The Power Moves

ARCHIVE

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Best regards,

/u/dream-hunter

Founder of TheRedArchive
August 22, 2026

What to Text a Girl Who Doesn't Reply (7 Proven Texts)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 March 2017 · Archived copy · Original

It's upsetting when a girl doesn't reply to your text, isn't it?

You text her, she replies a few times and then poof… She stops responding altogether. Or maybe she just never replies at all.

It's not uncommon.

But worry not, there are many texts you can send to make her text back.
I share a **system that will give you the highest chances of rekindling your interaction**.

To begin with, remember this: **don't take a few unanswered texts as a personal rejection**.
No matter the looks, skills, or mate value, everybody has been there before. Countless times :).

Now let's start by defining the "she stopped replying" situation:

When Can You Consider Her "Non-Replying"?

I will define a woman as having gone AWOL when:

1. She doesn't answer after two of your texts
2. She doesn't text back after two days

Now there will be plenty of women that will text you back after a few weeks, days… or even months (yep!).

Here's an example:

But as a rule of thumb, use the two above as they will cover 95% of your texting situations.

Why Two Texts Are the Threshold

If two texts go unanswered a third text is a big no-no.
If you send a third text, she will back-rationalize that if she hasn't replied so far it's because she didn't like you (called "sense-making" in *psychology*).

So the rule of thumb is: two unanswered texts and that medium has been "burned." You can't use it anymore.

What do you do, then?

Read on:

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1. Drop Texts And Call Her

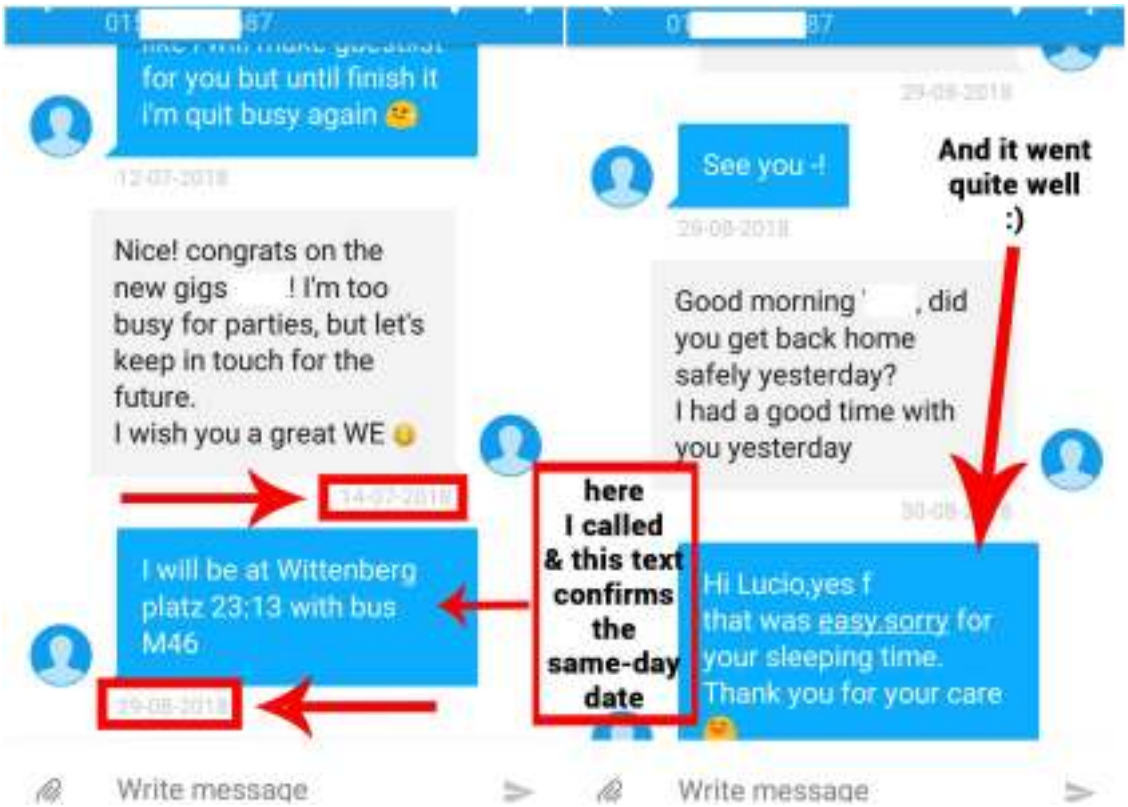
> *Bring back the good vibes*

The call is probably the first thing I'd go for after two unanswered messages.
It does a few great things for you:

Why Calling Works

1. Opens a new channel with a clean slate
2. Shows you're not afraid of calling
3. Brings back the good vibes
4. Some women prefer calls

Here is an example, and notice that one month and a half had passed between our last text:



If I had texted here instead of calling we would have never become lovers

Let's dig deeper:

Voice addresses a common reason why she hasn't replied: dissipation. When you first met there were good feelings, but they dissipated and now you're just a few lines of text on her phone.
The phone call, with your voice and conversation, is exactly what can bring back those good feelings in full force.

The last reason is that some women aren't into texting (mostly older and/or very busy). They consider it a time-wasting and "childlike" medium.
When you call these women they will finally see you as "man enough" to pick up the phone.

If She Picks Up

When she picks up it's a bit like starting from a clean slate.

I've had women propose themselves that we should meet after a good phone call, and the unanswered texts become a thing of the past.

Just to be sure though, avoid writing her again on the "burned" medium after the call.

Few Quick Calling Tips

- Call while walking
- Call in elated states (after workout or accomplishment)
- After a few drinks

- Have a couple of stories at hand
- Keep it brisk/entertaining
- Make sure you end the conversation

2. Switch Texting Medium

> ***Begin with a clean slate***

Of course, the call might go unanswered as well.
Or… let's be honest, you might be too nervous for the call. No shame, brother :).

If you did call, leave a message on voicemail—make it cool and nonchalant, tell her to call you back.
After a few days, if she hasn't called back, then switch medium again with a text.

The best one is going from texts to WhatsApp (or Line or Kakao or whatever is popular).

Why It Works

- She won't notice the old unanswered texts
- Doesn't fully realize you're chasing
- Won't feel guilty for not replying so far
- Apps are free (some gals can be that broke)
- Your nice picture can remind her of positive feelings
- New medium = novelty

Text Example

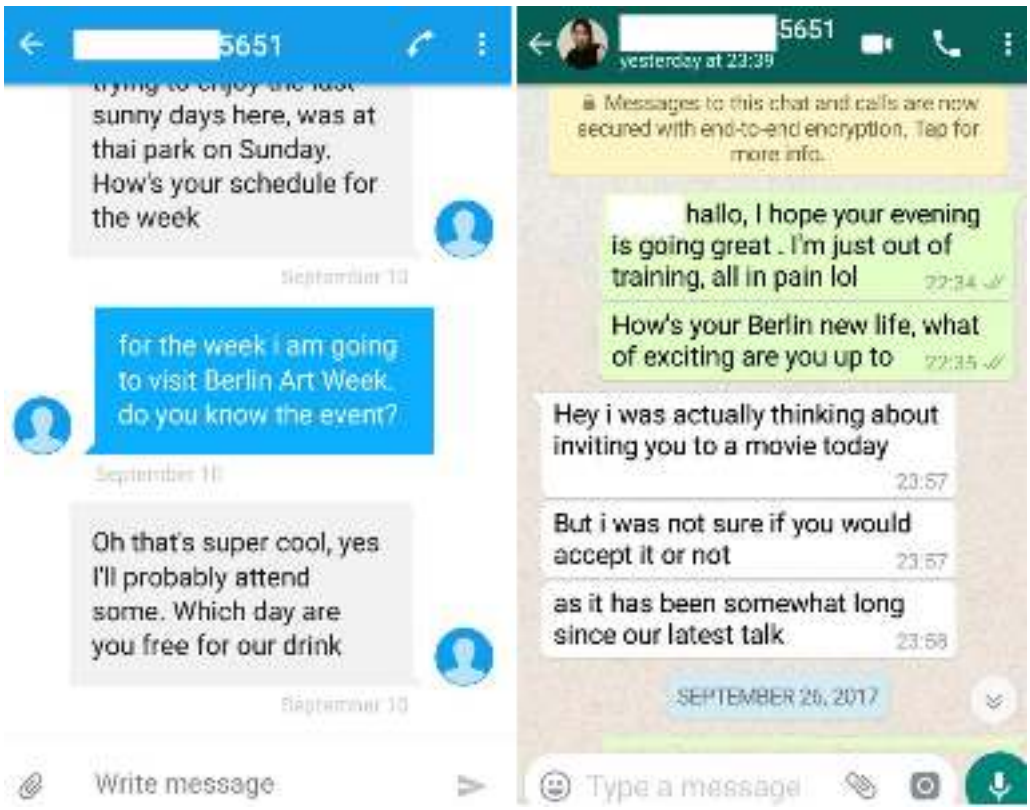
In the example below, she didn't reply to my last text.

But then, look what a 180-degree turn when I switched medium: she was thinking about inviting me to a movie but was afraid I'd refuse.

Wouldn't it have been simpler scheduling when I asked two weeks earlier?

Yes, but that's what sometimes happens with texts: it doesn't progress, but it does not necessarily mean there's no interest from her side.

And that's when a Text Medium Switch gives you the biggest bang for the buck.



3. Send A Value-Giving Text

> *Give instead of asking: propose something valuable*

We saw in the article on *Social Exchange* that the best way of getting what you want is to *give* people what they want.

Ideally, in romance, you won't provide anything more than being a hot, sexy, and charming man.

But life is rarely ideal. Especially after two unanswered texts, it can be a great strategy to give her something she wants and values.

Why it Works

Right now she perceives you as a guy who's asking and taking.

Providing something of value breaks that dynamic and flips the script. Now you're a giver.

Text Example

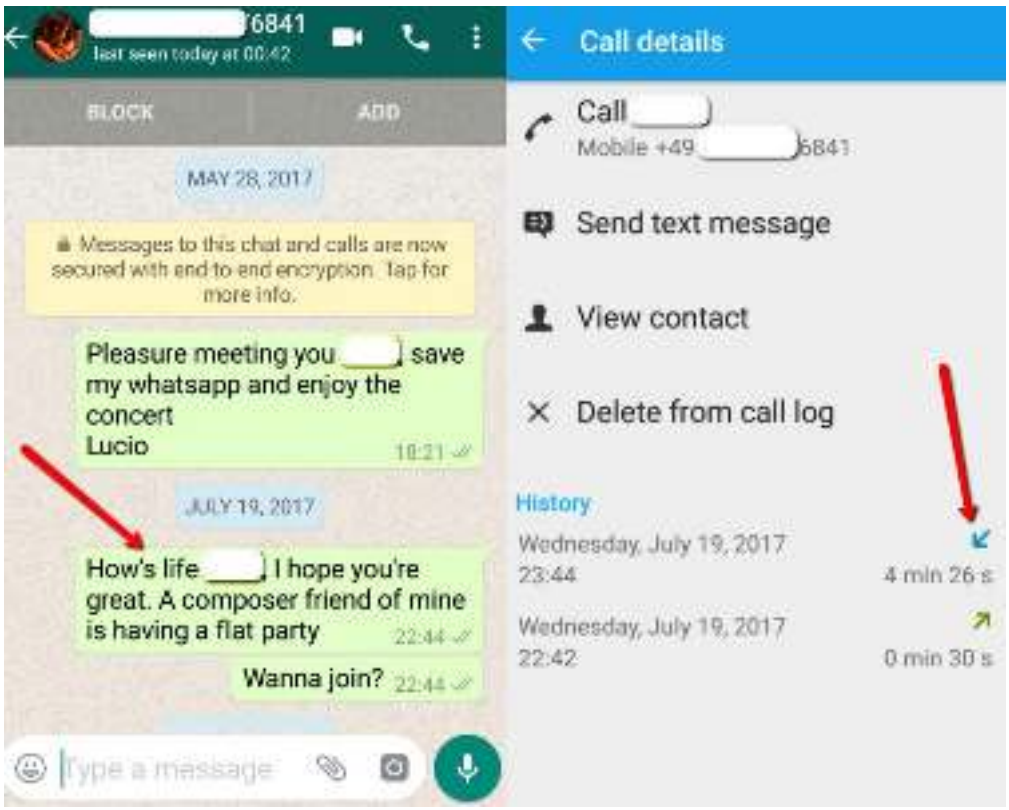
The girl from the text message below played and studied a musical instrument.

What could be useful for her?
Some (further) connection in the composing and music industry was a safe bet.

Now we can't AB test that, but I'm pretty sure that after an unanswered WhatsApp, an unanswered call, and an unanswered text this was a dead one.

So I proceeded to invite her to something useful to her.

Notice that exactly one hour later she promptly called me back.



Note:
You don't want to over-provide.
Just give one thing that's useful for her, hint at something more possible, and then close the deal asap.

4. "Make Your Move" Text

> *From chaser to raiser: her turn or that's it*

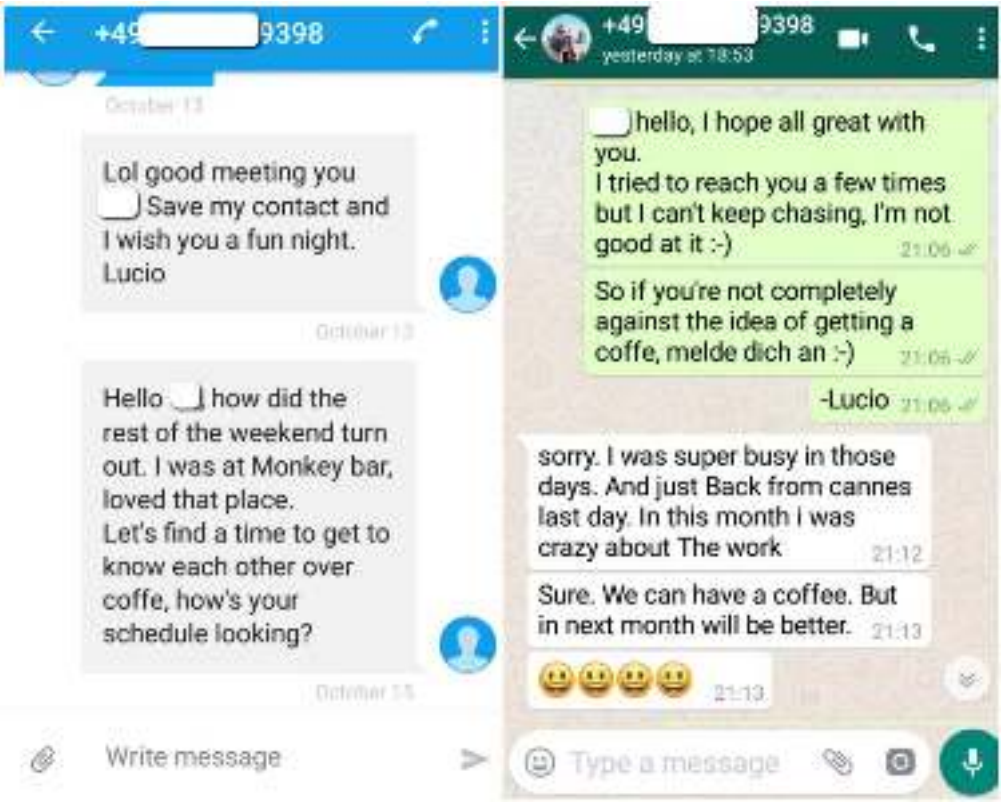
This is one of the most effective and by far my favorite.

Basically, you send her a message saying you've tried to reach her a few times but you can't keep going after her and… you will not.
If she's not completely against the idea of a coffee, it's her turn now.

If she liked you, this text can be a major wake-up call that she's losing you.
You go from "guy who's chasing indefinitely" to the guy who will stop and *demands* her to make a move instead.

I especially like to combine this one with "switching medium." For example: I'll text twice, call, and if still no answer, then I'll send this one via another messaging app.

Text Example



5. Drop It... Then Ping Her

> *A Blast from the Past*

This has a much lower hit rate.

But your text might land on some perfect timing: a recent breakup, or some long drought period… and you know you can help with those ;).

You can use it as a flooding strategy: when you're in downtime copy and paste the exact same message and send it to all the old unresponsive numbers.

Text Example

You can write you were deleting old numbers; or that you either saw her or someone who looked exactly like her; or that you stumbled by mistake on that old conversation.
Anything that gives you a plausible way to seem like you stumbled on that number/conversation by accident.

6. “I Am Gone” Text (Scarcity Principle)

> *The Allure of the Impossible*

This one works rather well too.

In some instances, it also worked for me without switching medium and after more than 2 unanswered texts (!).

It’s a huge wake-up call for those women who live their dating life passively, expecting a man on a white horse to smash their front door and drag them to a fantasy castle (and there are many of those!).

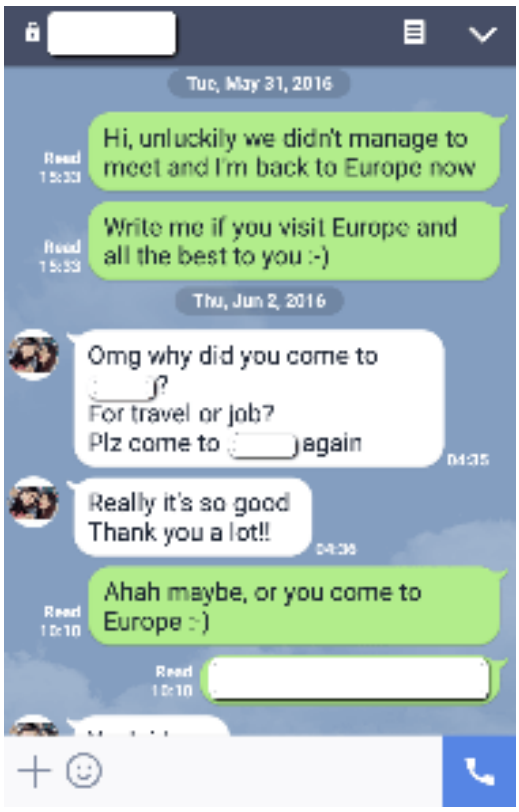
I’m exaggerating here with the imagery, but in practice, that’s how many women live their dating life.

Why it Works

It works because now you’re not anymore the guy who’s texting and waiting. Now you’re the guy who’s gone. And that’s it.

All of a sudden they remember you were a cool guy, and you become a missed opportunity. Scarcity and the human tendency to value what we can’t have come to your rescue (see *Influence* by Cialdini).

I use it with all the girls I liked but never got around to meeting while traveling. If you want to possibly meet those women when you go back, this text is more powerful than anything else you could write.



The Sneaky Variation

I don't like lying and only used it when I really left. But nothing stops you from using it with women from your same city.

If you do, you can tell her one month later you're back for a few days and then try to make things happen quickly during that time.

Don't worry about the "truth" emerging later. If all goes well she'll be delighted you're actually sticking around.

The Power Move Variation

If she's not very forthcoming it will increase your chances if you further rebalance the relationship.

How do you do that?

When she says yes to meeting up, don't write her anymore. Then write later on, or on some occasion like her birthday, to excuse yourself for not having had the time (see full case study on recovering from a bad date with Facebook).

Power balance restored, and your chances of things happening just increased.

7. "I'm Worried About You" Text

This is another effective one you can use where you pretend you're worried about her for whatever reason.

Why It Works

It positions you as someone who cares, which will warm her to you. And as someone who takes care of the people around him, which is a typical leader behavior—Godfather style.

Bonus points if you do it because you really care.

Notice she hadn't replied to 3 of my messages. I stumbled upon her in person again months later and we agreed for a coffee. She hadn't picked up the phone before.
But after I showed I cared, she was asking questions.

Empathy & Caring as a Screening Tool

It works more effectively with women who are compassionate and empathetic themselves.

And these are the kind of people you want in your life.

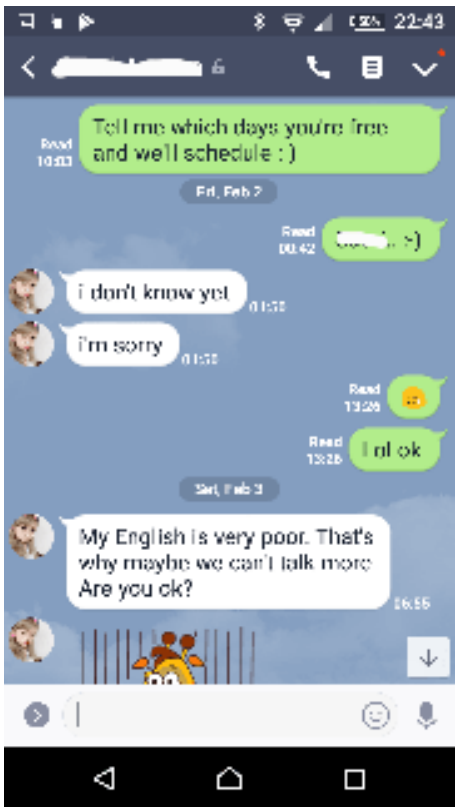
More than a woman also used it with me (1, 2 examples), and I cherish and remember these thoughtful check-ins.

8. Text Her 3 Dots

If you were in a conversation, a very effective technique is to simply write her name and three suspension points.

If she likes you and you didn't do anything too wrong, this text works very well in getting a reply and restarting the conversation.

Text Example



Read the whole case study on how to text flaky girls.

9. Use Some Text Flirting

Once you finally brought her to text you back, change the mood of your texts right away.

This is a good video on how to add flirting and good sexual innuendos:

#10. Fix Texting With Personality

Permission to be honest?

Alright then, here it is:

> **Worrying about her replies is a loser's game**.

Don't worry though: we've all been there.

I don't mean it in a mean way. As a matter of fact, I've been there too.

And if you are ready and willing to walk up the mountain, I'm happy to show you the way.

Read around here and make yourself into a man who doesn't have to worry anymore about a couple of silly texts.

Or better yet, accelerate, condense, and take your learning to the next level with **Power University**.

How To Dominate Debates Like Donald Trump (Case Study)

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 March 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Winning debates is an immensely helpful skill to have in life.

Especially if you're planning to get into politics (or academia).

And this article is going to show you how to win a debate… Exactly when winning a debate seems impossible.

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- How to Win The Toughest Debate
  - #1. Strategic Agreement: Take Their Game Away
  - #2. Fight Fire With Fire: Blame Them of Your Weaknesses
  - #3. Be Bold with Your Counterattack
  - #4. Play the Victim
  - #5. Show They Are Cheap: Then Be Generous
  - #6. Recruit Neutrals As Your Allies
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  - #8. Let Others Come To You
  - #9. Destroy Their Social Proof
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How to Win The Toughest Debate

Trumped headed into the second debate that the wheels were coming off of his political campaign.

He faced a sexual assault allegation and one of the biggest uproars a candidate president has ever seen.

Yet, that wasn't a huge change for Trump.
He always painted himself as an outsider and he always played by his own rules.
"His own rules", of course, often meant "outside of the rules.

Trump indeed uses a lot of debate tactics and techniques that could be defined as "unfair".
And this post will show you what those unfair techniques are.

#1. Strategic Agreement: Take Their Game Away

> ***Let Them Charge You… Then Simply Sidestep***

Sometimes a politician will derive most of his power not from his own values and personality, but by positioning themselves *against* you.

When that's the case, you have two options:

1. Shows yourself of being the opposite
2. Agree with them.

When you can show you are the opposite of what they are trying to depict you, they will look silly for attacking a straw man (Straw Man argument fallacy).

And for trying to push an agenda that you are showing not to be true -with facts-, they are basically spending

marketing money to look insincere and harm themselves.

Trump called Clinton “crooked Hillary”, and Hillary tried to do the same by making “dark Trump” stick.
While Clinton tried to frame Trump as dark and divisive she positioned her whole campaign as standing for the opposite of what Trump (supposedly) stood for.

Of course, as soon as the primaries were over, Trump went into overdrive to change that narrative and did so effectively: “dark Trump” never stuck.

This technique is especially effective during campaigns.

But you might be wondering:

How you can use it to win a debate?

The most effective way of using this technique during a debate is right after they have launched a big tirade against you.
Or right after they pitched themselves as being the exact opposite of what you (supposedly) stand for.

In the second presidential debate, Hillary is smart enough not to verbalize that her position is against Trump, but it’s pretty obvious to almost everyone.
Hillary talks about “being great” -VS “make America great again”- of “being good” -as opposed to “we are doing terrible” and “togetherness” -as opposed to Trump’s alleged divisiveness-.

And what does Trump do?

He takes the stage and agrees with everything she said!

When Trump takes the stage and he just agrees with Hillary, he neutralizes her whole (indirect) attack, makes her look terribly silly… and makes himself more palatable to large swathes of moderates.

All in one:

#2. Fight Fire With Fire: Blame Them of Your Weaknesses

> ***Show Chinks in Their Armor And Nobody Will Notice Yours***

You probably remember children quarreling with each other and repeating to themselves “you are”, “no you are”, “no you are”.

It can sound silly when it’s done without any supporting argument but add just a little bit of meat around it, and minimize your faults while you exaggerate your opponent’s faults… And you got an extremely effective weapon to win the argument.

When Trump was accused of sexual assault for his leaked videos talking about “grabbing women’s pu**y”, he resorted to this technique.

He said those were just words, but Bill Clinton has actually assaulted women with facts.
And Hillary Clinton has defended rapists and *laughed* about the victims.

Notice the difference: mine was just locker room talk. They did facts and Clinton even *laughed* about defending rapists.

Trump even brought those women on stage.
And since Hillary didn’t defend from Trump’s accusations, it always remained a lingering doubt in the audience.

This was a very well-structured form of “you are, no you are” game and effectively helped Trump to climb out of the huge hole that the sex assault tape had relegated him in.

#3. Be Bold with Your Counterattack

> ***When All Expect Surrender: Charge***

Trump's whole campaign seemed to be on the verge of disbanding and coming undone.

When you face a similar situation, approaching the situation meekly or with the common "defend and attack" wouldn't be enough.

You need something bigger.
You need to where nobody else would dare to go.

Trump needed something huge as well to even the scores.
The 48 Laws of Power suggest taking action with boldness, and that's exactly what Trump needed.

As we've already mentioned, Trump said Bill Clinton lost his license for sexual assault and says Hillary laughed at rape victims.

But he didn't stop.

He then moves on to the email controversy saying that "lives have been ruined for doing a fifth of what she's done". Trump took a small issue on Hillary's side and effectively managed to make it seem like a huge scandal.

And it eventually culminates with his (in)famous retort:

> Because you would be in jail

#4. Play the Victim

> ***Make Your Enemy Look Like A Bully & Everyone Will Be With You***

We have a strong tendency to sympathize with people whom we feel are being unjustly oppressed.

It doesn't work with people who dislike us deeply, but it works with people who like us and, crucially, with neutral and impartial observers.

If deployed when there's no objective oppression it looks lame, pathetic and you look like you're making excuses. But when you can spin it well, it works wonders.

In the presidential debate, the female moderator did seem slightly against Trump, or at least she was at times rather aggressive towards him, which helped Trump hugely in framing himself as the victim and the moderator as a Clinton supporter.

#5. Show They Are Cheap: Then Be Generous

> ***Your Generosity Pays Double When Your Opponent is Cheap***

Debates can often become confrontations.

When that happens, the party that is able to show the observers that he can preserve a positive and welcoming attitude no matter what stands to gain big time.

Trump does it masterfully.

It's challenging to be the first one to offer the olive branch.

It's challenging because it's difficult to quickly change your state and there's always the risk the other party might NOT reciprocate and use your opening to attack you instead.

Also, the first party is more likely to only take a half step towards you rather than a full step.
And therein lies Trump's Power Move in letting Hillary go first -whether that was intentional or not, we don't know-.

When Hillary goes first her "compliment" looks stilted and avoidant.

That's great for Trump: **the lady who presented herself as the party for unity and the president for everyone was unable to negotiate peace**.

She couldn't even deliver an honest compliment!

Trump takes the stage, looks like a real family man, a proud father, and delivers a sincere and honest compliment to Hillary. Huge point for Trump.

#6. Recruit Neutrals As Your Allies

> ***When Neutrals Side With You, You Must be Right***

When you're in a debate there's a tendency for people to take sides.

Having people on your side support you is great, but it's also expected: They're on your side after all.

But when you can get obviously neutral people to support your cause, that's when you really score big.

In the case of a debate, you will rarely get neutral people openly supporting your view.
But you don't need open support.
You all need to make it *look* like they are supporting you (Obama takes full advantage of that as well here).

Trump does masterfully.

How?

When the moderator asks Hillary about her "too cozy for comfort" relationship with big banks, Trump says "thank you".

That "thank you" draws attention to the question, which is a great way of pre-suading by drawing attention to it (*Pre-Suasion, Cialdini*).
And it makes it sound as if the moderator is now supporting Trump's cause.

The moderator's slight laughter also supports that view and Hillary's big smile -as if she had just been found out- also helps Trump in framing Clinton as the defender of big corporations' interests.

#7. Reveal Your Opponent's Tricks

> ***And Make Them Look Sneaky***

All politicians use very common and standard techniques such as:

- "defend and attack"
- "defend and change topic"

Trump does it almost always, while Clinton does it most of the time (but a few notable times she didn't and left her side open to counter-attacks: watch an example here).

This is a rather standard procedure in political debates.

However, when your opponent is deflecting a major question or when he didn't defend properly, here's a simple technique to bring the spotlights back where you want them: explain to everyone the technique they have just used.

It will give you double the points as it will look like your opponent is using unfair debate techniques to get off the thorny issues.

Watch Trump execute it to perfection and get a major cheer out of it (this is right after the "thank you" move) :

#8. Let Others Come To You

> ***And If There Are Any Doubts To Who's The Winner, Just LOOK Like The Winner***

When there's an audience watching you don't win the debate only *during* the debate.

Everything you do before and *after* is all part of your show.

At the end of the debate, Hillary is the first to move.
She tries to show herself as social and friendly, but she overdoes it and looks a bit like an over-excited schoolgirl meeting the family after her first class.

Trump instead moves slow -we've already spoken about the connection between slow movements and dominance– and, importantly, STAYS on the stage.

Clinton looks like the typical politician shaking hands, taking pictures, and giving away fake smiles -and this is a period people are a bit tired of politicians-.
Trump instead looks like the man at the center of the attention, he keeps getting all the limelight he can and lets others come to him.

#9. Destroy Their Social Proof

> ***If their friends don't like them then… Who would?***

A common strategy to accrue social power and win debates is to appear like you have a lot of support from famous people and people who command a certain respect.

Trump used it more than anyone I remember seeing, and often in a very hyperbolic fashion.

But when Hillary used it against him to increase her support, what does he do?
He attacks and undermines that same social proof.

When Hillary mentions Sanders, Trump reminds everyone how Sanders said Hillary is a crooked politician.

And when Hillary mentions "*my friend Michelle Obama*", Trump says it's no friendship and reminds us all how Michelle wasn't really very amiable towards Hillary in the past.

Most people are likely to remember both Sanders' comments and Michelle Obama's ads, so Hillary now looks like a chess-playing politician with no real friendships.
Such as a fake person, which is one of the biggest issues Hillary had to contend with during her campaign.

Deadly effective.

Summary

If you're here looking for tips on how to win a debate, I'd like to point out that some tips here are not always generalizable.

You will indeed not always be in a situation where you need to attack like a rabid dog.
And when not strictly needed it's an attitude that can backfire.

However, a few of the other tactics like Strategic Agreement and Recruiting Neutrals will serve you well in any situation.

Make sure to check out How to Win a Debate (Part I) and Ben Shapiro's bullying debate techniques for more.

Dirty Debate Tactics (That Win The Presidency)

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 March 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Dirty debate techniques, sadly, can also be extremely effective debate techniques.

And that's why you must absolutely learn all the possible dirty, unfair, shady, and even bullying debating tactics.

It is a tenet of this website that we desperately need good people to learn how to play the game dirty.
So let's delve right on, and learn how to do just that.

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- 10 Dirty Debate Tactics
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  - #5. Lure Her In. Then Attack
  - #6. Champion People's Discontent
  - #7. Speak Over: Seed Doubt in Real Time
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  - #9. Attack: Force your Opponent to Defend
  - #10. Hide Your Problems Behind Hers
  - Parting Thoughts

Trump Debate Skills: Overview

Some commentators say Trump has weak debate skills.

But not only did he win the election, but he also scored major presidential debate wins against Clinton.

I believe that many people underestimate Trump's debate skills simply because they don't fit the mainstream idea of "great oratory", which includes a large vocabulary, solid content, and good structure.

And yes, Donald Trump deployed simpler vocabulary, not very deep content, and a bit of an erratic structure.
But to hell with that, he used much deadlier techniques.

10 Dirty Debate Tactics

The following dirty debate techniques are based on Trump's analysis of the first presidential debate, but they can be applied to any debate.

#1. Ignore All Valid Criticism

At the beginning of the debate, Hillary tries to frame Trump as the lucky guy who made it thanks to Daddy's money.

She does it extremely well, cushioning it into a bigger topic as if it were not a critic but a fact.
And she doesn't sound critical about it, so as not to estrange richer Americans. But at the same time, she shows that Trump cannot represent the average American.

That's a wonderful move from Clinton.

Now most people here would reply:

> **Poor debater**: "No, that's not true *I* didn't make it thanks to daddy, but bla bla bla".

What's the problem with that?

When you address the criticism you elevate its importance.

Addressing and re-stating the opposing view gives it more air time and cements the question mark in people's minds.
Even if you manage to provide a good answer, your opponent is still going to counterattack or, at least, fail to provide support for your side of the story.
And that leaves lingering doubt.

Look at how Trump does it instead.

Trump just gives his own view of the accounts and does so naturally and smoothly, as if he wasn't even replying to Clinton's accusations.

Good move.

#2. Reframe Weaknesses as Strengths

This is the reinterpretation of an old and effective sales technique

Hillary tried to frame Trump and his wealth as the product of luck and something that puts him out of touch with ordinary people.

Trump reframes his wealth as a sign of business acumen, which will allow him to fix the country's problems.

It's a typical sales tactic to take a weakness and find a way to reframe it as a strength, and a very effective one at that…

#3. Make Her Follow Your Lead

This was the biggest and sneakiest power move of the whole debate.

Trump says:

> **Trump**: In all fairness to secretary Clinton, yes? Is that OK?

He is confident and demanding enough to sound dominant, yet adds enough "sweeteners" to make it more likely Clinton will submit.

"in all fairness" sounds as if Trump was *exempting* Clinton from his critic, a nice gesture.

He points at her with an open palm, a cross-cultural sign of friendliness.
He looks at her with his head tilted down and looking through his forehead -the "forehead bow"-, which is a signal of submission (The Body Language Project).
And he nods his head as if to invite Clinton to do the same.

Now the natural tendency when someone shows friendly signals is to reciprocate (*law of reciprocation*), which Clinton does with both verbals -saying yes- and nonverbal signs -nodding her head and smiling, both submissive signs-.

Now Trump looks like the leader and Hillary like the follower. That's only the first part though:

#4. Make Her Agree. Then Show Her Wrong

Now that Trump has Clinton's blessing and confirmation he then changes tack.

He says:

> **Trump**: good, I want you to be very happy

That's a mix of dominance -dominant people move other people around and "take care" of them- with a demeaning touch.

And then he proceeds to say Clinton did nothing for thirty years.
All with Hillary's implicit blessing.

Prince of Darkness moves.

Still, convinced about the lack of Trump debate skills?

#5. Lure Her In. Then Attack

"Make other people come to you, use bait if necessary", says Robert Greene in The *48 Laws of Power*.

That's what Trump does when he pretends to ask a question to Hillary. The question is extremely loaded, rhetorically asking

> **Trump***:* You've been doing this for 30 years, why are you just thinking of these solutions right now.

Hillary goes to reply, again following Trump's lead.

At that point, Trump strikes again, cutting her off with a dominant "excuse me" as he keeps pushing forward.

The result?

Trump looks dominant, and Hillary looks dominated.

#6. Champion People's Discontent

But Trump doesn't just look dominant, he also looks passionate, angry, and a people's champion.

A truly charismatic leader.

He is successfully positioning himself as the champion of the average Joe mad at the political elites.

Political dark horses around the world often win elections by riding the wave of mass discontent.
Politicians are often slow at changing and tend to cling to the status quo.

When waves of discontent and dissatisfaction ripple through nations the charismatic politicians rise to the top.
These are the ones who look most honest and passionate and the ones who seem to possess hard and definite answers.

In this example, Trump rides that emotional wave.

Clinton attacks the tax cuts for the higher earners.
Defending lower taxes for the rich is a hard sell to the non-rich majority.

This is a thorny argument!
Why risk it with logic?

Trump charges Clinton for being the typical politician with all talk and no action, skirting a thorny topic and at the same time appealing to the disgruntled masses.

Very effective.

Sure, Trump doesn't delight people with lofty rhetoric, but emotions trump logic in many a man's hearts, and that's one of the most effective weapons of Trump's debating tactics.

#7. Speak Over: Seed Doubt in Real Time

Some commentators implied that Trump's speaking over Clinton's time was the perfect example of the baseness of Trump's debate skills -or lack thereof-.

Some others said it was the perfect example of Trump losing his plot and hanging himself.

I disagree.

A few times he went overboard, but it was overall extremely effective.

7.1 Retorts

Some of Trump's retorts have become defining moments of the election.

With one single comeback here he hits Clinton at her most debilitating weakness: the idea that she's crooked and dishonest ("crooked Hillary", another genius Trump move).

If he had politely waited for his time to speak he would have missed on what has become the most famous moment of all televised debates.

7.2 Longer Voice Over

Trump takes any occasion he can to talk on Clinton's speaking time to strengthen his point, weaken her point or muddle the waters to avoid Hillary scoring a point.

A few more accomplishments of Trump's voice-over.
He:

- **Looked like the leader**

Speaking over someone is what dominant people do.

And while it can come across as too overbearing, it's Hillary who made the mistake of making him look legit.

She does it by replying to Trump on HER speaking time, thus acting as a follower and validating his intrusions.

- **Set the agenda by steering the conversation**

Hillary repeatedly falls for Trump's interruptions by talking at length about HER issues.

On the second debate, they spent more time talking about emails -an old topic- than they did about Trump's video on grabbing women's vagina which was the newest, hottest, most lethal issue ever.

- **More exposure for Trump, less for Clinton**

It's a known human tendency that what's repeated more often also seems truer, and that works whether or not we are already informed on the facts.

It's called the "*mere exposure effect*", and works even when we know it's not true (Fazio, 2015)!

By using Hillary's speaking time Trump also makes his point sound truer, all the while robbing Hillary of that same

benefit.

#8. Get in The Last Word

The recency effect tells us that we remember most what comes first and what comes last (Miller and Campbell).

By often insisting on putting in the last word Trump negates the win for Hillary and allows his point to linger on in people's minds.

8.1 Quick Retort

Look at this example where he uses the last word as a defensive mechanism.

Clinton here was the one who made the great pungent retort when she said

> **Clinton**: maybe because you didn't pay any federal income taxes

That could have become a key moment of the debate and gone viral… IF she had paused and IF Trump had let it slip (like Hillary would have).

But not only Hillary wasn't shrewd enough to take advantage of it, but Trump also mitigates it with the last word. His retort was not as powerful as Hillary's, but it was extremely effective in taking the edge off Hillary's zinger.

Note:
Hillary didn't pause because she was hell-bent on making a more complex and logical point, which of course nobody remembered.
If she had paused instead everyone would have remembered Trump is not paying taxes.
In debates, simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

8.2 Longer Speech

Again here is another defensive usage of getting the last word in, but with a longer speaking time.

Hillary was scoring a major point by making Trump look like he is irrational and making no sense, a very very bad frame for Trump.

But by getting in the last word Trump brings the topic back on a serious tone, re-state his point as valid, and largely negates Hillary a major win.

#9. Attack: Force your Opponent to Defend

This was another extremely powerful debate tactic by Donald.

Faced with seemingly insurmountable odds, he keeps attacking and, accomplice a meek Hillary, forcing her on the defensive.

Watch him in this video using all the last 3 debate techniques combined: interrupt, put in the last word, and keep attacking

Yes, he is reprehended by the moderator and looks slightly too aggressive.

But knowing this was just a few days after the huge scandal of grabbing women by the vagina ask yourself: was he effective in driving Clinton on the defensive?
Was he effective in muddying the water and getting off his huge issue?
Was he effective in shifting the agenda onto Hillary's issue and *keeping* it there?

That's the result of a master debater, not someone lacking in debate skills.

#10. Hide Your Problems Behind Hers

Trump handled well many accusations and issues with his campaigns.

They called him racist, and he quelled it by visiting black churches, they called him dark, and he shrugged it off by being positive and upbeat.

He couldn't shake the accusation of his tax returns though, and it kept nagging him all along.
So what does he do when the conversation turns there?

He says he will release his tax returns *after* Hillary releases her email.

Genius!

When you cannot shake your issues, remember this: misery loves company!
You might not win, but you gotta be strategic: **sometimes not losing is like winning**.

Parting Thoughts

Before you go around thinking that unfair debate techniques will hand you the keys to world power, notice a few things:

- **Techniques Must Suit Personalities**

Some of these tactics would have not worked as well for other politicians. They would have been counterproductive for Hillary, for example.

But Trump was just Trump being Trump. People knew he was brash, so while for some that still was overpowering, it was also genuine and sincere (something Hillary never appeared to be).

- **They can Backfire**

Some of these techniques could have backfired if only Hillary knew how to handle them well.

We'll go over it in a different post, but just as an example: nobody forced her to smile and nod at Trump. And if she had refused, that would have been her point (look at Obama refusing to follow the lead).

- **Learn more**

I write extensively on bullying, persuasion, and manipulation.
Also read *Carlson's unfair debate techniques, and Ben Shapiro's* bullying tactics, and check out part II of this series on *how to win a debate*.

How to Flirt With a Girl Over Text (Real Flirting Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 March 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for ways to flirt with a girl over text?

You have come to the right place.

My name is Lucio, and I have sent thousands upon thousands of texts.

This article will explain to you all the best techniques on how to flirt with a girl over text.

Contents

- Flirting Text Messages
  - #1. Imply She's Into Boys
  - #2. Imply She's Into You
  - 3. Imply She's Seducing You
  - #4. Turn Non-Flirty Into Exciting
  - #5. Leave Her Aching for More
  - #6. Hint At Sexuality
  - #7. Hint At Babies Together
  - #8. Move From Text Flirting to Meet
- And Enjoy Text Flirting
  - Bonus: These Ain't Flirting But Cheese
- Summary

Flirting Text Messages

Knowing how to flirt with a girl over text is a great skill to have.

It will make you more desirable, more entertaining and, yes, you'll incidentally also get more dates.

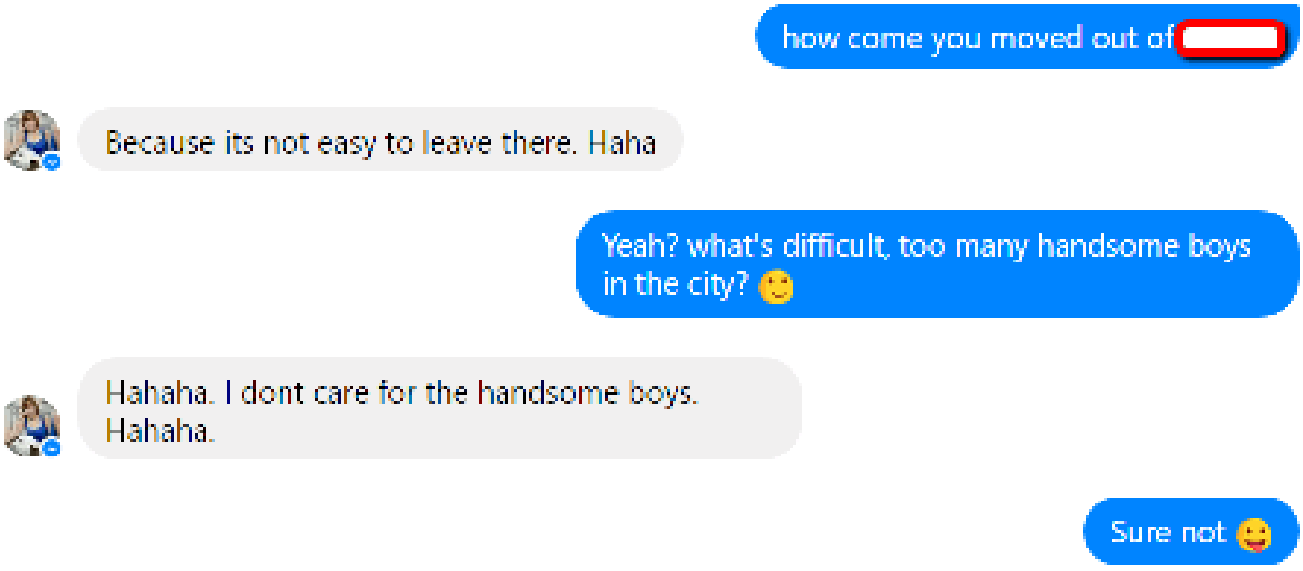
So let's start with the top text flirting guidelines -all real-life flirting examples from my phone or FB-.

#1. Imply She's Into Boys

I bet she does ;)

This is a favorite of mine: great upside and no drawbacks.

Women are smothered by the yoke of having to play "innocent" and feign disinterest in sex and men *(*Madonna-Whore Dichotomy). Implying they're into boys (and sex) liberates them by communicating in a flirty style that you "get them". She lets her hair down, her guard comes down… And maybe later some clothing item will come down too ;).

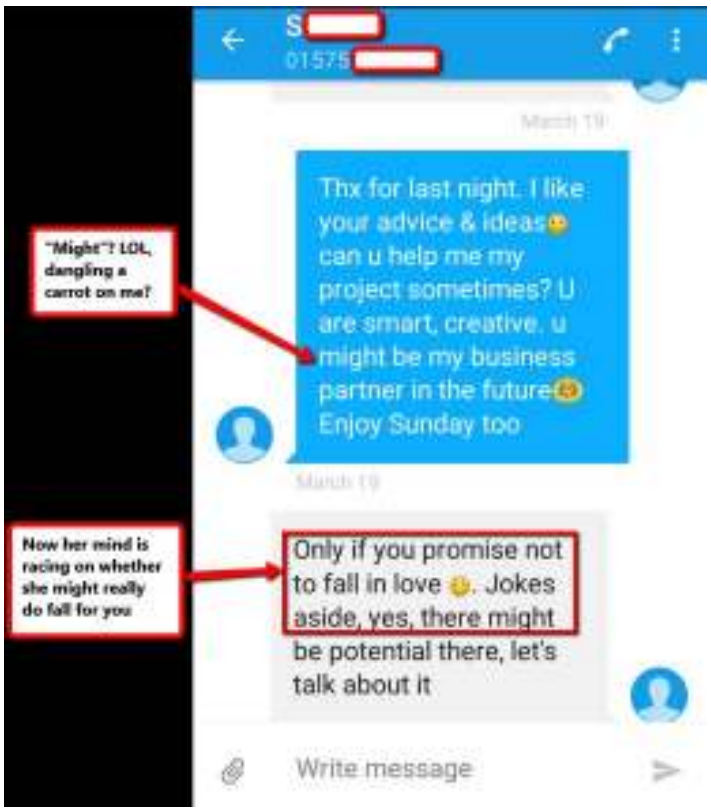


She doesn't care… Don't let all those "Hahah" fool you :P

#2. Imply She's Into You

Flirt by telling her she's so into you or, even better, that you're worried she is in *danger* of falling for you.

Her mind is running ;).



When in doubt about whether you're interested in her or in her venture, imply she's interested in YOU instead ;).

3. Imply She's Seducing You

Normally, it's the man who chases the woman.

The rule of thumb indeed is that man aggresses and the woman plays coy.

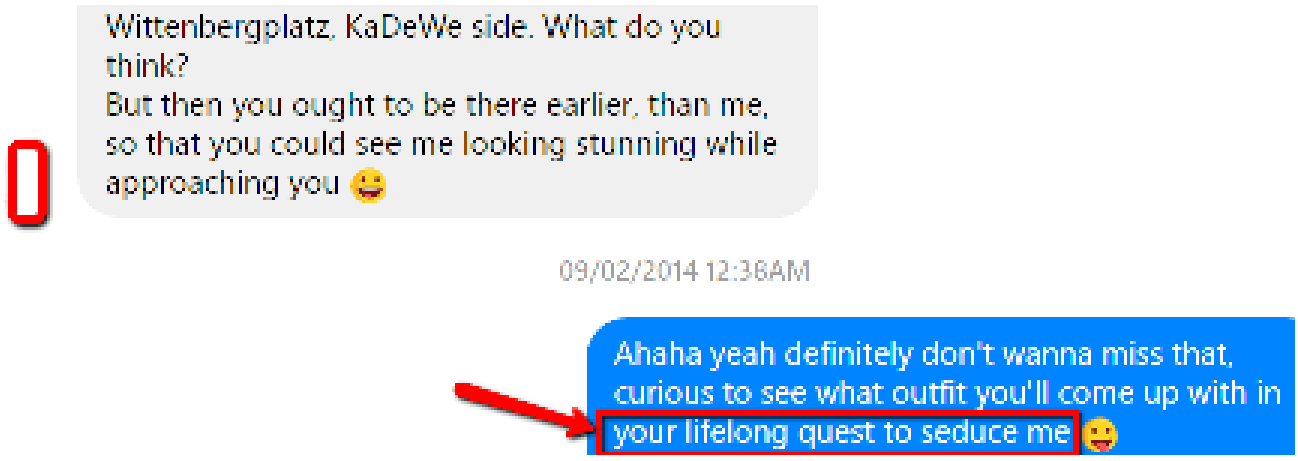
When you don't do it too obviously, sometimes women will try to poke you to get you chasing.

But wouldn't it be better if she was trying to get *you* instead?
Exactly!

And that's what you do with top-notch flirting: you turn the tables.

They're dressing up?
Just right out of the shower?

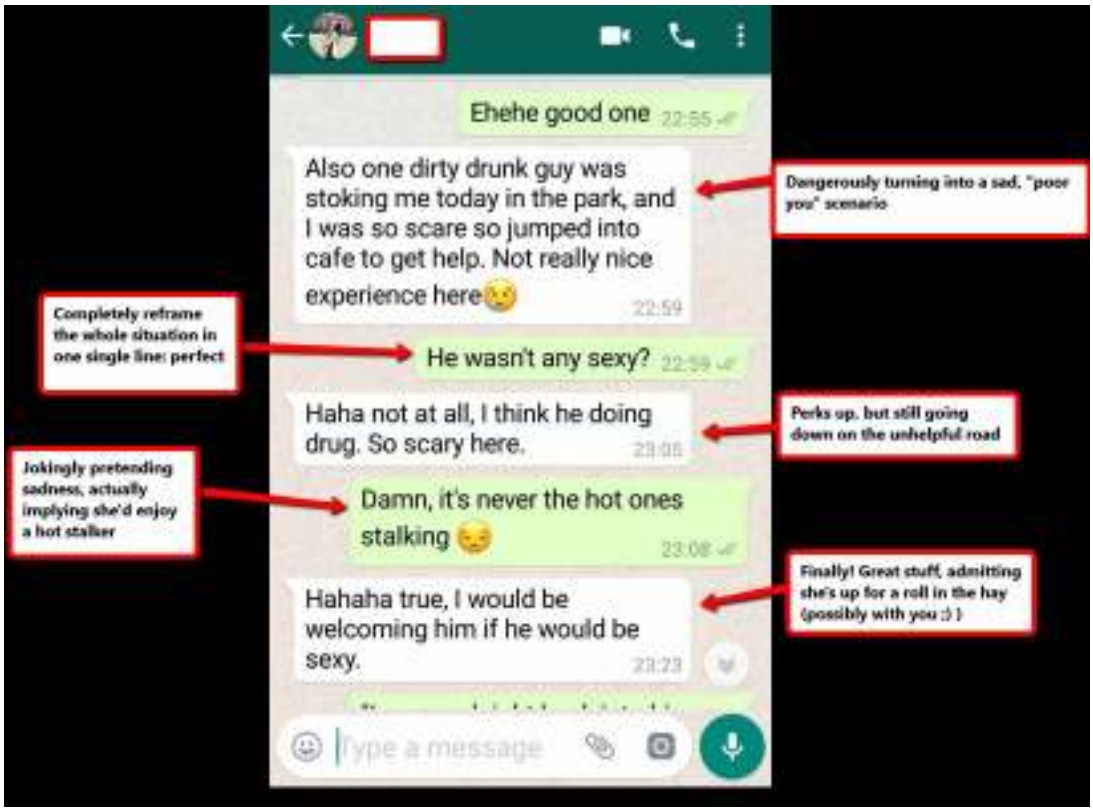
Don't take the bait, go texty caveman and show your cards (leave that for later): tell her she's using all tricks in the books to seduce you instead ;).



"Can't wait to see it"? Dull as F! She's hellbent to seduce you instead ;)

#4. Turn Non-Flirty Into Exciting

Flirty guys, the lover types, turn negative emotions into more flirtatious vibes. And many women love it.



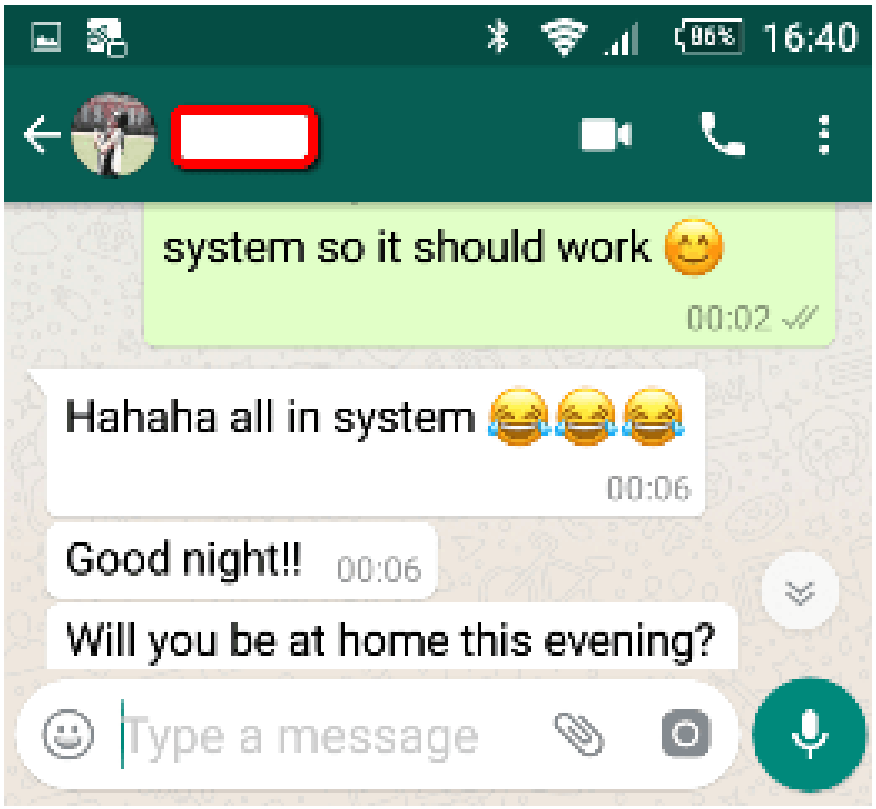
Sprinkle a few SICs here and there but you get the point :)

#5. Leave Her Aching for More

And just when fireworks are about to get off, and she's turning into a too-hot-to-handle mess… You pull back.

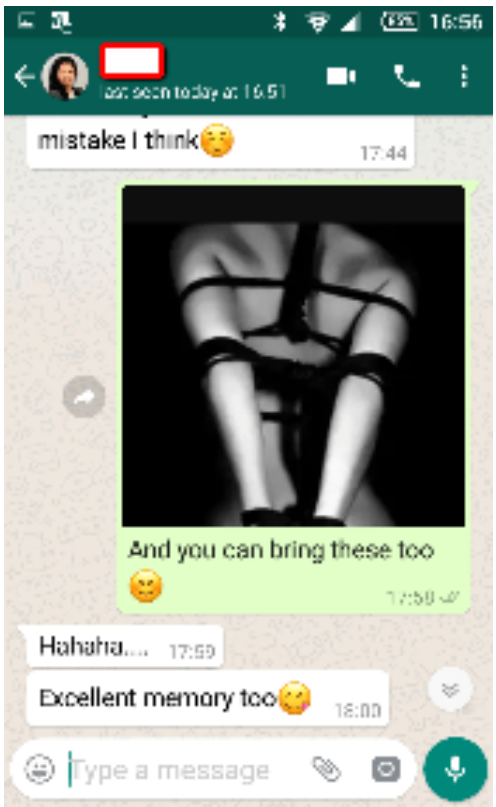
Women love the mystery, the hints. Don't spoil it by trespassing into the obvious and crude, but kiss them good night and tuck them up.. :).

…And guess who they'll be thinking of when waking up? :)



#6. Hint At Sexuality

And here is how you effectively inject sex into the conversation:



She mentioned bondage first: safe play :)
And now the big one. Flirting is *hinting* at sexual. It's (technically) not flirting anymore if you're openly discussing sex.

Rule #1: hints and mystery are sexy, clinical and crude are not.
Rule #2: fully sexual is very risky: proceed with caution.

Exceptions are: she starts it, she sends nudes or she opens up sexually.

Direct sexual flirting works best with:

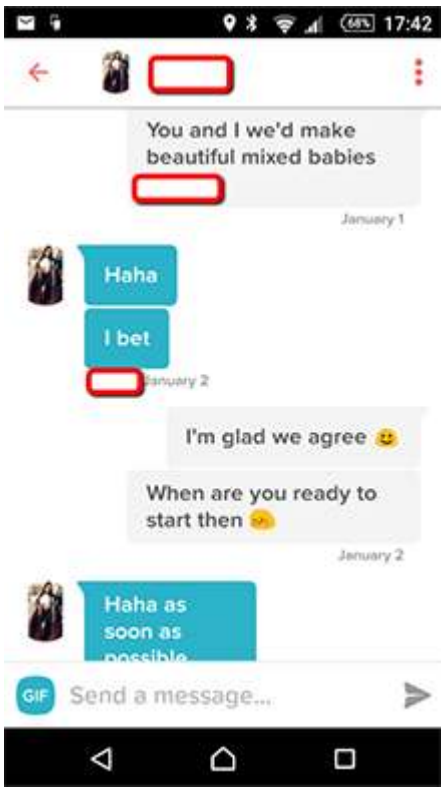
- Older women (you're the toy boy)
- Online dating (filter in 'down for it', filter out "no ONS")
- Married women (you're the sexy distraction)
- MILFs (got the baby already, no time for games)

#7. Hint At Babies Together

Hinting at the *product* of sex is a unique, flirtatious way of broaching sex as a foregone conclusion between you two.

If you're talking babies, sex obviously is going to happen.

Of course, use it only when it's abundantly obvious you're kidding or it's not flirting but family planning (and not cool :).



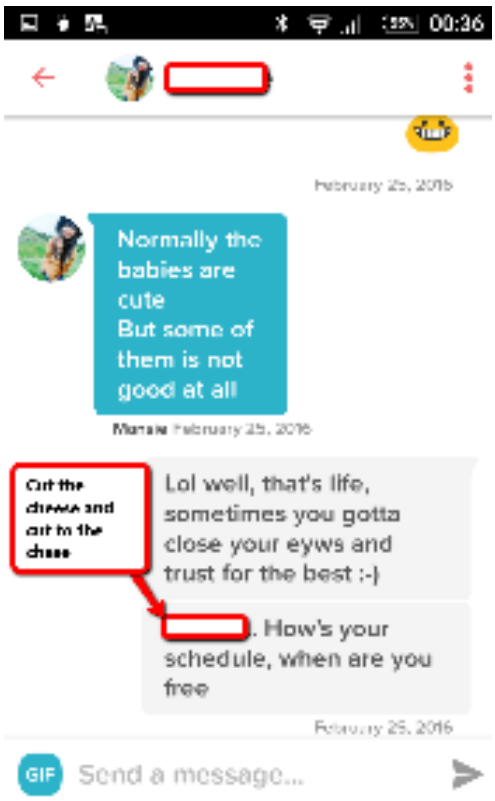
Perfect for:

- A Tinder match opening message
- Different “races” where you play the “cute mix card”
- Somehow black girls seem to love it

#8. Move From Text Flirting to Meet

Flirting is the preamble for something better -and real- to possibly happen. Imagine text flirting as the drumroll. Drumrolls glorify your daring entrance, but If all you do is drum rolling and no cigar, then… Then you might as well shoot the football breeze with your pals.

Be a guy who gets the job done instead: flirt a bit and then go for the *date*.



To do just that, consider this guide. (Edit: now it's part of Power University).

And Enjoy Text Flirting

Flirting excites us, makes us smile, and cheers us up.
It's one of life's pleasures: adopt this mentality and you'll flirt better.

I love women who can flirt.
Big grin when she implied her private dance would be "too much for me" :).

From Russia with Dance Moves, what's not to Love :)

Bonus: These Ain't Flirting But Cheese

I took a look around before writing this post and I've noticed there is some terrible advice from the most popular sources.

Read below what to avoid and in blue why they're terrible.

> **I know you're probably thinking of me, so we might as well text**

=I was thinking of you but I'm awkwardly hiding behind a smokescreen.

> **We're breaking up, you're too much trouble**

="Funny" relationship push/pull. Not the worst, but the sexiest flirts usually avoid any early relationship talk.

> **And that makes you my third favorite girl to text to**

=Good if you're a teen. Otherwise, it implies you text a lot. And no, implying you text a lot to girls is still not sexy.

> **You'll never guess what I'm doing right now**

=You're not doing anything obviously. Except for pondering a cheesy way to contact her, that is.

> **Any fun / smart way of asking for nudes**

=What's the nudes' intended use? Because learning how to flirt with a girl over text is about doing stuff *in person.*

Summary

Flirting with a girl is a bit of an art, but follow these guidelines and your text flirting will improve dramatically. And your texts will stand out because any hint at sex is also a *huge attention grabber*.

And if she doesn't text back? Try these techniques or try for the long game.

A parting note: **the in-person impression is paramount for effective flirting**.
Flirting with a girl over text works best when she thinks you are flirt-worthy… In-person.

No excuse for cheese, but at that point, even average stuff becomes strong text flirting.

The Alpha Male Handshake: Eye-opening Defense Tactics

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 May 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Alpha Male Handshake is a power move that seeks to assert dominance upon first meeting someone.

This post will show you the different types of alpha males handshakes, and what you can do when someone is trying to overpower you.

Contents

- AMOG Handshake
- Alpha Male Handshake at social gatherings
  - #1 One up him socially
  - #2: Call out the Power Move
  - #3: Meta him
- The Alpha Male Handshake in the club
  - #1 Body Language & Prevention
  - #2: Let it be
  - #3: Attack
- The Alpha Male Handshake in Politics
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- Matching = Winning
- Summary

AMOG Handshake

"Alpha Male Handshake" refers to someone purposefully crushing your hand and/or yanking your arm.
It is one of the bluntest Power Moves out there: very basic and purely physical.

In the past, the early pick-up artists used to refer to these men as "AMOG", such as "alpha males of the group" (also read "*The Game*" and "*The Mystery Method*").

Courtesy of Donald Trump, it has recently gone mainstream also into politics and has one of the most infamous Power Moves.

You will mostly see it from aggressive *and* socially uncalibrated individuals.

Aggressiveness is often (but not always) uncalibrated because the rule of thumb is that the most socially savvy a person is, the more subtle the moves become.

People are more likely to give you an Alpha Male Handshake when:

- You're physically smaller and/or he feels physically stronger
- He feels socially powerful and/or "at home"
- There's an audience and you make a good rug for his social climbing
- He "needs" to get territorial (you're a threat to group dominance, connected to testosterone)

> **They see you as a threat but believe they can dominate you**

And notice that being on the receiving end of an Alpha Male Handshake can often mean you're a rather cool cat.
It's because there's nothing to gain in belittling individuals with zero social status.

But at the same time, the Alpha Male Handshaker doesn't think you pose a major opposition or he'd think twice before alpha-ing you.

In either case, **he wants to assert dominance over you.** And if you let him, he will.
But I guess you're not quite cool with that ;).

Ideally, you will see it coming in advance and prepare (see below), but let's start with when you're taken off guard.

Alpha Male Handshake at social gatherings

#1 One up him socially

It was 3 people including me in a semi-circle when the 4th guy, let's call him Smug, joined.

Smug is a buddy-buddy with the organizer and a friend of the guy to my right. With a brisk pace, sunglasses on albeit the sun was long gone, Smug barges in interrupting us all.

He was bigger and taller than all of us -albeit that's no major feat when it comes to me :)- and introduces himself with a bone-crushing handshake.

He doesn't catch my name and now comes the full Alpha Male Handshake: he yanks me in and tells me to repeat my name (what Allan Pease calls "socket wrencher" in *The Definitive Book of Body Language*).

I restate my name -a slight mistake from my side- as I dig in and try to pull him as well, but I'm not very successful.

The exuberantly happy atmosphere we had before he joined makes perfect ground for my counter-move, which comes as soon as we break the handshake.

The counterattack delivery

Oops I didn't see that coming
With a perfectly erect and open posture (posture is correlated to power) I look straight at what ought to be his eyes beyond the shades and say confidently and loudly:

> **Me:** ***"Hey man, I hope you don't wanna take me home or something"***

And I begin to laugh as a queue for everyone to join in, which they did (they'll always do if you have a good standing in the group).

The joke at his expense is a socially shrewd way of saying: I didn't like your move, you don't get away with it, and I'm making it clear for you (and everyone else) to know.

Having the group laughing is important because:

1. Everyone laughs *at* him and on *your* side, and
2. Makes it difficult for him to retort in a serious tone without breaking the mood

The joke worked exceptionally well because it also implied 'interests' that undermine masculine ideals -and me spurning the advance-. Very powerful.

Indeed as we all laugh he replies meekly and deflated:

> ***Him:*** *"No I just wanted to hear your name"*

Note: "just" is a defensive word, and "wanted to hear your name" is a friendly overture.
What a sudden change from the boisterous ahole of just a few seconds earlier :).

THE GREATEST PUNCH you NEVER THREW

If you executed the move well, **you've been a tremendous class act. Now be magnanimous in victory.**

High-quality people add value to their group and going on the offensive would not only make an unnecessary enemy but also bring down everyone's mood.

Treat him neutrally, and if he offers an olive branch later on, which is likely, go on and accept it.

All went well for our hero here.
But what if you can't think of a witty retort on the fly?

#2: Call out the Power Move

If you can't master a pungent retort, then get serious and call him out on his behavior.

It needs some confidence because you will, for a while, break the mood and raise tension.
Don't pull punches though because he went *physical*, so you going strong on the verbal level is a *must*.

Speak slowly and calmly, very matter of factly and say something like:

> **You:** "*hey man, you just yanked my arm like you wanted to harm me or something, (I feel) that's very aggressive and unfriendly*"

If he apologizes and backtracks accept the apology and go back to neutral.

But it's possible that he will hide pretending he was joking, or plainly deny it. Typical cover power move.

But you go on until he admits and repents, or else you let him walk all over you on the physical *and* verbal level.

Force the bully into light

Address his excuse briefly and push forward, like this:

> **You**: hey man, you yanked my arm like you wanted to harm me or something, that's very aggressive"
> **Him**: "dude, are you serious, I didn't hear your name (what's wrong with you)"
> **You**:"I know you didn't hear my name, and it still felt very aggressive, did you really mean it like that or not"
> or
> **Him:** "I'm just joking man, it's a party, we're having fun"
> **You**: "I know you're joking and it's really funny, but that was aggressive, did you mean it like that or not"

Note: By asking "did you, yes or no", you help him save face and make it easy for him to say "no I didn't mean it like that".

At this point, it's possible people in the group will intervene. It's a good thing but do NOT address them, you want *his* apologies, not a group talk show.

Keep insisting a couple of times until he backtracks.
Once he does, add: "cool man, glad to hear" and propose a quick toast so you end the interaction with a leading move.

And if he keeps denying?
This is the time to Meta-frame.

#3: Meta him

Meta-framing is a technique in which you explain, in lay terms, what's happening on the harder-to-grasp socio-dynamics layer.

A full meta-frame in this scenario would be something like this:

> "I'll tell you what you just did. You came in guns blazing interrupting us all. What you were doing was trying to assert your social standing as the alpha male of the group in a very juvenile fashion. I'm not a fan of that behavior, but whatever. Where I *do* draw the line though is when you disrespect people, and you have just done that by yanking my arm.
> I have given you the chance to apologize and start afresh on friendly terms but you keep hiding even though *everyone* here noticed your behavior. You don't want to excuse yourself, bad on you, but don't do that sh*t again with me.

Note: Refer to the group as if they all stand with you. You want them to mentally nod to you as you depict us VS him in the scenario.

Since it's quite long and people's attention span is short, a briefer version is preferable:

> Look man, I don't know if you were trying to show off as the alpha male or whatever rubbish, but what I do know for sure is that you yanked my arm like you wanted to rip it off. Everyone saw it and that's extremely rude. And that's a fact. And instead of apologizing you are hiding yourself. Whatever. But make sure you don't do that shit again with me.

You deliver it sternly but unemotionally. You want to look like you mean it and there's no fucking around, but you can't sound like he got under your skin.
If you deliver it even half properly, it's very powerful.
And then drop the mic.

People will side with you

If he apologizes, great.

You won!

If he still doesn't apologize, you brought his move into broad daylight and the group will be on your side (example where standing up to the bully made Noah the new group leader) because most people resent bullies and gratuitous aggression –parallels can be found in primates as well-.

Indeed science tells us people prefer value-giving leaders to aggressive ones, and when you antagonize the bully you're almost automatically the good leader.

The Alpha Male Handshake in the club

You cannot easily speak in a club or loud environment, so prevention is even more important.

Your best prevention tools will be to:

1. Learn to read body language for prevention
2. Becoming a man people don't want to tool

That wasn't certainly me years back in my first encounter with an Alpha Male Handshake.

I was trying to look all cool against the bar when a girl came over and brought me into her group -don't you just love Eastern European girls, albeit we can't exclude it was all a ploy to make his man jealous :)-.

#1 Body Language & Prevention

Possibly exhausted trying to look cool, and my inebriated mind not helping, I missed the clear signs of an Alpha Male Handshake coming.

Ant's usually not difficult to spot.
In my case, the meathead was not that different from the picture below :).

When an Alpha Male Handshake is in the cards here's a nice trick: don't engage.

Don't shake hands at all.

Just say “hey man” and put two fingers to your forehead.

Or “hey man, nice muscles” and pat him on the back.

And if you fall for it and don’t have the power to match… Boy, that’s gonna stretch your learning curve now :).

#2: Let it be

So here we are, you fell for it. He crushed your hand. And yanked you. A few times. And he’s not letting go.

Unless you do something, you’re kissing goodbye to any shred of good status in *this* group.

This is the key word here, because If you don’t care about the group then you can just leave.
Shake your head with a look of contempt, exhale, and gesture as if to say “how cheap”.

It won’t be easy rebuilding your self-esteem from there, but it’s great training. Mentally, develop yourself to decouple self-esteem from results.

And then let actions do the talking and go get better opportunities: the best revenge is massive success.

#3: Attack

If you care about this group or you know most people around, then you gotta consider your reputation.
And iIt means you gotta consider evening the odds.

I know, I know, you’re not that kind of person, he’s bigger, there are people… I know there are many excuses.

But worry not, you don’t need perfect execution and you don’t even need to “win”.
You simply need to send the message that you won’t allow anyone to walk all over you without returning (some) fire.

The Alpha Male Handshake in Politics

Preparation rules the rooster in politics more than anywhere else. Politicians all prepare, Macron openly admitted

it (not the smartest move, if you ask me).

Here are a few things you can do when facing the possibility of an Alpha Male Handshake:

- Get physically closer: you're not gonna lose your balance
- Place one hand on his shoulder
- Grab his hand with both your hands
- Slip your hand fully into his hand and put more power than you normally would and
- Smile with strong unwavering eye contact

Here are some successful real-life examples:

Alpha Male Handshake Contest #1 Trudeau VS Trump

Trudeau's hand on Trump's shoulder achieves two purposes:

1. Avoids being taken off balance by the yanking and
2. Strikes preemptively entering Trump's personal space.

Alpha Male Handshake contest #2 Rahmon VS Trump

Pure power in play: look how Tajikistan president played ball:

Alpha Male Handshake Contest #3 Macron VS Trump

Macron got burned on his first outing but learned the lesson: on round 2 he slips his hand fully inside Trump's hand, powers his grip, holds longer than expected, and adds strong eye contact to boot:

Read here the full details of Trump VS Macron.

Matching = Winning

When you neutralize a Power Move, YOU end up being on top.

It's because the Power Mover chose to use shenanigans, *not* you. He tried and *failed*, you matched and *succeeded*.

It's like Mohammad Ali famous whispering into his opponent's ear:

> **Ali: That all you got George?**

And, inherent to the power of matching and succeeding: who knows, maybe you had some left to spare in the tank.

Summary

You learned what an Alpha Male Handshake means, that you *have to* match or retaliate, and you learned some effective ways to do so.

A quick recap:

- Prevent it:
  - Radiate "friendly confidence" in a way that people won't wanna mess with you
  - Read body language and when an Alpha Male Handshake is likely to come:
    - match power, put a hand on their shoulder, and close physical distance or
    - don't offer a handshake

- If you get caught out:
  - Match and one-up him socially with a well-placed joke or
  - Call the move out in the open, get a deserved apology, *or* state that you don't accept that behavior
  - If no verbal counter-move is possible, end the handshake

Enjoy standing up for yourself.

Lowballing Psychology for Effective Negotiation (Case Study)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The lowball technique can be a fantastic way to get a bargain.

But it's a high-risk crapshoot because it annoys the sellers.

What to do then?

This article will walk you through the steps of a psychology-backed, field-proven lowball technique that works (almost) every time.

Lowballing is risky: if you overdo it you annoy the other party, lose social capital, and can even end the negotiation before it begins

Contents

- The Lowball Technique: A Walkthrough
- #1: Don't make enemies
- #2. Ask a Trojan Question
- #3. Make a Trojan Compliment
- #4 Leverage Question & Compliment
  - Lowball Technique: the result
  - More Negotiation Techniques
- SUMMARY
  - Update: 5 years later

The Lowball Technique: A Walkthrough

This HP Envy on eBay Classifieds was exactly what I wanted to first launch this website.

However, having quit work, I needed to save every single possible Euro.

I will show you now how I used the lowball technique to get it at half the price.

#1: Don't make enemies

Now what most people would do, and would do wrong, is to lowball right away.
Or, only marginally better, lowball after a neutral question that does nothing useful for you (ie. "*is it still available?*").

Let's first understand why it's not the ideal way.

Why you don't lowball

There's much truth in the saying that people don't buy products but they buy *people* (whom they like).

But most are much less careful with the other side of the equation: people also *sell* (to) people (whom they like).

And often we'd rather lose money than sell to people we don't like.

This notion has been scientifically proven in many experiments -most famously the "Ultimatum Game"– and by neuro-science MRI scans showing that lowball offers stimulate the part of the brain associated with disgust.

In a nutshell: **lowball offers disgust people and make them switch to "vendetta" mode.**

No wonder so many low-ball offers end up getting spurned, ignored, or, it happened too, provoking violent reactions.

The great book Never Split the Difference is also based on the principle of not making enemies.

What do you do then?

Enter the psychology of persuasion.

#2. Ask a Trojan Question

Photo by Tama Leaver

To set up the lowball offer ask what I've baptized the "Trojan Question".

A Trojan Question is a question where **you already *know* the answer will highlight defects and problems.**

If you're buying a house that needs renovation, for example, you don't attack by saying "but it needs renovation".

You ask if they *think* it needs renovation.
Defenses go down and when they say yes, you ask how much it could be. And now you're safely hinting at "ask price minus renovation costs".

Similarly, I ask if the computer has SSD memory, which I already know it hasn't:

> *Hello Philipp,*
> *Is the drive SSD or SDRAM?*
> *Many thanks,*
> *Lucio*

And as expected he replies it's not.

NOW, *because* it doesn't have the feature you were looking for and you are already engaged in a conversation -as opposed to starting with a lowball offer-, you won't raise nearly as much hostility.

And on your next message, you build rapport and prepare the ground for a second attack with a Trojan Compliment.

#3. Make a Trojan Compliment

A Trojan Compliment is a compliment hiding another critic.

This is the best way to safely keep criticizing the product by staying friendly.

If you're buying a house, you could say

> **You**: "oh OK, I see, renovations are expensive. Well, I like the location though. And it looks like the traffic noise is barely audible (said it on a Sunday, with traffic being 3x higher during weekdays ;)"

With a Trojan Compliment, you fully focus the seller's mind on the negatives of the product, making it much more likely he'll seriously consider your lowball offer.

In our example, it went like this:

> *OK I understand*
> *.But it's still a good machine, and it looks like it doesn't have any scratches.*
> *I would offer 280 and can meet you this week and pay.*
> *What do you think?*
> *Apologies for my terrible German and best regards,*
> *Lucio*

The passages explained:

- "doesn't have any scratches": Trojan Compliment as I could see a small one
- "ready to move on ASAP": benefit for him to sell it quickly (maybe he already got a new one?)
- "what do you think": makes the seller feel respected and in charge. You just made an offer but *he* is the final decision maker
- "280": even numbers are perceived as bigger and it's slightly more than half, with half being a major psychological threshold
- "Sorry for my terrible German": I'm stretching myself to communicate in your language. Mistakes can be endearing.

#4 Leverage Question & Compliment

He tells me:

- it has a small scratch -exactly what I was angling for- and
- he accepts my offer *if* I go pick it up

Bingo. I use both information for another price reduction, which now seems very fair:

> *Hmmm it's a bit far. But OK.*
> *Is it OK for you if we make 250 because I'll need to take time off from work? I can be there this week, how's your schedule?.*

And he accepts.

NOTE:

- I say it's far before accepting: I'm highlighting its concession, and concession is given calls for concessions back.
- "because" always make your point stronger and more likely to be accepted (even when "because" adds no real information).

Lowball Technique: the result

50% discount on an already fairly priced item + Mouse & Bluetooth dongle gift.

With the next move, sold an old laptop above its value and for 76 Euros moved from an old 2010 clunker running Vista to a sleek All In One touch screen quad-core 64-bit Windows 10 with remote.

All thanks to great lowball technique -and auction sales techniques-.

Edit:
And that was also, BTW, the computer with which I started this website. A website that two years later became a viable business and my main source of income.
Fond memories spring to mind :).

More Negotiation Techniques

Since then I have written a lot on the psychology of negotiation.
Check out these articles:

- **Manipulative negotiation techniques**
- **Negotiating An Unfair Refund Request**
- Best Negotiation Books (+ free summaries)

> 20 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics

SUMMARY

Results will differ from case to case, but you learned the main issues with the lowball technique and you certainly will improve your hit ratio by doing the following:

1. On your 1st message ask a Trojan Question -a question with a negative answer-
2. Make a Trojan Compliment -compliment hiding a critique-, make your lowball offer and be kind

3. Use his reply for further discounts/concessions and tell him you're ready to move

And use with ethics ;)

Update: 5 years later

5 years later and a successful business built later (this was TPM's first article I think) this is what that same PC sold:

For full disclosure, the buyer didn't pay in the end, but it's still telling about the possibility of buying well and selling well while highlighting the advantages.

How to Use FB To Recover From Disastrous First Date

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Are you just coming from a date with a girl you liked?

And… You know you bombed it?

I know how it feels.
And it's 10x more painful if you liked her… Or if you were close to having sex with her.

Trust me, I know.

In this post, I will show you how to recover from a bad date.

Contents

- Recovering from a bad date
  - Advantages of Facebook over text
  - Facebook & law of large numbers
- From bad date to sex : a step by step guide
  - Recovering from a bad date #1 acknowledge it
  - Recovering from a bad date #2: ignore her
  - #3: ping her
  - #4: plan your strike
  - #5: strike
  - Should You Even Try to Fix A Bad Date?
- SUMMARY

Recovering from a bad date

Recovering from a bad date with Facebook is all about keeping yourself in the circle, and mind, of the women you know.
And of the women, you had a poor first date with :).

A bad date is defined by a girl who is not replying or who already told you "no" to meeting again. In these instances you cannot chase for another date: she is not thinking highly of you, and the more you write her the more you'll become "that annoying weirdo who just doesn't let go".
What do you do, then?

Enter Facebook.
Facebook is your best weapon to let her see what a terrible mistake she made in writing you off. And the best part?

You do so *without* any chasing and posturing -well OK, a bit of posturing: always make sure you look good on pictures ;)-.

Advantages of Facebook over text

When the romantic road is bumpy and she's not replying or already said "no", Facebook -or social media in general- is superior to direct messages for a few reasons:

- **It's a low effort medium to "ping"**

You weren't being a stalker on her profile, her post just appeared on your feed and naturally inspired your witty comment.

A text message, on the other hand, is high effort because you intentionally took time for her and that says "I was thinking of you". And when she's *not* thinking of you (yet), that screams "stalk-ey".

- **You can get "gallant points"**

For wishing happy birthday, for example. Or sincerely congratulating her on the new job.
These are also amazing natural conversation starter. "Oh congratulations on the new move, how you feel about it".

- **You showcase your cool life**

She will see you enjoying your life. Or what a great artist you are. Or what adventurous trips you're taking. And she'll notice you *not* contacting her as you enjoy your life. Now get some women in that life and you're hot commodity. Did those women made you forget all about her? ⍰

- **It's border-less**

People move and travel a lot these days. I do too, and deal with women and people moving all the times. Add people on Facebook and never worry again about changing phone numbers or forgetting about each other.

In a nutshell, Facebook is less "you and I" and more social.
Normally you *want* more "you and I", but after a bad date you need more social: you need removing yourself from the "guy who wanted to have sex with me but didn't" and move into the "cool guy I know and might meet again in the future".

Facebook & law of large numbers

Just to be clear: there's no magic bullet to a poor impression. Your best shot is in person the first time out. And if you're can't meet again quickly, your chances plummet.

But, here's the silver lining, they don't go to zero.

And since you can use this strategy with all those unlucky women who don't become your lovers right away, you can effectively play the large numbers' game. Eventually, the number of "somewhat interested" women in your Facebook periphery will grow to the point that you'll have the chance of striking again with *some* of them.

As this was the case.

From bad date to sex : a step by step guide

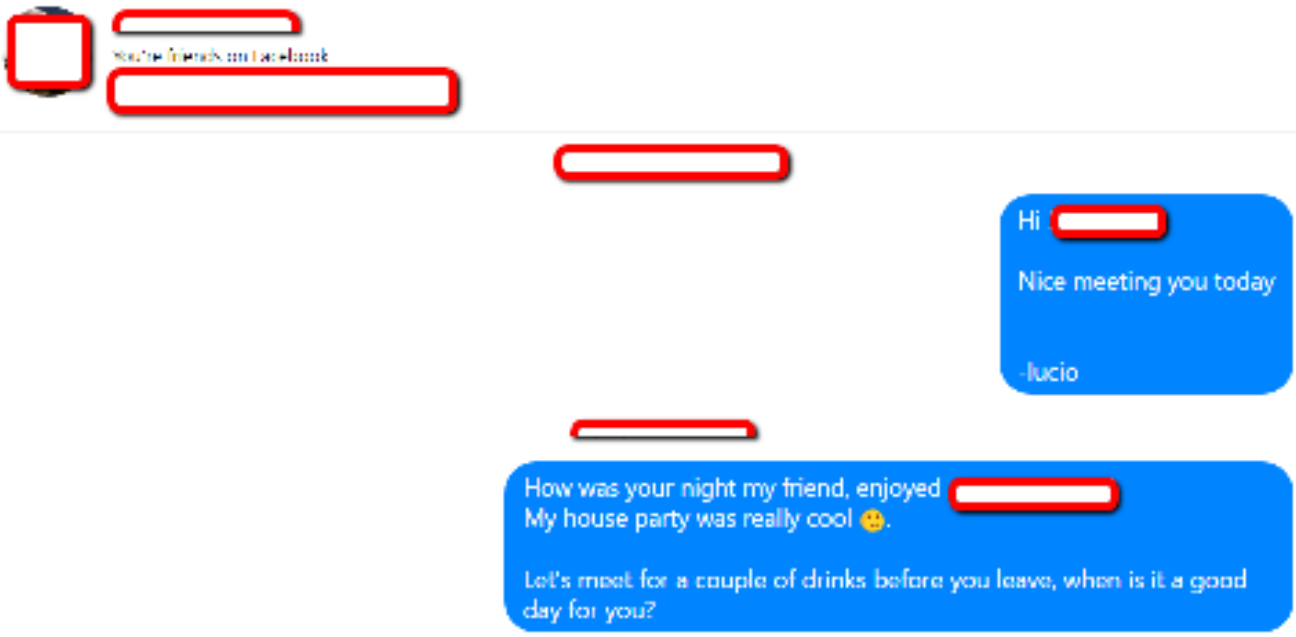
Recovering from a bad date #1 acknowledge it

You two didn't get along. Or you fucked up.
It happens.

In my case, we had very little words in common but I thought it was clear we were going back to my place.
So you can imagine how happy I was when, almost in front my place, she goes for the metro instead :).
I said she could only stay for a drink, it was just 5 minutes etc. etc. but nothing.

We exchanged contact anyway, albeit I was pretty sure that was going to be it, also because she was leaving town in a few days.

Indeed my two texts went unanswered:



As expected, no biggies.
Keep a learner and outcome independent mindset and.. Plenty of fish in the sea for your rod ;).

But… It's not over until the fat lady sings, as they say.
Follow the process below and you will maximize your chances of recovering from a bad date.

Recovering from a bad date #2: ignore her

Needless to say, you don't write anything anymore after two unanswered messages.
Don't even like any post or, God forbid, any of those sexy pic that got you so incensed for what you missed (mystery about your will feelings help you).

Just forget about her.

#3: ping her

Around 5 months later it's her birthday.

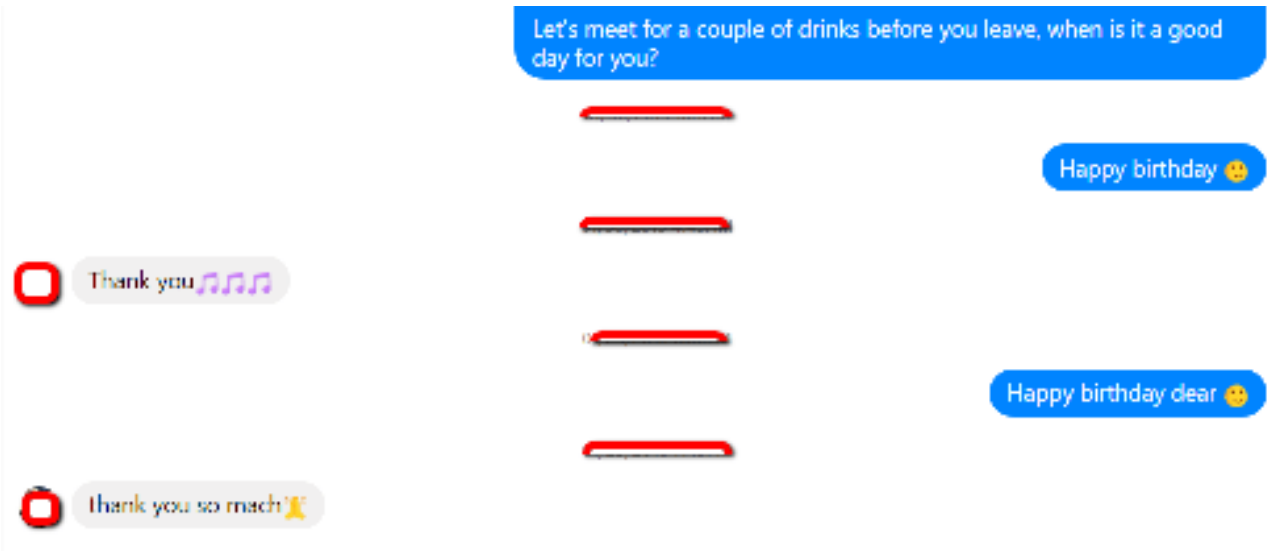
A birthday is a perfect occasion to re-send a message.

Everybody loves a good wish, and it's a natural and caring gesture *without* the kissing up factor -not like you were thinking of her, FB told you-.

Also, it's very likely you'll get a reply from a birthday wish.

Note:
a reply is *very* important. Texting after you already got a reply, even if just a "thanks", represent a positive precedent and puts you in an incredibly stronger position.

Power Move Tip:
If you're in different time zones, send the wishes before it's her birthday in her time zone or the day after, so that it will stand out.
Similarly, if you want to use her reply to restart a conversation and then ask her out, which works especially well if she replies "thank you, how are you", do it the day after, This way your message will not get lost in a barrage of incoming notifications.



Same thing for two years.

These were the first steps towards recovering from the bad first date.

In the meanwhile a couple of back and forth comments on some posts, mostly humorous, and some likes on some posts or picture not showing any skin -the idea is to induce liking by suggesting you are similar after all-.

#4: plan your strike

But you can't stay in the periphery all your life of course.

Your goal is to get her out with you again. The best way is to strike up a convo using a catalyst involving both of you.

Make it seem as if it "just happened", a coincidence, maybe even destiny: women love "just happened" and destiny.

Maybe she liked a picture of yours doing some sport, or she signed up to an event you're also planning to attend.

In my case, two years later, I was traveling to her city.
This is a typical scenario with travelers (and if you're serious about it, note down all women you wanna have another shot at with basic details and residence. Not that *I* do that though.. ⍰

Unluckily she was out of town, but that was our first real conversation since we first met. And it was clear by then she was fully ready to meet again (insert "*sics*" a bit all over :).

Hey, I'll be in [redacted] soon, what about we catch up for a drink

[redacted]

really?
when??
I'm in [redacted] Where are you going??

[redacted] And then we will see.
Weren't you living in [redacted] before?

Yes.I'm lived in [redacted] last year.But I have a lot of friend at [redacted]!!!
Go [redacted] to suit you

Ahaha why, [redacted] is better than [redacted]?

[redacted]

I love [redacted] 😍😍😍

Pleaes talk if there is to be a your help!!!

Note: this was the moment when I completely moved out of the "guy with whom it didn't work out" and entered into a more neutral territory -maybe even a slightly positive one given the bubbly replies-.

We exchange a few more messages and, a few months later… She's in my city.

#5: strike

That immediately gave us a reason to speak again, and now from a position of strength: I am a cool old friend she has a history with and destiny seem to be on our side to finally meet again. You can use some text flirting to your advantage here.

I sent her a message, we exchanged a few pleasantries and agreed on a time and place to meet.

[redacted], did you move to [redacted]?

Hello
Yes!!from last September

Crazazy! 😄
How do you like it

Are you still in Berlin lights???

Yeyyy
I like so much [redacted] ✨✨✨

Of course you do, you are perfect for [redacted] 😄
Let's get a drink/coffe one of these days

Great 👌

How is your schedule, when are you free

Every Sunday is day off.

Tomorrow evening I'm free ,and you??

We went for a beer, then back home. This time no late train to catch, and we closed the circle.

All thanks to (proper use of) Facebook.

Should You Even Try to Fix A Bad Date?

Recovering from a bad date can be such a daunting task that asking yourself if it's even worth it is a fair question.

You could use that time on something else.
And by moving on you might save yourself a lot of heartaches.

Because recovering from a bad date is difficult and, frankly, quite unlikely.

However, sometimes you do can.
This post showed one of the many ways you can do it.

So in the end whether or not you should try to fix a disastrous date, is up to you.

SUMMARY

Recovering from a bad date is a low probability situation (focus on texting right instead).

There's not so much you can do directly as that will come across as chasing.

Recovering from a bad date with Facebook then is all about reversing the odds *indirectly*, by staying in touch and showing your attractive side without chasing.

Like this:

1. Ignore her completely -You're a busy man and moved on-
2. Wish happy bdays and drop a rare, witty comment -You have no hard feelings but you're still around!-
3. Have an interesting profile, have women around highlighting you're in demand -Oops, are they prettier than her?-
4. Find an exciting, sudden event bringing the two of you near again and propose a drink

What To Do When Someone Mispronounces Your Name

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

What to do when someone pronounces your name wrong?

It depends.

But what you do *matters*.

It can make the difference between being a confident, respected individual… Or someone to whom people pay little attention.

This article will teach you how to correct people pronouncing your name wrong in a powerful, confident way.

Contents

- Power Dynamics of Mispronouncing Names
  - Carefree Environment
  - Formal environments
- When Someone Asks YOU to Pronounce Their Name Right
  - Mindset: look at the bigger picture
  - SUMMARY

Power Dynamics of Mispronouncing Names

Some people mean well and mispronouncing your name is simply a mistake.

But some people do not care about your name because they believe you are "inferior".
Some people might even mispronounce your name on purpose, just to show they can slight you because they are more powerful -also read office power moves-.

How to recognize people who are simply making a mistake from those who are doing it as a power move?

Well, one cue is the environment.

People mispronouncing your name after you meet them the first time at a bar is not the same as at a business meeting.
And people who are otherwise friendly are not the same as people who are being socially aggressive.

This gives us four different scenarios:

- Intention of the interlocutor (Warm VS Vicious)
- The environment (Carefree VS Official)

	Carefree	Official
WARM	LET IT GO	EXPLAIN
VICIOUS	TIT FOR THAT	THIS MEANS WAR

Let's see what these mean.

Carefree Environment

Carefree environments are informal places to let one's hair down, socialize, and have a good time. No-follow brief encounters also fall under this category.

Examples are house parties, bars, check-in counters, and cafes where they call your name.

Warm People: Let The Mistake Slip

When your interlocutor mispronounces your name without malice and you're in a carefree environment, it's best to let it slip or, at most, correct it warmly.

If they still get it wrong the second time, your name is either too complex or they just can't do it.
Let it go, it's not that important, really.

Focus on adding value

At bars and parties, until proven otherwise, conversations are fleeting and for a good time's sake.

Getting stuck up on correct pronunciation so early makes you sound very self-centered and with an entitlement mentality.

Your focus should indeed be on adding value, getting to know them, rewarding them, and connecting.

Basically, don't demand correct name pronunciation, but focus on becoming the kind of person that people want to get the name pronounced right.

And here's a nice bonus on not correcting: people like people whose name is easy to pronounce (and Cialdini said the same).

Bottom line:

In a friendly environment and when you have just met someone, don't pretend perfect pronunciation from people

you've just met

Vicious People: Hit Back

A few times you will meet people pronouncing your name wrong on purpose.

This is a "softer" version of an Alpha Male Handshake where your interlocutor is trying to further his social standing by one-upping you.

It's a similar game of pretending to remember your name wrong.
Here's an example from The Aviator with the "cigarette girl":

When people purposefully shun your correct name pronunciation, you must react.
If you don't, you are confirming that yes, they can slight you, that they dominate you, and that you are the subordinate.

Here's what you can do:

- **Do the same with their name**

Human beings have a tendency to kiss up to bullies.

Resist that at all costs!

And as soon as they pronounce your name wrong, do the same with their name.
Just make sure you do it neutrally rather than with a child-like butt-hurt attitude.

- **Ignore and cut them out**

Tell them "nice to meet you" in a very standoffish way. If it's a group, talk to someone else.

If it's just the two of you, try this: ask them a question, act bored as they reply, then leave without replying -or if you really wanna exaggerate, leave while they're speaking-.

Bottom Line:

if someone pronounces your name wrong on purpose, it's a power move and you should hit back.

Formal environments

Formal environments are business meetings, workplace interactions, 'high society', or job interviews.

You still shouldn't care but here's the kicker: in an "official" situation you should correct people pronouncing your name wrong anyway (below is why).
And of course, you will also use this occasion to show your social skills by correcting them warmly and tactfully:

Warm People: Correct Them Warmly

You will correct them in a warm way.
Such as, in a way that is more about explaining rather than fixing their mistake.

For example:

> ***Her:*** *"It's great to meet you, Lusio."*
> ***You:*** *(with warm body language) "Thank you so much. Lucio is the Spanish pronunciation, my name is Lucio, and it's great to meet you!*
> ***Her:*** *"Oh sorry about that!"*
> ***You:*** *"No worries at all! It's good to be here, thank you for inviting me Kate"*

Note: some social skills coach out there advise to correct people indirectly.
Such as, to not correct them directly but to let them understand they've done a mistake by using your own name correctly pronounced.
Like for example "*hello Kate, my name is Lucio*".

That's not good because everyone saw what you did and people might think that you don't have the courage to address issues directly.

That's very passive-aggressive and comes across as sneaky.
Don't hide. Be warm, but direct.

Why You Should Correct People

You correct people mispronouncing your name because of the message it sends about you.

The message is that you are a person who expects to be treated with respect and that, likely, will do the same to others.

Imagine the other way around: an interviewer pronounces your name wrong.
And you let it go.

Later she finds out she's been mispronouncing your name the whole time.

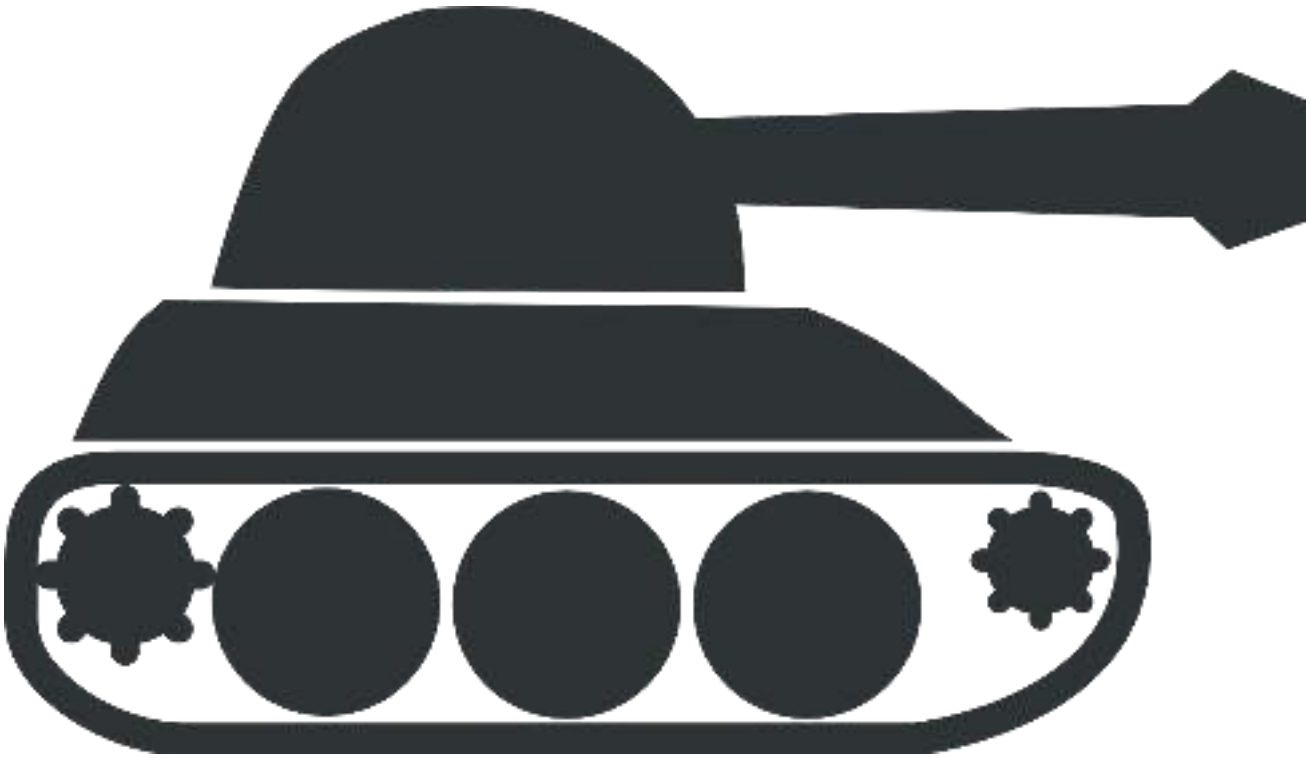
Ouch!

First of all, she feels bad.
And second, it makes her wonder if you didn't have the courage to correct her in the first place.
Or maybe you are just a bit sloppy.

Either case: you come across poorly.

Nip it in the bud, and correct it right away.

Vicious People: Let The (Social) War Start



This category is for bad bosses, terrible neighbors, in-laws, long time frenemies whom you already corrected many

times but still keep mispronouncing your name day in and day out like they couldn't care less.

Note of caution: only a tiny minority of people fit into this category.

So before you start considering people as "enemies" ask yourself:

- Is my name just too complex for them?
- Did I correct them and do they know I care?

If the former, give them more slack. If the latter, make yourself clearer.

But if you made yourself clear and they still snub you, they're basically insulting you every time they mispronounce your name.

And you can't let that happen.

And if you think the below solutions are "too much" because he's your boss, or your in-law, or whatever you have, then it means you are *endorsing* their point of view and you are offending yourself.

Please don't do that yourself and do one of these instead:

- **Issue a last call**

If you've corrected them but were a bit weak, make one last extra clear effort:

> **You**: James, I realize my name is complicated but we've known each other for while now and it makes me feel insulted and demeaned that you keep pronouncing my name wrong. My name is Lucio, not Lusio. Please call me Lucio"

- **Don't reply when they call you**

Do not reply when they call you with the wrong name.

- **Correct them every single time**

Every single time they pronounce your name wrong, you correct them. Not angrily, but coldly. And keep dealing emotionlessly with them.

- **Threaten tit for tat**

Tell them, in private, that if they keep butchering your name you will start doing the same with their names, effective today. If they don't get their act right, start.

- **Implement tit for tat**

if none of the above works and they continue to show disrespect, start mispronouncing their name *every* time you need to speak to them.

- **Cut them out of your life**

You don't need in your life people who can't show you a bare minimum of respect.
Let them slowly but surely disappear from your life.

When Someone Asks YOU to Pronounce Their Name Right

Sometimes it can be you who is pronouncing their name wrong.

In that case, you might end up in a situation where someone gets hung up on you getting their name right.

Consciously or subconsciously, that's a power move. **Avoid trying too hard and repeating their names many times over you get it right.** Unless you're an advanced player, this behavior is too high effort and violates the law of least ocial effort. Such as: the more effort you expend compared to them, the more power you lose.

You have just met, they have no right to demand so much effort from you.

Just look at how Deniro does it in a similar situation:

Mindset: look at the bigger picture

Taking care of getting a name right *does* show respect, and it's what high EQ people do (read: *Emotional Intelligence* and *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*).

But many otherwise good people are not high on EQ.
That does not make me bad, just a bit clueless when it comes to people and building rapport (or emotional connection).

Basically, as yourself this: does he mispronounce your name but he's otherwise kind, respectful, and caring?

Then why are you so hung up on pronunciation?

Your name does not *define* you.

Sure, you care because of the power dynamics and because you have life ambitions and goals.
But you shouldn't care because it hurts your ego.

If someone steals your identity tomorrow they don't steal your soul.
People with an anti-fragile ego and healthy self-esteem shouldn't get hung up on flawless pronunciation.

I'll give you one funny example of never correcting a mispronunciation in an otherwise positive and caring relationship:

We were sitting on a bench - albeit not in an open field :)-. I liked her, and she liked me too.

It was not much after the one-month mark, but it had been passionate. And she was already giving the usual hard time girls give you when they want a more serious commitment.

The funny thing was, she had been pronouncing my name wrong since we first met and I had never corrected her. Never saw the need and, plus, I found the "new name" amusing.

As we have "the conversation", I tell her we'll keep it the way it is until the end of the year because we both feel it's great and then we'll decide. She agrees.

And then I add “and by the way, my name is Lu-cio, you want a relationship and you don’t even know my name”.

Long, speechless pause.
That was a fun one :).

SUMMARY

You learned that how you react to people pronouncing your name wrong depends on their intentions and the situation.

Follow these steps to know what’s the appropriate reaction:

1. Make sure you clear out *your* ego issues first
2. If they’re friendly, let it go in informal scenarios and correct warmly in official settings
3. If they’re Power Moving, mispronounce their name as well or cut them off

Social Intelligence: Summary & Review (Daniel Goleman)

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

In "*Social Intelligence*" (2006) Goleman states that humans are purely social animals, wired to connect, and we can only be happy and successful when we learn to bond and get along with other people

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Summary
- CONS
  - Review

Exec Summary

- For a happy and fulfilled life master the art (and science) of social relationships
- You can control your feelings

Summary

Daniel Goleman is a journalist who contributed for twelve years to The New York Times.

He is most famous for having coined the concept of "Emotional Intelligence", a construct that is controversial in psychology but that has caught on with the general population.

Daniel Goleman is also the author of "*Emotional Intelligence*" and "*Primal Leadership*".

#1. The High & Low Road

Daniel Goleman argues there are two different parts of the brain which he refers to as the low road and the high road.

- **Low Road**

The low road sets his camp in the amygdala and works at a higher speed based on raw feelings we infer from other people.

It is responsible for the "first impressions", which we form unconsciously noticing.
This is similar to what Malcolm Gladwell also discusses in his bestseller "*Blink*".

- **High Road**

The high road, you guessed it, is instead the conscious, thinking part of the brain.
Now the interesting thing is that there's an interplay of these two roads.

Use the High Road to control The Low Road

The low road can unconsciously make us sad or scared. But we can then consciously use the high road to override the low road feelings and sensations with whatever we prefer.

Goleman gives us the example of a woman who was sad after seeing a picture of a funeral, only to switch to happiness when she was told to think it was a wedding instead.

And the greatest the activity in the pre-frontal cortex, the more muted the amygdala was during the appraisal, which means: the higher the high road speaks, the more it takes away the low road mic.

#2. How to erase your fears

Not only we can override the low road, but we can also change it.

Our memories are in part reconstruction: every time we recall them, the brain rewrites them. And *how* our brain rewrites them is correlated to our *current* concerns, understanding, and feelings.

So If when you recall a memory you have a flare-up of the same fear, then that fear will deepen.

But if you put yourself in a calm, confident state, the fear loosens its grip, and the memory is re-encoded with less power over you.

My Note:
this is the same concept Tony Robbins teaches.

#3. How to control the Low Road

This is the essence of exposure therapy: if you relax and then confront your fears and repeat them, you will reach a point where you will overcome your fear.

MEANING: you can get rid of unhelpful feelings!

#4. Mam VS Woman's Brain

Under stress a woman's brain releases more oxytocin, bringing women to seek out people interactions, which in turn releases more oxytocin.

Men are the opposite: under threats, they tend to go alone.

Also, women place positive relationships as the main source of their happiness while for men independence and a sense of personal growth are more important than relationships.

#5. Power & emotional pull

In a relationship, the party with less power will converge emotionally toward the party with more power.

I picture it a bit like a gravitational pull: two celestial bodies will influence each other, but the bigger one will exert a stronger force on the smaller one.

Also, Goleman says, people in the relationship have different power in different realms and there's usually a tacit agreement on who's got more power on which subject.

This is important, and something which you can indeed probably see in your own relationships.

#6. Mimicking does not create rapport

You probably heard the trick of mimicking the other person's body movements and gestures to make them like you, right?

Bet you thought you could do that on your dates and make him/her like you, right? ⍰

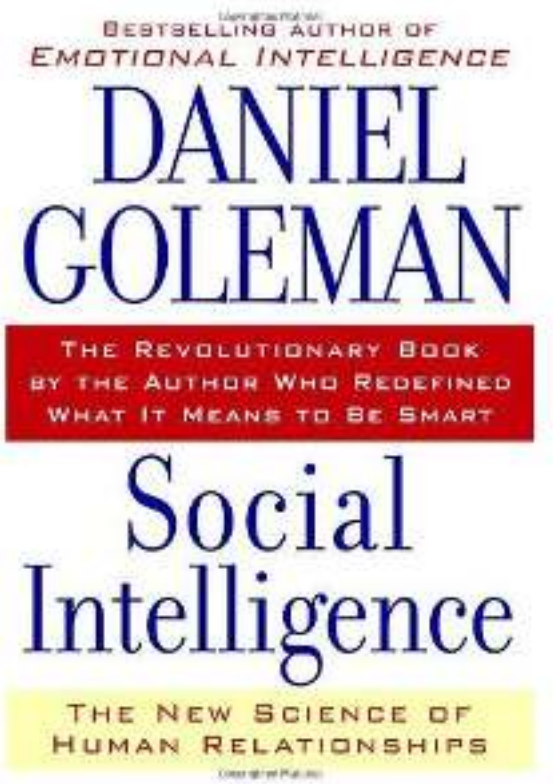
Well, Goleman affirms that intentionally mimicking the other person's movements does *not* create rapport by itself and can actually feel off (if you want to get close to someone, you will likely mimic body language unconsciously anyway).

#6. How to create rapport

Goleman then affirms the 3 ingredients to create rapport are:

- Mutual attention ;

- Shared positive feelings;
- A well-coordinated nonverbal duet



CONS

- **A bit basic**

Social Intelligence by Daniel Goleman deals with many topics (read below) without always going as deeply as I had hoped

- **Scatterbrained**

Too many topics for one book.
Ask me a year from now "Have you read *Social Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman" and I'll tell you "yeah, and it was good.. But, honestly… I can't tell you exactly what topics it covers".

- **No new ground broken**

If you are interested in psychology and people, many topics in *"Social Intelligence"* will be either common sense or familiar -Hedonic treadmill; Ultimatum Game-.

Review

Social Intelligence is a good book, I enjoyed it.

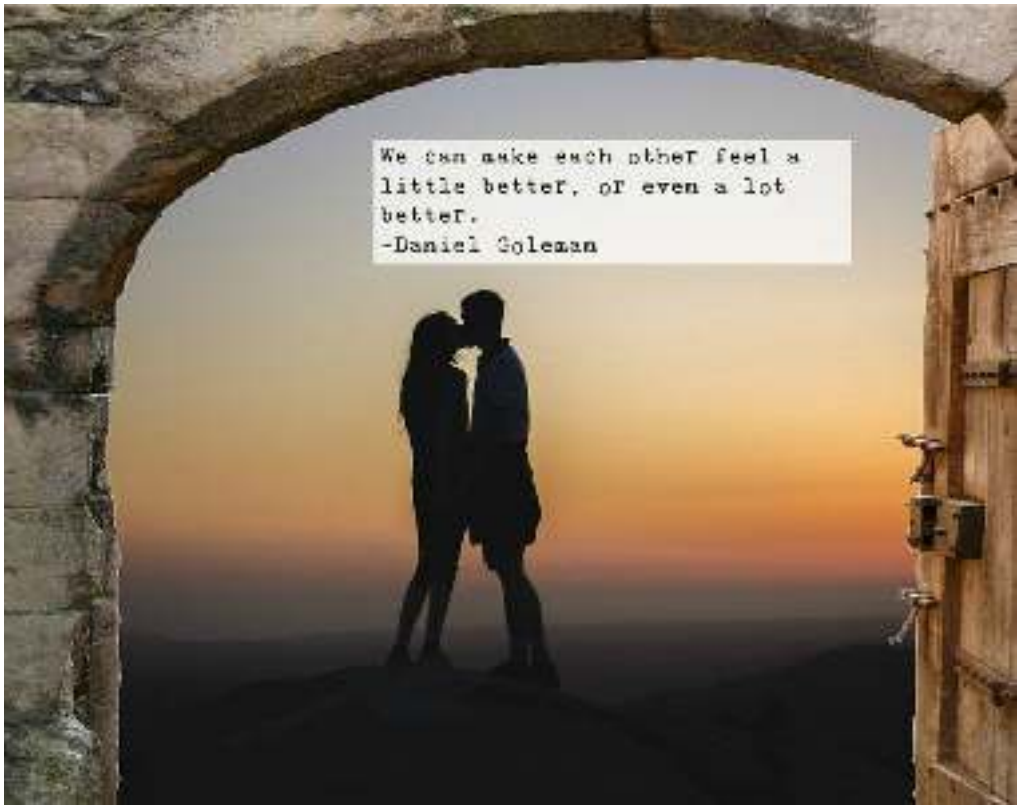
I did particularly love the:

- Science to back the importance of human relationships
- How we can influence the low road (subconscious)
- How we can use the high road (conscious) to override unconscious reactions

That's powerful stuff and I actually prefer it to its more famous sibling *Emotional Intelligence*.

If you are looking into *Social Intelligence* I can highly encourage you to take a look around this website which is all about increasing people's social intelligence.

If you find the golden nuggets above insightful, go ahead and **get the whole book here**.



Mindset Summary: The Power of a Growth Mindset. And When to Avoid (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Mindset (2006) delves into the psychology of a growth mindset. Researcher Carol Dweck explains the difference between a fixed and a growth mindset, why a growth mindset is superior to a fixed one, and provides some pointers on how to develop a growth mindset.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Criticism
  - CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Fixed Mindset people believe their qualities can't be changed while growth mindset people believe they can improve
- Growth mindset people work harder, embrace challenges and maximize their potential
- Growth mindset people build better relationships, better companies and lead better lives

Summary

About the author:
Carol Dweck is a psychology researcher at Stanford University.

Most of her career research is based on the growth/fixed mindset construct, and at the time of writing much of the research in this field bears her name.

Chapter 1: The Mindsets

Carol Dweck quickly outlines the major theory of the book:

- **Fixed mindset**

Fixed mindset people believe their qualities are set at birth and carved in stone.
You are who you are, and there isn't much you can do about it.

Characteristics such as intelligence, personality, and creativity are fixed traits, and you can't change them or develop them.

- **Growth mindset**

A growth mindset comes from the belief you can cultivate your qualities through effort.
Yes, people differ greatly – in aptitude, talents, interests, or temperaments – but everyone can change and grow through application and experience.

Chapter 2: Inside the Mindsets

The two different mindsets lead to very different experiences and developments in life.

Consequences of a fixed mindset

When you have a fixed mindset, the following will happen to you:

- **You will not grow much over time**

People who believe their qualities are fixed will not grow much because, of course, there is nothing to develop when you believe your qualities are fixed: you either have it, or you don't.

Many people with a fixed mindset believe indeed that high effort equals low ability. Skilled people think, use, and rely on their innate skills and should *not* need to work hard at all.

- **You will mostly be busy defending your ego**

Fixed mindset people do work hard as well though.
They work hard to protect their egos by avoiding challenges and boosting their self-esteem through validation seeking.

This is because your qualities, being fixed, determine who you are.
Thus fixed mindset people often build their ego around their qualities, which makes them horrendously dependent on results and people's judgment.

Performing poorly means you're bad, performing well and receiving compliments means you're great.

Have you ever noticed people battling to be "right?" That's a hallmark of a fixed mindset.
People looking at how many likes their picture got on Facebook? Major fixed mindset component.

The ones plastering their social profiles with "I don't care what people think" and "I'm me, fuck the world"? Mostly a front hiding a fixed mindset.

- **Your results define you (=are a slave to results)**

People who believe in fixed traits also have an urgency to succeed, because there's no "getting better", no "testing yourself". Succeeding means you're good, losing means you're bad.

And when they do succeed, they often feel a sense of superiority, because success means their fixed traits are better than others.

- **You spend all your efforts making excuses**

When people with a fixed mindset lose they try to “repair their self-esteem” rather than learning from their failures.

Failures indeed often take the shape of denying, blaming someone else, looking for those who are worse off, making excuses, or, of course, never competing at all.

Never competing at all feels safe for fixed-mindset people because a great fear for them is that of failing and being left without excuses.

Consequences of a growth mindset

People with a growth mindset are the complete opposite:

- **Major growth over time**

As opposed to a fixed mindset, a growth mindset makes you concerned with improving, which leads to major growth and development over time.

- **Anti-fragile ego**

In the growth mindset, failure can, of course, be a painful experience, but failure does not define you.
Failure is a problem to be faced, learned from, and overcome, which makes you more anti-fragile.

Also read: how to develop an antifragile ego.

- **You become grittier and more determined**

The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even when it’s not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset, as well as outlined by Angela Duckworth in *Grit*.

Indeed the growth mindset allows people to love what they’re doing and continue doing so *in the face* of difficulties and struggles.

- **You become more outcome-independent**

While the fixed mindset is all about the outcome -because if you fail you’re a failure- the growth mindset allows people to value what they’re doing regardless of the outcome.

Chapter 3: The Truth About Ability and Accomplishment

Carol Dweck says that fixed mindset people tend to become “scarred” after failures because they interpret failure as a lack of ability.

And since they don’t think they can grow any skill, they will avoid trying again in the future.

A growth mindset person instead is both more open to new challenges and more open to trying again and again after failures.
They enjoy testing themselves and going beyond their limits and, consequently, end up growing their skills and talents.

The author, being a scholar herself, discusses how different mindsets also affect people in school and in their studies.
People with a fixed mindset tend to study with the test in mind, they simply want to do good in the test.

People with a growth mindset instead study with life in mind: they want to learn and take the skills that will make

them successful *outside* of school.

> **Fixed mindset work to prove their abilities and protect their egos, while the growth mindset people work for life**.

Chapter 4: Sports and the Mindset of a Champion

In chapter 4 of *Mindset,* Carol Dweck goes into some famous sports personalities.

I believe one of the keys of this chapter is that many people look at top athletes and think they are extremely talented and were born with and gifted with great genes and skills.

Carol Dweck instead says that the truth, most of the time, is that at the very least that talent was backed by a huge amount of work. And, many times, top athletes didn't even show great talent when they were younger.

Carol Dweck also provides some very interesting examples of some top athletes who failed to reach their full potential because of fixed mindsets (Pedro Martinez and John McEnroe).

Growth mindset athletes instead were able to see failures as opportunities to learn and that allowed them to get closer to their full potential and to bounce back from major losses and setbacks in their careers.

Chapter 5: Business Mindset and Leadership

Carol Dweck then delves into examples of growth and a fixed mindset in business. Skilling for Enron and Iacocca for Chrysler are examples of fixed mindsets.

Skilling used to say that his genius defined and validated the whole company, and created value.
Iacocca would not allow skilled and empowered managers around him to weigh in with their opinions so that he could look -and feel- like the smartest man in the company.

As for many other successful fixed mindset people, Skilling and Iacocca believed their talents made them superior to others by birthright.

The Example of growth mindset CEOs are Jack Welch, author of "Winning", Lou Gerstner from IBM, and Anne Mulcahy from Xerox.

Chapter 6: Relationships and Mindsets in Love

Relationships are another extremely interesting realm to explore how the two different mindsets lead to very different experiences.

Carol Dweck reminds us that **fixed mindset people perceive rejections as a reflection of their flawed personality**.
It's a very painful rejection that hurts them at the core of who they are, so they can lash out when rejected and can sometimes plot revenge.

People with a growth mindset instead are more able to detach themselves from the ebb and flows of relationships and use them as feedback mechanisms to actually improve that relationship.
And when rejected, they are more able to move on.

Also very interestingly, which I have noticed personally, Carol Dweck says that people with a fixed mindset tend to see relationships more as battles and they will try to exploit the mistakes and shortcomings of their partners to feed their own ego.

Chapter 7: Where Do Mindsets Come From?

Carol Dweck says that teachers have a strong influence in shaping whether or not we will grow with a fixed or

growth mindset.

For example, teachers who compliment students for being smart to reinforce a fixed mindset.
And teachers who reward students for doing well because they worked hard help instill a growth mindset.

Also telling pupils they are very fast learners can nudge them towards a fixed mindset as when in other fields they might justify not learning fast enough in other fields with the idea they are not talented enough.

My Note:
These findings have been highly criticized and failed to replicate.

Chapter 8: Changing Mindsets

After having taken on the whole journey of how kick-a** it is to sport a growth mindset, Carol Dweck finally dedicates the last chapter to how you can go from a fixed to a growth mindset.

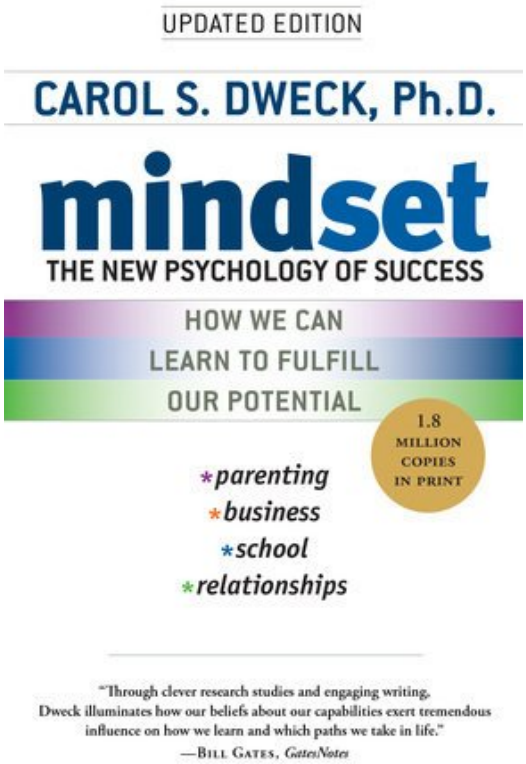
But unluckily I found the book a bit lacking here, so I will add my own research on it:

1. Hear your fixed mindset voice ;
2. Recognize you have a choice
3. Talk back to the fixed voice with a growth one (a mentor I follow repeats “I can do it” 3 times in his head every time someone says some disempowering BS)
4. Choose the growth mindset.

Also, I found useful:

1. Read and acknowledge brain plasticity: fixed mindset is plainly unscientific
2. Fixed mindset is *fear of looking bad*. Re-enact your worst moments while feeling great. Understand you are stronger *because* of them
3. Change your identity: a great way is by building the habits of the person you want to be
4. It’s all practice: I find it useful to always look at things as practice. Worry not about the final results, it’s all practice

Update: I dedicated a whole post to developing a growth mindset.



Criticism

Mindset has drawn some constructive criticism over time.

You can read more in these two posts:

- Pop-psychology myths
- The replication crisis in psychology

However, in a nutshell, it's this: Carol Dweck might have a bit embellished her results.

Replicating her findings is difficult and instilling a growth mindset in pupils might not be as easy as the book seems to suggest.

Future studies suggested that the benefits of a growth mindset may depend on several factors, and growth mindset interventions seem to produce modest or variable results.

Finally, there is no mention on the advantages of a fixed mindset.
For example, **I had a fixed but positive mindset circa my mental abilities and it served me incredibly well.**

However, I still found *Mindset* incredibly usel both to my self-development, and to better learn and read people.

CONS

- **No information on getting a Growth Mindset?**

The book gives you a fantastic overview of what a fixed and a growth mindset are. And you are itching to become a growth mindset person. But then… It doesn't tell us how.

- **Manicheistic Mindsets?**

Mindset is strong on the dichotomy of fixed/growth. Yet, I doubt most people are fully on the extremes: what about all the mixes? Carol Dweck does say there are mixes, but I would have liked to read more about it.

- **Don't go extreme! Powerful men must defend their competence!**

Some popular self-help gurus profess the adoption of an extreme growth mindset.
In a way, that's good… As long as you don't do so publicly, you lose authority.

Learn more about the law of optimum balance and when to avoid a growth mindset:

Learn here:

- **When NOT to display a growth mindset**

> Growth Mindset Power Dynamics

Review

Mindset is a great book for personal self-development.

For many people with a strong fixed mindset, I'd even say that it's a foundational book and an important step towards a more empowered mind -and life-.

It helped me develop in three important ways:

- **Empowered Life**

It explains how a fixed mindset caps potential and potentially condemn us to a life of ego validation and excuse-making.
And it will show the way out of it with a growth mindset.

- **Psychological Understanding**

Mindset opened a further door to understanding human psychology.
Many of the games of excuses and blaming from fixed-mindset folks made more sense.
It's because they thought that being bad at anything meant *they* were bad.

- **Extraordinary is… Doable**

A growth mindset also takes away top performance from the realm of "out of this world" and "genius", and places it within reach of each one of us (willing to put in the work).

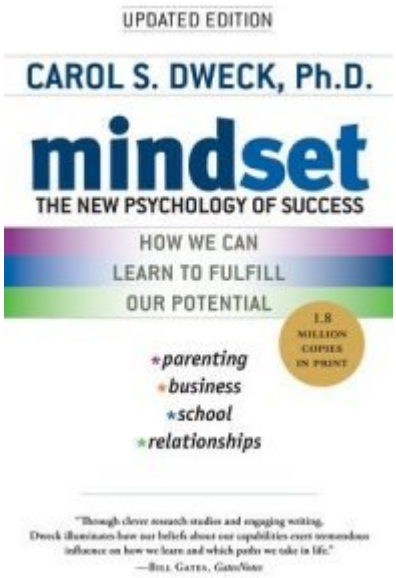
Because here's the secret nobody wants you to know: every single top performer busts his ass. And they're no better than you, and if you put in the work *you* will do just as extraordinarily.

See more great books to read or **get Mindset here**.

And don't forget this important exception for ambitious men:

- **Avoid a growth mindset with these people,** or you lose status, respect, and attraction

Mindset Summary: The Power of a Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck)



A seminal book which will take you to a whole new level.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/mindset-carol-dweck/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

What To Do When People Pretend They Don’t Know You

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

What do you do when someone pretends they don’t know you or don’t remember you?

Someone not remembering you or you not remembering someone is a common occurrence in social life.
And it’s a crucial moment of social power dynamics that will heavily impact your social value, status, and power.

Get it right, and you’ll take your status to the next level.

By the end of this post, you will know exactly how to deal with these sticky social situations.

Contents

- 1. Don’t Remind Them!
  - Most People Instinctively… Do It Wrong
  - Why you don’t remind them how you met
- 2. Prevent the value loss: let them remember you first
- 3. Move on quickly to avoid any power loss
- 4. Even the score and move on
- 5. Pretend you don’t know them
- Two Different Cases of Forgetfulness
- SUMMARY

1. Don’t Remind Them!

First rule.

No matter if they are pretending not to remember you or they really don’t, you do not remind them.

Not if you care about status, respect, and advancing at life, at least.

Or, actually, even if you don't care.
Just respect yourself a bit more, and handle forgetful people properly.

Most People Instinctively... Do It Wrong

This popular post of an otherwise likable chap is the perfect example of what most do wrong when people don't remember you.

Basically, when his conversation partner doesn't seem to remember him he explains all the details of when, where, and how they met.
Nice way of setting yourself up for a triple crown of failure :).

He even *suspects* some people "forget" him on purpose, and he's *still* playing into their hands and giving all his power away -head-wall banging-.

Explaining all the details is like saying:

> ***Sub-communication**: I remember everything about you because you're so cool and higher value. And I am obviously so insignificant and low value that you don't remember anything about me.*

It's pleading, it makes you look insecure, and it slots you as the lower-value man in that relationship.

Why you don't remind them how you met

The general principles are:

1. Remembering means caring
When someone remembers you well, it's a way of sub-communicating that they liked you. Or that you were important to them and that they cared. Or a mix of all of them.

In either case, it's a positive gesture.

2. *Not* remembering means *not* caring
When someone does *not* remember you they are sub-communicating you were not important enough.

3. The high effort ot reminding disempowers you
All that effort also violates the law of least social effort, which states that the more effort you invest compared to others, the more power you lose.

4. Pretending not to remember means power move
Pretending not to remember instead means they are willingly trying to make you look bad. Or trying to make themselves look superior.

It's social climbing in groups.
Or plain disrespect and the sign of a socially belligerent attitude.

When you keep reminding yourself of how where and when you met you keep caring for someone who doesn't care about you.
Socially, you are *giving* value while they are *taking* value from you. Which is the definition of kissing up.

As an example, take a look at this scene from Play the Game. Who do you think is chasing who here:

Notice that as he reminds her one issue becomes obvious in their relationship: she didn't care enough to remember.
On the other hand, he remembered everything about her, thus communicating it was a big thing for him.
He is heavily invested, she is not.
And now he brought all those issues to the surface, where they are obvious to everyone.
If he had pretended not to remember either, it would have been a neutral interaction instead.

And now the big question is: what do you do then?

2. Prevent the value loss: let them remember you first

If you know someone but they haven't said hi yet, you can approach them warmly and give them time to remember.

For example, imagine you know someone, you see each other… But they don't say "hi".

Then you can make the first move and make it all natural:

> **You** *hey man how you doing*
> **Him**: *hey hi there good, how's your night going*
> **You:** *good good, I think we know each other. Were you at Sarah's party by any chance?*
> **Him**: *yeah I was, I think I remmeber you know…*

And done.
Now it's natural, socially smooth, and nobody loses any power.

Notice that you say "I think".
That's a strategic move.
"I think" implies you barely remember and are not sure, so you don't put him on some pedestal.

Plus, you lower the risk for your social value in case he pretends he doesn't remember.

Or alternatively, you can start with an implied "I think":

> **You:** *hey man you seem like a known face…*

And then let them make the move.

Prevention is a very defensive mindset though and I wouldn't recommend it.

One because you should greet people you know warmly, and second… Are you really gonna pussyfoot afraid someone might not remember you?

Exactly…

3. Move on quickly to avoid any power loss

The principle is:

The faster you move, the less you linger on the power loss, and the smaller the loss.

Example:

> **You**: *Hi, how have you been, I think we've met before*
> **Her**: *hey hi, not sure I remember, I'm really bad with people*
> **You**: *I think some time ago at some party, but it was quick. How are you doing anyway*

Let's analyze it a bit better:

HER
Note here that she is very warm. She'd be in a position to "take advantage of you", but instead she's extending an olive branch. With that "I'm really bad with people" she's indeed slightly demeaning herself and taking the blame. She's socially attuned and possibly "protecting your feelings".

YOU
"I think" is vague and blurry as if you don't remember too well either. And "it was quick" is saying "*That's why you don't remember, not because you have a bad memory* (and.. Not because I'm unremarkable ;).
And then you quickly move on taking pressure off the slightly awkward moment.

You are both playing a very good and mutually helpful game here.

4. Even the score and move on

This one is a bit sneakier.

But sometimes, it's fair.
Plus, you should always defend yourself anyway.

I recommend using this with a poor attitude.

You can't be always sure whether or not it was a Power Move, but the social consequences are the same, so you will even the score (same for intros)

> **You**: Hi, I do know you, how have you been
> **Her**: (haughty attitude) Are you sure we know each other?
> **You**: Hmmm.. Probably I got confused, there are quite a few blondes around here, I'm X anyway

Note: the blond comment serves to even the scores as it hints at the fact she's unremarkable.

"Probably" is there to not completely renege your previous sentence: you're not afraid of telling how it is, you just got little patience for Power Moves.

That's it, you take your friendly overture back and match the mood.
Don't explain how you met, where you met, and keep for yourself you remember her because she was hot :)

And you then move the conversation forward because remember: your goal is building positive relationships. Be more memorable now and next time she won't play any game (or chances are, she will "remember" later on).

5. Pretend you don't know them

This is for when you're damn sure you're dealing with a Power Mover: they know you but are pretending not to.

For whatever reason, they decided to use your warm hello for a good ol' social climb.

And your empowered reaction to that is: on your dead body!

> **You**: *"hey, Samantha right? Good to see you, how have you been*
> **Her**: *"hey, hi, do we know each other?*
> **You**: (look at her quizzically, corrugate your forehead, as if you're trying to remember) *"sorry, I confuse you with someone else. But anyway, how's your night going"*

This way you negate their game by ignoring it (36th law of power). Don't tell your name at all: it would give them a chance to "remember" you and fake that it took them a while.

And of course "sorry" is not a real sorry, it's said neutrally, check how Hashton Kutcher does it.

Then be "friendly cold", tell them it was great meeting them, and end the interaction with a smirk that says "you're quite bad aren't you". And off you go.

Two Different Cases of Forgetfulness

First of all, there are two different cases of people not remembering you:

- They *really* don't remember you
- They are pretending not to remember you (a Power Move)

How you react will depend on which one you are dealing with.
But whichever case you are dealing with, you still never remind them.

SUMMARY

When someone doesn't remember you it says they didn't find you remarkable.

And when someone *pretends* they don't know you they are pulling a social power move on you.

Either way, it's best not to remind them how you met or you devalue yourself in the process.

So you *don't* remind them, but

1. Move on with the interaction quickly
2. Even the scores (back-handed remark) and move on
3. Pretend you got confused and cut the interaction short

Also, see:

- **Case Study Analysis**: Jordan Belfort plays the "don't know you" game on Grant Cardone

What To Do When People Pretend They Don’t Know You

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

What do you do when someone pretends they don’t know you or don’t remember you?

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First rule.

No matter if they are pretending not to remember you or they really don’t, you do not remind them.

Not if you care about status, respect, and advancing at life, at least.

Or, actually, even if you don't care.
Just respect yourself a bit more, and handle forgetful people properly.

Most People Instinctively... Do It Wrong

This popular post of an otherwise likable chap is the perfect example of what most do wrong when people don't remember you.

Basically, when his conversation partner doesn't seem to remember him he explains all the details of when, where, and how they met.
Nice way of setting yourself up for a triple crown of failure :).

He even *suspects* some people "forget" him on purpose, and he's *still* playing into their hands and giving all his power away -head-wall banging-.

Explaining all the details is like saying:

> ***Sub-communication**: I remember everything about you because you're so cool and higher value. And I am obviously so insignificant and low value that you don't remember anything about me.*

It's pleading, it makes you look insecure, and it slots you as the lower-value man in that relationship.

Why you don't remind them how you met

The general principles are:

1. Remembering means caring
When someone remembers you well, it's a way of sub-communicating that they liked you. Or that you were important to them and that they cared. Or a mix of all of them.

In either case, it's a positive gesture.

2. *Not* remembering means *not* caring
When someone does *not* remember you they are sub-communicating you were not important enough.

3. The high effort ot reminding disempowers you
All that effort also violates the law of least social effort, which states that the more effort you invest compared to others, the more power you lose.

4. Pretending not to remember means power move
Pretending not to remember instead means they are willingly trying to make you look bad. Or trying to make themselves look superior.

It's social climbing in groups.
Or plain disrespect and the sign of a socially belligerent attitude.

When you keep reminding yourself of how where and when you met you keep caring for someone who doesn't care about you.
Socially, you are *giving* value while they are *taking* value from you. Which is the definition of kissing up.

As an example, take a look at this scene from Play the Game. Who do you think is chasing who here:

Notice that as he reminds her one issue becomes obvious in their relationship: she didn't care enough to remember.
On the other hand, he remembered everything about her, thus communicating it was a big thing for him.
He is heavily invested, she is not.
And now he brought all those issues to the surface, where they are obvious to everyone.
If he had pretended not to remember either, it would have been a neutral interaction instead.

And now the big question is: what do you do then?

2. Prevent the value loss: let them remember you first

If you know someone but they haven't said hi yet, you can approach them warmly and give them time to remember.

For example, imagine you know someone, you see each other… But they don't say "hi".

Then you can make the first move and make it all natural:

> **You** *hey man how you doing*
> **Him**: *hey hi there good, how's your night going*
> **You:** *good good, I think we know each other. Were you at Sarah's party by any chance?*
> **Him**: *yeah I was, I think I remmeber you know…*

And done.
Now it's natural, socially smooth, and nobody loses any power.

Notice that you say "I think".
That's a strategic move.
"I think" implies you barely remember and are not sure, so you don't put him on some pedestal.

Plus, you lower the risk for your social value in case he pretends he doesn't remember.

Or alternatively, you can start with an implied "I think":

> **You:** *hey man you seem like a known face…*

And then let them make the move.

Prevention is a very defensive mindset though and I wouldn't recommend it.

One because you should greet people you know warmly, and second… Are you really gonna pussyfoot afraid someone might not remember you?

Exactly…

3. Move on quickly to avoid any power loss

The principle is:

The faster you move, the less you linger on the power loss, and the smaller the loss.

Example:

> **You**: *Hi, how have you been, I think we've met before*
> **Her**: *hey hi, not sure I remember, I'm really bad with people*
> **You**: *I think some time ago at some party, but it was quick. How are you doing anyway*

Let's analyze it a bit better:

HER
Note here that she is very warm. She'd be in a position to "take advantage of you", but instead she's extending an olive branch. With that "I'm really bad with people" she's indeed slightly demeaning herself and taking the blame. She's socially attuned and possibly "protecting your feelings".

YOU
"I think" is vague and blurry as if you don't remember too well either. And "it was quick" is saying "*That's why you don't remember, not because you have a bad memory* (and.. Not because I'm unremarkable ;).
And then you quickly move on taking pressure off the slightly awkward moment.

You are both playing a very good and mutually helpful game here.

4. Even the score and move on

This one is a bit sneakier.

But sometimes, it's fair.
Plus, you should always defend yourself anyway.

I recommend using this with a poor attitude.

You can't be always sure whether or not it was a Power Move, but the social consequences are the same, so you will even the score (same for intros)

> **You**: Hi, I do know you, how have you been
> **Her**: (haughty attitude) Are you sure we know each other?
> **You**: Hmmm.. Probably I got confused, there are quite a few blondes around here, I'm X anyway

Note: the blond comment serves to even the scores as it hints at the fact she's unremarkable.

"Probably" is there to not completely renege your previous sentence: you're not afraid of telling how it is, you just got little patience for Power Moves.

That's it, you take your friendly overture back and match the mood.
Don't explain how you met, where you met, and keep for yourself you remember her because she was hot :)

And you then move the conversation forward because remember: your goal is building positive relationships. Be more memorable now and next time she won't play any game (or chances are, she will "remember" later on).

5. Pretend you don't know them

This is for when you're damn sure you're dealing with a Power Mover: they know you but are pretending not to.

For whatever reason, they decided to use your warm hello for a good ol' social climb.

And your empowered reaction to that is: on your dead body!

> **You**: *"hey, Samantha right? Good to see you, how have you been*
> **Her**: *"hey, hi, do we know each other?*
> **You**: (look at her quizzically, corrugate your forehead, as if you're trying to remember) *"sorry, I confuse you with someone else. But anyway, how's your night going"*

This way you negate their game by ignoring it (36th law of power). Don't tell your name at all: it would give them a chance to "remember" you and fake that it took them a while.

And of course "sorry" is not a real sorry, it's said neutrally, check how Hashton Kutcher does it.

Then be "friendly cold", tell them it was great meeting them, and end the interaction with a smirk that says "you're quite bad aren't you". And off you go.

Two Different Cases of Forgetfulness

First of all, there are two different cases of people not remembering you:

- They *really* don't remember you
- They are pretending not to remember you (a Power Move)

How you react will depend on which one you are dealing with.
But whichever case you are dealing with, you still never remind them.

SUMMARY

When someone doesn't remember you it says they didn't find you remarkable.

And when someone *pretends* they don't know you they are pulling a social power move on you.

Either way, it's best not to remind them how you met or you devalue yourself in the process.

So you *don't* remind them, but

1. Move on with the interaction quickly
2. Even the scores (back-handed remark) and move on
3. Pretend you got confused and cut the interaction short

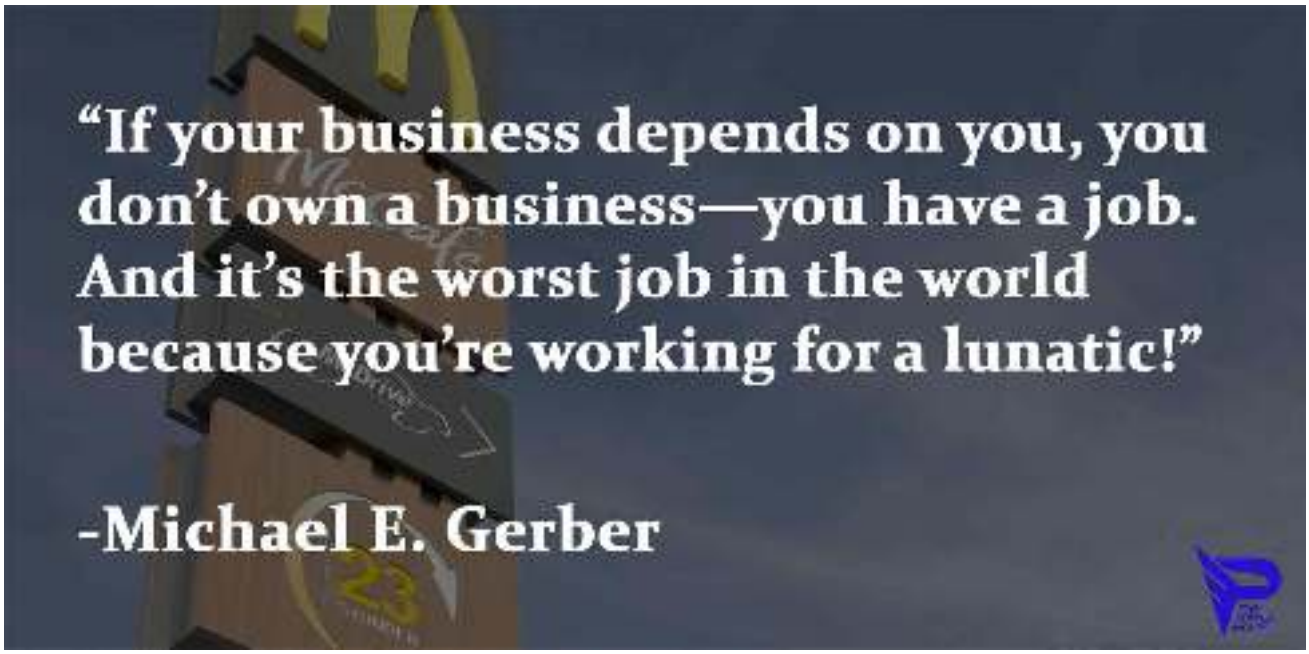
Also, see:

- **Case Study Analysis**: Jordan Belfort plays the "don't know you" game on Grant Cardone

The E-Myth Revisited: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*The E-Myth Revisited*" (1995) is *a book for entrepreneurs* who want to grow independently of their own businesses. Gerber, the author, says that most people start a business in search of freedom and self-empowerment, but instead end up being slaves of their own business.
So he teaches entrepreneurs how to build businesses that can run independently from the founders, allowing them to be truly free.[image]



Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Real-Life Applications
  - CONS
- REVIEW

Bullet Summary

- Think systems and replicable results (like a franchise).
- Develop a life vision and make the business a part of that life
- Work ON the business, not IN the business (hire others to do your work)

Summary

About the author: Michael Gerber is an author and an entrepreneur. He runs a business-skills company (and I wonder if it can run independently from him :).

The E-Myth Revisited is divided into three parts:

1. The current state of American small businesses (chapters 1 to 6)
2. A theoretical overview of how things should be (chapters 7 to 9)

3. The practical steps to build an effective business machine that will be independent of you -and eventually make you free and independent (chapters 10 to 18).

Chapter 1: The Entrepreneurial Myth

Michael Gerber says that many people who get into business do so because they don't want a boss. And they believe that because they know what they're doing, then they know how to run their own business.

Chapter 2: Entrepreneur, Manager & Technician

Michael Gerber affirms most small businesses fail because owners are technicians lacking manager and entrepreneur qualities.

Technician
The technician lives in the present and is all about doing the job. He starts a business because after getting tired of working for someone else.

Manager
The manager plans and organizes, he clings to the status quo and craves order.

Entrepreneur
The entrepreneur is the visionary living in the future and moving from idea to idea, often without setting up all the necessary processes for the business to succeed in real life.

Chapter 3: Infancy, The Technician Phase

Most people who start a business are technicians. They know how to do the job and start a company doing what they've been doing before. The owner and the business are exactly the same.
But, says Gerber, if your business depends on you and you do what you've always been doing before, you don't own a business, you own a job.

Chapter 4: Adolescence, Getting Some Help

The moment a business start hiring, it's when the technician moves to the manager phase.

The most common mistake of early managers -and often of managers in general- is that of doing most of the work themselves instead of teaching and delegating.

Chapter 5: Beyond The Comfort Zone

Gerber says that once you start hiring, it gets difficult for most people as they are, for the first time, outside of their comfort zone and have to rely on other people.

Some people shirk from it and, out of fear, they go back to being just by themselves. But, says Gerber, there's no going back after you've started hiring. Going back solo is an implosion, and few businesses survive it.

Grow slowly if you need to grow slowly, but don't go back.

Chapter 6: Maturity and Entrepreneurial Perspective

Gerber says that great businesses don't become great once they mature.
Yes, you must go through Infancy and Adolescence, but **great business started great.**

In the book the example is IBM.
IBM, Gerber says, started that it was all about *building* a business, not *doing* business.

Building a business means putting in place replicable systems that produce results for the customers.

And the secret to starting out a great business is to imagine that business, well defined, as it should be once you're mature. Then go back, map what it takes you to get there, and start building that vision into a reality.

Chapter 7: The Turn-Key Revolution

In a nutshell, Michael Gerber says that a great, self-reliant business is built on systems, not on people.

Chapter 8: The Franchise Prototype

Michael Gerber takes McDonald's to explain how the franchise is the best model -and mentality- for small businesses to succeed.

The franchise has its strongest point in the systems it develops.
The franchise systems allow your business to become independent from you as the owner and founder.

If you get stuck in your business as a technician you will always be a slave of your job.

Chapter 9: Working ON Your Business, Not IN it

Working on your business means starting to put in place all the systems that will make the business work, no matter whether you're there or not.

And no matter whether people leave or you hire new ones because the systems make it easy for everyone to do the work.

The right questions you to ask yourself are:

- How can you get your business to work without you -you're free!-
- How can you make your people independent of you
- How can you build a business you can replicate a hundred times
- How can you set your time to do what you love instead of what you have to

Chapter 10: The Business Development Process

Michael Gerber's advice is not very applicable to artists, writers, or solopreneurs who like to keep control of their creations.

The author says **you should be able to read everything about your business through numbers**.
Quantify everything, and make sure you can easily take your business' pulse by knowing what the key metrics, the ones that really matter, are.

The model that Gerber here describes reminds me a bit of Charlie Chaplin's movie and of Taylor.
He says that your business should be predictable, and to be predictable your employees should have no discretion on their job.

Because if you depend on people, you get chaos and you can't replicate it a hundred times. And if that's the case, ultimately, you don't own the business.

Chapter 11: The Business Development Program

How do you build such a replicable business? The Business Development Program consists of the following steps:

1. Primary Aim
2. Strategic Objective
3. Organizational Strategy
4. Management Strategy

5. People Strategy
6. Marketing Strategy
7. Systems Strategy

Chapter 12: Your Primary Aim

Michael Gerber asks what's your life goal.

Because Business is a part of it, but your primary goal should be bigger than the business itself. Once you know your primary aim, it allows you to bring your business to life AND life into your business.

Chapter 13: Your Strategic Strategic Objective

Your strategic objective tells you how your business fits into your Primary Aim. What does the business have to do so that you can fulfill your life's Primary Aim?

This is not a business plan, it's a life plan.

Chapter 14: Your Organizational Strategy

The organizational strategy ties back to working *on* the business rather than *in* the business.

It means doing strategic work and then hiring technicians -Michael Gerber recommends as lowly skilled as possible- to do tactical work.

Example:
at the very beginning, you sell *in* the position of sales rep. But you start working right away *on* the sales rep position as a VP of marketing by producing manuals and scripts for the technicians that will soon replace you.

Chapter 15: Your Management Strategy

By now you probably understand Michael Gerber and the management strategy is no different. A perfect management strategy, of course, is automated.
A system where managers won't have to make decisions at all. You can't depend on highly skilled and too smart, big-ticket people. They will come with too much power and when they leave it's hard to replace them.

Effective and automated systems for low-skilled workers are the answer and the key to your freedom.

Chapter 16: Your People Strategy

Michael Gerber says that you can't get people to do what you want, but you can create an environment where doing is more important than not doing it.

The author gives the example of a hotel manager training a young employee, explaining the primary aim, and acting as a life mentor.
He teaches concepts such as work as a reflection of ourselves and as an opportunity to be the best person we can be.

It's not clearly stated, but I loved how the chapter highlights that if you want to have great people working for you, you gotta become a great man first.

Chapter 17: Your Marketing Strategy

Michael Gerber says you should learn your market demographics (science telling you who buys) and psychographics (the science of perceived marketplace reality, why they buy something).

How do you find out?

Ask them and give them freebies for their answers. Ask them about their favorite colors, perfumes, and brands.

And see how those brands advertise.

The E-Myth Revisited has examples such as IBM and UPS brand colors, but the book here is more about raising questions than answering them -unluckily-.

Chapter 18: Your System Strategy

Make sure that all the systems work well together and then you're set.

There's a beautiful example of a selling process called "powerpoint presentation method", and it was very good. Definitely worth checking out the book: get **The E-Myth Revisited on Amazon**.

Real-Life Applications

Don't just do the work, think how you can automate the work and replace yourself with a system that doesn't always need you.
Then you'll be free.

CONS

- **Only works for certain businesses and professions**

Gerber's book might work for certain businesses, but certainly not all.

For example, it's certainly not a valid approach for a lifestyle business such as this website, since making the website and its mission independent from me isn't even a goal of mine.

- **Longish**

Michael Gerber uses the popular writing method of "imaginary dialogues" where he speaks with a struggling small business owner.

The dialogue takes quite a bit of space and some simple concepts didn't need that much space.

- **Manuals for perfect systems..?**

The idea of “detailed manuals” to give to low-skilled workers is appealing and it’s an important concept.

But it’s presented a bit simplistically though in what seemed the “external consultant way”. Most manuals I’ve seen gather dust and psychology clearly shows that they *risk demeaning the workforce*.

And my first reaction was that if you’re into reading and acting on it, chances are you wouldn’t be low-skilled

- **People Easily Replaceable?**

The suggestion of hiring low-skilled workers on purpose and building systems around it is, well… Quite a goal that would deserve discussion under the moral and ethical codes.

Also, if you in the process of building a system that uses people like pawns you fail…
It’ll come across as you didn’t really care for the people and at that point, you’ll just have a shi**y company (read more on how to treat people in *Leader Eat Last* by Simon Sinek)

REVIEW

The E-Myth Revisited is a good book if you’re in a more mechanical type of business and want to make the business independent of you.

Three great lessons I will keep from “The E-Myth”:

Make your life bigger than your business
A life vision bigger than the business will help you bring your business to life and bring your life -and passion- to your business.
It’s a key concept for a successful, happy, and balanced life.

Business as a dojo
Michael Gerber introduces us to the concept of business as a dojo: a place to learn about yourself and improve.
That’s an incredibly healthy and productive way of looking at business.

Become a great leader to get great people
And this is true for every other area of your life.

Check the collection of best books or **get the E-Myth on Amazon**.

Drive: An Intro Intrinsc vs. Extrinsic Motivation (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 June 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Drive (2009) explains, in simple terms and with plenty of examples, that rewards and punishments -motivation 2.0- is an old paradigm that doesn't work nearly as well in today's work environments.
Much better instead is to appeal to intrinsic motivation and "higher ideals" -motivation 3.0-.

TPM Strategic Note: An approachable introduction to human motivation
Drive popularized intrinsic motivation, somewhat oversimplifying how power, incentives, and human nature interact, yet providing a valid intro for many.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - Chapter 1: The Rise and Fall of Motivation 2.0
  - Chapter 2: 7 Reasons Why Carrots and Sticks Don't Work
  - Chapter 3: Type I and Type X
  - Chapter 4: Autonomy
  - Chapter 5: Mastery
  - Chapter 6: Purpose
- How you can apply it
- CONS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- Extrinsic motivation (rewards & punishment) works on mechanical, repetitive tasks (Tylor assembly chain)
- Extrinsic motivation is actually counterproductive in complex tasks
- Intrinsic motivation (already present within us) is far superior for complex tasks and creative work

Notes

About the author:
Daniel Pink is a journalist and a best-selling author.
He is not a psychologist himself, but he does good research.

Chapter 1: The Rise and Fall of Motivation 2.0

Daniel Pink first piques our curiosity by detailing a few well-known stories that shouldn't, theoretically, make sense if we looked at them through the lenses of the typical old economic theories.

Encarta for example, drafted by a team of well-paid writers, lost out to Wikipedia that didn't pay a cent to the curators.

He then sets out to explain why. In the early days of human history, we were driven by our survival needs: eating and, well… Surviving.
For all the survival drives we had, Pink refers to them as "Motivation 1.0".

With the industrial revolution motivation 2.0 emerged, which leverages extrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivation is still widely used today but, Pink argues, it's outdated for our modern world and it's time we move to a Motivation 3.0, actually based on Intrinsic Motivation.

Let's see the differences between Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation:

- **Extrinsic Motivation**

Extrinsic Motivators are sticks and carrots such as "if you do this, you get that consequence".
The consequence can either be a positive reward or a punishment.
A reward could be a raise, a promotion, a bonus, etc. A punishment could be a reprimand, public shaming, firing, etc.

- **Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is motivation coming from within.

It's the joy we get from producing something useful (Linux VS Windows), from spreading knowledge (Wikipedia VS Encarta), and from producing art (poetry for a loved one).

Once our basic financial needs are met, intrinsic motivation is far superior in motivating people.

Chapter 2: 7 Reasons Why Carrots and Sticks Don't Work

Albeit most people still stick to carrots and sticks, psychology makes it abundantly clear that they don't work really well.
Here is why:

1. Crowds-out intrinsic motivation

Daniel Pink affirms that extrinsic rewards tend to become the key reason for doing the task and thus they "crowd out" intrinsic motivation and any possible pleasure connected to the task itself.

Example: Giving preschool children a reward for drawing meant they drew *less* than the groups without any reward 2 weeks after the task ended. The group *without* a reward had kept their intrinsic motivation intact and thus kept drawing with gusto.

2. Diminishes performance (esp. long-term)

Studies show that paying people to achieve certain skills leads to lower results compared to *not* paying them.
And the "boost" to performance tends to completely dissipate over time.

3. Can crush creativity

Bonuses can focus action and attention towards a specific result, distracting us from the bigger picture, and thus reducing potential creativity.

For example, a panel judged artists who produced art for art's sake as more creative compared to when working on commission.

4. Can crowd out good behavior
Daniel Pink quotes the famous Richard Titmuss experiment concluding that paying citizens to donate blood led to a *reduction* in donations.

That's because monetary rewards made a socially responsible act of altruism a financially motivated one.

5. Can encourage cheating

By focusing on the end result, extrinsic motivators can encourage cheating.
The examples in Drive are of ENRON and NASA Apollo, but if you've lived through the 2008 financial meltdown,

you are well aware of the flak of critics around outsized bonuses.

Photo by Nathalie Magniez

6. Can become addictive

Study shows that a reward, while it can increase motivation in the short term, can lead to negative effects once it's stopped.
That's because the reward becomes normal, and once it's taken away, it feels like a punishment.
Here's a link to the study.

7. Can foster short-term thinking

Drive presents studies showing how the companies most hell-bent on guiding quarterly earnings deliver significantly lower long-term growth compared to their peers.

Chapter 3: Type I and Type X

Daniel Pink defines two types of people:

- **Type X (Extrinsic)**

Type X personalities are driven by external factors such as fame, status, money, etc. They can often be highly successful but also troubled by an insatiable appetite for more "things".
And we are all aware that the joy of monetary success never fully satisfies us.

- **Type I's (Intrinsic)**

For Type I personalities, motivation comes from within – to accomplish something meaningful-. Success is measured by the task itself and not by a reward.
Type Is have higher self-esteem, better relationships, and are in overall better physical and mental shape.

Type I's will usually outperform a Type X in the long run.

Intrinsic motivation pillars

Daniel Pink delves deep into the pillars that light the intrinsic motivation fire:

- **Autonomy** – the desire to direct our own lives;
- **Mastery** – the urge to get better and better at something that matters;
- **Purpose** – the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves.

Chapter 4: Autonomy

Here's a way to establish autonomy in the workforce: ask for the results and leave the *how-to* them.

Chapter 5: Mastery

The premise of Mastery is that people yearn to get better at what they do (as long as they care about it).

Flow is key to reaching mastery, and you reach flow when the tasks are neither too easy nor too difficult.

That sweet spot of not too easy and neither too difficult is also the point at which we will learn the most and the quickest (for more on peak performance, check *Peak*).

- Mastery is a mindset. You see your abilities as infinitely improvable (check how to develop a growth mindset)
- Mastery is a pain. It demands effort, grit, and deliberate practice.
- Mastery is an asymptote. In a mountain without a peak, there is always room for improvement.

Chapter 6: Purpose

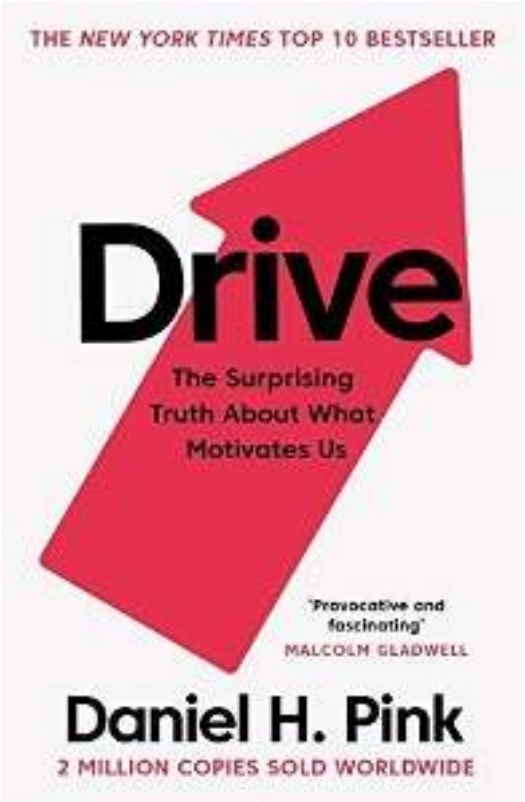
Purpose leverages the human desire of being part of something bigger.
Daniel Pink also cites Viktor Frankl in suggesting that the will for meaning is the basic motivation of human life.

We reach purpose while:

- Doing something that matters;
- Doing it well;
- Doing it in the service of a cause larger than ourselves.

Most companies focus on profit maximization rather than purpose maximization.

Apple is an exception: creating great products is Apple's way of maximizing profits *by* making great products.



How you can apply it

To motivate people from now on:

- Try to do without money or de-link money from results (check Cialdini too)
- Compliment, show appreciation for the behavior you wanna encourage
- Make them feel like they're contributing to something great

- Give a goal, let them find the way

CONS

- **One-sided**

Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us" makes no mention of any research that doesn't fully back its central thesis (and yes, there are: here is one showing how men are not swayed by financial reward in donating blood).
While I'm a big supporter of Daniel Pink's conclusions I would have preferred a more balanced view presenting both pros and cons.

- **Shallow representation of Type X**

Type X, the people motivated by extrinsic rewards, sound a bit like a straw man argument for the "greedy, bad guy".
I find it a bit simplistic. We can wish it weren't so, but most human beings *do* share a drive to hoard and get as much as they can. And it's not necessarily a terrible thing.

- **Shortcut to intrinsic**

Daniel Pink suggests intrinsic motivation is the only way to go "as soon as people are paid enough to take the money question off the table".
Well, talking about a big IF :).

And what's "enough"?
Is it the same for everyone? And who is really able to do that?

Review

Drive summarizes a ton of research to make a good case for moving past material rewards.

If you're interested in influencing and psychology, or even if you're a parent or a manager -or planning to be one- you will get a ton of value from Drive.

Check out the best books on persuasion

How to Talk to Anyone: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

How to Talk to Anyone (1999) is a *social skills book* compiled as a collection of 92 conversations and social skills 'tips' of varying levels of sophistication, but mostly beginner-friendly.

TPM Note: Good 'social lubrication', but we add power to achieve status, respect, and attraction
Leil Lowndes is a master of 'Social Lubrication' and charm. However, 'social polish' and 'liked' is not enough for ambitious men. *Power* skills are needed to achieve goals (see: social vs. power skills). We've audited this list to separate the 'social etiquette' from the 'strategic influence'."

About the Author:
Leil Lowndes is a best-selling author and a well-known figure in the "people's skills" circuit.

Contents

- Body Language
- Conversations
- Emotional Intelligence & Bonding
- Charm & Charisma
- Business Networking
- Power-Aware Tips

- CONS
- Review

Body Language

- **SMILE SLOWLY – WITH A SECOND DELAY**: Don't flash an immediate smile, it cheapens it. Instead, look at their face for a second. Pause. Soak in their persona. And then let a big, warm, responsive smile flood your face and overflow into your eyes. The split-second delay convinces people your flooding smile is genuine and only for them.
- **LOOK AT THE PERSON YOU CARE ABOUT – Epoxy Eyes** You can look at one person even while another person is speaking. This conveys a powerful "I care, I like you" sensation. To soften the edge you can still look at the speaker most of the time but go back to the target when the speaker has just finished a point.
- **BIG BABY PIVOT (ON INTROS)** When you get introduced, turn your body fully towards the new person and smile.
- **'HELLO OLD FRIEND' FRAME**: Treat someone you've just met as an old friend.
  My Note: this is a very good technique and will make your whole body language follow naturally.
- **THINK YOU'RE IMPORTANT:** Visualize and imagine yourself as a very important person. That way all your verbals will fall into place automatically.

These are good tips, but ambitious men need to first understand the fundamentals of body language.
Start here:

- Body language: a primer
- Confident body language
- Masculine body language

Conversations

- **PARROTING**: If a convo is dying and you want to let it continue without much effort, repeat their last words. Example:

> **Her** "and then I went to see match and it was amazing"
> **You** "see the match?"
> **Her** "yes, bla bla bla"

- **ASK ABOUT LAST FEW HOURS**: To get a new acquaintance talking, ask about her day, preferably about the last 5-6h. She'll love it because it's so close to her experience.
- **DON'T ASK WHAT DO YOU DO**: It signals like you're assessing their social worth and it's embarrassing if they're jobless. Ask *"how do you spend most of your time".*
- **LET THEM FINISH**: Don't jump in with "me too" which seems over-excited. Let them finish first instead, and the longer you wait to share your commonality, the more impressive it will sound. **My Note**: This is the opposite of what Vanessa van Edwards suggests. I say it depends. If you want to sound excited or go along with an overly excited mood, jump in. If you want to seem calmer and more powerful, wait.
- **LINK TO WHAT THEY JUST SAID TO CHANGE TOPIC**: Pick up something -thought, phrase, or also a single word- the speaker said. Repeat it or rephrase it and then relate it to what you want to say. Do you want to talk about a recent movie you saw, or about horseback riding but they're talking about the weather? In your first sentence allude to rain and then connect to your desired topic.

> **Her:** *On rainy weekends, I usually go to a movie. In fact, just last week I saw one called..*
> **You***: I sure hope it doesn't rain next Saturday because I have my next horse riding lesson..*
> OR
> **You:** *I pray it does rain next weekend so rather than taking the missus shopping I'll have an excuse to stay home and work on the new rec room..*

- **Comm YOU Nicate with 'YOU' First:** Start every appropriate sentence with "you", it immediately grabs your listener's attention.

Ie:

> ✅ *"you look great in that suit"*

rather than ❌ "*I think that suit looks great".*

Rather than ❌ "*there's this great Italian restaurant, do you wanna try it with me*?" say:

> ✅ *There's this great Italian restaurant, YOU will love it, wanna try it with me this evening?"*.

In an email, ❌"*I really enjoyed myself at the party*" becomes ✅ "You really threw a great party the other night". You save people the step to translate it in their head "hmmm, *he* says it's great, but will I like it?"

These are good tips, but for the foundations of high-power talk that deliver status, respect, and attraction, see:

- **Low-power speaking**: cues of low value and low status
- **Power talk**: cues of high value and high status

> Dominant Conversations: 10 Ways to Speak With Power

Emotional Intelligence & Bonding

- **FULL EMPATHIZERS**: When someone is talking to you don't just nod or say "uhu", use full sentences. Such as "oh that's a lovely thing to say
- **ASK WHAT THEY'D LIKE ON THEIR TOMBSTONE**: Ask what they'd like written on their tombstone (or what they love the most about them) and then tell them you appreciate them for exactly that quality they'd like engraved.
  My Note: it's easy to make this one an awkward moment. You need a bit more rapport and serious talk or it will be 'off'.
- **SOUND CLOSER ON PHONE**: Answer the phone with a neutral tone, and when you realize it's a friend of yours immediately warm up (similar to rewarding them *after* you got to know them). On the phone, it's harder to convey warm feelings, so it's a good idea to use their name as often as possible -"name shower"-
- **ECHO AND MIMICK**: Notice the words they use, and use the same ones. Match their speaking speed and tempo as well.
- **DON'T PAT WHEN HUGGING**: Patting signals distance and 'friendliness only', not closness or attraction
  My Note: I do *not* pat, not even male friends. Not patting is not necessarily sexual and it's much, much warmer. I have noticed indeed that people who pat and/or withdraw very quickly tend to be either homophobes or not very comfortable in their skin. Indeed in my experience patting too obviously sends a message of distance and discomfort.
- **WHEN ACCUSED AVOID DEFENSIVENESS:** Listen calmly until your accuser finishes and then say "I am glad you brought it up". Proceed by saying "you are right" and repeat his accusation word for word. No ifs, buts, and however: those are the prefaces for excuses. Pause. Then, without defensiveness, tell your reasoning. If no rationalization, tell what you have learned. Icing on the cake, thank your accuser for the opportunity to tell him.

Empathizing Example

Lowndes calls this 'emotional prediction', but it's about empathizing

Example 1:
the CEO at the end of a difficult experiment tells the experimenter "*glad that was over, it must have not been easy for you*".
Most people would have said, "That was difficult, I am glad it's over".

Example 2:
In a job interview: "*I hope for you that* this is the last interview; you must have had a grueling, long day". When going out, she added, "*I guess your real work starts now*".

My Note:
This works well in several environments, including in service-oriented contexts. For example, packed restaurant and the waiter is swamped. He finally gets to you with bated breath:

> **Him:** Sorry the delay sir, what would you like to drink?
> **You:** All good, I can see it's super packed, you must be going crazy

Instant bond (and you may have just become his favorite patron).

For a more foundational overview on how to bond and connect, see:

- **How to develop a deep connection**

> How to Build Emotional Connection With Women & Friends

Charm & Charisma

- **SEE NO BLOOPERS HEAR NO BLOOPERS**: Pretend nothing's happened when someone makes a mistake.If coffee is spilled, keep talking while you drain it with a napkin. If a waiter spills your order, make it nothing.
- **WAVE AT PEOPLE WHEN ENTERING A PARTY**: When entering a party in a place where you don't know anybody, just wave at the space between people and smile. Or wave at someone you think you like: people will think you are super popular and will later gravitate around you.
  My Note: Hillary Clinton was using this technique and it often looked very unnatural.
- **SCRAMBLE THERAPY – TRY NEW THINGS:** Just doing something once will give you 80% of the words and stories you need to relate to anyone who's an expert/professional in that field
- **CARRY GOOD NEWS**: As *The 48 Laws of Power* suggests, don't be the bearer of bad news. People associate us with what we say and talk about. Jump on good news and share good news instead
- **KILLER COMPLIMENT**: Search for one attractive and very unique quality they have and, at the end of the conversation, mention their name, look at them in the eyes, and deliver it.

Business Networking

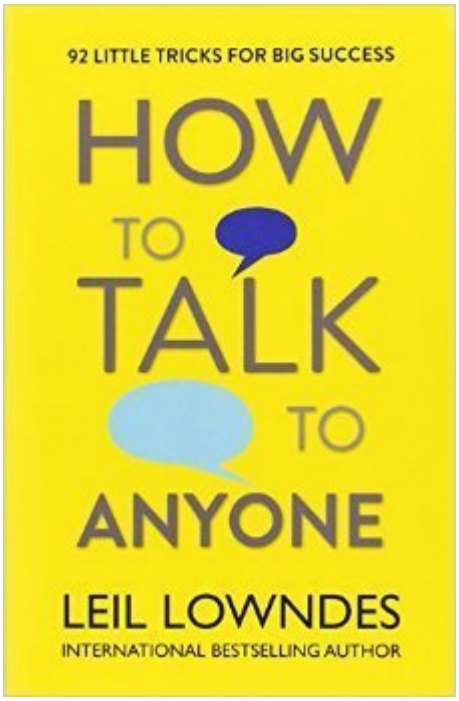
- **GO EARLY**: if you don't know anyone go early and you will be in a small circle of early birds by the time the party swells.
- **TRACKING**: Remember and then refer to people's minor and major events in their lives.
- **CREATE SAFE HAVENS**: Don't mention business when you bump into someone by accident. That's not the right time for that and they will respect you for giving them their space.
- **BUTTERCUP TO SUPERVISORS – for better service**: When there's someone whose service you value, make a compliment, ask who the supervisor is, and then send a letter-mail to the supervisor.
- **LEAD THE LISTENERS – be the first to applaud**: Be the first one to applaud or congratulate the person giving a speech you agree with. Lead the crowd into acceptance.
- **IF YOU'RE LATE – DON'T MAKE EXCUSES walking in**: If you're late to a meeting, don't demean yourself with an excuse as soon as you walk in but find an unflustered way to allude honestly at the problem you had later on. You will come across as sincere and secure and not obsessed with what other people think of you, two important big cats traits.

Power-Aware Tips

This is a collection from all that I've read from Leil Lowndes, including but not exclusively from "*How to Talk to Anyone*":

- **SIT TO THE RIGHT**: Sit on the right side of the most powerful person in the room. Men are uncomfortable sitting where they don't see the door and want "their woman" to be on their right while they put a friend to the left.
- **HIGHEST SEATING**: The highest chair is more important than being at the right of the host. An example of a businessman who used to screw down all the chairs in the meeting room except his, so he'd sit the highest.
- **NOD UP – NOT DOWN**: When you agree with someone you know by lowering your chin. Do the opposite, move your chin upwards instead. But be aware of blending it with warm body gestures or it can come across as

arrogant (see McGregor using the Nod Up).



CONS

- **Wrong about CEOs: it's not 'emotional intelligence' that gives you status and career**

Leil Lowndes describes the CEO as if it were obvious that the top man has the highest emotional intelligence. But that's not true. Data shows that CEOs have lower emotional intelligence. Read 'emotional intelligence lie'

- **All over the place "tricks" format**

Lacking a focused topic it's normal Leil Lowndes "tricks" tend to fall a bit all over the place.
And just as a note, the "little tricks" format can be dangerously misleading: if you want to get good at anything, drop the easy-fix mentality.

- **Mixed bag of value**

There are, of course, quite a few known and common sense "little tricks" in How to Talk to Anyone, but on the other hand, they can serve as a refresher.

Review

Leil Lowndes comes across as a skilled and charming socialite, and "How to Talk to Anyone" is an easy read with plenty of good social skills tips.

Some of the "little tricks" are common sense or not suited for high-value men -ie.: changing your answering machine's message every day-.
Some others are *not* "little tricks" but fundamental elements of human relationships which would require more than a brief 'trick explanation'.

As a matter of fact, the 'tricks' format may be the biggest limitation of this book because **'tricks' don't develop skills**, which in turn don't deliver the outcomes we want for our readership (ie.: status, respect, attraction, and achieving goals).
Read more basics on social power:

- Best social skills books (and courses)
- Advanced social skills books
- Basics of interpersonal power

Conversation Confidence: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Conversation Confidence is a collection of tips by Leil Lowndes to improve your social interactions.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Full Summary
  - Listening
  - Work a room like a politician
  - Body language
  - Different personalities
  - Avoid these
- CONS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- Empathizing with your speaker is far more powerful than you being smart or unique. So.. Quit showing off
- Listen at different levels: feel it within you, ask yourself how they're feeling, and why they're telling you
- Scramble therapy: try something different every so often

Full Summary

Touch people

Touching people will make you come across as warmer and more friendly.
Leil Lowndes righteously warns to use with caution, especially with the opposite sex and especially male to woman, but most people touch too little so don't let that deter you :).

Sticky eyes
We quickly move our eyes from what don't like and keep them on what we like. Hence, if you wanna send a message you like someone, keep your gaze longer on them.

Distance
We tend to get closer to people we're comfortable with, and we tend to stay further away from people we believe are of higher status or who intimidate us. So standing far will send the message you're not too confident.
Introverts tend to stand further away than extroverts.

Romantic distance
Studies show an interesting behavior of people first meeting.
When the woman moved forward the man stayed. When the woman moved back, the man did too -probably felt spurned-.

Reassure you're listening
When people talk to you, reassure them you're still listening with a perfunctory "aha", "ok", or "I understand".
Conversation Confidence affirms women need reassurance more than men.

Agree early on
Agree on something early on. "Early on" is the key here. When there's so little of you two out in the open an agreement will be a huge part of what's shared.
On the other hand, if you disagree after you exchanged just 5 sentences they will think you disagree on everything.
If you disagree, hold it off until you're friends and say "that's an interesting way of looking at it" or "tell me more".

Say something positive early on
Same concept as above.

Say yes to compliments
Accept compliments and answer with "oh thank you for noticing".
Saying "no" on the other hand implies a bad judgment on their side.

Moving out of small talk: Cherry Picking
Any anomaly in conversation can be a great topic to expand. If she says "this rain is good for my garden" ask about the garden.
If he says "yes it's been terrible, it feels like a tropical storm" ask if he's ever been to the tropics.
Or "I can't take my dog out", or "it blows leaves in my pool"… You got it, you ask about dogs and pools.

A feeling of empathy
Empathizers are simple short support statements like "*I can understand how you felt about that*" or "*I can appreciate*

you decided to do that.."
If you pick an overriding emotion, empathize with it. Say "I can see that you… " Empathizing is far more important than YOU being unique, interesting or original.
En: 1. Use when you get half-assed "facade replies". Tell them "*you don't seem really convinced*", and you'll get to the bottom of what they really feel.
2. Sometimes people will flaunt what they've done. Reward them and acknowledge it:
"I'm so happy to hear, that's an amazing achievement, congratulations"

What do you do
Only ask "what do you do" if they love their job.
Leil Lowndes brings a cool example of talking about work on a budget cruise for which low-wage workers saved the whole year VS asking "what do you do" to a wealthy people gathering where they live off investments and busy themselves with charities.

Use their names later
Some suggest using their name often but Leil instead suggests to only use it later on when you want to stress a point. For example, after a while that you've been talking, lean in and say "John, what inspired you to get into.. ".
Ed.: It's much more powerful indeed and a similar concept to asking their name pronunciation later.
If you don't remember their names
Similarly, if you don't remember their name wait after you spoke for a while and say "you know, I really want to remember your name, could you tell me again please?"

Conversation layers
A conversation follows an "intimacy level" from:

- Cliches (for strangers) ;
- Facts (for acquaintances);
- Feelings (for friends);
- You and me (for good friends and lovers)

Replacing clichés and facts with feelings and “we speak” is a great way to move forward quicker. For example, after she complained of a tough week you can say “wow we’ve really had a tough week haven’t we”

Captioning
Leil Lowndes suggests creating an inside story that you can use between the two of you.
The inside story should be funny and entertaining, possibly memorable, and involving both of you.

Nicknames
You can use a person’s child’s nickname as a powerful tool in building a personal bond.
Ed.: I experienced this myself when a girl I used to date used an old nickname of mine and it did feel closer.

Scramble therapy
I couldn’t agree more with Leil Lowndes when she recommends doing something different every now and then.
Communication Confidence says that even as a first timer you will get 80% of all you need to know to make you a valued conversation partner

Learn the keywords
Every profession has certain keywords and hot topics. Ask a friend working in that profession to give you the highlights and you’ll fit in with the crowd.

Listening

Righteously so, *Conversation Confidence* by Leil Lowndes expands on listening skills.

Whole body listening
Let yourself be free to experience what you’re hearing. It helps make an imaginary video of your conversation partner’s story.

Shrink Listening
What are they saying? Are they tense, excited, or holding back.. ? look at body language and the underlying emotions

Expected reaction listening
Some will tell you some stories to get a certain kind of reaction from you: ask yourself what that reaction is.
Example: someone is talking to you about a restaurant. Probably he wants you to admire his taste.

Why listening
Ask yourself why are they telling you the story.
Example: maybe he wants you to go with him to that restaurant.

Work a room like a politician

Why the party?
Sharing the rationale of a party is what puts you on the same ground as the heavy hitters.
Is the host looking for a job? Make an intro. Did he just break up? Show up with two girls.

Don't mix food and mingling
Leil Lowndes affirms that just holding the dish in front of you will put a barrier between you and people.

Ask for intro or for Info
If you want to talk to someone ask the host for an intro or ask about some key information about the person and then say "hey, you're John Smith, Susan told me you love to sky, where do you go to the sky around here?"

Entering a group
Stand nearby, listen to the topic, and then when the convo is winding down jump in and say "excuse me, I heard you sky at X, I've been meaning to go there, how is it?". Worry not about the people in the group, they'll be glad for some fresh blood.

Re-approaching someone
Think about your previous conversation and what's something else you can ask or talk about. For example "John, I forgot to ask you, what's a good place to stay in… "

Nutshell resume
Prepare something interesting about your job or where you're from.

Introductory debate
When introducing someone, imagine you are introducing him onto a stage and giving a great intro. For example "this is Mark, he's a top lawyer at X, and he was just telling a fascinating story about… "

Body language

Conversation Confidence by Leil Lowndes also delves into body language.

Full torso

Turn fully towards your conversational partner to give a warm impression. See where the expression “giving the cold shoulder” comes from?

Head/feet/legs/torso direction
if they are turned towards you it’s a good sign, if turned away from you, it’s a negative sign. If sitting, women will turn their legs towards you.

Women looking at you
If a woman looks at you smiling and is interested she’ll look away and return her gaze to you within 45 seconds

Wrist and palms
When she bears her wrist and palms the message is “I submit”. Now go ahead?

Heightened body motion
Her hormones are in action. You got this?

Rubbing
If she’s rubbing herself, it’s a great sign. Especially if rubbing inner parts like the thigh or upper arms.

Lean forward
Leaning forward towards your conversation partner saying “I like you”.
All these signals are better explained in *Undercover Sexual Signals*.

Different personalities

Bullies
There’s a tendency to let things slide with bullies or, worst, kiss up to them. Don’t do it. And don’t try to use subtle psychology.
Instead, let them fizzle out a bit by staying silent. When you begin talking and they’ll try to interrupt you repeat their name over and over again saying “Mr. Wilson, you interrupted me” as you look at them in the eyes until they let you finish.

Snipers
Snipers are people who attack while hiding themselves.
The example from *Conversation Confidence* by Leil Lowndes is a girl back in college. She would accuse without making names but while mostly looking at a particular girl in the group. “*Someone* used my toothpaste here, and I would like to tell that person to please stop and buy her own”.
Your task is to make them come out in the open. Ask openly if they are talking about you.
And if they say you can’t take a joke you keep going *“yeah, it was a great joke, but underneath it all, I sense there was aggressiveness, did you mean it that way?”*
Don’t ask what could be done to improve, that lends them credibility. Instead, once they come out in the open, ask the whole group “anyone else see it that way”?

Man VS Women
Men want to be trusted to be able to get the job done and their greatest fear is being a failure.
Women want to be cared for and women’s greatest fear is being alone.

Avoid these

Conversation Confidence by Leil Lowndes ends with a few interesting and entertaining suggestions on what you should *not* say. Ever.

You look tired
It’s like telling people they look bad. I guess you know why you don’t tell people they look bad :).

I bet you don't remember me
Any smarter way of devaluing yourself? ⍰

I don't drink / I don't smoke
Do take care of yourself, but when offered a cigarette or a Coca Cola don't shove down people's throats how are those habits don't cut it for your high health standards.

Don't tell him I told you this, but…
The subtext is that you can't keep a secret.

You promised to…
Whatever, that was in the past, now they didn't manage or they changed their mind. Allow them to keep their ego.
En.: Also keep in mind they will not only *not* backtrack, but also like you less.

Guess…
When someone asks you a question, reply. And don't play childish guessing games.

CONS

Sometimes Stilted
Conversation Confidence by Leil Lowndes is sometimes laborious and sounds better suited for Blue Blood nobility circles. There's indeed a feeling that in real-life scenarios a bit of inner confidence would serve you better than the proposed "games".
For example asking information before approaching, or pointing at people pretending to know them.
What about just walking up and saying hi, or really getting to know people without pointing at strangers?

REVIEW

Conversation Confidence shares a few similarities with Leil Lowndes' biggest seller "*How To Talk to Anyone*", but I feel Conversation Confidence is actually better and more complete.
If you are reading this summary because you want to get better with people, check out my in-depth Social Mastery Guide.

Absolutely recommended, **get Conversation Confidence here**.

Triggers: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Triggers apply principles of direct marketing to the field of personal selling through 30 techniques that Sugarman calls “psychological triggers.”

Contents

- 3 Sentences Summary
- Triggers Summary
  - CONS
- Triggers Review

3 Sentences Summary

- Link your product to a fad, make it go viral, and ride the free publicity to success
- If your product is new, or complex, link it to something simple
- Give complex-sounding explanations, you’ll see an expert and people will yield to you

Triggers Summary

Joseph Sugarman collects 30 different *triggers* to compel customers to take action.
Here I will summarize the ones that seemed most relevant to me.

Emotional Needs

Sugarman says that emotional needs are the most important drivers in determining buying behavior.
Your goal is to find out what emotional needs your target audience has and pander to them.

Objections First

If you know that your product or your prospect is almost certain to raise a certain objection, say it yourself FIRST.

Note: make sure the customer knew or was going to notice about it, otherwise you raise a red flag the customer wasn’t even gonna consider.

Example:
A house with a busy road behind: mention it first and then say for example that it means easy access to the road and safety.

Involvement in the Product (physical or emotional)

Let me the product touch, disassemble, or try the product. He will get more emotionally invested in it.

Authority

Authority is another hugely important aspect of persuasion (also read *Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Get to Yes*)

People love to do business with people with authority. Showcase yours. Hang diplomas on the wall, put certificates on your desk, preface your name with a title, etc.

Prove Your Value

People want to know they're making good use of their money. You can make a comparison with similar products with similar prices and showcase your products' advantages.

Credibility

If you give a complicated-sounding explanation people will think you're an expert -a credible person- and will more easily yield to your opinion.

Satisfaction Guaranteed

Offering a guarantee is a powerful way to address last-minute resistance. People will believe your product is really good if you can offer a guarantee of a refund.

Link to Fads

Link your product to fads for free publicity.

Examples:

1. When feminism was a new thing, a ski resort banned women from driving snowmobiles and issued a press release: it went viral. Sales skyrocketed.
2. The Viagra fad made a huge boon of an article humorously talking about the "baby boom". And a huge boon to the sunglasses the author was sold advertising them as "helping with Viagra side effects" (i.e.: blurry vision, blue colors, etc.)

Link to Easy

Link your product to something that is easy to identify for the prospect.
For example, a "smoke detector" when it first came out was presented as an "electronic nose for your safety".

KISS

Keep your offer simple. Only after he's a customer you can pitch complications.

Instill a Sense of Guilt

This leverage Cialdini's principle of reciprocity as explained in *Influence*.

Make the customer feel guilty about the gift, effort spent, paying something, and adding value to his life. The prospect will feel "forced" to give back… By buying your product.

Be specific

Be specific to sound more credible.

Example

If I say, "New dentists everywhere use and recommend CapSnap Toothpaste," it sounds like typical advertising lingo — puffery designed to sell a product.
It's so general that it will probably cause a prospect to discount the statement you have just made and maybe everything else you say.
But if I say, "92% of new dentists use and recommend CapSnap Toothpaste" it's immediately more credible.

Also read: *How to Lie With Statistics*.

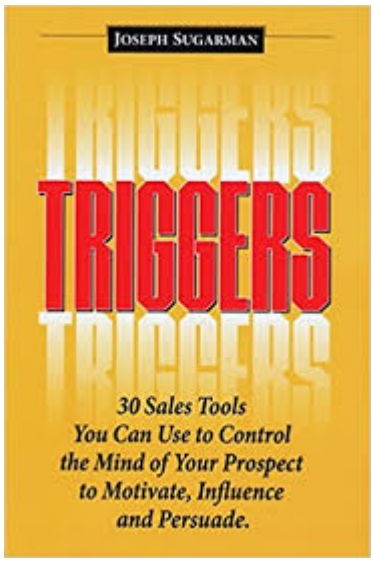
Familiarity

People go by default to things and people they are familiar with.
Make your name popular in the industry so that when they need something, they think of you!

Make love to your prospect

You want your prospect to understand and agree with your statements.

Make sure that everything you do and say is in perfect agreement with the prospect as you slowly and almost hypnotically get closer to concluding the sale.
You want your prospects to keep nodding their heads, saying “yes,” all the way through to the final question, “May I have your order?”



CONS

No copy-writing examples
If you were looking for a book to teach you step-by-step copywriting, *Triggers* by Joseph Sugarman is not that kind of book.

Not for Relationship Sales
At times it feels like the author is presenting a collection of tricks on how to manipulate people, media, and the public discourse to sell more. This can be effective for smaller ticket items, but not so much so for more complex sales.

Triggers Review

Joseph Sugarman summarizes many of the basic selling triggers and does so in an entertaining and easy-to-digest way.

It might be more suited for print and copywriting than for professional salespeople, but definitely, there’s a certain overlap between the two.

If you’re into improving your copy skills, Joseph Sugarman is a master copywriter, so you can actually learn simply by reading his stuff.
The last chapter indeed, “make love to your prospect”, is a great example of suspense, and you will remember it for years to come ;).

Get the Book on Amazon[image]

5 Ways To Turn Down A Date Without Being Awkward

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

How do you refuse a date and keep the friendship?

How can you say no to someone who's so vulnerable laying his heart bare just for you?

It's not as simple as it might sound, right?

Plus, rejecting others can have consequences.
Lots of people have a fragile ego and **they will resent you for making them feel bad**.

That's why it's always good to know how to let people down easily

In this article, you will learn the most socially savvy ways of refusing a date while still keeping the friendship.

Contents

- How to Refuse a Date Gracefully
  - #1: Say Yes And Do Nothing
  - #2: Say "We'll See"
  - #3: Say You Are Seeing Someone
  - #4: Say You Rather Keep It As It Is
  - #5: Say You Are Not Interested
- Never Refuse a Date Like This
  - Why Strategic, Before Assertive
- SUMMARY

How to Refuse a Date Gracefully

The 4 categories are designed to turn down a date in the kindest possible way you can get away with.

They go from kindest to bluntest:

#1: Say Yes And Do Nothing

Allan Pease says that social liars are better liked than people who are always honest.

And it's tough not to see why: social liars, with their smaller fibs, help save people's faces, which is one of Carnegie's main tenets to *win friends and influence people*.

> **Pursuer**: we should get a coffee sometimes
> **You**: Yeah we should do that eventually

And then… Never take any concrete steps to make it happen.

We'll do it. I'm just a bit slammed this week ya know
People who understand social interactions know that words are just endearing filler and *only actions matter*. And they'll understand and appreciate it.

If they don't get it and ask again, say you're busy these days.
If they *still* don't get it, reply with longer and longer delays or move to #2.

Perfect for:

- **Softer asks**

These are indirect, social approaches -i.e. "we should grab a drink one of these days". Very easy and natural to defer into oblivion.

- **Women asking you**

Being rejected is more painful for women but they know how to take a hint. I've done it a few times myself, worked like a charm, and kept a good relationship every time.

- **Your inner circle**

If you see them often -colleagues or friends- a softer approach will help you stay friends (if they are the kind of people who can get a hint, at least).

- **Exes**

Simply the way to go when meeting exes, which can be awkward for some. One proposes a coffee, the other says "for sure", and both know it ain't gonna happen.
Carrie in Sex & The City shows it brilliantly:

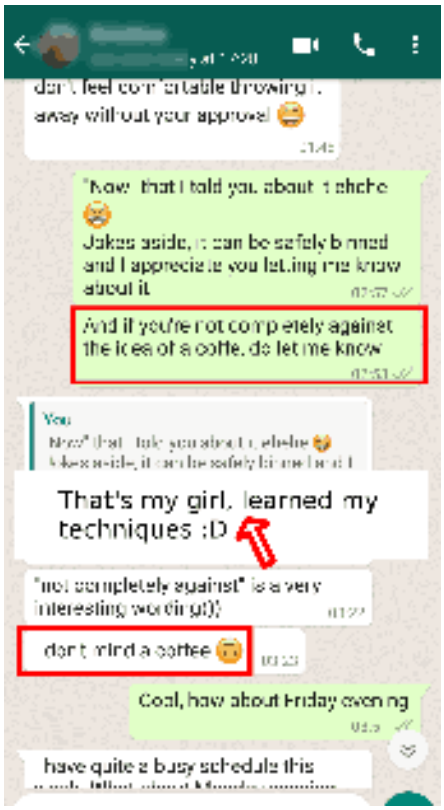
#2: Say "We'll See"

This one helps position yourself as the prize of the relationship, and if they are really interested, it encourages them

to chase you.

It's a good way to test them and see how truly interested they are. And it also leaves the door open for you to change your mind.

It's also good with exes, which is exactly what my ex-girlfriend did to me a few months ago when we met.
First, she said "We'll see about that coffee", and gave herself an option to do it. Then she probably thought it was over, asked her sister and her girlfriends, and decided yes:



And if you decide no, it's going to be easier and equally effective to deny the date invitation via text than in person. Why make things more complicated when you can have an easy way out and also help people save face?

#3: Say You Are Seeing Someone

Chances are you probably *are* "kinda" seeing someone or thinking about seeing someone, the fault lines can be blurry when you need them to be ;).

It's a very pain-free way of turning a date request down and you also come across as caring and respectful towards the person you're seeing.

And while "I'm not interested" is often a conversation ender with "I'm (kinda) seeing someone", you can easily keep interacting with your pursuer.
A friendship might blossom, or who knows, maybe you change your mind and suddenly that "someone" was not so serious anymore?

Perfect for:

- **Direct approaches from strangers**

They have no way to know whether it's true or not, and it's enough to stop most socially calibrated people from pushing further.

- **Preventing stalkers**

There are no studies telling us what's most effective to prevent stalking. Some suggest clear and direct "no" while John Moore suggests too direct a no will trigger a hurt ego and, possibly, violence.
Being clear without sub-communicating that *they* are the issue seems a perfect happy medium to me.

#4: Say You Rather Keep It As It Is

It's a firm no, but rather than stating outright you're not interested *in them*, you refer to some rule or situation beyond you.

For example, you don't date in your company, or you have a no-friends rule, or you are focusing all your efforts on your project/studies.

It's strictly business
Perfect for:

- **Friends**

Say you cherish them as friends and want to keep it like that. Chances are he knows about the friend zone, so you might even add "you know how it is with friends".
He protects his ego by blaming the "friend zone rule", you keep a friend without drama.

Win-win.

And of course, he doesn't need to know you wouldn't date him anyway, friend or not.

- **Colleagues**

Dating at work can get thorny. I personally have a rule of not getting involved with colleagues (or anyone too close for that matter).

I also know I'd probably throw that rule away under the right circumstances, and I'd bet it's the same for you.
But you can easily use it for anyone falling short of those right circumstances ;)

#5: Say You Are Not Interested

No means no, young fella
No excuses, no sugar coating.

You won't do it "one day", you don't have any rules of not dating colleagues and, as well, you don't have time to protect someone's ego.

However, you can still be super direct and take steps to make your date refusal easier on the refused.
Rather than "not interested in you (that way)", phrase it this way:

> **You**: Thanks, but I will be honest, you're not my type.

Less biting, but equally effective.

If they ask "*what's your type*", don't go into any description or you might get sucked into a discussion.
Just say "different" or turn the question back to them.

Perfect for:

- **Strangers / Rude People**

Total strangers don't always need the special treatment reserved for friends.
And of course, rude people can -and should- be treated the same way. So "*you really don't want to be rude, but a stinking breath is a bit of a deal breaker for you*" ;).

- **People who don't get it**

You tried to be polite, but they just don't get it and keep bugging you. Fine, you tried, now tell them like it is.

- **People hooked on you**

Before they find some fun way to embarrass you, get clingy (I had a girl dropping gifts in my mailbox and showing up uninvited), or be too dependent, it's time for some tough love.

A good way to help people hooked on you is to cut the time together or to show your uglier sides to help them fall out of love.
Clueless, clingier men are especially good at making women fall out of love.

The opening with:

> Yo!

Should be enough to warn you that you should go with the bluntest option here.
No kindness to aholes.

Never Refuse a Date Like This

Whatever you pick, please avoid these all-too-common ways to say no to a date:

- **You'll find someone eventually**

It's patronizing as F, babying people should not be your default setting.

- **Who knows, maybe in the future…**

You're placing them as second fiddle and you're entertaining the possibility of working both sides of the street.
The former doesn't say good things about them. The latter doesn't say much good about you.

- **You're such a nice guy but / You're such a great girl but**

They are generic and the "but" voids whatever you say before.
If they are great guys and great girls, then say what's so great about them (and no, "nice" is just too hopeless to be spun into anything remotely positive).

Why Strategic, Before Assertive

Why does it even matter how you refuse a date invitation?

After all, we've all heard them:

> "just be honest"

or

> "just say it as it is"

And sure, all your friends swear they'd rather hear the truth, right?

Baloney!

You think I'm fat. Just be honest
Of course, ideally, we'd live in a world where ego-resilient people can take an honest no without repercussions.
And in that world, how to say no to a date never becomes a relevant question.

But guess what, we don't live in an ideal world!

In this world, people get offended and blame you for it.
It's not so uncommon that some of the most idiotic will even try to hurt you -or turn into stalkers!-.

Yes, stalking out of revenge is common.
Says *The Handbook of Relationship Initiation*:

> When rejection leads an obsessive pursuer to abandon pursuit of intimacy, the desire for revenge can perpetuate stalking activity.
> Cupach and Spitzberg (2004a) explained (…) the underlying motivation for stalking transforms from seeking a relationship to salving the wounds of humiliation.

And how about the popular trope of "be assertive"?
Here are the results that delivered:

> Jason et al. (1984) interviewed women who had been harassed after breaking up, and found that the more assertive the women were in attempting to end the relationship, the longer the harassment lasted, the more frequent the harassment was, and the more threatening and disruptive it was.

Of course we're talking about borderline cases but… It still happens.

Plus, why start out assertive, when other options have zero risks, and far bigger upsides?

Knowing how to turn down a date nicely isn't just a defensive strategy. It's part of a strategic approach that makes those around you feel better, and makes you more socially successful.

Some advantages of knowing how to turn down a date politely:

- **It makes you friends**

Social mastery is about getting it your way *without* hurting anyone.
And not hurting people around you allows you to make -or keep- a friend. Good for the world, and good for you.

- **It doesn't make enemies**

On the other hand, a flat-out "not interested in *you*" can easily lead to resentment. It can even lead to more serious issues, like retaliation or stalking.

- **You keep doors open**

Guess what, things can always change.
You might become single, or change your mind about that person. If you don't burn bridges, you will have more options in life (and options equal power).

SUMMARY

How to say no to a date invite is all about letting them down as easily as possible.
It's good for them, and it's good for you.

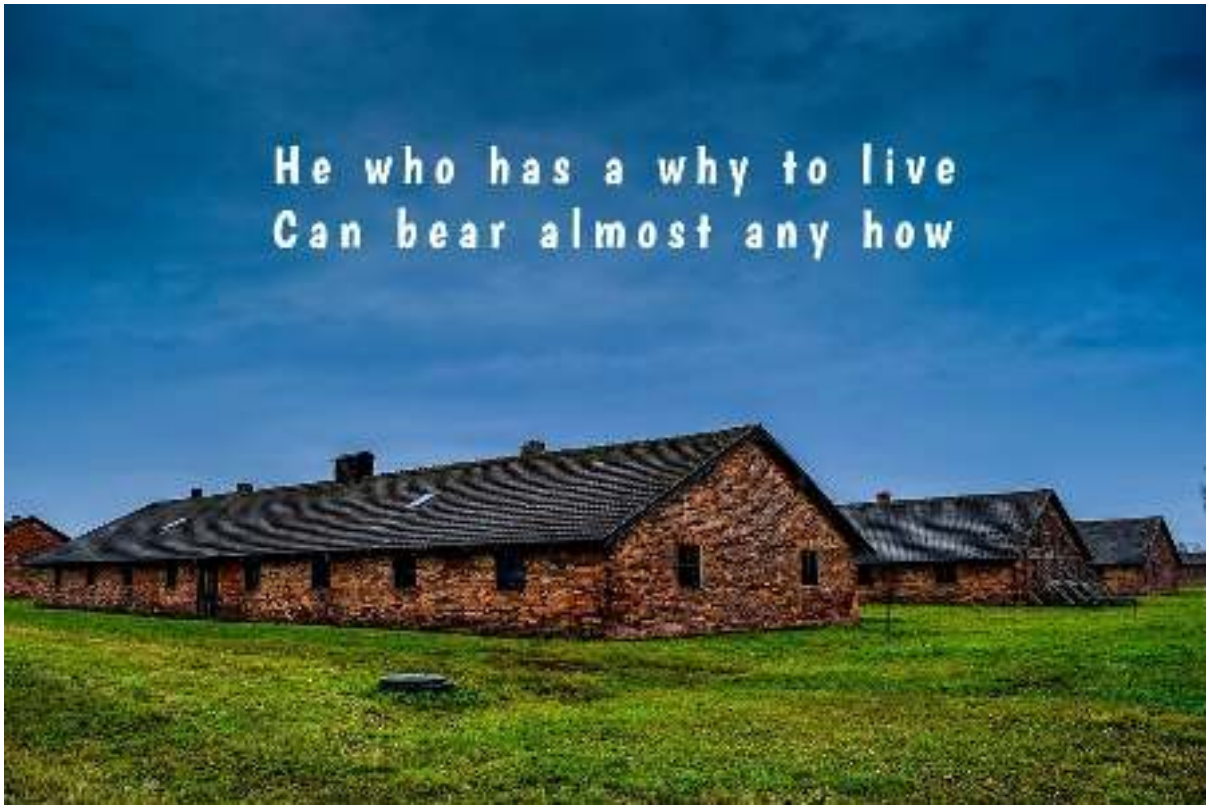
Go with softer versions first and they'll hopefully take the hint. Otherwise, you're (kinda) seeing someone.

If all else fails, well, you did your part and now you got permission to be blunt.

Man's Search for Meaning: Summary & Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*Man's Search for Meaning*" tells the story of Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl.
Frankl, a psychologist, reflects on the meaning of life and on the mental differences between those who survived and those who didn't.



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Main Takeaways

- If you have a strong WHY in your life-a guiding purpose-, you will bear any HOW -any difficulties-
- Success and happiness cannot be pursued. They must *ensue*. Get a goal greater than yourself and success and happiness will ensue.
- You choose your attitude in any set of circumstances

Overview

About the Author:
Viktor Frankl survived five concentration camps and in the holocaust lost his mother, brother, and wife (source).

The most surprising thing in all of this?

In "*Man's Search for Meaning*" there is nothing but hope, beauty, and faith.

That alone would make it a must-read.
Now add potentially life-changing content, great psychology, and deep wisdom, and you get *Man's Search for Meaning*.

#1. You choose your attitude (no matter what happens)

No matter what happens to you, you decide how to react and how to feel about it.

Viktor Frankl details how some men, no matter how desperate their situation, still found the strength to comfort others. Some of them even gave away their last piece of bread.

I can't help but quote him verbatim here because it's too beautiful to paraphrase:

> *They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's own attitude in any given set of circumstances—to choose one's own way.*

#2. Happiness and success must *ensue*

Frankl says that happiness is not something we should seek directly.
He defines happiness as a *by-product* of giving ourselves fully into an endeavor.

This is Viktor's number one way to find meaning, and we might call it today "a life goal" or, in today's marketing parlance, a "*WHY*".

#3. He who has a WHY can bear any HOW

This is the most famous sentence from Frankl.

In the book, he tells the story of men going from suicide plans to survivors simply by finding a big reason to live on.
It could have been a child in a foreign country or unfinished work.
Or it might also be surviving to make sure a holocaust would never happen again.

It's the reason to live that pushed people to live and to endure anything.

My Note:
I would add that your WHY must not necessarily be positive.
It can even be one driven by darker motives.

#4. Mental images

I also found it interesting how across all books some of the biggest reliefs from pain came from thoughts and mental images.

Viktor Frankl, for example, had mental images of his wife and the birds nearby became her living embodiment. Interestingly, he even said later on that the mental image wouldn't have changed if he had known his wife had already died.

He also imagined himself after liberation in lecture halls, teaching about what must never happen again -very prophetic as that's exactly what happened-.

Recurrent among other prisoners were also very descriptive and imaginative discussions about the food they were going to enjoy once free.

#5. What is life asking us

Viktor Frankl turns the table on the question of what we expect from life which, he believes, is a terrible question. We must instead find the courage to ask *what life expects of us*.

And sometimes, that answer only reveals the worst suffering.

I quote him:

> *(…) We had to learn ourselves and, furthermore, we had to teach the despairing men, that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. (…) stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life. (…) Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems (…)*

#6. Sunday Neuroris: Slow Roasting

Indeed, before reaching full depression, Viktor Frankl says that most people experience 'Sunday neurosis'.

Sunday neurosis is the feeling of dejection at the end of the weekend.

We realize our day-to-day humdrum is empty and meaningless, and instead of going to the root cause we cover up the pain with binge eating, drinking or shopping.

The bad thing is that these compensations, in the short term, might even patch us up. And poison us just like a drug would. And, probably worst of all, they prevent us from looking deeper into ourselves to find meaning.

This part made me think of Henry Thoreau's quote about most people "living a life of quiet desperation".

The Birth of Logotherapy

A chapter of *Man's Search for Meaning* is dedicated to Logotherapy, the psychotherapy school founded by Viktor Frankl.

Contrary to Freud's introspection, Logotherapy takes the person *out* of themselves and puts their life in a broader perspective.
Logotherapy also sees mental health as the tension between who you are and who you could be -or who you wished to be (a concept repeated by Tony Robbins on what he calls "blueprint").

In the logotherapy's perspective, existential distress is *not* a neurosis or mental disease, but a sign that we are internally looking for meaning in our life.
Depression sets in indeed only when the gap between who we are and who we could be becomes so large that we can no longer ignore it.

Thus depression can be a welcome warning if we use it as a wake-up call for some long-due soul-searching.

How to Find Meaning

So, here we are finally, how can you find meaning?

According to Frankl the main sources of meaning are:

1. Give back to the world with your work or creation
2. Experiencing or love
3. The attitude we take to situations and suffering outside our control

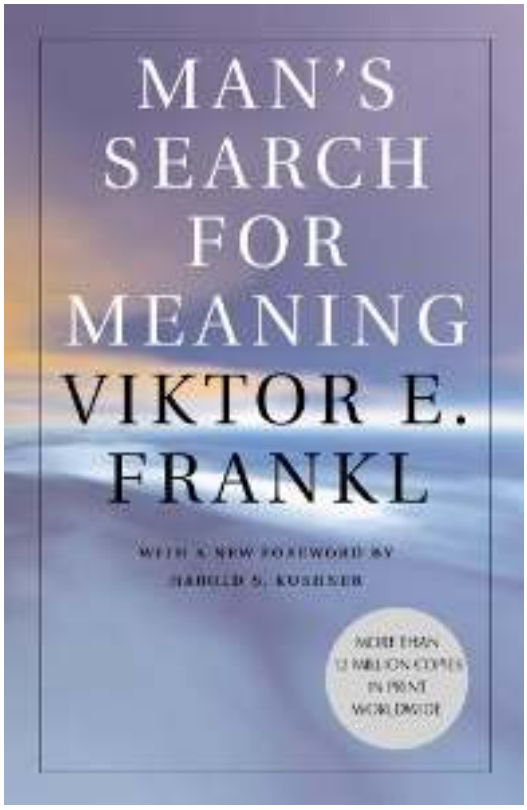
The first is what you could call a life purpose or life goal.

I love the second one as it puts experiences and a life of enjoyment as an alternative to achievement. Thus traveling the world or giving yourself fully to your partner can replace a more concrete or materialistic goal.

We get to the third when we learn to look at suffering as an opportunity to find meaning in life. For example, in the direst of consequences, we could take pride in staying humans and helping one another instead of regressing to an animal level.
To me, it can run even deeper. This is about growing and becoming people who are able to *choose* our meaning, no matter the situation we are in.

I leave you indeed with a powerful quote from the book on this subject:

> **When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves**



Real-Life Applications

- **Get a strong WHY for a happier life (and overcome depression)**

If you feel depressed, maybe you don't have an overarching goal that juices you.
It doesn't have to be lofty or grandiose.

You want a kid?
Maybe your goal is "find a man and become the best mother you can be".

You like smoking weed and gaming?
What about a legalization advocate and game tournaments to take kids off the streets?

- **Experience life**

Enjoying what life can offer is a great way of living a meaningful life.

If you are like me and tend to be demanding of yourself and rarely enjoy rewards, start changing that.
Book holidays and plan new activities. Learn to lose yourself in new experiences you will cherish for years and start living life fully. It's a skill you and you can learn it (develop a growth mindset).

- **Love someone**

Or go even further, by loving and cherishing *everyone* close to you.

CRITICISM

It's potentially weak to 'need' a meaning

I believe it's more empowering to endure for the sake of enduring.

Because, if you look deep into it, there is no meaning for the holocaust.
Or for much suffering.

To want to find a meaning at all costs can lead to all sorts of mental self-manipulation that you must constantly keep up.

It's more empowering to pursue a goal, even without assigning a practical meaning to your goal or conditions.

CONS

- **Poor organization**

You have just read a neatly organized summary with all the biggest lessons. But I had to spend some time putting it all together from different parts of the books.

But it's a minor detail really.

You will finish reading Man's Search for Meaning way too quickly and there won't be that many books that can compare.
That's the biggest con I can think of.

Review

Man's Search for Meaning is a classic and one of the most quoted books in the thousands of books that I have read.

And for good reasons: it's a powerful book.

Here are a few more personal reflections:

- **Depression and Meaning**

Depression or existential distress as a wake-up call to search for a deeper meaning was, pun intended, a wake-up concept for me.
It just rang so true with what I've seen around me.
The number of people I admire who overcame depression and/or existential crises just seemed too high to be random.

Viktor Frankl thesis seems the perfect explanation: we experience distress when we're not (yet) where we're supposed to be.
And once we heed those calls and get going on the right track newly found energies and lust for life will all but replace any distress.

- **We're more than basic drives**

While Maslow or Freud would make us believe that we can't see past our basic urges until they're satisfied Viktor Frankl proves the contrary: half-starved men taking care of others show us that we can go beyond any lack of basic needs.
Also, it proves that "higher" drives and ideals also work when our basic urges are not met (ie.: *Intrinsic Motivators work*, even in the most dread scenarios).

- **Generalization are just.. Generalizations**

Viktor Frankl affirms we can make few generalizations about what it means to be human, as *man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz (..) and also that being who entered those gas chambers upright.*

And also is man the being comforting others while starving himself.
In the end, it's up to each one of us to uphold the better angels of our nature, beginning with ourselves and projecting them onto others.

I will leave you with one more empowering thought.
Man's Search for Meaning is not a literal translation from the original title, which with "*Trotzdem Ja Zum Leben Sagen*" I found even more befitting and inspiring.

It means:

> **Saying Yes to Life in Spite of Everything**

Get **Man's Search for Meaning on Amazon**.[image]

Emotional Intelligence: Why Ambitious Men Need More (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*Emotional Intelligence*" (1995) explores what Emotional Intelligence (EI) is and why it matters more than IQ.[image]
In this book, Goleman famously said that emotional intelligence is the best predictor of life success -even more important than IQ and *power intelligence*-.
The assertion that "EI is a better predictor of life success" than IQ has been contested.

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Main Takeaways

- *Emotional Intelligence* is a (much) bigger predictor of success than IQ
- EI is composed of self-awareness; emotional management; self-motivation; empathy; managing others' emotions
- *Emotional Intelligence* skills can be taught and improved

Notes

About The Author:
Daniel Goleman is not a psychologist himself, but a journalist and a best-selling author.
He is most famous for the concept of *Emotional Intelligence*, which is rather contentious among psychologists but nonetheless brought fame to Goleman (who later also started an "*emotional intelligence certification*").

History of EQ: Daniel Goleman says that before 1990 the prominence of IQ as the major determinant of success was out of the question.
But things were just beginning to shift.
"*Emotional Intelligence*" was a term coined as an umbrella catch-all for an array of different findings that were slowly putting IQ more in perspective.

#1: What Are Emotions For?

Daniel Goleman says feelings govern our behavior as much, and often more so, than thoughts.

Thoughts are measured by IQ, while **feelings and emotions are the domain of Emotional Intelligence**.

Since feelings and emotions matter in our decision-making often more than IQ, it concedes that Emotional Intelligence matters more than IQ.

#2: Anatomy of an Emotional Hijacking

Daniel Goleman focuses here on the anatomy of the brain.

The gist is that the cortex is the area of the brain governing rational thoughts while the limbic system governs emotions.

#3: When Smart is Dumb

Daniel Goleman cites a number of studies proving *Emotional Intelligence* is a more significant predictor than IQ in determining "success" in life.

Namely, he mentions and lends credibility to a study concluding that IQ accounts only for 10% to 20% of "success", and implies that EQ accounts for the rest (80%).

My Note:
There has been discussion and criticism of those conclusions (superficial studies, EQ VS IQ?, EQ as a predictor), but I don't doubt it for a second.
IF EQ includes understanding other people's emotions, using emotions in service of your goal, and delaying gratification… Well, those pretty much are the *definition* of success.

Importantly, the author also stresses that **IQ and EQ are NOT antithetic**.
As a matter of fact, high IQ and low EI and vice versa are quite rare. Indeed there is a correlation between IQ and some aspects of IE.

Goleman takes the 5 domains of *Emotional Intelligence* first outlined by Peter Salovey and expands on them.
The general idea is that same for IQ, people have different abilities in each domain.
The basis is neural, but since *the brain is plastic*, these abilities can be changed and improved upon.

The next 5 chapters will cover the 5 Emotional Domains.

Emotional Domain 1: Knowing one's emotions

Knowing one's emotions refers to self-awareness. being conscious of what we're feeling and recognizing which

feeling we are experiencing.

Daniel Goleman says it's more important knowing yourself and your strengths instead of your IQ test and its results (or whatever other test you took).

Emotional Domain 2: Managing Emotions

You can manage your feelings by changing what you focus your attention on.

I especially liked the topics of optimism and hope.
They are highly beneficial and they can both be learned: underpinning both is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that one has mastery over life's events and can meet challenges as they come.

Developing a competency of any kind also strengthens the sense of self-efficacy.

Flow & Emotional Emotional Intelligence
Goleman says that Flow could be thought of in many ways as the peak of *emotional intelligence*.
One way to enter flow is to focus greatly on the task at hand.
Flow happens when a task is a bit more challenging than usual but within reach.

Goleman cites the same study in Daniel Pink's *Drive*, in which painters who were after money or afraid of critics weren't able to deliver as original work as their counterparts who freely expressed themselves.

For more on Flow check:

- Deep Work
- Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience

Emotional Domain 3: Motivating Oneself

Motivating oneself refers to the ability to use emotions in the service of a goal.
Goleman highlights the importance of emotional traits such as enthusiasm and persistence -also check *Grit* by Angela Duckworth-.

Emotional Domain 4: Recognizing Others' Emotions

This is basically empathy and social awareness.

Daniel Goldman also talks about *emotional intelligence* in relation to gender.
Women, on average, are more empathetic than men. Goleman also suggests that empathy helps with romantic life.

Emotional Domain 5: Handling relationships

This is the ability to manage emotions in others.

EQ is key in relationships because people who are poor at perceiving and sending emotions are poor in their relationships.

#9: Intimate Enemies

Daniel Goleman cites different studies to prove that women can express their emotions better than men.

Men also tend to have a much rosier view of their relationship compared to women.
However, the differences disappeared among top performers executive, meaning that top women are similar to top men (link to the study).

My Note: Take a look at my articles on dating and relationships:

- Biggest mistakes women do in early dating
- Communication mistakes men do to ruin relationships
- How to Fix Combative Relationships

#10: Managing With Heart

Goleman says that how well groups perform a task is determined in good part by their collective IQ.

But **the key to a high group IQ is Emotional Intelligence**: it's Emotional Intelligence indeed that fosters an environment of social harmony.

Research among engineers at Bell's Labs showed how what really made the difference for star performers was the informal network they were able to tap into. Informal networks are formed mostly on the basis of EQ.

Also, many studies proved the **top performers were people who started a task and finished it**.
People low in Emotional Intelligence instead started many tasks at the same time and ended up leaving many of them unfinished.

#11: Mind and Medicine

Goleman discusses many pieces of research showing there's a strong relationship between a positive and optimistic mood and good health.

Especially insidious to bad health are strong emotions like anger.

People high in hostility and prone to anger outbursts are 7 times more likely to die by age 50.
That is a higher predictor than smoking, high blood pressure, or cholesterol.

#12: The Family Crucible

Sadly Goleman points out that emotional imbalances are often transmitted from emotionally unstable families to their children.
Parents who constantly burst out in anger and beat their children often bring their children to lose empathy and behave the same way.

#13: Trauma and Emotional Relearning

Traumas and emotionally tragic experiences can become embedded in people's brains and even smaller events can recall the event and trigger uncontrollable reactions.

However, our brain is malleable and we can re-learn new things and abandon old neurological connections.

#14: Temperament is Not Destiny

The main idea here is that we can all learn emotional intelligence. However, I didn't find any enlightening advice.

#15: The Cost of Emotional Literacy

Daniel Goleman says that some people are paying very highly the cost of not recognizing emotions.

Some, for example, are unable to differentiate between being scared and angry.
Some other people end up hungry in depressing situations and binge eat.

Another example is bullies.
Studies have shown how they can misread neutral acts as aggression and then are able to muster one way to react: lashing out.

Criticism

There is much I need to say here:

1. EQ accounting for 80% of success is sensation-seeking nonsense

The notion that "EQ is 80% of success" has been severely criticized.
And for good reasons.

A few reasons why:

1. There is no study to prove that
2. At the time Goleman wrote there was no good way to measure EI
3. There is still a debate raging on whether we can correctly measure EI
4. How would you even measure "success" and how much "EI accounted for"? Close to impossible…

Just to be sure, Goleman himself says he's appalled people misquote him by saying that "EQ accounts for 80% of success" (note: he removed that page).

And he again criticizes that concept in another article.

Goleman himself criticized that idea.

Yet, the reason why so many quote him as saying that, it's because that's exactly how it feels reading "*Emotional Intelligence*".
It feels like a huge cheerleader for EI, which matters more than anything else.

Even in that second article in which he vehemently denies that EQ account for 80% of success, he ends by saying: "the slow march of research lags far behind the hype of EQ marketers".
The feeling is that the "slow march" of research will eventually prove the point.

In truth, there is plenty of research showing the limited use of EQ as in "empathy" or disproving it outright.

This leads me to the next point:

2. How about Machiavellian EQ? That surely helps!

With Goleman, "*emotional intelligence*" seems to be mostly about empathy, caring, and understanding.

These are all positive emotions.

But the emotional intelligence that gets you promoted can as well be Machiavellian in nature.
See:

- **The Myth of emotional intelligence and Success at Work**

In his overview of Machiavellian literature and research, Bereckzei also notes that Machiavellians score low on emotional intelligence tests because they're poorly designed.
But remove the agreeableness bias, add personal incentives, and add the opportunity for manipulation, and Machiavellians perform better than average.

This is something that Adam Grant also notices. Goleman called Grant's article an "acerbic takedown", but never addressed that crucial point.
Note: there was a link to Goleman's article, but Goleman removed the page.

If you want to have a good career, read here instead:

- How to learn office politics

- 4 prove career strategies
- Career strategies: start here

3. Meta-analysis shows EQ can impede success in non-people-facing jobs

Research shows that in jobs where people don't work with other people, emotional intelligence not only didn't predict performance but negatively correlated with performance (Newman, 2010).

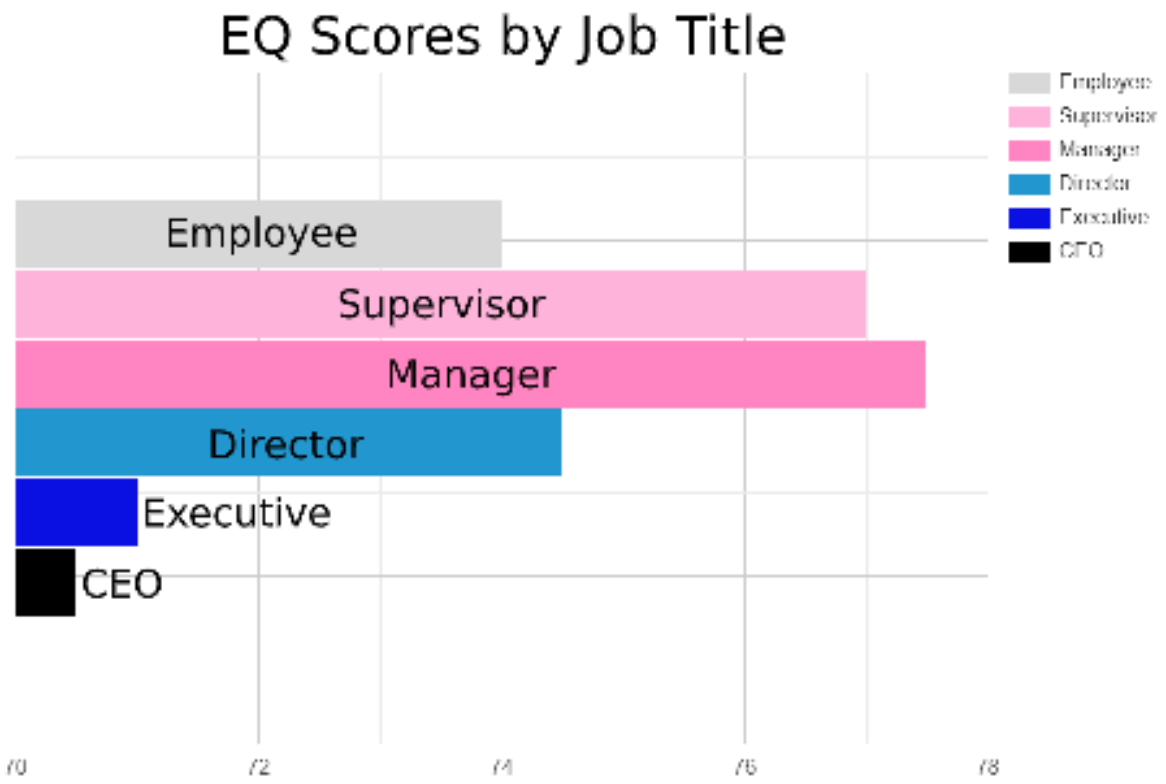
Again, this is something Adam Grant correctly points out in the previous article.
But Goleman focuses his answer on what some random people commented on Grant's post, plus with some more circumstantial evidence -plus accusing Grant of being an ivory tower academic, which in my opinion was low-.

In my opinion, **Ivory Tower is refusing to acknowledge how Machiavellianism can get you to the top as effectively as being an empathic manager can**.
And that's not what Grant is culpable of.

4. Execs have low EQ. CEOs have lowest EQ. How do you explain *that*?

Finally, there is Bradberry.
Bradberry markets emotional intelligence courses, and he'd have all the interest in showing that EI predicts job position.

Instead, these are his results:



So, how would you explain *that*?

Also, read:

- The Truth About EI and Success
- The truth about EI and leadership

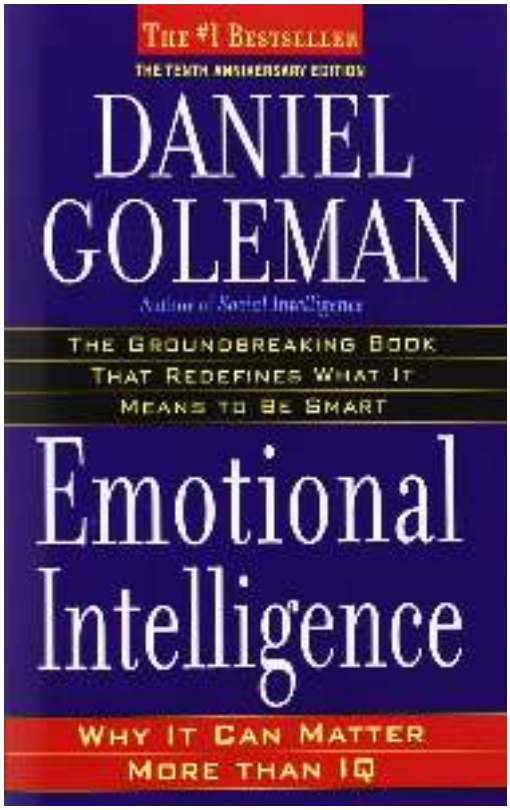
5. How About Hyper-Successful of IQ Geniuses & Emotional Idiots?

Finally, there are some extremely high IQs and very low EI.

And they still achieved huge success.
Think of Bill Gates or Mark Zuckerberg.
There is no mention of these personalities in "*Emotional Intelligence*", and they don't really seem to be such rare exceptions among the multi-billionaires.

For examples see these breakdown articles:

- Elon Musk
- Elon Musk got skewed by Talulah Riley because of low EI
- Einstein's letter to his wife



Real-Life Applications

Don't ruminate when you're sad
When you're sad, don't ruminate, but distract yourself. Exercise, complete small tasks, or re-frame the situation.
Also read: Learned Optimism by Martin Seligman.

How do you reduce anger
Emotional Intelligence says when you're angry you should see the issue from the other person's point of view. Or if there's a problem, think about a positive and plausible reason behind it rather than accusing "some idiot's incompetence". And do NOT vent. Contrary to popular belief venting only prolongs your feelings.

Review

"*Emotional Intelligence*" is an important book with some important caveats and potential fallacies that hadn't been addressed.

To begin with, let me tell you this: it is not a “how to” book.
There are some tips in here, but you won’t come out with a list of exercises or things you can do.

But if you want to learn about Emotional Intelligence the topic, and how and why it’s important, then this book provides a broad overview of many studies on the subject.

In my opinion, **“*Emotional Intelligence*” was a much-needed need, but got carried away too far**.
It is biased in the sense that it overstates the case for EI as linked to personal success, but it does not show:

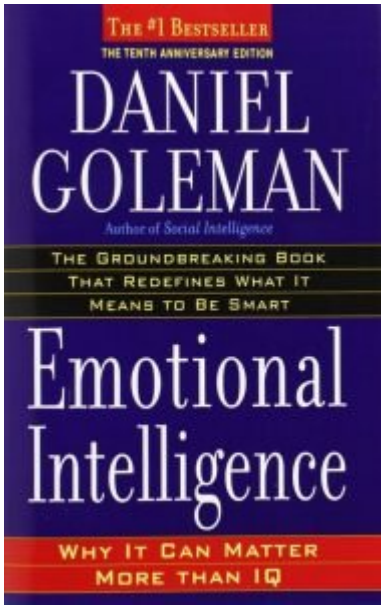
1. EI doesn’t matter so much in certain roles
2. EI can be used for Machiavellian strategies, and then it can be even more effective

On the other hand, it’s great that Goleman got people talking about this important concept because it does make for better lives and relationships -when used for good-.

Daniel Goleman brought “*Emotional Intelligence*” to the general public, and that’s a good thing.
We at The Power Moves tell men that emotional intelligence is crucial for relationships, but not enough to succeed.

Get it on Amazon.

Emotional Intelligence Summary: Why Top-1% Men Need More



EQ accounts for 80% of success when compared to IQ. What does that mean?

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/emotional-intelligence-review/

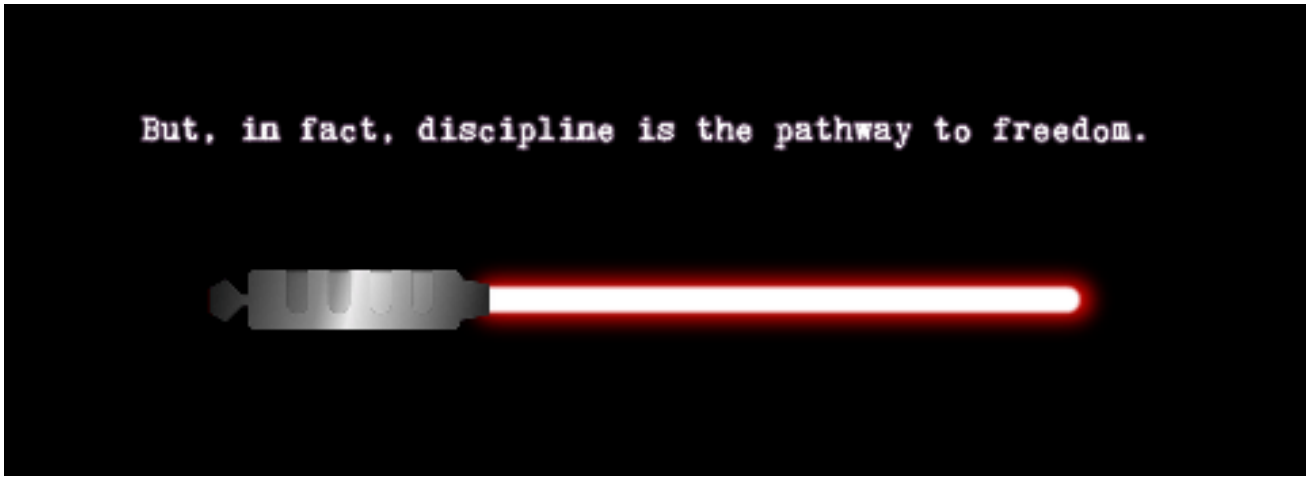
Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
1.8

Extreme Ownership: Is This A Powerful Mindset? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Extreme Ownership (2015) is a leadership book by Jocko Willink and Leif Beibin, two former Navy SEALs who share the leaders' mindsets they learned while serving in the US military.
Later on, the two authors acknowledge with a follow-up book that good leaders are never extreme but must strike an optimum balance between the extremes.



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- Review

Takeaways

- **Great leaders embrace Extreme Ownership**: you are responsible for everything
- **Leaders believe in the mission** and make sure their team fully understands it
- **The only measure of leadership is: are you winning?**

Willink and Babin make their philosophy clear right from the start: the only meaningful measure for a leader is whether the team succeeds or fails, they say.
Effective leaders lead their teams to accomplish their mission, ineffective leaders do not.
Simple

- **Leaders are humble, take the blame for mistakes and give full credit to the team for the victory**

The best leaders are not driven by ego or personal agendas.
As a matter of fact, humility is paramount. As for leaders, the humility to admit and own mistakes is essential to success.

Getting rid of ego and personal agenda will allow leaders to zero in on the mission.

And while the leader is responsible for failures, he gives the credit and honor of the victory to his subordinates.

About the Authors

Jocko Willink and Leif Babin are two former Navy SEALs who deployed in the Iraq War and later turned business consultants. They coach and write on leadership dynamics.
Their next book is "*The Dichotomy of Leadership*" to fix the misunderstanding about this one.

⍰♂Lucio's Take On Jocko Willink

> **Lucio**: Jocko is a great guy, with common military personnel mindsets that may at times be tribal/jingoist.
> At TPM **we espouse men's empowement as individuals-first**. Global citizens, conquerors, explorers, and seducers without borders.
> Be aware of those potentially limiting drawbacks, and he's a great guy to learn from, and even look up to.

Part I: Winning the War Within

Chapter 1: Extreme Ownership

Extreme Ownership means the leader must accept that he is truly and ultimately responsible for everything.

The leader must own everything in his world and all responsibility for success and failure rests with him. There is no one else to blame.

Total responsibility for failure is difficult to accept, and Extreme Ownership when things go wrong demands humility and courage. Being able to accept Extreme Ownership when things go wrong is an absolute necessity for learning and growing as a leader.

Even when subordinates aren't following up on the plan, or making an expected blunder, leaders exercising Extreme Ownership cannot blame them. Because the leader was responsible to make sure they understood the plan fully and were fully trained for carrying on their tasks flawlessly.

- **Underperformers must go**

The leader must take care that everyone in the team can get the job done.

If there are underperformers, it's your responsibility to bring them up to par. And if the underperformer cannot meet standards, it's your team, so it's up to you to get on board someone who can do the job.
Because at the end of the day, the leader must be loyal to the team and the mission, not to any single individual.

The leaders must look at an organization's problems with the objective in mind and without any emotional attachments.

Chapter 2: Not bad teams, only bad leaders

The precept that there are no bad teams, only bad leaders, is a big recurring theme in *Extreme Ownership* by Jocko Willink.

And when it comes to demanding a high standard of performance, it's not about what you preach, but what you tolerate.

Another key to excellent performance is embedding Extreme Ownership at every level into the team. Everyone must feel Extreme Ownership of their tasks and duties, no matter if people around you fail to deliver their part.

Chapter 3: Believe

A leader must truly fully believe in the mission to convince and inspire his team.

If he doesn't fully believe in the mission, a leader must work within himself to align with the thoughts and vision of the mission.

Aggressive and proactive
Jocko explains that, as a leader, your default setting should be aggressive – proactive rather than reactive. This is critical to the success of any team. Instead of letting the situation dictate our decisions, we must dictate the situation.

Chapter 4: Check the Ego

Ego is a big threat to top performance. And the most challenging ego to deal with is your own. Be confident, not cocky.

> **Be confident, not cocky**

Part II: The Laws of Combat

Chapter 5: Cover and Move

Cover and Move is the most fundamental tactic.
And **cover and move means teamwork**.

All elements within the greater team are fundamental and must mutually support each other and work together to achieve the final goal.

Leaders have the responsibility to link tactical and strategic perspectives.
It's up to leaders to remind and explain how the team fits in the greater strategic mission and what's their part in it to achieve that mission.

Chapter 6: Simple

Simplicity is key to success.

Always simplify as much as possible.
People will not understand complicated plans and orders and complexity compounds issues when things go wrong -and they will-.
Communicate plans and orders simply, clearly, and concisely.

And if your team doesn't get it, again, it's your fault. You must be clear enough to ensure everyone on the team understands.

Chapter 7: Prioritize and Execute

In the fog of war, dealing with too many tasks at a time is impossible and will make you fail.
Take a breath, step back for a second, prioritize and execute. Then deal with the next item on the list.

Prioritize and execute is your guiding principle at any time when the situation is getting overwhelming and out of hand.

Contingency planning can be of great help here to stay a step ahead of real-time problems.
This is because a good contingency plan will force you to look into likely challenges and instead of being caught in the heat of the moment, you will execute a few already thought-through effective responses.

Chapter 8: Decentralized Command

Humans generally cannot manage more than six to ten people, and that's all the truer when things start going wrong. Hence there must a leader for each team of 4 to 5 people.

Expect and empower those leaders both below and around you to make decisions and make a good job (this is the same principle of the *Autonomy Intrinsic Motivation* from Daniel Pink).

Explaining to each tactical operator the overarching tactical goals, and the WHY you're doing something is key: the people who were the least engaged, biggest complainers, and often lowest performers were the ones who didn't take any part in drafting the plan of action.

US VS THEM
That “us versus them” mentality was common to just about every level of every chain of command, whether military unit or civilian corporation. But breaking that mentality was the key to properly leading up the chain of command and radically improving the team’s performance.

My Note:
The authors s talk about “us VS them” but can’t see that **the whole business of war is a huge “us VS them” mind trap**.

Part III: Sustaining Victory

Chapter 9: Plan

A leader must first understand the overall mission, and then prepare a simple enough brief the whole team will understand. The mission must be clear and specific, with a well-defined end result.

Chapter 10: Leading Up and Down

A leader takes responsibility for leading not just his subordinates, but also his superiors.
It means you push up situational awareness to your superior and take care of obtaining all the support you need to enable your team to accomplish the mission.

Two parts I liked:
If someone isn’t doing what you want them to do, look at yourself first and see what you are not doing best.
You should know your job so well that you don’t ask your leader what you should do but you tell them what you are going to do.

> **Don’t ask your leader what you should do but you tell them what you are going to do**

Chapter 11: Decisiveness and Uncertainty

Intelligence and research are important, but you ought to be realistic about it.

Waiting to be 100% sure often leads to indecision and the inability to execute.

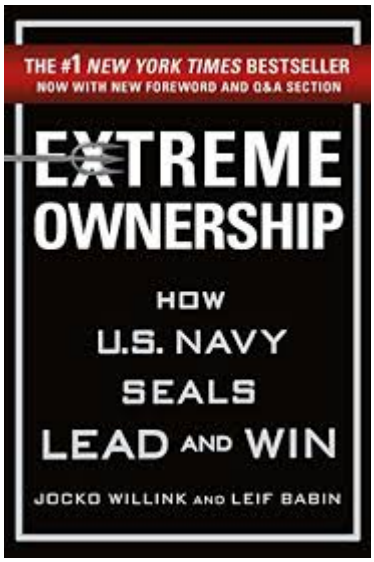
Leaders must be prepared to make an educated guess based on previous experience and the intelligence available right now (an interesting example in the book of the last-minute intelligence information which proved to be wrong, so intelligence is not always correct either).

Chapter 12: The Dichotomy of Leadership

The characteristics of a good leader are:

- Confident but not arrogant;
- Brave but not daredevil;
- Strive to win but be gracious in loss
- Detail-oriented but not obsessive;
- A leader but also a follower when needed;
- Quiet but not always silent;
- Logical but not without emotions;
- Close with the soldiers, but nobody is more important than another or the team as a whole;
- Not so chummy they forget who’s the leader;

- Takes Extreme Ownership, and exercises Decentralized Command;
- Has nothing to prove and everything to prove at the same time



Real-Life Applications

- **Get an Extreme Ownership Mindset**

Start getting an Extreme Ownership Mindset.
It will make you not just more effective, but also more positive and optimistic about life.
And it will improve your social skills as well because you won't have that annoying, friendship-destroying temptation of blaming and finger-pointing.

- **Own Up Mistakes**

Not many people are able to own up to their mistakes to themselves and the people around them. Once you will start doing so you will immediately become a higher quality person and get much more respect for it. Both from others *and* from yourself.

- **Take Responsibility for Up & Down The Chain**

The concepts of Extreme Ownership and responsibility up and down the chain of command took a new light for me thanks to Jocko Willink & Leif Babin.

- **Take Blame and Give Credit**

"Take the blame and give credit" really hit me hard as I read Extreme Ownership while I was at a company doing the exact opposite. Taking the blame and giving credit is what all-around high-quality men do.

- **Believe in the mission or change mindset**

The concept that you should change your mindset to align with your mission is an extremely powerful one. It was only briefly touched on in the book, but this is huge for you: you can align your mindset to fit your goals!

Overall, fantastic book, combining an entertaining read with terrific concepts to make you an even more amazing human being.

Criticism

The original title of this post was "*Extreme Ownership* Or Extremely "Following Orders"?

See this article here for the full criticism:

> Great Leadership Is Great Manipulation: Jocko Willlink Case Study

1. Extreme Ignoring: The N.1 Ownership The Authors Ignored

I wish I had seen this *extreme ownership*:

> The war may have been unnecessary.
> It may have caused more poverty, famine, death, maiming, and pain than necessary.
> For decadese we failed to bring peace and install a functioning government.

For a book that calls itself "*extreme ownership*", that ownership falls conveniently short sometimes.

Then, once you're sure war is needed, you do your dominant SEAL thing:

> It is our responsibility as men to only take up arms for valid reasons. But once we have valid reasons, may God have mercy for our enemies.

2. Performance & Doing Your Best Should Be Your Main Focus

I disagree the only measure of success is the final, binary result of victory or failure.

Ray Dalio built a multibillion-dollar empire by NOT judging based on the final result, but based on the quality of the decision-making.
Dalio calls it "judging the swing, rather than the shot".

The final result should *not* be your (sole) yardstick because it's not always in your full control.
When you judge the final result alone, you allow anything and everything outside your control to determine your self-esteem and confidence. By definition, that's giving power away to what you can't control, which is disempowering.
Read here instead of how to build an antifragile ego.

3. Extremes Are Rarely Effective

The law of optimum balance also applies to ownership.

Ownership is great, but not when it goes so far that it blinds you to making proper post-mortem assessments of mistakes -not necessarily to punish, but also to opportunities for improvement (keep on reading)-.

Read more on the law of optimum balance:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

4. Is The Military As An Organization Even Compatible With Extreme Ownership?

This is the main question:

How can you even adopt a mindset of extreme ownership when you're forced to follow orders and execute other people's decisions of who and when to enter the war?

That is incompatible with extreme ownership.

When it comes to the specifics of this book and the Iraq war, then it becomes more personal and some might disagree.

thors seem to assume righteousness based on… Not sure what, but it feels like it's based on belonging to the "right" country.
And calling the other group the "bad guys" simply based on what, in the end, is little more than tribalism.

To me, that mindset falls victim to dark psychology by the elites to enlist and brainwash young men to go fight for far darker motives.

The military ethos is replete with manipulative appeals to higher ideals which, at the core, have this exchange: we give you good feelings including "honor" and a sense of belonging, and you give your limbs or life.

And that's the definition of a sucker's trade.

5. Low-Power Leadership Executes What High-Power Leadership Chooses

The "real" leadership chooses the mission.

They choose:

- Whether or not to even enter a mission
- Which mission to pursue
- Which goals to achieve

The lower-level leaders execute the plan.

They call it "extreme ownership", but they might as well call it "extreme following".

And the executors follow the plan and call it "taking extreme ownership".
But taking extreme ownership of what, exactly? Of invading another country for oil?

That's the real question that the "extreme executioners" never ask.
To me, extreme ownership means asking oneself why and who you are fighting for.
And to refuse to fight for what's not worth fighting for.

Also, read:

- **Enlightened Individualism**

I'll leave you with a sobering thought: we've already heard in the past the "I was just following orders" mantra, haven't we?
I bet those guys were also taking great ownership of their tasks…

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

6. Truth Goes Lost With "Extreme Ownership"

The first victim of war is truth, someone said.

I wonder if that includes the military personnel books that follow every war as certainly as death and taxes do.

In my opinion, not only it includes the above-said books, but it also includes the mindset of Extreme Ownership.

What do I mean by that?

Well, think about it:

Imagine you have an "*extreme ownership*" leader beneath you.
You want to find out what happened to learn from the mistakes and, potentially, distribute punishment or rewards as needed.
And instead of an account of what actually happened, said leader tells you "it's all my fault".

What are you going to do with that?
It's useless to you.
And it's also not very useful for the organization as a whole.
And that includes the mission.

The mission suffers from an extreme ownership mentality because it cannot effectively learn from mistakes.

The mindset of "*extreme ownership*" should at the very least not be so extreme in its application. And it should be suspended any time that a more objective observation of reality is needed.

For example, if I were a general asking Jocko "what happened" and he'd say "it's all my fault", I'd tell him "that's cool of you to say that, but now let's see what actually happened".

> **Enlightened General:** let's review what happened to learn more and prevent similar mistakes in the future
> **Jocko**: it's all my fault
> **Enlightened General:** that's cool of you to say that. But we need to learn what actually happened and who did what. So let's review the facts now.

I'm exaggerating here, of course.
I'm sure Jocko is a smart guy who knows how to draw his lessons learned. Still, the point stands: an exaggerated "*extreme ownership*" mindset can stand in the way of rational and effective analysis.

7. "Owning It" Is A Virtue-Signaling, Self-Serving Power Move (& nothing wrong with that)

Owning your mistake was presented here as a mindset of enlightened leadership.

Yet, when Jocko took the full blame for the mission, it was also a virtue-signaling power move.
Not virtue-signaling in a bad way, mind you.
But it was, in many ways, a self-serving strategy to look leader-like. Once you own it in front of everyone, you empower your superiors to take action against you. But as they feel good about your submissiveness to their power and admire your non-defensive approach, they're more likely to congratulate you and let you off the hook.

It's a great technique.
Yet, I'm doubtful when it's framed as enlightened leadership only when it's also good for the leader himself.

8. No Science of Leadership, Experience Limited to Military Settings

When it comes to actual leadership, there is little science of leadership.

And, besides a few tips, I also find little practical "how to".
For example:

- How do you gain respect?
- How do you gain trust from your team?
- How do you ensure everyone pulls together (higher ideals is one answer, but Jocko doesn't like that level of explanation)?

And personally, I'm not convinced that simply having been in a conflict necessarily makes anyone a better leader or a bigger expert on leadership.

Review

Extreme Ownership is a good book with a foundational mindset for all men who seek effectiveness: taking ownership of their deliverables.

It may take that good idea too far, though, to the point that they had to make a follow-up book on *balance*.

Personally, I see some merit in this extreme ownership mindset, but also some important limitations.
The TPM community discussed it at length, and John made some great points to defend the Extreme Ownership approach:

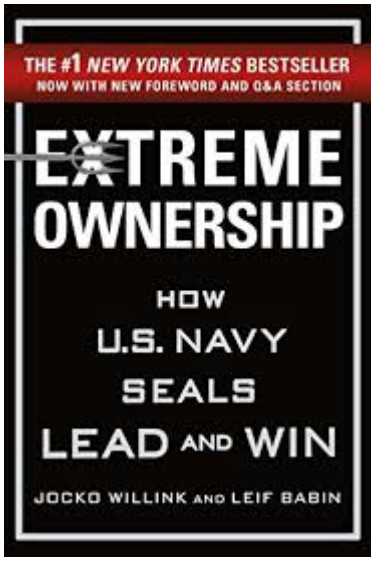
- **TPM community discusses "Extreme Ownership"**

Besides that, it covers some basics like prioritizing and executing, but it's light on practical details, and I wished for more real-life leadership power dynamics.

Check out:

- Best books on leadership

Extreme Ownership Summary: 12 SEAL Leadership Tactics



Extreme Ownership delivers you the most powerful, combat tested Navy SEAL weapons. You wanna know what they are? They are all mindsets, of course. Read on to arm yourself and win at life.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/extreme-ownership-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.8

Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn shows that to win in life, you have to remain teachable and learn from your mistakes.

Contents

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- Full Summary
  - Chapter 1 – Humility: The spirit of learning
  - Chapter 2 – Reality: The Foundation of Learning
  - Chapter 3 – Responsibility: The first step of learning
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  - Chapter 8 – Problems: Opportunities for Learning
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  - Chapter 11 – Maturity: The Value of Learning
  - Chapter 12 – Winning Isn't Everything, But Learning Is
- How You Can Apply It
- CONS
- Review
  - What I didn't like:
  - What I warn you about:
  - What I loved:

Bullet Summary

- To win tomorrow, you gotta become a learner (today)
- Drop the search for "quick fixes" in your quest to become a better person
- For the best and quickest growth stay *inside* your strength and get *outside* your comfort zone

Full Summary

Chapter 1 – Humility: The spirit of learning

Some people bounce back from losses. Others never recover. What's the difference?
John Maxwell says it's humility.

Humility as in the opposite of pride.
Prideful people respond to failure in ways that don't help them move forward, like denying and blaming others.
People with a spirit of humility instead learn from successes *and* losses (Ed note: this is what a *fixed mindset* does).

Here's what humility does for you:

–Gives you perspective: humility doesn't mean you think less of yourself. It means you think of yourself less. And it will allow you to look at the bigger picture.

–Enables you to admit a mistake: and thus to learn and grow.

–Allows to let go of perfectionism: contrary to prideful people, those with a spirit of humility aren't afraid of a mistake.

> **It's not what we have that determines our success. It's how we think**

Chapter 2 – Reality: The Foundation of Learning

John Maxwell says that when we accept that life is hard, we begin to grow.

Successful people don't shy away from difficulties, they learn to face them and move ahead in spite of them. And here's a new perspective for you: what if instead of fearing difficulties, you welcome them as a test of character and use them to rise to the occasion?

Roots author Alex Haley said: *"Either you deal with what is the reality, or you can be sure that the reality is going to deal with you".* Facing reality and accepting the problem will not conquer it, but it's the very first step to overcoming it.

John Maxwell says you should realistically rate the performance independently of whether you win or lose.

And life is definitely harder for those who stop growing and learning. Some people become focused on a specific goal that when they achieve it they relax because they feel they made it. That mindset has the power to unmake them (arrival plateau).

> **What if you treated hardships as a welcome test of characters**

Chapter 3 – Responsibility: The first step of learning

John Maxwell says that nothing happens to advance our potential until we step up and say, "I am responsible." If you don't take responsibility, you give up control of your life (external locus of control). Taking responsibility for your life instead puts you in a place where you are always able to learn and often able to win (internal locus of control).

Lack of responsibility means:

- Victim Mentality;
- Blamestorming activity, which is what John Maxwell designs as the creative process to find a scapegoat
- Giving away control of our lives: if you don't take responsibility for what happens in your life you relinquish ownership of your life
- No growth: and little chance of success-

Taking responsibility means:

- First step in learning: taking responsibility for what you can control and letting go of what you cannot control will accelerate your learning process
- Seeing Things in Proper Perspective: The best learners are people who don't see their losses and failures as permanent (develop a growth mindset)
- Backing Up Our Words With Behavior: Jeff O'Leary wrote "*sign your work at the end of each day. If you can't*

do that, find a new profession." When you can take full responsibility for your work, you reach integrity.

Chapter 4 – Improvement: The Focus of Learning

The Stone Age didn't end because people ran out of stones. It ended because people kept learning and improving.

1. Improving Yourself Is the First Step to Improving Everything Else. Whatever you want to improve in your life, you need to first start with yourself.

2. Improvement Requires Us to Move Out of Our Comfort Zone. Always doing the safe thing will not take you forward. You must surrender security to improve.

3. Improvement Is Not Satisfied with "Quick Fixes". "Everyone is looking for a quick fix, but what they really need is fitness. People who look for fixes stop doing what's right when pressure is relieved. People who pursue fitness do what they should no matter what."

4. Improvement Is a Daily Commitment. If you want to improve, you need to make it a habit. Motivation is nice but short-lived. It's the positive habits you practice consistently that will get you far.

Chapter 5 – Hope: The motivation for learning

By reading this paragraph I had the impression John Maxwell was using the term "hope" for "optimism", but he later says optimism is passive while hope is active.

It takes courage to have hope because it can be disappointing, but Maxwell is convinced it's going to be rewarded.

Hope-filled people are energetic, they welcome life and all that comes with it -including challenges-.
And Maxwell believes it's no coincidence depressed individuals often lack energy. Lack of hope and lack of energy usually go hand in hand.

Hope is your greatest asset against hardships: it looks for lessons rather than leaving us deflated. It sees what can be done rather than what can't be done.

Doing the following three things will help you become hopeful:

1. Realize That Hope Is a Choice. And then choose hope

2. Change Your Thinking. We get what we expect in life. Have positive expectations

3. Win Some Small Victories. Success, even in the form of small wins, will encourage hope. And smaller victories show you that bigger ones are within grasp

Chapter 6 – Teachability: the pathway or learning

If you want to be successful tomorrow, then you must be teachable today.

Teachability is a choice and these are the traits of a Teachable Person:

1. Attitude Conducive to Learning People with a teachable spirit approach each day as an opportunity for learning. They know that success is less about natural talent and more about learning (*Mindset* by Carol Dweck).

2. Teachable People Possess a Beginner's Mindset. It can be difficult, so you have to remind yourself.

3. Teachable People Take Long, Hard Looks in the Mirror. Always ask yourself "am I the cause?" If the answer is yes, then it's time to make changes.

4. Teachable People Encourage Others to Speak into Their Lives. Surround yourself with people who know you well and will tell you the truth. This is even more important as you become more successful.

5. Teachable People Learn Something New Every Day. Any day will make you a little larger or a little smaller.

Strung many days together and you will be a lot larger or a lot smaller

Daily Practices to Become More Teachable

1. Preparation. Every day ask yourself in advance what you're going to learn. You will be amazed by how often you can improve from people and experiences in your daily life.

2. Contemplation. Observe and reflect on your experiences. Stopping and thinking allow us to gain perspective on both the successes and failures so that we can find the lessons within them. Only evaluated experiences teach us.

3. Application. The true value of teachability comes when we take something that we learn and apply it.

Recognizing your contribution in your failings, seeking solutions no matter how painful, and working hard to change for the best is teachability in action.

> **If you want to be successful tomorrow, then you must be teachable today**

Chapter 7 – Adversity: The Catalyst for Learning

Difficulties can be a boost if you face them with the right mindset.

Adversity Brings Profit as Well as Pain If We Expect It and Plan for It Since adversity is going to be there anyway, we might as well plan for it. Gold medalist winners always expect pain.

Adversity Writes Our Story Adversity is unavoidable, and it's your chance to be a hero: if you respond well, it will be a heroic poem. Will adversity be your tombstone or stepping stone?

> **You never win the gold without hurting**

Chapter 8 – Problems: Opportunities for Learning

Problems get better or worse based on what you do or don't do when you face them.

Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn delves a bit into problem-solving: interesting and useful, but less foundational when it comes to mindsets.

Chapter 9 – Bad Experiences: The Perspective for Learning

How we think when we lose determines how long it will be until we win.

If you are ambitious a danger for you is that you will quickly move past successes and focus on "what you should have done better". Which way too often means you're focusing on losses and building regret. But you can't build on regrets. And the capacity to manage disappointment and loss is key to living a fulfilling life.

The next time you have a bad experience try this:

1. Accept Your Humanness. We will fail sometimes no matter how hard we try. Why? Because we're human. And that's what makes you special.

2. Learn to Laugh at Yourself and Life. How much easier would your problem appear if you were able to laugh at them?

3. Keep the Right Perspective. Seeing difficulties as experience is a matter of perspective:
Don't Base Your Self-Worth on a Bad Experience You are not your worst moment and you are not defined by your performance.
Don't Feel Sorry for Yourself You are allowed a 24h grace period of feeling sorry for yourself, then pick yourself up (or you might get stuck)

Do Consider Your Failures as a Process to Learn and Improve Look at it like scientists: when it didn't work, they tested a hypothesis.

4. Don't Give Up If you want to succeed in life, you can't give up. Og Mandino said "Your capacity for occasional blunders is inseparable from your capacity to reach your goals. No one wins them all, and your failures are just part of your growth. Shake off your blunders. How will you know your limits without an occasional failure"

> **Mistakes are painful when they happen, but years later a collection of mistakes is what is called experience**

Chapter 10 – Change: The Price of Learning

Some people put the minimum effort to distance themselves from their problems without going to the roots, which of course can often be found in themselves.
And of course, they never grow and never solve those problems permanently.

Entrepreneur Alan Cohen said, "To grow, you must be willing to let your present and future be totally unlike your past. Your history is not your destiny."

Here are a few ways to make positive change:

1. Change Yourself. Quit looking at the environment or people as the issue. In life, if you want more, you must become more.

2. Change Your Attitude Your attitude is fully within your control. Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn is all about giving the right attitude.

3. Change Your Non-growing Friends Wise is the person who fortifies his life with the right friendships. And of course, you have probably heard "you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with".

4. Determine to Live Differently than Average People. The question "who am I" is important, but even more critical is "Who am I becoming?". Keep an eye on where you are *and* an eye where you want to be.

5. Unlearn What You Know to Learn What You Don't Know. Before you input new more empowering thoughts in your brain, you have to let go of the ballast you picked up along the way.

> **In life if you want more, you must become more**

Chapter 11 – Maturity: The Value of Learning

Maturity doesn't necessarily come with age.

Here's what results in maturity for John Maxwell:

1. Finding the Benefit in the Loss.

2. Learning to Feed the Right Emotions. "Maturity is doing what you are supposed to do, when you're supposed to do it, no matter how you feel." Action is the key to success. Too often we want to feel our way into acting when instead we need to act our way into feeling. If you take the right actions, you will eventually feel the right feelings.

3. Learning to Develop Good Habits. By acting on our feelings with positive action over a sustained period of time, we will form positive habits. As poet John Dryden put it: "We first make our habits, and then our habits make us." Comes hell or high water, you need to follow through.

4. Learning to Sacrifice Today to Succeed Tomorrow. People are naturally inclined towards behavior that makes them feel good in the short term. Hence you have to cultivate the willingness to sacrifice.

5. Learning to Earn Respect for Yourself and Others. Brian Tracy says: "Self-esteem is the reputation you have with yourself." If you want it to be solid and lasting, it must be earned and confirmed, day by day. Following through no matter what is a great way to earn that respect.

> **Too often we want to feel our way into acting, when instead we need to act our way into feeling**

Chapter 12 – Winning Isn't Everything, But Learning Is

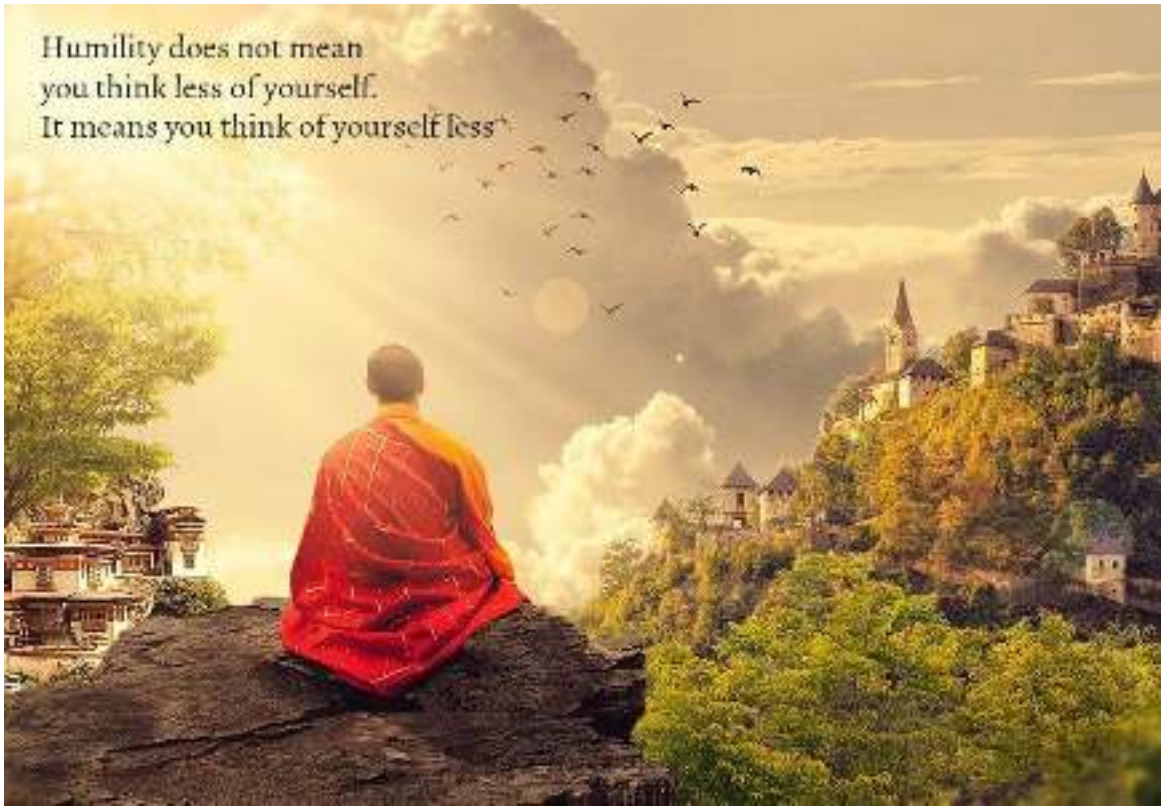
Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn ends with another fabulous chapter on the advantages of a learners' mindset:

1. Learning Too Often Decreases as Winning Increases Complacency. Winning may remove some of your hunger. Here's the solution for John Maxwell: keep your hunger to learn instead. Then no matter whether you win or lose, you'll keep getting better.

2. Learning Is Possible Only When Our Thinking Changes. Negative ideas and discouraging thoughts will try to creep in. But Maintaining a consistently positive mental attitude will be your greatest ally in growing and learning. So you stand guard at the gates of your mind. Think positively for long enough, and your positive thoughts will grow stronger and more natural.

3. Real Learning Is Defined as a Change in Behavior. The greatest gap in life is the one between knowing and doing. Remember to apply your learning and translate them into action.

4. Continual Success Is a Result of Continually Failing and Learning. Joseph Sugarman says, "(..) if you're willing to consider failure as a blessing in disguise and bounce back, you've got (..) one of the most powerful success forces." Progress requires risk, but there's an art to managing that risk: be in your strength zone -the things you like and do well- but get out of your comfort zone.



How You Can Apply It

Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn is a condensed guide for a learner's mindset. Here are a few distilled ideas on how to make it even more applicable:

Approach your challenges as an opportunity to learn
This will both prepare you to learn and grow *and* at the same time take some pressure off. "It's just an opportunity to learn", you tell yourself, and you will quiet your lizard brain which is so adamant about keeping you in your comfort zone.

Move past the mistake trap
If you are ambitious chances are you are very hard on yourself. The words of Hugh Prather in Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn will probably ring true to you: "*I react to a mistake as if I betrayed myself. My fear of making a mistake seems to be based on the hidden assumption that I am potentially perfect and that if I can just be very careful I will not fall from heaven (…)*". Needless to say, this mindset is a straitjacket.
Solution: Realize you're always a work in progress and your goal is not being perfect but getting better (learner mindset). Then fail quickly, forge ahead with a win-or-lose attitude, and base your self-esteem on doing it, rather than doing it perfectly.

Move past regret and losses
I put it here again because I know this is a sticky point for so many. Moving past losses and regret is key to a successful -and happy- life. But it's not our default setting.
Solution: here's what John Maxwell recommends to minimize the damage of losses:

1. Let them go emotionally
2. Remain positive -by feeding positive thoughts and interpretations to your mind-
3. Watch out how you evaluate yourself: be constructive (start with a positive and end with a positive)
4. Radically change the way you look at losses (as a learning opportunity, which is what the book is about)

> **We want success, but we should instead train for losses**

CONS

Life is difficult. Really?
That life is difficult is a message repeated a bit too often in one of the chapters.
Well, life is not *intrinsically* difficult Mr. Maxwell. Life is what you think it is. And I don't think it's educational -or true- repeating on a loop "life is difficult". So here it is for your benefit: no it's not. Life is beautiful.

Some platitudes
A sub-chapter was "Life is More Difficult for Those Who Don't Respond Correctly to Challenges" and then later on "Yet that is exactly what you need to be able to do—make good adjustments". Not exactly earth-shattering, and lacking concrete steps on how to make those suggestions a reality.

Review

Did you really make it thus far?
I applaud you (even if you just skimmed here).

Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn is an amazing book that I absolutely recommend you read.

Now for my review:

What I didn't like:

Pride is not bad
I disagree with humility as opposed to pride. You can be humble *and* proud at the same time. As a matter of fact, you *should* be proud. You should just be proud of the right things, of course. Read here how to build a supportive and antifragile ego.

What I warn you about:

Cool VS Wise

John Maxwell says successful people in his circle had an attitude of "been there, done that, got it all figured out". But as he grew older he realized that attitude only got them so far and they plateaued because they weren't growing. He had a continuous learner mindset instead, never getting to a place where it's all figured out.

That makes sense.

Yet the attitude of " been there, done that" is textbook charisma. Most people *admire* that attitude (when earned). Keep it in mind, and maybe keep it in your bag when you need to act up a bit.

What I loved:

All of it, but let's pick a few key ones:

Take responsibility (for what you control)
I loved the idea of taking responsibility for all you can control *and* letting go of all you can't. You can find it even more beautifully elaborated by Ryan *Holiday* and I find it a more empowering stance than feeling responsible for the final result no matter what (as preached, for example, by *Extreme Ownership*).

Sign your work (or don't do it at all)
I loved the idea of signing whatever you do. Or not doing it at all.
You don't like what you're doing at work? Do yourself a pleasure and change.

If you want more, you must *become* more
Before you set out to change the conditions before you look at what others are doing wrong… Take a hard look at yourself. And the best way to improve your condition (the only?) is to improve yourself.
It's not what you have, it's not your past, it's not your friends. It's who you are. And who you're becoming.

If you enjoyed this summary, check out my whole *collection of book summaries.*

And I will leave with a last quote from the book, which John Maxwell says will eventually make you successful:

> I'm not where I'm supposed to be,
> I'm not what I want to be,
> But I'm not what I used to be.
> I haven't learned how to arrive;
> I've just learned how to keep on going

Instant Influence: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Instant Influence describes 6 major influence triggers to persuade and influence people.

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  - Influence Trigger V: Commitment
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Exec Summary

- There are 3 kinds of people in relation to influencing knowledge: ignorant (and miss opportunities); abusers (unethical); appropriate users (men of integrity and long-term success)
- The major triggers of influence are: Reciprocity; Scarcity; Authority; Consensus; Commitment and Consistency; Friendship and Liking

Summary

Pantalon differentiates among three different kinds of people:

- Bunglers of influence: those oblivious to the power of influence. Can't influence even when it's in everyone's interest
- Smuggler of influence: those who know and abuse influence triggers. They are often in bad faith
- Sleuth of influence: use influence triggers appropriately and for win-win outcomes. They're often more successful in the long run

You want to be a sleuth: knowing how to wield influence and using it for good causes.
I agree with that.

Influence Trigger: Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the tendency by which we human beings feel obliged to give back to people who gave to us first.

Extra nudge for the egoists

Some people will not give back, in which case you give them an extra nudge.

Pantalon uses the example of an employee who never wants to cover for his manager, in spite of the manager always giving him a free hour whenever needed.
Instead of stopping doing him a favor which would not help anyone, the next time the employee asks for an hour the manager says:

> **Manager**: *"Sure, glad to let you have 1h for something unexpected because I know ho important it is for me to count on you to give me an extra hour when something unxpected comes up"*

Basically, you clearly show him the proper fairway while still being generous.

My Note:
My own example is when collecting a neighbor's heavy package from the postman. When the neighbor rang my door instead of thanking me looked at me expectantly -as if I now needed to place it in the elevator as well-. I stood there for a couple of seconds and then added "yes, I took it because I was glad to make a favor for a neighbor". After the little nudge, she profusely thanked me.

Avoid reciprocity pitfall

Pantalon gives the example of an employee who has driven his manager after and to work for a whole week. Now it's promotion time but another employee in another department is better suited. How does the manager avoid falling into the trap of feeling obliged to give back?

Pantalon says that you give back *before* the evaluation time comes.
Personal favor should be exchanged for a personal favor.

Claim your reciprocity rights

Some people after a favor they have done would say things like:

- "oh it's no big deal, just part of the job" or
- "don't worry about it, that's what I'm here for right" or
- "oh don't think about it, I'd do it for anyone"

That's terrible because you earned your points fair and square. Don't give it away. And instead, say:

> **You**: Oh don't worry about it, I know you would have done the same for me"

Smugglers of influence

Some people will use the law of reciprocity to trick you. Pantalon discusses the now-famous example of Hare Krishna devotees at the airports. They give you a flower as a gift, not accept it back and then ask for a donation. Most people would feel obliged to give back.

But then, Pantalon adds, in the long run, people learned the trick and the revenues tumbled.

Sleuth of influence

Polite, great service, is a win-win employment of the law of reciprocity. The customer appreciates your extra attention, feels good, and also feels compelled to come back.
Basically, Pantalon says, the best way to get what you want is to give it first.

> **The best way to get what you want is to give it first**

Influence Trigger II: Scarcity

Pantalon cites the example of the "original" Coca-Cola becoming extremely popular once it started being phased out of the market.
People wanted to grab it now because it was soon not going to be available anymore (also read *Blink* and

Brandwashed for more information on this).

Influence Amplifier: Competition

Scarcity is turbo-charged if there's competition for a product.

He cites the famous "cookies experiment" on supply and demand, whereby cookies becoming scarce because of high demand were valued the highest.

The same worked for information scarcity. Telling buyers that the beef was going to be scarce substantially increased sales. Telling people the information was not publicly available (ie.: even the information is scarce) brought a 6 fold increase.

Pantalon also tells the story of his brother profiting from the use of scarcity and competition.
What he did was simple and effective: he scheduled all the viewers for his cars at the same time. Once the second person got there Pantalon would tell him to wait as the first in line had priority. Then a third person would arrive. And suddenly there's a huge demand for the car.

The first person in line feels that if he doesn't get the car right away… Someone else will. And nobody negotiated on the price.

Influence Trigger III: Authority

We are more likely to listen to someone whom we perceive as an authority in the field.
For example, you are more likely to follow recommendations provided by a doctor rather than a physical therapist.

Authority has been shown to have some dark effects as well. The famous Milgram experiment, or airplane pilots' mistakes going unchecked because of people's fear of standing up to authority.

Authority Dark Side

Pantalon says it's most authoritarian leaders who go unchallenged, and you don't want to be an authoritarian leader and have your mistakes go uncorrected.

However, you shouldn't swing in the opposite direction either and always make a note: you have been given authority because, supposedly, you know better.

Here's what you do then: you tell them to always give you their opinion and you'll take them into account.

Influence Amplifier: Credible Authority

Usually, credibility grows over time, but if you don't have time, here's what *Instant Influence* by Pantalon recommends: mention a drawback about your product *first*.
When you mention a negative first, then you become instantly more credible.

Pantalon highlights the example of a restaurant waiter. He would discourage what the client ordered saying it wasn't as fresh as usual and then suggesting instead something slightly less cheaper. Instant credibility for the waiter.

Influence Trigger IV: Consensus

To decide what we like we usually look at what *others* like.

Thus the tendency to visit a restaurant with lots of people rather than the empty one nearby.

Another hideous example of the principle of Consensus is canned laughter in TV shows. Actors hate it, directors hate it… But it works: people do laugh more when hearing recorded laughs (by the way, it works even better when we believe it's people in our group to laugh).

Influence Amplifier: Familiarity and Similarity

The Consensus is much more powerful in swaying our decisions when:

- Unfamiliar with a situation: when we don't know what to do we tend to feel lost and look at what others are doing.
- Consensus is from people like us: For example, seeing our neighbors or colleagues are more influential than completely random people.

Influence Trigger V: Commitment

The force behind Commitment is our will for consistency. We want to feel and show ourselves like people who are consistent with their values and beliefs.

A great influencer indeed will look at what people *already* committed to and then align their offer accordingly.

Indeed people who took a small lapel pin to support cancer research were significantly more likely to donate money to the research compared to people who had not been wearing the pin.
What happened, is that people wearing the pin started seeing themselves as people who supported cancer research, so saying "no" to a donation request felt in-congruent with how they saw themselves.

Influence Amplifier: Active, Public, and Voluntary

Commitment is much more powerful when it's public, voluntary (no coercion), and active (people take action).

Influence Trigger VI: Friendship and Liking

Our friends and the people we like are much more likely to influence us than strangers or people we are neutral to.

Influence Amplifier: similarity, praise, cooperation

We like people who are like ourselves. This goes into all kinds of realms, including age, place of birth, race, religion, politics, and even cigarette smoking habits.

Pantalon also explains how cooperation will make people like each other, as it's obvious to anyone who's played in a team.

Smugglers of influence

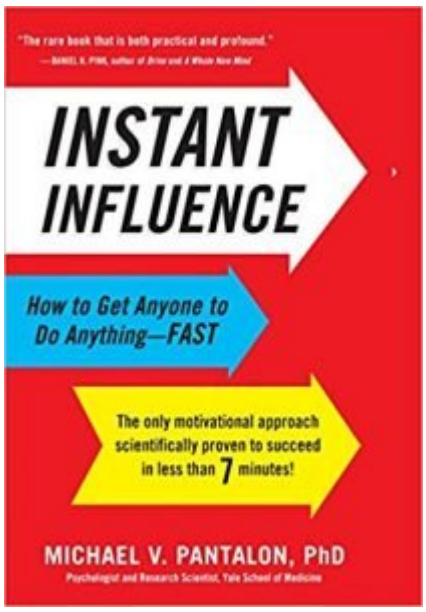
Michael Pantalon talks about an insurance company instructing sales reps to like anything prominent in the prospect's house. The author says there are two major downsides:

- People will dislike their job
- You don't influence yourself: Influence works both ways! If you compliment some things you don't like you will miss the opportunity to connect with your prospect, and it will shine through

The solution is simple: look for something you genuinely like when giving praise.

Bonus: what the most skilled do

Instant Influence tells its readers that the most skilled influencers don't spend the most time on structuring the request itself, but on what comes *before* the request (the contrast principle).



REVIEW

Instant Influence borrows heavily from *Influence by* Cialdini. So much so that on my first review years ago, I thought Cialdini was the author (and later corrected this review).

However, it also adds enough information and ideas to make it a more than worthwhile read.

Commonalities more important than differences
Michael Pantalon says that most of the training he attended started by saying how their industry is different and peculiar.
There might be differences indeed, but he believes that the similarities are probably more and more important.
I couldn't agree more.

Honesty is for *yourself* first
I loved how Pantalon mentions one of the main reasons, to be honest, is the effect it has on *your own* self-esteem. Not just for others, not just for long-term success, but simply *for yourself*.
Going through life knowing you're doing the right thing is indeed the basis for a strong, unassailable frame of self-confidence. It's because it takes immense internal strength -and external props often- to resist any environmental force pushing you into the shortcut.

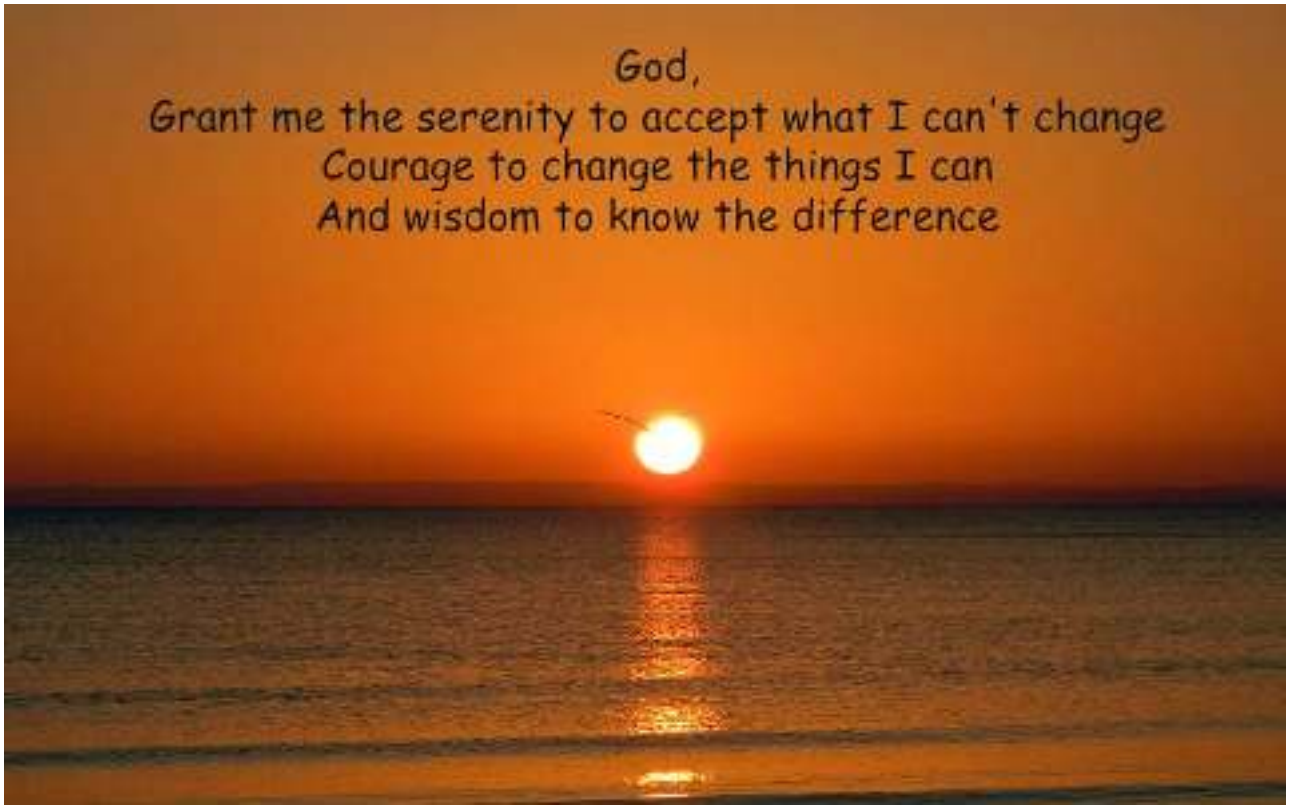
Smugglers, Bumglers, Sleuth
I loved the notion of how people can use influence triggers in an ethical or unethical manner. Or completely miss on any benefit simply by ignoring influencing tools altogether. Incidentally, this is exactly the point of The Power Moves: moving and awakening people from bunglers to smugglers -when strictly needed- and sleuths.

You will only find a cassette for this, so I recommend you **snag Influence on Amazon**.

The Obstacle Is the Way: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Obstacle Is the Way (2014) takes inspiration from ancient stoic philosophy to deliver an empowering treaty on how to perceive, act, and think about obstacles -and life-.



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Bullet Summary

- Look at obstacles positively and coolly: they're an opportunity
- Act on obstacles swiftly. No complaints, no regrets: just effective and persistent action
- Be serene with whatever result. And move on. Positively and coolly

Summary

About The Author: Ryan Holiday is a former marketer and self-styled "*media manipulator*".

But he's also a top-notch, down-to-earth philosopher and a best-selling author.
Holiday has also been of the main influences in reclaiming and rediscovering ancient -yet also very actual- stoic philosophy.

Intro

"*The Obstacle Is The Way* can be divided into three parts"

1. Perception (how to perceive the obstacle)
2. Action (how to deal with the action)
3. Will (how to deal with intractable obstacles).

Part 1 – Perception

Chapter 1: Discipline of Perception

Perception is how we see and understand the world around us. How you perceive the world can be a strength or a weakness for you.

When first faced with an obstacle do the following:

- Stay objective
- Control emotions and keep calm
- Choose to see the Positive
- See things in perspective
- Revert to the present moment
- Focus on what you control

Seeing opportunities in obstacles does not come naturally: it's a skill and an attitude you must train with self-discipline.

Chapter 2: Perspective: Your Power

The event, the obstacle, is neither good nor bad in itself.
It just is.

There are the event and the story we tell ourselves about what it means. It can be positive, negative, or there can be no story at all.

What if you were to consciously *choose* to tell yourself a positive story about the event?
Or what if you could choose an empowering perspective, and let your actions and emotions follow accordingly?

Because you can.

And that's the power of perception.

Chapter 3: Steady Nerves and Control Emotions

Perception is everything, and if your nerves hold, nothing really happened.

When panic rears its ugly head, say "no thank you, I can't afford to panic", and go back to focusing on what you can control.

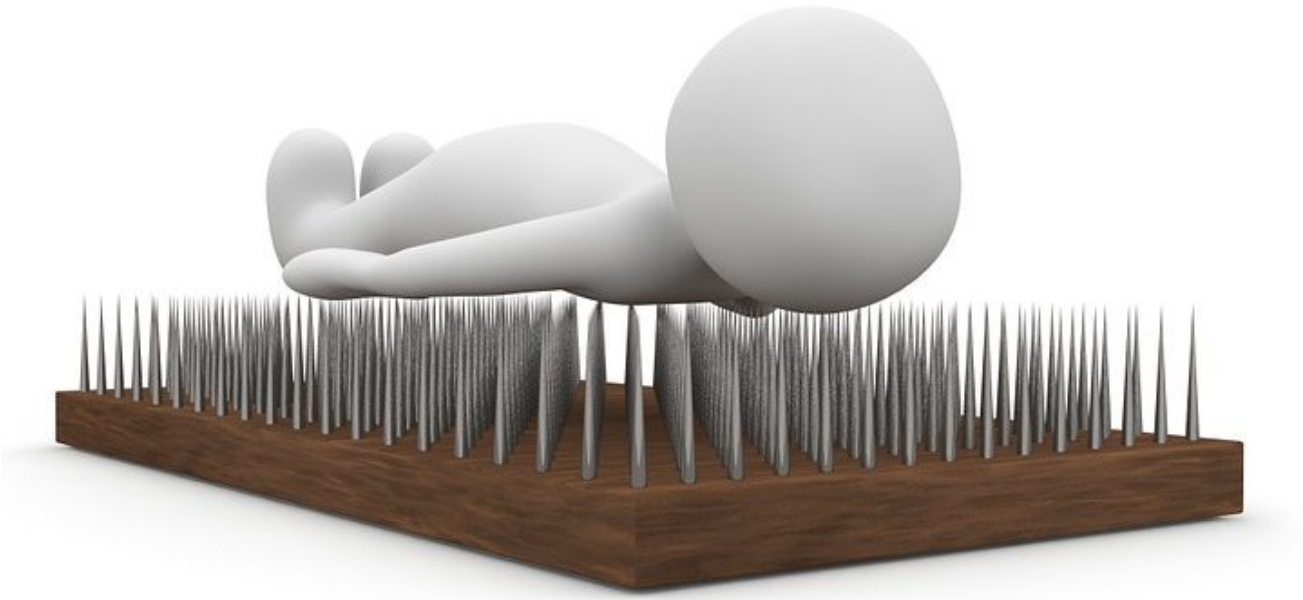
Ask yourself this:

Does what happened keep you from acting with justice, generosity, self-control, sanity, prudence, honesty,

humility, and straightforwardness?

No?
Then get back to work.

Calm and collected, ready and prepared to throw your best at it.



Chapter 4: Practice Objectivity

Everything's always so crystal clear and simple when you're giving advice to other people, right?

Well, why don't you do yourself a favor and use the same objectivity with yourself.

Do yourself a favor and pretend it's not happening to you.

Chapter 5: Is It Up to You?

You only focus on what matters: all that you can control.

Your emotions, attitude, actions, perspective, decision, determination… These are all up to you.
These are the playing field, where you do whatever you need to.

All the rest, all the things you can't control, are the rules of the game.
Don't waste time and emotions on them.

Chapter 6: Live In the Present Moment

It doesn't matter whether you're in a growing economy or shrinking one, a good job market or a bad one, or your obstacle looms huge.

What matters is that right now is right now.

The implications of our obstacles are theoretical.
What will happen after, how better it was before the obstacle… All useless. They're in the past and the future. *We live in the moment*. And the moment you embrace that, the easier the obstacle.

The Obstacle Is The Way discusses also entrepreneurial mentality and how entrepreneurs live in the present.
They are like animals with no time and ability to think about how things should be or how they'd prefer them to be.
They just live and act in the present.

Chapter 7: Think Differently

Your perception will determine what you are capable or not capable of doing. And if you believe in the obstacle more than you believe in your goal, which one do you think is most likely to manifest?

Exactly.
So be open, to questions, but don't let events and naysayers get to you.

Chapter 8: Finding the Opportunity

It's common for people to have survived adversity or have faced major injuries to bounce back better than before. Some times physically, some other times emotionally.

"That which doesn't kill me makes me stronger" is a fact and it has a name: Post-traumatic growth.

Chapter 9: Prepare to Act

Now that you know how important it is to steady your nerve and look at the positives, it's time to act.

Part 2 – Action

Action is common, the right action is not. Your action must be directed, unrelenting and focused.

Chapter 10: The Discipline of Action

We've all been too busy, overwhelmed, tired, stressed. An then went out partying or slept, or did nothing.

It makes you feel better to pretend and ignore. But it isn't helping you. You've got to act. Starting from now.

It doesn't matter what happens to you or where you come from. It matters what you do with what happens and with what you have. And the only way you'll do something spectacular is by using it all to your advantage.

Chapter 12: Get Moving

Whether you feel ready or not, however, the conditions, get moving.

Chapter 13: Practice Persistence

The people around you have already begun their chorus of doubts, excuses and dejection.
But you ain't buying it.
You look at the problem dead on and say, as Margaret Thatcher famously did: "You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning."

Too many people believe in the romanticized, yet painfully wrong idea, that great victories come from a flash of insight.
Like Thomas Edison.
No, it was the slow and constant pressure, from all directions, the elimination of hundreds more promising options, that slowly moved the solution to the top of the pile.

The genius, the real genius, was their doggedness, grit and staying power.

And that's the message you gotta send to the world and to yourself: resistance is futile.

> **The genius was unity of purpose, deafness to doubt, and the desire to stay at it**

Chapter 14: Iterate

Listen to the feedback you get from actions.

Doing so in an open, constructive way, is a key element in overturning obstacles.

That feedback is the instruction you need to reach your goal. That's your road map to success: by showing you where not to go, your path to victory becomes clearer and clearer.

> **Failure shows us the way—by showing us what isn't the way.**

Chapter 15: Follow the Process

Huge obstacle?
The Obstacle Is The Way teaches us you don't look at it like it's a monolithic giant.
You break it into smaller units. And do what you need to do right now, do it well, and then move on to the next.

Follow the process, not the prize.

As they say, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a step.
And the step after, and after that. Focus on waking well, not on what might happen after the curve.
Excellence is a matter of step-by-step.
And soon you'll be at the destination before you realize it.

Chapter 16: Do Your Job, Do It Right

Everything you do matters, everything is a chance to do and be your best. Whether that's making smoothies or bartending as you save money for your dream.

I just gotta quote Ryan Holiday here as I love that part: Only self-absorbed assholes think they are too good for whatever their current station requires.

We will be and do many things in our life. Some are prestigious, some won't be, but none are beneath us. Whatever we face, our job is to respond with hard work, honesty and helping others as best as we can. Wherever you are, you owe it to yourself and to the world to do it well. And when action is our priority, vanity falls away.

> **When action is our priority, vanity falls away.**

Chapter 17: What's Right is What Works

Do the best with what you've got.

That's it.
Progress is your goal, not perfection.

Not that you don't aim high, but you start thinking like a radical pragmatist: ambitious, aggressive, and even rooted in ideals, but also practical and grounded on the possible.
Because real artists ship.

Don't think small, but keep in mind the difference between the critical and the extra.

Chapter 18: In Praise of the Flank Attack

Outnumbered, low on money, encircled by powerful competitors… These don't have to be disadvantaged.

they can be your blessing in disguise. You got little chances head-to-head, so you're forced to be creative and more efficient. And to finally put your ego aside.
People or companies who have the size advantage are resting on their laurels. They were able to coast for a long time on size and brute force. And that worked very well for them… Until it doesn't anymore.
Until they met you.

Now you outflank them with swift action, outmaneuver them with speed, or pitch them one against the other.

Remember, a castle can be a scary and impenetrable fortress, or it can be a prison when surrounded.

Chapter 18: Channel Your Energy

Use all the emotions you get.

Our actions can become stronger when loose and bold. So take your frustration, and instead of giving in, use it to power your actions. Now you got physical looseness with mental mastery, and that's powerful.

And you don't disdain to work around the rules.
While others obsess with the rules, you're subtly undermining them and subverting them to your advantage.

You are an unstoppable force, you're a tide: slow and steady, there's nowhere to run for your opponent.
External factors will influence the path, but not the direction: onward and upward.

Chapter 19: Seize The Offensive

In many battles, as in life, you will often reach a point of mutual exhaustion.

Two opposing forces will often reach a point of mutual exhaustion.
It's the one who rises the next morning after a long day of fighting and rallies, instead of retreating who will carry victory home.

The obstacle is now your chance of winning.

Chapter 20: Prepare for None of It to Work

We can do a lot, but we can't control the whole world around us. We might even fail.

Don't let it get to you, your aim is to do your best. Not the impossible, but nothing less than your best.

And when you just can't get through, here comes another opportunity: to learn and practice new virtues, even if that is only acceptance or humility.

You know the kind of person who throws at it everything he's got and whatever the result, he is ready to accept it instantly and move on?

Is it you?

Because it can be.

Part 3 – Will

What is will?

Will is our internal power.
Will can never be affected by the outside world. When all action fails, will is our final trump card.

Chapter 21: The Discipline of Will

Some people think the Will is how badly we want something.

But that's a weakness misguided by ambition. And it won't serve you well under the biggest of obstacles.
Real Will is quiet humility, resilience, and flexibility.

Will is your ability to accept whatever happens. And be at peace with it. Will is wisdom.

Will is what prepares you to face anything you can face in an inherently unpredictable world.
Will is what keeps you going matter what's happening around you.

Will is what allows you to stay calm and collected when everyone else loses their heads.

Chapter 22: Build Your Inner Citadel

Nobody is born a gladiator. Getting great at anything takes practice: you *build* your own Citadel, brick by brick.

Being great with adversity and cultivating Will is no different.

Chapter 23: Anticipation (Thinking Negatively)

Your world is ruled by external factors outside your control.

You'll be vilified, threatened, bullied, lied to, and taken advantage of. You can't be surprised every time it happens or it'll make you miserable.

Be prepared for it instead -The Power Moves is here to for that-.

That's anticipation called anticipation, and it's both mental and practical.

Thanks to the anticipation you understand the range of potential outcomes and you can accommodate yourself to any of them.
You even understand it could go all wrong, and you're OK with it. And now you can get back to work.

Chapter 24: The Art of Acquiescence

If someone took traffic signals personally, we would judge them as insane.

Yet that is exactly what life is telling us when faced with an obstacle.

It tells us the way is blocked and you need a detour. No arguing, no depression, you simply accept it.
Take people and events as they come and move around them: it's only a bump along your road.

Ryan Holiday cites Eisenhower when he said:

> Everything we could think of has been done, the troops are fit and everybody is doing his best. The answer is in the lap of the gods.

And he explains those were not the kind of men to just "hope for the best", but at the end of the day, they understood that what happened would happen, and they'd go from there.

> **The answer is in the lap of the gods.**

Chapter 25: Love Everything That Happens: *Amor Fati*

After you accept that some bad things will likely happen and it might be outside your control, here is the big one: **Love whatever happens to you and face it with unfailing cheerfulness**.

We don't get to choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we feel about it.
And why would you choose to feel anything but good about it? Don't look back at your expectations, don't think you thought it was going to be different. Face forward, and put a smug little grin.

> **We don't get to choose what happens to us, but we can always choose how we feel about it.**

Chapter 26: Perseverance

Perseverance is more than persisting at your problem.

Persistence is a matter of action, dependent on energy. Perseverance is a matter of Will, and it comes with

endurance.
They work in conjunction.

Perseverance is a long game. Not just round 1. But round 2. and every round after.
It's a belief that, eventually, somehow, you'll get there.

Chapter 26: Something Bigger Than Yourself

Stop thinking of yourself all the time, and putting "I" in front of all the events. "I did very well but..", "I deserve better than this..".

No wonder you take losses so personally!

And stop pretending what you're going through is somehow special or unfair.
Hundreds and thousands before you felt the same and had the same thoughts.
They had no idea that you would exist, and a century from now, someone will be in your exact same position.
Embrace the power of being part of a larger whole, it's an exhilarating thought.

And do something helpful, think instead: if I can't solve it for myself, how can I at least make it better for others?

This new shift in perception will immediately shift your thinking into a new gear. All of a sudden you're thinking like a leader, and you're a person who takes care of others.

Be strong for others, and it will make *you* stronger.

Chapter 27: Meditate on Your Mortality

No matter who you are or what your plans are, someone would kill you for a few dollars or a fix of heroin.
Or a car can hit you in an intersection and that's it. It will be all over.

Today, tomorrow, or someday soon.

Or take the cliché question to ask:
"What would I change about my life if the doctor told me I had cancer"? After our answer, we inevitably comfort ourselves with the same insidious lie: "Well, thank God I don't have cancer".

But we do!
Our destinies are all already written.

And it's not depressing. It's invigorating. And reminding ourselves will help us treat our time and life as a beautiful gift (also read: how to leverage mortality for life).

It will also help create some badly needed urgency when we need to.

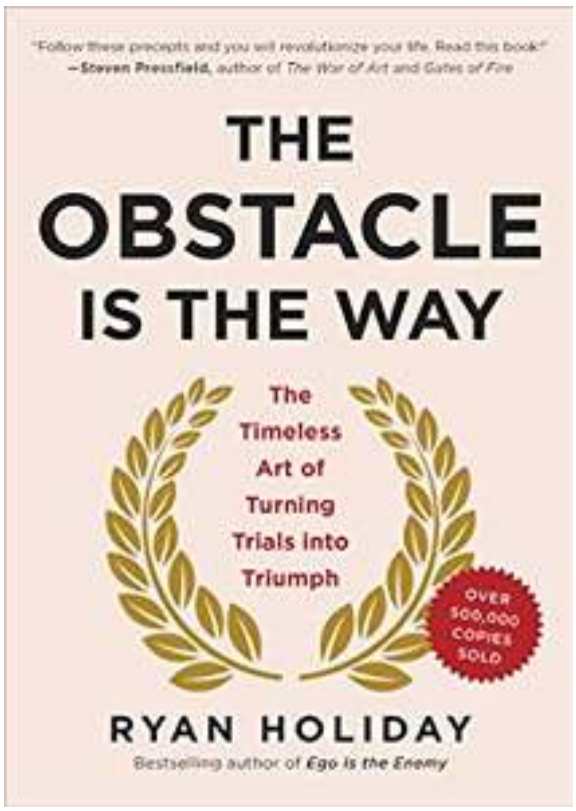
> **Instead of denying—or worse, fearing—our mortality, we can embrace it.**

Chapter 28: Prepare to Start Again

Just when think you've successfully overcome an obstacle, another one comes along.

That's how it is. And that's what keeps life interesting. Life is a process of breaking through obstacles, learning, and growing along the way.
And, as you're starting to adopt this mindset, that's what creates opportunities.

One more obstacle and a bit more of the competition give up.
One more, and it's just a few of you left.
One more and one more, until you're the only one left: the best version of you.



Practical Applications

"*The Obstacle Is The Way*" is the ultimate problem-solving book because it deals with mindsets.

Live, practice and internalize these 3 mindsets and you'll reach new heights:

- **Looking at the obstacle mindset**

You will look at the problem as an opportunity. Ask yourself "what can I learn", and "how can it make me a better person". Welcome adversities as a test and a chance to grow. No regrets, not what ifs. Only the present. And you will stay calm and collected.

- **Dealing with the obstacle mindset**

You will do your best no matter what. Not the impossible, *just* your damn best. You will look at all possibilities with a never give up mentality. Piece by piece, you can be slowed down but not stopped. You're an unstoppable force indeed. And you appreciate the struggle, in itself, as a welcome occasion for you to prove yourself.

- **Unsolvable obstacles mindset**

With the first two mindsets of *The Obstacle Is The Way* you will forge ahead like never before.
But even when you'll fail, you are calm and serene: this is an opportunity for you to wholly change direction, regroup or practice acceptance. You've done your best anyway, you don't have regrets. What's next.

Review

The Obstacle Is The Way is a monument to the human spirit and ingenuity. It's a masterpiece of empowering mindsets, applied philosophy and beautifully crafted, uplifting poetry.

Here are a few further comments for you:

Grateful for adversities

It is true that your most glorious moments come after searing defeats. Or when you snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. But also when you don't win immediately, your adversities can make you a better person if you let them to.
I am grateful for many of my darkest days. I did use many of them to become a better person. And I am so proud of that. You can be too.

Entrepreneurial mentality
The Obstacle Is The Way expands also on entrepreneurial mentality. Ryan Holiday talks about how most of us have been taught of thinking "realistically" and how that's a huge disadvantage for building a business.

Get the full book on Amazon.

I leave you with one last quote:

> *See things for what they are.*
> *Do what we can.*
> *Endure and bear what we must.*
>
> *What blocked the path now is a path.*
> *What once impeded action advances action.*
> *The Obstacle is the Way.*
> –Marcus Aurelius

Dominant Body Language Power Move: The Ear Tap

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

For a full overview of dominant body language check out:

- How dominant men speak
- How dominant men move
- Alpha male body language

This article is about a specific gesture, which I call the “ear cup, and it’s a specific example of dominant body language.

Without even touching anyone or saying a single word, it compels people to take action for you (and jump through your hoops).

But don’t worry: by the end of this article you will know how to respond when people try to use this body language of domination against you.

Contents

  - The Story
  - The Less You Move, The More Dominant You Are
  - When The Ear-Cup is Friendly

- Summary

The Story

I had just finished the most important elevator pitch of my life.

My audience was the top conference speakers, the movers and the shakers of the industry.

To a startup sales guy, it’s a dream scenario: get in, make friends, and pitch the heavy hitters as an equal.
Or so I thought.

The pitch was done. I ask my key question:

> **Me**: Could that be interesting for you?

And then I drop the mic.
The heavy hitters say nothing.
I say nothing.

Make your move
And then it comes.

> *"GTFO of Mount Olympus you mere mortal, you're too beneath us"*

he says.
He doesn't actually *say* it of course, but worse.

He slowly raises his hand instead, turns his face, grimaces a bit, and taps his ear.

Boom!

He had just used against me one of the most dominant body languages moves out there: the ear cup.

The Less You Move, The More Dominant You Are

Social interactions have this tendency: the most powerful people make other people move, with less.

Think about, what's the most powerful sign of power? It's the "pollice verso", the idea that an ancient emperor decided upon life and death with a mere hand gesture.

Luckily we don't face similar scenarios often, but the concept is the same: the bigger the difference between the dominant gesture and your reaction, the bigger the social status difference.

And that's why the "Repeat Please" Ear Cup is such a dominant body language gesture: he puts a finger on his ear (low effort nonverbal), you repeat your whole spiel (high effort).

Here's a gangster movie example. Paulie's status as the big boss is conveyed (a bit theatrically) by the fact he doesn't move and doesn't talk.
And who's the one moving the most? The kid, the dead last on the social ladder.

And now let's get to the juicy part: how you react.

#1. Submit... At your own volition

Again on Paulie's intro, have you noticed how one of the top guys responds to Paulie?

He doesn't flash a quick grin, he doesn't nod a hundred times. He waits for a second. And then he nods, slowly, thus mimicking Paulie himself. Paulie is the big boss of course, but he's no fifth wheel either.

This is a great way to submit at your own pace in all situations where you're not well served by throwing down the gauntlet -as in the conference opening story for example-.

So you take a second as if to stress you're not rushing to obey anyone's order.

Then you smile a bit, as in saying "I know what you just did there" and slightly touch his arm. The touch, as a dominant behavior, mitigates your actions.
You say "sorry" slowly (very high rate of speech = low confidence) and neutrally (there's a relation between pitch and perceived confidence).
And then you repeat. Shortly. And this time clearly?

#2. Hit Back

A good option is to reply something like:

> **You**: Yeah, it's a a bit of complex topic, I know.

What you're doing here is implying that it's not you who wasn't clear, but that *he* didn't get it.
Touch his arm as you speak, lower your gaze for a moment, and smile, your expression saying "*sorry, I overestimated you but you're actually a bit slow*".
And then look mostly at the rest of the group as you re-state: you are *not* following his lead, just using the opportunity to speak again.

#3: Recruit Friends

Don't bat alone when you got a pal.

You pause for a bit, then turn around to someone you're closer to in the group and ask:

> **You**: Did you get an idea of what I mean?

If you phrase it that way and ask a friend, you'll likely get a yes. And you'll probably also get a summary of what you just said.
You confirm of course, and keep building on that.

Very leading move: you call into action someone, have him chime in following your lead, and resume talking -and speaking time has a direct correlation to dominance-.

You take the lead, the Ear Cupping Power Mover takes the group's dumb@ß role.

#4: Ignore and forge ahead

And, of course, an evergreen, the *36th law of power*: you ignore.

You almost always win when someone wants to get a rise out of you and you deftly ignore and move along.

You can either do nothing and wait for someone to jump in, or better still, take the lead: turn to someone else in the group and move the conversation along either pretending they got it or changing conversation (and don't worry if nobody got your point, you can repeat to someone else, the key is you don't submit to the nonverbal Ear Cupping).

The Power Mover is left in the dust, his gesture completely spurned, while the group moved to a new topic under your leadership.

Wanna see an example? Look at Mayweather ignoring Conor McGregor (not too good) ear-cupping move.

Note Mayweather could have done even better by smiling a bit: too stiff looks fake and would look much worse in a more natural setting (also note McGregor takes the final social win by turning first, getting the crowd cheering and Mayweather following suit, in a clear display of leader/follower scenario).

When The Ear-Cup is Friendly

Just as a note, the Ear Cupping gesture isn't always an unfriendly body language gesture.
Like most body language it can also be used to convey warmth, depending on the delivery.

You will easily recognize warmth because he/she will:

- Lean toward you
- Accompany the gesture with words
- Possibly lightly touch you to convey closeness
- Maybe add a smile

For your benefit, here's a video example of a friendly *non-dominant* Ear Cupping.

Summary

The "repeat please" Ear Cupping gesture is a very dominant body language expression, that's why you'll often see cops using it.

It's not a good sign when someone does it to you: it means the Power Mover feels so superior that he can issue nonverbal commands and have you comply.

As always, your goal is to find the most socially shrewd way to *not* submit and, possibly, hit back in style.

So you:

- Imply the Power Mover is a bit slow

- Recruit someone else to isolate the Power Mover
- Ignore, forge ahead, and change the topic leaving the Power Mover in his dust

So long, onwards and upwards :),
Lucio

What? Do you like this website? Then please share it! :)

Linchpin: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Linchpin is that much-needed, so-called kick in the butt for artists who are being paralyzed by the fear of failure and the fear of judgment.
This book might give you what you really need to finally start sharing your artwork.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Linchpin Summary
- Real-Life Application
- CONS
- Linchpin Review

Exec Summary

- Be damned those jobs that clip your wings. We require your art and genius in this world!
- Your lizard brain wants to keep you safe. Be aware of it and learn to overpower it or you'll be stuck in the wheel forever
- Real artists ship

Linchpin Summary

Seth Godin doesn't mince words in flattering us right off the bat.
You are a genius, he says. Chances are you have something great to share with the world, but society squeezes the genius out of you.

Your fear of letting go and doing art stems from two places:

1. You have been brainwashed into believing that your job is to follow instructions (hint: it's not);
2. The resistance -your lizard brain- is the voice keeping you safe -and average-

Linchpin is about removing those obstacles.

Chapter 1: The New World Of Work

The world has changed.

The previous generations of the industrial revolution could have kept their head down, followed orders, and in exchange, they'd get a stable life, a mortgage, and a car.

Read more on the power dynamics of the following orders:

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

The goal for the capitalists was to have as many easily replaceable laborers as possible (Michael Gerber *recommends you do so*).
But the con game is finally ending and there's a new bargain now, one that leverages talent and creativity.

Today three thousand dollars (laptop and internet) buys you an entire factory of output. The factories are our

minds, and access to capital and the ability to find partners are no longer a problem.

Enter today's third player: the linchpins. Linchpins are not proles waiting for instructions, nor are they, industry barons. But they leverage something internal to create value.
They are artists who can find new answers, new connections, or a new way of doing things.

> **If you've got something to say, say it, and think well of yourself while you learn to say it better.**

Chapter 2: Thinking About Your Choice

The new American Dream that is being embraced all over the world is this:

- Be remarkable
- Be generous
- Create art
- Make judgment calls
- Connect people and ideas

And if you are an employer: obedient and artistic are antithetic, if you're looking for obedient employees, you'll never employ artists.

Chapter 4: Becoming The Linchpin

These are the characteristics of a *Linchpin*:

- **Run towards fear**

Linchpins *do* feel the fear, acknowledge it, and then proceed anyway.
Seth Godin says he can't tell you how to do it, but it's a prerequisite for success.

- **Knowledge is like opinions**

Linchpins are not just knowledgeable.
Knowledge is worth little in the age of Google. Depth of knowledge with insight instead is worth a lot.
The linchpin can walk into chaos and create order, invent, connect, and make things happen.

- **The limit is the asymptote**

Asymptotic is anything with a ceiling or an upper limit.
Bowling is asymptotic because there's a fixed ceiling (the number of pins). The Six Sigma approach is similar: there's an upper limit.
Organizations and people achieving dramatic success do so in fields *without* asymptotes.

> **If you can't be remarkable, probably you should do nothing until you can.**

- **Don't get a CV**

You are not your CV, you are your work.

And the only way to prove you are a *linchpin*, someone worth moving to the top of the pile and worth hiring, is to show, not tell.

And if they can't get your point, the linchpin says "I don't want a job a non-linchpin could get". Remarkable people deserve remarkable jobs.

If the game is designed for you to lose, don't play that game. Play a different one.

Chapter 5: Is It Possible To Do Hard Work In a Cubicle?

Seth Godin says that in everything you do, it's possible to be an artist.

What is art

Art requires an element of risk and daring: **if it's risk-free it's usually not art**.
And a certain complexity: your art is what you do when no one can tell you exactly how to do it.
The last element that defines art is the gift: you can't do it just for money.

Salaried Wok (=You're Owned)

He says he hates that approach to life as it cheapens us.

First, he asks, are you willing to sell yourself so cheaply?
Do you want to swap an entire, irreplaceable day of your life for a few bucks?

When you sell yourself for money, you're not the artist you could be.
And second, it's a cold, mathematical transaction with no added value (I give you money, you give me time).
At the end of the day, there's no bond: you are owed nothing and I owe you nothing.

The alternative is to use that day as your chance to do art, not available to anyone merely because he's the highest bidder.

Who's your boss?

The artist is supposed to change us.

But when you have a boss too often your job is to please that boss rather than changing him/her or the people around you.

It's OK to have someone you work for. And it's also OK having someone watching over you and paying you. But the moment you treat that person like a boss in charge of your choices and output, then you're not an artist. You're a cog.

> **You can't be an artist when someone owns you**

The myth of project-specific passion

Seth Godin also debunks the idea of "finding your passion".

You don't magically find your passion.
Jeff Bezos wouldn't have been sitting around in the pre-Internet era and Spike Lee wouldn't be an average Joe if he hadn't found a camera.

Passion is not dependent on a particular project or endeavor. It's inside of us.

Perhaps your challenge isn't finding a better project, maybe you need to get in touch with the fire within you and learn to become more passionate.
Because the combination of passion and art will make you a linchpin.

Who is it for?

You will not be able to do art for everyone. As a matter of fact, art for everyone is mediocre.
Your art must be focused.

Gifts VS MBAs

The digitization of work makes MBAs happy.
Today you can measure and put stuff on a spreadsheet, hallelujah!

The problem is that everyone is doing the same. Your competitors are analyzing the same data and using the same spreadsheet.

Similarly to asymptotes, in data-driven environments, there's little room for quantum growth.
The easier it is to quantify, the less it's worth.

The passion to spread

Passion means caring so much about your art that you would do almost anything to spread it.

And it can also mean giving up parts you love in order to spread the rest.

Seth Godin mentions people he knows who write books that don't sell and still refuse to change anything to "stay true to their art".

That way through their art is useless because it's not being consumed.
And if not consumed it's not art, only effort.

> **Swapping your days for a salary. Are you willing to sell yourself so cheaply?**

Chapter 6: The Resistance

The only purpose to start is to finish.

The project we are working on never really finish, but they must ship.
Real artists ship.

Shipping means hitting the publish button, doing the sales pitch, and picking up the phone. Shipping is where your art meets the world.

Seth Godin says that meeting deadlines regularly, without hassle, emergency, or fear, is a rare skill and something that will make you indispensable.

The Lizard Brain

And here we get to the all-important resistance.

What's stopping you from delivering your art?
Seth Godin says it's fear.
It's the fear of being ridiculed, of standing out and standing for something. And we're even afraid of openly talking about this kind of fear.

In ourselves, we have a daemon, which is our artistic genius, and the resistance, which is our lizard brain shackling the daemon.

Indeed, Seth Godin emphatically says: **We don't need more genius, we need less resistance.**

Here are a few ways the lizard brain typically stops you:

- "I don't have any good ideas."
- "I didn't graduate from [*insert brand of some prestigious educational institution here]*"
- "My boss won't let me."

And now please add to that list "and people will laugh at me if I try". Great, now at least you got your real reason in

there.

One way to control is it rationalize what's happening and say it out loud

- "My lizard brain is making me anxious."
- "I'm angry right now because being angry is keeping me from doing my work."

Another way to dominate the resistance is to always head directly into the resistance.
Quit the tasks you're doing out of fear and do the tasks you're afraid of. Once you start doing work that matters, the lizard brain will silence and you will hear the full roar of your daemon.

Seth Godin also recommends you don't set up a judge for your goal. Not having a judge will let you work on your art without alerting the resistance.

Seth Godin says that the difference between a successful artist and a failed one happens after the idea is hatched.

The difference is the race to completion.

Did you finish?

Developing plan B

You will have people coming to you with nice suggestions.

The nice suggestion is often that you should get a backup plan in case things don't go as hoped.

And you know what happens when you get a plan B? You settle for that.
As soon as you say "I'll try my best" rather than "I will", you leave the door ajar for the lizard brain to bust through and re-set camp in your mind.

Anxiety

Anxiety is fear about fear. Basically, a fear that serves nothing.

Fear is often a spiral: it's triggered by something small and immediately takes over.
Seth Godin says you control anxiety by embracing it. Don't assuage it, don't try to force it away. So the next time you're afraid that you got the passport and you already checked, don't check again! And don't get up to check the lights!

> **The difference is the race to completion. Did you finish? " username**

Chapter 7: The Powerful Culture of Gifts

Seth Godin says we evolved based on mutual support and generosity and that we're made to give rather than to receive.

Becoming a *linchpin* is an act of generosity because it will give you the platform for giving gifts and expanding what he calls emotional labor.

Some people see gifts in light of receiving. Some others to get something back (possibly something bigger). The most successful ones give gifts as a demonstration of love, they like giving gifts because it gives them joy. They seek respect, not reciprocity.

Being a *linchpin* is about delivering gifts that can never be adequately paid for.
And don't worry about being left with nothing: gifts signal the world that we have plenty more to share, and the more you have in your cup, the more people are to want a drink.

Friendlies

The Internet has added another layer between friends and business: the friendlies.
These are followers and admirers who might be friends one day. When you focus on friends and friendlies, the business circle (money) will take care of itself.

What art will you do?

And now the big question is: how do you know what kind of artist to become and what gifts to give?

There's no obvious answer and finding the answer will be the key to your success.
You have to find the map.
But here's the news: there's no ready-made map.

Chapter 8: There Is NO Map

But that's also great news.

The reason why art is valuable is precisely that nobody can tell you how to do it. Art is the act of navigating without a map, the ability to forge your own path, to discover a new route.

Seth Godin also refreshes on an important concept all successful author insists upon: the linchpin also accepts the world as it is and doesn't waste any effort on what he can't control.

Chapter 9: Making The Choice

If you are only working for the person on top of you in the org chart you may be scarifying your future.

Unless you are being an artist.
Deep down you probably know the truth. Think about it.

And if you're not doing art, If your agenda is set by someone else and it doesn't lead you where you want to go, why is it your agenda?

Lean in and seek out projects where you can make a difference and don't accept anything below your potential.
And if not possible, if you don't have any room for work that matters, draw your own map and lead.

How to find your passion

And here's Seth Godin answer to people looking for their passion: you don't look for something that matches your passion. You transfer your passion to what you're doing.

How does a linchpin work

In a world where indispensable people are so rare, the linchpin has two options:

1. Hire factory workers. Take advantage of the fact that most people want a map and will surrender their time on the cheap
2. Find a boss who understands the value of a linchpin and rewards you with freedom and respect. Do the work and make a difference.

And if you aren't doing either of those, why are you still there?

Failure and ego

You will fail, and often.

And that's when your lizard brain will rear its ugly head again.
He will highlight the critics, and emphasize your mistakes and missteps.

Successful people learn from failure too, but it's never that you shouldn't have tried in the first place (more key literature on learning: *The Obstacle Is The Way; Sometimes You Win Sometimes You Learn)*

And what about all those people hurting you? They are only getting away with it because you allow them to.
Be open to feedback, but don't let harmful comments get to you (discerning feedback from degrading criticism will take some practice).

Worst kind of attachment outcome

Some people often feel bad and have nostalgia not just for the past, but for the future IF things had gone differently. Ie. if they hadn't been fired, if they were still together with their ex etc.

Seth Godin says that's the worst kind of outcome attachment because, well, we can't control it.

I smile proudly looking at how far I have come from a past when that was exactly me, so I can vouch for the fact you can change that :).

Visionary leaders instead see a future with different rules and move and act to have that kind of different future.

> **If your agenda is set by someone else and it doesn't lead you where you want to go, why is it your agenda?**

Chapter 10: The Culture Of Connection

Linchpins do not succeed alone.

They build a web of connections.
Most psychologists agree there are 5 essential traits for doing well with people, which are also the signs of a linchpin: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability.

You need to get better at them if you want to become a linchpin.

Chapter 11: The Seven Abilities of a Linchpin

Here's what will make you indispensable:

- *creativity:* original and useful
- *unique creativity:* requires domain knowledge, the creativity must be focused
- *delivering unique creativity:* you must ship!
- Managing a situation or organization of great complexity: when it's impossible to follow manual linchpins step in
- Leading customers
- Inspiring staff
- Providing deep domain knowledge with smart decisions and generous contributions
- Possessing a unique talent: as a linchpin, you need to have a superpower that is difficult to replace. So either get all the other ones or get the best in the world at your unique talent

And of course, you have to be amazing at what you do. If all you can do is the task and you're not in a league of your own at doing the task, you're not indispensable.

Chapter 12: When It Doesn't Work

Word of caution:

before you self-appoint yourself as the artist and go pointing fingers at your boss, know that it's very likely your

boss thinks *you* are not contributing as much as you could.

And it's also true your boss will not give you all the freedom of this world because, well, you gotta *earn* it first. Part of your work is indeed earning that trust first, and selling your plans to those around you and above you (see *Extreme Ownership* for more on leading up the chain of command).

The possibility of failure

Now that we have the freedom to create, we must embrace the fact that not all creations are equal, and some people aren't going to win.

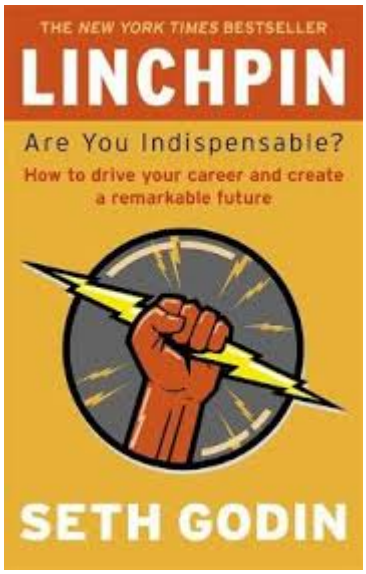
It might happen indeed things don't work out.
And that's ok.

What do you do then?

You do MORE ART, you give more gifts. Learn from what you do and then do more.
People committed to their art never stop giving.

Because the alternative, giving up and becoming an old-school cog is not appealing. So you do more.
Trying and failing is better than merely failing.

And keep in mind what you love, but if you need to make a living with it, then you also have to find a niche where money flows as a consequence of your art.



Real-Life Application

Become an artist
Here's a potentially revolutionary way to apply *Linchpin* by Seth Godin.
Ask yourself: *are you in love with your work? Are you doing art?*
Yes? Great.
No? Do yourself and this world a favor and change it.

Embrace anxiety: it works
I absolutely love the idea of not giving in to anxiety. Take the example of the keys, checking twice before you close the door or making sure they're in your pocket 10 times while you're out. They seem small things, but it's the thoughts behind it which are corrosive.
I did try to embrace the anxiety and *not* check again and it did work, so I absolutely recommend it.

CONS

Fear of not fitting in learned at school?
When I hear of people blaming human behavior on schools, churches, or society, I always need to resist the urge to disqualify them. Humans are complex and pinpointing this or that as a single culprit rarely seems the best explanation (Viktor Frankl *on generalizations*).
I believe indeed the fear of not fitting in is not just learned in school but also a major human innate driver (and I'm not the only one).

Artists and convenient descriptions
Linchpins and artists' descriptions feel a bit like reading the horoscope; most people would be nodding their heads, thinking it's exactly them.
It's very convenient, somehow.
Yet, that's also the beauty of *Linchpin* by Seth Godin: you just love reading it, and it can be helpful: we remember more and are more moved by well-crafted words.
So it's not a con but its greatest asset IF you don't just nod your head but also let it spur you to action.

Linchpin Review

Linchpin by Seth Godin is one of those rare books combining a great reading experience, great insight, and a motivating force to take action.

Two more things I'd like to highlight which are key:

Master Artist
Learning to overcome resistance is indeed critical. Read more on critical identity mindsets to spur you to action.
Just one thing I'd like to add to the puzzle: make sure you also focus on delivering and sharing *great* art.

The Lizard Brain
I was surprised to read Seth Godin stopped writing *Linchpin* a dozen times.

I'd urge you to reflect on that. Here is a world-famous author, rich and experienced. And he was *still* afraid. It goes to tell us that nobody is above and beyond the resistance, not even the people telling you how to overcome it.
So don't worry, it's not just you who's afraid. We all are. It's my struggle, it's your struggle, it's our struggle. But we keep going anyway. Welcome to the club.

Downrating Note:

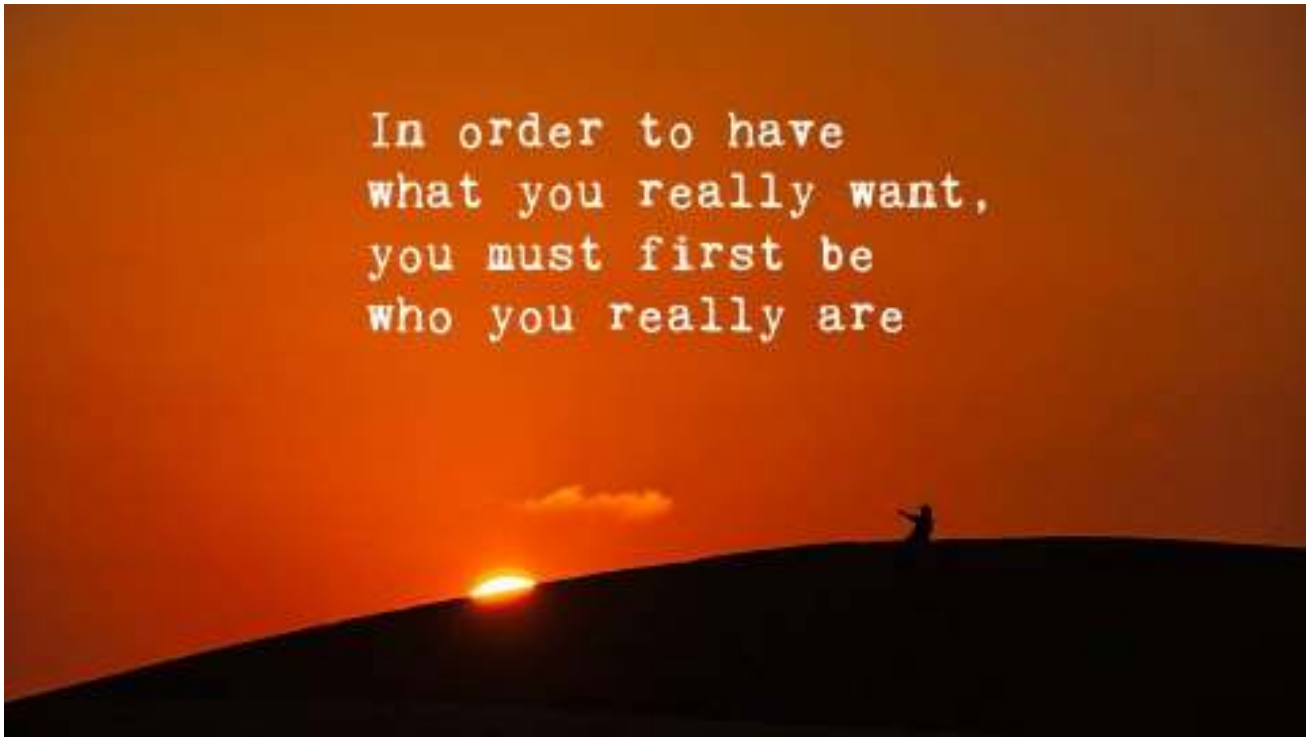
I demoted it from 5 stars to 4 after realizing it takes most of its ideas from *The War of Art*.

Get Linchpin on Amazon.

Relentless: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

In *Relentless* (2013) star athlete trainer Tim Grover shares the insights he gained into the psychology and personality of hyper-achievers and super-driven men.



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Bullet Summary

- Cleaners are driven by their dark side: get in touch with it rather than hide it
- Find your buttons to enter the Zone. Then use anger for top performance
- When you become amazing at your craft you don't think anymore. That's when you go off instincts
- Don't compete with others. Make *them* sweat to compete with *you*

Relentless Summary

Tim Grover talks about the mentality of the very top performers, the unstoppable ones whom he defines as "Cleaners".

Cleaners are the top of the top, "Closers" are great performers, and "Coolers" are very good performers.

The difference is mostly a mindset.

Let's see:

Don't Think

Tim Grover starts with a powerful one-two when he says:

> from now on your strategy is to make everyone else get on your level.

You're not competing with anyone else, *they* will have to compete with you.

And if you're into that wishy-washy "failing is ok" line of thinking, Tim Grover is not.
He says "the end result is all that matters".

Relentless is about never being content, about driving to be the best and then getting yet again to a whole new level, even if that level doesn't exist yet.
It's about facing your fears and being feared and respected not so much for your physical abilities but for your mental ones.

And worry not if you feel out of sorts at times.
You can always retreat to that secret place of yours where you're always in total control.
A place where there is no external pressure. Just your and your internal pressure to prove yourself, over and over.

Because you want it for yourself, not for anyone else.

> **Proving yourself over and over: you want it for yourself, not for anyone**

The Cleaner You Are The Dirtier It Gets

Tim Grover says *Relentless* means you're never satisfied and you create new higher goals as soon as you reach your personal best.

If you're good you don't stop until you're great and when you're great you don't stop until you're unstoppable.
In Grover's words being *relentless* means becoming a Cleaner.

A Cleaner is not about stardom and bling, it's about winning and winning again and again.
The Cleaner is addicted to success and is driven to do whatever it takes to win. And if that means breaking the

rules, be it, because Cleaners are also rule breakers when they need to.

The author says the Cleaner's attitude is that you own it and control it.
It's not about the actual job you do, it's about the attitude.

Whatever you do, you take responsibility to make things happen because you always put yourself in the position to carry the load for everyone else.

I loved the example Tim Grover has about the Cleaner's bus driver who knows all the passengers and their schedule, is friendly and smiling but silently thinks *"this is my fu**ing bus; it will be clean and on time, and anyone who messes with me or my bus will be back on the street walking".*

Cleaners are calm and collected, never too high or too low, and never too happy or depressed.
A Cleaner doesn't see problems but situations to be resolved and when he knows the solution he doesn't explain it, but simply says "I got this".

Failure is not an option for Cleaners: even if succeeding will take years he will find a way and will not stop until he succeeds.

Sounds great?

Well, being **a Cleaner also has a dark side**, Tim Grover says.

Cleaners also never stop working because it gives them too much time to ponder on their dark side and on what they had to endure and give up to get to where they are.

A Cleaner is also consumed by his addiction which takes center stage above all else in his life.
And that's a conundrum for the Cleaner: he is all about control, so when the addiction is controlling him he'll back off for a while. And then often come back with a renewed appetite.

Cleaners get what they want but pay for it by being alone and rarely understood.

> **You walk in confidently and leave with results.**

Closers

The author says a Closer can handle pressure and he'll get the job done if you tell him what he needs to do.

He will prepare and study all possible scenarios so he can anticipate them. Indeed, a Closer is uncomfortable with unexpected events he didn't prepare for.

Contrary to the Cleaner, a Closer loves and seeks attention and credit and is always paying attention to what others are doing and what they're thinking of him.

Money and fame are not so secondary for Closers, and he would choose financial security over winning.

Coolers

Tim Grover says a Cooler waits for the instructions, waits to see what all the others are doing, and then follows the leader. He doesn't take sides unless he has to and when things get too intense he kicks the problem over to someone else.
A Cooler can make a great play, but he's not ultimately responsible for the outcome. He leaves that to Closers and Cleaners.

Coolers VS Closers VS Cleaners:

Consistency:

- Coolers can have an amazing game.

- Closers can have an amazing season.
- Cleaners have amazing careers.

Competition:

- Coolers worry about the competition and how they measure up.
- Closers study the competition and plan their attack based on the opponent.
- Cleaners make the competition study them; they don't care whom they're facing, they know they can handle anyone.

Internal contentment:

- Coolers let others decide whether they're successful; they do the job and wait to see if you approve.
- Closers feel successful when they get the job done.
- Cleaners never feel as if they've achieved success because there's always more to do.

#1 – You push yourself harder when everyone else has had enough

Tim Grover says the mind comes first. First, you train your mind, then your body will follow.

Every single day you gotta put in the work and push past your fears and laziness and learn to be comfortable doing the uncomfortable.
Cleaners do the hardest thing first and they always focus on the destination, not on the hardship to get there.

How do you do that?

Well, you gotta crave the result so intensely that all that stands in between is just a means to an end.

It's hard not to quote Tim Grover verbatim here because it's just so powerful:

> *Bottom line if you want success of any kind: you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable.*
> *Every time you think you can't, you have to do it anyway.*
> *That last mile, the last set, the last 5 mins on the clock.*
> *When your body is screaming and depleted and telling you "no way, a**hole", you work harder and tell yourself "Do it. Now."*

You have to control your body, not the other way around.

My Note:
this reminds me of what Tony Robbins says: he used to jump out of bed and swim in freezing water to toughen his spirit and mind. His goal was that when his mind said something, the body follows

#2 – You get into a zone and control the uncontrollable

The zone has become a buzzword, but what does it even feel like?

The Zone

Tim Grover says that in the zone you don't hear anything.

Your only emotion is anger.
But it's never bursting out, it's quiet anger, simmering under your skin like a stealth predator waiting in ambush.
The zone is deeply calm, but not peaceful: it's intense focus.

Tim Grover says he can't stand athletes saying they switch on when they're under the spotlight because when you're

in the zone you shouldn't even notice the spotlights -or need them, for that matter-.

> **In the zone your only emotion is anger.**

How to find the zone

Of course, your next question is how to find the zone I suppose :).

The author says we all have triggers for it and it's different for everyone. However, the key is that it always comes from your dark zone.

Start with your past performance first: have you ever been in the zone?

What have you done to get there?
Or maybe you can think about your past, about a wound you still have open.
Or about someone screaming at you, or scathingly criticizing you.

Tim Grover says for some it can be questioning their manhood or ability and for some, it's a physical confrontation.

Sometimes to reconnect his athletes with their instincts Tim Grover would play old music to bring back childhood memories, taking them back to whom they used to be before there was any pressure to be different.

And when he gets it right, the heart rate drops instantly a few beats and there's always a smile.
Then he knows it's working.

Cleaners and emotions

A Cleaner doesn't get emotional but stays cool and calm saving all his energies for when it matters.
The only exception to showing emotions is if it will help him win, not because he lost control.

Tim Grover says that before game time he doesn't want to see players screaming and dancing and building each other up emotionally: it's a flash in the pan and if you start too hot you can only turn cold.

He takes Michael Jordan demeanor as an example and how he'd avoid any physical contact.
Just a fist bump or a subtle high five, very subdued and never making eye contact.

Grover is quite firm in outlining that emotions make you weak.
The fastest way *not* to get into the zone is to let emotions drive your actions. The only notable being exception is anger -the anger you can control and channel-.

Fear and nervousness

Fear and nervousness are also always a big topic when it comes to performance in key moments.

Tim Grover says that Cleaners also get nervous.
Michael Jordan admitted he had butterflies before big games, to which Grover would reply to get them going in the same direction. Butterflies are not going away, but your task is to *use* them to make you better.

Energy instead of emotions.
Big difference.

> **A Cleaner thinks "if I'm feeling nervous, how the f**k are they feeling? They have to deal with me**

Get a routine!

Tim Grover also suggests another great way to deal with fear and butterflies: a routine.

You practice the routine before your performances and it should not vary, whether it's a meaningless friendly game

or a final.

Stick to your routine and never tell people “leave me alone because I got big stuff coming up”.
That’s the worst you can do because you have just become emotional.

What to think before your key moment

Tim Grover says that players always ask him what to think before the free throw.
He says it has to be something personal and ideally if you’re truly in the zone, you think of nothing: it’s just you and the task as if you were alone in the world.
Or he suggests you tell yourself “it’s just a shot, not the end of the world either way”.
Alternatively, if you have to go somewhere in your head, he suggests going somewhere positive, like your kids or anything relaxing and happy.

My note:
The calmness of being in the zone reminds me of the 2006 World Cup final penalty shootout. The World Cup is the biggest sports event and shootouts are the tensest moment.
Look at Pirlo’s expression before shooting. Look at how he breathes out, notice his “think of nothing eyes”. It’s as if he’s forgetting about the external world and only focusing on himself. And how subdued is his celebration afterward?

When People Get Out of The Zone

With his characteristic vivid language, Tim Grover tells us that when a previous Cleaner falls out of the zone it’s as if he went from a silverback to a pussycat.
Interestingly, Grover says it usually happens when the dark side of the Cleaner’s life has been somehow rocked, for example by becoming public through a scandal.

And how do you get back in the zone from there?

Either something catastrophic happens to rebuild the dark side, or you are unapologetic about what happened (Tim Grover says he wished Tiger Woods hadn’t apologized for his scandal).

#3 – You know Exactly Who You Are

We’re all born bad but taught to be good (i.e.: born relentless and taught to relent).

Tim Grover stresses how key it is to trust yourself.
And of course, a big part of trusting yourself comes from hard, constant work.

Grover says you’ll reach a point when your body and mind reflexively know what to do all the time and *then* you can let your instincts take over. *Then* you can trust yourself to dominate any situation.
Then you can stop studying the competition and make the competition study you.

It doesn’t mean you stop learning, the greats learn everything and still never stop learning. But real learning doesn’t mean clinging to the lessons.

The real learning Grover is talking about means absorbing everything you can and then trusting your inner self, instinctively and without thinking.

In typical Tim Grover fashion, he doesn’t resist throwing a jab, and I thought that was so funny I just have to quote him:

> Oprah once said, “Every right decision I’ve ever made has come from my gut, and every wrong decision I’ve ever made was a result of me not listening.”
> Exactly.

> Of course, she also spent twenty-five years doing a show for people who preferred listening to her instead of listening to their own gut, as she told them whom they should believe and what they should do and how they should change.
> Every day, millions of people showed up to hear someone tell them what they were doing wrong, so they could receive instructions on how to live according to someone else's standards.

You gotta love Tim Grover.

Ideas and Actions

Look inside of yourself and ask: how would it feel if you could let go of all the pressure and just be yourself?
External pressure is one of the reasons many people don't start what they finish. And finishing is the most important part.
Anyone can have a great idea, but it's what you do with that idea that defines you.

And here's a completion for the three different personalities:

- A Cooler would talk about his idea (thought-mouth);
- A Closer would think and feel about the idea (thought-heart).
- A Cleaner would put it into immediate action (thought-gut, total confidence in his gut).

> **When you're great, you trust your instincts. When you're unstoppable, your instincts trust you.**

#4 – Your Dark Side Refuses To Be Taught Good

Tim Grover takes the example of Dr. Jekill and Mr. Hyde.

Cleaners in the zone transform into their Mr. Hyde alter ego, dropping all external and internal inhibitions to embrace their dark side and who they really are.
And that's where the ability to perform instinctively comes from.

Tim Grover presents it as a fact that every highly successful or highly driven individual has -without exception, he says- a dark side.

It's that dark side that drives their dominance, and it can be a fire to prove greatness, sexual energy, or even insecurity. It's different for everyone, but it's deep inside where no one else can see it.

The dark side is that part of you refusing to be ordinary, that part that stays raw and untamed. It's that part you keep in the dark, craving things you don't talk about. And you don't care how it comes across because it's who you are and you don't even wanna change it.

My Note:
I find it fascinating Tim Grover also includes insecurity as one of the main drivers to success. It's funny as practically all self-help literature only talks about how to remove your insecurity.
It's been my experience in life that some of the most driven people I have seen were, beyond their rougher external shells, deeply insecure and sometimes troubled individuals.

Cleaners control their dark side

But a Cleaner doesn't give in to these urges -that would be weakness-, he controls them.

When tales from the dark side become public, everyone usually sits in judgment and thinks, "He couldn't control himself. Weak."

But it's Cleaners saying that.

Understand this: **a Cleaner doesn't want to give up the thing you disapprove of**. For him, it's a strength, his choice.
Weakness would mean giving up what he craved because he was afraid of getting caught.

Cleaners often go to a place they call home to detach from the dark side. It's the built-in safety valve. And that's why so many men fight to stay in their marriages: that's their safe sanctuary.

#5 – You're Not Intimidated By Pressure, You Thrive On It

Tim Grover has a nice take on those athletes who "step up when it matters" and says it's not something positive at all. It's like asking where were you in all the other games, why weren't you as good and effective before?

Being relentless means working at all times for that result, not just in the last two seconds when drama is on the line.

Fear of Winning

Tim Grover also has an extremely interesting take on the fear of winning.

e says many are afraid of taking the last-second shot because they might miss it, but because they might make it, and then the expectation is they'll have to keep making it.

Cleaners instead crave that pressure.
They love it keeps them on their toes. They don't want to relax. Relaxing for a Cleaner is what weaker people do.

And now the funny part: put a Cleaner in a situation where they're supposed to relax, like a vacation he didn't want to take or a day off without working out, and he will become more stressed thinking about how he's slacking.

Stress

Tim Grover tells his guys to run towards stress. Stress challenges you and keeps you sharp. You can't have success without stress and your level of success is defined by how you manage stress.

How a Cleaner Reacts to People Putting Pressure

There's an extremely interesting part in which Tim Grover says LeBron is not a Cleaner because he gives in to external pressure.

Another player told the media LeBron can't defend another player. LeBron refuses to comment, but later he *did* comment, and at length.

That was typical Closer says Tim Grover: he thought about it, allowed it to become a distraction, and felt the pressure to prove something.
A cleaner would have put the pressure back on the guy by getting under his skin by not acknowledging him.

Indeed a Cleaner doesn't respond to external pressure. They don't feel external pressure because they are focused on themselves and on their own internal pressure. And they put so much pressure on themselves that anything external barely registers.

#6 – In Emergencies... They're All Looking For You

Tim Grover here says that Cleaners often get the last call, the one coming when the emergency seems unmanageable.

Many have already tried and failed to fix it, and now they're calling for you.

He says it happens to him every time when players arrive out of shape at training camp -thus implying he's a Cleaner-.

He says he will show up prepared and with something to offer, and he is 100% he can have a positive impact on any situation. And if that sounds like showboating, he says, it's fine with him.

The Cleaner job, he says, is often to go in and fix what wasn't working.

Not everybody wants that job, because you always step in at key moments and it leaves you very open and vulnerable to failures, but that's not how a Cleaner thinks because:

> *Nothing feels risky to a Cleaner; whatever happens, he'll know what to do*

Cleaners think *Before*

A cleaner can go with any plan and be ready when things go off plan because his instincts will take over.

It's not about "positive thinking", it's about having done so much hard work beforehand that he knows everything there is to know.

Do your thinking in advance, build your reflexes, and be open to whatever comes.

Cleaners and Mistakes

A Cleaner has no problem admitting he made a mistake and taking the blame. He will look at you and say "I fu**ed up" (taking the blame is also *what great leaders do*). A Cooler will give you excuses. And a Closer will blame someone else.

And Cleaners will also come to you and openly tell you that you fu**ed up. To you it might feel like a sneak attack, to the Cleaner it's just how it works.

Tim Grover says it's a question of confidence: Cleaners have such high confidence they know they can make it right.

I also like how Tim Grover goes into the "owning up" mentality.
He says you should own not just your mistakes, but also all the bad choices you've done.

That's your reputation and if you want your opinions to have value, then you must own up to them in good and bad times.

#7 – You Don't Compete With Anyone

When you're at the top it's up to you to pull everyone else up with you.

Some skilled players will lower their game or slow down so their teammates can feel more confident.
Silly move: the only way you can light the people around you is by being on fire yourself and the only way they can catch up is if you show them how it's done.

Two more things I found interesting in the chapter: Michael Jordan said the team was his supporting cast, which I'm not too sure how well it played in reaching the final goal of success.

And the other one is that a Cleaner, inside, never forgives and never, ever, forgets.

#8 – You Make Decisions, Not Suggestions

Tim Grover chastises big words in the self-help business such as "inner drive", "passion", and "half-full glass".

"Follow your passion" makes no sense, he says, what about "work on your passion" instead, excel at it, demand to become the best at it, and then follow through?

And if you're talking about "glass half full" you're engaging in mental masturbation instead of deciding and getting

down to it.

My note:
this reminded me of *Grit* by Angela Duckworth which explains that you indeed *build* your passions and become a master while you learn to love your discipline.

Tim Grover is very caustic here of pundits who encourage people to "visualize" as visualizing doesn't make it a reality.
My Note:
Tim Grover seems to mock the very hip "Law of Attraction" here, which is basically telling people to visualize things to make them a reality (see Conor McGregor using the Law of Attraction).

A Cleaner doesn't waste time: he makes a decision and sticks with it.
Say Grover: figure out what you do, then do it. And do it better than anyone else.

> **When you're great, you trust your instincts. When you're unstoppable, your instincts trust you.**

#9 – You Don't Love The Work But You're Addicted To Results

It doesn't matter what you have been given or what you were born with. It's what you do after that gives you the privilege of saying you did it.

Of course, the more gifted go to the top faster. And? That's not an excuse for not reaching as high.

I also like how Tim Grover underlines how most people are looking for quick fixes, for the elevators of life rather than the harder stairs. He also says hard work is not a skill, it's what will get you to the top and everyone can do it.

> **When you're great, you trust your instincts. When you're unstoppable, your instincts trust you.**

#10 – You'd Rather Be Feared Than Liked

A Cooler is liked, a Closer is respected and a Cleaner is feared.

You don't need to fit in, it's better to stand out. You're not there to make friends, you're there to be the best, and you're not afraid to show it.

Cleaners view people as tools and are careful in putting them in the right position, which is the position that will allow them to win. Once they have a great team in place, they stay committed to it.

Don't get it wrong though, Grover warns, being feared doesn't mean being a jerk, it means people are in awe of what you do and how you do it.

#11 – You Trust Few People. And They Better Not Let You Down

Cleaners always trust themselves the most. They do have a small circle of people they trust and believe in, and those better not let them down.

Cleaners don't explain

A Cleaner just says no. He doesn't sugarcoat it, doesn't make excuses, and doesn't offer explanations afterward. Explanations are a way of saying you're insecure and you're trying to defend your choice.

How to be respected by a Cleaner

Cleaners are not perfect; sometimes they make mistakes too. If you want to be valuable in his circle, be the guy who looks him straight in the eyes and tells him what all others are afraid to say.

He might hate it and even hate you for saying it, but he will respect you and trust you.

Cleaners keep quiet

I love it when Tim Grover draws parallels between his definition of a Cleaner and the Ultimate Cleaner which is… Can you guess? The Godfather.

Like The Godfather, Cleaners keep it quiet and intimidate their opponent by not saying a word.

When people make big shows of what and how they're going to do, they are actually trying to convince themselves. But the loudest guy in the room is the one with the most to prove.

Here's a full article on the "quiet dominance style of the Godfather".

Photo by labnol

#12 – You Don't Recognize Failure

Cleaners don't stop until they achieve their goal.
Tim Grover says that when people tell you you failed what they really mean is that they, in your shoes, would feel like a failure. Well, you're not that guy, and you stop when *you* say you are done.

Try or DO?

I love when Tim Grover says "fu** try". Trying is how failure starts. It's another way of saying that if you fail it's ok, you tried. And then he asks "did you *try* your best or did you *do* your best?"

Don't try. Do, or don't do. And if you do and it doesn't work, do it again.

> **When you're great, you trust your instincts. When you're unstoppable, your instincts trust you.**

#13 – You Don't Celebrate Because You Always Want More

Coolers and Closers love a celebration.
But Cleaners don't celebrate because they always want more.

Everyone will tell him he did great, but external approval means nothing to a Cleaner because he only heeds his own standards, which are far above anything anyone can possibly set for him.

Even in victory, the Cleaner will think about how he could have done it better, smarter, or in any different way than he actually did. And that's the difference between great and unstoppable: the drive to close the gap between "almost perfect" and "perfect".

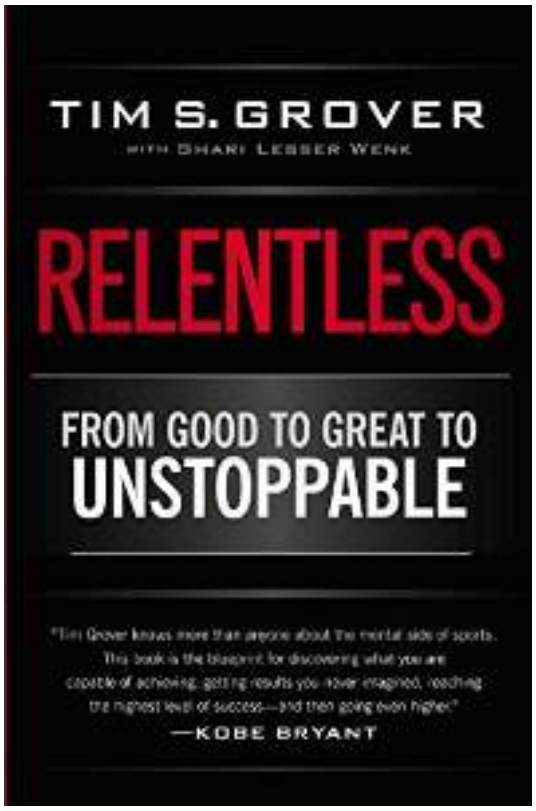
Tim Grover says the greatest battles you will ever fight are with yourself, and you must always be your toughest opponent. Always demand more of yourself than others demand of you.

The End

Your dreams are nothing but your instincts. Don't wake up and forget about them. Chase them instead, let them take you where you want to be, and make them happen.

Everything you want can be yours.
Be a cleaner and go get it.
Be relentless.

> **When you're great, you trust your instincts. When you're unstoppable, your instincts trust you.**



Real-Life Applications

Use your dark side
Don't the do-gooders influence you: don't try to repress your dark side. Don't force yourself to forget and forgive, to give the other cheek. Use your anger to fuel you!

Trust your instincts (and know your sh)**
Once you know your stuff, do let go of fear and study the competition and embrace your inner daemon. Let your inner fire drive you to victory.

CONS

Is relentlessness the ideal, or is it not?
You gotta wonder whether being relentless is a good thing for the relentless person, or if it's more like a curse. Read more on the law of balance:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

Tim Grover's gym is doing great. So what?
The author spends too much time attacking the people who criticized him and rumored his gym was a failure. That was a low, low point in the book and very unnecessary. It's a real pity because the rest of the book is spectacular.

People don't change?
Tim Grover says that people don't change. We don't fully agree with that.

Relentless Review

Relentless is an amazing book.

I disagree the end result should be your sole and final yardstick because you should build your self-esteem around something you *fully* control. And that's not always the case for the final result (same as *Extreme Ownership*).
I think insecurity as a dark side is not your best option or at the very least you should keep it very limited and stress, which Grover at times seems to glorify, should be moderate -research shows moderate levels are helpful, too much is not-.

I particularly loved:

Make your competition compete with you
Don't worry too much about your competition. Focus on being unstoppable instead.

Learn everything. And then trust your guts
Powerful concept.

Embrace your dark side
The most powerful concept of the whole book, and it was a huge realization for me since I have grown up with the idea of "forgetting and moving on is superior". It can be, but also harnessing the power of anger and revenge and potentially hitting back can be great options.

Get Relentless
Get it on Amazon

Start With Why: Summary, Review, & Examples

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Start With Why (2009) explains how clarity of WHY you do what you do is the driving force for charisma, happiness, leadership, best-in-class marketing, and personal success.

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Bullet Summary

- Find a WHY -a purpose or belief- for your company and stay consistent with it in all you do
- Find a WHY in your life and never forget about it for true happiness and passion
- People buy WHY (what you stand for), not WHATs (products)

Summary

Simon Sinek says that people and organizations who can inspire us give us a sense of purpose or belonging that has little to do with external incentives and benefits.

These inspired organizations appeal to us at a deeper level (also read *Drive* by Daniel Pink for more on internal motivation).

Learning how to inspire with your WHY is a win-win for everyone.
The more people and organizations communicate correctly, the more we will be fulfilled.
Starting with why, then, is a way to improve lives.

Chapter 1 – Assume You Know

Sinek starts with the example of car manufacturers.

In America, employees apply the final fixes on the doors with a rubber mallet, while in Japan the doors simply fit perfectly.

He says that's also a metaphor for leadership: there are those who decide to manipulate to get to the end result, and there are those who start with the end result in mind and let everything else naturally fall into place.

Also, read:

- Dark psychology manipulation: there is an overview of leadership manipulation

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Chapter 2 – Carrots and Sticks

Simon Sinek says there are two ways companies attract customers:

1. Inspiring -the carrots-
2. Manipulating -the sticks-.

Manipulations are not actual "sticks" but sales, promotions, customer programs, and similar.

Manipulations *do* work, says the author.

As a matter of fact, when you need behavior to happen once only, then manipulations are the best way to go.
But when you want more than a single transaction, when you want a loyal, lasting relationship, then you are better served with inspiration.

WHATs and Price Wars

When you are defined by WHAT you do, your product becomes a commodity.

At that point, price, quality, service, and features are the primary ways to motivate a purchase decision.

It becomes very hard to differentiate and build loyalty, and that's why most companies resort to what Sinek calls "manipulations": sales, promotions, influencing tricks, etc.

Chapter 3 – The Golden Circle

But how do you inspire? What does "*Start With WHY*" even mean?
Simon Sinek explains it with the Golden Circle.

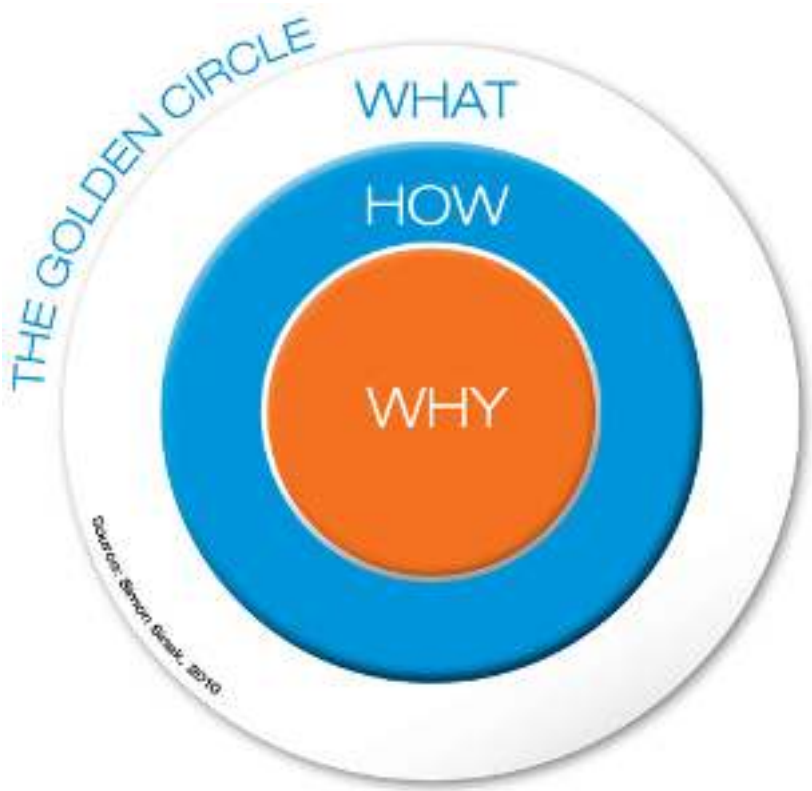


Photo by Gavin Llewellyn [image]

WHATs, HOWs, And WHYs

- WHAT is what you physically produce or offer as a service
- HOW is the culture and systems in which you produce your WHATs
- WHY is the purpose behind it all, the reason why you get out of bed

Every company knows WHAT they do because everyone can easily describe the products or the function they have within that organization.

HOWs are values and principles guiding how you bring your cause to life. HOW shapes the systems and culture within a company (also read: *The Culture Code*).

Understanding HOW you do things and holding the whole company and workforce accountable gives companies great strength.
For example, it gives companies greater ability to hire people who will thrive in the organization.

HOWs are most effective when they are verbs. So Sinek says it's not "integrity", it's "do the right thing"; It's not "innovation", it's "look at the problem from a different angle"

WHY, says Simon Sinek, is ironically rather simple to discover -WHY do you do what you do?-
However, most companies say WHAT they do, sometimes HOW they do it, but rarely WHY they do what they do.

That's not the case for inspired companies and inspired leaders though. Simon Sinek says that every single inspired company or leader thinks, acts, and communicates from the inside out. They "start from WHY".

That's key to building a following and even selling because, as Sinek stresses many times, people buy WHYs, not WHATs.

Inspired Companies and Leaders

When we start with WHY we go from the inside out of the circle.

WHY is the reason to buy and the WHATs merely represent the tangible products as proof of that belief.
WHATs are the reasons we can point to rationalize why we so much like one company over another?

Simon Sinek heavily cites Apple throughout the book.

He says there is nothing technically special about Apple, it's just a company like another.
There's no real difference from its competitors.

But Apple communicates from the WHY.
Apple's WHY is to challenge the status quo and empower the individual. And their challenging the status quo is a pattern repeating in all they say and do, which is the reason why people perceive Apple as authentic.

Products Represent People

Some marketing professionals will tell you Apple sells a lifestyle.

Well, Simon Sinek disagrees and puts it the other way around: Apple doesn't sell a lifestyle, Apple is simply one of those brands that people with a certain lifestyle are attracted to.

The products they choose become proof of WHY they do the things they do. And they can use Apple's products because Apple's WHY is so clear.

It's the same for other brands that managed to build a following: Harley Davidson fits into a well-defined group and Prada fits the lifestyle of another group.
It is the *cause* that these companies represent that inspires loyalty.

The loyalists and cheerleaders for each brand will tell you they choose them based on features and benefits, but in truth, the bond is deeper: it's about who they are.

Chapter 4 – This is Not Opinion, This is Biology

Simon Sinek says that's not just his opinion but it's rooted in biology and the drive to belong.

We want to be around people -and organizations- who are like us and share our beliefs.

When companies start with WHY, with what they believe, they will tap into our innate drive to include those products as symbols of *our* values and beliefs.
They make us feel special like we belong to something bigger, and we feel a sense of tribe affiliation with all the others buying the same products.

Start With Why Example: Apple VS MAC

Look at the Apple commercial "I'm a MAC and I'm a PC" and you will get an idea of who a Mac user is:

The Mac type is a young guy, dressed casually, relaxed, and with a sense of humor making fun of "the system".

The PC is in a suit and looks grey and boring.

Neither is better, Simon Sinek says, it's about where you feel like you belong.
Are you with the majority or are you a contrarian? Apple defines itself as a contrarian.

And the opposite is true: that same drive to belong also make us feel what does not belong.
It's something deep inside that we can't verbalize often, but it's what makes us queasy about buying an mp3 player from Dell: it doesn't feel right because Dell only belongs to computers.

WHY Talks to Limbic Brain

When organizations and leaders start from why they are talking directly to the part of the brain controlling decisions ("gut decisions").

People make decisions that just "feel right", cannot explain why they did it and will rationalize it and verbalize it with something else.

So, says Sinek, they won't tell you they choose Apple because they see themselves as someone who likes to challenge the status quo and Apple serves him to prove to the world who he is and what he believes in.

That's what actually happened in the non-rational part of the brain that controls behavior, but people don't have a rational understanding of that. So they will tell you they chose Apple because of the screen resolution, or because there are no viruses.

And, funny enough, Simon Sinek adds that if people made only rational decisions, and did all the research before making a purchase, no one would ever buy a Mac :).

WHATs speak to the rational

When organizations and leaders communicate from their WHATs instead they engage the rational part of our brain.

They force us to take the more stressful and laborious route to decision-making.

Rational decisions indeed take longer, and your WHATs will be pitched against a bunch of other WHATs.
It's in these conditions that manipulative strategies leveraging desires, fantasies, or fears work.

Why Companies Focus on WHAT

Companies start with WHATs and HOWs because that's what their customers ask for.
They ask for great quality, low prices, 24h service, and lots of features.
And it's all scientifically sounding because it's based on data.

But Simon Sinek says that's all baloney: the part of the brain controlling decision-making is different from the part of the brain reporting back WHY that decision happened.

So all those focus groups and questionnaires are actually of little value.

And Sinek says there is more evidence that sales don't improve and loyalty is not formed when companies do what their customers *say* they want.

And then Sinek quotes a famous Henry Ford annotation: "*if I had asked people what they wanted they would have said a faster horse*".

> **If I had asked people what they wanted they would have said a faster horse**

Manipulation VS Inspiration

Just to be clear, Simon Sinek says that manipulations also reach the limbic brain when they deploy fear, social

pressure, or aspirational messages.

However, it's only when the message goes deeper that it aligns with our sense of self and our behavior moves from motivated to inspired.
And it's only then that it "feels right" and we are willing to pay a premium.

Chapter 5: Clarity, Discipline & Consistency

Simon Sinek says that a WHY is just a belief, it's not readily touchable and visible. The clarity of your WHY is then more clearly shown through your HOWs and, even more visibly, through your WHATs.

HOWs are the actions you take to realize that belief? And WHATs are the results of those actions –everything you say and do: your products, services…-.

And they all have to prove what you believe. When everything proves your WHY, that's authenticity. You are authentic when your Golden Circle is in balance.

Chapter 6: The Emergency of Trust

Trust, says Simon Sinek, begins to emerge when we see that people and organizations are driven by reasons that go beyond the self-serving.

Aligning WHY, HOWS, and WHATs is a way to build that trust.

WHATs and Differentiation

Simon Sinek says that only companies acting like commodity producers have the constant challenge of differentiating.

And, looking at competitors to add features and benefits, only entrenches the WHAT culture.

In stark contrast companies with a clear sense of WHY tend to ignore their competitors and don't worry about "differentiating". They simply ARE different and don't need to convince anyone about it: everyone knows it.

My Note:
This part reminded me of Tim Grover when he says that unstoppable individuals let the competition study them, not the other way around.

WHY and Flexibility

Since people are inspired and buy WHY you do it, companies that communicate from the WHY have huge flexibility in what they market: a company communicating from the WHY indeed never gets labeled by the WHATs.

Take Apple again, you can buy a computer from Apple of course, but also an mp3 player or a cellphone.

It's not the case for Dell.
Dell defined itself by WHAT they do.

They do computers, so people don't feel comfortable buying anything else from them, like an mp3 player or a PDA.
They tried expanding into different verticals, but quickly retreated to "focus on their core business".

Simon Sinek also calls into question the first mover advantage when WHY is part of the picture.

Creative was more qualified than Apple to produce a digital music product, and they went there first. They marketed it though as a "5GB mp3 player", like a WHAT. Apple marketed the iPod instead as "1.000 songs in your pocket": WHY we needed.

WHY & Hiring

Simon Sinek also expands on the benefit of starting with WHY in the hiring process.

He says that most companies write their job description all about WHAT and not WHY. When you start with WHY instead you exponentially increase your ability to attract people who are passionate about what you stand for.

Sinek mentions Shackleton and his search for crewmen in a dangerous expedition.
His job description ran:

> "*men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.*"

You can rest assured that people applying for such a JD would be ready for anything.

Sinek also says that great companies don't hire skilled people and motivate them, they are motivated people and inspire them.

Steve Jobs didn't come up with any revolutionary idea, but Apple has a strong WHY to attract passionate people. And Apple gives them a purpose around which to develop great ideas. Simon Sinek says Apple employees, similarly to Apple customers, all love a good revolution.

> **Great companies don't hire skilled people and motivate them, they are motivated people and inspire them.**

Chapter 7: How a Tipping Point Tips

Simon Sinek also speaks about the ways new ideas and products spread.

The question, he says, isn't much about how you get influencers to talk about you, but how do you get enough influencers to reach the tipping point?

Sinek then introduces the diffusion curve.
The people waiting for 6h to get the iPhone were all early adopters, on the left of the curve.

The people on the far right instead are never content and never loyal. Sinek says you should know who the people on the far right are so you don't waste money trying to convert them.
After all, these guys will do business with you anyway if you meet their requirements (and will switch at the drop of a hat when you won't).

The goal of a business then is to be crystal clear about their WHY and find people who believe what you believe. Once you get enough of the 15-18% on the left side of the bell curve, they will encourage the rest to follow.

My Note: I invite you to check out The Tipping Point

Chapter 8: Start with Why But Know "How"

Simon Sinek says that energy motivates and can put people in a frenzy. But it's the charisma that inspires, and people with a clear WHY are charismatic people.

His example is Bill Gates as compared to Steve Ballmer.
Sinek says energy is easy to recognize, measure, and even copy. Steve Ballmer was energetic.

Charisma instead is difficult to define, measure and copy.
Bill Gates, in spite of being shy and awkward, is charismatic. Charisma commands loyalty while energy doesn't.

When Steve Ballmer speaks people are energized and maybe excited, but those states tend to dissipate quickly.

When Bill Gates speaks people listen with bated breath and inspire people. They will remember those lessons for weeks, months or years.

For different types of charisma read:

- The Charisma Myth

Energy motivates but charisma inspires

WHY and HOW Types

Simon Sinek says that behind most WHY-type leaders there's a HOW-type who builds the infrastructure which brings the WHY to life.

WHY types are the visionaries with overactive imaginations.
They tend to be optimists who believe that everything they can imagine can be accomplished and they tend to be focused on things most people can't see, like the future.

HOW types are more practical and more realistic and tend to be focused on the things most people can see -and tend to be better at building them-.

Interestingly Simon Sinek says that HOW types can be very successful and make millions but rarely do they build billion-dollar businesses that change the world.
And while HOW types don't need WHY types to do well, WHY types do need HOW types or they'll end up starving visionaries.
And while most successful entrepreneurs fancy themselves as visionaries they're HOW types.

Billion-dollar companies are usually born when a good WHY type meets a good HOW type (example of Walt Disney and Roy).

Vision and Mission Statement

The difference between the WHY and HOW types also introduce the difference between the vision and mission statements in an organization.

The vision is the founder's intent, WHY the company was founded.
The mission is a description of HOW the company will create that future.

When both are clear, it will help the WHY and HOW types to have a clear role in the partnership.

Chapter 9: Know WHY, Know HOW, Then WHAT?

Simon Sinek says that in the early stages of a company, it's easier to keep the Golden Circle working well because the founders make most of the decisions and have the most contact with the outside world.

To keep a healthy Golden Circle as the company grows the leader at the top should represent the emotional limbic brain while WHAT the company says and does represents the rational thought and language of the neocortex. And both have to keep in line at any stage.

Logo, Stories, Symbols & WHY

Simon Sinek then dwells on a very important topic: since the WHY sits deeply in the limbic brain, it can be difficult to clearly articulate it.

Just imagine you had to explain love to someone. It's impossible because the part of the brain controlling feelings is different than the one controlling language.

This is why, Simon Sinek says, we use stories and symbols to create a more tangible expression of our WHY. The

more clear they can be, the better the communication with the outside world.

Chapter 10: Communication is About Listening

Sinek says that symbols mean nothing until we give them meaning.
And it will still have little meaning if it only identifies a company.

But it's when a company's WHY is clear that a logo will start having a life of its own.

A logo can then become a symbol when it will inspire people to use it to say something about who *they* are.

Simon Sinek says that high fashion labels are logos to show status, albeit many are generic in what they symbolize.

Harley Davidson is a more profound example of a significant logo: Harley Davidson embodies the values and lifestyle of the people wearing it.

The Celery Test

What's good for your competitors is not necessarily good for you. What matters is that your WHATs and HOWs are in line with your WHY.

But how do you know that?
Simon Sinek proposes what he calls the "Celery Test".

Imagine if people told you that to grow you need cookies, Nutella, celery, fruits, and ice cream.
Should you get them all?
No, because it's time-consuming, expensive, and scatterbrained.

What you do is filter everything through your WHY.
So if your WHY is to live a healthy life you only pick the fruits and the celery.

When you filter your decisions through your WHY you save money, and time, and most importantly, you stay true to your cause for everyone else to see.

And Simon Sinek adds: sure, you might get some Nutella every once in a while, but you know it's a short-term fix and not part of your WHY.

Chapter 11: When WHY Goes Fuzzy

Simon Sinek here talks about examples of a company that lost their WHY, either in a mishap -Volkswagen- or more seriously in their core values -Walmart-.

Volkswagen for example literally means "car of the people" and its image has always been that of reliable cars for everyone, for the average citizens.

And the most famous Volkswagen model was a hippy symbol of freedom and simple life. So when they introduced a super expensive model, that flew against their own WHY and sold nothing.

Example: Walmart Losing Its WHY

Walmart is a more serious case. It started with the idea of helping people and communities and providing products at low prices.

However, after the death of its founders, the company focused only on low prices, forgetting about helping people and the communities they entered. So it became a cutthroat business towards its suppliers, employees, and the communities it joined.

Walmart got into serious trouble when it lost its initial WHY.

Achievement (WHAT) VS Success (WHY)

Simon Sinek says that achievement comes when you pursue and attain WHAT you want but success only comes when you are clear in pursuit of WHY you want it.

Simon Sinek's wording is just too beautiful that I will quote him verbatim here:

> *Success comes when we wake up every day in that never-ending pursuit of WHY we do WHAT we do.*

This brings me again to Viktor Frankl when he says that success, like happiness, cannot be pursued, it can only ensue. Ensuing from a cause bigger than yourself (your WHY).

Simon Sinek says that of those successful, rich entrepreneurs, few are actually happy. The ones who are, tend to never have lost sight of their WHY.
Simon Sinek also says that gaining clarity of WHY is not the hardest part. The hardest part is the discipline to trust one's gut over outside advice (Steve Jobs' example) and to stay true to your cause or belief.

> **Success comes when we wake up every day in that never-ending pursuit of WHY we do WHAT we do.**

Chapter 12: Split Happens

Simon Sinek says that a company always starts fueled by passion. But for passion to thrive and survive, it also needs structures and HOWs. Most companies fail, says the author, because both HOWs and WHYs need each other.

Chapter 13: The Origin of a WHY

You have probably read that before starting any business endeavor you should do market research, know your customer and find your niche.

No, says Simon Sinek.
The WHY starts within you.

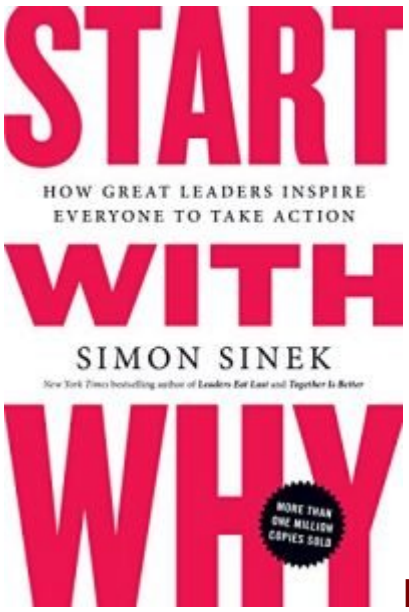
And once you find and know your WHY, the hardest part is to remain authentic to it.

My Note: if you need help in finding your why, I highly recommend taking a look here at *Grit* by Angela Duckworth.

> **WHY starts within you, not with market research**

Chapter 14: The New Competition

Simon Sinek says that when you compete with others, nobody wants to help you, but when you compete with yourself, people take a liking to you.
But what does everyone do?
We're all engaged in racing *against* our competitors.
People with a strong WHY instead aren't interested in competition, they're in a race with themselves.



Real-Life Applications

Find a WHY…
For yourself and for your company.

..Stick to it…
And stick to it, even when other options seem to give you more benefits or revenues. It will pay you in the long run and you'll be more confident, more genuine, and, chances are, happier.

.. And Start with WHY
Always keep in mind all your communication, actions and decisions will Start with WHY and will be filtered by your WHY. Then you will become a genuine man and lead a genuine company.

CONS

- **Repetitive**

The concepts in *Start with WHY* are awe-inspiring and groundbreaking, yet they're also rather simple and the book could have done with fewer repetitions.

- **Dogmatic**

I find Simon Sinek to be quite dogmatic.

He describes things as rather black and white, leaves few doors open to doubts, and seems to deal with the world as if there were one single right answer.

And while that's charismatic for most and it's a skill you should learn to deploy *when needed*, I find it jarring when it becomes a modus operandi (and opposite to a learner's mindset as presented by Maxwell).

- **Naive view of "WHY's" genuineness**

I find Simon Sinek's view that the "WHY" is genuine to be quite either naive or disingenuous.

Most WHYs are built by marketing departments and are nothing but professional corporate manipulations.

Also, read more on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Review

Start With Why is a fantastic book about the importance of a bigger WHY in life (overarching cause).

While this is not a new concept and we've already seen its power in *Man's Search For Meaning*, Simon Sinek delves into the importance of WHY in the business world.

But make no mistake, this is also psychology and social psychology as it deals with identities and social identities.

With tons of examples and real-life stories Start With Why will most likely open new doors of understanding for you both in psychology and in business.

What I disagree on:

WHY doesn't have to stay the same
Sinek seems to imply that a WHY is fixed for all your life. I strongly disagree with that. Viktor Frankl tells us that *finding* a WHY was the best way to survive in concentration camps and Angela Duckworth explains that we find our passions. And different life events can also change your WHY.

What I loved:

I love the whole book. If I had to pick one single element I believe too often goes unnoticed is this:

- **Differentiating is for mid-pack**

Companies desperate for "differentiating" are entrenching their status as mid-pack, average businesses.

Of course, you should know your competitors, but companies with a strong sense of WHY don't obsess with "being different", they focus on their thing and just *are* different.

Check my book summaries page. and get the book on Amazon.

Pre-Suasion: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Pre-Suasion (2016) is Cialdini's prequel to his famous "*Influence*", and explores the psychology of persuasion *before* you even place your question, demand, or call for action

Contents

- Exec Summary
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- CONS
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[image]Exec Summary

- The top persuaders focus on what they do and say *before* the request rather than the request itself (i.e.: they focus on priming)
- Pre-Suasion is all about channeling your prospect's attention to favorable aspects of your pitch (or yourself)
- Hold attention to favorable aspects, without any comparison and new information, and you've won half the battle

Summary

About The Author: Robert Cialdini, is almost a household name and he's one of the most well-known experts when it comes to the psychology of persuasion.
His previous book, *Influence*, is the biggest seller in the psychology of persuasion.

About Pre-Suasion: "*Pre-Suasion*" is divided into three parts. Cialdini wrote it after "Influence", yet he says you should probably read "*Pre-suasion*" first.
This a chapter summary of "*Pre-Suasion*"

Pre-Suasion – An Introduction

Robert Cialdini says that the top persuaders spend more time crafting what they do and say *before* the actual request than on the request itself.

To persuade effectively, adds Cialdini, is to Pre-Suade effectively.

How do you do that?
Pre-Suasion explains just that.

Cialdini uses the example of a friend of his in a consulting business.
His friend always felt put in a difficult spot when asked for discounts, but that all changed when he started presuading his target.

Before communicating his fee, he would joke:

> **Pre-Suader**: as you can tell, I'm not gonna be able to charge you a million dollar for this.

With that simple trick, he eliminated almost all challenges to his fees.

And if that doesn't sound surprising to you, here are a few more Pre-Suasion effects:

- drawing a long line instead of a short one raised estimate for a river's length
- listening to a German song made people more likely to buy German products;
- observers' estimates of athletes' performances increased if the jersey's number increased
- the amount of money people were willing to spend on a restaurant went up when the name of the restaurant was Studio97 rather than Studio17.

The Sneaky Presuasion Example:

An alarm system salesman was able to consistently sell more than all his competitors.
His pitch and process were the same in all but one detail

Which one was it?

While the prospects were taking a test in their house as part of the process he would tell them he forgot a piece of important information in his car.
He would ask the couple if they could lend him the keys so he could go out and be back without disturbing them.

The secret is that you only let people you trust in and out of your house on their own.
Now that they had given him the key the sub-communication was that he is a "trusted person".

Chapter 2 – Privileged Moments

Cialdini used to be a palm reader and he has a few funny stories.

He recounts when he told a man he was stubborn.
Later that night, that same man was impressed to hear he was "quite a flexible man".
In both instances, he uttered "absolutely right".

Cialdini says that giving very general traits helps, but that's not the only factor at play.
People usually look for confirmation rather than disconfirmation.

And thus, whatever generic trait you tell someone, they will look in their past for all the times they conformed to your chosen trait.

Pre-suasion and Confirmation Bias

Similarly, a sample of Canadians changed their mood when asked if they were happy or unhappy with their social life.
The people asked if they were 375% more likely to declare themselves unhappy.

For the same reason, you should be wary of surveys employing a single-sided and biased form of questioning (ie. "how are happy are you with.. ").

Your Focus Sways Your Opinion

Cialdini says the dominant model of social influencing is that if you wish to change someone's behavior you first change one of their existing features.

For example:

- If you want them to buy a soft drink they're unfamiliar with, you will change beliefs by reporting it's the fastest-growing new beverage
- To change attitude you will connect it to a well-liked celebrity
- And to change the experience you will offer a sample.

This approach works.

But Cialdini says there's an alternate model of social influence. It's the *Pre-Suasion.*
Prep them by asking:

> **Pre-Suader**: are you adventurous enough to consider a new soft drink?

Or get them to focus on a time in which they did try something different and were happy about it.

This way you only alter what they're focusing on.

Pre-Suading People At The Mall

Another example is researchers surveying random people in a mall.
Only 29% agreed to answer when asked directly.

But prepping them with a pre-suasive opener such as "*do you consider yourself being a helpful person*" changed everything.
Most people answered yes, and now you are in what Cialdini calls a "privileged moment".

As a consequence of the new focus, 77% of people agreed to take part in the survey.

Chapter 3 – The Importance of Attention

Channeled attention leads to persuasion: we tend to overestimate the importance of anything which draws our attention.

So the persuader who draws attention to the best feature of whatever he's offering succeeds first in having the audience consider that feature fully and, more importantly, also in giving exaggerated significance to that feature even before they see it.

It's important to notice that while drawing attention to anything is effective in making that idea or information stand out and be important, it's only a positive influence if the idea is valid.

Agenda Setting

Agenda-Setting theory says that media rarely produces change directly -ie. telling you what you think-, but it's extremely effective in telling us what deserves our attention -ie. what to think about-.

Pre-suading With Background Images

Cialdini gives us an extremely interesting example of how the background image of a website can sway our decisions.

A furniture store selling both quality and cheaper sofas wanted its clients to buy more quality sofas.
When they changed the background image on their website to fluffy clouds customers bought the quality version because the clouds made them focus on comfort.

On the other hand, a background image with pennies had customers buy the cheap version as the image had them focus on savings.

Noises and images in real life also have powerful effects.
Students in schools with train tracks nearby have lower test scores results. And classes with highly decorated walls also produced lower test scores.

Presuade Without Comparison

If you focus your prospect's attention on a positive benefit of your product without mentioning any rivals' equally good option you will likely enhance your product's rating.
Interestingly, your prospect's intention to buy your product will also jump.

For example, if Sony asked you to consider the quality of its smartphone but not the qualities of major rivals, your intention to purchase a Sony will increase.

Chapter 4 – What's Focal is Causal

Channeled attention also leads to the belief in causality.
Meaning that what draws our attention, we believe has the power to make events occur.

For example, when Johnson and Johnson issued a public recall of a dangerous product with serial numbers associated, those numbers ended up being played in local lotteries at unprecedented rates.

The number had become the focus of attention and people assigned special (predictive) power to them.

Presuading With Prominence

We all know that body language speaks the truth, right?
Well, body language is also heavily influenced by what you pay attention to.

An experiment scripted a conversation in such a way that neither speaker contributed more to the discussion.
The observers were arranged in a way that they could see the face of one person at a time and then asked who was the most influential of the two.

Guess what happened?

The observers always picked the person whom they had focused on the most.

Pro Tip: if you find yourself under interrogation find the camera in the room and move your chair in a way that it will record your face *and* the questioner's face equally.
So no judges will be Pre-Suaded you're guilty.

Leaders and Causality

Leaders often receive a disproportionate amount of attention and are often assigned disproportionate credit -or blame- for results.

Pre-Suasion hypothesizes the causality fallacy might be the reason why CEOs are paid so much more than employees.

Chapter 5 – Commanders of Attention I: The Attractors

Sexual and threatening cues catch our attention powerfully because they tie to our innate drive of reproducing and surviving.

However, they can be used in the wrong way and become ineffective or even counterproductive.

Sex and Sales

Using sex only helps to sell if the item is connected to sex in some way. For example, sex for cosmetics, perfume, lipsticks, and form-fitting clothes works.

While soft drinks, laundry detergents, or kitchen appliances do not follow in that category, Cialdini says.

Sex Interest As Breakup Indicators

I found it extremely interesting that the biggest predictor of a future break up was not how much a couple liked each other or what they planned, but how much they were aware of other attractive people around them.

How to Deliver Threatening News for Actions

The most threatening examples of poor health habits work better than mildly threatening ones.

However, Robert Cialdini also says that reducing the fear level works too because very high fear might have people denying the risks.

A great way to convey highly threatening news without raising people's defenses is to give a real and scary warning and *then* present the solutions.

An experiment in The Netherlands showed that a group given the scariest message and then presented with a workshop to reduce risks were 4 times more likely to sign up compared with the non-highly threatening message group.

Threatening, Sexual and Pre-Suasion

When we are exposed to sexual messages we prefer being on our own -to take advantage of the sexual possibilities-.
When we feel threatened instead we'd rather be in a group -for defense power-.

This tendency has far-reaching consequences in influencing.

For example, ads showing how popular your product is won't be effective during a romantic movie.
On the contrary, it will be very effective during a scary movie (or anything which makes people worried).

And showing how unique your product is will work well during a romantic movie (or anything with sexual undertones) and poorly during a scary movie.

To me, this was an incredible finding and it goes to show the far-reaching consequences of Pre-Suasion.

The Investigatory Reflex

If someone enters our environment or if we enter a new environment our focus shifts to the new setting.
This is why we often forget what we were supposed to do when entering a new room.

And it also happened to Pavlov's Dog: the most drooling dog in psychology wouldn't salivate when someone new entered the room.

Unique = Higher Sales

Two sofas pitched against each other were comparable except for the cushioned softness.

Let's call the couches "Hardy" and "Softy".
Most people preferred Hardy. But when 3 other sofas all with a harder cushion were added, Softy became the favorite.

It's because Softy's distinguishing factor drew more attention and it became more important.
Softy became the standout.

Chapter 6 – Commanders of Attention II: the Magnetizers

If you hold the attention your argument is likely to go unchallenged by opposing views.

And some information or format have intrinsic pull and staying power, like:

Self-Relevant Info Prevails

Any information specific to us will catch and hold attention.

Try to take a group's picture and pass the camera around.
Who do you think people will be looking at?
At themselves of course!

If you have a good product, Robert Cialdini also recommends switching the wording of your copy to "you" and to starting with "you".

And if you want someone to listen to you during a meeting you should not speak immediately before them or after them.
Immediately before they will be too focused on what they are going to say. Immediately after they'll be rehashing what they've just said.

Unfinished Arguments Linger On

Unresolved problems and unfinished activities keep holding our attention for quite a while (and spur us to get back to them).

It works even for humdrum advertising of soft drinks and toothpaste: students were better able to recall the details when the researchers stopped the ads 4-5 seconds before their natural end.

Leaving Open Loops in Dating

In another experiment, women participated in an experiment in which attractive men rated them based on their Facebook profiles.

The women were then asked who of the guys who had rated them they preferred.
Surprisingly, it wasn't the guys who had rated them the highest, but it was those whose rating was unknown.

Those men with unknown ratings stayed in the women's minds and made them appear as the most attractive.

Leveraging Open Loops

Here are a few ways you can leverage open loops in your life:

1. Don't finish a task so that you will want to work on it later on
2. Cialdini starts classes with stories he leaves unfinished and uses mysteries rather than questions and explanations. When he challenged students to provide explanations to mysteries their test scores went up.

Counterarguments VS Argument

Cialdini says in persuasion counterarguments are more powerful than arguments.

If you can show your opponent is misinformed on the topic you will undermine him even if you don't have a full-blown point to make.

And it's even more powerful when the counterclaim paints him as an untrustworthy source of information. In this case, you not only win the battle, but you also start with a huge advantage in all successive battles.

Chapter 7 – I Link Therefore I Think

Robert Cialdini says that our brain operation is all about associations. Associations are the building block of thoughts.

Association and words are more powerful than most people think: an experiment shows that people exposed to violent words delivered 48% more intense electric shocks in a successive experiment.

Associations For Political Persuasion

Pre-Suasion details a fantastic example of a politician with policies to catch and cage criminals.
Such a politician should portray crime as a wild beast raging through the city that must be stopped.

Imagine the other candidate wants to tackle the problem by addressing the root causes with education and jobs instead.
This candidate should portray the crime as a virus infecting the city.
It's because to remove a virus it's necessary to remove the unhealthy conditions that allowed it to spread.

And if you think it's too far-fetched an experiment presented two groups of the criminality problem with exactly those wording: wild beast and virus.

The ones presented with the "beast" problem chose the catch-and-cage solution and the opposite was true for the other group.
The size of the change due to a single word was *twice* more significant than gender *and* political party affiliation.

Associations in Sales

A master salesman used metaphors to achieve unparalleled sales in insurance policies.
He wouldn't say people died but they "walked out" of life and the insurance money "walks in".

Personal Associations

And of course, we like anything we can associate with ourselves.

We like more people who come from where we come from, people who look like ourselves, people with the same ideas, and also products with our same initials.

And we also like people whose name is easy for us to pronounce and sounds more familiar (read what to do when people mispronounce your name).

Nonverbal associations

Associations also work non-verbally.

"Heavy" in English is associated with seriousness and importance, so HR people with a CV attached to a heavy clipboard tend to view the candidate as a more serious contender for the job.

And major holding a heavy mock-up for a project tends to ponder the project more deeply.

And people who've been holding a hot cup of coffee feel warmer toward their conversation partner.

Chapter 8 – Persuasive Geographies

Cialdini says that working from home when writing his first book for a general audience produced a better job than when he wrote at University.

It was because at university he had all the scholar cues around him that made it more difficult for him to drop the jargon.
At home instead, he was immersed in the "general population" environment and more befitting words flowed accordingly.

Presuasion Can Help Women & Minority

Women have a negative stereotype of not being good at math.

Anything focusing on reminding them of their gender and focusing attention on that stereotype will lower their test results.

On the other hand, they score better when the teachers in the class are women themselves, or when on the wall there are paintings of famous female scientists.

For female Asian Americans, reminding them of their female gender led to worst performance.
But performed better when reminded of their Asian roots.

Cialdini also says that an effective technique before an exam is to focus on all past academic successes and strengths.

Chapter 9 – The Mechanics of Pre-suasion

The elements in our mind don't just fire when "ready", they fire when "readied". When a concept enters our minds, all the linked concepts enjoy a privileged moment in our minds.

That's the reason why violent games can raise aggressiveness: because they stimulate all connections related to aggressiveness.

The same concept works when we change the background of a product or when we communicate subliminally. Superimposing a brand of mouthwash on pictures of nature scenes made people feel more positive towards the brand immediately and 3 weeks later.

And subliminally exposing thirsty people 8 times to happy faces vs angry faces before tasting a new soft drink led them to consume more beverages and be willing to pay 3 times more for the beverage.

If, When, Then

By using the "if, When, Then formula" you can train yourself to stay on track with your goal.

For example, you can say "when back at home, I take the stairs (instead of the elevator)".

My Note:
For me, a clue to do something productive is always when I'm doing nothing.
My if-then clause is: "If I'm not doing anything, how can I use this time more productively"?
So if I'm riding the underground I listen to audiobooks. If I really feel like laying down, I do it on the floor and train a good posture.

Fatigue and Influencing

Some ads and infomercials run late at night as people don't have the mental strength to resist the buying urges.

The same concept is true for criminal interrogations: while the average questioning time is less than one hour, interrogation leading to false confessions average of 16h.

And similarly, military personnel were more likely to fire on civilians when sleepless and tired.

Chapter 10 – Six Main Roads to Change

Cialdini says that attention should be channeled toward one of the major principles of Influence.

And then he takes a step back from Pre-Suasion and focuses on the principles of his seminal book Influence.

Chapter 11 – Unity 1: Being Together

Cialdini adds another principle of influence: Unity.

Unity comes from coming in the same genealogy or geography.

There's a shortcut to feeling like someone belongs in our family: living under the same roof.
If you want your children to develop altruism as a quality, allow strangers in need in your house and offer them a meal.

Very interestingly, Cialdini says, the majority of people who helped hide Jews during the Holocaust did it after a relative or neighbor asked.
So the helper, often, was saying yes to a neighbor or family member.

How Psychology Can Save Lives

And I loved the example of Jewish persecution in Japan.

Japanese high officials were pondering whether or not to prosecute Jews in Japan and asked two rabbis why the Nazis hated them so much.

One of the rabbi, well versed in history and European affairs, had no explanation.

The other one, well versed in social psychology said: because we are Asians, like *you*.

It implied that the Nazi self-appointed race superiority did not cover Asian people.
And it shifted the Japanese wartime alliance to one based on regional belonging.

Chapter 12 – Unity 2: Acting Together

Working together on a project with its employees will lead a manager to value the output higher than if he hadn't worked on it.

And the more he attributed the success of the project to himself, the more he also attributed the result to the skills of the employees.

This latter finding surprised Cialdini and he explains it as a merging of identity: what applies to one applies to the other.
Working together brings feelings of being part of a bigger unified organism.

Asking for Advice is Good Advice

Asking for advice -not opinion or feedback- will activate a linking of identity between the adviser and the advised, bringing people into a "together state of mind".

Opinion or feedback instead will put people in an introspective state of mind, focusing on themselves.

Rational and Emotional Systems

Cialdini says there are *two systems of thinking*: system one and system two.

1. System one is intuitive, quick, and often emotional
2. System two is slow, deliberate, and rational.

The two systems hardly co-exist at the same time, so rather than going for both a salesman would be wise to recognize the current system and match it.

Even just saying "I *think* this is the right car for you" VS "I *feel* this is the right car for you" will have an influence if correctly matched to the prospect's system.

Music influences system one.
Cialdini funnily says he finally understands why so many women are into the musician type even though the musician's economic and romantic perspectives are often low.
Music does not deal with the rational part of the brain but with the emotional one.

The "music" and romance association has also been proven by research: a man with a guitar asking for a girl's phone number is significantly more successful than men without (more than double the hit rate).

Chapter 13 – Ethical Use

In this chapter, Cialdini says that most of the "tricks" he teaches are used by professionals.
So any book popularizing persuasion tricks is mostly for the benefit of the general population.

I agree with it and I have the same stance for what I teach on this website.

Cialdini also says that in the long run, any unethical action tends to damage companies.

Chapter 14 – Post-Suasion, After Effects

Pre-Suasion can produce dramatic, immediate shifts in people.

But to retain the changes of our persuasions it's important that people will commit to them at a later time in the form of related behavior.

The most effective "confirming" behavior are the ones involving identity.

Post-Suasion To Influence Voting Behavior

For example, people surveyed during the McCain (Republican) VS Obama (Democrat) campaign were divided into two groups.

One saw a small American flag on the top corner of the screen.
The second group didn't see any flags.

The group seeing the American flag espoused Republican causes more strongly and voted in bigger numbers for McCain (*Pre-Suasion*).

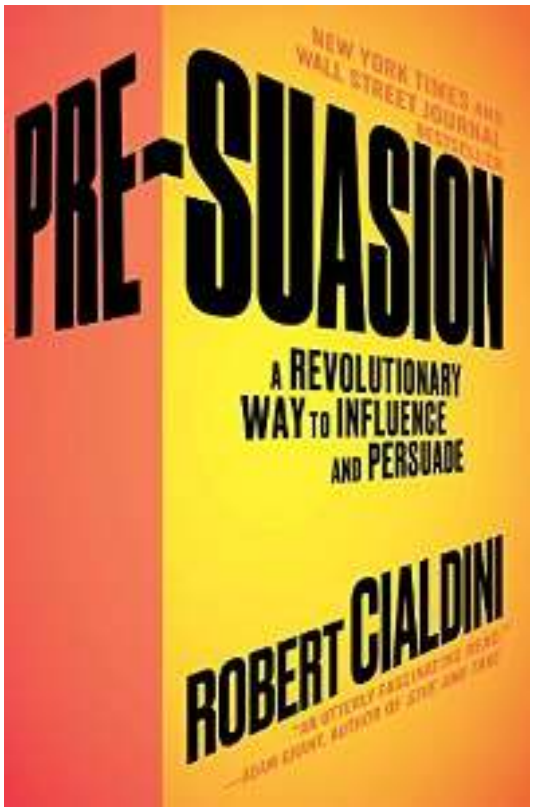
The groups were later asked to register online for the survey, thus *committing* to their behavior (Post-Suasion).
They later on then voted for McCain, an even bigger commitment to their identity(Post-Suasion).

And eight months later the Pre-Suasion was still holding.

Locking In PreSuasion For The Long Haul

Another experiment put people in a happy mood and had them rate a panting.
They liked the painting more.

But after five days only those who had submitted the rating still kept the same feelings for the painting.
It's because the people submitting the rating "locked in" their feelings.



CONS

There are really no "cons" here, more like a few notes:

- **Improving the consultant's persuasion**

Remember the consultant presuading his clients to accept his full fees?
He was saying:

> **Presuader**: as you can tell, I'm not gonna be able to charge you a million dollar for this

I don't think that's as effective as it could be.
"Not gonna be able to" sounds predatory (=I'd charge you as much as I can get away with) and demeaning towards your product (=it's not worth that much).

- **No mention of the limitations of priming**

Pre-Suasion was published before the huge replication crisis in psychology.

And what I would caution about is that much of *Pre-Suasion* is based on priming.
And Bargh's original priming experiment has been at the epicenter of that crisis, failing to replicate and giving way to a rather nasty exchange right after.

I will keep it brief here, but priming is real, just not as strong as many were led to believe (also read more in pop-psychology myths).

Review

Pre-Suasion is a classic of the *psychology of persuasion*.
The amount of wisdom that it packs is mind-boggling and a real treasure trove for anyone interested in psychology, people, and influences.

What I particularly loved to learn in "*Pre-Suasion*":

- **Threatening and sexual timing:** you need to take care of using sex with unique USPs and threatening messages with social proof
- **Standing out is better:** put yourself (or your product) among people looking similar to each other and make yourself stand out

Pre-Suasion by Cialdini is a must-read if you're interested in communication, people, and influences.

Also, see:

- **Best books on influence and persuasion**

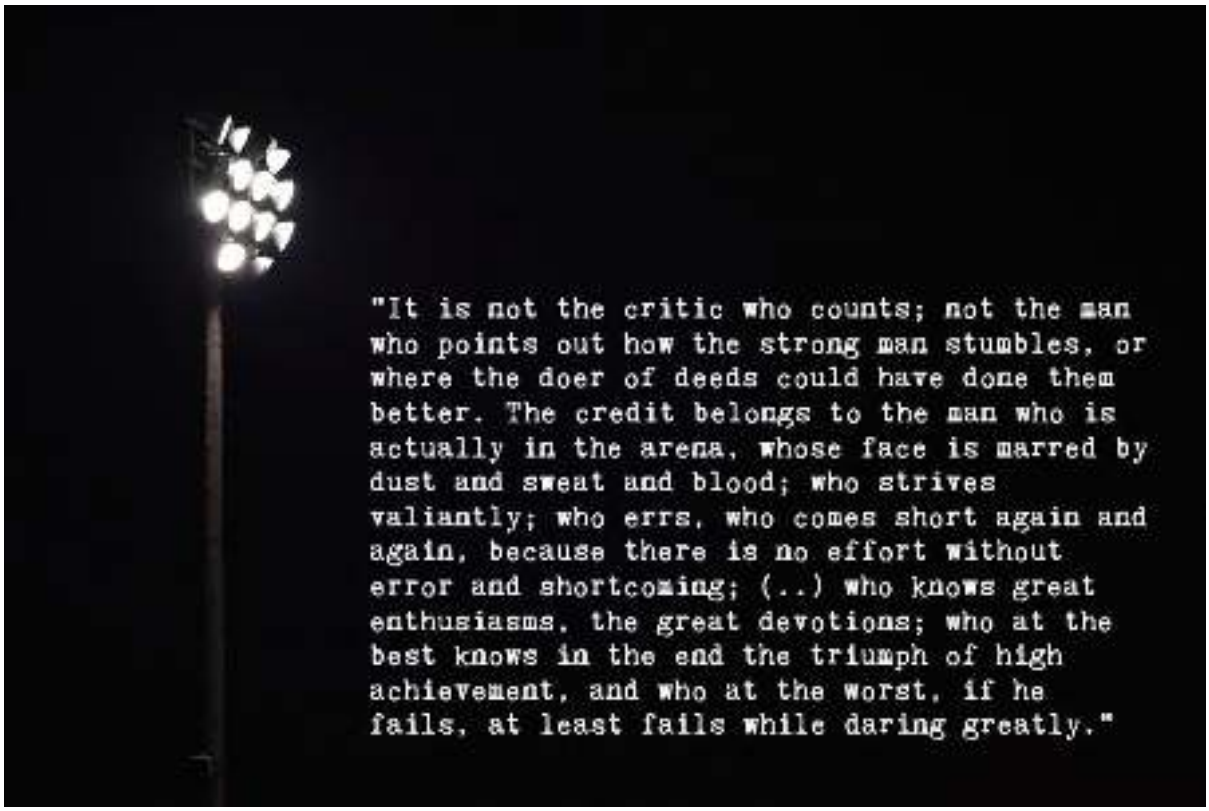
Or get it on Amazon.

Daring Greatly: Is Vulnerability Powerful For Men? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 July 2017 · Archived copy · Original

In *Daring Greatly* author Brene Brown shares her takes on vulnerability, which includes being genuine and having the courage to show up even if it might hurt because, she says, it's the only way to live life to the fullest and develop real, honest, and loving relationships.

TPM Strategic Note: Vulnerability is a tool. Powerful in the right context, costly in the wrong one. Brené Brown is the leading voice for Communion (warmth, connection, and openness; see social skills vs power skills). Her insights are valid for close relationships, NOT for environments governed by agentic goal-pursuit and competitive power dynamics (business, high-stakes negotiations, or hostile social circles). There, **vulnerability is a strategic disadvantage and a cue of weakness**. This review filters Brown's "Wholehearted" philosophy through a lens of Realism, helping you distinguish between "Healthy Openness" and "Tactical Self-Sabotage."



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Exec Summary

- Vulnerability makes you authentic and allows you to feel love, belonging, and joy
- To be vulnerable you have to:
  - Internalize that you are worthy (of being loved) and enough the way you are
  - Have the courage to show up and engage, even if it could hurt

Full Summary

What's Vulnerability

Being vulnerable means engaging fully and openly with the world around us.

Vulnerability is the courage of putting ourselves out there.
It's the courage of being open despite knowing it might hurt us.
And once we are able to do that, we will also be able to fully experience all the joyful moments of our lives.

To help you define vulnerability in practical terms, here's how Brene's research subjects described it:

- Sharing an unpopular opinion

- Standing up for myself
- Asking for help
- Saying no
- Starting my own business
- Helping my wife with cancer prepares her will
- Initiating sex with wife or husband
- First date after divorce
- Saying “I love you” first
- Getting fired
- Falling in love
- Trying something new
- Getting pregnant after three miscarriages
- Waiting for the biopsy to come back
- Exercising in public when I’m out of shape
- Admitting I’m afraid
- Laying off employees
- Presenting my product to the world and getting no response
- Standing up for myself and for friends under criticism
- Asking for forgiveness

As you can see and as Brene points out herself, these are all ordinary and common events that are part of our daily life.
Indeed, she says, emotional exposure is not an option, it will happen anyway.

The only question is: will you engage?

When you do, you are daring greatly and you are being vulnerable.

Brene Brown says that the more we protect ourselves from vulnerability, the more we grow fearful and disconnected.

How Does Vulnerability Feel

And these were some of the answers to the question of “how does it feel being vulnerable”:

- It’s taking off the mask and hoping the real me isn’t too disappointing.
- Not sucking it in anymore.
- It’s where courage and fear meet.
- Halfway a tightrope, and moving forward and going back are just as scary.
- Sweaty palms and a racing heart.
- Scary and exciting; terrifying and hopeful.
- Taking off a straitjacket.
- Going out on a limb—a very, very high limb.
- Taking the first step toward what you fear the most.
- Being all in.
- So awkward and scary, but it makes me human and alive.
- Freedom and liberation.

- It feels like fear, every single time.
- I know it's happening when I feel the need to strike first before I'm struck.
- It feels like free-falling.
- Letting go of control.
- Naked.

What Vulnerability Gives You

Brene Brown says that vulnerability is the source of hope and authenticity.

It gives us and allows us to feel the emotions and experiences that we really crave: love, belonging and joy.

Vulnerability and Love

Brene Brown says that we need to be vulnerable to fully appreciate love because while love can make us feel incredible, it also has the power to destroy us emotionally.

Loving someone knowing they might betray us, or that things might not work out… That takes courage. And that's vulnerability: opening our hearts and soul despite the risks.

Narcissism is Shame and Lack of Vulnerability

Brene Brown sees narcissism as the fear of being ordinary, the fear of not being good or extraordinary enough to be loved, to belong, or to build a sense of purpose.

And she says she can see it happening in our society all around.
It's incredibly easy for today's children of reality TV and celebrity culture to feel they're only as good as the number of "likes" they get.

How Brene Realized Shame Inhibits Vulnerability

Brene Brown tells she stumbled upon shame and empathy research rather randomly.

She knew connection is why we are here in this world because human connection is our biggest driver.

So she started studying human connection.
But people in her interviews spoke about their fear of not being worthy of connection more than they spoke about the connection itself.
That fear of not being worthy of connection is based on shame.

She deep-dived into shame, vulnerability, belonging, and worthiness, and she claims that vulnerability was the epicenter of them all.

Brene calls a life not impaired by shame "Wholehearted Living".

Wholehearted Living

Living Wholeheartedly means engaging our lives from a place of worthiness.

It means that at the end of the day, no matter what you manage to do and what you don't, you are enough.
It means that even though you know you are imperfect and sometimes afraid, you are also brave and worthy of love and belonging.

To embrace wholeheartedness and vulnerability develop:

- Authenticity and let go of what people think
- Self-compassion and let go of perfectionism

- Resiliency and let go of numbing and powerlessness
- Gratitude and Joy and let go of scarcity
- Trust and Faith and let go of the need for certainty
- Creativity and let go of comparison
- Play and Rest and let go of "busy" and "stress" as self-worth and status symbol
- Calmness and let go of anxiety
- Meaningful work and let go of what you are "supposed" to do
- Laughter, Song, and Dance and let go of "cool" and "always in control"

From Brene's research **those who love, feel lovable, and experience belonging believe they are *worthy* of love and belonging.**
And, most importantly, she says that a strong belief in our worthiness is cultivated, such as: **we can learn to feel worthy**.

Today's society doesn't exactly help us be vulnerable, though. So Brene says we should start by understanding what we're up against.

Chapter 1: Scarcity, Our Culture of "Never Enough"

We live in a major "never enough" culture, Brene says: never successful enough, never thin enough, never good enough.

Scarcity is dangerous because it makes it harder for us to own our vulnerability and imperfections and to live our life knowing that we are worthy of it.

I found it hilarious and at the same time it rang so true when Brene said that for many of us the very first thought when waking up is "I didn't get enough sleep".

It's something you want to focus on because, Brene says, this "scarcity mindset" is what breeds jealousy, greed, and many of our issues with life.

And of course, as previously stated in the narcissism part, if comparing weren't already bad enough, we often compare our lives to fake, media-driven "ideals" that are completely out of touch with reality.

The Three Components of Scarcity

- **Shame**: Fear of ridicule, finger-pointing, put-downs
- **Comparison**: Comparing and ranking, held to a narrow standard rather than acknowledged for uniqueness
- **Disengagement**: People keep to themselves, nobody shares, and nobody pays attention

The Opposite of Scarcity is Enough

The opposite of scarcity is not abundance because, Brene says, they're two sides of the same coin. The opposite of scarcity instead is enough.

Chapter 2: Debunking the Vulnerability Myths

Daring Greatly proceeds by discussing the main -wrong- myths about vulnerability that are often held in our society:

Myth 1: Vulnerability is a Weakness

Brene asked a room of people if they struggle to be vulnerable because they think of it as a weakness.

Most raised their hands.

Then she asked how many thought it was brave of people to go in front of the audience and be vulnerable. Again most raised their hands.

The point Brene makes is that we love and admire people being fully open, but we are afraid of doing the same. We are afraid of letting people see us as being vulnerable.

The author says being all in and stepping into the arena is not weakness, but courage beyond measure.
And no need for anything bombastic: I loved when Brene says that "*often the result of daring greatly isn't a victory march as much as it is a quiet sense of freedom mixed with a little battle fatigue*".

Myth 2: "I don't do Vulnerability"

Vulnerability is the base upon which all emotions and feelings are built, says Brene Brown.
Vulnerability is a daily encounter.
Closing the door to vulnerability is closing the door to all that makes life meaningful and beautiful.

Not only "not doing vulnerability" would be silly of us, but when we pretend that we can avoid vulnerability we engage in behaviors that are often inconsistent with who we want to be.

Daring Greatly is clear: we will experience vulnerability no matter what, the only choice is *how* we will respond.

Myth 3: Vulnerability is Putting it All Out There

No, vulnerability is not oversharing.

The author says vulnerability is sharing our feelings and experiences with a few inner circle people who have earned the right to enter our inner circle.

Being vulnerable is an integral part of the trust-building process that brings us closer to the ones in our inner circle.

Marbles Trust Jar

How do you know if you can trust someone?
Brene says that you build trust step by step.
The jar represents the trust you have for someone.

When someone does something that erodes that trust, you take some marbles away. When they do something to gain your trust you put the marbles back.

It's a great metaphor because, Brene says, trust is not a big gesture but it's a product of vulnerability that grows over time.

Disengagement is the Worst Betrayal

Brene says there is a more insidious betrayal that usually precedes the "big gestures". And that betrayal is the disengagement from a relationship, to stop caring.

Myth 4: We Go at It Alone

Brebe says that no, we can't go at it alone. We need support.
We need the support of people who truly care about us and will be there no matter what the outcome is.

And vulnerability and going at it together is also about *asking* for help.

Indeed Brene says we can never really give with an open heart until we learn to receive with an open heart.

Brene's greatest personal and professional transformations, she says, happened when she asked herself how her fear of vulnerability was holding her back and when she found the courage to overcome it and ask for help.

People in The Stands

Brene says that the people who matter to us are the ones who are with us in the arena, supporting us and fighting with us.

And the people who are criticizing in the stands, those, well… Those don't matter.

Chapter 3: Understanding and Combating Shame

Brene Brown says the only people who don't have a feeling of shame are sociopaths.
All the rest experience shame, so don't think you can ever completely extirpate shame.

But you need to keep it under control and be able to act in spite of it. Because to be vulnerable is to develop shame resilience.

Daring Greatly teaches us that shame draws its power from being unspeakable. So if we build awareness about shame and speak to it and about it, we can defeat it.

A strong inner circle helps us share our stories with someone who will respond with empathy and understanding to help us beat shame.

Similarly, we should cultivate empathy and self-compassion with ourselves.

The Categories of Shame

1. Appearance and body image
2. Money and work
3. Motherhood/fatherhood
4. Family
5. Parenting
6. Mental and physical health
7. Addiction
8. Sex
9. Aging
10. Religion
11. Surviving trauma
12. Being stereotyped or labeled

How Shame Feels:

- Getting laid off and having to tell my pregnant wife
- Being asked "when are you due?" when I'm not pregnant
- Raging at my children
- Bankruptcy
- My boss called me an idiot in front of the client
- Infertility
- My husband left me for my next-door neighbor
- Telling my fiancé that my dad lives in France when he's in prison
- My wife divorced and telling she wants children but not with me
- Flunking out of school
- Hearing my parents fight through the walls and wondering if I'm the only one who feels this afraid

Vulnerability, Sharing Art, Ego, and Shame

Sharing something you created is a key vulnerability moment in our lives.

Some of us link our self-worth to how our work is received. If people love it, you're amazing, and if not you're worthless.
Shame will often prevent us from releasing our art or lead us to remove the most innovative parts to avoid risks.
And when we do release our work and receive criticism it's a shame telling us that we shouldn't have tried in the first place.

If you attach your self-esteem to what people think AND the people love it, you're worst off.
You'll feel great in the short term and will not realize you willingly and happily opened the doors to shame to hijack your life.

When you master strong shame resilience skills, you still want people to like what you've created, but your self-worth is not on the line.
You know that you are far more than your products. The poor reviews are about your specific effort and not about who you are.

> **You are more than your work**

What People Think: a Tight Rope

Brene says that people's judgment is like a tightrope.

We need to care about what people think or else we lose our capacity for connection.

And at the same time, we can't be defined by what people think or we won't be able to be vulnerable.
Thus learning to discern useful feedback to implement and smearing attacks to discard is an important skill to develop.

> **We need to care about what people think but we can't be defined by it.**

Shame VS Guilt & Self Talk

Brene Brown says that how we experience different emotions comes down to self-talk. The way we talk to ourselves determines how we feel and how vulnerable we can be.

- Guilt is *"I did something bad*"
- Shame is "*I am bad*"

When we experience guilt instead of shame we own up to our mistakes and we are more likely to change for the better. When we experience shame instead we shift blame. And it makes us feel like we aren't able to change.

How to Combat Shame

Brene Brown defines shame resilience as the ability to stay authentic and stick to our values when experiencing shame.
And coming out of the shame experience with more courage, compassion, and connection than we had before.

The final step is then to move from shame to empathy, which is the real antidote to shame.

Brene Brown says indeed that shame is a social emotion, and it needs social healing. To overcome it we need to share the shame story with someone who can listen with empathy.

Self-compassion also plays a major role because it allows us to seek out a connection in the first place.

Here are the four steps to combating shame:

- **Recognizing Shame and Understanding Its Triggers.** Learn to recognize when you're experiencing shame and what triggered it.
- **Critical Awareness.** Check what's driving shame against who you choose to be
- **Reaching Out.** Talk to people who will give you empathy
- **Speaking Shame.** Talk about how you feel and ask for what you need
- **Own Your Story.** Brene doesn't list it, but she stresses you can't "try to forget" shame. Owning it is key to a feeling of worthiness

It's also key to understand that we need to work on our shame resilience because while shame is innate in the limbic system, resilience is a conscious process.

How Brene Brown Does It

Here's an example Brene gave us:

> When the shame attack started she repeats aloud "pain, pain, pain".
>
> She then took a deep breath, told herself it's a shame attack and that she can handle it (never bury the story, don't try to hide it)
>
> She repeats to herself loudly "i*f you own this story you get to write the ending*".
>
> And it's key that while we normally are extremely mean when we talk to ourselves, we must do so in a compassionate way. For example: not "you're such an idiot" but "you made a mistake".

And she then called her husband first and a best friend later to share the story.
The husband and her friend listened and empathized. And then they also shared similar stories.

And shame disappeared as Brene realized what she had just experienced was human and normal and that she wasn't alone.

Shame & Sharing Trauma

Importantly, Brene Brown says that sharing deeply shaming and traumatic experiences is even more important.

Studies show that keeping rape or incest a secret can be more damaging than the actual event. Sharing the stories instead helped improved the victims' health.

Connection, Love and Belonging

Love and belonging are the two most powerful connectors we have.

And people with a strong sense of love and belonging have one thing only in common: the feeling of worthiness. If you want to experience love and belonging, you have to feel like you are worthy of love and belonging.

- **Connection:** We feel connected when we feel heard and valued and when we can give and receive without judgment
- **Belonging:** When we feel part of something bigger than ourselves. Brene says we often try to belong by fitting in and seeking approval, but true belonging only happens when we present our real selves. Thus, our sense of belonging can only be equal to our self-acceptance.
- **Love**: self-love is a prerequisite for loving others. She says you can only love others as much as you love yourself.

Shame in Men and Women

Brene Brown says the primary shame trigger for women is how they look.
But also being nice, modest, caring for children, taking care of her looks, staying sexually faithful, and investing in their relationships.

Basically, says Brene, women should stay small, sweet, and quiet and use their time to look pretty.

For men, shame is about failure and being weak.
It's being "defective", being seen as soft, showing fear, and being criticized or ridiculed. In the end, says Brene, all boils down to "don't be weak".

There's an incredible paragraph in which Brene Brown realizes that women themselves are, in her words, the "patriarchy".
It means that women don't actually want to see men weak and vulnerable, and men know it.

And that's what puts pressure on men to be "masculine".
Masculinity is identified, I quote, with winning, emotional control, risk-taking, violence, dominance, playboy, self-reliance, the primacy of work, power over women, disdain for homosexuality, and pursuit of status.

The author shares the example of a man practicing shame resilience in the face of having to lay off staff.
He says "*while shame would want me to feel bad about being emotional, I don't buy into it. I have worked with these people for years, know them well and I am allowed to care about them*".

> **If you want to experience love and belonging, you have to feel like you are worthy of love and belonging.**

Chapter 4: The Vulnerability Armors

In Chapter 4 of *Daring Greatly* Brene talks about how we try to avoid and protect ourselves from vulnerability.

Most of us use the same techniques, which are:

Foreboding Joy

It feels safer to wallow in a sad or grey state rather than be happy and risk sadness.

While it's true disappointment might be more disappointing if you were happy (see Cialdini), it's not a good strategy because you give up all the joy in your life just to make your downs a little less down.

Antidote: Gratitude for our joyful events and our daily happy moments.

Perfectionism

We use perfectionism as a shield when we -mistakenly- believe that if we can just be perfect we will avoid the painful feeling of shame because we'll only get love and compliments.

But we'll never be perfect, and if we wait we might sacrifice relationships and opportunities that might never come back.

Antidote: Self Compassion and a sense of worthiness no matter what.

Numbing

We numb ourselves in many ways and not just with drug addiction.

A wine before going to sleep, being too busy to think, with prescription pills and with fantasy football too.
Numbing tends to be driven by anxiety, disconnection, and shame.

Brene says she took up smoking and drinking in her teens to look busy, and today many do so with their phones.

Antidote: learn to get in touch with your feelings, stay mindful about your numbing behavior, and learn to deal with the discomfort of hard emotions. And to reduce anxiety learn to say no: we have to believe we are enough to say "no".

Please see:

- **How to effectively say "no"**

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

Viking or Victim (or Win or Lose):

Viking or Victim means to divide humanity into winners and losers.

It's a combative way of engaging with the world.
Brene says it might be a useful mentality when in a battle for life or death, but it's not a mentality leading to a successful life by most people's standards.

TPM's Note: Competitions of winners and non-winners is part of life
Brown views the world as a place for mutual support; Power Dynamics recognizes the world as a place of *also* competition. While 'Viking vs. Victim' is a binary trap, **ignoring the competitive nature of life, including goal-achievers and non-achievers is naive**. Emowered men don't choose between being a Viking or a Victim; they choose to be a **Strategic Player who strives for victory** while staying mentally resilient in defeat.

Floodlighting

Sharing too much too soon in a desperate attempt to connect.

This behavior never leads to connection.
Brene says that most people using a floodlighting deal with the subsequent disconnection by telling themselves they'll never find true connection and they're not good enough for a relationship.

Antidote: Brene suggests only sharing stories you already worked through and not sharing "intimate" stories or fresh wounds.

Smash and grab

Similar to floodlighting but more underpinned by attention-seeking.

Serpentining

Brene Brown uses the term "serpentining" to describe the effort we expend to dodge vulnerability when it would take much less to just face it.

You serpentine when you have to make a call but postpone for made-up reasons.
Or when you need to send an email but leave your draft sitting for days. Serpentining is draining and not a healthy way of living life.

Antidote: When Brene finds herself serpentining she laughs, breaths, and reality-checks her behavior to start engaging with vulnerability.

Cynicism, Criticism, Cool, Cruelty

Brene Brown says that people *daring greatly* make us sometimes feel bad for not being vulnerable ourselves.

We then use cynicism, criticism, cool, and cruelty to put them down.
Being cool is the attitude of “whatever”, “who gives a s***” and labeling people as losers or lame.

The same is also attacking people for their “conformity” and dismissing people for example for selling out or for a “life in a cubicle”.

Criticizing is born out of a fear of not counting, and it’s an attempt to be heard (also read: alpha male posturing).

Antidote: I absolutely loved Brene’s tip on resisting the urge of using shaming criticism. You simply take responsibility for what you say. Dare Greatly and sign all your comments. If you don’t feel comfortable owning a comment, then don’t say it and deal with your issues.

Read more on how to turn cynicism into something positive:

- **Turning cynicism into something positive**

https://thepowermoves.com/positive-cynicism

Chapter 5: Closing the Disengagement Divide

Brene Brown believes that disengagement underpins most of the problems she sees in families, communities, and businesses.

We disengage for two reasons: to protect ourselves and because we feel the people who are supposed to be leading us are not living up to the social contract.
Such as they don’t live up to the preach.

Brene Brown calls the “disengagement divide” the space between our practiced values -what we actually do- and our aspirational values -what we want to do-.

The social contract for Brene Brown means aligning our values with our actions.

Chapter 6: Disruptive Engagement

Daring Greatly then analyzes the way shame permeates our culture in schools and organizations.

She says people in leadership roles bully, criticize and set up rewards systems that belittle, shame, and humiliate employees.

Recognizing a Culture

Brene Brown says that we can tell a lot about how vulnerable a culture is by looking at how often people say things like:

- “I don’t know”
- “I disagree, can we talk about it?”
- “here’s how I feel”
- “can I get your take on this?”
- “I accept responsibility for that”
- “I’m here for you”
- “I want to help”
- “I’m sorry”
- “that means a lot to me”
- “thank you”

Giving Feedback

Brene Brown gives a strikingly beautiful example of feedback she received on a paper of hers.

> Brene's professor got up from her chair and went around the desk to sit next to her.
>
> She put her paper down and said how happy she was that Brene had come in to talk about it.
>
> Brene had done a great job, the professor said, and she loved the conclusion.
> She patted her on the back.
>
> Brene said she had worked reallly hard on it, and the professor confirmed that she could tell.
>
> Then she said where she took some points off, adding that she could submit her paper for publication and she didn't want the formatting to hold her back.
>
> The professor asked her if she needed help with the formatting because it's tricky and it had taken her years to learn.
> And she agreed to review her paper again after the fixes and gave Brene a few tips.
>
> Brene left grateful for her grade and for the teacher.

Also, read "Thanks For The Feedback".

Good feedback starts from a seating position

My Note:

This part made me reflect on Brene Brown's character: going back to the professor and argue for a higher grade.

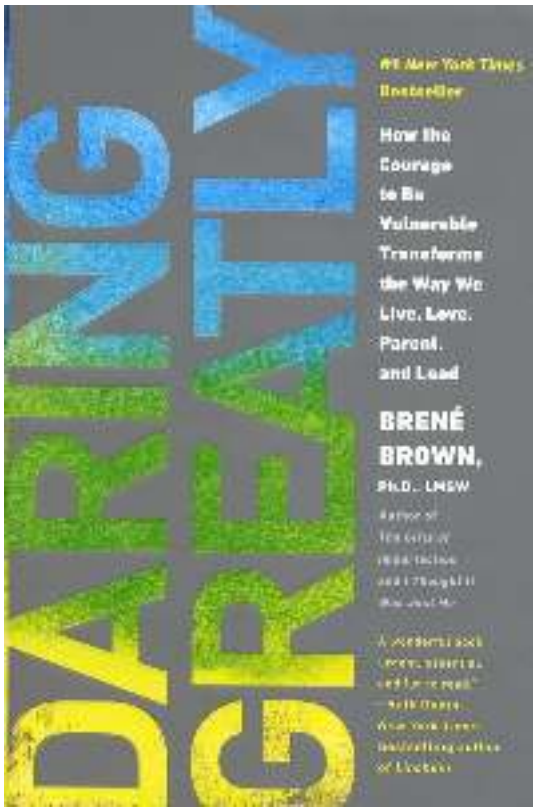
Chapter 7: Wholehearted Parenting

Our sense of love, belonging, and worthiness are shaped by the family we grew up in, but as a tear-jerking letter in Daring Greatly shows, it's never too late to learn.

Brene says that the best way to teach our children is to be and to show: how we behave and how we engage with the world are much better predictors of how our children will do than all the books we've read about parenting could

teach us.

> **It's not what you know. It's who you are.**



Criticism

Albeit "*Daring Greatly*" can be an important read for many, it remains grounded in little data and evidence.

So my first criticism is:

Psychology-Coated Storytelling

Brown's research is based on "qualitative research methods", particularly grounded theory.

It r**elies on interviews and narrative data to derive theories** -ie.: storytelling risk-.

And that CAN be a valid approach, but… You really need to trust the researcher on that.
And she did not gain my full trust.

Across her books and interviews I've also seen few references to research and it felt more opinions and generalizations.

Character-Dependent Generalizations (Brene's Own Projections?)

Several of Brene's approaches may apply more to certain personalities than to everyone.

Just as an example, take her advice of having a group of close friends to share your shameful moments in order to 'beat shame'.
That's something that didn't connect with me at all.

Naive Self-Help

A book that tells you to be more honest and show your weaknesses without talking about the risks and drawbacks of that is textbook naive self-help.

And a book that advises being honest without mentioning how to recognize and pick good people is naive. In truth, some people are takers and manipulators.

I highly recommend these cures:

- Why vulnerability is NOT power
- Naive self-help: a fundamental read to avoid the trap of being too good or too vulnerable for this world

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Culture Over Nature. Attacks on "Society" Are Misguided

I find it misguided when Brene Brown attacks society for "shaming" men and women into acting "mannish" and "feminine".

It's not all on society, there are innate drives at play there (read more in the review).

And maybe it's not "fair" that society reinforces the idea of men and women being like this or like that, that's a moot point.

Brene herself says that men know women don't wanna see them acting vulnerable and weak.
It's funny she reaches that conclusion for men and yet still can't see that it's the same for women and that people are not just socialized that way, they are *born* that way (also read: *The Blank Slate*).

Diary-Style at Times (Self-Absorbed)

Daring Greatly feels a lot like a diary at times with lots of personal stories, inside references, and even Brene's conversations with her therapist.

Was this book supposed to help the readers or is it supposed to help the author?
Because at times it feels like the latter.

The author talks a lot about narcissism, but at times it's as if you'd like to tell her: "relax, it's not all about you".

Haughty pontification

Brene self-appoints herself as the world expert on vulnerability -and it worked!-.

So now she tells people what vulnerability is and what is not as if she had a checklist to go through.
And she tells everyone how to do "proper" vulnerability which, again, is Brene's own way.

But I didn't see any study or number to back her own, well… Opinions.

TPM Assessment & Warning

Context	ROI of Vulnerability	TPM Strategy
Intimate Relationships	**High:** Builds trust & deep connection.	Be the "Wholehearted" partner.
Leading a Team	**Moderate:** Humanizes you, but can erode authority if overused.	Use "Selective Vulnerability" (share the struggle, not the doubt).

Context	ROI of Vulnerability	TPM Strategy
Salary Negotiation	**Negative:** Signals desperation or lack of leverage.	**Hard Frame.** Hide all vulnerability.

People Loving You Matter What: It's Not True

Some could read in Daring Greatly you should be who you are and people will love you no matter what.

But you shouldn't think that way.
That's an entitlement mentality and the truth is that only your mother will love you no matter what.

Everyone else will love you as long as you love them and care about them. And they'll love you even more if you're an amazing person.

So love first and be amazing, don't expect people will cheer you up "no matter what", that's entitlement BS (read more in The Social Exchange Theory).

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Don't use it as an excuse to be a slave of your feelings

Daring Greatly talks a lot about the courage of abandoning yourself to feel.

True, but don't use that as an excuse to stay sad or angry when that doesn't benefit you.
It's not brave being hurt or sad all the time. It's not brave to lash out.

So be open to feelings, but remember you *control* them.

Maintain masculine frame

Brene's talk about 'the arena' for what are trivial and mundane stuff can feel like overblowing things.
Making mountains out of molehills isn't masculine.

The vulnerability of big goals

I believe many of us are afraid of setting goals because of the fear of missing those goals.

Thus, albeit Brene Brown does not mention so in *Daring Greatly*, I'd like to add that the courage of setting high standards for yourself is also part of vulnerability.

Don't use vulnerability to lower your standards!

Brene says that embodying all the masculine traits makes you lonely.

I say that's preposterous.

Sure there is such a thing as toxic masculinity, but *only* if you take all of them to the extremes.

While you should discard for example "disdain for homosexuality" as a masculine trait you *do* want emotional control and self-reliance.

Yes, You Can Go Alone. And no, you're not dependent on others

Brene Brown tells us that we *need* caring and support.

She says that "no, you can't go it alone" and that you "need" support from people that "will love you no matter what".

I don't think it's helpful for you to internalize that you *need* external support.

External support is great and very welcome.
But NOT because you *need it*.

PROS

Many of the concepts in Daring Greatly can make you a better human being.

Here are a few key concepts:

Engaging in the arena is courage in itself
Go for it, go for whatever you love. And love yourself for going for it because showing up is courage in itself.

It's not the critics in the stands who count
It's those who take action.

Be the person you want your children to be
It's not what you say, not your results, and not what you know. It's who you are (and who you're becoming). Beautiful concept.

Don't tie your ego to the results
Rene tells us not to tie our ego to results. I'd add: become enamored of the process, not so much of the results, and the results will come.

Ego and Validation
Don't tie your self-esteem to people's feedback *especially* when that feedback is positive.

Review

Daring Greatly is a good book on honest living, accepting and owning our shame and fear, and owning up to our real selves with ourselves, and with the world.

Unluckily, it feels like it promotes vulnerable living to its self-harming extreme, and **it does not deal with the downsides of vulnerability.**

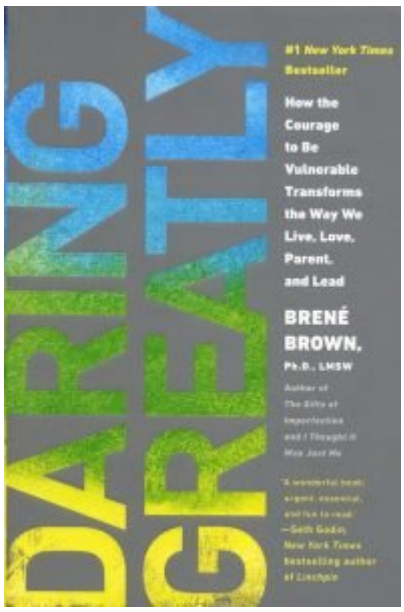
Another important issue with *Daring Greatly* is that Brene Brown passes for generalized truths what to me at times felt more like opinions and concepts that only apply to some people (higher in communion).

Overall, **this book feels more for high-communion women than for high agency men (our readership).** It's not just the topic or the advice, but the frame with which it's presented as well. That's why I can't fully recommend it to ambitious men.
Ambitious men may still learn and benefit from vulnerability, but they also need different skills to achieve their goals. See:

- **When vulnerability is not power**

> How to Be Vulnerable As A Man, Without Looking Weak

Daring Greatly Summary: Is Vulnerability Powerful for Men?



Good wisdom on vulnerability and relating to people.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/daring-greatly-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.5

Influence Book Summary & Review: Cialdini's 7 Principles

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Influence (1984) was the first book on persuasion from an actual psychologist to go mainstream and top the best-selling charts. In this classic on persuasion, author Robert Cialdini lists 6 principles of influence that make people act.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Influence Summary
  - 1. Weapons of Influence
  - 2. Reciprocation
  - 3. Commitment and Consistency
  - 4. Social Proof
  - 5. Liking
  - 6. Authority
  - 7. Scarcity
  - Epilogue
- Real-Life Applications
- Influence Video-Summary
- Influence Criticism
- Review

Exec Summary

- There are six main principles of influencing: consistency, reciprocation, social proof, authority, and liking.
- The principles leverage innate switches in our mind: they can be difficult to resist and recognize
- The switches in our minds often make our life easier with quicker decisions but they can be exploited

Influence Summary

Cialdini says that while there are thousands of tactics that influence practitioners' use, the majority fall into 6 basic categories.

Each category has a fundamental psychological principle behind it, and "*Influence*" is organized around these six basic categories.

The 6 influencing principles are:

1. reciprocity
2. commitment
3. authority
4. social proof
5. scarcity
6. liking

1. Weapons of Influence

Cialdini opens the book with a few examples of influence and “triggers” of influence.

The now famous copy machine experiments (full PDF here), for example, are based on a single-word trigger: “because”.

Asking:

> *excuse me I have five pages, may I use the machine because I’m in a rush*?

had 94% compliance.

> “E*xcuse me I have five pages, may I use the machine?*“

had 60% of compliance.

You might think the difference is “being in a rush”.
Instead, it was the word “because”.

Asking indeed:

> *“excuse me I have five pages, may I use the machine because I have to make some copies?”*

Had 93% compliance.

Simple Minds For A Complex World

Cialdini also tells us of a jewelry store that was only able to sell unsold merchandise when they *doubled* the price by mistake instead of halving them.

And he tells us of turkeys acting either aggressively or nurturing depending on which chirp was played.
The turkeys don’t act based on all that is real, but only a tiny portion of reality.
In this case, the chirp.

While the stories might seem unconnected, Cialdini says they stem from the same system complexity reduction we deploy.
In many ways, we humans also have pre-programmed tapes.

They usually work to our advantage, but they can be used to dupe us.
The people buying jewelry at double the price, for example, used the shortcut of “price=quality”, even when it was blatantly not the case.

2. Reciprocation

A university professor once tried a little experiment: he sent Christmas cards to perfect strangers.
He didn’t expect many cards back, but they just kept pouring in.

Cialdini says it’s a clear example of Reciprocation.

Reciprocity overwhelms the feeling of liking or not liking someone. We are indeed as much more likely to give back to someone we dislike than to someone we like.

Hare Krishna at airports

Hare Krishna activists used to give travelers a flower as a gift, not accept it back and then ask for a donation.

Most people didn’t want a flower, didn’t like the person, and yet would feel obliged to give back.

It's indeed the obligation to receive that makes the rule so effective and easy to exploit.

The Hare Krishna, for example, got money, which they wanted, for flowers, which travelers didn't want.

Other interesting examples of reciprocation are:

- **Carter's problems as an outsider**

Carter had trouble in passing legislation because he campaigned as an outsider who was indebted to nobody in Capitol Hill.
Well, nobody felt indebted to him either when he got to the office.

- **Free samples**

is another great way for companies to induce us to buy with the law of reciprocation.

- **Buying drinks for dates**

Women often comment on the uncomfortable feeling of indebtedness from men who bought them an expensive present or dinner.

Even a drink can be enough to trigger reciprocity feelings.

Concessions and the Rejection and Retreat Technique

A major consequence of the reciprocity rule is the obligation to make concessions to someone who's given a concession to us.

Cialdini tells us this is often exploited with the "Rejection and Retreat Technique".

The technique works by making a big initial request which will be turned down. Then you make the second request which is the one you really wanted to go for all along.

Your retreat and the smaller second request are perceived as a concession, and the receiver will feel like he should now concede back -by moving from "no" to "yes"-.

The larger the initial request -up to a certain point- the more likely the concession will be.

It is often employed to ask for a referral after a refusal.
For example:

> **Sneaky Salesman**: OK this widget is not right for you at this time but perhaps you could help by giving me the name of some others who could take advantage of our great offer

One might guess that people feel cheated by the Rejection and Retreat Technique and they would back out of the deal.
But the opposite is actually true.
It proved indeed to be more effective in having people carry out the request and in performing future similar requests.

It's because, Cialdini says, people feel more part of the agreement.
They feel like they produced the concessions and influenced the outcome. So they feel more responsible for the outcome.

Reciprocation is a crucial component of social dynamics and effective social strategies, for which we highly recommend this article:

- **The Social Exchange**

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Preventing Manipulation

Cialdini says the moment you realize there's a trick behind the initial gift you can redefine the gift as a sales tactic and free yourself from the reciprocity rule used as manipulation.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

3. Commitment and Consistency

The principle of commitment and consistency is that of aligning actions, feelings, values, and beliefs.

When actions and feelings are dis-aligned for example we feel *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957), which is a sensation of mental discomfort.

In that case, we might change our beliefs to justify our actions, or we will rationalize our actions in a way that will make us feel "good" about ourselves (more on rationalization in *Incognito*).

People who bet on a horse, for example, feel immediately more self-assured that their bet will pay off.
It's because once the commitment has taken place the need for consistency pressures us to bring our feelings and belief in line with the commitment.

Meaning: we convince ourselves we have done the right choice.

The Scrounging Boyfriend

Cialdini also gives us a juicy example of her neighbor Sara.

Sara lived with Tim, a drinking boyfriend who didn't wanna marry.
Sara broke their relationship and got engaged to an ex-boyfriend.

Tim called Sara before her wedding and promised he would change. Sara stopped the wedding and took Tim back. Then proceeded to renege on his promises: didn't stop drinking and still didn't marry her.

But Sara is more devoted to Tim than she ever was and says she did the right choice.

"How Are You" Manipulation

Solicitors asking for donations might ask you "how are you" first to make you admit you're doing fine.

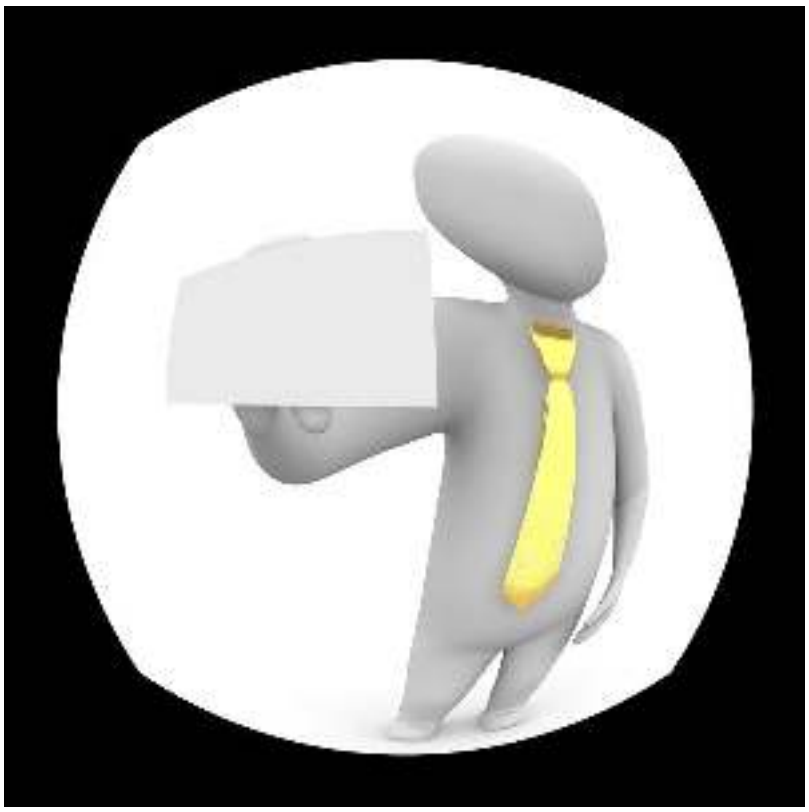
After you state aloud you're good, it's then easier to corner you into aiding those who are not as well as you are. The solicitor would say something like

> **Manipulator**: "*I'm glad to hear you are well, because I'm calling to see if you'd be willing to make a donation for the unfortunate victims of X for whom things are not going too well".*

Research by Daniel Howard showed an 18% agreement among people who asked if they'd be willing to help the hunger relief program.

But after asking "how are you feeling this evening" the percentage jumped to 32%.

The Foot in the Door Technique & Self Image



The foot-in-the-door technique uses the Commitment and Consistency principle by starting small and then asking for more after the initial commitment has been done.

Freedman and Fraser asked homeowners to install a big “drive carefully” billboard on their front lawns. 83% refused.

But when a different group was asked to put up a small 8cm sign and *then* asked for the billboard, 76% agreed.

Astoundingly another group agreed 50% of the time after they had signed a simple petition to “keep California beautiful”.

Why would they accept a huge billboard after having signed a petition which was not even connected to driving safety?

It’s because these people changed the way they looked at themselves: they started viewing themselves as active citizens acting in the public interest.

So when they were asked later to install a huge billboard to (hopefully) help bring down road accidents they complied to stay consistent with their newly formed self-image.

Cialdini says that this finding made him wary of signing any petition because of the potential to influence future behavior and self-image in ways he might not want.

The Low-Ball

The Low-Ball technique exploits the Commitment and Consistency rule by offering a very low price to get an initial commitment.

Later on in the process, the seller would say there was a mistake and the price is now higher.

But by the time the prospect has arranged financing, and filled out the forms, maybe he’s already driven the car, imagined himself owning it, and convinced himself it was the best decision.
The decision stands on so many legs that removing the price leg is not likely to change his mind.

This is the same that happened to Sara in accepting her drinking BF back.

She got a great offer at the beginning and accepted it.
And after Tim didn't marry her and didn't stop drinking Sara had built in her mind so many other advantages about Tim that she was happy anyway.

Actions Only Matter: The Chinese Brainwashing

People look at actions to determine personalities more than words.

The Chinese in their efforts to convert POWs to communism realized that we also look at our own actions to assess who we are.

So the Chinese built up from small actions to bigger and bigger commitments until they'd bring about full conversion to the communist ideology.

The Chinese would also make public what an individual had done, written, or signed.
And since what those around us think is true of us influences our actions and what we think is true, POWs also had social pressure to embrace the communist ideology.

It's a lengthy part of Cialdini's book and I have given you the main and most important gist.

Written Statements Increase Compliance

Written statements are a powerful way of spurring our sense of Commitment and Consistency.

Cialdini tells us that companies employing hard sales critiques experienced high cancellation rates.

And what was their way to reduce cancellations drastically?

Letting their customers write down their own orders.

Now the buyers cared less they have been pushed and cajoled into buying and focused more on their own commitment.
And of course, the effort they had put into writing it also added (a bit of) sunk costs to the interaction.

That's why it's so important to write down our goals.

Effort Increases Commitment

People who spend a lot of effort to obtain something tend to value it more highly than if it had been very easy to obtain it.

Cialdini says that's the reason why so many groups have hazing and initiation procedures: making it difficult to enter a group makes the group more valuable (also read: office power moves).

Indeed, tribes with the most dramatic initiation ceremonies also tended to have the highest group solidarity.

Similarly, you are usually well served in giving small or no incentive for the behavior you want to encourage.
People who had no major incentive feel like *they* chose and will accept more responsibility.

On the same note you don't want to impose threats to direct the behavior of your children, but rather have a reason that will produce the initial desired behavior *and* have the child take personal responsibility for it.

Commitment Makes Us Take More Risks

An experiment on a beach showed the power of Commitment and Consistency even with the possibility of personal harm.

Researcher 1 left his radio near to take a stroll and Researcher 2 stole it pretending it to be a thief.
Only 4 out of 20 people it was tried on to stop him.

But when Researcher 1 asked to “please watch his things” 19 of the 20 people it was tried on became ran after the thief.

Why Commitment and Consistency Works

Cialdini says the Commitment and Consistency principle works because it’s valuable and adaptive.

Consistency is another way to reduce complexity and mental load by offering a shortcut.
You commit to something and don’t have to think about it anymore.

Inconsistency instead raises our mental load and is commonly thought to be an undesirable trait.

Overcoming Commitment and Consistency Tricks

Cialdini says you will likely feel a knot when you’re being tricked with Commitment and Consistency tactics.
What you do then is to tell them exactly what they’re doing to you.

He recounts a brilliantly funny story of a woman in a short skirt who employed the Commitment and Consistency tactic on him.
He fell straight into it and exaggerated how many times he’d go out for restaurants and movie nights to appear like a socialite.

In the end, when the woman told him she had the perfect card to save him money, he had no place to hide. He admitted and committed to his answers; now he had to stay consistent to save face.

Cialdini says that if the same were to happen today he would tell her she was chosen for the job for her physical attractiveness, that men would exaggerate to prove what great swingers they are, and that he would not buy her club membership.

Some other times when our decisions have already grown legs we won’t feel anything in our stomach. In those cases, we ought to ask ourselves this question: “*knowing what I now know, if I could go back in time, would I make the same choice?”*.

Cialdini says that in a split second before our rational mind takes over, we will get a real feeling about our choice.

> **Control your behavior: it determines who you are**

4. Social Proof

Nobody likes canned laughter.

But they work.

Canned laughter makes us laugh longer and harder.
The difference is especially great with poor-quality jokes. Cialdini says it works because we get the feeling other people like it.

That’s social proof.

What other people think and do is one of the ways we use to find out what’s correct.

Cialdini says that since 95% of people are imitators and only 5% of initiators people are swayed more by the action of others than any proof we can offer.

Pluralistic Ignorance and Letting People Die

Cialdini draws attention to a highly publicized instance in which a woman was let die without help, in spite of many having heard her screaming.

It happens for two reasons:

1. “Distributed responsibility”, such as the more people around the less each single one feels responsible
2. We’re not always sure if an emergency is always an emergency and that’s when we look at how other people react to assess the situation.

When nobody reacts it’s a sort of Spiral of Silence situation where everybody is taking everyone’s inaction as a cue they shouldn’t act either. This phenomenon is called Pluralistic Ignorance.

An experiment found indeed that a researcher faking a seizure received help 85% of the time when there was a single bystander and 31% with five bystanders.

Similar experiments have been repeated with similar results.
In Canada, a single bystander provided help 90% of the time and 16% of the time when 3 people were presented and 2 researchers purposefully remained inactive.

Basically, people don’t help when they’re unsure if it’s an emergency and when they’re unsure if it’s their responsibility.

The safety in number then can sometimes be a completely mistaken idea and Cialdini suggests you make sure people know it’s an emergency by shouting for help and pointing at someone.

Social Proof From Those Like Us

Social proof affects us most when the people around us are somewhat similar to us.
When jaywalking we are more likely to follow up with people similarly dressed to us for example

And it works in nefarious ways too: homicide rates have a strong copycat effect.
In highly publicized fight matches when a black fighter lost black homicide victims rose. When it was a white fighter who lost the number of homicide victims increased for white men.

5. Liking

We prefer to say yes to the requests of someone we like.

Cialdini talks about the now (in)famous Tupperware parties as an example.
And he and says that referrals are a way of exploiting the Liking principle.

These are the principles that make us like someone:

Physical Attractiveness

We assign good-looking individuals characteristics such as talent, kindness, honesty, and intelligence.

Attractive people are voted more, receive more money in compensation, get hired more, and are twice as likely to avoid prison sentences.
And, interestingly enough, most people are little nor aware at all that their decisions have been swayed by physical attractiveness.

Similarity Influences People

We like people who are similar to us. People who have similar backgrounds and interests, but also similar names.

And we are also more likely to help those who *dress* like us, and we’re more likely to sign petitions from them without even reading them.

We need to be careful when we feel a bit too close to a salesperson because many sales programs teach us to mirror and underline similarities.

Praise Influences People

We love flattery and albeit we might know the flatterer has second motives we tend to believe praise anyway and we tend to like those who provide them even when the praise is false.

How Associations Influence Us

People have a natural tendency to associate us with the news we bring even when we're not responsible for that news.

Positive news = positive association;
negative news = negative association.

Weather forecast announcers have received death threats when the rain didn't stop or tornadoes threatened to hit.

We are also associated with the crowd we hang out with and people do assume we have the same personality traits as our friends.

Advertisers using models for their cars want to associate beauty and desirability with their cars. And it often does work.
Young men looking at cars with a model nearby rated it as faster, more appealing, and more expensive than the same ad without a model.

Again this is something that works unconsciously, and people weren't aware it was happening.

Similar is the case of linking celebrities to products.
Cialdini says the association doesn't even have to be relevant, just positive.

And Gregory Razran found out what has been named the "Luncheon Technique": people became fonder of what or who they experienced while eating.
Razran presented several political statements while and while not eating. Only the ones shown during eating gained approval.

Association and Sportsfan

Cialdini explains the phenomenon of sports-fan via the association principle.

We associate with a sports club and then want them to win to prove our own superiority. People feel their success will somehow raise their own social prestige.

Research proved indeed that after a team had won the pronoun "we" was used and the same pronoun was instead avoided when the team lost.

What I was even more impressed to hear though was that people who had done well in a test didn't change much the use of the pronoun "we" when discussing their team whether the team had lost or won (24% vs 25%).
But those who had done poorly in a test had a much bigger drive to associate themselves with a winning team (17% vs 41%).

It's indeed **people low on the feeling of personal accomplishment that seek compensation through their teams**.

Cialdini says it's similar for name-droppers and groupies. It's the same drive of seeking accomplishment outside of ourselves.

6. Authority

Cialdini mentions the now-famous Milgram's Obedience Study.

Under the insistence of the researcher -the authority- 65% of participants kept administering excruciatingly painful

electric shocks until the maximum level.

It is widely acknowledged that the reason people kept going is that the authority figure kept insisting.

The Doctor & The Rear

Another example from *Influence* has probably had thousands of people laughing the whole world over.

A typical authority figure is a doctor.

A doctor left a note for the nurse on how to cure a patient's ear infection. A right ear infection, to be precise.
The note said to administer the ear drops in abbreviate form.

Such as: "place in r(right) ear".
The nurse administered the ear drops in the anus. Neither she nor the patient said anything.

Similarly, an experiment showed how nurses followed a doctor's directive via phone and started preparing a dose of medication that would have been lethal.

Very few objected.

If you are incredulous, keep in mind that the behavior and demeanor of the authority figure are other important indicators of the likelihood that people will *execute orders* without reproach.

Why Authority Works

Authority works because, like most other psychological triggers, it has several practical advantages for us.

It made sense to listen to authorities like parents and teachers.
They both knew better and held control of our rewards and punishments.

How Titles Influence Us

The appearance of authority is all it takes: we are as affected by the actual authority as by the *symbols* of authority.
And a title is often all that it takes.

Cialdini says that titles are hence very popular among people short in substance.

Prestigious titles lead people to assess the title holder as taller. In an experiment, the title "professor" instead of "student" lead to an increased height perfection of 2.5 inches (10+ cm).

It's actually a rather general tendency to link size to importance.
We also estimate more expensive cars as bigger. And estimate higher-value coins as larger.

Cialdini says it's one of the reasons why conmen wear lifts in their shoes.

Uniforms Influence Us

Uniforms are another major symbol of authority.

And so are suits.

People jaywalking in a suit are more likely to be followed by bystanders than people dressed in casual clothes.

Status Symbols

Owners of prestigious cars receive special treatment.

People wait significantly longer to honk when it's a luxury car stopping in front of their car.
The opposite was true for cheaper models.

Funny enough, students asked what they would do in such a situation, especially men, who said they'd honk quicker

to luxury cars (again: action matters, words don't).

It's similar to other popular status symbols such as expensive golden jewelry, diamond rings, and furs.

Defending from Authority Influence

We constantly underestimate the power of authority influence.

But Cialdini says that we naturally trust impartial authorities more than the ones who have something to gain from convincing us.

A trick from compliance professionals is to criticize their product on a minor detail to gain our trust and then move to major positive traits. You can be more on the lookout when this technique is used against you.

Cialdini then gives us a great example of a successful waiter using that technique (get the book for the description).

7. Scarcity

We tend to want more of what's scarce.

Scarcity, New Scarcity & Demand Scarcity

A famous experiment of supply and demand on product ratings gave to 200 undergrads a jar with 2 cookies and a jar with 10 cookies.

The cookies from the small jar were rated higher, more pleasurable to eat in the future and even higher estimated value.

A second experiment gave a jar of 10 cookies, a jar of 2 cookies, and a jar of 10 cookies then replaced by a jar of 2.
The swapped 2 cookies jar was the highest rated. Indeed we want most what has become scarcer rather than what has always been scarce.

A third experiment shows that cookies that became scarce because of social demand were rated the highest of all. The sub-communication, in this case, is that we are in competition for a scarce resource.

Salespeople exploit this principle all the time with fabricated demand and competition.
And it's even used in the romantic arena when women (or men) want to make us jealous by showing off pursuers.

Scarcity Explains Revolutions

Cialdini says that revolutions are more like to happen when people have been given a taste of a better life.

Going from high to low, from happy to sad, usually, feel worse than if we had never had the good times.

That means that for despots, it's more dangerous to give and take some away later on than never to give anything at all.

And people are more motivated by the thought of losing something than gaining something.
Homeowners pitched on how much money they're losing without insulation are more likely to get insulation than those told how much money they can make.

Defending from Scarcity

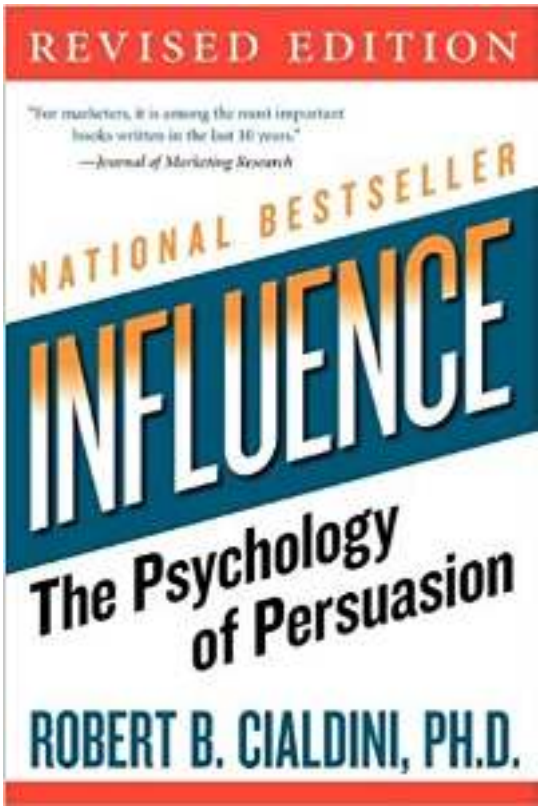
Cialdini says that when we feel the competition urge we should stop, get rational again, assess why and how we really want the item and set a maximum price we are willing to spend.

Epilogue

Cialdini says that in an increasingly complex and fast-paced world, we need shortcuts to make decisions.

And that is exactly why we have the moral obligation to rebel and push back on any attempt to trick us with influence shortcuts.

In a way, The Power Moves is doing exactly what Cialdini is advocating.



Real-Life Applications

The whole book is about practical application, but I wanna tell you one thing which was important in my development:

- **Stop Supporting Anyone to Feel a Winner**

I used to be either furious or ecstatic about any failure or victory of my favorite team or sportsperson.

I had to reprogram myself.

One is because you are giving up control of your feelings.
And two, because you might be compensating for your own lack of self-esteem and success.

Support this or that sportsperson, but don't let it get to you, and don't use it for compensation.

Influence Video-Summary

Influence Criticism

- **Brainwashing Effectiveness**

Some sources criticize the effectiveness of the Brainwashing methods" –Brainwashing was bunk", NYT– but the

techniques certainly can influence people.

In a nutshell: brainwashing works best with people with a confused identity, a sense of guilt and with black and white thinking.

- **Tupperware and Referrals = Like Principle?**

Cialdini lists the Tupperware sales technique and referrals as examples of the Liking principle.

But I think he's wrong there.

These are examples of social obligations.
Cialdini himself tells us of a woman complaining about the invitation to yet another Tupperware party.

She didn't want to go. And at that point, I doubt she liked the host. But she felt the *obligation* to.

- **"Because has no intrinsic persuasive power"**

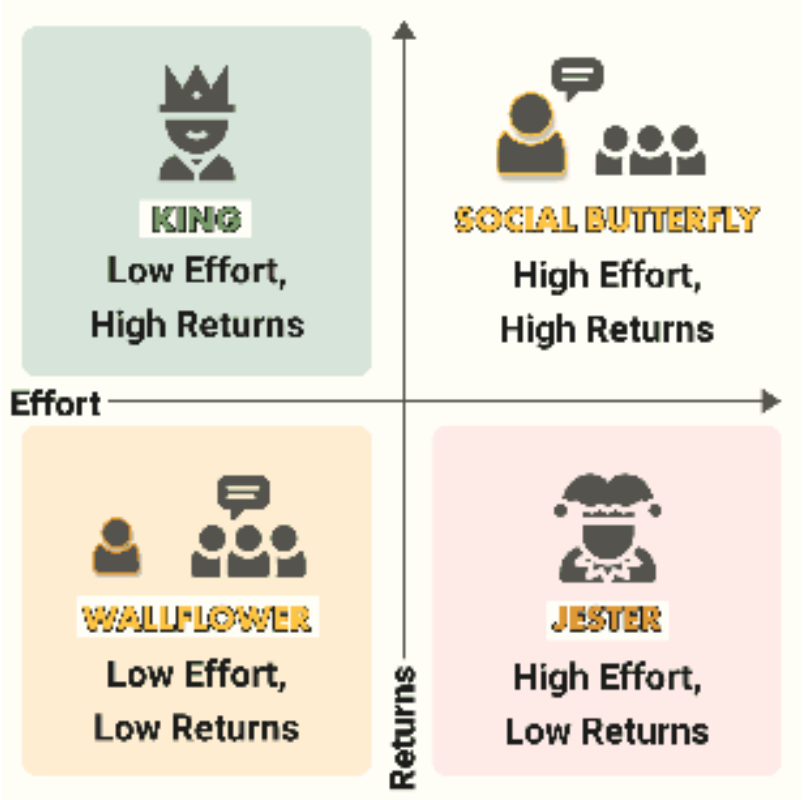
I was surprised by Cialdini's interpretation of the famous "copy machine" study.

He says that people allowed the researcher to go through because of the power of "because".
And while "because" is indeed a strong and loaded word, it's not the main reason why.

The reason why people let the experimenter go through when she provided a reason is exactly because she provided a reason.
Providing a reason feels respectful of social norms -and of others-.

It's what we call here "power protecting".

ChatGtp agrees:



Review

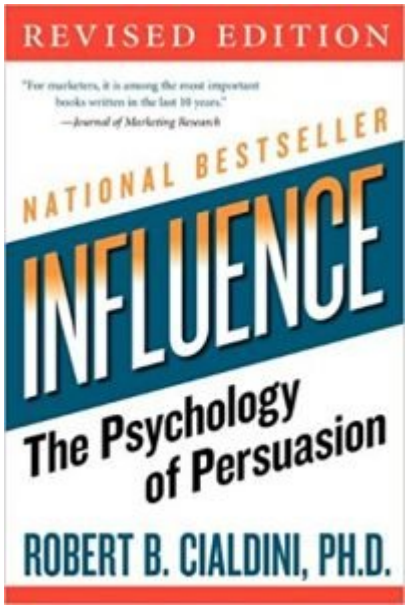
Influence is a seminal book on soft power and a mandatory book in your quest of becoming a better influencer. [image]

It’s well-researched, well-structured, and well-written.

As a last important note, Cialdini says that none of the weapons of *Influence* is so strong as to work on everyone at all times.

Get Influence on Amazon.

Influence Book Summary: 7 Psychology Principles to Persuade



Influence is a milestone in the literature of influencing and persuasion. Read here all the 6 major triggers you can use to influence people.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/influence-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

4 High Dominance Body Language Poses For Bars & Clubs

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

High-status body language is one of the main levers for boosting attraction.

Scientific research proves that men who adopt high status and socially dominant are more well-received by women (read the science of how to approach a girl).

So let's explore a few dominant body language poses you can adopt when out in a bar:

Contents

- #1. Taking Up Space
- #2. Drink By Your Side
- #3. Keep The Phone Up
- #4. Sitting Alpha
- Why It's Important
  - Summary

#1. Taking Up Space

Let the women be the months, and the Guardian your fiery mainstay alpha pose.

A few advantages:

- Takes up space and shows confidence in style;
- Shepard position: you are comfortable looking -dominant- and being looked -self-confident-;
- Perfect position to launch a convo: you're centered, they're orbiting around you;

Don’t overdo the “take up space” mantra: it screams overcompensation or social awkwardness and neither is attractive.

#2. Drink By Your Side

Any time you have the chance, put the drink down. When you don’t have the chance, hold it to your side.

Advantages:

- You keep an open body language
- You look confident and in control

PRO TIP: Small drinks are handier, make you look bigger and say you’re confident without liquid confidence.
Couple of wrong ones:

#3. Keep The Phone Up

Unless you're a Belieber teenager checking the latest snap from the latest androgyny popstar, try being a man instead :). Too many times our phones are used as a numbing shield: try not to use it at all.

And for the 3% of the times you actually need to use your phone, do so with an attractive pose:

Holding your phone high is great to keep your gaze and posture up but if you feel too much like "granny reading the

newspaper" it's ok to lower it a bit. Just keep in mind the main rule: BOTS -Brief and On The Side-.

PRO TIP: Only allow yourself to check phone at the urinals

#4. Sitting Alpha

Hollywood movies often depict actors sitting at bars *towards* the bar. And they're bad boys, gangsters, goodfellas..
You name it.

Yes, it is manly.

What they're certainly not, though, is sexy guys out to socialize.

Because sexy guys out to meet new people do *not* give their backs to the ones they wanna meet.
On the contrary, they show themselves openly and proudly.

This one is good if you're sitting at the corner of the bar, turned towards the crowd:

Why It's Important

The real-world feedback of dominant body language poses can be unbelievable for anyone who's not accustomed to it.

I had:

- women catcalling me (a couple of older cougars and a few inebriated girls)
- surreptitiously snapping my pictures
- and even sending their girlfriends over to profess their liking (for full disclosure this last one was in Asia where I enjoyed white-man bonus points).

And… I am super short, skinny, bald.
And far from very attractive.

Summary

The reason why it works is that people -mostly women- will notice the attractive body language *before* you even approach.

That's the equivalent of presuasion in place: you do all the hard work before you even begin your seduction.

They will notice you, think about it, maybe even talk about it with their friends… And then you approach.

This article showed a few basics of alpha male body language that you can start adopting right away.

Also, Look At:
How to Walk Sexy
Sexy Hands in Pockets

Captivate: 12 Steps to Succeed With People (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Captivate (2017) is a *social skills book* in which author Vanessa van Edwards shares strategies for learning social skills, as well as a variety of social tips and insights on how to captivate, gain power and status, and make others like you.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - #1. Do What You Like
  - #2. Make a Great First Impression
  - #3. Sparks
  - #4. Be Interested
  - #5. Highlighting
  - #6. How to Be Likeable
  - #7. Crack Someone's Personality
  - #8. Appreciate
  - #9. Values
  - #10. How to Lead People
  - #11. How to Deal With Difficult People
  - #12. Engage: How to Turn People On
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Learn the 3 layers of personality types and tailor your communication to them
- **Gesticulate as much as possible** when giving a presentation
- **Listen to what people brag and complain** about to find their values

Summary

About the Author:
Vanessa van Edwards holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree from Emory University. She began her entrepreneurial journey with children and writing children's books under the pseudonym 'Vanessa van Patten'.
She later moved to teach social skills from her point of view 'recovering awkward person', authoring several books and courses on social skills.
We already reviewed here *Captivate*, *Body Language of Love*, and her main course *People School*.

#1. Do What You Like

Vanessa says that "always say yes" is terrible advice and that you will not be successful following the "fake it until you make it mantra".

She says instead you should develop your own social game plan. Find out what you like socially and make those

your thriving locations.

My note: there is still merit in pushing yourself
fair point, but if you're serious about getting good, you should push yourself.

1. Staying at the edge of your comfort zone helps a lot in improving quickly as explained in
2. You can "force" yourself into something and *still* enjoy it. Often the first few minutes are tough and then it gets fun, as rightfully spotted by Jeanne Martinet in *The Art of Mingling*.

The mindset is: stick through your fears long enough, they will become your addictions.

Social Spots

Vanessa says social events often will have spots highly conducive to positive interactions and other spots that should be avoided.

The entrance should be avoided, for example, while a great spot is right at the exit of the buffet or the bar.
Once people got their food or drink they are often desperate to speak to someone.

#2. Make a Great First Impression

Vanessa says we decide whether or not we like someone long before we first hear them speak.
We quickly try to answer three questions about people we meet.
Are you:

- friend or foe (you answer it with a hands gesture);
- winner or loser (you answer with body language and posture);
- ally or enemy (you answer it with eye contact)?

Hand Gestures: Vanessa says pockets are "murderers of rapport" and you should use hand gestures and show your hands as much as possible.
Body Language: Winners *take up space* (*high power poses*), and Vanessa says you should always keep a good posture and open body language. Also, she reminds us that power poses give us confidence and weaker poses make us feel unconfident. So when checking our phone we should raise it up.
Eye Contact: looking at someone a lot says to that person "I like you". Hold eye contact to produce trust and gaze to build connection. Vanessa van Edwards mentions Brene Brown's TedTalk and how she used eye contact to build a connection with the audience (here's Brene's great book summary).

My note: you answer with your full communication
While it's possible that "you can answer this or that question with specific body parts or movements", you can't truly isolate sommunication. All parts co-exist and co-contribute.
Ie.: Eye contact won't only tell us "ally or enemy", but also if we're "winners or losers".

#3. Sparks

Vanessa talks a lot about "hot buttons" -what people love- and being unique.

My Note:
I'm personally not a big fan of uniqueness though, especially if it's uniqueness for uniqueness' sake.

#4. Be Interested

Captivate says that talking about ourselves releases dopamine and makes us feel good.

Hence, quoting Carnegie with "to be interesting be interested", the gist is that you should talk less and listen more.

#5. Highlighting

Part of the highlighting method:

- celebrate other people's successes
- introduce people with a big explanatory compliment
- let people impress you rather than trying to impress them

#6. How to Be Likeable

Vanessa says we like people who are like us because it's more likely we'll get along well with each other (*similarity principle of liking*). We like people who are dressed like us and think like us.

Captivate righteously reminds us that one of the biggest mistakes people do is to highlight differences rather than similarities.

#7. Crack Someone's Personality

Vaness delves into the Big Five personality traits: Openness, consciousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (OCEAN).

- **Openness**: how open you are to new ideas and trying new things (Variety seeker or routine person).
- **Consciousness** measures your self-discipline. High tend to have to-do lists, low ones find strict schedules constrictive.
- **Extroversion**: high get energy from being with people and tend to be cheerful and talkative; low drain energy from being with people and crave being alone;
- **Agreeableness**: how you work with others, empathy, and forgiveness. High are empathetic and easy to get along with; low is more analytical, like to take decisions without emotions and tend to be more skeptical.
- **Neuroticisms** how warrior you are

Vanessa says that when she started understanding people through the lenses of the Big Five personality traits, her conversation and human interactions started flowing much more smoothly.

#8. Appreciate

Vanessa quotes Gary Chapman's *5 love languages* to explain the different ways people show appreciation for one another:

- **Words of Affirmation:** Show love with words
- **Gifts:** Show love with gifts or with tokens
- **Physical Touch:** Show love with physical touch such as hugs, caressing, cuddling
- **Service:** Show love by helping someone out
- **Quality Time:** Show love by spending time with the people they love

Many issues in a relationship can be explained by the couple having different ways of expressing their love.

#9. Values

Vanessa van Edwards says all interactions are transactions (read the *law of social exchange*).

The major resources being traded are:

- **Love**: gaining acceptance, affection and likability;

- **Service**: support and care;
- **Status**: responsibility, praise and titles to evoke pride;
- **Money**: currency;
- **Goods**: tangible products;
- **Information**: advice, ideas and teaching.

We need all 6 but we take what we need most and give what we have in abundance. For example, people with low self-esteem look for likes on their Facebook pages.

How To Find Out People's Values

Captivate explains that a great way to find out people's values is to look at what they complain about or what they brag about.

#10. How to Lead People

If you want to get buy-in, you have to explain your why.

And to give control and ownership, avoid micromanaging and let people own their tasks.

What I loved most about this chapter is Vanessa's great advice on how to best give tasks: you don't just assign them, but give them to the people with the right skill.

And then… ?

Then tell them they are the best for it because they are the most talented for it.

Also, read:

- **How to be a leader**

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

#11. How to Deal With Difficult People

Vanessa van Edwards speaks a bit about the low road and high road and "emotion hijacking" when our fears take us over.

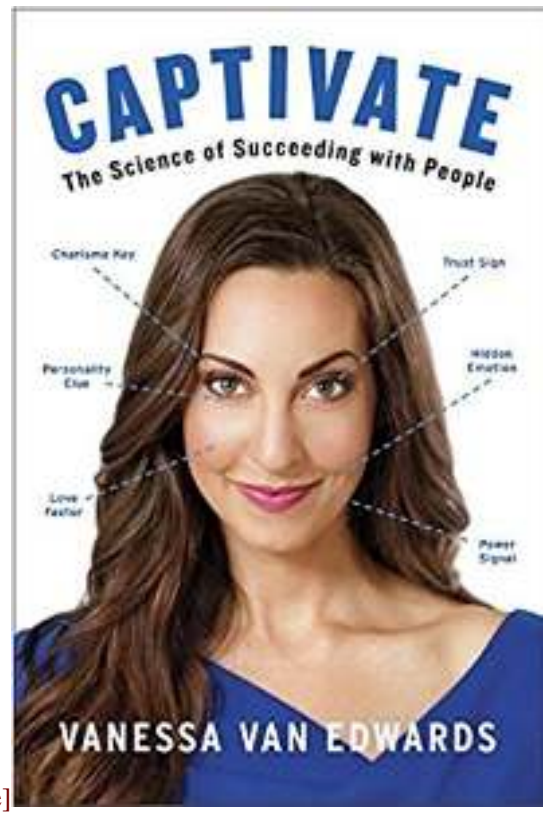
She then goes on with a brilliant dialogue between a man and a woman to point out that when someone complains to us we should resist the urge of going into solution mode and do listen longer instead.

#12. Engage: How to Turn People On

Popular people are more attuned to other people's popularity.

They are more attuned to social signals, social hierarchy, and relationships. Popular people also care more about these topics.

So if you want to be popular, I'm afraid that means you need to be attuned to the game of popularity.
Same for office politics: to be good at office politics, *you need to learn the game of office politics.*

[image] 

CONS

- **Some pop-psychology**

For example, the Myers-Briggs Test introduced as reliable and 'science-backed', is instead debatable.

Say the researchers and authors of the *Handbook of Research Methods in Social & Personality Psychology:*

> Without much evidence for its external, structural, or substantive validity, the MBTI nonetheless became the most popular personality questionnaire in this country.

And personality psychology researcher Keith Campbell strikes even deeper:

> I'm sure you've taken a personality quiz or two—who doesn't love those? Under the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, you may be an ENTJ or an ISFT. Many variations exist, and chances are, **many of them have little or no grounding in scientific evidence**, especially if they are related to pop culture.
> (…) Quiz takers often encounter what psychologists call the Barnum Effect, who apocryphally said, "**There's a sucker born every minute**." The Barnum Effect works by giving vague, ambiguous feedback that applies to everyone.

- **Lots Upsell**

Captivate has constant invites to check Vanessa's website.

The advertised link did not take me to any resource though but to a sign-up page.
That felt a bit wrong to me.

- **Some Tips Aren't Always Effective**

My opinion is that some tips can be counterproductive, especially for men.

For example, you don't ask a woman if she "can give you her number".

And you won't look socially powerful starting a convo by saying you want to "test a convo starter".

Review

Captivate is a good book on interpersonal skills for beginners.

As for any book on a large and complex topic such as interpersonal skills it cannot cover everything, and Vanessa focused more on 'standing out' and 'being unique'.

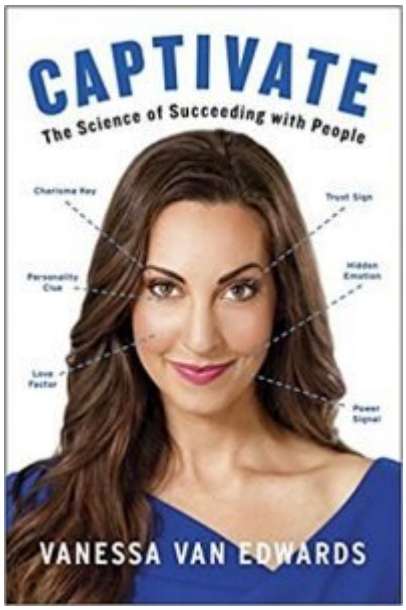
While that's certainly valid for many people in many situations, I find its validity contextual.

Seeking uniqueness is not an inherently high-quality trait.
By its very nature, it defines social climbing because high-status people are already getting the attention they want.

Get the book on Amazon or check:

- Best social skills books
- Best *advanced* social skills books
- Best social skills courses

Captivate Summary: 12 Steps to Succeed With People



Some great stuff on understanding personalities and using them for better and more successful relationships.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/captivate-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.5

Hands in Pockets: Body Language Meanings & Confidence Tips

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Curious about what hands in pockets really mean in body language?
This gesture can signal a variety of things—from confidence and coolness to anxiety and defensiveness, depending on how it's done and the context.
While many body language experts warn that hands in pockets can make you seem unconfident or untrustworthy, it can also be a powerful tool when used correctly.
In this article, we'll explore the different meanings behind hands in pockets, show you how to interpret them, and even teach you how to use this gesture to project confidence, sex appeal, or a laid-back vibe.
Contents

- Hands in Pockets: Body Language Meaning
  - Can Hands in Pockets Be Sexy?
  - 2 Types of Hands in Pockets
- Both Hands In Pocket – Fingers Out
  - Great For:
  - Bad For:
- Both Hands In Pocket – Thumbs Out
  - Great For:
  - Bad For:
- One Hand In Pocket – Fingers Out
  - Great For:
  - Bad For:
- One Hand in Pocket – Thumb Out
  - Great For:
  - Bad For
- One Hand In Pocket – All In
  - Great For:
- Both Hands In Pockets – All In
  - Great For:
  - Bad For:
- Bonus: Hand-in-Pocket Move

Hands in Pockets: Body Language Meaning

Hands in pockets when standing is a no-no in the *body language literature*.

Vanessa van Edwards says that hands in your pocket *murders rapport*, makes you come across as unconfident, and is associated with lying and defensiveness.

And she's right.

Mark Bowden author of "*Winning Body Language*" says that showing our hands is one of the most crucial aspects of building trust with the people around us.

But Lucio Buffalmano says that, as for most things people-related, big generalizations are almost always wrong.

And yes, you can also make hands-in pockets work.

Can Hands in Pockets Be Sexy?

Sometimes you don't want rapport.

Sometimes you don't want trust.

Sometimes you just want to look cool.
Or sexy.

That also works :).

And hands in pockets can be inherently sexy by drawing attention to your nether regions.

2 Types of Hands in Pockets

Three variables will determine how confident or unconfident your hands in your pockets will be:

1. **Visibility**: how deep in the pockets? Do they have a thumb or fingers sticking out? The rule of thumb -pun intended- is: the more visible your hands and thumb are, the more sexy/confident;
2. **Body Language**: how's the rest of the body language? The overall frame will determine if your hands in pockets are sexy, weak, or even strategically deployed to, for example, spice up a bland outfit or offset an otherwise too-imposing frame;
3. **Quantity**: both hands in pockets or just one? Usually, only one hand in your pocket is sexier and more confident.

Both Hands In Pocket – Fingers Out

Hoodlum warning!

Both hands with fingers out is probably the most sexually aggressive hands-in-pockets pose you can have.

The fingers outside conspicuously draw attention to your genitalia, making it a very gaudy, obvious pose.

If used while talking to a woman it will also give your game away.

Great For:

- Hyper mannish cowboy style
- Younger guys
- For "play poses"

Bad For:

- Most anyone outside cowboys, juvenile rebels, and gay party posters :)

The problem with the cowboy pose is that it's too obvious. It's the equivalent of a woman biting and licking the rim of a glass as she looks at you. Yes, many men would happily take that lay, but most women prefer a bit more subtlety –*Undercover Sex Signals* and *The Art of Seduction* both agree too much and obviously a display of masculinity is a turn-off-.

Both Hands In Pocket – Thumbs Out

This is the less extreme version of drawing attention to your nether regions with both hands: thumbs are less obvious and conspicuous and it's considered a *confident and authoritative position*.

Great For:

- When you're posing for a shot,
- When you're cold and hence have a real reason to hide your hands.
- With slim-fit clothing or hipster styles to get some more mannish edge.
- Overcoats, so more mature or "serious" looking men can use them while looking professional and… Authoritative

Also works well with the shoulder shrug. The thumbs out -confidence- Coupled with the defensive "*head duck*" (I don't know), communicates with endearing cuteness -but still a mannish side- that you either don't have much influence on the result or that you got found out. As if to say "Well… You know how it is".

She: “who’s this girl texting you?” You: *shoulder shrug*

Bad For:

- Interacting with people: you’re better off using hand gestures and possibly touching your conversation partner;
- As your main resting position -Martin Sheen doing it for the whole Badlands movie looked like a rebel, but in a non-powerful, juvenile fashion.

One Hand In Pocket – Fingers Out

We’re starting to get now to more “usable” daily poses.

One hand in the pocket with fingers sticking out is sexually allusive without being too showy. You will still rarely see mature men in this position though.

Great For:

- Holding with one hand onto a rail or bar
- Impressing a strong sexual vibe on the interaction (imagine yourself reclining against the bar as you speak to her)

Bad For:

- Getting to know people (unless you're playing the cool guy)

Note: try to keep your fingers together because open fingers are perceived as less powerful (*Pease and Pease*).

One Hand in Pocket – Thumb Out

Hand in the pocket with one thumb out is great all seasons.

This is a common resting position of mine: it's allusive in a great, slight "under the radar" way.

Great For:

- Your go-to resting position
- When reclining against the bar

Bad For

- Whenever it's not comfortable (i.e.: you can barely fit your hand in the pocket)

One Hand In Pocket – All In

With one hand fully in the pocket we start going further down the "blandness" side of the curve.

Great For:

- With a suit and a nice watch, as embodied by James Bond
- When holding a drink to look casual or…
- When holding a gun to take the edge off (remember this one next time you're out at the bar :)

Both Hands In Pockets – All In

Both hands in pockets are at the highest risk of looking unconfident and shifty because we hide our palms when we want to hide something *(Pease and Pease*).
But it can still work if you couple it with great posture and a relaxed look because hands in pockets are also non-commital as if to say "whatever", which can be sexy in a comfortable, soothing way. The secret to making it work is the expression on your face: relaxed and chill.

Great For:

- Laid back, hippie types (picture below would have been better with a pendant and a couple of brown wristbands)
- When you want to give an aura of "whatever"
- Comfortable, casual look

Chill babe, the world ain't gonna end

Bad For:

- When feeling down (it contributes to down-spiraling)
- When you tend to slouch (both hands in pockets will make you slouch more)
- With any other negative signs such as low gaze, slouched shoulders, downward lips, and hips drawn back (i.e.: moving genitals away rather than forward)

Bonus: Hand-in-Pocket Move

And don't forget the actual movement. Slow. With a slight smirk for social situations sexiness and a deadpan face for edgy sexiness. But don't take my word for it and look at who did it much better than I have.
Note: here's an example where the movement gave away nervousness in a "hide my hand" way more than a "look at my crotch" move.

Also, Look At:
How to Walk Sexy
Alpha Male Poses at the Bar

Think and Grow Rich: OK Advice, But With Unmasculine Woo-Woo

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Think and Grow Rich (1937) is one of the best-selling self-help books in which author *Napoleon Hill* shares his "secrets" and methods for getting rich and, more in general, for getting what you want in life.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - #Chapter 1: Desire
  - #Chapter 2: Faith
  - #Chapter 3: Auto-Suggestion
  - #Chapter 4: Specialized Knowledge
  - #Chapter 5: Imagination
  - #Chapter 6: Organized Planning
  - #Chapter 7: Decision
  - #Chapter 8: Persistence
  - #Chapter 9: The Master Mind
  - #Chapter 10: Sex Transmutation
  - #Chapter 11: The Subconscious Mind
  - #Chapter 12: The Brain
  - #Chapter 13: The Sixth Sense
  - #Chapter 14: How To Outwit Fear
  - Real-Life Applications
- Criticism
- Review

Overview

- **Develop a deep Desire to achieve your goals**
- **Have Faith** that you will achieve them
- **Reach decisions quickly and stick to them** (it's a habit)
- **Visualize** yourself as already having reached those goals (law of attraction)

Notes

Napoleon Hill starts the introduction while covertly hyping up what's about to come.

He says the "secret" of each chapter will manifest to you IF YOU ARE READY FOR IT.

When it does manifest, you should have a toast because that will be the most important turning point of your life.

My Note: This is a power move on the readers

On my first read, I found the introduction note and capitalization condescending and irritating.
I was looking for information and for wisdom, not for big hyperbole -the CAPS are straight from the author-.
And I want the info presented to me as clearly as possible, and not through some hide-and-seek game that already

felt manipulative to me.
That said, let's get straight into this *Think and Grow Rich* book summary.

Update:

Hill's introduction is basically an extreme *teachers' frame power move.*

Call it, if you wish, a "guru frame", which is very popular among gurus and… Charlatans -up to you to tell which from which, and the difference, if any-.

I then saw this video by Coffeezilla and he does a great job at telling you who Napoleon Hill truly was (heads up: a scammer).

#Chapter 1: Desire

The first quality you should possess to THINK AND GROW RICH is the DESIRE for riches.

Here are the 6 practical steps of desire:

1. Fix in your mind the exact amount you desire
2. Determine exactly what you will give in return
3. Establish a definite date
4. Create a definite plan and start with it whether you are or not
5. Write down all the previous steps
6. Read your statement aloud before sleeping and right after waking up. See, feel, and believe you're already in possession of the money.

Napoleon Hill says that no one is ready to acquire riches until he believes he can acquire them.
The state of mind indeed must be BELIEF, not hope or wish.

And he adds that nothing is impossible for the person who backs DESIRE with enduring FAITH.

#Chapter 2: Faith

When you mix FAITH with thought, the subconscious mind picks up the vibration, translates it into spiritual equivalent, and transmits to "Infinite Intelligence", like in prayer.

Napoleon Hill says you can become faithful with an affirmation or repeated instructions to the subconscious mind via auto-suggestion.

My Note:
Modern psychology has debunked the self-help myth of affirmation and shown that, in many cases, it can actually be counterproductive.

Hill says that any emotionalized thought -any thought charged up with emotion- which is mixed with faith will begin to immediately translate into the physical equivalent.

Our subconscious will ONLY recognize and act upon thoughts that have been well-mixed with emotions or feelings.
Thus, you must mix DESIRE with BELIEF, or FAITH.

Why Thinking Positive Is Key

Our mind takes the nature of what is most present in it.

That is why you should think positively and eradicate negative emotions.
And a mind imbibed with positive emotions provides the right breeding ground for FAITH to blossom.

My Note:
Positive thinking is good up to a certain point.
Too much positive thinking is harmful, also read "pop-psychology myths".

Self-Confidence Formula

1. Know you have the ability to achieve the object of your Definite Purpose, so DEMAND of yourself continuous action and promise right now to keep acting
2. Realize that what you focus on will eventually come true, so focus thirty minutes a day on the person you intend to become
3. Spend 10 minutes a day demanding yourself the development of SELF CONFIDENCE
4. Clearly write down a description of your DEFINITE CHIEF AIM in life
5. Understand that no wealth can endure unless built upon trust and justice. So engage in no transaction that does not benefit all parties; induce others to serve you by serving others, eliminate hatred, envy, jealousy, *selfishness and cynicism* by developing a love for all humanity.

Repeat this formula aloud once a day with full FAITH that it will gradually influence your THOUGHTS and ACTIONS so that you will become a self-reliant and successful person.

#Chapter 3: Auto-Suggestion

Auto-suggestion is what we'd call today visualization.

When visualizing the money you intend to accumulate, close your eyes and see yourself rendering the service, or delivering the merchandise you intend to give in return for this money.

You auto-suggest with the following process:

1. Go to a quiet place, close your eyes, and repeat aloud the written statement of the amount of money you intend to accumulate, the time limit, and the description of how you will do so.
   Most importantly, SEE YOURSELF ALREADY IN POSSESSION OF THE MONEY. I quote Napoleon Hill on what he recommends you tell yourself
2. Repeat night and morning until you can vividly imagine the money you want to accumulate.
3. Place a copy of the written statement where you can see it night and morning and read it until it's been memorized.

This is what you should repeat yourself:

> I believe that I will have this money in my possession.
> My faith is so strong that I can now see this money before my eyes.
> I can touch it with my hands. It is now awaiting transfer to me at the time, and in the proportion that I deliver the service I intend to render in return for it.
> I am awaiting a plan by which to accumulate this money, and I will follow that plan, when it is received."

Napoleon Hill says that *skepticism* is normal in human beings with all new ideas, but if you keep following the instructions, then belief and ABSOLUTE FAITH will soon take root.

At that point, you'll be able to say you are the true master of your faith and the captain of your soul.

My Note:
Studies have shown that visualization can also be harmful if it replaces action and if it provides enough good feelings that you will not want to work hard to make it happen in real life.

#Chapter 4: Specialized Knowledge

You will need specialized knowledge -as opposed to useless general knowledge- of the service, merchandise, or profession you intend to pursue in return for riches.

#Chapter 5: Imagination

Imagination is what you will use to create plans.

Napoleon Hill says that imagination only works when the subconscious mind is vibrating at a super rapid rate when, for example, stimulated with strong desire.

And imagination becomes more developed through USE.

The ideas you develop will then be transmuted into cash through the power of definite purpose in conjunction with definite plans.

I absolutely love when Napoleon Hill says:

> God seems to throw Himself on the side of the man who knows exactly what he wants, if he is determined to get JUST THAT!

And I love when he says that an idea, as crazy as it may sound at the beginning when coaxed, nursed, and enticed to remain alive, will gradually become a giant.
That idea will eventually acquire power and it will then drive you.

> **God seems to throw Himself on the side of the man who knows exactly what he wants**

#Chapter 6: Organized Planning

Napoleon Hill recommends you get your plans checked and approved by the member of your Master Mind.

And if the first plan you adopt does not work, replace it. And keep replacing all plans until you find one which DOES WORK.

The Attributes of Leadership

1. UNWAVERING COURAGE: nobody likes a leader who lacks self-confidence and courage.
2. SELF-CONTROL: He who cannot control himself cannot control others.
3. A KEEN SENSE OF JUSTICE
4. DEFINITENESS OF DECISION: wavering is not a leader-like quality.
5. DEFINITENESS OF PLANS: without a plan, you're like a ship without a rudder.
6. THE HABIT OF DOING MORE THAN PAID FOR: a leader will do more than he requires his followers to do
7. A PLEASING PERSONALITY
8. SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING: a leader has sympathy for his followers and he understands them
9. MASTERY OF DETAIL
10. WILLINGNESS TO ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY: a leader must *take full responsibility* for the mistakes and shortcomings of his followers. If he shifts responsibility, he won't be a leader for long
11. COOPERATION: Leadership calls for POWER, and power calls for COOPERATION.

> **He who cannot control himself cannot control others**

#Chapter 7: Decision

Napoleon Hill says that LACK OF DECISION -or procrastination- is one of the main causes of failure.

The habit of reaching decisions promptly and changing them slowly is one of the main common traits among people who accumulated riches.

#Chapter 8: Persistence

Persistence differentiates the poor from the rich.

1. Persistence in applying the rules of this book
2. Persistence in the face of misfortune

That's what will make you rich -or at least that's what Hill says-.

As a matter of fact, persistence alone will give success even to people with little qualities.

Here are a few ways to develop persistence:

1. Definite purpose spurred by a burning desire
2. A definite plan continuously put into action
3. Positive mindset insulated against all negative influences
4. Alliance with one or more people pushing us to follow through

> **The habit of persistence is the best insurance against failure**

#Chapter 9: The Master Mind

The "Master Mind" is the coordination of knowledge and effort, between two or more people for the attainment of a definite purpose."

A Master Mind built in a spirit of harmony among its members will amplify the power of each mind to give birth to an entity that is more powerful than the sum of its components.

#Chapter 10: Sex Transmutation

Sex is the most powerful creative energy.

Napoleon Hill says that there is no great leader without the driving force of sex: sex energy is indeed the creative energy of all genii.

But sex energy must be transmuted from the desire for actual sex into a different form of desire and action. Then, and only then, it can be the driving force of a genius.

Why do most people succeed only in their 40s or 50s?

Hill says it's because they waste sexual energy in the overindulgence of the sex, rather than harnessing it and putting it to different and higher uses.

Romance + Sex = Genius

Adding romance to sex puts us closer to Infinite Intelligence. When sex is coupled with romance, then a genius is born.

#Chapter 11: The Subconscious Mind

The subconscious mind receives and files any impressions from the senses or thoughts, regardless of their nature.

That means that if you fail to plant DESIRES and the right thoughts in your subconscious, you will leave your destiny to chance.

To imprint your subconscious with the thoughts of your choice, you must plant your thoughts through the imagination, and mix them with faith.

#Chapter 12: The Brain

Chapter 12 of Think and Grow Rich describes the brain.

But you're not going to learn neurobiology from a book written when neurobiology didn't even exist.

#Chapter 13: The Sixth Sense

Napoleon Hill had a council of advisers.

Except that they were all in his imagination.
Napoleon Hill describes the imaginary meetings he had with the members of his council.

The meetings started becoming more and more real, with the people in the room taking on different habits.
It was becoming so real that he started getting worried.

The sixth sense, as Think and Growth Rich explains, comes with mastery and continuous application of all the other principles outlined.

#Chapter 14: How To Outwit Fear

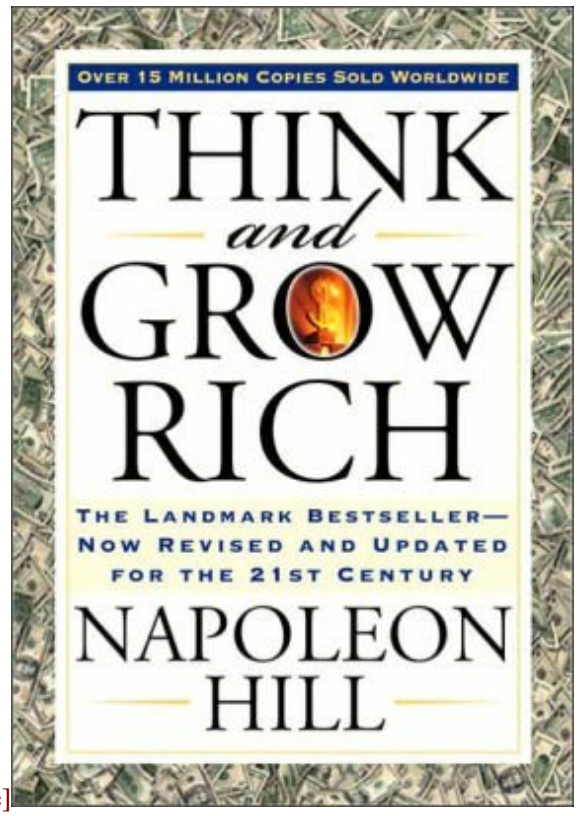
The enemies you must steer clear of are indecision, doubt, and fear.

The three, Napoleon says, are closely related. Indecision breeds doubt, and the two together give birth to fear.

Getting rid of fear is imperative or our mind will manifest physically exactly what our fears dictate.

Napoleon Hill ends by reminding us we have absolute control of our thoughts. And by controlling our thoughts, we control our destiny.

My Note:
In this chapter, Hill suggests "drowning our worries" by being too busy to be annoyed by them.
This is a terrible strategy that you probably shouldn't follow (read Carnegie and Brene Brown).

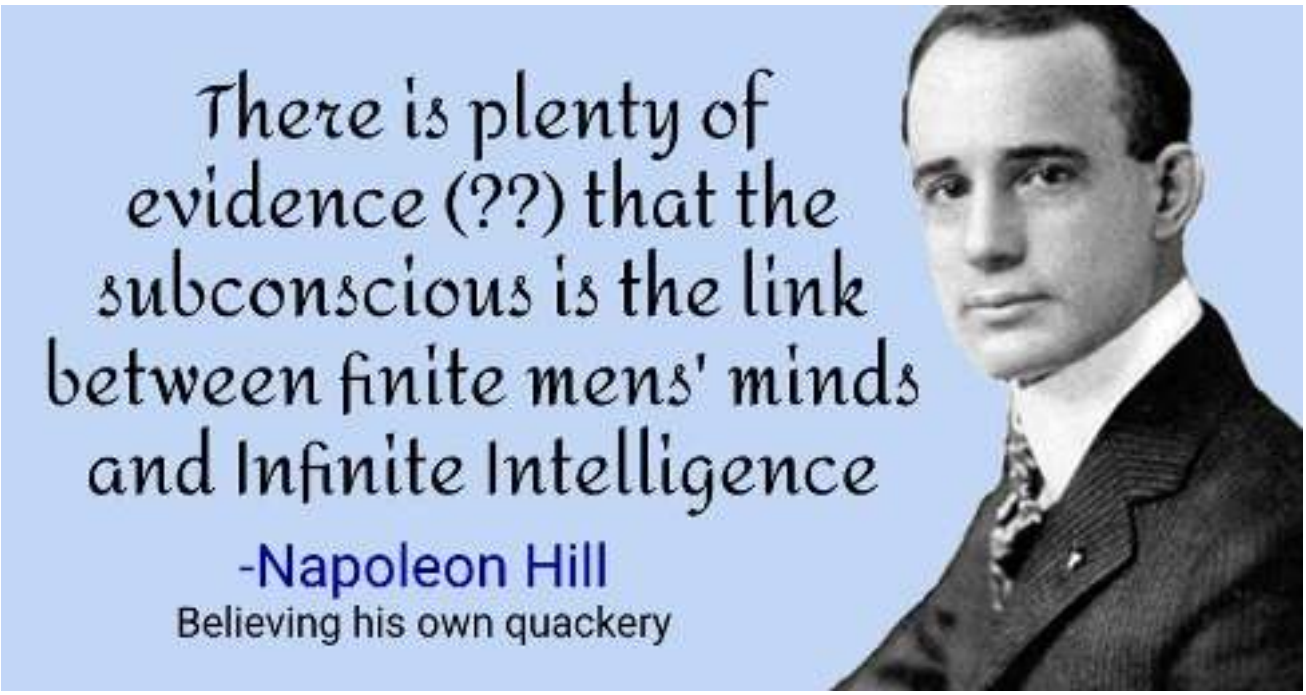
[image] 

Real-Life Applications

Some of the lessons in *Think and Grow Rich* are timeless and can benefit you, such as:

- Visualize
- Keep your thoughts positive
- Develop a deep desire for achieving your goals
- Have faith you can reach your goal

Criticism



There is plenty of criticism that any critical thinker has to move to *Think and Grow Rich.*

Dogmatic & Religious-like, Often Unscientific

Napoleon Hill lays out dogmas without citing any research or opening any door to doubt.

I feel there's a huge spiral of silence around this book: everyone says it's great so nobody has the guts to call out the BS in it.

But to me, it was jarring.
I prefer authors such as Ray Dalio who attribute their success to "knowing they don't know" and always cross-checking their conclusions (instead of "forcing yourself into belief and conviction").

Napoleon Hill says for example that when someone DESIRES something so deeply that he can bet his entire future on a single shot, he is then sure to win.
I hope nobody is ever too sure to win the lottery, albeit I'm afraid there are plenty of people who lost everything chasing their deep desires.

All Or Nothing Extremes

Extremes are appealing to people and help sell.

And *Think and Grow Rich* is packed with extremes, from desiring riches like a man stranded in the desert desires shade and water, to the unwavering faith of your ultimate victory.

More often than not instead, balance across many concomitant actions and pursuits is more effective and more conducive to goal achievements than extremes.
Read more on the law of optimum balance here:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

Paternalistic. And ignores psychology, human nature, and power dynamics

The author says that laborers will certainly receive more money (when?) and will be led by better leaders (very paternalistic to imply they will be happy being led, with just a bit more money), BUT:

> But first, they must give more to their employer, and stop this bickering and bargaining by force, at the expense of the public.

I appreciate a lot that Hill talks up collaboration since collaboration is also one of the tenets of this website.

But what he suggests is a ***naive collaboration*** (and he sides with the owners, too).

First of all, you can't give much more screwing bolts in a plant.
And if you only give more without making sure you have some leverage and negotiation power, then you are hoping the employer will be nice.
And you risk that the employer will likely take the lion's share and give you the crumbs. Or, also possibly give you *nothing* and get a cheaper laborer as soon as he's got the chance.

Also, read about "*enlightened collaboration*"

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

The “Secret for Succes” Format Feels Like Hyped-Up Marketing BS

Says Hill:

> “preparing myself to take it to the world, to men and women who, without the secret, might go through life as failures”

There is no secret formula to follow that ensures success.
And I personally don’t like that nasty power move and *manipulative technique* of framing those who don’t follow his formula as “failures”.

Getting Too Busy to Beat Worry Is Wrong

The strategy of being too busy to worry, the same suggestion as in *Stop Worrying and Start Living*, is plainly wrong. I’d recommend you don’t follow it.

Success Equals Money?

If your whole life’s meaning revolves around getting rich… I’d suggest you think twice about it.
I’m not necessarily saying that you’re wrong or that it’s an unworthy goal, but to truly reflect how important it is to you.

Law of Attraction Is Unproven & Unfounded At Best

Hill says that:

> thoughts are things, and when they are mixed with definiteness of purpose, persistence, and a BURNING DESIRE they will translate into riches.

This was the beginning of the biggest lie in the self-help literature: the law of attraction.

Conor McGregor has been quoted saying he manifests his thoughts into reality.
Until he lost.

Tony Robbins talks about a couple who willed into their life two different lottery wins by believing they would win and acting as if they had already won it.
In the meanwhile, thousands lost everything gambling.

I highly recommend the articles on this website on *self-help myths*, pop psychology *myths,* and *naive self-help:*

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Review

Think and Grow Rich has some great wisdom and some nonsense BS packaged with a mystic and mythic aura.

The fact that it’s one of the biggest sellers of self-help literature together with *How to Win Friends* and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* doesn’t mean it’s great or that you should read it.

Some passages and advice are unscientific, and also unscientific are some central tenets of the books -ie.: willing things into life-.

But many other tenets such as action, meditation, deciding, and persisting are timeless and you are well advised to put them into practice.

Be Careful of The Law of Attraction

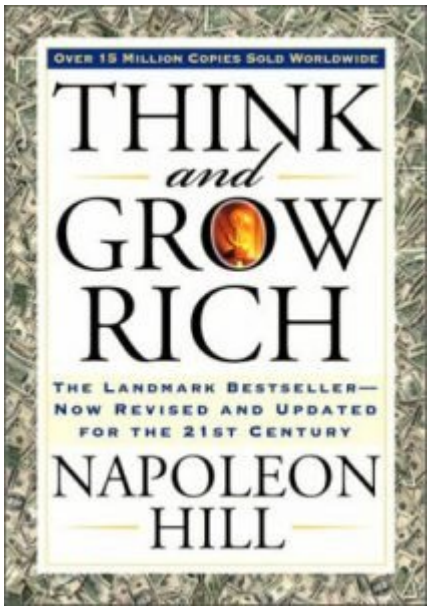
I advise you to be cautious around unscientific recommendations.

The “law” of attraction is now a law at all.

It’s useful in focusing you on the positives and in giving you confidence in taking the necessary steps.
But don’t expect the law of attraction to bring anything into your life without you putting in the work.

Check out my full Book Summaries Section.

Think and Grow Rich: Lucio's Take



Think and Grow Rich is the grandfather of all self help book. Many of its principles are timeless and you will do well by learning and applying them.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/think-and-grow-rich/

Author: Napoleon Hill

Editor's Rating:
1.5

Bold: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Bold is a book on entrepreneurial mindset in which author Peter Diamandis shares his “aggressively optimistic” recipe for entrepreneurs who wants to change the world.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Bold Summary
  - Part One – Bold Technology
  - Part Two – Bold Mindset
  - Part Three – Bold Crowd
- CONS
- Bold Review

Bullet Summary

- **Many disruptive technologies start relatively unnoticed** as they “brew” for a while before hitting suddenly
- **This is the best time ever** for you to take opportunities and change the world
- **Go for Moonshots**: huge goals are better at motivating you and better at changing the world

Bold Summary

Part One – Bold Technology

In part one Peter Diamandis discussed the trends in technologies that are changing the world.

I found particularly interesting the 6 Ds of exponentials, analyzing how digital revolutions work.

Deception
The first period of digitization goes unnoticed. It’s because when a trend starts, even if it grows exponentially, it still won’t impact lives.

Disruption
As the trend approaches a critical mass and starts having some visible effect… It will then quickly grow from “visible effect” to “disruption” at lightning speed as it keeps growing exponentially.

Demonetization
As a business becomes digital, money matters less. Peter Diamandis talks about Kodak: film quickly became useless with Megapixels.

Dematerialization
Anything that becomes digitalized also becomes dematerialized.

Democratization
As prices tumble and technology is more and more accessible to the masses, a democratization of opportunities takes place.

The Hype Cycle

Peter Diamandis talks about the Hype Cycle, which postulates that people tend to over-hype and overestimate the

impact of new technology only to be disappointed when said technology takes longer than expected to deliver the hyped-up results.
We then have another sort of “negative hype”, where people are *too* pessimistic about the new technology.
Peter then says that for entrepreneurs it’s critical to understand when a technology is exiting its trough and starts rising up the enlightenment curve.

Disruptive Technologies

Peter then delves into 3D printing, robotics, AI, the Internet Of Things, and the land of opportunities that the Internet is going to be.

He gives an overview of the huge changes in optimistic, contagiously upbeat fashion. The content is not disruptive, to stay on topic, and it changes so quickly that going into the details is not worth it and I invite you to read the book for it.
However, the overarching message is this: the world is changing, is changing fast and deep, and it’s an opportunity feast for us all.

Part Two – Bold Mindset

Bold by Peter Diamandis dedicates the second part to looking for what gives us an edge mentally.

He mentions that setting goals makes us more productive and that big goals outperform small and medium ones. Goals are best when they align the desired outcomes with the individual values.

Peter Diamandis then talks about Google, Moonshots -huge goals between audacious projects and science fiction-, 10x and motivation -where he recaps Drive by Daniel Pink-.

Google’s Eight Innovation Principles

1. **Focus on the User.**
2. **Share Everything**: In a hyperconnected world,d it’s critical to be open, allow people to help you innovate, and build on each other’s ideas.
3. **Look for Ideas Everywhere:**
4. **Think Big but Start Small:** you can start a company on day one that affects a small group but aim to positively impact a billion people within a decade.
5. **Never Fail to Fail:** Fail frequently, fail fast, and fail forward.
6. **Spark with Imagination, Fuel with Data.**
7. **Be a Platform**: the most successful companies -Airbnb, Uber, Instagram- are all platforms
8. **Have a Mission That Matters**: perhaps most important, does your company have a massively transformative purpose? Passion is key to progress

Flow

There are triggers or preconditions to help us achieve *flow*:

- High-pressure work: we have to be willing to take risks;
- An environment rich in novelty, uncertainty, and complexity
- Clear goals: it’s a shortcut to the *now*. *Y*ou know what you’re aiming at, so you can focus on the task
- Immediate feedback: another shortcut to the *now*
- Challenge to skills ratio: complex enough not to be boring, easy enough we can solve it
- (groups) Familiarity: for groups, everyone is on the same page
- (groups) Blending ego: no social climbers elbowing for the limelight

- Autonomy and Mastery (Intrinsic Motivators)
- (groups) Additive interactions: adding value to each other rather than confronting each other
- Thinking differently

The skunk methodology relies heavily on the flow state to reach outcomes quickly.
For more on flow read "*Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Performance*".

Peter's rules

Some of Peter's rules I liked most:

1. If anything can go wrong, fix it! (To hell with Murphy!)
2. When given a choice—take both!
3. Multiple projects lead to multiple successes.
4. Start at the top, then work your way up.
5. Do it by the book . . . but be the author!
6. When forced to compromise, ask for more.
7. If you can't win, change the rules.
8. If you can't change the rules, then ignore them.
9. No simply means begin one level higher.
10. Don't walk when you can run.
11. When in doubt: THINK!
12. Patience is a virtue, but persistence to the point of success is a blessing.
13. The faster you move, the slower time passes, the longer you live.
14. The best way to predict the future is to create it yourself!
15. You get what you incentivize.
16. If you think it is impossible, then it is for you.
17. An expert is someone who can tell you exactly how something can't be done.
18. The day before something is a breakthrough, it's a crazy idea.
19. If it was easy, it would have been done already.
20. Without a target, you'll miss it every time.
21. Fail early, fail often, fail forward
22. If you can't measure it, you can't improve it.
23. The world's most precious resource is the persistent and passionate human mind.
24. Bureaucracy is an obstacle to be conquered with persistence, confidence, and a bulldozer when necessary.

Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos & Richard Branson

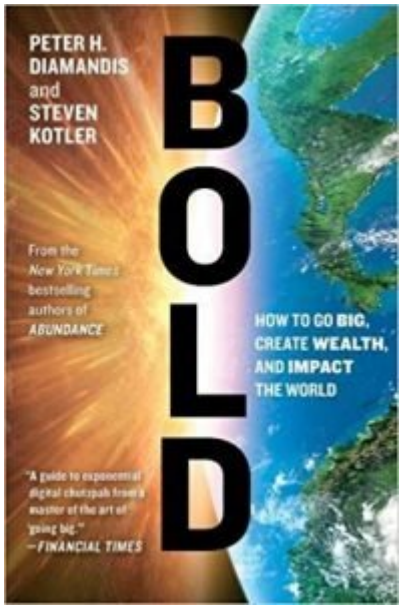
Bold by Peter Diamandis then goes on to analyze the exploits and different styles of Elon Musk, Bezos, and Branson.

What I love the most about this section is the differentiation between missionary and mercenary. Missionary is someone who loves the product and the customers, the mercenary is money-driven. Long term, usually the missionary makes more money than the mercenary.

Part Three – Bold Crowd

Bold by Peter Diamandis goes into the power of crowdfunding and community building and community

power.[image]



CONS

- **Symposium-style**

I was surprised to find *Bold* takes a lot of time to discuss the current state of affairs of different technologies and current services.
Luckily Peter Diamandis can do it well and lightly and manages to add value, but on the other hand, I think it was too long.

- **Won't age well because of the lengthy descriptions of current technology**

The symposium parts in which Peter Diamandis reviews the current state of technology and the next disruptors will not age well.
10 years from now this book will be 70% outdated.

- Geek-measuring approach to self-development

Diamandis is a typical Silicon Valley type of guy.
That's generally a great thing, but it comes with some downsides. Including the tendency to fall for the trap of going extreme on "data", "measurements", "hacks", latest trends and fads, etc. etc.

See a good review here:

- **Living forever pipe dream**

Diamandis is often associated with the "life extension" or "living forever" goal (obsession?).

I'm not too sold on that and I tend to agree with Robert Greene: accepting death may be a better approach.

Bold Review

Bold is an interesting book on Silicon Valley thinking and can be helpful for those who struggle with "glass half-empty" type of thinking.

It may also help humanity by encouraging many entrepreneurs to risk big.
Almost all will fail, but those who succeed may truly help humanity move forward.

In a way, the biggest gift of *Bold* is Peter Diamandis' mindset, which is:

- Positivity
- Opportunities mindset (as opposed to threats)
- Moonshot thinking

On the con side, ***Bold* does not provide a recipe to maximize your odds of success**, which most likely you maximize in *proven* industries and learning and applying the basics of entrepreneurship to proven business models that have much higher odds of success (vs very unlikely "moonshots").
See our review of Alex Hormozi and his book for more.

Get Bold on Amazon.

How McGregor Displays Social Dominance: Breakdown

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

If you are interested in how to dominate socially -or if you are interested in Conor McGregor-, you came to the right page.

In analyzing Conor McGregor's public interactions, I came across a few interesting traits and moves that he plays to position himself as the most dominant man in the room.

Contents

- Intro
  - #1. Stand Out
  - #2. Lead – And Follow Shrewdly
  - #3. Dominant Body Language
  - #4. Ask For Investment
  - #5. Avoid Investment
  - #6. Impose Your Will
  - #7. Be The Center of Attention
- Summary
  - Try Hard Warning

Intro

Conor McGregor always makes a point to be seen as a socially dominant man, and that makes him a good subject for a case study.

Let's begin:

#1. Stand Out

Court attention at all costs says the *48 Laws of Power*.
You won't be dominant at anything being the social wallflower of the situation.

You don't want to exaggerate and come across as a narcissist hogging attention to feed a little ego. That's weak. But you do want to stand out in a positive way.

Great posture, above-average grooming, taking up space, looking comfortable, nice fitting clothes, and speaking up are all positive elements of standing out. Conor McGregor uses all of them.

#2. Lead – And Follow Shrewdly

Dominance, authority positions, and leadership are not the same thing, but there's a certain overlap.

Here's the thing though: nobody can lead or dominate all the time, and while "leading" is an abundantly discussed topic, "following" astutely is probably even more important and much less understood.

Holding your own when someone tries to dominate you or when you have no other choice but to follow or yield territory is what differentiates the very top-value men from the rest.

Usually, you do it by assessing quickly whether or not you can avoid following, avoid obeying, or can successfully negotiate a better outcome.

When you can't, the focus is minimizing the social impact of being a follower while keeping your composure.
A few guidelines for doing so effectively:

- **Beat Him To The Punch**: do what you're supposed to do *before* being asked to-;
- **Lead Back:** Lead in another smaller area. The waiter was rough telling you to move out of the way so he can serve the drinks. Move and then chaperone him with a hand on his arm while saying "*this way please*"
- **Remain cold and detached**, don't say sorry, look at him in the eyes, and never smile -McGregor does it in the video below-
- **Thank Him:** Might seem counterintuitive, but "thank you" is a powerful way of framing the interaction as if he's done a pleasure for you. The cop made you walk all the way back because you crossed the crime scene? "Thank you for keeping our streets safe for us"

Note: These tactics are situational and meant for status-testing or dominance dynamics, not everyday polite or cooperative interactions.

#3. Dominant Body Language

Dominance is largely conveyed by nonverbals. Here are two examples from Conor McGregor's video:

Nod Up, Not Down

Nodding down, what most people do, *is a sign of submissiveness.*

Do nod down when you want to show yourself as non-threatening -ie.: meeting a woman at night-.
But don't over-nod down in neutral situations where there's no need for submissiveness and never in the presence of anyone trying to intimidate you.

Example:

Splayed Legs & Arms Swinging

Splayed legs and arms swinging are popular signs of confidence (Joe Navarro, 2009).

Conor McGregor does it a bit too theatrically.
James Bond has a less showy and more purposeful-looking walk.

Preview from our Power University-only videos:

#4. Ask For Investment

High power people get others do things for them.
It's a fundamental law of social power, tied to Social ROI.

It does not have to be done aggressively, but tasking others is the strongest signal of higher status.

If you never do, try asking more from the people around you.
As a guy who was in the habit of "always doing things on his own," I can tell you it's very likely you will find many who are glad to do something more for you.

Once you develop yourself to a position of value and power, then Machiavelli's quote applies:

> **Don't do yourself what you can let others do for you**

#5. Avoid Investment

By the same token, you should avoid any unreasonable investment that others demand of you.

For example, some weeks ago at a bar, a woman sitting with a man motioned me to go over to their table. What did she want?

It looked like she wanted me to join them for a drink. I was curious, but at the same time, beckoning someone you don't know is a major request to make.
Those kinds of requests, you never comply with because they are a form of *social shit tests:*

> **Girls**: (gesturing to go over) Can you please take our pictures?"
> **You:** (smirking) I wish I could but my hand shakes

Here is The Power Moves version of Machiavelli's rule:

> **Never do what others can do for themselves.**

#6. Impose Your Will

Dominance entails the possibility of imposing one's will over the environment and the people around, and it's divided into three categories:

- **Actual Power**
  Actual Power doesn't mean you will impose on others no matter what but it does mean you *could* impose your will. An enlightened monarch is as dominant -if not more- than an unjust despot. But the enlightened one can equally impose his will, or he wouldn't be a monarch.
- **Behavioral Power**
  You might not overpower your opponent but you *behave* as if you can always have your say and you're not afraid of getting your hands dirty. Even at the risk of losing out. It's actually more impressive when a weaker party steps up to the plate.
- **Mental Power**
  We human beings tend to act dominantly when we've got people on our side and when we feel our opinions will be accepted. But real domination starts within yourself. And it means you've got the mental power of sticking to your values and standing for what you believe is right, no matter the environment around you.

The actual power of imposing one's will can be the dark side, which gives the noun "dominance" a bad reputation.

It's then up to each one of us to dominate for good.

#7. Be The Center of Attention

You don't (necessarily) seek attention, but people seek *your* attention because your opinion matters.

Summary

Becoming more dominant is as much a matter of nonverbal cues as it's a matter of the beliefs and confidence underpinning those signals.

Dominance can be used for having a positive and net value impact on the world, or it can be used to dominate people out of selfishness.

The latter is when you should step in and stand up. And the more you learn about Power Moves, the more you'll be able to.

Try Hard Warning

McGregor's way of dominance is often a bit juvenile (also see: *the archetypes of dominance*).

Overplaying all these traits can easily make you come across as trying hard and a bit childish.

A stronger, more powerful way of showing dominance is that of the Godfather, for example. See here the *quieter dominance style: The Godfather*.

How to Look Dominant: 7 Moves From The Godfather

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for power moves to assert dominance?

You have come to the right place.

This article deep dives into one of the most dominant men on record and tells you exactly what makes him the most feared, respected, and revered man in the room.

Make sure to read until the end because I explain the different styles of dominance.

And now, here are the 7 power moves and body language cues The Godfather uses to assert dominance.

Contents

- Intro
  - 1. Slow Moves
  - 2. Cut People Off (With a Gesture)
  - 3. Pregnant Pauses
  - 4. Subtal Signals of No Respect
  - 5. Highlight Their Submission
  - 6. Touch Others
  - 7. Dominate With Intensity
- Showy Dominance VS Quiet Dominance
  - Showy Dominance
  - Quiet Dominance
  - Learn More
- Godfather Psychology

Intro

Dominant social moves refer to verbal and nonverbal cues that convey high status, high confidence, and

1. Slow Moves

Slow moves are a cornerstone of dominant men.

Robert Greene *The 48 Laws of Power* says that hurrying betrays a lack of control over yourself, and over time, being at the mercy of events outside your control. But dominant people are not at the mercy of anything, they are the masters of their own world. Hence, they don't rush but move slowly.

I pick a scene from The Goodfellas because it makes it crystal clear why dominant men move slowly: because they don't have to move for anybody.

> Paulie might have moved slow.
> But it was only because Paulie didn't have to move for anybody.

And right there and then, in just two words, lies the power of quiet dominance.

And it's exactly why quiet dominance, at the end of the day, always garners more respect and fear than the showy

type of dominance.

2. Cut People Off (With a Gesture)

Listening to someone intently without interrupting is a sign of respect.

Cutting people off is instead a sign of dominance and higher status. When you cut people off *without* even addressing them, you show total dominance.

The Godfather does it with Sonny in the movie.

3. Pregnant Pauses

The Godfather uses plenty of pauses between sentences.
And his pregnant pauses serve two functions:

1. Show that he's not hurried
2. Give more weight to what he's saying.

Notice how deeper it sinks in as he waits a full 2-3 seconds before finishing the sentence with "ever".

> Never take side against the family… Ever

4. Subtal Signals of No Respect

Disrespecting someone with impunity can be one of the dark ways of showing dominance.

The Godfather does it mostly in a subtle way. If giving full attention to someone is indeed a sign of respect, taking that attention away is a sign of disrespect -and dominance-.

For example:

1. Show Disattention

Interacting with someone while doing something else is a sign of disrespect.

Here the Godfather feels Bonasera is beneath him.
He shows it by playing with the cat while talking to him, thus *not* gifting him with undivided attention.

Vito will later move to higher forms of dominance such as finger-pointing, submission requests (hand-kissing) and then finally escorting him out.

2. Give Them Your Back

Giving someone our full frontal body is a sign we're intensely focused on them and can be a sign of respect.

On the other hand, giving them our back is the complete opposite: a sign we're not interested. And if they're talking to us and we're listening, it's a sign of disrespect.

The Godfather uses it a few times during the movie.

Here he is showing Fredo with his body language that he is disrespecting him and punishing him. And dishing out punishments with impunity is a sign of dominance.

Note:
this position can also be used to void the height advantage taller people might try to use on you when they want to dominate you (Pease & Pease).

3. Don't look at them

Similarly, you will also notice the Godfather often looks away.
While looking away can be a sign of shyness, it can also be a sign of dominance.

Looking at someone a lot builds indeed rapport and says "I like you". But looking at people less says *they* need to make the hard work of showing liking.

Joe Navarro says that while subordinates are supposed to look, dominant men can look wherever they want.
Thus, deciding where to look is a way of showing dominance and freely decide *not* to communicate liking.

Also, looking at people's eyes less often allows you to deliver stronger statements once you DO fixate your eyes on them. Add pregnant pauses, and you get to Godfather's intensity level:

> **Godfather**: Senator… (long pause before delivering his high-power line)

⚠⚠ Reminder for context: These behaviors are highly contextual, and they often damage relationships in normal social or professional environments.

5. Highlight Their Submission

This is a core concept of frame control: the more you 'thread expand' favorable dynamics, the more impact they have.

And the Godfather makes sure the people around him *do* act dominated in very obvious ways.
Most notably, the hand-kissing -"baciamo le mani"-.

Another major advantage of having obvious signs of submissiveness from the people around you is that we humans are major social creatures, which means that seeing someone submitting makes it much more likely we'll do the same (this is *the social proof principle*).

6. Touch Others

Quiet dominance doesn't mean passive or unassertive.

It means the intensity is restrained and under control, but it can always burst through when the situation calls for it. In real-world professional or social settings, physical escalation is most often inappropriate. But in certain settings it functions as a more obvious display of dominance, a phenomenon related to a dominance-approach to social status, and to bullying.

For example, the Godfather intervenes to 'shake up' Johnny Fontane when he breaks down and loses masculine respect.

7. Dominate With Intensity

Beneath the quiet surface, another dominant trait of the Godfather is his supreme Intensity.

As noticed by Nassim Taleb in *Antifragile* a man unleashing strong emotions when he's otherwise mostly calm and

controlled is all the more impressive.

Since most people live in a grey, repressed zone most of the time, raw intensity can scare many people off. This is not to be used randomly, but if properly calibrated to the situation, it can be appropriate and effective.
It's a 'dark side' of dominance (Machiavelli said that being feared is better than being liked by a king).

Here's an example: the intensity of Michael Corleone giving the kiss of death to his brother will give you the chills. Almost as much as it gave Fredo the chills in the famous 'kiss of death scene':

> You Broke My Heart. You Broke My Heart

Showy Dominance VS Quiet Dominance

You see, if you are looking for how to be dominant, you probably shouldn't just copy someone else's style but you should find something more akin to your current personality.

The Godfather has a calm and collected way of showing dominance.

And before starting let's highlight the difference between "showy dominance" –McGregor style for example- and quiet dominance, the Godfather style.

Showy Dominance

The showy form of dominance is brash, loud, and with hints of physical aggression -or actual physical aggression-.

This is the greener-in-the-tooth form of dominance.

It's usually -albeit not always- associated with younger age and more temperamental and impulsive behavior.
It's more likely to end up in trouble, to fall head over heels into traps, and even more likely to die.

In The Godfather, this is Sonny and, later, Vincent.

The aggressive style is often less powerful because it is more often associated with people who are not (yet) at the top or just recently got to the top.
Tim Grover puts it very nicely when he says that the loudest man in the room is the one with the most to prove.

> **The loudest man in the room is the one with the most to prove**

Quiet Dominance

The calmer way of showing dominance is more often associated with people who've been at the top for a while. Aside from natural temperament, it comes from 4 traits:

- **Little to Prove:** Most people know who's at the top, so they've got little to prove
- **Little to Gain:** Once at the top you have little incentives in rocking the boat
- **Experience:** The "been there done that" effect. It makes you calmer. And it's also sexy
- **Social Understanding**: A rational or intuitive grasp of the body language of power and dominance

In The Godfather, of course, this is Vito Corleone -Marlon Brando- and Michael Corleone -Al Pacino-.

For more information, read:

- **The archetypes of dominance**

Learn More

If you want to see more examples, look into:

- Signs of dominance
- How to sound dominant
- Alpha male body language
- Alpha male personality

Godfather Psychology

The Handbook of Psychopathy used Michael Corleone as an example of a 'successful psychopath' based on the subclinical model of successful psychopathy.

Benning, Venables, and Hall write:

> Having been raised in a family of individuals with salient psychopathic tendencies, Michael acquires a sense of structure and focus by joining the military during World War II despite his father's obtaining draft deferrals for him. As a consequence, Michael is organized and goal-oriented, yet emotionally detached and possessed of a deviously aggressive mind. His psychopathic tendencies are not expressed in a salient antisocial manner until he learns of an assassination attempt on his father, which prods him into a methodical campaign of murderous retribution.

The Godfather shows dominance in a multitude of ways.

And here's the corresponding full video:

The Like Switch: Tactics From An FBI Expert (Book Summary)

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Like Switch is *a social skills book* that teaches readers how to be liked and how to gain people's trust as quickly as possible.

Contents

- Exec Summary

- Summary
  - The Friend's Formula
  - Eye Contact
  - How to Approach Groups
  - Empathic statements
  - Building and testing for rapport
  - Signs of liars
  - Friend signals
  - Save people's face
  - Elicitation techniques
  - Compliments
  - Anger management
  - Real-Life Applications
  - CONS
- Review

Exec Summary

- **Use body language signs to be liked** (warm smile, head tilt, eyebrow flash)
- **Compliment and save people's faces** (use their own info to build a compliment; ask for clarification rather than highlighting mistakes; give options)
- **Use empathic statements to connect and dispel anger** (ie.: "I can see you're busy" / "you're upset because.. ")

Summary

About The Author:
Jack Schafer is a psychologist and former FBI special agent.
He is not one of those people who write only out of personal experience or only out of academic research: he's got a Ph.D. as well, so he leverages both knowledge and experience.

The Friend's Formula

Jack Schafer starts by telling us the golden formula to friendship, which is:

- **Friendship = proximity + frequency + duration + intensity**

He also tells us a story of how it's been used in history by secret agents who pretended to "bump into" their victim until they could eventually become friends.

My Note:
Albeit the stories are interesting, I find them not so useful to most people in normal life.
Planning "random meets" to be liked is similar to Robert Greene's approach in "*The Art of Seduction*".

Interesting, but impractical.

Most likely you won't have the time to plant yourself in someone's vicinity and "randomly bump into them" every day, day after day.

Urban Scowl

Some people have difficulty making friends because they wear the "urban scowl" on their faces.
This is especially true for people from big cities and/or rough neighborhoods.

Focus On The Enemies When Presenting

Jack Schafer tells us that we usually tend to look at, and address, people we already know.

While he was giving a presentation he noticed there were many who were not bought into his message because they weren't nodding or leaning in.

He resisted the temptation of addressing and looking at his pals who were already on board and focused instead on winning over the less friendly faces in the audience.

Territory Defense

People will leave a parking spot earlier if nobody's waiting.
But if there is someone else waiting, they must linger on purpose, just to show they are not giving in.

Eye Contact

Staring is a little bit like invading someone's space.

And holding eye contact for too long is considered threatening, but you can use this technique to intensify eye contact :

1. gaze for a second
2. then start turning your head giving the impression you're breaking eye contact
3. but keep locking eyes instead for one more second.

You should then end the stare with a smile. And if a smile is returned, that's *an indicator of interest.*

And if the receiver looks away (best down) and then looks at you again, you can safely approach.

Also, read:

- Cold approach VS warm approach

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

How to Approach Groups

At a gathering, look at people who are talking to each other with their feet pointed at the outside.

If their feet are eschewed they are instead willing to accept someone new.

It's the same for bigger groups: if the people's feet point at the center of the group it's a closed group.

If they are open in a wider circle with their feet pointing to an open space they want to accept new people.

If that's the case, then enter the group confidently: confident people are more liked.
Nod as other people are speaking, and then feel free to weigh in and say something during a pause: nobody likes interrupters.

And a little trick to look like old friends: when you see a person as part of a group you joined, later on, you can resume the conversation from where you left off and it'll feel like you know each other for a long time.

Also, read:

- How to approach women

> How to Approach a Girl: 9 Science-Based Steps

Empathic statements

Empathic statements show that you appreciate the situation of the people you are dealing with.

A good start for such an empathizer is usually "*so you..*".

Here's an example delivered to a waiter at a busy restaurant:

> **You**: you're super busy today, I don't know how you handle it

Or to your rebel teenager: "*you look like something is bothering you*" and if they aren't forthcoming add *"you don't wanna talk about it right now, when you feel the time is right, lemme know and we can talk"*.

Schafer also recommends not saying *"I know how you feel"* because it's likely to raise their walls.
It's indeed likely the other person will feel you're forcing a connection and/or push back by saying "*no you don't because you're not me*".

My Note:
I want to add here that it can actually be great to say "*I know how you feel*" *as long* you first dig deeper to make sure you *do* know how they feel. Then add "(I think) I know how you feel", and then tell your personal story of when you felt exactly the same. If you can do that, you have an extremely powerful connection there.

Building and testing for rapport

Jack Schafer shares a few indicators to test for rapport.

The idea is that you use them, and then test the reaction to gauge at what point you are in the relationship:

- Holding gaze
- Touching (the most non-intimate you can touch a woman is the small of her back and if no jerking reaction it's progressing well)
- Preening (doing it by yourself is a negative indicator if done for prolonged periods of time)
- Hair flip: when done without gaze or with broken gaze is a strong negative signal of lack of rapport (the bitch flip)
- Leaning: leaning backward (disinterest) VS forward (interest)
- Pacing and leading
- Open VS closed posture: palms open, uncrossed legs and arms, high rate of movement, head nodding, and head tilt are all positive

- Torso orientation (if they're looking at you but your torso and feet are pointing away they're not fully engaged)
- Barriers: placing barriers or removing them (example: placing a bag on her lap is a bad sign)
- Blinks: higher blink rate says uneasiness
- Eye closing: shutting eyes for 1-2 secs sub-communicates they don't wanna see you

Also notice that when someone starts aligning their body towards you the head turns first, then the shoulders, then the torso.

Signs of liars

If you ask someone a yes or no question and they start their reply with "*well…* " they are probably lying.

If you ask "*why should I believe you*" and they don't reply with "because it's the truth / because I did" or a version thereof, they're probably lying

Friend signals

Jack Schafer says the following are ways to signal you're friendly:

- **Eyebrow flash**

It lasts a split second, and you should do it before meeting someone. Make sure it's brief though, if it takes longer it's weird, there's a reason why it's called a "flash".

- **Head tilt (on the side)**

Jack Schafer says that the head tilt on the side is an indicator of friendliness. People who tilt their heads toward the speaker are perceived as more friendly, warm, and honest.

And he says you should use it more often when *approaching women* for the first time.

And if you are wondering if it's not too friendly, The Like Switch points out that it's mostly in business situations that you appear more powerful and *don't* tilt your head. But when making friends, do tilt your head :).

- **Smile**

Do smile when meeting someone first and learn to recognize and give a real smile. A real smile involves the muscles around the eyes. Without muscles around the eyes and without wrinkles, it's probably a fake smile.

Recognize an introvert/extrovert

Pause the middle sentence and the extrovert will jump in while the introvert will wait.

But when the introvert has rapport, he will also jump in.

Introverts are also uncomfortable with rush decisions: they can't be pressured into buying without making them uncomfortable.

Also, read:

- Quiet: The Power of Introverts

Save people's face

As a salesman don't say your product is better: it implies bad judgment from the customer.

By the same token, don't build "right or wrong situations".
Ask for advice instead and make them feel part of the decision-making process, which will make them feel good.

So if you found a mistake in your boss' work don't go there all happy and giddy thinking you can show how good you are.

Go there and say: *"I was reviewing your latest policy and noticed something. I'd like your advice on the matter*"

Give the impression of choice

When you are in the position to have to ask for something you can more easily avoid an escalation by giving the impression of choice.

Schafer tells us an amazing example.

He was on a plane and, as an FBI agent, was asked to offload a passenger from a plane.
He goes to sit next to the passenger and speaks slowly to him so that nobody else can hear.
And he gives him the impression he actually has two choices when he says:

> *The end game is you're getting off this plane.*
> *Now you have two options: I'm going to arrest you, handcuff you, and forcibly take you off the plane.*
> *Then you go to court, pay a lawyer, maybe even end up in prison.*
> *Or you can keep your dignity, go out by yourself, file a complaint and get on the next plane.*
> *Sir, I will allow you to make this decision. Take a few seconds to think about it.*
> *What do you want?*

Pure genius :).

Elicitation techniques

Jack Schaefer says the following are good techniques to get people to reveal information:

- **Statements to be corrected**

Asking many questions to someone you just met can seem nosy and invasive: so just blurt statements instead and they'll feel the need to correct you.

- **Quid pro quo**

Tell them where you work if you wanna know where they work.

- **3rd party perspective**

Rather than asking direct questions, say something happened to someone else and what they think about it.

My Note:
For example, you might ask your possible future girlfriend to gauge her fidelity habits:

> **You:** "Vanessa cheated on Mark the other night, crazy story eh?"
> **Her:** Oh that's terrible. Maybe she was drunk. Bad things can happen if you're drunk
> **You:** (thinking) How should I go about telling her I don't intend to settle down with her..

Compliments

Compliments are a well-known technique to influence people.
Here's how to use them:

At the beginning

Jack Schafer says that if it's very early in the interaction it's safer to let them set the stage for the compliment or you will sound insincere.

> **You**: "then you've been really busy lately"
> **Her**: "yeah I work 60h a week last month"
> **You**: "it takes a lot of dedication and determination to commit a project of that magnitude"
> **Her**: (thinking) "I sacrificed a lot to get that megaproject done and I did a good job if I may say so myself"

Now she's complimenting herself AND proving herself: a genius!

Note the guy didn't tell her she's dedicated and determined, which is dangerous at the beginning also because she might not think of herself like that.
Set up this way instead the comment didn't make any damage if she doesn't think of herself as determined and committed, but if she does, it furthered the relationship.

Elevate with a compliment

You can tell someone they remind you of someone famous/important (example: telling the Republican politician his ideas and passion reminded him of Ronald Reagan).

Lip purse: act before they speak

If you are telling something to someone and you see them pursuing their lips it means they disagree.

And you should act BEFORE they have a chance to voice their concerns, ESPECIALLY if it's in public.
If they speak, it becomes your idea against their idea.
But If you change their mind before they speak, you are still in time to avoid that dynamic.

Example:
Jack Schafer is giving a presentation and sees the boss pursing his lips.
He says

> boss, I bet you're thinking this idea isn't going to work, but lemme explain to you why it will

Anger management

If someone is fuming, begin with an empathic statement to let them vent. Your goal is to get to the root cause of the issue.

Continue constructing empathic statements until the anger is dissipated, like so:

> **Boss**:*"I expected you to have the report by this morning, your behavior is unacceptable"*
> **You**:*"I couldn't complete the report because I didn't receive the data from the sales team, they said they'd provide it within an hour"*
> **Boss**: *"that's no excuse, you should have gone there and get it, you knew how important it was, I have a meeting with the client this afternoon" (reject the explanation)*
> **You**: *"you're upset because the client is expecting the report this afternoon"* (empathic statement)
> **Boss**: *"yeah, it makes me look bad"*
> **You**: *"you're disappointed because you expected me to have the report done this morning"*
> **Boss**: *"exactly, that's an understatement" (vented completed, now starts being more manageable)*
> **You**:*"I will get the report now and get it to you before the meeting"*
> **Boss**; *"ok, see what you can do"*

Notice these statements sound patronizing to not angry people, but angry people are in fight or flight mode and won't notice them as so.

Another example:

Jack Schafer goes home and expects a warm hug and a kiss but the wife instead starts venting.

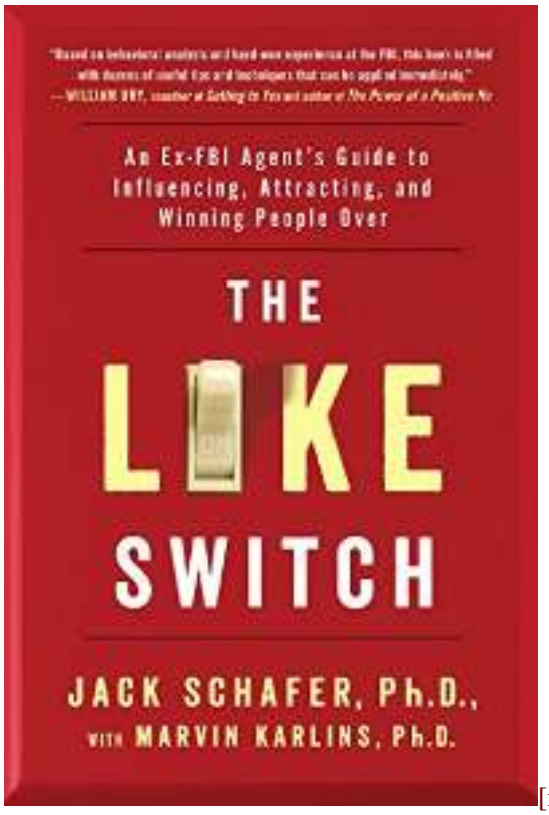
> **Wife**: *"it's about time you got home, we're going crazy because you haven't been here to help with the kids"*
> A simple empathic statement would have been "so you're angry" but he used a sophisticated one to address the root cause:
> **Jack**: "*you feel overwhelmed because I haven't been home to help with the kids"*
> **Wife**: *"I used to go every Wednesday night with my friend to take a break and talk to some adults for a change"*
> A simple empathic statement would have been "you miss going out with your friends", but better:
> **Jack**: *"you value the time you spend with your friends because it gives you a chance to take a break from the kids"*

MOVING TO PRESUMPTIVE STATEMENTS

> **Jack**: *"why don't I take the kids to my mom and we go to a nice restaurant, you deserve it"* (this is the presumptive statement)
> **Wife**: "you're not getting off that easy mister" (rejecting the presumptive statement)

BACK TO EMPATHIC TO BREAK ANGER CYCLE – she isn't done venting

> **Jack:** *"so you think one night out is not enough to make up for the work you did while I was gone"?* (empathic statement, re-entering breaking the anger cycle)



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Real-Life Applications

I would say the best takeaways for you are:

- **Empathic statements –** make these part of your normal repertoire: guaranteed liking
- **Save People Face –** this is HUGE. It's a hallmark of weak egos to use others' mistakes to raise their value. We call this smart approach "*power protecting*" on TPM
- **Build and Test Rapport –** start assessing where you stand and your interpersonal skills will skyrocket

CONS

Great book, but since it's all about being liked, this note is mandatory:

- **Don't Become People Pleasing**

The Like Switch is all about being a more likable person (similar to *How to Win Friends*).
And that's a HUUUGE skill to have.
Just don't make the mistake of going overboard with it and becoming a people pleaser.
People don't respect too much people-pleasers, and they can easily come across as fake, too.

- **The "I know you would do the same for me" game**

When you do someone a favor and they thank you for it, the author recommends telling them that "you know they would do the same for you".
I think that's a bit gamey and it can be quite annoying.

We discussed this in the TPM's community, see it here:

- **Why "I know you'd do the same for me is gamey"**

Review

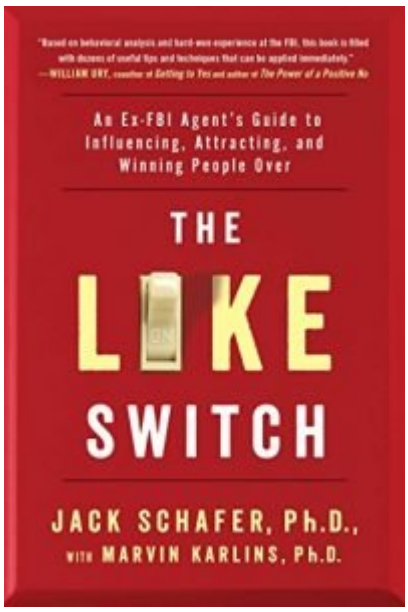
"*The Like Switch*" is a good book on social skills and techniques.

It doesn't have much research and it's built to deliver status, respect, or attraction like our material is.
But it's written by a guy who's experienced with people, and we tend to trust experience as much as we trust good research.

Overall, great book.

Get The Like Switch on Amazon.

The Like Switch: 10 Tactics From FBI Expert (Book Summary)



The Like Switch is a fantastic resource for getting better with people -and getting what you want from people-

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/like-switch/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

25 Ways To Win With People by John Maxwell: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

25 Ways to Win With People by John Maxwell teaches readers how to build rapport, uplift others, and make people feel valued.

TPM Strategic Note: good starting point, but you must add power & strategy to achieve advanced results
Maxwell's 25 "ways" are effective because they leverage fundamental human psychological needs. While Maxwell presents these as "being a good person," at TPM, we recognize these as **Social Lubricants** (communion), more about making friends and gaining acceptance than gaining status, power, or attraction (agency). So use these to bond, but remember to add power and strategy to achieve goals (see: power vs. social skills).

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- Full Summary
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  - The 30-Second Rule
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  - Create a Memory and Revisit It Often
  - Compliment In Front Of Other People
  - Give Reputation to Uphold
  - Encourage their Dreams
  - Pass the Credit on to Others
  - Share a Secret With Someone
  - Do For Others What They Can't Do For Themselves
  - Find the Keys to Their Hearts
  - Be the First to Help
  - Remember a Person's Story
  - Point Out People's Strengths
- Real-Life Application
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Exec Summary

- **Start With Yourself**: to help greatly, become a high-quality man first
- **Listen to their dreams**, encourage their dreams, and help them with their dreams
- **Share a secret** -or personal details- with someone you trust to bond more closely **<— ⍰⍰♂ TPM Note:** don't over-share or share a vulnerability that can be used against you before you first know they're trustworthy!

Full Summary

About the Author:
John Maxwell is a pastor, public speaker, and best-selling author.

He sold millions of books and among his most popular are leadership texts such as "*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*"

Start With Yourself

I love that John Maxwell leads with "start with yourself".

You can't give what you don't have and your relationships will only be as healthy as you are. So to make the people around you feel great, become a great human being first.
This is basically one of the overarching tenets of my life.

John Maxwell suggests solving as many problems in your life first and looking for improvement areas in yourself first.

> **Your relationships will only be as healthy as you are**

The 30-Second Rule

In the first 30 seconds you're in a conversation with someone, tell them something encouraging.

Once it becomes a habit for you people will light up when you walk into any room.

And here's a nice way to make it a habit: open your calendar every day, look at the people you will meet during the day, and plan something encouraging to say.

It can be something they've done for you that you thought was great or amazing, or that you are really thankful for it.
Or something they have recently done well, or something they achieved.

Let People Know You Need Them

People like to feel needed and helpful.

Think right now in your life who could be able to help you, and go tell them how much it would mean for you.

Create a Memory and Revisit It Often

Make something memorable with the people around you to create memories. Then immortalize those moments with pics, show them the pictures, and give them the pictures.

Then relive those stories together, talk about them, and laugh about them. And ask them to tell those stories.

Compliment In Front Of Other People

A compliment is fantastic to make people feel great, but a compliment in front of others is even more powerful. And it's super helpful so that people keep behaving in line with that compliment, ie.: uphold that compliment:

Give Reputation to Uphold

Giving a reputation to uphold leverages the commitment and consistency principle (Cialdini) and what in psychology is called the '**Pygmalion Effect**'.

For example, by publicly labeling someone as 'the most reliable person on the team,' you provide the motivation to work twice as hard to maintain that identity. It is a powerful tool for behavior modification.

John Maxwell says that a great way to do it is to actually find a nickname for the person that will embody a quality they possess.

And then use that nickname or repeat their quality often so that it will get associated with them.

Encourage their Dreams

Ask people to share their dreams with you, ask what challenges they'll need to overcome and at that point offer your help or give some helpful tips.

My note:
I find this extremely powerful indeed.
If you do it well it's a strong connection guaranteed and people will love you. Only do it though with the ones you really wanna connect deeply. It's also a good technique for men to use with women.

Pass the Credit on to Others

Contrary to Robert Greene's 'laws' on 'taking credit', Maxwell recommends *giving* credit.

We agree with Maxwell here: to bond with others, especially if outside of competitive settings, it's better to *give* than to take. This is especially true for leaders who want to encourage the team to go the extra mile.

Share a Secret With Someone

When you share a secret with someone it will make them feel special and closer to you.

You can make it even more powerful if you add that you only shared your secret because you trust them.

Do For Others What They Can't Do For Themselves

Helping others reach their goals will cement your relationship.

And if you do so in a way they couldn't have done by themselves, they will be even more thankful to you.

Find the Keys to Their Hearts

What do they dream, fear, love, or believe in?

Find out and establish some common ground on those key values.

Be the First to Help

Serving someone first in their time of need will make you remembered forever.

And I fully support this one: guaranteed you will never forget the people who tendered their hand when nobody else did.

Remember a Person's Story

Asking a person's story says "you could be special", remembering says "you are special", reminding him the story says "you are special to me", and repeating to someone else says "you should be special to them".

The result?

You become special to the person sharing the story with you.

I do keep a Word file with notes on important people in my life.

Point Out People's Strengths

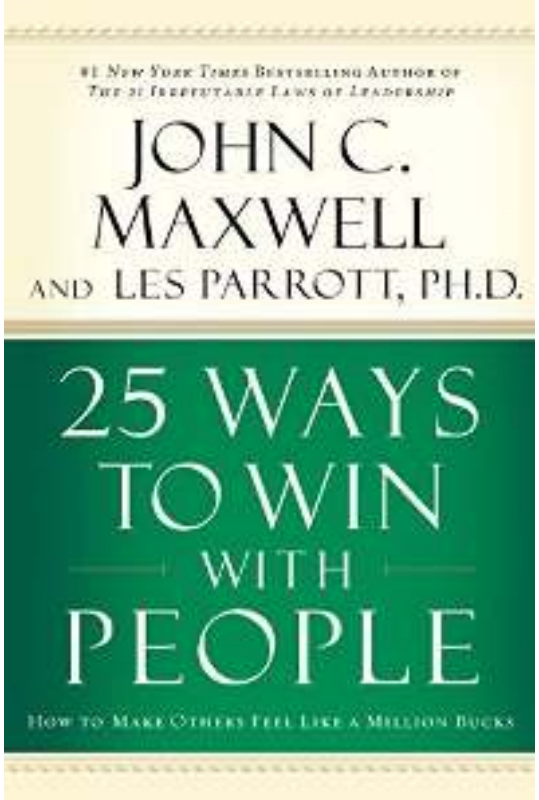
Everyone has some special ability.

Find it and point it out to them.

Real-Life Application

The two major takeaways from "*25 Ways to Win With People*" for me are:

- Start With Yourself: become a great human being to help greatly
- Care About People: If you care about people, most of all the "rules" will come natural



CONS

Doesn't cover crucial areas for both success and self-defense, including:

- **Positive dominance**, combining both dominance and warmth to secure leadership, status, or attraction
- **'Darker' aspects of socialization** necessary for self-defense, like manipulation, dark psychology, or Machiavellianism. These are crucial areas to succeed
- **Effective cooperation**, setting up relationships for win-win, ensuring you also gain and don't just give (you don't want to be a sucker giving while others just take)

Review

25 Ways to Win With People is an easy, pleasant, and useful read with several valid concepts to help readers become more effective at making friends and developing connections.

It's 'sanitized though', not acknowledging that not everyone is good, that relationships are give and take and not just giving, and that 'winning with people' sometimes also means achieving goals that require strategy, confidence, and power.
In that sense, it's a good book, but part of naive self-help.

Read:

- Best social skills books (and advanced books)
- Best social skills courses
- TPM Laws for Winning With People

> The 5 Laws of Social Success: Smart Power, For Smart Cooperation

Get Anyone to Do Anything: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Get Anyone to Do Anything is a book on social skills that teaches readers the "laws of interpersonal relationships" that will help them to influence people.

TPM Take: Poor title, but some good insights
Lieberman is a classic example of the **Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™**. He bundles high-level strategic insights (like his power-restoration model for forgiveness) with entry-level pop-psychology 'laws model' to ensure the book appeals to the mass market. At TPM, we strip the filler to focus on the 20% of his work that actually provides a tactical edge

Contents

- Bullet Summary

- Summary
  - 1. The Strategic Floor: 8 Laws of Basic Liking
  - 2. How to get people to find you attractive
  - 3. Spot the lies
  - 4. Take control of the interaction
  - 5. Regain trust and make others forgive you
  - 6. When someone's being rude stick with 'you'
  - Power-protect to give strong criticism
  - Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- To make people forgive you, give them back power saying you accept their decision over you
- When someone's being rude keep it about them. *They* are having a bad day, don't give them power over you
- Tell people a piece of false news to see if they're lying: quick answer, they're honest; delayed answer, lying

Summary

David Lieberman says that the core of each relationship, and the core of getting people to do something for you, is getting them to like you.

It doesn't happen randomly whether people like you or not, but there are 9 laws that make it happen.

1. The Strategic Floor: 8 Laws of Basic Liking

In *Get Anyone to Do Anything*, Lieberman uses the popular 'laws format' like Robert Greene does in *The 48 Laws of Power* and outlines several "laws" of attraction.
While these are foundational for social beginners, for the TPM strategist, they represent the baseline of social exchange:

- **Law of Association:** People link your presence to their current emotional state. To win, anchor yourself to their peaks (vacations, wins) and minimize presence during their troughs (illness, stress).

- **Law of Repeat Exposure:** Familiarity breeds comfort. Consistent, non-threatening interaction naturally lowers defensive barriers, provided the initial impression wasn't "red-level" negative.
- **Law of Reciprocal Affection:** Humans are socially "lazy"; we tend to like people who have already done the work of liking us first. Signaling respect often triggers a mirror response.
- **Law of Similarity:** We possess an evolutionary bias toward the familiar. We trust those who share our background, values, or niche interests.
- **Law of Appearances (Mirroring):** This is the physical extension of similarity. Subtly matching gestures, tempo, and posture creates a "subconscious echo" that builds rapid rapport.
- **Law of Favors (The Benjamin Franklin Effect):** Counter-intuitively, asking for a small favor can make someone like you *more* than if you did one for them. It forces them to justify their effort by deciding you must be worth the help.
- **Law of Self-Deprecating Vulnerability:** Perfection is intimidating and socially isolating. High-status individuals use a "sprinkling" of clumsiness or admitting small flaws to appear human and relatable.
- **Law of Positivity:** While "misery loves company," winners follow the light. People will wallow with miserable friends but will pivot to follow anyone who provides an exit strategy through a positive frame.

TPM Note: Remember to add power and strategy
If you rely solely on these, you risk becoming a "people pleaser." True social success that gives you status, respect and attraction requires you to balance and calibrate these laws with positive dominance, strong body language, and good strategy.

See:

- Social skills vs. Power skills

> Social Skills vs Power Skills: Why Likability Alone Won't Get You Ahead

2. How to get people to find you attractive

David Lieberman also goes into seduction:

1. Do emotionally arousing activities

When our bodies produce adrenaline attraction and sexual desire skyrocket.

scary movies, amusement parks, or even physical exercise release adrenaline which will be passed on to the people around.

Very interestingly David Lieberman says that in couples where one of the two is visibly more handsome, chances are they met in circumstances where arousal was high.

2. Appear young

Appearing young boosts mate value.

TPM Note: This tactic really depends on age and context
Young folks who look young may not need to behave young, and this approach generally works more for women than for men.

3. Gaze into people's eyes

Holding eye contact helps to build rapport and liking.

4. Low self-esteem is a risk factor

Very interestingly, David Lieberman says that if someone's self-esteem is temporarily low they'll find you more attractive.

My Note: PUA techniques are based on this, it may work, but it comes from a lower value frame
Early pick-up artists use tactics like 'the neg' to try and lower women's self-esteem (see "The Game" and "The Mystery Method"). But, just like 'passing shit-test mindset', it comes from the frame of a man who is lower value, instead of a high-value man's frame.

3. Spot the lies

David Lieberman says that to recognize lies we can create a conundrum for them.

For example, ask them if they have been to the movies.

Once they say "yes", tell them "I heard the traffic was all backed up because of a car crash".

Now they're in a conundrum: they weren't really at the movies, should they confirm or deny?

If they hesitate, they're likely lying. And they'll probably agree with what you said.

TPM Note: It's a good tactic, but NOT a surefire way to spot a lie
Research suggests that there is no single surefire way to spot a liar. Reading characters is a foundational skill for ambitious men, but it needs more than a few tells and cues.

4. Take control of the interaction

To get people to do what you want:

1. Lead and expect others will follow

People will do what you expect them to do. Example: start walking expecting they'll come

2. Break down your requests into smaller steps

The things we like, we internalize them in one or two steps.

Hence to encourage you to do something, make the steps smaller. To encourage not to do something, make it a long list.

3. Confirm their decision

To make it more likely someone will follow up on what you decided and confirm the decision.

For example, if they say they'll come Saturday, first get them to repeat it by saying

> "*you really mean it, are you serious*",

then move to a time frame similar to:

> "*great, what time, how long might it take*".

Finally, you might add you'll change your plans to accommodate them, and add how helpful it'll be.

For example:

> *awesome, I will cance my other appointment and I will see you Thursday then*

My Note: this is 'frame cementing', but it must be calibrated
I wouldn't do this early in dating as it signals that they are already a high priority for you and you might not want to show all your cards too soon.

Learn more:

- Frame control: an overview
- Frame control techniques

5. Regain trust and make others forgive you

You need to follow different techniques depending on whether you were responsible or not.

- **Misdeeds outside of your control:**

Show people it was outside of your control AND add you took steps but it was just too much.

Example:

> *I did leave early as I knew it was important for you and there might have been traffic, but the traffic was waaaay worst than it usually is and I could have anticipated*

Make your apology sincere and specific and you'll be fine.

- **Misdeed within your control:**

David Lieberman says that the key to forgiveness lies in restoring balance in the relationship

if you hurt someone's feelings by your own volition "sorry" is not enough because it doesn't give back dignity. Indeed you need to give the person their power back and bring them back to the psychological level existing before your misdeed took place.

so you do:

1. Apologies, responsibility, and sincerity. apologize and take full responsibility: shifting blame will make you look weak and will exasperate things. Also, if you shift blame, only the person to blame will have the power back to your partner: not good, because *you* want to be the one who will fix this.
2. Apologies for your behavior clearly. Just say: "I am sorry"
3. Make sure your sincerity shines through
4. Remorse. You give the power back by giving your partner the authority of punishment. "*I know what I did was wrong, you have every right to be angry and I'm willing to accept responsibility for my actions*"
5. Explain how the circumstances which happened will never happen again, a total anomaly. This is the WHY, a plausible explanation.

BUT don't defend yourself:

6. Say it was fear "*I feared because things were going so well*" or "*I feared that you would fire me*" or *"I lied because I feared you would hate me if you found out the truth*"
7. Show that your actions didn't produce anything good. "*I felt guilty*" "*the sex was lousy, I felt so miserable and filled with guilt afterward*"

This is a valuable insight into interpersonal power dynamics and it's based on the re-empowering principle of respecting others ('power protecting' in TPM's sytem).

6. When someone's being rude stick with 'you'

Don't react right away annoyed like "how dare you talk to me like that".

When you do that, you are giving a lot of power to him to make you feel angry and you are taking over his problem.

And if you use the word "I" it becomes a problem between you two. By using the word "you", you keep the issue in his court.

Try saying:

> "*you seem to be having a rough day*"

or

> "*this seems to have upset you*".

Some more reading for you on the topic:

- When someone makes you wait
- When someone pretends they don't remember you
- Dealing with a bad boss

Or watch:

Power-protect to give strong criticism

David Lieberman says that the key to giving criticism is to protect your ego.

Here's how you do it:

- Give the criticism while you are removed from the environment (example: don't criticize love-making right after making love)
- Mix it with a compliment
- You criticize the *act*, *not* the person
- Approach it as if they're not doing it willingly: don't assume or insinuate they're doing it on purpose
- Share your responsibility if you can (you and him against this thing) example "I should have been more specific when.. "

Also, read:

- **How to power protect**

My note:
Ideally, you want to surround yourself with people who can take the harshest criticism because they decoupled their ego from being good. Then, as Ray Dalio recommends, you can experience full transparency.

Find out how values are met

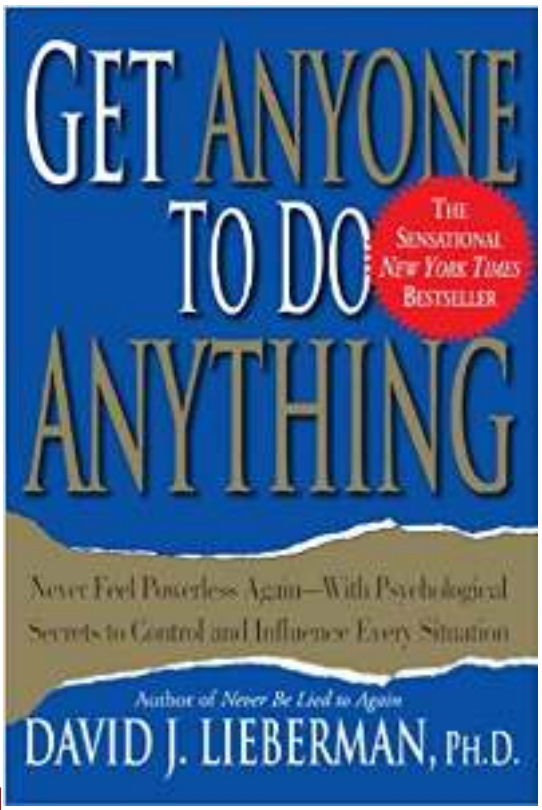
Once you find out the value of people always ask "how do you know when you are X?" "how do you when you have achieved Y?"

It will give you a much bigger understanding of the person.

Broaden definitions

To make someone do something they never did before, broaden the definition of what's permissible. People believe things in context, not in isolation, so re-frame the whole "permissible" field.

For example, a threesome can become something she does for you to make you happy and at no cost to her.

[image] 

Real-Life Applications

Get Anyone to Do Anything is all about practical applications. I think two things that can add the most value to you are:

- Give people the power to make them forgive when you've done something wrong
- "giving power back" when you did something wrong is critical in romantic relationships
- When someone is being rude don't get involved in "I VS You" but keep it about them, otherwise you give them power over you

Review

Despite the gimmicky title, "*Get Anyone to Do Anything*" shares valid foundational principles of social skills and mixes several more advanced insights and tips.

Read more basics on social power:

- Best social skills books (and courses)
- Advanced social skills books
- Basics of interpersonal power

> Interpersonal Power Dynamics: The Traffic Light Sytem for Mastering Status & Respect

The 5 Essential People Skills: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*The 5 Essential People Skills*" states that *assertiveness* is the meta-skill of all communication skills, and helps readers develop their assertiveness through examples and exercises.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Summary
  - Assertiveness (the meta-skill)
  - Assertive curiosity
  - Rewards
  - CONS
- Review

Exec Summary

- 5 essential people skills are:
  - rapport building
  - curiosity
  - communication
  - ambition
  - conflict resolution
- Assertiveness is the core skill that fuels all positive interpersonal relationships

Summary

About The Author: The Dale Carnegie training is an institution focused on delivering personal and corporate training on communication and interpersonal skills.

Assertiveness (the meta-skill)

Dale Carnegie Training says that assertiveness is the ability to have people respond attentively and positively, and it is at the core of the five essential people skills.

Assertiveness consists of being able to:

- Resist the dominance attempts of aggressive people
- Stand up for one's beliefs
- Maintain control when it matters

Once you will master assertiveness you will be both less stressed and freer.

3-part assertion message

The 5 Essential People Skills teaches us that an assertive message contains 3 major parts:

1. describe and summarize the fact of the situation
2. express your thoughts and feelings

3. clearly state your want and needs (including benefits to the other party)

This formula allows you to express your concerns without being personally aggressive.
It's simple but it takes practice and self-control.

Ask yourself: how can you express your message more clearly, be more specific and avoid being drawn off course?

Example scenario 1

A designer in your team is not keeping the deadline and it's causing some issues with the client.

> **You**: I remember talking about how long it would take to accomplish the logo design. We agreed it would take one week. It's now two weeks and the job is not yet done

Notice how the sentence is all about objective facts. There are no worries mentioned or accusations, which will come in the second part:

> **You**: when we are this late on a project it creates problems with the customer and that also translates into stress for us. I got concerned and I had to communicate that concern to you

In the third part, the changes that need to take place are highlighted.

> **You**: I want to make it very clear that when we set a deadline that deadline has to be met. I think that you set unrealistic timelines for yourself.
> Maybe you've done to give me the impression you are a really fast worker.
> But that's not what I'm going to be thinking if the deadline is impossible to meet

So far the talk was only about the problem that needs to be solved. Remember whenever possible in any assertive dialogue it's important to include benefits for the person you're speaking with.

> **You**: In the future when we talk about deadlines it will be better to give yourself a little bit more time rather than less. I'm sure that will make your life easier.
> And then when you complete the work in time, or maybe even earlier, the client will be happy and I will be happy.

Notice that when the manager talks about her feelings they are work-related. She doesn't say "you're trying to annoy me" or "I'm really angry about this".

Going down the personal feeling route would have opened the door for the employee to start verbalizing his own emotional responses or to start thinking about them and taking the whole conversation off course.

And if the employee disagreed:

If they are being inflexible, do the same and repeat your message over and over:

"I didn't create an unrealistic deadline"
"in the future, I want you to give yourself more time"

"tell the client to calm down"
"in the future, I want you to give yourself more time"

Example scenario 2:

Imagine you just finished a project at work, everyone made a good job, including you and the project went well.

You find out Jack, a team member who had done a good job but nothing more than anyone else was singled out by your boss and invited for a special reward.

How would you feel?

An aggressive person would feel hostility towards the boss and Jack. There would be angry feelings and possibly harsh words.
A passive person would refuse that anything questionable had taken place and would not do anything.

Here's the thing though, extremes are child-like, and in business, the person who acts the most grown-up comes out best.

The assertive response is then between the two extremes.

The first step is knowing how you really feel and knowing how to express those feelings in an adult, constructive way.

If you bring up your feelings by saying "*I did just as much work and now Jack gets all the credit*" you sound like you're whining. Even if you are actually hurt it sounds like you're whining.

An assertive approach when speaking to your boss would sound more like this:

> **You**: I understand you're happy with Jack's work and I'm glad about it because he delivered some important parts.
> But there's one thing concerning me, and that's this was a group effort and all of us taking part devoted a significant amount of time and did a good job, including me.
> When the time comes for my performance review, I want to make sure I get the same recognition that Jack did.

Example scenario 3

To an under-performing worker:

> **You**: Last months you did some amazing work, but lately things seem to have slow down a little.
> I know how that can happen as it happens to me too.
> Can you think of anything that might have caused those changes?

It starts with a compliment, then it creates empathy. And the emphasis is on what happened rather than an underlying issue.

Example 4: Questions rather than orders

If one says "*I wanna see a list of all the calls you make before noon every day"* the defenses will go up, normally.

A more assertive way would be:

> **You**: In my work I noticed that a good time management really increases goes hand in hand with my productivity.
> And when I track how I'm using my time I tend to get much better results.
> Did you try keeping a log of how you're using your time?
> Why don't you try that for a couple days. If you want, we can look over at it together and see what it tells us.

This is assertiveness in action. There's an implied reprimand BUT it's surrounded by empathy and encouragement.

Instead of feeling threated people will feel

Follow up with praise on any improvement. Now they have a reputation to live up to.

End positive

Don't ever allow a discussion to end on a negative note. Especially if the criticism was well justified!

Always allow people to save face and give them a way to retreat.

Bring the issue to the surface

Always bring the issue to the surface!

If someone is angry and wants to push back they pretend all is good, they will spread wildfire around you rather than in your face.

So you always have to bring the issue to the surface, no matter how harsh that might sound. Your challenge then is not being drawn into it, but never avoid bringing the issue up because you're afraid of high emotions.

If people push back

The Dale Carnegie Training says that if someone cries, be sympathetic but don't back down.

If they deny everything they are saying, say something like this:

> **You**: I told you how things look to me, if I'm wrong, I'm sorry, but if my perception is accurate I stand by what I said

When people apologize incessantly say that apologies are not necessary, at least not more than once.
And then reassert what you already said.

Personality types: alpha dogs (hard drivers)

The Dale Carnegie Training goes a bit into personality types as well.

The Alpha Dogs see the world as a zero-sum game, the business relationship as a hierarchy that they are determined to climb and do their best to be one rung above you on the corporate ladder.

Every occasion is an opportunity for dominance and intimidation.

It's not easy building rapport with them especially if they are at the same level or above.
Alpha dogs are based on ego needs.

They either believe they're inferior or they sincerely believe in their superiority.
So you basically play their ego by making them feel important. The hard part is keeping *your* ego needs out of the encounters.

The 5 Essential People Skills then details a fantastic example of how a CEO will smoothly put an alpha dog back in his place and I invite you to get the book to check it out.

Personality types: secret agents

They don't want the top post but they like maneuvering from behind the curtains.

They don't talk much because they want to keep all the information for themselves to maximize their power.

The approach is to draw them out and create enough trust and ask questions making sure that you want to aim for the top and will depend on him.

Also, check out:

- **The archetypes of office politics players**

Assertive curiosity

Assertive listening means empathy: feeling what they are feeling.

The Dale Carnegie Training gives a great tip: don't guess when someone is talking to you, but plainly listen.

If they are saying "I like working here" stop yourself from thinking they're lying and are trying to cover up: that's guesswork, not listening.

Assertive listening also means asserting curiosity to *yourself*.
It's normal losing attention, but assertive listeners get back on track and ask clarifying questions and make sure both parties are on the same page.

Rewards

The 5 Essential People Skills then goes into intrinsic motivation and external rewards, which is basically the main theory standing behind Drive by Daniel Pink.

The basic idea is that rewards can kill intrinsic motivation and lower the quality of the output, especially in the long run and especially for creative work

The difference between "*I'm giving you this reward because I personally appreciate your work"* and *"you're getting this reward because you've met certain standards*" is that the former is personal and human interaction.

It's an example of assertive people skills.
It ignites a certain ambition in both the speaker and the receiver. The second is a type of reward that can destroy motivation.

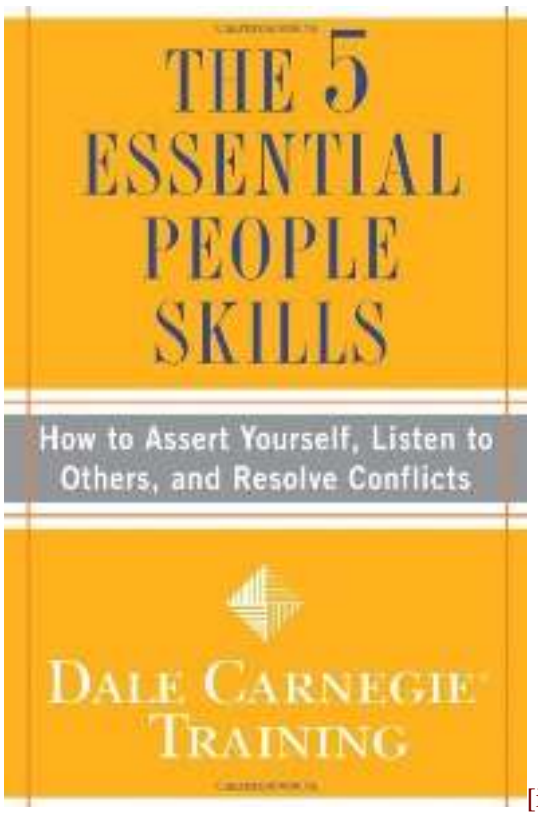
The negative drawbacks of rewards to motivation can be had by playing down the significance of these rewards and not using them in a controlling way.

What I found interesting though is that praise works exactly the same way.

Praise

The Dale Carnegie Training says that praise is similar to financial rewards when it feels controlling.

People who were told "good job you're doing just what you're supposed to be doing" were no more motivated than those who received just quantitative feedback.



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CONS

Random Self-Improvement Book
The 5 Essential Skills are not even the most important skills you should have and the book ends up talking more about assertiveness than anything else. It feels like a random title applied to a generic “self-improvement” book.

Review

I would not recommend *The 5 Essential People Skills* because of the 5 skills it talks about. I *do* recommend the book though if you’re lacking in assertiveness as it will add value for you in two ways:

- The focus is on assertiveness. Assertiveness really is a key quality for an empowered life
- The examples. We don’t learn so much with descriptions. We learn with pictures and examples. And the dialogue examples are very powerful

How to Make Someone Love You Forever in 90 Minutes or Less: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*How to Make Someone Love You Forever in 90 Minutes Or Less*" is a *dating book for men* teaching readers how to get women to fall in love with them.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Summary
  - Get early "me too moments"
  - Approach example
- CONS
- Review

Exec Summary

- Love is about emotional progression
- Find out as many "me too" moments at the beginning of the conversation as possible

Summary

About The Author: Nicholas Boothman is an author of people skills books. He seems to focus on super fast connection as his next title is "How to Make Someone Love in 90 Seconds or Less"

I guess if he writes another book we will all learn how to make people love us without even saying hi :).

Get early "me too moments"

Nicholas Boothman says that love is an emotional progression.

Early on it's important to find out the commonalities and letting your speaking partner open up.

Once people open up and you underline the commonalities with a sprinkling of "me too" moments -which the author suggests to actually blurt it out, then people will get the impression of being soulmates.

My note:
If you're a man "me too" will slot you as the follower.
If you're a woman, it might indeed make the man feel connected and can help speed up the romance progression.
Don't exaggerate though or you come across as insincerely forcing a connection and a bit too easy to get.

Also, read:

- **How to bond and connect**

> How to Build Deep Emotional Connection

Approach example

The approach example was one of my favorite moments in the book.

A man who later recounted the story to the author was on a train when he heard two women speaking.

He wanted to approach one of them. He goes to the seat next to them and with a calm voice tells the friend of the woman he likes:

> ***Him**: "hi, excuse me"*
> then starts addressing the woman he's interested in with a "you and I" gesture as he speaks
> ***Him**: "hello, do you mind if I say something, something personal"*
> ***Her**: "I'm not sure"*
> ***Him**: "as we've been riding in the train the last half hour and you were chatting with your friend I couldn't help but overhearing you"*
> (pause for attention).
> ***Him**: "And I wanted to say, you have the most beautiful voice"*
> ***Her**: "Thank you"*
> ***Him**: "I find it very attractive"*
> (pause)
> ***Him**: "I was wondering what you would say if I invited you out for lunch"* (nodding)
> ***Her**: "I don't think so but I'm very flattered"* (seemed genuinely amused)
> ***Him**: "I'll tell you what, here's my business card, I'm going back to NY on Wednesday (…) think about it and when it's appropriate give me a call, or if you change your mind you can email me tonight and maybe we can pencil a lunch tomorrow, your choice"*
> Smiled, turned to the journalist and said "thanks".
> Then got up and left the train

Nicholas Boothman says that what was good about the approach is that he paced the ongoing reality to make her feel relaxed, drawing attention to 3 obvious true things you agree with. i.e.:

- they were on a train
- moving along for 30 mins
- was lost in conversation

He used subtle body language nodding his head.

When suggesting she should call him once ready, he was giving suggestions, and the secret is to let those parts stand out from the rest of the conversation by changing the tone of voice and body language.

He also kept looking at her eyes while being physically still, so she could *fully focus on his voice*.

Also, read:

- **How to approach a girl**
- **Cold approach VS social circle**[image]

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

CONS

Little Practical Application
I didn't find that many recommendations that I would personally put to use

Basic
How to "Make Someone Love You Forever in 90 Minutes" or Less seems more targeted to the social beginners

Click Bait Title
I find the clickbait title quite a bit annoying.
Unluckily, it's very popular and it even seems to work. Take for example *Fuck Him, The Power of The Pussy* or *The Subtle Art of Not Giving A Fuck*.

Review

"How to Make Someone Love You in 90 Minutes or Less" sets very high expectations with that title. Whether or not it delivers, it's a different question.

Also, see:

- **The best social skills books**
- **Best dating advice resources for men**

The Art of Mingling: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Art of Mingling (2006) teaches readers how to mingle effective, sharing some (Machiavellian) tips to join groups, dropping a boring speaking partner, or talk to the host of the party you've just crashed.

TPM Strategic Audit: This text is audited as a manual on Social Maneuvering
While "mingling" can seem trivial and more communal than agentic, the author shares valuable strategies to control conversational flow, neutralize arrogant social climbers, and exit low-value interactions. It also shares the mindsets of 'not so genuine' minglers and social climbers to help you spot quality men and women. These are important aspects of Social Power Intelligence.

Contents

- Quick Tips
- Summary
  - Some Mingling Tips
  - Dealing With Arrogant People
  - Interviewing mode for the shy ones
  - Changing the subject
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Quick Tips

- Have fun: mingling is its own reward
- Keep moving
- Top minglers are great at managing the conversational flow (and have no hang-ups about white-lying)

Summary

Jeanne Martinet says, first of all, don't worry if you're anxious: many people in the room feel as lost as you are as soon as they walk in.

And she has some top suggestions on how to carry on in spite of the awkwardness:

- Enter the room, smile, and say: "I'm gonna fake it until I make it"
- Imagine your best friend is there with you in the room
- Imagine you are a famous actor you like
- Start talking with the wallflowers. Or pick someone who's very similar to you
- Start with a target who's obviously open to receiving you

Note:
I very much like her advice to push yourself and "fake it till you make it" compared to Vanessa Edwards' one of staying in your comfort zone.

Some Mingling Tips

Here are some quick wins you can start adopting right away:

- **When you're lost open with "excuse me but I don't know anyone here"**

You can start your conversation by being very honest and saying *"excuse me, but I don't know anyone here*".

And you should smile, but not in full power: they also need to deserve your full smile.

- **10 to 15 mins per conversation**

Jeanne Martinet advises an optimal conversation is around 10 to 15 minutes per person and then move on.

- **Don't talk about the stuff you managed to finally remember**

I'm sure it happened to you:

you wanted to say something about a certain topic but just couldn't remember.

Then it dawned on you but the conversation moved along.
But it's so cool you say it anyway!

Wrong!

Most of the time that's anticlimax and won't do anything good for the conversation or for you.
As a matter of fact, don't even waste energy trying to remember things you can't remember: it's much more important to be engrossed in *this* convo.

- **If you're heavily distracted: don't mingle**

If your girlfriend seems a bit too engrossed in conversation with that stud she's chatting with, tell your speaking partner you need to take a break from the conversation.

It's much better than pretending you're interested and spending all your time glancing away.

Oh, and read this guide *if someone is hitting on your girlfriend* and this other *if someone is hitting on your boyfriend*.

- **Link questions to replies**

Your questions are better if consequential and dependent on the reply you get.
And watch their faces: when it lights up you found a great topic

- **Enjoy not being in a convo**

Once you can enjoy also not being in a conversation, then you're hitting your stride and you become one with the party

- **Carry the convo when entering a group**

Jeanne Martinet says that when you enter a group it's then your duty to carry the conversation.

The attention is on you, and you should get the conversation going back again.
So ideally you've prepared something cool or fun to say.

- **Drop bad apples pretending something got your attention**

When you're stuck with some bad apple, Jeanne Martinet advises you to take control of the interactions, then (pretend to) notice something in the room, nudge at him, smile, and say "excuse me".

Jeanne Martinet adds that the guy is probably used to being ignored and by pretending something got your attention

you leave him hanging to dry in a warm way.

My note:
I don't personally feel this is warm at all.

Taking control of the interaction is key indeed, but a good old "going to the bathroom" is much better.
This is because pointing at "something" in the room and exiting with an "excuse me" gives no real reason to exit.
Such behavior says that anything happening around is more important than your speaking partner.

That's not "warm".

Going to the bathroom instead at least uses the excuse of a physiological need.
He/She knows it can be fake of course, but if you fake something, it's better to at least pretend it's something important

Dealing With Arrogant People

Jeanne Martinet says that when you meet truly arrogant people the temptation in many of us is to flatter them.

But flattering is a sign of weakness to the truly arrogant and it gives even more power to someone who's already assuming superiority.

My Note:
So true.
Great social analysis from the author here.

Jeanne Martinet then says that you should tease them, and communicate the way they communicate so to show that you speak their language.

For example, you could tell them you hear something terrible about them, or that you never heard about them.
Basically, show yourself as tough as they think they are and don't care whether they like it or not.

When they drop the arrogance, then you can go back to normal: the rules only apply until they exhibit arrogant behavior.

Interviewing mode for the shy ones

The Art of Mingling says that a conversation shod be like a volleyball game with lots of back and forth.

But if your conversation partner is very shy lots of questions can help draw him out.

Jeanne Martinet says that the best interviewers counter any reticence by couching the question between examples.

Ie. if you find out he just moved to a new place you could say:

> **You**: oh cool, the last time I moved for was about a year ago.
> Funny enough I've always around Wittembergplatz but just on the opposite side.
> I didn't move far but it took me a while to get used and find the best restaurants, dry cleaner and all the stuff, but once I learned the neighborhood I just loved the new location.
> How's the move been for you?

Changing the subject

Changing the subject is a bit like having to go from one side of the river to the other.

The key is to find the material to build that bridge.

Example:

Your group consists of an architect, her husband, and another person.
You want to talk about the architect's building as you love them. The husband though is talking about his garden.

Everyone else is passive or making innocuous comments like "oh nice" "those flowers are beautiful".

Your start building your bridge by thinking of all possible connections between the two subjects.
Then you turn to the architect and say

> **You**: planting houses in a community is a bit like planting a garden in a way isn't it?

or

> **You**: do you work closely with the landscapers on the gardens and lawns in your buildings?

The architect will answer and you'll be able to continue in your chosen course of conversation.

My Note:
This was a valuable insight.

Free Association

The Art of Mingling suggests yet another option if someone chatters away about flowers, and that is to take the word flowers and let it lead you to another topic.

Here you don't have in mind a destination topic, you simply want to move away from a certain topic, either because it's boring or because you want to take control of the dialogue.

Example: flower-bee.

Ask if bees pollinate all flowers or just some.
You can then add you have an uncommon fear of bees or that you're allergic or that if they also think how fair it is that after a bee stings you, they die,

From this last one can branch out to a topic of aggression and justice, which can be more interesting than flowers and fertilizers.

Jeanne Martinet says that free association is more flexible and open-ended than bridge building.
With free associations you can simply move away from point A, but you don't necessarily need point B.

Pole Volting Power Move

Another great technique from *The Art of Mingling* is Pole Volting.

Pole Volting makes a quick comment about the topic and then suddenly changes.

Example:

> **You**: yeah, there so many different kinds of flowers it's crazy, I can never tell one from another. But hey, before I forget to ask, how old do you think this bar is, some people say it just started but the reviews went back many years.

Or

> **You**:Yeah, all this talking about flowers made me think about honey and man, am I starving at the moment. Anyone else here is hungry and would like to share something?

Without a wrap up would be “have you heard Trump is getting a divorce?”

You might interrupt with an abrupt non sequitur if someone is entering a dangerous topic, like your ex-wife in front of your GF: “wait, I’m having a deja-vu”.

And then you change the topic.

[image]

Real-Life Applications

- The technique for faking until you make it, such as thinking of yourself as a famous actor and starting with the easier targets can be gold.
- The topic-changing techniques are also fabulous and do give them a try soon

CONS

- **“Take your scalp tips”**

I don’t know Jeanne Martinet but my guess reading the book is that she’s a driver and a rather dominant personality.

It gives me the idea she makes friends as much as she can easily make enemies -in the sense of people who dislike her-.

I believe you have to go for what you want, but you can do it with some classier moves.

Review

Funny, biting, irreverent, and *Machiavellian, The Art of Mingling* shares good tips and mindsets about mingling, as well as helping honorable men tell apart the social climbers from the quality individuals.

One tip you must be aware of: dropping the “need for truth”.
Mingling is about good feelings, and truth and reality are not always conducive to optimal interpersonal

relationships.
When that's the case, find something better than the truth.

Get The Art of Mingling on Amazon or check:

- Best social skills books (and courses)
- Advanced social skills books
- Basics of interpersonal power

How To Deal With Men Hitting on Your Girlfriend

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Have you ever experienced the sight of some guys hitting on your girlfriend?

If so you know that it is a highly emotional experience.

This article will teach you how to deal with guys hitting on your girlfriend.

Read it until the end, **and you will learn how to come out of the interactions with more love and devotion**.

You can always count on her to defend that guy :)

Contents

- Intro
- #1. Do Nothing And Relax
- #2. Flirt With Another Girl
- #3. Lead A Group
- #4. Bust The ‘Dominant Power Move’
- #5. Say Hi To The Guy

- Avoid These Ones!
  - Bad: Get Aggressive
  - Bad: This is MY Girlfriend
  - Bad: Do Nothing ‘Cause You’re Scared
  - Bad: Walk In Ignoring The Guy
  - Bad: Stat Making Out With Her
  - Guys Hit on Your GF All The Time?

- Mindsets of Overcoming Jealousy
  - #1. Focus On Yourself First & Foremost
  - #2. Ultimate Power Is Making Her Want It
  - #3. You're The High-Value Giver
  - #4. She Strays, She Goes. No Stressing
  - Be Less Jealous Than She Is

Intro

Getting jealous or worried is normal, and research literature tells us it's part of men's inborn psychology.

However, over-reacting makes you look fearful and lower value.
That's why you must be strategic about it.

So we'll now teach you how to deal with a man hitting on your woman, and we'll assume that:

- The man hitting on your girlfriend is not annoying her
- You're in a social setting
- The two of them are having a pleasurable conversation -just a bit too flirty and upbeat-

Let's start:

#1. Do Nothing And Relax

For sure, *flirting* is a sexually charged way of communicating.

But it's *not* sex per se nor is it in any way a strong indicator of "willingness to have sex" and, even less so, "willingness to switch partners".

People in a relationship flirt and tease as well.
As a matter of fact, you'd be well advised to keep flirting with girls even when you're in a relationship.

But that means that you should grant that benefit to your girlfriend as well.

So enjoy the party, talk to other women, enjoy the party and don't obsess about what your girlfriend is doing.

What matters is the end result.
And the bottom line is this: **she's coming home with you**.
So chill out.

Oh, if you're not chatting with others, make sure to *pick a conspicuously attractive poseyou* and *learn how powerful body language looks*.

#2. Flirt With Another Girl

We want and like what's scarce and in demand (Cialdini, 1984).

And if she learns that nobody wants you, chances are that she will also want you less.

Needless to say, that's not what you want.
Ideally, you want a relationship where she's slightly more apprehensive about you than you are about her.

And that's not going to happen if guys are hitting on your girlfriend while you don't flirt or chat with any other girl.

So to restore the balance of power, you do this: **while a guy is hitting on her, you go find an attractive girl to engage in a nice and lively conversation**.

And with this new girl on your side looking a bit too happy talking to you she might just be reminded why she's with you in the first place ;).

Note: *jealousy can help seduction* and it can even relationships in small doses.
Just don't let this become a war to who makes who more jealous: that's a lose-lose game.

#3. Lead A Group

Women love leaders.

Pick a group, and breath some new life into it.
Have people laugh at your jokes and add their own jokes as they look for your approval.

As the group grows louder, she'll be drawn more and more to your crowd.
Now introduce her as your girlfriend, make the women in the group jealous and she'll soon be reminded what a great catch she's got.

Note: just make sure you don't overdo it and become the clown of a group.

#4. Bust The 'Dominant Power Move'

No women around to talk to?
No groups to enter?
You're getting more and more worried?

Then it might be time to pull a power move.

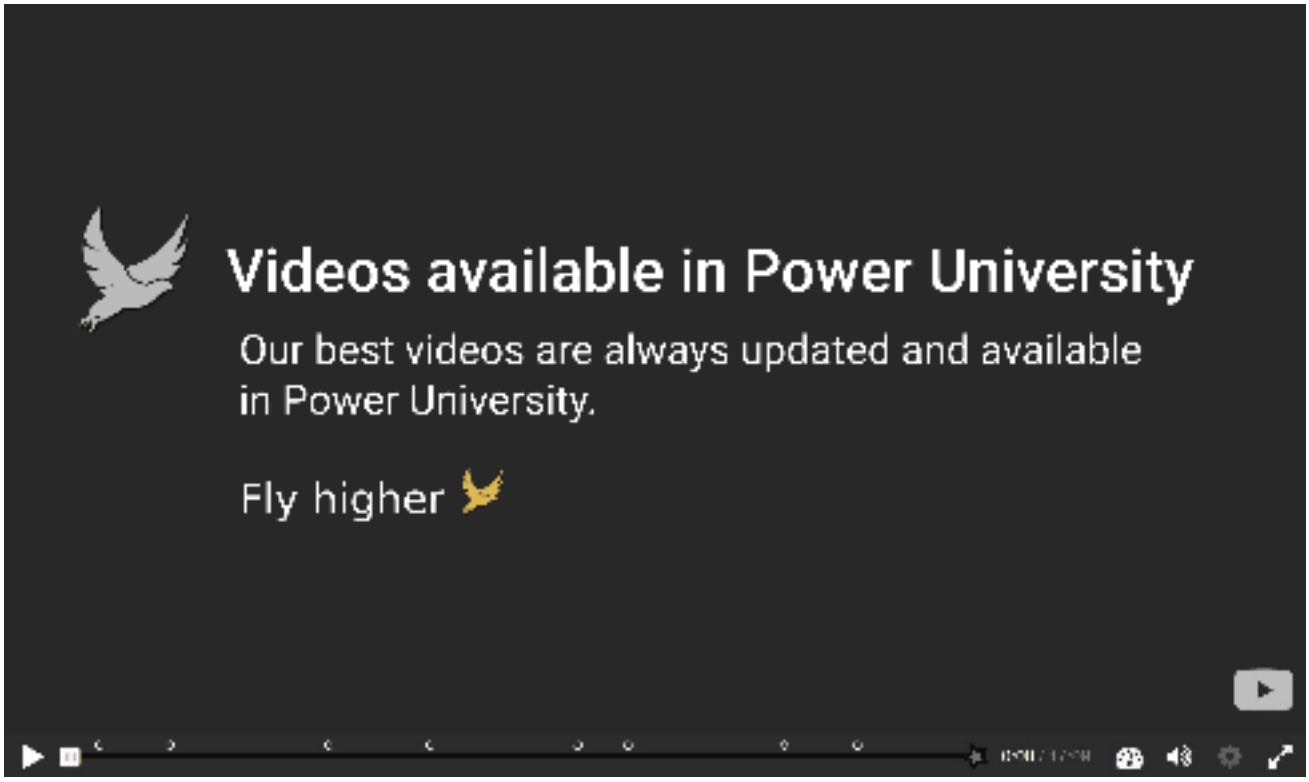
Go there, sleap her behind, and say:

> **You**: Look at you, how popular you are tonight!

This move says "this is MY girlfriend, which is not as good as her proudly claiming you are HER boyfriend.
But it is so sexually dominant that it can work wonders if executed well.

The guy who was hitting on her just with chit-chat will look outgunned and tame by comparison.
At that point, you can honestly befriend him like you'd befriend her gay friend.

Avoid If:
Needless to say, don't do it in a more formal environment or if there are around her colleagues, boss, and family.



#5. Say Hi To The Guy

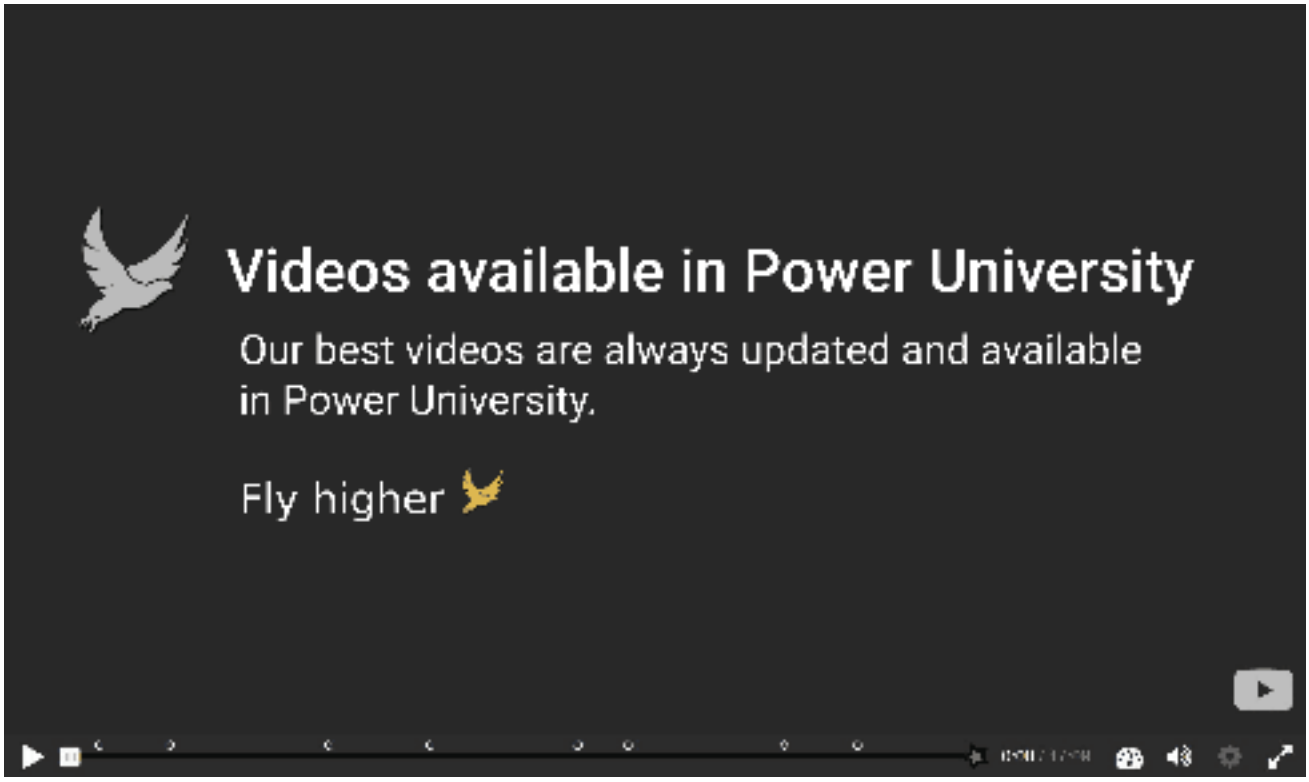
Go in and join the two of them.

You have two possible options depending on the situation:

- If it's a mixer party and they were having a conversation join them as if it were her gay friend and have an honestly positive conversation.
- If it's an intimate setting being too friendly is at risk of looking submissive and green-lighting his advances. So in this case, a smooth and socially-savvy beatdown is in order.

Ocean's Eleven has a great example of how to deliver a socially savvy beat down with the dinner scene.

There is only the Italian version on YouTube but the body language is all you need:



You can tell a lot by his reaction to your entrance.
This is how different types of men will react:

- **Cool guys:** a cool socially savvy guy will understand the situation and if you're equally cool he will respect you. They know that simply means they will just have to keep looking for another girl. Those are the guys with whom you can actually make friends
- **Scared ones:** less confident, less experienced guys will act like kids caught with their fingers in the cookie jar and will either apologize for openly and/or slink away
- **Overpowering:** some guys will ignore you, keep focused on your GF, or will try to challenge you.
  Now that's where the fun begins.

If they ignore you, act a bit bored as you stare into space and let your GF re-involve you, which would be her way of saying "this is my BF and I care about him".
Then re-enter the conversation and then take her away slightly after.

What if He Challenges You?

Never, ever address his challenges!

Remember, he is the challenger and you're the one in charge.
You have nothing to gain by taking the gauntlet of those who are beneath you.

Move your head away, staring into space, and put a slight smile as if what he's trying to do is mildly amusing to you.
Add "yeah, sure" in a low slow voice as if to say "look at this idiot".

Alpha females should jump in your defense.
If she is not *assertive enough* for that, this is the time to pull her away and leave the guy alone.

Avoid These Ones!

There are a few strategies that you definitely want to avoid when some guy is hitting on your girlfriend.

Here are some of the worst ones:

Bad: Get Aggressive

Look, I'm not generalizing.

In some circumstances, quick and resolute *aggression* might even be helpful. Aggression is a time-tested technique of *mate guarding*.

However, there are serious issues with it that make it a defensive move even while you're aggressing and, ultimately, cost you more than it's worth.

One risk, of course, is escalation to violence.
That's a risk both physically and legally.

And what are you fighting for? A girl who's *already* yours? Dumb move, if you ask me.

Even if you "win" the fight, belligerence, and violence are rarely conducive to seduction.

And it's also bad for what it says about your relationship dynamics.

***Aggression* communicates that you are afraid of the other guy and that she is of higher sexual value than you are**. If you are afraid she will leave, you are indirectly implying the other guy must be a higher *sexual market value* than you are.
And if you repeat the same behavior over and over, you also communicate *she* is of higher sexual market value than you are.
And by now we know that *women don't like men who are "less" than they are*.

The "advantage" of getting into a fight and winning it is the enormous display of dominance that might be attractive to some women.
But it will equally repel others, as studies show women prefer lovers to fighters.

Basically: little upsides and huge downsides risks.
And **it always makes you look defensive** and like you are the *lower quality party* in the relationship: avoid.

Bad: This is MY Girlfriend

Going to the guy and telling "this is my girlfriend" is another relatively bad common theme.

Bad because: It's similar to *getting aggressive*, except just tamer.
And relatively easier to sidestep and make you look like a tool.

The guy might reply "*oh cool man, we were having a nice chat here*", implying he was not interested in any sexual way.
And now you're the guy who got overly defensive and jumped the gun for nothing.

Similar to what happened to this man getting protective around Obama

Obama handles it seemingly well but not great.
When he says he was "nice about it" and he calls him a fool he offends the woman and sounds butthurt himself (also read: social climbing Obama case study)

Bad: Do Nothing 'Cause You're Scared

Have you ever had the feeling you were watching over your girlfriend as she talked to some handsome guys and you couldn't concentrate on the conversation because you were worried?

It happens a lot, don't worry.

But unless your girlfriend's conversation is *really* too flirty, you are ruining your good reputation with that behavior.

Bad because: most people will pick up on that. And it will likely shine through with your girlfriend later on too, as you probably will question her just a little tad too much about that guy.

Bad: Walk In Ignoring The Guy

This is one of the most common I see happening when going out solo.

The guy comes over, leans in to talk to the girl with very closed body language which communicates fear and discomfort, and completely ignores you (Pease, 2004).
It looks like a worried dog running back to the owner afraid that she might lose interest in him.

Bad because: it pushes the burden onto your girlfriend

The girl now has to juggle the *jealous boyfriend* and the new acquaintance.

What should she do?

Introducing the boyfriend, excusing herself for talking to someone new? Possibly she'll have to cut the new guy off because you're scared and worried.

But if you are worried and want to make it clear you are the boyfriend, that's *your* task, don't let your girl do the dirty work for you.

Bad: Stat Making Out With Her

The idea behind this move is to go in and either grope your girl, make out with her, or adopt any obvious couple-like body language.

There are two exceptions when it would work: your girlfriend is obviously not having a good time and you're rescuing her or it's an arousing game you're playing (see below a game version example).

Bad because: going in with a bold move like making out might make you feel like you're the man, but you're really just marking territory.

Joe Navarro says men are more likely to put their arm around their woman when other men might approach as a defensive gesture.
And you don't want to be defensive.

And if your girlfriend was having a good conversation, you are forcing her into a position that she might not want to be in.
In the worst-case scenario, she might as well spurn your advances and you'll look incredibly foolish.

Now that we talked about a few good techniques I wanted to get into what's even more important: the mindsets and the fundamentals.

Mindsets and fundamentals are what make *high-quality men* the real leaders of a relationship.

Guys Hit on Your GF All The Time?

This might be an issue because:

1. **Those other guys are not respecting you**
2. **You didn't pick a great partner**

Sorry to be so blunt, but you need to hear it.

The basic fundamentals are **who you are** -a man women would not cheat on- and **the girl you pick** -a girl who

doesn't cheat-.

These two elements will ensure you will NOT have to worry about anything. And both of them are under your control.

Become a Keeper Type of Guy

Quick question: do you think she's likely to switch to someone else if you're the best man she's ever been with?

Not very likely.

That's why it all starts with you.
Who you are, and who you are becoming.

It's not even that difficult.
If the average woman has been with around 8-10 men, then you only need to be in the top 10%.
Look around, you can do it.

And what if you were the best man she's not just been with, but ever met, including her father, brother, and cousins?

How to be that high *sexual market value* man?
Now you're getting in the right mindset.

Pick Her Right

Some women are more likely to stay faithful than others, an obvious point that might be worth stressing in a society with some strong politically correct shaming going on.

A few points backed by research:

- Yes, her past behavior matters: women with lower sexual partner count are less likely to stray
- Religious girls are more likely to be faithful
- Relationships with a friend are more likely to incur cheating
- Women in casual relationships are more likely to stray than in "serious" ones
- Read this article on how to find faithful partners

A few points backed by experience:

- Hardcore party girls are more likely to stray
- Women in poorer countries might be more likely to stray
- Women with jobs in highly sexed industries are more likely to sleep around

Mindsets of Overcoming Jealousy

Fear is the breeding ground of jealousy.

To get rid of jealousy, you have to get rid of fear.

This whole post is about defending because the simple question of "how to deal with a man hitting on my girlfriend" is defensive.

These are some important mindsets for prevention:

#1. Focus On Yourself First & Foremost

Truth to be told:

Yes, controlling can work.

But it's not the best option, it's not what the *highest quality men* do, and it's not conducive to your personal growth.

Most of all, don't fall for the complainer mentality that only blames women.

Of course, women can stray.
And of course, there are some "hoes" out there.

But the mindset of blaming women is a loser's mindset.

Your mindset is:

You know "*these hoes ain't loyal*" is the anthem and outcry of the weak men, the men who'd wish and believe they are *owed* loyalty, which is nothing but another form of an *entitlement mentality*.

But you, you aren't even thinking in terms of "owning" her or her loyalty.
You understand that there's one only simple rule of strong dating: she will be the happiest girl with you… *As long as you keep being a great man***.**

Loyalty is the consequence of you being a great man.
Your task is *not to control her*, not to "defend" her, and not to spy on her or spoil her. Your only task is being a great man.
And keep being a great man.

Then, the only thing you'll need to worry about is that she might be getting too into you.

> **Let her go, and if she returns, she's yours.**
> **Unless she returns and you turned into a pu*****

#2. Ultimate Power Is Making Her Want It

You understand that forcing her to stay faithful is seemingly strong, but actually weak (*43rd Law of Power*).

You shake your head at men curfewing their women and you know that ultimate power is her *wanting* to be faithful. Her *wanting* to come home early to stay with you.

And If she's not offering her exclusivity and trying to get the same from you, you're not yet where you need to be.

#3. You're The High-Value Giver

You are confident you bring a lot of value to her life.

Not in any confrontational or any you're "better" way. You are glad of giving her a lot and you're happy if she's happy.

But it also means you're confident you'll move on if she disrespects you.

Similarly, if you can't provide what she needs you'll be sorry to see her go but you *will* let her go if that's better for her. And you'll be happy for her.

#4. She Strays, She Goes. No Stressing

While you're very open and libertine, you also have very high standards and set defined boundaries.

You don't *tell* her what she can't do, you only tell her what you *expect*.

And if you expect her not to sleep around and she does, it will be the end of your relationship. And you're at peace with that.

Be Less Jealous Than She Is

You cannot *control the relationship* if you are the most fearful party.

And jealousy is a proxy for fear.
Even *The Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships* *says this much:*

> Jealousy implies that one feels threatened by the loss of a partner's sexual or romantic exclusiveness

In turn, fear belongs to the one who feels he has more to lose.

If you're the more fearful party, you sub-communicate that she is higher value than you are.
That she can get better.

And since *women want men who are better than themselves* you never want her to have those doubts.

Ironically, being less jealous is relative.

If she's nuts jealous, you could be very jealous.
And if she's very jealous, you could be jealous.

As a matter of fact, showing no jealousy at all can be a sign of non-caring, while showing some jealousy can be a strong sign of appreciation and get the two of you even closer.

Partying and Power Balance

if you go often to parties and clubs together you can often end up in situations where she's being hit on.

And you might not always be able to get the same dynamics on your side or to neutralize the situation.

That's why **partying together with your girlfriend shifts the balance of power on her side**.

Solution: don't go clubbing with your girlfriend too often.
At least if you care about keeping a neutral *balance of power*.

At least if you care about keeping a neutral balance of power.

What Every BODY Is Saying: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*What Every BODY Is Saying*" (2008) is a *book on body language* in which author Joe Navarro teaches the basics to read body language and nonverbal communication.

Contents

- Bullet Summary

- Summary
  - Review

Bullet Summary

- Learning the baseline behavior of the people around you will allow you to pick any relevant changes
- Discomfort VS comfort signs are the two major and most helpful nonverbal categories
- The 3 major and most useful classifiers of nonverbal discomfort signs are "freeze", "flight" and "fight"
- Threatening limbic responses to freeze, flight, or fight is followed by pacifying behaviors

Summary

About The Author: Joe Navarro is a body language expert, public speaker former FBI agent.
He is also the author of "*Dangerous Personalities*".

1. Mastering Nonverbal Communication

Joe Navarro then gives 10 "commandments" for observing and decoding nonverbal body language:

1. Be a competent observer: A skill you can learn with practice

2. Observe in context: Body language is always observed within the context in which it takes place. Being nervous *at a job interview* for example is normal and it often dissipates. If nervousness shows again later on then you can wonder why

3. Learn Universal Body Language: Some nonverbal signs are universal and independent of the culture they take place in (example: pressing one's lips)

4. Learn Idiosyncratic nonverbals: Idiosyncratic behaviors are unique to specific individuals.

5. Learn Baseline Behavior: Baseline behavior is how people normally look, sit, move and behave. Once you know the baseline comfortable behavior, you will recognize when they're *not* comfortable.

6. Look For Clusters of Tells: Your accuracy will be exponentially improved when you can note several tells part of the same clusters. For example, a few nervous tells coupled with a few pacifying tells in a negotiator can tell you he's negotiating from a weak standpoint

7. Look For Changes: Looking for body language changes can alert you to something about to happen, particularly useful if the impending action can cause harm or.

8. Discern False from Misleading: Learning to tell authentic from misleading takes practice

9. Discern Comfort from Discomfort: Joe Navarro says there are two main clusters you should focus on: comfort signs and discomfort signs. Comfort is associated with high confidence. Discomfort is associated with low confidence.

10. Be Subtle In Observing: With practice and persistence, you will learn to observe nonverbal cues without making it obvious you're looking for them.

2. Living Our Own Limbic Legacy

Everything we do is directed by some portion of the brain, and by observing these behaviors, we can learn to interpret what's happening in the brain.

Joe Navarro says that the limbic system is the holy grail of body language.

The behaviors dictated by the limbic system are reliable because they operate outside of the neocortex, the conscious part of the brain.

Freeze, flight or fight

Joe Navarro adds, rightly, that the common "fight or flight" dichotomy is actually wrong.

There are instead 3 major responses to distress or threat: freeze, flight or fight.

- **freeze**

People being scolded; shallow breathing during questioning; shoplifters hiding their presence with arms close to the body and hunching (the "turtle effect")

- **flight**

All nonverbal behaviors increase the distance.

It includes leaning away, turning your feet towards the exit, placing a bag on your lap, placing a bottle in front of you in front of the table, rubbing or closing your eyes, or putting a hand on your face.

Eye-blocking behaviors are powerful indicators of consternation, disbelief, or disagreement.

- **fight**

A heated exchange is a form of fight, but it also happens without words for example by puffing out the chest, violating personal space, or other aggressive posture.

Pacifying Behavior

Freeze, flight, or fight are highly intensive for our brain, which then directs our bodies to provide comforting actions to calm us down.

The comforting behaviors are the so-called Pacifying Behaviors (in other sources are called "adapters").

When you observe Pacifying Behavior you can guess that someone is in a state of discomfort and had a negative response to something.
If it's in your vicinity, it might be to something you said or did.

Examples of pacifying behaviors:

- Neck Touching, covering, or massaging, such as playing with a necklace or adjusting a tie (men more obviously than women)
- Rubbing your forehead
- Touching or rubbing your cheek
- Exhaling puffing out your cheeks to release stress
- The Leg Cleanser: used when sitting by rubbing your palms on your upper leg
- The Ventilator: pulling on your shirt collar (for men) or tossing the back of your hair up (for women)

- The Self-Hug: rubbing the opposite shoulder with one harm

Pacifying behaviors are indicators of uneasiness, stress, or discomfort.
And there's a relation between stress and pacifying behavior: the greater the stress or discomfort, the greater the likelihood of pacifying behaviors to follow.

Joe Navarro also warns to take note of what part of the body a person pacifies, because usually the higher the stress, the greater the amount of facial or neck stroking will follow.

The ability to link a pacifying behavior with its cause will help you better understand the person with whom you are interacting and to gauge and possibly adjust the way you're interacting.

3. Nonverbals of the Feet and Legs

Joe Navarro says that **the feet are the most "honest" part of the body** because they are the first to be engaged in the freeze, flight or fight limbic response.

And they are also the easiest to read because people usually focus on the face to decode what others think so we also focus on the face when we want to fake something.

Hence Joe Navarro exhorts us to do the opposite: start from the bottom, focusing on the legs and feet first.

Here are some typical body language moves associated with feet:

1. Happy feet: Bouncing or rapidly moving feet indicate excitement or satisfaction, but can also communicate impatience. As it's true for most situations with body language, you must understand the context to correctly decode the meaning. Joe Navarro says that while you can't always observe the feet, this movement can also show in the torso and shoulders when seated.

2. Feet direction: The feet will point in the direction of what we like or the direction where we would like to move towards. If someone is talking to you but their feet are pointing away, it can mean they either don't like you and want to disengage, or that they must go somewhere else.

3. Weight Shifting: Placing hands on the knees and shifting the weight towards the foot placed in front while seated is an indication the person is ready and looking forward to getting up and leaving.

4. Gravity-defying behaviors: Similar to Happy Feet, they indicate happiness or excitement. One foot pointing upwards is an example. When it's the heel to be lifted it's a "starter's position" and it may indicate interest as well as readiness to go.

5. The leg splay: Planting your feet far apart is an effort to control the situation. Joe Navarro suggests that if you want to diffuse a situation when you standing this way, bring your feet closer together and it will communicate nonverbally you are not interested in escalating.

6. Standing leg cross: Crossing your legs at the ankles when standing communicates that you are very comfortable. Joe Navarro says it's because you anticipate that there's no need to freeze or run, which would require both feet on the ground. Crossing your legs at the ankle while standing is a great way to put someone at ease by communicating *you* are at ease.
Notice also that we will often bend our crossed legs towards the person we like most -or the one that makes us most comfortable-.

My note:
Pease and Pease say that Standing Leg Cross communicates a submissive or defensive attitude. I tend to agree with both depending on how the rest of the body language looks.

7. Seated leg cross: If the crossed leg point towards you it's an indicator they like you. Another important indicator is where the inside of the knee is facing: towards you is positive, and away from you is negative.

8. Walking style: How we walk affects our moods and attitudes and, of course, how people perceive us. It's especially important to notice changes when we already know how people usually walk.

9. Foot movements: People jiggle and move their feet all the time, so it's not useful in itself as an indicator of a lie. On the other hand, it's very useful to understand when this behavior begins to change. Jiggling of the foot can be an indicator of nervousness, while a kicking motion is an indicator of fighting back against something unpleasant.

10. The foot lock: Locking the feet while seating is a sign of discomfort. When people are comfortable they tend to unlock their feet. Interlocking the feet around the legs of a chair is even more pronounced and is part of the freeze response.

4. Torso, Hips, Chest & Shoulders

1. Ventral denial and ventral fronting: When things are good and we feel comfortable, we face our frontal body toward the person we're speaking to. When things are not good and we don't like the person or there's a relationship change, or we don't like the topic, then we will face away with our torso and belly.
Leaning in or leaning away serves the same purpose: we lean in to show comfort and liking and we lean away to show discomfort and dislike.

2. The torso shield: We shield our torso when we are not comfortable. Arm crossing is an obvious one, but also buttoning a jacket, adjusting a tie, reaching out to one of our cufflinks, or touching our watch, they can all serve as torso shielding behaviors.

3. Torso splays: Shifting the weight to one side while leaning back communicates a territorial stance or a power pose. Joe Navarro says you can do it at home, but better not at the workplace as it communicates disrespect for authority

4. Chest puffing: A very clear aggressive pose that communicates the situation could escalate to blows. If it's followed by removal of clothing to bare the torso it's a further step towards physical confrontation.

5. Shoulder shrugs: Shrugging of the shoulders is a common nonverbal way to communicate ignorance on the topic. What's most interesting is that Joe Navarro says that when the shoulder shrug is only partial- for example, if the shoulders don't raise much or if only one shoulder goes up, it means the body language doesn't fully back up the verbal statement

6. Weak shoulder displays: Shoulders coming up towards the head -the turtle pose- is a strong sign of major discomfort in the situation. The players of a losing team will do it, or the employees about to report on their accomplishments who haven't had many accomplishments.

5. Nonverbals of the Arms

1. Gravity-related arm movements: Similarly as for "happy feet", when we feel happy and energized our arms tend to go up. And when we feel confident, we will use our arms more and will often swing on our side when we walk. On the other hand, our arms tend to drop and droop when we are sad or experiencing negative emotions.

2. Arm withdrawal: When we are confident our arms tend to move conspicuously and stay to the side; when we feel threatened, our arms will move closer to our body or will cover our body. As a general rule, the meek will pull their arms in, the aggressors will spread their arms out.

3. Arm freeze: Part of the limbic freeze reaction, this is how our body makes us less detectable. Unluckily, Joe Navarro says that abused children will display restricted arm movements.

4. Arm cues that isolate: Certain arm behavior communicates we need or want distance and people should not come close.
Placing the arm behind your back for example, albeit often misunderstood as a pensive position, is a typical move

of royal families that communicates superiority and it tells people not to come too close. In crowded places, arms will also be used to keep people away from our torso and body.
And arms can be used to distance someone when we greet them: how far we reach our hand out will say how far we want to be from them. And when hugging, fully outreached arms are a very positive sign of liking.

5. Arms akimbo: Your hands on your hips are a typical stance for territorial display and to establish dominance. The akimbo with thumbs down is more inquisitive and less authoritarian. Placing the thumbs back and fully displaying the fingers is a stronger way of saying "there are some issues here".

6. Hooding effect: Interlaced fingers behind the head, leaning back and elbows forward while seating is another territory-claiming pose of dominance.
Usually, only the most senior person in the room will be allowed to take this pose.

7. Dominant pose: Spreading your arm while leaning on a desk or placing your arm around a chair nearby is a major territorial display of authority. Similarly, people who want to claim territory will spread their stuff wide on a table.
Dominant men might also put their arms around the date on the first date as if it were her property. Some men might also put an arm around their woman it *when they feel there's a lot of competition around*, which is one of the reasons why I wouldn't recommend you do the same.

8. Adornments and artifacts on the arms: Interestingly enough, Joe Navarro says that adornments and tattoos on the arm do communicate about us, and until tattoos will become fully acceptable he recommends avoiding them since surveys show people perceive people with tattoos as low status.

9. Arms as conduits of affection: Arms can tell how happy we are to meet someone. When meeting someone new, leave them relaxed, preferably showing the internal side of the arms and maybe even showing the palms. A hug is a great way of saying "I like you" (Leil Lowndes says hugging can mean more than "I like you" unless there's a pat on the back, in which case is always friendly)

6. Nonverbals of the Hands and Fingers

Joe Navarro says that our brain gives a disproportionate amount of attention to the wrists, palms, fingers, and hands, as compared to the rest of the body (Givens, 2005).

1. Effective hand movements: People respond effectively and positively to hand movements, so use them when speaking and to emphasize your points. Joe Navarro uses a very strong example of a man who used his hands extremely well to sway and convince crowds: Adolf Hitler.

2. Keep your hands visible: Hiding your hand creates a very bad impression, we human beings expect and want to see the hands and what they're doing. So keep them in front of you and above the table.

3. The power of a handshake: Joe Navarro says you should avoid the famous power plays of rotating your hand on top or putting your second hand on top.
Albeit some politicians might do it to avoid looking weaker than their speaking partners, it just makes people uncomfortable. And of course, avoid Trump's style Alpha Male Handshake.

4. Offensive hand gestures: Very interestingly, there are more learned hand gestures than most other body language signals we've seen. Hence, it's easy to offend some foreign cultures with hand gestures. Joe Navarro hence advises avoiding hand gestures in a foreign culture until you learn a bit about what they mean.
Finger-pointing is universal though, and universally offensive at that.

5. Manage sweaty hands: Sweaty hands tend to happen because of nervousness, so they're a possible sign of nervousness.

6. Nervousness in the hands: Our hands can shake because of stress, nervousness, or excitement. But can also be caffeine or neurological disorders, so you should always use context and baseline behavior to judge.

7. Preening: Preening yourself is rude when you're supposed to be listening to someone, especially if done in a self-attentive, dismissive way.

8. Steepling: Steepling, a go-to move of Angela Merkel is, Joe Navarro says, one of the most powerful displays of confidence we have. On the other hand, interlacing fingers is a sign of low confidence, especially if couple of hand wringing.

9. Thumb displays: Thumbs in full view communicate confidence, while thumbs hidden, either in your own hands or in your pockets, communicate nonconfidence (unless the rest of the finger fully frames the genitals in the "genital framing"). The thumb sticking out of the pocket is a high-confidence display.

10. Genital framing: Thumbs sticking in the belt or in the pocket with the other fingers pointing towards the crotch is a dominance display more often seen among young people.

11. Frozen hands: Same as frozen feet, a sudden stop of all movements can be an indicator of stress and lying.

12. Interlaced stroking or rubbing: In case of doubt or under low stress, people will slightly rub their palms together. When they move to rub their hands with interlaced fingers, the situation is more stressful for them.

7. Nonverbals of the Face

Joe Navarro deals last with the face for a simple reason: it tends to be less accurate.

1. Pupillary constricting and squinting: Our pupils tend to widen when we are surprised, aroused, or confronted. They constrict when we perceive something negative. We also squint our eyes when we perceive something negative or something we don't like, thus squinting plus constriction makes for an ever greater negative response.

2. Eye blocking: Our limbic system tries to block incoming negative information, which can translate into heightened blinking, blinking more slowly, touching our eyes, or bringing our palms to cover our faces.

3. Eye flash: The eyebrow flash, a non-verbal already talked about by another FBI agent in *The Like Switch*, happens when we raise our eyebrow for a split second, and it indicates a positive reaction.

4. Eye-gaze behavior: When we look directly at someone's eyes we either like them, are curious about them, or we want to threaten them.
We must rely on other facial cues to understand which one is it. When we look away during a conversation we can do it to engage a thought, in which case it is actually a comfort display. However, a little later, he says that subordinates are required to be attentive with their gaze and keep facing the king as they leave the room. But the dominant men can look wherever they want.
Also, he recommends that you look at potential employers at an interview as looking all over "as if you owned the place" will unnerve them and make you look superior and disinterested.

5. Eye-blink / eye-flutter behavior: Joe Navarro says that Eyelid flutter indicates an internal struggle either with our performance or with the person or environment around us. It cannot be a good indicator of lying though because any stressful situation can cause the bling rate to increase.

6. Looking askance: The head is tilted or looks sideways with an aside glance or eye roll.

7. Disappearing lips, lip compression, and the upside-down "U": These are, in order, all rising signs of stress

8. The lip purse: The lip purse involves puckering the lips, and indicates disagreement with something that is being said or done.

9. The sneer: The sneer communicates disrespect or disdain

10. Tongue displays: Often a pacifying sign. Tong jutting between the teeth without touching the lips is used when someone got caught for doing something they weren't supposed to do or when they got away with something.

11. Furrowed forehead: Frowning is a signal of discomfort or anxiety, but it can also be concentration and full

focus on a task.

12. Facial blushing and blanching: It's our response to an impactful, major event. Our blood is siphoned off from our faces in preparation for a flight or fight situation.

13. Gravity-defying behaviors of the face: Tucking our chin in and pushing our nose down is a sign of low confidence. Chin up and nose high instead are indicators of confidence.

8. Detecting Deception: A Coin Toss

Joe Navarro goes deep in dispelling a myth and an industry worth millions: the myth that we can spot a liar.

He says that "even the very best of us are no better than 60% accurate".

Body language is great to spot how a person is feeling, or a disconnection between words and nonverbal signs. But when it comes to guessing when someone is deliberately lying, then… It's no more than pure guesswork.

The wrong idea that many have is that any sign of nervousness is a sign of lying. It's not. People can be nervous independently of lies.

The idea of catching if someone is lying is to establish full comfort so that if he is nervous when lying, then it will be possible for you to notice the changes from comfort to discomfort.

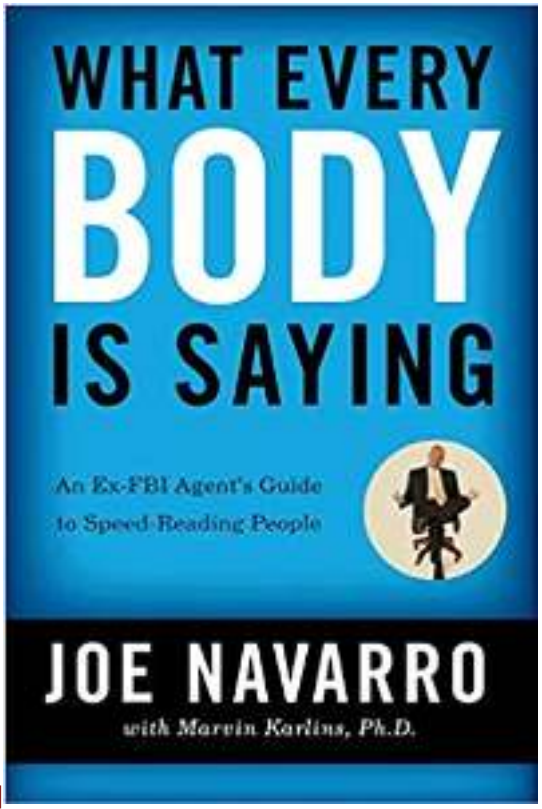
> **It's simply a lie that anyone can accurately spot lies.**

Three Major Tells To Spot Liars

Three major tells you can look for are:

- **Synchrony:** Says no but nods
- **Emphasis:** When lying we don't put much verbal and nonverbal emphasis on our words
- **Confidence:** People who tell the truth tend to be more convinced. For example, palms up display a suspicious "please believe me" attitude

My note:
most "spotting a liar mechanisms" are based on the idea that if someone is lying, they might not be too experienced in it and will need to put a lot of mental load on the lie.
That will raise tension and lets the nonverbal go awry. So you wanna know the biggest secret to a perfect lie? Don't lie. And if you need to, believe in your lie. It's not a lie if you believe it ;)



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CONS

I Would Have Liked More Pictures
More pictures would have been nice. Some interactive links to some videos would have made it an even more wow book. But for a non-interactive video, little to criticize, it's just great.

Review

"*What Every BODY Is Saying*" is a great book for anyone looking to improve their interpersonal skills.

It's well written, well researched, and contains boatloads of wisdom even for more advanced practitioners of the social arts.

Get The Book
What Every Body is Saying at Amazon.

Body Language of Love & Dating: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 August 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Body Language of Love And Dating is a video course by Vanessa van Edwards teaching people how to read body language in romantic settings.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Body Language of Love
  - Science of Attraction
  - Flirting Fundamentals
  - The Psychology of Courtship
  - Dating Dynamics
  - Relationship Connectivity
  - Let's Get Physical
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We think our signs are more obvious than they actually are: always give more signs
- How much women touch *themselves* is a great way to gauge how much they like you
- Women prefer being approached from the side

Full Summary

Body Language of Love & Dating requirements are quite far-fetched and easy for many to just nod along:

- Looking for Love
- Single Men or Women
- Interested in Building All Aspects of Relationships

Vanessa van Edwards says that she'll talk about all the nonverbal signs of seduction.
She says she gives love advice like nobody else does and her course is not about *gimmicks and sleazy stunts*.

Her course sets itself apart because it's science-backed and tested in her lab, sprinkled with a sense of humor and solution-oriented.

Let's see.

Body Language of Love

A man's favorite body part in a woman is the legs and a woman's favorite body part in a man is the butt.

Vanessa talks about congruency and incongruency.
When we are faced with incongruencies, she says, we will always believe the nonverbal signs.

Vanessa says that the body language of love is based on two main components:

- **Trust:** based on the oxytocin hormone
- **Attraction:** estrogen and testosterone

Women are looking for men with a high level of testosterone and men are looking for women with a high level of estrogen.

Vanessa also says in couples where the nonverbal communication decreases, the satisfaction of the relationship also decreases.

Science of Attraction

Vanessa goes on to explain how we know if someone is attracted to us. She lists five solid ways:

#1. Gazing

There are 3 different types of gazing, and intimate gazing is the way we show attraction:

Power Gazing
Power gazing is looking at someone's eyes and then forehead. Your gaze stays high and you want to use Power Gazing during business meetings or negotiations.

Social Gazing
Social Gazing happens when you look at your eyes and mouth.

Intimate Gazing
Intimate gazing is eyes and chest -not eyes to boobs, eyes to chest-. If you want to send a signal you like someone, you should drop your gaze to their chest area.

#2. Feet

The direction of someone's Feet will tell you about their mental activity.

#3. Proxemics

Vanessa goes into the intimate, personal, and social zones people tend to use when keeping their distance from other people.

You can gauge how close people feel to you by looking at how close they get to you. You can use proxemics in two ways: show them how close *you* want to be when speaking with them. Or by planting: stand and see how close *they* get.

When seating the same is true for leaning. And we can use also use touching to close the gap: the more we touch, the closer we want to be.

#4. Haptics (touching)

You can gauge how people feel about you not just by how much they touch *you*, but also by how much they touch *themselves* and how much they preen.

Vanessa says we use touch to release oxytocin and feel more connected.

Women tend to do more self-touching. Women tend to touch their:

- Necks (it releases pheromone),
- Hair (long healthy hair shows good nutrition and health)
- Lips (they might like to have something in their mouth, and it reminds them of other lips).

#5. Men Displays

While women tend to touch themselves more, men tend to:

- Show territorial displays when they're around women they like (spreading harms and legs, drapes their arm around a chair)
- Inflate (puff up chest)
- Alpha Cross (in western countries mostly: it takes lots of space and releases pheromones)

How To Know It's Time To Move

Vanessa suggests that before making a move you:

- Observe 3 different attraction signals or the same signal repeated 3 times
- Baseline: make sure she's not giving those signals to everyone

Flirting Fundamentals

Vanessa says that a study found that unattractive women with the right body language were approached more times than attractive ones who did not signal correctly.

Signal amplification bias: we tend to think that our signals are obvious. Most of the time they're not.

Vanessa gives us some ways to send proper signals in what she calls "Primal Flirting", composed of:

Availability

Fronting: move your toes, your torso, and your top towards the person you're interested in. Some women get nervous and move their torso away, that's bad because the brain cannot relax to form a connection if someone is facing away.

Smiling: smile as soon as you see your date to signal you're a friend and not a foe.

Eye Gazing: the intimate gazing already discussed, and deep gazing.
Solid and prolonged eye contact releases oxytocin.
On average, we hold eye contact for 60-70% of the time. You want to stay in that rage, but if a topic you are particularly interested in comes up, focus intensely as if you wanted to keep noticing their eye color.

Glancing: a study by Pamela C Regan found that successful men directed more brief glances to the women they liked. The flirting for them started way before they even started talking.

Confidence

Using Power Body Language will make you come across as more confident and will make you feel more confident too.
Look at some great body language at a bar or some sexy poses for hands in pockets.
Low power poses are contracting yourself, head down, and shoulder rolling.
High power poses are expansive.
It's claiming territory, head high, arms loose, shoulders back and chest open.

Vanessa says however that power poses are too obvious for normal situations and the ideal is in the middle (loose arms, open torso, shoulders down, head up and fronting).
But you can use power poses before a presentation or before going out and then the re-settle is in the middle.

I love how Vanessa suggests you find a few ideal poses for you, practice them and then use muscle memory to revert back to them and never get into low-power poses again.

Vanessa quotes again Pamela C Regan who found out that successful men, the ones who got the most numbers or went home with most women engaged in more "space maximization movements".

For example hands out of their pockets and arms over a chair.

And they displayed more non-reciprocated touching to the men around (patting, back-slapping, playful shoving)

Fertility

It's important to highlight a high level of testosterone for a man and a high level of estrogen for a woman.

Estrogen:
Body: The Hourglass, a waist-to-hip ratio of 0.7
Face: symmetrical face, large eyes, and large lips.

Testosterone:
Deep Voice: when you're tense the words tend to be higher pitched because of tense vocal cords. A good way to minimize this issue is to take a deep breath and speak after the out-breath.
Face and Body: prominent jaw and brow and large shoulders. Vanessa suggests that two-button shirts and two-button suits help to make your shoulders appear larger. Facial hair can also help accentuate the jaw.

The Psychology of Courtship

1 approach eye pattern:
The author says that the first 5 to 10 people enter a new space they will be scanning the room.

Next, we identify targets, which are one or two people that intrigue us and often our toes will also be pointing towards them as well.
This part lasts less than 3 seconds.

If we feel there's potential there, people we will engage in a longer 3 seconds gaze and will look if there's a smile and if the 3 seconds gaze is reciprocal. If all signs are positive, then there can be an approach.

The good thing about eye patterns is that you can do it before the approach to test the water, but also to invite more approaches. You can gaze at someone to invite their approach.

Monika Moore found that on average women had to make 13 direct eye contacts before being approached.

2. Approach:
Women like being approached from the side because it can feel too threatening from the front.

Men prefer instead being approached from the front.

Visual Voyaging: people want to assess and see the full body before connecting with them.

So while some people might feel discomfort and prefer not being seen fully it's important that you allow a person to look at you fully from head to toe.

Joe Navarro, for example, suggests that you do something to take your eyes off your speaking partner so that he/she can take a full look at you while you look away.

Also, read:

- How to approach women
- Cold approach as an approach strategy

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

First Impression

Vocal confidence:
Vanessa recommends never to speak as if there were a question mark at the end of sentences, not even for women as that's often perceived as untrustworthy.
Men with deeper voices are considered more attractive while women with higher voices tend to be more attractive in the dating arena as it shows estrogen (but it's counterproductive in business settings).

Primal Flirting:
Fronting, smiling and confidence.

Validation:
Showing ourselves fully engaged in the conversation provides validation to our speaking partner.

Seduction

Leaning In:
We lean in when we are curious, engaged, or want to connect on a deeper level. You can use leaning to show engagement and test engagement. You test by gauging their reaction to your leaning in.
Do they stay put, do they lean in as well? If they pull back, you're coming on too strong for now.

Eye Brow Raise:
It's a sign of curiosity, used for example when saying "oh really (tell me more)?".
If people use it while they're speaking it's a way of saying "pay attention to what I'm about to say" or "this really matters to me".

Eyebrow Flashes and Glances:
Eyebrow flashes and direct flashes are the way in which women show sexual openness.
So when you see a woman giving eyebrow flashes and direct glances, that's a go-ahead signal.

Dating Dynamics

Vanessa goes into micro-facial expressions here.

She says we take in information from micro facial expressions even if we don't consciously see them or realize they happened.

Just one note, she is absolutely amazing at using her face to mimic facial expressions.

Dynamic Expressiveness:
People who use a lot of gestures are seen as warm and agreeable. People who remain still are seen as more cold and analytical.

Vanessa says that in dating you want to be seen as warmer and more agreeable.

A tip from Vanessa is to feel the emotions your speaking partner is feeling and mirror them in your face.

She also says that men using palm-up gestures are more successful with women as that communicates an agreeable personality.

Dynamic mirroring:
we unconsciously mirror those we like and the people whom we mirror also perceive us as more likable.

Again, and rightfully, Vanessa recommends a happy medium: don't mirror too much and only mirror neutral and positive signals.

You can mirror the body language, the pace of their speech, the volume or tone and the facial expressions.

Vocal Emotionality:
Vanessa cites an MIT Media Lab research stating that men are more interested in women who vary their voice tone.

The key to showing emotions in your voice is to *feel* emotional and passionate about the topic you speak about.

Relationship Connectivity

Vanessa van Edwards tells us that women use more brain areas to decode nonverbals and that men and women interpret nonverbals differently.

Short interjections:
short interjections are:"uh-uh", "ok", "I see", "aha", "yeah", "yup".

Vanessa quotes another MIT Lab Media research saying the more men used short interjections in conversation the more attractive they were to women.

The more short interjections the woman made, the more she liked the relationship outcome (she felt engaged in the relationship).

Going Deeper:
Nodding three times slowly has been proven to make people talk longer (slow though, doing it quickly shows impatience).

Head tilt shows empathy and engagement. To learn more about relationships, check *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*.

Let's Get Physical

There's not much "physical" about this section to be honest, and it's just another collection of dating tips, albeit there are quite a few useful ones.

Vanessa von Edwards cites Rebhahn research that men tended to overestimate women's sexual interest and women underestimated men's willingness to commit.

Kiss Signal:
Women who want to be kissed will put their mouths somewhat closer to you.

Women who are ready to be taken home and ready for action will revert to the “Marilyn”, which is the famous pose from Marilyn Monroe showing her neck, lowering her eyelids, and opening her mouth, thus mimicking an orgasm (read here how Marilyin’s seductive secrets).

Back-Up Signal:
Some signs to back up are the lip purse (she’s holding back what to say), touching her neck (she’s nervous), and using her purse as a block between you two.

Note:
I don’t understand here why she says touching her neck is a bad sign. It can be a great sign, even if she’s nervous it can be a great sign if she’s nervous because of you.

Some behaviors that show untrustworthiness are: leaning back, crossing arms, touching rubbing, or grasping hands together, face touching (for men, as it shows nervousness).

Men should show their hands to heighten trust and offering protection is the ultimate alpha behavior (opening doors, offering coat, pulling out chair).

Pre-sex touches:
Men prefer backrub/massages and kisses on the lips. Women prefer cuddling/holding and holding hands.

Vanessa repeats again the main things you can do is: show you are attracted, show you are willing to adapt and show you want to know them.

Real-Life Applications

- Start speaking after breathing out if you’re nervous
- Use short interjections (“uh-uh”, “ok”, “I see”..) with abandon

CONS

Upselling
Not as badly as *Captivate*, but some upselling is also present

Micro-expression and lying
I feel that spotting lies have little to do with dating to be honest, and micro-expression shouldn't have been covered. Also focusing too much on "lying spotting" and "facial micro-expression" can get you in the wrong frame of mind.

Review

Vanessa van Edwards focuses much on "warmth" and "agreeableness".

That's great, but I feel that a course on Body Language of Love & Dating should also deal with different dynamics of dating such as leadership and dominance.

That being said the course comes packed with lots of actionable and useful information you will not find everywhere.

And what I loved the most is that Vanessa shows some real-life examples from clips she took from a series called "Dating in the dark".
Those analyses are very good.

The Art of Closing The Sale: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Art of Closing The Sale teaches readers not just practical sales techniques, but also the right mindsets that will make you successful not just at selling, but in life.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Summary
  - Personality= 80%
  - You're Self Employed
  - Work On Your Emotional Intelligence
  - Believe in: You, Your Company, Your Product
  - Write Down All Lessons Learned
  - 100 calls warm-up period program
  - Sales KPIs
  - Closing time
  - Closing Techniques
  - Ask For Referrals
  - Think hourly
- CONS
- Review

Exec Summary

- Your personality is 80% of the sales skills
- Always think of yourself as self-employed
- Believe in yourself and what you sell or move to a company in which you can believe in

Summary

Brian Tracey says that confidence in your sales skills will make you more aggressive in prospecting and will give you higher self-esteem.

Because you know you can do what it takes to close the sale, you will feel like a winner most of the time.

This self-confidence will even affect your prospects, making them in turn even more likely to buy from you.

Personality= 80%

Brian Tracey says that your personality constitutes 80% of your success.

He says that top salespeople have a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem. Self-confidence is the natural growth of liking and respecting yourself.

I liked how *The Art of Closing The Sale* stresses that mental fitness is like physical fitness.
It requires a good mental diet and practice. And once you develop it, it will go beyond sales because how you feel about yourself is the single most determinant of the success of all of your relationships.

It's a simple rule: like and care about yourself, and you will like and care about others.

> **Like and care about yourself, and you will like and care about others.**

You're Self Employed

If you have been reading Brian Tracey you are likely to have heard this one before because it's a big mantra for him.

He says that **no matter where you are employed, you should always consider yourself as self-employed**.
You are the president of your own company!

He says that top salespeople accept 100% responsibility for everything they do.

And the top 3% of people in every organization look at themselves as self-employed.
Not in the sense that they don't belong to the company, but the opposite: they treat the company as if it belonged to them.

And they took everything which happened to the company as if it happened to them.

Work On Your Emotional Intelligence

As we've already seen in *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman, Brian Tracey also restates that EQ is more important than IQ.

A person with empathy will try to put himself in the shoes of the other person to see what he feels.
And the author emphatically adds "if you can see John through John's eyes you can sell John what John wants to buy".

Empathy requires long-term thinking, and Brian Tracey says that **a balance between ambition and empathy is what you should strive for**.

Too much ambition and you're too focused on the short term, don't care about the customers and they will sense that.
On the other hand, if a salesperson is too empathetic he will not be *assertive enough* to ask for the close.

My Note:
I totally agree with Brian Tracey.
Also, on the subject, I believe it's great if you can switch empathy on and off at will.
Some people don't deserve an ounce of your empathy. Some deserve it all. Being able to switch it on and off at will allow you to adapt.

> **If you can see John through John's eyes you can sell John what John wants to buy**

Believe in: You, Your Company, Your Product

Here's another high-impact, simple rule Brian Tracey brings to the table: **your customer can never believe in your product any more than you do**.

There's a relationship between how much you believe in your product and your capability to convince your customer to believe in it.

And I leave you with one quote straight from the horses' mouth :

> **When you get into business you will make a living. But when the business gets into you, you will make a**

> **great life.**

Write Down All Lessons Learned

Brian Tracey suggests noting down immediately after each sale call/meeting what you did well and what you can do differently.

Notice that it's "what can you different" and not "what you did wrong".

By focusing on the positives and on what you can do differently you program into your subconscious mind the best behavior -like having a totally new interaction- and they'll be ready at your disposal on the next call.

My Note:
I used to record my own ales calls and listen to them afterward. Great learning!

100 calls warm-up period program

For every new job or product, you should make an effort to have 100 calls and face-to-face interactions as soon as possible.

The focus of these calls is not necessarily to sell but to get face-to-face time with prospects and tell them about your product or services.
And without focusing on sales it's even possible you will make sales more easily.

In any case, the 100 calls warm-up period will teach you much more than most people will learn in years (questions, customer feedback, customer issues, etc.).

And in the next two years, you'll find yourself doing sales to those 100 people you had calls with as it was easier to build a friendly vibe since you were not actively selling and didn't put them under any pressure.

Sales KPIs

The Art of Closing The Sale goes into the major skills needed for selling.

Any weakness in one of these areas will hold you back. And if you keep improving in each one of them, you'll quickly get to the top.

1. Prospecting
2. Establishing trust and rapport
3. Identify customers' problems and needs
4. Present your product as the ideal solution
5. Answering objections and concerns
6. Getting agreement to proceed
7. Obtain resales and referrals

Closing time

Brian Tracey says that your goal is to make the closing as smooth as possible for the customer.

It should be quick and your whole presentation should be structured with the close in mind.

Top salespeople know what they're gonna say word for word and rehearse. Poor salespeople wing it and sweat as they say whatever comes to their mind and hope.

6 major requirements to close

1. Positive, enthusiastic, and eager to close the sales: emotions are contagious
2. prospect requirements must be clear to you -as a result of asking questions –
3. the prospect must understand your product and its value to him
4. prospect must believe and trust you (and have faith your company will deliver)
5. the prospect must desire and want what you're selling
6. the product must be suited for your customer

Close at the right time (avoid high pressure)

Make sure the prospect :

1. Wants it
2. Need it
3. Can afford it
4. Be able to use it and get full value out of it

Signals the closing time has come

These are some signals that your prospect is ready to move:

1. Talking faster, becoming more upbeat and cheerful (from thoughtful and critical)
2. Sudden friendliness – relax and maybe ask a personal question (answer warmly and close question)
3. Chin rubbing – he's probably thinking about how to use your product. Stop talking, and when he comes up, ask a closing question
4. Price, terms and delivery questions. Ask another question and you've made the sale
   Him: *How much does it cost;* **You***: how soon do you need it*
   Him: *How soon can I get this;* **You**: *how many do you want*
5. Any changes in attitude, posture or voice

Closing Techniques

Brian Tracey says you should be able to master at least 10 different closing techniques to be used depending on the person and the situation and the kind of objections you get.

Try them out multiple times and practice them more than once until you perfect them.

And you're on your way to excellence.

Secondary close

You agree on the minor details so the customer implicitly decides on the major one. You help through the moment of indecision.

For example: *would you prefer this in blue or green / would you prefer it in 60 or 90 days / would you like it delivered or would you like to take it with you today*

Assumption close

You can ask "test closes questions" like "*does this make sense to you*" and if they say yes, assume they said yes to the sales and say "*then the next step is this*".

It allows you to keep control of the interaction: the customer either goes along or raises another objection that you

can address.

Selling past the sales

You begin talking about the joy of using the product and what will happen with it.

Tell (happy/sad) stories

Tell a happy story of a customer using your product.
Or the sad story of a customer NOT using your product.

You can start with "*BTW, this reminds me of Susan Smith, one of our customers..* ".
Once you talk about happy customers, you trigger an unconscious desire by customers.

Walkaway close

If the customer is walking away saying he wants to shop around, tell him most people did that before coming back and shopping from you.

You can tell him:

> **You**: You can go out but why don't you save that time and make a decision now. We can wrap up the deal right now and you'll spare yourself all that researching time and happily go on with your life.

If he still insists he wants to go:

Only today close

It's the last day of the sales contest so you can make a discount.

This is only to be done AT THE END of the selling. Save it until the last moment.

Ask For Referrals

Always ask for a referral.

One way is to visit each year customers of yours to make sure they are happy and then ask for a referral.

Think hourly

This passage of "The Art of Closing The Sale" made me reflect: most people work only a couple hours a day making the first phone call at 11 and the last at 3.

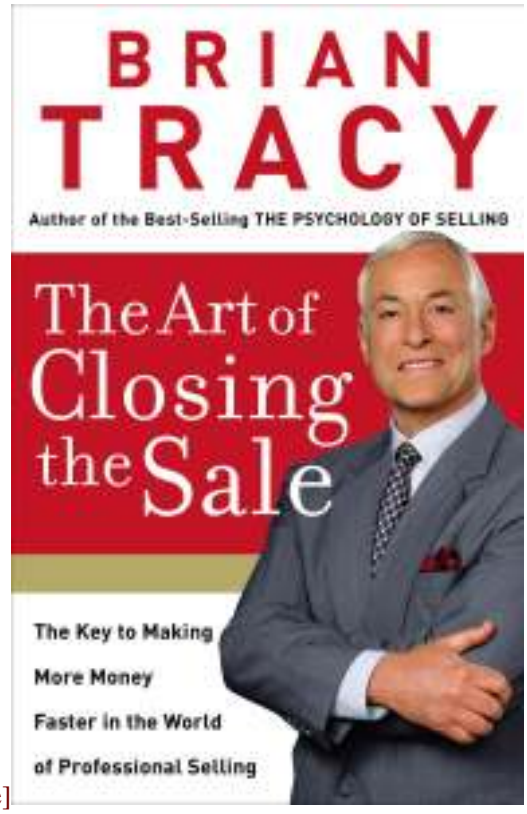
Sometimes it's true indeed.

Brian Tracey says that if you think of your goals on a yearly basis like most people do it's easy to waste time like that.

The solution?

You should instead think about your income goals in terms of hours.

And if you're doing sales then prospecting, presenting and closing are the only 3 activities that pay you money. All the rest is waste.



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CONS

No major cons.

Slimy Risk
The only "so-so" thing in "*The Art of Closing The Sale*" is the part in which Tracey suggests lowering the price when the customer is about to walk away.
That can easily reek as desperate and, albeit it *might* help, it will *surely* make you look slimier.
And the customer will come to expect discounts from then on.

Review

The Art of Closing the Sale is a good book with many foundational principles of effective selling.

Brain Tracey, the author, comes across as an honest, genuine, and trustworthy person, and his tips are always mixed with the positive mindsets they should be used with.

The top lessons I take away are:

- You are self-employed and the president of your own company
- Personality is 80%.
- Liking and caring about others starts by liking and taking care of yourself

How to Negotiate Unfair Refund Requests: Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

People have a right to request refunds.

And you should give them back their money if they're not happy.

However, as usual, you meet the assholes who try to take advantage of the system.
And they issue unfair refund requests not because they're unhappy with the product or service, but because they're trying to scam you.

This article takes the side of the seller, but it doesn't matter much which side you are on.
Because it's the *psychology* of negotiating that matters. And psychology is the same on both sides.

Contents

- Background: The Unfair Refund Request

- How to Negotiate Unfair Refunds
  - #1. Shame: The Psychology of Negotiating
  - 2. Master The Time: Control The Negotiation
  - 3. Be Nice: Make An Offer They CAN Refuse
  - 4. Play Dumb and Induce Them Into Mistakes
  - 5. Let The Thief Call The Cops: The Trap
  - 6. Play By The Rules: The Rules Are On Your Side
  - 7. Chill: Beaten Dog Shall Come Back To His Master
  - 8. Grand Finale: a Pat on The Good Boy Back
- Summary

Background: The Unfair Refund Request

The refund negotiation we are going to analyze is from a physical product sold on eBay.

The Internet indeed is awesome, but one of the few cons is that it also lowered the bar for playing tricks and games. It is indeed far easier to open an unfair refund request behind a screen than in person.

Buyers think they can easily get something back with little to no effort, so they exaggerate a small issue or completely make one up.

If you are selling online it can be an unnerving hassle because they can open a controversy and leave you a negative public review.

Worry not though, the answer is simple: playing the *negotiation game* better than they do.

My Mistake

I had uploaded pictures of the iPhone, stated that I wasn't sure which model it was and told the buyers to judge by themselves and buy based on pictures.

Then I put as the title my best guess as to which exact model it was and… Well, my best guess was wrong.

Technically, I was probably in the wrong.
But morally, I knew I was in the right.

How to Negotiate Unfair Refunds

Let's see how you handle it:

#1. Shame: The Psychology of Negotiating

You want to show yourself fully open to solving the issue, always.

You show total openness to stave off any risk of bad feedback and any possible escalation down the road.

At the same time, you also want to throw in a line to show it's their mistake too -and make them feel guilty for asking a refund-.

Why do you want to instill guilt in them?
For two reasons:

1. It makes it more unlikely they will try to damage you
2. They will ask for less (Guilt makes it more likely they'll ask for less)

Just make sure you end with the positive: that you're willing to help.

Von: [redacted]
An: a
Gesendet: 09.05.17 19:51

You didn t recognize the model from the pictures? ...

ebay™

Nuovo messaggio per: [redacted]

You didn t recognize the model from the pictures?

If you don t want it send it back and I ll refund you.

2. Master The Time: Control The Negotiation

Your main goals as to controlling the time and letting them wait here are different and this is what you will achieve:

- **Cool Them Off: Out of Sight, Out of Mind**

We are most adamant about anything which is fresh in our minds (*Cialdini: the importance of attention*).
The day they received the item they're all excited about it and salivating at the idea of making it an even sweeter deal by getting some cash back. Slurp! After 3 days though their lives go on. And now they're dealing with their partner's woes, their boss is a bit**, their cat's diarrhea -that one's annoying :)- and… And their refund is suddenly less important. After a week… All the more of that!

- **No Answer, No Money**

If you wait to reply you automatically start venting in their mind the idea they might not be getting anything.

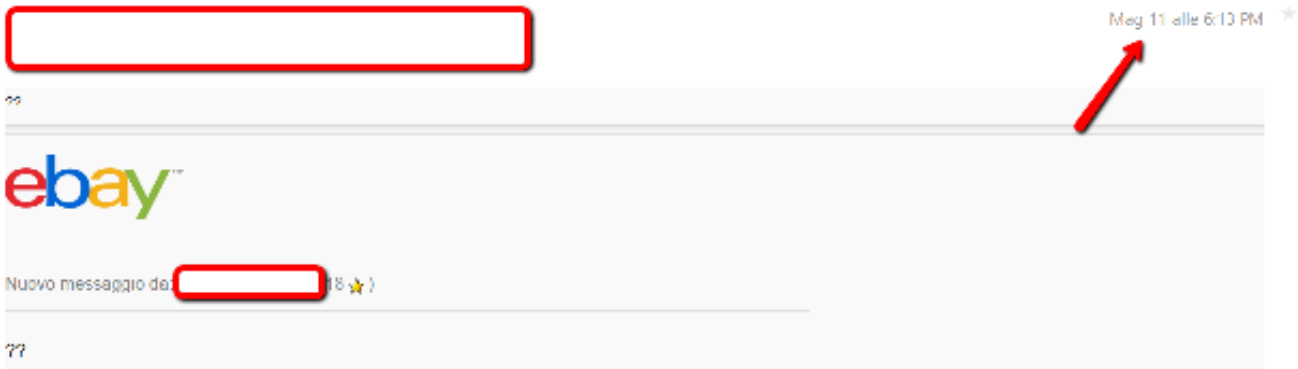
This is the power of presuasion at work: faced with nothing, something, even something very small, begins to seem a lot (*Cialdini: Pre-Suasion*).

This will work wonders in lowering their demands and expectation and shifting further power on your side.

- **Let them get used to it**

This is similar to the *"puppy close" principle*: as they start using the product more and more, they get used to it -including the issues of the product and the made-up issues of the product-.

Plus, they start getting into the mindset that they might not be getting anything from you, which will make your negotiation easier.



Note on Deadlines:

In some cases, you might be negotiating against a refund deadline.
For example, a deadline for refunds or a deadline to leave feedback.

With a looming deadline, you have to make a judgment call as to who's the party with the most to lose.
Secrets of Power Negotiating indeed makes the (correct) point that deadlines favor the party with the most options (and with the least to lose).

3. Be Nice: Make An Offer They CAN Refuse

Sounds weird?

Hold on for a minute.

Once you reply after 5-7 days or after they send you a reminder, you are absolutely nice to them and full of understanding about their situation: again, you want to stave off any chance of receiving negative feedback.

AND you make an offer they don't actually want: to send the item back.

You say

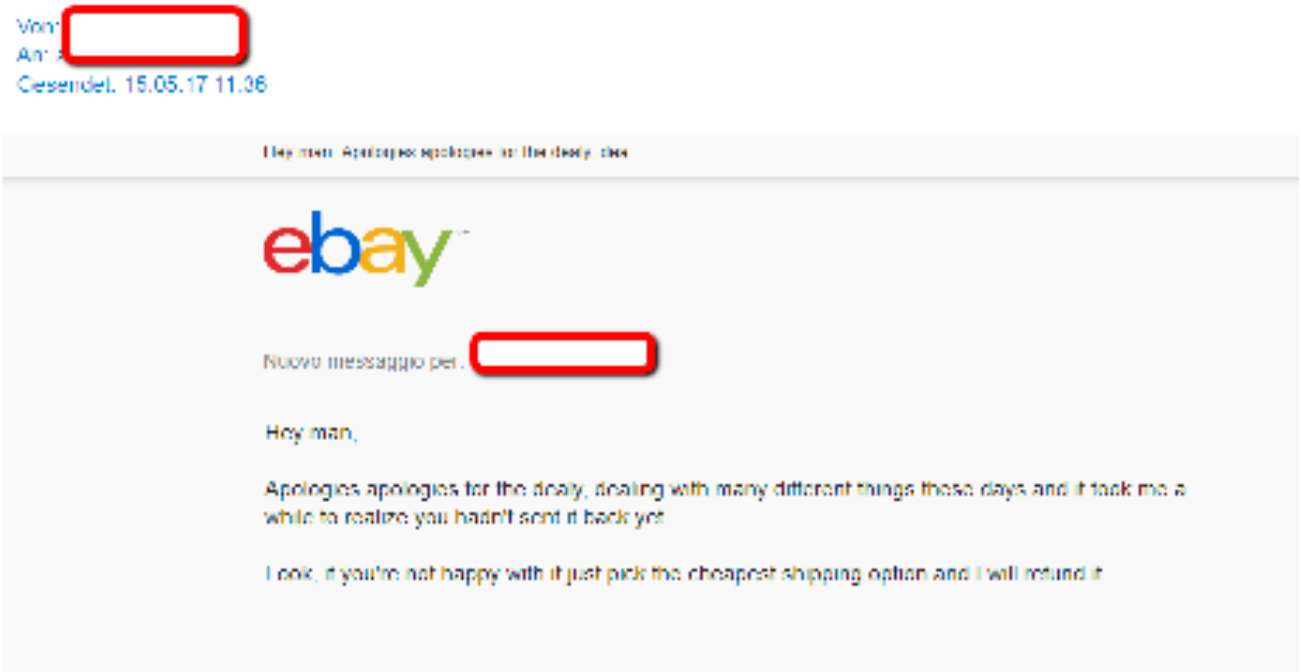
> *Absolutely, I understand your point. I am happy to refund you fully if you send it back in the same good conditions it was sold.*

You don't talk about partial refunds at all. You just propose something they don't want: a return. This will do two great things for you:

1. Show you're open to solving the issue (will do wonders in case of a controversy)
2. Force them to refuse your offer -similar to *Rejection & Retreat technique*, a refusal of your gentle offer will give you negotiation points to spend later-
3. Suddenly makes something, however small, look great in comparison to something negative (*Law of Contrast*)

Chris Voss in *Never Split the Difference* says that a great way to negotiate is to make the other person feel empowered.

When you empower someone to *say no*, chances are they will be kinder to you just (and at the very least, they will not start behaving like a cornered rat).



4. Play Dumb and Induce Them Into Mistakes

Note that I say "*pick the cheapest shipping option*".

It's because I know this guy is not experienced and he's obviously a pinch-penny if he's playing games to get a few bucks refunded.

Pretend you're also clueless and naive, and if he actually goes for the cheapest option it will be a non-tracked package and he won't have any proof he actually sent the item back.

> **If he has no proof he sent back the item, you have him.**

Albeit I feel he's being dishonest I don't necessarily wanna rip him off back, but I do wanna give myself all the chances I can of succeeding.
And I'm covering my a** in case he decided to send back an empty package or broken item (a common Paypal fraud).

Also, and most importantly since I strongly doubt he wants to send the phone back, by offering something he doesn't want I'm *nudging him* exactly where I want him: either giving up or opening up a controversy.

Once we go into official channels, I know things are more likely to turn out positively for me.

NOTE:
ONLY use these moves if you're convinced of being in the right and/or if you're convinced the other person is playing games on you and deserves it.
You can get rich and powerful, but you'll never be a great man if your aim is to swindle honest people.

5. Let The Thief Call The Cops: The Trap

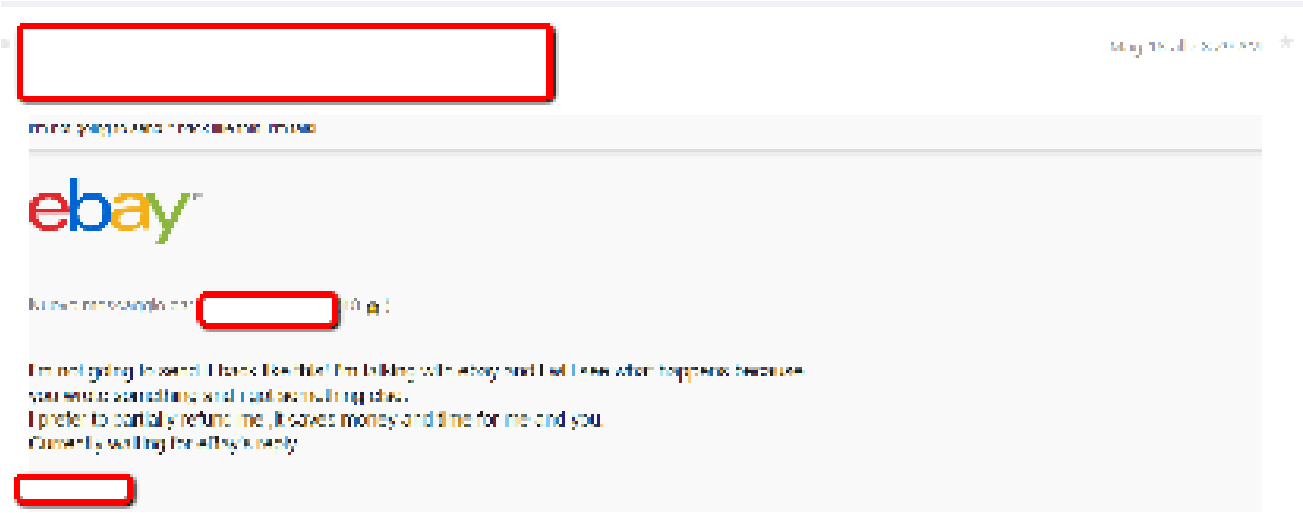
Notice you *nudge* them into an official controversy, you don't scream to their face to do it.

If you said right away “go ahead, open a controversy” it will sound like you are threatening them and that they have no chance to win.
When people feel they have no chance, their only chance is to lash out, and you don’t want that (in this case, negative feedback).

Robert Green in *the 48 Laws of Power* says the best deceptions are the ones that seem to give the others a choice: let them feel like it’s *their* choice to escalate.

Once they open an official controversy they dig their own grave.

You get the power that is on your side and you will have a much stronger case once they realize a controversy is a poor option for them-.



Plan to the end: Just make sure you’re in the “legal” right here, which is often not the same as the moral one.
I knew, for example, Ebay was going to take my offer of a full refund very well and likely propose the buyer to send it back.

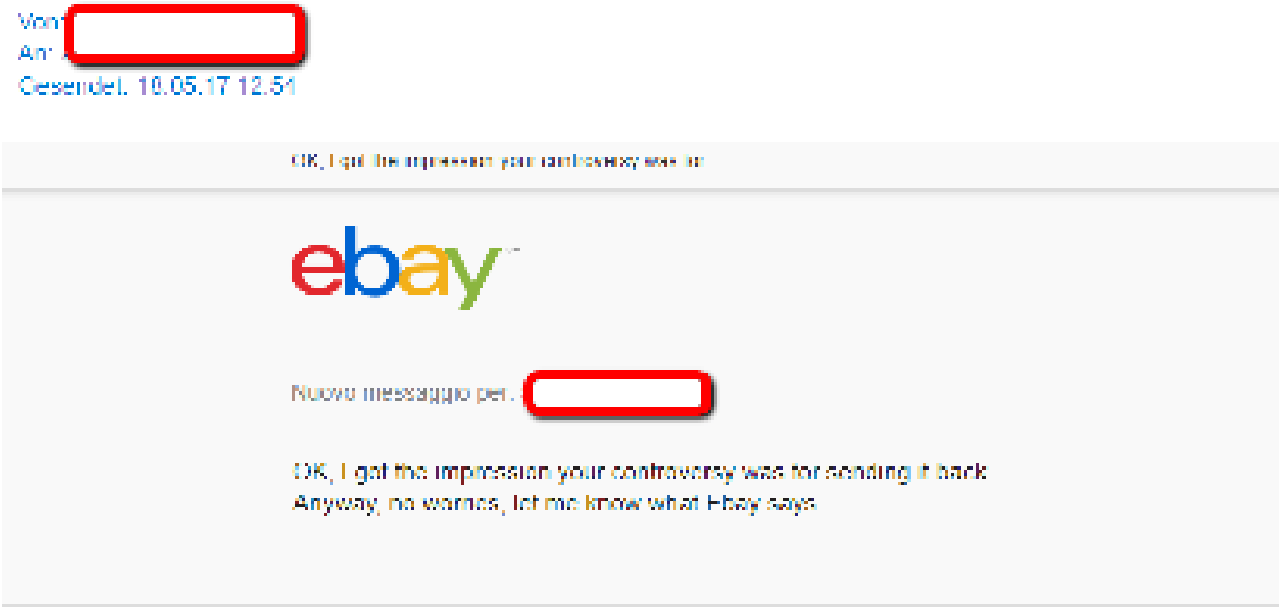
6. Play By The Rules: The Rules Are On Your Side

Once they make a mistake or open an official controversy you’re in a much stronger position.

In this case, with an open controversy, say -or imply as in this case- you will play by the rules and will accept whatever comes out of it.

Easy for you, you know you’re gonna win! But saying it explicitly will do great things for you:

- Make a good showing for the people who will be reviewing the case
- Stack in your favor the *law of reciprocation*: you stick by the rules and accept the results in stride, they’ll feel compelled to be doing the same later on

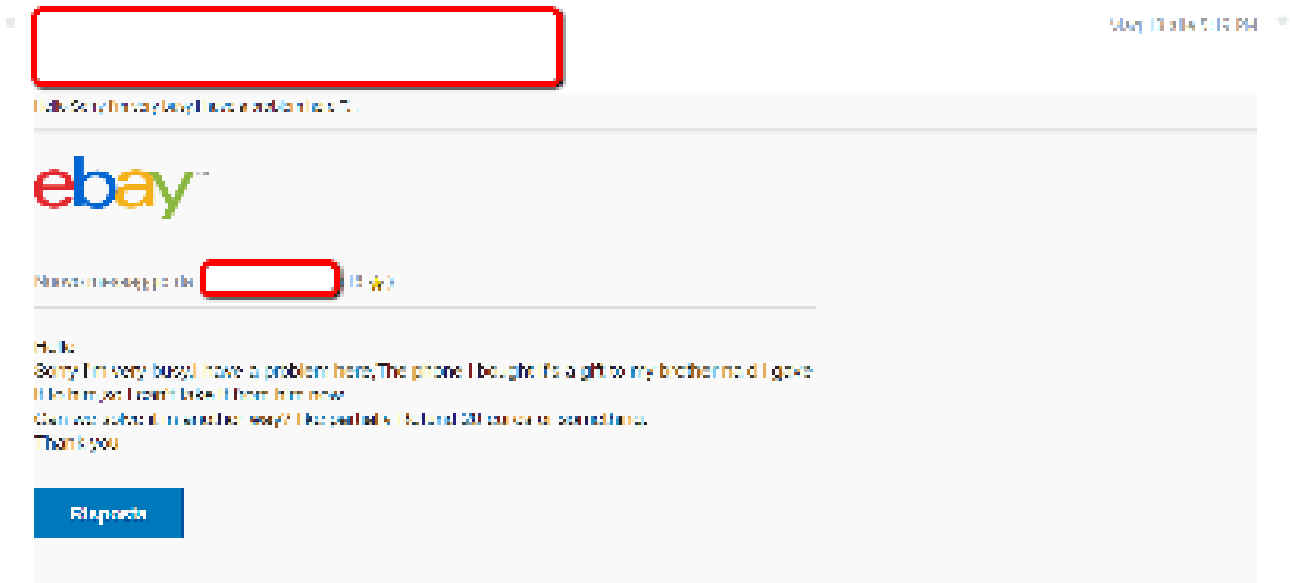


7. Chill: Beaten Dog Shall Come Back To His Master

Again, do not proactively propose anything but let them get back to you with the tail between their legs once they realize it's not gonna get well with them.

The power is now swinging more and more in your camp, and the beauty of it is that they have no reason to lash out or leave any negative feedback: you've done nothing but being a friendly chap!

Look what a big U-turn this was: all his big complaints and demands turned into a little begging:



Just LOL
Notice that you can get two scenarios at this point:

- Some beaten-down former big mouth now begging for some pocket change or
- A cornered angry animal who's resentful towards you.

All our openings and willingness to cooperate have been for us to get the former scenario.

The latter scenario is what the hard-headed sellers or the stickler for the rules will end up with.
They get an unfair refund request, they jump up with their clenched fists in the air and scream "*I shall not yield*".

And yield they won't save ending up angry and unhappy and with a bunch of easily avoidable negative feedback (I had a few such sellers and might make an article on exactly that in the future).

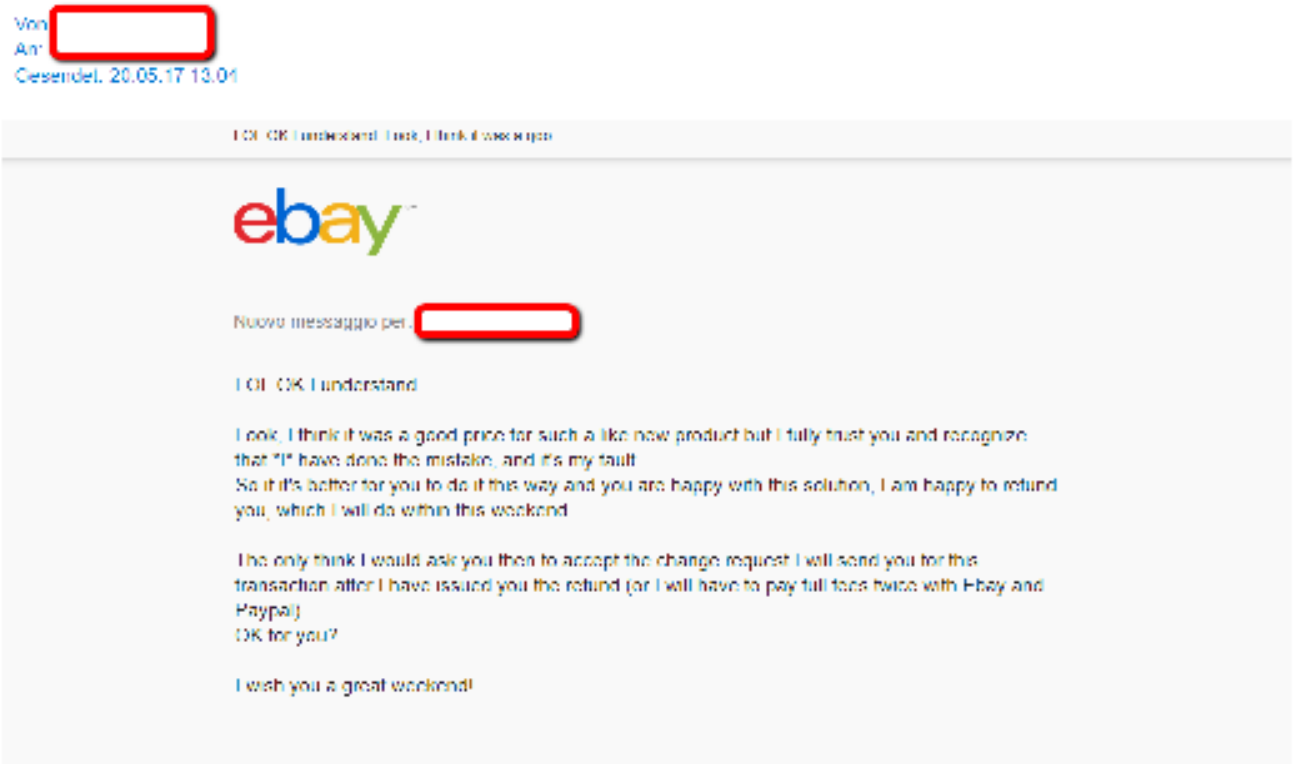
8. Grand Finale: a Pat on The Good Boy Back

You got it.

If your customers still have the right to leave you feedback, and if the controversy doesn't allow you to remove a negative, one you might still want to appease them.
Drive a bargain or ask for something back and do it with friendliness.

In my case, I gave him the full 20 in exchange for mutually canceling the transaction, which saves me more than the 20 I gave him back.

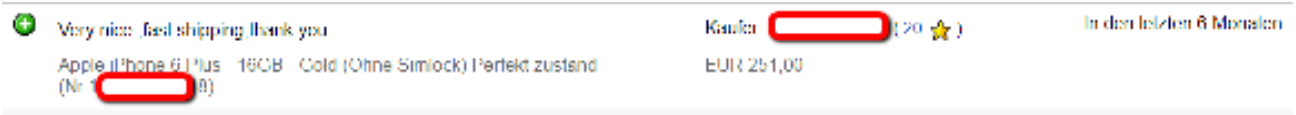
Win-Win.



Note:
Notice how I am actually nicer and more open here at the end than I have ever been before.

At the beginning indeed you don't want to embolden your sneaky customer with too many niceties because you never want to appear in retreat, scared, or backing down.
But once it's crystal clear who's "won" you want to pander to his feelings and build him back up.

Remember: it's good for the feedback, but mostly it's good for your own moral compass.
There's little to gain or teach in piling up on an already vanquished man. And you want to make friends, no enemies.



> **Be bold in battle, relentless in defeat, but magnanimous in victory.**

Summary

When facing an unfair refund request, always keep cool and never let it get to you.

Here's a nice idea: use it as a practice to test and improve your negotiation skills.

Then:

- Highlight it's also their mistake AND be open to a refund
- Let them wait, and then:
- Don't offer a partial refund but only a full refund IF they send it back in good condition, thus:
- You gently move them towards either giving up or an official escalation. Once fully escalated:
- Let them come to you with a lowered request
- Propose less than what they asked or ask something back

Congratulations on getting this new skill under your belt and spreading around the world the message that sneakiness doesn't pay :).

You Might Also Be Interested In:

Lowball: the psychology of driving a bargain

48 Laws of Power: Summary, Review & Strategic Flaws

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The 48 Laws of Power (1998) by Robert Greene is a provocative self-help classic that delves into power dynamics, Machiavellian strategies, and manipulation.

Contents

- Quick Summary
  - Key Laws
- Summary of the Laws
- Quotes
- Criticism & Limitations
- About the Author: Robert Greene
- 48 Laws FAQs
- TPM Review
  - Who Should Read The 48 Laws
- 48 Laws of Power: Mastery Hub
  - Beyond The Laws: Real-World Power Skills That Work

Quick Summary

The 48 Laws of Power shares one overarching theme: power belongs to people who understand human psychology, manage perception, and navigate hierarchies with power intelligence, agentic goal pursuit, and amoral strategy.

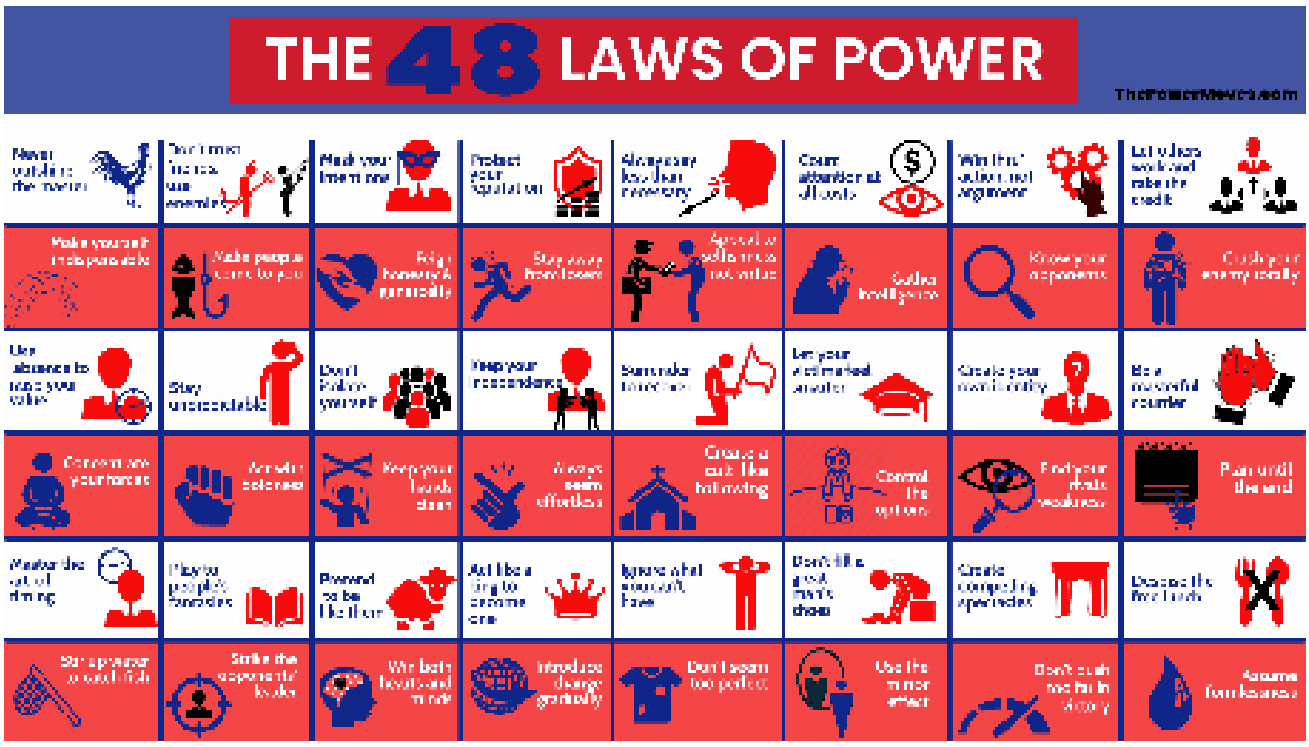
Greene shows that success in competitive environments does not go to the most moral, hardworking, or talented. It goes to those who apply key laws like these:

Key Laws

1. **Don't make your superiors feel threatened** to avoid jealousy and defensive retaliation
2. **Conceal your intentions** in competitive settings; it's better to mislead the competition
3. **Don't embolden your enemies**: win decisively, never wound
4. **Make others come to you** to maintain leverage and frame yourself as the higher value 'prize'
5. **Calibrate to the situation**, never take the laws as commandments ('assume formlessness')

Summary of the Laws

This infographic shares all the laws at once:



Law 1: Never Outshine the Master

Make your superiors feel superior.

Outshining your boss or mentor risks resentment, and they may undermine you to protect their power. Use flattery, give them credit, and 'power protect' to make them feel good.

- ✅ **Flatter subtly** and let superiors take the spotlight.
- ✅ Show talents in ways that **benefit them**.

> "Making others feel powerful makes you indispensable."

For a summary of all 48 laws:

⍰⍰ Click to Expand: Detailed 48 Laws Summary & Breakdowns+

Law 2: Never Put Too Much Trust in Friends, Learn to Use Enemies

Friends turn frenemies and betray out of envy, while enemies, with more to prove, can be loyal allies.

- ✅ Work with **competent enemies** over familiar friends.
- ✅ Create enemies strategically to **sharpen your edge**.

> "Friendship is emotional; power thrives on pragmatism."

Law 3: Conceal Your Intentions

Keep them guessing.

Hide your plans to avoid interference. Use **misdirection** to mask your true goals.

- ✅ Employ **red herrings** to distract others.
- ✅ Stay **unpredictable** to maintain control.

> "Secrets are the currency of power."

Law 4: Always Say Less Than Necessary

The Social ROI quadrant™: powerful men get highest return, with less effort

Speaking less creates **mystery** and reduces the risk of revealing weaknesses.

- ✅ Be a **deliberate speaker** to command respect.
- ✅ Use **silence** to let others reveal their intentions.

> "Powerful people don't waste words."

TPM Note:
This is contextual, and the opposite is true in many contexts. See video here.

Law 5: So Much Depends on Reputation—Guard It With Your Life

Your reputation precedes you.

A strong reputation is your greatest asset, boosting influence. **Neutralize threats** and undermine rivals subtly.

- ✅ Build a reputation for **excellence**.

- ✅ **Counter attacks** on your credibility swiftly.

Law 6: Court Attention at All Costs

"Obscurity is the enemy of power."

Invisibility is death in the power game. Stand out through **boldness** or **mystery**.

- ✅ Craft a **memorable persona**.
- ✅ Use **spectacle** to stay relevant.

Law 7: Get Others to Do the Work for You, But Always Take the Credit

Let others handle the work while you claim the glory.

- ✅ **Delegate strategically** to save energy.
- ✅ Position yourself as the **mastermind**.

TPM Note:
This can backfire long-term because top performers will leave your team. Effective long-term leadership requires a more balanced approach, including acknowledging contributions to attract and keep motivated talent.

Law 8: Make Other People Come to You—Use Bait if Necessary

Lure others into your domain to gain the upper hand.

- ✅ Set **traps or opportunities** to draw people in.
- ✅ Project **calm authority** to disorient others.

> "Power flows to those who control the game board."

Law 9: Win Through Your Actions, Never Through Argument

Show, don't tell.

Actions prove power more than words. Avoid debates; let **results** speak.

- ✅ Demonstrate through **outcomes**, not arguments.
- ✅ Let **effectiveness** silence doubters.

> "Action builds credibility."

Law 10: Infection: Avoid the Unhappy and the Unlucky

Negativity is contagious.

Steer clear of those who drain energy or bring misfortune.

- ✅ Surround yourself with **optimistic, successful people**.
- ✅ **Distance yourself** from chaos.

TPM Note:
Helping those seeking improvement can be rewarding, but avoid chronic complainers. See this reel.

Law 11: Learn to Keep People Dependent on You

Make others rely on your skills or resources to secure their loyalty.

- ✅ Be **indispensable** by controlling key assets.
- ❌ Avoid empowering others to **outgrow you**.

> "Dependence ensures loyalty."

TPM Note:
Seeking dependence signals neediness, and it often creates toxic, co-dependent dynamics that limit freedom (Beatty, 1986).

Law 12: Use Selective Honesty and Generosity to Disarm Your Victim

Strategic honesty or generosity lowers defenses, creating opportunities for influence.

- ✅ Use **selective truth** to build credibility.
- ✅ Give **calculated gifts** to create indebtedness.

> "When others trust you, they miss your traps."

TPM Note:
Sophisticated scams, like Madoff's, do the opposite. They rely on consistent honesty to conceal the underlying, major deception.

Law 13: When Asking for Help, Appeal to People's Self-Interest

Self-interest rules the world.

Frame requests to align with others' desires, not their mercy.

- ✅ Show how helping you **benefits them**.
- ✅ Make it feel like **their idea**.

TPM Note:
Intrinsic motivations often provide more influence than extrinsic 'what's in it for me'; see criticism here.

Law 14: Pose as a Friend, Work as a Spy

Knowledge is power.

Appear friendly while gathering information to exploit weaknesses.

- ✅ Use **harmless conversations** to uncover secrets.
- ✅ Leverage **intelligence** strategically.

Law 15: Crush Your Enemy Totally

Leave no threats behind.

A defeated enemy can recover. Eliminate their ability to retaliate.

- ✅ **Destroy their influence** completely.
- ✅ Ensure **unchallenged dominance**.

> "Half-measures invite revenge."

Law 16: Use Absence to Increase Strength and Honor

Scarcity creates value.

Strategic withdrawal makes your presence more desired.

- ❌ Avoid **overexposure** to maintain respect.
- ✅ Return when your **absence is felt**.

TPM Note:
Absence doesn't create value, it can only boost it after you've shown value with presence.

Law 17: Keep Others in Suspended Terror—Cultivate Unpredictability

Controlled chaos intimidates.

Unpredictability keeps others off balance and fearful.

- ❌ Avoid **predictable patterns**.
- ✅ Use **surprise** to maintain control.

TPM Note:
This high-risk strategy, it alienates potential allies and encourages plots against you. Despots frequently meet an early demise (de Mesquita, 2003)

Law 18: Do Not Build a Fortress—Isolation is Dangerous

Connection is strength.

Isolation cuts you off from allies and information and makes you an easy target.

- ✅ Stay **engaged** with your network.
- ✅ Build **alliances** for power.

Law 19: Know Who You're Dealing With—Do Not Offend the Wrong Person

Understand others' temperaments to avoid costly conflicts.

- ✅ **Study people** before acting.
- ❌ Avoid provoking those with **nothing to lose**.

Law 20: Do Not Commit to Anyone

Independence is leverage.

Stay neutral to maintain flexibility and power.

- ✕ Avoid **predictable alliances**.
- ✓ Be **courted by all sides**.

Law 21: Play a Sucker to Catch a Sucker—Seem Dumber Than Your Mark

Feigned weakness disarms.

Pretending to be less competent lulls others into revealing their plans.

- ✓ **Appear harmless** to flatter egos.
- ✓ Exploit their **overconfidence**.

> "Let their arrogance be their downfall."

Law 22: Use the Surrender Tactic—Transform Weakness into Power

Yield to gain.

Strategic surrender buys time and confuses enemies.

- ✓ Use **temporary retreat** to plan counterattacks.
- ✓ Leverage **patience** for victory.

> "Timing turns weakness into strength."

Law 23: Concentrate Your Forces

Focus is power.

Channel energy into your strongest opportunities.

- ✕ Avoid **spreading resources thin**.
- ✓ Prioritize **intense effort**.

> "Concentration overcomes obstacles."

Law 24: Play the Perfect Courtier

Charm influences subtly.

Master court politics with adaptability and grace.

- ✓ Use **charm** to influence superiors.
- ✓ Advance goals **discreetly**.

Law 25: Re-Create Yourself

Define your identity.

Craft a persona that commands respect and attention.

- ✅ Build a **powerful image**.
- ❌ Avoid being **defined by others**.

> "Self-reinvention maintains power through changing contexts."

Law 26: Keep Your Hands Clean

Reputation is your shield.

Stay above reproach by using proxies for controversial actions.

- ✅ Use **scapegoats** to avoid blame.
- ✅ Protect your **image** zealously.

Law 27: Play on People's Need to Believe

Tap into desires for purpose to build a following.

- ✅ Use **simple, emotional messaging**.
- ✅ Create an **us-versus-them** dynamic.

> "People crave a cause to follow."

Law 28: Enter Action with Boldness

Hesitation breeds doubt. Act decisively to intimidate and inspire.

- ✅ Move with **confidence**.
- ❌ Avoid **timidity** at all costs.

> "Boldness is the lifeblood of power."

Law 29: Plan All the Way to the End

Foresight is control.

- ✅ Plan for **all contingencies**.

- ✅ Control events through **vision**.

> "Power demands preparation."

Law 30: Make Your Accomplishments Seem Effortless

Ease inspires awe.

Hide the effort behind your successes to look more powerful (law of social effort).

- ✅ Present work with **grace**.
- ❌ Avoid revealing **toil**.

TPM Note:
In modern contexts, showcasing dedication can also inspire respect.

Law 31: Control the Options—Get Others to Play Your Game

Frame the choices.

Manipulate options so all paths lead to your goal.

- ✅ Offer **controlled choices**.
- ✅ Ensure outcomes **favor you**.

> "Control the game, control the power."

📖 Read more on frame control techniques.

Law 32: Play to People's Fantasies

Dreams bind followers.

Offer idealized visions over harsh truths to gain loyalty.

- ✅ Tap into **desires and dreams**.
- ❌ Avoid **blunt realities**.

Law 33: Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew

Weaknesses are leverage.

Find others' vulnerabilities for control.

- ✅ Study **insecurities** carefully.
- ✅ Use weaknesses to **gain influence**.

> "Know their flaws, own their actions."

Law 34: Be Royal in Your Own Fashion—Act Like a King

Confidence commands respect.

Carry yourself with pride to be treated as powerful.

- ✅ Set **high standards** for yourself.
- ✅ Demand **respect** through demeanor.

> "Act the part, and others believe it."

TPM Note:
Once powerful or famous, this law often inverts. See for example Steve Jobs' career: formal as a junior employee, then casual to signal agentic focus.

Powerless Jobs (left) and powerful Jobs (right)

Law 35: Master the Art of Timing

Timing is everything.

Know when to act and when to wait for maximum impact.

- ✅ Be **patient** but ready to seize moments.
- ❌ Avoid **rushing or delaying**.

Law 36: Disdain Things You Cannot Have

Dismiss what you can't have to reduce its hold over you.

- ✅ **Ignore insults** or unattainable goals.
- ✅ Show **detachment** to maintain control.

> "Indifference is the ultimate revenge."

Law 37: Create Compelling Spectacles

Use dramatic displays to amplify your power.

- ✅ Employ **symbolism** and rituals.
- ✅ Make your presence **larger than life**.

> "People believe what they see."

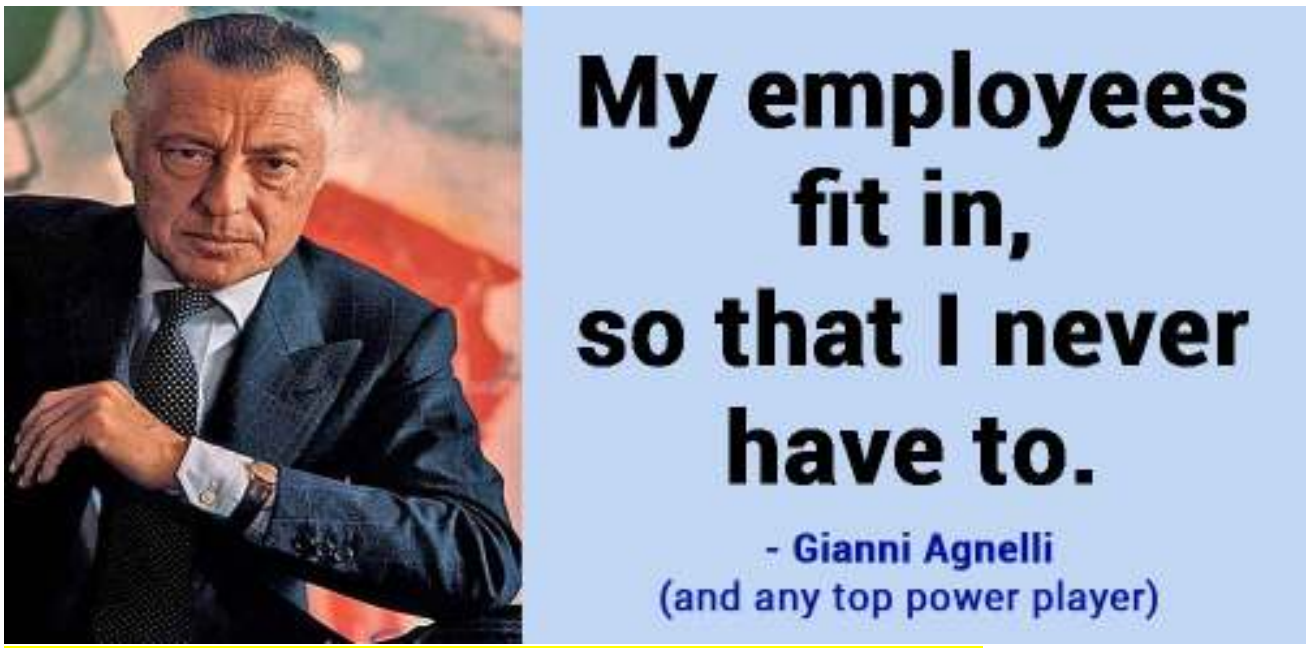
Law 38: Think as You Like, But Behave Like Others

Blend in outwardly while keeping your true thoughts private.

- ❌ Avoid **standing out** too soon.
- ✅ Strike when the **moment is right**.

> "Blend in, then dominate."

TPM Note:
Strategic nonconformity can signal independence and status.



One cue of going against the crowd captures attention and signals a sense of superiority

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Law 39: Stir Up Waters to Catch Fish

Chaos creates opportunity.

Disrupt rivals' composure to gain the upper hand.

- ✅ Provoke **emotional reactions**.
- ✅ Exploit **disarray** for control.

Law 40: Despise the Free Lunch

Independence is power.

Avoid obligations by paying your own way.

- ✅ Reject **gifts** with hidden costs.
- ✅ Maintain **self-reliance**.

> "Free gifts come with strings."

Law 41: Avoid Stepping Into a Great Man's Shoes

Forge your own path.

Create your legacy instead of imitating others.

- ✅ Build a **unique identity**.
- ❌ Avoid **living in shadows**.

> "Innovation trumps replication."

Law 42: Strike the Shepherd and the Sheep Will Scatter

Target the source.

Neutralize leaders to dismantle their followers.

- ✅ Focus on the **source of influence**.
- ✅ Weaken opposition through **strategic strikes**.

> "Take out the head, the body follows."

Law 43: Work on the Hearts and Minds of Others

Charm over force.

Win loyalty through emotional appeal, not coercion.

- ✅ Use **empathy** to build alliances.
- ❌ Avoid **force** to prevent resistance.

Law 44: Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect

Reflect others' actions to confuse or unsettle them.

- ✅ Use **imitation** to unsettle rivals.
- ✅ Reveal weaknesses through **reflection**.

Law 45: Preach Change, But Reform Slowly

Revolutionary zeal sparks backlash.

Introduce reforms gradually to avoid resistance.

- ✅ Respect **traditions** while innovating.
- ❌ Avoid **radical overhauls**.

Law 46: Never Appear Too Perfect

Minor flaws make you relatable and reduce envy.

- ✅ Show **small vulnerabilities**.
- ✅ Disarm **jealousy** with humility.

> "Perfection isolates; imperfection connects."

Law 47: Do Not Go Past the Mark—Know When to Stop

Stop at the height of success to avoid overreaching.

- ✅ Exercise **restraint** in victory.
- ❌ Avoid **greed** or overconfidence.

> "Overreaching leads to downfall."

Law 48: Assume Formlessness

Calibration is ultimate power.

Be flexible and unpredictable, like water, to stay powerful.

- ❌ Avoid **rigidity** in strategy.
- ✅ Embrace **fluidity** to outmaneuver.

> "Formlessness is the ultimate strategy."

Quotes

On resentment, jealousy, and *frenemies:*

> When you display your talents, you naturally stir all kinds of resentment, envy, and other manifestations of insecurity… you cannot spend your life worrying about the petty feelings of others

On leading with confidence:

> If you are unsure of a course of action, do not attempt it.
> Your doubts and hesitations will infect your execution. Timidity is dangerous: Better to enter with boldness

On work and friendship:

> Keep your friends for friendship, but work with the skilled and competent

On the dangers of victory:

> There is nothing more intoxicating than victory, and nothing more dangerous

On wasting time on other people's business:

> Never waste valuable time, or mental peace of mind, on the affairs of others—that is too high a price to pay

⁉ For more, see ‘best quotes on power‘.

Criticism & Limitations

⚠ **Applying these laws without calibration backfires**
The 48 Laws is a valid entry point for the ‘darker side’ of human nature and socialization, yet it’s not a how-to guide for life success, and can be misleading for beginners.

These dark psychology maxims are not laws but **generalizations that, without intelligent calibration, may harm more than they help** — leading to loss of power, leverage, and relationships instead of gains.

PROS	CONS
Valid maxims and effective *in certain contexts*	**Lacks true power principles** and lacks required calibration
Dark realism	**Over-cynicism**: cooperation & quality relationships matter
Tactical examples and case studies	**Lacks frameworks and strategies** to provide deeper guidance
Wake-up call for naive and too-nice guys	**Doesn’t build skills to deliver results** and lacks how-tos
Captivating storytelling	**Unscientific**

Unscientific and Anecdotal

The laws rely on historical anecdotes, not empirical data. Several of these laws are contradicted by scientific research.

Power Principles & Calibration Are Missing (Maxims, Not ‘Laws’)

While Greene lists good and bad examples, the book prioritizes catchy generalizations over effective calibration.

For example, ‘say less than necessary’ fails during group formation, where talkativeness affords leadership (MacLaren et al., 2020).

The maxims also don’t map to general principles but are either too specific or too abstract.
Examples of principle-derived ‘laws’ would be:

- ⚖ **Calibrate your dominance level to your target’s dominance**, for optimum balance between disempowering or overpowering others (from the ‘Net Effect Principle™ of interpersonal power dynamics)
- ⚖ **Never give too much without getting back**, or you self-frame as lower value (from the Compensatory Investment Principle™ of Social Investment Theory)

Over-Cynicism is Ineffective

A healthy dose of cynicism is helpful, but *over*-cynicism is ineffective because it can lead to cooperation breakdown.

No Skills & ‘How Tos’ = Little Results

While it can provide an important wake-up call and kickstart power awareness, it doesn’t install necessary ‘modules’ like calibration, calculativeness, or strategic thinking.

Even valid laws, like ‘assume formlessness’, offer philosophical flair but not actionable advice.
Examples of ‘how tos’ woud be:

- How to handle a manipulator
- How to prepare for betrayal with self-defense strategies
- What to do when someone makes you wait, a common power move

Frameworks Are Missing: It Lacks Foundational Guidance

The book provides many *tactics*, but it's not a guide because it lacks unified *frameworks* for acquiring power.

Key frameworks would be:

- **Smart cooperation**: get the benefits of win-win, minimizing risks
- **Power and warmth** as a baseline approach to socialization to get the best from both dominance and agreeableness
- **Foundational strategies of social success** as guiding principles for strategic decision-making

Mentally Low Power in Some 'Laws': Not For Top-1%

Beginners may fail to see that several laws can put them in a *low* power mental frame.
See the different mindsets:

Law	Low-Power Signal	High Power Mindset
Never Outshine the Master	The master determines your destiny	*I can leapfrog the boss or become an entrepreneur*
Never Appear Too Perfect	It's important others like you	*I don't need others to like me to win*
Play the Perfect Courtier	Be yielding because staying in the court is crucial	*I want to be my own king*
Avoid Stepping into a Great Man's Shoes	You'll look bad by comparison	*I can be greater than my predecessor*

Some others are *covertly* low power. For example, 'keeping others dependent on you' in relationships matters most to men who feel *lower* value and are low in self-sufficiency.

This is important because **high-power men are approach-oriented and don't think defensively**.
For example, studies in narcissism show that unsuccessful narcissists are threat-focused while successful ones are rewards-oriented.

Read more:

- **Laws of Power for Top-0.1% Players**

See a deeper analysis of some laws here:

Dive deeper here:

- 48 Laws of Power Criticism, a deeper critical review of *The 48 Laws of Power*
- ⁉️ How I broke the 48 laws and won ↗: a video example of *breaking* the 'laws' and winning

About the Author: Robert Greene

Robert Greene, trained in classical studies, is a bestselling author of books on power and manipulation dynamics.

Greene works primarily as a historical curator of power stories, and not as a behavioral researcher. The historical

angle has its merits, yet the lack of empirical grounding can be a limitation.
Some of Greene's laws draw on *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, which may reduce their originality for readers familiar with Gracián's work.

⍰ Strengths (Pros)	⍰ Limitations (Cons)
Power aware	**Limited real-life experience** in seduction and power
Well-read	**Unscientific**: history & non-empirical psychoanalysis
Intelligent author	**Lacks frameworks** to go from insightful tactics to achieving goals

Lucio's Take: Can a Geek Teach You Power?

> **Lucio**:
> It's an uncomfortable question we must ask.
> Before this book, there is little evidence that Robert Greene had much experience or succes with power or seduction, and his work has little empirical evidence.
> However, his power awareness helps make up for those limitations.

Paradox of Practice: The Laws Didn't Work for the Author?

Much of the author's success appears to have come from *writing* about the laws rather than successfully *applying* them.

Mj DeMarco calls this 'paradox of practice'. If the author himself couldn't successfully use the laws, can you really trust the 'laws' practical efficacy?

Learn more:

- **Robert Greene**: how authoritative is he?
- ⍰ Analyzing Greene's Modern Change: Morality vs Real-World Power (video)

48 Laws FAQs

What are The 48 Laws of Power?

The 48 Laws of Power is a list of strategic maxims authored by Robert Greene in 1998. The "laws" are derived from historical anecdotes involving figures like Machiavelli, Sun Tzu, and P.T. Barnum. While presented as immutable rules for success, many of the laws function as **Dogmatic Maxims**—simplistic shortcuts to complex social problems that require careful calibration in modern, high-stakes environments.

What is the 48 Laws of Power book about?

The 48 Laws of Power is a book on "amoral" social strategy. The book is about the mechanics of gaining, observing, and defending in competitive hierarchies. Unlike traditional self-help, it focuses on **Dark Psychology** and offensive maneuvers. However, the book's primary value is as an "eye-opener" to social predation; for actual mastery, the anecdotal "laws" must be upgraded to **Evidence-Based Principles** and **Calibrated Nuance**.

What is the most important law in The 48 Laws of Power?

Law 48 (Assume Formlessness) is the most important because it warns the reader that all the previous laws are contextual and require strategic sophistication to be applied successfully.

The book sold well because it's engaging and easy to read while addressing uncomfortable truths about human nature that most self-help books long avoided.

What books are similar to The 48 Laws of Power?

Robert Greene's *The Art of Seduction* and *The 33 Strategies of War* are similar. *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* is most similar, *Influence* is more scientific, and Power University, although not a book, includes a full module on dark triad strategies and provides a clear framework for men's success.
Full list of books like the 48 Laws ↗

TPM Review

The book is an **excellent beginner's entry point** into power awareness, but it's **far from a complete or reliable manual.**
Greene curates stories brilliantly, yet **many laws are generalizations that backfire without social calibration** and strategic predisposition.

It's a book we loved and **highly recommend to the right audiences**, but we add the caveat that **it's not an equally effective guide for real-world success,** and it may set beginners off-path.

We rate it high not because it's a perfect manual—it's often flawed and unscientific—but because it is captivating, valuable for the right audiences, and one of the most popular primers for power awareness.

Who Should Read The 48 Laws

For	Not For
Beginners as a first step into strategy and power dynamics	**Beginners who stop here** (they'll misapply the laws)
Naive men as a wake up call	**Cynical men** who must prioritize their cooperative game
Too nice-guys	**High-IQ Machiavellians** who are already beyond this book
The Power Moves readers will find similarities and know how to put it in perspective	TPM critics will find *The 48 Laws* equally or more unappealing

48 Laws of Power: Mastery Hub

We've personally analyzed every law and tested and studied their real-world application.
This Mastery Hub gathers our complete ecosystem of summaries, scientific critiques, and advanced resources for applying—and outgrowing—the 48 Laws of Power.

Quick References

- 48 Laws of Power List
- Cheat Sheet
- Chapter-by-chapter summary

Applying the Laws

- How to apply the laws in modern settings
- 48 Laws for Top-0.1% men
- 48 Laws for Honorable Leaders

Similar to the Laws

- Books like the 48 Laws of Power (or better)
- Best books on power
- Power University vs 48 Laws of Power

Achieving Results with the Laws

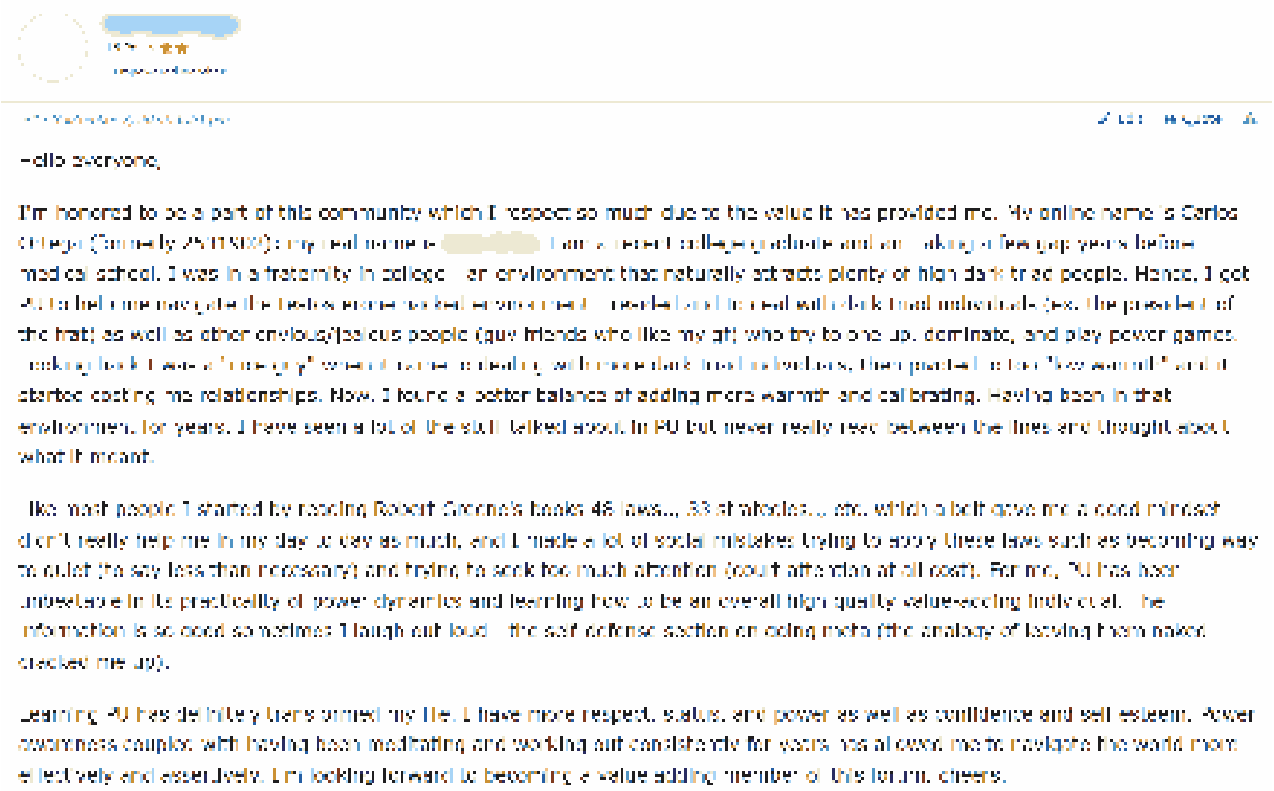
- Why the 48 Laws don't work (and what does)
- Why the 48 Laws are wrong: a scientific and advanced power drill-down of the laws

FAQs About the laws

- Why is the 48 laws so popular
- Is the 48 laws of power evil?

Beyond The Laws: Real-World Power Skills That Work

The 48 Laws of Power is an excellent primer, and several members of our community successful used it as springboard to TPM's offering:


Like most people I started by reading Robert Greene's books 48 laws.., 33 strategies.., etc. which albeit gave me a good mindset didn't really help me in my day-to-day as much, and I made a lot of social mistakes trying to apply these laws such as becoming way to quiet (to say less than necessary) and trying to seek too much attention (court attention at all cost). For me, PU has been unbeatable in its practicality of power dynamics and learning how to be an overall high quality value-adding individual. The information is so good sometimes I laugh out loud. The self defense section on ego mode (the analogy of leaving them naked cracked me up).

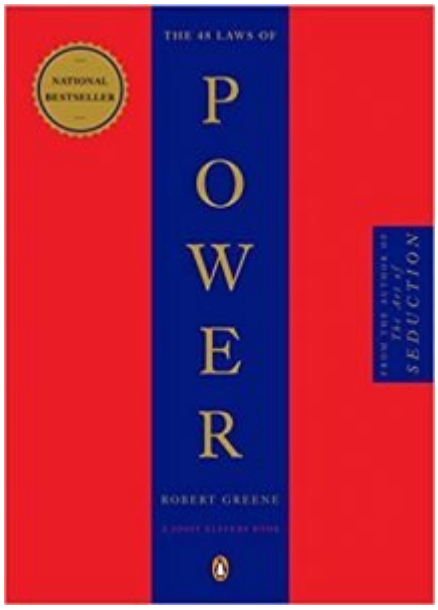
Learning PU has definitely turned my life. I have more respect, status, and power as well as confidence and self esteem. Power awareness coupled with having been meditating and working out consistently for years has allowed me to navigate the world more effectively and assertively. I'm looking forward to becoming a value adding member of this forum. Cheers.

> Like most people I started by reading Robert Greene's books **48 laws**.., 33 strategies.., etc. which albeit gave me a good mindset **didn't really help me in my day-to-day as much**, and I made a lot of social mistakes trying to apply these laws such as becoming way to quiet (to say less than necessary) and trying to seek too much attention (court attention at all cost). For me, **PU has been unbeatable in its practicality of power dynamics and learning how to be an overall high quality value-adding individual.**
>
> *PU alumnus introduction*

Check it out for yourself:

Check Power University

The 48 Laws of Power: Lucio's Take



Popular book on power dynamics and the "darker side" of human nature. Greene lists 48 Machiavellian-sounding "laws" with historial anecdotes and superb prose. WARNING: it's NOT a guide. Most of these maxims have specific and limited applications and endless exceptions.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/48-laws-of-power-summary/

Author: Robert Greene

Editor's Rating:
4

Body Language: Review (David Cohen)

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*Body Language*" explains how to properly communicate nonverbally and it's mostly aimed at public speakers.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Body Language Summary
  - Words are more than 7%
  - Displacement Activities
  - Proper Eye Contact
  - What Your Hairstyle Says About You
  - Handshake
  - More Movements = More Dominance
  - Extroverts VS Introverts
  - Relationships and dominance
  - Relationships and communication
  - How to Read People's Lies
  - Smile + Trust
- Review

Exec Summary

- Words are more than 7%
- Gesticulating more, more eye contact, and more facial expressions are linked to dominance
- Extroverts get aroused faster

Body Language Summary

About The Author: David Cohen is a *body language* expert and a communication skills coach.

Words are more than 7%

David Cohen quickly dispels the most misunderstood and misquoted experiment ever.

The one from Albert Mehrabian states that words are only 7% of communication.

Just imagine this: if you told someone they're terribly unpleasant with a smile, positive body language, and an upbeat tone of voice, is the message going to be 93% positive?

Probably not, right?
And that's why words are more than a mere 7%.

Also, read "pop-psychology myths" and "self-help myths".

Displacement Activities

David Cohen calls "displacement activities" what some others in the literature called "adapters" and what Joe Navarro calls "pacifying behaviors".

Comparing displacement activities to the ostrich burying its head in the sad, Cohen says that the displacement activities don't necessarily make the situation any better, they only help *us* feel better.

He says that animals usually appear when they are torn between two opposing drives.
For example, wanting to mate but being deterred by a bigger opponent.

Proper Eye Contact

David Cohen says that the gazing behavior, or how much we look at other people's eyes, is determined by culture.

As a rule of thumb, in the Western world if you look too little in someone's eyes you might be perceived as deceitful and shifty.
If you look too much you can be viewed as domineering.

As a rule of thumb, **we are comfortable if the other person's gaze meets ours 60-70% of the time**.

Albeit we are told to look at people in the eyes usually the person who is speaking looks away more than the person who is listening.

Much research indeed shows it gets uncomfortable if you look at them too much, so a skilled speaker will only spend around 40% of the time making eye contact.

Bottom line:

If you are the speaker only spend around 40% of the time looking at the people you are speaking to.

Most episodes of direct gaze will last between one and four seconds.

Eye contact also signals that you're almost done speaking.

So the rule of thumb is: look more at them when they're speaking, less when you're speaking.

What Your Hairstyle Says About You

The author says:

- short and tussles hair on a woman communicates confidence and an outgoing personality, but not sexiness
- Medium-length hair suggests intelligence and good nature
- Long hair projects sexuality and affluence.

Handshake

Handshake is huge in body language, here is what Cohen says about it:

- **Double Handshake**

Cohen says that cupping your shaking hand with your other hand can be perceived as motherly, controlling, or too intimidating.

The exception is if there's a big gap in status between the two people shaking hands, in which case it's seen as a sign the person cares (example of Bill Clinton).

- **Handshake length**

The perfect length of time is 2.7 seconds. Too brief a handshake can signal anxiety

More Movements = More Dominance

People who make strong, definite movements are seen as more dominant.

People are also seen as more dominant when they gesticulate more, make more eye contact, and show more animation on their faces.

Submissive women also tend to stay in the same posture for longer, while women who move more are seen as dominant.

Extroverts VS Introverts

Extroverts tend to have fewer inhibitions about entering personal spaces.

Introverts will be more awkward about allowing people into their personal spaces.
Men who are perceived as cold tend to be given more personal space.

Extroverts are more impatience, get bored more easily, and also get aroused faster.
Introverts are slower instead, which would make them better lovers… If they didn't also get more anxious :).

The risk of an extrovert is that he might move too quickly for an introvert.

Also, read:

- Quiet the power of introverts
- Are you an ambivert

Relationships and dominance

Since I deal with power dynamics, this was one of the most interesting chapters for me.

Cohen says that:

- The person who drives most often in a couple will be the most dominant one in the relationship.
- When a couple is at the checkout and they forgot something, the person who stays is the dominant one as he or she has effectively sent the other one to fetch and carry.

Most interesting for me, was the author quoting an article on high-flying career women.
The women were used to being the boss at work, but the moment they got home they wanted to relax, and they relaxed by being submissive to their man -particularly in bed-.

Cohen says there's no dominance in flirtation, it's more like a dance.

> **Successful women behave submissively at home**

Relationships and communication

Cohen says that when a woman complains to the man "you're not listening" and the man says he's actually listening, they're both right.

Why the divide, then?

Women, use more "aha", "uhu" and other perfunctory sounds to show they're listening.

Men think those are signs of impatience instead, so they don't use them as much.

Result: men are listening but they don't communicate they are listening and women think they're not.
Vanessa van Edwards also says that men should use more "aha" when speaking to women.

How to Read People's Lies

Cohen talks about NLP and mentions a colleague saying it's not easy assessing if someone's lying by looking at

where their eyes go.

Eyelashes flutter means the person does not like the question.

There are 6 cues to spot liars:

1. fidgeting
2. cues suggesting you're reticent or withdrawing from the situation (ie.: looking down)
3. behaviors that are very different from your normal behaviors
4. behaviors suggesting you dislike what you're doing
5. cues showing underlying vagueness -hesitating before saying something-
6. incongruous messages

+

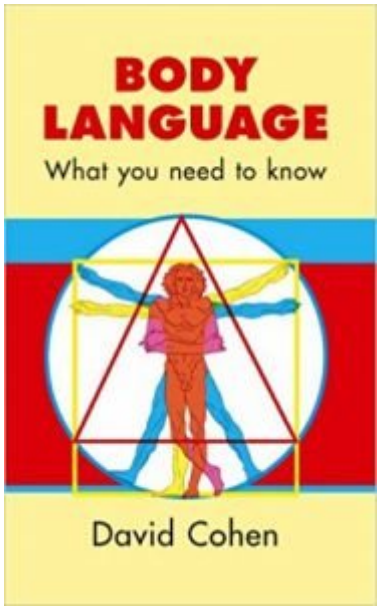
1. less "I" or "mine"
2. less emotional words such as angry or hurt

Self-confident people tend to lie better when they're under pressure and, funny enough, the author says attractive people tend to lie better (?).

Smile + Trust

We trust people who smile more than people who don't.

Politicians who smile more get more votes (Example: Bush and Al Gore).



Review

Reviews for "*Body Language*" on Amazon are not great and I can see the point in some of them.

The "out-breath/in-breath" part, for example, didn't make too much sense to me, and it dragged on for too long.

However, I enjoyed "*Body Language*" by David Cohen.
I learned a lot of new things and I appreciate he is not afraid of being politically incorrect and saying things how they are (ie.: career women behaving submissively in the relationship).

I also liked the author's calm voice and "nondefinitive" approach to information, such as presenting findings without

implying they were truths cast in stone.

Get Body Language on Amazon.

Protected: Alpha Male Battles: Case Study (McGregor VS Mayweather)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

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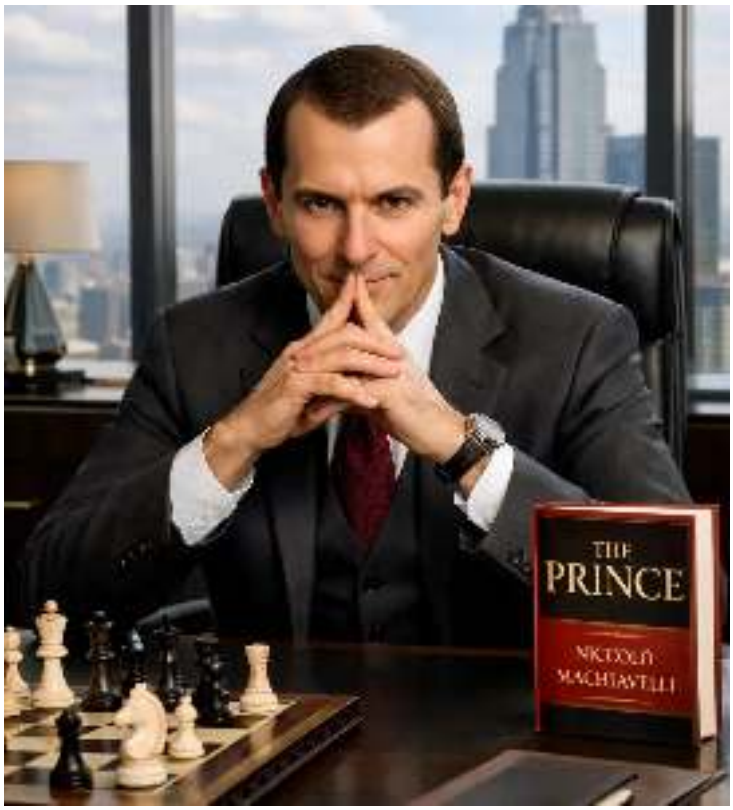
17 Steps to Neutralize a Toxic Boss (The Machiavellian Blueprint)

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Terrible bosses can make life terrible for most employees, but empowered and strategic employees do not have to suffer.

In this article we share strategies and techniques to handle toxic bosses and come out winning.

This article is for legitimately poor bosses whom everyone benefits from removing
We do not stand for toxic behavior, dishonorable vendettas when delivering poor work, or petty grievances. We are here to help good men win. The more Machiavellian notes in yellow boxes are descriptive and not prescriptive and we share them for self-defense.



Contents

- Basics of Dealing With a Bad Boss
  - #1. Know Your Rights
  - #2. Record His Policy Violations
  - #3. Never Seem Like A Threat
  - #4. Record Sick Leaves
  - #5. Keep Your Hands Clean
- Lifestyle Solutions: Live On Your Terms
  - #6. You’re Not The Boss’s Victim
  - #7. Develop Options: Networking
  - #8. Increase Your Financial Independence
  - 9. Be So Good They Can’t Sack You
  - #10. Become a Hardened Target (Porcupine Strategy)
  - #11. Turn Colleagues Into Allies

- Mindsets: Thank God For The Bad Boss
  - #12. You're Free
  - #13. Win The Mental War: Act, Don't React
  - #14. Boss? You Don't Have a Boss!
  - #15. Reframe It: Your Chance To Learn
- Careful With General Advice
  - 1. Talk to Him
  - 2. Talk To His Boss
  - Superior Strategies

Basics of Dealing With a Bad Boss

The three main basics of dealing with terrible bosses are:

- **Increase your power base** with good work, larger and higher-value network, fallback options
- **Record all of your boss' infractions**
- **Make friends with your peers** to ensure you're not, and are not seen, as the problem
- **Keep mental power:** Control your mind to control your environment

#1. Know Your Rights

> Who lets bad bosses trample on their rights? Those who don't know their rights

Almost anywhere, there's a large gap between what's legal and how things are done. Fortunately, toxic bosses are often way on the wrong side of the law.
Start by knowing your legal rights, your boss's legal rights, and, most of all, what matters in a court of law:

1. Consult a lawyer: a 200€ employment lawyer consultation can pay back 100x or more
2. Find a lawyer: *before* you need one. Knowing you got someone to call on will give you huge confidence. Consider getting legal insurance too
3. Research online: in the information age, the only upper limit is people's laziness. Luckily for you, that's quite a low bar
4. Ask: ask those who've already been there. Process, timelines, hurdles…?

Start today.
Research and consultation won't take you longer than a week of easy work and it will serve you for a lifetime.

#2. Record His Policy Violations

Record all evidence of your boss's law-breaking behavior.

For example, based on the information you gather, is it illegal in your jurisdiction to:

- **Work on weekends?** If not, don't necessarily reject his reach-outs, but record them instead.
- **Work longer than 10h a day?** Log your work schedule with laptops and back up all emails you receive before and after the 10h mark that require immediate action.
- **Work during holidays?** Don't pick up the phone if he calls, but let him use emails instead.
- **The big blunders**: Sometimes a single big move is all it takes. For example, toxic people tend to reveal their

true nature when alcohol is flowing. Many poor bosses revealed their true selves when they got sloppy at company parties.

Note:
be careful about what counts as evidence and what carries more weight.
In some countries, it's OK to record conversations; in others, it's illegal. Do texts count as much as emails?
That's all info you need to know and that's why you consult an employment lawyer within your jurisdiction.

Some highly Machiavellian employees make themselves verbally available for weekend work, late-night emails, or holiday calls, then quietly document every instance of the boss crossing those exact legal lines, building a log of violations.

#3. Never Seem Like A Threat

Robert Greene in *The 48 Laws of Power* suggests playing a sucker to catch a sucker.

If you appear overly litigious or high-strung, your manipulative boss will go underground. Instead, predators become careless when the prey is naive.

Machiavellian employees sometimes purposefully look cooperative and non-confrontational to make superiors and colleagues relax their standards, while they quietly document problematic behavior.

#4. Record Sick Leaves

> *Which enemy is easy to beat? The one the jury will hate*

If stress has become a medical liability, share your health concerns with your physician.

In most countries, you don't report the exact illness to your employer. Don't volunteer it. Record if he keeps chasing you while on medical leave.

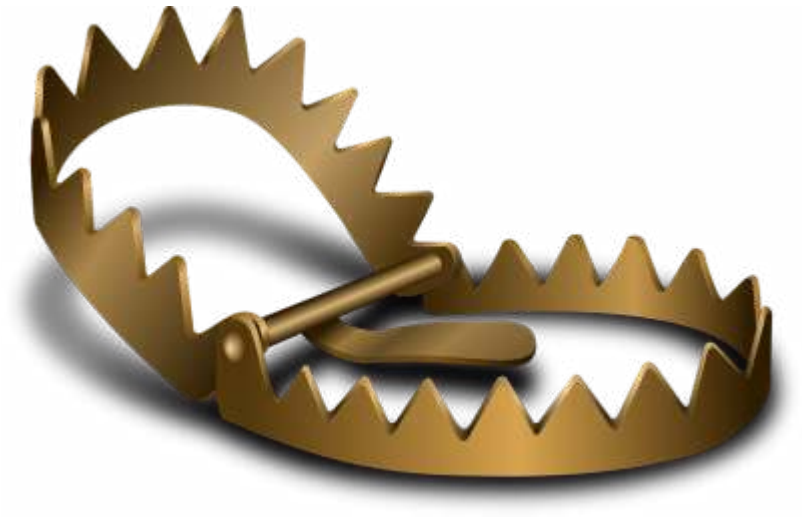
Some highly cunning players may visit doctors while visibly run-down during critical deadlines, attribute symptoms to workplace issues in medical records, but downplay the sickness to the boss so he keeps contacting them — creating a trail of chase logs during sickness.

#5. Keep Your Hands Clean

> *Which enemy is unassailable? The one you can't see. No evidence, no case*

As your toxic boss leaves evidence of his toxic behavior, you stay irreprehensible:

- BYOD: bring your own device for your personal stuff. Use work equipment *only* for work stuff
- Do good work, something you should always be doing anyway
- Follow all guidelines about passwords, filing processes, etc.



Lifestyle Solutions: Live On Your Terms

Right now you have problems dealing with a bad boss because you have yet to fix deeper issues in your life.

Fix those same root causes and you will fix most other problems you have.

#6. You're Not The Boss's Victim

> *Who is a victim? Him who think of himself as a victim*

Let's face it dead on.

You're a grown-up in a free world.

Why are you a victim at all? **If you've been at the mercy of a bad boss for too long *you* allowed it**. Thinking of anything else is the equivalent of giving up to your oppressor the power to oppress you.

Are you really willing to give all that power over you to some frustrated mid-level manager?

Extreme ownership mentality, such as accepting that you are responsible for everything happening in your life is hard to accept at first, but once you embrace it will set you free.

Once you accept that *you* put yourself in a victim position it will also mean that *you* have the power to take yourself out of it.

Starting from now: you're a free man in a free world, you can move at any time and you can change your circumstances however you see fit. Internalize that psychology and let's start to give you practical options.

#7. Develop Options: Networking

> *Who stays a victim of bad bosses? Those with no other options*

How do you stay in control of any relationship?

By not needing them.

You might *want* them, and you *should* want any relationship you're in, but you are able to walk out and find other opportunities if the other party crosses your boundaries.

Developing options in the work environment means:

- Know everyone in your industry: meet up, events, trade shows
- Know every competitor in your city
- Make friends with HR
- Know every other boss in your organization (you could work for)

There are plenty of resources on how to network, including Ferrazzi's *"Never Eat Alone"*.
But the quick tip here is to follow that suggestion: always use lunch for networking and make as many contacts as possible.

Upper-management contacts empower you to potentially have toxic bosses removed

#8. Increase Your Financial Independence

> *Who's afraid of bad bosses? Those who can't pay rent if they get sacked*

Financial independence is a game-changer.

Not only to deal with abusive bosses but also for your own self-confidence and happiness.

While the capacity to generate your own income at will is invaluable, the minimal goal is much lower.
Save enough that you can survive for at least 6 months without any income.

That's the minimum threshold to give you the confidence of standing up for yourself.

Here are some ideas for you to consider:

- Have friends or a partner who could host you, just in case
- Rent out space: rent (or own) a flat with several rooms and rent them out for a profit
- Save money: as simple as that, money *is* power. Save some power for rainy days
- Golden parachute: arrange for a good severance package, use all the legal hacks above

9. Be So Good They Can't Sack You

> *Who is at the mercy of the queen? The little value adding pawns*

The simplest, and possibly the most useful "hack" is as simple as that: be(come) great at what you do.

Call it however you want, but make it so that losing you is losing an invaluable member of the team.

Deliver so much value that anyone will be afraid at the thought of you leaving.
Do so much that everyone in your organization knows you're the man.

If you take this strategy to the extreme you can become more useful to the company than your own boss is!
And **when you become more useful than your boss, then you hold the power**.

When that happens, guess who is actually afraid of escalating?

So don't complain, don't wait… Start today with a single-minded goal: become the best at what you do.

#10. Become a Hardened Target (Porcupine Strategy)

> *Who do bullies pick on? People who can't defend*

It doesn't matter if you're the biggest tiger, the king of the Savannah, or the deadliest snake on earth.

Nobody's gonna swallow a porcupine.

Even if on paper they are less powerful porcupines make it hard -and painful- for any wannabe assailant, and that makes them strong.

Similarly, you wanna make your boss feel the sting every time he disrespects you.
That's operant conditioning and trust that, like Pavlov's dog, he'll soon think twice before harassing you.

Here's a great example:

- How to deal with a boss yelling at you

Just remember: timid reaction calls for harder put-downs. Bold moves take the fire out for good.

#11. Turn Colleagues Into Allies

> *Who's easy to pick on? The lonely one with no friends*

Phil Jackson said:

> The biggest challenge of leadership is keeping the guys who hate you away from those who are undecided.

He is right, and that applies mostly to *toxic* bosses.
Make friends with others, see if they share your concerns. You don't need to spread hatred; you simply need to put everyone on the same page.

Let them vent, but never let your complaints be bigger than theirs and never talk like a victim: victims can never be leaders.
The correct frame is this:

> "This company/team has such great potential, we could do so much more with a better leader

If most of the team wants the despot gone and you remain a high-quality, honorable man, you may be ready for a promotion.

Power in unity. Disapproval in isolation has no bargaining power (Blau, 1964).
Instead, Machiavellian employees develop informal networks within the team and manage the shared narrative. They create informal coalitions of employees who share similar concerns so that the boss's removal becomes the group's shared goal.
Clusters of negative reviews may sometimes appear on employee-review platforms to undermine a poor leader and signal broader dissatisfaction.

Mindsets: Thank God For The Bad Boss

Competition is often more mental than physical.

So let's see the mental aspects of dealing with a terrible boss:

#12. You're Free

> *Who's happy in spite of everything? You!*

Imagine a place where you'd like to be.

A white sand beach. A snowy mountain. A happy ending massage in Thailand. Or a sunset on the ocean.

Because you can go there. You can live that. Any time you choose. Any. Time.

Your bad boss simply doesn't have the power to make your life miserable in a free world.

#13. Win The Mental War: Act, Don't React

> *He who makes the other react controls the game.*

Tim Grover says that top performers make others measure up to them, not the other way around.

Don't ask yourself how to deal with a bad boss then, think how hard it will be for him to deal with *you* instead. This is mostly a mental attitude of course.

It's crucial not just to deal with a bad boss, but in life, that you stand guard at the gates of your mind. Do not allow anyone to drag you down or spoil your mood. This is your mind, YOU call the shots there.

- Meditate
- Ask empowering questions
- Smile at how much better you're becoming thanks to him

Do anything, but retain control of your mind and emotions and keep it positive and constructive.

#14. Boss? You Don't Have a Boss!

> *You never have to deal with a bad boss if you never have a boss*

Let's be honest here:

Having a POS of a boss is demeaning.

Never mentally accept leadership from a dishonorable man just because his picture sits above yours in some meaningless org chart.

One of the best pieces of advice I got from Brian Tracey is that **you always think of yourself as your own boss**. You are the president of your own corporation.

If you have a boss, your boss is your final result only.

You're in:

- **Sales?** The customers are your boss. They're the ones who pay you.

- **Research?** Are you researching to make our lives better or are you researching to please your boss? Please get your priorities straight because we really need you to be in the former category.
- **Customer Relationship**? Are you making your customers happy or your boss? Please the former, this world really needs people who can make our lives better.

#15. Reframe It: Your Chance To Learn

> *Smooth sailing won't carry you to greatness. Harsh seas and high waves will*

Let the victims of this world complain about their hard, hard life.

But not you.

Stoicism is helpful here.
Find the silver lining in the hardships of his life because you know hardships are exactly what make you stronger and build your character.

A bad boss is your chance of putting into practice skills that will make you a more empowered man.

High moral ground reframe: From a power and influence perspective, Machiavellian players can frame the neutralization of a truly toxic leader as a 'moral duty' and systemic correction. It's a "righteous mindset" that strengthens resolve and better recruits other people's help. They aren't 'destroying' a bad manager; they are the architects of a more functional environment.

Careful With General Advice

If you research online "how to deal with a bad boss" you will get, of course, a plethora of plain vanilla, ineffective recommendations.

Some of them are actually counterproductive.
So here's what you shouldn't hed from the popular (and poor) common advice:

1. Talk to Him

> *People listen to actions, not words. Don't plead when you can act*

I gotta laugh at this advice.

Next thing you know someone will recommend you to pray and turn your cheek.

Sure, 3% of the time, with the right people and in the right situations it can be helpful.
But you don't make the rules with the exceptions.

Why "talk to your bad boss" is bad "strategy"?

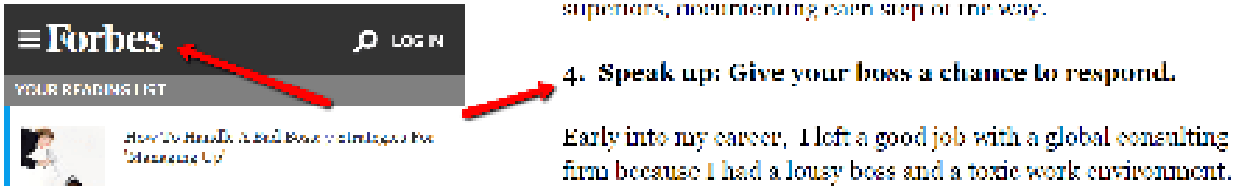
Because he wouldn't harass you if he knew any better and/or if he cared about you.
"talk to your bad boss" also presupposes a few things that are more likely to be false than true.

Such as:

- **He can take negative feedback**: Great people *take feedback* without taking it personally. But great people are *not* toxic bosses
- **He will listen**: High dark-triad individuals are notoriously resistant to change and treatment
- **He will "change":** Most people don't change, and it's likely even truer for toxic bosses

Here's what's more likely to happen when you "talk to him":

He will resent you: If there was a chance he didn't dislike you before, now he surely will.
He will blame you for any issue in the team: You're on the watch list. Kiss goodbye to any effective covert strategy. And if you do great work you only become more dangerous to him.



The Great Popular Advice

2. Talk To His Boss

Here's another popular piece of advice: "go talk to your boss".

What are you a kid pleading for daddy's protection?

Because that's exactly how you will sound.
As Dan Rust explains in *Workplace Poker*, upper management doesn't like people bringing up problems to them.

Also, be realistic: it's more likely that your boss will know you complained to his boss, and it will complicate matters further.

Exception:
Think execution, not a complaint. The time you go over a toxic boss's head is when you have enough power or can rally enough critical mass to oust him.

Superior Strategies

For the full blueprint on how to move from defending against despots to becoming an unassailable and honorable leader, see:

Check Power University

The Art of Seduction: 23 Rules to Seduce Anyone (Book Summary & Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"The Art of Seduction (2001) is a provocative exploration of seduction as a blend of art, Machiavellian strategy, and manipulation, offering insights into the psychology of attraction and power.

Contents

- Foundational Rules
- Full Seduction Process
- Part I: The 9 Seducer Types
  - #1. Sirens
  - #2. The Rake
  - #3. Charmer
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  - #5. Ideal Lover
  - #6. Dandies
  - #7. Naturals
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  - #9. Stars
  - Anti-seducers
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  - Part 2: The Seductive Process
- Phase I: Separation
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- Phase III – The Precipice
- Phase IV – Moving In For The Kill
  - Appendix A: Seductive Environments
- CRITICISM
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Foundational Rules

- **Pick easy-to-seduce targets**, not just targets you like
- **Pick a target you *really* like** too -and never your same type-
- Seduction is about fantasy and idealization. **Provide an out-of-the-ordinary experience**

Full Seduction Process

About the Author:
Robert Greene is a popular author of books on power and strategy.

Although he doesn't have an educational background in psychology or sociology, he is an acute observer of power dynamics.
His other books include *"The 48 Laws of Power", "The Laws of Human Nature"* and *"The 50th Law"*.

🤔Can a geek teach you seduction?

Lucio:
Greene is not a prolific dater.
He still wrote one of the best seduction books available.
But if you're looking for practical strategies to improve your dating life today, his approach is not the most effective.

Part I: The 9 Seducer Types

The 9 seducer types are:

- Sirens
- Rakes
- Charmers
- Charismatics
- Ideal lovers
- Dandies
- Naturals
- Coquettes
- Stars

In the first part of *The Art of Seduction,* Robert Greene describes the personality types of the most successful seducers.
See here for the in-depth seducer types list.
And for a deeper overview of *male* seducer types, check out:

> 10 Types of Seducers Exlained: Pick Your Niche!

#1. Sirens

The siren is highly sexual, and confident, offering the promise of endless pleasure and a bit of danger.

Examples of sirens are Cleopatra and Marilyn Monroe.

Watch Marilyn Monroe here and read more on seduction here:

- How to seduce a man case study.
- How to make him crazy

Robert Greene says sirens are the most powerful seductresses as they operate on a man's most basic emotions, and these work on everyone.

Dangers of Sirens:

Members of the same sex can get jealous.

Example:

Robert Greene righteously talks about Marilyn Monroe's orgasmic faces. Here is an example for you:

#2. The Rake

The Rake insatiably adores the opposite sex, and their desire is infectious.

The Rake is a great female fantasy figure: **when he desires a woman he will do anything for her**. Sure he may be disloyal, but that only adds to his appeal.

The Rake is a guilty pleasure offering what society does not allow women: **an affair of pure pleasure** with the added bonus of danger.

To learn more about the rake type of seducers read:

- The psychology of womanizers
- How to spot a player
- Signs you're dating a fuckboy

#3. Charmer

Charmers want to please and know how to please: they are highly skilled social creatures.

Charmers seduce by removing themselves from the equation and taking full interest in their victims.
They will know what makes you tick, and understand your pains and… Your weaknesses. **Charmers make you feel understood** and they feel better about yourself.

The Dangers of Charm

Robert Greene righteously says that some people tend to view Charmers as slippery and deceitful.

Charmers must know then when to get rid of their flexibility and start acting inflexible.

Also, read:

- How to be charming (with video examples)

#4. Charismatic

Charisma is an exciting presence.

It comes from inner qualities that make you stand out. It can be confidence, sexual energy, a sense of purpose, or contentment.
Most people lack these qualities, and that's what draws them in.

- Read here *traits and video examples of charismatic men*

Contrary to Charmers, Charismatics thrived during turmoils, when they can show off their daring.
The examples in The Are of Seduction are Joan of Arc and Rasputin.

Dangers of Charisma

Charisma is as volatile as the emotions it creates, says Robert Greene.

#5. Ideal Lover

Ideal lovers thrive on broken dreams.

Do you long for adventures, romance, and losing yourself in the moment?

The Ideal Lover will reflect your fantasy.

Appeal to lofty ideals together with carnal desires and sexual affairs will become sense-engulfing love affairs.
The Ideal Lover is rare in the modern world because it takes much effort and time.

Dangers of Ideal Lover

You create a fantasy that involves the idealization of your own character. If your faults get in the way, you will destroy that fantasy.

#6. Dandies

Dandies like to play with their image, creating a striking and androgynous allure.

They live for pleasure and surround themselves with beauty.

The sexes *tend to have a chasm between them* and they don't understand each other. The Dandy is reassuring and feels comfortable for having similar traits.
The key is ambiguity: you are heterosexual, but you move delightfully back and forth between the two poles.

A difference with the Rake is that while the Rake's insolence is tied to conquering a woman, the insolence of the Dandy is aimed at society and conventions: it's not a woman he's trying to conquer, but a whole social world.

Example:
An example of the slightly androgynous dandy is Russel Brand:

> **Russell Brand**: (plays the dandy)

Dangers of Dandies

The Art of Seduction nails when it says that Dandies are likely to be accused of being too masculine -for women- or too feminine -for men-.

And of course, insolence can get someone really angry at you.

#7. Naturals

Naturals are spontaneous and open.

They bring us back to childhood, the golden paradise we consciously or unconsciously try to recreate.
They bring us back to that time by embodying those child-like qualities such as spontaneity and sincerity.

The key is to infuse your play with the conviction and feeling of a child, making it seem natural. The more absorbed you seem in your own joy-filled world, the more seductive you become.

Example:
You can see an example of child seduction in my article *"how to drive him crazy"*.

Dangers of Naturals

Total childishness can be annoying, so the best Naturals combine adult traits like experience and wisdom with a childlike manner.
It's the mixture of qualities that is most attractive.

#8. Coquettes

Coquettes are self-sufficient.

They seem to say they don't need you, and their narcissism is devilishly attractive.
Imitate the alternating heat and coolness of the Coquette to *make your target chase even harder*.

The real essence of Coquettes is to trap people emotionally. The secret of the coquette it's not much tease and temptation, **the secret weapon of the coquette is emotional withdrawal**.

Their withdrawal makes them mysterious… And it makes us insecure.
What if they've lost interest?

Example
You can see video examples of coquettes in action in *"how to seduce a man"*.

Dangers of Coquettes

Coquettes play with volatile emotions as love can easily shift into hate. Their absence can't be too prolonged, anger must be followed by smiles as the negatives can't overweight the positives for too long.

#9. Stars

Stars are ethereal and envelop themselves in mystery.

Daily life is mundane and can be harsh. **The star represents the escape into fantasies and dreams**.
To be a star, *The Art of Seduction* says, you must transform yourself into a glittering object.

Dangers of Stars

The danger is that people will tire of your illusion and move to the next up-and-coming star.
Once that happens you will find it very difficult to regain your spot in the sun.

Anti-seducers

Greene dedicates a chapter to the personalities and traits of the anti-seducers.
Avoid them at all costs unless you want to repel everyone:

- **Brute**: no patience and wants to skip seduction
- **Suffocator**: cling incessantly & loves too soon
- **Moralizer**: wants you to become like they want you to be
- **Tightwad**: money above seduction
- **Bumbler**: self-conscious and awkward (example)
- **Windbag**: talk incessantly
- **Reactor**: terrified of having their ego hurt
- **Vulgarian**: ignores the rules of seduction and yet expects to win.
- **Greedy**: make it too obvious they're after things

P.S.:
We helped thousands of men get rid of any anti-seducer within them and become effective in life, socialization, and with dating:

- **Power University** to become a top 1% man

The 18 Types of Seducer Victims

Don't think that everyone lacks what *you* are lacking and don't try to seduce your own type.

1. **Reformed Rake or Siren**: long to escape what restricted their freedom
2. **Disappointed Dreamer**: stuck in a boring life and longing for adventure
3. **Pampered Royal**: long for prince charming to let them live the pampered fantasy of a royal life
4. **New Prude**: concerned with appearance and judgment, secretly long release
5. **Crushed Star:** long to be adored again
6. **Novice**: excited about being introduced to a new, darker world…
7. **Conquerer**: give them an obstacle to overcome or a mission
8. **Exotic Fetishist**: want novelty, experiences, edgy stuff
9. **Drama Queen**: long for drama in their lives
10. **Professor**: analyze and ponder, but long been overwhelmed by a free spirit
11. **Beauty**: used to being appreciated. Focus on hidden features like her intellect or wit
12. **Aging Baby**: immature and looking for a supportive parent
13. **Rescuer**: long to feel like they're saving someone
14. **The Roué**: experienced in life and desire to educate someone more naive.
15. **Idol Worshipper**: seeking meaning in life
16. **Sensualist**: driven by their senses. Overwhelm their sight, smell, and touch
17. **Lonely Leader**: they're not used to being bossed. Act as their equal or superior
18. **Floating Gender**: float with them

Part 2: The Seductive Process

Phase I: Separation

Your victims live in their own world, their minds are busy with their daily lives and daily worries.

Your goal in the first stage is to enter that world and become their great escape.

#1. Choose The Right Victim

The perfect victim is the person who stirs you in a way that cannot be explained.

There should be some tension, the victim might fear you or even slightly dislike you.

Here are a few categories of people easy to seduce:

- **Unhappy**: Happy people are much harder to seduce
- **Imaginative**: a person with a good imagination is easier to seduce (they can fantasize about you)
- **Manly**: turn the aggression around with coquettish tricks and make him your slave.
- **Shy and introverts**: are better targets than extroverts
- **Disorganized & lost**: men without a goal are better than focused ones.
- **Lots of time**: people with lots of time are great targets. More time to think about you
- **Boring life**

Robert Greene says that we all want to be seduced.

#2. Create a False Sense of Security

If in the opening stages, you can make your target think they are doing the first step, you won the game.

Whatever action you take to let them come to you, avoid crowding your target: too much attention early on will suggest insecurity and give no room for imagination.

Robert Greene says that direct approach can be quicker, but indirect approaches may reduce the number of your conquests but more than compensate with quality.

My Note: I understand Greene's point of view, but you can seduce with direct approaches as well.

#3. Send Mixed Signals

Mixed signals suggest depth and it fascinates while it confuses.

A question mark, an elusive personality… It will make people want to know more, drawing them in.

The Art of Seduction says that great ways of adopting mixed signals are to show attributes running against your physical appearance.

Warning: keep your hidden quality subtle or else you'll seem schizophrenic.
Also, some people prefer things to stay simple: everything depends on your target.

#4. Appear an Object of Desire —Create Triangles

The Art of Seduction says you want your target to see you as someone others want. And that they might lose to these other admirers.

Doesn't have to be a specific conquest, but can be a number of admirers and even past conquests.
You can make your target feel in competition with both your past and your present.

Also, read:

- How to make him value more
- Power move in relationships: leveraging competition

#5. Create a Need— Stir Anxiety and Discontent

The Art of Seduction reminds us that a perfectly happy and content person is difficult to seduce. Hence, you should stir tension and disharmony in your target's mind.

Danger:

The risk is in going too far and making your target angry, or defensive.
Greene says, in the beginning, charm is better than making people feel bad (so skip the neg of the old *PUA style*).

#6. Master the Art of Insinuation

A useful skill in *the Art of Seduction* is the art of insinuation: making your target feel dissatisfied in a non-obvious, socially savvy way.

Danger:

When the target is already interested in you, skip it.

#7. Enter Their Spirit

Understand them, vibe with them, like what they like, and adapt to their moods. Don't just mirror who they are, but

also the ideal person they want to be.
Once they start opening up you can turn the tables and let them enter your spirit.

Danger:

Mirror for too long and they will see through it and be repelled by it. Mirroring is a tactic, a step in your seduction followed by them entering into your world.
It's important that beyond the mirroring you keep your own solid sense of identity.

#8. Create Temptation

Lure your target with the temptation of the pleasure to come.

Find that unrealized fantasy they have, that weakness they can't control, and tempt them with it.
Keep it vague, postpone the gratification, and let their mind fill in the gap.

Phase II – Lead Astray

Your victims are already intrigued by you, and your goal in this phase is to get them fully hooked and reach the point of no return.

#9. Keep them in Suspense- What's Next?

Reliable people are boring. When they know what to expect from you, your spell is broken.

The Art of Seduction explains that surprises work because they create a moment when the defenses come down and new emotions can take in.
Take them somewhere exciting, and make them seem spontaneous and natural. Or suddenly appear before their eyes: a great tactic, especially if they already like you.

> **Dogs are reliable, not seducers**

#10. Use Words to Sow Confusion

Use loaded words, sweet ones, and flattering ones. Make them feel better, spin fantasies for them, and give them promises. They will not just listen, but start falling for you.

Danger of Demonic Words

Too much flowery language can seem pretentious and it's a sign of selfishness. Less is more: vague and ambiguous leave more room for imagination.

#11. Pay Attention to Details

The devil is in the details and the details are what will differentiate you from the masses.
Pay attention to your aesthetic "finishing coat". Remember their details and make gifts that mean a lot to them.

Also think of everything about yourself: the way you look, *the way you walk*, your moves, *your poses*.

#12. Poeticize Your Presence

People are dying to fantasize about someone.

Embody some ideal or some cultural ideal of beauty. Chivalry, romance, adventure.
Even roguery and evil are better than nothing.

#13. Disarm With Strategic Weakness and Vulnerability

Most people try to hide their flaws, but what's natural to our character is also seductive. Something you can't control can be your most seductive quality.

Confess something bad about you, or something bad that you did. One honest gesture will cover many deceitful ones (this is a law of *the 48 Laws of Power*).

But don't overdo the vulnerability and read:

- Too much vulnerability is unseductive

Danger of Weaknesses

Weaknesses like neediness have no seductive value. And timing is everything: only share it when they're already falling for you.

#14. Confuse Desire and Reality

Bring their fantasy into reality.

Create their fantasy or embody their fantasy.
The best illusions are the ones that do not depart from reality too much. A bit like a drowsy dream.

#15. Isolate The Victim

An isolated target is easier to seduce.

Isolate them psychologically by having them think about you and physically by taking them away from what's familiar to them.

Make your target feel they're embarking on a great adventure with you, but they are also losing something, like their past or their comfortable life.

From Books to Real-World Results

Hi, I'm Lucio Buffalmano, founder of The Power Moves.

I write these reviews myself as part of our 3-pillars method.

We combine research, top books, and real-world experience into proven strategies for status, respect, and attraction.

Power University turns knowledge into wins.
Ready?

Check Power University

Phase III – The Precipice

The goal of phase III goal is to make everything deeper.
Once your hooks are deep into them, you can move at will until they snap.

#16. Prove Yourself

A self-sacrificing action will overwhelm your target's emotions.

Don't wait for something exogenous to happen, put your target in a difficult position and rescue them.

I'm glad Robert Greene says you should also make your target prove to you: it raises your values and covers your blemishes.

#17. Effect a Regression

The Art of Seduction brings us a super powerful tool when it introduces Regression.
Regression leverages the transfer phenomenon of psychoanalysis.

Ask about their childhood. As they talk, adopt a therapist pose. Be attentive but quiet, and interject with nonjudgmental comments to keep them talking.

Don't just talk though, you want people to act out their memories in the present. Make your target feel like they are

getting what they always missed with you.

The Art of Seduction describes the four types of regression:

- **Infantile**: the first bond with a mother is the most powerful one. The key to the regression is the unconditional love a mother has for the infant.
- **Oedipal**: must be tailored to your target because you play the parental role
- **Ego Ideal**: let them feel they are getting close to being the person they wanted to be.
- **Reverse Parental**: here you play the role of the child instead. Cute, and adorable, but also a sexual child.

Some types are more vulnerable to regression:

- Serious and "adult"
- Full of themselves
- Seem in command

They're often over-compensating.
And positions of power can be more of a burden they subconsciously want to be free of.

#18. Stir Up the Transgressive and Taboo

We all love to explore our dark side, so make your target feel they are going past those limits and into uncharted territory with you.

You don't respect marriage vows, religions, or age differences.
Someone to theoretically avoid, but in reality terribly seductive.
The shared feeling of guilt and complicity will further strengthen your bond.

> **In seduction, there is no power in respecting boundaries and limits.**

#19. Use Spiritual Lures

We all have some insecurities about our physical appearances and if we only appeal to the physical we risk making our targets insecure and doubtful.

Focus instead on something sublime and spiritual.
Art, the occult, an extra-sensorial experience.

#20. Mix Pleasure With Pain

The greatest mistake in seduction is *being too nice*.

Try inflicting some pain instead.
Focus fully on them at the beginning, then suddenly appear uninterested. Make them feel guilty and insecure.

The lower the lows you create, the higher the highs will be.

The Art of Seduction says that many of us have masochistic yearnings without realizing it. And when someone inflicts pain on us, the deeply repressed feelings come to the surface.
Works best on those who have it easy, those who have power and little problems.

> **The lower the lows you create, the higher the highs will be.**

Danger of Pain

Don't do it too early on and on people who recently experienced lots of pain.

Phase IV – Moving In For The Kill

You seduced their mind, then confused and stirred them up to seduce them emotionally.
Now the time has come for the physical seduction. By now, your victims should be weak and ripe with desire.

#21. Give Them Space to Fall— The Pursuer Is Pursued

Once they are under your spell, take a step back to let them pursue you. A touch of aloofness, a no-show, a hint of boredom.

Don't make it explicit, let them sense it and let their imagination do the rest. Soon they'll be aching to possess you physically.

Dangers

Don't go absent in key moments of the seduction.
And don't exaggerate: the strategy is give and take, if you only take away for too long you might lose your target.

#22. Use Physical Lures

Combine a non-defensive attitude with a charged sexual presence.

While you're relaxed, cool air is calming your target's mind and lowering inhibitions, your glances, voice, and physical presence are raising the temperature.

To achieve it, it all starts with you. **Train yourself to let go of your own inhibitions, doubts, and anxieties**.
Your confidence and fluidity will have more intoxicating power than any alcohol or drug you could apply.

Dangers of Physical Lure

Few people feel repulsed by their sexual nature but many are uncomfortable with their bodies.
An approach working only on the physical level then will frighten and disturb.

#23. Master the Art of the Bold Move

Some targets will never make the first move.

And some women can become disgusted if she's long been ready, but the man never made the move.

Don't give them the time to ponder over what's going to happen, to consider the consequences. Create conflict, stir up tension, and the bold move will come as a great release.
If you're hesitant or awkward, it means you're thinking of yourself. Be overwhelmed by the target's charm instead.

Here's an example of bold move:

Dangers of Boldness

While boldness can work wonders, uncontrollable boldness is more scary than seductive. So you need to be able to turn it on at off as needed.

> **One person must go on the offensive, and it is you.**

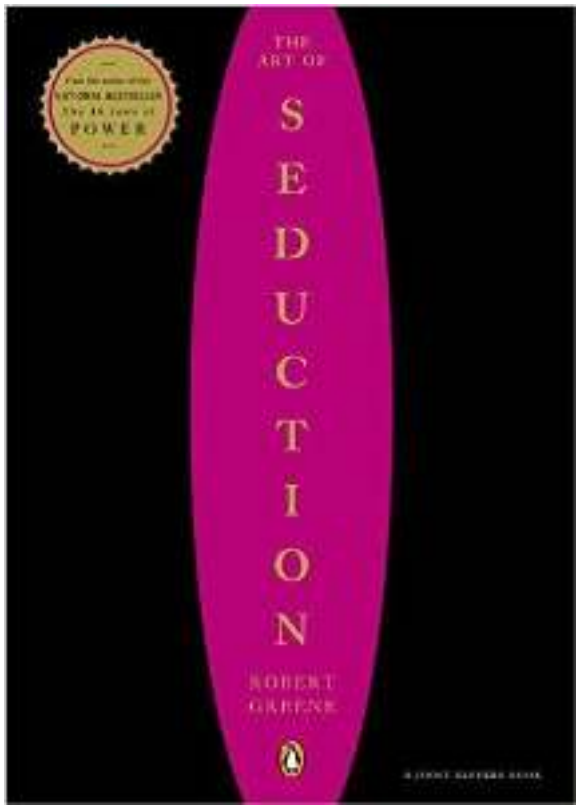
#24. Beware the Aftereffects

When emotions reach a peak, they can easily swing in the opposite direction if you're not careful.
If you are to part, make the sacrifice swift and sudden instead.

You can let some reality and routing creep in: too much mystery will create doubts. But never let your target take

you for granted.

If separation must happen, make it happen quickly and as beautifully as the seduction.



Appendix A: Seductive Environments

Robert Greene describes *seductive environments* as:

Spaces with a theatrical, heightened quality -glittery or opulent for example- create a childlike feeling that makes it hard for the victim to think straight.

Something mystical can help block out the real world: astrology books, angelic imagery, mystical music from far away land.

Any environment offering the possibility of playing a different role, of being someone different than in normal day-to-day life, is immensely seductive.

Also, read:

- Playlist for seductive environments
- Seductive environments

> 10 Steps to Prepare Your House For A Date (Seductive Environment)

CRITICISM

A great book, to which we need to add some caveats.

Let's start with a review of Greene's "seductive methods":

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Lucio**: For these techniques to work reliably with attractive women, you better be a skilled, high-value man.

Greene promotes a 'therapist' approach to dating, but to date effectively you also need to lead.
And to be more dominant than her, *not* an equal.

Sometimes ignores basic power and intersexual dynamics

Sometimes it feels like there is no deep understanding of *sexual market value* and *dynamics*.

For example:

Greene recounts how actor Errol Flynn 'seduced' a black woman.
But it's quite easy for white men to sleep with black women in Africa, let alone for an attractive and confident one.

In this podcast, Greene marvels at Flynn's prolificacy:

> **Greene**: And the math was quite insane, at some point he must have seduced a woman every other day, something like that. What was his secret? What made him so insanely successful?

I was incredulous.
The guy was a rich, attractive, ***famous*** actor.
That's the biggest *sexual hack* ever.

He wasn't seducing anyone.
Or at least, not with any special skill.
He was busting a nut every other day coasting on his fame.

Not an effective approach for successful modern dating

"The Art of Seduction" is tailored to the old, classical times.

Many examples are pre-1900.
The examples of *letters* as correspondence tell you this is not 100% a "how to seduce in the 2000s guide".

I'm pretty confident in saying that if successful dating today is your goal, then you shouldn't follow *"The Art of Seduction"* recipe.

Also, see:

- **Straight Line Seduction**: for a more effective and streamlined seduction model

Check my *best seduction resources* if you're interested in more up-to-date seduction resources.

Mixes heterosexual, homosexual, and social seduction

And these all have different dynamics.

Since our main target here are ambitious men, this is an important drawback.
For example, heterosexual men won't have as much to learn from Andy Warhol.

Unscientific. Ie.: The myth of “powerful men are into submissive roles”?

In general, *The Art of Seduction* lacks modern real-world experience and scientific references.

For example, Robert Greene says that powerful men often want to be babied or dominated.

However, I’m doubtful.
The *Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology,* for example, says that men’s fantasies tend to be more dominance and power-related. Testosterone also fuels both sexual and dominance motives, while Ogi Ogas’ data-driven analysis suggests that ‘most alpha males prefer the sexually dominant role‘.

So it seems like dominance in life is probably correlated to *dominance in sex* and relationships.

Greene ignores power and status for his seducer types

Of all Greene’s ‘seducer types’, there isn’t a single man who is:

- High mate value
- High value
- Alpha male type
- High status
- Socially dominant and confident

Maybe geekier types resent more dominant men who did all the dating in their younger years?

Seduction Case Study

This video shows you how to put *The Art of Seduction* in practice, but mixing solid high-power dating that also works for the modern world, and with attractive women:

> **Lucio**: She was taller than I was. But I seducer her and she fell in love in one single date

Review

The Art of Seduction is a fantastic book with a ton of insights.

Dark psychology, at times.
And of course, heavy in amoral manipulation tactics.

Recommended to anyone interested in seduction, power dynamics, psychology, and manipulation.
But NOT a high-priority reading for beginners looking to improve their dating and social skills.

Get The Book on Amazon or see:

- Best dating books for guys
- **Best red pill books**
- Best books on manipulation

Undercover Sex Signals: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"Undercover Sex Signals" is a dating book for men in which Leil Lowndes, the author, explains to readers how to read and understand women's nonverbal signs of attraction.

Contents

- Overview
- USS Summary
  - The 5 Steps of Successful Pick-Up
  - Opening Lines to Approach Successful
  - Difference Between Winners & Losers
  - What Women Want From Men
  - Lead And Choose The Date
  - Undercover Sex Signal #1: Talking & Looking At You
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  - Undercover Sex Signal #25: The Pose
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- To Read With USS
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- USS Review

Overview

- Most men miss women's sex signals
- For a successful seduction learn and respond accordingly to USS
- Learning USS will allow you to avoid rejections and improve your "hit rate"

USS Summary

Leil Lowndes says that women broadcast their attraction with body language and nonverbal language.
And to be effective at dating and seduction, you need to learn how to act on those signals.

Men Miss All The Signals

Leil Lowndes first says that 30 out of 31 men miss the signals a woman sends when she's interested in them.

Studies also back up the fact that major misunderstandings can originate between men and women when it comes to nonverbals.
While women give meaning to many nonverbals such as proximity, the topic of conversation, eye contact, etc, most men don't.

Conscious or Unconscious?

Leil Lowndes says that women's sex signals are both conscious and unconscious.

Why Women Are Better

The author says it's partly because women get a major head-start.

When men were watching wrestling and Dragon Ball, women were making up love stories with dolls.
While men were playing football, women were gossiping and dissecting everything a man said and did.

The 5 Steps of Successful Pick-Up

Leil Lowndes introduces a 5-step process for a successful approach:

1. **Acknowledge Her Signals (or response to yours):** As soon as you enter a room, look for possible USS and keep scanning around. It's likely she will flash a quick, slight smile together with the eye contact
2. **Respond**: You must return a smile or she gives up and move to another guy. Don't exaggerate, match her smile or match her signal's intensity: studies show that if the intensity is too different she won't appreciate it. When she peeks at you again, you smile again.
3. **Approach:** Wait until she catches your eye and then approach slowly. Do not overpower her with your physical presence. Leil says you could move in front of her and not start speaking right away, which might lead her to speak to you first. The best opening lines are something complimentary and neutral.
4. **Turn Your Head First:** Move to her side, and angle your body parallel to her. Only turn your head to speak to her so it doesn't come across as too strong. If she moves more strongly towards you, then you follow suit. Slowly turn your torso towards her and if you spot Undercover Sex Signals then move closer to her. As she gives you more USS, lean in towards her and fully focus on her
5. **Start moving in synchrony.**

My Note:
I disagree here you should approach them when she catches your eye contact as it seems very reactive of you, like a

dog who's just noticed the owner wanted to pat him.
The only exception, of course, is when you won't have a second chance.
If for example she's waiting for her girlfriend from the toilet and she's got her coat and is about to leave, then walk there confidently.

Also, read:

- **How to effectively approach women**

> How to Approach a Girl: 9 Science-Based Steps

Opening Lines to Approach Successful

Leil Lowndes recommends you drop *cheesy pick-up lines.*

The worst opening lines are about her physical appearance such as

> "what's a woman like you doing in a place likes this"

or

> "what's a beautiful woman like you doing without a date tonight".

Leil says you should look more interested in her mind than in her body and the best *conversation starter* is *"hi, my name is…. ".*

My Note:
I disagree that physical appearance lines can't work well. If delivered confidently and honestly they make your intentions clear and can start a sexually charged conversation which can lead to a quick resolution.

Also, check out:

- **Does cold approach work?**

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

Difference Between Winners & Losers

The difference is in *how men take rejections.*

Winners take rejections not as a rejection of them but as a statement of fact.

For example, if the answer to the question "shall we dance to this song" was "no" the winners would say that it's ok and invite her to seat.
The losers would interpret it as a personal rejection and give up.

The winners also let very little poses happen in the conversation and would jump in with their own stories when needed.
The losers had less musicality and less sensitivity to the timing. Their conversations had more awkward gaps, they paused too long.

What Women Want From Men

Rather straightforward:

- **Resources:** Money, education, intelligence
- **Status**: Other people respect you
- **Physical Strength:** Mention exercises you do or some physical work you've done
- **Emotionally Caring**

Leil Lowndes gives a few ideas on how to show them all, but I disagree you should show off resources much really but won't go deeper on this one here.

Undercover Sex Signals says women still want their men to earn more, be smarter, or just be plainly better, whatever that means :).

When you are asked "what do you do", always sound proud and happy about it.

Lead And Choose The Date

Leil Lowndes says it might sound nice if you ask her where to go, but you should tell her where to go. She says I quote "take charge man, you make the reservation"

Pleasure Centers

While a man's pleasure center is more localized, a woman's pleasure center is spread all over their body, which is why women tend to self-touch more all over their bodies.

Why Women Go For Bad Boys

Leil Lowndes also discusses why women fall for bad boys.

First, she mentions a friend of hers who says she feels emotionally chaperoned with her nice male companions, as if her mother was sitting her with but she feels naughty and excited with the bad ones.

The bad boys seem self-confident and to get what they want by pushing other people around.
Leil Says that's to cover deep insecurities, but they keep it well hidden.

Then she mentions Stockholm Syndrome and how some women find some perverse pleasure in the pain some relationships give them.
She feels the drama all teenagers felt with their first love. She has no idea what's going to happen next (uncertainty). That kind of uncertainty gets her juices flowing.

So Leil Lowndes advises you to stamp out all unnecessary predictability in your relationship and do something to surprise her.

This topic is better explored in as*hole strategy.

And see:

- **Better than an as*hole**

> How to Be A Good Asshole (5 Easy Steps)

Should You Wait if She Says "Let's Be Friends?"

When she says "you're not my type" and she's not attracted to you, might she change her mind?

Should you stick around?

I love Leil Lowndes' reply on this one.

She says that if she's a woman who habitually ends up in *abusive relationships*, it might be a bad idea to "wait".

If her previous relationships simply didn't work out, she might feel her biological clock is ticking and she might pick you as a "good enough" option and hope she'll grow to like you -which she probably will actually-.

The bad thing is that there will never be that strong sexual spark and attraction and she will never love you in that hot, passionate way that you might like.

But if her love without her lust is enough for you, it might work out.

Women Look For Everything

Leil says that women, for evolutionary reasons, tend to be more selective than men. Women subconsciously listen to their genes for one-night stands as well.

See:

- Sexual market value to understand what woman want

Intense Eye Contact

When you stare deeply into a woman's eyes, particularly during silences, it will increase attraction.

This works best when she initially found you attractive.
Leil Lowndes is quoting here the famous study "The Effect of Mutual Gaze on Feelings of Romantic Love", saying that subjects who engage in mutual gaze increased significantly their feelings of passionate love and liking for their partner.

It works well because intense eye contact stimulates a primitive part of the human brain calling for two basic emotions: approach or retreat.
The reaction to deep gaze is fear, and fear is linked to romance.

So look deeply into her eyes, and when you look away too reluctantly so and slowly.

We don't use it enough because, Leil Lowndes says, the more someone overwhelms us, the more we avoid their eyes. If we meet someone particularly handsome and/or accomplished, we tend to avoid their gaze.

The risk of this technique is that if she's not attracted your eye contact will scare her off.

Undercover Sex Signal #1: Talking & Looking At You

Leil Lowndes says that many men get fearful upon seeing two women talking and looking at them because they think the girls might be ridiculing them.

That's not the case though: two women chatting to themselves while looking at you is one of the oldest and most obvious sex signals out there.

Giggling while talking and looking at you is a further added signal, but more mature women don't do it as much.

Undercover Sex Signal #2: The Peekaboo

Peekaboo is the game children play of hiding from a grown-up's view and then reappearing again. You've probably seen and played this one a few times if you've ever been around children.

In dating scenarios, I have seen some variations in relationships, but rarely as an interested signal. A more common variation might be you looking at her, she looking away, then you looking away and she looks at you.

Test The Waters

Leil Lowndes says that if you don't get any *Undercover Sex Signals* you can still initiate your own before approaching to see if you will be welcome.

Undercover Sex Signal #3: Shy Geisha

The way a woman looks at you reveals her true emotions. If you look at a woman and smile almost all of them will look away. How they look away will reveal loads.

If they look down as if to sweep the floor with her eyes, she likes you. If she looks up again to look at you within 45 seconds she expects and wants you to make a move on her.

If she looks away horizontally she isn't sure yet she wants to talk to you.

If she looks at the ceiling when looking away, she's not interested.

Undercover Sex Signal #4: Side Long Glance

Leil Lowndes says that since people don't respect women giving too long eye contact, she will be glancing over at you to see if you're noticing them.

Women have better peripheral vision than men, so this could be a bit like a head turn for men.

If she's glancing at you from the corner of her eyes, she wants you to approach her.

Undercover Sex Signal #5: The Jewelry Tag

Leil Lowndes says that playing with a necklace while looking at you is a strong sexual interest sign. Leil says that she is getting you to notice her decorations, her plumage if you want :).

Supporting Sex Signals

Leil Lowndes says that women often use two or three sex signals, with one being more prominent than the others.

Undercover Sex Signal #6: The Expose

If her dress falls from her shoulder it might not be a coincidence and she's just showing you more skin. A slightly open blouse could work the same.

You could say "boy it's quite hot in here" to show you picked up on it and are in tune with her.

Undercover Sex Signal #7: The Shoe Dangle

If a woman dangles her shoe on her toes, it's a major strong signal of availability.

Note:
what I've also read somewhere else is entering and exiting the shoe with her foot. I'm sure you can see the parallel in that rhythmic entering movement :)

Undercover Sex Signal #8: Close Encounters

Leil Lowndes here talks about proximity. Pay attention to how close she's standing to you.

If she's standing very close, it's a good sign. Do NOT act surprised or step back, unless you want to communicate disinterest, that is.
You could slightly move or lean in towards her instead or smile to reciprocate.

Undercover Sex Signal #9: Space Invasion

She might let just a part of her body enter your personal space. A leg, a knee for example.

Note: this was actually rather redundant and similar to number eight.

Undercover Sex Signal #10: The Innocent Touch

Leil Lowndes says that a woman will never touch if she doesn't welcome your advances.

If a woman reaches out and touches you for any reason, you must react very positively otherwise she'll think she's gone too far and back down.

Undercover Sex Signal #11: Leaning In

When a woman leans in towards you never ever back up.

Undercover Sex Signal #12: Weathervane palms

If she shows the inner side of her palm it's a good sign and a way of saying "I submit to you". When she's resting her head on her hand, does she show you the knuckles or the inner palm?

Showing the knuckles is a close body language sign and also might be a hostile sign. Leil Lowndes says though not to jump to conclusions too quickly if her palms turn away: it might be sexual tension or a sign of nervousness of a shy person who likes you.

Look for more signs.

Undercover Sex Signal #13: Necking

Showing the neck is a very powerful sex signal. If she moves her hair completely to the back while talking or looking at you it's a sign she wants to submit.

Undercover Sex Signal #14: Underarm Flash

She might be leaning back, supposedly appearing relaxed, but if she shows her underarm she knows exactly what she's doing.

The same showing of underarm can happen when she flicks her hair back.

Undercover Sex Signal #15: The Lips Lick

A woman might do it either conspicuously or covertly. She wants to make her lips most and more inviting for you, for her own pleasure or to imply what might be in store for you later on.

This is a rather obvious and sexually open sign. And yet, Leil Lowndes says, many guys still miss it.

Undercover Sex Signal #16: The Primp

She might quickly add some extra touches to herself like applying lipstick or makeup to draw your attention across the room. Alternatively, if you're already engaged with her, she might do it when you're not there, so pay attention if her makeup is more visible or if she applied fresh lipstick.

Note: I have walked on women adjusting themselves more than once either before the date when they were waiting for me behind a corner or when I walked back into the room :).

Undercover Sex Signal #17: Hair Play

When you're talking she can sometimes start playing with her hair or twirling them with her finger. Leil Lowndes says it's either a sign of sexual nervousness or she's tantalizing for you to be playing with her hair.

A little flip while looking at you is also a very common USS.

Undercover Sex Signal #18: Self Caress

If she touches herself on her neck, collarbone, arms, and thighs it's a good sign of arousal.

Leil Lowndes says that when a woman is very attracted to someone it's like the high of a drug. Some women freeze like deers in the headlights and can't speak or move, others feel a tingling sensation and caress themselves to pacify, and still, others might get silly and scrunch their shoulders.

Undercover Sex Signal #19: Shoulder Scrunch

As an above, some women will start acting like little babies when they're with a man they like. They might giggle and scrunch their shoulder together for example.

Note:
I was once out with a woman on a rainy day and the streets had some puddles of rain.
We were walking back from my place, it had been a nice time and she was so happy that she started in the puddle with both their feet. I thought that was a bit *too* silly and I didn't enjoy dirty water splashing on my jeans.

Undercover Sex Signal #20: Perking and Breast Trust

When you enter a room, notice if some woman perks up and straight her back thrusting her breast forward.

It can also be a good indicator when you walk up to her. Before you even say anything: is she thrusting her breast forward?

Leil Lowndes says all women do it, but it's not a tell that you can use by itself because, I'd add, most women would do it even with guys they're not necessarily interested in. So you should always combine this sign with other signals. However, if she does not perk up when she sees you, that's a very bad sign.

Undercover Sex Signal #21: Mirroring

When women start copying your signs and movement, it's a good sign.

Undercover Sex Signal #22: The Suggestive Suck

If she puts something in her mouth… You don't need a biology degree to see the hint there. It can be a spoon, a straw, or even her fingers.

Note: Since many women drink their drinks with a straw I'd like to add you should look for signs of her doing it in a particular way. For example, she does it a bit quicker and more often, or with a different style than her previous baseline behavior, like holding the straw, or more slowly, or while looking at you.

Undercover Sex Signal #23: Playing With Glass

If a woman runs her fingers around the rim of her wine glass she might be thinking about touching you. Or around the stem of the glass, or play with a pen.

Note: Since I rarely do restaurant dates and am more likely to get a beer, I have seen more than once women running their hands up and down a long beer glass.

Undercover Sex Signal #24: Being Goofy

Excitement and sexual nervousness, especially in younger or less experienced women, can come off as goofy.

Undercover Sex Signal #25: The Pose

When a woman strikes a pretty pose, she wants to attract you; don't mistake it for being standoffish.

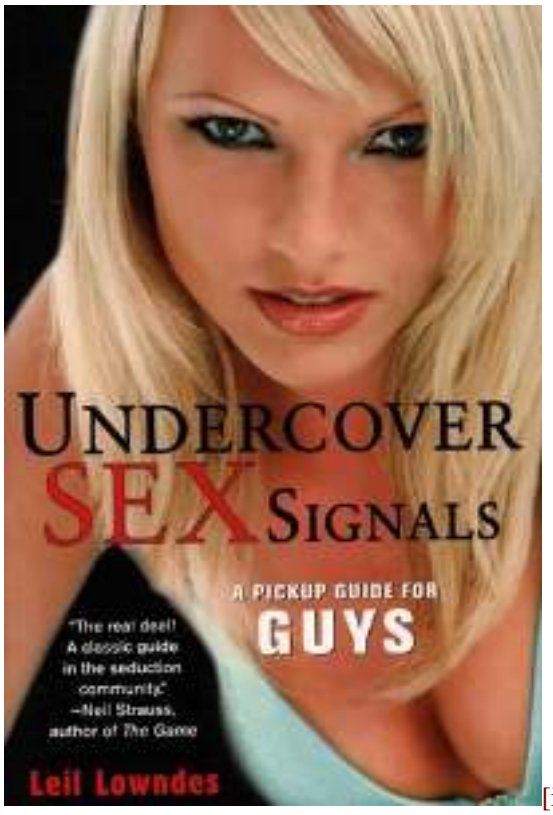
Undercover Sex Signal #26: Showing Leg

Baring their legs is a major USS signal.

To Read With USS

Here are two related posts with pictures for you:

- Signs She Likes You
- Signs He Likes Her



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CONS

- **Some Bad Suggestions**

On many occasions, I fully disagree with Leil Lowndes advice. Some of them are:

- Never let her pay for the restaurant
- dropping hints about your resources

These *can* be effective *depending on the occasion and depending on the man*.
But not always.

- Calling Strategies: She seems to be suggesting a very slow dating scenario with long waits, I disagree with that.

USS Review

Undercover Sex Signal is a typical Leil Lowndes book: funny, easy to read, and useful.

I find she has a lot of talent in social settings and she understands human relationships very well, including dating. However, some of her suggestions are not very conducive to the most effective dating for men.

The Definitive Book of Body Language: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Definitive Book of Body Language (2004) teaches readers how to read nonverbal communication as well as how to improve one's own body language to come across as more confident and become *effective speakers* and communicators.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Understanding the Basics
  - The Power Is in Your Hands
  - The Magic of Smiles and Laughter
  - Arms' Signals
  - Cultural Differences
  - Hand and Thumb Gestures
  - Evaluation and Deceit Signals
  - Eye Signals
  - Territories and Personal Space
  - How the Legs Reveal the Mind
  - The 13 Common Daily Gestures
  - Mirroring – How We Build Rapport
  - Cigarettes, Glasses & Make-Up
  - Body Points Where The Mind Goes
  - Courtship and Attraction Gestures
  - Ownership, Territory & Height Signals
  - Seating Arrangements
  - Interviews, Office Politics & Power Plays
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Cultural differences are becoming less and less relevant in a globalized world
- Most basics of body language are the same for every human being
- Where the body points, the mind wants to go

Full Summary

About The Authors: Allan Pease, writing with her wife Barbara Pease, is an Australian coach of body language. He has written numerous *books on body language* and flies around the world delivering body language training.

Understanding the Basics

“The Definitive Book of Body Language,” says we quickly judge people upon meeting them the first time.

We quickly assess their friendliness, dominance, and whether they are a potential sexual partner. And we do it primarily with nonverbals.

Words are used primarily for conveying information and body language is for negotiating interpersonal attitudes.

Most People Are Unaware of Body Language

Barbara and Allan Pease say that Most people are unaware of the body language signals they send out.

Allan Pease makes the example of Australia’s prime minister Bob Hawke as he spoke about politicians’ salaries compared to executives.
He said politicians’ salaries had increased less than executives’ salaries, but his hands were always farther apart when talking about politicians, underlying that he actually believed politicians were getting it better.

Women Are Better At Reading Nonverbals

The Definitive Book of Body Language quotes an experiment showing movie scenes with the sound off showed that women read the situation accurately 87% of the time versus men 42%.
Female intuition is particularly evident in women who have raised children, and men in nurturing occupations such as artistic types, actors or nursing did almost as well as women. Gay men also scored well.

Women are mentally wired to do better than men: MRI scans show that women have 14 to 16 areas of the brain to evaluate nonverbal behavior while men have 4 to 6.

Inborn, genetic, or cultural?

I fully agree with Barbara and Allan Pease when they say cultural differences are many, but the basic signals are the same everywhere.

Sneering is a universal sign because it shows the teeth. The shoulder shrugs as well as it raises the shoulder to protect the throat, shows the palms, and raises the eyebrow, which is a universal submissive greeting.

3 Rules for Accurate Reading

1. **Read in Clusters:** never interpret a gesture in isolation from other gestures or the overall circumstance.
2. **Look for Congruence:** When verbal and nonverbal channels are incongruent people, especially women, rely on nonverbal
3. **Read in Context:** One might just be cold and not defensive in winter; a woman in a short skirt will look less approachable if she’s wearing a miniskirt but it’s just because she can’t open her legs;

Kids are Easier to Read

Kids have more muscle tone in their faces and grown-up have learned better to mask their lies and body language.

A kid for example might fully cover his mouth, a teenager might rub his lips with a finger, and a grown-up might have the instinct to cover his mouth but then change in the last second into a nose rub. But the nose rub would still be born out of the same feeling of covering oneself.

Can you fake it?

I was surprised Barbara and Allan Pease say the general question to this answer is “no”. A few signs are easier to fake, such for example exposing the palms to appear honest, but pupil dilation, sweating, and blushing cannot be consciously faked.

And it's much harder to fake for a longer period of time.

The Power Is in Your Hands

Hands send out major cues as to what our real intentions are.

How to Detect Openness

Barbara and Allan Pease say that when we want to be open or honest, we will often hold one or both palms out. Similarly, when people begin to open up or start being honest, they'll likely expose their palms.

When we are hiding something, the tendency is to hide the palms. A man who doesn't want to talk about his night out with the boys might put his hands into his pockets.
Men who don't want to take part in a conversation also tend to put their hands in their pockets.
Women instead prefer to look busy as they lie.

Law of Cause and Effect

Allan and Barbara Pease say that if we force ourselves to use more open-palm gestures our tendency to tell lies diminishes and most people find it difficult to lie with their palms open.

The law of cause and effect also says that if you are not feeling defensive but cross your arms, then you will start feeling defensive. This is what Tony Robbins refers to when he says "emotion is created by motion".
In a last twist, if you speak with your palms open, your speaking partner will also start feeling more pressure, to be honest and truthful.

Palm Power Dynamics

The palm-up is non-threatening, while the palm-down signals authority.

If you ask someone to do something for you with the same voice tone and facial expressions the palm down will sign you are pleading with them to do it and the other person will feel no pressure to do it and will not feel threatened. Asking with the palm down will make the other person feel like you've given them an order and he may start feeling antagonistic towards you.
If that person is of equal status, he might resist the palm down and is more likely to comply with a palm-up gesture.

Just imagine, say, Barbara and Allan Pease, if the nazi salute had been with the palm up. People would have laughed at it.

Also when couples walk holding hands the dominant partner will walk slightly ahead with his hand on top and the palm facing backward. Alla Pease says that looking at who's got the upper hand immediately reveals who wears the pants in the house.

The palms closed and finger-pointing is one of the most annoying gestures anyone can use. If you're delivering a presentation the finger-pointing will turn off your audience, make them like you the least of all three, and even remember less of what you said.
The palm-up was the favorite.

If you tend to use the finger pointing a lot, Pease recommends instead using the "OK" gesture touching your thumb and index finger in a circle. The OK gesture will make you authoritative but not *aggressive*

Handshake Analysis

When people turn your hand down and your palm up they are trying to dominate the handshake. Barbara and Allan Pease's study of 350 executives showed that 88% of men and 31% of women used the dominant handshake position.

Power and control issues, says Pease, are generally less important to women.
Also, read:

- Jealous and controlling man
- Signs of abusive men
- Accepting influence in relationships

Some women will give men a soft handshake in some social contexts to *show submissiveness* as a way to highlight their femininity. It should not be used in business contexts though: women displaying high femininity in business meetings are not taken seriously.
Pease adds that it doesn't mean she needs to act in a masculine way, but she needs to avoid too many *feminine signals* such as soft handshakes, short skirts, and high heels.

Handshake to Create Rapport
To create rapport make sure that your and your partner's palms are both in a vertical position and apply the same pressure you receive.

Disarming a Power Player
Trying to push your palm down, say, Barbara and Allan Pease, is typical of the overbearing person. Allan and Barbara Pease do a fantastic job of explaining a few practical moves to avoid accepting the *submissive position*. A simple one is the Double Hander: putting your second hand on top of his, grabbing his wrist as a last resort, or, for another genius technique, look at the pictures here.
There are a few situations when the power play goes well beyond turning your hand down and crushing your bones or starts pulling you in to show pure physical dominance. I wrote an article here based on a couple of real-life experiences: *how to disarm an alpha male handshake.*

Double Hander
Putting your second hand on top gives the feeling that the initiator is trustworthy and honest, but if you use it on someone you've just met it can leave the receiver feeling suspicious about you.
Indeed the Doubler Hander, says Barbara and Allan Pease, is a miniature hug and should only be used when a hug would also be acceptable.

Handshakes of Control: Two-Handed handshakes
Barbara and Allan Pease say that the intention of two-handed handshakes is to show sincerity or a depth of feelings. It's a bit like using the second hand to show the willingness of hugging the other person, so the farther up it goes, the more intimacy it shows.
It's also an invasion of personal space, so they are only acceptable when the person feels close to the other. If the intimate feelings are not mutual or the initiator doesn't have a good reason for using both hands, the receiver will likely be suspicious.
Unless you have a good reason, it can be political or business suicide.
You can use the Two-Handed handshake to reclaim some power if you are on the left side of a picture or video and your partner will hence get the upper hand.

Allan and Barbara Peas go on to detail a few common handshake blunders, among which the Vise and Bone-Crusher, used out of a desire to dominate and assume early control of the relationship or "put people in their place". Sometimes the person using feels weak and is afraid of being dominated.
The socket wrencher, such as pulling the arm in, wants the encounter to be on his terms.

Also, read:

- **Alpha male handshake**

> The Alpha Male Handshake: Eye-opening Defense Tactics

The Magic of Smiles and Laughter

Smiling and laughing are universal signs of happiness.

Real and Fake Smile

The Definitive Book of Body Language tells us something we've already seen a few times on this website: **an honest smile involves the muscles around the eyes**.

The muscles that tense our mouth can be consciously activated, but not the ones around the eyes. So when we're smiling without really meaning we can recognize it as the smile is only a mouth smile, without eyes.

Lines around the eyes can also appear in intense fake smiles and the cheeks can bunch up making it seem as if the smile were genuine. But when a smile is genuine, the fleshy part of the eye between the eyebrow and the eyelid moves downward and the ends of the eyebrows dip slightly.

Smiling is Submissive

Barbara and Allan Pease go into how primates use smiles with "fear faces" and "play faces", both submissive gestures. The authors say that smiling serves much the same purpose in humans.

Smiling says you are non-threatening.

Subordinates are more likely to smile in the presence of dominant and superior people, both in friendly and unfriendly situations. Superior people instead smile around subordinate people only in friendly situations.
The superior person will also make subordinates laugh but without laughing himself -or laughing less- as a way to maintain his superiority.

Smiling is Contagious

Barbara and Allan Pease say we automatically copy the facial expressions we see in other people.

Allan Pease says that's the reason why it's important to be able to smile even when you don't feel like it: it will influence other people's attitudes and how they respond to you.
Science has indeed proven that t**he more you smile, the more positive reactions others will give you**.

Allan Pease also found out that smiling at appropriate times -such as at the beginning of a negotiation-, produces positive responses on both sides of the table leading to higher sales ratios and more successful outcomes.

Common Types of Smiles

These are the different types of smiles according to Barbara and Allan Pease:

- **Tight-Lipped Smile**

The authors say the lips form a straight line and the teeth are concealed.

It communicates you have a secret, an opinion that you don't want to share. Pease says that it's typical of women who don't want to reveal they don't like someone and it's a rejection signal (other women get it, men never).

You will also see in magazines pictures of successful businessmen who are saying "I got the secrets of success (but I won't be telling you)".
These people often talk about general rules to be successful but rarely give their details. Conversely, Richard Branson who always gives all he's got always sports a full smile showing all his teeth.

- **The Twisted Smile**

The Twisted smile shows opposite emotions on each side of the face. It can only be done deliberately and conveys sarcasm.

- **Sideways-Looking-UP Smile**

With the head turned down and away while looking up with a tight-lipped smile. It looks secretive but in a juvenile and playful way. It's a men's favorite as it generates parental male feelings.

- **Laughing Makes You Happier**

Intentionally producing smiles and laughter will make you spontaneously happy.

- **Smiling and Laughing to Bond**

Laughing is more than 30 times more likely to happen in social situations than when one is alone. Laughter has less to do with jokes and more to do with relationships.

- **Smiling for Women & Men**

Barbara and Allan Pease say Women smile far more than men in both social and business settings, which can make a woman appear subordinate or weak in the presence of an unsmiling man.

Pictures of unsmiling men were seen as less attractive and decoded as a sign of sadness. Pictures of unsmiling men were decoded as a sign of dominance.
Women should smile less with dominant men in business situations and -or mirror the amount of smiles of men- and probably more in social and dating scenarios.
Pease says that if men want to be more persuasive with women, they would do well to smile more in all contexts.

- **Laughter and Love**

The authors say women laugh more than men in courtship. The ability to make others laugh is a dominant trait, so the more a man can make a woman laugh, the more she will find him attractive (women love dominant men and men love subordinate women).

Humor makes you attractive to women: women laugh at men they're attracted and men are attracted to women who laugh at them.

Very interestingly, Pease says men also become annoyed when one man dominates the joke-telling, particularly so when there are women around who are laughing. The men who are not laughing will think the joke teller is a jerk and not funny either.

Arms' Signals

Hiding behind barriers is an innate behavior of human beings. Folding one or both arms across the chest we form a barrier as an unconscious attempt to block out threats or undesirable circumstances.

Arms' Crossing

Crossing arms in front of the chest is a sign that someone is nervous, negative or defensive.

As long as someone keeps an arms folded position, a negative attitude will persist. A good idea can be then to give the person something to hold on to that will lead them to unfold their arms.

"I'm Just Comfortable"
The Definitive Book of Body Language goes into something I have experienced a few times.

Some people will deny the significance of certain body language signals by saying they're just comfortable that way. Pease says that of course, you're more comfortable: if you're nervous, arms crossed will make you feel more comfortable.

For the law of cause and effect, having neutral people crossing arms in front of your chest also give you more

negative thoughts about the speaker and you will retain less information.

Arms crossing will also send out a message to the people around you though, and that message is likely to be negative. So the message is simple: avoid crossing your arms unless you specifically intend to don't agree or don't want to participate.

Reinforced Arms-Crossing
Clenched fists with crossed arms show hostility on top of defensiveness. If there's a tight-lipped smile or clenched teeth and red face, an attack, either verbal or physical might be imminent. A conciliatory approach is recommended.

Arm-Gripping
In the Doubled Arm Grip, the person tightly grips both his upper arms to further strengthen his barrier.

It's also a way to comfort oneself with a form of self-hug. You can sometimes see it in doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms or with first-time air travelers. It shows a negative, restrained attitude.

Pease says that in court, the claimant may be using a fist clenched arms crossed while the defendant may have adopted the double arm grip position.

Boss VS Staff
Barbara and Allan Pease say that status influences arm gestures too. A general manager greeting new employees, for example, will not cross his hands and will either keep his hands to his side, behind his back (superiority), or in his pockets (noninvolvement). The employees instead might cross their arms for the apprehension of being around the company's top person.
If the GM now met a young up-and-coming superior type, the younger gun might cross his arm but keep his thumbs sticking out and pointing up. The thumbs-up show a positive and self-confident attitude.

Also very interestingly, the authors say that defensive and submissive will be shown in symmetrical positions, while defensive and dominant will take an asymmetrical pose.

Thumbs Up
If the Thumbs-Up-Arms-Crossed appears towards the end of a presentation, chances are you can go ahead and ask for the order.

Hugging Ourselves
Barbara and Allan Pease say we hug ourselves when are stressed or we find ourselves in tense situations.

Of course, our self-hugs are more masked.
For example, one arm might reach out to the other upper arm -mostly used by women- and recreate the feeling of how their mothers held them.
Or holding both hands in front of our body -mostly used by men- and called the "broken zipper position", recreating the feeling of someone else holding our hands.

Famous and VIPs Arms' Crossing
The authors say that celebrities who tend to be more aware of body language will more rarely be seen with an obvious self-hugging gesture.

But their nervousness will still often leak.
For example, they might reach out with an arm to the bag on the other side, or fix their watches or bracelet, or shirt cuffs.
Women can often clasp their purses.

Gauging Our Speaking Partner
Offering a refreshment is a great way of gauging where the other person stands.
Do they place the cup on the side -open and accepting what you're saying- or in front -closed and not accepting-?

They can also hold it to the side, thus crossing their arm in front of their body, or hold it to the side, thus opening up.

Arms and Armrest
Planting your elbows on the armrest is a position of power.
Letting your arms fall on the inside of the chair is the position that humble, defeated individuals will take.

The Power of Touch
Barbara and Allan Pease say that Touching someone with your left hand while shaking hands can create some powerful results.

The Phone Booth Test showed that people who were being touched lightly on the elbow for less than 3 seconds gave back a coin 68% of the time VS the 23% of people who didn't.

Pease said that worked well because the elbow is a safe area to touch, second because touching a stranger is not considered normal so it created a powerful impression and third, the most important of all, a touch creates a momentary bond between two people.

Touching above or below the elbow did not produce the same positive effects, and touching for more than 3 seconds also had a negative response.

I was both appealed to and had to laugh when I saw that the same experiment with elbow touching gave an 85% return rate in Germany, 50% of French, and… A paltry 22% of coin returns in Italy. But Pease said that it's because, in the Italian culture, it's more normal to touch, so the elbow touch didn't create such a special moment.

Looking at conversation outside cafes indeed showed 220 touches an hour in Rome, 142 in Paris, 25 in Sindey, 4 in NY, and 0 in London.

Women were four times more likely to touch another woman than a man or another man.

A famous experiment with a librarian slightly brushing the hand while issuing a book also had powerful effects, with the borrowers being touched responding more favorably to all the questions and more likely to recall the name of the librarian.

Read also: *4 ways men touch women wrong*.

Cultural Differences

I fully agree with Barbara and Allan Pease when they say the world is becoming more and more similar and the basics are the same almost everywhere.

Pictures of happiness, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, and surprise in 21 different cultures registered mostly the same responses everywhere. Japan was the exception which described fear as a surprise.

The biggest cultural differences exist mainly in relation to territorial space, eye contact, touch frequency, and insult gestures.

The regions with the most local signals are Arab countries, parts of Asia, and Japan.

Pease says that we do business with people who make us feel comfortable and it comes down to sincerity and good manners. The author suggests that when you're in a foreign country and unsure of the local customs and gestures it could be a good idea to reduce the range of your body language signals until you can better understand the local ones.

Hand and Thumb Gestures

How to Spot Which Option We Prefer
Right-handed people give their favorite point of view or summarize their favorite contestant with their right hand

and left-handed people with their left.

Hand, Attention & Impact
Hand gestures grab attention, increase the impact, and help individuals on the receiving end of the communication remember more of the message (up to a third higher recall in an experiment).

Rubbing Palms
Rubbing the palms together is a sign of positive expectation. A quick rub signals the person expects the benefits to be for you, Slow rubbing signals the expectation is for them to profit.

Salespeople are instructed to rub their hands quickly indeed. When a buyer rubs his palms waiting for you to present your product it's a positive sign that he has high expectations it can be a good option.

Hands Clenched Together
Barbara and Allan Pease say Hands Clenched Together can be mistaken for a signal of confidence as people are often seen smiling when using it. It is though a gesture showing an anxious, restrained, or negative attitude.

During negotiation, it can be a frustrating gesture signaling a negative or anxious attitude. The person using feels they are either not convincing the other person or felt like they were losing the negotiation.

The hands can be held in front of the face, on a desk on the lap, or low in front of the crotch.
There seems to be a correlation between height and frustration: the higher the hands clenched position, the higher the degree of frustration.

As for arms crossed then, you should take action to let the person un-clench his hands.

The Steeple
Barbara and Allan Pease say the Steeple can be the exception confirming the "cluster rule" as it can often occur in isolation.

A favorite of Angela Merkel, The steeple is frequently used in interactions between superiors and subordinates and it shows a confident, self-assured personality.
It is often used when giving instructions or advice and it's common among accountants, lawyers, and managers.

The steeple is usually held high when speaking and held lower when listening. Women tend to use the lower steeple more often.

The raised steeple with the head tilted back gives more arrogant and smug air.

The steeple can also be a sign of negative confidence. If you are delivering a presentation or a sale and the client was folding their arms, crossing their legs, looking away, and having many hand-to-face gestures, and then assuming a steeple your prospect is feeling confident he will say and that he will easily get rid of you.

When you want to persuade or win the other person's confidence Pease recommends not to use it as it can come across as smug or arrogant.

The Face Platter
Resting the face on both hands can be a gesture used by women during romantic encounters or dates.
She is placing her face there for you to admire and to attract your attention.
If you are interested in more sex signals, take a look at *"does she like me"*.

Holding Hands Behind the Back
Barbara and Allan Pease say that holding one's hand behind the back is a sign of authority.

High military, headmasters at school, royalty, and policemen will usually use it.
The person is fully exposing his body in a show of fearlessness.
Cause and effect also apply, so if you use this pose in high-stress situations you will also begin to feel confident and even authoritative (albeit it does not change your hormonal state as *Amy Cuddy originally implied*).

If however, the person is holding his wrist behind his back it communicates frustration and an attempt to self-restraint, and the higher up the grip, the higher the frustration.
If you catch yourself doing it, change to a palm-in-palm position instead and you'll begin to feel more relaxed and confident.

Thumb Displays

Barbara and Allan Pease say that thumbs denote superiority, and body language gestures using the thumb show self-important attitudes. Thumbs indeed are used to display dominance, *assertiveness*, and sometimes even *aggressive attitude*.

A man will use protruding thumbs around women he likes, even when he's wearing high-status clothing. You will rarely see low-status individuals using it.

If someone is verbally showing humbleness and shows his thumb, you can probably guess he's not being fully forthcoming.

Thumbs coming out of back pockets are a bit of a tamer pose as if the person was trying to hide the dominant attitude.

Pointing at someone with the thumb is usually a gesture of ridicule and disrespect towards the person you point your thumb at. Usually, it is not directly pointed at the person you're speaking to, but it's pointed toward a third party.

Thumbs from Coat Pockets
It's common for people to feel in a superior position.

The boss will walk around the office with the thumbs out of his coat pockets and when he's not there the second in the line of command is likely to do so. None of the subordinates is likely to do it around the boss.

You can sometimes see people with their hands in their pockets and thumbs sticking out but their arms folded. The folded arms are defensive or negative, while the thumbs out show a superior attitude.

Also, see the pictures in:

- How to make thumbs in pockets look sexy

Evaluation and Deceit Signals

I love when Barbara and Allan Pease say that lying is the oil greasing social interactions.

Research shows that **social liars are more popular than people who continually tell the truth** even though we know the social liar is not being fully forthcoming.

Malicious lies, of course, are a different beast.

The Three Wise Monkeys
The authors say that when we see, speak, or hear lies or deceit or something we don't wanna hear or witness, our tendency is to use our hands to cover our mouths, ear, or eyes.

Women are Better Liars
Allan and Barbara Pease say women are better at reading emotions and even better at telling lies.

How to Lie Better
A good way of getting away with lies is to decrease your overall body movement so that you won't send any negative signals.
Lying is easier behind something that will cover part or all of your body. Behind a desk, for example, peering over a fence, from behind a door or, of course, via telephone or email.

How the Face Reveals the Truth
When we lie indeed we increase our hand-to-face gestures and increase the number of gulps of saliva and while there's no guaranteed movement that will let you know someone is lying you can learn a few clusters that will dramatically increase your chances of spotting a liar.

Note:
Allan and Baraba Pease here seem quite encouraging about the fact you can spot lies. This is in contrast to FBI agent **Joe Navarro** who takes a strong stand in saying spotting lies is notoriously difficult *and* unreliable.

These are some indicators of lies:

- **Mouth Cover**, or anything similar, could be a fake cough. If they cover their mouth while you're speaking they think you're hiding something.
- **Nose Touch** can be such an indicator and people tend to smile less when lying. The itching can actually be real
- **Eye Rub**. Men do it harder, women tend to just get closer to the eye and both genders can look away
- **Ear Grab**, another sign of anxiety
- **Neck Scratch** is a sign of doubt and uncertainty which says "I'm not sure I agree"
- **Collar Pull**
- **Fingers in Mouth**, a sign someone is in need of reassurance
- **Eye contact**, some people won't be able to hold eye contact when lying, and they get caught the easiest. But since most people are aware of that, they will swing in the other direction keeping eye contact more than they normally would -and get rarely caught-
- Foot Movement

Boredom
Supporting the hand with your hands is a sign of boredom.
Drumming of the fingers or of the feet is often misinterpreted as boredom but they're actually signs of impatience (the degree of impatience is related to the speed of the taps).

Evaluation Signals
Barbara and Allan Pease say that a closed hand resting on the cheek's face, sometimes with the index finger pointing upward, signals the person is evaluating something.

If they want to feign interest but are starting to the bored the palm will start supporting the head.

If the thumb supports the chin it's a sign of critical thoughts about the speaker or the topic. The index can rub or pull the eye if the negative thoughts persist. It can be mistaken for interest, but the difference is the supporting thumb under the chin.

Decision Making
Chin-stroking is a sign that a person is thinking about what to say or what to decide.

Stalling Clusters
People wearing glasses can take them off and put one arm of the frame in their mouth, a smoker will take a puff of smoke and someone with a pen can put them in their mouth.
Putting objects in the mouth is a sign that the person feels like he needs more time and wants to delay an answer.

Head Rubbing and Slapping
When someone forgot something or did a blunder they might slap their own head to communicate forgetfulness.
If they slap their forehead they signal they are not intimidated by you, if they slap the back of the neck it says you are actually a pain in the neck.
Habitually rubbing the back of the neck says that someone tends to be more negative or critical, while those rubbing the forehead tend to be more open and easygoing.

Eye Signals

Barbara and Allan Pease say that women have a wider peripheral vision, while men tend to have more tunnel vision. Women can look at you better without moving their eyes.

Pupils
Dilated pupils are a sign of attraction.
This is why lighter eyes are considered more attractive: because you can more clearly recognize a dilated pupil and this is why romantic encounters tend to be more successful in dimly lit places: the pupil dilates naturally.

In a direct mail campaign, Allan Pease was able to increase the sales of a lipstick brand by 45% simply enlarging the pupil size of the model.

Interestingly, people are better at decoding eye signals than they are at decoding body language. Women do better as usual, but men didn't fare poorly.

If someone is looking at you for more than 2/3 of the time he can either be interested in you, in which case he'll have dilated pupils, or he'll be hostile -in which case he'll have constricted pupils-. Women are good at deciphering it, men not as much.

Eyebrow Flash
The eyebrow flash is eyebrow-raising rapidly for a split second, and it's a universal, friendly gesture to say hello.

We don't give the eyebrow flash to people we don't like and to strangers and people who don't use it upon first meeting someone are perceived as potentially *aggressive.*
Jack Schafer in *The Like Switch* says you can use it to feign liking for someone, and Pease says that you should always Eyebrow Flash people you like or those whom you want to like you.

Eyebrow Signals
Lowering the eyebrows *shows dominance* or *aggression* and raising the eyebrows shows *submission*.

Women raise their eyebrows and eyelids to make their eyes appear bigger and create the "baby face effect" which makes men want to protect them.

Looking Up
Barbara and Allan Pease say that lowering the head and looking up is a *submissive gesture* women use to appeal to men.

It makes the eyes seem larger and makes the woman more childlike.
Pease says that Diana made an art out of lowering her head and looking up while exposing her neck.

Some women show sexual submissiveness by lowering their eyelids while simultaneously raising their eyebrows and looking up. It's one of the trademarks of *sex sirens* such as Marilyn Monroe and Sharon Stone (more *female seduction: attractive body language for women*). This is also the expression that many women have during an orgasm.

Gaze Behavior
Michael Argyle found that Westerners and European look at each other an average of 61% of the time while they speak. 40 to 60% when talking and 75-80% while listening. 31% is mutual gazing.

When one likes the other, he will look at him a lot. The person being looked at notices and he will likely like him in return as well. This means you should look at people a lot to make them like you. Your gaze should meet their 60-70% of the time.

When in foreign cultures though, the best course of action is to mirror the gaze time of your host.

The timid people who rarely meet our gaze are seen as untrustworthy.

When two people meet and make eye contact the subordinate is usually the one to look away first. This means that not looking away is a subtle way of delivering a challenge or showing disagreement.
Pease says that if the higher-status person is your boss you could keep your eye contact for a few seconds longer than is usually acceptable but that you shouldn't do it regularly if you care about your job.

Darting Eyes
Barbara and Allan Pease say that when our eyes scan the surrounding from left to right we are looking for escape routes.

We do it naturally, even when we're talking to someone boring. If sometimes we want to avoid looking like we're bored to death, we could then swing to the opposite, the same as we do for lying, and look into our speaking partners' eyes even more than normal.

In this case, we will often have a tight-lipped smile same similar to when we're lying.

Gaze Geography

- **Social Gaze:** moving your gaze between the eyes and the mouth for about 90% of the gazing time. This is non-threatening and others will perceive you as nonaggressive
- **Intimate Gaze:** across the eyes and below the chin to lower parts of the person's body.
  From far away it's eyes to the groin or below and standing nearby it's between the eyes and the chest.
  Intimate gaze is used to show interest and those who are interested will return this gaze. Intimate gaze too soon though would give the game away (men miss it anyway but women get it)
- **Power Gaze:** looking between the eyes and the center of the forehead.
  Pease says the impact is huge, it changes the atmosphere to be very serious, and if your gaze doesn't drop below the eye level you can keep the screws on him.
  Never use it in friendly or romantic encounters, just on those whom you want to intimidate or quiet down
- **Power Stare:** when you are under attack, maintain eye contact without blinking, narrow your eyelids, and focus closely on him. If you have to move from one person to another, don't blink first move your eyeballs and then let your head follow with your shoulders standing still

Starting a Great Job Interview
A man wants to check a woman's hair, legs, and body shape and you should allow that to happen to make everyone feel at ease.
Shake hands then and give the interview a 2-3 seconds time window to scan you.
This strategy also helps to sell better.

For more on getting the job you want:

> How to Prepare For An Interview: 6 Tips To Get The Job

Territories and Personal Space

Barbara and Allan Pease go into the personal zones here which I won't go into details here because it's a well-known topic.

The distances tend to reduce between two women and increase between two men.

When people embrace the distance they keep their hips apart giving away information about their relationship.

We hate riding elevators because the cramped space gets other people into our Intimate Zone and Pease says the behavior we follow is called "masking", which is everyone's trying to hide their emotions by wearing a neutral mask. And the people riding in the subway at rush hour, the author says, aren't really unhappy, they're just masking

their emotions.

I also found it particularly interesting that Pease says that the people who go around slapping everyone on the back are secretly disliked by everyone.

Why Mobs Get Angry
Barbara and Allan Pease say that one of the reasons why mobs get so angry is because everyone is in everyone's personal space.

When the police break up the crow the dynamics change and the riot usually stops.
And, the author says, this is why areas with the highest crime and violence are also areas with the highest population density.

My Note:
I'm not sure this makes any sense at all, places with the highest population density also happen to be the poorest areas, and poverty is correlated with violence and crime.

Spacing Rituals
The authors say that when deciding where to seat people will usually pick the place that gives them the most space. If there's only one person sitting the person who's just arrived will usually pick a place between the person sitting and the end (or front) row, so as not to offend the sitting person.

Cultural Differences
An Italian couple in Sidney was accused of hitting on everyone at a club they joined because the Italians, coming from a smaller personal space culture, were standing too close to the Australians.
Japanese also tend to stand rather close.
City dwellers also tend to have smaller spaces than country people.

Territory and Ownership
The Definitive Book of Body Language goes into a topic I have long observed before it became conscious: people can feel like a certain seat or space belongs to them in a place they often visit.
Or they might feel ownership of the kitchen in a house if they are using it.

To avoid offending anyone and starting a relationship on the wrong foot it's a great idea too as when you visit someone's house "which sit is yours".

People driving cars tend to feel like they have a bigger personal space, and that's why we see so many incidents of road races, Pease says.

How the Legs Reveal the Mind

The Definitive Book of Body Language says that the farther away a body part is from our mind, the less awareness we have of it. That's why legs and feed are some of the most honest body parts.

Walking Styles
Young and healthy people walk faster, resulting in their arms swinging the most, almost as if they were marching.

This walking style has been adopted by politicians and public figures who want to look younger and healthy.

Barbara and Allan Pease say that people walking slowly show they have plenty of time, are not interested in what they're doing, or have nothing else to do.
It's OK for retired millionaires but not for people who want to convey authority or health to a potential mate.
Influential people commanding attention walk briskly at a medium pace with medium-length strides.

Also read: *how to walk sexy*.

Legs & Feet

Barbara and Allan Pease say that evolutionary speaking legs served the purpose of going towards what we want and running away from what we don't want-, so the way we point our feet and legs tells us where we want to go.
As a rule of thumb, open or uncrossed legs show an open or dominant attitude and crossed positions reveal closed attitudes or uncertainty

Standing Positions

- **At Attention:** standing with your feet close together is a formal and neutral position showing no signs of commitment toward any particular course of action.
  With men and women interacting women use it mostly, and employees use it with bosses
- **Legs Apart:** predominantly a male position and the equivalent of a crotch display
- **Foot Forward:** the foot forward points in the direction our mind wants to go. In groups, we point our forward foot to the person we find most interesting or attractive
- **Leg Cross:** the standing leg cross and scissors show that someone wants to stay, but has a closed, submissive, or *defensive attitude.*
  It is usually adopted in the presence of people we feel superior to us and studies show it's usually people who lack confidence who uses it

From Closed to Open
When meeting someone we don't know often we start with crossed arms and legs. First, are the legs uncross, and next are the arms.
We can start with one arm only and flash the palm. Then both arms uncross. Finally, one person takes the foot forward position to show acceptance of the other.

(American) Figure Four
Sitting with one leg horizontally on top of the other is the seated version of a Crotch Display.
The authors say it's American or of any Americanized culture, but I find it just a very common and natural way of sitting.
Men sitting this way are perceived as more dominant, relaxed, and even youthful. Women using this position usually only do it around other women as they don't want to appear too masculine or signal too strong sexual availability.
It's not conducive to final decision making though as studies show most final decisions are done with both feet planted on the ground.

Figure Four Leg Clamp
Same as Figure four, with the leg on top being held by the hands. It's a sign of tough-mindedness and stubbornness in rejecting any idea.

The Ankle Lock
Barbara and Allan Pease say that locking ankles is the equivalent of biting one's lips and holding back.
It can also show uncertainty and fear. If the feet are pushed far back beneath the chair it also highlights a withdrawn attitude as people who are very into the conversation put their feet "in" the conversation.

When an interviewee locks his ankles, he is mentally "biting his lip." The gesture shows that he is holding back a negative emotion, uncertainty or fear. The feet are usually withdrawn under the chair, showing that the person also has a withdrawn attitude. When people are involved in a conversation, they also put their feet into the conversation.

During negotiations, it means the party is holding back on a concession.
If the ankle lock happens during an interview, questions can be reasonably effective in getting the interviewee to relax and unlock but going around the table and sitting beside them is probably the most effective.

I had to laugh when Barbara and Allan Pease said that 88% of dental patients lock their ankles as soon as they sit on the dentist's chair as I had to think back about my teenager's days and indeed I was doing the same as far as I can

remember.

Leg Twine
Almost exclusively used by women, and it's a sign of shyness and timidity.

Parallel Legs
Parallel Legs are the most attractive seating position for a woman. Since it would be difficult for men to sit this way, it's a sign of femininity.

Legs for Women
Men will watch TV shows with the female presenter for longer if she has a short dress.
However, men will also remember less of what she said. In business, it's best if a woman avoids short dresses and skirts (and best if men keep their knees closer together)

The 13 Common Daily Gestures

Barbara and Allan Pease go into common gestures of people who don't realize what they're actually doing.

Patting during a hug for example signals it's time to end the hugging, and starting to pat even before you hug is a sign you didn't wanna hug in the first place at all.
Kissing in the air as you're about to hug someone is pretty much the same.

Head Nod

Barbara and Allan Pease say that nodding regularly in groups of three nods leads to people talking for three to four times longer than they would have normally spoken.

Nodding slowly communicates interest, while fast nodding communicates it's time to stop talking or that you want to talk now.

The authors say that people will talk three to four times more than usual when the listener nods their head using groups of three nods at regular intervals.
The speed of the nod signals the patience—or lack of patience—of the listener.
Slow nodding communicates that the listener is interested in what the speaker is saying so give slow, deliberate clusters of three head nods when the other person is making a point. Fast nodding tells the speaker you've heard enough or that you want them to finish or give you a turn to speak.

Head Nod to Get Agreement
Finishing the sentence with a "wouldn't you" or "isn't it" as you nod will raise the chances the other person will agree with you.

Head Nods to Get More Information
A technique to get people to talk more and give you more information is to nod your head during his answer.
After he replies, you keep nodding your head another five times with one nod per second.
Pease says that by the time you counted to 4, he will usually resume speaking and give you more information.
Do it as you keep your hand on your chin and give it a few light strokes in an evaluation position, so you don't come across like an interrogator and it will seem natural

Basic Head Positions

- **Head Up:** neutral attitude.
- **Chin Forward**: When the head is lifted high and the chin pushed out and high it signals superiority, fearlessness or arrogance. It allows people to look down their nose
- **Head Tilt:** it's a submission signal as it exposes the throat and neck. Women will use it to show interest in men they like

- **Head Down:** a chin down signals a negative, judgmental, or *aggressive attitude*. Critical evaluations are normally made with the head down

Head Duck
Raising the shoulders and lowering the head signal submissiveness, and it's often used to show apology.

When someone walks past others who are talking or looking at a view or, as it's more and more often the case these days, taking a picture, they will usually use the Head Duck.

It's also used by subordinates approaching superiors and it reveals the status and power play between individuals.

Also, read:

> Managing Your Boss For Ruthless Career Advancement

Lint Picking
Looking away while picking imaginary lint is a sign of disapproval.

Hands-on Hips
The Definitive Book of Body Language says that placing the hands on the hips and pointing the elbows out shows readiness to dominate.
It's a nonverbal challenge to other men who enter their territory.

One hand on the hip is similar, especially if the elbow is pointed towards the person we are issuing the challenge. It's also been called the "achiever" pose as it shows readiness to tackle the issues and get down to it. Men use it around women to display an *assertive male attitude*.

Cowboy Stance
Thumbs into the belt or in the pockets are a gesture to frame the genital area and are used mostly by men to signal a *sexually aggressive attitude*.

Men use this gesture to stake their territory or to show other men they mean business.
Pease says it's regular for men on the prowl.

If it is used while talking to women, especially with dilated pupils and a foot pointing toward her, it immediately gives the game away as to what are his intentions.

- Also read: *signs he likes her*

> Does She Like Me? 35 Proven Signs of Attraction (W/ Pictures)

Leg Over Arm Chair
Mostly a man gesture as it also uses the legs spread.
It communicates ownership and signals an informal and *aggressive attitude*. If someone is having a serious discussion, it also communicates superiority and indifference.

Straddling a Chair
Barbara and Allan Pease say that the person straddling a chair wants to dominate (the crotch display) while at the same time using the back of the chair for protection).
Straddlers tend to be dominant types who will try to take control of others when they get bored with the conversation.

The Catapult
The Definitive Book of Body Language says the Catapult is the seated version of the hands on hips.

The heads are behind the head with the elbows pointing outward. It gives an air of superiority like the person knows it all.
Legs are usually in Figure Four or Crotch Display.

Pease says that women quickly grow to dislike men who use the catapult during business meetings and women can't really use it as it would show their chest too obviously even flat-chested ones are described as aggressive by both men and women.

Show of Readiness
Barbara and Allan Pease say that leaning forward with one hand on the knee, or both hands on the knees as it were the start of a race, signals that a person has reached a decision.
If it comes after closed-body signs, it's usually a negative answer. If it comes after decision-making clusters (chin-stroking) then the decision can often be positive.
It also signals the desire to end the meeting and move out.

Mirroring – How We Build Rapport

You've probably heard of mirroring a thousand times.

Basically, mirroring says, nonverbally, that you two are similar and share the same attitudes.

When people refer to having a good vibe or that it feels right they are unknowingly referring to mirroring and synchronous behavior.

Mirroring is also a way of saying we're in agreement with someone.
Usually, the person with the highest status makes the first move and the others copy.

Men VS Women Mirroring
Barbara and Allan Pease say that women are four times more likely to mirror another woman than a man to mirror man.

Women mirror men too but men mirror women less unless he's in courtship mode.
Women mirroring men should mirror their body language and use fewer facial expressions rather than trying to mimic what they *think* he's feeling.

Facial Feedback: Men, Women & Dating
Men use fewer facial expressions than women and tend to have expressionless faces when listening.

Men feel awkward at the idea of using facial feedback while listening as it makes them feel effeminate.
But it's the opposite.
Women judge men who use facial feedback as caring, intelligent, interesting, and attractive.

What's Mirrored
Intonation, voice inflection, rate of speech, and even accents tend to synchronize.

Pease suggests never speaking quicker than the other person as that makes them feel pressured.
It's extremely interesting when Pease says that a person's rate of speech is the rate at which their brains can analyze information, so either speak at the same speed or slower.

Intentionally Mirroring
It's possible to influence others by mirroring their positive gestures and posture, which will make the other person feel relaxed and receptive.

It's a good strategy to mirror people who adopt superior body language with you to disconcert them. Don't do it with the boss though Pease recommends.

Do not mirror their negative signals though in order to create rapport.

Subordinate – Boss Mirroring
Barbara and Allan Pease say that when the leader adopts a pose, the subordinates will usually copy, often in ranking order.

Leaders also tend to be the first of a group to walk through a doorway and like to sit at the end of a sofa rather than in the middle. In a conference room, the boss usually sits at the head of the table, often farthest away from the door.
In a boardroom, people who will mirror your position are also the most likely to vote for you.

When you present your product to couples, noticing who mirrors whom will let you know who's got the ultimate decision power.

Cigarettes, Glasses & Make-Up

I was not too surprised to read Barbara and Allan Pease saying that smoking is an outward signal of inner distress. But I was very surprised to read them say that smoking has less to do with nicotine addiction than it has to do with the need for reassurance.

Smoking then is one of the many displacement activities people use while non-smokers chew gums, bite their nails, groom, tap their feet, scratch their heads, or play with something.

Blowing Smoke
Blowing the smoke of a cigarette up is a positive sign.
Conversely blowing down is a sign the smoker is in a negative, secretive, or suspicious frame of mind. Blowing down from the corner of the mouth further reinforces the negative sign.

In sales scenarios, those who want to buy will blow upward, and those who don't blow downward.

Speed of Blowing Smoke
The speed at which the smoke is blown is an indicator of the intensity of the feelings.

Extinguishing Cigarettes
Barbara and Allan Pease note that if a smoker extinguishes the cigarette before it's finished it's an indicator he wants to terminate the conversation.

You can then change course and terminate it earlier so it seems it was your decision.

Glasses
The Definitive Book of Body Language quotes Desmond Morris when he noted that putting objects against the lips or the mouth is an attempt to relieve the security a baby had when he was breastfeeding.

A person wearing glasses putting the arm of the frame in or near the mouth is looking for reassurance. As we've already seen, it's also a stalling sign to gain time, as it is taking them off frequently to clean them.

Folding them will often mean they have reached a decision while putting them back mean says the person wants to "see" more of the information or evidence.

Big-frame glasses project power while frameless or thin-frame glasses convey a powerless image and say you are more interested in fashion than in business and the opposite is true in social situations.

Peering Over Glasses
Barbara and Allan Pease say that looking at people over the rim of the glasses gives a sensation they are being judged. The person on the receiving end may respond to it by crossing their arms.

Sunglasses on the Head
Dark sunglasses during meetings make you appear secretive and even insecure.

Wearing them on the head is seen as relaxed, youthful, and cool".

Pease says it's because they give the wearer the appearance they have two huge eyes with dilated pupils on top of their head, similar to the nonthreatening effect that babies have.

So don't be afraid of keeping your sunglasses fellas :)

Glasses and Makeup

Makeup adds credibility for women in business, as confirmed by a (small) experiment Pease conducted himself.

The combo of makeup and glasses was even more powerful.
An exception is if it's a woman-on-woman interaction, as women tended to see the makeup-wearing ladies as colder and more arrogant, probably because they saw her more as a competitor.

If you don't need to wear glasses, having a pair with non-correctable lenses could be a good idea for business meetings.

Lipsticks

Barbara and Allan Pease say that wearing bright color lipsticks for interviews made women appear as if they were more interested in themselves than in business and career.
Women without lipsticks were seen as more serious about work than men, but they were also seen as more lacking in personal skills.

Briefcases Signals

Large briefcases communicate the person is doing all the work and takes work home because he can't manage his time well.
Slimmer briefcases say the person is only concerned with the bottom line and has more status.

Body Points Where The Mind Goes

The Definitive Book of Body Language points to an extremely easy and super effective way of reading people's intentions: the direction in which someone points his body or feet is a signal of where he wants to go.

Body Angles

Open Positions

Standing straight and facing someone head-on is perceived as *aggressive*.

To avoid taking an aggressive stand we must stand at 45 degrees angles so that together with our speaking partner we form a 90 degrees angle. This position invites others to join the conversation.

Pointing the body away from the listener is seen as confident but not aggressive.

Closed Positions
Barbara and Allan Pease say that if two people want intimacy they will instead face each other.

If someone wants to monopolize the conversation with someone, they will take this position. A fully frontal position is also a courtship signal (see "*body language of love*").
If the other person accepts the courtship signal, they will also orient their bodies at zero angles.
Pease says it's OK to approach a woman from the front and eventually move to a forty-five-degree angle (also read: *how to approach a woman*).

The Closed Position can also be used to issue a challenge between people who are hostile to each other.

Attacks & Approaches
Research shows that men are wary of attacks from the front and women are wary of attacks from the rear (and approaches from the rear).

So never stand fully frontal with a man you've just met as it's perceived as either an attack from a man or a sexual interest from a woman.

How We Exclude / Include
Barbara and Allan Pease say that 45 degrees angles invite other people to join the conversation.

If two people were facing each other frontally and a third person joins it's likely the two will only turn their heads towards him but not their bodies. Only turning the head towards someone signals that the newcomer is not very welcome.
They will probably have tight-lipped smiles as well.

A *group conversation* can also start fully open with a triangle but two people can eventually start facing each other and it's a sign for the third one he should probably move along.

Seated Body Pointing
When we are seated we can point our knees towards the person we are most interested in or towards the person we accept the most.
Feet serve the same purpose: we point our feet toward the person we find the most interesting.

Courtship and Attraction Gestures

The Definitive Book of Body Language quotes Albert Scheflen when he found out that when we meet someone from the opposite sex physiological changes take place that make us more youthful in appearance.

A man will stand taller, protrude his jaw, and expand his chest while an interested woman will make her more *submissive and feminine*.

Barbara and Allan Pease say that because men tend to have more difficulties than women in dating most dating and flirting classes tend to have more men than women (see a few *tips and examples for text flirting*)

The Emergence of Colorful Men
Barbara and Allan Pease note that in most mammals it's the man who dresses up to impress the woman.
In humans, it's the woman who dresses more attentively to attract male attention.

Today however we see the re-emergence of the man who takes care of himself, sometimes even in ways that have been predominantly feminine. This is the sometimes so-called metrosexual man.

The authors say that while metrosexual men seem strange to many heterosexual men, their observations show that metrosexuals fall in the categories of gay men, effeminate men who realize that many traditional female behaviors are a great way to meet lots of women.

Attracting The Opposite Sex
When someone wants to attract the opposite sex, we do so by emphasizing sexual differences.
Pease says that most of the success in the mating game relies on the man's ability to read the signals a woman sends to him as opposed to initiating his own moves.

Barbara and Allan Pease talk about Graham and *his style as a seducer.* They say his success is mostly due to his ability to read women's signals and play the rituals well.
Women would describe Graham as sexy, masculine, humorous, and as making them feel feminine.
Men described him as *aggressive*, insincere, arrogant, and not particularly funny. Graham had few male friends as men didn't like a rival for the attention of his woman.

Women Call the Shots
The Definitive Book of Body Language will tell you what most good observers noted by themselves: most men will tell you they made the first move.

But most studies in courtship show that **women are the initiators 90% of the time**.
And while some men approach without being invited first and some of them can even be successful, their overall statistical success is low because they're simply playing the number game.

Women and Men Misunderstandings
Barbara and Allan Pease say most men tend to mistake friendliness and smiling for sexual interest.
Pease says that's because men see the world in more sexual terms than women.

Upon meeting a possible partner women tend to send a flurry of courting rituals in the first minutes.
They often send ambiguous messages in the early stages to manipulate men into showing their hands. Men often confuse these signals and make a clumsy passes.

I find it extremely interesting that Barbara and Allan Pease say this is one of the reasons why some women have difficulties in attracting men: men get confused with ambiguous messages and won't make the approach.

The Attraction Process

The human courtship follows a predictable five-step sequence:

- **Stage 1. Eye contact:** She looks at him until he notices and holds eye contact for around five seconds, then turns away. A woman will repeat this behavior a few times (my note: in my experience, it's often less than five seconds, especially if she's engaged in a convo with a friend or you're not straight on and she needs to turn her head to see you)
- **Stage 2. Smiling:** She gives him a quick half smile
- **Stage 3. Preening:** She straightens up emphasizing her breasts, sits to show off her legs, or if she's standing tilts her head sideways and tilts her hip. He can respond by standing up straight, pulling in the stomach, expanding his chest, tucking his thumbs into his belt, and preening as well. They point their feet or entire bodies toward each other.
- **Stage 4. Talk:** He approaches and attempts to make small talk
- **Stage 5. Touch:** She initiates light touching either "accidental" or not. A hand touch is more intimate than the arm. The touch is repeated to let them know it was not accidental. Touching the shoulder of a man says she cares about his health and appearance.

These 5 steps are critical, and they're what most people, especially men in primis, find challenging.

The 13 Most Common Female Courtship Signals

The Definitive Book of Body Language says that women use a lot of the same gestures men use, such as touching the hair, smoothing the clothes, body pointing, gaze, and one or both hands on hips.

She may even use the thumb in a belt gesture, albeit it's a bit more subtle, for example only one thumb tucked into the belt or protruding from a handbag.

1. **Head Toss and Hair Flick**: Usually the first, used even by women with short hair
2. **Wet Lips and Pouting, Mouth Open**: women have more subcutaneous fat than men, including lips, which are used as a sign of femininity. Pouting increases the lips' size. Also, the female genital lips are proportional to their lips, so it becomes a sexual mimicry. Aroused women have their lips, breasts, and genitals become larger and redder because of blood circulation, so red lipsticks are very attractive
3. **Self Touching**: our minds act on our secret desires
4. **Limp Wrist**: the Limp Wrist is a submission signal used only by women and gay men. In business, the situation should be avoided
5. **Fondling a Cylindrical Object**: a man could in turn symbolically possess her by fondling her belonging (a cigarette lighter, keys, etc.)
6. **Exposed Wrists**: especially simple to do for smoking women
7. **Sideways Glance On Raised Shoulder**
8. **Rolling Hips**: a woman has an accentuated roll that highlights her feminine pelvic region
9. **Pelvic Tilt**: Tilting the pelvis shows her waist-to-hip ratio. A waist-to-hip ratio of 70% is considered the most attractive. At 80% men being to lose interest and are not interested at 100% but are still interested at lower than 70%. 70% were attractive even when the woman was quite heavy
10. **Handbag Nearby**: a woman's handbag is almost an extension of her body and putting it near a man is an indicator of interest. Fondling or asking him to get something from it is equally positive
11. **Knee Point**
12. **Shoe Fondle**: it has the phallic effect of thrusting the foot in and out. It can unsettle many men without knowing what's happening
13. **Let Twine**: the most appealing sitting position a woman can take. Other leg signals are crossing and uncrossing the legs (slowly) in front of the man and gently stroking the thighs with her hand

For more signs also check out *"Undercover Sex Signals"*.

Also later on Pease says that a woman is likely to lean forward and push her arms close, pressing her breasts together and showing cleavage.

Male Courtship Signals

Men are generally not good at sending and receiving the signals used in the mating game.
They most often react to women's mating signals and often react poorly too.
Male courtship signals involved the display of power, wealth, and status.

Some other signs include:

- **Preening**: straightening the tie, brushing imaginary dust from the shoulder, touching cufflinks or watch, and rearranging shirt or coat)
- **Crotch Displays**: the most direct sexual display is the aggressive thumbs in-belt gesture; when seated or against a wall he can also spread his legs
- **Crotch Adjustments**

What Men Look at in Women
Barbara and Allan Pease say that when it comes to body shape both men and women prefer athletic body shapes.

Men are more attracted to women with childlike faces -large eyes, small noses, and full lips and cheeks- as it releases hormones that want to make them protect themselves.
Women prefer instead adult faces such as strong jaws, larger brows, and strong noses.

Guys are split among preferences for butts, breasts (men love them in every shape and size because it's the cleave that is most attractive), and legs.

What Women Look At Most
The Definitive Book of Body Language says something you are probably familiar with: women prefer men with deeper, smoother voices because deep tones are linked to testosterone levels. Pease adds that in countries where feminism has been more influential women have taken jobs requiring more testosterone production and have become more *assertive and authoritative* and their voices deepened as well. He adds he hopes his hairy chest won't follow suit.
40% of women prefer butts, legs, and chests/arms to be equally split.

Broad shoulders, muscular chest, and arms, and a tight butt are preferred. Up to a certain point though, most women don't like the muscle man bodybuilder type.

Barbara and Allan Pease say that a tight butt is preferred because it helps to make the strong, forward motions needed for successful sperm transfer during sex.

Availability Beats Looks
The authors say that a man is often more attracted to a woman by the signs of her availability than by her physical attractiveness and you can learn and practice availability signals.
Indeed, Pease says, studies show that most people are skeptical about beautiful people and it appears to be inborn as babies prefer average faces to very beautiful ones.
And we prefer mates who are roughly as attractive as we are (which means they're more likely to stay and not go look for someone else).

Cold People Are Actually Colder
People who are described as cold tend to be physically colder too because their blood flows to legs and arm muscles for the fight or flight response. When one person is attracted to another blood rises to the skin surface making them warmer.

Ownership, Territory & Height Signals

Humans lean against objects and other people to show ownership and stake a territorial claim.

If the object we lean against or touch belongs to someone else it can also be used as an intimidation sign or as a challenge.
Leaning against the doorway of someone else's office or sitting in his chair can also be an intimidation ploy.

A boss speaking to a subordinate in his own office could put his feet on the desk, but if his superior enters his office he is more likely to change that position, and might for example place a foot on the bottom drawer of the desk.

Lovers hold hands or put their arms around each other to show wanna-be competitors they have a claim on that person.

Height / Size
Barbara and Allan Pease say that people make themselves smaller to show deference.

Taller men tend to have greater reproductive success because height is linked to testosterone and because women tend to choose taller partners. Men prefer shorter women because it gives them a height advantage.

On the screen, we tend to assigner height centimeters based on the power and authority of their presentation.
This is why, Pease says, many short actors or politicians do well on the screen: they simply act tall.

My note:
I honestly see no point and no merit here in Pease's assertion of "acting tall".
Behavior is yes *somewhat* related to height, but so loosely that there's no such thing as "tall behavior".
Also, you act the way you need to act *independently* of your height. As a matter of fact, a short man acting powerfully is even more impressive and a taller man acting submissive is more striking.
Just look at Joe Pesci doing it:

Powerful performances or impressive titles all lead to you being perceived as taller.

Barbara and Allan Pease say that if you want to test the authority that comes with height lie down on the floor and try to reprimand someone standing. Then try the opposite.

My note:
I feel this "test" is preposterous as nobody deals with each other while lying down.
If you really wanted to try something similar, then you should stand on your knees. But even then, it's not very popular as you can't move around freely. You should just try to reprimand someone taller than you, as simple as that.

Very tall people can have a disadvantage when they want to connect with people shorter than they are.
tall salesman found out that delivering sales presentations while seated increased his sales substantially (a whopping 62%).

To sum it up, to fully quote Barbara and Allan Pease, height differences can have a significant impact on relationships, but height and power are often just perceptions.

Lowering Body & Raising Status
Barbara and Allan Pease say that slouching down in a chair can raise your status.
If the owner of the place is standing and you slouch down the complete informality on someone else's territory communicates a *dominant* or *aggressive attitude.*

People tend to be superior and protective when in their territory, especially their own home, so using submissive gestures and behavior is effective for getting them on your side.

The authors say you can also make yourself avoid intimidating others or avoid coming across as confrontational.
Pease uses the example of appeasing the cops who pulled you over for a ticket by playing the victim.
It's an extremely interesting example -albeit a bit slimy-.

Basically, the idea is to show that you're not a threat and encourage him to take the role of the reprimanding parent, in which case he may decide to give you a reprimand without a ticket, says Pease, up to 50% of the time.

Note:
I have used this technique twice, both times very successfully, but I wished he had added "the other option is to just be a (wo)man, take it in stride, and pay your ticket".

Learn more:

Body language & strategies to get out of a traffic ticket (alumni only!)

Negating Height Power
Barbara and Allan Pease say that If you are shorter, you can create a sitting situation that will neutralize the height of the other negotiators in the room by lowering their chairs or raising yours –as was suggested by Leil Lowndes-.
Sitting at the opposite side of a desk or talking to them standing while they are seated are also good techniques.
Talking in public settings such as bars or crowds, or in a car or plane also limits the tactics of taller speaking

partners.
Looking outside of a window as they speak gives the impression you are giving deep thoughts to the discussion also even the field as height advantage doesn't exist when you're not looking at them.

To appear taller, dark-colored clothing, pinstriped suits or pants suits, and full sizes watches make you look taller. About the watch, the idea is that the bigger the watch the more clout the person appears to have.

Seating Arrangements

This was for me one of the most interesting chapters of *The Definitive Book of Body Language* because it opened some new doors of understanding.

How you sit in relation to others is an important tell of relationships statuses and a powerful way to gain cooperation. It's very impactful and should never be left to chance.

Seating Positions

- **Corner Position**: when both of you are standing by the corner of the table it's used by people in friendly and casual conversation and it avoids territorial division of the table. The corner of the desk provides a smaller cover. Pease says this is the best position to deliver a presentation.
- **Cooperative Position**: sitting by the same side of the table. it's a great position for presenting your case and having it accepted as it's a cooperative seating position one can have. The trick is to sit in this position without the other person feeling like you invaded his territory
- **Independent Position**: each person is sitting at the corner, facing each other but both at the opposite end of the table, and it's used when people don't want to interact with each other
- **Competitive / Defensive**: the two face each other frontally with the table in between. The table becomes a solid barrier between the two and it can lead to each party taking a first stand on his point of view.

A competitive/defensive position can really make a huge difference, often a negative difference.
People speak in shorter sentences in this position, can recall less of what was said, and are more likely to argue.
An experiment showed that in patient-doctor relationships only 10% were at ease when sitting in the defensive position against 55% when the desk was not present.

Many managers unluckily prefer the desk. 76% of senior managers preferred the desk and 50% of lower managers did. Male managers were twice as likely to place a desk between themselves and their subordinates.

The person sitting to your right tends to be more cooperative than the one to your left.

Keeping 3 People Involved
If you're sitting at a table with two people and one is asking all the question when the third one mostly stay silent it's a good idea to still involve both of them.
Pease and Pease recommend that you look at the question asker as you begin to reply, then turn your head back to the silent person and keep going back and forth as you speak. You then finish looking at the question asker.

Rectangular Board Tables
The person sitting at the shorter edge of the table, the farthest from the door, is the one with the most power.
The person right in front of him across the table is next in line. Then the person in the middle of the long edge of the table. Then the person to the right of the leader.

Power Plays at Home
Open families tend to go for round tables, while closed families prefer square tables.
Authoritative families go for rectangular tables. Placing the shiest person at the head of the table will often lead that person to talk more and even more authoritatively.

Audiences and Sales
Barbara and Allan Pease say that if you want someone to pay attention to what you're saying you should sit them in the front row.

When you're having a business dinner or lunch it's best to complete the business talk before the food arrives.
Let your prospect sit with the back against a solid wall because open spaces make people uncomfortable. Sitting with the person's back towards the door or a ground-floor window also increases the tension.
Lights should be dimmed and muffled background music should be played to relax the senses.

If you're selling in the defensive seating you can try to place a paper in the middle of the table.
If the prospect picks it up and moves it into his territory it signals acceptance and you can ask to go over to show him something so that you can take the *collaborative approach*. But if he pushes the paper back to you don't encroach his personal space.

Interviews, Office Politics & Power Plays

Barbara and Allan Pease say that most job interviews are not productive.

Studies show indeed we tend to hire the person we like the most, not the one who's best for the job.

Pease says that the best stuff from the CV, what really matters, is forgotten.

The impression in the first 15 seconds was strikingly similar to the overall impression at the end of the interview.
And that's another striking proof that you don't get a second chance to make a great first impression.

Linguistics, Nonverbals, and Status
There's a direct relationship between the vocabulary range (and relative clarity of communication) and the status and power people command.

The higher up the person is, the fewer nonverbal gesture he will use because he can use words to convey meaning.
Less educated and less verbally accurate people will use more gestures to communicate as he tries to make up for their vocabulary range.

Barbara and Allan Pease say that James Bond uses minimal body gestures, especially when under pressure.
High-status people tend to keep their cool by revealing as little emotions as possible.
Actors such as Jim Carrey play highly animated roles, and they're usually powerless, intimidated men.

Golden Keys to Making Great First Impression

- **In The Reception:** remove outerwear and avoid entering with your arms full of stuff that can make you look inept. Stand in the reception area with Hand in Hand behind your back or the steeple and slowly rock back and forth on your feet. Never sit.
- **Entry**: when the receptionist told you can go in, enter without hesitation keeping the same speed (people lacking confidence change gears and perform a small shuffle as they enter)
- **Approach**: even if he's doing something, put down your briefcase, shake his hand, and immediately take a seat, showing that you don't expect to be kept waiting.
- **Handshake**: palm straight and match the pressure. Let him decide when to end the handshake
- **Sitting**: if you have to sit in a low chair directly facing him, turn the chair 45 degrees so that you're not in the reprimand position, and if you can't turn the chair turn your body. Avoid low-sinking sofas and sit on the sofa's edge if needed
- **Gestures**: cool people in control of their emotions use clear and deliberate gestures. High-status individuals use fewer gestures than low-status individuals: people with power don't have to move much. Mirror the other person when appropriate
- **Exit**: pack your things calmly and deliberately, shake hands, and walk out. If you're a woman turn around before

you leave the room and smile so the last impression will be your smile and not your rear

When Someone Keeps You Waiting

Barbara and Allan Pease say that if someone keeps you waiting for more than twenty minutes they're either disorganized or *it's a power move.*

Letting you wait reduces your status and enhances the status of the person making you wait.

Always bring an ebook or laptop with you and start working. When the person arrives let them speak first, lift your head slowly and greet them, then pack smoothly.
If they call you, you might even say you'll be there in a second you just need to finish something.

Another option is to make all the phone calls you had to do.
The message is that you're a busy person and are not going to lose time because of their disorganization -or power games-.

If the other person takes a call during the meeting or someone enters and starts talking to your interviewer for a long time, take out your notebook and start reading. It gives them privacy and demonstrates you don't waste your time. If you feel he's doing it on purpose take out your phone and do your calls.

Read more about this on *What to Do When Someone Makes You* Wait here:

> What To Do When Someone Makes You Wait

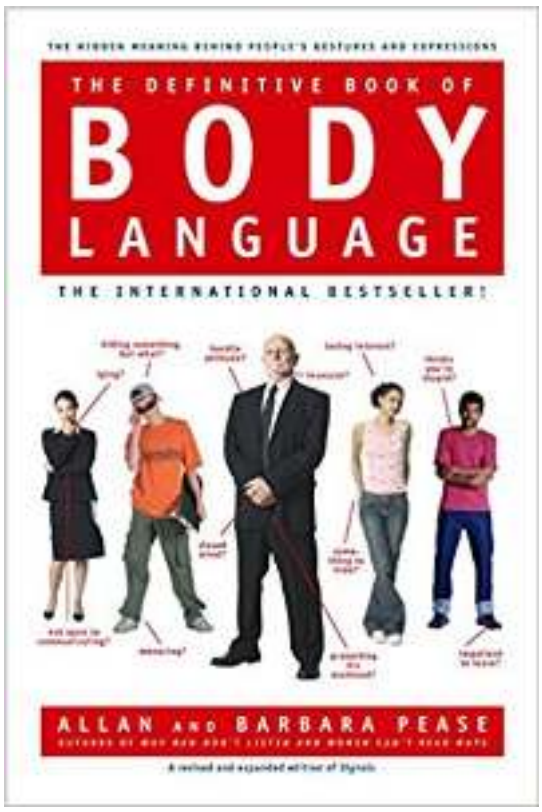
Some Tips

- **Keep your fingers together:** open fingers and hands above the chin is perceived as less powerful, so keep your fingers together and hands below the chin level
- **Elbows Out:** sitting on the chair keep your elbows on the armrest
- **Watch Coat Buttons:** more agreements are reached when people have their coats unbuttoned

Chairs and Accessories
The higher the back of the chair the more power and status it bestows upon the person sitting there. Swivel chairs have more power as they give more freedom of movement.

Sitting Distance
The farther away the visitor is placed from the interviewer, the lower the power.

Barbara and Allan Pease give a few fantastic examples of how to give feedback to a subordinate.
They say you face dead-on for direct answers, 45 degrees for more personal questions to take the pressure off.
They also present a case study of how they re-arranged an office to improve a manager's relationship with his employees.



CONS

Some Childish (Sexual) Jokes
A lot of childish jokes such as “how to tell if a politician is lying: his lips are moving”, or a Chirac picture with his hands far apart and the caption “measuring the size of an issue or boasting about his love life?”.

Jumping to (Unfounded) Conclusions
The author refers to Hitler more than once. One comment portrays Hitler putting an arm in front of his “lonely testicle” because he felt at odds with his sexuality.

Albeit that might certainly be true I’m not sure how the author can be certain that was the case.

Allan Pease also says that a candidate he advised won the election after he suggested he shorten his lectern, look straight at the camera and have the camera shoot his film from below.
Pease implies that was proof that people don’t vote based on debates but on who looks best suited to be the leader.

That’s some really bad critical thinking there.

Unscientific “Researches”
A few of the research he ran were good for anecdotal evidence, but not scientific.

Pease wanted to prove the theory that a man needs to be “1.09 times taller” than a woman for a successful relationship.
So he picks some random couples respecting the 1.09 ratio that are still together and some that don’t abide by the ratio and aren’t together anymore.

That makes no sense.

Random Paragraph Names
Some paragraphs’ names don’t reflect the content, and paragraph structures are not neatly arranged.
Sometimes information about X was under paragraph Y, or sometimes summaries introduced new topics.

Review

The Definitive Book of Body Language is *one of the best books on body language* available.

And learning the basics of body language is crucial to understand *social power dynamics* and getting good with people.

> Best Body Language Books (or Courses)

The Body Language Project: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*The Body Language Project*" is a pictorial guide to learning to read body language.
The focus is particularly on the body language of dating, seduction, and approaching.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Mixed Signals for Ego Protection
  - How to Approach Sitting Women
  - Cornering
  - Approach Angle
  - Touching
  - Whispering
  - Finger Tap
  - Mirroring
  - Leg Cross Height
  - Tibial Torsion
  - Lip Puckering
  - Forehead Bow
  - Childlike Playfulness
  - Alpha Males
  - Eye Games
- Controversies
  - Steeple
  - Leaning Against the Bar
  - Foot kicking
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Your goal is never to dominate a woman
- In real life, you're likely to get mixed signals
- Don't overdo any alpha male stuff: it's unattractive

Full Summary

Since *"The Body Language Project"* contains lots of pictures and little text, I will provide here a rather quick summary of some good points I liked and a review.

Mixed Signals for Ego Protection

Christopher Philip says that both men -mostly women I'd add- send mixed signals of interest and disinterest to protect their egos in case of rejections.

Women also have a conundrum: she might be interested in a relationship with you and doesn't want to look too easy -and too obvious with her signals-.

To make sure the signals are positive, the author says, you should look for 3-4 interest signals and make sure they're aimed at you.

How to Approach Sitting Women

For an overview, check out "*how to approach women*".

Towering

Christopher Philip says that towering is the wrong way to dominate, and it means you keep standing while she's sitting and slightly crouch down a little bit toward her.

Height advantage can be used while standing if you're taller, but should never be exploited if she's sitting and you approach while standing. That's called "towering" and feels overpowering.

Never approach a girl sitting while you're standing.

Your initial goal is never to dominate or intimidate a woman upon approaching her, your goal is to turn the natural fear response most women can have to a man's approach into excitement.
Christopher Philip says that trying to dominate is also an indicator of disinterest.

Squatting

Going nearby and squatting lowers your body height compared to hers.

Christopher Philip says that **squatting shows courtesy** and is not necessarily less dominant.

And I couldn't agree more.
When you approach her while she's sitting it shows a lot of cojones from your side, so showing courtesy on top of cojones will skyrocket your value to her eyes.

Cornering

You should never approach a woman giving the impression you are pushing her against a corner or against a wall.

Approach Angle

Christopher Philip says you should **never approach from behind**.
A frontal approach in plain view is preferable, and the best is giving her the chance to take a full look at you before approaching.

My Note:
I don't like a frontal approach instead.
Allan Pease also discourages a full-frontal approach.

Touching

All king of touching move two people closer together.

Especially when the woman initiates it, it's a sign of sexual interest (also read: *all the signs she's interested in*).

Touching is also a much stronger cue than body pointing, so if a girl has her hand on her leg but her legs are pointing away, it's still overall an indicator of interest.

Whispering

Whispering is a neat way of getting someone closer into your intimate space.
If someone is whispering into your ear it's an indicator of interest.

Also read: *all the signs he likes you.*

Finger Tap

A woman looking at you with crossed arms and tapping her index finger on her arm is an indicator of interest.
The finger tap is a way of saying "come here".

Mirroring

Christopher Philip says that you can use mirroring to test interest levels.

If you adopt the same pose your speaking partner is having and they change it soon after, they aren't interested in you.

Dancing can be a great way to test mirroring because movements happen very quickly and fluidly.
If she copies a bit of your style and looks at you, she's interested.
If she's doing her own moves and looks away, she's not.

Leg Cross Height

Christopher Philip says that the higher a woman crosses her legs above her knee, the higher the interest she's showing.

Tibial Torsion

When a woman points both of her toes inwards she's trying to appear smaller and less dominant, and it's a signal she's willing to submit.

Lip Puckering

Puckering the lips is an obvious attraction signal and also an indicator that the woman is ready to kiss.

Forehead Bow

When the head is tilted downward and the woman looks at you "through" the forehead.
This is similar to a bow and a strong indicator of interest as it shows a willingness to submit.

Childlike Playfulness

Any childlike games such as stealing something from you or pinching you are to be considered a positive sign and an indicator of interest.

Alpha Males

Christopher Philip also goes into *alpha male behavior* and says most men trying to look alpha overdo it.
They take up *too* much space and look *too* angry and competitive.

I couldn't agree more.

Also, read:

- Alpha male posturing
- Alpha male body language

And of course, the *ultimate article on alpha males:*

https://thepowermoves.com/alpha-male/

Eye Games

I was surprised to read Christopher Philip suggests you should break eye contact with a woman by looking down.

Looking down, he says, shows you're not aggressive and it "admits" you're interested.
Breaking eye contact to the side says you are just scanning the room.

Controversies

There were a few parts I found contradicting other sources and/or my experience. Here they are:

Steeple

Christopher says that interlaced fingers clenching the hands together is a subtle form of steepling while Allan Pease says it's a sign of frustration. I think they can both be right depending on the situation.

Leaning Against the Bar

Christopher says that not reclining against the bar or the wall for support is a way of saying you're alright by yourself.

In another picture of a man reclining against the bar with closed body language, he says that people like that tend to end up being the wallflowers of the evening.

I fully disagree here.
Reclining against something is natural and a sign of comfort. Standing as a standalone object is very unnatural. When you're at home you don't usually stand in the middle of the room doing nothing. You do something or lie down.

Foot kicking

Christopher Philip says that a foot-kicking motion is a sign of boredom.

Joe Navarro says that jiggling of the foot can be an indicator of nervousness and kicking is an indicator of "fighting back against something".

I tend to side with Joe Navarro here: foot movements are commonly misread for boredom but they're more often in the discomfort cluster.

CONS

Terrible Clothes
Some guys in the picture really need all the body language help they can get given the clothes they wear.

It brought me back to the time I spent in Eastern Europe and their fantastic fashion style.
The local men had too-wide shirts with too-long arms, too-wide and too-long pants folding over ugly plastic Bata shoes, and the color matching of a daltonic man :).

Review

Great, I really enjoyed Christopher Philip's work and loved the pictorial format. I also loved the fact that he shows many pictures that are not too obvious, where there are several contrasting signals, and how it often appears in real life.

He then often proceeds to say which signs are more important and what's the overall message.

The idea is similar to *Undercover Sex Signals* by Leil Lowndes, but I would say that Leil has better marketing and less content. Christopher goes deeper into body proper body language analysis.

Further Readings
If you want to improve your social skills, check out my *Social Skills Summaries*. More body language articles with pictures and videos:

- Hands in Pockets Sexy Body Language
- Sexy Body Language at the Bar
- How to Walk Sexy

How to Walk Sexy & Confident: Men's Guide (W/ Videos)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Do you want to learn a confident and sexy walk for men?

You have landed on the perfect page.
My name is Lucio, I am a social scientist, psychology nut, social skills consultant, and eternal researcher of everything related to people and social dynamics.

This article will tell you what research and body language say about a powerful, confident, and sexy walk.

Contents

- 1. Move Your Shoulders
- 2. Pace Your Walk With Your Arms
- 3. Splay Your Legs
- 4. Walk With Erect Posture
- 5. Splay Your Feet Outward
- 6. Keep Your Gaze Up
  - Straight and Focused
  - Chill and Calm: Enjoying Life
- 7. Smile Slightly
- 8. A Walk To Pick Up
  - Walk Past Her
  - Give a Slight Smile
- 9. Bounce With Gravity Defying Steps
- 10. Brisk Walk is a Sexy Walk
- Walk Like You Own It: The Mindset
- Bonus: Some Less Sexy Walk for Men
  - Vladimir Putin
  - John Wayne

1. Move Your Shoulders

A shoulder swag is a crucial aspect of a sexy walk.

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Behavior* states that while women 'sway hips', masculine men 'swagger shoulders'.

Opposite to men, women instead sway their hips and bottom to highlight femininity.

2. Pace Your Walk With Your Arms

There are two elements of arms' movements to walk like a sed God:

- Back and Forth Movement
- Distance from the Body

You want to move your arms, at least a bit.

Not moving and standing still is a typical fear response part of the “freeze” category of our reptilian brain, which is exactly what you do *not* want to communicate.

Similarly, arms too close to our body signal fear and unconfidence.
It’s when we’re afraid of venturing into the nearby territory indeed that we keep our arms close to our bodies.

Why?

Because we unconsciously feel like our arms could be more helpful close by to defend our body.

Again, you don’t want to send the message you are afraid of your surroundings.
For a sexy and confident walk, we’ll move our arms and we will spread them farther from our body.

3. Splay Your Legs

We keep our legs crossed when we’re fearful.

And we keep our legs open when we want to show openness and masculinity in what’s often called a “crotch display”.

Also, as politically incorrect as it might sound, what’s one of the most stereotypical effeminate walks you can imagine?

It’s the walk with the thighs rubbing one another of course. Pressing your thighs against your crotch is a way of negating your sexuality.
Letting some air circulate is a way of displaying manhood instead.

An easy way of adding splayed legs to your budding sexy walk is to avoid your thighs rubbing each other.

4. Walk With Erect Posture

Slouching and dropping our shoulders it is a way of closing within ourselves and defending our inner body.

Erect posture is a sign of confidence and it makes you much more attractive.

5. Splay Your Feet Outward

When people open up their feet, they also open up the way to their crotch and make it more visible.

Some men “open” the internal side of their feet when walking and it’s rarer in women -it seems to me Asian women do it more often-.

And since much of positive sexual communication is about displaying gender differences, splaying out the feet can be considered a positive masculine sign.

When women do it while sitting it works as a powerful aphrodisiac for many men, as it feels like an invitation to their vagina (rawer and cruder style, classier women will never do that).

Warning:
Do it slightly. Some raw, masculine energy from splayed feet is good, but do it too much and not only you go overboard, but you also show poor physical joint structure.
And physical malformation is rarely attractive.

This video represents a good mix:

6. Keep Your Gaze Up

There are main ways of gazing while walking:

- ### Straight and Focused

This is the “man on a mission” kind of walk.

Look straight on, focused, with the slightly aggressive attitude of the man who knows where he’s going and wants to get there quickly.
Don’t look at people, your expression and demeanor say “*get the fu** out of my way”* (most will).

Warning:
Don’t use this type of walk in any social setting. It shows a (slight) disdain for people, it will make you seem unapproachable and it will look incongruent *if you want to approach* and socialize later on.

Daniel Craig does it great in general, and particularly well here at second 23.
Yours truly gives you below a poorer stylish-wise example but with a better camera angle.

- ### Chill and Calm: Enjoying Life

Sometimes life is to be taken in and enjoyed at a slower pace.

And while the “man on a mission” walk is sexy in a *dominant kind of way*, the “chill and calm” is sexy in a more *intellectually dominant kind of way*.

There are a few ways to make the “chill” and “enjoy life” walk work.

The most important part is that you do not look down and that you **move your head slowly.**
Men darting their eyes around are scanning the environment for opportunities and, more often, for threats. Not sexy.

7. Smile Slightly

I will have a proper article on smiling, but the short of it is that there are two main ways you can smile:

- **“Teethy” Smile**

A genuine smile is wider and larger and it fully shows the teeth.

It’s less sexy, *less dominant,* and more social but can also be attractive.
Note the difference: some smiles are submissive, but if you’re smiling with full gusto out of sincere enjoyment it says you can let go of yourself, which is sexy.

And it says you’re content with your life.
In a world where most people live a life of quiet desperation -to quote Henry David Thoreau-, we are naturally attracted to those who have found an inner source of happiness and peace.

- **Sexy Smile**

This is the sexier, smugger version.

A tight-lipped smile says you got some secret in your life that makes you feel confident and superior and that you will not share (*Pease and Pease*).

What is he up to, what's his secret, they'll be wondering…?

One corner of your lips is more raised than the other corner and you don't show any teeth: it's an ever-so-slight smile.

Warning:
sexier is overall better but doesn't *always* attract more women. Some can think you're too into yourself, and some others will dislike you for making them feel like you're out of their league.
When you're in doubt and want to socialize, it's safer to err on the more social side.

8. A Walk To Pick Up

Let's be honest: the reason we care at all about how to walk sexy is for the opposite sex.

There are two main ways you can make an impression which will result in more physical activity beyond just walking:

Walk Past Her

Keep walking past without looking at her. Your superior, snub style coupled with your sexy strut will sure as hell make her look at you.

Gianna Nannini has a famous hit song called "bello e impossible", meaning "handsome and impossible".

Why am I telling you this?

Because "impossible" is exactly what you're angling for here, except… Except you will meet her later on "accidentally" and if she plays her cards you might become "bello e *possible*" ;).

The effect is similar to having a *cool standing pose*: you let them look at you and admire you and the effect is to "celebrit-ize" you.

Give a Slight Smile

As you go past her, you turn slightly towards her.

Unsexy guys leering at girls make it wrong because they do it crudely and too obviously -and sometimes add the biggest attraction killer ever: the catcall-.

You, instead, look at them coolly… Yes, she piqued your interest… Somewhat.

But you're not fully sold yet, and you know how to play the game.
That's the message you want to send.

Looking at them this way is also more likely to elicit a reaction so that your approach will be more like a warm approach.

And if she doesn't look at you at all?

Well, then coolly turn around and go for it anyway, you have nothing to lose.

9. Bounce With Gravity Defying Steps

> ***Has he just had sex?***

Guys, if you're looking for "how to walk cool", this is your walk.

Energized and confident, this one communicates “the world is mine for the taking, and that makes me the coolest cat alive”.

Joe Navarro in “*What Every BODY is Saying*” talks about “gravity-defying” body language.

He says that when we feel energized and confident, we will gesticulate with our arms more often and we will often swing them from side to side when we walk.

A bouncy sexy walk also tends to move at a quicker speed.
It’s a bit more juvenile and you will rarely see it from more mature men, but it’s very sexy as **it underlines vitality, vigor, and a joyful personality.**

You do a bouncy sexy walk by moving slightly quicker and adding a bit of a bounce to your steps as if you had springs in your shoes.

And feel free to move your arms around, touch your face (in a sexy way), or adjust your clothes.
And don’t forget the mood: you love life.

I’m glad I can show you this walk with one the sexiest men alive:

10. Brisk Walk is a Sexy Walk

Some sources will tell you to move slowly and walk slowly. Well, that’s true… On some occasions.

In some others, not so much.

How speed relates to sexiness, is indeed highly contextual.

Slow will work great for:

- Retired millionaires
- Bigger men
- Powerful men in slower “lines of work” as we’ve already seen with *The Godfather*
- Strolling around with your woman

Look at her expression before thinking he was a jerk.
It will also work great for almost everyone in more chill settings, like a nighttime lounge, the beach, or a sunny day at the park.

But a healthy man in a busy, bustling city, with people swirling around you? Or when immersed in work, or partying on the dance floor?
Too slow will make you look silly there.

Like Tom Tucker in Family Guy:

Don't listen to sources saying "slower is better": it's just a bad generalization.

Walking during daytime stick to average speed with good strides or slightly above average speed underlying your goal orientation and physical fitness if you're doing stuff.

Slightly lower than average if you're strolling.

Walk Like You Own It: The Mindset

The mindset of a sexy walk is also what makes you sexy in general.

Believe you are a man with a lot of value to give to any woman -or guy for that matter- and you feel like you're in control of your life.

Walking powerfully with a goal in mind means you do have goals you care about in your life, and walking leisurely means you do enjoy life and know how to enjoy life -which is very sexy-.

Bonus points: research also shows that a confident walk is also *safer*.
Muggers and criminals subconsciously pick victims who display weakness with their gate and nonverbals.

Note On Video Examples:
my walks in the video examples are slightly accentuated to show the move more clearly.
For normal daytime and day-to-day situations, I usually rein it in a bit and I would advise you to move *towards* those examples without fully reaching them (except for when you wanna play a bit and for when the time calls for

it, then go full power).

Bonus: Some Less Sexy Walk for Men

Here are some examples of famous walks that are not as sexy:

Vladimir Putin

It's OK to swing one arm more than the other, even advisable maybe. But Putin overdoes it (KGB training some say) :

John Wayne

John Wayne is a symbol of manliness, but I wouldn't copy his walk here.

His upper body arm swings a bit too much in front of his body.
A good erect posture wants your arms more on the side, and the arms in front of the body are defensive.

He does much better here though and adds another great nonverbal gesture of dominance: the slight "get out of my way" hand gesture.

The Talent Code: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*The Talent Code*" teaches readers how to best train to grow myelin and achieve peak performance by training at the edges of their comfort zone.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - How Myelin Impacts Performance
  - The Talent Code PART I: Deep Practice
  - Do It Often: Action
  - The Sweet Spot: Make Mistakes
  - The Three Rules of Deep Practice
  - The Talent Code PART II: Ignition
  - Let Your Skill Become Your Identity
  - Believing You Can – And You Will
  - The Talent Code Part III: Master Coaching
  - Deep Practice and Psychology
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- The Talent Code is: Ignition + Master Coaching + Deep Practice = Talent
- To learn quickly you must struggle and make mistakes at the edge of your comfort zone
- To achieve mastery you need to love your craft so you will stay long at it

Summary

About The Author:
Daniel Coyle is an American journalist who has been covering sports and top performers.

How Myelin Impacts Performance

Myelin is a fatty tissue that surrounds the axon of the nerve cells in our body and, importantly, in our brains.

Axons are a bit like the connecting cables of our brains, and myelin is the sheath surrounding these cables.

Myelin can grow with usage similar to how a muscle can grow with usage, and the more myelin we build to connect some specific paths of our brain, the more skilled we will become at that specific craft we're working on.

Put simply: **practice builds myelin, and myelin makes your moves more natural**.

Skill is myelin insulation that wraps neurocircuits and grows according to certain signals.
The story of skill and talent is the story of myelin.

The whole point of *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle is to explain how we can optimize our practices to build

myelin quicker and more efficiently.

The Talent Code PART I: Deep Practice

Daniel Coyle says that Deep Practice involves “doing it yourself” first and foremost.

For example, if you’re struggling to remember a name and you remember it yourself you’re more likely to remember it later on.
And if you try to put a safe vest by yourself you’re more likely to remember how to do it compared to simply watching a flight attendant do it.

It’s because you fire those connections in your brain and you build myelin around them.

Do It Often: Action

The more often you repeat a certain action, the more myelin you build.

The deep practice involves quick cycles of repetition based on mistakes and quickly fixing them.

Daniel Coyle explains the huge number of talented Brazilian players in a game they all play growing up: futso. Futso is played on a small field and allows the player to touch the ball up to 600% times more often.

Being so often actively involved in the game allows the futso player to pack much more practice in a much shorter time.

The Sweet Spot: Make Mistakes

Daniel Coyle says the best way to build a good circuit is to fire it, attend to mistakes, then fire it again over and over.

You must teach that circuit how to fire correctly. The struggle is not an option, it’s a requirement.

And that’s why passion and persistence are key to talent: wrapping lots of myelin requires lots of energy and repetition. If you don’t love what you’re doing, you won’t do it often enough.

The author says effortless is a terrible way to perform and so is working against insurmountable odds with no solution in sight.

The sweet spot of deep practice is at the edge of your ability, where you can target the struggles that are near your ability level, make those mistakes and correct them.
Incidentally, the sweet spot at the edge of your ability is also a key to finding inner motivation, as explained by Daniel Pink in Drive.

Repetition Builds Automaticity

Daniel Coyle says our brain is built to make the skills we master automated. The more we build a skill circuit, the more we are aware of actually using it.

Myelin Buildup Cannot be Undone

Myelination -the growth of myelin- happens in one way only: once it’s built it cannot be undone.

The only way to change a pattern of behavior then is to build a new habit by building a new behavior.

We Can Myelinate During Our Whole Life

Daniel Coyle goes a bit into the age question and says that in children myelin arrives in a series of waves lasting until our thirties.

These waves vary depending on the person, and they form critical periods in which the brain is extraordinarily receptive to learning new skills.

We keep building myelin until around 50 when overall myelin tips towards loss rather than accrual.
But we retain the ability to myelinate during our whole life. That's why it's easier to learn young: our genes stay the same, but the ability to build myelin changes.

10 Years Rules

Top mastery requires around a decade, or 10.000 hours of deep practice.

This is one of the most misquoted and most popular notions coming out of Malcolm Gladwell's book "*Outliers*".
It's also one of the most misunderstood, as Daniel Coyle himself says it's more about how you practice than simply clocking hours.

Also, read:

- **Pop-psychology myths**

The Three Rules of Deep Practice

The three rules of deep practice are:

#1. Chunk It Up:

Look at the task as a whole first.

Listen to the whole song, and watch the whole movement sequence.

Then break it into chunks and do them slowly first.
Going slowly allows you to attend to errors more effectively and reach a higher degree of precision whenever you fire signals.
So your myelin grows over the correct portion of neurons more precisely and quickly.

Master the pieces individually, then start linking them together in progressively bigger chunks.

#2. Repeat It

You have to continuously keep working on your skill.

Myelin is a living tissue, it breaks down and repairs, so daily practice matters.

Repetition though is only as good as the quality of the practice. Coyle says that most top talent schools he visited practice no more than 3 hours a day, and doing that in a state of deep practice is not only enough, but it will often exhaust you.

My Note 1:
I don't fully understand here why the author says myelin breaks down while earlier he says that myelin cannot be undone (unless through age or illness).

My Note 2:
I was intrigued about this 3h day practice only that I had to research deeper. I expected to find out 3h only is not enough.
Well, Daniel Coyle in his blog actually takes it even further.
He mentions Barcelona's talent school practices only 70 minutes a day. And he suggests you quit when you're exhausted.

#3. Learn to Feel It

Daniel Coyle says that Deep Practice should feel to you as being a staggering baby learning to walk.

It's an uncomfortable sensation that most sensible people would seek to avoid. Yet the longer you endure in this sensation, the more myelin you build and the more skills you build.

The author then drops another gem when he says that to get good, you must love, or better be enthusiastic, about being bad.

> **To get good you must love being bad**

We Can Be Heroes (All Of Us)

Daniel Coyle says that genes matter and IQ matters.

But we have a good deal of control over what skills to develop and we have more potential than we might have ever presumed.

The Talent Code PART II: Ignition

Motivation is started and sustained through a process called ignition.

Let Your Skill Become Your Identity

Students who performed best in music classes answered they were going to practice longer than students who weren't sure.

The students who performed the best thought and felt like the art they were studying "was their thing".

They had acquired the identity of being musicians (read more on *how to build a supportive identity*)

It's also a social construct: the willingness to be like someone.
So if you had a musician in the family, it could feel to you like that's part of your heritage, which will also come to share your identity.

Ignition is that spark that leads us to decide who we want to be. Ignition shapes our identity.

> **Long term commitment always beats short term commitment.**

Believing You Can – And You Will

Ignition is also what makes us believe we can do it.

Daniel Coyle uses the example of Korean golfers.
There had never been a golfer in Korea, but the moment one appeared, it suddenly seemed possible that a Korean could be great at golf.

She became a star and a few years later Korea started dominating golf.

Similarly, it was for the first man who ran a mile in under 4 minutes. Before then it was thought to be impossible, but after Bannister did, many more did.

My Note:
this story always smelled fishy to me and it might be one of those fake "you can do it" cheap motivational stories with little truth behind it.
The more likely truth is very well explained in my list of *self-help myths*. You don't need fake "you can do it"

motivational psychology to empower yourself.

Ignition Through Competition

Daniel Coyle notices that even in sports where genetics seem to reign supreme, like running, there are strong indicators that there's more than meets the eye.

Most runners, for example, were younger brothers or sisters in the family.

To keep up with their older brothers they had to put in more effort, which worked as the ignition element to always put them at the edge of their skills, effectively leading them to deep practice every day.

Language of Ignition

Daniel Doyle gives a few examples of how throwing a challenge to someone can set out an ignition spark.

Sentences such as "you don't stand a chance" are perfect.

The author then talks about Carol Dweck and her research on *Growth Mindset.*

Telling children they were smart or telling them they worked hard had incredible consequences.
The kids praised for being smart were subsequently looking for easy tests to confirm their intelligence, while children praised for working hard sought difficult tests.
When presented with difficult tests the kids praised for intelligence hated those tests and gave up early. The kids praised for working hard were more likely to relish the challenge and stayed at it much longer.

In light of the myelin and Deep Practice point of view, we can now see how a *Growth Mindset* naturally leads people into Deep Practice (*learn how to develop a growth mindset*).

The Talent Code Part III: Master Coaching

I found Daniel Coyle's description of the master coaches inspiring and eye-opening.

The best coaches were quiet, mostly older, and have been coaching for decades.
Their gaze was deep and unflinching, they listened more than they spoke. They didn't give Hollywood-style prep talks but instead offered small and highly specific adjustments.
They are also a master in psychology and communication

John Wooden, probably the most famous of them all, wasn't looking for big improvements but was constantly working on smaller incremental improvements.

Daniel Coyle says that John Wooden's rules of learning on could be called the rules of myelin. The steps are:

1. Explanation
2. Demonstration
3. Imitation
4. Correction
5. Repetition

Also, read *"Eleven Rings*" by Phil Jackson.

Deep Practice and Psychology

In this part, Daniel Coyle talks about social improvement and how it's similar to deep practice.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy & Deep Practice

The secret to improving socially, as for most anything else, is to move to the edges of our comfort zone.

Then, linger in that uncomfortable area and learn to tolerate the anxiety.

Albert Ellis was a painfully shy kid and decided to react to his shyness problems with his actions.
One afternoon he sat on a bench and chatted with every woman who sat down. In one month he spoke with 130 women. 30 walked away and he spoke with the other 100, for the first time in his life, no matter how anxious he was.

Ellis went on to build an action-oriented approach to psychotherapy came to be known as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which works equally or better than prescription drugs according to the New York Times.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy challenges the Freudian model of examining childhood experience and proposes action instead.

The issue with most therapies, Ellis said, is that they help you feel better. But you don't really get better. You gotta back it up with action and action.

> **Albert Ellis**: "neurosis" is just a high-class word for whining

This is similar to what Tony Robbins said in which Freudian psychoanalysis looks for the issues instead of looking for solutions.
The problem with looking for issues is that you find what you look for, so you will find them. So if you look for solutions instead you'll find solutions.

Prolonged Exposure Therapy: Building New Connections

Daniel Coyle says you can't undo myelin wrapping, but you build a new connection to link the traumatic stimulus to a new normal everyday event.

So, for example, doctors use software -Virtual Iraqui- to administer all the war sensations to the returning Iraqui soldiers dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorders.
The idea is to relive the memory without triggering the debilitating connection.

You can't easily unbuild the circuit of war memories and stressful reactions, but you can build another road where the war memories don't lead to any negative reactions.

This way the war memories and sensations, played and played again, become the new normal.

For more on trauma read "*The Body Keeps The Score*".

Real-Life Applications

Two huge lessons learned you can readily apply:

1. Use the Deep Practice methods in your craft of choice
2. Pick the identity of what you want to become to solidify behavior and long-term commitment

CONS

Naive empiricism
Doyle says Brazil has won the most World Cups and has the top players, so… It's got the results to prove Brazilians must be doing something "special", right?
Nope.
At the time of writing, Brazil has 5 world cups, and Italy and Germany have 4. But if you divide the world cups tally by population, then Italy has more world cups per inhabitant, which matters far more if you're looking at the country that produces the best talent.

Jumps to conclusions
The author says that Brazilians learn better than anyone else because they play on five-men smaller pitches. Doyle ignores that most guys in European countries also play on those same smaller pitches. For his theory to be even a valid hypothesis, he should have made sure that Brazilians play significantly more in smaller pitches than any other country.

Also, read "naive empiricism" in our foundational *naive self-help article:*

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Does myelin undo or not?
In one part Daniel Coyle says you need to keep practicing all the time or the myelin scaffolding will undo itself. In

several other instances, he says you can't undo myelin.

Which is which?

Review

"*The Talent Code*" is a wonderful book.

It will improve your understanding of how the brain works and what you can do to reach mastery of your craft even faster.
And all information is applicable and supported with examples to make it easier for you to understand.

If I had to leave you with one key piece of advice to take away from *The Talent Code*, it's this:

> **Love The Struggle**

Further Readings
Read more book Summaries or **get the book on Amazon**.

Be a Sales Superstar: Summary & Review (Brian Tracey)

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Be a Sales Superstars teaches salespeople how to become a sales superstar both through the mindsets and the techniques of selling.

Contents

- Full Summary
  - #1. Ambition
  - #2. Courage
  - #3. Commitment
  - #4. Professionalism
  - #5. Preparation
  - #6. Continuous learning
  - #7. Responsibility
  - #8. Make Every Minute Count
  - #9. Sales Superstars Tips
- Review

Full Summary

About The Author: Brian Tracy needs no introduction for most. He is one of the most popular self-help gurus, a high-ticket international speaker, and a world-renowned sales coach.

And here is what it takes to become a sales superstar:

#1. Ambition

Top salespeople see themselves as being able to be the best.
Make a commitment to becoming among the best 10%.

#2. Courage

You can't be great in sales without first conquering the fear of rejection and criticism. Repeat yourself "I can do it"

#3. Commitment

Top achievers commit to their craft.

Make a decision to commit to what you're selling, commit to your company, commit to helping your customers, and commit to yourself.

#4. Professionalism

Top salespeople see themselves as consultants.

This is important, Brian Tracey says, because how the person feels about you in the back of their mind is key to whether or not they'll buy from you.

And if they feel like you're a salesman, they might have some reservations.
If they feel like you're a consultant, they'll be much more open.

Brian Tracey says that people take you at your evaluation of yourself and then look for confirmation in your behavior. If you present yourself as a consultant people will tend to accept you as such.

I quote him for a great way of doing just that:

> *"thank you for your time, please relax, I'm not here to sell you anything, I see myself more as a consultant than a salesperson.*
> *All I want to do is ask you a few questions and see if my company can help you in a cost effective way.*
> *But I am more of a consultant than a salesperon".*

After such an intro, customers were far more open and more likely to buy and refer friends.

#5. Preparation

Sales superstars review all the notes before a sales call.

#6. Continuous learning

Top salespeople spend between 5 and 10 times more time and money on learning.

Brian Tracey also speaks about a friend of his who would not hire any salesperson who didn't read and keep informing himself.

#7. Responsibility

Top salespeople see themselves as president of their own sales corporation and they view themselves as self-employed.

They refuse to make excuses or blame anyone else for anything in their life they're not happy with.

Their motto is: if it's to be, it's up to me.

> **If it's to be, it's up to me**

#8. Make Every Minute Count

Top salespeople always ask themselves:

> what's the best use of my time now?

Brian Tracey also often repeats to turn your car and your commute into a learning opportunity: listen to audiobooks, and CDs and make use of that time. I couldn't agree more.

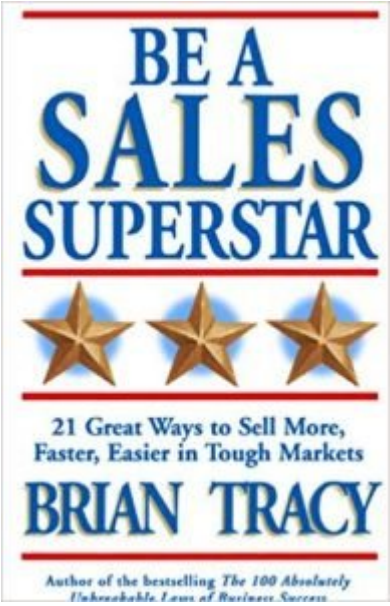
My Note:
It's not just sales superstars who make every minute count; it's very efficient people the whole world over.

#9. Sales Superstars Tips

And here is a list of what it takes to become a sales superstar:

1. **Act as if it were impossible to fail**
2. **Build long-term relationships**
3. **Build credibility with every prospect**: a prospect you treated well and professionally today is a customer tomorrow. A customer you treated well today is an evangelist tomorrow

4. **Handle objections effectively**
5. **Apply the 80/20 rule to everything**
6. **Keep your sales funnel full**
7. **Set clear income and sales goals:** and divide them by the hour
8. **Divide your territory strategically:** always schedule your meetings geographically closer so you will meet more people per day



Review

All material I have read or listened to from Brian Tracey is top-notch, and Be a Sales Superstar is no exception.

You can read here a summary of what I liked the most from Brian Tracey here.
Or you can get Be a Sales Superstar on Amazon.

Rich Dad Poor Dad: Good For Beginners, Top Men Need More

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Rich Dad Poor Dad is a popular book on personal finance that, through the author's personal experience, teaches the different mindsets between people who make money, and those who stay poor.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - #1. Stop Working for People
  - #2. The Rich Don't Work for Money
  - #3. Learn to Differentiate Asset VS Liability
  - #4. Rich & Corporations Spend, The Poors Pay Taxes
  - #5. Work to Learn, not for Money
  - #6. Rich Dad Mindsets
  - #7. Develop Financial IQ
  - #8. Cash-flow Quadrant
  - More Rich Dad Tips
- Rich Dad Poor Dad Criticism
  - Smells of made-up stories
  - Libertarian ideology indoctrination
  - For beginners only
  - More cons
  - Other people's criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Working for someone else is for suckers**. It means helping someone get rich while putting little in your pocket
- **The employed middle class pays all the taxes**. They subsidized the poor while the rich avoid most taxes
- **Work to learn**, not for money

Summary

Robert Kiyosaki, the author, focuses more on mindsets than on pure practical advice on how to get rich.

And he shares the wisdom in parable-like stories. For this "*Rich Dad Poor Dad*" summary I will skip the parables and focus on the concrete advice.

#1. Stop Working for People

The first and possibly biggest lesson Rich Dad gives to Kiyosaki is to step off the rat race.

To stop working your life for someone else. Working for someone, being an employee, means putting little money

in your pocket and lots of money in someone else's pocket.

#2. The Rich Don't Work for Money

Kiyosaki says most people have been duped into playing it safe and not taking any risks.

So we have a whole army of poor and middle-class people exchanging lots of their time for (little) money and some security.

#3. Learn to Differentiate Asset VS Liability

Kiyosaki says there is one major rule for financial literacy and growing rich. And that's the Asset VS Liability Rule.

An asset is simply what puts money in your pocket. A liability is anything that takes money from your pocket.
And make sure that you only control assets

If you buy a house and live in it while paying mortgage and taxes, you got a liability.
If you buy a house and rent it and the rent pays the mortgage and puts something in your pocket, you got an asset.

Kiyosaki in this regard gives great simple advice: **only buy a house if it makes sense from a cash-flow point of view today -not in the future-**. never buy a house because of the potential for appreciation in the future.

Ask yourself:

> Is the cash flow positive?

If the cash flow is positive, then you have an asset.
And it's a good investment.

If the cash flow is negative and you believe it will appreciate soon, don't buy it.

List of Assets

Kiyosaki says the following count as assets:

1. Stocks
2. Bonds
3. Notes (IOUs)
4. Income-generating real estate
5. Royalties from intellectual property (software, music, scripts, patents)
6. Anything that produces income or appreciates (and bonus if it has a liquid market)

#4. Rich & Corporations Spend, The Poors Pay Taxes

Kiyosaki shows a rather belligerent attitude towards government and taxes here, but what he says still rings damn true.

The poor people pay taxes first and keep what's left.
Corporates and rich people who shield behind corporations know the systems and use loopholes to pay as little as possible.

Also, corporations don't pay taxes first. They accrue income, spend and then only pay taxes later on what's left.

Comparatively, it's as if you received your salary in full, without tax detractions, and then paid taxes on what you left at the end of the month.

Knowing the system, knowing accounting, loopholes, markets, investment vehicles, and the law also helps you. The ignorant get bullied, and the knowledgeable are in with a fighting chance.

Also, read:

- How corporations manipulate employees

#5. Work to Learn, not for Money

Kiyosaki says you are one skill away from dramatically improving your life.

Many talented people are poor because they are only specialized in one skill only.

The author uses the example of a girl with a master's degree in literature who refused to enroll in a sales and marketing course because she thought that was too beneath her.

He also uses a good example.
He asked a room of people how many people could make a better hamburger than McDonald's, and everyone raised their hands. Everyone can do a better hamburger than McDonald's, and yet McDonald's is a multi-billion corporation because it can sell well.

Kiyosaki says some key skills to learn are management skills, business system knowledge, and sales and marketing skills.

> **You are one skill away from revolutionizing your life**

#6. Rich Dad Mindsets

The author says that the 5 mindsets that most stand in the way of success and wealth are:

1. Fear
2. Cynicism
3. Laziness
4. Bad habits
5. Arrogance

I loved the story Kiyosaki shared. When he tells people there's money to be made in buying and fixing real estate people reply they don't wanna fix toilets.
Kiyosaki says it's silly that people look at the small detail instead of looking at the bigger picture and bottom line.

My Note:
To me, more than an example of looking at the detail, this is a typical example of letting your ego get in the way of what you really want. And a typical example of sacrificing long-term goal achievements for short-term pain.

Read more on cynicism:

> Positive Cynicism: Turning Poison, Into Gold

#7. Develop Financial IQ

After IQ and EQ, there is also "financial IQ".
To increase your financial IQ you must understand the following:

1. Accounting

2. Investing
3. Markets
4. Law

#8. Cash-flow Quadrant

Rich Dad Poor Dad is famous for its cash flow quadrant.

The employee in the first square *have* a job, have no leverage, and exchange time for money.

The self-employed *own* a job and how much they work is related to what they earn.
The business owner owns a system and leverages other people's time for income.

The investor leverages money to make money.

More Rich Dad Tips

A collection of tips I took away:

- **Pay yourself first:** always put some money aside for yourself, and do it first thing
- **Pick your friends:** get around people who like talking about money
- **Be generous:** your professional supports are the people propelling your success, choose a good broker, pay him well
- **Find a bigger reason:** find a bigger purpose in life to motivate you
- **Start as many businesses as needed:** 9 out of 10 businesses fail, say Kiyosaki. Good, then it means you gotta start 10 of them

Especially the last one was an "aha" moment for me.
I was a guy with a really bad mindset toward business, thinking that it was dumb to start a business when 90% fail.

> **9 out of 10 businesses fail. Then start 10**

Rich Dad Poor Dad Criticism

I'll save you time:

The stories are made up, and the book is very simplistic.

If you're not a beginner, skip it.

Smells of made-up stories

Once you develop your intuition for made-up self-help, you'll see.

Until then, trust me:

Half of these stories smell like made-up BS.

Actually, here's a litmus test for you:

If it feels like a Hollywood movie line, it's probably BS.

Here is an example:

> **Rich Dad**: (talking to a 9 year old) … that's my offer, take it or leave it

> **Robert**: may I ask a question first?
> **Rich Dad**: no, take it or leave it. (…) I got too much work to do to waste my time. If you can't make up your mind effectively, then you'll never make money anyway. Opportunities come and go, being able to make quick decisions is an important skill (…) school is beginning or it's over in 10 seconds
> (Richd Dad proceeds to be a weird teacher who pays slave wages and has him do menial work that feel nothing like learning)

LOL this Rich Dad talking like that to a 9-year-old, sure

Also, doesn't that sound like The Karate Kid?

My money is on this never having happened.

Libertarian ideology indoctrination

Many of Rich Dad's mindsets are your run-of-the-mill "small government" and libertarian takes.

But masked as if it were "the only possible mindset to get rich" -it's not-.

For beginners only

While the concepts and ideas are valid and great for beginners, more advanced and ambitious men need more.

More cons

- **Man Eats Man Perspective**

Kiyosaki takes an individualistic, "dog eat dog" perspective.

But many great businesses are built with an eye both to the bottom line *and* to adding value to the customers and the stakeholders.

- **Black and white thinking**

Dividing the world into "independent entrepreneurs who get rich" and "employees who stay poor" makes it easy and simpler to write an appealing book.

However, it doesn't do any good service in explaining reality.

There are plenty of employees who got wealthy –Jack Welch, technically, is an employee-.
And there are plenty more who live happy, fulfilling, and outright awesome lives without following the tenets of *Rich Dad Poor Dad*.

- **Real Estate Focus**

Rich Dad Poor Dad is heavily focused on real estate. It might be your thing, but if it's not, you won't get nearly as much value from it.

- **Caustic Towards Education**

There seems to be a hidden trend where Kiyosaki is hiding some anger toward the typical white collar well-educated employee.

I understand where that is coming from as I sometimes feel the same, but you gotta move beyond that.

Education, even university education, is not the antithesis of entrepreneurship, risk, and hard work.

As a matter of fact, I would advise getting that degree which will make your risks safer: whenever you fail or

whenever you need a degree make it easier for you to get a job and rebuild some wealth to start afresh.

- **Demeaning Towards Some**

Rich Dad Poor Dad tends to divide the world into "smart people", or those who follow his suggestions, and "dumb people", those who don't. I find it very demeaning and extremely simplistic.

Other people's criticism

Robert Kiyosaki has drawn plenty of criticism for his *Rich Dad Poor Dad* series.

- John T. Reed writes:

> Rich Dad, Poor Dad is one of the **dumbest** financial advice books I have ever read. It contains **many factual errors** and numerous **extremely unlikely accounts of events that supposedly occurred**.
> *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* contains much **wrong advice**, much **bad advice**, some **dangerous advice**, and **virtually no good advice**.

And he then proceeds to tear the book apart.
Kiyosaki himself replied to John T. Reed.

- Trent Hamm of The Single Dollar:

> I read the book a second time and **concluded that the book was a waste of time.**

Hamm says that he initially got very inspired by *Rich Dad Poor Dad*. But after reading John Reed's criticism he went through the book a second time and concluded it was a waste of time.

- Rob Walker at Slate writes:

> A good chunk (…) is self-help boilerplate. First, there's the mandatory declaration that it isn't a get-rich-quick book. Second, there's the repeated claim that "the rich" have "secrets" (…) that will herein be revealed. Third, the series of "lessons." And fourth, the counterintuitive revelations that effectively undercut various popular "myths."

He says, basically, that there is nothing groundbreaking here and that the advice is simplistic.

- Mike Norman of The Motley Fool

> Much of the wisdom can be best described as simplistic, unsophisticated and in some cases, totally absurd. ("You're a loser if you work at a job. Formal education is a waste of time if you want to get rich. Mutual funds are for losers," etc.)

Norman goes on to say that Kiyosaki didn't get rich with his own advice, but by operating what's actually a multi-level marketing scheme (*Go Pro* teaches how to excel at those).
This is the same that DeMarco says in *The Millionaire Fastlane* Kiyosaki got rich by *selling* the advice instead of *using* the advice -and he calls it a "paradox of practice"-.

And then there is Forbes alleging that there is no proof Kiyosaki was rich before the publication of *Rich Dad Poor Dad*.
And Farrington at The College Investor says that his company's bankruptcy makes him a hypocrite.

What I think of the criticism

As you can see, the criticism is plenty and abundant.

What do I think of all this criticism?
Well, I think that most of it is actually true.

However, that's not to say that Rich Dad Poor Dad doesn't also have qualities.
I look at my own family and cannot help but think how richer they could be if they had heeded the advice in this book.

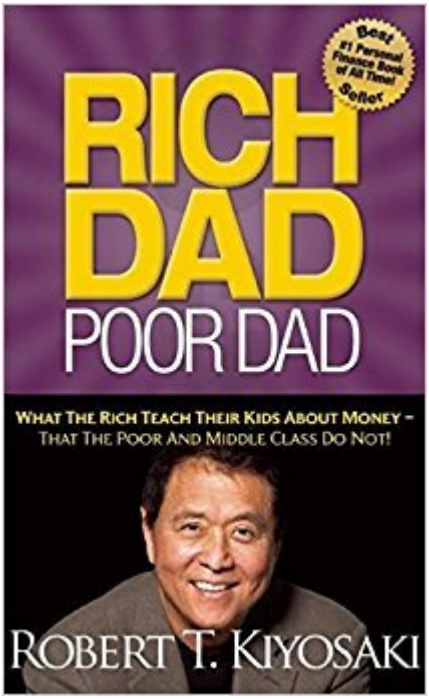
They live in the countryside in their way too big houses with gardens.
They think of their houses as their little, invaluable nests.
And they really think they're richer because of their houses.

They'd never rent, and of course, they'd never rent their own house to someone else.
They *think* they are "well-off" because of the asset mentality, but in the meanwhile, keep paying taxes and crazy maintenance expenses.
Then I speak to them… And they're always complaining about how short on cash they are.

Doh!

I wonder how that might be…

If they had built smaller places, built in better areas, or if they didn't act as if renting out part of them was a sin…
Well, over decades they'd be much, much richer.



Real-Life Applications

Here are a few points I took away and I constantly try to apply:

Don't buy liabilities

- Do you really need a car?
- Do you need gym memberships if you don't go?
- Do you need to buy a house if you don't have cash and pay the mortgage and repairs?

- Do you need a pet?
- Do you need Netflix, Tinder Pro, and all other subscription services…?
- …..

Buy assets

- Low-priced flats for renting
- Dividend-paying stocks
- Bonds
- If for living, what if you bought a multi-room house and rented out a room to pay the mortgage?
- Storage units and sell space
- ….

Reduce Expenses
Kiyosaki says it's not how much money you have but how much you keep. The truth is deeper than it might seem: most people don't have any money because they let expenses balloon when they start earning more.

Entrepreneur Neuro-Associations

Kiyosaki suggests what's basically Tony Robbins' method to move towards your goals: associate pleasure with what you want and disgust for the other options.

If you want to quit the rat race, escape the middle class, or be your own man, I find Rich Dad Poor Dad to provide very strong neuro-associations to support it.

Here are some you can use to grow your disgust for being an employee:

- Middle Class is gullible to paying for everyone
- Employees are enriching someone else while putting little in their own pockets
- Employees are enriching the government and fat cats politicians
- Employees are the equivalent of the nice guys who make everyone happy except themselves

Review

Rich Dad Poor Dad is a good book to showcase some important mindsets that differentiate rich people from poor people.

Although basic for more advanced men, **Kiyosaki's main concepts are largely true and valid.**

As a matter of fact, I wish part of my family could understand the simple and yet transformative power of Assets VS Liabilities in reducing expenses.

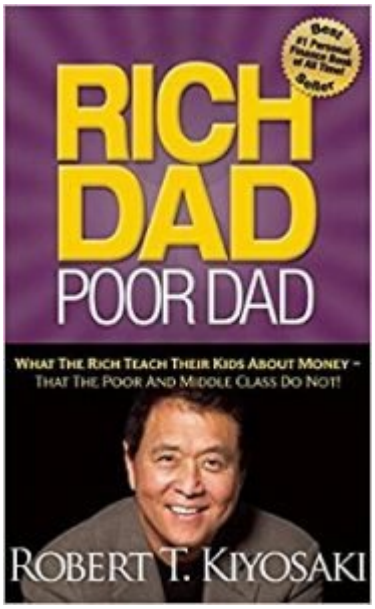
The concept of having to start 10 businesses to be successful also hit me.
I used to think startups were silly and for silly people because, well, 9 out of 10 fail, why would anyone take that sort of risk, it just makes no sense.

So when I heard Kiyosaki saying it only means you gotta start 10 businesses, well… That was a major "aha moment".

Overall, if you have zero education on personal finances, **get *Rich Dad Poor Dad* and then come back here to learn the more advanced lessons on male success.**
If Ki'yosaki's concepts were already obvious for you, keep exploring our website.

Check here for the **best books to read** or Get it on Amazon.

Rich Dad Poor Dad Summary: Street-Smart or Simplistic BS?



Rich Dad Poor Dad has many critics, but the book simply delivers great insights and some key mindsets. Some of the insights can improve your life, and some of the mindsets can change your life.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/rich-dad-poor-dad-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.5

The Power to Influence: Summary & Review (Tony Robbins)

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Power to Influence is an early Tony Robbins product to influence and persuade people.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Full Summary
  - Pain and Pleasure
  - Framing
  - Set Outcome
  - BELIEFS YOUR CUSTOMERS MUST HAVE TO BUY
  - Align and Redirect -Never Argue-!
  - Handling Gatekeepers
  - Believe in Your Products
  - Make Friends
- How You Can Apply It
- CONS
- Review

Exec Summary

- Agree and redirect, never argue!
- Sales are about making friends
- Don't tell people what's bad about their current supplier, ASK them what could be improved with their current supplier

Full Summary

About the Author:

> **Lucio**: Robbins is a fantastic motivational speaker, a self-help "guru" with great content… And an endless marketer and covert bragger. Still thumbs up, though

Pain and Pleasure

Tony Robbins says there are two main drivers in life: avoiding pain and seeking pleasure.

As a top salesman, you gotta build both!

When a person buys it's because he associates more pleasure in buying than not buying. Buying means pleasure, not buying means pain.

Tony Robbins says that if you want to sell you must get the person to a point where they are really dissatisfied with what they are and/or with what they have.
Once you get them to that point, they are now compelled to change. Now heal them with your product.

Tony Robbins says that AT&T reaches out and touches someone advertising masterfully using both pain and pleasure at the same time.

Basically, to stir pain, you must disturb your prospect. And then heal him again.

On the pleasure side instead, persuasion is the process of getting your customer to clearly associate their most desired feelings or states to your product or service.

Framing

Tony Robbins uses the example of selling a real estate property. Let's imagine the objection is the distance from the city. This is how you deal with it:

Preframe

Find out what the likely objection to your products or service is and start with them.
If the house is 50km from the city you can say

> "I will show you this property, it's amazing, the biggest I've seen around here. and most importantly it's 50km outside of this filthy city. You can be out there in the open space and smell fresh air. And if you gotta get here, in 40 minutes you are. And when you get home, freedom.

Reframe

If the objection comes later, make a question out of it and then address that question.

Let's imagine the prospect raises the distance objection, you say:

> *OK, but you really liked the property.*
> *Yes, but too far.*
> *How long will it take to get to the place you'd like to go to?* (turn the objection into a question)
> *How much longer will it take than the place you were possibly thinking.*
> *20 minutes*
> *Isn't it worth 20 minutes for living outside of the filth of the city?*

Deframe

Tell them they're not good enough for it.

> *It's too far away*
> *I'm kinda glad you said that, I didn't think you could qualify to live in this community*

And now he'll be proving to you that he's good enough.

Check Dan Rather interviewing George Bush for that.
On the topic of integrity, Bush first tries to reframe, which doesn't work and then goes for deframing. Now the interviewer is chasing. Now it's about Dan's integrity, not Bush.

Set Outcome

Tony Robbins suggests setting outcomes for your goals rather than listing a set of activities.

BELIEFS YOUR CUSTOMERS MUST HAVE TO BUY

1. **That You Have Their Best Interest in Mind** Believe in your product and care about the person. The most

important tenet

2. **That Your Product Fills Their Wants** Many salesmen sell what *they* wanna have. So if they are adventurous they tell their clients "oh this trip around the world will be so adventurous". While if the customers want to connect they should say "connecting with people of all cultures will make you feel great".
3. **What Will Others Think:** We are human creatures, we always care what our neighbors, friends, and colleagues will think. And of course, our partner.
4. **It's Worth It:** The question for the customer is what they have to give up to get your product. It's not just money, but do they need to wait, do they need to learn how to use it, to install it, to tell another supplier they don't wanna work with them anymore? You want them to believe the pain to acquire your product pales in comparison to the benefits they will get

If they don't wanna break a relationship, you make them hurt even more.
So ask them: wow you know what, I'm jealous of your supplier for such a great relationship. Tell me, what does he do so great (telling he's wrong goes against his beliefs)?
And then tell me, what could he do better?
Now, drill on the things he could do better: what does it mean to your company? What if the mistakes keep going on…?

Align and Redirect -Never Argue-!

If he says it's too expensive, never say "no" because that would break rapport.

Ask why it's too expensive, or compared to what it's too expensive.
Then ask "well, mr prospect, have you ever had a situation when you tried to save money and were dissatisfied with a cheap product you bought? It just happened to me some days ago with… ".

And then ask if they'd rather have a quality product.

Another great way is to actually agree with them and then redirect.

And if they don't know the answer to one of your questions you can say. *I can appreciate that, I know you don't know the answer, but if you did know what would you probably say*".

Or: "*I know you can't but if you could, what would it be"*

Handling Gatekeepers

Tony Robbins says some salespeople's strategy to go through gatekeepers is to bully them into compliance. I have seen the "bully technique" in action and experienced it firsthand. Definitely, not the best way to go.

He suggests instead that you be nice to the gatekeepers while staying steadfast to your goal at the same time. The approach he recommends is that you call and say something like:

> Hallo, this is Janet, good morning
> Hallo Janet, good morning, this is Tony Robbins from Robbins Research is mr Smith in?
> Who wants to speak with him?
> Yes, this is Tony Robbins from Robbins Research
> Oh, OK, can I take a message for you sir?
> No it's personal

Tony Robbins says it's OK to say it's personal because it is personal since your target is the only one who can actually evaluate your proposal and answer.
If the gatekeeper tells you he's in a meeting, here's the move Robbins proposes: you say "OK, I'll hold". Holding,

says Robbins, will pile up lots of pressure on the gatekeeper that will eventually yield and pass your call as soon as the meeting or the call your target was on is over.

Believe in Your Products

Similar to many other sales training and books, Robbins repeats a big truth of what it takes to be successful in sales: you have to believe your product is good and will help your targets.
Call not because you need to call, but because you want your prospects to be better off.

Make Friends

Lastly, Tony Robbins reminds us that salespeople are paid to make friends!
You have to love people!
Enjoy people, and like them, everyone has something you can like. Even annoying ones might have a bad day, and they will remember if you help them.

The people who are loved the most are those who can induce state changes. If someone is sad, that's your opportunity, make them happy!

How You Can Apply It

- Never argue with a customer, agree and change his mind with questions instead
- If you want to change someone's mind don't tell them about what's bad, ask them about what's bad and let them tell you

CONS

Scatterbrained
It's an audiobook and, like a few other Tony Robbins' products, it doesn't seem to follow a precise structure, it jumps a bit left and right which can make it slightly harder to follow

Review

Some great gold nuggets from Tony Robbins.

Especially the part in which the author says you don't ask what someone else is doing wrong as that's too direct. Make a compliment first, then ask what they could do better and let the prospect see the other party is not that great after all.
If you enjoyed it also check: *Personal Power II*

Awaken the Giant Within: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Awaken the Giant Within is Tony Robbins' master guide to taking charge of your life, ranging from your mood to your finances to your relationships.

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Exec Summary

- **Use Cognitive Reframing**: Change what things mean to you and you change your life
- Change your focus, beliefs, and identity to change your life

Full Summary

About the Author:
Tony Robbins is a renowned life coach, motivational speaker, author, and entrepreneur

> **Lucio**: Robbins is a fantastic motivational speaker, a self-help "guru" with great content… And an endless marketer and covert bragger. Still thumbs up, though

1. Dreams of Destiny

The 5 areas that impact us the most:

1. **Emotional Mastery:** the final goal of most things we do is to change how we feel
2. **Physical Mastery:** "mens sana in corpore sano" said the Latins. Such as; mental and physical fitness are

connected
3. **Relationships Mastery:** we are social beings, we can't be happy without great relationships around us
4. **Financial Mastery:**
5. **Time Mastery:** it's not time management as it may sound, but more about nurturing your ideas and potential for long enough to come to life. People overestimate what they can do in a year and underestimate what they can do in a decade

2. Decisions: The Pathway to Power

Tony Robbins says that to take control and direct our lives we must take control of our decision power.

We must be able to decide and commit to a course of action. Not once, but repeatedly and consistently.

Robbins advises the readers to decide who they are going to be and what they are going to do.
And then commit to it. Remove any other backup options if need to be and burn your bridges.

Three decisions with which you will control your destiny are:

1. What to focus on
2. What do things mean to you
3. What to do to create the results you desire

Our brain set up an internal system to make our decision-making more automatic:

1. Core beliefs and (unconscious) rules
2. Life values
3. References
4. Habitual questions
5. Emotional states

It's scary, that the vast majority of people never take conscious care of their thoughts and their actions.
But the good news is that you can always override and change the system with conscious and directed effort.

3. The Forces That Shape Our Life

This is a core pillar of Robbins' NLP-based philosophy:

> **What you link pain to, and what you link pleasure to shapes your destiny.**

Robbins says everything we do is either to avoid pain or seek pleasure.

When you don't do something even though you know it would be good for you is because you associate more pain with doing it than not doing it.
The net value is not positive yet in your mind.

If you don't change despite the pain, it's because the pain isn't strong enough yet.

So the secret to changing then is to associate major pain with the behavior or habit you want to quit and massive pleasure with the behavior you want to move towards.

For more ideas on changing habits check out "*Atomic Habits*".

4. Belief Systems

Tony Robbins says that Beliefs are generalizations telling us what leads to pain and what leads to pleasure.

Most of our beliefs are generalizations about our past and what happened to us.
They are not reality, but the meaning we gave to events.

It's indeed not about the actual experience, but about the meaning we give to our experiences.

The problem is that once we adopt a belief we take it for granted, we treat it as truth and we forget it's simply our interpretation.

A belief is supported by a number of references we feel confirm that belief.

My Note:
Oftentimes though we discard references running against our beliefs or we modify references to make them fit with our beliefs.
And we do that with unhelpful beliefs as well!

The most effective way to change a belief is to associate massive pain with that belief and massive pleasure with the new belief you want to adopt.

5. How to Change Neuro-Associative Conditioning (Operant Conditioning)

Tony Robbins gives us 6 steps to change neuro-associative conditions:

Step 1: Decide What You Want (and what's stopping you)

The first step to creating any change is deciding what you want so that you have something to move towards.

Ask:

> what do I want (instead of..) .. ?

The more specific you can be, the more clarity you will have and the more power you will command to achieve what you want more rapidly.

It's important you focus mostly on what you WANT, not what you DON'T want, remember, you get what you look for and what you focus on.

At the same time, we also must learn what's preventing us from having what we want.

At the bottom of it, it's because we link more pain to making a change than to staying where we are.

So ask yourself what is the pain you have associated with changing in the past and the pleasure you've gotten by not following through.

Step 2: Leverage! Use Pain and Pleasure

Change is usually not a question of capability but almost always a question of motivation.

The only way to make a change now is to create a sense of urgency that's so intense that we're compelled to follow through.

Tony Robbins says that one of the things that turn virtually anyone around is reaching a pain threshold, such as such an intense level of pain that you know you *must* change *now*.

If you tried to make a change and failed it means the level of pain for failing to change was not intense enough.

To get leverage ask yourself pain-inducing questions: rather than being busy estimating the price of change as we

mostly do, ask:

- what will this cost me if I don't change?
- What will I miss out in my life?
- How will it affect my loved ones?
- How much life will I have missed 2 years from now? 5 years from now? 10…?

Then ask yourself positive questions about what the change will mean to you once it's happened.

For example: if I do change, how that will make me feel, what kind of momentum could I create, how my family and friends will be, and how happier will I be?

Gets lots of reasons, or better yet, get strong reasons!

A few more ways to summon up more leverage:

Public Commitment
A public commitment might also help.
Or make the commitment to those people who will not let you off the hook

Personal Integrity
One of the strongest forces in human personality is the drive to preserve the integrity of our own identity and we often don't realize our own contradiction.

If you want to help someone you better access the leverage of keeping integrity.

do so by asking them questions that make them realize for themselves the inconsistencies (ask questions rather than telling them as that will only make them push back).
And this is also a tool you can use on yourself.

Example: Fixing a Marriage

A woman was not able to give herself 100% to her husband.

Tony Robbins found out it was because she gave 100% to her family but felt let down.

Tony asks what will happen to her relationship if she doesn't give 100% (here Tony is looking for leverage). S he tells him it will eventually lead to break up and bad feelings overall.

Now Tony got leverage.

Her pattern though is still that "what if he lets me down".

So Tony asks "lemme ask you a question, have you ever driven on a road where only a line was dividing you and the other cars? Is it possible someone could come to your side of the road and kill you? How could you then drive a car under those conditions". "well… I trust.. " "what happens if you don't trust… " "I cannot get from here to there, I'm trapped".

Now the association of not trusting is with not living, with being trapped, which means living a poor life.

In brief: Ask yourself what it has cost you so far, what it will cost you if you don't change over the next 2-3-4 years, and how it makes you feel. Then ask yourself what will you gain by taking this action right now and make a huge list that will make you feel great emotionally (say to yourself: I'll gain I'll gain I'll gain..)

Step 3: Interrupt The Limiting Pattern

If we run the same old patterns, we're going to get the same old results.

So we gotta interrupt the old patterns.

A powerful pattern interrupting system also creates leverage, and with these two steps alone you can already change anything.

You have to interrupt the pattern while it's happening. And the more outrageous the way, the more effective it will be.

Example: Stop Overeating
If you overeat, your pattern interruption could be to stand up at the restaurant and scream "PIG" pointing at your seat. This way it both interrupts the pattern makes you shy to do it again and gives you a reason not to overeat again.

Step 4: Create a New, Empowering Alternative and Link Pleasure to it

Step 4 is critical to establish long-lasting change.

We want to change our neuro associations because they have some major side effects we don't like.

But in our brain, those neuro associations and patterns have been designed for us to avoid pain and have been going on likely for a long time. So there can be a tendency to get back to them again.

So if you don't replace them with something new, chances are you'll be going back at it again.

You avoid going back to the old habits by filling the gap with a new set of behavior that will give you the same pleasurable feelings without the negative side effects. The benefits of the old feelings or behaviors must be preserved by the new behaviors or feelings.

Short-circuit Another Pleasure for the New Alternative
You can also use the pleasure of something else to start feeling strongly about the new pattern and link it to the new pattern through repetitions. For example:

Example: Music to Stop Overeating

Tony Robbins associated pain with not finishing everything on his plate.

He started associating pain with overeating and pleasure in pushing the plate away with food still on it.

He pushed the plate away playing his favorite music and putting himself into peak state, feeling pleasure while pushing the plate away, again and again.

Example 2 – Surfing to Learn

Tony Robbins received a kid who, the teachers said, couldn't learn.

Tony made him talk about something he loved: surfing.

And then Tony asked, "how did you learn to do that". "I learned that.. "

Now the kid is talking about learning.
Then he asked what would it be like to develop a surfing school.

Now the kid starts linking school to something great.

Then Tony Robbins took words the kid could not spell and told him to spell them as if he was surfing, with the same sitting position, with the same breathing, and with the same rhythm.

Guess what?

He was able to spell them.

Example: beat fear with the feeling of power

Tony Robbins was treating a guy fearing elevators.

So he got him thinking about a time he was feeling strong and powerful.
And then suddenly think about riding an elevator.
And he did it over and over again until the strong and powerful feelings started rubbing off the elevator rides as well.

For someone with a phobia, indeed, let them think about a time they felt super powerful.
And make them associate feeling strong and powerful with their phobia.

They feel differently, they behave differently.

Step 5: Condition the new Pattern Until it's Consistent

Conditioning is the way to make sure a change you create is consistent and lasts long term.

The simplest way is simply to rehearse it again and again with tremendous emotional intensity until a neurological pathway is created.

Any pattern that is continually reinforced will become automatic and will become a conditioned response. Anything we fail to reinforce will eventually dissipate.

Imagine It
And you can begin to condition the pattern by just imagining! Remember: your brain can't tell the difference between something you vividly imagine and something you actually experience.

Reinforce It with Rewards
We can reinforce our own or someone else's behavior through positive (or negative) reinforcement.

Such as every time we produce the behavior we want, we give a reward (praise, a gift, attention, a smile, etc.).

Punishment and rewards are not the same as reinforcement. Reinforcement comes immediately after, and punishment and reward may occur long afterward.
And timing is absolutely critical: the sooner the better.

Example: How to Make Your Partner Call You

A BF who wants the GF to call him every day might berate her for the delay when she finally calls.

If when they call you, you give them a negative reaction right away, that's negative reinforcement by giving pain right after the behavior you want to encourage.
The pain will be linked to calling you.

Remember: link pleasure to any behavior you want someone to repeat.

So the next step is to draft a schedule to reinforce your new behavior. Reward yourself for succeeding step after step.

Caveat is to make the reinforcement variable, otherwise, the reward will become the norm, and expected, and won't help us anymore.

Step 6: Test it!

One way of testing if it will work is "future pacing", from NLP, which means you imagine the situation that used to frustrate you and notice if it still frustrates you or if your new pattern has replaced it.

Example: Quit Smoking

if you have the urge to smoke when feeling overwhelmed, imagine yourself in an overwhelming situation.

then notice if you have an urge to read or run or whatever new alternative you've conditioned instead of smoking.

It's good to make sure the pleasures of the old pattern are maintained in the new one.

Also, it's good to test the "ecology", such as the impact of the changes you've made and if they fit in with who you are.

6. How to Get What You Really Want

If you dig deeper to examine why you want anything in the first place, you will eventually find out that you want it because it gives you a certain feeling or emotion.

Tony Robbins says that **one of the quickest ways to change how we feel is by changing our physiology**.

Another way is to change what we focus on: focus on what you want rather than what you fear and you will feel better and are much more likely to reach your goal.
And a great way to change your focus is with questions.

Here's another great idea: write down a list of everything that makes you feel great. Now you have a whole list of what you can do to feel superb.

7. Questions are the Answers

Tony Robbins says that quality questions lead to a quality life.

Three great things questions can do for you:

1. Change your focus
Questions will quickly change what we're focusing on consequently will quickly change how we feel

2. Change what we delete
What you don't think of, you will forget. By keeping at the forefront of your mind the positive stuff of your life you will also delete all that makes you unhappy.

3. Questions give you new resources
The brain will search and scan all the options available based on the question we ask ourselves.

If you ask yourself "how can I be so stupid", as many of us do, guess what? You will find a ton of reasons.

But if in times of difficulty, you ask yourself "how can I turn around" your brain will deliver ways to turn it around.

The problem-solving questions:

1. What's great about this problem?
2. What's not perfect *yet*?
3. What am I willing to do to make it the way I want it?
4. What am I willing to no longer do in order to make it the way I want it?
5. How can I enjoy the process while I do what is necessary to make it the way I want it?

> **Emotion is created by motion**

8. Improve Vocabulary & Metaphors

Tony Robbins says that there's a link between the words we use and the states we feel.

Replace words such as "terrible", "tragedy", "it killed us", and "furious" with something gentler.

9. The 10 Emotions of Power

As we've seen, we can choose what emotions to feel at any time.

It's still good to "listen" to them though from time to time to see where we're at.
They're like an internal compass pointing towards the actions you must take to reach your goals.

Four basic wrong ways people deal with emotions:

1. **Avoidance** (trying not to feel anything at all) ;
2. **Denial** (faking that "it doesn't feel that bad") ;
3. **Competition** (a race to who's "got it worst") ;
4. **Learning and Using** (the correct one)

Mastering emotions is done in 6 steps:

1. Identify what you're really feeling;
2. Acknowledge and appreciate, knowing emotions support you, you never want to make your emotions wrong.
3. Get curious about the message this emotion is offering you. It will help you master your emotions, solve the challenge and prevent the same from occurring again.
4. Get confident you can handle it immediately. Remember a time you felt similarly and successfully handled it.
5. Get certain you can handle it in the future as well. Rehearse handling situations where this Action Signal comes up again.
6. Get excited and take action.

And these are the ten emotions of power:

1. Love and Warmth
2. Appreciation and gratitude
3. Curiosity
4. Excitement and passion
5. Determination
6. Flexibility
7. Confidence
8. Cheerfulness
9. Vitality
10. Contribution

Note on Negative Feelings:
Tony Robbins also says not to forget that there is power in the pressure of dissatisfaction and in temporary discomfort.
You can use this pain in your life to achieve more and propel yourself towards more positive action.

10. Creating a Compelling Future

To awaken the giant within you, you must find a major goal that inspires you and that will drive you to log the long hard working hours needed to succeed.

You start creating a compelling future for your goals by getting a clear WHY you want to achieve those goals.

Then start feeling the joy of moving towards your goal.
Enjoy the little steps, love the path as much as the final attainment, and relish in the constant and never-ending improvement (CANI).

Then Imagine yourself once you have accomplished the goal. How does it feel, what it will mean to you?

And don't forget that all goal setting must be followed by immediate and constant action.

11. The Master System

Tony Robbins repeats that how we evaluate what happens in our life changes our life. There are five key elements that will decide how we actually evaluate things:

1. State
2. Questions we ask
3. Values hierarchy
4. Beliefs
5. Reference experiences

12. Life Values: Your Personal Compass

The author says that our values tell us what we pay attention to and determine the kind of person we are.

Values are built from beliefs, which are built from references, and there are both values we move towards, and value we reject and wants to move away from.

Ask yourself: what kind of person do you need to be in order to achieve all that you want? Ask yourself that question and go become that person.

Step 1 – awareness
Gain awareness of your current values.
Ask yourself: what's most important to me in life? Is it peace of mind, impact, or love..?

Step 2 – decide
Make a conscious decision about the values you want to live by.

As yourself not "what's important to me" but "In what order do my values need to be to achieve my ultimate destiny?"

Ask yourself what other values you need to add (in the case of Tony, intelligence wasn't there), and what values you need to eliminate (Tony found out that by constantly focusing on being free, he was missing out on the freedom he already had, so he dropped it from the list and felt immediately freer).

Ask which benefit you get from which values and which cons you get (for example for Tony having passion at the top meant he was burning out)

Example of a question to ask yourself: how would your capacity to deal with fear, frustration, and rejection be affected by placing "courage" high upon your move towards value?

Note on Values: Don't Compare
it's a human tendency to compare and switch based on what you see from people around that you would like as well.
Once you decide your values and your path DON'T compare yourself to people who have chosen different paths and values as that would make you switch course and be unhappy.

13. References: the Fabric of Life

References are all that has happened or that we've seen or heard or read or imagined in life.

The references' strength depends on the amount of emotion attached to them and the number of similar reference experiences.

They do not necessarily have to be accurate, but they do become accepted as real, regardless.
We have countless references for everything, often running contrary to each other.

And references build our beliefs not neutrally, but in the way we select them and the meaning we attach to them!

Nothing in life means anything but the meaning you give it, so please give your past events an empowering meaning to build powerful and empowering beliefs.

Write down some events you think impacted you negatively, and instead of using it as an excuse to beat yourself up, look for a positive and empowering lesson: there are no tragedies if something good can eventually come of it.

We are not our pasts unless we live there.

> **We are not our pasts. Unless we live there.**

14. Identity: The Key to Expansion

Tony Robbins says that identity is the beliefs we use to describe and define ourselves.

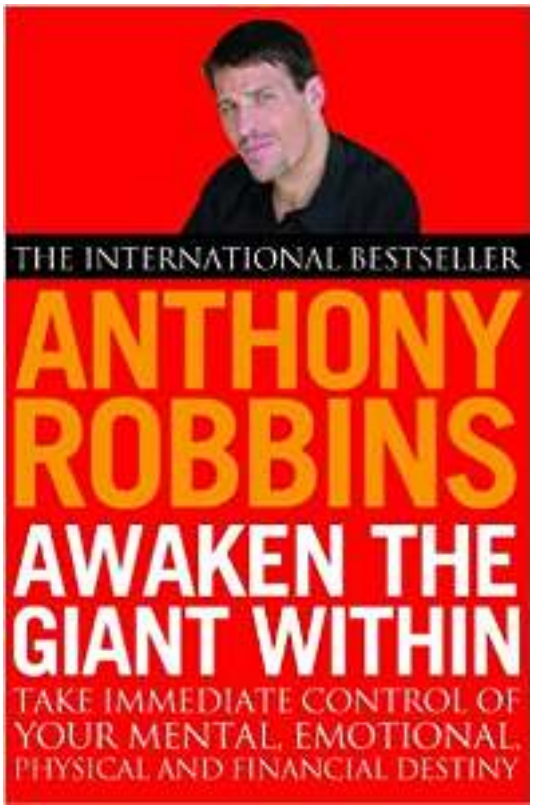
And identity beliefs create the boundaries of our lives.

Often the challenge we face in making a change is that we feel the change is inconsistent with who we are.

To define who we are we often look at our behaviors, at how we act and what we do.
And when start acting a certain way, the tendency is to keep acting that way to keep consistent with ourselves (see Cialdini).

But your past is not your future, and Tony Robbins says you can always change your identity.

1. Define your current identity
2. Decide who you want to be
3. Develop a plan of action to take that will start shaping your new identity. Choose friends accordingly
4. Commit to your identity by letting everyone around you know about the new you



Tony Robbins Criticism

Tony Robbins sometimes engages in unsubstantiated *pop-psychology* and quite a few *self-help myths.*

When it comes to financial advice, Robbins lost a case in court for providing misleading information (I remember one of his tapes claiming that you can get a "higher return without higher risk").

However, even as a reviewer who prefers fact-checked information, I must say that Tony Robbins also delivers so much potentially life-changing information that he is in a category of his own.

Review

Awaken the Giant Within is a wonderful read for everyone.

It delivers applicable and life-changing information that can lead you to take control of your emotions, your states, your actions, and your fate.

And as a matter of fact, not just your life, but apply these insights and you will lift the people around you to new heights as well.

Ambitious men need the ability to detach to remain effective and mentally strong and healthy.
Read how we combine mental power with social power to enjoy mental health and agentic pursuits (including status, respect, and attraction):

- **Foundations of self-development**

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

Personal Power II by Anthony Robbins: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Personal Power is a month-long transformation program where the author Tony Robbins provides mindsets and tips for a more optimistic, confident, and empowered mind.

TPM Note: Great for beginners, advanced players need more
While Robbins is considered a master of 'state management', his 1990s framework lacks deeper empirical grounding, as well as the added value of social exchange theory and power dynamics. This summary filters for high-agency tactics while discarding the dated 'rah-rah' filler

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Notes

About the Author:
Tony Robbins is a self-help author and coach, especially popular and successful in the 1990s.

More about him:

> **Lucio**: Robbins is a fantastic motivational speaker, a self-help "guru" with great content… And an endless marketer and covert bragger. Still thumbs up, though

Success Formula:

1. Get clear on what you want: you gotta know what you want and what your outcome is
2. Take action! Do something. Personal power is the ability to take action in spite of fear
3. See what you're getting: develop acuity, take feedback on what works
4. Use a role model

Success is composed of :

1. Beliefs (core of our performance)
2. Potential
3. Actions
4. Results

Tony Robbins says that potential is unlimited but we only start tapping into it once we believe that we can reach good results.

Once you start believing you can, you will tap much more potential and take a lot more actions and then you will start tapping into a positive look cycle.
You get some great results and your brain goes "see I told you that you would succeed", and your beliefs grow stronger and you're in that success cycle.

Tony Robbins says that to get great results when you're in a downward spiral you can take massive action, and that's a great way.
Or you can change your beliefs and visualize your results in advance, which will make your actions even more confident and inspired.

The Controlling & Driving Forces of Our Lives

Ton Robbins says people are motivated by 2 forces:

1. Need to avoid pain (greater motivator in most cases)
2. Desire to gain pleasure

If you want to control your life and your actions you have to control the motivating forces.
You have to **link pain to not doing something and link pleasure to doing it.**

When you learn to change emotional associations to things and behavior in your life (pain and pleasure links), then you control your life.

The author says that if you try to make a change and never happens it's because your internal association of pain and pleasure hasn't changed.

You want to change something, but because we have strong "wiring" in our brains already in place it's difficult to

change purely out of will.
BUT we have the power to change that.

The basic idea is that **the less you use your old neuro association, the more they will atrophy.**
And **the more you use your new empowering neuro associations, the stronger those links will become**.

Use pain and pleasure instead of having pain and pleasure use you. That's the secret to success, Tony Robbins says. That's the secret to controlling life and not having a life to control you.

Then Tony Robbins gives us an example we can all relate to: how many times have you seen someone you're attracted to and whom you would have liked to date but didn't do anything?
It's because you associate more pain with walking up and asking for a date than not doing it.

Remember, the resources you need to change anything in your life are within you right now, Tony Robbins says. Right now you have a set of neuro-associations that habitually cause you to not fully use your capability. What you must do is reorganize your neural pathways so that they guide you in the directions you desire.

How to change your neuro associations:

Tony Robbins says we have to believe that we can change right now.
And that WE are responsible for the change.

Get to the point where you believe that something MUST change, that YOU must change, and that you CAN change it.

We've already seen the steps in *Awaken the Giant Within*, but here they are again for simplicity:

- **Step 1: Decide what you really want and what's preventing you from having it now**

Focus on what you want and clarify to yourself what's preventing you from having it. Understand what pain you link to changing to a new behavior and what kind of pleasure your current behavior is giving you (or what pain it's shielding you from).

- **Step 2: Leverage! Associate massive pain not changing and massive pleasure changing**

Start thinking and noting down your own brain's benefits of all that you are missing by not changing.

Ask yourself a question to self-induce pain in not changing. Ask yourself what you've missed in the last 5 years with your current sub-standard behavior. Ask what it cost you. Ask how much more you could have today if you had changed earlier. Ask what it's costing you right now. To you, to the people around you. Ask what it WILL cost you in the next 1, 2, or 3 years.

Another two ideas to get leverage is to make a public commitment that you're going to change (what Charles de Gaulle did to stop smoking) and personal integrity (ask yourself how your current sub-standard behavior is inconsistent with who you are.

- **Step 3: Interrupt the limiting pattern**

Anytime you see yourself leaning against the old pattern, change it immediately.

Change it abruptly and make it as conspicuous as possible. If you can manage to shame yourself too in the process of changing the pattern you will not only interrupt the pattern but also get leverage at the same time.

- **Step 4: Create a new, empowering alternative and link pleasure to it**

Step 4 is critical for long-term change.

Your old habit was likely filling a need for you and is also engrained in your brain. Simply erasing it is difficult. You

gotta replace with something new.

Ideally, you replace it with something that gives you the same pleasurable feeling without the negative effects. Or something that gives you *even more* pleasure.

A good technique is to “use” the pleasure from something else and link it to the new behavior. Tony Robbins for example used to link pain in leaving food on his plate. And when he started to link pleasure to pushing the food away he did it when playing a song he loved. He is using the song he loved positive association and started transferring it to push the dish away.

Genius.

Another technique is to think about a time you felt strong and powerful and then immediately think about what scares you.

- **Step 5: Condition the new pattern until it’s consistent**

Conditioning is the way to make sure a change you create is consistent and lasts long term. The simplest way is to rehearse it again and again with tremendous emotional intensity until a neurological pathway is created.

Do it long enough and it will become conditioned.

A couple of good techniques are to imagine it first (your brain can’t tell the difference between something vividly imagined and something actually experienced) and to reinforce it by giving yourself a reward.

- **Step 6: Test it!**

Testing is two-fold:

- Imagine yourself in a situation where your old habits would have taken hold. Are you able to resist and go ahead with your new habit?
- Make sure the new change is consistent with your identity

Neuro associations shaping your life

Tony Robbins invites you to take stock of all the positive and neuro associations in your life and then address the top 3 negative ones you want to change by following his 6 steps process.

The meaning we associate with our neuro association

The author says the meaning we associate with a given association controls our life and behavior.

Tony Robbins provides a strong example of a victim of an assault.
Many victims feel violated, dirty, and keep this dark hole inside.

But what if you completely changed the meaning of it?
What if you told yourself that you’ve been there and now you’re stronger than ever?
What if you could use that experience to help other people in a similar situation?
Or help people in general, by showing how resilient a human being can be?

Those are the kind of empowering questions that can change the meaning of a terrible event and give someone strength and power instead of pain and depression.

Incantations

Incantations are continuously repeating to yourself something you want to be true about yourself.

Brian Tracey, for example, suggests that you repeat daily to yourself “I’m the best, I’m the best, I’m the best”

My note:
Incantations have been proven to be potentially harmful to people with low self-esteem.
Also, read *pop-psychology* and self-help myths.

On another tape, Tony says as a youngster he repeated for hours and full intensity incantations to himself, after which his whole body was shaking.

Exposure therapy to destroy your comfort zone

Please like this website to keep reading this long article:

The idea is that you expose yourself to stimuli that cause anxiety until your brain and mind realize it's no danger for you.

What happens with social anxiety is your sympathetic nervous system kicks into overdrive and focuses all of your energy on "survival" because it tells your brain/body that you're in danger. Yes, approaching a hot chick is the same as a car crash or shark attack on your brain/body.

STATE – changing your state

The ultimate goal is that no matter what happens, you're gonna stay in a beautiful state.

Tony Robbins believes the success of his life has come down to one basic skill: state management.

On a consistent basis, Tony learned to manage his state and therefore he got himself to break through and take actions when he would have normally done nothing and when very few people around him were able to.

He says he's done every day, day after day, by doing things that would increase his physical ability changing the way he moves and breathes.

And by consistently and daily conditioning myself to ask the kind of questions and create the kind of focus that moved him in the direction he wanted.

The moment you put yourself in a better state you will see more solutions and you can tell yourself a better story to start a breakthrough and change plan.

Focus:

What you focus on determines how you feel.

Many people focus on what they don't have, or on the problems rather than what they have, the solutions, and what they can do.

Questions

Tony Robbins says a great way to focus on positive endeavors, is by asking questions.

The quality of the questions you answer yourself determines the way your brain thinks.

While already mentioned in the state section, questions are one of the 5 "master systems' in Tony's approach.

You gotta ask with conviction and a sense of certainty and expectation for an answer. And you really have to dig for those answers.

Example: The Man Who Stole From Tony

Tony Robbins had a guy who embezzled from his company. He started raging and screaming "how could he possibly do this to me, how could he have the audacity".
Then he switched.

Tony loves learning and started asking himself "what can I learn from this".
What's funny about this that I didn't notice? And he really started searching for those answers. And he changed his state.

Questions you can ask yourself:

- *"What are you most happy about right now"*

If nothing then:

- *"What COULD you be happy about if you wanted to be"*
- *"I know you don't, but if you did, if you could, what could you feel happy about"*
- *"What about that makes you happy"*
- *"How does that make you feel"*

Also, ask these questions to unhappy people around you and you will see what shift they will bring.

Morning questions

Ask yourself these 5 morning questions and give two answers each:

- What am I most excited about?
- What makes me happy
- What do I look forward to
- Who loves me (or who could love me, even if it means getting a puppy)
- What can I do today to make it a great day

Body

Ton Robbins uses his now famous equation that Emotion = Motion

He says the number one way to change your state is by changing your body.

Change the way you move to feel empowered and in confident.
Change your breathing and your facial expressions.

> **Emotion = Motion**

Breathing

How do you breathe when you're happy, excited, bored…?

Face:

Learn as many facial expressions.
Notice when you're tense you have some tension in your facial muscles.

Voice

How do you speak when you're happy, when you're euphoric when you're on top of the world?

Emotion templates:

Write them all down so that you can re-enact them whenever needed

Things You Can Do To Be Happy

Write down all the things you can do or experience that will make you happy.
Every time you need to feel in a specific way, you will have a list of things to do.

For example, a few items on my list are:

- Listen to great music and jump around
- A great smoothie
- Eating great and healthy food
- Having sex
- Spending time with a woman I like
- Spending time with someone I like
- Calling/texting someone I care about and making them feel great
- Read
- Enjoy a sunset with a beer and a cigarette

Exercise – Negative focuses

What do you focus on that doesn't help you?

I'm sure you gotta pretty long list here, I know I do :).

Consciously stop focusing on these whenever they come up, and consciously switch to positive ones as soon as it will become more and more natural.

Values

Tony Robbins says that your values tell you what you will pay attention to and will determine the kind of person you are.

Values are built from beliefs, which are built from references (more on that below).

There are both values we move towards, and value we reject and wants to move away from.
Your values determine your destiny. **Your values determine what you move towards and what you reject** and determine your most likely behaviors.

And it's very possible you have value conflicts that create self-sabotage (example: top value of success and top moving away from value as rejection).

How can you fix this?

Step 1 – awareness
Explore what your current values are.

Ask yourself: what's the most important thing in my life? Is it peace of mind, impact, or love..?

For Tony Robbins, for example, it was: passion, love, freedom, contribution, being able, growth, achievement/accomplishment, happiness, fun, health, and creativity.

Step2 – decide
Make a conscious decision about the values you want to live by.

As yourself not "what's important to me" but "In what order do my values need to be to achieve my ultimate destiny?"

Ask yourself what other values you need to add -Tony Robbins found out intelligence was a big one missing-.

Ask what values you need to eliminate.

Tony Robbins, for example, found out that by constantly focusing on being free he was missing out on the freedom he already had.
So he dropped freedom from the list and consciously decided not to make it an issue anymore.
And suddenly it was amazing the freedom he had by dropping it from the list.

Ask which benefit you get from which values and which cons you get (for example for Tony having passion at the top meant he was burning out).

Tony Robbin's list changed to: health/vitality; love/warmth, intelligence, cheerfulness, honesty, passion, gratefulness, fun/happiness, making a difference, learning/growing, achieving, being the best, investing, contribution, and creativity.

Tony asked if being happy higher than achievement would suck the wind out of his sails, but it was quite the contrary: he started achieving more by being happy.

My Note:
I did the exact same with freedom.

Freedom was such a big thing for me I felt suffering any time I was doing something that negated my freedom. Helping a friend? That's not freedom! Keeping an appointment? Damn, where's my freedom!

I dropped the freedom trap by reminding myself that I *AM* free. I *CAN* do whatever I want.
I always choose what I'm doing. Being a free man in a free world, freedom is *NOT* your issue.

Update:

I am not convinced anymore about "having to drop" your values. First, think about whether you can leverage your values.
Today I went back to valuing freedom instead of considering it a burden. And it helped me launch my business.

Also what you place higher up means you give it more importance, so ask yourself how the placement will affect your life. For example ask: how would your capacity to deal with fear, frustration, and rejection be affected by placing "courage" high upon your move towards value?

One more note:

Brian Tracey adds that our happiness and self-esteem are heavily dependent on how closely we live to our values. Our self-esteem is tied to our ideal self, such as the person we want to be, and the way we see ourselves at the present time.
Unsuccessful people have no values or sacrifice values for short-term gains. You gotta stay true to your values if they are to shape you in any significant way.

Rules

Tony Robbins says that rules are the belief (sense of certainty) about what needs to be fulfilled in order to achieve your various values.

They are generalizations you've set up for yourself about what has to happen to experience a certain result in your life. They often are in the form of "if… then" statements.

For example: "I wanna be successful". Success is the value. How do you know if you've reached it? Those are your rules.
The value is the target. The metrics to see if you've reached it are the rules.

Rules determine not only whether or not a certain value is met, but also whether we'll feel good or bad, whether we'll give ourselves pain or pleasure.

Tony says a great way to make yourself feel better is to have laxer rules.
Many are afraid that we have too lax rules or we'll lose our drive. But Tony says that you don't need to have ridiculously difficult rules to keep your drive. We certainly want to use the power of goals and the allure of a compelling future, but we must make sure at the bottom of it we have rules to allow us to be happy any time we want.

We want rules that move us to take action, that cause us to feel joy, that cause us to follow through. A bit of push-through pain is great, just don't make it overwhelming.

Rules and values conflict

You can also have conflicting values and rules.
For example, if you were heartbroken your new rule could be "never get too close to someone", but if you value love… major conflict.

Empowering and disempowering rules

A rule is disempowering if it's impossible to meet if it's outside of your control, or if it gives you only a few ways to feel good and lots of ways to feel bad.

To know if our rules are empowering or disempowering ask yourself *"what has to happen for me to feel good in.. "*

And remember, the most empowering rule is to enjoy yourself no matter what happens.

Kind of rules

The author says there are two kinds of rules: threshold rules (musts) and standard ones (should).

In a way, it's better not to have too many must rules, or we'll be shackled.

Example: Managing A Bit Let-Down

Tony was in a resort having high expectations for the eclipse which was going to happen.
But clouds gathered and it was a huge letdown for everyone. However, Tony decided he would enjoy his time anyway in spite of the clouds. It was possible because had decided that "no matter what happened, we'd find a way to enjoy it".

Some people say it's lowering your standards, but it's actually raising them because you'll enjoy it in spite of what happens.

Beliefs

Tony Robbins says that beliefs are feelings of certainty about what something means.

2/3 of top athletes are the oldest in their classes so they grow up winning and develop a belief they're the best.

My Note:
But beliefs can often trump the body.
An experiment allowed a mouse to win fights against bigger opponents by drugging the opponent. Then he was pitched against bigger NON-drugged opponents.
The smaller mouse trashed the bigger opponents.

Beliefs are supported by what we call references, which are life experiences. Imagine beliefs as tabletops, and references are the legs of the table.

An idea can become a belief the moment you start linking reinforcing experiences confirming that idea.

If for example, you have an idea you're sexy, girls telling you-you're a great lover, a playboy, attractive, etc., those are reinforcing your idea with experiences and it's like putting legs underneath that tabletop so you feel certain about it.

Often ideas we have turn into beliefs because we cherry-pick the experiences we will use as legs.

So if you think you're a failure it's often a self-reinforcing prophecy because you only register the times you failed and keep behaving as a failure and apply that "I'm a failure" lens to everything in your life.

The good news, of course, is that you can change beliefs and you can develop a belief about anything as long as you find enough references/legs.

Global beliefs are: "people are", "life is", "I am.."
The second kind of belief is that rules are: "if… Then" "if you love me.." "if you respect me.." "if you appreciate me..".

Tony says that every great achiever he's ever interviewed had the ability to get themselves to feel certain they could succeed, even though no one before had ever accomplished it.

Belief's categories

There are three categories of beliefs:

1. Opinion- something we are relatively certain about. Can be easily changed.
2. Belief- much stronger because it has more references and emotional attachment.
3. Conviction- eclipses a belief due to emotional attachment. Identity is based on convictions. To give up a conviction would be to lose your identity.

Tony Robbins says that often the best thing you can do to create mastery in any area of your life is to raise a belief to a conviction. The conviction will then become your identity and drive you to action and push you through obstacles.

Creating a Super Belief

How to create a conviction:

1. Start with a basic belief
2. Reinforce your belief by adding new and more powerful references (think about when it happened or make them happen)
3. Find or create a triggering event.

If you don't have that belief at all, start conditioning it with the 6 steps on neuro associations and then take action to reinforce it and create new references.

How to change your beliefs

1. Think what the negative belief is costing you (a staple to change, what it will cost you..)
2. Doubt the old belief (question it, find contrary examples, ask how was this belief ridiculous or absurd, was the person I learned it from an expert in this area, where they producing results?)

If you do this right you will soon start doubting the old belief and your mind is then ripe to instill a new one by associating pleasure with it and conditioning it.

Example: Getting Good With People

Let's say you wanted to get good with people, and you wanted to adopt the belief, "I can learn to get better with and understand people."

You'd build that up out of all of the references you have in the past for talking well to people, how many guides there are for talking to people, and how great it would feel to finally handle this area of your life.

Then, look for the antithesis you're feeling right now, that you're terrible with people and you'll never get better.

Find as many references that run counter to it, like how you can at least talk to store clerks or make small talk with people, how some people with backgrounds of being shy have evolved to socialites, and imagine finally shaking off this negative label for yourself.

Then, associate massive pain to it with the techniques listed above.

When it becomes too painful to not adopt the belief and too enticing to hold back from adopting it, you're on the right track.
You're now motivated enough to take action towards building this idea into a full-blown belief and you'll find ways to get experience with talking to people. Maybe you'd read guides, talk to strangers, figure out what works and what doesn't, and keep focusing until the changes stick.

Beliefs You Have

Tony Robbins then encourages you to make a list of all the beliefs you have. Positive ones and negative ones, and then encourages you to start changing the top 3 negative ones you are currently holding.

References

Tony Robbins says that references are all that has happened or that we've seen or heard or read or imagined in life.

Their strength depends on the amount of emotion attached to them and the number of similar reference experiences.

References do not necessarily have to be accurate, but they do become accepted as real, regardless.
With enough emotional intensity and repetition, our nervous systems experience something as real, even if it hasn't occurred yet.

We have countless references for everything, often running contrary to each other. And references build our beliefs not neutrally, but in the way we select them and the meaning we attach to them!

Nothing in life means anything but the meaning you give it, so please give your past events an empowering meaning to build powerful and empowering beliefs. Write down some events you think impacted you negatively, and instead of using them as an excuse to beat yourself up, look for a positive and empowering lesson: there are no tragedies if something good can eventually come of it. We are not our pasts unless we live there.

Rituals – The Power Of

Tony Robbins says asks what are some emotions you experience on an ongoing basis.

It's important to know because we often end up with "patterns", or sets of actions and thoughts we use recurrently. These patterns can make us happy or unhappy, and it's up to us to use the good ones and discard or change the bad ones.

Disempowering Rituals:

Step one to remove them is awareness. So ask yourself: what do you need to do to feel bad?
For me, it often used to be "having" to go to work, and this was the loop I'd fall into:

1. I go to sleep much later than I should (or I take a nap after 8 pm)
2. I am still sleeping when the alarm rings
3. I am still sleepy, and I feel staying in bed would be amazing
4. I think it sucks "having" to go to work (work is a duty here, not a potential enrichment)
5. I stay in bed longer with negative feelings
6. My face is contracted, my mouth tilted down
7. I get out of bed… Late

8. I get the pressure I gotta run because I'm late, fight back the "rushing" urge but it gets even later
9. I feel like my work sucks, and I translate that dislike toward my boss and the company
10. I go out of the house, again having to run, and I hate that feeling

Empowering Rituals:

In my case, these are some rituals that empower me:

1. I Push my limits in moving towards a goal I want
2. I start getting closer and closer and start loving the struggle
3. I take a small break and think of myself proudly
4. I get it done and feel fantastic
5. I give myself a small reward and it feels 10 times better than normal

Emotions – The Power Of

You can choose which emotions to feel and you should build that still. But at times it's good to listen to emotions without trying to change them right away because emotions can act as useful messengers.

Tony Robbins says there are four wrong default answer people have for emotions, which are:

1. avoidance (trying to suppress emotions) ;
2. denial (pretending "it's not that bad") ;
3. competition (a race to who's "got it worst") ;
4. learning and using (the correct one).

Mastering emotions:

1. identify what you're really feeling;
2. Acknowledge and appreciate: emotions support you, you never want to make your emotions wrong.
3. Get curious about the message this emotion is offering you. It will help you master your emotions, solve the challenge and prevent the same from occurring again
4. Get confident you can handle it immediately. Remember a time you felt similarly and successfully handled it.
5. Get certain you can handle it in the future as well. Rehearse handling situations where this Action Signal comes up again.
6. Get excited and take action.

Vanquishing Worry

Tony Robbins says worry is one of those emotions to stamp out, and you do it as follows:

1. Think of the worst-case scenario, accept it, then work to improve the worst-case scenario.
2. Focus on the goal, on what you want, rather than on what can go wrong
3. Get busy: if you're busy you ain't got no time for worry

My Note:
getting busy to "crowd out" worry is NOT a good strategy as that only covers up the issue, as well explained by Brene Brown *Daring Greatly.*

Rid of Procrastination

Tony Robbins says that an easy way of dealing with procrastination is, well, to procrastinate it.
Put it off.

Here's a 5-step process:

1. An easy way of dealing with procrastination is to put it off.
2. Find out how you create the rituals and put yourself in a state to procrastinate
3. Don't tell yourself you "have to do" because that makes your brain rebel. Say you "choose"!
4. Think of what you're missing while you procrastinate and think of how great it will be if you moved your ass
5. Develop the physical habit that as soon as you feel like you're procrastinating, you MOVE

Anchoring to Success

Tony Robbins says that you are anchoring every time. Any time you are in an intense emotional state, anything that happens around you consistently while you're in that state gets associated with that feeling.

Negative associations can kill a relationship because you go home and you are angry a few times in a row, then you anchor that feeling to that person.

My Note:
I second and confirm that from first-hand experience.

Create an anchor

Put yourself in an emotional state that you want to anchor in.

Example: Motivation
Think about a time when you were motivated, breathe how you were breathing, move like that) and once you're in the state consistently do something unique (for example: clap your hands and say yes).

It's important you create the anchor while you are at the peak of the emotional state, not going up for the peak, or coming down.
You can create several anchors that will as "buttons" to command your brain.

Collapsing an anchor

You can remove an anchor by collapsing an anchor.

Create a positive anchor similar to the negative one. For example, if I get sad when someone touches my left shoulder, then I create a positive anchor to the right shoulder.

Test the anchor by getting out of state and then back again.
Once the anchor is set, then fire both the positive and negative ones simultaneously.

My Note:
I didn't personally find anchoring super useful

Switch Patterns

Picture yourself about to start the behavior you want to change (play with your hair, crack your fingers, get weak in the presence of your boss).

Then create a picture of yourself as the guy you want to be, your ultimate self (confident, great communication, charming, drawing people in, a picture of success).

Take a picture of yourself taking the action you want to avoid and make it big.
Take a picture of who you want to be and put it behind the first weak picture of you.

Now feel the tension between the two pictures, like a slingshot. Make the picture of you want to be moved farther and farther away until it disappears.

Then release and make it come back again exploding right through the weak picture into your mind making a weird noise (woooosch).

Speed is important, the strong picture has to come back strong.

Financial Success

Tony Robbins also has a section on financial success, but I will skip it.

My Note:
I didn't find the steps or what Tony Robbins said here to be particularly useful, to be honest.
This was before he wrote his *Money Master the Game* and interviewed true experts like Ray Dalio. He said things like "you can increase your return without increasing your risk", which makes little sense.

The usefulness for me of this section was:

- Write down all the negative associations you have linked to money
- Don't make money your only and sole priority as that's the best way to fail at life
- Develop a belief that no matter what happens you are bigger than anything which can happen to your finances

And of course, the last point he gives is that you should help out people. Receiving is the evidence you've given consistently.

> **Receiving is evidence you've given consistently**

Overcoming Fear of Failures

Tony Robbins says that failure is impossible.

The only way you can possibly fail is to tell yourself you failed.

Tony Robbins advises you to write down what must happen for you to feel like a failure and what must happen for you to feel like a success. And then change that.

Your new failure will be quitting and totally giving up. And your new way to feeling successful will be to give it all no matter the situation and no matter the result.

Erasing technique

Worst-case scenario you can always "delete" a failure from your mind with the erasing technique.

Just think many times over about the scene of you failing, then start changing it.

Imagine the people around you getting smaller. Growing mickey mouse ears.
Farting or whatever silly stuff you can imagine. Rewind it back quickly, with all the voices unintelligible. Put some weird music as a background.

Be outrageous, do something your brain will not expect, and do it over and over again until you don't remember it straight anymore.

My Note:
This idea that it's impossible to fail is weak in my opinion and possibly dangerous.
You want to build yourself into someone who doesn't ache just because of a failure.
Also read: *the antifragile ego.*

Vanquishing Rejection

1. Decide you are not going to allow this limiting emotion to control your life.
2. get enough leverage on yourself: write down the price you will pay if you don't control rejection and all the pleasure you will get if you were able to get rid of the fear of rejection
3. Create a new set of rules for what is rejection (make it tough to feel rejected)
4. Repeat to yourself that mass rejection equals mass success. You really can't have success without rejection
5. Condition yourself to feel great in front of rejection. Feel unstoppable and create an anchor. Now imagine a reaction and fire off the anchor over and over until rejection makes you feel strong. It sounds difficult but it's actually easy!

Eliminating Self-Sabotage

Tony Robbins says that self-sabotage starts because our brain links an often wrong meaning to certain stimuli.

For example, any time you experience a significant amount of pain or pleasure your brain searches for the causes in 3 ways:

1. Something that appears to be unique;
2. Something happening simultaneously ;
3. Consistency –but we highly generalize about consistency-

Self-sabotage is a positive intent, the brain linked something in the past that it now wrongly associates with pain/pleasure.

Example: curing self-hurt
If someone hurts himself on purpose he probably associates that people care for him when he's hurt.

So he does it again to get love.

What Tony did with that man who was hurting himself was to make him realize that what he was getting wasn't really love, but an obligation.
And people were actually hating him for that (he is linking pain to his previous pattern).

And then Tony asked him "what do you feel when you give love", and the guy understands that giving love means love. And Tony begins installing a new pattern.

My Note:
This was simplistic as self-hurt is often associated with Borderline Personality Disorders (also see: I Hate You Don't Leave Me and Stop Walking On Eggshells)

If you clearly see a pattern where you are subconsciously self sabotage yourself, then you might be sabotaging yourself.

Mixed neuro associations self-sabotage

Harder to spot is self-sabotage originating from mixed associations.

For example, you might love the money, but at the same time, you link feelings of pain to money.

To find out if you might have self-sabotaging mixed neuro associations, you can list all that you think about something.

The negative associations don't have to be more in terms of quantity but sometimes are more powerful (ie.: "stress, greed, sleepless nights" are stronger than "security and opportunity")

Step by step and eliminate self-sabotage:

1. identify a behavior keeping you from your goal (ie.: getting nervous with pretty girls and people around)
2. ask yourself: what's the positive intent here, what is my brain trying to give me (shield me from rejection)
3. get some leverage on yourself (teach your brain that if you don't change you get more pain)
4. interrupt the pattern
5. install new patterns

Confidence

Tony Robbins says that confidence lies in the belief that every person you meet is better at something than you are.

But every person you meet, you're also superior to them in something else.

And he suggests focusing on what you've already done and accomplished.

Confidence is often a question of how you manage your memories.
Go back in your life and think of all the great things you've done, or of all the times you think you weren't gonna do it but you did.

Problem-Solving

Tony Robbins applies the Pareto Law here.

He says you should spend 20% of the time on your problem and 80% on the solution.

He suggests coming up with solutions and exploring them deeply.
Ask yourself "what if we do this.." and keep expanding on the options rather than shutting solutions down as they come up. This way you'll open up more possibilities.

Asking the right questions:
Tony Robbins gives us an amazing example of a time when he went back home, was super tired, and almost a hundred important calls had piled up for him to take care of.

So he starts by asking:

1. What's great about this (nothing? What COULD be great about it)
   Example: Well, 3-5 years ago Tony would have begged to speak to these guys. They just want me and these are movers and shakers and he can make a difference
2. What's not perfect yet (presupposing it's gonna be perfect)
   Example: I don't have enough time for my own personal life
3. What am I willing to do to make it the way I want it (presupposes you want and can do something)
   example: I'm willing to find a way to make these calls cause they deserve an answer and I will change my schedule
4. What am I willing no longer to do to make things the way I want them
   example: I'm willing to no longer complain when I set the thing up. And I'm willing to change things so that more people can take care of my things
5. How can I do what's necessary to get this job done and enjoy the process
   example: you own a Jacuzzi, haven't been there in a while, go outside, bring the laptop there, bring the phone, get in Jacuzzi, and have fun calling guys and making fun of them and with them!

Words and expressions for energy

Tony Robbins says that the words and expressions you use, and how you pronounce them, make a difference in your states.

For example, how you call your spouse will change the way you feel about them. Maybe keep "partner" for business

and use “lover”, “soulmate” or “better half” for your romantic relationship.

Softeners and Intensifiers

Softeners and intensifiers give us a greater degree of precision in our dealings with others, whether it’s a romantic relationship or a business negotiation.

Years ago when Tony thought something was screwed up he’d call the appropriate person and say *“I’m really upset” / “I’m really worried about.. “.*
That would automatically put the other person into reaction and they’d often become defensive, preventing them from finding a solution.

So what he learned, even if he felt more intensely, was to say “*I’m a little bit concerned about X, can you help me?”.*

This lowered his own emotional intensity and conveys that you have faith in that person’s ability.

Expressions and metaphors:

- *rather than “pissed” or “furious”: I’m getting a bit frustrated or peeved. Peeved made Tony laugh and moved him out of an enraged state.*
- *to a man who said “they put a gun to our head”, Tony changed his state by breaking his pattern by asking “what color is the squirt gun”. Now the gun has become a silly toy.*
- *to a guy who said they had put them in a box, he said “I don’t know about you, but I know nobody could ever build a box big enough to hold me”.*
- *If you’re drowning in a world of chaos, take a stroll down the shore of tranquility and think a bit before acting.*
- *to a woman who said she had pieces of baggage, Tony said: what if you dropped the baggage.*

Sometimes you need the opposite though and expressions can give you the hedge to move:

- *Some parents didn’t feel like they should encroach on their sons’ troubles and Tony wanted to spur them to action. So he said: “there are two bullets to your son’s head right now, one is alcohol and one is drugs, and one of them will eventually kill him”.*

That image gave them the strength to move.

Metaphors for life

Tony gives a few great metaphors for life:

- Life is giving by becoming more
- Life is a game
- Life is a dance
- Life is a gift

Blueprint and Happiness

Tony Robbins says that if you are not feeling satisfied in your life it’s because your blueprint -the idea you have of how your life should be- is not aligned with what your life is right now.

There are 3 ways people cope with that:

- Blame (themselves or others, and doesn’t fix the problem)
- Change their life (great approach)
- Change and rewrite their blueprint (great approach)

My personal challenge to you

Tony ends by saying that if you really wanna master your life :

1. Master your own mental and emotional state.
2. Develop compelling reasons to manage your state.
3. Develop goals to keep your good state.

Anticipate Challenges
Tony says to anticipate the challenges of life and role model how to deal with them.

Some challenges are obvious and fixed. Like death for example. What are your beliefs about death *so that you can deal with it*? Talk to people who have already done it successfully.

Some other challenges for people are turning a certain age, which Tony says often has to do with a "0" after a number.

Re-evaluate Life
It's a great idea to re-evaluate your life every 6 months or year.

Become a Team Player
The secret to lifelong wealth and happiness is this: become a team player.

Tony says that we will do more for the people we care about than we'd do for ourselves.
If you can find a team of people whom you deeply care for and you can make a difference for them and be a source of power and possibility you will be driven the most.

Every day cares deeply, create something new, cooperate with ppl on how to make a difference, commit to being the best and contribute. The dreams of your past will become small confronted with what you will have.
Life is a process, so enjoy it.

> **You are bigger than anything that can ever happen to you**

I wanna leave you with a great quote Tony uses by John How to spur those people who are scared of dreaming and acting big in case of possible failures:

> "*What a folly to dread the thought of throwing away life at once, yet having no regard by throwing it away by parcels and piecemeals*".

It's not how long you live, but how.
Live with passion!

Criticism & Scientific Verdict

Robbins' framework overlaps with evidence-based principles like:

- Reinforcement learning (pain/pleasure conditioning)
- Cognitive restructuring (changing beliefs)

However, many claims lack both realism and empirical grounding, including:

- Unlimited potential <— You're better advised to choose something where you have high potential
- Visualization as a primary driver of success <— Likely not a *primary* driver

More robust frameworks come from:

- Behavioral psychology (Skinner)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Beck)
- Social exchange theory (Homans; Blau)

Some other issues with Robbins, besides the notes above:

Guru-approach: use conviction, including in low-expertise areas

One of Robbins' secrets to success is his charismatic conviction.

And to keep up the charade of an omniscient human being, he talks with full certitude about anything. Including topics, he has no expertise on. And… It shows.
To people like me, he loses a lot of credibility. But to many other people, he just seems more Godlike.

Also see:

- Teacher frames (and why they're a red flag)

Law of Attraction

Robbins tells the story of a couple who won the lottery, twice in a row, by acting as if they had already won it.

That's stuff that I don't approve of and I would not recommend anyone to follow that path -either the blind belief in the law of attraction or focusing on winning the lottery instead of making through skills and dedication-.

TPM Filter: What Actually Works

Keep:

- State management (useful for action-taking)
- Pain/pleasure reframing (basic but effective)
- Taking action despite fear
- Optimism
- Internal locus of control
- Framing/reframing

Use with caution:

- Visualization (works as support, not driver)
- Incantations (can backfire for low self-esteem, focus on constant action instead)

Discard:

- Law of attraction
- "No failure" mindset
- Overconfidence without competence

Review

Personal Power 2 was one of the first self-development resources I started with, and one of the best ones I initially went through. It was practical and motivational at the same, and it was helpful for a beginner.

I can still recommend it for beginners, and this post will give you a quicker overview of the basics of self-development for ambitious men:

- **Foundations of self-development**

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

Neil Strauss Analysis: Smooth, But Weak

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Neil Strauss, AKA 'PUA Style', writes in "*The Game*" that two years in a row he was the "best pick-up artist in the world".

Of course, that didn't say much about his abilities.

The title was awarded on an Internet forum which was likely populated by people who weren't very socially skilled.

This post analyzed the power dynamics of Neil Strauss' appearance on the show "The View".

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  - The Theory of Aggression
  - 2. Respond in Kind
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  - Host Advantages
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  - How to Ace Difficult Interviews
  - Stand by Your Deeds
  - Nobody Has the Right to Intimidate You

Intro

Neil Strauss was dominated on The View.

He handled it smoothly, very smoothly. But he used ignoring in place of assertiveness.
It's not *completely*wrong, but he let the host disrespect him while he kept smiling. And that's not very powerful or masculine.

The short of it is that the host -Star Jones, the de facto "head bit** there- aggress and Neil Strauss evades.

Neil's strategy is to avoid confrontation, try to isolate Star and charm the rest of the group.
"Be like water" Bruce Lee would have said, very typical of the Charmer types as described by Robert Greene in *The Art of Seduction*.

Neil does rather well in charming the group and is relatively successful in isolating Star but at the very heavy price of being socially gored by her dominant, vindictive barbs.

Let's see then some great strategies Neil Strauss could have used to deal with the aggressive woman:

1. Nip It in The Bud: Set The Precedent

> ***Get Into Fight Stance to Avoid Fighting***

The beginning of social interactions sets the tone for what is about to come, and it is particularly true with an aggressive opponent.

Imagine that beginning as him sniffing you out and testing your mettle.

He will try to make an offhand remark, or maybe force the upper hand in the handshake.
And if you let it slip without doing anything about it the aggressor will feel he's just been green-lighted to tooling you.

Neil Strauss Is Too Submissive

Neil is too submissive at the beginning and sets a bad precedent.

Star shows the first aggressive sign with a disparaging remark (*yeah right*): only supremely confident individuals belittle so openly.

She then uses a thumb display, speaks loudly over the hand-clapping, and with a reproaching tone turns to Neil putting her elbow on the desk.
These are all nonverbal power moves as if to say "*what the fu** is that all about, explain*!"

Neil's movements are smooth in his reply, but no good execution will change the fact that the whole cluster -including his verbals- are submissive.

Here's what he could have done to show he's no pushover instead:

- **Touch Her:** Touching first is a sign of dominance and confidence.
  He could have smiled -not laughed- at her initial joke while lightly placing a hand on her back or upper arm. Touching is a simple, not aggressive way of showing confidence and dominance.
- **Imply She's Dumb:** Instead of saying "I'll explain" he could have smiled and said "*Nice intro. It's not exactly like that, lemme clear that up*". This implies Star got it all wrong with her generalization and sets him as the authority with the straight facts.

The Theory of Aggression

Before we dig deeper into the practical techniques it's great to understand the theory behind aggressive interactions and the escalation they often follow.

- **1. You're Dumbstruck and do Nothing**
  For most people, and especially if you are a non-aggressive person, the moment you are first aggressed will leave you at a loss for words. Most people in this situation withdraw within themselves and move on pretending nothing happened.
- **2. The Aggressor is Emboldened**
  Seeing the victim has no answer to their antics emboldens the aggressor and often leads to *more* aggression. This is why you need to push back right on.

If it's in a romantic relationship, this can often be the woman actually, and her aim is not usually to hurt you, but a misguided attempt to get you emotionally involved when she feels you are withdrawing.

Outside of a romantic relationship, the aim is usually to hurt you, make you look bad, or dominate you for their own gain.

- **3. Aggression Repeats**
  In either scenario, you will often find yourself in a situation where your boundaries are continually encroached upon. You can feel victimized and lost, but since the precedents have been set, you can feel like it's too late to do something. So the victim hopes the aggressor will not exaggerate, that he will show some restraint, and that it will soon be over. But it rarely stops by itself.
- **4. The Victim's Psychology**
  Some victims often defend their aggressor to cover up their inability to stand up. They will say "*oh it was nothing*". What they are really trying to say though is "*no, their behavior is OK, it's not me who can't do anything about it*". When brought to extreme cases, people can even develop real feelings for their harassers (captor bonding syndrome).
- **5. Aggression Escalates**
  The next step is usually much bigger aggression. It can sometimes happen because the victim tried to undermine the aggressor with passive aggression or simply because he's emboldened by successful previous aggressions. While the smaller harassment might have seemed justifiable, the big one is more humiliating and harder to ignore.

For example, your boss was raising your voice in private, but now he just berated you in front of everyone (how to deal with yelling bosses).

In Neil Strauss' case, the first major instance of escalation was when Star Jones shouted orders while pouncing the table with her hand:

2. Respond in Kind

> ***Fight Fire with Fire***

Responding in kind, in this case, would have meant this:

> *"How would you feel if I did this to you lady? Probably bad because it's very rude and disrespectful, right?"*

Chances are she would have been dumbfounded and, put on the spot, backtracked with an apology.
And if she kept up with her offensive antics she'd be playing into your hand: you are painting her as the ill-mannered one and she's just proving it to everyone.

Keep cool and repeat she's very rude as she shames herself by raising her tone (repeat: "yes you are", "yes you are").

3. Use Strategic Aggression to Shame Them

> ***And Recruit Everyone on Your Side***

With this technique, you call on everyone around to side with you by playing the "empowered victim".

Simply state what she just did is vulgar and uncivil. Then demand an explanation and show you're expecting an apology.

It's less dominant than "Respond in Kind" but can be even more effective because now it's "everyone VS her".

Watch Tom Cruise executing it:

https://youtu.be/9C4UvvHMoZs?t=20

Notice at the beginning Tom is accommodating, pretending it was OK. But then he quickly switches to the shaming technique. And notice the people around naturally siding with him.

Note: he then moves to aggression, which was a mistake. He comes across as vindictive and butthurt. He should have stopped at the shaming stage.

To read more on shaming, check:

- Defending against the moral police attacks
- Anatomy of a shame attack

4. Scold Them With Moral Authority

> ***Hit and Move Along***

This is possibly the simplest technique to use.

You state it was rude and move on. It's powerful because you become the judge and take the moral high ground.

Neil could have turned around slowly, looked at her for a second, and said: "Woah, that's very rude of you".
Then moved along with his speech. She would have probably gone crazy, but again, that would have been a good thing.

The idea is that you judge and then move along, leaving the aggressor behind. You communicate that you're a superior man who doesn't engage in petty social brawls.

Power Moved!

5. Use Nonverbals Against Them

Getting rid of someone without uttering a word is even more powerful than speaking.

Dominate with Touching

In Neil's situation, he could have turned around while still speaking and without missing a beat, put his palm on her arm or back.

Since she hadn't touched him yet, it would have been a dominant and socially savvy move—non-aggressive but strong.
Subcommunication being: "*I keep going and ignore it, but you won't be such a rabid dog, chill*".

Shame With Facial Expression

Similar to the moral authority technique, but you don't speak. You pause, give a disgusted or disappointed look, then resume.

Just make sure the facial expression is obvious and long enough to be picked up by the audience.

What Neil Strauss Should Have Done

Commit and Stick to it

He says a couple of times "*oh my God I can't believe I'm saying this*", only for Star to prod him and Neil follows suit.

Tentative decisions make you look insecure.

If you're on a show to talk about something, talk about it. If you don't wanna talk about it, don't. But don't waffle in between.

https://youtu.be/M0omMTu9Ax8?t=7m40s

Don't Finger Point

Research shows using your index finger while speaking makes you less liked by the audience.

Don't Kiss Up – Just Don't

As we've already seen, even outside of abusive relationships people often try to win over their aggressors with flattery or appeasement.

But that's a trap. Bullies interpret your friendly gestures as your final capitulation.

Look how Star derides and brushes off Neil Strauss when he kisses her:

POWER DYNAMICS

Host Advantages

- **Home Advantage:** Hosts feel at home on set—both emotionally and even hormonally (higher testosterone).
- **Final Authority:** It's their show, which subconsciously grants them a higher status role.
- **They Ask Questions:** The one who asks the questions has more control and power in conversations.

Neil Strauss' Advantages

- **Center Seat:** The center position is the highest status position. Think of the US president at Yalta or Jesus in the Last Supper.

- **He's the Only Man:** When you're the only one of your gender, you automatically grab attention.
- **Captivating Topic:** The topic was fascinating, especially to women, and he leveraged that to charm the group.
- **He's the Subject Matter Expert:** Being the expert on stage gives you status. People look to you for answers, giving you automatic power—even if the book itself isn't great advice.

How to Ace Difficult Interviews

Stand by Your Deeds

Neil Strauss looked insecure and ashamed of his work. That's why he was defensive and on the back foot.

To be confident, own what you do. Sign your work—even your mistakes. When you own your identity and deeds, confidence becomes a byproduct.

> *"Explain what? I don't have anything to explain—least of all to you. What are you, the moral police?"*

Nobody Has the Right to Intimidate You

Even if you're caught off guard, remember: you give respect, but also *expect* respect. You don't accept rudeness or disrespect from anyone.

If it means walking out of a show, so be it.

Brian Tracy: A Sum of ALL Lessons Learned (In 1 Post)

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Brian Tracy is a self-help author and speaker.

I have listened to many of his courses and tapes over the years, and they're great.

This post is **a concentrated summary of all lessons learned from Brian Tracy books, talks, and courses**.

There is much to learn from the man, so let's get started:

Contents

- #1. Take Responsibility to Lead Your Life
- #2. Brian Tracy Seven Mental Laws
- #3. Tap Into your subconscious mind
- #4. Increase Self-Esteem By Living Your Ideal Self
- #5. Set Your Goals
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- #23. Learn to Provide Constructive Criticism
- #24. Use The 7 Laws to Raise Self-Esteem:
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#1. Take Responsibility to Lead Your Life

There is a strong relationship between the responsibility people take and their income.

Responsibility means always looking at your contribution and what you can do fix the problem, and *not* looking at people to blame.

And that includes you.

I love when Tracy says that you are not guilty, but you are responsible for the way you react to the situation and how you conduct yourself. Everything is contained in your response.

Tracy says that people who take responsibility for their own life are positive, confident, and self-reliant.
Even psychologically they tend to be more optimistic, happier, and mentally healthier.

As a matter of fact, psychology says that there's a direct relationship between the amount of responsibility you take in a certain area of your life and how much you feel in control of that area.
And a direct relationship between how much you feel you control and how much freedom you have in that area.

Taking responsibility also makes you much less likely to hold negative emotions because you don't have the "brain capacity" to blame others.
Every time you're getting negative, repeat to yourself that you are responsible.

#2. Brian Tracy Seven Mental Laws

Brian Tracy lists seven laws

- **The law of internal locus of control**

Internal locus of control means that you believe you are in control of your life.

If you have an external locus of control you feel helpless, are sadder, get angry easier, and are more prone to depression. If you feel you are in control of your life and the master of your own faith you are energetic and optimistic.

- **The Law of Cause and Effect**

What you reap today is what you sowed yesterday.

For every effect in your life, there is a specific cause.
If you have an effect in your life that you do not enjoy, you need to trace it back to the causes and get rid of them.

The change in your outer experience is a consequence of the changes in your inner experience.

Change the quality of your thinking and you change the quality of your life.

Self-mastery and self-discipline start with taking charge of your own thoughts. It begins with accepting that no situation can make you feel anything if you don't allow it. It is you thinking of a certain situation that makes you feel a certain way.

- **The law of belief**

What you believe, with annexed feelings, is what will manifest.
This is why you gotta overcome your limiting beliefs. This is similar to the law of manifestation from *Think and Grow Rich.*

My Note:
I never agreed much with this one though. It's *pop psychology* and a *self-help myth.*

- **The law of expectation**

Whatever you expect with confidence becomes your own self-fulfilling prophecy.

A set of expectations with strong repercussions has been set for us by our parents, and we tend to live up or down to those expectations. Same for bosses.

BUT you can obliterate all past and current expectations if you decide to set for yourself a positive set of expectations.

You can become an inverse paranoid, and believe the universe is conspiring to make good things happen to you. Expect the best of yourself in every situation, that you are going to gain and learn and become better from any situation.

- **The Law of Attraction –** (subset of law and effect)

You are a living magnet.
You invariably attract into your life people and situations in harmony with your dominant thoughts.

My Note:
I don't believe in this one bit. Brian Tracy law of attraction is no better than all the BS spewed by the "law of attraction crowd". Also, read my review of *"The Secret"*.

> The Secret: Summary, Review & Criticism

- **The Law of Correspondence**

It says, "As within, so without." It says that your outer world is a reflection of your inner world.

- **The Law of Mental Equivalency**

Thoughts objectify themselves.
Your thoughts vividly imagined and repeated, charged with emotion, become your reality.

#3. Tap Into your subconscious mind

Brian Tracy says that your subconscious mind records all past beliefs and behavior.

It records all of them and keeps you on track on those.
Importantly, it also records all the limits of your comfort zone and works to keep you within them.

Start seeing everything you do and everything happening to you as adding up one more block for you to become the great man you are destined to be.

- **Law of Subconscious Activity –** Any idea or thought that you accept as "true" in your conscious mind will be accepted unquestioningly by your subconscious mind and your subconscious will immediately begin work to bring it into your reality.
  All your words, actions, and body language set a pattern consistent with your dominant thoughts and goals (law of attraction).
- **Law of Concentration –** Whatever you dwell upon, grows.
  The more you think about something the more it becomes a part of your reality. Dwell on thoughts of love, courage, hope, confidence, etc, and meditate on these daily.
- **Law of Substitution –** Your conscious mind can only hold one thought at a time and you can substitute one thought for another.
  This "crowding out" principle deliberately allows you to replace a negative thought with a positive thought. This allows you to control your emotional life. Stop thinking about the problem and start thinking about the Solution.
- **Law of habit –** Mentally speaking, in the absence of affirmative decision and determined effort you'll continue doing and thinking the same forever (earn the same, have the same friends, drive the same).

Changing your habit is not easy but it's key, the secret is to keep repeating what you want to become a habit. *Forming good habits* is hard but makes for an easy life.

> Forming good habits is hard but makes for an easy life

#4. Increase Self-Esteem By Living Your Ideal Self

How to increase your self-esteem?

Brian Tracy says you can make yourself into an extraordinary living being by setting high values and then disciplining yourself to live by them on each occasion

There are 3 parts of your personality and self-concept:

- **Self-ideal**, the person you most admire and wanna be like (future you);
- **Self-image**, the way you see yourself and think of yourself which guides your performance and behavior (your present you);
- **Self-esteem**, is given by how you feel that your current behavior is consistent with the best person you could possibly be.

For most people, self-ideal is an unconscious process.
You begin to improve yourself and your life once you bring this process to a conscious level and then do some thinking and auctioning on it.

#5. Set Your Goals

Brian Tracy hits you hard when he says:

> Those without a goal end up working for those with a goal.

He who's got the skills of goals setting down pat is either very rich or very happy or both

The law of concentration says whatever you dwell upon, grows.
Whatever you dwell upon continuously, will eventually come to fruition. Brian Tracy says that goals are even a way to happiness. When you're sad: think about your goals.

People don't set goals for the following reasons: they're not serious and have no real desire; they're talkers rather than does -but the actions count, not the words-; they haven't accepted responsibility for their lives; they are afraid of failure.

> Those without a goal work for those with a goal

#5. Categorize Your Goals

Use these 5 categories to set goals imagining you have no limitations. You will only evaluate and set priorities later.

1. **physical**

Physical health and longevity and things you'd like to do, like ride a boat, skydive, climb a mountain….

2. **mental**

All the things you'd like to learn and understand; skills you need.

3. **emotional**

Quality of relationships you wanna have with spouse, parents, friends, coworkers, self-esteem

4. **spiritual**

Quality of your inner life and inner development, peace with the universe, peace of mind

5. **financial and career**

Earn the money you need to do all the other things, how are the other people doing differently

6. **social**

Your goals for making a contribution. Superior men always feel a responsibility for the greater good

#6. Ask Yourself These Questions

1. What are the 5 most important values for you (this reply comes before setting your goals)?
2. What are your 3 most important goals right now (answer in 30 secs)
3. How would you spend your time if you had only 6 months to live
4. How would you change your life if you won 1 million dollars tomorrow
5. What's something you always wanted to do but were afraid to do
6. What do you enjoy most do in life, what you love to do
7. If you were guaranteed success, what exciting dream and goal would you set

#7. Prioritize Ruthlessly

Since you can end up with many goals, you should sort and prioritize.

You can use the ABC method: A for important and exciting; B you'd like but not as important; C for least important.

You can then take all the As and move them to another list.
At that point, you can add another layer of "A1, A2.. " to further sort out.

#8. Follow Your Natural Tendencies

Brian Tracy reminds us to keep in mind what we naturally do best and enjoy doing while prioritizing goals.

It is said that luck is when preparedness meets opportunity. Or when goals meet natural talent.

#9. Follow These Rules of Goal-Setting

- **Keep it congruent**

Your goals and your values must fit together like a hand in a glove.

- **Focus on areas of excellence**

it may change, but you should put your effort into what you love the most and possibly what you're already good at

- **Keep it balanced**

make sure that the goals you set in different areas are complementary to each other and don't work against one another

- **Develop a mission statement**

The N.1 goal is the most important of all. To find out a possible mission statement ask yourself: which goal, if I will achieve it, will do the most to achieve all the other goals?

#10. Motivate Yourself to Achieve Your Goals

Brian Tracy says that the moment you realize you can achieve any goal, you become unstoppable.

- **Desire –** Burning, Intense, Desire. The motivational force of power to overcome the fear or inertia that holds most people back. Dwell on your desires till they override and push aside your fears. Desires are personal, decide what YOU really want
- **Belief –** Conviction! You must absolutely believe it is possible to achieve your goal. You must have complete faith that you desire the goal and it will come to you exactly when you are ready for it. Nurture your faith and beliefs until they deepen to an absolute conviction that your goal is attainable. Belief is the catalyst to activate your subconscious.
- **Write It Down –** Goals that are not in writing are not goals at all they are merely wishes. When you write a goal down you crystallize it and make it tangible.
- **List all the ways you benefit from achieving the goal –** Reasons why are forces that intensify your desire. Motivation depends on your motive and the more reasons you have the more motivated you will be. Your reasons why must be uplifting and inspiring, they must be big enough to drive you onward. It is when you have big reasons for achieving your goal that you develop the intensity and purpose that makes you irresistible. If your reasons are big enough, your beliefs solid enough and your desires intense enough nothing can stop you.
- **Analyze your starting point –** Determining your starting point gives you a baseline to measure your progress and lets you know exactly how much you have to do to achieve. The clearer you are about where you are coming from the more likely you will be to get where you want to go.
- **Set a deadline –** Set a deadline for all tangible goals. People resist setting deadlines for fear of not meeting them. Think about your goal by projecting forward till after you have completed it and imagine the steps you took to get there. Then think backward from the achievement to the goal.
- **List all the obstacles to achieve your goals –** If there are no obstacles it is probably not a goal and more likely an activity. Make a list of obstacles then arrange them in order of biggest to smallest. The biggest obstacle is your rock. You will need to remove this first. Obstacles are the flip side of success and achievement. Your rock may be internal or external – Be honest!
- **Identify Additional information you need to achieve your goal –** The most successful people have more essential information than others. Make a list of all the information, skills, talents, abilities and experience will need then make a plan to learn, buy, borrow, or attain these as quickly as possible.
- **List all the people whose help and cooperation you will require –** To accomplish anything worthwhile you will need other people, people will help you accomplish your goals once you have shown them a willingness to help achieve theirs. Make a list and order it!
- **Make a plan –** Write out in detail what you want, when you want it, why you want it then make a list of activities ordered by priority. Many activities can be worked on simultaneously or others have to be done in sequence. Once you have all the actions listed in value for the plan, then START! The more detailed and better organized your plans the more likely you are to reach your goals exactly as you have desired them.
- **Visualization** -Create a clear mental picture of your goal as it would appear if it was already achieved. Project this picture over and over again on the screen of your mind, with emotion!
- **Make the decision in advance that you will never give up! –** Back your goals and plans with persistence and determination. Never consider the possibility of failure. Never think about quitting, hold on no matter what happens. Of all qualities to develop your ability to persevere is the most important.

Check out my video of how I developed my burning desire for my goals:

> Decide in advance that you will never give up

#11. Maximize Your Productivity

Brian Tracy says that good working habits can be summarized with two things: focus and concentration.

- **Focus** means clarity regarding the final result you want. It's like a lens, and you need to continually adjust your lens to make sure that what you're working on is the most important you could be doing.
- **Concentration** means the ability to stay with the task until it's 100% complete.

Also, read *Deep Work*.

6 steps to creating the quality of concentration common to all successful people:

1. Clear your workspace of everything except what you need for the highest priority at hand;
2. Organize your work and day by creating chunks of time (and allow plenty of time: don't rush things and just do the task at hand, nothing else). keep in mind the last 20% is usually the most productive because your mind warmed up and is fully into the task
3. A hard, sustained, concentrated effort is central to achieving
4. Develop a compulsion to closure and completion. Refuse to give yourself a reward until the job is 100% complete. And give yourself a reward when you complete an important task.
5. Program yourself with commands and use a trigger when your attention wanders: "back to work".
6. Discipline yourself to stay with the task until it's done

#12. Develop The Psychology of Success

It's not true that rich people are unhappy!

Overachievers enjoy more financial success and are happier with their money, enjoy more family success and take more joy out of family life, find more life success finding more meaning and contribution.

These are the characteristics of overachievers:

1. Have a greater capacity of coping with disapproval, move ahead quickly, and don't worry as much
2. Are more action-oriented
3. Use effective thoughts to cope with negative emotions (substitution: focus on what you can do something about)
4. Engage in less superstitious thinking, don't believe in good and bad omens
5. Better mental skills to cope with failure: failure is part of learning and doesn't lower self-esteem, so they take more risks and keep working even if it can mean some more "failure"
6. they don't think in categorical terms
7. practical optimism: positive but not naïve
8. Think positively but prepare for other possibilities
9. embrace new experiences and leave the comfort zone

#13. Develop The 6 Qualities of High Performers

These are the traits of high performers:

1. **See themselves as self-employed**. They accept 100% responsibility and see whatever happens in the company as affecting themselves. Look for ways to improve their organization, are team players, and are results-focused. All good leaders were good followers. All opportunities will open up once you start taking full responsibility for your organization.
2. **They have a clear sense of direction**: a career plan
3. **Unshakable level of optimism**. They know that self-confidence, self-trust, and self-esteem are key

4. **They are always self-teachable.** and never become impressed by their intelligence
5. **Mental resilience**: it's not how hard you fall, it's how far you bounce. Successful people don't allow external events to dictate their emotions
6. **High level of persistence** in the face of adversity and disappointment

My Note:
I particularly loved and made it my own, the idea that you never work for anyone else. You are always self-employed.

#14. Develop Mental Fitness

These 6 steps will help you keep a positive attitude:

1. positive self-talk and affirmation: use the law of substitution to tell yourself positive things. "I like myself" or "I'm the best" or "I'm sexy"
2. positive imaging: create mental pictures of the man you want to be. Or visualize yourself doing what you are about to do. Eventually, your subconscious accepts those ideas as true and as who you are
3. positive mental food: always feed your mind with positive books, movies, and audiobooks…
4. positive people: surround people you want to be like
5. positive training and development
6. positive health habits
7. positive actions

#15. Apply The Law of Reversibility

In all mental work effort defeats itself.

If you wish to develop a new pattern of thoughts, the more you relax and "don't try", the faster the thought is accepted by the subconscious mind.

> *The Law of Reversibility says that feelings and actions interact with each other.*
> *If you feel a certain way, you will act in a manner consistent you're your feeling.*
> *And the reverse is also true.*

Just as the feelings create actions consistent with the feelings, the actions create feelings consistent with the actions. i.e., you can act your way into feelings and the feelings will then generate actions consistent with them.

The second application of the law of reversibility is that just an object of state -an accomplishment or a success of some kind- generates a subject of state –a feeling of happiness and achievement-, a subject of state in reverse will also create an object of state.

ie.: if you arouse in yourself the emotions that you will get in the accomplishment of a goal or a solution to a problem and you can hold that emotion, the feeling will create in your outer world the result that goes with it.

#16. Work On Your Subconscious

Here's a 5 step process to internalize in your subconscious the subject of state:

1. verbalize and affirm your desired outcome
2. visualize and see the outcome
3. emotionalize your combine affirmation and visualization and create the feeling
4. release the situation from your mind with complete faith (as if someone will take care of that)

5. realization

Here are some ways when and how to use these steps best, use as many as you can and whichever is best for you:

Standard affirmation technique

Brian Tracy suggests going to a quiet place.
Take 7 deep breaths and relax. Read your goals and repeat them 5 times.

Visualize as if it were already achieved. Imagine how you'd walk, talk and act.
Emotionalize and create the feeling. Take another deep breath, exhale, and release the goal.

If you do it in the morning you activate the law of attraction and alert the reticular cortex to accomplish your goals.

If you do it in the evening your subconscious mind will work on the goals during the night bringing you ideas and solutions in the morning.

Quick affirmation technique

This technique is before non-recurring events like a sales call or a presentation or a meeting.

Close your eyes, affirm, visualize, emotionalize, and release. See and feel the event going well and then go to the meeting calmly and confidently.

Every time you think about the event use the law of substitution and use this technique rather than thinking about it with nervousness and anxiety.

Autogenic conditioning

It's a process of systematically relaxing your body before you affirm, visualize, emotionalize and release.

In its simplest form lie down or sit in a comfortable chair. Close your eyes, breathe deeply.

Now you can start talking to the six parts of your body (arms, legs, chest, and head) saying: "my left arm is becoming heavy and warm"… "my left arm is now heavy and warm".

In 10 minutes you'll be deeply relaxed and your mind will be in an alpha state and ready for deep programming.

This technique is sometimes called auto hypnosis and it helps people overcome anxieties and helps improve physical skills by rehearing the moves.

Heterogenic conditioning

What others say to you.

Think of what other people have told you. Or hear an audiobook saying the word "you" and saying what you desire to become.

If you enter a deep state of relaxation and then play classical music you will remember better.

You can use tapes with positive messages.

Make your own tapes!

17. Conquer Your Fears

Brian Tracy says that life is of the risk-takers, not the security takers

Successful people base decisions on desires and dreams; underachievers on fear and worries.

The starting point to overcoming fear and developing courage is, first of all, to look at the fact that predisposes us and second to analyze our fear objectively.

We are all afraid, the question is how you deal with it. When you move towards what you're afraid your fear diminishes and your self-confidence increases. When on the other hand you let fear dominate you, you are feeding the dragon until fear controls all of your life.

> Life belongs to the risk takers

#18. Apply the Law of Practice

Everything that you practice over and over again will eventually become a new habit.

This is the same for fear. If you practice doing the things you fear, fear will soon stop stopping you.

Make a habit to do the things you fear. If you do so, then the death of fear is certain.

Here are the key areas:

The courage to begin

The courage to lounge, to step out in faith, to move out of your comfort zone without guarantee of success.

A professor teaching entrepreneurship made a study, the only thing the successful ex-student had in common was that of willing to start a business.

The other who had done nothing was waiting for things to "be just right" and unwilling to launch themselves into the quarter of uncertainty.

Life belongs to risk-takers, not security-takers.
Life is perverse in the sense that the more security you see, the less you'll have. The more chances you take, the more likely it'll be you'll have security.

The courage to endure

The second step after you begin is the courage to keep going and endure in the face of difficulties.

The courage to see yourself as you really are

The courage to accept as you are, being honest with yourself. The courage to give up all excuses and accept responsibility.

My Note:
I prefer this one much more than the "self-lying" that are affirmations.

The courage of 100% commitment

Commit wholeheartedly to your job, your family, and yourself.

Make a firm commitment that you will give all yourself in what you're engaged in.

The courage to cut your losses

Brian Tracy recommends asking the following to know when it's time to cut your losses:

> knowing what I know… would I get involved with this person/relationship/business/investment… would I make this decision now again?

Admit if you've done a mistake

The courage to set big goals

Set big challenging goals and hold the dream of the life you want to have. You need big dreams to conquer your fears.

Crowd Out Fear

The mind can only hold one thought at a time. Have thoughts of courageousness.

Desire & believe

You have to desire to become courageous. And believe it's possible.

Think and envision the new you

Think about how you will be, how you will act courageously. Recall all the times you were courageous.

Affirm the new you

"I am calm, in control, and completely unafraid and genuine"

Mastering Worry

1. define the problem you are worried about (often half the cure)
2. Write the worst possible outcome
3. resolve to accept the worst possible outcome (now you're free)
4. improve on that worst situation

Also read: *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*.

#19. Face Problems Head On (& Avoid Stress)

Brian Tracy says that are two kinds of people: those who try to forget the problems and pretend they don't exist, and those who confront them head-on and early on.

The "confronters" have lower levels of stress. People who confront problems are happier and healthier. By facing problems you will become stronger and more confident.

#20. Learn That Crisis Are A Sign of Achievement

If you push ahead for big goals, you'll always have a crisis.

And that's great.
The way you respond to the events of life builds upon itself until you will steel yourself up and become unstoppable.

#21. Make People Feel Good

People will like you and help you in direct relation to the way you make them feel.

#22. Leverage The Law of Reciprocity

Brian Tracy says that whatever you do onto others, others will do onto you.

If you want others to respect you, you simply give them respect.
This is also true in the sense that we feel the same way we make other people feel.

A major area where people need help most of the time is in their self-esteem, so start by *not* lowering their self-esteem.

My Note: Don't be naive and believe that doing good will get you good
This might be a good belief unless you believe that by simply doing good, you will receive good.
If you take it to an extreme, then you, first of all, fail the *law of balance*, and second, you *become naive* You're better off learning the law of reciprocity from the more scientifically sound social exchange theory:

- **5 social exchange laws to succeed in life**

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

#23. Learn to Provide Constructive Criticism

Not everyone can take criticism.

With weak-willed people, if you need to criticize their idea, say it in the third person: "what if that person would say so.. ".
Many people have a tendency to want to get even, even when it's constructive criticism.

Eliminate destructive criticism

Completely, from your life. Don't even dwell on it, don't talk about other people negatively.

#24. Use The 7 Laws to Raise Self-Esteem:

1. **be agreeable**, don't focus on winning debates and fights, and get along. If you really have to counter, then use the third party, put the words in someone's else mouth, say: "what do you think our customers would say if they knew we were doing this" or "how do you think our investors would answer"
2. **acceptance**: smile and accept people for who they are
3. **appreciation**, say thank you
4. **gratitude**
5. **approval**, praise people as soon as they do something right, especially do so in front of others

CONS

The main cons for Brian Tracy's teaching are:

- **Lots of "self-help galore" that isn't scientifically proven or that's been proven to be sup-optimal**

You can also read articles on *self-help myths, pop-psychology myths*, and jump to the *best positive psychology books.*

- **Sometimes naive**

As Bel, a friend from the TPM's community noted, Brian Tracy sometimes spreads some naive beliefs and notions. For example, that doing good will (necessarily) bring back good karma in your life, and that morals and ethics are crucial to personal success.
I wish that were true, but I'm afraid it might not be. Or, at least, you're better off not banking your life on that notion that good deeds will necessarily get you back good karma and success.

I highly recommend you read the naive self-help article.

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Summary

Brian Tracy is an awesome self-help author.

He is one of the self-help gurus I started with and I learned hugely from him.

As time went by and I grew my personal knowledge, I also got more and more into self-help with a critical mind. And I realized that Brian Tracy also shares some *naive advice* and *pop-psychology* and *self-help myths* that aren't always helpful for everyone.

However, Brian Tracy is still a man you can learn a lot from and a wonderful role model.

Creating Lasting Change: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Creating Lasting Change is a course in which self-help author Tony Robbins teaches how to influence and persuade people to change.

Contents

- About The Author
- The General Rules of Change
- The Basics of Changing People
- To be happy match life conditions with blueprint
- To change, leverage the six human needs
- Understand People and Yourself
- Step 1: Understand and Appreciate Their World
- Step 2: Get leverage
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- Step 4: Define the problem in solvable terms
- Step 5: Create new empowering alternatives
- Step 6: Condition it
- Step 7: Relate to Environment & Higher Purpose

- CONS
- Review

About The Author

Tony Robbins is a motivational speaker and self-help author of books, courses, seminars, and live tours.
He has been of the most successful in this area, if not *the* most successful and famous self-help personality.

> **Lucio**: Tony Robbins is incorrigible, sometimes annoyingly and "power move-y" salesman and marketer… But also a great value giver with fantastic content

The General Rules of Change

Anthony Robbins says Change often happens when we least expect it.

For example, a tragedy strikes, and then we quickly change.

And it happens more easily when we're in a trance.
To put someone in a trance you can actually talk about YOUR experience and (if you do it well) they'll follow you in a trance. Your story will change their emotions, their focus.

Tony Robbins says that the problem with normal therapies is that they analyze for a long time the issue and where it came from.
But that often matters little.

Most **old-school therapies diagnose a pattern and give it a label, making it even stickier for people**.
If you know Tony Robbins you've heard this criticism towards the most common psychotherapies and I couldn't

agree more.

The author says you need to address the underlying problems, the source of the problem, not just the outward behaviors. And the source of the problem is an emotional pattern of physiology, language, focus, and beliefs.

Because if you smoke out of boredom and kill smoking habits, then people will start doing something else which might also be unhealthy.

The Basics of Changing People

Tony Robbins says that to change someone you need a solid relationship first, which is based on two things:

- **No judgment**

Never judge the person you want to help. Be open to whatever they have to say without putting any label on it.

- **Respect and care**

Look for something you can respect about someone. And care about them.

Tony Robbins says there are 3 levels at which people evaluate things: the targets (driving human forces: top 2 needs of 6 human needs), the guiding force (global/identity beliefs, so you know how they meet their needs); fuel of choice (the top emotions people experience).

To be happy match life conditions with blueprint

As we've already seen in *Personal Power 2*, Tony Robbins says that if your life conditions don't match your blueprint then you're unhappy.

If they match, you're happy.

To help someone you must either change their living conditions or change their blueprint.

To change, leverage the six human needs

Tony Robbins says that to change anyone you must understand what their needs are first.

Human beings have 6 human needs which drive their behavior. Our life is shaped by the way we learned to meet our needs.

Any time someone links in their mind consciously or unconsciously that thinking, believing, and acting a certain way meets 3 needs, it will become a habit.

Changing someone is about breaking the old pattern and showing them a new way to meet their needs.

1-4 are the needs of personality, and 5 and 6 are the needs of the spirit. The last two are what make you feel fulfilled.

1. Certainty

Anthony Robbins says you can get certainty in ways that are positive, negative, disempowering (for example: I know it's a waste of time, it never works so I'm not even gonna try) or empowering, attainable, or sustainable.

Worry is something that creeps up when we are not certain. Anthony Robbins suggests always getting a plurality of opinions and quality information.
A potent antidote for worry is to decide you're gonna have faith. Robbins' way to get through some of the toughest times is to believe you are guided. The power of belief and faith.

You can also have too much certainty though. When you have total certainty you lose your edge, you get bored and

you start yearning for a change.

2. Uncertainty/variety/diversity/challenge

The second human need is uncertainty.
We also need stimulus and change, we need it to feel alive.

3. Significance

Tony Robbins says that significance means feeling special and worthy of attention.
People get it with things like trying to be different with tattoos and piercings, dressing top brands, and being more generous than everyone.

4. Connection and Love

Tony Robbins says that everyone needs connection and love.
Love is a bit scary though so most people settle for connection which you can get with intimacy, walking in nature..

Again, you can meet this need in positive ways, negative ways, or empowering/disempowering ones.

5. Growth

Growth is the need to develop and expand

6. Contribution

The need to give beyond yourself.

Understand People and Yourself

What do you focus on?

Tony says most people focus on certainty and on being significant (often trying to be significant via FB even if it means faking it).

Once you understand what's driving you and what are the rules you follow you will understand yourself better.

To change someone, look at what needs they value most. The more you reinforce a person's behavior with the needs they value most, the quicker that behavior becomes automatic.

Step 1: Understand and Appreciate Their World

Tony states a huge truth about being with: to influence other people, you've got to know, simply, what already influences them.

You understand by listening and asking questions.

A person's model of the world is made up of 3 chunks/forces: human needs, beliefs (including identity beliefs), and their most common emotions.

Driving forces: what do they need and what do they want

Tony Robbins says that first of all, he looks at what are their top 2 needs. These are the preeminent needs and driving forces.

The first thing you need to understand to influence people is what they need and what they want.

We already know the needs they have. They all have the first 4, not everyone has the last 2 yet.
We need to know what they want, and we have to tease it out.

Example:

"I want to make a billion dollars" is significance;
"feeling in control of my life" is certainty.

Guiding Principles

Tony Robbins says that the belief systems and the values we have are what has to happen to meet our 6 needs -and mostly the top 2-.

For example, you can get significance by killing or by saving people, two completely opposite behavior but all going back to the same need.

Creating Lasting Change then goes on to describe the guiding principles (or guiding forces, Tony often switches words), which are composed of 7 parts:

- **1. Global Beliefs**

These affect everything. Your beliefs about time, life, death, people, God, and destiny. What it means to have children.

Questions: What is their life about; Who are their role models; what is life about; what is abundant in their life?

- **2. Identity Beliefs**

These are the beliefs about you. How you describe yourself.

For example: *"life is that way, OK, but this how I am, this is how I'm gonna show up"*

Questions: who are you really; what can you be; how can you expand your identity right now

Tony says that Identity Beliefs are key to understanding because if we give someone some tool consistent with his identity he'll use it. If those tools are not consistent with him he won't use it.

- 3. **Values**

Tony Robbins says that we know our identity through the values that we hold.

Values are ideals that are personally important to the individual. Values are what we want to move towards and away from.

Questions: what do you want; what do you desire most in life; what do you really fear or find yourself avoiding most in life;

- **4. Rules**

What has to happen for their values to be met? Those are their rules.

Questions: What must a person do or never do in a relationship; how do I know I'm successful

Example:
To feel loved I need to be told 'I love you' every morning; I feel loved when I love others ;

Example: bonding
Tony speaks with an audience member live, Jim.

In Jim's case: a good relationship has to push you and love you when you go off track and if you're really my partner you'll love me during those times.

So if you work with Jim, what's one of the best ways to bond with him strongly? When he screws up you tell him "no worries brother, you and I are in this together". Like that, you enter into his world the way it works for him.

Now that's human nature and most everyone will appreciate you for that, but in HIS case, it's even more powerful and he will appreciate you even more.

Contrary to Jim's someone else's rules could be "I only appreciate people who come out and confront me" and if you go and tell them "hey it's no problem", they won't respect you.

- **5. Vehicles**

The vehicles are what we use to meet our needs. They can be positive, negative, or neutral.

For some people it's their bodies, working out every day I get certainty, significance, and connection.

And whatever vehicle people pick, it tells you where their fears lie.
Did you pick your business? Money is your fear.
Did you pick your wife? Losing your wife is scary for you.

In the case of Jim, that's his business.
With his business he meets his needs for certainty, variety as it always changes, significance as it's growing, connection to the people around him, and contribution.
Another primary vehicle is his wife for both love and certainty.

- **6. Situation-specific beliefs**

Beliefs about specific situations or contexts.

Example:
When would you break your own rules?
Or you might have a few people in your life you think are screwing up your life in a specific period of your life.

- **7. Metaprograms**

How your brain processes information.

Example: ***Analyzing Jim***

Jim believes a long time is a very short time for most people. He's married. He has 13 burger kings.

"what is life about", he believes life is a journey.
"what kind of journey" a path A to B. "
so you know what the path is?" "yes",
"what if the path doesn't turn out the way you thought "you take a detour", "what's the reward" "uncertainty, variety"
"what's a relationship about" "partnership, no fun by yourself"
"what does your partner do" "push you at the right times, support, love you even if you're off the path".

Jim wants to know the system, just cut to the chase, show me what works "right Jim?" "amen".

Jim style works really well in an environment where you can lead in an authority position where people see him as superior than they are. Like in the military (Jim confirms he'd fire them easily).

He values certainty (one of the top 2) and significance.

How much does this man value love? A lot because he brightens up when speaking about his wife and he mentioned "support and love you when you're off path".

Tony says Jim is a love bug, but learned that you can't be a love bug and really have certainty.
If you open too much you risk. So Jim went for another strategy: going for certainty and significance.

Cause if I'm certain and significant I'll have enough within me and feel good about myself that I can love and along the way he found a partner to share it all with.

He has a motive for love and variety, in fact, he believes that if he's certain and significant he can enjoy the ride.

He's got his 4 major needs met so he goes to the next 2.

Tony is listening for his driving force and his map (the way he's gonna meet those needs, all 6 but especially certainty and significance).

He's listening to global beliefs (what's life about, what's a long time, what are relationships about..). Tony guesses that part of his identity is being an achiever and a leader.

He's a successful man and that's part of his identity. That's gonna help Tony understand what influences him and Tony has to communicate to him the way he'd listen.

For Tony, it's easy because there's a part of him like Jim. You influence Jim by entering into Jim's world.

Emotions – where do you live

Tony Robbins says you should find what emotions are they most often feeling.

On average we have a half dozen emotions or less and we get to those states any way we can. it's the language they use, it's what they focus on. Switch what they focus on towards what they want rather than what they don't want.

People go where they live: they find in the environment what triggers their emotions and then they blame their environment.

Example: 09.11
A woman stood up screaming we had to kill them all when 09.11 happened. We use the environment to meet our needs, she got certainty by getting really angry.
She got a connection: everyone was paying attention.

Step 2: Get leverage

Tony Robbins says that leverage happens when your brain and body become one and you go "this is it, no more" when you hit an emotional threshold.

When failing to change is more painful than all the other options.
Leverage must be immediate. Immediate pleasure for changing now and immediate pain for not changing now.

People don't change because the habit fills some of their needs.
For example, smoking makes you feel comfortable, it changes your state, creates variety, you connect with yourself and other smokers.
But if your health becomes too critical, or if someone you love deeply hates cigarettes… Now you start getting leverage.

How do you know what's the leverage? You try different things.
And if you know what their 2 biggest needs are, then you know where to look for them.

Sometimes the trigger can be physical, for example, stopping smoking by giving pain every time someone lights a cigarette. You can easily get to change someone with that kind of leverage.

But those people then take up eating or something else (more on this later).

Global solution

When you find a global solution you help someone get out of pain and into pleasure by finding something they value more than pain.

People keep being in pain because in their belief system pain meets some of their needs.

Changing will take away some of their needs. With pain, they are connected with themselves.

Example 1: Splitting Personalities
In Hawaii, a woman started splitting her personality during a Tony Robbins' event.

What needs is she fulfilling? She was raped by her father and then brought into psychiatry raped by her doctor.

Splitting personality was a way to get out of pain (certainty) and variety (you create movies) and significance (first person ever with that issue) and connection (people take care of me).

Tony has to increase pain to that behavior and find something she values more so she has something to go after.

And Tony goes "I know you believe all your personalities and that's very colorful. But I know you are Mary. You are an amazing woman. This adaptive behavior is impressive as you got through it and survived. And he actually compliments her.

And then hits her saying "but you are here for a reason. And that reason is pain". He said it low and takes a pause. Now Tony is stirring the pain to get momentum towards the change. He keeps going on saying that she's creating so much uncertainty for the people around her that they pay attention, but don't actually love her.

She goes "I'm Superman" and Tony Replies "no you're not, show me the S".

He has her admit her multiple personalities give uncertainty to herself as well to the people around her. And it's a lot of work to keep all that up.

She replies she's one of the first MDP and Tony goes "yeah and how many there are now, you're pretty much a dime dozen". But you know what, they all claim they can't change. And there hasn't been one who managed so far. Now changing would bring significance AND love.

Do you like children? Yes. They have lots of imagination, like you. You should write children's books.
Now, he's creating a path for her.

Example 2: Cheating
A man was so angry at his wife's cheating that he couldn't even connect with his daughter.

What made him shift was the realization that the love for his daughter was much more important and transcending than his anger and mind. He realized this through questions.

Example 3: firing a friend
The CEO of a large organization had been with his right arm for many years but a few facts made him realize he needed to fire him.

But he was in pain as he valued loyalty very highly.
When he realized that his real commitment to the organization to make the mission come through he felt he was ready to make it happen (that was the point of leverage: the mission of the company was higher)

Example 4: money don't buy you love
A man's entire life was about contribution.

He wanted to be significant (he made it through a business and making lots of money) but don't make it just for himself, make a difference to other people so they'll love you.

Be significant – contribute – you'll get love.

He was successful but lost all his money and his family's money in the stock market crash. Not only he can't give but now he took from others. His life blueprint is the opposite of reality.

Tony searches for leverage but can't find it anywhere, he is just hell-bent on giving back to the family by killing himself and giving them back with his life insurance policy.

That way, he can give and be significant. At that point, Tony takes it away from him saying he filmed the whole episode and he'll release it: now he can't kill himself anymore.

The look on the man's face: he exploded

Now his suicide was not significant anymore if he took his life away.

Example 5: The raw food eater
Tony asks her how long she'll live if she keeps going like she's going and she says "no longer".
Since she said it herself now Tony thinks he's got some leverage. But it wasn't enough.

So he said "Lisa", when you die and your daughter will be the pallbearer, how do you think she'll feel knowing you could have changed but you didn't?

She paused and started crying.

Now Tony thinks he got through to her. But she cries and tells him sobbing "true but I can't change".

Tony repeated his mantra "there's always a way" and prodded again "do you think her new mom will be a meat eater". Now that snapped her.

How to Use Framing

Tony Robbins says that to change someone's behavior you change people's state.

If you leave them where they are, they stay stuck in a negative state and won't budge.
And you do that through physiology and focus.

Focus

Focus is what they focus on and what it *means* for them. Ask questions whenever possible and tell stories so they get a bit in a trance.

If I tell you something and we have great rapport maybe you'll listen, but if I ask you "*what do you think this might mean in this context*" then I make you come up with YOUR OWN resources and you can't deny your own experiences.

Having a frame that interrupts their pattern is also important. You can ask a question which is really bizarre (example: Tony speaking to a suicidal guy and he tells him "is it because of the red shoes" "what?" "because they're fucking red").

Example: reframing a stubborn daughter
Tony spoke to a guy who complains her daughter is stubborn and too lively all the time.

And you could say "yeah, I like that, kinda reminds of me someone. Do you know someone who's really stubborn and makes them successful?" he builds rapport, makes a question, and interrupts the pattern.

Follow up question could be "do you think there'll be any place in the future it could be really useful for her to assert herself?" or he might jokingly add "do you think when a boy takes her to the backseat of her car and she doesn't wanna be there it will be useful?" (instantaneous reframe)

How to Use Preframing

Tony Robbins says to tell someone in advance what to pay attention to and what it means.
It's the most powerful way to change someone.

The pre-framing works like the placebo effect -which is extremely powerful BTW-.

An example is: what I'm gonna do right now is the most powerful pattern ever, there wasn't one person who didn't heal, you will love this one.

if you are with someone who's skeptical immediately say that you know what they're thinking. "*you know what, I don't know if this really makes sense, it probably doesn't, but why don't we give it a try*", which will immediately build rapport.

Example: dealing with Dennis Rodman
Tony went to coach the Spurs.

He was extremely badly pre-framed as they invited all the take it easy ticket takers entourage, white, with most overachievers players, black.
The Spurs had won 9 matches in a row and there was Dennis Rodman on the team who walked in, sat down with his sunglasses, and ripped the workbook in front of him.

He is introduced by someone who doesn't know how to introduce himself, who forgets what Tony had told him and that destroys his pre-frame even further.

The white guys in the back are clapping and the whole team is actually not giving a shit.

Now Tony needs to adjust that preframe.

He says:

> *"you're probably wondering why I'm here.*
> *You just won 9 games in a row, you haven't had a day off and it's your first day at home and now you've got some white guy standing in front of the room who's never play basketball for his entire life trying to show you how you can play better when you just won 9 in a row.*

Now Rodmann is looking up. He says "those are good questions to ask".

> *I wouldn't be happy if someone took my one day off (pacing their reality).*
> *I have nothing to do with that but I am here and I am responsible to deliver for you. You only gotta be here 1h.*
>
> *You gonna be here for 3. You have the choice to leave after 1h but you won't. And I tell you why: because I will deliver results to you that you've never seen before in 3h.*
>
> *And I'll deliver so much in the 1st hour that you'll wanna stay. And you will see that while I may not know how to play basketball I worked with the finest people in the world in all these categories (and went bam bam bam).*
>
> *I might not have all the answers but there's another reason you gotta listen to me:*
>
> *You never made it past the first round of the playoffs (Now everybody looked).*
>
> *I am not suggesting I will get you beyond because only you can do that and I know there are only a few things keeping you from there.*

He created a frame that he doesn't believe he's got all the answers BUT he's got the answers.
That he doesn't deserve to be there but he does. A frame that he's gonna deliver because he's done with it.

> *But before starting I'd like to make a prayer to guide us through (he knew the group is religious and always says a prayer before the game, he has done his research).*

He had heard they make crazy resounding prayers but this one was super weak.

So he makes a joke about it saying it looks like they don't hope to achieve much there, so he does one more thing: he takes his jacket away, gives it to the captain, and says

> *"I don't deserve to wear this yet. If by the time we finish I delivered so much value then you give it back to me and I'll wear it with pride. If I haven't, throw it on my face for having taken your time, but that won't happen. Let's*

> *begin".*

He created a frame that he doesn't believe he's got all the answers BUT he's got the answers. That he doesn't deserve to be there but he does. A frame that he's gonna deliver because he's done it.

If he had just started talking, it would have fallen terribly flat.

He gets Rodmann on stage and said

> *"I don't know about you Rodmann but I saw you the other day signing autographs and taking time for those kids. I know you wanna be unique and have your own space, but I know you're a good guy".*

Now they are participating but not at the level he's used to. He feels it's also because the people on the back are drowning them out (Tony thinks the players don't want to associate with them).

So he says

> *"OK, your hour is up. I know you guys played with me and taken notes when you usually don't and I've gotten you value but we haven't scratched the surface here to get the results you want. I need to tell you two things, frankly all the people on the back get outta here, leave. Leave, the boys and me need to have a talk".*

Then he says

> *"listen, I appreciate the attention you have given me but I am not like one of those people in the back. I ask you one question and you nod, that is NOT peak performance. I am here delivering for you and you gotta deliver back. You can leave now for 15 minutes or leave forever. If you come back here I have one requirement: you play full out with me. if I ask you a question you answer fully out. If I tell you to jump, you say how high. And if you don't wanna do it I'm totally cool with it because I'm here to deliver you results. If you get back here you will if you don't you don't (and he storms out).*

Example 2: delivering news of change
"today we're gonna talk about some great opportunities coming up in the company" VS "I have some news about changes in the company that will affect many of you", which changes the tone hugely.

My Note:
if you want to read more about the importance of pre-framing in persuasion, take a look at Pre-Suasion by Robert Cialdini.

Reframing

Tony Robbins says that pre-framing happens when someone has a problem and you change what it means.
What things mean is determined by what you compare and contrast them to.

Example of John Belushi: he forgot how life was when he was struggling. You make sure you never forget your roots, the ultimate frame of reference for Tony was taking his kids to some of the worst places.

Make sure you compare yourself to what empowers you and make sure what you reframe for the people you speak to aligns with their core values and beliefs.

Example: make pre-framing relevant
If I value learning and you reframe something as having fun, it's not as powerful.

It's better if done with questions and after you interrupted the pattern so they pay attention (if they're in a stuck state it won't work).

Example: changing the meaning
Your friend complains about the dates he's been going to are a failure and you say "maybe god is protecting you from these men because he has someone special lined up for you"

Context reframing
You let them see their situation in another context. i.e., a problem in one situation is a benefit in another.

Content reframing
Give some input they didn't have. Or tell them something they believe is not true.

Deframing

Deframing is when someone is caught up in something and you destroy their frame of reference.

For example, someone complains about something trivial, then a guy in a wheelchair passes by and says if you can help as he can't eat anything.

Example
your child who's complaining about eating his piece and you say "you know, there are a lot of children in the world who are starving and would love to have your piece to eat"

Step 3: Interrupt the pattern

Tony Robbins says that all change is the interruption of a pattern.

Once you understand that, all gets easier.

You interrupt the pattern and bring resources -confidence, calm, grit, etc.- from other realms of the personality (and if they don't have any, from other people).

People are subject to a pattern of: focus and beliefs, physiology and language (which puts them in certain states and give certain emotions).

Ideally, you interrupt all 3.
Language by itself won't do.

Interrupting the pattern is key: people often fail to change because they try to change the pattern before first interrupting the old one.
Ideally, you want to interrupt the pattern asap: kill the monster when it's small and before it's ingrained in their system.

Any pattern which is continually broken will eventually be changed. You have to scratch that old CD so that you can't go back.

You can break the pattern physically (throw water on them, pain, slap them..), take them into a more positive future, change the language pattern (ie.: "next time you feel depressed say, thank god I'm not a cockroach in Bulgaria and repeat 20 times a day")

Rapport & common mistakes

It's good interrupting the pattern with elegance and with rapport.

Sometimes it's not possible for Tony to build relationships first and he gotta intervene right away, but then he doesn't keep breaking patterns but builds rapport.

There's a fine line between breaking a pattern and destroying rapport.

Attention not to get too offensive, but also don't make it too subtle or expected.

Questions

The simplest way to break someone's pattern and rewire someone's brain is with questions.

Outrageous

The more outrageous and unexpected it is, the better. Something gross, bizarre, or sexual.

Example 1: Sadness is a state
Tony was receiving people who were ok when they walked in, then they'd sit down and start talking about their problems and getting sad and crying. And he'd scream "heeeey, we didn't even start here".

And he'd have them convince HIM that they wanted to change.

Example 2: *A golden medalist who's afraid of public speaking*

But he's so confident when he's playing his discipline. Tony gotta interrupt the pattern of the audience being in such a scary place.

So he brings the positive emotions beliefs and physiology he has for the competitions to public speaking. That's the core of change: interrupt the pattern and bring resources where they're needed.

Example 3: making mutes speak
They bring in a patient to Tony's original teachers (John and Richard) who didn't speak and hadn't said a word for 10 years. They brought him in and said with a challenge, see what you can do with this one.

The guys tell them to go out and leave them alone. John tells Richard "lock the door". "lock the door?" "lock the door! (shouting)"

And then pulls out a knife and proceeds to denude the patient whom… now did speak!

Example 4: curing Jesus
A guy who said he was Jesus is taken to the same teachers. The guy goes "excuse me, I understand you used to be a carpenter" and he goes "uh? Ah yeah, yes.. " "you are Jesus aren't you?" "yes my son" "ok, I'll be back".

That's a slight pattern interrupt. He didn't introduce himself as a doctor or anything and just leaves him hanging, now Jesus isn't so certain.

So he goes back with a tape and brings in hired people to build a cross with giant nails. The guy asks what they're doing and Richard goes "well you're Jesus right" "ohh.. yes my son" "well, then you know why we're here".

Barely 3 minutes and he went back to being John J.

He took shock therapy, he took drugs, he took analysis… but he wasn't ready to be crucified.

The more intense it is, the more effective it is.

Pattern recognition

When you learn to see the pattern, you can anticipate what's going to happen.

We need to learn their evaluation process. Noticing the state they're in, the questions they ask themselves, and the neuro-association they have.

If we can help a person see how their evaluation is the source of the problem, we can show them a way to solve it.

Step 4: Define the problem in solvable terms

Does somebody say they're depressed?

No, they're not depressed, they're bored.

They're living life under someone's else terms. You redefine their situation in a way that is addressable.

Example: The man who wanted to kill his wife and children
Bob wanted to kill his wife and children.

*Tony asks him what's a good life for him, and then tells him that he's trying to be something he's not. Tony tells him to fu** that idea of "responsible father" which is shackling him.*

He says there's no point in waiting for something, he can get back to living the life he dreamed right now and improve the life of the people around him by being a better person.

He says everyone loves a comeback. It's boring having been great all the time, but the person who makes a comeback and gets even stronger, that's what everyone loves.

He tells him he's a man who likes to ride and boogy, so tells him to close his eyes and imagine how it'd feel to get up, give a kiss to his kids, and get on his Harley (and Bob describes his surroundings) and feel the wind on his face. Then he goes back, grabs his wife, and makes the most passionate love he's ever done.

As he speaks Bob has the biggest grin on his face.

He plays "born to be wild" and now he's moving and dancing and singing.

Step 5: Create new empowering alternatives

Tony Robbins says that it's key to find out what vehicles people use to meet their needs.

Once you know, you must set a new empowering alternative. People need a new way of thinking, focusing, new physiology, new beliefs, and new emotions.

Any behavior/thought or belief that gets reinforced constantly will become automatic.

Be on the watch for someone's words.

And to change associate pain with the current behavior and associate pleasure with a new behavior.

Step 6: Condition it

To embed the new empowering alternatives you must use it every day. Doing is of course the simplest way. And Tony Robbins also proposes anchoring and incantations.

Anchor It

An anchor is creating an association between a specific stimulus and a specific state.

An anchor is created any time someone is in an intense state (depression, anger, love..), either positive or negative, and while they're at the peak of that state someone consistently does anything unique.

Create an anchor

Either find someone in a peak state or create it. You can just ask them how was it when they felt amazing.
The amount of emotional intensity is key.
Now consistently do something unique.

And to test it take them out of their peak state and fire the anchor.

Collapsing an anchor

Create a series of positive ones which are more powerful than the negative.

Incantations

When you speak aloud with absolute certainty and you repeat it and repeat it. They can override beliefs.

You have to do with your whole body and intensity and believe in it.
Tony as a youngster would do that for hours and hours, vibrating.

Example: don't create negative anchors with your partner

Tony's daughter waiting for the BF to call and was getting impatient. Then he calls and she screams at him. Then Tony explains she is conditioning him NOT to call.

My Note:
Incantations are not effective with people with low self-esteem. Read here why in the self-help myths list.

Step 7: Relate to Environment & Higher Purpose

Tony Robbins says that when creating change, you must connect it to a person's highest values and help them integrate the new empowering alternatives into the environment where they actually live.

Help them see how the change relates to what they value most and to what ultimately they want to accomplish -and their highest love, that's where the biggest leverage is-.

It might be a daughter, it might be a cause, it might be mastering an art or skill.

Get empowering friends

Most people's lives are a reflection of the expectations of their peer groups. You live a life that is the reflection of the expectations of your peer group.

If your expectations for your life are higher than those of the people around you, they will pull you down.

Create an alternative that meets your needs which is good for you, and for the people around and serves the greater good.

Leverage Identity

Identity is the belief in who you are.

One of the strongest needs in life is to remain consistent with our own definition of ourselves (with our identity).

Changing identity will create forever change.
Who you are is more than anything you can face.

What shapes an identity? Beliefs, physiology, language, what they focus on (the triad), and references.

If you wanna change someone's identity:

1. Give them an experience that contrasts with their identity and (limiting) beliefs. So you start developing a new set of beliefs.
2. A huge change in the physiology (train them to change them consistently and use their body consistently, so it's not just a one-off thing)
3. Change the person physically
4. Incantation: use the physiology and emotions with it (incantation is physiology, language, and focus the triad)
5. Create a peer environment in which the only possible identity is the one supported by your environment
6. Link so much pain to the old identity that they need to change and link pleasure to the new identity (or behavior, emotions, pattern). Pleasure is the long-term motivator for long term as people learn to deal with pain
7. Provide a compelling future

8. Help them master a new skill: it gives a sense of growth and the identity expands

This Is Leadership

Leadership is a state of caring and rapport and a set of standards that causes other people to want to have something that you have.

The person who is most certain, if there's rapport, will influence the other.
State and rapport are the two main ingredients.

You Must Be Your Personal Master First

Tony Robbins says that a leader's got to be effective in himself first. And doing so at many levels:

1. **Change your state in a moment**
   on yourself, you gotta be able to change your state in a moment.
2. **Change state in challenging situations**
   take a situation where you normally don't manage your state and link it to a situation that puts you in a great state. The trigger for a negative frame becomes the trigger for a positive one. Pick those situations that scare you the most and turn them around. When the tigers show up, you use it and you show up
3. **Live permanently in a great state.**
   create a model of the world where you have no tigers: most of your time is at peak state, fulfilled. Your whole way of looking at life

Individual mastery

1. Take someone and change their state in a moment
2. Take someone facing tigers and use those tigers to make them stronger
3. Change their model of the world

Social Mastery

When you can do it in groups.

TPM's reviews

CONS

- **Reactions Are Not Long-Term Results**

Sometimes I have the feeling Tony Robbins seems focused on making people change their state and move around and dance and act crazy.

That's what he likes to see.

But I gotta wonder how often those changes are actually long-lasting.

- **Jumping to Conclusions**

Tony Robbins is charismatic because he exudes conviction.
But that conviction comes at a high price: the guy always jumps to conclusions, and I'm pretty sure he got it wrong a few times.

- **Scatterbrained**

Tony Robbins often jumps from one thread to the other, going back and forth without always sticking to the topic and to the relative chapter. I find it confusing.

- **Unprecise Nomenclature**

Tony seems to use a different name for the same things, and he keeps changing it and mixing it, making it very difficult to summarize and, most of all, to understand what is he actually talking about.

You will think "it makes sense but… What step was he referring to?

Review

Creating Lasting Change is another amazing program by Tony Robbins.

It's packed with amazing useful information on how to change people's state and behavior and, most of all, I love the examples.

I like Anthony Robbins.
His credibility when it comes to influencing people and changing their state is unquestionable. So we should listen when he talks about influencing and changing people.

Just a personal note: don't try to change anyone who doesn't wanna change. Not only it will hardly be effective but you will only alienate people that way.

8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness offers a comprehensive overview of *passive-aggression*, including how it develops, how you can fix it, and how you can deal with passive-aggressive people.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - What Is Passive-Aggressiveness
  - Passive-Aggression is a feeling of powerlessness
  - Are you passive-aggressive? Go through this checklist
  - The characteristics of weak boundaries
  - The 3 Types of Communicators
  - How to communicate assertively
  - A passive-aggressive needs an enabler
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Passive aggressiveness stems from childhood
- Holding back anger is one of the main traits of passive-aggressiveness
- Passive-aggressive need an enabler in a long-lasting relationship
- You overcome passive-aggressiveness with *assertive communication*

Full Summary

8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness has lots of great examples, so I recommend you get the full book to get the most out of it.

What Is Passive-Aggressiveness

Passive-aggressiveness is one of the *major four styles of communication.*

Andrea Brandt says that passive-aggressiveness arises from the taboo our society places on anger.

Passive-aggressive people don't set and don't know how to set personal boundaries.

And when people overstep those boundaries, they swallow their anger. But Anger doesn't go away, it's an energy that needs to be expressed.

So the passive-aggressive often projects their anger onto other people.

Others might not be angry at all, but the passive-aggressive actually provokes anger in the other person to then justify their feelings.

Passive-Aggression is a feeling of powerlessness

Andrea Brandt says that passive aggression is born out of a feeling of powerlessness.

It's no coincidence the roots are often to be found in our childhood.

If one of the parents is dominant and the other subservient children are likely to develop some passive aggressiveness personality traits. From the subservient parent, children learn powerful people shouldn't be approached directly.

Are you passive-aggressive? Go through this checklist

Andrea Brandt gives us a handy checklist to see if we're being passive-aggressive:

1. Withhold praise, attention, or positive feedback when someone deserves or asks for it.
2. Fail to follow through
3. Stall when an important issue needs to be resolved
4. Withhold intimacy as a way of punishment
5. Engage in sabotaging behavior
6. Respond with minimal words during important discussions (ex. "aha, hmm, I don't know, fine")
7. Respond in sarcastic ways about life, yourself or others
8. Feel frustrated, disappointed, or irritable a lot sometimes without reaching anger
9. Look at situations negatively even when they are going well
10. Make small negative comments underlying someone else's self-esteem
11. Feel depressed frequently
12. Never say no or always say yes

If you said a lot of yeses here it means that showing anger is a problem for you.

Also, see:

- **How to politely say no**

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

The characteristics of weak boundaries

Andrea Brandt also gives us a list of what weak boundaries look like:

- Not protecting personal space;
- Revealing too much;
- Getting caught up in other people's troubles;
- Neglect own needs for others;
- Tolerate abuse;
- Confuse sex and love (and give in to pressure for sex)
- Easily persuaded by one religious creed or another;

Example: Passive-Aggression in real life

Luisa and Katka work together at a bookstore.

Luisa asks for an important favor to be taken care of ASAP.
Katka does her own things though as the task takes some time and then goes to lunch.

When she comes back Katka is doing the task herself and gets angry

> *-"I don't understand why you say you can help if you really can't"*
> -I didn't know it was that urgent
> *-I told you it was ASAP*
> *-I had some other stuff to finish.* I can do it now if it's important, I don't see why you're so angry
> *-Forget it*

Katka said sure without asking for a time frame and without considering her own agenda.
She just said yes almost always to avoid saying no.

Then she delayed doing it and said she didn't know it was that urgent when she actually knew it was ASAP and could have easily figured out how important it was.

And she could have easily figured out whether or not she could have managed and easily said no.

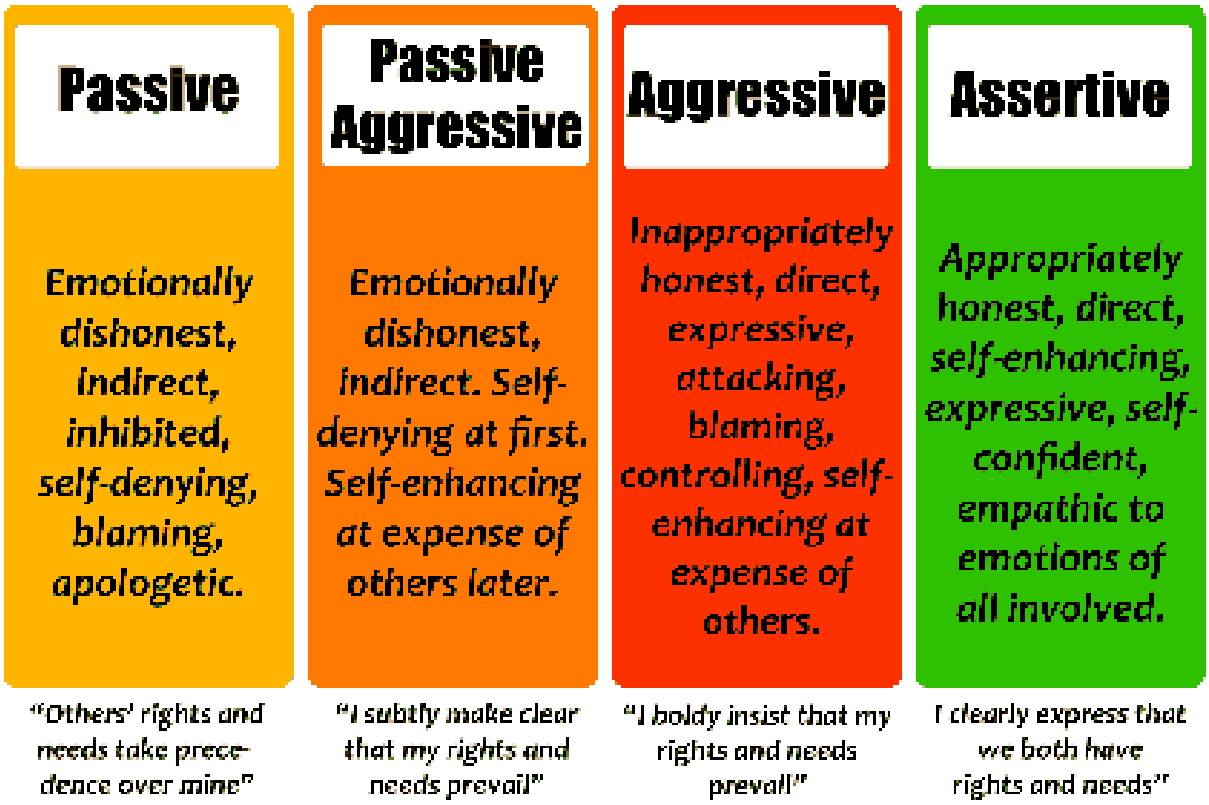
The 3 Types of Communicators

Andrea Brandt says there are three different communicator types:

Aggressive communicators are loud and domineering, winning is everything.

Passive communicators say little, don't stand up for their rights, and ignore attacks. If they have an outburst they are immediately ashamed. They say sorry. Their body language is tentative.

Passive-aggressive on the surface seems similar to passive, but the anger comes out in criticism and sarcasm. They send a double message: their face is smiling but the words sound mean.



How to communicate assertively

Andrea Brandt says that when we treat each other with empathy we see the situation from the other's point of view.

But this is different than assuming you know what they're thinking or feeling.
An essential part of assertiveness is seeing others as individuals and we reflect this understanding with "I" statements without accusations.

Examples:

> **Wrong**: *"you really hurt my feelings when you criticized my cooking in front of everyone"*
> **Correct**: *"I felt embarrassed and angry to hear you didn't like the dinner I made for our friends. I want to know what you think, but I'd rather hear it privately"*

And:

> **Wrong**: *You should really go to the dentist for your teeth, they're really yellow*
> **Correct**: *I was reading about… (news about whitening) … have you heard about it?*

Passive-aggressive communication assumes all discussion will lead to a quarrel, these examples show how criticism can be conveyed in non-threatening ways.

A passive-aggressive needs an enabler

Andrea Brandt says that a long-lasting relationship with a passive-aggressive needs an enabler.

The enabler creates an environment where passive aggressiveness can survive.

The enabler is usually the follower in the relationship.
They keep quiet when they should speak up, excuse outrageous behavior, and bail the other out. They say things like "he's trying" or "if I say something he'll get mad".

Andrea Brandt says that if you're the enabler and want to fix your relationship you'll have to become the leading figure.

Validation example

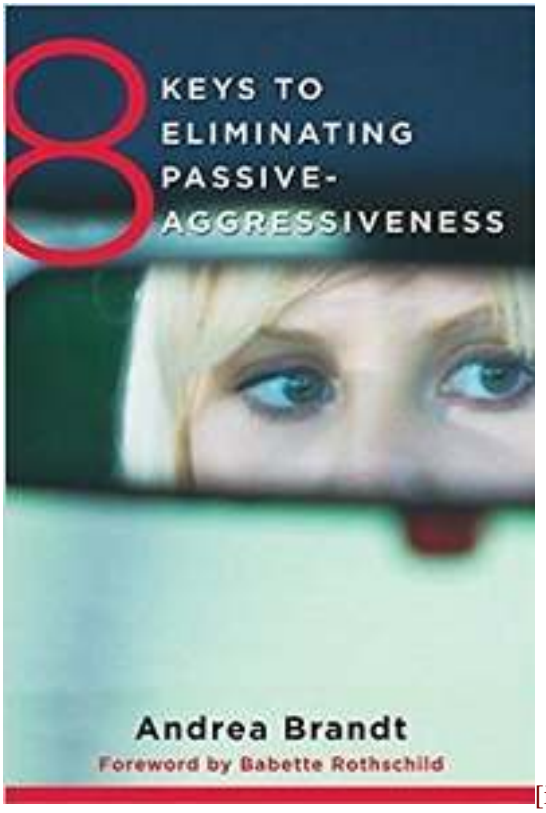
Andrea Brandt says it's incredibly helpful to confirm people's feelings.

She provides a few dialogue examples, and I propose a similar one based on hers:

> *-"the president is hosting a retreat and I haven't been invited yet*
> *-"so they're having a retreat and you want to go but you haven't been invited yet, that's the issue?*
> *-"yes"*
> *-"But I feel there's something more. Is it so important for you?*
> *-"blab la bla"*
> *-"OK, so you're feeling cut out and you're worried it might impact your career"* (confirm understanding)
> *-"I would feel the same in that situation, you are part of the team and you deserve respect and inclusion"* (validation)
> *-"thanks, I think so too and I don't know why I'm being left out"*
> *-"I had the same experience … bla bla bla"* (express empathy, let your partner know you had the same feelings)

+ bonus point if you can draw a positive message from your similar experience, or at least a new understanding and self-development

My Note:
This dialogue is golden.
When people say what they're feeling way too many people would reply "oh come on, what do you care about that stupid retreat", which is wrong because that's YOUR point of view.



[image]

Real-Life Applications

Take responsibility for changing!
And take responsibility for changing your relationship if your partner is passive-aggressive.

Review

"*8 keys to eliminating passive aggressiveness*" is wonderful and I learned hugely from it.

I personally found my own passive-aggressive tendencies and Brandt helped me address them.

I believe many of us have at least some hints of passive aggressiveness. Sure, there are people who have *none* of it, the people who *say no very easily and very quickly*, but it's a minority.

Even if you're not passive-aggressive yourself, "8 keys to eliminating passive aggressiveness" will help you understand passive-aggressive people.

I highly recommend the book if you're dealing with a passive-aggressive personality or if you are passive-aggressive yourself.

But if you are into communication and human relationships, I would say this is a must-read no matter where you stand on the assertiveness scale.

Get the book on Amazon

The Social Power Dynamics of “Can You Take My Picture” Requests

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 September 2017 · Archived copy · Original

You heard this a few times:

> Hi, could you please take our pictures?

Maybe you’re at a club and it’s a bunch of drunk girls, or simply some random people in the street.

But in this and ange it’s impossible going through life without someone asking you to snap their photo.

But what does that request mean from a social power dynamics perspective?

Should you take their picture or should you refuse to?

Contents

- Power Dynamics of Picture-Taking: A Story
- Should You Say No To Picture Requests?
  - Effort Levels
  - How They Ask
  - Low Effort and Nice Ask: Do it
  - High Effort and Nice Ask: Ask for Compliance Back
  - Low Effort and Rude: Refuse
  - High Effort and Rude: Ignore
  - The End of the story
- How to Turn Down Picture Requests
  - #1. Use an Excuse
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- Summary

Power Dynamics of Picture-Taking: A Story

It was a chilly summer evening in Brandenburg’s Gates, Berlin.

The band had just finished playing and I was looking around.
To be honest, I was a bit on the prowl.

I quickly noticed a girl glancing towards me. Let’s call her Madelaine. Madelaine was looking over me a bit too often and a bit too obviously to be just random (undercover sex signals).

She was in a mixed group of around 5-6 guys and girls, all still riding high from the parade and the live band.
I wasn’t too sure about her though, I’m not a fan of groups, and my “silent kill mood” wasn’t matching their energy levels.

Suddenly a cute blonde near Madelaine’s group seemed to appear out of nowhere. All by herself. Nice. I walk straight to her and introduce myself. Her name was Julia. Me and Julia hit it off very well.

We engage in a fun back and forth with lot of teasing, and something was telling me Madelaine wasn't too happy about it.

She was getting louder and louder.
She steps nearby on the edge of our personal zones a few times, absolutely the only one to do so in her group. I'm starting to think it's no coincidence and she's actually actively trying to disturb us, either out of jealousy or purely out of spite.

Eventually, she finally makes her full move to interrupt us. She barges in and asks loudly:

> "Can you take our picture?"

And hands me her camera even before we can consent.

Should You Say No To Picture Requests?

Can a request to take someone's picture be a power move?

Sure it can.
And it's the same for any small favor or requests.

There's an inherent power dynamics in all requests.
Most of the times they are hidden because they are small requests and tend to be low effort.

But once stripped of all cues, at the core, it's a party asking for compliance, and another party complying.
The good old dance monkey dance.

There are two different variables you should look at to consider whether you should yes and do the favor or you should say no and refuse.
They are:

- Effort Levels
- How They Ask

Effort Levels

Effort levels are key.

They tell us if there is a dancing monkey or if it's a balanced relationship.

The general rule is that **the person who needs something should be putting in more effort** or, at least, being willing to incomodate themselves with their request.
In this case, the person asking you a favor, should be putting in more effort.

It's important to note that effort has many forms beyond the most obvious physical effort and money or gift exchange.
Here are some other forms of effort and goodwill:

- Smile
- "please"
- "thank you"
- Head bow

Let's see how these work in the practical situation of taking a picture:

Low Efforts: Do It

Low efforts situations are those situations where taking the picture is easy for you.

It could be because you don't need to do much or because they make it easy for you.

Some examples of low efforts situation are those in which:

- You don't need to move
- *They* come to you for the picture
- Your weren't doing anything else

High Effort: Rebalance The Relationship

High effort means you have to put in work or inconvenience yourself.
Examples of high effort situations are:

- Sitting (and need to stand up to take the picture)
- You are talking to someone (need to stop your convo)
- You are far away and they expect you to move
- They ask for many pictures

Notice that these are not high effort per se: standing up is something you do all all the times. But it's high effort to do when you were not planning to do it, when you do it for someone you barely know or don't know at all and when you don't get anything back.

How They Ask

Nicely / Ask Permission: Do It

Asking nicely and thanking you is a form or repaying your effort, which make the relationship more even.
Some way of asking nicely:

- Emotional effort: non-threatening body language, smile
- Asking consent before actually handing the camera
- Providing a "why" or saying a few words
- Physical effort: walking towards you rather than expecting you to walk

This guy is expanding efforts in crouching down, explaining how it works and showing submissive body language (a great way to engage older women whom might be worried or anxious with younger men) :

Rude: Refuse (Or Rebalance)

Rude can mean actually rude, or not giving anything back for the favor they are asking. Some examples:

- Handing you the camera without you having said yes
- No "please", no smile
- Disrespect for your time

It's worth noting here why implying compliance is rude.

It's rude because of the social meaning behind it. **Implying that you will say yes sub-communicates that what they need is more important than what you're doing**.

And therein lies the power move.

See, Madelaine, the girl who asked me for a picture in the beginning of the story was not rude in the way you would define a typical rude behavior.
But by barging in the conversation uninvited, with open body language and by handing the camera without waiting for our consent she sub-communicated that our conversation was not very important or, at least, less important than her picture.

Which makes it, effectively, a power move.

Let's see now a few situations for when and how you can accept and when and how you can say no:

Low Effort and Nice Ask: Do it

They ask nicely, it's simple for you to do it… Simply do it.
It's good to be good people.

High Effort and Nice Ask: Ask for Compliance Back

They might be asking nicely, but if you have to put lot of effort you risk looking powerless.

Or that you either don't have important things to do or that you don't value your time and effort too highly.
You can still do it if you're just enjoying your day or if you like the person asking. But if the moment you are asked you care about looking powerful and in control at all, watch out that you don't over-comply and put too much effort.

Here are two ways then to do them a favore while still keeping a balanced exchange: do it on your terms, or can ask for compliance back.

- **Do it on your terms**

Saying yes but doing it on your terms then means in the picture example that you take the camera, but without inconveniencing yourself.

If you're sitting, you stay seated -or just stand up without moving-. If you were reclining against a wall, you just take a step forward but no more.

And if you're talking to someone, you take the camera, take a quick shot and quickly give it back.
Don't say "sure", "it was a pleasure", "do you need one more". The message you're sending here is that you want to be nice enough, but your conversation and your friend are more important and is not to be kept waiting.

Notice the girl in this Youtube prank example. She's sitting, the guy moves rather far away for the picture, but she still stays seated anyway. She's sub-communicating "sure dude, I can help… Without being too inconvenienced though, this is where I draw the line".

- **Demand Compliance Back**

An easy way of not looking like you're following their lead and putting in more effort is to demand from them equal compliance and have them follow your lead as well.

It's easier than it sounds: you simply command them on how to fit and pose the picture.
You're the one with the camera, don't let them tell you how to take the picture, YOU tell them how to move.
If they keep insisting having it their own way say you're the photographer. If they still keep insisting tell them to find another photographer.
But you will find the vast majority of people will just follow your suggestions.

Here's an example:

Not long ago a group of guys asked me to take the picture.
It was night time. Big group of guys, being noisy, taking time as they formed the group.
The social risk for me was that I looked overpowered and like a tool at their disposal.
The guy who gave me the camera told me "go back" so that they could all fit in.
Nice try buddy. I took it saying "no from here it's good". Then when I pointed the camera I told them to move farther back and form two lines.

Power balance restored.

Low Effort and Rude: Refuse

If someone is rude, even if the task is easy, refuse.

Demanding proper and well mannered behavior should be a staple of who you are.
If they comes to you and hand you a phone without a please or without a smile don't take the phone.

If they ask why not say it's because they were rude.

And If they look at you with a "why not expression" don't say anything: you never reply verbally to a nonverbal gesture.
Either take a step away as if it's a smelly bum or stay there and shake your head.

It will happen rarely though that someone will come to you and be rude. What can happen a bit more often though is in the example below:

High Effort and Rude: Ignore

Here's the simple rule: if someone needs something from you *they* should put more effort first, not the other way around.

You will mostly see this happening in these situations:

- **Waving you over**

This is the worst possible!

Maybe someone is sitting and you're walking by.
Or it's a group of people and they call out to you -groups always feel more powerful than single persons-.
You ignores these requests.

I remember once I was walking in a club and a guy sitting with a girl at bar was waving at me. I stopped and turned my head towards them. He took the camera out and motioned me to go there.

In these cases, you nod at them as if they just said hi and resume walking. The idea is that you ignore compliance while helping them save a bit of face so you also avoid making enemies.

- **Asking for too many pics**

It can happen sometimes the high effort is not apparent right off the bat (sometimes it's used in deceiving tricks by exploiting the consistency and commitment principle, Cialdini).

In the "take my picture case", you might be asked to take more pictures than you were expecting to.

In these cases, as soon as they ask for more, you say "*last one and then I need to go*". Or "*hey girls I'm too lazy, this is the last one*". Then hand the camera back -and let them walk to you to take it-.

	Low Effort	High Effort
NICE	Do It	Up to You
BOSSY	Refuse	Ignore

The End of the story

How did I handle the girl coming over and asking me for a picture?

Well, my first mistake was that I should have moved Julia away earlier. Moving her was good both in terms of her following my lead, in starting to do something together, and in removing us from the noisy group and jealous girl.

But of course, once Madelaine asked us for a picture it was too late for that.

It was important to me that Julia didn't think I was prioritizing doing a favor to this unknown girl over talking to her, which would have sent a bad message about my leadership and about my level of interest about her.

Also, I didn't want to look like I was complying too much to this group of unknown people. Accepting was going to be a risk in that sense.

But I was also wary of denying Madelaine a picture in front of Julia. Julia probably hadn't picked up on Madelaine's not so nice intentions and in that case *I* would have looked bad and rude -and nobody likes rude people-.

See, when you already intimate with a girl, or when you're with someone you know well, you have much more leeway to act as you please.
There's indeed already trust between you two and you can always explain later.
But so early in a conversation, your bond is tenuous and a miscommunication can be fatal to your interaction.

What did I do then?
I lightly put my hand behind Julia's back and said

> **Me:** *yeah, she will take it*

This way I took the lead and avoided both the risk of over-complying to Madelaine and the risk of having Julia think I was too spineless to let external events get in between us two.

Then I stood beside Julia to make sure she wasn't going to be drawn for too long and too deeply in the group dynamics and to send a message the two of us were together.
And as soon as the picture was done I restarted talking to her, minimizing the exposure to the group and to Madelaine's meddling.

How to Turn Down Picture Requests

And here are a few techniques to say no in case you feel too much pressure:

#1. Use an Excuse

Ideally, you won't need to make up stories and lies, but if it's really too difficult for you to say a direct no, then make up a story.

In the example of taking a picture:

1. My hand shakes
2. I'm waiting for an important call
3. I'm too busy right now

#2. Use Nonverbals

Put your hand up and lightly shake your head. You don't even need to say a word like this.

#3. Say "I could... But I think You Should Do It"

If the request is about something that they can easily do, just say

> I could do it but why should I do your job. That's your task

Then let them explain why you should do it. If their explanation convince you, then you can do it.
And it's a win anyway for you because by explaining they invested energies in the interaction.

#4. Pretend You Didn't Hear

If it's someone bothering you and you're walking, or if you are working on your laptop very busy, don't turn around.

Before asking you to do something they should at least make sure you are ready to listen. If they don't, they don't deserve your full attention.

Summary

From a power dynamics point of view, asking for a picture entails a power dynamic.

Some people, depending on the situation, might also use it for social climbing purposes.

If you take their picture the wrong way, you will lose social power.
But if you handle it well, you might even gain some points.

Cheers,

Lucio

Get the Guy: Summary, Review, & Criticism (Matthew Hussey)

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Get the Guy (2013) is a dating book for women in which the author Matthew Hussey shares dating strategies and techniques to meet more and better men with a mix of proactiveness and 'Strategy A' femininity.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Part I: Find the Guy
  - 1. Put the Odds in Your Favor
  - Social Life Serving Love Life
  - Being a Woman of High Value
  - Approach Men
  - Part II: Get The Guy
  - Formula of Attraction
  - Sex Talk
  - Why Hasn't He Called?
  - Part III: Keep The Guy
  - How to Be The Woman of His Dreams
  - Is he Mr. Right?
  - If You Want Him to Commit
- PROS
- CONS
- Review

Overview

- Find the guy with a mix of pro-activeness and high value
- Get the guy with a mix of challenge, value, and connection (+ visual chemistry)
- Keep the guy marrying high-value qualities with male needs

Notes

About The Author:
Matthew Hussey first started out as a dating coach for men in the then-budding "pick-up scene" and later transitioned to coaching women.
He says he's qualified to teach women how to get guys because he's spent years coaching men in dating and he knows how men think.

Part I: Find the Guy

1. Put the Odds in Your Favor

Hussey says most women meet too few guys.

They think it will *somehow* just happen, or that if it's meant to be the right guy will just *somehow* materialize.

He urges us to drop that mentality, build a lifestyle where we meet tons of new men, and **give as many men as possible a chance.**

Agreed.
Also, read:

- Biggest dating mistakes women commit
- How to find a boyfriend

> 7 Biggest Dating Mistakes Women Do (Before Sex)

Social Life Serving Love Life

Matthew Hussey advises an old technique around the social improvement field: says yes every time, to every invite.

In "how to work a room" Matthew suggests stopping and standing when you enter into new venues. Take in the environment, see, and let yourself be seen.
The author then tells a story of a club owner he met who seemed confident and in control, and suggests you should adopt the "owner mentality".

My Note: Not good for women
The "owner story" is popular in men's dating advice. I don't it's a good strategy for a woman: it's too overbearing.

Being a Woman of High Value

Hussey says that getting the guy starts with yourself.

As much as you're looking for a man of high value, men are looking for *women of high value* too.

The author concedes that "high value" is relative, but certain traits are fixed. These traits are:

- Confidence
- Independence
- Integrity
- Femininity

Self Confidence
Hussey says that a high-value woman is confident in her own value and knows what she wants.

She is also confident in making her needs clear when they're not being met and is able to walk away from relationships that do not fulfill her.

She is unaffected by superficial things and is neither intimidated nor overly impressed by looks, money, or high status.

My Note:
True, but don't overdo it. Like Harvey says in *Act Like a Lady*, many "strong, independent women are also lonely".

On the other hand, the author says, low confidence and uncertain women are doing things to please others.

A confident man will lose interest in an uncertain woman, and men can always sense when a woman is uncertain about herself.

My Note:

This would be the "nice girl" of *Why Men Love Bitches* (read: *better strong woman or submissive woman?*). One note here: well-placed insecurities can push the "need to protect her" button in a man.

Also, read:

- **The traits of high-value women**

> 12 Traits of High-Value Women (With Examples)

Approach Men

This is the biggest female misconception:

> if he really liked me he would have come and talked to me

He says the more he likes you, the harder it is for him. Indeed, the guys who are most likely *to approach you*, are also more likely to approach a lot of women, and they're probably only 1% of the male population.

Contrary to some other authors of dating advice for women (for example *Power of the Pussy, He's Not Into You*) Hussey recommends your approach.

How to Approach

Matthew Hussey describes a few ways a woman can start a conversation.
He says you should look at the guy first, maybe for half a second, and then smile the second time you look at him.

Then make it easier for him to talk to you by getting closer to him.

Matthew has a terrific piece of advice when he says that women should never be easy, but the first ten seconds of a conversation, be easy. Give him a chance.

Asking for a favor
You can start a convo by asking for a favor, which also plays on the man's ego and makes him feel like a man.

"Pass the Test"
Ask a question (for example: what type of drink you should order).

Then depending on his reply either say "*great you passed the test*" or "*oh that's a pity, it would never work between us*".
The author says he will automatically think "*yes it can work and I will prove it to you*".

My Note:
This is another typical man's pick-up technique. The risk is that the guy will see what you're up to, know that you're into him, and label you as a bit of a game player.

Seed the Date
Matthew Hussey says that you don't really ask for a date, but seed the idea. For example, you could say:

> **You**: *"All the guys I know keep telling to try (name of popular restaurant)".*

When he says he hasn't tried it, say you're the only two who haven't been there yet and you should go.

When you're leaving then you say something like "*hey, I gotta go, lemme leave you my number and maybe we can do something sometime*".

Part II: Get The Guy

Formula of Attraction

Matthew Hussey says the ultimate formula of attraction is composed of visual chemistry + perceived challenge + perceived value + connection.

Playing Hard to Get
Matthew Hussey says that playing hard to get is a terrible strategy in the long term. Pretending to be always too busy or too aloof will only get chasing you the most undiscerning types of men.

My Note:
I agree here and I'm glad he says it. Read *how to get high-quality men with mutual escalation*.

Sex Talk

Matthew Hussey says that waiting for X dates before having sex takes your focus into game playing and away from the most important thing: building a connection.
Sex should happen when you make an emotional connection.

The author says that waiting too long is also a mistake because he will feel like he's not important to you sexually. And men do get their validation through sex.

My Note:
couldn't agree more. Hussey is one of the few authors to nail this point. Also, read *why you should not let him wait for sex*.

How to Spot "Only for Sex Guys"
Hussey says that if gets too emotional or persistent when you deny sex, you shouldn't date him again.

Also, read:

- 7 signs of a fuckboy
- What to ask to spot a player

Denying Sex
Matthew Hussey says that a guy doesn't mind waiting for sex if you do it in a tactful way.
For example, if he calls you late at night for a booty call, you deny but there's no point in "punishing". What you do instead is to suggest an alternative.

My Note:
I fully agree. Also read: *how to reject sex*.

> How To Turn Down Sex & Get A Relationship

Why Hasn't He Called?

Matthew Hussey says that some misconceptions the guy hasn't called yet are because he's intimidated, because he doesn't want commitment, or because he's only after sex.

The real reasons, Hussey says, are that she was one of these:

- too nice and no challenge
- boring
- too aggressive

- too desperate
- trying too hard to impress
- too negative
- no chemistry

My Note:
I disagree with the " too nice and no challenge": he would still want to have sex with you.

Part III: Keep The Guy

How to Be The Woman of His Dreams

These are the crucial aspects of being the woman of his dreams:

- **Let him know you're attracted to him**

Matthew Hussey says that your man should know that you derive complete sexual satisfaction with him.

- **Make him feel unique**

Hussey says that you should make your man feel unique and that you would choose him no matter what.

- **Make him feel like the protector**

Matthew says you should make the man feel like you need him.
Being independent is what makes a woman a high-value woman, but not giving him any chance to add value or help you emasculates him.

- **Cheer Him Up**

The author says that supporting him and making him feel like you believe in him is another central part of keeping a guy happy.

Is he Mr. Right?

Matthew says that two values are the most important in guaranteeing a long-term relationship:

- growth
- teamwork

If you don't have these two values you don't have much long-term potential. If you have these two in common, you can overcome difficulties and differences.

My Note: teamwork is what high-quality men want.
I totally agree with Hussey, teamwork is what high quality wants. High-quality and driven men have things going on in their lives and it's either they find a supportive woman who adds value, or they aren't going to stick around. That's why the advice of dropping manipulative dating games and confrontational attitudes is great advice.

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

If You Want Him to Commit

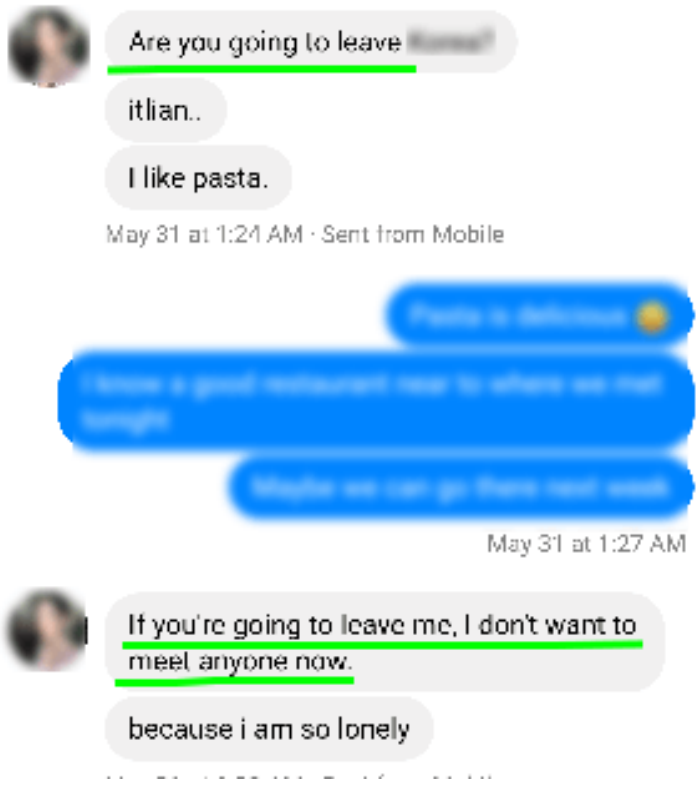
The author says that the extraordinary doesn't just attract the extraordinary, but also *keeps* the extraordinary.

And then adds that you should be careful to over-commit and give too much too soon.

The Girl that Made the Author Commit
Matthew gives a funny and great example of him telling a girl he wasn't going to commit.
Little did he know, not long after he did commit. How did she do it? She kept cool when he said he wasn't feeling like being in a relationship.
Then she lowered him in the list of priorities but STILL was great when they were together. That made the trick.

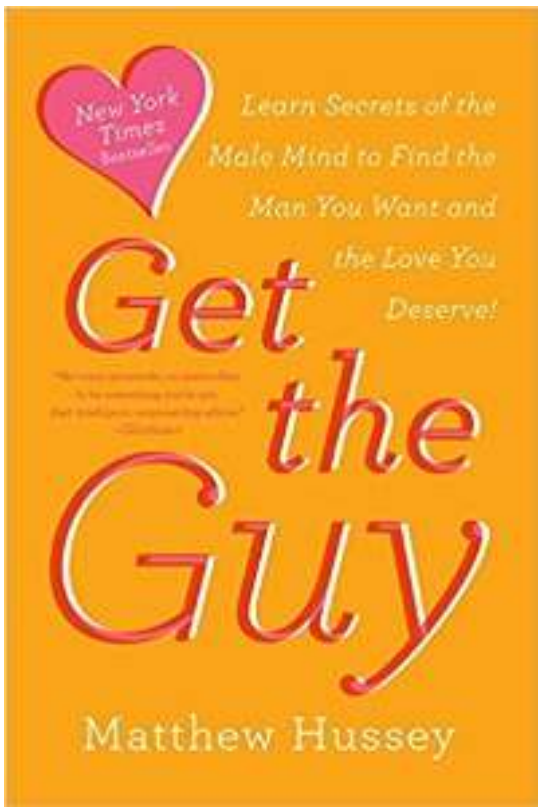
> Extraordinary don't just attract extraordinary. It keeps extraordinary.

My Note: Play selectively submissive to make him commit!
See an example here:



And read the full description here:

- **How to make men want to invest and protect** using selective submissiveness



PROS

- **Unique Point of View**

Of all the authors in the women's dating literature space, Hussey is probably the most original.

I believe a big reason why is that he comes from men's dating space, and he brings a lot of ideas from there that were not previously present in the women's dating literature.

That's a plus, but also a con (read below).

- **Great Insights**

The author has many many great insights that many other authors -especially female ones- don't have.

For example, many female writers fail to stress that you should reject his sexual advances tactfully.
Or that for most guys, being single means having little sex actually :).

CONS

- **Cheesy – Game-y**

The book is not overall cheesy, but some parts are (a bit reminiscent of *The Game* and *The Mystery Method*).
Some men will see you like them but are hiding behind games.

- **Made for Men**

Some of the advice is man dating advice swapping “she” with “him”. And sometimes that’s not ideal.

- **Confrontational**

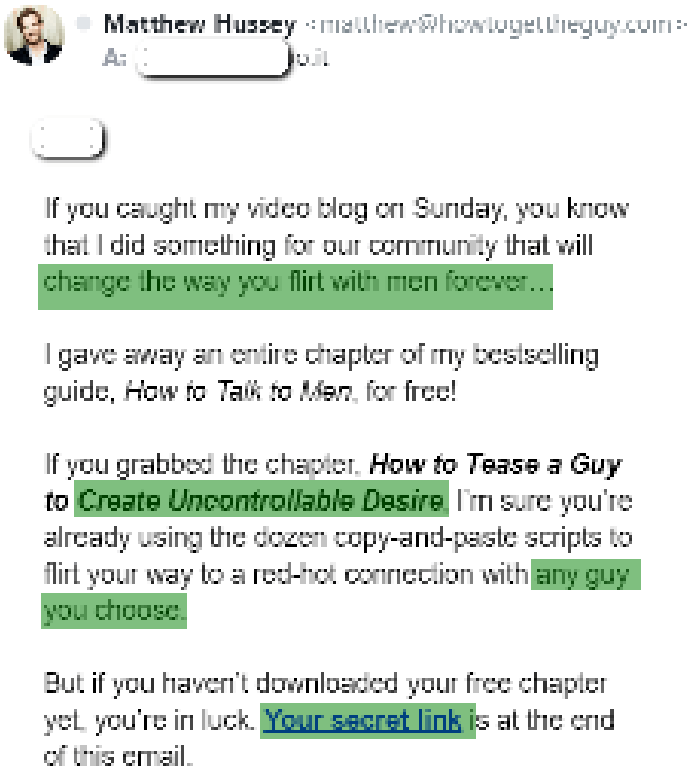
Some of Hussey’s suggestions to be a challenge can start a silent battle dynamic.
For example, he suggests telling the guy he’s so lucky to be with her. That’s not good because it starts a “who’s lucky/better” dynamic (check: *4 communication mistakes men do in relationships* and *combative relationships*).

- **Video Bonuses Up-Sell**

There’s quite some up-selling in the book.

And, beyond the book, I find Hussey’s marketing to be more geared towards clueless consumers rather than smart women who are in charge of their lives (see here *dating for successful women*).

See here an example from the mailing list, which seems to me more aimed at selling than providing information (albeit the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive):



Matthew Hussey <matthew@howtogettheguy.com>
As [redacted] to it

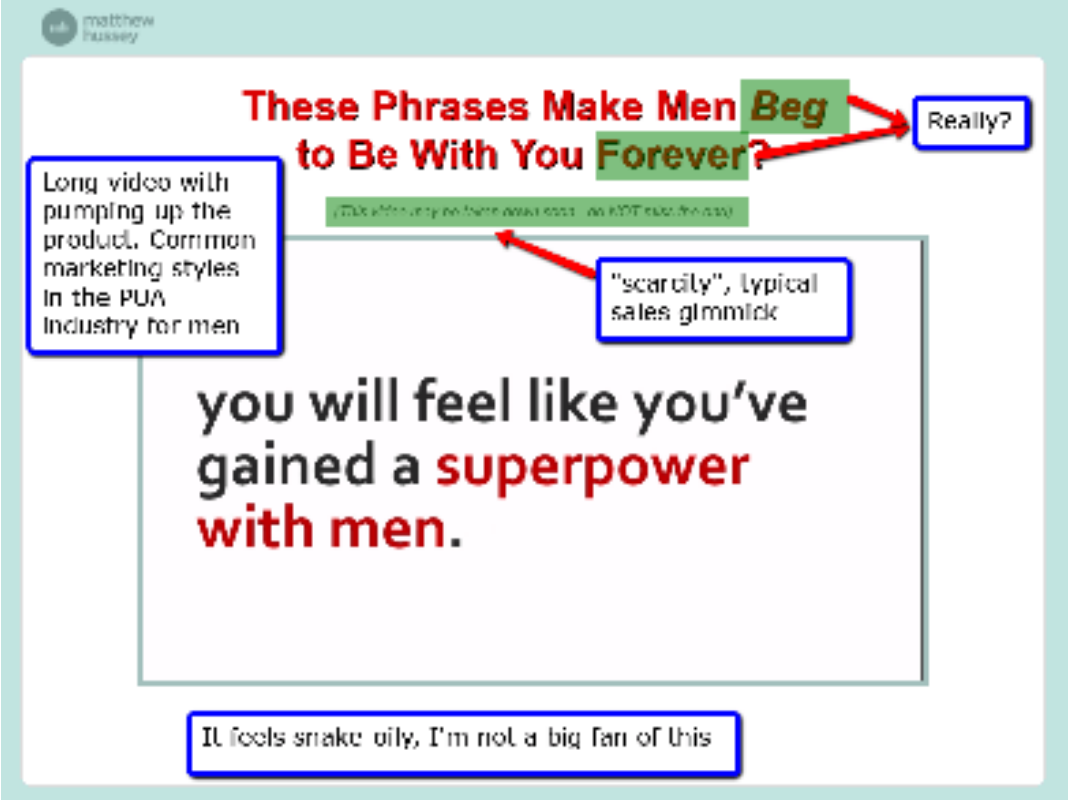
If you caught my video blog on Sunday, you know that I did something for our community that will change the way you flirt with men forever…

I gave away an entire chapter of my bestselling guide, *How to Talk to Men*, for free!

If you grabbed the chapter, ***How to Tease a Guy to Create Uncontrollable Desire***, I'm sure you're already using the dozen copy-and-paste scripts to flirt your way to a red-hot connection with any guy you choose.

But if you haven't downloaded your free chapter yet, you're in luck. Your secret link is at the end of this email.

And once you click on it you get a video vastly overselling the results:



I find this approach predatory
Hussey talks about "getting any men to do as you please", "like mind control, but better".
In my opinion, this is an unethical approach to business. And it makes me suspicious about the quality of the product, too.

Review

Get The Guy has solid content and lots of good information albeit it recommends behavior that is not the *most feminine* and hence, sometimes not the most effective.

Just a bit cheesy at times and I would warn female readers to avoid the more “male pick-up style” advice because that would make them look less feminine, *and femininity is crucial*.

Also, see:

- The best dating resources for women

Get The Guy on Amazon.

Day Game by Todd Valentine: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Day Game by Todd Valentine is a video series on how to meet and approach women during the day.

Contents

- Exec Summary
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Exec Summary

- Go in with a mentality of making things happen right there right then
- Spend some time talking and spend time AFTER you exchange phone number
- Take some pressure off saying “I want you to come and have a drink with me at some point”

Day Game Todd Summary

About The Author:
Todd Valentine has been a dating coach for a long time now. He started with Real Social Dynamics (RSD) and then eventually branched out on his own after a rumored fallout with Tyler, one of RSD’s founders.
I find Todd to be the best of the Real Social Dynamics’ pack.
Todd is also the author of *The System*” and, he said in one of his courses, a proponent of applying Jordan Belford’s “*straight line persuasion*” to seduction (i.e.: “*straight line seduction*“).

A quick note on “Day Game”:
I usually recommend getting the full product if you find the summary good, and it’s especially true in this case as Todd presents lots of videos as examples.

Take the Pressure Off: Criteria for Success

Todd Valentine says that in many day game scenarios, you won’t have time to warm up, so **accept that not every interaction will be great**.

He says you should learn to be forgiving of yourself, and get the mentality you are going to make a girl happy in the worst-case scenario.

Your criteria for success should be that you did it and did the best you can independently of the result.

I loved it when Todd said you should be “outcome dependent”, but your outcome is doing it and doing the best you can, not “winning”.
If doing the best you can mean being a stuttering mumbling idiot during the first moments, be it.

Plan daygame in your life

Toss suggests doing a minimum of three approaches per day and going out earlier for your appointment so that you have some time to scout around. Also, you should know your area so that you know where to go for an instant date.

Decide your goal ahead of time

Todd Valentine suggests you decide beforehand if you want quick phone numbers, 10 mins of chat, and a phone number, or go on a date right away.

What makes a man attractive

Todd Valentine goes into what makes a man, which is:

- social proof
- leading
- knowing the dance of seduction
- entitlement and assertiveness

Entitlement and assertiveness mean that you believe you deserve things in life, stand up for yourself, talk in a loud tone of voice, voice your opinion even if they’re unpopular and you’re OK with being the center of attention.

Basically, *an alpha male is attractive.*

My Note:
This sounded a bit like the typical *"alpha male posturing recommendations"*.
Loud is good… Up to a certain point. And same goes for the center of attention, albeit Todd does not say to be at the center of attention but is OK with it, which is true.

Another attractive behavior, Todd says, is self-amusement. Self-amusement means that you enjoy yourself and enjoy what you say independently of whether or not the girl you're talking to might like it.

How to start a conversation

Todd says that mentality is the most important aspect.

The first few minutes you should assume that you have to bear the burden of taking things forward and making the conversation snowball.

Lower your standard, don't worry about a perfect conversation and focus fully on the girl and be present in the moment.

Todd Valentine says that you should trust you're a great man, that the bar is not very high, and that whatever you say is better than average anyway.

The author suggests speaking loudly: if you try not to be awkward you'll be awkward. Todd says you should focus on having a good interaction, not on her liking you, and keep talking at the beginning no matter what (remember: the burden is on you).

How to Make Her Like You

Todd Valentine says you should have the mentality that you need to risk to get a reward: you can't stay in polite conversation without going anywhere.

To get the hook Todd says to you:

1. Self amuse: enjoy the interaction in itself. You will find that when you're in a particularly good mood or loving your life, it'll work.
2. FRED (focus, relevance, emotion, decision)
3. Push-pull ; neg;
4. Force-qualification: for example, she says something and you say "*ah that's cool, I wasn't too sure about you, but now you seem cool*"

I found one bit particularly interesting.

Todd says that when she's really into a topic, rather than going deeper into it as most guys would do, change the topic by saying "*we'll talk about that later*", and when she tells you "*nono please let's keep talking about it*", she just cemented herself into chasing you.

Those high times can be exploited.

My Note:
I don't fully agree with this. If she's really into you maybe, maybe she'll say "please let's keep talking about it".
But it's more likely she won't say anything and just think you're either weird or couldn't care less about her.

How to Get Physical

Todd Valentine says you always change her mood, not her mind.

And *always be escalating*. When it doesn't go well, back off.
Never escalate just to touch.

> How to Sexually Escalate With Women (3 Steps)

How to Get a Solid Number

Todd says that you never go in to "get a number" or you are pandering to your ego.
The idea of a phone number is that: **you two like each other but it's just so impossible to do it right now so you plan for later.**

The 5 minutes AFTER the phone number are the most critical because after the number you are not strangers anymore but you are planning to meet.

Todd says that you'd rather have 2 mins of conversation and 5 mins after the number than 30 mins and then rush after the number.
And when you ask, expect to get it.

How to do an instant date

Todd Valentine says that the first rule is: **Just ask.**

Make it very casual and very normal and part of the interaction. Not a big deal.

And you can assess her reaction even before you actually finish the sentence.

If you're getting a no, think might be because of safety concerns. In which case, just say

> *"it's safe, and if you want to leave you can leave at any time and I help you to come back here".*

or:

> *"we'll go somewhere lovely and if you don't love it then you can leave. And it doesn't really matter either way because I'm having a good time and that's what really matters"*

Escalation to Sex

Here are a few tips from Todd to *escalate to sex back at home:*

- -Patience once you get back home and let her chill out a bit
- -Use intermediate locations, such as the kitchen before you get back to the bedroom
- -block both her hands with one of your hand and use the other one to escalate, the moment her hand start resisting, let go
- -pre-emptive sex: when things get heated, take a break
- -keep her panties on for a while then you'd normally go for, as it allows her to feel aroused without feeling in danger

> How to Sexually Escalate With Women (3 Steps)

Exercises

A few of the exercises I liked most from him are:

- 10 reasons why you're the best thing that can happen to her;
- 5 things you wanna see in her ;
- 1 week thinking only positive ;
- 1 week don't qualify yourself ;
- 1 week of certainty in the language (yes, no, and stick to a decision. And if you don't know say I need more time but I'll get back right at you)
- Talk to groups in the street to get in the mindset that having a conversation is normal

Todd Valentine Approach Review

In the video below Todd Valentine discusses *shit tests.*
I have analyzed and reviewed Todd Valentine approach here, take a look

Edit: the video has now been taken down.

- **Todd Valentine approach breakdown**

Day Game Review

I like Todd Valentine and I liked his Day Game work.
He shares some good stuff and good mindsets. Definitely recommended.

Difficult Conversations: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"*Difficult Conversations*" (1999) is a *communication skills book* that teaches readers how to have constructive, respectful, and effective conversations exactly when it's most difficult to have those conversations: when the stakes are high when you are very emotional, and when the last thing you would want is to talk.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - What Are Difficult Conversations?
  - #1. Stick to The Facts: What Happened
  - #2. Do Share Your Feelings
  - #3. Detach Your Identity From The Conversation
  - #4. Letting Go: Do You Really Need The Conversation?
  - Mastering Difficult Conversations
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Accusations are masked feelings: express the feelings directly instead
- Starting a performance review by asking people how they're feeling or how they think they've done is awkward
- If you think it or feel it, you are entitled to say it. Speak for yourself and you can speak with the power
- You can't move the conversation in a positive direction until the other feels heard and understood

Summary

About The Authors: Douglas and Heen are the founders of Triad Consulting Group, a corporate education and communication consulting firm founded by members of the Harvard Negotiation Project.

I have found their work to be of very high quality, including their latest "*Thanks For The Feedback*".

What Are Difficult Conversations?

Difficult conversations are all those conversations we'd rather avoid.

They include complaining to a neighbor about their barking dog or asking for a salary increase at work.

The authors say that underlying *difficult conversations* are three deeper conversations, which are:

- **What happened**: usually involving the facts, what should happen, and where the blame lies
- **Feelings**: the feelings and emotions involved, that most people try to cut out
- **Identity**: some conversations can go to our personal core. Are we good people? Are we competent?

#1. Stick to The Facts: What Happened

The authors say that the common mistake is to stop what has happened at a superficial level.

What we should do instead is to understand what *interpretations* of those events are and what is important to each

party.

For a good resolution, the parties involved should move from their own views of the fact to a curiosity about the other person's view of the events.

For example, you could prod:

> **You**: OK, and does it inconvenience you when I leave you the window open?
> **Them**: Totally!
> **You:** OK, and how od you feel when I leave the window open. Does it feel like I'm being rude?

From then on you can then explain you don't mean to "hurt" them or inconvenience them so that the conversation can move to two human beings understanding each other.

Don't Assume

The second common mistake is that people often assume to know what the other party's intentions are.

But **our assumptions are often wrong because we base them on our own feelings**.
So if we are hurt, then we tend to believe the other party's intention was to hurt us, and that's often just not the case.

Also, there's a certain tendency of going with the worst possible option, which certainly doesn't help in conflict resolution.
The simple solution is to ask the other party what was their intent.

Avoid Blame, Talk Contributions

And the third mistake is to assign blame, which can quickly escalate the situation and take us further from any resolution.

The authors say we should instead focus on finding out how we all contribute to the situation.

Telling first our own contributions can help the other party move away from the natural tendency of blaming.

Here are four common contributions in difficult conversations:

1. **We avoided it for too long**: We often contribute to a problem by avoiding it for so long, allowing it to grow
2. **We avoided the person**: Behaving in any way that makes it hard to talk to. Moving quickly, avoiding contact, being generally unfriendly
3. **We assume righteousness**: We all form opinions based on past experiences and references, but there are no right or wrong, just intersections of different needs and personalities
4. **We assume we're good**: We often assign ourselves positives roles in the issue which is comfortable for us but not useful

To expand your views on the contribution try to look at yourself from the other party's shoes and then look at the whole situation from a third party perspective.

#2. Do Share Your Feelings

Expressing emotions openly is difficult for many of us.

We tend indeed to avoid being too open about how we feel.

This is dangerous, the authors say, because unexpressed feelings tend to fester, find their way back into the conversation in nasty ways and prevent us from listening properly.

The solution is for all the parties to share their feelings openly and clearly. Don't mistake them for facts, this is

important, but don't pretend that feelings are not there. Both their feelings and *your* feelings.

#3. Detach Your Identity From The Conversation

Some conversations are very tough because they inherently touch our own sense of worth.

A job review for example, or talking about how to fix a big mistake.

The most difficult conversations threaten our ego and sense of identity by calling into question our competency or even whether we are worthy of being loved and appreciated (for more details on the importance of feeling worthy of love read Brene Brown – Daring Greatly).

The authors say it's a human tendency of thinking in terms of all or nothing that can make the identity level of the conversation so touchy.
We tend to think we are either great and everyone loves us, or we are terrible and unworthy.
The solution is in adopting the "And Stance" and ditching the "all or nothing" paradigm.

You're not bad because you have done a mistake.
And you can keep interacting and working on things: an issue, a refusal or a mistake does not spell the end of anything.

The authors say that there's a relation between how easily we can admit our own mistakes and our own mixed intentions and how balanced (and strong) we will feel during the conversation.
And once you can adit admit your mistakes and emotions, chances that your difficult conversations will go well will immediately rise.

My Note:
The identity side will always hit harder those people who have a fixed mindset. Read here *how to develop a growth mindset* and *how to develop an antifragile identity*.

#4. Letting Go: Do You Really Need The Conversation?

The authors say that while many of us tend too often to avoid *difficult conversations*, sometimes it does indeed make no sense to have the conversation.

They suggest that working out on your own the three levels of the conversation and drafting a "contribution map" without having the difficult conversation.

That will give you more insights and will also give you a better idea of whether it makes sense to have a conversation or if it's mostly an issue that you have within yourself only -an identity crisis for example-.

Mastering Difficult Conversations

Douglas and Heen provide a lot of practical advice and real-life examples.

#6. Tell The Story From Third-Party Perspective

They say most people start by describing the issue from their own perspective, which automatically raises the defensive barrier from the other party.

The best way to go instead is with a "third story" perspective to describe the issue in neutral terms.

Example: Discussing Open or Closed Window

For example, in my case, my neighbor always opens the window of the common building entrance area.

I hate it during the cold reason as it's expensive for the heating and unethical.
This would be stating the conversation from your own perspective:

> **Your Own Perspetive**: *you always open the window open and it's very cold in here*"

A third-party approach instead would be:

> **Third Party Style**: you prefer having the window open why I prefer having it closed during the cold season.
> I would like to find out why you want it open, explain why it's important for me to close it and find possible solutions.

#7. Do Listen

Listening is one of the most important bits of *difficult conversations.*

And it's exactly what most don't do.

Once the other party feels heard, it calms them down, makes them more likely to hear you, and exponentially increases the chances of effective problem resolution.

The key to being a good listener is very simple: **be genuinely curious and genuinely concerned about the other party**.
Ask questions, ask for examples, and paraphrase what they said to make sure you understand.

You cannot move the conversation into a more positive and constructive stage until the other person feels heard and understood.

#8. Express Your Opinion As Legitimate

Each party must understand that their own views and feelings are just their own and there's no wrong or right.

Also, personal views and feelings are no less -and no more- legitimate and important than any other party.

Don't present your views as if they were the only truth, use the "and stance" and avoid any exaggeration such as "you always" or "you never", which are a surefire way of raising the other party's defensive walls.

#9. Accept There Are Some Difficult People

The authors rightly point out that the other party has likely not read *Difficult Conversations*, so they might remain focused on blaming and arguing about right and wrong.

They provide and detail some great tools, including:

- **Reframing**: for example means taking the blame and accusation of the other party and reframing them in more positive terms for the discussion, for example as contributions.
- **Naming the dynamic**: if the other party goes off track, for example by interrupting or refusing to admit their own feelings, call attention to that behavior and raise it as a point of discussion. The naming of the dynamic technique will make the other person aware of their own behavior.

You could for example tell them:

> **You**: "it's not okay to only look at my contribution.
> I feel like I'm trying to look at the issue from both perspectives. Is there anything I'm doing to make it hard for you to look at your own contributions in the situation?"

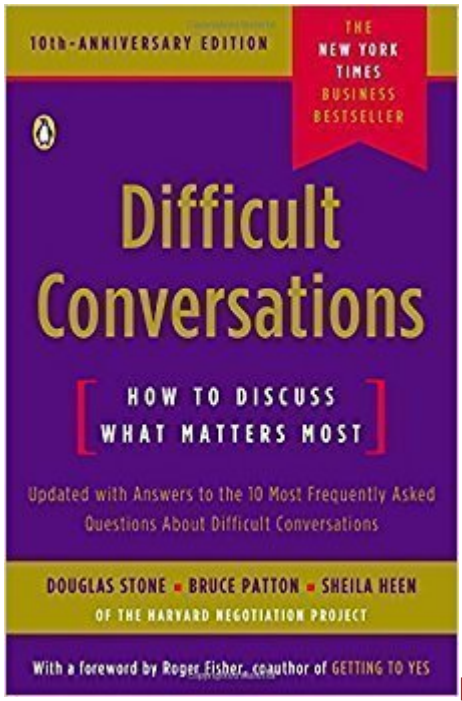
Ultimately,

#10. Find Common Ground Solutions: Mutual Persuasion

Remember that you both need to agree on the solution and that they have to persuade you as much as you need to persuade them.

Ask them what would persuade them, and tell them what would persuade you.

When the parties cannot find a solution working for both, they must decide whether to accept a smaller solution, deal with the consequences, or walk away.



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Review

Difficult Conversations is possibly the best book I have read on effective communication (and indeed it ranks first in the "*best communication skills books*").

I was excited when I first started listening to it because that's the feeling I get any time I have "struck gold": I get excited at how much I am going to learn -and share with you-.

The only caveat we add is that you do NOT want to share your full truth with sneaky people, *manipulators, gaslighters*, and what we refer to here as "turkeys".
In that sense, postulating that anyone is a worthy recipient of your full honesty is plain naive self-help.

Overall, I highly recommend "*Difficult Conversations*".

Also, read:

- **Best communication skills books**

Get Difficult Conversations on Amazon

Maximum Influence: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Maximum Influence teaches readers how to influence and persuade people through a series of science-backed techniques.

Contents

- Full Summary
  - #1. The Rule Dissonance
  - #2. The Rule of Obligation
  - #3. The Rule of Connectivity
  - #4. The Rule of Social Validation
  - #5. The Rule of Scarcity
  - #6. The Rule of Verbal Packaging
  - #7. The Rule of Contrast:
  - #8. The Rule of Expectation:
  - #9. The Rule of Involvement
  - #10. The Rule of Esteem
  - #11. The Rule of Association
  - #12. The Rule of Balance
- Review

Full Summary

About the Author: Kurt Mortensen is an American trainer on influence and persuasion.

#1. The Rule Dissonance

The law of dissonance (Festinger, 1957) says that **people will naturally tend to behave consistently** with their beliefs, attitudes, and values -cognitive consistency-.

Conversely, when we behave in a manner that is inconsistent with our values and beliefs, we tend to adjust our behavior in accordance to our values and beliefs to regain cognitive consistency.

This is similar to the Commitment and Consistency principle in Influence by Cialdini.

This law has many interesting ramifications in our lives.
For example, after we have placed a bet on a horse we feel more sure the horse will win.
Or if we have made a lousy decision sometimes we will fight to prove it was right just to keep that internal cognitive consistency. Buyer's remorse is also a form of cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is a powerful tool you can use by making people commit to something. The more they commit, the more likely it is they will later take action..
Cognitive dissonance is especially powerful when the commitment is:

- Public
- Written
- Preceded by a smaller commitment

- Effortful -the more effort needed, the more powerful it is-

Foot in The Door & Baith and Switch

The foot in the door and bait and switch are all (rather sneaky) techniques based on the law of dissonance.
For an effective FITD:

1. the first request needs to be big enough that it counts as a commitment, but not so big that it can be refused;
2. the prospect must not feel like he's being taken advantage of (that's why it's best a different person follows up on the second request)
3. there must not be external incentives to consent to the first request or the prospect won't feel internal dissonance (similarly Daniel Pink in Drive explains how external incentives cancel internal motivation)

And the steps to use the Law of Dissonance are:

1. Get the commitment
2. Create Dissonance: show your prospect he's not keeping the commitment
3. Offer the solution

#2. The Rule of Obligation

The rule of obligation is what Cialdini calls the rule of reciprocity.

It states that **when people do something for us, we feel the need to reciprocate**.
It's worth noticing that the rule also produces discomfort when we can't repay the favor.

Mortensen cites an experiment that had two people sell raffle tickets.
One was friendly, the other purposefully rude. The rude one though gave people a free drink. And **he sold twice more tickets *in spite of his rudeness* simply because he provided a small gift** that leveraged the law of obligation.

The author says the rule of obligation also works pre-emptively.
By sending a check to physicians in exchange for filling a questionnaire 78% filled the questionnaire VS 66% of those who were promised the check after they would send the questionnaire backfilled.

Even more interesting to me was that of those who received the check but did not return the questionnaire, only 26% cashed the check against 95% of those who received the check after they filled out the questionnaire.

It's been theorized this happened because the physicians didn't feel like they deserved the check and didn't want to feel the discomfort of taking it without giving it back.

Influence People With Mutual Concessions

When we show people we are willing to let them change our minds and opinion, they will also be more willing to do the same.

Basically, **to influence people show them they are influencing you**.

Mortensen says the same is true for secrets.
Sharing a secret with someone will make him feel more intimate with you and compel him to also share personal details.

#3. The Rule of Connectivity

The rule of connectivity says that **the more we attract or connect with someone, the more we will be able to influence them**.

Mortensen says there are four elements of connectivity:

- attraction
- similarity
- people skills
- rapport

Maximum influence then goes over how beautiful and physical attractiveness helps people in all situations and realms of life.

Mortensen also discusses the importance of people skills in getting ahead in life both in your relationships and in your career and that people skills account for most of your career success (80% is a commonly quoted statistic made famous by Daniel Goleman in *Emotional Intelligence*).

Remembering names is a great way to establish a connection, says Mortensen -and if people forget your name, check out "*when someone doesn't remember you*"-.

#4. The Rule of Social Validation

Mortensen says that we are social animals, and many of our decisions and behavior are influenced by the people around us, often unconsciously.

And as much as it would pain most of us to admit, **most of us do what the crowd does** (only 5-10% are rule breakers).
And the more we respect the people in the group, the more their opinion matter and the bigger the group's effect will be.

Social validation can be used both in sneaky ways and in constructive ways.

For example, children scared of dogs who watch other children play with dogs learn through social validation that if the other children can do it, and there's no danger, so can they -67% consented to sit with dogs after watching the videos-.

Similarly, watching a political debate where the crowd cheers for one candidate can easily sway the perception of that candidate in a favorable way (watch more about political debates in *Trump's debate power moves* and *How to Win a Debate*).

The Bystander Effect

Mortensen then goes over the dark side of Social Validation with the famous case of Catherine Genovese and what came to be known as the bystander effect.
The bystander effect says that people are unlikely to provide help when there are many other people around and nobody is acting.

To enhance the effect of social validation:

- Size: the bigger the group, the better
- Familiarity: the more familiar and similar the people in the group are to us, the better
- Clarity: the clearer the social validation aspect is, the better

The Dangers of De-Individualization

Mortensen goes into the de-individualization of the individual when being part of larger groups.

What happens is that **we feel anonymous in bigger groups and we feel we can get away with things we would never do by ourselves**. Anti-social behavior is then also more likely to rise.

An experiment showed how children left alone were almost three times more likely to steal when in a group than when alone, and more likely to steal when they hadn't given their name, thus making them feel even more anonymous.
Think for example of the hooligan phenomenon, or cat calls, which happen most frequently in a group of guys.

Social Validation in Marketing

Calling products "best selling" and "most popular" is an easy way of using Social Validation.

Allowing queues to form at the entrance of a club is another way of showing social validation.

#5. The Rule of Scarcity

People are more likely to act and want something when it is scarce.

This is a known phenomenon and is already well-detailed in Cialdini.

I particularly liked though when Mortensen talks about the principle of scarcity applied to auctions: **we often end up bidding above the value of the product simply because someone else is trying to outbid us,** making the item appear scarcer and more in demand.

To effectively use the rule of scarcity:

- Deadlines
- Limited number
- Possible loss: "you may already be a winner" compels more people to check the sweepstake than "you can be a winner"
- Restrict freedom

Threat of Potential Loss: When an item or a liberty is threatened to be restricted it usually becomes even more important to us. The mental trigger of potential loss can make us fight to defend something that we might have never even used otherwise.

Scarcity in Marketing

Some examples of the principle of scarcity in marketing are:

- Exclusive membership requirements
- Airlines informing they can only reserve your seat for a limited time
- Online hotel booking informs you only one room is left
- Sales "by invitation"
- Offers not available in stores, or not available online

#6. The Rule of Verbal Packaging

As Tony Robbins often repeats, language directs thoughts and emotions, so the way you speak will influence both yourself and the people you communicate with.

Need I say more than what I already wrote? Language directs thoughts and emotions and can make people act in ways they wouldn't.

#7. The Rule of Contrast:

The rule of contrast is all about human perception.

If I told you my legal fee was 3.000 you could be shocked.
But if I told you that you risk going to jail and having to pay 300.000 in reparations and a few days later I tell you I've just saved you from all of that and give you 3.000 bills you'll be delighted.

Mortensen says that timing is important: the two alternatives should be one after the other -or, as in my example above, still be fresh and relevant in the prospect's mind-.

Usually, negative information is more powerful than positive ones, and unluckily negative information tends to command more real estate in our minds.

Some ways the rule of contrast is utilized:

- Sweeteners: adding bonus items
- Reduce it to smaller units: instead of the yearly or monthly payments, break the costs daily and show how small they are
- Shift focus: your product is 3% fat? Say it's 97% lean instead
- Door in the face: start with a huge request and your smaller follow-up request will seem small
- Comparison: similar to door in the face but you present an undesirable alternative

#8. The Rule of Expectation:

Expectations influence reality.

Mortensen says that what is expected usually gets done.
People often rise to meet your expectations of them, and they also lower themselves to meet your low expectations (also see "*How to Win Friends*").

Assuming the sales is a typical way that expectations can influence reality, and the place effect is probably an even more surprising one.
Setting goals is also a way to tap into the law of expectations.

First Meeting Expectations: Mortensen notices how often people turn out to be just as we expect them to be as soon as we meet or sometimes even before we meet them. He says this is because we send unconscious signals treating exactly how we expect them to be, and they rise to those expectations.

#9. The Rule of Involvement

Involvement means having the person you want to influence participate more actively. Mortensen says that you can increase participation with:

- Role-Playing: let them make arguments against their own resistances and objections
- Asking for Advice
- Visualization
- Physical movement
- Increased Interactions: studies in retail showed that talking longer to a prospect increases the chances of sales
- Increased Contact: trying something on makes us more likely to buy
- Questions
- Riveting Stories
- Repeat and Repackage: the more we hear something, the more it grows on us. Mortensen says to repeat 3 times, with different words
- Building Suspense

#10. The Rule of Esteem

Mortensen says that acceptance and craving are some of our deepest cravings.

He then goes on to say that pride is the opposite of self-esteem and is usually a red flag for low self-esteem.

My Note:
I disagree here. Pride can be a roadblock in your personal development, but it's not a negative thing. You should be proud of yourself -just proud of the right things, of course-.

#11. The Rule of Association

Mortensen says that link objects with our inner states and feelings.

Anchoring (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) uses the principle of association to create a specific gesture that we will associate with a feeling.
Once we want to recreate that feeling we will just have to repeat that gesture then.

Endorsements of famous people and endorsements also work with the law of association: we associate the positive qualities of the famous person or event with the product.

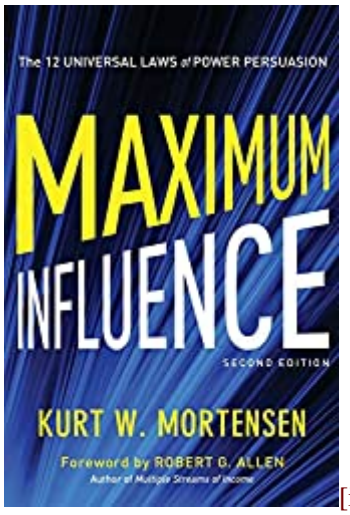
How where you are, who you're with, and how you associate, can affect the perspective of others.

#12. The Rule of Balance

Mortensen says that to persuade you have to focus on emotions but still maintain a balance between emotions and logic.

In most persuasions indeed people act on emotions and afterward justify their actions with logic.
A message only of emotions will set off alarm bells, while only logic will not compel enough to take action.

How to work both the logical mind and emotional heart of a person.



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Review

Maximum Influence is a great book on persuasion, I enjoyed it all the way and absolutely recommended it.

As a matter of fact, I will tell you that "*Maximum Influence*" is a vastly underrated book.

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Social Exchange Theory: What Is It, and How to Use It

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Social Exchange Theory is one of the foundational frameworks in social dynamics and behavioral science for understanding how relationships, influence, and status actually work.

At its core, it explains a simple but powerful reality:
people gravitate toward interactions and people that increase their value and avoid those that decrease it.

Yet many intelligent and well-intentioned people struggle socially and professionally because they misunderstand how value, investment, and perception operate in real interactions.

This guide breaks down the science of social exchange and introduces the **TPM Social Exchange Model**, a structured, strategy-focused application that translates established theory into practical tools for becoming a higher-value, more effective man.

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Based on established social exchange theory, the TPM Social Exchange Model combines research-backed principles with proprietary insights and actionable strategies to help men become higher-value and more successful.

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Intro & Definitions

The social exchange theory postulates that people's interactions and relationships work like exchanges of value and investment governed by cost-benefit analysis

Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Blau, 1964) is one of the foundational frameworks in social dynamics and behavioral science. And 'mental accounting' enjoys interdisciplinary support ranging from evolutionary psychology and relationship research, to intercultural negotiation, and intercultural persuasion.

The social exchange theory is

A framework that conceptualizes social relationships as exchanges in which individuals seek to maximize personal returns.

The social exchange theory starts from the premise that people seek relationships and people who add value to their lives, advance their interests, and generally make them better off.

Also read:

- **Social Investment Model**, applying social exchange dynamics to investment and effort

Value is

In social exchanges, social value is an umbrella term for everything that makes or can make people better off (value-positive)

Think of value in an all-encompassing way.
Making people feel good, or simply being a pleasant person to talk to, are also forms of value. What people want and appreciate is value-positive, and what they dislike and avoid is value-taking.

There are two high-level forms of value:

1. **Personal Social Value (PSV)** → *who you are*
   Traits, status, competence, personality, attractiveness, intelligence, reputation, etc.
   AKA: 'personal value' or 'social value' in general discourse.
2. **Value Exchange (VE)** → *what you give/take* (relates to 'investment dynamics')
   Favors, time, help, money, effort, support, opportunities, introductions, etc.

AKA: Give-and-take, investment

Total Social Value includes both.
The Social Exchange Model covers both, and they overlap and feed into each other, but they also have importantly distinct dynamics.

Passive Social Value

Passive Social Value™ refers to a latent form of value derived from inborn or low-effort traits such as looks, fame, or generational wealth.

Value-Givers/Takers

Value-givers are individuals who add net positive value, either through behavior, give-and-take, or association.
Value-takers are individuals who extract net value, either through behavior, give-and-take, or association.

Givers and takers can apply to any currency and at any level, ranging from a single back-and-forth in 1:1 interactions, to a lifetime and in relation to humanity.

People tend to like value-givers more, and to dislike and avoid value-takers.

Social accounting is

Social accounting is TPM's term for the cognitive process by which individuals unconsciously or semi-consciously track and maintain mental balances (positive or negative) of value-giving and value-taking transactions in their social interactions and relationships, applying to both actual or anticipated exchanges.

There is evidence that people tend to keep a "social accounting tab" in their minds (Buss, 2019).

And the results of our mental social accounting influence people's behavior.
When we expect a value-negative transaction, we avoid people. And **when we see the potential for a value-positive transaction, we welcome people** -or even chase them-.

Learn more:

- **Effective calculativeness**, a foundational component of social accounting
- **Machiavellianism**, a strategic predisposition skewed towards social accounting, 'what's in it for me', and strategic signaling

Social capital is

Social Capital is the net balance of your social ledger with others. It is the sum of your **social credit**, accrued through value-giving, and **social debt**, accrued through value-taking. High social capital functions as "relational equity," granting you influence, leverage, and the benefit of the doubt in future exchanges.

High social capital means others perceive you as a net value-positive individual, based on past contributions and expected future value.

As a result, people are more inclined to like you, seek you out, and maintain a relationship with you.
High social capital also increases goodwill, bargaining power, and influence.

⚠ **Note: Giving & investment must be matched by personal value, power, and smart strategies**
It's not wise to seek social capital by giving and giving (value exchange) because that frames you as lower *personal* value and trying to make up the difference ('Compensatory Investment Principle™'). It's a form of 'buying' their affection and time that often loses you respect and attraction. Focus on personal value instead, and be a smart giver.

Giving and expecting to win is naive. You need to give SMART. That's a foundational principle of TPM

Passive Social Capital

Passive Social Capital™ refers to the *potential* of giving, a latent, net-value effect that high-value people enjoy without even having to give anything

High-value people often enjoy initial social capital simply based on their passive social value, without having to give anything.

Social currencies are

A social currency is a specific form of value

Value can be traded in countless different ways. Beauty, kindness, cooking skill,s or owning a villa in Tuscany are all forms of value one can possess.

Total Social Value

Total Social Value is the net overall individual value within a social exchange, resulting from the balance of one's positive and negative attributes.

People compute 'social value' based on both objective-leaning criteria, and more subjective and contextual ones. The result differentiates people along a partially subjective spectrum of 'low' and 'high' value.

Social value in dating is also referred to as 'sexual market value' or 'mate value'.

High-Value People

Individuals with a high net overall value within a social exchange

High-value people tend to be selective because **people who have a lot to give also demand a lot back**.
So high-value people prefer associating and exchanging with other high-value people.

Indeed, unless blessed by excesses of value in some areas, people tend to pair up with mates of similar socioeconomic background and attractiveness, a tendency referred to as 'assortative mating' (Buss, 2019).

Also read:

- High value men, traits, and how to become one

⍰⍰ Approach High Value People Strategically

High-value people tend to be suspicious of those who pursue them because they're rightfully on guard against lower-value people who may turn out be 'value takers'.

Low-Value People

Individuals with a low or negative overall value within a social exchange

There are countless ways of being low value, or a value taker.
Fortunately, most forms of value-taking can be addressed with self-development.

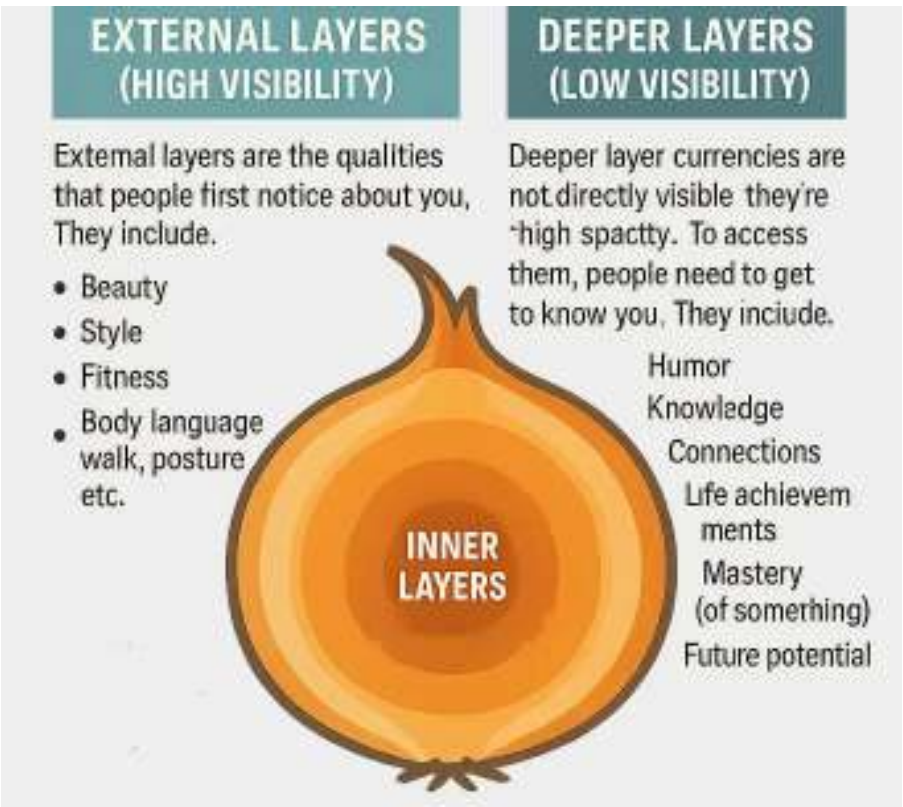
Also, read:

- Low-value women
- Low-value men

Value Visibility Model

Value Visibility Model™ is a TPM framework postulating that **exchange dynamics are largely shaped by *visible* value**.
As a result, strategic actors engage in 'value signaling' and, potentially, deceptive signaling to increase their own perceived value.

To understand and influence these dynamics, it's helpful to look at different currencies of value in terms of *visibility*.



External Layers (High Visibility)

External layers are the qualities that people first notice about you.
They include:

- Beauty
- Style
- Fitness
- Body language, walk, posture, etc.

Deeper Layers (Low Visibility)

Deeper layer currencies are not directly visible; they're 'high opacity'.

To access them, people need to get to know you.
They include:

- Humor
- Knowledge
- Connections
- Life achievements
- Mastery (of something)
- Future potential

Being VS Appearing: A False Dichotomy

The popular 'being' VS 'appearing' argument deals with the *visibility* of social currencies.

And while virtue-signaling behavior dismisses the more visible currencies, deep down people know that *both* are valuable.

Plus, albeit at times tenuous, there is a relationship between external and internal traits (Miller, 2000). And both layers influence each other, and feed into each other ('halo effect', Thorndike, 1920).
For example:

- Beautiful people are perceived as smarter (Kanazawa, 2004)
- People in authority positions are perceived as taller (Blaker and Van Vugt)
- Great personalities who make us feel good are more attractive (Tornquist, 2015)

And the opposite is also true.

This argument sometimes parallels the similar 'being' VS "having", which relates to exchange value vs. personal value, where 'being' is associated with deeper traits of *personal* value.

External Layers 'Gatekeep' The Deeper Ones

Value-gatekeeping™ is the mechanism by which highly visible outer layers invite or repel access to deeper, lower-visibility inner layers of value.

Important real-life implication:

Few people are interested in your deeper qualities if you don't reach at least a minimum threshold of *external* qualities.
External qualities get your foot in the door.

⍰ Example:

How willing are you to associate with someone who lacks basic self-care, including hygiene?

Such a person might have much wisdom to share, but few people will stick around to find out.
Simple association with a negative-value individual can undermine your own status ('law of association').

Who would you rather date, befriend, or even talk to? The woman on the left isn't just more attractive. She also sub-communicates better "deeper" character-based traits

Value Signaling

Value-signaling refers to the communication or sub-communication of one's social value, where the approach and effect depend on objective value, strategic predispositions, and interpersonal skills.

Smart marketing of value is what differentiates successful social strategists from average guys.

We have many articles and a best-in-class course on how to signal value, but the first and most important shift is mental:

Mindset: switch to a "WIIFT approach"

The biggest improvement for beginners is to stop seeking value first, and ask yourself what you can provide for others.
A "what's in it for them" approach brings self-development and strategy to the forefront.

Some techniques:

- **Value-signaling**: the primer and framework
- Effective self-promotion at work
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The Relativity of Value

Social value is relative.

In economic terms, a $1.000 hunting rifle has low value outside of hunting aficionados. But if society were to collapse, it would be invaluable.

Currencies in social exchanges are similar.

Any type of skill or positive trait is a positive currency.
But how much people value them depends on the individual and the situation.

In dating, a man's wealth would matter much less for a woman looking for a one-night rebound.
This is why moving to sexual marketplaces that are more in line with your goals is a powerful 'hack' to boost your success.
Some other examples:

- **Status-relativity**: status is a form of social power and value, and it's entirely group-dependent (power beats status)
- **Role-based relativity**: a professor is higher value when he's in professor role at school, but just another guy outside of it

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Currency Hardness™ refers to the breadth of social appeal of a given social currency. Hard currencies are universally valued and readily accepted, while soft currencies have limited marketability or only niche and situational appeal.

While subjectivity matters, some social currencies enjoy broad appeal ("hard currencies"), and some others are more situation or individual-specific ("soft currencies").

To make an economic parallel, you can have 1 million in USD, Ukrainian Hryvnia, or in raw material, say, palladium. Everyone will take your USD and give you back whatever goods you want, but few will take your

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In human social exchanges, money and looks are hard currencies. Knowledge is a softer currency.

Social Exchange Manipulation

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Whenever a signal can impact an organism's odds of surviving and reproducing, there is an evolutionary incentive to fake that signal (Dawkins & Krebs 1978).

So it would only be expected to find manipulation when it comes to social value-signaling and value exchange. Value Scalping™ refers to personal value manipulation, while Social Scalping™ refers to value exchange manipulation.

Here's an overview of social exchange manipulations with extra examples.

"Social scalping" includes a host of manipulation tactics to:

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The manipulaotr uses the extra credits to get more concessions in negotiations, more favors in friendships, win more arguments in relationships, and, in general, gain more power and control.

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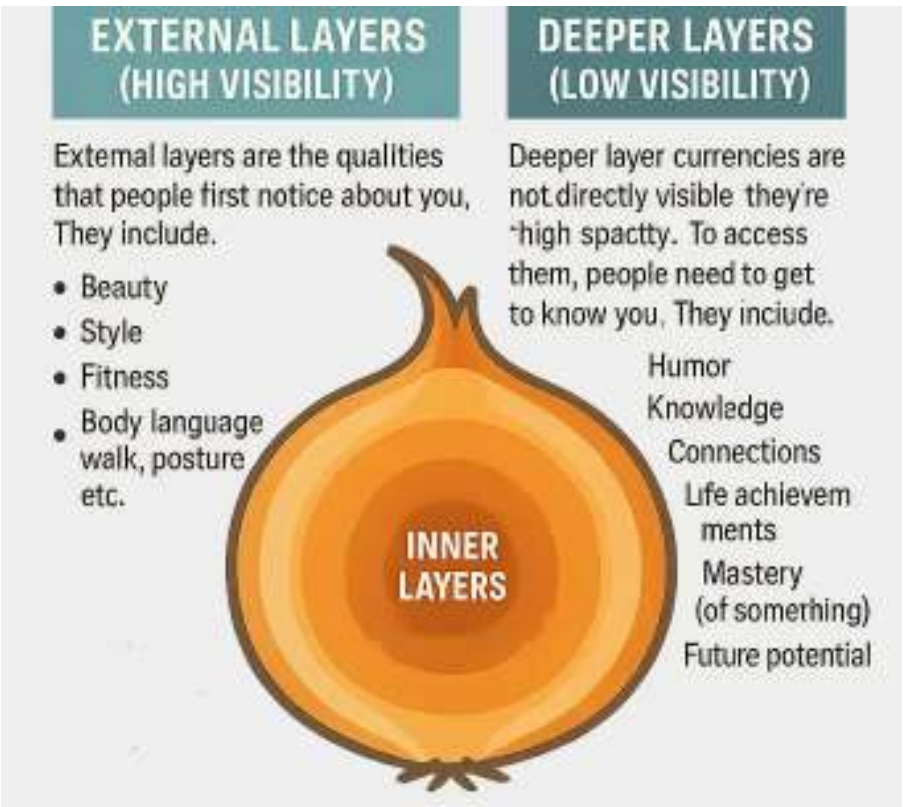

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Barack Obama's Social Climbing: A Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Why is social climbing so harmful for a leader?

This article will answer that question -plus what you should do instead of social climbing-.

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  - 2. Throw Social Weight Around
  - 3. Delivering Hurtful Remarks (Masked as Jokes)
  - 4. Physically Exclude, Ignore or Reject
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- Why Leaders Must Avoid Social Climbing
- Summary

Obama's Social Climbing

These are the most typical social power moves people engage when they social climb.

Many of which Obama used over and over:

1. Piling Up on the Weak: Bullying

Of all the Status Power Plays, this takes the crown as the most heinous.

It's bad enough to status jockey with your peers, but picking on the weakest to score an easy win and look cool and powerful is simply low, low, low.

Bullying can be either physical or verbal, and it's often about social status rather than bullies' 'insecurities' (CNN study).

To me, this kind of thinking is the sign of an excuse-making mindset.
Someone is mean or violent and someone who's afraid of standing up for himself says "deep down he's really just a little scared and insecure maybe".

Well, maybe he is.
Maybe not though.
But this is more ahole behavior and you're losing power and accepting a submissive role if you let him behave like that without even trying to do something about it.

The difference between bullying and all the other categories below is that here we're witnessing a full-on and direct attack. The others instead tend to be more hidden.
Bullying confers the following social points to the misguided perpetrator(s):

1. Strengthen the group by creating an out-group
2. Increase the bully's own self-confidence
3. Raise the value of the group (by communicating people like the victim(s), are not good enough to be in it)
4. Confers social power to the bully: he can harass with impunity

2. Throw Social Weight Around

Throwing social weight around is a common -and seemingly benign- Status Power Play.

You throw your social weight around when you use your position to pile social pressure on others.
This makes the person socially higher up feeling strong and powerful and it often embarrasses or diminishes the one on the receiving end.

Throwing social weight around confers social status by highlighting the perpetrator's position by showing how giggly/embarrassed/shy/weak at the knee people around can get.

Many of us have been guilty of it, and I know that I have. It feels particularly good when people are not very used to their social power, so that wielding that invisible weapon for the first time feels exciting and builds social confidence.

A typical example is when we make jokes about someone in a group and most people are laughing.
Except the person on the receiving end who is instead uncomfortable.

And what do many people do?

Of course, they *keep* making those jokes.

The group keeps laughing, increasing the social standing of the person who makes them laugh and all, of course, at the expense of the butt end of the joke.

See what's happening in the video?

The people start laughing at the poor girl, who's so embarrassed and overwhelmed she has a typical ostrich reaction: hiding her face.

Obama didn't go in saying, "I'm gonna embarrass her", quite the opposite, he wanted to help.
But he ended up doing just the opposite when he caved in to the sirens promising cool social points.

So he pointed at her and cracked a joke for the amusement of the bystanders. In that moment, he was basically communicating "look at her, how embarrassed she is for having fallen off stage in my presence".

3. Delivering Hurtful Remarks (Masked as Jokes)

Delivering hurtful remarks is one of the nastiest Social Power Plays because it is often less focused on building one's own social status than on tearing down others.

The idea is that, if you take social status away from others, but keep yours more or less intact, then you still gain because someone else has less status now.

It can also be concocted in a way that you look good by comparison, as in the case below.

Obama attacks the republicans, all of them, by saying they can't handle "a bunch of CNBC moderators".

This is a heavy attack which makes him look good because in a way he is saying that *he* can handle world leaders and *he* would easily chew those CNBC moderators like nobody's business. He also looks good by taking away status from Republicans, while democrat's status stays intact.

In doing so, however, Obama is not only taking a jab at *all Republican candidates*, but at the same time he is also lowering the status of all the CNBC moderators, making them look like weak and easy to dispatch. Nasty.

It's neatly masked as a joke though, so that people laugh at it.

Notice also Obama uses a Strawman technique here (which you can check it on this YouTube video).

4. Physically Exclude, Ignore or Reject

An easy and obvious way of raising one's status is to ignore, reject or leave someone out in the cold.

When someone rejects you, ignores you or turn their back to you they are communicating you are not valuable enough for them, not worth of their attention, or not good enough to be in their group. A rejection immediately places the rejecter above the rejected in the social hierarchy.

In some exceptional cases, some women do this by stopping talking to you or turning around or raising their hand in front of you, maybe even very theatrically if their goal is to let everyone know they are rejecting you.

Most of the time it's physical, but sometimes it can be verbal too.
For example, once I was at a company party with a group of three, and one of the two higher-ups suddenly blurted out:

> Well, it was good seeing you

And kept looking at me as if to imply I was supposed to move.

Note though in this case, it's not the girl who's being mean or anything, it's the guy who is being a social burden.

5. Flaunt Superiority With Punishment Threats

The leader position sometimes carries with it the possibility of retaliating or using physical or military force.

The basic concept is that he can do more damage to you than you could possibly do it to him. If he ever wanted, that is. He might also be nice and just imply it ;).

The Social Status gain here comes from the display of sheer force: if you're the one who can resort to force and violence and win, then it's difficult attacking your position.

Obama in the video below is veeeery subtle about it. Try to watch it before reading below and see if you can spot it:

Did you try?

So here it is then: Obama has a big-ish ego and always feels the need to hit back and assert his status.

When the guy says “don’t touch my girlfriend” Barack is a bit lost and his first reaction

> **Obama***:* I wasn’t really planning to

This is a defensive statement.

But as he regains his bearings, he goes on the attack.
First, he says

> **Obama**: *Mike is such a fool*

Which was unnecessary and mortifies the already anxious woman.

And he then adds

> **Obama***: fortunately the president was nice about it*

And that was the hidden threat (also see: covert power moves).

It was the implication that he, the president, could have NOT been nice about and unleashed some consequences for the rascal who dared to joke around the president.

6. Exploit Mistakes to Self-Aggrandize

This is another value-taking move.

It highlights the mistake someone has made to make him look poorer and, by comparison, makes us look better.

I have often seen this one in relationships, especially from men who feel the need to somehow reassert their intellectual superiority on the relationships (read combative relationships).

Needless to say, these aren’t great relationships.

In this clip, the guy asked Obama a silly question, something like plans about nuclear war with Russia.

So silly indeed, it didn’t even deserve comments or wasting any time on.
But Obama pounces on the occasion, raising it to a worthy discussion point, if not only to make everyone laugh and gain some “smart ass social points”.

All at the expense of the heckler of course.
We could easily say that the guy had it coming for his nonsense quip, but the best course of action was different.

When someone has a (brain) fart the highest value behavior is to help them save face and move on.

Exploiting mistakes is weak, and even weaker when they come from easy-to-attack people.
Typical social status climbing behavior.

Why Leaders Must Avoid Social Climbing

Social climbing shows insecurity.

A leader, by definition, is a high-status individual who sits at the top of a social group.

And if you’re “officially” at the top, you shouldn’t need Status Power Plays in the first place.

If you're at the top and social climbing, you communicate you do not FEEL like you're at the top.

And people around will feel like you are overcompensating.
That's their insecurity.

They're afraid someone might take their position. Their fear and insecurity, then leads to seeking the constant validation that comes with re-asserting their superiority.

The team that these leaders "lead" or the relationships they form tend to be combative and ripe with constant backstabbing and status jockeying.
Not good.

What do the high value leaders do, then? We'll go over it more in detail eventually, but here's an overview.
Effective leaders:

- Build people up (not tear them down)
- Address major challenges, but ignore minor ones
- Help people save face
- Make people feel good about themselves

Summary

Social climbing is an attempt at increasing one's social standing by attacking and taking away other people's value.

They are terrible for leaders because a leader, by his own position at the top, should not need to take away other people's social value.
An effective leader should instead focus on improving his group, which comes in good part from building up the people in it.

As a final note, I used Obama as an example because he tends to be more subtle than many others. And as they say, when you train in hard mode, you dominate the medium and easy mode.

Also read:

- Why you must quit social climbing
- Social climbers types and how to defend yourself

When Someone Makes You Wait: Psychology & Tactics to Get Respect

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

It's upsetting when someone makes you wait.
And if you're wondering 'is making someone wait disrespectful', the answer is that **yes, it's disrespectful to make you wait.**

Maybe it wasn't a calculated power move to assert power over you. Maybe they were busy, or are disorganized. Sometimes it's hard to say.
But waiting disempowers you independently of their intentions.

And **how you respond to being left waiting determines your relationship**, whether it's one based on respect or not.

Let's learn the best ways to handle it.

WTF dude… I've been waiting here for one hour

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The Power Dynamics of Making Someone Wait

Making you wait disempowers you because it frames you as lower power and lower value.

It sub-communicates that:

1. **You are needier** if you rushed and wait, it means you probably need something from them.
   Ie, a salesperson does not make the prospect wait
2. **He is more powerful**: making someone wait is disrespectful, and disrespect is 'more acceptable' when it comes from above.
   Ie, employees don't let bosses wait
3. **He is higher value** because whatever else they were doing is more important than you. And it lowers your value by sub-communicating that your time is not as important as theirs

As per Social Investment Model, effort and returns also play a role in disempowering you.
Punctuality doesn't come naturally to everyone; **punctuality takes effort**. You expanded that effort for them, but they didn't do the same for you.
Low Social ROI also signals low power. You're wasting your time waiting, with negative-ROI on your time. They're not.

In sum, the power dynamics are clear: you're being disempowered.

How to Wait For Someone

Of course, you are not cool with any of those implications, so let's see how you restore some power balance.

1. Prevent It By Meeting at Your Convenience

Prevention always goes a long way. Here are a few I routinely deploy:

- **Meet Close to Your Place**

The man who travels to meet the other signals lower status (Blau, 1964). So, whenever possible, choose meetings that are easy for you.

- **Confirm The Meeting**

If it's anything you have to leave the house for, always confirm the place and time on the morning of the scheduled meeting. Confirmation will make it harder for them to let you wait without looking disorganized.

- **Plan B**

"Plan B" is anything allowing you not to waste your time if you have to wait. For example, I always have noise-canceling earphones with a new audiobook on my phone, so worst case scenario I imbibe knowledge :).

Power Dynamics

The more you inconvenience yourself to meet someone, the more power you are giving them.

Now remember, there are exceptions: if *you* need something from them, then *you* should make it easy for them and meet as close to them as possible.
If it's a meeting with a friend, meeting middle way or alternating between easy for you and easy for him is fair.

2. Start Without Them

> ***You Wait for Nobody***

Once they fail to show up in a timely fashion, whenever possible start doing whatever you had planned to do without waiting.
So if you are sitting at a diner table, order. If waiting outside the office for lunch, go by yourself. If you are at a meeting, start the meeting without them.

Once people join the meeting later they will feel they have been marginalized and might try to grab attention back. They might say "sorry I was very busy". Or they might try to interrupt your speech with some made-up stuff like "sorry I was busy, where can I sit".

Don't dignify their excuse or you are giving them power back.
Instead, say it's OK, but say so very nonchalantly, and then move on. If they ask you a question, don't reply verbally or reply the bare minimum.

For example, if they ask where they can sit, keep talking, and point to an empty chair.
If they ask for a recap, don't give a recap and say you will take it offline 1:1 after you're done. If you can't avoid answering, add a little zinger in there. Something like:

> *"Yes, this is important for you to know so I'll repeat. Everyone else has already heard it so I'll be brief"*

You're communicating here that because of them every one is being inconvenienced and you're not afraid of

highlighting it.

Notice: "*this is important for you to know so I'll repeat*" is a great way to reduce your compliance with them. Instead of just following the order you add that you repeat… Because it's important for them to know, not because they just told you. Don't let the late *ahole* take away your power, but comply because you want to instead.

Power Dynamics

Waiting dignifies the late party and acknowledges that they, indeed, are important and can keep you waiting.

It's also a bad operant conditioning strategy as now everyone will think it's OK to come late.
And when you fail to educate people to respect your time, you can kiss goodbye to your chances of ever starting on time -and generally being respected for that matter-.

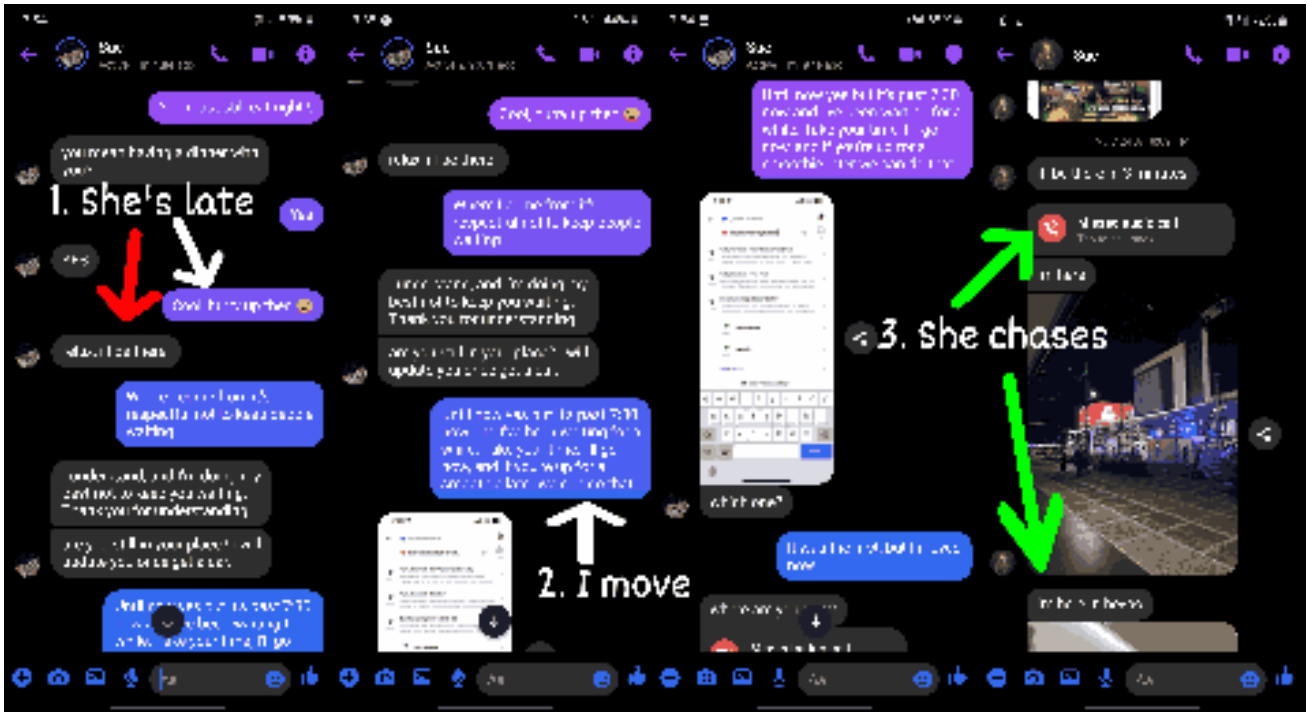
Starting no matter what instead does the complete opposite. It puts pressure on them for having joined late and sends the message that you wait for nobody.
Powerful.

> (Kabhib tells the organizer to start)
> **Kabhib**: I don't need to wait for nobody. This is 3pm, friends are here, media is here, everyone is here. Dana a little bit late but it's OK. But 3pm I begin, if you guys have questions, let's go.
> (15 minutes later)
> **Kabhib**: hey guys, thank you so much, it's 15 minutes late, this guy hasn't shown up, it's big disrespect, tomorrow at 9am I'm gonna show you my weight. See you tomorrow guys. Good night (and leaves)

Kabhib did great to start the conference on time. And by leaving early he totally denied McGregor's power move. McGregor arrives at a conference that had already started and ended.

In dating: leave

My date had me waiting.
AND had an attitude:



> **Her**: (late) <— She's already in debt for keeping me late
>
> **Her**: Relax, I'll be there <— Out of place
>
> **Me**: Where I come from it's disrespectful to keep people waiting <— The covert frame is a cultural difference around time and commitment. But going deeper via text is too high investment
>
> **Her**: I understand and I'm doing by best
> (…) Thank you for your understanding <— Covert power move. Imples that I will understand. Professional tone is out of place
>
> **Me**: (moves) <— She will have to make it up to me with her investment (text, calls, worrying)
>
> **Her**: Where are you
>
> **Me**: I moved
>
> **Me**: (stops replying, order and starts dinner)
>
> **Her**: (chases me and shows up at the restaurant, where she will pay for her dish)

3. Busy Yourself

> ***You ain't got time to waste***

If you can't start, *use* that time.

Bring anything with you that allows you to turn any downtime into productive time -including waiting for *some ahole* to play his games-.

If you have a laptop, use it. Or carry an ebook reader, or put an audiobook in your phone you can listen to.
If all else fails, call someone you had to call or call someone you didn't have to call just to say hi.

Power Dynamics

You are communicating here that you are a man who places a high value on his time and is not to be inconvenienced by their power plays. It will also soften the power of their move as you didn't feel any impact.

4. Even The Scores: Let Them Wait

> ***Tit For That: Fight Fire With Fire***

This one comes straight from Allan Pease.

When your beloved Power Mover finally shows up, let him greet you first and be slightly colder than usual in your greetings.

If you are behind a laptop screen or if you were reading an ebook, don't raise your head until they say something. Let them speak first, and then slowly raise your head and slowly pack.

If you were talking to someone, finish the sentence or keep talking for a little bit before you turn around to say hi:

you will communicate that the party who respected your time and presence gets more respect than the party that let you wait.

If you were on the phone, keep talking for a little bit longer before you hang up and possibly shake the Power Mover's hand while you're still on the phone -a devilishly sneaky move to lower his status-.

Look at the clip below.
Notice Ashton Kutcher doesn't say anything when his date arrives late and is rather cold and standoffish (turns his head the other way, and looks ahead into space).
He puts social pressure on her to speak first, lean towards him, and apologize, which helps restore some power balance.

> **Her**: (arrives late)
> **Him**: (says nothing, lets her speak first to expend more effort, and turns to his right when she goes to his left)
> **Her**: I'm late, will you ever forgive me (power moves start already)

Note:
She's very shrewd though, and hell-bent on keeping the power on her side. She leads towards the table first and thus forcing him to follow. But that's another topic

Power Dynamics

If you greet him first as soon as he arrives, you look like a dog waiting for the owner.
Letting them come to you and greet you first instead is a very easy way of restoring some power balance.

And of course, make them apologize:

5. Assertively Call Them Out On It

> ***…And Don't Rush Saying "It's OK"***

If they enter the room or join you pretending nothing happened, they are disrespecting you.

That's when you want to straighten things out openly or prod them into an apology.

If you are on the same level or if you are above in the company or social hierarchy, be open and direct.
Tell them it was not OK to let you wait and please not do so anymore without any warning. An apology is almost guaranteed at this point and you can resume being friendly after that.

With fresher acquaintances or with a *job interviewer* or boss, you want to be more indirect.

For example, you could look at your watch when they enter the room.
A further step below that, here are a couple of nice ways to nudge them towards an apology while at the same time showing some warmth:

> *"Hi, pleasure meeting you, I was thinking something happened"*
>
> *"Hi, good to see you, I was getting worried everything was OK"*

Power Dynamics

People who are inconveniencing you should be *volunteering to* apologize for the delay. If they don't, it's only fair you nudge them towards it.

6. Let Them Pay

> **How to Restore Power Balance**

If we are talking about a major delay and you're meeting for a coffee or lunch a person looking for a fair relationship might offer to pay.

At that point, you can go ahead and refuse because what matters most is the gesture.
The gesture, in this case, shows sincere apology and concern, which by itself restores the balance of power.

If you were the one running late you can actually end up strengthening the relationship when you volunteer to make

it up for them because it's an opportunity to show that you care.

But "letting them pay" doesn't have to be financial.
If the power mover doesn't apologize sufficiently, you could for example leave earlier than planned saying you unluckily have something important to attend and it's unfortunate you two only had so little time to share.

He came late, and you leave early, 1-1.

7. Cut Them Loose

Are they doing it over and over?

If you're dealing with people who repeatedly disrespect your time or who don't do anything to excuse their behavior, then it's time to consider appropriate alternatives.
It might be time to cut them loose.

Here are a few considerations to assess if that's appropriate.
Excluding people who simply don't get it, there are two possible scenarios:

1. They don't value you
2. They are actively trying to undermine you

If they don't value you, you can keep interacting with them in case you are the only party who's getting value from the interaction.

For example, if the other party is your mentor, and he's always late, you can willingly decide to take that disrespectful attitude in exchange for his help.

If it's an otherwise balanced relationship and they still often let you wait, start demanding investment back to be on an equal footing, and if they refuse to stop meeting them on their terms.

Restoring Power The Right Way

Human relationships can be seen as exchanges.

Is it you who needs something from them?
In this case, don't go overboard with the above tips.

Was it them who wanted something from you?
Then follow each and every step from above and quickly end the relationship if they don't take major steps to restore the balance.

And of course, if we're talking about close relationships, always cut more slack because it's more unlikely we're talking about Power Moves there.

Mindsets

As usual, the mindsets are the most important part.

You Respect Others, & Demand Respect Back

This is *the basic mindset of assertiveness.*

You are looking for a fair and balanced relationship.

Even if you're *at a job interview* and theoretically you want the position more than they need another candidate, there's no excuse for playing power games.

Letting you wait on purpose is indeed a sign they are not looking for a fair relationship.
But that doesn't change who you are and what you're after, and that's why:

No Vendetta: Only a Fair Relationship

You're not looking for vendetta and you don't sulk like a wronged kid.

You deploy any method you can to restore the power balance because you always stand up to power plays and demand win-win relationships.

But once you restore the balance, you stop pushing.
As a matter of fact, once you achieve balance, you turn 360 degrees and make them feel good they helped you balance the relationship. That's positive operant conditioning right there.

When you do that, people will feel you're a man of high value and will feel like idiots they tried to play you now that you're so welcoming.

Your Time is Valuable

Finally, you view your time as valuable.

You don't necessarily want to be mean, but you're not going to sit at a restaurant table fidgeting around.

Summary

Making you wait is one of the oldest Power Moves around.

It disempowers and lowers your value and empowers and raises the value of the person making you wait.

Your goal then is to neutralize these effects.

The above techniques are all designed to reset the power balance and restart afresh towards a win-win relationship.

Or, at least, a relationship where you're not losing.

That's what a *high-value man* does: win-win ideally, but definitely not losing if win-win is not possible.

How to Make Her Change Her Mind After Rejection: 7 High-Value Tactics

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

If you're wondering how to make a girl who rejected you change her mind, the answer is simple: show her that you're much better than she thought.

This article shares tips and techniques that display high value and increase the odds that she will change her mind about you.

Note on consent: she must be the one to make the final decision because it's the best choice for her
Changing a woman's mind is about making the relationship a win for her. It always implies full consent because being with you is a win for her

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- Common Mistakes When a Girl Rejects You
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  - Avoid Thread-Expanding the Rejection
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Intro

We will address the topic of rejection and changing people's minds.

The first part deals with the techniques on what to do when a girl rejects you, and the second part on the general principles of rejections.

Let's start:

1. Prevent The Rejection

The easiest way to change her mind is to never get rejected in the first place.

Basics: Be Higher Value

Start with some basics:

- How to be a high-value man
- How to signal power and status
- How to lead your dates, like a masculine man

⍰ Tactics: Work Your Way Up In Smaller Steps

Imagine these two scenarios:

1. You meet a girl at the bar, chat for 10 minutes and then invite her home
2. You meet a girl at the bar and ask her about her life. And then:
    1. Tell her to see her bracelet;
    2. Tell her to come to sit with you somewhere;
    3. Tell her to watch your stuff while you take a leak;
    4. Tell her to go get some air;
    5. Finally, tell her you should go chill a bit back at yours

The second could take the exact same time, but it's immensely more likely to end up back at your pace.

Why?

It's because it followed a more linear progression where you took the lead role in incremental steps.
She granted you that position and got used to answering yes and investing more and more.

⍰ Ask More Persuasively

Some questions make it easier for the girl to say "no" than to say "yes".

And those are the questions that most men ask.

You want instead to make it easier for her to say yes by making the first move.

⍰ Example: Asking Girls Home The Correct Way

I like to ask girls if they want to come over while we're still walking, not when we've stopped.
And sometimes I will ask them after we've already passed their metro station.
There's little pressure on them, we're already moving and the dynamic expects a yes, which makes it very easy for them to just say "OK".

Here's another simple example.
Instead of saying "do you want to dance with me?" and then wait, tell her "shall we have a dance" and stick your hand out.
Much easier for her to follow your lead because you don't place the burden of decision-making on her:

> **Him**: this music, this place… Will you dance with me (*and* sticks his hand out)

2. Show You're Unaffected: Emotional Poise

What really sinks most men after a rejection is not the rejection itself, but their reaction.

They act like beaten dog who've been denied the treat. And that signals a lack of confidence and options.
Women don't want men who are easily broken. They want stronger men who can handle setbacks… And turn them around.

Sometimes simply displaying you're unaffected is enough to change her mind.
If not, it will make your job easier later on.

What if it was a test?

Most rejections are real.
But sometimes some women may reject a suitor to display preselection, gain power, or test your reaction.

In those cases, ignoring it and don't try to change her mind.
Trying to change her mind would only strengthen the frame that she's the prize. And the more you invest and chase, the lower value you become (Buffalmano, 2026).
And women don't like sleeping with powerless and lower value men.

Instead, keep acting normall.
Paulson and Roloff indeed found out that dealing with the rejection without mentioning the rejection at all, resulted in higher compliance rates (Paulson & Roloff, 1997).

Note: most rejections are REAL, don't act like they're not

3. Take a Step Back & Display Value

Instead of trying to change her mind, which is reactive, **stop chasing**.

This works best when you can see the "no" coming up, before it materializes, and to display value and bond more before escalating once again.

For example:

> (…)
> **You**: *"hey, I'd like to get a coffee with you one of these days when we have a bit more time"*
> **Her**: "*Hmm.. I'm quite busy these days"*

It's a polite "no", but it's not a "no" yet.

Instead of pushing or accepting the "no", interact a bit longer, show how cool you are, and chargeback later

> **You**: *"yeah, I can feel you, I barely got time to eat these days. What are you busy with"*
> **Her**: *"I'm working on this building model for uni and I have to finish it next week"*
> **You**: *"Oh cool, what kind of model are you working on"*
> …..
> ….
> **You**: *"Hey look, we're both busy, but we can exchange contact and schedule for when we have a free evening"*

This approach worked countless times for me.

4. Agree and Redirect

In some situations, you can agree with her, go along with it, and then change direction to something more fruitful.

For example:

> **Her**: "*OK, I need to go see my friends now"*
> **You**: "*You're right, this place is too smoky, let's go outside"*
> (Start walking with her)

Try to spot when Ashton Kutcher uses the same technique:

Notice she says “I’m leaving”, and he jumps on the occasion to take a huge plunge in the seduction: going straight home.
Instead of arguing on a possibly losing battle -to stay longer-, agree -leave- and redirect -leaving together-.

A similar technique is to agree and pretend it was your idea so that maybe you can have another chance at a different time. But this is more defensive and we’ll go over it in another article.

5. Change Tack

This is the bazooka you will use once you’re already knee-deep in bad precedents, especially if it’s over setting up a date or exchanging contacts.

The problem with getting a NO is that it sets a precedent.

And the more “NO” you get, the harder it is to buck the trend.
What you do then go for something big that takes her out of her rejection autopilot and turns the situation on its head.

For example:

> ….
> **Her**: “*I don’t drink coffee”*
> **You**: *“Well, Katy, I suppose you understand it’s not about the drink but about knowing each other”*
> **Her**: “*Yes, but I live far”*
> **You**: *“Alright Katy. I’m not here to waste your time, or mine. I’m looking for a serious relationship. I don’t know if you’re right yet and how knows I may be a good fit for you. I propose a coffee, and if you don’t think I’m a top option for you, you just walk away*

You can also use this with bolder approaches with a higher lover frame who wants to ‘give a good time’. But that’s more advanced stuff.

In any case, this technique scrambles everything and gives you the chance of *taking the lead back*. Also, it goes from asker -the guy who wants a date- to giver -giving her amazing sex-.

6. Get YES With *Calibrated* Persistence

NEVER become antagonistic after a rejection.
It’s weak, reactive, and makes women unsafe. The *opposite* of good seduction.

Instead, it works better to be, for example, *playful and energetic*.
Avoiding the overly serious signals that you’re not too concerned or boring.
And most of hell it staves off any chance she could think you’re annoyed, irritated or angry: women are naturally afraid of men who lose their temper too easily when sex is at stake because it rings rape danger bells.

Insisting is an art in itself and deserves its own article, we have examples in Seduction University.

⚠ #7. Bold Move: Acting On Underlying Attraction (not recommended)

For obvious reasons, this is high-risk.

See here an example:

I don’t recommend going for the kiss after a rejection as that would be too much of a step.

However, you can still be cool, lead, and see if she's willing to follow.

Common Mistakes When a Girl Rejects You

After this article, you can already understand many most common mistakes. But here are a few examples of what not to do when a girl rejects you:

Arguing Over Nothing

Sometimes the rejection can be not about you, but about your ideas, opinion, lifestyle, or whatever.

You don't need to agree with her, but it's paramount you don't let the disagreement become an argument and a reason why the two of you can't be together -if only for a brief night-.

You will see it often from the less socially savvy guys when they escalate their differences into heated arguments about who's right or wrong.

I remember years ago going back home to a girl's place.

As we drank and smoked weed, she started with her left-wing tirades and I didn't resist raising a few questions. A little argument ensued and I managed to go back without seeing any action.

God, I was a dumbass :).

Avoid Thread-Expanding the Rejection

Sometimes rejections are just stock sentences without any meaning.

It's a huge mistake trying to "convince" her she's wrong because you force her to repeat over and over that it's not going anywhere between the two of you.

A typical example is the girl saying you're just friends and the man saying it's not true.
Talking about a losing battle :).

Ryan Gosling makes that mistake in "Crazy Stupid Love":

> **Him**: I find you very attractive, do you find me attractive?
> **Her**: I don't
> **Him**: You do
> **Her**: I don't
> **Him**: permission to approach the bench (and now he's trying to "convince" her after he has thread-expanded on the no, he's fighting an uphill battle)

It was too early to ask her "do you find me attractive".

As she repeats NO both in her mind and verbally, that only serves to entrench her position.
The more we repeat something, the more real it becomes. And it triggers the *Commitment and Consistency principle*, which will make it harder for her to behave later on like she actually likes him.

After saying no it would have been better to smile and add "sure not".

No Ladder

You probably heard about the YES ladder.

Well, the NO ladder works exactly the same way but in the opposite direction.

Some guys make this mistake of confusing persistence with “asking the same thing over and over”, just changing a few words here and there.

The result is that they get rejected over and over.
As a matter of fact, two NOs in a row are already enough to sink you.

> **Him**: maybe you can show me around
> **Her**: I don’t think so. Can I get you anything else?
> **Him**: how about your phone number

Asking for her phone number comes too soon after the “no”. He had to give it more time.

Grit: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Grit is the combination of passion and perseverance and, author Angela Duckworth says, is the biggest predictor of achievement.
Grit explains how you can find your passion and how you can increase your grit.

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Bullet Summary

- Grit is a mix of passion and perseverance
- Grit matters more than talent in achieving success
- You can grow your grit
- Find an interest, develop it into a passion, and stick with it

Grit Summary

About The Author: Angela Duckworth is a psychology researcher, Oxford, and Harvard alumni, and psychology teacher at the University of Pennsylvania.
She became popular because of her research on grit, perseverance, and achievement for which she also won a McArthur award.
The concept of Grit and Duckworth's research has been controversial.

Part I: What Gris is and Why it Matters

Chapter 1: Showing Up

Angela Duckworth begins *Grit* with a quick overview of the psychology of the highly successful.

She says that the most successful people:

- Have huge perseverance
- Never feel like they're good enough, but are satisfied being unsatisfied
- Love the chase as much as the capture
- Have an enduring passion for carrying them through boring and painful times
- They know what they want: they have both determination and direction

And it's that mix of passion and perseverance that Angela Duckworth calls *Grit*.

> Grit is a mix of passion and perseverance

Grit Matters Most

Angela Duckworth studied the challenging Westpoint induction training.

She wanted to see what differentiated those who made it through from those who dropped out.
And she found out that Grit was an astoundingly reliable predictor of who made it and who quit.

She ran the same study with sales representatives, a profession with a notoriously high turnover rate.

And again Grit was a huge predictor of who stayed and who quit. Grit mattered more than any other personal trait.

Grit was of course not the sole predictor of endurance.

In sales, for example, previous experience mattered; in school, a supportive teacher helped students make it through; and for the military, the physical fitness at the start of the training also made a difference.

But Grit was important to *all* of them and mattered even when the other predictors were absent.

> Our potential is one thing. What we do with it is quite another

Chapter 2: Distracted by Talent

Angela Duckworth says that in spite of the USA being a country where most people appreciate and idolize effort and hard work, often that's more lip service than reality.

She says that, **deep down, we all love "naturals"**.

And experiments show that people would rather hire naturals and believe that naturals have higher chances of succeeding than hard workers, even when their skill set is completely the same.

The author says that it's a bit like people saying they don't care about physical attractiveness, but then we actually pick the cute partner to date when given the option.

Angela Duckworth says that talent is not a bad thing -of course, it isn't- and, importantly, that we are *not* all equally talented.
But the biggest reason why the preoccupation with talent is harmful is that we risk forgetting all the other important traits that matter, like Grit.

Chapter 3: Effort Counts Twice

The author says that our human tendency when we look at someone highly skilled is to stare in awe and think it's raw talent. "He's naturally gifted", we tell ourselves…

Angela Duckworth quotes Dan Chambliss when he says that, of course, not all of us will become Michael Phelps, but that the talent needed to succeed in swimming is lower than most people think.
And, importantly, that **greatness is doable**.

As long as you understand that a high-level performance is backed by countless hours of mundane work behind the scenes.

I found it fascinating to read the reason why Angela Duckworth says we all love talent, and **we all love talent because it lets us all off the hook**.
If the achievements of others are because of something magical, or because of some lucky mixture of genes, then we don't need to compare ourselves to them.

They are the special ones and freaks of nature, and we are normal.

Angela Duckworth's Achievement Equation

Talent x Effort = Skill →
Skill x Effort = Achievement

Talent is how quickly your skill improves when you invest effort.

Achievement is when you take the required skills and use them.
Notice that effort figures twice.
First by building the skill, and second by deploying those skills until you achieve your goals and objectives.

The author recognizes that this equation is incomplete as it doesn't include other important variables -ie.: a great coach- but adds that it's still relevant to understand the importance of effort.

Will You Quit at the First Obstacle?
Angela Duckworth says that many people often start things full of excitement, only to give up too soon when they encounter the real first obstacle.

We quit what we start way too early way too often.

But what really builds skills and leads to achievement is waking up day after day and staying at it.

Chapter 4: How Gritty Are You

Grit is about working on something you love so much that you simply want to keep at it.
Grit is falling in love and *staying* in love.

The author then proposes a test to assess how gritty you are.

My Note:
We all love tests with neat and defined results, but since it's based on self-assessment of yourself I would recommend taking it with a pinch of salt (or not taking the test at all).

Grit has two components: passion and perseverance.

Angela Duckworth says that passion often gives us the idea of a quick infatuation, but in high achievers, passion is about consistency over a long period of time.

> Grit is working on something you love so much that you simply want to keep at it

Grit & Goals

Grit means keeping the same end goal -which she calls a “life philosophy”- over a prolonged period of time.

Importantly, gritty people have related lower-level and mid-level goals supporting their life philosophy.
Imagine a pyramid, with the lower-level goals all there in support of the top.

On the other hand, people lacking in grit tend to have goals that don’t align. And some other people have a big final goal but without any supporting mid-level and lower-level goals. The author calls it “positive fantasizing”.

You can, and sometimes should, swap or scrap lower-level goals if that makes sense in your circumstances.
You should however strive to stay stubborn about your high-level goal.

> Grit is falling in love and STAYING in love

Chapter 5: Grit Grows

Of course, the author had to touch on the all-encompassing question: is Grit a “given” or can we change it?

Grit & Genes

Angela Duckworth says that the short answer is that in part our *Grit* is genetically determined.
But don’t start cheering or using that as an excuse yet.

All human traits are a mix of genes and experience and you can influence all of them.
Even height, the stereotypical genetic trait, is more malleable by the environment than most people think.

The next paragraph teaches you how you can grow Grit, but I think it’s also interesting to take a look at inter-generational Grit.

Angela Duckworth says that the previous generations show more grit than millennials.
She says this could be because of a different cultural environment, but also because millennials are younger today and Grit grows with age.

How To Grow Grit?

Angela Duckworth says most people quit because they:

- Get bored
- Don’t think it’s worthy
- Can’t see themselves ever making it.

She then says there are four specific psychological assets that the Grittiest people have and that serve to counter the forces that urge us to quit.

They are, in order:

1. **Interest**: Passion starts with enjoying what we do. You don’t have to enjoy every single part, but you enjoy it overall
2. **Practice**: You must devote yourself to improving in your focus area zeroing in on your weaknesses. “Whatever it takes I want to improve” is a common trait among gritty people
3. **Purpose**: The conviction that your work matters, that it’s connected to the well-being of others. Interest without purpose is hard to sustain
4. **Hope**: Hope encompasses all three stages and is what will keep you going when things are difficult and doubts arise

And the beautiful thing?

You can learn all four elements.

You can learn to become interested, you can build the habits of practice and discipline, you can develop a purpose and you can become a hopeful person.

> Enthusiasm is common, endurance is rare

Part II Growing Grit From the Inside Out

Chapter 6: (How to Find Your) Interest

Angela Duckworth says that you don't usually find your passion as if a bolt hit you from the sky.

From her interviews, most people found their passion by exploring many different interests they had.

Why It's Hard to Find Our Passion

Barry Schwartz says that most people don't stick to anything they are interested in because they have an overblown expectation of what it means to "find your passion".

It's a bit like a life partner, Barry says.
Some dream of a knight on a white horse with a book-long list of qualities.

But in real life, nobody has a book-long list of qualities without some deficiencies here and there.
And a related problem is the idea that falling in love should be sudden and swift to be "real".
But again, life is different, and love often grows.

To Find Your Passion try What You Life

To find your passion, try to go for something you believe you would like.

Don't be afraid of guessing if you're not sure, because there is definitely an element of randomness and trial and error.
Sometimes it can also be difficult to predict what you will enjoy, and if you pick the wrong one, don't be afraid of moving on.

It's also important that you *do* what you like because you don't find your passion through introspection but with first-hand experience.

In the beginning, our interests tend to be feeble and ill-defined, and indeed Angela Duckworth says that often the discovery of a life passion can even go unnoticed.
That's why it's important to at least give a fair chance to any new endeavor we start.

Once you start finding a certain topic or activity interesting, it might happen that you want to try something.
That's because, the author says, our brain loves novelty. Before switching, see if you can deepen your interest instead.

And remember: if you want to stay engaged in anything for the long term, you have to learn to enjoy the nuances and details of your discipline.

Finally, I would also like to add that, as Angela Duckworth herself highlights, the people around us are important in whether we will take a liking to something or not.
And early positive feedback serves to make us feel happy and confident we are indeed pursuing the right choice.

Finding Your Passion Step by Step

1. Try different things which seem interesting to you;
2. Pick one which is particularly interesting for you;
3. Proactively develop that interest;
4. Further, deepen it over a lifetime.

So, to be clear and for your complete understanding, it's more about "developing" your passion than it is about "finding" your passion.

> **You don't find your passion. You CHOOSE it and DEVELOP it**

Chapter 7: Practice

Experts don't just practice more, but they practice differently.

Grit by Angela Duckworth talks at length about the concept of Deep Practice.

Deep practice means zeroing in on your weaknesses, focusing more on what you did wrong than on what you did well.
And then fixing it.

Deliberate practice is exhausting.
Many top performers can only handle one hour before taking a break, and no more than 3-5 hours per day.

To improve more quickly under deliberate practice, follow these steps:

1. Set a precise stretch goal
2. Focus 100% on it
3. Get immediate and accurate feedback
4. Repeat and refine

Fear of failure and of looking bad are the worst enemies of deliberate practice.
It's because since the core idea behind deliberate practice is to train based on mistakes outside of your comfort zone you simply can't allow shame to hold you back.

Also check *Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown, largely based on beating shame and living fully.

Deliberate Practice VS Flow

Deliberate practice and *flow* are different.

Deliberate practice is a behavior and it's more effortful and rarely as enjoyable as flow.
It is planned and happens when you're beyond your skill level. Your goal is to increase your skill and you are looking for problems to fix.
Finally, deliberate practice is for preparation.

Flow is a state instead and it can be more challenging to accurately plan.
In flow, you're not analyzing what you're doing but simply doing it and you're effortless.
All the feedback you get is often great and not based on mistakes because your skill level is enough for the challenge.
Flow is for performance.

Deliberate Practice for the Gritty

Gritty people do more deliberate practice and experience more flow.

Importantly, gritty people also experience deliberate practice as more enjoyable than less gritty ones.

But some high achievers hate the practice part but still maintain an overall passion for their sport.
Some others go through hard practice for the pleasure of the final result (as Tim Grover explains in *Relentless*: these people are addicted to winning).

Overall, Angela Duckworth says there is not enough evidence to say whether or not deliberate practice can be perceived as enjoyable and effortless as flow.
Her own experience says that deliberate practice can be gratifying, just in a different way than flow is.

Learning to Work Hard

I think a key nugget of information that might slip by since Angela Duckworth didn't drill down on it is that the experience of working hard changes when the effort is rewarded.

Therefore If you're a parent it's important that you reward your children for the effort.
And if you're an adult you reward yourself for your hard work as that will help you link pleasure -or at least a pleasurable follow-up- to hard work.

To get to know more about effective practice, I invite you to check out:

- Peak
- Mastery

And for "flow", go straight with the original work:

- Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Performance

Chapter 8: Purpose

Angela Duckworth says that often gritty people have difficulty in putting into words what they feel about their purpose.
But the key is that purpose is always connected to other people.

Their action can be driven for the sake of the sport, for the country, or for some specific person. Or, in general, for what we matter to others.

However, an altruistic principle is not a strict requirement for grittiness and it's well possible to be a gritty villain.

Chapter 9: Hope

The hope of gritty people has nothing to do with luck but has to do with getting up again and again after we fall down.

The author calls "hope" what to me seems "optimism".
She says that optimists are different in that they find explanations for their failures that are temporary and specific.
Pessimists instead explain their failures with permanent and pervasive causes -ie.: "I'm a loser", "I always mess things up"-.

She is right, and she is referring to Seligman's groundbreaking studies of optimistic salespeople who outperformed pessimistic ones.
Also, read:

- Learned Optimism

Duckworth also talks about Growth and Fixed mindset and says that a Growth Mindset is strongly linked to higher levels of Grit (*read how to develop a growth mindset*).

Duckworth says that many of us often have a pessimist fixed mindset in us alongside the optimist growth mindset we profess.

Angela Duckworth says that a fixed mindset about your capabilities leads to a negative and pessimistic explanation of events, which in turn leads to both avoiding challenges and giving up early.

It makes sense.
If you believe your capabilities are fixed, why would you go through challenges?

On the other hand, the author says, a growth mindset leads to optimistic self-talk and Grit in the face of challenges.

> Grit is falling seven times and rising eight

Part III – Growing Grit From Outside In

Chapter 10: Parenting for Grit

Angela Duckworth says there is much research on parenting and some research on *Grit*, but no research on both of them.

The author says that authoritarian parents are demanding and unsupportive while permissive parents are supportive and undemanding.
She recommends instead a middle way that takes the positives of both of them: demanding and supportive parenting.

And the best way to grow Grit in your children is to show grit yourself and then adopt a parenting style that encourages your children to emulate you.

Chapter 11: The Playing Fields of Grit

Students who engage in extracurricular activities for longer than a year are more likely to graduate and do better in almost any measured trait from grades to self-esteem to employment after college.

The author recognizes the first doubt I had while reading that: is it sticking longer through extracurricular activities that helps, or are higher achievers simply more likely to stick longer to their chosen activity?

She says that the two aren't mutually exclusive and that both factors -cultivation and selection- are at play.

Learned Industriousness

The association that working hard leads to reward can be learned.

Because when we don't make that association, we tend to fall back to laziness.
We human beings have a tendency to preserve energy as much as possible when we don't see the point of action.
And when we don't make the association that working hard pays off then, guess what? We will not work hard.

The Hard Thing Rule

Angela Duckworth raises her children with the Hard Thing Rule.

The hard thing rule says that:

1. Everyone in the family has to engage in an activity that requires deliberate practice
2. Finish what you start: you can't quit until the course ends, the season is over or something major happens

3. You get to pick what you want to do
4. Once in high school, the kids must commit for at least 2 years

> If we don't associate hard work to rewards, we won't work hard

Chapter 12: A Culture of Grit

The culture we live in and with which we identify powerfully shape our behavior and, with time, our identity.

This is critical because our identity shapes our character and behavior.

Basically, sometimes we process information logically to reach a conclusion.
But many other times we don't deeply assess what are the benefits and drawbacks of our daily decisions, but simply revert to "who we are" and what people like us do.

This is important, Angela Duckworth says, because the results of long-lasting effort often take years to materialize.

And when we don't have an identity to push us through we might simply be tempted to give up when the results are both uncertain and so far away.

Chapter 13: Conclusion

You can grow Grit in two ways:

- From the inside out, by developing your interests into passion
- From outside in by immersing yourself in the kind of culture that promotes and foster grit.

The author also says *Grit* is of course not the only thing that matters in life. And if Duckworth had to choose for her children between goodness and Grit she'd choose goodness.

Angela Duckworth divides the major personality traits into three groups:

- Intra-personal (will)
- Interpersonal (heart)
- Intellectual dimension of character (mind).

Grit is part of the Intra-personal dimension, which also includes for example self-control, and this is the cluster that is most predictive of achievement.

For a healthy social life, though interpersonal traits are most important (check out this website's course to take your social skills to the next level).

Practical Applications of Grit

- **Focus on growing gritty**

Grit not only will make you more successful, but it will also make you a happier and prouder person.
Once you rationally understand that, start making it your goal to be grittier. And be proud when you show Grit so that it will start becoming part of your identity.

- **Associate hard words with results**

You have to believe that results will come via hard work applied over a long period of time.
This is a kind of mindset you have to develop and make yours. This is also connected to a *Growth Mindset,* which is the belief that with hard work you can improve yourself.

- **Grit-tify your goals**

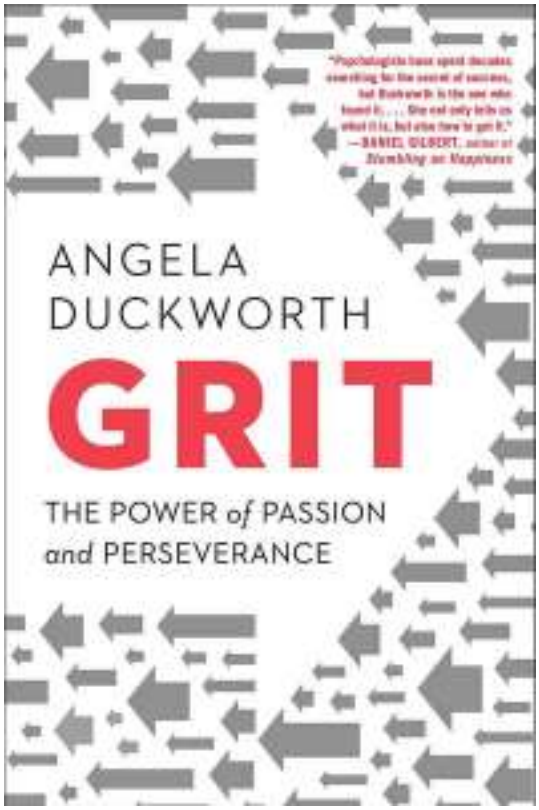
Divide your goals into short-term, mid-term, and long term and make sure the shorter-term ones support your overarching goals (your life philosophy). That way it's easier to know what you can change or quit while staying gritty with your overall goal.

- **Choose gritty friends**

The culture and the people around you influence you and do so powerfully. Hence, if your goal is to achieve something lofty, escape from the pot-smoking friends and join a group of highly driven men and women.

- **Develop your passions**

You don't "find" your passions, you develop them.



Criticism

"Grit" as a psychological trait might not exist.

Grit is likely to be simply another definition of consciousness as measured in the Big Five personality traits.

You can read more here:

- Pop psychology myths list
- Self-help myths

This does not necessarily change much in what grit, or call it "tenacity" or "staying power" if you prefer, means to your success.
However, it does, in my opinion, take away from the author's personal reputation.

As Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules for Life* says in this Quora answer, Duckworth never apologized for her (likely) mistake.
Personality psychologist Keith Campbell said the same:

> Consider the case of the Grit Scale, created by psychologist Angela Duckworth, who wrote about it in her bestselling book Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance. Her TED Talk on grit is one of the most viewed.
> The Grit Scale captures an important trait in what determines success versus adversity, especially for long-term goals. However, as several researchers reported in a 2017 meta-analysis, **grit turns out to be a variant of the Big Five trait of conscientiousness—but with a cooler name**. That doesn't mean there is anything wrong with the Grit Scale, and in fact, it means the scale was well built, but it is redundant in some ways.

And it does cast a shadow of doubt upon Duckworth's recipes on "how to increase grit", which now basically rests on… Little science?

Personally, I believe in the validity of this grit and/or conscientiousness. And I also tend to believe in the validity of combining passion with perseverance to "deepen" your passion.

Review

Grit is a good book, and although founded on a 'wrong' scale that replicates conscientiousness, it remains valid in many of its takes on what contributes to long-term success.

Check out the best psychology books, or **Get Grit on Amazon**

Winning Body Language by Mark Bowden: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"Winning Body Language" is a book on **body language** focusing on public speaking, developing rapport, and communicating trust.

TPM Strategic Take: Great for trust signaling and rapport, but you must also signal power
Winning Body Language focuses on emotional signaling and rapport-building, all important and valid for speakers However, ambitious men's body language in daily interactions must also signal status, power, and leadership—not just trust and openness.

Contents

- Summary
  - 1. Gesticulate From the 'Truth Plane'
  - 2. Stand Tall & Feel 'Grounded'
  - 3. Gesticulate Higher From the Chest to Signal Passion
  - 4. Ensure Your Mouth is Visible (Disclosure Plane)
  - 5. Gesticulate at Head-Level to Signal 'Thinking'
  - 6. Consider How You Use Right / Left Plane
  - 7. Keep Above Your Head for Over-The-Top (Ecstatic Plane)
  - 8. Use the Indeterminate Smile to Draw People In (The Gioconda Expression)
  - 9. Use the Head Tilt to Show You're Listening
  - 10. Use Symmetrical Body Language
  - 11. Boost People's Status (Yes State)
  - 12. Push to Signal Rejection, Pull to Signal Acceptance
  - 13. Careful Around Handshake Power Plays
  - 14. Focus on influencing instead of 'reading'
  - 15. Be Aware of Power Dynamics & Social Exchanges
- Review

Summary

Mark Bowden starts by saying that most business presenters do it all wrong with their body language.

For example, many have their hands by the side, hunch over their shoulders, and crunch their stomach in.
Some even tuck their head in, narrow their eyes and move around.

This is all wrong, the author says, because this is what the human body naturally does when we are getting ready to attack or to face an attacker.

We lower our center of gravity to be more grounded, to duck more easily and we move around so as to stay a moving target and jump more easily if needed.

Other signs of flight or fight are moving to the angle of the audience to decrease our vulnerable area and to hide behind an object.

Now the issue with that is that we mirror what we see other human beings do.
And if the message we send is a nervous and aggressive one of fight or flight, that's what the audience will be

feeling.

1. Gesticulate From the 'Truth Plane'

Never drop your hands by your side and never stand still.

Even if that's what many presentations of training recommend: S.

Instead, the universal signal that lets everyone know you have good and positive intentions is to gesture on a horizontal plane originating at the navel.

Mark Bowden calls the plane originating from the navel the "Truth Plane". Keeping your hands in the Truth Plane will also naturally let you fight anxiety and helps you relax.

The author also speaks about a client of his who was extremely tense about public speaking.
The suggestion of positive self-talk of his colleague was utterly useless.

Bowden is indeed of the opinion that in almost all cases of stage fright battling the fear is useless.
Instead, he told him to accept his anxiety for what it is, embrace it, and counter it with hands in the Truth Plane. It worked like a charm.

Step away from the podium (unless it signals high authority)

A podium, by denying access to the speaker's Truth Plane, can be a barrier to trust.

An exception is when the podium presents some important logo or insignia at the belly height that restores that trust and symbolism.
The eagle on the US presidential podium is such an example.

Mark Bowden says that another drawback of podiums is that the only gestures the audience will see are the ones on the chest area, the Passion Plane, which is more likely to make the speaker seem a bit too excited and over the top.

2. Stand Tall & Feel 'Grounded'

Mark Bowden says that "breathing from the belly" is not the magic pill that will instantly make you an effective presenter.

Instead, he says to breathe effectively you need to imagine a string is pulling you up from the crown of your head, lengthening your spine and at the same time making sure you stay well connected to the ground.

When you breathe with this position, Mark Bowden says, you are mostly in the in-breath position. The in-breath inspires the audience, and the out-breath expires them.

TPM Note: this 'in-breath/out-breath' could have been better clarified.

3. Gesticulate Higher From the Chest to Signal Passion

The Passion Plane expands from our chest area.

When gesticulating from this level, you raise the energy level.
The Passion Plane can also come across as aggressive, so Mark Bowden says you want to use the Passion Plane for content that is exciting and energetic, and you want to communicate from the Truth Plane for content that you want to come across as honest and sincerely felt.

Bowden's example is a business situation in which a woman calms an irate customer by sitting down, thus staying physically lower, exposing her belly by moving the chair away from the table, and gesticulating on the Truth Plane.

4. Ensure Your Mouth is Visible (Disclosure Plane)

The author says that the jaw and mouth are the disclosure plane.
If the audience cannot see this part, it will seem as if we are closing off and not revealing all the information.

5. Gesticulate at Head-Level to Signal 'Thinking'

Mark Bowden says that at the level of the eyes and the temples we have the thought plane.

Gesticulating from this area near our head will put a mental strain on our words.
But if we move our hands wide apart, it will seem agitated and crazy

6. Consider How You Use Right / Left Plane

The author then speaks a bit about the significance of gesticulating on the left or right plane.

He says that for most people the right hand is connected to the left side of the brain and to cognitive thoughts and the other way around.

Telling someone to imagine something with your right hand works better and using your right hand for multiplication tables will make it easier to follow them.

TPM Calibration Note: While Bowden's "Right/Left Plane" theory is based on the biological cross-wiring of the brain, no scientific is provided that it will impact your persuasiveness.
Treat the "logic vs. imagination" hand-gesturing as a **minor optimization** at most, rather than a fundamental pillar. Over-calibrating on "left vs. right" can lead to unnatural, robotic movements that actually *decrease* trust. What I recommend instead is to pick one side that you will stick for a certain point, and the other for the opposite point.

7. Keep Above Your Head for Over-The-Top (Ecstatic Plane)

Mark Bowden says that gesticulating above our heads will give our message an elated, over-the-top feeling.

8. Use the Indeterminate Smile to Draw People In (The Gioconda Expression)

An indeterminate smile is what Gioconda has in the famous Da Vinci painting, but also the Ko-omote smile.

A similar smile is an indicator of acceptance that makes the audience feel welcome and invited into the conversation.

The author says that this type of smile is positive enough to draw a viewer in, but at the same time, it's also indeterminate enough that the viewer projects his own feelings onto the face, thus inviting the audience to look in themselves.

The smile is positive enough to invite a viewer toward it with a feeling that he will be accepted, yet indeterminate enough that the viewer easily projects many of his own feelings onto the face of the communicator (the mask)—again to feel accepted.

In short, an indeterminate smile invites the members of an audience to look into themselves.

9. Use the Head Tilt to Show You're Listening

Mark Bowden says that tilting your head does not drop your status making you look subservient -unless you believe listening is subservient, he adds-.

Indeed the head tilt sends the message that you are listening. And a prolonged or heavy tilt adds strong empathy.

I also found it interesting and noticed it myself when testing, that tilting your head to the left engages the right part of the brain and tends to furrow your eyebrow with thoughts and questioning. A tilt on the left instead gives a

lighter feeling.

TPM Note: consider a straight head and using nods and 'uh-uh' instead. I recommend this approach for most men

10. Use Symmetrical Body Language

Beauty matters and symmetry an important cue of beauty and mate value.

Armed with this knowledge, Mark Bowden says we should strive to use symmetrical gestures, which also help lead the eyes of our audience more easily toward our mouth.

So here's a sneaky power move: **when you talk about your competitors, keep a positive appearance at a verbal level but use asymmetrical body language**. Back talking about your company and product, go back to symmetrical body language.

11. Boost People's Status (Yes State)

Mark Bowden says that we all naturally move towards increasing our status and we naturally move away from decreasing our status.

So if you could communicate in a way that increases people's status, they'd be drawn towards you.

That's the "yes state".

You get into the Yes State by opening up and exposing your full belly and chest area to your audience.
Lengthen your spine so that you stand tall and confident, yet vulnerable at the same time.

To get naturally into a Yes State consciously think "yes, good" and your body will follow.

The author says that performance reviews are most often seen in a negative way no matter how you try to spin the "improvement areas" because they're often delivered with closed body language.
And when you can give a reward experience with your feedback, the need for a raise in salary is reduced.

Mark Bowden says that you can watch the Yes State in the Hollywood actors on red carpets and as they stand with for the paparazzi's pictures.

I particularly enjoyed when the author suggests you use the Yes State when you are under attack in business situations.

Instead of closing off and going on the defensive, open your body, show your belly area, nod, and put on a gentle smile.
He says you will be amazed at how quickly you can move him to your side.

12. Push to Signal Rejection, Pull to Signal Acceptance

Mark Bowden says that pulling something towards us is a gesture of acceptance while pushing away is a strong gesture of rejection.

13. Careful Around Handshake Power Plays

The author says that an effective handshake that builds trust makes full palm-to-palm contact.

If you push your hands towards your partner's stomach he will become passive even when he was aggressive at the start of the interaction because, near this vulnerable part of the body, he unconsciously feels that his position is now compromised.

You are now the one in power.

Read more:

- Handshake power moves and self-defense

Let Them Have the Upper Hand to Make Them Feel Good

Instead of trying to dominate someone, you can reward him with the upper hand and make him feel great.

To let him have the upper hand, simply turn your hand with your palm facing up and slightly move his hand into your belly area at the level of the Truth Plane.
The author says your partner will naturally feel good and will likely smile.

And later on, he righteously reminds us that **people who give status to others are perceived as people who have enough to give away.**

TPM Note: This is good social strategy, but requires a baseline of power
Initial warmth sub-communicates you're there to respect and uplift, doesn't make others feel threatened, and prevents 'dominance competitions'. However, this warmth-first approach only works if you have a baseline of power (see: power and warmth).

Also read:

- How to respect others

Don't Listen to Machiavelli

He says that Machiavelli and his rule of better being feared than loved is a silly one -and Machiavelli died in poverty-.

14. Focus on influencing instead of 'reading'

I again found myself fully agreeing with the author when he says that influencing and persuasion are more about knowing the messages you are sending than reading what others are sending you back.

And wasting time reading other people's body language is either a distraction for beginners, or a luxury for the very expert who have 'time to waste'.
Reading others' body language is a low-value effort when you can instead influence others.

15. Be Aware of Power Dynamics & Social Exchanges

Power intelligence is crucial, a good communicator should send the message that you are there to help and to give.

A good communicator must also avoid any body language that makes people defensive.
And threatening someone's territory is a surefire way of doing so.

You invade someone's space when you lean on, touch, or stand very close to someone's objects, which include a desk, laptop, stationery, etc.

Special attention should be given to leaning against a door, which is a potent and unconscious major physical sign for most of us.

A doorway is the way, and it's the way out. It's our escape in an emergency, and having that escape blocked by standing on it or leaning against it triggers our flight or fight switch.

Lots of power is held by those who control and create a territory or access to vital resources such as water coolers, provisions, and light and heating.

The author also recommends watching out for crowds and groups.
When we see more than four people we perceive it as a crowd.
And seeing them all together and nearby can be threatening.

So if you are introducing a customer to your team, it's a good idea to break them into groups of two.

Read more:

- Power dynamics
- Interpersonal power dynamics

> Interpersonal Power Dynamics: The Traffic Light Sytem for Mastering Status & Respect

Be Aware of Proximity

Mark Bowden cites Hall when he says that social distance is correlated to physical distance.

People of similar status stand closer to each other, and the same is true when you have an emotional connection to someone.

Also, the closer we are to someone, the more we influence him.
So as a speaker, it can be a good idea to step closer to your audience, as long as you don't get too close as to towering over them or stepping into personal boundaries.

Mark Bowden says that a great tip is to notice the point at which you can't see the feet of someone without dropping your gaze down.
At that point, you can't foresee all their movements anymore, and that's when an important barrier has been crossed.

Dominant Body Language

Mark Bowden says that height conveys high status.

A loud voice, bigger and broader gestures, and aggressive colors all add to dominance and put together they can be too much and come across as threatening.

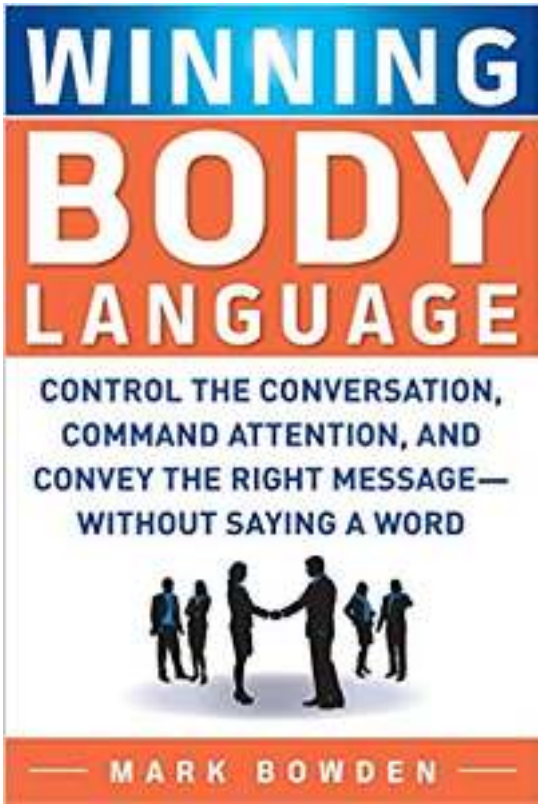
Bright colors also send a message of dominance.
Mark Bowden mentions reds, blacks, and yellows as aggressive colors.

And **if you are shorter, stand further back and don't turn your head up, but use your eyes to look at them**.

The author also reminds us that **you can command status at any height** and that the two are connected: people with high status are indeed perceived to be taller than they actually are.

Read more:

- Dominant behavior



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Review

Winning Body Language is a solid book on nonverbal communication with plenty of useful advice, both at the tactical/cue level, and at the higher level of strategy and mindsets.

It's not strongly empirically grounded, though Mark Bowden is a recognized expert in body language and communication.

Learn more:

- Best body language books
- Body language: a primer
- Confident body language
- Masculine body language

> Confident Body Language For Men: Status Cues

How to Deal With Dominant Men: Case Study (Obama vs. Putin)

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Have you ever been wondering how to deal with a dominant man?

This post is just for you.

You will learn how you can interact with a dominant man without ceding one centimeter of social power through a real-life case study.

If you are looking for generic signs of power, there is much on this website:

- Alpha male body language
- Signs of a dominant man
- How dominant men speak
- Alpha male posturing

Contents

- The Putin Style of Dominance
  - #1. Reduce Friendly Signals
  - #2. Speak Less
  - #3. Touch Them (Or Avoid All Contact)
  - #4. Avoid Jokes
- Dealing With Dominant Men: Summary

The Putin Style of Dominance

For this case study on handling dominant men, we will be using Vladimir Putin.

Putin is not the kind of "dominant man" who slaps you on the back.

He is the kind of dominant man who dominates by silent intimidation (in my *archetypes of dominance system* I call this "cold-blooded" or "icy").

This case study focuses on his interaction with Barack Obama.

Overall, Putin was markedly more dominant than Obama in pretty much all their recorded interactions.

One of the reasons why Putin was more dominant is exactly why The Power Moves exists at all: Obama, like most people, was too friendly in the face of dominant behavior.

Let's see what we can learn from Putin-Obama interactions to deal with dominant men:

#1. Reduce Friendly Signals

You will notice in their very first meeting that Obama presents all the nonverbal signs of the person who is raptly listening.

He clenches his hands, visibly leans forward, and repeatedly nods his head.

Giving others your full and undivided attention builds their status. Which is great if they do the same, but it only makes you look submissive if they don't.
And Putin, indeed, often looks away -when he's speaking –*dominant men can look away*– and doesn't show half the

obsequious signs Obama shows:

Improvable Obama behavior:

- Lean less
- Nod less
- Match their body turn (notice Obama turns visibly more)
- Do NOT kiss up (Obama's "*I appreciate you taking the time to meet me*")
- Match their gaze behavior (if they don't look at you, don't look at them)
- Do NOT follow their gestures (Obama opening his jacket right after Putin)
- Say "*thank you*" when you can't avoid following (this way you frame them like they are helping you out: imagine like you'd follow a waiter, yes they're leading you to the table, but they're the ones serving you, outline by your "thank you")

#2. Speak Less

With the quiet style of dominant men who speak little, you should also speak less.

Otherwise, it will look like you're trying to win their sympathies with words.

A few crucial aspects of the social dynamics of this interaction:

- **Obama is Shunned**

When someone uses your language, he is communicating that your culture is dominant because he has learned your language (and you haven't learned his).

Obama tries to speak to Putin in English, and Putin doesn't reply. Obviously. A man like Putin who wants to stake a claim on the world and bring back Russia to superpower status will never accept that sign of cultural dominance.

It looks terrible for Obama because when you speak to someone and you don't get a reply, you look powerless and the other party looks either defiant -imagine a kid with a parent- or superior -because he has the power to ignore

you-.

- **Putin Leads Obama**

Obama comes in and tries to tell Putin "where he would like to sit". Putin barges in, and without saying a word curtly shows Obama where *he* should sit.
Obama looks very much dominated here because first he tried to lead, and then he gets told what to do, thus making it even more obvious who's the man in charge.

Improvable Obama behavior:

- **Don't Speak (in English)**

Obama should have known Putin would never reply without a translator.

And especially so in front of cameras.
He should have avoided addressing Putin before sitting and looking like he was talking to the wind.

As a matter of fact, more silence would have made him look more powerful.

Dominant people often use more nonverbal communication than verbal, so a great way of avoiding looking like you're being subservient is to speak less in general.
And this is especially true around people who have a quiet way of being dominant (like *The Godfather*)

- **Don't Tell Putin Where to Sit**

Obama should have avoided telling Putin where to sit.

This is Putin's place, there's no way he will accept anyone telling him where to sit in his place. Obama unleashed on himself Putin's aggressive reaction.

If Obama really felt the need to say something, he could have spoken to his staff about how beautiful that place was and bided his time until Putin invited him to sit somewhere, thus looking like he was the guest treated to a nice local breakfast.

#3. Touch Them (Or Avoid All Contact)

In this clip, Obama starts speaking even before he's fully out of the car.

Dominant people usually take their time, and starting to speak too early can come across as if you're overly eager to fill the awkward silences that make us uncomfortable.

Also, he is very far from a nice erect posture, which looks like he's trying to make himself smaller in front of the most dominant person.

And finally, and most importantly, he begins a pat on the back but then stops.
It looks like he wanted to look more comfortable but just couldn't bring himself to touch Putin (a bit intimidated?).

This is your rule: if you want to touch and start making the move, then touch.

Otherwise, simply avoid it.

Improvable Obama behavior:

- **Take Time to Speak, Speak Less**

People have a tendency to fill silences with words.

And we do especially so when we're nervous.
Thus, powerful people can look even more powerful and imposing when they speak little. Putin is one of them.

When you're facing a man who speaks little like Putin then, you will look like you're nervously crumbling under social pressure when you speak too soon and too much.
Chatterboxes are not dominant.

Obama should have taken his time to start speaking, or maybe even waited for Putin to speak first.

- **Touch or Don't Touch: Just do it All the Way**

Obama should have touched Putin no matter what when he started that move.

Not making contact made him look like he was intimidated.

And if he wasn't comfortable touching, he should have kept a frostily-distant exterior demeanor similar to Putin's.

- **Don't Grin**

Showing your full teeth is a submissive sign (*Pease, 2016*).

Avoid big grins in the presence of *alpha-behaving men* or you will look like their subordinates.

- **Don't Point Outside First**

You will notice Obama points away from the two with his hand gesture.

Often people who are nervous or under pressure will talk about some random stuff in the environment just to shift the focus away from themselves.

#4. Avoid Jokes

Here Obama cracks a joke with the idea of getting a laugh from the press and from Putin himself.

But Putin instead barely laughs and uses the joke to frame Obama as the one "trying to relax him".

When you say that someone is trying to relax you, you are communicating that you are a party with power and the other one is trying to make you smile so that he can appease you.

Quite something if you consider there are little doubts as to which country is the real superpower between US and Russia.

- **Jokes Are Friendly Overture**

Jokes are another way of making a friendly overture, and they signal that you're putting in lots of effort to appease your speaking partner.

That can be great… As long as the other party accepts the overture and shows the same friendliness.

But the problem with *controlling people, power-hungry men* and people obsessed with power and dominance, is that they often use jokes to frame you as the weaker and *more submissive party*.

For example, they will avoid laughing and make you look like you've spent all that effort to win them over for nothing. Or they might outright say it was a bad joke -showing power over you- or outright say you're trying to win them over -verbally implying you're the subordinate party kissing up to them-.

Dealing With Dominant Men: Summary

If I had to summarize in one sentence what we can learn from the Putin-Obama interactions on how to effectively deal with dominant men, it would be this:

- **Avoid Friendly Signals**

That's the major reason why most people look dominated by the presence of dominant men: they keep sending friendly signals, and the dominant men just take them without giving back.

With that "give without receiving" dynamic you build up their status while they take your status away at any chance they get.

Dealing with dominant men instead is all about playing the game the same way they do and behaving like their peers. It can be taxing having to stay guarded all the time, but that's the only way to avoid being slotted as the submissive party.

Leaders Eat Last: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

In *Leaders Eat Last* (2014) Simon Sinek says that *leadership* is about taking care of people. Leaders are not responsible for the numbers, says Sinek, *leadership is about people* and for the people, who in turn will take care of the numbers.

TPM Strategic Review: Aspirational, But Not For Real World Power
While the book is inspirational, it offers an ideal of what a leader *should* be, but NOT what a leader *is*, or how you can can gain leadership roles

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- How You Can Apply It
- CRITICISM
- Review

Takeaways

- *"Leaders eat last"* means that **leaders first take care of their people**, and only after they can think of themselves
- A team can only effectively face external threats when there are no internal threats, and it's up to **leaders must eliminate internal threats**
- **Leaders enjoy benefits but must fulfill responsibilities** too (protecting the tribe)
- **We need more leader**s, so take it upon yourself to become one

Notes

"Leaders Eat Last" starts with the difference between leaders and managers.

Sinek says that today's pieces of training are not about *developing leaders* but *training managers* instead.

The author says that goes hand in hand with a short-term mentality that disregards long-term viability and people. *"Leaders Eat Last"* wants to change that paradigm.

Part 1 – Our Need to Feel Safe

Chapter 1: Protection From Above

Simon Sinek uses examples from the military and combat because, he says, lessons are more obvious in life-and-death scenarios.

He says though that the same principles apply everywhere else.

Be it an effective platoon in the fog of war or a successful company in a booming market, they all share one thing: leaders provide cover from above and the people on the ground look after each other.

Chapter 2: Employees Are People Too

Sinek says that leaders of great organizations don't look at people as commodities to grow money, but they see money as a commodity to help grow their people.

Seeing the relationship between people and money from a people's first perspective, says the author, is a necessity to have the people care about the organization.
Once you can put the people first, In return, people will give everything they have to help the organization grow.

As leaders, says indeed Sinek, our sole responsibility is to protect our people.

And in turn, the people will protect each other and advance the organization as a whole.

On the other hand, when our leaders don't take care of us, Sinek says that it's our duty to protect and take care of each other (read more about *How to Deal with a Bad Boss*)

Simon Sinek might sound like an idealist to some… But he says he can't be accused of idealism when the organizations he describes actually DO exist and DO happen to do well.

> …To sacrifice the numbers to save the people, and not to sacrifice the people to save the numbers

Chapter 3: Belonging

Simon Sinek here introduces the concept of the Circle of Safety.

The author says that the world around us is filled with danger and forces trying to hinder us.
Back in the day, it was saber tooth tigers, today it is competitors, changing technologies, meeting deadlines, and personal life issues.

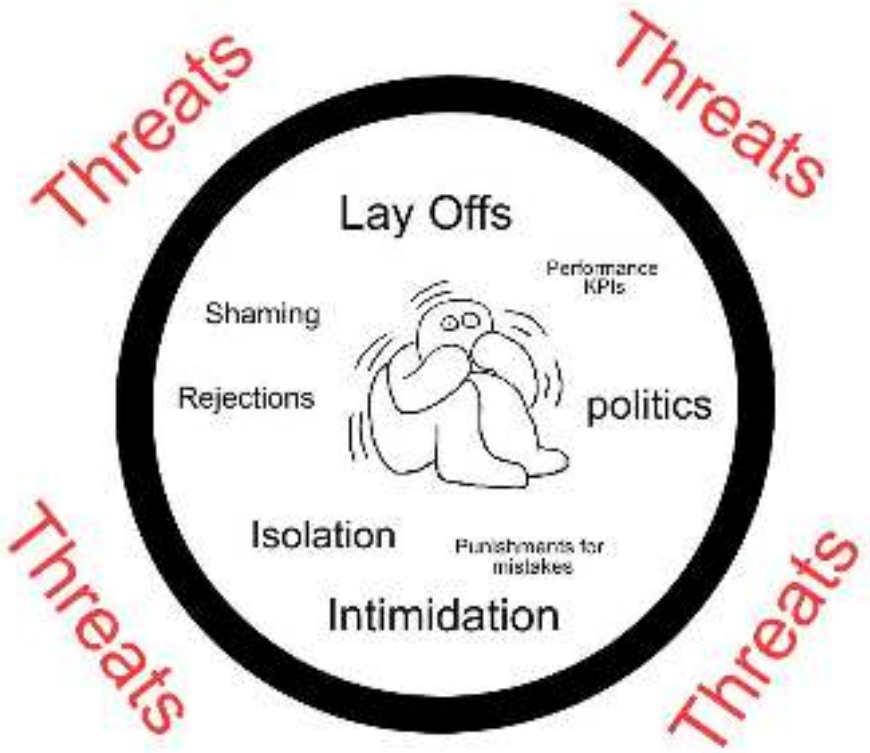
In some organizations, there are also threats from the inside towards the individuals, such as layoffs and bad cultures.

When organizations present threats from the inside the focus of the individual switches to self-preservation.
And when that happens people can't build a unified team but will defend themselves or their smaller teams at the cost of the overall organization.

It's the duty of leadership then to set an internal culture that is free of threats and rich in camaraderie.

The Circle of Safety

The wrong Circle of Safety (circle of threats):



Absent internal threats instead people don't need to self-preserve and our inner drives to socialize and care about

the group can take over.

And when effective leadership can fill the culture with a sense of belonging and care for the group, that's when the people can effectively tackle external threats.

The Good Circle of Safety:

Chapter 4: Yeah, But...

Simon Sinek reviews the reality of life for many managers and employees who are stuck in bad companies and bad cultures.

He says there are very few leaders who strive to make the work environment safe.
Some of us like and nod at the theoretical principles but then… Then we tell ourselves the reality is different.

We got to make sales, show some numbers, and, of course, we got mouths to feed.
So people stay put even when they don't like their job. And that's a pity because having a job we hate is often worse for our health than not having a job at all.

And still, even when we know that, we stay in jobs we hate, convincing ourselves that the dangers of staying are smaller than the dangers of leaving which, the authors, say it's not true.

Control And Stress
Sinek cites studies to say that work stress is not caused by pressure and high responsibility, but by the level of control that people have on their own work.

Basically, those who feel empowered to make their own decisions instead of waiting for approval suffer less stress.

And it's also not the effort required that makes us stressed, but the imbalance between the effort and the reward we receive that is stressful.
So people working for terrible managers who don't reward them, suffer higher stress.

Part 2 – Powerful Forces

Chapter 5: When Enough Was Enough

Simon Sinek says we work at our best when facing external challenges, and that's rooted in biology.

However, there are many misguided leaders who believe internal threats are necessary to push people in the right direction which, the author says, is simply not true.

The Biological Conflict

We all have a biological conflict of interest within us.

We have indeed four major chemical incentives in our body. Two are more selfish for "getting things done" -endorphins and dopamine- and two -Serotonin and Oxytocin- are for more selfless activities such as socializing and cooperating.

Serotonin and oxytocin are the backbones of the Circle of Safety.

Chapter 6: E.D.S.O.

Simon Sinek goes deeper into chemistry here and its effects. Don't skip it though as this is important to understand the powerful insights of the book:

- Endorphins are there to hide pain;
- Dopamine makes you feel good when accomplishing a goal;
- Serotonin makes you feel grateful for the people who support you;
- Oxytocin is responsible for love and is released when hugging or bonding.

Because of serotonin, Simon Sinek says, we can't feel a sense of responsibility for the numbers. We can only feel a sense of responsibility to the people.

> We can't feel responsibility to numbers. Only to people

Chapter 7: The Big C

Simon Sinek says that the release of social chemicals is not automatic but can be inhibited through Cortisol if we feel under threat.

So when our inner circle and tribe are ripe with threats, we release cortisol, which stops oxytocin.
When that happens, we have no feeling of empathy toward our colleagues and friends and have no drive to help one another.

When we are **immersed in an environment in which we cannot feel safe, we naturally *become more selfish*** and we start using our time and energy to preserve ourselves through politicking, backstabbing, gossiping, etc.

On the other hand, with a well-functioning Circle of Safety, Serotonin and Oxytocin can be released and we can even deploy our selfish chemicals and drives for good use.
For example, to further the goals and benefits of our whole organization and group and add value to the customers.

Chapter 8: Why We Have Leaders

As much as it's popular to say we are all equal, the truth is we are not and we will never be.

Sinek says we need a social hierarchy to avoid the constant battle for food that would leave us all divided and enemies.

With a hierarchy instead, we voluntarily step back and allow the higher-status individuals to serve themselves first.

However, Simon Sinek says, that higher status comes at a price, and it's this price that our current society often forgets.

The price for high status is to defend the group.
The alpha males of the tribe, the strongest of the group and brimming with serotonin, should indeed be the first to rush toward danger and protect the rest of the group.

And that's why we give them the first choice of mate: if they die early from the threats we want to keep their genes in the group.
The group is not stupid or irrational, we don't give them all the perks for nothing.
That wouldn't be fair.

My Note:
This is a bit of a ***naive interpretation*** of evolutionary psychology, to be honest. Sinek seems to describe some sort of "group selection" where people behave rationally and collaboratively to maximize the group's return.
But that is not the case.

That's why we get angry about huge severance payments of many executives: they took the perks and the money but did not offer any protection. They actually often do just the opposite: they sacrifice their people to boost their interests.
Fame and financial wealth should be a byproduct of alpha status, not a way to achieve it.

The rank of office, says Simon Sinek, is not what makes a leader. Leadership is the choice to serve others with or without any formal rank.

Those who want to enjoy the leaders' perks without fulfilling their obligations are, by definition, weak leaders.
True leaders are the ones who rise through the ranks because they fulfill their obligations and the tribe offers them a higher status.

It's obvious then why good leaders do well for their tribes in hard times, says Sinek: it's because their people willingly commit to seeing them, their tribe, and their company grow strong.

> Leadership is the choice to serve other with or without the formal rank

Part 3- Reality

Chapter 9: The Courage to Do the Right Thing

Simon Sinek says we trust people, not rules.

We don't really care about rules as long as the people in charge are doing the right thing for us.
That's why we find bureaucrats and *sticklers for the rules* annoying: the rules are there to serve us, not the other way.
And when the rules don't serve us anymore, there's no point in following and keeping them.

In strong organizations, people break the rules for the organization's benefit. In weak organizations, people break the rules for their own personal gain.

Chapter 10: Snowmobile in the Desert

Simon Sinek says it's ironic what happened with technology.

Our limbic brain controls our feelings and ability to trust and cooperate.
And it's exactly that ability that allowed us to build this complex and technologically advanced world we live in.

And it's ironic that this same technology is making it harder for us to cooperate and live well with one another.
He uses the booming self-help industry as a sign that we are growing apart from each other and growing more and more unhappy (also read: *self-help myths*).

My Note:
I have to disagree here. Technology is making it harder for us to cooperate. Where is Sinek living? This is a world of cooperation opportunities.

Part 4 – How We Got Here

Chapter 11: The Boom Before the Bust

Simon Sinek says that the World War I generation -the great generation- was all about serving others.
The baby boomers instead switched towards a path of only caring about themselves.

My Note: I have to call BS on this one.
I always recoil at these generation-generalizations and I'm not 100% sure how valid they can even be since none of us lived in that era.

Chapter 12: The Boomers All Grown Up

Disposable technologies took root with the baby boomers and that's when we started to look for more things to throw out.

Eventually, it ended up expanding to… People. People started becoming disposable.

The author says and will expand later, on the fact that we have become abstractions.
We are anonymous customers, lines on email lists, avatars, and expenses on a spreadsheet.

05.08.1981: The Culture of Lay Offs
On August fifth, 1981 Ronal Reagan fired 11.000 traffic controllers.

Sinek says this was a tacit approval from the country leadership and authority that easy, mass firings were OK and good for business.
Now everyone could be easily laid off if it served to improve the numbers.

Kicking off the layoff era

Part 5: The Abstract Challenge

Chapter 13: Abstraction Kills

I loved Simon Sinek's take on Milgram's experiment.

He first notices that people were more likely to inflict the most severe electric shock when they were not able to see the victim.
And then he says that the same experiment is taking place right now in offices around the world.

When people could not see the victims the victims weren't real but became abstractions.
Similarly, the more abstract and physically distant the people become from any headquarters or high-up office floor, the more we become capable of harming them with our decisions.

Chapter 14: Modern Abstraction

Sinek draws a parallel between the nazi famous defense of "I was *following orders*" to the modern "we have to provide shareholder value" of the corporate world.

Sinek says that we are visual animals.
We pursue things we can see. If we see a person needing help, we help. If there's a clear vision of a brighter future, we build it.
And if we have to work to increase a number from X to Y, we'll do that too. The problem is in the pain and harm behind those numbers and which we cannot see.

When we can't see our customers indeed we pursue the most immediate thing we can see: metrics and KPIs.
And to justify any action the new corporate mantra is "we work to provide shareholder value" or "we need to fulfill our fiduciary duty".

The author says that similar to Milgam's experiment where some people blamed the people who were receiving the

shocks, some bankers in the latest crisis ended up blaming the defaulting homeowners.

He quotes Jamie Dimon saying :

> **Jamie Dimon**: "*we are not evicting people who deserve to stay in their house*"

Funny enough, Duckworth used Jamie Dimon as an example to emulate in her book "*Grit*".

> Provide shareholder value = I was following orders

Chapter 15: Managing the Abstraction

Simon Sinek proposes a few rules to tackle the dangers of abstraction.

1. Keep It Real—Bring People Together. The Internet can't give us deep and trusting relationships. Trust is formed in person.
2. Keep It Manageable: 150 max. Keep your groups at no more than 150 people to reap the benefit of the group's cohesion and sense of tribal belonging
3. Meet People You Help. Getting a visual and real-world experience of the impact of your work will reward you and motivate you to do even more
4. Give Time, Not Money. We value the time and effort we receive more than money (read more on *Drive* by Daniel Pink)
5. Be Patient— 7 Days and 7 Years. It takes time to develop a bond of love and trust. Sinek doesn't know how long it takes but it's more than 7 days and less than 7 years

Chapter 16: Imbalance

Many organizations today are imbalanced in terms of selfish and social pursuits, a situation that he calls "Destructive Abundance".

Destructive Abundance is too much dopamine (goal accomplishment) and no oxytocin (social chemical).

It's getting the results without caring for those who produce the results, and it's focusing on the final score forgetting why we even started in the first place.
Destructive Abundance is often brought by leaders who don't take it upon themselves to shoulder the *responsibilities of leadership*.

Part 6 – Destructive Abundance

Chapter 17: Leadership Lesson 1 – Culture = Company

Simon Sinek uses a beautiful quote to introduce his concept:

> *You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.*

What it means is that strong company culture will treat everyone well and not just those who are paying them or earning money at the moment.

The author says that the people working in bad companies are neither bad nor evil in themselves, but the companies they work for make it possible for them to do *bad and evil*.

Chapter 18: Leadership Lesson 2 – Leader = Culture

Sinek says that leaders set the tone of behavior in an organization.

Strong leaders delegate responsibilities and empower their subordinates. They foster an environment where social chemicals -and the relative behaviors- are abundant and people look after each other.

He outlines the example of O'Neil in Merrill Lynch as a terrible example of a bad leader ruining a culture and destroying a company.

And he details the positive example of Captain Marquet aboard the Santa Fe submarine.

He also speaks at length about Jack Welch and Sinegal from Costco.

Chapter 19: Leadership Lesson 3 – Integrity Matters

Simon Sinek says that when we cannot trust the people who are supposed to lead us and serve us, then the whole fabric of our groups comes apart.

Leadership is about:

- Integrity: the adherence to a code of morals; telling the truth; incorruptibility, and when our words and deeds are aligned. The worst betrayal of integrity is when people tell us what we want to hear and change their stance to suit their interests (politicians)
- Honesty: telling the truth. That simple.
- Accountability

Chapter 20: Leadership Lesson 4 – Friends Matter

The US Congress worked better in the past because Democrats and Republicans mingled with each other and spoke to each other once the business was settled.

The author says it's very healthy indeed to meet and spend time together outside of the business context as we are more inclined to see people as human beings and develop deeper friendships.

When we never meet and speak to our opponents, we also tend to demonize our opponents (also see "*The Lucifer Effect*").

Chapter 21: Leadership Lesson 5 – Lead People, Not Numbers

Here Simon Sinek debunks the myth of Jack Welch, the famed CEO of General Electric.

Welch was the typical leader who purported to serve the shareholders and went after short-term gains.
Sinek says he didn't leave behind as great of a company as most people think.

The author then compares him to Costco's CEO, who pays his employees above minimum legal wage and is interested in people and long-term growth.
Nobody knows him, but he built a far more solid company. His returns on the share, also, have been far larger.

Sinek says that teams led by directive leaders initially outperform those led by empowering leaders.
But in the long run, empowering leaders do better.

Part 7 – A Society of Addicts

Chapter 22: At the Center of All Our Problems Is Us

Sinek says that managers look after numbers and results, and leaders look after us.

But before we can point any finger at the terrible managers, we have to point the finger at ourselves first. We have to look at ourselves, and we have to admit we are the problem.

> Managers look after numbers. Leaders look after people

Chapter 23: At Any Expense

Simon Sinek says the desire to win has always existed and it has always caused problems.
He says the desire to win should not take precedence over taking care of the people we serve.

> Winning should not come at the cost of serving people

Chapter 24: The Abstract Generation

Simon Sinek says that cell phones are the new drug for Generation Y.

Digital addiction is making the new generation more impatient in the best-case scenario, and more lonely and isolated at worst.

The author then keeps laying it on thick on Generation Y saying it's a superficial generation all about "having an impact" and "raising awareness" but it forgets that **to have an impact and to solve problems requires grit, determination, and hard work**.

And doesn't happen with a share or alike.

Part 8 – Becoming a Leader

Chapter 25: Step 12

Simon Sinek says that for all of the people who enroll in Anonymous Alcoholics, almost only those who reach step 12 will get rid of alcohol addiction.

Step 12 is about service and taking care and helping someone else beat alcoholism.
Step 12 is about oxytocin, and oxytocin is key in beating addiction and pushing us through.

Interestingly enough, Sinek also says that Anonymous Alcoholics is a perfectly formed Circle of Safety.

Chapter 26: Shared Struggle

Simon Sinek says that to inspire us, we need challenges that outstrip the available resources.

Bill Gates for example said "a PC on every desk", and that was an example of a huge challenge.

The author says that if leaders can paint a challenge bigger than the available resources -but within the intellect capacities- people will become motivated and will give everything they've got.

Chapter 27: We Need More Leaders

Leadership is a commitment to people and takes time, effort, and energy.

He says that the Jack Welch style of leadership can seem more attractive because it feels more like gambling in a casino, more like an emotional roller coaster.

The author ends the book by saying it's not just those at the top who need to change.
It's the responsibility of all of us to keep the Circle of Safety strong, and we must all start today to make our own contribution for the good of others and to be the leaders we wish we had.

> **Let us all be the leaders we wish we had**

How You Can Apply It

- Take Care of People First: apply this in all your relationships and you'll be a happy person
- Paint Realistic Vision: "becoming N.1", and "being the leader of.." are no inspiring visions and mean nothing. Make something more practical and easier to measure
- Paint a Struggle to Motivate: to motivate people, make a big goal which is a struggle to reach
- Act Like a Leader: and shoulder the responsibilities. Or abdicate the role

CRITICISM

Leaders Eat Last is a "nice" read.

It makes people feel good because, listening to Simon Sinek, "most people in corporate are bad", and to succeed "you need to be better".

Yeah, nice, but… Please read this *naive-self help rebuke* right away:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Inspirational, but it's not how things truly work

"Leaders Eat Last" is a great-sounding book.

But not very grounded in reality.
And if you wanna make it to the top of your organization, this book might not help you.

I'm actually unhappy to write that. I wish it weren't so.

But evidence shows that *psychopathic traits get you to the top more often than empathy does.* And evidence shows that as a manager, it pays off to network more than to spend your time on the team.
If you want to be the catalyst for positive change, my advice is to *get politically savvy.* And then use it for good. But you must learn the truth, first.

High in morals, low in science

Sinek here refers to 'prestigious leadership'.

But he never calls it that way and it's an analysis more based on ethics, and less on science.

We wholeheartedly agree with his take and ethics.
But we also like science.

Also read:

- **Global leadership: prestige VS dominance**

Idealistic, unrealistic view of goal-oriented leadership

Has Simon Sinek ever worked in business?

Sometimes, it feels like he might have not.
Frankly, it makes little sense to say "leaders are not responsible for the numbers", when they clearly are.

Says leadership trainer Kim Scott, who has actually been a leader in a top-performing organization:

> Bosses are responsible for results, and they guide their teams to achieve results.

Yep.

Romanticized view of the past: but people don't really change over a few years

Way too often Simon Sinek defaults to romanticizing the past in contrast to the present.

It was all great back then, and today it all sucks. The previous generations were great, today's generations suck. Congress used to work well, now it doesn't. Even Goldman Sachs used to be a great company and today it's Goldman sucks.

It's probably a formula that helps selling and marketing, but it's not true.
The truth is that the leaders of our cave days were probably as ruthless and cunning as they are today.
Probably more.

And I had the same feelings for the chemistry descriptions of serotonin and oxytocin that seemed to be over-simplified (see Sapolsky for better endocrinology, his main summary of how the body works are "it's complex").

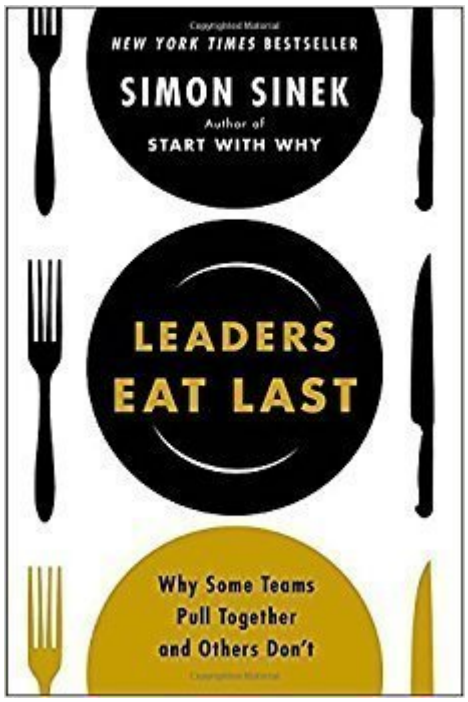
Applies more to average teams than top-performing ones. Top performers don't seek 'protection'

If you're a confident and ambitious man, answer this: do you think you need your leaders to protect you?

No, you're there to get a job done, not to search for 'protection'.

I'd hate if my 'leader' though he had to provide a 'circle of safety' for me. That's babying and disempowering. I want a hard-charging leader who drives forward.
And it's the same for any masculine, confident team member.

Ironically, **Simon Sinke's advice applies better for leadership in romantic relationships than for men leading top-performing teams**.
It's there that you want to offer 'protection' and a 'circle of safety'.



Review

"*Leaders East Last*" is a good book on the ethics, morality, and responsibilities of leaders within

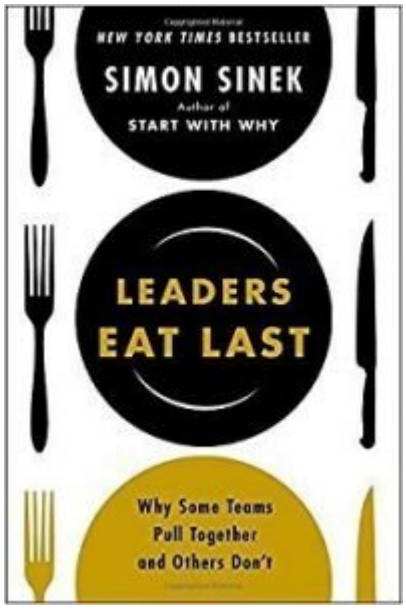
As someone who's been around weak leaders after numbers and self-preservation, I agree with Simon Sinek.

But this is not the book that will help you advance in your career, lead top-performing teams, or make a difference during challenging times.
This is the book you can read when you get to the top of a stable company to help you develop more collaborative mindsets, and foster that same culture in the organization.

Or get Leaders Eat Last on Amazon or check:

- **Best leadership books**
- Best career books

Leaders Eat Last Summary: 23 Steps To Inspire Teams



Leadership means taking care of the people. How true.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/leaders-eat-last/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.8

Contagious: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Contagious (2013) analyzes the traits and characteristics that viral products, ads, and ideas all have in common. It's 6 characteristics they all share, and if you want to go viral, you better incorporate them in your marketing.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Contagious Book Summary
  - 1: SOCIAL CURRENCY
  - 2: TRIGGERS
  - 3: EMOTION
  - 4: PUBLIC
  - 5: PRACTICAL VALUE
  - 6: STORIES
- Review

Exec Summary

- Virality is not the product of pure chance
- You can increase the odds of going viral by incorporating some of the 6 principles

Contagious Book Summary

About The Author: Jonah Berger holds a Ph.D. in marketing and is currently a professor at the Wharton School. He is considered an expert on *word of mouth*, social influence, and viral marketing.

The $100 Dollar Cheesesteak Gone Viral

Berger starts with the example of Howard Wein.

Wein was not selling just another cheesesteak, but a conversation piece. He did it by using great ingredients and asking for an exorbitant price: a hundred dollars.

It went viral.

Great Products Go Viral

Jonah Berger beings by saying that **one of the elements of virality is simply having a great product**.

Some ideas catch on for simply being better than the alternatives.

Attractive pricing is another obvious why products and ideas spread.
Advertising also helps, Jonah Berger says that word of mouth is more effective than advertising because it's more persuasive and more targeted.

Jonah Berger goes after the idea that you have to hit the opinion leaders to make your message spread.
He says though that **the message in itself is more important than the messenger**.

What is then the secret to making our messages contagious?

Jonah Berger says that it's six principles:

1. Social currency (people looking cool for sharing),
2. Triggers (reminding people about our product)
3. Emotions (when we care we share)
4. Public (can people see we are using the product?)
5. Practical Value (is it useful?)
6. Stories (what narrative can we latch onto our idea?).

It's important to notice that Jonah Berger says that principles are not like ingredients.
They must not be deployed in a certain fashion, and they are not even all needed at the same time.

1: SOCIAL CURRENCY

Jonah Berger says there are three ways to use social currency:

1. Find something unique
2. Use game mechanics
3. Make people feel like insiders

More remarkable products are talked about twice compared to less remarkable ones.

Game mechanics are levels and badges that make us want more.
Berger says that it works internally as we all love achievement, but also because we want to do better than others.
Icons can be used, or badges (fourth square).

Making people feel like insiders works because If something is supposed to be secret or limited access people love to share it.
It makes them look cool for sharing something reserved. They were one of the first in the know, and now they're sharing it with you.

People shared the video of a blender smashing marbles because it was interesting and unexpected.
And sharing something that others will find interesting will give us social points.

Here's the video the author refers to:

2: TRIGGERS

People talk about more cheerios than Disney World.

How's that possible with all the excitement and uniqueness that Disney World commands?

The author says it's because of triggers.
People rarely go to Disney World and few things remind them of it.
Cheerios are seen often at the supermarket and breakfast every day reminds people of Cheerios.

Jonah Berger says that interesting products receive more immediate word of mouth than boring ones, but interesting per se doesn't sustain word of mouth over time. Triggers do. When we see the same triggers over and over, the product comes back to our minds over and over.

The author says that Mars bars saw a big uptick in sales when NASA launched an expedition to, guess where? Mars.

KitKat was seeing a constant slump in sales that seemed hard to stop.
It was reversed when an advertising campaign linked KitKat to coffee so that people would use the coffee trigger to eat a KitKat bar.

3: EMOTION

There are two types of emotions that lead people to share (or not share):

- Arousing emotions
- non-arousing emotions

Emotions that make us share are arousing emotions like anger, awe, anxiety, or excitement.
Sadness and contentment decrease arousal, slow us down and make us relax, leading us to share less.

Very interestingly, Jonah Berger says that when we are in aroused states we tend to share more than we'd normally want.
So if we are on a plane with turbulences, we might tell the person sitting next to us more than we would normally like.

The author says that focusing on feelings is likely to increase sharing and even seemingly dull products can find a way (for example: google search with the story of a couple told through their search queries).

4: PUBLIC

Jonah Berger presents very few interesting cases on how what's public influences us even when in private most people would think otherwise.

For example, many college students don't enjoy drinking but drink anyway because externally everybody is drinking and all others who don't enjoy drinking are actually keeping it private.

Similarly, when a presentation has finished and the presenter asks if there are any questions nobody asks anything, because while nobody else has probably understood, the public and visible tell us that we are probably the only ones who didn't get it.

The author provides a few examples of a few products that effectively used the observability principle.
Hotmail for example, put in the signature the link to sign up for the free service (it was the first free service).
Apple white iPod headphones were a big help in spreading it.

The example of the anti-drug "say no" campaign was also extremely interesting.
Jonah Berger says that the campaign actually increased the likelihood people would try drugs because it brought drug use into the public observable territory.
The ads basically said that drugs are bad but also, crucially, that other people are doing it.

The example of the music industry was simply a big laugh for me.
When the ads said that only 37% of music was being paid for, the author implies the message was counterproductive.
It basically said that everyone was not paying, that it was OK not to pay, and that those paying must have been idiots (similar example for wood in the park).

> If something is built to show, it's built to grow

5: PRACTICAL VALUE

Jonah Berger says we share useful information because we want to help and if we can help it reflects well on us.

Putting a product on sale, even when the price stays the same, increases demand.

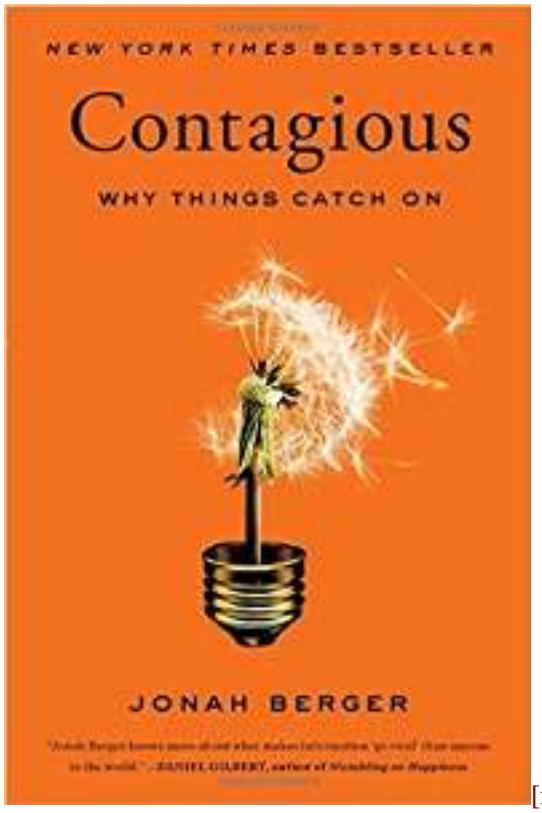
The author says that depending on the price of the product it can be better to list the discount as in percentage or as an amount.
The author says that for products above 100, it's better to highlight the amount and for products worth less than 100

it's better to state the percentage.

6: STORIES

Jonah Berger says that we don't think in terms of information but in terms of narrative.

It's important that the story is relevant to the product, or the product has to be a key part of the story.



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Review

"Contagious" is easy to read, insightful, and highly applicable.

It makes a great pair with a few more books on marketing and influencing such as *"Made to Stick"* and "*Influence*", the big classic by Cialdini.

Of course, as the author himself says, *"Contagious"* is not a recipe that you can apply and be guaranteed success. I'm afraid that virality is, in good part, the product of *pure randomness.*

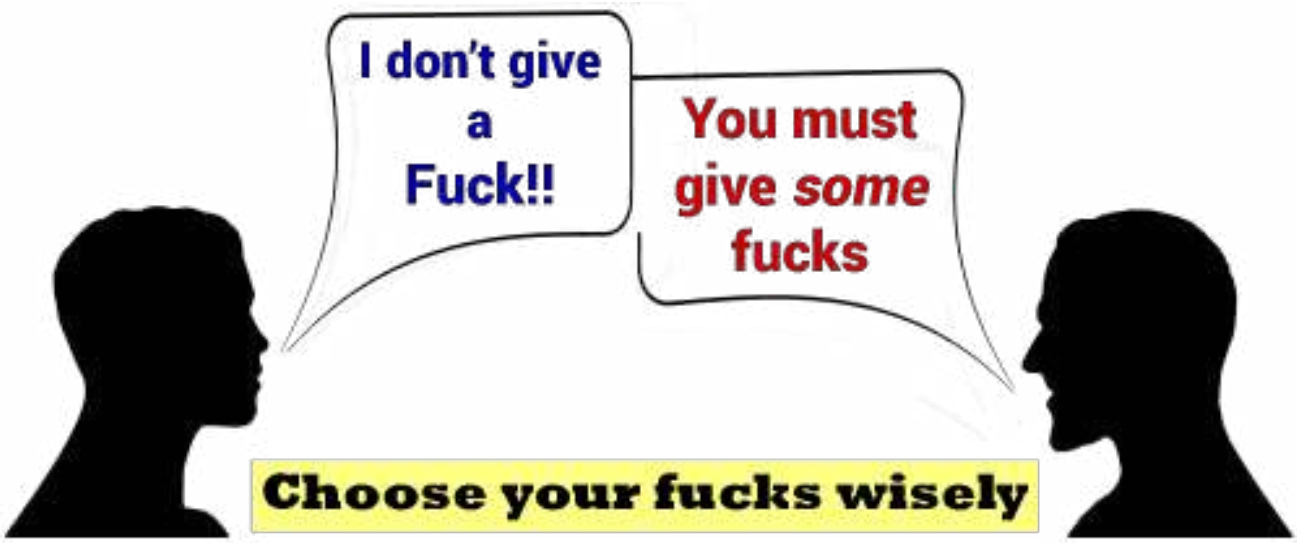
But that doesn't mean you can't somewhat increase the odds with some good knowledge, research, and creativity.

[image]

The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* (2016) teaches readers how to live a happier, anxious-free life through practical philosophy centered around the rejection of any self-help effort.



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Overview

- Being too harsh on improving yourself is saying you're not good enough. Give less of a fuck instead.

- Choose what to give a fuck about. And then don't give a fuck about all the rest.
- Choose what to give a fuck about. And then don't give a fuck about the price to get there

Notes

About the Author:
Mark Manson started his career as a dating coach and *pick-up artist* to later broaden his scope into general self-development.
His first book was *"Model"*, followed by *"The Art of Not Giving A F*ck"* with which he broke into the mainstream and then followed by *"Everything is Fucked"*.

Chapter 1: Don't Try

Mark Manson says that our culture of always getting more and more focused on what we lack.

He says that dating and self-improvement advice are all ways of saying that you aren't enough.
And it's all designed to make you feel bad and buy more stuff.

He says that a confident man instead doesn't feel the need to prove anything. The key to a good life is not about giving a fuck more. It's about giving a fuck less.

Avoid Social Media

Mark Manson says that social media only accentuated the culture of never enough (read *Daring Greatly* for more on never-enough culture).

All we see is people trying to one each other up showing how great and better their lives are.
And when we can't compare we wonder what the hell is wrong with us.

Accept Negative Experience

The author then suggests that the desire for a more positive experience is in itself a negative experience.

And the acceptance of a negative experience is instead in itself a positive experience.

Trying to avoid pain is giving too many fucks about pain. When instead you become capable of giving less fucks about pain… Then you become unstoppable.

Give Less a Fuck

Mark Manson says that we have a limited number of fucks to give in our lives. Deciding what NOT to give a fuck about them will free our time and mental resources for the things we really care about.

What Not Giving a Fuck Means

1. Not giving a fuck doesn't mean being indifferent.

It's about choosing what to give a fuck about and then not giving a fuck about all the rest.
It also means you don't give a fuck about the troubles standing between you and what you give a fuck about.

2. Give a fuck about something more important than adversity.

If you don't find something important to give a fuck about, your fucks will be given to meaningless and frivolous causes.

3. You're always choosing what to give a fuck about.

So pick something meaningful.

> Not giving a fuck is not being indifferent. It's being indifferent to being different

Chapter 2: Happiness Is a Problem

Mark Manson says that happiness is not a solvable equation or something that can be worked for.

He proposes instead a different question: what pain do you want in your life? Happiness takes struggle and even requires problems.
And here's the beautiful catch: if you want the rewards, but not the struggle, you don't really want it.

Our struggles determine our successes and our problems, determine our happiness as we struggle to fix them. Because the joy is in the struggle itself.

> The question is: what pain do you want in your life?

Chapter 3: You Are Not Special

We're inundated by a deluge of self-help messages screaming:

> Each and everyone can be extraordinary!
> And that we all deserve greatness!

Even Oprah says it, quips Manson so it must be true!

This all leads to an entitlement mentality (read *how to overcome entitlement mentality*).

Bunce, once you accept that, you can be "normal", and that you don't have to be "special", it's liberating.

You can be normal and happy, and you can be normal and great in your "normalness".

And you will be able to enjoy the boring beautiful side of life: friendships, reading a good book, laughing, creating something.

> It's liberating to accept you're not really special

Chapter 4: The Value of Suffering

The question is not how to stop suffering but for what purpose you are suffering.

Your values should be instead reality-based, socially helpful, and controllable.
For example "being popular" is dependent on others and not fully up to you, and thus it's not a good value.

Picking and deciding on good values also allow us to give fucks about things that matter to us and for others.

My note:
True, albeit I think it's more about identity than values. Check my guide on building an antifragile identity.

> Self Improvement is prioritizing things to give a fuck about

Chapter 5: You Are Always Choosing

Mark Manson says that we can't always control what happens to us, but we certainly can choose what it means to us and how we respond to it.

My Note:

Albeit Manson criticizes self-help, this is a true and valid common mantra in self-help embraced by authors such as Tony Robbins and Brian Tracy and harking back to stoic philosophy.

Chapter 6: You're Wrong About Everything

Mark Manson says that it's easier to settle on certainties, even when they're negative.

And he suggests instead of resisting the temptation of being sure and accepting "never knowing who you are". It will force you to keep an open mind and keeps you striving to discover and find out.

Some questions Mark Manson recommends you ask yourself are:

- What if I'm wrong?
- What would it mean if I were wrong?
- Would being wrong create a better or worse problem?

Mark Manson ends by saying that if you're in a situation where you are screwed up or everyone else is screwed up… It's far, far more likely that it's you.

> If it feels like it's you VS the world, chances are it's just you VS yourself

Chapter 7: Failure Is the Way Forward

Mark Manson says that failures come from having picked the wrong values. And life is about not knowing but doing it anyway.

> Action doesn't just happen because of motivation, it causes motivation

Chapter 8: The Importance of Saying No

Freedom by itself means nothing.

You are always free, and roaming the world without a boss reading "The *4-Hour* Workweek" just to prove it won't give you any sense of meaning.

The only way to achieve a sense of meaning in your life instead is to reject total and boundless freedom and choose instead to commit to something. Like a place, a relationship, or even a belief.

The author uses himself as an example: focusing on just writing gave his website more success than he could have ever imagined, and committing to one woman gave him more happiness and joy than all the one-night stands he's ever had.

My Note:
this part basically summarizes *Grit* by Angela Duckworth.

> It's commitment that gives you freedom and liberation

Chapter 9: ...And Then You Die

I have to say, the beginning story of chapter 9 was touching.

Mark tells the story of a good friend of his, a guy he looked up to, who died at a party when jumping into a lake from a cliff.

My Note:

I have read a similar story from different authors now to the point that I must wonder how true it actually is.
It sure sells well and captures people's attention, which makes it all the more dubious.
Of course, I have no way of knowing that.
But we can still learn from it. Also, check how mortality can help you live better.

> If there's no reason to do anything – there's no reason NOT to do anything

How Not To Give A F*ck

And here are the deepest, practical aspects of not giving a fuck and enjoying life better:

- **Choose What to Give a Fuck About**

Pick your passion and then zero in and focus on it.
Mark Manson says it in the "bro" style, but however, you phrase it, deciding what matters in your life IS a great way of improving your life.

- **Leverage Mortality to Go For What You Want**

I particularly loved the last chapter in that it reminds us of a very important thing: we will all die.

That's not sad.
That's just how it is.

Reflect on that and then demand yourself: should you really waste your time doing things you don't like or don't care about?

- **To Beat Death…**

.. Care about something bigger than yourself. Which will also allow you to not give a fuck about so many things you shouldn't give a fuck today but you do.

CONS

Some Re-hashed Self-Help Ideas

Some of the contrarian-sounding ideas are actually established concepts that are explored deeper in other sources (but this is not to say they aren't valuable or that Manson doesn't give it a different spin).

Tries too hard to be contrarian

Trying too hard to be contrarian or counterintuitive is bad for accuracy, and it's a pitfall of *naive self-help*.

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Being 'Special' Can Be Good. & You're Not Wrong About Everything

I'm not convinced about the usefulness of some concepts.

As a website focused on social interaction and people skills, I'd have to say that **second-guessing yourself on how wrong you are, for example, will make you very much uncharismatic**.

And yes, if your value is "being special" you're on the wrong path.
On the other hand, **men who can strategically adopt an air of being special often gain respect, status, and**

attraction.

A good middle ground can be in earning that 'specialness'.
If you tell yourself you'll *prove* how special you can *become* (proving it to yourself), just to motivate yourself, then it can also be a great motivator.

Also, read *"the law of optimum balance"*.

> The Law of Optimum Balance

Bro-"hip" language

It feels sometimes as if the author is trying too hard to sneak in one more swear word and to make his sentences sound cool and fun.
Maybe someone likes it, to me, it was a bit "meh".

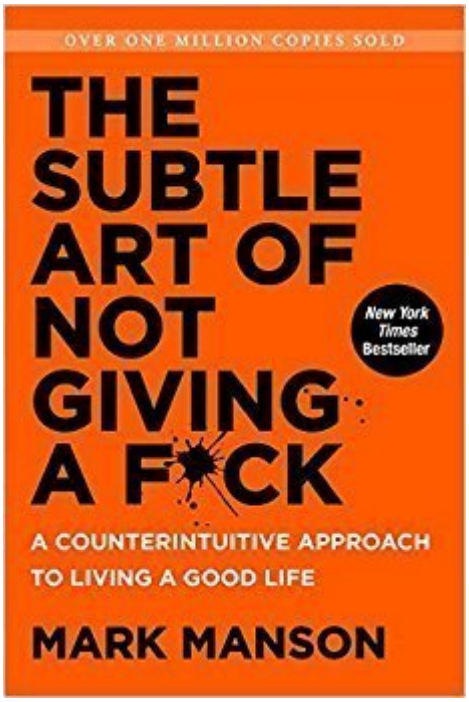
PROS

- **Deeper than some might think**

The title could be misleading to some. And, in some intellectual circles, I have heard some scathing reviews for "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F".
But I disagree: this book is the opposite of many other books. It is seemingly shallow, but in truth quite deep. Plus, contains solid and practical wisdom.

- **Good wisdom**

Beyond the cussing, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* is a book packed with practical philosophy and life-changing wisdom.



Review

I had some negative expectations, thinking it was some bro-book on *how to be an asshole.*

Well, I was wrong.

"*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck*" is **a good entry-level mix of philosophy and self-help** *seemingly* against self-help, but ultimately helping people to, well… Self-help :).

The ideas I'll take away from Mark Manson are:

- Pick what to give a fuck about. And don't give a fuck about the failures and embarrassments it takes to get there.
- If you want the reward but not the struggle, you don't really want it. Love the struggle or stop wishing for the achievement
- If there's no reason to do anything, there's no reason NOT to do anything

Note & Warning on Friend Who Died

I have absolutely no call in doubt the veracity of the friend who died story.

However, I have to note that I have read almost the same story in the book *Published*, by a rather skilled marketer. And it left me wondering a bit if it was copied from here.

Check out the **best books to read**, see **all my reviews at once** or **Get the book on Amazon**.

How To Fix Combative Relationships: Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Are you stuck in a combative relationship?

Or do you have a combative personality and want to change it?

You have found the right article.

By the end of this article, you will know exactly what combative relationships are, and how to fix them.

Contents

- Intro: What Are Combative Relationships
  - Combative Partner Definition
- Sign 1: Covert Aggression
  - Psychology of Covert Aggression
  - How it Should Be
- Sign 2: One-Upping
  - The Psychology of One-Upping
  - How it Should Be
- How To Fix Combative Relationships
  - Try Appreciation
  - Teach Them The Right Way
  - Share Win-win Mindsets
  - Set Your Boundaries & Be Ready to Move On

Intro: What Are Combative Relationships

I will define a combative relationship as:

> A relationship where one or both partners are more intent on showing superiority than on supporting each other

Combative relationships are defined by nasty games of “one-upping” and put-downs.

A combative partner will often use verbal and nonverbal attacks as a way of demeaning their partner, such as:

- Making fun
- Highlighting partner’s mistakes
- Focus on “winning”
- Refusing small favors “out of spite”
- Diminishing partner’s accomplishments
- Belittling partner’s ideas and contributions
- …..

Combative Partner Definition

A partner who focuses more on competition, ‘winning’ and maintaining power, than on relationship communion,

win-win, and support.

Since we write for men, we'll refer to women here, but keep in mind that either or both partners can be combative.

Psychologically, a combative woman may have a 'fixed pie' mindset where the man's win comes at her cost.

It's difficult to have good relationships with combative women because they do not approach relationships with a win-win mindset.

Let's see a few mainstays of a combative relationship:

Sign 1: Covert Aggression

Partners in combative relationships are in constant bickering.

Criticism is not always an open act of aggression like yelling and shoving though, and that's why some people fail to diagnose where the problem lies.

Sometimes the criticism is *nasty jokes*, backstabbing, indirect criticism, covert aggression, and sarcastic put-downs.

Here is an example to stress the difference.
Imagine the couple who is having difficulties parking, these are the two different approaches:

> **Direct Aggression***: Of course there's enough space to park, you're a terrible driver, switch seats and lemme do it!*

Indirect aggression:

> **Indirect***: "Ahaha are you really asking me if there's enough space? Ahaha a 30 ton truck could park there…*

The first one could be mean, but the person saying it doesn't hide and is not making fun of the other.
It deals with the issue straight on and focuses on fixing it.

The second one is sneakier because it *undermines* your partner in an indirect way by making fun of her.

It's also not solution-oriented because it doesn't solve the issue.
Indeed the unconscious aim of the aggressor is to leave the issue open and up for longer discussion or escalation.

Look at a few real-life examples here:

> **Her**: (barrage of aggressive and combative "jokes" and attacks)

Psychology of Covert Aggression

Why do partners resort to passive aggression?

It's a mix of power and, potentially, insecurity.

It's because, **devaluing one's partner frames the attacker as comparatively higher value**.
This is part of the 'value scalping™' manipulation clusters.
The higher value party also tends to have more power and control, and to get more investment to 'make up for the difference' (see 'Compensatory Investment Principle™').

While many describe this approach as stemming from low self-esteem, Baumeister's research suggests it's egotism with high but fragile self-esteem that most often leads to aggression.

> When researchers began to conduct careful prospective studies of family violence, however, the evidence for low self-esteem disappeared.

> The new buzzword among researchers on family violence is status inconsistency.
> (…)
> The violent husband is the man who thinks his daily life is not confirming his exalted opinion of himself.

Status inconsistency refers to the willingness -and belief- that one deserves the leadership role in the relationship. And whenever he feels under threat by her independence, he needs to lash out to re-assert his power and control.

The Hide and Seek Game of Covert Abusers

Since combative personalities are often insecure, accusing them usually goes nowhere.

The aggressor will hide behind the smoke screen of "it's not true, it was just a joke".
This is a typical *passive-aggressive technique*.

Maybe they will even add a *gaslighting zinger* such as "don't be so touchy", just to push you on the defensive.

One Aggressive Partner Is Enough

In many combative relationships, it's not both partners who are aggressive.

It's instead one partner who feels the need to assert his superiority while the other partners the other party reacts in defense.

In a way, both are trapped in a combative relationship, but neither knows any better and so it keeps going on and on forever.

How it Should Be

A relationship with endemic aggression is a poor relationship.

No relationship, and least of all a romantic one, needs constant aggression and you should not settle for it.

Your relationship should be your sanctuary of understanding, warmth, and support. When you don't get warmth and support from your partner you might as well (try to) string a one-night stand after another.

Read more on how to turn criticism into constructive feedback:

- Fixing criticism in relationships

Sign 2: One-Upping

A 'one up' is any action that disempowers others and makes them worse off.

While one-upping may include aggression, it may also be covert aggression, with sneering, mean jokes, or broaching topics that others find painful.

The Psychology of One-Upping

The partner one-upping the other needs to feel superior or protect one's their ego.

One-upping is more common in people high in dominance, dark triad traits, or with a fixed mindset.

Notice the very first skit here:

> **Her**: I have over 37.000 followers on Instagram, thank you so much
> **Him**: 36.999 of which are mine <— sub-communication: "you're nobody without me"

How it Should Be

Partners in supportive relationships don't tear each other down**. Partners in supportive relationships build each other up**.

Confident men who care about their partner don't negate their wife's successes, but compliment, congratulate them, and make them feel great about it.
See the difference:

Weak One-Upping Man:

> **Her**: *I have just hit 10k Instagram fans today!*
> **Him**: *Oh, cool, and do you think that makes you a better person now? Who cares about followers…*

If she's bragging about it, it's obviously important to her! If she's bragging about it to you, she cares about what you think.

The man here probably doesn't have 10k fans and is afraid of being inferior because of it.

So he tries to tear down her whole metrics of success and, in the process, her whole judgment (very, very demeaning).

Confident Man :

> **Her**: *I have just hit 10k Instagram fans today!*
> **Him**: *Wow, congratulations baby! Give me a hug, we should have a toast to that! How do you feel about it..*

The difference is light day and night, right?

Here the man is making her feel great for her accomplishment.
But he is also communicating something deeper: that he appreciates her and her successes and that he can partake in that success because they are a team.

This second man is the kind of man she will want to be around and share her stories with.
And, very possibly, her whole life.

How To Fix Combative Relationships

First off, you need to understand you're in a combative relationship.

And if you are a combative personality, you need to admit it to yourself.

If you are reading this article, you either looked for it and you know, or you know now.
So own it.

Try Appreciation

If your partner is the aggressor, try this:

Make them feel appreciated in spite of their shortcomings.

People long to be who they are. But they are scared that they are not enough, and that's why they put on all that big fight.
But deep down, we all naturally long for a place and a relationship where we can let our guard down and be loved for who we are.

Teach Them The Right Way

But of course, before you get there, you might need to do some teaching.

Besides not showing warmth, you may also want to assertively address the bad behavior with some tough love and 'win-win' operant conditioning.

To show how we will move away from the Instagram example and use the situation from the video where she rudely refused to give him his pen:

> **Her** (swats his hand away)
>
> **Him**: (warmly, genuinely hurt) why are you doing that. I need a pen, I would happily lend you my pen if you needed one
>
> **Her**: Sorry that was a bit rude, maybe but why should you take my pen, get your own pen
>
> **Him**: No, I just needed it for a second, but the pen is not the point, it goes deeper and I've seen this dynamic a few times now and I feel we should address it.
>
> The point is that we're together now and if you needed a pen right now I'd be happy to help you with a pen right now.
>
> And if tomorrow you need help in some other way I can help you with, say a shoulder to cry on like it happened last week, I'm happy to help you in that way.
>
> Because I want to see you happy.
>
> I see relationships as a way of helping each other.
>
> So if one day, it's me who needs your support, I'd also appreciate you to help me too. I believe those are the best relationships, the ones where we are a team. You're my co-pilot and we are stronger as a team. Don't you think that would be a better relationship?
>
> **Her**: Yeah.. Sorry I just thought you wanted to steal my pen
>
> **Him**: All good

The first time you do it, your partner will likely feel ashamed of their behavior.
And that's great because it means they understand and care.

Do it a few times and your relationship will quickly grow stronger and more collaborative than you thought possible

Exceptions:
Of course, not everyone can be fixed.
Fringe cases are the real narcissistic, heavily egocentric, *power-hungry, abusive, controlling*, and *jealous-paranoids.*

Share Win-win Mindsets

These are the mindsets of benevolent relationship leaders:

- You understand that the mindset of trying to win and showing yourself superior to your partner is ultimately a weak one driven and motivated by internal deficiencies
- You know that strong and confident leaders don't push other people down and don't feel the need to show their superiority.
- You know that enlightened leaders do the exact opposite: they help the people around them get nearer their level, make them feel great, and build them up.

Men in great relationships don't dictate but instead, make their woman part of their common decision-making.
Or even delegates to her in any realm where she's better suited to lead or decide.

Ironically, the moment you stop “proving” yourself superior and focus instead on caring about your partner is also the moment you become the leader of that relationship.

Set Your Boundaries & Be Ready to Move On

Don’t accept disrespect, ever.

A high-quality man demands a minimum level of respect as a precondition to even date him.
Some women may simply not be good (enoguh) for your new high standards of behavior.

If you make it clear you only accept win-win and do not accept combativeness, aggression, and power moves and nothing changes… It’s time to move on.

4 Communication Mistakes Men Do In Relationships (W/ Videos)

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 October 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Some men doom their relationships by repeating the same communication mistakes over and over.

These 4 communication mistakes are possibly the most common and most deadly.

This article provides you with examples and fixes.

Contents

- Relationship Communication Mistakes
  - 1. Interrupting
  - 2. Not Paying Attention
  - 3. Belittling Her Opinion
  - 4. Ignoring Bids of Emotional Connections
- Fixing Relationship Communication Mistakes

Relationship Communication Mistakes

I had originally titled this section “communication mistakes men make in relationships”.

But I have changed the title since then because albeit men make more of these mistakes, the ladies aren’t immune either.

There are many different communication mistakes men do in their relationships. Here we will focus a bit more on the actual conversation, and as usual with plenty of examples.

1. Interrupting

Interrupting when there’s really no need to interrupt is bad for two reasons:

1. It’s disrespectful

2. It's too dominant and highlights she's the subordinate

Why both are terrible:

Respect Is The Bedrock of Healthy Relationships

Respect is the bedrock of any good relationship and one of the most fundamental elements. Without respect, no relationship can even reach a "sufficient" status.

Over-Dominance Breaks Bond & Rapport

Great relationships are often balanced bonds between people who are similar and share affinities.

The problem with domination is that it highlights instead a huge difference between the two.

I will share a story here of when it happened to me that I ended up dominating my partner too strongly:

> One night me and my ex girlfriend went out to meet an old friend of mine visiting town.
>
> On the way back to my place, my girlfriend was as angry at me as I had ever seen her.
> She was not directly lashing out though but expressing it in a very passive aggressive way, without talking and refusing to help me carry some grocery.
>
> Once I realized she wasn't yet ready to talk, I didn't try anymore, but just kept walking ahead towards home.
> The big surprise came once we reached the crossroad.
> Instead of going straight to my place I turned to the bus stop to send her back home.
>
> You should have seen the look on her face.
>
> I stopped and told her "I'd rather you stay, BUT you have to change your mood and TALK to me. Normally and politely".
>
> In a downtrodden and feeble voice she said: "but I cannot change now so suddenly".
>
> I didn't accept any compromise, though, if she wanted to stay, she had to pull it off. She spoke to me, and she stayed.
>
> I had imposed my will out of sheer power.
> I had "won", and she was now a browbeat, dominated woman. Broken, as she said herself as we walked home.

That was one of my lowest moments, way too much and very unnecessary.

It highlighted she wanted to stay with me more than I wanted her to stay with me -at least for the night-.
But it did so in a confrontational, unhelpful way.
Terrible.

Also, read:

- Controlling people
- Combative relationships

Dominance creates a chasm.
The man should be the leader, but not the owner of a puppet on a string because, and here's the key: there are no subordinates in great relationships.
Great relationships are formed by a captain and a co-captain.

In extreme cases focusing on "winning" and controlling is the sign of an abusive relationship. Read more:

- Relationships with power-hungry partner

- Types abusive partners
- Signs of an abusive relationship

2. Not Paying Attention

If interrupting communicates “I don’t respect you”, not listening communicates “I don’t care”.

As Brene Brown points out in *Daring Greatly*, stopping to care, or disengagement, is the first sign of betrayal. And it’s the first sign the relationship might be in its dying stages.

However, many men aren’t actually interested in ending the relationship but are actually still very into their partner. But they don’t pay attention because they don’t know any better.

And that’s why it’s paramount you don’t fall prey to this pitfall, but *show* that you care by paying attention.

Notice how he says “yeah yeah” without really paying attention as he looks down at his cards instead of looking at her.
He then suddenly turns around and gives her his back. When she’s looking for a word, he repeats what she said before with a fake ironic grin, communicating he’s not really interested in what she’s saying.
The last nail in the coffin, he interrupts her and moves the conversation off without letting her finish her point.

3. Belittling Her Opinion

Our opinions are a manifestation of who we are.

So when we belittle someone’s opinion, especially if it’s opinions they hold dearly, we are also belittling *them*.

This is especially pernicious with your partner, where caring for her personality is the main ingredient of a great relationship.

Basically, when you belittle her personality, **you are communicating you are with her only because she’s got a vagina.**

It doesn’t just say bad things about her but also says terrible things about you.
Namely, that you have low standards, that you are with her out of *need* –not out of *will*- and that you are probably not able to get any other pu**y if she dumps you.

Here’s a personal story of when it happened to me:

> Years ago an ex girlfriend of mine was animatedly talking to me about a writer she was studying whom had just become her favorite author.
>
> I kept arguing back this author wasn’t so smart if he supported communism.
>
> Eventually after some protracted arguing about the author and the (non) merits of communism, she snapped saying I didn’t appreciate her and respect her.
>
> Needless to say, I was an idiot back then.
>
> If the same situation happened today I would be curious about her opinion, ask more about the author and learn a new couple of things.
>
> Also, I would appreciate that she was drawn to communist-ideals out of a willingness to help people. I would still fully disagree, but I would not belittle her opinions anymore.

And here’s an example:

Notice her body language: as soon as he spurns and belittles her opinion she crosses her arms moving to a closed-off

position.
She feels under assault, also because he later takes the super sneaky road of “recruiting” the rest of the team against her when he says “boys, boys, is he done?”.
As if it weren’t enough, he calls the break without even giving her a chance of explaining.

4. Ignoring Bids of Emotional Connections

This is similar to “not paying attention”, but with much higher stakes because deeper feelings are concerned.

When the conversation turns more emotional it’s because your partner is telling you something important for her.

If you fail to listen and to connect, you are saying you don’t care about her emotions and you are snubbing her moment of vulnerability.

That hurts.
She exercised all that emotional effort for nothing, and she feels like she is the only one “making a real effort” while you stay cold and unaffected.

And when you ignore her emotional opening and connections, you are also communicating that you two don’t really connect on an emotional level after all.
That is to say, you are not a great couple after all.

But what are these bids for emotional connections?

If they’re not obvious enough for you, you can look at the topics. They often concern her, you, or the two of you. For example:

- Her past
- Difficult life experiences
- Feelings (especially if feelings for you)
- Embarrassing stories
- Anything concerning the two of you

Often emotional physical cues are also present, which can be part of the discomfort, hiding, or “reaching out” clusters. Such as:

- Looking down more than usual
- Moving body away
- Reaching out to touch you physically
- Looking at you intensely
- Tears

Here’s an example of an emotional talk. Not all will be so obvious, but you get the point:

And here’s a real-life example of failure to connect.
Don’t let the same happen to your partner:

She is sharing with him a major personal feeling.
She says they are so lucky for being on the same page. That’s very deep, she is telling him why she feels the two of them are so great together. His behavior is just proving otherwise though.
He again uses his typical “yeah yeah”, then looks away while she strives to meet his eyes and he makes light fun of her with him “are we gushing today”.
She puts a hand on his arm, trying to connect with him physically and hoping to get his full attention.
No such luck, he turns around and checks his computer.

Fixing Relationship Communication Mistakes

The mindset that will help you prevent the communication mistakes men do in relationships is the same mindset that makes you a top man in a relationship.

That is, you only get into relationships you want, not the ones you need. And you only accept relationships that fully stimulate you, both physically and intellectually.

That's the first step.

The second step is that you care about the people around you, both in the sense of getting to know them and in caring in the sense that you want to see them happy.

Both are traits that you can develop.

Once you have those two elements in place: being in a relationship because you want to, and caring, you will automatically avoid these mistakes.

Similarly, if you don't care about your partner, then be brave NOT to have a partner and allow her to find someone who will actually care about her.

Social Engineering: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Social Engineering (2018) provides an overview of manipulation and dark psychology strategies and techniques hackers use to gain access to sensitive information.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Chapter 1: Social Engineering
  - Chapter 2: Information Gathering
  - Chapter 3: Elicitation
  - Chapter 4: Pretexting
  - Chapter 5: Mind Tricks
  - Chapter 6: Influence
  - Chapter 7: The Tools of Social Engineering
  - Chapter 8: Case Studies
  - Chapter 9: Prevention and Mitigation
- CONS
- Social Engineering Review

Bullet Summary

- Watch out for the data you give to strangers and share with the public
- Education is the best defense against Social Engineering
- Confidence, human psychology understanding, and believing you are who you say you are, are the keys to a successful Social Engineering attack

Summary

About the Author:
Christopher Hadnagy is a well-known social engineering researcher and security consultant specializing in human-based security vulnerabilities.

Chapter 1: Social Engineering

The first step towards being more secure is accepting that systems are vulnerable and can be compromised. Believing a system is unbreachable instead is the surest way of making your system unsafer.

Christopher Hadnagy lists the different types of social engineers:

- Hackers: since software are becoming harder to break through, hackers are more and more moving into social engineering;
- Penetration Testers: they have the skills of a hacker but use them to test their clients' systems
- Spies
- Identity Thieves:
- Disgruntled Employees: often difficult to detect as they hide their displeasure. The more disgruntled they

become the more they justify their malicious actions

- Scammers:
- Recruiters:
- Sales People:
- Governments
- Doctors, psychologists, lawyers

Social Engineering Equations
Christopher Hadnagy says that the *Social Engineering* Equation is: Pretext + Manipulation + Subject's Greed = Success

> Knowledge is the best defense

Chapter 2: Information Gathering

Christopher Hadnagy says that gathering information about your target is your very first step and a crucial one.

I loved the story's examples with the dialogue the author provides.

He walked into a cafe where he saw his target get in. He orders the same, sits nearby, takes the newspaper, and makes a comment on a conversation-worthy piece of news he read and says:

> **Social Engineer**: *Even in these small towns things are scary nowadays. Do you live around here?*

He then says a few things more and adds

> **Social Engineer**: *"I sell X to major corporations, you're not a higher up in a big corporation are you"*

He then says he's not trying to sell anything but asks if he could stop by the day after to leave some information. To enjoy the full conversation I invite you to get Social Engineering on Amazon.

Chapter 3: Elicitation

Christopher Hadnagy says that elicitation works because it leverages a few inborn human tendencies. For example, the author suggests that people:

- Desire to be polite
- Want to seem informed and intelligent
- Talk and divulge more when praised
- Will not lie for lying's sake (most of them at least)
- Respond kindly to those who are concerned about them

The author says that great conversation requires the mastery of three steps:

1. Be comfortable and confident
2. To be comfortable, educate yourself on the topic, and don't pretend you know more than you do
3. Don't be greedy: give and share info as well

Pre-loading

Pre-loading is similar to what Cialdini refers to as *Pre-Suasion*.

Appealing to Someone's Ego

The book shows this as example where the attacker starts a conversation with this:

> **Social Engineer**: *you must have an important job and be good at it, X thinks very highly of you*

And if the target denies and corrects you, you can get what he actually does in the company, and then move on saying that he's modest.

Mutual Interest

Example:

> **Social Engineer**: *you have a background in Ruby on Rails, you should see the work we did at X to expand that language, I'd like to send you a copy*

Expressing interest is another great way to elicit.
The author says this is very powerful too because now the attacker controls the next step: what to send, when, and how much to share.

Deliberate False Statement

The author explains that attackers use deliberate false statements to trigger corrections, which can provide novel and truthful insights.

Volunteering Information

When social engineers say something to someone, their natural tendency will be to give something useful back.

Assuming Knowledge

The book describes how attackers create the impression of expertise to gain trust. People are more likely to share with others who seem already knowledgeable.

Leading Questions Manipulation

Christopher Hadnagy goes a bit into open-ended questions and close-ended questions.

He says that leading questions can be used to manipulate someone's memory.

For example, if you show someone the picture of a child's room and ask them if they saw the teddy bear, it implies one was in the room, and the person is likely to say yes, because it seems logical, or even expected, to have a teddy bear in the kid's room.

Read more on *dark psychology:*

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

Assumptive Questions

Assumptive questions assume the target has the knowledge and knows the answer.

The author says it's used by law enforcement, when for example asking "where does Mr. Smith live", assuming the target knows the answer.

Chapter 4: Pretexting

Christopher Hadnagy says the best way of living your pretext is to become the person you need to impersonate.

Two tips I liked:

- Avoid “hmmm” before answering: it’s obvious you don’t know the answer
- If you need two seconds, you can pretend you’re going to ask a colleague

The book uses this cynical quote to illustrate the mindset of malicious social engineers:

> Honesty is the key to relationships. If you can fake that, you’re in.

Chapter 5: Mind Tricks

Christopher Hadnagy starts the chapter by saying that movies and comics often present larger-than-life characters who can recognize someone’s lying simply by looking at them. These representations are fantasies.

Senses of Reference

Christopher Hadnagy says that although we have 5 senses, we mainly refer to 3 for building our thoughts. They are:

- Sight – Visual Thinker (“I see what you mean”, “see where you’re coming from”)
- Hearing – Auditory Thinker (“I hear you”)
- Feeling – Kinetics Thinker

It’s important to understand the mode because it helps social engineers meet people in their comfort zone, and the more people are comfortable, the higher the social engineer’s chances of success.

The author highlights that finding and using someone’s dominant sense is not an exact science and you should not fully rely on it.

Micro-Expressions

I fully agree with him that, although you can become proficient at reading micro-expressions, you can’t really be sure what’s behind that expression, or why it’s happening.

Leveraging NLP

You will probably not use the side of NLP dealing with hypnosis, but NLP can serve you well with the use of voice, language, and word choice to guide people where you want them to be.

- **Vocal Tone**

The author says changing the tone of voice can change the meaning of the sentence and how the target will perceive it.

For example, asking “don’t you agree” without going up with your voice will make it more of a command.

- **Ultimate Voice – Embedding Commands**

Hadnagy describes the skill of embedding commands as a core part of a social engineer’s toolkit

TPM’s note: we’re skeptical of ’embedded commands’ from NLP

- **Choosing Words**

Social engineers use positive words to get targets into a positive state of mind and negative words when they want

their target to think negatively about the topic.

Building Instant Rapport

Christopher Hadnagy says that the prerequisite to building rapport is to like people and be genuinely interested.
He also stresses clothing and personal appearance.

Chapter 6: Influence

- **Smart Compliments**

The author talks about the power of compliments and how easy it is to use them wrong for beginners.
"You have beautiful eyes, can I use the bathroom" is the wrong of doing it.

Commenting on the picture she has on her desk saying they're beautiful kids and asking if they're their children, and then commenting you got children around the same age is a good way of doing it instead.

- **Send gifts**

Christopher Hadnagy says that gifts are very useful. He shares that sending a small gift and saynig that you only ask them to visit your website and download their catalog in exchange often worked.

- **Concessions**

Giving a concession is also a great way to get something in exchange (check *Reciprocity* in Persuasion by Cialdini for more).

- **Authority**

Social Engineers will often pretend of being authority figures to get people to comply with their requests or to let them enter and exit the premises unchallenged.
The author says that authority is especially powerful when people are acting on an auto-pilot.

- **Manipulation**

Creating stress, anxiety, and fear make people more likely to do what the Social Engineer asks.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Chapter 7: The Tools of Social Engineering

Christopher Hadnagy goes into locks, lock-pickers, GPS, cameras, etc.
This goes a bit outside the scope of this website.

Chapter 8: Case Studies

The author mentions a few very interesting case studies here, both from his personal experience and from other famous Social Engineering attacks.

I invite you to check the full book for this part.

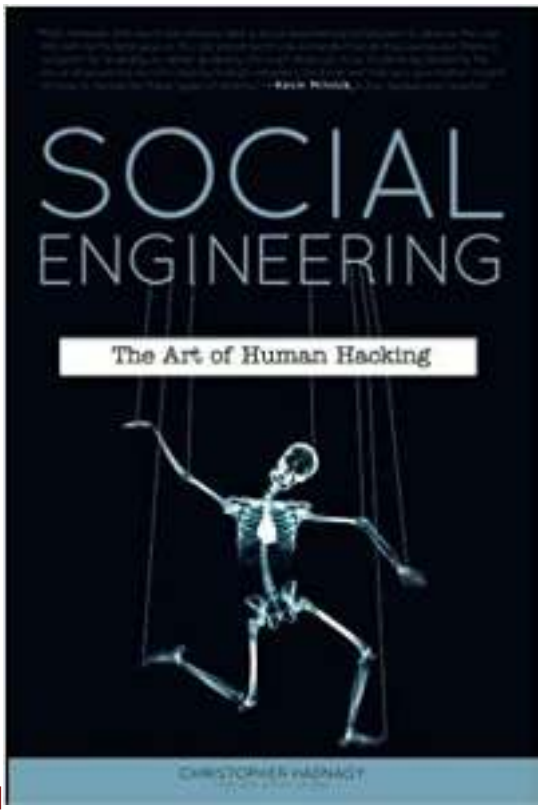
Chapter 9: Prevention and Mitigation

First:

Have in place **a good disaster recovery plan and an incident response plan** because a malicious attack is more a

question of when than if.

In *Social Engineering* you can't just be thrown money at the problem to make the system more secure though because it's often a matter of people and education.

[image] 

CONS

- **Some Unneeded Info**

I felt the information on actual software to be too detailed and only took up unneeded space. The specifics of programs and software will get old in a few years and can be easily retrieved with a Google search.

- **Broad… But Not Always Deep**

"Social Engineering: The Art of Human Hacking" mentions so many different things that it's only naturally impossible it could go deep into most of them.
So it ends up being an overview of many topics, which someone might appreciate, but in the fields, I love I prefer the depth of insight to the breadth of overviews.

Social Engineering Review

If you want Social Engineering because you're into social arts, psychology, and human relationships, the book has some good examples.

It's especially useful for:

- Hackers with few people skills
- People who want to learn Social Engineering basics
- People who want to learn more about how to defend themselves from scams

In all the above three cases, it's a useful book and I particularly loved the examples.

Those were also helpful for people relatively advanced in the social arts.

Read more:

- **Best dark triad books**
- **Best manipulation books**

Get the book on Amazon

How to Touch a Woman: 4 Ways to Touch Like A Confident Man

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The power of touching a woman right is what makes a man attractive.

What happens when a man touches a woman is that it immediately communicates interest, confidence, and masculine presence. *As long as the touch is done right*, of course.

How you touch a woman makes the difference between happy relationships and sexy seducers who "get" women and… All the rest.

By the end of this article, you will know the proper way of touching a woman.

Contents

- How to Touch Women
  - 1. Touch Slow, Avoid Quick Touches
  - 2. Touch With Your Palm (No Backhanded Touches)
  - 3. Touch With Purpose & Confidence, No 'Peckers'
  - 4. Touch Her Seductively, No Bro Games
- Takeaway: Treat Her Like A Woman
  - When To Use The Bro-Touch
- The Power of Touching A Woman

How to Touch Women

Many men touch girls the wrong way: as if girls were their male pals.

But masculine men treat women like *women*, not like their male friends.
Treating women like women sub-communicates masculinity and confidence in your sexuality.

Conversely, touching her wrong, or like a 'bro' kills attraction.

When you treat women like your guy friends, well, that's also when you enter straight into the friend zone.
There are four major categories of this so-called "male touch", which we will also refer to as "bro-touch":

1. Touch *Slow*, Avoid Quick Touches

The Pointed Sisters said the following about their dream lovers:

> *I want a man with a slow hand*
> *I want a lover with an easy touch*
> *I want somebody who will spend some time*

That song might be more than 30 years old, but a few things in human nature change very slowly. And, pun intended, touching women slowly is one of those evergreen.

Hurrying and quick movements belong maybe to a magician's slight of hands bag of tricks, but they have no place in the world of sexy, sensual and romantic.

How to touch girls, then?

Slow.

A nightmare of many women is out of control men who jump on them too quickly, move straight to their vagina without any warm up, and then pound them rabbit style only to finish (here's happening to Carrie in Sex and the city).

If you noticed any thread in that nightmare is this: everything is too quick.

By moving slow before the actual sex, you communicate you're one of those men who's been around and is in no rush.
One of those men The Point Sisters wanted, a man who can spend some time warming up and reveling in the pleasure.

And it's the same for social situations: **quick movements communicates you're nervous.**

And in relationships, it communicates you prefer distance to empathic bonding.
For example, quickly patting on someone's back communicates you want to break the hug and keep some distance (Lowndes, 2003).

To be avoided both in relationships and in seduction.

Why?

Because the quicker one pats, the more uncomfortable and distant he feels and the more a-sexual he wants to keep the interaction.

via GIPHY
Notice the difference between the two and what that communicates. He communicates he doesn't want to be there to console and support her.

That's failing to read a bid for connection.

2. Touch With Your Palm (No Backhanded Touches)

The palm of your hand is the inner part of our hands, and it communicates openness.

The palm of your hand brings the external world inside, it's warm, communicates trust and welcomes people in (Bowden, 2013).

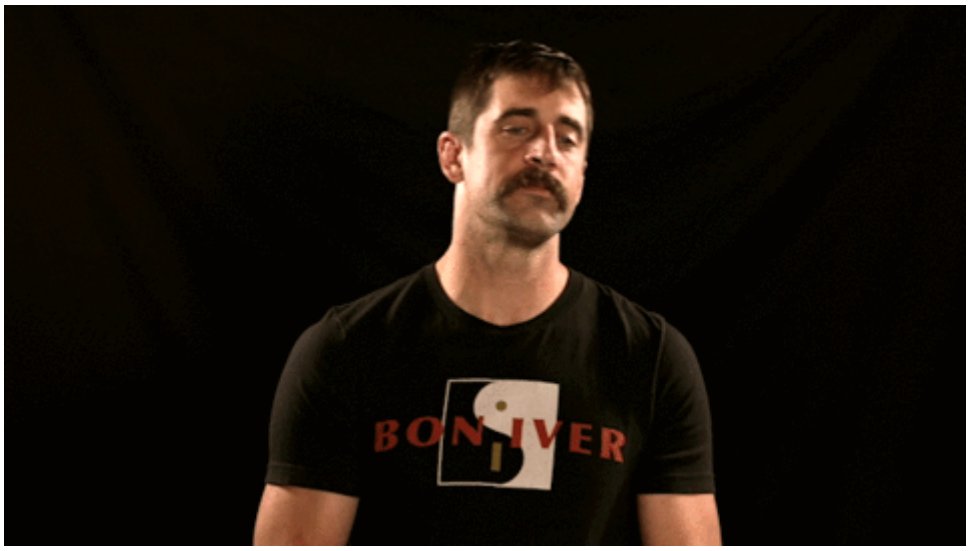
Touching people with a full open palm is a sign of deep connections.

Guys avoid hugging other men with the palm of their hand firmly on their back because they are afraid of looking too chummy, too close and… Not masculine.
So they go for the backhand to show distance in a misguided effort to look "super heterosexual".

The problem is that… They do the same with women, most of the times.

Then they read that they should be touching women and force themselves to go for it…. But they do it with the back of their hands.
And with that, they communicate that they are cold and distant.

Indeed, if you think of the nonverbal message of “whatever, I don’t care”, how do you do it?
With the palm of your hand or with the back of your hand?
Of course with back of your hand:



via GIPHY

And we use the back of our hand to push things away, or to say we don’t want to have anything to do with certain people.

via GIPHY

It should already be obvious by now why you don’t want to use the back of your hand with the woman in your relationship or for the woman you’d want in your relationship.

Here is one example:

3. Touch With Purpose & Confidence, No ‘Peckers’

The nagging touch reaches out and retreats like a pecker.
It’s used in two occasions:

- Friendly jokes

- When you're trying to get someone's attention

In the friendly case, you look a bit childish.
It's not too bad, but childish behavior is rarely sexy or romantic.

When you're trying to get someone's attention though it's even worse.

It communicates that their opinion matters hugely, that it's more important than yours and that you are having troubles being heard.
None of those says great things about you.

If you really need to interrupt her instead, just hold your finger high, *hold* your hand on her body, or start speaking (and then apologize and explain why it was so urgent for you to interrupt).

4. Touch Her Seductively, No Bro Games

Bro greetings are all those ways of greeting someone that men use, mostly among themselves.

Some examples:

- High fives
- Fist bumps
- 10 moves handshakes
- Clasping hand and touching shoulder

Try to remember someone using those.
And lemme guess, it was rarely women, right? Men mostly, and often young men.

And that's exactly why you don't want to use them with your woman.

Takeaway: Treat Her Like A Woman

You will notice that all these ways of touching girls are the same ways that guys would use with their male friends.

But how would you feel if a girl escorted you out of the door with her hand on the small of your back?
And if she took your hand like in the below picture?

A bit weird, right?

It's because she'd be treating you like you would treat a girl.
And it's the same if you treat her like you would treat your best friend. **When you touch women like you touch your friends you communicate you don't get women**.

And when you overdo the bro touching you are:

- **Offending her**

Because by treating her like a male friend you are negating her sexuality as a woman.
And you are nonverbally negating the possibility of you two getting together, which takes us to our next point:

- **Communicating (awkward) friendship**

If you wanted to be sexual with her, you are drastically reducing your chances when you use any of the above mentioned bro-touches.

Touching women like men is the fast way ticket into the dreaded friend zone.

If you already are in a relationship, it's great if you two can be lovers and friends at the same time, but that doesn't mean you should negate her female gender and sexuality.

When To Use The Bro-Touch

Who should you be using these bro-touches with, then?

Well, ideally, you would have a limited use of them with anyone, your guys friends included.
Mostly go for it in locker room situations and when you're half naked or a bit too physically close for comfort.

Quick motions, backhands and nagging touch I rarely see the need for.
If some men are your friends, don't shy away from real hugs when you meet them and don't be afraid open palms touches.

Men who are comfortable with their sexuality aren't usually too scared of looking gay.

It's guys with lots of sexual hang-ups and closeted homosexuals who are often most afraid of looking like one (in psychology it's called "Reaction Formation").

Look at the Godfather and notice: it's all open palms.
Even slight caressing.

And is he worried about looking gay? No!

He is communicating that he cares, and that he *takes care* of the people around him, men included.

The Power of Touching A Woman

The biggest takeaway for you from this article is this:

1. Treat women as women, not like your guy pal
2. Slow down your touches

… And you will become a more attractive man.

Eleven Rings: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"Eleven Rings" shares the insider story of what it's like to be the most successful NBA coach ever and to *be the leader* of the best basketball teams and talents of all time: Michael Jordan's Bulls and Kobe Bryant's Lakers. [image]

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Bullet Summary

- Love -the bond of brotherhood- is what makes winning possible
- Distributing leadership is what makes you a great leader
- Not intervening is sometimes the very best you can do

Summary

About The Author: Phil Jackson is a former NBA and later NBA coach. He holds the record for most NBA championships by a team's coach.

Chapter 1: THE CIRCLE OF LOVE

Phil says the circle of love is the secret sauce that takes teams from a bunch of individuals to a cohesive winning teams.

Of course, the author clarifies, it's not about romantic love and not even brotherly love. What Phil refers to is the emotional connection that ties the warriors together in the heat of battle.
That kind of bond, of being willing to take a hit for a comrade, is critical to success.

Many other factors matter says Phil, like for example talent, intelligence, toughness, and even luck. But without love, none of those factors matter.

Phil quotes Dave Logan, John King, and Halee Fischer-Wright in their five stages of tribal development, which are:

- **STAGE 1 –** Despair, hostility, and the belief that "life sucks."
- **STAGE 2 –** Apathetic players perceive themselves as victims and who are passively antagonistic. The mind-set is "my life sucks."
- **STAGE 3 –** Focused on individual achievement and a mindset that "I'm great (and you're not)." The tribe is a tribe of "lone warriors"
- **STAGE 4 –** Pride of belonging to the tribe and a belief that "we're great (and they're not). It requires an enemy, and the more powerful the enemy, the more powerful the tribe;
- **STAGE 5 –** A sense of innocent wonder and the mindset that "life is great." (Chicago Bulls during 1995–98)

Chapter 2: THE JACKSON ELEVEN

Phil Jackson says that the *principles of leadership* he used are quite simple:

1. LEAD FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Some coaches look at new hip techniques to gain an edge.

That's an outside-in strategy and, he says, only works in the short term.
It backfires when players get *tired of following orders* and when the other teams catch up to your latest tricks.

He says that as long as he spoke from the heart, players would hear him.

Learn more on *how to execute tasks while maintaining power:*

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

2. BENCH THE EGO

Phil says that the most common type of coaching in the NBA is domineering or pandering to their stars and treating them like friends.
But the more he tried to exercise power in a direct way, the less effective and powerful he was.

What worked instead was distributing power as much as he could while still keeping final authority.

And he let go of his ego.

He wanted an environment in which everyone had a *leadership* role, however small that could be (also read

Principles: Life and Work).
Just as a note, this does not mean being a pushover.

Learn to let go of your ego:

- How to build an antifragile ego

3. LET PLAYERS DISCOVER OWN DESTINY

Phil says you can't force people to change, but you have to inspire them to want to change.

Phil wasn't even interested in getting players to do as he said, he wanted them to think on their own so they could make their own decisions during the game.
And he encouraged players to find themselves and find their own specific qualities (read *The Gifts of Imperfection*).

4. THE ROAD TO FREEDOM IS A BEAUTIFUL SYSTEM

Phil talks about the triangle offense system in basketball.

He says the beauty of the system is that every player counts and you can't simply rely on the superstar to do something.

It gives everyone enough freedom to express themselves within a well-defined structure.

5. TURN THE MUNDANE INTO THE SACRED

The son of two extremely religious pastors, Phil observed the communities they were able to create with faith and religion.

He learned early what it means to connect people together and with something greater than themselves.

Over the course of the book, Phil talks about the sacred he created to infuse practices and games with a sense of the sacred.

6. ONE BREATH = ONE MIND

Phil used meditation both in his life and with his teams.

Specifically, he introduced the Bulls' mindfulness meditation and had the players sit together in silence and breathe together in sync.

7. THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS COMPASSION

The author says that kind and thoughtful words have transformative effects, even with the apparent toughest men.

He says the day Michael Jordan realized he needed to get to know his teammate was also the day he became a compassionate leader, which in turn helped him take the Bulls to where they got.

Also, read *Daring Greatly* for more on compassion.

8. LOOK AT THE SPIRIT, NOT AT THE SCOREBOARD

Great team spirit is the key to the scoreboard, not the other way around.

9. SOMETIMES YOU PULL THE BIG STICK

Phil says he used many tricks to raise the players' game and level of consciousness. Including tough ones.

10. WHEN IN DOUBT, DO NOTHING

Sometimes focusing on something completely different than your current problem is the best way to solve that problem.

11. FORGET THE RING

Obsessing about winning is a loser's game, says Phil.

We should focus instead on creating all the conditions for success and then letting go of the outcome.

What matters is playing the right way and growing, as human beings and as players. Then the final win takes care of itself:

> Obsessing on winning is a loser's game

Chapter 3: RED

In this chapter, Phil Jackson focuses on his past as a player for the Knicks. If you're into basketball it's interesting and I invite you to check the book.

Chapter 4: THE QUEST

Phil talks about how he got into Zen and meditation and the power of a beginner's mind.

Suzuki teaches us to meditate by sitting with a straight spine, relaxed shoulder, and chin pulled in as if we wanted to support the sky with our head.
Then focus on your breathing in and out. Don't try to stop thoughts, but let them come and go and then go back to focusing on your breath.

Let your thoughts come and go naturally.
They will become less and less intense and will have less and less power over your conscious mind.
Meditation helps you clear your mind and fully focus on what you need to focus on, without any distractions in the background.

Phil says that it took him years of practice, but eventually the more aware he started to be about what was going on within him, the more he became connected to the world outside.

He became calmer and more patient, qualities that helped him immensely as a coach.
The aspects of Zen that have been critical to Phil Jackson are:

1. GIVING UP CONTROL

If you want to obtain perfect calmness you cannot be bothered by what's going on in your mind.

Let the thoughts come and go, and they will be under your control.

Similarly, to control people, the biggest mistake is to try to control them directly.
Give them lots of room instead, even encourage them to be mischievous, and then watch them.

The author says that was really helpful when dealing with Dennis Rodman.

2. TRUSTING THE MOMENT

Zen helped Phil focus on the moment without distraction from the past or the future, slowing down the way he experienced time and becoming more aware of the present.

3. LIVING WITH COMPASSION

Phil says he was particularly attracted to the Buddhist tenet of compassionate life.

Particularly, there was a key thought that became a building block of his work as a coach, and it was:

> *"what you do for yourself, you're doing for others, and what you do for others, you're doing for yourself."*

Chapter 5: DANCES WITH BULLS

The "Jordan Rules" is how the Pistons stopped Michael Jordan.

It worked by attacking him with multiple players any time he had the ball. Here's a video:

https://youtu.be/p2v0LOhjsJs?t=43

The author says he was looking for a system that had the ball move around in a selfless fashion and ended up using the triangle offense to reach that goal.

Phil sees the triangle as a system that develops as the game unfolds, "in the moment".

> The road to freedom is a beautiful system

The system has many upsides, including:

Hard to play against

The triangle was hard to play against and to prepare against because, well… Not even the players themselves knew what was going to happen.

Depersonalize criticism

It allows coaches to criticize the play, not the players.
He was interested the players all understood the basics of the system, and every critique and feedback was about that, not about the player.

Distributed Leadership

The group, as a whole, had a purpose and each player was an important part of the system.

The players began teaching one another, and that formed a stronger bond that no individual glory moment could ever foster.

Phil Jackson says that Jordan at the beginning was working solo a bit too often and that he had to emulate Magic or Bird instead in working with the rest of the team. He has a great quote from Red Holzman:

> *"the real mark of a star was how much better he made his teammates."*

Chapter 6: WARRIOR SPIRIT

Jordan didn't exactly love giving the ball away more often.

But when he realized Phil wasn't going to back down, he started looking for ways to make the system work to make him win. Exactly what Phil wanted.

To be precise, Phil Jackson wasn't looking for a totally selfless team where everyone is equal and there is no space for creativity.

He was looking for a middle way between systems and space for personal creativity.

Once the Bulls hit that middle spot they took off.

Bull's Leadership

Phil Jackson thought Jordan didn't really have the magnetic personalities of Larry Bird or Magic Johnson.

Jordan was not a natural leader, he was a natural doer who pushed the team with his will and with the high demands he placed on everyone around him.

The team needed someone else to balance Jordan's perfectionism, so Phil named Bill Cartwright as cocaptain. Bill wasn't afraid to stand up to Jordan.

Bull's Tribal Initiation

Phil Jackson wanted to give the Bulls a safe environment away from the spotlights.

A place where they could get a sense of oneness and team spirit.
So he stopped press access to training and started introducing some tribal customs from the Lakota Indian tribe.

Alpha Dog VS Distributed Leadership

The tendency for some of us might be to have weak people around us so that we can feel superior and in power.

Phil Jackson surrounded himself with the strongest and most knowledgeable people instead and then gave them space to contribute.
Obviously, Phil had a *Growth Mindset*.
Read here on *how to get a growth mindset*.

Chapter 7: HEARING THE UNHEARD

Phil often reminded the team to focus on the journey rather than on the end destination.

Each game had to be meaningful for them in light of what they were trying to do as a team.

Phil Jackson also describes in this chapter how the work of Carl Rogers inspired him during this period.

Rogers helped his clients more by growing personally than by solving their specific problems.
He says that unless we accept ourselves first it's impossible to change and accept others.

And that's exactly what he tried to foster as a coach: an environment where players can be and express themselves creatively within a team structure.

Haters and Team Chemistry

A great challenge for coaches is to stop the players who dislike them from corrupting the rest and undermining the team's chemistry.
He quotes Casey Stengen:

> *"the secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from the guys who are undecided.*

I have seen a few teams and small companies crash and burn because discontent spread like a virus.
As Greene says in the 33 Strategies of War, you're better off eliminating these people.

Knowing the Players

Another great insight from *Eleven Rings* is that Phil Jackson made it a point to get to know his players.

He'd ask questions such as "what's your greatest aspiration", "whose influence you the most" or "what's something people don't know about you".

He'd have them fill out questionnaires or use psychological tests such as the "social bull's eye" to assess how players felt in relation to others.

Phil also mentions he never figured out a way to heal the wounds of players who didn't feel part of the team for getting little playing time.

Talking to Jordan

To get Jordan on board with his plans Jackson would not force anything on him.

He would treat him as a partner and ask him questions to switch his point of view. He'd ask how that strategy could improve the team, and what would Scottie or Horace feels about it.

When he let Jordan solve the problems and answer the questions by himself, he'd be more likely to buy into the solution (the "rule of involvement" as explained by Kurt Mortensen in Maximum Influence. Also read *How to Win Friends*).

Preparing for Matches: Meditation

Jackson says that back then most coaches prepared players for matches by exciting them and revving them up. But he realized he'd have a harder time staying focused and effective under pressure. So he did the opposite: he would calm players down.
To do so he'd use mindful meditation.

Relating to Players with Compassion

Phil Jackson tried an old technique called "whipping boy".

The "whipping boy" technique uses a single player for most of the criticism to motivate the rest of the team to bond together.

Jackson understood the whipping boy stratagem was a losing one and constructive criticism, respect, and compassion were the way to go.

Chapter 8: A QUESTION OF CHARACTER

Did it get harder as a winning team?

When it came to group cohesion, yes.

Once the spotlight turned on the Bulls, the team started vying for more attention and some players started getting jealous of Michael Jordan's fame and media attention.

As Michael Jordan said, "Success turns we're back into me's".

Chapter 9: BITTERSWEET VICTORY

Phil Jackson talks here about the rise of Scottie Pippen as a player and as a leader.

Scottie was more human than Michael and better at relating with other players.

He says that in every successful team, he's coached, players had a clear idea of their role in the team. **Having a clear structure helps reduce the players' anxiety and stress because there's no need to jostle around for power and positions**.

My Note:

Simon Sinek similarly says that when there's internal accord and supportive leadership then the tribe can focus on beating the external enemies (*Leaders Eat Last*).

Chapter 10: WORLD IN FLUX

Phil Jackson talks here about mindfulness.

It says it means "coming back to the present moment", an act that is not only limited to meditation itself but should take place all day long.

Dealing With Player Mutiny

Scottie Pippen famously refused to go back in the game once.

Phil stayed focused on the moment and looked for another player to take the shot instead of Pippen.
He then didn't let the situation pan out without injecting his ego and escalating.
Pippen understood and the issue was behind them.

Chapter 11: BASKETBALL POETRY

Phil Jacksons says he's often asked about the 95-96 Bulls.

And he says that the secret is that that team reached the stage 5 "life is great" mindset.
They were playing to enjoy the game itself and they were in a competition with themselves only.

Dealing With Rebels

How do you handle rebels like Dennis Rodman?

Phil says Dennis tried to buck the system, sometimes in small and childish ways, like showing up with an untied shoe or hiding some jewelry.

Sometimes Phil would make a joke, giving him a small fine, or simply ignore it.
And once Dennis realized nobody was interested in his little pushbacks, he stopped.

My Note:
This highlighted the psychological need of some people to stand up to authority just for the sake of not following orders. Once you ignore them, the issue often goes away as they don't feel pressured anymore.

Learn more:

- How to tell others what to do without growing resentment

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

Standing Up to Bully

Jackson mentions the fight of Jordan vs Kerr.

He says that after he had stood up to Jordan, Jordan looked at him differently and never picked on him anymore.
And he started trusting him on the court more as well.

My Note: This highlights again the importance of standing up to bullies (see an example here on: *how to deal with an alpha male handshake*)

Give Credit for Devotion

Phil Jackson quotes Liu Bang on the importance of giving credit to the players.

He says he would put players in the position to fully realize their potential and then give them credit for their achievements.
Then, as the grass grows toward the sun, the players would sprout towards the coach in devotion.

Finding Courage: The Winning Team Secret

In one of Jackson's best seasons, the most significant match for him was a loss against a weaker team.

Instead of conceding defeat, they rallied and caught up.

They lost in the end by a few points but realized that no matter how dire the situation was, they could find in their heart the courage and the strength to turn the situation around.
That game, he says, the Bulls found their heart.

Chapter 12: AS THE WORM TURNS

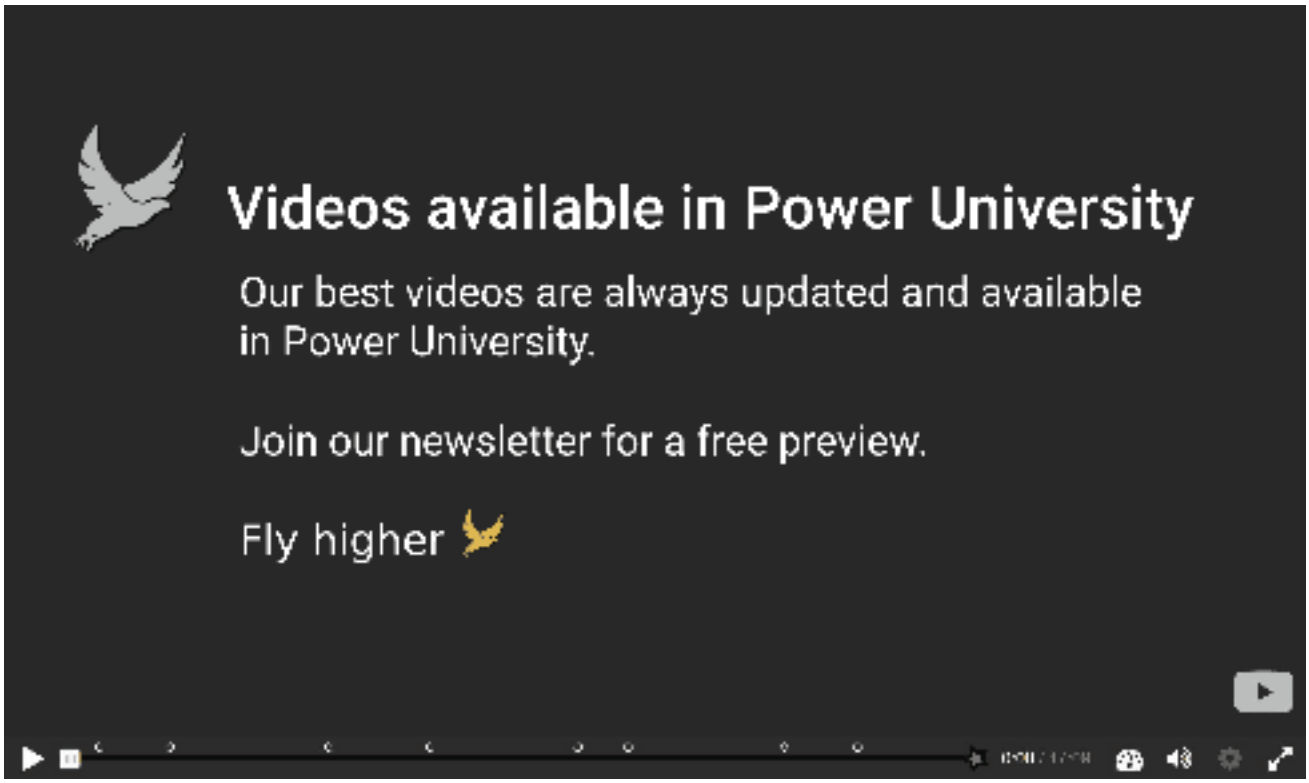
Phil starts the chapter with a Zen quote:

> *Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water.*

This is just another way of repeating a key tenet in *Eleven Rings*: focus on the task at hand, don't get lost in the past, and don't worry about the future.

Chapter 13: THE LAST DANCE

Phil Jackson describes here the emotional last dance with the Bulls.



Chapter 14: ONE BREATH, ONE MIND

The author says it's often a not easy task to foster oneness in popular sports.

It's a universe that often encourages egoistic behavior and a stardom mentality.
He says it was even more so in LA, the city of the glorified self.

Chapter 15: THE EIGHTFOLD OFFENSE

Rick, one of the players, said that Phil took a lot of pressure off the team by putting that pressure onto himself instead.

He'd get cities railed up against him, raise a s*it storm, and the press wouldn't be thinking about the players.

My Note:
This was a strategy later also used by football coach Jose Marino, albeit the guy after starting with a bang later slipped into anonymity.

Kobe Bryant: The First Mindset

Phil says that his approach with Kobe was to be as direct as possible and do so in front of everyone.

He played the bad cop and then use one of his coaches to mellow the player later on.

When Kobe said he'd like to be captain as soon as possible, Phil replied that you can't be a captain if nobody follows you. And back then, nobody was with Kobe.

Eventually, it sank in and Kobe started looking for ways to play more collaboratively, culminating with his Alley-Oop for Shaq:

> You can't be captain if nobody follows you

Chapter 16: THE JOY OF DOING NOTHING

Eleven Rings discusses Kobe and MJ.

Both of them wanted to win at all costs.
However, Michael had to win at everything, while Kobe seemed to compete with himself first and foremost.

Kobe was possibly more difficult to coach though, because his goal was to become the greatest of all time.
His goal was clear to him, so he didn't see the point to listen to Phil who told him to cut back on his shots and scoring.

Kobe VS Shaq

The alliance between Shaq and Kobe fell apart when Kobe wanted to be at the helm.
Jackson let it play out until it solved itself.

Chapter 17: ONE-TWO-THREE—LAKERS!

Phil says that trying to repeat a winning formula is a mistake many do.

Instead, the key to a successful run is to keep growing into the unknown and evolving.

Chapter 18: THE WISDOM OF ANGER

Chapter 18 starts with a quote from the Buddha:

> *Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned*

Phil says that the more freedom he gave Kobe, the more combative he became.

Jackson would later understand that Kobe took his laissez-faire approach as indifference. And while in the past he had been *passive-aggressive*, now he was openly *aggressive*.
Phil says he realized there wasn't much he could do to change his behavior, so he focused on dealing with his own anger in reacting to Kobe's anger outbursts.

My Note:
I wished here he gave more practical examples and more factual stories.
But I felt like **Jackson had made a leadership mistake here**. By allowing Kobe to run slipshod, Jackson was showing weakness.
He was communicating he wasn't strong enough to stand up to Kobe, and people don't like weak leaders.

Don't Hide Anger

Phil says we're wrong trying to eliminate anger as if it were a flow.

The more you hide it, the more it will come out bursting later on.
It's better to learn how it affects you.

And then learn to channel its energy for sustained focus and creative energy.

Also, read *Relentless* by Tim Grover on how anger can put you in the flow and "*Flow*" for getting yourself into a state of flow.

Chapter 19: CHOP WOOD, CARRY WATER

Phil says the key to being successful in NBA is to:

- Control emotions
- keep your focus during games
- play through pain
- find your place in the team
- stay cool under pressure
- stay balanced during big wins and big losses
- perform consistently

Reading that list, it's a lot to do with emotional intelligence (read *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman).

Chapter 20: DESTINY'S CHILDREN

Phil says, there's nothing like a humiliating defeat to focus the mind.

To him it means reaching that stage of deep camaraderie arising when a group commits to something greater than themselves, no matter the risks standing in the way.

It involves covering teammates' mistakes and weaknesses and even fouling when necessary to protect a friend.

> There's nothing like a humiliating defeat to focus the mind

Kobe Transformation

Phil says that during this season Kobe transformed from a selfish player into a leader that, finally, teammates wanted to follow.

The key, says Phil, was to learn that to get from his teammates, Kobe had to learn to give.

> To learn how to get, you need to learn how to give

Chapter 21: DELIVERANCE

Kobe says he learned hugely from Phil.

He learned to be present and enjoy the moments as they come. And he learned to lead his two daughters as well.

Letting them develop and explore at their own pace without forcing anything on them, but nurturing and guiding them along.

Chapter 22: THIS GAME'S IN THE REFRIGERATOR

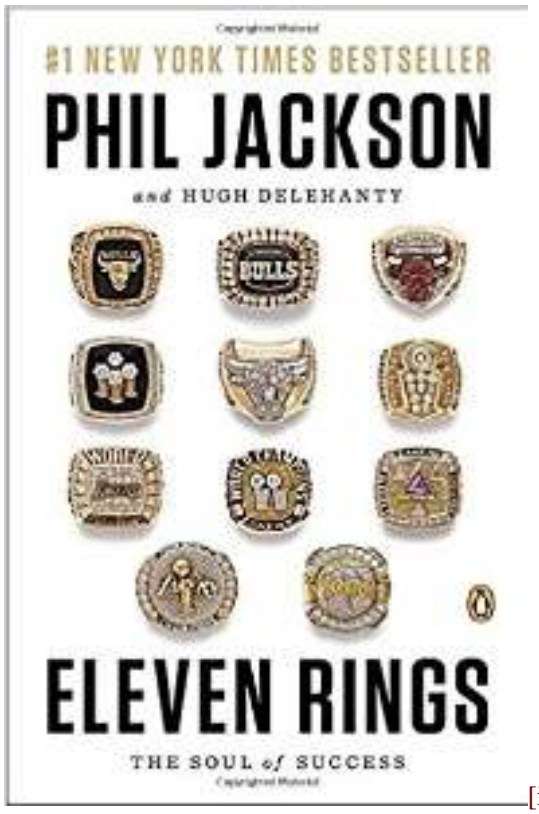
The last chapter is about Phil's last season.

He felt it was a mistake to have stayed one more year and he talks about the importance of letting go of losses.

Drawing again from Zen's teachings, Phil suggests that we should not resist losses.
The best way of coping with them instead is to become an active participant in them. Instead of only seeking gain and happiness, we must accept losses as well.

Lastly, Phil says that the main message he wants to share with *Eleven Rings* is to **see yourself as something bigger than yourself**. Something going beyond the confines of your ego and embrace instead something that "includes everything".

> **What we resist persists**



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Practical Applications

Coaches, managers, and leaders can learn a lot. I would say the most important takeaways are:

- Distribute leadership
- Check your ego at the door
- Foster an environment for growth
- Be compassionate

CONS

A few more specific examples of players' rebellions and how he handled the specific situations would have been nice (The Power Moves is all about specific situations and examples, which I believe are the best way to learn).

Review

"Eleven Rings: The Soul of Success" is a great book.

Absolutely recommended for anyone in any coaching or trainer position. And especially good for leaders leading highly driven and talented individuals.

I particularly liked the behind the scene and the focus on Phil's own personal growth via philosophy and meditation.

His approach of focusing on creating the conditions for success and then letting go of the outcome is also particularly inspiring (as opposed to a more "the result is all that matter" approach as in Extreme Ownership).

Get Eleven Rings on Amazon

Mastery Chapter Summary & Review (Robert Greene)

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Mastery (2012) proposes a structured, long-term journey to achieving elite expertise by finding your life's calling, learning everything from a previous master, and then adding your own unique talent to develop and create something new.

TPM Takeaway: Insightful, but lacks a scientific foundation.
Mastery offers a compelling and structured path to developing expertise, but Greene focuses on ancient history and examples, rather than modern contexts and scientific evidence. That makes some of its conclusions harder to generalize or trust.
Also, while the book focuses heavily on skill acquisition, it only briefly touches on how those skills translate into real-world results—where factors like strategy and value also play a role.
 For a more evidence-based framework, see: **TPM's Competence & Power Guide ↗**

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- Notes
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Overview

You achieve mastery with a set of replicable steps:

1. Follow your natural inclination
2. Go through an apprenticeship
3. Get a mentor
4. Master your craft
5. Set your creative energy free

Notes

About the Author:
Robert Greene is a best-selling author of books on power and strategy.
He has also written "*The 48 Laws of Power*", *"The Art of Seduction"*, *"The 50th Law"*, *"33 Strategies of War"* and *"The Laws of Human Nature"*.

Mastery Is A Simple Path

Robert Greene says the path leading to *mastery* is a simple process accessible to everyone.

He says there are three major distinct faces: the apprenticeship, the creative-active, and then mastery.

Greene mentions Darwin.
He says that what was specific for Darwin is actually common to everyone who achieved mastery: a passion and inclination for a subject, an encounter allowing them to apply their passion and an apprenticeship.

Masters often move ahead quickly because they are driven by their passion.
So **to master a specific field, you must love it first**.

Greene says it's mostly emotional qualities that drive people forward. Desire, persistence, and confidence play a much bigger role than reasoning powers.

Chapter 1 – Discover Your Calling: The Life's Task

Robert Greene says you have an inner force guiding you toward your life's tasks.

It was obvious in your childhood, and your first step towards mastery is actually always inward first: reconnecting with that innate inclination.

We are all born with a unique seed, and your life task is to find that uniqueness and bring it to fruition.
The force is there, and you can start moving toward it at any point in life.

But some people, says Greene, never end up who they really are.
They stop trusting themselves, they conform to the expectation of the people around and start wearing a mask.

When that happens, we end up in fields we don't really like, and we try to fill ourselves with the love of public approval.
The author says that when we do it for money and comfort, it's out of anxiety and to appease our parents. And our parents, in turn, push us into a more stable and lucrative position out of (misguided) care.

Greene gives us five strategies to find again our calling:

- **Return to Your Origins**: sometimes the inclination becomes clear while performing an activity. It's often visceral, nonverbal
- **Occupy the Perfect Niche:** overcrowded fields are attractive because everybody's there, but you get lost in politicking and can't focus on mastery. Find a niche you can dominate instead. Two strategies: start large and branch out till you're on your own or find connections between different fields
- **Avoid the False Path**: Realize you're in the wrong line of business. Rebel against the forces that got you there. If it was a father figure, you have to slay it
- **Let Go of the Past**: you don't have to fully abandon what you've done so far, but you can learn new ways to apply the skills and experiences
- **Find Your Way Back**: sometimes you deviate from the lure of money. But even if you get the money, you'll be unfulfilled. Going back to your inclination is your way to fulfillment

Robert Greene says that when facing your weaknesses resist the temptation to become like others and keep working on what you do well.

Don't think about grand plans for the future, but focus on the immediate strengths in front of you.
It will give you confidence and a strong base from which to branch out on future pursuits.
Keep going and you'll eventually hit your life task.

Indeed, the author says, your life tasks won't always be obvious to you.

But don't envy those who seem born with a gift in the meantime: it's often a curse because they don't learn to work hard at it.

> Being born with a gift is a curse if you don't learn to work hard at it

Chapter 2 – Submit To Reality: The Ideal Apprenticeship

After formal education, most of us enter a second practical education known as apprenticeship.

You will keep re-entering apprenticeships every time you switch fields.

Don't focus on the money or "piece of paper": **the goal of an apprenticeship is the transformation of your mind and character**.
Look for challenges, and move past your comfort zone: this is when you plant the seed for greatness and mastery.

My Note:
you absolutely need a *Growth Mindset* in this phase (*check my guide to get it*)

Robert Greene says there are three essential steps in a successful apprenticeship:

1. **Deep Observation**: learn the social and power dynamics, the unspoken rules. Don't try to impress people by showing you want to get to the top. If anything, impress by your eagerness to learn
2. **Skills Acquisition**: focus on a skill at a time, don't multitask. Embrace the boring and tedium and be fully present. 2-3h of intense focus is better than 8h of distracted work. Concentrated practice over time cannot fail to produce results.
3. **Experimentation**: initiate putting into practice and creative endeavors the skills you've built. Some people never experiment out of fear. Force yourself to do it before you feel ready and you'll know where you stand, get precious feedback, thicken your skin and develop a key skill: the detachment between your ego and your work.

Robert Greene also details 8 effective strategies for a perfect apprenticeship:

1. **Value Learning Over Money**: learning is the N.1 priority over everything else. If you can afford, work even for free as people will be more likely to teach you and divulge their secrets
2. **Keep expanding your horizons**: take responsibility for your own learning. Don't accept the status quo and any limitations you might have. Whenever you feel in a rut, shake yourself up and look for new challenges
3. **Revert to a feeling of inferiority**: to protect your ego you might be tempted to tell yourself you're good and better than your teachers. Don't. You're there to learn from them
4. **Trust the process**: it takes time. Push through the pain and frustrations with trust and faith
5. **Move towards resistance and pain**: our natural tendency is to avoid pain and difficulties. Do this instead: go in the opposite direction of your natural tendencies. Don't be nice to yourself, go against the tendency to lose focus
6. **Apprentice yourself in failure**: look at failures as learning opportunities
7. **Combine the 'how' and the 'what'**: learn deeply about your field.
8. **Advance through trial and error**: don't follow a linear path. Learn as many different skills as you can in the area that interests you.

Robert Greene says that nobody can skip the apprenticeship phase.

Mozart and Einstein, two examples often bandied as natural talents, also took 10 years before coming up with a great piece of work. The only difference is that they started very early and with full immersion.

Chapter 3 – Absorb The Master's Power: The Mentor Dynamic

Robert Greene says we live in an iconoclastic culture, we like to attack and dismantle all forms of authority.

Some of us believe that criticizing is a sign of intelligence and learning as a submissive pupil is a sign of weakness. That is a terrible mindset to reach mastery. **To learn we have to let go of the fear of submitting and accept and acknowledge there are people much further ahead in our field than we are**.
And their position is not due to friends or luck, but it's based on skills and knowledge.

Robert Greene says that books are generic and not tailored to your situation, but they can serve as mentors as well. You can idealize a figure of the past and ask yourself what they would do in your exact same situation.
Napoleon Hill had a whole team of great figures from the past he would turn to for suggestions (read *Think and Grow Rich*).

How to Deepen Mentor Relationships

1. **Choose Mentor Based On Your Needs**: refrain from looking for someone like your parents and don't just pick someone.
2. **Push Them to Give You Tough Love**: everyone's so PC and soft today, even self-help books tell you what you want to hear. That's damaging: you need your mentor to tell you the harshest truths even if that makes you uncomfortable
3. **Transfigure their Ideas:** take their teachings, but breathe your own personality into them
4. **Create Back and Forth Relationship**: don't only passively receive information, build a relationship of back and forth

Mentors Turning Sour

I particularly loved the psychological analysis Greene brings to the mentor-mentee relationship.

He says that good mentors will want you to become independent and will set you free once you're ready while remaining friends.

But **poor mentors will want to keep you subjugated**.
They will see your moves toward independence as an affront to their authority. They might come to envy you and your growing skills, your youth or your drive.

You can't let them hinder you: your mentee position is in no way permanent.
Your goal is to absorb as much as possible and then move on. If needed, start to resent him and use the emotions to break yourself free.

The mentor-mentee relationship often resembles that of a son-father figure, and sometimes you need to slay the father to burst your cocoon.

Once you internalize the knowledge you must move on. Your goal is to surpass your mentor.

> Your goal is to surpass your mentor

Chapter 4 – See People as They Are: Social Intelligence

Robert Greene says that social intelligence is key for any kind of mastery you're aiming for.

Why?

Because, Greene says, success without social intelligence is not real and will not last.

The author says that **social intelligence is about seeing people for who they really are**, what motivates them, and

what their manipulating tendencies are.
We're all different, but we all also have a dark side and a tendency to manipulate.

Robert Greene says the best approach is one of supreme acceptance.
He quotes Schopenhauer in saying that your goal is not to judge people and to change them, but to take them for whom they really are.

A few good tips in the book are:

- Too big praises or too much friendliness upon first meeting are signs of envy and you should be guarded
- To avoid envy ask for advice, self-deprecate, and show some weakness
- Hide your rebellious streak in the beginning -until you're at the top-
- Accept your boss will take credit, it's part of the apprenticeship but don't let colleagues do it

When you are getting too emotional when dealing with people, do the following to keep your edge:

1. Speak through your work:
2. Craft the appropriate persona: lean good public behavior
3. See yourself as others see you: we have a tendency to ignore criticism or fight it. Don't let it happen to you. Analyze the feedback you receive and your interactions as if you were analyzing a third person
4. Suffer fools gladly: fools are governed by their ego and are more interested in public approval and their personal career than in the truth. Do not lower yourself to their value

Chapter 5 – Awaken the Dimensional Mind: The Creative-Active

Coming out of apprenticeship, the tendency might be to relax or fit in and stay safe.

You must resist that urge and go to the opposite side instead.

Expand knowledge with different fields, experiment, and challenge the same rules you learned.
Developing and embracing originality will take you to new heights.

We often hear about how children are creative and open-minded. Well, Robert Greene says children never invent or discover anything life-changing.

Masters then DO retain the spirit of the child's mind, but they also add years of apprenticeship, knowledge, and a strong and deep focus on their ideas.
The key then is to blend the knowledge, focus, and mind-openness to explore new routes.

The author also goes into what the most common pitfalls are that are stifling our creativity:

- Complacency: we take everything for granted and feel like we know everything
- Conservatism: we stick to what worked in the past and we want to fit in. But if we worry about failure and what others think we'll never do anything creative
- Dependency: you have to distance yourself from your own work and art so that you can discern helpful feedback from useless hatred
- Impatience: the creative process requires constant focus and intensity, not hurrying and easy ways out. Tenacious application is required, what Da Vinci called "ostinato rigore"
- Grandiosity: praise does harm. We will start working to attract praise and as our ego inflates we'll come to believe it's our natural brilliance that pushed us up. What must motivate you is the process and the work itself.
- Inflexibility: it's about paradoxes and holding two thoughts at once. For example: doubts about what you know and trusting yourself

Robert Greene ends the chapter with a helpful reminder: the myth of creative power fueled by drugs is… A myth.

Don't fall for that cliche. Any work of mastery requires discipline, emotional stability, and self-control. Plus enduring hard work, doubts, and obstacles.

Chapter 6 – Fuse the Intuitive With the Rational: Mastery

Robert Greene says that *mastery* is not fully rational but a combination of knowledge, skills, and intuition.

Intuition needs both knowledge, skills, and experience and can take up to 20 years to reach.

My Note:
this reminded me of when Tim Grover spoke of "trusting your guts" for the very top performers in Relentless.

But it's never a point at which you stop and call yourself a master.
Mastery is a never-ending process.
You will never stop facing setbacks and situations that challenge you, and those are your blessing to keep going up and up on the never-ending road of mastery.

Reversal of Mastery

Robert Greene here tackles the critics of mastery.

Those who say there's no point in striving because masters are genius who were born lucky. Some others say it's immoral and only for the ambitious. Or a game of luck.

Mastery is not a function of genius, it's a function of time and focus, says Robert Greene.
And, last but not least, setting yourself on the path of Mastery is a favor you do the world.

> **Setting yourself on the path of Mastery is a favor you do the world**

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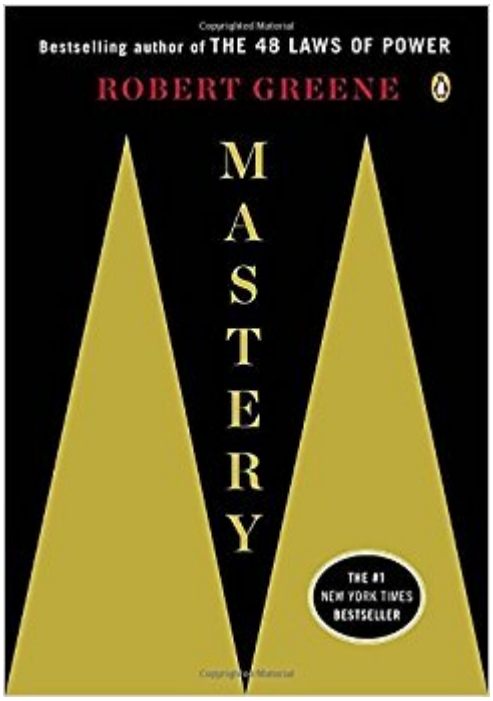

Real-Life Applications

- **Breadth of Experience before Depth**

Learn as many skills as possible, and follow your circumstances, but only if they're in the path of what interests

you.
A wide range of experience will make you better suited to decide what to stick with later on.

And I invite you to read *Grit* by Angela Duckworth for more on the importance of many experiences.

- **Do not lower yourself to fool level**

Fools are those looking for short-term gain, being right, their own career, and public approval. Accept them as a part of life but do not lower yourself to their level.

CONS

> **Lucio**: Robert Greene lacks some experience in power and, even more, in seduction. But he has such a great grasp on human nature, especially in its darker side, to more than make up for it.

Some more:

- **Games, Games, Games**

Robert Greene seems to often resort to his *combative*, "48 Laws of Power mindset" with a heavy focus on games people play and you playing back.
It feels like Greene is obsessed with seeing the world as a big chessboard where defection is more common than cooperation.

- **Bullet Points Book… Without Practical Steps**

Robert Greene uses a lot of lists and steps in Mastery.
However, those bullet points didn't always seem like actionable steps. One example: the step "craft the appropriate persona" doesn't say much about how to do that, so it feels like those lists don't always deliver on their promise.

Review

Mastery lacks scientific grounding, but provides a unique and valuable take on the competence literature by adding the power dynamics and 'darker' aspects of human nature.

We appreciate Greene's power-aware take, some of which were brilliant, and at the same time would recommend our readers interested in developing competence to also check more scientific resources.

Also see:

- Robert Greene's books: ranked and reviewed
- Is Robert Greene legit? Reviewing the author
- **Competence: why it matters and how to acquire it**

https://thepowermoves.com/competence

Tony Robbins VS Gary Vaynerchuk: Power Dynamics Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Gary Vaynerchuk and Tony Robbins are two of the most popular self-help gurus at the time of writing this article.

They are both dominant and both are used to leading and having people follow them.

Thus, their meeting was bound to be an interesting encounter for interpersonal power dynamics and various power moves.

Contents

- Intro: Why The Analysis
- Gary Vaynerchuk VS Tony Robbins
  - 1. Physical Dominance
  - 2. Verbal Dominance: Gary
  - 3. He Who Interrupts Dominates
- Overall: Tony Most Dominant & Best Communicator

Intro: Why The Analysis

There is no better way to learn how to be dominant than to look at two dominant men interact.

Vaynerchuck and Robbins are both authorities in their fields.
Both are men who are used to controlling and dominating their interactions, so their meeting was bound to be extremely interesting.

Also, even more interesting, the two have similar personalities.
Both Robbins and Vaynerchuk are super energetic, sky-high in extraversion (see OCEAN personality types), and major driver personalities.

Gary Vaynerchuk VS Tony Robbins

There are several layers of dominance. In this guide, we will go through each one, one by one, and analyze their interaction

1. Physical Dominance

Tony Robbins dominates the physical interaction at each and every level almost all throughout.

Physical Jostling

Robbins not only touches Gary first and right away, but grabs him and pulls him towards him, you can see it here.

Of course, he does it in a friendly, joking way: any other way would basically be a fight.
But joking or not pulling someone into you is a big display of extreme comfort, strong confidence and (physical) dominance.

You generally don't pull in people unless you feel at the very least at the same level as them.
But more often than not, people doing so usually feel both extremely confident and somewhat superior. Sometimes they might *want* to make a point of being superior, but they would hardly do it if they didn't feel able to enforce their dominance.

Just imagine this: would Tony do that if he were meeting a country's president, or even a strong moral authority such as a priest?
Of course not.
And that can communicate a sense of superiority.

Even more telling than the initial grab and pull for me was the moment Tony grabbed and kissed Gary on the head.

Kissing someone says you care about them, but also that you take care of them.
Fathers kiss their children, and caring teachers kiss (very young pupils). But among grown-ups? Very seldom.

Thus, kissing Gary on the head can sub-communicates something "you're my kid brother" or:

> *You're the kiddo, I'm the big daddy here.*

Touch: a Master Persuader

Tony touches Gary more often, while Gary mostly touches him as an answer to Tony's touch.

Tony also touches Gary with open palms, which shows a caring touch and a strong, strong confidence.
Most men are indeed afraid of touching other men with open palms afraid of invading the sexual realm or of looking gay (read more here: *touching other men*). Check it out Tony using open palms here.

I'd like to draw particular attention to the times Tony touches Gary when he makes a point. This is master persuasion and something the most charismatic of men do (see below for more).

Gesticulation

It's not that Gary is not good, he is good.

But Tony is best in class when it comes to hand gestures and accompanying his speech with hand movements.

Also, Gary commits a few mistakes:

Gary Vaynerchuk:

- Fidgets around with a pen or his own hands
- Keeps his hands below the table
- Sometimes crosses his arms

Fidgeting is often considered a sign of discomfort and low confidence (*What Every Body is Saying*), not showing your palms can make it harder for the audience to trust and connect with you (*Winning Body Language*), and crossing your arms is often considered defensive (*The Definitive Book of Body Language*).

Now I don't actually think that Gary was nervous.
Gary Vaynerchuk's personality type seems to be on the hyperactive side of the spectrum, high-energy and restless.

However, our subconscious will not necessarily make any justification for fidgeting, so even hyperactive men stand to gain from learning to stop fidgeting around.

Tony Robbins:

- Never fidgets or crosses his arms
- Gesticulates a lot and is perfectly in sync with verbal production
- Shows his hands a lot

Also while keeping your arms close to your body is defensive, using the space around you says that you are confident enough to let your arms "invade" the outside territory.

Read more:

- **Body language**: a primer for understanding body language, body, and value-signaling

Physical Dominance: Last Note

Tony has the advantage of being physically bigger, making it easier for him to pull and move Gary.

Gary, however, never, ever looked intimidated or on his back foot.
He kept his behavior constant and never let up on his host's powers. Gary looks like a man doing his thing, no matter what happens around him and *to* him.
There was a specific time instead when Tony did feel the dominant hook thrown by Gary (you can see it here)

2. Verbal Dominance: Gary

Gary was slightly more dominant when it came to verbal dominance. Of course, the fact that he's the host is a huge factor.

But he also has a natural advantage because, as a hyperactive man, he's always so eager to speak that he often tramples the normally accepted social conventions.
For example, he has issues waiting for his turn to speak and interjects constantly.

This inclination also brought him to master a few great techniques to take the speaking stage and defend his speaking time.
However, this same inclination is also a limitation and a drawback for him (see below "interruptions").

Here are a few Verbal Power Moves he deployed:

Verbal Dominance Tip: Repetition

Gary is very aggressive in defending his right to weigh in.

It can be very helpful to know how to do it because it's a relatively common occurrence that when you start speaking the other person doesn't stop.

It can be because you started too early, but it can also be because the other person doesn't respect you or wants to display dominance over you.

If it's the latter, it's a good idea that you enforce your right to speak. Some people do it by simply speaking further, but that's not ideal and the beginning of your message will get lost. A much more effective technique instead is to repeat your first word over and over.

By doing so you are basically communicating:

> "*wait a minute, it's my turn to speak and I got something important I want to say, lemme say it please*".

Watch Gary execute it as he repeats first "this is what Buffet" and then "Buffet, Buffet".

Notice that Tony soon realizes Gary is acting like he has something important to say and that he isn't giving up.

Notice indeed Tony quickly wraps up and lowers his voice.
He's finishing his point while at the same time communicating to Gary that he can go ahead, and he will listen.

Verbal Dominance Tip: Keep Speaking to Defend Right of Speech

When you're speaking, some people might try to interject to make a quick point.
This often happens when people want to:

- Correct a mistake you've done
- Make a joke about what you're saying

When people stop speaking and either correct themselves or take part in the joke, they are communicating that what they were saying was not important.
And they are communicating that the interrupter is of higher status than they are and he has something more important to say.

So unless you've made a blunder that really needs correcting, it's a good idea you **keep going and finish your point when people are trying to interrupt you**.
At least if you are making an important point, that is.

It's not rude, or at least it doesn't have to be.
It's indeed a good idea that you acknowledge the interrupter. You can do it either with a slight smile or a nod of your head and then possibly address their point later on verbally.

Gary does it well here, see how he handles it:

These are the correct moves he used:

1. Raises his finger (= nonverbal "wait a minute")
2. Says "lemme just.. " (=wanted to say "lemme just finish")
3. Looks at Tony with crazy intensity (=I really want to finish this)
4. Does not laugh (=I'm not buying into your joke/frame)
5. Says "yeah right" AND
6. Diverts his gaze from Tony (=attention withdrawn, I'm cutting you off now) AND
7. Keeps talking (=I've acknowledged you, but now lemme finish)
8. Touches Tony at the end (=nonverbal way of getting attention: "hear me out")

With all these steps Gary communicates that he's not allowing Tony to disrupt his speech and that he should cut his interjection short because he's in the middle of making a point.

Avoid Subordinate Role

Dominating and leading is as much about dominating and leading as it is about… *Not* being dominated and led.

If you want to dominate the verbal interaction -and that's not necessarily a goal you should have!- a challenge you face is that whenever you ask a question the one answering becomes the teacher and you become the student who's learning. The student is the subordinate role.

When that happens, they take the authority trappings that come with the teacher position.
They are the expert and you're not, what they say is true, and what you say is not necessarily true, and when you two disagree they're always right.

It also becomes more difficult for you to defend your right to speak and enforce your right to speak and win arguments.

Why?
Because the people around will perceive you as a nuisance: why should you speak when it's not you who's got the answers and insights?
Why on earth would you think it's OK to interject if you have no authority there?

Provided you are also knowledgeable about the topic, you might then want to avoid the teacher/student dynamic.

A few techniques to avoid a teacher/student dynamic are to either make a debate out of the interview or to listen

with some perfunctory notes when they're speaking.

For example, you can:

- Say you agree (showing you got an opinion as well),
- Quote someone (you're knowledgeable on the topics' literature)
- Add something (you know what they're talking about)
- Slightly correct them (huge authority boost for you)

Gary does well a few times and a bit in his "over-the-top way" in a few more instances:

He goes a bit overboard with that "of course" while rolling his eyes up, which is demeaning.
He's communicating there that what Robbins is saying is so obvious that he is wasting his time.

I would avoid doing that anytime you want to keep a good relationship with people.
Of course, Tony ignores it because he's a top man, but deep inside he does register that's not a friendly sign.
It's also a behavior that can easily come across as rude and overbearing to the audience.

"Hear Me Out"

This is where Tony is way better than Gary.

Gary is a bit of a steamroller, a bit like a bull in a china shop. Tony has the same sheer power when he wants, but also has much more finesse.

When he wants to draw attention Tony uses some great techniques that the most charismatic men use, which are:

1. Fully focus
2. Leaning
3. Changing voice pitch
4. Slowing down voice tone
5. Touching

All of them are basically saying, "hey, I'm talking to you, I know my stuff and I'm dropping some major insight right now, pay attention".
Watch Tony do it here:

3. He Who Interrupts Dominates

This is the dark side of dominance.

And it's something you better use with caution or simply avoid any time that it's not strictly called for.

Not only it impairs your ability to build relationships, but it also makes it difficult for you to win friends and build allies.

People might respect you out of fear, but deep down all the people you interrupt resent you, and the audience cannot connect with you at an emotional level (*Pease & Pease* say everyone secretly hates the "dominant" back-slappers).

He doesn't do it as much as on other occasions, but a few times Gary still does it with Tony, here's an example:

You don't usually want to change the topic so abruptly without at least acknowledging first what the person just said.
The problem with that kind of interruption is that this is what they communicate:

> *What you said is meaningless, unworthy of my attention and I don't give a F if you might be offended about it*

Of course, you can see why that's an issue when you want to win people over and make friends :).
Here's how Gary could have changed the topic in a more polite way instead:

> (nodding for a few seconds and then turning to Andy) *Did you hear that Andy? That's what you should do too, do you have any Facebook stock?*

That way he would have acknowledged Tony, complimented him for a worthwhile contribution, and gracefully moved out of the topic with a win-win social power move.

Interruptions and Relationships

This is so key for great relationships that I want to make one last note.
You tend to see this interrupting, jarring behavior from certain personality types:

- hyperactive / extroverted
- socially oblivious
- self-centered
- narcissists
- dominant

Now not all these people are rude and not all of them are insensitive.
I believe Gary is a good-hearted person. But he's not helping himself when he ignores people, interrupts them, and abruptly cuts them off.

People who are over-eager to speak without listening indeed have difficulties in forging deeper relationships.

Remember, people feel connected to people who know them well, not to people whom they know well.

Hence, **deeper human relationships are built on listening more than on speaking** (*How to Talk to Anyone,* Leil Lowndes).

Also, read:

- How to bond and emotionally connect

You can see Grant Cardone, a personality similar to Gary, committing those huge blunders in his personal romantic relationship: *Grant Cardone 4 Communication Mistakes.*

Overall: Tony Most Dominant & Best Communicator

Overall, in spite of Gary's slight rudeness in his interruptions and interjections, Tony Robbins still comes across as the most powerful man in the room.

What's most impressive, he does it while still keeping an overall vibe that is warm and welcoming.
When you're a leader who's dominant and respected but warm, welcoming, and caring at the same time, you're basically at the pinnacle of social skills.

Tony seems to have higher *emotional intelligence*: most people meeting both of them would feel closer to Tony than they feel to Gary.
And the same is probably true also for most audience members just watching,

However, nobody is perfect, and Tony had his muck-ups. Check out:

- Tony Robbins “me too” communication blunder

As a last note:
This analysis interprets observable behaviors in a single interaction and does not claim to provide final assessments on personality.

Zero to One: Summary & Review (Peter Thiel)

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Zero to One is a book on the mindsets of disruptive entrepreneurship. Peter Thiel, the author, says that mindsets come first because there is no guide to being a successful entrepreneur, but the mindsets will always apply.

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Overview

- Don't look for incremental, look for 10x: have the hubris to dream big
- Think like an **enlightened cooperator:** don't think to disrupt, don't think competition: think new, think value-adding
- Pick founders and employees who share your same vision and your same culture

Notes

About the Author:
Peter Thiel is a billionaire entrepreneur, investor, and venture capitalist. He is most famous for having launched PayPal with Elon Musk.

Mindsets Come First

Every major moment in business happens one time only.

The next Zuckerberg won't build a social network and the next Larry Page won't build a search engine.
Your best bet then is to learn the mindset of going from zero to one:

Chapter 1: The Challenge of The Future

Peter Thiel says that the future is only the future if it's different from today.

If society doesn't change for a thousand years, then the future is a thousand years away. If things change drastically over the course of a decade, then the future is now.

The author says that nobody can see the future, but we know two things about it: it will be different, and yet it will be rooted in today's world.

Zero to One: The Vertical & Horizontal Way

Thiel talks about two different kinds of changes: horizontal and vertical.

- Horizontal: Horizontal means incremental improvements on what exists already
- Vertical improvement means doing something completely new.

Vertical is not easy to do and to envision because it means finding new paths that nobody has explored before.

That means going from Zero to One.

Peter Thiel says that globalization is a horizontal change: taking what works in one place and replicating it somewhere else.
China wants to be and do as the United States does.

But without radical changes in technology, **the world cannot sustain billions of people living with the same US standards**.

Startups Need New Thinking

In some big and dysfunctional corporations entrenched interests work as a roadblock to change.

In those organizations, politicking is more important than getting work done.

If that's the case in your company, you should quit.
Also, read:

- Office political players

On the other hand, a startup's most valuable asset is a new way of thinking. What a startup must do is question ideas and rethink businesses.

> Brilliant thinking is rare, but courage is in even shorter supply

Chapter 2: Party Like It's 1999

Peter Thiel says that the dot.com bubble taught entrepreneurs four fake big lessons:

1. Make incremental advances: the only safe path
2. Stay lean and flexible: plans are seen as a straitjacket. "try things out" instead, don't plan
3. Improve on the competition: don't try to enter new markets prematurely
4. Focus on product, not sales: if you need sales, your product is not good

Thiel says the opposite is true instead:

1. Better to risk boldness than triviality
2. A bad plan is better than no plan
3. Stay away from competitive markets: they destroy profits
4. Sales matters (as much as the product)

But the dot.com bubble wasn't just madness, Thiel says.
It had some clarity and vision.

He says we need to look into the future, think big and we need that 1999 hubris to achieve it.

My note:
you can see this book has been a few years now. Thinking small is nobody's problem these days. *10x* and moonshots have actually become the new norm. Possibly, Zero to One helped shape this culture.

> The most contrarian thing of all is not to oppose the crow, but to think for yourself

Chapter 3: All Happy Companies Are Different

The business equivalent of a contrarian question is:

> What valuable company is nobody building.

Peter Thiel talks in this chapter about monopolies and perfect competition.

Monopoly though means something different in Peter's vocabulary: **monopoly is a company doing something so good that nobody else can offer a close substitute**.
Google is such an example of a company achieving monopoly for having gone from zero to one.

My Note:
This is simplistic in my opinion.
Once you are a monopoly you can leverage networks and integrations to keep your sub-par product afloat even if it's not the best.
Google, for example, could have a poorer map, but the competition can't usurp it because Google can integrate it with all its other products.

Monopolies Power Moves

Monopolies want to look non-dominant and weak by defining their markets broadly.
Normal companies want to look unique.

Basically, they do the opposite: monopoly companies define their market broadly and say they're in tough competition because they don't want unwanted attention from regulators.
Businesses in a competitive market instead define their markets very narrowly so they can dominate them.

An original Tajikistan restaurant, for example, might say they're in a league of its own as the only restaurant of its kind in the city.
But what if the market is not Tajikistan food, but simply all the restaurants?

Monopolies Are Good Companies

Thiel says monopolies are the best companies in the world.

Since they don't have to worry so much about profits, they can allow themselves to treat their employees well, to invest in new helpful technologies, and fund social projects.

It's the companies in perfect competition that are the most cut-throat businesses instead.

All happy companies are different because they solved a unique problem or came up with a unique, life-changing product. All failed companies instead are the same: none of them came up with a great new product.

Chapter 4: The Ideology of Competition

Thiel says it's just economists who frown over monopolies and love competition.

It's our society that has embraced the competition ideology.
Our educational system is based on competition and businesses love war references ("make a kill", "sales task force" etc.).

The author says that wars start for trivial reasons and keep going without any real reason.
Microsoft VS Google is such an example, taking on each other with a myriad of competing products.
Until Apple came along and focused on innovating instead of battling and made a killing (pun intended).

Thiel says competition is a destructive and distracting force instead.
Better to make alliances instead, as he did with former competitor Elon Musk to build, together, PayPal.

Chapter 5: Last Mover Advantage

Short-term profit-making culture pervades many startups.

He says the most fundamental question instead is: will this business still be around 10 years from now?

Numbers alone can't tell you the answers, but you have to think critically about your business.

He says that there's no surefire way to build a monopoly, but each monopoly shares four characteristics:

1. Proprietary Technology: great tech improving on the past in order of magnitudes (IE: google search, iPad)
2. Network Effects: when so many people use a product the scale tips and everyone joins
3. Economies of Scale: monopoly businesses get stronger and growing bigger (not the case for service businesses)
4. Branding: a brand should embody an ideology

Disruption

Peter Thiel says disruption has become a buzzword for anything that wants to sound trendy and new.

He says that **the disruption mindset is silly and counterproductive**.

When you call yourself disruptive you look at yourself through the eyes of other companies that become older and the enemies.
But **your act of creation should be the focus, not disrupting and upsetting** this or that industry.
Also, when you see yourself as the dark horse rebel you become focused on roadblocks and enemies.

But seeing yourself as the dark horse upsetting the world only brings trouble.
Think about Napster, Thiel says, who wanted to take on the whole music industry.
Troublemakers are sent to jail, and troublemaker companies are sent to Chapter 11 courts.

The author says PayPal was disruptive, but they didn't want to challenge any competitor and they ended up bringing more business to other payment methods eventually.

> Don't disrupt: add value and avoid competition

This was the 5-star idea in this book alone.
It's the idea of collaborative frames I espouse on this website. Also, see the *"fundamental strategies of power"*:

> The 4 Fundamental Strategies of Power

The Last Will Be First

There's no inherent benefit to being the first.

It should be a tactical move, but not your goal. It's far better being the last instead and enjoying years of monopoly profits.

You do that by dominating a niche first and then expanding from there.

Chapter 6: You Are Not a Lottery Ticket

Peter Thiel here talks about "luck" and its role in business success.

He says the phenomenon of successful serial entrepreneur calls into question the "luck logic".

My Note:
The serial entrepreneur thing is no proof, to be honest. One might easily "get lucky" twice. Or even thrice. Pretty sure there are several double lottery winners in the world (also read: *Fooled by Randomness*).

The author talks further about pessimists and optimists and about Lean Methodologies.
He says six sigma and lean methodology is about incremental improvements and will not get you from zero to one.

Chapter 7: Follow The Money

Thiel says that anyone without a salary or stock options is misaligned with the company's interests.

Part-time employees and external consultants don't work because they don't have aligned interests.
They don't really have the best future of the company at heart.

My Note: Great!
Great insight on aligning interests. This is one of the basics of the "**healthy cynic**" approach and of "**enlightened win-win**"

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Even remote workers should be limited as it's easy to disalign without daily face-to-face.
The hiring decision should be binary: either fully on board or not.

Another interesting trend the author found, which was illuminating for me was that the less the company pays its CEO, the better it does.
Too high salaries make CEOs behave more like politicians busy defending the status quo.

A low salary also sets an example for the rest of the company.

Chapter 8: Secrets

Peter Thiel says in this world most people don't think there are any "secrets" left to discover.

My Note:
I can so relate to this.
As a kid first learning about Columbus and the explorers I always thought the world by now had it all figured out.

Of course, the truth is there are countless "secrets" left to be found and countless problems left to be solved.

Chapter 9: Foundations

You'll always make mistakes, but a few things you better get them right at the beginning.

The author says indeed that early mistakes are often very costly.
The constitution hardly ever changed even though an update would be beneficial.

Similarly, early mistakes in choosing your co-founders or even early employees are damn hard to correct.

Often the beginning of a relationship is full of excitement, but when it dissipates, if major rifts take place, they can easily take the whole company down.
Thiel says that these days he only invests in startups where the founders share a history and knew each other long before they started pitching VCs.

Set Up Clear Structure & Clear Responsibilities

Thiel says that a clear structure and clear responsibilities will help keep people in line in the long run.

A basic structure tells you who:

1. Owns the company (ownership)
2. Runs the company on a daily basis
3. Formally control the company affairs

The author says that distributing ownership in theory gives everyone incentives, but it also multiplies the chances for dis-alignment and internal power struggles.
Keep the board small then.
Similarly, everyone should be doing one thing and evaluated for that one thing only.

My Note 1:
This reminds me of *Eleven Rings* when Phil Jackson says that having clear roles allows people to focus on the task rather than wasting energy on it.

Keep Equity Shares Secret

Equity is a great way of aligning interests and keeping individuals motivated.

However, it must be allocated smartly.
Giving everyone the same is a mistake, but giving differently and making it public is also a mistake as that will breed resentment.

Time is also a huge differentiator in a fair equity distribution.
For example, if the company explodes in value a secretary joining Ebay in 1996 would make and own more than anyone else joining in 1999.
So to avoid any issues… Keep the details secret.

Chapter 10: The Mechanics of Mafia

Corbis/The Telegraph

Thiel says that in the ideal culture, employees love the company and love their job to the point they don't look at when it's time to go home.

The author poignantly asks: why should an engineer be the 20th hire instead of going for Google for more money? Well, the answer is specific to your company, but it's related to:

1. Your Team
2. Your Mission

The perfect hires are excited *specifically* to work with your company because of what you are trying to achieve.

And they want to join because they are perfectly in sync with their colleagues already working there.
When everyone perfectly fits in and is bought into the mission, the company will look like a cult.
And that's a good thing.

Sometimes your company won't make sense to external people. But that's OK. Better to become a cult. Or even a mafia.

The opposite of a cult are firms like consulting companies (Accenture for example). Consulting companies don't have a mission on their own and consultants are always rotating in and out of companies they have no link to.

> No company has a culture. Every company IS a culture.

Chapter 11: If You Build It, Will They Come?

Peter Thiel says there's a certain anti-sales mindset in Silicon Valley.

The idea, as wrong as it is, is that if you need to sell a product the product is not that good.

The author says that marketing and advertising work, and works on everyone, including the people who say it doesn't work.
Actually, sales might matter more than product. Sales and distribution can create a monopoly, but a great product

without strong sales distribution won't spread by itself.

Viral Marketing

A product is viral if the core functionality leads you to invite their friends to also use your product.

Check *Contagious* to learn more about how you can make your product more likely to become and go viral.

Chapter 12: Man And Machine

Peter Thiel says the debate of man VS machine or even machine taking over people's tasks is a silly one.

Computers are complementary to human beings, not substitutes.

And the best companies will be built by entrepreneurs empowering people, not taking away their jobs or their tasks.

Chapter 13: Seeing Green

Peter Thiel talks in this chapter about the failure of the cleantech bubble.

He says the reason for the failure is to be researched in 7 key areas every business must address:

1. Engineering: can we create breakthroughs instead of incremental
2. Timing: is now the time to start your business
3. Monopoly: are you starting with a big share of a small market?
4. People: do you have the right team
5. Distribution: do you have a way to distribute your product
6. Durability: will your market be defensible in 10 years in the future
7. Secret: have you identified unique opportunities others don't see?

If you nail all the seven you'll grow a monopoly and amass a fortune. Even 5 or 6 might work.

Thiel says you should dominate a small market first instead of going for a big one.
Big markets are usually competitive, so better build your foundations on a smaller niche and then go big.
Facebook, for example, started with Harvard first. Then universities. And then the world.

Peter Thiel analyses the tech bubble along those 7 variables and then goes into why Tesla has been successful by nailing those seven variables.

> Huge markets are highly competitive, not highly attainable

Chapter 14: The Founder's Paradox

Thiel talks about how paradoxical founders can be and what a difference they can make to a company.

A founder can also become the main figure of the whole company, and in spite of the modern tech they build, come to resemble kings of feudal time who imbibe their companies with their spirit -or use their persona for further marketing, hard to say sometimes-.

This chapter made me think of ego-driven CEOs and sociopaths' founders (read *Bad Blood* for an example).

Zero To One: Conclusions

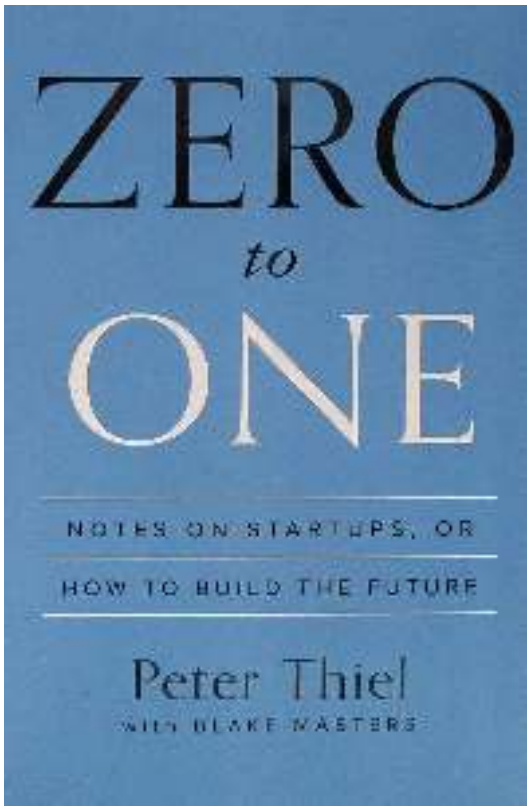
Thiel says we need new technologies to build a better future.

No other options are possible.

Even a plateau would mean trouble for us, because in a world with finite resources and a growing, consuming population, that would be unsustainable.

Go ahead fellow founders and creators then, we need people going from zero to one.

> **To sustain life on Earth, we need Zero to One Entrepreneurs**



[image]Practical Applications

There are many key mindsets.
Here are a few to keep in mind:

- Don't focus on "disrupting": it gets you in a uselessly combative mindset
- Pick your co-founder as you'd pick your husband/wife
- Hire people who believe in your mission and fit your culture
- Don't look at the size of the overall market: dominate a niche, then go from there

Cons

- **Disagree with some analyses (ie.: monopolies are good)**

I don't agree with some analyses by Peter Thiel.

The idea that monopolies are good companies that treat employees well and experiment with new helpful technologies is not completely wrong but also *somewhat naive.*

Google's employees are as money and as power-driven as anyone else, and they will want to make sure that their products are commercial successes so so that they can line up their pockets.

And being a monopoly allows them to squash any new upstart, thus possibly stifling competition and new products which could be more useful to the customers.

- **“Be like a mafia”**

The way he talks about “being like a mafia” is somewhat misguided in my opinion.

- **Elon Musk is a great salesman?**

Peter Theil says that Elon Musk is a master salesman.

But I have some doubts.
Sales is a people’s profession and, in all his genius, Elon Musk does not shine for emotional intelligence and social skills:

Geoffrey Miller lists Peter Thiel among the “Aspergers who benefit the world”, and that might be the reason why Thiel is not the best one to judge other people’s social efficacy.

Also, read the full article here:

- Elon Musk’s emotional intelligence (and how he was emotionally manipulated by his ex-wife)

Review

“Zero To One” is a great book on entrepreneurship.

It’s a mix of mindsets, psychology, and sound business advice.
You will certainly benefit from reading it.

Get The Book on Amazon

Incognito: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Incognito examines the unconscious part of our brains and how they interact with our conscious brain.

TPM Note: Useful, but potentially disempowering
While much of our thinking and reacting happens automatically, this book sometimes leans toward a more deterministic and disempowering view of human nature and rationality as not being in control.
At TPM we prefer to a different frame: **you are influenced by forces you don't see, but not controlled by them**.
And learning about them further increases your control.
And ultimately, whatever portion of your mind you do control is what matters.

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Takeaways

- **Our conscious mind is only aware of a tiny fraction** of what goes on -both within us and outside us-
- Our mind is made up of **competing forces and beliefs**
- **Genetics are important, but not everything**. Who you are and your actions are the result of too many variables to predict anything

Notes

About the Author:
David Eagleman is a neuroscientist and professor at Stanford University.

Chapter 1: There's Someone In My Head, But It's Not Me

David Eagleman says that most of what we do, think, and feel is not in our conscious control.

Consciousness is a minor part of the operation of the brain, and it has little access and even less knowledge of the processes taking place "beneath the hood".
You can easily realize when you:

- Hit the brake pedal even before you know why
- Find someone attractive – but can't really explain why
- Hear your name… Even though you weren't listening to the conversation

Even when you think that you came up with something, in truth, it wasn't probably a moment of genius, but your brain did all the work in silence before the answer finally came up to the conscious part of the brain.

Chapter 2: The testimony of the senses: what is experience really like?

David Eagleman says that most of our experience is a personal and subjective construction.

We're not really perceiving objectively what's out there, but simply our own interpretation of it.

And our brain makes all types of assumption that allows it to save time and resources, says the author.

For example, as you read, you are not aware of your left foot.
Now that you read i,t though, you might consciously think about it, but you're not aware of exactly what's on the side of your computer.

If there's a noise coming from another part of your room, then you won't be aware of your computer for a while because all your attention and senses will be diverted toward the noise.

Basically, at any time, we only really know what we need to know, which is a tiny, tiny slice of the world around us.

David Eagleman uses a few more examples to highlight how our brain makes up facts based on pure assumptions.

For example, our eyes have a blind spot, but we're not aware of it because the brain simply takes the information around the blind spot and fills it up (here's an experiment to check your blind spot).

The brain is plastic in the data it can accept, read and make sense of.
This opens up the door to amazing future possibilities.
We'll be able to plug ultraviolet or infrared light data. Our brain will struggle at first but eventually will learn to make sense of the information and use it.

Chapter 3: Mind: The Gap

David Eagleman takes it one step further in chapter three.

Not only do we not fully what is happening in the world around us, but we also don't even consciously access all that we know.

And it's not just breathing or blood flow, but also riding a bicycle, driving… These are all skills we have but that we don't consciously access.

These are all complex tasks ingrained within ourselves that would not benefit at all from conscious "meddling".
And we realize how complex these seemingly easy tasks are with artificial intelligence and robotics.

Robotics started with quick progress, but for decades it still hasn't overcome the most simple of human tasks: crossing a road safely, walking on a sidewalk without falling, etc.

We Like Those Who Are Like Us

People tend to marry partners with the same initial of their name more often than pure chance otherwise would have.

David Eagleman says it's because people with the same initial somehow remind us of ourselves (also discussed in *Influence* by Cialdini).

The same goes for a product we buy or say we like: we tend to prefer products with the same initial.

Psychologists say it's because of unconscious self-love or perhaps because we like things that are familiar (in psychology it's called implicit egotism).

My note:

I wish the author had explained whether we like people who are familiar with us because they remind us of ourselves or because we like things that seem familiar.

Mere Exposure Effect

We tend to like what we are familiar with.

If we saw a face before and then we see it again, we will judge it as being more attractive.
This is why some people in the public spotlight are often not bothered by the negative press but are happy anyway that they'll get airtime and people will be exposed to them.

Similarly, we are more likely to believe as true what we heard several times, independently of whether or not it was true in the first place (Trump used it across his campaign and even in the debate with Clinton, *check here an analysis of his tricks*).

An experiment showed people were more likely to rate as true statements they had heard before, but which they couldn't remember they had heard. As crazy as it might sound, it worked even when people were told the statements were false!

Energy and Specialization

The author then goes here into a well-known phenomenon of the learning process.

Our brains are hyperactive and burn lots of energy when we learn a new skill.
Once the skill is learned, the brain slows down.
The skills become part of the brain's system and now not much energy is needed anymore.

An athlete who has become great at a task will not think much about the task when he's playing.
That's why when he's learning he should push himself beyond his comfort zone and when he's playing he should be in the zone and not think much

For more on peak performance, read:

- Peak
- Mastery

Chapter 4: The Kind Of Thoughts That Are Thinkable

Not only the reality we see is only a tiny portion, but also the thoughts we can think are very limited.

We can't comprehend the vastness of the universe or the number of stars and celestial bodies in it for example.
The same is true for our instincts. We can't see or access our instincts.

Chapter 5: The Brain Is A Team Of Rivals

David Eagleman begins chapter 5 with Mel Gibson's example.

Mel Gibson viciously attacked Jews and then retracted everything.

The author asks: What's the reality, does he really believe what he said about Jews or is it possible our brain holds different views at the same time?
Is it possible to have a racist part of our brain and a non-racist part of our brain?

Well, it turns out, yes. **Our brain is constantly driven by different forces pulling in different directions**.

The author says we could divide our brain into two forces:

1. The rational part of our brain analyses information in the outside world, while

2. The emotional part of our brain monitors our internal state and worries about the consequences.

Short Term VS Long Term

You know the feeling: someone offers you a piece of cake, or you sit down to eat and love the food.

One part of us wants to eat everything, while another part of us wants to stay stronger so we can keep our weight.

One part of us is concerned with the short term and indulges the immediate satisfaction, while another part of us wants to play the long game and do what's best for us.

My Note:
Successful people are the ones able to resist the pull of immediate satisfaction, control their own minds and instruct their bodies to do what is best in spite of the difficulties and hardships (also read: *The Marshmallow Test* and *Grit*). This is what constitutes emotional intelligence, and that's why Daniel Goleman said that Emotional Intelligence predicts 80% of success (read *Emotional Intelligence*).

Emotional / Rational Balance

David Eagleman says the internal struggle is actually optimal, we do need a balance of "right now" and "future" and a balance of rational and emotional.

The author also mentions the current technology might pose a problem.
In today's world, we take a lot of decisions when we are far removed from the people that will be affected, and that will make us less "emotional", and hence less concerned for them (also read *Leaders Eat Last*).

Action / Feelings / Meaning Connections

David Eagleman says that "hidden programs" beneath our conscious level drive actions while our left hemisphere finds a way to rationalize and justify.

We are constantly looking for meaning, even when there's none, which often leads to loads of wrong rationalizations.

The author says our brain looking for meaning is the same reason why we are happier if we sit straight or force a smile. The brain reads the smile and says it must be because we're happy.

This is sometimes referred to as "sense-making" *in psychology*.

Consciousness = CEO

The conscious part of our brain acts like a CEO.

He sets the goals and then the vision and the rest gets to work.
The CEO is not aware of most of what goes on, but only steps in when his attention is required.

Chapter 6: Why Blameworthiness Is the Wrong Question

David Eagleman says there's no evidence that convincingly supports free will.

Then he goes into something I fully disagree with: that we are the product of both nature and nurture, but that we choose neither.

He says, depending on the brain chemistry we are born with, or with the genes that have been activated in our environment, some of us are more prone to violent behavior or addictions.

The author is very clear though that it doesn't mean we will not punish criminals.
Explanation does not mean exculpation, he says.

It simply means we need to find better ways to cope with people's problems. Something better than just jail, something to help them improve and society regains honest citizens.

Chapter 7: Life After the Monarchy

How to cope with our meaninglessness?

This chapter talks about what's left for us humans to feel special about after we're not at the center of the universe anymore, we're not created by God and we're not even controlling forces of ourselves anymore.

My note:
I disagree with this notion of us having been dethroned wholeheartedly.

Much More Than DNA

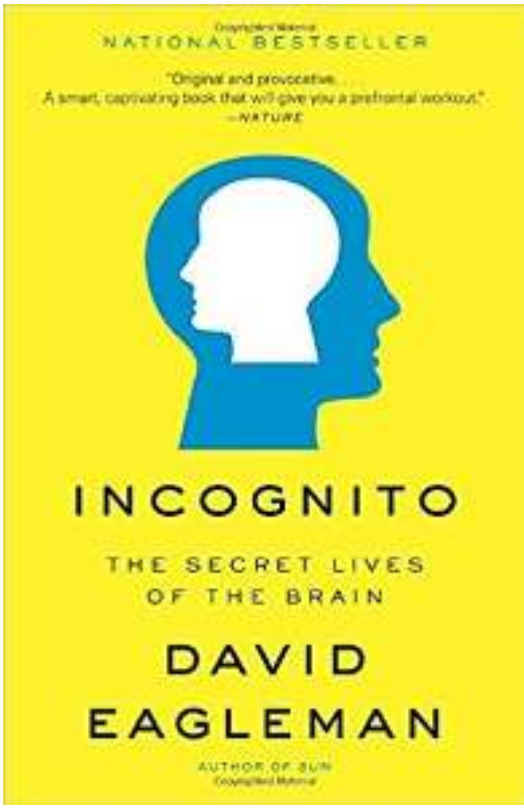
We're definitely tied to our biology, and yet the variables that influence us and our behavior as so innumerable that mapping everything is nearly impossible.

For example, have we found any genes that correlate to schizophrenia? Yep… Hundreds of them.
And yet the most important predictor is the passport people have.

If someone lives in a foreign place and looks different and he suffers because of it instead of being proud of his heritage… He's at higher risk of becoming schizophrenic.

Genetics play a role, but at the end of the day, says the author, we behave and turn out immensely different than what's written in our DNA.

My note:
And that's exactly why I don't buy the thesis about humans having been "dethroned" by anything.



CONS

Disempowering frame– at times-
David Eagleman is upbeat in the narrative and never says anything in the tone of “we’re screwed”. But at times it feels like that.

Not the most practical
Lots of info, but not so much highly applicable advice.

Review

“Incognito” is a good book on the human mind, yet at times I find it dramatic rather than scientifically and rigorously detached.

David Eagleman talks about the “dethroning revolutions” of human history.
Earth is not at the center of the universe, the subconscious, and now his book shows how little we really control.

I don’t feel less empowered in discovering how the brain works.
It does NOT matter how much you can control. Your task is simple: whatever you can control, you’ll do your best on that.

That’s it.

And whether that control is 0.1% or 99%… It doesn’t even matter.
This leads me to the last part I disagree with, which is that I believe you control yourself… A lot.
If you want to. And if you are willing to put in the work.

Predictably Irrational: Why We Are Not Rational (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"Predictably Irrational" (2008) is a book on psychology, biases, and introductory game theory in which Dan Ariely explains that not only are we irrational, but follow "patterns of predictable irrationality".

TPM Takeaway: Behavioral economics explains cognitive bias, but you need more for social success
Ariely's summarizes findings from behavioral economics, and most underlying mechanisms were already established in psychology and sociology. From a TPM perspective, they're useful and interesting, especially for marketing and entrepreneurship. For personal success, TPM's core frameworks like **social exchange** and **power dynamics** are more useful in real-world influence, status competition, and strategic interaction.

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- Practical Applications
  - CONS
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Overview

- We have no idea of intrinsic values: we only assess them by comparison
- Rationality goes out the window when emotional or aroused
- We are very likely to cheat when we have the chance and when we can easily rationalize

Notes

About The Author:
Dan Ariely started out studying physics and mathematics and only later transferred to psychology.
Today, he teaches psychology and behavioral psychology at Duke University.
Edit 2023: Dan Ariely has been accused of fabricating data for some of his research.

Chapter 1: The Truth About Relativity

Dan Ariely says we don't comprehend the world around us in absolute terms, but we make sense of it via comparisons.

For example, the author ran an experiment with The Economist newspaper. He asked his MBA students to pick among the different options presented, which were:

1. Internet-only subscription: $59
2. Print-only subscription: $125
3. Print-and-Internet subscription: $125

The second print-only option makes no sense when we see the third one, so 84% picked the third one.

But when the students were presented with two options only 68% chose the cheaper Internet-only subscription:

1. Internet-only subscription: $59
2. Print-only subscription: $125

The print-only option is the decoy.
It seems expensive and when we see that at the same price, we can also get Internet access, for free (!), the print-and-Internet seems immediately more attractive by *comparison*.

Here is another example:

Imagine you are undecided between a holiday in Venice and Florence.
Both packages come with a free tour, how could you sway the decision? You could add a third package for Venice with a paid city tour. This third option seems the least attractive and nobody will pick it.

However, it provides a term of comparison for Venice with a free city tour. Now most people will go to Venice with the free tour.

The Same Applies to Dating

And now the dating example.

Imagine there are two good-looking possible mates, mate one and mate one. Then we add a third one comparable to make two:

1. Attractive Mate One
2. Attractive Mate Two
3. Less Attractive Mate Three and similar to Attractive Mate Two

Now most people -75% as per Dan Ariely's MIT experiment- will go for Attractive Mate Two because they can compare it to Less Attractive Mate Three.

Chapter 2: The Fallacy of Supply and Demand

Supply and demand is not a realistic model.

Why?

Because we comprehend the world and assess values based on the *comparison*. There is no direct relationship between price and demand.

Prices can easily become irrational when there's no comparison or when the other items of comparison are irrational.

Indeed, when a consumer has no previous reference to a product you could place that product among other highly expensive and luxury products. Then you could sell it for a price that is aligned with the products around you instead of picking a price correlated to the costs and availability of your product.

Similarly, you can anchor your services early by mentioning a very high price at the beginning.
Cialdini mentions a friend of his who would simply say "I'm not going to charge you a million dollars". The simple sentence would make anything coming after seem like a very small number (check here *Pre-Suasion*).

Burning an Anchor

Dan Ariely says that price tags are not necessarily anchored by themselves.

They do become an anchor when we seriously consider buying that product.
At that point, we will compare each future product we review to that first pricing anchor, which we will use to judge future products as being cheap or expensive.

This makes a lot of sense since our brain does absorb information mainly when we pay full attention.

Arbitrary Coherence

Arbitrary coherence is an extremely interesting phenomenon.

It says we stay coherent with previous decisions, but the very first decision which gave impetus to our "rational coherence" might have been completely irrational.

For example, an experiment had students write down their Social Security Number and then bid randomly on a few items.
The students whose SSN ended between 80-99 were bidding 3 times higher compared to students who had written numbers ending between 0-19.

Their bidding stayed constant compared to their first bid which also functioned as an anchor, but the very first bid had been irrationally anchored by their SSN.

Other experiments proved that changing an anchor once it has been set can prove challenging and may fail.

Self-Herding & Building Habits

You probably know people tend to follow other people, right (*social proof*)?

Here's what Dan Ariely adds, though: we "herd ourselves" by looking at our past behavior.

For example, you might not like Starbucks, but one day you happen to have a date there and have a good time.
The day after you decide to give it another try and really like one of their coffee.
The third time you pass by Starbucks you have now 2 previous great memories and you are much more likely to go in based on your own past behavior.

With positive experiences, you anchor yourself to build new habits.

Chapter 3: The Cost of Zero Cost

Dan Ariely talks about the emotional pull and call to action that "free" represents.

Even when a service is priced at a "symbolical price", say less than 1 Euro, **there's a huge gap between any super small price and "free"**.

For example, when free shipping was offered by Amazon, sales jumped. They jumped everywhere except in France.

Were French people being more rational?

Not really.

In France, the price was left at a symbolical 1 Frank (0.2 cents). When it was replaced by “free” sales jumped in France as well, even though the difference between 0.2 cents and free was meaningless.

Another example?
Try to notice the length of the queue the next time you see some products offered “for free”.
Of course, those people in line probably don’t believe that time is money :).

Chapter 4: The Cost of Social Norms

Some people will work harder when there’s no monetary reward than when they are being paid to carry out the same action.

Ie.: people work harder for a cause than for cash.

The author divides the motivational forces into two camps:

- **Social Norms**: rules you obey when you help a friend
- **Market Norms**: the rules you follow when you work for a salary

When you offer someone money to carry out a task they were doing because of social norms you bring a major shift in the interaction because you go from Social Norms to Market Norms.

For example:

a bunch of lawyers was asked to help pro bono and a good chunk agreed.
Another group of lawyers was asked to help with money and most refused.

When they were asked to help pro bono, social norms applied and some of them were happy to help. But when they were asked to help with money, the market norms applied and the sum of money seemed low compared to their hourly fee, so they refused.

Small gifts are also perceived as being in the social norms.
But small gifts with a clear price tag shifted the interaction into market norms because it told people exactly how much you paid for the gift,

Should You Pay For Dates?

Dan Ariely also reflects on expensive dates.

Yes, they will impress your date or your mother-in-law, but they risk shifting the relationship from social norms to market norms. And once you are into the market norms, it’s difficult going back to the social norms.

My note:
Indeed the risk is that of shifting the interaction from a meeting of two connected souls to an exchange. For example, his money for beauty. This is why many cool guys don’t appreciate women who expect men to pay for them (check: **biggest early dating mistakes**).

Using Extrinsic Motivation

Since a cause is a bigger motivator for many people than money, you should hire people who believe in your cause if you have a company.

This is exactly what Peter Thiel says in *Zero to One* and the bond of people going after a cause is what he means when he says “mafia”.

And this is why you should be careful in rewarding people with money because that doesn’t make people feel like

your friends or part of a cause, but more like employees working for a paycheck, which will reduce motivation.

Companies Getting Social Norms Wrong

Mixing the two different realms of social and market norms is a mistake many companies do when they try to present an image of a friendly and trustworthy relationship with their customers but then hide fees or "punish" users with fines.

The same goes for the relationship between companies/employees.

The author says the current focus on short-term gains and cost-cutting is destroying the relationship by moving farther and farther towards a colder market norms realm.

The author says, righteously so, that company can't have it both ways.
You can't have loyal employees working hard for you and fire them if they get sick or when you need to meet Wall Street expectations.

On the topic also read:

- How to deal with a terrible boss when you have such a market-oriented boss
- The Rules of Social Exchanges for more on social exchange
- Corporate manipulations

> **People work harder for a cause than for cash**

Chapter 5: The Influence of Arousal

Humans also become irrational while in "special states", for example, when very emotional or when sexually aroused.

In an experiment with Loewenstein, Ariely asked students questions when they were sober and then when aroused.

The questions included some like using condoms and the likelihood of administering drugs to a woman to increase the likelihood of questions.
It was chilling enough to read that 5% of men answered they'd give women drugs to have sex, and even chillier to read that number jumped to 26% when put in an aroused state.

The bottom line is that **we are not the same people when emotions take us over**.
This is why, the author suggests, it would be a good idea to plan for altered states when we are actually sober.
For example, systems that do not allow us to drive after drinking (also read "*Nudge*").

Chapter 6: Procrastination and Self-Control

Our tendency to procrastinate gets worse when we have total freedom and the quality of our work drops.

Dan Ariely divided his class into 3 groups who were supposed to hand in three different papers.

- One group had no deadlines, just handing all the papers in by the end of the last class.
- The second group had self-imposed deadlines.
- And the third group had deadlines set by himself for every single paper.

The group with "external deadlines" did the best. Second came the group with self-imposed deadlines and last the one with no deadlines at all.

Self-Control Hacks

We all have procrastination issues, but those who do best are the ones who know and recognize their weakness and find ways around it.

With procrastination, pre-committing to specific dates works.
Best of all, if you can set many different dates for a big project each sub-task with its own date.

If your issue is credit card spending, you could avoid credit cards or set a very low limit that simply won't allow you to rack up debt with impulse decisions.

Chapter 7: The High Price of Ownership

We rarely make rational decisions when it comes to ownership.

The three major irrational quirks related to ownership and sales, the author says, are:

1. Falling in love with what already possess
2. We focus more on what we can lose (rather than gain)
3. We assume others share the same feelings about our belongings

Other quirks of ownership are:

1. The harder we work on something the more we appreciate it
2. We feel ownership before we actually buy it

Feeling ownership before we actually buy a product is why selling techniques like the puppy close, test drives, or *lowball techniques* work.

And it's the same reason why we often end up overbidding at auction sales. It's because we try the product or start imagining owning it, and we get addicted to those feelings that we don't wanna lose them and just need to proceed with buying it.

Chapter 8: Keeping Doors Open

Dan Ariely says we have an internal drive to keep our options open.

Often it's a good thing, but many other times it only leads to wasted opportunities, decision-making paralysis, and a lack of specialization (to specialize read: *Mastery*).

Dan Ariely devised an experiment to find out if people were actually going to earn less money, or even pay, simply to keep the options open. And lo and behold, they did.

It's much better than choosing something and then actively closing the doors of other possibilities so that they don't distract us any longer and can focus on something.

My Note:
Angela Duckworth makes a compelling case that by staying at something not only do we get better, but we also start liking it more.

indecision in predictably irrational

Chapter 9: The Effect of Expectations

You know this, don't you:

If we expect something to be good, it's likely going to be good and if we expect something to be bad, it's likely going to be bad.

Ariely ran many different experiments highlighting that what we expect influences our decisions.
For example, students preferred beer with vinegar drops in it, but when told about the vinegar drops, they all preferred the normal beer.

Students also rated higher the coffee that was presented in fancy cups and in upscale environments because the cups and environments led them to believe the quality of the coffee itself had to be superior.

Interestingly enough, Coca-Cola says tests prove that people prefer Coca-Cola, while Pepsi tests say people prefer Pepsi.
They're both right, the only difference is that Pepsi's tests were with a covered logo, and Coca-Cola's was with its logo showing.

People were swayed by Coca-Cola's brand and picked Coke even though they actually would have preferred Pepsi when picking blind.

Stereotypes Work on Expectations

Expectations are also the reason why stereotypes have real effects.

And we not only behave toward people according to their stereotypes, but we also behave ourselves according to our own stereotypes.

Women reminded of their gender before math exams performed more poorly compared to women who weren't reminded of their gender.
And Asians performed better when they were reminded of their ethnicity.

> The mind gets what it expects

Chapter 10: The Power of Price

You know about placebos, right?

Placebos can actually trigger internal chemical reactions that induce real changes in the patient.

What is also peculiar, though is the impact that pricing has on efficacy.

Ariely ran an experiment with a placebo saying that 92% of patients experienced pain relief. He told one group the drug price was $0.1 and for another group, he told the price was $2.5.

Almost everyone in the $2.5 group experienced improvement and only half in the $0.1 experienced pain relief.

Chapter 11: The Context of Our Character, Part I

The total costs of employee theft or fraud are higher than all the other theft combined.

Dan Ariely explains that there are no clearly defined lines between cheaters and honest people.
The rule of thumb is that **most people are fairly honest, but when given the chance, people tend to cheat**.

The interesting finding though is that, when reminded of morals and ideals, people tend to behave honestly.
~~When people were told to write down the 10 commandments, none in the group who couldn't remember them cheated.~~

~~The mere recall of a "moral authority" made people behave honestly.~~

Edit: this study failed to replicate and may have been fudged

Chapter 12: The Context of Our Character, Part II

Chapter twelve delves further into the concept of honesty.

It says that the more removed people are from cash and money, the easier it becomes to cheat.

An experiment left one-dollar bills on a plate and coke cans in the refrigerator.
The cans vanished quickly, the money always stayed here.
It's because cash makes it obvious to ourselves and to our conscience that we're stealing.

Also, the more removed we are from the act of cheating, the more likely it is we will cheat.

For example, Ariely says, it's more likely we will boost our expenses report if our secretary hands it in for us rather than us doing it ourselves.

And we're more likely to exaggerate our expense report if it's a trip abroad than one in our own city.

Super interestingly, cheating is not much limited by risk, but it's limited by our ability to rationalize our own actions to ourselves.

Chapter 13: Beer and Free Lunches

The last chapter provides an overall critique of the standard economics model of a rational consumer.

Overall, Ariely says, we are far less rational than economic models lead us to believe we are.
And there is a major reward to reap once we admit it and take steps to overcome our limitations.

Also, read:

- Misbehaving (on the birth of behavioral economics)
- The Undoing Project
- Thinking Fast and Slow

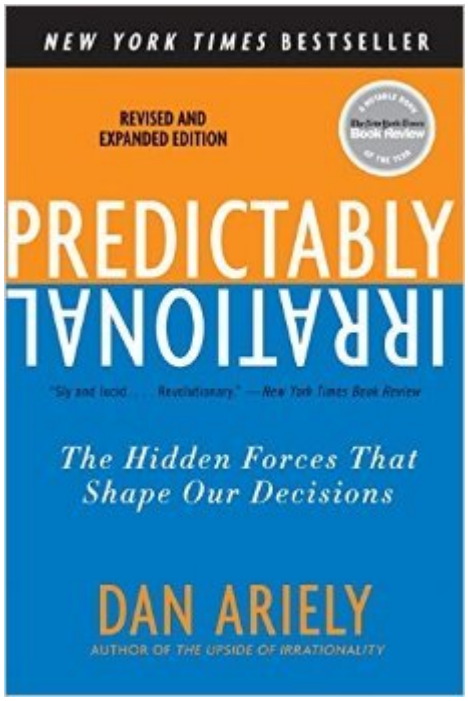
Need for Uniqueness

Dan Ariely ran an experiment with four people ordering beer and found out that when they ordered aloud and publicly, more different varieties tended to be ordered.

He later found out that the difference in order was correlated with the “need to be unique”.

Such as, people would order differently from the other patrons at the table simply to express their own uniqueness, even if that sometimes meant changing their order from what they originally wanted to get or from what they knew they liked.

In cultures where conformity is valued, such as in Hong Kong, the opposite instead happened: uniformity rose as people ordered what other people at the table also ordered.



Practical Applications

- **Base your pricing on what you want to earn**

Don’t base your prices on the competition or you’ll be compared to your competition. Pricing is often irrational, so find an irrational way to excuse your high pricing.

- **Watch out for Anchors**

Ask yourself about repeated behavior you show. It’s possible it all started irrationally and it doesn’t benefit you anymore.

- **Use Deadlines**

Break up bigger projects with staggered deadlines. Always give yourself deadlines when there are no external ones.

- **Prepare for When Irrational**

There will be times you're tired, aroused, emotional, angry, or… Just drunk. Give yourself a line of conduct of what you will do and not do and what you will accept of yourself and others. And stick to them.

CONS

- **WEIRD research: both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation matter**

Some of those researches were heavily based on small undergraduate samples and then generalized to the whole population.

Because a bunch of Duke undergrads work the same or harder when you reduce pay and compliment them more, doesn't mean everyone -or even the majority- does.

In truth, *both* extrinsic and intrinsic motivation matter.
And which one matters more depends on the individual and context.

- **Misleading title**

The name may also be misleading, since people are not *that* predictable at the individual level.

- **Some naive policy recommendations**

The author recommends scrapping "cap and trade" policies to reduce pollution in favor of no-money exchange "social solutions".

In my opinion, that's *really naive* to believe that executives will decide to self-contain themselves in order to save the environment.

The author -and the readers- might want to review both the theory and the continuous real-life examples of public goods games and the "tragedy of the commons".
Also, check out Matt Ridley's *"The Origins of Virtue"* which very well explains both.

And, most of all, this article on *naive self-help:*

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Review

Predictably Irrational is a very good book summarizing research on rationality and human biases in a more popular and engaging format.

However, it still feels like a "list of anecdotes". *Predictably Irrational* is not exactly a behavioral economics book, not a deep psychology text, and not a practical guide on influence and persuasion.

It's a mix of all of them, and it does a good job of all of them. But it fell short in weaving a coherent narrative, advancing a unique theory, or in teaching anything new.

Social Climbing: What It Is, and Why You Must Stop It

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Ever felt like someone was trying too hard to impress others or get ahead by stepping on people?

That's a classic case of **social climbing**.

While a natural drive to improve one's social standing is part of human nature and a good thing to have, this article explores why certain **social climbing behaviors**, like being overly aggressive, obvious, or pushing others down, can actually backfire and *hurt* your **social status**.

We'll dig into the different types of poor social climbing, the hidden costs, and how to avoid these common pitfalls in your quest for advancement.

Contents

- Social Climbing: Definition
  - Bad Types of Social Climbing
- Costs of Social Climbing
  - Impresses Below, Undermines Above
- How to Social Climb Well
  - 1. Calibrate to The Audience
  - 2. Calibrate to The Context
  - 3. Do It Smoothly, Subtly

Social Climbing: Definition

Social climbing seeks to raise one's status within a group or society.

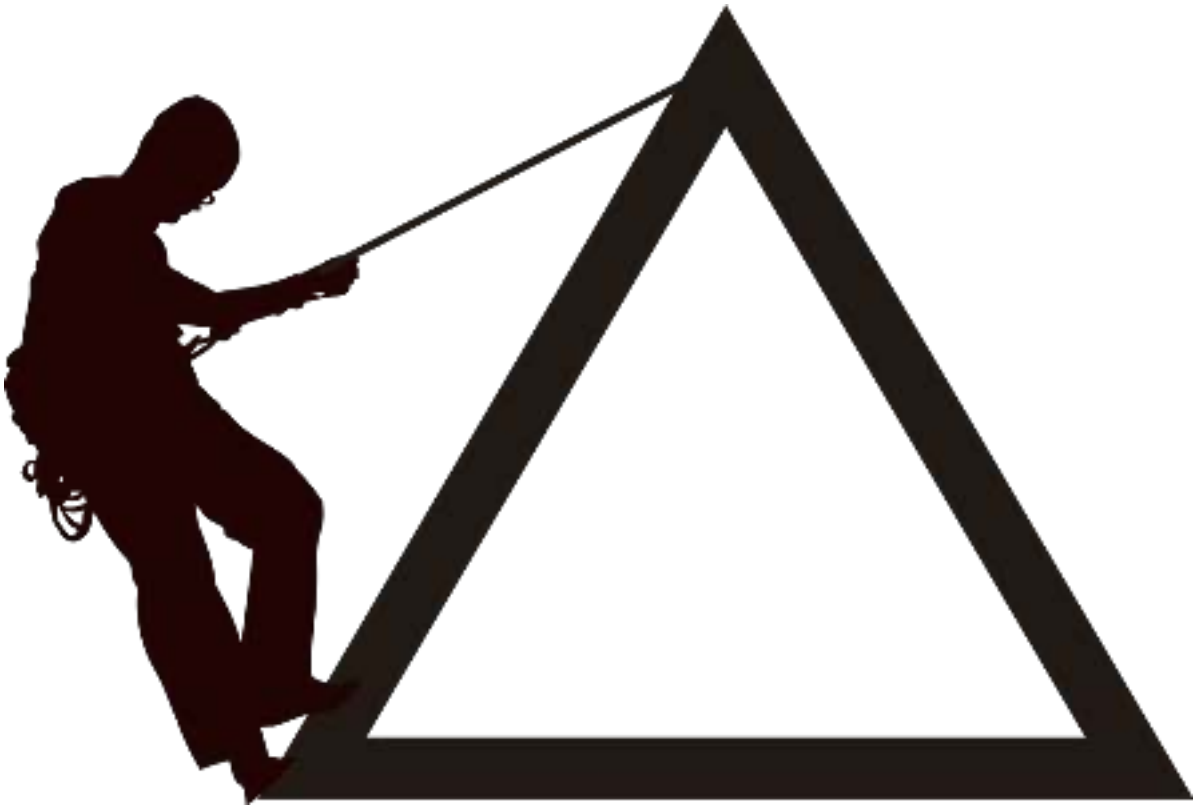
There are many tactics for social climbing, including self-promotion, networking, or pushing down on others.

It's important to note that **the aspiration to social climb is natural** and normal (Blau, 1964).
And **the act of social climbing can be empowering**, value-adding, and even honorable. Ambitious men are driven to advance, and masculine men all seek social status.

Bad Types of Social Climbing

In common parlance, social climbing refers to its negative form: aggressive, nasty, or *too obvious.*

Obvious social climbing is an issue because it signal lower value. Too aggressive, and you're antisocial; too 'in your face' and you lack social skills; too much compared to your life station, and you're posturing, and insecure. And you pay the costs.



Bullying For Social Climbing

An aggressive social climber may target a low-status, submissive-looking person and demeans him to look dominant by comparison.

He is effectively using him as a 'social peg™', stepping on him to gain higher placement in the hierarchy.

It's a form of bullying, a more extreme example of the dominance approach to social status, and it can work. However, it also comes with costs.

Costs of Social Climbing

Poor social climbing lowers your value because it signals:

- **Signals Lack of Top Dog Status**

People at the top of the hierarchy don't engage in social climbing because, well… There is nowhere to go once you're on top.
And that's why social climbing communicates you're probably around the middle of the hierarchy and craving to be higher. Sometimes you will see (clueless) top dogs engaging in social climbing though, and that's because he is afraid and insecure about his position.

- **Defensiveness and fear**

If you have a good reputation, continuous grandstanding looks suspicious. Why anyone who already has people's respect would keep bragging? It suggests insecurity about one's position in the world, or to potentially lose status to new upstarts.

- **Hostility and lack of cooperative, win-win mindset**

The positive way of climbing is to climb by your own merit.
The destructive one is to attack others.

And while of course both can work, competitor derogation can be socially costly and psychologically costly. associated with the most maladaptive forms of narcissism (Back et al., 2014). It comes with *lower* self-esteem, and general negative affect.

Impresses Below, Undermines Above

Social climbing can impress. But it mostly impresses the people who are at the bottom of the pyramid.

Just think about it: if you are vying for some above-average position, how does it look to below-average people? Kind powerful. But to higher than average people? It looks like you're scrambling for scraps.

In animal terms, a cat posturing as a tiger looks awesomely powerful to a mouse. But not so much to the other cooler cats in his neighborhood.

Hence, if your aim is slightly above average, happy social climbing.
But if you aim high, then you must grow in sophistication.

And that's the essence of it: **social climbing "works" in mediocre environments, among mediocre people, vying for middle layers of the social pyramid**.

How to Social Climb Well

Everything is contextual and there is a time and place for almost anything.

For example, early pick-up artists used some forms of social climbing to "demonstrate higher value". It doesn't seem to me they were doing it well, but in principle, if done well, it can be effective.

1. Calibrate to The Audience

Good social climbing starts with audience calibration.
High quality men and high quality women are power aware and see through the most basic games. Strategic social climbing with them is more refined and indirect. Much of your value display is on how you talk, and how you move.

2. Calibrate to The Context

Context also matters.
In some seductive contexts, even more blunt social climbing can work.

Many women enjoy the confidence, pride, and dominance that goes along with a well-executed social climb.
Two possible social climbing frames that work:
How lucky she is to be with this great guy that you are.
Look how great *we* are in this world of boring people (us VS the world)

3. Do It Smoothly, Subtly

Smooth social climbing requires calibration.

However, here's the key, when you are truly skilled and calibrated, you gain stauts, respect, and attraction without looking like you're even trying.
This is the paradox.
Good social climbing doesn't look like climbing at all.

The bumbling, unskilled guys look like they're trying too hard and look insecure. We baby and feel for these men. The strategic and effective men instead, we just naturally admire them. We call them 'cool guys'. Men naturally have respect for these men, and women are naturally attracted to them.

These are the types of men we train here at The Power Moves.

Learn more:

- Leaders' social climbing
- Social climbers types, techniques, and how to handle them
- **How to gain social status**, the smart and effective way

Power University: the one-stop solution to advance in life, without climbing:

Check Power University

Antifragile: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

In *Antifragile* (2012) Nassim Nicholas Taleb discusses the fragility of systems and explains how some systems are destroyed by shocks while others grow stronger.[image]

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- Practical Applications
- CONS

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3 Sentences Summary

- When you're antifragile you become stronger when attacked
- Take upside risks while protecting your downsides (barbell strategy)
- Options and collaboration heighten your antifragility

Notes

About the Author:
Nassim Nicholas Taleb is a former trader, philosopher, and student of probabilities.
He is one of my favorite authors and he has also published *"Skin In The Game", "The Black Swan", "Fooled by Randomness"*.

Definition of Antifragile

Antifragile is not strong or robust, it's the *opposite* of fragile, which means that the more you attack it, the stronger it gets.

When we can build antifragile systems, they will thrive in our uncertain and inherently risky world.

Book I: The Antifragile: An Introduction

Chapter 1: Between Damocles and Hydra

Nassim Taleb here repeats what "antifragile" means. Namely, antifragile benefits from shocks.

The author says that the increased complexity of our society also makes our society more fragile.
But it doesn't have to be so.

Chapter 2: Overcompensation and Overreaction Everywhere

Post-traumatic growth is an example of antifragility.

Post-traumatic growth is the phenomenon by which human beings become better after traumatic accidents.

Similarly, when we bounce back from failures and grow out of frustrations and hardships, we also show antifragility.

Inventions, he says, are born out of necessity. Not via planning and not even with education.
Highly decorated Harvard professors of entrepreneurship and innovation never innovated anything, and the same goes for the highly expensive consultants.

Nassim Taleb says that humans tend to look at the past and fail to understand that the unexpected events of the present will likely surpass what happened in the past.
Our body, contrary to our behavior, does prepare better.

When you train for weights, for example, your body overshoots and over-prepares.

Chapter 3: The Cat and the Washing Machine

The natural and biological is usually antifragile.

The secret of life seems to be antifragility.

The author says we have a tendency to try to reduce normal swings in life. He says there's a tendency to overmedicate and overdose with drugs such as Prozac to smoothen out normal mood swings we experience.

Book II: Modernity And The Denial of Antifragility

Chapter 4: What Kills Me Makes Others Stronger

The antifragility of some comes at the expense of others.

The fragility of startups makes the whole economy resilient -what Schumpeter called the creative destruction of capitalism-.
Nassim Taleb says that restaurant as a whole is a very strong category, but it comes at the expense of high competition, and also high failure rates, of each single one of them.

Disasters also serve a similar purpose, says the author.

The Titanic, for example, was a disaster, but by being a catalyst for change in the ship cruising industry, it made the system stronger.

The single parishes while the whole system gets stronger.

Some systems, like the aviation industry, are set to be antifragile by getting better after a crash, but the same cannot be said for the financial system, says the author.
In economy and finance, a big error causes a domino effect because all the nodes are connected and interlinked.

The goal of a system should be to let single individuals or institutions fail without dragging anyone else down.
This is the opposite of what governments are doing by bailing out companies at the expense of the whole system, which ends up propping up the wealthy and damaging the poor.

The Definition of A Loser

The definition of a loser is someone that is embarrassed by his mistakes and tries to explain them away instead of introspecting and becoming better with the new piece of information.

My note:
this is key indeed to becoming a better person, and what Nassim Taleb is talking about is typical of a fixed mindset (read more on Mindset).

Those who made errors and learned from them are more reliable than those who never committed any error.

> **System antifragility feeds off individuals' fragility**

Chapter 5: The Souk and the Office Building

Professions such as artisans, prostitutes, and taxi drivers are more robust to black swans and more antifragile than employees, even high-earning employees.

The wage of an employee can easily go to zero, but an artisan with several customers usually weathers crises much better.

The author also discusses how we human beings do not usually grasp what's not concrete.
A baby crying is more important to us than a thousand dying somewhere else that simply do not seem real.
They are just a statistic.

Taleb also says we have a thirst for the anecdote and the sensational.

Chapter 6: Tell Them I Love (Some) Randomness

Trying to over-control systems often leads to fragility.

Systems need a relief valve and need to be able to re-adjust freely.

So when we want to keep everything fixed and unmovable, any small movement will create panic and overreaction.

Similarly, moms who try to shield their children from all the negativity and possibly dangerous experiences of life got it all wrong.
Children need those experiences to grow more antifragile, and the more they are shielded from them, the more fragile they will be when they will inevitably encounter them.

Chapter 7: Naive Intervention

Nassim Taleb says he is not against intervention in any way.

It's just that he often sees too much, naive intervention.

He says that systems often are more antifragile than we think, and we should allow them to re-balance by themselves before jumping in.
He says a protocol would be needed for when to intervene and when to leave systems alone.

The author says we often intervene because we listen too much to the news, to the noise, rather than looking at the substance and at the long-term repercussions.
And the shorter the time frame you observe an event, the higher the noise you will perceive.

> **The more data you get, the less you will understand**

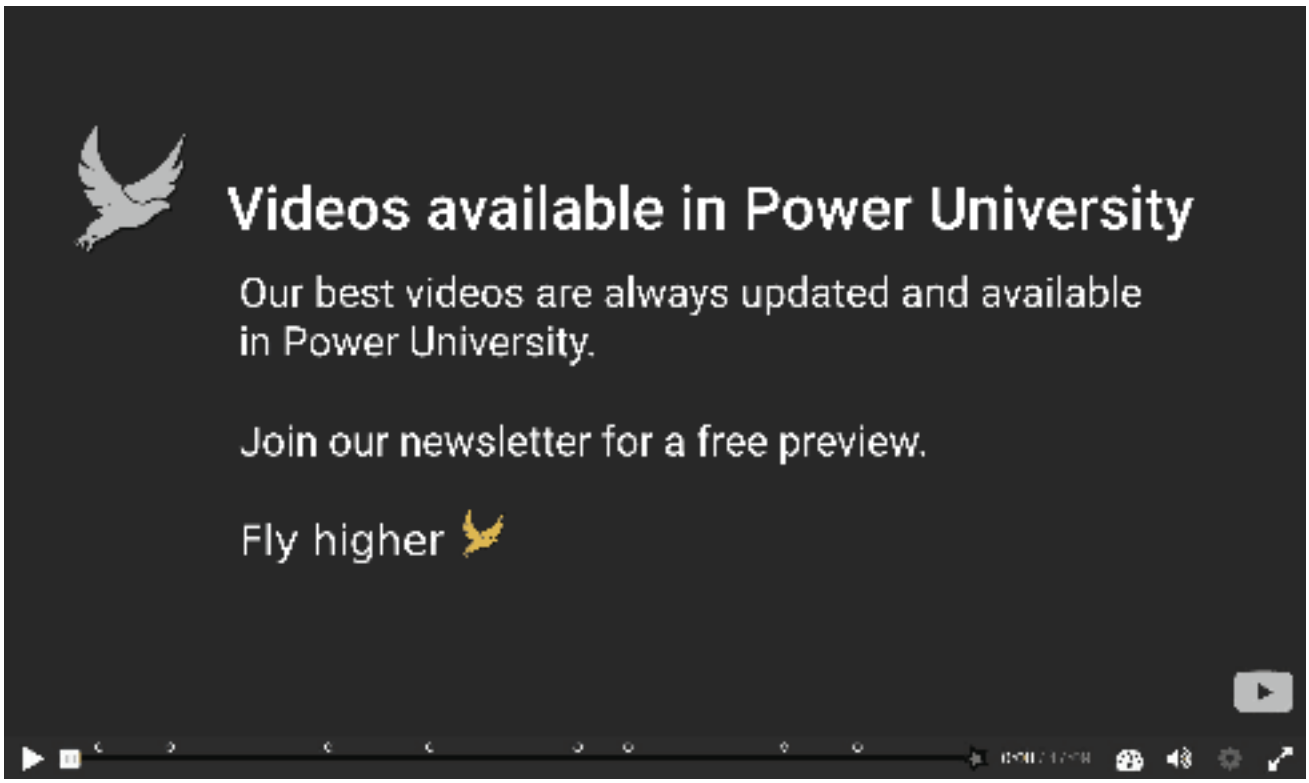
He says that "the elder had far more wisdom" and uses the example of Roman revering a general called "the deferrer" who always preferred to delay intervention.

My note:
I am always suspicious of sweeping generalizations and arguments that can be boiled down to "before it was better/those guys knew better than us".

In some other instances though over-intervention happens because of greed, like surgeons who make more money by operating than non-operating, and because people sometimes need to justify their presence. Doing nothing would feel like they have no character and their position is not needed… So they just do something.

Nassim Taleb compares the nervous overreaction of the over-intervention to the more needed calmness, and he uses a mobster as a paragon.
He says to look at Salvatore Gravano and how he always looks calm and in control, the video below (also check the *Godfather's way of dominance*).

He says when a man like Salvatore, usually calm, gets angry, people heed it.



Chapter 8: Prediction as a Child of Modernity

Nassim Taleb says it's best to prepare with failure in mind than trying to predict how and when failure will happen and how to avoid it.

For example, the Swedish government focuses on fiscal responsibility so that a new crisis will cause a disaster there and the new nuclear plants after Fukushima are built with future failure in mind.

That's the best way to go.

Book III: A Nonpredictive View of The World

Chapter 9: Fat Tony and the Fragilistas

Nassim Taleb talks quite a bit about himself and his ideas here, it's very theoretical and a bit of blabla.

He says it's hard to make money by trying to predict the future, but you can make money betting that those predicting the future will get it wrong and face troubles.

Chapter 10: Seneca's Upside and Downside

Nassim Taleb dislikes the employee position because it makes you very dependent on someone -and on someone's whims.

Chapter 11: Never Marry the Rockstar

Nassim Taleb here introduces the barbell strategy as a way of being antifragile.

The barbell strategy means covering your downsides while increasing your upsides. You play it very safe on one side so that you can take more risks on another side.
If the risky part plays out badly, you're still OK. If a black swan event will make the risks pay off big, you profit handsomely.

I loved the examples of the barbell strategy. Of course, finance had to be there, so in that case, it would be putting most of your money in safe investments and 10% in highly lucrative ones.
Take a boring job while you indulge your passion for literature and philosophy.

Women's Dual Sex Strategy

Or, and here's the chapter title, a barbell strategy is the one women sometimes seem to follow: marry the boring guy, the accountant, and if it happens sleep on the side with the exciting Rockstar.

This is a very popular concept in the manosphere, also referred to as *"alpha fucks, beta bucks"* (also read *"The Rational Male"*).

I love when Nassim Taleb says he's not sure that's good for the species and simply not just for fun because, while evolutionary psychologists love a good narrative, he prefers evidence, and there's no evidence to prove it's good for the species.

My Note:
However, Taleb here fails to truly understand how evolution works.
Evolution doesn't always maximize what's good for the species. And he cannot simply say "they do it for fun", because that's not an explanation. Evolutionary psychology explains *why* people find pleasurable the behavior that they find pleasurable.

Also read: lovers VS providers.

Book IV: Optionality, Technology, and Antifragility

Chapter 12: Thale's Sweet Grapes

Nassim Taleb says that options are a great way to make the system more resistant to shocks.

The more options you have, the more ways you have to respond to black swans and unforeseen events.

My note:
That's true, but while that's pretty obvious and everyone knows that, I'd like to stress that too many options is actually bad and can lead to choice paralysis and lots of wasted time and effort. Predictably Irrational explains it pretty well with scientific tests.

Chapter 13: Lecturing Birds on How to Fly

Nassim Taleb is both damn right and hilarious when he reflects upon our lack of imagination through the "invention" of carrying on luggage with wheels.

He says it took 6.000 years from the invention of the wheel and billions of hours of people slugging through airports and stations before someone thought about stripping two of them beneath a piece of luggage to simplify everyone's life.

Can you imagine, he says, how many supposedly super smart people, traveling to and from conventions of PhDs

exerted an inordinate amount of sweat but never thought of luggage with wheels?

The same invention came 30 years after the moon landing, which seemed such a great thing… But **the moon landing did little to improve our lives, the wheeled luggage did**.

Chapter 14: When Two Things Are Not the "Same Thing"

Nassim Taleb says most people get it wrong with education and standards of living.

It's not education which improves standards of living, it's the other way around.

Education is not even strictly needed for a wealthy, antifragile society like Switzerland shows us with its heavy focus on "on the job" training.

Theory should be differentiated from practice and, empirically speaking, your grandmother's advice is superior to what you get in business school.
Also, to the economists' chagrin, Nassim says that economics is not a science and economists should not be advising on policies.

Nassim Taleb says it's not true the best idea survives.
It's indeed not a competition of ideas, but a competition of human beings who happen to hold and defend those ideas. I don't fully agree here, but one of my favorite quotes in the chapter:

> *An idea doesn't survive because it's better than the competition, but because the person saying it survived.*

Chapter 15: History Written by the Losers

Nassim Taleb has a very interesting theory here.

He says that it's not practical applications that follow the theory, but the other way around.
New great discoveries and breakthroughs happen by trying things out, by tinkering around, and then theoretical knowledge plays catch up and explains it.

To use Nassim Taleb's always interesting and colorful language, the theory serves to satisfy the intellectual bean counters.

Contrary to Peter Thiel's advice in *Zero to One*, Nassim Taleb seems to slightly mock plans and business plans and takes the example of a few successful corporations which started doing something completely different than what they ended up being successful for.

That's why you invest in people, not in business plans: successful entrepreneurs must be able to change course.

The author then sums up a few rules:

1. Look for optionality (many options)
2. Open-ended payoffs
3. Invest in people, not business plans
4. Apply the barbell principle (limit your downside)

Chapter 16: A Lesson in Disorder

In this chapter, Nassim Taleb takes it again on education and soccer moms.

What we learn in class often really stays in class and is rarely translated into real life.

The examples the author uses in the book are really great and also hilarious, ranging from bigwigs who got it all wrong on oil prices skyrocketing after the Iraq invasion to the traders who would be considered smart when they

could spell their street correctly who were very successful at what they were doing.

And of course, they cap it off with the example of the gym rat at a major disadvantage against the street fighter or mafia hitman :).

Book V: The Nonlinear

Chapter 17: Fat Tony Debates Socrates

Nassim Taleb says that we often decide based on fragility and not on probability.

It's very unlikely for example that aboard any given plane there will be a terrorist, but since the consequences would be devastating, then we put up with lengthy safety control just to eliminate any possible chance.

Chapter 18: On the Difference Between a Large Stone

Nassim Taleb talks about the nonlinear property.

For example, one crash at 100 km/h will wreck much more damage than 100 crashes at 1 km/h.

Your body is fragile to alcohol and five bottles of wine in one go is more damaging to your body than five bottles spread out over five days.

And the last glass of wine will be more damaging than the preceding one, which in turn was more damaging than the preceding one

Chapter 19: The Philosopher's Stone and Its Inverse

Nassim Taleb here talks about the Pareto Law and says that more than 80/20 it's more and more becoming a 99/1 across many realms.

He says that *collaboration* is also a tool to reach antifragility.
Similarly, as adding up units in nonlinear systems brings non-linear increments, also adding up people to a well-functioning team adds up more than the sum of its parts.

From a psychological point of view I also particularly enjoyed the author's point of view on "giving many reasons" for anything. He says that robust, strong decisions, require just one single reason.

When people try to cram too many reasons why it's usually because they are putting up smoke screens.

Read more on collaboration strategies here:

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Book 6: Via Negativa

Chapter 20: Time and Fragility

Nassim Taleb says that what's most likely to stick in the future is what has already been around for a long.

When asked what the future house will look like, for example, a shelf full of books is a good guess because a shelf full of books has been around for centuries.

A chair is another safe bet.
Wine and forks… Huge safe bets.

The same goes for papers and books.

A new paper is “dangerous” because it hasn’t stood the test of time and is not proven. A recent book, the same. A book that has been popular for a decade instead is likely to stay popular for another ten.

And you can also rest your mind if you hate religion: rational or irrational, it’s been around thousands of years, so it’s likely to stick around for a while.

He also says the imperial system makes more sense than the metrical one because it’s based on reality.
A meter doesn’t match anything, but a foot does. A pound that you can imagine holding in your hands.

My note:
when Taleb mentions a stone makes sense because it weighs as a stone and a pound makes because it’s what you can hold in your hands I had to double check he wasn’t joking.
This part made little sense to me: stones go from tons to grams so, no, it’s not true that it’s more intuitive. If anything, it’s more likely to sidetrack people.

Chapter 21: Medicine, Convexity, and Opacity

Nassim Taleb comes back to some concepts of antifragility here.

Doctors tend to over-intervene even when there’s no need to and we tend to try to make life too comfortable when comfort only makes us more fragile.

The episode of Nassim Taleb in the emergency room arguing with the doctor if he had any evidence an ice pack on the nose was going to help in any way was hilarious.

Chapter 22: To Live Long, but Not Too Long

This chapter was very chatty, and philosophical, and reflected on the author’s life.

It made me smile when Taleb says a big improvement in his life came from removing offensive irritants such as TV, air conditioning, long commutes, and… Newspapers since just reading Friedman and Paul Krugman would lead to unnecessary bouts of anger :).

Book VII: The Ethics of Fragility and Antifragility

Chapter 23: Skin in The Game: Antifragility at the Expense of Others

Skin in the game is a big thread for Antifragile.

Skin in the game means people who take part in a system should also lose out if that system goes bust. And that’s not what it’s happening today.

For example, the Romans had the chief architects and constructors stand beneath the bridge they had just erected.

Or the leaders of ancient times used to put their own life on the line as a consequence of their decision.
Roman emperors marched with their legions and as a rule of thumb, the people with the biggest downside had the most respect and had the highest positions in society (the “bastardization” of leadership is something Simon Sinek discusses in *Leaders Eat Last*).

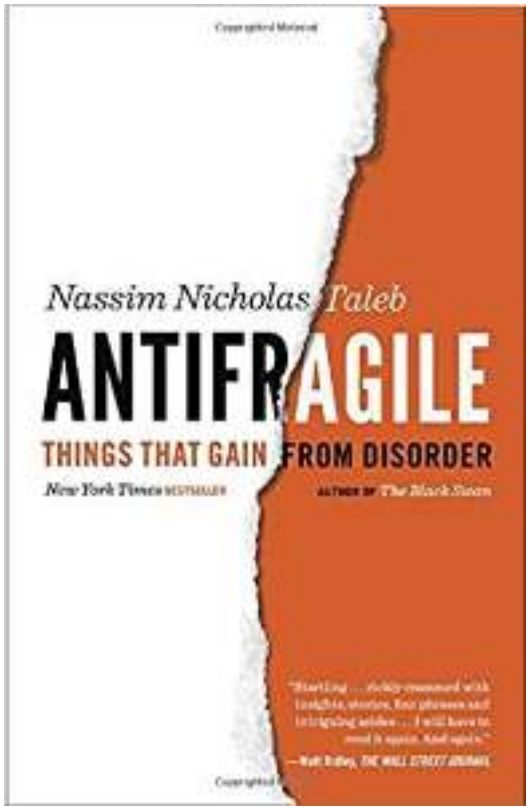
Today instead overpaid bankers can bankrupt a bank, or the whole system, and walk away with big bonuses.

That’s akin to transferring fragility from one party to the other so that one party becomes antifragile at the expense of other innocent players and bystanders.

Chapter 24: Fitting Ethics to a Profession

In this chapter, Nassim Taleb talks about the hedonic treadmill many of us are slaves of.

The hedonic treadmill is the tendency we have of wanting more and more material stuff even when we don't need them.
It's often driven by seeing the people around us possessing those same things.



Practical Applications

- **Comfort is the weakening of the will**

Push your limits and do make experiences to become antifragile.

- **Build your Ego with antifragility in mind**

It's funny that the biggest takeaway from this book, for me, was contained in a little more than a line. It's when Taleb talks about his definition of losers: people who make excuses when wrong instead of learning and moving on.

That's because their ego is not antifragile. And that's the most important step you can take to make your "system" antifragile.

Read here *"the antifragile ego"*.

CONS

- **Does Not Fully Understand Evolutionary Psychology?**

Taleb often criticizes evolutionary psychology, yet here he seems not to understand it.

He says that "there is no proof that it's good for the species", but no good evolutionary psychologist ever said evolution always moves towards what's good for the species. Especially sexual selection doesn't.
That's not how selection works.

I agree with him that sometimes people like to make a nice narrative out of something that might be random.
But that's not evolutionary psychology, that's just idiots who like to make up stuff.

He cannot deny a claim just by saying “they do it because it’s pleasurable”, because the question becomes “why do people find a certain behavior pleasurable”, and that’s what evolutionary psychology explains.

- **Some Find Taleb Arrogant**

You could find Taleb funny, entertaining, plainly honest… Or offensive.

I do not find it offensive, however, I can also understand if one were to label Taleb as being a bit arrogant.
There are a lot of personal attacks, including with swear words, in antifragile.

The author also says about the financial industry that wasn’t listening to him so he “took their money”, which sounds a bit vindictive.

Also of course he’s human, so while he attacked some people for not understanding anything, he also got some major predictions and analyses plainly wrong.

- **“Before was better”**

There’s a feeling that Nassim Taleb always hints that “before it was better”.

- **Long and Disjointed**

Was this a book about antifragility or was antifragility simply one of the many many random topics?

Don’t get me wrong, most of it was interesting and some parts even illuminating, but I didn’t see a strong common thread joining it all together to deliver a single, potent message.

And it’s ironic Taleb himself says a philosopher should be remembered for one thing only :).

- **Nebulous and Complex**

At times the book is not simple, which is OK, but I feel like there could have been easy ways to actually MAKE IT simple.

And any time you can simplify something but don’t, that’s hubris or lack of communication skills.

Review

“Antifragile” is longish, and not super simple.

It has many different concepts and some extremely interesting points of view.

Nassim Taleb is also eclectic, entertaining, and at times beautifully sarcastic writer (in Antifragile he coined “IAND”, standing for: International Association of Name Droppers).

He makes fun of “professors of innovations” -who never innovated anything-, economists, and even a bit of himself.
I particularly loved the line he used when he left the financial industry and thought it was over but then “they pulled him back in” (that’s a line from *The Godfather*, a move Taleb seems to like a lot).

I also admire Taleb for his knowledge and his classical history references. Alongside numbers, he quotes Latin, then goes into French writers only to go back to old Mediterranean civilizations, Greek philosophers, and Roman customs.
And then again back to analyze the present reality and the future. All in one.

I wish he had used more psychology in his concept of antifragility -I have done that with *the antifragile ego*-, but overall I enjoyed Antifragile.

Get the Book on Amazon

How Expert Marketers Manipulate (14 Tactics From Tai Lopez)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 November 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Is Tai Lopez a scammer?

I will let you answer that.
What I can tell you, is that Tai Lopez is good at using a lot of persuasion techniques all crammed in the shortest amount of space possible.

Sometimes those persuasion techniques can become manipulative.
This article shows you all of Tai Lopez's persuasive and manipulative techniques.

Contents

- How to Persuade Like A Marketer
- Persuasive Techniques Analysis
  - #1. Scarcity
  - #2. Authority
  - #3. Social Proof
  - #4. Liking
  - #5. "Secret Insights" Trigger
  - #6. Repeat Exposure
  - #7. Strategic Honesty: Building Trust
  - #8. Self-Prospecting Questions
  - #9. False Entry Barriers
  - #10. Use Your Enemies: Outgroup Technique
  - 11. Relatable "you can do it" path
  - #12. The Charismatic Leader Triggers
  - #13. Exhaust Your Audience: They'll Need To Skip (& Buy)
  - #14. Fake Scarcity
- Tai Lopez Review

How to Persuade Like A Marketer

First of all, why an article on Tai Lopez?

Simple: because the guy is killing it on YouTube (and, likely, with online sales).
Indeed, at the time of writing, Tai Lopez is the biggest self-marketer out there.

And let's be frank, it's not about content.
His quality content is heavily diluted, and if you really want to learn and develop yourself there are *plenty of better resources* out there.

What is it, then?
What allows Tai Lopez to build a huge following and rake in millions of online sales?

It's his heavy usage of persuasive techniques that allows him to make more money online than any other guru.

Persuasive Techniques Analysis

Persuasive techniques leverage some well-known psychological triggers.
We will start with the most obvious ones.
But keep reading for the less-known techniques.

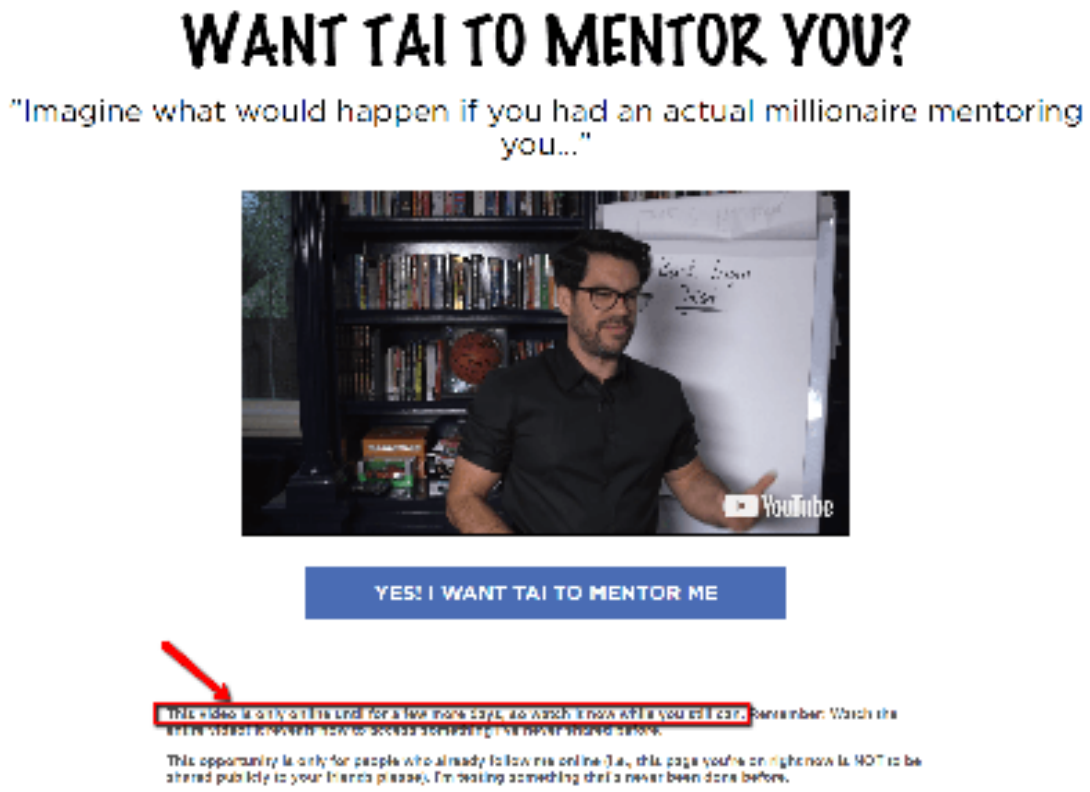
#1. Scarcity

You know this one, don't you?

This is one of the most commonly used techniques the world over to make money online.
And there is a good reason why: it works.

The principle of scarcity, as explained by Cialdini in *Influence* says that the more something is scarce, the more we want it.
And Tai Lopez uses this principle any time he can.

The principle of Scarcity has an even stronger appeal when our product is scarce because of high demand.
And that's why Tai Lopez often pitches his products as only open to a few people because the demand is too high and he cannot -or does not want to cater to everyone.



Can You Abuse The Scarcity Principle?

I believe the abuse of the scarcity principle, which often is also a very easy one to spot, is the single most important factor why Tai comes across as such a fake snake oil salesman.

And that's why people like you and I might probably not buy from Tai.
BUT… Not all audiences are smart and educated.

And if you are selling to green-in-the-tooth, not particularly bright individuals, you can probably make more money online by abusing the principle than by using it, ehm… Judiciously and honestly.

#2. Authority

The principle of authority says we are (much) more likely to listen to someone when we perceive he has authority. Especially if we're dealing with his field of supposed expertise.

A cop in uniform for example, or a doctor in a hospital, or the head researcher in the experiment.

Tai Lopez as Authority

Tai Lopez tries to first of all places himself as an authority.

He does it when he says he started as a poor man and shows us all the rich-man trappings, thus communicating that he knows how to make money.

But he also gets authority when he says he learned hugely from top mentors and that he reads nonstop.
When he says that he is providing credibility to his teacher role because he never stopped studying and he learned from the best people out there.

His attitude of always explaining things and standing in front of flip charts also leads people to believe he knows what he's talking about.

All the materialistic possessions he accurately places around him also serve to project him as an authority.
His villa, his sports cars, the often objectified women… They are all authority tools because they communicate that Tai "made it", so he can speak from a position of experience.

Authorities Endorsing Tai Lopez

Tai Lopez also gets authority when he names-drop supposedly billionaire friends.
People think "wow, if so many rich people as friends he must be good".

Tai tries to show two things with rich and famous people, such as that they:

- Are part of his circle
- Respect him and his knowledge

Notice, for example, how nonchalantly he mentions Elon Musk.
He says "the last time I chatted to Elon Musk" as if those chats happened often and they're no big deal for him (watch the scene here).

Notice when he met Mark Cuban, a famous billionaire, Tai made the video of him opening his own house door as if to highlight that it was Mark Cuban who went to him and not the other way around.

That was a huge one for Tai and in a later video where he tried to defend himself from "fraud allegations" he mentioned sarcastically that "Mark Cuban stopping by was an impersonator", as if to say "if I were a fraud I wouldn't be able to meet Cuban".

This is strictly my opinion, but Mark Cuban didn't look very sharp for going along with that gag).

Authority From Scientists

But of course, Tai also doesn't shy away from the most obvious of authority endorsing: the top scientist

It sounds almost comical when he introduces the "leading scientist" as "having published in all these top scientific journals", but it probably works for many people (as a note, I looked that leading scientist up, and all publications I could find were self-published posts on his own LinkedIn).

#3. Social Proof

Mortensen in *Maximum Influence* says that we are social animals and many of our decisions are based on what other people think and do.

Tai uses social proof in abundance.

He always comments on the huge number of people following him, thanking him and asking for his suggestion. The listeners will think that if so many people follow him and write him… He must know what he's talking about.

Of course, very few think it might be a Ponzi Scheme..

Tai Lopez, Hot Women & Cars

Sex can sell fantastically, but the wrong sexual association can also spell doom for products that are not related to sex (Cialdini, Pre-Suasion).

Tai Lopez makes sure he never comments on him sleeping with many women because it could not gel well with his "knowledge and teacher image".

But he makes sure he always has hot women and Italian sports cars around (the two things are actually very tight in the modern world imagery).
It proves and sub-communicates that he must be very successful with women.

People seeing cars, money, and hot women want to become like him, and the quickest way seems to be to, well… Buy from him.

#4. Liking

Liking works in two ways:

1. We buy more from those we like
2. We buy more products that people we like also buy

In vulgar language, we could call the second part the "rub-off effect".
And that is why so many brands associate their products with a celebrity.

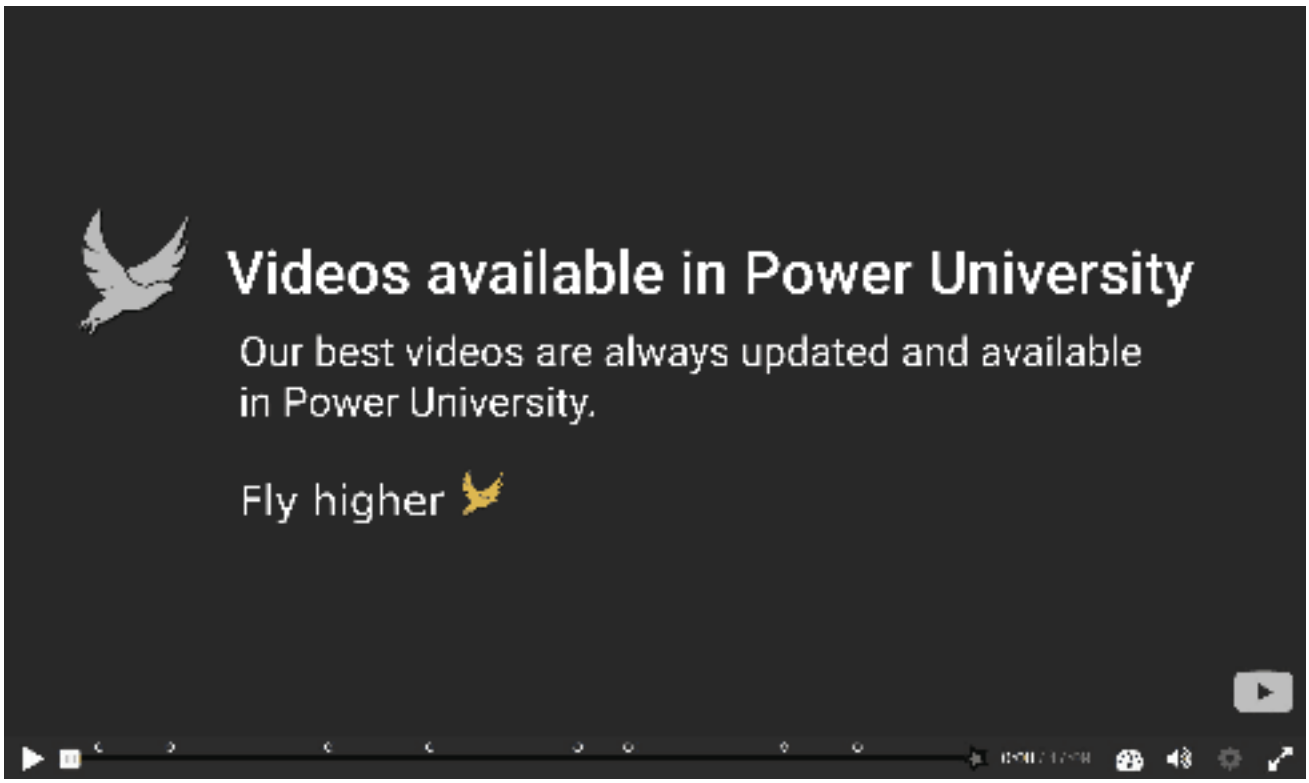
Linking Celebrities

Tai always tries to make a short video or take a snap of himself with some famous well-liked and respected celebrity.

That way he can inflate his own credibility by giving the idea those celebrities know him (and, sub-communicated, endorse him).

Check indeed this picture with Elon Musk and some people wondering "why Elon Musk is endorsing a scammer": Quora question (the obvious answer being Elon Musk cannot vet all people taking pics with him).

And he made his short video with Rihanna his very own channel intro video. That's how important it is for Tai to be seen as a known and respected man among top celebrities:



Notice Tai will later highlight Rihanna asked him for book recommendations because “she knew he had the biggest book collection”. Tai is using Rihanna in one single fell swoop for liking, social proof, and authority.
Watch out for value leechers when you become a celebrity :).

#5. “Secret Insights” Trigger

Would you listen to a billionaire who told you that he is going to share his “how to make millions online” only with you?

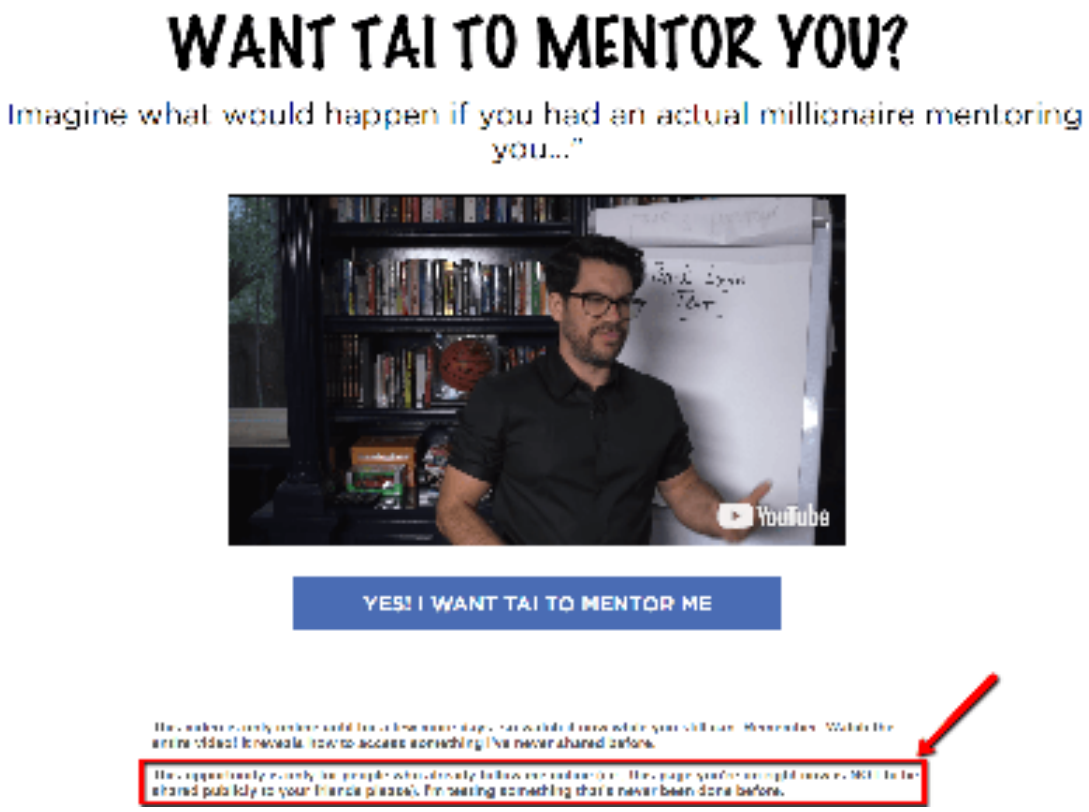
You probably would.

And that’s the power of authority combined with the power of “secret insight” trigger.

Our mind is programmed to look for shortcuts and the easiest paths to our goals. Secrets and information that are still unknown to the masses promise us an easy way to get ahead.

It doesn’t matter that the biggest “secret” to Mastery is effort applied over the long run (read *Mastery, Grit*): our subconscious is hypersensitive to keywords such as “tips”, “secrets” and “insider information”.

Tai Lopez often brands his information as “secret insights”, “insider information” and “new breakthroughs” which are available to a few lucky ones.



I don't follow Tai online… And yet I can buy it :)

#6. Repeat Exposure

Warning: you might need major capital to leverage this one.

A message that is repeated time and time again makes people eventually curious to go and find out who the hell this guy, who has become so present in their life, really is.

That's basically how Tai Lopez launched himself: with a huge multi-million dollar marketing ad campaign that got him in front of the eyes of his target group.
Multiple, multiple times.

With repeat exposure, he went from a nobody to an Internet phenomenon. And it didn't matter that he paid for that and that he rented the houses and the cars… Sometimes what it seems to be is equivalent to what it is.

Also, the "mere exposure effect" (check Incognito by David Eagleman) says that simply being exposed multiple times to a message, or to someone, leads us to like that person more and to believe that message more (also check the *Like Switch*)

#7. Strategic Honesty: Building Trust

A great way to build trust is to highlight a defect of your product.
It does two good things for you:

1. Builds trust, because you are willing to share negative information
2. Takes the objection away from people's minds because it's already been discussed

You will notice that Tai sets the bar very low for his courses and implies that if you just follow his suggestion you will live like he's living (hopefully that doesn't mean living on borrowed money :).

But he still often repeats that "*it's not a guarantee and not everyone will get rich… Not super quick at least*" (let's give time to the refund period to expire at least :)-.

This makes him sound more honest and offsets a little all the other sales techniques he uses.

> **This is not a get rich quick scheme..**

A special mention goes to his very first ad, the one that was all over the place.
He says "now this is not a get-rich-quick scheme", addressing the very first objection people have when looking at that video.

Of course, he then proceeds to re-lower the bar again by saying "*I can't promise you will be able to buy a Lamborghini tomorrow, but you will be able to buy it much sooner than you think..*".

#8. Self-Prospecting Questions

I love this technique because it's actually ethical.

Tai Lopez asks questions that are designed to make us answer internally "yes" so that we can self-prospect.
It's incredibly more powerful than telling and much more powerful than asking direct questions as well because this way we feel we reached the conclusions all by ourselves.

For example, while telling he didn't start off rich Tai Lopez will say:

> *Now I don't know where you're starting from…*

And when he's talking about money and he draws dollar signs he says:

> *Now I don't know what you want..*

Of course, the vast majority of people listening to those videos do want to get rich and are starting from low levels.
So as they answer in their head "I'm also starting from low (like you)" and "I also want money" they feel closer to Tai, *bond with him,* and confirm to themselves they are the perfect people to buy Tai Lopez products.

Very ingenious…

#9. False Entry Barriers

Would you feel cooler if you were admitted into the VIP section of a local club?

Chances are that yes you would, even though there is nothing inherently great with the VIP section.

But we all feel more special when there was a selection to enter and we made it through.
We "made the cut", we were good.

Tai Lopez often uses false entry barriers to make people feel good about "being good enough to follow him".

He does it in his very first advertisement.
He says:

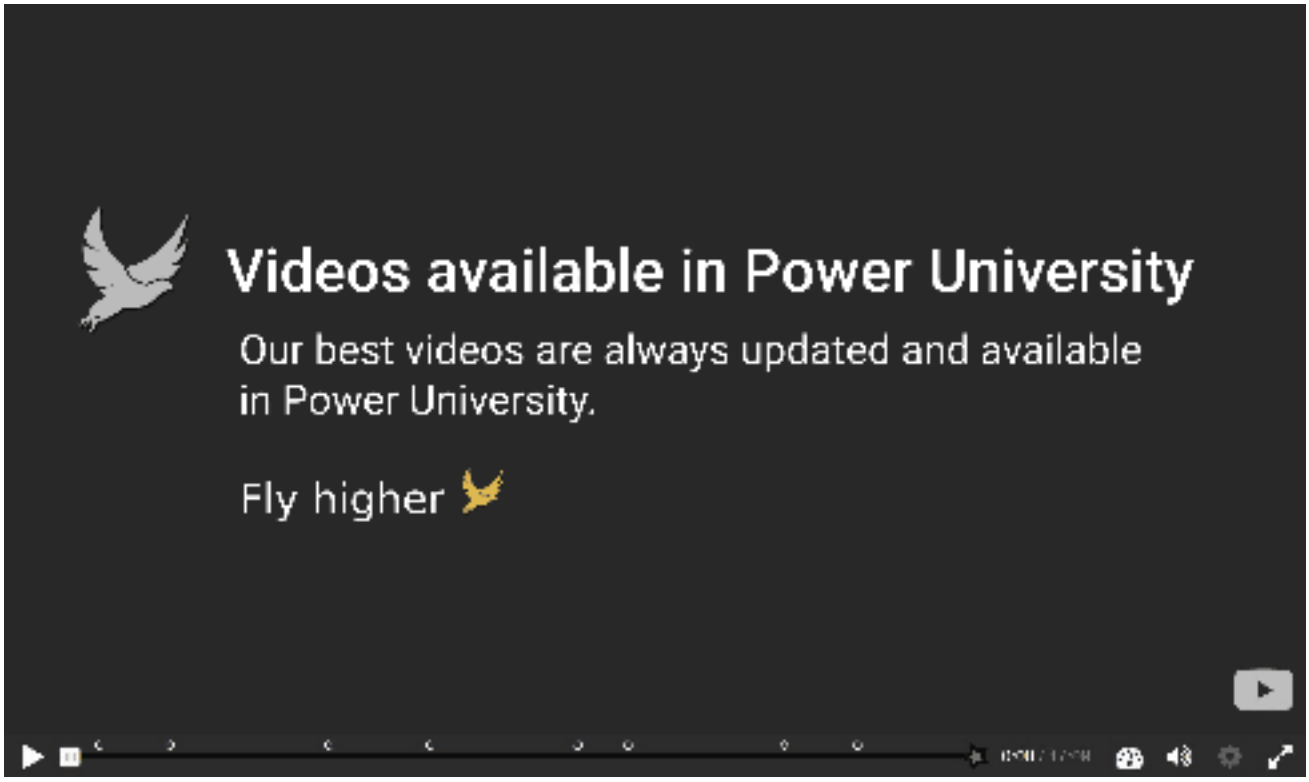
> "*be an optimist, if you're a cynic don't click here*".

Of course, the cynics might have clicked but weren't going to buy.

Now the people who weren't unsure or the ones who were interested can identify themselves as the ones who "made the cut": they're not cynics, they're optimists, and they can go ahead.

And they feel proud and happy. And closer to Tai Lopez, the man who bestowed upon them the optimist label -and

how is just about to teach them how to make money online… After they give *him* money-.



And by the way, *some* cynicism is actually healthy.
See this article on positive cynicism:

> Positive Cynicism: Turning Poison, Into Gold

#10. Use Your Enemies: Outgroup Technique

This is an old favorite of *crooked politicians* the whole world over.

I think this is by far the best move from Tai Lopez.
It's a form of False Entry Barrier, but the way he uses it with his enemies takes its effectiveness to a whole new level.

Tai Lopez attracted lots of haters -and a few people willing to show the truth-
Some of these people found out he rents his place and doesn't own it, that he pays for women to stand around him, and that he… "bent" some truths.

Well, while pitching one of his products Tai says scathingly and disapprovingly:

> *I don't want to deal with a whole bunch of people who are super cynical. If you are one of those people who thinks that I don't know what I'm talking about, or this is all rented or this some kind of an act, then just go off the video, this is for serious people.*

Let's analyze what he did:

No critics ever said he doesn't know what he's talking about, they just said he's a liar and a fraud.
But by mixing true statements with fake ones he makes their objection seem much shakier and the product of "hatred".

Then he says if you're one of them you should stop listening and not join his group, please.

That's the False Entry Barrier because the critics would not buy anyway so he can safely tell them to go take a hike.

Then he says:

> **Tai Lopez**: "this is for serious people".

Now the people who are NOT his critics feel a stronger bond and connection to Tai Lopez and between themselves.

It's because now there's an out-group, the haters, and an in-group.
His followers can now identify as the in-group, which happens to have lots of positive characteristics: they don't hate, but they are optimists and serious about getting rich (and incidentally buying Tai Lopez products).

Genius.
To sum it up, in one fell swoop Tai Lopez:

- Makes his enemies' position shakier
- Uses his enemies to create an out-group
- Throws a fake disqualifier strengthening people's resolve to buy
- Makes the in-group stronger and prouder to be with Tai Lopez

11. Relatable "you can do it" path

Tai Lopez doesn't just present himself as a rich man.

He presents himself as a man who started poor and got rich. And that's why he's qualified to teach it.

That's a great pitch because it does three key things:

1. Communicates familiarity: "he was like me", people think
2. Gives a sense of possibility: "if he did, so can I"
3. Communicates credibility: "he must know what he's talking about"

Joseph Sugarman lists "familiarity" and "credibility" in his marketer's book *Triggers*, and they are both key ingredients in Tai Lopez pitch.

#12. The Charismatic Leader Triggers

Contrarian, rebels, and strongly opinionated leaders are the ones commanding the strongest following.

It's one of the secrets to *becoming a charismatic man.*

Tai Lopez tries to replicate that hard-core fan base with his own version of strong statements and opinions, but he does it again in a very "marketed" and safe way.

He does it when he says

> **Tai Lopez**: "*stops listening, if you're a cynic, I don't want you here*".

Or when he's very caustic with the "generation of *self-entitled people*".

Of course, he takes some aim at the private schoolers out there too and says that "genius level" smart people down-perform.

All these seemingly strong positions make him seem contrarian and opinionated, but **they are all safe attacks because most people buying his products are *not* in private MBAs**, not "genius level smart" and nobody thinks of themselves as entitled.

And they all strengthen his group of followers who now identify themselves as “those who don’t have a silver spoon in their mouth”.

#13. Exhaust Your Audience: They’ll *Need* To Skip (& Buy)

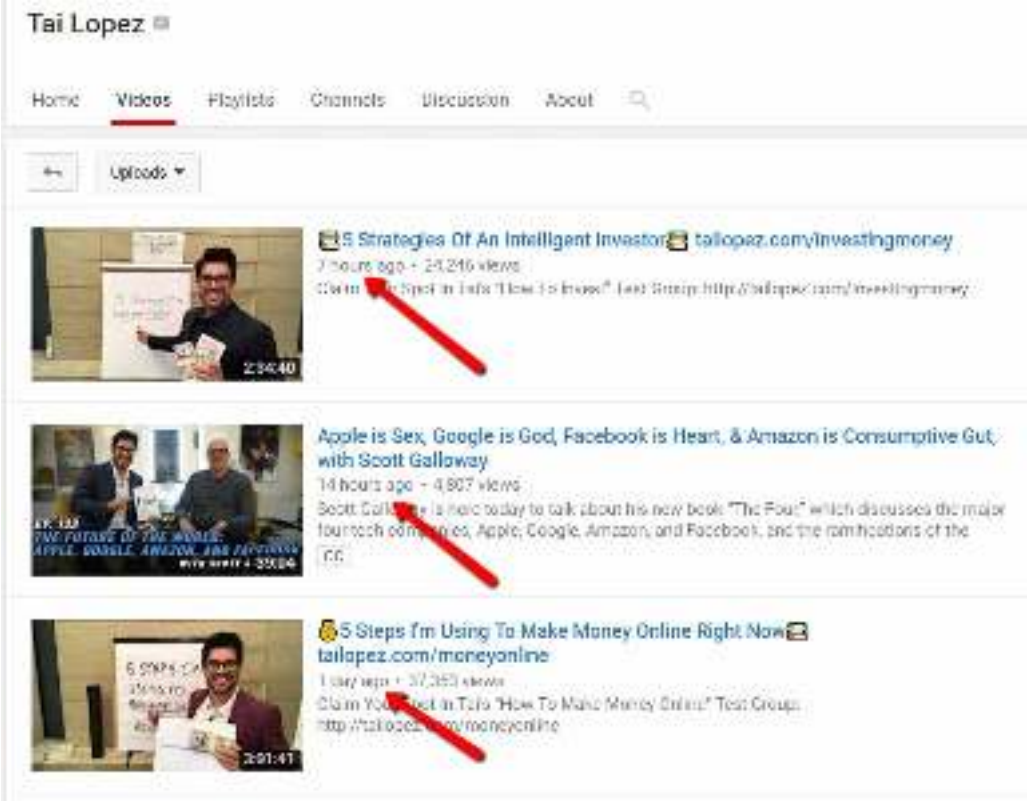
Make things fuzzy and they will pay for clarity.

Tai Lopez puts out an incredible amount of videos, often hours long. This doesn’t just help him with the “repeat exposure” we talked early, but also to sell with exhaustion.

People can’t possibly follow all his videos, so they think they must be getting a summary of all his says in a more concentrated form. With what? With his products of course.

Also his hour-long product presentations… I’d love to have some statistics but I’m guessing that most people who buy, buy before the end of the video.

It’s because we don’t have so much time, and after all the sales techniques Tai Lopez uses we would rather get to the goodies and “start getting rich” rather than waste time with the watered-down pitch.



#14. Fake Scarcity

Of course, sometimes if we could just lie it could make it all easier when it comes to influencing people.

At least in the short term…

And Tai Lopez doesn’t may at times cross that line.

He says his videos will only be online for a few days… And they’re still there after months.

He tells you this opportunity is “only for his followers”, and it’s there for everyone.
Sometimes he will pretend a product is out of stock and then collects your email to add you to his newsletter and the product magically reappears the day after…

Tai Lopez Review

Tai Lopez is a very smart and well-learned guy.

One may even say he's a wise man.

As a matter of fact, we agree on a lot of things, including:

- **Balance is key**
- **You don't necessarily need to be an *"alpha male"* to succeed** as per *exceptional dating dynamics* and the effectiveness of *"niches"*
- **You need a certain level of dark triad traits** to succeed, and Tai is a good example of (positive) Machiavellianism

Says Lopez in an old IG post:

> My mentor Dr. David Buss said that all dark triad traits are functional in the sense that they have successfully been perpetuated in the gene pool. So my guess is a little narcissism doesn't hurt. But a lot does. Balance. Not extremes.

When I hear him talk, he's the type of guy I'd like to meet.

But when we're talking about Tai the marketer, then, well… We differ.

Yes, you do some of these techniques.

Even if you sell great products you will still need to leverage a few of these techniques. Or lots of them.

Learning how to build a successful business is all about learning psychology and what makes people tick.

Tai Lopez has become successful by using a great number of influencing techniques… *Constantly*.
My main gripe with Tai Lopez is that he has shown no qualms in lying and pulling sneaky tricks as well.

Also, see:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

The Moral Animal: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Moral Animal is an *evolutionary psychology book* that explains human psychology and human behavior in light of our evolution.
Robert Wright opened my eyes when I first encountered this book many years ago.

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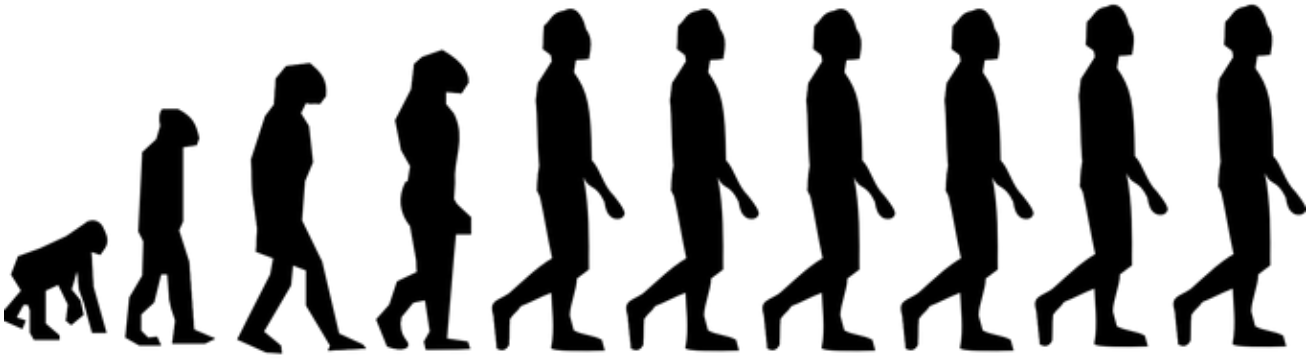
Bullet Summary

- Human males are high in MPI (=men invest in children, albeit not as much as women)
- We are naturally altruists, albeit often in a selective, self-serving fashion
- We deceive, self-deceive, and use morals as a tool to further our goals

Full Summary

Robert Wright says that Darwinism, in the shape of what he calls a vague ideology of “social Darwinism”, has fallen prey to racists, fascists and the worst form of capitalist ideologies.

The author also prefaces the book by drawing a line among the similarities in seemingly different cultures. Why do all people worry about social status, feel guilt (in the same predictable circumstances), or gossip (about the same things)?
Modern Darwinians, even when they focus on differences, don’t tend to see them as genetic differences but tend to see cultures as the product of a common human nature responding to different environmental and cultural circumstances.



PART I: SEX ROMANCE & LOVE

Chapter 1: Darwin Comes of Age

Robert Wright begins making light fun of the popular claim that Darwin was no special in any way and just a “normal boy” as he grew up.

He says those claims are suspicious as normal people accomplishing great feats always make for good reading (Mastery by Robert Greene also slightly uses Darwin as an example of an average man achieving greatness).

The author though doesn’t question whether Darwin was or not bright or smart, but he questions whether his theory of natural selection was that smart.

Indeed, he says, the theory is rather simple.

The Natural Selection Theory

All that the natural selection theory says is this:

> If in a specie there’s a variation among hereditary traits, some of those traits will prove more conducive to the survival and reproduction than others.
> And those traits will likely become more widespread

And the result is that the species aggregate pool of hereditary traits changes.

Madonna Whore Dichotomy

This is important to understand dating.

The Madonna-Whore Dichotomy says that men view women as belonging to two different groups: the ones you want to marry and love (Madonnas) and the ones you want to have sex with and quickly discard (whores).

The author says today there's a tendency to reject and laugh at these aspects of Victorian morality, but to completely discard them is to overestimate the advancements of our own morality.

Even educated and liberal men who wouldn't openly talk about "sluts" often end up acting accordingly to the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy.

At the end of the day, the author says, the Madonna Whore Dichotomy and the sexual double standard have roots in human nature and mental mechanisms we all use to evaluate each other.

The Madonna-Whore Dichotomy is based on the idea that if women do differ in terms of the likelihood of cheating and sleeping around, then **it makes sense for men to separate the two groups**.

And spread their genes sleeping with whores and marrying the Madonna who will never cheat on them (and trick them to raise children who are not his).

Also, read:

- The Madonna-Whore Complex

Chapter 2: Male and Females

The idea that men and women are identical in nature has less and less proponents.

Sex and attitudes towards sex are one such example.
Male sexual appetite, for example, seems to be more constant than a woman's sexual appetite.

Darwin himself had noticed that the men being the ones with insatiable sexual appetites always chasing sex and the woman being coy seemed to be a constant in the animal kingdom.

The author says that what creates the imbalance is the fact that men can reproduce hundreds of times a year while can't reproduce more often than once a year.
For a woman hence it makes sense to stop pursuing sex once she's impregnated while for a man that time never comes.

Since a woman can reproduce less often and has to invest heavily in one single reproduction, it makes sense for her to be very selective when it comes to quality.

Women indeed are more about quality than quantity.

Advertising Fitness

Since unusually fit males tend to reproduce unusually fit offspring, men tend to advertise their fitness to women.

There's a bit of an arms race because males have an interest in appearing better than they are and women have an interest in being able to spot false advertising.

Rape

Robert Wright goes into the very thorny subject of rape.

He says that women "choose" men even when they don't consciously want. Resisting rape ends up being such a choosing device because women will be able to resist weaker men but not stronger men.

Chapter 3: Men and Women

Robert Wright says that human men and women are naturally born to form bonds with one another.

In every culture marriage, whether monogamous or polygamous is the norm.

Human fathers everywhere feel love for their children, which makes human males high in MPI.

Male Parental Investment

MPI stands for Male Paternal Investment.

It's a measure of how much males in a certain specie invest in their offspring. Investing means sticking around, protecting, providing food, and teaching.

In humans, men are relatively high in MPI, albeit not nearly as high as women.

Robert Wright says one plausible explanation of why men started investing more and more has to do with us walking upright.
Walking upright means females have narrower hips and human babies are born very early.
Infants tend to be very vulnerable for long periods of time and severely limit the mother's ability to gather food.

Men helping the offspring grow allowed more children to reach adulthood and have offspring on their own, thus spreading the high MPI trait.

High MPI = Gold Diggers

The title is purely mine :).

What high MPI means is that suddenly women are not just interested in male fitness, but since he will stick around to help, they are also interested in his resources to help grow the offspring.

Women care more about men about the financial prospects of their mates. However, Robert Wright says, since our ancestors were not able to hoard riches as it happens today, women might be more attracted to social status, which translated into power.
It meant the ability to get more food after a big kill.

Also in today's societies anyway status, wealth, and power often go hand in hand and make a very attractive package for females.

Ambition and industry are also very appreciated characteristics as they raise the odds that status, power, and wealth will come in the (near) future.

My Note:
this is more true for younger men though. Older ones are better off with some wealth.

Affection and Tokens of Affection

Women in high MPI species care very much that their partners will stick around after sex and conception.

That's one of the reasons why "tokens of affection" such as flowers and gifts are particularly appreciated by women because they serve as a sign of the willingness of the male to invest.

It makes sense for women to care about affection because, albeit men are high in MPI, **it can make genetic sense for a man to impregnate a woman and not care for the kid.**

The kid could survive anyway and the mother could still be able to attract resources from some other men who will take care of the kid -whether or not he knows that's not his baby-.

In a low MPI species impregnating and moving on is fair because the female could not get any investment anyway.
It is an exploitative technique among species high in MPI such as ours because the woman COULD get resources from men.

But a man running away after having impregnated her makes it much more difficult for her to obtain those resources.

Affection Arms Race: Love Duping

Another arms race then can happen with men faking devotion and long-term investment and women having to filter through the fake devotion.

So there's a possible tendency for men to fake and inflate their willingness to commit.

However blatant lying in our ancestors' environments could be dangerous as it would ruin a man's reputation or lead to vengeance from the woman's family.

Robert Wright says that natural selection might have developed love to induce men to *believe* they will stick around longer than they actually will.

The Modern Casanovas

Robert Wright says that the lifestyle of some men to have sex and drop women without investing is not a real sexual strategy in our ancestor environment because it simply wasn't possible back then.

But that's what happens when you put men with their tendency of having multiple sexual partners into anonymous cities filled with potential sexual partners and contraceptive technology.

Also, read:

- The Psychology of Womanizers

Female Rivalries

Robert Wright explains how females in low MPIs species have no rivalries because men can simply impregnate them all and move along -and he'll happily oblige-.

But in species high in MPIs men and their resources can become scarce resource.

Albeit competition is not as high as among men for women, scarce resourceful men still lead women to rival one another to catch the best men out there.

Selectively Selective

In high MPI species, both men and women want partners who are "above average".

However, since for men a mixed strategy of high MPI and "impregnate and run" can make sense, they have a double standard.

Men tend to be selectively selective indeed: they are very selective for women with whom they want to stick around and much much laxer with women they just want to have sex with.

Female Beauty VS Male Beauty

As women have reasons to care about resources, men have reasons to care about the ability of women to produce offspring, which is highly related to age.

That's why probably men care more about physical attractiveness than women do. Men also tend to be attracted to traits such as large eyes and small noses, which are both related to age.

Threats to Genes: Fidelity and Emotional Attachment

What threatens the future of one's own genes is different in females than it is in males.

Infidelity is very dangerous for males in high MPIs because they might end up investing heavily in offspring which are not their own.

On the other hand, for a woman, it's dangerous if a man not just sleeps with another woman, but gets emotionally attached to that woman.

Why?

Because that could mean he might divert resources away from her and her children to the new woman and her children.

Indeed men are much more jealous and careful about sexual fidelity and women tend to be more concerned about emotional attachments.

It's still painful for women to be sexually cheated, but Robert Wright says that the result is often a self-improvement campaign: losing weight, better clothes, etc.
Men instead can often have trouble staying in a relationship after sexual infidelity.

Why Would a Woman Cheat

If a woman cheating would enrage her partner and threaten a break-up, why would she do it?

Robert Wright says there are many possible answers.

- Resource extraction
- Seeds of confusion
- Best of both worlds

For example, she might be able to extract resources from several men by carrying sexual favors.

Also, multiple sexual partners mean that more men could believe in being the father of a child -or at least having a chance to be and could invest in them, even in case of the death of the woman's partner, which in some cases could have had dire consequences.

Some speculate that women in the human species hide their ovulation periods as a way to help them seed confusion.

A man would not be able to know for sure when she's ovulating and he would not be able to guard her 24/7, thus allowing her to seed confusion and get the best of both worlds.

Women indeed are more likely to cheat during their ovulation period, suggesting they are after the genes.

There's also evidence women do cheat, with different statistics showing how a relatively high number of children are fathered not by their biological fathers.

Most interesting is the "best of both worlds" theory. Robert Wright says that a woman in a high MPI species seeks two things: great genes and investment.

Those could come from the same man, but could also not.

So she could find a man who is willing to invest in her and stay beside her while she gets the good genes from a more promiscuous, more brainy, or more brawny man.

Also, read:

- Why do people cheat
- What are emotional affairs and how they happen
- How to find a loyal partner

Testicles and Promiscuity

Testes size compared to body weight can shed some light on the promiscuity level of females within a species. Bigger tests produce more sperm and pay off when women sleep around because it gives males a higher chance of being the father of the children.

Testes' size then becomes a record of the female's sexual escapes during the ages.
Humans fall between chimpanzees -very promiscuous- and gorillas -more stable-.

The quantity of semen a man produces depends not only on the last time he had sex but also depends heavily on how long her female mate has been out of sight.

Also, read:

- Sex at Dawn

Cuckoldry Arms Race: The Madonna Whore Dichotomy

Another arms race then exists between men and women when it comes to infidelity.

A man would be well served in spotting infidelity and a woman would be well served in leading him to believe she's only faithful to him.

And this is where the Madonna Whore Dichotomy makes sense. If women differ in the level of promiscuity, it makes sense for a man to be able to identify which women are more likely to cheat.

So a man could think that if a woman shows too much sexual eagerness early on, sleep with her but doesn't keep her because she's not trustworthy.

If on the other hand, she's slow and coy, she makes for a good wife because she's not likely to stray and cheat (and let him raise another man's kid).

The speed at which a woman sleeps with a man then can become a big indicator a man uses in deciding whether to stick with her or not.
And women sexily dressed are more attractive as short-term mates than long-term ones.

And as much as that could pain some feminists or liberal women, Robert Wright says that the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy is common in every culture.

Also, read:

- Should she let him wait for sex?
- How to delay sex

Madonna-Whore Pay Offs

The Madonna-Whore Dichotomy is a continuum of course.

But some theories say some women will pursue a strategy of “sexy son strategy”, such as they will mate with sexy or brainy or particularly attractive men and risk losing that parental investment compared to if they had been more Madonna-ish.

But they will gain with the likelihood the children will be like the father and also eventually be sexually successful in spreading their genes.

Robert Wright says these theories are interesting, but they don’t have to be “cast in stone”.
The brain is more malleable and the strategies pay off better when they can be abandoned.

Frequency-Dependent Selection

Theoretically, two opposite traits will not be kept for long because if one is more conducive to proliferation, it should, with time, take over the whole population.

So why are there still behavior and appearances that some women adopt to seem more Madonnas or more Whores?

It’s because of frequency-dependent selection.

Frequency-dependent selection says that one strategy will make sense against another strategy as long as there’s an equilibrium.

Robert Wright uses the example of a fish, but to stay with the Madonna Whore Dichotomy, if all women were whores, the strategy would not pay off anymore. If all were Madonnas, it wouldn’t pay off either.

To keep existing and make genetic sense, they both need each other.

My Note:
this is often, indeed, a strategy.
Most women, including many of the ones more open about their sexuality, tend to hide their sexual fantasies and drives to cheat. But all women, be madonnas or whores, are at the end of very similar to each other.
That's why you're very well served usually by letting women know you "understand them" you know there's nothing wrong with their fantasies and that you will not "punish" them by labeling them whores are most men do. See how to do it a bit in my text flirting guide.

Adapting Mating Strategies

Pretty girls tend to marry up while women who have lots of sex early on tend not to marry.

Robert Wright says that it's possible that getting early feedback about their beauty and ability to secure a resourceful mate might influence women's strategies.

The prettier one might go for a more Madonna-ish strategy while the less pretty ones might realize they can't be choosy and go for a wider multitude of men.

Women might also adjust depending on how likely the male mates around are to stick around and invest, and they will change their strategy depending on the circumstances.

So women with too many men around or men who are not willing or not able to commit might pursue a more whore-ish, sexually aggressive mating strategy, only to shift again if the situation around changes.
This is why women in poorer areas tend to be unwed mothers more often: there's a scarcity of men willing or able to invest.

Similarly, for boys, high self-esteem and good looks are correlated to a higher sexual partner count. A "stud" will go for a shorter-term sexual strategy without providing investment.

Men with lower self-esteem and lesser looks might instead go for a provider strategy, promising and delivering on future investment and support.

And women, when they don't expect the relationship to last, place higher importance on looks, suggesting that they are trading off the investment for good genes.

Also, a study showed how rapists tend to lack confidence in themselves in both sexual and non-sexual areas, suggesting they resort to rape when they can't see themselves able to find a willing mate.

Edit: not true
David Buss summarizes the latest evidence in "When Men Behave Badly" says that, overall, the theory of the"mate deprivation hypothesis" is likely false.

Chapter 4: The Marriage Market

Robert Wright says that the breakup costs after the marriage have been consumed tend to be heavier on the woman's side.

It's easier for the man to find a younger woman than for the woman to find a man.

The man's dissatisfaction with the marriage is indeed the leading cause of divorce.

In this chapter, Robert Wright makes the case that polygamy is better for women.

It's easy to discount polygamy for more attractive women who can get a good man all for themselves, but the author says polygamy is simply better at distributing wealth and giving more women a shot at securing resources.

It would make for a more dangerous society though as single men left without a mate would more easily drift off towards crime.

Monogamy is best for men because it gives them a chance with women who would otherwise move up the social scale becoming the women of wealthier men.

My Note:
Robert Wright oversimplifies it here.
Monogamy is best for average men.
But top high-quality men who can get many women are better off with polygamy of course.

Our current monogamy is not monogamy anymore though, Wright says, but it's serial monogamy. Serial monogamy, though, is basically polygamy because few men monopolize long stretches of the best reproductive years of women.

Chapter 5: Darwin's Marriage

Robert Wright talks here about Darwin's life and his marriage.

He says it's strange that Darwin, as a rich and high-status man, would marry an older woman.

But he says that the rich+high status = young and beautiful is a bit of a crude equation. Intelligence, compatibility, and the selection of a wife also based on her abilities as a future mother, also have weight.

He says that as could be expected of Victorian England, Darwin pushed toward an early marriage while she was

more willing to put it off.

After the marriage she was blissful.
But the author says it's not equally obvious Darwin would be as well after consummation finally happened.

Chapter 6: The Darwin Plan for Marital Bliss

Robert Wright says that lifelong devotion is not natural. Not for women and even less so for men, so it requires an act of will.

Some great help in keeping Darwin's marriage strong were:

- Far from the city and young women's distractions
- Many children
- No pictures back then

The invention of photos and the proliferation of pictures and videos of young women can make men feel like the environment is more abundant in women than it actually is, and push them into a shorter-term, no-investment strategy.

Robert Wright says that males' sexual fantasies tend to be more visual while women's fantasies often entail tender touching and similar indicators of future investment.

My Note:
well, this doesn't necessarily mean that women don't have rougher fantasies as well.

Divorce is Good for Men

Robert Wright says feminists welcomed divorce as a great conquest, but that divorce is "better" for men than for women.

Men are more likely to be able to find a younger woman, especially if they're well off, but a woman in her 40s, especially if with children, will be hard-pressed in finding a new man.

PART TWO: SOCIAL CEMENT

Chapter 7: Family

Robert Wright says the only thing natural selection cares about is the survival of the specie and the passing on of our genes.

If we suffer in the process, or if we die, doesn't matter.

Altruism -and even death to save kin- makes sense because our kin shares part of our genes.

If we look at different species, we see that the bigger the share of genes they share from common descent, the higher the altruism.

Since brothers don't share 100% of their genes, there's always a sort of war of resources going on.
Parents as well can easily display preferences by giving more resources to those offspring that better seem able to reproduce.

Family Standing and Offspring Preferences

Poor families have a preference for pretty females compared to handsome males because they are more likely to marry up, and hence secure more resources for their offspring.

Poor families can prefer females in any case because it's easier for them to reproduce, while a malnourished male will hardly produce any offspring.

In wealthier families, all things being equal, it's the men who have more status because they can produce scores of offspring.

Robert Wright says this sounds all too Machiavellian to be true, but for a Darwinian, Machiavellian actually adds credibility.

And if that weren't enough, the daughter provides some chilling proof for this all.

Feelings, not Logic: Why You're Not Consciously Aware

Robert Wright says we are not aware of any of these tendencies going on.

Why not?

Because natural selection provided us with feelings to guide us through, not rationality.

We just feel closer to the daughter if we're in a poor family and we have no idea why.
Even brothers of poorer families tend to worry more about their sisters than their other brothers, the author says, and of course they have no clue as to why.

Chapter 8: Darwin and the Savages

In chapter 8 of *The Moral Animal* Robert Wright talks about groups and the differences among cultures.

He says that the rules can change from culture to culture, but adhering to them and the feelings of disobeying them are innate.

Group selection theories all have a common problem: it's hard to see how a group trait could ever exist without first existing at an individual level.

Chapter 9: Friends

Robert Wright here tackles the important question of altruism.

How can altruism make sense?

He says it's because human relationships are a Non-Zero Sumness.

Non-Zero Sumness

Imagine for example you have just finished your dinner and you're almost totally full.

But your neighbor is starving. That last dish will not do you as much good to you as it will do to your neighbor.

If you ate it, it would help you, from 0 to 10, 2. But if you give it to your neighbor, it will help him 9 out of 10. Now your neighbor is majorly indebted to you so that if in the future you need something, chances are you can count on him.

Because of the Non-Zero Sumness property, both parties can benefit from altruism.

Corollaries of Helping

One corollary is that we will be better off helping people in desperate situations.

And that's why we feel worse when we see someone in a very poor situation: so that it will be more likely we will help them and we will be able to cash in on bigger IOUs (Trivers, 1971).

The second corollary is that we are not really helping out to help out, but we are mostly interested in *looking* like we are helping, which is equally effective and costs us no resources.

Tit For Tat

Robert Wright discusses a test with software where different parties were programmed with different strategies.

The most successful was Tit For Tat, which would give the first time, then remember what the other did, and react the next time -give if the other gave, defect if the other had defected-.

In the long run, the *selectively collaborative approach* won out.
To read more on exchange theories in human behavior, read *The Social Exchange Theory*.

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

How did Altruism Start?

Robert Wright says it's hard to see how any altruist behavior could emerge in the tough environment we developed for most of our time.

He says a good theory is that it started as kin altruism and then spread with people who started being selectively altruistic with other selective altruists -such as altruists with other altruists and not altruists with those who never gave back-.

As the software Tit for Tat showed, that's a mutually beneficial strategy that with time won over.

My Note:
Tit for tat developed over time to include other strategies that even better explain human behavior.
For more, check out "The Origins of Virtue".

Indignation and Fights

Robert Wright also talks about indignation and fighting.

He says how come some people would risk getting into a fight when they discover a small wrongdoing or act of cheating.
Partially it's because lots of cheating over a lifetime add up, so it could be worth the risk of "stopping" it right there and then with a major escalation.

However, another reason is because of the message it sends: that you are not to be trifled with without consequences.
That's why, ironically, many homicides happen in the presence of witnesses: because, from an evolutionary perspective, it's better to take the risk of a fight with people watching.

My Note:
indeed if you care about social power, it's most important you answer to affront when there are people around, as we have seen in the case of an Alpha Male Handshake.

Guilt and Knowledge

We are more likely to feel guilty if we can get caught.

So that we can ideally come clean before we get caught. We are also more likely to feel guilty if we get caught, not if we get away with it.

Collective Behaviors

A neat way of punishing bad people and promoting good ones is to spread the word about their deeds.

This is the reason for grievances: spreading the words of someone who cheated us will ruin his reputation.

As much as we can have an interest to punish who wronged us, we can also have a tendency to simply attack our enemies to diminish their public standing while we cover up our wrongdoing and try to look morally superior.

Chapter 10: Darwin's Conscience

Robert Wright says we all want to be seen as doing what others say is good.

What others say is good changes all the time though, and that's why conscience is so malleable.

Moral guidance is a misnomer, then.
Our parents actually guide us towards a moral compass that makes sense for the environment we are in, teaching us when to cheat, and lie and when we should look like whatever society is rewarding at our time.

The author says we have machinery for a helpful Tit For Tat, but we also have machinery for *more cynical* and egoistic behavior.

The problem with that?

In a more and more anonymous society with more and more fleeting encounters, the cynical machinery might be more and more rewarding.

PART THREE: SOCIAL STRIFE

Chapter 11: Darwin's Delay

This chapter of *The Moral Animal* is mostly about Darwin's life.

Chapter 12: Social Status

Robert Wright says that in most groups a pecking order arises from an initial one of chaos.

The pecking order is advantageous for most individuals in the group.

For example, if chicken A beats chicken B most of the time, it makes no sense for chicken B to continually go against chicken A and he's better served by deferring and obeying the pecking order.

No Inborn Social Status

Robert Wright says that there's no inborn gene for a leader or alpha status.

The serotonin equips the winner and the leader once he got there or when he's ready to fight for the position, he wasn't born with it (to read more on serotonin, read *Leaders Eat Last*).

People with low self-esteem are more likely to cheat and people low in serotonin are also more likely to commit impulsive crimes, suggesting that cheating is an evolutionary response to being relegated to the bottom of the pile.

My Note:
Watch out not to over-generalize here.
As Baumeister explains in "Evil", it's people with high self-esteem who commit violence.

Lust for Power

Since *alpha male status* warrants access to most females and the lowest statuses often preclude female access, it's a natural male tendency to be lustful for power.

Social Status in Primates

Social status in humans and primates is less rigid and obvious than in chickens.

It changes more often and it's more dependent on a web of friends and support than on pure physical strength.

After fights primates, as well as humans, often go through a ritual of reconciliation.
Beginning a reconciliation can be not easy because it carries costs. It can easily be read as an act of submission and as a loss of social status.

That's why many human males sometimes don't like asking for guidance, even in trivial things such as asking for directions as that would mean to admit the "superiority" of another man, albeit in a very circumstantial situation.

The array of activities and professions that can give status in human cultures is wide and entails many, many different types of skills and knowledge.

Chapter 13: Deception and Self Deception

Robert Wright says people present themselves in what's in their genetic interest to look like.

The author says we are not the only dishonest specie, but we're probably the most dishonest. If nothing else, because we do the most talking.

My Note:
talking is indeed the easiest to "fake". To better spot how to read people, learn some body language, for example with Joe Navarro and The Definitive Book of Body Language.

The author says in small groups which could have been our ancestor hunter-gatherers societies, it made genetic sense to downplay the abilities of others, especially those of the same age and sex as ours which represented the biggest threat to our mating options.

The funny thing is that since the best way to deceive others is to actually believe the lie, we often tend to self-deceive ourselves first (read *Predictably Irrational* for more info on the irrationality of our brain).

For example, we tend to believe other's success is because of luck and we tend to believe our success is purely because of talent and skills.

Give Credit to Non-Competitors

Interestingly enough, Darwin gave plenty of credit to smaller researchers who could never take his crown or share the stage with him.

But doesn't mention the people who actually influenced him the most. And even writes disparagingly of the man who might have given him the biggest contribution to the theory of natural selection.

It's because those people who influenced him the most were bigger guns and more at risk of making him look less smart, less independent, and less revolutionary.

Self Deprecation

Why does self-deprecation exist at all when self-advertising is so ingrained within us?

Well, to begin with, Robert Wright says humility gives us more credibility when we will eventually later on *brag or boast.*

In other instances, it can be beneficial for example when we want to step aside in a challenge and show deference to a superior. That's how low self-esteem can also sometimes be helpful in avoiding fights.

Also, I found it very enlightening when Wright says it's especially useful for women at times to show deference to a man or to make him feel better when, say, he comes back all deflated from work and she provides with her self-deprecating attitude a paragon with which he can regain some confidence.

Also, read:

- Vulnerability is not power

The Strategy of Conflict

Robert Wright quotes Thomas Shelling for some psychology on bargaining and the game of chicken.

Shelling says the trick is to be the first to convince the other party of your rigidness so that he will be the first to consent.

My Note:
there's some element of truth here, but it's equally easy to piss off the other party and make the deal fall through. Cialdini in his seminal book Influence explains how the most successful deals happen when people give concessions because a concession begets a concession.

Brain is a Machine to Convince The World – and the Owner

Robert Wright says that the brain is a machine to convince the world that the owner of that brain is in the right.

And often the best way to *manipulate others* is through self-manipulation first.

Chapter 14: Darwin's Triumph

Robert Wright says how people were willing to defend the validity of blatantly wrong statements when the people around them did the same.

Similarly, people quickly changed their opinion depending on who the audience was.

Robert Wright also tells us how another scientist, Wallace, had theorized something very similar to the natural theory of evolution.

Had he sent the paper to a journal or to anyone else but Darwin, he could have probably been remembered today as the first man to theorize the theory of natural evolution.
But he sent it to Darwin instead…

PART FOUR: MORAL OF THE STORY

This part goes into morals a bit deeper.

Albeit it's certainly important, especially when talking about such a thorny subject as evolution and human nature, I find it less applicable and I invite you to get the book for the full story on morals.

Chapter 15: Darwinian (and Freudian) Cynicism

Robert Wright says that, albeit most think Freud "relegated" human rationality to a thin slice of our brain functioning, the Darwinian theory is actually much more upsetting from that point of view.

There isn't a "rational" part in our brain as the rational and the subconscious are both parts of the same drive.
And we are not interested in reality or understanding but only in surviving and passing our genes on.

Chapter 16: Evolutionary Ethics

In chapter 16 of *The Moral Animal* Robert Wright talks about Darwin's ethics and moral point of view and expands on those with his own theories.

The author says we are prone to be indignant to groups of people whose interest conflict with the interests of the group we belong to. Unluckily, we also tend to be very tolerant of high-status people and very intolerant of low-status people.

In a nutshell, morality was designed by natural evolution to be employed selfishly.
However, we can distance ourselves from our tendencies long enough to see them and recognize them, says Wright.

Chapter 17: Blaming the Victim

If we are simply reacting to our environment and obeying inner drives ingrained in us by millions of years of evolution… Then we should call free will into question.

And we gotta wonder: can we ever be made "guilty" of our actions, if there's no real free will?

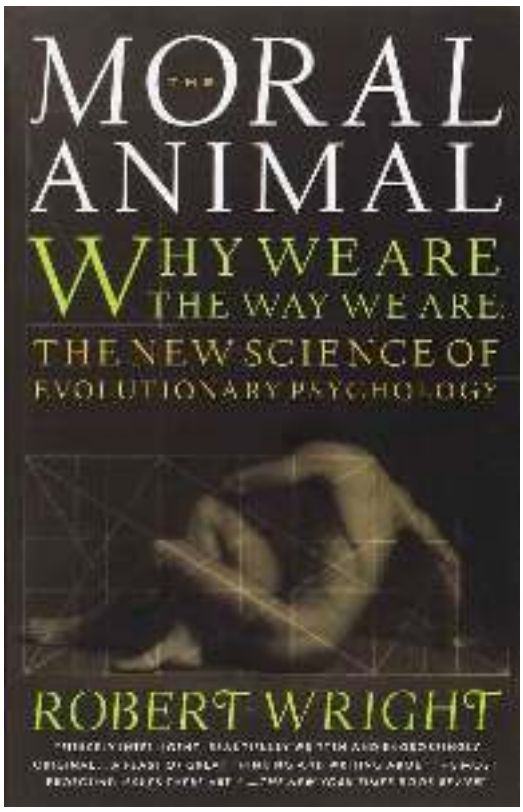
Well, the question never really touches the "punishment", which should be there at least to prevent anyone to do further harm.
However, it should take into account why we do what we did so that the punishment can more easily lead the guilty back into a productive role in society.

Righteously, the author says, the truth becomes what we say is the truth.
So if we say that sleeping around is natural, then we condone that behavior and likely will see it increasing.

David Eagleman also talks well about this topic in his book on the limitation of the human mind, which I invite you to check out here: Incognito by David Eagleman.

Chapter 18: Darwin Gets Religion

Robert Wright talks about Darwin's religion in the last chapter of *The Moral Animal.*



CONS

- **Should better state what's a hypothesis and what's more empirically sound**

At times it feels like the author is talking as if everything was proven beyond doubt, but he doesn't always back it up with studies.
Almost everything he says just makes a lot of sense, but maybe he could have been a bit more specific about what's been "proven" and what's a bit more speculative.

- **Some years have passed since 1994**

It's been a while now, and much new research has emerged.

Review

For several years during my student time I considered *"The Moral Animal"* the N.1 mandatory reading to understand human nature.[image]

I agree with almost everything in "*The Moral Animal"* and even with the fact that we are an "own interest maximizing machine".

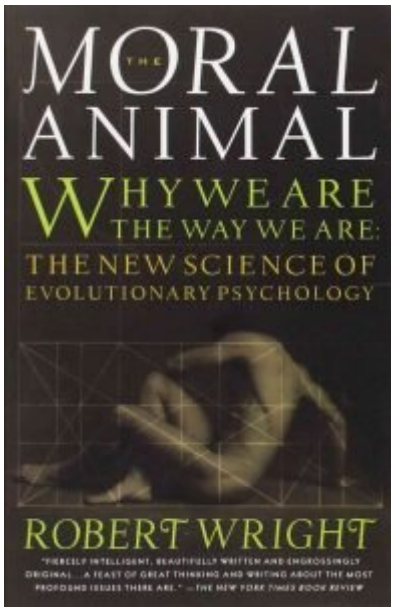
However, I disagree with the message of supreme selfishness that the book seems to advance at times.
For example, in *Man's Search for Meaning* Viktor Frankl says that man is the species that built the gas chambers, but also the species that walked upright in them and gave his last piece of bread to another human being.

That being said, if you are not familiar with evolutionary psychology, do yourself a favor and start learning the basics.
There's no understanding of men, women, and humans without understanding the basic tenets of evolutionary psychology.

Get the Book on Amazon or:

- **Check the best evolutionary psychology books**

The Moral Animal Summary & Review (Robert Wright)



You absolutely MUST read at least one major book on Evolutionary Psychology. The Moral Animal is one of the best around

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-moral-animal/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

The Selfish Gene: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"The Selfish Gene" explains evolution by looking at single genes as the basic units that are ultimately responsible for the selection process, and for driving our behavior.

Contents

- 3 Sentence Summary
- The Selfish Gene – Summary
  - Selfish Gene – Meaning
  - Selfish Genes Make For Selfish Human Beings
  - Inclusive Fitness & Altruism
  - Battle of the Sexes
  - Kins Battles Among Each Other
  - Groups Are Equally Selfish
  - Nice Guys Finish First
  - Humans Often "Disobey" Genes
  - Bigger Than Our Genes
- Criticism
  - The Original Premise of Selfishness Was Wrong
- Review

3 Sentence Summary

- Our genes don't care about us
- We all have tendencies to maximize our benefits
- We can consciously decide to override our genes' programming

The Selfish Gene – Summary

About The Author:
Richard Dawkin is an ethologist and evolutionary psychologist and has been a professor at Oxford for many years.

Note:
I read *"The Selfish Gene"* in my younger twenties, and while it remains a seminal book, I haven't re-read it because I consider more recent evolutionary psychology books to be more encompassing and updated.
[image]

Selfish Gene – Meaning

A gene is not selfish because only a sentient being can be selfish.

Richard Dawkins wants to express instead that natural selection does not care how the genes are passed along, but only that they will.

And the more likely it is that a gene will be passed along, the more likely it is that a certain trait that the gene gives birth to, will spread and eventually become common to a whole population.

If the animal or person carrying that gene will suffer or die in the process, again, natural selection does not care. Natural evolution can actually at times select behavior that is harmful to the organism as long as the organism passes its genes on.

Selfish Genes Make For Selfish Human Beings

Dawkins does present a view of very selfish human beings though.

He says human beings are selfish with a semblance of altruism.

The more selfish we can be while at the same time appearing the most altruist, the more benefits we can reap from the people around us while we are actually doing our own interests.

Dawkins says that any other being around us, especially if of the same species, can be an enemy in the struggle for survival and passing on genes.

Inclusive Fitness & Altruism

Richard Dawkins popularized the concept of W. D. Hamilton.

That concept is that an individual does not simply want to maximize the number of children, but wants to maximize the spreading of his genes, which is not exactly the same thing.

For example, caring for a brother makes genetic sense because his children will share 1/4 of our genes.

The book doesn't talk about it, but by extension, we share at least some genes and similarities with every other human being on the planet, so theoretically we tend to prefer to rescue a human being instead of an animal.

Battle of the Sexes

Richard Dawkins says that, from a genetic point of view, there's much between a wife and a husband that can be divisive.

For example, while both want the good of their children, one could easily gain by investing less than the partner so as to have more to invest in other possible children.

There's always a constant "arms race" where both genders, men especially, are trying to look better than what they actually are to lure a partner and the partner needs to be able to discern false advertising from the truth.
Women also have a tendency to try to look less sexual for men so that men will want to marry and invest in them (we talk a bit about how men can disarm this tendency in *text flirting for men*).

Kins Battles Among Each Other

Dawkins says that a parent's interest is to see as many of her children survive.

However, in some dire situations, she might sacrifice a son/daughter who's too weak to increase the chances of survival of the other children.

Children also present a strategy in which they try to maximize the Parental Investment all for themselves.

Groups Are Equally Selfish

Dawkins says that even when we form groups we display an apparent unselfish behavior, but it developed in the first place only because it helps spread the genes of each single individual.

Groups make genetic sense because we live in a non-zero-sum world: we can all profit from cooperation.

Nice Guys Finish First

Dawkins presents the famous Prisoner's Dilemma and how the simplest strategy to play the game won them all.

The strategy is called Tit for Tat always gives first, never "cheats" first but always retaliates when cheated. Tit for That drove away cheating behavior until everyone cooperated.

For more on "tit for tat" check out *"The Moral Animal"* and "*The Origins of Virtue*".

Humans Often "Disobey" Genes

Humans are far more complex and have built civilizations that often "disobey" genes.

Contraceptives and the use of porn instead of copulation are such an example.

Also, many elements of culture do not always seem to have a direct connection with natural selection.

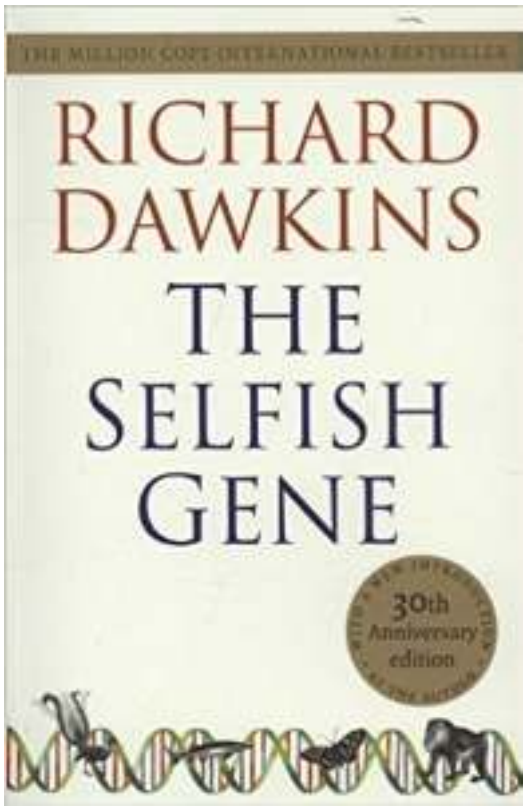
Bigger Than Our Genes

Importantly, Richard Dawkins says, we evolved a neo-cortex and a brain, which allows us to step back, understand what our genes want and decide if we want to resist.

We all love sugar, for example, because of natural evolution, but we can force ourselves to eat less when we see it's not actually helping our organism anymore.

Or we can consciously decide not to have children.

> Let us understand what our own selfish genes are up to, because we may then at least have the chance to upset their designs, something that no other species has ever aspired to do



Criticism

The Original Premise of Selfishness Was Wrong

The Selfish Gene, both in its original version and its title, may lead people astray.

It's true that 'the selfish gene' operates under simple 'whatever replicates me best' rules.
However, it doesn't mean that the resulting behavior of the animal must necessarily be selfish. Instead, contrary to the title, the best interest of the animal, including humans, is often to cooperate.

This isn't a wishful thinking opinion, but it's the results of successive decades of theories and empirical evidence.

I quote Krebs from *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior*:

> As brilliant and renowned as Richard Dawkins is, he reached the wrong conclusion about the evolution of morality, primarily because he conflated genetic selfishness, which pertains to the selection of genes, with biological and psychological forms of selfishness (a mistake that Dawkins corrected in revisions of his books). In a nutshell, behaving in biologically and psychologically altruistic and moral ways can increase fitness, and behaving in biologically and psychologically selfish and immoral ways can diminish fitness (Krebs, 2011).

So if you want to read *The Selfish Gene*, make sure you get the latest version.

Review

The Selfish Gene is a seminal text of evolutionary psychology.

It reframed evolution from the gene's perspective, showing how genes drive behavior to maximize their replication.

However, its original version also mistakenly overextended the "selfishness" metaphor to human behavior, and downplayed the role of gorup and cultural selection.

My crazy coincidence story with this book

I have an interesting story connected to *The Selfish Gene*.

Not long after I finished reading the book, I went to Facebook to check if there were any pages for it or (back then I had just opened the account a few days prior).

There wasn't any group, but I saw a person with that name. It was a girl.
I left it at that.

Years later, I was living in Prague and was out at a nightclub.
A girl approached me and we started talking. Wanna guess who she was? Yep, it was Selfish Gene.

I wish I could share a happy ending story and tell you she was nice and all. But here's a hint for you: if a woman represents herself with a marker of self-aborption, maybe she isn't the kindest and most supportive woman :)

Get the Book on Amazon

Protected: The Psychology of Avoiding Traffic Tickets (Step-by-Step Guide)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

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The Brain That Changes Itself: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Brain That Changes Itself explains the properties of the brain that allow it to change through a phenomenon called “neuroplasticity” -and what that means to us as the “owners”-.

TPM Takeaway: The power of knowing you can change and improve at a neurological level
The Brain That Changes Itself shows that the brain is not fixed but remains malleable throughout life. While many of its cases are extraordinary, they demonstrate what is neurologically possible and support the broader principle of neuroplasticity.
For our readers, the strategic takeaway is that beliefs, habits, and skills are not static. They can be unlearned and rebuilt at any age, making deliberate learning and practice a valid approach for increasing competence and, ultimately, personal power.

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Main Takeaways

- Our brain constantly changes -and you can use it-
- The critical period of growth in childhood can shape our lives
- Habits shape us as much as genes do -and more than choices-

Notes

About the Author:
Norman Doidge is a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Though not a neuroscientist himself, he does a great job reviewing the science of brain plasticity, while weaving in the more extraordinary success stories for ‘storytelling effect’.

Preface

Norman Doidge says that *The Brain That Changes Itself* is a collection of stories of scientists, doctors, and patients who discovered and proved that the changes over time, and can change with self-directed effort.

The brain's property of changing itself has been referred to as "neuroplasticity".

While empowering, neuroplasticity also allows for the development of paranoia or habits that are not in people's best interests. And that's one more reason to learn and understand brain plasticity.

2: Building a Better Brain

Chapter two of The Brain That Changes Itself tells the story of a woman who had been labeled as retarded and how she taught herself to be "normal" instead.

She showed that children with learning disabilities can go beyond compensation and correct the underlying issues instead.

My Note:
the story points to the power of grit and hunger for succeeding. The woman didn't just "study", she was up all night and worked super hard on her learning skills. First, she designed her own tests, then applied herself to them tirelessly.

3: Redesigning the Brain

Norman Doidge talks at length here about another hero of neuroplasticity: Merzenich.

Merzenich has made the most ambitious claims of them all when it comes to neuroplasticity: that brain exercises are as useful as drugs even when treating severe diseases and that our brain is plastic from birth to death.

Rewiring: What It Means

When we talk about "rewiring" we are talking about the connection between neurons.

Neurons are separated by a space called a synapse. Electrical signals travel from neuron to neuron through the synapse.

Rewiring occurs between neurons, at the synapse level.
A rewired group of neurons strengthen their connections at the synapse level.

Critical Periods

Norman Doidge also introduces here the concept of the critical period, such as that brain development goes through periods in which it is especially plastic and sensitive to change.

Language, for example, has a critical period between eight years and puberty. After this period has passed, it's hard not to have an accent when learning a new language.

The difference in plasticity between the critical period and adult plasticity then, says Merzenich, is that during the critical period, simple exposition is enough to change our brain maps because the brain is always in learning mode. In adults it's different: **in adults paying close attention and effort are what allow for plasticity**.

The Brain That Changes Itself also says this makes sense from a biological perspective because children cannot possibly know what's important.

How To Learn Effectively

Merzenich proved that human brains are plastic even in adult age, and that experience changes the brain.

Specifically, when neurons get trained through repetition, they become more efficient and can fire faster, and faster firing also means faster reaction and faster thought in general.

Also very importantly, when we want to remember something well, it's important we hear it or read it well, because our memory can only be as clear as the first impression. And it's important, to learn well, to pay close attention.

Brain Maps Competition

There's no precise definition of a "brain map".

But I would personally define it as

> A part of the brain, or a cluster of neurons, allocated to a certain task or to interpret a set of impulses (read brain mapping on Wikipedia).

An important trait of the brain is that if one area is not used for a certain task other areas, with their own maps, will "take over" that area to put that computational power to use, so to speak.

This is very important because it has major consequences for our everyday life. It means for example that when we stop exercising a mental skill the brain turns that space over to something else that we are instead actively practicing.

This also explains why it's so hard to learn a new language past a certain age, says Norman Doidge.
It's not just because the critical period for language learning has ended, but also because the more we use our native tongue, the more it comes to dominate our linguistic map space, thus leaving little space for a new entry.

Similarly, it's very important for our habits.
Learning a new habit is not just about learning a new one, but also getting rid of the old ones, because that old bad habit has now taken over a brain map and leaves little space for the new one.

So you first have to "unlearn" that old one, and that's why early childhood education is so important because it's much better to get it right early before the bad habits take hold.

My note:
it's important though to notice that you can change the bad habits.
Tony Robbins talks a lot about it.

Future Possibilities and Keeping Smart

Norman Doidge then puts a chip on every geek's shoulder talking about the possibilities of future human engineering.

It's possible for example, in theory and also in practice when tested on rats, to re-open critical period plasticity also in adults via external stimulation and drugs.

It's also possible to slow, stop, or inverse aging decline.
Aging decline happens in good part because the processing speed and the accuracy go down.
The future is full of opportunities… But before any breakthrough, you can simply exercise.

> Neurons that fire together wire together

4: Acquiring Tastes and Loves

Norman Doidge says that human beings have the biggest degree of sexual variety and plasticity in the animal kingdom.

That plasticity and variety also mean that our sexuality is not hardwired, but is altered by our psychology and experience.

The plasticity of this man's sexual taste exaggerates a general truth: that the human libido is not a hardwired, invariable biological urge, but can be curiously fickle, easily altered by our psychology and the history of our sexual encounters.

It could have been interesting when Norman Doidge says that sexual plasticity seems higher in those who have had many partners and in those couples who stayed together for a long time but fails to dig deeper and provide any sort of proof.

Love: It's The Ensemble of All Attributes

Falling in love brings about huge changes in our brains.

Especially when people commit to each other, they need to alter their existing lives as well, which is why, for many, love feels like a loss of identity.

The author says that we do not fall with looks alone but with a host of attributes, including the ability of that other person to make us feel good.

Once in love, highly pleasurable emotional states are triggered that can make us fall in love even with the defects of our partners, which made me think of 500 days of Summer.

A tolerance to love is what makes people eventually fall out of love, and couples can keep their "highs high" with novelty in their relationship.

Unlearning, Oxytocin & Love

Norman Doidge says that oxytocin reinforces bonding in mammals and triggers trust.

Contrary to dopamine, which triggers sexual arousal and excites us, oxytocin makes us calmer and warmer.

Oxytocin though also allows us to unlearn by melting down existing neuronal connections, as it's been proposed by Freeman.
Oxytocin is released when falling in love and when preparing to parent so that people can unlearn previous selfishier behavior and make space for the new partner and new baby.

Unlearning and changing at such a deep state also helps explain why so many people who fall in love with *manipulative persons* often end up being puppets and takes them years to recover.

Early Experiences Play Big Roles

The author says that, albeit there are exceptions, research shows that Freud was right.

And early childhood problems can get "wired" in our brains and repeat in adult life.
Especially important for sexual development are critical periods.

Pornography is Addictive

Norman Doidge goes on a long tirade against pornography.

He says pornography is addictive for its dopamine release and has negative repercussions for couples.

People who get hooked often require kinkier and kinkier stuff or are more and more violent and cannot get horny anymore with their partner without fantasizing about pornographic scripts.

Sex, Violence, and Overlapping Maps

The author speaks at length about a patient he had.

The patient had a childhood where violence was common and her mom also had sexual encounters with him.

He ended up mixing sex with violence and the two maps for sex and violence overlapped with each other.
Merzenich calls two overlapping mental maps that are supposed to be separated “mental traps”.

Doidge was able to disassociate the two maps by pointing out the difference between the two every time they came up in conversation, helping him see the difference and that he was capable of untangling sex from violence.

Sexual sadism is similar in that the two maps of sexual and aggressive are fused together.

5: Stroke Victims Learn to Move and Speak Again

For a long time, it was believed that there was little that patients could do to recover after a stroke.

Of course, given our brain plasticity, that was quite wrong.

Norman Doidge introduces Thaub and his research with monkeys.
Basically, monkeys who had had their arm deafferented -ie.: cutting the motor nerve- were not using their arms anymore, which is what everyone expected.

But Thaub had a genius idea: maybe the monkey was not able to use their arms because when they tried a few times it didn’t work, And so learned that it was futile to try again and simply gave up.

They still had the other arm they could use.

However, when both arms were deafferented they eventually started moving them again because they never stopped trying: they needed to use them.

> **You don’t get what you want – You get what you need**

Thaub began treating people with strokes even long after they had stopped normal rehabilitation, and many showed large improvements even when their stroke happened more than 4 years before.

One of the main tenets of Thaub’s treatment was “massed practice”, such as concentrating on a huge amount of exercise in just a couple of weeks.

We can learn different tasks even when there was a lesion because most of our brain’s operators are not specific.
A few are -like the one for colors-, but many are generic, so that our motor skills or computational skills, for example, can be taken care of in whichever part of the brain.

6: Breaking OCD Habits

Norman Doidge talks about OCD, obsessions, and neurosis here.

From a neuroplasticity point of view, a patient who indulges his worry by checking and re-checking that everything is OK only strengthens his fears and worries because he keeps firing those neurons over and over, making the neural connection more and more efficient.
Worry begets worry, says Doidge.

The author talks about Schwartz and his research to cure OCD.
Schwartz proposes that the patient, as soon as the worry comes up, should tell himself that the problem is not whatever he is worried about, but the OCD episode.
This will help him get some distance from his own brain’s chemical reactions. It can also help them to think they are helping themselves carve new positive pathways when they don’t give in to their compulsions. The struggle is

not to make the feeling go away, but not to give in.

The next step is that the patient focuses instead on a new, pleasurable activity.
The idea makes sense because instead of firing the worry neural connection, it grows a new brain connection. Because of the use or lose it principle, the more the patient does it the more the new connection gets stronger and the weaker and weaker the worry connection gets.

The patient does not really “break” the old pattern, but replaces it.

Because the patient should think about a pleasurable activity, he also gets rewarded with a dopamine release, which helps grow the new neuronal connection.

7: Pain, The Dark Side of Plasticity

Norman Doidge explains here that plasticity is a property.

As a property, it can be good, or used in good ways, or it can be negative or used for negative purposes.

The author then introduces Ramachandran and the phenomenon of phantom limbs, such as patients who lose a limb, but feel like the limb is still there. Sometimes the original pain that led to losing the limb can also be “locked in”.

While pain has often been seen as the transmission of information from a part of the body to the brain, Ramachandran says instead that pain is a more complex system obeying the brain’s plasticity properties.
He says that “pain is an opinion of the organism’s state of health”.

Ramachandran managed to help people with phantom limbs by basically “tricking” the brain.
He managed to finally allow an amputee to scratch his arm by scratching a part of his face because the brain maps of his face and arm had overlapped in the patient’s brain.

And he managed to cure other people’s pain with a mirror, tricking the brain to believe the arm was still there so that the patient could “move it” until the pain went away.

The whole idea also led to a simple revolution: providing pain-killer before the surgery even started allows patients not to have their pain “locked in” in their brain after the surgery was completed.

8: Imagination – How Thinking Makes It So

Norman Doidge introduces Pascual-Leone’s research and talks about the neuroplasticity of learning.

Brain scans of students during the whole week showed that on Friday the brain maps had a dramatic expansion, only to return to normal size on Monday.
Friday maps continued to grow for six months, but always returned to normal on Monday.

Monday maps were the opposite instead: they only started changing after six months and then increased slowly and stopped growing at the ten-month mark.

Pascual-Leone believes that on Friday the scans show the brain strengthening existing neural connections and “looking” for buried ones. The longer-term Monday changes instead represent the new neural connection being formed.

The two different speeds also help us understand a phenomenon we can all be familiar with: some people learn quicker and seem better at a new skill only to be overcome later on by those who stay at the skill longer and build longer-term skills.

And this is why it’s bad to prepare hard for a test a few days in advance: we cram all the information but we forget it because it’s not long-term learning.

To learn long term we need to stay at a skill for longer.

Mental Practice

Interesting was also the research of Pascual-Leone on “mental training”.

People training mentally on a skill were almost as good as people who actually trained physically in that skill.

Even when it came to physical tasks, people actually doing the physical task increased muscular mass by 30% and people just thinking about physical exercise increased their muscles by 22%.

The “trick” is that doing and thinking about doing aren’t that different after all for our bodies. Both start as electrical impulses in our brain which then send signals to our muscles.

Experiments have already proven how people with electrodes in their brains could move objects connected to those electrodes, allowing us to imagine a future where paralyzed people can move objects around them.

Our brain is not disconnected from our body. Every thought leaves a trace by altering the shape of the brain itself.

Plasticity, Brain & Identity

The author poignantly asks: if the brain is so malleable, how come we don’t change continuously?

Pascual-Leone uses a great analogy: imagine your brain on a hill covered in snow.
The slope, snow consistency, and terrain beneath the slope are our genes, a given. Albeit the slope is partly given, we can steer the sled to choose a path.

Here’s the interesting part though: sliding down the slope with a sled, we carve a few pathways.
The more we keep using those paths, the more we strengthen and the more we increase our chances of using them again. Those are our habits, which can be good habits or bad ones.

As Thaub showed with his research on OCD, to develop a new pathway, you have to block the other already existing ones.

However, Doidge later explains, we can also shape our genes.

Not all our genes are expressed, so when we learn we also affect which genes are utilized, which in turn shape our brain’s anatomy.

10: Rejuvenation and Preserving Our Brains

How do we preserve brain functions?

Our brains, like all other organs, gradually decline. And yet it still goes under massive plastic reorganization.

Here are a few ways Norman Doidge fleshes out in the book:

- Change your surroundings
- Exercise (physically)
- Exercise (mentally)
- Eat healthily

Notes From Appendix

IQ and Recovery
In spite of some books that seemed to downplay the importance of IQ, IQ helps people with brain injury to recover well.

High IQ has been correlated to how well someone can recover from lost brain functions. It seems like having the

intelligence to spare allowed people to better restructure the brain.

Left Hemisphere and Special Abilities
Norman Doidge explains how our left hemisphere inhibits and suppresses the right hemisphere.

It's an interesting phenomenon that people with left hemisphere damage can sometimes develop extraordinary computational or memorizing skills.

The question is then why on earth should the left hemisphere limit our potential?

Well, it's simple and it's because our brain is limited: we don't need to remember everything as that would take away much-needed space in our brains.
Better to let go of the details and use that space for other activities.

Culture and Neuroplasticity
Culture does shape the brain.
It's the same for any other activity we are immersed in: it does shape our brains.
Culture is simply no exception and it's a two-way street: brain and genetics produce culture, but then culture also shapes the brain.

Humans VS Chimps
Doidge explains we share 98% of our DNA with chimpanzees.

What's different then?

Well, a key difference is in a gene determining how many neurons will be produced. Our neurons are the same as the ones in chimps, we just produce more.

Civilization VS Barbarian Instincts
Brain Doidge asks how it is possible for us to mix together our most violent instincts with our cognitive brain.

My Note:
I found the question doesn't make sense; one because the two are not opposite in any way, and two because it's been proven that altruistic tendencies make perfect sense from a genetic point of view as well.

Freud said civilization rests on our ability to inhibit our lower urges, but sometimes we can go overboard with it and crease neurosis.
However, Freud doesn't explain how we inhibit those violent and aggressive tendencies.

Doidge instead suggests that our base tendencies from our older, instinctual brain part, can be attached, thanks to neuroplasticity, to a host of different activities, including our more civilized, cognitive-cerebral ones.

For example, the rush we get in trapping an enemy's king on the chessboard is the same as we would have gotten in trapping an animal one million years ago. This process is called "sublimation".

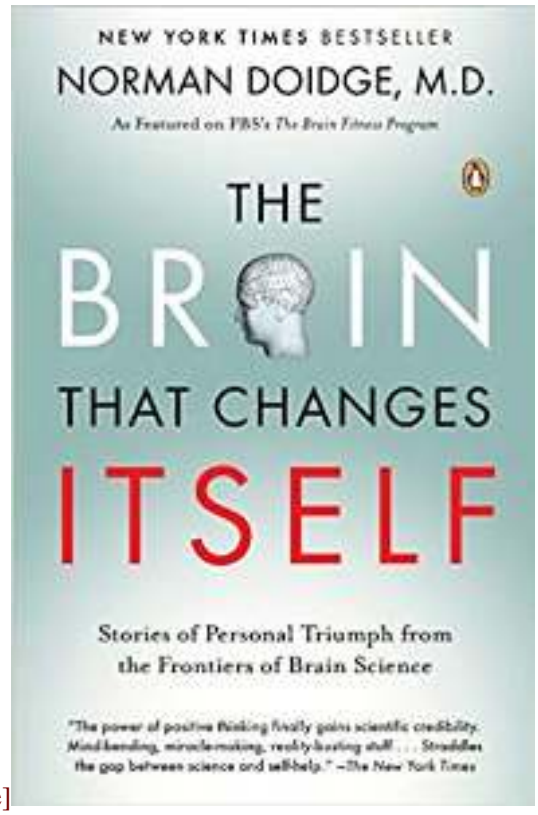
Civilization, says Doidge in one of the best moments of the whole book, is a tenuous affair that must be taught in each generation.

> **Civilization is a tenuous affair we must constantly teach and care for**

TV & ADD
There seems to be a link between how much TV children have been exposed to and the likelihood of developing attention deficit disorder.

Modern media such as TV, movies, and soap operas make constant use of cuts, zoom, and sudden noises that, genetically, attract our attention. However, they do so in an unnatural way because we haven't evolved for constant, continuous attention-grabbing.

The price to pay could be difficulty concentrating and staying on a task for a long time.
Which, I would add, is a key to success at pretty much anything.

[image] 

Practical Application

-Change your habits:

1. Resist the urge to obey negative habits
2. Immediately switch to a positive thought
3. Replace the negative habit with a positive one
4. Keep repeating and with time you'll rid of the bad habit

-Ditch TV and limit Movies

-Stay At Skills For Long
We learn in bursts, but if you don't stay at the skill those bursts will quickly fade away. You have to repeat the exposure to grow new neural connections

-What You Don't Use You Lose
Connections and activities you don't use for a long time, you lose. Which is great for your bad habits. But keep the good ones going if you want to keep them for long

CONS

- **Many personal opinions**

Sometimes the author proposes his own conclusions and his own theories -or other people's theories- which haven't been proved.
I appreciate a good theory that makes sense, even though they haven't been proven yet, but there were quite a few here.

- **Plasticity is real, but it's also limited: the limits were missing**

I found that Doidge does not discuss the limits of plasticity enough.

Review

The Brain That Changes Itself is a good starting book to understand brain development and plasticity over time.

And, as you learn about how the brain works, you can also pick up a few good strategies and mindsets for self-development.

Check our **best books for top-1% men**.

Principles: Summary, Review, & Criticism (Ray Dalio)

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

In Principles (2017) Bridgewater founder Ray Dalio shares how he developed and institutionalized the best asset of his multi-billion-dollar investment firm: its culture.
The principles are the lessons Dalio learned along the way and, allegedly, codified into his business systems.

Contents

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  - #1. Embrace Reality and Deal With It
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  - #14. Do What You Set Out to Do
  - #15. Use Tools and Protocols
  - #16. Don't Overlook Governance
  - Work Principles: Putting It All Together
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Principles Review

[image]Overview

- What's good for the whole is good. The whole takes precedence over the one
- Perfect meritocracy is the best system for decision-making. It requires:
  - Radical open-mindedness (know and accept reality and your limits)
  - Radical transparency (be frank and open about your and other people's assessments)
- You must always voice your criticism (or else the environment becomes toxic)
- Hire people with a thirst for making sense of the world
- Pain + Reflection = Progress

Notes

About the Author:
Raymond Thomas Dalio is an American hedge fund manager, author and philanthropist. He founded Bridgewater in 1975 in New York and led it to be one of the best-performing hedge funds in the world.

Ray Dalio has been on the receiving end of some critical investigative journalism.
The book *The Fund* paints a truly dark "behind the scenes" picture.
Before that, there was a highly critical article by the Wall Street Journal. *Read my analysis here*.

Also, see check out later our Machiavellian version of Principles:

- **Principles Machiavellian version**

> Principles Life & Work: Machiavelli's Version

Introduction

Ray Dalio says the first principles serve to find your own principles.

This is what you should do:

1. Think for yourself to first decide what you want
2. Find out what's true
3. What should you do to achieve what you want in light of what's true

You choose your principles and you can even accept someone else's principles if they help you attain your goals. But your principles must be authentic, meaning they should reflect your real character and values. And then you should live by them and walk the talk.

Ray Dalio says that the success he had is because of the principles he followed, and not because of anything unique about him. So anyone else following these principles can achieve the same level of success.

Principles' Levels

There are three level principles:
Higher-level principles are chapters; mid-level principles are designated by numbers and sub-level principles are designated by letters.
Please note I will not always write all sub-level principles.
However, for a complete understanding of Principles, I invite you to get the book.

Part I – Where I'm Coming From

My Note: I will be brief here because I'm not too interested in biographies.

Here are a few points. Ray Dalio:

- Fears mediocrity and boredom more than failure. Terrible is better than mediocre
- A "can't lose bet" he lost showed him it's always best to assume you're missing something
- Meaningful work and meaningful relationships are better than money
- Doesn't want paycheck collectors but people who wanted to make sense of things -as he wants-
- Bad times with good reflections provide the best lessons -and who are the real friends-
- The greatest success is having others do well without you
- There are far fewer types of people than people & far fewer types of situations than situations…
- .. Hence matching people and situations is key
- Happiness comes from struggling well

The key question is "how do I know I'm right". The best way to answer is with other independent thinkers while engaging in thoughtful disagreement.
Dalio realized the only way he could succeed was to:

1. Seek out the smartest people who disagree with him so he could understand their reasoning
2. Know when not to have an opinion
3. Develop tests and systematize time-universal principles
4. Balance risks in a way that keeps big upsides while capping downsides

Part II – Life Principle

#1. Embrace Reality and Deal With It

Ray Dalio looks at problems as games and puzzles he has to solve.

Any time he solves a problem he gets a token in the form of a principle which allows him to avoid the same problem in the future.

The more tokens he collects, the better decisions he makes and the more he advances in the game.

1.1: Be a Hyper Realist

Ray Dalio says he has become such a realist that he loves reality even when it's harsh.
On the other hand, he came to despise all impractical idealism.

Dream + Reality + Determination = Successful Life

People who drive progress understand the cause-effect relationship that governs reality and idealists who are not grounded in reality cause problems instead.

1.2: Proof is The Foundation of Good Outcomes

The author says that proof or an accurate understanding of reality constitutes the bedrock of any achievement.

Most people don't go for that though and fight reality when reality is not what they want to hear.

1.3: Be Radically Open Minded and Radically Transparent

We aren't born knowing what's true, we have to find out, says Ray Dalio. And the best way to do that is with radical

open-mindedness and radical transparency.

We learn with feedback loops from our actions and beliefs, and radical open-mindedness improves those feedback loops.

Radical transparency means facing the truth and speaking that truth freely. It can be difficult because it opens us up to criticism, but fearing criticism is tragic, says Dalio because you won't learn.
The more you do it, the more comfortable it will become.

Last but not least, radical truth and radical transparency allow for meaningful work and meaningful relationships.

1.4: Look To Nature to Learn How Reality Works

Ray Dalio says nature sets all the laws of reality.

It's clear Dalio has been deeply influenced by *evolutionary psychology* because he says that evolution is the greatest force of reality.

Most people, says the author, judge bad and good based on how it affects them. But nature optimized for the whole, not for the individual (similar to what Nassim Taleb says in Antifragile).

Other big insights into this principle:

- Don't get hung up on how things should be because you miss how they really are
- For something to be good, it must obey the laws of reality and contribute to evolution as a whole

1.5: Evolving is life's greatest accomplishment and reward

Getting better and evolving is simply instinctive and that's why we have an innate pull to it.
Radical open-mindedness will allow you to adapt to reality via trial and error.

And since nature and reality optimize for the whole and not for the individual (ie.: not for you), **contribute to the whole and you will probably be rewarded**.

Ray Dalio philosophizes here when he says we are unbelievably tiny and whatever we accomplish means nothing when seen from the universe.
And still, we want to matter and we want to matter to the people around us.

Which point of view do you choose and who do you choose to matter to and care for (family, country, world.. ?) It's your choice, and it will determine who you will be.

My Note:
Mark Manson says we can see death as a reason not to do anything or say there's no reason NOT to do anything (check The Art of Not Giving a Fu*k) and check my articles on how to leverage our *insignificance* and *mortality*

> **You are simultaneously everything and nothing. -Which one you choose?**

1.6: Understand Nature's Practical Lessons

It's evolution and progress itself that makes us happy and fulfilled rather than achieving the goal or material wealth. But to evolve remember that "no pain, no gain".

1.7: Pain + Reflection = Progress

Ray Dalio says there is no avoiding pain, especially when you're after ambitious goals.

Instead of trying to avoid it, you should develop a reflective reaction, which will make you develop much quicker. Reflection before the pain and during is best, but also afterward is helpful (plan around inflection points, says The

Power of Habit).

In any case, **you must run through the** pain **or it means you're not living to your full potential**.

- Embrace Tough Love

What Rai Dalio wants to give people around them is not what they want, which ultimately makes them weaker.
He wants to give them the strength to deal with reality to get what they want *by themselves*, which ultimately makes them strong and independent.

1.8: Weigh Second and Third-Order Consequences

Ray Dalio says that people who stop at the first high-level consequences get duped by nature and rarely achieve their goals.

Translated into normal parlance, this is a bit of a more obvious point, and it says that not exercising and eating sugar, for example, have great first-order consequences, but bad second and third consequences.

1.9: Own Your Outcomes

The author talks here about the internal and external locus of control.

Internal locus of control people think that they are in charge of their life and they are happier and outperform those who think that life is a crap shoot game they have no control on.

1.10: Look At The Machine From a Higher Level

Ray Dalio says it's helpful to look at yourself and the people around you from above and as if you were a machine.

It will help you to be more objective about where you stand and what you need to do.
Looking from above you'll be the designer and manager of your life looking at your worker self.

When you see a weakness from the above, you have four choices: deny them (unacceptable), accept them and work to address them (great), find ways around them (easy win), change what you're going after (great if you're not suited or don't enjoy your current path).

#2. The 5-Step Process to Get What You Want

1. Have clear goals
2. Identify and don't tolerate the problems standing between you and your goals
3. Diagnose problems to get to the root causes
4. Design plans to get around those problems
5. Do what's necessary to push those designs to completion

2.1 Have Clear Goals

- Prioritize because you can't have everything.
- Don't confuse goals with desires, but try to reconcile them to "follow your passions".
- Don't mistake the trappings of success for success (= don't go after the bling)
- Don't rule out goals because they seem attainable: great expectations create great capabilities
- Flexibility (accept what reality and mentors teach you) and self-accountability (holding yourself responsible) will get you there

2.2: Identify and Don't Tolerate Problems

Ray Dalio says most people are loath of bringing problems to the fore because it exposes their weaknesses, but successful people know that they have to.

2.3: Diagnose Problems to Get to the Root Cause

Ray Dalio says you should focus on the root cause of the problem really is before moving into solutions.

Fixing the root causes is important because the manifestations of that problem, which can be many and varied, will keep popping up.

2.4: Design a Plan

Design precedes doing.

2.5: Push-Through Completion

Great designers who don't execute their plans go nowhere.

Keep in mind your WHY when you're struggling, why you want to do what you're doing and it will help you stay focused and on track.

> **Good work habits are underrated**

2.6: Weaknesses Don't Matter If You Find Solutions

The author says everyone has at least one big thing standing in the way to success.
When you find them, go to the root cause, address it, and fix it. All the rest will come much easier.

If you can't overcome your biggest roadblocks, have the humility to understand and ask for other people's help and support.

2.7: Understand Your and Other People's Mental Maps and Humilities

Mental maps mean understanding yourself well, and humility means the open-mindedness to find beyond yourself what are the best things to do.

#3. Be Radically Open Minded

Ray Dalio says this is one of the most important chapters in the book because it addresses the two biggest weaknesses almost everyone has:

1. Your ego
2. Your blind spots

3.1: Recognize Your Two Barriers

The two main barriers are your ego and your blind spots.

- **Ego Barrier**

Our ego-protecting mechanisms make it hard for you to recognize and accept your mistakes and weaknesses.

Dalio talks about the high level (conscious) and low level (unconscious and emotional).
The high level is often fighting with the low-level amygdala.
For example, when someone disagrees and asks you to explain your point of view the low level you is getting angry and defensive, even if the higher level you know it's better to understand each other and come to a better solution.

But to be effective, **your need to find out what's true must be more important than your need to be right**.

- **Blind Spots**

We all have a preferred way of seeing the world which determines what we pick up on and what we miss.

For example, we can big picture or detail types of people or linear or lateral thinkers.

Most people never realize their mental blind spots. And their ego makes it harder for them to understand when someone shows it.

But realizing your mental blind spots is paramount to succeed at any kind of complex project (once you know fix them or get people who are strong where you're weak).

My Note:
To read more about the brain's limitations read Incognito and *Thinking Fast and Slow*.

3.2: Practice Radical Open-Mindedness

Ray Dalio says that radical open-mindedness is how you fix the ego barriers and blind spots. To be radically open-minded you must:

1. sincerely believe you might not know the best path
2. recognize your ability to deal with not knowing is more important than what you know

Dealing with not knowing means you ask equally knowledgeable and smart people. And don't worry if what they think is different and don't worry about looking smart and being right, worry about achieving your goal.

3.3: Appreciate The Art of Thoughtful Disagreement

Your goal is not to convince anyone that you're right, but to find out which view is true and how to act on it.

All people in thoughtful disagreement must be worried about missing some key information and talk with each other with the goal of putting all the pieces and perspectives together.

3.4: Triangulate Your View With Believable People Willing to Disagree

Ray Dalio proposes to individually talk to experts and encourage them to disagree with each other.

He basically creates a thoughtful disagreeing group that raises the chances of being right.

3.5: Recognize The Signs of Close and Open-Mindedness

Close-minded people:

- don't want their ideas challenged
- frustrated the other person disagrees
- feel bad about getting things wrong and are interested in being right.
- make statements instead of questions
- focus on being understood more than understanding
- say "I could be wrong but..", which is a semblance of open-mindedness while being defensive
- have problems holding two conflicting thoughts
- lack humility

Open-minded people:

- not angry when someone disagrees

- are conscious there's always the possibility they are wrong
- ask genuine questions
- feel compelled to see things from other's people's eyes
- listen attentively
- can go back and forth between conflicting thoughts

My Note:
Ray Dalio here is basically talking here about a fixed and growth mindset (check *my guide to developing a growth mindset*).

3.6: Understand How You Can Become Radically Open Minded

It will take time to become truly open-minded because it's a question of habit -18 months on average, Ray Dalio says-.

But you can become it and then anything else will become intolerable.
To practice open-mindedness:

- Use pain as a guide to reflection

Anger, irritability, and tensions are all signs that your low road is taking over.
Don't worry, it won't last long. Resist it and use it as a queue to go the opposite direction instead.

- Make Open-Mindedness a Habit

The more you practice, the more it becomes a habit and the more natural it will become.
Read more about changing habits from Tony Robbins and how habits work on the brain in *The Brain That Changes Itself*.

- Know Your Blind Spots

Record all the times you've taken bad decisions because it might be a trend. Ask others and you might be about to uncover a blind spot.

- Meditate
- Be Evidence-Based

Many people make choices based on what they like or on what their subconscious dictates. Use data and evidence instead.

- Help Those Around Be Openly Minded

Be calm and reasonable to help others prevent the fight or flight response (which is actually freezing, fight or flight, as per Joe Navarro).

#4. Understand People Are Wired Differently

Ray Dalio says hired plenty of book-smart people who excelled in top schools, but as often as not that didn't turn out well.

He finally understood that **the biggest differentiator was in personality**.

4.1: Power Comes From Knowing How We're Wired

Ray Dalio here passes the microphone to someone else -sorry don't remember the name- who says that we are born with attributes that usually have both positives and negatives.

4.2: Meaningful Work and Relationships are Genetic Predispositions

We crave meaningful relationships (Brene Brown saying that "connection" is why we are here)

4.3: Understand Brain Battles and How To Control Them

Principles here go deeper into the previous concept of high and low you.

The conscious mind is in a battle with the unconscious mind, and the biggest battle is between feelings -unconsciously governed by the amygdala- and thinking -the prefrontal cortex operating consciously-.

The people who guide their own personal evolution and achieve their goals reflect on their own amygdala hijacking and form good habits.

My Note:
God, I couldn't agree more with this one.
Learning our psychology to transcend it is one of the emantras of this website.
Also, read: *The Laws of Human Nature*, *Start Here,* and *The Best Books About Power*.

Good habits take on average around 18 months and if you keep up they will stick forever.
You don't want to fight the lower level you though, but treat it with kindness and respect, as if you'd teach a child.

4.4: Find Out How You And Others Are

The author says that self-assessment of ourselves and others tend to be very inaccurate and psychometric assessments are better.

At Bridgewater, they map employees on their personality traits and he talks about a few personality traits, which are:

- **Introverts /Extroverts**: introverts focus on the inner world and get energy from ideas and memories. Introverts prefer to share and communicate after they analyzed on their own, while extroverts can find it hard to work out ideas without someone (also read *"Quiet: The Power of Introverts*")
- **Intuitive / Sensing**: Intuitives focus on the context while sensing people focus on details
- **Thinking / Feeling**: some people make an analysis based on logic and others on harmony among people
- **Planning / Perceiving**: some prefer plans, others prefer the flexibility
- **Tasks / Goals**: goals-oriented are more visionary and task-oriented are more reliable and better at managing processes that don't change much
- **WPI**: Workplace Personality Inventory for example low achievement orientation and high concern for others are unwilling to step on people's toes to achieve their goals; someone bad at rule-following might be a more independent thinker
- Creators / Definers / Advancers / Executers / Flexors.

Archetypes
Dalio says that some traits often combine together to create archetypes we are all familiar with.

Albeit archetypes tend to be less useful and precise than the full assessments they can be useful when assembling teams: impractical artists, tidy perfectionists, crushers running through the wall to get things done, and visionary pulling ideas out of nowhere.

Shapers
Dalio adds a few archetypes, the most important of whom are the shapers with which he identifies himself.
The shaper is very rage and goes from visualization to actualization, he can hold different conflicting thoughts at the same time and he's a visionary + practical thinker + determined.

Also, check out this diagram on different personality types:

4.5: Right People in The Right Role is Key to Success

Using the traits above, you want to have the people with the best fitting traits for each task, and form teams with complementary traits.

#5. Learn How To Make Decisions Effectively

Ray Dalio says he has spent his life trying to make decisions effectively.

He has been looking for a way people can make decisions repeatedly with the same quality under the same circumstances, often using systems and computers.

5.1: Ban Harmful Emotions and Learn Before Deciding

Ray Dalio says that to make good decisions one must synthesize reality well and know how to navigate well.

5:2 Synthesize The Situation at Hand

Many things come at you and they all seem bigger during the present moment. That's why it's important to take a step back and realize what to pay and what not to pay attention to.

- One of the most important decisions you make is who you are asking questions to
- Everyone has an opinion, don't mistake opinion for facts, and don't believe everything you hear
- New is overvalued, great is better than new

5.3: Synthesize The Situation Through Time

Don't get duped by the fact that something is simply "improving".

Look how much it's improving and where it's starting from, or it might not be useful at all.

Everything important in your life needs to be above the bar and on a trajectory toward excellence.

- Remember the 80/20 rule and be an imperfectionist

5.4: Navigate Levels Effectively

Ray Dalio intends levels as the depth you are looking at any given topic.

The example is that of a map, are you at street level or at the country level?
Your decisions should make sense at all levels.

5.5: Logic, Reasons, and Common Sense Are Your Best Tool

Don't use anything else or you will be prey to your low level.
I loved the quote from Carl Jung:

> *Until you make your unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.*

5.6: Make Decisions as Expected Value Calculations

Be logical and take decisions based on the likelihood of being right, including expected rewards, and the likelihood of being wrong, including expected losses.

Sometimes though it makes sense to take a chance if it costs you nothing even when the odds are fully against you if the rewards of a win would be big.

- Knowing when not to be is as important as knowing what bets are worth making
- Best choices have more pros than cons, not zero cons. Beware of people arguing against something just because they can find something wrong with it without considering the upsides

5.7: Prioritize Based on The Cost of Getting More Information

You need to decide if the cost of waiting to make a decision to collect more information is greater than the risks of making a decision right there and then.

- Don't mistake possibilities for probabilities: everything is possible, and the likelihood of it happening is what matters

5.8: Simplify

Any damn fool can make it complex, it takes a genius to make it simple. You do it simple

5.9: Use Principles

Using well-thought-out principles is a great way to simplify and improve your decision-making.

All situations could look slightly different, but if you can look beyond the differences and identify "which one of those" it is, you will have systematized your decision-making.

5:10: Believability-Weigh Your Decision Making

Triangulate your decision-making with people with high believability scores.

The two mental blocks to overcome here are assessing who is more believable and not rating your own believability too high.

5:11: Convert Your Principles in Algorithms and Recruit a Computer

Computers are an integral part of the process of systematizing and automatizing decision-making.

5:12: Be Conscious of Trusting AI Without Understanding It

Computers have no common sense, so you must be aware of the pitfalls of automatized decision-making.

Life Principles: Putting It All Together

To have the best life possible you have to know what the best decisions are and have the courage to make them.
To acquire principles that work it's essential that you embrace reality and deal with it as it is.

Part III – Work Principle

Work principles might be much more important than individual ones, says Dalio.

Why?

Because the power of a group is so much greater than that of the individual.

For groups to function well the work principles have to be aligned with the members' life principles.
Not aligned on everything, but at least on the most important ones: the mission they're on and how to deal with each other.

- A great organization has both great people and great culture -and it's not easy getting them both right-
- Great people have both great character (radically truthful, radically transparent, and committed to the mission) and great capabilities (skills)
- Great cultures bring problems and disagreements to the surface and solve them well
- **Work Relationships & Tough Love**

Ray Dalio wanted the people working for him to be his partners more than his employees.

He says that treat partnerships come from sharing common values and interests, having a similar approach to pursuing them, and having consideration for each other.

At the same time, they must be willing to dish out tough love to push each other to greater levels. Too often people avoid facing the truth and put comfort ahead of success so they can stay safe in their social comfort zone.

Basically, the more care you give, the tougher you can be.

- **Believability-Weighed Meritocracy**

Ray Dalio says he wanted an environment where everyone has the right and the responsibility to make sense of things for himself and fight openly for his point of view.
Resolving those conflicts in a meritocratic system with a believability-weighed will outperform any other system.

A full meritocracy means:

- radical truth + radical transparency + believability-weighed decision-making.

Ray Dalio says that while some called Bridgewater a cult, it's the opposite, and critical thinking is the main differentiator (Peter Thiel doesn't go this deep in *Zero To One* when he suggests a start-up to be a cult).

- **Exceptions & Common Sense**

It's important to remember that all rules have exceptions and you should use your own judgment and common sense.
Your Principles are like your GPS, if your GPS is telling you to turn right when there's no road to the right, you can't simply blindly follow it.

TO GET THE CULTURE RIGHT...

#1. Trust Radical Truth and Radical Transparency

It takes time to adapt to radical truth and radical transparency.

But the critics say it's not natural to have it wrong because after 18 months people adapt to it.

Dalio says it's almost always best to shoot straight and be honest even when the news is not positive.

So when they were thinking about spinning off a division, most companies would have kept it secret to avoid employee dissatisfaction.
But in the name of honesty and radical transparency, they made it public instead and kept great relationships even when the team eventually spun off.

1.1: Realize You Have Nothing to Fear Saying The Truth

The truth is your best friend to improve and the best way to dispense love and make others improve.

1.2: Have Integrity and Demand it From Others

- Never say something you wouldn't say directly to them

Criticism is always welcome, but never beyond someone's back

- Don't let loyalty to people stand in the way of truth and the well-being of the organization

Personal loyalties and covering for someone's mistake stand in the way of improvement and encourages deception. It's an insidious form of corruption and undermines meritocracy.

Dalio says he believes in a healthier form of loyalty founded on exploring what's true

1.3: The Right to Understand and the Obligation to Speak Up

In a perfect meritocracy, openness is not just a privilege but a responsibility.

Discuss what you disagree on until you are in sync or until you decided what should be done.

About Lying:
Don't be *naive about lying*: people who lied once are more likely to do so again, but at the same time be practical, everybody has lied at least once, treat cases as appropriate

1.4: Be Radically Transparent

In the beginning, it will be difficult and it has drawbacks.

Since everything is in plain sight it might appear that a radically transparent organization has more problems, and it might be more prone to scandals because nothing gets swept under the rug.

But Ray Dalio says wisely: the only opinion that counts are those of your employees and your customers.

So being transparent is the way to go, especially with what's difficult to share, and keep the exceptions rare. Exceptions, of course, are private information and "enemies" of the organization.

1.5: Meaningful Relationships & Work Are Mutually Reinforcing

… Especially when underpinned by radical truth and radical transparency

#2. Cultivate Meaningful Work and Relationships

A meaningful relationship means that people care about each other and can have a great time together both inside and outside the organization.

Asked if the relationships in Bridgewater are more like a family or a team, Dalio answers that he wants the organization to be like a family business where members have to perform excellently or be cut.
He would do the same with a family member because he believes that's best for all.

My Note:
I must call BS on this one though.
He would not cut family members, I bet, and the "family lie" is a typical ***corporate manipulation***.

He says he approached benefits for employees not in the impersonal transaction way most companies do, but like a family business.
It doesn't mean he would give and give, quite the opposite. He was very generous with something while expecting them to take care of other things for themselves.

Dalio says the company behaved often like a family and many employees would do everything for the organization and they'd spend holidays often together.

It can happen that some employees don't want to spend time with the organization outside of work and it's totally OK to opt out.
However, the opt-out people are not the ones who provide the organization with the kind of commitment that is necessary for extraordinary performance over the long term.

2.1: Be Loyal To The Common Mission...

… And not to anyone operating inconsistently with it.

2.2: Be Crystal Clear on What The Deal Is

You must be clear on what the rules and values are -what's the qui pro quod, what's generous, what's fair… And that people understand the difference between the two -.

Dalio advises making sure people give more consideration to others than they demand themselves.

2.3: Size of The Organization Can be a Threat to Meaningful Relationships

When you grow past a certain point people don't know each other personally well anymore and sectarian tendencies might sprout.
Ideal meritocracy demands you do not allow factions.

2.4: Many Feign Organization Interest While Maximizing For Their Own

Don't be naive.

Strive for the maximum amount of people going for meaningful relationships while realizing there will be exceptions.

For example, most people will try to maximize the money they can get while minimizing the amount of work they need to do.
So be aware, for example, of lawyers' advice as they want to bill more hours.

2.5: Treasure Honorable People...

.. Who are capable and they will treat you well even when you're not looking.

#3. Create a Culture of Learning From Mistakes

Ray Dalio says you must create a culture where making mistakes is OK but it's not OK not learning from them.

Making a mistake is painful, but you shouldn't shield yourself from that pain because it's there to teach you a lesson.
It's not easy finding people with the correct mindset towards mistakes, partially because schools stress the importance of having the right answers.

I particularly loved when Ray Dalio says:

> If you cannot look back at yourself one year ago and don't think how stupid you were, you haven't learned much.

3.1: Mistakes Are a Natural Part of The Evolutionary Progress

Don't feel bad about mistakes, but love them because they're your milestones in evolutionary progress.

3.2: Don't Worry About Looking Good: Worry About Achieving Your Goals

Get over blame and credit and worry about accuracy and inaccurate.

3.3: Are Mistake Patterns the Products of Weaknesses?

Our weaknesses are often revealed in the pattern of mistakes we make. Observe and take note.

3.4: Remember to Reflect When Facing Pain

Stay in the pain and explore them so you can build the foundations for improvement. And do the same for others: teach and reinforce mistake-based learning.

Pain + Reflection = Progress

3.5: Know What Mistakes Are Acceptable and Unacceptable

Of course, in some areas and situations, it's not OK to make mistakes.

#4. Get and Stay in Sync

Ray Dalio says that since we're all wired differently alignment among people cannot be taken for granted.

Quarrels can happen because of misunderstandings and disagreements.
And to fix disagreements people must be open-minded and *assertive* at the same time.

For open-minded assertiveness in conversations check Difficult Conversations.

4.1: Conflicts Are Essential For Great Relationships

Because it helps people understand each other and clarify their disagreements.

4.2: Know How to Get In Sync And Disagree Well

It's essential to know where the final decision-making authority lies and it's never acceptable to get angry because the meritocracy doesn't produce the decision you wanted.

4.3: Be Open-Minded and Assertive At The Same Time

Ray Dalio says most people have problems in being both *assertive* and open-minded at the same time and that *being*

assertive comes easier because it's easier to see things the way you want to see them.

But getting in sync is a two-way street with both responsibilities: listening and speaking.
And last tip: don't waste time with close-minded people.

4.4: If It's Your Meeting to Run Manage The Conversation

Make clear who is directing the meeting and who is there to serve. The person who has a goal for that meeting is responsible for it.

I also liked the warning on *assertive* fast talkers: people who articulately speak faster than people can process as a way of pushing their agenda.

Don't be scared of appearing stupid in saying you didn't get it.

4.5: Great Collaboration Feels Like Playing Jazz

> 1+1=3
> 2+1=4.25

In a great team, the result is greater than the mere sum of its parts.
But up to a certain point.
Beyond 3 the marginal benefit diminishes and it might be counterproductive as

4.6: When You Have Alignment, Cherish It

Make sure you end up with people with your same core values.

4.7: If You Can't Reconcile, Consider If The Relationship Is Worth It

If you can't reconcile the core values chances are you'll drift with time, so you might want to do that sooner rather than later.

#5. Believability Weigh Your Decision Making

In most organizations decisions are made either autocratically from the man on top or democratically.

Both systems produce inferior decision-making.

The best decisions are made by ideal meritocracy with believability-weighed decision-making.
Believability-weighed means that the opinions of more capable decision-makers are weighed more than those of less believable decision-makers.

How to Weigh Opinions
The opinions are weighed based on whether people have repeatedly and successfully accomplished the thing in question and can demonstrate they can logically demonstrate the cause-effect relationships behind their conclusions.

5.1: You Must Understand The Merit of Each Person's Idea

But if you have never done something successfully don't think you can tell others how it should be done, especially if they've done it successfully.

5.2: Find The Most Believable People Possible and Understand Them

Ray Dalio says you must check the believability of people you triangulate with and pick the best ones.

How do you check for believability?

Usually, those who have done it at least 3 times and who have great explanations of the cause-effect relationships that led them to their conclusions-.

Sometimes inexperienced people can have great ideas too though and sometimes better than experienced ones as they don't have preconceived notions and experienced ones can get stuck in their own ways.

5.3: Think If You're Playing Student, Teacher or Peer

You should be upfront about how confident you are in your opinion, and you should be upfront if it's a suggestion, a conviction, or an opinion.

There's also a weigh in the exchange depending on your position. It's more important the student understand the teacher first than the other way around.

5.4: Understand How People Came By Their Opinions

Don't just listen to the opinion as that can get you confused.

Ask people why they think what they think instead and it will help you get to the truth.

And be skeptical of statements with "I think that… ". Even more skeptical of statements beginning with "I think that I… " as people are poor at self-assessment.

My Note: Watch out for fake confidence
I'm not sure about this advice since it plays straight into the hands of those who feign confidence.
In general, men also tend to sound more confident than they're competent, and women tend to use more "I think" structures.

5.5: Disagreeing Must Be Done Efficiently

Disagreeing must be done following a protocol.

The teacher role always speaks first then the students.

And agree on important things first, then move to the smaller things -if necessary at all-.

5.6: Make Sense of Important Things Is a Right & Responsibility

You don't need to make a judgment about everything and if not important and not your expertise let someone else decide and move on.

5.7: Pay More Attention To Fairness of System Than Getting Your Way

Don't worry about "winning" but whether or not the system is fair.

With a fair system, you will get your way when you're right and you will develop as a person to reach your full potential.

#6. Recognize How to Get Beyond Disagreement

In this chapter, Dalio digs deeper into working out disagreements.

6.1: Principles Can't Be Ignored By Mutual Agreement

If you don't like a principle you need to speak up to change the principle, not just do what you wanna do.

6.2: The Right to Debate is Not The Same as The Right To Make Decisions

Responsibilities and authorities are assigned to certain individuals based on their ability to handle them.

They are stress-tested both up and down the chain and debates are always encouraged.

But the final decision is still their responsibility (but if they go against believability-weighed opinion they make a strong statement that will influence their future scorecard).

6.3: Don't Leave Important Conflicts Unresolved

Important conflicts can undermine relationships and the decision-making process. Always address them.

6.4: Once The Decision Has Been Made Everyone Must Get Behind It

The decision might change in the future again and people must not pretend they agree with it if they don't, but they must get to work towards the success of the final goal.

6.5: If Meritocracy Comes Into Conflict With The Organization...

.. Declare martial law only in rare and extreme circumstances when the principles need to be suspended.

But be aware of people who agree to suspend the meritocracy for the good of the organization.
Often these people place what they want above those of the organization.

Get rid of these people.

Also, read:

- Toxic employees archetypes
- Political players

> 8 Types of Toxic Employees & How to Deal With Them

6.6: If People With Power Don't Obey The Principles, The System Will Fail

For that reason, you only can give power to those who value the principles more than their individual or factional interests.

TO GET PEOPLE RIGHT...

People can change the culture for better or for worse.

#7. Remember: WHO is More Important than WHAT

Who is taking the responsibility is more important than what should be done.

Ray Dalio sees his role as that of a conductor looking for the best players able to perform better than him. Ideally, he would find a conductor who would do a better job than himself.

As a conductor, you must:

1. Remember the Goal
2. Give the goal to those who can achieve it
3. Hold them accountable
4. If they can't achieve this after training and time, get rid of them

7.1: Choosing Responsible Parties Is Most Important Decision

The parties holding responsibility are the most important parties in the system.

7.2: Those Bearing The Consequences Are Ultimately Responsible

If you bear the responsibility for the failure you're the ultimate responsible party.

If you want to build a house and pick an architect, you're the one ultimately responsible as you will pay for mistakes.

So when you put someone in a position of responsibility make sure their interests are aligned with the final person bearing the consequences.
And make sure everyone has someone to report to.

7.3: Remember The Force Behind The Thing

Companies don't make decisions, people do. Change the people, and change how things develop.

#8. Hire Right

Ray Dalio says people hire people whom they like, which are basically people who are like themselves.

So he developed two ways to radically improve Bridgewater's hiring practices:

1. Be crystal clear on what type of person they were looking for and
2. Develop a way to assess people at a much more granular level

At a high level they're looking for people who think independently, argue open-mindedly and *assertively* and, most of all, value the intense pursuit of truth and excellence, improving themselves and the organization.

8.1: Match The Person to The Design

Don't design jobs to fit people but think about which values, abilities, and skills you need -in that order- and find a person that fits those.

Values are deep-seated beliefs that motivate people and determine people's compatibility with each other; abilities are ways of thinking and behaving (faster learners, big picture types, etc.); skills are learned tools -the easiest to chance-.
Since most people don't change much, especially in the short term, it's best to assume their values and abilities won't change at all.

Once you know who you're looking for, make your hiring systematic and scientific.

8.2: Different Personalities Make For Different Jobs

Ray Dalio is a big proponent of personality assessments, which he says are often more reliable than *interviews*.

He also has a top suggestion on how to use the human tendency of people to pick people who are like themselves: if you are looking for a visionary, have other visionaries *interview the candidate* as their positive opinion will give you a stronger clue.

8.3: Think of Your Team The Way Sports Fans Do

Nobody by itself has it all for success and everyone must excel.

8.4: Pay Attention to Track Records

Since people don't often really change that much, track records do matter.

But be wary of school track records: they will not tell you much in terms of the abilities you are looking for. School is best at measuring memory, processing speed, determination to succeed, and the ability to follow directions.
And you might not need those.

And check the references.

8.5: Hire People You Want to Share Your Life With

You want to hire for the long term, so don't just look at the ability to do the first job you are hiring them for, but hire based on long-term compatibility.
And:

- Look for candidates with lots of great questions

Great questions are a much better indicator of future success than great answers.

8.6: Provide Both Compensation and Opportunity With Salaries

Pay enough that people are not under financial stress.

Ray Dalio says to pay more than it's fair, but not so much that people become unmotivated fat cats.

Capturing all the intricacies of top performance is very hard, but you should try to put incentives loosely tied to

performance metrics.
And finally, I loved:

Focus more on making the pie bigger than on slicing the pieces

The very best negotiation is the one saying “you should take more”, “no you should take more”.

Also, read: *negotiation manipulations you should be aware of*.

8.7: Consideration and Generosity Are More Important Than Money

Some people respond to generosity and others respond more to money.

You want more of the first kind of people, and start with yourself: be generous first and expect the same from others.

8.8: Great People Are Hard to Find...

.. So make sure you know how to keep them. Encourage them to speak up and assign a mentor.

#9. Constantly Train, Test, Evaluate and Sort People

Ray Dalio says that both people and design must improve for the machine as a whole to improve.

It can be hard but if people can’t get up to the bar in an acceptable time frame, they must go.

Choose between keeping incapable and liked people and missing your goals or getting rid of them and achieving your goal.

At Bridgewater, you have no choice because you must choose excellence, which in the end is best for everyone.

9.1: You And The People You Manage Go Through an Evolution Process

Since people evolve, their careers cannot be planned from the outset.

Evolution is a natural consequence of discovering strengths and weaknesses and how to tackle them.

The best way to teach them is to let them fail and make mistakes.

9.2: Provide Constant Feedback

Assessments should not come as a surprise because they should be constant.

9.3: Evaluate Accurately, Not Kindly

It might not seem so at first blush, but at the end of the day, accurate and kind are the same thing.

You must be precise in assessing who has been responsible for what results and judge independently because people tend to inflate their own contributions.

9.4: Tough Love is The Hardest and Most Important Type of Love

It’s the most important because it’s so rare. Compliments are easy, tough love is not, but it’s the most useful.
No pain, no gain.

9.5: Don’t Hide Your Observations About People

But explore them openly.

Make and note all observations, but at the same time don’t overemphasize any single observation but look at trends.

9.6: Make Personal Evolution Open, Evolutionary and Iterative

The review must be done together with the person being reviewed and must be ongoing.
There can be an inherent struggle in open evaluations: the evaluated see themselves better and have an interest in appearing better.
Keep in mind that your only final goal is always the truth.

9.7: Know How People Operate Is More Important Than What They Did

Ray Dalio says that knowing how people operate and whether that way of operating will lead to good results is more important than knowing what they actually did.

In Bridgewater, they call it “paying more attention to the swing than to the shot”.

If someone is doing a job poorly pay attention if it’s because of a lack of learning, which can be fixed, or a lack of ability, which cannot be.

> Pay more attention to the swing than the shot

9.8: If You’re in Sync About Weaknesses It’s Probably True

If you are in sync with someone about their weaknesses, it’s because it’s probably true.

Ray Dalio says that people feel safer evaluating candidates for hire than colleagues. But anyone looking for the truth should see how that’s a mistake.

9.9: Train, Guardrail or Remove. Don’t Rehabilitate

Rehabilitation is an attempt to create changes in values and abilities, but since those are difficult to change, you’re better off removing incompatible people.

Including the people you love. The best way to “shoot the people you love”, says Dalio, is to love the people you shoot.
Do it with consideration and in a way that helps them.

Sometimes you can let people step back to another role after failing, but you have to be cautious about it. They could grow resentful and that position could go to someone better suited.

> **Love the people you shoot**

9.10: Transferring is to Benefit The Community

Both managers should agree a new role is the best highest use for someone.

If there’s no such role they should escalate to make a termination.

For continuity reasons, it’s always best to let people finish their tasks and goals before moving to a new position.

9.11: Don’t Lower The Bar

Ray Dalio says that at Bridgewater they cannot compromise on the fundamentals of their culture.

And if a person cannot operate within the requirements of excellence and radical truth and transparency in an acceptable time frame, he must go.

TO BUILD AND EVOLVE YOUR MACHINE...

Ray Dalio says that thinking of your organization as a machine has some important ramifications on how you behave.

#10. Manage And Operate a Goal-Achieving Machine

Anyone diagnosing problems must understand what the parts of the machine -the design of the people in it- are like and how they work together.

10.1: Look Down On Yourself And Your Machine From High Level

That macro-perspective of looking at yourself and the machine from afar will give you a better perspective and much better insight.

Always simultaneously try to accomplish the goal and evaluate the machine, people, and design as all outcomes are a reflection of how the machine is running.

10.2: Move Closer To Your Goals and Train/Test The Machine

Use any situation to move closer to your goals and to train and test the machine.

Training and testing your machine is even more important than moving closer to your goal because that's how you build a solid organization working well in all circumstances.

I particularly liked that Dalio suggests looking at everything as a case study and looking at it at two levels: the case level and what to do about it and the machine level (why that outcome was produced).

10.3: Managing, Micro-Managing & Non-Managing

Micromanaging is telling the people working for you what tasks to do or doing the task for them.

Not managing is letting them do their tasks without oversight or involvement.

Great managers orchestrate like conductors of an orchestra.

10.4: Your People Are The Most Important Resource: Know Them Well

Know how much confidence you can have from the people around you instead of assuming. And regularly take a temperature check of the most important people around you.

10.5: Assign Responsibilities Clearly

It made me chuckle when Dalio says people in organizations are often like children playing football and all running after the ball. Avoid that with clearly defined responsibilities.

10.6: Probe Deep and Hard to Learn What You Can Expect

Ray Dalio asks people reporting directly to him to take 10-15 minutes daily to write a report of what they did, their thoughts, and their problems.

He says that probing into problems allows you to get a feeling before those problems hit with full force.

It's also important to probe to a level beneath your direct reports and allow them to escalate problems to you because you can't fully know the person until you know how he behaves with his direct reports.

10.7: Think Like an Owner

.. And expect the people you work with to do the same. As Dalio said before, you don't experience the

consequences of your action, you'll take less ownership of them.
Thinking like an owner means that you are always responsible… Even when on vacation.

10.8: Recognize and Deal With Key Man Risk

Every key person should have one person who can replace him.

10.9: Don't Treat People The Same, Treat Them Appropriately

To treat people fairly and appropriately, you must treat them differently. But all are treated with the same set of rules.

Over the years, many threatened Dalio to quit, sue or spread bad press.
He says that while it seemed easier to "just let things go away" giving in to threats is short-sighted and communicates that the rules have changed. It only invites more of the same behavior.

He says he is willing to take the punch in the short term because he's worried about doing the right thing, not what people think.

> **Worry not about what people think, but about doing the right thing**

10.10: Great Leadership is Not What It's Made Out to Be

Dalio says he does not describe what he does as great leadership because he believes what most people think of leadership is ineffective.

The stereotypical leader is strong, and confident, and motivates others to follow him. The emphasis is on "follow".

He says that it's more important to have challengers than followers and you should be both weak and strong at the same time.
Asking questions is perceived as weak and indecisive, Dalio says, but it's not because it's a necessary step to becoming strong and decisive.

Don't Worry Whether People Like You
Some people will dislike you no matter what decision you take, says Dalio.

That's why you only have to worry about making the best decision possible.

If you are in a leadership position it's also plausible to believe your opinion weighs more than the average person's opinion.
If that weren't true then the average person should be in your position.

How To Lead
The best way to deal with your people is to encourage everyone to come up with their own ideas and let the meritocracy decide so openly and reasonably that everyone will recognize the valid merits of your thinking.

Once the decision has been taken in a meritocratic way, be happy whether your idea "won" or not as long as the best idea wins.

And don't give *orders to follow*, but strive to be understood, understand and get in sync.

10.11: Hold People Accountable...

… And appreciate them for holding you accountable.

Keep in mind you can't hold people accountable when there wasn't a clear agreement between you two, so always be clear.

10.12: Communicate The Plan Clearly and Have Clear Metrics

Once you decide on a plan, it's your responsibility to communicate it well and know how you will measure progress.

10.13: Escalate When You Can't Handle Responsibilities

Escalation is not a failure, but a responsibility

#11. Perceive and Don't Tolerate Problems

Most people have a tendency to celebrate wins and sweep problems under the carpet.

Those people have their priorities exactly backward.

11.1: If You're Worried, You Need to Worry...

.. And if you're worried, you don't need to worry.

This really made me smile. A favorite saying of mine has always been "the best way to be unsafe is to feel safe"

11.2: Your Machine Must Check if Things Are Good or Not

You have to make sure that people are not afraid to look for, investigate and report problems.

Dalio, for example, gives them independent reporting lines.

Without systems that make sure problems are brought to the surface, you cannot count on people to raise all the problems you need to hear about.

And be aware of group-think: the fact that nobody seems concerned doesn't mean nothing is wrong (also check the spiral of silence on Wikipedia)

11.3: Be Very Specific About Problems

Avoid "we" and "they", be specific about people.

11.4: Don't Be Afraid to Fix Difficult Problems

Sometimes people can be afraid to start tackling problems that seem too difficult to fix. But not fixing them is worse.

#12. Diagnose Problems to Get at Their Root Cause

Ray Dalio says that the most common issues when fixing a problem are:

1. not getting to the root cause
2. not connecting the problems to people
3. not connecting the problems to see patterns

12.1: Diagnose Well and Ask These Questions

- Is the outcome good or bad
- Who's responsible for the outcome
- Is the party responsible incapable or is the design bad?

12.2: Diagnose Continuously

Your system should keep diagnosing on an ongoing basis.

12.3: Diagnoses Should Produce Outcomes

Or at the very least lead to theories about root causes and clarify what information is needed to reach outcomes

12.4: Use Drill-Down Techniques

Step one is to list all the problems and identify the root causes. Ray Dalio uses the “5 whys technique” (5 whys on Wikipedia).

12.5: Diagnosis is Foundational to Progress and Quality Relationships

As you dig deep into problems, it’s also an opportunity to get to know people better and help them grow (and vice versa).

#13: Design Your Machine to Get Around Your Problems

Once you find out the problems, you have to design plans to solve them.

13.1: Build Your Machine

Instead of focusing on each task at hand, try to modify the machine in a way that you fix the issue at the operating system level.

It takes longer, but it will pay many times over.

13.2: Systematize Principles And How to Implement Them

Build your principles into habits and into the machine.

Ray Dalio, for example, puts all his thinking processes and principles into algorithms to systematize his decision-making.

13.3: A Good Plan Resembles a Movie Script

Try to visualize different plans and assess the second and third-order consequences they will bring about.

13.4: Between Now and Then There’s a Work-Through Period

Between a bad now and a good then you try different plans and designs

13.5: Build Organization Around Goals, Not Tasks

Build the organization around goals and organize departments and sub-departments around “gravitational pull”.

Hire and build from the top down.
You hire managers before hiring reports. The people overseeing others must have higher standards, and don’t just trust people to do their job well.

13.6: Create an Organizational Chart Like a Pyramid

The arrows should go down and don’t cross.

The whole organization should look like a series of pyramids but try to minimize layers to minimize hierarchy.

13.7: Create Guard Rails When Strictly Needed

Guard railing is to help good people perform better, not to prop up not good enough people.

An example of a good guard railing is siding people with other people who have key strengths they are lacking.

13.8: Keep Strategic Vision While Making Tactical Changes

Don't act like you don't have time for strategic issues because you're dealing with tactical ones.
Kicking the can down the road is the path to slaughter.

13.9: Have Good Controls to Fence Dishonesty

Do not assume that people will act in your interest rather than their own.

When faced with the choice of being fair or taking more for themselves most people will take more for themselves.

Dalio says that even a minimum of cheating is intolerable, so investigate and let people know you will investigate.

Dalio suggests using public hanging and shaming to deter bad behavior and make sure everyone sees that bad behavior does not pay.

13.10: Have Clear Reporting Lines for Responsibilities and Reporting Lines

Assign responsibilities based on workflow and abilities, not job titles.

Dalio also says he is always looking for leverage, and technology is a great way of doing so.

For example, designing FAQs and building manuals and training.

13.11: Virtually Everything Will Cost More and Take Longer

Virtually nothing goes according to the plans.
To get better estimates, Dalio usually multiplies the estimates by 1.5.

#14. Do What You Set Out to Do

Motivations of why people follow through differ says Ray Dalio.

And at the end of the day, most of the success comes from doing mundane and often distasteful stuff, like identifying problems and sticking through them for a long time.

My Note:
on the importance of long-term commitment for success, but also for the long-term growth of your passion, I warmly invite you to read Grit by Angela Duckworth).

14.1: Work For Goals You're Excited About

.. And think about how your tasks are connected to those goals.

14.2: Recognize Everyone Has Too Much To Do

What differentiates those who do a lot with the same amount of time is creativity, character, and wisdom.

Creativity leverages people, technology, or different work approaches. Characters help wrestle with the challenges. Wisdom looks at us as a machine from above to prioritize, redesign and make sensible choices.

If something bad hasn't happened yet, wait and it will. But it is what is, success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

14.3: Use Checklists

But don't confuse them with responsibilities.
Your task is doing your job well and achieving your goals, not crossing items off a list.

14.4: Allow Time For Rest and Renovation

Plan and schedule for rest.

14.5: Ring The Bell

Do celebrate when you achieve your goals.

#15. Use Tools and Protocols

Dalio says that even though most can see why these principles make sense, they won't be implemented because people agree or recognize it makes sense.

Tools and protocols are needed to shape those principles into habits.

15.1: System-Embedded Tools Are Especially Useful For Ideal Meritocracy

For an ideal meritocracy to operate the way Ray Dalio describes it, you need effective tools to collect all the data and convert it into decisions.

These tools allow people and systems to work with each other in a symbiotic way.

A good system will make the system fair and all decisions less arbitrary.

#16. Don't Overlook Governance

Governance is the oversight system that removes people or processes when they are not functioning well.

And all the principles will be useless without good governance.

Governance makes sure that the best interests of the whole are placed above those of the individuals.

16.1: To Be Successful All Organizations Need to Check And Balances

For an ideal meritocracy, governance must always be more powerful than any single individual.

Make sure nobody is more powerful than the system and that nobody is irreplaceable.

My Note:
As a website on sociology and Power Moves, I must note the divergence here.
Your interest as an individual is to be (almost) irreplaceable instead. But it also means you deliver outstanding work, which is great for the organization.

16.2: A Great CEO Is Not As Good As a Group of Great Leaders

In Bridgewater Dalio places several co-CEOs instead of just one. That's what's best for ideal meritocracy, he says.

16.3: Great Partnerships Still The Way To Go

All governance, check and balances, and principles will take you far unless you have great partnerships.

Such as capable people in positions of power who want to operate for the good of the community based on the agreed-upon principles.

Work Principles: Putting It All Together

Ray Dalio says we work together to accomplish three things:

1. more leverage to accomplish our goals
2. quality relationships

3. money that allows us to buy what we want for ourselves and others

Ray Dalio believes an ideal meritocracy is the best way to achieve all of them.
An ideal meritocracy requires you to do three things:

1. Put honest thoughts on the table for everyone to see
2. Have thoughtful disagreements to come up with the best answer possible
3. Obey the meritocratic ways of getting past disagreements (such as believability-weighed decision-making)

Real-Life Applications

This is how I would recommend you strive to apply Ray Dalio's principles:

Love Reality
Always look at reality. Love reality even when it's harsh.

Radical Open-Mindedness
Be open to accepting the feedback you receive on your current skill levels, action, and personality. Only by accepting the feedback from the real world as openly as you can, you'll be able to move forward as quickly as possible.

Radical Transparency
Foster relationships based on radical transparency. Accept and give feedback with full transparency and straightforwardness. Don't start business ventures with close-minded people who can't handle radical transparency.

My Note:
don't be radically transparent with everyone! Most people would get hurt and you'd make enemies out of them (read How to Win Friends for more).

Sit Through Pain… With A Pen
Painful experiences with reflection are the biggest growth opportunities. Don't shy away from pain. Sit through it and make your principles.

Believability-Weighted Decisions
Just genius. Pick the people with the most credibility and assign different weights to their opinions.

Duty Of Speaking Up
If you're building a company, make it a duty of every employee to speak up when unhappy or when they feel wronged. It will stop rumors and dissatisfaction from spreading behind people's backs.

> **Love Reality. Even when it hurts. Especially when it hurts.**

CONS

- **Sub-Principles Org-Chart Not Perfect**

Some sub-level principles did not fit well with their upper-level principles. They still made sense, but they would have been better under other higher-level principles.

- **Repetitive**

Some concepts repeated across different principles and a slight pruning would have made the book more digestible.

- **Some principles can trample individuals' rights**

The concept of “the whole is more important than the individual” is good for reaching a goal.

However, it can lead to treating the individual as disposable, especially in bigger corporations (something Sinek talks about in *Leader Eat Last*).

The idea of “loving the person you shoot” can be applied in many harsh ways, too.
Call me an ineffective romantic, but I like to think that bonding between individuals can matter as much as the whole.

Also, read: corporate manipulations.

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees (W/ Examples)

Principles Review

Principles is a great book that packs endless insights for self-development and empowered mindsets.

It’s one of the best books I have read about business, one of the best leadership books, and one of the top 3 best books I have read on how to shape company culture.

Keep in mind though that it’s a bit on the idealistic end.
In that sense, if you don’t add power dynamics and human nature, it may even be naive self-help.

So we recommend you also read *The Fund* and Machiavellian principles right after.

Get The Book on Amazon

4 Steps to Mastering Group Conversations

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Group conversations are daunting for beginners.

But worry not, like most other things in life, it can be learned.

By the end of this post, you will know what are the top mistakes and the golden rules of awesome group conversations.

good group conversation around a table

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- Group Conversation Example
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  - 1. Passes The Conversation Microphone
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Group Conversation: Example

Some days ago I was sitting in a cool bar having a beer and laughing along with the guys.

We were all having a great time.

Everyone was engaged, everyone was listening and everyone was ready to jump in with their opinions.

Of course, the fact that we were talking about women contributed to that group's engagement, but… That's no guarantee of great group conversation as we shall see.

Party Pooper Steals The Show

We will call the *socially awkward* fella "party pooper".

And as soon as Party Pooper barged into the conversation, the mood immediately soured.
Some nursed their beer, some looked away.. And everyone disengaged.

Party Pooper had effectively managed to bring the group from cohesive and engaged to removed and disjointed.

What had happened? How could the mood shift so quickly?

Let's see:

Group Conversation Example

I can't remember the conversation verbatim.

But this one below is a good close approximation:

> **…**
> **Guy Who Gets It**: *And what about Cristina, what do you guys think of Cristina*
> **Guy 2**: *Physically not my type, I like though how she's always kind and welcoming towards everyone*
> **Guy Who Gets It**: Yeah she *is awesome, but I understand if she's not your type. But what's your type then…*
> **Guy 2**: *blabla*
> **Guy Who Gets It**: *Oh got it, you're into X, I like that too, what do you think about Cristina, Guy 3*
> **Guy 3**: *I dig her man, nice body shape and the boobs, man, blablabla*
> **Guy Who Gets It**: *Damn those boobs (smiles). Guy 4 also appreciates her boobs (looks at Guy 4)*
> **Guy 4**: *I would blablabla*
> (Everyone laughs, ready to move on to some other topic / girl, when…)
> **Clueless Party Pooper**: *Oh yeah, about Cristina, I met this great guy at the conference in Rome, Paul. I was having a very deep conversation about her with Paul. We have a very good understanding, that guy is amazing, turned out both of us…*
> **Everyone**: *looking away*

Group Conversation: 3 Top Mistakes

You will notice that the Clueless Party Pooper makes a few mistakes all packed into one sentence.
Let's see which ones:

1. Beating a Dead Conversation Horse

The first conversation mistake is that he tries to bring back to life an already dead topic.

That's a mistake people sometimes do when they try to remember something but cannot.
Then they finally do and say it even though the conversation has moved on. When that happens to you, don't try to

remember anything: you're better off going with the flow instead.

But it wouldn't have been the end of the word if he had quickly weighed in with his opinion.
The two bigger issues are:

2. Conversation Dead End

You will notice Party Pooper takes the conversation where it cannot go anywhere else.

Beautiful conversations are like an ebb and flow of an ocean wave. They come and go naturally between water and land.
But he doesn't pass the buck along to anyone else and neither does he throw any new meat on the conversational fire.

He just goes on a new road, *all for himself*, and it's a dead-end road.

That's another common mistake, and when it happens you will notice that there's a pause within the group where nobody says anything.

If the group lacks a good conversationalist, an awkward silence will reign.
But if there is a good conversationalist, he will jump in at this point to re-kindle the conversation or to start a new topic.

However, Party Pooper made a much bigger mistake it that would have made the job of an even more skilled conversationalist much harder.
And it's this:

3. Conversation Hijacking – And You Guys Are Out

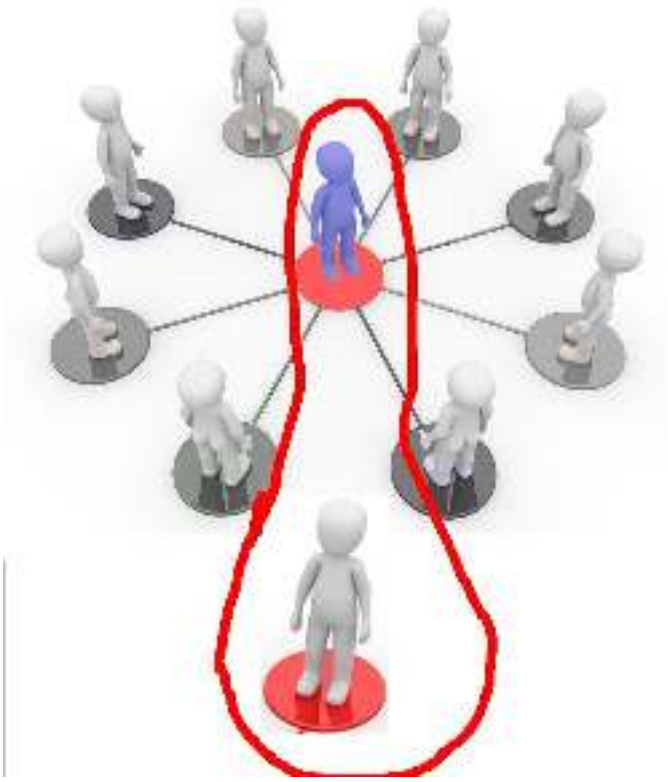
The biggest issue of them all was that **Party Pooper took a conversation that was all about the people in the group and turned it into a "me, me, me fest**".

You will notice the conversation was entertaining not only because of the topic but because everyone was chipping in.
And everyone's opinion was being valued and appreciated (that's the hallmark of a great conversationalist, as we shall see).

Imagine an inclusive line, and that line was all around the group. Everybody was in it, and that's one of the reasons why everyone was so engaged and enraptured.

With Pooper's interjection, it became instead "me and this other guy".
He basically took that red line and put it around himself and that new guy alien to the group.

This is what he did with a picture:



And that's why nobody said anything or *wanted* to add anything.
It's because everyone had been left out and with no way back in.

And maybe, just maybe, everyone deep down thought what a dumba** move the Pooper had once again done.

It's a bit like this "Italian guy" spoofing in Family Guy:

See how unsupportive that is?
It's the equivalent of saying "you sucked… But me, mate.. Me I'm great".

4. Conversation Social Climbing

If you dig deeper, you will also notice that this is yet another form of *social climbing*.

Why?

Because it basically does these three things:

1. Aggrandizes a non present person
2. Aggrandizes himself by association
3. Demeans the people around

First of all Party Pooper throws a name of a guy at a conference nobody else attended and lavishes praise on this Paul.

If the person were famous, it would have been typical name-dropping and social climbing by association (check an example with Tai Lopez).

Since nobody knew this guy, Party Pooper needed to build him up first, which looked like he was fawning at him with the end result which was possibly even worst than "simple" name-dropping.

He then proceeds to build this special connection with this supposedly great guy by associating himself with him - "deep conversation", also a slight dig at our conversation-.

As we've seen a couple of times, the worst kind of *social climbing* doesn't just raise the climber's status, but *lowers* the status of others as well (*value-taking social climbing*).
Here it's a bit less obvious, but it's there.

By hijacking the conversation and building this "special understanding" with this great guy outside of the group he is indeed also slightly demeaning us.
Nobody in the group was allowed into their little bubble and nobody was given the stage afterward.

Notice also that he doesn't share what the content of the conversation was, making it seem as if the group wasn't exclusive and special enough to hear about it.

For more on social climbing:

- Social climbing in absentia
- Obama social climbing

Subconscious Fu*k You

Unless you read a website such as The Power Moves -in which case kudos to you :)- most people are unlikely to consciously understand (or reflect) on what happened.

However, don't let that fool you: on a less conscious level, everyone notices.

And if anyone in that group were to have a party, what do you think are the chances Party Pooper will be invited? :)

Indeed albeit there's no conscious understanding, the consequences are very much real and concrete.
People feel zero rapport with individuals who behave like Party Poopers and will most likely not like them all that much.

What's the proper way of doing group conversation, then?

How To Converse Well In Groups

How to be successful in group conversations, then?

It's about bringing a positive mood and having everyone engaged (positive doesn't necessarily mean laughing BTW).

Guy Who Gets It, as the name suggests, does a lot of good things.
let's see a few of them:

1. Passes The Conversation Microphone

You will notice from the conversation at the beginning that Guy Who Gets It is working as a connector.

He is asking an opinion from one guy, then adds a bit of comment, and then passes the packet to another guy to further enrich the conversation.

He is allowing everyone to participate and chip in.

That's why everyone is drawn in: everyone knows that his opinion matters and that his time to speak will come soon.
So, in exchange, everyone cares about listening and understanding what the others are saying.

2. Refrains From Too Many Comments

High-value men don't feel the need to always get their ideas validates.

And many *high-value men* would rather take the "moderator role" in group conversations.

People who are *dominant* enough to take the moderator role and "pass the mic around" should know the N.1 risk of having group power: that of hogging the conversation.

You will notice indeed that Guy Who Gets It doesn't talk at length about his own opinions.
He just adds quick remarks on each. And all of them are rapport-building, like: "I like that too", "damn those boobs".

Everyone feels connected to Guy Who Gets It.
And everyone loves him.

3. Brings People Together

The other risk of being the one passing the mic is that you end up with a group that is too dependent on the moderator.

In that case, the group ends up like this one here (a Star Network type for the geekiest among you):

Star networks are fragile because they're dependent on the central node.

So for building effective group relationships, one should let the other nodes take part as well.

Back to people's world, that means letting less talkative and shier people chip in and connect directly between themselves.

You will notice Guy Who Gets It says "Guy 4 Also Appreciate Those Boobs", basically bringing Guy 3 and Guy 4 together as two people who both share the same tastes and liking.

Normally Guys 3 and 4 will also look at each other and add a few comments, which brings the two closer together. With a good, engaged atmosphere, more people will jump in, thus strengthening the bond between them and bringing the group further closer together.

Now it starts looking more like this:

This is also a great way to introduce people by the way.
Find a connection or commonality between them and use it for an introduction. For example:

> **Guys Who Gets It**: *Matteo, meet Catherine, she also loves cooking*

Or:

> **Guys Who Gets It**: *Caterina, meet Matthew, he also plays in a band.*

That way you bring the group closer.
And once the group is closed, you can even exit the group because you have made it independent of yourself.

As John Maxwell said, the true test of *leadership* is time (meaning: what happens once you leave).

4. Asks Deeper questions

I understand that some people might think this is just a shallow example of group conversation.

Just talking about women with a beer, after all.
Well, I don't fully agree: these are great types of conversations *to bond and connect* people together.

Furthermore, notice that Guy Who Gets It still goes for a quick dive into more personal territory.

When Guy 2 says Cristina is not her type of girl, that's the perfect occasion to go a bit deeper, and Guy Who Gets It asks what type of girls he like then.

That's a deeper question than it might seem at first blush. Brene Brown in *Daring Greatly* righteously says we are on this earth looking for connections.
And guess what, romantic connections are some of the deepest connections we form.

Thus, asking about what type of partners one gels with is really getting to know an *extremely* important aspect of any individual.

Summary

There are of course several other techniques for successful group socialization.

But this article gave you a good idea of how to prevent some of the most common blunders.
And it gave you a few good ideas on what constitutes a proper group conversation.

The techniques in this article work best for when you're the group moderator, the most extrovert one, the one who knows all the others in the group, or the most *socially powerful* group member.

To summarize:

1. Don't form "us" groups with people outside the group
2. Have everyone engaged
3. Speak little if you're the moderator
4. Bring people together with common traits or common stories
5. Pose quick, deeper questions: those bond the best

And make friends and spread the good vibes :)

The Power of Myth: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of Myth records the interview of Joseph Campbell, a popular mythologist, and shows us how myths build civilizations, shape cultures and capture our imaginations.

TPM Strategic Audit: Myths are the ultimate Macro-Frame
As a website on power dynamics, myths may seem too abstract. But while micro-tactics can sway interactions, Myths can sway civilizations. Myths can also serve as guiding principles for men's self-empowerment, if not even as roadmaps (ie.: Hero's Journey).

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[image]Key Insights

- Civilizations are founded on myths
- Our modern society is losing myths
- Many great cultural phenomena such as Star Wars are all based on myths

Summary

Campbell says that much of our life must be mythologized to hold power over people.

Think of something as simple as the robe the judges wear.
If the judge was simply a role, he could wear a suit.
But instead, he wears a magisterial black robe to ritualize and mythologize his position and power.

Chapter 1: MYTH AND THE MODERN WORLD

Campbell says that myths are clues that human life can have spiritual potential.

Myths are also a way to put you in touch with the experience of being alive, and the realization of being something more than simple flesh and blood.

Religions are myths but realize that you should read other religions because there's a tendency to see our own

religion as containing facts.

Sometimes normal people, when they become models for other people's lives, become mythologized.
It happens mostly with actors in movies (TV creates more celebrities and less myth, another reason not to watch TV as we've already seen in *The Brain That Changes Itself*)

Chapter 2: THE JOURNEY INWARD

Campbell says that we have the same body, organs, and mind as the Cro-Magnon man thirty thousand years ago.

And the same inclination towards myths and stories (I don't fully agree with that, but read more on evolution in *The Moral Animal*).

For example, he says, that the myth of the eagle and the snake is a common recurring theme in cultures very far apart.

Campbell says that civilizations are grounded in myth.
In the Middle Ages, for example, it was grounded on Christian myths and the cathedral was the center of that civilization, with the caste protecting the cathedral.

Then Campbell says that the absence of ecstatic religious experience and the denial of transcendence in our society has pushed many towards the use of drugs.
Drugs become the way for that kind of experience that religion used to provide.

Chapter 3: THE FIRST STORYTELLERS

Chapter three of The Power of Myth stood out to me for two concepts.

One is that if you identify yourself with consciousness you don't fear death and your body decaying (also read: *how to leverage mortality*).

You can watch your body functions go away one by one without worry because your body is a vehicle of consciousness, which will keep existing no matter the body.

The second one is that myths serve as a rite of passage.

So for example the sometimes cruel-looking rite of passage of boys into adulthood make sure that the boy is really an adult when he comes back.

And you don't have any modern-day men who at forty-five are still obeying their fathers and then going into psychoanalysis to have the analyst do that job for them.

My Note:
I disagree here.
This idea that old societies produced stronger men and that "rite of passage" makes men stronger is a BS that I have already addressed in "The Rational Male", "Tribe" and "The Way of Men".

And if you wondered who today's myth-makers are… They are the artists.

Chapter 4: SACRIFICE AND BLISS

Chapter four talks about sacrifices and the tendency different cultures have of making myths out of the landscape they live in.

And of course, today we don't have those sacred places anymore.

I found it interesting that Campbell says you can recognize a society by looking at its tallest building.

First, it used to be the temple, then the city hall took that place, and now it's a skyscraper with office spaces taking

care of the affairs of both temple and political buildings.
That's the history of Western civilization, Campbell says.

Campbell also reflects on the fact that Christianity is built on the Fall of Man from the Garden, which leads us to see nature as corrupt. That type of myth corrupts every spontaneous act as sinful.

The Fall from the Garden of Eden leads us to see nature as corrupt. That myth corrupts the whole world for us. Because nature is thought of as corrupt, every spontaneous act is sinful and must not be yielded to.

You get a totally different civilization and a totally different way of living according to whether your myth presents nature as fallen or whether nature is in itself a manifestation of divinity.

Chapter 5: THE HERO'S ADVENTURE

The hero differs from the leader in that he saves people or supports an ideal and sacrifices himself for something.

That's the morality of it. And what he sacrificed himself for doesn't cancel his heroic deed.

Campbell says that a society needs a hero to pull people together against the tendencies of separation.

Campbell analyzes George Lucas' Star Wars.
Dart Vader has such a shapeless face because he hasn't developed his humanity. He's a bureaucrat living not on his own volition but on terms of an imposed system. Luke Skywalker instead is on a hero's journey.

Campbell also uses the mythical image of the dragon to talk about the fear we all have to follow our own paths. When we don't follow our path, we are under the dragon's spell.

You gotta slay the dragon, and follow your own bliss, wherever that will lead you.

Read more on how to make your own hero's journey:

https://thepowermoves.com/heros-journey-for-men

Chapter 6: THE GIFT OF THE GODDESS

Campbell talks about father figure and mother figure.

Myths are all about finding the father first of all because, well… The mother is right there, you're born from there and she's there to nurse you.

Chapter 7: TALES OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Campbell explains how "love" the way we intend it today in the West was actually born in the twelfth century with the Troubadour literature.

Before love was simply Eros and sexual attraction.
It was more impersonal.

The troubadour poetry was the first to shatter that notion, also going against the church which back then was for arranged marriages.

Chapter 8: MASKS OF ETERNITY

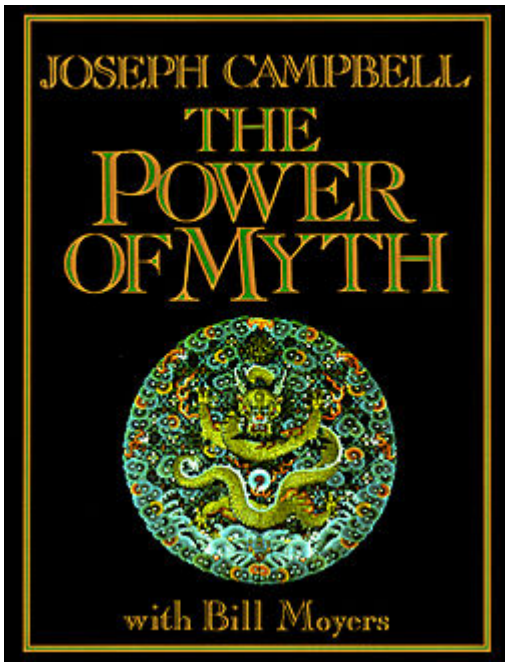
Campbell and Moyers talk a bit about Jesus here.

They say Jesus today would not be a Christian and probably would be a monk more in touch with the spiritual side of life (also read: *The Power of Now*).

I particularly liked when he refers to Jesus saying to Peter to "put back thy sword".

But the sword has not been put back in the sheath ever since.

Campbell then explains a touchingly philosophical way of looking at life taken from Schopenhauer.



Bullet Wisdom

- The difference between the hero of the myth and the modern celebrity is that the celebrity lives for himself while the hero redeems society.

CONS

There is this feeling, very common in certain authors, that "things are bad today" and, guess what, "they were way better before"…

For example, Campbell says that today's world has no mythology anymore and that's one of the reasons today's world is not as good.
He says:

> Well, as I said, all you have to do is read the newspaper. It's a mess.

Of course, it's not a mess and I won't even start with why it's plainly silly looking at the newspapers to get a snapshot of how things are (read: *Fooled by Randomness*").

Review

The Power of Myth is an ethereal and philosophical book.

It's not the most typical type of book you will find on this website. But that doesn't mean it's any less powerful.

Quite the opposite, indeed.

Some of the most influential cultural products are myths.

And they end up having concrete effects on people's thoughts and behavior.

Definitely do explore The Power of Myths if you're into artistic endeavors or want to create a new cult with super-

engaged followers.

Get the Book on Amazon

The Game by Neil Strauss: Entertaining, But Not Always Effective (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Game is a mix of Neil Strauss' autobiographical descent into the pick-up and a dating advice book for guys, chronicling how the author learned to pick up women, going from an almost virgin to, allegedly, a ladies' man.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Chapter 1: Select a Target
  - Chapter 2: Approach and Open
  - Chapter 3: Demonstrate Value
  - Chapter 4: Disarm the Obstacles
  - Chapter 5: Isolate the Target
  - Chapter 6: Create an Emotional Connection
  - Chapter 7: Extract to a Seductive Location
  - Chapter 8: Pump the Temperature
  - Chapter 9: Make a Physical Connection
  - Chapter 10: Blast Last-Minute Resistance
  - Chapter 11: Manage Expectations
- Practical Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- Disarm her sense of superiority with "negging"
- Signal high value (with stories, magic tricks, social skills, etc.)
- Move her somewhere private

Notes

About the Author:
Neil Strauss was a journalist and Rolling Stone writer when he wrote the book.
With "*The Game*" he became (relatively) famous and later wrote a few sequels. He seems to be lower on power and masculinity and more of a charmer type (check The *Art of Seduction* or archetypes of seducers).

Chapter 1: Select a Target

The main idea is that you approach within 3 seconds of seeing the girl you like.

Girls standing physically near you or dressed in bright colors or skimpy clothing make for good targets.

Also, read:

- Signs she likes you

> Does She Like Me? 35 Proven Signs of Attraction (W/ Pictures)

Chapter 2: Approach and Open

The *type of approach* depends on the situation, says Strauss.

But the book relies a lot on Mystery, author of *The Mystery Method*. The mystery was all about "owning" the group and showing your *alpha male qualities* by entering a group and becoming the center of attention.

Some of the most popular openers on 1:1 situations are about asking an opinion, such as what gift a guy should make to a woman or "who lies more, men or women".

My Note:
This does not seem like a good technique to me as it's more about friendship than seduction.
Approaching a random girl to ask for an opinion when you're actually interested in the girl herself gives off major alarm bells in her head that you're interested but don't have the balls to be more direct.
And if she actually believes you're not interested… Then it's even worse and you become her friend.

Another famous technique is that of "negging" the target, which means giving a back-handed compliment or a slightly offensive remark.

The idea is to lower *her self-esteem* so that she will be easier to get and more dependent on your approval.

Also, read:

- How to approach a woman

> How to Approach a Girl: 9 Science-Based Steps

Chapter 3: Demonstrate Value

Demonstrating value means showing off your qualities.

Mystery was a magician and he'd use to perform tricks, so the whole community started getting into tricks to impress women at the bars.

Neil Strauss also describes going around with a bag with all the tools of the trade to perform magic.
He also had a pack of pictures in his bag to show women. Those pictures showed him doing cool activities and being social, all aimed at "showing high value".

My Note: avoid the 'bag of tricks' ⍰⍰♂
The tricks make you look like a jester who's there to entertain her instead of, say, the guy who leads and take her to bed.
Also, there's a big imbalance of power as you spend lots of effort while *she is the judge* of your performance.

Chapter 4: Disarm the Obstacles

Disarming the obstacles refer to dealing with friends who want to take her away from you.

It can be *alpha females* who don't like you, or it could be other men who cockblock or try to tool you.

Check this article for men hitting on your girlfriend.

Chapter 5: Isolate the Target

Once you're in the group and everyone thinks you're cool you will want to move the girl you like away from her group.

If you have a wingman he can help you by taking her of her friend for example

Chapter 6: Create an Emotional Connection

Once you are alone with the target it's time to create an emotional connection.
"The Game" is actually rather poor when it comes to *bonding and connecting* with people.

Chapter 7: Extract to a Seductive Location

You will want to eventually move the girl to a more secluded location where you can escalate physically.

Chapter 8: Pump the Temperature

Once you're alone with the woman, you want to make her excited.

Check this article for a guide on text flirting.

Chapter 9: Make a Physical Connection

A physical connection is when you start to get touchy-feely with the girl.

The Game had many stories of guys who tried to hypnotize girls and then slowly touched them more and more intimately.

Chapter 10: Blast Last-Minute Resistance

Last-minute resistance is what happens when you go home and are possibly kissing, but she is resisting or *delaying sex*.

One of the most popular methods to address *last-minute resistance* was that of "freezing her out", such as completely ignoring her and doing your own thing in the house.

My Note: freezing out is high risk because it relinquishes leadership
Freezing out can work and, if she was interested, it will get her to re-initiate and try to get your attention.
You have to be careful though that she was into you and does not see you are stepping back as a final refusal, because if that's the case she will close off, and write you off… And hate you for it too :).

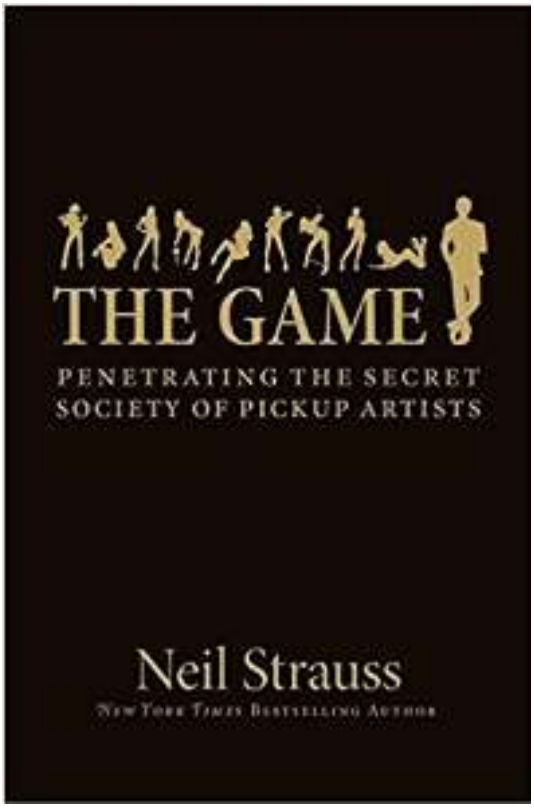
Chapter 11: Manage Expectations

Managing expectations is the phase happening after you slept with her.

It sometimes also means handling her attempts to lock you up in a relationship.

Also, read:

- Female relationship control



Practical Applications

Go For It
The drive to self-improvement and going for it even when you're uncomfortable is one of the main positive lessons from The Game

Be a Challenge
The idea of being a challenge is something many men could do more of.
Turning the tables on women trying to be *the prize of the relationship* is what differentiates men who chase women from those who get social dynamics (albeit in "The Game" the guys often overdo it and then it's not effective anymore).

CONS

- **Puerile**

I always felt "The Game" is all about shallow candy pills for these guys' egos than actual results.

Even the night that Neil Strauss says consecrated him as the best Pick Up Artist it's about him kissing the -supposedly- hottest girl of the club.

Now albeit that was an interesting story and he did use some interesting techniques, "making out with her" is not a real result to me.
Unless you're a teenager, making out means little (and even then, there are plenty of teenagers who actually get laid).

- **No great seducers in this book, potentially counterproductive**

Some techniques in *The Game* are great.

Some others, not so much.

And some are not just bad but counterproductive when it comes to both seduction and even appearing like a "high-value man".

Most of these guys weren't getting laid, including the "masters".

If you can read between the lines, it's pretty clear.
For example, Mystery says that "you need 8 hours to sleep with a woman and everything less is a fluke" (sure).

Mystery also one day announced that phone numbers were "wood" -such as useless-.
Why would he say that? It's because they were useless *for them*.
They couldn't get girls to see them again, which tells you a lot about their success.https://thepowermoves.com/manipulation/

- **Blind to women's manipulation**

Says Bel in our old Discord server discussing Katya's (redacted for brevity):

> Neil Strauss did not grasp what was going on (…)
>
> But the facts are:
>
> **1. She found a FREE place to live** (she chose Mystery's mansion; she used her dog, initially leaving it there for days, to establish a sense of emotional connection with the guys);
>
> **2. She painted herself from as the innocent "victim"** (she "confided" to Neil that she was "worried" to "fall" for Mystery, which Neil Struss – fully under triangulation – later recounted as "proof" that Katya was wronged);
>
> **3. She provoked Mystery (…)** to blow up in front of everyone repeated times (thus reinforcing the idea that she was the "victim");
>
> **4. She cheated on Mystery with his friend, in the same house, all the while appearing as the victim.** And rubbed it in his face ("provoking someone to behave badly so as to gain the social allowability to do the same to him").
>
> That Mystery had a mental breakdown and oscillated between "love" (trauma bond) and "hate" (for being abused) is fully in line with what happens when one is abused by someone and doesn't realize it. Everybody thought Mystery was the sole problem

While I'd have some added notes, it's a great analysis with top-notch power awareness.

Katya was a terrible woman who harmed Mystery and ruined the harmony in that house.
She sought seeds of hatred, while also staying there free on everyone's dime.

Also read:

- Nasty games women play
- Female domestication

PROS

- **Entertaining**

Albeit some have called into question the veracity of some parts of the book, Neil Strauss writes well and The Game is a whole interesting and entertaining read.

- **The Real Man Behind The Mask Shines Through**

What I liked most was that Neil, albeit at times a bit self-promotional, is also oftentimes honest and sincere.

He shares with the readers the *real* feelings he had, including his fears and insecurities about not being strong or cool enough.

That's the *courage of vulnerability*, and that's something that not many authors can do.

Review

The Game is an entertaining book of cultural significance because it chronicles the early developments of the pick-up movement, but while it shares many helpful techniques and mindsets, it's **far from being the most effective guide on dating and seduction.**

If you are interested in how the PUA movements and early 'gurus' like Mystery, DeAngelo or RSD Tyler took off, this is a great read.

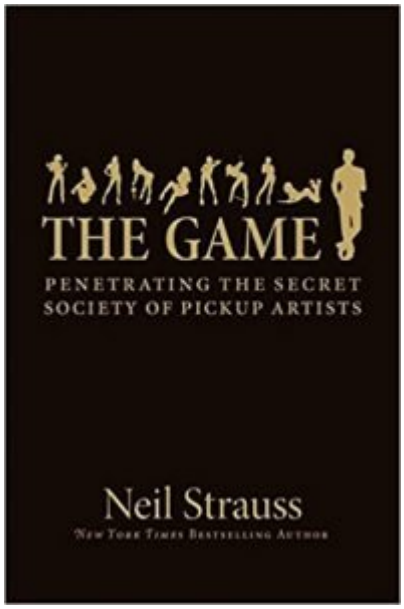
However, although many of the principles were groundbreaking and valid, *The Game* is not an effective resource to get dating results.
It's not even its focus, and when it delves into strategies and techniques, many concepts needed refinement.

To make a comparison, the Wright brothers' plane is a historically significant work.
But *not* something YOU should rely on for travel.

Also check:

- **Best dating books for guys**

The Game Summary: Neil Strauss' 11 Pick-Up Techniques



The Game had many stories of guys who tried to hypnotize girls and then slowly touched them more and more intimately.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-game-neil-strauss/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.2

The Noble Art of Seducing Women: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Noble Art of Seducing Women is *a dating book for men*. Kezia Noble teaches men how to seduce women from the rare perspective of a female dating coach for men.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Understanding Chemistry
  - Understanding What Women Want
  - Confidence and The Mistake of Being Vague
  - The Stage
  - The 3 Elements of Attraction
  - Pre-Approach
  - The Opener
  - Conversation Skills and the 9 Hooks Lead System
  - Validate Her
  - Bitch Shields
  - Sexual Escalation
  - Closing
  - The Phone Call
  - Good Guys VS Bad Guys
  - Never Going Back to Zero
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Women look for strength first and foremost
- Place yourself “higher than her” (with validation & tasks)
- There is no dichotomy of nice guy/bad guy: there are great good guys too, and they’re the top

Full Summary

Kezia Noble starts with an example of a man in her life who managed to excite her in spite of the fact he wasn’t physically her type.

Understanding Chemistry

Kezia Noble tells a captivating story of a night out when she met a guy who managed to do everything right.

She says that state and frame of mind are very important as that comes across your face and body language and people pick on it.

Understanding What Women Want

Kezia says that while *loyalty* is the most important trait men look for in women, for women it's a bit different.

Loyalty is also often among the top three, but what takes precedence is strength. **Women want strength**.

She then goes into evolutionary psychology to explain why (to deeply understand why and social psychology I invite you to read *The Moral Animal*).

Bad Boys VS Caring Men

Kezia says that as a younger woman, up until around 19 YO, she preferred bad boys.

But then started to tire of them and found their rebellious streak childish and a waste of energy.
She started being more attracted to caring men.

Other women she knows though had the opposite and started being into bad boys later on in their lives.

The author uses this example to make the point that men should not worry about superficial traits because those change.
They should focus instead on the most important trait women are looking for strength. "The strength of who you are", she says.

Confidence and The Mistake of Being Vague

Kezia says that the super common advice of "being more confident" hurts people more than helping them.

It's because people start thinking of themselves as not having confidence, and that can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You should then stop to tell yourself you have no confidence and look at areas where you are performing well.
Then understand that getting better with women is simply something you can learn.

The Stage

Kezia says, righteously, that a woman must respect a man first in order to be attracted to him.

She introduces the concept of the stage to teach body language (weak stage VS strong stage).
The stage is composed of six columns:

1. Leg Position = shoulder width far apart when standing
2. Arm Position = don't keep both of them in your pockets
3. Hand Gesture = avoid "palms up" as it feels like you're begging and that you need help
4. Eye Contact = hold gaze in sexual escalation, before kissing and during intense and mood/shifting conversation
5. Facial Expression = never laugh nervously or to cover silences
6. Vocal Tone = don't start with "so" or end questions with mumbling, "or" or going up with your voice

Kezia Noble certainly has some very interesting tidbits in there, the most important of which I highlighted above.
These body language topics are very vast though, and for a deeper understanding, I invite you to check *The Definitive Book of Body Language* and *What Every Body is Saying*.

Since learning body language without actually watching is difficult, check out these video/picture articles:

- Sexy Walk
- Sexy poses at the bar
- Sexy hands in pockets pose

The 3 Elements of Attraction

Kezia says that the three elements of attraction are control, impact, and connection.

- **Control**

Controlling means basically… Controlling yourself and the environment. And Kezia goes more into mindsets adding it's also about taking responsibility for how things go (check *Extreme Ownership* for that kind of mindset).

- **Impact**

The impact is about standing out and grabbing her attention. Kezia also stresses it's not about being the super entertainer jester of the situation.

- **Connection**

Kezia suggests going for questions that people don't usually get asked.
For example, to a woman who tells you she's a lawyer, everybody would ask "how long have you been doing that", but you could ask instead "is that what your parents wanted you to do".

My Note:
Going so deep so early can be weird, so use it with caution and never in group situations.

Kezia Noble tells yet one more captivating and helpful story. This time, of a man she dated and with whom she opened up very quickly.
The man explains women love dropping their masks and sharing personal stuff.
When they reveal something personal and might feel a bit vulnerable, that's when you reveal something very personal about yourself too, so you both connected on a deep level.

My Note:
this is good indeed. I would like to add it might be even better not to share anything about you and simply listen with a slight nod and let the "heavy moments of vulnerability" hang in the air.
You basically become a bit of a psychoanalyst or slightly distant father figure (Robert Greene mentions this as well in *The Art of Seduction*).

Pre-Approach

Kezia Noble says that women are much more aware of men of what goes around while men are often way too obvious.

If you're nervous to approach, Kezia suggests focusing on the defects of the woman or comparing her to your favorite celebrity or sexual fantasy.

I liked, even more, her suggestion to build a list of qualities you like and then go with a mindset you want to see if she fits your criteria.

Also, read:

- Signs she likes you
- Undercover Sexual Signals

The Opener

I love the example Kezia gives of an opener that would have quickly gone south.

A man approached him asking if she was Italian, and to her "no", he replied, "how bad, I was looking for an Italian girlfriend".

I otherwise didn't like her "opinion-based openers", which reeked a bit of The Game by Neil Strauss.

Also, read:

- Step-by-step guide to approach a girl
- **Cold approach VS social circle**

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

Conversation Skills and the 9 Hooks Lead System

To keep a conversation humming beautifully Kezia Noble suggests you think of everything she says as a hook, and then gives 9 hooks to use:

1. Open Ended Questions: will make her speak and provide you with many hooks
2. Facts: drop some fun facts to lighten the conversation
3. Opinion: early opinions show personality and lack of fear. Saying you hate what she likes is a way to make an impact
4. Challenge:
5. Humor: if you say something funny and she doesn't laugh don't pretend it never happened but comment on it or laugh by yourself
6. Anecdotes
7. Tasks: tell her to do something, including to tell you something -but without "please"-
8. Validation:
9. Assumption: a great way to make a raise out of her even when wrong (great story of a psychic)

Since these are a lot Kezia recommends starting with 3 and putting validation and tasks among them.

Don't Back Down in Arguments
Kezia says that you should never back down if you enter into an argument. You can and should defuse though. Tell her to stop, then say you will never agree, and say it's great because you appreciate she can voice her opinion contrary to most girls who just avoid confrontation.

Validate Her

Kezia Noble says that every successful man in seduction places himself above the woman.

Even *"alpha women*", as Kezia self-defines herself, also enjoy pleasing a man and doing something that impresses him.

A way to validate is to say that you appreciate something she says or does, as that sets you up as "the evaluator" (also see: *soft power*).

Negative validation is instead about a slightly negative reaction, possibly following positive validation, which should prompt the girl to prove herself to you afterward to regain your approval.

Kezia Noble goes into the push-pull technique and tells another amazing story of a man picking up a gold digger and hunting celebs for which I invite you to get the book.

Bitch Shields

1. Stay detached and keep composure: don't allow anyone to change your state

2. Destroy the negative pattern
3. Validate: tell her you to love her attitude

Again Kezia Noble delivers a couple of great examples, both well-executed interactions and bad ones.
For more, also check out:

- How to respond to shit tests

Sexual Escalation

Kezia Noble divides the interaction into three stages:

1. Beginning: your energy level should be high, at least equal to hers
2. Comfort: use this stage to start planting the seed, a man showing attraction is better than a man staying noncommittal for too long
3. Seduction: slow down your voice, triangle gaze between right eye, left eyes, and then lips (do it a bit during comfort as well)

Kezia Noble says many men are afraid of being seen as sleazy or creepy and then talks about flirting.
Flirting is great because it intrigues and introduces the sexual without giving your cards away (check this article on how to *text flirt effectively*)

> How to Sexually Escalate With Women (3 Steps)

Closing

Kezia Noble talks about "number close" and "kiss closes here".

My Note:
I very much disagree here on the kiss close as even counting at all.
Kisses not only mean nothing but at times can even be counterproductive by introducing uncertainties in the seduction.
For example, a kiss might happen because you were both very horny. But then emotions come down.
She might feel like the next time you meet it's going to get to sex because you've already kissed.
And since right now she's not so hot about you, she'll never come out (I talk a bit about these pitfalls in *Women Early Dating Mistakes*).

Kezia talks about a few great techniques, such as taking pressure off of your ask by adding "I'll text sometime next week" and some I'm less convinced about, like asking her to put her own name on your phone with her nickname.

She says that "Facebook close" is not so good and the risk of long chats there is that she will start taking your relationship as an online, chat relationship and never from there (check this article though on *how to effectively use Facebook*).

The Phone Call

If you exchange a number through a direct approach you should call her that same evening.

An atypical exchange should follow that path because you created a moment, but that moment quickly vanishes so it needs a quick reminder (same suggestion Kezia gives on *Texting Game* and similar on why I suggest *calling after a non-answered text*).

Otherwise, wait 3 days and when you call do something so you seem busy and not like you were just doing nothing

and thinking of her.

I particularly laughed at Kezia's idea on why background noises are helpful: if she says she can't speak now you tell her that you couldn't hear and you'll call her later LOL.

Good Guys VS Bad Guys

Kezia Noble really hits the nail with this part.

Basically, she says that it's not a dichotomy of *"nice guys*" VS "bad guys" as many seem to make it.

She adds "good guys, which are men who are as confident and unashamed of *sexual escalation* as "bad boys" but who do not make women feel bad and used or try to lower their confidence.
These are the real top men.

I tend to agree.
Also, see:

- How to be a good asshole

> How to Be A Good Asshole

Never Going Back to Zero

Never going back to zero means that you keep your own life, even when in a relationship.

In case you break up you will get back in the game more easily, but keeping your own life and interests will also give you a stronger and more solid relationship.

Kezia also says some women will threaten they want to leave you to get a reaction out of you. In those cases, you should tell her she's free to go.

My Note:
I disagree here. Threatening to leave the relationship is unacceptable and you should not play any games there.
Also, read:

- What to do when she threatens to break up

When you've done something really wrong though like cheating you tell her… Oh well, I invite you to get the book for that :).

Albeit I love what Kezia suggests, I think it's mostly important when you do something really wrong that you take care of re-balancing the relationship by giving power back to her to really make it us as perfectly explained by David Lieberman.

CONS

Some Question Marks on Honesty?
Kezia Noble suggests when you give some fun facts that those could be… Well… Not really true. The way she also reacts to past boyfriends having lied to her is very nonchalant.
Since she doesn't seem to take a strong stand against lies, it makes me wonder if the stories she presents as factual are actually factual.

Review

A few blemishes here and there don't allow me to give this book 5 stars.

But Kezia gets many, many things right.
And most of all her stories, some of her insights, and her conversation and social dynamics breakdown are top-notch.

Read the best dating books for men or **Get The Book on Amazon**.

Conversation King by Tom Torero: Review & Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Conversation King is a video product by late dating coach Tom Torero on how to do day games and converse with women.

Contents

- 3 Sentences Summary
- Summary
- Practical Applications
- Review

3 Sentences Summary

- Check your body language first
- Assume familiarity
- Let her talk the most

Summary

Tom Torero says that the fundamentals of body conversation are:

- a good body language
- staying positive
- keeping eye contact
- avoid going up with your voice

- use “OK” rather than “wow”, ” cool”, “how amazing” or any over-the-top compliments

When it comes to “quantity” of speaking, she should speak the most and the topic should be 90% about her.

You should assume familiarity, meaning that from the moment you stop a girl pretend you’ve met through a social circle and you’re at a house party.

Conversation Safety Nets: Statements and Question

Once you stop a girl, before you ask a question you will make a statement about either her or the environment.

The statement will break that hideous pattern of “questioning mode”, which is jarring and unnatural.

My note:
I totally agree, the pattern of question/answer is very dangerous early on and must be avoided.

For example, you sit down at a café and say

> *oh you look very relaxed and chill, what did you have of special today*

Or

> *“you look very Russian, blonde, with a good style, with the fur.. “*

My note:
the nationality thing is a double hedged sword as many “international” people don’t like being pinned down or judged based on how they come from, but the overall concept is spot on.

Some other suggestions Tom Torero gives are:

- Open-ended questions (what is it about X that you love; what is it about dancing that you love)
- Girls’ questions (how did that make you feel..)
- Stealth questions (“I don’t know about you, but.. “ “oh, you’re from, X must be so different from Berlin which is cold and full of people.. “, ie. You are forcing her to give an opinion)
- Vacuum (take your time before replying and stop speaking at times)
- Environment switch (use interesting surroundings)
- Intent (say you like something about her) my note: this sounds more like qualifying than intent
- Disagree

About the topics, Torero suggests you explore her past, present, and future. For example:

- Past: how it was growing up where she grew up, what she wanted to do as a kid etc.;
- Present: you look like you’re carrying a heavy bag, where are you going
- Future: so you are here studying, but in a year’s time where are you going to be

Tom Torero also suggests that you prepare how to introduce yourself beforehand.

And also prepare a few answers to the most common questions so that you’re not always left thinking about what to say next or repeating the same boring stuff over and over.

For example, you could say you moved to the city because you like the challenge of a new place, that you enjoy the vibe, or that it wasn’t easy at the beginning but now you love it, which opens up the question of why it wasn’t easy.

Practical Applications

I think that one of the biggest take-ups away is to start with statements first so that you don't fall into the all too common vicious spiral of question/answer which goes stale very very quickly.

Review

I think Tom Torero is reasonably good at what he teaches.

He is a solid guy to learn from and he's got a *socially powerful vibe* in his videos.

Unluckily he's been caught hiring actresses for his videos, and that somewhat tarnished his reputation.
You can't help but wonder "which videos are true and which are staged"?

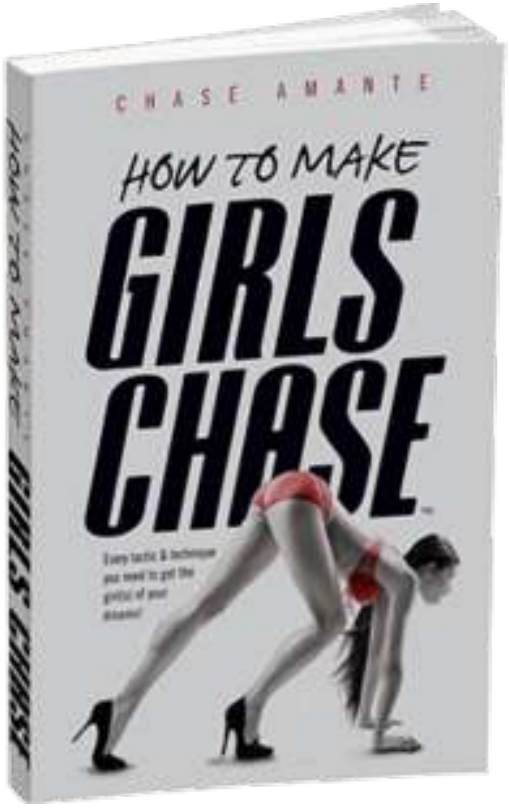
But that doesn't mean his material doesn't work, or that you cannot learn even from the staged ones -as long as they were good at making them realistic, at least-.

Also, check out the best dating books for guys.

How to Make Girls Chase by Chase Amante: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

How to Make Girls Chase is a dating ebook for men, teaching men how to meet, interact, and seduce women.



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Bullet Summary

- Balance value, investment, and attainability
- **Hit 'escalation windows'** for successful seductions
- **Follow an effective process** for reliable results

Girls Chase – Summary

About The Author:
Chase Amante is the founder of Girlschase.com, a blog on dating and seduction for men.
After launching a few products on conversation and an ebook, he then launched a course called *"One Date"* and several more courses launched via his email list.

How to Open

Chase Amante recommends *cold approaches*.

He says you better avoid approaching women from the back or with your body in full frontal position.

Approaching from the side is better (I agree, and the same as Vanessa van Edwards in *Body Language of Love and Dating*).

Chase also recommends that you "pre-open her", meaning that you grab her attention and make her look at you before you look at her.

Then, "lock in" as soon as possible, meaning that you assume the most comfortable position -for example leaning against the bar or sitting on a stool-.

Both moves of her looking at you first and you take the most comfortable position are designed to make it seem like she's the one most invested, which highlights you're "above her"

My note:
Chase also recommends you drop openers such as "excuse me" as that sounds like you're apologizing.
I don't fully agree with that, "excuse me" is not so much an apology as it's an attention grabber before starting a conversation.

Also, read:

- Step-by-step guide to approach a girl
- Signs she's interested in you

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

Use Genuine Interest

Chase Amante recommends you tell her directly you are interested in her and you do so with what he calls a "killer compliment".

A killer compliment is a compliment that is highly relevant to her.
Your goal is to make her feel special (as opposed to trying to lower her ego as often happened in *The Game*).

The author also provides examples of how to actually structure a solid opener, and I invite you to get the book for

those.

The Hook

Chase says that the all-important moment of an early interaction is reaching “the hook”.

The hook is that point in the interaction when she starts being interested in you and engrossed in the interaction.

He says there’s no silver bullet for that, but the most reliable ways are to have proper fundamentals.

Fundamentals include:

- Your voice
- Body language
- Posture
- Fashion

Focus on getting her investment early on.
Ask questions and focus the conversation mostly on her.

My Note:
I think many people get this “focus the conversation on her” and “ask questions” all wrong.
The easiest mistake to fall into is to ask lots of questions in close succession. In the beginning, some statements can be more useful to that bad pattern (also see Kezia Noble and Mark Manson).

Chase Frames / Push-Pull

Chase Amante talks about the famous Push-Pull technique and uses the example of:

> *You’re cool, but don’t get any ideas, I’m not easy*

The technique is effective in that it first gives a compliment drawing her close in, and then pushes her away.

Also, that second part is what “chase frames” are about, such as implying that she is chasing you.
Some other examples could be:

> *I also like you, I’m glad you spoke to me*

Thus implying, or highlighting, that she’s the one who’s making it happen.

My note:
I use this technique a lot, especially implying she’s into boys in general which is less risky for push-backs. You can read more on it as that’s the first point of my Text Flirting Guide.

Repartee and Rapport

Repartee is the very beginning where you exchange a few witty remarks and it’s helpful to break the ice.

He highlights you avoid any joke that might sound aggressive or *combative*.

Then you move into rapport, which is where you bond at a more personal level.
Rapport is where you need to manage the three biggest pillars of seduction: value, investment, and attainability.

Deep Rapport

Chase Amante calls deep rapport, or that sensation of “being in a bubble”, deep diving.

He says though that emotions don't last, so you should do something useful with it (an expectation we explored in *women's early dating mistakes*).

For example, make a comment to "cement" those emotions, for example, saying you're happy that you met, it was so little ago and you already got that great connection.
Or when she smiles tell her that's the biggest smiley you've ever seen and it's lovely.

And again, always focus on her. Her dreams, ambition, her story..

Pillar I: Value

Chase Amante says that the basic definition of value is what you have to offer to someone (check *The Social Exchange Theory* for more).

Your value should be tied more to your unspoken fundamentals than to your stories and obvious show-offs.

Chase then goes into the all-important distinction of what women value in men, such as qualities that make them lovers or providers (and all the mixes between them).

If you're not familiar with them, I definitely recommend you look it up in his book or even read an evolutionary psychology book that will explain the difference from a more scientific point of view (check *The Moral Animal*).

Pillar II: Investment

Investment is the time or effort or "emotional cycles" that a woman spends for you.

The more a woman invests in you, the more she will feel for you.

Chase Amante breaks down the investment types you can get, which are:

- Compliance (as Chase calls it): asking her to do things for you, from "(can you) tell me about that" to "(can you) pass me the lighter"
- Taken compliance: no question but proceeding as if it were obvious she said yes <— ⚠TPM's note: be careful with this. Gaging her willingness to follow requires high social and mating intelligence to do effectively. In today's culture, assuming compliance can also lead to issues
- Rumination: she thinks about you. Give her a task to do in your absence and she'll think more of you
- Intriguing: when she wonders whether you like her or not or she wonders about you
- Angering her: the most dangerous and not recommended for non-experienced guys
- Temporal: spending time together
- Auto investment: some women will invest on their own, always accept

Chase Amante says that kissing and *sexual escalation* are a form of taken compliance.

Many men run into resistance there because they haven't built enough compliance before and the woman is not accustomed to following his lead.

On the "anger" one, I agree it's dangerous (also see *The Art of Seduction* by Robert Greene).

To learn more about how investment works, see:

- Social Investment Model: the primer article on interpersonal investment dynamics

Rewarding and Punishing

Chase Amante takes a leaf out of Skinner's book here in terms of operant conditioning

Rewarding and punishing both shape behavior and her perception of you.

If you allow rude behavior to go unchecked, her respect for you will tank. So you have to both discourage that behavior with punishment and show that you're no puppet that will take her disrespect.

On the other hand, you want to encourage good behavior by rewarding it. You can reward with attention, more questions, compliments, physical proximity, etc.

My Note: Operant conditioning is an old model of psychological influence
Operant conditioning is not always the most effective.
I prefer a more direct approach to addressing bad behavior.

Screening

Chase Amante proposes screening as your way of showing her you've got standards.

When you screen her, you are looking for qualities that you like.

When she confirms she has those qualities, she is complying with you and trying to show her value to you.
And that's when you reward her for it (we've talked about this in "*how to make a powerful first impression*").

With that, you automatically position yourself as the one who's judging and picking.
And as we've seen many times on this website, the one who's judging is the one who is "above" in the interaction.

Chase Amante says there are three ways of screening:

- **Questions**: easiest and most basic
- **Comparisons**: "all my friends are very driven people, they go for what they want"
- **Self Description**: you describe a characteristic of yours, putting pressure on her to agree with you

Avoid Gaps
When she doesn't qualify, the gap between you two grows larger.

So you should "help her" to pass your screen by nudging her a little bit or by amplifying her only slightly positive answer.
For example, if you ask her if she cooks and she says "not much" you could add "like nothing? You can't even do some basic pasta?".

If she replies "just a bit of pasta" you could amplify and say "well that's not just a bit, pasta is great good, what kind of pasta do you cook".

Another way to help screen girls who aren't experienced is to give them multiple options.

Your goal is to not get "nothing" as a reply, so you could tell her "what do you do of exciting, travel, write… Make your mom go crazy by skipping class all week?".

Pillar III: Attainability

With attainability, Chase Amante introduces the topic of value balance.

Basically, in a (budding) relationship the woman should feel like the man has high value but she can access that value.

If the woman believes the man is *low value*, she will not want him.
If he is *high value* and difficult to get, she will write him off and resent him.

If she perceives him as being high value, but he manages to build her up with good screens and rewards, she will feel like she can happily get him and be with him.

And that's the definition of the perfect seduction.

Move Fast

Chase Amante stresses the importance of moving fast with women.

Meaning you should try to shorten as much as possible the amount of time spent between the first meeting and sex. That's an indicator of both confidence and previous experience and success with women.

Touching Girl

Chase says that going for too long without touching as it builds attraction, can become too much.

The girl will feel under pressure and will jet.

Touch helps close that tension gap between you two and gets her accustomed to your physical contact.

Chase then goes on to describe the different kinds of touches and how you can deploy them and I invite you to get the book for the details (and check *4 ways women touch men wrong*).

Inviting For The Date

Chase Amante says you should not ask for her phone number and you should not even say "number", but instead "contact".

And always ask on a high point and preferably middle conversation, before you two say goodbye.

The author recommends you avoid group stuff, clubs, bars, and expensive activities.

Meeting near to your place is great, and if she was very into you, even straight to your place could work.

Follow-Up & Texting

Chase recommends text over calls.

One text soon after you met, and then later to arrange the meeting.

Chase elaborates further on his blog on his texting process.
He proposes to ask women something like:

> **You**: When are you free this week?

Or:

> **You:** How does your schedule look like?

My Note:

Chase is a good observer of dating dynamics, but we disagree on this one.

While for some time I tried that approach, Kether helped me change my mind on this. Kether is one of the best dating coaches I've had the pleasure to meet and learn from.

The problem with asking her is that it's a big-ish ask. Many women don't know their schedules or don't want to make plans in advance -or don't want to make plans at all-. So even if they may want to meet you, they may still bulk at taking charge of the next step.

The second problem is exactly that: scheduling is an important part of *leadership*. And asking about her schedule feels a lot like relinquishing leadership.

The third problem is pure *power dynamics*: it feels like it's *her* schedule that matters only. And whatever she says,

you'll *adjust*. That's low-value and low-power dating. And we know that women *don't exactly like* guys who are lower value than they are.

When Kether first pointed it out to me it hit me like a ton of bricks. I sat there thinking "that makes SO much sense. What the f*ck was I even thinking".

Sometimes you need someone to (re-)slap some common sense back into you :).

So now we advise on proposing the days yourself.

Frames

Chase Amante uses the word frame to refer to your view of the world, values, and intent.

He says it's important your frame "wins" over that of a woman.
To have a strong frame, you need to know who you are, what you want, and what you are willing and not willing to put up with.

The author uses the example of a stronger frame in what he calls the "hard push".

The hard push consists of calibrated insistence until others buy into your frame.

Also, read:

- Signs of social power
- How powerful men speak

Responding to Challenges

Chase Amante also talks about responding to challenges.

A challenge is a woman being snippy and/or *shit-testing you*.
For example, she might tell you she only dates rich men.

The common answer of qualifying yourself -saying you're rich- or challenging back.
Challenging back can be fun and it's a step forward, Chase says, but it lowers your attainability.

He then proposes other solutions such as:

- dismissal (ignoring it)
- self-deprecation (jokingly disqualifying yourself)
- invitational (using the challenge to move the interaction forward).

Pulling Her Home

Chase Amante says that after you move a girl, made her invest, and possibly *built a connection*, it's time to start thinking to pull.

Pulls can happen after hours or after a matter of minutes, so don't get hung up on checking the time.

Escalation Windows

Chase Amante is the first author I've ever read who introduces the concept of "escalation windows".

Those are times when you need to progress the relationship forward and if you miss them… It's all but over.

During escalation windows, the girl is hoping the man will make a move -either invite her to sit, invite her home or escalate sexually-.
If the man doesn't move forward, *she will write him off* and eject him.

Follow The Process

Chases says that proposing is what will get you from a lone man to one with women in his life.

He gives a rough seduction process to follow similar to this one:

1. build social momentum meeting many new people
2. move women quickly until you meet one who will carry with you
3. get to know her
4. invite her home
5. escalate to intimacy

Girls chase CONS

Focus on her, always take the spotlight from you to her

Good general advice, but needs lots of caveats.

First of all, this is a good example of the *law of balance*.

You don't want to overdo it or it seems shifty and like you're hiding something.

Second, calibration is the name of the game.
While some women will happily talk all the time, some others require you to lead a bit more to make them comfortable enough to open up.

Also, if you know how to showcase your good qualities, talking can be a great opportunity to increase attraction and emotional connections.

Also, see:

- The law of optimum balance
- **The law of balance in dating**

> Why Balance Is Most Seductive

Dogmatic / Black & White Thinking

Chase seems at times to be a bit dogmatic.

Generalizations don't sit well with my critical approach to social dynamics.

For example, he says "move quick and you will *always* have more success".

Well, not always.
There are *plenty of exceptions in dating*.

But I get it.
"Laws" are more memorable.
They save Chase space, time, and the complications of *explaining exceptions*.

They might not be closest to the truth, but "close enough" and "enough times" to help, more than harm.

Some of the examples I felt were "black and white":

- **Never leave your contact information** because girls never contact you

My experience instead:

Generally true.

But it's a catch-all ceiling advice for beginners who only rely on leaving information.

Some women can be shy, or be close to their families or even boyfriends when you meet them.
And leaving your card is the easiest way to discretely exchange info.

Plus, in some countries, conservative women may be uncomfortable being seen with a flashy foreigner.

In any case, more than one woman contacted me when I left my card. Including attractive ones, including a very successful entrepreneur that I ended up dating.

- **Never use FB/social media** because you'll never be successful with it

Again, *for most guys*, it's low odds.
So I agree with the general principle if you remove "never" and if you add a few caveats.

But exceptions always apply:

My experience:

More than once I dated women that I cold-reached out on social media.

My nephew is also in a relationship with an attractive woman he reached out to on Instagram.

Also, more than once social media allowed me to stay in touch, and date/get intimate later.

- **You will never get a girl back if you don't have sex with her *when escalating***

And yet again, generally true.

Actually, often true.

And yet still, exceptions apply and, if you're skilled, you can (almost) easily skirt this issue if you stop on time and spend more time after.

My experience:

I got together with several women after I first escalated to sex, but didn't get intimate.

Some women even liked me a lot in spite of the "failed escalation", and some even fell in love.

For one example, *you can read the message here*, and scroll down.

You can see in **Seduction University** how to do it.

> Seduction University

Girls Chase Review

How to Make Girls Chase is a very good book for beginners and intermediates, written by a capable author, and offered on a website that produced several valid dating articles.

More advanced practitioners may find some exceptions and add some nuances, but they can still find value in it.

Even years later *How to Make Girls Chase* remains in our list of top dating books for men.

Check out the **best dating books for guys**.

Phantoms in the Brain: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Phantoms in the Brain reviews exceptional neurological cases to shed new light on brain functions such as decision-making, self-deception, recovery, and neuroplasticity.

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  - Chapter 3: Chasing the Phantom
  - Chapter 4: The Zombie in the Brain
  - Chapter 5: The Secret Life of James Thurber
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  - Chapter 9: God and the Limbic System
  - Chapter 10: The Woman Who Died Laughing
  - Chapter 11: “You Forgot to Deliver the Twin”
  - Chapter 12: Do Martians See Red?
- Practical Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- There’s no unified self
- We construct our own reality
- We all deploy defense mechanisms

Full Summary

About The Author: V.S. Ramachandran is a neuroscientist and he is known for being a bit of a maverick in the scientific community.
His contributions have not only helped increase our scientific knowledge but also helped countless patients.

Studying The Exceptions

Ramachandran has a different approach than most.

He prefers investigating borderline neurological cases rather than the norm.

He removes patients from the realm of insanity and says they are often simply defense mechanisms.

Ramachandran says that “borderline cases” and “exceptions” provide the best examples to understand how the brain works.

Instead of discounting and ignoring them as most do, one single example is enough to at least start a theory.

He says that if I showed you a talking pig you wouldn't say *"but that's just one, show me one more, and then I'll believe you*".

Ramachandran also often uses very simple techniques and technologies.
He says Galileo understood all planets orbit around the sun with cardboard with two lenses inside.

Today is no different: many discoveries are staring into our faces and need no expensive equipment.
And Ramachandran certainly walks that talk…

Chapter 1: The Phantom Within

Ramachandran says there are some specialized parts of the brain and focuses on how they interact with each other.

The example in chapter one is of a woman whose left hand tried to strangle her.

Chapter 2: "Knowing Where to Scratch"

Chapter two of Phantoms in The Brain focuses on phantom limbs.

The patient he examined, Tom, had a constant itching sensation on his amputated hand.
He couldn't scratch it because, of course, the hand wasn't there.

What happened is that the mental maps of the arm and face took over the space in the brain that was allocated to the hand. The over-imposing of the brain maps created a mix-up of signals for Tom.

Ramachandran found out that, by scratching certain parts of his face, Tom was able to finally scratch his hand.

Also, people with an amputated foot had much bigger orgasms because the penis mental map took over the foot mental map.
Ramachandran wonders if the foot fetish has something to do with the fact that the mental map of sexual orgasms and feet are spatially so nearby.

Chapter 3: Chasing the Phantom

In chapter 3 Ramachandran discusses a man with an amputated hand who had the feeling his fingernails were digging into the palm of his amputated hand.

Ramachandran managed to cure him with a simple assembly of different mirrors, giving the patient's brain the feeling that he was seeing the paralyzed hand moving.

As the patient opened the non-amputated hand, the brain thought it was the amputated hand, and finally, the pain was relieved.

Chapter 4: The Zombie in the Brain

Ramachandran says that perception is much more than replicating images in our brains.

Chapter 5: The Secret Life of James Thurber

Chapter 5 of Phantoms in The Brain focuses on hallucinations.

Ramachandran talks about the blind spot and how our brain "fills the gap" (you can check your blind spot here).

This is not an exception, but the example of a trait of our brain to fill in information even when there's no information.
The same principle applies when we see a dog behind a fence: we don't perceive the dog as in pieces, but as a whole

even though our brain sees “pieces”.

Ramachandran says that our brain fills information out of a basic evolutionary need: saving resources and saving computational power.

Chapter 6: Through the Looking Glass

Ramachandran in chapter 6 of Phantoms in The Brain talks about the patient Ellen.

Ellen damaged her right parietal lobe and simply does not pay attention to what happens to the left of her space and body.
She will notice if people draw attention to it, but if not she might.

Ramachandran experimented with putting a mirror on her “good side” and a pen on her left side.
She knew full well it was a mirror, but since she now saw the reflection on her right side, but doesn’t pay attention to her left side. She thought the pen was “in the mirror” or must have been behind it, never even thinking it was on her left.

Ramachandran says it calls into question our own perception of reality, and how an alien looking at us from a four dimension world might interpret our behavior as being equally perverse.

Chapter 7: The Sound of One Hand Clapping

Ramachandran talks about a patient with a paralyzed left arm… Who was convinced it wasn’t paralyzed?

It was a case of denial patients, who often make up inane and crazy excuses of why their arms or legs don’t move when they need to.

The author introduces Freud and the defense mechanism in this chapter.
He makes the case that all the lies, excuses, and rationalizations patients use are nothing more than an extreme case of defense mechanisms we all engage in -be it the bills or denying our final destination, death-.

Ramachandran shows with experiments that denial patients are not trying to save face but fully believe their own lies.
The author then wonders if there’s some part in their brain that knows the truth, and with another “Ramachandran” experiment he borrowed from an Italian neurologist -dropping cold water in the ear canal-, he found out the patients know the truth deep down.
And that truth can be brought to the rational part of the brain, finally admitting their paralysis.

Ramachandran proposes a couple of ideas about why the cold water worked, but it’s mostly speculative in the book.

For more on separate compartments of the brain also read: *Incognito*.

Reaction Formation

This chapter is particularly interesting for Ramachandran’s digression about Freud.

He says he used to be, like most of his colleagues, very skeptical about his ideas.
But as he researched more and more he came to realize that, albeit Freud wrote a lot of nonsense, “there’s no denying he was a genius”.

Reaction Formation is the tendency of emphasizing a trait that runs contrary to our natural disposition in an effort to disguise people and ourselves reality.
For example, a late homosexual might strut in cowboy boots and act macho in an unconscious attempt to assert his presumed masculinity.

A study also shows how “gay bashers” get bigger erections when watching male pornography than non-bashers.

Humor

Ramachandran says that humor is also often used to “disguise the absurdity of the human condition”.

We use nervous laughter or all the time we use humor to defuse tense situations. It might not be the case that humor is often about topics that are the most difficult to openly talk about, such as sex, religion, and racism.

My Note:
Indeed, all those people who bear tense situations without cracking a joke or smiling are considered stronger.
Think of The Godfather.

Chapter 8: “The Unbearable Likeness of Being”

Chapter 8 of Phantoms in the Brain deals with people who don’t recognize their parents or close relatives and believe they are impostors.

Ramachandran explains it with a breathtaking theory.
Since the emotional parts of the brain are damaged they don’t feel any warmth when looking at their parents.
So the brain tells them they cannot be their parents and must be someone else.

Basically, we human beings also have a sort of imprinting. Imprinting based on emotions.

Chapter 9: God and the Limbic System

Ramachandran says many traits differentiate us as human, and pondering on our own lives and the existence of God is possibly one of the most relevant.

He wonders whether our brain has some circuitry for religious experience, and if it exists where it come from, and how it evolved.

It appears there are circuits in the human brain involved in religious experience.
We don’t know though if they evolved for religious experience or if they generate other feelings that are conducive to religious beliefs.

Ramachandran starts his dissection of evolutionary psychology here.
He says that just because a trait is common to all culture doesn’t necessarily mean it has biological roots.
For example, almost all cultures cook, but there are no “cooking genes”.

Chapter 10: The Woman Who Died Laughing

In chapter 10 of Phantoms of the Brain Ramachandran goes deeper on evolutionary psychology.

He says that fiction and facts get easily blurred in evolutionary psychology. The author sat down once to test how far one could go in making up theories without any back evidence, and came up with an “evolutionary psychology” story of why men like blonde.

He easily published the paper and few complained about it.

Ramachandran says there seem to be two camps in evolutionary psychology:

1. One affirms that natural selection selects all our mental traits
2. The other camp calls the first “ultra-Darwinist” and contend there are more factors at play.

For example, feathers evolved to keep reptilians warm but slowly morphed to being used for flying (pre-adaptation).
Ramachandran is more in line with the second camp.

My Note:

Always watch out for people on Internet backing up their theories with evolutionary psychology “stories”. That being said, the field will shed copious light on your understanding of human beings, for which I highly recommend you check out The Moral Animal and The Selfish Gene).

Chapter 11: “You Forgot to Deliver the Twin”

Ramachandran talks about false pregnancies, such as “pregnancies” with no fetus, and what they tell us about the connection between mind and body.

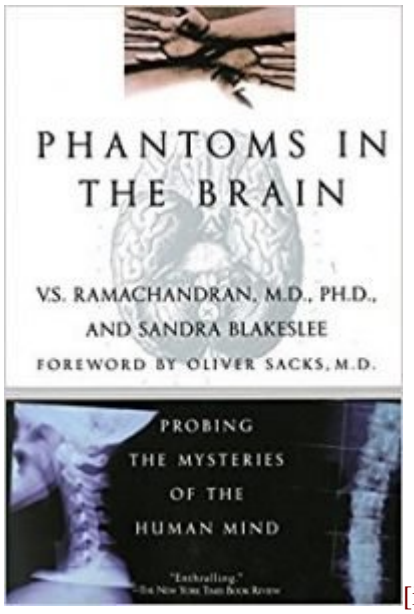
The author says that the “wholeness” of mind and body is not just new wave philosophy. There’s some truth behind it.

Ramachandran also mentions those rare cases where tumors disappear by themselves and wonders why they are no studies to investigate this phenomenon more deeply as they could hold the secret for curing cancer.

Chapter 12: Do Martians See Red?

Ramachandran says here that after years studying borderline cases and normal people he has come to the realization that **we create our own reality and that there’s no single unified self**.

For more on our brain limitations check: Predictably Irrational and Incognito.



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Practical Applications

To me there’s on single, huge application that I would draw from this book:

You Make Your Own Reality
You make up your own reality. So why not make a great reality, and one that is useful to you?

Defense Mechanisms
We all deploy defense mechanisms. But these mechanisms often don’t really help us move forward, make us happy or achieve our goals. I would invite you to read Principles by Ray Dalio for an approach that revers reality, be it “good” for us or “bad”.

CONS

Collection of curiosities

The book is super interesting, yet I'd have troubles to pinpoint what exactly it talks about. There's so much meat, and so much variety of it, that there's not a single thing that stands out.
This doesn't have to be a con, but the book is less memorable because of it.

Lots of "Theories"
The book presents a lot of theories which are.. Ramachandran's own ideas. Not necessarily a bad thing, but definitely something to keep in mind.

Review

I wish every researcher read Phantoms in the Brain and followed Ramachandran on his pioneering spirit and disregard for dogmas.

Hopefully, we will have more and more and we will move quicker and quicker towards alleviating the sufferings of many.

I find by the way his method not too dissimilar from this website. The Power Moves also takes specific and often "difficult" social situations and derives general social rules from the specific cases.

Get The Book on Amazon

How to Stop Worrying and Start Living: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

How to Stop Worrying and Start Living is a self-help book that shares readers' tools, techniques, and mindsets to help readers enjoy a more fulfilling and carefree life.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - 1. Fundamental facts you should know about worry
  - 2. Basic techniques for analyzing worry
  - 3. How to break the worry habit before it breaks you
  - 4. A mental attitude of peace and happiness
  - 5. The perfect way to conquer worry
  - 6. How to keep from worrying about criticism
  - 7. How to prevent fatigue and worry and keep energy and spirits high
- CONS
- How to Stop Worrying Review

Overview

- Ask yourself what's the worst that can happen and be OK with it.
- Then work to improve on that worst-case scenario
- Act more, worry less

Notes

About the Author:
Dale Carnegie writes this book because, he says, he was a worrier himself and a deeply unhappy man.
However, he managed to teach himself the way to a more carefree, happier, and more fulfilling life. And he teaches techniques in *"How to Stop Worrying and Start Living"*.
Carnegie is also the author of "*How to Win Friends and Influence People*".

Into: Why You Must Stop Worrying

Dale Carnegie says that worrying too much will make your life shorter and more miserable.
Thankfully, there are ways to deal with and eliminate worries. Many people have done it, and you can as well.

1. Fundamental facts you should know about worry

Dale Carnegie quotes William Osler to make this simple point:

> To care less about worries, start caring more about your present tasks and goals

Because most people worry about the future, the best way to have a good future is to do a good job now.
So make your life more compartmentalized and deal with every single compartment one by one.

Carnegie recommends readers associate lots of pain with worrying ways that changing becomes a must.

This is an NLP technique that Tony Robbins discusses at length.

More techniques Carnegie recommends:

1. Ask yourself what's the worst that can possibly happen if you cannot solve the problem that makes you so worried.
2. Accept mentally the worst-case scenario and be OK with it
3. Work to improve the worst-case scenario: you can only get better from there

2. Basic techniques for analyzing worry

1. First of all, get all the facts.
2. Once you have all the information you need, make a decision.
3. Once you have a decision, it's time to act on it.

No worries, no sweating, just action.

Dale Carnegie also talks about the top insurance salesman in the country. He wasn't always at the top though and was struggling until he asked himself the following questions:

A Simple Set of Questions to Eliminate Worry

Frank Bettger, one of the top insurance salesmen in America, used these questions to reduce his worries and multiply his income.

Early in his career Bettger began to despise his work and felt discouraged. He was working too much and was burning out.
Frank was always either in meetings or calling out prospects and wasn't having much success at all.
Then, one day, he wrote down and answered these questions:

1. What is the problem?
2. What is the cause of the problem?
3. What are all the possible solutions?
4. What is the best solution?

3. How to break the worry habit before it breaks you

1. Stay busy: no free time, no time to worry (my note: don't do this as Brene Brown explains)
2. Don't allow small things to get in your way
3. Understand numbers: chances of catastrophic events are slim
4. What you cannot change is not worth worrying about
5. Put a stop-loss order in your life: after a certain threshold, you move and that's it
6. Stop worrying about the past. It's useless

4. A mental attitude of peace and happiness

1. Think and act joyfully and you'll be joyful
2. Thinking about what we don't like is poisonous: don't waste a minute with people you don't like
3. Don't expect gratitude and you will not be disappointed by the lack of it
4. Focus and count your blessings, not your troubles
5. Be yourself and don't try to copy others

6. Do your best with your losses. Profit from them. When life gives you lemons, make a lemonade
7. Help others to help yourself

5. The perfect way to conquer worry

Dale Carnegie suggests that believing in a greater being, in God, and praying, is a great antidote for worry.

6. How to keep from worrying about criticism

1. Unfair criticism is often a compliment: it means you have raised envy
2. Grow a thicker skin: you'll be criticized anyway. Your job is to do your best, not to avoid criticism
3. Criticize yourself first and then ask for more criticism: it's the best way to grow

7. How to prevent fatigue and worry and keep energy and spirits high

Rest is important, says Carnegie.

Churchill took two naps a day during WWII. Make sure you get enough rest as well.

At work, clear your desk of all papers, because **the mess around you translates into mental mess** and stress. Then prioritize and execute (a mantra of *Extreme Ownership*).

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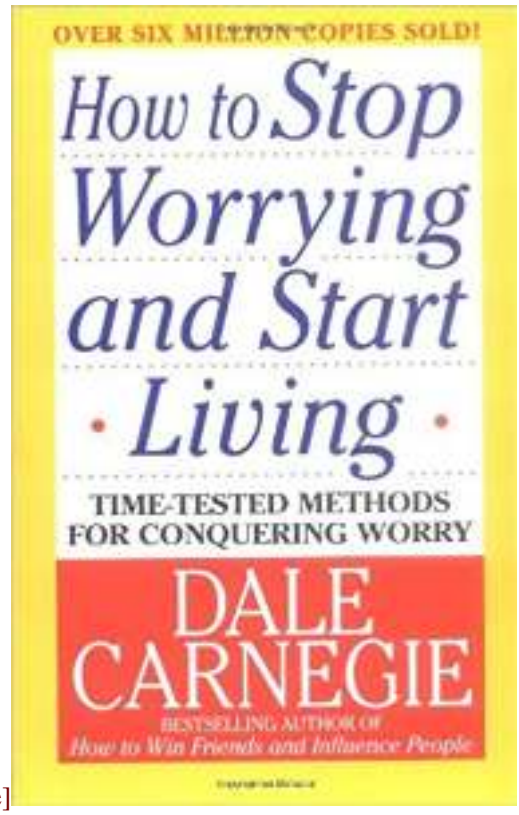

CONS

- **Map Without Compass**

All the tips make sense, but they're also common sense.
What would have been more useful is all the nitty-gritty of how to actually do it. I believe guys like Tony Robbins do a better job at that.

- **Too Busy To Worry… Really?**

The suggestion to get too busy to worry is not only scientifically unfounded but counterproductive. It doesn't address the root cause.

It's like telling the hangover patient to keep drinking and the headache will go away. Better drinking water instead. The hangover will take more time to heal, but it addresses the root causes.

How to Stop Worrying Review

"How to Stop Worrying and Start Living" is one of the grandfathers of the self-help books.

It has sold 6 million copies, and if *Nassim Taleb* is right when he says the longer something remains successful, the better it is, then you can't go wrong with this old classic.

The content is indeed top-notch, and most of it is evergreen -as Ray Dalio said, *great is better than new*-.

However, don't miss out on new contemporary authors because neuroscience has developed a lot since Carnegie and can teach us a lot.
For example:

- The brain that changes itself
- Phantoms in the Brain
- How to develop a growth mindset

Stop Worrying
& **Get the book on Amazon**

Gary Vee Analysis: Emotional Intelligence & ADHD

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Gary Vaynerchuk talks a lot about EQ and 'emotional intelligence'.

So one would assume he has a lot of it, right?

He constantly says he loves people and emphasizes Emotional Intelligence.

Then… he must be good with people and have EQ in spades.

Well, not necessarily.

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- Gary Vee's EQ: Final Thoughts

Intro: Gary Vee EQ

Whenever I watch online interviews, I pay close attention to patterns—especially in communication, power dynamics, and social intelligence.

And when I saw Gary Vaynerchuk in this interview with Seth Godin, I was surprised. It was one of the clearest examples of communication breakdown I've seen.

To be clear, this isn't personal criticism. It's an analysis of communication habits. What happens in this conversation offers several powerful lessons on **what to avoid** if you want to connect with people, build rapport, and communicate effectively.

Seth Godin himself eventually threatens to get up and leave.

Let's go over Vaynerchuk's recurring communication patterns—and how to avoid making the same mistakes.

#1. Interrupts All The Time (0 Listening Skills)

Interrupting is one of the worst habits in conversation—and one of the most common reasons why communication fails (as explained in *Difficult Conversations*).

The more passionate we are about a topic, the more tempted we are to jump in. But this damages both the content and emotional quality of the interaction:

- **Interruptions reduce the listener's attention and engagement**
- **They break rapport and mutual respect**

Cognitive bandwidth is limited. When someone is interrupted, they can't process ideas calmly. Instead, they get defensive, angry, or just check out.

From a rapport standpoint, interrupting signals egocentrism. We bond with people who care about us and listen to us—not with those who constantly talk over us.

Even worse, when you jump in with your opinion too soon, you often misunderstand their point. And the conversation feels disjointed.

Watch this example:

Exception: When She Wants to Impress You

In certain dating scenarios, a woman may interrupt—not out of rudeness, but eagerness to connect or fix a past mistake. In those cases, it's more endearing than aggressive.

The best response? Smile and signal that it's OK. It reinforces that she's emotionally invested—and you're socially intelligent enough to recognize it.

#2. Seeks Differences Instead of Building Consensus

When someone shares an opinion that differs from ours, it's natural to disagree or correct them. But constantly highlighting differences can kill rapport.

Especially when someone is trying to bond or share something meaningful.

Case in point from the interview:

> **Gary Vee**: Seth, I hate science.

Seth Godin had just praised science as one of the great achievements of humanity. Responding with "I hate science" isn't a playful quip—it's a rapport-killer.

Especially when your partner is still emotionally invested in their statement. It can feel invalidating or even disrespectful.

Example: Right... and Alone

> Many years ago I went back to a girl's place with a bottle of wine as we chatted and *flirted* along the way.
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Gary often interrupts, disagrees, and competes in conversation. It becomes less of a dialogue and more of a performance.

Even when you technically "win" an argument, if it comes at the cost of warmth and connection, it's a hollow victory.

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Gary challenges and disrupts—Seth holds frame—but the overall emotional quality deteriorates.

Contrast: How to Maintain Rapport

> This year I had one of the most remarkable dates I have ever had.
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> She wanted to become a shaman.
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Repeated "No's" sent a clear signal: she didn't value my input. I walked away from the project—not because of the business plan, but because of the communication pattern.

Tip: Don't Say No to Compliments

When people give you a compliment or offer connection, rejecting them with a "No" feels like a slap.

Even if the compliment doesn't resonate, accept it. To do otherwise breaks connection and signals detachment.

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In sales, avoid correcting your prospect—even when they're wrong.

> Customer: So it's kind of like X, right?
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Agree first. Then build. That keeps rapport strong and makes them feel heard.

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Surface-level talk is fine at first. But real connection happens when people feel heard, validated, and emotionally understood.

Gary often changes topics too quickly, doesn't let others go deep, or cuts them off before the connection builds.

Watch this clip. Seth Godin is trying to thoughtfully respond to audience questions, but Gary rushes the process:

He forces the conversation back to surface level. And Seth clearly resents it.

Compare that with great conversationalists who ask open-ended questions, dig deeper, and hold space for real discussion.

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Some say, "I'm just being honest"—but often, that's an excuse for being blunt or socially unaware.

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There's enough overlap between honesty and rapport that you can absolutely have both.

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Does Gary Vaynerchuk have ADHD?

We can't say for sure. But his high-speed communication style—frequent interruptions, topic-hopping, impulse responses—resembles common ADHD communication patterns.

It's not a judgment. But it can explain why deep rapport and listening may be more difficult for him.

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Gary Vee is great at energizing crowds, commanding attention, and delivering bold messages.

But when it comes to deep one-on-one communication, his patterns often create friction rather than connection. And those patterns—interrupting, disagreeing, redirecting—undermine emotional rapport.

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Crucial Conversations: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

"Crucial Conversations" (2002) is a self-help and *communication skills book* for business leaders who want to improve their interpersonal and communication skills through theory, practical advice, and examples.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Practical Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Start with the heart: don't let the need to win or look good get in the way
- Find a common purpose and communicate that you care: it makes the conversation safe
- Start with facts and a positive note and be curious about the other person's stories

Summary

About The Authors: The authors are four corporate trainers who founded VitalSmarts, a business consultancy providing corporations and executives with the tools and knowledge to be more effective at work.

Introduction

Why Mastering Crucial Conversations?

The authors say that very often when you found yourself stuck, it's because of a crucial conversation that you are not having or are not having well.

What differentiates great companies from good ones, they say, is how they manage crucial conversations.
In great companies crucial conversations take place and problems are never swept under the rug.

Chapter 1: What's a Crucial Conversation?

A crucial conversation has three ingredients:

1. High stakes
2. Strong emotions
3. Opposing opinions

The author says the irony is that **the more important conversations are, the poorer we handle them**.
It's because our emotions take over and our pre-cortex, the region that makes us humans basically, shuts off.

And we end up behaving like animals exactly when behaving like human beings is most important.

Poor Communicators Suffer or Get Violent

The authors say that the two most common destructive patterns relating to crucial relationships are silence and violence.

We either avoid engaging in crucial conversations or we do so hyper-emotionally and in violent ways.

Often we also swing between the two. The more we stay silent, the more we are likely to eventually explode.

Silence is much more common, and it's very dangerous when it becomes the company's culture.

Chapter 2: Mastering Crucial Conversations

Dialogue is the exchange of meaning when people have a conversation.

The author uses an imaginary "pool" at the center among the people conversing.
The more people can be open and put information in the pool, the more likely it is we will reach good decisions.

This is basically the principle Ray Dalio institutionalized in Bridgewater. Dalio sought a culture of radical transparency and radical open-mindedness where people are expected to speak up and share opinions (check Ray Dalio's Principles).

Chapter 3: Start with Heart

Starting with the heart means starting within ourselves first. We need to examine our own personal contributions to the problem.

The authors also suggest that you focus and ask yourself what you really want. What you want for yourself, for the other(s), and for the relationship(s).

Looking within yourself and asking what you really want is also a great way to avoid damaging feelings such as the need to look good and to "win" the argument.

Don't Get Stuck in The Sucker's Choices

The authors also remind us that we often see difficult conversations as two opposing choices that cannot co-exist. Or two bad decisions.

It's however often not the case.
To look beyond appearances, it's often great to ask questions such as "how can I do X and still do Y".
Or "how can I do X without hurting Y".

My Note:
Being honest and building rapport is such a choice. You can both build rapport in conversations and be honest (check out this analysis of Gary Vaynerchuk).

Chapter 4: Learn to Look

Learning to spot and recognize the sign of a crucial conversation is not always easy, but it's an essential part of being successful at crucial conversations.

Especially look for signs of silence and violence.

When you see someone being silent a great way to draw them out is to ask something like:

> *you say you are OK, but I can see you're not*

or

> *are you sure everything is OK, you don't sound like everything is OK*

Chapter 5: Make it Safe

The authors say that when we are dealing with a crucial conversation we often feel that our message and our words are the problem.

So we water it down and look for safer alternatives. And we don't say what we really want to say.
The key though is exactly that: being able to say what we want and need to say the most. The best way to do so is to make the conversation safe.

There are two ways to make a conversation safe:

1. Mutual interest = they must know we care about their interests and goals
2. Mutual respect = they must know we care about them

When our conversation partners know and believe both of those elements are in place, they can relax and really listen to what you're saying without defensive barriers.
When they don't believe those two are in place, we get silence or violence.

When respect has been shattered the author suggests that you:

- Apologize (when respect is broken)
- Contrasting (when mutual interest is broken)
- CRIB, an acronym to avoid miscommunication and finding out what the others really want

My Note: You have to state it and own it if it's not "safe"
Unluckily the book starts from the premise the conversation IS safe. But what if the consequences are big from then? Then it's NOT safe, but you still have to say it first to avoid tension.

Apologies: Also, from a social skills website such as this one, I found apologies especially captivating. Indeed a well-placed apology works wonders in mending relationships.
The authors say: the party often doesn't want to be compensated because they're wronged, they want to be healed because they're wronged.

Chapter 6: Master My Stories

The authors say that our emotions come from the stories we make up, not really from reality and facts (something Tony Robbins often repeats as well).

The core of this chapter is to encourage us to look at the facts and the stories from different and more complete angles.

The authors say that when we engage in crucial conversations it's easy getting emotional and upset. When we do that, there seems to be a tendency where we take the story the worst possible way., which further escalates emotions.

To break the negative patterns we must then look at all other possible stories and change our judgments and conclusions.
As we expand the breadth of our stories, we become calmer and better prepared to have crucial conversations.

- **Start With Facts**

The authors also recommend you start crucial conversations from facts -as also suggested in *Difficult Conversations*-. It will be less personal and it will make you more credible.

- **Start With What You Agree**

I also particularly like the suggestion of starting with what you agree, so that you begin on a positive note.
They propose the acronym ABC, meaning Agree, Build (instead of tearing down, "yes and.."), compare (what you see differently).

Chapter 7: STATE My Path

The author introduces here an acronym to help us with the crucial conversation:

- S share the facts
- T ell your story
- A ask for another's story
- T alk tentatively
- E encourage testing

Chapter 8: Explore Other's Paths

When people fall into silence or violence, we need to encourage them to take the same healthier steps that we want to take for ourselves.

The authors say that we need to move beyond the simple expression of their emotions to their facts and stories.

A great way is to get curious. Ask yourself: why should a reasonable person like X act and behave like this? What brought them there? And then get down to find out what happened.

Chapter 9: Move to Action

Understanding each other and having a positive atmosphere are not our end goals. Those are the means to an end.

Once we have no silence or violence and once we have a big pool of shared meaning it's time to move to solutions.

Always keep a record of the decisions and keep one single person accountable for a single result.

Chapter 10: Yeah, But

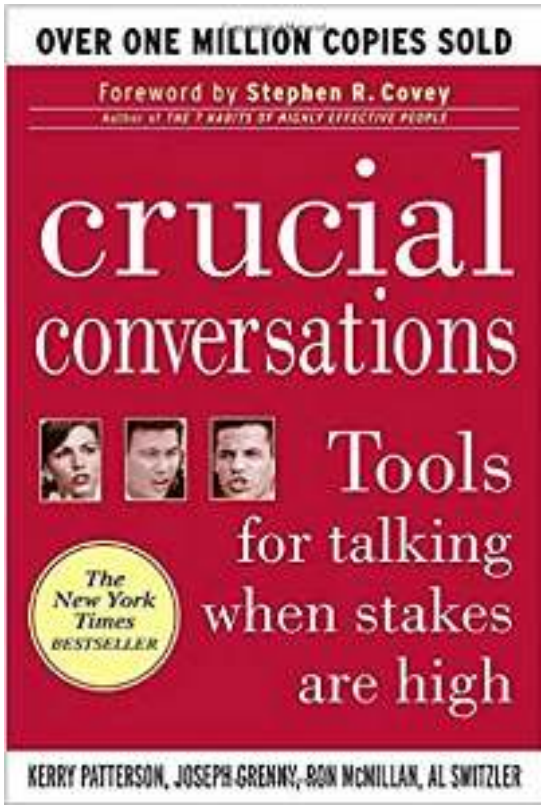
The authors say that most people believe those neat principles sound good but don't really apply to their personal cases.
Well, they do. They then proceed to present several case studies to walk us through them.

I warmly invite you to get the book because examples are how we really learn.

Chapter 11: Putting it All Together

The authors suggest that to improve you:

- Analyze the crucial conversations after they happened for lessons learned.
- Think about patterns in your relationships.
- Change in real-time when you notice a mistake
- Ask friends for feedback



Practical Applications

The whole book will improve your communication style. The crucial points to take away for me:

Words don't matter. Caring does.
You can say whatever you want as long as the conversation feels safe. As long as they know you have a common goal and that you care about them.

Start with what you agree
This is a small piece of advice that changes everything. Often we approach crucial conversations defensively or are already angry. Changing that mood is crucial.

CONS

More Hard Cases
I would have liked some more borderline case examples, such as people furious or screaming. But that's just me, the book is otherwise great.

Review

Crucial Conversations is almost a must-read for anyone serious about improving socially.

The topics are similar to *Difficult Conversations*, but there are a lot of different insights from each of them.
So I would recommend both.

I also enjoyed the psychology behind people who avoid crucial conversations, which reminded me of *passive-aggressive personalities.*

The main caveat we add is that you want to be less truthful and more strategic with *manipulators, gaslighters,* and what we refer to here as "turkeys".
In that sense, acting is anyone is a worthy recipient of your full honesty is plain *naive self-help.*

Check out the best communication skills book or **get the book on Amazon**

Here's What To Do When She Threatens to Break Up

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Of all the manipulative power moves threatening to break up might be *the* most toxic.

If you have ever dealt with breakup threats, you know it can be an emotional, even scary moment.

In this article, we deep dive into this manipulative technique that's sometimes referred to as "holding the relationship hostage".

You will learn why your girlfriend is threatening to break up, and how you can handle it.

Let's start.

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Why Women Threaten to Break Up

Your girlfriend will threaten to break up because of three different reasons:

1. As a power move (manipulation to achieve a goal or accrue more power)
2. Because she is naturally confrontational and/or emotionally unstable
3. Because you or the relationship are not providing for her basic needs

If it's the first time it happens, you might not be sure which one it is, and that's exactly what you need to find out. But first, let's start by exploring the most common reactions to a break-up threat:

Typical Reactions to Break-Up Threats

These are the most common reactions men experience when their women threaten to break up:

#1. The “Why, Why” Begging Reaction

Breakup threats make us emotional.

It’s normal.

Especially the first time you hear a breakup threat it will likely blindside you and you will be lost for words.

After all, the more we care about something, the more likely it is we will be overridden by emotions.
And the ironic consequence is that the more we care, the worse we perform.

That being said, this is no excuse not to bring our very best to the table. Some typical reactions of the beggars are (click hyperlinks for video examples):

- **Trying to change her mind**

Terrible because pushback is a natural answer to a push. Basically, you become the one who’s trying to patch it up and she becomes the one convincing you -and herself- that actually breaking up is a great idea

- **Asking “why, why, why”**

It’s wrong because, of course, now she is looking for reasons why breaking up is a good idea;

- **Promising change**

Communicates that you are indeed at fault and/or not good enough. While that *might* be the case, most often than not, it’s not what leads your partner to threaten the end of the relationship.

- **Being incredulous, stating “we’re good”**

Similar to trying to change her mind, with the added bonus that if there are indeed issues you look clueless.

Here’s an example of a man quickly moving to the upper echelons of beggar-dom as soon as she airs her breakup

intentions:

> **Him**: (beaten dog face, about to cry) We can work it out

Why Begging is Wrong

This should be obvious, but for the sake of clarity:

1. You legitimize her threat
2. You look low-value

It sub-communicates that you want the relationship more than she wants it.

Since it's usually the lower mate value partner who clings to the status quo, it immediately places her above you. And women don't like being with men who are obviously below them.

Thus, the begging reaction confirms to her that she should go ahead and enact her threat, which is exactly what happened in the video example.

#2. The Brinkmanship Game

Similarly to the Beggar, the brinksman wants to keep the relationship.

But he knows that trying to change her mind or getting all emotional is the best way to lose her.

What the Brinksman does, then, to quote Eminem, is that he'll be nervous on the inside but on the surface, he'll look calm and ready to drop bombs. And he pretends he will be OK if she goes ahead -possibly better than she will be-.

A well-executed game of brinkmanship shows power and strength.
If well-executed, she will "realize" she is the one most invested in the relationship and will quickly turn things around (Kezia recommends this approach).

In the brinkmanship game, the one who shows to be least invested wins.

See an example from The Notebook:

In the video, they are both in love. He walks away first and "needs to think about it", which drives her crazy.
She chases hard, and notices the only time when he actually walks towards her is when *she* says it's over. This video very well explains the power of the first mover when it comes to the hideous games of brinkmanship.

Why It's Not Optimal

This is not an optimal solution.

To begin with, the brinkmanship game doesn't just communicate you need the relationship less but also communicates you don't really *care* that much about the relationship.

This is what partially happens in the video example, and one of the reasons why she flies into a rage, trying to get a reaction out of him.

But most of all, the biggest drawback of the brinkmanship game, even when you win, it's exactly that.
It's all about "winning".

You "win".

But **great relationships are not zero-sum games**, so if you win and she loses it's still not great for the relationship.
The relationship becomes a combative relationship of continuous power struggle.
And that sucks.
You deserve better than that.
Look at another example of brinkmanship escalation: is this a good relationship?

#3. The Steamroller

The Power steamroller does not accept being pushed into a corner and having to take a step back.

He is afraid of any concessions: for him, concessions are a sign of weakness.

So as soon as the woman airs the possibility of a breakup, he sees red and he charges head-on.
He must win that battle, so he jumps the gun and tells her to go.

The Power Steamroller sounds like the most powerful answer.
Probably it's no coincidence that it's one of the favorites of most gung-ho "dating coaches" (example) and all the *alpha male posturers.*

It has a certain pull, I can see that.
Beggars look at the *Alpha Steam rollers* and think "Wow, that guy… He's the man".
Of course, he's not.

Note:
Just to be sure, showing her the door right away *can* be a fair answer, but you must first make sure of that.

Why It's Not Optimal

The Steamroller is far more concerned with "proving" his power than making the right decision.

And therein lies the issue.

When faced with a scary outcome, the Steamroller type is defensive. **But true confident men are not defensive.**

So when the chip falls and it comes to a threat, the steamroller falls into the same bad habits that plagued him the whole relationship long: a focus on himself and ego protection.

The Steamroller never really paid attention and understood her partner, so what are the chances he'll do so now?

And that's the final and fatal issue with the Steamroller answer: another great occasion to understand her partner goes to waste.

Example 1: The Godfather

An old-school steamroller type is *The Godfather*.

Instead of telling her to go fu** herself though, he tells her she can't leave (*typical of abusive men by the way*).

The emotionally distant Godfather never really understood his wife. Steamrolling his way into the final showdown only further highlights the huge chasm between him and her, culminating with her saying:

> **Kate**: "I feel no love for you anymore"

Of course, she doesn't, you can't love an emotionally distant Steamroller!

If there ever was a chance for them to stay together, treating her like an owned object was the last nail in the coffin:

Example 2: My Story

Years ago an ex-girlfriend of mine in rather heavy distress threatened me that, if X happened (don't remember what X was), she "wouldn't control herself" (a veiled hint at possible violence).
Now there are a few things I won't tolerate in a relationship, and threats and violence are two of them.
I paused, looked at her, and said "if that ever happens, it's over".
As she plunged into silence, lowered her head, and looked down, I had won.

But "won" what, exactly?

What a Pyrrhic "victory", and what an idiot I was.

She had been super sweet until then, what the hell was that?
I had no idea if she was serious, or if she could become abusive in the future.

Or maybe the topic was just too emotional for her that she was not being herself?

The Steamroller in me never found out.

How to find out, then?

Enter, The Cool Detective:

#4. The Cool Detective

And now we finally come to the optimal way of handling it.

As usual, mindsets are key.

The cool detective knows that a break-up threat is a serious infraction in a relationship.
He knows it can be the sign of a major *personality flaw* and only the first of more problems to come. He knows it means he might be forced to actually end the relationship.

But he knows it can also be something else.
And he wants to find out.

When she threatens to break up the detective breathes in and pauses for a second, looks at her straight in the eyes, and with a slow, neutral voice tone asks her:

> **Cool Detective***: Now, tell me. Why would you ever say that*

There aren't many good examples of this behavior of course, but you can check the Godfather again using a similar technique in a business setting. It's the famous senator scene.

Why It's The Best

When you are faced with a breakup threat you need to make an important decision: whether you want to stay in the relationship or end it.

And to make the best information you need to have all the information you can.
Especially since said information is readily available and staring straight at you.

The Cool Detective, such as remaining calm and asking for more information, is the only reaction that will allow you to probe and dig deeper.
It's the only answer to a breakup threat that lets you better understand where you stand, where she stands, and what she's made of.

Douglas Stone explains that in emotionally-laden conversations it's best to seek to understand first -rather than being understood-.
So make sure you let her talk and express herself freely and safely for as long as it's needed.

And now let's see why she would even ever threaten to break up:

Break Up Threats: What They Mean

As we've seen, there are three high-level reasons why she threatens to break up. Let's review them better:

- **She is naturally confrontational**

If she sees the relationship as a power struggle, you are probably better off moving on (see *Elon Musk's relationship* as an example).

> **Talulah Riley**: There's been so many times where I think "alright, I'm gonna get on a plane to England and I'm never gonna see him again

From a power dynamics perspective, confrontational women who often threaten breakups feel superior to you and confident you will yield -or at least that you'll get scared-.
That means you can probably do better personality-wise (keep reading The Power Moves :).

In case you are also part of that combative attitude, you also need to work on yourself. Check *how to fix combative relationships.*

- **Personality disorders**

Breakup threats are common with *borderline personality disorders.*
If she also engages in suicide threats, self-harm, and wild emotional swings, then she may have BPD.

- **It's a power move**

Yes, it can be a nasty power move just to get power.

If that's the case, let her follow through on the breakup. You're better off alone than with a value-taking partner.

But it also might be using the breakup as a bargaining chip to get to something specific -i.e., marriage or children-.

And that might mean either that the relationship is not very important to her or, more likely, that what she is looking for is very important to her.

Break-Up Threats: Are You The Issue?

We can't know for sure about your specific relationship, but here are a few common scenarios why your partner might have a point when she threatens to break up:

#1. Mismatch of Needs

- You are noncommittal about something important to her (marriage, kids, fidelity…)
- You refuse to give in on a major important topic (making it official, allowing her to sleep in, meet her parents, etc.)

In *The Laws of Social Exchanges*, we saw that all relationships also have a transactional and self-interested element. And if you're not giving something that is critical for your partner, you should really look within yourself and decide.

If you want to stay in the relationship, you must provide for her core needs at the very least (here's an article to *help* you decide when it's best to break *up*).

And if you cannot, don't further *waste any more of her time.*

#2. You're Not Seeing The Obvious Issue

Men often have a tendency not to see signs of discomfort, which women instead believe are pretty obvious.

She might have tried to "explain" to you that there was a problem with her behavior, but *you failed to understand it*. She thinks it's clear, he thinks she's creating pointless drama.

Both are frustrated.

Sometimes she might have tried with words, but she starts the talk *too strongly* and men end up *defensive, stonewalling*, or escalating.
The result: arguments multiply and issues don't get solved (example).

#3. Emotional Distance

You are distant, *emotionally unavailable*, or generally fail to care about her and the relationship (maybe you're an *avoidant* and you're in an *anxious/avoidant relationship trap*).

She still probably likes you and that's why she "threatens to break up" instead of just doing it.
Deep down she hopes that threatening to end the relationship will make you realize that you should take care of her a bit more.

In these cases, the "break-up threat" is a communication failure from her side. The threat is actually a cry for help. It reads "care about me" or "show me you care".
That was exactly the example we saw earlier from The Notebook.

Bad listeners and emotional distance are the situations where the Cool Detective approach helps you the most.
It will help you unearth what's going on, what's missing, and what you can do to get back on a positive track.

#4. You're Being A Jerk

There are a hundred different ways a guy can be a jerk, including *over-the-top jealousy, abusive behavior,* or acting too low power and *losing all attraction*.

Says evolutionary psychologist David Buss:

> The final tactic, called resisting control, involves expressing anger at the partner for being too controlling, fighting with the partner to preserve independence and freedom of socializing, and threatening to break up with a partner who is too smothering.

#5. You Must Eearn Her Respect

Here's the general principle:

Women don't threaten high-value men they admire and respect.

The solution: be a higher-power, confident man. Study our website or, better yet, consider Power University.

How to Stop Breakup Threats

This is only going to be relevant if you decide to stay in the relationship.

You should only if:

1. Your girlfriend is not playing power games
2. Holding the relationship hostage is not her modus operandi and if
3. You can provide what's lacking

If you want to keep the relationship, then you might even use the occasion to get better together.

Let's start:

#1. The Mindset

Your mindset should be to only accept supportive relationships.

Bar violence, threatening to break up is the hallmark of the worst kind of combative relationships and it's not to be accepted.

You do your part of having a supportive relationship, if your partner doesn't, then your partner is at fault -and you may end it-.

#2. Communicate It Effectively

The next step is to let her know just that.

After you let her vent and clarified, say something like this:

> Look, I hear you, I understand how important it is for you and I'm very glad we clarified and can fix this issue.
> Now there's something else I need to add as well.
> I can't deny that when you came up with a threat, because that's what you did, I was disappointed. *Very* disappointed.
> As I often tell you, I see relationships as teams, and as a way of adding value to each other. I only want a relationship where we are a team and we both make each other better.
> Think about it, have I ever threatened you, or do you think it's likely I ever would?
> Exactly.
> The point is, in a great relationship there's no space for threats. And I expect of you that the next time you're unhappy you speak to me instead.
> Do you understand what I mean?

> Do you think you can do that?
> Good

It's very powerful when people seek to raise your level of expectations. She will only admire you that much more after this.

#3. Become A Higher-Value Man

And finally, the most foundational fix:

Become a high-quality man that women look up to.

And I guarantee you no woman will ever threaten you again.

We help good men turn into high-quality leaders who gain women's devotion in Power University.

Why You Must Stop Your Own Threats

Threats are generally a bad idea because:

1. **It's low power** to use your biggest leverage too soon because effective should first use high power, clear, and *assertive communication*
2. **The more you threaten without acting, the more power you lose**
3. **It ruins the relationships for both**, so not really a leader-like behavior, and especially not an *enlightened* leader

Of course, some exceptions apply.
But first off, you better learn the general rule first.
And second, you rarely want to threaten the breakup, and more calmly explain why you cannot accept certain behavior within your relationship -and, as well, you generally want to frame it in the positive, rather than with the threat-.

Read this topic for the *threats' power dynamics.*

Summary

A breakup threat is a serious offense, and if you are not doing anything wrong it's acceptable only once.

Sometimes though it happens because she sees no other options with you and/or you are not meeting her basic needs.
How you answer her first threat will set the tone for the rest of your relationship.
And now you have the right tools to answer well.

In a nutshell:

1. remain calm
2. ask "why would you say that"
3. let all the real issues come to the surface
4. make your call: end it or address the root causes?
5. If the latter, fix it and let her know from now on only open dialogue and win-win are accepted
6. keep monitoring

And enjoy a much-improved relationship.

-Lucio

Onward by Howard Schultz [An Analysis of Leadership & Spin]

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Onward is the entrepreneurial history of how Starbucks founder and leader Howard Schultz got back at the helm of his company to take it back from the brink of bankruptcy during the 2008 financial crisis.

TPM Power Takeaway: A story on managing the empire succession
Onward is the story of building an empire from a vision and a dream to a multi-billion-dollar reality, almost losing it due to poor succession strategy, and stepping back to secure the empire and its cultural legacy.

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[image]Key Takeaways

- Growth for growth's sake can be poisonous
- Stay true and focused on your core values
- Reinvent and innovate around your core values

Notes

About the Author:
Howard Schultz is the founder of Starbucks. In this book, they took a bloated, inefficient company that was losing its soul and re-innovated it while going back to its roots.

Introduction

In the introduction, Howard Schultz explains how he was inspired to start Starbucks in the bars he saw visiting Italy.

He describes the experience of Italian cafes as human interactions that resembled an amazing theater unfolding before his eyes.

The goals, he says, were never only that of winning or making money, but to build a great company that also cares about people. One that would give people the feeling of Italian bars.

The idea of striking a balance between profit and social conscience is indeed a big recurring refrain throughout the book.

However, Starbucks was failing that objective. During the years when Howard Schultz stepped out as CEO Starbucks started being obsessed with growth and bottom-line revenues.

He takes the blame for that shift as well, but in January 2008 he decided to step back in and take the reins of the company again.

Onward is the story of his comeback and of Starbucks' turnaround.

Part 1: Love

Chapter 1: A Beverage of Truth

In Chapter 1 of Onward, Howard Schultz talks about the unprecedented decision of closing all US stores to retrain the baristas.

He says it was a bold move that was likely to have many critics.

It was an admission that the company was not good enough. But Howard Schultz says that he knew that was the truth.

But at the same time, it was a galvanizing move.
The author had seen the quality of Starbucks cafes and experience deteriorate more and more, and he addressing the core product was a necessity.
The simple fact that Starbucks was going for it was a strong message the company was going to invest in its people.

And to put people and customers back at its core.

Chapter 2: A Love Story

In chapter 2 I particularly loved the description of entrepreneurship from Howard Schultz.

He says that the companies entrepreneurs build become part of themselves and, as such, are deeply personal.
The entrepreneurial journey has high highs, but also low lows that can break your heart. Entrepreneurs must love what they do so much that it's worth the pain.

Doing anything else, for the entrepreneur, would be unimaginable

Howard Schultz says that when we love something, emotions drive us. And in reading Onward I had the perception indeed of a caring man with a big heart.

> **Doing anything else would be unimaginable for entrepreneurs**

Chapter 3: Surfacing

Howard Schultz explains his humble upbringing.

His father was a blue-collar delivery worker and when he fell and broke his hip and ankle he was simply sent home. No health care coverage, no severance payment, no nothing.

He deeply believed that people deserved better than that.

But just as tragic for Schultz was the fact his father never found fulfillment in his work.
Work should be fulfilling, Howard Schultz thought.

And he wanted to build that kind of company that his father never got the chance to work for.

And to build such a company, one needs intent, process, and heart.

Chapter 4: Nothing Is Confidential

Howard talks here about an internal memo he wrote and how painful it was to see it leaked.

And yet that reminded him of two things: one, that Starbucks needed to be more active in digital media.
It needed to have the power to tell its own story, rather than being the victim of a rumor mill.

And the second was that as long as he spoke from his heart, he would be fine.
He says:

> Only by not speaking from my heart do I betray that trust

Chapter 5: Magic

Chapter 5 is interesting for the dilemma Howard was facing: following his heart or the data?

Customers loved the sandwich cheese they were serving, but the melted and burned cheese was destroying the coffe aroma.
And the coffee aroma was at the core of Starbucks.

Howard Schultz was not interested in finding a compromise.

Chapter 6: Loyalty

The major lesson learned is never to let success get to your head. Schultz says Starbucks never did… Until some did.

Part 2: Confidence

Chapter 8 A Reservoir of Trust

Howard says he wanted to return to the roots, but it must have not been as a way of dwelling on their storied history.

He had to go **back to his roots while reinventing and innovating**.

He would not cast blame on anyone, and the number one priority was that of instilling back confidence in the company's future.

As a website on social interactions, I found it particularly interesting when he talked about the "reservoir of trust". Howard says that during the years, with exceptional employee benefits and respect, he had earned "points" with his employees he could now use in difficult times.

This is basically the same principle of *The Social Exchange Theory* applied over time.
And he's right, "deposits" do apply over time as well.

Did Starbucks Need Differentiation?

One thing I didn't agree 100% with Howard was when he talked about competitors and he says Starbucks needed to "differentiate itself".

I think a company with strong roots doesn't need to "differentiate" itself.

It's the commodity producers that need to differentiate themselves.
Companies with a soul and strong values don't worry about differentiating.

Indeed, soon after he explains that Starbucks had to show how their experience and customer relationships were not the same as a fast food business.
It wasn't simply based on a transaction, but there was added human value.

Howard talks further about the competition and says that McDonald's could actually serve well to Starbucks as a strong motivator.
He is basically pointing out here the rule of out-group / in-group. We all feel closer and more emboldened when there's an "enemy" outside (check how Tai Lopez uses this technique)

Partners, customers, and shareholders

Howard says he puts partners first, then customers, then shareholders.

To create long-term value for shareholders a company must create value for the employees and their customers

first.

Which is not what always happens under the pressure of Wall Street.
He was going to change that.
By slowing the opening of new stores first and putting the customer experience back in pole position.

Chapter 9: A New Way to See

Howard was going to put Starbucks' core product first: without great coffee, Starbucks had no reason to exist.
Starbucks had to be *the* coffee authority.

Chapter 10: Playing to Win

Howard says the company too often played on the defensive.

Missing the earnings estimate was the primary fear and the primary motivator behind Starbucks' actions.

It was scandalous for him that Starbucks' coffee was rated behind McDonald's.
So he would, first of all, restart grinding beans directly in the store, something that had been scrapped in a push to serve customers faster.

Chapter 11: Elevating the Core

Howard Schultz eliminated comps figure reporting as one of the main culprits in driving short-term thinking.

He refers once to walking into a store and seeing a bunch of stuffed animals for sale.
They had nothing to do with coffee or Starbucks, but the store managers said they were great for sales and had a big profit margin.

That was the mentality he needed to stamp out.

Chapter 12: Get In the Mud

Howard Schultz says that Starbucks' mentality had become that of big numbers.

A bad store, a non-perfect cup of coffee, or an unhappy customer meant nothing with the big numbers.

But they forgot that… "ones" add up.

The new mindset he wanted, instead, was to start from the core of what Starbucks was. One cup of coffee at a time.

> **Ones add up**

Chapter 13: A Reason to Exist

Howard Schultz didn't particularly like external consultants but decided to give them a try.

And was very pleased with the top global leaders who retreated a consultant firm organized.

He presented there his "Transformation Agenda", and was particularly touched seeing the line of people forming to sign their copy of the mission statement.

Chapter 14: Benevolence Inside

The author says Starbucks' coffee is exceptional, but that emotional connection is their true value proposition.

And it's something, he says, too subtle for many business people and cynics to appreciate or replicate.

He also speaks here about the importance of their Fairtrade initiatives.

Chapter 15: Beyond the Status Quo

Chapter 15 of *Onward* is all about the digital world and the new push of customer interaction he wanted to champion.

Building a website to collect customers' feedback and idea was the first step.
Today, as of 21.12.2017 it seems to me this is the result.
And it's not possible to read other people's ideas.

Chapter 16: Bold Moves

Howard Schultz talks about his colleague, Costco CEO Jim Sinegal, a hero of ethical retail entrepreneurship.

Jim told him never to lose his customers because re-acquiring them after they were gone was going to be much more difficult and expensive.

And Howard started introducing reward cards.

Part 3: Pain

Chapter 17: Whirlwind Starbucks

Howard talks about the critics he received, especially from Wall Street, for his decisions.

He says that Starbucks is not a coffee company serving people, but a people's company serving coffee, and human behavior is paramount because it's much harder to change than a recipe or a marketing strategy.

That's what most of his critics never understood.

He says that he realized later on how the good decisions he made had something in common while the bad ones didn't.
The good ones:

1. Were right and engaged partners (Starbucks' employees)
2. Was right for customers and met their needs
3. Was right for the business

Howard talks about a few more frustrations here, including how he feels it's unfair that while Wall Street was taking the world down with them, Starbucks had become a symbol of excesses with the "$4 latte".

Chapter 18: A Lethal Combination

Howard talks here about the outdated in-store technology and all the bloated expenses Starbucks was running.

He says that growth had taken precedence over everything and was the carcinogen that had invaded the company. Many of the newly opened stores didn't even make sense from a financial perspective.

Chapter 19: Reverence Building

The stores opened without paying attention to the returns they would bring and had to be closed.

Howard here describes how painful it was for him to close stores and let go of workers.
It was 600 at the end. 70% of which had been opened in the last 3 years, during the crazy push for growth and expansion.

He describes all the steps he took to make sure he was giving the laid-off workforce a chance.

Chapter 20: No Silver Bullets

Howard Schultz talks about the big success the customer card turned out to be, but how there was no silver bullet.

I found it particularly interesting that the author fell for a “silver bullet mentality”, trying to find something that would change his business overnight.
And in that desperate quest, he embraced a product, an Italian sorbetto, that turned out to be a failure.

Chapter 21: I Know This to Be True

Chapter 31 of Onward then goes into the pain of having to let go of office staff.

He says that as much as they opened stores haphazardly, so people were hired at times to cover up process deficiencies.
Throwing bodies at problems instead of fixing the root causes.

He said again they tried to do it as emphatically as possible and provided with more benefits than most other similar companies would.

Some employees understood and thanked me, but others didn’t. And Howard peaks at a few emails he received from some fired employees that hurt him to read.

He says he read every name of people being fired, not allowing them to become just a number on a spreadsheet (again, this is the danger of remote decision-making, something Sinek talks about in *Leaders Eat Last*).

He also made sure to speak about it and give people the chance to vent. Publicly.

He hoped that talking to him and doing so publicly would reinforce the very values some felt he was tarnishing.

It reminded me a bit of Ray Dalio when he says that you “must love the person you shoot” (check Principles by Ray Dalio). But Howard seems much more human than Dalio.

Part 4: Hope

Chapter 22: Truth in Crisis

Howard Schultz talks about how inefficient Starbucks’ supply chain was.

Particularly interesting as a leadership lesson learned for me was the fact that the supply chain had no real supply chain expert.
Starbucks used to promote from within, what the author calls “stretch hires”.
But it seems like sometimes one does need experts.

Starbucks’ supply chain didn’t need generalists to learn on the job, it had become a very complex matter that needed specialists.

Chapter 23: A Galvanizing Moment

Schultz talks about the 10.000 people strong conference he was being pressured to scrap to save costs.

But he was adamant to keep it.

He says he needed to see all the leaders and store managers all together to reignite the passion and remind them of the company’s values.

He says it was a huge success and a game-changer.

Chapter 24: Nimble Someone

Chapter 24 of Onwards talks about the “free coffee for voters” campaign

They managed to launch in a few weeks and which turned out to be a huge success.

It was a reminder that it was still possible to move quickly and that social media was going to be a game changer when used smartly.

Chapter 25: Plan B

Chapter 25 deals with cost-cutting initiatives and the Lean methodology Howard implemented.

He says he was skeptical, but soon changed his mind and the results were great.

Chapter 26: Stay the Course

Chapter 26 of Onwards talks about the investors’ conference.

Howard was worried, but then a former MBA player on his board of directors gave a pep talk behind curtains that helped everyone step up and deliver.

Part 5: Courage

Chapter 27: Innovate For more

Howard says that a good idea is not enough.

Great execution is equally important.
But instead of asking why, he would ask “why not”, and launched a R&D branch to come up with new products.

Chapter 28: Conviction

Howard says he doesn’t believe leadership has a single recipe for success, but he believes *great leadership* has two major attributes:

1. Confidence about the destination
2. The ability to bring people along

Also, read:

- How to be a great leader
- How to be a great manager
- Best leadership books

Chapter 29: Connecting The Dots

Chapter 29 was interesting regarding how watchful famous people must be in front of cameras.

Howard said Starbucks saw the situation in the UK as quite dire.

The journalist interviewed a UK government official soon after whom, in turn, lashed out against Starbucks.
Lesson learned.

Chapter 30: Balance The first

Howard Schultz talks here about the importance of *charm,* values, and human connection.

And at the same time he wants to do it at scale.
He wants the magic of the coffee, but also wants it replicable and of the same quality over and over.

This reminded me of Michael Gerber when he says McDonald is as passionate about burgers as any other burger enthusiast, but he made it at scale (check *The E-Myth Revisited*)

Howard wanted to balance efficiency with romance, humanity, and profitability.

The lean methodology actually allowed baristas at Starbucks to be less stressed, move more quicker, and also have more time to talk to customers.

Chapter 31: Conscience

Traveling in Rwanda Howard wonders how much can one person or a single company do.

He did not have an answer, but he knew that doing nothing was unconscionable.

EPILOGUE

The epilogue stresses again the importance of balance.

Howard says that growth is a tactic, not a strategy. And **Starbucks lost its way when growth became a strategy**.

Again Howard stressed the importance of the sustainable economic model and the emotional attachment to the customers.

And of course, being an authority in the core business. I particularly loved when he said:

> **The proof of Starbucks' coffee authority will always be in the cup**

TPM Power Analysis

Onward is a case study on building the empire, passing it down to the wrong people, and stepping back to re-set it

on the right course, with better guardrails.

TPM Power Lessons:

- **The Dominance Display:** Closing 7,100 stores for "retraining" signaled to the Board and the Market that Schultz's vision superseded short-term profits.
- **Social Capital as a Battery:** Schultz's "Reservoir of Trust" is the ultimate example of **long-term social strategy.** Sacrificing short-term gains to buid social capital for the future.
- **Control over maximum scaling speed:** Growth without control undermines your empire. It allows the short-term corporate suits to take over and milk your dream.

Practical Applications

- **Speak From The Heart and You'll Always Be Right**

Howard said that whenever he speaks with honesty, he feels safe and right.
Indeed.

- **Dreams and Execution**

A great reminder that great ideas are nothing without great executions. Great ideas, says Howard, must be embraced by those who execute them, meet customers' needs, and meet business criteria.

- **Sometimes You Need Experts**

Better to drop the silly idea that "everyone can learn anything". Sure they can, but it takes time. And sometimes you don't have that time.

- **Excel in Your Core Business**

Don't forget your product. You must always excel in your core product.

CONS

This is strictly personal.

But as Starbucks talks about humanity and the Italian espresso bar atmosphere, I couldn't help but think that **Starbucks has nothing of the Italian bars' human experience.**

Starbucks is also a multinational with a bunch of all-the-same stores.

Yes, I'm a bit *no-global* at times.

Review

"Onward" is a wonderful book that any entrepreneur of *values-based business* should read.

At times, it felt a bit self-referential though and some measures sounded silly.
For example, writing his own "CEO", with small letters, "ceo", felt really unneeded.

I'm also not a big fan of this idea of calling employees "partners" and all the bragging about providing shares (including an employee crying about it).
To me, this can easily be a form of *corporate manipulation*.

Doubts About Starbucks:
There are also plenty of doubts and rumors about Starbucks, including:

- Blocking baristas from joining unions
- Their fair trade is not that free trade after all?

I leave the final judgment to you, but whatever the case, there's lots of good in this book and I hope you will build a big and ethical business. **Get Onward on Amazon**.

The Power of Habit: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of Habit explores the science behind habit creation and change, including tips and advice on how to change our habits and make them stick.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Part One: The Habits of Individuals
  - Chapter 1: The Habit Loop – How Habits Work
  - Chapter 2: The Craving Brain – How to Create New Habits
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  - Chapter 4: Keystone Habits
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  - Chapter 8: How Movements Happen
  - Chapter 9: Free Will – Are We Responsible for Our Habits?
  - Appendix: How to Change Habits
- Practical Applications
- CONS
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Bullet Summary

- Habits are around 40% of your life. They have 3 parts: cue, routine, and reward
- You can change your habit more easily by just changing the action part: the routine
- Willpower is a habit you can grow. And it will change your life.

Full Summary

About The Author: Charles Duhigg is a reporter, so technically not a scientist or psychologist himself. However, he makes a good job here at condensing lots of science in a way that is accessible and practical.

Introduction

Charles Duhigg opens the book with the example of Lisa. Lisa changed her smoking habit when she felt she *had* to change to accomplish her goals.

When she switched smoking with jogging a cascade of positive changes started, including eating healthier.
The change of one single major pattern -known as keystone habit- taught Lisa how to change the other habits as well.

Lisa still has powerful cravings to overeat when she sees images of food, but there's new brain activity in what's

supposedly the region of inhibition and self-control.

Charles Duhigg says habits can be changed -if we understand how they work-.
And that's what The Power of Habit sets out to do.

Part One: The Habits of Individuals

Chapter 1: The Habit Loop – How Habits Work

Charles Duhigg explains that habits emerge because the brain looks for ways to save effort.

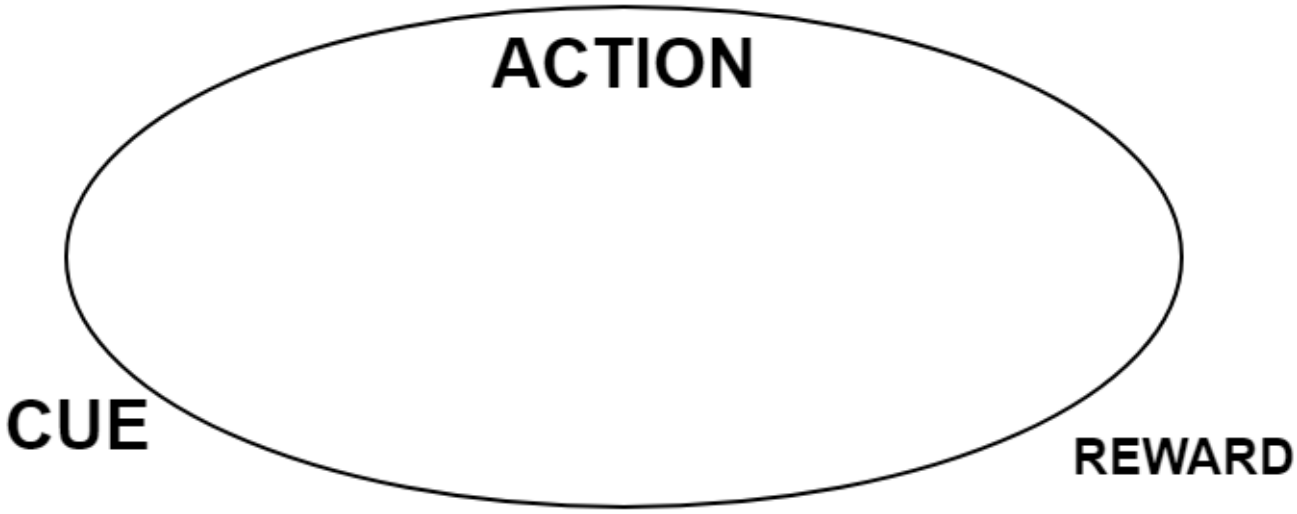
The Basal Ganglia stores habits for us, and once stored we don't need to use the rational part of the brain to execute. We just access our habits in "automated mode", and it all goes very quickly.

The process of making a routine into a habit is called "chunking".

The brain activity spikes at the beginning of a habit, when it's looking for a cue. And spikes again at the end, when a reward is usually present.
In between spikes, the brain relinquishes control of the habit.

The habit then consists of three steps:

1. **Cue**: a trigger telling the brain to go into automatic mode. Depending on the trigger the brain selects a specific routine
2. **Routine**: physical, mental, or emotional behavior that follows automatically
3. **Reward**: positive result telling our brain if this loop is worth memorizing



Habits are automated, but they are not destiny.
They can be changed, ignored, or replaced.

Old habits stay inside our heads, but as we develop and use new ones, the new ones become stronger (read *The Brain That Changes Itself* for more on neuroplasticity).
Understanding how they work is your first step in choosing the habits you want.

Companies (Ab)Using Habits

The author explains how McDonald's uses the power of habit by standardizing everything.

The shop architecture, the food, and what the employees say.
All are designed to deliver the exact same feeling anytime, anywhere.

Habits are delicate though, and even small shifts can change them. If the place closes, for example, the family can start having dinner at home.

Also, read:

- Corporate manipulations
- Best manipulation books

Chapter 2: The Craving Brain – How to Create New Habits

Charles Duhigg introduces the famous advertising pioneer Charles Hopkins.

Charles Hopkins Rules

1. Find simple and obvious cues
2. Clearly define a reward

Hopkins says when you identify those two points, products will sell like magic.

However, Hopkins was wrong.
He didn't sell Pepsodent toothpaste because of the "clean teeth reward".
That was what everyone else said too.

The difference was that Pepsodent had a chemical that made the toothpaste foamy and tingling in the mouth.
That was the cue: the tingling sensation.

Similarly, Febreeze from P&G failed at the beginning as an odor remover. People don't have any craving for "no odor".
But it exploded when P&G marketed it as an air freshener. After they used it people craved for that fresh smell.

Charles Duhigg adds then the missing third step: craving.

Craving drives habits.
When there's a craving, creating a habit becomes much easier. The endorphin rush of working out, for example, fuels the habit of working out.

Chapter 3: The Golden Rule of Habit Change

Charles Duhigg discusses American football coach Tony Dungy.

Dungy wanted to change the habits of his player, but want to do it quickly and easily.
The idea behind it is ingenious indeed.
Instead of changing the whole habit, Dungy set out to change the habits by changing the routine between the cue and the reward.

It's much easier indeed to change behavior if cue and reward stay the same. If there's something familiar at the beginning and at the end, changing what really matters, the routine, becomes much easier.

Stopping Nail Biting

Any time the patient felt the need to bite her fingers, she was advised to grab a pen or put her hands in her pockets.

Then she should search for something to provide quick physical stimulation, such as rubbing her arms.

The cues and reward should stay the same, just the routine changed.
And little by little she replaced the old habit with the new one.

The author adds though that changing any habit is easily described but not easy to do.

It requires determination and understanding of why you do what you do (understand cues and rewards).

The patient, for example, understood that nail-biting was her craving for physical stimulation.
And studies show that smokers who found out what their cues and rewards were and then changed their smoking routine with something else were more successful at quitting.

For example ask yourself: if you eat unhealthy snacks at work, might it be it's your way to get away from the desk?

Belief: The Key Ingredient for Changing

Charles Duhigg then discusses AA (anonymous alcoholics) and its efficacy in dealing with alcohol addiction.

The author says AA attacks the habits that surround alcohol usage.

Research shows that alcoholics with faith and belief in God stayed sober the most. It wasn't a specific faith in God that helped though, but more a general belief they could change.

You need to believe things will get better.

Small wins are particularly useful in that realm. Small wins galvanize us and show us that bigger wins are possible, as long as we stay constant.

Habits That Win Gold Medals

Charles Duhigg says that Michael Phelps, like many elite athletes, has the capacity for obsessiveness.

The author says what sets him apart were his daily habits.
Phelps had all his days down to routines.
No matter if it was an Olympic race or a normal day, he has his habits, always all the same, that would ground him and keep him calm and focused.

My Note:
This is pure speculation on the part of the author. We don't know whether that's true or not.
Who says that Phelps might simply not be a guy who naturally does not get stressed?

Part Two: The Habits of Successful Organizations

Chapter 4: Keystone Habits

Charles Duhigg describes Paul O'Neill's stewardship of Alcoa.

O'Neil changed the habits of the organization to revolve around the importance of safety.

My Note:
I didn't find Alcoa that great, but O'Neil taking responsibility when a tragic accident took a worker's life reminded me of true ownership as exemplified in Extreme Ownership.

The idea of a keystone habit is that of a crucial habit you can change that will change your whole life.

For example, the habit of exercising will also lead to better eating habits, better mood, etc.

Chapter 5: Habit of Success – When Willpower is Automatic

Self-discipline predicts academic results more than IQ (check *Emotional Intelligence*). And the best way to strengthen willpower is to make it into a habit.

It seems true that students with high willpower aren't working hard, says Duhigg quoting Angela Duckworth, and that's because they made it into a habit (check *Grit* by Angela Duckworth).
It's normal for them.

Willpower Is Learnable: Like a Muscle

Willpower is learnable and works a bit like a muscle.

If you use it a lot it gets tired and then you run out of it the rest of the day. Like a muscle though, it also builds over time.

The author says that patients in rehab who had written plans and a plan to cope with pain to get healthy quicker did so twice as fast as those without plans.
It's because they had plans and solutions in advance to deal with what Duhigg calls "inflection points". Inflection points are those points when pain, emotions, or fatigue hits us.
And the patients who healed quickest had cues and rewards to deal with inflection points (for example: walking to the bus stop and saying hi to their wives).

The author says that's what Starbucks does with its employees: it provides them with routines to use when they hit an inflection point and a customer screams or is rude (check *Onward by Starbucks CEO*).
And of course, as we've seen in *Drive*, Duhigg also reminds us that a sense of control over one's tasks also increases willpower.

My Note:
The science of willpower is still heavily contentious.

Chapter 6: The Power of a Crisis

Charles Duhigg talks about how crises can become the catalysts of new and better habits. An example is a hospital where nurses were mistreated and browbeaten into obedience.
When nurses noticed mistakes, they said nothing. When that cost the hospital -and the patients- many tragic mistakes, the culture changed. Cameras, checklists, an anonymous reporting system, and a culture allowing everyone to speak up transformed the hospital into an example.

Chapter 7: When Companies Predict (and Manipulate) Habits

Chapter 7 of *The Power of Habit* delves deeper into how companies use big data to predict and take advantage of consumers' buying habits. For example, why put vegetables at the beginning as they are more delicate and can get ruined at the bottom of the shopping cart? It's because after we buy healthy stuff we are more likely to buy all the unhealthy stuff that we will encounter later on.

Companies got so good at matching consumers' shopping habits and state it became spooky. Pregnant women started to wonder how the hell could their supermarket know they were pregnant. So Target started sending advertising for pregnant women… Alongside random stuff, so to make it seem random.

The Habit of a Big Hit

Also very interesting for me was the psychology of making a hit. Making a hit is all about making the unfamiliar sound familiar.
We often like familiar songs even when we say we don't. People say they don't like a specific popular song or artist, but they don't change station the way they do with a new song.
"Hey Ya!" by the Outkast was slated to be a success by the producer. And yet it was failing on the radio because it didn't resemble previous songs. The trick is to get people hooked to Hey Ya and then want to sandwich between two other popular and familiar songs. Blending the unoriginal with the original.

The Habit of Eating

Similarly, there's a strong to stick to what we've always eaten. To change the eating habits of soldiers the army changed the way it delivered a certain type of meat to make it look as if it were the same type of meat they had

always eaten. And the troops just went along with ti.

Part Three: The Habits of Societies

Chapter 8: How Movements Happen

Charles Duhigg explores the act of defiance of Rosa Parks and how it became a movement.

He says there had been similar cases before, but Rosa's turned into a movement because she belonged to many social groups and had a strong network of activists and acquaintances.

The word spread quickly and everyone who belonged to the same organizations' Rosa Parks was a member of felt she was somewhat of a friend. And they felt compelled to participate in the movement.

Chapter 9: Free Will – Are We Responsible for Our Habits?

The last chapter deals with the hot topic of free will.

We have already seen this topic in *Incognito* and *The Moral Animal*.
The author talks about gamblers addicts and says it's unclear if the brain is born with an "addiction tendency" or if the exposition to gambling changes the brain.

However, as we acquitted of homicide people who weren't fully cognizant when they killed, then Duhigg wonders if she should do the same for people with uncontrollable gambling habits.

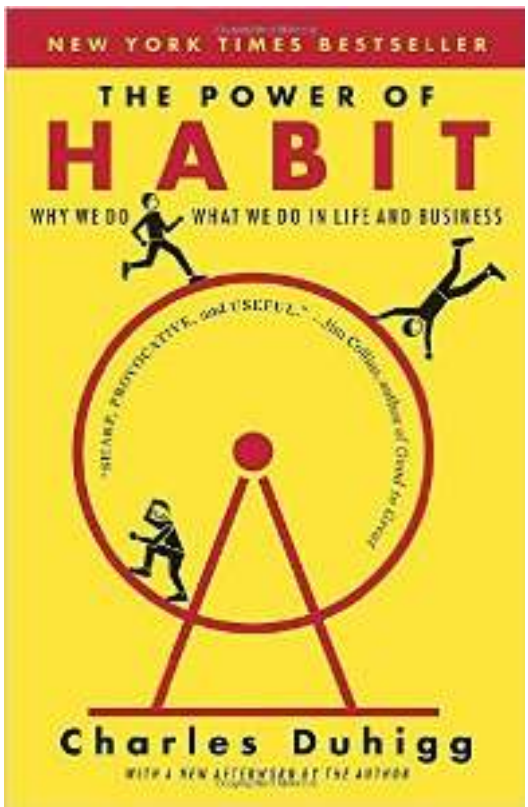
Appendix: How to Change Habits

At the end of the day, though, the message is a positive one.

Alcoholics can get sober, dysfunctional companies can transform themselves, and you can change your habits.

To change it you must:

1. **Identify your routine:** What is it that you want to change
2. **Experiment With Rewards**: the reward is often far from obvious. Change the "routine" part as a test and see which works. For example, if you're eating junk food, try eating an apple. If you still crave junk food, hunger wasn't the issue. Try coffee. If you're still hungry, maybe you needed a break. Try chatting with friends or exercising. Write down your results and keep trying until you identify the right cue driving your habits
3. **Find The Cue**: Once you isolate which reward works, find out what was the cue. They're often related to a location, a time, a person, an emotional state, or a preceding action. Keeping a log of the habit you want to change will allow you to isolate your cue
4. **Have a Plan**: Prepare a plan on what you will do once the cue comes up and stick to it



Practical Applications

Changing Habits
You can change your habits.
To make it easier for you, make sure the reward stays the same, but you change the behavior.
With time you'll have a new habit. So pick one that is not detrimental, but beneficial.

Understand why you do what you do
The second lesson learned is the importance of understanding yourself first and why you do what you do, which will open new doors of self-awareness.

Plan for inflection points
I particularly loved the tip on planning for your moment of weakness. Something I will do.
Anger is also a good motivator for your moments of weakness (read Relentless by Tim Grover, all about using your anger and dark side).

Grow Willpower
Willpower is a habit you can grow. It works a bit like a muscle and it will change your life. Start right now.

CONS

- **Split Stories Format**

Charles Duhigg starts a story and doesn't finish it.

He begins a new one and doesn't finish it.
Then he goes back to the first one and doesn't finish it.

I find this cycle unhelpful and confusing. Especially for people who read more than one book at a time or have many things going on at once.

- **Too Many Stories & Too Long**

Wouldn't it be nice to have science and a few examples and stories on how people apply in real life and how we can do the same?

That's my template of a great book and that's what The Power Moves does.

The Power of Habit at times seems to be more a collection of stories and some science than science with examples though. For me: too much unnecessary blabla.

- **Disjointed**

Some stories, topics, or chapters -like the weak ties for example- don't seem highly connected to habits in my humble opinion. I prefer laser-focused products.

Review

The Power of Habit is a great book on understanding habits and routines.

It is not as actionable as the later *"Atomic Habits*", but it contains all the practical steps you need to change your habits.

See:

Best resources for ambitious top performers

Macron VS Trump: Alpha Male Battle (Case Study)

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Macron utterly failed to influence Trump.

As a matter of fact, Macron managed to make an enemy out of Trump in a matter of a few days.

This article is a case study on influence, using Macron VS Trump as an example.

It will explain how Macron spectacularly failed to influence Trump and managed to make an enemy out of him by turning the relationship antagonistic.

By the end of this post, you will understand some key principles to influence people.

My name is Lucio, I hold a master's degree in communication, I am a *psychology buff* and most of my time goes into analyzing effective (and not-so-effective) human behavior.

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- Background: Macron Burst Into The Scene

- Macron Persuasion Mistakes
  - #1. Don't Make Enemies
  - #2. Don't Make Them Feel Inferior If You Win
  - #3. Don't Induce Them Into Vendetta (Trump Quits Paris Agreement)
  - #4. Repair Relations (But Macron Escalates Further)
  - #5. Seek Agreement (Avoid Drawn Out Wars)
  - #6. Don't Fight Out of Ego (Trump Shames Macron… Trolling Power Move)
- Macron's Influencing Mistakes
- How to Influence People: The Correct Way
- Summary

Background: Macron Burst Into The Scene

Emmanuel Macron, France's president, burst into the political scene hailed by some as the new leader of the "free" and progressive world.

I don't know if Macron believed the hype himself, but he certainly barged in with some very bold moves.
Some of them were bold in a dumb way though.

Macron Persuasion Mistakes

Let's see, in chronological order, how he spectacularly failed with Donald Trump and the Paris Agreement negotiation.

#1. Don't Make Enemies

Macron didn't like Trump.
But if you want to influence people, you should not let your personal feelings get the best of you.

The Handshake

Macron went into his first meeting with Donald Trump with a tough-guy mindset.

He knew that Trump often resorts to bullying and aggressive tactics when dealing with others -check *Trump's Alpha Male handshake*-.
So he must have thought he should go even more aggressive to show his resolve and *"how alpha" he is.*

I think he went a bit too far with that handshake and mean look. But, overall, his intention was sound. It was actually a great tactic.

A show of strength is often indeed a very effective way of handling bullies:

The problem was that he didn't stop there.

The Swerve & Let Him Wait

Macron goes too far with his "display of strength".

A few hours later from that handshake, Macron is approaching the group of the various head of state at the NATO summit.

He seems to be going straight towards Trump.
But he swerves, avoids Trump, and goes to Angela Merkel first.

Approaching someone first among a group of people is often a sign your respect him/her the most.

And avoiding to approach someone who's physically closer to you is a sign you don't respect him much or don't want to deal with him.

On top of moving away from Trump, Macron also let him wait (check *what to do when someone makes you wait*).

After Merkel, he then greets a man between Merkel and Trump, with the momentum suggesting he's about to finally Greet Trump… And instead, he goes back to a man to the left of Merkel.

Letting Trump wait even longer.
See here:

An obvious sign of disrespect from Macron.

There's no point in hiding here.
In this era, in any NATO meeting, the US president is the most important man.
Avoiding him and letting him wait like that in front of everyone is most certainly a sign of disrespect.

Trump Hits Back

When finally Macron greets Trump, Trump uses his old "yank and pull" handshake technique.

This is a staple of Trump in asserting physical dominance.

However, given all that preceded I think Trump had to somehow hit back. Macron cornered him and was taking away social values from him.
Trump, typical of him, answered too directly obviously.

But he had to do something to restore the power balance.

A better alternative for him would have been to start talking to someone nearby and let Macron wait before shaking his hand.
Or even better, quickly shaking Macron's hand without even looking at him and then starting walking again as if he had barely noticed him.

Trump didn't handle it perfectly here.

#2. Don't Make Them Feel Inferior If You Win

Sometimes you might need to stand your ground.

And you might even win.
But if you want to influence people, you must play down your wins and make friends again (there are examples of how to do it in the course).

That's the best possible scenario, actually.
You show how strong you are, and then you make friends. Win: Win, you can influence them with both fear and friendship.

Not Emmanuel Macron, though.

He runs his big mouth to the press about his first handshake (check the main part of the article).
He says Trump believes in the "logic of the trial of strength".
But it doesn't bother him, he says, as he won't let anything pass.
And, in a major blunder, he highlights that his handshake was on purpose, that he wanted to show he makes no concession.

Basically, Macron publicly talks smack about Trump and shows off how he beat him (at his own game). And **by showing off his "Trump domination" to the press, Macron makes an enemy out of Trump**.

This was his biggest mistake.

Men like Trump, who have big ego and a *fixed mindset* tend to be very touchy.
Trump had already shown, clearly and repeatedly, that he takes things very personally.
And he tends to be very vindictive -the Rosie O'Donnell example, so spiteful it's actually funny-.

#3. Don't Induce Them Into Vendetta (Trump Quits Paris Agreement)

Trump will later quit the Paris Agreement to mitigate global warming.

Some Trump aides say Trump's mind was mostly made up about the Paris Agreement. But they add that if he had any doubts, Macron's behavior cleared them all (here's the Washington Post article).

Some other political observers went much further and placed the US' withdrawal blame even more strongly on Macron.

Now the story could be over, but out of social dynamics interest, let's see what happened after and what we can learn from it:

#4. Repair Relations (But Macron Escalates Further)

Macron, taking his role of leader of the progressive world one step further, prepares a message in English for the US citizens.

He opens it by saying:

> Let me say a few words to our American friends.

Macron speaks as if he were talking to an occupied territory that needs to be liberated.
Of course, Trump was not going to like that: dah!

Soon after Macron also launched a program and a website inviting American researchers to go to France to research.
And he writes on his website "to all responsible American citizens", **clearly implying that Trump is *not***

responsible.

See it here:

Whether or not we agree with Macron on that, that certainly isn't helping their relationship.

#5. Seek Agreement (Avoid Drawn Out Wars)

War is the antithesis of influence.

When you're at war, people hate you.
In war, people suffer and die just to hurt you.

Macron started a war with Trump.

Macron then invites Trump to Paris for the national celebration. As soon as he's out of the car Trump is more dominant, but his main revenge comes later:

#6. Don't Fight Out of Ego (Trump Shames Macron... Trolling Power Move)

Now here's the interesting thing.

Have you noticed how Macron spoke to the press about his Trump handshake?

He was serious and spoke matter-of-factly about his tactics. Macron revealed all his cards, publicly, and left no room for imagination.

Trump instead never reveals his cards.
He always covers his tracks and raises dust to hide his real moves.

As the *48 Laws of Power* suggests, he conceals his intentions.

And when the press asked him about Macron after the Paris meeting, he hits him indirectly.
He says that Macron loves holding his hand. And he adds "*and that's good, as far that goes*".

People who are too used to literal talk will say that Trump is, at his usual, talking nonsense.
But he's actually very effective.
He blames the victim while at the same time taking the pi** out of Macron.

Trump pretends it was Macron who wanted to hold his hand in Paris.
And he slightly implies Macron might be a little bit too much into him. It's even a slight dig at Macron's dating preferences –same technique I describe against a guy who wanted to out-alpha me-.

Trump outmaneuvered Macron both physically and socially.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/13/us/politics/trump-interview-transcript.html

POLITICS | Excerpts From The Times's Interview With Trump

HABERMAN: He was very deferential to you. Very.

TRUMP: He's a great guy. Smart. Strong. Loves holding my hand.

HABERMAN: I've noticed.

TRUMP: People don't realize he loves holding my hand. And that's good, as far as that goes.

TRUMP: I mean, really. He's a very good person. And a tough guy, but look, he has to be. I think he is going to be a terrific president of France. But he does love holding my hand.

[crosstalk]

Macron's Influencing Mistakes

Macron did well in the first encounter.

He proved he was not to be trifled with. That's where he had to stop.

His mistake was that he kept insisting down that belligerent path in front of the whole group of heads of state.

You get respect when you deal strongly with someone one on one.
You get hatred and rage when you do it in front of others because that becomes shaming.

And then again, bigger still, he brags publicly to the press.
Macron said to the press that he wanted to show he wasn't going to make any concessions.
And of all the stupid things he said, that was one of the worst.

First of all, a man like Trump prides himself on deal-making and negotiation skills.
Macron painting himself as the best, toughest negotiator is like emasculating Trump.

Basically, **Macron created a win-lose situation**.
And when you create win-lose situations with those who are calling the shots, you lose.

Of course, at that point, Trump was motivated not to stay in the Paris Agreement as that would have felt like he was submitting.

And further still, Cialdini shows that the best negotiators are not the tough ones. The best ones *do* make concessions.
Making concessions is the best way to reach mutually beneficial agreements.

Macron had to keep his show of strength private. That way he would have gotten Trump's respect without souring relations.

> **When you create win-lose situations… You can lose**

How to Influence People: The Correct Way

Now the big question is, what should have Macron done?

We've already seen that his plan of showing Trump he was no guy to be pushed around was great.
You often get bullies' respect only after you show strength.
Or after you show you're not afraid of escalating -and ideally after you beat them-.

After he showed Trump some resolve Macron was in the perfect position to make it up to Trump and make him feel good.
Indeed, **people don't respect those complimenting them from a lower position as that feels like brown-nosing**.

But since Macron was now in a position of strength, he could use the full leverage of building Trump up.

Men with big ego like Donald Trump are more easily manipulated, and Macron should have used that to his advantage.

For example, he could have said publicly that "*Trump is the most important person in the difficult quest of saving our planet*".
And then complimented him for how deeply he cares about the common people.

That would have put pressure on Trump to conform and given him an incentive to step up to the plate.
Such as the honor of championing a worthy cause.

Summary

Tony Robbins said in one of his sales training: selling and influencing is the art of making friends.

He couldn't have been more right.
Such a simple lesson, and yet so often overlooked.

Macron did the exact opposite. He picked up a fight and backed Trump into a corner.
The Paris Agreement was the collateral damage of Macron's *alpha male posturing*.

Here's what he did:

1. Stood up to Trump
2. Shamed Trump publicly & made an enemy
3. Created a win-lose atmosphere saying there are no concessions
4. Forced Trump to hit back

Here's a summary of what he should have done:

1. Showed strength to earn Trump's respect
2. Offer an olive branch to make a friend from a position of strength
3. Strengthen that friendship
4. Appeal to Trump's ego to champion a better world

Photo by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [image]

How to Help Friends Out of Awkward Social Situations

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

We've all been in awkward social situations.

Wouldn't it have been nice in those situations to have someone to help us and support us?

This article explains how to do just that: helping friends out of awkward social situations (and saving people's faces).

Contents

- Rescuing People From Awkward Social Situations
  - #1. Let Them In
  - #2. When Ignored, Show Interest
  - #3. Hurtle Away From Awkward Situations
  - #4. Put Your Social Weight On Their Side
  - #5. Undermine Their Attacker
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  - #7. Throw an Emotional Life Preserver
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  - Cordially & Quickly
- The Social Rescue Equation
- Summary

Rescuing People From Awkward Social Situations

These are some of the most common socially awkward situations and how you fix them:

#1. Let Them In

> ***When They're Standing Outside, You Open The Door***

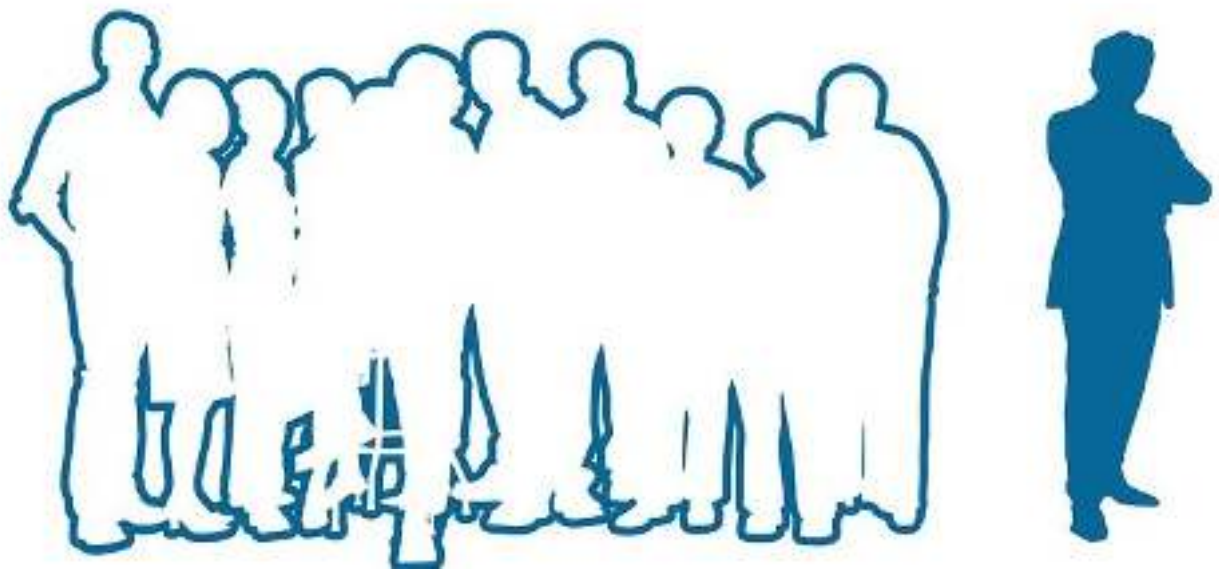
Standing at the edge of a group is a typical awkward social situation for many.

The longer someone stays in the periphery of the group, the stronger the message they are not welcome is broadcasted. And you don't want that to happen to your friends.

What you then do is this:

1. Take a step back
2. Put your arm on your friend's back inviting him to step in
3. Step back in together with your friend
4. Introduce him or mention him in what you say next

Being ostracized and left outside in the cold is a great fear of human beings. Rest assured that people will remember and cherish those very few who notice and open the social doors for them.



#2. When Ignored, Show Interest

It happens relatively often that someone is telling a story, but the people around them start ignoring him.

What to do then?

Here's an example:

I got a question
A few weeks ago a friend of mine, let's call him Terry, was telling a story to a group of 4 guys, all knowing each other, and 2 new girls.

Terry was looking at the two girls as he spoke, but they suddenly turned to each other and started talking to themselves.

Now, the story might not have been the most captivating ever, but that was very socially oblivious and rather rude of them.
Terry looked shunned and was losing big social points.

The quickest and easiest way to rescue anyone in Terry's situation then, is to jump in and make a wrap-up question (read below why wrap up).
This will allow Terry to finish his story, show everyone that he's not isolated and comfort him that there are people who care.

It looks like this:

> **Friend**: *I tried La Casa pizza parlor last week, and it was* superb. (nobody listens, tries with a question) *Have you guys ever tried La Casa*
> **Group**: (Looking away, starting side conversation)
> **You**: *Oh cool man, I've heard about that place a few times, how was it*

Also, read:

- Mastering group conversations

#3. Hurtle Away From Awkward Situations

> ***The Shorter The Time, The Less The Embarrassment***

A very common way of helping your friends out of awkward situations is to move away from them as quickly as possible.

You can pretend it never happened, change the topic or keep going.

Leil Lowndes calls it "see no bloopers, hear no bloopers".
It's a very easy and simple method that doesn't require much effort, so in the very worst-case scenario, you can always come back to it.

It works well… A lot of times.

Exception: When The Blooper is Too Obvious

But you cannot use it when the blooper was too obvious to ignore.

When the blooper is too obvious, big, or grave, then ignoring does not work.
That's where the saying "ignoring the elephant in the room" comes from.

Rather than ignoring them, you can address them head-on and "normalize it". For example, you can say it happened to you too, or you can tell a story of when something even worse happened to someone you know.
When you normalize the blooper, the blooper has no shaming power anymore.

#4. Put Your Social Weight On Their Side

> ***And Openly Take Your Friend's Side***

Most people who put our friends in awkward situations do so with opinions or with out-of-place questions.

Imagine they take one side of the scale.
But if you can put your own judgment on the other side of the scale and you have more weight, you win.

Let's review the same Sex & The City example:

> **Antony**: *Mother of God, what's with the gut. Well she's eating something out there*
> **You**: *Not true at all. I'm just bummed she's my friend. I hate having hot friends and not being able to make a move, or I'd be all over that (smile)*
> *Welcome in baby! (Open arms for a warm welcome)*

This works particularly well if your opinion is highly regarded in the topic and the attacker's opinion is not so much.

In this case, for example, it works great if you're a guy with good taste, or rumored to sleep around.
Then your opinion on the topic matters. And his opinion as a guy naturally not interested in women matters much less.

#5. Undermine Their Attacker

> ***No Social Weight, No Harm Done***

Opinions and questions that put our friends on the spot often look powerful because, *the moment we set ourselves as judges,* we *become* judges, and acquire huge social power.

If you, on the other hand, can highlight that it was simply an opinion -and a silly one at that-, you take away power from the judge.
And you relieve the social pressure.

You do so by questioning the attacker on their motives or undermining their authority.

A great way to do this is to use humor so that people will laugh.
A humorous moment also decreases tensions and helps to move on more quickly.
And, of course, you won't look butthurt.

> **Antony**: *Mother of God, what's with the gut. Well she's eating something out there*
> **You**: (rolls eyes, speaking as if you don't wanna be heard, but loud enough that everyone hears) *says the guy highly experienced in women. We'll ask him when we need an opinion on di**s. In the meanwhile, come on in*

> *Samantha, you look spectacular* (hugs her and welcomes her in)

Notice also this is the same technique Jesus Christ used to save an adulterous woman from being stoned (talking about awkward social moments lol).
It's when he said:

> ***Let him who is without sin cast the first stone***

With one simple sentence, Jesus put the attackers on the same level as the victim: everyone's a sinner.
Once everyone was on the same level, he robbed the attackers of their ability to pass judgments.
And relieved the pressure on the victim.

#6. Support Them By Relating With Them

> ***No Worries, Everybody Poops***

Of course, some of the most typical awkward moments involve body functions at the wrong time.

Ideally, your friend will own it without making a big deal about it, but this post is about how we can help our friends, not how to control their minds.

So a good technique to relieve the pressure is to laugh at it… Naturally.

You want to avoid anyone thinking it's weird, and you to do so you gotta believe it first.
It's a natural, healthy body function.

Your friend might still feel singled out though. "Yeah sure, it's a healthy body function, but it was me who did it and you're all laughing about what I did", they might think.

That's when you relate a short personal story of when you were also embarrassed.
Make others laugh at yourself so you take pressure off of your friend and get your own share of laughter.

Then you can keep talking about other people's embarrassing stories or move on the conversation to something more relevant.

And this is the wrong way to do it (from a silly video of top 10 farts, a typical socially challenging situation):

https://youtu.be/QdRTa0iK8zs?t=51

The host perks up, all surprised as if to say "oh my God, what have you just done". That's the opposite of helping our friends out of socially awkward situations.
Even worst, he looks around, which is a typical way of showing emotional disconnect.

People who laugh at other people's expenses start by looking around. They're looking for others to support them and "gang up with" (see more examples in Power University).
All of which of course puts further pressure on the woman (and are rather *low-quality behavior*)

#7. Throw an Emotional Life Preserver

> ***Problems Are Twice As Small With a Partner***

The emotional life preserver is one of my favorites because there are no dangers of escalation, no losers and it actually strengthens the bond between the group.

Look at the example of Meet The Parents, a fantastic comedy based on awkward social situations and people more

or less dealing badly with them:

Why is it so awkward?

For a few reasons, a big one being that nobody really takes Greg's side or helps smoothen the transition.
Ideally, the person who will help us is either the most powerful or the one closest to us. In this case, imagine if this had happened:

> **Doctor**: *oh really what field*
> **Greg**: *nursing*
> **Doctor**: *ahahaha. no really, what field*
> **Greg**: *nursing*
> **Greg's GF**: (gets up, goes to Greg, kisses him on the cheek) *Greg is one of the very best nurses in his hospital. He aced the MCATs but decided to be a nurse to stay closer to the patients and follow his heart. And that's why I love him* (takes a chair, invites him to sit, changes topic). *Greg, you absolutely have to try this jam, it's from our aunt's farm, Michelle* (points to Michelle) *and it's deeeliiicious. Greg also loves natural products auntie.*

Social Support: The Top Socialite Way

The top socialite saves their friends from awkward situations in two socially savvy ways:

Smoothly & Subtly

> ***Your Friend is Not a Lost Puppet***

Subtlety is the name of the game.

Your goal is always to land a hand in the most subtle way possible. And draw the least possible attention to your social rescue move.

Why?

Because the more obvious your rescue is, the more attention you draw to the social faux pas and the more you are communicating that your friend made a mistake.
And, of course, more attention to the fact that your friends need your help.

People resent those who help them too obviously, because that's not real help.
That's us showing off our social power.

Do it subtly instead. Help them save face, but make it seem as if nothing happened.

Cordially & Quickly

> ***Save The One Without Destroying The Whole***

Ray Dalio says that the whole is more important than the individual person.

If your friend puts himself in awkward social situations, it's often because he's made a social faux pas.

And he is being "socially punished" for that.

If you save him too obviously, that also means that you going against the group.
And you don't want to antagonize the whole group.

You will notice in the Terry example that the friend helping him asks "how was it".

He didn't ask "I'm super curious, tell me all about it".
Or "oh cool man, do you like Italian food".
These kinds of questions build up the victim too much while encouraging them to ramble on.

Terry has made a mistake and the group has already spoken about that. And albeit he might have not deserved a harsh punishment, you don't want to keep going against the group.

"How was it" instead is a neutral question that does not build him up, and which invites a quicker reply, such as "oh it was really good".
Terry saved faced, the topic is closed… And now we can all happily move on.

The Social Rescue Equation

To generalize, you rescue people in social situations in two ways:

1. Putting your social weight behind them
2. Neutralizing the social threat causing embarrassment

Notice that it doesn't really matter what the "social threat" causing the awkward situation is.

It can be another person -as in Antony's case-, a blooper caused by the person himself -passing gas- or anything else in the surrounding. But the principle is still always the same.

Example: Blaming the Circumstances
Your friend might be embarrassed because they "walked through" a glass door and hit their face.

The situation is embarrassing because, the mind goes, it's silly not to see it was a door.

But is it really silly?

You can still single out the door as the "embarrassing agent" and take power away from it to rescue your friend.

You can say for example that it's idiotic to use such perfectly transparent glass as a door.
"I would have hit it myself", you can add.

Now it's less about your friend being awkward and more about the safety issue of a transparent door.

Summary

Saving our friends from awkward social situations is about showing we are close to them and then helping them up. And, when applicable, by taking pressure off of them and shifting blame to the embarrassing agent.

Always do it as smoothly and quickly as possible. And everyone will love you for that.

For more serious social ju-jitsu also read:

- Defending people from social assault

How to Defend Friends From Social Attacks

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Knowing how to defend someone—whether it's a close friend or an innocent victim—can make a big difference in both their social status and your own.

In this guide, you'll learn effective and socially intelligent techniques for **defending a friend in social settings**—smoothly, and effectively.

As one of the few websites focusing on power dynamics, we use the term **social assault** to describe these behaviors:

> Social assault is an umbrella term covering any form of social attack that decreases the social power and status of the target, while potentially—but not necessarily—increasing the power of the attacker.

Social assaults include:

- Covert aggression
- Rude behavior or hostile expressions
- Implied or direct threats
- Social climbing
- Throwing someone under the bus
- Undermining others

Let's now explore several ways to protect your friend or ally when they're under social attack.

Contents

- 1. Use Physical Proximity
  - Physical Threat
  - Emotional Support
- 2. Touch: Show Your Support
- 3. Break the Pattern
- 4. Bond with the Victim
- 5. Attack the Attacker
- 6. Mediate from Above
- Case Study: A Real-Life Rescue
- Summary

1. Use Physical Proximity

Standing physically close to your friend during a confrontation signals solidarity. Depending on your posture, it can be interpreted either as a warning to the aggressor or as emotional support to your friend.

Physical Threat

This is common in high-adrenaline environments like team sports. Standing next to your friend, facing the threat directly, sends a non-verbal message: "If things escalate, you're dealing with both of us."

Watch this example from the Italian national football team, where teammates defend Francesco Totti after an

unjust red card.

- Face the aggressor directly
- Align your body toward the threat
- Project tension and readiness

Emotional Support

Contrast the above with this video, where physical presence is used to *comfort*, not confront:

Here, the woman comforting Emily doesn't engage the aggressor. Instead, she focuses fully on her friend. That silent act of support sends a powerful message: "You're not alone."

2. Touch: Show Your Support

Human touch communicates trust and solidarity. During tense social moments, placing a hand on your friend's back, shoulder, or arm says: "I'm with you." It also signals to others where you stand.

In group dynamics, this can subtly raise your friend's status—especially if *you* are well-respected within the group.

Example from *The Godfather*: Fredo tries to support Mo Greene with a public gesture of solidarity—although Fredo's low status renders it ineffective.

3. Break the Pattern

When someone is under verbal attack, both parties often become emotionally reactive. Introducing a third-party voice—especially a calm one—can interrupt that dynamic and reset the tone.

Tony Robbins calls this technique "pattern interruption."

Example from my high school days:

Our French teacher was angrily shouting at a classmate, Alessandra. During a tense pause, I calmly said, "She just

forgot her homework." The mood shifted. Others chimed in. The teacher calmed down—and even joked Alessandra should like me for standing up for her.

This scene from *Goodfellas* shows a failed—but insightful—example. Watch how Anthony tries to interrupt Tommy's aggression:

4. Bond with the Victim

Just being friendly and warm toward the victim—especially in public—can counterbalance the attacker's narrative.

However, this approach can provoke the attacker if it's too obvious. The trick is subtlety.

Watch how Fredo tries (and fails) to bond with his brother here:

Fredo was too overt and ended up escalating tensions. In contrast, a private, sincere gesture—like a handshake later on—would have been smarter.

This approach is best used when the social attack wasn't too severe or when the victim did make a small mistake and just needs some moral support.

5. Attack the Attacker

Sometimes, the only way to defend someone is to go on offense. Especially when the attacker is going too far or trying to dominate the interaction.

If you sense that silence would allow the aggressor to gain momentum, a sharp rebuttal can shift the power dynamic.

Examples:

- Call them out on hypocrisy
- Accuse them of the same behavior they're criticizing
- Undermine their credibility

This scene shows a full-blown counter-attack:

Use this approach only when:

- The attacker is clearly in the wrong
- You can handle potential escalation
- You expect others to side with you

6. Mediate from Above

In some cases, the wisest way to defend a friend is to rise above the conflict entirely and act as a neutral mediator.

This is powerful because both the attacker and the victim want peace—but don't want to look weak by initiating it. When a third party steps in with authority, everyone saves face.

To pull this off, break the emotional state first. You can:

- Interrupt with higher energy (example)
- Interrupt with unexpected calm (guy stops fight while eating chips)

Then play peacemaker: gently call out both sides, offer a resolution, and ideally end with some symbolic gesture (like a handshake or hug).

Case Study: A Real-Life Rescue

One night in Boracay, I witnessed a girl publicly and cruelly cut off a guy named John. He'd been chatting with her, but she suddenly turned her back and began ignoring him completely.

John was left standing outside the group, trying to save face. I couldn't stand her behavior—so I stepped in.

- **I gave him a fist bump –** let him reframe the social dynamic
- **I stepped back –** created space in the circle for him
- **I put my arm around him –** signaling warmth and inclusion
- **I subtly criticized the girl –** attacking the attacker, but lightly

This intervention flipped the script. He went from rejected outsider to accepted group member—and I gained social capital as someone who defends others.

Summary

Defending others in social interactions isn't about blind loyalty or raw aggression. That may also be effective in some cases, but it lacks social calibration for most contexts.

Defending your friends socially is about using power dynamics, emotional intelligence, and social strategy to:

- **Support your friend or ally**
- **Neutralize or undermine the attacker**
- **Interrupt the pattern and mediate peace**

When done well, you not only help others—you increase your own status as a socially powerful and respected individual.

The 2008 Financial Crisis: A Psychological Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The following is an excerpt from my master's thesis on the psychological causes of the subprime mortgage crisis.

The main behind is **that financial crises are *not* the exception, but a natural consequence of human nature and human psychology**.
To really understand them -and prevent them- we then need to understand -and plan- with human nature in mind.

I will share here how some well-proven psychological biases might have contributed to the financial crisis.

Contents

- Hyperbolic discounting
- Diffusion of Responsibility
- Social Rationality & Competition
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Belief manipulation (or "self-deception")
- Obedience
- Representativeness
- Base Risk Bias
- Optimism
- Overconfidence
- Illusory Superiority
- Bandwagon Effect and Herd Instinct
- Attention Anomalies
- Loss Aversion & Ambiguity Aversion
- Categorization Bias
- Normalcy Bias
- Familiarity
- Anchoring
- Abundance Bias
- Psychopathy & Sociopathy

- Sociology & psychology of financial crisis: Summary

Hyperbolic discounting

Hyperbolic discounting is:

> the tendency for people to increasingly choose a smaller-sooner reward over a larger-later reward as the delay occurs sooner rather than later in time.

Such as, humans show a preference for the temporally nearest reward by a factor that increases with the increase of the delay.

This might also be due to an *evolutionary disposition*: since we evolved in an environment where food was not readily available at will, it made sense for our ancestors to guzzle and get as much as possible on those few

occasions when they could have guzzled.

Even though rushing might have caused a stomachache a few hours later, that might have given them a big leg up in tackling a possible food shortage in the coming days (note: this is *highly* speculative, it's just my personal *guess* and there's no proven science behind it).

In the same way, when traders and bankers can binge on the profits, there's a tendency to just do it.

Hyperbolic discounting only addresses rewards, but it's probably not too much of a stretch to imagine that short-term rewards can blind people not just to bigger rewards in the future, but also to lack rewards, or even full-blown problems, in the future.

After all, we probably all know someone who spends all they have -or even borrows to consume more-.
And this is nothing, after all, more than the "grasshopper mindset" of the famous fable The Ant and the Grasshopper.

The hyperbolic discounting is magnified by the fact that the "costs" are often not borne by the individual. Or at least, there's a tendency to believe they are.

Enter, the diffusion of responsibility:

Diffusion of Responsibility

When many different parties are contributing to a flawed process it is easier for everyone to tell themselves that they are not at fault.

This helps people assuage their moral and ethical concerns about their own actions.

And in there were so many parties involved in the securitization process that it was easy for everyone to say, both to themselves and to others: "look I'm not doing anything wrong here, everyone else is doing the same".

Most might not have been even aware that something was wrong, but the diffusion of responsibility bias simply never led anyone to even *ask* if what was happening was good or dangerous.

Social Rationality & Competition

Social rationality refers to the type of practical rationality displayed by individuals in multi-agent decision-making situations.

Basically, people apply simple heuristics to complex problems and tend to follow the crowd.

Strong economic competition and social interaction push financial institutions to follow short-term strategies by taking as reference what the majority thinks (either go with or against the majority), independent of the actual relevance of what the majority thinks.

This might have brought people to sell and buy CDOs and MBS not much because they thought it was the best thing to do, but because they were in competition with the other hedge fund managers that were all doing the same.

> Our competitors are packaging and making mad money off of CDOs.
> Shall we play it safe, research thoroughly and plan for the long term or shall we do the same and make mad money too, right now?

The question had such an obvious answer that many probably never even asked it.

Social rationality, coupled with the "**competitive arousal**" model of decision making suggests that situational factors such as rivalry, time pressures and external people judging our performance stimulates physiological arousal that pushes us to win.

No matter if winning means doing the right thing or not.

Competitive arousal also crowds out more thoughtful consideration of risks and costs, and pushes people "straight into grabbing the spoils".

Social rationality and competitive arousal seem to have been instrumental to the exponential increase of leverage.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is the discomfort we feel when we take actions that conflict with our (usually positive) self-image.

To avoid coping with the fact that they were doing something wrong, bankers and traders *manipulated their own beliefs* to convince themselves that everything was ok.

This is a process called by Barberis:

Belief manipulation (or "self-deception")

The high complexity of the derivatives might have helped in the "belief manipulation".

It would have taken considerable effort to disprove the claim that MBS were relatively safe, and since we prefer the path of least resistance, the normal path was to delude themselves about their risks.

The "belief manipulation" comes in help other biases, like the **Confirmation bias**, which leads people to overweigh information that confirms their prior beliefs and to underweight information that disproves those beliefs.

Through these two biases, we can also more properly frame the role played by the mathematical models.

Many blamed the models for the crisis, but I don't fully agree with it.

The mathematical models didn't fool everyone, but they were a ready excuse and a handy instrument of self-deception.

Why shall I believe that silly voice in my head that things can turn sour?

The mathematical models of our smart finance whizzes say everything shall be alright.
So let's get back to making money…

Obedience

People are remarkably willing to follow instructions from an authority figure, even when the task seems inappropriate.

Especially in confusing situations, we look to authority figures for guidance on what to do (so our dependence on authority figures rises in the presence of a stressful situation).

Many people may have felt that what they were doing was not completely sensible but they felt a psychological need to do what their bosses wanted them to do.

It might not be a coincidence that Bridgewater was one of the very few mutual funds to foresee the crisis since Ray Dalio strongly encouraged a mentality of independent thinking and speaking up (check Principles by Ray Dalio).

Representativeness

People's tendency to see patterns, especially trends, in data that are actually completely random.

This is coupled with the tendency to extrapolate too readily (over-extrapolate) from small samples.
Housing prices had been rising for several years, so most home borrowers went ahead with their mortgages never

even thinking they could lose money.

Base Risk Bias

Akin to the representativeness is the "**base risk bias**", such as the tendency to overweight base-rate information and historical statistics.

For what concerns the crisis, an example is over-weighing historical default rates, which might give the impression of safety without assessing how the fundamentals, or the lending standards, had changed (Shefrin, 2009).
Similarly, people looked at the historical data to reassure themselves that house prices had never fallen.

Interesting how Greenspan, the then-president of the Federal Reserve, used this statistic to convey the idea that a housing crash was not an immediate danger to the economy.

Conservatism is an empowering factor of the "base risk bias", and is the tendency to overweight base-rate information relative to new (or singular) information.
This phenomenon is sometimes called "underreaction" because we tend not to react promptly to the new information we receive.
Conservatism might have slowed people's reaction when news about higher insolvency rates started to appear.

Optimism

People have excessively rosy views of their prospects and the outcome of planned actions.

This includes overestimating the likelihood of positive events and underestimating the likelihood of negative events.

In surveys, people overwhelmingly think that setbacks are more likely to happen to others than to themselves.

The optimism bias operated at many levels.
Households may have underestimated the risks of taking a large mortgage and thought house prices had still a long way up to go.

Hedge fund managers, investment bankers, and investors might have concentrated on the possible gains of their investments and underestimated the chances that they could actually lose money.

Overconfidence

People strongly overestimate the precision of their forecasts.

This too may have contributed to the poor modeling and the poor predictions we had about the future course of the housing prices.

Overconfidence may have led people to believe that they could forecast future house price movements more accurately than they actually could.

Illusory Superiority

Illusory superiority is a cognitive bias that causes people to overestimate their positive qualities and abilities and to underestimate their negative qualities, relative to others.

Optimism, overconfidence, and illusory superiority played a role on all levels.

Bandwagon Effect and Herd Instinct

We tend to assume naturally that when other people all say something it's probably true (bandwagon effect) and we tend to follow them (herd instinct) to feel safer and avoid conflicts.

Therefore, when everybody behaves as if a housing crash is so unlikely, we follow the herd believing they have good reasons for saying so.
And when everyone traded CDOs, it seemed just normal that we do the same.

Indeed, people tend to self-censor, and many could have been embarrassed to bring up the possibility that we might have a financial crisis.
Shiller says it worked for him and a colleague of his as well when he refrained from publishing a book dealing with the importance of psychology in finance.

This bias can also be strengthened by the "**omission bias**", the tendency to judge harmful actions as worse than equally harmful omissions (inaction).

It might not have been a case that many of the people that predicted the crisis was rather marginal and unconnected people, sometimes also regarded as "oddballs".

Of the same family as the biases just described is **Groupthink**, a kind of thinking in which group cohesiveness is more important than carefully considering the facts.
Symptoms include people not voicing contrary opinions so as not to rock the boat.

The pressure is on dissenters to conform and opposing opinions are viewed in a stereotypical, simplistic way.

This is often referred to as **Conformity**, the strong tendency to conform to the group we belong to even though we don't think it makes any sense. It's a behavior that stems from the basic human need to be liked and accepted by others.

Even if some bankers or traders saw the problems, they may have kept quiet for the sake of conformity

Groupthink is considered to be particularly strong when: the group is valued and attractive to belong to, which seems quite possible in the case of Wall Street.
The group is isolated from other opinions, and indeed there was not a very big diversity on the Wall Street boards, and often risk managers weren't lent a hearing; there's a strong leader who makes his view known, and is a *strong assertive leader* is almost a prerequisite to becoming a CEO in Wall Street.

Also, see:

- **How to be assertive**

Attention Anomalies

We are more concentrated on emotionally salient stimuli and on what people and media around us are talking about.

Thus, investors might see their brain resources hogged by the "attractive" yields of the subprime borrowers that everybody is talking about, or by the growth targets discussed in the company's meetings and spend less time researching what might go wrong.

Loss Aversion & Ambiguity Aversion

People have an aversion to losses and ambiguity, especially under certain circumstances.

For example, the loss aversion is stronger when we've recently experienced a loss.
And the ambiguity aversion is stronger when we don't feel well prepared to understand what's happening.

Once CDOs and MBS started losing value both institutional and individual investors experienced increases in loss aversion and ambiguity aversion, leading them to quickly dump their holding of risky assets quicker than the real economy would have granted for.
This bias possibly accelerated the domino effect.

Categorization Bias

Categorization bias leads to partitioning objects into general categories and ignoring the differences among members of the same category.

Categorization bias may produce unintended side effects if the members of the same category are different from each other in meaningful ways.

The categorization likely played a major role once the rating agencies rubber-stamped their ratings.
So all investors considered all AAA assets to be the same when it clearly turned out that wasn't the case.

Similarly, AIG, one of the biggest insurers of toxic CDOs, treated the mortgage pools it was insuring at the beginning of the 2000s as the ones it insured in 2005-2006, even though the latter contained far more subprime mortgages.
A behavior that provided devastating for AIG and for the ripple effects it provoked.

Normalcy Bias

The normalcy bias refers to a mental state people enter when facing a disaster.

It causes people to underestimate both the possibility of a disaster occurring and its possible effects.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, in his book "*The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*", explains it as the psychological biases that make people individually and collectively blind to uncertainty and unaware of the massive role of rare events in historical affairs.

According to the Black Swan Theory, unpredictable events are much more common than people think and are the norm and not the exception. Black Swan events are hard to predict based on historical events.

This, coupled with the tendency to have an optimistic view, helps explain why many thought it was impossible some catastrophic event might have happened.
Mathematical models were also built without taking into account what back then seemed highly unlikely events and the results of the model further helped many people to overlook the chances of improbable events.

Familiarity

We feel safer with what's familiar, even when what's familiar might not be necessarily safer.

Supported by the notoriety of a certain financial instrument, we are reassured into buying it.
We don't notice this influence, and we distort our risk-profitability ratio.

Maybe this could also be stretched to include the "daily familiarity" we developed with certain securities. So for example after years of lucrative gains with CDOs and MBS traders might have felt those securities "reassuringly safe".

Anchoring

The **anchoring** (or **reference point bias,** Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) is the tendency for which we tend to make forecasts on the ground of a starting assessment, or of a price thought to be "right".

An anchor to which our mind binds and prevents us from reacting promptly when new information surfaces.

So for example, people holding CDOs who were rapidly depreciating might have been brought to keep them because the price they were currently trading for was "far below the right one".

Lehman Brothers traders, including his CEO, bought a big portfolio of MBS as it sought to deleverage because they thought "it was a great deal".
It was such great because they were comparing it to the old prices.

This, maybe also more importantly, is also true the other way around. People that get used to certain profits, might use them as references.

And as the risk premiums declined and the same amount invested was yielding less, here it surfaces the "need" to leverage to reach –and surpass- the reference point of the previous years (or quarter, or trade).
A reference point can also be set for emulating purposes. UBS increased dramatically its exposure to subprime products because a consultant company had advised doing so (McKinsey).

Abundance Bias

Abundance bias might kick in when there's so much to one's disposal that worrying about the future shrink till reaching zero, and an end of the bonanza doesn't even cross people's mind.

Traders and bankers were so busy splurging that they just couldn't fathom that the end of their plush life might be in the cards.

Psychopathy & Sociopathy

Finally, it's possible that the higher concentration of sociopaths and psychopaths in high-risk and high-reward industries such as investment banking and trading might have also contributed to the crisis.

Psychopaths tend to be highly driven towards gains and rewards while ignoring risks to both selves and, even more, others.
Many psychopaths are also undeterred by the risk of punishment (which few people were considering anyway thanks to the diffusion of responsibility bias).

For more on psychopathy in business organizations, please read:

- **Psychopathy in business**: it's Machiavellis that reach the board

And of course, also take a look at:

- **Machiavellianism**

Sociology & psychology of financial crisis: Summary

The markets were –and maybe still are- ill-prepared to cope effectively and efficiently with the less rational side of human nature.

When the bubble was inflating, judgment and decisions about risk, reward, and the evaluation of success had become systematically compromised.

The excitement of gains erased the anxiety about potential consequences, producing herd effect, and competitive arousal.
Plus, any anxiety about the risks of financial collapse and legal consequences was quelled by the "diffusion of responsibility", as people were comforted by the fact that "everyone else is doing it", so "it's safe being a scoundrel when everyone else is a scoundrel">

When the bubble started deflating the same psychological forces started acting in the opposite direction.
Anxiety and panic broke out leading to the 21st-century version of bank runs, far worse than a 20th-century version of bank runs since the whole system was far more global and interconnected, which lead to a domino-effect collapse.

And in the aftermath of the crisis, the emotional pain and social status loss that is involved in accepting and admitting responsibility stand in the way of learning our lessons.

Disrupt You! Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Disrupt You! by Jay Samit teaches readers how to lead disruptions and how to *think like successful entrepreneurs.* It explains what disruptions are, how you can use them, and how you can create them. But, first and foremost, how you can disrupt yourself.

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Bullet Summary

- Disruptions create a new market and business model
- One disruption spawns a wave of disruptions as it propagates to different markets
- You can profit without inventing by applying a disruption to new markets or creating ancillary services/products
- Other people's money is the best funding. To tap it creates an opportunity for others with your product

Full Summary

Jay Samit calls disruption the intense introspective process of questioning his assumption about himself and his goals.

With self-disruption, he realized he could accomplish what he before thought impossible. And he realized two things:

- If he can express problems as a series of challenges he can build a team to meet those challenges
- Businesses don't sell products; They sell solutions.

Jay Samit says that the mentality of disruptors is that of seeing obstacles as opportunities (check also *The Obstacle is The Way*). disruptors constantly reinvent themselves and their careers and are never afraid of losing their jobs because they create jobs.

To become a disruptor you don't an MBA or an engineering degree. You simply need to think like a disruptor.

Disrupt You! is Samit's way of teaching us how they do it.

Chapter 1: In Defense of Disruption

Jay Samit says that disruption almost always happens because of technological change, but the impact of disruptions goes far beyond the technology industries.

The author talks about the laserdisc in which he had invested feeling safe it would be the next revolution. It failed instead. And he learned that it failed because it tried to compete with the old technology, the VCR.
But for disruption to happen, it must create a new market and transform the existing business model.

Samit refused to give up and learned that failing is trying something that doesn't work while failure is throwing in the towel. And he refused to be a failure.

The author says that big disruptions often set out a chain of disruptions.

For example, cloud computing, wearable technology, 3-D printing, etc are providing the chance of making a fortune with hundreds of related applications of the new tech.

Sometimes in the simplest way.
For example, while the entrepreneurs were busy coming up with complex computer systems in the '90s, Samit's friend Billy made a fortune selling mouse pads and plastic floppy disc containers.

With a big disruption underway, you should apply your unique experience and viewpoint to look for opportunities in parts of the market that others have overlooked.

With his own company, Samit looked at how personal computers were disrupting non-technology-related business.

Since he came from advertising, he applied his own point of view to sell the first CD-ROM with stock photos in it. The stock photo companies hadn't realized the big opportunity that lay on the CD-ROM.

In a period of endless disruptions, says Samit, the secret to thriving as a disruptor is this: Use existing technology to disrupt a different business.
A wealthy disruptor then is the one who captures the value which is released by disruption.

The chapter ends by saying that your corporate job isn't really secure. And it's not security that robs ambition, it's the illusion of security that robs ambition (something Seth Godin also talks about in linchpin)

> **The world is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking**

Chapter 2: Become a Disruptor

Jay Samit says that being a disruptor is a state of mind.

It's looking at opportunities in the obstacles you face, to respond to setbacks as if they were new beginnings and, he says, it's being the silver-lining business.

The author says that every person who has transformed a business started with a personal problem and then took note of how many others shared the same problem.

Examples:

- Branson started Virgin when he noticed how many stranded people were at the airport and he chartered a plane.
- The girl who started the dresses for rent noticed how many girls shared her problem of wanting a top designer dress but couldn't afford to buy it.
- The man who started an online university noticed how many students were drowning in debt.

All these people shared a disruptor mindset.

Instead of waiting for someone else to solve the problem or to suffer in silence, they jumped in headfirst. Massive problem equals massive opportunity.

THE ART OF SELF-DISRUPTION

Jay Samit quotes the Buddha when he says that "the mind is everything. What you think, you become".

He says you must remove all definitions of self, internal or external, that limit your progress.
Self-disruption is like undergoing surgery, but you are the one self-operating.
It's not a comfortable process and it requires getting out of your comfort zone.

The author uses the same value chain links used to describe businesses to describe our own personas:

- R&D: takes input from the environment and sees them as obstacles or opportunities. Annihilate all beliefs holding you back.
- Design & Production: our actions in response to our perceptions. Avoid baby steps, train to see the big picture, and go from the solution to where you stand now
- Marketing & Sales: do something you never thought you could do, that'll change your perception of what's achievable
- Distribution: how we spend our time and direct our focus, think of how you can become more effective and do more of what you love and moves you towards your goals

Jay Samit focuses a lot on the beliefs we hold and how they influence us.
He mentions the Matthew Effect, Children who are told they are smart to do better (my note: watch out here, it's better to tell children they work hard, read *Mindset* by Carol Dweck).

Basically, you get what you believe you deserve.

The author also recommends visualizing and I recommend you get the book for his own personalized suggestions.

Chapter 3: The Disruptor's Map

Samit stresses the importance of having a map and a plan.

Think about what you want to achieve, both in your career and outside your career.

What do you want to achieve and experience?

Work-life balance is about choosing what's important in your personal life and career and then placing them on your map according to importance.

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can start working on it.

The author stresses the importance of mentors, invaluable and often crucial to disruptors' success.
He says they are easy to find, just read the blogs in your industry and you'll quickly find the luminaries you aspire to emulate.

Last but not least, Samit urges us to get going.
Time waits for no one and the number one regret of dying patients is they wish they lived according to their true self instead of following the expectations of others.

> **Failing to plan is planning to fail**

Chapter 4: Building a Brand of One

Jay Samit talks here about personal branding.

He says for a long time he believed his work should speak for itself, but he realized that's not true.
Our personal brand often speaks for us before we even have the opportunity to open our mouths or show our work.

A few great ideas to grow your personal branding:

- Public speaking: many conferences are desperate to find speakers, and the more niche your topic the less competition
- Certifications: especially from big brands so you can put their logo on your business card or CV
- Big brand endorsing: big publishers need people to write for them, and your story on the Huffington Post makes you a columnist

- Guerrilla marketing: having stars use your product

Particularly interesting were also the techniques Jay Samit describes for getting a dream job, such as buying ad word impressions for executives who are very likely to Google themselves.

Chapter 5: Disruptors at Work, the Value of Intrapreneurship

Jay Samit says that big companies are too busy fighting other big companies to often pay attention to future disruptors.

My note:
In some cases, this is because, as Peter Diamandis explains in *bold*, new technologies develop at a logarithmic scale, meaning they develop without challenging the status quo for a while, but when they start disrupting they do so abruptly.

The author says that big organizations are built for efficiency, not innovation. Management is rewarded for achieving more of what's already proved to be successful, and trying new paths is often a career suicide.
Also, any initiative that could cannibalize or kill the existing revenue generators faces strong internal headwinds.

Basically, the whole culture is strongly biased towards safe and short term -which ends up being nonsafe in the long term-.

So big organizations prefer to overpay for a new promising startup than do the internal investment required to do the disruptions themselves.
And this is all great news for the disruptors.

Most Silicon Valley millionaires indeed didn't become millionaires by building profitable businesses, but by selling to bigger and established companies.

Disrupting From Within

However, Jay Samit still managed to disrupt from within during his stints at Sony, EMI, and Warner.

He says the trick is to get what you want by giving the company what they think they want.

And of course, never complain that the current management doesn't understand you, it's always up to you to communicate to them in a way they will get it, which is by presenting the new idea as if it were an old one.

This is something *the power of habit* explains well: always pitch your novelty through familiar lenses.

And when he received a NO to his project, Samit understood another huge lesson: you can do whatever you want in life as long as you can find someone who is willing to pay for it.

I invite you to read the book where Samit shows exactly how he's done it.

Chapter 6: In Search of the Zombie Idea

Jay Samit says that every time you get a great idea, your task is to find a way to kill that idea.

Do it yourself and early, or the marketplace will find it and you will waste time and money.

The faster you can kill bad ideas, the quicker you can pivot to a successful one. Speed to fail should be every entrepreneur's motto, says Samit.

And when you can find a big idea that can't be killed -what he calls a Zombie Idea-, then go ahead with it.

The Big Idea

Jay Samit says that the "Eureka" moment of the big idea is a myth.

Big ideas are actually easy, but they don't come from moments of brilliance, they come from careful and methodical observation.

He says you have to look at the existing value chain that is most easily upended. Look for the link that will shift the most dollars away from the present setup.

Uber for example disrupts one link of the taxi chain: distribution. And it shifts the money from thousands of small cab companies to one centralized software.
The next step is to capture as much of that unlocked value in the shortest possible time.

The author encourages his students to look at their lives and write down every problem they encounter and every possibility of disruption.

The Stealing Ideas Myth

Jay Samit says that the common misconception of keeping your great idea under cover or else someone will steal it is baloney.

If your idea is original, people will say it won't work. If it's not original, people will say there's already X and Y company doing it so why should they invest in it?

Also falling in love with your great idea is silly, your goal is to kill it and attack it until what's left is a Zombie Idea.

> **Nobody is going to steal your stupid idea**

Chapter 7: Pivoting Your Energies

Jay Samit says that pivoting is a skill and a difficult decision.

But if it has to be done, get rid of your silly emotional attachment to your original idea and change course.
Staying the course too long because changing is a tacit admission you were wrong is a common mistake.

A great way to decide when the time has come is through data.
Data has no ego and makes an excellent copilot, the author says. It may disappoint, but it never lies.

So invite it any time you can.

Chapter 8: Unlocking the Value Chain

Chapter 8 deals with the potential of identifying links that are costing you too much and that can be safely discarded.

For example, Cirque du Soleil got rid of the animals which were the most expensive link, and focused on the most profitable and value-adding parts of the show.

Chapter 9: R&D – Unlocking the Value of Waste

Jay Samit says there are billions and billions worth of research in universities that could yield to huge new disruptions.

And major disruptions are under way only looking for new uses. You only need to look.

And if you don't know where to start, you can crowdsource the development of your invention.
A website like Quirky is such an example of bringing the product to market via crowdsourcing.

Chapter 11: Production – Reuse, Repurpose, Re-create

Jay Samit stresses again that for an innovation to be successful it must not just create value, but capture it -unless world improvement is your goal, then you have Wikipedia and Craiglist that only displace industries without capturing the value-.

With his company, called Jasmine Samit, he was making money only when he was hired to produce courses.
He was like the old scribes before Gutenberg invented the movable printing press.

Then he contacted his big customer brands and proposed to sell their courses to other brands with their logo in it and he'd give them a revenue share. Now Samit was making money even while sleeping.

He talks about the revolution 3D printing will unleash and how the copyright laws will be easily circumvented again by everyone who wants to.

Those who will cling to the status quo will lose. Those who recognize the inevitability of such changes stand to benefit the most.

Chapter 12: Marketing & Sales

Differentiation and disruption in the sales model can be as revolutionary and disruptive as the product itself, says Samit.

The challenge is not in coming up with a new and creative marketing campaign, but rather in developing completely new sales strategies, channels, and business models.
Differentiation of the sales model can be as powerful as the differentiation of the product itself.

I invite you to read the book for further examples.

Chapter 13: Distribution – Unattained Value

Physical dollars have been replaced by digital dimes in many industries, and yet several companies have figured out a successful model allowing them to capture the greatest value.

They did it through distribution while disrupting the producers' ability to maintain profit margins.
Distribution, Samit says, seems to be the higher value link in the digital age.

Amazon, eBay, and iTunes squeezed the producers' profits and amassed a fortune for themselves.
And a new generation of entrepreneurs is connecting the world without ever having to create any content themselves.

Chapter 14: Capital Revisited – Other People's Money

I love Samit's take on Other People's Money (OTM).

Venture capital and borrowing can be great ways of expanding your startup, but whenever you can OTM beats them all.
To use OTM you need to create opportunities for those who have more capital than ideas and entrepreneurial wherewithal. It's your chance to monetize your creativity and go-getter attitude.

In a nutshell, the secret to use OPM is to find someone else's problem and make your product their solution.

The secret to OPM is to find someone else's problem and make your product their solution.

When working for Sony and trying to launch the company's own e-store for music against the much more powerful iTunes, Samit managed to get free partnerships with rock events and McDonald's.

Especially the partnership with McDonald's was not easy and had a crazy twist in the end.

The way Samit solved it is genius and I invite you to read the book for it.

Chapter 15: Disruption in the Era of the Crowd

Samit says that the easiest industries to disrupt are those where inefficiency is your only competition.

An example is the real estate industry, where investing was complex and time-demanding.

Websites and services allowing investors to simply put a small chunk of money in projects of their choice easily disrupt an industry that was so inefficient at its core.

Chapter 16: Disrupt the World

The last chapter is about the disruptive process and attitude applied not just to industries but to countries and political regimes.

The examples Samit uses are the Arab Spring and the Syrian revolt again Assad, albeit I'm not too sure that applies well seeing the results in hindsight.

Jay Samit makes a last great example with bottle recycling though. He says passing the bill to recycle used plastic bottles seemed so very difficult because of entrenched benefits.

But when the bill gave potential new profits to the local bottlers, it became immediately easier and embraced by everyone in the industry. The message is that to solve a dysfunctional political systems a business approach may be needed.

My note:
On top of a business approach, it's a human approach is needed. The example was, after all, a simple application of the social exchange framework.

Epilogue: The Self-Disruptor's Manifesto

Jay Samit reminds us that to change the world we first have to start with ourselves.

And once we do that our future and the world's future are far more malleable and we realize.

Photo by jdlasica

Disrupt You: Take Aways

Disrupt Yourself
Before changing the world, seek to disrupt yourself first.

Use Data
Use data whenever possible to decide. Data doesn't have an ego and doesn't lie.

Use OPM
Whenever possible, position your product as a solution to someone else's problem so that they will invest or help you out by working together.

CONS

Disruption Mindset
Not technically a con, but just a reminder. Peter Thiel in *Zero to One* says that the "disrupt" mentality can be dangerous.

If you take it to mean "we will destroy X industry" it will pitch you *against* people and big companies instead of giving you a mentality of *adding* value to people.

Samit never meant to use "disrupt" in an aggressive way, but it's a caveat to keep in mind.

Review

Disrupt You by Jay Samit is possibly the best book I have read so far on entrepreneurial mindset -with examples too!-.

It's packed with insights, clear examples tons of "wow moments" and good step-by-step explanations.
On top of it, an aura of positive, contagious can-do attitudes permeates this little pearl cover to cover.
Absolutely recommended.

Note: I'm honored Jay Samit himself commented on this page and he has 40 pages for free on his website, snag it out before you get the whole book: **http://jaysamit.com/** or:

Get Disrupt You on Amazon

Thinking Fast and Slow: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

Thinking Fast and Slow (2011) is a popular psychology book dealing with human cognitive biases, including descriptions, research, and examples. Daniel Kahneman, the author, also seeks to develop a theory of human biases, assigning biases to the "fast" way of thinking, as opposed to the slower and more rational way of thinking.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Part I: Two Systems
  - Part II: Heuristics and Biases
  - Part III: Overconfidence
  - Part IV: Choices
  - Part V: Two Selves
- Criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Overview

- We are less rational than we think
- Intuitive heuristics are simpler rules we use when faced with a complex reality
- Only when intuitive heuristics are not enough we engage our slower, rational brain

Notes

About The Author:
Daniel Kahneman is a psychology professor and researcher, a Nobel laureate, and widely recognized as a leading researcher and expert on human psychology.
Kahneman collaborated with Amos Tversky for a long time in pioneering research on human cognitive biases and heuristics
In the book "*The Undoing Project,*" Michael Lewis tells the story of the friendship and rivalry between Kahneman and Tversky.

Introduction

Daniel Kahneman says economics was blind for many years to the fact that humans are far from rational.

Today, the idea that our mind is susceptible to systematic bias mistakes is generally accepted, and, in good part, it's thanks to the work of Kahneman and Tversky.

Part I: Two Systems

Kahneman describes two different modes of thinking we deploy, which he calls System 1 and System 2.

System 1 is our default system. System 2 is only called upon when system 1 doesn't have a ready and quick answer

and an “escalation” is needed.

System 2 also monitors System 1 to ensure that any suggestions and default decisions are correct, and it suppresses the ones that aren’t. But more likely than not, system 2 will go along with what System 1 dictates. Kahneman says “laziness is built deep into our system”.
Also, self-control shrinks when our brain is fatigued.

System 1: Fast

System one is fast and automated, it needs no voluntary control. It operates on simple heuristics that kick in automatically for the simplest actions and behavior. System one takes care of things like:

- 1+1
- Understand an angry face
- Drive (after you’ve been driving for a long time)

Some complex or more difficult tasks, such as the example of driving, can be “burned” into the system after adequate and long enough training and repetition.
The insightful part of the book is that system one, the nonrational part of our brain is much more influential than most of us would want to believe.

System 2: Slow

System two is the slower, rational part of our brain, the one that uses focus and concentration looks at different variables, and makes pondered decisions.

We use system two when for example:

- Fill out a complex form
- Decide between two job offers
- Walk faster than we are used to

Some Heuristics Daniel Kahneman introduces are:

- **Priming**

Conscious or subconscious exposure to a particular topic primes one to think in the direction of that topic.

Studies proved that people reading about older people walked slower and people who were asked to move more slowly more quickly recognized words related to old age. And it’s true that our body and movement influence our mood (emotion is created by motion says Tony Robbins).

2019 Update:
Priming has been largely criticized and, possibly, debunked. Read the criticism section for more.

- **Cognitive Ease**

Things that are easier or more familiar seem more true.

Similarly, if a statement is linked to other beliefs or preferences you hold, it will also seem truer.

Repeating something over and over then does work in making it sound truer (check Trump leveraging cognitive ease during his first and second debates).

- **Coherent Stories**

We always try to make the world and the events fit into stories that make sense to us.

- **Confirmation Bias**

We look for evidence of what we believe is true and discard evidence proving the contrary (this is why for a long time scientists refused to believe the brain is malleable).

- **Halo Effect**

When we like someone we tend to fill in the dots of traits we haven't even seen yet with positive characteristics.
And the inverse is true.
That's why first impressions are very important.

- **Substitution**

When faced with complex questions we often substitute it with an easier one instead and answer that one.

Part II: Heuristics and Biases

System 1 doesn't like doubt.

As we've seen for the confirmation bias, it's System 1 that especially takes care of fitting exceptions and ambiguity in a way that fit our stories.

System 2 is our inner skeptic.
It can handle doubt and can maintain opposing thoughts at the same time. But doubt is more taxing for the brain and sometimes System 2 just doesn't intervene at all.

- **Law of Small Number**

We often lend high credibility to the result of small samples.
It's a mistake because small samples are likely to lead to imprecise outcomes and are not statistically relevant.

- **Confidence Over Doubt**

We tend to make connections and attribute causality when there are actually no connections.
Sometimes it's pure chance or luck and there's no law or design behind the events.

- **Anchoring**

Anchoring (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) is the tendency to change our own beliefs and guesses based on the number we've previously heard.
This is also sometimes used in negotiation as explained by Cialdini.

- **Availability Heuristic**

We tend to overestimate the odds of something happening when it's easier for us to retrieve that information.
So being exposed to news about terror attacks, we tend to overestimate the likelihood of them happening.

- **Rare Events Overestimation**

We overestimate the chances of rare events happening and we assign them too big a weight in our decision making.
Also read *The Black Swan*.

- **Representativeness**

We judge something we don't know based on how familiar it is to something else we know.

For example, baseball scouts used to recruit new talents based on how closely they resembled previous successful players and the league improved when statistics instead started becoming common use.

- **Conjunction Fallacy**

We are more likely to believe a person has more than one characteristic based on plausibility than having a single characteristic, which is obviously statistically more likely.

For example, students rated as more likely that Linda is a feminist teller than her just being a teller.
It's because system 1 overlooks logic in favor of plausibility and system 2 just doesn't always intervene.

- **Underestimating Statistics**

When we only have statistics we usually make accurate predictions, but if we have statistics and plausible stories, we favor stories over data.
So we tend to generalize from single stories and events rather than going from the general to the specific.

Also, read "*How to Lie With Statistics*".

- **Overlooking Luck and Chance**

We assign stories and explanations to events that are just random.

If we yell at a bad performance, we think it's our yelling that "sets them straight", but it's just the natural regression to the mean.
But yelling is not the best way to teach. It was bad luck the student had a poor performance and it was simply likely he would do better the next time out.

- **Intuitive Predictions**

Sometimes we just "feel right" and trust our intuition.

That's usually overconfidence bred from System 1, which has a tendency to predict events and extreme occurrences from flimsy evidence.

Part III: Overconfidence

- **Narrative Fallacy**

We look at the past and create false narrative stories that make sense to us, but that do not necessarily -and often do not- adhere to reality. And we tend to underestimate chance and luck.

- **Hindsight Illusion**

Our intuitions feel much more true after the event has actually happened.

So we get the famous "I knew it" or the worst "I told you so" when nobody actually told us anything.
We are prone to giving too little credit to good decisions because in hindsight they seemed obvious. And we overestimate bad decisions as they also seem like obvious blunders in hindsight.

And that's why Ray Dalio suggests to judge the swing more than the shot.

- **Illusion of Validity**:

Sometimes we feel confident about our judgment because we base our judgment on the coherence of what we have and the cognitive ease we experience in processing it.

Of course, we often discard to check other data and neglect to consider data running against our beliefs.
Intuition exists, but it's more an immediate pattern recognition based on high experience or highly emotional events.

- **The Planning Fallacy**

We have a strong tendency to plan with the best-case scenario in mind and we often fail to take into account worst-case scenarios and likely issues we'll face.

- **Optimistic Bias**

We tend to overestimate our capabilities and believe the final result lies fully in our hands.

We discount the element of luck and the uncertainty of our environment. This is accentuated by human nature: confident leaders make us feel more certain and we turn to them.

Part IV: Choices

Daniel Kahneman introduces this part of Prospect Theory, the theory that granted him a Nobel prize.

I invite you to read the book for more because it's very interesting.
But basically, the theory debunked the aspects that viewed humans as being rational and mathematical when approaching money and risk (Expected Utility Theory).

For a quick summary:

1. The value of money is subjective to how much one already has
2. Changes in wealth are subjective to how much it previously changed
3. Losses command a much bigger real estate in our brain

For more on behavioral psychology see Misbehaving by Richard Thaler.

- **Loss Aversion**

We dislike losing more than we like winning

Edit: Not true on loss aversion
And subsequent research showed that gain frames can work better, depending on context. See more in the *Routledge Handbook of Persuasion*

- **Theory Blindness**

Once you accept a theory you tend to use it as a filter to see the reality.

But you only see evidence supporting the theory and tend to exclude and omit anything else running against that theory.

- **Endowment Effect**

We overestimate the value of an object we like and use.
We invest it with emotional attachment and we hate to lose it.

- **Possibility Effect**

We tend to overestimate the possibility of highly unlikely positive outcomes.
Think of lottery tickets.

- **Certainty Effect**

We underestimate the likelihood of highly likely scenarios

- **Expectation Principle**

The Possibility and Certainty Effect together explains how people don't make decisions based on the weighted value of the outcomes, but more on the psychological feeling that winning and losing gives us.

This means:

1. We are scared large likely gains might not happen and will accept much smaller but sure gains
2. We overestimate very small chances of winning huge. And we buy lottery tickets.
3. We buy insurance -and often overpay for it- because it buys us peace of mind
4. Faced with high chances of making things worse, but a small chance of improving we'll take the gamble because it gives us hope.

And that's why gamblers keep on losing till they have nothing left (or until they can borrow more to lose).

- **Disposition Effect**

We prefer selling stocks we are making money with than the ones we are losing with.
Selling losers is an admission of failure and selling winners makes us feel smart.

- **Sunk Cost Fallacy**

To avoid the bad feeling of cutting losses and admitting failure we stay too long in negative scenarios, be it losing trades or abusive relationships.

- **Framing**

How we verbalize the same scenario will lead to different choices.
Doctors are more likely to operate with a 90% survival rate than with a 10% mortality rate.

Part V: Two Selves

Daniel Kahneman says we have two selves: one who experiences and the other who remembers.

Once the event is over, the one who remembers is the one in control.

And if we had an amazing holiday but on the last day had a negative experience, we are likely to remember the holiday as not really positive.

Kahneman also notices that people are really bad at assessing their global well-being -they answer how happy they are right now- and what will make them happy in the future.

- **Ending Fallacy**

How an experience ends takes a disproportionately bigger role in how you remember that experience.
Also see Pre-Suasion by Cialdini.

- **Duration Neglect**

How long we experienced the positive or negative experience matters little for our memory.
The peak of the experience and the ending are the most important

- **Focusing Illusion**

The most essential thing in our life… This is what we are focusing on at that exact moment.

And when we are asked to rate how happy something or someone makes us we are likely to focus mostly on one aspect.
And we tend to focus on positive traits disregarding how often we actually experience those traits.

Criticism

First of all, from a self-development point of view, I warn you of the potential for mental disempowerment if you go to the extreme of the "human irrationality" bias.

And I recommend two articles here:

- **Law of optimum balance**, such that your own empowerment starts from accepting your (mental) limitations, without going to the extreme and thinking of yourself as totally irrational. Indeed, you grow more limitless as you accept your cognitive biases, while also finding ways around them
- **Naive self-help**, especially the section on "naive disempowerment"

From a more academic point of view, *Thinking Fast and Slow* has been heavily criticized for lending support to the priming research literature which has specularly failed to replicate.

Kahneman originally demanded more clarity and continued to profess optimism that priming research would be confirmed (note: there was a link to Kahnemann's response that has been then taken down).

But later in 2017 he eventually admitted that the criticism of chapter 4 of "Thinking Fast and Slow" is legit.

He said:

> I placed too much faith in underpowered studies
> (…)
> However, I now understand that my reasoning was flawed
> (…)
> Unanimity of underpowered studies provides compelling evidence for the existence of a severe file-drawer problem.

You can read more here:

- Pop psychology myths: the full list

More Irrational Than We Really Are

One of the issues with Kahneman's work is the endless list of biases that sometimes frame humans as "irrational".

At the extreme, that becomes "hopeless irrational".

But in truth, **those heuristics work more often than not**.
Or, at least, they often work "reliably enough" to keep us alive and well-functioning.

Says Jordan Peterson:

> That doesn't mean that the heuristics themselves are deeply flawed. That's the problem with the work of Kahneman ant Tversky, they take perfectly valid heuristics (and look for specific and rare situations in which they fail).

Real-Life Applications

- **Trust Yourself… A Bit Less**

All the heuristics in Thinking Fast and Slow have a common thread: we are not rational decision-makers.

And often our decision does not serve our best interests or the interests of the people around us.

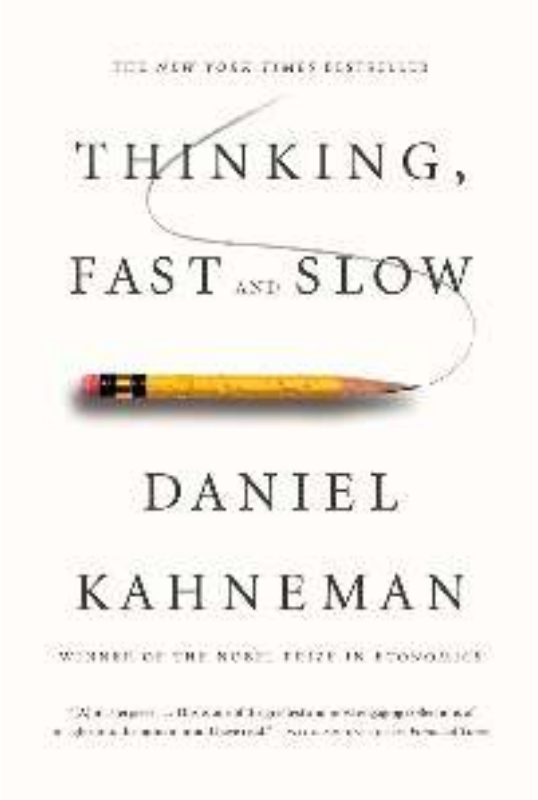
This allows us to make huge improvements in our life if we only learn where we fall short.
As an example applied to human interactions, check 7 dating mistakes women do.

- **We Prefer Stories**

When given the choice between listening to data or stories… We choose plausible stories.
So choose plausible stories when you need to influence people.

CONS

Lack of Common Thread
Well, the thread of Thinking Fast and Slow seems to be that of "we are less rational than we think we are", but it seems at times a list/collection of heuristics.



Review

Thinking Fast and Slow is a classic of cognitive psychology and a good book to understand an important aspect of human cognition.

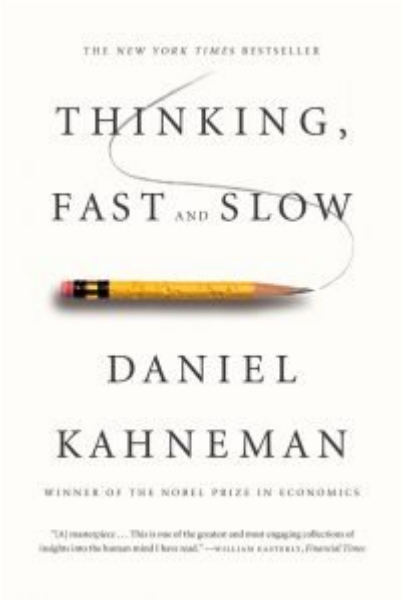
I'd have personally preferred if it had dedicated less space to each cognitive bias, or at least if it provided a more encompassing evolutionary framework.

That said, I'm grateful to Daniel Kahneman. He is one of the main forces behind behavioral economics -on which I based my master thesis-.

For more on general psychology, see:

Best psychology books of all time.

Thinking Fast and Slow: Summary & Review | The Power Moves



A fantastic book on behavioral economics and how the mind works.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/thinking-fast-and-slow/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.5

The Tipping Point: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

The Tipping Point (2000) analyzes how trends go viral and how localized hotbeds can join together and snowball into big movements.[image]

Contents

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- Summary
  - Chapter 1: The Three Rules of Epidemics
  - Chapter 2: The Law of the Few
  - Chapter 3: The Stickiness Factor
  - Chapter 4: The Power of Context (Part One)
  - Chapter 5: The Power of Context (Part Two)
  - Chapter 6: Case Study
  - Chapter 7: Case Study – Suicide, Smoking
  - Chapter 8: Conclusion
- Practical Applications
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- Review

Bullet Summary

- A trend becomes a snowball depending on the type of people sharing it, the stickiness of the product, and the overall context
- The people spreading a trend are well-connected, love helping others, or are good at selling
- The overall context or historical period must help the trend spread

Summary

About The Author:
Malcolm Gladwell is a journalist for The New Yorker, a public speaker, and the author of several pop psychology books.
Among his other bestsellers are: Blink, Outliers, David and Goliath.

Introduction

The Tipping Point starts as most captivating stories begin: with an open loop.

Gladwell introduces the seemingly inexplicable rebirth of a brand that seemed on the verge of disappearing: Hush Puppies.
In the 1990s the Hush Puppies shoes went from being popular in the Soho district of NY among the hipsters to spreading to the whole country.

How did that happen?

Gladwell will explain how that happens in the course of the book.

Chapter 1: The Three Rules of Epidemics

Gladwell says that most social trends spread following the same rules.

Whether it's the spread of a disease like syphilis or the Hush Puppies shoes, they all have a moment the author calls a "tipping point" that unifies many isolated enclaves into a unified trend.

For Gladwell, the factors that make a trend reach the tipping point are three:

1. Law of the Few
2. Stickiness Factor
3. Power of Context

Chapter 2: The Law of the Few

Gladwell notes that a few "super infectors" are responsible for most of the spread of the virus.

These super infectors spread the virus to dozens or hundreds of other people.

These are what Gladwell calls the "connectors", part of the three major types of individuals that help a trend reach a tipping point:

- **Connectors**

Connectors are people who know everyone and who help spread the word -or the virus- on a bigger scale.
They often have varied interests spanning different realms, so they also help bring the trend to different industries and different personalities.

- **Mavens**

Mavens instead of knowing *everyone* seem to know *everything*.

They read more than the average person and love to gather information, and they love using that information to help other people.

Mavens are enthusiastic about introducing new ideas and concepts, and their passion is contagious and helps spread the trend with natural charm.

- **Salespeople**

Salespeople are able to influence others in changing their behavior or directing their buying decisions.

Salespeople have great *interpersonal skills* and use the *power of body language* (check *The Definitive Book of Body Language*).

Gladwell also goes into how salespeople influence conversations.
He says that everyone has a different speaking rhythm, such as the words per minute or the moments he pauses or speaks.

When two people meet, they will have to reach a common ground.
But the one who draws the other into his own rhythm will be most powerful, and influential and dictates the terms of the interaction.

Chapter 3: The Stickiness Factor

Gladwell calls the "stickiness factor" a special quality or trait that "sticks" easily in people's minds.

There's a way to package your information or product that, under the right circumstances, will make it irresistible.

Gladwell doesn't provide a clear way to make your product or message sticky.
But in that regard, I recommend you check *Contagious* and *Made to Stick*.

Chapter 4: The Power of Context (Part One)

The power of context refers to the bigger environment around the product or trend itself.

The environment can stifle or give impetus to the budding trend.

Malcolm Gladwell uses the example of the welcome and yet the strange and unexpected sudden decline of crime rates in New York in the 1990s.

He says there were a few small but influential changes that helped by changing the context and he introduces the Broken Windows theory.

The authorities in New York, for example, focused on ridding the subway system of graffiti and cracking down on subway fare dodgers.

My Note:
The Broken Windows Effect has received much criticism.
Read the National Bureau of Economic Research article on what helped make NY safer besides the contextual efforts.
As a heads up, the paper says that the police measure that most consistently reduces crime is the arrest rate of those involved in crime.

Chapter 5: The Power of Context (Part Two)

Albeit major trends reach big numbers spanning different demographics often it's one specific demographic that fuels that expansion.

This concept reminded me of the 1.000 screaming fans Tim Ferris talks about and the Diffusion Curve that *Start With WHY* also mentions.

The author also talks about group properties as related to the size of the groups.
Up to 150 people the group members can get to know each other and that allows for strong interpersonal relationships to blossom.
That intimacy effect and the efficiency that ensues are usually lost in groups of more than 150 members.

Chapter 6: Case Study

In chapter 6 of Tipping Point Gladwell introduces the case study of the Airwalk shoes.

Airwalk's initial consumers were skaters, but the brand wanted to expand beyond.

How to sell to people who never skated in their lives?

The ad agency targeted many typical emblems of "coolness" spanning from gang culture to hipster fashionistas

To manage to appeal both to the masses and the more selective hip fashion movers, the company selected models for boutique stores and mass-produced models for department stores.

Chapter 7: Case Study – Suicide, Smoking

Malcolm Gladwell addresses the potential rise of disturbing trends.

For example, we sometimes witness sudden increases among teenagers in mass shootings, cigarette smoking, or suicides.

He says teenagers are most likely, perhaps genetically predisposed, to imitate others and “try new things”.
And those who champion those “new things” are also most likely to become the easily romanticized cool guys the teenagers want to imitate.

I particularly liked how the author differentiates “benign experiments” from abuse and suggests not to become hysterical at a teenager trying cigarettes or a drug for example.

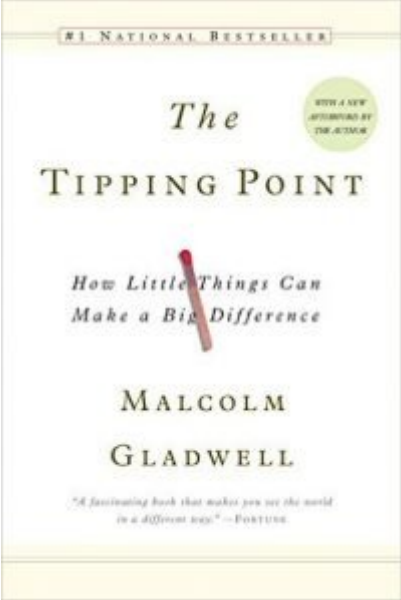
Chapter 8: Conclusion

In the last chapter, Gladwell brings a few more examples of how some movements or brands used the tipping point rules he listed.

Lexus, for example, spent an inordinate amount of money pampering its customers when it had to recall a few autos.

Why did they invest so much?

Because the very first buyers were more likely mavens, people who care about cars and talk about cars.
Those are the guys who would influence all the rest.



Practical Applications

- **Conversation Rhythm & Social Power Moves**

A website like The Power Moves had to pick up on the little hidden social gem and power cue of the book.
People have different speaking patterns such as speech rates and pauses. When they meet, the one who has the other adapt to his pattern is usually the one with the upper hand.

- **Use Mavens and Connectors**

When you spread your idea or product try to get mavens and connectors first to love it and they will help you spread it further.

CONS

Overall, there has been much criticism of the concept espoused by Gladwell in *“The Tipping Point”.*

For example, Andy Sernovitz, author of a book on *word-of-mouth marketing,* says it’s plain average and normal

people who drive word of mouth and not particularly “thought leaders”.

Indeed, among the major drawbacks for me is this one:

- **Lots of Stories but Light Evidence**

The stories all sound interesting and plausible, but there is no strong data here.

Kahneman in *Thinking Fast and Slow* explains how plausible stories are often a smokescreen to reality.

Indeed, I found the evidence behind those stories lacking.

- **Simplistic Recipes End Up Being Tautological**

Gladwell often explains the success of this or that campaign for “targeting mavens and cool people”.

But that explains nothing and is no proof of anything.

Furthermore, that’s exactly what *every* brand is trying to do. Why that one was specifically successful? Could it be it was just chance? Those were the questions I was left with.

Also read: Fooled by Randomness.

Review

The Tipping Point is an interesting and easy read.
And albeit the concept of “tipping points” is valid and a relatively common dynamic in natural and human phenomena, Gladwell still does not provide a holistic view of the phenomenon.
So I would still warn readers to be careful in over-generalizing or over-extrapolating its concepts.

Ultimately, Gladwell writes books that are designed to be pleasant and interesting to read, and not to provide readers with the best possible information, or to equip them with the best possible tools to affect any real-world change.

Once you keep that in mind, *The Tipping Point* is a well-written book with lots of wisdom to offer.

Get The Tipping Point on Amazon

Hillary Clinton Personality Analysis (& Why She Lost)

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 December 2017 · Archived copy · Original

There are many theories as to why Hillary Clinton lost the election.

As a website on social dynamics, I will focus on Hillary Clinton's personality and the social aspects of her campaign.

Overall, one aspect shines: few people truly liked Hillary Clinton.

But why?

That's what we will find out here.

TPM Note:
This article provides an opinionated analysis of Hillary Clinton's campaign and public perception, focusing on social dynamics, voter psychology, and media framing. The points below reflect the author's interpretations and are intended to explore lessons in authenticity, perception, and strategy — not to make factual claims about her character.

Contents

- #1. Hillary Clinton Seemed Fake
- #2. Many Felt She was Amoral
- #3. Clinton Seemed 'Politician Sneaky'
- #4. Hillary Clinton Lost Femininity

- Where She Got It All Wrong
  - Likable Trap
  - Aggressive Trap
  - Clinton Before Big-Time Politics

#1. Hillary Clinton Seemed Fake

Hillary Clinton didn't come across as honest and genuine during her campaign.

It feels like she always tried to be and say what gave her the most vote, never who she truly was.

Clinton Fake Smile

This is particularly clear in her smiles, which never seemed genuine and have already been scrutinized several times by body language experts (here is an example).

Why It Mattered

We like genuine and honest people, and we dislike fake ones.

We cannot trust and rely on fake people.
If they praise us or say anything positive today, we feel they only say it because it's good for themselves.

But if tomorrow's stabbing us in the back will pay off, then they'll stab us in the back.

The most popular word to describe Hillary Clinton was indeed *liar*, which is closely related to fake.

How To Avoid Being Fake

To avoid being fake, pick a few values you believe in and do not renege on them for anybody.

The more you stick to your values, even when it would be convenient for you to ditch them, the more you gain respect.

It's also helpful if, while you think highly of yourself, you also think less of yourself.
Meaning you focus more on your goals and the people around you instead of how you will come across.
Which, accidentally, makes you come across as more genuine.

#2. Many Felt She was Amoral

By "amoral," I mean it literally.

Hillary Clinton rarely showed any hint of a strong set of morals and values she believed in.

Trump ran against the politician's clique.
Obama campaigned for change.

But Hillary?
Why was she running?

It felt like she didn't have a big enough why, a reason underpinning her candidacy that was about the American people.

And since she didn't have a strong enough "why", it was easy for people to fill that vacuum with their own criticism: **Clinton's WHY was winning**.

That "winning" was self-referential, of course, it was about her.
In that, she seemed like the typical politician who tries to keep it as safe as possible while at the same time telling you what you want to hear.

This was especially clear with her policies' flip-flopping when pandering to the audience she had in front:

Why It Mattered

Liar, dishonest, and crooked were the top 3 most common words to describe Clinton.

It might not be a coincidence that most religious people, who tend to care more about values, voted largely for Trump (check the source).

Compare it to the grassroots movement Bernie Sanders commanded instead.
Sanders had a large grassroots appeal because it was clear he had strong values and beliefs.
It was clear Sanders wanted to get on top to help those on the bottom.
That's why people were willing to mobilize and campaign for him.

But those without morals who only care about themselves…? We are happy to see them bite the dust.

How To Avoid Being Amoral

Start caring about something and someone besides yourself.
And drop the mentality of "the end justifies the means".

Put among your top values some that are about others and helping others. And then stick and honor them.

Also very useful here is what we mentioned before: shift the focus from yourself to others. Tony Robbins says the best way to be happy is to make others happy.

#3. Clinton Seemed 'Politician Sneaky'

By sneaky I mean trying to avoid direct confrontations and harsh truths or trying to weasel her way out of uncomfortable situations.

As also evident by her reaction after the loss, Hillary rarely took full accountability.

And her refusal to face major issues head-on helped fueled the flame of her "crooked" nickname.

You might disagree with Trump or Sanders, yet you wouldn't call them sneaky, right?
Even though Trump is a master power mover, you still wouldn't call him sneaky (weird people humans, eh? :))

Trump's super successful "crooked" campaign was in good part possible because of Hillary's own sneakiness (take a look here at Trump's Power Moves in the first and second presidential debates).

Hillary indeed was not only unable to attack Trump with the same efficacy but also unable to effectively clear her name.
The shadow of her lazy backroom deals and big corporation entanglement never left.
And very much tainted her.

When confronted with difficult questions, she was always on the defensive and always looked sneaky.

Notice as she replies she gesticulates, looks down, and stutters.

She never addressed the issue convincingly. She changes the topic, but in a rather awkward way that doesn't fool anyone.
And also notice how she walks backward at minute 6:52.

We move backward when we are uncertain and we want to move away from our own stories.

Why It Mattered

Nobody wants a crook as a leader.

Many who didn't want Trump simply couldn't turn up to vote for Hillary. Notice that Trump lied too and he was also faced with big, big scandals.

And yet, like it or not, he never looked as sneaky as Hillary did in confronting them.
Yes, he either denied or blatantly lied sometimes, but he didn't look as sneaky.

How To Avoid Being Sneaky

When you are accused, attack back if you're not guilty or own up to your mistakes.

Address the open issues and you get to write the last word.
More times yes than not you can even look better off when you own up to your mistakes (check *Extreme Ownership*).

And if you try to sneak your way out, you never clear your name or get to write the word end.

This is especially true in an electoral campaign with people full-time busy throwing dirt at you. Your issues will just keep popping up.
And Trump never stopped scoring big points at "crooked Hillary", the shill for big corporations.

For example, she could have said:

> *Well yes, I did give a speech at Goldman Sachs.*
> *And yes, it was very well paid.*

> And we can both guess why they paid me a lot: because they probably wanted reassurance I will not legislate against them.
>
> *And I gave the speeches and I took the money.*
> *And you know why?*
> *Because I am running a very expensive presidential campaign and I need all the money I can get to become president and enact the positive reforms I want.*
>
> *I don't want to punish Wall Street, I will enact the reforms that will bring Wall Street to work for Main Street. Without getting rich on taxpayer's money and without leaving anyone behind.*
>
> *And if to enact my pro-American reforms will take me giving speeches, I am happy to do that.*

A response like that would have addressed the root causes because she would own up to it while at the same time putting a positive spin on it.
Once she owns it, she can't be accused of it anymore.

#4. Hillary Clinton Lost Femininity

Clinton has often been accused of being overly ambitious.

And some people said the only reason she's accused of unbridled ambition is that she's a woman.
And those people are most likely right.

Ambition above a certain limit is a trait people don't always appreciate, but as Sheryl Salzberg notices in *Lean In*, that's all the more true for a woman.

But that's how it is, and you gotta live with reality even when you don't necessarily like that reality, as Ray Dalio recommends.

Blaming Americans for misogyny makes no sense: Hillary needed Americans' vote, not the other way around.
It was Hillary who had to convince them, not the Americans who had to change their mindset for Hillary.
And Hillary Clinton could have done more to seem more likable.

Another masculine trait she embodied a few times and that certainly damaged her is aggression.
Clinton often looked rather ugly with her aggressive bouts towards non-aggressive constituents:

Finger pointing, screaming with voice cracking… As a professional politician, she should know better than that.

Read more:

- How to be a powerful woman and still be feminine

Why It Mattered

Hillary lost big among men, in rural areas, and among those with low education.

Exactly with the ones who are most likely to see -and to prefer- women in a more traditional role.

What We Can Learn

Hillary should have avoided shouting, finger pointing and generally looking like an angry hyena.

At all costs. In those situations, she just looked mean.
We also talked about a bit femininity and how to be powerful *and* feminine at the same time in how to be feminine.

Photo by Gage Skidmore [image]

Where She Got It All Wrong

Hillary is not a monster.

As a matter of fact, I think she would have been far better for the US and for the world as president.

And she's probably not a bad person by any stretch. Her biggest weakness was that she trapped herself in a "need to please" and "need to win".

I feel like she was trapped into a mindset that she needed to be "better", which for her translated into "likable" and "stronger".

She then swung like a pendulum from trying too hard to please -with all her fake smiles- to being strong -with the angry shouting-.

That's also where her nervousness and discomfort came from: it's because she was not being herself, she was acting.

Likable Trap

And of course, in her effort to please, she abandoned her morals and values.

When you try to be someone you're not, you end up being everybody.
And you're always checking if your actions and beliefs are "good enough". And when you're afraid they're not…
Your bulk.

And lie.

And sneak…

… And then, you lose the election.

Aggressive Trap

I feel that once she stepped into big-time politics "stronger" often led Hillary to be more aggressive.

Since that wasn't her natural self, she ended up overcompensating.

Some people say indeed behind the curtains Hillary Clinton is warm and charming.

Keith Ferrazzi says Clinton remembered the name of his kid and asked him how he was doing.
But we've rarely gotten to see the warm and welcoming Hillary during election time.

Clinton Before Big-Time Politics

I base this analysis not only on looking at election-time Clinton but especially by comparing election-time Clinton to old-time Clinton.

If you look at her old interviews, you will notice she was much more natural and came across as more genuine, like in this example.
And more feminine even when discussing serious politics like in this example.
She was more vulnerable and likable, and often even more confident.

That's striking, considering younger Clinton didn't even have a third of the experience election time Clinton had.

I think that if Clinton had managed to bring that younger, more natural self to the election, she would have cleaned it.

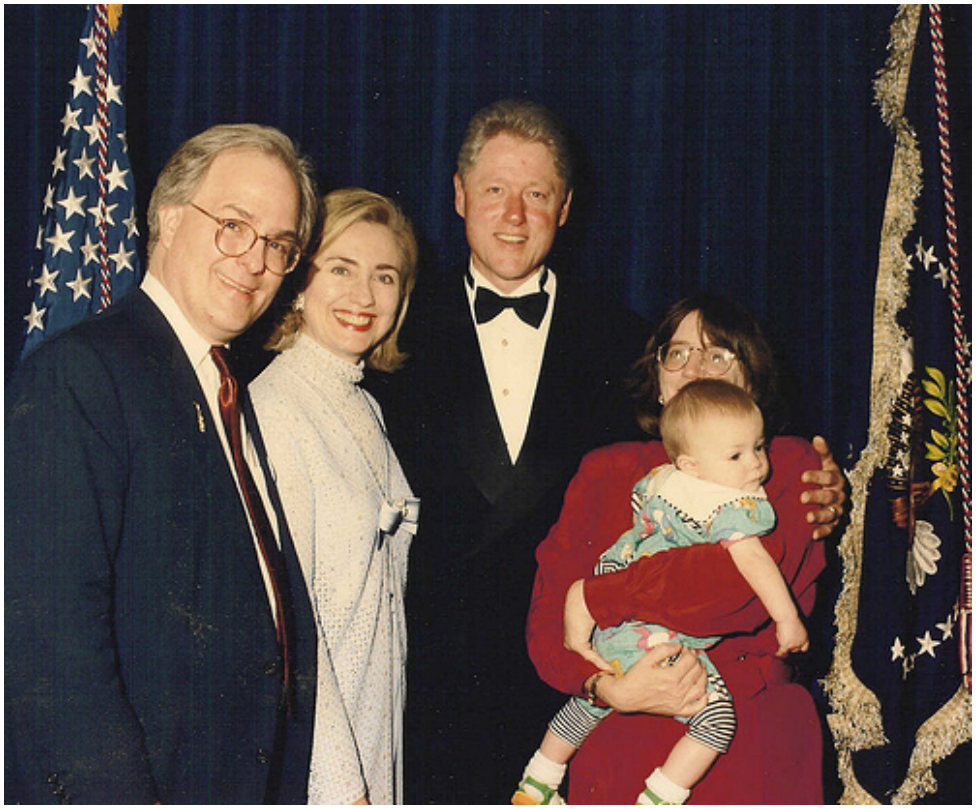


Photo by mdfriendofhillary [image] Hillary with a natural and warm smile

Why Men DO NOT Marry Bitches (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Why Men Marry Bitches is a dating book for women, the sequel to *Why Men Love Bitches*. Sherry Argov, the author, follows the same 'high independence strategy' to dating, which, she suggests, should get these independent women the wedding they (supposedly) want.

TPM Strategic Audit: Argov's work is analyzed here as a female manual on Dating Power Dynamics, including dating strategies, dating leadership, and frame control. For high-value men, this power awareness is essential for vetting quality women and self-defense, so they never end up 'controlled' or manipulated into commitment.
See: TPM literature analysis (what truly works) ↗

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Takeaways

- A bitch is independent, knows what she wants and what she will not tolerate
- Don't always be available, and don't give him the feeling that he has you. Let him chase
- Don't ask for commitment, focus on being a great woman, and you'll have leverage

1. Ask: What's The Advantage of Having a Guy?

Sherry Argov criticizes what she says is the widespread women's dating advice found in magazines.

The most common attitude, she says, is that of clamoring to be picked, she says, and that turns men off.
The bitch instead turns that attitude on its head and asks "what's the advantage of having this guy around"?

TPM Note: Effective dating means doing *both*. Focusing on both value given and taken
Argov criticism to 'mainstream dating advice' does not apply today.
Anyone who wants a relationship should instead focus on what value *she* brings to the table first, and then ensures also gets value back. Asking what value he adds without ensuring she also adds value is entitlement mentality that drives good prospects away.
See smart cooperation, effective calculativeness, win-win dating

2. Don't Chase

Sherry says that "being upfront" about your commitment makes him run away.

So you better behave, as you like him, but don't want to lock him down.

And, Sherry says, avoid mentioning any biological clock ticking like Sara Tomei did (albeit, I have to say she's quite sexy there):

> **Her**: my biological clock is ticking like this (stomps her foot on the ground)

3. Delay Sex

In regards to sex and physical contact, Sherry seems to espouse the view of sex as a bit of an arm's race.

That means that his goal is to make it happen quickly, and yours is to preserve the possibility of a long-term commitment by delaying sex.

This is common advice in the dating literature for women. Kara King of "*The Power of the Pussy*" for example, recommends "waiting as long as possible" and Steve Harvey in "Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man" recommends "at least 90 days".
Some other authors only advise having sex after the official relationship

My Note:
I partially agree with this advice, but it's highly contextual. It depends a lot on the environment, the type of man she is dealing with, the type of dating they are having, and the sexual chemistry between the two.
For exceptions also read:

- Why you shouldn't let him wait for sex
- How to slow down sex

> How To Slow Down Sex & Get A Relationship

4. Maintain Emotional Control

Sherry Argov says that men consciously provoke women to get a rise out of them.

They do so to test their women and see where they stand or to seek validation.

And when you let that get to you, he feels validated and in control.

I found this concept deeply insightful, and I invite you to check out the book for the details.

TPM Note: Women test men more than men test women (unless he's a top-1%)
Testing goes both ways, with women probably testing men more than the other way around. This also aligns with evolutionary psychology and dating power dynamics.

5. Keep Your Money to Assuage Fears

Sherry speaks many men's minds when she says:

> some men are afraid of losing big with a divorce.

And that's why, if you're financially independent, you will feel more secure.

And will respect you more.

Sherry has a few more gems regarding financial independence; read them in the book.

6. Don't Mention "Commitment Needs'

Sherry Argov says that staying for a year without mentioning your "commitment needs" will give you leverage.

After one year, he knows you're not easily replaceable.

But if after a year there's still no ring, you can't give an ultimatum. The author suggests you have two conversations.

In the first one, you say you're not happy. If he doesn't give you what you want, cut back on the time you spend with him. The Second one, you say, forces his hand a bit more.

TPM Note: Not a good strategy. Quality women don't waste a whole year

7. Don't Be a Doormat

And in the relationship, avoid being a doormat.

Argov uses the example of Rose in "The Joy Luck Club":

> **Him**: I wanna hear what you want
> **Her**: (keeps proposing more and more options for him to decide)

I dated some women like this.
And yes, sometimes you want them to tell you more and more clearly about what they want. Sometimes, I even got a bit angry and assertively instructed them to think about it and tell me what they preferred.

However, in general, based on my experience and observation, **her submissiveness is rarely a deal breaker for most men**.

What is much more often a deal breaker instead is too much female power and dominance.
Also, read:

- Why do feminine women do better than dominant ones

> Why Submissive Women Beat Strong Women In Dating

Real-Life Applications

Focus On Yourself…
.. And your life and becoming independent. Think about your values, what you accept and don't accept.

Don't Ask For Commitment
Focus on being a great girlfriend instead and he'll be the one to offer commitment. If not, you will have great leverage when you will tell him the relationship is not progressing.

When Men Provoke You…
.. You must keep it cool and either dish it back equally, address it *rationally* (say the word) or take distance. Above all, do not get emotional.

When You Move in..
.. Move to a new house together and not "his" apartment.

CONS

- **Most Men *Actively Avoid* Bitches**

Sherry's bitch is fiercely independent.

Some men prefer a woman they can take care of and provide for though. *Act Like a Lady Think Like a Man* by Steve Harvey is such an example.

Also read: why submissive women have more dating options.

- **1 year without asking for commitment wastes a lot of time and is a high-risk**

The concept of not asking for commitment is great… On paper.

But it's also risky. What if your man is happy without a wedding or stronger commitment?
Because… Many men are.

Then the 1 year conversation can become a bit of a win / lose argument and you should be careful not to make it seem like you're holding the relationship hostage. As Dale Carnegie explains, there are no winners when arguments arise.

- **If you want a marriage, learn from married authors**

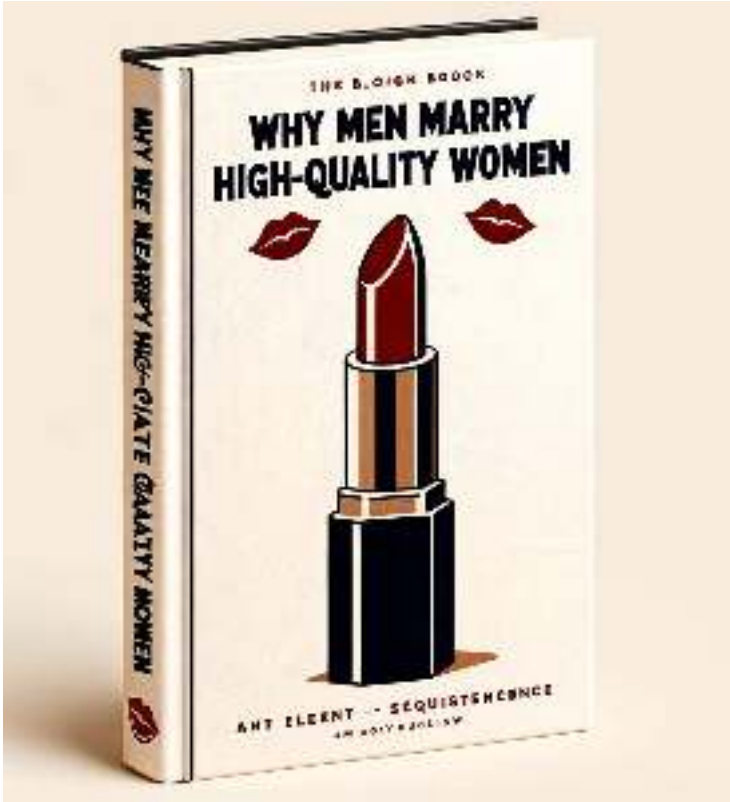
We don't know whether the author is married or not. In general, if you want to achieve a certain goal, it's more reassuring to learn from someone who has achieved it already.

PROS

Valid for Too Nice Girls
I don't think it's the majority of women, but there certainly are many women who are way too nice. Why Men Marry Bitches is perfect for them.

Great For Social Skills
Why Men Marry Bitches is a very good book to help people understand social dynamics and improve their social skills.

Good For Power Dynamics
I could see quite a few parallels in the book with this website as many tips and suggestions leverage important psychological triggers. And some which you could classify as "social power moves". And at the very least, they're great to know.



High-quality men marry high-quality women. As simple as that.

Review

Why Men Marry Bitches is an easy read sharing the same DNA as *Why Men Love Bitches*, but slightly more competitive and less genuine.

Whether that's good or bad, is up to you.

The question I'm even more interested in though: is it *effective*?

And I think that it's not the most effective approach to dating -at least for women who prefer getting the highest quality men they can-.
So the correct title would actually be "some men with fewer options marry bitches, while high-value men prefer feminine women".

On the other hand, although I don't necessarily agree with everything, Sherry Argov shares many gems in this book. Especially useful and recommended to women "hunting for the one", women who get clingy too soon, and women who are a bit too nice.

Check the **best dating books for women**.

Made to Stick: Summary & Review (+ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Made To Stick (2007) examines viral advertising campaigns, urban myths, and compelling stories to determine the six traits that make ideas stick in our brains.[image]

Contents

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Bullet Summary

- Take the core of your idea and communicate unexpectedly, concretely, credibly, and emotionally
- Avoid raw statistics but humanize them in a way people can relate with
- Don't tell and pitch, hold attention with mystery and show with stories

Made to Stick Summary

About The Authors: Chip and Dan Heath are two brothers, both academic authors, and researchers.

Introduction

Stick means understood, remembered, and with the capacity of making an impact.

The Heath brothers introduce the "curse of knowledge" as the great enemy of your ideas to stick. The person sharing the idea knows all the nuances the receiver has no idea about.

So he often ends up glossing over core information or indulging in too many details.

The authors highlight the principles are not a mathematical formula that will guarantee your ideas will stick, but they are proven methods that will increase the likelihood:

#1: Simple

Simple ideas stick, complicated ones don't. To make your ideas simple:

- Present the core of your idea
- Share it in a short form using the 6 principles (SUCCESS)

The authors suggest you use the inverted pyramid of journalism, such as starting from the most important aspect, then adding important details, and then all the other background information.

I particularly liked the idea of CI or Commander Intent, very useful when you need people to act on your behalf in a big organization.

It's a very short and simple sentence that sums up the overarching goal of the organization and functions as a filter for localized decision-making.

Southwest Airlines' CI is "we are THE low-fare airline". So nobody would think to gift trinkets on board because it's not in line with the CI.
In Bill Clinton's campaign, it was "it's the economy stupid" so that everyone knew what to focus on.

Analogies and metaphors can also help simplify complex issues.

For example, Disney calls the staff in their parks "cast members" as it projects its parks as theaters.
Disney doesn't need to explain why it's important to behave in a certain way to its employees: being a "cast member" reminds everyone they're always on stage.

My Note:
Also, read "corporate manipulations".

#2: Unexpected

Attention is key in making your message stick say the Heath brothers. We need to both get attention and keep it.

As *Thinking Fast and Slow* explains, the rational part of the brain only starts paying attention once something is out of the ordinary.

So the key to getting someone's attention is to break their patterns, or to surprise them (this is something Tony Robbins stresses a lot).

Example

An example of grabbing attention with the unexpected is the buckle-up campaign:

To keep attention the authors introduce Robert Cialdini's "Influence" and how Cialdini used mysteries to keep his students' attention.

Mysteries are so powerful because they create a need for closure. Your goal is to raise questions, open gaps of knowledge with mysteries, and pique curiosity.

The Heath brothers suggest you:

1. Identify your core message
2. Present it in a counter-intuitive way people don't expect
3. Introduce a mystery and explain it with your message

My Note:
In a quest for the unexpected, some advertisers focus too much on grabbing attention in ways that do not relate to the content. You must always grab attention in a way that relates to your content.

> **The 'huh?' moment prepares the scene for the 'a ha!' moment**

#3: Concrete

The easier we can relate to something, the more we understand it and remember it.

Concrete is something the senses can capture and something that we have already experienced.

So similarly to what Jay Samit and Charles Duhigg suggest, the Heath brothers say you must link a new idea to something familiar.
For example, to introduce Speed to Hollywood producers you pitch it as “Die-Hard on a bus” and Alien becomes “Jaws on a spaceship”.

Joseph Sugarman in *Triggers* said a great way to sell the first and unknown smoke detectors was to pitch them as “electronic noses”.

The authors also compare the (in)effectiveness of complicated CEO parlance such as “maximize shareholder values”.
Too often mission statements sound like meaningless hot air nobody cares about.

Compare it instead to what fueled US’ efforts for a decade.
When JFK made the government’s mission to “*land a man on the moon and return him safely to the earth*“.
That’s concrete and clear.

The curse of knowledge comes into full force here.
Experts tend to see things at a higher, more abstract level than novices and the danger is that they will explain it in more abstract terms as well.

And this is one of the reasons why The Power Moves always makes examples and shows videos: to give concrete examples.

Last but not least the Heath brothers say that our memory functions in the form of “hooks”.
The more familiar and concrete hooks our message has, the easier it will be to remember (this is similar to what Johan Berger calls Triggers in *Contagious*. Check it if you’re interested in making your idea viral).

#4: Credible

To make your idea credible the Heath brothers present a few different triggers:

- **Authority**
- **Anti-authority**: people who experienced firsthand the nefarious consequences (ie.: smokers)
- **Details**: the more details we hear, the more real it seems; details are often a proxy for expertise
- **Statistics**: not the raw numbers though, highlight relationships, contextualize them in a way that’s human
- **Sinatra test**: if you’ve already done it in a difficult environment, you’re credible to do it in easier ones
- **Testable experience**: if they experience it first hand they believe it more. This is Reagan asking “are you better off than you were 5 years ago”? Or Wendy providing verifiable facts about their bigger burgers (check below the ads)

A great example to contextualize a statistic.

Imagine you have to explain how accurate is a missile.
You could say it can be shot from the sun and hit within a Km of the target. But to humanize it you would say it goes from New York to LA and hit within 5cm.
The distance has been humanized because people have no idea of the sun-earth distance.

A great way to make your message more credible is to have the audience test it themselves… Without knowing.
For example, a nonprofit picked up potential donors to meet them.
And then told them how successful they were in turning homeless people into honest workers.
One of them was their own driver (surprise).

Example

The authors say that Wendy successfully prodded consumers to experience firsthand -or confirmed first-hand experience from those who tried already- that their burgers had more beef meat.

See here the spot:

#5: Emotional

Emotion is about making people care.

People who care act.
The authors quote Mother Teresa when, paraphrasing, she said:

> People will do for the one what they will not do for the many.

Research shows how people who heard a story about a single child donated more than when they heard about the big numbers related to the same problem.

The reason is that the numbers appeal to our analytical brain while the story appeal to our emotional centers -the same decrease in donation happened if people were asked to perform calculus-.

Interestingly, combining the story with the data did NOT produce better results contrary to what one might think (ie.: "if I used both logic and emotions I'm fully covered").
So it's best to know both and use them depending on your audience or situation, but not to blend them (read more on the topic of how to elicit donations).

The Heath brothers say to call to action you can appeal to:

- **Self Interest** (WIIFM): use "you", and talk benefits to them & not feature. Let them imagine
- **Associations**: link something they care about to your message
- **Identity**: Sometimes we don't pick what's best for us but what's best for the group we belong to. Or based on our "ideal self-image"

The authors debunked the Maslow hierarchy saying people pursue all the benefits simultaneously and not one after the other.
Emotional is actually about getting out of Maslow's basement.

Appealing to pure self-interest with only a money bonus may crowd out higher engagement as people feel "bought out" and ultimately less motivated.

Examples

A couple of emotional ad examples are the anti-cigarette campaign that depicted teenagers delivering body bags to a big corporation.
Teenagers smoke to rebel, but the ad showed "The Man" being the evil corporation.
So now nonsmoking is rebellious (check the ad here)

Texas government found it hard to make people stop littering. So they used identity. They had very Texans icons embodying Texans' virtue telling them not to litter.
Now the people heeded: being a Texan also meant respecting Texas and not littering:

6: Stories

Sticky ideas often use stories with a simple plot that people can relate to.

And that inspires us.
The authors say that a story lit in our brains is the reenactment of that story which “burns it” in our brain (check *The Brain That Changes Itself* for how the brain rewrites itself).

The Heath brothers introduce three different types of stories:

- **Challenge Plot**: the underdog story, overcoming adversity, inspiring grit
- **Connection Plot**: relationships, people overcoming discrimination, and social gaps
- **Creativity Plot**: people moving around obstacles with ingenuity and smarts

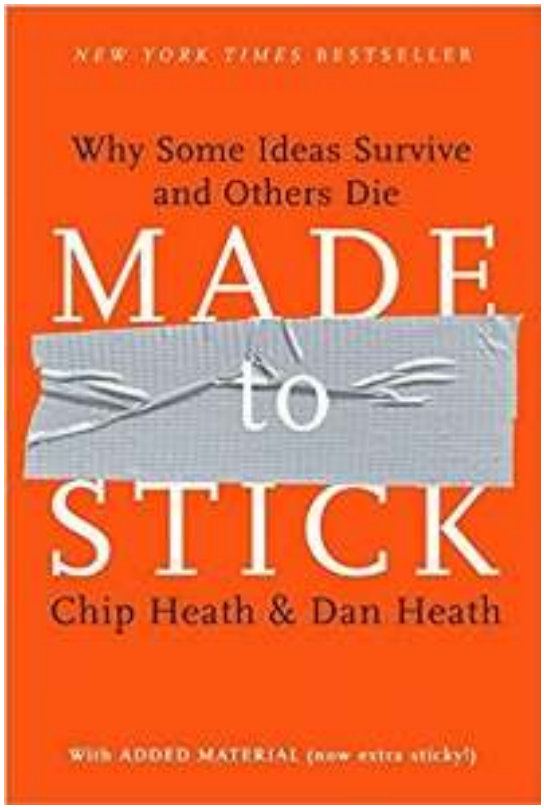
Stories also help lower the audience’s guard.
While pitching them your idea often gets people to look for cracks in the idea, a story will get them engaged and think for themselves.

Epilogue

The authors say this is not a checklist that will guarantee your idea will stick, but it will help.

To make an idea stick, it must make the audience:

1. Pay attention (unexpected)
2. Understand and remember (concrete)
3. Agree and believe (credible)
4. Care (emotional)
5. Be able to act on it (story)



Real-Life Applications

Commander Intent
Give your team -or yourself- a clear and brief top-line goal that will serve to filter all ideas very quickly. In the fog

of war, a plan is too complex, but a commander intends to stick.

Appeal to Emotions, not Logic
Think about not using numbers at all when you can tell stories. Numbers call for logical reasoning while stories influence emotions.

Use Stories To Avoid Push Backs
I especially liked the idea you pitch with stories. People will be less inclined to push back as they start thinking about what it means and how they can act on it.

Humanize Numbers
Always bring numbers and statistics back to people's lives in a way they can understand what it means. For example, don't use microns or light-years. Use units people have daily experience with.

CONS

Examples
Some of the examples didn't fully cut it for me, but it's small potatoes. I love practical books with big insights and Made To Stick is exactly that.

Review

Made To Stick is a great, practical resource on how to communicate effectively in a way that your message will influence and motivate you to take action.
The Heath brothers heed their own good recommendations and provide lots of examples to go along with heaps of insights, which makes *Made to Stick* a must-read for marketers.

Get Made to Stick on Amazon

Men Are From Mars Women Are From Venus: Real Biological Differences, Or Made Up Cliches? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Men Are From Mars Women Are From Venus (1992) is a popular relationship book in which author John Gray dispenses relationship advice based on what he sees are the foundational differences between men and women.

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  - Book For… Average Folks & Relationships
  - It's Masculinity & Femininity, Not Men and Women
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Men and women are different** by nature
- To get along, we should **take a step toward the other without compromising our true nature**
- Men care about competence and achievement, women about feelings

Full Summary

About The Author:
John Gray is a relationship counselor and a speaker.
His academic background, not in psychology or humanistic fields, has been subject to some controversy.
⚠ It's unclear where Gray completed his bachelor/master and whether he received his Ph.D. It seems to be from a

now-defunct and unaccredited institution after completion of a correspondence course.

That being said, I find some of Gray's points to be accurate observations -albeit they're also broad-stroke generalizations-.

Introduction

John Gray warns in the introduction that he generalizes about men and women.

Some of those generalizations will ring truer to you and some might seem less so.
The reason is simple: beyond the generalizations, we are all unique individuals.

Gray also mentions that sometimes genders switch: men relate to women's descriptions and women relate to men's descriptions (around 10% of women, possibly for being born with more testosterone).

That's a case of role reversal and it's nothing to worry about.

Differences lessen when genders have been single for a long time and will manifest more strongly with children or during high-stress periods.

The author says that some men deny some aspects of their masculine side and women deny some aspects of their feminine side (most workplaces reward masculine attributes).

Chapter 1. Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus

John Gray says that men and women are of two different natures.

To get along well they need to stop expecting the other to be the same and understand each other instead.

The most common complaints of a woman are that his man:

- Doesn't listen
- Is inattentive
- Is no longer romantic
- Is self-centered
- Divorcing reason: he doesn't give back to all of her giving

Men would complain that their women:

- Overreacts
- Make a big deal out of nothing
- Withholds sex
- Is unreasonable
- Divorcing reason: no matter what I do she's never happy

These are the most common fears by gender:

- **Fears for men**

Men's deepest fear is of being incompetent and not good enough.

They are afraid of giving because, when they give, they risk failure and rejection.
Fear increases when he cares, so he might stop giving when he cares the most.

- **Fears for women**

Women can be unconsciously afraid of being worthy of love and she's afraid of getting too much.

She's afraid she won't be supported and unknowingly pushes away the support she needs, which makes him feel rejected and turns him off

Men are empowered: when they feel needed and trusted, so women can feel free to show she needs him

Women are empowered: when they feel cherished and cared for

Chapter 2. Mr Fix-It

> ***He Needs To Show Competency***

John Gray says that men care about abilities and women care about feelings.

Men value power, competency, and achievement, and their sense of self is defined by their success and ability to achieve their goals.

Achieving their goals is a way to prove their competency.

Similarly, men want and need to have their abilities recognized and appreciated and resent having them ignored or called into question.
When a woman offers to help it's often an offense for the man as that's a vote of distrust in his abilities.

Women instead want to be listened to. They don't want to be alone and like cooperation and assistance.

Men offer solutions when women complain, but women are not looking for solutions.
They want to have their feelings recognized and appreciated. They don't want to be left alone when hurt or when dealing with a problem.

Chapter 3. Men Go to Their Caves and Women Talk

When dealing with problems men tend to withdraw, go sit by themselves and avoid communication.

For solutions and examples also read:

- Stonewalling in relationships

The problem is that women do the opposite: they communicate to find a solution.

When the two sexes communicate, women often communicate for the sake of communication and for the sake of talking.
Men like to talk in a solution-oriented fashion instead.

For a man, there must be a point and a conclusion in the conversation.

What a woman can do to help his man is to let him know in advance the outcome of the story, and then go back for the details.

Men don't like the suspense: give him the facts straight.

My Note:
I couldn't agree more with this.
In my relationships I often found myself urging women to cut to the chase.

Chapter 4. How to Motivate the Opposite Sex

Jon Gray says that a man's instinct tends to be self-centered while a woman's instinct is to care and look after others, even if that means sacrificing herself.

If both genders give in to their instinctive behavior, the man gets all the care and attention and the woman gets nothing.
One wins, and the other loses, which bodes badly for the relationship long term.

Once the two genders enter into a relationship instead they should meet in the middle.
The man should learn to care for the woman and a woman should learn to give less instead of endlessly giving and then resenting for not getting back.

She must remember to express her desire for her needs. And the man should express his desire to help.
This way, they both win.

My Note:
I'm not too sure about the "looking after others at her own sacrifice". *The Moral Animal* explains how women have a tendency to hoard resources when they can.
Which is the opposite of self-effacing giving.

Also, read:

- How women control relationships

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

Chapter 5. Speaking Different Languages

> ***He Must Hear Her Out***

Men communicate literally while women communicate more dramatically and "artistically".

Women use "artistic" language as a way to express their feelings.

Men like to sort through their thoughts privately before communicating. But women can get antsy as he steps back and they need reassurance he still cares.

Women indeed prefer to sort through their thoughts "as they speak" and tend to put all their concerns out there.
Men can feel under assault when she does that because it's a threat to who he is.
He needs to know she still values him.

When facing challenging situations the man likes his woman to tell him he "got this" as that's a tacit compliment of his skills.
Conversely, he feels undercut if she offers assistance or sympathy.

The woman wants him to show concern instead, she feels snubbed if he doesn't offer any assistance.
She doesn't want him to tell her the problem is "easy" as that would be a way of brushing off her feelings.

Men also have a tendency to jump in with solutions as the woman talks about her problems.
He wants to show his skills and resoluteness.
But the woman doesn't want to hear solutions, she wants first of all to be heard.
The man should then offer a solution only after he has fully listened to her.

Chapter 6. Men Are Like Rubber Bands

> ***Men alternate between the need for intimacy and the need for autonomy***

John Gray says that men have periods in which they withdraw and want to avoid any communication.

Women don't understand this because they only pull back if they feel unloved or if some serious issue arises.
Women then can be unconsciously afraid he's avoiding her or going forever and keep prodding him for a reaction.
The situation can easily escalate.

Instead, **she should instead allow him to withdraw** and give him the space he needs. When women don't do it, they upset the cycle, "torture" the man, and destroy the relationship.

On the other hand, he can reassure her that he will be back (men's cycles are short anyway).

Once the man springs back, he's ready for intimacy and romance again. But she might be hurt and need her time to

rebuild back up. That can be another cause of friction.

When both partners can be supportive and understanding in their low periods, they will find their partner also finds it easier to do the same.

> **Let him pull away and he will come back quicker**

For more on cycles of intimacy and distance also read:

- Anxious-Avoidant Attachment Trap

Chapter 7. Women Are Like Waves

> ***Women Have Slower Up & Down Cycles***

John Gray says that women have slower cycles instead.

They periodically enter into depression and can become negative.
When a woman is at a negative point of her cycle she cannot give love.
She may then revisit old issues, even if they have already been discussed and resolved.

They will demand men that pay attention and provide support. Some men are stumped sometimes by the time it takes for the women to get back to their usual loving ways. But they must avoid trying to rush her or criticize her because it's a natural female behavior.

With his support, she will grow to trust the relationship more and she'll go through waves in a milder, more loving way.

The author suggests that if a woman's needs to be heard and supported overlaps with the man's need to be on his own, she should turn to her girlfriends then.

My Note:
Suggestions like these have sparked some criticism that the book asks women to do most of the "work" to meet in the middle.
I don't fully agree with the criticism though.

Chapter 8. Discovering Our Different Emotional Needs

Men and women have different emotional needs, and providing our partner with *our* emotional needs will not necessarily fulfill our partner.

Men look for: trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement
Women looking for: caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance

Top 3 mistakes women make in relation to men's needs:

1. Tries to improve him or his behavior with unsolicited advice
2. Complain about what he hasn't done and doesn't appreciate what he's done
3. Corrects him and his behavior as if he were a child

Top 3 mistakes men make in relation to women's needs:

1. Minimize the importance of her feelings and needs
2. He listens. but then blames her for bringing him down
3. After listening, he says nothing and splits

John Gray says there's a knight in shiny armor in every man and a girl looking for a knight in shiny armor in every woman. And they can find each other.

Chapter 9. How To Avoid Arguments

John Gray says that arguments often balloon out of men's failure to pay sufficient attention and women's expressions of disapproval.

Disapproval will get the men angry and defensive.

When arguments arise verbal attacks can be destructive for the relationship. Men usually charge the hardest as they want to "win" the argument, using strong and aggressive words.

The woman backs down to avoid never-ending escalation and the man feels he has "won".
But she hasn't changed her opinion, so the following "peace" is phony as the underlying issues have not been fixed.

To avoid communication degenerating into fights, the author suggests men strive to listen *without raising their defensive walls* and women should communicate without criticizing their partners.

More on communication:

- Fixing combative relationships
- Two good books are Difficult Conversations and Possibly Crucial Conversations

And if you're already arguing a great way is to stop and take a break.

She Must Be Direct

Women often unknowingly start arguments by not being direct when sharing feelings.

For example, when a man is late, the woman might be worried or bothered. But when he shows up she asks rhetorical and *critical questions* such as:

> *"why didn't you call"*

Or

> *"how can you be so late".*

The man feels attacked because that's disapproval to him.

When a woman expresses frustration or disappointment the man gives explanations without allowing her to vent. What she feels though, is that he doesn't care about her feelings. For her to hear his reasons, she needs him to hear her reasons first

> It takes two to argue, but one only to stop it

Chapter 10. Scoring Points with the Opposite Sex

> ***She Must Appreciate Him For What He Gives***

John Gray says women give unconditionally and proactively.

Love for women means anticipating someone's needs and they don't stop giving.
Men only give when they feel that their efforts will be appreciated and often are not good at guessing when it's time to give unless they are specifically asked.
And they tend to stop giving when they feel they have done their part.

When it comes to giving, men value results while women appreciate more the thoughts that come with it.
So women appreciate lots of little gifts while men tend to value the big gifts more.

When men and women fail to understand these dynamics, the relationship can easily sour.

When the woman does not appreciate the man giving he may stop giving altogether while she continues to give unconditionally expecting to eventually get something back.
However, as she gets nothing back, she starts feeling unloved and grows resentful.

To help meet each other's needs, men should give in many little ways without being asked and learn that if their partner does not ask doesn't mean she's happy.

Women, on the other hand, should talk clearly if they are not happy and should reduce their own giving -or even ask things back- and never forget to appreciate him.

Here's a simple one for women: "thank you for listening".

With men giving and her appreciating, both will gain.

Chapter 11. How to Communicate Difficult Feelings

John Gray goes deeper into interpersonal psychology.

He says that to ease unresolved conflicts men bury themselves in work while women might seek perfection and lapse into depression to avoid feelings of anger.
In *Daring Greatly* Brene Brown also digs deeper into perfection-seeking and vulnerability.

Before even tackling effective communication the author says we must first unlearn to repress our feelings and to avoid negative communication.

He suggests that writing is a great way of expressing negative feelings in a controlled manner instead of exploding with our partners.
Both positive and negative feelings as often we don't realize how loving we can be.

Once we write and work through our feelings we will be better prepared to explain in a clearer and loving way.

My Note:
Avoid keeping a secret diary of your relationship. I can't remember the source but a study shows that keeping a diary raises the chances of breakup -and then regretting those breakups-

Chapter 12. How to Ask for Support and Get It

Women should not come to expect their partners can read their minds and anticipate their needs.

They should ask for help but ask without making it seem like a demand because men hate doing things when they are demanded.
Indeed, giving excessive instructions will make him feel like a slave.

Women have to ask with tact because any request to be more or get more makes the man feel inadequate

Questions with the form of "could you" or "can you" sound to him like questioning his abilities, so "would you" or "will you" are better. And it's best to let him choose the way and time he does it.

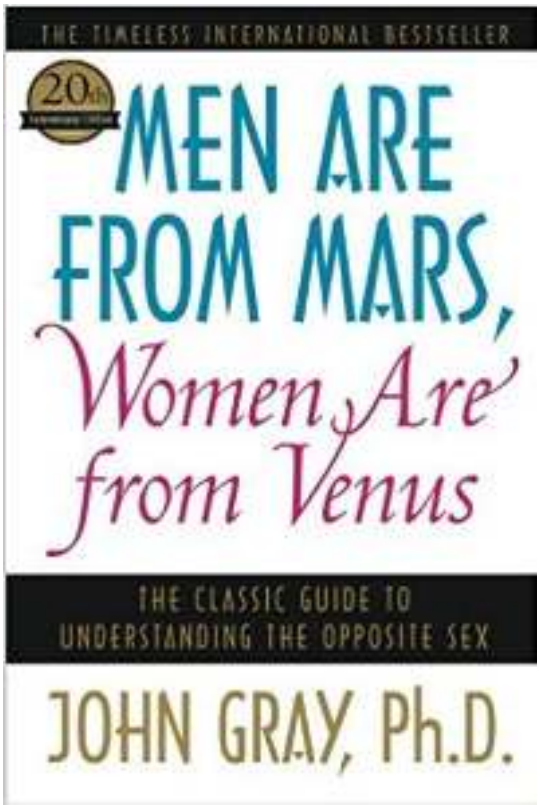
It's OK to ask him when he's busy but be prepared for him to postpone or say no.
A woman should also come to understand denials as a request also implies the possibility of a no.

Chapter 13. Keeping the Magic of Love Alive

John Gray says that there's a conundrum in love.

The more we feel in love and safety, the more turbulences of the past can surface as our minds "let go".
Wade through them: they're only a sign that your relationship is great.

The author says that love changes over time.
The bliss of the beginning does not last forever and our normal faults emerge for what they are.
But by sticking through the highs and lows the initial bliss becomes a more mature form of love which gets stronger as the years go by.

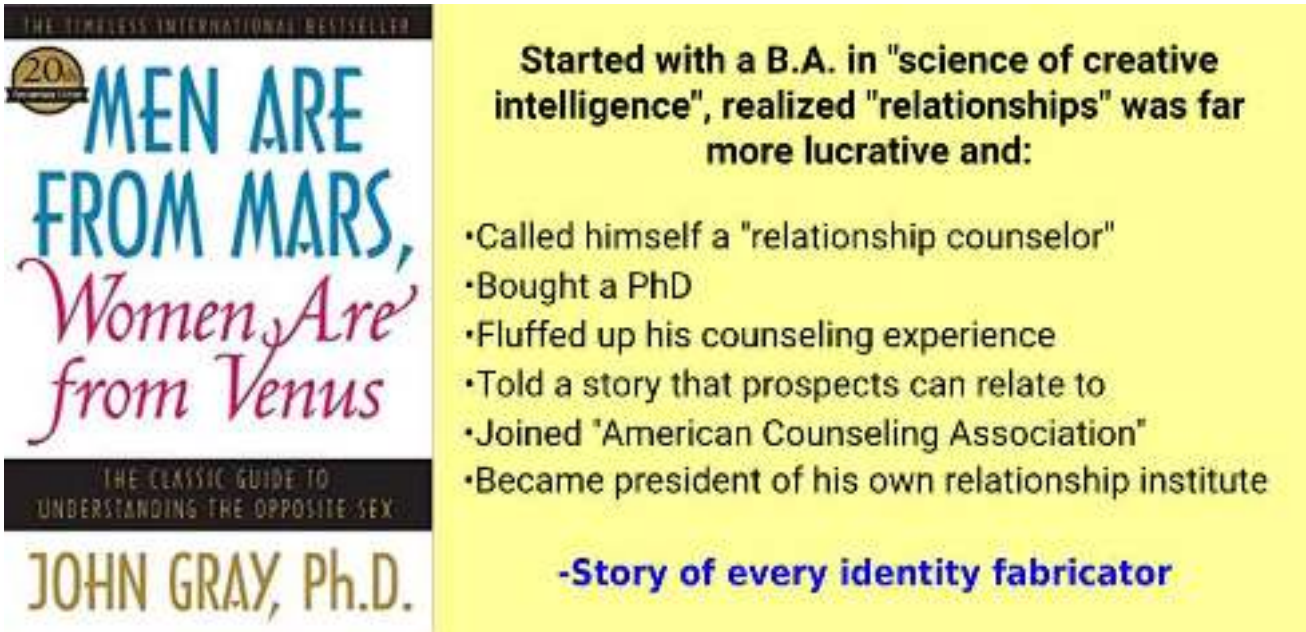


Criticism

“Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus” has been criticized for relaying stereotypes from *pop psychology*.

John Gray has been criticized too for some shady practices and for not earning a real PhD.

We even made this picture for another article on common marketers’ tactics:



Some criticize the portrayal of women as (more) emotional creatures, while some say that Gray’s advice is “sexist” because it asks the woman to do more of the adjustment.

I did indeed notice more “requests for changes” aimed at her rather than at him.
However, that doesn’t *necessarily* mean “sexism”.
It might simply mean the author believes it’s easier for the woman to adjust or that it’s simply best for the relationship.
Or, here at TPM, we would also say that if the man is giving more, it’s fair exchange that she may have to adjust more.

Let’s see some more:

Advice On Power Dynamics, Missing Critical Power Insights

In brief, this is the communication it espouses:

- Women should power protect men when tasking them
- Women should be more feminine
- Men have the right to their space, lone time, and pursuit of masculine hobbies

Unwritten and covert is this:

- **Men are higher power and value than women** in the relationship. Not necessarily wrong, but only valid for high-value men

And common tropes based on social and value exchanges:

- Good partners seek to add value
- Both partners must focus on giving and compromising for win-win

All of these make sense.

But Grey's analyses exclusively based on gender generalizations make it seem a lot more simplistic -and less accurate- than it should be.

Unscientific

Note that unscientific does *not* equal "inaccurate" (as much as "scientific" does not always mean "accurate", also see the *replication crisis in psychology*).

And while it doesn't have the scientific backing of a John Gottman, this book has, in many ways, more insights than many other research-backed books.

I also believe it can help many couples to better understand relationship dynamics, and common gender-typical issues and, ultimately, it can help many men and women improve their relationship.

Stereotypes: They Can Be True, But Exceptions Matter

This whole book is the *emblem* of generalizations and stereotypes.

The reader should always keep that in mind.

You just need to look at the title to realize that this is not going to be a book that goes into the nuances.
And it doesn't ever mention that there is plenty in common between men and women.

Book For... Average Folks & Relationships

Trying to describe ANY woman, man, and relationship…

Men Are From Mars ends up serving almost no one in particular.

This is true for ANY book or advice that lacks specificity.
See our article on ceiling advice:

> Ceiling Effect: Why 99% of Self-Help Leads to Plateaus

More growth-oriented folks will both *need* this advice less, while also being able to *use* this advice best.

The top guys who work on themselves to improve and develop a growth mindset won't get nearly as defensive as the author mentions.

And of course, the same is also true for high-quality women.

It's Masculinity & Femininity, Not Men and Women

Grey describes masculinity and femininity, which is not the same as men and women.

Some men can lean more into feminine psychology and behavior, while some women can lean more masculine psychology and behavior.

Also read our centerpiece articles on that:

- What is masculinity
- How to be more masculine

Real-Life Applications

“Men Are From Mars Women Are From Venus” describes somewhat valid general tendencies about men and women and turns them into practical applications for improving relationships.

What struck me the most based on my experience were:

Give Him The Results Quick
When telling a story, give him the “executive summary”, one sentence of what happened.
Then flash out the details. Men will get impatient if it takes too long to get to the main point.

He Must Let Her Vent First
The man must let the woman vent first before giving explanations or she’ll feel he doesn’t care.

Review

Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus is a not-so-bad popular book to understand how feminine and masculine tendencies can at times clash and create possible issues within intimate relationships.

Do I recommend you read it?

Yes.
And no.

These stereotypes are so common that you probably heard them.
And because of the padding, you may get similar value from the full book as from this summary, to be honest.

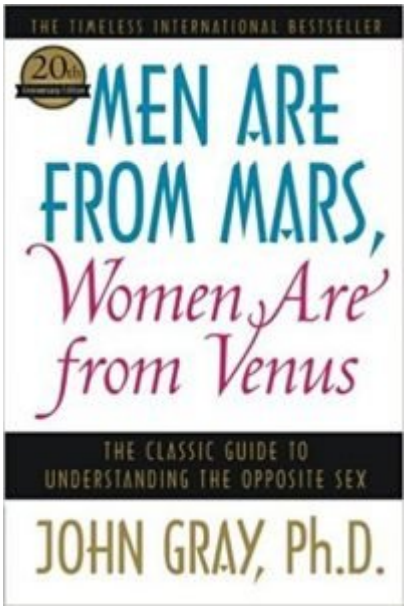
Keep in mind these are also generalizations and don’t take into account individual differences or how the dynamics change based on mate value.

So if you read it, do so with a critical approach.

Get it on Amazon or check out:

- Best relationship books
- Masculine & feminine energy: the real differences

Men Are From Mars Women Are From Venus Summary & Review



A great resource to understand gender differences and improving your relationship.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/men-mars-women-venus-book-summary-review-criticism/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.2

Best Songs For Romance & Make Her Fall In Love

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Nothing lubricates the gears of love like a great playlist of seductive music.

A great soundtrack is one of your best bets for *successful escalation*, make her fall in love and give her an unforgettable time.

Even for couples, the perfect music will make your time together all that more special.

So let's review a few ideas for a great soundtrack for romancing:

Contents

- 1. Bruce Springsteen
- 2. Slow Classics To Dance On
- 3. Mellow Classics
- 4. Romance Soundtracks: Your Songs
- 5. Trance Rhythm
- 6. Romance From Exotic Sounds
- 7. A Song For You To Sing On
- 8. Break Pattern Songs
- Avoid These Songs
- The Mindset of Romancing
  - A Man Leading
  - A Contagiously Passionate Man
- Summary

1. Bruce Springsteen

> ***Romance The Mannish Way: Show Her Who's The Boss :)***

The Boss is passionate and romantic at the same time without ever getting corny.

He's also a handsome and mannish performer that will reflect well on those who choose him.

An old favorite of mine, here are a few picks:

- **I'm On Fire**: a masterpiece of dripping sexual desire.
  "hey little girl is your daddy home, did he go and leave you all alone, I've got a bad desire, I'm on fire"
- **Tougher Than The Rest**: perfect ambiguity between the propositioning for love or a roll in the hay
  Well it ain't no secret I've been around a time or two, Well there's another dance All you gotta do is say yes
- **Human Touch**: some touchy-feely lyrics, but great to add a layer of "broken man seduction"
  You can't shut off the risk and pain – Without losin' the love that remains

2. Slow Classics To Dance On

> ***Dance Is Love… While Standing With Clothes***

When you want to put the full romance moves on, the most archetypal romantic moment cannot be missed:

The slow dance.

Dancing is a mix of romantic and sexual. It hints at and can be the prelude of, more carnal, physical contact to come.

Unless you're prepping out and pre-gaming for clubbing, stick to slow classics.
She might think it's corny, but it always has a big impact, *even when it's corny*.

Here are some good options:

- **Strangers In The Night**
- **Can't Help Falling In Love**

And a good example of "there is no corniness in romance", including for high-power frame control:

> (moon river starts playing)
> **Her**: so corny
> **Him**: no! It's classic. Listen
> **Him**: (tells a story about his parents, reminiscing, shows a glimpse of his most vulnerable and emotional self
> Then invites her to dance)

And just in case some of you might think "it's just a movie", you only need to read the real-people comments below it:

This scene always get me. The moment where big let's down his defense and finally shows us a different side to him.

26 REPLY

Gabby Hagood 5 years ago

He's such a selfish prick and carrie is childish for playing a long with his games - but I can't help but love them together. I can't help it. This scene is so romantic.

884 REPLY

View 7 replies

NYCBlonde 10 years ago

Simply breathtaking scene. It brings tears to my eyes. What a lovely, lovely valentine to their relationship, and the NYC–knowing it was filmed before 9/11 but aired afterwards...it just gets to me. Perfection.

REPLY

The slow dance is also a good move before sex to make intimacy more special and unique.

You can also use it as a tool to gauge where you stand with her.
If she hugs you tight you can likely go ahead and become lovers soon.

If she stops moving completely and just rests her head on you, she's smitten and really likes you a lot (and tread carefully if you're not into commitments!)

As a last note, I avoid it when I'm dating women who are around my height because the stereotype of the slow dance is "man taller, woman shorter".
So maybe you want to skip this if you're around the same height or if she's taller (or keep it for after intimacy).

3. Mellow Classics

> ***The Romance Bread & Butter***

These will form the bulk of your playlist.

You can talk over them, or cook while you listen, or, well… Also get down to it of course.
Expand your romantic playlist with mellow classics until it's several hours of songs, so it can cover a whole night.

Pick depending on your tastes here as long as the sound is mellow, romantic, and warm.
The goal is to display your "romantic side", so it's best if at least a few of them are popular and she's heard them before.

Some ideas:

- **James Blunt**: I picked "High", but he's got several good ones
- **Dylan: Lay, Lady Lay**: a nice ballad
- **The Cure**: "Pictures of You" is a good one
- **Highwayman**: a romantic string of adventures through reincarnation. You know women dig those ;)
- **Moby, Porcelain**:
- **Simon & Garfunkel, Scarborough Fair**: a transcendental sound for a transcendental experience
- **Pearl Jam**: Wishlist is great for romantic nights
- **Classical**: if you go classical, pick something easy on the ear or it'll be too much (Ennio Morricone here from "Once Upon A Time In The West)
- **Kings of Leon**: Closer is about a vampire, a common woman's fantasy. Perfect to slowly move closer and kiss/bite her on the neck
- **Certe Notti by Ligabue**: if you're an English speaker adding some foreign songs is a must. It makes you come across as more worldly and open-minded

These are better for later on and not first dates since they clearly reference "love":

- **All of My Love** by Led Zeppelin
- **The One I Love** by REM

4. Romance Soundtracks: *Your* Songs

Romance Soundtracks are songs specific to your story and relationship.

They stress the "us" and must feel unique to you two.

It's always good to stress and openly state (ie.: "thread expand" and "surface") each special moment you enjoy so they grow bigger, and get burned into her memory.
And the romance soundtrack is one way of doing exactly that, with a song.

For example, when I was in a relationship with a girl flying to see me, a song that spoke to us was "leaving on a jet plane" by Peter Paul and Mary.

Or if you meet a woman during your party years, it might be a party song, too ("Sky and Sand" by Paul Kalkbrenner was another big one for me).

When I'm living in Berlin, another popular artist has been David Bowie since he was living in that city and was a great representative of the "alternative" vibe that many people enjoy about that city.

The more the songs talk about you two, the better.

Play these songs more than once and she will come to associate that song with you two -or simply with the night together-.
And if you stay together for longer, they can become the songs of your relationship.

Soundtracks don't necessarily need to be sentimental in a stereotypical way.
But they must give you two the feeling of being bonded, special, eternal, or **living an unforgettable moment with no past and no future -simply suspended in time-**.
And they must pack a strong emotional punch. Have a "soul".
The essence of romance.

Some examples of songs with a strong emotional punch:

- **We Can Be Heroes**: Romance for the Underground. You two can beat The Man. Just for one day. Or forever and ever. The essence of romance.

> "*We can be heroes, just for one day;*
> *We can be heroes for ever and ever*"

See what we're talking about here?
We can be heroes. *Just for one day*, on this very special day, you're living together.
Or we can be heroes forever *and ever*, hinting at the possible beginning of a great love story.

- **Sky & Sand**: romance for the party people

> *Design our own world,*
> *Ain't nobody understand.*
> *As long as we are flyin',*
> *All this world ain't got no end*

See again?
"We design our own world, that nobody understands" are the perfect lyrics.
They speak of you, being so special together, that you're in a bubble where there is only the two of you -and nobody else understands that-.

- **Gigi D'Agostino – L'Amour Toujours**: the king DJ of the '90s, with another song for party lovers

> I still believe in your eyes
> I just don't care what you have done in your life
> (…)
> You'll be my baby and we'll fly away
> And I'll fly with you, I'll fly with you

One video version of this song is also perfect as a video, with anime characters (Final Fantasy?) moving in a world of fantasy:

Final Fantasy also works for ambiance and background videos for your seductive environments.
It works great because the stories are modern interpretations of millennia-old myths of knights and heroes fighting the "good battle" against monsters and dragons. And the women in the saga look feminine and submissive, so their expressions subconsciously frame the interaction as men in charge, and women following.

5. Trance Rhythm

> ***To go into trance***

Says a neuroscientist on Quora:

> Trance music calms down the limbic Brain.
> It brings down stress-related neuro chemicals and hormones like cortisol and norepinephrine. And at the same time can increase the levels of oxytocin and Serotonin which are happiness and trust Neurochemicals.
>
> *Quora's answer by neuroscientist, redacted for brevity*

Sounds like the perfect music to throw away the mask.
And grow intimate with the release of bonding neurochemicals.

Some survivors of psychopathic love say that "hypnosis and trance" is a tactic of seduction.

6. Romance From Exotic Sounds

> ***The Romance Of Far Away Lands***

Relationships born in the same cultural and socio-economic background are the most common.

And also the most boring.
Give her a dream of a faraway place and time instead.

Music from a place with no boring jobs, traffic, and inept men.

Music from a land of unending romance and love

Gondolas in Venice, sopranos in Spain, and “elle ne regrette rien avec toi” when it hails from Paris.

If you have nothing that screams romance about your background, weave a story around the song as it starts playing.
Say what it talks about, what it reminds you of.

Pristine white mountains, sunsets on the beaches, backpacking adventures…

You talk about them, she dreams of experiencing their sublimated essence… With you in mind.

7. A Song For You To Sing On

> ***Taking It To The Next Level***

Put in your playlist a few songs you can sing along with.

Sing them on your own as well so you also get better -and make yourself happier, too-.

It wouldn’t hurt to have a great voice but you don’t need to be great.
Actually, you might even get some points for singing badly: it shows you’re not afraid of making a fool out of yourself.

And sing early if she’s a bit nervous, it will release tension and put her at ease.

Like Ashton Kutcher shows you:

> **Him**: Roll the windows down, turn the music up, and make an ass out of yourself, it puts them at ease

The good thing about singing also is that it shows a positive, happy personality.
An attitude of “Lust For Life” to quote Iggy Pop. That’s a very, very positive trait. We all want to be around positive people.

I know the lyrics of most songs I like, so I can pick whichever moment I want to make a fool out of myself.
This one is the most stereotypically romantic song I have in my playlist, which sounds difficult but is actually rather easy to sing on: Tu Che Mi Hai Preso Il Cuor.

And bonus points if you have a guitar of course.

Note: we’re talking about just a bit of singing here, a few lines of lyrics. It’s not a performance.

8. Break Pattern Songs

> ***Roller Coaster Ride***

Similar concept to “venue change”:

Same as always sitting in the same place can feel stale, staying always in the same tempo and rhythm can start feeling dull.
And if it’s all very high romance, it can start feeling saccharine.

Changing the tempo and mood of your songs is often a good idea.

I like to mix more romantic songs with something happy and lively as well.

For example:

- **Dancing In The Dark**: Keep the romance mood but with more rock power
- **Summer of 69**: The melancholy of reminiscing on a great young love mixed with an uplifting beat. An air of rebellious freedom from the ’60 plus 69 in the title :).
- **It’s My Life**: It’s now or never, I just wanna live while I’m alive, my heart is like an open highway, an optimistic shout to enjoy the moment
- **You’re Simply The Best**: if you’re having a great time, she’ll associate “the best” with you
- **Rolling Stones**: most of the Stones is great, a great mix of rock and sensual
- **Libiamo**: the perfect classical song for the situation. Explain to her it’s about drinking and enjoying life: you set the right frame and even come across as cultured
- **Rihanna’s** “We Found Love”: there’s something perversely beautiful and addictive in the whirlwind romance mixing craziness, love, and abuse

Same as for the blinking lights in *seductive environments,* you want smooth shifts from one state to another.
So you want to stay in that “happy song section” for at least a few songs before going back to the mellower sounds.

Avoid These Songs

Unless you're already lovers, skip any song with guys who:

- Promise they'll do anything for her
- Cry their heart out
- Sad-sack mood, since research shows *positive*-affect music made men more attractive
- Complain about breakups/women/life

They send the wrong message.
And unless you're thinking about getting serious or are already serious, I would avoid all those (many) songs falling in this category:

- Professing eternal love

I would personally avoid anything too overly sentimental as well.
For example, I used to like Elvis Presley a lot but too many of his songs are a bit too mushy and *low-power*.

The Mindset of Romancing

The perfect romancing playlist starts with you at the helm.

The best playlist won't make for a great evening of romance by itself.

But a cool guy who knows how to move *plus* a great romantic playlist will take her to heaven.

Here is what needs to go along with that romantic playlist:

A Man Leading

You can alternate songs with her.

Sometimes.

But once you're 100% in romancing mode, don't ask her what she likes, or if the music is OK for her. This is no

“getting to know each other time” or the moment to go for parity of the sexes.

One must let go to fully experience romance. So let her go 100% without worrying about anything.
You let go 90% and with the other 10% make all the rest happen (the songs, the drinks, the dance, the light conversation, and then the lovemaking).

It’s *your* world she’s stepping into, you’re leading this dance. Take her by the hand and bring her along on a beautiful journey of romance.

A Contagiously Passionate Man

You’ll notice this post is not just a list of romantic songs.

It’s because **the songs must mean something to you**.
Romance is feelings, and feelings are notoriously contagious.

You must love the songs you pick.
At times you will describe them, explain what’s so great about them, why you like them so much, and sometimes you will sing over them a bit.

Be passionate, love the moment and she’ll be passionate with you.

Summary

Think about the most romantic movie scenes you know.

Or some great romance in your life.
Probably there was a song or a few songs linked to them.

Good music is an essential moment to enjoy a great night of romance and you should take good care of building your own romance playlist.

Why Men Love Bitches: Is This Feminist Approach to Dating Effective (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

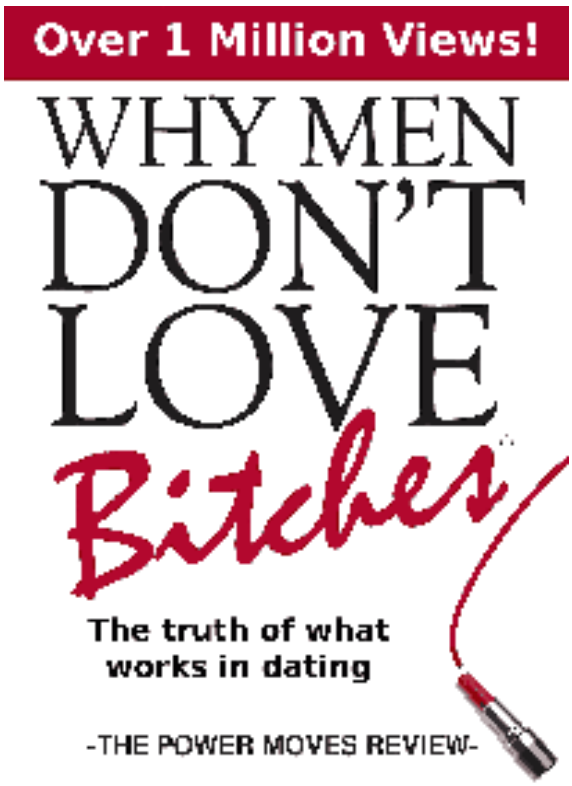
Why Men Love Bitches (2002) is a dating book for women promoting dating strategies based on emotional and financial independence, female power, and some potentially manipulative dating games.

TPM Strategic Audit: We analyze Argov's to provide strategic awareness on female dating strategies, potential manipulation tactics, and dating red flags. It's essential knowledge for high-value men in order to vet for quality women and make decisions that are good for both.

Contents

- Quick Review
  - A book for women who are WAY too nice (only)
- What I Liked
- What's Wrong
  - 1. Feminine Women Date Better Than Bitches
  - 2. The "Men VS Women" Approach Is Ineffective With High-Quality Men
  - 3. Traditional Family Men Want Supportive Women, Not Bitches
  - 4. Don't Learn Happy Relationships From Singles
  - 5. Poor Approach To Date Higher Quality Men
  - 6. You Lose Out In Relationships
  - 7. No, Men Don't Love Bitches
- Who Should Read It: Too Nice Girls
- Review

Quick Review



High-quality men love high-quality women. As simple as that.

Why Men Love Bitches advocates for a 'me-first', assertive way of dating, but the problem is that overly assertive women tend to date poorly.

The 'bitch' is:

- Independent
- "not needing a man" and
- High power

The type of woman who'd proudly sing "I can buy myself flowers".

And power is good: this website is all about power and personal empowerment.

However, when it comes to dating *effectiveness*, things are not as straightforward.
Power is almost always good for men, but research shows that **power for women comes with important costs** (unless she's very astute in wielding it).

And that's *especially* true in dating.

In dating, **high-power women tend to repel many high-power and successful men and only retain lower-value and more submissive men**.

So while some power is good for displaying some value, too much power backfires.
Generally speaking, female power above a certain threshold reduces her options.

A book for women who are WAY too nice (only)

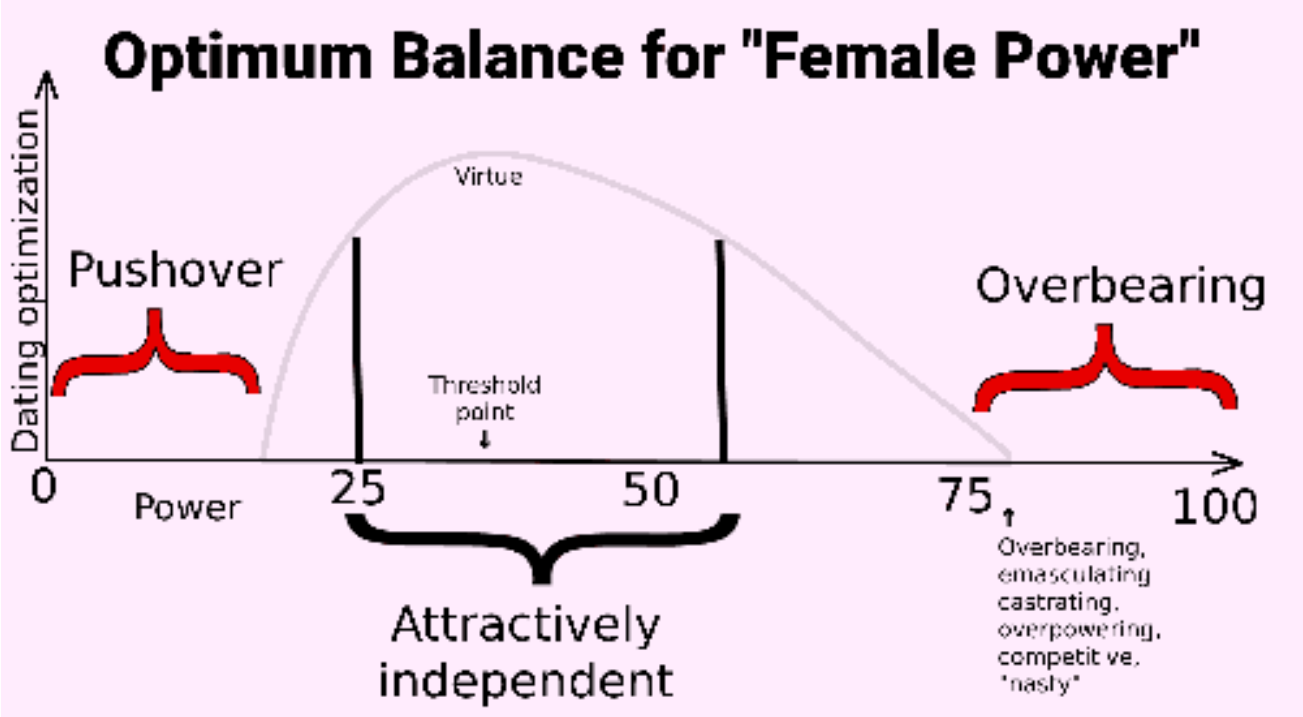
Here's the issue:

Why Men Love Bitches doesn't provide dating advice that works for all, or even most, women.

As a matter of fact, I'd say that ***Why Men Love Bitches* is only suited for a *specific subset* of overly submissive, overly naive women**.

As the subtitle of the book suggests, such as “from doormat to dreamgirls”, *Why Men Love Bitches* is best suited for women who are “too nice”.

But it is not a very effective strategy for the majority of women because **women maximize their sexual market value at lower levels of power** than men:



“Independent” is only attractive UP TO A CERTAIN LEVEL
Just as a quick example, take availability.

Argov recommends being more on the unavailable end.

However, **contrary to the book’s advice research shows that *available* women are actually more attractive to men** (Birnbaum et al., 2013).
Of course, any single research isn’t the end-all-be-all. And you don’t want to be *too* available to the point where it feels like you have no life whatsoever. That would be too much and decrease your value.

But the point remains: “be unavailable to display power” is not good general advice.

Not A Book For Win-Win Relationships

Another issue with the book is that it focuses on dating power dynamics and *relationship control.*

That means that ***Why Men Love Bitches* is less suited for win-win, supportive relationships**.

The risk of going into the “bitch” way of dating is the same as for toxic masculinity.
And it’s that one starts seeing relationships as zero-sum games where only one partner can win, and only if the other loses (a mindset leading to *combative relationships*).

Finally, it’s not effective with high-quality men, since high-quality men tend to be leaders, successful, and high in dominance.
And successful men rarely enjoy an overpowering woman who plays games and seeks to lead and control the dating process.

Also, read the foundational law of balance article and as it applies to dating:

> Why Balance Is Most Seductive

What I Liked

There are some good insights in *Why Men Love Bitches*.

Albeit not a psychologist, the author has an intuitive grasp of power dynamics, which makes some of her analyses very on point.

Her analysis on nagging for example, was very insightful.
She says nagging reassures men that she cares and he 'has her'. It's true, although the author missed on the power of nagging.

Potentially good advice *in the right doses* include:

1. **Love yourself and your life first** (or you become dependent on him)
2. **Control the pace of the relationship, and keep it slow** (or you go too fast and burn out)
3. **Let him come to you** <— There are exceptions to this
4. **Never make him feel like he "has you"** (or he will lose interest) <— Potentially trapping you to play game for the whole relationship

The last one can backfire.

Many men prefer women who become "his" -and many high-power men would only date seriously women who become "his"-.

The overall message is "be strong, be independent, and he will fall for you".
You can read more techniques in:

- How to make him value more: the "game-playing way"
- **How to make him chase you:** the healthier way

> 10 Mindf*ck Ways To Make Him Value You More

And, finally:

- **How to make him go crazy:** the sexual side of female dating strategies

What's Wrong

The main issue with *Why Men Love Bitches* is simple:

1. Feminine Women Date Better Than Bitches

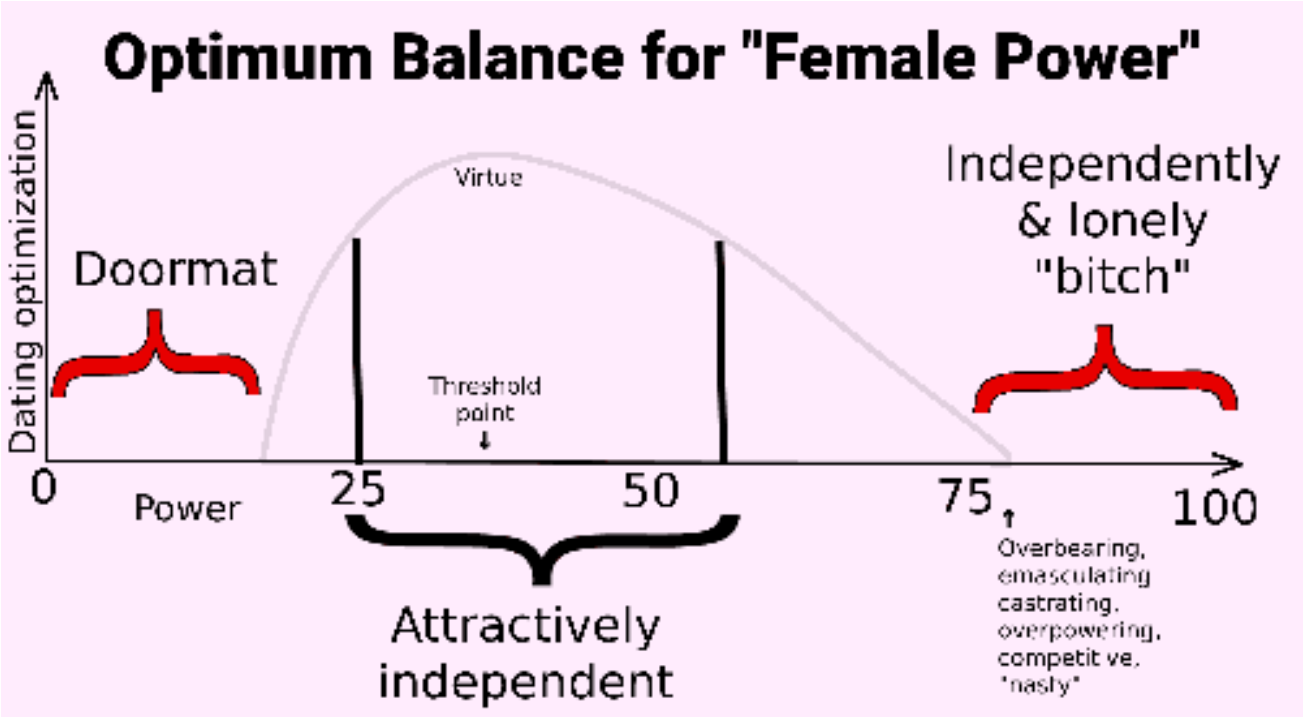
Generally speaking:

***Feminine* women who love, support, and even display slight submissiveness to a high-quality man date better than high-power women**.

Power, strength, and independence in a woman follow the law of optimum balance: you need *some* of it to avoid being a total pushover that only attracts losers.
But if you have too much of it, most men are turned off -including successful men-.

And power for female dating has a low threshold point: it's easy to overdo it.

Here's that "optimum balance" in chart terms:



In brief and put it bluntly: **high-power women are less attractive and have fewer opportunities**.

2. The "Men VS Women" Approach Is Ineffective With High-Quality Men

The "men VS women" frame sells but doesn't work.

That approach leads to poor relationships and, potentially, to toxic relationships.

This is exactly what happened to this reviewer, who started applying the advice in her relationship:

> That being said, the advice for people in long term relationship is garbage. I have been in a relationship for almost 2 years and reading this book almost RUINED EVERYTHING. If you are in a long term relationship and you are told by a book to 'pull away' emotionally and physically until he sees what he is missing...then you are not in a relationship with a man, you are in a relationship with a BOY. This book should be titled "Why BOYS loves bitches". That would make more sense. If you continually want to play this cat and mouse game with your boyfriend then go for it. But it will leave you exhausted and unfulfilled.
>
> I tried following the 'advice' given in this book and we suffered because 'pulling away' and waiting for him to figure out what's wrong is absolute BS. I felt misunderstood, confused and angry that he couldn't read my mind. Then I realized "I'm an ADULT. This MAN that I am dating is an ADULT. We should be ADULTS and not play juvenile games."

Combative advice makes for combative relationships. It's that simple.

Unluckily, this is common in the dating advice industry.
The same happens in many *dating books for men*.
These books end up being misogynists because they frame dating and relationships as battles to be won (see the review of *"The Rational Male*" for more).

I expect my relationships -and my partners- to seek mutual support and caring.
Because if not, why being a relationship at all?
That's what high-quality men and high-quality women seek.
And that's why **focusing on power and control only lands you poor-quality men and women**.

After all, why should a man with options be in a relationship with an uncollaborative woman *who engages in manipulative games*?

High-quality men with options demand partners who add value to their lives. These men are often busy building, acquiring power and influence, and they prefer a supportive woman to help them along their journey. And if instead of adding value their partner focuses on playing games, they will drop her.

That's why I advise women (and men) to drop win-lose mindsets and nasty power moves:

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

3. Traditional Family Men Want Supportive Women, Not Bitches

Traditional family men want a wife who supports them.

And guess what: most men who want a happy marriage are traditional.

You may not like Trump, but he's a prototypical "alpha male type".
Listen to what he says about his divorce from Ivana:

> **Trump**: Putting a wife to work is a very dangerous thing.
> (…)
> That was the single greatest cause of what happened to our marriage
> (…)
> Her softness disappeared. There was a great softness to Ivana
> (…)
> She became an executive, not a wife

There you have it.
Trump wanted a good support woman, not an independent bitch.
And I guarantee you that many men are like that.

4. Don't Learn Happy Relationships From *Singles*

DeMarco calls it the "paradox of practice".

In brief, the paradox of practice means to "sell advice that the author herself hasn't used to succeed".

Argov also wrote *"Why Men Marry Bitches"*, but as a cautious reader, you may want to ask yourself if Argov or other practitioners of "bitch dating" are in a happy relationship.

I don't know about Sherry Argov's personal relationships, but as the learner who wants to maximize her options you should definitely ask yourself:

Are the women promoting and practicing *Why Men Love Bitches* advice dating high-quality men?

OR…

Are they mostly single & bitter, or in a relationship with a doormat?

From what I've seen, some of these women promoting the "bitches" advice are either:

1. **Selling**, without making sure the material works
2. **Deceiving** the competition for personal gains
3. **Justify their choices** with a convenient narrative to reframe their loneliness

However, it's not a case of "everyone's bad".
Some are honestly clueless.
And some others have been victims of less-than-ideal men.

So this is not necessarily an attack on many women who instead deserve understanding -or compassion-.

Some women got into this type of mindset and advice after they dated *assholes, avoidant men, sociopaths*, narcissists, and the *male equivalent of bitches.*

So it's understandable.

Still, it doesn't mean this advice works.

5. Poor Approach To Date Higher Quality Men

The "bitch" of the book seems quite a game player.

And that doesn't work well with high-quality men with options and competing interests.

Example from the author in a private video:

> **Woman**: (plays games)
> **Men**: (falls out of love)

I usually recommend high-quality women who seek high-quality men and who want high-quality relationships to date differently.
You must plant the seeds for a high-quality relationship.

And a high-quality relationship demands mutual support, which starts with dating.

You can also read:

- Mutual escalation to date high-quality men
- Most common dating mistakes for women

You can also see one real-life example here.

I found instead the bitch of *Why Men Love Bitches* advice being more on the bellicose end rather than on the "we're in this together".

> 7 Biggest Dating Mistakes Women Do (Before Sex)

5.2. Making Him Chase and Invest Is Good... But Harmful When She Overdoes It

Sherry Argov recommends women make him invest in them.

That's common advice in the dating literature for women and there is some evidence to confirm that it works.

For example, studies show that givers feel more committed to the recipient after giving.
So a man doting and investing in her will like the woman *more*.
In that sense, *Why Men Love Bitches* is right.

Yet, whether that technique works or backfires, depends highly on the environment you are dating in, and the type of man you are dating.

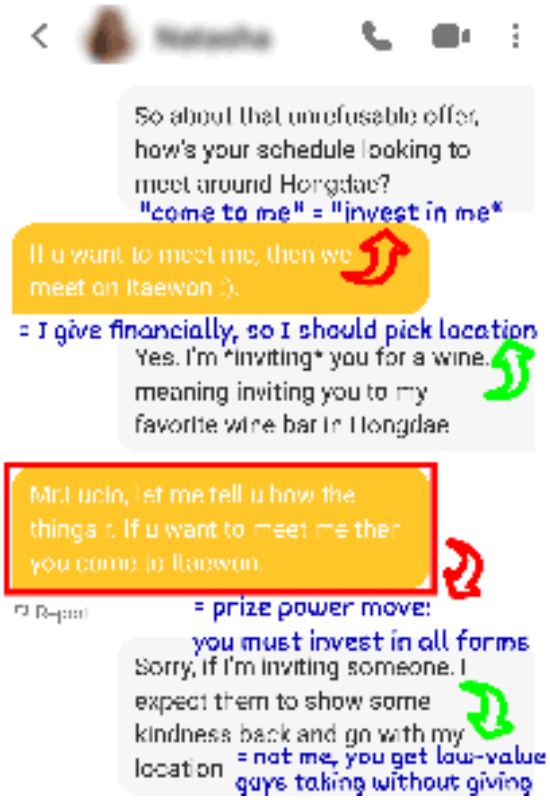
But, generally speaking, you don't want to *try too hard to make him chase.*

Why Not?

Because today there are more high-quality women than men, which gives men an advantage in general.
And that's even more true for high-quality men.

Asking for big investments upfront drives away the men who have the most options -and those are the ones whom ideally you want to get-.

Just look at this real-life example:



She dates like a "bitch".
If I have other options why should I want to date her beside a sexual thing? No self-respecting man would pick her for a relationship

That's why I say that this approach of "dating like a high-powered bitch" who makes men chase and invest works great… *For average and below-average men.*

If you don't believe me, there are studies showing that men prefer kind women. And *especially* so for long-term relationships.

I recommend you take a look at *"why dating for successful women is harder* (and what they can do about it)".

> Why Successful Women Fail At Dating (& How to Fix It)

This is especially true if she is not well versed in asking without giving back in equal amounts.
When she dates with "getting as much as possible" in mind, it's very easy *looking like a low-quality woman.*
Discerning men who are attuned to social dynamics will never be OK with giving and giving without anything in return (and again, those are ideally the men she wants).

This is why, overall, I cannot fully agree with *Why Men Love Bitches* without adding a few caveats.

5.3. Letting Him Wait For Sex Can Backfire If It Feels Like A Game

Sherry Argov seems to recommend that she lets him wait for sex.

And, again, there are plenty of reasons why that's a good idea, including the male's ingrained mindset of dividing

women along the “Madonna-whore dichotomy“.

For the exceptions also check out:

- Should you make him wait for sex?
- Dating rules and exceptions

And for the techniques on how to actually delay sex, check:

- **How to delay sex** (and enhance the relationship)

> How To Slow Down Sex & Get A Relationship

6. You Lose Out In Relationships

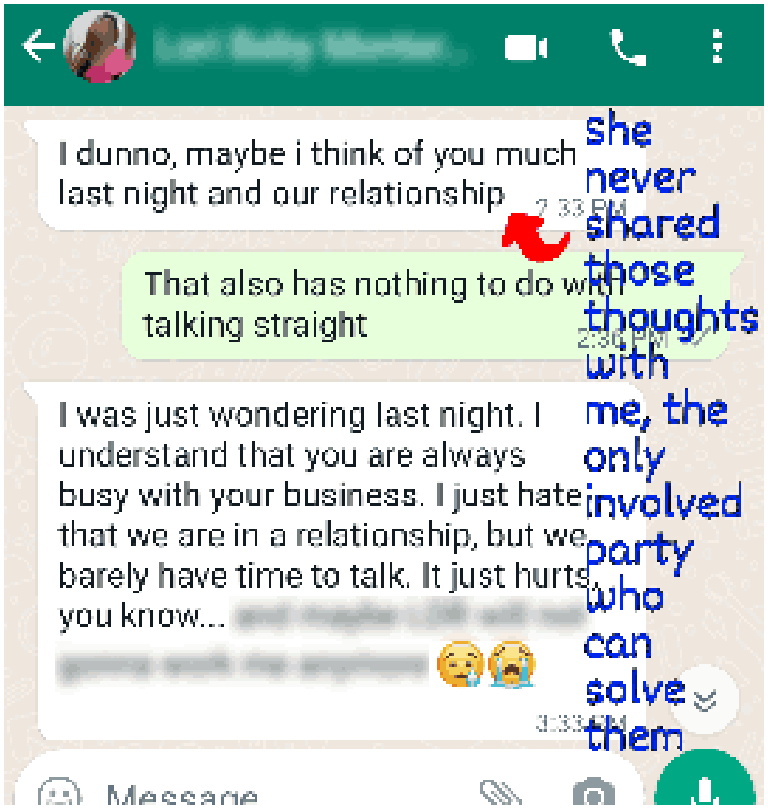
I’ve dated my fair share of women who either:

- **Speak straight**, including admitted they needed time/attention
- **Play games**, including hiding their need for time and attention

And that’s a major problem for “bitches” in relationships with high-quality men who demand and expect straight talk.

It does show you’re playing games, and he’ll lose respect and attraction.

Real-life example:



She hid her feelings to look “strong”, and ruined the relationship for it (for both)

This woman acted like Argov’s “bitch” who “doesn’t need him”.

But it wasn’t her true and honest self.
So she put up a fake persona and never spoke straight about her needs and wants.

Instead, she played the game.

For a long time.
She *pretended* she didn't need much contact, and refrained from contacting me when she wanted to talk.

And this is among a slew of other "power games" that align with the "ideal bitch".
For example, whenever I couldn't pick up the phone, she also withdrew and avoided sending good night wishes.
She never spoke up that she felt spurned when I couldn't pick up -or that she'd expect a call back, something I could have agreed with-.

But of course, I teach this stuff, and I knew what was up.

Anyway, back to her "need for attention" that she hid.
That was also the straw that broke the camel's back.

She suffered (in silence) for as long she could.

And when she finally spoke up, it was too late.
I had lost a lot of respect for her and that was the last straw.
I lost respect for her for playing games for so long. For not (having the courage to) speak straight and early. And for playing a game of power instead of the game of partnership and making it work together that I *expected* -and clearly told her multiple times-.

What's sad is that, generally, she's actually a very good person.

But by the time we reached that point, I had to come to the conclusion that she too into the (sneaky) game of power, than a partnership.

At that point, **I didn't believe anymore a good relationship with her was even possible**.

No matter how good a person, is, if she can't put that good to work WITH you, it's useless.

7. No, Men Don't Love Bitches

When reviewing "Why Men Love Bitches", the ultimate question is:

> Do men love bitches?

The short answer is: **no, most men don't love bitches**.

And it's ESPECIALLY men looking for a committed relationship who dislike bitches.

Much of the modern attrition you see online between genders is men's reaction to women who claim they don't need a man.

Of course, as for everything, there are exceptions.

A minority of power-hungry men can be motivated to pursue the bitch.
Those men are turned on by the quest to control, domesticate, and dominate the independent bitch.

However, that's NOT a healthy dynamic to set off.
One, it's high in games and manipulation.
And two, those men lose interest once they get her.
So the bitch would condemn herself to a lifetime of constant aloofness and distance, becoming in a way a bit of an emotionally unavailable (wo)man.

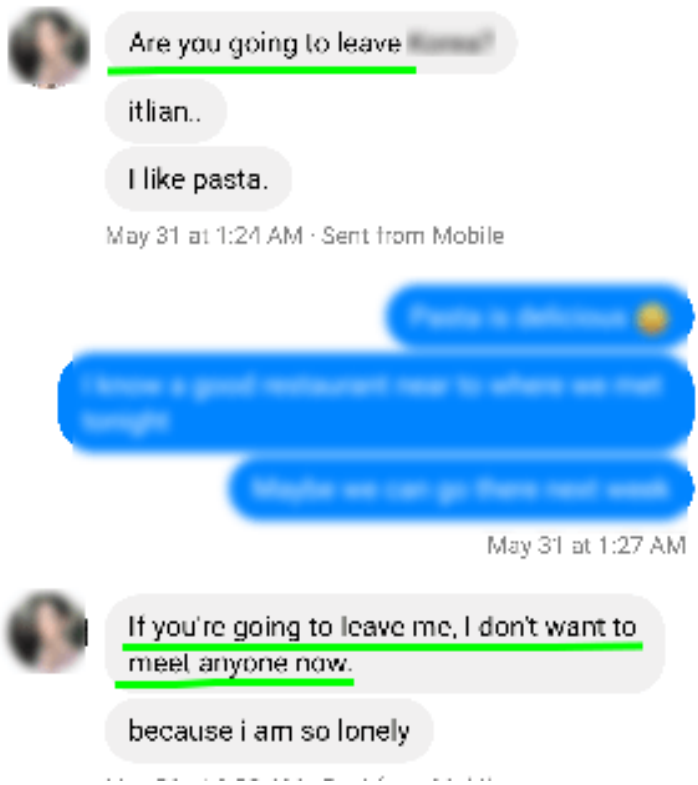
Most men though will never go for a bitch because they prefer women who are easier to get along with.
These are usually also the mentally healthiest men and men *with a secure attachment style*.

This isn't just my opinion, my personal experience, and my observation of the men around me, but several studies support this view.
You can read more in "submissive VS strong women" and "are men intimidated by strong and independent women?".

> Submissive Women VS Strong Women: Who Wins at Dating?

With some other men, it's best to make them feel like they have you and they protect you and take care of you. Sherry Argov mentions this, albeit at times as a manipulative tactic for getting what she wants.

This is the type of man and relationship that Steve Harvey describes in his bestseller *Act Like a Lady Think Like a Man*.
See an example here:



And read the full description here:

- **How to make men want to invest and protect** using selective submissiveness

In summary:
yes, some men are attracted to independent bitches because they want to tame and dominate them.
However, that's a short-term attractor only, and if the "struggle for power" continues only submissive men are going to stay after sex.
Ultimately, the dating market for more submissive and *feminine women* is larger and with more high-quality men than the dating market for the bitches.

Smart Women Agree

If you don't wanna take my word as a man, then listen to a woman teaching class and feminity.

Anna Bey, a former matchmaker who understands dating dynamics says it perfectly well:

> **Anna Bey**: If you are going to be incredibly cold and rigid just not to be a "pick me woman", you might

> actually end up attracting a very submissive type of guy who loves being bossed around by a woman

With "cold and rigid", Bey is actually referring to too many games and to a dating approach that seeks power.

Who Should Read It: Too Nice Girls

Why Men Love Bitches can be a great wake-up call for certain types of women.

For example, it can be good for *"women who love too much"*, women who are *too* nice, fall in love *too* quickly or get *too* clingy.
For these women, it can be a much-needed wake-up call.

In that sense, it's a bit like the equivalent of the *red pill for men*, and the corresponding book for men would be *"No More Mr. Nice Guy"*.

For example, I once had a girl who used to drop gifts in my postbox.

She once came to bring a gift after I shared some negative news, and I couldn't even let her come in because… There was another woman at my place.

I have never felt more guilty in my dating life than on that evening. But my guilt didn't improve her lot. *She* should have learned to be a bit 'bitchier' maybe.

On the other hand, I must say that if "too nice girls" can pick men who appreciate them, they'll have great relationships.
Case in point: the girl who dropped gifts in my letterbox is now in a long-term, happy relationship :).

Review

Why Men Love Bitches transfers some feminist values of independence and self-efficacy to dating.

However, there's a **contradictory undertone to the message if the ultimate goal is to get a man and be loved.**

And therein lies a major issue if the book: if readers want to date well, this approach isn't the most effective. Especially for women who want a long-term, high-value partner.

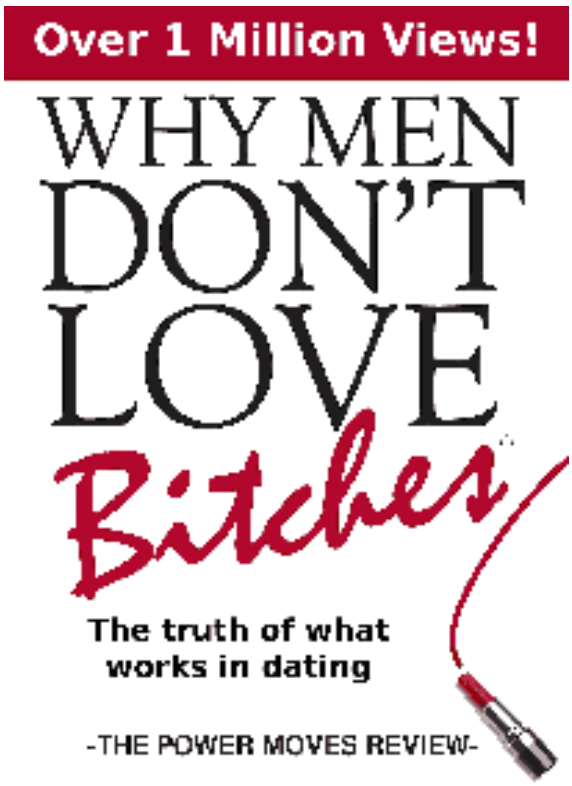
Still, I enjoyed *Why Men Love Bitches*.
There is some overlap with this website.
It was one of the earlier books to bring some power dynamics into dating for women. However, our advice is to use that knowledge to develop more genuine and collaborative relationships.

Also, check out:

- **Best dating books for women**

Get the book on Amazon

Why Men Love Bitches: Lucio's Take



A great resources on dating and relationship power dynamics.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/why-men-love-bitches-book-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
1.8

The Mask of Masculinity: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Mask of Masculinity (2017) lists four masks that men and alpha-male posturers wear in an effort to appear more "alpha", more dominant, and more attractive.
Lewis Howes suggests these masks are counterproductive as they lead to pain and poor relationships.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - #1. The Stoic Mask
  - #2. The Athlete Mask
  - #3. The Material Mask
  - #4. The Sexual Mask
  - #5. The Aggressive Mask
  - #6. The Joker Mask
  - #7. The Invincible Mask
  - #8. The 'Know-It-All' Mask
  - #9. The Alpha Mask
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Pros
- Lewis Howes Review
- Book Review
  - Utility of Masks

Bullet Summary

- Men live life obeying culture's rules of what it means to be a man
- The "masks" we wear to appear manly ultimately makes us weaker and unhappy
- Dropping the masks will free us to be ourselves and become better persons

Full Summary

About The Author:
Lewis Howes is a former athlete, entrepreneur, and founder of "the school of greatness", a show and podcast where he interviews various celebrities.

Introduction

Lewis Howes calls into question the idea of masculinity in our society.

He says it's not really working well for men.
They underperform women at school, have poorer social skills, and commit nearly 90% of the homicides.

At the same time, they are also 6 times more likely to commit suicide and much less likely to ask for help compared to women.

Masculinity is clearly failing men, Lewis seems to point out.

Removing the masks will make you happier, better, and more successful, Lewis says.
So let's start to see what these masks of masculinity are.

My Note:
I don't disagree with Lewis, yet it's not all about culture.
Much of that "masculinity" is also inborn. Also, read "*The Blank Slate*".

> **Without masks, we can be who we really are**

#1. The Stoic Mask

The stoic mask is possibly the most common and pervasive in our society.

Putting on the stoic mask the man pretends he has little or no emotions.

Lewis Howes says that ridding yourself of the stoic mask will give you emotional freedom, deeper permissions, and, lo and behold, the power of feeling those emotions again.

#2. The Athlete Mask

As a former athlete himself, Lewis Howes knows this one very well.

He says that some men equate being great at sports with being great at being a man.
They will force themselves through pain and injuries just to prove their worth and will spend hours and hours practicing or in the gym.

#3. The Material Mask

Men wearing the material mask will measure their worth by their… Net worth.

Bank account statements, cars, luxury items, and, these days, social media buzz as well.

Lewis Howes says that when we manage to drop this mask we will finally meet people who like us for who we are instead than for what we have. And we'll find peace and gratitude.

#4. The Sexual Mask

This man proves his worth with sexual conquests.

His value is the number of women he has been with. Relationships are for suckers, he thinks, a real man doesn't need that safety.
A real man loves and moves on.

The sexually masked man needs the next hook-up to feel good.
And he'll always be tense and hungry until, for a fleeting moment, he feels satisfied again after that next conquest.
And then, shortly after, the cycle begins again.

A man who manages to drop his sexual mask will finally find inner peace and he will finally be able to enjoy deeper relationships.

My Note:
This one rang true also from a personal point of view. However, this description only reflects the most stereotypically negative views and psychology of this archetype.

Also, read:

- The psychology of womanizers

#5. The Aggressive Mask

Men wearing aggressive masks act with disregard toward others.

The author says that some men think that going after what they want with full disregard for anyone else is a male trait, and that makes them strong and mannish.

Men wearing aggressive masks will often get into arguments and fights.

Lewis Howes says these men think it's ok to have enemies and to hate.

My Note:
And actually, I might go even further.
Some of these men base their own worth on having enemies and hating people. One of the mottos of Benito Mussolini's fascism was "many enemies, much honor".

The aggressive mask will have men always tense and restless.
They never allow themselves to forgive and move on. Moving beyond this mask will finally give men emotional stability and control and a more enjoyable, more peaceful life.

#6. The Joker Mask

This is the man who laughs at his problems and uses cynicism and jokes to show his tough, hyper-realist attitude.

It's also a way to show his superiority, of course, and they will use irony to seem superior:

> **Friend**: Do you want to talk about problems?
> **Cynic**: Sure Dr. Shrink, lemme just recline this chair and you can start fiddling your thumbs in the meanwhile.

The problem with the joker mask, says Lewis, is that it becomes an avoidance tool to move away from uncomfortable emotions.

When you drop this mask, Lewis says, people will finally take you more seriously and, similar to all other masks, you'll be able to establish deeper human connections.

#7. The Invincible Mask

The man with the invincible mask fears nothing.

He's a daredevil with little regard for the consequence of his actions and he "lives life to the fullest".
The bigger the risks, the more his chances of proving his manhood (and one of the reasons why men die younger).

Lewis says it's ok instead to admit our fears and not do something we don't want to do.
Once we drop the invincible mask our self-esteem will go up because we won't have to feel bad about what we fear and avoid.
And we'll get permission to just be instead of proving our mettle with doing.

#8. The 'Know-It-All' Mask

The know-it man must have all the answers and know what to do at any time.

This man feels like not knowing is a weakness, and that cannot be tolerated.

Men wearing this mask are more prone to "proving" their knowledge than to learning, which will leave them at a huge disadvantage when it comes to growing and learning.

This is also one of the worst kinds of *fixed mindset.*

As Lewis says, everyone knows a few things more than you do, and if you learn from them instead of proving your knowledge, you will progressively become a better and better man.

Dropping this mask will not finally allow you to grow, but will also make other people like you more and develop stronger relationships. Because, frankly, nobody likes a know it.

Also, read the description of a smart alec in "Archetypes of Dominance".

#9. The Alpha Mask

The alpha mask means a man must win and dominate anything he takes part in.

As the Internet population shows all too well, many men believe there are "alphas and betas".
You can't be both.

Also, read:

- Alpha male posturing

This is similar to what Brene Brown terms in *Daring Greatly* as "Viking mentality".
A Viking, similar to the Alpha Male, sees the world as a split between winners and losers.

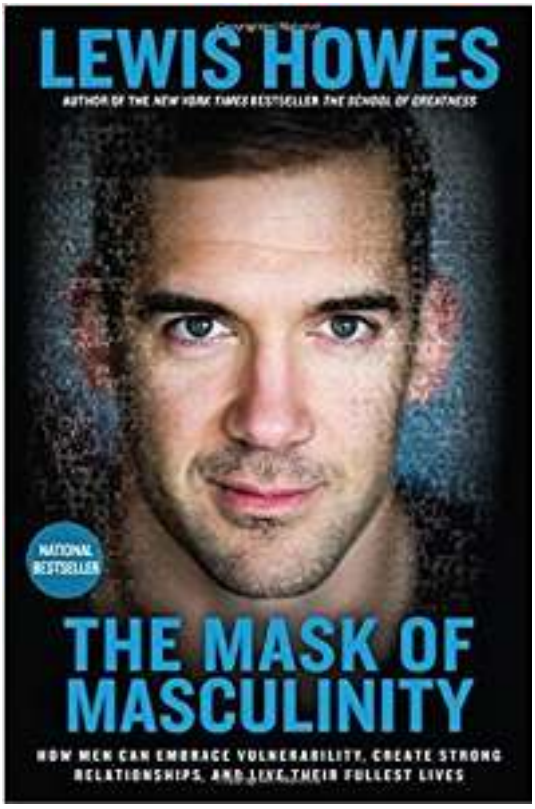
Lewis says Alpha types are not even about getting what they want, they're about the *illusion* of winning and feeling in control.
Which makes them weak and easy to manipulate.

You might think you're the big alpha male, but you're actually profoundly weak, he says.

Alpha males can hardly connect with others and dropping this mask will make great things for you.
It will help you create win-win solutions and relationships and make others feel better, too.

Also, read:

- Toxic masculinity
- The Rational Male review
- Preventive Medicine review
- Positive Masculinity review



Real-Life Applications

Learn Masks
I would say it's key for your development to learn what masks you're mostly wearing and how they affect you. By reading the book and the examples you will likely understand your own situation.
Then:

Choose Masks
See which masks you want to try to drop and which ones you want to keep if they help you somehow.

Power Moves Masks
Keep in mind sometimes you will need to put on some masks. That's also part of being socially shrewd in life. Not necessarily about tricking someone, but sometimes masks can also help you help someone.

CONS

How To Drop The Masks?
An explanation of why these masks exist and how to drop them could have been useful.

Is It Really A Mask?
This idea that you can take a mask and throw it away sounds appealing but… Are we really sure all those people are just pretending?
Maybe for some, it's not a mask, but more like how they're wired…

Masks… What If You Remove Them?
Imagine a man throwing all the above masks.
He feels he can say no to any scary thing, he doesn't "need" to sleep with women, he doesn't care about "material" stuff, he doesn't need a good career… And then what?
He's like neutered Brian couch potato?

Ideally, you might want to be able to throw off your mask and still push yourself.

Pros

Good Psychology
The Mask of Masculinity provides a very, very good practical psychology analysis of men in a format that is simple and understandable to everyone.
It might seem like "pop-psychology", but it's not. Simple, yes, but also realistic.

Useful
This book can be extremely useful to understand and improve yourself.

Lewis Howes Review

I think Lewis Howes is awesome.

And we also used him here as an example of a high-quality man.

This is why I was particularly surprised to hear that he outright refused to have Layne Norton on his show to discuss about nutrition.
Laye Norton is TPM's #1 recommendation when it comes to nutrition.
Layne said that Lewis got angry when he hinted that the guests he was having to speak about nutrition were quacks.

And albeit Layne can be a bit rough around the edges, I think it was not cool of Lewis to shut the door in his face.

Book Review

I find "*The Mask of Masculinity*" a great book to better understand psychology and the "boxes" many men live confined in.

You will gain a better understanding of how men work and, if you're a man, how you work. And that's huge because self-awareness is key to any real development.

I see The Mask of Masculinity a bit as the extension of *Daring Greatly*, considered by some the "Bible of vulnerability".

The message to drop all pretenses and have the courage and strength to be ourselves, including all our flaws and weaknesses is similar.
However, The Mask of Masculinity is mostly aimed at men and also adds a layer of very practical examples which makes it extremely useful.

Utility of Masks

I personally don't fully believe that dropping all the masks at once is the best strategy.

To begin with, you first should make yourself into a man who can drop all pretenses and still be somewhat socially appealing.

And second, you can use some of the pain and humiliation from the masks to propel you to the next level of achievement (Lewis himself explains how the pain of humiliation and a few masks he had propelled him into becoming a great athlete).

I also believe that mastery of oneself -and social mastery as well- is not always "being yourself".
But sometimes it's also about being able to put on this or that mask depending on the situation.

Also, read:

- **Vulnerability is not power**

In brief:

Great book.
Enjoyable, easy to understand, and useful.

Just as a reminder:

Law of balance.

Don't overboard with the vulnerability and openness and remember that coming across as "strong" is part of the "alpha male game of status".
And learning how to come across as an alpha male is important to learn.

Check the best red pill books or get The Mask of Masculinity on Amazon

Sex At Dawn: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Sex At Dawn proposes a different interpretation of human sexuality than the standard "Western ideal" of monogamy and paternal investment. The authors challenge the precept that we are mostly monogamous and that parents care about who their children are.
Instead, suggest the author, we are polyamorous and we are used to living in communes where people don't care who their children are.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Part I: On The Origin Of The Specious
  - Part II: Lust In Paradise (Solitary)?
  - Part III: The Way We Weren't
  - Part IV: Bodies In Motion
  - Part V: Men Are From Africa, Women Are From Africa
- Real-Life Applications
- Criticism
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We are (probably) naturally more polyamorous than monogamous
- Physically speaking, we are in between polyamory and monogamy
- Men lose testosterone in monogamous long relationships and crave diversity

Summary

About the Authors:
Christopher Ryan did not originally have a background in psychology, evolutionary psychology, or any of the like. But he later acquired an M.A. and Ph.D. from an online learning program.
Cacilda Jethá, the other author, is Ryan's wife and is a doctor (M.D.).

Introduction

We didn't descend from apes.
We *are* apes, say the authors right away.
The standard narrative of sexual evolution goes like this:

1. Boy meets girl
2. Assess mate: he looks for youth, fertility, and fidelity; she for wealth, status, health, and MPI
3. They mate and form a long-term bond
4. He keeps an eye on her and on other girls to impregnate; she's wary he doesn't fall in love with another woman and keeps an eye on genetically superior men to have a quick fling (possibly during ovulation)

The authors say researchers claim to find evidence for that narrative, and it makes sense on paper.

But they say there's no real evidence and monogamy in the west is more an adaptation to social conditions than our true nature.

Part I: On The Origin Of The Specious

The authors say Charles Darwin was a genius and a gentleman for whom they have endless respect.

But as it's the case for most gentlemen, he was a bit clueless about women.

There are two theories as to why women copulate outside of fertile days. The standard theory from Fischer says it's to cement the bonding with a constantly horny male mate.

He wouldn't have a need to look for other females, and since he wouldn't know when she'd get pregnant he also has an interest in sticking around.

The other explanation is that it evolved to "seed confusion".
The woman mating with different males would leave them unable to know who was their children, so nobody would want to kill them but, just in the off chance, take care of them.

In either case, it's a world where both genders want to confuse and cheat each other.
The authors don't seem to buy into that.

Part II: Lust In Paradise (Solitary)?

The authors say the human specie is obsessed with sex.

And before the agricultural revolution sex used to be more of a shared thing, and not such a big thing.
There was an abundance of sex.

The institutionalized sharing of resources and sexuality spread and diminishes risks and secures a more peaceful and secure social environment.
This is the case in bonobo societies. The availability of women makes males far less violent.

The authors call into question the obsession that evolutionary psychologists give to being the genetic father of a baby.

They say that if "passing the genes" is the most important thing a parent should care for, then seeing his wife sleeping with his brother should anger him less.

But that's not the case, they say.
Many societies live caring about everyone's children. And so it was probably with our ancestors.

Part III: The Way We Weren't

When we evolved in smaller groups people gave with the expectation of receiving because everyone knew each other.
At least up to 150 people.

Karl Marx's error was not that of failing to understand human nature, but to apply to large societies when it actually works best in smaller groups.
And it seems like our hunter-gatherer society was more about sharing.

Then things changed with the end of nomadic life and the agricultural revolution no longer than 10.000 years ago - the day after yesterday in evolutionary terms-.

Agriculture is highly dependent on a number of factors that make famine and scarcity much more likely.
Scarcity made people more selfish and drove them to live in families and create a private property. Men and husbands wanted to make sure they were toiling the fields for their own children and nobody else. And that changed

everything. Women became, as Darwin said, coy.

That also changed what women look for.

The authors say women look for wealth not genetically but by adapting to a world where men controlled a disproportionate share of resources.
It wasn't like that in the hunter-gatherer tribes, where people shared resources -and women-.

My Note:
Of course, women don't look for money genetically, but they might as well look for help genetically, which translates into resources.
This part here betrays, in my opinion, the liberal-idealistic nature of "Sex at Dawn".

Now here's the funny thing: women are more malleable than men.
They adapt more easily to the culture. So their adoption of monogamy was a bit easier than it was for men.

Part IV: Bodies In Motion

Males' testicles are a way of observing a species' sexual past.

Bigger testicles mean the male needed to fight bigger sperm wars.
Smaller testes mean the male didn't have to fight bigger sperm wars, telling us females were mostly monogamous or faithful to one man.

Human testicles are in between those of chimps/bonobos and bigger than polygynous gorillas.
The authors say the glass is half full or half empty depending on how you look at it.
We are in the middle, you could choose which view to heed the most, whether Polyamory or monogamy.

But they then add a twist: the testes' sizes likely changed in the 10.000 years since the agricultural revolution and our testes shrank since then.

The authors say humans produce lots of spermatozoons, so the only question is if they are competing among themselves or among someone else.
And they advance a few reasons why, they say, humans seem to be wired for competition with other men:

- Men ejaculate more after they've been away from their partner or suspect infidelity
- Women report stronger thrusting in the above cases
- Porn videos feature lots of gang bang but little reverse gang bang (ie: stressing competition)
- Men watching more men with a single woman ejaculate more

The authors then seem to suggest that the standard theory of being a mostly monogamous species doesn't hold up.
We evolved for polyamory, they seem to suggest.

My Note:
The authors don't cite any study and "women reporting stronger thrusting" is very unscientific.

If we also add a penis strongly adapted to sperm competition, the authors suggest we are leaning more toward polygeny.

Differences Among Races

The condom's width for Asia is 49 mm 52 mm for Europe and 53 mm for Africa.

What it means though is difficult to say since there are so many variables at play, including food and food availability.

My Note:

Other sources I read say there are no primate species in Africa that form pair bonding but there are some in Asia.

This seems to suggest that pair bonding developed later, not earlier.
It would also make sense that humans today are more pair-bonding species and that Africans have a bigger penis for sperm wars.

It would also fit with my veeeery anecdotal evidence that black women are (far) easier than white girls.
Even when you won't be having sex with black women, they are far warmer and more welcoming upon approaching.

Women's Vocalizations

The authors say that baboons' female vocalization communicates the female reproductive state and the status of the male copulating.

If you factor in that giving away your location to potential predators is actually dangerous in the animal kingdom, it convenes that a baboon's female vocalization is actually a call for other males around to stoke sperm competition.

Vocalization in the animal kingdom is associated with promiscuous mating and not monogamy, say the authors.

And guess what human females do?

Part V: Men Are From Africa, Women Are From Africa

The authors poke a little fun at the book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus,* and also attack *The* Moral Animal when Wright says we seem designed to make each other miserable.

They say that's not true and we are each a fragment of a greater unity.

Male VS Female Sexuality

Groups of men and women were shown different sexual scenes.

The scenes were either gay erotic, straight erotic, people at the gym, and two primates mating.

They were supposed to report how they felt about it as their blood flows were also measured.

Gay and straight men reported their status in line with their blood flow. Women were turned on by gay and lesbian scenes, but they reported less arousal.

When they watched heterosexual couples they were turned on and reported even higher arousal than their body indicated. They reported nothing to Bonobo on Bonobo action but their body… Kinda liked it too.

Basically, gay and straight men and women react according to their preferences.
But **heterosexual women like everything**.

The author says that's exactly what the theory of erotic plasticity suggests. Such as, that we -mostly women- are conditioned to like what society expects them to like.
It's worth keeping in mind why some women report no interest in sex or difficulties in reaching orgasm.

The Dangerous Pill

Women smelling shirts worn by males tended to prefer men whose Major Histocompatibility Complex best differs from theirs, which makes genetical sense.

Women on the pill though failed to pick the man who best fit her MHC or, worst, picked the one most similar to hers.

Repression and Violence

The authors cite a study saying that cultures repressing sexual behavior, especially in childhood and adolescence are closely related to violence.

Monogamy Drains Testosterone

Testosterone levels go down as the years advance, but it's not just age, the authors say, it's monogamy as well.

Married men have lower levels of testosterone compared to single men of the same age.
Fathers of young children have even less.

Affairs raise testosterone instead. Even just talking to an attractive woman raises a man's testosterone.

Notice:
Correlation does not necessarily imply causation, as the authors themselves admit.
Albeit the study shows that simply talking to a pretty woman seems to point toward the fact that female novelty raises testosterone levels.

For men, it seems, sexual monogamy leads to monotony.
That's why, the authors say, so many marriages end up being low-sex or no-sex marriages.
Novelty itself is the attraction.

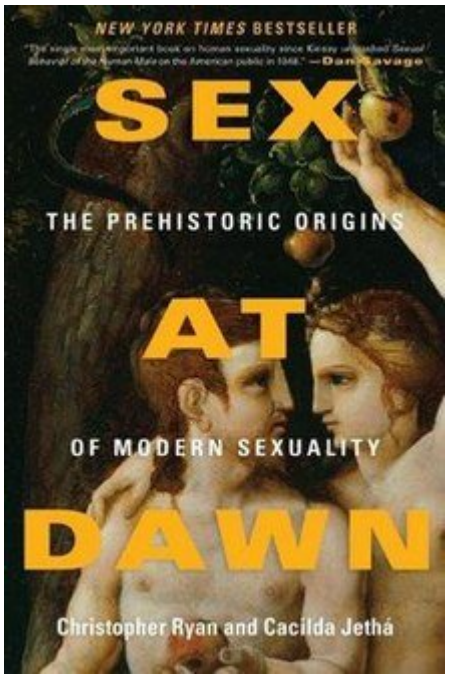
Most men don't understand it until they're married (without a prenup) and have children and joint properties.

What's A Couple To Do?

The authors seem to criticize the current trend in the western world that cheating equals "packing your backs because the marriage is over".

They suggest staying wary of "one size fits all" recommendations but don't propose much more in the way of solutions.

Except, maybe, understanding better human nature and being more ready to… Understand?



Real-Life Applications

Don't Meet Guys On The Pill!

The pill will change your perception of man. Once you go off of it, you might not like your partner as much.

Watch Out For Monogamy
Monogamy is not easy. Especially for men.

Criticism

Albeit I enjoyed *"Sex at Dawn"*, there is also much to criticize here.

The authors mention Rousseau and talk about "socialism working for smaller groups".
They talk a lot about sharing, sexual freedom, and female libido being repressed.
To me, it feels like they are falling for that idealistic "back then it was great and today all sucks" narrative.
Altogether, it makes me a bit suspicious of progressive, left-wing ideology-driven thinking.

And this idea that bonobos are nice and peaceful isn't even true. Robert Sapolsky who actually studied bonobos says they are incredibly nasty to each other.

Sex At Dawn indeed received a flood of criticism.
Steven Pinker calls it pseudo-science in a tweet (but then links a terrible book).
And I am personally very very skeptical that fathers used to care less about the paternity of children, as the authors claim. Well, lemme paraphrase: maybe fathers did not care indeed. And that's why those fathers are not well represented today :).

And I'm really not sure that societies were much more open toward sharing sexual partners.
At the of the day, without looking for evidence and data, which the authors don't seem to do too deeply, we're just discussing personal conjectures.
From my point of view, **presenting unsubstantiated claims as facts is *unethical*** *and manipulative.*

For more on the ethics of manipulation, see:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

More criticism:

- **Lots of Inferring**

Lots of the authors' theories are not based on research.

Of course, evolutionary psychology cannot always and fully rely on research, but I wished they underlined that a bit more, which would have reduced their critics as well.

- **Straw Man**

It's such a human tendency to build an enemy where there's none.

The authors discuss the "standard narrative" and then "blame" it for covering up the truth with the monogamy ideology.

But there's no such standard narrative.

It seems to me that mainstream Evolutionary Psychology is quite clear in highlighting that extra-marital affairs have been part and parcel of our past and that monogamous relationships are often short-lived.

Review

I enjoyed *"Sex at Dawn"* when I first read it, and it taught me a lot.

Among the good point, it makes:

- monogamy is difficult
- monogamy lowers men's testosterone
- we are somewhat physically and emotionally wired for sperm competition
- heterosexual women are attracted to other women -albeit maybe not always consciously aware of that-

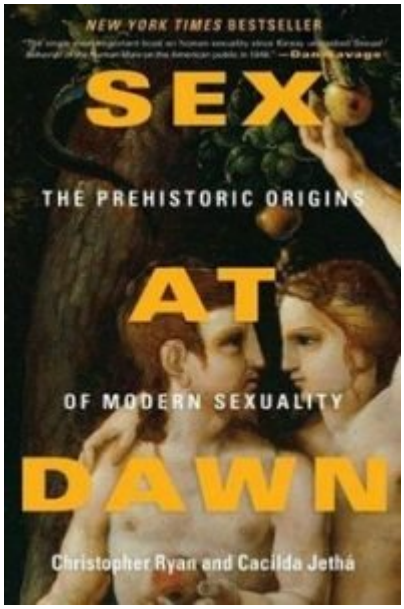
And albeit the book does not make that point, it's obvious to me that:

- Humans are highly plastic in their sexual expressions. They can go from monogamy to polyamory to partible paternity

Still, I found *"Sex at Dawn"* one-sided and, even more so, idealistic. This is not science, this is more like personal opinions and wishful thinking with a smattering of data to make it sound more credible.

Check out the best evolutionary psychology books or **Get Sex At Dawn on Amazon**

Sex At Dawn Summary: We Didn't Evolve For Monogamy?



Are we a monogamous species? Maybe not so much. You will learn a lot about sex and sexual drives in humans

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/sex-at-dawn/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.2

The Way of Men: The 4 Masculine Virtues of Jack Donovan (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Way of Men (2012) is a manosphere and self-help book teaching male readers "what it means to be a man". Jack Donovan, the author, describes our ancestral days of cave-dwelling and hunter-gathering as the golden era of masculinity, banding together as men, and defending our caves.

Contents

- 3 Sentences Summary
- The Way Of Men
  - #1. Strength
  - #2. Mastery
  - #3. Courage
  - #4. Honor
  - Our Current Society
  - How to Form a Gang
- Criticism
  - 1. Romanticized View Of Tribes and Gangs
  - 2. Romanticized View of Tribal Life
- Review

3 Sentences Summary

- A man must show Strength, Courage, Mastery, and Honor
- A man needs a gang of other men to fully develop his manhood
- Masculinity is at odds with our PC, overly polite society

The Way Of Men

About the Author:
Jack Donovan is an author and prominent manosphere figure. Although apparently attracted to same-sex individuals, he doesn't use the word 'gay' for himself and distances himself from gay culture when it overlaps with feminism and leftist politics.
Some consider Jack Donovan a red pill author, leaning into a "male-tribalist" subset (similar in that sense to Sebastian Junger).

Introduction

Donovan says we sometimes see men trying to get back to what it means to be men in a primordial way.
But they have to do so in a way that seems unnatural in a culture that does not accept those natural expressions of manliness.

To Donovan, being a man means going back to when we used to sit and camp around a fire, guarding our caves, women, and possessions.
Always looking outside at what could threaten us and always ready to attack it.

Men, says Jack Donovan, are judged by other men and attract women when they obey four core values:

#1. Strength

Men differentiate themselves from women because, on average, they're stronger.

Jack Donovan says that a woman can be strong as well.
And if she is, great.
But if she's not, nothing will change much. She will still have a good life and she'll have several men lining up happy to help her out.

But if a man is weak, that's a big stain for him that will make him less respected among other men.

#2. Mastery

Mastery is your level of skills in a certain field.

This will depend heavily on the type of gang you're in. If you're a soldier, it might be your endurance or your marksmanship.

If you're a football player, it could be how well you defend or how well you score.
If you're a firefighter, it might be your courage, or your ability to go climb a tree without any gear.

Mastery is equivalent to the "Magician" male archetype in "King, *Warrior, Magician, Lover*".

#3. Courage

Courage means taking action even when there are risks or dangers.

A man who takes no risks or sacrifices nothing for the gang is a man that cannot be relied upon, says Donovan.

Such a man, makes the gang more vulnerable.

My Note: Courage yes, cowboy no
I think it might be easy for men to misunderstand this step. Being overly courageous and putting people's lives at work for personal glory is not courage, but it's bad leadership.
That's why I recommend reading *"King, Warrior, Magician, Lover"*.

> King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: The 4 Archetypes of Masculinity

#4. Honor

Honor means caring for your reputation.

Your reputation is tied to the other elements of strength, mastery, and courage.
It is also mostly referring to other men.

He says that when men scoff at other effeminate men, they are often rejecting their weakness and their lack of manly virtues.
The effeminate men represent the complete opposite of what men should be standing for.

My Note:
I agree indeed that women are little concerned with honor.

Our Current Society

Jack Donovan says there's a part of us that still longs to be a man.

Today we do it with sports, video games, or trying to make a career.
And even then, most men don't take part in those.
So masculinity has become whatever people want it to be.
Even the effeminate man claims to be the "latest evolution of being a man".

But ultimately, you have to stay true to the core value of a man.
And, the book seems to suggest, it's not with words or careers that we evolved to compete.
It's with violence that we evolved to compete for status and power.

He compares the chimpanzees' society to the bonobo society. The chimps are a patriarchal society where men compete with each other.
The bonobos are a matriarchal society where women mate with everyone in the group.
And peace reigns supreme.

Jack Donovan seems to prefer the warring chimpanzees and says our current Western society is more like a bonobo one.

My Note: nonsense, why should war be better?
This is total BS.
I don't see why chimp society with constant war and violence should be any better.
The authors of Sex At Dawn instead, wish we were more like bonobos, enjoying sex more and worrying less about honor and warfare (and I also think that's hippy nonsense, by the way).

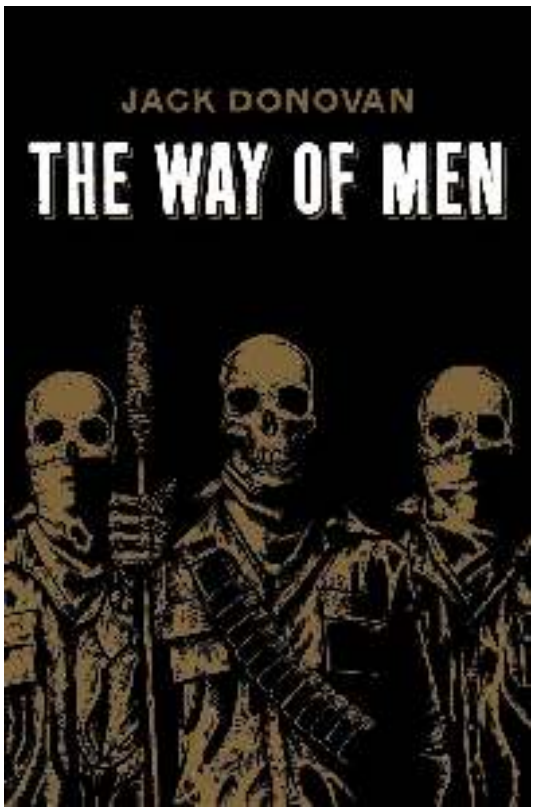
How to Form a Gang

The author also suggests that our society seems to be breaking up.

And that we might find it useful to be able to find our way of men.

Frankly, I found it to be wishful thinking of someone who almost hoped that was the case, and somewhat of a tin foil hat theory.

But hey, you never know, and if you're interested I invite you to get the book for the actual steps on how to build your own gang :).



Criticism

There is much that I don't buy from *"The Way of Men",* but please refer to the review for that.

1. Romanticized View Of Tribes and Gangs

I feel Jack Donovan fell for what I call the "back then when it was better" fallacy".

He romanticizes the old days of life in a gang, which is something that I have seen before from other authors (see "Tribe by Sebastian Junger").

It also reminded me of Rumble Fish, where a very immature Rusty James (Matt Dillon) fantasizes about gangs until the brother he so much admires tells him "it wasn't anything":

I feel the same way as Mikey Rourke in that movie.

Gangs weren't anything as "cool" as Donovan makes them out to be: a bunch of tribes killing each other, sometimes for food, some other times for women, and sometimes, as well… For nothing.

2. Romanticized View of Tribal Life

Donovan seems lost in a romanticized view of the past, of the gangs, and of warfare as well.
And he seems to suggest that the only way forward is… Going backward.

Just look at the book cover and you'll understand what Donovan likes about that past: men in skimpy clothes, guarding some "territory" with their lives.

Life in our past was probably much more boring than that.

Plus, I doubt that leaders and high-status men were exactly as Donovan describes them.
Getting to the top can be a dirty business, coalitions, and Machiavellianism. Often, **it's not the strongest and most honorable man that goes to the top, but it's the most socially skilled, ruthless, or Machiavellian man**.

The most honorable man might be more admired.
But he might refuse to kill a man in 3 against 1. The most ruthless man, would. And the most Machiavellian man, instead, makes sure he stays alive and builds a coalition that will carry him to power.

You can see it with chimps too, where it's the chimp with the best mix of strength and connections that makes it to the top, not the absolute strongest (Sapolsky, 2017).

I wish it were like Donovan says, but you can just look at the modern world of business and you will see that it's often Machiavellis at the top, not honorable men.

> The Myth of Emotional Intelligence: Machiavellis At The Top

Review

The Way of Men is a well-written book for men with some interesting takes on masculinity, social status, and 'respect' among men.

Personally, I don't think anyone, inlcuding Donovan, can self-appoint himself to tell others "what it means to be a man".

Donovan says that terrorists are "manly" and one of his follow-up books is called "Becoming a Barbarian".
That says a lot about what "being a man" means to Donovan.

In Donovan's view of "what it means to be a man", men are enslaving themselves to the group, and to others.

I disagree with that.
Not only do I think this is toxic BS, but it also makes men's lives worse.

It can be an easy sell because some young men need a group and group-level ideals.
I know because I've been there, and I've been pulled into the irrationality of groups and "bands of men".
But I now know men can find a better ideal rather than falling for groupthink and obedience.

> **Men cannot find themselves in a gang, men need to find themselves first *as individuals*.**

What About The Positives?

Jack Donovan's take on masculinity are good from a sociological and power dynamics point of view.

Some might find this book sexist, and yet it won't change the fact that men indeed ARE often judged for their strength, courage, and honor.

Stifling View of Manliness

At the same time, though, Jack Donovan's view is also stifling for men.

Why should men live by those ideals?
Why should anyone allow society, Jack Donovan or anyone else to define them?
That's giving them way too much over us, and *the power of judging us.*

When you let people define you is also when you allow others to control you.
Read *how women control men and relationships*, which explains exactly how women leverage "what it means to be a man" to control men.

The empowered individualist rejects that.
Learn how:

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

Don’t let anyone tell you “what it means to be a man”.
You decide it.
Or take a look at the best manosphere books for inspiration:

- **Best red pill/manosphere books**

Or get the way of men on Amazon.

Models: 3 Foundational Pillars to Dating Attractive Women (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Models is a dating advice book for men, with some general self-development in the mix. Mark Manson takes readers on a journey of personal and mental transformation to help men become higher value, date better, and become better men in general.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Summary
  - 1. Learn What Attracts Women
  - 2. Get Rid of Emotional Neediness
  - 3. Become More Vulnerable
  - 4. Use The Gift of Truth
  - 5. Polarize With Full Honesty
  - 6. Overcome Fear of Rejection
  - 7. Work On The Three Fundamentals of Attraction
  - HONEST LIVING
  - Money Matters, But It's Not All
  - How To Be Attractive
  - HONEST ACTION
  - How To Take Action
  - HONEST COMMUNICATION
  - How To Be Charming
  - Communication
  - The Dating Process
- Real-Life Applications
- PROS
- CRITICISM
  - Some Inconsistencies in Mark's Dating Claims
  - The Nice Guy's Guide… May Turn Out To Be TOO Nice Guy
  - Weaker On Techniques
  - Better editing would have helped
- Models Review

Takeaways

- The 3 traits of success: **honesty, communication skills, and a good lifestyle**
- **Vulnerability is key** for honest communication <— TPM Note: Careful, it requires calibration, or it can signal weakness
- Learn to deal with your sexual and social anxieties

Summary

About The Author:
Mark Manson is a former dating coach who turned self-help author and penned several books in a "bro philosopher" style, including "*The Art of Not Giving a Fuck*" and *"Everything is Fucked*".

Introduction

Mark Manson says that a lot of Pick Up Artist advice makes you look and act like a phony.

Ie., stay away from:

- *The Game*
- *Mystery Method*

It hit him the hardest when an ex-girlfriend of his told him to "act normal".

He says there's a striking lack of solid relationships among PUAs because they're all about gimmicks and not about deeper human connections.

1. Learn What Attracts Women

Manson says there are many variables changing what women find attractive, including:

- Menstrual cycle
- Relationships status
- High diversity
- Mismatch between body arousal and perceived arousal -as explained in *Sex At Dawn*-.

It seems clear though, says Manson, that **women want men with status and power**.
Status is shown by how you treat other people, how they treat you, and how you treat yourself.

Also, check out:

- Dating Power Dynamics

2. Get Rid of Emotional Neediness

Mark Manson says that your attraction is inversely proportional to your level of neediness.

His definition of neediness is to be more invested in what people think of you than in what you think of yourself.

In dating it means that you should be less willing to alter your thoughts, feeling, and motivations compared to the woman. He calls the three of them "investments".

Mark Manson uses evolutionary psychology quite a bit to explain his stance. But personally, like Nassim Taleb, I'm skeptical about "ad hoc" evolutionary explanations.

More importantly, the author says that we often reveal neediness in seemingly innocuous ways but women perceive it at an unconscious level.
He says it's impossible to be completely uninvested, but you should be less invested than she is.

3. Become More Vulnerable

Manson says that vulnerability is the opposite of Neediness and it's the path to true and deep human connection (something Brene Brown expands in *Daring Greatly*).

My Note:

He's right, just make sure you don't overdo the vulnerability part and read Vulnerability is Not Power.

Neediness is caring more about the perceptions of others while vulnerability prioritizes and reckons with your own feelings and perceptions.

You'll feel vulnerable any time you do something that makes you feel uncomfortable and ashamed.
But as you keep making yourself vulnerable you'll develop more than a "*not a give a f*ck attitude*".

He says that to become more vulnerable you need to become more attuned to your emotions and learn to express them without inhibition and without being afraid people will like you less.

Desire and Neediness

The author says showing desire is a paradox in that it's vulnerable, but also a bit needy and lowers your status.

PUA (pick-up artists) looks for tactics and tricks to pursue her without showing attraction.
But that only works in the short term, he says.

Vulnerability "short-circuits" that issue as men comfortable with being vulnerable don't behave in a needy way.
And desire shown without neediness is attractive.

My Note:
"Showing attraction mixed with vulnerability" wasn't super clear for me here.

4. Use The Gift of Truth

Mark Manson suggests the pickup ideal of pursuing women without letting her know you're interested is bogus.

And he says that being honest and upfront is better.

The vulnerable man, being honest and upfront, encourages women to do the same.
The vulnerable man indeed is not afraid of speaking his mind, drawing boundaries, and telling her when she's being out of line.

And that's very attractive.

5. Polarize With Full Honesty

Mark Manson says that full honesty is polarizing.

And that's great. Quick screening tool and no time-wasting.

Many rejections you will get as an honest man is from women who are actually attracted.

But they're scared of a man who isn't afraid of honesty, and they'll reject you -and lash out maybe- out of fear (this is a woman's mistake I mention in *Women's early dating mistakes*).

6. Overcome Fear of Rejection

People are afraid of rejection because they are operating on other people's truths.

Because if you operate within your own truths, what's there to fear?

7. Work On The Three Fundamentals of Attraction

Mark Manson says the three fundamentals of attractions are:

1. Attractive lifestyle (honest living)
2. Overcoming fears and anxieties about women (honest action)

3. Expression of emotions and communication (honest communication)

Honest living is about doing what you love in life or you are living by other people's values.

Honest action means that if you're attracted to a woman the most honest action you can do is talk to her. Otherwise, you're being dishonest to yourself.

Honest communication means communicating your true intentions and communicating them well.

HONEST LIVING

Money Matters, But It's Not All

Money, looks, and success do matter as they are all indicators of status.

They matter less than many people think though.

Behavior is also an indicator of status.
So the more money and looks you have, the less attractive behavior you need.

Beautiful Women Are Prizes For Insecure Men

The author says most men approaching these women do so because they want to show her off and are hunting for status.

That's very needy behavior.
That means that most guys approach these women very insincerely.

Hence Manson suggests looking at something you like about her beyond the looks.

Also, read:

- Is it better to cold approach or to warm approach?

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

How To Be Attractive

In this section, he talks about:

- Style
- Fitness
- Body Language
- Vocal Tonality

They're all primer so I suggest you delve deeper into that stuff separately. Here are some resources on body language:

- The Definitive Book of Body Language
- Sexy Body Language At The Bar
- Sexy Hands In Pockets Poses
- How To Have a Sexy Walk

HONEST ACTION

The author says that the needier you are, the more anxiety you have.

Anxiety stems from our unwillingness to be vulnerable.
And the first step to overcoming our anxieties is to understand the pattern we fall into.

How To Take Action

Mark Manson recommends you do not try to suppress your fear but embrace it.

Incremental high-volume exposures are better than facing extreme scenarios.
And that means starting small with something you can bear. Then do a lot of it and build up from there.

Ultimately, fear will never go away but it changes shape and won't affect your sense of worth anymore.

HONEST COMMUNICATION

How To Be Charming

Mark Manson says that connecting deeply is more powerful than any technique you could ever use.

Building an emotional connection is what makes the difference.

And he gives us a blueprint on how to do it:

1. Become aware of your emotions and motivations
2. Share them (will create trust)
3. She will share in return

Instead of saying things like "oh I like that too", tell why you like it and relate it to your life in a way that builds emotional trust.

Also, read:

- How to be charming
- How to be charismatic

Communication

Taking a leaf out of Leil Lowndes book Mark says that friends speak in statements, not questions.

Questions create the feeling that you want something from her, and she must oblige.
Instead of questions, use statements.

For example, instead of saying:

> "how long have you been knowing each other"

Say:

> "you guys look like you are old friends".

My Note: best is mixing questions with statements
I partially agree with the statements VS questions topics. But I disagree that questions (always) mean that you want something from her and that it puts you at a disadvantage. Because the moment she works to reply to your question,

she is obliging, and also investing. And those are good.
Many questions in a row are terrible, yes, but so is stacking up a lot of wrong statements.
Plus the wrong statements scream “nothing in common”. I think the best is a mix of questions and statements.

Communicating With Women

Mark Manson says that men discuss things outside of themselves while women enjoy talking about themselves.

Men should then speak to women about things relating to the two of them. Their stories, their dreams, their feelings.

My note:
that much is true.

Say Your Name to Approach

So, how do you approach women?

Mark Manson recommends you never approach from behind and that you smile and give good eye contact.

It won’t matter what you say, he says.
He usually just blurts “Hi, I’m Mark”.

Also, read:

- How to approach a girl

> How to Approach a Girl: 9 Science-Based Steps

The Dating Process

Mark Manson talks a bit about calling vs *texting strategies* (also read: *How to Text* & *Text Flirting*).

His dating process consists of doing lots of interactive activities and changing venues several times during the date.

The author ends the chapter with an overview of the signals that women send.
Also, read:

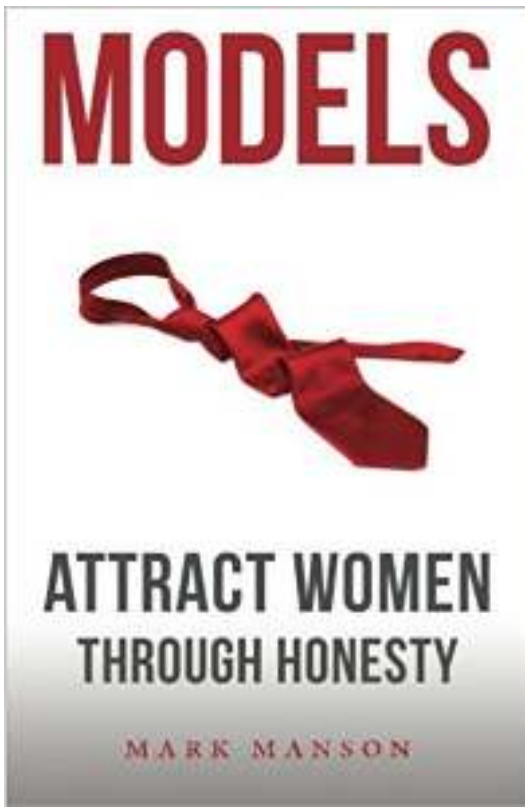
- Undercover Sex Signals
- Signs she likes you

My Note:
I see the utility of doing lots of things during the date and changing venues. However, I prefer simplicity.
Planning lots of things also involves lots of investment.

Err On The Side of Risk

The rule of thumb, when you’re not sure when to escalate, is to go for it.

It’s better to be rejected than to do nothing and not know what could have been.



Real-Life Applications

- **Take Charge Of Your Interests**

Don't just volunteer at events, promote them; don't just attend art exhibitions, organize them.

The idea is that you take responsibility roles in what you like doing in your life.

- **Incremental Exposure Beats Extremes**

To learn something difficult "jumping at the high end of the water" might not be the best solution.

Better to do something you can manage repeatedly and then build from there.

PROS

- **Great Novel Outlook**

Models by Mark Manson introduces an honest approach that is quite refreshing in the pickup world. You can see he is a well-read man as he weaves together feelings, attraction, and seduction -instead of looking at the latter in a silo-
.

- **Good Wisdom**

Much of what Mark says makes sense. And much of it is also backed by science and, well, reality.

CRITICISM

Some Inconsistencies in Mark's Dating Claims

Mark Manson seems like a smart guy, and I like his approach to life.

There are a few inconsistencies though in *Models* I'd need to flag.

In the book he says he "kissed more than 300 girls" and then he says he has "been with almost 100 women".

In the chapters on first impressions, though, he says that "of the thousands of women I've been with, around 90% we clicked right away".

Which one is which?
If you 'clicked' with thousands of women and only 'been with almost 100', that's a **low conversion rate, and it's not effective dating.**

In terms of actual experience, "almost 100 women" is not that much for someone who focused on dating around, and travels a lot.
Finally, in this AMA session on Reddit, he lists he's been with women from over 18 Countries (link to highlighted part). Counting countries may suggest a diversion from raw numbers (and I'm personally not impressed by people who keep track of nationalities).

Dating Models... Or Marrying Girls Next Door?

Mark Manson's wife seems awesome, the two seem happy years after marriage, and if so, he absolutely won dating.

At the same time, if one writes a book about dating models, isn't it also fair to expect the author to be dating models?

I'm not convinced on this one because both sides of the equation are right: Manson is winning at dating and relationships.
But he's not winning the way that a book on *dating models* would suggest. You be the judge, depending on what you want.

The Nice Guy's Guide... May Turn Out To Be TOO Nice Guy

Models is very "PC and safe".

For example:

1. Be vulnerable
2. Be honest
3. Relationships are more fulfilling than sleeping around

These are all family-friendly and “Instagram quote-friendly” positions.

But that doesn’t mean they’re the most effective approaches. That is not to say that those concepts are useless or necessarily wrong.
They are true… *Under certain conditions*. But **poorly expressed vulnerability can be weak and repellent**, something *Models* doesn’t even warn men about.

Ultimately, *Models* is not the best in terms of dating strategies and techniques to succeed.

Weaker On Techniques

Models is a great dating resource, but it’s not heavy in terms of techniques and processes.

In my opinion, there are also a few imperfections here and there when it comes to the accuracy of information (read my comments in blue).

Better editing would have helped

For example, Mark Manson introduces 3 pillars.

But the core concepts he introduces end up being much more. Now don’t get me wrong, they’re all great and, indeed, fundamental. But he could have found a better way to summarize them.

Models Review

Models is a very good book on dating for men and covers many of the foundations that men should start with.

Mark Manson is the pick up artist for nice guys, reminding readers that depth of connection beats hookups, and that relationships are superior to short-term dating.

The book straddles between general self-improvement, pick-up, and dating for genuine relationships, veering and advising on the former.
It’s also one of the best dating books on mindsets and overarching philosophy and that’s why I put it on my *best dating books for guys list.*

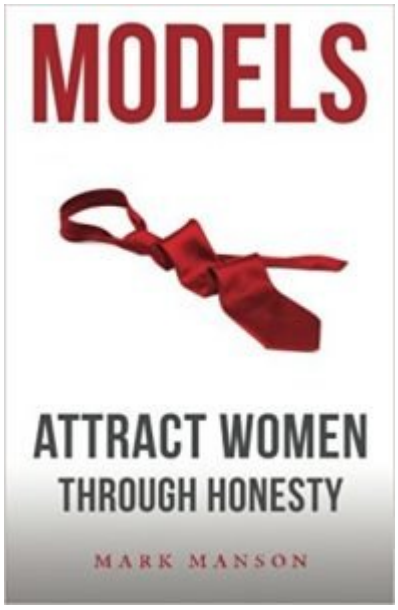
On the con side, when you try to be a bit of everything, it’s tough to excel at anything. Manson strikes me more as a relationship type of guy, and *Models* doesn’t excel at seduction, for example.

We can say that ***Models* does a great job for the average guy who just wants better ‘normal’ dating while leaving more advanced men wishing for more.** That’s why it’s a highly rated book by many: because most people cluster around the middle of any bell curve.

For the types of more ambitious men we cater to, it’s a valid starting point, and then you can come back here for more advanced strategies, including *Seduction University*.

Get Models on Amazon or check the **best dating books for guys.**

Models Summary: Does Mark Manson's Advice Still Work?



Very good resource on dating mindsets.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/models/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.2

Ho Tactics: 17 Manipulative Moves Exposed (G.L. Lambert Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Ho Tactics is a dating book for women in which author G. L. Lambert teaches how women can trick a man into spending and doting on her.[image]

TPM Strategic Audit: We analyze this text not as a moral endorsement, but as a Technical Manual on dating red flags, manipulative personalities, and a 'taker approach' to dating and relationships. For high-value men, this power awareness of real-world 'dark psychology' tactics is essential for vetting and self-defense, so they never become 'tricks or sponsors'.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Summary
  - Part One: Secrets to Being a Smart Ho
  - #1 Ho World Order
  - #2: Why Men Love Hos
  - #3: Being Disciplined Around Dick
  - #4: Sexual Leverage Mechanics
  - #5: Treats, Tricks, Sponsors
  - #6: How to Flirt the Ho Way
  - # 7: How to Seduce the Ho Way
  - #8: Getting Nasty with It
  - #9: How to Make Him Fall in Love the Ho Way
  - #10: How to Ask for Gifts, Money, or Favors
  - #11: Exit Strategy
  - Part Two: The Power of Sex Magic
  - #12: You Had Sex Too Fast… Now What?
  - #13: Using Ho Tactics On Your Ex-Boyfriend
  - #14: Turning Old Pussy into New Money
  - #15: On the Side: Making Her Man Your ATM
  - #16: How to Online Date… the Ho Way
  - #17: How to Go From Ho to Housewife
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- Advanced hos only start asking for money when he's emotionally hooked
- The ho gives the illusion he's not buying her, but that she likes him and he supports her

Summary

Lambert divides women who complain about not finding a wealthy man into two categories: attractive women and career women. The former think look sufficient, and the latter feel their resumes are enough.
Both camps don't understand how to excite a man, he says.

Ho Tactics is here to fix that.

Part One: Secrets to Being a Smart Ho

#1 Ho World Order

Lambert says the best and smartest hos get what they want without ever giving sex.

To reach that high level it does take one major skill, and that's unwavering self-confidence.

#2: Why Men Love Hos

Hos show a strong sexual side but they're not prostitutes sleeping with everyone.

Hos are easy emotionally, but not sexually.
That, says Lambert, is the big secret most women cannot grasp.

Hos live in the now. They make it fun for their marks. Hos don't inquire about their relationship status and will joke and tease.

It's the mix of sexiness, joy, and carefree attitude that takes him by surprise and draws him in.

#3: Being Disciplined Around Dick

Lambert says it's natural for women to feel sexually attracted to their marks.

But a hot must resist sex because once you give sex, your leverage disappears.
To avoid the risk the author refers to the famous scene in "There's Something About Mary" and suggests you masturbate before the date.

Say Maybe

You must *be strategic when saying no.*

When he makes a move don't say "no".

No breaks rapport and makes him feel rejected. for more-. The 'ho' is instructed here to say "we'll see" or "wait", signaling that it's in the cards but he needs to keep working on it.

TPM Note: This can be effective
Check our article on how to reject sex without destroying the relationship (and without being manipulative):

> How To Slow Down Sex & Get A Relationship

#4: Sexual Leverage Mechanics

Lambert says that sex in the last two decades has become easy and lost much of its value. All courtesy of women who feel they need to have sex to "keep him around".

My Note:
the author says it's happened because of men's manipulative tactics. I am of a different opinion. It has little to do

with men's "manipulations", which always existed. It happened because of a change in cultural mores around sex, and because of sexual marketplace dynamics, including a skewed sex ratio of quality options among certain demographics.

Also, read "Games Men Play":

> 10 Games Men Play, And How to Handle Them

But in spite of the current trends, the author says that intimacy with you must stay a luxury item if you want to be a top ho.

Here are a few suggestions from Lambert:

- Don't tell him he chooses the place or you put the power in his hands
- First date is not super expensive because it's a "free sample to get his blood flowing"
- Date two you start setting the rules: go for elegance -and dress the part-
- Reward his good behavior. Passionate kiss or playing with his private
- Leave him lusty -unattainable desire will drive him crazy-

Obviously, don't even think of *paying for the first date.*
Or for any other date afterward.

#5: Treats, Tricks, Sponsors

Lambert describes the different types of men you'll be hustling.

The treat will give you nice dinners and dates. The tricks will help with small ticket items such as a purse or a SPA. The sponsor will finance your life.

Does He Pay?

You need to make sure he's willing to dote on you. Check the book to see the little trick Lambert recommends.

#6: How to Flirt the Ho Way

Lambert says you must approach first.

If needed to be, you must *cold approach a stranger*.

And when you do it, he will think you're a slut and he has it easy. Which is great as that makes your job even easier.

How To Approach

Maria spots a potential mark at the Apple store and goes nearby to check a laptop.

And I invite you to get the book for the details.

Lambert's tips on a successful approach:

- Stand near: the nearer the higher the arousal
- Start side by side or at an angle: don't look too thirsty
- Use touches: Nudges, light chest smacks, or accidental brushes
- Think of something sexual as you talk to him
- Leave early, leave him wanting more

7: How to Seduce the Ho Way

Lambert says the ho's task is to be a fantasy woman.

The main ingredients of a ho are:

- Listening
- Being open and non-judgmental
- Never nagging
- Get comfortable with him really fast
- Knows how to be a "filthy wh*re"

Here is what basic 'b*tches' do instead:

- Waitfor him to pick the conversation and just reply
- Laugh when there's nothing to laugh about
- Don't say anything racy that might rock the boat
- Closed body language -"don't rape my body language" in Lambert words-

Ho On A Date

Lambert again uses Maria to describe how the smart ho acts during the date.
I invite you to get the book for more on that, but here's what I liked most:

First Date

- She says "are you gonna leave me here all alone" to move him beside her
- Jokes with the waiter to let the mark see men want her
- Rests her head on his shoulder and asks him to order something "as good as an orgasm"
- Lets him pay and ask how much she should tip the waiter -if he lets her, it's a bad sign-
- Flirts and jokes about going back to his but says she doesn't do "coffee" with a new man
- Kiss on the lip when bidding goodbye and looks at him with lusty eyes

Notice that she is submissive but in a very *decisive way*.
She lets him be a man, but she pushes him to act as such.

And notice she is both warm and sassy at the same time. It's the mixed-signal hot/cold approach.

The author says the ho hints at powerful sexuality and strong chemistry. She might tease him sometimes and not be afraid of calling him out on shit, but it's not in a *confrontational way*.

Ultimately she shows him she's on her side.

Second Date

Maria is touchier and tells him she dreamed about him.

In the car, she strokes near his private area and tells him he's doing something crazy to her.
But she doesn't want to bring her A game before he's ready, so she must go home -notes she says *he* is not ready, challenging him-.

Maria rewards good behavior with sexual attention, so she'll give him great phone sex that week and goes for an earphones test for the third date.

If the mark started pressuring for sex or showed up without earphones, Maria would drop him.

Dating Techniques

Lambert recommends that she:

- Uses kisses, but ration them
- Doesn't wait for him to call: call and say she imagined kissing him
- Stays busy and vague on when to meet next
- Doesn't ask about the next date, but tells him

#8: Getting Nasty with It

Lambert says you must sow your freaky sexual side… But in a subtle way.

He has the power to arouse that side of you, not everyone.
The ho doesn't get labeled a cock tease because it's always "just about to happen".
That's the feeling that keeps him stringing along.

#9: How to Make Him Fall in Love the Ho Way

Lambert says you need love to get lots of support.

To make him dependent, he says, the ho appeals at the same time to both nobler virtues and animal ones:

- Protector side (to make him like a rescuer, she tells him she'd be lost without him)
- Father figure
- Sexual drives

My Note:
Steve Harvey in *Act Like a Lady Think Like a Man* says indeed that to love, a man must feel like he can protect her.

Hos leverage their vulnerability.
First, they gain their trust, and then they show their deeper, darker side in need of protection:

The Commitment Conversation

Maria calls him when she's having a difficult moment and demands to see him.

Over to his place she holds him tight and tells him she likes him but doesn't want things to get complicated.
Men changed when things got complicated but she wants the two of them to stay fun and great as they are now.

Boom.

The mark is used for women asking for commitment and here's this girl who wants the opposite instead.

Then she tells about her life and struggles. She asks his opinion to make him feel important.
And just as they are bonded as bro and sis Maria drops again the sex bomb. She adds she's going to fuc* the hell out of him anyway.

My Note:
This section outlines effective but manipulative tactics men must be aware of.

#10: How to Ask for Gifts, Money, or Favors

Lambert says when shes starts with her hands she you get scrap change.

She must ask when there's a deep bond and he feels like a protector.
When she asks:

- Makes him feel he's saving the day
- Not fearing to be submissive and pleading
- Makes him feel he's got the power to make you happy again
- Gives him a sense of reciprocity with (valueless) gifts

#11: Exit Strategy

Lambert says you will exit either when you got everything you want or when you can't manage to get anything more.

A great exit is to simply fade out and stop calling.
If he realizes all of a sudden he's been taken advantage of, play offended and make him feel guilty for saying that.

My Note:
Men must be careful here because an even more Machiavellian woman may tell him how much she loved him and that he will always have a place in her heart.

Part Two: The Power of Sex Magic

Part two of Ho Tactics deals with hustling *with* sex.

#12: You Had Sex Too Fast... Now What?

Lambert says sex is a mistake.

Check the book to see how to fix it if you've done that mistake.

My Note:
I disagree sex is always a mistake. Instead, it's contextual (eg.: men with fewer options, men who are falling for her or men who are paying for some special treatment they can't get everywhere else).
Also, read:

- Should you make him wait for sex?
- How to delay sex

#13: Using Ho Tactics On Your Ex-Boyfriend

If she want to rope in an ex-boyfriend, the author says she must show she's changed. Lambert suggests:

- Stroking his ego as to how much he's improved
- Showing she's changed & improved
- Agitating him by mixing up crazy sex memories… That she potentially never did with him
- Telling him she still has a weak spot for him
- After the first date, telling him she's like to be "friends"
- Only having sex with him after he confesses or shows his feelings

If after two weeks he doesn't open up or show any feelings, drop him.

#14: Turning Old Pussy into New Money

Lambert says that no matter what women think, they all have sex the same way.

The book recommends:

- Pre-sex hype: (this is called *Pre-Suasion*)
- Doing something freaky to give him the idea there's nothing she won't do if he sticks around
- Screaming "Y*ou're about to make me come*"
- Making him feel like he took you where nobody else took you
- Rationing out sex: you're not to be had at any time
- Raising the price as he wants more of it

The book recommends increasing anticipation and then withdrawing it to extract more investment—a classic push-pull manipulation pattern, played with sexual desire **<— TPM Note**: this is highly manipulative and it may get some men hot and steaming and potentially chasing, but it's a bad way to start a relationship. Quality men will also NOT want a relationship with this game-playing type of woman.

And remember, it's about him: one ho even played Xbox after sex to make the mark feel she was one of the guys.

#15: On the Side: Making Her Man Your ATM

Lambert has a whole chapter hustling men in committed relationships.

You never want to replace her mainstay because you have more power than the forbidden fruit on the side.
When she leaves the current wife for you, you become an old pussy.

#16: How to Online Date... the Ho Way

Lambert is not a big proponent of online hustling, but he still has amazing insights even there.

He says most women going after rich and handsome do it the wrong way, which is:

- Follow him in the hope he'll follow back
- Inbox him as soon as you can

… And then you're one of the hundreds of groupies.
Much better instead is focusing on people with money who are not under much public limelight.

Online Hustle

You never add him before you speak to him and before you meet you act like it's going to be a sure lay for him. It's good stuff, I invite you to get the book for the details.

#17: How to Go From Ho to Housewife

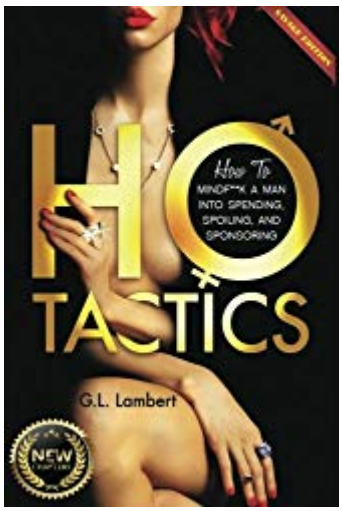
Lambert says it's possible to go from ho to housewife because ho is a part you play, not part of your DNA.

The author has a beautiful psychological analysis here. He says the ho brings to a midlife crisis man that breath of youth and craziness that he desperately craves.

Their craziness, as Robert Greene agrees in *The Art of Seduction*, is addictive.
Also, read:

- 15 ways to drive him crazy.

Lambert says that if you want commitment, let him know you well in all your greatness and then say at this point in life you need to get serious.



Real-Life Applications

The whole book is about practical applications. A few pearls of wisdom for me were:

Challenge his manhood
When you challenge his manhood you strongly arouse him. Slightly doubt his power in bed, his ability to please, or his strength to resist you.

Drop Hints Of When You'll Do It
I found indeed that women dropping hints about sex or "testing him" do make men quite horny.

CONS

Sex-Witholding The Main Leverage?
If not having sex is the main leverage, then this is obviously not the book for women who want to keep that spark going for long.
I believe there are many ways to keep a man hooked even while having sex -Cleopatra and Marie Antoinette are just two obvious examples that it's possible-.

Little Sister
When discussing the protective instincts hos leverage he makes a very valid point, but the "little sister explanation" didn't convince him. He says every man has (had) a little sister he protects, but I haven't any.

Black Hood Target
In the preface, Lambert says career women don't understand men. But Ho Tactics is not tailored to them. The book targets mostly black women of low income. A career woman can hardly complain her car is being repossessed or call him crying for a bag. And she doesn't need to be told there are wealthier and better men besides pushers.

Review

Ho Tactics is a revealing resource on manipulative dating strategies, exposing how some sex workers can hook men into spending and financing their lives.

While it's written as a guide for these Machiavellian women, it also serves as a self-defense guide for men.
I wish that women interested in this book decide for a better life. If one has this Machiavellian intelligence to trick others, they may as well succeed in more honorable and value-adding ways.

See '*The Goal-Digger's Guide*' or check out the **best dating books for women**

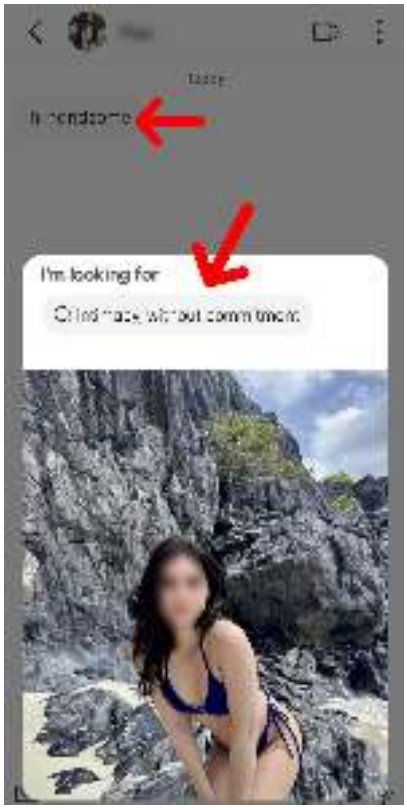
How To Spot and Avoid The Ladyboy Surprise – Definitive Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

If you are traveling around SE Asia -including Thailand- you need to learn a thing or two on how to avoid ladyboys and transexuals.

Don't expect them to do it for you.

It's your duty to learn, because, well… Some of them will lie to you.



Short-term fun and '*Hi handsome*'. That's all you need.

Contents

- How To Spot a Ladyboy
  - 1. She Sends Your Unrequested Pictures
  - 2. Unfeminine Voices
  - 3. Male Body Features
  - 4. Ladyboys Tend to Be (Sexually) Trashy
  - 5. Ladyboys Are Sexually Forward
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  - 10. Share All Contact Info on Dating App
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  - 12. Ask Her: "Are You Natural Born Woman?"
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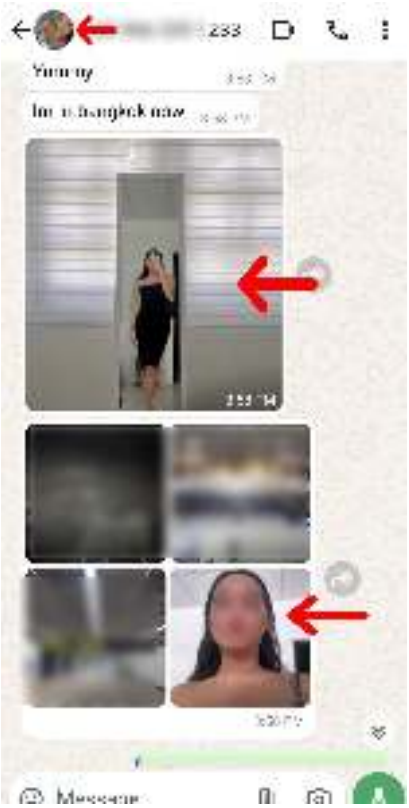
- How to Avoid Ladyboys in Thailand
  - Coping Stratagem: Avoid Making Out
  - Remember: Respect People, No Matter The Gender
- My Experience With Ladyboys
  - The Greater Skill That Helped Me: Reading People

How To Spot a Ladyboy

Here are the major signs of a ladyboy:

1. She Sends Your Unrequested Pictures

As if to 'prove' she's a woman or attractive.



Too many pics, including her 'looking good & feminine'. Few women do this, many ladyboys do

But women, of course, don't have to prove their femininity.

Plus, it provides ladyboys with their next move and excuse.

Such as, in case you ask, or when eventually it becomes obvious it's not a woman, she has a ready excuse.

You know, 'you've seen me, I'm attractive (right?)'.

2. Unfeminine Voices

This is probably the biggest giveaway.

Sometimes it's super obvious, some other times a bit less so. The voice will not necessarily sound masculine, but it will be "off".

It often sounds nasal, but there's no point trying to convey an auditory signal in written form because it won't help

you much.

Check the video below and, in general, trust your instincts.
Trust your instincts: with women you rarely think their voice is “strange”.
So when you talk to a person who looks like a woman but the voice is somewhat “off”, that’s a big indicator.

Here is one example:

P.S.: I’m only putting this video here as a resource to recognize a ladyboy’s voice.
It’s a crazy prank, but I also find it somewhat distasteful. It kind of rubs me off the wrong way (but the ladyboy seemed to enjoy it, so it’s all cool).

Of course, this won’t help if you’re doing online dating.

3. Male Body Features

This is the obvious second one and you’ve probably heard them before.

Things such as:

- Height
- Square jaw
- Broad shoulders
- Lower eyebrows
- Straight waist
- Adam’s apple
- Hands (shape and feel)

Adam’s apple comes up first often and I’ve heard it many times, but it never helped me much.
I have found hands to be most useful.

Especially at the touch: if they feel like coarse, hardened hands, you might not be the only one who’s ever gotten hard there :).

Whenever I hold a woman’s hand and they’re soft and “womanly”, I breathe a sigh of relief (but that’s not the ultimate indicator, some take supplements!).

4. Ladyboys Tend to Be (Sexually) Trashy

Ladyboys often overdo it with their sexuality and show more than most girls would.

Is she:

- Licking a lollipop?
- Straddling the couch doggie position?
- You don’t need much imagination to picture her boobs?
- Licking the rim of the glass?

Check, check, and check.

A little story from a couple of years ago when my LB spotting skills were hovering around absolute zero:

> I was sitting with a girl who flat out denied her ladyboys-ness and got offended I even asked.
>
> Little later, she proudly volunteered to show me a video of some idiot smashing her from behind.

> Now I've crossed my path with a fair share of women, including one who recorded our session, but never a girl showed me her videos having sex.
>
> It doesn't mean there aren't such women of course, but when sexuality is thrown at your face, keep in mind that red flags come with long poles :).

This also includes sending you un-requested pictures of her looking hot and/or skimpily dressed.

Girls will rarely volunteer those pictures before you're already lovers. Ladyboys do so very gladly.

5. Ladyboys Are Sexually Forward

Women, even when they like you, tend to be coy and more reserved.

Some women who really like you can even be nervous.

But not ladyboys.
They're excited you're considering them and run towards you at 100 km/h.

- When is she free? Right now, you silly!
- Her number? Why do you need it, I'm free now! Take me!
- Oh, you need need to run to meet your friends? Here is the number! When are you going to call, handsome?
- Her schedule? What do you mean, I'm always free (for you)

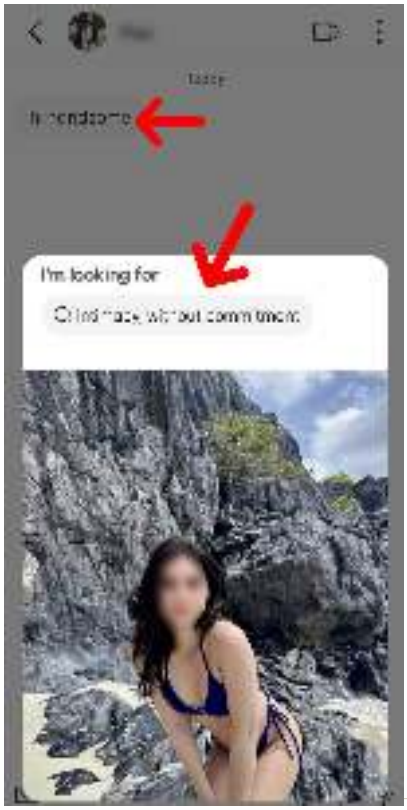
Watch Out For Hotel Visits

And if you meet online and they agree to come straight to your hotel/place, watch out, that's another sign.

Plenty of real women will do it too, granted, so don't avoid it just out of principle.

But still, consider it another check for you to worry about. She might bring along a little surprise for you :)

6. Ladyboys Are Short-Term Oriented



She's looking for short-term fun and opens with '*Hi handsome*'. That's all I needed to know

7. Ladyboys Are Risk-Taking

Women are naturally risk-averse.

Evolution and biology ensure that women are careful around strangers, or in committing to being alone or 'stuck' with random strangers.

Ladyboys instead have no qualms in:

- Coming to your place
- Traveling to you
- Traveling *with* you

8. Ladyboys Overreact

Just like histrionic women, ladyboys seek attention.

They make a big show out of everything.

But their show looks like a *cheap* show.

They are also more easily upset as well, and although this is not exactly scientifically proven, I'm not the only one who noticed.

9. Ladyboys Try Too Hard to Behave Like Women

> **Her**: I'm looking for a dress like this (shares a Barbie-looking dress) <— I didn't yet know at this point it was a ladyboy. But that put a nagging doubt in my mind. When I later asked: she confirmed she wasn't born female

It's often suspicious when tried too hard to seem masculine or feminine.

And ladyboys will accentuate any feminine trait while covering up their masculine ones.
This means:

- Exaggerated hips swaying
- Swinging their purses left and right
- “Bitchy cat walking style”
- Lots of makeup

Basically, anything that looks like someone is trying too hard to look and act like a woman is another indicator for you to worry about :).

10. Share All Contact Info on Dating App

If you’re doing online dating, you notice that lots of girls these days have their Instagram there or anything else where you can “follow them” -do *not* follow them of course :)-.

Ladyboys go one step beyond though.

Eager to move things along with you, they will also have their contact details such as Line ID, number, WhatsApp, etc.

11. She’s a Freelance ‘Model’

Albeit this is growing in popularity even among women, it’s still a red flag.

Jobs such as “freelance model”, “CEO”, and “owner (by myself)”, on top of being an indicator of low-quality women, can also be LB indicators, albeit not as strong as the contact info.

12. Ask Her: “Are You Natural Born Woman?”

And of course, I’m not joking here.

Make yourself no qualms.

If you’re traveling in SE Asia or Thailand Always ask.

Not when you’re unsure, not when you think she might be, but make it a habit.
You’d be astonished at how often you can be wrong.

Don’t think the girl will be offended: from personal experience I can tell you they won’t if you ask un-judgmentally.

If the first time you’re a bit queasy, you can easily spin your question into a compliment.
For example:

> **You**: You never know here, some of the prettiest, best-dressed girls seem to be ladyboys and you’ve got such a great style.

If she’s a woman she will likely appreciate you’re only into women.
And last but not least, the question serves as a screening device as well: with her answer, she had to “prove” herself to you.

She jumped through your screening hoops and… For that question to be relevant, she also admitted you two might be getting sexual.

Three birds with a stone.

Any time you get evasive answers, avoid them. Chances are it’s not a real woman:

She never gave a straight answer because she wasn't a "she"

The Limits of Asking

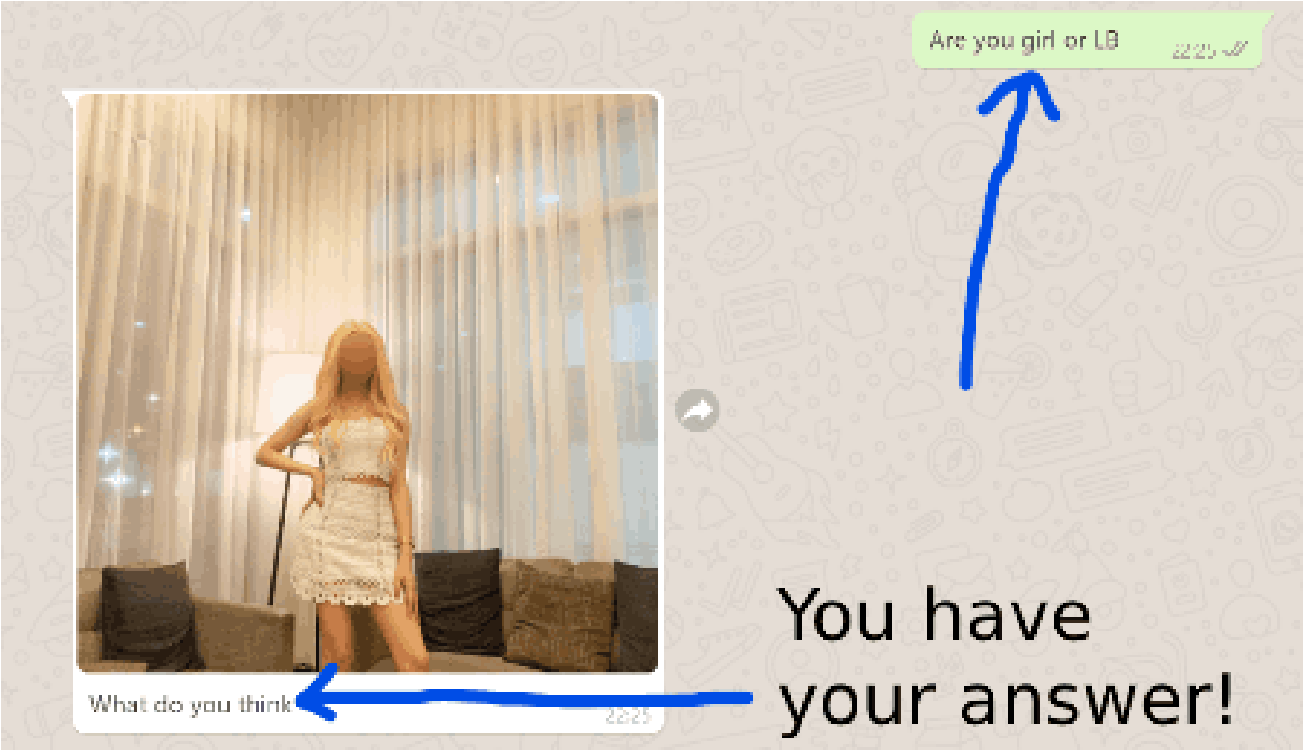
A few guides and answers around the web present asking as the final solution.

And then they add you can ask the manager.

These guys are referring of course to paid hookers working at go-go bars. Those working girls are much less likely to lie about their gender.

But if you're like me and don't do pay-per-play, then you can still meet a few bad apples who will lie about their true gender.
Once I went out to meet a Tinder girl who told me she was a natural girl. She wasn't.

Oh, and here is one more tip.
If you ask and they reply with a sexy picture, then she is transgender:



This is a common pattern. Trust it! Extra example

13. “She” Needs Lubes

This is the very final step.

Some ladyboys will be fully post-op in all areas.
And after years of hormone therapy (estrogens), their skin is softer than a real girl.
Technically at that point, they’re not even ladyboys anymore.

However, their surgical vagina still doesn’t get naturally wet.

This means that if you’re closing in and they tell you they need an external lube… You might wanna think twice about it.

How to Avoid Ladyboys in Thailand

There’s a saying in Italian:

> Trusting is good. But not trusting is better.

Most ladyboys will tell you they are ladyboys.
Those are cool.
Most are not all of them though. Some will play offended you even asked and insist they are women.

And I have met those “bad” types of ladyboys most often in Thailand.

Some ladyboys will go as far as scheduling their period and carrying tampons with them.
Don’t count on those to tell you the truth any time soon :).

And many ladyboys in Thailand are very thirsty for di*ks, *especially* foreign ones.
So **as a foreigner, you’re a juicy target for ladyboys**.

A few guys have that bragging attitude they’d never be fooled.
Most of those guys are the easiest to fool.

It goes beyond ladyboys and to life in general: let people think they're too smart to be fooled and you just made it easier for anyone to fool them.

My recommendation to be on the safe side while traveling in Thailand is this: until you see a vagina, don't kiss on the mouth.

Coping Stratagem: Avoid Making Out

And what if all else fails?

Keep reading because that's possible!

I often don't kiss on the mouth while leading to sex and prefer neck and body kisses instead.

You might not agree with that, but you might want to do it in Thailand, the Philippines, or any other region with lots of ladyboys.

Why?

Because **none of the previous steps is foolproof**.
Anybody who's telling you they can always spot a ladyboy is lying.

When the worst pangs of ladyboy-induced paranoia set in, you might want to do the same.

Start kissing on the neck and remove her panties first. Once you make sure there's a nice vagina there… Nice :).
Now you can relax and enjoy the ride.
And If you find a surprise instead, smile: I just saved you a make-out session with a man :).

Remember: Respect People, No Matter The Gender

As a reminder, we stand AGAINST hate here.

Men who wished they were women already have a difficult enough life.
They don't need any extra a$$hole making their lives even harder.

If you are, it's on you anyway.
It only shows what a bigot caveman you are.
The world has no use for bigots who gratuitously make other people's lives worse.

Of course, it's also not cool when trans lie or try to fool people.
Trans are just like everyone else: some are great, and some are a$$holes.

And the good and honest ones deserve our respect.

My Experience With Ladyboys

As I write this post I am traveling around SE Asia, probably the region with the highest concentration of ladyboys.

Ladyboys are so many indeed, and often so indistinguishable from pretty girls, that many guys get a bit worried.

I'm no stranger to that feeling.
Ladyboys on the hunt are one of the things that make traveling around this world region a real pain in the ass.

Don't ask me how I learned this stuff :).
But let's say that among the daily encounters, I also had a couple of close calls myself.

And my travel buddy had a proper wake-up call when he only realized at the last possible moment.
Yes, after he had done pretty much everything already :S.

This was his actual text:

> **Him**: Trans. I can't believe it
> **Me**: Sh*t!
> **Him**: Absolutely beyond suspicion. Perfect voice, no Adam's apple, soft curves. And the behavior!

So this is my guide on how to avoid the ladyboy surprise.
So that you won't need to learn by experience :).

The Greater Skill That Helped Me: Reading People

Spotting ladyboys is just one example of a bigger skill: learning to read people.

The same skill applies to dating, business, and life decisions.
That's the kind of skill we train inside **Power University** —not tricks, but judgment and strategic awareness.

Explore Power University

Blink: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Blink (2005) investigates human cognition and explains how to snap, subconscious decisions can turn out to be extremely accurate for people who have become experts in their fields.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Blink Summary
- The Theory of Thin Slices
- The Secret Life of Snap Decisions
- The Warren Harding Error
- When Less is More
- Experts Are Better At Thin Slicing
- Performing in High-Pressure Situations
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Blink Review

Bullet Summary

- Quick, intuitive snap decisions can be as reliable as highly analytical ones
- Being good at snap decisions means knowing what's relevant
- Deep expertise allows people to make a reliable snap judgment (they know what's relevant)
- Extreme stress impairs our snap decisions skills

Blink Summary

About The Author: Malcolm Gladwell is a journalist and an author of popular pop psychology books.
Among his other bestsellers are *"The Tipping Point"*, *"Outliers"* and "David and Goliath".

Introduction

Gladwell talks about Adaptive Unconscious a decision-making machine that operates unconsciously and quickly.

For those of you who know Kahneman, this is basically the same as "fast thinking" in *Thinking Fast and Slow*.

Gladwell says that with Blink he wants to:

1. Show quick unconscious decisions can be as accurate as conscious ones
2. Explore when and when not to trust our intuitions
3. Show how we can improve our snap chat decisions

So let's what these snap decisions are:

The Theory of Thin Slices

The idea behind Thin Slicing is that our mind can see overarching, significant patterns, even with small samples.

This means that we can often make a snap judgment with a high rate of accuracy on little information or exposure.

You can be effective at Thin Slices in two ways:

1. With lots of experience
2. By looking at what's relevant (experience helps to know what's relevant)

John Gottman is Gladwell's example.
John Gottman, an author of some wonderful books you can read on this website as well, became famous for predicting with a 90% accuracy rate which couples would divorce just by looking at a 15-minute conversation between them.

But thin-slicing also works with non-experts if you're looking at something which is relevant.
It's possible for example to assess people's personalities by looking at their room compared to their long-term friends.

How To Spot Future Divorces

In Gladwell's examples, the major giveaways for a future divorce were:

- Contempt, signaled by eye-rolling, eyes shutting, patronizing voice…
- "Yes, but" sentences format, which highlights Contempt
- Never giving credit to the partner
- Inflexibility

Gottman mostly looks at the ratio between positive and negative emotions. The positive signs must outweigh the negative by at least 5 to 1.
Read more from Gottman here.

Asking Direct Questions Is Useless

Gladwell also points out that asking couples about the state of their marriages didn't give many clues.

Most people had no idea how they came across during their communications.

Doctors Get Sued for Low EI

There's little correlation between doctors' mistakes and the incidence of legal proceedings.

The correlation instead was very strong with the way doctors treat patients.

The doctors who don't get sued do the following:

- Spend on average 3 mins longer for patient
- Orienting comments such as "first I examine you, then we talk it over"
- Active listening such as "go on", "tell me more about it"
- More likely to laugh

The difference was not in the information or amount of the information, but in how they spoke and treated the patients.

Thin Slicing Doctors' Suing Chances

Gladwell says a researcher could predict the likelihood of a doctor being sued simply by listening to the tone of voice -without any content at all-.

The more dominant the doctor appeared, the more likely he was to be sued. The less dominant and more concerned the voice, less likely to being sued.

The voice basically works as a proxy for the doctor's attitude. Caring and respectful or disrespectful and talking down?

The Secret Life of Snap Decisions

Gladwell discusses the subconscious calling it a "locked door".

Many decisions we make, he says, we can't even explain them consciously not even after we reflect on it.

Tennis coach Vic Braden was Blink's example: he was able to say when a player was going to perform a poor serve but he wasn't able to explain why.

The locked door also works the other way around: we can decide what we like and want consciously, but our conscious list of traits is a poor predictor of what we actually like.

That's why it's not uncommon that speed daters will end up picking participants who look and behave like nothing in their pre-drawn criteria.

Priming Effect (But Read The Note!)

Gladwell also talks about the priming effect (Bargh et al., 1988).

Reminding students about their genders or ethnicity, for example, elevates in their minds the associated stereotypes and they score better or worse depending on that stereotype.

Reminding women they're women lowers their math test scores. While Reminding blacks they're black lower their scores. But reminding Asians they're Asians *raises* their math scores.

Similarly, people taking a test with many age-related words result in the test-takers walking slower.

Students also interrupted other people's conversations right away or waited indefinitely depending if they were primed with politeness or rudeness.

Gladwell mentions this can be an adaptive response within ourselves.
If our brain believes our environment favors this or that type of personality, then we start behaving more like our environment.

And of course, people had no idea of the outside influence that changed them.

My Note:
The research on priming has been at the center of a storm in psychology. But of course, Gladwell missed that. More on this article on pop psychology myths)

We Never Tell The Truth When We Rationalize

I loved how Gladwell debunks the merits of "explaining one's behavior".

He presents an experiment in which people were subtly helped to solve a puzzle.
But when asked how they solved the puzzle almost nobody mentioned the external help and all focused on their own mental processes to reach the solution.

Gladwell says it's not that the people were trying to cheat, but the hint was so subtle their rational brains never realized it.
So when asked about an explanation **our rational brain doesn't tell the truth, but comes up with what *seems* the most plausible solution**.

But the most plausible solution is seldom the real explanation.

We are really ignorant about what motivates our decision, says Gladwell. And we should really be saying "I don't

know" more often.

The Warren Harding Error

Chapter 3 focuses on the disadvantages of our subconscious decisions.

We have a strong tendency, for example, to vote for those who "look the part" rather than those best prepared at carrying out the duties -as happened with Warren Harding-.

Computer tests developed at Harvard University also revealed that when we are forced to make snap decisions we fall back on (racist) stereotypes.

No matter whether the person was or wasn't racist or whether he was aware of it or not, most still showed racism towards black people under the pressure of time constraints.

The biases that we have in our subconscious will determine our behavior in ways that we don't consciously control.

Test your own implicit biases here, but be aware there's some controversy and criticism on these tests.
Also, make sure to read that topic well: **not all biases are bad**.

Whites Pay Less

A friend of mine used to say that "only white people pay full prices".

Boy, was he wrong?

A study on car sales showed how white people on average end up paying less than other races.
And not because they're better negotiators, but because salespeople tend to haggle less aggressively.

Gladwell says it's possibly because when a sales rep sees a white person the stereotype is that he will be more educated and less likely to fall for his tactics.

Would it pay if a salesman was able to rid himself of stereotypes?
Gladwell suggests so when he introduces Bob Golob.
Golob manages to sell twice the average of other salesmen by, says Gladwell, eliminating biases towards customers.

Can We Change Our Biases? Yes We Can!

There is a way to change our biases.

To do so, we should spend more time with the people and subjects we are biased towards.
Understanding them and their culture, and becoming familiar with them as people.

That way, biases will not affect our snap decisions anymore.

When Less is More

In chapter four of *Blink* Gladwell says that our Western culture values decisions which are complex and time-consuming.

That should not be the case, he says.

The example here is the decision-making process in Emergency Rooms.
He says that to assess whether a patient is having a heart attack doctors use all information they can gather.

The process takes a long and doctors face a "data deluge" that clouds their brains instead of helping.

When finally a new algorithm with only three data points was tested, it proved not only to make for faster decision-making but also to be more accurate than the old "take all data" system.

> **Sometimes, to make important decisions, less is more.**

Gladwell also mentions research showing that the more information a psychologist received, the more they felt confident about their diagnosis.
But the rate of correct diagnosis didn't improve with more information.

When Visual Trumps Verbal

Gladwell says when it comes to face recognition we are great at visual recognition, but terrible at verbal description.

You could write a book about a person's face and still, you wouldn't recognize it.

In a snap of a second look at the picture of Marilyn Monroe's face and you would recognize her right away though.

Experts Are Better At Thin Slicing

Gladwell talks about how different people can "thin slice" things differently.

Experts can thin-slice much more efficiently compared to newbies.

Indirect Observation

Gladwell repeats again what's the main concept in *"Blink"*.

Such as, that we can learn more from people by observing body language, facial expression, or looking at their room than by asking them directly.

While people are very good at explaining their actions, those explanations aren't necessarily correct.
Especially when the behavior arises from the unconscious.

The Package IS The Product

The author introduces the Coke VS Pepsi tasting battle.

He says that consumers don't experience the product just by itself. But product, packaging, and "brand" are experienced all together.

The mistake Coca-Cola made was to ascribe their loss of market share entirely to the product.

Feeling Misinterpretation – Failed Thin Slicing

The author explains the launch of a brand new, groundbreaking chair with steel frames in plain sight.

The first market research showed people didn't like it.
The company launched the product anyway and it became a hit.

Gladwell says it's because people misinterpreted their feelings.
They said they hated the chair, but what they really meant is that it was so new and unfamiliar that they were not used to it.

This is often when something is new and groundbreaking.
People will say they don't like it, but it's only because they're caught off-guard or shocked.
And it's easy to miss the difference between the two just by going with testers' scores.

Because given the time to warm up to it, it's also very possible they might start liking it -or loving it- (but of course, it's also possible they won't like it).

We love market research because it provides scores, numbers, and a feeling of certainty. But **there can be no certainty with new groundbreaking products**.

You simply must give it a try.

Thin Slicing Training

Gladwell says we can't look directly into our subconscious, but we can understand it by analyzing our reactions and behavior.

All experts that have become great at snap judgments and thin slicing did so by breaking down their area of expertise and analyzing it bit by bit.
It's similar to psychoanalysis. You analyze your thoughts for years and then start to learn how your mind works. Experts do the same with the object of their expertise.

Performing in High-Pressure Situations

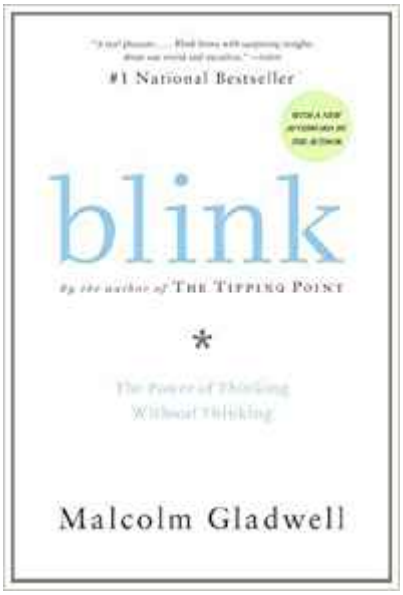
Stress can help us focus.

It's what some top players refer to as "the game slowing down". It's because our brain drops all unnecessary stimuli and focuses exclusively on what matters. It's the so-called "tunnel vision".
Gladwell says this is between 115 and 145 heartbeats for minutes.

But above that threshold, stress makes us ineffective. Most of us, as a matter of fact, get too aroused in stressful situations.
Above 145 part of our body functions start to shut down. That's why for some it's difficult to even dial the police phone number.

Our snap judgment tends indeed to be impaired by extreme stress or life-and-death scenarios.
Even simply being under strong time pressure, without life or death scenarios, make us unable to see clues in body language and facial expressions.
Extreme time pressure situations make us autistic, the author says.

It convenes that we should avoid relying on our snap judgment in high-stress situations. Whenever you can, disengage instead, take a break and resume later.



Real-Life Applications

Don't Believe In Post-Act Rationalization
When people tell you why they did what they did, don't listen. They are often fooling their own mind and coming up with what seems to make sense, not the real reasons.

Beware of Feelings' Misinterpretation
Don't take reactions to new products at face value: they need interpretation. A "I hate it" could easily mean "I'm so unfamiliar with it I can't make sense of it (yet)".

Drop Snap Judgement In High Pressure
Unless you already know you perform great and can handle well high-stress situations, don't engage. Take a break and resume later on.

Thin Slicing Training
Becoming great at Thin Slicing means knowing something so well that you know what matters and you can deconstruct complex realities it to its basic elements.
In a way, The Power Moves is thin-slicing human interactions and training your snap judgment of people.

CONS

Bending Examples To Fit His Narrative
At times I feel like Gladwell bends stories and examples to fit his narrative. For example "analyzing someone's room in 20 mins" VS "knowing someone for years" are NOT measuring the same thing.
So you can't tell me the former is an example of "superior snap judgment".

Snap VS Deliberate… Wait, are these antithetical??
The narrative of snap decisions VS deliberate ones reminds me of the "EQ VS IQ" in *Emotional Intelligence*.
Such as, they are pitted against each other when they're not exactly antithetical.
They both have their own place and time.

Long and Theoretical
Could have been shorter and there is little focus on how to actually use this information.

Blink Review

I don't see much empowerment in pitting "snap decisions" VS "deliberate ones".

They both have their time and place.

But what makes Blink an amazing book is all the explanation that goes into snap decision-making.

On a personal level, it made me realize the usefulness of this website.
From a Blink point of view, **The Power Moves makes you an expert at social interactions so that you can then slice the reality around you**.

The nuggets of wisdom are too many to list, but as a website on social interactions, I will leave you the one highlighted by the doctors' study:

- How you treat people is the biggest determinant of how they will perceive and treat you.

Check out the **best psychology books** or Get Blink on Amazon

The Millionaire Fastlane Summary: Skip Compound Interest, Build a Business (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Millionaire Fastlane teaches readers that the most touted way of getting rich, such as saving and investing, is a sucker's choice. DeMarco proposes instead what he dubs the "fastlane", such as becoming an entrepreneur.

TPM Power Takeaway: The mindsets of personal power and sovereignty
This isn't about chasing the Lambo as a young man, it's about doing what you want. You can get the Lambo if that's your thing, but you can get anything you want, on your time, and on your choice.
See TPM's entrepreneurial power model ↗

Contents

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  - Part 2: Wealth is Not a Road, But a Road Trip
  - Part 3: Poorness: The Sidewalk
  - Part 4: Mediocrity: The Slowlane Roadmap
  - Part 5: Wealth: The Fastlane Roadmap
  - Part 6: Your Vehicle to Wealth: YOU
  - Part 7: Millionaire Fastlane Commandments
  - Part 8: Accelerate Wealth
- Power Dynamics Behind 'The Lanes'
  - TPM Takeaways
- CONS
- Review

Takeaways

- Working a job and investing in the stock market will NOT make you rich
- Entrepreneurship (the fastlane) will give you independence, freedom, and early (wealthy) retirement
- Time is your most important resource. Buy time, don't trade time for money.

Summary

MJ DeMarco says The Millionaire Fastlane is not "The Four-Hour Workweek" that will tell you step by step what to do.
He says that is your task to find out, because success is a journey and it cannot be outsourced.

Part 1: Wealth in a Wheelchair

One day DeMarco saw a *young* man drive his dream car, a Lamborghini.
That was the epiphany for him and he realized the difference between "get rich slow" and "get rich fast".

Part 2: Wealth is Not a Road, But a Road Trip

The typical “get rich” scheme bandied by financial gurus, which he dubs “get rich slow” is a trap, the author says.

You need to toil your whole life employed by someone else, squandering the golden years of your life in a cubicle.

MG says that people see the big event-grabbing headlines like the IPO or the big buy-out and think that getting rich is event-driven.
But the real story is the process behind those events.

The process entails sacrifices and hard work. You will never enjoy the big ticket event without the process.

MJ also introduces the core concept of the book here: fast **wealth happens exponentially, not linearly**.
Employment and savings are linear, that’s why they don’t work.
And he puts people into 3 different roads when it comes to wealth:

- The Sidewalk
- The Slowlane
- The Fastlane

Part 3: Poorness: The Sidewalk

In short, the sidewalkers are those people who spend more than they earn.

They are not necessarily poor, they can be very rich, but they finance their life with an unsustainable mix of income and debt.

Instant gratification is the key for the sidewalker.
You probably heard the fable of the ant and the grasshopper. Well, the grasshopper resides on the sidewalk.

Sidewalkers also tend to pursue money through events. Things such as lotteries, gambling, “a big hit” etc. etc.

Part 4: Mediocrity: The Slowlane Roadmap

Most people reside in the slow lane.

They sacrifice today for a better tomorrow. In the ant and the grasshopper fable, these people are the ants.
They buy into the “compound interest strategy”, so they work hard today and save to be rich tomorrow.

It’s not an optimal strategy, the author says. Decades in a job you likely don’t love are also wasted decades.

In the slowlane you’re the butt-end of a sucker’s trade.
You trade a salary while your employer makes money off of you.
You trade 5 for 2 when you give Monday to Friday to get 2 days off. That’s why you see people “celebrating their freedom” on Friday”.
Only to go back in the cage again on Monday.

No, fuck TGIF: your life is now!
Your life can be Friday every day.

The other problem with the slowlane is also that you’re not in the driver’s seat. You don’t control your destiny.
What if the stock market tanks when you’re about to withdraw your money?
Or if you want to double your income today, will your boss accept it? And if you get a heart attack at 55?

Problems with the slowlane:

- Trade weeks for weekends
- No leverage (work twice harder is not twice the money)

- Trade time for money (you can never buy back time)
- Upper limit (can't work more than 24h/day)
- Trade your best years for future, uncertain money
- Compound interest takes time and only works in the final years
- Limited learning (compared to huge learning with your business)

> **To trade Time Is To Trade Life**

The Paradox of Practice: You're Being Conned

MJ DeMarco says gurus sell the slow lane while they themselves get rich in the fast lane.

He makes fun of Robert Kiyosaki and his "Poor Dad Rich Dad".
MJ says Kiyosaki didn't make money with his real estate tips, but by selling books with his tips.
Which doesn't make him credible.

MJ doesn't mention it, but this is similar to Tony Robbins peddling slowlane compound interest and Tai Lopez who makes his money selling courses on how to make money.

> **Dump the damn job – the job sucks**

Part 5: Wealth: The Fastlane Roadmap

People on the fastlane take care of their finances like slowlaners, but also enjoy life more like the sidewalker.

However, as they build their empires, they are more similar to slowlaners but with key differences:

- Fastlaners accumulate wealth in 10 years or less (instead of decades)
- Fastlaners control their assets (instead of depending on external forces)
- Fastlaners give jobs while slowlaners seek jobs
- Fastlaners use financial assets to generate cash (slowlaners use them to get rich)

However DeMarco is very clear: do not confuse "get rich quick" with "get rich easy".
Fastlane is all about frontloading your hard work.

Building a Pyramid: The Different Roads

DeMarco uses the example of building a pyramid to explain the different approaches.

I will give my own slightly different interpretation:

The slowlaner starts moving the stones. Slowly.

The fastlaner works even harder, weekends included, all impassioned about his project.
But he's not putting up any stones. After 5 years it looks like the slowlaner is getting stuff done, but then the fastlaner's crane is ready.
In a few months' time he's already surpassed the slowlaner and will finish the pyramid in a few years, ready to enjoy it while he's still young.

The sidewalker?
He blew all his initial money on Egyptian hookers and now he bums around for scrap change :).

The Solution? Become a Producer

DeMarco says we have all been conditioned to consume and buy “stuff”.

He urges you instead to get into a mentality of providing stuff.

Don’t attend a seminar, give one; don’t dig for gold, sell the shovels; don’t take a mortgage, hold one.

Divorce Wealth from Time

MJ recommends you build “money trees”.

Such as, systems or products producing income independently of you.

This part made me think of other authors as well: Ray Dalio says that if he were to do his job the best, he would find a CEO to replace him and do better than he does.

Here are good money trees options for MJ:

1. Rentals
2. Software
3. Content (books, blogs, songs, videos etc)
4. Distribution systems (app stores, e-commerce etc.)

Law of Attraction is BS

DeMarco says that many gurus sell the law of attraction because it’s easy.

He says it’s nothing but the repackaged old habit of visualization.

He says it’s not a law because it doesn’t work universally and all the times. And it doesn’t work at all unless you work hard at what you want.

I couldn’t agree more with it.
MJ then proposes a different law:

Law of Effection

The Law of Effection says that to make a million, you need to help one million people.
The more lives you improve, in scale and magnitude, the bigger your returns.

Part 6: Your Vehicle to Wealth: YOU

DeMarco says the main element of a successful business if yourself.

He stresses the importance of ownership and taking responsibility for your life.
He says that everything happening to you is because of your choices.

And then proposes two methods to make choices: the worst case scenario -asking what’s the worst that can happen and how likely and acceptable it is- and the weighted average decision matrix.

The author makes fun of inspirational quotes and says need to build daily habits instead (check The Power Of Habit).

He also mentions the famous suggestion from The Richest Man in Babylon that you should pay yourself first.
But that’s impossible as an employee because your salary comes already curtailed by taxes.
To pay yourself first, you need to start a corporation instead -which is the same advice from Rich Dad Poor Dad-.

Don't Waste Your Time

MJ talks about people spending hours playing Facebook games or watching TV.

He says those people are escaping their lives because their lives is not exciting.
He recommends you spend little time with those people and build a life that you're excited to live instead.

The More You Buy, The More Time You Lose

The author says anytime you buy something too expensive for your income, you are giving up time.

You are giving up time because that's all hours you'll need to work to pay back that (useless) expense.

Don't Waste Time to Save Nickels

The author says that many people spend lots of time to save little money.

Taking a layover flight to save a hundred and driving two hours to save 20 dollars is stupid.

Your time is the most precious resource, and you can't buy it back.
Time-wise, we're all on a sinking ship, and you should keep that in mind.

So here's another difference between slowlaners and fastlaners:

- Slowlaners are frugal with money. Fastlaners are frugal with time.

Fastlane Requires Commitment

The fastlane process is not easy.

It requires commitment.
The author differentiates between interest and commitment.

- Interest reads a book, commitment applies that book 50 times

Commitment is staying at it for long hours and through failure and failure.

My Note:
DeMarco is talking about grit here, check out Grit by Angela Duckworth and Deep Work.

Part 7: Millionaire Fastlane Commandments

DeMarco says you must not worry if someone else is doing the same you're doing, but you must worry about doing it better than everyone else.

He writes that a good business must obey five commandments:

- **1. The Commandment of Need**

You must start a business to solve a need or a problem people have.
Need of the people, not *your* needs.

That's why DeMarco says the advice of "follow your passion" is terrible advice.
However, he also says passion is important for success and he does suggest to "do what you love".

- **2. The Commandment of Entry**

The harder it is to start a business in the field you choose, the easier it is to make money and *keep* making money.

When barriers are low, you need to be really exceptional.

But then again, it's easier being exceptional among a small group than being exceptional among hundreds of

thousands.

- **3. The Commandment of Control**

If anyone can change something and send your business in a tailspin, you're not in control.

As an employee, you're not in control.

Or if your website is all your income and you get all leads from Google and AdWords, then you're too heavily dependent on Google.

- **4. The Commandment of Scale**

The more you can scale your business, the more you can earn.

A street corner coffee shop is not scalable as it's limited in the amount of people it can reach and host on the premises.

A course online is scalable instead because people from all over the world can access it at the same time.

- **5. The Commandment of Time**

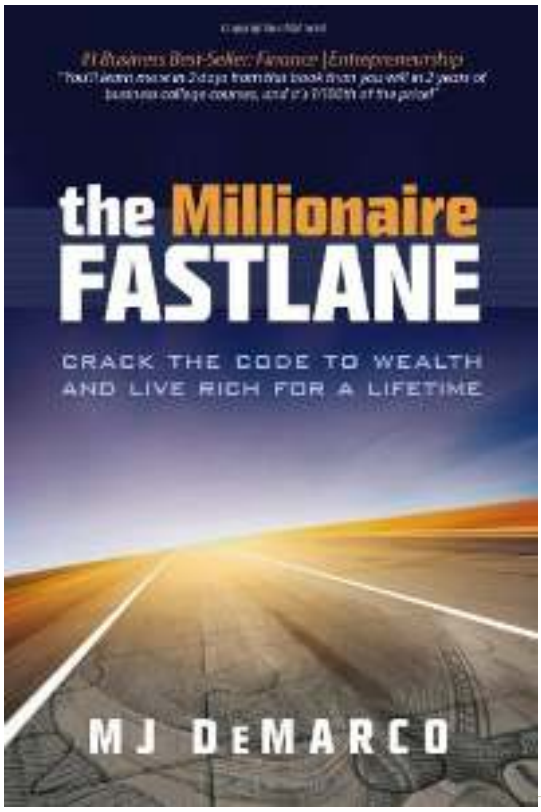
If you want to enjoy life and win back time to do all other activities you enjoy, you must be able to eventually automate your business or have it run without you.

Part 8: Accelerate Wealth

DeMarco says your real boss is always the person who pays for your products -your customers-.

And in bussiness, DeMarco says, you should choose monogamy.
Don't spread yourself thin or divide your resources over several different ventures.
Stick to one and grow that one until you succeed.

> **Dollars are like privates in your army: the more you have, the harder they fight for your freedom**



Power Dynamics Behind 'The Lanes'

- Fastlane = **control of value flows**
- Slowlane = **dependence on systems you don't control**
- Sidewalk = **zero leverage + consumption trap**

TPM Takeaways

Switch From Consumer To Producer Mentality
Don't go through life thinking and planning only about what to buy. Think about what you can sell and provide instead.

Place a High Value On Your Time
Time is your most important resource. Don't trade your time for money. Use money to buy more time instead. Incidentally, this mindset makes you a higher-value man and shifts the interpersonal power dynamics in your favor as you become scarcer.

Stop Listening To Gurus
Stop listening to gurus who didn't make their money with their own tips. They didn't get rich giving up a coffee a day or using their own material. They're getting rich selling you that material.

CONS

- **Critical takes may be too critical for some**

I found the bashing of the industry's gurus hilarious and at times also on point.
But I personally found a bit out of place the critique to Kyosaki as the message of the two books is far from antithetic and at times is actually quite similar.

- **College is peak life experience (educationisn't isn't useless)**

I agree education is not a pre-requisite for success, however, I wouldn't go as far as the author does in discounting its utility.
What most authors like DeMarco don't consider is that university is not just a place to get information, but **college is a place to make *social* experience and date around**. It can be a peak experience for many men's lives and it completely fits what DeMarco says: you cannot get that same experience later on in life as an older man, no matter how much money you make.

See more here:

> **Lucio**: College for smart men is a peak life experience to experiment, enjoy life, and gain invaluable dating experience

Review

The Millionaire Fastlane unveils the hidden costs of a 'safe' existence based on employment and savings and propose a different, more empowering model we wholeheartedly agree with.
It's one the most underrated book I've read.

Some parts really spoke to me. I've been conditioned to be a slowlaner all my life.
I grew up with the idea that the slowslane is what serious people do.
And that diverging from that path is for good for nothing, "pie in the sky people".

If you think about it, most of us feel the pressure of the slowlane.
Who do we respect, who do recruiters look for in a CV?
Consistency!

But too often that means “consistency of employment”, the guy who held a job for years.
The guy who kept his head down the longest.

I also enjoyed DeMarco’s writing style: rebellious, biting, and irreverent.

Of course, there are parts that are not as groundbreaking.
Like when it tries to be an “how to book” and discusses which field to start a business.
That’s not as powerful.

And there are parts I don’t fully agree with, like that the main determinant of sales is marketing and not the product itself -it’s both-.

But it’s a 5 star book as it gives readers the theoretical foundation -and proverbial kick in the butt- to step off the employee’s rat race.

Check out the best entrepreneurship books

How To Slow Down Sex & Get A Relationship

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Turning sex down is an art.

It's part of the forgotten art of *effectively* saying no.

And you want to do it well because **if you like a guy but make him feel unwanted you can destroy the relationship**.

Luckily, if you turn him down well you will *enhance* your relationship.

This article teaches you how to turn down sex while also becoming *more* attractive, and more long-term material.

Expressions of disgust or "yucks" are the worst. It makes him feel hurt and unwanted (and he might leave for good)

Contents

- The First Time You Delay Sex Is Make or Break
- How Bad Rejections End Relationships
- 4 Bad Ways Women Reject Sex
  - 1. "I Don't Want You" Rejections
  - 2. "You Have To Respect Me" Rejection
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- How to Delay Sex Properly
  - 1. The Hug Tackle

  - 2. Fire First, Water Soon After
  - 3. Reframe From Sexual to Romance
  - 4. Only Go To His Place When You're Ready
- Responsibility For Dating Failures
- Summary & Note

The First Time You Delay Sex Is Make or Break

The first time he escalates towards sex is a very emotional, intense moment for him.

He is putting all of himself -no, not just his penis, really all of himself- on the line.

When you turn him down the wrong way it's like telling him "I don't like you, I don't want you".
And that can easily make or break the relationship.

It's indeed entirely possible that two people can like each other and *still* end things acrimoniously over a poorly executed sexual rejection -or sexual delay-.

This article will teach you how to turn down sex in two steps:

1. First, we analyze how women turn down sex the wrong way;
2. Second, we'll show how you can delay sex effectively

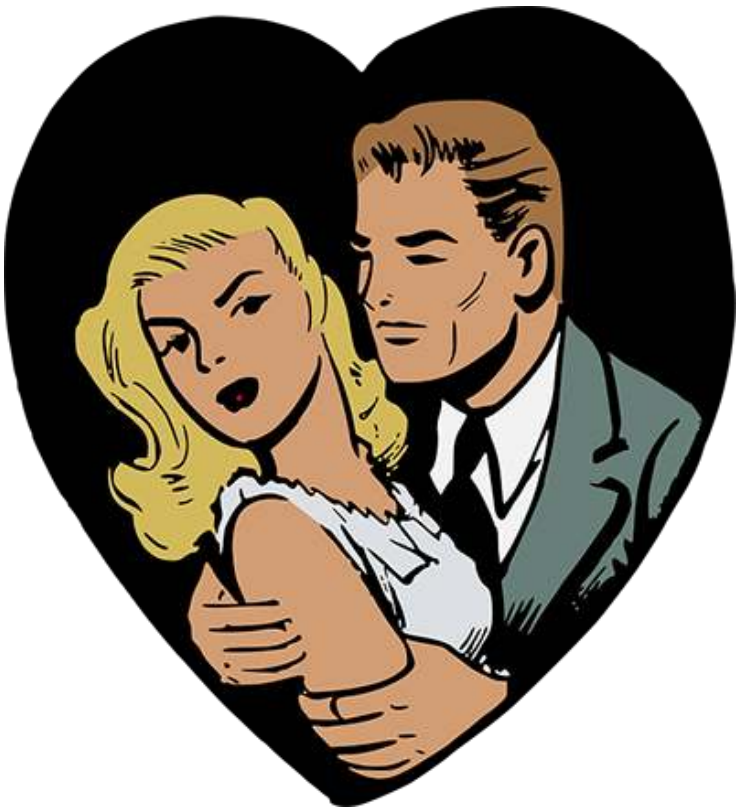
Keep this in mind:

- **It's easy to crush a man's ego with a rejection**: Brene Brown pinpointed "initiating sex" as one the most vulnerable moments in men's lives. That included men in relationships, and it's all truer when there is no relationship yet.
- **Things can easily spiral downwards after critical phases**: and escalation to sex is one of the most critical phases

How Bad Rejections End Relationships

Imagine the following scenario with a new budding relationship:

1. **You're in a private location -for the first time-**: You think this could lead to something physical. You're not sure about it, but you're excited and a bit nervous.
2. **He makes a move**: He goes to kiss you. But it's a bit too soon. You need some more time, or you don't want to seem too easy
3. **You reject him – the wrong way**: You pushed him away, or you physically move away as if he was a rabid dog.
4. **He's hurt**: Of course, you didn't mean it that way, but he feels spurned and hurt
5. **Now it's weird**: he is dejected, and the conversation sputters. You fumble something, you hope he can make it good again. But nobody is sure what to do or say. Oooops.



6. **Things turn sour**: the discomfort grows larger. You want out of this.

When you leave, you're glad your out.

And yet…

Yet, he seemed a great guy up until then.

What happened?

The Psychology Of Bad Sex Rejection

Now granted, he might have been an actual, real weirdo.

But.. Are you really sure he was?

He wasn't a weirdo at all until then.
He was a cool guy.
Why is he only a weirdo now?

Psychology is clear on it: we don't remember whole interactions.

We remember the peaks, what happens last, and *what's most emotional*.
A bad move from his side and a bad rejection from your side end the interaction on a terrible emotional low.

And that's all it takes for an otherwise great guy to be passed up and for a high-potential relationship to end.

I'll come out of the woodwork and say it: I have come across as a weirdo after a few failed escalations in the past.
And some other women said I was the best man they'd ever met.

How is that possible?

The difference was all in the rejection and what happened afterward.
Yes, it takes that little.

Now, we're going to learn how to avoid this scenario.

4 Bad Ways Women Reject Sex

Do you want to hear a (not so) funny thing?

I was checking what were the most common search terms for this article. In the top 10 there was this one here:

> **Her**: I rejected him now he rejects me

Now I will show you *exactly* what those women have done wrong.

Here are four common ways that women sexually reject men the wrong way:

1. "I Don't Want You" Rejections

MOST rejections fall under this category.

When you reject him you are not communicating your full range of feelings.

You are not saying "I like you, but not yet, I just need some more time".
You are only communicating the negative part, the "I don't want you, go away".

And that can be painful, and he can have difficulties recovering from there.

If you like him but need more time your rejection should communicate that.
Your rejection must deflect the physical escalation while also communicating your positive feelings.

2. "You Have To Respect Me" Rejection

Some women reject sex by demanding to "be respected".

The "respect me" line self-frames her as saintly (see Madonna/whore) and as the relationship leader who dictates the tempo.

It works well with less experienced men as they'll gobble it up and keep investing in the woman.
It works very poorly with *higher-quality men* who don't appreciate the power move.

You go haughty queen with that move, but only peasants will stick around.

Basically, it works well with the guys you don't want and works poorly with the men you most want.
Guys worth their salt knows that the best way to respect a woman is to bond emotionally, have great physical chemistry, and make her come.
And then bond a bit more after that.

They know the best relationships are based on honest communication and entail great chemistry.

When you tell him to respect you, you are communicating the opposite.
This is what he will hear:

- I'm not that attracted to you
- We don't have a great chemistry
- I don't respect you that much
- I'm playing games

3. Spite Check Questioning Delay Tactic

Spite check refers to a chess player who prolongs the game just to irritate the other player.

Some women unwittingly irritate him with spite-check delay tactics.

Women's way of slowing down and defusing sexual tension is to talk and ask questions.

"Spite check questions" include:

- Why?
- But why?
- Why do you have X in your room?
- But why do you want to make love to me?
- But why do you want to take my pants off?

The goal of these questions is to make him talk and frustrate his sexual mood.

And that's *exactly* the problem with spite check questions: they frustrate him -and destroy the mood-.

Experienced guys of course know better than to reply to those questions.
But even for them, "spite check questions" ruin the mood.

Spite check questioning sends a negative message both about you and him.

About you, it makes you come across as slightly childish, unnecessarily nervous, indecisive, and potentially also frigid.
By frustrating the sexual mood, they communicate that you might not be very much into sex, and not very much into him.
And he might feel like you don't like him.

Ideally, if you've reached that point, you should know whether or not he's a guy you're comfortable getting together with.
And you should be at least somewhat attracted to him.

Personally, when I'm on the fence about a woman and she seeks to stall me with spite check conversation, I start getting turned off.

If I like the woman I can find it endearing -up to a certain point-. But that doesn't mean I don't pass some judgment based on it -namely, that she's a bit of a big baby-.
In either case, she never comes across as a *high-quality woman*.

4. "You're Not Getting Any" Rejection

Some women love to see men horny about them.

And up until here, all great.
The problem starts with some women who, instead of getting themselves in the mood… They prefer teasing him and going on a sexual power trip.

Some will say things such as:

- "Hmmm you're so horny, aren't you" (talking as if they weren't horny at all)
- "I like to see men like this" (ie.: chasing after me / desperate for me)
- "You can call a hooker when I leave"
- "You look a bit serious, are you angry you're not going to get what you want?"

These women like to have power over men.
They prefer having power over men instead of actually enjoying sex and the sexual mood.

This sexual power trip can be very delusional. Especially for men who actually have options.
Personally, few things turn me off as quickly as a woman who talks as if she were the ultimate dispenser of pleasure

in this world.

And sure, I'm particularly sensitive to power dynamics, but this technique is poor even for the most undiscerning man.

Why?

Well, think about it.
The problem with this technique is that it's sexually confrontational.
This technique says "you want me, I don't want you… And I am happy to see you suffer".

Who on earth might want to have a relationship with a woman like that?
It's not a *high-quality man*, for sure.

How Not to Delay Sex: Example

The messages below come from the worst sex-delaying attempt I have ever experienced.

This was the poster child of doing it all wrong.

This is how she behaved during our intimate time:

1. During the date, she seems bored and irritable
2. When I say I like her and imply she feels the same, she vehemently denies it (first rejection before we even reach sexual escalation)
3. She was taller and during the escalation, she repeats "how small I am" (allow me a clarification: was not talking about my penis :)
4. To keep her pretense of disinterest she finally dresses to leave while she really wanted to stay
5. I am fed up with her and don't play the game of "stay a bit longer" anymore: I gladly walk her out
6. Once away, she realizes her mistake and since she actually likes me, writes me to negotiate her come back (now she looks needy and desperate)
7. She walks back in with the same haughty and distant attitude, undresses, and lays on the bed
8. We do it and she shows no passion
9. Finally, she falls in love *after* she managed to fully estrange me

Can you see how each step compounded the mistake?

The difference here is that the man knew what he was doing, and that attracted her.
She didn't know what she was doing and pushed him emotionally away.

Result: he doesn't want to see her again and she fell in love.

This is an extreme example of course, but many women do at least some of those same mistakes.

Bad Rejections Only Get You The Players!

Now you might think:

> Wait a second Lucio, it's a good thing to be harsh so I only get the coolest guys!

Some guys indeed will disregard your rejection, no matter how you slice it.
They'll take a step back, talk a bit more, chill a bit more, and pour one more drink.
And then go for it again.

That's what happened in the example above, after all.

But if you only end up with those guys, then you're screening in players and fuckboys.

Those are the guys who've been there a hundred times and know how to make up for the women's mistakes.
But if you want a serious relationship, then you can't hold *only* onto the womanizers.

And Turn Away The Good Guys!

About the guys who are not male whores?

Those are the guys who'll most likely feel hurt by poor rejections.

They might recover with a bit of time, but the minutes after a failed move are the heaviest.
And the heaviness of that situation often doesn't afford him the luxury of time.
It's often over before you two even had a chance.

And it only gets worse when he's really into you.
You see, **the more he is into you, the more your rejection will destroy him**.

It might be this guy was just a bit too touchy.
Or he was just too into you. And he'd otherwise be a great guy. But you'll never know when you turn him down the wrong way.

Because when you reject too strongly you filter in the players and you filter out the guys really interested in you!

What's a gal to do then?

The end of this article answers that.

How to Delay Sex Properly

Do you like him?

If you do but you need more time -or want to resist a little bit-, you must slow things down *while* also showing that you like him.

A few techniques to do exactly just that:

1. The Hug Tackle

A great technique to delay sex and a win-win for everyone.

As he escalates sexually, you deflect moving towards a cuddly hug instead.

If you also rest your head on his shoulder, he might feel like you're in need of emotional support.
That will also help to awaken his protector's feelings, bringing him emotionally closer to you.

Whether you rest your head on him or not, it's best done all in silence, no words spoken.

The hug tackle switches from sexual to emotional. It slows down the tempo while at the same time increasing your bonding.

Great technique!

2. Fire First, Water Soon After

As he kisses you, kiss him back, touch him, or pant a bit.

Then all of a sudden, stop and push him back.
Don't verbalize it, but the feeling you want to convey is this:

> **You**: It's hot, but I'm a lady and need time, that's why I must resist.

It's a bit like she does, but you will stop far sooner (and without giving in):

This works great because you communicate at the same time:

1. You do like him (which men love) +
2. Albeit you like him, you also don't want to be easy (which men love for long-term girlfriends)

That's the *perfect* combo.

HOWEVER you must be careful with this one and stop very early, or else you end up frustrating him sexually.
He might slot you as a game player or a tease and hate you for it.
Plus, a small percentage of men might even turn aggressive.

So… Watch out for this one and, in doubt, avoid it.

Or use it for when you're ready to go all the way.
See here:

- Read Madonna / whore seduction for more

3. Reframe From Sexual to Romance

This might be the best way of delaying sex.

It's honest, builds him up, and *develops an emotional connection*.

Once he accepts your new long-term romance frame, he is also moving closer to being your boyfriend (if you want him like that of course).

Look how she executes it to perfection:

https://youtu.be/sNcKSvLgglk

Note:
YouTube removed it.

Please see "Seduction University" with the full version of this article.

4. Only Go To His Place When You're Ready

Many a great connection died on the altar of a failed *sexual escalation*.

In my experience going to someone's place and *escalating* without getting to sex almost always spells doom for the relationship.

If you like him but you're also sure and positive you don't want to get physical I recommend you simply avoid being at your place or at his place.

As they say, an ounce of prevention…

Responsibility For Dating Failures

This article is to help women (and men) increase their chances of finding the right partner.

It's not about pointing fingers.

But since men traditionally have the *"leader's role"* in seduction, we could argue most of the "blame" rests on men.

But no man is flawless.
And even the amazing ones, they're not amazing all the time.

I'm pretty sure many a woman missed a relationship with Clooney or Pitt because some women rejected them poorly.
I'm pretty sure some women left these guys in disdain.

This is dating.

And ironically, the more you care and the bigger the feelings, the easier it is to derail.
Sometimes a small pebble at a key intersection can derail a train that was on course to beautiful destinations.

By knowing what the most common issues and pitfalls are, you can give your own contribution to make sure you give your and your favorite men the best possible shot.

This post helps you help men to run things smoothly.

Summary & Note

Please note that this article is to turn down sex when you want a relationship.

If you don't want intimacy nor a relationship, then research shows that a direct rejection works best.

However, if you like him and would like to explore a possible relationship, then this guide becomes relevant.

If we had to summarize this guide on how to turn a man down in two sentences, it would be these:

1. **If you want to delay sex, make sure you protect his ego**: show that you like him, personally and physically. You just need a bit more time and you'll get there together
2. **If you want a relationship, reframe from sex to romance** and add an emotional bond: with the techniques shown above

Further reading:

- Biggest early dating mistakes
- Should you wait for sex?
- Should you make him chase?
- Should you make him invest?

The Paradox of Choice: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Paradox of Choice (2004) is a psychology book on decision-making. It investigates the counterintuitive effect of having too many choices: it's not true that choices necessarily free us, but they can also paralyze us and make us unhappier.
Schwartz, the author, gives practical advice on how to become happier, more fulfilled, and even more effective decision-makers.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: Quit spending time on 'maximizing' small stuff, focus on ROI
For the strategic operator, the goal is to shift from a Vulnerable Maximizer (who can be stalled by details and inconsequential stuff, including with various 'bio-hacking fads') to a Strategic Satisficer (who moves with speed and agency).

Contents

- Main Takeaways
- Notes
  - Part I: When We Choose
  - Part II: How We Choose
  - Part III: Why We Suffer
  - Part IV: What We Can Do
  - Barry Schwartz TED Talk
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Main Takeaways

- Too many choices can make us unhappy, indecisive, and regretful ("what if…")
- Maximizers, people obsessed with making the best decisions, are the worst hit
- Fear of regret leads you to sub-par decisions (and self-sabotage)
- You can learn to stress less and be happier

Notes

About the Author:
Barry Schwarz is an American psychologist and university professor at Swarthmore College.

Introduction

The usual thinking goes that the more choices people have, the freer and happier they are.

The author says that's true up to a certain point.

When there are too many choices, the negatives start overtaking the positives. **Above a certain threshold, choices no longer liberate us but debilitate us**.

Part I: When We Choose

Picture this study:

People could choose between 6 varieties of jam or 24 varieties. The people exposed to the tray with 6 options bought jam 30% of the time.

People exposed to 24 options only bought them 3% of the time.

Studies also show that people with fewer choices are not only more likely to buy but are also more satisfied with what they get.

Part II: How We Choose

Barry Schwartz says that we don't really shop for value.

We shop for expected value.
Then, once we tried something, we built a "remembered utility" and chose based on that.

Ideally expected, experienced, and remembered utility matches
But most of the time, they don't.
Indeed, we don't really remember our experiences all that well.

Memory Bias: We Remember Peaks

We remember the peak and the end of an experience.

The duration, for example, matters little.

So ironically, you could have a longer bad experience that ends not so bad, and you would prefer it to a much shorter bad experience that doesn't taper off at the end.

Memory bias invalidates the concept that we are rational decision-makers when we are presented with many choices.

We Don't Know What We Will Want

Even when choosing what we would like to consume in the future, we make mistakes.

This study showed that students *thought* they wanted to have more diversity in the future, but they didn't.

They *thought* they wanted variety, but instead simply stuck to what they liked most (Diversification Bias).

We Think There Is More If It's Available

Availability also makes us feel there are more options available than might be the case.

We think, for example, that there are more words in English starting with "T" than having "T" as the third letter. But that's only because we can think of more words beginning with "T".

We Can Only Decide Comparing Things: Anchoring Bias

We have difficulties considering things in isolation.

Instead, we often make decisions based on other available options.
In a rack full of 900 Eur suits, a suit at 600 feels like a bargain. The context is indeed what makes a good pick.

This is the anchoring bias (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

We Value What's Already Ours More: Endowment Effect

When we acquire something, it feels like its value is higher than the cash we just exchanged it for.

Since we fear loss more than gain, giving up something that's already ours feels disproportionately unacceptable to us.
That's why, the author says, some companies can safely offer guarantees: people are not willing to give up their items after they become "theirs".

Similarly, when you propose a car with full options and ask people to winnow out what they don't want, they'll end up with more stuff than if they were asked to add options to a car with zero options.

Maximisers VS Satisficers

Finally, we get to the real genius part.

Barry Schwartz introduces here the two different ways people relate to options.
The two types of people are: satisficers and maximisers .

- **Satisficers:** pick the first good option

Satisficers pick the first option.
They don't spend too much time pondering the different available choices. They are decisive: they take what they like first.
To sell to satisfied customers, marketers need to make their products as available and visible as possible.

Satisficers are more likely to be happy with their choices.

- **Maximizers:** search for the *best* option

Maximizers (want to) pick the best option.
Every choice is a mini-project. They conduct exhaustive and time-consuming searches, trying to come up with the final winner.
To succeed with maximisers marketers need to offer the best possible value.

Maximisers often end up less satisfied (read below why).

Maximizers By Choice
Schwartz says we're not maximizers or satisficers in every single realm of life.
Which is good news, as he implies, as it means we can choose.

Maximizers VS Perfectionists
Schwartz says that perfectionists have very high standards they don't expect to meet.

But maximizers believe they can reach their lofty goals.

That's why perfectionists are not depressed or regretful. Perfectionists are happier with the results of their actions than maximizers are.

Take the quiz here to see if you're a satisficers or maximizer.

Maximizers Suffer of Regret

Almost everyone who scores high on the maximizer scale scores high on the regret scale.

In the presence of many options, Maximizers end up unsatisfied as soon as they find it there are new or better options.
And one of the reasons why maximizers take so long to decide is also because they want to avoid future regret.

Maximizers, indeed, can sometimes even experience anticipated regret.
It's the imagination of how bad you'll feel if you realize you didn't make the best choice.

The overload of choice is indeed a burden to maximizers, not to satisficers, as they feel the need to research to avoid making the wrong choice.

Near Misses Are So Painful for Maximizers

Near Misses are particularly painful for maximizers as near misses, sorry for the pun, maximize regret.

You were so close, yet not cigar.
That's one of the reasons why bronze medalists are happier than silver medalists.

Regret Leads Us to Poor Decision-Making

Barry states that, often, we make choices based on future regret.

Imagine that you can choose between a great possible win and a good certain win.
You will choose differently depending on whether you will be available to know what would have happened if you had taken the risky bet.

People indeed show greater willingness to take risks when they can find out the "what if option".
It's because they will not have to deal with the "what if" scenario.

Regret Factors

Barry says the major determinants of regret are:

1. Personal responsibility for the result
2. How easily you can imagine better alternatives

The more options there are, the more those two factors are magnified.

Part III: Why We Suffer

Barry Schwartz talks a bit about happiness in relation to wealth and options.

He says that above a certain threshold, there's no strong correlation between wealth and happiness.

Similar to the conclusion Brene Brown reaches, he says that **the biggest determinant of happiness are close social relationships**.
Albeit, Barry adds, we don't know the causality here.
But likely it goes both ways: happy people make more social connections, which in turn makes them even happier.

Decisions With Trade-Offs Make Us Unhappy

Barry Schwartz says that studies show how decisions with trade-offs tend to make people unhappy.

The problem, he adds, is that most decisions present trade-offs.
A common response people adopt is to postpone the decision, he says.

Other Options Make Us Unhappy: Opportunity Costs

A study by the University of Florida shows that people value a magazine if they don't see any other magazines in it.

The simple idea that they could miss out on other options makes people feel that their choice is less valuable.

Schwartz describes an example from his own life.

He was walking along a street full of nice restaurants. He was looking forward to dining in one, but as he kept

walking, he couldn't find the best option available, and he started losing both appetite and mood.

Looking at one attractive alternative after another reduces the pleasure of the next one.

Relationships and Job Hopping

Barry Schwartz implies that the feeling of having many romantic options leads people to choice paralysis, also in dating.

He says that's why people marry much later nowadays and hop from job to job.
They are never sure that what they picked is the right one. And the grass often seems greener on the other side.

This is something I mention in Mistakes Women Do In Early Dating.

We Adapt... And We Can't Predict Our Future Mood

After a few months of winning the lottery, people revert to their level of happiness before winning the lottery.

And people suffering a paralyzing accident also go from depressed to normal.

Schwartz explains what are the external causes and doesn't want to imply the two events are comparable in people's level of happiness.
However, it does tell us that people overestimate the impact of most events on their future emotional well-being.

Maximizers will likely be most disappointed by adaptation.
Because they spend so much time choosing what they believe will be a big game-changer. Only to find out it didn't really change their life all that much.

Adaptation is also at the heart of the hedonic treadmill.
And learning about adaptation can help us sweat less on decisions because, a year from now, it won't really matter that much to us.

Grateful People Are Healthier

The author says grateful people are healthier, happier, and even more likely to achieve their goals.

And contrary to adaptation, we can directly control our gratitude.

Comparisons Make Us Unhappier

Schwartz says we don't judge where we stand and the results of our choice in a vacuum, but always based on the environment and on the people around us.

Here's how we evaluate our experiences:

- People around us (because we care about status)
- Expectations
- Previous experiences
- Previous best experience

Maximizers are the ones who really care about social comparisons.

Ownership Culture = Blame & Regret

The American culture stresses the power of the individual and of the individual's choices (*Extreme Ownership* mentality).

Such a culture, however also puts more pressure on the individual and on the choices he makes.
Barry says that personal responsibility culture coupled with cultural ideals such as thin bodies causes depression,

illnesses such as bulimia, and also an increased suicide rate.

Maximizers are most likely to feel this kind of pressure.

Part IV: What We Can Do

Barry Schwartz says that some people can lead a better life if they can learn to be less of a maximizer.

But the world is not helping you today.
There are far too many choices. Between 1975 and 2008 the average number of products in supermarkets skyrocketed from 9.000 to over 47.000.

So you must do it by yourself.

He proposes a few steps to minimize the choice paradox. This is my take on his suggestions:

- **Choose when to choose**

Determine what really matters in your life.

Think of how you could spend that time on something else more important. Think of how your final choice will benefit from research, if at all.

If it does, then decide how much time you spend on research.

- **Become more of a satisfier**

Think of the times you behaved like a satisfier and you happily settled for good enough. Then apply the same logic and methods more often

- **Stick to your usual**

Unless you're very unhappy, stick to what you always buy.

My Note:
This is a great suggestion. Steve Jobs, for example, used to wear the same clothes not to waste time.

- **Set rules**

The more rules you have, the fewer decisions you gotta make.

- **Stick to oldies but goldies**

Ray Dalio says great is better than new.

Similarly, Barry suggests not to be tempted by new and improved.
Don't worry about what you're missing in the world: likely you're not missing anything.

- **Make your choices final**

The author says that the ability to change our minds often leads to stirring disturbance and unhappiness.

A great fix is to make more of our choices final.
Also useful is to make your relationships last: you picked your partner, stick with it.

- **Anticipate adaptation**

Whatever you're choosing, it won't make much of a difference to you a few weeks down the road.
Think about it and pick something.

- **Allow serendipity**

If you allow the world to surprise, you'll be surprised -and happier-

- **Practice gratitude**

Stop comparing and, also recommended by Tony Robbins, gratitude is a magical thing to make your life happier.

Barry Schwartz TED Talk

Real-Life Applications

There is really a lot to learn here and much you can use to improve your life.

Especially if you are a maximizer.

- **Stick to Your Choices**

Many options make us feel bad about picking something or staying with something.
That's why we job-hop and find it hard to commit to a partner.
Make your choice final instead, as Angela Duckworth explains, passion grows when you stick to things.

- **Stop Wasting Time on BS Decisions**

I'm sure we'll be guilty of this. As MJ DeMarco explains, time is the most precious resource we have.
Let's stop spending time on small decisions and use that time for what really matters.

- **Don't Allow Regret to Stop You Doing The Right Thing**

I realized I have too often allowed regret to stand in the way of making the best decisions.

Out of fear of regretting something later on, I don't do anything -or self-sabotaged myself-.

When you do the same, you never give yourself a chance.

- **Be Aware of Memory Bias**

In how a woman should turn down a man for sex I explain how memory bias can doom our relationships early on.

When something bad happens to us, we will blow it out of proportion and forget all the good things.
Watch out when that happens so that you don't throw away the baby with the bath water.

- **Embrace Serendipity**

Torturing on "what ifs" not only leads you nowhere but your what ifs are most likely wrong.

Maybe if you had gone to college, you would have hated it. Or a truck would have hit you on your first day there.

You don't know the what-ifs scenario. Embrace a bit more serendipity in your life.

- **Let Go of Regret**

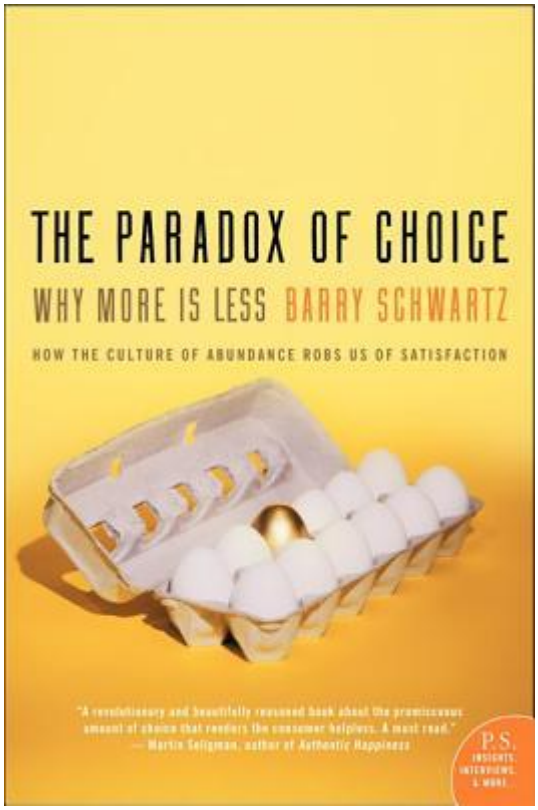
There's only something to gain when you can let go of bad decisions from the past.
And you can only gain when you can make decisions without fear of tomorrow's regret.

CONS

Published Early, It's Not As Simple
The book jumped the gun on early research, so it's not a complete overview of the impact of choices.

Bit Disorganized

The paradox of choice extends much beyond choices.
Possibly the title should have reflected that.
More importantly, I haven't always found the chapters to well reflect the content.



Review

I loved "*The Paradox of Choice*", it was very instructive for me when I realized I'm a maximizer, and I believe this book can help me to use this information to further boost my work and life effectiveness. And it can hopefully do the same for you if you're a fellow maximizer.

Men Don't Love Women Like You: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Men Don't Love Women Like You (2015) is a dating book for women that teaches readers "how to date like a Spartan", meaning how to take charge of one's dating life to find the right man.

TPM Strategic Note: High agency dating for women
We audit this text as a case study in High-Power Female Dating Strategies, including leading, screening, and controlling the tempo. We advise ambitious men to lead themselves, but they can learn to differentiate a high-value woman's tests from power moves and red flags.
See **TPM female dating analysis (what works)** ↗

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Part I: Awaken The Spartan
  - Part II: Date Like A Spartan
  - Date Night: Gather Intel
  - Post Date
  - The Second Date
  - When to Have Sex
  - From Dating to Relationship
  - Part III: Conquer The Relationship
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- It starts with you: you have your own life, you don't settle, and you demand respect and investment
- Use the dating process to vet your men
- Become a friend, build a bond, and get a relationship before you have sex

Notes

About the Author:
G.L. Lambert is an author and dating coach for both men and women, but particularly specializes in women's dating advice. He also wrote *Ho Tactics*.

Part I: Awaken The Spartan

Many men play the same games the whole world over, the author says. They aren't even playing smart games. And yet women fall for it. This book is to help women stop falling for games and find love.

Forget About Your Job

Lambert says many women think their job or income makes them special.
But it doesn't.
On the dating market, **a woman owning a nail salon and one working part-time are at the same level.**

As a matter of fact, dating might be more challenging for successful women.
Also, read:

- How successful women must date

You Are Not What You Can Do for a Man

Lambert says you should ask what a man can do for you, not what you can do for him.

You Are Not Your Vagina

Lambert, says too many women think sex is the key to keeping a man.

But no matter what, great sex won't keep a man around if personality isn't there.
Shining outside the bedroom gets you farther.

You Are Not Your Looks

The author says looks won't guarantee success.

Pretty people break up and can't find a mate like everyone else.
Your confidence must come from something beyond your external appearances (check my article on *building an antifragile ego*).

Killing Basica: Resetting Your Mind

Lambert says dating is unbalanced because men don't worry about finding anyone.

They trust it will eventually happen. Women instead ache to make something happen quickly.

My Note:
this is very true.

He dedicates a whole section to how you should revamp yourself.

Games Men Play

Some of the biggest games for Lambert are:

- Ego-stroking flattery
- "No pressure" game

Some men will indeed not pressure you for sex and can even give you a relationship.
But you might still be a placeholder for them until something better comes along.
And it will destroy your heart because *you* gave them your heart.

Also, read:

- Full list of games men play (with examples)

> 10 Games Men Play, And How to Handle Them

Awaken The Spartan Within

Lambert says the root of weakness is insecurity.

When you are insecure, you are a slave of the “not good enough fear” (check *Daring Greatly*).

He then trains the reader on how a Spartan thinks.

The main takeaways for me:

- Drop the good girl supposed to serve him mentality
- **Be more selfish**
- Drop negative beliefs about men
- Drop the excuses: you want a man. Set goals accordingly

Part II: Date Like A Spartan

Lambert starts part II with the biggest factors holding you back.

The two points I liked most:

- **#1 Understand How Men Date**

The author says men put out feelers trying to do things as easily as possible for them. A typical girl will settle for his low offer.

- **#2 Understand The Importance of Dates**

Lambert says you must use dates to understand and vet him. Dig up dirt, and tease out his needs and objectives. Or you’ll trip on the issues when you’re already together.

The Pre-Date Battle Plan

Lambert uses in his story a fictional character called Cali.

Cali approaches him at Starbucks. The author says the key to the first contact is to get out quickly.
She contacts him a day after to give him time to think if he’s into her.

The phone call before the date is key because Spartans don’t do blind dates. They want to know the guy’s got the basics to qualify for a first date.

Date Night: Gather Intel

Lambert says the first date is all about conversation and intel gathering.

It’s a *job interview* where you know who you’re looking for and peels his layer with indirect questions.

Cali arrives 10 minutes late not so much to *make him wait*, but to test him to see what he’s made of.

Take Charge

The author says men are careful in the beginning trying to assess what image they should project.

Typical women wait for him to lead, which emboldens him to take control.
No Cali: she uses that occasion to take the lead.

Let Him Talk

Cali will not drink and will let him open up with unexpected questions.
Lambert proposes probing questions to ensure he’s a good man. For example:

> *What's the closest you came to smacking a b*tch*

From then on, to get to know the real him, make him feel comfortable and safe to share the most truthful answers.

Drop Hints of Sensuality

Touch his arm, and lightly rub his foot beneath the table when you want to cheer him up.
Stress certain words with *the same style Marylin Monroe did*.

End On A High Note

Lambert says to end early on a high note and tells him he'll make more time next time.

Waiting for the cab, she hugs him pushing herself against his body and laying her head on him.
When the cab arrives she gives a pecker on his lips and says with a smile "next time".

Let Him Pay

Lambert recommends *letting the man pay*.

Even more, he says the woman should contribute nothing financially on the first date.

But similar to what I suggest in the *7 biggest mistakes women make*, you should thank him and reward him with something physical (a hug).

You Must Vet Him Indirectly

Lambert stresses the importance of making him open up and asking good questions.

While direct questions are always best with honest men, not every men is honest.
With them, don't ask whether he's faithful, tease him and make him feel he can be himself.

Ask if he'd cover up for one of the boys who cheated.
And say you'd do it for your brother.

Post Date

Don't offer to see him too soon: now you will keep him on the phone for a while.
These are the do's and don'ts of the post date:

- the day after you can text more because he's earned it
- if he doesn't contact you the whole day you call him in the evening
- assume you're not the only gal he's seeing but behave as if you are
- fit into his day, don't pretend to take it over

The Long Phone Conversation

The author recommends you treat phone calls like marathons and make their last hours (!).
If a man has time to meet, he should have time to talk too.

My Note:
I feel this is too long. But I've noticed black girls do enjoy calls

Cali now wants to stay on his mind. So sometimes she sends a funny picture or a funny email chain. But never agree to a quick lunch or hello meeting.

Go Off-Grid For A Day

Sometimes people need to miss someone to truly appreciate how much they value them.

If he attempts the same, barely notice it when he's back.

The Second Date

Let him wait for the second date and pick a place you like.
You want to vet for compatibility.

On the second date, you switch from asking to observing.

Girlfriend Experience

Cali starts with what the author calls "The Girlfriend Experience".

The goal is to make him feel like you two are in a relationship so he starts falling in love with that idea.

End of The Date

You will not invite him home.

That's why you kiss him so he knows he's not being refused and you like him.

If he insists to come home, have an excuse ready.

Read more on how to reject a man without rejecting the relationship.

Cali will not go now for another date, it's his turn. If he doesn't make a move, she'll cut him fast.

Third Date

On the third date, you can reward him with a dinner at home, but end early and no sex.

The focus and the last test from the third date on is to become real friends. To lose you, it will mean for him to lose a trusted partner.

The author has some good tips on spending the first night over. Why and how to do it.

When to Have Sex

Lambert says there's no time or date number to have sex.

All you need is proof -and intuition- that he has what it takes for the boyfriend role.

He must invest and treat you like you are his girlfriend before the title is there.

He says there are three signs you must see to green-light sex:

1. Time and effort
2. Aggressive pursuit
3. You're the first choice as a confidant and friend

From Dating to Relationship

The author recommends you have "the conversation before sex". Get the book for what to actually say.
After sex, you want to see a continued effort.

Part III: Conquer The Relationship

The third part of *"Men Don't Love Women Like You"* is about keeping a healthy relationship.

Relationships Problems

Lambert goes over a few common external issues that often taint relationships.
Get the book for the full list, it's worth it, this is just a sample:

- Family / Friend interference

You never tackle them directly, but tell your boyfriends about the issue. A high-value man must defend you.

- Past or Current Suitors

Men rarely burn bridges. If there's a girl he still talks to tell him it's improper and you want him to stop talking to her.

- Picking at scabs

When something you don't like happens, you either forgive or you don't. If you forgive, you can't bring it up anymore in the future.

Men Are From Mars Women Are From Venus says this is normal female behavior.

Helping Without Emasculating

Lambert says men have big egos you need to take care of.

Men live under the pressure of *having to appear strong*: they will not tell your anxieties if you ask them.

You must be indirect and simply listen without giving solutions instead. Then thank him for opening up.

Boyfriend Manipulations

Some of them are:

- **Victim Games**

A potentially emotionally manipulative approach to make you feel guilty.

- **Attack your thumbscrews**

Bringing up your hot buttons (*33rd law of power*). For example, they'll say you're paranoid like you were in the past.
Lambert says you own up to your mistakes and faults, so you are immune to his guilt games.

- **Say you're bossy**

Spartans are *strong alpha females*, so he can use it against you and say you're domineering or mean.
He's trying to take you to the level of basics.
Nice bit*h check, but you reply with facts.

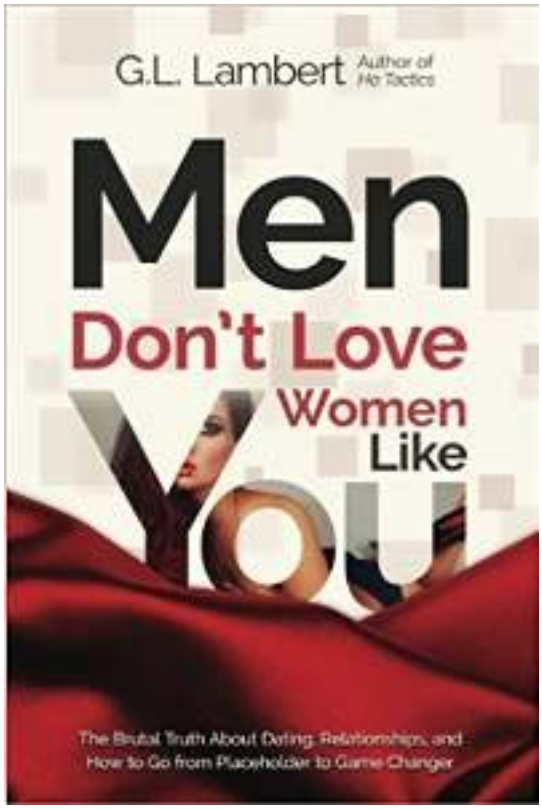
Threesome & Breaks

Lambert says if you only do it for him, that's a bad mentality because you'd be over-investing. As per social investment model, over-investing signals lower-value and can decrease attraction.

And when cheating lines get blurred, they're easier to cross it. So don't go there.

Avoid Breaks

Breaks are terrible, says the author. Avoid them.



Real-Life Applications

Love pics bring more vultures
Don't think that pics of you two on social media will scare away other women. It will attract them more.

File details of top men
Lambert advises you don't pursue but you keep the contact details of great men in case your relationship won't work.

Let Him Open Up
Understand the pressure on men of being strong. Listen to him without giving solutions (or it'll emasculate them).

Vet Your Men!

CONS

- **High Initial Investment**

Lambert talks about getting your man used to treating you well.

True, but when you start with lots of "event dates" you start with a bang. Then it will feel like going backward when you settle down.

- **Making Him Invest Much**

I'm not fully convinced the strategy of keeping men chasing without sex is that effective.

Many great men simply won't stick around. Also, read *why you shouldn't let him wait.*

- **Is Strong Women Dating Effective?**

I like the "Spartan dating attitude" in *"Men Don't Love Women Like You"*.
Yet, I'm not convinced it's always effective in getting men to do the approaching and in making men fall in love.

Also read: *"submissive VS strong women"* and *"how to be feminine"*.

- **Sometimes Bellicose**

Men Don't Love Women Like You seem to look at relationships like power struggles.

The author himself says spartan hood is about power, but in my opinion that leads to *combative* and *toxic relationships*.

I think the best relationships are partnerships, and women should date for mutually supportive relationships (see: *how to date for supportive relationships*).

PROS

Great Insights
Some very, very good insights on dating and the psychology of dating.

Top Questions
The questions and techniques Lambert recommend to make a man open up are very strong and direct and require a very confident woman.
But they're also great, I was impressed.

Review

"Why Men Don't Love Women Like You" is a good book on high-power dating, sharing several empowering strategies and mindsets.

Learn more:

- Signs that he likes you
- Best dating books for women

15 Early Signs She's a Low-Value Woman

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Some women signal low value early—you just need to know what to look for.

This guide shows you the most common **signs of a low-value woman** and helps you **spot the red flags early**, often on the very first date.

Learn what behavior, mindset, and patterns give them away—so you don't waste time, respect, or effort on the wrong partner.

Definition & Methodology: We analyze "value" through Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), and the evolutionary concept of mate value (Buss, 2016). Contrary to men, we exclude power as it's less relevant to women.
Definition: A woman who possesses more traits that make her socially and sexually unattractive than traits that make her attractive.
TPM Perspective: From a high-value man's perspective, more likely to be a net taker.

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- #1. She's Always Free
- #2. Picks The Most Expensive Dishes Expecting You to Pay
- #3. She Dresses Provocatively But Lacks Class
- #4. She Has Poor English/Language Skills
- #5. She Asks Nothing About You
- #6. She is Rude To Servers
- #7. She Has No Personality
- #8. She Is Lazy
- #9. Attention-Seeking On Social Media
- #10. Doesn't Care About Her Looks / Weight
  - Yes, Beauty Matters
- #11. She Is Confrontational And Constantly In A Bad Mood
  - Victimhood & Anger Hidden Behind a 'Cause'
- #13. She Is An Inveterate Game-Player
- #14. Sells Her Beauty (Cheaply)
  - 14.2. Barters Sex & Beauty for Things
- #15. She Is Emotionally Unstable
  - More Traits
  - Strategic Risk Assessment
- Low-Value Women F.A.Q.
- Summary

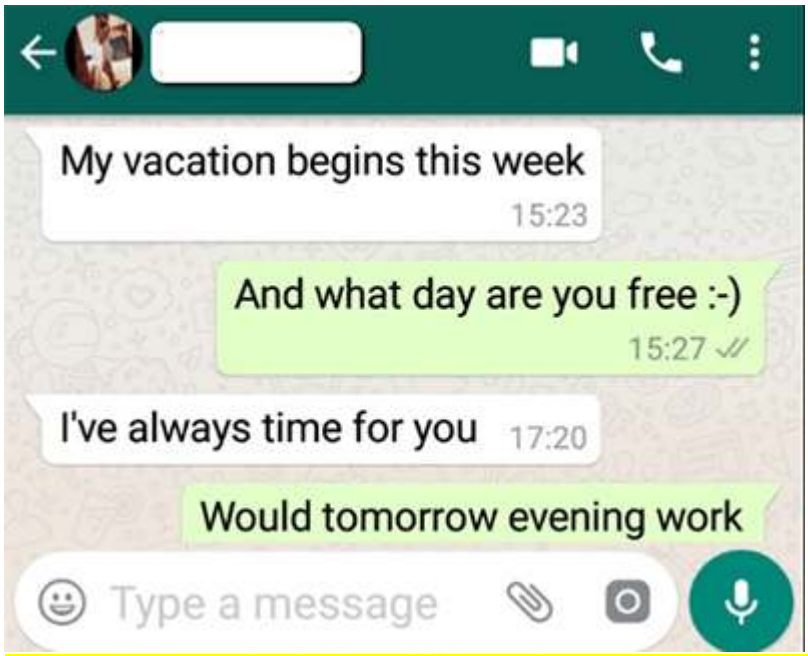
#1. She's Always Free

Being always and saying she's always free signal:

- 'Empty' life
- No plans to move forward

- Low social skills
- High risk of unrestricted sociosexuality (ie.: many short-term partners)

When setting a date, being free for you can be a sign she likes you. But if she does it with everyone, she may also be 'too easy'.
You won't see this often in the West, where many women are more attuned to basic game, but you'll see it more often as you travel.



Good text… *If she could see you're a high-value man*. But if you've just met, it lowers her value

Some women even take pride in "doing nothing", "sleeping and eating", and "being lazy". Let them find another guy who is a better match for them.

#2. Picks The Most Expensive Dishes Expecting You to Pay

This one signals **low respect for your money and possibly a value-extracting mindset.**

On dates, watch carefully how she treats you and your money.
A low-quality woman will make no effort to chip in, tip, or give back any sort of value.

The problem with these "give me luxury lifestyle" women is not that they want to live well.
That can be a high-quality trait.
The problem is when spending is a way to define who they are.
This is how they think:

> **Low-quality mindset**: I buy luxury items, so I'm better than all the rest

The 'ordering the most expensive dish' is a good signal for this mindset. It often pairs with an entitlement mentality.
They demand luxury, give nothing back, and potentially leave you when you're down on your luck.

Drop this financial ballast ASAP.

#3. She Dresses Provocatively But Lacks Class

This combines two potentially negative signals:

- Willingness to 'use' sexiness to attract, but

- Lack of cognitive capabilities and/or work ethics to pair beauty with class

Overly showy with little class can signal attention-seeking, narcissism, and appearance over substances

One example is walking poorly on heels. It isn't really about walking style, but it's an **indicator of appearance over substance**.

It's the belief that quick fixes -heels- will make her more attractive instead of addressing the core issue -learning to walk well-.

The male equivalent is the guy who doesn't work on himself but sprays half a bottle of Axe, believing that the stinky scent will do the heavy lifting he isn't doing.

High-quality women take the time to learn *how to be truly feminine women.*
They might put on high heels… But they also took care to learn how to walk with them.

#4. She Has Poor English/Language Skills

Language is an honest signal for several underlying traits, including:

- Cognitive abilities
- Family background/SES
- Conscientiousness/ambition

Ambition matters more for men, but a minimum level of drive also impacts a woman's quality.
Powerful men may not need the most ambitious woman, but they also don't want a slacker.

Being born to a lower-class family is a mitigating factor in this case.
On the other hand, being born to a lower-class family but still acquiring superior language skills through self-education is a major signal of value.

English as the global language is particularly important here. High-value men tend to move in international circles that use English as the lingua franca, so they need a woman who can make them look good.

Note: Extenuating circumstances for English skills for countries farther from Western culture and/or with strong local cultures.

I was about to turn around… :)

#5. She Asks Nothing About You

This signals a woman who does not screen her dates, meaning:

- Low standards
- Low emotional intimacy in relationships

In dates, it looks like this:

She just sits there, asks no questions, and sometimes answers with one-liners.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's Experience: It goes beyond mere disinterest**
I have gotten intimate with plenty of women who sat there in complete apathy and didn't ask a single question. I have been with women who wanted a relationship and didn't know a single thing about me.

Try dating a woman who cares, and listens, and with whom you can talk about your job, passions and, in general, share your life.
And you will see the difference.

#6. She is Rude To Servers

You will see this sometimes from women who come from a caste society.

But of course, rudeness itself doesn't care about casts and it knows no borders.

For some deranged women, mistreating those they deem as low-value people is a way of showing the high value (*social climbing* of the worst kind).

Why should you avoid these women?

Non-Christians might have never heard of these words:

> What you'll do to the least of these you do to me

But those words remain true no matter your religion.
And the day you'll struggle and *you* will be a "least" in her eyes, then it will be your turn to get the whip (hopefully, you got a whip-proof prenup by then).

Otherwise, go for someone with a heart.

#7. She Has No Personality

Albeit rarer in the West, you'll sometimes meet women who are so apathetic, passive, and submissive that they don't even know what they like.

This **lowers a woman's relational value.**
It undermiens quality time, lowers conversational value and, lacking in any critical input, it makes for a poor 'co-pilot' in life.

This is a dramatized example from "Coming to America":

> **Him**: What do you like to do
> **Her**: Whatever you like

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: Although this seems exaggerated, I've dated several women who wouldn't choose a dish unless I

picked it for them.

Note: Less confident men like this type of woman.
These women, emblems of submissiveness, communicate to them “sexual availability’ and “ease of control”.
But for most men with options, this ain’t attractive.

#8. She Is Lazy

Laziness lowers a woman’s quality in several ways:

- Provide less support, even if ‘only’ with homework
- Demand more from her man, including for her own needs and wishes
- Genetic risk for his legacy

Sure, agency and drive may matter more for men than women. But still, many high-power men prefer a woman who contributes.

#9. Attention-Seeking On Social Media

Working out: to all men please stop harassing us women at the gym
Different eras provide different means for escapism and attention-seeking.
We went from binging on soap operas, to reality TV, to Netflix series binging, and today to social media attention-seeking.

The attention seeker feels validated and empowered by the number of likes, followers, and thirsty suitors she attracts.

Over-reliance on external validation for self-validation is a strong sign of a *fixed mindset.* And almost always is a way of investing time that brings little to no benefits.
Sorry, that’s got a different name than “investing”, and it’s “wasting”.

There are different styles of attention-seeking, including:

- “Gym pictures” after workout
- Complaining about men (especially men hitting on them)
- Bathroom selfies
- Sexy selfies with “inspirational” quotes

Partaking in seemingly deep, but actually shallow and pointless social media discussions is also a sign of attention-seeking:

I guarantee you: women who will succeed at making money don’t spend time posting about money on social media.

Edit:
The game changed with OnlyFans and cam work.
Now attention wh*ring can produce real income milking ‘simps’.
An OnlyFans woman is still not the best green flag for a long term relationship, but it can be a smart way of earning her independence.

#10. Doesn’t Care About Her Looks / Weight

This might seem controversial, so let’s dig deeper.

There are two ways of ‘not caring’:

- Limited control (ie.: convert food into fat very easily, child abuse, etc.)
- Don’t care (eats junk food, does not exercise, is “happy the way she is”)

Eating junk, not exercising, and not making an effort to change communicate **low conscientiousness**, apathy, and low agency.
If she doesn’t care about herself, what are the chances she’ll care about anything else?

Keep the same distance between you and her as the distance she keeps between herself and a gym.

Yes, Beauty Matters

More controversial yet, beauty isn't just about aesthetics; it is a primary signal of **genetic potential**. In evolutionary terms, symmetry, skin clarity, and vitality are proxies for a strong immune system and heritable fitness.

#11. She Is Confrontational And Constantly In A Bad Mood

Kindness is an important trait for a quality woman: it boosts her social and mate value, makes her charming, and boost her man's value as well.

No wonder it's one of the most sought-after traits (Buss, 2016).

Angry and confrontational women instead make the relationship worse, and lower a man's social value. Nobody will say it, but many will wonder, 'couldn't she find a kind woman'?

Here is an example of a spiteful, overly aggressive, low-quality woman. Would you like to date or associate with her?

> **Her**: (angry and aggressive)

Victimhood & Anger Hidden Behind a 'Cause'

Nobody would admit we're full of spite, so people often hide pent-up anger behind a cause.

The secret of each entry is that they're *excessive* in their zeal, revealing their opposite:

- Animals first ⇒ I don't like people
- I defend women ⇒ I hate men
- I defend the poor ⇒ I resent success

I'm not angry! It's (pick her scapegoat-'cause') fault, not mine
As usual, don't generalize:

Not all women passionately defending a cause are spiteful.

But anger can be less a sign of passion for a better world, and more the sign of a spiteful, low-value woman.

#13. She Is An Inveterate Game-Player

Everyone plays some games, and it's part of social calibration, a high-value trait.

However, l**ow-quality women play value-taking games because they're manipulative and are not in it for win-win.** They tend to be more cynical and higher in dark triad traits.
Their goal is to take more than they give, which, by definition, makes someone a taker and a net drain.

Over-faking busy when scheduling a date is an example -and a *typical mistake*– of a bad game in dating.
For example:

She 'suddenly' gets "busy" after I told her I was busy first and then again ready and open to reschedule.

Also, read:

- Games women play
- Games women play to get commitment
- Red flags of dating in women

#14. Sells Her Beauty (Cheaply)

How she uses beauty and sexuality signal about her character.

The high-quality approach is as the icing on the cake when she has already worked on her core traits.

The low-value use of beauty instead is a standalone trait that feeds her today and leaves her hungry when that beauty fades.

My dad always told me I could have been a doctor

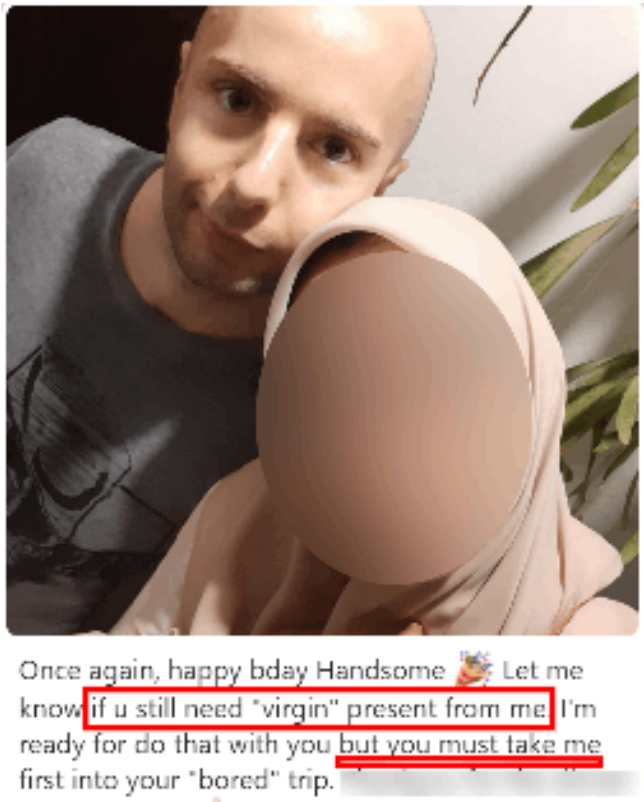
Note:

Some sex workers and gold diggers, although arguably not high-quality for relationships, may be smartly using their beauty to gain personal power and independence. They're low quality for relationships, but are not low-value women as individuals.

14.2. Barters Sex & Beauty for Things

Beauty, sexual access, and loyalty are valuable traits in mating exchanges.

In some cultures and for many men, virginity is also a valuable currency. It should be expended wisely, not cheaply:



She was a good woman, yet didn't know how to properly manage her own value
If she can't manage her own "Sexual Capital" effectively, she cannot be trusted to manage a family's resources or a man's legacy.

#15. She Is Emotionally Unstable

While some emotional swings are to be expected, excessive for a man mean:

- Lower relationship quality
- Emotional drain
- Time sink

Disorders such as borderline personality disorder and histrionic are more common among women than men, and no man gains from public drama or wild aggression.
Example from a movie:

Her: (dangerously out of control)

More Traits

We didn't include the most obvious indicators as they need no explanation.
Some are:

- **Dark triad traits** (Psychopathy, Machiavellianism, Narcissism)
- **Smoker /** Drug /alcohol abuse
- **Disloyal**, or high sociosexual orientation, carrying social and paternity risks for men
- **Low self-esteem,** constantly seeking validation. It can lead to higher promiscuity and shorter-term relationships (Mikach & Bailey, 1999)

Note that a bad family or being abused does *not* make someone low value. They may unfortunately boost the odds of short-term thinking and dating, but not always and necessarily.

Strategic Risk Assessment

Young age, poor upbringing, small-town girl, idiotic parents… These are all major extenuating circumstances for low-quality women.

However, for those extenuating circumstances to apply, she must show a willingness and eagerness to make up and move beyond her limitations.

If she proudly laughs at her lazy ass while eating McDonald's in front of the TV set, she's irredeemable for the foreseeable future.

Low-Value Women F.A.Q.

How Many Red Flags Are Too Many?

Two major red flags without strong extenuating circumstances are often enough for a reliable, quick judgment.

What do you do when you're already in a relationship with a low-quality girl?

You must consider whether she's willing to work on herself and, if you see potential, give her the opportunity and potentially help her along the way.

If she's not willing to work on herself or if nothing changes you may not be the best match.

Summary

Low-quality women are relatively easy to spot if you know what to look for and know how to vet properly.

If you have average social skills, look for any of the above signs and you'll nail it by the end of the first date.

Then head here for the traits of high value women.

How to Handle Your Girlfriend's Public Drama

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 January 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Handling public drama and emotional outbursts from your girlfriend can be a very *awkward social situation* for most men.

But the most socially skilled men gain points when their girlfriends unleash public drama.

Why?

Because they know how to handle it.

This guide will help you become that type of *high quality-man*.
We will see through a real-world story I witnessed when I first had the time for this article.

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- A Story of Drama Queen Public Outburst

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- Handling a Drama Queen in Public
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A Story of Drama Queen Public Outburst

I am traveling to Bantayan, a semi-empty island in the Philippines.

It's growing, but as of today, it's so off the maps that my Chrome dictionary here doesn't even recognize it as a word.

This morning I was sitting on a wooden bungalow, having breakfast with one of those delicious fresh fruit shakes on the side.

The bar is one of those hideous white-men frontier alcoves, though.

Exclusively white patrons, costlier than the average, and a TV tuned in on some hideous sports channel -what the f*ck was I doing there, I know-.

The owner, a big Swedish guy in his 50s whom we'll call Blonde, is also sitting in front of the bar.

It looked like an uneventful morning. What could even happen here except for some hangover-fueled, late-morning

brawl?

I was about to be surprised.

With the tail of my eyes, I notice from across the street a local Philippine woman making a beeline for the bar.
We'll call her Drama Queen because drama queen girlfriends are most likely to embarrass you in public.

This is not the place you'd expect locals to hang out though, and much less so single women by themselves.

What is she coming here for?

Drama Queen looks nervous and purposeful at the same time.
I keep it cool on the outside, but my mind perks up: this could be Power Moves material!

I wasn't going to be disappointed.

Drama Queen Example

Drama Queen walks up behind an older English man -we'll call him Lude-.

Lude, like the two other patrons, is sitting with his back towards the entrance and facing the bar (same angle as the first girl in this picture on the left).

Drama Queen stops a meter away behind Lude and starts talking to him.

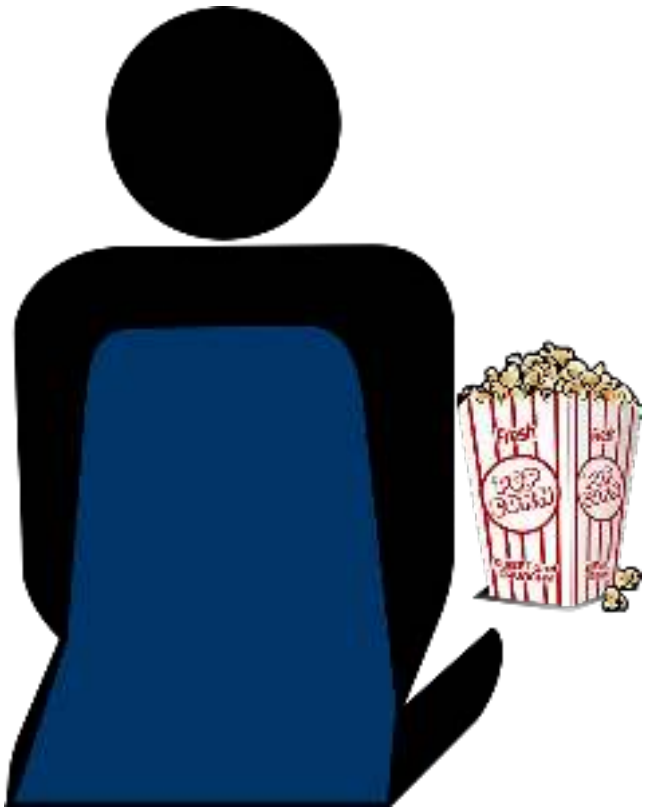
Her tone sounds demanding, but her voice gives away her true emotional state: shaken and emotional.

I only get the word "passport" and couldn't make out the rest of the sentence.
But from body language and demeanor, it's clear Drama Queen felt she had been wronged and was confronting Lude for his misdeeds.

Lude only briefly turns his head to make sure he knows who's talking and then returns fully to face the bar.

Lude is adopting a "pretend she's not there strategy".

That strategy rarely works in these cases: she's already invested too much to let go so easily.
Drama Queen indeed keeps talking, her voice becoming even higher pitched and emotional.



This is not an easy situation for either of them: while all the patrons pretend to keep doing their thing, everyone knows we are all 100% focused on this public drama.

After a few long seconds of Drama Queen venting Lude turns to the Blonde the owner and tells him to kick her away.

Blonde doesn't answer though, and doesn't move.

It doesn't look good on Lude.
He resorted to higher authority but higher authority is not on his side.

But it's not good for Drama Queen either as Lude made his move clear now: his strategy is to treat her like a ranting bum.

Lude's move doesn't come free though.
Any "pretend it's not happening strategy usually angers the already emotional woman and adds more fuel to the dramatic fire.

Drama Queen indeed digs her heels.

She uses defiant words when she says she doesn't care if they will call security.
But her voice betrays she's feeling the brunt of the social weight on her small shoulders.
A few seconds later, on the verges of tears, she says:

> **Drama Queen**: *if you have an heart you…* (couldn't get what)

And then she finally crumbles under pressure and leaves.

Lude goes after her now and they deal with each other out of earshot and out of sight.
He comes back after barely a minute and quips

> **Lude**: *oh well that was quick*

With that sentence, he's trying to appear resolute and powerful.

And then moves on to talking about which cable TV the bar is using.
He's trying to move the conversation ahead to relieve pressure from himself and what just happened.

Reflecting On The Public Embarrassment

What do you think of this story?
How did you feel?

Think about it for a second.

Drama Queen had her own share of mistakes, but we're focusing on Lude here.
Have you noticed the mistakes he made?

Here's my take: he was right with his comment that "that was quick".

But not in the way he meant it.

It was quick in the sense that it didn't take long for everyone around to reach the conclusion of who he really was.
An old bastard taking advantage of a poor woman.

Now mind you, that might not even be true, but from what people saw there, that's what most are going to think.

Here's the mistakes Lude has done:

Handling a Drama Queen in Public

Here are the typical mistakes when handling a drama queen's public embarrassment:

1. Ignoring the Drama

When you avoid engaging someone who's emotionally unstable and looking to engage you, what do you think will happen?

They'll calm down by themselves or they'll increase their effort?

They've already initiated the silly move, they're emotionally unstable at that point… When you don't engage of course chances are they'll keep escalating!

The escalation following a failure to engage can get wild.
Either into emotional collapse (leaves crying/drops on the floor, etc.), emotional (spills out all your personal stuff public), or even physical (in *toxic relationships*).

This scene from Blow is an example of physical escalation because he failed to engage her:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vA5159X3mH0

2. Expecting Help From People

Or, even worse, asking for help.

When Lude asks for help from the people around, he is deferring to someone else, which does three bad things:

1. He communicates he has no power
2. He's bothering someone else with his problems
3. He's making people think he's a mean man

This God-forgotten bar doesn't have any security of course, and the owner doesn't have to personally kick out

anybody just because this is his place.

Nothing bad happened so far, why should he be asked to take his side at this stage?

Also, since he's calm and she's on the verge of crying, he ends up looking like a heartless bastard when he asked the powers that be to intervene for him.
Especially after she said "if you have a heart", he looks like an abusive fu*k in everyone's eyes.

When tyrants suppress the demonstrators with violence, most people end up hating those tyrants.

3. Badmouthing the Drama Queen

Badmouthing the drama queen will only have people think that it's not the drama queen to be crazy.

It's the relationship that is crazy. *And that includes you*.

You want to dump *low-quality women* right away but handle it publicly like a professional. Keep a detached public demeanor and wash your dirty clothes in private.

Notice The Godfather looking to his wife after he badmouths his sister, here behaving like a drama queen.
This was one of the social mistakes The Godfather commits.

When he comes back and says "well that was quick", he treats her like a silly, worthless problem who doesn't deserve any time and further comment.

The problem for him though is that most people are building a very bad impression of him.
And this last comment is the icing on the cake, strengthening the idea he's a lewd bastard taking advantage of poor women.

This was not the time to go for powerful. This was the time to be human.

4. Don't Forget to Own It

Lude's technique of pretending all is good is fake to everyone.

He's trying to pretend he's above that little commotion, but since he asked for external help it's obvious he wasn't.

And of course, we wouldn't do anything with his apologies.
But by not acknowledging us and the disturbance he's created he's failing to win some easy points back and ingratiating us.

Handling Public Emotional Outbursts

Here's the correct way Lude should have dealt with that woman:

#1. Engage Her

If she's not already out of herself avoid further escalation by engaging her.

A great way to engage her is to:

1. Fully turn towards her (body language speaks the loudest)
2. Quickly greet her with "hey X" (inject some normality in the exchange)
3. Say you can see she's very upset (you're attuned to her feelings)

All the steps are executed calmly but not super slow *Godfather style.*
You want to relate here, not show superiority.

At the same time don't come across as defensive as that is an admission of guilt and an endorsement of public drama -something you *never* want, here's an example–

If Lude had engaged her, he would have come off as much more of a caring man.
Nobody would have thought he fucked her and took advantage of her, and possibly she would have changed her mind about him as well.

Importantly, she would have not said the words "if you have a heart", which made everyone think he's a heartless bastard.

Look how quickly Karen takes it down a notch after she notices he's listening (and he cares):

Note:
Heavy disrespect or upsets without a cause cannot be met with nicety. In that case, you meet her at her level or it's OK to ask security to take care of her.

#2. Deal With It One-on-One

Soon after telling her, she looked upset with a calm

Making a public scene of a private affair is *typical of low-value women.*
If you want to test your girl, you could actually ask her what's going on there and then in front of everyone.
If she starts venting private details, she's a low-quality woman.
Calm down and then drop her.

Otherwise, if you already trust her, invite her closer to you if it's a loud environment and people won't be able to hear.

If not, stand up and move her outside or to a place where you can address her concerns like two adults.

#3. Address Her Concerns

Once you avoid a full-blown public escalation and you're one on one, you effectively avoided public disaster.

If you don't know what happened, her explanation will make the difference between you keeping her around or not.

#4. Apologize Or Lead All Through

When you come back from talking to her one to one, don't pretend nothing happened -it's obvious to everyone that's not the case-.

And don't attack her unless it's obvious she was at fault: people can easily think *you're the ahole.*
What you do instead is either make light of it and help people move ahead with a laugh, or be serious and apologize for having inconvenienced everyone.

If it was a major drama, it's also OK to apologize to the patrons, wish everyone good night, and leave.

Note:
the apology is not really about asking for sorry.
You did nothing wrong and don't need to ask for forgiveness. You say sorry with your words but with an otherwise neutral voice tone. It's more like a nice gesture to acknowledge them and the situation.

#5. What To Do With Drama Queens

If you are considering the outburst girl as a mainstay, you need to make sure she doesn't do her drama queen's antics in public.

Lay down a no-public drama rule first thing in a relationship. Failing to meet those criteria is failing to be in a relationship with you.

When The Drama Queen is Out of Order

The steps to dealing with a drama queen in this post are specific to this example and they are accommodating towards the woman.

They're not to be followed if the Drama Queen is rude and out of order from the start. In that case, you can't be nice toward rudeness or you show weakness and reward bad behavior.

The steps in this article apply when:

- You know you're in the wrong and
- She is still keeping it together or
- You're clueless but you respect her and know she might be onto something
- Averting a crisis is the first priority

Averting a crisis might be a top priority for example if you're with your family or at an important networking event. Or you're in the same situation as Johnny Depp in the car :).
In those cases, follow the steps to calm her down and cut her loose later on (asap).

Summary

A woman who's getting more and more emotional needs to feel she's got access to you. Seeing a shut door will likely bring further escalation and risks damaging your relationship.

Engage her instead, bring her mood down, and then resolve the issue privately.

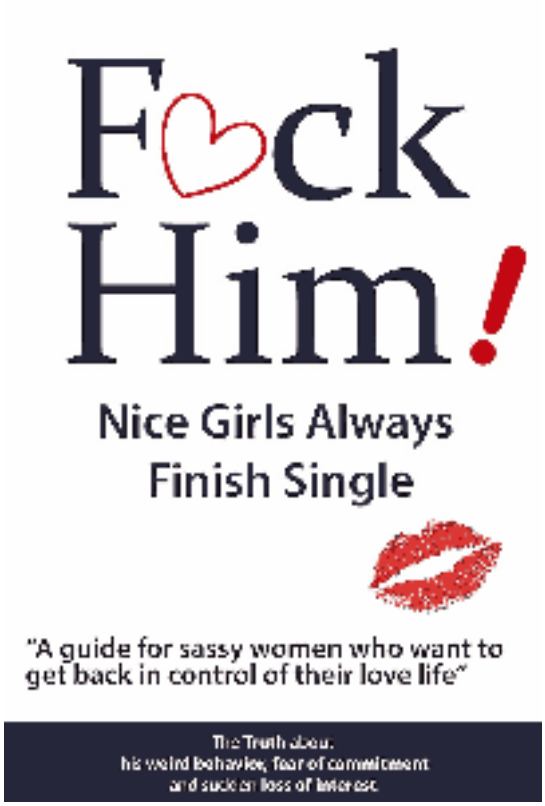
If she went overboard or if it happens too often, she is not girlfriend material.

F*ck Him! Summary: Nice Girls Always Finish Single (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

*F*ck Him* is a book aimed at female readers who want to *take control of their dating lives* -and of the men in their dating lives-.
It's brief and to the point with some good insights and some heard-before content.

Clinical Note: This is a strategic audit of Brian Nox's Fuck Him: Nice Girls Always Finish Single.
We analyze this text through the lens of Social Exchange (Blau, 1964) in dating (Sexual Marketplace Dynamics), Mate Value (Buss, 2016), and Dating Power Dynamics (Buffalmano, 2022). If you are looking for adult content, this is a behavioral science resource; please look elsewhere.
Male perspective: Although written for women, this book teaches female psychology and various dating games/manipulation, helping men recognize and select quality women.



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Key Takeaways

- Let him invest in you: he will like you more and you filter poor prospects out
- Don't have sex with him too early: develop an emotional connection first
- Never nag, let him come to you by withdrawing and praising good behavior

Summary

About the Author:
Brian Nox is the pen name for Brian Geert, a European author and dating coach for women who published several dating books. He says that *F*ck Him* is not meant to be applied literally, but refers to *mental* game.

1. Too Nice Girls Traits

Brian & Brian say the personal traits of good girls are:

- Quickly believes she has found "the one"
- Treats him like a king (but he doesn't treat her like a princess)
- Lets him be in charge of everything

2. High-Value Woman Traits

- Wants a relationship but is happy to stay single if nobody matches up
- Is kind but has strong boundaries she enforces
- Let him invest in her
- Never makes him the epicenter of his life
- Doesn't play games

I particularly appreciated the author's saying she brings her best but also expects him to do the same.

For a more in-depth analysis of high-value women read:

- High-value women traits
- How to be feminine

> 12 Traits of High-Value Women (With Examples)

3. Avoid Playing Too Many Games

Brian says that the high-value woman is honest and sincere.

Low-value women play *plenty of games with men.*
But the high-value woman does not play games. She doesn't pretend busy, she *really* is busy.
And the authors say that *high-quality men* appreciate that "no-BS" attitude -and he is right-.

On the other hand, I believe there must be a method for dropping games.
See an example here:

- **How to drop games in an effective way**: a real-life example of how dropping games can be an effective dating strategy and give women more relationship power

4. The "Mind F*cking" Framework: Psychological Investment & Reactance

Brian & Brian say there are two rules to mental f*cking:

- Don't have sex too soon
- Behave differently than most women

You are more than your body, and similarly to Hussey in *Get the Guy*, the authors recommend you should build an emotional connection first.

'Mind f*ck' means you behave unlike most other women.

> How to Mind Fuck a Guy: 12 Techniques (With Examples)

5. Set Good Habits Early

The authors say it's a common mistake of women to let something slip early on with the hope it'll change later on.

I agree with it, also because he would feel like you're changing for the worse.
This is particularly dangerous during the shift from passionate love to compassionate love.

6. When He Plays With You

The authors focus on a few games even the good guys sometimes play:

- Say He'll Call, Then Doesn't
- Being aloof
- Saying "I'm not ready for a relationship"

Pretend nothing happened, don't chase, and give him space instead.

> 10 Games Men Play, And How to Handle Them

7. Let Him Wait

The authors say that when you give sex too soon men will think that's what you do with all the other guys (Madonna/whore dichotomy).

I believe though that it's difficult to make a catch-all rule.
Sex depends a lot on what guys you're dealing with and the environment you're dating in.

Also, see:

- Should you delay sex?
- How to postpone sex without endangering the relationship

> Why You Should NOT Make Him Wait to Sleep With You

8. Why He Needs To Put In Effort

The authors say you should have your man put time and effort into you.

It will screen out the players and he will get used to staying on good behavior.

Also, read:

- How to make him invest in you
- Games Machiavellian women play to make him invest more

I agree with that and I also advise you not to ask too much soon, or it will reek of an entitlement mentality. And high-value men don't like that.

> 10 Mindf*ck Ways To Make Him Value You More

9. Mind Control

How do you control a man?

The author espouses the same concept that Dale Carnegie proposes in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Such as, instead of yelling and nagging, let him believe it was his own decision.

What I liked a lot though is that the authors say that if you're always trying to change his opinions on very important subjects, then maybe he's not the right man for you.
Indeed, as I also explain in my *how to make him value more* guide.

10. Team-Relationships

I particularly liked this part, which sets *"Fuck Him"* apart from a lot of other popular "tell it like it is women's dating books".

The authors say **two high-value people behave like a team in a relationship**.
It's not a win-lose or lose-win, but both make concessions and stay in equilibrium.
A win-win relationship is indeed the only possible setup for great relationships.

Also, read "how to keep power in relationships", the healthy way:

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

11. Great First Impressions

The authors say great first impressions are key because we will then filter out anything else via the first impression we have.

Brian and Brian take the example of high-value people in networking events.
They say hi to everyone and then circle back to the ones they found worthy.

12. Acquire Self-Respect

Self-respect means you don't accept disrespect and you don't change your beliefs, opinion, and behavior for anyone.

That's a trait of a high-value woman.

13. Keeping A Great Guy

The authors also deal with how to keep healthy relationships.

A part I really liked is that men need some praise from the most important woman in their life (ie.: you).

14. Is He For Real?

Brian says that to keep it simple, women look for commitment and men look for sex.

But some women make the mistake of bugging their partners to make sure they're still fully committed.
That's not a good strategy.
High-value women know that perfect security doesn't exist and use their *emotional intelligence* to live without any constant confirmation.

I particularly loved how the authors apply the hierarchy of needs to a relationship and how you can use it.

Real-Life Applications

Great Relationships are Win-Win
Beyond all the games, never forget this one. Avoid *Combative Relationships* at all costs.

Praise Him For His Success
Remember to praise him for his successes. Lots of them, he does it for you.

CONS

Digressions
The authors often digress on topics that are not highly relevant *Evolutionary Psychology, Operant Conditioning, Maslow's hierarchy*, and even a few pages explaining what's a Ponzi Scheme -probably too much for a book on dating and relationships-.

Some Confusion
The authors make good points explaining why women are attracted to 'bad boys' or dark triad personalities. But then say "well-sculpted" guys actually have low self-esteem, as if the two categories were the same. Then they throw narcissists in the mix as well.
Those categories are not exactly the same though.

You Need To Be Less Invested
Most *women's dating books* say he should invest in you as much as possible. I believe though that overdoing it is a *common mistake* of low-quality women. The best approach is to raise his investment *in parallel* with yours. That's a win-win relationship. Check: *get high-quality men with mutual investment.*

PROS

Honesty for Solid Relationship

I like that Knox, at the end of the day, actually recommends honesty. As simple as it sounds, it's really the best medicine.

Short and to The Point

Review

*"F*ck Him"* provides valid dating strategies for women, overlapping with *The Power of The Pussy* and *Why Men Love Bitches*, but it's more cooperative and, often, more effective for dating quality men and establishing win-win relationships.

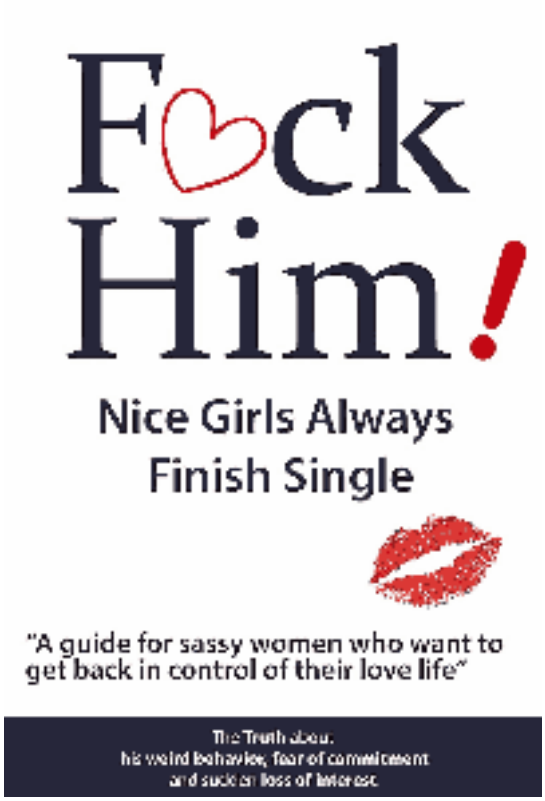
At times, the "overlap" may have called for some credit-giving, which would have only boosted this book's authority.

Otherwise, I like that *F*ck Him* mixes the "mental game" with honesty and values.
Honesty and values will make for a stronger relationship as a team, which indeed the authors also represent as the ideal type of relationship.

Check:

- **Best dating books for women**

F*ck Him! Summary & Review: Nice Girls Always Finish Single



It's not about getting down to it quickly as I thought. It's a condensed version of "Why Women Love Bitches" plus some more interesting insights.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/fuk-him-summary/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4

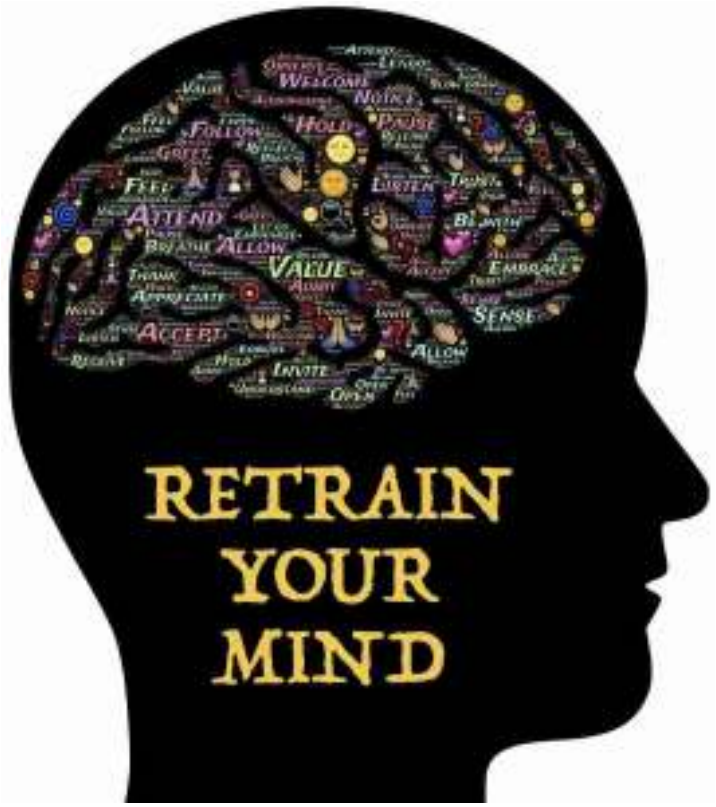
How To Develop a Growth Mindset: Here's How I Did It

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

If you want to reach your full potential—socially, professionally, and personally—developing a growth mindset is non-negotiable.

Psychologist Carol Dweck's research shows that the difference between those who grow and those who stagnate isn't talent—it's how they think about their abilities.

I grew up in a fixed-mindset environment, and I know firsthand how it limits your life. Today, I'm actively cultivating a growth mindset, and the results are undeniable.
In this guide, I'll show you **exact, actionable ways to shift your mindset**, overcome fear of failure, and use challenges to fuel your personal growth.



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Growth vs Fixed Mindset

The difference between stagnation and mastery often comes down to your learning orientation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007).

Learning orientation is divided into Performance Goal Orientation (PGO) and Learning Goal Orientation (LGO). Performance Goal Orientation can be further divided into (VandeWalle, 1997):

- **Performance-prove orientation** (approach-oriented): focus on *demonstrating* their competence and gaining favorable judgments from others
- **Performance-avoid orientation** (avoidance-oriented): focus on *avoiding* the demonstration of difficulties or incompetence, as well as avoiding the unfavorable judgment of others

Dweck later simplified and popularized these distinctions in her 2006 book *"Mindset"* as 'growth mindset and fixed mindset'.
A growth mindset tends to produce learning orientation. A fixed mindset tends to produce performance orientation, both the approach to 'show off' when possible (performance-prove) and avoidance when competence is uncertain (performance-avoid).

Here's a quick breakdown:

Fixed Mindset (The Trap)	Growth Mindset (The Path)
Skills and intelligence are **innate** and "set in stone."	Skills are **developed** through effort and strategy.
Failure is a verdict: "I am a failure."	**Failure is feedback**: "I'm not good *yet*."
Avoidance orientation. Protecting the ego by staying in the comfort zone.	**Approach orientation**. Seeking challenges to sharpen social tools.
Defensive toward feedback. Shifting blame to protect self-esteem.	**Analytical**. Using criticism to improve performance.
Long-term stagnation and wasted potential.	**Long-term growth**, social proficiency and antifragile ego.

While the theory sounds simple, the social reality is brutal: a fixed mindset leads you to skip the very events, conversations, and risks required to get good. You stay "safe," but you stay subpar.

Fixed Mindset:

- Believes traits are fixed; failure defines you
- Avoids challenges to protect ego
- Fears public failure
- Stays in comfort zone, blames others when failing
- Socially: avoids social risks, fewer friends/partners, sub-par life

Growth Mindset:

- Believes skills can improve with effort
- Embraces challenges to grow
- Failure doesn't define you; "yet" is key
- Socially: takes risks, learns from feedback, grows socially

The growth mindset reframes initial poor results or skills as a starting point towards mastery, rather than something to hide and be ashamed of.

How To Develop A Growth Mindset

1. Change Associations to Past Failures

A fixed mindset is propped by fear of looking bad.

And the times in the past when we looked at our worst function as fear-laden baggage, burned in our memories. And our subconscious does everything to avoid anything similar.

Think about these past failures, but **change the interpretation**.
Sit with that pain for a second and you'll realize that…. You're still alive. It's not that unbearable after all, is it?Second, resist the temptation to feel extremely embarrassed, and re-interpret them as part of growing up and developing.

Here are a few reframes for you:

- I'm glad about them because they made me stronger
- It's providing me the anger I need to move ahead
- I'm proud that I did it no matter the result
- I'm glad it happened, so I can prove to myself I keep going no matter what -that's the kind of man I am-
- F*ck that noise. Other weaker men would crow. I'll do it another thousand times

Relive Shame With Power

Relive those scenarios while you are in a strong state.

Listen to some rock songs, or imagine yourself in hero-like scenarios.
Then revisit those memories imagining more empowering behavior and outcomes. Do it enough times and those memories will lose their grip on you.

2: Associate Pain to Fixed Mindset

Look at your life and realize that you're not living because of a fixed mindset. Think of what you don't have and what you have missed so far.
For example:

- Evenings at home
- No parties
- No partners
- No friends
- … Add as much as you can.

Think of your friends instead.

Get jealous!

They're enjoying life and having a good time.
Trips with girlfriends and boyfriends, parties, networking, and career opportunities.

Hate your fixed mindset in your guts.

Now start looking back in disgust, you're about to change that.

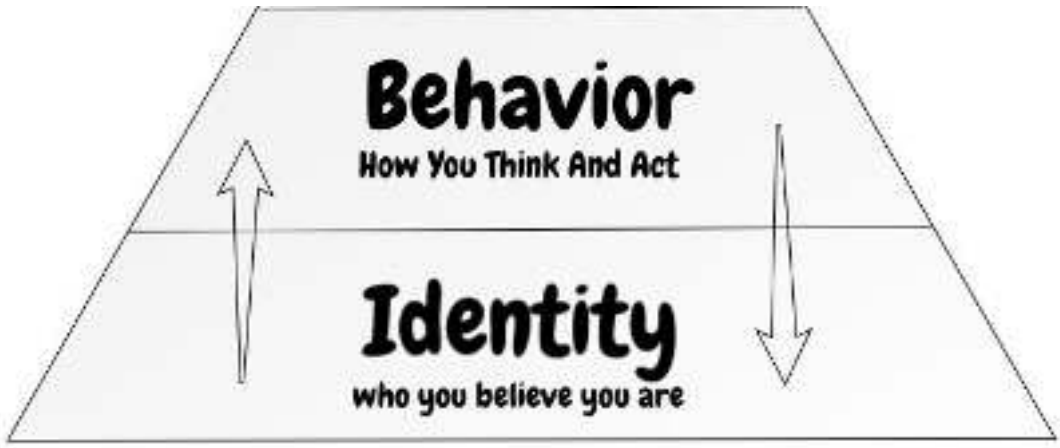
3. Associate Pleasure To Growth Mindset

Think of what you will get moving to a growth mindset.

Associate pleasure with all the opportunities.

- Friends & partners
- Growth & improvement
- Strength & Resilience
- The power of walking to an event on your own and leave with friends
- Walk into a bar and -it's not a joke- leave with phone numbers

4. Develop New Identities Associated With Growth



Identities drive behavior.

Start thinking of yourself as a man with a growth mindset, and take pride in it.
Start also *talking* publicly like a man with a growth mindset and the commitment and consistency principle will help you stay the course (Cialdini, 1984).

Also, read:

- **how to develop an antifragile ego**

5: Reinforce Every Day

Ingraining habits benefit from *repetition*.

You must develop new neurological pathways, and you do that with repetition.

6. Talk Back to The Fixed Mindset

For the daily grind, Carol Dweck herself advises to:

1. **Hear your fixed mindset voice**, for example saying that 'you don't have the talent and better quit'
2. **Recognize you have a choice**
3. **Talk back to the fixed voice with a growth one**: don't lie or brag, be real. Say you're not sure you can manage and may fail, but you will learn and you will move forward.
    - Reframe shame from failing not trying: If you don't try you didn't save face, you lost anyway. *That's* what's shameful for the new you. Then be proud you're going forward, this is your new identity, and this is what you will build your self-esteem around.

4. **Choose the growth mindset**

7. Get Excited About Learning

Get excited at the prospect of growing and learning, and filter everything through that opportunity.

In your daily life, you will come across feelings associated with a fixed mindset thinking.
Always be replacing those feelings with empowering, growth ones.

Here are some examples:

- Jealousy towards someone far better = wow, what can I learn?
- Failure = nice I went for it, what did I learn
- Painful criticism with push-back feelings = I'm excited, I'll listen and soon get better
- Pain of finding shortcomings = great, it means there's room for getting better

Someone is better than you? What can you learn?

8. Shield Yourself Against Fixed Mindset

Most people live with a fixed mindset and/or are not used to pushing boundaries and making big demands of themselves.

So in your life, many people around you will try to drag you down with their disempowering talk.

Don't try to change those people, but avoid them and cut them out of your life.
When you hear anything fixed-mindset-like, repeat three times in your head:

> *I can do it if I want to*
> *I can do it if I want to*
> *I can do it if I want to*

Next Steps

A growth mindset is a deep-rooted, long-term solution that touches on *everything* in your life.

However, it will not make you competent and successul by itself.
You still need to learn the basics of high-value behavior, power dynamics, body language, etc. etc.

Calibration is also crucial and sometimes you must *avoid* displaying a growth mindset or you end up as the pupil in a disempowering teacher-student dynamic.
We've spent years codifying the strategies and behaviors that make men win. If by now you believe you can learn and improve, Power University can help you become a top-1% man in the fastest possible way:

Grow With University

The Ultimate Personal Power Tool: The Antifragile Ego

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

An Antifragile Ego™ is one of the most important psychological foundations of personal power.

Performance and long-term success are not primarily determined by intelligence, but by how individuals regulate their identity, self-evaluations, and subsequent behavior.

TPM's Framework
The Antifragile Ego™ is an original psychological framework developed by Lucio Buffalmano for The Power Moves (TPM).
Leveraging foundational research in social psychology, self-regulation theory, and cognitive psychology, this framework synthesizes disparate concepts—including Carol Dweck's *Growth Mindset*, Nassim Taleb's *Antifragility*, and Roy Baumeister's research on *Self-Esteem*—into a singular, identity-based self-regulatory system to help you grow stronger under stress, failure, and criticism.

Contents

- Intro: Ego & Its Components
  - Identity, Behavior, & Self-Evaluations
- Standard Ego
  - Resilient Standard Ego: Good, But Still Limited
  - Fragile Ego: The Extreme Fragility & Defensiveness
  - Standard Ego Table: Structure & Consequences
- The Antifragile Ego
  - Antifragile Ego Table: Structure & Consequences
  - Antifragile Identities
  - ⚠ Avoid Building Self-Esteem Around Winning & 'Personal Greatness'
  - How to Adopt New Antifragile Identities & Self-Esteem

Intro: Ego & Its Components

In psychology, the ego refers broadly to the sense of self: the mental structure through which individuals experience themselves as a distinct, continuous person across situations and time.

The concept of ego evolved from Freud's time to be more accurately understood as a self-regulatory and evaluative system (Baumeister, 1998; Leary & Tangney, 2012).

At a functional level, a simplified description of the ego includes:

- **Identity** or self-concept (who I am)
- **Goals, Values, and Expectations**: the standards and desired outcomes that guide behavior and evaluation.
- **Self-regulatory & evaluative mechanisms** that monitor, assess and adjust the relationships among identity, our behavior, our social interactions, and our outcomes
  - Sociometer, specifically gauging acceptance and social status (Leary, 2000)

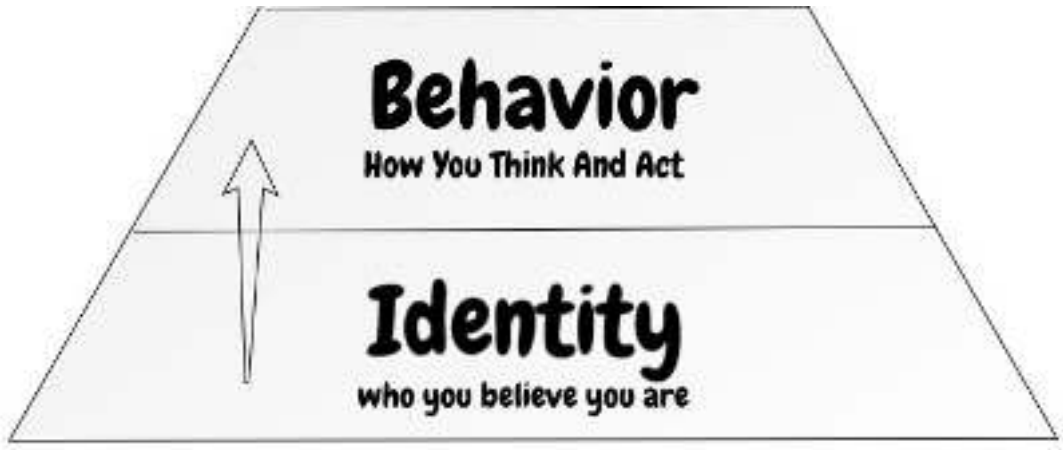
Identity, Behavior, & Self-Evaluations

Identity includes the roles, traits, group-belonging, and self-concepts that define who we are and who we aspire to be.

For example, you could think of yourself as a white American male, and think of yourself as ambitious, courageous, and honorable.

Identities drive behavior because people seek to act in ways that maintain consistency between action and identity (Oyserman, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2000).
When behavior deviates from identity, we experience psychological discomfort—a phenomenon first formalized as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Relatedly, Cialdini's commitment and consistency principle (1984) demonstrates that once we commit to a self-definition, we are more likely to behave consistently with it, *reinforcing* both identity and behavior.

Identity can even 'override' immediate desires, emotions, or external pressures, making it a critical tool for achieving long-term goals.



Identity-Behavior Alignment & Self-Esteem

When our behavior aligns with our identity, we tend to have higher self-esteem (Higgins, 1987).

Potentially, the highest psychological well-being is when our behavior matches our *ideal* identity.
You probably know the feeling. It happens when you manage to follow through with actions on what your ideal self would love to do.

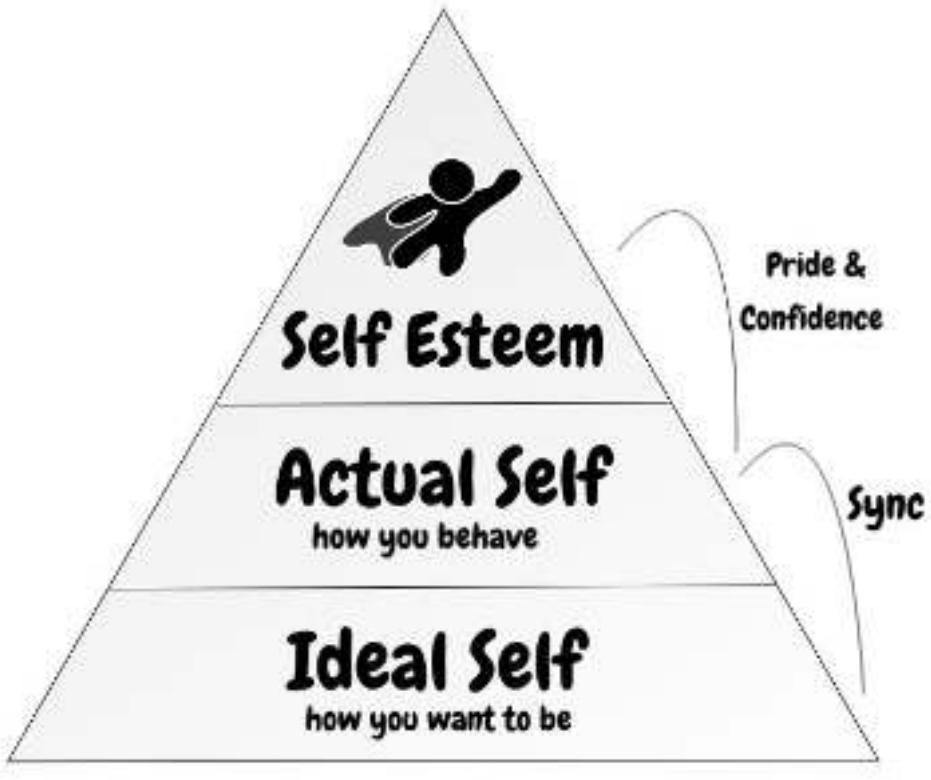
For example:

- You feared speaking up, but spoke up anyway
- You didn't feel like going for that run, but went anyway
- Being lazy all day would have been easier, but you did productive work instead

Mental Health: Learning & Accepting Our True Selves

Perceived identity can differ from *actual* possessed traits. People may have rosier self-views about aspirational traits, like honesty and 'honor'.

These mismatches can create personality conflicts and subconscious defensive mechanisms.
Gaining deeper self-awareness, improving the parts we don't like, and finally *accepting* ourselves can lead to better psychological adjustment and higher self-esteem.



Now let's learn how identity holds you back with the 'standard ego' most men are naturally equipped with.

Standard Ego

> Ego developed keep us functioning and to protect our sense of self with acceptable levels of self-regard, but not optimized for top achievement or top well-being

The standard ego is a functional but largely defensive system built for self-protection instead of thriving and winning.
Not good for agentic men who want to achieve goals and advance in life.

A 'standard ego' is not terrible, of course, and it works 'well enough' for most.

Resilient Standard Ego: Good, But Still Limited

It's possible to have a standard but *resilient* ego. Good self-regulatory mechanisms allow you to stay steadfast and

maintain high self-esteem in the face of stress, criticism, or failure.
Psychological resilience is associated with adaptive coping, emotional regulation, and mental health (Masten, 2001).

But even when resilient, it's not the best structure for ambitious men.
Resilience built on a 'standard ego' is inherently limited: it only helps up to a certain point, it's not optimized for effectiveness, and creates distorting coping mechanisms.
The 'standard ego' isn't built to maximize progress, self-advancement, or to support your goals. It's built to maintain an *acceptably* functioning brain, with an *acceptable* positive self-image.

Fragile Ego: The Extreme Fragility & Defensiveness

Worse than 'standard ego' and equally common is an ego built to prioritize self-image, sometimes associated with narcissism and a fixed mindset.

When paired with *vulnerable* narcissism, you could properly call this 'fragile ego', marked by thin skin, reactive anger, and high threat-orientation.

Standard Ego Table: Structure & Consequences

Here are some examples of how the ego's quest for positive self-views can work against you:

Ego's goal	Ego's pain	Ego Defense Mechanisms
Be Right	Be Wrong	-Seek confirmation, not truth -Go with the crowd: it's safer -Focus on winning only, not learning or effectiveness
Be Good	Be Bad	-Look for praise, not truth -Do what you know, don't try anything new
Be Accepted	Be Rejected	-Avoid the risk of meeting someone new -Say what people agree with, not your real opinions

⁉ **Outcome:** You feel OK momentarily, but don't grow and don't advance

Paradoxically, the more you succeed at 'feeling good about yourself' without increasing your effectiveness, the more you set yourself up for underachievement.

In this sense, boosting self-esteem is not the answer.
Paradoxically, the higher the self-esteem, the more threats we perceive to our well-being, and the more defensive and reactive we become. Potentially even leading to reactive aggression.
As psychologist Roy Baumeister says:

> Violence ensues when people feel that their favorable views of themselves are threatened or disputed by others.
> As a result, people whose self-esteem is high but lacks a firm basis in genuine accomplishment are especially prone to violence because they are most likely to have their narcissistic bubble burst.

Psychologist Martin Seligman agrees that boosting self-esteem is not the best approach to self-empowerment (Seligman, 1991).

The solution is changing identities and self-evaluations that completely alter the ego's functioning, going from fragile, even when strong, to *anti*fragile.

The Antifragile Ego

> An antifragile ego is built on identities and self-evaluations that do not strictly need positive outcomes and can grow stronger during challenging times

This concept builds on Nassim Nicholas Taleb's notion of antifragility (Taleb, 2012), applied to psychological self-structure rather than systems or markets.

While some believe you should 'destroy your ego', the truth is that we all need an ego. And, fortunately, you don't need to 'destroy it' because it's much better to recruit your ego and make it work for your goals.

The antifragile ego is built on identities that do not require 'standard positive outcomes' like being good, getting compliments, or even winning.
And the evaluative processes based on these antifragile identities may even *strengthen* your self-esteem and mental well-being when you're struggling.

Antifragile Ego Table: Structure & Consequences

Antifragile goal	Pain	Antifragile Ego's Incentives
Learning	Not learning	-Seek truth, not confirmation -Try new things: you learn more – If you don't win but learn, it's a win
Be effective	Be ineffective	-Seek truth to improve, not 'ego candy praise' -Try new approaches to increase efficiency
Approach orientation	Avoidance	-Approach more if you seek dates -Speak your mind to find the people you most vibe with

⍰⍰ **Outcome:** you become more competent and achieve more

Antifragile Identities

The best identities are:

- **Process-rewarding, rather than outcome-rewarding**: You cannot control all the variables, and you don't want your self-esteem to hinge on external factors. But you can control your effort and dedication, so that's what you focus on.
- **Built for worst-case scenarios**: and using negative inputs to persevere ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's example**: In my first martial arts classes I was the beginner-foreigner nobody picked for training. And I went home bruised and battered. But my identity was being the guy who sucks and shows up anyway. So I was driven to attend to confirm my identity, earn my own respect, and feel great afterward. That got me over the hump until I became one of the most respected guys
- **With positive associations** you enjoy, like a trait you want, a hero from childhood, or someone you look up to

Some identities to pick:

- **I'm a learner** <— Allows to you always keep growing. See 'how to develop a growth mindset'
- **I'm the type of man who does his best and focus on preparation, not results** <— It takes pressure off from performance, while preparing you to win
- **I'm a gritty man, I never stop, and I love the struggle** <— Allows you to keep going. *'to get good you have to love being bad'*

⚠ Avoid Building Self-Esteem Around Winning & 'Personal Greatness'

Winning and achieving goals is the ultimate goal, we embrace that TPM.

But it's ineffective to (fully) build your self-esteem around it. If you come to depend on winning as your main source of self-esteem, you may fear *not* winning, turn defensive, and **avoid trying any time that the odds of winning are low**.

Not good, because taking your chances and using the law of large numbers in your favor is often a fantastic approach to achieving more in life.
An identity and self-esteem built around outcomes and winning may also limit learning. You may not try anything new because the brother of 'not winning' is 'not performing well'. So you never learn new things.

Finally, you don't want to depend on positive results to feel good because **you become needy for something you can't fully control.**
Psychologist and founder of REBT Albert Ellis echoes this same concept. He says that equating success with high self-esteem is a trap, because you become *dependent* on positive results to feel confident (Ellis, 1988).

Personal greatness is also risky; it's a double-edged sword.
It makes you feel great when things go well, but it makes you defensive when things don't go well. Worse yet, it's fragile: it sets you up for a major breakdown during the toughest challenges.
Learn how to harness grandiosity without fragility in our guide to **Antifragile Grandiosity**.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **One of my proudest days is when I missed my goal**

Lucio:
I had finished my 10k race, it was the toughest run ever, and my GPS said I had achieved my long-time goal. I was ecstatic.
Then I engraved my medal with my record time and… It was different than my GPS time, and 14 seconds above my goal.

Technically, I had failed.
It should have ruined my day, but it didn't. It remains one of my life's peak experiences because I gave it all.

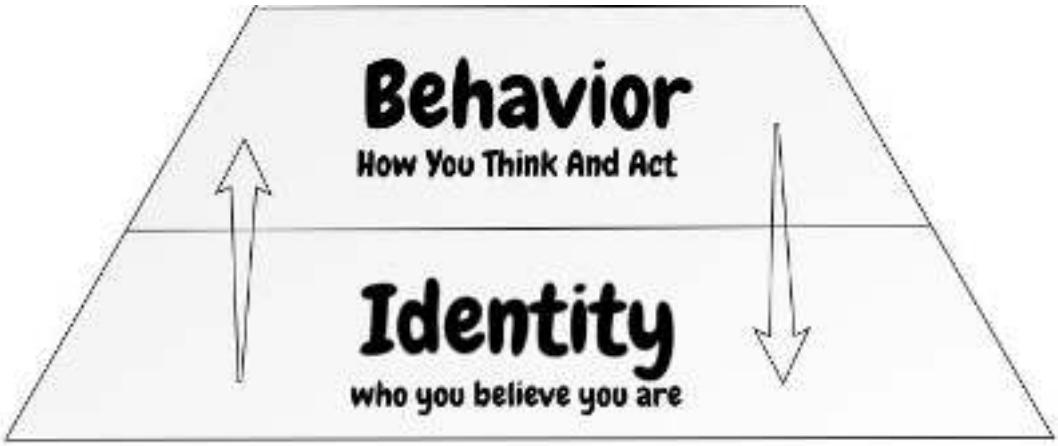
How to Adopt New Antifragile Identities & Self-Esteem

Adopting new antifragile identities can be as easy as this:

- **Start describing yourself with the new identity**
- **Take pride in it**, which links your new identity to your self-evaluative processes
- **Act according to your new identity**

Daryl Bem in 1972 first proposed that identity doesn't just drive actions, but actions also drive identity.
Our brain looks at our behaviors and then infers that if we behave a certain way, then it must be because we *are* a certain way.

So develop the good habits, and identity will follow.



An antifragile ego is one of the 7 key psychological foundations that will help you achieve self-control and help you lead a truly empowered life.

For the whole list take a look at Ultimate Power (now part of Power University)

Immortal Mortal Mindset: Accepting Death As Psychological Edge

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Reflecting on death is one of the fastest ways to clarify priorities, reduce social fear, and act boldly.

Men who consciously engage with their mortality tend to take more responsibility for their lives, pursue their goals, and live fuller lives.

This article explores how deliberately reflecting on mortality becomes a practical advantage: a source of courage, urgency, and mental empowerment.

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- Intro
  - Costs of Denying Death
  - Advantages of Accepting Death
- How to Leverage Mortality For A Memorable Life
  - 1. Mindset: Make Everything Fit Into This Life
  - 2. Prioritize Ruthlessly: Say No to Everything
  - 3. Use Mortality to Overcome Fear Of Judgement
  - 4. Use ‘Afterlife You’ to Propel You Into Action
  - 5. Use The Collective of Humanity As Reminder
  - 6. Meditate On Mortality for the Ultimate Source of Strength
  - 7. Radical Acceptance of Life’s Fleetingness
- The ‘Immortal Mortal’ Mindset™

Intro

Most people live as if they had unlimited time.
This tendency may have grown larger in recent centuries and especially in the West: we removed all reminders of death, and people live safely and until old age.

In practice, many people who avoid thinking about mortality delay what matters most: authentic relationships, self-expression, and purposeful action.

When you accept that time is finite, priorities sharpen, social fear loses its grip, and action replaces hesitation. You stop optimizing for comfort and approval, and start optimizing for meaning, growth, and achievement.

Costs of Denying Death

That creates several crucial issues for ambitious men, including:

- ✕ **Missing our goals** by living overly cautious lives and postponing decisive action
- ✕ **Subpar lives** filled with regrets instead of adventures
- ✕ **Fitting in instead of living our dream life**: One of the most common deathbed regret wishing they had been more true to themselves (Bronnie Ware, 2012).

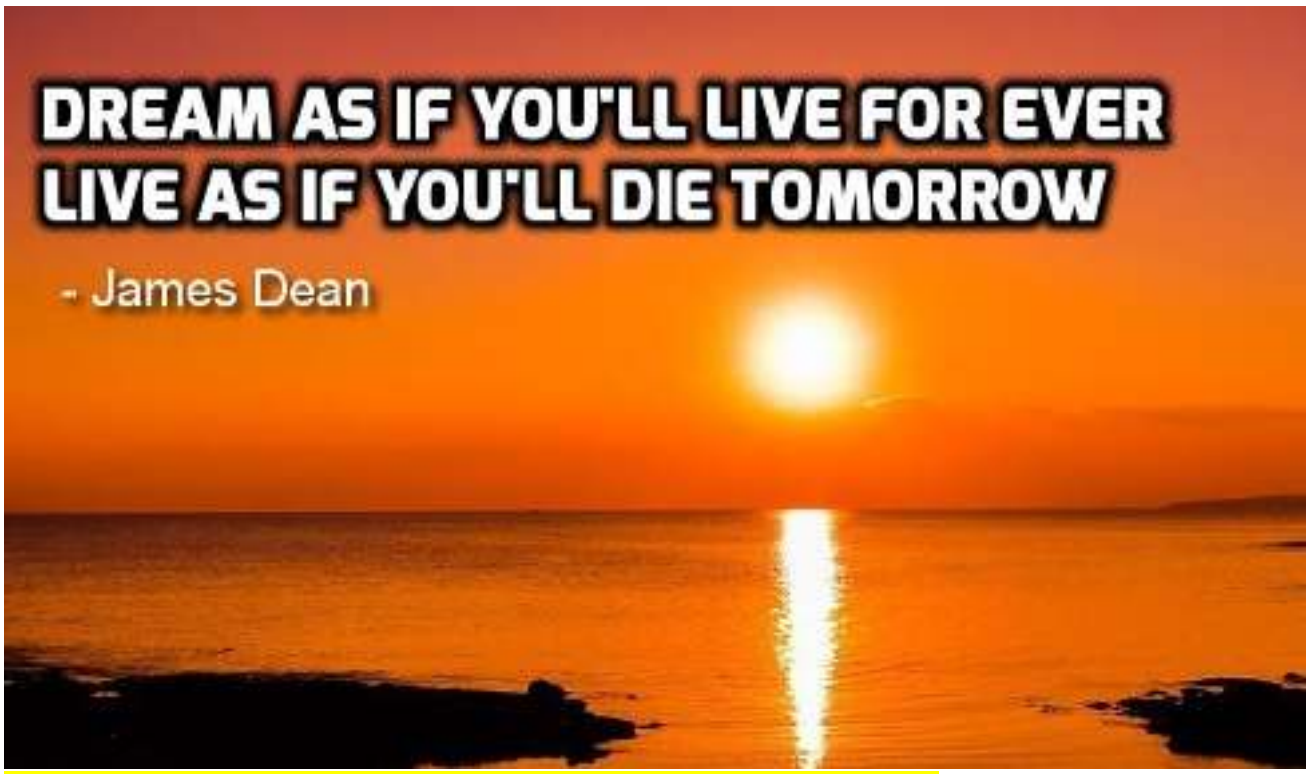
Socially speaking, hiding your real self and biding your time for an elusive “tomorrow” are huge roadblocks on your road to social mastery.

Advantages of Accepting Death

The benefits of living with the awareness of our limited time on earth include:

1. ✓ **Courage and decisiveness** to take action and stand up for ourselves
2. ✓ **Living life to the fullest**, doing what you always wanted to do
3. ✓ **Pursuing our goals** with all of ourselves

Men who live with the awareness of death tend to be more decisive, bold, and potentially even more masculine and successful.



Most people dream as if they'd live forever. But they don't live as if they'll die soon

How to Leverage Mortality For A Memorable Life

Death can be your best friend when you need that proverbial kick in the butt to go for it.

Here's how:

1. Mindset: Make Everything Fit Into This Life

> Life is short. But if we live it purposefully, it can be enough
>
> *TPM Proverb*

Accepting mortality means shifting to **a mindset of 'positive scarcity'.**
Such as, we're on limited time, and we cannot do *everything*. But if we stay purposeful, we can do everything we care enough to pursue.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Turn this empowering mentality into a display of value**

Lucio:
Whenever someone asks, 'how come I don't X or Y', I usually reply that 'I would love to do it… If we lived 10.000 years'.
But since we don't, we must prioritize what truly matters to us. 'Life is short, but if we live it well, we can make it a good one', I usually add.

It works perfectly on dates as well. Not only does it display value, but it's also a seductive and 'lover frame' of Dionysian abandon.

2. Prioritize Ruthlessly: Say No to Everything

Say 'no' to everything and everyone that doesn't:

1. **Move you towards your goal**
2. **Repay you of your time investment** with practical or emotional returns

If you need help saying no, read:

- How to say no

> The Assertive Strategist's Guide to Saying "No" (Without Guilt or Losing Social Capital)

3. Use Mortality to Overcome Fear Of Judgement

Death is a powerful antidote to fear.

Whenever you feel fear in the presence of social judgment and criticism, think again of death.
Think of future you on his deathbed.

Will you feel any better that you didn't do what you *wanted* to do to avoid judgment?
Or do you think you'll be proud you took your chances?

It's a rhetorical question, of course, you know the answer already…

4. Use 'Afterlife You' to Propel You Into Action

Ali suggests looking at your present moment as if you were reliving your life after death.
It's not the present, but a memory.

Are you satisfied with that memory if you don't do what you want to do, if you acquiesce, or if you don't take a chance, or enjoy that moment?
No?
Then, change it right now.

Because you won't be able to when you're re-living your life from the afterlife.

5. Use The Collective of Humanity As Reminder

Exploring stoic philosophy, Ryan Holiday suggests thinking that someone before you has been in your exact same position, having no idea you'd even exist.

But you're making too much of a big deal about it because you personalize too much.
Someone else in the future will be in your same position, still balking and losing chances.

They'll be making a big fuck*ng deal out of saying hi to some random girl, going out solo to a club of drunks, or speaking up at a meeting nobody really gives a fu*k about.

What would you say to that guy? Probably to just go for it.

Then… Just go for it.

6. Meditate On Mortality for the Ultimate Source of Strength

They say that people who faced death acquire a certain "edge" in life.

That "edge" is the calmness and coolness of those who take any extra time on earth as a blessing.

You don't need to risk your life to achieve that same level of coolness and calm.
By reflecting, meditating, and appreciating your own mortality, you will acquire that same "edge".

7. Radical Acceptance of Life's Fleetingness

Men who haven't accepted their mortality are mentally defensive, looking for comfortable escapes or scapegoats.

Take the COVID pandemic, for example.
Viewed through a mortality-acceptance lens, much of the scapegoating during COVID looks less like rational anlysis effective decision-making, and more like an inability to tolerate the idea that humans are fragile and death is uncontrollable.
Scapegoats were Bill Gates, Illuminati conspiracies, population control, Chinese warplans, etc.

Conspiracies and scapegoats may have served as comfortable respites from the reality that we can die at any time, from a random virus that wasn't even on the horizon.
Added insult to injury, a virus you can't even see.

Men struggled to accept their inherent mortality as human beings.
But it's not mortality the weakness, **failure to accept mortality is the only true weakness.**

Those who are at peace with their mortality don't need scapegoats.

It's men who accepted mortality who lived boldly, built civilizations, and moved humanity forward

The 'Immortal Mortal' Mindset™

Accepting mortality leads to a paradox: the more we accept it, the more we can make a long-lasting impact.

I like the mindset that the best time of our lives, the best experiences, and the moments of peak human connections, are forever.

Think about it.

No matter how short our existence or how small we are in this universe, nothing can change the fact that at one time, in a certain place, you were great.

That's the **etched in the universe mentality**, 'saved' in a snapshot of time and place.

Now it's up to you to fill your life with memorable, immortal moments.

Pursue POWER, Not Status: Big Fish in Litte Pond Syndrome

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Social status delivers real advantages.
It brings influence, preferential treatment, access to resources, and psychological rewards such as confidence and validation.

However, status also has **structural limitations** that are rarely examined.

In particular, status is often **local, context-dependent, and non-portable**. When individuals invest heavily in a form of status that only exists within a narrow reference group, they may experience short-term gains but long-term strategic weakness.

This article analyzes the limitations of status, and how to smart men can get all the benefits of status, without the downsides.

TPM Concept — Small Pond Syndrome™
While the expression "big fish in a small pond" is colloquial, **Small Pond Syndrome™** is a power-dynamics framework developed by Lucio Buffalmano for *The Power Moves*.
It describes how locally bounded social status can create psychological dependency, effort misallocation, and set the stage for self-esteem and psychological collapse once the reference group disappears.

Contents

- The Small Pond Syndrome
  - Why Power Beats Status
- Small Pond Psychology
  - Drivers of Status Addiction & Risks
  - Examples of Small Pond Status Addictiveness
- Shortcomings Of Social Status

- 1. Small Pond Status Is Group-Limited
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- 3. The Status Game Constrains You: Freedom Loss
- 4. Group Dependence

- The Pond Dries & The Fish Dies
  - The Big Fish, Small Pond Cycle
  - Post-Pond Depressions
- How to Become Universally Big Fish
  - 1. Build Antifragile Ego
  - 2. Join Many Different Groups
  - 3. Become A 'Blue Ocean Shark': Learn to Acquire Status Anywhere

The Small Pond Syndrome

Small Pond Syndrome is a form of psychological attachment and dependence on a non-transferable localized status. We can define it as:

> The opportunity loss, strategic misallocation, and psychological disempowerment of over-expending behavioral and emotional efforts to defend and enhance one's social status within a specific, circumscribed group ('social pond'), rather than developing **Universal Power**—the kind of high-value traits and assets that are portable to any environment.

The "(social) pond" refers to specific social groups you belong to, including workplaces, classes, your group of friends, or a sports team.

Why Power Beats Status

But, while power frees you, status comes with (social) chains and is group-dependent (non-portable). Academic research suggests this much:

> since **status relies on others**, concerns about maintaining one's status will orient status-holders outward (…) monitoring where they stand
> (…)
> As such, high-status parties (…) strive to fulfill others' expectations (Blader and Chen 2012; Ridgeway 1978, 1982)
> (…)
> This description of the effects of status stands in stark contrast to the effects of **power, which liberates people from social and normative pressures** (Galinsky et al. 2008; Guinote 2007; Keltner et al. 2003).

From adaptive past to maladaptive modernity

For most of human history, focusing on status made sense.

Our ancestors lived in tribes of 50-150. Status in that small social pond was everything, and there was no "outside" the pond.

We're still using our stone age brain developed to chase and focus on status, but **we're living in a blue ocean world where social status is transient**. Sticking with our old brain modus operandi leads us to over-value the opinion of 15 people in an office, even though we'll be out of there in a few years.

In this new world, **smart men are often better off transcending small-pond status.**
And they can have their cake and eat it too: status in all social circles they join, without depending on it.

Small Pond Psychology

As social animals, humans naturally form social status hierarchies, and most men are hardwired to seek status.

Research also suggests that **we are hardwired to feel great with higher status** (Leary & Downs, 1995).
And for good reasons: high status feels great because it *works* great. It affords lower stress, better mood, and better social and romantic outcomes (Wang and Geng; Buss, 2016).

From this point of view, **it's almost expected that many become hooked on the good feelings of social status.**
This effect may be even stronger in big-fish in small-pond cases (Zell & Lesick, 2020).

Drivers of Status Addiction & Risks

In principle:

⚖ **The odds of status dependency increase as status and benefits increase, and portability decreases**

And the risks of negative effects increase with:

1. **Validation**: Use social ponds as major ego validation
2. **Ego projection**: Tie their identities to their small pond status
3. **High effort**: Spend time and effort in their social ponds
4. **Dependence through specialization**, growing skills that only work inside the small pond

Examples of Small Pond Status Addictiveness

Popular media offers many realistic examples of how addictive small pond status can become.

Take for example Henry from The Goodfellas parading his small pond status:

> **Him**: (shows off all his pond power) <— Attraction spike through status display
> **Her**: (impressed, already falling in love) What do you do? (caresses his hand)

Or look at John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*, the king of the small pond club:

> **Him**: (walks in like he owns it)
> **Her**: (girl kisses him) Oh my God, I kissed **him**! <— Pond ladies prefer mating with the alpha-of-the-pond, making localized status extremely attractive for men (Buss, 2019)

These examples show how powerful localized status can be: high in both practical benefits and psychic rewards,
It's hard for most guys who'd be perfect nobodies outside of their small pond not to become addicted to that type of power.
But they also show the risks: both men will go from heroes to zeros.

Shortcomings Of Social Status

1. Small-ish
2. Time-limited (college, company, etc.)
3. Lower-value (not many high-quality men, few mating options, etc.)

However, because seeking status is ingrained in our brains, we apply the same intensity to seeking status in *any* group.

So seeking status in groups that do little to make you better off is not an exception.
It's the *norm*.

People who seek status in the small pond do so as if that were the most important social setting in the world.

And they fail to realize a few intrinsic shortcomings of the small pond social environment:

1. Small Pond Status Is Group-Limited

Social status is almost always limited in scope to a specific group of people who belong to it, or are at least aware of the group.

Stay in the pond… You're not adapted to thrive outside of it
This means that, **no matter how big a fish you've become in the small pond, you're still nobody outside of it.**

A man could be the life of the party when everyone's drunk, he buys rounds, and everyone loves him.
But the day after he's just another random guy, plus a headache and minus a few hundred bills.

2. Small Ponds Are Time-Limited

Most groups are time-limited, and small spond status comes with the group's expiration date.

Many men don't think about it when they first start because they focus on gaining status.
But then high school or university ends, and they feel lost.

3. The Status Game Constrains You: Freedom Loss

Most social groups pose some unwritten limitations on their members.
Even the unwritten rules that afford status can turn constrictive because you must obey them to maintain that status.

Plus, some groups entail nastier social climbing, office politics, and various power moves.

4. Group Dependence

The benefits you derive from your status go up and down depending in good part on the group itself, rather than

you.

The company's rising star is dependent on his company's results for a good salary.
Or take Henry Hill from our example before: his mafia-related status was also tied to the mafia's fate.

Neediness & Fear of Ostracization

Group dependence also means **you need to maintain group acceptance**, which often leads to approval-seeking neediness.

This issue compounds for men who never learned the skill to acquire status anywhere.
These men grow even more needy of the group.

Followers' Dependence: The Leadership Dependence Paradox™

Ironically, the higher up you go, the needier you become.
This leads to the leadership dependence paradox™. The group leader depends on his group more than the group depends on him because the leader has more to lose.

The Pond Dries & The Fish Dies

When the small group disappears, many former high-status members suffer.

They suddenly lose their validation and their benefits.
And the crisis is even larger if they tied their ego to being popular, 'important', or 'members of X group' (read on how to develop antifragile identities).

The Big Fish, Small Pond Cycle

Here are the stages:

1. **Outsider Stage**, when you're not yet in and don't feel part of it. You look at it from the outside, trying to understand it. You may even feel superior to the gossip

2. **Incremental Social Integration Stage**, when you familiarize with people, the culture, and start gaining status and social benefits. You may even start playing the politics that you felt so superior to
3. **Investment, Identity, Neediness Stage,** when the group and the status acquire significance for your life and identity, and group dynamics also heavily influence your mood
   - Neediness: the more status you acquire, the needier you become, and the more time and effort you spend in the group
4. **Disappointment or Depression Stage**, when either the social pond reveals itself to be nothing special, or when it disappears and leaves the former big fish to dry

Since the depression stage is the riskiest, let's dig deeper on that:

Post-Pond Depressions

For men who haven't yet experienced this phase, popular media offers several good case studies.

For example, Bruce Springsteen's "Glory Days" song captures the post-pond depression.
It's about a former 'jock' and an attractive woman.
Their peak life experience was tied to their high-school status, and they spend the rest of their lives reminiscing about the 'good old glory days'.

Or you can compare Harry Hill's life after he quit the mob.
He started saying he was 'somebody in a world of nobody', and how:

> **Henry**: Now it's all over. That's the hardest part (…) I'm an average nobody.

The story of Brooks from "*The Shawshank Redemption*" is an even sadder, more tragic version of the Small Pond Syndrome.
Brooks was somebody in prison. Outside of the prison pond, he was a nobody. He couldn't take it, and he took the gravest decision.

Unfortunately, it's not fiction.
Storr in *The Status Game* describes the same dynamic as Ben Gunn:

> On some unconscious level it was deeply disturbing being released. I was sitting on the floor for two weeks rocking back and forth. I could see where I was in prison. I knew who I was and what I wanted to be. Now I'm completely lost. I'm imploding.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **When I went from high status to struggling in a dried pond**

Lucio:
The Erasmus student exchange program was a continuous party in the best possible conditions: thousands of students, free money from the program, easy classes, and one common mission for all: having the time of your life.

I was well-known; friends looked for me and cheered and hugged me when I walked in. It felt great. I'd feel like Harry in the video example.

But Erasmus ended as suddenly as it started.
I stayed longer in the city when everyone else had gone. The same exact city, but without my reference group and without my status.
It felt lonely, and the contrast from popular to nobody was depressing.

I probably got into a relationship with a fellow Erasmus girl in an unconscious effort to hold onto those glory days.

How to Become Universally Big Fish

Avoiding the small pond syndrome is easier than it seems.

Here are the steps:

1. Build Antifragile Ego

Replace fragile and small-pond dependent identities such as 'popular' or 'member of X' with antifragile identities.

2. Join Many Different Groups

> Put your eggs in more baskets, and you never depend on a single basket.

Be part of several different groups, and learn how to join new groups at will.

Travel & Soar Higher

> "Travel broadens the mind because it forces you to abandon your home country's stereotypes and resist adopting those of the destination."
>
> *Claudio Magris*

Traveling is also helpful, and it expands your horizon and helps you soar above single-group pettiness. Keep that spirit when you enter new groups, and you become immune to idealizing any specific group.

3. Become A 'Blue Ocean Shark': Learn to Acquire Status *Anywhere*

While big fish tend to be high value within their social pond, they seldom have the skills to replicate it and gain status wherever they go.

It's this skill-based lack of replicability that makes you needy.
But learn to gain status anywhere, and you become an empowered and free blue-ocean shark.

To help you become that type of globally high-value man, we created **Power University**.

Check Power University

The Power of the Pussy: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of the Pussy (2014) is *a popular dating book for women*, sharing *dating strategies and techniques* to win at dating.
Most of all, it advises women on how to leverage the power of their most valuable asset: the pussy. Kara King, the author, says that once she learns to fully wield the power of the pussy, *she can control men*, lead the dating dance, and secure the relationship she wants.

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- Bullet Summary
- Summary
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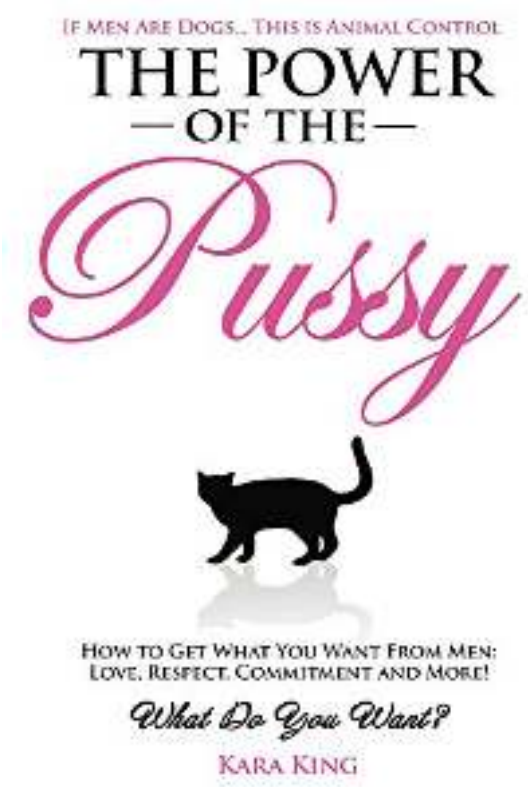
  - 5. Keep Yourself Busy
  - 6. Adopt Realistic Standards
  - 7. The Power of the Uterus
- CONS
- PROS
  - Review

Bullet Summary

- Don’t let your emotions dictate your actions
- Your pussy is a source of power: set a high price and don’t give it away
- Date a lot to find a great man. Then you’ll be free to give him your all



Summary

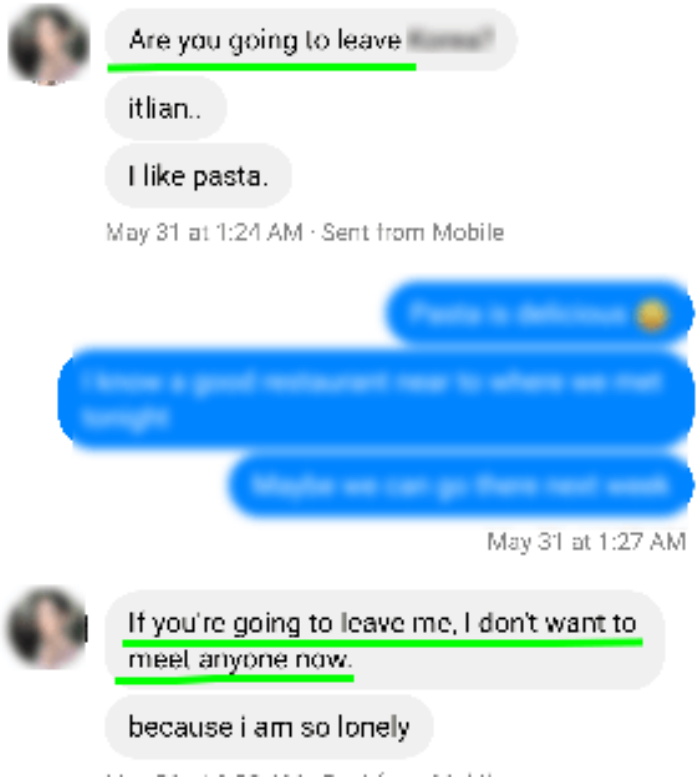
Kara King says that some women, no matter their looks, can get good men and can get those men to treat them well… *If* they learn to leverage the Power of The Pussy.

1. The Power of Controlling Emotions

Kara proposes you forget about feelings in the beginning: emotions are misleading.

The author has a lot of tips on how to control emotions, and I invite you to get the book for more.

My Note: Using selective vulnerability to make him want to invest
But, on the other hand, I must say that vulnerability and being open about wanting and needing a man can be super powerful techniques to make him want to invest and protect.



And read the full description here:

- **How to make men want to invest and protect** using selective submissiveness

2. The Power of the Pussy

Kara suggests that you write down all that you want from a man.

The list of what you want is your asking and your pussy will get it for you.

Men will either disappear because they can't afford it, or they'll give you your asking price.

> **Put your pussy on a pedestal**

Wait For Sex

Kara recommends you let him wait for sex.

Similarly, Lambert and Harvey, recommend you get the relationship *before* you consume it.
And to know that he is ready for sex, and ask him to do something for you to prove he's willing to support you.

Get the book for more information.

Also, read:

- Should you let him wait for sex?
- This is how you delay sex

> How To Turn Down Sex & Get A Relationship

Embracing Your Femininity

Kara shares tips on how to embrace your femininity.

She also tackles the basics which most other books don't go into (too bad).

The author recommends you shave your pussy and your a**hole and pluck hair on your nipples if any (I can vouch for all).

For more read:

- **How to be more feminine**: one of the best primers on femininity on the web
- Sensual body language: article on sexy body language for women
- Avoid this terrible hipster fashion: 2 examples of bad femininity

> How to Be Feminine: Step-by-Step Guide (Videos & Pics)

3. The Power of Confidence

Kara King says that the value you place on yourself is a direct reflection of the value of the men you will get.

And I couldn't agree more (*also read the science behind it*).
To get high self-esteem, check *the antifragile ego* or "Ultimate Power".

Oh, and just one last note: Kara King says that confidence doesn't mean conceit!

> **Love and value yourself, and men will do too**

4. The Power of Taking Out The Trash

Many women have a "fixing men tendency", says the author.

But there's no point in trying to fix some of them, she says.
And if he cheats, he must go.

Kara King goes on to describe the behavior that should tell you he must go.
Also, check out *"breakup diagnostics"* if you're unsure what to do.

> Should I Break Up? Step-by-Step Guide to Overcome Ambivalence

5. Keep Yourself Busy

Kara King here says you should be busy working on your career, on yourself, and on your future.

She says men want women with their own life who wouldn't even want a man. That's part of the challenge for them.

Time for a change of perspectives:

> **Dick = Distraction**

6. Adopt Realistic Standards

Kara King talks about some women's crazy and unrealistic standards that are damaging them.

My Note:

I fully agree.
The paradox of choice often gets women to wait and bide their time for a dream that doesn't exist. Also, check women's 8 biggest mistakes and how to get high quality men.

> 7 Biggest Dating Mistakes Women Do (Before Sex)

Don't Approach!

Contrary to some other guy writers (Hussey, Lambert, Behrndt) Kara advises you not to approach because it turns men off.

I agree with the author here. Or at least, you should know how to approach sensibly.
For example, avoid *cold-approaching* with *direct openers*, and opt instead for social circles, warm approaches, and third-party introductions.

7. The Power of the Uterus

Power comes with responsibilities.

And that's all the more true for the power of giving life.

This chapter is really deep, and its message should be spread as widely as possible.

CONS

- **Fails the law of optimum balance**

Power and female independence are important in dating.
And so is to demand for investment from men.

Generally speaking, most men don't want pushovers and doormats.

However, as for most things, it's about when to be more demanding and when to be more accommodating and feminine.
it's not an "all or nothing" because extremes are often ineffective -and unattractive-.

Also, read *the law of balance* and, more befitting, the *law of balance in dating:*

> Why Balance Is Most Seductive

- **A Bit Confrontational**

A few passages from *The Power of the Pussy* made me feel as if it was "men VS women" (i.e., "men prey on emotions, you prey on need his need for sex").

I find that bitter approaches drive away the highest-quality men who have more options.
These guys know that *collaboration trumps antagonism,* and they can find a collaborative woman. So prefer to settle down with collaborative partners who don't antagonize and *don't manipulate men.*
All high-quality men that I have met prefer a more *mutually supportive approach*.
So for the sake of all, drop these nasty games, ladies:

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

- **Using Sex as Leverage**

I personally disagree with the suggestion of using sex as leverage.

He might start associating sex with compromise and negotiation, and you risk *looking like a blatant manipulator*, which is a bad strategy for relationships -especially with high-quality men-.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

PROS

- **Tackles the basics of self-care**

The Power of The Pussy is one of the few *women's dating books* that tackles the basics.
And while every woman *should* know that stuff, there are many who don't (also see here *two examples of terrible women's fashion*).

- **Can be an empowering read for some women**

For women who are low in confidence and feel at the mercy of men in dating, The Power of The Pussy can be a great injection of confidence.

Review

I enjoyed reading *The Power of the Pussy.*

Kara writes well and the book is both fun, easy to read, and with lots of good advice.
The Power of the Pussy is one of the most practically-oriented dating books for women I've read, and that's a great compliment.

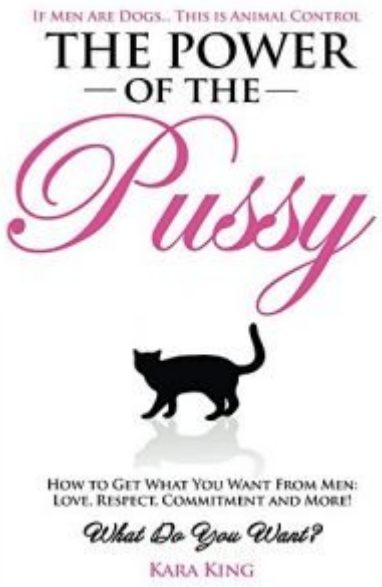
There are some parts I disagree with. Namely, the popular advice women should let men invest as much as possible, which is true in some cases, but not true in many others (see: *why you shouldn't make him chase*)

That being said, I loved the self-respect bits and the mindsets parts.
The Power of The Pussy will most likely help you both in believing more in yourself and in getting into a relationship as well.

Get The Power of the Pussy on Amazon or check out:

- **The best dating resources for women**

The Power of the Pussy Summary: Empowerment or Games?



The Power of the Pussy is a guide for women to leverage their value -and their greatest asset- to get what they want and find a great man.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-power-of-the-pussy/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.9

Fooled by Randomness: Summary & Review (Nassim Taleb)

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Fooled by Randomness (2001) delves into the fallibility of human cognition, exploring our tendency to develop logically sounding but actually *naive and false* stories and trends where there was only chance and randomness.

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  - Chapter 14: Bacchus Abandons Anthony
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- There's often more chance involved in big successes than people think
- We see links, trends, and causality where it's often just randomness
- Looking at what successful people do can be misleading in achieving success

Summary

About The Author:
Nassim Nicholas Taleb is a former trader, philosopher, statistician, and risk analyst.
He is also one of my favorite authors, penning masterpieces such as *"The Black Swan"*, *"Antifragile"* and *"Skin in The Game"*.

Introduction

Taleb first addresses some criticism.

He says his skepticism is not nihilism: of course, chance favors the prepared, the *gritty,* and the perseverant.

Skills count, he says, but **skills count much less in highly random environments** (such as trading and investment).

Nassim Taleb says he spent his life in a fierce fight between his brain -not fooled by randomness- and his emotions -completely fooled by randomness-.

And the success he's had is because of going around his emotions instead of rationalizing them.

Part I: Solons Warning

Part of I of Fooled by Randomness discusses the role that luck plays in life.

Chapter 1: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You So Smart?

Nassim Taleb says that it's silly to judge people's skills and talent purely on the basis of their success or wealth.

Because there's a good chance it's just chance -or risky behavior that's not likely to last in the long term-.

Taleb lays out the example of the "master of the universe" successful traders who made millions only to later lose many more millions in the subsequent market crash.

Those master of the universe traders didn't make money because they were good, they were just piling up on risk and riding the wave.

But **lucky fools never realize they are lucky fools** and prefer fooling themselves into the idea they're skilled.
So when the wave turned, they drowned in it.

Nassim Taleb uses Nero Tulip, a friend of his, as an example of a more rational investor (I looked him up BTW, some say it's Taleb himself).

Nero Tulip always invested safely and ended his career early and wealthy. Not super wealthy, though, because super wealthy entails big risks and it's a huge game of chance.

Risk-conscious hard work and discipline lead to high reliability to a comfortable life, he says. Beyond that, it's high randomness.

Basically: mild success is skills while wild success is variance and randomness.

Chapter 2: A Bizarre Accounting Method

When assessing a successful individual one should also consider the possibilities of failure that he faced.

He uses Russian Roulette as an extreme example.

If you were to bet 10 million on Russian Roulette, in 5 of the 6 alternative outcomes, you'd be a millionaire.

Now, Russian Roulette is an extreme example, but in many endeavors, people carry on without realizing that much of their success is highly dependent on chance.
And the more they win, the more they feel safer because they attribute success to skills.

Finance and trading, Nassim Taleb implies, is such a field with high randomness.
Other more stable professions -dentistry, he mentions-, rely less on randomness and more on skills and hard work.

Abstraction Fallacy: Picking The Wrong Death Insurance

If you ask people if they'd like to insure against death or against death by a terrorist attack before a flight, they'd be much more likely to take the latter.

Which makes no sense, because "death" *includes* a terrorist attack. It turns out, what grabs people's attention is always something vivid.

Risk is Irrational Because It's Emotional

Taleb says that we don't deal with risk detection and risk avoidance rationally because the emotional part of the brain deals with risk.

Our rational risk thinking has little to do with actual risk avoidance.

What it does instead is rationalize our actions by assigning some logic to them after we've already taken a decision.

Chapter 3: A Mathematical Meditation on History

Nassim Taleb introduces the Montecarlo Simulators.

Montecarlo simulators are computer algorithms that produce a (high) number of results for a given choice.
He says the results of a Montecarlo Simulator are a much better test against randomness than looking at the past.

Simply looking at the past indeed present survivorship bias.

Importantly, Nassim Taleb says here that you don't look at mistakes after the fact. You only look at decisions in light of the information you had up until that point.

That's why I write *you should base your self-esteem not based on results but on processes.*
And that's what Ray Dalio refers to when he says you should "look at the swing more than at the hit".

Chapter 4: Randomness, and the Scientific Intellectual

Taleb brandishes some poetry to make the case that we don't need to apply scientific rigor in all things of life.

We don't really need to be realistic and rational when it comes to religion, feelings, and arts, for example, which is a mistake that many make.

We need to be more rational when it comes to fields where rationality is more important though, which is something that few really do systematically.

On his first salvo against evolutionary psychology Taleb says that *The Selfish Gene* sounds mathematical with its many equations, but it's actually just artistic prose :).

Chapter 5: Survival of the Least Fit

Nassim Taleb says some believe that plants and animals reproduce on a highway to perfection.

And the same thought has been applied to the economy as a whole, with the best companies surviving.

He says instead that **there's a lot of randomness in evolution**. And sometimes it goes off tangents on dead-end branches. And some other times it can even regress.

Negative mutations for example survive, not longer than for a few generations, in spite of being worse.
Taleb says that on average animals will be fit, but not all of them, and not every single time.

Basically, he says, we don't live in a world where things move continuously towards improvement.

Chapter 6: Skewness and Asymmetry

Taleb talks about median estimates and how they often lead us astray.

For example, if a patient with a certain illness lives on average for 8 months tells us little.
Why?
Because there might be a big divide between those that live past a certain month mark VS those who die very quickly.

Asymmetry is countered with the expected value.

You should multiply the expected value of an event by its likelihood and then add up the total of the expected value results.

Chapter 7: The Problem of Induction

Induction means that you can never be sure about your final results, no matter how many observations you make.

For example, no matter if you see ten white swans or a thousand white swans, you cannot mathematically rule out the existence of a black swan.
By seeing a single black instead, you can be certain black swans exist.

Similarly, he says George Soros makes several induction mistakes in his book.
Soros infers that his trading system worked because his portfolio was up.
But that his portfolio is up, says Taleb, is no proof of anything.

Part II: Monkeys on Typewriters

Taleb introduces the survivorship bias, a bias that he says is chronic in our society.

Survivorship bias is the failure to account for those who didn't survive (maybe while doing the exact same thing the successful ones did).

Ironically, the most successful survivor is also the most visible one, skewing our survivorship bias even further.
And that's why, as mentioned earlier, it's important to always adjust success and results to the odds of failure.

Chapter 8: Too Many Millionaires Next Door

This chapter starts lighter, with Taleb making fun of The Millionaire Next Door,

The Millionaire Next Door peddles the idea one should save hard to become a millionaire, but Taleb says he doesn't see the point in getting rich if *you will live like a monk* (same concept MJ De Marco promotes).

Then we go back to risk, chances, and randomness.

Taleb lashes out at the even more foolish The Millionaire Mind which says that "a taste for risk" is what makes millionaires.
Taleb says that "a taste for risk-taking" is necessary for large successes, but also a necessary trait for… Large failures.

An analysis of bankruptcies would also find a predilection for risk-taking, says Taleb.

Chapter 9: It's Easier To Fry an Egg Than to Buy and Sell

Taleb explains the property of volatility and randomness.

He says that **successful performers will emerge even among a group of very poor performers** -provided that there's enough of them-.

This is simply the effect of volatility and random distributions, but an external observer will easily misconstrue the results for skills.

Consequently, Taleb says, success presents a higher correlation with the number of players than with their skills.

He doesn't say Warren Buffett is not skilled, but that a large population of investors will necessarily produce someone with Buffett's results… Just by luck (!).

Regression to the mean: there is no hot hand

Nassim Taleb introduces the regression to the mean phenomenon introducing the hot hand fallacy.

The hot hand fallacy is the belief that people who have been successful in the past are more likely to be successful in the future.

It's simply a question of large numbers, he says: with many players, it's almost guaranteed that someone will embark on a long streak of good shots. But the tendency is to eventually regress to their long-term mean.

He says not all deviations are a question of chance, but a disproportionate amount are.

Markets Don't Always Go Up

He says that a common misconception is that stock markets, over a long period of time, will always provide great returns.

But if rational investors had bought stocks in 1900 in Argentina, Russia, USA, and UK, he would have lost it all in Russia.

Chapter 10: Losers Take All – The Nonlinearities of Life

Nonlinear means that a small change will cause a disproportionate effect on the results.

The idiom "the straw that broke the camel's back" is an example of a nonlinear result, and that happens in many realms of life.
Sometimes one new customer, one order, or that last push you make can bring a windfall.

Taleb mentions *The Tipping Point*, a book by Malcolm Gladwell that started a trend of people looking for virality and networking effects.

But he says that viral effects are too difficult to predict to take those studies seriously.
My Note: I couldn't agree more.

He says that it's the beginning of a path that often makes a big difference.

Our path is not independent of previous steps, and early success often begets future success (for a number of different reasons).

So a random lucky chance, in the beginning, will sometimes take people on a very successful path.
And external observers will misinterpret the path as wholly due to skills.

Chapter 11: Randomness and Our Mind: We Are Probably Blind

Taleb says we are blind to probability.

We tend to see facts and chances as either black or white, good or bad, happening or not happening.

He mentions *Thinking Fast and Slow* and discusses a few more biases. I invite you to check Thinking Fast and Slow because it's more in-depth.

We See Causality Where There Is Only Randomness

Taleb says people tend to see causality where there's only randomness.

For example, when a currency is down commentators give a reason for why that happened.
But, he says, it's very difficult to isolate single causes and that might not even make sense.
Because it's often just noise.

Small moves are noise, larger ones tend to be more significant, he says, in a nonlinear fashion.

Part III: Wax in My Ears

Chapter 12: Gambler's Ticks and Pigeons in a Box

Taleb says many people often pick up habits and ticks based on what they did when they have previously been successful.

He does it too, and so do many animals by the way.

It's not always easy overcoming our own ticks, so we should work around them.
For example, avoid distractions and noise if you know you tend to overreact to them.

Chapter 13: Probability and Skepticism

Taleb says that science is great, but scientists are not.

Why?

Because scientists tend to "marry their own positions".
And he is right if you see how some scientists answered to the *replication crisis* like rabid dogs whose bone has been taken away.

He says most scientists cling to their positions and make excuses instead of doing the courageous thing: looking for the truth and *taking ownership*.

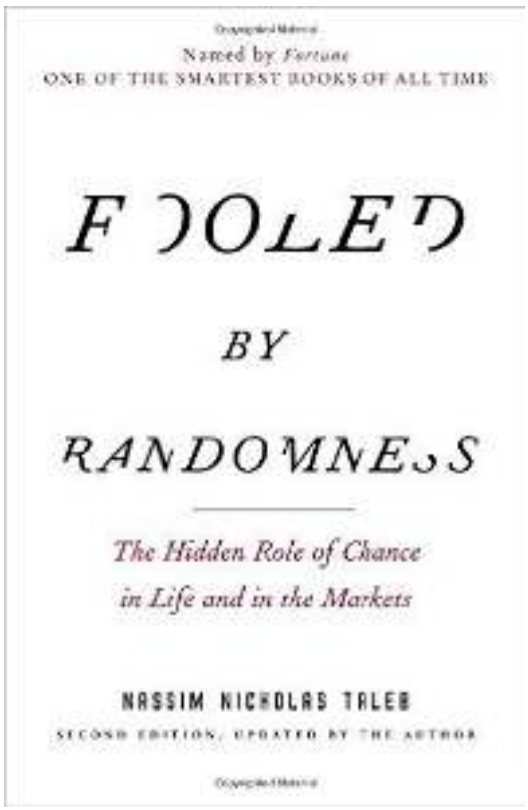
That's why, he says, science often moves forward funeral after funeral.
Once the old guard dies, the new guys are more ready to accept and challenge old beliefs.

Chapter 14: Bacchus Abandons Anthony

The link between the skills of a CEO and the results of the company is very weak (similar concept from Sinek's Leaders Eat Last).

And he delves into satisfiers and optimizers.
Optimizers spend their lives looking for what to improve and they change residence to save a couple of points of income tax.
What's the point, he quips, "I thought wealth was supposed to buy peace of mind".

My Note:
I was surprised Taleb didn't quote it, but this is very similar to satisfiers and maximizers in The Paradox of Choice, another great book.



Real-Life Applications

Success does not equal skills
Don't think people are necessarily amazing because of some success they obtained. They might have achieved success because of pure randomness.

Failure does not equal bad decisions
You should only judge your decisions based on the information you had when you took them, and not on the results.

Always consider the alternatives
Similar to the above, don't think that because you won -or lost- you did well -or badly-. Consider the odds with which you played.

Inductive Reasoning is not absolute
Just because you saw someone succeed a number of times it doesn't mean it will always succeed.

Markets don't always go up
Similar to the above, don't buy into the narrative that if you invest today you will certainly be rich tomorrow. I would personally recommend you invest in yourself more than in the markets.

Ignore the noise, focus on the signal
Many things in your life -like the news for example- are just noise. Focus on what really matters to you instead and on your goals

CONS

- **No Structure**

I wish Nassim Taleb had been more structured with his thoughts and core messages. He goes a bit off tangents sometimes making the book more like a personal diary than a well-designed product to support his core messages.

It's a pity because those core messages are really important and insightful.

- **Can Be Complex For Some**

Fooled by Randomness can be a complex book to digest.

But it didn't necessarily have to be so: simplifying is a choice (and a skill).

Taleb's own dissertations and, ironically, his huge culture, get in the way of a simple message.
Literary and historical references that people will most likely miss out on are also likely to arise more confusion.

This doesn't have to be a negative though, I for one love those bigger picture (or fun) references and tangents.

Review

Fooled by Randomness is a must-read to understand how probability applies to everyday human issues, and it's one of the best books I've read on developing sound critical thinking.

Some many not like Taleb's style, but it cannot detract from the value of his work.
I personally love Taleb's irreverent and biting style.

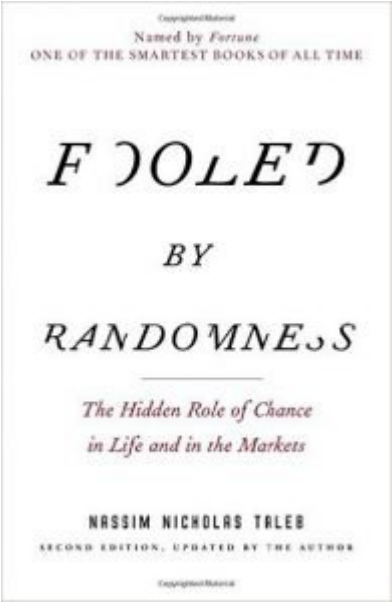
He is not afraid of telling it how it is, even when he touches big names (Bill Gates, Soros, and Warren Buffett just to name a few).

I used to reflect on the underestimated role of randomness, and I'm glad for Taleb's work, which I can now refer to (edit: and I've referenced it countless times to critique many popular books).

The only thing stopping this book from getting a full 10/10 is that Taleb's take may lead some to underestimate evolutionary psychology, which we believe is one of the disciplines and forces that best explain human nature.

Don't get fooled by randomness: **Get the book on Amazon**

Fooled by Randomness Summary: Master Probability & Logic



Masterpiece of critical thinking sills

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/fooled-by-randomness/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:

4.9

He's Just Not That Into You: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

He's Just Not That Into You teaches women how to date better by learning to read male signals.
Its main thesis is that men are simple, and you don't need any special skills to decode their messages.

TPM Strategic Note: While this book is not market to men, we analyze women's dating advice at TPM as a study in female dating behavior. Understanding these principles helps high-status men better navigate dating and relationships. See **TPM's female dating advice analysis ↗**

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  - 6 . He's Just Not That Into You If He Only Wants to See You When He's Drunk
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- He's Just Not That Into You Video
- Real-Life Applications
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- Review

Summary

The authors are Greg Behrendt and Liz Tuccillo, both of whom have been on the consulting team for Sex & The City, a show I reference quite a bit on this website.

Greg says that because he's a guy, he knows how a guy thinks –which is irrational to say as it's an inductive fallacy: one instance does not make the rule, but we will let it slip :)-.

Greg says that **men will never tell you to your face they're not into you**. That's why sometimes it can be difficult. But they will let you know about their actions.

How "He's Not That Into You" Started

Liz recounts the first time Greg dropped the words "he's not that into you" it was a collective epiphany for the women in the room.
It was painful to hear, but also liberating at the same time.

No more mixed signals, no more interactions to examine… His actions will make it crystal clear whether he's interested or not.

That moment then made it into Sex and The City in this scene right here:

So let's see what are these clear signals:

1. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Not Asking You Out

> ***Men ask women out no matter what***

Greg says women make a lot of exceptions to this rule in their minds, but they're all made-up fantasies. If a man likes you, he will ask you out, no matter if:

- You're friends (guys don't mind mixing sex with friendship)
- He might be intimidated
- You're his superior
- He gave you his number (he puts the onus on you and set himself up as the decider)

Greg admits he might need some encouragement if you're of higher status than he is, but he will.

My Note:
I don't fully agree here, I know for a fact many men will not pull the trigger on women at work if they are above his pay grade.
However, I fully agree with what he says later: should you want to be with a man who's afraid of asking you out?

You Can't Make The Move

Contrary to Hussey and Lambert, Greg says you should not make the first step.

He says the majority of guys don't like it because men like the uncertainty of results and the thrill of the chase.
OK, he admits, a few guys might like it, but those are the lazy ones.

And **if you need to be the pursuer, nine times out of ten, he's just not that into you**.

2. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Not Calling You

> *Men know how to dial a number*

And Greg says it doesn't matter if he:

- Is very important (are you saying you're unimportant?)
- Travels a lot
- Is very busy (busy is another word for asshole)

Basically: **if he's not calling you, you are not on his mind**.

And the author says it's even more important when he actually creates the expectation that he will call, but he doesn't.
That seems like a mixed message, but don't get sidetracked: he chose not to. And if he slips on these small things, he will for the bigger things, too.

I especially agree with Greg when he says that "very important" is not only silly but also degrading for the woman as that also says you're not that important.

3. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Not Dating You

> *"Hanging out" is not dating*

If a guy says he doesn't want to be in a serious relationship, he either really means it or he's actually saying he's not sure you're the right one for a relationship.

Either way, you should not waste time on this guy and go for that guy who's aching to be in a relationship with you, says Greg.

4. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Not Having Sex with You

> *Men who like they always want to get it on with you*

And if they don't, they either are not into you or might have other issues.

The Madonna-whore complex, for example:

5. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Having Sex with Someone Else

> *There are no excuses for cheating*

Greg says the cheating happened with the full knowledge that it could destroy your relationship.

He says a guy who hides his escapades is not only not that into you, but also showing he doesn't even really like you much.

The author also says you shouldn't think that a man caught with his pants down will improve.
Cheating is most difficult the first time out, but it gets "easier" for him after that.

My Note:
while I think it's weak for men to get into relationships while they're thinking of potentially cheating, I wouldn't be so black and white.
Sex at Dawn explains we're probably not as monogamous as we think.
And The Moral Animal shows men (and women too, in part) have an innate tendency to look at sexual prospects.
Also, for a woman sexual cheating is less damaging than emotional one.

6 . He's Just Not That Into You If He Only Wants to See You When He's Drunk

> *It only counts if he's sober*

Greg says drunk booty calls mean nothing and whatever he says while drunk means nothing too.

A solid relationship is not fueled by alcohol or drugs.
The two of you should spend -and want to spend- sober time together.

7. He's Just Not That Into You If He Doesn't Want to Marry You

> *Love cures all commitment fears*

All these are excuses:

- I'm not ready
- I don't believe in marriage
- I feel rushed

Greg knows this one, in this day and age, will be controversial.

He says that while some men might have some real reserves, he still believes that if he really loves you he will want to make you happy.

And you should really make sure if he doesn't want to get married or if he doesn't want to get married to you. And you should take stock of what else you have different opinions on. Because if he feels rushed but you're comfortable, you should wonder why you're waiting.

I also fully agree with the author when he says that you, as a woman, should not feel ashamed or "unliberated" for wanting a marriage.

My Note:
I agree feminism is taking a toll on many women, sometimes putting more pressure instead of freeing them.

8. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Breaking Up with You

> ***And don't take him back***

Greg says that we all want to be loved… *Especially* by that someone who just broke up with us.

But you should only consider getting back with him if he's showing strong and unequivocal signs -like showing up to your door with a truck to move your stuff back in.

In any other case, cut him off and don't contact him.

And, he righteously says, be especially suspicious of men who want you back after you start dating someone else.

9. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Disappeared on You

> ***He didn't have the guts to tell you, but he's not into you***

There's no worse feeling that not having an answer because it leaves you wondering and it feels like there's no closure.

Your reaction will be to chase and ask why.

But no answer is your answer, and the reason why he disappeared is that he didn't have the courage to tell you in your face that he's not that into you.

Psychologically, the author says, is that it's particularly painful because it possibly means the person you loved had been emotionally distant for a long time before he disappeared.

Liz says that if it makes you feel better though, it's OK to reach out to him and ask for an explanation.

> **No answer is your answer -He's just not that into you**

10. He's Just Not That Into You If He's Married

> ***Or any other crazy "unavailable" situations***

You're a side chick.

Some men will use their wife as an excuse to keep on the sex level while they complain to you about her.
But don't buy without full action to back it up.
Is he filing divorce papers? **Unless he's all yours, he's all hers**.

> **If someone is not free to love, he cannot love**

11. He's Just Not That Into You If He's a Jerk

> ***Or selfish, bully, abusive…***

Greg says women will stick with him saying he has many other qualities.

Of course he has, that's why you loved him. But the question you need to ask yourself is one and one only: **is he making you happy?**

The author says that abusive isn't simply beating, but it includes:

- Yelling
- Humiliating
- Making someone feel unattractive

Then Greg Behrendt says what I believe is a big truth: there aren't that many good men around.
And there are more great women than great men.

Don't Listen to These Stories

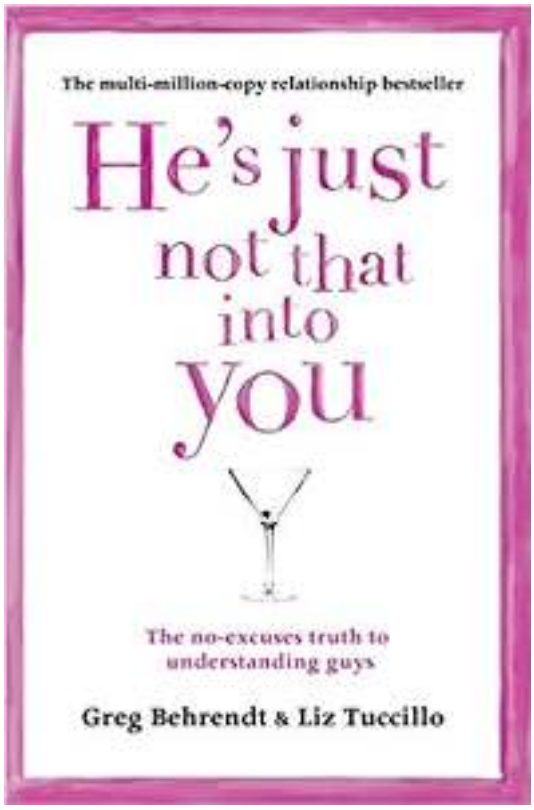
Greg says that for all of these rules, *there will be exceptions.*

And there are stories of friends of friends who went ahead and it finally worked out.
But he says you shouldn't listen to them.
Because they are the exceptions, not the rule.

Always *go for the rule*, because chances are that **you are exceptional, but not the exception.**

That's very good wisdom.
Also, see:

https://thepowermoves.com/underdog-dating/



He's Just Not That Into You Video

This is the video version in Sex And the City of the principle *"he's just not that into you":*

Real-Life Applications

Look At The Big Picture
The book reminds us that meaningful actions are what really matters. Instead of wondering what a text "means", look at the most obvious signs of love and appreciation: they're easy to spot.

Is He Making You Happy?
Finally, answering the question if he's making you happy or not is as simple as it is enlightening. If it's not obvious, change it to: "in the last week, have I been happier or sadder because of him?". Does it for 3 weeks before deciding whether or not it's time for a change.

CONS

A Bit Dogmatic
Greg tends to be very dogmatic, very black and white. It's entertaining to read and he often nails it, but several situations can be more grey.

Review

"He's Just Not That Into You" is the perfect read for women who go to an extreme of overthinking things, but it's important not to go too far in the other extreme.

Remember that **men also have their own dating strategies, games, and tactics**, and while experienced and power-aware women may not need to overthink it, more beginner dates may need to analyze things a bit more thoroughly to best navigate dating.

That said, the book generally provides realistic and effective advice.
Learn more:

- Signs that he likes you
- Best dating books for women

Never Chase Men Again: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Never Chase Men Again is a dating book for women helping readers to recognize, find, and date not just any men, but *high-quality men.*

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Reinforce His Attraction & Train Him to Chase You
  - Communicate High-Value and Be the Woman Men Adore
  - Final Thoughts
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Self-respect and a set of guidelines will help you even when you don't have experience
- Big initial demands don't make you a prize, they make you pretentious
- Use early investment and vulnerability as a test: if he grows with you, he's a keeper

Full Summary

About The Author: Bruce Bryan is a pen name, so I don't know much about the author except that he has written a few books on dating.

However, I can say that Bruce Bryan understands how quality men think. He presents, in my opinion, one of the most insightful dating for women on the market.

Introduction

Bruce Bryans says a woman needs a few things:

- Self-respect
- A set of guidelines for rational decisions
- Strong boundaries

Strong personal boundaries are not romance or man-centered but principle-centered (Ray Dalio recommends the same concept for success in life).

The author says women can get confused about whether they should "play games" or not.
And he spells it clear for the reader: while withdrawing as a tactic can work, her actions are not based on self-respect.

High-quality men DO NOT pursue women who fake disinterest and play games: they respect women with no tolerance for manipulation and time wasting.

When you value your self-respect more than the feeling of being liked by any given man, you will have no need for games anymore.

Reinforce His Attraction & Train Him to Chase You

Bruce Bryan suggests that you:

Are Not Too Available at the Beginning

Being a challenge will keep his interest, but also serve to separate the lazy men who don't pursue- from the ambitious ones.

And if he doesn't pursue, *he's just not that into you.*

My Note:
I disagree here, some cool guys will also stop pursuing if you don't give enough.
Lots of losers will keep chasing instead because they have time and don't know any better.

Don't Play Hard to Get but Be Hard to Get

Bruce Bryan underlines that you should not *play* hard to get, but you should *be* hard to get.

You should have an exciting and attractive life and be happy and content with your own life.
That's the kind of woman men want to meet.

Keep Your Life and Hobbies

And since you are content with your life, you don't give up your hobbies, family, and dreams the moment you meet a guy (similar suggestion to *Why Men Love Bitches*).

Prioritize Calls VS texting

Bryan says texting is the players' medium.

If you want a man to take you seriously and if you want to screen out players, you should let him call you.

If he refuses to call it's because he wants to keep it casual and he's not a serious prospect.

My note:
Lambert also recommends you encourage him to call you, and while I would also agree to go for calls when the guy is a good prospect, I disagree it will screen out players.

Don't Flake

Bryan says that when you fail to show up you communicate unreliability. And high-quality men want women they can count on.

Take Responsibility

You know those people who always blame circumstances and it's never their responsibility?

That's *typical of low-value women.*
Take responsibility and *ownership* of your life instead, suggests the author.

Restrain Your Affection

Before he has shown his part, show restraint when displaying your feelings for him.

Bruce says that the key to a successful seduction is a mutual level of interest (and you will know based on his enthusiasm for you).

Show Flexibility (and easy-to please)

Bruce says you should be hard to have but easy to please.

He says you show it in those situations where, if you just were a bit more flexible, he would find you more pleasant to be around.
Men know that adaptable women make for better long-term companions.

The only men who will tolerate inflexibility are the pushovers kind of men.

Don't Be Too Assertive

Bruce Bryan doesn't state it this clearly but says that the kind of men you want to end up with will not find overly assertive women to be very attractive.

My Note: I agree wholeheartedly with this.
Also, read:

- Submissive women VS strong women
- How to be more feminine
- Why career women fail at dating (and how to fix it)

Show Vulnerability

The author says that for a long-term solid relationship, you need an intimate and emotional connection.

And to connect, you need to be vulnerable (*check Brene Brown for more on vulnerability*).

Laugh at yourself, admit your mistakes, and ask forgiveness when you make a mistake.
These are all extremely endearing and will build a strong emotional connection.
And don't worry about sounding weak, a masculine man is attracted to a feminine spirit.

My Note: I agree

Show Your Love When The Time Comes

Bryan says that most men value emotional intimacy.

When he has proven his worth, it's time to start escalating the emotional attachment.

Show major appreciation whenever he does something good for you or for the two of you.
And use your female tenderness to show your love proactively.

If he responds in kind, keep him. Otherwise, next to him.

My Note: 100%. Bryan nails it.
also read:

- How to make him invest with mutual escalation

Don't Confuse Great With Right

Bryan says a man could be great, but he might not be good for you because he won't or can't give you commitment.

Always assess the potential of a man both on quality AND compatibility.

Set High Standards and Enforce Boundaries

Some nice girls will be accommodating hoping he will be the same, says the author.

When he isn't though she turns into a *passive-aggressive* and emotional manipulator and *the relationship becomes a combative one.*

He says women *should be assertive* in asking for what they want and need from the beginning instead.

Give Him The Joy of Conquest

If everything is too easy and obvious, he will feel like he's slowly edging closer to filling the husband's job position.

That's boring for him.

Make him feel like's slowly winning you over with effort instead.

A man's actions tell him what's important to him, and when his action show effort, he will rationalize you must mean a lot to him.

My note: this is true, rationalization is a key function of our brain, check Incognito

Don't Nag For a Change

Bryan says that if you want to change something in a relationship you never nag.

First, you have a conversation, and if nothing changes, then you withdraw. Make him anxious a bit and let him miss you.

Don't Be Exclusive With a Guy Who Isn't Exclusive

If a guy is keeping his options open, you do the same.

And never fall for the old one of "commitment problems". That only means he's waiting for someone else.

Don't Give It Up Too Easily

Bryan says that before sex you have all the power, but after sex, you have very little.

He says when sex happens too easily and too quickly most men are less likely to stick around.

The rule of thumb is that the more significant his investment before sex, the more likely it is you will keep him around for the longer term.

He recommends you watch this video (which I personally didn't find that good TBH):

Increase Your Self Respect

Bryan says that you should never allow a man's mixed signal or aloofness to become the cue for you to chase him.

Because the more you do it, the more ingrained it becomes, and *that's how you build (bad) habits.*

Conversely, walk away from every bad situation and you will make further investments in your self-respect.

The more you do it, the more your self-confidence will increase

Communicate High-Value and Be the Woman Men Adore

I had no further doubts that Never Chase Men Again was the best women's dating book I had read when I got to this:

Stay Positive as You Keep Searching

The author says that if you allow a bad dating experience or a breakup to infect your mood you risk becoming bitter towards men.

And that's a very unattractive trait for high-quality men.

My note:
that's exactly what I criticize for some books in the same genre such as *The Power of the Pussy*: they sound too bitter.

Be Graceful In Communication

Bryan says high-quality men want women with high *emotional intelligence*.

That means they want women who can express themselves respectfully and without emasculating them.

It's important for men because they need respect as much as women need love (also check *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*).

Embrace your inner vixen

Bruce says high-value men don't want cute girls, they want mature and confident women.

Act and carry yourself confidently and like you know your own value.

Don't Demand Too Much Too Early

The author nails another big one when he says high-quality men have little tolerance for egocentric women.

Asking him to do X or Y for you will not make you a prize, but a spoiled high-maintenance girl (and a *low-quality woman*, I'd add).

Bruce says it's fair and good you expect exceptional treatment, but big early requests reek of entitlement.
Smart men will know how to treat you based on what you show and how they like you, you will only turn them off by asking for it.

Humility speaks louder than entitlement and unpretentious goes further than self-important.

Guard Your Reputation

Robert Greene in the *48 Laws of Power* says reputation is everything.

Bruce says your reputation in dating is also important.
Make sure you don't build a negative reputation for dating losers.

Don't Move In... If You Wanna Get Married

Bryan says that moving in for men is like doing a car test drive or simply a way to postpone… Indefinitely.

For women instead, it's a step closer to the final commitment.

But when you hit a snag, men will be less likely to want to work it out compared to if they were married.
There's just less pressure, either social or financial.

Be The Mountaintop, Not The Stepping Stone

Bruce has a super interesting view on being with men who "need your help" or "need a woman's touch".

The issue is that often these men will then move on to another woman once they fully bloom or once they don't need your help anymore.

Breakup if No Progression

The author suggests that first of all, you make sure he knows you want a marriage.

Then feel free to apply pressure if you think he won't budge.

If the relationship is still not progressing the way you want, you should break by making sure he knows why.
If he wants you, it's possible he'll come back giving you what you wanted. Only accept him if he shows proof of moving forward.

Date With Purpose

Don't get distracted or sidetracked: know what you want and don't settle for less.

Don't Be One Of The Boys

Bruce Bryans says you shouldn't be like one of his male friends with him. It will kill his attraction.

My note:
true. In *4 ways men touch women wrong* I talk about an ex-girlfriend complaining that I was high-fiving her. She said she was a woman, not one of the boys.
My respect (and attraction) for her only grew.

Believe You Deserve His Unconditional Love

The author says most mistakes come from self-sabotage.

When the woman doesn't believe in her own value and doesn't believe she deserves his unconditional love.

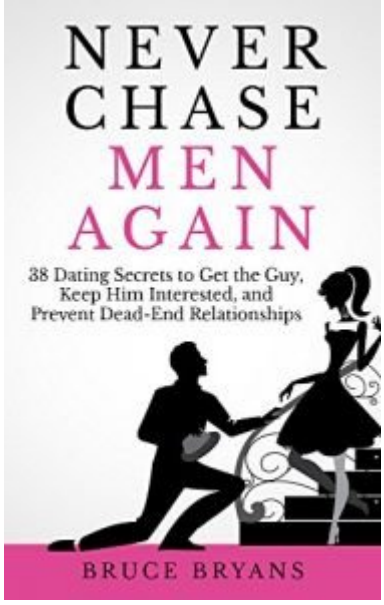
Final Thoughts

To avoid time wasters, the author says, you should approach dating with an almost ruthless inclination.

Filter in quickly the good prospects, and cut off the bad ones.

To quickly spot the good ones, show your vulnerabilities, and proactively increase his emotional investment and attachment in you.
If you realize that your steps are not reciprocated, move on.

Finally, focus on becoming a great catch yourself, stay true to your standards and boundaries (remember: the more you respect them, the higher your self-esteem!), and… Enjoy the process.



Real-Life Applications

Don't Move In… If You Want Marriage
I liked the idea you better not move in if you want marriage. Women see it as a step closer, men see it as postponement -and as an easy way out if they don't fully like it-.

Don't Be Overpowering
Let him lead, and tone down *your assertiveness* if it can get too much

Stay a Woman
Never become one of the boys. You can be his friend alongside his lover. Just not his beer-drinking, football-watching, burping friend.

Don't Get Bitter!!
Watch out for books and gurus telling you "it's time to get some revenge on the boys". That's the perfect mindset NOT to get a high-value man (and a good relationship, of course).

Invest… And Watch
Do open up and escalate investment on both sides. Then watch. Does he reciprocate? That will tell you whether you can keep growing together or if you need to move on.

CONS

Escalate His Emotional Investment?
I would have loved to see some more concrete examples of how she should do this.

Just a few things here in there (like calls screening out players and maybe *initial unavailability which is dangerous*). But it's still the best book I have read so far on women's dating.

Review

I have been reading *many best sellers for women's dating*.

And in many of them, I found the same issues of teaching game playing without consideration for the health of the relationship.

I was glad I stumbled upon Bruce Bryans.
He was the first and so far only one who was able to avoid basic mistakes all other authors did and point out a few great truths in dating.

I feel Bruce has a great grasp of the mindset of high-quality men.

Check out the **best dating books for women** and **get the book on Amazon**.

How to Win Friends & Influence People: 12 Principles (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to Win Friends and Influence People (1936) is a popular social skills book in which Dale Carnegie, the author, shares his advice on how to communicate and behave to make friends and influence others.

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  - Carnegie's Principles Make For Nice Books, But He Got Rich With Different Principles
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Takeaways

- **Put yourself in their shoes**: appeal to their needs, understand their motives, etc.
- **Protect and boost people's ego**: help save face, make them feel great, let them think it was their idea, etc.
- To be interesting and make friends, **be interested and curious about them**

Here's a pictorial summary of all of Carnegie's principles:

Notes

About The Author:
Dale Carnegie was an American writer and author and one of the first "self-help gurus" in history.
How to Win Friends and Influence People is one of the best-selling books ever and the best-selling book in the self-help genre.

He is also the author of *"How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*".

Part 1 – Fundamental Techniques in Handling People

Principle 1: Don't Criticize, Condemn, or Complain

Criticism is terrible when you want to influence people or change their behavior.

It's because **criticism will put the recipient on the defensive** and he can't listen to you or focus on changing when he is busy defending himself.

The opposite might actually happen: to protect his ego, he will make up a story to rationalize that he isn't so wrong after all… And that you're a jerk.

My note:
Criticism indeed often raises the fight or flight response in people. HOWEVER… Criticism and disappointment work great if you have a very strong emotional leverage on people.
See our article on "judge power dynamics":

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Emotional Control

Principle 2: Give Honest and Sincere Appreciation

Appreciation takes out the best in people.

Dale Carnegie says that appreciation leverages one of the most difficult needs for people to meet: the need to feel important.

Carnegie says that also flattery, such as fake appreciation, might also work.
It worked for Disraeli with Queen Victoria, he says (Greene describes it in *The Art of Seduction*).
But that doesn't mean it will work for you as well. Instead, always make your appreciation sincere.

My Note:
Later social experiments showed how flattery, even when people suspect second motives, is still effective. Check Cialdini's Influence.

If appreciating anything in people is difficult for you Carnegie recommends you adopt Ralph Emerson's mindset when he says -I paraphrase-:

> Every man you meet is superior to you in something. And you can learn from him

Principle 3: Arouse in the Other Person an Eager Want

To get what you want from people, you must first understand what *they* want.

This is the *"What's In It For Me"* principle and it's also a law of power in Robert Greene's *"The 48 Laws of Power"*.

And then you can present your wants and needs in a way that will satisfy *their* wants and needs.

Also, read:

- The Laws of Social Exchange
- How to Become a Leader

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Part 2 – Six Ways to Make People Like You

Principle 1: Become Genuinely Interested in Other People

Dale Carnegie says that the only way to make solid and lasting relationships is to be genuinely interested in them.

As the author is famously quoted as saying: **to be interesting be interested**.

> You make more friends in two months by being interested in them, than in two years making them interested in you

Principle 2: Smile

Dale Carnegie says that a smile is a way of saying "I like you and you make me happy".

So smile at people when you greet them.

My note:
Schaefer in *The Like Switch* recommends you also flash your eyebrows upwards, which is an unconscious indicator of liking and acceptance.

Carnegie says that our actions influence our feelings as much as our feelings influence our actions.
So by smiling, you will also be naturally happier.

My Note:
That might be somewhat true, albeit there has been valid and scientific criticism of what's been later dubbed the "facial feedback hypothesis", see "self-help myths" and "pop psychology").

> Pop Psychology Myths

Principle 3: Remember Their Names

People love the sound of their name more than any other sound in the world.

Remember their names, which will make them feel valued.

> His name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in any language

Principle 4: Be a Good Listener

The most important element of being a good conversationalist is being a good listener.
And to become a good listener, the number one rule is to care.

> To become a great listener: care about the speaker

Principle 5: Talk in Terms of His Interests

Most people like to discuss their interests and hobbies.

And that's why Dale Carnegie recommends you talk about what interests *them*.

Principle 6: Make Him Feel Important

To make others feel important Carnegie recommends you ask yourself what is it about them that you admire.

Once you know what you admire about them, it will reflect in your demeanor and you can also tell them about your admiration.

Part 3 – How To Win People To Your Way of Thinking

Principle 1: To Get The Best of an Argument, Avoid It

Carnegie says you will always lose in an argument.

If you lose, you lose, and if you win, the other will feel resentful and you still lose.
The only way to win an argument is by avoiding it.

Principle 2: Show Respect For His Opinions

When you attack someone's opinion, you will push them on the defensive.

And again, if you get into an ideological battle, you only always lose.

Principle 3: If You Are Wrong, Admit It

… And do so quickly and emphatically, says Carnegie.
It will boost his ego and confidence, because, if you're wrong, he must be right.

My note:
Another great advantage of admitting fault is that it shows a strength of character. Most people shift blame, and those who take full ownership set themselves apart.

I particularly loved the answer from Elbert Hubbard that Carnegie used as an example.
When a reader sent an irate mail to attack the author's opinion, Hubbard replied (I paraphrase):

> Come to think it over, I don't think I completely agree with it myself.
>
> Not everything I wrote yesterday appeals to me today. I am glad to learn what you think on the subject.
>
> The next time you are in the neighborhood, please visit us and we'll talk about it.
>
> Yours Sincerely…"

Principle 4: Begin in a Friendly Way

Anger against anger is the fool's way of discussing and solving issues, implies the author.

It will get you nowhere -except maybe to trading blows-.

Begin in a friendly way instead and you will immensely lower his guard, lower the tension and dramatically increase the chances of a resolution.

Also, read:

- Best communication skills books

Principle 5: Get Him Saying "Yes" Immediately

Never start with disagreement as that's a slippery slope.

Start with what you agree on instead.

Carnegie says that when someone starts out saying “yes” a few times the natural tendency is to keep going with “yeses”.
And he will immediately place himself in a more positive and conducive mental disposition.

My note:
That’s what the sales technique “yes ladder” is based on. Check out my article on the *nasty effects of a “no ladder*“ to understand the opposite effect.

Principle 6: Let Him do a great deal of the talking

Carnegie recommends you never brag and never monopolize the conversation.

Do the opposite: let the others do most of the talking.

In truth, if you know how to brag, *bragging can work*.
See here how:

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

Principle 7: Let Him Feel That The Idea Is His

People embrace ideas quickly and work harder on them when they feel it’s their own brainchild.

So don’t push your ideas on others and fight to convince them. If you want cooperation let people feel it was their own idea.

That’s also a good way to stimulate what psychologists call “intrinsic motivation”.

Carnegie provides a very good example here.

He tells the story of a customer who was stumped among different choices -of course, see *The Paradox of Choice*-.
Instead of pitching the products the salesman asked the person what kind of product he would select best.
As he described the product, the prospect came to his own conclusions as to what he should buy.
And he happily bought: it was his own idea.

Principle 8: Try to See Things From His Point of View

Our natural tendency is to judge people and immediately think we’re right and they’re wrong.

But the world is rarely, if ever, so cut and dry.
And one of the biggest secrets to doing well with people is always to see the situation from their point of view as well.

Dale Carnegie says if you only take one thing away from *How To Win Friends & Influence People*, it should be *making a habit* of looking at interactions from other people’s perspectives.
Not to simply understand their opinion, but why they are even having those opinions in the first place.

Principle 9: Be Sympathetic To His Ideas and Desires

Carnegie says that people ache for understanding and sympathy.

Instead of giving them the battle they expect, he suggests one sentence that will put to rest any argument (I paraphrase):

> *I don't blame you for feeling the way you feel. If I were you, I would feel the exact same way.*

So simple, yet so genius.

Principle 10: Appeal to The Nobler Motives

Dale Carnegie says that when you appeal to nobler motives, you will make people want to rise up to the noble trait that you bestow upon them.

Principle 11: Dramatize Your Ideas

Dramatizing your idea basically means having good marketing for your product.

Simply stating the truth is not enough, you have to make it appealing.

Principle 12: Throw Down a Challenge

When nothing else works, Dale Carnegie recommends you make it a challenge so that people want to win as if it were a game.

This is the same concept games use and which has become famous today as "gamification": put a score on the game, and people will work hard to increase that number.

Part 4 – Be a Leader: How To Change People

Principle 1: Begin With Praise and Honest Appreciation

Dale Carnegie says that if you must criticize someone, first find something good they have done and begin with that.

The author also highlights the danger of the word "but", which negates anything you previously said.

Don't say:

> **Poor Communicator***: you did great, BUT…* "

but say:

> **Influencer**: you *did great and you can do even better if…* ".

My note:
Carnegie also gets into the "sandwich feedback technique". But it's so popular today that you better stay away from it.
Everyone knows the praise is setting the stage for the critique and they won't even believe it. Check out Daring Greatly for a great feedback example instead (Ctrl+f and write "feedback").

Principle 2: Call Attention to People's Mistakes Indirectly

Same as for criticizing, directly pointing out people's mistakes is a surefire way to put them on the defensive.

Telling someone "you've done a mistake" is like telling people "you're wrong".
And it hurts the most when done publicly.

My note:
Simon Sinek says in Leaders Eat Last that the task of a leader is to defend his team.
And well, sometimes you also need to defend their ego.

Principle 3: Talk About Your Own Mistakes Before Criticizing Him

Dale Carnegie says it's easier to take criticism when the person criticizing us admits to his mistakes or his own imperfections.

When we can share the blame, blame hurts less.
And when we make ourselves imperfect, we are more likely to be accepted.

Principle 4: Ask Questions Instead of Giving Direct Orders

Dale Carnegie says that nobody likes to take orders: it makes us feel subordinate and less important. So give suggestions instead of orders.

Principle 5: Let the Other Person Save Face

People will resent us if we hurt their egos or insult their skills, especially if publicly.
Always think of a way to save people's faces instead.

For example:
General Electric had a brilliant engineer who was doing very poorly as a department head.
Demoting was likely going to be very costly to his ego.
So the company instead gave him a big title and moved him somewhere else in a way that if felt he was being promoted.

Check this article for an example.

Principle 6: Praise Every improvement

If you want people to keep improving, give them praise for every improvement.

He will feel good for doing well and will be motivated to keep going.

My note:
Carnegie is basically suggesting here to use of positive reinforcement in what in psychology is known as operant conditioning.

> Be hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise

Principle 7: Give Him a Fine Reputation to Live Up To

When you give people a good reputation, the tendency is to act in accordance with that reputation.

It's partly because being found out not as good would hurt us, and partially because we want to keep that good trait real.

Identity drives behavior, so when people start liking and believing in a new identity, they will act accordingly.

Principle 8: Encourage. Make The Fault Seem Easy to Correct

If a task seems too big or if people feel like they are far too unskilled to accomplish it, they will lose their heart and fail to act.

Encourage them instead, build up their ego.
And make the effort seem within their grasp. Then they will be motivated to act.

Principle 9: Make Him Happy About Doing What You Suggest

When you want someone to do something, make them feel happy and proud of the task at hand.

Tell them their rare skills and talent make them the best fit for the job.

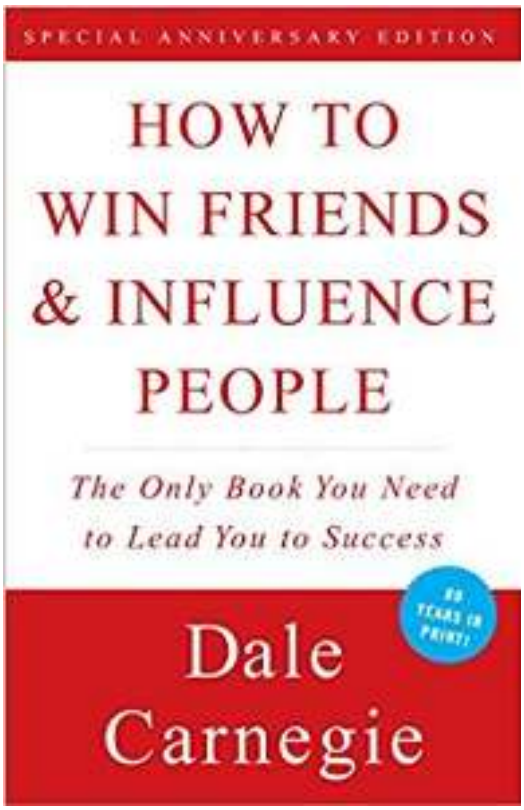
Part 5 – Making Your Home Life Happier

This section was included in the original book, but not in the revised version.

It could indeed be easily summarized as saying that all previous principles apply to your relationship as well. The most interesting for me were:

1. Don't nag/criticize
2. Don't try to change your partner
3. Give honest appreciation
4. Don't over-emphasize the details
5. Read a good book on the sexual side of marriage

If you're interested in relationship books, head over to my *relationships book summaries*.



Real-Life Applications

Appreciate More
Most of us would do great in remembering this very simple advice: appreciate, compliment, and encourage more.

Put Yourself In Their Shoes
Whether you need to engage someone for a *crucial conversation*, to better understand their needs, or to lead with what's in it for them, it's a great habit to always put yourself in their shoes first. It doesn't mean you concede they are right, but it means you consider their perspective.

CRITICISM

Let's start with *a quote* from our power-aware community:

> What a crappy world we live in if everything I learned in *How to win friends and influence people* is actually counterproductive! ⍰
>
> *TPM Community Member & PU Alumnus*

Yep, that's our main criticism.

It's a great book that can easily turn *counter*-productive without power skills, manipulation awareness, and strategies.
You MUST be aware of the limitation.

You Need To Add Advanced Material For Status, Respect & Attraction

The book is not meant to tackle the more advanced approaches to socialization and influence.

There is no way to social strategize like Machiavellians.

Or how to handle value-takers, and assholes.

And that's important to be effective in life.

How to Win Friends is still a *fantastic* book.
Best for those who can come across as awkward, who struggle to make friends, or who couldn't even persuade a nice guy to get Power University.

Nuances Missing

Carnegie's principles are solid.

But the advanced game is in the nuances and exceptions.

For example, the highest achievers often want truth, not to be coddled by someone afraid to speak his mind.

Also read this:

- Glass ceiling advice

> Ceiling Effect: Why 99% of Self-Help Leads to Plateaus

Misses The Nuances of Otherwise Good Techniques: The Book Borrowing

Carnegie famously recommends asking an enemy for a favor to become closer.

It's indeed a fantastic technique.
However, that comes with consequences and obligations that may not fit everyone's goals.

The technique works because of social exchange principles.
When they do you a favor, you move from 'former enemies' to new friends -and *allies*-.

But getting closer and **receiving a favor also indebts you to them**, and adds future expectations.
They will expect you to support and help them when needed.

If they don't, they will go back being twice as big enemies -and more motivated to trip you-.

So it's not be the best approach for everyone.

It Can Make You Come Across As Weak

The various ego-protecting and indirect approaches are great principles.

As for everything, though, there is risk in overdoing the 'polished-sounding techniques'. And if you do, you can come across as weak, too passive, or submissive.

Make sure you use these techniques because you care about people or because you want to achieve certain results. But NOT because you're afraid of being blunt and honest.

Carnegie's Principles Make For Nice Books, But He Got Rich With Different Principles

Here's what Machiavelli would say.

The Andrew Carnegie receipt for power, status, and legacy:

1. **Ruthlessly seek power**, money, and market domination
2. **Hire private goons as strikebreakers** when employees seek better living standards
3. **PUBLICLY support unions WITH YOUR NAME, then have your underlings be ruthless** on your behalf
4. **Write nice-sounding books to gain a good reputation** as an enlightened man
5. **Build libraries, universities and institutions WITH YOUR NAME ATTACHED for a long-lasting reputation** as a philanthropist
6. **Give most of your fortune away before you die as the last reputational power move** because… You can't take it with you anyway

This may not be too far away from the truth.

But then again… What does Machiavelli know :).

How to Influence People After PU

Says a PU alumnus in TPM's former Discord server:

> PU definitively changed my life!
>
> I basically **lived my life by the book „How to Win Friends and Influence People"** by Dale Carnegie.
>
> **I gave and gave and even when nothing came back I gave more for absolutely nothing. I was an altruistic giver and a people pleaser.**
> One of my friends introduced me to sociology and after a bit of research I stumbled across PU.
>
> Long story short – It was an eye-opening experience. It felt like learning the ability of the next higher layer of language.
>
> As if my vision became enhanced on so many levels. I slowely started to understand the true meaning of words, sentences and behavior. Thanks to PU I now was able to build strong win-win friendships and I feel **more and more people start to look up to me**.
>
> *Power University alumnus*

I see where he's coming from.

And I bet he would agree that it's still a *great* book… IF you put it in perspective.

And you MUST be aware of the limitation.

The second part of me answer was:

> And it IS a *great*book, which makes it even more challenging to put it in perspective.
>
> Because it *must* be put in perspective as it's incomplete and can easily take people off track -similar to "*The 48 Laws of Power*"-.
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

Says another PU alumni right after:

> I went back to a glance at that particular book after PU and **with the background of PU, I think I appreciate the book more**. As I think Lucio implied, it's so easy to lose perspective when you're encountering new principles
> from one enthusiastic perspective, since there's always more perspectives and outlying scenarios where the principles don't hold any longer.
>
> *PU alumnus*

Yep, 100%.

To make the most of a book like *How to Win Friends and Influence People* you may need the skills and competencies we teach here.

Review

How to Win Friends and Influence People shares valid and timeless social advice.

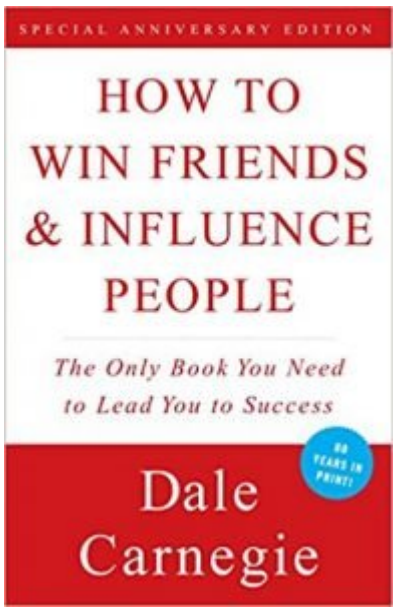
It's based on sound principles, and even if you're an advanced student of the social arts, it's still a great refresher.

I also appreciate that Carnegie uses many real-life examples to back his principles.

Some of the principles, like almost any principle, are not always the most effective for all situations (see 'ceiling effect').
And it would be even better if it included some power dynamics, a crucial element for ambitious men's success.

Check the best books on influence and persuasion.
And for status and power, we help our students with Power University.

How to Win Friends & Influence People Summary: 12 Principles



How to Win Friends & Influence People is the biggest seller for social and people's skills of all time. And for good reasons: Dale Carnegie delivers timeless principles that will indeed make you more friends and help influence people.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/how-to-win-friends-influence-people-book-summary-review-criticism/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.2

How Women Make Men Value Them: Guide for High-Value Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you wondering why some women seem to effortlessly command higher respect, investment, and commitment from men — even very high-value ones?

You have come to the right place.

Before we start, this article explains psychological patterns some women use in relationships — knowing them helps you protect yourself and make smarter choices."

As a general rule, we recommend you avoid partners who engage in manipulation and nasty dating power moves.

But if you've been too naive or too giving without positive calculativeness, this article helps you understand power dynamics, defend yourself, and pick better partners.

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- #2. She Disqualifies Your Crown Jewel
- #3. She Highlights Her Optionality & Pursuers (Preselection)
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Intro

From a general perspective, there are two ways women make men value them more:

1. Increase their (perceived) value
2. Decrease the man's value

Often, they overlap.

But the second is nastier and rooted in 'value scalping' manipulation tactics and games, while the first can be rooted in true self-development.

Let's start:

#1. She Lets You Come To Her

> ***Oh there you are, I hadn't seen you!***

Kara King in *The Power of the Pussy* says the natural order of things is that men make the move, and women make the choice.

That dynamic starts from the smallest detail: who's looking at whom.

Predators peer at their prey.

Women who want to increase perceived value often avoid being the one scanning / chasing visually. Instead, they let the man spot and approach them first.

On the first date, many smart women do this: pretend they can't find you and let you come to them while they look around, walk, or check their phone.

One time a woman I was waiting for at the entrance of an underground station walked a few meters past me like she was cat-walking.

Then she stopped 10 meters ahead, looked around, and pretended to stop there waiting.

98% of guys fall for it, admire the strut, and feel lucky to be out with her.

Watch for this — it's common.

#2. She Disqualifies Your Crown Jewel

No, not necessarily your penis — unless that's genuinely the trait you're leaning on hardest.

The crown jewel is the main quality that makes you attractive to her / others, the standout trait, or the possession you're most proud of.

The move is to **downplay the trait you rely on** most for your confidence and self-esteem.
So imagine you're a very wealthy man and that's your most glaring quality. She might say something like:

> **Her:** *I hope you're not one of those guys who thinks money makes him special*

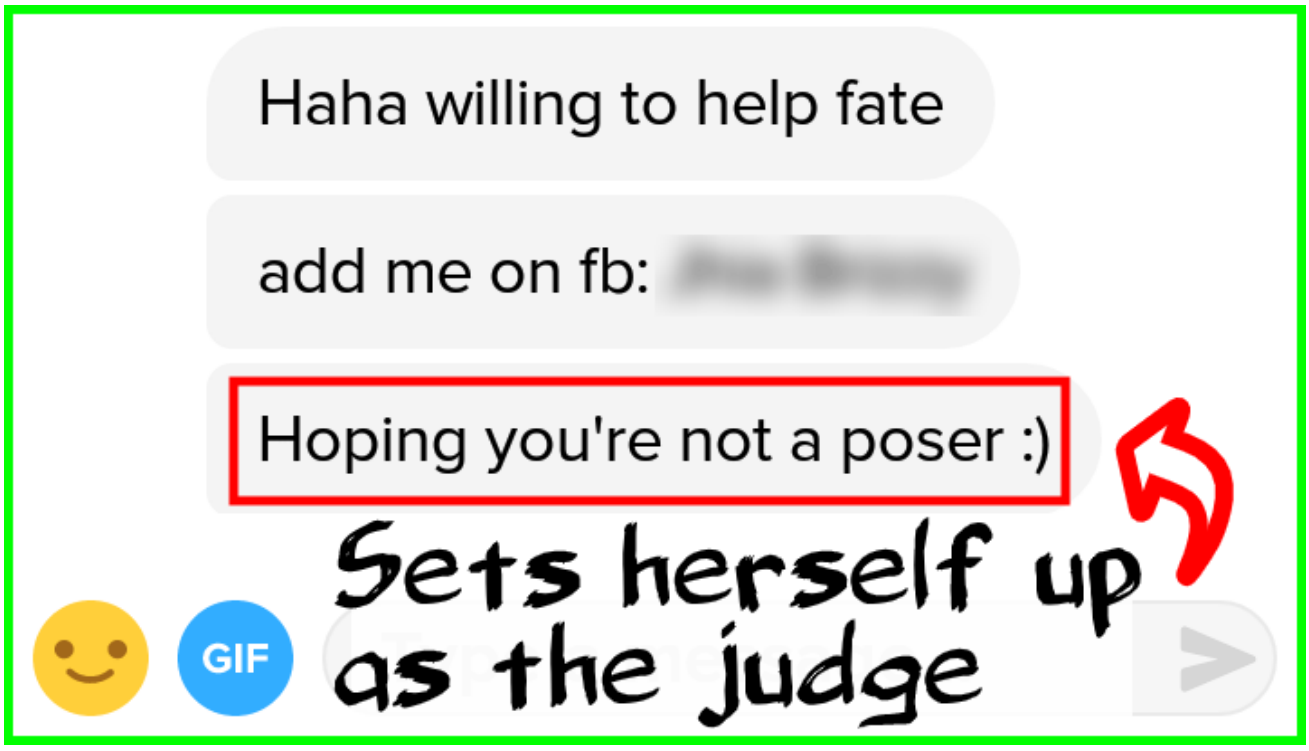
It does a few things to you:

- Denies your “advantage”
- Tells you that you need to come up with something else (qualifying and complying with her)
- Sets her as the judge
- Communicates she needs more
- Communicates she looks beyond superficial stuff

All in one, nice.

Now, the most astute guys will not jump through her hoops. And yet, even those start valuing her more.

Here’s an example of a girl executing this with me:



This worked especially well because a few of my pictures tend to be “poser” pictures, so she made me slightly insecure and gave her more power and control. I cared more for her opinion and wanted more for her to “accept me” in spite of my pictures, which also made me value her more.

#3. She Highlights Her Optionality & Pursuers (Preselection)

Cialdini and countless studies leave little room for doubters: people want what other people also want.

And the dating marketplace is no exception.

The best is if she gets you to see it firsthand.

And that’s why the best places to use this technique are night venues where people naturally approach each other.

She won’t always stand close hand in hand, but takes some distance.

When you’re getting drinks? She stands outside the queue and looks languishingly at some guy.

When guys approach her, she makes polite conversation.

And when you come back with the drinks and see her talking to another man… you will get into a more defensive mindset.

And yes, you will also value her more.

She can't lose if she does it well: no matter how handsome you are, if she dresses sexy a woman will always get more approaches.

#4. She Implies You 'Barely Managed'

> *…. He can count his lucky stars!*

This is the main idea:

She communicates that **she was assessing you hard before she gave you a chance.**

One more mistake there, one blunder here… And you would have gotten the chop.

No need to do it confrontationally.

The positive message she conveys is that she liked you and cheered for you, but she has very high standards and you had a few shaky moments.

You were under heavy scrutiny. That's the message.

Look at this Tinder date example. She was too childish and I was close to walking.

But the fact that she displayed such high standards was a huge point for her.

Rejecting someone raises value.

Almost rejecting you raises her value, lowers yours… And still makes you happy that you made the cut.

Win, win, and win again!

To communicate high standards, here are a couple of examples she might use:

> **Her:** *There was that guy with the pony tail hair you were talking to… If he was your friend I'd never have given*

> *you my number*

If you're already in a more advanced stage she might look at some situations and say:

> **Her:** *When I asked you to help me and you weren't sure… I'm glad you came through or we wouldn't be here now*

Now on to the next.

#5. She Tells You You Were a Such Dork (But She Loved You Anyway)

If the relationship progresses you will eventually get to talk about the first time you met, and what you thought about each other.

She never says she thought you were a catch, cool or, God forbid, that she was scheming to meet you.

That would make **you the prize of the relationship**.

Instead she says she thought you were a bit of a dork.

If you were cool, she says she wasn't sure about you because you looked so try-hard.

You won her over time instead. She's super happy with you, but it's not like you swept her off her feet… But hey, you're great.

That's the message.

#6. She Talks About Her Wonderful Exes

There is a tendency for couples to match up around the same overall value.

Thus, communicating great exes is a great way for her to make you realize her worth.

Talking about great exes does a few good things:

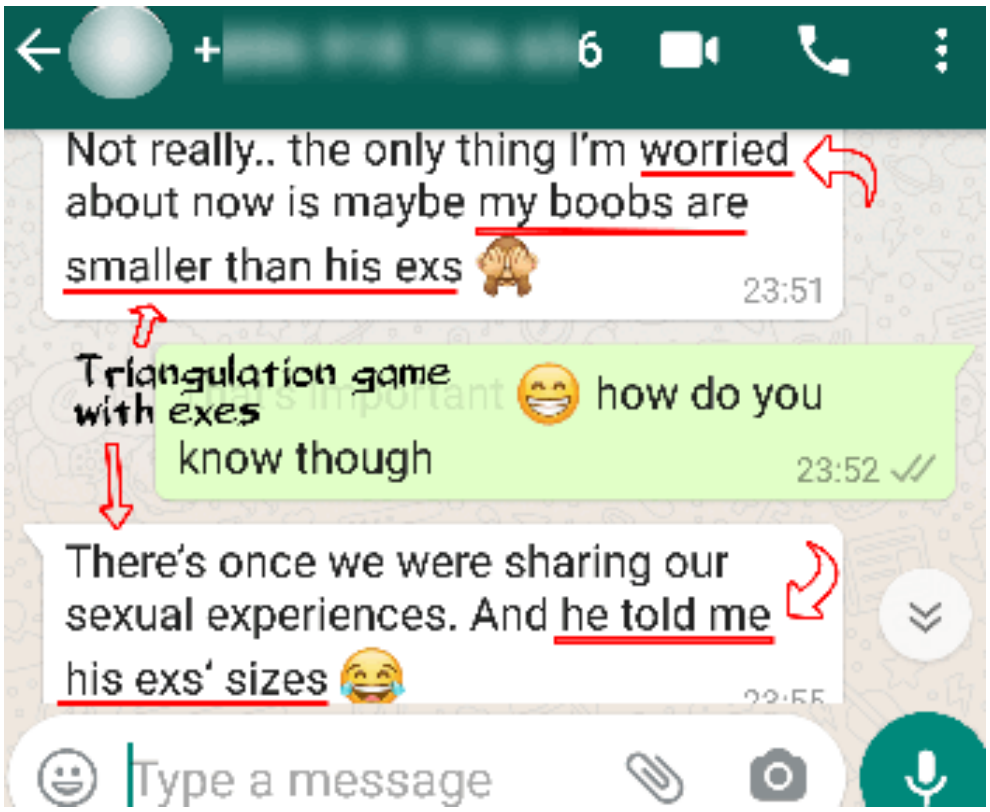
- Signals she's a high-value woman
- Implies she can get equally amazing men

And, as well, if you don't have strong inner confidence:

- Keeps you insecure

Some men play this on women anyway.

From a message from an ex-fling of mine, talking about his new boyfriend:



Man using the male version of "my studdy ex" game

The opposite is also true.

If she makes you feel like you are something special compared to her exes you will feel like she's punching above her weight with you.

Even in the best-case scenario, you might feel like the main rooster in her life and might let yourself go.

Where else would she go, you will think.

You will acquire an attitude and potentially even treat her more poorly.

Some women do like Summer instead, parading a nice roster of exes:

> **Her**: (describes ex-boyfriends, including in a highly sexualized fashion)

#7. She Builds You Up For Unmanly Traits: You're A Cuddle Monster

Some men need to feel superior.

And, unluckily, for *the most abusive of them*, that means pushing her down.

These guys are egotists.

Meaning they have high self-esteem and big egos, but also very fragile egos.

She doesn't want to enter into a race to who's lower down, but at the same time doesn't want you to feel *too* good, or you will never come to respect her and recognize her value.

Solution?

She builds you up.

But NOT for personal qualities which do not help the relationship.

If you're intelligent and worldly, she won't look at you doe-eyed while you explain things.

That would only make you feel like she's not smart enough.

If you're a gym-type, *ripped guy*, she never shows herself too thirsty or too into your abs, muscles, or, God forbid, package.

Instead, she treats you more like a big cuddly bear.

When she negates your mostly mannish qualities and slots you for good in the big teddy bear category she effectively defangs you.

And in a very sneaky way, too: you'd never even suspect anything.

#8. She Undermines Your Achievements

This is nasty.

But the guys who are least likely to recognize her worth often do so because they are too into themselves.

Blinded by what they believe is their own huge achievements, they fail to even take her value into account.

To help them value her more, she reins in a man's over-inflated ego.

She can do it without starting a war by indirectly pointing out flaws he might be self-conscious about.

Example:

Years ago when I was dumb and inexperienced a girl told me we could go somewhere… If I'd go pick her up.

… And I felt inadequate for not having a car.

She can use the same concept when she needs to shorten the distance between you.

Ask for things you can't provide, compare you with people you can't stack up with, and talk of an underwhelming past.

All things that will cool down "Mr. too hot to handle".

The first step, as my former GF's crush says, is to **never show you're impressed,** which lowers her market value:

It doesn't matter how ripped / rich/smart you are. She can always take you down a peg or two by unearthing some shortcomings:

> **Her**: *Oh that's a cool Olympic size swimming pool. Is it warmed up for winter swimming?*

Or:

> **Her**: *Oh, professor and author, nice. Maybe you know X guy in your field who wrote Y best-seller. I really like him*

The secret here is to make her comments seem nonchalant, natural, and off-hand.

Powerful stuff.

#9. She 'Pinches Your Baby Fat' (playing on insecurities)

Here is when I fully realized the insidious power that this mind game has on people:

> My ex girlfriend was fit and I loved her legs.

> I thought it was fun to grab her well defined calves and comment “chub chub” as a joke. We both laughed about it.
> Then one day she told me to stop or that would make her insecure. She was too embarrassed to tell me earlier.

There was nothing that could have realistically made her insecure.

But that made me think how even the most innocent-looking gesture can have far-reaching consequences.

She can use the same principle to deflate you. Stereotypes are often the easiest to sheath with a joking semblance:

- Scrawny book worm? She tells you if she should also carry your luggage too
- Gym rat checking the grocery bill? She strokes your head and jokes she’ll call an accountant to support

#10. Ashton Kutcher Is The Hottest (Not You)

> ***Someone else is on Mount Olympus. You can come back to earth***

I like understanding people, and that includes their tastes.

A conversation I like to have early with women is who they think are the hottest men (and women) around.

I remember asking an ex-girlfriend of mine who she thought was the hottest guy in Hollywood. We were left with two people, so we get to finally crown the N.1.

> **Me:** *So who’s the hottest then, X or Kutcher?*
> **She:** *Well, is there really anyone hotter than Ashton Kutcher?*

As you notice, I can’t remember who was the second. But I do somehow remember she was so into Kutcher :).

Basically, she had me admit I wasn’t N.1.

You cannot do this with her friends, but with actors and celebs, it’s fine (and if it’s not fine you should re-evaluate her).

#11. She Breaks Up With You

Many people only realize that they need her when they don't have her anymore.

And plenty of marriages followed a breakup, when the woman gained more power and when the man realized he truly wanted her.

Albeit this might seem like a huge power move, if she's not getting her needs met, many women actually do break up.

It's a very strong way of putting the ball in your court.

However, there is a skill in how she uses this move.

She needs to make you understand that she likes you, but that until you are unable to give her what she needs, she simply can't stay.

Something like this:

> **Her**: I love you, and I always will. And at the same time, I also love and respect myself. If you cannot do the same, then you are forcing me to move on. If in the future you will change your mind, please let me know. Goodbye my love.

Mic drop, exit.

If you liked her, you will realize her worth when she's not there.

And if you come back, chances are that you will treat her *much* better.

Bonus: She Likes You Because You Recognize How Great She Is

This is an interesting gambit.

Dale Carnegie says that to promote the behavior you want to see, you need to tell people they already have that behavior.

So if you fail to recognize her true worth, she might suggest to you that you are already seeing her true worth.

For example, she can tell you that the reason why she likes you so much is because both of you appreciate her true

worth.

That you recognize that she is an accomplished woman, a pious girl, a respectful lady… Or whatever it is that she feels sets her apart.

Please Note:

If you see these dark psychology techniques used on you too often, you need to consider you might be dating a poor partner.

These techniques to make her valued more are best for:

- Knowledge sake
- Friends/colleagues you can't avoid
- Short term flings
- Sparingly with girlfriends who self-aggrandize

A swallow doesn't make summer so even great women can have a moment of weakness or can unconsciously *try to make you feel inferior*.

In those cases, it's good to know how to even the odds to display you're not a naive, submissive, or low-value man.

But if you often have to deal with these games, then you need to reconsider that woman.

If it happens more than very rarely, you're in a *combative relationship* or possibly even in an abusive relationship.

If your woman is busier *putting you down* than building you up. That's the definition of a *toxic relationship*.

And you should probably not look for ways to "balance it" because it will only take you into a downward spiral.

That's why increasing her value or decreasing yours are actually two faces of the same coin.

It's because they both focus on who's better in a sort of competition-fueled race.

A healthy relationship is different. **A healthy relationship is about adding value to each other**. She builds you up and you build her up.

That's the kind of relationship you deserve.

I recommend you also check:

- How to control relationships and maintain attraction
- How women control relationships
- Mind games men play
- How women mindf*ck a guy

Ignore the Guy, Get the Guy: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Ignore the Guy, Get the Guy is your guide to surviving a breakup and making him run back to you.[image] Thus, it's especially geared towards women who want to get their man -and their relationship- back.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - INTRODUCTION
  - Chapter 1: Why No Contact Works
  - Chapter 2: The Aftermath of a Breakup
  - Chapter 3: The Emotional Roller Coaster Ride
  - Chapter 4: What a Man Expects After a Breakup
  - Chapter 5: Cut Him Off Completely
  - Chapter 6: Hide Your Crazy
  - Chapter 7: Handling a Breakup Through Facebook and Twitter
  - Chapter 8: How Long You Must Go Without Contact
  - Chapter 9: Get Your House In Order
  - Chapter 10: Skyrocket Your Self Confidence
  - Chapter 11: How To Make Mr. Ex Miss You
  - Chapter 12: What You Should Do to Get Him Back
  - Chapter 13: Be Smart With Your Heart
  - FAQ
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Avoid contact after a breakup
- Resume a happy life. And if he can see that, all the better
- Only take him back if he shows he's serious about moving forward

Full Summary

About The Author: Leslie Braswell is an author of female dating strategies books.

Note:
"Ignore The Guy, Get The Guy" never openly states so, but it's geared towards maximizing the chances of you two getting back together.
I'm personally not sure that's the healthiest mindset to have, but that's your decision.

INTRODUCTION

Leslie Braswell says that how you handle the post-break makes the difference in either making him run further away or making him come crawling back for another chance.

Chapter 1: Why No Contact Works

No contact immediately after the break up is the only way to go, implies Leslie Braswell.

She says that controlling your emotions will be the hardest part. But it's key because women who fall apart communicate unattractive neediness and no emotional control.
No contact is the best medicine because:

- Hides your true state (that you're falling apart)
- Communicates you're no longer his (and men want what they can't have)
- Gives him space to miss you
- Shrouds you in an air of mystery (what is she up to?)
- You more easily move on (keeping in touch makes you stay loyal to him)
- It's the only way to know if he really wants you back

When he contacts you first, let him wait before you reply. If he sends an empty text such as "what a great day today", don't reply. Texts without a scope serve nothing: you're not out for a chat, he either wants you back, or he's a time waster.

Leslie Braswell says you keep the silent treatment until he's 100% serious about getting you back.

Chapter 2: The Aftermath of a Breakup

The author says that it's OK to take the first week to mourn and be sad. Use this time to analyze what went wrong and how you contributed to it.

After that week, it's time to move on:

- Change phone ringtone (so you don't run checking texts hoping it's him)
- Always dress well
- Keep the old messages, use pain as a reminder: love shouldn't hurt, it wasn't real love
- Set weekly "no contact reminders" and reward yourself at the end of each week

Chapter 3: The Emotional Roller Coaster Ride

Leslie Braswell says knowing the emotions you will experience will make it easier for you to endure them.
The emotions are:

1. Shock
2. Denial
3. Anger -obsessively asking what went wrong-
4. Negotiate -in this phase, you want to talk to him to fix it-
5. Acceptance

But the author says that smart women don't negotiate: they have a take-it-or-leave-it approach and don't do compromises.
However, she doesn't believe that once it's broken it's gone forever. But don't take that as a motivation to pursue him: he has to show you first. And he has to put in the effort.

Leslie says you will know if he really wants it: when a man loves you, he makes you his priority. That is simple (same concept Greg Behrendt espouses in *He's Just Not That Into You*).

Chapter 4: What a Man Expects After a Breakup

Leslie Braswell says a man will expect you to contact him, and possibly to fall apart.

And that's when you'll throw him a curve ball.

She says in three weeks he will realize you're not really seeking him, and after four weeks he'll wonder what are you up to. But if he hasn't reached out in eight weeks, he has moved.

Breakup Power Move

Leslie Braswell says you should bounce back and have fun -and possibly let him know that-. When he catches wind of that, it's gonna be a big hit to his ego.

How He Broke Up

The author says that a telephone breakup is only acceptable in long-distance relationships.
Otherwise, anything else outside face-to-face is a no-no to even consider getting back together.

You Can't Be Friends

It doesn't work when there are still feelings because the breakup never really ends and it only gets messier.
And there's another slimier reason why he'd want to stay friends: he's not really sure and wants to keep you as an option.

I loved the author's suggestion on what to reply when he gives you the "let's be friends" BS. You smile and say "sure". And if he calls you to be friends, ignore it.

My note:
this is also my suggestion on how to turn down a date with class. And what Carrie does when meeting his ex with a kid.

Chapter 5: Cut Him Off Completely

The author says it feels to you like you you've lost the love of your life, but you only actually need to give your body the time to re-balance from the oxytocin chemical.

Don't Have Sex With Him

The author says that men want sex while women seek security. That's why until he's providing you with security you shouldn't give sex.

My note:
Lambert says during breakups men look for new women while women stay loyal. So no sex breakup. Either together, or nothing.

Chapter 6: Hide Your Crazy

Chapter 6 of Ignore The Guy Get The Guy can be boiled down to this: you can have a nervous breakdown, but never act on it or show it.

The example is that of a former female astronaut who, obviously, didn't hider her crazy. Lisa Nowak drove hours on astronaut diapers to assault his ex' new girlfriend -oh, and in case you're wondering, the diapers served to avoid wasting time on biological breaks during the drive-.

The author poignantly asks: do you think her ex would ever consider getting back together after that?

Chapter 7: Handling a Breakup Through Facebook and Twitter

Leslie Braswell recommends you delete him from your friends list and quietly take down the pictures of you two together.

Wait a few days before changing your relationship status and change it privately.

Keep posting the same way you used to post before the breakup, so you won't show any signs of emotional trauma.

Chapter 8: How Long You Must Go Without Contact

The author says if you two shared something meaningful he'll probably get in touch within thirty days.

If he doesn't contact you within sixty days, your relationship is probably over for good.

My Note:
I don't totally agree.
There are women whom I felt so good with that I'd be ready to reconsider at any time.
But that's *not* to say that you should count on that!

Chapter 9: Get Your House In Order

Leslie Braswell has a few tips on moving on:

- Tell yourself there's no other option but to move on
- Join classes
- Make yourself beautiful and go out (maybe on girls' night out)
- Be open to give and receive (new) love
- Change your style: some hair highlights for example
- Go on a shopping spree
- Clean / fix the house
- Remove all his pictures from the sight

Chapter 10: Skyrocket Your Self Confidence

Leslie Braswell says that self-confidence is something you develop.

She says you should develop your own rules and value, and not simply accept what society feeds you (I agree, check my guide on *how to build a strong identity*).
Other tips she shares:

- Take stock of your qualities and remind yourself each day
- Surround yourself with positive people
- Do positive affirmations (what Tony Robbins calls incantation, but *it doesn't work with low-self esteem*)
- Try new things and new places

Chapter 11: How To Make Mr. Ex Miss You

Leslie Braswell says you should give him less attention than he gives you after the breakup.

And when you get in touch, don't say everything about yourself. Be a mystery, leave him guessing.

I especially liked in this chapter Kate Middleton's example.
The author says she'd bet Kate was destroyed after Prince William broke up with her. But she gave the opposite impression. She worked out and got in shape, she organized charity events and enjoyed the nightlife. And Prince

William went back to her.

Leslie Braswell says you might not have photographers to chronicle your life, but you can use the power of social media.

> Men are like cats: chase and they'll run. Ignore them and they'll come purring

Chapter 12: What You Should Do to Get Him Back

Braswell suggests you focus on yourself and on becoming the best woman you can be.

Chapter 13: Be Smart With Your Heart

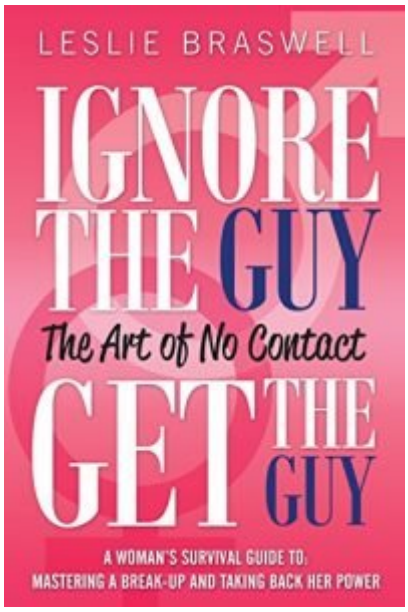
The author says women crave a hand to hold on to or a chest to sleep on, but relying on someone else to make them happier is not good in the long term.

And she says you should first love yourself before anyone can love you.

And most of all, don't get bitter, and don't let past relationships hold you back to move toward new -and possibly better- relationships.

FAQ

The author has a list of frequently asked questions. Get the book for more.



CONS

Long
Ignore The Guy Get The Guy has useful content, but the book could have been (much) briefer.

Getting Back?
Leslie seems mostly hell-bent on making him miss you so that he might come back. I'm not too sure that's a very healthy mindset and in some cases, you might be better served with a "let's find a better guy mindset".

Review

Good book, easy to read and the concepts make a lot of sense.

You will definitely increase your chances of getting back together or moving ahead faster by following Leslie's tips.

I also appreciate the fact that Leslie doesn't take any moral high ground on the reader.
She admits it's difficult and it's a tough time. I appreciate when authors show a vulnerable side instead of pontificating while hiding behind a pen.

Further reading
You can check my further book summaries on women's dating here or **Get the book on Amazon!**

You’re Insignificant. The Sooner You Accept It, The More Powerful You Get

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Tomes have been written on the notion that *“ego is your enemy*“.

I don’t think ego is your enemy.

But it certainly does not help you when that ego becomes too big and when you start feeling like you’re a true big shot.

Let’s see how that impairs your social skills and your general life quality.

Contents

- How Self-Importance Leads to Social Anxiety
- Importance and As*holes
- Moving Beyond I’m Important
- Why We Don’t Really Matter That Much
- Better Alternatives to Being Important
  - 1. What Life Demands Of You
  - 2. You Do Matter
  - 3. You’re A Machine
  - 4. Your Goals Are Bigger Than You
- Being Unimportant Is Ultimate Power
- Summary

How Self-Importance Leads to Social Anxiety

I used to be conceited, jealous, always guarded, and relatively socially anxious.

My brother instead was open, more honest, and relaxed. He was more likable and, overall, a much better human being.

Today I understand what was one of the biggest reasons for our different dispositions.

I was self-centered and I thought I was important.
A song from the Beatles springs to mind: I, me, mine. That was me: a little conceited tw*t who thought he was “better”.

Everything around me was filtered through the “me lenses”: what it meant for me and for my reputation.
Since I felt I had a big name and reputation to defend and uphold, I had to be careful.

And “careful” is often synonymous with guarded, calculative, and… Rather scared of doing the wrong thing.
Because when you’re a big deal, everything’s a big deal.

And that’s why your social anxiety goes up when you think you’re important.

My brother wasn’t self-centered instead and thought of himself as “just another guy”.

Can you start to see how that impacted his life and character?

My brother didn’t have a good name to defend, so he didn’t need to look good.
Chill and relaxation were natural consequences of his disposition. He wasn’t afraid of making a fool out of himself,

of looking silly, or of being rejected by someone.
Because when you're not a big deal, nothing is such a big deal.

Let's dig deeper and let's see how successful "I'm important" people still fall short of their full potential:

Importance and As*holes

You can probably see some overlap between the *fixed mindset* and your *identity*.

Indeed a high sense of importance is often tied to an "I'm important" identity and it's the most paralyzing when coupled with a *fixed mindset.*

But of course, out of *pure randomness* and out of sheer ambition, some people will succeed without a growth mindset or an antifragile identity -albeit they won't maximize their potential and be as happy as they could be.

Some high-confidence people will even avoid social anxiety while still clinging to their belief of importance.

Which often goes with a more or less open attitude of "you're not as important as I am" stance.

Those are usually the people you refer to as "as*holes".

That attitude will attract some people to you. Possibly quite a few people.

But it will mostly be less confident and less socially savvy people who are drawn to what seems like high confidence and self-esteem.

But overall you'd still be at a social loss as it will harm you this way:

- Develop jealousy and resentment from less successful individuals
- Make other men see you as competition
- Repel high-caliber individuals

The last one is key.

The highest caliber individuals usually have moved beyond the "I, Me, Mine" stage. Indeed the **"I'm a big shot" stage is associated with immaturity and childishness**.

Highly successful men still trapped in this stage can still get high-caliber women, but those women see them like big babies they can't fully relate to and that can easily be played by their egos.

And that's exactly what books like *Why Men Love Bitc*es, The Power of The Pu**y*, and *Fu*k Him* all recommend: play to his need of importance and you will control him -and they are right-.

Donald and Melania Trump have this kind of shallow relationship in good part because he hasn't moved beyond his need of being important, special, and superior.

Moving Beyond I'm Important

Mark Manson's book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* is basically all about moving beyond the "I'm exceptional" phase which, he says, is mostly a western problem.

Manson says that once you drop the need to be special you will be free to pursue whatever you want without the fear of judgment and the pressure of having to reach that "you're special" status.

And it's **when you move beyond "I'm important" that you'll reach truth and liberation.**

Moving beyond the "I'm important" mindset will make you:

- Higher value man
- More attractive to a larger population
- More vulnerable, drop the masks
- Able to develop deeper and more meaningful relationships
- Don't take things personally: stronger and more resilient

It's Not About You: Don't Take Things Personally

That last point deserves a bit more space.

Don Miguel Ruiz in *The Four Agreements* says during childhood we pick up the "me, me, me mentality".

That mentality leads people to always be on guard, always ready to take offense.
He recommends we move past it and develop a mindset of not taking things personally instead.

Not only do I agree, but that's a great mindset for *getting good socially*.

The first step to moving beyond the "me, me, me" phase is to realize, factually, how little we matter in the greater scheme of things:

Why We Don't Really Matter That Much

Let's start with the idea of "people changing the world", a typical goal of today's driven entrepreneur -and a *great corporate manipulation tool* to attract naive talent-.

Nobody Changes The World (Single–handedly)

Alexander the Great was the biggest conqueror the world had ever seen.

Unstoppable and undefeated in battle, he built the biggest empire the world had ever seen.
He thought he was the son of a god and wanted to be remembered forever… And you probably needed to look him up, didn't you?

Alexander was only one of the thousands of "conquerors" whose big empires soon fell to pieces -as they all do-.

A couple more millennia, less than a blink of an eye, and he won't even be the single-line entry on history books

that he is today -not that any student gives a fu*k about him even today, anyway-.

You don't need to Google Steve Jobs, another remarkable man.

But it's only because he's contemporary and your friends lust after the latest iPhone.
But don't believe the hype of changing the world.
Internet-enabled smartphones were already a widespread tool (ten years before the iPhone) and even Jobs will be a nobody in just a few generations.

Well, Jesus does seem to last a little bit longer though, right?

When a commandment says killing is a sin, but millions died in the name of God, we could easily argue people don't really follow prophets, but *use* prophets. To justify their own actions and beliefs.
Or just go to Asia and see how well they really know Jesus.

Time Relativity: nobody remembers you

The Pharaohs took "for ever" to the next level.

Pyramids were built with the idea of lasting forever.
But believing they achieved that goal is a lack of understanding of how time really works on a bigger scale.

Pick anybody you think changed the world.

And see if anybody will remember him in 10.000 years.

Yes?

Try 300.000.

After a few more world wars and another bunch of prophets and despots will have millions up in arms and millions dying -and a bunch more huge-building projects will be started and then looted and destroyed-.

Then one billion years, after a bunch of glacial eras will give way to the sun making the world too hot to live in.

Two billion and our current world map will be nothing like it's today (our continents move). All those battles for a piece of land, this nation against that nation… How ridiculous they are when looking through the prism of time.

In five billion years the sun will be gone. By then we're either outta the solar system or we'll be gone.
"We" will make no sense by then though. Because that will be a totally different species:

Species Relativity: You're An Amoeba

By the time we either leave Earth or die, humanity won't be anything like it's today.

By then those creatures will be so different that they will feel as close to "us" as you feel close to an amoeba.

Size Relativity: You'll Always Be Small

Size matters if being important is important to you.

But however big you get on this earth… It's still a laughable matter.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Eh5BpSnBBw

Space Relativity: You'll Always Be Confined

In some corners of the universe, there might be some interplanetary merging of civilizations going on.

If we could watch them, we might realize that if some of them are as petty as we are, someone there might think they matter.

But of course, light travels slowly, so as we watch them… They're all already long dead -or extinct-. And they really thought they mattered.

We will never know anyway, because our "importance" is physically bound to very, very small regions of the universe.

And eventually, no matter what, the universe will die out and everything inside of it will go out with it:

Survival Relativity: On a Long Enough Timeline, We're All Dead

Freeman Dyson, who famously wrote a paper on life surviving in spite of all stars dying down, is much bleaker today.

Since the discovery that the universe's expansion is accelerating, he says that "it's a rather dismal situation in the long run".

Worry not though, *we're all going to die much, much sooner than that.*
This all means you're not that important, but let's what other positive mindsets we can have:

Better Alternatives to Being Important

Once you drop the need to be important, we don't want to slide into a nihilist world.
In *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* Manson says he was slipping into such a mindset.

Then he realized that if there's no reason to do anything, there's also no reason *not* to do anything.

1. What Life Demands Of You

Viktor Frankl knows a thing or two about the meaning of life.

The survivor of five concentration camps and the founder of logos therapy, Frankl says in *Man's Search For Meaning* that it's not what you ask of life, but what life asks of you.

Frankl also says love and giving back to the world are great ways of finding meaning in life. I agree with that. And I personally believe life asks you to be the best man you can be, because:

2. You Do Matter

Don't let it get to your head but, between us, you do matter.

Not in the sense that people will remember you forever, but in the sense that you matter to the people around you. Today, right now. And tomorrow.
The lives you touch, the relationships you build.

You owe it to the people around you to be the best person you can be.

3. You're A Machine

Ray Dalio *in his seminal book Principles* proposes an interesting way of looking at yourself: from the above.

Look at yourself from the top down as if you were a machine.

I think this perspective can be very healthy in going for what you want without allowing emotions to sap your spirit or make you all haughty and mighty.

4. Your Goals Are Bigger Than You

Finally, even better than looking at yourself as a machine, I like the perspective Tony Robbins proposes: do it less

for yourself and more for others.

That, he says, is the key to happiness.

Make your goals, and the people around you, bigger and more important than you are. That way you remove fears and social anxiety from the equation.
It's important, and you matter in many ways… But it's not about you anymore.

Being Unimportant Is Ultimate Power

By now you should have realized that this post is not about taking you or anyone else I mentioned down.

It's about removing the *need* of being special and important.

Removing the need for importance will take the pressure off and make you freer. And, ultimately, more powerful.

Paradoxically, the less you think you're important, the more important you will actually become to the people around you.

And once you take your own importance out of your way, you can finally start tackling what really matters in your life.

Summary

Once you *get a growth mindset* and *make your identity antifragile*, the last two steps are *leveraging your mortality* and leveraging your unimportance.

At this point, we can start tackling the hard social skills.

10 Warning Signs of Emotionally Unavailable Men (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Emotionally unavailable men make for terrible relationships.

Luckily, it's not difficult to spot them if you know what to look for.

This article will show you all the signs and provide you with a background behind the psychology of emotional unavailability.

Contents

- Emotionally unavailable men characteristics
  - #1. Business Above All
  - 2. Stonewalling
  - 3. All Logic And No Feelings
  - 4. Physical Distance
  - 5. Texts Over Face to Face
  - 6. Does Not Turn Towards
  - 7. Forced Calmness
  - 8. Hot & Cold
  - 9. Sudden Coldness
  - 10. Anger to Cover Up More Vulnerable Emotions
- Curing Emotional Unavailability
  - Personality Disorders
  - Protection Walls
  - Masks of Masculinity
  - Achievement First, Love Second
- Summary

Emotionally unavailable men characteristics

This post will use quite a few examples from Michael Corleone, the main character of *The Godfather*.

The reason we use him is simple:

1. He is the archetype of emotional unavailability
2. There are a lot of easily available videos

So let's start with the main signs and characteristics of emotionally unavailable men:

#1. Business Above All

Business is important, and one can prioritize business and still be emotionally available.

But when a man can *only* talk about business, goals, or material achievements… That's a red flag of emotional unavailability.

Note: this can be simply a phase of life for some men (more details below).

When Michael Corleone first uttered the famous sentence "it's strictly business", that's when we knew his cold,

emotionally unavailable side had taken over.

> ***It's not personal Sonny, it's strictly business***

That's when we knew The Godfather had put a defensive layer between the world and his true, emotional self.

2. Stonewalling

Wikipedia defines *stonewalling* as "refusal to communicate and cooperate".

Stonewalling serves emotionally unavailable men to avoid emotionally difficult topics through silence, topic changes, leaving the room, or, in the *most abusive men*, lashing out in aggression.

Not all men avoiding intimate topics are emotionally unavailable, but it's an indicator.

Here is an example of stonewalling from the movie "Crazy, Stupid, Love":

3. All Logic And No Feelings

There's nothing wrong with rationality.

Rationality is great.
But when it's *only* rationality, *always* rationality, then it means it must crowd out something else.

That something often is emotions and feelings: there's no place left for them.

Dealing with a partner's heavy emotional moments only rationally and matter-of-factly is a big indicator of emotional distance.

Notice how Michael Corleone first deals with his sister and then with his wife.

Note: Rational conversation in the face of emotion and worry is also a losing strategy.
His wife will only feel more distant. And it's the worst possible moment for discussing rules and demands. It's not like she is likely to remember, obey and be happy with his "just one-time rule".

4. Physical Distance

Emotionally unavailable people sometimes carry their emotional distance into the physical realm.

It can become a vicious circle where the emotionally open partner, afraid of giving too much and of being spurned, shows less and less.
Until the partner who is in touch with her emotional side becomes emotionally starved, lonely and isolated.

Here are some signs:

- Avoiding hugs
- Patting on the back (a sign of distance)
- Never initiating hand-holding
- No caressing/cuddling
- Sitting at a distance
- Avoiding kisses

Notice here how detached the godfather's answers to his sister's emotional out-pour (he just gives her his hand):

5. Texts Over Face to Face

Long-distance communication medium feels safer to emotionally distant men.

Especially written and asynchronous communication.

When you notice a pattern where your relationship issues end up being discussed over text, that's a red flag.

6. Does Not Turn Towards

Turning towards is a concept that relationship researcher John Gottman first came up with.

People who deal with emotionally distant individuals are often worried about seeking fulfillment of their emotional needs too directly and too openly.

But the fact that they avoid too direct expressions of their emotional needs does not mean they still don't have them.

So they will drop hints though in the hope their partner will pick up on them and take the conversation deeper.
But those hints go always unnoticed.

So when you see yourself trying to broach important issues but you never end up discussing them.. You may now know why.
Your partner either does not understand your hints or does not have the emotional courage and vulnerability to act on them.

There is a name for this behavior in relationship literature, and it's called: *turning away*.

Notice Fredo here.
When he says "Mikey… I was mad at you", he wants to open up about his past, about his personal issues. He is hoping Michael will listen to him, forgive him, and welcome him.
But Michael soon moves into the business talk (and notices how disappointed Fredo is)

:

If the Godfather wanted to let Fredo open up he should have asked "*you were mad at me.. ?*" in a curious but un-judgmental tone. Fredo would have most likely opened up.

A common mistake would have been instead to ask "why were you mad at me", which sounds inquisitive and would push your partner to defend and backtrack.

7. Forced Calmness

Mirror neurons help us feel what the people around us are feeling.

So when we are very tense, the people around us tend to tense up as well.
And same goes for emotions.

When you're riding high on emotions or showing plenty of love to him, is he always stone-cold calm no matter what?

If so, that's an indicator he's out of tune with your feelings and might be emotionally unavailable.

Notice the difference between Kay, nervous, edgy, and breathing shallow, and Michael.
Total emotional unavailability:

https://youtu.be/97uOXRPw_MA?t=72

8. Hot & Cold

Sometimes you will see relationships that seem to go well and move forward.

Then suddenly he disappears or “changes”.
Then he goes back to being good.
But you’re never sure, he always seems to teeter between amazing and open to cold and shifty.

This might be a positive sign as it shows he’s afraid of emotional commitment, but at least he’s capable of it.
But it’s still far from certain that he will eventually be fully open (or that it will happen with you).

This might be a case of an *avoidant attachment style*.
Also, read *anxious-avoidant relationships*.

Ashton Kutcher in the movie Spread is an emotionally unavailable philanderer. Until he meets his real love (but before that plenty of women never saw that emotional side) :

If the underlying issue is solved, these men can move beyond the emotionally unavailable stage. Unless:

9. Sudden Coldness

Narcissists individuals will often start relationships “pedal to the metal”.

You will feel like you are being swept off your feet and falling into an abyss of love.
But then he suddenly changes and becomes cold and distant.

Also, read:

- Signs you’re in a relationship with a sociopath

10. Anger to Cover Up More Vulnerable Emotions

Anger is an emotion, so it might seem like it’s the domain of emotional people.

However, **anger can also serve as a mask to cover emotions** that are more difficult to express.

You will recognize the difference when anger is used in situations where despair, tears, or sorrow would be more normal responses.

The Godfather finding out his wife has a miscarriage is such an example:

Curing Emotional Unavailability

Do emotionally unavailable men change?

Yes, that can be the case of course.
But that they can change does not mean they will.

Below are some common sources of emotional unavailability and how to cure them.

Personality Disorders

Sometimes emotional unavailability is the consequence of personality disorders such as narcissism or, even worst, *sociopathy*. In those cases, drop the relationship.

Cure:
No cure, just distance yourself. In the worst cases, you might want to do it cautiously too as some of these individuals can be dangerous and abusive.
Also, read:

- Signs of abusive relationships
- Ending a toxic relationship

- Should you break up? Diagnostic quiz

Protection Walls

In some cases, emotionally unavailable men hide their emotions to protect themselves.

It can be because of past heartbreaks, traumas, or because they're scared of falling in love with you.
Sometimes it's unconscious, some other times fully conscious.

Example: the last words of a woman I liked before she disappeared from my life a couple of years ago were "I need to protect myself". Albeit that was a woman and not a man, the mechanism is the same.
Stay distant and aloof and you won't get hurt.

Cure:
If you like each other and it's conscious, give them time and show them your love first.
The feeling that they're not alone in their emotions will reassure them that it's safer than they think. The more they feel safe in the relationship, the more they can lower their wall.
If it's unconscious or because of past traumas, it might require some therapy.

Masks of Masculinity

Men can act emotionally unavailable because they think that being distant, fully rational, or unemotional is how real men behave.

They either think it's what's expected of them or believe that's how the ideal man is.
Lewis Howes recently wrote a book about it and it's called *The Mask of Masculinity*.

Cure:
Knowledge, age, experience, and maturity usually cure the mask of masculinity.
It's difficult to accelerate this process from the outside, and some men might even never complete it.

Achievement First, Love Second

As Harvey righteously points out, some men need to achieve a certain goal or reach a certain financial stability before they can fully allow space for love, family, and relationships.

These men won't feel accomplished enough or "men enough" if first, they don't get that to that minimum base level. The base level varies for everyone.

Cure:
Achieving that minimum level of comfort or achievement will automatically free these men to love.

If they are far from their goal and playing second fiddle is too much for you, you might want to move on.

Otherwise, you can state a minimum love requirement and ride along with them -these are the beautiful relationships starting when he had nothing and reaching the top together-.

Beware also there are some men that never make space for relationships and never stop achieving. These men often have boundless drive and ambition.

Summary

Emotionally unavailable means he will either never open up to love you, or he will never show it. Which, we might argue, is almost the same.

It can be a conscious or unconscious choice; genetic or cultural; a phase of life or unchangeable.
Whatever the cause, it must change because there's no relationship without an emotional bond.

And the closer the relationship is, the more damaging a lack of emotional bond becomes.
Ultimately, **Emotional unavailability hurts people and destroys relationships**.

If you are in a relationship with an emotionally unavailable man, these are the steps I would recommend:

1. Assess if you're dealing with an emotionally unavailable man
2. Determine why it's happening
3. Determine if there's a solution
4. Ask yourself if you can or cannot deal with the consequences

And then you'll even have your answer if to work on it or move on.

Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man (2009) is a best-selling dating book for women.
Steve Harvey, the author, shares his views on how men think and shares knowledge and dating strategies to help women secure a man, a happy relationship, and a wedding ring.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - 1. What Drives Men
  - 2. Our Love Isn't Like Your Love
  - 3. The Three Things Every Man Needs
  - 4. Talking Differences
  - 5. First Things First
  - 6. Sports Fish VS Keepers
  - 7. Mama's Boys
  - 8. Why Men Cheat
  - PART THREE: The Playbook
  - 9. Get Some Standards
  - 10. The Five Key Question Every
  - 11. The Ninety Days Rule
  - 12. Let Him Meet The Kids
  - 13. Strong, Independent -and Lonely- Women
  - 14. How To Get The Ring
  - 15. The Full Harvey System: Timing & Negotiation
  - No Nagging
- TPM Takeaways
  - Let Him Lead & Feel Important (don't overplay 'independence')
  - Avoid playing nasty power games
  - Pick men who feel 'accomplished enough' for LTR
  - Clearly state your goals early on
- CONS
- Review

[image]
Takeaways

- Men show love with Professing (introducing you as official), Protecting and Providing
- Men need your support, loyalty and sex
- Set your requirements, demands and needs early on

Notes

About the Author:
Steve Harvey is an American comedian, television host and public personality.

PART ONE: The Mind-Set of a Man

In the introduction, Steve Harvey says men are simple and they all think in a similar way.
He says that “Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man” is a playbook of sorts.

1. What Drives Men

Steve Harvey says men are simple. No matter where he’s currently at, there are three things that shape his identity and self-esteem:

- Who he is (his title)
- What he does (how he gets the title)
- The reward he gets (how much he makes)

A man must achieve a minimum in those three areas to feel like he is fulfilling his duties as a man.
Before he figures out how to achieve his minimum goals in those areas he will be too busy to focus on you (and on family & relationships).

2. Our Love Isn’t Like Your Love

Harvey says men and women love differently.

Women profess their love many times a day and will probably expect their men to do the same.
But men love in three ways instead, which the author dubs the “3 Ps”:

1. Profess

He will tell everyone you are his woman and he will introduce you with an official title.
Conversely, if he doesn’t take you out and you haven’t seen his family and friends, you’re not there to stay.

2. Provide

The more a man can provide, the more he feels like a man.
If he can’t provide, he doesn’t feel like a man.

That’s one of the reasons, Steve says, that poor men run away from their father’s duties: to escape their feelings of inadequacy.

Providing is not only monetary, but it’s also about helping to fix things, moving stuff, or solving problems.
And that’s why you need to make him feel like he’s providing for you (later chapter).

3. Protecting

When a man loves you, he will defend you and stand up for you.

He will defend you physically, from people who are disrespecting you and by doing things he deems too dangerous for you.

3. The Three Things Every Man Needs

Steve Harvey says a man needs three things:

1. Love

2. Loyal Support
3. Sex

Love means to make him feel like he's special, like he's a king.

Loyal support means that you will stand by his side no matter what happens.
Sex, well, Steve says men can only go a month without it. And if you start rationing out sex, he'll be looking for it elsewhere.

When a woman doesn't provide for these three things, the relationship is doomed.

4. Talking Differences

Steve Harvey says men are about purpose-driven talk and solutions.

Men rarely open up like women do, but they like fixing stuff for you.

For more on gender difference (generalizations) read:

- **Men Are From Mars, Women From Venus**

https://thepowermoves.com/men-mars-women-venus-summary
PART TWO: Why Men Do What They Do

5. First Things First

Harvey says again that men are simple, and if they come to talk to you, they like you.

When he comes, he has two things in mind:

1. If you will sleep with him
2. And if so, how much effort it will take

Now that you know, he says, let him know what's your price so that you won't waste any time.

6. Sports Fish VS Keepers

Steve Harvey says men divide women among women good for a night, and women good for long term.

My Note:
This is the basis of the Madonna/Whore dichotomy

The key, says Harvey, is that it's you who decides if you're disposable or if you're a keeper.
By being a high quality woman, by setting the bar high and by demanding and requiring proper behavior, you communicate that you're a keeper.

And here's how to recognize if he's looking for something serious or for quick fun:

- He picks up the bill (VS asking to split)
- Keeps his word and shows up on time
- Introduces you his friends
- Happy to meet your kids

For more details read:

- **Is he wasting your time?**

> Am I Wasting My Time On Him? Check These 7 Signs

7. Mama's Boys

Does your boyfriend put his mother above you?

That's not a good sign as you should be a team. Check the book on why that happens.

8. Why Men Cheat

Harvey says that men can have sex without emotions.
Which means he can love you and still cheat for the simple act of sex.

For more on cheating read:

- Why do people cheat

PART THREE: The Playbook

9. Get Some Standards

The author says men like women with standards.

However, Harvey warns the readers this does not mean you get on a man's face telling him what he must and must not do.
You need some tact and some good presentation for your requirements (indeed high initial demands are a sign of low quality).

10. The Five Key Question Every

Steve proposes you find out 5 things about him early on:

1. **Long Term Plans**: and how they fit into who he is, what he does, how much he makes
2. **Short Terms Actions**: is he acting on his plans?
3. **Relationships**: with his mother and God. How he feels about family and children
4. **What He Thinks About You**: you want details and examples (or he's not thinking long term)
5. **How He Feels About You**: you want to see deep feeling (missing you, feels great with you, loves you..)

One and two tells you if he's ready for something long term.
Number 3 tells you if he wants something long term.
Questions 4 and 5 come after you have been knowing him for a while.

These questions by themselves will also cause him to start seeing you in a different, and better light.

11. The Ninety Days Rule

The ninety day rule relates to sex, and you can imagine what it means.

My Note:
Making him wait for sex is a very common concept among women's dating advice books. I think 90 days is a bit too long, check my article on why you shouldn't let him wait for sex.
But if you must, read "how to delay sex effectively".

https://thepowermoves.com/how-to-reject-sex

12. Let Him Meet The Kids

If you have children, Harvey recommends you introduce them early on because you also want to check for compatibility between them.

13. Strong, Independent -and Lonely- Women

Harvey says that when a woman says she doesn't need any men, men cannot provide and protect, and they feel useless.

For a couple good articles on the subject, check:

- **Successful women dating**
- **How to marry power and femininity**

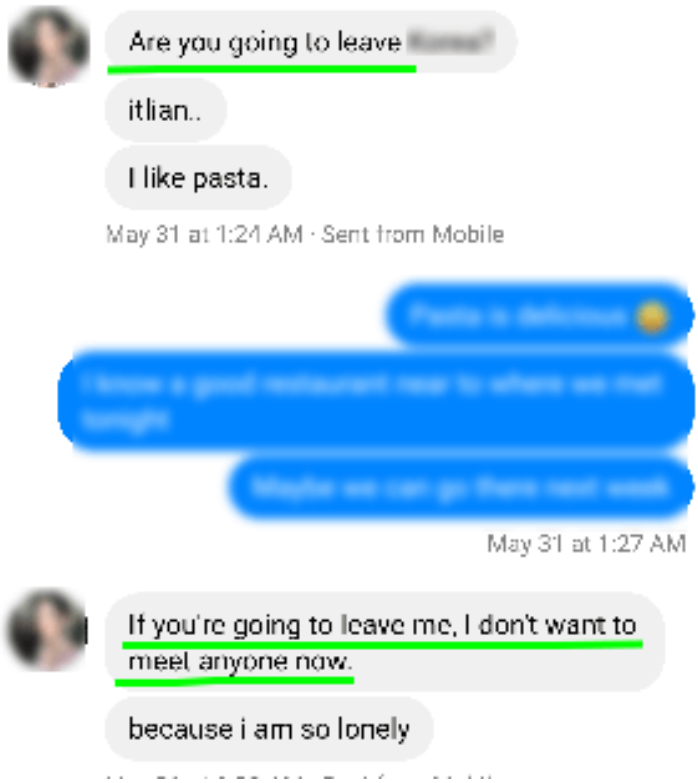
> Why Successful Women Fail At Dating (& How to Fix It)

14. How To Get The Ring

Harvey says **the only reason why he is able to stall marriage is that she hasn't required him to set the date**.

So you must make the ring a requirement for your continued relationship.

My Note: Use selective submissiveness and "in need" to get the commitment
See a real-life example here:



And read the full description here:

- **How to make men want to invest and protect** using selective submissiveness

15. The Full Harvey System: Timing & Negotiation

From the sequel book 'Straight Talk, No Chaser', the best takeaways are:

Assess Men's Psychology Based on Age

- **20's prioritize money over relationships**: He is just beginning to get his bearings on life as an adult and just finding out about the three cornerstones of manhood. Steve says that men have a "financial clock" similar to a woman's "biological clock", and it starts in earnest in his 20's
- **30's: Getting Tired of Chasing Skirts**: He is achieving some of his life goals and getting tired of chasing skirts. He starts grappling with the idea that he will not always be young and fit and starts seriously thinking about children's timelines. If he looks unhappy and still working hard, he might not be ready to commit yet. Check his behavior: If he has a lot of time for extra-work activities, then he also has time for a family.
- **40s: If He's Single, It's For A Reason**: Feels good about his life and is in his prime, especially if he's a husband and a dad. But if he's single, he's single for a reason. He might be afraid of commitment, happy with the single life, or giving up on the idea of a family. If he's recently divorced, it's likely he'll be chasing skirts again for a while, and it might take him a few years to be ready for serious relationships again.
- **50's: Consolidating Legacies**: Are looking to solidify their legacies and are a lot more open to having a woman around and growing old with her.

No Nagging

Harvey stresses how so many women do it wrong when they want their men to do something.

They use *passive aggressiveness*, silent treatment, or, worst of all, full-blown verbal aggression.

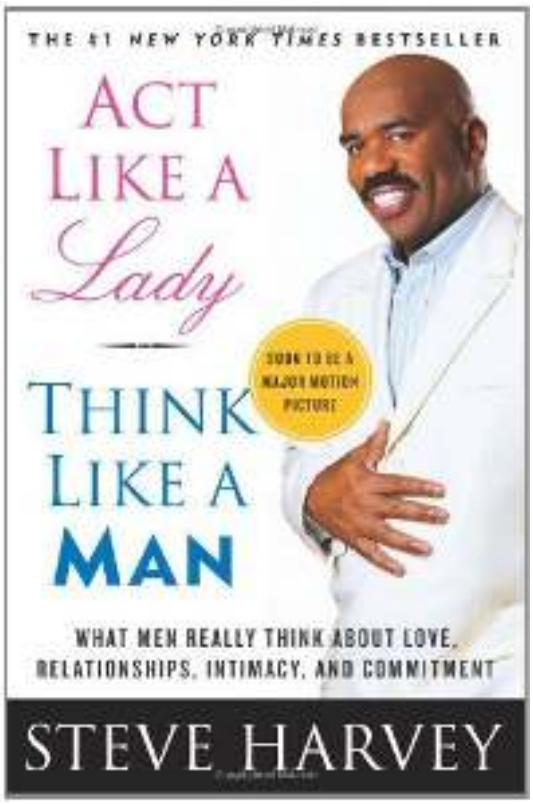
He says though that it's a question of priorities, and your man's priorities aren't necessarily the same as yours and you should understand that.
Of course, he'll do the dishes… But not right after eating maybe.

He says you should be more diplomatic and pick your battles and use more of the:

The Relationship Art of The Deal

The art of the deal is a sort of tit for tat.
You help him in what matters to him and he helps you in what matters for him.

Harvey advises that you start the conversation with an appreciation and ask him what you could do more for him. Once you agree on something you can do for him, then you ask him what he can do for you.



TPM Takeaways

Let Him Lead & Feel Important (don't overplay 'independence')

He will feel more like a man and he will like you more. Many men need to feel they provide and protect their women.

Men want women who make them feel important. Men want women who want men.
They don't want independent women or women who seek power in their relationship.

Avoid playing nasty power games

Good and quality men want collaborative and supportive women. So cut out nasty power games:

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

Also read:

- **How to make men want to invest and protect** using selective submissiveness

Pick men who feel 'accomplished enough' for LTR

- A man needs a minimum level of achievement before he can fully give himself to relationships.

That's true and Harvey is the only one of all the women's dating books I read to stress that.

- **P.S. Read more dating books written by men**

Women advise other women to be strong and independent. But while that's good advice for empowerment, that's a covert manipulation to handicap the competition in dating, and it's not effective.

Clearly state your goals early on

I liked and agree with the concept that a woman should make clear, early but in a tactful way, what her final goals are (marriage or kids). And she should have a timeline.

That goes against what some other authors advise. But not putting your needs and demands early is, in my opinion, too big of a risk.

CONS

I think that Harvey is a much better person to learn from than most other female authors who write for other women.

But still, there are a few cons here:

- **Dogmatic: men are not all the same**

Steve Harvey purports to speak for all men.

For example, he writes:

> *I cannot tell you the fulfillment we have in knowing that we've secured your time (…) it's all the affirmation we need*

But that's not how *I* feel, for one.
And I'm not alone.

Why?
Because "Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man" is:

- **Tailored Towards Providers Men**

This book is tailored towards men who want (and *need*) to provide for their women.

Not all men are like that. Some men want women who are more equals and who can work for themselves.

You don't need to take my word for it: the most up-voted bad review on Amazon is exactly from that type of man.

Also read: "lovers VS providers" and "psychology of womanizers".

- **Inductive Fallacy**

To prove that sleeping with him before 90 days is a bad idea, Harvey asks where are all the men you've slept with before 90 days.

But that's an inductive fallacy and doesn't prove anything.
Most sexual relationships don't last forever, whether you slept with him after 900 days or 900 seconds.
Plus, women who are reading this book are likely looking for a man, which of course leads to almost all the readers answering positively -ie.: a trap question-.

Review

"Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man" shares valuable dating insights for women and several of his approaches are effective and well-calibrated.

Check the **best dating books for women**

12 Rules For Life: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *12 Rules For Life,* author Jordan Peterson provides a guide to a fulfilled life with advice based on ethics, religion, philosophy, and psychology.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - #1. Stand Up Straight With Your Shoulders Back
  - #2. Treat Yourself Like Someone You Are Responsible For Helping
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  - #4. Compare Yourself to Who You Were Yesterday, Not Who Someone Else Is Today
  - #5. Do Not Let Your Children Do Anything that Makes You Dislike Them
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  - #7. Pursue What is Meaningful (Not What is Expedient)
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  - #9. Assume that the Person You Are Listening to Might Know Something You Don't
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  - #11. Do Not Bother Children when they are Skateboarding
  - #12. Pet a Cat When You Encounter One on the Street
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- 12 Rules For Life Criticism

- Review

Overview

- Abusive people prey on the weak: muster the capacity for aggression to protect yourself against abusers
- Don't let people -or your kids- mistreat you or embarrass you: it will breed resentment
- Tell the truth and stand up for your values: it will build an honorable character

Notes

About The Author:
Jordan Peterson is a Canadian clinical psychologist and professor of psychology at the University of Toronto.
He has risen to fame when he refused to use government-mandated pronouns and then successfully debated many left-leaning personalities. More recently, he became more openly political and leaning towards conservative and alt-right movements and, in part, for *red-pill communities*.
He is also the author of *"Maps of Meaning*" and the follow-up to this same book "*Beyond Order 12 More Rules for Life*".

See more more on Peterson's personal (d)evolution here:

#1. Stand Up Straight With Your Shoulders Back

The author says naive people have too rosy of an outlook on the world.

They believe people are mostly good, but they invite abuse because **abusive people prey on the weak and naive**. I agree with that.

Also, read:

- Alpha male body language

Aggression Can Be Good

Jordan Peterson says People who buy into the idea that *any* sign of aggression is wrong can end up with psychological issues.

These people try to block within themselves ALL aggressive emotions, and bottling up emotions need to come out some way.

Peterson says there can be good uses for aggression.
Aggression does not necessarily translate into cruelty and destruction. **Aggression is also channeled into good causes**.

Jordan says when people see themselves as dangerous (at least potentially) they're shocked at first, but their fear also decreases. And they develop more confidence and self-respect.

They see in themselves the ability to withstand aggression and evil. And tt that point, they might be able to begin resisting oppression.

> **If you can bite, you often don't have to**

My Note:
I have built The Power Moves partially out of anger, indeed.

See my speech about it:

Also, read "*using pain and defeat for motivation*" and this other speech on the dark side of motivation.

#2. Treat Yourself Like Someone You Are Responsible For Helping

Well, the title said it all for me here.

The rest of the chapter was some deep mental lucubration. Interesting, maybe.
But not highly applicable and loosely connected to the title at best.

#3. Make Friends with People Who Want the Best For You

Carlo Rogers says it's impossible to convince someone to change and improve.

The desire to improve is indeed a precondition for progress, says the author.
Peterson says it's a good thing, not a selfish thing, to choose people who are good for you, he says.

#4. Compare Yourself to Who You Were Yesterday, Not Who Someone Else Is Today

This is one of my favorite rules.

The author talks about the popular *invisible gorilla experiment* and says that our mental resources are limited to what we pay attention to (also see *Incognito*).
That means that we really see what we focus on.

And there's no point in focusing on people who "have it better".
Compare yourself to yourself instead. Compare yourself to how you're improving and getting better.

My Note:
Exceptions apply.
If you can find motivation in anger, then it can be OK to compare yourself to others as a tactical device.

#5. Do Not Let Your Children Do Anything that Makes You Dislike Them

The author says refraining from some parental tough love is only going to harm our children.

The world, he says, will dish out far harsher punishments on the unprepared.
Parents, Peterson says, must act as (caring) proxies for the world.

He also says no adult human could tolerate being dominated by an upstart child.
When you do that, you will harbor resentment which will lead to revenge either directly or indirectly. That's why you shouldn't allow your children to behave in a way that will make you dislike them.

> **If you allow your own kids' behavior to repel you, imagine what it will do to others**

#6. Set Your House in Perfect Order Before You Criticize the World

Setting your house in order means working on yourself before you think about anything else.

It means focusing on what you can change and what you can do, instead of wasting time on everything that's wrong.
I couldn't agree more.
As the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* say, start with yourself first.

My Note:
And this is one of the reasons why I don't recommend Greene's advice from *"The 48 Laws of Power"* of "seeking

attention at all costs".
Seek improvement at all costs instead. Then, maybe, seek attention.

#7. Pursue What is Meaningful (Not What is Expedient)

Pursuing what's meaningful is to forego instant gratification to build a better future.

Today's sacrifice will forge your character and provide tomorrow's reward.

This is very true indeed.
The key to future success is today's habits of hard work.
And as Roy Baumeister explains in *"Evil"*, a good chunk of the world's evil is the consequence of short-term thinking and shortcut-seeking.

#8. Tell the Truth, or at least Don't Lie

The easy way out or the truth is not just a different choice, but a wholly different path through life.

And lying is the easy way out.

Lying is a betrayal of yourself and it weakens your character. Especially when you say yes *but really wanted to say no.*

Learn how to say no:

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

My note:
I agree with the weakening of character. And that's important because your identity becomes that of someone who can't speak his mind.
Read here how to build a resilient identity.

#9. Assume that the Person You Are Listening to Might Know Something You Don't

Speak more than you listen.

And listen without premature judgment.

My Note:
I would personally underline "premature". There is nothing inherently wrong with judging, and *high-quality men* and *women* do judge.
Don't judge too early, but don't otherwise get lost in a sea of relativity.

If you're interested in communication skills check the:

- Best communication skills books

#10. Be Precise in Your Speech

LOL, this is funny coming from Peterson.

The guy built his career on being precise with his speech and that's how he controls and wins most of his debates.

Being precise in your speech is not just about your words. It also means being precise in looking at the world around you.

Like Ray Dalio writes in his seminal book *Principle*: look at the world as it is, love reality even when it hurts.

#11. Do Not Bother Children when they are Skateboarding

The author says it's not true that gender is a social construct.

It's not, and it's not a debate because data proves it: genders are different.
And trying to culturally change that by removing masculine traits is bad for everyone.

Also, read:

- The Blank Slate
- The Female Brain
- The stupidity of the Swedish bathrooms

My Note:
I couldn't agree more here.
It's popular these days to say that "men and women are the same", but that doesn't make it any less wrong to anyone who has taken the time to research, study and analyze the world around him.

The Dark Side Calling

The author says that when softness becomes the only socially acceptable virtue, then dominance and violence start becoming unconsciously appealing.

This is, he says, one of the reasons for the rise of fascist political parties. And part of Trump's appeal (check Trump's dirty debating tactics).

> **People have a great capacity for evil as much as good**

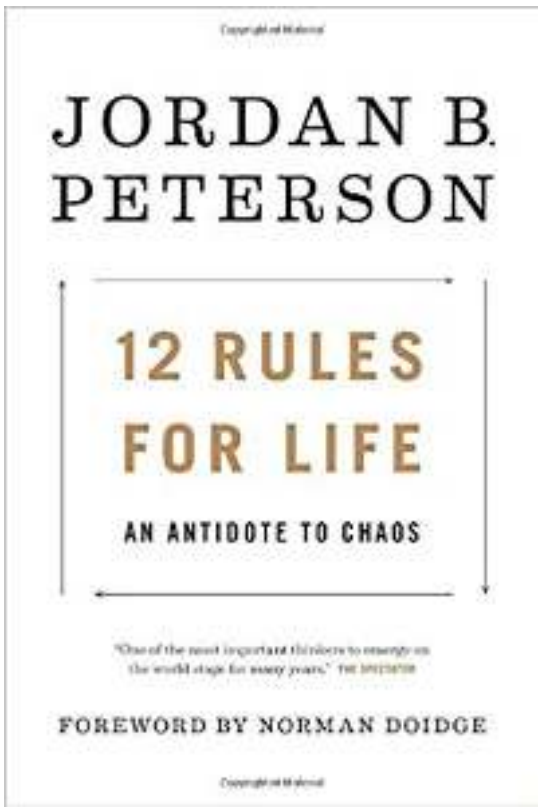
#12. Pet a Cat When You Encounter One on the Street

In the last chapter, Peterson deals with the hard moments of life.

But abandoning oneself to nihilism and hatred is not the answer, he says.

There's nothing in nihilism, he says. It only perpetuates and spreads more evil and pain.

He proposes instead to look for the beauty in life.
Petting a cat stands for enjoying the sparkles of beauty that life has to offer.



Real-Life Applications

- **Master Your Dark Side**

Don’t hide or repress your dark side but use it for good. I like the way Tim Grover put it:

> To get what you really want, you first need to be who you really are.

- **Channel Your Aggression**

Don’t allow your aggression to dominate you or take ugly forms. Use it to stand up to evil, protect and foster good and for creative endeavors.

- **Educate Your Children**

Educate your children in a way that prepares them for the world. Importantly, don’t let them -or anyone else- disrespect you or that will breed resentment in you. And resentment will eventually show.

- **Stand For What You Believe**

Stand for what you believe in and don’t hide behind lies. It will build your character.

CONS

- **Big words, could be simplified**

Jordan Peterson own rule says to be precise in your speech.

Obviously, there’s a difference between precise and simple, because he certainly doesn’t have simple prose.

It doesn’t have to be a con, especially if you like poetry. But at times it feels to me like aesthetics get a bit out of hand to become *the* message instead of *supporting* the message.

- **Diluted, could be briefer**

There are some great insights that really spoke to me.

Some of them changed me for the better and even clarified this website's mission in a way.
I would have preferred the book to be built around those key insights instead of being just ingredients in the bigger dish.

PROS

- **Great primer on self-development and power-awareness**

There is much wisdom in The *12 Rules for Life.*

And it's a type of wisdom that's rather unique and very rare in the self-help literature (see 'naive self-help').

That's a pity because this type of information is highly relevant and highly useful.

12 Rules For Life Criticism

Jordan Peterson is a controversial figure.

And his book was bound to be somewhat controversial.

I read the Financial Times' review and The Guardian's summary before reading the book.

And lo and behold, they were both scathingly negative and even derisive.

I didn't know Peterson well, and I let the reviews influence me negatively: I was indeed expecting *12 Rules for Life* to be a terrible book.

Boy was that an awesome experience.

As I started listening to it, I was flabbergasted at how both reviewers spectacularly failed to see the sparkle of greatness.

And that's where I think those reviewers failed: they let the part they disagreed with contaminate the whole.

Big mistake.

There's indeed much of this book that can ruffle feathers if you're not religious -or if you prefer more fact-based, less aesthetic writing-.
But denying the nuggets of wisdom in 12 Rules for Life is a spectacular failure both as a reviewer and as a man looking for truth and self-development.

For me, The *12 Rules for Life* is a book with some genius content mixed with too much aesthetic. Read below for more details.

Review

10 seconds review: *"12 Rules for Life"* has major Christian influences and a bit of a bombastic style. But it also has many sparkles of genius, several practical tips, and lots of great psychology.

There were some key passages that really struck a chord with me -and that are very similar to this website's credo and values-.

The first chapter of "*12 Rules For Life"* particularly spells out some of our core values.
Peterson says that **some people are too naive and let the world take advantage of them**. And that **the ability to muster aggression is needed to stand up to evil.**

Failing to do so, and failing to acknowledge the existence of evil, opens you up to oppression and abuse.

And this is exactly The Power Moves credo.

And the knowledge of how to master and deploy aggression will also decrease the chances it will ever be needed.
Because if you can bite, you generally don't have to.
And this is another pillar of this website.

The author then goes one step further when he says:

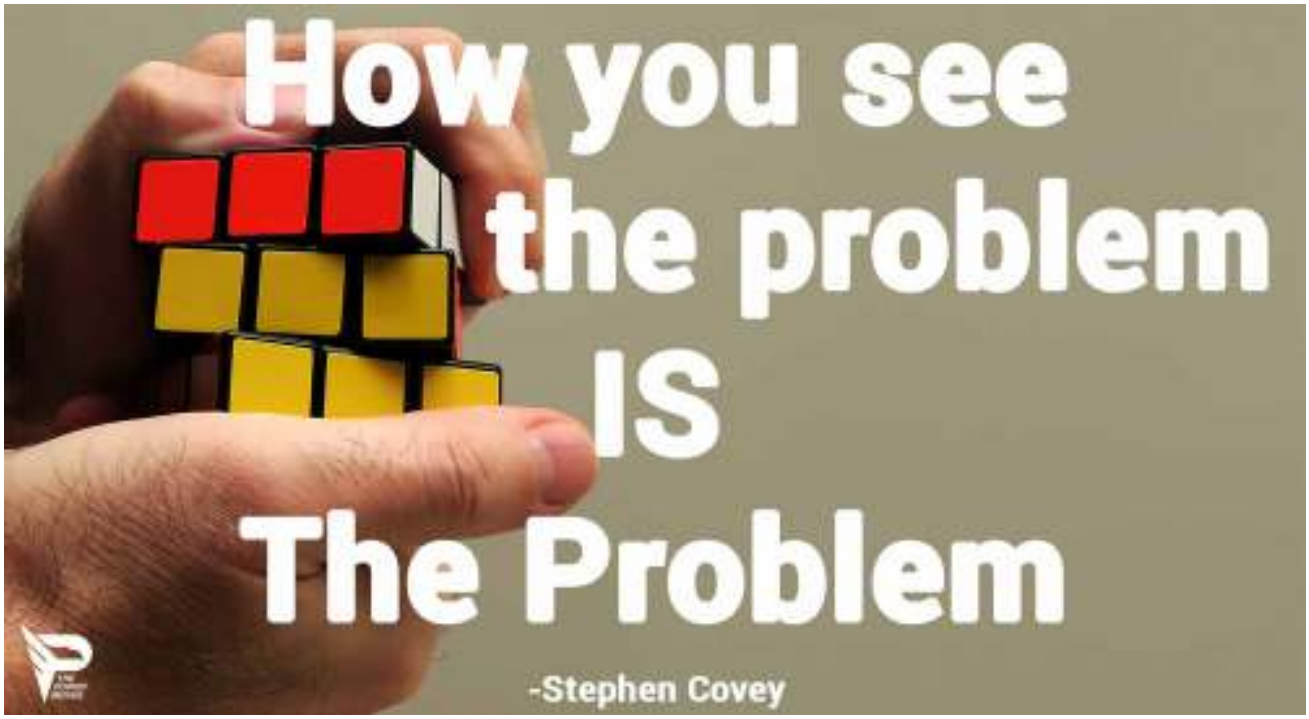
> ***There is little difference between the capacity for destruction and strength of character.***

Check out the best red pill books, or Get 12 Rules for Life on Amazon.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is the biggest self-help bookseller of the last thirty years. And while sales don't always and necessarily guarantee high quality, in this case, it does.



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- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Real, deep change starts within yourself

- Learn to communicate and deal with people: it's life's most important skill
- Take care of yourself: keep learning, improving, and growing

Full Summary

- Habit 1: **Be Proactive**
- Habit 2: **Begin with the End in Mind**
- Habit 3: **Put First Things First**
- Habit 4: **Think Win / Win**
- Habit 5: **Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood**
- Habit 6: **Synergize**
- Habit 7: **Sharpen the Saw**

Let's dig deeper:

Part I: Paradigm and Principles

Covey says most people look for quick fixes.

They see a big success and want to know how he did it, believing (and hoping) they can do the same following a quick bullet list.

But real change, the author says, comes not from the outside in, but from the inside out. And the most fundamental way of changing yourself is through a paradigm shift.

That paradigm shift is **a new way of looking at the world**.
"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" presents an approach to effectiveness based on character and principles.

The first three habits indeed deal with yourself because it all starts with you.
The first three habits move you from dependence on the world to the independence of making your own world.

Habits 4, 5, and 6 are about people and relationships. They will move you from independence to interdependence. Such as, learning to cooperate to achieve more than you could have by yourself.

The last habit, habit number 7, focuses on continuous growth and improvement.

> **The way we see the problem is the problem**

Part II: Private Victory

Habit 1: Be Proactive

> ***You Create Your Reality: You're In Charge***

Proactive is not what most people would think it is.

For Covey being proactive means **exercising your power of choice between the stimulus you receive from the world and your response**.
If you feel down, it's because *you* allowed the stimulus to bring you down.

The author quotes Viktor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning* when he says:

> *Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response*

> *lies our growth and our freedom*

This is also a major stoic philosophy pillar.

Focus On What You Can Control

Covey introduces the "circle of control" to represent all that we care about.

We can only influence a portion of what we care about, and that's what we should be focusing on.

Focusing on anything else means focusing on what the author calls "the circle of concerns".
Focusing on what we cannot control is a waste of time and energy. And often also spoils our mood because it takes the form of worrying and complaining.

Ironically, the more you focus on the things you can control, the more your abilities and skills improve. Which in turn will further enlarge your circle of influence.

To start mentally shifting your focus into the circle of influence the author suggests you stop using "if" sentences such as "if only I had…" and start using instead "be" sentences, such as "I can be more.."

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

> ***Start Creating Your Reality***

Beginning with the end in mind means being clear about who you want to be and where you want to go.

And then travel that path.

However, it runs deeper than Robert Greene's "plan all the way to the end" as described in *"The 48 Laws of Power"*.

Habit two is based on imagination and on the idea that two different forms of creation exist: mental creation and physical creation.
The mental creation comes first, and the physical creation follows the mental one.

Covey says that if you are not clear about the mental creation of where you want to be you are the mercy of randomness and circumstances.

Personal End in Mind: Principles

Covey recommends that as much as you think about your life goals, you also think about who you want to be.

When you have that clear, you can draft principles and values in accordance with that person.

With your principles and values clear you will approach life and all the events in your life with a high level of clarity and confidence.

Aligning Life and Principles

To make sure your life goals and personal principles are aligned Covey recommends you write a personal mission statement.

The mission statement should answer the questions "who do you want to be and what you do want to accomplish".

This chapter reminded me of the auto-suggestion chapter in *Think and Grow Rich*, but better and without woo-woo.

> What do you want to be when you grow up**?**
> **Decide and then become it.**

Part III: Public Victory

Habit 3: Put First Things First

> *Time Management is Life Management: Put Your Life Priorities First*

Habit three is all about prioritization.

If you follow the steps of Habits 1 and 2 then you have your values and life goal very clear.
This means you know what are your priorities… And which are not.

Basically, your first and major prioritization is through the filter of your life goals.

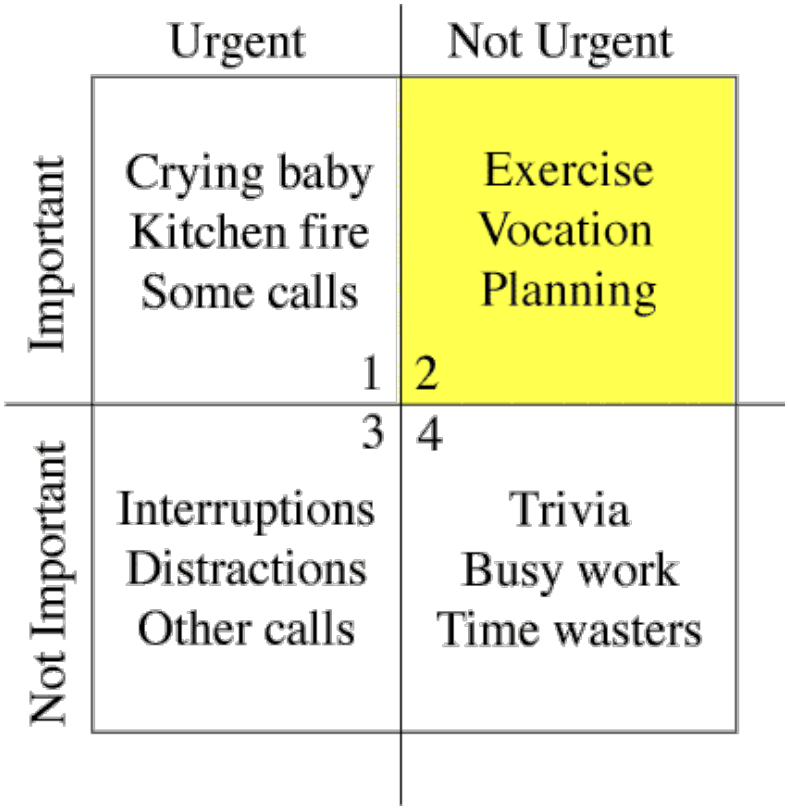
Once you have a burning desire to become and do what you want your yeses will also clearly show what are your nos. That's the bedrock of prioritization.

The Time Quadrant

Covey introduces here the now-famous time quadrant.

To effectively manage your time you should spend most of your time on non-urgent and important tasks.

This way you will rarely have to deal with urgent and important tasks, which heighten your stress and often deliver sub-par results.



Habit 4: Think Win / Win

Covey says that win/win is a character-based approach to human interactions.

To achieve this level, you must first acquire three essential character traits:

1. Integrity (sticking with who you are: feelings, values)
2. Maturity (expressing your ideas and feelings with a balance of courage and consideration)

3. Abundance mentality (life is not zero-sum, there's plenty for all)

I particularly liked that the author stresses the importance of integrity in the sense of *aligning yourself with your public actions*.
That's indeed a great way to acquire personal confidence and self-esteem.

The author says most people think in terms of either/or: it's either you're nice (and a pushover) or you're tough (and get your own way).
This is what Brene Brown calls *Viking or Victim mentality in Daring Greatly*.
Maturity instead is that happy balance in between.
It requires you to be empathic and confident, considerate and brave, all at the same time.

Social Bank Account

Covey talks about human relationships in terms of emotional and human balance.

He says when you approach life with a win / win mindset, you always treat people well and you make deposits in your emotional bank.

If one day something goes wrong and you need a withdrawal, you can count on years of systematical balance surpluses.
And people will be happy to help you.

This theory reflects the view of *social interactions as exchanges*, with which I agree with.
And it also reflects much of this website's foundational laws of power.
See:

- The 9 irrefutable laws of Power
- Mix power with warmth

Other Interaction Scenarios

These are all subpar approaches:

1. Win / Lose (egoistical and authoritarian)
2. Lose / Win (too nice and pushover)
3. Lose / Lose (when two Win / Lose butt heads)

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

Covey says that communication is the most important skill in life.

And we are all heavily under-trained in listening. Indeed, very few people even listen at all.
This is a pity because the foundation of influencing people is to first understand people.

If you need some help, check out the *best communication skills books*.

Covey says there are four levels of listening:

1. Ignoring
2. Pretending to listen
3. Attentive listening
4. Empathic listening

Even most good listeners stop at the third level of attentive listening.
Attentive listening entails the following:

- **Evaluating**: judge and then agree or disagree
- **Probing**: ask questions from your own frame of reference
- **Advising**: advising based on own frame of reference
- **Interpreting**: interpreting his action and feelings based on his own frame of reference

Empathic Listening

Empathic listening is about removing your own frame of reference as much as possible.

Empathic listeners look at people's body language, tone of voice, and nonverbal gestures.

Ultimately empathic listening means putting yourself in their shoes and feeling what they're feeling.

This is key because **before people can move to solutions they need to feel you understand them**.

To be understood the author advises not to start and communicate with just logic but to explain where you're coming from emotionally as well.

My Note: True, emotions should be part of the solution
I agree. Trying to completely take emotions away might seem "stronger" but ultimately destroys relationships.

Further reading
Dale Carnegie proposes the same approach in *How To Win Friends and Influence People.* And if you want to read practical applications in conversations I recommend the books *Crucial Conversations* and *Difficult Conversations.* Or check all my *summaries on communication*.

Habit 6: Synergize

> ***A Team is Stronger Than an Individual***

The idea of synergizing is that the whole of a well-functioning team is greater than the mere sum of its part.

The key to an effective group synergy, says the author, is to really value the differences among us.
So ask yourself: do you want to be right, or do you want everyone to agree?
Learn to embrace differences as a strength instead.

Synergy also entails "*flow*" and perfect group automation as if the group was functioning as one. That's when you achieve top results.

Part IV: Renewal

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

> ***Take Care of Your Greatest Asset: Yourself***

No habits in the world will take you far unless you preserve, take care of, and keep improving yourself.

Covey recommends you focus on the four major dimensions of your life:

- **Physical**: exercise, nutrition, and rest
- **Social/Emotional**: meaningful human connections (see "how to bond and connect")
- **Mental:** learning, visualizing, acquiring new knowledge
- **Spiritual**: art, meditation, music, time in nature, prayer, and service

He says it's important you commit some time to each dimension. And he's right.

Real-Life Applications

Remember You Have The Ultimate Trump Card
Nobody can make you feel bad if you don't allow them. Your mind is yours, you wield the ultimate power.

Build Your Future (You)
Think about the (wo)man you want to be and what you want to have. And then forge your path to get there. On the way, keep your eyes on the ball. Meaning:

Prioritize What Matters To You
Do and spend time on the things you care for and that will lead you to where you want to be. Don't allow circumstances to sidetrack you.

Do you really like what you're doing? Is what you're doing taking you where you want to be?

If not, change.

CONS

Some Key Mindsets Missing
The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People is so successful that I'm afraid some people might not read anything else.

And in all its greatness, it's also missing a few key mindsets for self-development. A *growth mindset,* for example, is a key element missing (check here *how to develop a growth mindset*)

Review

"The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People" is a fantastic book.

I might even go as far as saying that it's a must-read.

The last thing I'd like you to notice is that Stephen Covey says even today, more than a decade after he wrote the book, still struggles with the principles.
It's a constant practice, he says.
The better you get, the more you realize you can do even better.

So start today:
Get The 7 Habits on Amazon

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership (1998) lists what author John Maxwell believes are the 21 most important *laws of leadership*.

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  - #21 – THE LAW OF LEGACY
- Real-Life Applications
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Bullet Summary

- You can only lead when you are the most respected person in the group
- Your leadership skills are the upper bound of your team's effectiveness
- People buy leaders first, and only after, maybe, they'll buy into visions
- Leaders put their people first

Full Summary

About the Author:
John Maxwell is an American pastor, author, and speaker.
He is also the author of *"25 Ways You Win With People"*.

Introduction

To get the most out of the 21 laws of leadership you must first understand that the rules can be learned.
And if you didn't know that, you need to *develop a growth mindset* first thing-.

#1 – THE LAW OF THE LID

> ***Your level of leadership is your level of effectiveness***

The law of the lid says that if you are at level 8 on a leadership scale, 8 is also your maximum effectiveness.

Maxwell gives the example of the McDonald's franchise.
Ray Kroc controversially introduced himself as the founder of the company. But he wasn't the founder, he bought the company.

Maxwell says that the previous owners of McDonald's had lower leadership abilities than Kroc and that's why they couldn't maximize the company's potential.

My Note:
I'm not sure the story in the example is really connected to leadership. I feel Kroc was probably more well-versed in business systems.

I enjoyed the example of a buy-out firm.
The firm management would always fire the leaders of the organization they bought. Of course, says Maxwell, that makes sense. An organization is always intrinsically limited by the ability of its leaders.

My Note:
it reminded me of *Extreme Ownership* when the authors say: there are no bad teams, only bad leaders.

#2 – THE LAW OF INFLUENCE

> ***The proof of leadership is in the followers***

A leadership title does not make one a leader, says Maxwell.

Leadership must be earned through the people that want to follow you.
The final proof of leadership is in the followers.

> **The true measure of leadership is influence. Nothing more, nothing less**

#3 – THE LAW OF PROCESS

> ***Leadership develops daily, not in a day***

Your agenda today determines the type of leader you will be tomorrow.

Nobody likes to be lead by someone who is stagnant over time.

You need to grow over time -and make the people around you grow over time-.

#4 – THE LAW OF NAVIGATION

> ***Leaders chart the course***

You can't get anywhere without a destination.
Good leaders have a clear vision of where they're going and they craft a map accordingly.

#5 – THE LAW OF ADDITION

> ***Leaders add value by serving others***

Maxwell says we become valuable when we provide value to others.

Maxwell stresses here the importance of providing value not just materially, but also at an interpersonal level (also read *The Social Exchange Theory*).

Knowing who the people are, what they care about, and what are their goals and dreams.
And assisting them along their way. Successful leaders also provide value by giving credit to the team.

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Leaders Speak Last

Maxwell says that positional leaders are quick to speak.
But the successful leaders speak last.

And you will recognize the leaders because when you make a question everyone will look at them.

#6 – THE LAW OF SOLID GROUND

> ***Leadership is builds upon foundations of trust***

Maxwell says that leaders earn trust and respect by putting what's best for the organization and the followers ahead of what's best for themselves.

It's important you keep your standards up because you cannot break trust and keep influencing people.

#7 – THE LAW OF RESPECT

> ***You can only lead when you're the strongest of the bunch***

Strongest does not refer to muscles.

Strongest means that people respect you the most.
And when people don't respect you anymore, your legitimacy as a leader also dissolves.

#8 – THE LAW OF INTUITION

Maxwell says the most successful leaders don't need to spend hours on all the facts and details.

They develop intuition.

My note:
This isn't really intuition, this is most of all experience.
With experience, we learn what's important and what's not important, so we can only focus on that 15% of information that will give us 90% of confidence.

#9 – THE LAW OF MAGNETISM

> ***Birds of a feather flock together***

You will attract people who are like you.

People who work with you are not a consequence of HR or your company's

If you're not happy with the people around you, look within yourself first. Like the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* say: real change is from within.

#10 – THE LAW OF CONNECTION

> ***You can't move to action unless you first move their hearts***

Some leaders have an issue with the responsibility of the leadership to connect with the team.

They think they're the leaders, so it's up to others to step up to their plate.

But successful leaders take it upon themselves to build relationships and connect emotionally.

#11 – THE LAW OF THE INNER CIRCLE

> ***You are the average of the people you spend the most time with***

Surround yourself with great people.

#12 – THE LAW OF EMPOWERMENT

> ***Secure leaders empower others***

Scared and weak leaders, like Henry Ford, actually was, don't want great men around them because they feel intimidated.

They prefer weak people, so they can feel strong and validated -and likely, they have a *fixed mindset*-.

Developing others and giving them responsibility is not only good for the people you empower but also for yourself.

> **The more you empower, the more powerful you become**

#13 – THE LAW OF THE PICTURE

> ***One example is worth a thousand pictures***

Maxwell famously says that "people do what people see".
Show with your actions what the right course of action is, not with your words.

#14 – THE LAW OF BUY-IN

> ***People buy leaders, then visions***

You cannot separate a leader from the cause he champions.

People don't follow worthy causes first, they follow worthy leaders who promote worthy causes (and sometimes, as history teaches, unworthy causes too).

#15 – THE LAW OF VICTORY

> ***Leaders find a way to win***

Maxwell says that the best leaders share an unwillingness to accept defeat. And they keep going until they find a way to win.

#16 – THE LAW OF THE BIG MO

> ***Trend is your friend***

The only way to change inertia and a negative spirit is to get going. Get some momentum on your side and no obstacle is too big to overcome.

#17 – THE LAW OF PRIORITIES

> ***Activity is not accomplishment***

Busy work is a waste of time and resources. Leaders put first things first.

#18 – THE LAW OF SACRIFICE

> ***To go up you have to give up***

Leadership does come with certain perks but also comes with responsibilities and sacrifices.

Similar to the message Simon Sinek shares in *Leader Eat Last*, Maxwell says that leadership means putting others ahead of yourself.

#19 – THE LAW OF TIMING

> ***Success comes from the right action at the right time***

Master the art of timing, says the *35th law of power*. Similarly, leaders must learn when it's time to lead.

#20 – THE LAW OF EXPLOSIVE GROWTH

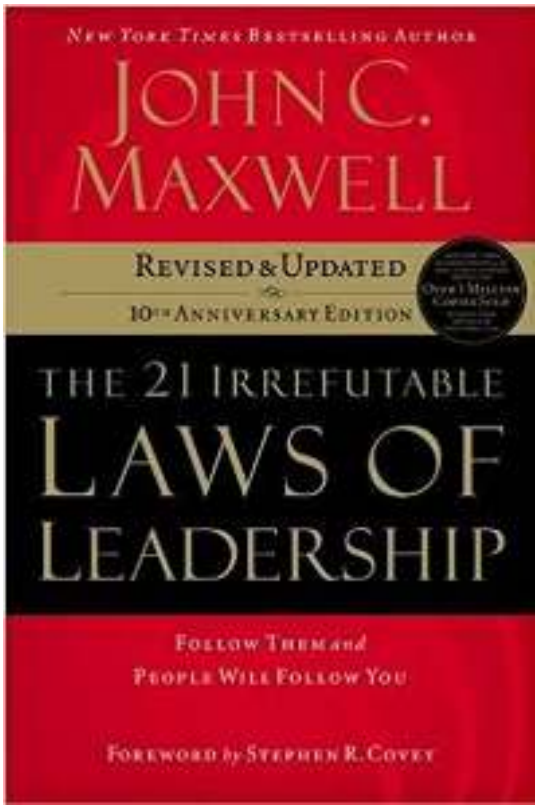
> ***Lead follower for linear growth; lead leader for exponential growth***

To nurture leaders and set off explosive growth, focus on the top 20%,

#21 – THE LAW OF LEGACY

> *Time is the ultimate test of leadership*

Great leaders make sure to leave behind capable organizations and teams that will thrive even after long they have gone.



Real-Life Applications

Pick Your Leaders
Refuse to work for people or bosses who are not above you on the leadership scale. Don't waste your time working for people whom you don't trust. It really takes away a lot of joy from your life.

CONS

List Format
List format, bullet points, "laws" or "hacks" always make me fear "attention seeking".

This was not the case, the book is great.

But I think Maxwell could have reached even more people if he had chosen a different format.

Unscientific
The laws are great.
But they're not grounded in science.
For a more scientific guide on how to be a leader, check *"13 scientific laws of leadership"*.

Review

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership is a great book on leadership.

It really lists all the major traits, including the most foundational ones which I put in the bullet summary list.

For more, check out:

- Best leadership books
- How to become a leader
- How to be a great toastmaster president

And of course, check out the course “Social Power” for real-life examples of true leadership.

Become a leader
Get the book on Amazon

The Millionaire Mind: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Millionaire Mind surveys more than 1.300 mostly self-made millionaires, based on Thomas Stanley's large-scale research into affluent households to understand how they think, what they do, and what they did to achieve what they achieved.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: The millionaire mind is positively calculative and strategic
Many of these traits (social skills, discipline, spouse selection) are part of the basics of what we teach here, including smart cooperation, reading people, and **effective calculativeness**.

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Bullet Summary

- Social skills, discipline, and courage are the most important personal traits
- Passion and love for what you do is paramount
- Saving and a good life partner are major factors

Summary

The biggest benefit of being a millionaire is to live free and happy. Free from debt, *bad bosses,* and making ends meet. And loving because they love what they do.

1. Hoesty, Discipline, & Social Skills

Stanley asked the millionaires to rank 30 different success factors.
The top three were:

1. Honesty
2. Discipline
3. Social Skills

As a website focusing on social skills, I was not surprised. 94% of the millionaires said that getting along with

people is one of the most important factors in getting rich.

TPM Note: Good social skills include POWER skills
Most successful, attractive, and high-value men aren't just socially skilled in the sense of being liked, they're socially skilled in the sense of gaining status, respect, and attraction. They were good at competing and winning, achieving goals, and influencing others.
It's not just being liked, but being competent (see: communion vs agency).

Learn more:

- **Laws of social success**

> The 5 Laws of Social Success: Smart Power, For Smart Cooperation

2. Poor Grades Didn't Hold Them Back

Stanley says a majority of millionaires did not attribute their success to either university or grades.
Indeed many millionaires were rather average. And they were judged as not good or smart enough to get into the top schools and professions.

My Note:
Don't diss school though. Keep in mind that 90% of them had a degree. You could easily wonder how many of them would have become a millionaire without that degree.
A degree is not just a piece of paper and classroom knowledge. It's also an opportunity to live on your own, socialize, date, and make a defining life experience.

But many of those millionaires used the judgment to fuel their own ambitions and hunger.
Indeed the **harsh judgment drove them to prove the opposite**. They became good with people, they hunted for opportunities and they built a strong work discipline.

My Note: Mental empowerment is key
Basically, they didn't let the system and others tell them what they could or could not achieve. This is the foundation of an empowered mind.

> **Top grades are the beaten path. The millionaire mind challenges that**

Read:

- **Confidence University**
- Healthy grandiosity

3. Smart Risk Taking

Of course, all of them said that to accumulate wealth you need to take risks.
Some key mindsets:

- Overcoming fear
- Believing in yourself
- Keep working at it and confidence will come

Employee is also risky

Millionaires have the mindset that being an employee is the riskiest position of all. You can get fired at any time,

and you have a ceiling on how much you can earn.

Note: this isn't true in some parts of the world where employee protection are high

Invest in the Business

Everybody talks about investing in the stock market, passive income, and compound interest. But millionaires focus on building a business instead.
This is the same mindset that DeMarco espouses in *The Millionaire Fastlane*.

> **9 to 5 is the biggest risk**

4. Do What You Love (Vocation, Vocation, Vocation)

This chapter of The Millionaire Mind can easily be summarized as: **do what you love**.

There's a strong relationship between how much you love what you do, how much you work on it, and how good at it you become.

Don't think that your passion necessarily comes from some lofty goals. **Love comes from continuous effort and the deepening of skills**.

Getting good at spotting opportunities, wherever they come from, is also something one could be passionate about. Millionaires indeed are happy in launching car washes or truck spare parts businesses.

To find your vocation, Stanley recommends you try many different things before you eventually stick with one.

5. Pick a Good Partner

90% of married millionaires say their spouse has been instrumental to their success.

These guys are, as you would expect, very careful when choosing mates.
However, most of them mentioned the most stereotypical reason you would expect: love. Attractiveness and common interests were also important.

Among character traits, they appreciated:

- self-worth
- integrity
- compassion
- honesty

6. Keep Expenses Low

Millionaires budget and spend carefully.

For example, they buy products in bulk, fix their shoes instead of buying new ones, use coupons, etc.

However, they are not the Scrooge McDuck type of men (of course: you don't get rich wasting time).

They are frugal but not DIY maniacs. They were aware of the opportunity cost of doing menial tasks. So they hire and outsource to focus on what they are actually good at and what makes them the most money.

This is similar to *The Millionaire Next Door,* which Stanley co-authored.

7. Buy Real Estate Smart

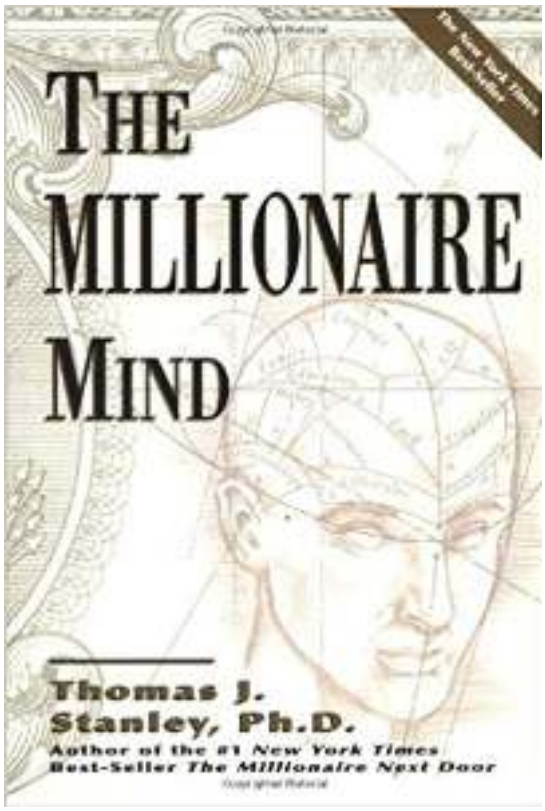
Millionaires present a few common tendencies when buying a house. They:

1. Don't pay the initial ask price
2. Take time scouting for good options (foreclosures, divorce sales, etc.)
3. Don't build from scratch (73% never had a custom-built home and 80% never had a spec house)
4. Only buy what they can afford (if their income were cut 50%, they could still afford it)

Basically, it's the same concept of being frugal applied to real estate investments.

8. Live a Simple Lifestyle

Stanley says that the millionaires he surveyed don't spend money to have fun. They don't do crazy holidays, splurge on super-cars or go on exotic vacations.
They bootstrap for business ventures instead of borrowing and, on average, attend religious activities.



Real-Life Applications

Use Harsh Judgement as Fuel
Most millionaires were not slated for success by the system, school, or the world. But they used that as fuel to get great. That's the biggest takeaway for me.

Do What You Love… But also what you're good at!
Doing what you love often works because love often *follows competence*, not the other way around. Ensure that what you love you is also what you can be good at.

CONS

Biased Survey
A survey of all the successful people is, by its nature, incomplete. There are probably people who behave the exact

same way as these guys but did not succeed.
Nassim Taleb in *Fooled by Randomness* criticizes this approach to studying wealth as **survivorship bias**: risk-taking also produces many failures, but those are invisible in millionaire-only samples.

Spending Money for Fun & Experiences Makes Life Worth Living
The idea that one should not spend money for "fun" is dangerous to me. Studies show that people spending on experiences have a happier and more meaningful life.
Foregoing holidays, traveling, and trying new things make for a poorer life.

Review

The Millionaire Mind is a good analysis of how wealthy individuals think and behave.

It shares some concepts with *Rich Dad Poor Dad* when it comes to real estate investment, *The Millionaire Fastlane* when it comes to business vs employee mindset, and *The Millionaire Next Door* when it comes to frugality.

For more on successful men, see:

- **High-value men**: traits and how to become one

Why Making Men Wait for Sex Backfires With High-Value Men (Dating Psychology Explained)

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you being subjected to the common **"make him wait for sex"** tactic?

Are you unsure if she's waiting because she's high-value, or if she's simply playing a low-value, manipulative game?

You've come to the right place for clarity.

"Make him wait for sex" is one of the most common—and misleading—pieces of dating advice women get.

But here's the reality: while that tactic may keep low-quality men chasing, it often backfires with **high-value men** who have options, standards, and self-respect.

This guide breaks down the psychology behind *waiting for sex*, when it works, when it does, why it fails with top men, and what the power dynamics reveal about dating in modern times.

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- What The Dating Advice Says
- Advantages For Women
- Advantages for Dating Strategies
  - 1. He Likes You Because You're Scarce
  - 2. He Appreciates You Because He Invests
  - 3. You Look More "Good Girl"
  - 4. You Gain Bargaining Power
- When Waiting Works…
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- When Waiting Backfires
    - 1. Doesn't Work in Difficult Markets
    - 2. Doesn't Work With Many High(er)-Value Men
    - 3. Doesn't Work With Men Who Value Sex & Sexual Chemistry
    - 4. Doesn't Work When Other Women Have Early Sex
- The Quality-Woman Approach
    - 1. Don't Frame It As A Power-Thing
    - 2. Keep The Relationship Balanced
    - 3. Frame It As "Taking It Slow Because It Might Be Something Meaningful"
    - 4. Show The Light At The End of The Tunnel
    - 5. Make Sex a Pleasurable, Guilt-Free Experience
    - 6. Best of Both World: Early Sex & "Serious" Girl
- Summary

What The Dating Advice Says

> Let him wait for sex.

It's the battle cry that all the *dating best sellers for women* chant in unison.

It's a long list with the same message, but here are some of the most popular ones:

- Reddit's Female Dating Strategies
- Ignore The Guy, Get The Guy
- Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man
- F*ck Him (yep, even that one tells you to wait)
- …

King suggests 60 days minimum; Lambert says get a relationship before sex; Harvey has a 90 days rule; some other authors go indefinite with "as long as you can".

Heck, even the gold-digger guide says to never have sex with him!

So…

Why make him wait?

Advantages For Women

The concept of "waiting" is largely based on this assumption:

Men want quick sex and women want relationships.

And, albeit it's a generalization, it's true that *on average* men seek more hookups.

So when you give quick sex, most guides say, men get what they want and have less interest in sticking around. And plus, some authors say, men despise "easy" women.

Letting him wait for sex supposedly does the following great things for you both:

What Waiting Does For You

1. **Protects your feelings** (women bond more than men through sex)
2. **Filters for serious men** (theory being that players and fuckboys won't wait, which is often true)
3. **Keeps you in control** (he's like the dog waiting for the treat, which is also a potential con if you stress the "power" part)

Some also believe that waiting for sex increases the odds of a relationship.
However, I'm not convinced at all about that and have seen no good logic, data, or real-life examples to back it up, so we'll discard that.

Still, these are some big advantages of waiting.
So the approach is not to be discarded but, rather, "refined".

What Waiting Does For Him

1. **He sees you as "serious" long-term material** (based on the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy)
2. **The more he invests during the waiting time, the more likely he stays after sex** (and rationalizes he must like you, a process called "sense-making" in psychology)

Advantages for Dating Strategies

The advice of letting him invest works well on paper.

It is founded on solid psychological principles and in some environments and situations, it might indeed be the best way to go (more on it later).

Here is the science behind the advice of letting him wait to sleep with you:

1. He Likes You Because You're Scarce

It's true that people value what's scarce.

Especially when it's scarce because of high demand from others (scarcity principle, Cialdini).
This is a general rule that few human beings escape.

2. He Appreciates You Because He Invests

Several studies show this seeming conundrum:

We appreciate more people for whom *we* invest in, than the people who invest in *us*.

Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1985) plays a role here. Such as, people often back-rationalize based on their *actions* (also see Aronson, 1972).
In simple words, he (unconsciously) thinks:

> I am investing in her and sticking around even without getting the ultimate prize… Then it means she must really be valuable and I must really like her.

In that sense, the more he invests without payoff, *the more he values you.*

3. You Look More "Good Girl"

Many (most?) men think along the Madonna/Whore Dichotomy.

Such as, they divide women into "easy girls" -the whores- and "good girls -the Madonnas-.

And they seek whores for quick or kinky sex and seek Madonnas for long-term pair bonding.

The Madonna/whore dichotomy even affects most men who *say* they are not affected by it.

So in that sense, not getting too wild, too soon, might help you to stay away from the whore side of the dichotomy.

However, there is a potential pitfall to it.
The pitfall is the exact same as the positive one: he will see you as the good, "serious" girl.

Many a man pay prostitutes because they have a mindset that they "can't do that with their wives".

Not good.
Ideally, you want a man who sees you for who you really are. A woman with her own defects, needs, and sexuality.

4. You Gain Bargaining Power

We could argue that "having power" might not be the best approach to a relationship.

But still, *power dynamics* affect any relationship, even the most collaborative ones.

And if we embrace the theory of sex as an *arms race between genders*, then holding onto the sex card will *give you more bargaining power* indeed.

I'm not a big fan of the power argument, though.
And not on the ground of morality, but of simple long-term effectiveness.
Because **if your main power is sex, then you lose all your power the moment you *"give"* sex**.

And I'm sure you'd agree when I say that you don't want to be the lady whose *only* allure is sex.

So... Why Not Always Wait, Then?

Alright.

So there are many reasons why letting him wait to sleep with you is good.

Why do I tell you to also consider a different approach, then?

Because the strategy, like almost any other social strategy, is not universal.

So the most important questions become:

1. **When** does it work?
2. **Who** does it work with?

Let's see.

When Waiting Works...

The approach of "letting him wait" works in:

1. It Works In Conservative Cultures

In cultures where waiting is the norm, wait.

You can't go wrong by giving men the waiting time they expect -or even want, sometimes-.

2. It Works When Men Outnumber Women

However, how about more libertine places, which include most of the West?

We make a long dissertation on the economics of sex here:

- How to date effectively: a scientific guide

But here's the short of it:

When there are more men than women, the culture and the dating dynamics shift towards a romantic, courtship style of dating with men wooing women over the long haul.

That means that **when (high-quality) women are scarce, you should let him wait**.

But when there are more women than men, the culture devolves into more of a hookup culture.
Exceptions always apply of course, but generally speaking, in highly libertine cultures, many men aren't ready, prepared, and willing to do the long-courtship thing.

Even men looking for relationships tend to end up with women who contribute and "help them" along the dating process.
In "difficult markets", the most successful women focus on *moving forward together* instead of "getting as much as possible" while giving as little as possible.

That means that **when (high-quality) women are abundant, waiting games are more likely to backfire**.

You should know that in our current environment, especially in the West, *high-quality women* (far) outstrip *high-quality men*.

Also, read:

- **Successful women dating**

> Why Successful Women Fail At Dating (& How to Fix It)

3. It Works With Average Guys

The problem with "letting him wait" is this:

It can create major imbalances of power and *value exchanges* (i.e.: in the give-and-take, you may end up taking more than giving)

Of course, it doesn't have to.
For example, if both are happy to wait or if she wants to wait and he's cool with it, then waiting is a win-win.
But the way I've seen more coaches and resources advise on waiting for sex, it *does* create imbalances.

So unless you take steps to rebalance things, what happens is that he invests time, money, and effort while you receive and (calculatingly) withhold the sex.

Who do you think is going to stick around with a sucker's deal?

Millionaires globetrotting the world?
Entrepreneurs building companies?
Driven men too busy to make their dreams a reality?

Usually not.
Higher-quality men demand at least a balance of give and take (Equity Theory of Love).

Even "normal" guys who are just moderately *power-aware* won't be happy with that deal and might as likely walk away.

But worry not, lower-value men, optionless men, and clueless men will be more than happy to provide and wait for some P.

These are the guys most likely to be OK with the short-changing tactics of letting him wait for as long as possible.

Here's an example from "Crazy, Stupid, Love", a scene that always makes me smile:

It's the average man who "thinks he did everything right" and was happy to wait.
The cool guy knew better.

Some of the authors do understand the principle, albeit they don't apply it.
Kara King, one of the biggest proponents of delayed sex and high investment, writes in *The Power of The Pussy* (I paraphrase):

> *It's a clear sign you should break up with a guy when you invest a lot in him while he doesn't invest in you*

I wonder why then she expects men to accept the same?
Indeed the same author a few pages later says you should "lower your expectations".
Why?
Because she says:

> *"a perfect 10" would never open the door for you or do all the nice things for you.*

Bingo!
So if a perfect 10 would never invest too much, who would?
Exactly!

If you focus on controlling men… You get easy-to-control men (not cream of the crop)
In short:

The bad men will stick around.
And the best ones…

When Waiting Backfires

First off, a reminder:

We are talking here about the more "game-y", power move version of "let him wait".
If he's happy to wait and/or if you frame it and implement it as a win-win, then it must not be an issue.

However, the more disempowering for him waiting becomes, the more it becomes an issue under these conditions:

1. Doesn't Work in Difficult Markets

We can define "difficult markets" as:

> Sexual market places with an abundance of great women and not many great guys.

Jon Birger in *Date-onomics* makes a good case that most women with a degree in the west are in difficult markets simply because there aren't that many well-educated men.

When good female prospects outnumber men, men tend to become more promiscuous and expect early sex as part of the deal.
Most women might recoil in disgust here, and I get you. I would react the exact same way.

However, that doesn't make it any less true. And as Ray Dalio says, we can all only gain from looking at reality as it is.

And the reality is that if there are more equally great women available, it's fair to expect some of them will sleep with him sooner and some will sleep with him later.

And who do you think he is more likely to end up in a relationship with?
It's the woman he is having sex with, of course.

Also, read:

- **Easy VS difficult sexual marketplaces**

> Global Intersexual Dynamics: Where Dating Is Easy (or Hard)

Now on the next biggest issue with long waiting times:

2. Doesn't Work With Many High(er)-Value Men

Sure, there are plenty of *high-value men* who don't need or request early sex.

HOWEVER…

The waiting must not be framed and implemented as a win for her, and a loss for him.

The *law of social exchange* says that no healthy relationship can stay out of balance for too long.

Eventually, you have to reach an equilibrium.

See where I'm going?

If the guy you're seeing has very little to offer compared to you, he'll invest a lot.
And wait.

Because he needs to make up for that imbalance.

But of course, *women prefer guys who are "better"*.

And *high-quality men* are least likely to accept an unbalanced relationship with a "taker".

With higher-value guys and/or same-value guys, you should aim more for a balance.

Bruce Bryan of *Never Chase Men Again* is one of the few authors of women's dating books who gets this point.
He says:

> High quality men have little tolerance for egocentric women.
> **Asking for the moon will not make you sound like a prize but like an entitled princess on a pea**
>
> -from "Never Chase Men Again"

And entitlement is a typical trait of *low-quality women*.

Smart men know how to treat you based on who you are and how much they like you, says Bryan.
And he adds that men with a backbone are annoyed when you need to remind them.

Bryan is right.

And indeed, those men with a backbone will flee if all you do is demand, without giving.
And withholding sex as a bargaining chip is part and parcel of that mentality of "get without giving".

Top 1% Men Don't Accept Suckers' Trades

One other issue with the "waiting game" is exactly that: the "game" part of the equation.

Unluckily, that's exactly how all the dating resources I stumbled upon approach it.
Waiting is always a game to gain power, leverage, or, at least, as a chip to get his commitment.

Now don't get me wrong, some games are good and helpful.
But the waiting game to gain power is a *win-lose type of game*.

And **the highest-value men are not cool with being the suckers in a lose-win exchange**.
That's just basic power dynamics: top men didn't reach the top by being suckers.

So if you want to wait, you must at all costs avoid framing your waiting for sex in a way that comes across as win-lose (win for you, lose for him).
Ideally, you'd even frame it as a win-win.
It's possible, and we also teach that here.

Smart Men Know There Is Little Link Between "Waiting Time" and "Chastity"

Experienced or more socially aware guys know better.

They know the relation between "slow to sex" and "Madonna" has more holes than an Italian mama colander.

They know some of the quickest sex happens with inexperienced women and women without second motives -women who don't play games-.

And when they see a girl who's otherwise been around putting the breaks on them, they'll think:

> **Experienced Man Thinking:** *She's sampled around, she's probably had a few lusty encounters… And now she wants to put me under the yoke and pretend she's a good gal?*

And while some might be OK with that, some others will resent you.
And may even plot to wait until sex, and then drop you.

See Samantha's comment on guys disappearing after 10th date sex.

Some other guys might see through it, but for whatever reason still accept it.
Exceptions always exist, after all.
But you don't make the rule with the exceptions.
And the rule of sexual bargaining is that **if you frame the wait as a hoop he must jump though, you can only make him wait if he is lower sexual market value**.
And… why would you wanna be with a *lower-value man*?

3. Doesn't Work With Men Who Value Sex & Sexual Chemistry

Here's another possible issue with waiting:

Waiting for sex can sub-communicate low chemistry.

Matthew Hussey in *Get The Guy* writes that sex should happen after an emotional connection has taken place -albeit he adds that's unlikely to happen on a first date-.

And then he says:

> *Waiting too long is a mistake because he will feel like he's not important to you sexually.*
> *And men do get their validation through sex*

For many men, that's true.

And with those types of men, the longer you wait, the more you communicate that you're not so attracted to him. When you wait too long for sex, unless you're very skilled at maintaining romance and attraction, your relationship can easily resemble more of a friendship.

And that's not really a dream start, is it?

Then one day *a seductress* looks at him with lusty eyes he may start to wonder… "Damn! Wouldn't it be nice if my partner felt the same about me?"

4. Doesn't Work When Other Women Have Early Sex

This entry is a subset of "difficult markets".

Now ask yourself:

Why do almost all women tell other women to wait?

Well, in many cases, it's because they have their best interest in mind and it's solid advice and well-meaning.
But in some other cases, **women tell other women to wait as a (subconscious) *manipulation***.

It's intra-sexual manipulation to lead the competition astray to gain at an individual and personal level.

Such as:

> I tell other women to wait, while I have sex with the guy and lock him in.

Why would a woman gain doing that?
Because, at parity with everything else, this is the general rule:

Men are far more likely to pair up with the woman they're having sex with than with the woman they're NOT having sex with

It just makes sense, no?

So if he's seeing two women, chances are higher that the woman who moves the slowest will be passed up for the

woman with whom he's having sex.

Game theory shows this concept as well, with the more forward women getting the guy first.

And it seems logical as well.
It's a simple law of momentum and the path of least resistance.

Think about it this way:

He can meet one woman and he needs to court her, take her out, bring flowers, and pursue her, and then… Then nothing, he goes home and she goes to hers.

Or he can meet another woman, enjoy sex, cook a meal together, watch a movie in bed, and be his real self (because men are always more natural and relaxed when sex has already happened).

As you can see, it's not even all about sex.
Earlier sexual intimacy just makes dating easier -and more pleasurable- even beyond sex.

Who do you he is more likely to end up in a relationship with?

At parity of value and at parity with his personal preference, he will keep seeing the woman he is sleeping with.

And you can check out *my own example from my last relationship.*

The Quality-Woman Approach

Now a note:

Don't get this article wrong.

The premise is always to respect yourself, never feel rushed or forced and that, **whenever you're not comfortable with having sex, by all means, don't do it**.

Furthermore, making him wait is also an effective strategy at the right time, with the right man, and *when well executed.*
And it's also possible to make it work in more challenging circumstances.

As a matter of fact, in some cases, **waiting can be the sign of a girlfriend-quality woman**, and if it's honest, then it's also an honest and reliable signal.

However, you want to be strategic in your approach whenever not having sex can lead to losing a man you like. Because it's easy to get this wrong, even when well-meaning.

To begin with, what you need to avoid:

1. Don't Frame It As A Power-Thing

Such as:

Don't frame sex as a bargaining chip to ask for his investment (ie. some sort of "sex only in 3 months, if you prove yourself to me").

Because that only works with men who are lower quality than you are.

But Frame It This Way:

Instead, be honest about your preferences and concerns and make sure that the "wait time" is *framed* not as a hoop for him to jump through, but because you:

- Prefer to wait to make sure it's real

- Are very careful about STDs and pregnancies
- Need to be comfortable with someone
- Need to feel some level of intimacy before sexual intimacy
- Prefer to know each other first to make sure you're the right fit
- See sex as the natural progression of romance/love, with romance taking some time to develop
- Only have sex with a few selected men

And, important: **don't shove it down his throat as if it were a "take it or leave it" requirement**, because that's disempowering and most self-respecting men will walk away just to maintain dignity.

Instead, get his buy-in with it, and then you'll be both fine.

I highly recommend this article:

> How To Slow Down Sex & Get A Relationship

2. Keep The Relationship Balanced

Keep the relationship somewhat balanced.

If he does something nice for you or both of you, appreciate and give back. That's the best way to advance a healthy relationship: in lockstep.

Read this article:

- **Win-win dating for high-value men**

And to delay sex effectively here are a few techniques:

3. Frame It As "Taking It Slow Because It Might Be Something Meaningful"

This is a great approach if you truly feel this way.

It's sincere, it builds him up and it *deepens your connection* all at the same time.

And that's a huge step towards a relationship.

Watch her execute it to perfection:

https://youtu.be/sNcKSvLgglk

P.S.:
YB removed that video as it contained some nudity.
It's now in **Seduction University.**

4. Show The Light At The End of The Tunnel

Say you're not ready but, don't forget to mention:

It *will* happen eventually if you keep seeing each other and get along well.

For more, you can read *How to Reject Him Properly.*

Or alternatively:

5. Make Sex a Pleasurable, Guilt-Free Experience

In *"The Tao of Dating"*, a great dating book for women, author Aziz recommends you don't follow any rules but listen to yourself and decide accordingly.

If that means waiting, wait.
If it means earlier than usual, go for it.

Indeed, great initial sex sends a strong, powerful signal of strong chemistry.

It shows an honest and sincere attraction from your side and, of course, men too love to feel wanted.
A woman who lives in the now and can enjoy the beautiful things of life.

My Personal Take
This is just me, I'm *not* pretending to speak for everyone and plenty of men are happy to wait. But for me the only relationships I've been in started with early sex -or, at least, not long waits-.
All the rest felt dull to me.

6. Best of Both World: Early Sex & "Serious" Girl

Early sex must not be a curse.

And unless you're dating very traditional men who *expect* to wait, then you can turn it into an advantage.

If you do early sex well, it's possible to enjoy the sex, make him feel great, and also avoid coming across as "easy".

One way to do it is to alternate resistance to sex with moments of abandonment.

Basically, you show that you are attracted to him.
You want to resist -like you usually do-, but the chemistry is just so good… That eventually, finally… You relent.

But just for him.

We call this the "Madonna-whore seduction".

For more details, read:

- **How to drive him crazy**

> How to Mind Fuck a Guy: 12 Techniques (With Examples)

Summary

Most dating resources for women tell you two things:

1. Let him wait for sex as much as possible and
2. Make him invest as much as possible.

That's how you get a guy to stick around, provide and adore, is the message.

The premise of this article is that first and foremost you should respect yourself and should never rush if you're not comfortable with it.

Talking about actual effectiveness, we then show that the "make him wait for sex" approach works… *In some circumstances*.

It doesn't work nearly as well in libertine countries with an abundance of attractive women who are not waiting.
It also backfires with *higher-quality men* when it reeks of a *power move* because, generally speaking, it's only lower-

quality men who accept a sucker's trade.

And we then show how to make the wait work for (both of) you.

In **Seduction University** you can learn more strategies and methods, plus the full system for a happy love life.

Entitlement Mentality: Signs & Cure (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Entitlement mentality is the state of mind that you are owed something when most people around would beg to differ.

The second part of that sentence is the key.
Indeed, the most toxic expression of entitlement mentality is the gap between egotism and reality.

Should you fix your entitlement mentality?

Absolutely!

Until you get rid of it, you will have difficulties achieving what you want to achieve and it's unlikely that you will maximize your true potential.

This article will show you how examples of entitlement mentality and, by the end of it, you will know how to overcome it.

Contents

- A generation Entitled?
- The Entitled Social Life
  - Entitlement Mentality Examples
  - Entitlement Self-Help Examples
- What Makes You Entitled?
- How Entitlement Eats Away At Your Power
- Overcoming Entitlement
- Replacing Entitlement
  - On Your Road to Greatness
- Exception: When Entitlement Is Useful
  - Basic Rights: You're Entitled to Respect and Dignity
  - Maximizing Entitlement
  - Next Level: Enlightened Entitlement (Entitled and Humble & Realistic)
- Summary

A generation Entitled?

Some people say that millennia and Generation Z have a huge entitlement mentality.

You've maybe seen the now-famous speech of Simon Sinek, author of Start With Why.

Frankly, this video is more of an emotional/bitter rant than a thorough analysis, but it makes some good points

Mark Manson says that entitlement is the consequence of advertising and fake self-help telling you that yes, "you're special" and yes "you deserve it".

And some sources claim that entitlement seems to be an issue in the western world, with its individualistic and materialistic values.

But still, I say that's all hogwash.
Not because it's not true.

But because you don't need to worry about it.

You are not your generation and you are not your geography!

Why should you care if your generation is X, Y, or Z?
You are an individual, with your own mindset and psychology. You are bigger than your generation.

Wherever you come from and whatever your age, being entitled is not doing you any good in your life.
And particularly so for your social life and personal power.

So let's see how to change that.

The Entitled Social Life

In social settings, an entitlement mentality is particularly unhelpful.

Here's how entitled people undermine themselves socially:

1. Give Little Recognition to Others

To entitled people what others accomplish, say, or do doesn't matter much.

They filter out the world through the "me" lenses and hence miss out on the chances of building others up.

2. Talk Too Much

They believe that attention is owed to them.

And that others must be interested in their stories.
So instead of managing a good back-and-forth conversational flow, they monopolize the conversation
See the *group conversation walkthrough* for an example

3. Ignore Other's Opinion

People can often be easily won over by your way of thinking.

But first, they need to feel that you care about them and understand their opinion (*seek first to understand, 7 Habits*).

Entitled people believe their opinions are more important though, so they jump straight to that.

4. Interrupt / Deny / Pontificate

Being social is striking a balance between "I" and "them". And often more about "them" than "I".

Of course, entitled people struggle with that, and they commit all the most typical rapport-breaking mistakes.

They say "no" (big rapport break), interrupt others; launch with their own stories to "outdo" others.
Check *common conversation mistakes*.

Entitlement Mentality Examples

Here are a few sentences that reek of entitlement:

- "*Let's do it, I know how to market a product*" (the "serial entrepreneur" with 3 failed startups)
- "*No, what you should really tell her is this…* " (the 3 years single guy who didn't choose singledom)
- "*I'm a woman, he should pay for me*" (low-value woman with a man who obviously doesn't feel that way)
- "*I deserve it*" (but can't afford it: hilarious example here)

Billy Bats in this Goodfellas scene shows an entitlement mentality:

He just looks like an entitlement complainer. Nobody takes you seriously when you talk like that.

Or look at this acquaintance of mine who “deserved” the Louis Vuitton bracelet -but didn’t really have the money for it-:

Entitlement Self-Help Examples

There’s a lot of bad self-help literature that is all based on entitlement.
This is what it sounds like:

- Breakup: You were too good for him

But you’re crying over the breakup

- Didn’t get the job: They didn’t deserve you

But you really wanted the job

- Looking to improve: no, just be yourself

Even though “being yourself” hasn’t gotten you where you want to be.

What Makes You Entitled?

We could slice and dice entitlement in many ways.

But I will rein in my tendency to over-write :).
This is, in short, the definition of an entitled personality

> **You believe something is owed to you..**

And the second leg of entitlement is this:

> **…But the world feels otherwise**

Let's analyze some of the above statements with the entitlement X-ray goggles on:

- "Let's do it, I know how to market a product"

Experience entitlement. If you're barely making ends meet the world doesn't think you know how to market a product.

- "No, what you should really tell her is this… "

Attention entitlement. He didn't ask your opinion, you're assuming he wants to hear it.
And could be OK if you really had deep insights. But 2 years single not for choice might suggest otherwise.

- "I'm a woman, he should pay for me"

Vagina entitlement. That guy didn't really feel like he owes you a meal. *Become a higher quality woman* or learn to pick better men and the next one probably will.

- "I deserve it"

Lifestyle entitlement. Your bank account feels differently pal. Give more to the world and you will be able to spend more.

- Just be yourself

Egocentric entitlement. If she's crying being herself maybe isn't delivering. And doing the same and expecting different results is like asking the world should start treating you differently.
But changing the world is hard because, well… Because the world doesn't revolve around you.
Change yourself instead.

How Entitlement Eats Away At Your Power

Entitlement *can* help to acquire power, actually.

In "*how to gain power quick*" I explained how a sense of entitlement coupled with ballsy and resolute actions is a key trait to acquiring power quickly.

However, entitlement is also the enemy of long-lasting power.

Writes Robert Greene in The Laws of Human Nature:

> Whatever the cause, it infects all of us, and we must see this sense of entitlement as a curse.
>
> It makes us ignore the reality—people have no inherent reason to trust or respect us just because of who we are.
> It makes us lazy and contented with the slightest idea or the first draft of our work.
>
> Why do we have to raise our game or strain to improve ourselves when we feel we are already so great?
>
> It makes us insensitive and self-absorbed.
> By feeling that others owe us trust and respect, we negate their willpower, their ability to judge for themselves, and this is infuriating. We may not see it, but we inspire resentment.

Entitlement has led some poor *leaders* and dictators to their bitter (and deserved) end.

Overcoming Entitlement

To overcome entitlement you'll need *vulnerability* and the initial courage of staring at your current inadequacies.

"Love reality even when it hurts", says Ray Dalio.
Let's start with that:

1. Stare Naked At Reality

Before proven otherwise, this is the default status:

- You're a dime a dozen and you're not that special
- Nobody cares about you
- You're not great

And that's OK.

2. Pull Your Own Weight

Some cases of entitlement are because of helicopter parents.

Move out or start contributing and helping your parents. Their love might be unconditional, but it's unconditionally *asshole of you* to just take.

3. Wisdom Awaiting Outside Your Comfort Zone

The belief that you are "good" is often a fantasy we build to protect our ego.

We keep that fantasy by not really trying anything difficult and by shielding ourselves from failure.

Do the hard things instead.
Get out of your comfort zone and get some wisdom slapped into you by the real world.

And watch your entitlement mentality disappear.

4. Put Yourself in Others' Shoes

Take a moment to think of typical entitlement behavior:

- How do you feel when people ask for more than they contribute?
- What do you think when a smug face feels like they cut the line in front of you?
- And when they interrupt you because they *think* they know better?

Yep, that's how obnoxious entitlement is.

5. Give More To Get More

Peter Diamandis, author of Bold, says that to become a billionaire you have to help a billion people.

Get that mindset!

What you take is what you give.
Socially as well, with such things as *the law of social exchange*. The trick, as Dale Carnegie says, is to make people want to do things for you.

Replacing Entitlement

To fully deal with your entitlement mentality and zip past it, you need to replace it with something else.

The entitlement mentality is built around the idea that you're good, important, and "better".
Not only that's not (always) true, but it makes you act like a moron.
We will replace that with a different identity based on being a:

- Learner (read developing a growth mindset)
- Someone who never gives up (read Grit by Angela Duckworth)

Read building an antifragile ego which lays out all the steps.

On Your Road to Greatness

Now that you're not that special anymore… It's quite a bit freeing, isn't it?

You're just a guy/girl who's finally free to try new things and… Possibly fail.

And now that you're not so great anymore, you can finally start getting great for real. Because **nothing is owed to you, but everything you want is for the taking when you become the right person for it**.

What would happen if you made your goal to be the best at whatever you do?
It's not entitlement anymore to believe you're the best when you're actually the best.

Exception: When Entitlement Is Useful

As for most things:

Balance.

And context.

Some entitlement can be useful, in some situations and for some basic beliefs and rights.
Including beliefs and rights that support personal empowerment.

Feeling you are NOT entitled to anything leads to *over-passiveness*, over-submission, and to under-achieve in life.
And extreme non-entitlement to basic respect can also lead to abuse.

Basic Rights: You're Entitled to Respect and Dignity

You *do* are entitled to:

1. Basic respect and dignity
2. Respectful behavior and communication
3. To never be abused and taken advantage of

And you are entitled to *demand* proper and respectful treatment and communication.
When not forthcoming, you are also entitled to push back, fight, or find any other means to stop the abuse and disrespect.

Maximizing Entitlement

There are also some situations when feeling entitled can help you achieve more by taking more chances.

For example, feeling entitled to a good mate or a good job pushes you to look for partners and jobs, and that can ultimately lead to better results.

However, it's still good to remain realistic and focus on self-development as well, or the only thing you'll get is a string of rejections and burned bridges.

Generally speaking, to maximize your results you want your entitlement to only marginally be ahead of your "actual

value".

When Entitlement Helps Succeed

Finally, it's also a generalization that entitlement never leads to success.

Some entitled and narcissistic personalities believe they can simply talk about themselves and receive attention and money for it.
And for very few, it works.
Our era of digital gossip made that possible even outside of the old established media.

However, never forget that one, those are the rare *exceptions*.
For every entitled famous person who makes a living from their IG updates and selfies, there are 10.000 who get their ego thrashed for believing they should, but not getting it.
And two, it's still probably not the best, healthiest, and even happiest way to succeed.

Next Level: Enlightened Entitlement (Entitled *and* Humble & Realistic)

Because in some situations entitlement can be helpful and support both confidence and self-esteem, the next level of development is in being able to both feel entitled and:

- Realistic about your self-assessment
- Humble about life and your achievements

Call it "enlightened entitlement".
And it's a pattern of "walking the line" we've seen often on this website.
I highly recommend these articles:

- Enlightened individualist: a monster of an article but central to TPM
- Enlightened collaborator
- Enlightened cynic

Summary

Entitlement mentality is costing you in your quality of life, your achievements, and in your social relationships.

Get rid of it and you'll take a further step towards (social) success.

Note: it's very possible you were too good sometimes. Or that he should have paid for you or that people should have listened to you. But the question is: is the rest of your life proving that?
Because the onus to prove otherwise is on you.

Improve Your Social Skills: A Beginner's Guide for Social Anxiety

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Improve Your Social Skills (2014) is a practical guide to help readers improve their *social skills* and social intelligence.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Foundations: Overcoming Social Anxiety
  - Learn The Basics of Body Language
  - Manage The Conversation Flow Like Ping-Pong Match
  - Learn The Basics of Group Conversation
  - Develop Empathy To Get To The Next Level
  - Make Some Friends & Develop A Relationship
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Social anxiety is a fake fear and you can overcome it
- Social skills can be learned with practice and good theory
- Empathy is key because it will allow you to know what others are feeling

Full Summary

About the Author:
Daniel Wendler is a fellow writer and researcher on social dynamics.
He says that, as a man with Asperger syndrome, he was socially awkward growing up, but that he improved immensely with constant work and focused self-development.
Wendler holds a doctorate in clinical psychology from George Fox University, is the founder of the biggest social skills community on Reddit, and is an active blogger on his personal website.

Foundations: Overcoming Social Anxiety

Wendler says the first step to overcoming social anxiety is to understand the difference between physical fear and true fear.

True fear is because something in your environment is truly dangerous and your fear is justified.

Physical fear is the activation of the fear system without any real danger. And, of course, social anxiety is a physical fear.

Learn The Basics of Body Language

The author gives you a very nice crash course on body language.

I totally agree with him when he says that there are thousands of different expressions, but the only two signals you need to understand are comfort and discomfort.

He says when you learn that, you can gauge your interaction and adjust accordingly. Seeing discomfort? Start troubleshooting or cut your conversation short, maybe you're boring them.

Comfort signals?
Greenlight, keep going.

For some pictures on body language check:

- **High-power body language**
- **Submissive body language**

Manage The Conversation Flow Like Ping-Pong Match

Daniel teaches you how to manage conversations effectively.

He introduces the concepts of invitation (a question) or inspiration (saying something that will make the other person want to jump in).

Only invitations will make the conversation *like an interview*. Only inspiration is hard.
So the author proposes a mix.

Just a note from my side, I like the idea of Mark Manson in *Models* saying it's good to replace questions with statements. A question, he says, begs for an answer.

Learn The Basics of Group Conversation

I agree with Daniel's suggestion.

He says the first thing you should look at, is if the groups are open or closed to new people joining.
Closed means they are huddling and there's little physical space to actually join.
Open means they are facing the larger group or it's physically easy for new members to join in.

To join a group, he advises you either introduces yourself directly or indirectly. Check the book for the details on how to execute both, it's quite good.
Also, check:

- Successful group conversation

Develop Empathy To Get To The Next Level

Daniel stresses the need for empathy to succeed socially, with which I wholeheartedly agree.

And he proposes you check out the book *Social Intelligence*, which to be honest, I haven't found to be very enlightening (and removed it from our website for being so thin).

The author says that empathy is partly innate, and partly you can grow it.

Daniel says first you need to understand yourself and allow yourself to feel the feelings you're feeling, and then you can move to empathize with others.

Make Some Friends & Develop A Relationship

"Improve Your Social Skills" also has chapters dedicated specifically to where and how to meet friends and how get girlfriends.

And how to nurture and develop both friendships and girlfriends.

We come from very different perspectives and experiences when it comes to dating, but I respect Daniel's opinions.

He proposes to start as friends, and it's an interesting opinion because he says that's the only way to be attracted to real personalities.

Most of all, I really appreciated something he said, which I will quote:

> If you are more concerned with what your partner can do for you than with what you can do for your partner, then you should not be dating them.

And the other way around.

After having read a bunch of *women's dating books* all about *playing games*, I really appreciated Daniel's point of view. That's indeed how the best relationships are.

Real-Life Applications

Match Eye Contact
I like how Daniel simplifies eye contact, which in many resources is made to sound very complex.
Simply hold eye contact with them more or less as they hold eye contact with you.

Review

In spite of social skills being some of the most important abilities one could develop, there are few good books on the subject out there.

And I find Improve Your Social Skills to be one of the best beginner's guides available.

I don't know the author personally, but I have a very good impression of him.
He communicates with solid morals and ethics and he focuses on adding value to the people around him.

The fact he overcame Asperger's Syndrome to become socially effective gives Daniel a strong perspective on working on the basics that most other authors don't have.

And, if I may add, it's also a testament to human capabilities: a beautiful message from Daniel there.

Further Reading
You can check out the:

- best social skills books
- best communication books

Or: **get the book on Amazon**

Value & Availability: Two Foundations of Social Dynamics

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Value and availability are two key concepts of social skills.

They have important consequences both for your social success and for your dating success.

Yes, this might sound a bit theoretical, but you still need a solid grasp of them to learn and understand social and power dynamics.
Value and investment are highly relevant to dating.

Contents

- INTRO
  - Unavailability and Self Rejection
  - Fixing Availability Issues
  - People Want The Highest Value, Available Person Possible
- The Value & Availability Matrix
  - Low Value / Low Availability
  - Low Value / High Availability
  - High Value / Low Availability
  - High Value / High Availability
- Availability Influences Value
- Maximizing Your Results
  - Increasing Your Value
  - Maximizing Your Availability
- Availability in Dating
  - Being a Challenge: The A/V Sweet-spot
  - Gauging Your A/V Sweetspot
  - Super High Value / High Availability
  - False Self-Rejection To Make Them Chase
- Summary

INTRO

In the *Social Exchange framework*, we explained social dynamics can be seen as a big exchange.

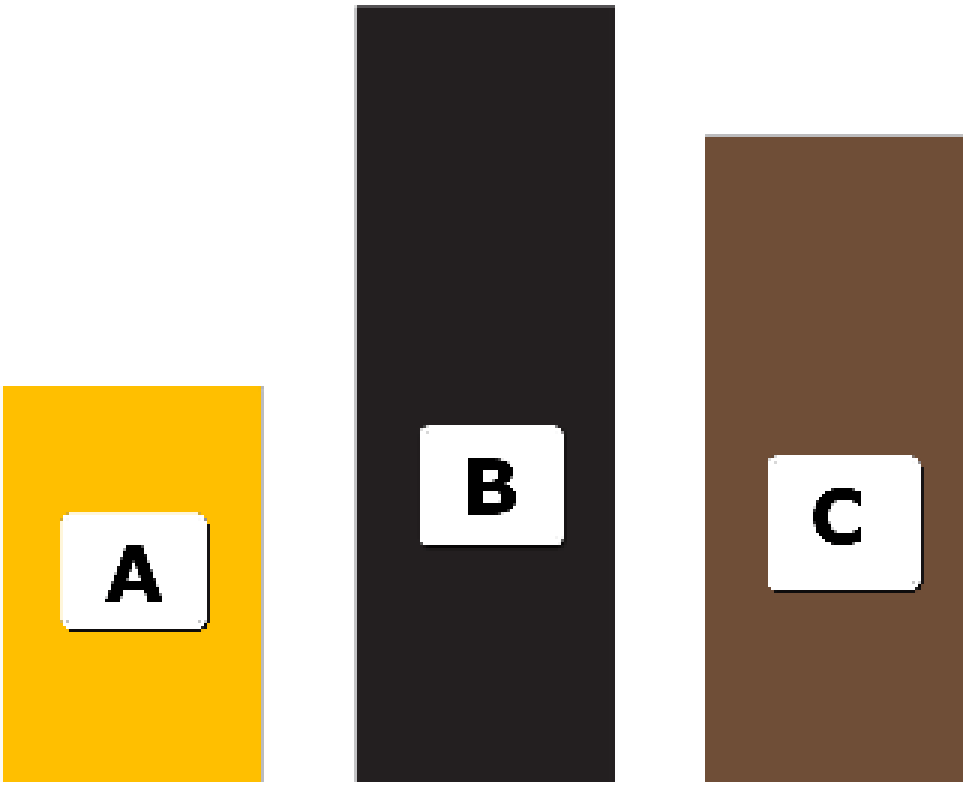
In a nutshell, the main principle is that the more value you have, the more you can demand.

But it's not always that straightforward. And there's a caveat. The caveat is: how available that value is.

This concept originate in the dating literature for men, from a dating coach called Sebastian, originally called 'attainability'. We place it within larger social dynamics and TPM's existing concepts, including "collaborative frames" and "power and warmth".

Value and Availability: Explanation

Imagine the bars below represent the total value of three different folks:



In a digital world free of psychology, both Amber and Christy want Black and *pursue* black.
And Black could easily get friendship, romance, or at least a warm welcome from both Amber and Christy.

But in the real world, it's not as straightforward.
People also have a sense of what their personal value is, and they know that higher-value people might not be thrilled to hobnob with them.
That's why Amber and Christy might want Black, but not pursue Black. They might act aloof, snub him, or even be curt towards him so as to reject him first.

That's a case of self-rejection.
If you are high value, ***self-rejection*** **happens when people don't think you will accept them, and they self-reject themselves before you do so**.

In the above example, Amber and Christy might think Black is not interested in them, so they self-reject themselves.
It's also possible that *self-rejection* turns confrontational. Amber and Christy might be hurt by Black's (potential) rejection, so they act out their own rejection with their own unfriendly and dismissive behavior.

In short, it doesn't just matter how high-value you are.
High value might not be enough, because **people only want to enter a meaningful social exchange if they believe that your value is available to them**.
That, in a nutshell, is the concept of perceived value availability.

And that's one of the reasons why I recommend that as you get better, you mix power with warmth.

Value Availability

What does "making your value available means"?

Well, think of it this way:

> Making your value available means "welcoming people into your higher-value world" and making them feel accepted and valued for who they are.

That's true no matter if we are talking about a relationship, a friendship, a networking event, or a seduction.

Let's now explore value and availability with an example.

Unavailability and Self Rejection

Imagine Amber (bar A) is out at an event and wants to talk to someone.

But Amber will likely not go for Black because the difference with Black (bar B) is too big. Amber thinks it's likely Black will reject her because Black is "too good".

That's a typical case of *self-rejection.* Remember that **self-rejection happens when we feel someone might reject us and we reject them first**.
People who self-reject take themselves out of the running, often unconsciously, without even trying.

People who *self-reject* do so either to protect their ego, which doesn't help them succeed in life or to protect their social standing, which can make sense in case of public rejection.

Signs of Self-Rejection

How do you recognize if you are pushing someone into self-rejection?

These are some of the signs:

- Ignoring you
- Being in awe and too nervous to speak to you
- Disliking you (even if they haven't spoken to you yet)
- Being rude to you (they feel hurt, you make them feel "not good enough", so they hurt you back)

And that's also one of the reasons why when dealing with *underminers, frenemies,* or early enemies, I often recommend trying to be kind and collaborative with them first.
Many of those people are in *self-rejection* and you can turn them around if you make them feel like you do not reject them, but value them.

Self-Rejection & Teasing Too Much

Now, what if Black were to approach Amber?

Well, Amber might be elated (and nervous at the same time).
But she might not take him seriously, wondering if he's toying with her.

It's also possible though that Amber will be rude or shut Black down. Afraid of being eventually hurt or let down by Black, she does the rejection first.

The worst thing Black could do is tease her too much.
Too many guys focus only on building their value as high as possible and coming across as powerful as possible **but forget about availability.**

Seen an example here:

> **Him**: come on, you gotta keep it interesting, interest me
> **Her**: ahh… I studied at Oxford University
> **Him**: booooooring!

She liked him!
But he keeps being playing too hard to get, too aloof, and too rude as well. **He makes his value too unavailable,**

so she thinks she does not like him, and self-rejects.

Self-rejections tend to be final, so one must always strive to prevent them:

Fixing Availability Issues

If Black wanted to have a deeper interaction with Amber he should make her feel like he accepts and respects her. Ideally, he values her.

And, if he likes her romantically, also that he likes and is attracted to her.

Black could either come down to her level -for example with humbleness, deprecation, or vulnerability- or, even better, raise Amber to his level -getting to know her, appreciating her, etc.-

People Want The Highest Value, *Available* Person Possible

Do you know the red pill?

If you have been reading manosphere blogs, you know the mantra around *"female hypergamy"*.
The idea is that since women look for the best possible men they can find, then you can never trust women in relationships.

But albeit *female hypergamy is certainly real*, it's not exactly true that women -or men- always look for the best possible mate.
Instead, people seek the highest possible mate among the ones they feel are *available* for them (ie.: the ones they feel they can get and the ones they feel will appreciate them).
Much different.

Even before the approach, people will always be gauging how valuable the other person is and how available he is.

And during the interaction, people use the following signals to gauge availability:

Availability Signs

- Warmth
- Friendliness
- Touching
- Effort (to keep the conversation going for example)
- Interest in the other

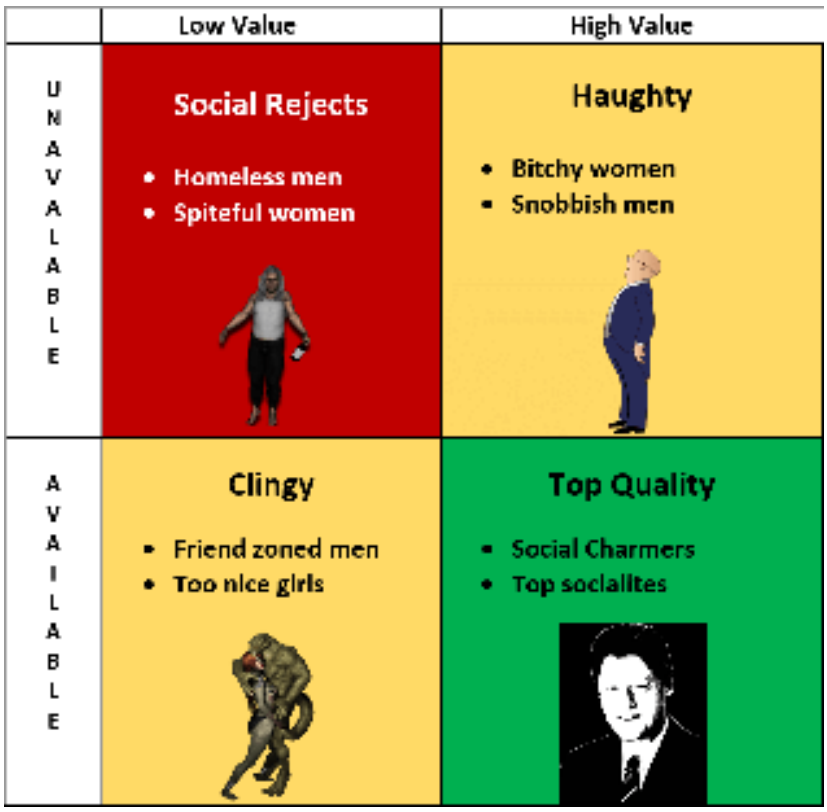
Unavailability Signs

- Coldness
- Aloofness
- Physical distance
- No effort (let the conversation die for example)
- No interest (no questions, looking away, etc.)

On the extreme end, unavailable signs become repulsion instead of no attraction. Then it's aggression, disgust, etc.

The Value & Availability Matrix

To make the Value and Availability concept clearer, let's project it onto a matrix:



Low Value / Low Availability

People in this box aren't even on the map in either the social or dating world.
They have no qualities or skills worth of notice and are unfriendly and socially clueless.

Low Value / High Availability

On the extreme side of this box, imagine fangirls screaming "pick me, pick me" under a singer's stage: super available and low value because there are a hundred of them.

On a more day-to-day basis, these are people with little going on in their life. They're always free for you and are the most likely to chase you.

High Value / Low Availability

These are the people we call haughty, pompous, and full of themselves.
Low availability can make the people around you jealous and resentful. That's one of the reasons why celebs have so many "haters".

High Value / High Availability

These are people who are high-value and welcoming. They make the people around them feel accepted and high value as well.

Bill Clinton is a great example:

Bill Clinton being high-value and high-availability (or, at least, *looking* high availability)

Availability Influences Value

Value is also influenced by the availability of the value itself.

Indeed, psychologically, we are programmed to use availability as a shortcut for value. If something is abundant, we find it less valuable.

If on the other hand, something is scarce, our brain tells us that it must be valuable and we want it more (also see Cialdini).

Hence, it is possible to make our value go up by faking scarcity.

An experiment found out scarcity increases perceived value in the following order:

1. What's scarce
2. What has become scarce
3. What has become scarce because of social demand

Maximizing Your Results

To maximize your results, you should increase your value and find the sweet spot for availability.

Increasing Your Value

Increasing your value should be the core of your efforts.
And it means you become a better person and get more of what other people value.

Maximizing Your Availability

The availability sweet spot is this:

- **Available enough so that people don't self reject**
- **Scarce enough that you're still selective, a challenge, and appreciated for your time**

The availability sweet spot It's usually less relevant in social settings and friendships -where it's best to add value to each other-.
It's a bit less relevant in good and established relationships -where it's best to add value to each other-.

But it's very relevant at the beginning of dating:

Availability in Dating

The idea of being scarce to be more attractive is an old one.

Virtually all female dating advice centers around being scarce to make him chase.
It works in principle.
But has several drawbacks, most notably:

1. You risk the target will stop pursuing (self-rejection)
2. It's a game everyone plays: more available singles can steal your lunch

Let's not go into that now but let's have an overview of availability:

Being a Challenge: The A/V Sweet-spot

Imagine your availability as a peephole to your value.

If what people see is good (your value) and if it's visible enough (your availability), then it's exciting and people will want to get it.

If people can't see any light at the end of that peephole (zero availability), you're too hard to get and they won't pursue you because they don't think they have a shot (except for stalkers of course).

Gauging Your A/V Sweetspot

Remember this:

- **Your value is relative** (social value relativity & sexual market value variability)
- **People's confidence in their ability to access your value varies**

What does that mean?
It means that you cannot stick with the same strategy with everyone, but **you must vary and target your value and availability to the specific person and situation**.
To do that, emotional intelligence and knowing *some basics of body language* are key.

The rule of thumb is:

Bitterness / Rudeness
When people are bitter and *combative* towards you, they might be *self-rejecting*. Be less of a challenge.

Lukewarm / Unresponsive
When people are not interested in they'll be rather nice as they don't want to hurt your feelings. But they will not want to meet you or move with you.
If that's the case, you should be more of a challenge.

Super High Value / High Availability

Ideally, the best of the best is to be so great as to wow someone upon approach (super high value and at risk of self-rejection).

And then proceed to make yourself more available by taking the edge off of yourself with humility and self-deprecation.
Or even better: build him/her up to your level so that he/she feels he has a shot with you.

On a social scale, this is exactly what Clinton was doing.

False Self-Rejection To Make Them Chase

As a last note, I wanted to show you a high-level use of *self-rejection*.

When someone is being a bit out of order, you can choose to ignore, tell them that's not cool, or… You can feign self-rejection.
This is called "false takeaway".

If they like you, that will get them chasing.

See a perfect example here:

> **Her**: that's exactly what American women think Italian men say
> **Him**: (looks hurt and disappointed) thank you (walks away)

Did you spot the guy's (fake) self-rejection? It's rather easy, at minute 2:07.

This is a greatly effective technique that we call "collaborative shaming" here, it's delivered with high vulnerability *from a judge role.*

Summary

Your value, be it your overall value or your *sexual market value*, are crucial to do well with others.

You knew that already.

However, people will often judge your value depending on how available it is for them.
If they think you don't wanna share your value by talking to them, helping them, being kind to them, or sleeping with them, they might either avoid you, despise you, or *self-reject* and never even consider you as a sexual option.

Socially
To make friends, make your social value easy to access -ie.: be approachable and welcoming-.
Also read: mix warmth with power.

Romantically
Romantically, make your value available enough they feel they can get it but not so available they think you're too easy.

WIIFT: When & How to Use It (& When to Avoid It)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 February 2018 · Archived copy · Original

WIIFT stands for What's In It For Them.

It postulates that if you want to influence people, you should highlight what they stand to gain from doing what you are proposing.

And that makes a lot of sense… Usually.

By the end of this article, you will gain a better understanding of when to use WIIFT, how to use it, and when it's best not to be so direct.

Contents

- When To Avoid WIIFT
- WIIFM Examples
  - How to Show Value: Two Guys Looking For a Room
  - The "No WIIFM freeloader"
- Summary

When To Avoid WIIFT

What's In It For Them is about being upfront about what you can do for them.

In *Value and Availability* though, we showed that sometimes you want to show yourself not too available to the other party, especially in romantic situations.
WIIFT is the total opposite. WIIFT is the pinnacle of availability.

WIIFT is also not ideal for *political candidates* or for *leaders*, because, well… Often, there is little in it for them, and you're better off leveraging higher ideals (see *Drive* by Daniel Pink).

When should we use WIIFT, then?

Let's see:

WIIFT: For When You're the Asker

You want to start with what's in it for them in all situations where you play by *their* rules.

In those cases, you don't have (yet) the power and social pull to demand something back.

The characteristics of these situations are:

1. Obvious power imbalances: Power imbalances can be so obvious sometimes that there's no point in trying to pretend they should be interested in you and that's why you communicate first and foremost what's in it for *them*

2. Not-in-person: When not in person people can't see or get a sense of your other qualities, so you have to go right to the point of what you can do for *them*

3. Time starved: When you have little time you can't let them slowly discover your qualities, so you gotta be more obvious.

Here are some examples:

- Swipe-based online dating
- Sales cold outreach

- Elevator pitches
- Emailing for a job
- Asking for funding

WIIFT: Logical Interactions

Logic-based transactions are transactions where there is no social stigma in being upfront about what you want and what you can give.

You are looking for something, they are looking for something and you have to prove to each other you have what it takes to enter into a mutually convenient transaction.

Here you want to be obvious about what you can give and at the same time be obvious and direct about what *you* want.

Some examples are:

- Some types of sales
- Arranged Marriages
- Interviewing for jobs

No WIIFT: Social Interactions

In social interactions, you want to be more indirect.

You want to show attractive external qualities and drop hints about the less visible parts of your value.
Let them dig out for more as you slowly reveal more and more about your awesome personality.

"*Oh my god"* they'll be thinking, *"how many other cool things is this guy hiding*".

No WIIFT: Dating

In dating the script is inverted.

Here ideally you want them to show you what's in it for *you*.

Because in dating the one who's doing the selling is communicating he's lower in the pecking order. And people - especially women- are not very attracted to those who are beneath them.

So ideally you want to show your external qualities first and foremost, but without selling yourself on the deeper ones.
Then you build a connection by being interested *in them*.

Ideally, you will get physical on chemistry attraction even before she finds out about all your other deeper qualities.

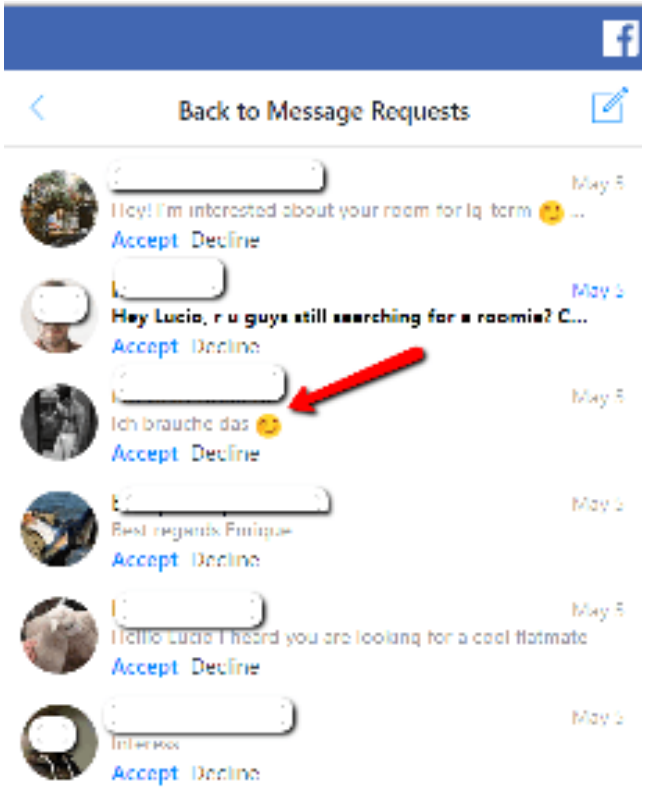
Let's check a couple of examples now:

WIIFM Examples

I will show you a couple of examples.

How to Show Value: Two Guys Looking For a Room

This is what happens when you rent a place in a city where everyone is looking for a place to stay:



I ask for a relatively high rent and yet many people always reach out (above are the messages of people who wrote on Facebook only).

This is the type one, super obvious situation: there's a clear power imbalance because they ask and I am the chooser. Plus, it's not in person and there is high demand.
This is when you have to front-load your value as much as you can.

Let's see the difference between those who get it and those who are oblivious to the *Rules of Social Exchanges*.

The shirtless man with a selfie in front of the mirror is a great example.
I wrote my ad in English, and he wrote to me in the local language, which is the first bad sign: you have to adapt to the chooser when you're the asker.

Second, he doesn't make it easy for me to proceed.
What am I supposed to ask him a thousand questions now about when he's free, what he does, and if he can pay?
Not going to waste my time on that dude.

And of course, he makes the crucial mistake of not leading with what's in it for me.

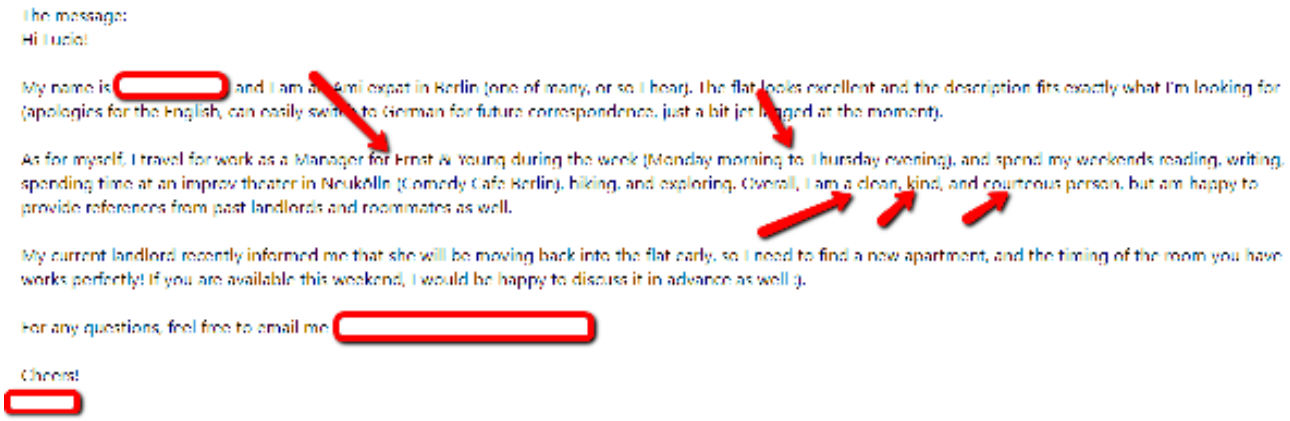
"*Ich brauche das*" literally means "I need it".

These are the same people who complain that nobody replies to them -and you really have to wonder why… -.

If the message wasn't idiotic enough, would the emoji seal the deal?
Compare it to the two people who get it, which are those I invited over to get to know them.

They quickly show their interesting personalities (social currency), lay out what's in it for me (good job and ability to pay, traveling most of the time, no mess in the kitchen), and make it easy for me to say yes (propose their availability).

Now, even if I didn't particularly care about their benefits, it shows that these are people who *get it*.
And we all like people who get it.


The message:
Hi Lucie!

My name is [redacted] and I am an Ami expat in Berlin (one of many, or so I hear). The flat looks excellent and the description fits exactly what I'm looking for (apologies for the English, can easily switch to German for future correspondence, just a bit jet lagged at the moment).

As for myself, I travel for work as a Manager for Ernst & Young during the week (Monday morning to Thursday evening), and spend my weekends reading, writing, spending time at an improv theater in Neukölln (Comedy Cafe Berlin), hiking, and exploring. Overall, I am a clean, kind, and courteous person, but am happy to provide references from past landlords and roommates as well.

My current landlord recently informed me that she will be moving back into the flat early, so I need to find a new apartment, and the timing of the room you have works perfectly! If you are available this weekend, I would be happy to discuss it in advance as well :).

For any questions, feel free to email me [redacted]

Cheers!
[redacted]

Request from [redacted] WG-Gesucht.de (8)

The message
Hello Lucio,

My name is [redacted] and I'm currently in Berlin starting my Masters in Business Management along with a company internship. I am from [redacted] but my family is [redacted] I am looking for a flat share for ideally long term but I am flexible with that. I would love a chance to set up an appointment with you for the room maybe today or anytime this week.

Some quick facts about me:
- I don't cook so I never make much mess in the kitchen
- I don't smoke. I'm just more of a whiskey person
- I've lived in many different cities and always had good relationships with my roommates

Hope to hear from you

Regards,
[redacted]

You can also contact me by phone on [redacted]

The "No WIIFM freeloader"

Have you read the article on freeloaders?

Check it out; it's well-in-depth, and "no WIIFM" is the definition of freeloading.

Look at this guy asking for a free month:

Help Inbox ×

OK, you cannot pay $9. But what can you give back? Put THAT in the email.

c[redacted]s <h[redacted]pm>
to connect@thepowermoves.com

Hello Mr Lucio, I am interested in your Power Moves website.. it is unlike anything I have seen, so in depth! But, the paywall has become issue for me, would there be any way to set up a trial for a month? Money is a big concern right now but I am still interested in becoming a better person using your services.

He starts off with no "WIIFM".

And the sentence "the paywall has become an issue for me" tells me this guy does not see that relationships among strangers require a sort of exchange.

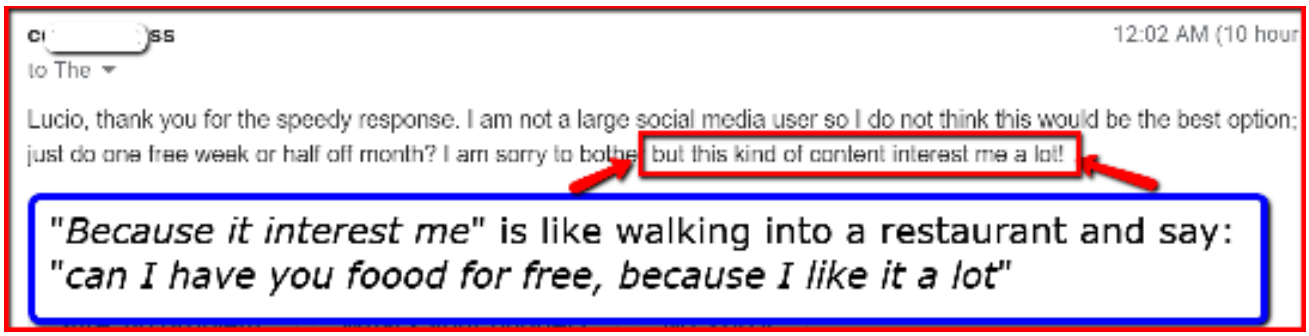
Especially if he had the emotional intelligence to consider that maybe I receive a lot of these emails.

But hey, if I can help, I'm happy to.

So I give him the chance of providing him with a "WIIFM". And I tell him I'm happy to give it to him for free… If he is willing to share the articles he likes the most on his social media.

A simple way to help him out and to help him make this a fair exchange.

Here is his reply:



He does not get that I'm offering him the opportunity of a fair exchange in the form of a "WIIFM".

Instead, he keeps pressing on a deal with no "WIIFM".

Not a good signal to send me because this whole business teaches how to defend against people who seek win-lose (instead of win-win).

Summary

In *The Rule of Social Exchange*, we talked a bit about social currencies.

We said there that to get what you want, you have to give what people want.

In this article, we differentiate a bit on when to be very direct about what we can offer and when we should let them show us what's in it for us instead.

How Quality Women Make Men Invest: Low vs High Value Tactics

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Most women want men to invest in them, and chase them.

Howevre, how they go about it tells you everything about a woman's character, quality, and **whether she is relationship-material.**

As experts in social and dating power dynamics, we break down in this article the dynamics of investment in dating, and what it says about both men and women.

Contents

- Intro
  - What 'Investing' Means
- Typical Dating Advice On Making Him Invest
  - Why He Should Invest Much More
  - Why It Makes Sense (on paper)
- The Drawback of Making Him Invest
  - Cooler Guys Seek ROI
- Making Him Invest: The Right Way
  - Reciprocal Investment Blueprint
  - Emotional Investment
- Summary

Intro

Relationships are 'mixed games' of converging and diverging interests where both partners must strategically display some interest to maintain the relationship, but also hide interest to avoid depreciating its value and signaling lower value (Blau, 1964; Buffalmano, 2016).

However, hiding interest entails risks. Over-hiding interest can derail a budding relationship and undermine attraction.
To overcome the impasse and avoid the risks, **ideal dating between interested partners would allow both partners to display interest, and increase it in lockstep.**

This model maximizes dating effectiveness without undermining attraction (or even increasing it, when well executed).

What 'Investing' Means

First of all, a quick overview of what "investing in a woman" actually means.

We define investing in a woman as:

> Any act of caring or adding value to her life and well being that requires the expenditure of effort, time, or resources.

Sounds too abstract and theoretical?

OK, here are some simple examples:

- He initiates calls/texts and always replies
- He picks her up / drives her back
- He listens and asks questions
- He is protective
- He offers to help
- He seeks to impress or look good
- Any act where he inconveniences himself to help and support her

As you can see, investing is mostly good.
Even better, investing in each other is what develops great relationships!

Mutual investing might indeed be the single most important indicator of a *great relationship*.

But one partner investing a lot in the other without equal investment back…?

Not so great, as we shall see (and not good for your dating effectiveness, either).

Typical Dating Advice On Making Him Invest

Let's quickly review the popular dating advice for women.

Most authors of women's dating advice say that the goal of dating is to make him invest in you as much as possible.

It's a common mantra in:

- Power of The Pussy
- Get The Guy
- Ho Tactics
- F*ck Him

So far, so good.

The bad news is that some of these authors spread the idea that best of all is to **get a lot while giving back as little as possible**.

Why?

Why He Should Invest Much More

The idea of making him invest as much as possible is that:

1. You weed out the non-serious guys (players etc.)
2. You'll be in control and won't fall for him too soon
3. He will like you more

And for the most part, these are all true.

Why It Makes Sense (on paper)

These are the advantages of typical dating advice on making men invest in you:

- **You Weed Out Players & Low Investment Guys**

Generally, you don't want men who invest very little because they don't make for great relationship partners -and the same is true for women-.

And as a rule of thumb, *fuckboys* and *womanizers* tend to invest less.
So it might be true that pushing for him to invest more could weed out the players.

However, as we shall see, it also weeds out more discerning and experienced men who are simply not OK with being "pushed" into more and more investment.

- **You Will Not Fall In Love**

We tend to like less what's very available (Cialdini), so investing little while receiving lots will "safeguard" your feelings indeed.

This is only good if you don't want to fall in love, though.

- **He Will Like You More**

Studies show that givers feel more committed to the recipient after giving (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010).

This is probably partially because of sunk costs (Coleman, 2009) and back rationalization (*Eagleman, 2011*).
But in a nutshell, it's true: the more one gives to you, *the more he values you.*

There are exceptions (especially in difficult markets, read The Eligible Bachelor Paradox), but overall the theory does make sense.

But now, the big question:

Who does it work with?

The Drawback of Making Him Invest

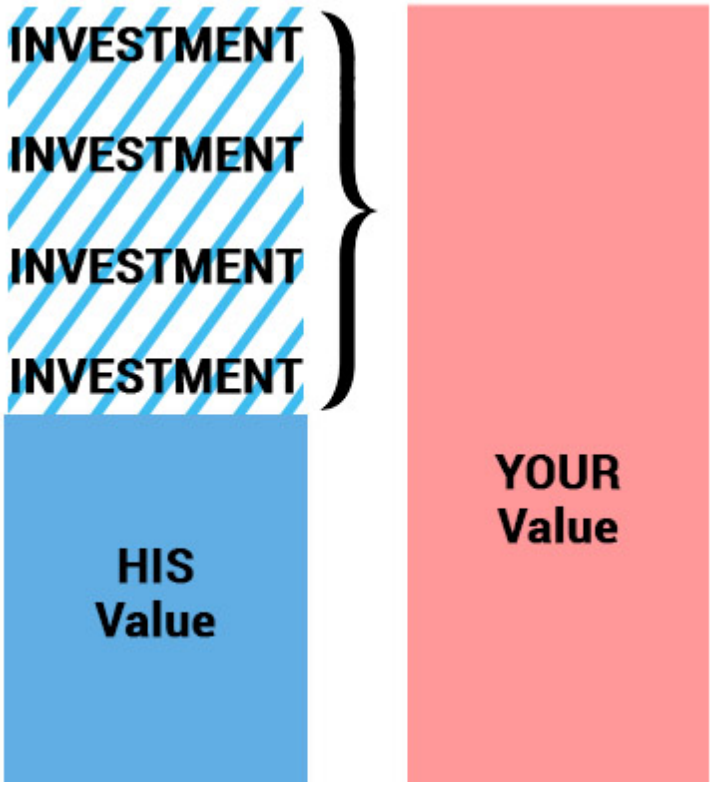
Social relationships can be seen as big exchange markets.

And the *Law of Social Exchange* postulates that good relationships tend to reach a balance of value -who you are- and investment -what you do for the other-.

Frist off, giving and investing much more invites exploitation.
Second, a corollary of the social investment model is that when one side has some major lack in overall value, he must make it up with "external value injections".

Investing is indeed a way of making up for a lack of value.

So when you make him invest a lot, this is what the relationship looks like from a purely exchange-driven model:



Now, can you start seeing why "forcing him to invest a lot can be an issue?

As for anything people-related, *there are exceptions* of course, but, as a rule of thumb: **the men who are OK with investing in you without an equal amount back are the ones who are not good enough for you**!

Yes: it's mostly men who feel they're not good enough for you that will over-invest.

When they cannot bring enough value with who they are, *then* they throw on the table different kinds of extra services, such as:

- Wining and dining
- Carrying bags
- Fixing stuff
- Ready at your beck and call
- Emotional tamponing
- …

On average, men who invest a lot tend to be less experienced, less valuable, and lower-quality types of providers (see: *providers and lovers*).
In short, they often don't know any better.

Here's an example that always cracks me up:

When he says "I thought I did everything right", he refers to investing a lot.

Cooler Guys Seek ROI

ROI is a financial term that means "return on investment".

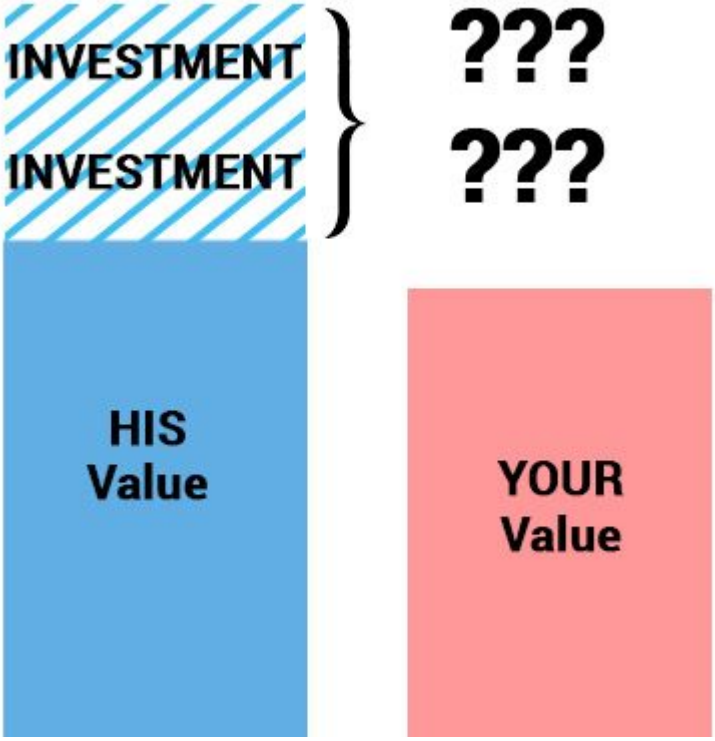
And it applies to dating as well.

We all have an internal system of value exchange, and we all seek to keep it balanced.

What does that mean to you?

It means that **men who are around your same value or higher are unlikely to invest a lot without requiring equal amounts back**.

This is what it looks like with bar charts:



These guys will invest the first time and then… And then they will expect you to do the same. They might not be aware of it consciously, but unconsciously they expect something back (unless they read ThePowerMoves, in which case they will consciously expect it :).

And when they see nothing coming from you, they will feel something is off.

And what will happen if you keep following the typical dating advice and expect even more *without* giving?

Bruce Bryan of *Never Chase Men Again* hits the nail on the head when he says that **men with a backbone will flee very soon if you demand without giving**.

Indeed those guys will think you're an *entitled woman*, with big demands and little to show for it. That's a big trait of *socially clueless* women and *low quality women*.

That's why I highly recommend you don't seek to make him invest without giving equally back.
Because a high-quality man might be very happy to date you… Unless you start demanding and expecting over-investment, in which case **you are driving the very best men away**.

Power Move Tip:
Strategically, you can differentiate between men.
You might for example seek investment from the clueless ones who are blind to the imbalance.
While you can seek a balance with the cooler and smarter ones.

Making Him Invest: The Right Way

What's the alternative then?

The alternative is **reciprocal investment escalation**.

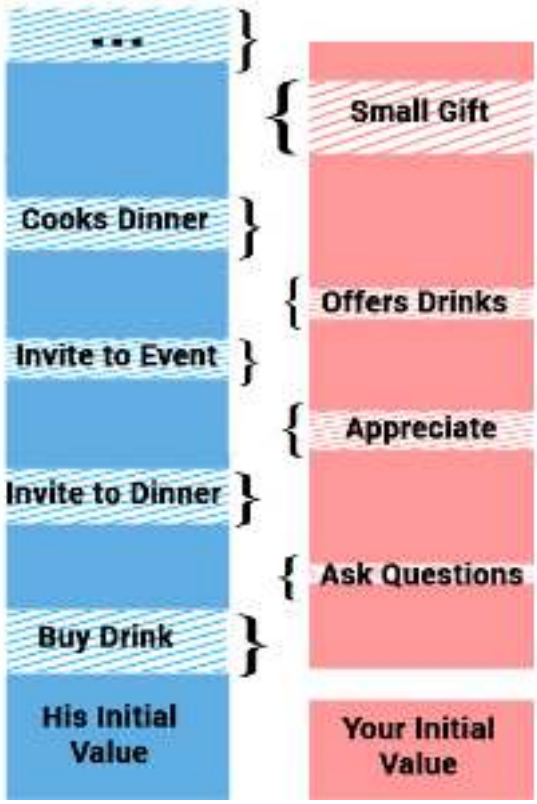
Let him do the first step, and make sure you reward him and make him feel good, which will encourage more giving.
Give something too, which will reassure him you're in it as a contributor as well.

And **the virtuous cycle of mutual investment will start feeding on itself**.

Not only this attitude of reciprocal investment will foster more and more giving, but research shows that partners' inequitable relationships are happier and last longer (Equity Theory of Love).

This approach displays what psychology calls 'welfare trade-off ratio' (Buss, 2021), such as how much we focus on our needs VS how much we focus on our partner's needs.
This approach shows the healthiest balance of caring for oneself, while also caring for him.

See here a chart bar example of how a woman can lock in a *higher quality man* (starting from the bottom):



This is how you move onward and upward together
Let's now dig deeper into how you can get into a great relationship with the mutual investment virtuous cycle.

Reciprocal Investment Blueprint

#1. – First meeting:

- **He**: buys you a drink
- **You**: thank him and get to know him

#2. – First date:

- **He**: invites you out and pays for dinner
- **You**: thank him. At the end of the date warmly hug him, look him in the eyes and tell him you're happy you two met

#3. – Second date:

- **He**: invite you to some event

- **You**: you offer him a round of drinks and toast him to such a nice company (building him up)

 # 4. – Third date:

- **He**: invites you somewhere or to a home-cooked meal
- **You**: bring him a gift with little money value but that says "I thought about you"

That's how you show him you're a keeper.

That's a woman he feels he can rely on for life, which is indeed a major trait all the male authors highlighted in *women's dating books*.

Emotional Investment

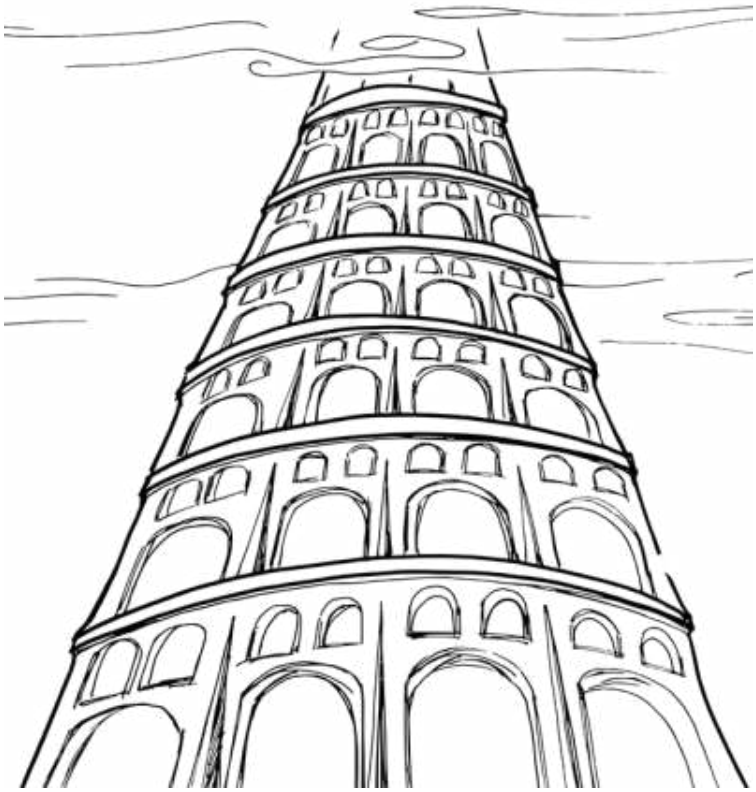
Emotional investment is a subset of overall investment, but it's the most important.

Bruce Bryan recommends you open up first and show your vulnerability.
If he shows nothing, it's not a good sign: he might be an *emotionally unavailable man* or an *avoidant attachment type*.

If he replies with his own emotional investment (ie.: opens up, listens, asks more questions, increases intimacy, etc.) he's a keeper.

I like the idea of making the first move and gauging the reaction.
But whoever makes the first major overture, the pattern is the same: one step each.

Building the tower of a *great relationship* is a common effort. **One brick at a time, one brick each**.


One brick each and you go twice as higher

Summary

The advice in most dating books for women is to make men invest as much as possible, while she invests as little as possible.

Then, the advice goes, he'll pursue her and want her more.

While that might be true, I explain in this post that **making men invest as much as possible only works for lower-value men, and it often backfires with higher value men, who see it as a red flag**.

It also doesn't bode well for setting up functional relationships. As Blau notes '*Only when two lovers' affection for and commitment to one another expand at roughly the same pace do they tend mutually to reinforce their love*.

A woman with a good character will always accept a man's investment warmly, make him feel good about giving, and give back as well.
If she escalates investment by giving back, that's the healthiest progress towards a win-win relationship.

Also, check:
Why you shouldn't use sex as a bargaining chip.

Dark Capital: Turn Pain and Anger Into Fuel for Success

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Many of us will face challenges in life.

We will face losses, rejections, heartbreaks, pain, and failure.
Some of them can bring us to our knees.

This post is here to tell you that not only can you recover, but that those dark days can become the foundation of your future, upgraded self.

This article shows you how.

Contents

- Avoid Victim Stance
  - 1. Don't Pretend 'It's OK'
  - 2. Don't Complain Privately & Do Nothing
  - 3. Don't Make Excuses For Them
- Turn Pain Into Anger & Fuel
  - 1. Accept It Happened, And That It Sucked
  - 2. Turn It Into A Catalyst For Positive Change
  - 3. Turn It Into Positive, Controlled Anger
  - 4. Tap Into The Pain Whenever You Need A Boost
  - 5. Move Past Darkness
  - Bonus: Later On, Be Compassionate to Your Suffering

Avoid Victim Stance

Bullying, rejection, failure… These can be defining moments in our lives.

In the beginning, it's OK to sit with the pain and process it. Avoiding this part can create unresolved issues and coping mechanisms.

We don't deal with therapy here, we deal with power, personal power, and achievement.
And from that point, do this:

1. Don't Pretend 'It's OK'

Most people pretend nothing hurtful happened.
Instead of dealing with their lack of assertiveness and power, they pretend they are OK with their state of subjugation and submissiveness.

Example*:*

- The "friend" is making fun of you. He always cracks jokes about you and all the group laughs. And you laugh along
- Your boss coaxes you into overtime with a pat on the back and a fake compliment that 'the team would be nothing without you'

You smile in both cases and accept.
Except, you really didn't feel like laughing at all.

Don't pretend you're OK with it.
You're not.

Recognize and accept that you got shitty friends and a terrible boss.
They're not the end of the world, and there is no need to pretend otherwise.

2. Don't Complain Privately & Do Nothing

This is another common response for most people.
They complain to themselves or to someone close… And do nothing.

Example:

- The boss disrespects you in front of colleagues. But instead of standing up to your boss, you prefer complaining to your colleagues.

"He's an asshole", you say. But **private complaints with zero action make you look even more powerless.**
You can complain privately only if it's part of a strategy to undermine or foment a rebellion.

3. Don't Make Excuses For Them

Here are some examples of making excuses for others:

- *He was just stressed out* (justifying disrespect)
- *He is weak, that's why he bullies you* (psychologizing-justifying)
- *They were just joking, didn't mean to offend* (pretending they're friends)

The fact that he might have his own problems doesn't mean he must create problems for you.
And the idea that bullies have low self-esteem is not true, it's a pop-psychology myth (Baumeister, 1997).

Turn Pain Into Anger & Fuel

Every painful event becomes fuel, a ‘dark capital’ that you can use as propellant.

Some examples of ‘dark fuel’:

- Rejection when you were desperate for a yes
- Heartbreak when you didn’t expect it, maybe being cheated
- Bullying, either physically or verbally. Being the butt of the jokes also qualifies
- Feeling inadequate

Or it can be deeper and darker.

An abusive parent, like your father telling you that you’d never amount to anything in life.

Most people try to hide these painful events, pretending it never happened, or trying to forgive and forget. Instead, we propose to use it for motivation.

Start like this:

1. Accept It Happened, And That It Sucked

Acceptance prevents it from staying in your subconscious and wreaking havoc in your life. It’s the first step to healing. And it’s also the first step to using it as motivation.

2. Turn It Into A Catalyst For Positive Change

Some people turn destructive, antisocial (toxic externalizing) or destructively inward with drugs and depression (internalizing).

But some of the most ambitious overachievers used their most painful experiences as a catalyst for positive change and hard work.
For example:

- Tony Robbin's mother poured glue into his mouth
- Oprah was abused during childhood
- David Goggins' father beat him mercilessly

The question is, are you going to let your pain devour you or are you going to channel it positively?
It's OK to be down, depressed, or take time off. But then, eventually… Are you going to rise up?
Remember, the night is always darkest before the sun rises.

> **It is always darkest just before dawn**

3. Turn It Into Positive, Controlled Anger

Anger can be destructive when it's too much, and in bursts.

But controlled and within an optimum balance, it can be the fuel behind your hard work.

Star trainer Tim Grover for example says that anger gets you in the zone.
It's anger simmering beneath your skin, barely about to burst, but you keep it under control for laser focus and peak performance.

4. Tap Into The Pain Whenever You Need A Boost

And whenever you're depleted, tap into it:

- Thank you, Dad, for telling me I'd never amount to anything, this last set is for you
- Your ex dumped for a richer guy. These last 10 approaches are to show her you can get better

Remember: smooth sailing rarely carried anyone to greatness. But men are born and characters are forged in your darkest hours.

> **It's in your darkest hours that men are born and characters are forged.**
> -Lucio Buffalmano

5. Move Past Darkness

Dark fuel is powerful, but it also pollutes heavily. And over time it can pollute your mind and health.

And it can also cost you in honor and empathy.
As Nietzsche said:

> Whoever fights monsters shall see to it that in the process he does not become a monster.

Eventually, you want to move to more positive motivation, such as:

- **Identity-driven motivation**, you do it because that's who you are (see 'antifragile ego')
- **Value-adding motivation**, to have a positive impact and legacy
- **Life-quality motivation**, for yourself and the people around you. This approach is especially suited if you want a family

🤔Lucio's Take: **My drive went from anger to identity and value-adding**

Lucio:
I started TPM with more anger as fuel.

With time, anger played a smaller and smaller role. I still use it, but my main drive today comes from identity ('this is whoI am and what I do'), responsibility to TPM's mission ('creating the best in-class, ever-lasting repository for men's empowerment), and responsibility towards humanity ('adding my little brick to help humanity forward').

The goal is to harness pain and anger, use them, so they can help you fly farther and higher.

And that's the ultimate human conquest: harnessing the dark so that you can create more light.
For yourself, and for the world.

> **Harnessing the dark, so that you can create more light**

Bonus: Later On, Be Compassionate to Your Suffering

This approach is the 'warrior phase', and it's important to get your life moving in the right direction.
However, it may leave some emotional wounds open.

Eventually, you may want to revisit your wounds with more compassion, and potentially with a therapeutic approach.
Not to wallow in the pain, but to fully heal it. You want to **avoid looking at your past emotional pains and think you're weak for having them**. You're not weak, you're human. Instead, extend love to yourself, including the one who suffered. Self-love is the foundation of self-esteem and mental health.

The peak of self-development is to combine compassionate self-love with the warrior approach to life.

Social Relativity: How Go From Low to High-Value

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Personal value and social status are 'relatively relative'.

They are relative because there is no set measure and because they don't depend only on you. Indeed, for the most part, they depend on the assessment of the people around them.

You can be a star in one group and a nobody in another one. In the short span of a few minutes.

This post will review social relativity from a group's perspective.

Contents

- Social Relativity: Intro
  - Interest-Based Clubs Afford Status Relative to Their Interest
  - Rank-Based Groups Afford Status Based on Rank
  - Bars & Clubs: Your Status Is Relative To Strangers
  - Forced Groups Are Free For All
- Environmental Impact On Personal Values
- Win Every Time: Value Targeting
  - Social Chameleon
  - Group Social Value Drawbacks
- When Status is LESS Relative
  - Better Specific Currencies or General Ones?
- Summary

Social Relativity: Intro

Researcher Joseph Henrich tells us this on the psychology of status:

> While not infinitely malleable, what constitutes a valued domain is amazingly flexible. The differential success of societies and institutions will hinge, in part, on what domains are valued.

However, the *competition* for what affords status is a constant, and not relative (Barkow, 2020).

Let's quickly review different types of groups that will make you valuable -or useless- within them.

Interest-Based Clubs Afford Status Relative to Their Interest

Some groups aggregate around their interests.

Being good at whatever skill those groups value will give you status within that specific group.

- In a stamp collection club, the guy with the most stamps will see a boost in his social value
- In tuning groups, the guy with the most powerful car and stereo will probably be one of the coolest guys
- And in a group of hooligans, it will be fanatism—or violence—that will determine who has the highest value and most social power

Some Groups *Exclude* Based on Lack of Common Traits

Some groups bond around a certain trait.

That trait might not be an advantage because everyone has it.
But if you don't have it, you're almost automatically excluded.

For example, older people who go to university feel awkward.
Why?

They will be the only older ones, the same age as the professors but on the part of the students.

But being of a different age almost automatically makes you an outsider in that social hierarchy.

Which basically means: you don't belong.

Hate Groups: There Is One Hidden in Any Group

Sometimes groups can get nasty toward outsiders.

As a matter of fact, as Baumeister explains, almost any group has in it the seeds to oppose other groups.

Hate groups often award the most status to the most extreme members.
The most extreme member might not otherwise shine in any other way than his shallow *charisma*, hate, and rage.

Hate groups are most likely to form when:

- There is a strong pride in what makes them a group
- They build their pride around out-group enemies
- There is a high level of similarity among members
- Out-groups are seen as dangerous for the group

Here is one example from the movie "School Ties":

The highest social status is probably going to the one who concocted and prepared the hated banner.

Rank-Based Groups Afford Status Based on Rank

In companies, a lot of your social status will depend on your position within that company, which is rather formalized through a title.

As John Maxwell says, titles don't make leaders, but titles certainly have a major impact on the social hierarchy within the company—and on the social status too.

Bars & Clubs: Your Status Is Relative To Strangers

Sometimes you will loosely be part of a group simply because of your geographical location or proximity.

In a club, for example, your social status is highly relative to the people who are attending that club and is mostly based on your looks, clothes, body language, status cues, and group of friends.

Sometimes that will play well for you, and other times it will not.

For example, one evening I ended up in a club in Madrid where the local football players hang out. Most of the girls in there were hookers looking for football players.

The social currency there was (football) popularity and money.
I shouldn't need to tell you I was pretty much a nobody there :).

Forced Groups Are Free For All

Some groups form out of necessity and not out of our participants' own will.

Some examples are:

- High school
- Military drafts
- Prisons

These groups tend to be highly differentiated, and there is little overlap between what's popular in one group and what works in another group.

Popularity is the high school social currency; strength is the social currency in the military; and violence and alliances in prisons

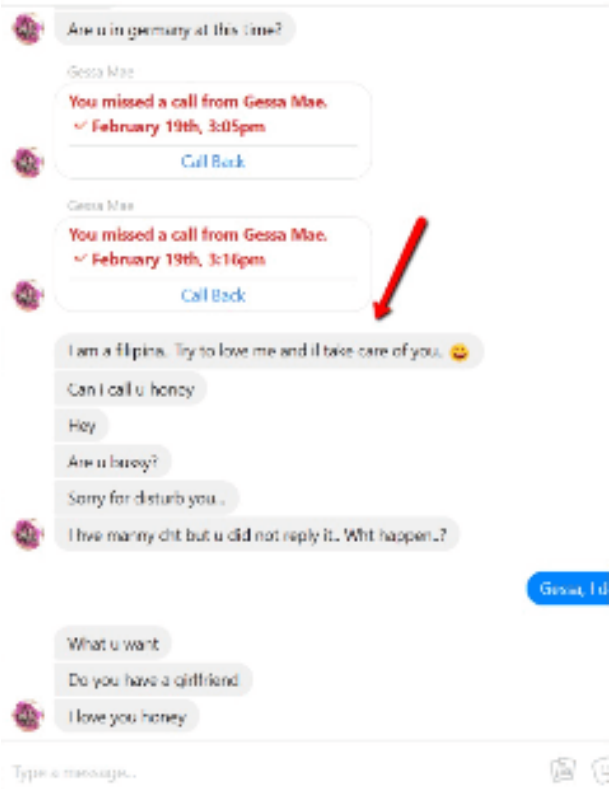
Environmental Impact On Personal Values

Sometimes you will completely change the environment without joining any specific group.

For example: when you travel to different countries,

Simply being more exotic can get people to notice you more and make you more interesting.
Or because of stereotypes or real differences, you can be perceived as "better" than the people around you.

Dating is one of the starkest examples of social relativity.
A white man traveling to an African or Southeast Asian country will immediately boost his status.
In some cases, it will *skyrocket* your value. See this example of this Philippine woman, who had never seen me nor met me, throwing herself at me:



social relativity can swing to some crazy extremes

Win Every Time: Value Targeting

And now, how can you use the theory of social relativity in real life.

To get what you want from people, to start friendships, or to start a relationship: get and **show them the currency they specifically value**.

For example:

Get artistic value to date an artist

Do you like artistic folks, do you want to join an art circle and maybe have an artist as a wife/husband?

Of course, they are likely to want people with the same social currencies that they value.

Here's what you do: start drawing, acting, and attending art exhibitions.

You'll pick the lingo and the common topics and you'll be able to give the comfort of a shared culture and passion.

Or learn the history of art better than most and teach her about the history of art -women dream to sleep with their professors :)-.

Give business value to get business value

Do you want to mingle in business circles and attract a top business mentor?

Don't write you seek employment from them, that's what everybody does. Speak to him in a currency he wants instead.
Ideally, you'll go for an *emotional bond and connection*. Or he will want to be a father figure to you.

But that's not easy to achieve.
So the second best option is what all business people appreciate: *"what's in it for them"*.

Tell him you'll work for free for 3 months, and if you're great and only if you're great he can start paying you.

Otherwise, you'll be happy for having learned from him and he got free labor.
Now he's going to listen.

Social Chameleon

Being a social chameleon is all about understanding what social currency the people around you appreciate.

And then playing up those qualities while muting the ones they don't.

In short: **understand the group's social currency and trade that currency**.

A breadth of experience will help you develop lots of reference points so that you will always have something to offer.

Group Social Value Drawbacks

The very nature of group specificity makes groups' status less valuable.

In *the Small Pond Syndrome*, we reviewed how some people spend an inordinate amount of energy to boost and defend their social statuses in some specific groups.
Only to one day move out of those groups and realize that what they had was… Meaningless.

The new group doesn't know about their previous social status and… They couldn't care less.

Now they're back to nobodies.

That's why unless you stick to a specific group for your whole life, I would advise caring little about the group's internal social status.

When Status is LESS Relative

Alright, here is the good news:

You can develop currencies that will work no matter which you join.

In *The Social Exchange Rule*, we reviewed that social relationships often obey a non-written rule based on social value exchange.

It postulates that the more social value you possess, the more you can demand from others.
We dubbed that social value "social currency".

In this article, we saw that the currencies always change depending on the group.

True.
That stands.

However, some currencies are almost always in demand, no matter the group you are in.

Some examples of them are:

- Social skills
- Conversation skills
- Great looks
- Lots of resources (or ability to acquire them)
- Confidence

When you possess them, you tend to do well in almost any social circle you join.

Better Specific Currencies or General Ones?

In some instances, groups' specific currencies, or the qualities that a specific group appreciates, can count more than the general ones.

And in extreme examples, even subvert them.

For example, a positive and upbeat personality is what *most* people like.
But if you want to enter a circle of emo and Gothic subcultures your smiles and positive attitude might make you an outcast.

However, as a rule of thumb, **you should put all your effort into developing general-appeal currencies**.

Those allow you to enter and do well in almost any group.

Developing group-specific currencies instead is dangerous and ties all your fortune to a single group.
And you're better off free as a bird than anchored to the same group for all your life :).

Summary

We have seen that what people value can be highly relative depending on the groups you join.

Your social status in those groups will hinge on whether or not you have the currencies that the group values.

Most groups however are not very strict and value what most other groups value.

Focus on those general currencies and you'll do great.

How Women Seduce Men: 3 Archetypes of Female Seduction

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Ever wondered why some women seem to hypnotize men without saying much?

This guide breaks down **how top female seductresses do it** — the psychology, power moves, and emotional hooks behind male desire.

Understand their playbook, so you can spot it, learn from it, and never lose control in the game of attraction.

Contents

- Intro
- 1. Marilyn Monroe Seduction Style
  - 1. Orgasmic Faces
  - 2. Innocence
  - 3. Promises of Endless Pleasures
  - 4. Madness
  - How Marilyn Seduces Men: Summary
- Aida Yespica Seduction Style
  - Try To Guess
  - 1. Hedonistic Playfulness
  - 2. Sexual Inhibition
  - 3. Sexual Provocation
- Margarita Levieva Seduction Style
  - 1. Dancing Skills
  - 2. Feminine Body Language
  - 3. Flowing Motion
  - 4. Purring Voice
- Summary

Intro

First of all, there are several different ways to effectively seduce men.

That means that you don't need to change your natural self, but you can leverage your strengths.

Indeed, I highly recommend you choose a style that is most similar to your base character: nothing beats a sexy woman who's comfortable in her own skin (and game).

Some styles, like Marilyn Monroe, work on virtually every man.
But worry not: each seduction style in this article works for the majority of men.
Even many of those who say "they are not into that".

Let's start then.

1. Marilyn Monroe Seduction Style

> The Sexual Innocence

A guide on female seduction couldn't start with Marilyn Monroe.

Marilyn's seduction power plays on the mixed signals of always-on sex vibes coupled with her defenseless girly attitude.

1. Orgasmic Faces

Look at the first 10 seconds of the video below.

What does it make you, what sensations does it evoke in you?

It's a mix of orgasmic and dreamy expressions.
As if she'd just awakened. Or as if she'd never wake up. She's always there to take you to her dream world.

2. Innocence

The second most important element of Marilyn is innocence.

It's the mix of sex and innocence that is so explosive.

Sex alone is common and would make her no more than the typical TV soubrette.

Innocence is the element that allows her to scream sex from every pore without looking desperate.

Thanks to her innocence, Marilyn escapes labels: **on the Madonna-Whore dichotomy, Monroe takes both.**

Her natural aura of innocence gives Marilyn a huge advantage over almost any other woman.

With a mix of innocence and sex, she seduces men at two different levels:

- Carnal desire
- Male provider role

At the same time that men want to possess her, they also want to protect her.

3. Promises of Endless Pleasures

Look at the first 20 seconds of the video below.

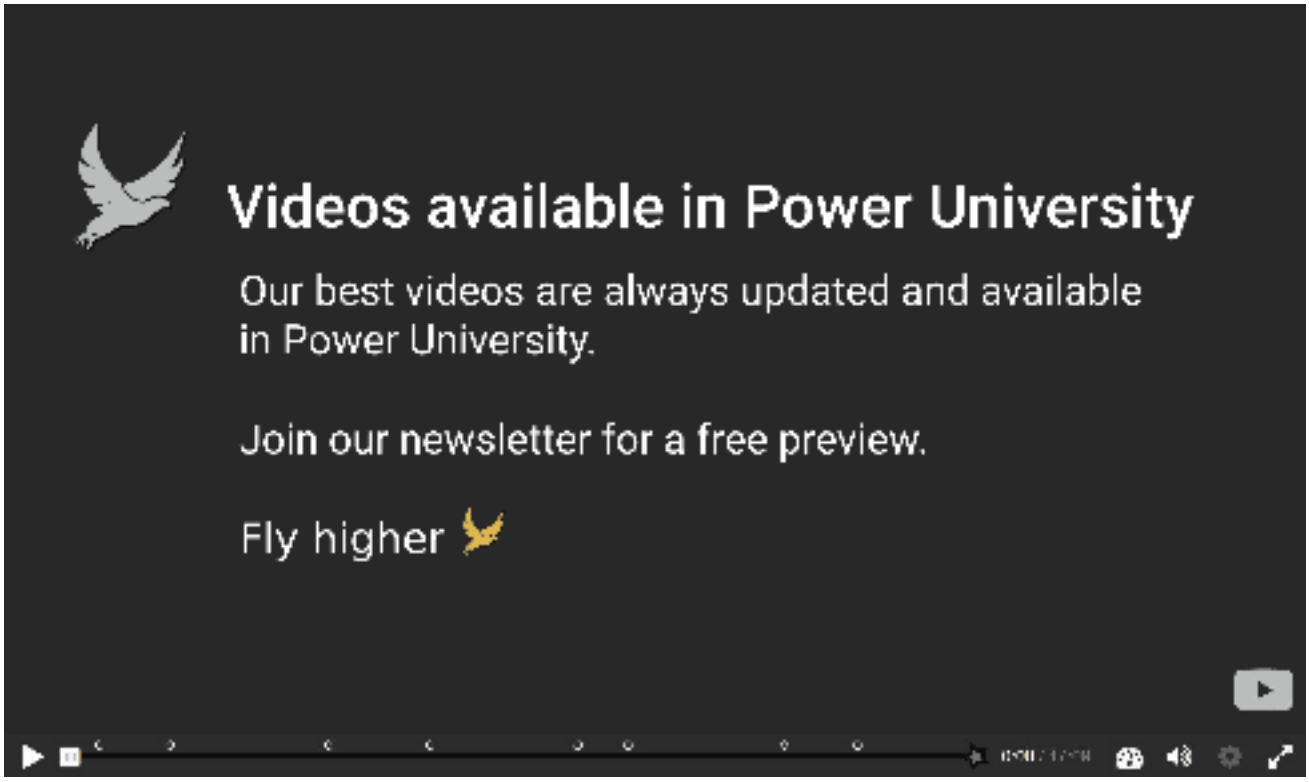
Her voice, her softness, and her demure attitude are already captivating.
Then the interviewer asks a difficult question.

She pauses, without getting defensive or guarded.
She admits she doesn't know what to say, showing her vulnerability and inhibition.

Then she cracks a joke… And flashes her orgasmic face.
Marilyn in 20 seconds.

How does it feel?

Does it feel like this woman around the house would nag you about dirty dishes?
Or complain about crumbles in the kitchen?
No, it feels like she'd float around, never bothering, never pestering… And never rejecting his man for sex.



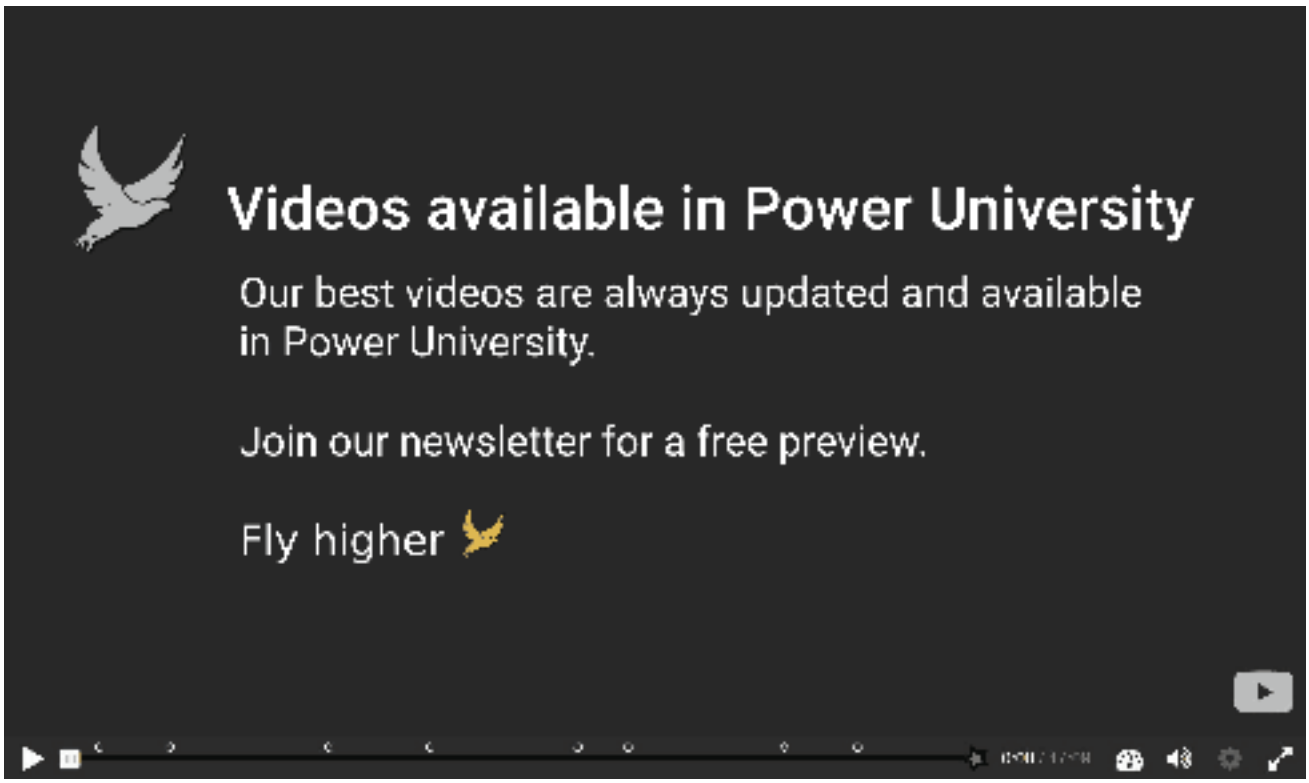
4. Madness

This is the last major pillar of Marilyn's appeal.

As Greene also explains in *The Art of Seduction*, men are smothered by the need to always be rational and in control.
And that's why irrationality and madness exert such an unconscious pull.

Madness also puts a man slightly on edge.
He never knows what's coming… And he never feels he fully has her.
All powerful tools to hook him in.

Notice how she lays against him, slightly unnatural. And how she's short of breath as if pained by some mysterious mental issue.



How Marilyn Seduces Men: Summary

If I had to summarize Marilyn feminine seduction powers in one sentence, it would be this:

Marilyn Monroe oozes sex to make every man think she's primed for intimacy, while also sending out submissive, naive, "protect me" signals that make men want to provide, protect, and invest at the same time.

And here are the steps:

- Look like sex
- Seem easy
- Add innocence
- Play the girl in need of protection
- Add a touch of madness and unpredictability: you're not easy to tie down

Aida Yespica Seduction Style

> The Sexual Tease

"Gatte morte" knows how to seduce a man.

I know that's not English.
There's no equivalent for that Italian expression. It would be something like a crossover between "tease" / "feminine" / "coy".

But we'll see what that means with examples.

In the latest years, I've never seen anyone topping Aida Yespica when it comes to the teasing seductive style.

Rumors had it she would charge thousands of Euros for her company before she even got famous.

And I still remember my friend's comment: "I would totally pay for it".

Now why would a penniless -and very handsome- teenager go into debt when he had an abundance of women -and when equally beautiful hookers were available at less than 100?-.

Because none of them knew how to use teasing to seduce a man, of course.

Try To Guess

Watch this video first, and see if you can guess who's the seductress we're talking about.

Don't just look at bodies.
Look at the overall aura:

Who makes you want to possess her the most?

It's not even a contest, right?
The girl who grabs her own boobs and shows her tongue is Aida Yespica.
Here is what makes Aida stand out:

1. Hedonistic Playfulness

It's all a game for her.

Life is dancing, laughing… And very possibly sex, we imagine.

Aida makes you feel like you're drinking from the source of eternal youth.
Because *She* is eternal youth and hedonistic passion.

If you want to have the same vibe:

- Laugh hard
- Dance with abandon
- Be positive and upbeat
- Socialize, make friends quickly
- Be happy, have a lust for life

2. Sexual Inhibition

Aida emanates confidence in her own body and sexuality.

It feels as if she could do it herself, she would.
And as she grabs and touches herself, many men probably imagine her doing just that.

There's a strong relationship between how much we accept our bodies and how inhibited we can get in bed.

We know that unconsciously, and that's why sexually inhibited seducers are so good at arousing men.

See her again in action:

Notice again that sexual liberation is only the first step, but not enough to get you into the Olympus of top seducers.
It's the tease and provocation that Aida adds to the mix indeed that takes her to the next level:

3. Sexual Provocation

The way Aida mixes sex and fun is a big provocation.

She puts sex in front of you, then pulls it away as if it was all in jest.
She pokes fun at your manhood.

It's like telling him:

> *"I'd go for it… But you were too slow.. We're just friends now… Unless you're man enough to come and get me?".*

That's the kind of sexual provocation the top coquettes go for.

It's waving the red flag in front of the bull, only to sidestep at the last second and get him chasing with his blood roiling.

Here's an example of the concept from a TEDx talk on seduction:

And now let's move to the third and most feminine seductive style.

Margarita Levieva Seduction Style

> The Essence of Feminity

An article on how to seduce a man could not avoid the most natural of seduction: pure, concentrated femininity.

It's Margarita Levieva, pure femininity in motion.

And I wasn't surprised to read she was born in Russia and was a competitive gymnast.

1. Dancing Skills

Some art expressions can give you big points when it comes to femininity and seduction.

Singers, violinists, and fashion designers are some of them.
And of course, dancing.

Dancing is the public, dressed-up expression of lovemaking. Nothing screams femininity like proper dancing:

2. Feminine Body Language

The devil is in the details.

The best feminine seducers incorporate highly feminine body language into their daily expressions, making it all-natural.

Even when they don't look like they're trying to seduce, they are *still* seductive.

Here's an example:

Did you guess it? The cues are head tilt and a slight swayback posture.

3. Flowing Motion

Men tend to move in a blockier fashion.

Some women, too.
And they are *not* seductresses.

Because the best seductresses move flowingly instead, like colorful butterflies.

Here's the perfect entrance: no bombast, but 100% femininity:

Notice how she moves like she's walking on air.
She's late but still doesn't hurry: she's a lady and the man can wait.

And most of all notice how she gets into the chair: she doesn't use her hands or pull the chair up.
She seductively moves her body.

4. Purring Voice

Notice in the above video her accent on the words "late", "ever" and "forgive".

It's like a cat purr. It's not about meaning, it's about sensuality.

Summary

These three archetypes show how women can command attention and desire — not by logic, but by psychology.

Learn how to read, counter, and use these dynamics inside *Seduction University*.

If you want to take it now to the next level, check out these articles:

- **Male seductive types**: this same article, but for men
- **The definitive guide to driving him crazy**

> How to Mind Fuck a Guy: 12 Techniques (With Examples)

In Seduction University we keep the best psychology for seducing and attracting men

A Goal Digger's Guide: Manipulative Tactics Exposed (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

A Goal Digger's Guide (2010) teaches women how to attract rich men, get them to invest, and use that leverage for financial freedom. It's part manipulation playbook, part empowerment guide.

TPM Strategic Audit: This text is audited here as a study in a 'taker's approach' to dating (**Resource Extraction strategy**) and dating power dynamics. For the high-value man, this summary serves as strategic knowledge about the 'dark psychology tactics' to help you spot red flags and vet for quality and supportive women.

Contents

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- Summary
  - 1. Ask For What You Want
  - 2. Never Apologize
  - 3. Go For Owners, Not Players
  - 4. Never Ask What He Does
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Key Takeaways

- **Educate yourself**, save up, and don't give it up
- **Ask for what you want**, and drop him if he doesn't give it
- Gold digging is a means to an end: **financial independence is your end goal**

Summary

A Gold Digger Guide is a pun between *gold* digging and *goal* digging. But it's actually both.
The author's approach is about chasing personal goals and never being dependent on anyone. But she pursues financial goals with *gold*-digging.

Here is how the author suggests combining both approaches:

1. Ask For What You Want

An effective gold digger always asks for what she wants.

Ask in front of other people too, so the pressure is on them to say yes.
And if they don't comply, leave right away.

If you're shy?
Use text or emails.

2. Never Apologize

This is all about power and interpersonal power dynamics.

If you never apologize, you come across more as an authority figure, and he's more likely to comply.

⁉️♂ Lucio's note: major red flag for men and women who also want a good relationship
Not apologizing when an apology is due is a major red flag. Not apologizing is a strong signal of dark triad personality, and it's often linked to gaslighting.

Also read:

- Judge power dynamics, linked to emotional power dynamics and authority figures

3. Go For Owners, Not Players

Go for wealthy low-key owners, not for the flashy guy with the abs.

Fletcher says men with real money often are low-key and don't flash around jewelry and sports scars.

You recognize owners through the people they have around, and how they treat them.

4. Never Ask What He Does

Unless he asks first, don't ask what he does.

When you do, you come across as too interested in his material wealth.

You want to recognize that he's rich *beforehand*, not ask him how rich he is.
Your confirmation will come later, once you will ask for what you want and he will provide it.

Ask Him What He Wants To Do Instead

If he asks first, don't reply like most other gold-diggers do. Ask him instead, so you can gauge what kind of man he is.

5. Test For His Compliance

Fletcher takes *"shit tests"* to a whole new level.

The first compliance is to test how hard they chase you and how much they invest in you.

You must **screen out men who don't comply**, men who don't chase, and men who don't invest.

If he is not complying, no need to waste your time.
Don't chase men who don't spend on you from the beginning or who don't come to you.

Money is useless unless they're willing to spend it.
And men who won't listen to you will rarely splurge on you when you ask.

The Subtle Gold Digger Test

So make sure you test his mettle early on by asking this:

> **Gold Digger**: *What are you drinking*

If he doesn't offer you the same, drop him.

6. Get His Contact Discreetly

Never use your phone when you're talking to a guy: it will seem like you're exchanging contacts and you come across as less exclusive.

If he takes his phone out, tell him to put it away.

Instead, memorize his number.
Baje has some tricks to memorize phone numbers, and I invite you to check the book for that.

My Note:
I think exchanging business cards might be a happier medium than memorizing phone numbers.

7. Take a Look at The Backdoors

Actual backdoors.

Important and rich men often use backdoors and alleyways to get in: keep an eye on them.

And make friends with DJs, bouncers, and managers to get the lowdown on people and to know who's there.

8. Meet Outside the Restaurant

Why?

So he can pay for parking and fuel.

If you're afraid of asking, make him follow you to your car when you leave and tell him you need to stop for gas.

If he doesn't offer to pay, ditch him.

9. Don't Listen to His Life Story (to Stay Detached)

If the gold digger listens to him, she will start seeing more as a person.
But, the author says, the gold diggers cannot allow themselves to fall for him and must maintain emotional detachment.

In a way, the author's advice here is to become 'more psychopathic', having no empathy, and only seeing him as a target.
This is why it's almost never a good idea for men to date gold diggers.

If You Think He's Lying...

… Ask the question and stay silent.

The pressure will lead to adding more details or dig himself deeper.

10. Buy Him a Drink

To throw him off.
That's something that rarely happens to him.

Bonus: Ask a No Question to Skip Intimacy

This technique leverages reciprocity from the social exchange.

The author says that there will be times when a guy may pressure for sex. And you don't want to give him sex. When you feel like you want to get out of there or you need *an excuse to deny him*: ask a no question.

A no question is a large request which will compel him to say no. Once he says no, you have an excuse to refuse him or to leave.

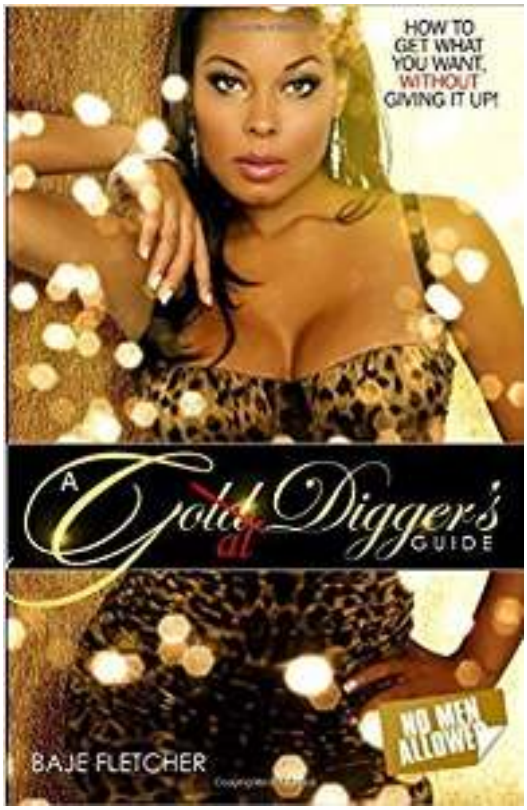
Baje's Books Recommendation

Baje Fletcher also recommends a bunch of books to read, among which:

- The 48 Laws of Power <—⍰⍰♂ List of maxims, not an 'how to'. Complement with 'dating power dynamics 101'
- The Art of Seduction <—⍰⍰♂ Solid. Consider the deeper *Seduction University*
- Poor Dad Rich Dad <—⍰⍰♂ Good, but it's basic
- Think and Grow Rich <—⍰⍰♂ Some good points, but lots of woo-woo.

Check out our recommended best resources:

- Best books and courses for self-empowerment



PROS

- **Empowering go-getter approach**

We do not agree or endorse all of Baje's advice, especially the Machiavellian taker's attitude, which doesn't align with our honorable preference.

But this book isn't just gold-digging, it's goal-setting.

The main dish is about self-improvement, long-term planning, and achieving one's goals.

Cons

A Goal Digger Guide is chock full of great tips, and with real-life stories and examples, but:

Misses Advanced Seduction

Although several tips and techniques are spot-on, the deeper psychological insights that make men *crave* her were missing.

So while *A Goal Digger Guide* may be good for some tricks, it's not as good for deeper seduction.

Baje doesn't mince words, so the book is heavy in manipulation techniques, but then again, would anyone expect anything different from this type of book?

Review

A Goal Digger's Guide is an entertaining read that offers a mix of practical tips on how to be a gold digger, and genuine self-development strategies and mindsets.

While the guide also shares tips on 'the art of gold digging', it may as well be called "get an education, invest in yourself, and plan for your future".

I leave you with one of my favorite quotes from the author.
She says some women get weak in the knees in the presence of celebrities and very rich men.
But they're just normal people, she says.
And talking about one of them who got the cash, but not the manners and skills, she comments:

> ***In my eyes he was just another brother who happened to get a lucky break, but still had no clue how to handle a woman.***

Read *Ho Tactics* or Best dating books for women

The 4 Hour Body: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 4-Hour Body (2010) is a *nutrition book* and guide to "rapid weight loss" (not good) and optimized nutrition based on Tim Ferris' opinions and personal experience.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Foods To Avoid
  - Beverages: Mostly Stick to Water
  - No Fruits
  - Allowed Food
  - Repeat The Same Meals
  - Cheat DayL One Day a Week Binge
  - Use Thermal Dieting For Faster Weight Loss
  - Avoid These Common Mistakes
  - The 15 Minutes Orgasms
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- No white carbs
- No sugars
- Use cold to shed calories faster

Summary

About The Author:
Tim Ferriss says in the introduction that he is not a doctor and you should consult your doctor for any doubts, issues, and pre-existing conditions.
Tim Ferris indeed is an American entrepreneur and "hack-seeker" who became famous after his first book *"The 4 Hour Work Week"*.

🤔Lucio's Take On Tim Ferriss

> **Lucio**: Tim Ferris is a bit of an over-optimizer, sometimes a bit too Machiavellian, I don't follow him… But he's a smart guy, not a bad guru, and can be a worthy guy to learn from

Foods To Avoid

Avoid white carbohydrates, which are:

- White bread

- Pasta
- Cereals
- Potatoes
- Rice
- Crackers

And also avoid:

- Cream-based sauces (herbs and spices are fine)
- No deep-fried (stir-fried is OK)
- No whole grains or steel-cut oats

Beverages: Mostly Stick to Water

Drink plenty of water.

No juices, milk and limit soft drinks to 500ml max, and only diet versions.
If you like coffee and tea, drink them without sugar.

Note:
The diet version of soft drinks often contains “hidden sugars”, some of which are even worse than sucrose.

Alcohol: Dry Wines, Without Sugar

If you like wines, the best ones are dry and red (no more than 1.4% of sugar content).
Avoid champagne.

Note:
1.4% feels like quite a random number to me.
But here are my favorite low-sugar wines:

- Rosso di Montalcino DOC 2020 – Caparzo.
  Residual sugar: 1.3
- Nipozzano Chianti Rufina Riserva
  Residual sugar: 1.6
- Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2015
  Residual sugar: 1

No Fruits

Most doctors and nutritionists do recommend lots of fruits.

Not Tim Ferris.

Tim Ferris recommends no fruits for your diet.
He says that in the research literature, there is no consensus on the benefits of eating lots of fruits.

The only exceptions are tomatoes and avocado -but not too much of it-.

My Note:
Ferris talks about the benefits of “lots of fruits”, which is generic and specific at the same time.
What does he mean by “lots”? And who says that “some” fruits per day are not good?

Allowed Food

These are the food you can eat and enjoy:

- Eggs (organic)
- Fish: such as tuna and salmon
- Meat types: chicken, beef, pork
- Legumes such as: lentils, black beans, pinto beans, red beans, soybeans
- Most vegetables such as: spinach, asparagus, broccoli, peas, beans
- Nuts: almonds, walnuts, etc.
- Tomatoes
- Yogurt

Repeat The Same Meals

Tim Ferris suggests you repeat the same meals over and over.

He says that the research literature shows no consensus on the merits of a balanced and diversified diet.

But if you still crave variety, then you can mix the allowed foods above.

My Note:
Again Ferris mentions “no consensus”.
But the consensus is almost never reached: one single small study proving Y against a thousand proving X would still mean no consensus. Yet you’re far better off with X.

Cheat DayL One Day a Week Binge

The concept of “cheat day” has become very popular in dieting.

In short, it means:

Pick a single day in a week in which you can eat as much as you want of whatever you want.

I personally disagree with cheat days.
And not because I’m a nutritionist expert, but because logically -and psychologically- they make little sense.
For the logic, Sean explains far better than I ever could:

Use Thermal Dieting For Faster Weight Loss

And now we finally get into Ferris’ penchant for hacks :).

When we are in a cold environment we lose calories due to heat loss.
So you can accelerate your weight loss with “cold treatment”.

Tim recommends cold showers and ice packs on the back of the neck and upper back for 30 minutes (you can also do it while watching a movie).

And drink half a liter of icy water when you wake up.

Avoid These Common Mistakes

Tim Ferris lists a few of the common mistakes people make.

I will pick the best ones and transform them from the negative form (not eating..) to the positive form (make sure you do..).

Make sure you:

- Eat within half an hour of waking up
- Eat enough proteins (at least 20 grams per meal)
- Drink lots of water, especially on the binge days
- Avoid too much sweeteners, whether artificial or natural
- Avoid lifting and going to the gym too much (2-3 times a week is enough)

The 15 Minutes Orgasms

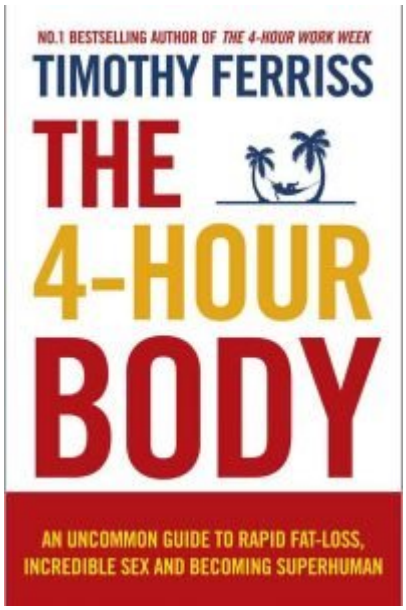
Tim Ferris also has some tips on how to reach orgasms.

Here's the gist (for men):

- In missionary shift weight on the hips and grind her clitoris
- When at the bottom, rise up so that your torso is at 160 degrees (lean back 20 degrees)

For the improved angle missionary and the pictures, you must get the book.
Or read:

- How to last longer in bed



CONS

- **Simply average or poor advice**

Please learn from those who actually know what they're talking about:

- **Outdated**

Nutrition evolves quickly, and you're probably better off with newer content

- **NOT Good for Binge Eaters**

This diet is not good for people who have food addiction (ie.: binge eating, huge cravings, often thinking about food).

People high on the food addiction scale must skip the binge days (also read *"Bright Line Eating"*)

- **Over-analyses & Obsessions Make For Poor Quality Life**

Tim Ferris is a “hacks” guy with a geek approach to nutrition

“x grams of this a day”, “a capsule of that at this time”, “percentage variation of Y” etc.

That’s what also makes him a great writer and what makes the 4-hour body great.

On the other hand, though, there are so many factors influencing whatever we measure in our body, that one has really to wonder: what about being *fooled by randomness*?

And if you pick up the same attitude, you will be spending most of your time measuring instead of living.

- **Health as Mathematical Obsession**

In general, being data-driven is good.

But not all realms of life can be exactly measured.

And I find Tim Ferris in general to be too numbers-driven in realms that are difficult to reduce to simple equations.

It feels like the author feels he can measure anything and find a direct correlation to body size, shape, and energy levels.
But there are plenty more variables that can make these too-detailed measures not only a fool’s errand but actually misleading.

Campbell in *Whole* refers to it as a mathematical equation approach to nutrition, and he says it’s wrong. I agree with Campbell.

- **Heavy Cognitive Load**

Following Tim’s full list of advice, your diet can become a big heavy cognitive load in measuring amounts and applying ice packs.

What I’d wonder is: are you living for your diet, or is your diet that should be serving your life?

- **Too Many Topics?**

From weight loss to exercise, it makes sense.

But diet, orgasms, testosterone, sperm banks, and “engineering sleep” might be a lot for someone who’s looking for an answer to a specific question.
(that being said, it’s all interesting and important stuff Tim writes about).

PROS

- **He Worked On It**

Tim Ferris did research hard for *The 4-Hour Body*, and I appreciate that a lot.

Review

I find *The 4-Hour Body* to be dated and a purveyor of many debunked myths.

And back when it first came out, it might have been one of the first forerunners -and myth inflaters- of the low-carb diet.

It’s also counterproductive to approach food with the “geek mindset”.

This is something that Michael Pollan calls “nutritionism” in *In Defense of Food* and he explains very well all the

drawbacks of looking at the single nutrients instead of the whole food.

I prefer a more holistic, whole-food approach. Which is also simpler to live with.

Disagree on Binge Days

Tim says a binge day a week is actually helpful to lose fat.

And I have no reason to doubt it may have been helpful *for Tim Ferris*.
But I just didn't like the idea. For sugar lovers "eating whatever you want" could easily mean kilos of pies, desserts, and ice creams.

I don't think that's good. Plus there is food that should be off-limits at any time, like industrial trans fats.

Addendum: after reading books such as Hunger by Roxane Gay I understand that binge days are not just a real issue, but completely a bad idea for people with food addictions. Also, check out Bright Line Eating.

Get the book on Amazon

MONEY Master the Game Summary: Is Compound Interest Right For Ambitious Men?

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

MONEY Master the Game is a practical crash course on personal finance and investment, helping readers to invest successfully and retire wealthy.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - 1. Develop an Automated Investment Plan
  - 2. Know the Basic Investment Rules
  - 3. What You Really Want: Your Life Vision
  - 4. The 5 Levels of Financial Success
  - 5. Learn The Investment Vehicles
  - 6. Upside Without Downside: The Dalio Secret
  - 7. Retiring in Safety
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- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
  - Implies Past Predicts Future: Performance Is NEVER Guaranteed
  - Fails to Address Inflation & Quality of Life
  - Compound Interest Is A Half Lie
  - Conflict of Interest?
  - US – Centered
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Develop a system of automated withdrawals** for your investment
- **Defend from downside risks**: it's more important than gaining
- Don't forget: **money is only a tool and an enabler**. Think about why you want and how you'll use it

TPM Note: Compound interest is 'slow-lane', not for smart and ambitious men
Robbins approach is a valid system that works for many, and is especially useful for overspenders. But it's less suited for ambitious and smart men who may be better off with entrepreneurship. Also consider that Tony Robbins advocates this model, but didn't use it for himself.

Summary

About The Author:
Tony Robbins is a self-help guru and not an investment expert himself. And with his brief forays into financial advice in his early work, he often left me scratching my head.
But things have changed with "Master the Game", where he did his homework and where he consulted with top

financial experts such as Ray Dalio.

More on Robbins:

> **Lucio**: Robbins is a fantastic motivational speaker, a self-help "guru" with great content… And an endless marketer and covert bragger. Still thumbs up, though

These are the most important takeaways of *"Money Master The Game"*:

1. Develop an Automated Investment Plan

Don't stress about money: develop a system.

Tony Robbins says that most people with a normal job will not manage to earn financial freedom unless they're deliberate about it.

And that's what you should do: be deliberate and build an automated withdrawal order for your investments.

Then forget about that money and let the compound interest do the work for you.

2. Know the Basic Investment Rules

Tony Robbins proceeds to bust some myths about the market that many people hold:

- **You can beat the market**

No, only very, very few people manage to beat the market and only a tiny minority of professionally managed mutual fund does.

Better instead than you invest in an index fund matching the big indexes, such as an ETF.

- **Mutual funds hide their fees**

There is a litany of hidden fees when investing in mutual funds, and the average total fee adds up to 3.17%.

That's huge when you take into account that you will be missing a huge chunk of compound interest year after year.

That's another huge reason to use ETF and passively managed index funds.

- **Mutual funds embellish their returns** (ie.: don't lose money!)

Tony Robbins says that a core tenet of investing is that it's more important to avoid losses than to make gains.

If you go down 50% in your first years and you go back up 50%, you're still overall down 25%.
But the mutual fund will mask that reality by only stating the nominal changes.

- **Brokers might not be on your side**

Brokers need to increase your money and the company's money.

Those are often mutually exclusive, so he often has a conflict of interests. For those who live in the US, a registered investment advisor is a much better choice.

- **Your 401(k) is not a good investment vehicle**

The 401(k) is at the mercy of all the top three myths.

And it also taxes your withdrawals and doesn't do anything to shield you from the timing risk (ie.: you need to retire your money during a financial crisis).

- **Target date funds aren't that safe**

Target date funds start very risky when you begin your contribution and become progressively more conservative as you get closer to retirement.

The idea is that by being more conservative you will not lose much on your retirement day if there will be a financial crisis.

The idea is good, but it often rests on a bad concept: that bonds are safer than stocks.

3. What You Really Want: Your Life Vision

Tony Robbins explains that nobody really wants money.

And you should better investigate what it is that you actually want.
He says what you want is something the money might help you to get and he introduces his principle of the six basic human needs.

Once you know what you're really after, you can determine what it will cost you financially.

And you might easily find out you don't need nearly as much as you thought -or you can find a way to get to your need at a fraction of the overall costs, for example by leasing or renting-.

4. The 5 Levels of Financial Success

Tony Robbins lists five levels of financial success:

1. Financial Security: half the basic costs

When you reach a point where the returns on your investments and savings will pay for half of your basic costs (housing, food).

At that point, you reach a fundamental level of independence: you can choose a job you really like instead of a job that you might not like but which pays more.

You are also allowed to take risks to chase your dream: launch a startup or start freelancing for example.

2. Financial Vitality: half discretionary spending

If you can cover half of your discretionary spending (sports, entertainment) you are halfway through never having to work at all again.

3. Financial Independence: all basic costs

Once you can cover half your discretionary spending and all your basic costs, you reached the point where you do not have to work again unless you want to.

4. Financial Freedom: some luxury spending

When you can afford some significant luxury spending (sport-scar, holiday house, etc.)

5. Absolute Financial Freedom: whatever you want

There are many steps you can take to achieve the level you would like to achieve.

Cutting costs, saving more, finding a way to save on taxes, or… Move to a cheaper country. Or to a country that will provide you with lots of things you like.

Italy, for example, can give you the sea, the best food and wines in the world, and all the history and culture you want.

5. Learn The Investment Vehicles

Tony Robbins goes into the nuts and bolts of investment and describes many different investment vehicles you could use.

A simple Google search for each investment vehicle will give you all the basics about each one (ie.: stocks, bonds, options, and commodities being the four main ones).

6. Upside Without Downside: The Dalio Secret

This is possibly the best part of the book because Tony Robbins relies heavily on one of the best investors in the world: Ray Dalio.

Here's the allocation:

- Long-term US bonds: 40%
- Stocks: 30%
- Intermediate US bonds: 15%
- Gold: 7.5%
- Commodities: 7.5%

Backtesting this portfolio, you would have solidly beat the market.

The secret of this allocation is that it heavily shields you against losing years, which as we have seen are the years that really impair your long-term growth.

My Note: Backtesting does not assure future performance.
Especially now that this portfolio mix is out in the open.

7. Retiring in Safety

Robbins explains that with the advances in medicine, we can expect to live longer.

That's great.
But it also means that once you retire you need to know how to allocate your resources.

Treasuries and CDs provide terrible returns, so he recommends fixed-indexed annuities

8. Money is Only a Tool

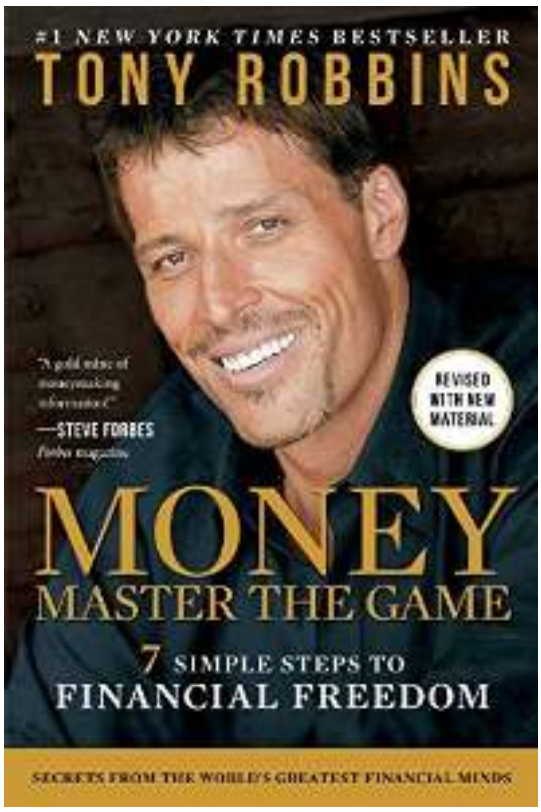
In the last part, Tony steps back from pure money talk and goes back to the big picture.

He says the three most important decisions in your life are:

- What do you focus on
- What does your life mean
- What you will do (action)

Money only enables you to leverage your decisions in those three areas. And money will allow you to better enjoy life's beauties, like experiences, quality time, and giving.

Use the money for growth and contribution and you'll live a happier and healthier life.



Real-Life Applications

Don't Invest in Mutual Fund
Fees are often too high and eat away at your long-term growth

Don't Use Brokers
They often have a conflict of fiduciary duties (between your interests and their companies' interests)

CONS

"MONEY Master The Game" is the best book on personal finance and personal investment.

But it comes with a few cons, too:

Implies Past Predicts Future: Performance Is NEVER Guaranteed

The idea that all books on investment rely on is that financial assets will always go up… On a long enough timeline.
As Nassim Taleb explains in *Fooled by Randomness*, that's not true:

1. The past doesn't equal the future, there are no guarantees that returns will beat inflation, let alone that they will stay at 7%
2. On a long enough timeline… We're all dead

You might want to keep that in mind.

Fails to Address Inflation & Quality of Life

Rarely do I hear compound interest theorists talk about inflation.
Or what giving up those monthly installments will do to the quality of life of average or below-average-income people.

Or… That someone may not live until old age to enjoy the money.

Compound Interest Is A Half Lie

"Money Master the Game" rests on the compound interest concept (including the usual crazy-sounding examples).

I love Robbins, but it's NOT how he made his money.
It's what DeMarco calls the "paradox of practice". Tony Robbins didn't get a private jet and an island investing a few hundred a month. He got there using the *Millionaire Fastlane*. Or check *Rich Dad Poor Dad.*

That concept makes you *somewhat* wealthy, that *may* be true. But when you're old… IF all turns out well. Which is a big if, as we've seen above.

Conflict of Interest?

I haven't investigated myself so I can't deny or confirm, but it's a flag I feel like I need to raise.

The highest-rated negative review on Amazon warns that Robbins' son works for one of his highly recommended companies.
Check out the review and replies here and judge for yourself:

US – Centered

It's not a con but a plus if you're a US citizen. But if you're not a US citizen, the practical side of *Money Master the Game* is US-centered.

PROS

Well Researched
Tony Robbins interviewed the who's who of the financial industry here, which gives *Money Master The Game* an authority level that Tony couldn't have reached on his own.

Top Information
I listed a lot of cons there, but if you've got lots of cash and want to grow your money with long-term investments, then *Money Master The Game* is one of the best books of its genre.

Review

Tony has taken huge strides since his (poor) earlier years of financial advice.

With *"MONEY Master The Game"*, he has done some major legwork and interviewed several top financial minds.

And you can see the results.

What he says makes a lot of sense and some of the insights he shares can be life-changing for some. And even for those who don't plan on living to invest such as myself, you will still gain super helpful insights.

In short:
MONEY Master the Game is a great financial crash course. Plus, some valid Tony Robbins mindsets all over it.

Straight Talk, No Chaser: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"Straight Talk No Chaser" is a *dating book for women* teaching *how to find a man* and build a strong relationship. It has some very good insights and makes some valid psychological points.[image]

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - How Men Think: The Age Factor
  - Are Women Intimidating?
  - Sugar Daddies Aren't Sweet
  - No More Games: Asking the Right Questions
  - Always Look Good
  - The 90 Days Rule
  - No Nagging
  - The Relationship Art of The Deal
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Bullet Summary

- Men need to achieve their goals before they can commit
- Your success doesn't intimidate him
- Master the art of compromise: do what matters for him so he can do more of what matters for you

Full Summary

About The Author: Steve Harvey is an American comedian and TV host. He has no formal background in psychology but has made a name for himself when it comes to dating advice and relationships with his best-seller *"Act Like A Lady, Thinks Like A Man"*.

Intro:

Steve Harvey says that not all men are ready for a relationship.

Why not?

Because some of them are not yet mature enough for it.
Some men need to learn how to be men before they can focus on a fully committed relationship.

And he gives an overview of how men change depending on their age:

How Men Think: The Age Factor

Harvey refers heavily here to the key concept of how man defines themselves from his previous book *Act Like a Lady Think Like a Man*.

The idea is that man defines themselves along the line of:

- Who he is (title)
- What he does (main occupation)
- What he gets in return (how much he makes)

Men in Their 20's: Finances Higher Prio Than Women

He is just beginning to get his bearings on life as an adult and just finding out about the three cornerstones of manhood.

Steve says that men have a "financial clock" similar to a woman's "biological clock", and it starts in earnest in his 20's

Men in Their 30's: Getting Tired of Chasing Skirts

He is achieving some of his life goals and getting tired of chasing skirts.

He also starts grappling with the idea that he will not always be young and fit to be the kind of father he wants to be.

For the first time, he starts seriously thinking about children's timelines.

If he looks unhappy and still working hard to make his life plan a reality, he might not be ready to commit yet.

To be sure: check how he spends time on hobbies and friends outside of work. If he has a lot of time for extra-work activities, then he also has time for a family.

Note: keep in mind Steve Harvey is talking about ambitious men here.

Men in Their 40s: If He's Single, It's For A Reason

A man in his forties feels good about his life and is in his prime, especially if he's a husband and a dad.

But if he's single, he's single for a reason.
He might be afraid of commitment, happy with the single life, or giving up on the idea of a family.

If he's recently divorced, it's likely he'll be chasing skirts again for a while, and it might take him a few years to be ready for serious relationships again.

Men in Their 50's: Consolidating Legacies

Are looking to solidify their legacies and are a lot more open to having a woman around and growing old with her.

Are Women Intimidating?

Many women, especially successful women, say that men are intimidated by them.

But Harvey says that's BS. And it's only an excuse for women to rationalize why they're single.

He says men are OK with strong and independent women. **What men have a problem with, is not being needed**. And that's what some of these women do.

Harvey says it's also OK to tell people and men about your big credentials. But he poignantly asks: what about some truths after?

Yes, you are really happy, but you're also looking for a man to complete you. You got yourself halfway, but you also want a husband to get you to 100%.

Also, read:

- Are men intimidated or rational?

Women Who Make More Money

Harvey says that men will not hold it against you that you're making more, but against themselves.

Especially if that involves staying at home with the children and he didn't choose it, he will not be happy about it.

Read;

- Effective dating for successful women

Difficulties of Strong, Successful Women

I find that Harvey really dispenses some big truths when he tackles the problems that successful career women face.

It's that they only look at men who are equally successful.

But men who are equally successful look at a bigger chunk of the dating pool.

Sugar Daddies Aren't Sweet

Steve Harvey says that you might feel good and smart when a sugar daddy is pampering you and buying you stuff.

But those men enter those relationships willingly, you're not really pulling his legs on anything. And it's actually likely that you're the one being played.

No More Games: Asking the Right Questions

Harvey says that men will only give you the answers that will make them look best.

He will use the buzzwords such as commitment, kids, hard work, etc. But those are only superficial answers.
To get to the real truth, you gotta dig deeper.

The secret for Harvey is to ask three questions.
After two questions, men have no more in their lying pool. And you'll get the truth.
So for example you say:

1. Why did you divorce from your wife?
2. If she was a good woman, why didn't you work harder on it?
3. If you were caring and were looking for more support, what made her give up?

And then Harvey tells a great story of how exactly that worked for him.
You cannot grill him like in the Menace to Society scene (below), says Harvey, but drop the questions over time.

Avoid grilling men like an FBI investigator.

And he has one more great tip. Tell him that honest men turn you on.

Always Look Good

Harvey recommends you always look good.

When you're still looking for a man, you'll be ready for any chance. And when you're in a relationship, it's still important to put in the effort to keep a healthy relationship.

The 90 Days Rule

Harvey restates his 90 days rule for sex.

I don't fully agree with that though, check my *why you shouldn't let him wait for sex*.

No Nagging

Harvey stresses how so many women do it wrong when they want their men to do something.

They use *passive aggressiveness*, silent treatment, or, worst of all, full-blown verbal aggression.

He says though that it's a question of priorities, and your man's priorities aren't necessarily the same as yours and you should understand that.
Of course, he'll do the dishes… But not right after eating maybe.

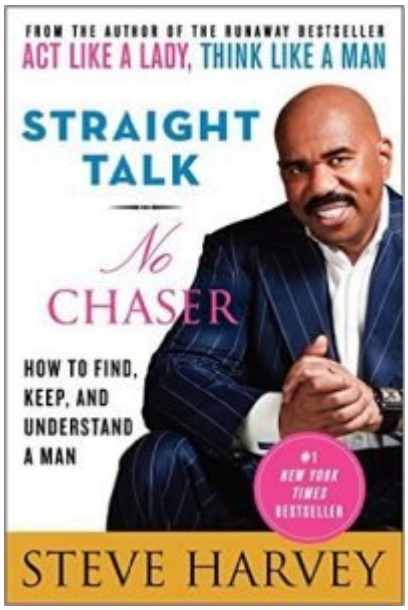
He says you should be more diplomatic and pick your battles and use more of the:

The Relationship Art of The Deal

The art of the deal is a sort of a tit for tat.

You help him in what matters for him and he helps you in what matters for him.

Harvey advises that you start the conversation with an appreciation and ask him what you could do more for him. Once you agree on something you can do for him, then you ask him what he can do for you.



Real-Life Applications

Show Appreciation
Show him you appreciate his help. It's the best way to make him happy and make him want to keep doing the good stuff.

Don't Nag and Scream
Don't ever nag or scream, it's the fastest way to kill his love in the long run (I can't agree more with that).

Give To Take
To take, learn to give. Always be ready for a good deal: do what he cares for, and have him do more for you care for.

Review

"Straight Talk No Chaser" is a great book to understand the everyday psychology of dating from the male mind's perspective.

It provides a lot of hard truths that some women would do well to heed, such as being more feminine instead of complaining men are intimidated.

And it shares some great insights and very useful wisdom for women in a relationship.

Definitely recommended: **get the book on Amazon**

How Women ‘Mindfuck’ Men: Dark Triad Tactics Analyzed

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This article exposes the psychological tactics Machiavellian women use to control the dating power dynamics and trigger obsessive attraction.

This article analyzes 12 “mind-fuck” tactics associated with **Dark Triad seduction**. It breaks down the psychological patterns behind these attraction dynamics so men can recognize sexually manipulative tactics and protect their emotional frame.

Knowledge is power. Understanding these dynamics helps you spot them early and avoid getting pulled into obsession-inducing games.

Note on Ethics & Power Dynamics: While some of these tactics can be integrated into healthy, high-value relationships, many are inherently manipulative. We advocate for a “win-win” approach to dating. However, these dynamics remain objectively effective. We analyze them here so men can recognize the patterns and choose better partners.

Let’s start:

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1. The Dionysiac Mind-Fuck

You know how men like watching the craziest dancer on the dance floor?

That's the appeal of the dionysiac spirit.

There's *much external pressure* on men to appear rational and in control more times than they'd want to.
And that's why irrationality and a touch of madness can be so appealing to the unconscious.

And a woman who can muster irrational abandon and Dionysiac sexuality exerts an irresistible pull on him.

Example

Look at this example from "Dating In The Dark".
She uses a Dionysian spirit of irrationality to make him want to possess her.

Notice his reaction when he says:

> **Mindfucked guy**: *In a weird way I'd still like to see Ilona*

And then he ends with “damn”.
He’s been taken for a ride. And he just experienced the power of irrationality:

> **Her**: Did you hear that? Whenever I’m in bed with someone I really really fancy my stomach always does that
> (…)
> **Her**: That must be someone in this room I really fancy. It could be you. Or it could be a spirit, a ghost
> (…)
> **Her**: We don’t come from apes, we actually came from dogs
> (…)
> **Her**: We’re not gonna get married, are we
>
> **Him**: (commenting later on his date) my date with Ilona was like jumping straight into the twilight zone. The whole thing was one shock after the other. **But in a weird way I’d like to see Ilona again because I’m just so confused. But… Damn!**

In this example, she effectively makes him want to possess her.
The downside in this specific case is that she also ends up looking like a *low-quality girl*.

But madness is *not* synonymous with stupid and seductresses do the same without looking stupid.

See the example from Aida Yespica in:

- **3 styles to seduce a Man**

2. Madonna-Whore Seduction

Carnal desire and a powerful sexual chemistry validate men and enslave their minds.

But there is a danger: one might appear too “easy” if it’s too soon (see: *Madonna-Whore Dichotomy*).

Advanced players resist him AND show an overpowering sexual lust: the best of both worlds.

Example

This is a quick story of a woman (unconsciously) using the madonna-whore seduction on me:

🤔♂Lucio’s Experience

Lucio:
She was willing and into it, but still delaying.

So I decided to let her do some touching.
I took her hand and started running it across my body.
My abs, then down on my upper leg and thigh. Then slowly back up again.

Finally, I slide her hand across my crotch.

And then back up again.
On the next pass, I let her linger a bit more on my crotch. Then lower down again.
Eventually, I let her slip under the underwear's elastic band. But just a dip.

A few more motions and then I finally let her lace her fingers around it.
And that's when she jumped on me, panting heavy and her tongue swirling in my mouth.

She was showing me all the signs of pure sexual abandon.

I'm thinking we reached the 'boiling point' and we're ready to go.
But she snaps back to rational and delaying.

Have you figured out which part is the madonna/whore seduction?

Of course her panting and horny is the whore, while resisting again in spite of her dripping sexuality is the Madonna part.

The succession of unbridled lust and rational resistance lasted for a while. I'm not a fan of women resisting for long, but of all the resistances I've encountered… That was the best lead-up to sex I have ever had.

I sometimes still think about it…

How They Do It

Simple:

Machiavellian women show powerful sexual attraction while also fighting off the urge.

- They let him come to them
- They abandon themselves in the heat of the moment
- They suddenly “wake up”: it’s not easy but they’re forcing themselves to stop
- Rinse and repeat

For more techniques on delaying sex also read: how to turn down sex.

And here is a short video example from the movie “Seduce and Abandoned”:

3. Push-Pull Seduction

Lust and emotional dependency thrive on mixed feelings.

Anger and lust, passion and fear, warmth and coldness. And, most of all, physical heat and emotional distance.

The key is to alternate them.
Advanced players give positive feelings, then take it away. Then have lustful sex. Then rinse and repeat.

A mix of strong and positive emotions alternating with negative ones rarely fails to make men lust and obsess over dark triad seductresses.

Example

🙍♂️Lucio’s Experience

Lucio:
My date was late and, slightly annoyed, I used that time to shop for groceries.

When I came out, there she stood: a perfect candid baby face with a striped suit (mixed signal).

She didn’t apologize and was cold and distant when I hugged her. That annoyed me once again.
I asked her to help me carry the grocery.

And she refused.

My patience was running out.
I was teetering between telling her to go back home or take her back and possess her.
Of course I decided for the latter.

We walked without exchanging a single word for a couple of minutes, and then she went from cold to teasing.
She made fun of sulking me.
She told me I should call her “miss no” and teased me if other women do the same (she sets herself up as “different” and “superior”).

Then she finally swung the opposite direction.
She apologized, took more than half the grocery and lightly hit me with her leg as if to say “wise up, I was just messing with you”.

I was already horny, but that boosted it even further.

How They Do It

Machiavellian women make him feel like the best man in the world, make him feel like he can make them so happy and satisfied.

Then they take it all away and keep him guessing.

- **They love him**, then
- **They make him angry**
- **They are cold and distant**, then
- **They have wild sex**
- **They are cuddly** (letting them think for a while they have them)
- **Rinse and repeat**

4. Mixed Signals Seduction

Similar as above.

Push and pull is a typical form of mixed signal and the most famous example, but there’s more tactics seductresses can use:

- Angelic face (paternalistic instincts) + naughty undertones
- White dress & blonde hair (purity)+ revealing clothes
- Baby face (naivety) + suit (seriousness)
- Striped suit, back from office (power) + asking him to possess her

The Madonna-whore sexual seduction also leverages push-pull and mixed signals

5. Regression Seduction

> ***Nobody really ever leaves his mother***

Here's a sum of Western women's dating strategy:

1. Show no emotions
2. Pretend they're not into him
3. Make him chase and invest

While that definitely can work (*albeit often with the wrong guys!*), the opposite strategy can work even better.

And the opposite is what Robert Greene dubs "regression seduction" in his seminal *The Art of Seduction*.
Greene says that the most powerful Regression, the Infantile Regression, is all about unconditional love.

Example

An ex-girlfriend of mine was a natural when it came to oedipal regression strategy.
This was what my ex did:

Healing Kisses

- I woke up one morning with little sleep and dark circles around my eyes. She leaned in and kissed the area under my eyes

That was unexpected.
I fumbled a "thanks" and a smile.
I couldn't even remember my mother having done that, and I was smitten by her display of caring.

Sleeping Temple Kisses

- During sleep I realized that before going to the bathroom she kissed me on the temple

Tucking In

- When I'd join her in bed, she would raise the cover to help me in
- On a night flight, I fell asleep and woke up with the sleeping cover snugly arranged on me (she did that for me)

These are caring signals the way a mom would do to a baby.

How did that affect me?

It's easy to tell sex stories, but it's less easy to be open with emotional ones. But the truth is that I still feel emotionally connected to my ex. I think of her as "my baby", but probably the opposite would be more correct. And if I have to think of an ex-girlfriend I'd ever want to be together forever, it would be her.

Example

Listen to what she says:

> **Charlie**: Always trying to get back to that primary state of completeness, connectednesss, they took total care of me, and I felt peace in their presence.

And again:

> **Charlie**: why this relationship sticks so much with me. What about this girl? I don't care. This other girl? I don't care. But this one? Oh, call her right now

That's total emotional control.

And again:

> **Charlie**: this person must **provide for your most basic needs to feel save, loved, and enough**. (…)
> With this woman was the only time I let myself watch movies, I let myself eat junk food, it was the only time I let my brain take time off work

How They Do It

Dark triad seductresses use this one when they want a strong long-lasting relationship.

For the specific moves, advanced players copy the above examples and add some of these:

- They caress him
- They remove lints, fix his clothes
- They show unconditional love when he makes a mistake
- They show total acceptance
  - They say they like his belly
  - They say they like him when he's dorky
  - They say they like him when he's drowsy in the morning

Best With

It works with everyone.

And it's especially useful if Machiavellian women want to hook wealthy but rascal playboys, or driven men who can never let go.
They will use and forget all other women, but they'll always come back to the seductress.

6. Inverse Regression Seduction

This is the inverse regression.

Youthful behavior is attractive to men for evolutionary reasons (Buss, 2016), and in the presence of youth some men feel like their *own* youth is coming back.

They get to feel like fathers and take care of the seductress, but with the addition of the sexual side.

Mixing sex and innocence is exactly what made Marilyn Monroe so appealing.

Example

> **Him**: (jokingly chases her with a knife)
> **Her**: (shrieks like a baby, runs away)

How They Do It:

- They play naive, lost… In need of protection and guidance
- They laugh out loud and with gusto: they haven't experienced the darker side of life yet
- They feel free to be awkward: they haven't yet internalized society's rules of "proper" behavior
- They emphasize weaknesses and vulnerabilities

The rules bend with inverse regression.
Don't worry about entitlement mentality or asking too much: children are egocentric and believe the world revolves around them.
And he will act accordingly and do everything for the seductress.

Best For:

This is perfect for Machiavellian women to get sugar daddies to pamper and spoil them.

Reversal:

Some men can be put off (I once told a girl playing baby with her Tweety underwear not to wear them anymore).

It's lightheartedness *with* sex undertones, not full-on baby. The first part here is good, the last one is too much.

7. Guilt-Trip

Some Machiavellian female players don't just stop at sex and seduction, but enter into the more morally fraught realm of emotional manipulation.

To become 'the judge' and control him, they may try to make him feel bad for some putative failures of morality, masculinity.
The more he seeks her approval while trying to make things right, the more she controls him.

Example

There are many sexual moments I'd like to relive in my life.

Some of them, because they were great.
Some others, because I didn't have her and thought I should have had her.

But if I could go back in time one time, and one time only, that would be to change things with the woman who told me:

> **Ex-fling**: *I wish I had never done it with you.*

Something changed the day she uttered those words.

I could no longer look at myself and say I'm a giver.
In a way, those words stole my innocence and burned a little hole in my conscience.
And even to this day, after she forgave me, I still feel I need to make it up to her.

How They Do It:

- They let him feel he pushed too hard
- They tell him they feel so hurt
- They let him know they're devastated after he cheated

As Harvey correctly points out, men who cheated often go back to being perfect husbands. But only if the seductress makes him feel bad about it.

Reversal:

It will not work with narcissists and psychopaths.
Some of them will even see it as a badge of their deceptive skills.

8. Dangerous Woman Seduction

Danger mixes well with madness and irrationality, and takes it a step further.

Danger is exciting, that's one of the reasons why *heart-breaking players* appeal to women and why James Bond is so alluring.

And, if present, it also plays into possible latent masochistic tendencies.

Example

We were pillow talking and she was prodding about me and my life -funny how some women remember to do that *after*, BTW-.

I love after-sex conversations. You can drop the masks and really be yourself.
But back then "myself" was a bit of a childish tw*t.

So when it came to talking about love and past relationships, I delivered my line -which I thought was so cool-:

> **Me:** "*just don't fall in love with me*"

With a serious and stern tone she said:

> **Her:** "*No, I will fall in love with you and then I will kill you*"

I laughed at the beginning thinking how that was the best comeback I had ever heard.
But I also realized later I was perversely more attracted to her.

The “Dangerous Woman Seduction” is also one of the driving seduction forces of the movie “Basic Instinct”, where in the final sex scene he suspects and fears for his life.

9. Possessive Dominance Seduction

Disclaimer: Prioritize mutual respect and consent
These dynamics are sometimes symptomatic of a toxic relationship. Prioritize safety, consent, and meantal health

Anger, aggression, and attraction are distinct constructs, but *can* powerfully overlap.

Physical domination appeals to some women more than most people would care to admit.
For many women, the fantasy of being ‘overpowered’ is a powerful aphrodisiac (Ogas, 2011; Costa, 2022; Critelli & Bivona, 2008; Joyal et al., 2015).

And, sometimes, more than a fantasy.
Relationship researcher John Gottman in *“The Science of Trust”* reveals some shocking confessions from women.

In any case, it’s different for men, but they will get excited if the seductress puts up a little fight, or when she teases him physically or sexually.

Example

Intimacy during heightened emotions is extremely arousing, sometimes even when anger is in the mix.

Do you think this scene is sexy or not:

> **Her**: fuck you!
> **Him**: that’ll make you happy (LOL, what a comeback :D)
> **Her**: walks away

> **Him**: (grabs her when she's leaving)
> **Her**: no, no, it's over
> **Him**: (starts kissing and undressing her, culminating in dominant passion)

Notice the mix of emotions: hate, carnal passion and love.
P.S.: The full upload has been flagged, so you get the PG-13 version here.

How They Do It

To stay in the safe zone, advanced players do the following:

- The first time they put up some physical resistance (see above)
- They resist from time to time and let him "earn them" with some dominance
- Pillow fights
- Play wrestling

10. Private Area Pokes

This is a big weapon in the arsenal of the *teasing seductress*.

The below the belt touches are a form of waving a red flag in front of him.
It's like saying:

> **Teasing Seductress***: I might be into you… Are you gonna be man enough to come get me*, or are you sleeping down there?

And rest assured, he will want to possess the seductress and obsess over her the whole night (or life) long.

A similar and equally effective technique is "accidentally" rubbing the pelvis or chest against him, which were rated as the most effective technique to turn him on by David Buss' research.

Example

See an example from this real-life documentary:

> **Her**: (touches above his ass while walking away)

If Machiavellian women seek intimacy, this move compels men to chase

If they want to be more provocative and they're in private, advanced players can have grab/poke or touch his private parts (note: video's been deleted).
Just remember: don't be too direct or thirsty, this is not the seductress who wants him: this is her making *him* want her.

How They Do It

- They touch his upper leg when seating
- They rest their hand on his inner thigh for a split of a second
- They touch the side of his leg while waking
- They joke "hit him" below the belt (not necessarily crotch, side of the leg is also fine)

11. Sex-Talk Seduction

Actions speak louder than words.

But that doesn't mean that words can't have their place in making him crazy about the seductress.

Indeed sexually-laden talk is a great, great way to arouse someone.
It's also a game men use with women, and it works even better when women do it to men.

As we've seen in the text flirting guide, it's best when implied, understated, and hinted.
Direct can also work, but be aware it's at a higher danger of slotting the seductress into the short-term type of gal.

Example

The best way to do it is to pass obvious hints at sex, but without getting crude.

That way, Machiavellian women make him want to have them while still coming across as a high-quality woman.

> **Him**: all I need is a blanket, I don't need all the sheets
> **Her**: I don't want you getting your funk all over
> **Him**: my funk?
> **Her**: yeah, I can't wash a couch. G'night
> **Him**: thank you
> **Her**: I would let you sleep in my bed, but uhm… I wouldn't want you to get confused

Check this forum entry for a couple more ideas on talking about sex without using curse words.

12. Sexual Bursts Seduction

> ***Uncover your wild side… Then take it away.***

Quick bursts of whirlwind sexual passion will leave him speechless.

Actually, better than speechless: it will leave him horny and excited.

And that's when brain neurological patterns are more easily shaped: the seductress is literally branding him.
Obsession guaranteed.

Example

Watch Summer's perfect execution:

> **Her**: (submissive and feminine tonality) hey
> **Him**: hi
> **Her**: (walks towards him, doesn't say a word)
> **Him**: so, it was.. fun… the other day…
> **Her**: (starts making out with him with her body against his)

Please notice the body language and how she moves and looks at him.
Notice the slight panting of sexual arousal towards the end, how she looks at him *deeply*, but *briefly*, so that he looks at her far more and far longer (higher investment).

That's perfect.

How They Do It

Dark triad seductresses catch him where sex is not to be expected, and initiate high-risk physical intimacy in public settings to create a surge of adrenaline.

See “Seduction University” for more practical tools and strategies

Flaky Girl Texting: Text-by-Text Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

What to do if a girl flakes but keeps texting?

First of all, know that it's a common issue.

I have been there countless times.
And eventually, I refined a good method that works most of the time.

With this article, **you will learn the method through a text-by-text case study**.

Contents

- What to Text Flaky Girls
  - #1. First Text: All Seem Good With Flakes
  - #2. Dealing With The First Flake
  - #3. Take Pressure OFF After First Flake
  - #4. Take A Break… Then Go For It Again
  - #5. Two Flakes: It's Now Officially A Flaky Girl
  - #6. Rinse & Repeat: Pressure OFF V.2
  - #7. Blow Her Off To Regain Power
  - #8. In or Out Text: You Must Stop The Buck
  - #9. Capitalize On Any Opening
- #10. Strike
- What to Text Flaky Girls: Overview
- Handling Flaky Girls: Summary

What to Text Flaky Girls

Most guys drop the ball with flaky girls by pushing too hard until the women lose interest.

Or they give up themselves complaining about flakes.

Granted, some flakes you will never meet, but you should at least do your part properly.

Please note she has very bad English. Albeit I believe that terrible English is an *indicator of a low-quality woman*, she was young and learning. And very attractive.

#1. First Text: All Seem Good With Flakes

Our first in-person interaction was very good.

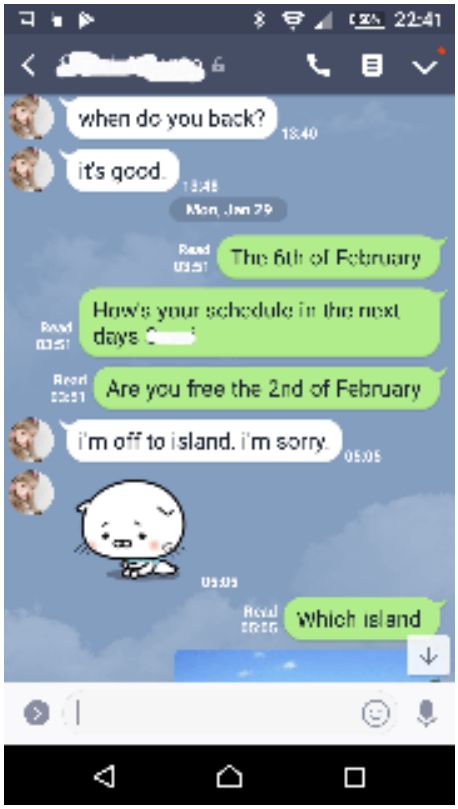
And the fact that she answers the first text is another major positive sign.
Usually, flaky girls do reply to the first texts because they enjoy that push-pull dynamic going on, and push-pull starts with a pull.

My plan was to contact her the day after and ask about her schedule.

#2. Dealing With The First Flake

She misunderstands my request of “what’s your schedule” and/or doesn’t give me a date. Not the best situation.

I propose a date and she denies it without proposing another date. Not good.



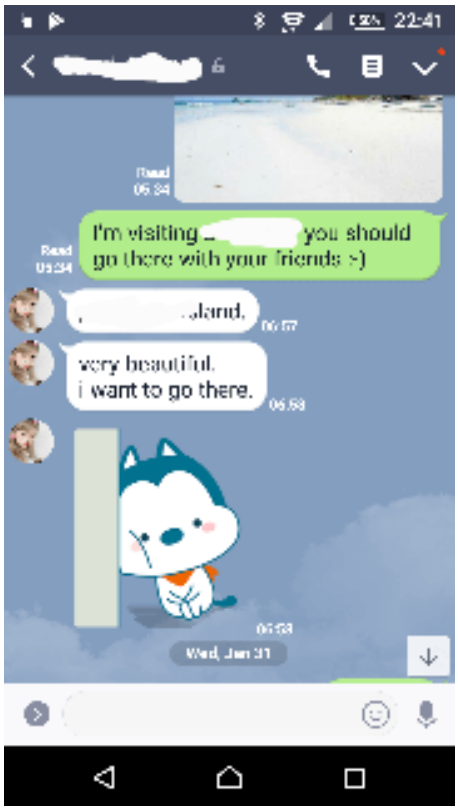
At this point, I could have asked her when she comes back, but that would have been quite a lot of chasing from my

side.
I decide to go another route:

#3. Take Pressure OFF After First Flake

Pressure off and I want to get some points back. I want to give her a reason to say something and engage.

I send a picture of an amazing place which almost everyone would like. You could do the same with some food: that also almost always works.
Notice I say you should go there with your friends, which is slightly dismissive.



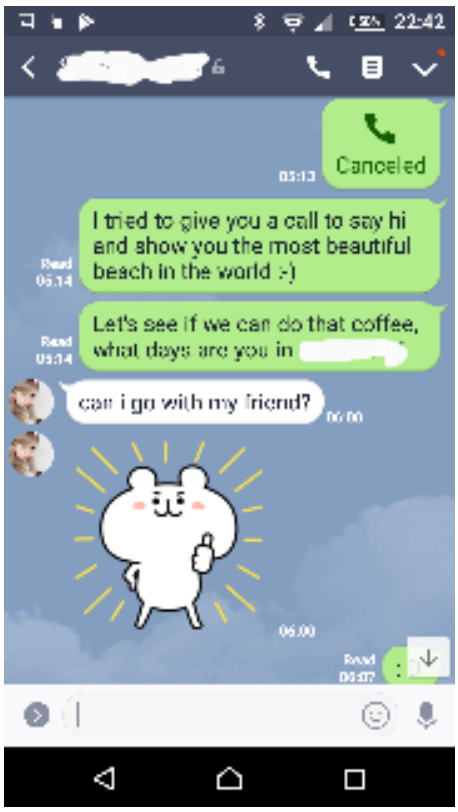
After that, I don't reply.
I'm trying to accumulate some brownie points for my next charge by making her write last.

#4. Take A Break... Then Go For It Again

Now I can freely call and go for it again without being too chasey.

She doesn't pick up: expected.

With my after-call text (always write right after the call) I bridge back to the last conversation. It's always good to put a bit more meat on the fire so it doesn't look like you're only and always trying to get her out.



She proposes to go with a friend.

This is typical of younger girls and girls who have mixed feelings about you. They like you but they're also a bit worried/shy/apprehensive.

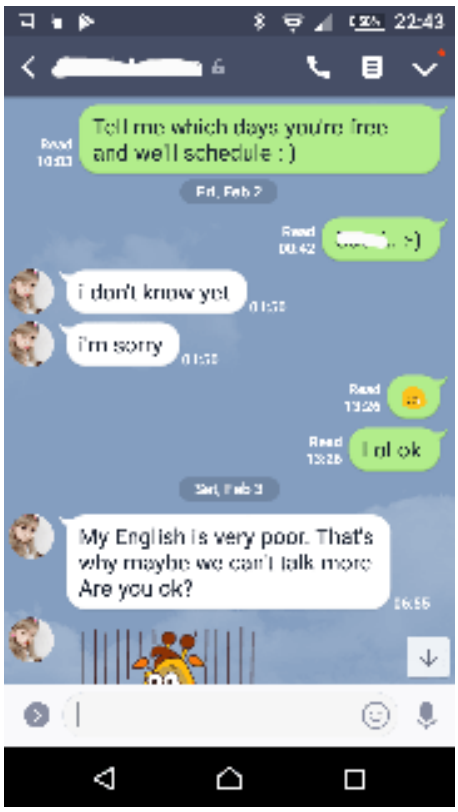
I reply I'd rather meet her on her own. It's a risk you gotta take. I make a slight mistake here though: I should have asked why she wants to meet with a friend.
That would have uncovered her real issue but at that point, I was kinda confident she'd go for it.

#5. Two Flakes: It's Now Officially A Flaky Girl

We exchanged a couple of texts where she seems positive about the meeting.

But again, she flips flops when it's time to set it up. and doesn't reply. The whole interaction was hanging on a thin thread here and it was close to the end for good.

Writing her name with a few dots is a good way to *resume a conversation when she doesn't text back*. It works mostly when there was a previous convo.



Pushing here would have probably been the end of it.

My best bet is to let her re-engage first. I put a crying smiley. It should be obvious I'm exaggerating but just to be sure I add "lol ok".
No more, you must remain unaffected.

The day after she comes clean on her real issue: limited language skills. Great, now I can address it:

#6. Rinse & Repeat: Pressure OFF V.2

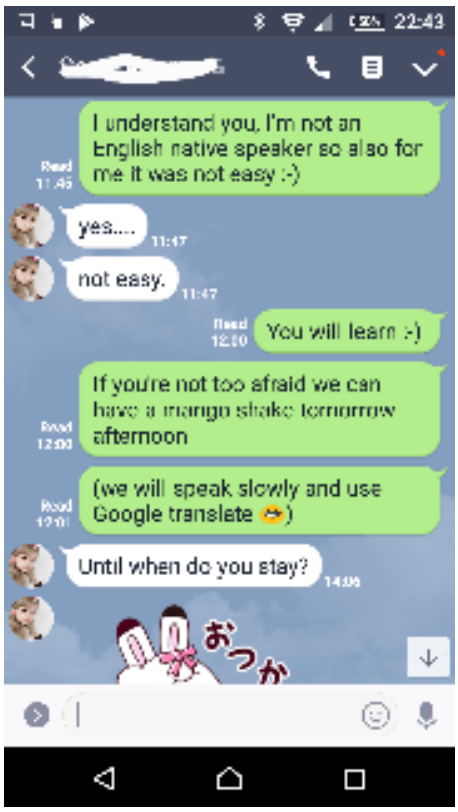
Telling her "it's OK, you don't need to worry and blablabla" is a typical, common mistake.

It would be too much effort and too much push. Make her feel it's fine by relating to her instead.

And then I go for it again, mildly.
I'm banking on the fact that now that we've addressed the issue she's OK with going ahead. Whether she is or not, you'll never know without actually going for it, so you simply have to.

Because pressure is off, yes, but the mantra still applies:

> *Always be closing*



Her reply is again leading absolutely nowhere.

Replying to that sh*t would be a mistake. It's the second time she asks, and it's leading me astray.
Plus you don't wanna follow her lead and reply to her questions when she's not following yours (giving you a date).

#7. Blow Her Off To Regain Power

I have a different plan in mind: blow off her question and get her to follow my lead instead.

She's Japanese, so I tell her I tried a local Japanese restaurant, which should easily get her to jump on my topic.

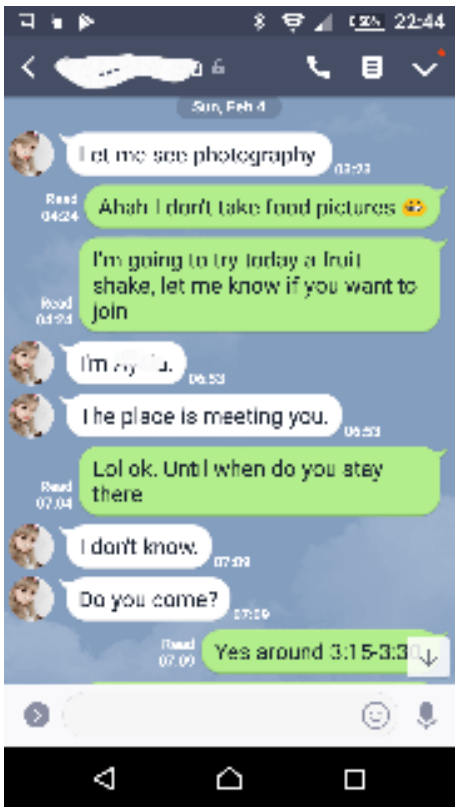
Which indeed is the case:

#8. In or Out Text: You Must Stop The Buck

Trying to send her a picture here would not be too good because, again, you'd follow her lead when she's not following yours.

At this point, it's time to start getting a bit more disengaged. We've exchanged quite a few texts and you can't keep chatting with flakes for too long.

So this time I don't ask her when she's free but I tell her where I will be.



Notice that I don't rush to go to her just because she says she's there.
Never run after flakes: that's how they string along men for eternity!

P.S.: the time doesn't match because of the different time zones.

#9. Capitalize On Any Opening

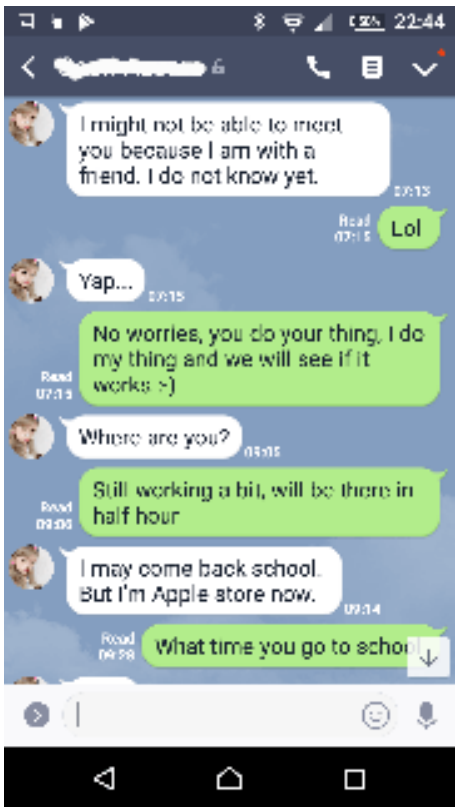
When she says she's with a friend it's also a key moment.

If it was at the beginning of interaction it might be OK to tell her she should choose you in a slightly cheeky way, like for example:

> *it's OK, tell your friend you have to to meet a handsome guy*

But at this point, I'm not gonna invest a zilch anymore. I've spent enough time, addressed her concern, and made her invest enough. If she's into me at all, she should be cool with meeting me.

So I tell her we do our things and we'll see.
And finally, it goes just the way I want. The moment she says "where are you" indeed marks a turning point. That's her putting in effort and chasing me.



I know it will take me longer than half an hour, but now that she's finally chasing I want to string her along a bit. I need to make back some points.
However, don't overdo it. At the end of the day, it should still be a win-win to meet, so don't go overboard with ignoring or not showing up at all.
As for most everything in life: balance.

#10. Strike

And finally, we met.

What to Text Flaky Girls: Overview

I define here flakes as women who never seem to make concrete steps to meet. They seemed interested, and they kinda reply… But keep out of reach.
You handle these women like this:

1. Go for the meet
2. Pressure off and let them invest
3. Don't reply for a few days
4. Call and go for it again
5. If they flake again, let them invest again

If they don't meet you again, they're either never gonna meet you, or there's an issue. So:

1. Uncover the issue (scared, no English, no money.. ?)
2. Address root cause
3. Go for it again
4. My way or the highway: it's either it happens now, or you have close contact

Handling Flaky Girls: Summary

Texting flaky girls can be (relatively) a lot of work as you can see.

It's your choice whether or not to engage in it, but know that among flakes there are many girls who actually like you.

So if you also like them, it could make sense to take some time on it. Just remember the golden rule: don't chase too hard, try to rebalance the power, and strike as soon as you can.

7 Texting Mistakes That Turn Guys Off (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This post is a collection of some common texting mistakes that turn guys off.

Contents

- #1. Ping Texts
  - Example
- #2. Low Investment Text Messages
- #3. Powerless Woman Texts
- #4. Rage-Texting
  - Example
- #5. Bored Texts
- #6. Talk To Me Texts
  - Example:
- #7. Selfies Texts
  - 7.2. Sexting
- Summary

#1. Ping Texts

Ping texts are messages like:

- Hey
- What's up
- Yo
- "the guy's name"

While it was *you* who wanted to get in touch, ping texts shift the burden on *him* to actually come up with something meaningful.

It screams that you are *trying to make him chase* and *make him invest in you.*
But it does so in the wrong way.

Now he'll be thinking:

> **Him**: *Hmmm… She contacted me.*
> *Do I have anything to say?*
> *No, then why should I try at all?*
> *I'm just gonna send the ball back on her court instead (and hopefully she'll get it)*

Example

Notice the girl below makes the same mistake twice.

The first text was useless and I give her a chance to articulate her thoughts.

But instead of fleshing out a meaningful message, she shifts the burden on me once again (demanding I explain).

Now if we had been close, I might have taken the time to explain. But we weren't close enough for her to demand so much investment.

We had a good time and I sincerely wish her well, but that was our last text.

Communicate meaningfully, or forever hold your peace

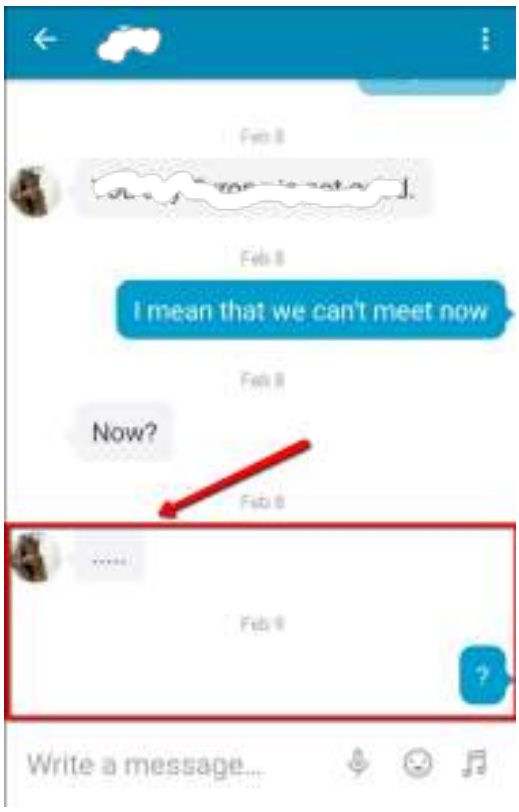
#2. Low Investment Text Messages

Gimme more messages are messages aimed at making him write as much as possible with as little effort on your side as possible.

They suffer from the same downside of all the "let him invest tactics": less discerning men will chase you.

More socially aware men will get annoyed.
Read more details on *why you should aim for a balanced investment.*

- "and.."
- "so… ?"
- "…"
- "?"



Races to the bottom only go one place: to the bottom

#3. Powerless Woman Texts

I used to call these texts “rudderless boat texts”.

Why?

Because they communicate the woman relinquishes control of her life.

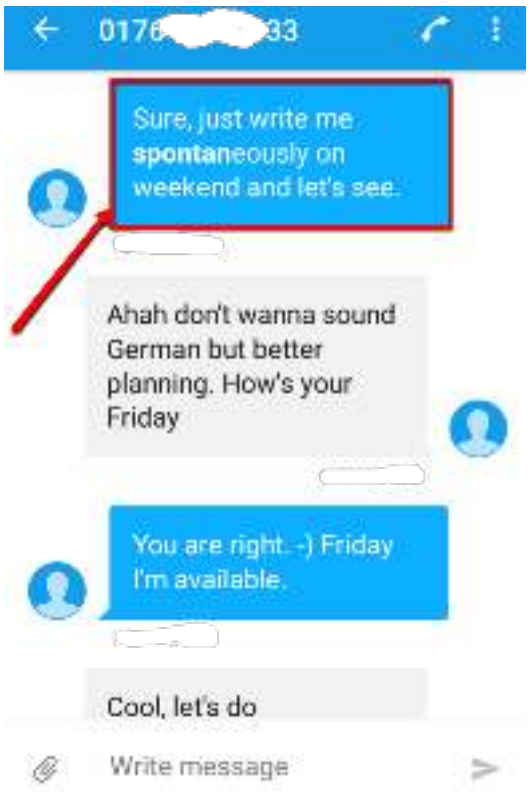
And if she relinquishes control of one of the most important areas of her life, what does that say about her?

Some rudderless texts are hilarious in their timeless idiocy:

- “I like being spontaneous” (like should we wait to run into each other?)
- “We’ll see” (see what exactly)
- “I’m not sure” (who is sure then)
- “I believe in destiny” (and that’s why you’re single)

Even when you’re sincerely on the fence, rudderless texts make you look indecisive.
If they’re excuses because you don’t want to meet him, *you can do better*. If you’re really not sure, then think about it and reach a conclusion.

And if you actually like him, then lay up and go for it (or *other women will*).



No plan is a plan to fail

#4. Rage-Texting

When you get angry, he is reassured that you are emotionally invested.

That easily translates into the feeling that “he has you”.

Indeed, when you get snippy two possible things happen:

1. The guy backtracks and apologizes -and then you know he’s a wuss-
2. The guy laughs -and he knows you’re under his thumb-

And, worst of all, **you look like a *low-quality woman* who can’t control herself and maintain a polite, respectful conversation**.

High-quality men don’t want angry women.
What do you think it’s like to be in a relationship with a woman who often rages and flies off the handle?

I can tell you that: it sucks.

Example

My reply was a joking way to nudge her into dropping the bragging tone.

But when she got snippy I knew for sure that she was indeed trying to impress me and that she was emotionally invested.

If she was really bothered, stopping communication would have been a better way of sending the message.

But the best course of action was to make a joke about it and move on. That would have actually given her some points.
Something like:

> **Woman Who Gets It**: *LOL yeah, I like making sure people know they're talking to a big shot :D. Jokes aside…*

OR:

> **Woman Who Gets It**:*LOL, I want to make sure you know you gotta bring the A game around me :D. Jokes aside…*

Instead, her reply communicated that she was totally under my thumb.
And that she would make for a poor relationship partner, too!

Stay cool or ghost out trying

#5. Bored Texts

Few things scream *low-quality woman* as complaining about being bored.

I'm not even gonna dig on my phone for examples: don't do it, just don't do it.

#6. Talk To Me Texts

Talk to me via text and let him know that you were thinking about him and that his silence is getting to you.

And maybe both are true and, sometimes, it's great to be sincere and vulnerable.

But do it too often, and they signal insecurity and neediness.

Some examples:

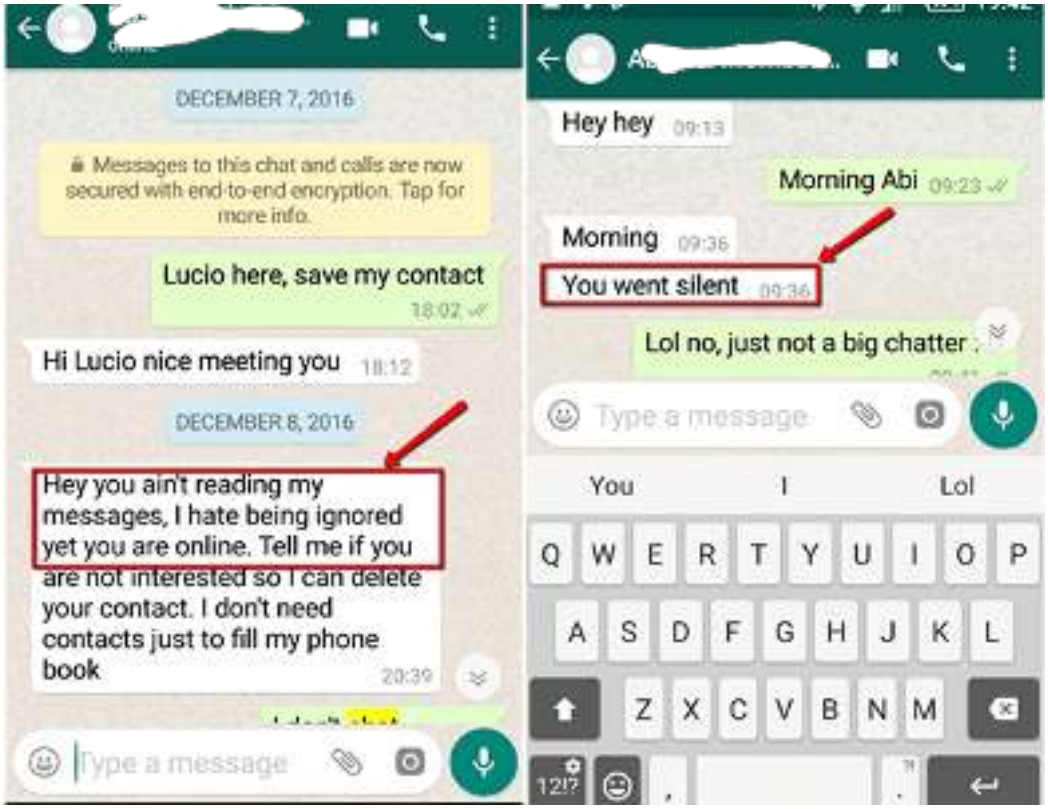
- "you don't talk to me"
- "why don't you reply to me"

Example:

Notice that the first text, in the second part, could actually be a text you should emulate.

It's like saying "I'm for real, step up and come get me".

But the first part ruins it. It says she's insecure and high maintenance from an emotional point of view.



Don't force him; make him want it

#7. Selfies Texts

Unless you're a teenager and unless you two are already lovers you better avoid texting selfies.

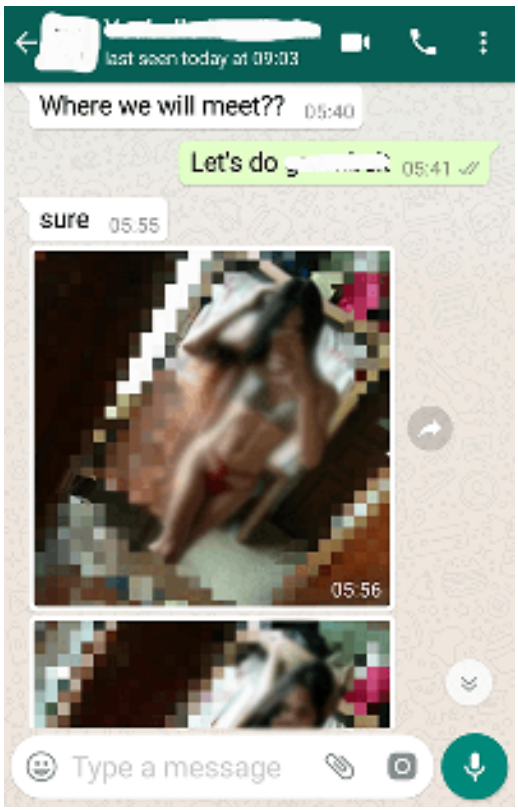
They scream attention-seeking and time-wasting.

And if he's a cool guy, chances are he doesn't know what to do with your pictures before you two are close.
He should want you physically in real life, not in the byte version.

7.2. Sexting

And worst of all, of course, are unrequested (half) naked selfies.

Trust me, *that's what trans and ladyboys do* and it's a major warning signal for guys who've been around the block.



At 5:56 I knew it was a bad idea…
And unless you're going to marry and be together happily ever after, who knows where those pictures are going to end up.
Don't risk it, and avoid sexting.

Summary

There are many ways to send terrible texts and I could make this list longer.

But I feel these 7 covers some of the most common bad texts I've seen around.

#AskGaryVee: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

#AskGaryVee is a condensed version of Gary Vaynerchuk's Youtube show #AskGaryVee. The book presents Gary's philosophy and beliefs through a string of questions and answers.[image]

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Hustle
  - Self Awareness
  - Big Goals
  - Love it All
  - Invest On Strengths
  - Clouds VS Dirt
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Be self-aware to understand your limits and what you should pursue
- Invest in your strengths and work hard
- Set big goals to keep you focused and motivated

Full Summary

Hustle

A major tenet of Gary, in all his communication, is the need to hustle (ie.: working hard). Gary proposes to remove some time from television and invest it in anything else that moves you closer to your goals.

Your question is:

> *Are you working as hard as you could?*

Self Awareness

Self-awareness from an entrepreneurial perspective means knowing a few key things:

1. What excites you (so you can set motivating goals)
2. What you're good at (to focus on)
3. What you're not good at (to outsource it)
4. How you're doing

Gary seems to be in the realistic camp. Like Ray Dalio he stresses the importance of staying grounded on reality. He says it's important, especially for people in a position of power, to have people around telling you what you're

doing well or wrong. If you don't, you're likely to build your own reality, which might not work well.

Gary also recommends you ask the people around for feedback on what you're good at.
And once you know the overlap between what excited you and what you're good at, you can draft your goals:

Big Goals

Peter Diamandis in Bold calls your big goals "moonshots".
However you call them, your goals are important for two things:

1. Drive you
2. Keep you focused on the long game

Also read:

- The Magic of Thinking Big

Drive

Don't worry if your goal doesn't sound worthy, your goal is to motivate you, not to make you look good or cool.
Gary for example wants to own the New York Jets, which to me sounds silly.
But it doesn't have to sound good to me, that's what motivates Gary to keep going. Indeed it's not what a goal is, it's what a goal does (to you).

Long Game

When you have a big north star lighting your path, you will worry less about the pebbles on the way. A big goal not only will keep you focused on what matters, but it will also increase your grit and resilience, which are key to success (also read Grit by Angela Duckworth).

[bctt tweet="It's not about what your goal is; it's about what it does " username=""]

Love it All

Another great takeaway from #AskGaryVee for me was to learn to love everything you're doing. Gary says he loves the calls with angry customers, the HR headaches, and the daily grind.

Tying it back to his big goal, he says that it's easy to love it all when you know everything is inching you closer to your big goal.

Invest On Strengths

The next use of self-awareness is knowing your strengths.

Gary espouses an idea common today in self-development circles, which is to work on your strengths. Your weaknesses should receive your attention only as long as they are holding you back. Otherwise, focus on what you're good at: that's where the biggest bang for the buck comes from.

Clouds VS Dirt

Clouds are your overarching vision and values.
Dirt is the tactical, day-to-day grind to execute on that vision.

Real Life Applications

Love it All
I really liked the idea of loving it all, struggles included. When you can reach a place where you really love what you're doing, including the difficulties, you're golden.

Pursue What You're Good and Passionate About
Analyze what you're good at and what you're passionate about. That's probably what you should put your efforts into.

CONS

Longish
Could have been a bit shorter.

Black & White
I believe that to give good answers, one should also draw from the data. Gary's answers are more based on his views and opinions, which tend to be rather black and white.

Review

As of 2018, #AskGaryVee is possibly my favorite Gary's book (and it's likely to stay that way because I think I got most of his great business philosophy and wisdom not planning to absorb more from Vaynerchuk's personality).

Watching the show to get Gary's philosophy can be long and time-consuming.
With #AskGaryVee you get all his wisdom in a condensed form (and you can skip the show if you don't have time).

You will like it if you're a fan of Gary.
Or if you're a fan of "hustle culture".
Otherwise, this website believes you can prioritize other folks to learn from.

Read more summaries and get the book on Amazon

How to Be Feminine: 12-Steps Guide (With Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

I'm glad you're looking at how to be more feminine.

This world needs more women who know how to be feminine.

By the end of this article, you will know the exact moves, body language, and expressions that make women more feminine.

So let's start:

Contents

- 1. Remove Markers of Masculinity
  - Shake Hands Like A Woman, Not Like A Man
  - Refuse Unfeminine Behavior
  - Purge Unfeminine Body Language
  - Compete While Looking As Unaggressive As Possible
  - Remove Unfeminine Clothing
- 2. Be More Vulnerable
- 3. Be Modest
- 4. Display Coyness
- 5. Learn to Move "Smooth & Flowing"
- 6. Develop A Feminine Walk
- 7. Speak With A Purring Voice
- 8. Adopt Feminine Body Language
  - Feminine & High-Power Body Language

- 9. Pick Feminine Careers & Hobbies
- 10. Play Up Typically Feminine Qualities
- 11. Go For “Strategic Submissiveness.“
- 12. Advanced Level: Simpering Moves
- How Not to Be Feminine
- Why Being More Feminine
- Femininity: Does it Bother You?
  - Mindset: Drop Resentment
  - Femininity Is Power
- Summary

1. Remove Markers of Masculinity

The first step to being more feminine is to avoid masculine expressions.

Have you noticed most men make a point of avoiding pink and doing anything effeminate?

You might agree or disagree with that attitude, but you should probably start considering the same approach.

Example:

One evening, I cajoled one of the most feminine women I’ve ever dated to play football with me.

She was very reluctant, though, because, as I later understood, she didn’t want to play typically male games.

When I high-fived her across the table –a typical male behavior– she drew the line and, with a touch of baby talk and a pouting face, told me:

> **Her**: “don’t high five me, I’m not a guy”.

Boom!

There she was.
In a country where 95% of women pretend there are no differences between genders, she’s a feminine woman who wants to be treated as a feminine woman.
I respected her more after that, treated her more like a woman, and even liked her somewhat more.

That girl made a point of being feminine by outright refusing male behavior.

If you are interested in how to be feminine—very f*emin*ine—I recommend you take the same approach.
And actively remind men that **“you are not one of the guys”.**

Let’s now see more masculine traits to eliminate so that you can troubleshoot yourself:

Shake Hands Like A Woman, Not Like A Man

Are you a businesswoman?

Great!
In business, shake hands like a man.

Outside of business, shake hands like a woman.

This is the business handshake:

Very common for American women, but avoid it outside of business
And this is how women greet men when they haven't been instructed to behave like men:

Use this one: rest your hand on his hand
A woman shaking hands as if it were a business transaction can be off-putting.
Especially to more experienced men, who will think "here's another woman who thinks that proper socialization means acting like a man".
Avoid it most of all in dating and socialization for potential dating, where it sends a message of cold distance.

Needless to say, you can keep the business style in business and then revert to the female style outside of business.

Also, read:

- **How to be a feminine leader**

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

Refuse Unfeminine Behavior

One could write a book about what are typical mannish behaviors, but here are some

- High-fiving (you're not one of the guys)
- Cussing (leave that to the truck drivers)
- Speaking too loudly (leave that to show-off men)
- Spreading out (few things are more unfeminine than this)
- "Bro hugs"

About the latter, keep in mind that a little distance is very high.

If you need to be close to someone, put your body close to them instead (Marilyn's video below is very arousing for men) or go arm in arm.

Purge Unfeminine Body Language

We could write a book about masculine body language, but here are some examples:

- Hands-on hips (AKA akimbo, exceptions for playful akimbo and sensual akimbo)
- Walking with spread legs
- Arms far from the body's trunk
- Leaning against objects
- Jutting chin forward (an aggressive indicator)

This video exaggerates everything about how a woman should *not* move. Stay away from anything that looks even mildly similar:

The braggart entrance, the swaying of arms, the bounce of the feet… That's how men move—not even the well-refined ones).

To understand unfeminine body language, you can also watch how many female UFC fighters behave.

Compete While Looking As Unaggressive As Possible

Ronda Rousey, a former MMA fighter, always tried her hardest to look and sound like a man.

Even *saying* she would beat men of equal weight.
Do the opposite, and avoid direct competition with men, as that makes you more like a man.

Competition is a male trait.

And of course, if you are reading this, you want to go places, and you must compete.

However, to be feminine, you must compete without looking overly aggressive, overly ambitious, or too overpowering.
It's not easy, I know.
Nobody said being feminine was easy.

Also, avoid competing with the men you are dating.
Trying to be better than the partner is typical low-quality male behavior, so it's a huge no-no.
That's not your role, let *him* compete with the other boys. And let him compete to win you over.

Read more:

- How to date as a successful woman
- How to express power as a feminine woman (W/ video examples)

Remove Unfeminine Clothing

Avoid neutral clothing as well.

It's popular among hipsters these days to wear shapeless body bags: please stay away.
They're the death knell of anything feminine.

Avoid shapeless, straight-line clothing
You can see one more example of bad female style here.

Here are two simple litmus tests:

- Would a gender-neutral person wear it? If yes, don't wear it
- Would a stereotypical lesbian wear it? If yes, don't wear it

And now let's start with the proper traits of femininity:

2. Be More Vulnerable

Vulnerability is crucial.

Why?

Because, once you get it correctly, you can be courageous, go-getter, and strong WITHOUT being mannish.

Why?
The answer is in the difference between how men and women display courage and boldness.

Men's Courage
Men do it as a display of strength, with stress on *display*. And they do it while hiding their emotions and fear.

Women's Courage
Instead, the most feminine way of courage is to admit fear and show up anyway, humbly and without bombast.

Here's a good example from "Dating in the Dark":

She openly speaks about her fears while also having the courage to show up. Notice the unassuming way she opens the door, too.

Also, notice the different reactions. The guy defends his ego by bragging and boasting:

> **Braggard man**: *"I'll go ahead and close some more women like I usually do".*

When the moderator tells her "she'll find someone," she doesn't flaunt her options like he did.
And instead vulnerably replies:

> **Vulnerable woman**: *"hopefully yeah".*

Finally, notice that in all her humility and vulnerability, she puts the bragging guy to shame, which is a powerful reminder that femininity does NOT have to mean "less powerful".

3. Be Modest

Males are naturally showier and braggarts.

That's where the terms "peacocking" and "cocky" come from. It's about showing off.

But femininity is often the opposite of mannishness.
And that's why, while humility is good for everyone, it's particularly good to be more feminine.
See an example from Monroe here:

A touch of coyness and self-consciousness, well-placed insecurity… All are very feminine.

Notice how unassuming Marilyn is when she says "I hope it will be a good picture". Impossible not to like her.

4. Display Coyness

Notice how Angelina Jolie plays it coy by turning her face away. Super attractive to men:

Notice the similarities?

5. Learn to Move "Smooth & Flowing"

Nothing says feminine like flowing, smooth movements.

Dance and yoga classes can be very useful here.
Here's an example from Margarita Levieva:

Notice the way she sits in the chair. She doesn't pull the chair up, she uses it as an occasion to put her body on display instead.
Perfect.

6. Develop A Feminine Walk

Body language research says that women who want to appear more appealing sway their hips more.

Indeed, there are two major traits of a feminine walk:

1. Hip swaying
2. Small strides

High heels can help with both (Morris et. al., 2013).
See Marilyn Monroe, in high heels, displaying both signs of a feminine walk:

Also notice how she has a bit of a "jump" in her steps, visible through her fur movements.

That's exactly how an ex of mine used to walk, by the way, and I could never resist sneaking up from behind and (jokingly) spanking that sexy swaying ass.

Warning:

The wider the angle and the more pronounced the sway, the more "sex" it will scream.
And too wide can go from "feminine" to "whorish":

Unless you are doing it strategically, for example as a coquettish move to dare a man to rail you hard, avoid being the lady who screams "sex" *too* obviously.

Here is a good example of being sexy in a feminine way without looking like a whore:

The secret is that you have to look like it's just natural to you and that you are not trying to draw attention.

7. Speak With A Purring Voice

Go back to the "flowing movements video examples" (N.5).

Have you noticed Levieva's voice?

She purrs on the words "late", "ever" and "forgive".

It's not so much about what she says, words are an excuse to exhibit her feminine purr.
Wonderful.

8. Adopt Feminine Body Language

When you make feminine body language part of your repertoire, you'll always be seductive.

Even when you don't want to seduce.
Here's an example:

Some more feminine body language:

- Head tilt (video above)
- Swayback (video above)
- Neck show (video above)
- Glancing over the raised shoulder
- Leg twine (examples 1 & 2 are feminine because men cannot do it, and N.3 is sexy for its coyness and submissiveness)

You can, of course, combine femininity with a more aggressive sexual stance for an explosive mix of feminine lust.

Check out:

- Sexy body language for women

Feminine & High-Power Body Language

In the foundational laws of power, we explain the “return on investment” concept, which says that:

The less effort you expend, the more powerful you are.
Powerful and feminine women will achieve the same goal with fewer words, and more body language.
Notice how she invites him to leave not by saying “you should go”, but simply by looking at the door:

> **Her**: I’m really tired (intonation that sub-communicates disappointment)
> (long pause)
> can we talk about this tomorrow? (look at the door, sub-communicating that he should leave)

9. Pick Feminine Careers & Hobbies

Your environment matters.

Your environment shapes you and encourages you (or discourages you) to find your femininity and bask in it.

For example, a female executive at Lockheed Martin (an arms producer) or at Jeep (a typical male car) will have more difficulty embracing her femininity than a woman owning a hair salon or a design agency.

The latter will be around more women, more feminine women, and is immersed in an environment that screams femininity.

The former will have to play down her feminine side, play up her masculine side, and be constantly immersed in a high-testosterone environment.
Indeed, if you read the best business and career books teaching women how to be successful in a male organization, they are all about teaching how to play the game the man’s way.

It can be hard for you to exhibit more masculine traits at work, and then unplug every day at 6 p.m. and every week on a Friday, ready to embrace your femininity.

Sure, you *can* be successful and feminine in male-dominated organizations. And you can unplug whenever *you* want.
But you're not choosing the easier path.

And to make it easier on yourself, you can pick more female-dominated environments.
If you've already chosen your job, here are a few more hobbies to consider:

- Ballet
- Painting/drawing
- Languages
- Fashion
- Music

There is nothing more feminine than a woman who can sing or play

I remember many years ago, I was hitting it off with a woman at a social function.
Then she went to play the piano… And hordes of men clustered around her.

And if you want to take it 3 steps further, pick a languid song and go Jennifer Connelly on it:

Also, notice her clothes and her movements

10. Play Up Typically Feminine Qualities

Typical (and sometimes stereotypically feminine) traits and qualities include:

- Caring
- Listening
- Helping others shine

- Seeking middle ground
- Tending and befriending

If you're on a date, **you can rest assured that** men will like nothing more than you asking questions and making them feel great about what they have to say.
Another smart move to be more feminine is to avoid talking too much, too loudly, or taking too extreme positions. Prioritize bridge-building and harmony instead.
You can see here a great example:

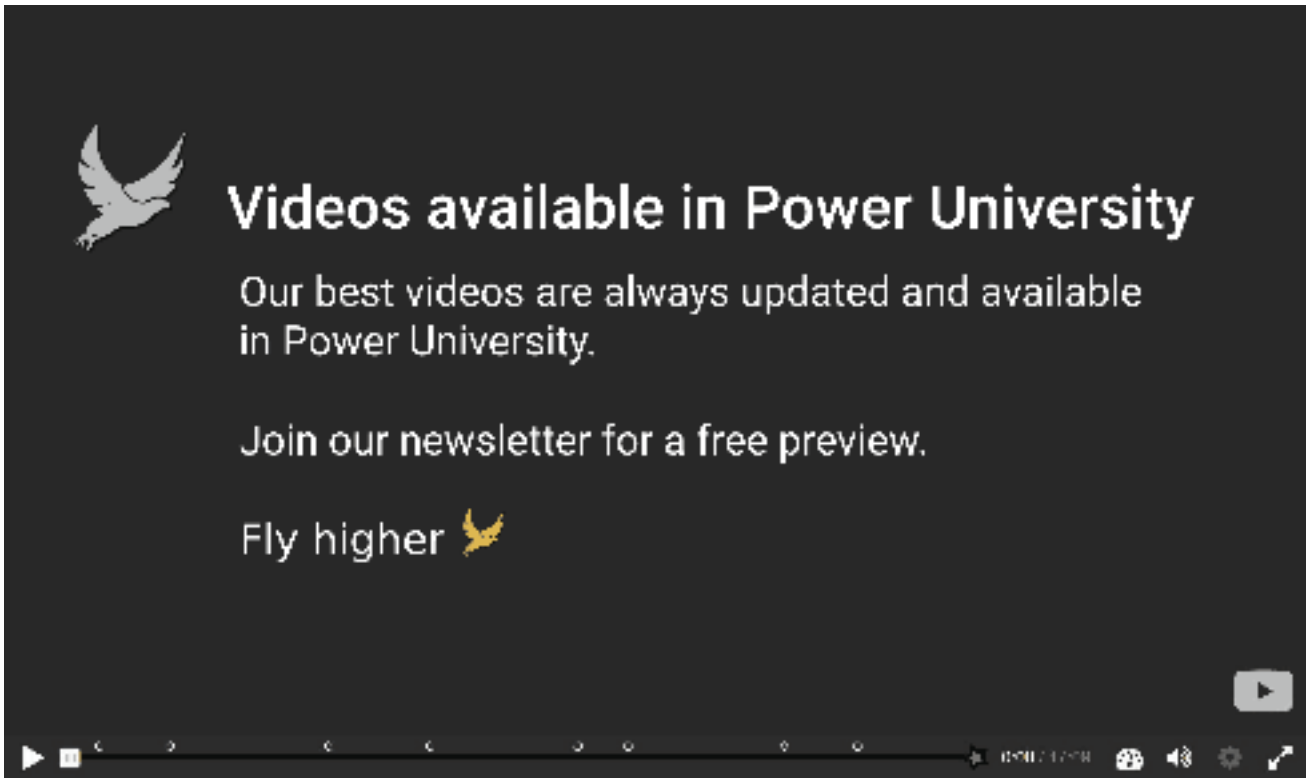
- **How she conquered every man's heart by not picking sides**

11. Go For "Strategic Submissiveness."

When it comes to being more feminine, the "little girl looking for protection" takes the most flack (see below).

But a hint of insecurity, admitting your shortcomings, and letting him lead are very feminine traits.

If you're not comfortable with this one, think of it this way: Don't do the heavy lifting when you can let a man do it.



Notice Marilyn Monroe resting her head against him. As if to communicate that he's the leader of her world.

You don't need to make yourself a full subordinate, but it's the little details that make the difference:

- Lower your gaze first
- Laugh at what he says (if it's funny enough)

Your hand on your neck, covering your belly, closing your jacket as if you sought protection… These are also very feminine poses that make men want to protect you and take care of you.

Self-hug and neck-massaging: both very feminine

Pro tip:

At the intersection of coy, submissive, and *extremely* seductive is being naked and covering your private parts with your hand.

This is also a favorite of mine.

A Note on Submissiveness

Some women will recoil at the word "submissiveness".

The word has indeed taken on negative connotations. In a way, it requires you to give away power, but it also gives you a different form of power back.

Furthermore, sexual and dating submissiveness is a matter of choice. It's not about being submissive to *everyone*. It's about *choosing* who to be submissive to.

Read more:

- Strong women VS submissive women (who wins at dating)
- Strategic vulnerability (to make men chase and invest)

12. Advanced Level: Simpering Moves

Some of the most feminine and attractive women engage in what reminds me of cat-like behavior.

Here's a perfect example (click, it's a video):

Notice that instead of repeating herself she leans in and prods him with her head -similarly to how a cat or feline would do-.

Powerful AND feminine at the same time.

I remember one woman before we had sex.

Laying on the bed, she told me how she wanted to be a cat in her next life.

"She does this, and then this", she said about her cat while she copied some of the moves.

It was a real pleasure making love to that cat-woman :).

How Not to Be Feminine

As much as there are low-quality expressions of mannishness, there are also low-quality expressions of femininity.

And much as it's true for men when too much manliness becomes a drawback, extreme expressions of femininity can also become a drawback.

Here are some examples:

- Over-the-top emotions
- Shrill expressions of excitement
- Too early, too deep emotional attachment
- Too much makeup / too skimpy clothes
- Over-the-top plastic surgeries
- Demands to be "treated like a lady" (instead of being one and letting the man decide to treat you as a lady, see how to make him chase)
- Too childish / too baby-like behavior

See an example of too childish from "How I Met Your Mother":

Notice that some men will still appreciate that over-the-top attitude, but it's a minority.

Why Being More Feminine

Why would you want to be more feminine?

Pat Heim, a female career coach who helps businesswomen become more successful, says this about femininity:

> Your gender is a large part of who you are. **You can't feel good about yourself and not feel good about your femininity**. To be comfortable with her power, **a woman must be both powerful and feminine**.

Frankly, I don't 100% agree with that.
I don't build my ego and self-esteem around being "a mannish man", either.

But there are many practical advantages to a woman being feminine, including:

1. You will gain a huge advantage in the dating marketplace
2. You will reduce the backlash against powerful women: both men and women cut more slack to powerful women who retain their femininity
3. You will be more charming, which results in more social power as well

Finally, learning to become more feminine can be a great opportunity for you: since so few women are feminine these days, you will gain a huge comparative advantage.

Femininity: Does it Bother You?

Femininity as a topic annoys some women, who lash out in anger at articles like this one.

Some women get angry for a variety of reasons, including:

- **Fear of competition** (women fear more feminine women because they tend to be more successful, and attacking articles like this one is a manipulative strategy of intra-sexual competition, also see "pro-group feints"

as manipulation strategies)

- **Culture & feminism**: feminism has become a cultural diktat for many women who feel pressured to reject femininity as an outdated, "patriarchial" value
- **Wanting to have one's cake and eat it too**: some women want to gain more social power, and it bothers them that it comes at a dating cost

But in part, the push-back against femininity also reflects a difficult position for women in today's society.
Many women today are expected to work and fend for themselves while they are *also* expected to be feminine when it comes to dating.

It's not easy to successfully combine the two.

But it's paramount that you purge yourself of jealousy and bitterness:

Mindset: Drop Resentment

The fact that someone could point at another woman and say "see? She's more feminine than you" hurts them, and anger is a defensive reaction.

It's the same for men.
And it's understandable.

Some of these women are smart professionals who had to adapt to male-dominated organizations by dropping more typical feminine traits and acquiring more masculine ones.

And after they've done so much to prove their worth, the idea that their male colleagues might want to date a woman who plays girly in need of help maddens them.

Albeit understandable, you are still better off dropping the resentment.
It communicates insecurity and spite and it hurts yourself first and foremost.
Plus, look, deep down you already know the truth: **men (and women as well) will still prefer more feminine women.**

Femininity Is Power

Part of the animosity towards femininity also stems from a misconception.

The misconception is that femininity means dumbing yourself down, becoming less independent, or becoming weaker.

And albeit marrying power and femininity is not easy, femininity and intelligence, success and power are NOT antithetical.
And we could argue that women who master femininity are actually better able to get what they want, which is a definition of power.

Just watch the examples of femininity above and ask yourself if any of those women are "weak" or "dumb".
To me, they seem the opposite: high-quality women and human beings who *also* manage to be feminine.

Summary

I see very few women these days who can get femininity right.

And the number seems to be dropping further and further.

And that's great news for you!
It's a huge opportunity to stand out and make yourself a super high-class woman.

Further Reading:

- How to make him obsessed with you (tricks and power moves from the most addictive women)
- Alpha females

7 Biggest Dating Mistakes Women Do (Before Sex)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

These are some of the most common biggest early dating mistakes.

I have seen them over and over again and they are making countless women (and men) around the world unhappy.

Contents

- Early Dating Mistakes
- 1. Playing Unavailable Games
  - Exception:
- #2. Demanding Too Much
- #3. Focus On Getting More, Not on Balance
- #4. Too Little Femininity
- #5. Combative Stance
- #6. Fear: When It's Too Good
- #7. "It Will Happen When It Will Happen" Mindset
  - Example
- Summary

Early Dating Mistakes

The biggest dating mistakes I'm focusing on here are those which happen before the relationship starts getting any serious.

This is a highly critical period because you haven't developed a bond with a man yet. And any mistake in early dating is much more likely to lose you an otherwise great partner.

Note: all the tips here are based both on the science and data of dating and on personal experience. All texts are actual texts I received.

1. Playing Unavailable Games

> ***Date Frequently, Date Fast, Date Forward***

I put it first because most sources recommend the opposite: that you should show value through being unavailable (Glamour cra**y advice example).
I can't think of anything more counterproductive.

Making yourself unavailable, either when you're scheduling a date or by playing aloof upon the first meeting, does not do much good to you. If a man is pursuing you it's because he already likes you (wants to sleep with you for sure, and very possibly more). Thus, being unavailable or playing too hard to get gives you limited additional benefits.
Being unavailable and aloof is one of the biggest risks women take in dating because ***many men don't like to chase too hard*, and they just stop pursuing**. And that is all the truer for *higher quality men* with lots of options.

Why It's Bad

1. Time Passes And You Forget

Early relationships and dating are a bit like clay pigeons shooting. It's not a very romantic analogy, I know, but it fits perfectly: from the moment you meet your possible beautiful relationship is hurtling away. And the more time goes by, the fewer the chances you'll ever get together. You wanted to play unavailable, but then you (or him) forget, get busy, it starts feeling stale and less fresh.. And it never happens.
Like the example below. Don't let that happen to you!
Strike when it's hot.

Hard to say if she was *playing a game*. But since she canceled a few hours before, it's possible. I didn't reply. She wrote me sometime later, but we never met. Great chemistry, gone to waste.

2. He Will Self Reject (and Stop Pursuing)
Play coy, fake busy, and be unavailable too much and men will self-reject. Such as, they read your unavailability or postponement as a possible no, and instead of pursuing further and "risking"a full blow-off, they decide to protect their egos and stop pursuing you.

Following the unavailability advice

3. You Will Unconsciously Downgrade Him

Read it as this is possibly new info for you.

Playing unavailable makes him chase and you unconsciously interpret his reach outs as a sign of him being lower status compared to you -otherwise, he wouldn't need to chase me, you tell yourself-. And of course, *you want men who are "higher" than you*, so very soon you will unconsciously start liking him less and less.

It probably happened to you that you met a cool guy but he began losing points after a while, right? Now here's the funny thing: you changed your own opinion! He probably IS a cool guy but you'll never know.

Other women who say yes and meet him quickly will find out for you.

4. Available Women Will Steal Your Lunch

This is particularly true if you are dating in a difficult market.

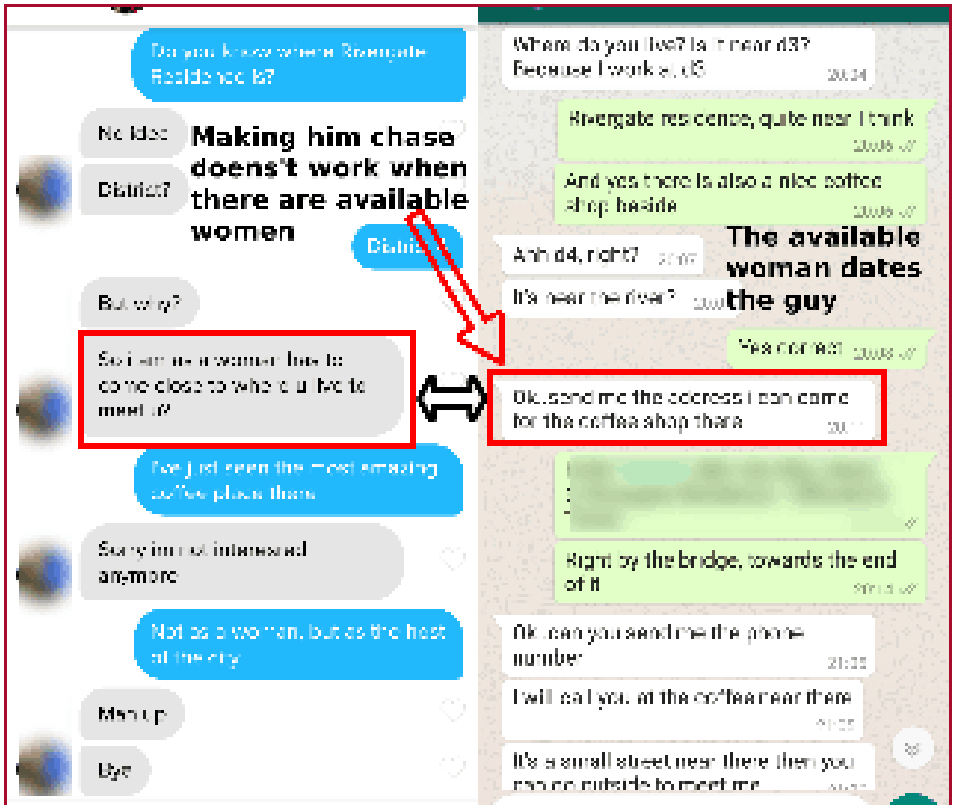
In difficult markets, women less intent on playing unavailable games will simply tell him when they're free. And they will schedule. And they will meet up with him. Like the woman on the right side of these two texts behaved.

And if he's as cool as he seemed at first, he might soon be off the market.

Cool guys don't stay single indefinitely: go meet him!

It's not a question of opinions, it's a simple fact of offer and demand.

See an example, same place, same woman:



At parity of *sexual market value* the more available woman will date more, and have more options to choose from (and just to be sure: dating more doesn't have to mean "sleeping" with more men).

The unavailable one, especially if she's catty, will generally have a harder time.

Solution

Say yes to the men you like when they ask you out.

If there was a good vibe between you two men do NOT interpret eagerness to meet as desperation. **Men interpret eagerness to meet as great chemistry**. As a matter of fact, they'll feed off your eagerness and get more excited to meet you (look at point 7 for an example and read: *waiting for sex or not?*).

Look at this girl.
Her supportive attitude is exactly what made me *want* to meet her even more:

Or, even better, look at these examples:

- Strategically dropping games
- One simple text that made me look forward to meeting her

The "Equity Theory of Love" is pretty clear about this: when you demand more and more investment, you make the relationship unbalanced, and unbalanced relationships are unhappier and shorter.

Exception:

For the sake of clarity, throwing yourself to him IS also a mistake (this message is an example). Making yourself available because you like him and see potential is one thing, top priority is another.
The top priority has to be earned over time.

It's also after sex has been consumed that is too easily available, especially for booty calls, and risks lowering your long-term girlfriend value (*here's an example*).

But 90% of women are instinctively aware of it.

#2. Demanding Too Much

> ***How Do You Take It All? By Not Asking***

The second biggest dating mistake women do is Investments Requests, or put simply "demanding too much". It's often jarring for guys when women's demands are too big or come too early. The most common demands include:

- To have dinner/drinks paid
- That he comes to your chosen spot

- That he has to write you first and last (unspoken demand)
- To help you with stuff
- To do what you say

Having men commit to increasing demands is a sneaky and *effective* way of getting… Poor quality mates. Read *investment imbalances* for more details.

Why It's Bad

The first reason is that a big imbalance of money spending risks turning the relationship from a collaborative, loving one into a "market one" (read the psychology in *Predictably Irrational*).

Second is that when you demand too much too soon it's either you end up with a puppet or you'll drive the cool guys away.
Funny enough, some men will even comply with women's requests but then resent you for it. An example from a Dating In The Dark episode:

Note: demands and investments are always a question of balance.

Remember:

1. Men appreciate women who say a genuine thank you when they are invited
2. Men appreciate women who offer to split -even if he ends up paying in the end-
3. Cool guys don't appreciate women who expect to be invited and don't say thank you

Here's an example from How I Met Your Mother: Ted explains her date the mistake she made and, later on, Ted decides whose girl he wants to see again.
It's tongue in cheek, but based on reality.

#3. Focus On Getting More, Not on Balance

> ***NO Begets NO; YES Begets YES***

This is the smaller brother of the above.

Most women dating advice books tell women the same things: make him invest, *make him chase*, be the *prize of the relationship, make him wait for sex*.

That's a mindset of "get as much as possible, give as little as possible".
Many women in the West seem true to follow that rule, and they focus more on "staying ahead" instead of "staying in balance".

Some small acts that keep relationships out of balance:

- Not letting the guy plan the date
- Refusing to comply with small favors
- Not chipping in for the date expenses

This is what you will see a lot from women who are considered "stuck up".

Why It's Bad

The problem with refusing investment is that balanced, cooperative investment is one of the major drivers of relationship growth.

And a refusal to invest is also a refusal of moving the relationship forward.

Look at these messages below and notice both the refusal of investment and the consequences.

Coming after a long first date together and after sex, this was a fairly balanced request: I invite her over, she brings some food -whatever she likes- and I get the wine.
A win-win collaborative effort to spend a nice evening together to eat, enjoy good wine, get to know each other better and make love.

That's the perfect date to deepen the bond.
Her refusal to participate not only stops the relationship from growing, but takes it back onto game playing and a combative "someone win, someone loses".

In spite of her great looks, after this message, I wasn't keen on a closer relationship with her.

The issue I saw here were two:

1. She seemed more hell-bent on power than on collaboration
2. She missed the chance of escalating mutual investment

What could she have done better?

She could have said, "OK, I will bring X, can you make sure you get Y and Z?" Easy and efficient way to move the relationship forward with mutual investment and mutual acts of caring.

#4. Too Little Femininity

> *Opposites Attract*

There have been cultural and societal shifts that brought women to behave less feminine these days.

One is that more women work today, and many lines of work reward testosterone more than femininity (*Pease &*

Pease).

The other shift has been feminism, a great and welcome cultural revolution. In some western countries though feminism reached a stage where it's not helping women anymore but damaging them.
Feminism has become the new slut shaming it purported to fight (slut shaming in Wikipedia).

A few examples:

1. My ex-German girlfriend had the biggest fallout with her best friend when the friend told her she wasn't "emancipated enough". Apparently, being too happy about one's boyfriend is terrible because it signals a girl "needs" a boyfriend;

2. This year a local girl visiting my room hated the painting on the wall because the woman figure was too sensual. Apparently, it's wrong to look "girly" and women should avoid sensuality

3. Notice how Charlotte feels guilty for deciding to quit her job instead of simply being free to do what the hell she likes:

Basically, for some of the current feminists, girls should be more like men and never too sensual.

And a subset of the female population is buying into it.
Here are a few mindsets which aren't helping women when it comes to dating:

- I don't need a man
- I don't have to take care of myself (for a man)
- Men and women are the same
- I shouldn't allow a man to lead or decide for me

Why It's Bad

There's no point in pretending it's not true:

Men are attracted to feminine women.

If you're a high achiever, it might not be easy to blend femininity and a go-getter career, but it's not impossible. And therein lies your opportunity.

Some articles on femininity and successful women dating:

- How to be more feminine
- Successful dating for successful women
- Sensual body language for women

#5. Combative Stance

> ***Warriors Rarely Find Love***

I have seen this dating mistake several times, often from younger / less experienced women.

It's born out of an internal struggle and out of fear of:

1. Being "one of many" or a quickly forgotten sexual thing
2. Falling in love (too soon)
3. Being not good enough

The first is when the man comes across as a *player*. She likes him and wants to be with him, but at the same time,

she resents him.

The second is when the emotional whirlwind is very intense, she likes him a lot and she's afraid of falling head over heels.

For the first two, belligerence is the armor she wears in an effort to push him -and the danger he represents- away.

The third case is a bit more complex, and she uses a combative stance as a way of getting back at him and taking power away from him to re-balance the relationship.
This can also happen in already established relationships (video example below with Elon Musk and Talulah Riley)

Here are a few examples of combative dynamics:

- **Running Away**

Can be physical and quite literally in an effort to make the man chase.

This is childish and I've seen it mostly from Asian girls and labile women (picture below).
More commonly it's emotional and looking for the same reaction but only at an emotional level. Both try to raise her value and lower his value by making him chase.

Terrible game: she loses high-quality men (who won't run after her) and sticks with low-quality ones (who will)

- **Pushing him Away / Rejecting Him**

Rejections hurt, and women are even less used to it.

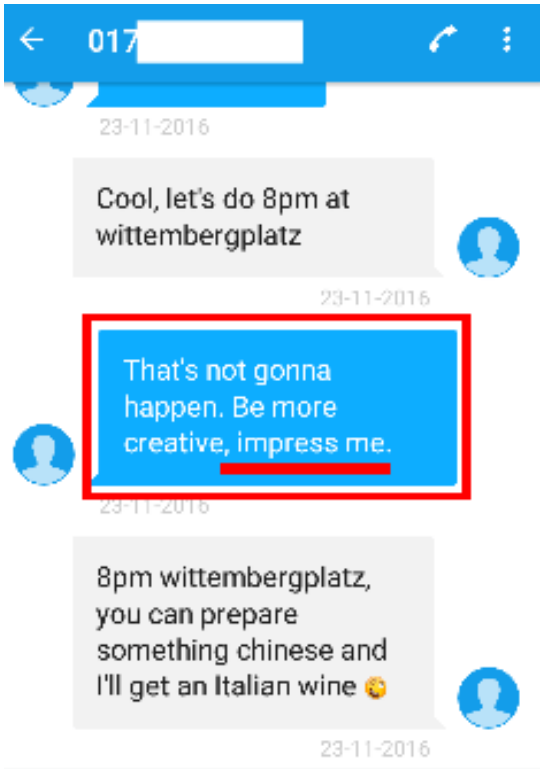
So when a woman (often mistakenly) feels the man is too good, she will push him away or reject him before he can reject her.
It's an unconscious mechanism of ego protection.

- **Fighting for Wins / Escalating**

Fighting for wins and escalating smaller issues into "my way or the highway" are most often the consequence of feeling unworthy or not cared for enough.

Drama and fights then become a way to force him to pay attention and care (Brene Brown describes a similar dynamic in *Daring Greatly*).

More rarely it can happen when she felt sex happened a bit too quickly and/or she feels it's difficult to get a relationship with him and now she resents him.
This is the below example, notice that's both a major escalation AND a refusal to invest.



I let my ego get in the way and I should have understood where she was coming from. But she also started an unneeded escalation trying to make me jump through her hoops.

- **Taking Value Away**

When she feels he's too good -or people think he's too good-, she will try to make him look bad as a way of re-balancing the relationship (check *combative relationships*).

Note she says "she would have said yes to anyone", basically communicating to him "you're not special". Super mean. And later on, she says she sometimes feels like taking a plane and running away.

Why It's Bad

A combative attitude is a major dating mistake because *high-quality men* don't want a relationship with a combative woman (makes sense, no?).

And once you're in a relationship (most likely with a *low-quality man*), it's equally bad because it leads to *toxic relationships*.

Solution

When you catch yourself acting combative, stop immediately and assess what's driving you.

Are you self-sabotaging because you're you might get hurt?
Are you resentful because you feel he's too good?
Because you feel he's a *player*?

Once you'll know the reason why you'll be more able to act accordingly and, if that's what you'll decide, overcome the internal resistance to the two of you getting together.

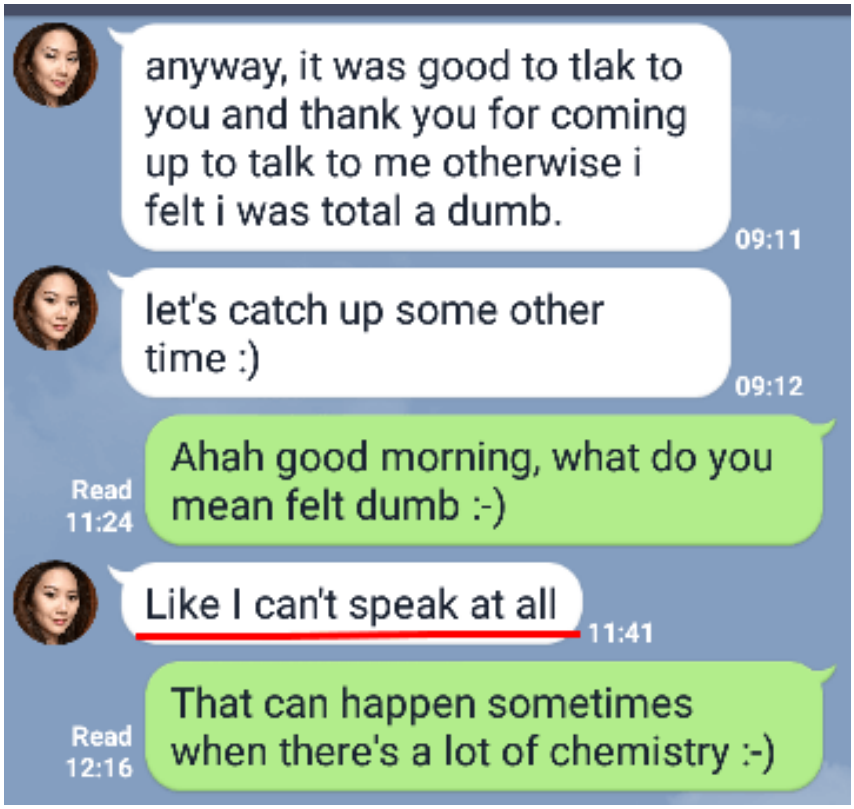
#6. Fear: When It's *Too* Good

I can't count the interactions I have had with overflowing chemistry.

Big emotions, excitement, the sparkle of a great romance in the air… And yet they never had a follow-up.

Look at this example below.
She was so overwhelmed that, she admits herself, she couldn't speak. Theoretically, if this girl were you, you should be very happy to meet him again, right?

Well, often unluckily, it's wrong.



She was so nervous and excited she couldn't speak. Did she come out and meet me again? Nope

Women way too often don't meet the men that excite them the most because those same big emotions end up playing against them.
And it's relatively common. This is *one more example*.

Let's see why:

- **Fear of Getting Hurt**

When you like someone a lot and want something to happen badly… You're also very afraid it could go wrong.

Maybe you tell yourself he's too good.

Or you tell yourself you will say yes… But you're a bit nervous or emotional to reply now, so you tell yourself you'll do it later on. And you put it off.. And then put it off more… And it never happens.
So instead of going out with the guys with whom it was "soooo good", you end up going out with the guys with whom it was "OK".
Silly, no?

- **Cognitive Dissonance**

Meeting a man with perfect chemistry can be a huge emotional roller coaster.

But emotions can dissipate or can come crashing down. And that's where it all goes to waste.

Your rational side takes over.
Now you feel silly, or weak for having been so excited. Maybe you have a more boring boyfriend, or you see yourself as "rational". So to avoid he reminding you of your moment of "weakness" you cut him out (Commitment and Consistency principle, Cialdini).

- **Rationalization**

And if you were horny and nothing happened, guess what?
You get angry, disappointed.

You will ruthlessly cut him out, maybe even being angry at yourself.
You will rationalize your feelings telling yourself something like "I thought he was great but how silly of me, another good-for-nothing man..".

It's because from an evolutionary perspective, a man who can't capitalize on a horny woman is an ineffective man.

But here's the funny thing: your unconscious mind won't differentiate if you met him half naked in a cave a hundred thousand years ago or with your mom at the mall -the latter being a bit more difficult to make happen right there and then… –

It has a name: left brain interpreter (and more in Incognito by Eagleman)

Why It's Bad

These are three slightly different instances, with fear probably being the most common.

However, they're all interlinked as the most damaging early dating mistake you could commit because they all happen with the men you like the most. Basically, when you give in to fear and fall prey to cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), **you are missing out on the very best!**

Silly, right?
The men that excite you, the men that give you strong emotions and the men with whom you have the biggest chemistry are also the men with whom you can have the best encounters and the best relationships of them all.

Solution

Spend time with him right there and then when possible, and if not possible, make this your new rule: any time, upon meeting someone, you:

- like him
- have butterflies
- are sexually attracted
- there's strong chemistry

Go meet him no matter how you feel afterward.
Worst case scenario, it will be a new experience and a drink outside. Most likely, you'll do a favor to both him and to yourself.

#7. “It Will Happen When It Will Happen” Mindset

Big cities, Tinder and chatting apps trick your brain into believing there are more options than there really are.

The consequence?

You hold out and pass up good opportunities one after another -the phenomenon has a name: *The Paradox of Choice*-.

Why It’s Bad

Put simply, while you’re lazy, other women take charge of their dating life, make things happen and pair up with cool guys.

Below is an example.
Cheeky, bold, and sexy at the same time.

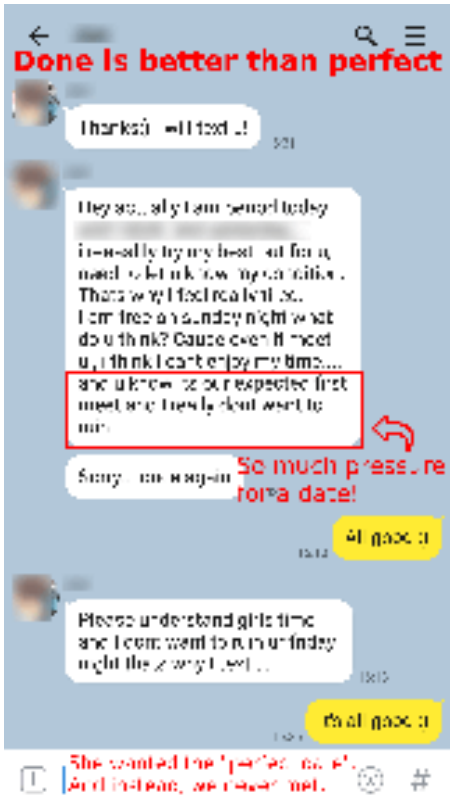
The issue is even worst for appealing and educated women, who mistakenly bide their time confident in their “strong hand”.

But the opposite happens: more commitment-aggressive women pair up with the cool guys early and the longer you wait the fewer good men left (game theory for dating).

Solution

The solution? Drop the “waiting” attitude.
You have to help him make it happen.
And when the phone rings it’s time to wake up from the passive dream and do your part to make it a reality.

Sometimes you won’t feel like, but make an effort if you like him.
Don’t be like her:

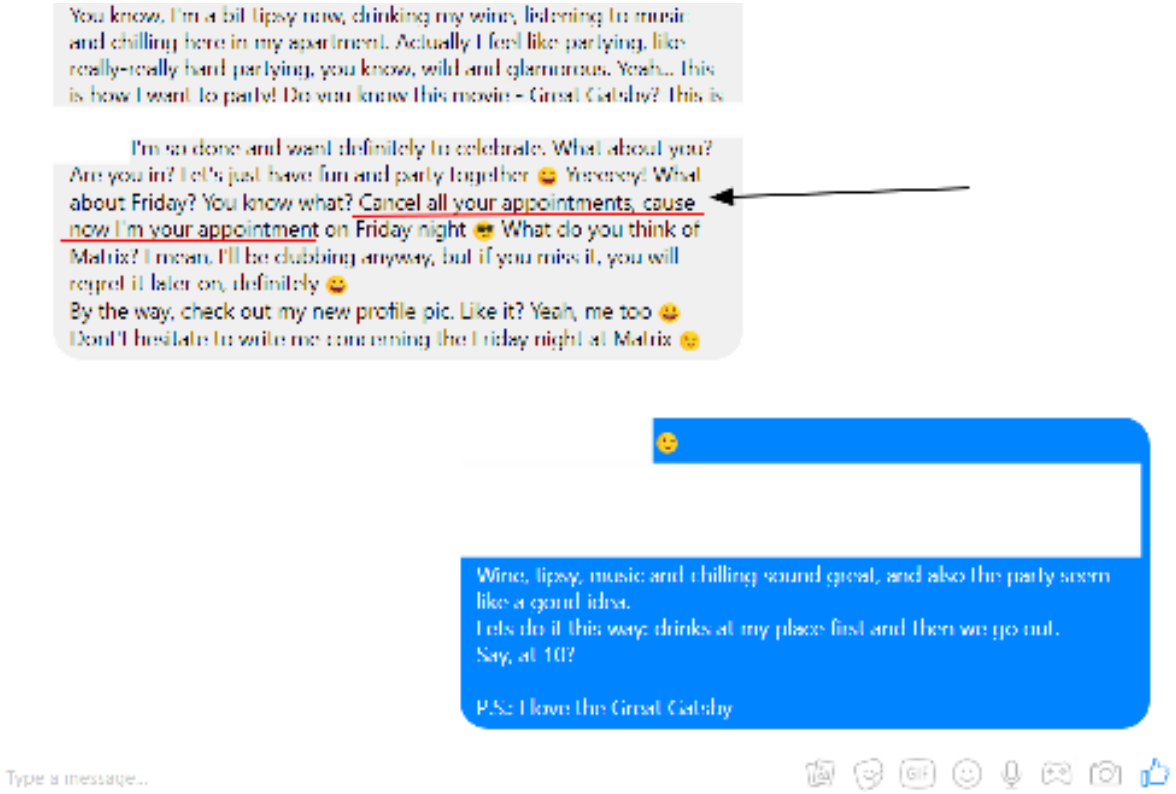


Example

As I was saying in the “unavailability games” this didn’t feel easy or overbearing.

It felt special that she had chosen me in connection to her lofty feelings and emotions.

And it felt like immediate, powerful (sexual) chemistry.
A memorable night followed and a beautiful relationship blossomed from there.
Take a leaf out of her book, **be brave, and go for it**.



Summary

Many women are unhappy being single and many more are not in great relationships.

This post only addresses the mistakes happening early on in the dating process.
But a good start is half the way already.

Quite simply, the women who get the early process right and get the relationships they want are the women who say yes to the men they like and (help those men) make things happen.

These are the women who, without necessarily taking an active role, remove the obstacles along the seduction road (and oftentimes make him feel like he did everything).

These women:

1. Send easy-to-read signals (men need more than women think)
2. Are pleasant in the first approach and make him feel liked (no aloof games)
3. Say yes and find the time to meet later on (no unavailable games)
4. Go meet him
5. Escalate mutual investment
6. Keep him by being feminine and making him feel like a man

There are very, very few women like that, and they don’t stay single for long -provided they want a relationship of course-.
So once you will become one, you’ll definitely stand out.
And once you pair up, you can even chill and enjoy the rainy nights in with him after.

Unshakable: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Unshakable is Tony Robbins' guide on personal finance to help you retire rich with smart investment and compound interest.[image]

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Unshakable
  - The Money Masters
  - Compound Interest
  - Stock Market is Safe
  - Stay in The Market
  - Taxes & Fees
  - Investors' Mistakes
  - Mastering Your Mind
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Start investing early
- Stay in the market
- Control your mind: don't panic, don't overtrade

Full Summary

About The Author:

> **Lucio**: Robbins is a fantastic motivational speaker, a self-help "guru" with great content… And an endless marketer and covert bragger. Still thumbs up, though

Unshakable

Tony Robbins starts first by explaining what *"unshakable"* actually means:

Unshakable is a state of mind. That you are safe and will be alright no matter what. This book should help you to feel financially safer.

The Money Masters

The men Robbins interviewed for the book are a who's who of finance:

- Ray Dalio, possibly the most successful investor ever -read his Principles–
- Mary Erdoes, managing nothing less than 2.4 trillion assets at JPMorgan
- Jack Bogle, the pioneer of index funds and founder of The Vanguard Group;

- T. Boone Pickens, billionaire takeover operator of the ’80s
- Carl Icahn,
- John Paulson, who made 4.9 billion in one fell swoop during the financial crisis (read The Big Short)
- Warren Buffett, who doesn’t need any intro

Compound Interest

Tony Robbins is a big proponent of compound interest. He says that you will not earn your way to riches: just look at celebs and how they go bankrupt all the time.
It’s saving and using compound interest, says Robbins, that will transform small amounts of monthly installments into fortunes.

My note: albeit resources like *The Millionaire Next Door* and *The Millionaire Mind* pitch the same idea, I fully disagree (read the cons).

Stock Market is Safe

Tony Robbins uses a bunch of statistics to basically say that the stock market is safe. “It always rebounds”. Nobody will know whether it will rise or fall but, in the long term, it will rise.

Stay in The Market

Robbins says that the biggest danger you face is actually staying out of the market. The longer you stay out, the more your sabotage your compound interest.
Compound interest requires you to be always in the market.

Taxes & Fees

The author reviews a bit of the big impact that government taxes and hedge fund fees can have on your returns. In a nutshell, you should:

- avoid actively managed funds
- take steps to minimize your taxes
- Avoid transaction costs by trading less
- avoid brokers (they work for a company, not just for you)

He has a list of questions to ask your financial advisor, for which I recommend you get the book.
Or check *Money Master the Game.*

Investors’ Mistakes

Confirmation Bias
Seeking confirmation of your investment decisions and beliefs instead of looking for opinions to contradict them

Trend Extrapolation
Believing a current short-term trend will continue.
My note: one could say the same about the stock market “always going up”.

Overconfidence
We overestimate our abilities.

Greed and Gambling
We have a tendency to look for the home run, the big payday, and the lottery win. But it’s slow and steady that wins

the game.

Investing Home
The tendency is to invest in companies and markets geographically near. Diversify internationally instead.
Loss Aversion and Negativity
During financial turmoil and a bear market, your brain will want to panic. Don't. And do what's logical, not what your pain-avoiding brain tells you.

Also, read *Thinking Fast and Slow* and my thesis on the *psychological pitfalls leading to the financial crisis.*

Mastering Your Mind

Tony Robbins says financial freedom is only one part of success and fulfillment. And he spends a good chunk of his book on "the other important parts of life".
As usual this in high Tony Robbins standards. I invite you to get the book and check *Awaken the Giant Within* or *Personal Power II*

Photo by b_d_solis

CONS

The compound interest theory
Rarely do I hear compound interest theorists talk about inflation. Or what giving up those monthly installments will do to the quality of life of average or below-average-income people.

You'll never earn your money through earnings?
Never…? I love Robbins but that sounds precious to say and it's what DeMarco calls the "paradox of practice". Tony Robbins didn't get a private jet and an island investing a few hundred a month. He got there using the *Millionaire Fastlane*. I also invite you to check *Rich Dad Poor Dad.*

Nobody knows… But it will go up
I experience a strong pushback anyone somebody says the stock market will always go up. Especially when they talk about psychological pitfalls but then they're all so sure the market will always go up. Hell, it went up for the last 100 years… Which still doesn't say anything of course.
If you're one of those guys I warmly invite you to read *Fooled by Randomness.*

Review

I listed a lot of cons because, as usual, I feel I need to make all counter-argument I can think of.
But overall Unshakable is a great resource for investing.

Read more summaries and get the book on Amazon

Verbal Judo: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Verbal Judo* (1993) author George Thompson teaches readers the verbal skills, techniques, and mindsets to prevent escalations and get what they want, no matter how challenging the situation may seem.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Verbal Judo Summary
  - Don't Take Things Personally
  - Develop Empathy
  - 3 Types of People
  - Always Go for Win-Win
  - Learn to Paraphrase
  - Avoid These Bad Phrases
  - Here's Why You Need to Explain The Rules
  - The 5 Steps of Verbal Judo
  - The Structure of Verbal Judo: LEAPs
  - Praise and Criticism: Avoid The Sandwich
  - React to What People Mean, Not What They Say
  - Cross-Cultural Communication
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Treat people with respect
  - Learn how to power-protect
- Put your ego aside: let bad words slide
- Listen to what they mean, not what they say

Verbal Judo Summary

About The Author:
George J. Thompson is a former police officer and a communication skills trainer.
As he shares in his own book, he is also a martial arts expert but dedicated his career to using words to get what he wanted.

Introduction

The author says that *verbal judo* is about using and deflecting the other person's aggression to reach your goal.

It's the opposite of "verbal karate", which is more likely to escalate and leave people's feelings hurt.

Underpinning the whole idea of *verbal judo* is to treat people with dignity and respect.

Don’t Take Things Personally

This is rule #1.

George J. Thompson says that if you learn *not to take things personally*, you’ll already be ahead of the curve and barely need any verbal judo.

Most of interpersonal issues, indeed, are born out of ego (read *how to rebuild your ego*).

> **Say what you want but do as I say**

Develop Empathy

Empathy is the most critical skill of verbal judo, says the author.

Empathy doesn’t mean sympathizing or approving of him. It means to see through his eyes and understand.

3 Types of People

The author says there are three types of people:

- Nice People (will do what you say)
- Difficult people (will push back and want to know why and what’s your authority)
- Wimps (will not say anything but will resent you and breed discontent)

With difficult people, George shows early on *what’s in it for them.*

Always Go for Win-Win

Following a major tenet of the *7 Habits of highly effective people,* Thompson presents the solution he wants as a win-win for both.

For example, he would say something like:

> *“so far you have only done X. if you refuse to cooperate, you will spend the night in jail, get a criminal record and I will have to do a lot of paperwork. If you step out of the car and cooperate, we will be done in 10 minutes”.*

This is also a similar technique as presented by a former FBI agent in *The Like Switch.*

Learn to Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is another key ingredient of effective *verbal judo.*

Paraphrasing often serves to soften the tone.
Angry people don’t really mean what they say, so when you paraphrase them and use their own words such as “always” and “on purpose” they will soften the tone themselves.

When you paraphrase never ask if they understood you: nobody will admit they didn’t.
Let them repeat.

And to paraphrase them, here’s the perfect way:

> *Let me be sure I understand what you have said*

Avoid These Bad Phrases

Verbal Judo has a very interesting chapter about the top phrases to avoid.

I invite you to read the book for the complete list, but here are some that struck me the most:

- What's your problem (instead: what's the matter, how can I help)
- Calm down
- I'm gonna do X to you (don't warn people of impending action or they'll get ready)
- This is the last time I say it (it's probably not true and you'll lose credibility)
- Because those are the rules

Here's Why You Need to Explain The Rules

Some rule enforcers don't like to explain the rules.

Why Not?

Because they are being egotists.
The author says that when people refuse to explain they show they are more concerned about themselves and *appearing dominant* than about the other person's well-being.

And it's most likely to escalate.

If someone else gives you the dreaded answer "because those are the rules" you could say:

> "Could you explain to me why those rules were put in the first place. They don't make sense to me and if I understood it would be much easier for me to comply".

The 5 Steps of Verbal Judo

The author proposes a five-step approach to the conversation:

1. **Ask** (ethical appeal)
2. **Set context** (reasonable appeal: explain policies and rules)
3. **Present options** (reasonable appeal: what's in it for them and what if they don't)
4. **Confirm** (practical appeal: "can I do or say anything to make you cooperate")
5. **Act**

When you present options, make him feel like it's his choice (saves his face, also read *How to Win Friends*).
And flash out the stories, give details: make him feel what it's like to choose the difficult option or the easy one.

The Structure of Verbal Judo: LEAPs

The author provides 5 steps and tools to generate compliance:

1. Listen
2. Empathize
3. Ask
4. Paraphrase
5. Summarize

He goes into details for each step and I invite you to get the book for the details.

Praise and Criticism: Avoid The Sandwich

I love the author's take on the typical sandwich feedback technique.

He says most people will not believe your praise at all when followed by a "but" or by a critique.

Do the opposite instead: start with the criticism and what you want to see them improve on.
Then deliver heartfelt praise that is highly specific. Specific praises are credible and memorable.

React to What People Mean, Not What They Say

George Thompson says to react to what people mean, not to the actual words.

When people are angry they might not really mean what they say or not understand the situation.

Address the underlying issue and concern instead.

Cross-Cultural Communication

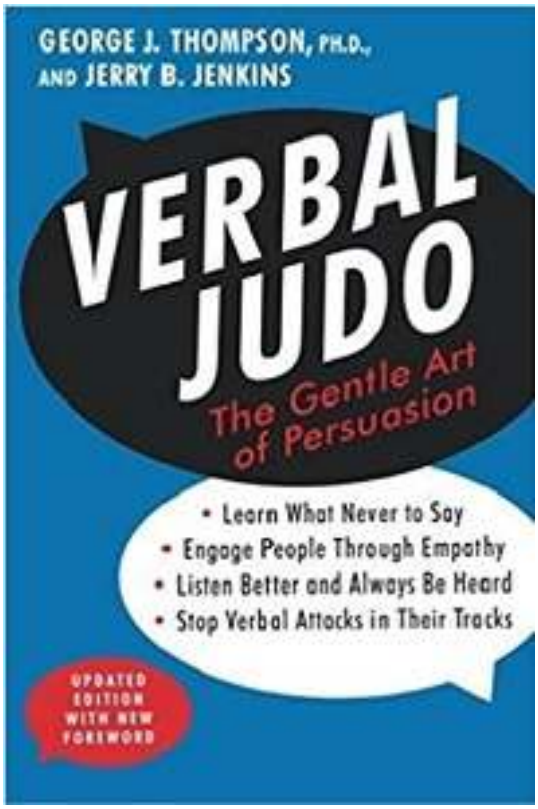
The author says the stress on cross-cultural communication can sometimes be more counterproductive than useful.

He says instead something I always believed in as well: what if we focused on the commonalities instead?

Same as the author, I too agree there are more key commonalities than differences.

Also, read:

- The futility of intercultural communication training



Real-Life Applications

Confront Wimps
You need to confront the people who talk behind your backs or they will undermine you.
Exposure is unbearable to wimps, so if you call them out on it, they'll disappear like snow on a hot day.

Don't Repeat Yourself
Don't repeat orders over and over because it's a sign of weakness for people in a position of authority.
And if you're executing, *execute orders high-power*.

Don't Say What Makes You Feel Good
… Unless it also makes the other person feel good.
When you're angry it might feel good to lash out, but it's almost always the wrong reaction. And you can never really take back what you said.

CONS

- **Some Macho Attitude**

Albeit he presents himself as a man of words and not brawns, Thompson often comes across as a bit macho.
And, in a couple of instances, even slightly braggart.

Review

Verbal Judo is a treasure trove of great communication tools.

It's up there with the best of them, like *Difficult Conversations* and I liked it even more than *Crucial Conversations*.

I absolutely recommend you to get it.
This is only an overview and the examples in the book are what make the difference.

EDIT:
As I reviewed the *best communication skills books*, I moved *"Verbal Judo"* from 5 to 4 stars.
It's still up there with the best ones, but not as good as "Difficult Conversations" in my opinion.

Get the book on Amazon

7 Proven Questions to Spot A Player

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Spotting a player can be easy… Once you have a bit of experience and know what to look for.

And most articles I have browsed around the web have no clue as to what to look for.

So while in this other article we tell you the signs of a f*ckboy, this article will show you how to proactively spot a player with 7 simple questions.

Contents

- Intro: Leveraging Players' Psychology
- Questions to Spot a Player
  - 1. Ah, what do you know about women, you're a guy
  - 2. My ex was such a player. He knew the game, he slept with more than 15 women
  - 3. My girlfriend met Mr. Perfect. She won't sleep with him so he'll be serious with her
  - 4. I don't know, you seem like a guy who would hurt women..
  - 5. I think there are two types of men: long-term, for serious stuff; and short-term, to have fun. You look like a short term
  - 6. How Do You Spend Most of Your Time
  - 7. Are you a player?
- Types of Players
  - Players Are Vocal Minority
- Summary

Intro: Leveraging Players' Psychology

To spot a player, you have to understand the psychology of a player.

Player is indeed more about a state of mind than about the act of bedding women.
And that state of mind is underpinned by a common thread:

- Pride

The most inveterate players, those who play out of a drive and lust for women are all proud of their "player status".

They are proud of their "skills", their love for women, their female knowledge, or, more crudely, of their partners' count.

And pride is what you need to leverage to spot a player.

Questions to Spot a Player

Direct questions won't work every time.

A few players, some of whom are very *high-quality players*, will tell you very openly that with them it's all about a roll in the hay and no more.

But most will hide their true status.

The best way then is to lure him out.
Remembering that he *structures his ego* around women, you need to put him in a position to defend his "honor".
You must provoke him to prove his worth.

Here are a few great ways:

1. Ah, what do you know about women, you're a guy

You are prodding his pride here. Provoking him by implying he doesn't know women.

If he defends his female knowledge, he's a player.

2. My ex was such a player. He knew the game, he slept with more than 15 women

Say it with a little disdain.

The boring guys will tell you "poor you".
The good guys will be interested in how you felt.

But the player?

You just aroused his competing instincts. Now he won't wanna come second to your ex.
And that's how you will catch him.
If he laughs or at looks at you with a smirk and asks "oh why, is that a lot?", then you know he's a player.

Only as briefly as a few years ago I wouldn't have personally resisted this question either and would likely ask back "and do you think that's a lot?".

3. My girlfriend met Mr. Perfect.
She won't sleep with him so he'll be serious with her

This is just an example of a dating question.

The idea here is that you indirectly broach the topic of seduction, dating, and *dating strategies.*
Possibly, you might even ask more directly "a guy's opinion" on what a girlfriend of hers should do with a guy she is seeing.

If he starts talking at length about it and if he sounds like he knows a lot about the topic, then there are two options:

1. He has been around a lot (he is or was a player)
2. He is studying the topic (he is or wants to be a player)

4. I don't know, you seem like a guy who would hurt women..

Now notice that many guys here will reassure you they are for real. And that they don't hurt women.

But that's not how players act and think. They don't think in terms of "not hurting" and "taking care".
They think in terms of giving and "sharing adventures".

And they will tell you about "giving" whirlwind romance, "giving" passion, and great sex.
Or losing themselves in the moment with you.

Tell him that sentence. Then start digging deeper into his answers. It won't take long till you get to his "player's honesty time".

See here an example of what that looks like from the movie "Forgetting Sarah Marshall":

5. I think there are two types of men: long-term, for serious stuff; and short-term, to have fun. You look like a short term

Bingo.
That's exactly the player's mentality!

You just did three things when you say that.
You:

1. Stroked his ego
2. Gave him a great reason to come out (ie.: position himself as "for fun")
3. Make him feel like he can be honest with you

Chances are he will jump on the chance of coming out and he'll want to actually prove that he's short-term material.
Once he does that, it's your call: enjoy the night, or drop him.

6. How Do You Spend Most of Your Time

This question is not for the real players but for the guys who simply end up behaving like players.

These guys might be marriage material… In the future.

But right now they don't have time for women. They might enjoy women, but their priorities are different.

If all he's doing is work, if he has no time for anything outside his passion and goals… He might see women the way James Bond does. A good distraction.

7. Are you a player?

You'll be surprised to see that, contrary to what most other sources online say, many guys are open about it.

This can be either because they validate their ego with women, or because they are high-level womanizers and don't

need to lie.

Read more in *Signs of a Fuckboy*.

Types of Players

Let's use the definition of a player as:

> A man who sleeps with more women than most other guys

We can then differentiate players into four different categories:

- Opportunity player (they have the chance and take it)
- Love for women players (Casanova types)
- Validation player (sleep with women for ego validation)
- Sex addicts

Players, per se, do not say much about the overall quality of a man.
Some players can be *high-quality men*, while some other players have little to offer.

For more:

- Types of players and their psychology

Players Are Vocal Minority

There are no official statistics, but I'm pretty confident players are a minority.

Most guys indeed do not have very easy access to women, are not hell-bent on retching up lays, and are not slaves to women's beauty *the way Casanova was*.

But though they're a minority, with their skills and *charm* they also make up an important part of the dating scene. Since they approach more and interact more with women, you get to see and talk to them more often than you do with normal guys.

That's why **an underestimated way of spotting a player is to ask yourself how did you meet him**.

If he came up to you, if he seemed confident and unafraid, then chances are higher that he is a player.

If he was an old friend, introduced by a common friend, or is part of your social circle, then chances are lower that he is a player.

Summary

Learning how to spot a player is a great skill to learn and it will immensely improve your dating efficiency.

If you're not yet looking for "the one" or for a serious relationship, then you need to worry less about spotting players and you can simply enjoy the experience.

But the more you want to get serious, the more this skill will come in handy.

This post provided you with 7 proven questions to spot a player.

High-Performance Habits: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *High-Performance Habits*, Brendon Burchard answers the question of what differentiates high performers from the rest.

It's not bad, but there is nothing new or earth-shattering either.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Seek Clarity
  - Generate Energy
  - Raise Necessity
  - Increase Productivity
  - Develop Influence
  - Demonstrate Courage
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Focus on what really matters
- Get breaks so you can stay energetic till the end
- Love the struggle

Full Summary

Seek Clarity

High performers focus on what matters, which helps them filter through what doesn't matter to only spend energy on what's important.

Generate Energy

Brendon says that a big difference between normal people and higher performers is their level of energy throughout the day. Most people lose energy long before the day ends.

Effective performers instead are able to quickly recharge their batteries between tasks. The secret is to take micro-breaks between tasks. For example, going from your desk to a meeting, you could close your eyes, meditate for a second and put yourself in the state of energy that you need for the meeting.

The author suggests you do the same with micro-breaks every 45 or 60 minutes.

Raise Necessity

Brendon says that the top performers associate a sense of identity with great performance. They have a way (read *Start With Why*). The author recommends you think about whom needs you to be at your top level -could be your

family, spouse, or customers.

My Note: I agree with the necessity and with tying it to your identity. At the same time, I would recommend not to put the pressure of winning on yourself. Put the pressure on doing your best. Read more on my anti-fragile identity guide.

Increase Productivity

Brendon says highly effective people increase productivity by focusing on what matters. And they think of all the steps it takes to achieve what matters and focus on them.
If it's a matter of skills, they'll work tirelessly in acquiring those skills.

Develop Influence

Burchard says people who yield a big influence do two things:

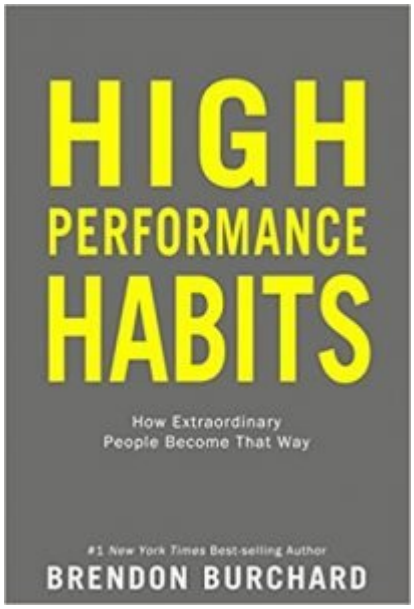
1. Change the way people think
2. Challenge people to grow

Most interesting of all for me, was Brendon saying that some of the best influencers have a giving mindset and believe they are making a difference.

Demonstrate Courage

The author says that highly effective people do things in the face of hardships and risks:

1. They are willing to speak up and share their truth
2. They expect, respect, and often love the struggle



Real-Life Applications

Prioritize Health
Take care of your rest, nutrition, and recharging breaks.

Make Your Own Mood
Don't wait for joy, happiness, or whatever feeling you want to happen. Make it happen.

CONS

Informercial
There's a lot of referencing to online courses and material on his website. There's also an assessment you can take on his website… If you leave your email. I'm not a big fan of those marketing techniques (check my Tai Lopez article).

Longish
The book is longish, it could have been made shorter.

Review

The concept of *"High-Performing Habits"* is similar to *Tools of Titans* in the sense that it lists a few insights into what successful people do.

I didn't find anything earth-shattering, but it's not too bad either.

In more frank words, it means you can probably skip it.

Read more summaries or get the book online.

Womanizers Psychology: The 10 Types of Players

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

I write this article on the psychology of womanizers, leveraging both research and personal experience.

We leverage the largest collection of scientific psychology handbooks at The Power Moves, and I have a history as a player: a perfect combination to understand the underlying dynamics.

By the end of this article, you will understand the psychology of players, the types of players, and what drives and motivates them.

Romantic womanizers are the most dangerous

Contents

- Overview: Players' Psychology
  - Trait 1: Avoidant Attachment Style
  - Trait 2: Dark Triad Traits
  - Trait 3: Unrestricted Sociosexual Orientation
  - Trait 4: Higher Testosterone
  - Trait 5: Risk-Taking Behavior
  - More to Be Researched
- Types of Players
  - #1. Slaves to Love Womanizer
  - #2. The Artistic-Soul Womanizer
  - #3. Opportunistic Womanizer
  - #4. Infatuation Womanizer
  - #5. Charmer Womanizer
  - #6. Bigger Pursuit Womanizer

- #7. Validation-Seeking Womanizer
- #8. Addicts Womanizer
- #9. Predatory Womanizers

- Womanizers Summary

Overview: Players' Psychology

Humans adopt two macro mating strategies:

1. **Player strategy**: Find (easy) women to have sex with, and move on (short-term, uncommitted)
2. **Relationship strategy**: Get serious with a quality woman, invest, sire children with her, and provide (long-term, committed)

It's shades of players

Both tendencies, in varying amounts, are present in all men (and women).

Evolutionary psychology indeed suggests that humans have a history of 'non-full monogamy'.
Meaning: the tendency for pair bonding is a human universal. But so is a history—and a wandering eye—for straying.

The player/relationship type is a continuum and few, if any, are 100% either of them.

There is often some element of both in the same man, but many men lean (far) more on the right or (far) more on the left (Figueredo, 2022).
And the two archetypes come with different psychologies and preferences:

- Relationship guys place a higher value on non-physical attributes that players do (e.g.: personality, intelligence, see Regan, 2000)
- Players tend to prefer youth and looks

For a more in-depth analysis and examples, see:

- Lovers VS players VS friends

The "player psychology" includes:

Trait 1: Avoidant Attachment Style

The avoidant attachment style is uncomfortable with emotional intimacy.

That allows the player to remain at a safe distance, and ready to move on.

Quoting from *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*:

> Attachment avoidance is assumed to refect a relationship commitment minimization strategy (Del Giudice, 2019; Karantzas et al. , 2019), in which parental investment is traded off against reproductive investment (…) (Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019).
> (…) aligns with a fast life strategy and short-term mating strategies (…)

Trait 2: Dark Triad Traits

The dark triad constellation includes Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy.

Players tend to exhibit higher dark-triad traits (Lyons, 2019).

Narcissists are the most successful dark triads daters (Rauthmann and Kolar, 2013) and, speculatively, agreeable Machiavellians (Alexander, 2024)

Trait 3: Unrestricted Sociosexual Orientation

Unrestricted social sexual orientation, or "more inclined towards casual sex", is the defining trait of the player type.

Recent research showed that restricted and unrestricted orientations are related but can also move independently.

That means that usually people lean one way or another. But it's possible to be high in desire for casual sex while still desiring a committed relationship.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's experience:
I loved most the *initial* phases of seduction and infatuation. My initial desire and enjoyment of the relationship plummuted while my desire for freedom came back with a vengeance.

Visual Fixation to Attractive Others

Committed men avert their gaze faster when they're in a relationship.
Men with higher sociosexuality stare more.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's experience: I've always been drawn to attractive women, and noticeably more than most peers

Trait 4: Higher Testosterone

High testosterone is associated with higher mating effort, and potentially rockier relationships.

Edelstain summarizes his research on testosterone and relationship quality saying:

> high testosterone may be incompatible with the maintenance of nurturant relationships

Trait 5: Risk-Taking Behavior

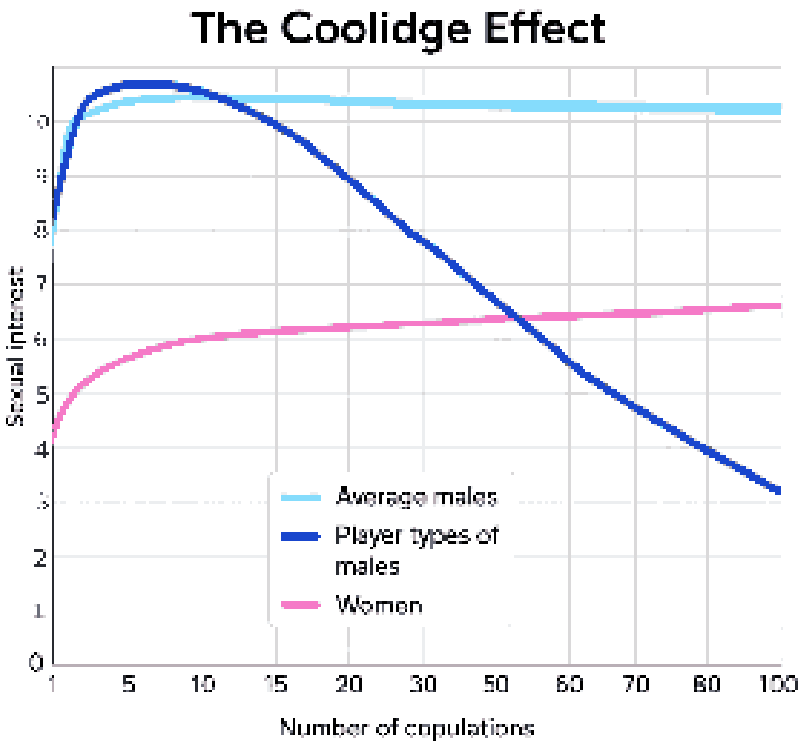
Including more frowned-upon dating approaches with frequent cold approaches, mate poaching, and 'rotations of partners'.
And, potentially, sexual risk-taking, with unprotected sex (Seal, D. W., & Agostinelli, G. 1994).

More to Be Researched

I suspect more will be discovered by future research, including:

- **Less jealousy & controlling behavior**, both pertaining to relationship and commitment types.
  ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's experience: I had low jealousy and even lower 'control motivation' in my relationships. I was more often freely offered faithfulness

- **Less heartbreak**, quicker rebounding, and sometimes happy at the breakup
  ⁉️♂️ **Lucio's experience**: My first breakup was half painful, and half celebration. The successive ones, I felt worse for her, than for me
- **Dominance motivation**, including seduction as a game of increasing influence
  ⁉️♂️ **Lucio's experience**: My biggest heartbreaks are not relationships, but failed seductions that I believed were meant to happen
- **Faster infatuation** but lower long-term companion love and lower relationship satisfaction
  ⁉️♂️ **Lucio's experience**: I sometimes even idealized during the infatuation stage, only to swing in the opposite direction afterward
- **Stronger post-nut clarity**, which for players may include a stronger loss of interest
- **Coolidge effect**, or decreasing sexual interest for the same partner, stronger for players
  ⁉️♂️ **Lucio's experience**: intimacy was fireworks with high sex drive women, but that could become an issue over time as women's drive was stable or increasing, while I lost interest



Hypothesized sexual interest over repeated copulations for women, increasing with intimacy; most men, decreasing slowly; and high sociosexual orientation men (player types), starting highest but collapsing fastest. Chart and concept by Lucio Buffalmano.

For now, this is enough to show that **player types have a different psychology than relationship-type men**.

With that being said, let's now explore the archetypes of players:

Types of Players

#1. Slaves to Love Womanizer

> *I have loved women even to madness..*

I love that quote from the most famous womanizer of all.

Giacomo Casanova epitomizes the type of player with a boundless love for women.

It's not true that all players are manipulative and deceptive, or that they only play games with women, and it's also not true that all players "only want to fu*k".

Casanova-type of players will truly love you.
And love you deeply and passionately. But the problem for some of those women is that "women" is plural. Indeed the next part of Casanovas's quote is

> ".. But I loved freedom above all".

Casanova types of lovers will remember you forever, think of you fondly, or even get heartbroken when they depart… But they do depart.

These types of players love the *feeling* of romance.
And the goodbye is often part of the romance. There is a bitter-sweet, poetic touch in goodbyes.

⁉️♂ Lucio's experience:
Some of my favorite moments of a sexual encounter are walking her back.
And some of my sweetest memories are farewells to lovers.

The Casanova type of player is the most likely to break hearts.

He enters into your life with a whirlwind of romance and passion, something you've probably never experienced before.
And it will be amazing… Until he needs to go for another romance.

Do They Stop?

Rarely.

This is the archetype of the "ever-moving womanizer".
They will always keep an eye open for other women.

#2. The Artistic-Soul Womanizer

> ***Life is short, might as well enjoy it***

The artistic seducer loves art and beauty—of which women are an expression.

Artists have a touch of madness that hinders long-term pair bonds and facilitates short-term ones—a link also found in research:

> creativity could implicate being relatively detached from relationships because of creativity's association with subclinical levels of schizotypal traits, associated with a disinterest in long-term pair-bonds
>
> *Brown in Cambridge Handbook of Sexual Psychology*

Artists can pull women into dysfunctional on-off relationships of rescuer and troublemaker, while some women also get ot live the fantasy of being a muse.
This is an interesting example of 'inverted polarity' seduction: a boy at the mercy of his emotions forces her to use her love to be a healing/mother figure for him.

Some, like Pablo Picasso, have an ugly mean streak. That too, unfortunately, can be a potent seductive trait, especially for women with masochistic tendencies.

Milder artists are brooding, slightly depressed, and can evoke women's maternal instincts.
Think of Kurt Cobain in "Nevermind" unplugged, lost in his music, and with a touch of lonesome sadness.

Some are more direct and active, though.
This is an example from the movie "Vicky Christina Barcelona":

Do They Stop?

They might, but that might also mean that as they get tamed, they also lose their best artistic talent.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:**
Deep down I always looked down on this player type as a L, and too feminine.
And the dark narcissist ones like Picasso disgust me.

#3. Opportunistic Womanizer

> ***I'm popular, might as well take advantage of it..***

Remember we said there is a player in most men?

Well, that's what gets awakened when opportunity meets dormant evolutionary tendencies.

Opportunity players are not truly players at heart.
They're just passive recipients of the fruits of success and fame.

Some men in college -at least the attractive ones- are opportunity players thanks to the hookup culture.

#3.2. Predatory Opportunists

These bottom-feeding players abuse their position of power to get sex in exchange for preferential treatment.

Weinstein was such an example.

A true shame for the category.

Do They Stop?

Once they get their fill, opportunities dwindle, or they crave a family life, they stop.

Just make sure they've had enough playing time though, and if you can somewhat restrict their options, that won't hurt either.

#4. Infatuation Womanizer

> ***Short bursts of relationships***

These guys are not notch collectors, but more relationship guys.

We could even argue if they are real players since they tend to stick with one girl.. At least as long as they're together.

And that's the whole point.

These men are enamored with the *infatuation* phase, lasting at most for two years.
After that, they're on to the next relationship.

Example?
George Clooney.

Do They Stop?

Yes, they can stop.
It will take an amazing woman, as Clooney said… And some years of playtime.
Then, after they've strung a few, they will be looking for a high-quality partner for the long haul.

#5. Charmer Womanizer

> ***What's Life Without a Flirt***

Some players enjoy the *social power of their charm* almost as much as they enjoy women.

They are indeed social charmers, as Greene called them, and see women as one of the pleasures of life.

Jack Nicholson is a good example:

Notice how he relishes his power over her, and see how affable he is with the interviewer.

Do They Stop?

Many of these individuals form families, but some struggle to adapt to a committed life.

They keep paying flirty compliments to the waitress and throwing sensual smirks at the clerks. Maybe with their wives on their side.
Quite disrespectful and childish, we could argue.

#6. Bigger Pursuit Womanizer

> ***A pleasurable break from my other pursuit***

This is the James Bond type of player.

But, as much as they might seem on the opposite spectrum to the superficial observer, also Einstein-types.

This type of player likes women, but he has bigger goals and drives in his life and can't commit.

While Casanova lives for women and romance and falls in love passionately, James Bond has a bigger loyalty to his mission.
Which is also part of his allure.

See an example from James Bond, when his bigger pursuit came up:

P.S.: all players will enjoy the line "I'll be back". Players like players' characters.

Do They Stop?

Yes, they can stop.

That happens when their main hustle becomes not so important anymore. It shouldn't just be their main hustle that ends though, but their drive behind the hustle as well, or they might look into something else.

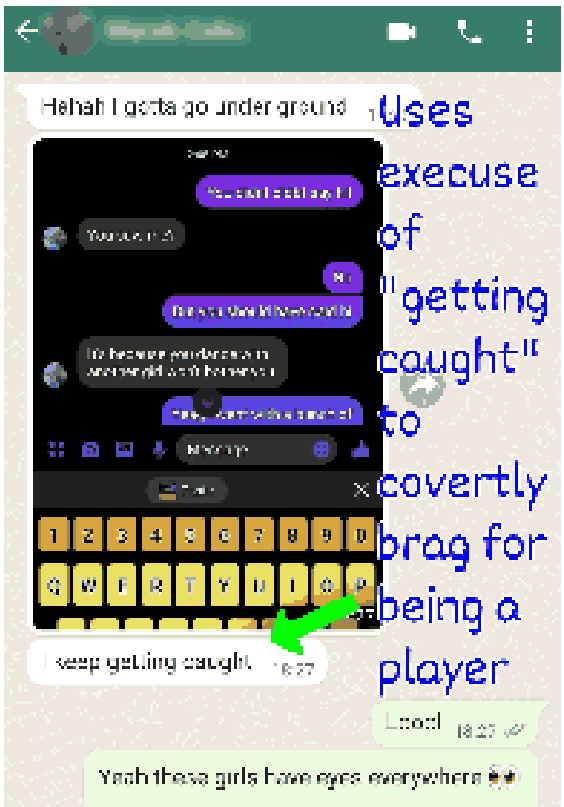
This might happen if they:

- Achieve their goal
- Reach a comfortable enough position they're happy with
- Change mindset
- At a certain age, the urge for family gets bigger than their goal
- The woman becomes part of the hustle (ie.: business partner)

#7. Validation-Seeking Womanizer

The validation of collecting notches props up an individual's own self-esteem and grandiosity, and social status.

Example of a text I received with a humblebrag:



> **Him**: I gotta go underground, I keep getting caught (attaches a snapshot of a woman saying they saw him with other women)
> **Me**: (validates him, then attaches his own screenshot to vibe)

These types of players seek women for secondary emotional benefits—conquest, self-esteem, bragging, etc.
So they *brag about it.*

Lucio's experience:
Conquest was also a major driver of mine.
Separating after a 'conquest' indulged my avoidant personality with 'me time' to bask in the 'glory of victory'.
Turning a stranger into a lover in a matter of hours also boosted confidence.

Do They Stop?

Yes.
Some slow down once they mature, and some slow down after they reach 'their number'.

#8. Addicts Womanizer

Sex addicts need women to appease their urges, whether they seduce them or pay them.

But this category also often mixes sex addicts with substance addicts, making for very low-quality partners.
Charlie Sheen, who allegedly spent millions hiring prostitutes, is an example.

Do They Stop?

Yes, once they get clean.

When that happens, the woman can provide the stability they need to kick the drugs for good.

If that's the case, he will always come back to you because he needs you as his anchor.

These relationships are perfect for *alpha-females* who lead and keep them in check.
It becomes a *co-dependent relationship*, albeit the "healthy" type of co-dependent.

Be careful if they relapse, though: it's a slippery slope and you don't want to be dragged down.

#9. Predatory Womanizers

Predatory womanizers make women worse off.

In general, the harsh truth is that **short-term and uncommitted dating is less cooperative** than long-term monogamy.

As Condolin explains, monogamy aligns interests and promotes cooperation between the sexes.
By contrast, and sometimes unwittingly, **the uncommitted player pursues a 'quantity of offspring' strategy that leaves women without a provider**.

This approach is inherently more fraught with opportunities for conflict.

The difference is that an honorable man with morals will be upfront, won't lead her on, and will do his best to keep it win-win (a 'high quality man' who happens to be a player)

But **predators have no morals.**
Psychopathic predators sit at the antagonistic extreme because not only do they lack morals, but they may actively seek to harm their partners.

Predators are getting more common.
As women empower themselves, they also become more and more targets for their assets (Hare, 1993)

The lazier ones become fully dependent on her, which in the long run often turns her off.

Example:

> **Him**: (gains emotional leverage over her, then chills when she is hooked)

There are slightly different kinds of predatory players:

- Power-hungry (seeks control)
- Gold-diggers (seeks money)
- Narcissist (seeks status via a trophy partner)

Of course, there is often a comorbidity of traits and they overlap.
These are the worst types of players: read the signs and avoid them at all costs.

And for a VERY sobering read, check this:

- **Psychopaths predatory mating**

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Womanizers Summary

"Womanizer" is the end result of chasing and/or sleeping with lots of women.

But the deeper causes of what brings a man to be a womanizer differ, and they make all the difference in the makeup of that man's personality and overall value.

This article helped you better understand who womanizers are.
And you can practically apply this knowledge to become a better dater, too.

Also, read:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

- **Types of male seducers**: if you're a man looking for information on how to present yourself, this is your article
- 7 signs of a fuckboy
- How to spot a player

Secrets of the Millionaire Mind: Book Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Secrets of the Millionaire Mind (2005) focuses on the mindsets of the wealthy and helps readers acquire that mindset with the assumption that money will follow the mindset.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Develop Internal Locus of Control
  - Rich People Think Big
  - Spend Time With Rich People
  - Play to Win, Not to Avoid Losing
  - Focus on Opportunities, Not Threats
  - Admire Success, Don't Hate it
  - Promote Yourself
  - Focus on Value & Results
  - Make Money Work For You
  - Learn and Grow
  - Money is Power: Save Money
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Being rich is a mindset: mindset-rich people can create their wealth at will
- Your thoughts are not who you are: change your thoughts and change your life
- You will be paid in direct proportion to the value you deliver

Full Summary

About The Author: Harv Eker is an American businessman and motivational speaker.
He deals with topics such as personal finance, wealth, entrepreneurship, and motivation.

Introduction

Being rich, as much as being poor, is a mindset.

To change your life, including financially, change the way you think.
And for good or for worst, explains Eker, a mindset is often passed on from parents to children.

My Note:
God, I can relate to that. I grew up in a family where a government job was the ultimate dream and, for a long time, I kept that mindset.

Develop Internal Locus of Control

Rich people believe they're in control of their lives and that they can fix things.

They don't complain about the government, society, or what's wrong in the world. They think about what they can do to change their conditions.

As *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* say: change starts with yourself. Start by focusing on what you can control, and your area of control will automatically expand.

Rich People Think Big

They have an abundance mentality, they think there's more and more out there, and the only question is how to get it.

And the opposite is also true: poor people think small.
They clip the coupons, try to hold on to the tip, and spend hours to save a few cents.

Also, read:

- Freeloaders and their small-timer mindset

Spend Time With Rich People

Rich people spend time with other people who also have a millionaire mindset.

Play to Win, Not to Avoid Losing

Millionaires play to win, while poor people play to avoid losing.

Playing to lose is a defensive mindset, and when you focus on not losing you will miss out on all the big chances to win big.

Focus on Opportunities, Not Threats

Rich people focus on opportunities while poor people focus on threats and obstacles.

Admire Success, Don't Hate it

Rich people admire other successful people.
They want to connect and learn from them.

Poor people instead resent successful people and try to take them down instead of learning from them.

Promote Yourself

Wealthy and successful people are not afraid of promoting themselves.

This was a big one for me.
I always shied away from self-promotion, but the author says that rich people aren't afraid of selling and promoting themselves.

Focus on Value & Results

Rich people choose to get paid based on results.

They know they'll get paid once they can deliver results and value, so they focus on building great products and efficient *business systems*.

Poor people think in terms of time instead. And they sell their time in exchange for (often little) money.

Make Money Work For You

This is similar to the concept of *Rich Dad Poor Dad*.

Rich people invest in assets that will generate income. And they invest their money in a way that generates more money.
Poor people, exchange time for money, keep working hard, and are enslaved to money.

Learn and Grow

Rich people keep increasing their knowledge because they look for knowledge.
Poor people think they know it all.

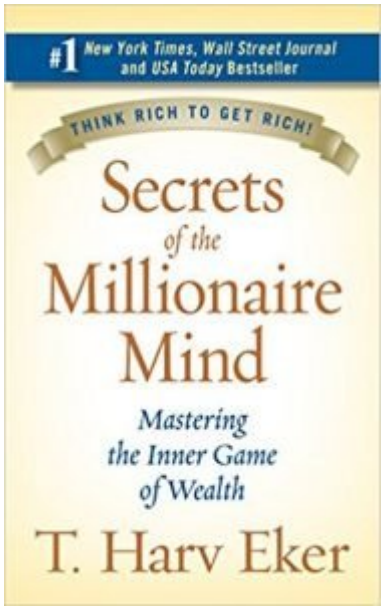
Also, read:

- how to develop a growth mindset

Money is Power: Save Money

While poor people focus on buying and spending, rich people focus on investment and, when needed, keeping expenses low.

This is indeed exactly the mindset of the millionaires as analyzed in *"The Millionaire Next Door"*, and it's the opposite of what Greene recommends in *"The 48 Laws of Power*", where he advises "letting your money circle freely".



Real-Life Applications

Don't Save for Rainy Days, Save For Your Freedom!
Save for your financial freedom days!
It's a small mindset shift, but it's a little golden nugget that can change your perspective for the positive.

Find a Good Cause to Make Money
If your drive to make money is insecurity, fear, or the need to prove yourself, money will never make you happy.
Find a better and more empowering alternative to becoming rich.

CONS

Rich Mindset: Spend
To get you into a rich mindset, the author advises you to spend money. I am not fully convinced this is a good idea.

Infomercial
There's a lot of referencing to other products and seminars of the author. I didn't particularly appreciate that.

Review

I liked *"Secrets of The Millionaire Mind"*.

The focus on mindset, culture, and psychology is a different approach than the typical "get rich" book on personal finance.

Tony Robbins has a similar approach, but Eker adds tons of good examples to help the readers differentiate between rich and poor mindsets.

If you are a beginner and if you come from a "poor mindset" culture, then this book will help you de-program yourself..

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The 5 Second Rule: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 5 Second Rule is a book by Mel Robbins on how to skip motivation, which in her opinion is useless, and jump straight into the actions that are needed to accomplish anything worthwhile.[image]

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The 5-Second Rule In A Nutshell
  - Why it Works
  - How It Helps You
  - Break Poor Habits
  - Instill Positive Habits
  - Who It Works Best With
  - Start The Day With The 5 Second Rule
  - Motivation Is a Myth
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Count from 5 to 1 and then start doing it
- Fear blocks you. The 5 second rule won't give fear time to kick in
- Your brain wants to save energy: the 5 second rule will short-circuit that

Full Summary

We are all scared of doing something and we would all prefer being lazy. Whenever you are faced with a difficult task you know you need to do, use the 5 Second Rule:

The 5-Second Rule In A Nutshell

1. **Count down from 5 to 0**
2. **Start moving when you reach zero**

That's it.

Once you reach the "go" time, start moving. Don't give yourself time to think about it or you'll come up with excuses.

Why it Works

Mel says that there's a five seconds window between thinking we have to do something and our brain coming up with excuses why we should *not* do it.

If you move before excuses start, you'll move.

How It Helps You

It helps us overcome two issues with starting:

- Conservation of energy
- Fear

Systems, including humans, tend to save energy and follow momentum. Starting up action takes energy (activation energy), and we must overcome our do nothing momentum to start.
Then there's of course fear, coming from our reptilian brain which wants us to stay safe (*read Linchpin* and *how to stop worrying*).

The counting distracts you from the excuses and it will help you focus on the goal. It will move you from your reptilian brain and activate the prefrontal cortex.

Break Poor Habits

The more you delay action, even on small things, the more those small actions build up to become bigger and bigger.

Start by breaking the bad habits with the small things -getting out of bed, doing your exercise, finishing a task- and you will begin to shift your all life with a bias towards following through.

Instill Positive Habits

Use *the 5 Second Rule* often enough, and it will become a starting ritual, your new *positive habit of action*.

Remember, the first difference between daydreamers and the people who make their dreams come true, is that the latter start.

The more you will build on the small things, the more your self-confidence will increase (also read *ego and self-esteem*).

> The one thing of people who make their dreams come true is that they start

Who It Works Best With

It works especially well with people who overthink stuff. And with those who tend to give in to procrastination and laziness (basically everyone :).

Start The Day With The 5 Second Rule

Mel Robins suggest you start with the first thing you do in the morning: wake up.

She recommends you set up your alarm and then go for it.
The key is to start going before your brain starts coming up with counterarguments.

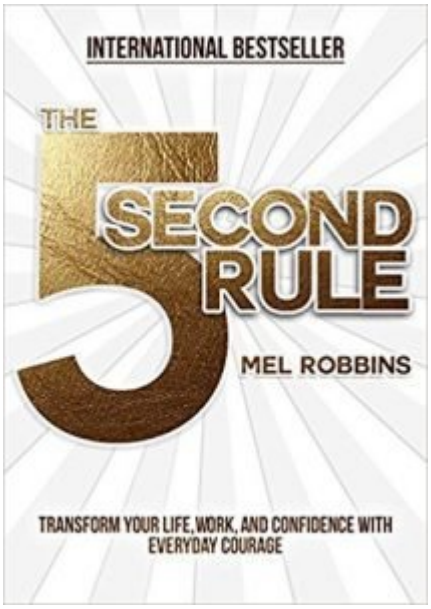
My Note: I recommend you don't wake up with an alarm actually. Especially if you're not a morning person.

Motivation Is a Myth

Motivation is *naive self-help*, says Robbins.

More than that, Robbins seems to have a pet peeve against motivation.

She says the concept you should feel motivated and inspired to do the hard things in life is garbage.
Put simply, you will never feel motivated to do anything that is hard or difficult.



CONS

A Simple message doesn't need a book
This might be the epitome of space-filling elevated to art.
Stretching a 5-second concept into a full book may even be a feat one has to, in some distorted way, admire.
Unluckily though, stretching a 5-second concept into a whole book means that the difference between what the concept *should* take you, and what it *actually* takes you reading the book is all time that you're never going to get back.

Too Long
The book could be shorter.
If you wanted a shorter version, all you'd need to know would be: what's the 5 second rule and some examples of implementation.
And then if you're curious, why it works. A single blog post could accomplish that.

Review

The 5-Second Rule is an OK book with a good idea that ultimately, in our opinion, you can skip reading.

The idea of moving quickly before you start making excuses is not new.

The *old Pick Up Artists* called it the 3 seconds rule, such as *approaching a girl* you like within 3 seconds or you'll start coming up with excuses.

Still, the 5 Second Rule concept in itself is a great and valid concept.
It can really help you get going and build positive habits of an action taker. Just make sure you couple that with staying power and *Grit.*

However, frankly… You may not need the whole book for one single concept.

Get the book on Amazon or read more summaries.

8 Proven Signs You're Dating A Fuckboy (With Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How do you know if you're dating a fuckboy?

Well, some of them are easy to spot.

But some try to hide their true selves.

Experience also helps: once you meet a few, you will start growing your fuckboy-spotting antennas.

But until then, this guide is here to help you.

Fuckboys show off abs in the most unlikely places

Contents

- 8 Signs Of a Fuckboy
  - #1. The Fuckboy Approaches Quickly
  - #2. Dress to Impress
  - #3. Fuckboys Want to Skip Dating & Jump to Bed
  - #4. Fuckboys Date Near Their Place
  - #5. Fuckboys Quickly Make Their Move
  - #6. After Sex The Fuckboys Only "Dates" At Home
  - #7. Fuckboys Lie. A Lot
  - #8. Fuckboys Puff Up Their Chests With (Fake) Confidence
  - #9. Fuckboys Spin Uncommitted Sex As 'Romance & Bonding'
- Fuckboys VS Womanizers
  - High-Quality Players
  - Low-Quality Fuck Boys

- Summary

8 Signs Of a Fuckboy

All the following signs are *indicators* that you're dealing with a fuckboy.

None of them by themselves is a guarantee, but once you put them all together, they start telling you a fuckboy story.

#1. The Fuckboy Approaches Quickly

> ***Practice makes smooth***

Most men are tense before approaching a girl.

It will show once he actually approaches, and some men will be open and vulnerable about their own feelings and tension.

But a fuckboy builds his pride around *not* being tense. He prefers cold approaching, just to show that he's a hunter. And he will try his darn best to look ballsy and in control.

If the fuckboy has been around the block, it's possible he truly doesn't feel much pressure anymore.
It might be the case that chasing skirts is the fuckboy's sole occupation, in which case he might have become well versed in it.

He:

- Approached you in "difficult" conditions
- Approaches himself (VS sending a friend)
- Was out by himself

See an example of a deep-sounding fuckboy from the movie "Vicky Christina Barcelona":

Low-level, clueless fuckboys are likely to use pick-up lines, while more aggressive fuckboys can open with sexual compliments about your figure.

#2. Dress to Impress

> ***Better style = easier lays***

Lower-status and younger fuckboys adopt 'hood fashion' and seek the "Insta-friendly" artsy shot to display masculinity or muscles, without looking like he's flexing

Any seducer worth his salt knows that a good style gives him a huge leg up in dating.

Plus, most fuckboys are high-dark triads, which includes narcissism.

The lower fuckboy tries to have his own style. But he often botches it. He overdoes it, exaggerates the alpha male poses, comes across as too "macho-man" and, ultimately, you just have to think "what a fuckboy".

Players tend to take better care of themselves than the average Joe, and the average fuckboy will either try to dress to look tough, or adhere to the latest fads.

Often, he does not have his own style but copies whatever is trendy and whatever the latest teen band is popularizing.

Fuck boys usually prefer street attire, tank tops, and/or bad boy style (tattered clothes, leather jackets, etc.).

However, the higher-level fuckboys will also know that a solid suit and a classy style work wonders.
See an example from "Crazy, Stupid, Love":

#3. Fuckboys Want to Skip Dating & Jump to Bed

Players a few hundred years ago might have courted you and smothered you with love letters.

But today the game has changed, and fuckboys are a modern, libertine, and mostly urban phenomenon.

In today's diverse and fast moving societies with lots of options, **fuckboys go for quantity, not quality**.

They seek "down-to-fuck girls", and try to screen for them.

Fuckboys will:

- Try to get you home as soon as you meet
- Try to schedule a date as soon as you meet
- Talk little about yourself and themselves

- They already have a place in mind
- And they insist on their place because:

#4. Fuckboys Date Near Their Place

> *And follow a process*

Low-level fuckboys are disorganized in their dating as much as in their lives.

Don't expect much from low-level fuckboys, neither in terms of conversation, dating, or, possibly, even sex.

Higher-level fuckboys, though, are more organized.
When they meet you, players might ask what you would like to do, but they have something in mind anyway.

Here are a few fuckboy warning signs for the date:

- Meeting place is close to his place
- Gives you 2-3 options, which can include his place
- Knows the staff of your date's location (goes there often)
- Lets you speak and ask questions (more advanced players)
- Ends the date himself (more advanced players)
- Asks you if you want to go back "for a drink" or "for five minutes."

The fuckboy arranged the date right away and confirms ASAP

#5. Fuckboys Quickly Make Their Move

> *Comfortable and quick move*

Players want to get to sex fast, so they will try to coax you to their place as soon as they feel they possibly can.

Once at home, if they are experienced, it's likely they will follow a process. Here are a few signs:

- Lets you take your shoes off (you commit to staying)
- Shows you the house (you get comfortable)
- Too good a place (great music, books about tantra and massage, etc.)
- Stays in the kitchen for a bit (bedroom might be too quick)
- Makes a move early
- If you reject him, he won't be flustered, but go for it little later (more advanced players)

#6. After Sex The Fuckboys Only "Dates" At Home

> *Sex-based relationships*

Have you had sex already?

If so, the fuckboy will try to go for a "sex-at-home based relationship".

Meaning he will invite you over and go out a little, if at all.

The more demanding and entitled fuckboys will even ask you to prepare and bring something to their place:

A fuckboy-busting countermove

#7. Fuckboys Lie. A Lot

This is the most important part.

And what really differentiates a fuckboy from a high-quality womanizer (read more in the next paragraph).

Fuckboys lie and hide.

They will try to make up for their mistakes with a show of affection and love, trying to win you back and make you

feel good.

Alternatively, they will try to make you dependent on them with the opposite behavior: treating you badly and making you feel unworthy.
But they won't leave you, because they need you for sex and validation.

Watch out, particularly for small lies and inconsistencies, because they hide bigger ones.

Did he say he was meeting Bob, but a week later he said he met Alex?
His family was in town for a week, but when he talks about it later on, it was 10 days?

The more you spot him, the more likely it is that he is a low quality fuckboy.

#8. Fuckboys Puff Up Their Chests With (Fake) Confidence

The fuckboy obeys the mantra that "confidence makes women wet".

And to look confident they will go to the gym, repeat to themselves how great they are and try to fuck women to get their filly of ego stimulation.

When the fuckboy is inebriated, he is at the top of his world. He is less afraid of rejection and can lay it on thick, just the way he likes it.

Here is the cocky fuckboy approach (from the movie 500 Days of Summer):

Liquid confidence swells the ranks of fuckboys in bars and clubs.

The Misogynist Toxic Fuckboys

There is a more toxic version of fuckboys.

The women-hating fuckboys.

They seek success as "revenge" against women and how badly they treated him (often it's a victim mindset and all in his mind).

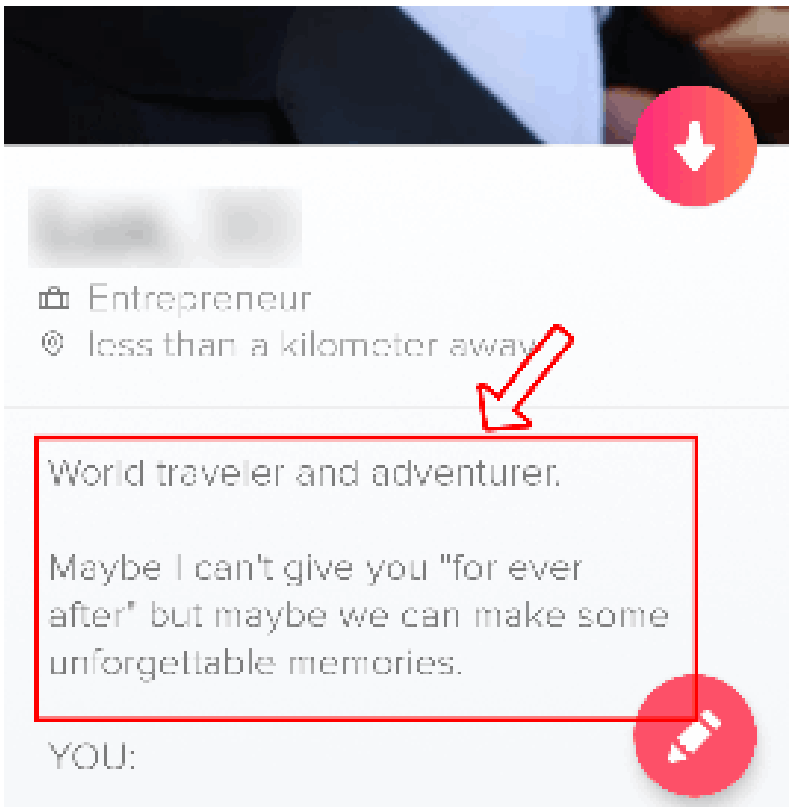
They are likely to hang out in communities close to toxic masculinity, read covert women-hating authors such as Rollo Tomassi, and use feminism as an excuse to attack women and paint a society of "us men vs. them women".

They call themselves alpha males, but they are emotionally damaged and alpha male *postures* per excellence.

Stay as far away as possible from these bitter, low-quality men at all costs.

#9. Fuckboys Spin Uncommitted Sex As 'Romance & Bonding'

Example from online dating:



> **Fuckboy**: Frames the uncommitted sex as a more romantic 'making unforgettable memories'

Fuckboys VS Womanizers

The difference is huge.

I will call fuckboys the low-quality players, and womanizers the high-quality ones.

Most sources online refer to low level fuckboys when talking about players (for example, Wikihow and Goodmenproject).
But that's very reductive because high-quality players can make for great short-term relationships, sex, excitement, or rebound.

Or, when they stop, they can make for great long-term partners, too.

High-Quality Players

High-quality players have richer lives, have an abundance mentality when it comes to dating, and believe they can give a lot.

Since they feel they are enough and the next woman is behind the corner however it goes with you, **they don't lie** (nearly as much).
Many of them will actually be upfront.

High-quality players are also more likely to care about you and your feelings. And they don't want you to get hurt.
Rayan Gosling in the example above is actually more on the high-quality side than on the fuck boy side.

In some cases, women with high-quality players will actually gain even if the relationship ends abruptly.
Naomi Campbell, for example, considers his ex-playboy boyfriend Flavio Briatore a mentor.
In case of age differences indeed high-quality womanizers can be a sort of mentor or father figure.

Low-Quality Fuck Boys

The low-quality players don't have a major life goal beyond women and small timing.

They don't have -or don't feel they have- that much to offer. Except for a di*k, which is not in short supply anyway.

Since they often don't feel they are good enough, they make up for their lack of lies and shenanigans.
These are the guys who create drama, build two different relationships at the same time, and string women along for as long as possible.
They also often use women to feed their egos (read validation player).

These are the players that will tell you that you're great, better than your friends, that they love you, etc., etc.

The protagonist of the movie "The Pick-Up Artist" is a great example of a fuckboy. Is he a low-quality dude with little going on in his life.
Lies and mind games are his forte.

It must be that way.
Lying must be part of his repertoire because his genuine self wouldn't be enough to attract a quality woman.

So if you want to be a quality woman, start by cutting out all fuckboys from your life.

Summary

Fuckboys can be all you need for a night.

But you should at least know you're dealing with one, and you should be able to differentiate between a low-quality fuckboy and a high-quality fuckboys (womanizer).

The issue with fuck boys, contrary to high-quality womanizers, is that they are low-quality men overall.

Internally conflicted, low-level fuckboys get their validation through your emotional attachment (ie.: "two girls are into me, I must be great!").
And that can eventually hurt you.

If you missed the fuckboy signs and have already been hurt: don't let that become bitterness towards all men.
Fuckboys are just but a tiny minority.

Also, read:

- How to spot a player
- The 10 types of players

Crossing the Chasm: Summary & Review (3rd Edition)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*Crossing the Chasm*" is an *entrepreneurship book* that explains how to take products from market entry and niches to widespread and mass adoption.[image]

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Crossing The Chasm Summary
  - Innovators
  - Early Adopters
  - Early Majority
  - Late Majority
  - Laggards
  - Gaps Between Segments
  - The Biggest Chasm
  - How to Cross The Chasm
  - Selling to Early Majority
  - Mistakes Selling to Early Majority
  - Overleaping The Chasm
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- The diffusion of new technology follows a tiered bell curve
- There's a gap between all groups
- The biggest gap, a chasm, is between visionaries (early adopters) and pragmatists (early majority)

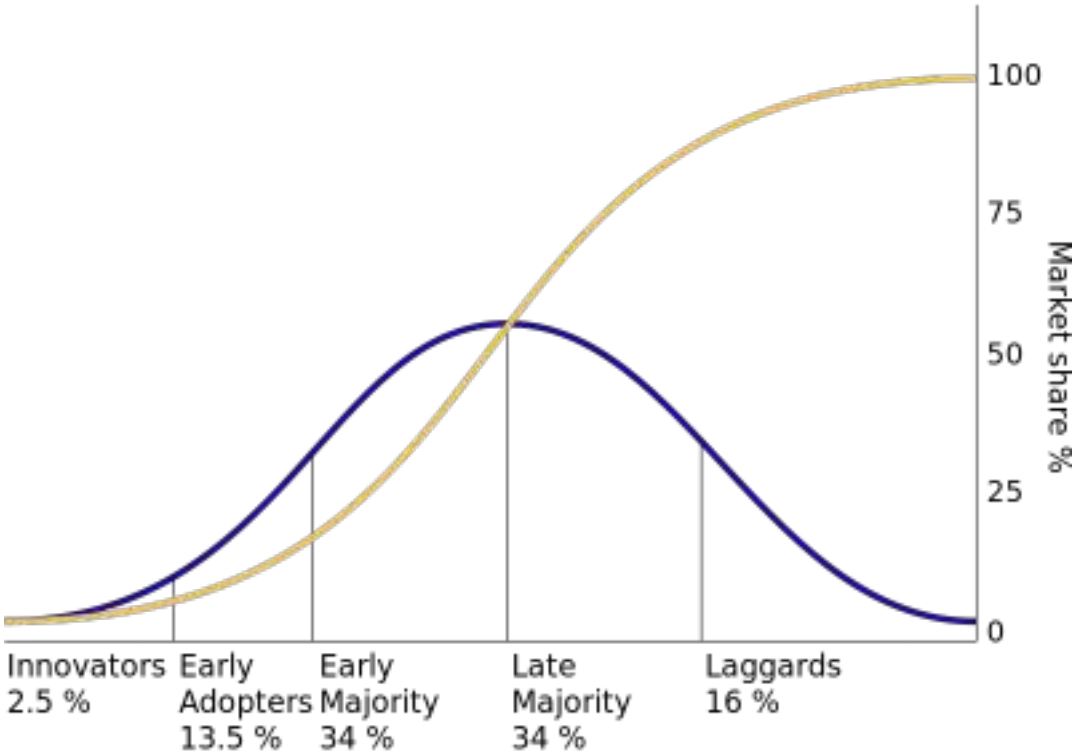
Crossing The Chasm Summary

About The Author: Geoffrey Moore is an American management consultant, professional speaker, and organizational theorist.
Moore started as a literature student and an English teacher later. But eventually, he moved into corporate and quickly developed his expertise.

Introduction

The chart below was the standard diffusion model of innovation (in tech sectors also called: the technology adoption life cycle).

Before Moore, it was usually thought to be a linear Bell Curve distribution.



the yellow line is the market penetration

Innovators

> *Technology Enthusiasts*

Innovators love technology themselves.

They sometimes scout the market and seek novelty before the technology has even been officially launched. Innovators want to be the first.

Winning them is key because early deployment proves that the technology works and the product is viable.

Early Adopters

> *Visionaries*

Early Adopters are visionaries and understand technology, but are not high-tech geeks themselves.

Their goal is not one of technological innovation per se, but a business goal.
For visionaries, technology is a business opportunity. They want a breakthrough and they embark on high-risk and high-visibility adoption projects.

Since the technology is so new, Early Adopters are willing to take a risk and they will work with fresh and unfunded vendors.

Moore says that Early Adopters are easy to sell to, but they're not easy to please: they have a dream and they might be unhappy with the issues standing between dreams and reality.

Moore says Early Adopters are not where the real money is. The real money lies with more prudent buyers who want to see a technology tested in the real world.

Early Majority

> *Pragmatists*

The Early Majority also understands the technology, but they are much more pragmatic.

They don't necessarily look at what visionaries do, but at how the technology will fit into their existing business.

These guys are harder to sell to: they care about buying from an established vendor, the reliability of the product, and the interface with other systems.
The issue can also be a cultural and communication one.
Pragmatists communicate best with other pragmatists and with people in their own industry.

Late Majority

> *Conservatives*

The Late Majority has all the concerns of the Early Majority but they are not well versed with technology.

These guys dislike disruptive technology and wait until the new technology has become the established standard.

Laggards

They don't want the new technology, for whatever reasons. They are usually not worth pursuing.

Gaps Between Segments

Moore demonstrates though that there are gaps between each different group.

And it will be difficult for each group to adopt the new technology if you present it the same with which you presented it to the earlier adopter.

So the chart looks more like this, with cracks in between:

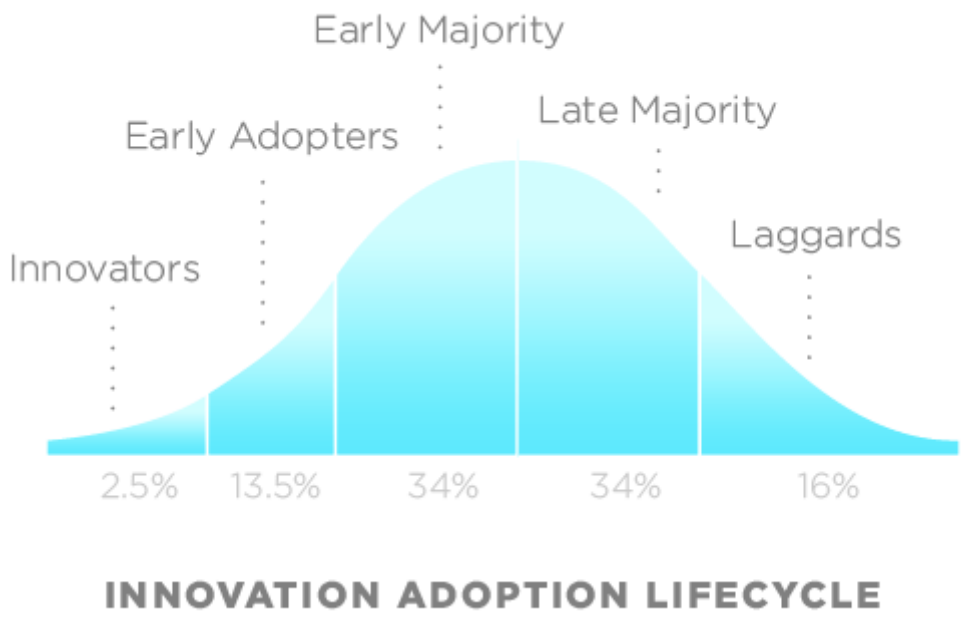


Photo by Pnautilus

- **Innovators / Early Adopters Crack**

This first gap happens when a hot new technology cannot translate itself into a major business benefit.

- **Early Majority / Late Majority Crack**

Since the late majority doesn't have the same tech skills as the preceding groups, the product must be made increasingly easy to use. Then this group will be comfortable adopting it.

The Biggest Chasm

The biggest gap is between early adopters and the early majority. Moore calls it a "chasm". So this is how the final chart looks like:

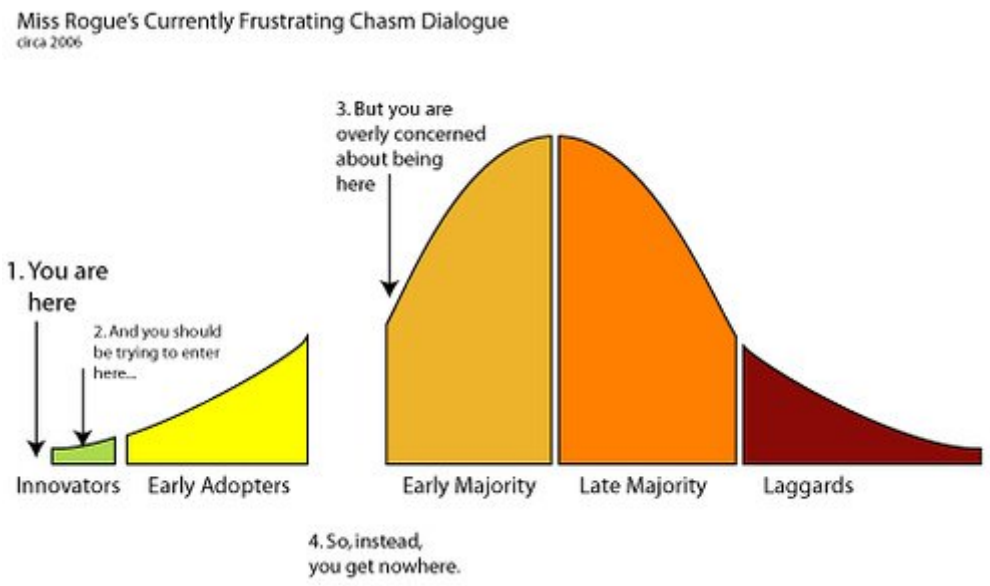


Photo by miss_rogue

Geoffrey Moore says the chasm can go unnoticed because customers and order sizes can be the same.
What changes though is the *reason* why they order in the first place.

The early adopter buys for an edge on the competition -and as we've seen are ready to bear with a few glitches-.
The early majority guy buys an improvement on the existing process.

They're not looking for a revolution, but for a system that works reliably and with no surprises.

How to Cross The Chasm

The author recommends that you focus on a single market that you can dominate.

DO NOT start selling randomly: your goal is to secure a beachhead on a single niche market.
Once you dominate that single market, you can then use it as a stronghold to move to the adjacent markets.

Focusing on a market niche allows you to:

- Optimize resources
- Become a market leader (and pragmatists buy from leaders)
- Get word of mouth going (pragmatists communicate vertically within the industry)

#1. Target Market Niche

Pick one market niche and focus all of your efforts there.

Focusing on one niche will keep your costs lower as you can repeat and use the same processes and knowledge across similar companies.

Pick a strategic niche, one that will be easier for you and that has good links with adjacent markets.

My Note:
Focus on your effort also happens to be one of the 48 laws of power.

#2. Invasion Force

Create your product not with tech first in mind by with your customers' problems in mind.

Present your product as a ready-to-go solution. Think of integrations, installation, training, etc.

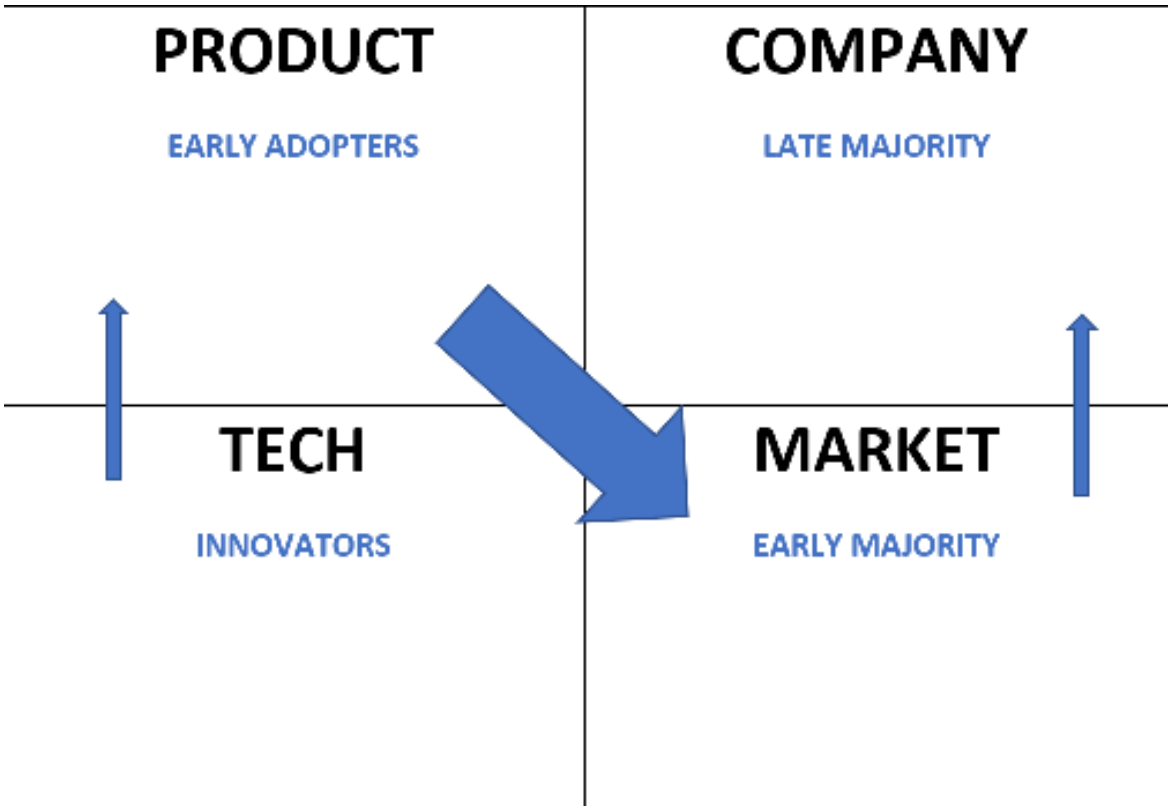
#3. Define the Battle

Position yourself and standardize your communication. Reduce your competitive advantage to a two sentences formula.

#4. Launch The Invasion

Get a sales force using consultative selling and a team of application and tech experts to develop and propose solutions.

Remember, *crossing the chasm* is about **going from tech-based values to market-based values:**



In the early market, you showcase tech superiority and product.
In the mainstream markets, you showcase company credibility and market leadership.

Selling to Early Majority

Moore says that to sell effectively to these guys you need patience and you need to become relevant and specific to their industry.

For example:

- Develop tech relevant to their industries

- Develop partnerships with other vendors in their industry
- Get mentioned by industry magazines and websites
- Show at their industries' trade shows
- Be an insider: learn the lingo, know their issues
- Earn a reputation for service and quality

Mistakes Selling to Early Majority

Moore says that visionaries alienate pragmatists in four major ways:

1. Not respecting their experience
2. Putting tech before their industry specifics
3. Not recognizing their current systems and infrastructure
4. Focus on disruption

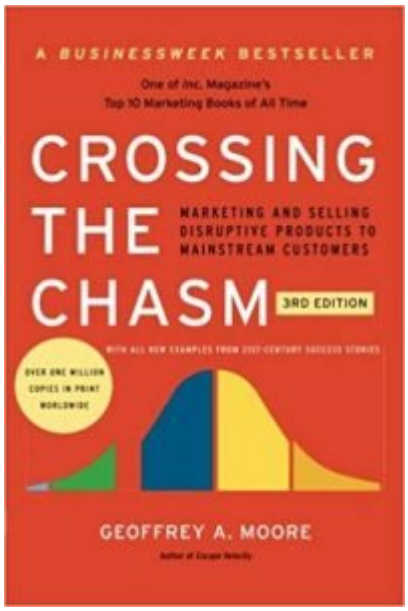
Overleaping The Chasm

The current digital world offers a new opportunity to jump the chasm with mass market disruptive innovation (this is only in the third edition of Crossing The Chasm).

Basically, when you have a B2C digital product that can go straight for the consumers and you don't need any distribution channel there's no chasm for you. Examples are Instagram and Tumblr.
How to get users quickly? Virality and quick adoptions are key, read more on *The Tipping Point* and *Made to Stick*.

Moore says that while *crossing the chasm* means you get paid as you move forward, the new digital disruption is more of a URL approach: ubiquity first, revenue later.
And he proposes a 4 gear approach:

1. Acquire traffic
2. Engage users
3. Monetize their engagement (don't do it too early)
4. Enlist the faithful (also read Start With Why)



Real-Life Applications

Tech Savvy Early & Business Savvy Later
The gap between early adopters and the rest makes me think that you might want to have technically savvy salespeople early on and then more business-savvy people later on.

CONS

War Terminology
This is just my thing, but I really dislike the continuous referencing of war terminology for business. I remember as a salesperson it was always about "trenches", "going to war" etc. It always seemed stupid and… Plain wrong. **See yourself as adding value, not launching an invasion**.

Review

"*Crossing the Chasm*" doesn't apply to all fields.

As the author himself says, it's for disruptive innovations and B2B.
It's not for incremental innovations (continuous or sustaining innovation) and B2C.

But *"Crossing the Chasm*" is still a great read for almost everyone.
No matter the industry, psychological principles apply anywhere. And if you're in tech B2B, then it's an absolute must-read.

And it's also a great read for people interested in human psychology.

Totally recommended.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

6 Proven Steps to Deal With Judgmental People (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Judgmental people can be very annoying and easily get under your skin.

This post teaches how to deal with their annoying judgmental attitude with six simple steps.

We will also use a case study to help you understand the power dynamics of assault/defense that dealing with judgmental people entails.

Contents

- #1. Do Not Give Them Moral Authority!
- #2. Refuse to Take The Defendant Position
- #3. Dig Up Their Dirt: Show They Are Unfit to Judge
- #4. Call Out Their Game: Don't Allow Them to Shoot & Hide
- #5. Stick to Your Guns: Don't Apologize
- 6. Keep The Mental Edge: Don't Let Them Get Under Your Skin
- The Power Dynamics of Judgmental People

- Summary

#1. Do Not Give Them Moral Authority!

Judgmental people only have power over you if you give them authority.

They need authority to feed their ego, increase their social status, and, of course, make you feel bad.

And they usually ***assume*** authority based on something of ***self-appointed superiority.***

The self-appointed superior can be based on skills, results, "being better"… Or general moral superiority.
They set themselves up on that moral high ground, and look down on you.

But here's the thing:

They can only stay there if you allow them to!

There's rarely an official "moral handover" and it all happens because the entitled attacker takes the moral superiority.
So the number one step is a mindset:

- Never feel like he is superior to you!

And whenever they take an authority position over you, contest it.

#2. Refuse to Take The Defendant Position

The other side of the coin of not giving judgmental people the authority position is to not take the subordinate position.

You have to do this consciously and remind yourself about it.

Why?

Because unless you're already very skilled or self-assured the natural tendency when facing a judgmental attitude is one of subservience.

Avoid like the plague to:

- Follow
- Justify/defend yourself
- Backtrack
- Ask what you should do
- Ask what they would do

Instead, a good idea is to cut the topic short while you make it clear their judgment is not welcome.

Say something like:

- That's a fair point but I disagree
- I disagree, but thank you for your opinion
- I see it otherwise, but thanks for sharing

Or block their judgmental ways with a stronger verbal opposition:

- NO, that's not true
- Sorry mate, but lemme be frank here: you don't know what you're talking about
- (shaking your head, no words spoken)

#3. Dig Up Their Dirt: Show They Are Unfit to Judge

This is a nasty but effective technique.

And it consists of kicking the soapbox off their haughty feet.
Your aim here is to **show through their track record that they are unfit to judge**.

If they can't pontificate, they can't judge you.

Seen an example:

Nasty, but effective.

#4. Call Out Their Game: Don't Allow Them to Shoot & Hide

Often judgmental people will make us feel bad without coming out in the open.

They won't say anything directly to our faces but a smirk, a look on their face, or an off-hand remark will sub-communicate they are judging us -and disapproving-.

Exactly what happens in this sex and the city episode:

Notice Miranda's judgmental comments:

- *"Tray suggested… ? "*
- *"Like what… "*

She never directly admits her true feelings. She never says that she thinks the idea is silly, but she makes Charlotte feel under heavy -and negative- scrutiny.
This is called "cover aggression" because you know the aggression is there, but it's hidden.

This leads to a fight later as in typical *passive-aggressive behavior* Charlotte didn't address the issue head-on.
You want to do the opposite: **take the behavior in full light and address it**.

Say something like:

> **You**: *I perceive some hostility from you right now. Can you please clarify?*

Then keep going until they admit it.
If they keep denying, you still won as they've shown they don't even have the courage to voice their disagreement.

#5. Stick to Your Guns: Don't Apologize

Judgmental people have the power to make us feel bad about our choices, our ethics, and our behavior.

But again, only if you give them that power. A great antidote is to **answer with full conviction and pride in your own choices and ethics**.

This is particularly important in situations where the judgmental person backs a widely held view in society.

For example, things such as "don't party too much, don't sleep around, don't live unemployed, etc., etc."

6. Keep The Mental Edge: Don't Let Them Get Under Your Skin

If you overreact, you lose.

Indeed, as George Thompson teaches, it's crucial that in difficult communication you **keep the mental edge by remaining unaffected**.

If you let judgmental people get to you, you are blessing them with a lot of power.
Notice their behavior, maneuver around it, and stay unaffected.

The Power Dynamics of Judgmental People

Judgmental people are powerful because, with their judgment, they are indirectly saying:

1. I'm better than you
2. You're not good enough

The first part goes under our skin, while the second part makes us feel unworthy.
Once we feel unworthy, we want to change our behavior to comply with the judgmental person's standards.
And that's why *judgmental people are manipulators*. **Judgemental people seek to make you feel bad in order to control and manipulate your behavior**.

If the judge position is uncalled for, it can be a dominant, effective form of emotional manipulation.
And the more you emotionally invest, the more power you give (law of Social ROI)

Judgmental people *always use a judgment frame* against you.

They seek to frame themselves as the only ones who hold the true moral and ethical code, and they seek to frame you as living outside of that moral code, which makes you "not good enough" for them, for their group, or for society.

To *learn the power dynamics* of the judicial role, please see:

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Power & Control

Summary

The keys to dealing with judgmental people are:

1. Don't give them power
2. Put a spotlight on their spiteful attitude
3. Never apologize: stay proud of who you are
4. Stay unaffected

The 50th Law: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 50th Law, which some people misspell as "The 50th Law of Power", is a book on *power dynamics*, life philosophy, and the mindsets of success and *social dominance*.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - How to Correctly Deal With Fear
  - Love Reality
  - To Live Fully: Embrace Your Mortality
  - Learn to Be Self-Reliant
  - Understand and Be OK With This: You Are Alone
  - Master Aggression: Know When to Be Bad
  - Be a Feared Leader
  - Believe in Your Leadership
  - Master The Process: Stick With Things
  - Focus On What You Can Control
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
  - Is this supposed to be a winner?
  - Reality VS Stories: doesn't add up to me
  - Inductive Reasoning
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Power requires fearlessness
- To acquire power you must have a thirst for self-reliance (and hate depending on others)
- Look at reality and love reality

Summary

About The Author:
Robert Greene has a background in classical studies and is a best-selling author of books on power and life strategy. He also wrote *The 48 Laws of Power*, *The Art of Seduction*, *Mastery*, and *The Laws of Human Nature*.

⍰♂Can a geek teach you power???

Lucio:
Shall we address the elephant in the room?
Greene is no seducer himself.
Can he really write a book about seduction?
Well, yes he can, and he wrote a GREAT one. One of the best available, indeed. But his lack of personal experience still poses important limitations. Especially when it comes to translating seduction into actual dating

success

How to Correctly Deal With Fear

Greene says there are two ways of dealing with fear:

1. Avoiding what we're afraid of
2. Confronting what we're afraid of

Greene says that when we're forced to face our fears we often find out we're stronger than we thought we were. These moments are therapeutic. But if we have the chance, we go back to our safe shells.

The author says there are people though who have been forced to continuously face their fears. And they have grown fearless. He says the many examples of celebrities and successes coming from the ghettos have been schooled in fearlessness.

Love Reality

I really loved the chapter on realism.

I found somewhat what Ray Dalio embraces in his seminal book *Principles: Life and Work*.
Contrary to many *self-help myths* of "constructing your own reality", Greene says you must learn to look at reality *as it is*, and stay as close as possible to it.

Sharpen your curiosity and openness, and never turn your back to reality. Dreamers waste time and do the biggest mistakes.
The real inventors and innovators are realists.

> Reality is my drug, the more I get, the higher I go

To Live Fully: Embrace Your Mortality

Greene says that to learn to live well and fearlessly you need to appreciate your mortality.

People who had a brush up with death get a sense of urgency that leads them to work hard, accomplish more and enjoy life.
When their turn of dying will come, they'll have no regrets and will have lived a happy life.

The author says you don't need to risk your life to become fearless, but you can reflect and meditate on it. And then structure your life going backward.

My note:
I couldn't agree more, and it's funny a few weeks before reading The 50th Law I had actually written my own post exactly on this topic. Read: leveraging death to live.

Learn to Be Self-Reliant

We come into this world with the only real possessions that matter:

- Your body
- The time you have to live
- Your energy
- Thoughts and ideas

And yet you give it all away.

You spend years working for others, you listen to experts, and lose your unique ideas to embrace the majority.

And I really loved this part: don't think your boss cares about you. He will drop you off as soon as he doesn't need you anymore or someone cheaper comes along.

For more life truths, read:

- Corporate lies

True ownership can only come from within yourself.
It comes from rejecting anyone who limits your mobility, it comes from confidence in your own decisions, and by using your time in constant pursuit of growth and education.

> Own yourself first. Or you'll be at the mercy of someone else.

Understand and Be OK With This: You Are Alone

You're alone in this world.

Everyone is pushing and pursuing their own agendas.
It's not a thought you should fear, you should use it to push yourself towards full self-reliance and freedom.

It's liberating.

Master Aggression: Know When to Be Bad

This chapter reminded me of both the *12 Rules of Life* and the spirit of The Power Moves, on this website.

Greene says we are *often naive*, believing people are peaceful and desiring good for us.
We are too good and avoid conflict, and sell our real selves away in the process.
The author says that we need inner strength to deal with conflict. And that has nothing to do with bad or good but with strength and fear.

If people feel like they can take from you, they will take from you, says Greene.

Be a Feared Leader

Greene says that many leaders take the wrong route when they decide to be benevolent leaders.

A leader will oftentimes be in a position to *ask people to do things* they don't wanna do.
And when he's too nice, people will rebel -or *execute those tasks too high-power* for the leader's liking-.
Much better, he says, being a ruthless leader. No issues in getting your orders executed, and when you make a compliment, people will really cherish it.

I don't fully agree here.
Also, read:

- How to be a great leader
- Why the 48 laws of power is wrong

Believe in Your Leadership

Appear is if you always know where you're going.

Pretend you're driven by a God, a destiny, or a vision nobody else can see.
Like Joan D'Arc and Moses were.

Also, read:

- How to be a charismatic leader

Master The Process: Stick With Things

Greene says that fearless people learn to master processes also through boredom.

Don't fall for the quick and easy solution: it doesn't exist. *Mastery* takes time, *grit*, and hard work.

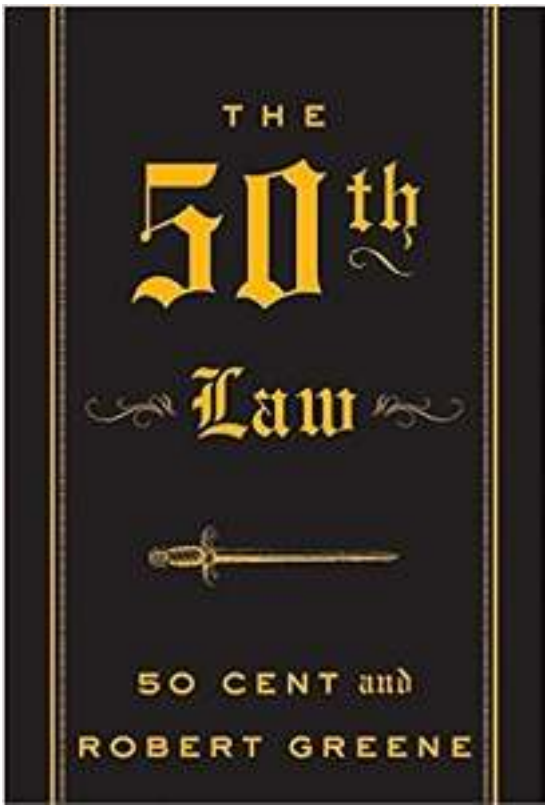
Focus On What You Can Control

Greene talks a bit about the freedom of choosing our own reaction to any event we encounter.

Similar to *The 7 Habits of Effective People,* the more we focus on what we can control, the more our control zone expands.

He also goes a bit into weak ego and a strong ego. Check the book for more or read my post *"building an antifragile ego"*.

> **In general, be less respectful of rules others have established for you**



Real-Life Applications

Don't work for others
Your time is one of the most precious things in your life, don't squander it on someone else's dream.

Despise anybody limiting your freedom
To become successful, I indeed believe it's a great asset when you despise anything and anybody limiting your freedom.

That's indeed one of the greatest motivators that brought to me start to this website.

CONS

Is this supposed to be a winner?

I like 50.

He's smart, sharp, fearless, and strategic.

But, in my opinion, TOO Machiavellian/dark tirad.
To the point that it cost him in his relationships.

Look at his life.

Besides money, it doesn't seem to me this what one should aspire to.

50 has **one ex-wife who hates him, one single child who hates him, and he's only alive by a miracle**.

I know a hundred men who have better lives than that.

Reality VS Stories: doesn't add up to me

50 Cent says he was trying to go provoke Ja Rule but Ja Rule didn't take the bait.

So he started dissing Supreme, a former druglord friend of Ja Rule, who in turn put pressure on Ja Rule to "destroy" 50th.

This doesn't add up to me.
Why would a drug lord ask a rapper to "destroy" a rapper with nothing less than a… Diss track? A diss track that would only bring him more attention?
Also, the fact that Ja Rule had to "prove his toughness" with a song… Doesn't add up.

Inductive Reasoning

Social sciences are a bit of an art and not pure sciences.
Yet there's quite a bit of *inductive reasoning fallacy* in *The 50th Law.*

For example, Robert Greene has a theory that ghetto life makes people fearless, which in turn drives them to success.

Yet just because you see a few successes coming from the ghetto doesn't necessarily mean ghetto life makes you fearless or more likely to succeed.

Indeed, probably the opposite is true.

Review

The 50th Law is a fantastic book.

I even approached it with the wrong foot, thinking it was mostly a fluff book done for marketing.

Boy, I was wrong.
I much enjoyed *"The 50th Law*.
But we strongly recommend here to also prioritize good relationships with high quality people. And for that, our honorable man approach may afford the best of both worlds: strategic Machiavellianism, with a genuine side for great people.

Read the best books on power and get the book on Amazon

The Tao of Dating: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Tao of Dating (2010) is a *dating book for women* that draws inspiration from Taoist and Eastern philosophy to help women become better and more efficient daters.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Dating With Tao: The Foundations
  - Become Yin to Attract Yang
  - Relationships Types (Jerks VS Good Men)
  - Love Takes Time
  - Develop Self-Esteem to Keep & Attract High-Quality Man
  - Learn How to Spot Bad Boys & Good Guys
  - To Meet Him, Show You Like Him
  - Develop Sensuality and Femininity
  - Attraction, Rapport
  - Don't Flake: It's A Dating Slippery Slope
  - Make Sex A Guilt-Free Experience
  - Relationships
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Love yourself first
- To attract masculine (yang) be feminine (Yin)
- Give good men a chance: love develops over time

Summary

Binazir says that educated and **talented women find themselves in unhappy dating situations at an epidemic scale**.

I could not agree more with that.

So let's see how *"The Tao of Dating"* can help you fix that.

Dating With Tao: The Foundations

Binazir starts with important mindsets that will help you not only in dating but in life.

They are:

- Fulfillment is a feeling, NOT a person
- The world is a reflection of ourselves: love and accepts yourself
- Be grateful (the author quotes Viktor Frankl)

- You're a manifestation of divine energy: radiate it

Become Yin to Attract Yang

Binazir suggests that good relationships are a balance of Yin (*femininity*) and Yang (masculinity).

A woman, to attract a masculine counterpart, should embrace her Yin.

Most men respect strength and leadership qualities indeed, but unless they are expressed in an overall framework of femininity, respect does not translate into attraction.

> **Respect for female strength does not translate into male attraction**

Also, read:

- Dating Advice for successful women

And:

> How to Be Feminine: Step-by-Step Guide (Videos & Pics)

Relationships Types (Jerks VS Good Men)

The author presents 3 archetypes of male/female relationships:

1. Mannish woman (no Yin / no heart) and submissive woman (lots of Yin / no spine)
2. Sensitive man (little Yang) and independent woman (little Ying)
3. Good guys (minor in Yin, major in Yang) and good woman (minor in Yang, major in Yin)

In the last stage, both understand the other sex but at their core, they stay true to their genders.

Love Takes Time

When I read Ali Binazir talking about women's attitudes towards dating, I knew I was possibly reading the best book on dating I had ever read.

He mentions this story:

A female friend of his had a great date.
She spoke to him until 3 am in a cafe' and deeply vibed with him.
So Binazir asked her when she would see him again.

Her reply?

She wasn't sure she was going to see him again.

Why not?

Because she didn't have "butterflies".

But, says the author, love rarely means madly falling in love with someone during the first date. Love is an ever-deepening feeling that develops over time.
Which, I would add, is exactly the same for developing your passion: *developing*, not *finding* (read Duckworth's research about it).

Develop Self-Esteem to Keep & Attract High-Quality Man

The author drops another big pearl of wisdom as he cites the (nearly not enough) famous research of Swann et al., 1994.

The research explains that low self-esteem in women is the fertile ground upon which *toxic relationships* develop.

Also, read:

- Low self-esteem and toxic relationships

Learn How to Spot Bad Boys & Good Guys

The author describes how to spot bad boys.

He says they come with extremes and then describes a few of the bad men types.

Get the book for the full descriptions and check these:

- The 10 types of players
- 7 signs that he's a player
- 7 questions you need to ask to find out he's a player

Binazir also describes how to recognize good men.
He has several different telltale signs, and the one I liked best is this:

- Has own moral compass and knows what he wants: he doesn't look and cater to outside sources

The outside sources will at times also includes you.
And that's why ***high-quality men will not chase you*** and do everything for you.
I couldn't agree more.

Also, check my article:

- how to get high-quality men with *mutual* investment escalation

To Meet Him, Show You Like Him

Signaling your intention is important.

The author has some great suggestions –check the book– and mentions the movie "O brother" for some sensual beckoning inspiration:

If you need some more help with your body language, also read:

- Signs she likes me
- Attractive body language for women

Develop Sensuality and Femininity

The Tao of Dating also has some great exercises for rediscovering your femininity.
Get the book for the exercises and read:

- How to be feminine
- World best seductresses: 3 case studies

Attraction, Rapport

The author delves into attraction, rapport-building techniques, and also how to make him fall in love with you.

Read the book for more and also check *How to make him crazy about you.*

But the high-quality way to make him fall in love, the author says, is to let him become a better man together with you.

Don't Flake: It's A Dating Slippery Slope

The author introduces a concept I'm very fond of: "back justification".

When you flake on someone or cancel at the last minute your mind will back-justify your action telling you that you didn't care enough about him.

That might not even be true.
But now you unconsciously lose interest in a guy who might otherwise be an amazing guy.

My Note:
So true.
I also list this point as the very first mistake in my 7 biggest early dating mistakes women do.

I would also add that, similarly, you shouldn't:

- Willingly let him invest much more than you do
- Let him wait for sex (as a bargaining chip)

Make Sex A Guilt-Free Experience

I fully agree with Binazir outlook on sex, which is less strict than most other dating authors.

Binazir says that sex can be thorny, and indeed how long you wait depends on your chemistry, how you feel, and the type of man.

But, if you make sex a good, guilt-free experience then it will *help* your dating, no matter when it happens.

Relationships

Relationships can be challenging.

But Binazir says that if you are good with people in general, then relationships will also be easier.

Because in spite of what some popular psychology books say, men and women are not from different planets (he's hinting at *Men are From Mars Women are From Venus*).

No difference has been supported by scientific evidence, so avoid over-generalizations based on gender stereotypes.

Review

My bad!

I approached *The Tao of Dating* with some unwarranted reservations ("Eastern philosophies" raise woo-woo red flags in my mind).

But boy was I wrong.

The Tao of Dating is *the best dating book for women* I have read so far. Ali Binazir shows a great grasp of human psychology and an understanding of high-quality men that few other authors match.

I can only praise and recommend *The Tao of Dating*.

Get the book on Amazon.

How to Invest Without Getting Played (John Bogle's Strategy)

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Intelligent Investor is a classic of investing literature and is considered by some as the Bible of value investing.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Intelligent Investor VS Speculator
  - Defensive Investor: A Profile
  - Enterprising Investor: A Profile
  - Defensive or Enterprising: Which One Should You Be?
  - Is Investing More Art or Science?
  - Past Does Not Equal Future
  - The Mind is The Enemy
  - Mutual Funds: Watch Out
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Choose a strategy: defensive or enterprising and stick with it
- Most people should choose defensive and use diversification (index funds, ETFs)
- Most speculators and market timers lose money

Lucio's Take: **Quit playing the market, focus on your craft**

Lucio:
In TPM's approach, **time is a power resource**. That means it's not just about getting good returns—it's about **leveraging your time and attention** toward outcomes that *maximize your status, freedom, and strategic advantage*.

A key trap for many men is **mistaking financial tinkering for a worthy pursuit of their time**. Spending hours watching charts and trying to beat the market—when 95% of investors don't—often results in wasted time, diminished returns, and *less* life power.

So here's the core TPM takeaway:

- **Go long-term gains with minimal micromanagement** (like passive index investing), it aligns with TPM's ethos.
- If your trading requires **constant attention for lmited returns**, it's just *another form of busywork disguised as empowerment*.

⚖️ In short: **Power = control over outcomes with minimal input**. Use this lens to filter what's worth your time.

Full Summary

Benjamin Graham refers to the "intelligent investor" as the one who follows the rules of value investing.

The Intelligent Investor VS Speculator

A recurring theme in *The Intelligent Investor* is that of the value investor, also called the "Intelligent Investor" VS the speculative investor. Graham defines investment as:

> The result of a thorough fundamental analysis in the company in which you invest, which results in the promises safety of principal and an adequate return

Any investment not meeting that requirement is speculative by nature.

Also, notice the word “adequate” return. Value investing indeed is not looking for outsized returns.
Graham is very skeptical of the speculative methods and says it’s likely to lose money.

Defensive Investor: A Profile

The defensive, or passive investor, wants freedom and safety.

He doesn’t know the intricacies of markets and investment very well, so he buys 10-20 high-grade stocks with a long positive history of dividends and keeps them for the long haul (note: there were no ETFs at that time).

A good option for the defensive investor is not to look much at prices but simply buy the same amount of stocks on a recurring basis, a technique which is called Dollar Cost Averaging.

Enterprising Investor: A Profile

The enterprising investor has the time, willingness, and market knowledge to try to beat the average market returns.

The enterprising investor looks at a company that is undervalued through financial quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis of growth prospects.

Once he picks a good stock chances are it will grow quicker than the overall market as other investors realize these companies are underpriced.
Usually, he will start his research first by looking at companies with a low price-earnings ratio and a low price-book ratio (P/B).

Few Speculative Bets

The enterprising investor looks mostly at high-quality companies, but might sometimes look at more speculative investments and lower-quality securities.

He only does though when he has a firm grasp and knowledge of the market, the security is very lowly priced, and he has hedged his investment.

Fewer Growth Stocks

Growth stocks are stocks that are overpriced compared to the overall market because they have ambitious growth plans or because the market expects them to keep delivering outstanding and uncommon results.
The enterprise investor will rarely invest in growth stocks.

Not Trying to Time The Market

The enterprise investor is focused on “price” and not on “time”. Timing is the attempt to buy and sell based on the idea that one can predict whether the market will go up or down. That’s a speculative effort that rarely pays off.

The enterprise investor instead focuses on price as he looks for undervalued stocks.

Enterprising Commandments

Graham’s tips for enterprising investors are:

- Don’t trade daily
- IPOs are often over-hyped (and overpriced)
- Junk bonds are risky
- Only look into foreign bonds if the expenses are lower than 1.25%
- Great companies don’t necessarily make great investments
- Temporary setbacks and unpopularity can be great buying opportunities

Defensive or Enterprising: Which One Should You Be?

A frequently asked question is if you should be a defensive or enterprising investor.
Graham is clear that few people should follow the enterprising investor path. Unless you're very knowledgeable and spend lots of time, you should expect to achieve lower returns with an enterprising investor strategy.

Whatever you pick, make sure you're serious about it.
If you decide to be an enterprising investor, you must invest time and effort in your portfolio. If you're a defensive investor don't over-trade. Don't let the flurry of news and the speed of the Internet dupe you into becoming a speculator.

Is Investing More Art or Science?

Graham admits that value investing is not an exact science but entails a margin of art, experience, guesswork, and risk. However, the risk is not so high when investing in high-grade companies because, even if you got it wrong, the company might not grow but it will rarely sink either.
He advises buying a stock when, based on your analysis, it's at more than a 50% discount.

Past Does Not Equal Future

Graham says a common mistake is that of extrapolating from the past to guess the future. It's another human bias to see a trend and believe it will keep going… Indefinitely.

The Mind is The Enemy

Graham says that human psychology and our tendencies of overreacting and going with the crowd as the worst enemies of an investor.

I couldn't agree more with this.
Also read *Thinking Fast and Slow*, *Fooled by Randomness*, and an extract of my master thesis on the *human mind pitfalls that led to the 2008 financial crisis*.
As a matter of fact, he should do the opposite of what the crowd does.

As Warren Buffet also said, "buy when everyone is fearful, and sell when everyone is confident".

Mutual Funds: Watch Out

Graham says most investment funds are overpriced compared to their expenses.

This is a common refrain in many investment books, including the valid and more recent *Money Master the Game* and *Unshakable*.
Here's what you should look into before investing in any of them:

1. Expenses
2. Risk level
3. Reputation of decision-makers
4. Past performance

Later on in his life, Graham recommended passive index funds, especially good for defensive investors. These days you can buy them easily through ETFs.

Listen to Warren Buffet talk about Benjamin Graham:

Real-Life Applications

Don't Overtrade
This is typical of guys starting out. I know it was for me.

Don't Time the Market
Don't try to time the market.

Tune Out Noise
The market is irrational and often random. Don't overreact to the daily price swings.

Review

If you have been around markets and investments for a while, you know the main principles of *The Intelligent Investor*. But that's only because *The Intelligent Investor* made those tenets popular and because time proved them right.

If you're just approaching markets and investment, it might make sense to start with what is Warren Buffet's favorite book: *The Intelligent Investor*.

Follow this basic advice, and you may not need any more financial advice.

Read more summaries or become an intelligent investor and get the book on Amazon.

The Compound Effect: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*The Compound Effect*" states that success is the consequence of consistent practice and the accumulation of small daily improvements that add up over the long run.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Constant Actions Towards Your Goals
  - When To Be Patient
  - Daily Small Steps of Discipline
  - Daily Compound
  - Consistency is The Compound's Enabler
  - Obstacles Are The Way
- CONS
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Focus on doing the daily activities that move you toward your goal
- Build momentum and results will start to compound
- Consistency is the key to compound results

Full Summary

Darren says most people get discouraged when they don't see immediate results. But that's the wrong mindset because:

Constant Actions Towards Your Goals

Great results require constant, daily effort spread over time.
The author suggests that you exchange the "right now mindset" with a mindset of daily micro achievements that are consistent with your goals and core values.

This was really the key part for me and I couldn't help but nod along. Also, read Grit by Angela Duckworth on the need for consistency and Start With WHY by Simon Sinek for actions in line with your core values (your WHY).

When To Be Patient

Since daily actions seldom yield immediately visible results, it begs an important question: How do you know you're on the right path? How do you know you're just not wasting your time?
To answer that question you should measure your growth, not your final results.

Since small daily steps toward your goals rarely give you huge results, you shouldn't focus much on the final results when you're starting it out and grinding it out. But you should focus on the growth.
If you can spot a growing trend, then you're probably on the right path.

My Note: this is very important indeed because small growing trends usually don't yield positive results until they reach a tipping point. And that's when you start seeing the results and your daily efforts start paying off. And that's when you start overcoming all those who chose the easy path.
This is a similar concept applied to disruptive technologies in Bold by Peter Diamandis.

Daily Small Steps of Discipline

You don't get too huge of success easily: success is daily discipline and doing the hard thing every day.

Hardy says you should focus on positive daily habits that let you take every day small incremental steps forward. If you're straggling there you can focus on the beginning and the end. Start and end the day with positive actions toward the attainment of your goals.

And the author says that you need habits because willpower by itself is not enough (read here the contentious *science of willpower*).
To learn more about habits also check out *The Power of Habit*.

Daily Compound

If you focus daily on improving and small daily steps as you move towards your goal, your effectiveness will compound over time.
The steps you take daily don't seem that significant. But over time, they will build upon each other.
Years from now, you will look back and be amazed at what you've achieved.

Consistency is The Compound's Enabler

The author says that there's one thing that matters the most and that trumps the intensity or length of your efforts. And that is consistency. It's consistency that builds momentum and enables the compound effect to achieve the unachievable.

> **Consistency builds the momentum to achieve the unachievable**

Obstacles Are The Way

Darren says that obstacles can spur your growth. The risk though is that you might feel accomplished after the big achievement and fall back on your old habits.
The key indeed is to keep going once you have overcome the obstacles. Also, read *The Obstacle is The Way*.

CONS

Unproven, technically untrue concept: often progress "adds up", doesn't "compound"
The idea of linking the financial property of compound interest to self-development is catchy and sexy.
Yet, I don't think it works exactly the same way.
Not in many areas of self-development, at least. Your self-development does move you constantly forward, but it seldom "compounds" over time.

Real-Life Applications

Measure Growth
Measuring growth instead of final results is a powerful concept.

Align Your Actions to Your WHY
And here's another key nugget of wisdom: make sure your daily actions are aligned with your goals *and* morals. Do

what makes you fulfilled, do what moves you towards your goals.

Boring Consistency
It's the daily grind and boring daily tasks that will propel you to great success.

Review

The Compound Effect is an interesting, easy, and potentially really value-adding read.

Frankly, I don't fully buy into the "compound" idea.
At least, not for many self-development activities -ie.: healthy and fitness, knowledge, social skills, etc., etc.-.

Yet, they might apply in some fields.
For example, in some types of business growth and *tipping-point* market penetration dynamics.

Furthermore, the principle of "staying at it" is crucial in many more areas, whether or not the progress "compounds" or simply "adds up".

And some smaller nuggets of wisdom -like measuring growth- can make the difference between you giving up and you soldiering on to success.

To be frank, you probably don't need the whole book after this summary.
But the full book might help to drive the key concept home.

Read more summaries, get the book on Amazon, and sign up for the newsletter.

7 Offensive Jokes And How to Respond (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Yes, it's not necessarily you have a bad sense of humor.

Humor *can* be a form of *aggression*, and science shows that dark-triad individuals are more likely to engage in aggressive and demeaning "humor".

In this article, we will learn how to respond to bad jokes and dark humor.
Most of all, we will deal with the type of humor that can be considered as *microaggression* or covert aggression.

Picture by Dake, Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gun-type_fission_weapon.svg
How many times have you heard this:

> I'm just joking!

Don't ever believe those words.

A joke is rarely just a joke and it often hides an attempt to ridicule you, isolate you, decrease your status, or increase the joker's status.

Contents

- 1. "I'm Better Than You" Type of Jokes: Avoid Laughing!
- 2. "You're Below Me" Type of Joke: Uncover Their Nastiness!
- 3. Personal Attack "Jokes": Draw Your Boundaries!
- 4. Snarky Comments: Dish Out The Same Medicine!
- 5. People Laughing At You: Leave Them In The Dust!
- 6. The "Not Funny At All" Story-Joke: Make
- 7. And… Learn to Laugh About Yourself
- Offensive Jokes Are Power Moves
- Power Dynamics of Offensive Jokes
- The Social Consequences Of Mean Jokes

- Mean Jokes Examples

1. “I’m Better Than You” Type of Jokes: Avoid Laughing!

The first urge you gotta resist in any type of nasty joke is this:

Avoid laughing along!

That’s the too-nice-guy answer, and it’s never good.

Imagine a guy in a culture that frames his skin as ‘higher status’, standing beside a woman:

> **Him**: we look like a black and white picture
> **Her**: so what, you think you’re better than me?
> **Him**: ahaha I’m just joking, why are you taking it so personally

The Real Meaning:
behind the joke’s smokescreen -and helped by her offended reaction- he positions himself as the superior party by virtue of skin color.
In the long run, if he keeps making similar “jokes” she will feel insecure and inferior to him.
Notice that her overreaction proved to him that she indeed has skin color hang-ups. Now, if he wants to keep her one down, he knows one of her thumbscrews.

Beating “I’m Superior” Jokes:
Don’t laugh because that’s the equivalent of accepting the message behind the joke.

People who laugh at these kinds of jokes become the cool friends who “know how to laugh at themselves”, but who are really just there to make the power mover feel superior.
And don’t push back either like the girl in the example.

What you want to do is to either completely let it go or frame back the joker’s position as the “one down”.
In the above example she could have said: “yeah, you really need some tan buddy”.

2. “You’re Below Me” Type of Joke: Uncover Their Nastiness!

It might be difficult to differentiate “I’m better than you” VS “you’re inferior”.

As a matter of fact, they’re two sides of the same coin.
But “I’m better than you” is more focused on pulling the joker above and “you’re inferior” more focused on pushing the victim out.

Here is how you deal with them:

2.2. Surface It ™ & Draw Them Out

Surfacing makes the nastiness obvious to all for everyone to see.

Here is what it would look like:

> **Him**: So my neighbor popped his head above the picked fence and asked me “what’s going down brother”. And I said “the value of my house since you moved in you f***** (N-word)”
> **You**: Oh, I’m not sure I get it..
> (you want to make it clear here that he’s engaging in blatant racism)
> **Him**: It’s about people not wanting to buy properties when colored people move in a neighborhood
> **You**: Oh, really. I suppose that only concerns white people though. I didn’t even know about that. Is that still happening today
> **Him**: Yeah..
> **You**: And you find it funny?

“I suppose that only concerns white people” move the needle from “everyone VS black” to “this specific group”.
I didn’t even know about that” is the first hidden counter-attack, painting him as old school racist.

Finally, by asking if he finds it funny you back him into a corner where he has to fess up or justify himself (the typical defense being “it’s just a joke”).

2.3. Negate the joking frame (& deny their retreat)

The technique of more passive-aggressive players is that of hiding their snarky remarks behind the "just joking" shield.

By adding "just joking" they deny you of a target and rob you of your ability to hit back or get offended because, "hey, they didn't mean it, it was just a joke".

The problem if you keep telling them that "it was not a joke" is that it becomes a battle of wills and you risk looking overly aggressive. And you don't want to end up with the people around jumping in and trying to contain *you*.

A great way of handling this situation then is to deny them the easy retreat.
Here is how:

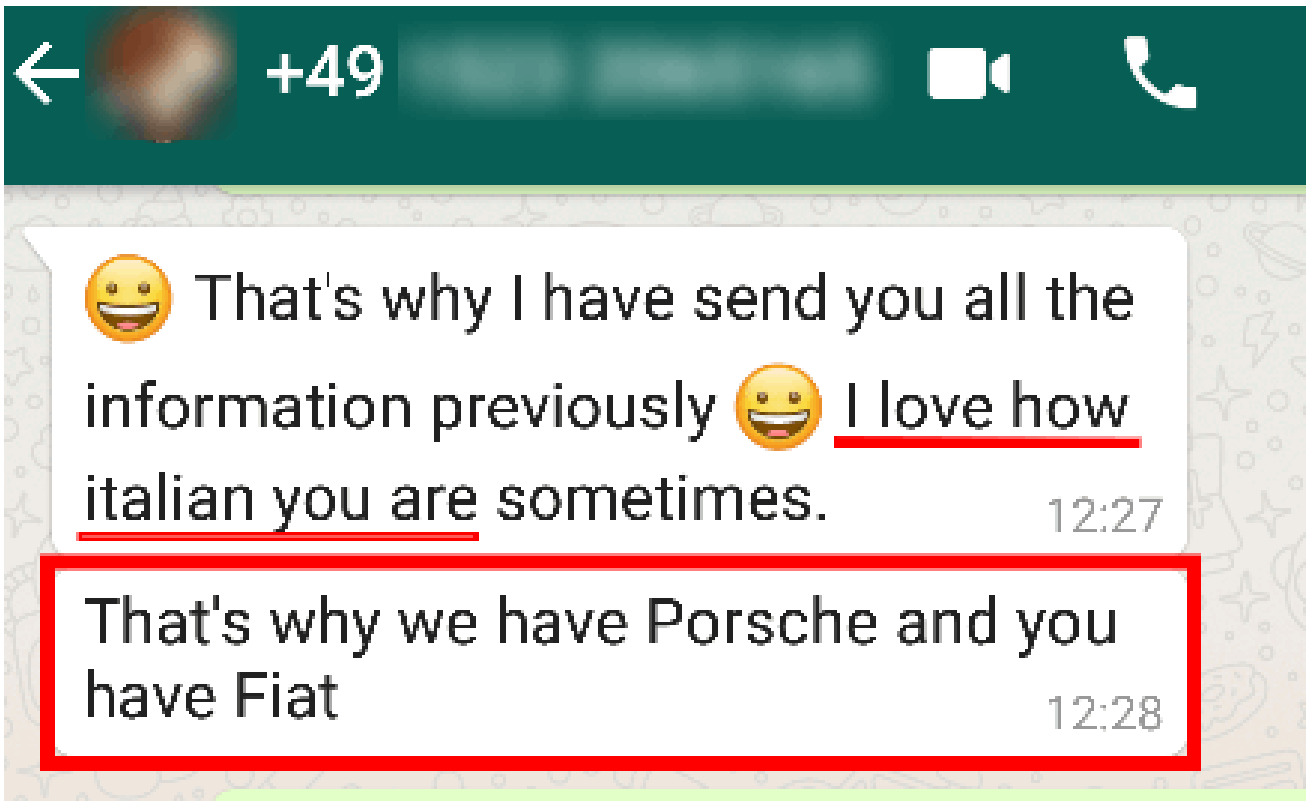
> **Him**: So what brings you to Germany from Italy man. Except of collecting unemployment benefits I mean. Ahahah just joking man, but no seriously, what brings you here
> **You**: Collecting unemployment benefits?
> (you want to pin them down here on their nasty remark)
> **Him**: Yeah, you know what they say of Italians coming to Germany, but I was just joking
> **You**: Yeah, I know you were just joking, but it's not really funny. What do they say of Italians coming to Germany

You know they were *not* really just joking, but pretending to accept their excuse blows off their cover.
You steal their shield and they can't use it anymore.
If they try again, you will say:

> **You**: Yeah, I know you were just joking, but it's not funny
> **Him**: I was just joking man
> **You**: Of course you were just joking, you're quite a joker, but this one was not funny

2.4. Go Meta

Going meta means you explain what they have just done.
Take this example:



I sometimes deal with these funny "jokes".
Sometimes it's a question of *frenemies* and envy, but if they are done in public, their effects can still be harmful to you.
Consciously or unconsciously, their effect is that of ostracizing you from the dominant group and pushing you down. It's like saying "you don't belong here, you're different".

Here is how it would look like if you wanted to deal with it going meta:

> **You**: That doesn't make any sense. Randomly picking two products and comparing them to end up with sweeping generalizations says absolutely nothing (or: "is the epitome of racism")
> **Him**: I know, I know, it was just a joke
> **You**: Well, you know what psychology says about jokes: jokes are simply a shield to share our uglier but very real feelings.
> If you feel superior by virtue of your nationality that's how you feel, but don't take it on me and please don't do these "jokes" (make quotation mark gesture with hands) with me from now on

When you explain to them exactly what they are doing like this, you score a huge win and will send them scuttling in an embarrassing retreat.

Personally, I didn't go meta in that situation because I don't allow these people to get under my skin.
But I did take note of it: you always want to take note.

2.5. Tit for Tat

Tit for tat consists of delivering the same message back to them.

In the example of Porsche/Fiat "joke" it would go like this:

> **You**:*The Romans did their best to civilize the barbaric Germanic tribes. It's been a while since then, and some people still need to catch up*

I recommend you avoid tit for tat because you play within their *frame of reference* and lower yourself to their level. With tit for tat, you are *reacting*.
And you know as they say: you roll with the pigs, you get dirty, and the pig loves it.

Also, see more on frame control techniques:

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

2.6. Switch From General to Individual

Remember: people who attack you at a *general* level, often feel bad at a *personal* level.

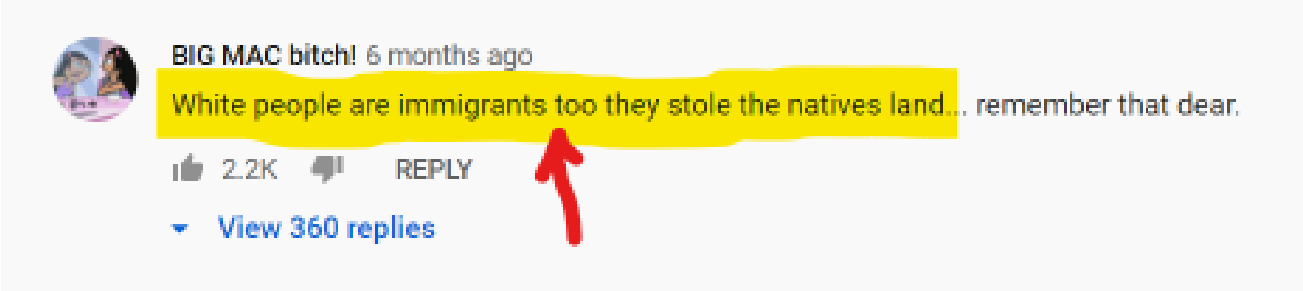
The personal level is what you have done and who you are.
The general level is your skin color, your nationality, your religion, your political affiliation, and anything which can be grouped together.

Attacking the general level is often effective in making people overreact because it's demeaning and depersonalizing: it feels like you are branded for life and there is nothing you can do… Except lashing out in anger. But that's the wrong way to deal with it because, again, you let yourself drag down to your level, you react, and you play within their frame of reference.

First of all, here is what you must know to handle these situations well: people happy with themselves and content with their lives rarely go around offending and making racist remarks.
It's usually angry and bitter people or people who feel like you're doing better than they are who resent you.
Case in point.

That's why, if you want to hit back effectively, you must avoid the general level they're at, and play at the individual level.

The general level in the example above would be this comment:



It's reactive and it stays within the attacker's frame of reference: bad
Where are you going to go with that? Not only do you stay within her frame and legitimize it, but you create a pointless race of "who was there first"?
You don't need that.

That's why, if you want to go tit for tat, you should attack her at an *individual* level.
But, again, I don't recommend you descend to their level.

2.7. Use Vulnerability to Call out Rudeness

Simply say "that feels very rude to me".

If their apology is not enough you can add "it's OK", but without looking like you really mean it.
You want to say "it's OK" very flatly with an attitude of "that was really out of line" (we will hear an example of this tonality later).

2.8. Blank Stare for Social Pressure

Look at them with an expression as if to say “really?”.
Or alternatively utter “wow”, as if to say “can’t believe that was you”, which is very shaming.

2.9. Judgmental Sarcasm

She does it very well:

3. Personal Attack “Jokes”: Draw Your Boundaries!

The simplest way is what Jonah does with Jimmy Kimmel:

Call it out!

Jonah simply asks the question back with an annoyed expression:

> **Kimmel**: first of all you smell good, which is surprising
> **Jonah**: why is that surprising?

Simple and super effective!

Another example:

> **Him**: Oh it was easy. OK, Jane didn’t get it, so let’s say it wasn’t too complicated for anyone with an IQ above 30

Here are a few ways of dealing with it:

3.2. Battle Sarcasm With Sarcasm

This is best for people with great humor.

Example from the show “Weakest Link”:

But even if you lose the war of jokes, don’t worry.
Smile when you have no more comebacks and move on. You might even say “well done” and look like a real winner.
Look at Trump doing it when he was losing to Bush:

3.3. Hit them back with the same medicine

If you can find a way to use the same criticism back on them it’s golden as you show them, and everyone around, what type of game they are playing.

See Jay Leno doing here when being accused of being “the weirdest looking person”:

> **Louis**: I hope I can say this without insulting you <— sets the cover
> You’re the weirdest looking person (…) I don’t mean it as a negative… (he’s about to get even more sarcastic)
> **Leno**: Just the fact that I got a full set of hair (<— one-up back) I don’t mean that to offend you (<— plays the same game back)

Leno uses humor to show that his guest is hiding behind humor to be a little bit too nasty.
Perfect!

3.4. Say “we have a joker here”

If nothing comes up, you can always resort to these proven and tested retorts:

> We have a joker here!
>
> What a funny guy..

From a movie example:

> **Tony**: How much
> **Care salesman**: 43.000 fully equipped
> **Tony**: that all?
> **Car salesman**: machine gun turrets are extra (implies he might be a gangaster)
> **Tony**: he’s a funny guy

You can power up this retort by pointing your finger at them as if to say, “Listen to this funny guy”.

4. Snarky Comments: Dish Out The Same Medicine!

Snarky comments are barbs barely veiled with humor.

Some people around might laugh, but they are *not* laughing at the joke itself but at the social power move and the daring of the individual delivering it.

It happened once to me when I went back to my place after a long time and one woman said:

> **Her**: Oh my God, I saw you walking by and I barely recognized you with a bald head

And this was my reply:

> **Me**: Hey, yeah I know the feeling, I had the exact same when I saw you. I remembered you so much thinner. Not in a bad way eh, you look even better now with some more kilos.

“Not in a bad way” is there not really to soften the blow, but to make it more socially acceptable and not to make it seem like I was escalating and replying out of nastiness.

That’s exactly what you gotta do when you want to reply with social grace to nastiness: you make a comment back that *is* nasty, but then you pretend to take some of the stings out so that people can laugh about it.

And indeed, a big laugh from everyone around.

Note on beating snarky comments:
I actually like a bald head. But this is about social strategy: you don’t react only when you care: you react when it serves you.

You react to the power move to defend not a hurt ego, but your social status.
Plus, it’s always good to stand up to assholes.

5. People Laughing At You: Leave Them In The Dust!

The dynamics of people laughing at us can be extremely painful.

Being laughed at by a group usually comes in two different social flavors:

1. Everyone in the group is piling up in a mutually reinforcing cycle

2. There is a clear leader that functions as the group-buffoon

This interview of McGregor and Diaz is an example of the second type:

Usually, the buffoon has good standing in the group, but it's an easier situation to control.
As Robert Greene writes in *The 48 Laws of Power:* strike the leader and the sheep will scatter.

Solutions:

5.2. Strike the leader

If you can take out the leader, you solved the issue.
Sometimes you can even lose and *still* solve the problem -as long as the leader sees you're not easy pickings.

5.3. Isolate the leader

Work on becoming good friends with the members who are not as sanguine towards you.
Little by little you can carve your own sphere of influence and if you keep growing in the group you might even be able to overthrow the leader.

5.4. Abandon the group forever

Here is the truth:

It's not easy changing the dynamics of a group that has chosen you as the scapegoat for their frustrations and small-time status-jockeying.

But that should be a wake-up call as to what type of groups you are being part of.

Usually, these people are very stationary in life and if you're reading here you want to go places.
Start by leaving the idiots of yours behind.
Just as a learning opportunity, you can use them to try different things though: use them as free social training.

5.5. Abandon the group, work, and come back like a G

As we've said people who pick on others usually don't go very far in life.
Work on yourself. Don't try to forget their derision but use them as fuel to become better and better.

Then if you want you can go back improved and upgraded, maybe saying hi while you drive from a Ferrari.
But chances are you will care very little about them in the future -and I recommend the "leave behind path", including emotional disengagement-.

5.6. Change dynamics, then lead

Groups that pick on people rarely do so out of strength, but because they need their own psychological boost.

If the group moves to a novel situation and environment where you can show strong skills and leadership, suddenly you're no laughing stock anymore.

Example:
I remember as teenagers when we went go-carting and the shy guy people liked to pick on whoop everyone's ass.
Not many jokes on him that day.

5.7. Achieve big where they are failing

People usually pick on the ones who have the least skills and power.

But achieve some big goals in life and there won't be much for them to laugh about.

I remember when the kids in my group stopped laughing at Gabriele.

Why? Because Gabriele was the first to get a girlfriend.

6. The "Not Funny At All" Story-Joke: Make

Here's the coolest reply:

Don't answer at all!

Not verbally, at least.

You can just stand there and make a serious facial expression.
Or even better, a facial expression that says "this guy is so annoying".

Very high power because it's low-investment.

And the more their "joke" is poor, the more they're harming *themselves*, and the better this works.

Look Khabib executing it here with his "not-so-good friend" DC:

> **DC**: How many times do you have to say… You answer the SAAAME thing EEEVERY TIME. I heard you say the SAAAAME thing..
> **Khabib**: (rubs his face with a facial expression that sub-communicates "what an annoying c*nt")

Khabib handles it well with:

- Avoid the "too nice trap", which would be to laugh along or pretend all is well
- Direct request to drop it
- Body language that frames the attacker as an annoying c*nt
- Low investment
- A *verbally* high-warmth "see you later", but with the re-empowering sub-communication of "f*ck you"

7. And... Learn to Laugh About Yourself

As a final note, don't see all jokes as power moves.

Even if almost all jokes *are* at least somewhat connected to power hierarchies, you will still gain from a more relaxed and open stance toward the world.

Even from a pure power point of view, a clear, unemotional mind will always operate at a higher level than one fuming with rage and indignation.

Learning not to take yourself too seriously and learning to laugh about your shortcoming and the stereotypes of your race/religion/country is an immensely powerful trait to develop.

Offensive Jokes Are Power Moves

Racist jokes, offensive remarks, mean comments… These are all a form of *social power moves*.

Hidden under a sheath of irony, offensive jokes tell the story of a power relation: **the joker seeks to take the dominant position, while the butt end of the joke gets socially demoted**.

These types of jokes are nothing but forms of *social climbing*.

Power Dynamics of Offensive Jokes

Power Moves masked as jokes work by reinforcing a stereotype, prejudice, public perception, or sometimes, let's be frank here, an uncomfortable truth.

The joking layer with which the power moved is sheathed allows the joker to set the power relation in a socially acceptable way.

Basically: **the attacker hides behind the joke to hurt and social climb**.

And it allows him to sidestep any possible backlash behind the joking pretense.
I'm sure you've seen these:

> **Social climber**: *Hey come on, it was just a joke*
>
> **Social climber**: *God I was just kidding, I actually love Italy (/Africa /women /blacks etc. etc)*

But don't be fooled by the "joke" pretense, most of the time that's only the sugar coating for the dominant power move.

Power Jokes Breakdown:

When you put your social x-ray goggles on this is what a superiority joke really says:

1. I'm superior
2. You're inferior
3. By accepting the joke you accept that power dynamic

The Social Consequences Of Mean Jokes

The joke can have lasting consequences.

If it's not met with any backlash, public opinion can start shifting.
Not only it becomes more OK to throw mean and racist jokes, but some people can start *believing* they are actually true.

Equally important, the Joker feels more powerful, and the butt of the joke starts feeling inferior.
As the butt of the joke starts buying into that frame the joke becomes more and more reality.

Until the Joker doesn't even need to throw power moves anymore: everyone accepts his superiority.

Mean Jokes Examples

Power jokes happen more often than most people could think.

Some men use this technique to keep control of their relationships (see "*combative relationships*").
And when they are successful, the woman can start *losing her self-esteem*, which might lead to *abusive* and *toxic relationships*.

Or people can use offensive jokes are used to pump their own ego or, of course, for good old *social climbing*.

Here are a few examples:

Skin Color Power Move

> **White guy in Asia**: *"I'm whiter than you"*
> **Girl**: *"so what, you think you're better than me?"*
> **Guy**: *"ahaha I'm just joking, in Europe it's actually cool to be tanned"*

Result: behind the joke's smokescreen -and helped by her offended reaction- he slots himself as the superior one by virtue of skin color.

In the long run, she will feel insecure and inferior to him.
Notice that her overreaction proved to him that she indeed has skin-color hang-ups.

Gender Power Move

> **Guy**: *"you bought a new pair of shoes?"*
> **Girl**: *"yes, do you like them"*
> **Guy**: *"yeah.. And good for my figure you don't spend as much time in the kitchen as do with shopping"*

Result: he implies she spends too much and that her role is that of cooking (and she's failing it). In the long run, she might feel insecure and less of a woman for failing in what he presents as her female duties.

Nationality Power Move

The mean joke in the message example at the beginning of this post was basically saying:

- (We) Germans are (economically) superior to you (Italians).

Result: I might start believing it myself.
Also, I would admit that yes, he's right, and there are good reasons why Germany is a bigger economy (namely because Germans are superior).
I don't know you, but I'm not cool with that.

The Little Book of Common Sense Investing: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Little Book of Common Sense Investing does what it says: lays out great -and easy-to-follow- investment principles in a short amount of time.
And that's pretty great.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Cut Middlemen
  - Minimize Fees
  - Stocks Match Businesses
  - Managed Fund: The Short-Term Gains
  - Investment Advisers? No Thanks
  - Index Funds
  - Play Money
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Avoid middlemen: skip the advisers
- Avoid high-priced funds
- Pick index funds (ETFs) covering big indexes and sit back

Full Summary

The author, John Bogle, is the founder of Vanguard Investment and he often quotes Benjamin Graham, author of *The Intelligent Investor*.

Cut Middlemen

People who promise to manage your money to make money for you are actually taking money for you. Ask yourself: does that make sense? The author says that, often, it doesn't.
This means you should look for ways to invest with the fewest middlemen possible.

Minimize Fees

The author indeed says that the average investor should, first of all, focus on minimizing fees. Taxes are fees too, and from a US-tax perspective the less transaction a fund does, the more it will maximize taxes' payments. Another reason why index funds are better.

Stocks Match Businesses

Bogle says that stocks' returns, in the long run, closely match the performance of the business you are buying. The short term is different as it can be governed by emotions but, long run, stocks do seem to move rationally.

Managed Fund: The Short-Term Gains

The authors concede that some funds are better positioned to provide outsized returns in the short term in certain niches and in certain market conditions.
During the dot-come bubble for example many funds managed to beat the market and provide huge returns. But while the overall market survived and recovered from the bust, many of those funds collapsed.
So again, long-term managed funds perform poorly.

Investment Advisers? No Thanks

Investment advisers do far worse than the market once you weigh in their fees.

Index Funds

The Little Book of Common Sense Investing builds up toward one simple truth: you should invest in index funds yourself.
How do you do that?

Picking the Best Index Funds

1. First, eliminate all the high-cost funds
2. Pick funds with the widest coverage (funds covering big markets)

Don't look too much based on past results. They're not an indicator of future results and in the long run, the performances average out.

Play Money

The author advises you to keep the lion's share of your portfolio on broad index funds tracking the biggest indexes. But keep a small portion with which you can play around and speculate a bit.

Your portfolio will be safe and you also get to enjoy some playtime.

[image][image]

Real-Life Applications

Play Money
The idea of leaving only a small portion of your portfolio as "play money" is simple, yet genius. You can use this small portion of the portfolio to let your irrational instincts take over and realize that no, you likely won't beat the market through speculation.
I wish I had stumbled upon this idea years ago :).

Review

The Little Book of Common Sense Investing is a perfect introduction to investment.
And most of all, it lays out how normal people can get great results -or better: match market results- without wasting money on advisers or wasting time following financial news.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon.

Date-onomics: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Date-onomics (2015) reviews how the gender ratio (men to women) affects behavior and personalities, both within dating and outside of dating.
It is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand dating psychology, intersexual dynamics, and increase his general mating intelligence.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Not Enough Men With Degrees
  - Why So Few Men With Degrees?
  - Where Does It Happen?
  - How Few Educated Men Transform Dating
  - Is Feminism The Consequence of Disgruntled Women?
  - Let Him Chase is Bad Strategy!
  - Why The Best Women Remain Single
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Overview

- Gender ratio heavily affects dating behavior
- Men refuse to settle down when there are many women
- There are far more women than men holding a college degree (bad news for women)

Notes

Jon Birger makes a compelling case that the falling marriage rates, hook up behavior and a chronic lack of good caliber men willing to commit in the college-educated cohort are all byproducts of lopsided gender ratio (ie.: too few men compared to women).

Not Enough Men With Degrees

The issue for women holding a college degree is that, historically:

1. Women with a degree don't often marry men without one
2. There are more and more women compared to men who finish college

I laughed hard when the author quips that "it's not that He's Just Not That Into You, it's just that there aren't enough of him".

Also read:

- How successful women must date

Why So Few Men With Degrees?

The author says that:

1. Men can get good paying jobs without degree
2. Women need it more: the pay gap between high school and college is bigger for women
3. Women mature earlier, giving them an advantage in school
4. Men are more prone to disciplinary issues (from ADHD to criminality)

Where Does It Happen?

Birger says the issue is present in almost every developed country.

How Few Educated Men Transform Dating

What does it mean to you?

Birger draws parallel with other nominally monogamous animal species and notes that the effects of changing the gender ration are stunningly similar.

Scientists seem to agree that, albeit changes impact both gender, they affect men more than they affect women (you can see similarities here with evolutionary psychology literature such as The Selfish Gene and The Moral Animal).

How Men Change

When there more women than men, men are:

- More likely to cheat
- Less likely to form long term relationships
- More likely to entertain more sexual partners at once

How Women Change

When there are more men than women, women also are more likely to cheat.

But not as much as men.

Most importantly, women tend to become choosier. Their focus is on screening men harder as they look for the best they can get.

How Culture Changes

The author quotes the book "too many women" -which I'm planning to review soon- in assessing the cultural changes of gender ratio.

More men bring a culture of courtships, romance and men doting on women.

But when women outnumber men, women are more likely to become sexual objects.

Other consequences of fewer men:

- Quantity and quality of sex improves for everyone
- Women more likely to bridge the gender's gap (they want to decrease men's power)
- Women less sensitive to male's look (can't be too picky) but:
- more attentive to other women's looks and (competition)
- Women are more likely to forgive cheating

Other consequences of fewer women:

- Lower teen pregnancy
- Lower sexual assaults (the study's author say women are more protected and respected)
- Men value girlfriends and wives more
- Men more likely to work hard (need money to attract mates)
- Men more likely to spend and go in debt (to show off for women)

Is Feminism The Consequence of Disgruntled Women?

The author links the rise of feminism to the woes those same women face with men.

Since men are hard to come by, women are more likely to focus on work, career and possibly politics.

As we've seen, when men are in short supply, women are treated poorly and more like sexual objects.
So, since women are more and more at the mercy of men, they fight back demanding more rights.

Couple that with the possible resentment towards men, and you have a major driver for feminism.

Let Him Chase is Bad Strategy!

I almost wanted to cry when the author debunked the idea that most women's dating books sell: that you have to make him chase and invest.

No, Birger explains: in difficult markets, it's the assertive women who get the guy.

These are the women who meet the guy, play little unavailability games and who ask for the relationships.

Thank you Jon Birger, more women should heed that.

Also read:

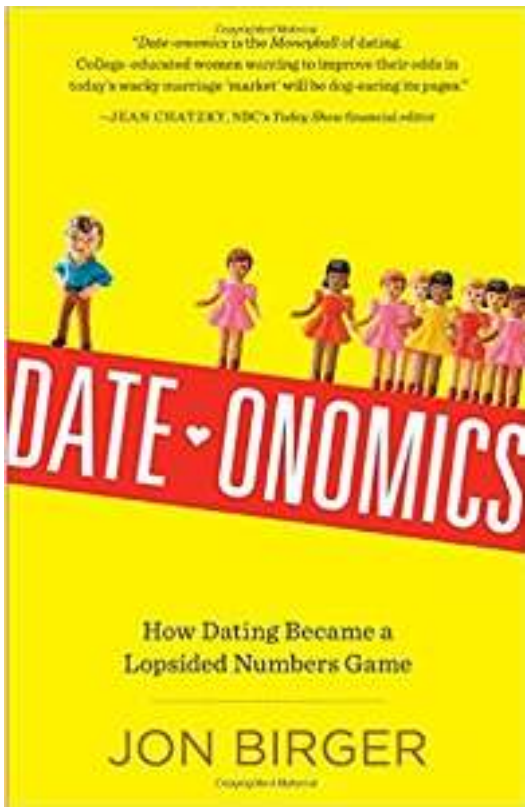
- How to make him invest
- How to make him chase
- How to make him value you more

Why The Best Women Remain Single

The author tackles a few more interesting phenomenon, including:

- Why the best women stay single
- Why women in "bad markets" with few men would better hurry
- Why attractive women get approached less
- Should you give him a commitment ultimatum?

Get the book to read the answers to those questions.



Real Life Applications

Check the gender ration beforehand
Check the gender ration of the place you want to move to, the career you want to take, the college you want to attend.

CONS

There were a many “empirical evidence stories”. I get a bit skittish when I read the micro stories as evidence for the whole.
But, overall, this was not the case: Birger uses enough data to back up the stories.

Review

Date-onomics is a crossover between sociological research, a data-driven scientific paper, and an evolutionary psychology text.

It’s an insightful text, and I listed in the “best red pill books list“.

Date-onomics is not a dating book in the strict sense, but it’s one of the books that explains dating the best.
And it indirectly suggests some of the best high-level dating strategies one could ever apply.
Way too underrated and super recommended.

Further Reading:

- Best dating books for men

Jordan Peterson VS Cathy Newman: Power Dynamics Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Jordan Peterson vs Cathy Newman has been one of the most popular debates in recent memory.

By and large, Peterson won it.
And it propelled his name into one of the contemporary giants of conservative thought leaders.

By the end of this article, you will understand exactly how Jordan Peterson out-debated Cathy Newman.

Contents

- Quick Peterson Background

- Jordan Peterson VS Cathy Newman
  - 1. Straw Man Technique
  - #2. Block Their Attempt at Undermining Your Authority
  - #3. Don't Allow Them to Label You
- How Peterson Won
  - 1. Stay Cool and Collected
  - 2. Showcase Superior Knowledge
- SUMMARY

Quick Peterson Background

Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules for Life*, is a contemporary thought leader of conservative ideology, generally seen as taking a stand against feminism and Marxism (albeit not all women hate him).

Kathy Newman is a more left-leaning, potentially feminist-leaning host who had some fiery debates against other conservative figures.
Let the debate begin:

Jordan Peterson VS Cathy Newman

We have already seen a few power debate techniques and we have already done a debate analysis in the Trump VS Clinton debate.

But I would put Jordan Peterson above anyone else when it comes to debating.
Without using any unfair debating techniques, he wins by staying in control and showing himself a better leader.
This is the good leader, prestige approach to gaining status.

Cathy Newman instead never seemed up for an honest debate.
She was looking to score a win and make Peterson look bad.

She might have won. Or at least scored some points against any other opponent. But not Jordan Peterson.
He was too good for her.
Let's see.

1. Straw Man Technique

This is an old technique and you better learn how to watch out for it.

Newman had a simple strategy: try to paint Peterson as a villain, make him an easy target, and score an easy win.

This is a subset of the straw man technique, which consists in refuting an opponent's view which the opponent never really had to begin to win. Usually, unfair debaters pick for their straw man opponent an easy target, such as a view everyone disagrees with, an opinion everyone hates, or a position that is easily assailable.

Example: The Gender Pay Gap

Sneaky Warning!

Jordan Peterson's view on the gender pay gap is that it's real and it's the consequence of many different variables. One of them is the difference in personality (agreeableness) and part of it is also prejudice.
Overall, it's a level-headed and fact-based opinion.

Cathy Newman however wants to shoehorn Peterson into an extreme position. One that she can easily rail and pontificate against. She seeks to trap him into saying something along the lines of:

- The gender pay gap doesn't exist
- Women should put up with it
- "I want to defend the pay gap"

If Newman were to manage to make Peterson admit to any of the above, she would score an easy win.
Watch her try it in an increasingly desperate fashion:

Defense

The straw man technique can be unnerving.
When someone uses it against you many times in a row, you might be tempted to espouse the extreme positions just so you can raise your voice and get into a fight.
Never do that.
Here's what you should do instead:

1. Calmly repeat your positions rationally. Over and over again if needed
2. Accuse your opponent of offensiveness
3. Show superior, fact-based knowledge: you look powerful, and they look infantile

That's a powerful way of leveraging vulnerability.

#2. Block Their Attempt at Undermining Your Authority

Bringing up bad associations is a way to smear the opponent's persona instead of engaging with his facts and logic.

The past, some mistakes, friends… Anything that can throw dirt on him. The idea it tries to conjure is that "once wrong, always wrong".

Cathy tries to attack Jordan by saying that his followers are all male (!), divisive and abusive.

Defending Against Authority Attacks

- Don't defend yourself (gives credibility to the accuser)
- Say your only answer for yourself (or it's in the past and you've moved on)
- Refuse to comment further: let them look like vultures scavenging for a non-existent scoop

#3. Don't Allow Them to Label You

Cathy Newman really wanted to corner Peterson.

An unfair debater will try to have you confess or admit to something which the public often frowns upon so they

can make you look bad.

The most dangerous words to label you are emotionally charged ones, such as “racist”, “illegal”, “addict”, “violent” etc.

Example: Losing the Labeing War

Look at this man.

He “admits” that a leaflet of *decades* earlier “could be defined as racist”. Big mistake.
He was an honest man, but honesty doesn’t pay with unfair debating.

Notice how she abuses that admission to continually back him into a corner:

Note: I had to cut the video eventually and the original video I first posted has been taken down. However, she keeps going much further with the same technique.

Defending Against Labels

1. When you’re unsure never say “yes”: always say no
2. Accuse the interviewer of unfair tactics
3. Refuse to answer, always rephrase

Notices Newman tries to do the same with Peterson, but see how it never works because he always denies and rephrase:

A “no” makes you look more powerful and in control. And it doesn’t give any ammo to your opponent.

How Peterson Won

Jordan Peterson dominated the debate against Cathy Newman in the following ways (in order):

1. Stay Cool and Collected

Getting nervous with an unfair debater like Newman is very easy.

But showing too many emotions is often seen as an indicator that you’re not confident enough in your opinions.

See how Jordan remained confident and calm even when facing the worst slanders:

2. Showcase Superior Knowledge

This goes back to the roots of reaching mastery of anything, from social mastery to winning a debate: know your stuff better than anyone else. Jordan knows his stuff much better than Newman.

But “knowing” wouldn’t be enough.
Jordan showcases it:

SUMMARY

Jordan Peterson VS Cathy Newman wasn’t even a contest.

Peterson’s debating skills such as calmness, logic, and superior knowledge, would have been enough to win.
If that weren’t enough, the failure and conspicuousness of Newman’s unfair debate tactics made her look biased and antagonistic.

Overall, this wasn’t even a contest because Peterson was just too good for Newman.

He dominated it by and large from the beginning to the end.

Adopt Peterson's techniques, grow a knowledge that matches his, and you'll be able to do the same with any unfair debater you'll ever meet.

The Entrepreneur Mind: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Entrepreneur Mind is a book for entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs.
Kevin Johnson, the author, shares one hundred crucial mindsets with which entrepreneurs view the world.
The readers can learn about the entrepreneurs' mindsets and, with some work, adopt the same.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- The Entrepreneur Mind – Summary
  - Strategy
  - Education
  - People
  - Finance
  - Marketing and Sales
  - Leadership
  - Motivation
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Get a sense of urgency: don't delay or postpone, all must happen today
- Build systems that don't need key people (or yourself for that matter)
- Decouple feelings from the right actions
- Build an environment where criticism flows openly

The Entrepreneur Mind – Summary

About The Author: Kevin Johnson studied computer science and started out his career as a software programmer for IBM.
He showed early signs of entrepreneurship by successfully launching and selling one of the first content management systems. And he eventually went fully back into entrepreneurship in 2000, when he founded and grew his current company Johnson Media.

Strategy

1. Think big: If you think small you will not maximize your potential. And as Tony Robbins says, that's your biggest failure. Better to come short of lofty goals than to leave untapped potential on the table. Also, read *The Magic of Thinking Big*.

2. Create new markets: Creating new markets means no competition. Companies operating without competition in monopolistic markets enjoy all the profits. Also read *Zero to One*, where Google is such an example.

3. Work on your business, not in your business: Hire employees to take care of operations so you can focus on growth. Read *The E-myth Revisited*.

4. All risk isn't risky: While we all know that entrepreneurs take risks, they are also able to calculate that risk and

make informed choices that try to minimize those risks.

5. Don't waste time: Get a sense of urgency

6. Systems-dependent, not people-dependent: Automate processes, you can't bet all your fortune on a few people who might leave.

7. Ask for help: Don't be afraid of looking less powerful.

8. Business first, family second: One of the rules that might be hard to digest for many.

9. Do what's most important first: Prioritize, prioritize, prioritize.

10. Hire a good lawyer: get the book for the details

11. The business plan is overrated: Do the background checks first like competition and customers first. I was surprised to read Johnson saying you also develop a prototype before a business plan.

12. Require criticism and disagreement in your company: Be aware of yes man. This is a great point, also read *Principles: Life and Work* for more on this concept.

13. Fire your worst customers: Some customers waste too much of your time and can even make you lose money. Don't serve them.

14. Make money while doing nothing: Again, focus on processes that don't require you.

15. Outsourcing makes sense: Noncore functions can suck up too much of your time. Outsource them.

16. Move on fast from bad business: Tenacity and grit are the soul and parcels of an entrepreneur, but you have to be able to recognize when an idea is dead.

17. A bad economy is a great opportunity: Start when nobody else does and you'll be ready to reap the benefits when the economy turns.

18. Adopt technology early: Being an early adopter will allow you to see connections and possible new mass uses. Also, read *Crossing the Chasm*

19. Ignorance can be bliss: Newcomers often come with a mindset that is not hampered by the old ways of doing things.

20. Adapt to change quickly: Check the book for more

21. Technology is an opportunity, not a threat: Check the book for more

22. Always follow up: Fear of rejection can get in the way. Don't allow that to happen

23. Have laserlike focus: Focus on making a few great products. Too big a lineup can spread your resources thin (which is also one of the *48 Laws of Power*)

24. Nonprofit really means profit: Nonprofit organizations have money to spend

25. Explore new adventures for inspiration: Go on an adventure, it will open you up mentally and make you come up with new ideas and solutions

26. Failure doesn't kill you; it makes you stronger: Read the book for more

27. Seek partnerships for the right reasons: Don't make partnerships for PR: good partnerships show up in your cash flow (increase revenues or reduce costs)

28. Be a master at leveraging resources: Not everyone will always pay with cash. Learn to get creative with all possible resources. Read *Disrupt You!* for more.

29. It's not ideal, it's execution: Focus on speed

30. Find an enemy: An enemy can rally the troops and motivate employees. Read *The 48 Laws of Power*

31. Don't underestimate your competition: Companies with different products and business models also can be competition

32. Ask for what you want: You'll be amazed at how much people are willing to give

33. No competition = no market: If there's no competition, ask yourself why, there's probably a good reason (albeit not necessarily)

34. Put out fires quickly: Respond quickly to customer issues

35. Have an exit strategy: It will help you put things in perspective for decision-making and recognize exit chances along the way

Education

36. School is not necessarily education: This is not school bashing, but entrepreneurs keep learning after school

37. You're in no rush for MBA: An MBA while you're building a business is a distraction

People

38. Spend time with smarter people: You will learn the most

39. Office space is not a priority, a good team is: You can keep working from wherever you are

40. What you wear isn't what you're worth:

41. You don't always have to be the smartest one in the room: The best entrepreneur are humble and are more interested in bringing in smart people than being the smartest ones

42. Talent trumps seniority: Don't get hung up on ranks, it's solutions and execution that matter

43. You are odd, and it's okay: Dyslexia, ADD, and Asperger have all higher incidence among entrepreneurs

44. People don't only work for money: Check *Drive* by Daniel Pink for more on motivation

45. You have a sidekick: 2+2 is more than 4

46. Don't let people abuse your flexibility: You might have flexible hours, but work is still your priority

47. Don't manage people, manage expectations: Set deadlines instead of micromanaging

48. Get the right mentor: Read *Mastery* for more

49. Choose your spouse wisely: Spouses can be your boon or can be your ruin (read Men on Strike and *The Millionaire Mind*)

50. Fire unproductive people: also read "how to be an effective leader"

Finance

51. You don't need money to make money: To make lots of money quickly money is helpful, but entrepreneurship is about workarounds and doing something with nothing

52. Pay taxes quarterly: If you only do it at the end of the year, you might not have enough left

53. A check in hand means nothing: Don't assume you've been paid until the money is in the bank, always double-check dubious checks

54. Avoid negative cash flow: Some companies can get in trouble with negative cash flow even when they're

profitable. Make sure that doesn't happen to you

55. Borrow money before you need it: You won't get a loan when you need it, so get one when you still don't

56. Prepayment is king: Build trust so you can get paid. Otherwise, make sure your payment timelines are clear and respected

57. Professional accountant is money well spent: Good accountants will save you money and time

58. Manage debt well: Most businesses fail because of under-capitalization. Do get the money you need

59. There's a downside to having investors: External money can sometimes exacerbate your problems

60. Focus on building revenue: If you go for external investors, show some revenue and sales first, it will make everything easier

61. The biggest investment is yours: Show your own investment before asking for any

62. Use different banks to minimize risk: Keep business and personal accounts separated at different banks or they'll affect each other (credit scores and asking payments from personal account)

63. Know your PAYDEX score: Check the book for more

Marketing and Sales

This section is a lot about sales and people's skills.

64. You're in sales: Start selling early, you need to make sure people want it

65. Your customer is your boss: Always refer to what the market wants

66. You have sales before you have a business: The best way to start a business is when people are willing to pay even before you have a product

67. You aren't always the best person to close a deal: Hire the best people to make the sale, and that's not necessarily you

68. Networking isn't all about you: Ask how you can help

69. Don't waste time on people who can't say yes: Ask who's the final decision maker and don't waste time

70. There's no such thing as a cold call: Research before calling

71. Tell everyone about your business: Shyness, fear, or politeness will make you miss out on opportunities

72. Ask the right questions: Open-ended questions

73. Receive the maximum value: Don't change prices to accommodate customers

74. Don't patronize customers: Entrepreneurs believe they need to "act big" to impress people because that's what CEOs do. Terrible mindset.

75. Build your network creatively: The right environment is not necessarily the standard networking environments

76. Don't hold grudges: A no today can be a yes tomorrow, don't alienate people

Leadership

77. Act in spite of how you feel: Don't let emotions get in the way (also read Emotional Unavailability)

78. Push beyond your fear: Let your goals guide you.

79. Be a maverick: Most entrepreneurs have a rebellious streak.

80. Make your dreams come true: Read the book for more

81. Make difficult sacrifices: Entrepreneurship requires sacrifices

82. You have unbelievable endurance: Endurance is possibly the most important trait for entrepreneurs. Also, read *Grit* by Duckworth

83. Be prepared to lose it all: Most businesses fail, don't be surprised

Also, read:

- Best leadership books
- Values-based business (about this website's credo)

Motivation

84. Being successful is not the goal: The feeling of success is fleeting, entrepreneurs should be motivated by the creation process. Also, read *Start With WHY*.

85. You are excited for Monday: You can get to start a fresh new week and the world is ready to move along. My Note: when I first read it I was disappointed, there are no Mondays and Weekends for me.

86. You're disappointed For Friday: They're less productive, you gotta pay people and you won't be able to restart 100% until Monday My Note: I didn't like the sense of powerlessness. There's plenty you can do during weekends.

87. A 9-to-5 is worse than death: The biggest fear for entrepreneurs is that of having to go to a "normal" job. I can attest to that.

88. Your parents demand a real job: Don't get angry about it, be compassionate

89. You get resentment: People sometimes won't understand or will be jealous

90. It's not about being your own boss: Those who want to go the entrepreneur road not to have a boss often lack the discipline that entrepreneurship requires. And entrepreneurship also requires vision

91. Entrepreneurship is in your blood: The author recommends you research your family history for some more motivation. But I disagree with this one.

92. You know your worth: You might have to say no to seemingly good money if you don't believe it meets your worth or your company's worth

93. You can't keep a job: The author says entrepreneurs are not good at staying at a job. They either quit or get fired. I couldn't agree more with this.

94. You cry when things don't go your way: Steve Jobs did, so you can do it too

95. It's never too late: Media focus on young upstarts, but older people start more companies than teens and 20-something

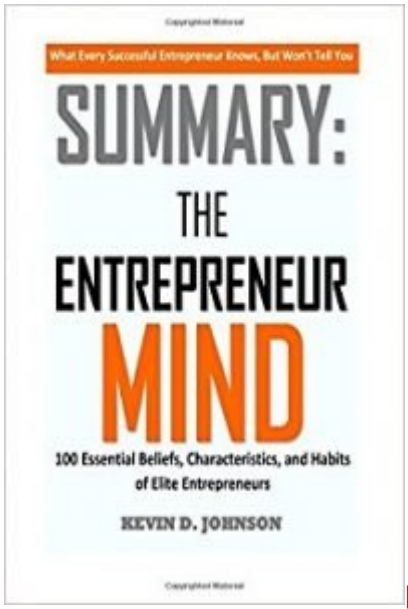
96. You feel unequaled joy when your idea becomes reality.

97. Following your passion is bogus: Not all passions can be monetized. But I disagree here, finding fulfillment and joy in what you do is key

98. You have the right motivation: Read the book for more

99. You love your life: Controlling your destiny makes you happy. And I couldn't agree more.

100. You're an entrepreneur forever: Once you get a taste of it, you can never go back



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Real-Life Applications

A lot of concepts in *The Entrepreneur Mind* were really good and aha moments for me. Such as:

- Fire your worst customers
- Borrow money before you need it
- Tell everyone about your business (my tendency is to keep it under wrap)
- You can't keep a job (I found this ringing so true for me)

Review

The Entrepreneur Mind is an easy and wisdom-rich read that you will go through at light speed.

While some concepts are more obvious and won't add as much value, they can still serve as great refreshers. And you will likely find many gold nuggets to help you propel forward.

Also, I particularly appreciated the psychology behind some points, such as that many entrepreneurs can't stay happy in their jobs and end up either fired or quitting.

Read the **best books on entrepreneurship** or get the book on Amazon

8 Steps to Handle A Boss Who Shouts at You

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Some bad bosses shout, and it can be a distressful experience for employees.

It's also highly disempowering and can cost you in status, respect, and career opportunities.

Especially if he yelled at you in front of other colleagues.

Between us, it's demeaning, humiliating, and emasculating.
Not good for your own self-confidence.

So by the end of this post, **you will learn how to put your yelling boss back in his place**.

Quick preview:

She disrespected me publicly. But she quickly regretted it

Contents

- #1. Internalize Aggression Is NEVER OK
- #2. Internalize Mistakes Are OK
- #3. Let Him Yell
- #4. Keep Proud Nonverbal
- #5. State You Are Not OK With Yelling
- #6. Hold Your Own
- #7. Don't Accept "Sorry But You… "
- #8. Demand a Public Apology

- Case Study
- SUMMARY

#1. Internalize Aggression Is NEVER OK

As usual, mindsets come first.

You have to believe it in your core that:

1. You are worthy, no matter where you stand in the silly org chart
2. It's NEVER ok for someone disrespects you

That includes when you make a mistake, because:

#2. Internalize Mistakes Are OK

We all make mistakes.

And whenever we commit a mistake, it doesn't mean we become sub-humans who can be abused.

If your boss is yelling at you, yes, you probably made a mistake.
And you will learn from it. But you need to internalize that mistakes and abusive reactions to mistakes are not connected.

Mistakes are natural and fair game, verbal aggression is not.
Ignorance does not justify aggression.

Never allow anyone to link mistakes to yelling (read below) and especially do not link them in your mind.

Yelling is also very poor leadership.
It instills a fear of making more mistakes, which stifles creativity, teamwork and, ironically, is more likely to *induce* mistakes.

So here is another mindset for you: it's your duty to limit the power and scope of poor managers.
If you let them get away with it, they will keep abusing people for their whole life.

#3. Let Him Yell

If he's really furious, let him go ahead.

He's chipping away at your social status, that's for sure.
But you're in for the war, not the battle.

And in the meanwhile, he's also embarrassing himself as he shows no internal control whatsoever.

When you let him yell uninterrupted, you allow everyone to see he's a dickhead.
A few minutes from now, everyone will be on your side when you'll serve him skewered.

The trick here is not to listen without listening.

What do I mean?

To let his words go through you without hurting you and without getting under your skin.

“Be like water”, said Bruce Lee (and Robert Greene).
And communication trainers such as George Thompson and Douglas Stone make emotional detachment a centerpiece of getting what you want in difficult exchanges.

See the point?

In short: most smart people agree that a crucial aspect of verbal power and control is being able to not take things personally.

If you can’t yet, meditate.

The goal is to reach a point where you can remain calm while you plan the exact wording of your next move, which will come as soon as he stops.

In the meanwhile, while he speaks:

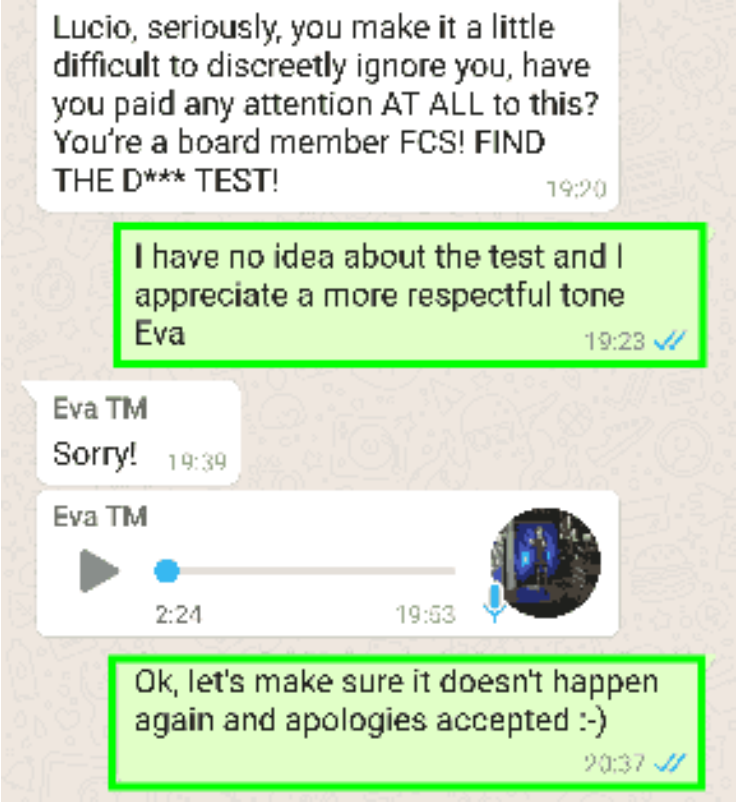
#4. Keep Proud Nonverbal

Don’t look down, don’t droop your shoulders, don’t arch your back.

Stand straight, as if you had an air of defiance -minus the air of defiance in your face-.

Basically, look strong, just without facial signs of aggression.
You avoid facial signs of aggression because first, you don’t want to escalate. And second, you don’t want to warn him about what’s coming.

#5. State You Are Not OK With Yelling



> **Me**: I have no idea about the test, and I appreciate a more respectful tone

Now the time has come for you to speak.

Do NOT address your mistakes here: that will make you look weaker and give ammo to the yelling boss.

Do NOT address the words of what he said: you don't want a debate.

Once he's done say instead something like this:

> **You**: *I understand you are angry. But I am not OK with you screaming at me*

Alternatively, a bit less strong but equally powerful:

> **You**: *I understand you are angry. But I feel that yelling is very impolite and aggressive*

Then pause.

#6. Hold Your Own

If you reached this point: congratulations!

Whatever you do now, even if you muck up all the rest, your boss and the people around will already respect you much, *much* more.

Now let's keep going.

Two things can happen here:

- He will ignore what you said and resume reaming you for your mistake even harder (don't worry: that's OK)
- He will attack what you said and state that it's not aggressive or impolite

In either case, he will probably perceive what you've just done as insubordination and he wants you to backtrack.

Here you want to clarify the point that you're not out for a fight or to deny your mistake.
But you're demanding fair treatment.

If he says you fuc*ed it up, you answer:

> **You**: *I made a mistake, and I own it.*
> *But that does not give you the right to yell at me. That's very rude and it's unacceptable behavior*

Whatever he says, keep repeating your point, just with different words:

> **You**: *I always strive to improve my performance and I am happy to talk about it in private.*
> *But yelling at me publicly like is completely out of line and I do not accept that kind of behavior*

The more he screams, the more you look powerful and in control: he's the one flipping out and you're the one making him dance to your tune.

#7. Don't Accept "Sorry But You... "

As we've seen mistakes and aggression are two separate things.

But **bad bosses will try to use your mistake to justify their aggression**.
Never allow that!

If you allow it, you empower them to make you look so bad that it's your fault that they can't control themselves.

So when they say:

> **Boss**: *yeah, sorry, BUT you did X / Y, that's unaccetapble and it's costing us..*

You say:

> **You**: *you're right, and I am happy to discuss my mistake, how to fix it, how to learn from it and how to never make it happen again. But these are two different topics.*
> *The other topic is verbal bullying ,and that's not OK.*

Basically: make sure you keep the mistake and the verbal abuse separate.

Dealing with the abuse and the mistake at the same time is nothing but double abuse.

Have you noticed the parallel?
This is the same as saying "OK, she was victimized, I'm really sorry, but what was she doing at 2 am at the flat party?"
That kind of "rationale" humiliates the victim twice.

Don't allow anyone to do it to you.

P.S.:
We teach how to become a respect-worthy man in **Power University.**

#8. Demand a Public Apology

Here is what sneaky bosses will do when forced to apologize

They had their aggressive display of strength *in public* and they will later apologize *in private*.

An apology is a meaningful step, but you will have to demand a public apology.

Say:

> **You**: *Thank you, I appreciate you realizing it wasn't cool and apologizing. At the same time though you yellet at me in public, and I lost face in public.*
> *I believe you should apologize in public as well.*

If he doesn't, he's not a great human being.

His ego is more important to him than respecting the people around him and achieving the organization's goals.
He probably has a *fixed mindset.* Good to know.

Learn from bad bosses, too. It will help you become a much better leader once it is your turn.

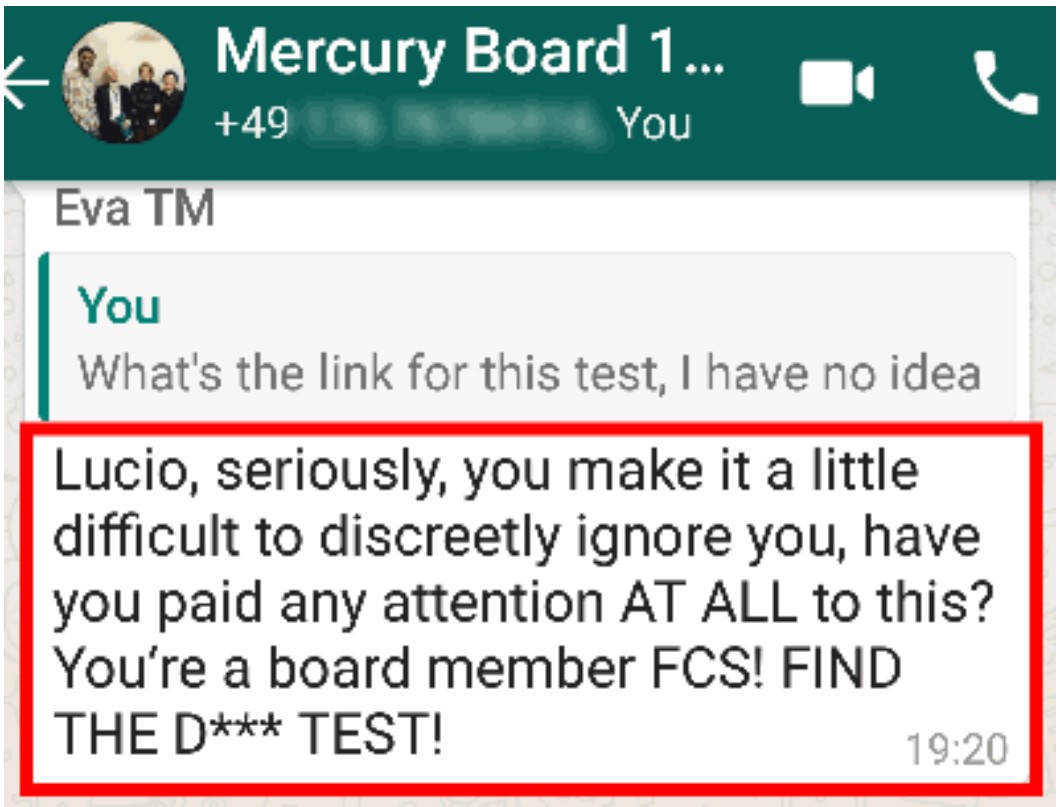
Also see:

- **How to get rid of bad bosses**

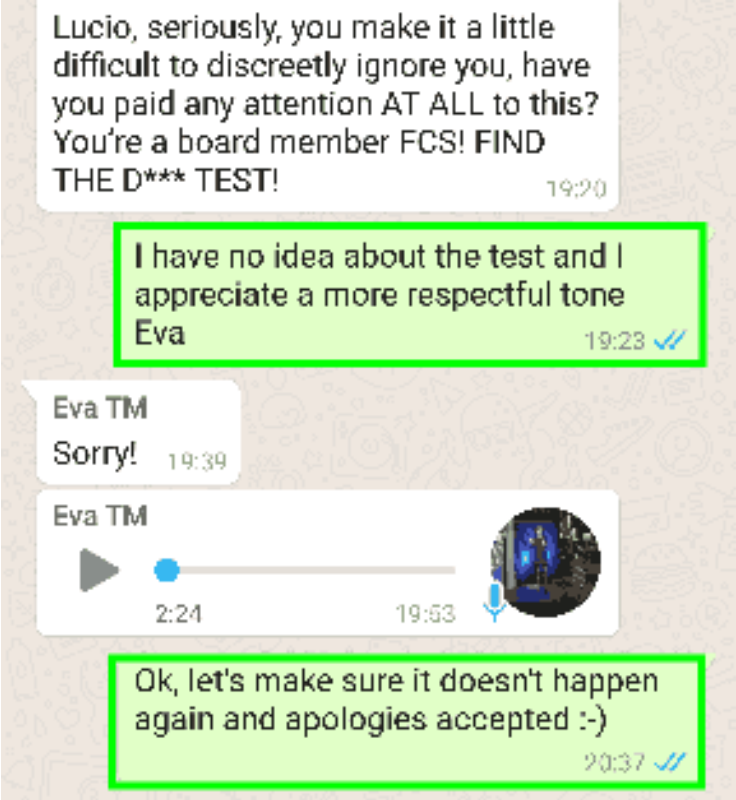
Case Study

In a Toastmasters leadership WhatsApp group.

Think of the social power dynamics, and think of ways you would handle the shouting boss:



Now take a look at my reply and try to think of why I said what I said:



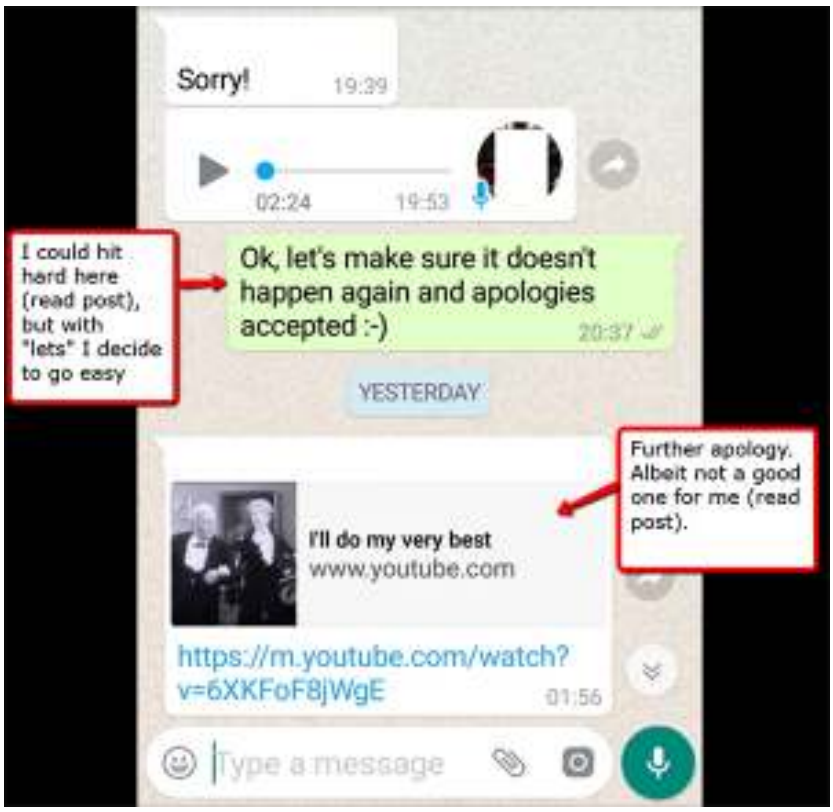
Now read the comments and the notes below:

Lots of power moves in my replies. Get Power University for the full strategy

> **Her**: You make it difficult to discreetly ignore you <— Rude and babying
>
> **Her**: FIND THE D*** TEST! <— Equivalent of rude yelling
>
> (3 minutes later) <— ♟ Strategic fast reply. I didn't want her to apologize on her own. I wanted her to apology *because of me* ⍰⍰
>
> **Me**: I have no idea about the test <— Confidently owns it.
> And I appreciate a more respectful tone Eva <— Focuses on the tone, sets boundaries with straight talk
>
> **Her**: Sorry! <— Good, but not enough
>
> **Me**: (silence) <— ♟ I wanted everyone to read. I wanted her to stew on it, and add more
>
> **Her**: (audio message) <— High-investment extra apology
>
> **Me**: OK, let's make sure it doesn't happen again, and apologies accepted :) <— Now it was enough to accept.

Because I found it unacceptable, I was ready to stand my ground as long as needed.

Anyway, let's go on and see what happened:



After the apology, I strike a conciliatory tone.

If you have enough power and want to come out on top avoid the socially friendly "let's" and say:

> *OK, make sure it doesn't happen again and apologies accepted*

Note the video "I'll do my very best" is a further apology, albeit not an empowering one.

To begin with, "doing one's best" is not enough when you're serious about not accepting abuse. He must do it full stop, not doing his best.

And second, "doing one's best" implies the possibility, and power, of doing it again.

Not too cool. Ideally, you want to be near the same level of power as your boss so that he doesn't even think that yelling (again) is even a possibility.

Learn more techniques about executing vs giving orders:

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

But OVERALL…

I gained significant status and respect.
Do something similar with a bad boss, and others will see you as a leader with strong values.
It wasn't by accident I was proposed as the next president, and it went unchallenged.

SUMMARY

So to deal with a yelling boss start with the mindsets: you deserve respect.

Then, grow leverage.
Develop your skills, network, options, and save money.

This article then showed you the step-by-step techniques you can use.

Remember this lesson when you become the boss: treat people with dignity, and you'll contribute to a better world.

Men on Strike: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Men on Strike analyze feminist and gender-related issues. Helen Smith, the author, says that society has become hostile towards the male gender, and this attitude is costing both men, women, and society at large.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Marriage Is Unfair to Men
  - Society is Becoming Feminine and Male-Unfriendly
  - Colleges Are Pro-Women & Against Men: And That's Why Men Abandon College
  - No Father-hood Control
  - He Has No Say On Parenthood, But He's Stuck With Child Support
  - Men's Affirmative Actions
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Our society has become increasingly hostile and unfair toward men
- Men lose their shirts in case of divorce and are held hostage by their wives
- Men are reacting by "refusing to play": not getting married, not being chivalrous

Full Summary

About The Author: Helen Smith, the author, considered herself a feminist. Until she found out that feminism didn't mean equality of sexes, but female privileges and discrimination against men.
She decided she wasn't going to stand for that.
"*Men on Strike*" represents her new philosophy when it comes to feminism and gender issues.

Marriage Is Unfair to Men

The author says that marriage has become a better and better deal for women and more and more dangerous for men.

She cites a survey from Men's Health showing that men in cohabiting situations are happier and more confident than married men. And the wives thinner.

This is because, says the author, **marriage gives power to the woman**, who takes the man for granted and treats him as hired help rather than as a partner (albeit, I have to add, correlation does not imply causation).

Also, read:

- The tools women use to control men and relationships

I also found it interesting, albeit it's drawn from a small sample size (141) and on self-described traits, that the men more likely to be against marriage were virgins and low earners.

Men who identified themselves as alpha males were more likely to want a marriage.

Society is Becoming Feminine and Male-Unfriendly

Helen Smith says that schools, colleges, and society frown upon masculinity.

And the tendency is to eradicate and stamp out male traits from the boys.
Men, says the authors, are seen as abusers and dangerous sex.

Colleges Are Pro-Women & Against Men: And That's Why Men Abandon College

Since at universities, the environment is so anti-male, more and more men are abandoning college.

And that's why, implies the author, there are more and more women on campus.
This is similar to the message that Jordan Peterson more recently has been sending out -check his *12 Rules for Life*-
.

My Note:
It's probably true that feminism and anti-male campaigning is too strong in universities, but I believe the reasons for decreasing male attendance are, by and large, of different nature.
Read *Date-onomics*, successful women dating, and how to date.

No Father-hood Control

Men don't have much control over their fate as fathers.

If the woman tricks the man into saying she was on the pill, he has no say on whether or not the baby should be born.

And his woes aren't over because:

He Has No Say On Parenthood, But He's Stuck With Child Support

The man will be forced to pay for child support -it doesn't matter whether or not he was tricked into it-.

Indeed, there are many cases of women who used a man's sperm for self-impregnation and received big checks as a reward for their shenanigans.

In one shameful example, Boris Becker was forced to pay for child support even when the woman made him a BJ and then manually inserted his semen in her vagina.

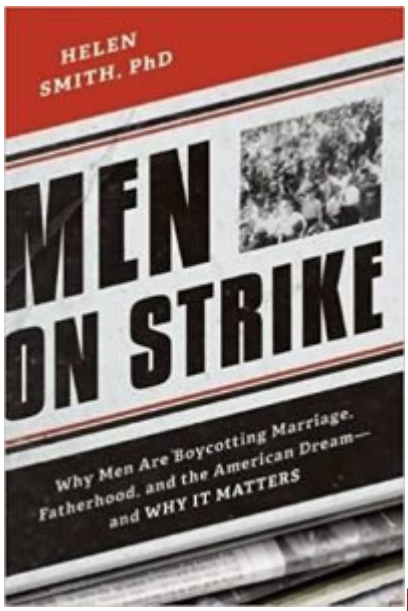
Even in statutory male rape, a man is forced to pay. And this is why, by and large, I agree with the author.

Men's Affirmative Actions

What can men do?

The author has lots of great tips on groups you can join and even great advice on how you can react to women trying to put you down.

And most of all, I liked the concept that you shouldn't fall for the mindset of "man up and shut up", but speak up against abuse.



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Real-Life Applications

I'll make a proper article about it, but not to get screwed the author recommends:

- Stay single
- Cohabit but don't get married
- Know your local law and palimony laws

CONS

Empirical Evidence
Men on Strike sometimes presents a lot of empirical evidence based on stories and some too small sample sizes to draw conclusions (like a poll on Vox Day with 141 respondents).
But this is not to say the book doesn't make valid points: it does make very valid points.

Review

What a wonderful sociological analysis!

I disagree with some of the key tenets of Men on Strike. Namely, men are withdrawing from college because they sense unfairness. And I think it goes a bit too far at times.
But it also presents extremely valid points.

I have to admit I was skeptical before starting to read it. I reject feminism because of its juxtaposition of genders, of viewing women VS men.
So for the same reason, men VS women (or VS current feminine society) was equally meaningless to me.

Plus I was loath of sounding like a complainer and I had always refused of entertaining the thought that current regulation was unfair towards men.
After all, nobody ever says it.

But this book opened my eyes to many current injustices.

And I had to nod as I realized for the first time that yes, it's not damn normal that as a man I don't want to be seen too close to children. And that's possible because society's image these days is that of men as children's predators (urgh!).

And of course:

- Men forced to pay child support for children who are not theirs
- Men forced to pay child support for children they fathered as teenagers with 30-something women

All pretty crazy.

So I not only recommend you read *Men on Strike*, but I would warmly welcome people to reflect on its message.

Check out the **best red pill books** or get this book on Amazon

The Magic of Thinking Big: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Magic of Thinking Big exhorts readers to abandon small and easily-achievable goals and to shift instead to huge goals -moonshots- that drive you and motivate you.

Contents

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- Summary
  - Believe in Success and You Will Succeed
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- Review

Bullet Summary

- The first step towards success is thinking big
- Whether you believe you can or you can't you're right: believe you can
- Drop all excuses and start

Summary

About The Author:
David Joseph Schwartz (1927-1987) was a professor of marketing at Georgia State University, but he is best known for his work as a motivational writer and coach, most of all with the book we are reviewing here, "*The Magic of Thinking Big*".

Believe in Success and You Will Succeed

1. Believe you will succeed
2. Dream big

Schwartz says that to succeed you must believe you will succeed.

Start by changing all your fears and doubts into positive thoughts. And think big: the size of your success is in direct

proportion to the size of your beliefs.

> The size of your success is proportional to the size of your dreams

Drop All Excuses

Schwartz dedicates a chapter to the excuses people come up with to avoid going for lofty goals.
But to be successful stopping the excuse mill is mission-critical step 1.

Don't Underestimate Your Intelligence

Do not underestimate your own intelligence as much as you don't want to overestimate other people's intelligence.

Schwartz also says that attitude is more important than IQ (read *Emotional Intelligence*) and, I would add, your intelligence is not cast in stone.

You can change your brain and grow your skills. Also, read how to develop a growth mindset.

That being said, your intelligence also matters more or less depending on which field you decide to pursue.

> The less excuses you make, the more successful you will be

Build Confidence and Destroy Fear

I really liked two guidelines by the author:

1. Take action – it's loitering inaction that feeds fear
2. Only do what you believe is right to do

Also read: How to Stop Worrying and Start Living.

Think & Dream Creatively

1. Believe you can do it and your mind will find ways to do i
2. Don't let past traditions get in the way: experiment, go for new approaches, and think of different
3. Demand yourself how you can do better and magical answers will show you the way
4. Scramble therapy: meet and talk to new and different people, and get new inputs in your mind. Ideas in = ideas out

You Are Who You Think You Are

Change how you think about yourself and you will change your life.

1. Carry yourself as if you were important. Because you are
2. Think of your work as important. Because it is
3. Ask yourself how the ideal and important you would act. Then act that way

Go First Class

Get the best people you can around you, pick the best advisors, and only listen to successful people.
Always go for the best in class. You can't afford anything else.

> Always go first class. You can't afford anything else.

Think Right Towards People

The Magic of Thinking Big also deals with social skills.

Schwartz encourages the readers to introduce themselves and be proactive in making new friendships.

Similar to *How to Win Friends* he recommends you take care of remembering people's names.
And a very good suggestion is to accept people as they are and focus on the positives.

Also, read:

- The best social skills books

Think Like a Leader

To get people to follow you, start by putting yourself in their shoes and looking at things from their perspective.

Treat people fairly and lead by example.
Also, read:

- How to Become a Leader

Get In The Habit of Action

Start things, don't wait for conditions to be perfect because they never are.

Waiting for the perfect time is often only an excuse you're making. You will meet obstacles anyway, start and solve them as you go: *the obstacle is the way*.

The author recommends you don't wait for your spirit to get you going, but *build the habit* of moving right away.

> You don't dare because it's difficult, but it's difficult because you don't dare it's difficult

Turning Defeat Into Victory

Schwartz says that you must study your faults and mistakes in order to avoid repeating them in the future.

Don't let the pain overwhelm you, as Tony Robbins says there's some good in every situation, you only need to find.
And if you can't find any, here's what Ray Dalio says: pain + failure provide your biggest drivers for growth.

Set Big Goals

Get clear on where you want to and write it down: your life is too important to leave it to chance.

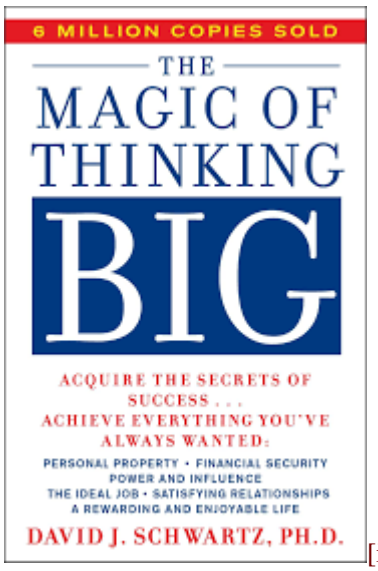
Then let your goals drive you and motivate you along the way.

The Magic of Thinking BIG

The author finally ties down the power of thinking big in driving you forward.

Even in the toughest situations:

- When haters hate: think BIG, it's proof you're growing
- When you get scared: think BIG, focus on your strengths, look important, and remember nobody's any bigger than you
- When you're getting angry: think BIG, a quarrel is not probably worth your time
- When your romantic life is in trouble: think BIG. Rebuild romance, don't get even



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Real-Life Applications

Don't Overestimate People's Intelligence
That is so true. As Steve Jobs said, "when you realize it's people no smarter than you are that run this world, things change". It took me a long time to realize that… And I'm still in that process.

Put Positive Memories in Your Brain
I liked the idea of putting positive thoughts and memories in your mind when you wake up and before going to bed. Try it out, it's helpful.

CONS

It's aged a bit
If you've been around the self-help literature for a while most of the information in here won't be new to you. But that's not to say the book isn't valid: quite the opposite, it's this book that propagated many of those ideas.

Does thinking big really work?

Thinking big may, or may not work, and we don't know for sure because there are no experiments or research that show how thinking big leads to *achieving* big.

When it comes to "focusing on the positives", that's a popular mantra of self-help, but that doesn't mean it's correct.

Self-learned optimism, as the more scientific Martin Seligman calls it, is different than simply thinking positively. And optimism is in some fields and endeavors, but not every time and everywhere, as Seligman himself stresses out.

Also read: self-help myths and pop-psychology myths.

Review

The Magic of Thinking Big is an OK book with an interesting, but ultimately untested concept.

In my personal experience, I think that many people would gain with bigger goals.
But I've also seen plenty of people with way too big goals for their levels and skills, and not nearly enough realism, self-assessment, and strategic thinking to even increase their odds of success.
They miserably failed.

The concept of The Magic of Thinking Big reminded me a bit of the concept of moonshots in *Bold*.

Overall, it's a good book, but most people can probably find more impactful books and resources in the vast self-help literature.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

To Be Good, You First Need to Be Bad: Here's Why

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 March 2018 · Archived copy · Original

A big tenet of this website is that to be a force for good in the world, you have to learn how to be bad.

The concept of facing evil as a necessity for good is not simply a matter of philosophy, but there's enough empirical evidence to prove it.

The first part of this post will address the quantitative, more empirical side.

The second part will address the question more from the individual point of view.

Contents

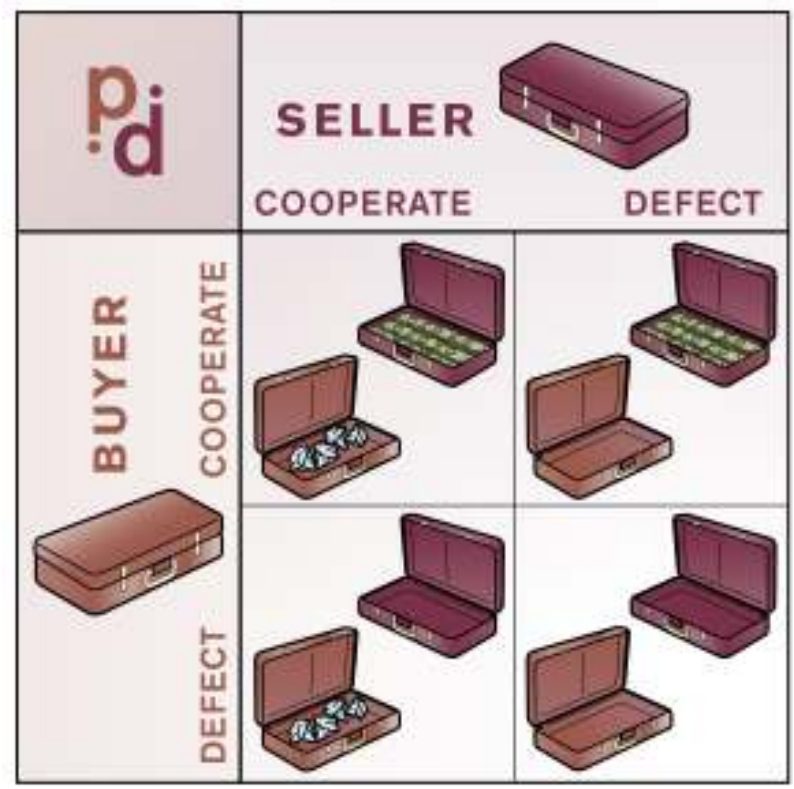
- An Empirical Case For Mastering Evil
  - 1. Abusive & Too Nice Strategies Die Out
  - 2. Conditional Cooperation Wins
  - 3. Retaliation is Required
- Too Nice Is The Root of Evil
  - The World Needs Good Men With Capacity for Evil
  - More Evil In Real World
- Why You Must Master Evil
  - 1. Mastering Evil Prevents Abuse
  - 2. You Remove Yourself From The Easy Target List
  - 3. You Respect Yourself More
  - 4. The Only Way to Do Good
- The Hero Journey
- Summary

An Empirical Case For Mastering Evil

Cooperation can be a conundrum in the face of otherwise selfish genes.

But Axelrod's experiments detailed in *The Evolution of Cooperation* explain how cooperation also makes sense for selfish individuals.

The experiment is a computer program running a simplified version of negotiations (iterated Prisoner's dilemma). Many different negotiation strategies were pitted against each other.



By Christopher X Jon Jensen (CXJJensen) & Greg Riestenberg (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

In brief, these were the main strategies:

- **Always defect** to get maximum selfish payoff (cheating, in human terms);
- **Always cooperate** (too nice, in human terms);
- **Middle of the road** between the two (shall we say, "strategic". Or, to humanize even more, assertive and win-win).

Albeit obviously simplistic when compared to human social exchanges, these experiments are still significant for us.

And the "too nice" VS "too cheating" strategies also allow to draw parallels with human behavior.

The results of these game theory experiments are very telling:

1. Abusive & Too Nice Strategies Die Out

The strategies skewed towards maximum payoff -"abusive"- die out.

And the same fate awaits highly cooperative strategies -let's call them "too nice"-.

Who wins, then?

2. Conditional Cooperation Wins

The strategy that won out, TIT FOR THAT, could be interpreted as a middle-of-the-road, sort of an "assertive win-win".

Read more on TIT FOR TAT strategies, but in a nutshell, it works like this:

1. First, it cooperates
2. It keeps cooperating with those who cooperate
3. It retaliates with those who cheat

4. It starts from scratch after the retaliation

3. Retaliation is Required

"Tit for tat" embodies, empirically, the central thesis of this post (and a central tenet of this website).

And that is that to allow cooperation and win-win you need to be able to punish and cast aside the abusers of this world.

There have been more elaborate techniques that eventually beat "Tit for tat", but they all included the capacity of cooperating as default while defending and isolating abusers (for a good overview see Ridley, 1996).

> **For cooperation to even exist, evil must be met with evil**

Too Nice Is The Root of Evil

Helplessness to evil invites evil (and gives evil the world)
As the empirical experiments show, highly cooperative strategies ("very nice", in human terms) are the best for everyone IF everyone else around were to be equally very nice.

But it's important to notice that unless forever ring-fenced, **naively cooperating environments are in high danger of being invaded and taken over by opportunistic cheats**.

Indeed, as long as an abusive alien force can penetrate a highly agreeable system, the agreeable players will be relegated to ever-increasing indigence, enslavement, and, eventually, extinction.

Indeed a dishonest strategy seeping into a cooperative-only strategy (too nice strategy) would make it easy to pick off everyone who can't retaliate.
Unable to defend themselves, the too-nice people of this world succumb to the self-centered, evil player.

The World Needs Good Men With Capacity for Evil

When we extrapolate the results of game theory, we get a bleak outlook for virtues without the capacity for evil.

Because if people with good intentions don't arm themselves with the tools and knowledge to muster evil when it's necessary, then this world is mathematically doomed to be run by evil people.

No wonder so many people around the world lost all faith in the political class: it seems like getting to the top automatically filters out the good players.
Which is indeed something that happens when systems become rotten to the core.
Mathematically indeed, it's impossible to infiltrate a cheat-only system with a collaborative strategy (unless many collaborative players enter it at once).

More Evil In Real World

There's one more twist.

The simulation probably makes it harder for abuse to pay off.

"Tit for tat" for example plays multiple rounds with fixed payouts.
But what if one could win big once without retribution? Or cheat without anyone else knowing it?

Indeed, abusive behavior is more likely to pay off socially when:

- Nobody knows you have cheated
- The other player cannot retaliate
- You will never meet the other player again
- You can win huge and give back little when retaliated against

You will notice that any of the above are common instances in life.
An abuser who is able to legally -but not ethically- take advantage of someone else, for example, will often face no retribution.

What's left to do, then?

Why You Must Master Evil

By mastering evil I am referring to:

1. The ability to recognize evil when you see it
2. The strength, and skills, to withstand it (avoid it or destroy it)
3. The ability to act evil, when needed

Once you can do that, it will do a myriad of great things for you, the people around you, and the world at large:

1. Mastering Evil Prevents Abuse

When you know how to recognize dishonest players, you are also more likely to defuse them or even beat them at their own game.

It's a little bit like martial arts training.
You will be able to spot the signs of aggression and are more likely to respond calmly and confidently.
Which, overall, lowers the chances a fight will ever be needed.

2. You Remove Yourself From The Easy Target List

Who do abusers prey on?

Mostly on people who are easy to prey on, of course. When you can read the signs of dishonesty and cruelty and are able to send back equally powerful signals, you are less likely to become prey.

And if everyone were able to withstand evil, evil will cease to pay off. And cease to exist.

> If you're unable to muster evil, you're enabling evil to exist

3. You Respect Yourself More

As Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules For Life*, explains: if you are too nice, too agreeable, and too passive in the face of abuse, you will pay the price emotionally.

All that action that you're not taking, all that anger you're bottling up makes you become bitter and resentful.

Peterson says that if you're harmless you're not virtuous. There's no virtue in being harmless.

But if you're a monster without acting monstrously, *then* you're virtuous. And, I would add if you can be a monster and act virtuously, then you're a hero.
Why don't you be a hero instead?

4. The Only Way to Do Good

Ultimately, I believe, you can't do good in any meaningful way without being able to be bad when the time calls for it.

I'm afraid it's again simple logic that supports this statement: the higher you aim, the more you will have to contend with evil.

Your success will attract lots of great people and great opportunities. But also the swindlers, the resentful haters, and the vultures looking for easy spoiling.
And of course, it might be the case that unfair competitors won't stop at anything trying to squash you.

It derives that you cannot spread love at scale if you cannot destroy the evil that stands in the way.

The better angels of our nature are useless if they can't confront evil

The Hero Journey

“Having an impact” has become a catchphrase.

Usually, people mean to say they want to have a *positive* impact.

Albeit we find the mantra to be potentially manipulative, we appreciate the goal of succeeding while adding value. That’s what win-win is, and we’re all for win-win here.

However, to effectively add value while also winning for yourself… You do need to learn all the “darker” disciplines we teach here:

- Machiavellianism
- Manipulation
- Social power dynamics
- Leadership power dynamics
- ….

And you must learn all of that… While also never forgetting the light.

As Nietzsche says: when you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back at you.
That’s especially true when you move forward in life. The higher you go, the more ahole you will meet.

And all the turkeys you meet along the road may

But don’t let that stop you.
Mastering the dark while still pushing ahead for the light is the ultimate hero’s journey.

Go for it.

> Get your sword. Then keep it sheathed (most of the times).

Summary

We talked about why you need to be bad.

But don’t get this article wrong:

We’re not promoting endless cynicism here -more *enlightened* cynicism.

There are plenty of good men and women in the world.
And some will even help you while asking for little or nothing in return.

But what this article says is that you can’t count on that.
There will be people wanting to take advantage of you along the road. That’s also human nature. And you’re better off being prepared for that.

This is what this website -and Power University- are all about.

A Random Walk Down Wall Street: Psychology of Stockmarkets

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

A Random Walk Down Wall Street makes the case that the stock market moves randomly in the short term, and it helps readers understand how they can leverage that knowledge to improve their investment strategy.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Foundations and Castles in The Air
  - Irrational Exuberance Exists, But It's An Exception
  - Technical Analysis: A Non-Science
  - Fundamental Analysis: Better But Still Not Perfect
  - Random Walk Means You Shouldn't Try to Predict
  - Anything Less Than A Decade It's Pure Randomness
  - Where to Invest?
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- The market moves randomly and unpredictably
- There's a long-term upward bias though
- Don't try to outperform the market

Full Summary

About The Author:
Burton Malkiel is an American economist and writer.
Burton largely espouses the efficient-market theory over the long run. But he adds that there are exceptions and, in the short term, markets are much more random than economists had long believed.
This is a position that behavioral finance has eventually confirmed (see *Thaler, 2016*)

Foundations and Castles in The Air

Burton says there are two ways of approaching investment:

1. Financial fundamentals investing (value investing)
2. Castle in the air

Castle in the Air is based on following trends and emotions.
And it's not necessarily a poorer alternative as it can give much higher returns.

An example of Castle in the air investing would have been to invest in cryptocurrencies when the hype was reaching the *early majority* and about to go into a buying craze.

Irrational Exuberance Exists, But It's An Exception

Malkiel reviews a few of the financial bubbles over the years, such as:

- Tulipomania
- Nifty Fifty
- South Sea Bubble
- Wall Street Crash of '29
- Dotcom Bubble

The author says that the markets always return to roughly the pre-crush levels.
It's because markets do tend towards efficiency and after the irrational binge they tend to get back to rational levels.

Technical Analysis: A Non-Science

Malkiel introduces the two main analyses people use to decide when to buy:

- Fundamental analysis -poring over financials and market prospects-
- Technical analysis -looking at chart patterns-.

He severely criticizes technical analysis, saying that most correlations are dubious and that when you focus on charts you're focusing on the micro and losing sight of the macro.

Indeed, when a completely random chart was shown to some famous "chartist", they couldn't tell the difference between a random walk and a real stock's movements.

Fundamental Analysis: Better But Still Not Perfect

The author has more respect for fundamental analysis, but he says that's also lacking.

Not only the whole idea has several flaws, but the results are poor.

He says that analysts who were asked to predict the price of a stock within 5 years were very inaccurate.
They shorten the period to one year and they were even less accurate. And it wasn't a question of industry: no industry turned out to be easy to predict.

Random Walk Means You Shouldn't Try to Predict

Basically the central thesis of "*A Random Walk Down Wall Street*" is that stocks move in a random pattern that cannot be predicted.

The shorter the timeframe, the more random the movements will be.

Technical analysis is mostly bogus, while fundamental analysis is based on actual data, but is still poor at predicting the future.

However, long run, the trend is upward.

> It's flipping a coin – with a slight upward bias

The question is, how long:

Anything Less Than A Decade It's Pure Randomness

The author says that the past is a very flawed indicator of the future.

Yes, over a long period of time, stocks will likely outperform bonds and will beat inflation, but in the short term, there's no such guarantee. And in periods shorter than a decade, it's basically random.

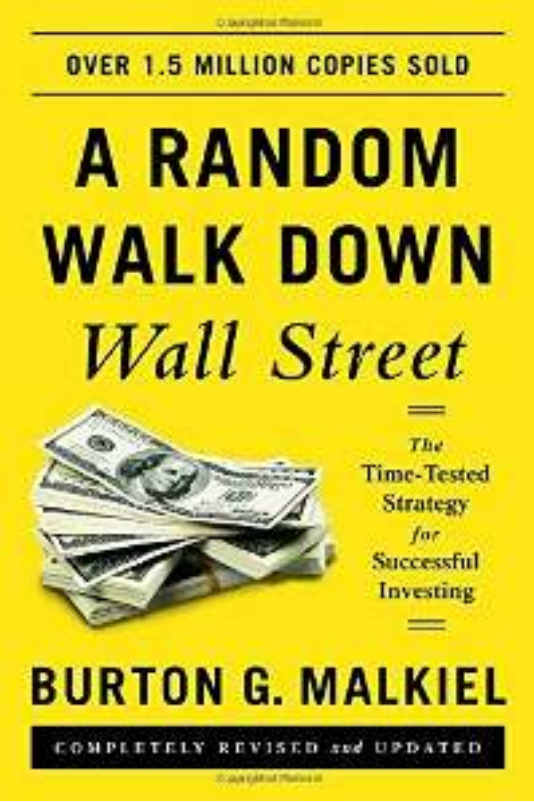
That's why Malkiel believes that Target-Date Funds are a good idea because these de-risk as your chosen date -often retirement- approaches.

My note:
This is contrary to Robbins in MONEY Master The Game, who says the idea that bonds are less risky is wrong because stocks and bonds can often move in the same direction.

Where to Invest?

If you can't beat the market -and if even trying would require so much time and effort-, what are the alternatives? The author recommends:

- Invest in Index Funds
- (Mostly) avoid actively managed funds
- Don't overtrade

[image] 

CONS

I mostly agree with Malkiel.
Yet, there are also important holes in his theory that he should have addressed.

For example:

- **What About Those Who DO Beat The Market?**

Warren Buffet, following *Graham's value investing theory*, and Ray Dalio, just to name two, do beat the market for long stretches of time.

What about them?

There ARE exceptions who manage to beat the market in the long run and Buffet uses fundamental analysis that Malkiel says doesn't really work.
And it would have been interesting to read about the exceptions to the rule.

Review

Any new young man who thinks he can make money in the stock market should read "*A Random Walk Down Wall Street*".

This text will hopefully help them see that trying to beat the *market* is mostly a fool's errand.

As a sociologist and as a website focused on psychology and social psychology, I particularly loved the analysis of the human aspects of investing.

RSD Julien Scandal: Handling Shame Attacks (CNN)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The story of the RSD scandal involving Julien Blanc is the story of a typical shame attack.

In 2020's words, you'd call it a "cancel culture attack".

Contents

- Intro
- Julien Blanc Scandal: Intro
  - What's Moral Police?
  - #1. Don't Give Them Moral High Ground
  - #2. Break The Attack Early
  - #3. Counterattack: Highlight Moral Police Hypocrisy
  - #4. Remove Their Power: Agree
  - #5. Prove The MPs Wrong
  - #6. Reject Their Frame
  - #7. Extol Your Virtues (Broken Record Technique)
- SUMMARY

Intro

Cancel culture is about power.

The attacker also referred to as "moral police", "virtue signaler", or "social justice warrior" publicly attacks a sacrificial lamb.

The goal of the attacker is, whether he knows or not, power.
Often, it's in the form of:

1. **Reputational "virtuosity" gain**, to look saintly and "right"
2. **Leadership gains**, to lead a charge of other cancelers
3. **Self-signaling gains**, so that he can hide his own dark side to himself and pretend he's "good"
4. **Rational and strategic gains**, for example by eliminating a competitor
5. Culture influence. Please note that sometimes that influence of a virtue signaler can be a positive influence!

Cancel culture does not always have bad effects.
Sometimes someone *deserves* to be canceled. Or it can be good for society to cancel something.

However, as for everything, canceling can be done for good causes, or… Not so good ones.

And with everything, also come the excesses.

So, in many cases, canceling others is at least of dubious moral virtues.

To gain more points, the attacker frames the victim as "bad beyond reproach" and "not good enough" to live and operate in the society that the virtue signaler wants.

Anyone who works and operates outside of the morality of their zeitgeist can be the victim of a similar scandal.
So it's good if you prepare yourself.

By the end of this article, you will learn what you should do in a similar situation and how you can deal and beat the moral police.

Julien Blanc Scandal: Intro

Julien Blanc (previously RSDJulien), was a dating coach at a company called RSD.

He was mired in a scandal for some videos he had done in Japan, and he appeared on CNN for an interview (you can watch the full version here).

It wasn't a friendly interview, though.
There were no questions, no letting him explain, and no finding out what really went on.

The interview format was confrontational and framed him in the most negative light. Indeed, he demonized Julien, took the worst pictures he could find, and bullied him on live TV.

Albeit I believe the interviewer was rather unfair and Julien didn't deserve that much hate, this post is not about taking a position on the issue but more to analyze the interview.

The objective is to share and learn how to deal with moral attacks when you actually *did* do something wrong.

What's Moral Police?

I will define moral policing as such:

> The act of shaming someone for breaking an alleged standard of ethics and morals, and framing him as "unworthy" for that morally just society

The standards of ethics and morals are either the majority's standards or simply the ones that the moral police prefer.

Moral policing is a pejorative term, implying that the ethics and morals used as yardsticks are not necessarily good and positive but can simply be a tool to win an argument and destroy an opponent.

The moral police always take a judge role against the attacker, framing themselves as "moral and fair" and framing the attack as "not good enough" for us.
To learn more about judges please read here:

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Power & Control

We have seen shame attacks and more policing before on this site, for example analyzing the Charlie Sheene interview.

But this case is different because Julien Blanc's public behavior gave critics legitimate material to attack, which made the shame dynamic easier to trigger.

So, in truth, the first step is 'don't be an asshole, be an honorable man'.
Once you do that, you can focus on defending yourself like a high-power, high-value, honorable man.

Here is how you do it:

#1. Don't Give Them Moral High Ground

This is the very first rule.

Whenever you allow anyone to take the moral high ground on you, you're going to fight an uphill battle.

They will be always on the offensive and you will always be on the defensive.

Which is what, partially, happened to Julien Blanc.

See an example of how the interviewer takes the moral high ground by setting himself up as the defender of "meaningful relationships" VS "whatever Julien preaches":

The interviewer sets himself up as the judge of "what's good" and Julien allows it, thus legitimizing his authority.

#2. Break The Attack Early

The later you act against the moral police's attacks, the more you'll be fighting against the momentum.

The key is to react early and nip their attack in the bud.

This is one of the reasons why Julien Blanc was in a difficult spot: the interviewer swung for the hilltop right off the gates. Julien gave his flank and never recovered from there.

Do the opposite instead:

- Match their intensity
- Push back and deny accusations

See how Trump did it:

> **Trump**: "*No I didn't say that at all, I don't think you understood what was said, this was locker room talk*"

Totally different approach, right? Trump led the exchange and controlled the narrative.

Reject, powerfully, and reframes effectively.

Of course, say may say Trump was lying and gaslighting.
We don't advocate manipulation here outside of a "strictly needed basis" and always prefer a honorable man approach.

Julien Blanc could have done something similar.
A stronger response in that position would have reframed intent, rejected extreme characterizations, and emphasized context without accepting the attacker's moral framing.

#3. Counterattack: Highlight Moral Police Hypocrisy

As Robert Greene suggests, hypocrisy is a powerful weapon in moral battles.

Whenever you can point out their hypocrisy, you're halfway through winning.

See how Trump goes for it against Hillary Clinton:

Note: Trump's move was not the most effective here, but it did help in removing a lot of heat from himself and opening a new front on Hillary's side.

#4. Remove Their Power: Agree

Moral police gather power only by virtue of their opponents.

Keep that in mind because that's crucial to understand the power dynamics of shame attacks.
The moral police only exist thanks to its opponent and only draw power *because* of its opponent.

Basically, their power is correlated to how bad they can make you out to be. The bigger the villain you are, the bigger they win.

On the other hand, the more virtuous you can make yourself out to be, the less power you have.

What you will do then is you will avoid entrenching yourself behind positions that are objectively too hard to defend.

What you will do instead is you will agree with some of their most agreeable positions and build bridges that show you're a sensible man.
Appeals to love, unity, and togetherness always work.

Julien could have done the same by going deeper into the wedding stories he mentioned and then adding something like:

> **You in Julien's Place**: *Absolutely many guys meet their partners for life with our seminars. And I'm so happy for them.*
> *My job at the end of the day is about helping people find love, and that's what makes my work so meaningful to me*

Look how Trump does it again with Hillary Clinton:

Clinton paints a picture of "togetherness" by trying to paint Trump as a divisive dark horse. And what does Trump do? He agrees

#5. Prove The MPs Wrong

If you're going into a protracted war, even better than words, is using actions.

When Hillary tried to nickname Trump "dark" he did the opposite, defending the rights of middle America and showing up around poor minorities.

Do the same. When the moral police try to paint you as X, you do Y.

#6. Reject Their Frame

When accusations are framed to trap you, do not accept the premise blindly.

When the moral police won't be able to attack you head-on, they will try sneaky maneuvers to catch you off guard and then spin their web around you.

If the interviewers is biased and out to frame you, then it's 'no first, and clarify later'.
Or say that "it depends", or tell them to be clearer before you commit to any answer.
This is the technique Jordan Peterson used against Newman:

Jordan Peterson's denying strategy never allowed Newman to gain a single small foothold from which to launch her moral policing campaign

#7. Extol Your Virtues (Broken Record Technique)

Moral police will keep trying to make a villain out of you.

The problem with that?

That if you let them play their game while remaining mostly silent, you *do* become a villain.

After neutralizing the attack, reinforce the broader identity and values you stand for. Public conflicts are battles over narrative identity, not just facts.

Repetition shapes perception. In public conflicts, the side that consistently reinforces its narrative often defines how events are remembered.

Case study from Trump:

When they attack you and you extol your virtue it becomes your word against theirs. If you did a good job of denying them authority, this technique will give you the edge.

SUMMARY

Julien Blanc had a close encounter with moral police in that CNN interview.

Because the RSD scandal blew out of proportion, that wasn't an easy chair to sit on, so no judging here.

This article highlights some pitfalls you should avoid and gave you the basics on how to act when someone is using moral superiority.

Stay strong, and never let the moral police push you around.

How Successful People Think: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How Successful People Think provides readers with an overview of how the mindsets and beliefs of successful people.

Contents

- Full Summary
  - Introduction
  - 6 Basic Rules to Change Your Mindset
  - 1. Focused Thinking
  - 2. Possibility Thinking
  - 3. Creative Thinking
  - 4. Realistic Thinking
  - 5. Strategic Thinking
  - 6. Reflective Thinking
  - 7. Question Popular Thinking
  - 8. Unselfish Thinking
  - 9. Bottom Line Thinking
  - 10. Big Picture Thinking
- Review

Full Summary

About The Author: John Maxwell is an American pastor, keynote speaker, leadership expert, and best-selling author.
He is also the author of "*21 Irrefutable Rules of Leadership*", "*Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn*" and "*12 Invaluable Laws of Growth*".

Introduction

Don't fool yourself:

Changing your thinking will be neither automatic nor easy.
But it can be done *if you apply yourself*.
And it will be *very* worth it.

6 Basic Rules to Change Your Mindset

Here are 6 ways to change your thinking for the positive:

- Expose yourself to good input
- Be around good thinkers
- Only spend mental cycles on positive thoughts
- Act on those positive thoughts
- Schedule out time for thinking
- Repeat the process

Also, read:

- How to develop a growth mindset
- The antifragile ego (the most important mindset of self-empowerment).

1. Focused Thinking

Successful people have very clear targets.

A very clear target allows you to get highly relevant feedback in a short period of time, which, in turn, will allow you to take strides toward your goal.

2. Possibility Thinking

Winners have a can-do attitude.
They believe in possibilities and believe there's a way to achieve anything.

3. Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is the ability to make connections and associations in a way that the final product is different than the sum of all the inputs.

Does it make sense?

Basically, Maxwell is saying that creative thinking is about combining different ideas and inputs to reach a conclusion that is different from every single input taken by itself.

I especially liked the concept that creative thinking has a relation with "screwball thinking".
"Screwball thinking" means that to think creatively, you need to tolerate some craziness.

4. Realistic Thinking

Leaders must be grounded in reality and take into account best-case scenarios, worst-case scenarios, and likelihoods.

5. Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking requires that you put your ideas and solutions into a bigger plan.

Basically, thinking about contingencies and how to actually make it happen.

6. Reflective Thinking

Reflective thinking takes time to ponder things.

Block out time and only dedicate it to thinking over your ideas.

7. Question Popular Thinking

Popular thinking is the most widely held view that most share.

But sometimes you need to escape and distance yourself from widely held views if you want to disrupt and come up with something groundbreaking.

8. Unselfish Thinking

Givers are the happiest people in the world.

If you want to improve yourself and the world, adopt unselfish thinking and learn to be a giver.

9. Bottom Line Thinking

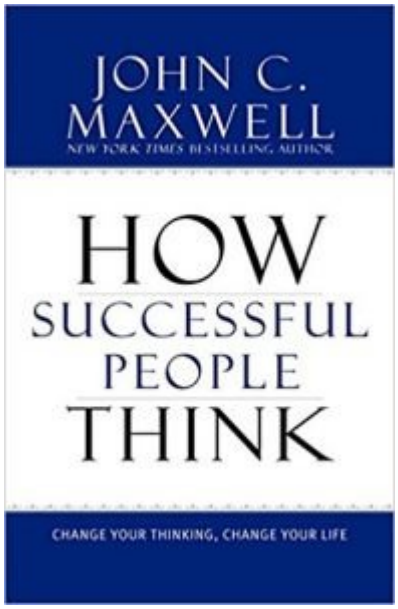
Bottom line doesn't necessarily mean thinking in dollar terms.

But it means knowing what you're after so that you can filter out your decision based on what you really want.

10. Big Picture Thinking

Successful people look deep.

But they don't get lost at the tree level: they look at the whole forest.



Review

If you're into self-development you probably won't have many "wow" moments as a lot of the material will not be new for you.

But that is not to say that the message is any less valid of course.
The principles Maxwell shares in "*How Successful People Think*" are true and timeless.
And they can always serve as a reminder.

I did prefer however some other work from Maxwell, including "*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*".

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Pitch Anything: Summary & Framework

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Pitch Anything (2011) teaches readers how to raise money and sell their ideas to investors and venture capitalists by mastering power dynamics, displaying power and resolve, and controlling the frame.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Pitch Anything Summary
  - 1. The "STRONG" Method
  - 2. Set the Frame
  - 3. Be The One With Highest Status
  - 4. Pitch Anything Framework: Less Than 20 Minutes
  - 5. Use Hot Cognitions
  - 6. Eradicate Neediness
- Real-Life Applications
- CON
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Power dynamics are key in business deals
- You must remove all neediness from your side
- Sell to the lizard brain (emotions and feelings, only later financials)

Pitch Anything Summary

About The Author: Oren Klaff is an investment banker and consultant with lots of experience in helping businesses and entrepreneurs raise money.

1. The "STRONG" Method

Oren Klaff introduces his method via the acronym STRONG, meaning:

- **S**et the frame
- **T**ell the story
- **R**eveal the intrigue
- **O**ffer the prize
- **N**ail the hook point
- **G**et a decision

2. Set the Frame

The author goes into detail on what a frame is.

As the author of a website on social skills and power dynamics, I can tell you frame is basically an umbrella word for who's got the power in the interaction.

You could say that most articles you read here are about frames. And the main idea Ofer wants to convey is that when you pitch investors, you want to do it from a position of strength.

That means: make yourself the prize, and they the commodity (money *is* a commodity after all).

Don't Over-Explain or You Lose The Frame

In every interaction, there's one party who has the stronger frame, and the stronger frame ends up absorbing the weaker frames and controlling the social interactions.

And usually, the author righteously says, when you find yourself in the position to respond (ineffectively) to what the other is saying, you have the weaker frame.

And when you need to explain your authority, you rarely hold the stronger frame.

How to Seize The Frame (& The Money)

Oren says that defiance and humor are the keys to seizing the frame.

It's key not to be confrontational because otherwise you will trigger their flight or fight response, and you don't want that.

The moment you can be defiant without being abrasive, that's when they understand they're dealing with a pro.

Ofer recommends you approach with a "playful" mindset. Imagine it's a game that you are enjoying.

The Time Power Frame

When I read this part I couldn't help but think: this book is basically The Power Moves for entrepreneurs!

Oren describes a typical situation in which a salesperson loses power with a customer:

> **Customer**: *"hey, I only have 5 minutes, but come in"*
> **You**: *"Thank you for your time, I appreciate you finding a few minutes"*

And right there and then, you handed him all the power.

Now he's the guy feeding you crumbs and you're kissing up to him, happy for receiving scraps.
Here's instead a way for getting more power in that exact situation:

> **Customer**: *"hey, I only have 5 minutes, but come in"*
> **You**: *"Sorry I don't work like that, we can't reschedule unless I know we can work well together. I need to know if you're the kind of person who can keep appointments"*
> **Customer:** *"yes you're right, sorry, come in"*

When you break his controlling frame like that, he will respect you more and listen to you properly.

Similarly, if they send in a subordinate saying that the big shot can't make it, don't try to pitch the subordinate. Tell him you can give Mr. Bigshot 15 minutes to be there or you can call it a day.

And of course, the oldest trick of them all is making you wait.
Read:

- What to do when someone makes you wait

Defending The Frame

When investors or potential buyers are drilling you down on financials, they are reinforcing their power frame.

They are the choosers.

Instead, Oren suggests that you quickly answer the financial parts, but then revert back to the relationship question.

Because your frame must be:

- Are we a good fit to work together? This is what you want to find out

See?
With that frame, you become the chooser!
So here's how Oren suggests you present the pitch:

> *Revenue is X, expenses are Y, the net is Z.*
> *The numbers and details you can verify later and take all the time you need.*
> *But first I want to find out if we are a good fit to work together.*
>
> *This is what I came here to do.*

Defending The Frame II

Ofer recommends that if they want to change the agenda, the time you've scheduled, or the people who will attend, you should refuse and withdraw.

My Note:
I could partially agree with the time. Albeit I wouldn't cancel but simply make it a bit harder for them to reschedule. I don't personally see any issue though with changing the people who attend.
If you want money because you believe in your project you shouldn't get hung up on the details of the attendees.

The Intrigue Frame

When investors meet you, it's because there's something in your product or presentation that piqued their interest.

You know something they don't, and that gives you power.

During the presentation, they will be asking themselves if they have seen it before and fully understand it, and the moment they realize they do, you lose a lot of power and they lose their interest.

What's the answer then? Don't let them feel they understand it at all!

3. Be The One With Highest Status

Status closely interrelates with frames.

The person with the highest status is most likely to hold the most powerful frame.

Here are the key steps to keep a higher status:

1. Ignore their power rituals (and avoid following)
2. Don't let his global status affect you (only focus on the situational status)
3. Look for a small acts of denial and defiance to increase your status
4. Once you have enough power move to your domain of expertise
5. Position yourself as the prize to be won over
6. Find a way to let them qualify to you and confirm your higher status

See a few of my articles with clear examples of power relations:

- Putin & Obama's power plays

- Macron VS Trump: a failure to Influence
- How Trump won the debate

4. Pitch Anything Framework: Less Than 20 Minutes

Ofer says your pitch shouldn't be longer than 20 minutes.

After 20 minutes people disconnect and start forgetting what they've already learned.
Here are the steps for an effective pitch:

4.1. Pitch Overview

First of all, reassure them it will be brief. 20 minutes only, a few questions, and then you gotta go.

It puts them at ease, raises your status, and increases their focus.

4.2. Introduce Yourself

5 minutes, a key few facts about you and your major accomplishments.

4.3. The Big Idea: Intro

- Who is it for
- Why your target customers can't find something similar
- How does your product change that (solution-based features)
- How your product differs from anything else

It's important that you show how your idea is not coming out of a lone genius mind, but it's the natural evolution of market forces and demand.

Do name competitors: it shows you are grounded in business reality.
And add some time pressure: this is the moment to strike before those competitors wake up.

4.4. Budget & Secret Sauce

Every investor know you will be conservative about your expenses and overly optimistic in your growth predictions.

Don't dwell too much on growth, but **show you're good at budgeting**: that's a rare and prized skill.

And then introduce what you do better than anyone else, that something that gives you an edge over the competition and will allow you to keep market share even when competitors jump in.

And last but not least: make sure they understand one of the biggest assets on the table is you.

5.5 Offer The Deal

Tell them what they will get when they will do business with you.

I particularly liked the idea of push and pull.
Ofer says that when you only pull (hard sell) people will get suspicious.
You should float the idea of not giving them the deal (taking it away) and then giving it back to them.

For example:

> *It might not work out between us (push). But then again, if it does, we could really do something great together.*

5. Use Hot Cognitions

Hot cognition happens when you decide you like something even before you fully understand it.

And that's what usually happens: we don't make decisions with rational cognitive processes but with emotional ones.

And then we use the data to justify those decisions.

The overarching ideas are that:

- Emotions and feelings are key
- Complex abstract concepts need to be processed by the neocortex
- But people would rather avoid using the neocortex

Ofer revisits some of the hot cognition points that will help you get to the final decisions via the lizard brain and bypass the neocortex. Some of them:

Prize Hot Cognition

This is the mindset:

You have one of the best deals available, but you are choosy as to who you work with.

Yes, you might work with them, but you need to know more: let them tell you about themselves.

Time Pressure Hot Cognition

Ofer explains there's a scarcity hot button in our brain (also read *Influence* by Cialdini).
And your pitch should make that button itch by putting some time pressure on the deal.

6. Eradicate Neediness

I was surprised to see Ofer introduce Taoism here, but it does fit very well.

Basically, he says that neediness is a huge deal killer.

The more you can reach a mindset that you want nothing from others, the easier business deals will get.

[image]

Real-Life Applications

Don't let them solve the puzzle!
When you're pitching don't make your product too simple to grasp too soon or they will lose attention. Keep something that will keep them on edge throughout the whole presentation.

Pitch to the lizard brain
Don't unload all the numbers right away: structure your pitch to appeal to emotions.

Don't get skewered!
Don't let them drill you down on the details and financials or they get all the power. Remember your frame: you're there to assess them.

CON

Too hung up on being the one with power

If you've been too needy or accommodating all your life, you need to focus on power dynamics.

But at the same time, unless you have become very good at it, people who appear to be hung up on power come across as dickheads.

"*Pitch Anything*" sometimes feels like it's too much about power struggles.

And while that *is* very important, you should also learn to influence and persuade when you're not the most powerful person in the room (and you don't always need to be to get that money).

Review

In "*Pitch Anything*" Ofer mixes psychology, a good Machiavellian understanding of social dynamics, and a long experience in deal negotiation.

In my opinion, this method might come across as too hellbent on “getting the power”.
On this website, we would say that “it’s power taking” and “no power-protecting enough”. In simpler words, that can piss people off and harm you.

However, there is also plenty of gold if you know how to use this information more smoothly.
I see a lot of overlap between Pitch Anything and this website.

So, overall, I enjoyed “*Pitch Anything*” and I couldn’t recommend it more.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Feminist Lie: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Feminist Lie purports to present readers wit hall the lies and ugly truths of feminism.
It debunks many myths and, somewhat convincingly, dismantles the overall idea that women are at a disadvantage in society.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- The Feminist Lie – Summary
  - Types of Feminism
  - The Lie of Patriarchy and Male Privilege
  - Feminism Is Responsible for Fatherless Families
  - The Wage Gap Is A Lie
  - The Fake Rape Pandemic
  - Domestic Violence Lie
  - Women Enjoy More Privileges Than Men
  - Feminism Harms Women
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- The Feminist Lie Review

Bullet Summary

- There's no male patriarchy
- Women have an advantage in today's society, not a disadvantage
- Men should be careful with the legal system (divorce, fake rape) as it's skewed to favor women

The Feminist Lie – Summary

About The Author: Bob Lewis is a pseudonym. As far as I know, the real author's identity is not known.
Albeit I would have preferred a real name, I don't see any particular issue with that.

Types of Feminism

The author says there are two main types of feminism.

One is about females' choices, and the other one overlaps with Marxist ideology puts the group first, and says that feminists cannot be oppressors.

But both of them believe in an invisible system of oppression against women that they call "patriarchy".

The Lie of Patriarchy and Male Privilege

The author has a quick excursus of world history, pointing out several successful and powerful women.

A point, he says, which should deny there ever was a patriarchy.

My note:

Albeit I'm not a big believer in patriarchy, circumstantial evidence is no definite proof of anything. This is an inductive reasoning fallacy, also read *Fooled by Randomness*.

The author says men are enjoying no privilege.
For example, most men are homeless, but it's women who disproportionately are welcomed into shelters.

Feminism Is Responsible for Fatherless Families

Bob Lewis says that feminism is somewhat directly responsible for the rise in crime.

Why?

Because feminism leads to more divorces. And children growing up without a father are more likely to veer into an unlawful life.

I agree that it's best for children to have both parents, but I'm not fully convinced that feminism is directly responsible for the higher incidence of divorces.
Sure, bitter women who hate men are less likely to make for happier marriages which in turn makes it more likely that marriages will end. But is it feminism's fault or is it just that some women are naturally difficult to live with, feminism or non-feminism?
Maybe there's a relationship between feminism's adoption and broken marriages, but I wouldn't feel like endorsing the idea that feminism is a (major) contributor to the rise of crime.

The author also says that the feminists' war on marriage is also leading more men to suicide, and he cites a few interesting stories here that do make sense.

For example, those fathers couldn't get to see the children nearly as much and were forced to pay for alimony checks that they couldn't afford.

However, I'd have to wonder again if it's feminism's fault or if it's just the system that needs to be addressed, feminism or not.

The Wage Gap Is A Lie

The author says there cannot be any wage gap, at least in the US, as that's been coded into law many decades ago.

He says that the law allows for differences in wages to cover any single factor excluding gender. But including output.

So you can have the same job title but different work output. And he says women complaining about wage differences should first focus on deserving to be paid more.

The Fake Rape Pandemic

The author says there's a fake pandemic across the US and across colleges' campuses.

He uses numbers to back his claims and cites many stories.

With the due premise that fake is a terrible crime and must be properly investigated, I had to agree with the author.

His numbers were credible and the system does seem skewed to make it too easy for women who want to abuse it (for example, to get back at someone).

Domestic Violence Lie

When there's violence from one single partner at home, it's more likely to be originating from women (read the study here).

That could make sense if you take into account that women can be more emotional and more likely to overreact. However, the author deals with the incidence but does not take into account the intensity of the violence, and the study shows men are more likely to inflict injury.

This is the first question that popped into my mind as I read the book: a slap or a push in a moment of heightened emotion could not be compared to years of punches.

In a nutshell, it was very interesting data the author presents.
It does call into question the widespread idea that men are far and wide the perpetrators of domestic violence.

The author's data is confirmed by other research I have read as well. For example, you can check Baumeister's work "*Evil*".

Women Enjoy More Privileges Than Men

The author dedicates a whole chapter to what are female privileges.

For example, in case of divorce, the woman gets a huge slice of the household wealth even though it was mostly wealth created by him.

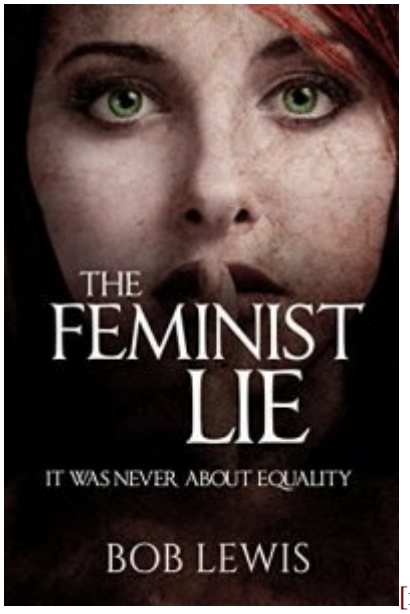
The woman can also single-handedly decide on whether to keep or not keep a baby and the man has no say in it. But the man will be forced to pay.

He will be forced to pay.
Including, the author recounts, some jaw-dropping cases such as when the woman committed statutory rape or when she surreptitiously used his semen without his knowledge.

Feminism Harms Women

I couldn't agree more with the idea that feminism, in many cases, is harming women.

Both in making some women way too bitter and in harming them at dating.



[image]

Real-Life Applications

Watch out who you marry
For all the men out there, watch you who and how you marry. You can be stuck paying big.

Watch out for fake rape accusations

I have sometimes been afraid of this. Some of the stories of men accused of fake rape are terrifying and it can be way too easy to make up a case.
I won't go into details here, but I'll make one full article going forward.

CONS

The bias left me wondering

The topics are extremely interesting and the author does use many statistics and studies to back his claims.

At the same time, he seems rather one-sided.

That doesn't mean his points aren't valid, they are, but I always felt I couldn't let myself go and fully absorb knowledge. I was constantly feeling like I needed to double-check to avoid one-party bias.

For a deeper criticism of red pill and Manosphere authors, check out:

- The Rational Male criticism
- Toxic masculinity mindsets you must drop

The Feminist Lie Review

The Feminist Lie has some similar content to the female's authored *Men on Strike*, albeit it's more aggressive and, in my opinion, darker and more polemical.

And those are the two parts I have the most grievances with.
Albeit I don't have any sympathy for men-hating feminists, I prefer a conciliatory approach.

An approach that, at the end of the day, shows that the genders are not antithetic but are better together. That's, in my opinion, the only winning approach.

That being said, the book has tons of great data and it will get you thinking big time.

Check **the best red pill books** or **get this book on Amazon**

Best Self-Help Books + FREE Summaries & Reviews

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

WARNING: THIS LIST NEEDS TO BE UPDATED!
SIGN UP FOR THE MAILING LIST IF YOU WANT TO STAY UPDATED

This is my recommended reading list of the top 10 best self-help books based on what I have read so far.

It's a perfect reading list if you are short on time but are keen on self-development. You can be sure that any recommended book here is life-changing material.

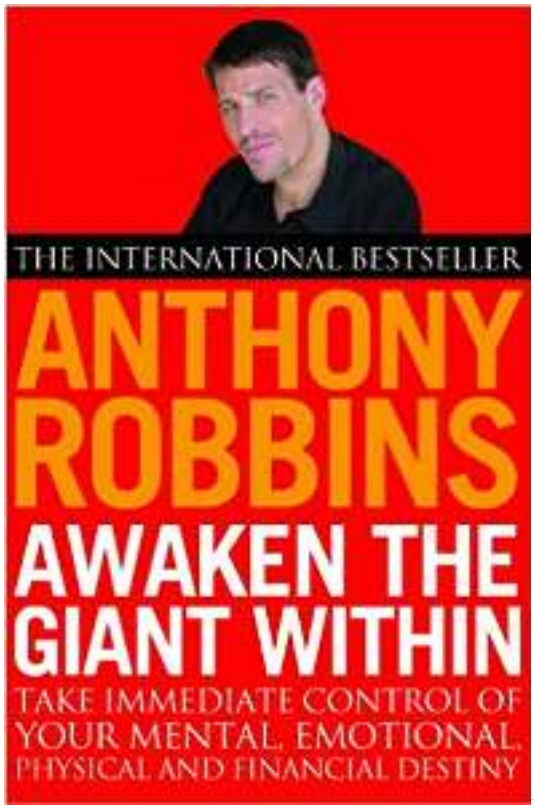
If you have any comments or if you have a book that has changed your life in the self-help genre and it's not in this reading list please let me know in the comments.
I am really curious to hear about your experience and pick further book recommendations.

Contents

- For Beginners
  - Awaken the Giant Within
  - Mindset: Psychology of Success
  - The Millionaire Fastlane
  - The Obstacle is the Way
  - Also, Read

For Beginners

Awaken the Giant Within



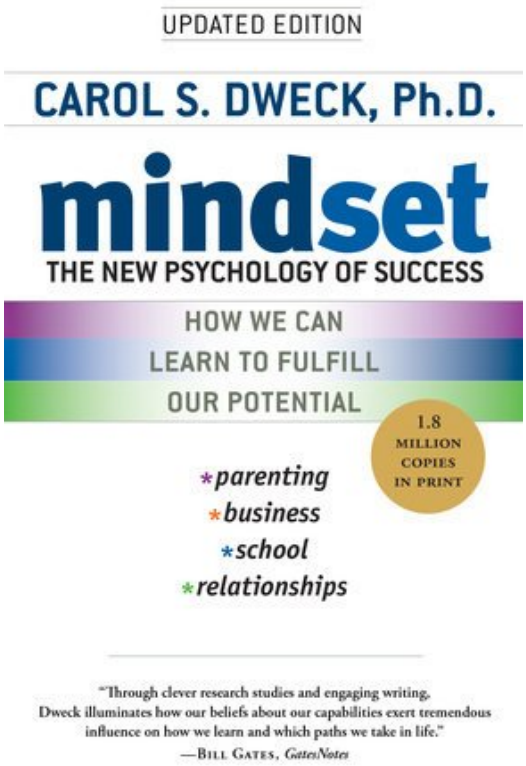
[image]by Tony Robbins
Summary | Audiobook | Kindle | Print

Could anyone draft a top 10 of the best self-help books and not have Tony Robbins featured in it? My personal favorite from Robbins is an audio product called *Personal Power II*.

But Awaken the Giant Within is the book overview of most that Robbins preaches. It's equally inspiring and motivational as it is practical and applicable.
No small feat.

> Quote: "*People are rewarded in public for what they practice in private*"

Mindset: Psychology of Success



[image]by Carol Dweck
Summary | Print

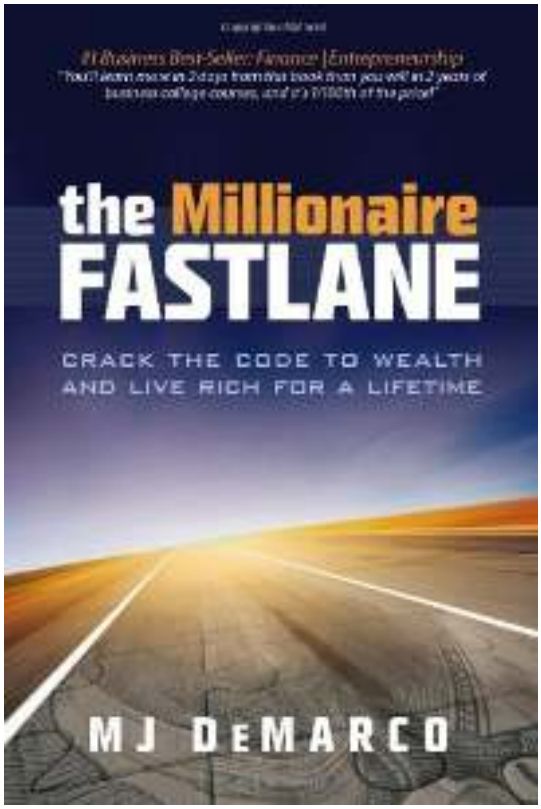
Why is Mindset the N.1 of our best self-help books reading list? It's because a growth mindset underpins the success of the highest kind, including wealth, relationships, and happiness.

It's the bedrock of living fully. Putting our egos aside, relishing new experiences, and being openly vulnerable… They are all key consequences of a growth mindset (also read developing a growth mindset).

Mindset opened my eyes not only to key mental roadblocks standing in my way but also helped me better understand human psychology.
With Mindset, suddenly, human behavior made so much more sense.

> Quote: "*Talent isn't passed in the genes; it's passed in the mindsets*"

The Millionaire Fastlane



by Mj DeMarco
Summary | Audiobook[image] | Kindle

Two things really got me about this book:

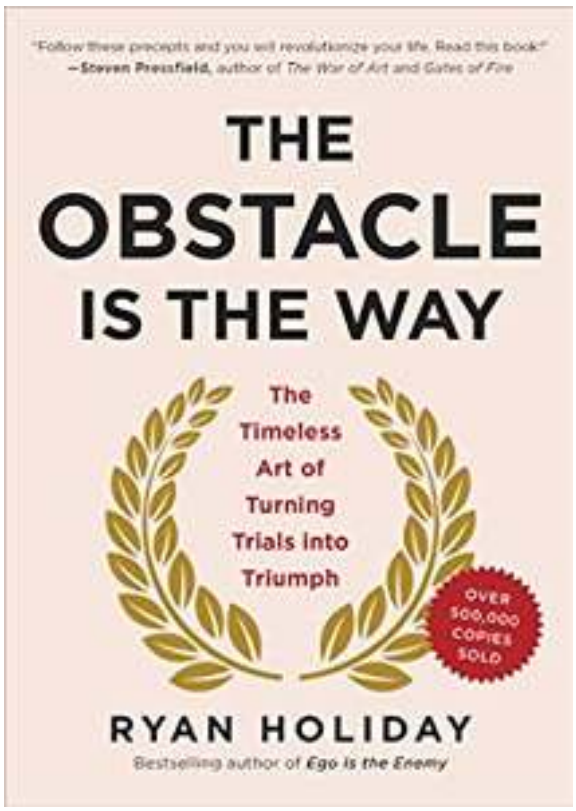
1. The paradox of practice: if authors selling get-rich products got rich selling to you, are they credible? Probably not…

2. Slow lane wake-up call: employees, duped by the compound interest myth, trade invaluable time today for distant (and uncertain) riches.

And the fast lane..? You'll have to read the book.

> Quote: "*Dump the damn job. The job sucks*"

The Obstacle is the Way



[image][image]by Ryan Holiday
Summary | Audiobook | Kindle | Print

Ryan Holidays draws on stoicism and *Meditation by Marcus Aurelius* to deliver a breathtaking treaty on how to approach -and turn around- life's obstacles.

It's an inspiring and mind-blowing read that can change your approach to life's problems. A real gem.

I have yet to read Meditation, but I consider The Obstacle is The Way the ultimate treaty on problem-solving.

> Quote: "*When you've truly done it all, relax. The final word is in the lap of the Gods.*

Also, Read

- Best communication skills books
- Best leadership books
- Best dating books for guys
- Best red pill books
- Best personal finance books (alumni only)
- Best psychology books

Note: quotes are not necessarily taken from the authors but are my way of summing up what the book meant to me.

If you are interested in getting the best insights from hundred of self-help books check Power University.

Spontaneous Girls Are Lying: It's Just A Dating Mind Game

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

It will not take long before you meet a woman who defines herself as "a spontaneous woman".

Often you will see the "spontaneous girl game" when it comes to dating.
Oh yes, because that *is* a dating game.

So much so and so widespread indeed that we can even give it its own name: the "spontaneous girl game".

This article shows you what this psychological game is all about and how you can deal with it.

Contents

- An Example of "Spontaneous Girl" Dating
- What Spontaneous Really Means
- Who Are Women Spontaneous With?
  - This Is Who Women Are Spontaneous With
- Wrong Ways of Dealing With Spontaneity
- Dealing With "I Like Being Spontaneous"
  - #1. Say Yes & Move On
  - #2. Leave It Up to Her
  - #3. Forcing a Decision
- Summary

An Example of "Spontaneous Girl" Dating

> *"I like being spontaneous"*

How many times have you heard that sentence from people you're trying to schedule something with?

I was having a couple of beers with the guys yesterday evening, making a pleasant exception to my work schedule and diet regimen.
As we drank and chatted, I asked Mark about Anna, a common acquaintance of ours.

Mark likes Anna, but they're friends, so it wasn't a typical case of setting the date.
But don't get fooled: the dynamics are the same whether it's friendship or dating.
Dating just happens to be more common and more extreme.

Mark asked Anna for a couple of possible dates when she was free and she replied, you guessed it, that "she prefers being spontaneous". Mark then did a common mistake guys do: taking her words at face value.

So he pinged her a couple of times "spontaneously" and, since this was friendship, he was finally able to find a time.

He changed his schedule for Anna, dropped a couple of friends to have some more 1:1 time, and then… Then 30 minutes before the "spontaneous date"… She spontaneously canceled.

That was the moment when I knew I had to rush out an article on "spontaneous dating".
So let's begin this spontaneous dating article:

What Spontaneous Really Means

When someone replies to you they like being spontaneous, don't read it at face value, but translate it in your head with one of the following:

#1. I'm not sure about you...

> *I'm stalling you for a while as I make up my mind*

Be advised that "for a while" often ends up being "forever".

#2. I'm not sure about my life

> *I'm not good at reaching decisions. Postponing is my way of deciding.*

Spontaneity, on those rare occasions, when it's actually true, communicates a lack of priorities and a clear vision for one's life.

Because, guess what, people with clear goals *know* what to say yes and no to and they don't let chance and "spontaneity" get in the way of their goals.

#4. I'm politely brushing you off

> *I have difficulties saying no to people. And you're so cute I'm afraid you might get hurt. So I give you a future maybe.*

Some people have a hard time saying no.

It can be too-nice girls, too-nice guys, or even people with *passive-aggressive personalities.*
And they rather deflect the date than say no right away.

#4. I'm keeping you in the backburner

> *You're not my top priority, but I'm keeping you as an option. Maybe you'll propose to take me shopping. I'd say yes to that?*

This is the so called "friend zone".
Of course, even if you two are just friends, you still want a relationship of equals, so you shouldn't be OK with her dictating the tempo 100%.

Also read:

- Friends, lovers and providers

#5. You should chase me: make it easy for me

> *I'm not gonna block any time for you. Try to ping me and if I'm cool with it and I don't have my period… I might consider you.*

Be advised that the more times you ping and the more NOs you get, the more she'll never be free (here's an article on turning around no ladders).

#6. Do more to prove yourself to me

> *I'm not yet fully open to you but start by jumping through my hoops a bit more first. And if I'm entertained enough I might consider it.*

And here's a rule of thumb: the more you jump through people's hoops, the less they respect you.

#7. I'm top dog

"I like being spontaneous" most of the times is an unconscious power move.
But conscious or unconscious, the effects are the same.

The party who likes being spontaneous is the party with more power. And the party who accepts it is also accepting the subordinate role in the relationship.

After all, think about, who do people want to be spontaneous with?

Who Are Women Spontaneous With?

If you think about it, who do women -or people in general for that matter- usually give the "spontaneous woman" line to?

- **Bosses? No**

I bet you those spontaneous people don't show up late at work saying they like being spontaneous.

Even with terrible bosses, if they care about keeping their jobs, they would at least take care of coming up with a more credible excuse.

- **People who can't wait? Nope..**

If our spontaneous friends are flying on vacation somewhere, they probably don't show up one hour late at the counter telling them they spontaneously wanted to enjoy a wine before checking in.

- **Boyfriends? Neither these guys..**

And if they have a boyfriend they like they probably don't tell their boyfriends they want to be spontaneous when he's organizing a meal together.

As silly as the top 2 might sound, what do all these scenarios have in common?

- Bosses have power over them
- Planes don't wait for them
- They *want* to meet their boyfriends (in a healthy relationship, at least)

This Is Who Women Are Spontaneous With

In short, this is who women (and men as well) pull the spontaneity card with:

- People who have little power over them
- People who will wait for them
- People they are not yet sure are important enough in their life

Not sure however doens't necessarily mean "no".
So here comes the juiciest part of this article:

Wrong Ways of Dealing With Spontaneity

Here are the most common bad ways of dealing with the “I like being spontaneous” line:

- **Accepting it at face value**

And chasing after her schedule.

- **That’s cool, I like spontaneous**

Notice there’s a slight jab in “I like being spontaneous”. And that’s that she’s free and rebellious, and you’re a bit of square.

When you say you like her for that, your are rewarding her for impolite behavior, which is the opposite of what you should do.

- **Me too!**

When you say “me too”, you’re doing a U-turn: you’re dropping your scheduling ways and conforming to her free-flowing standards.

And of course, women will like you when *you* make them U-turn, not when they make *you* change opinions.

Dealing With “I Like Being Spontaneous”

You deal with “I like being spontaneous” by refusing to accept it.
Three ways:

1. You say yes and never contact her again
2. You leave it up to her
3. You force a decision

#1. Say Yes & Move On

In the first case, you accept that either you’re not top priority for her, or that she’s a time waster, low quality woman and you move on.

#2. Leave It Up to Her

If it’s a friend and you want to stay in touch, I think leaving it up to her (or him) might be the best way to go.
You simply tell your friend:

> **You**: *Hey, I understand that you’re busy and it’s difficult to plan in advance. Tell you what, if you want to meet up, ping me when you’re good to go and we’ll see if we can set it up*

This option tells your friend that you are not going to accept any subordinate role.

You expect her to do what both parties are expected to do in a healthy relationship: chip in and contribute. So since she’s the party who can’t make plans, it’s also her who must come up with spontaneous ideas (and not you pinging her).

If it’s a dating scenario, I like the third option best:

#3. Forcing a Decision

I like forcing a decision as you can never be sure who you can move to yes until, well, until you actually push for a

final decision.
To force a decision, you reject the spontaneous gambit and pin her to an exact date (or to a no thanks).

Here's a great way to do it:

> **You**: *Oh I totally get you.*
> *I used to love being spontaneous too!*
> *Now I'm a bit too busy for spontaneity though and I'm afraid it might never happen if we don't plan (and… That could be a pity).*
> *What do you say we set a date instead*

I love this one.

It starts by relating to her and pretending you're going along.

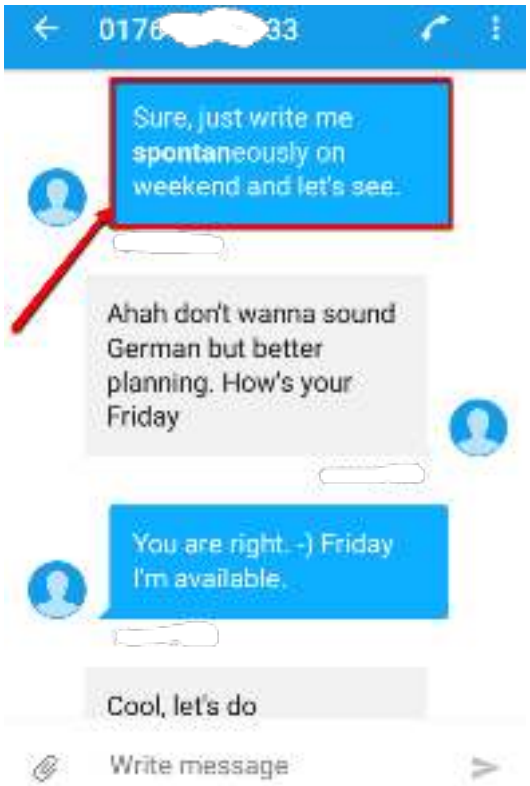
Then it delivers the punch (counter-power move) to re-establish balance in the relationship. That's when you're basically telling her she must not have much going on to be spontaneous. But you *do* have much going on and can't afford spontaneity.

And then it rebuilds her value a bit to avoid ending on a combative tone, which is the part when you say "*I'm afraid it might never happen*".
And ends on a conciliatory tone making it a collaborative effort when you end by asking her to weigh in.

Deliver this line and chances are you'll get a yes.

Example of Effective "Spontaneous Girl Handling"

And here's is a successful real life texting example:



Note: in text keep it short and not too stern: it's easy coming across the wrong way in text (this is an excerpt of my texting guideline from texts to dates).
Also read a case study on handling flaky girls.

Summary

In this article, we saw that “I like being spontaneous” is often either a brush off or a game to put you in the subordinate role in the relationship.

To avoid it, you must not ping her spontaneously but must put the ball in her court or force her into a decision.

Best of all, if you deliver it with a counter-power move saying you’re too busy for spontaneity… But you’d like to see her. So she better let you know her schedule.

P.S.: for a definitive cure to spontaneous girls, check out the texting guide.

Best Communication Skills Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

It's difficult to learn communication skills only from a book.
But it's also difficult to learn the practice only, without any theory.

The best way, which is also the way that worked best for me, is to mix quality theory with practice.
For the theory part, these are the 9 best communication skills books you can find.

Just let me be precise here.
Most lists of communication skills books that I have seen online actually include books on general social skills.

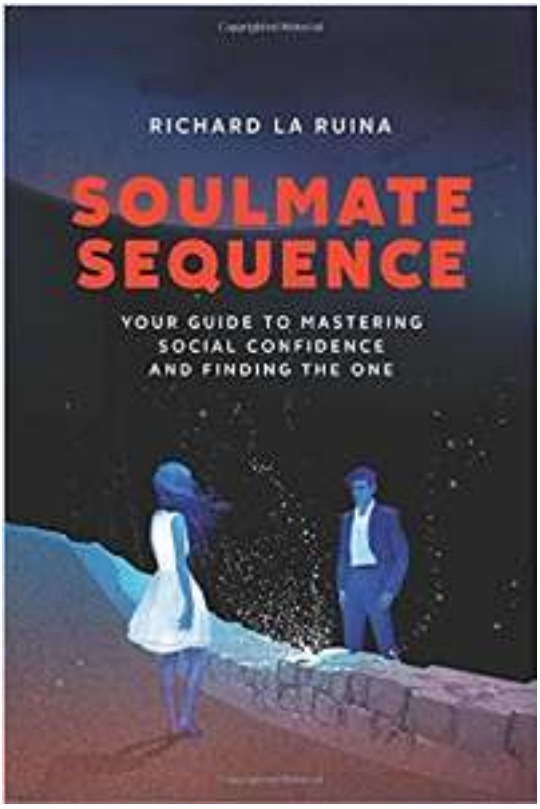
But I like being precise.
So I have *a different list of social skills books* while **this list is strictly focused on verbal communication**.

So without further ado, here's the list:

Contents

- 11. Soulmate Sequence
- 10. Speaking Pro
- 9. Crucial Conversations
- 8. Verbal Judo
- 7. Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness
- 6. How to Win Friends and Influence People
- 5. Difficult Conversations
- 4. The Power of a Positive No
- 3. People Skills
- 2. The Gervais Principle
- 1. Power University
- Final Words
  - Also, read:

11. Soulmate Sequence



By R La Ruina
Summary | Amazon

Richard La Ruina is a skilled analyst of social dynamics, and Soulmate Sequence contains some truly high-quality examples of smooth and flowing conversation.

> Quote: *"The key to all success in all social interactions, as I'm sure you've noticed, comes back to making other human beings feel good*"

10. Speaking Pro

By R Love
Summary | Get Speaking Pro

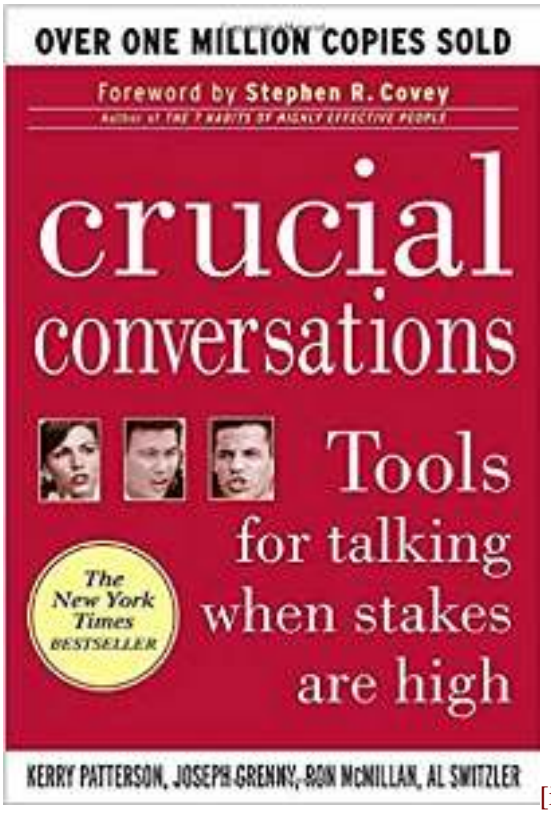
Communication isn't just 1:1 communication.

As a matter of fact, if you want to kick it up to the next level, you must learn how to communicate to several people at a time, either while delivering a speech, or a presentation, or while talking to a room of people at your daily meetings.

This is also a skill that will help you *greatly advance your career*.

> Quote: *"Connect with anyone. Never assume that anyone in the room doesn't have influence"*

9. Crucial Conversations



[image]

by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler
Summary | Kindle | Print | Audiobook

Crucial Conversations is one of the most popular titles in our best communication skills books list.

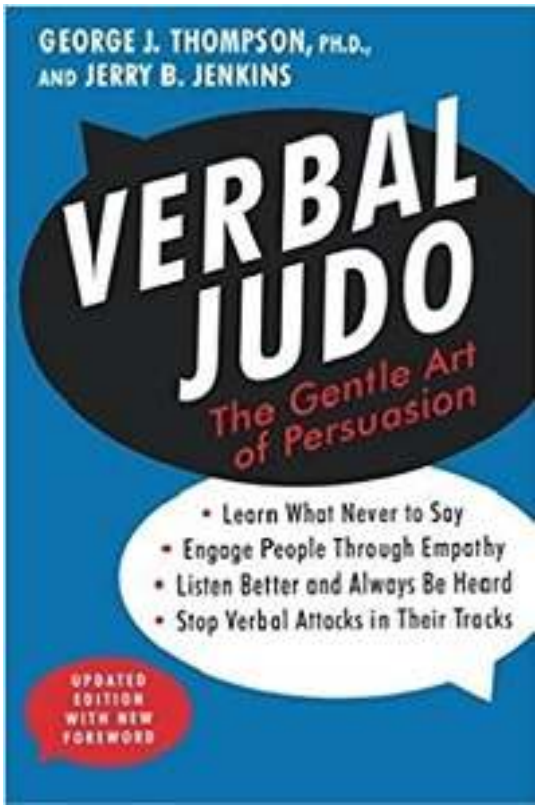
Among the biggest takeaways:

1. Make it Safe: people hold back out of fear. That's why you must create an environment where people feel safe to speak and cared for;
2. Fill the Pool: I loved the image of "the pool", or the shared space of meaning between speakers. The more you fill it, the more successful the conversation will be.

Do get ready for high-stakes conversation, because paradoxically when it matters the most is also when we're most likely to perform the poorest.

> Quote: *"When it matters the most it's when people are most likely to avoid or get emotionally. Both major screw up "*

8. Verbal Judo



[image]
by George Thompson, Jerry Jenkins
Summary | Kindle | Print

Thompson says that as long as you can manage to *never take things personally,* you'll hardly need any verbal judo.

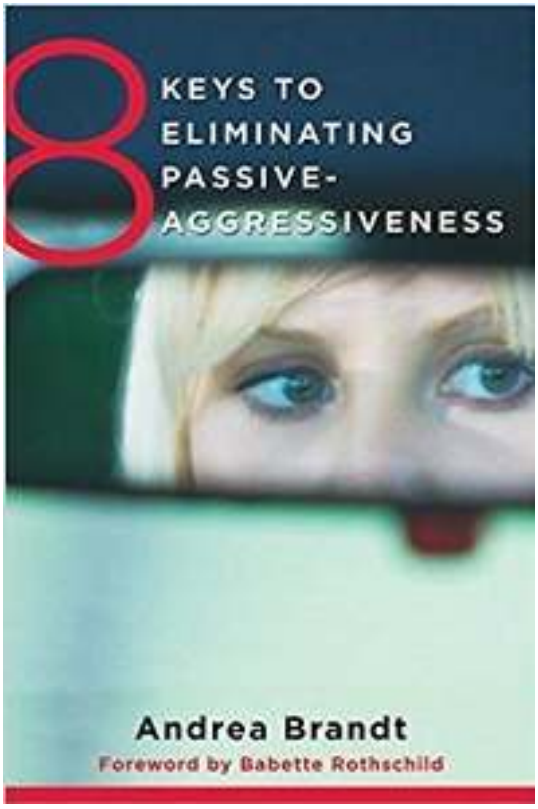
But even if you can manage that, I still think Verbal Judo will help you become a better communicator.

Here's something I loved: start with the negative. When you give feedback, start with the negative first, then end on a positive note.

With informal prose and plenty of examples, including straight from the streets (Thompson is a police trainer), Verbal Judo is worth its communication skills weight in gold.

> Quote: *"Say what you want. As long as you do as I say"*

7. Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness



by Andrea Brandt
Summary | Kindle | Print | Audiobook

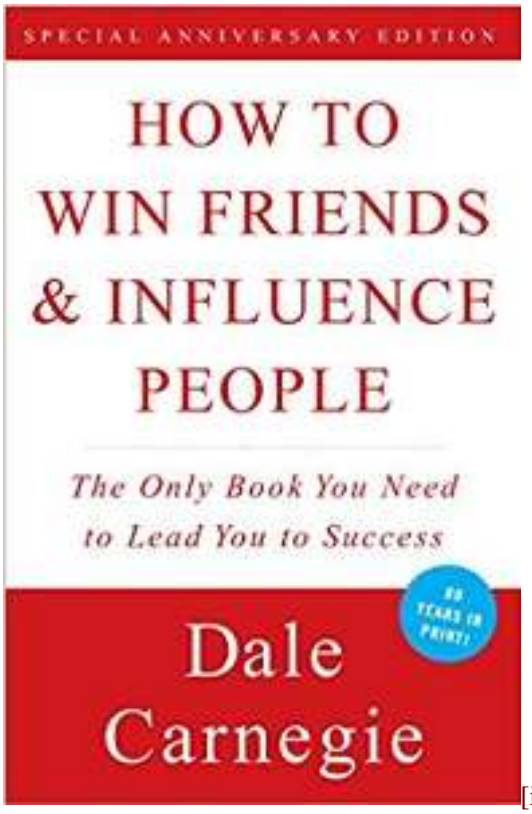
Unluckily I couldn't find statistics on how many people are passive-aggressive.

And that's probably because every one of us, at times, resorts to *passive-aggressive communication.*
This is exactly the reason why Andrea Brandt makes it into the top 5 of our best communication skills books: you *will* communicate with passive-aggressive people. And Brandt teaches you exactly how to recognize and how to deal with it.

It's a great book with top advice and a choke-full of super helpful examples.
A real eye-opener in the communication genre.

> Quote: *"If you're not assertive and if you're bottling up anger, then you're passive aggressive*"

6. How to Win Friends and Influence People



[image]

by Dale Carnegie
Summary | Print | Audiobook

Could anyone compile a reading list of best communication skills books without Dale Carnegie in it?

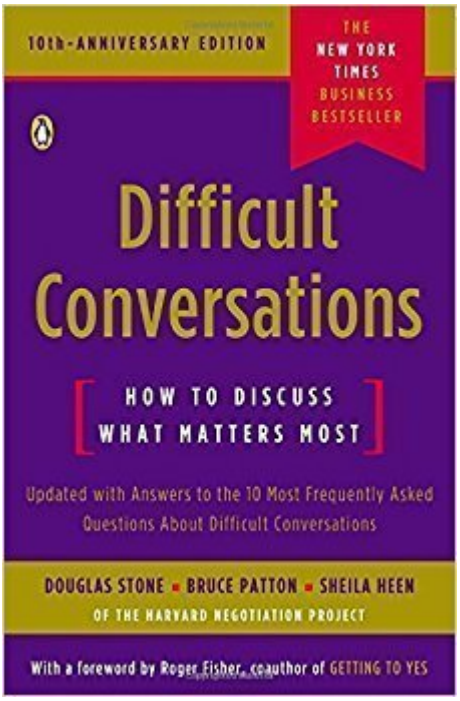
I didn't think so either.

How to Win Friends might not be for you if you need more assertiveness since it's all about finessing and making others feel good.

But I can hardly think of anyone who cannot stand to gain by applying the timeless principles of this huge classic.

> *Quote: "To be interesting, be interested "*

5. Difficult Conversations



by Douglas Stone, Patton, Heen
Summary | Kindle | Print

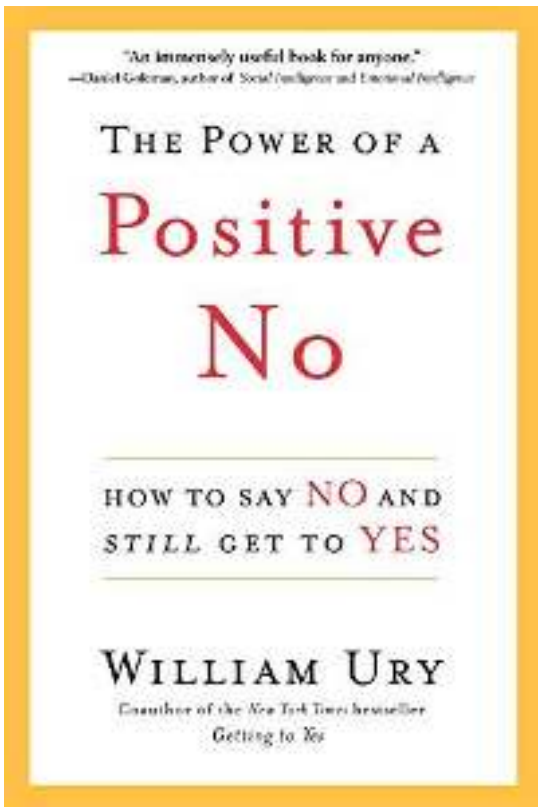
Difficult Conversations has been the very first communication skills book I've read.

And every page I turned I only grew more and more excited realizing I had a wisdom-bomb in my hands.

Difficult Conversations dissects conversations at the three most important levels: what happened, feeling, and identity.
Difficult conversations are difficult because they are heavy emotions and, sometimes, can reach us at the core of who we are (identity, also read antifragile ego).

> *Quote: "Humans feel binary when conversations touch identities: either great & lovable or terrible & unworthy "*

4. The Power of a Positive No



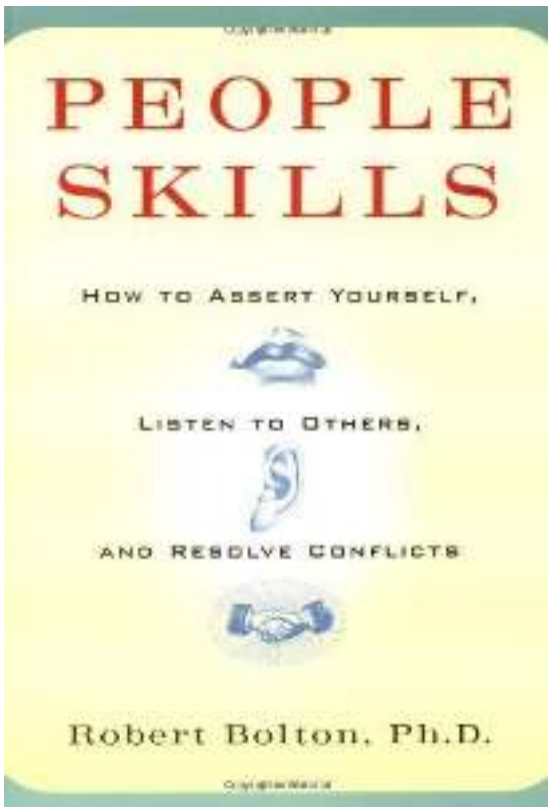
By William Ury
Summary | Kindle |Audiobook

In between a book on how to become more *assertive communicators* and *defend our boundaries* and a top-tier communication skills book on how to better engage with people in our lives.

And in both realms, William Ury does a wonderful job.
It's definitely one of my favorite communication skills books.

> *Quote:* "Even in the face of the other's provocations, keep showing respect, remembering that you give respect not because of who they are but rather because of who you are"

3. People Skills



By Robert Bolton
Summary | Kindle

It's called "People Skills", but it's all about communication. To be precise, *assertive communication*.

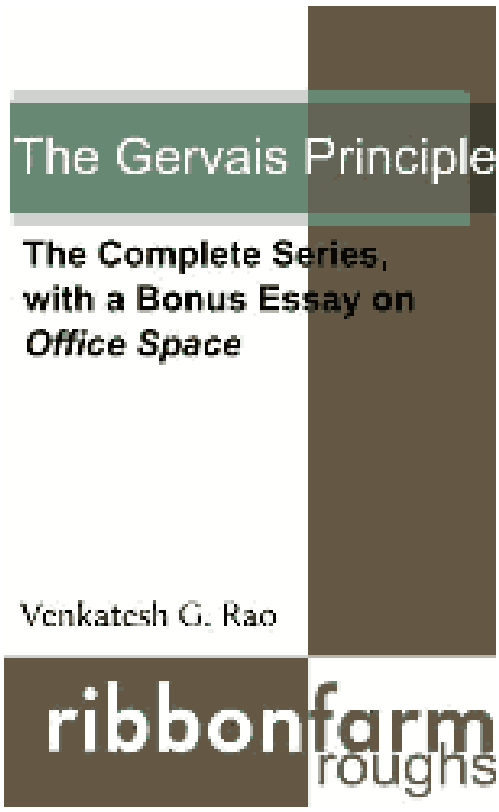
It was previously in the first spot on this "best communication skills book" because most people need some help in striking that balance between *the passive communication style* and *aggression*.
And People Skills is one of the best I have read when it comes to assertive communication.

However, it lacks both the strategic need for social effectiveness because assertive communication is NOT always the best approach, and it lacks the darker side -hence "The Gervais Principle" and "Power University" leapfrogged it-.

Still, a great book on communication skills, and also includes good psychology and real-life examples.

> *Quote: "Listening and assertion are the yin and yang of communication"*

2. The Gervais Principle



By Venkatesh Rao

Summary

It's crazy how few resources truly cover either the power element or the *darker side* of human nature -let alone both of them-.

As if humans' darker side didn't even exist, as if one could simply be honest, straight, and direct and everything would go well.

Obviously, it doesn't work like that.

And communication skills books are no exceptions: many of them write with the "ideal human being" in mind, who is not going to play games, who is not going to take offense and *become a frenemy*, and who is not going to use your honesty against you.

That makes a good chunk of communication skills books part of what we call here "*naive self-help*".

The *naive self-help* also fails with more honest characters, because if you care at all about advancing, you need awareness of the *power dynamics.*

That's what Rao correctly says in "The Gervais Principle": if you try to learn the techniques and words of "proper" communication without acquiring the power skills that allow you to understand the dynamics, deliver the words properly, and handle infinite possible directions the communication take, you'll only sound like a bigger fool.

So for proper communication, you NEED *power awareness.*

The only downside of The Gervais Principle is that it *only* addresses the power and *"darker"* component of human socialization.
But since almost no other resource does that, even the single chapter in this wonderful book that addresses communication is enough to put it near the top of this list.

> *Quote: "In Powertalk, you play with money (the currency is most often reality-information). In the other languages you are playing with no stakes."*

1. Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano & TPM Community
Overview

Power University is “communication for the real world”.

It teaches you how to win and establish win-win, to set up and maintain positive, value-adding, and fulfilling relationships with anyone -colleagues, spouses, friends relatives, etc.-.

And it does so with examples and case studies so you can watch and hear how to deliver the lines.

The strategies and techniques for good communication, *frame control,* and persuasion are also based on the reality that people may have divergent interests, may dislike you, maybe enemies or frenemies -or dangerously become so-, or maybe inveterate manipulators.

Final Words

If you’re starting out, you can’t go wrong with any of these verbal communication skills books.

Finish reading a couple of these, apply the teachings, and watch your communication skills go to the next level.

Then, once you get the basics down, and maybe even start realizing the limitations of the more popular but *naive approaches*, you can step up to a TPM course.

One only thing left to do: subscribe and get updated when a new entry will crack into the must-read list.

Also, read:

- Best assertiveness books
- Best leadership books
- Best dating books for women
- Best dating books for guys
- Best relationship books
- Best psychology books

The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth lists John Maxwell's rules to keep growing and improving.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Your character is the foundation of everything: work on that first
- Don't worry about plateauing or reaching your goals: there's never a real stop to growth
- And don't make it just about you. The quintessential growth is making others grow

Full Summary

About The Author: John Maxwell is an American pastor, public speaker, and best-selling author of books on leadership and personal development.
He is also the author of *"21 Irrefutable Rules of Leadership"*, *"Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn"* and *"How Successful People Think"*.

The following are the 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth:

1. The Law of Intentionality

You don't just grow "accidentally", you must be intentional and deliberate about it.

2. The Law of Awareness

You cannot improve if you don't know yourself: where you stand and where you need to work the most.

The law of awareness says that the more you know yourself, the more you can grow.

3. The Law of the Mirror

To effectively work on yourself, you must first believe you are worth the effort.
That means getting rid of limiting self-beliefs and *developing high self-esteem*.

Similar to what Don Ruiz says in *The Four Agreements*, Maxwell proposes that you only use yourself as a paragon. Don't compare yourself to others.

4. The Law of Reflection

Do take and schedule time to reflect on yourself, your lessons learned, and your next steps.

5. The Law of Consistency

What will really make you grow in the long run is consistency.

Start small.
The author says most people don't even show up and it's very easy to beat them. Start there, by showing up: that's

your 80%.

On the science of developing good habits also read *The Power of Habits*.
For more on grit and consistency also read Grit by Angela Duckworth and *The Compound Effect*.

> Motivation makes you start. Discipline keeps you going and growing

6. The Law of Environment

The people and the environment around you are major contributors (or detractors) to your growth.

Make sure the people and the environment around you are not pulling you down but helping you up.

7. The Law of Design

You must look at self-growth seriously. Look at it as a mission and design your plans to make it happen.

No plans are planning to fail.
Or as Jim Rohn said:

> No plans means falling into someone else's plan. And do you know what they've planned for you?
> Not much…

8. The Law of Pain

No pain, no gain.

Maxwell says that it's good management of bad experiences that lead to the biggest growth.
As Ray Dalio said: pain + reflection = growth.

9. The Law of the Ladder

I found the law of the ladder to possibly be the deepest in The 15 Laws of Growth.

Basically, it says that everything you built rests on the foundations of your character -who you are-.
If you go very high without a solid personal character, you're on shakier and shakier foundations.

> Achievement is not something you do, it's who you are

And especially touching was Solzhenitsyn's story.
Imprisoned for having to be critical of Stalin, he blesses his prison experience.
He says the objective of life is not to prosper as he had been brought up to believe but to mature and grow one's soul.

Beautiful!

10. The Law of the Rubber Band

If you're not stretching yourself, you aren't growing.
Look for change, look for growth opportunities.
Always keep the growing tension in your life, never let your rubber go soft :).

11. The Law of the Trade-Offs

To achieve your full potential you must be willing to sacrifice something.
Be it time in front of the TV set, your videogame playing hobbies or maybe working on something during holidays.

This is also similar to the law of sacrifice in Maxwell other fantastic book *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*.

My note:
I wouldn't look at this law as sacrificing. I would actually encourage you to look at "sacrifices" as welcome opportunities to test and temper your character.
You can't drink cola anymore? Great! That's no sacrifice. That's great for your body and it will strengthen your character.

12. The Law of Curiosity

Growth is fueled by questions and curiosity.
To keep growing, you need to be thirsty about knowing more and more.

As the saying goes:

> Those who know how to do will always have a job. Those who know why they have to do what they have to do will always be their bosses.

Also, read *Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn*.

13. The Law of Modeling

Find a mentor and look for a coach who has already been where you are going.
They will help you grow quicker by showing you the way and pointing out your mistakes.

Also, read Mastery by Robert Greene.

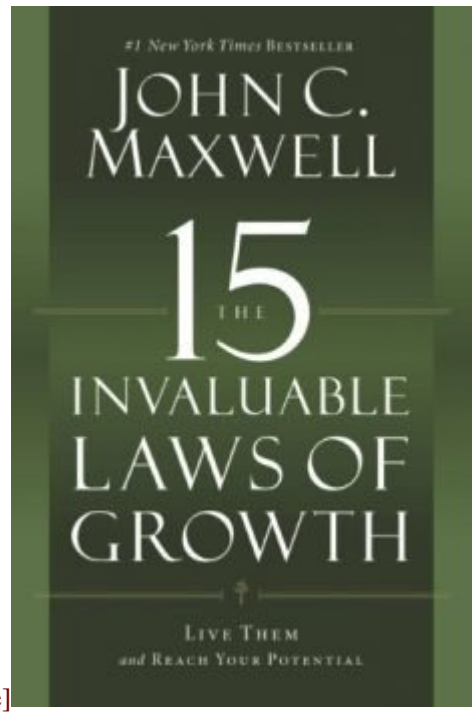
14. The Law of Expansion

Don't think there's ever a limit to your growth and expansion.

It doesn't matter what you've done or achieved, you can always do more.
And that's great news.

15. The Law of Contribution

The greatest joy in life is in contribution. As you grow yourself, help others to grow as well.

[image] 

Review

The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth is an easy and pleasant read.

If you are into self-development you are probably aware of most of the concepts, but it can be a good refresher and you will possibly get some new gold nuggets.

For me, it was the Law of The Ladder or the idea that your character should be the foundation of your achievements.

That was a much-needed reminder and put things into the right perspective: first of all, it's who you are. Then comes habits and then eventually achievements.

And that's the order you should work on.

Read more summaries or **get The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth on Amazon**

Dark Triad Strategies to Get a Girl With a Boyfriend: an Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Mate poaching, or wooing a girl with a boyfriend, is a universal, recognized evolutionary mating strategy (Buss, 2016; Hudek-Knezević et al., 2022) that has likely been going on since time immemorial in the human species.

Mate poachers tend to be less empathetic and conscientious, and higher in dark triad traits, especially psychopathy (Wade and Fisher, 2022).

In this article, we will review the **strategies and tactics that dark triads use to get a girl with a boyfriend.**

TPM Note: This article is descriptive, not prescriptive. Use cautiously
While some of these strategies and tactics can be fair and even win-win, their effectiveness and ethics depend on context. This information is also invaluable for self-defense: to secure your relationship, and to recognize when someone is trying to poach you.

Contents

- 1. Stir Doubts
  - 1.2. Consider A Bold Lover Move
  - When She Complains About Boyfriends
- 2. Fuel Her Discontent
- 3. Covertly Undermine Her Boyfriend
- 4. Position Yourself As The Better Replacement
- 5. Be A COOL Friend: Don't Chase
- 6. Pull Back When She's Falling For You
- 7. But Show That You Value Her
- 8. Concoct "Destiny" Meetings
- 9. Prepare Your Move
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1. Stir Doubts

For example:

> *Does it bother you he's younger?*
>
> *Was it an issue for you, that you've got a master and he doesn't?*
>
> *In some relationships it can be an issue he's making less money. How is it for you…*

As soon as they hit the issue, mate poachers stop the questions or they'll arouse suspicions.

If she starts complaining, poachers listen to thread-expand the issue.

Otherwise, they focus on behaving with confidence and power.

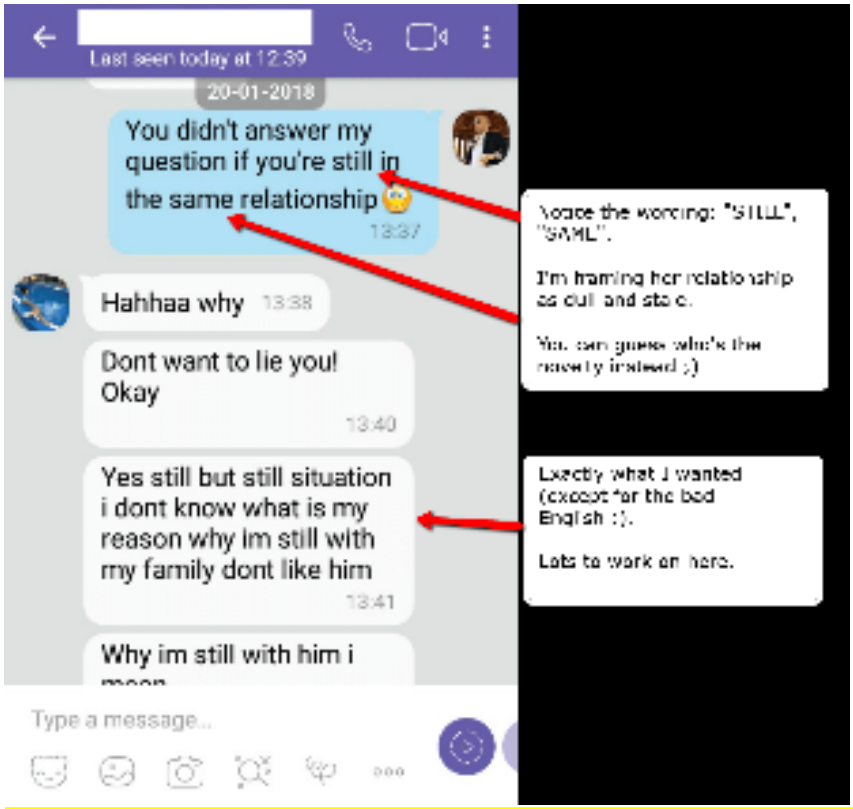
1.2. Consider A Bold Lover Move

Poachers say relationships for them are about growing together, sharing adventures, mutual support, and traveling to faraway lands… They make it sound amazing and hardly comparable to their reality.

Then they go suddenly deep and ask point-blank:

> *Have you ever been deeply, passionately in love?*

Most women will balk at the love question, which plants the seeds of relationship doubt.
Poachers want her to think “no I haven’t” or even better.. “no I’m not”.



The mate poacher’s question covertly implies her relationship is boring and stale
Of course, *exceptions apply*.
If her boyfriend is a thrill seeker and she wants more stability, then poachers are the stable guy.

When She Complains About Boyfriends

If she complains about her woes, all the better.

Gottman, a famed relationship researcher, says friendships turn into affairs when she complains about her relationship.

Machiavellian mate poachers show interest, but without acting in love or chasing too hard. They say they’re sorry, but without being too affected.
This approach maintains power and frames them as a high-mate value options.

If she’s getting emotional about her boyfriend, poachers get a bit closer to her, but never white knight her with “poor you”. Poachers avoid saying they would treat her better at this early stage to avoid coming across as chase-y. Experienced poachers may add light physical closeness, like a hand on her back, or a slight rubbing of her upper

arm, but without overdoing it. They want her to come to them.

Overall poachers make their presence felt by staying calm and collected, a rock in the storm of life.

2. Fuel Her Discontent

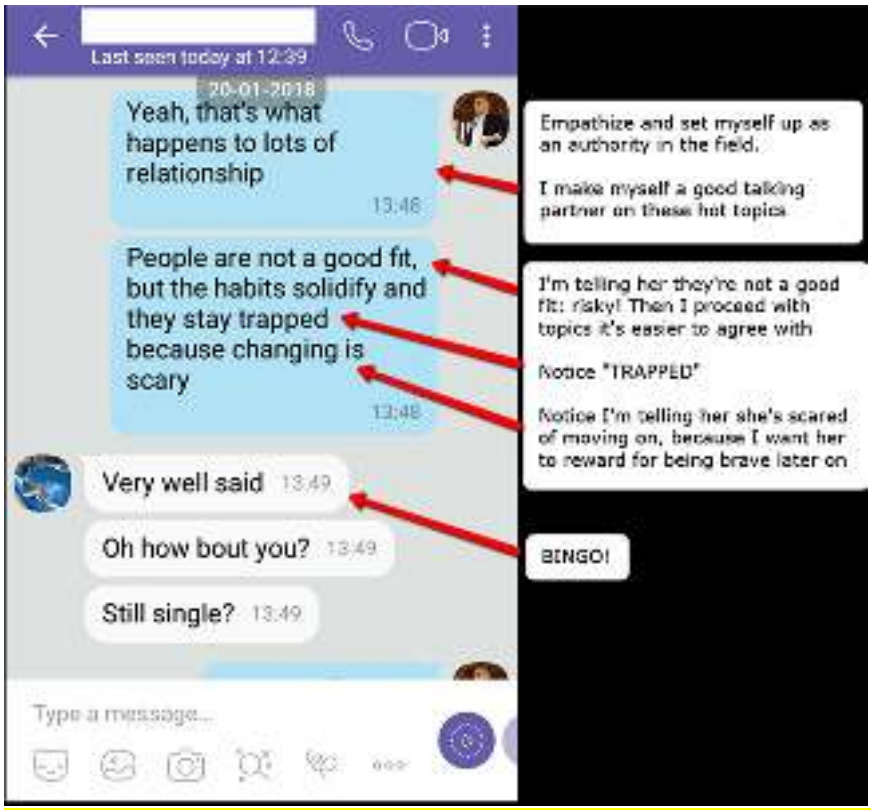
Whatever she complains about, poachers expand on it.

But they don't just agree with her. That's weak. poachers let her flesh it out instead of asking questions and listening.

The more she expands on the negatives of her boyfriend and realationship, the more fertile the ground becomes for poaching.

Poachers contribute their own if they can add good insights.
If they cannot, poachers may describe her situation with generalizations that apply to almost anyone.

For example, poachers may tell her that people stay "stuck" because changing is scary. They are planting the seeds for her to be brave and consider a better relationship.



He 'paces her reality' of a dull relationship to make her agree with it. This tactic 'thread expands' the weakness of her relationship

Soon after, poachers will start setting themselves up as the man with better alternatives.

3. Covertly Undermine Her Boyfriend

For example:

- *Yeah, it's great you to take care of yourself. Does he also go to the gym?* <— If he's a couch potato
- *Rock on, keep it up like that and I'm telling you: you're going places* <— Boost her self-esteem to make her realize she deserves better
- *So, in what exotic place is he taking you for holiday* <— If he's not taking her anywhere

This is even a recognized approach in the research literature, called ‘competitor derogation’.
And if done well, it works.

And to do it well, poachers do it COVERTLY.

If they’re too obvious they signal petty jealousy. It makes her the prize and them the lower-value chaser.

Example:

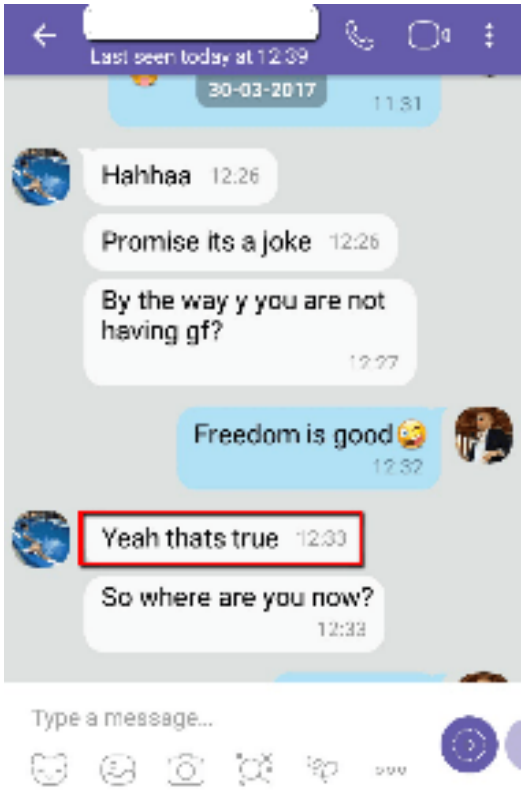
> **Him**: I can’t believe this is your boyfriend <— Too obvious: petty and aggressive

4. Position Yourself As The Better Replacement

For example:

- Is he poor? ➡ They throw some money around
- Is he overweight? ➡ They talk up how much they value staying fit
- Is he boring? ➡ They are exciting

Also this tactic is supported by research and experience:



> **Me**: Freedom is good <— ⍰⍰ I don’t need a girlfriend because I’m a high-value man who can get women whenever he wants

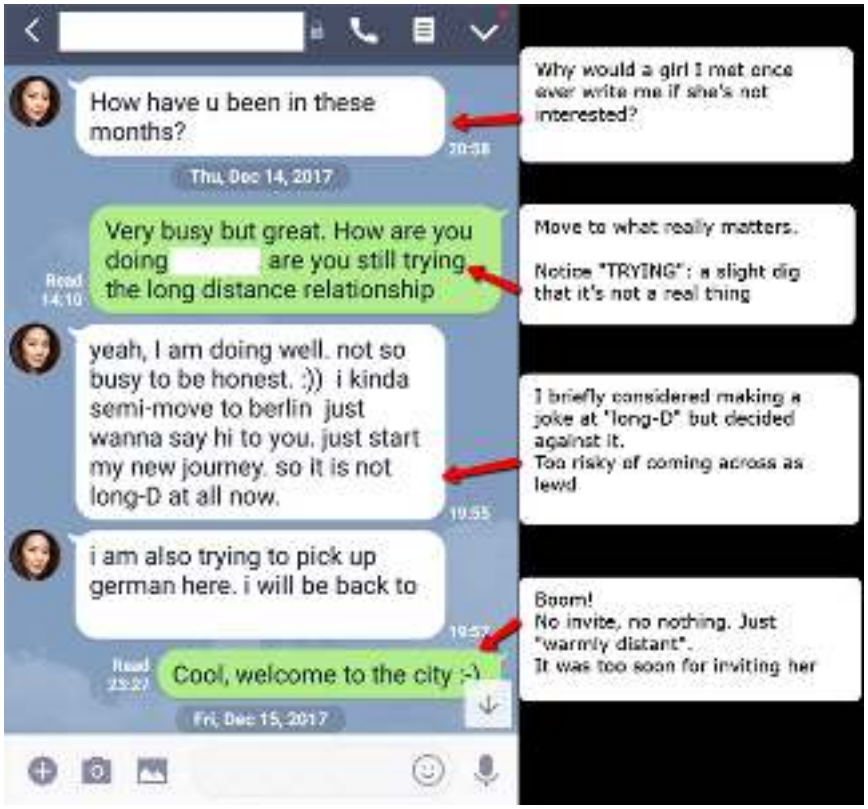
In this example, he went for a lover approach.
If mate poachers want to be her new boyfriend, they can also play up more

5. Be A COOL Friend: Don’t Chase

Machiavellian mate poachers never chase, but even less so when they want to get girls with a boyfriend.

When poachers chase and compete, most of the time they lose. She's got a history with her boyfriend and she's still sleeping with him.
While there they are, expanding efforts to woo her without anything in return.
Of course, the boyfriend looks better off.

Poachers stay distant and aloof for a while before going for an actual invite.



Most of all, they avoid being the overly-interested, overly-available friend.
Low-value friends never get a girl with a boyfriend.

But both research and experience converge to suggest that women consider high-value friends for switching.

6. Pull Back When She's Falling For You

IF poachers have leverage, then they quit reaching out, and let her come to them.

Poachers use this technique after they had a great time (and may made a move that she rejected it for being taken).
What do poachers do then? They disappear!

She told them they could be friends, and experienced poachers knew she is into them.
But they told her it wouldn't work.

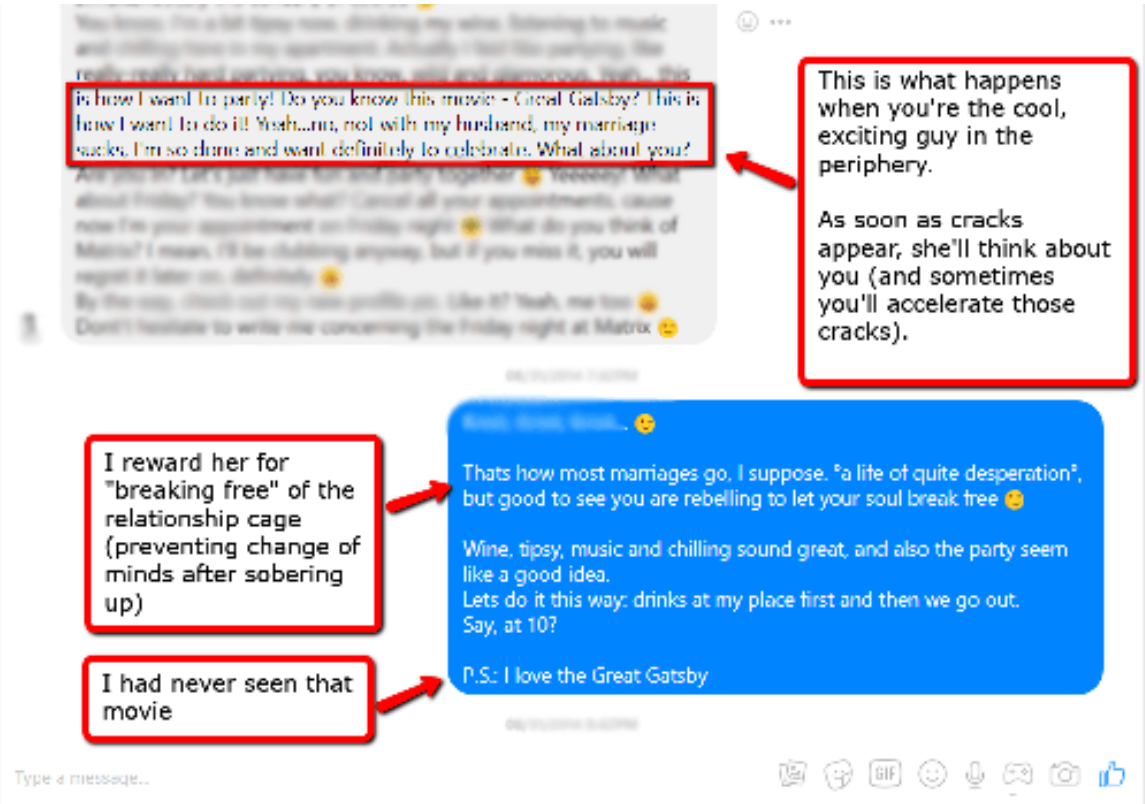
They explained that "yeah, we could be friends", but *their way* of being friends.
Such as that if they saw her again, they would do exactly what they had just done (ie.: escalate towards intimacy).

She complained and got emotional.
Exactly what the poacher wanted. And he stayed firm but calm:

> *No, you can of course refuse at any time, but if we meet again, I'll do exactly the same.*

The poacher could see she was horny and could have probably made it happen with a bolder push, but didn't want to cause trouble.

But one month later:



> **Her**: My marriage sucks and want to celebrate. How about you? <— Effective poachers become option #1

Yes, disappearing is higher risk and they must be ready to walk away for good.
But as Casanova said, love is not a place for risk-avoiders.

7. But Show That You Value Her

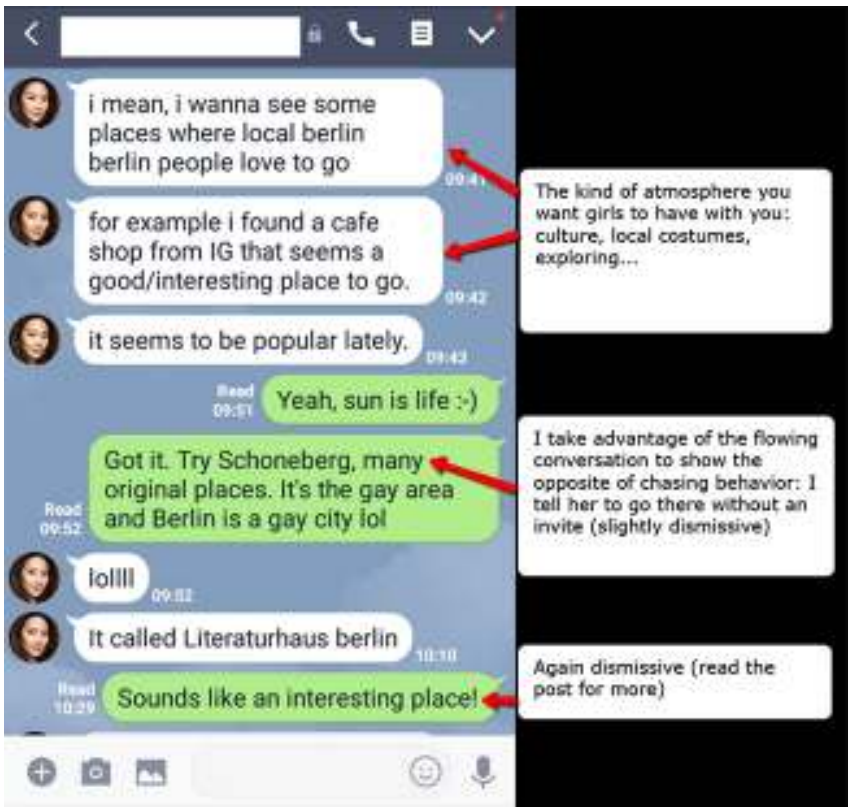
It might sound contradictory to show interest without chasing.

But there is a difference between being smitten and appreciating someone.
Being smitten is lower value, while appreciating is high-power chooser ('the judge').

Showing some interest is OK, but without ever overdoing it.
Poachers walk that line.

Because if, on the other hand, they never show signs of interest, she'll never really consider them.

In this example, they were giving her the chance to open up, which shows a bit of interest from their side, and were moving toward a possible date.



He didn't pull the trigger on the date and delivered two dismissive statements to make her invest more.
They wanted something more from her (and wasn't aching to go to some pretentious cafe' with sexually confused metrosexuals).

IF they're in a similar situation though, poachaers may do things such as:

1. Check online reviews of that place
2. Comment on "what you heard from friends about it"
3. Vibe back with her
4. Invite her there if she doesn't do so herself

Notice what's point 2?
Why isn't she going there with her boyfriend?
It's possibly because he's not the kind of guy to explore new places. Or not the artistic kind of guy.
That's their occasion to show the opposite face.

8. Concoct "Destiny" Meetings

Many women believe in destiny.

So… Effective mate poachers give them destiny.
Spontaneous and chance meetings work because they're not chasing after a date.

But of course, it's the *appearance* of destiny.
Poachers may also simply hang in shared social spaces, projecting a social and high-value image that boosts their preselection. Girls do notice.

9. Prepare Your Move

These strategies can be effective to get committed women to even chase the poacher.

She will develop feelings for them and things may naturally lead to intimacy.

However, Machiavellian poachers have a whole process to boost the odds with well-oiled seduction processes. For example, they have:

- Seductive environments in their home
- Romantic playlist to set the mood

Poaching Main Strategies

There are three main strategies for sleeping with a girl with a boyfriend:

1. **Close friend** who slowly takes over
2. **Acquaintance** who times his move
3. **Attractive hookup guy**, often related to partying or nights out

This article mostly discussed 1 and 2 here.
#3 is often harder to plan, and mate poachers may sleep with taken women without ever even knowing it.

However, even the short-term 'f*ckboy approach' requires some strategy.

If poachers started from a cold approach or as an attractive stranger, they *must* move quickly.
If things won't happen fast, chances are they never will.

One committed the mistake of letting sexual tension dissipate without consuming their passion, and they never got together:

Poaching

Pursuing girls in a relationship is an area fraught with moral implications, intense emotions, and grave consequences.

It's important to think about it carefully to avoid causing harm, or even putting oneself at risk. Violence from a protective boyfriend is always a real risk.

Poaching Self-Protection: Strengthening Your Mind

Loyalty is an important value and it's always better to find loyal women who believe in loyalty as a virtue.

However, **it's always best for a man not to rely on loyalty alone**. Instead, the focus must be on making the relationship a win for her, and cheating a loss.

This video shares the foundational mindset shift:

> **Lucio**: Only weak men crave loyalty. Strong men are **offered** loyalty

⍰⍰♂ Poaching Failure: A Personal Story

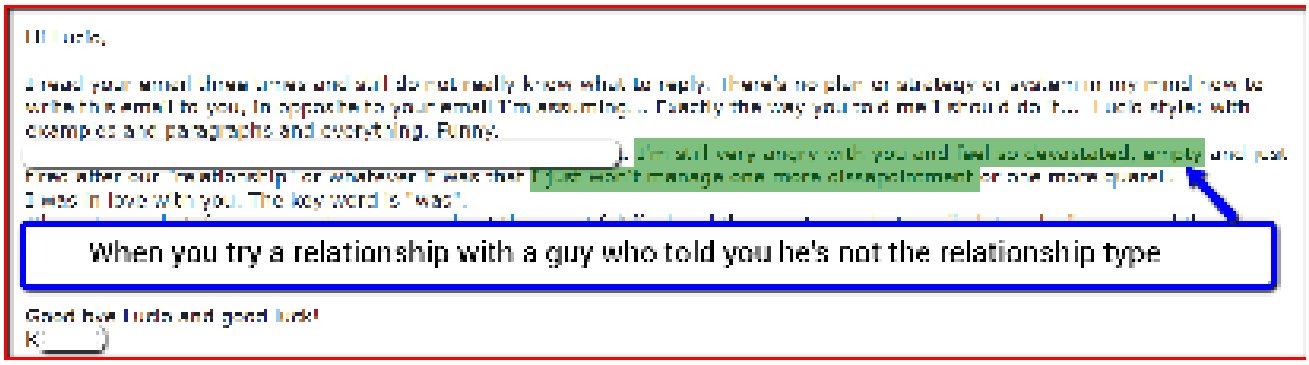
I believe in living an honorable life, seeking to add value instead of making the world worse off.

And while I was laughing looking for old messages for this article… I laughed no more when I stumbled on my worst case of taking a married woman.

She had a husband. A husband whom she divorced a little after we met.
Then the two of us got into a relationship… For a while.

For me, it was one of the best "serious" relationships I've ever had.
But she was looking for a much longer term and my version of "serious" and "long term" wasn't nearly "serious" or long enough for her. And it turned out to be her biggest heartbreak.

Her last email told me in no uncertain terms how she felt after our "great" relationship:



> **Her**: I feel so devastated, empty

I still have pangs of guilt.
This remains the biggest, most shameful stain of my dating life.

And the fact that she's now back with her ex-husband -the same she divorced partially because of me- makes me think that things weren't nearly as bad between them.

As one can see, seducing women who have a boyfriend is an emotionally dangerous game.

And I don't want my material here to be used for evil purposes, which increase the pain in this world.

So I advise to use these strategies in the following two scenarios:

1. **You seek a long-term relationship** (doesn't mean you *guarantee* success of course)
2. **It's clear to all you're just a short-term fling**

If doubts persist, it's on the poacher to clarify them.

Poached partners make for bad relationships

Evidence shows that relationships that start with poaching and infidelity are lower-quality relationships.

Quoting from *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology*:

> individuals who had been poached by existing partners tended to have poorer-quality relationships, including less satisfaction, commitment, and investment.
> Poached individuals also reported being more attentive to alternative partners, perceiving their alternatives to be of higher quality, and engaged in more infidelity relative to nonpoached individuals (Foster et al., 2014).

Meaning: mate poachers pass the "girl with a boyfriend" if they're looking for a relationship.

Of course, this is on average.
And in truth, they could be the exception…

Poaching FAQs

Is it okay to pursue a woman who has a boyfriend?

Generally, it is considered a morally grey area to pursue a woman who has a boyfriend, and especially so if the boyfriend is an acquaintance or, worse yet, a friend. If the boyfriend is a friend, it's also highly disrespectful and widely considered as breaking the unwritten "male code of honor".

Is it always wrong to pursue a woman with a boyfriend?

It's not always wrong to pursue a woman with a boyfriend as it depends on the situation. If she is in an unhappy or unhealthy relationship, then providing a better alternative can be a win for her. If she is not in a fulfilling relationship and she prefers you, then her choice and preference also matter. And if you can provide a better life and relationship, then one could argue that it's fair for people to choose what's best for them.

Should I tell her how I feel if she has a boyfriend?

Generally, it's not a good idea to share your interest or love for a girl in a relationship if she hasn't first shown any signs of interest in you. It puts her in an awkward situation, it makes things weird socially between you, her, and her boyfriend, and it also lowers your value if she isn't reciprocating. It's only OK to share your feelings if you're fairly sure she reciprocates. But even then, men who understand dating and power dynamics usually rely more on subcommunication and building tension rather than verbal confessions.

Learn More

- Keep her happy in the relationship
- Become a top 1% man who never has to chase after taken women

The 33 Strategies of War: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 33 Strategies of War lists and analyzes various strategies and techniques that have been deployed in war through the ages. But it's more than just about wars, and it's also applicable to interpersonal and social power dynamics.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Intro
  - Part I SELF-DIRECTED WARFARE
  - Part II ORGANIZATIONAL WARFARE
  - Part III: DEFENSIVE WARFARE
  - Part IV OFFENSIVE WARFARE
  - Part V UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE
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Overview

- First of all, you need to "conquer your own mind."
- Avoid frontal attacks when you can hit the flanks or the sources of power
- Make enemies work for you or infiltrate them. Bloodless wins are the quintessence of strategy

Notes

About the Author:
Robert Greene has a background in classical studies and went on to a string of low-ish status jobs around the world before becoming a best-selling author of books on power, manipulation, and practical social psychology.
He also wrote *The 48 Laws of Power, The Art of Seduction, Mastery,* and *The Laws of Human Nature.*

⍰♂Can a geek teach you war?

Lucio:
Shall we address the elephant in the room?
Greene has no experience on anything war-related.
Can he really write a book about war?
Well, he wrote a great one because he has a great intuition for power dynamics and psychology.
BUT… There is a but.

Intro

"*The 33 Strategies of War*" begins with an overview of the key mindsets of war.
Most of all, I liked:

- Look at things as they are: your emotional responses are a disease

As Greene himself stressed in *The 50th Law*, and as Ray Dalio says in *Principles*, the men who learn to look at

reality for what it is, with dispassionate eyes, hold a huge advantage.

- Judge people by their actions; words are covers for their strategic maneuvers
- Depend on your own arms

Alliances shift easily. You better depend on your own weapons and strengths.

> Let him who wants peace prepare for war

Part I SELF-DIRECTED WARFARE

> *First declare war on the enemies within you.*

1: Declare war on your enemies: Polarity Strategy

Do not become a sheep in the crowded center: go to the extreme. A dominating, polarizing presence has more pull than middle ground men.

Don't necessarily get into the idea that you need to be liked -as in *How to Win Friends*-, being respected is better, and even being feared is better. Don't be afraid of battles and enemies either. Your enemies give you purpose and direction.
And battles are what will allow you to win.

And ultimately, victory over your enemies will bring you the most meaningful and lasting popularity.

> Victory over your enemies is the best form of popularity

Reversal

Don't see enemies everywhere, and always keep them for yourself. If you're wrong, nobody will judge you.

Do like Cortez did. Keep it to yourself, pretend you didn't notice. Let them come more and more to the surface, and when it's obvious to everyone that they're enemies, then strike.
And don't make enemies or pick fights at any time. You don't want to make enemies with *everyone*.

2: Do not fight the last war: Embrace Change

Your past successes can be your biggest obstacles if you believe that repeating the same strategy will give you more victories.
Let go of the past, and embrace change and fluidity instead.

3: Keep your presence of mind: Counterbalance

Detach yourself from the fog of war and the chaos of battle.
The counterbalance to doubt, fear, and losing our minds is an intensification of confidence and determination.

Ultimately, it's preparation and a grasp of all details that allow you to see the whole picture. And understanding the trees while looking at the forest is the main quality of all great generals.
However, let others believe that your Zen qualities come from some mysterious source.

> Preparation is key. But let others think you're gifted

Greene says that we tend to overestimate others and trust ourselves less. Overcompensate it by doing the opposite: trust yourself more and trust others less.

4: Create urgency and desperation: Death-ground

Creating urgency and desperation means putting yourself and the troops in a position where there's no other option but winning.

It's the "burn your bridges" strategy.

Greene recommends using the thought of death as your driver to spur you into action.
I loved this part so much that I wrote a whole article about it. If you're interested in the subject, also read: leveraging mortality.

Place yourself where your back is against the wall, and you have to fight like hell to get out alive.

Part II ORGANIZATIONAL WARFARE

You'll rarely win by yourself: you need leadership skills to bolster team morale.

5: Avoid groupthink: Command-and-control

People naturally have their own agendas in the groups you lead.

If you're too authoritarian, they will resent you, and if you're too lax, they will revert to their own interests.

You need a chain of command where people buy into your vision and naturally follow your lead.

The overall strategic vision must come from you and you alone. But make the group feel involved in the decision-making. Take their good ideas, deflect the bad ones, and if necessary, make minor changes to appease the most political ones.

The Dangers of Groupthink

People in groups tend to act and speak conservatively because they're all worried about what others think.
That's not what you need. And that's why you need unity of command (you).

Beware of Political Animals

Political animals are not only after themselves but also form factions to further their agendas and create their small fiefdoms of power.

You should avoid hiring these people in the first place.
Watch out for those who mirror your ideas 1:1; they're probably trying to ingratiate you.
If it's too late, isolate them

Also read:

- Archetypes of office political animals
- **Toxic employees**: psychology and solutions

> 9 Types of Office Politics Players (W/ Examples)

6: Segment your forces: Controlled chaos

Decentralize your army to gain mobility and speed.

The critical elements in war are speed and adaptability—the ability to move and make decisions faster than the enemy.
Break your forces into independent groups that can operate on their own. Give them the spirit of the campaign, a mission to accomplish, and room to run.

7: Transform your war into a crusade: Morale

People are cynical nowadays, speeches and group activities do little.

Build a group myth. Use the past to forge the idea that your group is mythical and legendary. People will feel the pride and work hard to live up to that image.
Those who don't want to will be forced by the shaming pressure of their own peers.

> Don't push from behind. Make them run to keep up with you

Get them to think less about themselves and more about the group.
Involve them in a cause—a crusade against a hated enemy. Make them see that their survival is tied to the success of the army as a whole.

Also read:

- How to become a leader

Part III: DEFENSIVE WARFARE

Fighting defensively is not a weakness: it's a smart strategy.

And in a word that frowns upon direct warfare, making your enemy make the first overt move is the hallmark of great strategy.

8: Pick your battles: Perfect-economy

Not all battles are worth being fought.

The costs of war are high. Even if you do have an enemy, sometimes covert warfare is best.
Think about it shrewdly: Pyrrhic victories are more common than you might think.

Reversal

Once you're engaged make sure you don't lose because you're cutting costs. That's not economy but stupidity.

9: Turn the tables: Counterattack

Let them go first. Let them believe you're weak.
Then destroy them with a counterattack once they're over-stretched.

> The best blows are the ones they never see coming

10: Threatening presence: Deterrence

Make your enemy believe you're too difficult to attack.

Look stronger than they think, build a reputation for fighting till the bitter end, sometimes taking your enemy with you. This works great with enemies who have a reputation.
If you're smaller, they have little to gain and much to lose.

Or even better: build uncertainty. When the enemy doesn't know the real costs and dangers, he will stay put.

11: Trade space for time: Nonengagement

Infuriate them by refusing to fight.

Gain time to reflect and rebuild your defenses as they keep over-extending.

Robert Greene also mentions Murphy's laws: the more time passes with your enemy on the moves, the more likely it is that something will go wrong (albeit I'd say there are also chances something good will happen to your enemy or that something bad will happen to you as you wait).

Part IV OFFENSIVE WARFARE

The biggest dangers come from the unexpected. When you attack first at their vulnerabilities you take action and minimize the unexpected.

12: Lose battles & win the war: Grand strategy

Look beyond the present battle and think about the overall war.

Here Greene talks a bit about visualization and successful people who visualized a lot (albeit that's an inductive reasoning fallacy), reminding me a bit of *Think and Grow Rich*.
He recommends you set big goals that will drive you forward.

13: Know your enemy: Intelligence

Similar to his work *Mastery*, Robert Greene focuses here on the importance of reading people.

Don't ask too many questions or you'll put them on the defensive.
Put a friendly, or even subservient front, observe them, and let them open up voluntarily. Uncover their weaknesses. And use them.

> The most powerful armies are beaten unhinging their leaders' minds

14: Overwhelm with speed: Blitzkrieg

Move quickly, and strike first without giving your enemy the time to prepare. Make him emotional, afraid, and error-prone.

15: Control the dynamic: Forcing

> *Control the battlefield, control the war*

The ultimate control is leading the enemy to believe he's in control.

It works best when you move with his energy and works best with the aggressive and passive-aggressive types.

Then slowly change the battlefield in a way that suits and makes your enemy uncomfortable.
If the discussion is about money, reframe it as a moral issue.

16: Hit them where it hurts: Center-of-gravity

Don't exchange punch for punch, that's the hallmark of stupidity. Look instead at what's supporting him and strike there.

Your enemy derives its power from a few key sources. Strike there, cut off his lifeline.

Find the source of your enemy's power. Find out what he cherishes and protects and strikes.

17: Defeat them in detail: Divide and Conquer

Sow the seeds of discontent, and turn large enemies into smaller parts. Then attack and conquer.

18: The flank attack: Turning

Frontal attacks are the equivalent of going punch for punch: the sucker's way of fighting.
The key to a flank attack is disguising your intentions.

19: Envelop the enemy: Annihilation

Encircling deflates your enemy.

Give him the feeling that he's being attacked from all directions. Phalanxes closed in on him from all directions.

Reversal

With the enveloping strategy, you reveal your intention of annihilation. Either you are successful, or you might be left in a difficult position.

20: Maneuver them into weakness

Confuse your opponents so that they don't know where to defend themselves.
Create disorder, then attack.

Boasting your own skills reeks of self-promotion.
Instead, let them speak first and reveal themselves. Now you can use it to your advantage. If they pick an extreme position, say they are dangerous revolutionaries.
If they tone down, say they are inconsistent.

Before the battle begins, put your opponent in a position of such weakness that victory is easy and quick. Create dilemmas where all potential choices are bad.

21: Negotiate while advancing: Diplomatic war

Don't trust people's words.

They will break their promises and find moral justifications for their amoral behaviors.
And people will forget broken promises when you're strong and in the position to offer something they want.

Keep advancing and waging wars during negotiations.
When you keep winning the war you will get better deals and you can use the conquered terrain as bargaining chips.
If on the other hand you stop, you will often find your enemy much stronger in battle because *he* didn't stop.

It's even more important you keep advancing when you're holding the weak hand, so you can show resolve.
Act strong and people will treat you as strong.

22: Know how to end things: Exit strategy

How things end is all that matters. The ending is your final judge.

Greene talks here of the quicksands of protracted wars with no end in sight, like the Russians in Afghanistan or the Americans in Vietnam. The only two options in these cases are:

1. A major blow that will drive victory home
2. Cut your losses and move out

When you see that defeat is inevitable, you can make an effort to go down in style. Planting the seeds of future victory during a defeat is the strategy of the highest order.

The Mental Side of Defeat

Defeats are inevitable, so you should learn how to lose gracefully -both for yourself and for others-.

See it as a temporary defeat, welcome it as a way to make yourself stronger, and as a way to demonstrate your character and your strength to stay upbeat even in loss.

> Short term defeat is better than long term disaster

Part V UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

The greatest element of surprise comes with using new strategies that nobody expects.

As people push for novelty though, says Greene, there's a race to the extremes, leading to dirtier wars.
But you must go dirty yourself. You can't risk loss out of a sense of morality.

23: Blend fact and fiction: Misperception

Deception is not about making big shows off elaborate distractions.

Most people are aware you'll try to deceive them and won't fall for it. The best deceptions mix reality with fiction. Spread your deceptions to people who believe in the lie themselves, and they'll work to convince others, naturally, of your deception.

Finally, make up realities that match your enemy's desire and they'll deceive themselves into believing it.

24: Line of least expectation: Ordinary-Extraordinary

Greene says that the greatest general has a touch of strategic madness.

As we age though we more and more tend to conform to old habits, and that's how Napoleone declined and came to rely more on size than on brilliant strategy.
Keep an edge of unconventional instead and break the habits.

25: Occupy the moral high ground: Righteousness

Make your cause seem morally justified and paint your enemy as evil.

Pick a fight with an enemy you can portray as morally corrupt, authoritarian, or power-hungry. Don't drum up your moral superiority but show it: contrast your own life with theirs.
Convince people you're fighting for a just moral cause and nobody will take note of the tactics you deploy.

I wrote a lot of examples of real-life this. Check:

- Beating the moral police
- Dealing with judgmental people – Charlie Sheen interview

26: Deny them targets: The Void

Let your enemies chase you into emptiness.

Avoid fighting, give them no target. Empty will drive them crazy.
An example is Napoleone in Russia.
And another great example is Trump VS Hillary.

27: Seem to act for the greater good: Alliances

Most people operate with feelings and emotions and make alliances based on liking and friendships.

Bad strategy: **the best alliances are the ones giving something you can't get on your own**.
Sometimes we think instead that the more allies the better. But it's not true: the more you have, the more likely it is

you'll be dragged into other people's wars.

Alliances must be based on mutual interests. See them as stepping stones towards getting what you need.
Finally, never become too dependent on alliances: they will drop you when it best serves them.

Alliances Strategies

Seem like you want to help and let them do the work, then reap the benefits.

You'll be accused of playing the alliance game, which is nothing but strategic moral attacks. The only real danger is that your reputation will be so tarnished that people won't wanna ally to you anymore.
But, says Greene:

> **Self interest rules the world**

The example of Murray Bowen was a genius. He created a family storm on purpose to bring all back-talking to the surface. Then… Read the book for more.

28: Give rope to hang themselves: One-upmanship

Sometimes enemies are your colleagues, your collaborators.

That's unconventional warfare at its best as they all try to keep the appearance of working for the greater good.

Don't attack them head-on: it will only make you look bad and they will have an easy way out.
Look at this Family Guy skit for a preview of how it will end up:

Never attack coworkers directly. It's easy to make you look like a bad team player

Get under their skin subtly instead. It works best with people who need to perform as they won't be able to be at their best.

Instill doubts and insecurities in rivals, getting them to think too much and act defensively. Make them hang themselves through their own self-destructive tendencies, leaving you blameless and clean.

Rigid types who cannot stand breaking moral codes are the easiest to one-up. They will overreact and attack you too obviously, making them look vindictive.

29: Take small bites: Fait Accompli

Most people cling to the status quo and are loath of starting wars over trivial matters.

That's why you will take small bites, bite by bite. Every time it will be too small to start a war and once you take enough bites they won't even be able to wage war against you.

30: Penetrate their minds: Communication

The goal of communication is to further your interest, to penetrate the enemies' minds. Anything else is self-indulgent talk.

Make people reach your conclusions and let them believe it was their own ideas.
Very interesting analysis of *The Prince* here by Robert Greene and how also writing must be focused on spreading your ideas to be effective.

31: Destroy from within: The Inner Front

Instead of fighting your enemies: join them.

Infiltrate their ranks, and rise to the top. Then slowly get what you want or stage a coup.

The example here was that of Canaris, a high-ranking officer in Hitler's spy networks. I was very surprised to read the story as I had never heard about it.
Basically, this guy was one of the biggest influences in the Nazi's loss and no history books have ever mentioned him.

32: Seeming to submit to dominate: Passive-Aggression

Seem to submit and go along with them.

Disguise your aggression so you can deny it even exists.
People are not well equipped to see both aggression and submission at the same time and will usually just go along with one.

Make sure your front is spotless.

It's also difficult to fight people who fight without violence. If your enemy attacks, they will look terrible and justify further revolts. If they let you go, you can grow your clout (Gandhi example).

Dealing With Passive Aggression

In a world that despises full aggression, passive aggression is on the rise.

First of all, eliminate any feeling of guilt you might have when they show the passive side.
Whenever you can, disengage. When you can, never attack directly, but use their own tactics right back.
If it's a partner in a relationship, make them feel safe to express themselves.
Also, read:

- Passive aggressiveness

Examples:

Roosevelt pretended he didn't want to run for a third time, so nobody could accuse him of being power-hungry. When people asked for him, he showed up almost as if he had to oblige.

Partners in relationships who try to force the other into what they want while denying doing so.

33: Sow panic with terror: Chain Reaction

Terror strategies aim at raising havoc, making enemies fearful, and provoking desperate overreactions -or surrender without fighting-.

They serve well to smaller groups who can't fight openly because of size disparity.

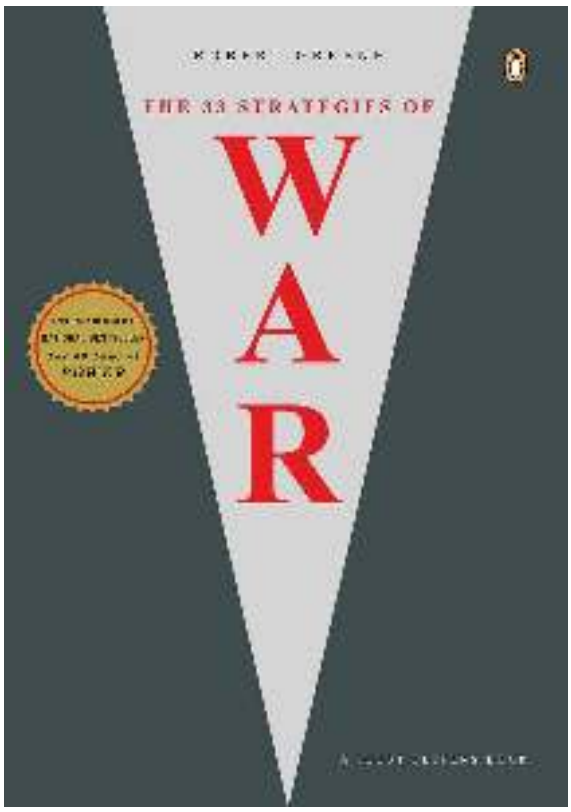
Their goal is to spread fear with small acts of violence that reverberate through stories and media and command outsized attention compared to their real effect.

Counterstrategies include keeping calm and rational and alienating the terror groups from the masses to deny any political base (Brigate Rosse in Italy).

Stopping the terror from spreading is also important (UK managing V2 terror), and heavy military engagement from the stronger side is often a mistake (what happened to the US recently).

Examples:

Mongols and spreading stories of their horrors so enemies would give up without a fight.
Robespierre and holding to power through an actually peaceful time thanks to the fear he instilled in enemies and people alike.



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CONS

- **Don't forget to make friends and allies**

This is not really a con, but more like an important reminder.

The 33 Strategies of War, like its cousin "*The 48 Laws of Power*", focuses war and competition only.

Be aware of enemies and covert enemies, but don't be paranoid.

Remember you can and should create alliances.

And that relationships can be based on mutual caring as well.

Also, read:

- The updated 48 Laws of Power
- Why The 48 Laws of Power Is Wrong

Review

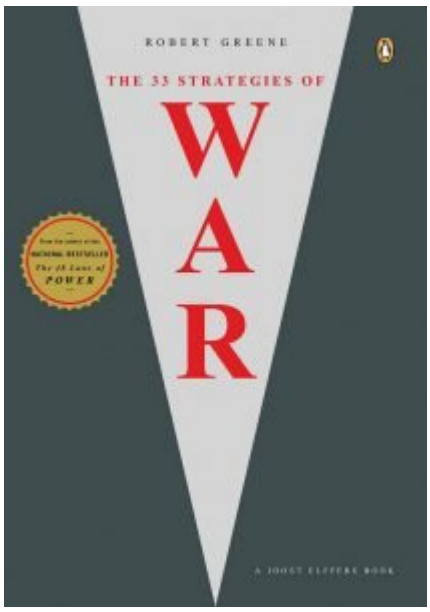
The 33 Strategies of War is a great read on strategies, leverage negotiation, and power dynamics.

And I put "*The 33 Strategies of War*" up there with "*The Art of Seduction*" as my two favorite books from Greene.

For more strategies on empire-making, read:

- 10 Strategies to build an empire
- **Best books on power**

33 Strategies of War Summary: Conquer Without Mercy



A fantastic book on the techniques and decoys of war. Also applicable to social interactions.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/33-strategies-of-war/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.6

Skip Blinkist: It's NOT Worth It for Serious Learners

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Blinkist is a paid service that provides access to book summaries and markets itself as a tool for acquiring knowledge faster and more efficiently.

While we agree with the speed angle, we don't necessarily agree with the 'efficient' part, and this review explains why.

TPM Strategic Audit: The Pitfalls of Low-Resolution Learning
Most summary apps optimize for speed and volume—not understanding, internalizing, and upgrading mindsets and behaviors.
Blinkist is low-resolution learning: it gives you the feeling of knowledge without the ability to apply, connect, or think critically.
We keep this review as a case study for our high-agency readers. **If you outsource your thinking to a low-level summary, you outsource your competitive advantage.**

Contents

- Intro
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  - 1. Saves Time on Poor Space-Filler Books
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- Why it Doesn't Work for Top-1% Men
  - 1. Science-Based Books Are Not There
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  - 5. Blinkist Does Not Provide Critical Review
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- Should You Get Blinkist?
  - You can use it as a 'filtering tool'
  - If you get it… Keep this in mind

Intro

This Blinkist review comes from Lucio Buffalmano, social scientist and avid reader who has read thousands of books and reviewed hundreds of them on this very same website.

That's me.

The headphone strings you see are from noise-canceling headphones so that I can listen to audiobooks on the go.
Indeed, as you can see from our reviews list, I read a lot. And I like being strategic about it.

So let's see why I don't use Blinkist (and why I don't recommend it to TPM's audience).

Where Blinkist Can Be Useful (Limited Cases)

Here are the advantages of using Blinkist:

1. Saves Time on Poor Space-Filler Books

> *Short waste of time is better than big waste of time*

Let's be frank, not all books are worth your time.
Some might even be great books, but they don't fit your goals, personality, or lifestyle.
And some might be great authors or great people, but they're just putting out content to monetize their name-brand.

In these cases, a summary saves you time (and money).

P.S.:
Most best-sellers are fluffy for smart and high-angency men. See:

- Why I stopped reading best-selling books

2. For Many Books You Can Get 80% of Value in 20% of Time

> *Pareto says yes in his Blinkist review*

Some books -but not all, read the cons!- can be easily summarized and you can get most of the value in a quarter of the time (and cost).
One example could be The 10X Rule.
Even with some great books, you can get 80% in 20%.

Why it Doesn't Work for Top-1% Men

The main cons for our target demographic are these:

1. Science-Based Books Are Not There

We prefer textbooks written by researchers because they're the best tools to properly understand the world, and become effective in that world.

They pay the biggest bang for the buck, and are the most reliable and evidence-based books you can get.

But…

They're not on Blinkist.

2. Great Books Can Lose 80% of Value

The really good books, with lots of content and lots of wisdom, are difficult to summarize. For anyone.
And I don't think Blinkist does a good enough job with the books I tested.
I think of *The Art of Seduction*, which the Blink summary pretty much butchered.

3. You Must Trust Blinkist Employees (some bad summaries)

Some summaries I tested didn't meet my expectations.

4. No Ranking Means You Can't Prioritize

Services like Blinkist don't -and possibly can't because of the agreements they sign- rank their books.

But ambitious and busy men must prioritize.

5. Blinkist Does Not Provide Critical Review

Blinkist summaries don't criticize the book, only summarize it.

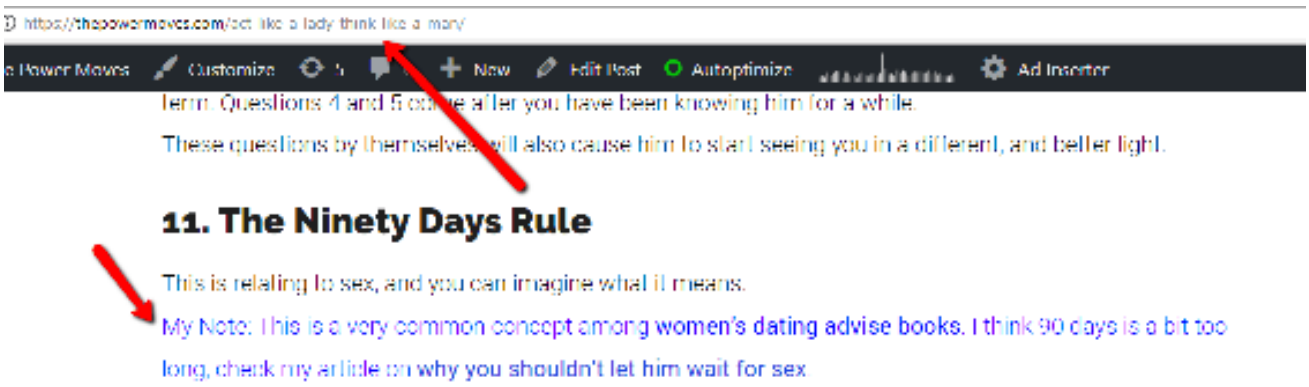
For example, in the otherwise good book *The 48 Laws of Power*, we listed the risks of over-antagonism and loss of cooperation (see 'why The Laws Don't Work').
But that's not something you would read on a Blinkist summary.

6. Books As Silos: Get The Trees, Lose The Forest

By looking at books as silos, you lose sight of the broader literature, which often offers a superior lens for understanding reality.

This is especially important for books that go against the grain of the consensus, or that try too hard to be unique and contrarian to capture attention and boost sales (example: The China Study, which Blinkist doesn't put in perspective with the consensus on nutrition).

But mentioning contrasting theories is important for readers to make sense of a subject.
For example, in *How to Win Friends*, we say that it's a must-read book. But also add that ambitious men must look at the full social skills spectrum, which includes power dynamics, positive dominance, and strategies.

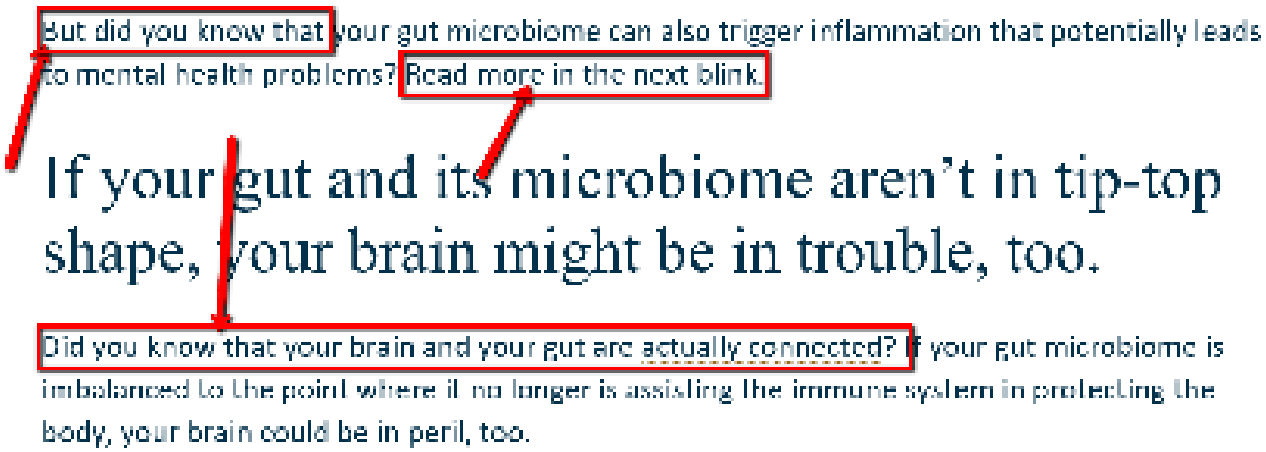


7. Fun-Fact Approach to Learning Doesn't Serve 'Pros'

It's good that Blinkist seeks to make reading 'fun': it's good if more people who wouldn't otherwise read, read.

But it's not the approach that best fit our audience.

Here is an example:



"But did you know that" is a typical "fun fact" approach. But I am not interested in fun facts. **I want facts, not fun facts**.
And I want to know how they can help me move forward.
It's the same for TPM's audience.

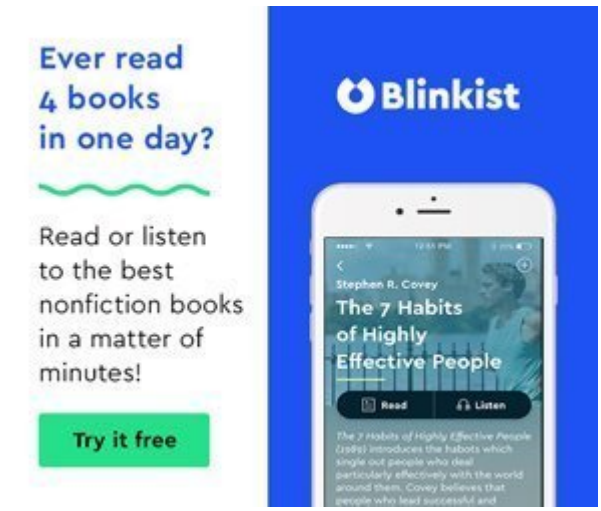
Validation-Reading

Books should add value to your life.

Adding books like players add notches under their belts won't move you an inch toward your goals.

In that sense, Blinkist and its marketing may nudge people towards 'reading for reading's sake':

> *Ever read read four books in a day?*



Ego validation, anyone?
No I haven't, and neither do I want. I'd rather learn from 1/10 of a top resource every day. And internalize and apply that wisdom every day.

Should You Get Blinkist?

If you're an ambitious, driven man who reads to boost his competence and personal power to achieve goals, you shouldn't get Blinkist for your core learning.

Quip George Clemenceau when he said that "war is too important to be left to generals".
Similarly, I say:

> **Knowledge is too important to be left to random people's summaries**

You can use it as a 'filtering tool'

However, you can use Blinkist for two high ROI approaches:

1. Save time on space-filling fluff books (many are)
2. Get a first idea about a book

This approach can also work for our readership, which can use Blinkist alongside the full book, or TPM's own analyses.

If you get it... Keep this in mind

Ultimately, by removing the most popular books without adding criticism or power dynamics, Blinkist can unwittingly promote ineffective naive self-help.

Learn better:

- TPM's top resources (for top-1% men)
- Why I stopped reading best-selling books
- Naive self-help to avoid (if you want to succeed)

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Protected: 5 Machiavellian Techniques to Sell A House Fast (Unethical!)

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

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The Five Love Languages: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Five Love Languages (1992) explains that we all express our love and affection in different ways (languages). And to make sure we all show our love in a way that others can understand, we must learn to speak the right language.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction
  - Love Language #1: WORDS OF AFFIRMATION
  - Love Language #2: QUALITY TIME
  - Love Language #3: RECEIVING GIFTS
  - Love Language #4: ACTS OF SERVICE
  - Love Language #5: PHYSICAL TOUCH
- Real-Life Applications
- What Are The Five Love Languages?
- Criticism
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- People express love and feel loved in different ways
- For a happy and loving marriage, you need to know your partner's love language
- There are people with two love languages and there are "dialects" within the same language

Full Summary

About The Author:
Gary Chapman is an American pastor and relationship counselor.
He can claim to have written the biggest-selling book when it comes to relationship advice.
And for good reasons: it's short and to the point and with great relationship wisdom.

Introduction

The 5 Love Languages states that people express and feel loved in 5 different ways.

If two people from two different love languages are together they can ruin their relationship by not making their partner feel loved.

To fix the issue you should learn how your partner communicates and receives love and adjust accordingly.

Let's start then with the 5 Love Languages:

Love Language #1: WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Words of affirmation communicate with words how much you love your partner.
If words of affirmation are your partner's primary love language, it will mean the world to them when you *say* how much you love them.
Here's how you can communicate through words of affirmation:

- Tell them "I love you"
- Make compliments
- Say you love them so much when they do X

Reversal

People whose primary love language is quality time will be deeply hurt by criticism and hurtful comments.

Love Language #2: QUALITY TIME

People who have quality time as their main love language will value spending time with their partners and getting their full attention.

Quality is the keyword here, which excludes activities such as watching TV together (TV gets your attention) or driving (the road gets much of the attention).

Here's how to express love in the quality time language:

- Going for a walk just the two of you
- Eating together while having personal conversations
- Doing new experiences together

Reversal

You will hurt people whose love language is quality time the most when you avoid spending time together.
Avoid postponing dates, being distracted, and not listening to them.

Love Language #3: RECEIVING GIFTS

If your love language gifts, you appreciate gifts and concrete symbols of love.

Indeed, that's what gifts stand for: a symbol of appreciation, a sign you are thinking of them, and, of course, a symbol of love. No gifts mean no love.

The value of the gift is actually often less important (unless she's a low-quality girl).

My note:
I can relate here. I had a girlfriend whose language of love was gifted, and she always came up with super personalized gifts for me. Often of little value but requiring work and thought.

Reversal

If you never buy gifts and your partner's love language is gifts, you are hurting them. Especially hurtful is missing gifts for celebrations, birthdays, and anniversaries.

Changing Attitudes Towards Money

I particularly liked the note Chapman does on people who are money savers and don't like spending on "meaningless" stuff (I am like that).

Savers feel good about themselves when they save money, so when savers are in a relationship with a partner whose language of love gifts, it could create problems.

But, the author says, **by not purchasing gifts you ARE purchasing for yourself**. You are purchasing emotional security and self-worth. You are caring for yourself… And hurting your spouse.

Love Language #4: ACTS OF SERVICE

People whose love language is acts of service appreciate concrete help as a sign of love.

"Let me do that for you" is the keyword here. You use your own time and resources to take a load off your shoulders.

Here are examples of acts of service:

- Cooking
- Preparing the table
- Changing children's diapers
- Mowing the grass
- Taking the garbage out

Different Dialects

Here Chapman introduces the possibilities of "dialects" within the same love language.

For example, you can both speak acts of service as your love language but value different types of services.
He might feel his duty is mowing the lawn, but she should take care of the children. While she could feel they are both parents and it's not loving of him not to help with the kids.

Chapman recommends you ask your spouse to come up with a list of tasks she would appreciate help with.

Reversal

Refusing to help and breaking promises is particularly painful for those who speak acts of service as their love language.

Love Language #5: PHYSICAL TOUCH

Partners whose main love language is physical touch will feel your love when you kiss them, hug them, cuddle, have sex and hold each other after sex.

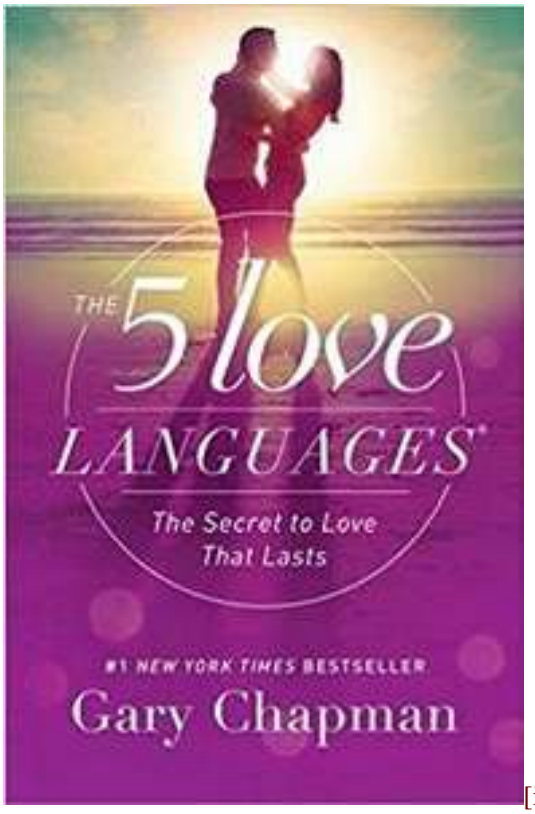
Even here there are different dialects that are expressed through situational physical touch and which parts of the body one likes most.
Don't assume, but ask or, better, observe.

My Note:
also note that men and women touch each other very differently. Read more on 4 ways men touch women wrong.

Reversal

Lack of touching is of course particularly painful for people whose main love language is physical touch.
You might be a guy who's not into holding hands -I wasn't-, but if your spouse is, hold that hand while walking.

For children, if their primary love language is touch, they will remember a slap for their whole life.



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Real-Life Applications

Learn Your Own Love Language
And let your partner know about it.

Find Your Partner's Love Language
And communicate with him/her using his/her love language.

What Are The Five Love Languages?

The five love languages are compliments (words of affirmation), quality time spent together, gifts, concrete help (acts of service), and physical touch.

Criticism

Is It Sexist / Traditional?

The 5 Love Languages has been criticized over time.

One of the main criticisms is that Chapman recommends a woman try to revive her marriage on her own.
And since her husband always wants more sex with her, he recommends she have sex once a week first and then increase it to two times a week.

I don't see much point in this critique.
If one wants to give it a try to revive a marriage -or any relationship for that matter-, why not start from oneself first?
If it doesn't work, that's fine, but one can always try.

On the sex question, if one party wants to have more sex, there are only three ways to solve it. 1. have more sex and make him happy; 2. don't have sex and only make yourself happy; 3. or meet in the middle.

Chapman's recommendation just seemed a way to meet in the middle.
And it was smart in the sense that sex also underpins an emotional connection, and can be an indicator of an improving relationship.

Is It Too Religious?

Chapman is a pastor and there are biblical references in "*The 5 Love Languages*".
But it's not all based on religion and scriptures like, for example, Boundaries is.
And personally, I didn't find those references to take anything away from the main message.

Is It Unscientific?

One of the main criticisms against the 5 Love Languages instead is that of having a little scientific background.

That's a stronger critique.
As I listened to the audiobook, indeed, I couldn't help but notice that Gary Chapman's 5 Love Languages had little scientific research backing its claims.

It did seem to make sense, but so do many other pop psychology myths.

But when I looked into the research to confirm (or disprove) the 5 Love Languages, there didn't seem to be any consensus.
However, some evidence points to the validity of the love languages.
See: construct validation of the 5 languages of love and a validity test of Chapman's 5 Love Languages.

At the time of revisiting this review, I am 'cautiously optimistic' the love languages may apply to some individuals.

PROS

- Brief and to the point
- Practical
- Potentially useful

Review

The 5 Love Languages is an interesting book with an interesting theory, turend into a global phenomenon.

Although I'm not yet fully convinced of how universally valid the 5 Love Languages are, I still consider it valuable information to possess.

Respect for Chapman

As a last note, I have major respect for Chapman if what The New York Times says about him is true.

Chapman devoted all income from "*The 5 Love Languages*" to a charity.

The charity promotes Christian values and one might or might not agree with that. But he's certainly a man who puts his money where his mouth is.
And that's not something many do.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Man's Guide to Women: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Man's Guide to Women (2016) is a research-backed book for men to learn more about women and relationships.
It touches on topics such as relationships, courtship, female psychology, and sex.

TPM Note: Great for monogamous relationships, less suited for other options
Gottman's work is invaluable but focuses on traditional monogamous relationships and does not account for sexual market dynamics or mate value disparities. It also **skips the mating choices available to top-1% men**. However, Gottman remains a top resource for committed relationships.
Calibrate with our Gottman Master Audit ↗

Contents

- Key Insights
- Summary
  - Introduction
  - What do Women Really Want?
  - Women's 2 Biggest Complaints
  - The Biggest Relationship Fix: ATTUNEMENT
  - Women's Rhythms
  - Hormones and Sex
  - Women and Fear
  - Women & Attraction
  - Romancing a Woman
  - Is She Girlfriend Material?
  - Making Love to a Woman
  - Handling Conflicts
  - Women Need Friends
  - Stages of Love
  - Marriage Is Important to Relationship Health
  - Women and Children
  - How to Stay Together For a Lifetime
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Key Insights

- It's men's behavior that makes or breaks a relationship
- Men who ATTUNE (listen / care /empathize) have the best relationships
- Making great love starts long before bed and it's in most parts mental

Summary

About the Author:
John Gottman is an American researcher and clinician who focused most of his career on relationships.
He is also the author of "*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*".

Introduction

From the start Gottman delivers a key takeaway: **men are the crucial factor between a great relationship and a failed relationship**.

It's not to say that women don't count: it's a relationship between two individuals, so sure they count.
But men and their actions are the key variables.

What's a man to do, then?

Read on.

What do Women Really Want?

First of all, women are unique, and if she contradicts what Gottman's love lab says, listen to her.

They do however have several traits that are likely to be shared. And the number one thing women want is this:

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in dating and relationships means that:

1. You are who you say you are
2. You do what you say you do

The authors say women want safe and dependable men and that's why they find firefighters hot: they epitomize the role of the dependable hero.

And that's why symbolic actions of protectiveness and concern, such as opening doors and pulling chairs actually do work.

My Note:
I think Gottman's right, but I need to make an addendum.
Firefighters being hot is relative and varies from country to country.
In Italy, it's seamen who have the hot stereotype. And the seaman stereotype is "a woman in every port".
I'm not saying that safety is not attractive to women. It can be and it's helpful in relationships. But danger and excitement are equally attractive, especially for short flings. Also, read the 10 types of players.

This is very important also sexually because **trustworthiness and sex are linked for women**.
Sex means being vulnerable for women, and fear or lack of trust will inhibit them sexually.

Women's 2 Biggest Complaints

Women in relationships have two major complaints:

1. He is never there for me
2. There isn't enough intimacy and connection

They are related complaints of women who want more intimacy but feel alone in a relationship.

Men's 2 Biggest Complaints:

1. Too much fighting
2. Not enough sex

Men are also, in a way, lonely in a relationship and they want intimacy as much as women.
But men feel more intimacy through less fighting and more sex.

What Men Want: Men want to be desired and to feel like their woman adores them and approves of them.

The Biggest Relationship Fix: ATTUNEMENT

Attunement is how you increase intimacy, remove most fights and increase sex.
But first, here's what most men do wrong:

Men's Mistakes: Dismissing Emotions

The fights of many couples are the consequence of men dismissing women's emotions instead of attuning to them.
You dismiss women's emotions every time you:

- Minimize them (or say she's exaggerating)
- Fix them
- Try to distract her from them
- Make fun of them
- Mock them
- Ignore them

A big mistake men do is to feel responsible for the woman's emotions.

When they do that, they either try to fix her or become irritable as they take her feelings personally.

Men have problems, especially with negative emotions. They think dwelling on them makes matters worse and will rather avoid them altogether. This is, again, a mistake.
Acceptance is key instead. Or even better: look at emotional "crisis" as an opportunity to build trust.

Attunement

Women want trustworthiness, and trustworthiness is built with emotional connection, which in turn is created with attunement.

Men who learned emotional attunement got what they ultimately wanted from their relationships: less fighting and more sex.
To understand attunement, we can use it as an acronym (A TT U N E):

- **A**ttend and give your undivided attention
- **T**urn toward: not just a metaphor, but physically turn towards her
- **U**nderstand: whatever she says, strive to understand. Ask questions
- **N**on Defensive Listening: don't justify or attack back
- **E**mpathize: understanding is intellectual, and empathizing is emotional. Feel what she's feeling

Non-defensive listening

A special note goes to listening without defending.

Men more easily go into flight or fight, so it's not easy for them to listen calmly. But those who were able to stay

calm were men with great relationships.

Women's Rhythms

Women change as their hormones change during their menstrual cycles.

This is just a general guideline, as it varies widely from woman to woman:

- First 2 weeks of the menstrual cycle women are friendlier, more talkative, and more relaxed
- Second 2 weeks they can be more stressed, irritable, and craving lone time
- During ovulation, women can be more emotional and interested in sex.
- PMS (premenstrual syndrome) can last one day or a full 2 weeks. Can include depression, anxiety, irritability, emotional sensitivity

You can help smooth things out by:

- Listening to her feelings (which are real)
- Avoid blaming PMS
- Get familiar with her cycle (not every woman has a 28 days cycle)
- Remember that women constantly change, so:
- Don't take her moods personally: they often have nothing to do with you
- Know that your woman of last week will be a different one from this week

My Note:
The authors also recommend you avoid telling her to cut caffeine and exercise more -which helps with PMS-.
But I disagree here. If she can do something to help the relationship, she should.

Hormones and Sex

Men have sex centers in their brains, which are twice the size of women.

And men think about sex on average six times more frequently than women.

But while men peak in the sexual drive during teenage years and early adulthood, women don't hit their sexual stride until their thirties.
Sexual drive for the two genders indeed aligns more closely in the forties and fifties.

Alpha VS Beta: The Cycle Effect

Women are more attracted to aggressive alpha men when ovulating and more attracted to kinder and nurturing men when not (beta).

The authors say that heroes adapt their behavior to be both alpha and beta depending on their woman's cycle.

My Note:
The authors are all well-learned, but their alpha/beta designation seems wrong here.
Betas are second in command, often very close to alphas. Associating aggression with alphas and nurturing with betas sub-communicates low scientific backing and lowers authority.

Women and Fear

While men go through most of their daily life without experiencing fear, that's not the case for women.

It was highly instructive for me to read the example in the book:

> A marriage counselor asked a room full of couples when was the last time they were afraid.
> Men were astonished to see their spouses were afraid or feeling uneasy on a daily basis. Including when walking in the parking lot to get to that same seminar room.

Stress Response In Men and Women

Men get less fearful in high-stress situations.

Women get more fearful instead and are also more likely to get mini-traumatized and be even more afraid of similar situations in the future.

An example is a near-car crash where the man chases the other driver and the woman gets more and more afraid.

Holding Hands During Fearful Situations

An experiment in MRI scan showed that holding hands with their husbands completely erased fear in happily married women.
It slightly decreased fear in unhappily married women. And it had no consequences when holding hands was a stranger.

Women & Attraction

Women look for confidence, intelligence, and high social status.

High social status is highly contextual, though.

So you can be a nobody at work but have high social status on a night out playing board games (also read: relativity of social status and small pond syndrome).

The authors say that the expertise you demonstrate in an area of interest is what attracts women. So if you collect stamps, be highly knowledgeable about stamps.

Romancing a Woman

The authors say that women remember the first kiss more than anything else.
Even more, than losing their virginity.

An example of a memorable kiss:

Is She Girlfriend Material?

The author recommends you take note of how she treats her pets, friends, and family.

That will give you a good idea of how she will treat you in the relationship.
Some more warning signs:

- Does she complain often?
- Pattern of friendships
- How she treats service personnel and strangers
- Is she considered self-centered?

Also read: 17 early signs of low-value women.

> **Choose your partner carefully. Your relationship is 90 percent of the joy or sorrow in your life**

Making Love to a Woman

The Man's Guide to Women has a whole chapter on making love.
I invite you to get the book for that.

But here are a few droplets of wisdom that no other sex book will tell you about women's mindsets:

Beauty for Women is a Matter of Survival

There's constant pressure on her from society and more and more from the media from any direction.

A woman's self-identity is tied to her body. She doesn't see herself separately from her body, so her self-worth is often tied to it.

While men are judged by their performance and abilities, women are judged today by the same standards PLUS how good they look and how they dress in the process.

So here's what a hero does:

- Comments on how great she looks
- Answer "you look good in everything" when she asks if she looks fat
- Does NOT make funny jokes about her eating
- Let her know he's attracted to her
- Appreciates her body in and out of bed

When heroes do that, they also get much better sex.

The Mental Side of Sex

Good sex and lovemaking start before bed.

A woman's anatomy is actually only a small percentage of what turns her on and gives her pleasure.

And, the authors say, t**he greatest sex organ of a woman is her mind**.
It's a myth that if a woman doesn't reach an orgasm the man is not a good lover. Ultimately, say the authors, a woman is responsible for her own sexual pleasure.
She must first allow herself to reach an orgasm with you.

My Note:
Indeed I have experience with women who've never had orgasms and it's not easy to get them to peak. They seem to reach the orgasm point but never actually get there. With women who did experience orgasms, it's instead easy to give them *multiple* orgasms.
Indeed, the authors say, it takes a modicum of skills to pleasure her if she's experiencing desire.
I once experienced a woman in a trance-like state once back home after a long day together. She had multiple orgasms… While we were still on the bed… Dressed (!)

> **The greatest sex organ of a woman is her mind**

Handling Conflicts

First of all, makeup sex is a myth: fighting puts a damper on women's desire.
Women's anger has its roots in three different categories:

- Powerlessness
- Injustice

- Other people's irresponsibility

Research in the Love Lab shows that most of the time conflicts start without a reason.
And when it happens, women want a good listener because women's goal is to be better understood by their partners.

Men & Conflicts

Men are more likely to get aggressive, passive-aggressive, or seek revenge when they are angry.

Men get emotionally flooded and overwhelmed during conflict situations: they feel the shock of the attack and the need to defend themselves.

Those who can reduce heart rate while staying present tend to respond better and have better relationships.

To avoid flooding, there are three strategies:

- Breath deeply
- Count to 10
- Take a break (WITHOUT thinking about your wife, but taking your mind off)

Your main job as a man is to learn to calm down when she has strong feelings or criticisms. It's not about bending over, say the authors, it takes lots of strength to really listen while staying detached.

> Men can't differentiate between a spear and a verbal spear

Women & Conflicts

Women are on average better at managing conflict, and that's one of the reasons they don't understand men stonewalling or leaving mid-conflict.

They are less likely to express anger directly, stay angry longer, and become more resentful.
Since women are more likely to use indirect ways to express anger, they are also more likely to simply stay silent.

Women Need Friends

While men need a woman to live longer, it's friendships with other women that determine women's longevity.

Breast cancer patients also showed that the survival rate was highly correlated with the number of friends, and *not* on whether or not they had a spouse.

Note:
just as a note, women do get health benefits from marriages, but only if the marriage is good. Men get benefits anyway.

Women have a natural inclination for friends. They make friends more naturally than men, like while shopping or having a manicure done.

Confidantes and Genders
In a study of blue-collar marriages, their spouses were the only confidantes for men and men spoke to their wives about almost anything.
But their wives had many topics they didn't talk about with their husbands and preferred other women instead.

Men's Jealousy

Some men are jealous -and feel threatened- by their spouses' girlfriends, and it was a major cause of domestic violence.

In the case of male friends though they might have a reason to worry.
The authors say that friendships slip into affairs when the woman complains to him about her relationship (read: how to sleep with women with a boyfriend).

Stages of Love

Love has three stages:

1. **Limerence**: the period of butterflies (but not necessary nor sufficient for lifetime love)
2. **Trust**: women make sure he's responsible for children (a couple of years)
3. **Loyalty**: you've chosen commitment, the relationship transcends the two of you and becomes a thing of beauty

Limerence, the period of crazy love, is not the right time to make decisions about long-term commitment.
But the couples who don't experience it sometimes feel as if something is missing. And wonder if they've done the right choice.

Importantly, the authors say that any other relationship type beyond monogamy in stage two is a threat to the relationship. Once you enter stage three, there's a sense of purpose in the relationship. Couples feel like they have created something bigger than their mere sum.

How do you know if she's the one?

Research has shown that similar interests matter little.

Feelings compatibility matters, though.
That's about how you express affection and love (read *the 5 love languages*), how you express feelings, if at all.
People have different ways of expressing feelings: passionate and all over or uncomfortable and shying away from feelings.

If you are mismatched there, it rarely works out.

Here's an example of a more rational woman withholding emotions VS one who makes no effort and bursts at the seam:

If meta-emotion works, here's what matters next: how does it feel being together?
If she makes you feel happy, appreciated and that you can be yourself, then she is the right one for you.

Marriage Is Important to Relationship Health

Turns out, marriage is more than a piece of paper.

The longer a couple lives together without getting married, the less they behave like a couple. They were also less likely to support each other and more likely to leave if someone better came along.

Overall, The Man's Guide for Women makes the case that marriage is good.

Women and Children

The main message here is that women do put their children first once they become mothers.

They tend to build social networks that will help them support their babies, and the father is a central piece in such a network. She needs you, and countless studies show countless benefits for children who grow up with an active father.

Heroes bond with their children as well instead of being jealous. And help raise healthy children in a happy family.

How to Stay Together For a Lifetime

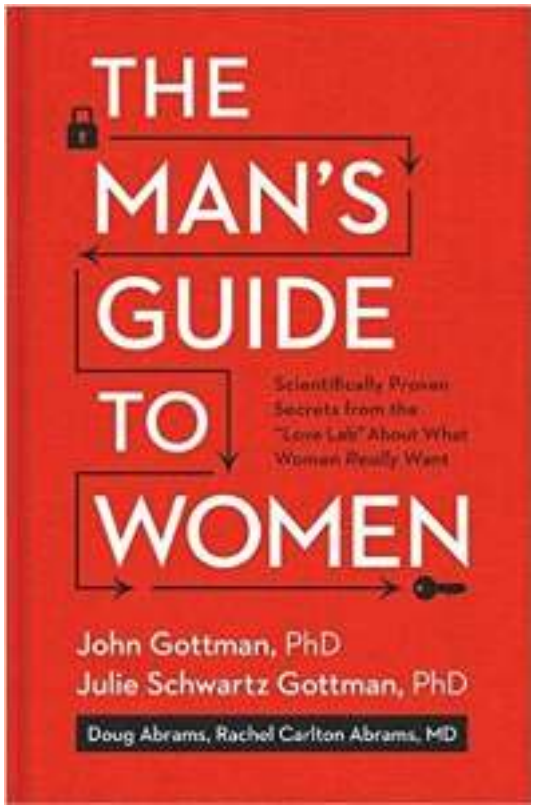
Heroes are always curious about her and never stop investigating her and asking her questions.

And they're never afraid of sharing their own world.
Staying curious is how you keep healthy communication and tell her you care with facts. Sharing your world is how you keep trust and an open relationship.

The authors say that betrayals don't happen out of the blue, but are the result of a long slide of secrets, unexpressed feelings moments of connection that went missing or dismissed.

If you turn away from your partner too many times, she might not be there when you finally turn to her again.

So here's the other key: be present.



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Real-Life Applications

Don't take her moods personally
Often they have little to do with you

Inject Excitement on Your First Date
When you do something exciting on your first date, she will feel aroused with you. The authors mention bungee jumping, which I wouldn't do. But you could, for example, visit a weird venue.

Don't Compete
women are much more geared toward collaboration than competition. On your date, don't make it a matter of who's right or wrong. Also, read 4 communication mistakes men do in relationships.

CONS

- **Evolutionary Psychology Misunderstanding**

The authors say that since women have been schooled only on dressing for 3.000 years, that came “bred into their bones”.
3,000 years is not much in evolutionary terms though.

- **Misleading Use of Evolutionary Psychology**

I felt the authors’ use of evolutionary psychology to “explain” their findings was wrong.

For example, they say men can bond when standing sideways because that’s how they sat while hunting for buffalo. That’s so random that it’s ridiculous.

I think men are comfortable sideways because full frontal shows genitalia to other men, which is awkward. But I don’t make up an evolutionary psychology story because I know full well what my explanation would be: my own (meaningless) guesswork.

- **Wrong Alpha VS Beta designation?**

Women tend to be somewhat more attracted to aggressive (alpha) men when they are ovulating and more attracted to kinder, gentler, more nurturing (beta) men when they are not.

But where does it say that beta males are more nurturing?

And a beta male is, technically, second in command. Gottman could be more careful with the words he picks: he’s supposed to be a scientist, not a red pill bro-scientist.

Review

The Man’s Guide to Women is a wonderful book for men interested in better understanding the psychology and dynamics of successful, monogamous and committed relationships.

Check out **the best relationship books**

Absorbing Information The Efficient Way: Reading Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Effective reading begins with mental preparation.

The mental preparation makes sure you are ready to welcome and retain the new information.

Contents

- 1. Crave New Wisdom
- 2. Open Yourself To Be Changed
- 3. Prepare Your Mind To Absorb Information

- Reading Quickly
  - 1. Read Everywhere
  - 2. Leverage Audiobooks
- Technical Tips
  - Leveraging E-Readers

1. Crave New Wisdom

> ***The End Wisdom Justify the Means***

Craving new wisdom is easy.

Accepting that new wisdom no matter what can be more difficult than it can seem at first.
It's not even just *a question of habit*. It's about fully internalizing the "learner mindset" and refraining from our most natural animal spirits.

When we read something we don't like, we experience *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957) and our natural reaction is to discard or attack the new source.

When we don't like someone, we experience a natural pushback to whatever he says.

Here are some examples:

Don't Let Bad Apple Spoil The Bunch

- **Tony Robbins' nonsense**

Tony Robbins in his *Personal Power II* talks about some law of attraction nonsense and he has some silly things to say about financial investment.

If I had let that one take away from the overall message, I would have lost on an otherwise breathtakingly beautiful program.

Don't Let The Bunch Spoil Good Apple

- **12 Rules For Life religious zealot**

Sometimes it's the opposite.

Sometimes the gold nuggets are to be picked among tons of stones. The book *12 Rules For Life* is too convoluted and packed with Bible references that go nowhere.

It's also quite right-wing. I read the Financial Times' review and The Guardian's summary before reading the book: both highly scathingly negative and derisive.

When I read 12 Rules For Life I realized the reviewers… Were kinda right? But they also completely missed the genius in the book. And there's quite a bit of it!
They allowed the bunch to spoil the few amazing apples.

Don't Let Bad Trees Spoil The Apple

- **Robert Kiyosaki snake oil**

Sometimes you don't really like the producer of the apples.

My instinctive reaction to Robert Kiyosaki after I uncovered a few murky moral spots was to immediately reject him and shut him down.

But his book *Rich Dad Poor Dad* has some simple yet groundbreaking content.
By dividing the message from the messenger I was able to fully internalize some powerful mindsets.

Attention, this doesn't mean you lower your standards for the people around you or lower your BS scan.
It only means that you filter in the great insights no matter where it comes from and no matter what else it comes from.

2. Open Yourself To Be Changed

> ***There's No Growth Without Change***

When we encounter content that goes against our worldview, values, or current knowledge we experience cognitive dissonance and the immediate reaction is to push back and hold to our current state.

That's particularly important for those who, like me, are mismatchers (looking for opposing information) and highly critical thinkers (looking for holes and counterarguments).

One of the reasons I'm good at doing social dynamics breakdowns is exactly because of that: my natural tendency is to look for holes and inconsistencies, which helps me see when someone is full of "it".

Approaching a book with that mindset, though led me to look for ways to tear a message apart instead of learning from it.
I didn't eradicate my BS detector: it's what makes me a great book reviewer.

But I also force myself to be open to being changed while looking for new wisdom.
I'm not saying that I am always successful, but it helped me hugely.

Be Open to Disturbing Content

A special mention goes to "disturbing content".

This is content that hurts us because it reminds us of how we're not doing what we're supposed to be doing, how we're missing out in life, or how we've wasted so much time in the past with wrong decisions.

It's imperative you move past the first natural pushback here.

3. Prepare Your Mind To Absorb Information

Before starting a book I browse the synopsis, read the whole table of contents and even quickly scan a summary of that book.

Sometimes I might even read a few reviews.

It doesn't take long, but why doing it all?

Because when you don't prepare yourself, your brain is taxed with the complex task of making sense of things *as you go*.
Your brain needs to understand what's the topic, what's the overarching message each section builds to and what's the point with all the seemingly unconnected stories.
That's why sometimes people really get little from a wisdom-packed book: because they didn't prepare in advance and it was simply too much for them.

When you already have a general idea instead the brain is better prepared to absorb, make sense and retain that knowledge.
It knows which area of previous knowledge or experience it can activate, it understands where each individual part is moving towards.
And it can guess in advance what's the point of that long a*s story the author wants to surprise you with.

Reading Quickly

Here are a few tips to churn through a high number of books quickly:

1. Read Everywhere

Some people suggest finding a time and place where you read as that will solidify your habit. I say that's BS.

Your time and place to read are everywhere and at any time.

I read before going to bed. I often read while I eat as well (not I'm not that crazy, sometimes I just listen to music and dance between morsels).

And I take it with me whenever I travel. Too early at the airport or was the flight delayed? Great, I love it, best time to read!
Some asshole is pulling a power move on you and making you wait..? No problem, not gonna waste my time fiddling my thumbs.

I always have an audiobook on my mobile and always take earphones with me.
They are noise-canceling earphones, which means I can listen to books while I walk around traffic or as I'm on a bus -and without the need to pump that volume to ear-damaging levels-.

At home, I have two portable speakers that I connect with Bluetooth to my phone.
So when I'm in the bathroom flossing, I'm listening to audiobooks.
When I'm eating -if it's not something too crunchy and noisy-, I either call home or, you guessed it, listen to a book.
When I'm going through my stretching and exercising routine at home… I listen to audiobooks.

Some time ago I had started to switch the speaker from remote when I'd wake up so that I'd use those 10 minutes where you just lie in bed doing nothing (but I stopped it: that's my time to think and be grateful now).

Of course, don't go thinking I'm this monster of efficiency: plenty of times I slack off. Too many times. But I often remind myself I need to demand better of myself and the less I use those downtimes, the dumber I'll be. And then I force myself to tune in.

2. Leverage Audiobooks

I listen to audiobooks at faster the normal speed so I can read more in less time.

I try to go as fast as I can manage while still understanding the message.

I also earmark important parts so that when I summarize them, I can re-listen to those key parts without listening to the whole thing again. This is the equivalent of highlighting on an audiobook basically.

Unluckily I haven't yet found a highly efficient equivalent for the audiobook version of a note.
A nice feature would be an app allowing you to record your voice and insert it in the audio file, but I haven't found any for that (if you did, shoot me a message :).
Therefore, as of today, I jot down a few lines on an Evernote file on my phone for anything I absolutely want to keep top of my mind.

To play the audiobooks I use an app called Audipo. I chose it because it was the only one that allowed me to go faster than 2x.

Speed Training

At times I'm reading a book that is very easy, or I'm listening to a book a second time for a recap.

Or I might have forgotten to load a new one so I have no other options. I use these instances as "speed listening training".
Since full understanding is not a top priority anymore, I go slightly faster than I could otherwise so that I can train my ear to discern words faster.

Technical Tips

And here are more of the actual mediums I use:

Leveraging E-Readers

I highlight and take notes as I read.

Something that clicks and makes huge sense, I write "booom" in the notes.
Some amazing insight, I write "genius".
Something good, I write "that's true".
Something personally, I write "this is something you do / this is you".
If there's something I want to double-check, I write "check it", and that means I'll google that information later.

Then I copy-paste the highlighted parts on a Word file and that'll form the basis of my summary.

I also learned and applied some speed reading techniques (I was particularly slow before).

About the reader as a device, I used to have a Sony and now got a Kindle. My next one will be a Sony again because Epub are easier to find compared to Mobi and I save time in converting formats.

Best Dating Books for Women

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

I have perused all the most popular dating books, resources, and gurus available when it comes to women's dating advice.

As a matter of fact, I'm not aware of a single major title I haven't read.

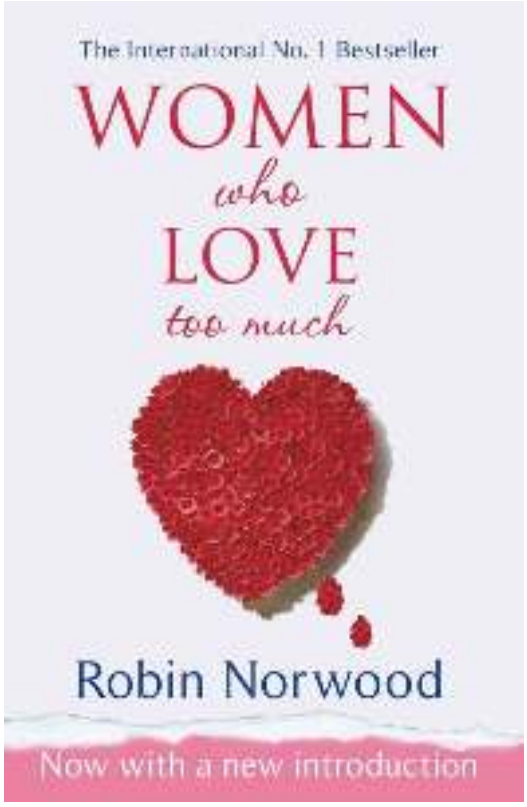
Coming up with a shortlist of the best dating books for women was not easy and some good titles had to be left out. But done with the talking.

Let's start:

Contents

- 10. Women Who Love Too Much
- 9. Date-Onomics
- 8. Seductresses
- 7. Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man
- 6. The Art of Seduction
- 5. The Woman's Guide To How Men Think
- 4. Attraction Explained
- 3. Never Chase Men Again
- 2. The Tao of Dating
- 1. Seduction University
- Good Dating Books for Women
- Also, Read

10. Women Who Love Too Much



by Robin Norwood
Summary | Audiobook

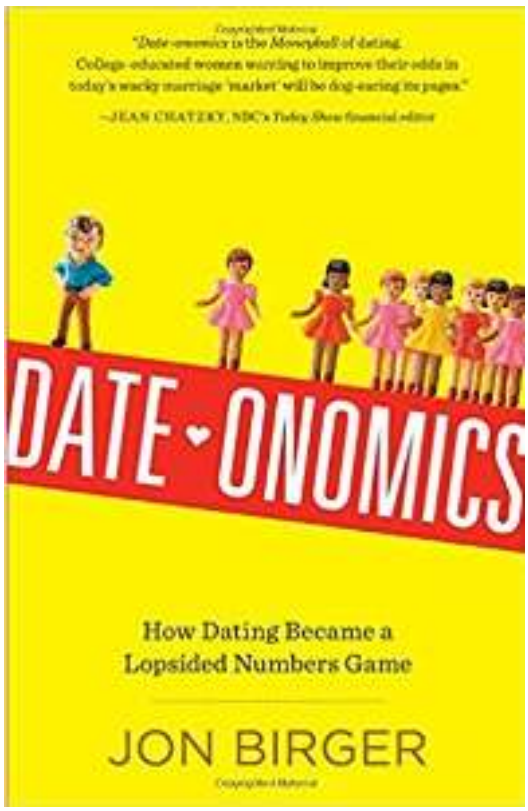
Let's start with the basics.

This is more of a self-help, self-love type of book, but it's a necessary step for some women in order to avoid scumbags and toxic relationships.
Self-love forms the foundation of any effective dating, and it becomes even more important for relationships.

I also recommend:

- **Self-esteem in relationships**: how healthy self-esteem underpins healthy relationships, as well as prevents abuse
- **Psychopaths: the profiling of a sex predator**: a sobering, even shocking analysis of a psychopath's strategy to procreate, abandon, and control women. Learn this for the red flags and types of men to avoid

9. Date-Onomics



by Jon Birger
Summary | Kindle | Print

Date-onomics is not a dating book in the strict sense of the word.

There are no “place yourself near him” tips or “make him chase” suggestions. But it’s the best book available to link behaviors, difficulty (or ease) in finding a good mate, and… Numbers.

One of the (many) key concepts is that in “difficult markets” women who date proactively win.

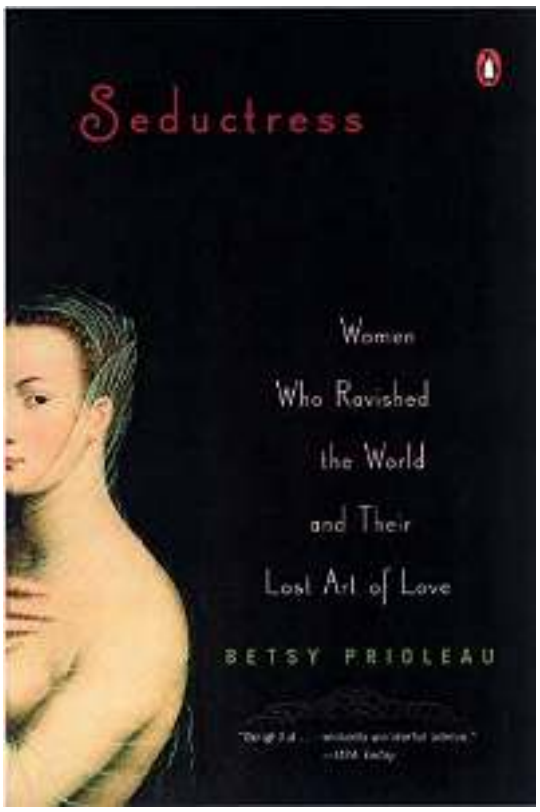
Date-onomics is eye-opening, fun, and highly applicable.
And it might have the best dating advice you could ever receive:

- The best way to (easily) find a man is to be in an environment with lots of high-quality men

Take care of that, and you might not need any further advice.

> Quote: *“It’s not that he’s not that into you, it’s that there aren’t enough of him*”

8. Seductresses



By Betsy Prioleau
Review

The seduction strategies outlined in this book only apply to 0.1% of women.

Such as much of the book deals with dating exceptions.

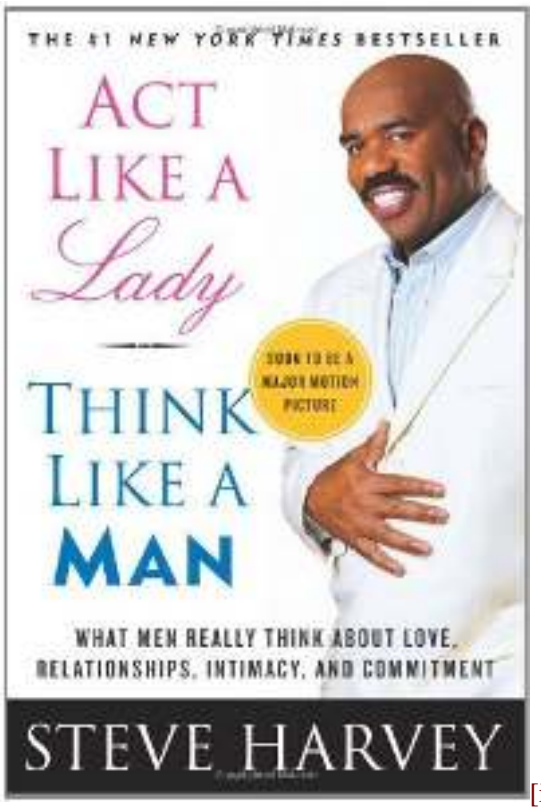
It's for women who are either extremely skilled, talented, driven, or, as well, for women who are extremely egotistical, narcissistic, or with sociopathic tendencies.

For most "normal" women, this book might actually be dangerous.
It's dangerous because much of Prioleau's strategies translated, half-baked and watered down, into feel-good self-development mantras such as "powerful women are attractive women" and "women who don't need a man attract men".
That's only true in a few specific cases, when the woman is "all in" and extraordinary, in her own way.
If she is middle-of-the-road, suburban, and office or small-business type of successful, then it likely won't apply.

But it's still a very important book to understand seduction at 360 degrees.

> Quote: Seduction demands spunk and "daimonic assertion." "Venus favors the bold!" Next they'd urge us to boost our self-esteem and get high, mighty, and magnificent. And, of course, to discover our genitals (…) Finally they'd advise us to tune out the pretty-power propaganda and dial up the neglected psychological arts.

7. Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man



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by Steve Harvey
Summary | Kindle | Print |Audiobook

Two caveats: while Harvey proposes a 90 days no-sex rule, I believe long waiting times are unhelpful.
Steve also caters to more traditional men who want to be providers. He's right, but it doesn't apply to everyone.

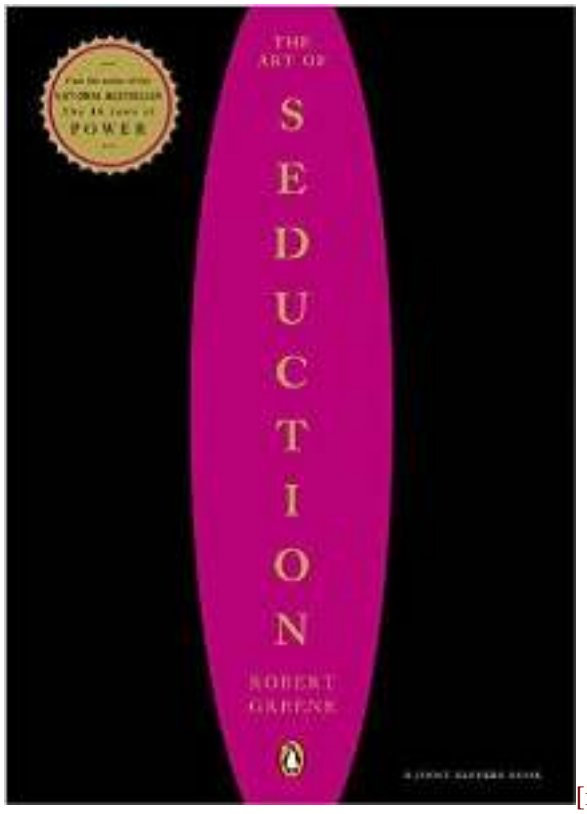
That being said, Harvey has boatloads of dating wisdom and introduces one groundbreaking concept:

The Minimum Achievement Bar. It says that men need to reach their minimum life goals of income/career before they can fully focus on a woman.

Overall, in his huge bestseller, Harvey provides an effective crossover between actual dating and successful relationships.

> Quote: *"Women who let him lead win at dating"*

6. The Art of Seduction



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by Robert Greene
Summary | Kindle | Print |Audiobook

Robert Greene is one of the deepest connoisseurs of *human nature*, world history, and psychology.

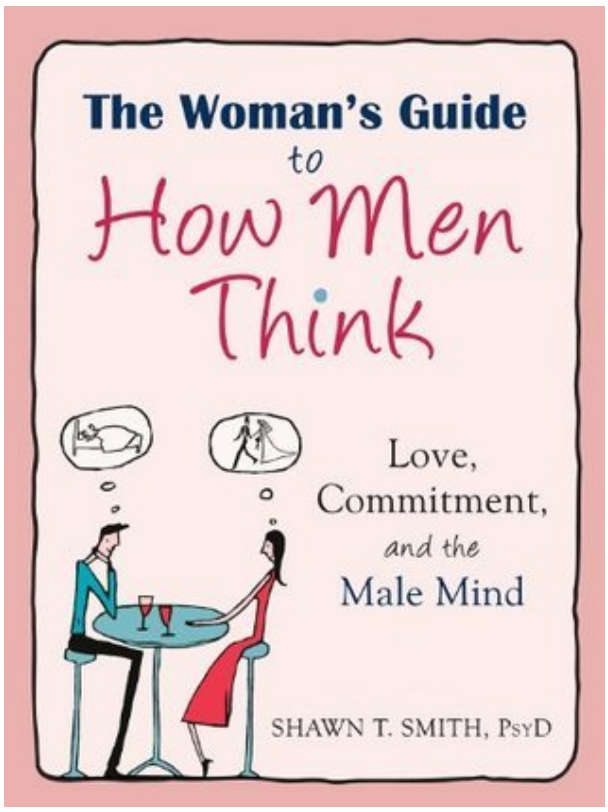
Different realms he wisely mixes and combines to back his theories with examples and famous case studies.

Greene (*48 Laws of Power; Mastery*) is one of my favorite authors, and his foray into seduction might as well be his crowning jewel.

I put it "only" as fourth in the best dating books for women list because it's heavy in theory. And the actual seduction stage is more geared toward men.
But don't get me wrong: The Art of Seduction will deepen your psychological knowledge of dating like few other books -if any- ever could.

> Quote: *"Sirens offer the promise of endless pleasure… And a little bit of danger"*

5. The Woman's Guide To How Men Think



by Shawn Smith
Review (removed) | Audiobook

A book on how men think… Written by an actual psychologist and couples' counselor.

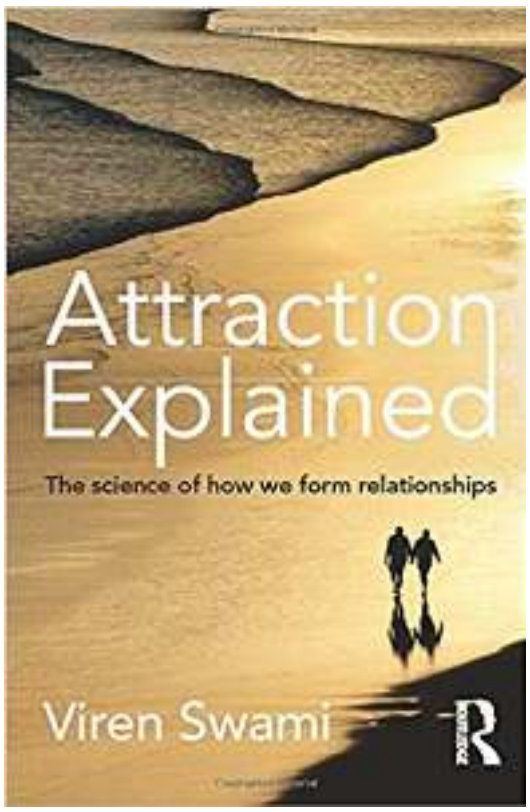
Wow, what a rarity.

Add on top of the credentials actual great content, and you know why this book had to be here.

Most women know little about men and are ill-prepared to be in healthy relationships with men.
This book will help you date with a relationship in mind, setting up healthy dating patterns from early on, so that you can both enjoy a healthy relationship.

> Quote: Maybe you've seen one of those cartoon diagrams of a man's brain in which most of the brain areas are labeled "sex." Those cartoons might be more accurate if they depicted a man's brain as one giant marketing firm designed to earn the affection and admiration of women.

4. Attraction Explained



by Viren Swami
Summary | Kindle

Just when I thought "Date-Onomics" was the only source to provide some data and science on female dating, I stumbled onto Viren Swami's work.

And what a gem it is.

This book will help women cut through the BS of "Cosmopolitan" style advice by sharing what's been proven to work and what's most likely to backfire.

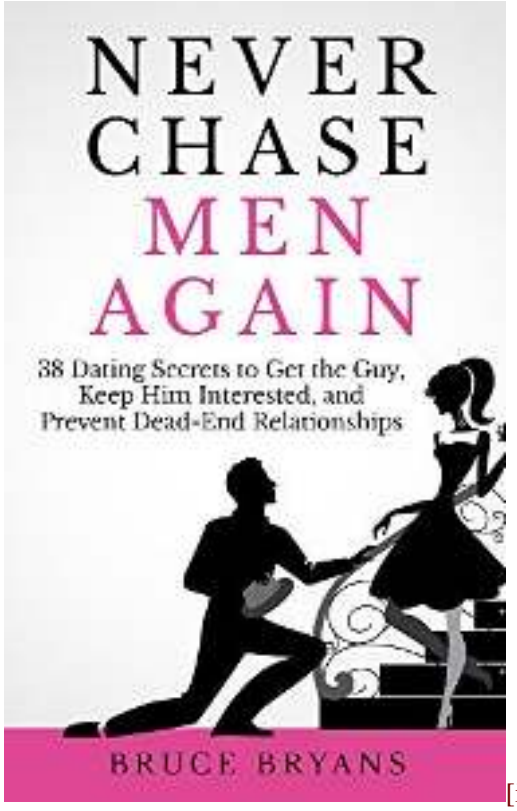
Here is one quick tip: "playing hard to get" is more likely to backfire because like begets like and dislike begets dislike.

Also, read more on scientifically proven dating strategies:

> 9 Proven Female Dating Strategies (Science-Based)

> Quote: "When we play hard-to-get, we give the impression that we dislike the person – and that just isn't conducive to sparking attraction"

3. Never Chase Men Again



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by Bruce Bryans
Summary (removed) | Kindle | Print |Audiobook

Bruce Bryan focuses on high-quality men, and he does a great job at that. He really gets how high-quality men think.

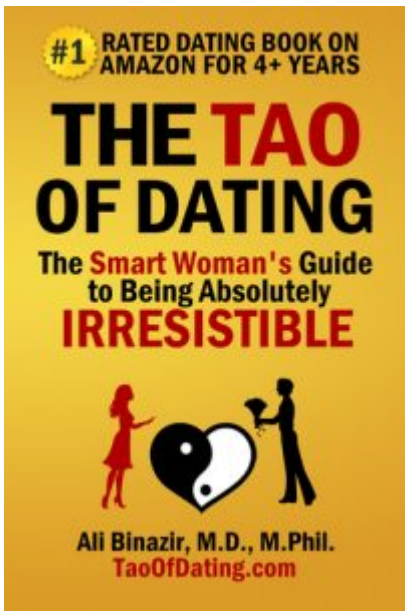
A couple of takeaways from this great book:

1. Escalate Emotional Investment: when he's proven his worth, show vulnerability and escalate emotional investment. If he reciprocates, he's a keeper;
2. Don't move in if you want marriage: men consider moving in a way to test ride or forestall marriage.

And many more great pearls of wisdom await you in "Never Chase Men Again".

> Quote: "*Men with a backbone don't take demands as a sign of quality but as self entitlement*"

2. The Tao of Dating



by Ali Binazir
Kindle | Print |Audiobook

Binazir takes the top spot on our women's dating reading list when it comes to actual books.

As a matter of fact, I think this may be the most underrated book when it comes to dating advice for women.

The author has a deep grasp of human nature and understands dating and high-quality men's mindsets.
He shares lots of deep wisdom, some of which includes:

1. Fulfillment is a feeling NOT a person (so don't get hung up on any specific man)
2. Don't play unavailable games: it will mistakenly make you like him less (back justification)

He's also the only author of all the best dating books for women who says that early sex can gain you leverage if it's a great, guilt-free experience. And I couldn't agree more.

> Quote: "*Respect for female strength does not translate into male attraction*"

1. Seduction University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview

Seduction University is a course that includes written text, pictures, videos, and real-life examples.

It's a unique product that combines first-hand experience with science, and real-life examples of effective dating strategies and techniques.

That way, you learn what truly works, and you can *see* how to make it work.

Seduction University does not sugarcoat things to pander to the readers. But it provides you with real tools and strategies to become a more effective dater.
Whether you want more sex or a relationship, you will learn the best strategies to get them.

> Quote: "negotiating a mate is not that any other negotiation. The product you've got matters. But the good negotiators polish the product, present it well, engratiate the other party… And they get more.
> Same for dating. Learn what men want, market yourself accordingly, play often, play well… And you will win.

Good Dating Books for Women

Outside the "best of" list, but still books with some wonderful information and advice:

- **The Power of The Pussy:** a bit more focused on the friction and sexual conflict between men and women than on pure dating strategies. But good on tackling the basics and thumbs up for exhorting women to date more and give more men a chance rather than complaining and rejecting all men off the cuff.
- **Why Men Love Bitches**: this one is the female equivalent of "No More Mr. Nice Guy", and it's a good read for women who are way too nice. Just don't make the mistake of going to the opposite end and becoming too abrasive, because that doesn't work. Also watch out for the feminist undertones, because feminism can give you power *outside* of dating, but not so much dating power
- **F*ck Him**: takes some leaves out of the above two books, but with a more collaborative frame which I think is far more helpful to both date well, and start good relationships
- **Get the Guy**: this book takes a lot of male dating advice and repackages it for women. Sometimes, that doesn't work too well. But some other times, that's exactly what women need to do more. Starting from the mindset of taking a more active approach to their dating lives

The Criteria for The List

To make the cut in this dating books reading list I had a simple rule: there shouldn't be any major advice which, in my opinion, could work against women.

For example, the popular concepts of making him chase, invest and wait for sex as long as possible do sometimes work.
But, depending on the individual and the environment, they equally often backfire (they work better with low-quality men and avoidant men, -and you don't want either).
So I scrapped all books that only focus on those aspects.

Another popular concept is that of being a highly independent woman. That's very popular among female writers and feminist-leaning authors. But as good as it sounds on paper, there is plenty of evidence that it doesn't work well in dating -and telling other women to be strong and independent is a form of female intra-sexual manipulation-.
That type of advice makes you an effective gal at work and in life, but purely in terms of dating opportunities, it can be a double-edged sword.
So I eliminated the dating books that don't accurately flesh out those concepts (also see: successful women dating).

> Why Successful Women Fail At Dating (& How to Fix It)

Yet another popular concept is that of playing lots of dating games.
And you should play some games.
But too many of them, and too many win-lose games drive away the higher quality guys.
So I skipped all books that focus too much on win-lose games. And you should scrap those, by the way:

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

The books in this list instead all share one thing in common: top dating advice for women with little or no downside.

Also, Read

- Best dating books for guys
- Best relationship books
- Best psychology books

Dating a Woman with Low Self-Esteem: A Guide for Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

You've probably heard the advice that you should **never date a woman with low self-esteem.**

While it's a generalization, there is some truth to it.
A woman with low self-esteem can make a great relationship feel like an uphill battle, leaving you confused, emotionally drained, and frustrated.

They tend to be more anxious, less trusting, and can create power dynamics that prevent a relationship from being a true partnership.

This article is a proactive guide for men on how to **identify the key signs of low self-esteem** early on and **navigate these dynamics** from a place of strength and purpose. You will learn:

- The psychological reasons why low self-esteem women can't handle a high-quality partner.
- The self-sabotaging "dances" that a man can fall into with them.A strategic framework for building relationships based on mutual respect, not codependency.

Contents

- The Theory of Self-Esteem
  - Low Self-Esteem Inhibits Loving Relationships
- Steps For Men
  - 1. Understand Her Psychology & Sabotage Behavior
  - 2. Choose: Work It Or End It
  - 3. Implement Proactive, High-Authority Strategies
  - 4. Don't Be Paranoid, But Be Careful of Infidelity
  - ⚠ 5. Ensure It's Not A Tactic
- Her Part of The Work
  - 1. Accept positive feedback
  - 2. Make herself useful
  - 3. Build antifragile ego
  - 4. Demand and expect authenticity
  - 6. Get good… At something
- Why do men like women with low self-esteem?
  - Low Self-Esteem Drives Quality Men Away

The Theory of Self-Esteem

We like people who build us up and make us feel good.
In psychology, this is sometimes referred to as self-enhancement.

Women with low self-esteem abide by the self-enhancement theory only at the beginning of dating.
This might be because women during dating are still in "assessment mode" and less focused on themselves.

But during long-term relationships, a switch happens.
Women with low self-esteem switch from self-enhancement (ie.: make me feel good") to self-verification (ie.: treat

me like I deserve).
Self-verification means that people don't want to be treated well, but they want to be treated the same way they think they deserve to be treated.

Can you see the possible issue there?
If a woman thinks she is not worthy of a good man, she will find it difficult to deal with a man who treats her well. The man who treats her well feels like

Nobody can exactly say when that shift happens.
But when it does happen, women with low self-esteem grow apart from men who love them and treat them well. Why?

Because they revert back to their low self-appraisal and their mind goes:

> *Why does he love me if I'm such a mess?*
>
> *Why does he think I'm great If I'm terrible?*

When that happens cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) kick in. Cognitive dissonance is the mental discomfort in the presence of two opposing views.

Women with low self-esteem and loving partners feel like their loving partners don't really get them. So they lose emotional connection with their spouses. Distrust can also set in becuase they think that 'there must be something wrong if he's interested in me'.

Low Self-Esteem Inhibits Loving Relationships

Low self-esteem women seek consistency through their men's actions.

Any man who treats them well is not consistent with their own self-beliefs. They cannot trust loving men and cannot feel a connection with loving men.
How could they?
Loving men see them as lovable, but they see themselves as unworthy!

The result?
Low self-esteem women sadly cannot hold a happy relationship with loving men over the long haul.

Steps For Men

1. Understand Her Psychology & Sabotage Behavior

The core scientific concept you need to grasp is self-verification theory (Swann, 2012).

In a nutshell, people seek consistency between their internal self-image and how others treat them.
A woman with low self-esteem believes she is unworthy of a high-value man's love.

When you treat her well, it creates **cognitive dissonance**—a mental discomfort from two conflicting beliefs: "He loves me" and "I am unlovable."

This can cause her to subconsciously **sabotage the relationship** to confirm her negative self-belief.

Identify the Behavioral Patterns

Scientific research shows that low self-esteem manifests in specific behaviors. Your first step is to recognize these patterns without taking them personally:

- **Constant reassurance-seeking:** She frequently asks, "Do you love me?" or "Am I good enough?"

- **Self-sabotage:** She may pick fights, pull away, or become overly critical of you to create distance.
- **Jealousy and suspicion:** She may question your intentions or get jealous of your friends or accomplishments.
- **Rejection of compliments:** She might deflect or argue with you when you give her sincere praise, as it doesn't align with her self-image.

2. Choose: Work It Or End It

It's not your duty to save or fix anyone.

However, if you *want to*, it's fair to decide to at least try.

And if you want to give it a try, you must do your part.

Your goal is to not just be a good partner, but to help her rewrite her internal narrative.
You must help her believe she is worthy of you.

Here are some approaches for that:

3. Implement Proactive, High-Authority Strategies

- **Validate, Don't Just Reassure:** Instead of just saying "I love you," validate her feelings. If she says, "I'm not good at anything," you can say, "It sounds like you're feeling down about yourself right now. I want you to know that I see how hard you work on X, and I admire that." This acknowledges her pain while providing specific, authentic praise.
- **Model Self-Respect and Boundaries:** Your job isn't to fix her, but to be a model of a healthy, high-value partner. A woman with low self-esteem can unconsciously try to drag you down to their level. By maintaining your own self-respect and **setting healthy boundaries**, you demonstrate what a balanced, respectful relationship looks like. You are a leader, not a fixer
- **Encourage Self-Care and Growth:** The real work must come from her. Support her in finding hobbies and activities that build her own sense of self-worth outside of the relationship. This could be anything from joining a group to picking up a new skill.
- **Communicate with Kindness and Clarity:** Use the Gottman method's principle of **"turning toward"** your partner's emotional bids. When she tries to open up, respond with curiosity and empathy, not logic or defensiveness. At the same time, if a behavior is unacceptable, communicate your needs clearly and respectfully, without being critical. For example, "When you accuse me of flirting with my coworker, I feel hurt. It makes me want to pull away."
- **Avoid the "Fixer" Role:** You cannot heal her. Your role is to be a supportive partner, not a therapist. If she is struggling with deep-seated issues, gently suggest professional help.

4. Don't Be Paranoid, But Be Careful of Infidelity

Low self-esteem overlaps with anxious attachment, and both may predispose to infidelity.

Writes Susan M. Hughes in *The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity*:

> Individuals high in anxious attachment may be willing to risk engaging in a secretive infidelity relationship as the other man/woman simply because it is a way in which they can receive a self-esteem boost and feel greater intimacy that they so desire.

⚠ 5. Ensure It's Not A Tactic

Finally, as experts on power and manipulation dynamics, we must raise a warning here.

This is something that other resources shy away from.

But seeking your validation or creating issues can be a manipulative tactic to make you invest more in the relationship.

For example, Buss notes that women who pursue a short-term mating strategy appear to intentionally signal sexual exploitability.

Some cues to exploitability may be similar to low self-esteem.
Such as: While men evolved to spot and potentially target exploitable women, **women may have learned to send false signals of exploitability to arouse and gain male investment**.

These cues of exploitability may overlap with low self-esteem.

Don't Fall For Toxic Relationship Dynamics

Finally, cycles of up and downs, pursuing and avoiding, and fighting and making up can lead to toxic relationship dances.

That may also be an evolved tactic to maintain a man's interest.
Crosby makes this point in *The Cambridge Handbook of Sexual Psychology and Female Adaptations*.

He hypothesizes that 'when women face a mate retention problem, they may experience increases in sexual desire, engaging in sex in response to facilitate partner retention'.

That 'pattern retention' means getting mired and stuck in a toxic relationship.

This is a pattern I've noticed from anxiously attached women and borderline personality disorder (BPD).
And self-esteem appears to be more unstable among BPD as well as among anxiously attached women.

See more:

- Anxious-avoidant trap for the dynamics
- Red flags and 'games women play' in dating

Her Part of The Work

Here are some behaviors you want to encourage, demand, or expect from her if you wish to work on your relationship:

1. Accept positive feedback

Chronic low self-esteem women reject positive feedback.

She must fight that urget and willingly allow it to sink in.

2. Make herself useful

We base much of our self-esteem on how useful (and needed) we are to others.

Here's a win-win then: join an organization, engage in service, focus on helping people. Being useful to the world will lift her spirit like few other things will.

Or, simply, she may be more supportive towards you.

3. Build antifragile ego

It's easy to break our spirit when our ego is built around "being good".

Self-esteem built around being good is easy to destroy: just make a mistake and you're not good anymore.

This is also why women whose goal is to be good wives to an abusive man often stay with low self-esteem: he *proactively* seeks to makes her feel 'not a good wife'.

Instead, encourage her to build her self-esteem around non-fragile beliefs, like:

Build your self-esteem around concepts that are not assailable instead.
Something like:

1. **I try my best**, whether I win or fail, I judge myself on doing my best
2. **I'm a learner:** mistakes don't define me, but help me move forward

Also, read "the antifragile ego".

4. Demand and expect authenticity

The "faker" she is, the more the main issues will go unresolved.

Fakeness and games may 'work' during courtship and dating, but as soon as you move in, the issues will only get bigger.

Note:
This largely rest on you, in being able to spot the games, call them out, and demand better.

6. Get good... At something

Encourage her to do something she's good at.
Or even better, to **start improving at something**.

Join a gym, a Toastmasters club and overcome the fear of public speaking, or as simply as learning to cook a new meal.

She needs to feed her brain with something that she can use to tell yourself "see? I'm not that bad, I learned and improved on this one thing".

Finally, I want to dispel a myth:

Why do men like women with low self-esteem?

First off, it's not true that all men like women with low self-esteem.

But ***some*** **men prefer women who signal 'exploitability' because they may be easier to control** (Buss, 2019).
And some men may also find signals of exploitability attractive for short-term mating, or even predation.
For example, imprisoned psychopaths have been shown to target victims based on cues of exploitability.

This is why low-esteem women tend to attract and keep lower-quality men.

More controlling and abusive types of men may even prefer a low self-esteem partner.
They don't even have to do the 'work' of lowering her self-esteem, and she is less likely to run away from value-taking control tactics.

Low Self-Esteem Drives Quality Men Away

High-quality men tend to be put off by low self-esteem women.

Low self-esteem women tend to drive away quality men, but *stay* in lower quality relationships.

A lower quality and more abusive type of man behaves in a way that is consistent with a woman's negative self-image.
This is what she tells herself after the abuse:

> *He's right… I am terrible. I deserve it*

A relationship with an abusive man hurts her, but **she stays with abusers because abusive behavior is consistent with her own self-image.**

Are those guys treating her well?
They're fake and never really understood her.

Protected: How to Buy A House Cheap With 5 Unethical Life Hacks

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

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Never Eat Alone Summary for Power-Networking Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Never Eat Alone is a book on networking and achieving success with people and through people. Keith Ferrazzi, the author, teaches readers how to increase the breadth and quality of their social networks.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - The Mind-Set of Networking
  - Connecting for Options
  - Relationships Are Give and Take
  - Adding People to Your Goal Setting
  - Never Eat Alone: Stay Visible
  - Networking Tips
  - How to Give Value
  - Develop a Brand
  - Mentors
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Takeaways

- Business is about people
- You can't go far alone
- You should treat networking seriously for what it is: one of the most important tools for success

Notes

About the Author:
Keith Ferrazzi is an Italo-American entrepreneur, speaker, and author.
Ferrazzi says that a lot of problems, even in business, are not business problems but people's problems. And he made people the focus of his career.

The Mind-Set of Networking

1. You can't go very far alone
2. Seed relationships today to enjoy tomorrow's fruits
3. Ask! You need to ask
4. The power of networks grows exponentially
5. To get: give

Smarts, talent, and resources all matter. But they still won't do much by themselves without good people around them.

Business is a human enterprise.
When you strip any business, at its core, is always about people dealing with people. People selling to people, people working with people, people hiring people, etc., etc.

Connecting for Options

Why would you want to connect with more people?

Many reasons, Ferrazzi says.
Including:

- Financial safety
- Career options
- Control over one's life

Ferrazzi says that in a world of shifting employments and shorter stints, connecting replaces the old loyalty and security that big organizations used to provide.

This is an idea I espouse as well to give yourself more power and control over your own life (read: how to deal with a bad boss).

Relationships Are Give and Take

Giving and taking are interlinked, you can't just do one or you'll only do half the equation.

A network functions only as long as the different needs are recognized and met, and that's at the core of the give and take.

Finally, Ferrazzi proposes that you focus on giving first without keeping scores. The more people you help, the more help you will receive.

And he paraphrases Kennedy in saying "don't ask what people can do for you, but ask what you can do for them" (albeit that was a big political manipulation).

Adding People to Your Goal Setting

Keith Ferrazzi proposes a goal-setting path with a twist: adding people to it.

Devise your goals in the next three years, then break them down by months and smaller goals.
Then connect those goals to people who can help you obtain them.

The last step?

Find what you can give these people and how you will reach them.

Never Eat Alone: Stay Visible

Never eating alone means keeping your networking schedule always full.

One connection might not pan out, but you must have another 6 engagements just like that lined up over the week through breakfast, lunches, or after-work events.

As an up-and-comer you must do the legwork: stay visible, connect, and network.

Networking Tips

1. Do your homework: know what they're like before meeting them

2. Follow up: remind them what you can do for them, not the other way around
3. Be authentic: Ferrazzi says vulnerability is one of the most underrated traits
4. Treat gatekeepers well: they're often close to the decision-makers
5. On events: help organize them and speak there
6. Relationships are like muscles: the more you use them (give & take) the stronger they get
7. Connect with connectors: those people who know everyone
8. Exchange networks: everyone in your network is a door to a huge network; help them with yours, and they'll help you with theirs
9. Quality time for deeper relationships! What are they about? Health, wealth, and children are usually what matters most to people
10. Ping! The network will die unless you keep in touch. Pinging is grunt work, but it's what keeps your network alive

How to Give Value

To develop a good network, you need to be a valuable person to others.

Here are the three tips:

- Opinions

Ferrazzi says that to be interesting, you need to have some uniqueness.
Talking about events and stuff is not enough, have an opinion on them instead.

- Expertise

Forget about job titles: what's your expertise? Become a master at something so that you can bring expertise to the table.

- Story

Once you know who you are, what you stand for, and what's your expertise: build a compelling story around it.

Develop a Brand

A brand is what everyone thinks of you when they see you or hear your name.
Here are a few tips to develop a good brand:

- Distinct Message

Have a clear message associated with your and to your name.

- Package the Brand

Visuals matter more than words. Be polished,

- Stay True to It

Look the part and live the brand.

Mentors

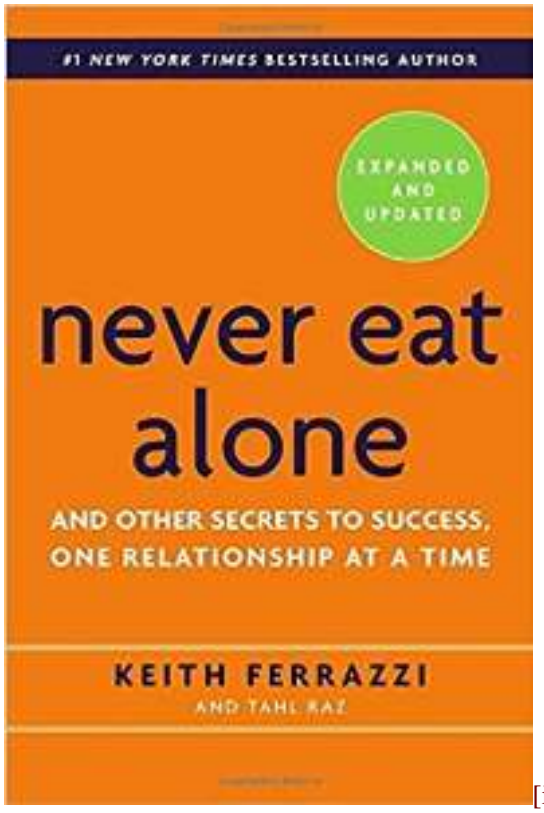
Keith Ferrazzi strongly recommends you find mentors.

A mentor, different than a coach, is someone who is emotionally invested in you. Someone who really wants to help

you and see you grow.
The key to finding a mentor, as usual, is looking for what you can give them.

I also recommend you read *Mastery* by Robert Greene for more on mentors.

> Networking is not a zero sum game



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Real-Life Applications

Give, Share & Feed
Share your contacts, make intros, and give to your network.

Ping
Making contacts will become a fool's errand unless you stay in touch with them. Ping your network from time to time to keep the relationship alive.

Keep a full schedule!
Always keep a full schedule of people you meet. From meeting people for breakfast to lunches to after-work events, always be on the go and always exchange contacts.

Keep a file!
Keep a file of the people you meet. I do it, and I write some key info about people I see daily or whom I deem worthy.

Don't be afraid of approaching big names
Another big takeaway for me is a powerful reminder that people are people. It doesn't matter what their business card reads, we all want the same thing and we all equally appreciate people who connect with us and care about us. So do connect with the bigger names in the room.

CONS

Self Referential
Several passages are a bit too much about the author and his accomplishments.

Self Serving
Albeit Ferrazzi tells you to give and not keep score, ultimately that's not what he's angling for. Connections for him as for your own utility. Which is normal, but it somewhat came across a bit too egotistical and self-referential at times.

Review

Never Eat Alone is a powerful reminder of something that is too often forgotten by many: business is about people. And personal success, I would add, is also about people.

Anything people do, as a matter of fact, is about people. People are always central to almost anything you want to accomplish.

It's both easy to read and useful, I can recommend it.

Read more summaries or Get Never Eat Alone on Amazon

Conversation Starters for High-Power Men That Work Every Time

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

High-value men use conversation starts to sub-communicate power and confidence from the get-go.

High-value conversation starters aren't about being funny, 'unique', or impressive. Those are try-hard. **Great conversation starters communicate power, poise, masculinity, and confidence.**

This guide gives you proven conversation starters to connect, lead, and leave a lasting impression—especially with women and people of value.

The best conversation starters do three things:

- Make your entrance seamless and natural
- Add value without demanding too much (easy on the receiver)
- Makes you look positive and confident

Contents

- Best Conversation Starters
- Keep The Conversation Going
- End The Conversation
- Bad Conversation Starters
- Summary

Best Conversation Starters

People on their own are always your best bet to start a conversation. But as you become higher status, you can approach anyone, and even groups.

These work because their simplicity communicate confidence. **Simplicity displays the confidence of the man who knows his value and doesn't need to try hard.**

Walks to someone and simply say:

- **Hi, I'm Lucio**

If you have someone near with a drink momentarily on his own raise your drink for a toast and say:

- **Cheers!**

In line for the drinks or as you're side by side against the bar:

- **How you doing**

To approach a group, hover a few secs on the periphery. If nobody turns, keep moving. If the group stops:

- **Hey guys, I'm Lucio, hi** (shake hands in a circle)

When you want to impose your presence without waiting for anybody, step into the group and say:

- **Hey, do you mind me joining, I'm Lucio**

Or even simpler, which is confidence while also building them up at the same time. Put a mischievous smile on and say:

- **Hi guys, I wanted to join you :)**

At buffets with high tables, any table is an easy island to plant your flag on. Then you're a micro-host of your table island.
As soon as you see someone interesting pass by, start talking:

- **Hey, how are you enjoying the event**

If the table is busy but there's enough space for one more go for it. Nobody can refuse space: they are shared.
Put on a warm smile and put them in front of your fait accompli intrusion:

- **Hi, I hope you don't mind me sharing the table**

Compliments are another fantastic way of starting a conversation.
Approaching someone who spoke at an event:

- **I loved your speech. Especially the courage of putting yourself out there: so open and vulnerable**

To anyone who put effort into his appearance:

- **I love your style man**

To the host:

- **Hey, thank you for organizing and great job, it's such a great event**

Here are a few tips to keep the conversation going after you've delivered your conversation starter

Keep The Conversation Going

Always go for open-ended questions that get people talking:

- **How did you end up here**
- **How come you chose this event**

I particularly love to re-open people you spoke to earlier, either as part of a group or from a previous conversation.
Also, notice the finessing of saying "I heard it's a competitive field", so if it's not going well you already offer him an excuse to say it's not exactly flying :)

- **How's that VR company you launched going, I heard it's a competitive field**

Look for interesting bits where to dig deeper:

- **Oh wow, you two were in a relationship and now you go out together as friends? Respect, how did that work out for you**

Look for commonalities:

- **Oh, you're also in tech, cool. What kind of tech start-up are you in**

P.S.: you can use the above even when you're not in the same field or have the same interest. Maybe you worked there in the past, have friends who work there or you're just interested in it.

End The Conversation

Always end the conversation on a high.
For example:

- **I see, sounds like a great plan. Hey, I wish you all the best with it, I'll take a walk and see you around**

Or if you exchanged contacts and agree to meet again:

- **Cool, I admire your determination. Kate, it was a pleasure! I'll write you later to schedule something then**

And here are's the bonus on the conversation starters you want to avoid:

Bad Conversation Starters

I scoured around the web for common conversation starters, and while most of them are good, they're not ideal for a masculine and confident man.
These openings for example are good for average folks, but fall flat on the top 1%:

- **Which [speaker/panel] are you most excited about?**

Few if any really care about the speakers.

One, it's because you don't learn from prepared speeches; top achievers learn from experience, handbooks, or coaching from other top achievers.

Most others are there to network, enjoy the free food, show their new dress, and possibly meet some girl/man.
They're all focused on themselves and asking about the speakers shows a lack of understanding of their world.

- **Tell me about you**

What's wrong with this?
It asks for major investment right off the bat and socially aware people don't like that (same as for dating).
This is, effectively, a power move as it asks people to jump through your hoops before you give anything.
It works well if it's a dating situation and a man wants to get a woman to invest quickly, but otherwise, avoid it!

- **What's your story?**

Just imagine someone walks up to you and asks you what's your story. How do you even reply to that?
The only fair reply I can think of is "*and who the hell are you*".
Never start telling your story to someone you've just met!

- **What personal passion project are you working on**

This is the equivalent of Trump describing the way he meets women: grabbing them by their private parts.
Openers like there indeed are equivalent to conversation starters' rape.
Open neutrally first, and build up as you go deeper.

Summary

Here's a step-by-step to make your conversation starter work well:

1. Nonverbal comes first: warm smile, open body language
2. Start easy: the most receptive people, the wallflowers, etc.
3. Say "*hi, how is it going, my name is*"
4. Talk a bit, then move: socialization is like a snowball: the more momentum you get the better you perform

How Women Seek to Become “The Prize” In Relationships

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The relationship prize is the higher value and higher power partner in a relationship.

Women seek to be the relationship prize to make men commit and invest, keep men around, and control the relationship.

Women have three ways to become the relationship prize:

- **Become a high-value woman**
- **Date a man with lower sexual-market value**, or clueless about power dynamics
- **Use manipulation and power moves**.
  for example:
  - Nasty dating power moves: these are the win-lose games designed to make him chase and invest
  - Relationship manipulative games: these are the equivalent games to keep him investing and pedestalizing
- The first one is what high quality women do.
- The second is fair enough.
- And the third is what you want to avoid the most.
- Unluckily it’s also the most common.
  People don’t like the hard work of the holistic approach so resort to dark psychology and relationship power games.

This article deals with relationship power plays.

Contents

- Example: How My Ex Set Herself Up As The Prize
  - The True Meaning Behind Her Power Play

- Consequences of “Contest Power Plays”
- Reacting to Relationship Prize Power Plays
- Nasty Relationship Prize Games
  - More Relationship Power Plays

Example: How My Ex Set Herself Up As The Prize

Here is how one of my exes’ power play to set herself up as the relationship prize:

My first girlfriend, whom we’ll call A, had a very traumatic breakup with her first boyfriend, whom we’ll call “EX”.

Splitting up took a big emotional toll on A and she lost the childhood “feeling of home” after that.

EX took full advantage of it whenever he saw fit (read: whenever he wanted to bust a nut). He kept re-entering G’s life and caused the breakup of two of her new relationships.

Sometimes he re-entered -pun intended- her life sexually and sometimes sexually *and* in an emotionally destructive fashion (very weak of him BTW).

One evening my ex was talking to me about EX and I told her I didn’t want to hear about him at that time.
Sensing that I was a bit peeved about the topic, she replied cheering me up:

> **Her**: *But you should be happy: you won!*

Interesting statement.
It was the first time I heard that, but not the last.

Now, what does that actually say?

The True Meaning Behind Her Power Play

When a woman communicates to you, directly or indirectly, that you “won” over the competition, she is doing two things:

1. Implying that she’s in demand
2. Setting herself as the prize of the relationship

In my example, it was very direct.
But some other times, it can be more indirect.
Some examples are:

> *“I prefer you”*

or

> *“you’re better”*

Yes, it’s a way of complimenting you, and yes, it does raise your value (somewhat).
But it raises your value by comparing you to other men who were in the running.
She’s still the chooser among several candidates.
And **the one who chooses is always the prize in the relationship**.

Furthermore, there’s often a darker side implied in the contest power move. And that’s: are those other men really

out of the running or should you stay watchful?

The “contest power play”, as I will call it is a weak form of triangulation, which is a very nasty mind game women play.

At the end of the day, you’re never in the best position when you get compared to others.
And of course, it does not set a win-win dynamic for the relationship either.

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

Consequences of “Contest Power Plays”

Contest power plays are so obvious that even a clueless me of more than a decade ago could see it from a mile away.

It bothered me and it only ended up taking points away from her.

Whenever a girl uses the competition of other men to become the prize in a relationship, she’s not doing anybody a favor.
Not to the relation, not to you, and, ultimately, she’s undermining herself too.
Here’s what it says about her:

1. She thinks you’re so dumb you’ll be proud for “winning”
2. Such low-level power plays say bad things about her IQ
3. Using exes and other men as power plays is rather low
4. It might be a sign of insecurity
5. Power plays or building a great relationship: you can’t have both. What is she focusing on?

Overall, it’s a move that a low-quality woman would do.

Reacting to Relationship Prize Power Plays

And here’s what you do when she tries to become the prize of the relationship with a contest power move.

1. Ask her why she’s comparing you to her exes or to other men
2. Go meta (ie.: explain what she’s doing)
3. Show what the proper way of behavior is through your values

In this case, it’s something like this:

> *I’m not really comfortable with you saying that.*
>
> *I feel you are stacking me up against exes and making a contest out of it. I have no interest in being part of a competition of winners and losers.*
>
> *We are together now, and I hope in the future as well. And that’s what matters.*
>
> *I see relationships as collaborations to be better… together. and as much as I am very glad we ended up together, I also believe you won as well.*
>
> *And unless you’re curious or it’s relevant to the topic, I have no interest in discussing my exes with you.*
>
> *This relationship is about you and I, and I wanna keep it that way. My exes have no part in it.*
> *I’d like if it were the same on your side.*

Now that will actually shame her.
She will likely backtrack and make excuses.
And that's good.
Albeit strong and critical, your message is a collaborative one and the best way of approaching relationships.

Then watch.
Does she drop the BS going forward? Great.
If not, well… You might want to re-assess your relationship.

This is the mindset of high-quality men who also happen to be "enlightened collaborators":

> They want and prefer kind and collaborative women for the woman they will elect as their partner. But they know that not every woman is up for that position.
> And so, they must test and screen.

Nasty Relationship Prize Games

The "contest power play" is annoying.

And yet, it's not the worst kind of relationship power play.

It sets her up as the prize of the relationship but does so by raising your value and complimenting you.
And that's inherently a "kinder" type of relationship power play.

But there are of course far nastier power moves that women (or men) use to set themselves up as the prize of the relationship.

Some of them include:

1. **Threatening to end the relationship** (breakup threats to keep him on his toes);
2. **Devaluing his efforts** (hints he's not being enough for her, also read female relationship control)
3. **Lowering his self-esteem** (to keep him dependent on her approval, this is the nastiest side of soft power)
4. **Raising jealousy** (= "look at how many options I have, I'm the real prize here")

Discussing every single one here would transform this article into a book, but as you can see we have already covered many of these, so you can browse around a bit.

However, I want to leave you with a quick final warning that is very important.

Differentiating between good power plays and nasty ones makes the difference between a great relationship with a high-quality woman and a toxic relationship with a low-quality one.

Here is a quick way to differentiate between the two:

1. **Fair games**: Games to make you value her more without pushing you down are "fair" types of games, and what any high-quality individual would do
2. **Nasty games**: Games that bring you down are poisonous and toxic

You can try to educate women who play the first kind of relationship power plays.
But you should be very watchful for the second type and consider dropping her if you spot them in more than one instance.

Because that's emotional abuse.

As an example of the second, nastier type of relationship power plays, you can watch this video analysis of Elon Musk's relationship:

More Relationship Power Plays

And here are more articles on dating and relationship power plays for you:

- “I’m the prize, chase me”: a pictorial tale of “chasing guy” and how he fell for her games
- Make him obsessed with you
- One-upping (combative relationships)

Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Why Marriages Succeed or Fail (1994) provides a research-backed analysis of marriages and relationships, helping couples succeed.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Types of Successful Marriages
  - Matrix of Types
  - Types of Unsuccessful Marriage
  - What Determines Successful Marriages
  - Disagreement is Needed
  - The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse
  - Inner Scripts Impaired
  - Flooding
  - Breaking Cycle of Negativity
  - Gender Difference: Women VS Men
  - Suggestions for Happy Marriage
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Make sure to have at least 5 positive moments for 1 negative
- Engage conflicts without being defensive and offensive
- Focus on the positives, and make time for what you both like

Full Summary

"*Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*" leverages years of research and contains lots of expletive examples.
The examples are not present in this summary.

Types of Successful Marriages

Gottman highlights 3 different types of successful marriage.

And do you want to guess what's a major way to tell them apart?
How they fight :).

Here are the three types:

- **Validating**

They're calm and make an effort to understand their partner's point of view and their emotions.
They use a lot of "aha" and "I see" and encourage the partner to share everything.

Validating couples tend to have traditional and defined roles and to be good friends valuing the “we” of their marriage.

Risks: passionless and losing sight of unique personalities for the “we”.
But overall it’s a solid marriage.

- **Volatile**

Frequent and heated arguments without listening to each other. They’re all about winning.
They value full honesty and independence.

Risks: Can verbally hurt each other or lead to violence in extreme cases.

- **Avoidant**

They minimize conflicts and avoid “unsolvable” issues altogether.
The bond is so strong that it trumps the disagreements.

Risks: They don’t learn to address issues. And they are low on introspection and understanding, which can lead a partner to think their spouse doesn’t really understand them.

Matrix of Types

These are the different mixes of personalities we can have.

“You” is the first half:

- **Conflict Avoider / Volatile**

You can feel overwhelmed with conflict engagers and feel your partner is too combative. You can feel it’s too much when they “force” you to resolve conflicts (instead of sidestepping).

- **Volatile / Conflict Avoider**

Your spouse probably feels you always bring conflict into the marriage and that you are overly emotional

- **Validator / Volatile**

You find your partner argumentative and domineering and they don’t give you the chance to express your feelings.
You wish you could work more as a unit and as a “we”

- **Volatile / Validator**

You perceive your partner as too detached. You try to get a rise out of your partner sometimes and feel like your need for autonomy falls on deaf ears.

Types of Unsuccessful Marriage

Gottman recognizes two types of relationships when they’re heading toward divorce.

- **Hostile Engaged**

They argue often and use name-calling and sarcasm.

- **Hostile detached**

They are equally offensive to each other, but without fully engaging their spouse. It happens when two stonewallers are in a relationship and it’s the most likely to break up.

What Determines Successful Marriages

Gottman says that happiness in relationships is not in a particular style of fighting or making up, but:

- Balance between positives and negatives (5 positives to 1 negative minimum)
- Actions toward each other

Later in the book he gives two more pointers:

- Agreeing on a style to handle disagreements with
- Repair mechanisms (to limit negativity and increase positivity)

If you allow negativity without making an effort for positivity your marriage will get sour.
Gottman advises making an effort. Think of your spouse in a positive light during the day, for example.

And notice that anger per se is not negative (unless expressed with contempt, defensiveness, and criticism).
Couples who divorce and split up fight a lot, yes, but volatile couples also fight a lot. But then make up for it with far more time laughing, joking, and loving each other.

Disagreement is Needed

Gottman then wonders if it wouldn't be better to avoid all disagreement and negativity.

He says in the short run maybe yes, but in the long run, couples need to hear the differences.
Disagreements and anger might lead to short-term misery, but they're helpful in the long run.

The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse

Relationships with lots of negativity often have toxic elements which Gottman dubs "the four horsemen of the apocalypse".
He chose that name because they easily predict marriage dissolution.

Here they are:

1. Criticism

There's a key difference between complaining and criticizing.

Complaining mentions a specific behavior or instance, or something you wish would be different.
They often start with "I".

Criticism is a global attack on personality or character and passes a judgment. They often begin with "you" and add "always" or "should".

Examples:

> *You always do that, you only think about yourself*

Antidote: complain without blame and make your criticisms specific. Use I statements and express your needs in a positive form. What would you like to see more?

2. Contempt

Contempt is the intention to insult, hurt and psychologically abuse your partner.

The partner using contempt takes a position of superiority and wants to make the other feel inferior and unworthy.
When contempt engulfs your relationship you have difficulty remembering any single positive quality of your

partner.
Signs of contempt are:

- Insults and name-calling (bitch, fat, ugly, failure, losers..)
- Hostile humor "*we could go there… If you can manage to move from the couch, that is*"
- Ridicule "*oh yeah you sooo care about me*"
- Facial expressions (sneering, rolling eyes, curling upper lip)

Antidote: it's the greatest predictor of divorce and must be fixed. You counteract it with a culture of appreciation and respect.

3. Defensiveness

Play the victim, counterattack, or rightful indignation. You deploy them to defend yourself or reverse the blame. Defensiveness prevents you from solving the problem and making your partner feel heard and cared for.
The partner using defensiveness feels under siege and therefore doesn't see anything wrong with being defensive, which makes it so hard to invert.

Signs of defensiveness:

- Denying responsibility
- Cross-complaining (ignore your partner and launch your own complaint)

-You never sit with us for dinner
-It's because you never clean the place and it's so dirty

- Denying previous commitments "*I never said I would do X*"
- Making excuses "*it was external forces that led me to do that..*"
- False smile, protective body language (moving from side to side, closing off, self-soothing)

Antidote: Calming yourself is the first step, then stop seeing your partner's words as an attack and force yourself to understand and empathize.

4. Stonewalling

Stonewalling happens when one partner withdraws from an argument or interaction.
He stops engaging or physically leaves to convey disapproval and distance.

You could see stonewalling as the opposite of exploding. It's an implosion and, similar to exploding, does not help your relationship.

Most stonewallers are men (85%) and they often do it not to hurt their wives but while trying to be neutral. However, women's heart rate jumps when their husbands stonewall them as for women it's emotionally painful (men are not as bothered by wives stonewalling them instead).

Stonewalling can compound when the wife's kitchen sinks, such as starts aggressing more and more to get a reaction out of him, starting a vicious circle.

Antidote: let your partner know that you need to take a break. Then calm down and go back to engage her (/him).

Inner Scripts Impaired

Gottman says that the tipping point towards divorce happens when the four horsemen turn our internal self-narratives fully negative.

When that happens, we can't see past criticism to find a solution. We hear a complaint and we think "typical of this

princess", or "classic of his ahole attitude".

When that happens, we cannot avoid defending ourselves and we can't see any qualities in our partners anymore. Everything our partner says takes a negative connotation.
The two types of impaired scripts:

- **Innocent victim**

As long as you feel like an innocent victim of an abuser, your marriage will not improve

- **Righteous indignation**

Feeling like a victim plus hostility and contempt towards the spouse.
When inner scrips are permanently damaged it leads to vicious cycles of negativity

Flooding

Flooding is the experience of feeling swamped or "system overload".

Men get flooded more easily, which possibly explains why men are more likely to stonewall (imploding under pressure).

Gottman says people can become chronically flooded. And that's when inner scripts get impaired.
The flooded partner ignores positive gestures or sees them with suspicion. And interprets negative interactions as "the clear sign of who he really is".

Flooding is the driving force behind the isolation cascade that leads to dissolution.

The stages are:

1. You see your marital problems as severe
2. Talking about problems with your spouse seems useless (and look for solutions on your own)
3. You start leading parallel lives (and actively avoiding your partner)
4. Loneliness (the marriage is unofficially over)

If you feel lonely, you need to admit to your spouse how you feel. Let them know you're lonely and you need to change or you fear for your relationship.

Breaking Cycle of Negativity

To avoid flooding:

- **Calm yourself**

First, recognize when you're flooding. To calm yourself down, breathe slowly and deeply.

Take a break for 20 mins and only go back when you're fully physiologically calm. If you don't, you'll take over your partner's emotions.
It's important you don't think of your spouse or of the fight, especially in negative forms. Instead, read, work, and read a magazine.

Gottman proposes to measure the heart rate and advises the exact percentages at which you should take a break.
I don't feel it's helpful for most couples as they won't go that far. Just keep in mind that you're only fully calm *after* you actually feel fully calm. So stay another 15 minutes away.

- **Speak non defensively**

Start with listening non-defensively. Empathize and put yourself in your partner's shoes.

Avoid any facial expression that conveys disappointment or sarcasm.

- **Validate each other and the relationship: praise and admiration**

Gottman says that we sometimes focus on negatives to improve, but we must be careful not to let negativity take center stage.
Looking at the positive also works in relationships as in all other areas of life.
Using lots of praise and admiration is a great way to forestall cycles of negativity and institutionalize virtuous cycles instead.

- **Internalize the principles**

Changing is not a matter of one-off changes. It's a matter of repetition: you must internalize the changes (read *the power of habits*).

Gender Difference: Women VS Men

Gottman first warns of the dangers of generalization because that's what they are: generalizations.

With that in mind, here are some key differences between gender:

- Women have an easier time with emotions; men get lost in a sea of emotions
- Men have shorter fuses and tend to get flooded quicker -criticism is enough-
- Stonewalling is distressing for men as they brood on the issue; for women because they want to work through emotional issues
- Men tend avoiding issues; women prefer to address issues
- Men can have sex even when angry or distant; women don't

On average, women are the emotional managers in relationships and the ones to bring up difficult topics.

Advice for Men

- Embrace her anger: she's not attacking you, she just needs you to address the issue

Advice for Women:

- Confront him calmly
- Say you still love him and only want to change a specific behavior
- Let him know that talking is a way to keep your relationship great

Advice for Both:

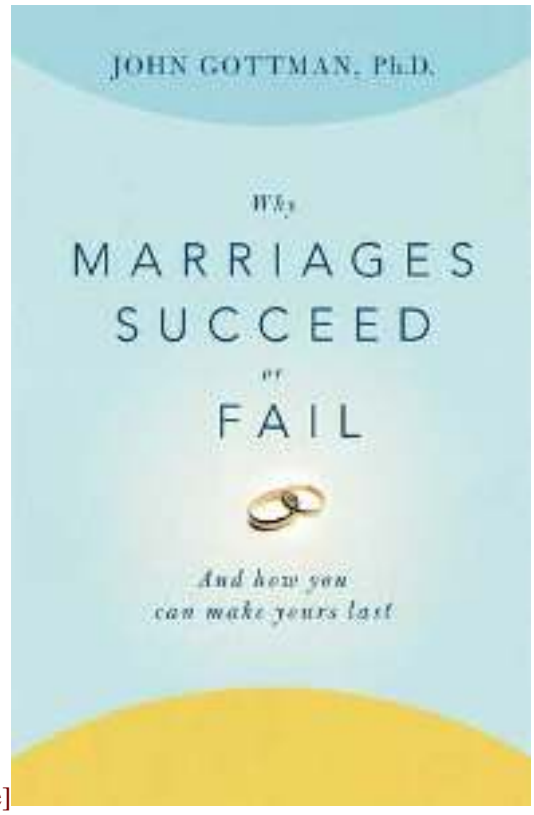
- Accept the differences

Suggestions for Happy Marriage

A few more tips on improving your marriage:

- Schedule discussions (and don't postpone)
- Divide discussions in:
  - agenda
  - persuasion/arguing
  - resolution (only say yes to something you're happy with)
- Summarize your partner's point of view or what you agree on instead of only your opinion

- Be realistic in your exceptions and accept differences
- Make time for the things that make you two happy
- Experience new things together
- Tell the stories of your common good times: glorify them

[image] 

Real-Life Applications

Take Care of Your Relationships
There's so much great information here that I cannot summarize it in one go. The only thing I'd like you to focus on is to… Focus on your relationship.
It's one of the most important determinants of your happiness, health, and even success.
And the good thing? You don't just do it for yourself but also for your partner (and the people around you).

CONS

Repetition
There's so much information that I'd have really appreciated a better structure.

Review

Why Marriages Succeed or Fail is another pearl from John Gottman.

The book is too good to summarize effectively and it has a ton of examples that will help you understand the concept to make your marriage great again (and sorry for spoofing Trump :).

Check out the:

- **best books on relationships**

Or get the book on Amazon

The 10 Best Free Book Summary Websites

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

As the main editor at The Power Moves, having analyzed and published more than 500+ books reviews over 10 years on psychology, strategy, and human behavior, I'm very familiar with the 'free book summary industry'.

In this review, I list the best free book summary websites, differentiating based on added value and Return on Investment for high-value men who want more than generic information.

This analysis of the free book summary industry ranks options based on critical approach, summary quality, and effectiveness for ambitious men to achieve their goals.
You'll find out:

- Who actually adds value
- Who just repackages ideas
- And where most readers get misled

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- 10. Optimize.me (Library)
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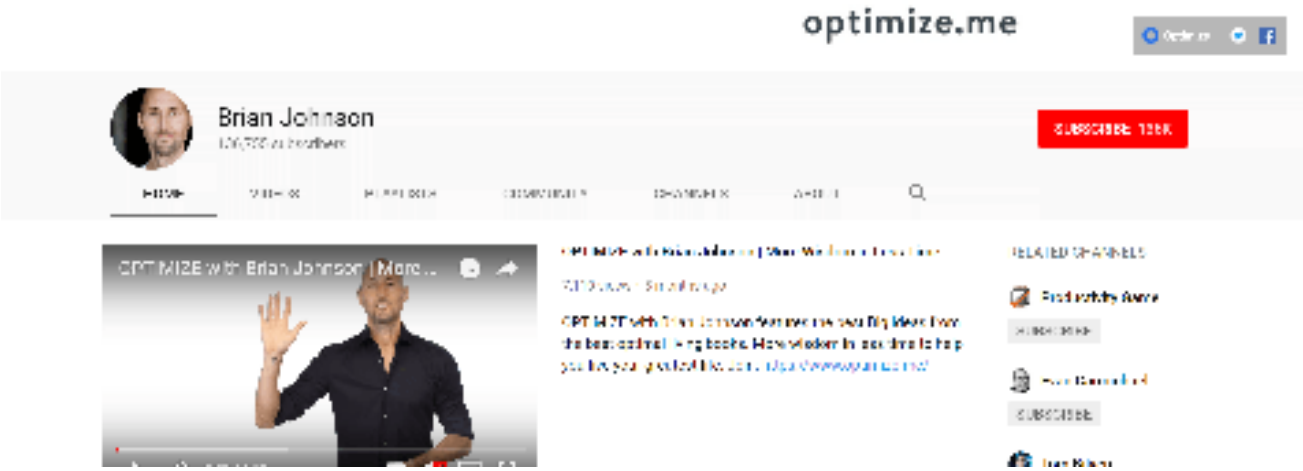
- 2. Nat Eliason
- 1. AI Summarizers
- Bonus: The Power Moves
- More Free Book Summaries

Table Comparison

The most crucial differences is between free summaries that only summarize, and free summaries that critically analyze books:

Feature	Summary-only Sites (Blinkist, 12Min)	Strategic Audit Sites (TPM, Nat Eliason)
Primary Goal	Save time / General Knowledge	Acquire Power / Strategy
Tone	Neutral / Professional	Critical / Analytical
Critical Vetting	Rare ("faithful" to author)	Strict (Logic Audits; TPM vets for science)
Social Engineering	None	High (Extraction of Strategies & Tactics)

10. ~~Optimize.me~~ (Library)



Edit:
Optimize.me used to be a top choice, but does not do summaries anymore. Brian's old reviews are still available on his YouTube channel.

It's refreshing to see a human being deliver the book summaries and reviews, rather than the more typical "animated summaries" that are common on YouTube.

I sometimes see his advertising on Facebook and I can tell you that he is the only guy I am actually happy to see among the ever-annoying Tai Lopez, Sam Ovens, and all other 'gurus'.

⍰ Pros

- **Contagiously positive guy**

Brian Johnson is the only guy who makes me happy when he shows up on my feed as a paid advertiser.
Don't ask me how he pulls that off, but he does :).

- **High-quality free book summaries**
- **The blackboard style feels like a free online university**
- **"Meta-summaries" by topic: The best shortcut to knowledge**

Brian and ThePowerMoves are the only ones on this list to provide "meta-summaries" by topic.
Such as taking tens of books on a given topic and summarizing *all* their content into one (VS a summary for each different book).
That way, you can get an overview of the whole literature in one hour, saving tons of money and time.

⍰ Cons

- **Less critical reviews**

Brian Johnson is one of those reviewers who had decided to only say positive things about the book he reviews.

Brian Johnson does not challenge or criticize potential snake oil salesmen and only decides to share the positives of their messages.

I respect that, but I personally prefer a different approach.
As you might have noticed, this is a pet peeve of mine. I don't just like to read what's good about something. I also want the author to be challenged. I prefer to investigate biases, mistakes, and why the author might have been wrong -or why he's been proven wrong-.
That's why I personally don't like the approach of "neutral summaries". But hey, that's just me.

- **Bit less scientist, more philosopher's approach**

Brian considers himself a philosopher, which is great.
I also love philosophers.
When it comes to knowledge acquisition, I personally prefer a scientific approach. Best of all, a skeptical scientist approach.

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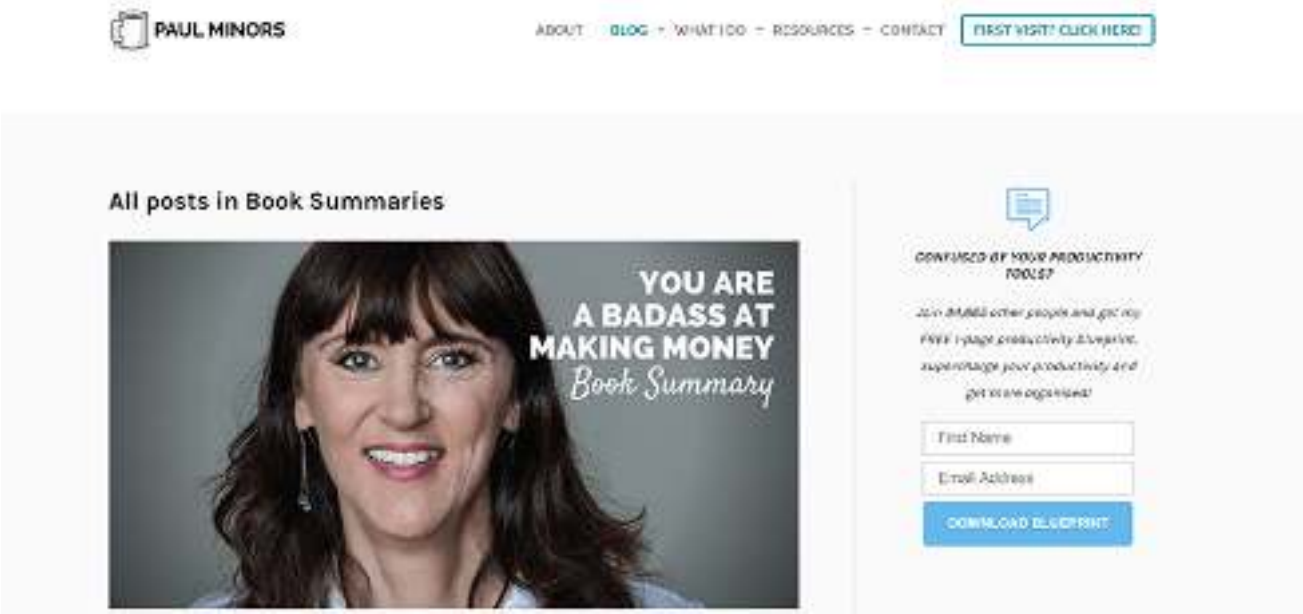
9. Paul Minors



When Paul summarized a book that I was interested in, he used to be the guy I turned to.

Paul was my #1. favorite resource of free book summaries.

Nowadays my favorite books tend to be very specialized in psychology, advanced social skills and strategies, power dynamics, or truly research-based texts, so it rarely happens that Paul covers one of them.

⍰ Pros

- **Detailed, in-depth summaries**
- **Summaries follow the book's chapter structure**

That way, you truly get much more than a simple sneak peek but a much deeper overview.

⍰ Cons

- **A few typos here and there**
- **More summaries, less reviews**

Paul does not weave in much of his personal life and personal thoughts. For some, that's an advantage. For some others, it's not. Up to you.

- **Guns for hire summaries**

Paul Minors is not personally writing the summaries anymore, and sometimes that shows.

8. Four Minute Books

Niklas is a legend.

He is a friendly and really likable guy, but when it comes to free book summaries, he is also the 900-pound gorilla in the room :).
One might probably say that Niklas started this whole "free book summaries" thing, and a few more joined in after seeing his success -and mimicking his website's name, too-.

When it comes to quantity, FourMinuteBooks is unbeatable.
And Niklas doesn't rest on his laurels but keeps on going and going, publishing 3 (!) new book summaries a week, that keep adding to what's already the biggest *completely* free book summary repository on the web.

Niklas summarizes books into 3 major takeaways for each book.
No more, no less.
If you want a quick look into a popular book -or almost any book in the near future, really- Niklas probably can help.

⍰ Pros

- One of the largest collections on the web of free book summaries
- Niklas seems like a cool, good-spirited person

⍰ Cons

- **Summaries of summaries**

The book summaries are often summaries of Blinkist summaries, so it's actually a summary of a summary.
That works out well for many books, but since I'm not a huge fan of Blinkist, I am sometimes skeptical when it comes to heavier and more research-based books.

- **More summaries, less reviews**

Niklas focuses on the summary of the book. He provides a small review section, but he does not go berserk like

yours truly in finding faults, criticism, and comparing notes with other books.
That must not necessarily be a con though.
Depending on your point of view, that might even be a positive.

- **3 lessons learned format: pros & cons**

Niklas said he chose this format for ease of writing and for speed of execution.
That makes sense.

And I can also appreciate the format that repeats for every single book: it's a sleek-looking solution.

Of course, the downside is that some books need more than 3 takeaways, while some won't even need 3 :)
Again, that's my approach as a petulant reader. For most other people, 3 takeaways will do just fine.

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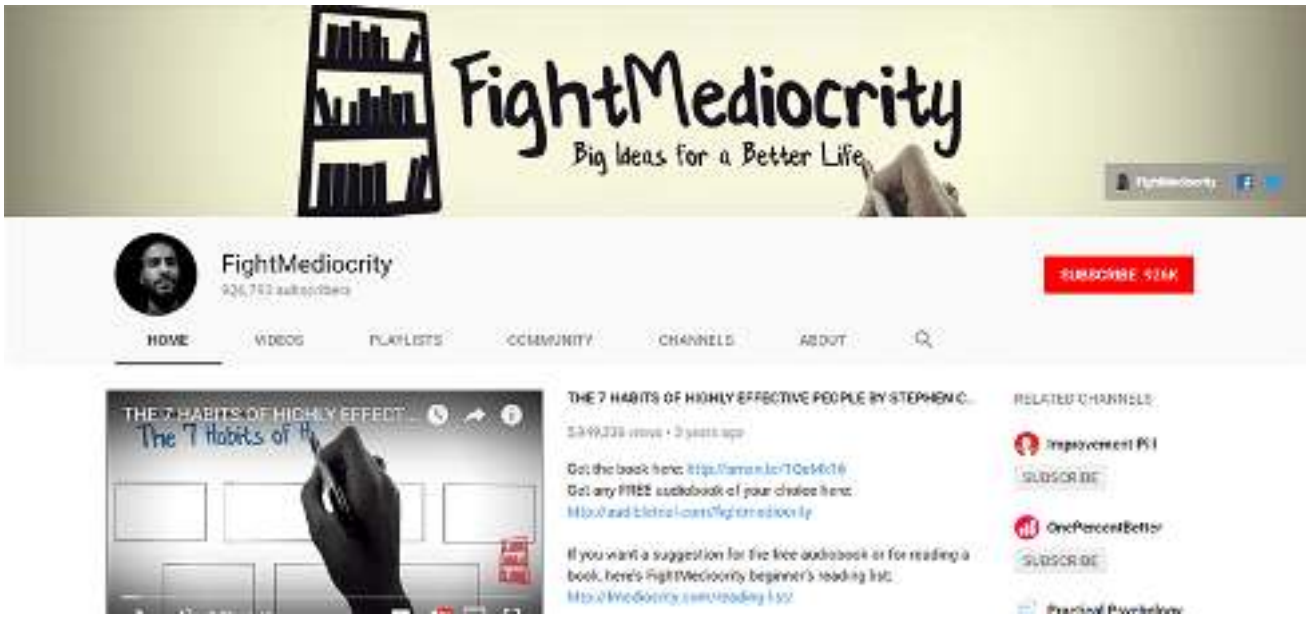
7. Fight Mediocrity



Edit:
The channel stopped posting new videos.

This YouTube channel shares not just book summaries, but more personal analyses mixing book insights with how the reviewer applied them in his real life.

6. The Book Summary Club

The Book Summary Club

LET US DO THE HEAVY READING

The Book Summary Club writes short summaries of books for business owners.

Sure nothing beats a good book, but there's **nothing worse** than spending over fifteen hours reading a book to only get **one or two takeaways**. Or worse, spending five hours reading to realize the book **isn't for you.**

This is a relatively new entry in the world of free online summaries.

It uses a “3 lessons learned” format similar to “Four Minute Books”, but Book Summary Club has longer summaries, “real” reviews, and a more personalized approach.
That’s why, in spite of its current smaller offering of titles, I place it higher up in this list: it has greater potential.

Pros

- **High-quality summaries**

Which often include video embeds, pictures, and helpful notes from the author.

- **Learn with Humor**

Vince adds his personal touch to each book summary, making the reader not only informational but also fun and entertaining. A true breath of fresh air.

- **Vince’s personality**

While perusing Vince’s book summaries for this review, I couldn’t help but smile at this quote from his “The 4h Hour Body summary“, talking about Ferris’ advice on sex:

> I also learned during this book that at times, I’m still too immature to read things like this without giggling.

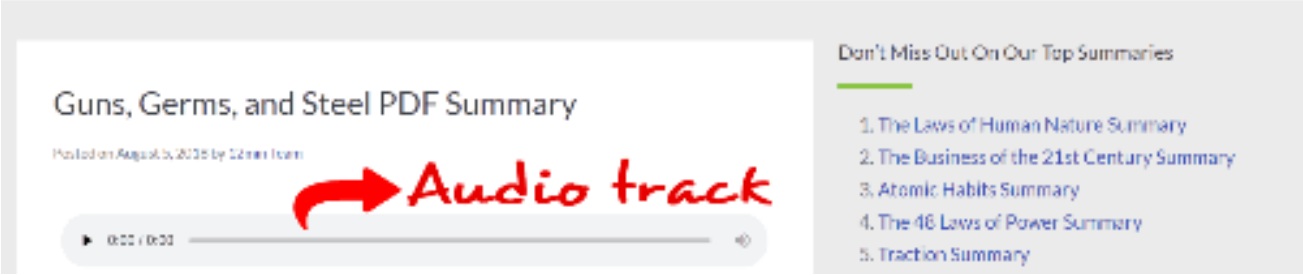
That’s right there is an author who’s not pretending to be someone he’s not and is not afraid of being himself. Reading Vince’s review feels in between reading a summary and reading a well-written magazine article.

Cons

- **Needs to grow the offering a bit**

But that will come with time. And Vince might consider doing a few summaries in a row on specific topics, which will help grow his expertise and make him more of an authority on specific niches.

5. 12Min.com



As far as I understand, 12min.com was formerly known as "Nuggets" and now it shifted its focus from simple quotes to full summaries.

As of today, 12Min is both a book summaries website app and a website. And, as well, even a cool organizer of events in several world cities (I attended a few myself, and were always great).

⍰ Pros

- **Audiobook version of each summary**
- **Longer summaries**: on average, 12min provides summaries that are long enough to truly get to the core of what a book is about
- **Critical review in the end**: 12min tries to combine both neutral summaries writing with personal touch by adding a personalize critical review in the end

⍰ Cons

- **More summaries, "professional" reviews**

Their reviews are very professional, and in this day and age, that can feel a bit politically correct to some, as if in fear of offending someone.
I get that, and see the point -I've had a few issues myself with angry authors who didn't appreciate my reviews :)-.

- **The audiobook summary version is read by a robotic voice**

By now robot readers are pretty good, so this doesn't have to necessarily be a con.
It's such a great idea that… I might think about it for this website as well.

- **The writers are a "12min team", it feels impersonal**

I appreciate book reviewers who put their faces behind their business and their writers.

You can write to them, comment, understand where they come from… And maybe even grab a drink one day with them.
But when it's "teams", like 12min or Blinkist, then it feels impersonal, and you are also lacking some crucial information about the reviewer.

- **Random list of quotes**

The last section of their summaries is a list of tweetable quotes.

But the quotes are out of context and left unexplained. Why are those quotes good or important? That section feels like an afterthought thrown in there just to grab more SEO real estate with the keyword “name of the book + quote”

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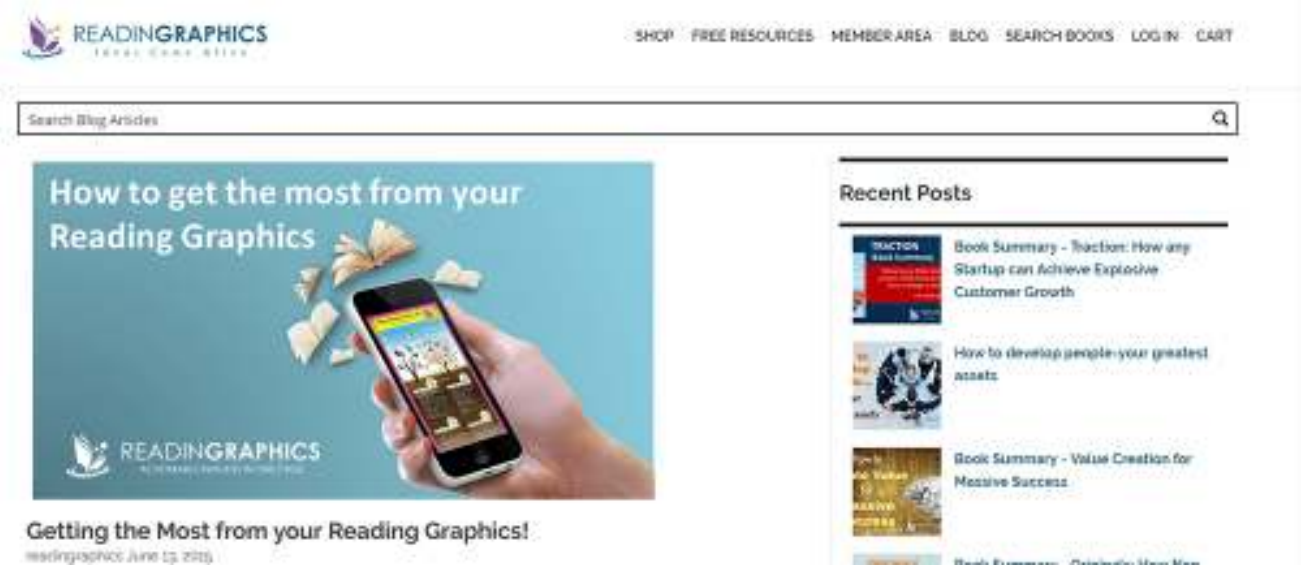
4. ReadinGraphics



One smart man once said:

> A picture is worth a thousand words

Isn’t that true?

Well, often it is.
But, unfortunately, books are all about text. Or… Are they?

Because ReadinGraphics set out to just change that.

ReadingGRaphics is the best infographic book summary website to mix pictures, content, and data.
If you think that pictures can help you learn, **check out here ReadingGraphics subscription plans** (it’s an affiliate link, meaning that if you subscribe I will get a small commission at no cost to you).

⍰ Pros

- Unique style
- A picture is worth a thousand words: perfect for some types of books

⍰ Cons

- Certain types of books are more difficult to summarize with infographics

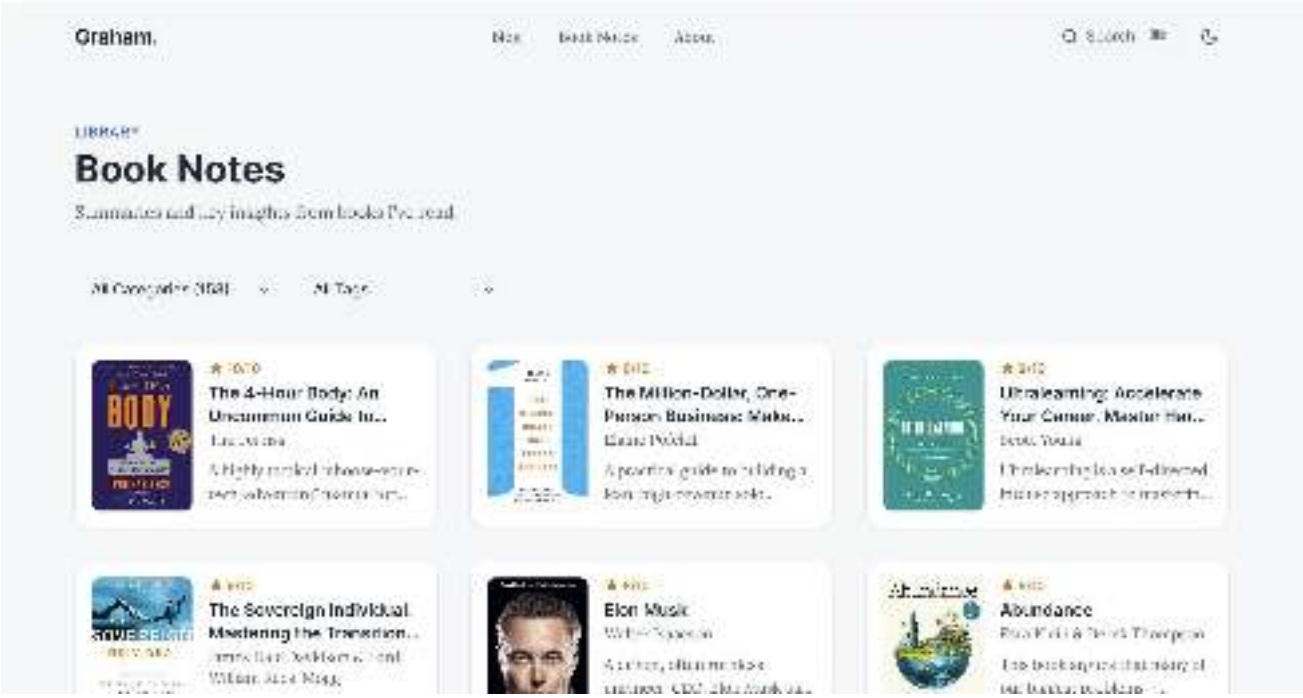
ReadinGraphics Promo Code

And here’s a ReadinGraphics promo discount for you:

- **ThePowerMoves-5** gives you a 5% off the card (including subscriptions)
- **ThePowerMoves** gives you 10% off regular items in the store

Enjoy ReadingGraphics'
Try Open.CodeC

3. Grahammann.net



A recent entry, Graham has been climbing the rankings thanks to quality summaries and simple, captivating and innovative design.

✅ **Pros**

- Modular approach of super-short overview or deeper dive
- Best-in-class design
- Personal analyses, not just regurgitating notes

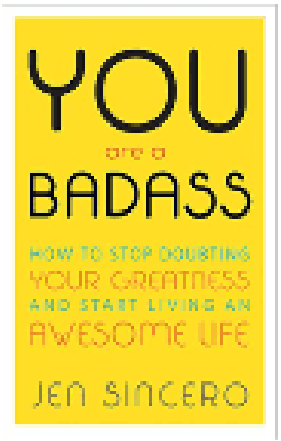
❌ **Cons**

- TikTok-generation approach designed for reduced attention spans

2. Nat Eliason

natoliason.com/notes/badass-jen-sincero

Articles Notes Podcast Brain Medley Support Twitter



You Are a Badass by Jen Sincero

Rating: 1/10

Read More on Amazon

Get My Searchable Collection of 200+ Book Notes

Nat Eliason is a legend.
You don't just get summaries from a guy who simply loves reading, but from a doer who's been using that information. He has been a successful startup employee, *plus* a successful entrepreneur, *plus* a very successful blogger, too.

He doesn't call his book summaries "summaries", but "notes" and "lessons learned".
For practical purposes, that's basically the same.

⍰ Pros

- **Great reviews**

With Nat you don't just get summaries, but also book reviews. And, very often, *great* book reviews (check out the best book review websites, too).

- **Nat summaries are personal reviews**

Nat doesn't try to be neutral: he puts his own personality, thoughts, and experiences in his summaries.

- **Nat's not afraid of thrashing what needs to be thrashed**

This is what I loved the most.

Nat seems like a book summary writer who is not afraid of speaking his mind and calling a spade a spade.

For example, he gave a 3/10 to "Tools of Titans" and 1/10 to "You Are A Badass".
I agree with both. And that, in my opinion, makes Nat's website a good resource to decide what you should or should not read.

⍰ Cons

- **Varying quality**:

some summaries are great, some others are shorter

- **Random topics might dent authority**:

Nat is interested in many different topics, and I can relate to that.
That lack of specialization might make the reviews somewhat less authoritative if you're looking for a specific

subject matter expertise subject (say, for example, psychology books and reviews).
On the other hand, I must say that he is a reviewer with high critical thinking skills, and those apply to *any* subject.

- **Some summaries are bullets and/or lists of quotes**:

I'm not a fan of summaries in bullet points or in a list of quotes taken straight from the book (more on it below).
On the other hand, there are countless full-length summaries, so to speak.

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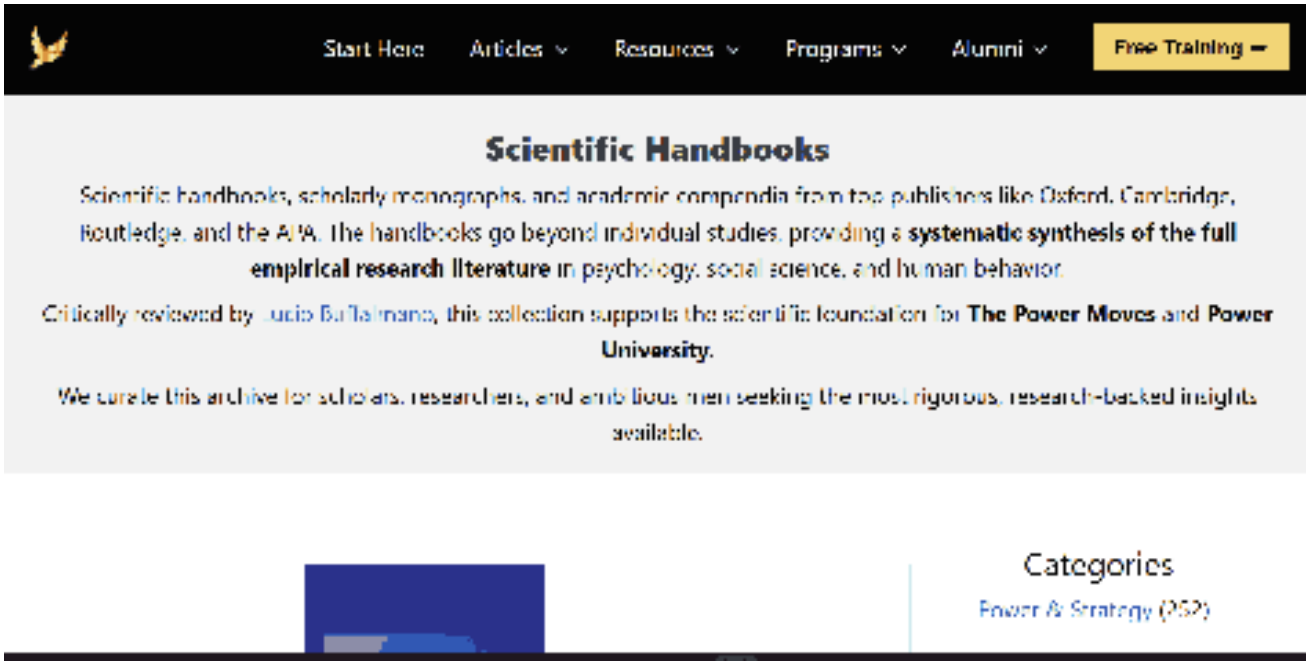
1. AI Summarizers

In 2026 you don't need a free book summary website anymore. Upload your target book to a good AI tool and ask for a summary on demand.

⚠ **Note of caution: often PC, lacks 'BS-filter'**
While AI provides the best on-demand 'what,' it lacks the 'BS-filter.' AI will summarize a snake-oil salesman just as faithfully as a scientist. Use AI for the overview, dig deeper for what will work for you.

Bonus: The Power Moves



Most "book summary websites" give you compressed content.
We do something else entirely.

As part of our three-pillar approach, we constantly study the available literature on power, strategies, seduction, and men's empowerment, and often share our reviews publicly. We focus particularly on scientific handbooks that provide an overview of the full research literature.
And we don't just 'summarize', we **audit, pressure-test, and cross-reference books against real-world power dynamics, scientific research, and prioritary frameworks**.
The same can be said for courses and authors as well.

⍰ Pros

- **Best for scholars and researchers**

Focusing on deep summaries of handbooks on psychology, evolutionary psychology, and human behavior.

- **Critical reviews vetting for science, logic, and real-world effectiveness**

We don't just repeat the author; we challenge them. If a book's advice is "PC fluff" or scientifically unsound, we flag it.

- **Interconnected Intelligence**

Our reviews link directly to similar sources, proprietary frameworks and real-world case studies, turning "book knowledge" into learning systems.

- **Best-of *resources*** not just books, including authors, websites, courses, etc.

The "best of" lists help you go straight for the best of the best information, saving money and time, and making you more successful, and quicker.

⍰ Cons

- **Sometimes there are typos**

Some book summaries were written for the author himself, just so that he could remember the content and come to it in the future.
And some other times writes passionately but forgets the more methodical proofreading.

- **High entry barrier**, and some may not like the vetting approach

TPM is not for the 'casual' reader or the easily offended. We prioritize harsh reality over comfortable myths. If you prefer simple and 'feel-good' summaries that never challenge the author, TPM is the wrong fit.

- **Focus on power, strategy, seduction & men's empowerment with scientific foundations**

TPM focuses on more advanced resources that move the needle when it comes to understanding the world's nuances and affecting change on it, including achieving outcomes like social status, respect, and attraction. We prioritize power, psychology, dating, and strategies. This means that many common but generic best-sellers won't be covered (see: 'why TPM prioritizes handbooks', including the 'Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™')

More Free Book Summaries

Also deserving a shout-out:

- **James Clear**: the most famous, but with a limited library

James Clear is a top result for anyone searching 'free book summaries' and he commands high citations and rankings even with shorter formats.

Clear's summaries are more limited in number, and that also impacts his "best of" lists, since they only include the books he reviewed on his website.

On the plus side, Clear is a wonderful writer and author himself, a big success story to learn from, and, last but not least, his website design is minimalistically awesome.

- **Samuel Thomas Davies**: bullet format summaries

If James Clear was lacking in quantity, Samuel Thomas Davies *isn't*.

Sam was one of the biggest names in the free online book summaries space, and he is probably the best organized

in this whole list, breaking up his summaries into tens of different categories.

I am personally not a big fan of bullet-style summaries because I feel that prioritization goes missing. And without a narrative around the wisdom it's harder to mentally store and digest information.

Elon Musk Biography: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Elon Musk by Ashlee Vance could be considered the *Elon Musk biography*. It's easy to read and gives a good glimpse into the mind and personal traits of Elon Musk.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Elon Musk Summary
  - Childhood
  - Zip2
  - X.com
  - SpaceX
  - Saving The Human Race
  - Tesla
  - SolarCity
  - A Big WHY
  - Character Trait
- CONS
- Elon Musk Review

Bullet Summary

- Elon Musk is ambitious, passionate, and driven. He doesn't take "no" for an answer
- He has a large ego and a sometimes difficult personality
- His overarching goal is to ensure humanity a future

Elon Musk Summary

Elon Musk is the most iconic entrepreneur of our generation. Here's his biography:

Childhood

Elon Musk parents separated when he decided to live with his father despite having a difficult relationship with him.
On top of a difficult atmosphere at home, Musk was also nearly friendless and constantly bullied.
One time a bunch of bullies beat him up so hard that he missed school for a week.

Musk retreated from the world through reading and study. And he was good at it (read how to absorb knowledge).
Ashlee Vance says Musk has an incredible photographic memory.
He particularly loved the book The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. and soon began planning ways to improve our civilization. He thought of conquering other planets (of course), solar power, and paperless banks for example.

He also started early with entrepreneurship: at 12 he also sold his video game for $500

College in Canada

Musk recovered confidence in college, which he attended in Canada because he didn't want to serve military service

in South Africa.
He studied business, attended public speaking courses, and successfully courted his first wive Justin Wilson.
She wasn't particularly fond of him, but he kept insisting.
Ashlee Vance says that when he was stood up at an ice cream parlor on their first date, he found out what her favorite ice cream was and showed up with two of them.

College in Pennsylvania

Musk would organize house parties and charge a 5 dollars entrance fee.

Zip2

In 1995 Musk launched with his brother Zip2 to help businesses go online for the first time.
They didn't sell much, but things changed when Mohr Davidow Ventures invested in the company after being impressed by Musk's drive.
In 1999 Compaq paid $307 million for Zip2, but of course, Musk wasn't going to stay and work for Compaq.

X.com

With the new cash, Musk bought a supercar, a condo, and a jet.
And all the rest he put into X.com. The company was doing well but instead of going head to head with their main competitor, they decided to join forces with Musk as CEO.
Things weren't going well after the merger, and when Musk left for his overdue honeymoon, the board staged a coup.
They went to Peter Thiel -author of Zero to One– and asked him to replace Musk. Thiel accepted and X.com changed its name to Paypal.

It didn't go well for Musk though, Paypal sold to Ebay for $1.5 billion and netted Musk $250 million.

SpaceX

The *Elon Musk biography* says that he was into space exploration and wasted little time getting into it.
His planning for the first rocket was wildly optimistic. He planned the first launch after 15 months of launching SpaceX.
It took 4 years, but they did make it.

Saving The Human Race

Elon Musk wants to save humanity.
Musk thinks the earth is not enough. The resources won't last forever and living on a single planet makes us vulnerable to a host of potentially race-threatening events.

Ashlee Vance says this is a concern that never leaves Elon Musk's mind and it gives him unwavering drive and determination.

Tesla

Musk didn't actually find Tesla.
He invested in the already existing company $6.5 million and became the sole shareholder and chairman.
It was the first foray of tech into the car industry and it's been a huge success since the

SolarCity

The Elon Muk biography says he funded his two cousins with SolarCity becoming the biggest shareholder of the

company.
SolarCity today is the biggest solar panels company in the US.

A Big WHY

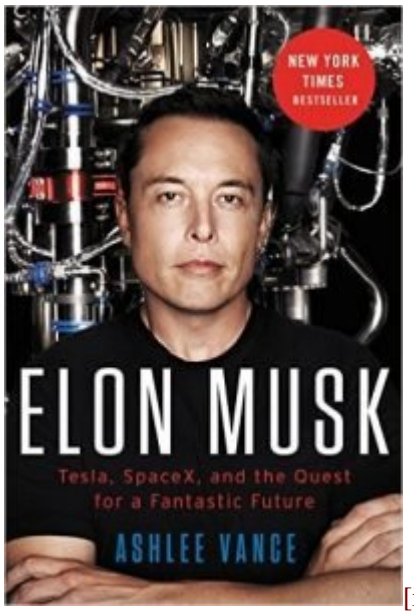
Musks' businesses complement each other.
This is because he doesn't think of businesses as silos, but looks at them through the prism of his goal: ensuring that humans will have a future.
In the words of Simon Sinek, Elon Musk has a big, overarching WHY (read *Start With WHY*).

Character Trait

Albeit it might seem hard to believe by looking at him, Elon Musk, similar to Steve Jobs, also verbally abuses employees who fall short of his high demands (read: what to do when a boss yells at you).
His ex-wife says that Musk told her he "would fire her if she was one of his employees". As a guy who writes about people's skills, it's one of the most stupid things a man could tell a partner.
The wife also says that he wanted her to dye her hair blonde and expected her to be a trophy wife, a role in which she wasn't comfortable.

Some people say Elon Musk can be mean and some even say he lacks empathy, citing his dismissal of his long-term secretary as proof.
But other people close to him say he's a loving and caring person.
My guess looking at his interview is that he is indeed a good person. Much better than Steve Jobs :).

My Note:
if you have a strong goal, the personal relationships that trump that goal should be that many.
Otherwise, you're a guy shooting the breeze at the bar.
As Ray Dalio says, the solution is to do what you need to do with compassion.



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CONS

Sometimes You Wish It'd Go Deeper
At times you wished this *Elon Musk biography* would go a bit deeper.
As interested in human relations as I am, I wanted something more about Musk's relationships. Or sometimes I was curious how he secured a billion from NASA (without which SpaceX might be a bankrupt company).

Elon Musk Review

Vance does a great job with this Elon Musk book.
Easy and entertaining, it also sheds light on the qualities and traits you need to become a successful entrepreneur.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Berlusconi Power Moves: Stealing The Show (Case Study)

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to steal the show when someone else is the most popular (or most powerful) person in the room but you don't want to be their subordinate?
Berlusconi came up with an interesting solution to that.

Contents

- Berlusconi Background
- Video Background
- 1. Pretend You're The Master Mind
- 2. Don't Look at Him
- 3. Don't Follow
- 4. Acts of Insubordination
- 5. Get in The Last Word
- Countermove
- Lessons Learned

Berlusconi Background

Trump has often been compared to Berlusconi. And for good reasons. Both self-made billionaires, they both went into politics and reached the highest heights in their respective countries.

Trump is Touchier though and more of a loose cannon. Berlusconi is a bit warmer and more humor-loving.
Plus, of course, the singing and the women.
In a way, Berlusconi is "more stereotypical Italian" than Trump.

But don't let that fool you.
If anything, it makes Berlusconi even more dangerous. Trump won a "lucky election" in many ways. Berlusconi instead dominated politics and won election after election.
Berlusconi also has a much tighter grip on Italy than Trump on the US (easier since it's a smaller country) and he is richer than Trump (and that's more difficult since the US is richer than Italy).

Both Berlusconi and Trump though have an immense drive to accumulate wealth and a boundless thirst for power. They both stop at nothing.

Video Background

The owner of many enterprises, the premier for the best part of a decade, and the undisputed leader of his party, Berlusconi is used to being in charge.

But he's not in the twilight of his years.

In the last elections, he managed a surprising comeback but was still the junior coalition partner in the right-wing political landscape. That means Berlusconi had to give way -and defer to someone else.
And deferring is something Berlusconi is not particularly fond of.
What would he do then?

Watch this video first and see if you can think of what he's up to:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRsGA55ZYOI

And here's what Berlusconi was up to steal the show:

1. Pretend You're The Master Mind

If you cannot give the speech yourself, pretend you are the mastermind behind the speech.
You're the one who did the tough choices, he's the flunky delivering it for you.
How does Berlusconi do that?

1. Spell out the words
2. Gesticulate as he speaks

That way it looks like he's an active participant in the speech. Or, even better, people will think he knows the speech so well that it must have been him who wrote it.

2. Don't Look at Him

The more you look at the speaker, the more you're giving him power.
Notice Berlusconi rarely if ever looks at him.
Compare it with the woman, who's looking up to Salvini while she touches her necklace's beads (at 50 seconds mark of the above video).
Don't worry, we won't make any Freudian references :).

3. Don't Follow

When somebody has finished speaking or delivering a speech, don't leave after them.
When you do, it looks like you're their low-power entourage.
Leave before if you can or, even better, linger on and leave later just like Berlusconi did.

4. Acts of Insubordination

The more you are in service and the more you follow orders, the more you're in the subordinate role. Thus, avoid being in a position of following orders as much as you can.
Ideally, you will sneak in little acts of insubordination.
For example, someone might tell you:

> *Alright, let's go.*

Instead of going, you say:

> *Yes I'll join you in a second, lemme finish this (/go to the bathroom), you go ahead*

Notice you say "yes", but then deny it with a good excuse (so it doesn't seem like a direct confrontation). "You go ahead" is very natural there, but it's a de facto counter-order.
In Berlusconi's examples, he avoids leaving indeed and:

5. Get in The Last Word

The more someone speaks while you just listen, the more it seems like you don't count much (unless you're the one assessing and making the final decision but that's different!).
Try to weigh in with your opinions instead.
Best of all is if they are staggering or struggling to answer some tough questions. Don't jump right in. Let them

roast, then provide the right answer for everyone to notice.

If they don't struggle in any way, you can add a small detail or weigh in with your own opinion at the end. It will slightly discredit them and it will increase your clout.

Countermove

Countering Berlusconi's game while delivering a speech was difficult.

Stop the middle speech, and you look like your priorities are in-fighting instead of delivering. Draw attention to Berlusconi, and you look petty and easy to derail.

Salvini didn't do too shabbily actually. He's also a shrewd guy.
By not giving any attention to Berlusconi, he didn't validate him. And by turning to the woman instead, he isolated Berlusconi and made him look like an outsider vying for attention, which was also not bad.

What when wrong though is that he had a normal knee-jerk reaction to the power move. Berlusconi power moves him, and his power moves the woman (put hands on her, escort her away).
However the power dynamics there was Salvini on the woman, but Berlusconi on Salvini, so not ideal.

To fully neutralize that last shove, he should have dealt with Berlusconi directly. How? Two ways:

- Linger on further in front of the microphones.

That would have made Berlusconi look powerless standing from behind and not getting what he wanted.

- Turn to Berlusconi, and tell him to speak

Another good power move could have been to turn around to Berlusconi and tell him something while pointing at the microphones (it doesn't matter what since nobody would hear that).
That way, it would have looked as if he was allowing Berlusconi and telling him what to say. Great way to fully flip the script.

Lessons Learned

Berlusconi was supposed to be in Salvini's team and camp, and look what he did.
I think there's an important lesson learned from this video.

When you have "in your team" people with boundless ambition or people with a huge hunger for power… Don't trust them!

Or at least keep an eye on them.

The power-hungry and the super-ambitious have only one team: their own.
Best of all is if you can rid of them.
If you can't, ring fence them or expect they'll conspire against you.

No Logo: How Brands Trick the Masses

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

No Logo (1999) provides an analysis and criticism of the modern effect of marketing on culture and people's behavior.
Naomi Klein's book became the bible of the anti-globalization movement of the early 2000s, and it's an important read for those who are interested in persuasion, power dynamics, and marketing manipulation.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- No Logo Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- No Logo Review
  - Who Should Read No Logo

Bullet Summary

- Corporations are only interested in profits
- Big brands focus on marketing to insecure teenagers
- There's a growing anti-brand resentment brewing

No Logo Summary

About The Author: Naomi Klein is a Canadian social activist and filmmaker. She teaches media, culture, and feminist studies at Rutgers University.
Naomi Klein has written several books, but she is most famous for "*No Logo*".

Introduction

Naomi Klein says that "*No Logo*" doesn't stand for a call to arms. It's not about telling you what to do. It's about empowering people to learn how brands and big corporations market and operate.

What you do with that information, is up to you.

Brand in The Office Create A Dream Knowing Nothing About Actual Operations

Naomi Klein explains how brands are created by marketing departments in the office and they have little to do with the actual production of the goods.

Marketing departments are busy thinking about how to position their brand in the mind of the users -images of things instead of things-.

And the actual production, that's outsourced to places with cheap labor.
Brands would rather spend money on marketing than on actual production.

Klein provides several examples, but a recurring one is, as you might expect, Nike.
Nike has long been embroiled in several scandals of child exploitation and yet still managed to come out of it unscathed (this is Nike's answer to No Logo allegations).

Brands Sell to Young People Leveraging Self Doubt

Klein says in *No Logo* that brands love selling to young people.

They take advantage of their fragile identities and self-doubts. Marketing is about giving the illusion that by possessing some cool products, teenagers can rub off some of that “cool” on themselves.
And be a bit more popular and well-liked.

And that’s why brands try to associate and incorporate anything that teenagers can think of cool. Movie stars, sports stars, grassroots movements, and, as well, iconoclastic movements pose a threat to the brand itself.

The effort is worth it, says Klein.
Teenagers are fantastic profit machines. They shop in packs, so if you can sell to a few of the cool guys, then everyone will follow suit.
This is why, says Klein, brands have been trying -and often succeeding- in getting a foothold in schools.

Brand Resentment is Growing

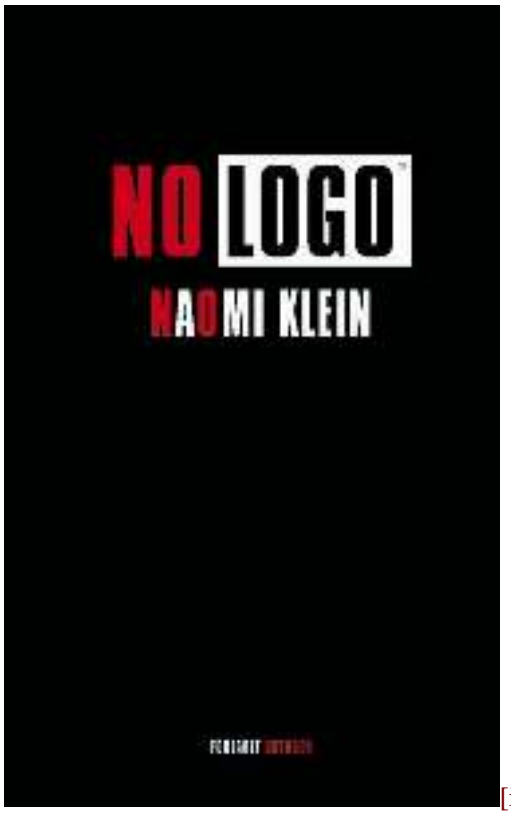
Naomi Klein says there’s a growing resentment against brands.

Corporations’ greed has brought lots of pain to real people.
They removed jobs from high-paying countries bringing unemployment and poverty; they gamed and rigged the system to pay employees as little as possible (McJobs); and they pollute and take advantage of any loophole they can while also taking advantage of the environment by polluting and contaminating the environment.

My Note:
I’m afraid to say that this resentment is nowhere strong enough. Brands are still going strong. If not stronger.

Alternative Movements Against Globalization

Finally, Naomi Klein says she can start seeing an alternative movement blossoming. She shares several examples, including Adbusters magazine, the culture-jamming movement, Reclaims the Streets, and the McLibel trial.
But the book has aged and the landscape has surely changed.



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Real-Life Applications

Watch Out for Copyright Laws
No Logo was prescient in talking about how corporations (ab)use copyright laws to silence critics and maintain market dominance and the image of "cool".
This has become more and more of an issue in the digital age (if you're a YouTube you're probably aware of it). It happened to The Power Moves as well with a book summary. I received a false copyright claim because my review was not very positive.
Watch out if you want to publish critical reviews.

CONS

- **Globalization Has No Positives?**

A bit typical of the left-wing, No Logo criticizes without recognizing the positives of modernity and globalization.

Yes, I also don't necessarily like sprawling multinational brands and marketing, but modernity and globalization also have countless advantages.

There's no mention of that in No Logo.

- **No Alternatives**

No Logo criticizes, and it provides wonderful criticism. However, it does not come up with alternatives.

That's not necessarily a con though: the author says it first that her work is an analysis.

No Logo Review

I have a special emotional attachment to *No Logo*.

It reminds me of my teenage years as a self-styled No Global boycotting McDonald, Nike, Coca-Cola, and many other big brands.

You would call it today "alter-globalization", but back then I didn't know that.
Indeed, you might say that I was nothing more than the typical clueless teenager more concerned about protesting than understanding what he's protesting against -which is what The Economist criticizes No Logo for-.

But The Economist, going overboard with its criticism, shockingly misses out on all the great aspects of Klein's work. And there is lots of it.

Including, for example, the psychology of brand marketing and its effect on young people. And, on a more pragmatic tone, the journalistic fervor with which Klein laid bare the corporate skeletons in the closet of some of the biggest and most popular brands.

And as well, The Economist and the critics, miss out on the fact that idealism can serve an important part in people's lives.
I think idealism is a gift to keep within ourselves. **A bit of idealism can serve as a drive for a better world**.
No Logo might as well be too simplistic and negative -and it is at times-, but it's also a great book with much wisdom.

Who Should Read No Logo

No Logo is not (simply) a protest book. It's an intelligent and well-researched account of how brands and marketing work, and the impact they have on a large swath of the population.

I think No Logo should be a must-read for:

- Marketers
- Designers
- Sociologists
- Idealists striving for a better and freer world

Also, read:

- **Best books on manipulation**

Or get the book on Amazon

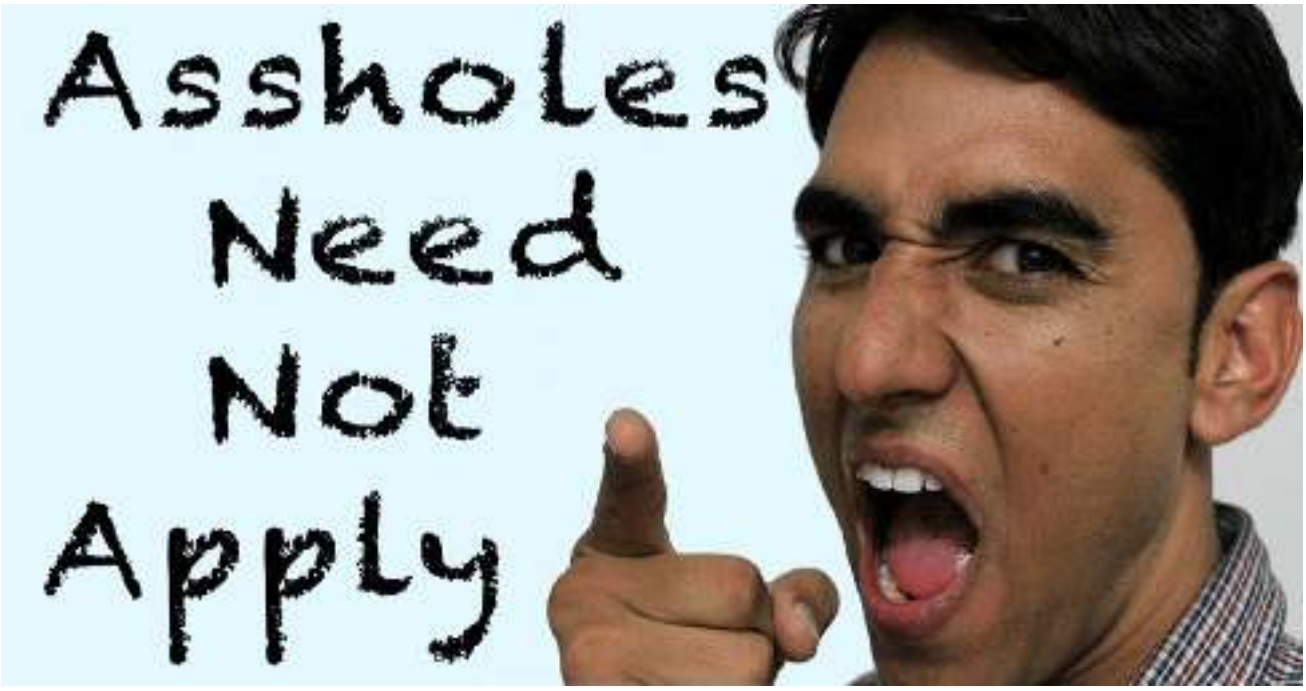
13 Signs of a Bad Boss (That Got Me to Quit)

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Being able to read the signs of a bad boss is extremely important for employees.

A bad boss will not only damage your career but also your personal development and your life satisfaction.

Ultimately, though, I am grateful for bad bosses. Bad bosses provided me with the anger and fuel that pushed me into entrepreneurship.



Never forget: you can also fire your boss

Contents

- Intro
  - 1. Takes criticism personally
  - 2. Believes that providing a salary is all that matters
  - 3. Believes a salary is the main motivator
  - 4. You have a “TGIF” mindset
  - 5. Doesn’t know you at all
  - 6. Can’t pronounce your name
  - 7. You don’t respect him
  - 8. Finger pointing
  - 9. No gratitude, no rewards
  - 10. They have favorites
  - 11. Disrespects you
  - 12. Treats employees as expendable pawns
  - 13. Engages in Power Games
- Bonus: No Good Bosses
- Summary

Intro

This article does not copy-paste a few annoying traits like most posts on the web do.

This article leverages solid psychology to provide you with a list that underlines the key personality traits of bad bosses -and, in general, bad people-.

When you see these red flags present in your boss, you should seriously consider moving on because your bad boss is probably making you a worse person.

Before diving in, I urge you to consider reading right after this article "how to be a great leader", which is a psychology-backed article on how to become a great leader and manager.

1. Takes criticism personally

The ideal boss has a moral framework within which he fully focuses on achievement.

And to achieve at the highest level, as Ray Dalio says, you need to constantly search for the truth against the backdrop of reality. And that means that you need to put your ego aside.

For the ideal boss, it doesn't matter whether he's right or wrong. It only matters what's the right answer and what will move him, you, and the whole company forward.

It's a sign of a bad boss instead of focusing on being right, having the last word, and taking feedback personally. All of these, by the way, are the signs of a *fixed mindset.*

If this is you, don't worry: it's common. And it's fixable.

Read more here:

- How to develop a growth mindset

Example

One day I sent an email to my boss with a better description for our Linkedin company page, which was full of grammar mistakes, and for our website's SEO (I was already running this website and could spot some obvious improvement opportunities).
Instead of being excited at the chance of moving forward, he got defensive and aggressive. And that's when I had no doubt anymore: I was dealing with an idiot.

2. Believes that providing a salary is all that matters

Look at this scene from "Adman":

If you know what's wrong with Don Draper's approach, then you have a good intuitive grasp of what's wrong with bad managers

John Maxwell says in the *21 Irrefutable of Leadership* that leaders add value.

But by "value" he refers to both quantitative aspects, such as a salary, and qualitative ones, such as an emotionally safe environment, a supportive group, and a leadership figure that you can learn from.

If all your boss can provide is a salary, then you have another sign of a bad boss and you probably shouldn't be working for him.
If your exchange is only monetary, then you'd better be making good money.

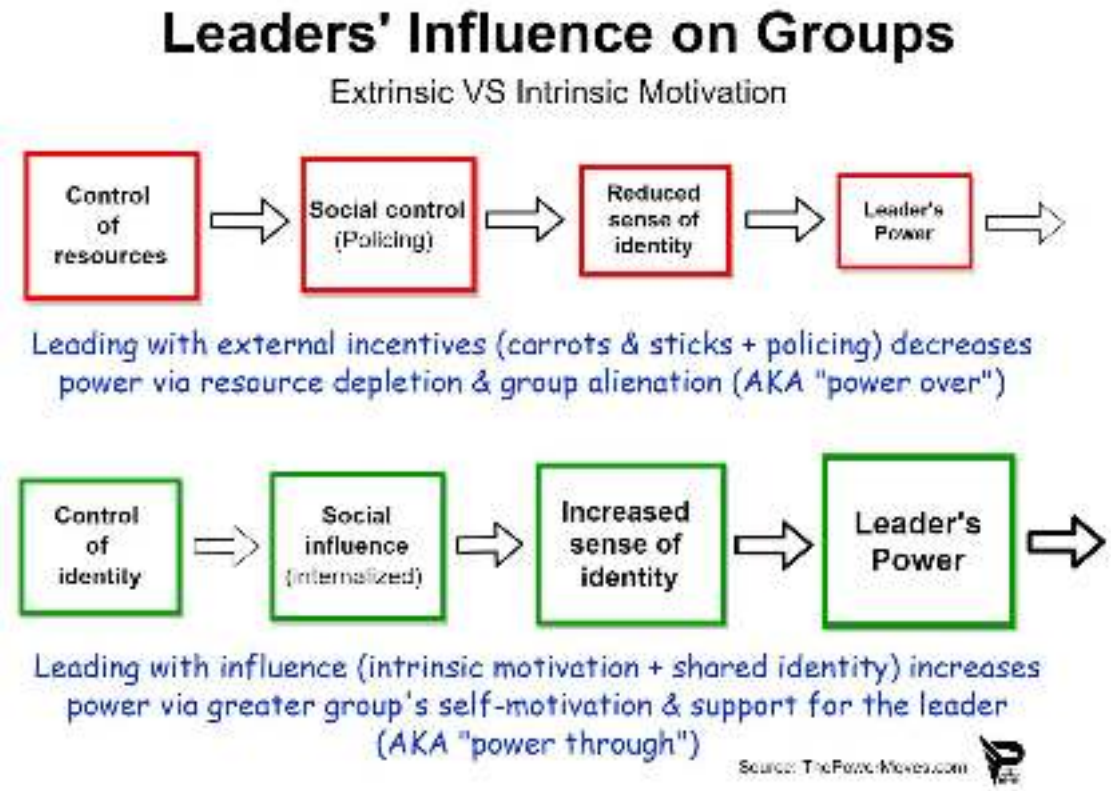
3. Believes a salary is the main motivator

Some bad bosses believe that giving you a salary is all they need to provide to keep you chained -and motivated-.

That is a huge failure of understanding basic human psychology and what really drives us. And as Daniel Pink explains in *Drive*, that's often not money.

With a boss like that, you are not learning what makes people tick.
And you are not maximizing your potential.

And just for you to know, this is the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as adopted by Haslam, 2006.



4. You have a "TGIF" mindset

This is an indirect sign of a bad boss.

If you're looking forward too much to the weekend and if Mondays and your last day of a holiday feel like a small drama, that's a big sign you have a bad boss and/or a bad job.

5. Doesn't know you at all

Simon Sinek in *Leaders Eat Last* says that leaders are not responsible for results.

What are they responsible for, then?

Great leaders are responsible for *the people* who in turn are responsible for the results.

That means taking care of the employees, knowing them as people and not numbers, and appreciating them for their unique contributions.

Failing to know anything about you is a clear sign that your boss only sees you as an entry in the cost center and not as a human being.

6. Can't pronounce your name

This is a corollary of the above and another glaring sign of a bad manager.

Dale Carnegie famously said that the sweetest word in any language, for anyone, is the sound of their name. And not caring about how to correctly pronounce your name is a big sign they don't really care much about you.

Example:

Some weeks ago a friend of mine asked me what could be a good Westernized name for her Chinese name. She needed it because her European boss could not pronounce her name and needed a Westernized version.
I told her she shouldn't change her name for anybody.
Change your boss instead of changing your name. Or better yet, tell him he's a smart guy and you're sure he can learn it… If he only applies himself just a little bit.

Also, read:

- Office power moves
- When people pronounce your name wrong.

7. You don't respect him

To have a good relationship with anybody, you need to respect him.
Ask yourself:

1. Do I respect him as a person?
2. Would he be my friend?
3. Do I respect him as a leader?
4. Would I be happy to help him?

One "no" is not a good sign.
If you answer no twice, you can't work for that guy.

8. Finger pointing

Mistakes happen. All the time.

They're the only way we can improve and it's also the only way we can move forward.

Bosses who cannot accept mistakes and mishaps as a normal part of life fail to understand the basic truth of life. And they show another terrible sign of bad managers: they focus on negatives and on blame instead that on solutions.

The great bosses, instead, take responsibility for all failures (read: *Extreme Ownership*).

Also, read:

- Archetypes of office players

9. No gratitude, no rewards

Great managers celebrate their team's achievements and pass the glory to the people around them.

I used to work at a start-up as an early employee. At the time I left and after we'd raised double digits millions in both debt and equity, I was responsible for, numbers at hand, 80% of the revenue.
Not a single time I had ever heard a "well done" from my direct manager.

Not the kind of boss you appreciate, let me tell you.

10. They have favorites

We are humans, obviously, we will like someone more than others.

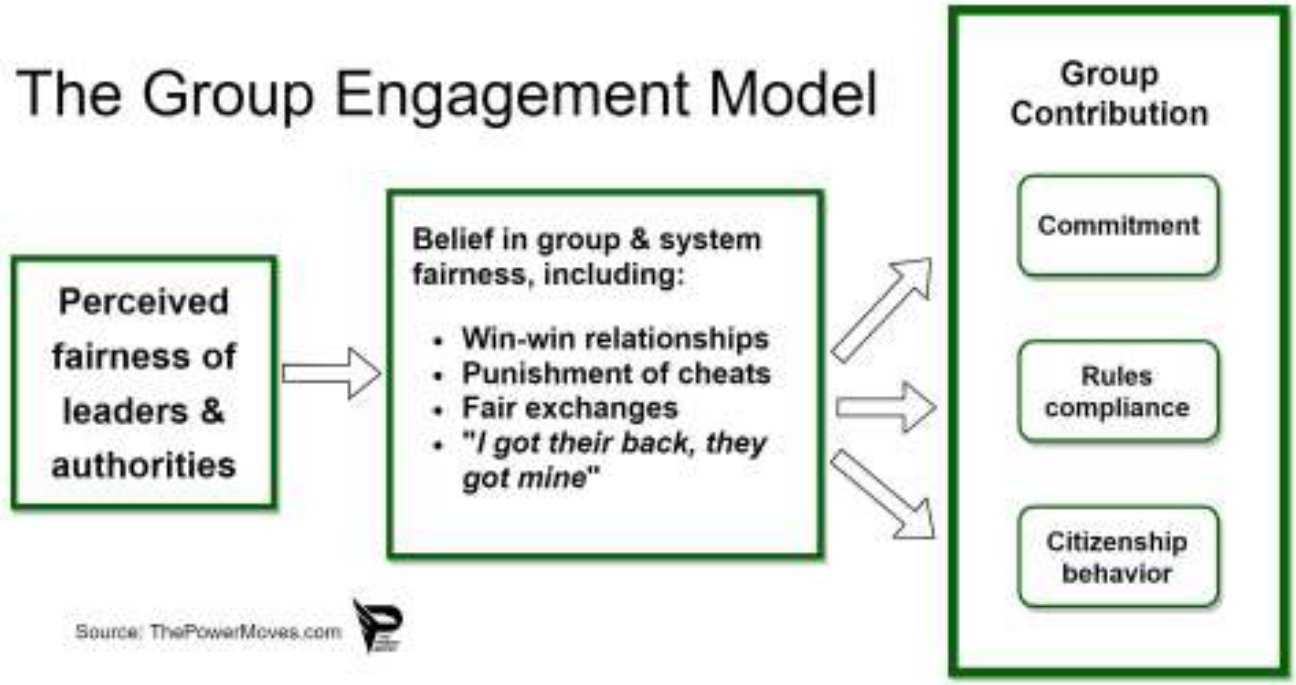
But the ideal manager treats everyone equally.

The worst kind of favoritism is not even based on results, bad on race, gender, or simple physical attraction.

As you can understand from this website, I do like women. But I think few things are as weak as a boss taking advantage of his position to sleep with his reports.
Or even worst, flirting or being all nice and tender to the female reports.

A terrible boss playing favorites was one of the main reasons I set out on my own:

If your boss has favorites, it's another sign of a poor manager.



11. Disrespects you

There are many more ways to subtly (or openly) disrespect you.

For example:

- Makes you wait
- Types on laptop when talking to you
- Doesn't find the time to speak
- Doesn't introduce you to customers and superiors
- …

These are often the signs of a boss who feels superior because of his title. And they're also a sign of a bad person, looking at titles instead of human beings.

11.2 Yells at you

Yelling is a common example of open disrespect.

Yelling to adults is disrespectful and I can think of very few exceptions (life/death scenarios, military jobs, stealing..).

You can read here how to handle a boss yelling at you, but if the problem persists either make sure your terrible boss gets fired or you find yourself a better alternative.

12. Treats employees as expendable pawns

Some bosses see employees as expandable pawns and cannon fodder to win their own war.

Example

I was once at a job interview as a senior candidate and was invited to attend a few strategy meetings before even joining. The founder referred to employees in what he deemed easy positions as “monkeys”.
He used to say “we just put need monkeys for those jobs”.

I was really tempted to join from a Power Moves experience perspective, but finally, I decided against it. Our time is too valuable to be spent with terrible managers.

You might not get such a direct example of a “take no prisoner attitude”, but here are a few red flags:

- Profits above all
- All their pride is in bottom-line achievements
- All credit to themselves
- “Collateral damage attitude” towards the victims of their final results
- Choice of words (enemies, battlefield, trenches, etc.)

Now don’t get this wrong: without profits, there’s no company, and achieving your results *is* key. But if that’s *all* they brag and care about, it’s a big red flag.
These guys have no loyalty and morals: don’t even think about growing with them. Think instead that as soon as you don’t serve their final cause, *you* will become the enemy.

Also, read:

- Corporate manipulations

13. Engages in Power Games

A leader who is at the top should look for his team.

But a leader who is at the top and looks to defend his turf and increase his social status shows inner insecurity and a lack of basic leadership qualities.

Some signs of power games:

- Social climbing
- Undermining
- Throwing people under the bus

Here is an example from, case in point, “Horrible Bosses”

Bonus: No Good Bosses

At last, I’d like you to consider a completely different perspective.

There are no good bosses.

This is a great mindset if you’re interested in entrepreneurship and need that final kick to get started.

Alternatively, I like Brian Tracey's position when it comes to employment.
He proposes that no matter what's your company, you always see yourself not as an employee, but as the president of your own corporation.

Summary

Most signs of a bad boss are also the same signs of a bad person.

That's why I put a lot of weight on the question "do you respect him" and "would you be his friend".

The problem with having a bad boss is that, well, life is short.
You will enjoy your work less -or even hate it- and your chances for growth and improvement are severely impaired.

If your boss is really terrible, I'd suggest you either think about changing job or using the situation to your benefit.
Either use your bad boss to learn about power moves or to profit personally (read: dealing with a bad boss).

Alternatively, you can use it as your motivation to become your own man and start your own business.

9 Common Sex Mistakes Women Do

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

There are a few common mistakes I have noticed in women when it comes to sex.

By “mistakes”, I mean that they either make the men less interested, less attracted, or even less horny and less interested in having sex or in having sex again in the future.

This article will list the common sex mistakes purely based on personal experience.

Contents

- Common Sex Mistakes
  - 1. Passionless Resistance to His Advances
  - 2. Going For His Penis Too Quickly
  - 3. “Yuck” Rejections
  - 4. Talking Too Soon After Coitus
  - 5. Asking If It Was OK
  - 6. Assigning Morality to Sex Positions
  - 7. Finger Interlacing During Doggy
  - 8. Dictating The Rhythm
  - 9. Not Allowing Yourself To Let Go

Common Sex Mistakes

Here is the list of the most common sex mistakes:

1. Passionless Resistance to His Advances

The first time a couple has sex can be a memorable moment.

And resisting a man’s advances *without* showing any sign of attraction is one of the most common sex mistakes women do to ruin that moment.
Resist and postpone as long as you want, but if all you do is push him away you:

1. Will make him feel hurt and unwanted
2. Risk he’ll self-reject and write you off
3. Sub-communicate you’re not into him or into sex

Much, much better to tell him you’re attracted to him but it’s too early for you (read how to reject sex) or to reject him while also showing bursts of passion (read Madonna/Whore seduction)

2. Going For His Penis Too Quickly

I was guilty of this one when I first started out:

I remember my first girlfriend proposing to me we should play the doctor game.
“What the hell is she thinking”, I thought.
Then she finally admitted: I was too quick in going for her female parts. And the game was her way to teach me a more gradual build-up.
Face palm :).

Today, several years and experiences later, I've been on the receiving end of "jump-start sex" more than once. Albeit the issue is not as bad for men, it can take a lot away from the overall experiences. Especially when it repeats over time.

Note: super hot moments of tearing each other's clothes off are an exception.

3. "Yuck" Rejections

How women rejected men can make or break a seduction:

I couple of years ago I crossed paths with a fellow countryman while traveling through Thailand. He liked the local women, he said because they enjoyed oral sex.
And that was in contrast to his previous Italian girlfriends whom, he said, rejected oral sex saying "*no ma che schifo*". That roughly translates as "*yuck no that's disgusting*".

However open-minded a man can be, it's never a good feeling when a woman says "Yuck" to his member :).
Of course, don't do anything you're not comfortable with, but a bit of tact in turning things down goes a long way.

A few other expressions to avoid:

- It smells
- It's disgusting
- I don't wanna do that with you
- I don't do that on a first date

4. Talking Too Soon After Coitus

This is another relatively common one.

The first couple of minutes after coitus are one of the pleasures of life.
And it's one of those pleasures that it's best enjoyed and respected with the utmost silence :).

Right after he has peaked, he wants to enjoy that moment without any distractions. And if you talk to him, he might see you as a momentary nuisance or, worst, as someone who "doesn't get him".

Here's a rule of thumb, then: no conversation for the first two minutes after sex. If you're not sure, let him speak first.

Comments that don't need a reply are allowed though.
Especially if positive:

- That was great
- I've never come so hard before
- God, I feel good now

5. Asking If It Was OK

It's OK asking if "it was OK".

But it should be done with tact or you come across as needy -and you might disturb that after-coitus phase that actually bonds partners together.

I was once going for non-typical intimacy with an ex, but we stopped because it was a bit too painful for her.
After we were done and laying down, she asked:

> **Her**: Is it OK for you?

> **Me**: Ja
>
> (a few seconds later)
>
> **Her**: Is it OK that we didn't do it..
> **Me**: Yes

Asking if it was OK for him right after sex slots you as the one who has to please him. It puts him in charge.

But worst of all, it can make you come across as a bit insecure.
Now mind you, strategic weaknesses can be highly seductive… As long as you are aware of it.

6. Assigning Morality to Sex Positions

Don't get this wrong, you refuse whatever you're not comfortable with.

A few women however refuse some positions -for example from the back- because they see it as "demeaning" or "unpure".

Love, caring, compassion… These are all key traits of a relationship. And no sex position takes any of that away. If anything, it's refusing to do something with your partner that might diminish your bond.

And when you slot sex positions into "good" and "bad" categories, that might send the wrong message to a lot of guys out there.
Including:

- Domineering attitude (sex as a power struggle)
- Fringe-feminist beliefs (ie.: not from the back because it's "dominant sex")
- Inability to lose oneself in carnal passion (rational approach)
- Possible hang-ups about sex

7. Finger Interlacing During Doggy

I'm thinking here of the flat doggy-style position when the man's hands are sometimes near the face of the woman.

Placing your hand on top of his and interlacing fingers could be seen as too cutesy at that point.

Note: this applies more strongly when you're not in a relationship. And it changes depending on how you live sex with your partner and what "kind" of sex you're having (more on the rougher side or more on the "sex as emotional bonding" type).

8. Dictating The Rhythm

The rule of thumb:

The woman on top decides the rhythm.
In other positions, a man decides the rhythm.

Plenty of exceptions to the rule of course.
But it's often off-putting when women try to dictate the rhythm. Sometimes she's trying to do it for him, and sometimes after he's announced that he's about to come.
At that point, he knows best how to thrust to maximize *his* pleasure. As tempted as you might be to show off your pelvic mobility, it can easily end up out of sync and only take away from his pleasure (and it's mostly about timing: I've experienced some skilled twerkers… Who got the timing all wrong).

Exception: if you're in a relationship and want to learn to take it to the next level. Then learning to time each other's pleasure can pay off handsomely.

You'll get it wrong a few times most likely, but once you reach the perfect thrusting-timing for each other, then… Nice :).

9. Not Allowing Yourself To Let Go

This goes beyond simple "sex mistakes women do" and into a fundamental truth of many women's life and psychology.

Men's sexual skills are important, but even more important are her attitudes toward her body and towards sex. And her willingness and ability to let herself go correlate highly with those attitudes.

It's indeed relatively easy to give multiple orgasms to women who have experienced orgasms before.
But it can be very difficult to give orgasms to women who've never had an orgasm before.

So the first, and the very first thing you can do make your sex life as pleasurable as it should be, both for yourself and for him… Is to give yourself permission to.

How to Read a Book: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to Read a Book teaches readers how to read books in a way that maximizes their understanding and their information retention.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Inspectional Reading: Does It Even Deserve A Read?
  - Have a Purpose For Reading
  - Use Several Modes
  - If It's Good: Read It More than Once
  - Take Time to Process Information
  - Question The Information
  - Know Where You Can Go Faster
  - Syntopical Reading
  - General Tips
  - More Tips From Me
- How to Absorb Knowledge Video Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Read because you need a book, not for the sake of reading
- Read quicker on easy parts but slow down on important ones
- Before you agree or disagree, you have to understand

Full Summary

About The Author: Mortimer J. Adler was an American philosopher, teacher, and author.
He is most famous for the book "*How to Read A Book*".

Introduction

Reading is learning.
But it's learning from an absent teacher, which requires some necessary adjustments.

In a way, you're on your own while learning from a book. And that's why it's all the most important you use a few tools to maximize your reading effectiveness.

Inspectional Reading: Does It Even Deserve A Read?

Inspectional reading gathers information before you start reading in earnest.

During inspectional reading, for example, you can decide whether or not the book even deserves your full attention.

Inspectional reading concerns: Reading the preface and the table of content.
Checking if the chapters have a summary at the beginning and at the end, and check the end of the book to see if the author summarized it. If so, read it.
If there's a chapter you're particularly interested in, start reading that one.

Have a Purpose For Reading

Don't read books just for the sake of reading.
Read them because you're interested in a certain topic. Or even better, because you need to read it and the information is relevant to your life.

Use Several Modes

Instead of just reading, writing the information down. Think about it, visualize it, and put it into action.

If It's Good: Read It More than Once

If a book is very good or if the information is very important to you: read it again.

My Note:
Instead of reading the whole book again, you can read your note again if you're a good note-taker.

Take Time to Process Information

You know those dares of 50 books a year, or 20 books a month?

That's crap.

You know Blinkist, encouraging people to read 4 books a day?
That's also crap.

Don't cram stuff just so you can say you read X books. Take time to think the information over and it will more easily sink into your brain.

Question The Information

Understand the author and his position, understand the period of time it was written, and question what the author says.

A big note of caution here: before you question anything, I would urge you instead to also do the opposite: accept it. And ask yourself "what if the author was right?".
I say so because, more than believing everything we say, most of us tend to reject whatever we don't believe in or whatever causes *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957) in us.
And that's probably even more dangerous than believing something that is not true.

Know Where You Can Go Faster

On some pieces of information or on some chapters you can go quicker.

On some others, you have to slow down to really understand the message.
Knowing when you can go faster and when you need to slow down is a major skill in reading quickly and effectively.

Before You Disagree…

… Or before you agree, or suspend judgment, you have to be able to say “I understand”.

Syntopical Reading

Syntopical reading is the reading we do when reading many books on the same topic and comparing what they talk about.

This is how I read and this is how I structure my how to absorb knowledge.

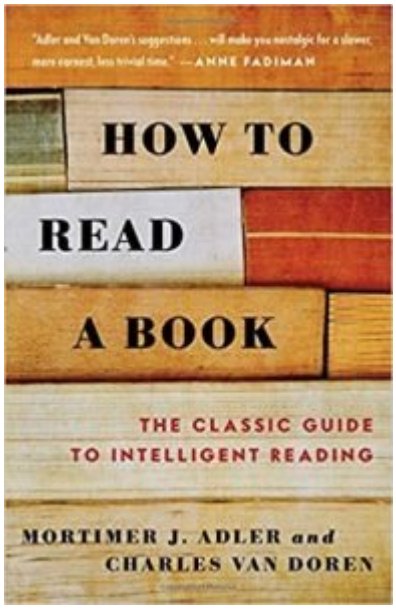
General Tips

- Take notes as you read
- Place your thumb and first two fingers together and use them as a pointer as you slide across text lines
- Understand and respect the difference between knowledge and opinion
- Read the book before the summaries

More Tips From Me

Finally, for quick and efficient reading you can also consider the following services:

- **The Power Moves subscription** (you get summaries and critical reviews of the highest quality)
- **Blinkist** (check out Blinkist review)
- **MentorBox** (check out MentorBox review)
- **Audible subscription** for audiobooks (check out Audible review)
- **The Power Moves Meta-Summaries** (in the shop section)



How to Absorb Knowledge Video Summary

And here is a good summary I have found on YouTube:

[image]

Real-Life Applications

Skim Read Before Reading

Read the preface, the summary, and the table of contents before reading the full book.

CONS

- **It's dated quite a bit**

How to Read a Book is an old book. And that's not an issue… Except for the fact it misses many new tools, one can leverage for knowledge.

Of course, there's no mention of audiobooks, e-books, and checking the Internet.
And that's not a minor lack because these tools really revolutionize the way we learn.

Review

Knowing *how to read a book* is a foundational skill.
And "*How to Read a Book*" is a good help in that direction.

Adler says you should read the full book before reading summaries while I recommend you do the opposite in my guide on how to absorb knowledge.

I also stress that it's more important that you open your mind even before you question the author.
But I can otherwise agree with most of "*How to Read a Book's*" content.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work (1999) is the most popular book from relationship researcher John Gottman and it's a seminal text when it comes to understanding what makes successful relationships.

TPM Strategic Audit: A top book *for traditional monogamous stability.*
We host it as Gottman's best book, neatly putting together all of his research.
Warning for High-Agency Men: This book assumes a 50/50 "Equalitarian" model within monogamous relationships. It often ignores Mate Value (SMV) and other important relationship power dynamics.
Calibrate with our Gottman Master Audit ↗

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Summary
  - Myths of Relationship
  - What Makes Marriage Work?
  - How to Predict Divorce
  - Solvable & Unsolvable Issues
  - Principle 1: Enhance Your Love Maps
  - Principle 2: Nurture Fondness & Admiration
  - Principle 3: Turn Towards Each Other
  - Principle 4: Let Your Partner Influence You
  - Principle 5: Solve Your Solvable Problems
  - Principle 6: Overcoming Gridlock
  - Principle 7: Creating Shared Meaning
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- Marriage satisfaction has a huge impact on health and happiness
- You can likely save your marriage even when it's not going well
- You can likely improve your relationship even when it's already going well

Summary

Unhappy marriages can increase your chance of getting sick by 35% and shorten your lifespan by around 4 years.

Gottman says that by **working just 10% on your marriage instead of the gym, you'd get 3 times the health benefits**.
TPM Note: You can do both.

Myths of Relationship

Gottman starts off with a few myths that need to be debunked:

- Affairs destroy relationships

It's often the other way around, bad relationships cause affairs.

- Men are not built for marriage

Cheating is more about the opportunity. Today young women outstrip men in infidelity.
My Note: this is not fully true based on the latest data I've seen, including from the *Oxford Handbook of Infidelity*.
The two genders are near, but men are still slightly ahead. On average, men engage more in sexual affairs and women in emotional affairs (which of course can include sex, too)

- Reciprocity makes good relationships

NO, keeping tabs is bad, Happy couples help each other without keeping scores

- Men and women are too different

Yes and no, 70% of men and women agree friendships are the key

What Makes Marriage Work?

- Positive Sentiment Override

"Sentiment override" refers to how people see the relationship as a whole. If you have a positive image of your partners and your relationship, you will take notice of the positives and discount the negatives.
But if you have a negative override, you look with suspicion -or disregard- what your partner does well.

- Sense of Meaning (or purpose)

When partners have a strong sense of meaning, they understand each other's dreams and aspirations and support them.

- Repair Attempts

Repair attempts are words, sentences, or actions that stop negativity from escalating.
Repairing attempts are crucial in saving marriages as they lower stress levels and prevent flooding.
Indeed, couples overridden with The Four Horsemen but engaging in successful repair attempts stayed together in 84% of the cases VS 90%+ of breakups without repair attempts.

How to Predict Divorce

- Harsh startup

A harsh beginning with criticism and contempt in the first 3 minutes predicts the trajectory of a 15-minute conversation with 96 accuracies. That's to say that beginning set the tone for what's to come.

- Four Horsemen

If you're familiar with Gottman's work, you know these are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling.
Criticism is an attack on the other person;
Contempt is criticism on steroids by adding sarcasm and cynicism;
Defensiveness is about defending ourselves instead of listening and, often, counter-attacking;
Stonewalling is tuning out of the discussion and usually arrives later in the relationship.

- Flooding

Flooding is an overwhelm of our system and we cannot rationally function well anymore (increased heart rate, flight or fight kicks in).
Usually, people stonewall to protect themselves from flooding.
85% of stonewallers are men because they flood easier (women produce more milk when relaxed and oxytocin is in the brain while men survived easier when they reacted more strongly)

- Bad Memories

Couples who are badly entrenched in negative views (negative sentiment override) rewrite their past with a negative tone. And that's why past memories become a good predictor of the future.

Solvable & Unsolvable Issues

Some issues can be solved, while others are perpetual.
The majority (69%) are unsolvable problems.

Some examples are:

- Having or not having children
- Sex frequency
- Children's religion

Marriages are successful to the degree to which you can live and compromise with unsolvable problems.

Principle 1: Enhance Your Love Maps

Love maps are, in a nutshell, how well you know your partner.

The more familiar you are with your partner, the more intimacy you can share, and the stronger your relationship is.
Couple with stronger love maps is also much better at weathering life crisis periods (including the birth of a baby).

Principle 2: Nurture Fondness & Admiration

Fondness and admiration are a great antidote to the four horsemen, and to contempt first of all.
Gottman says a great way to increase fondness and admiration is to:

1. list all the qualities of your partners you admire
2. tie the qualities of a practical event
3. share it with your partner
4. celebrate the happy moments and the history of your relationship

Principle 3: Turn Towards Each Other

Turning towards each means paying attention to your partner. It allows the couple to stay connected, and it happens daily starting with all the small things.

Example 1:

A man looking at a magazine commenting to his wife "wow, look at that boat". And the wife replies it's like the one they saw last summer, with the husband confirming.
Couples engaging in chit-chat like that stay happily married.

Example 2 (at the grocery)

> **Her**: *Do we still have wash up liquid at home?*
> **Him**: *I'm not sure, but let's take some just in case*
> (instead of shrugging the answer)

Example 3:

> **Her**: *I had such a bad dream tonight*
> **Him**: *I'm in a big hurry, but tell me about it quickly so we can talk more about it tonight*

Exercises

1. Take turns to speak
2. Don't give advice, just listen first (women react more negatively to quick advice)
3. Show genuine interest
4. Communicate your understanding
5. Take your partner's side
6. Express a 'we against others' attitude
7. Express affection (say I love you, put an arm around them)
8. Validate emotions (empathize)

Principle 4: Let Your Partner Influence You

Letting your partner influence you means sharing power.

It means you listen to them and you are open to compromise and change your opinion if it makes sense.

Both partners can refuse influence, but it's more commonly a male issue. And it's a big mistake: 81% of couples that don't allow influence split up.

Principle 5: Solve Your Solvable Problems

This principle is about problem-solving and communication. To a certain extent, it comes down to having good manners.
Here are the steps:

- Soften your startup

Women tend to be the ones who bring up issues, but they also tend to do so in a harsh way. Make sure you start warmly.

- Learn to make and accept repair attempts

Humor or direct (ie.: "can we take a break", "I was too mean, sorry"). Announcing them often amplifies their power.

- Soothe

Understand when you're flooding and need to self-soothe and help your partner do the same.

- Compromise

Part of accepting influence. Giving ground is an important part of reaching happy solutions.

- Be tolerant of your partner's faults

Also, see:

- **Enlightened cooperation**

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-collaborator

Principle 6: Overcoming Gridlock

Gridlock happens when a partner doesn't respect the other partner's dreams or "the way he is". For example, spender VS saver or security VS safety seeker.

Here's how to find out your partners' dreams:

- Become a dream detective

Some people might disguise their aspirations as "childish" or "impractical dreams". But dig deeper anyway or they will resurface without your support and understanding.

- Work on them

There are three steps to work on your partners' dream:

1. Listening (without criticizing)
2. Financially supporting them
3. Taking an active part in them

And, ideally:

- Find common ground

You might never be able to fully solve gridlocked issues, but you can find out the areas where you can compromise and workarounds for the areas you cannot.
Or simply understanding where you cannot compromise is already a major win.

- Appreciate

It might not always be easy to appreciate and say thank you after a gridlocked discussion but do end on a positive anyway.

Principle 7: Creating Shared Meaning

A shared meaning is a togetherness between two individuals that goes beyond the differences and arguments.
It takes years to build, but here are a few ways to promote it:

- Family culture (dinners, Christmas traditions, holidays together, etc.)
- Shared symbols
- Reflect on your history together

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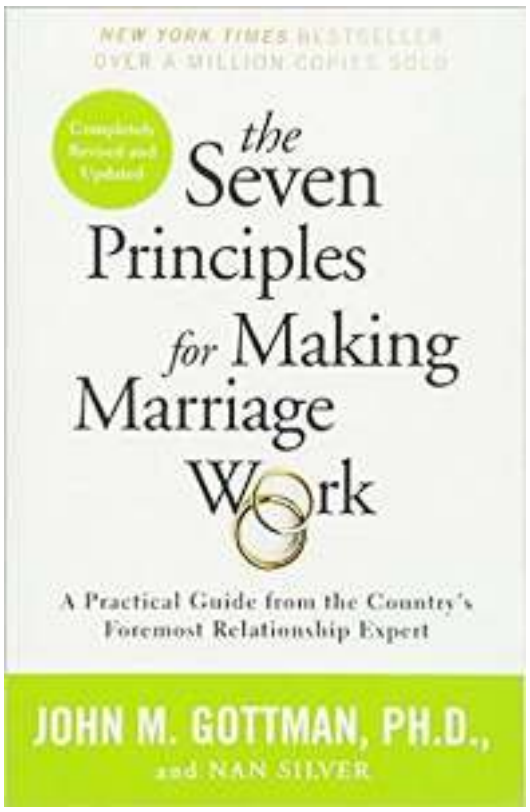


Real-Life Applications

Work on your relationship
The amount of helpful and relationship-saving and enhancing wisdom in this book is too much to summarize. The main real-life application I would take away from "*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*" is this: relationships matter. They're one of the biggest factors to determine your health, success, and happiness. Not working on them is plainly stupid.

CONS

- **Disjointed: it's far more than 7 principles**

It's called "7 Principles" but the principles and key concepts in the book are much more. Trying to reduce them to 7 but then disseminating the book with more crucial wisdom isn't helping the reader.

- **A few unneeded off topics**

I find the book going sometimes off track, like in the discussion of cultural shifts in gender roles.

- **A bit self-aggrandizing**

Especially at the beginning of the book, it reiterates (a bit too) often on the scientific foundation of the book. Once was enough :)

PROS

Great Wisdom
As for most of Gottman's work, The Seven Principles to Make Marriage Work has deep wisdom that will make your relationships better.

Novel Content

I particularly appreciated that it goes well beyond the usual “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”. Especially the concept of repair attempt was very instructive.

Review

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work is a fantastic source to understand what makes monogamous relationships truly work.

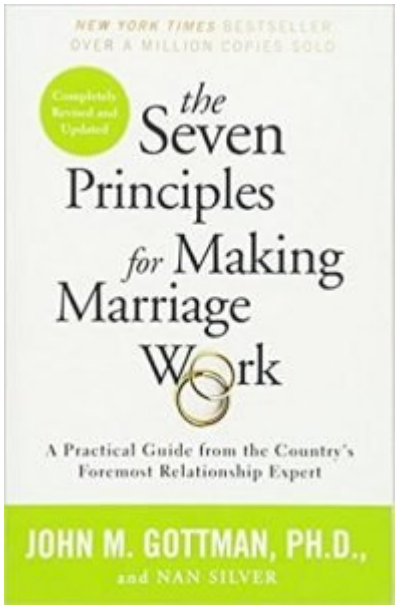
Not only does everything Gottman says make sense, but I also appreciate that it’s not just his intuition speaking, but that everything is grounded in research and data.

Highly recommended for men interested in monogamous relationships.

The only important downside is that **the book implies a relationship of equals, while high-value men may be better off with different setups**. Equally respectful and win-win, but fairer for what they bring to the table.

Check out the best relationship books.

Gottman's 7 Principles for Making Marriage Work: Summary



A seminal book for successful relationships.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-seven-principles-for-making-marriage-work-summary/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

How to Handle Aggressive Debaters: Tucker Carlson Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 April 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Have you ever wondered how you could handle an aggressive, unfair debater?

It's not easy, because they are willing to do anything to get under your skin and make you look bad.
However, if you know how to, you can turn their techniques around.

This article will show you how can debate -and win- against an aggressive and unfair debater.

Contents

- Background

- #1. Strawman Technique
- #2. Undermine Credibility
- 3. Provocation
- 4. Aggression
- Summary

Background

Tucker Carlson is a Fox News host and is often seen as a regarded debater.
He certainly does have some good debating skills.

But at times he uses plenty of underhanded techniques that make him an unfair debater.

These are four unfair debating techniques that he used in his interview with Lauren Duca:

#1. Strawman Technique

Carlson attacks Lauren not on what she said, but on how he would like her to be.
Which, of course, is nastier and more extreme than who she really is.

Also, notice how confirms his own strawman when he says "that's what you said" (49s).
That's quite a bit sneaky.

#2. Undermine Credibility

Carlson uses two techniques to undermine Lauren's credibility:

1. Nitpick quotes from the past

Picking what someone has said in the past is an effective and overused technique to discredit someone.

2. Undermines her credential

He mentions she writes for Teen Vogue, then quotes her description of Ariana Grande's style.

Then pretends to go back to politics as if that were a normal detour.
Indeed, Carlson undermines her credential in an indirect way, as if the information slipped incidentally. That way it's even more powerful as it seems unbiased information.

But of course, as Lauren herself said, whatever magazine she writes for shouldn't delegitimize her in any way (but people's psychology doesn't work that way, of course).

3. Provocation

Tucker Carlson is a world-class provocateur.

Almost as good as Ben Shapiro.

His fake laughter, pungent sarcasm, and out-of-context quotes can easily drive his guests angry.
And he's no exception here:

4. Aggression

Tucker Carlson is a powerful debater.

He has lots of energy, speaks loudly and when he feels like it, he doesn't shy away from aggressing and disparaging guests.

Interestingly enough, that's where Tucker loses most points.

He only wins here in the eyes of the staunchest conservatives who already agree with him.
But any moderate will find him overbearing and overly aggressive. And they'll side with the guests.

Summary

Tucker Carlson is a smart guy and a highly skilled debater.
And he's a very, very aggressive debater.

He doesn't shy away from using lots of unfair debating techniques though, and he sometimes goes overboard in aggressing his guests.

And that's where I feel he is doing no favors to his own conservative camp.
The moderates are more likely to turn away when they see contempt, sneering, and aggression.

If you're interested in debating techniques, also check:

- Trump VS Hillary 2
- How to debate (and win) against shaming attacks

Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage* Julie and John Gottman analyze relationships and teach readers exactly what they can do to improve their marriages and relationships.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Ten Lessons Summary
  - The Two Truths of Married Couples
  - Positive Behaviors You Must Implement
  - Look for Longing in the Complaints
  - Do Deal With Problems
  - Focus on The Positives
  - Respect Your Partner's Dreams
  - Do Not Suppress Anger
  - Avoid Children-Centered Marriages
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Deal with irreconcilable issues by understanding your partner, talking about it, and compromising where you can
- Keep high expectations for your marriage: they translate into better marriages
- Share the power in the marriage: listen to your spouse

Ten Lessons Summary

Ten Lessons to transform your marriage goes through 10 couples who want to improve their relationships and analyze a typical dialogue of theirs.

Then Gottman explains what's the issue, gives pointers on how to improve, and shows us the improved dialogues.

And he teases out a few lessons learned and exercises you can apply to your marriage as well.

The Two Truths of Married Couples

Julie and John say that the two simple truths of happy couples are:

1. They behave like good friends
2. Handle conflicts in gentle and positive ways

Behaving like friends means their relationships have lots of respect, affection, and empathy.

Positive Behaviors You Must Implement

Couples who are happy together present a few common positive behaviors.

They aren't necessarily huge, but repeated daily is what makes the difference:

1. **Soften Start-up**: they introduce complaints gently, without accusing and criticizing the partner
2. **Turn Towards the Partner**: they tune in to turn their partner when their partner needs them and give them full attention
3. **Repair Conversation**: when a conversation is going south they manage to stop it instead of escalating it
4. **Accept Influence**: they listen to the partner's opinion and are open to being persuaded (this is mostly for men)

Look for Longing in the Complaints

The advice I found particularly useful was that of looking beyond the complaint and going to the root cause.

For example, if your partner shouts you're never there and all you can do is work, it's most likely they are actually saying:

> I miss you, I like you a lot and need more of your time

Many men though take it as an attack or, even worse, feel inadequate.

Do Deal With Problems

Some couples will always try to avoid talking about problems.

They might be afraid of giving too much air time to negative feelings, or afraid of opening a Pandora's box. But not talking about the problems leads to emotional distance.
And a sense of loneliness, which can be a precursor of infidelity as well.

And if it's your partner who avoids digging deeper into the problems, then it becomes your duty to make sure he/she hears you.

Emotionally Distant Marriages

Avoiding problems and deeper feelings is typical of avoidant relationships (read: *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*) and "emotionally distant" marriages (also read: emotional unavailability).

The risk of not getting to know each other well is to develop "inner lives" they keep away from their partners and you won't feel understood.

Gottman suggests that conflict-avoidant couples learn to share strong emotions instead of suppressing them.

Focus on The Positives

Anthony Robbins says often: you get what you focus on.

And it's similar to marriages and relationships. To get more feelings of fondness and admiration, you should make a conscious effort to pay attention, notice, and express your feelings of fondness and gratitude for any positive thing happening between you two.

Similarly, avoiding replaying negative thoughts in your mind.

Respect Your Partner's Dreams

Gottman explores dreams and gridlocked conflicts, a topic he already covered in The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work.

It's important to notice that our dreams and the deepest expressions of "who we are" are not always obvious.

To bring our deepest differences to the surface and prevent them from being an issue, do the following:

1. Create a safe environment where it's safe to discuss our deepest drives and dreams
2. Find areas of flexibility
3. Compromise where you can

The most important step is to know that your dreams are respected and understood.

Do Not Suppress Anger

Anger, like all other emotions, should not be suppressed.

Gottman says you can actually use anger. For example, when you use anger to stand up for yourself, you gain self-respect.

But to allow anger to transmute into a positive force, you have to express it openly and in non-destructive ways. You must also avoid down spiraling thoughts such as "how could he do that to me, that's so unfair, I need to show him now, he will see.. ").

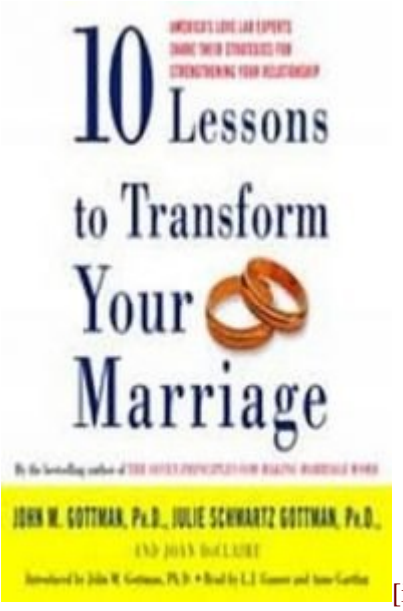
The right way to express it instead is like this:

> I feel so angry right now and it's a fair emotion. I can handle this feeling and I need to talk to him right away and fix this situation

When you're angry, it's not true that "getting it off your chest" will help (also read pop-psychology and self-help myths). **Ranting and raging without a listening partner only makes you angrier**.
What you need indeed is someone to hear you out and work through your feeling.
And that will calm you down.

Avoid Children-Centered Marriages

Gottman says that putting your children always first means you put your relationship second. And it's likely that your relationship will suffer. Which in turn, it's been proven, is bad for children.



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CONS

Misleading title
I find the title slightly misleading. This is more like 10 case studies and the lessons we can learn from each one.

Is affection necessary?
Gottman says that happily married couples behave like good friends with lots of respect and affection for each other.
But in other titles, he says that couples with lots of fights also can stay happily married (as long as the positives outweigh the negatives 5:1).

The two aren't mutually exclusive: for example, a couple with frequent arguments can still be affectionate, but it still raised a question mark for me.

All the books necessary?
Of course, some information repeats. I wish Gottman had done one single book and put everything in there. Then maybe a few more books with only case studies.

PROS

Lots of dialogue examples
I am a big, huge proponent of learning through examples -which is indeed one of the founding principles of this website-.
And "Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage" has lots of dialogues that Gottman breaks down and analyzes.

Some great psychological wisdom
There's some great psychological wisdom. Like for example why people growing up with difficult families can become oversensitive to criticism (because children believe everything's their fault and take responsibility for the family's issues)

Review

10 Lessons to Transform Your Marriage is yet another great book by John Gottman.

It's hard to overestimate how much the wisdom of his work can help couples build better relationships.
I especially loved the dialogue examples with a sentence-by-sentence analysis.

Check out the best books on relationships or get the book on Amazon

The Relationship Cure: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Relationship Cure* author John Gottman focuses on emotional intelligence and "bid for connections". Such as, how partners open up for emotional bonding and what it means for relationships.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Responding to Bids For Connection
  - Recognizing Bids
  - Partners Don't Try Again After Failure
  - Men Are Key
  - Families Influence Our EQ Levels
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Responding well to bids for (emotional) connection is crucial for healthy relationships
- You need to know your partner to effectively and constantly recognize all the bids for connections
- When communication is poor some bids can be hidden behind criticism, arguments, or seemingly innocuous remarks

Full Summary

A bid for connection can come in many forms. It can be a question, a touch, a comment, a gesture… Any expressions through which someone wants to feel connected with you.

How people respond to bids has a huge, huge effect on relationships.

Husbands heading for divorce, for example, miss (or disregard) bids for connections 82% of the time, while husbands in stable relationships only miss it 19% of the time (for women, it's 50% and 14%, which also tells us men miss more bids for connection).

Responding to Bids For Connection

There are three ways to respond to bids for connection:

1. **Turning towards** (and we increase our emotional capital)
2. **Turning away** (it ignores the bid)
3. **Turning against** (it reacts with anger)

Here's an example:

The man is at the computer to fix an important work issue. He looks nervous and worried. The wife gets up and silently puts a hand on his shoulder.

If he reaches out to her hand or turns around and touches her, he's turning towards her. If he keeps ignoring her, he turns away. If he gets angry and tells her not to touch her, he's turning against her.

Recognizing Bids

It's not always to recognize bids. Sometimes a question or a comment can be "transactional", such as it has no deeper meaning beyond getting something done or conveying certain information.

Gottman says that it requires *emotional intelligence* and getting to know the person well.
Once you know the person, you will better understand them and will also recognize where, when, and how they're more likely to make emotional bids.

Hidden Bids

Sometimes bids are not even made but are hidden behind a complaint or a criticism. It's what Gottman refers to as the "longing behind the criticism" in *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage.*

For example, if you're at the computer and your wife complains to you that you're always working, she might not really be tired of you working so much.
But she might be actually making a bid for connection in asking you to turn towards her care more about her.

Partners Don't Try Again After Failure

After a bid for a connection has been rejected, people usually don't try it again.
Gottman says people only retry in 20% of the cases.

Men Are Key

Women make bids for connection at the same rate independently of the health of their relationships.
Which, Gottman implies, gives men more power to turn around those relationships for good.

Men keep having the same chances to emotionally connect even when things are not going well.

Families Influence Our EQ Levels

Family culture is key.

- **Emotionally intelligent families teach children**

Emotionally intelligent families teach children to accept their feelings and to handle them appropriately. They value emotions and the expression of emotions, which is key in raising healthy children.

- **Emotionally dismissing families suppresses EQ**

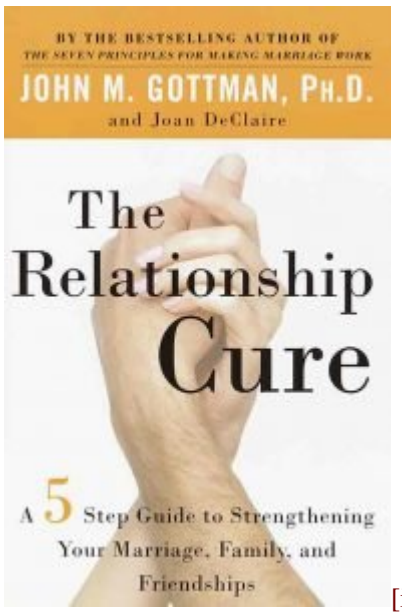
Some other families dismiss feelings or disapprove of them.

Children are subtly -or non-subtly- discouraged from showing feelings. When a kid or a family member is emotional or too sad, the family turns away (or against it).
Minimizing feelings is also in the same category (ie.: "oh come on it's just a toy").

Also, check:

- Emotionally unavailable men

Gottman also doesn't believe people should force themselves to be positive. He says that experiencing all emotions is the better option.



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Real-Life Applications

Watch out for bids!
Take care of bids for connection, they're the main building block of relationships.
I see people missing those all the time, and that's where relationships turn sour and partners feel lonely. This goes for any kind of relationship!
Check out: 4 communication mistakes men destroy relationships with.

To build an emotional connection…
… Turn towards that person emotionally as often as you can.
This is the greatest advice since *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

CONS

- **Could be more precise**

I think this bidding concept is way too underrated and way too misunderstood.
In a way, I'm glad Gottman dedicates a whole book to it. But in a way, I'm also angry that the Relationship Cure, in my opinion, doesn't do a great job of clarifying and exemplifying what bids are.

- **A bit fluffy**

Atypical of John Gottman's books, I found The Relationship Cure to be a bit fluffy. The concept is fundamental, but it's also simple and it could have been said in a briefer fashion.
Instead, it covers lots of topics that Gottman covers better in other books such as *The 7 Principles for Making Marriage Work* and *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*.

- **Some fuzziness in the definitions**

Gottman talks about the "emotional command systems" but honestly I failed to see much relevance in there (let me know in the comments if you think otherwise!).

And getting into micro-expressions and body language was yes relevant, but trying to explain these complex topics in a few paragraphs felt out of place.

PROS

Sheds light on an important topic
This is an important topic that doesn't get enough recognition.

Review

If you're unaware of bids for connection, I recommend you look into it. "*The Relationship Cure*" is a great start.

Check out the **best books on relationships** or get the book on Amazon

How to Find The Perfect Roommate: The Psychology of Flatsharing

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to find the perfect roommate?

If this question is running through your mind, you have to the right place.

Through psychology-backed methods, you will learn all the necessary steps to finding a great flatmate.

Contents

- Rommate Choice: Common Mistakes
- My Experience With Flatmates
  - #1. Match Extroversion Levels
  - What To Ask:
  - #2. Match Attitudes Towards Privacy & Personal Space
  - Example:
  - What To Ask
  - #3. Cleanliness Levels
  - What to Ask
  - #4. Check for Noise Sensitivity
  - What to Ask
  - #4. Match Noise Attitudes
  - What to Ask
  - 5. Beware of Love & Attraction
  - 6. Avoid Living With Owners
- Bad Questions to Ask Potential Roommates

- Summary

Rommate Choice: Common Mistakes

Most people meet once, have a good feeling, and proceed to move into a flat (or accept new roommates).

That's not a good strategy.

Some others believe they are going deeper with questions about what he does and what he likes.
And that might be even worse.

Much better is to inquire and look for compatibility in the key areas that make for a good life in the flat.
At the end of this article, you will know exactly what to look for in a roommate to find the best roommate you can get.

My Experience With Flatmates

Since I moved out of my parents' house my life has been a continuous experience in flat-sharing.

I have traveled the world and the seven seas sharing flats, and if I've learned anything… No, it's not that everybody's looking for something -albeit that's also true-, it's that who you share your space with matters.

My name is Lucio, I am a psychology buff and all of my work is basically about people and human dynamics. Through studies and personal experience, I realized that to find the perfect roommate you should match in the following traits:

#1. Match Extroversion Levels

The very first personality trait you must match is your extraversion-introversion levels.
Extraversion is on a continuum:

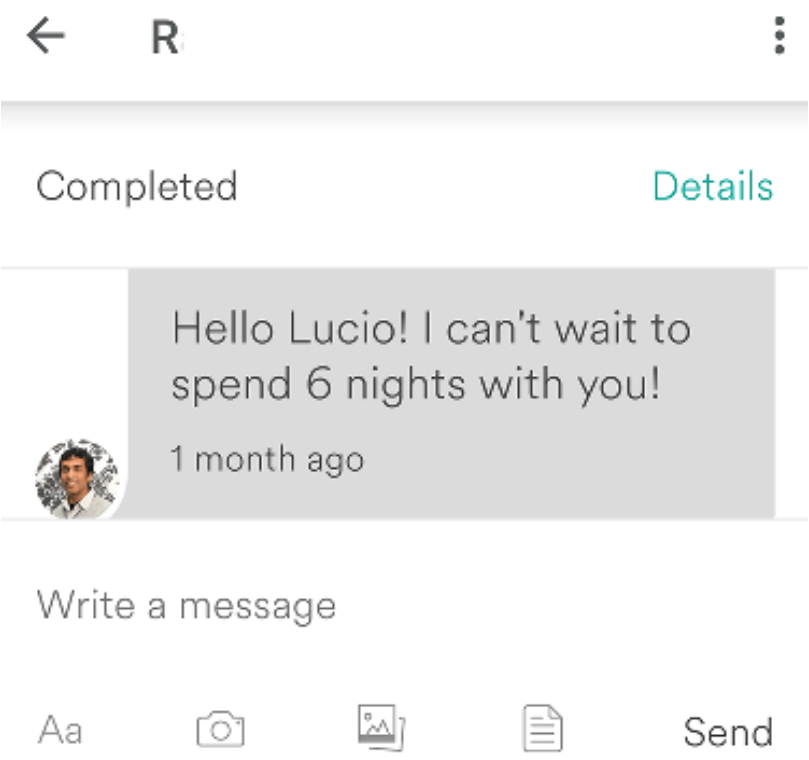
Few people are 100% introverted or 100% introverted, and people in the middle are often referred to as "ambiverts".

This is all the more important if you are very *introverted* or very extroverted because life together will be hell. The introvert will think the extrovert is annoying and overbearing, and the extrovert will think the introvert is slippery, and "weird" and that he hates him.

Topic	Extroverts	Introverts
Eating	Want to eat together	Want to enjoy food alone
TV / Sport Events	Watch TV and sport together as a shared event	Watch the match alone (and comment it on an online forum)
Use of common spaces	Camp out on common areas (and hope roommate will come out)	Stay in the room (hoping roommate will get the fuck out so *they* can go out)
Feelings towards the other	• weird • slippery • always avoiding me • doesn't like me	• "too much" • overbearing • all over me • likes me too much

Basically, when two people at the opposite end of the extraversion level meet, they end up looking like an anxious-avoidant relationship: the extrovert chases for talking and connection while the introvert runs away.

Here is an example of how I, an introvert, immediately spotted that an Airbnb guest of mine was not going to be the perfect flatmate:

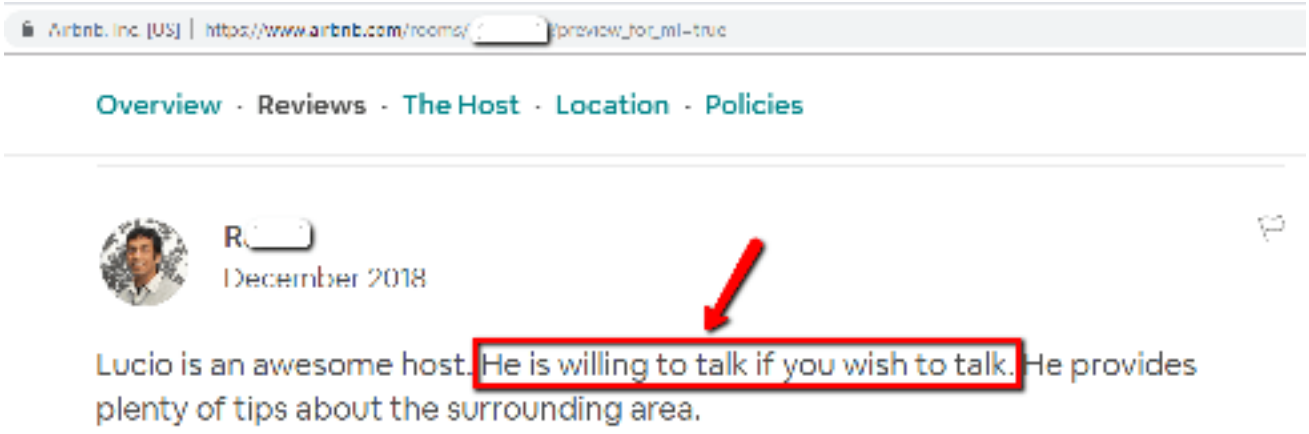


Imagine you are traveling. You're going to a new country, a new city, a conference in the pharmaceutical field you love.
Much to visit, much to do, right?
Who is going to say, under those conditions "*I can't wait to spend six nights (!) with you?*".
A super extrovert of course!

And how is an introvert going to react?
By trying to dodge all that connection and chitchat of course!
Look at me trying to avoid too much talk. And notice his reply:

"Let's see if we can take ten minutes to catch up later", LOL.
It never dawns on many extroverts that there is an extroversion mismatch and they never realize that the introvert is, indeed, avoiding them. But not because the introvert doesn't like the extrovert, it's simply because they need their own space.

Finally, when he leaves me feedback, look at what he writes:



No comments about cleanness, location, the attraction of the new city, or anything.
Just says that "I am willing to talk".
Who provides such feedback? An extrovert chasing down an introvert for connection, of course.

What To Ask:

What can you ask to spot if your future BFE (best flatmate ever) is an introvert or an extrovert?

Here are a few good questions:

- **Do you cook?**

Cooking is often more about the shared experience of cooking, talking, and then eating. At the very least, it will tell you if they spend lots of time outside their room.
If you're introverted, avoid people saying yes.

- **What type of flat-share do you like?**

Extroverts will mention activities *within* the flat and things they like *together* with their roommates.
Introverts will mention their activities *outside* the flat and will talk about what *they* do.

Look at Their Behavior

On top of just *listening* to their replies, notice *how* they behave.
Extroverts talk a lot. And often they talk a lot about themselves.
If you're an introvert, avoid gushers. If you're an extrovert, avoid people who ask lots of questions and talk little.

Extraversion & Introversion Are Relative

Extraversion in a flatshare is the pattern of relating between people and not unchanging constants.
You can become an introvert to a super extrovert and be an extrovert to a super introvert.
So it's best to pick someone around your extraversion level.

#2. Match Attitudes Towards Privacy & Personal Space

Sharing a flat is about, well… Sharing.

Sharing space, sharing things in the common areas, and also partially sharing our personal spaces.
That's why finding a good roommate often means finding someone who doesn't differ too much from us when it comes to privacy.

Example:

I am slightly tilting towards privacy seekers, but without being a nazi about it.

And I have been living with people far on the "communal" line. I can tell you it's an issue. These people opened my door without knocking and left their own doors open while studying, playing video games, and even while sleeping and… Showering.

Some of these people I could absolutely be friends with… But they were not people I could live with :).

Topic	Communal	Privacy Seeker
Giving possessions	You can take my food	I don't want your food, buy mine
Taking possessions	I take yours, then you can take mine	No, it's my stuff and I don't want yours
Common space	My cabinet, your cabinet… What's mine	Hey, don't put your stuff here: it's mine
Personal Room	1. Leaves their doors open 2. Knocks, then opens door	1. I wish he'd close his damn door 2. Please wait for me to say "come in"
Feelings towards other	• uptight • jealous • keeps me at distance • such an elitist • doesn't like me	• too easy going • overbearing • doesn't respect my space • such a communist • doesn't like me

What To Ask

Here is what to ask to make sure that you match your future flatmate's attitudes toward communal living:

- **Do you usually close your door?**

Anything but "well of course" tells you they probably have a very communal attitude towards spaces.
It means they will also treat your own space as if it were their own… Unless you teach them. Sometimes, repeatedly.

- **Would you mind if I took your stuff sometime (and you can then take mine)?**

Anything but an emphatic "absolutely" tells you they care about their private property.

#3. Cleanliness Levels

Dirty roommates make for terrible roommates for clean people (the opposite holds less true).
As a matter of fact, a very dirty roommate can make living impossible for a very clean person.

What to Ask

Here are the best questions:

- **How clean is the place for you right now?**

If you're looking for a good roommate, leave the place at your average cleanliness level and let them rate it.
If they say it's very clean, they're too dirty for you. If they say it's dirty, they might be too clean for you

- **Is this how you keep the place, on average?**

If they are offering the room, ask if the current state of the place is what they're comfortable with and see if it's enough for you.
If they cleaned for the occasion, ask:

- **Can I check your room?**

Chances are they cleaned and organized the common areas but not their rooms. Check their room for a real litmus test on whether they'll be great roommates or not.

Note: cleanliness correlates highly with organization and house chores, so you don't need to prod for all of them.

#4. Check for Noise Sensitivity

Some people ask about circadian rhythms, and albeit that's good information to have, it's not really crucial… Unless you or your roommate have very light sleep.
In which case, watch out.

What really matters instead is how people are bothered -or not bothered- by noise.

For example, when I moved into my current flat I asked a neighbor how it was for him. He told me he was just about to move out because the lady from the last floor was so noisy and annoying.
I prodded for more data.
He said that she would listen to the TV at full blast with the window open and the noise would "bounce back from the building in front" and ruin his whole day.

This guy was on the 3rd floor, talking about a lady on the 5th floor. There was a whole floor in between and he was talking about "noise bouncing back from the building in front?".
Obviously a highly noise-sensitive guy!
I moved in and it's been for me one of the quietest places I've ever been to -but then again I've been living in Roma with cars honking all over the place and noisy scooters zipping from left and right-.

What to Ask

- **Do you have a light sleep?**
- **Do you find it annoying if someone is up late / wakes up very early?**

A yes to any of these answers can make for a difficult living together if you stay up until late or go out a lot.

#4. Match Noise Attitudes

Does it sound a lot like the previous point?

Nah, it's similar, but it runs deeper.

Noise seekers fear silence and need their life to be constantly filled with noise.
Many activities they do, they do with background music. Sometimes they also study with music, which means an almost constant stream of noise during their wake hours.

The worst example I had, was a guy who would sleep with his hairdryer on, which meant 24h noise!

Topic	Noise Avoiders	Noise Seekers
TV	Why the hell do you keep it on if you're not watching it!	Sometimes I pay attention. It keeps me company.
Ubiquitous Noise	You're in the kitchen, can't you switch off the stereo in your room	I do back and forth. And I guess I like a lively house
Talking	Can you turn off the TV / phone music while we speak	But I can hear you
Feelings towards other	• loud and crass • unfocused and scattered • low quality • he's not like me	• boring and uptight • overachiever • smart / cultured • he thinks he's better

Noise is highly related to nervous system sensitivity, and people who are very sensitive to noise also tend to be very sensitive to light, commotion, lots of people, stress, pain, caffeine, emotions, etc., etc.
Also, read:

- The Highly Sensitive Person
- Are You Highly Sensitive? Take The Quiz

What to Ask

- **How important is silence to you?**

Watch Out For Personal Loudness

Watch out, particularly for a loud tone of voice.

It's often an easy giveaway for people who are used to screaming to be heard above their background noises :)

Not that the attitude towards noise is also influenced by the introversion/extroversion personality type. Research showed that introverts prefer quieter places while extroverts like noisier environments (Cain, 2012).

5. Beware of Love & Attraction

I used to be quite open and liberal about the sexual orientation of my flatmates.

But after this awkward experience, I'm not too sure that's a good idea:

Indeed familiarity and repeated exposure tend to increase liking (Schafer, 2015). That means that if there is an even minuscule amount of liking, then living together will likely amplify it.
As a matter of fact, I believe that living together is one of the easiest ways of developing feelings.
Which can also eventually lead to (unreturned) love and lots of troubles.

As much as that might sound unfair, if you're straight you might want to consider avoiding non-straight men.
And if you're in a relationship, you might want to avoid members of the opposite sex.

Ultimately, that's up to you. Just be aware of the dangers though.
Personally, I won't let one bad experience change my "LGBT-friendly policy" and I'm still open to any gender orientation.

No *that* type of brother in arms :)

6. Avoid Living With Owners

When you're a paying flatmate in someone's house you are officially buying your own space.

But unofficially chances are that you will always feel like a guest.
And that the owner will always feel like an owner.

Especially for long-term rent, it's best if you don't rent with the owner in the flat.

Bad Questions to Ask Potential Roommates

Many people -and most guides online- focus on personal questions.

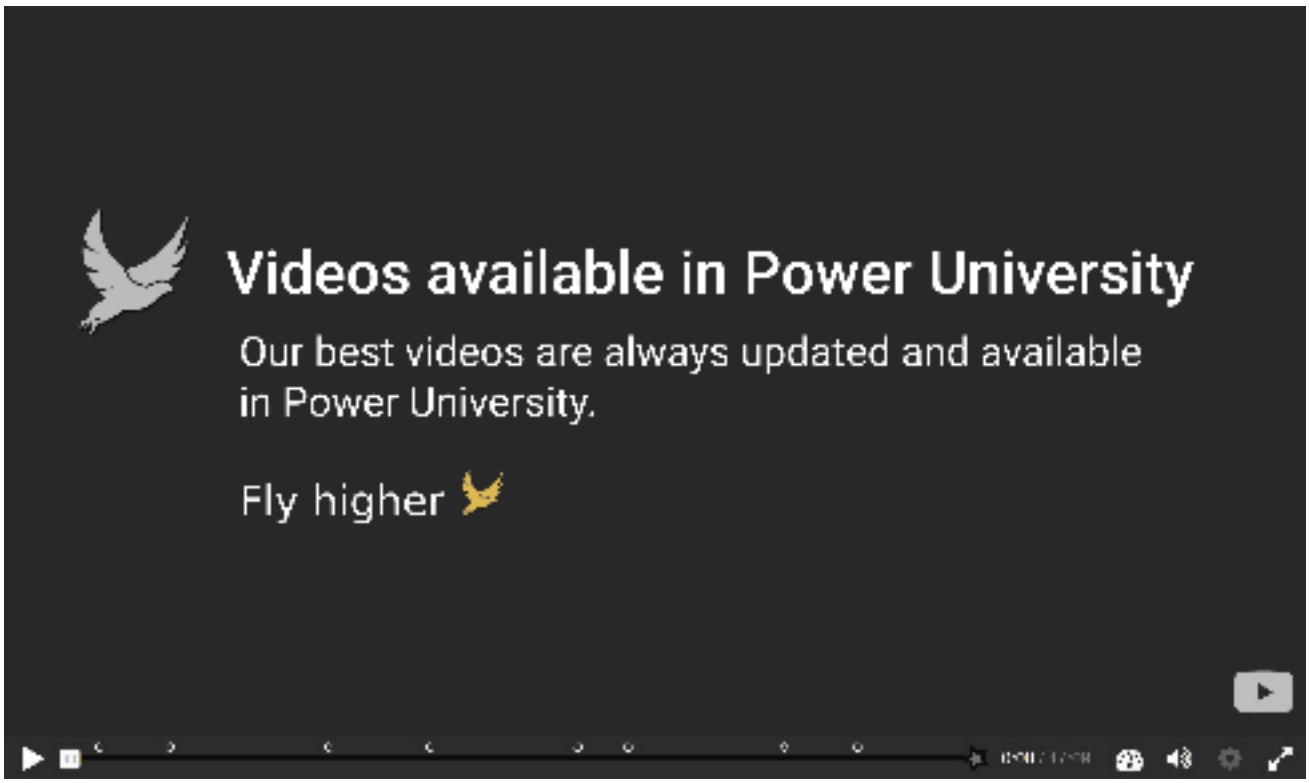
Things like:

- likes and dislikes
- hobbies
- profession
- aspirations

That stuff is important when you want a friend, but matters little when it comes to finding a great roommate.

If someone is a lawyer, it says very little about how you'll get along.
If they're passionate about arts, it won't make much of a difference in your flat-sharing life if they leave their dishes unwashed and you hate that.

But if he's a super extrovert lawyer who wants to talk to you about his latest art gallery discovery when you'd rather enjoy your food by yourself… Then *that's* an issue.



These typical “flatshare interviews” tell you nothing about the person.

Summary

It’s crucial to understand that finding a good roommate is not the same as finding a good friend.

Most people -and online guides- focus on questions and aspects that help you find friends, but that have little significance when it comes to sharing a flat.

This guide will help you find a good roommate.
Up to you then if you want him to also be a friend (or more :).

Criticism in Relationships: Examples & Solutions

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This article is an in-depth take on criticism in relationships.

You will see real-life examples of criticism and you will learn why criticism is destructive and how to properly give feedback without criticizing.

But first of all, I want to give you some motivation to tackle this area of your life and relationships.

Why We Need to Fix Criticism

Relationship skills are some of the most underappreciated -and underdeveloped- skills in the world.
This is silly, considering relationships are the biggest determinant of a happy and healthy life.

As John Gottman said (I paraphrase):

> *working on your relationship instead of going to the gym makes you 3 times healthier in a fraction of the time.*

Criticism: Part of a Bigger Problem

Criticism is one of what John Gottman calls "The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse", which are:

1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Defensiveness
4. Stonewalling

Why should you know this?
Because when couples engage in any of the above, a break up follows 90%+ of the time. And couples that don't split up experience terrible relationships.
So let's start now.

Contents

- What Is Criticism?
  - Criticism (wrong) VS Complaints (right)
  - Bad Criticism
  - Proper Complaint
- Why Criticism Dooms Relationships
- Examples of Criticism in Relationships
- Fix Criticism: Proper Relationship Communication
  - Rewriting The Criticism Examples
  - Express Feelings
  - State Facts
  - State Need
- What It Takes to Move Beyond Criticism
  - 1. Ownership & Team Framing
  - 2. Vulnerability & Courage
  - 3. Emotional Intelligence & Repair Attempts

- 4. Practice
- It's Not About Suppressing Emotions
- Summary

What Is Criticism?

In *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* Gottman introduces criticism as

> *A global attack on personality or character*

Criticizing differs in one important characteristic from a complaint.
A complaint is about specific issues, whereas criticism is an attack on a defining personality trait.
With criticism, you attack your partner at an identity level.
Criticism is hurtful and pushes your partner to either defend or counterattack. And that, instead of helping us solve the issue, escalates the negativity.

Here are some elements that can help you recognize criticism:

- Start with "you"
- Use absolute adverbs such as "always" and "never"
- It's about *them*, not the situation

Criticism (wrong) VS Complaints (right)

On the left side, are some examples of criticism.
On the right side, how a more emotionally intelligent partner would communicate the same issue?

Bad Criticism	Proper Complaint
You never listen to me, you are so egoistic!	I want to hear about your day, I really do. But I also want to share mine. It makes me feel you don't care about me when you don't listen. Can you please listen and pay attention to me?
You always leave a mess! You're not a responsible adult, you're a baby. But I'm not your mom to clean your shit!	I feel *so* tired and overburdened. And now that I see you throwing your socks on the floor I feel like exploding.
You "forgot" what? How can you forget the bills! Probably too busy thinking what shoes to buy! God you are so sloppy it would be funny it wasn't tragic	I am furious you forgot to pay the bills. I want to discuss this matter deeply with you once I calm down. For now, this is your issue and I want you to think of possible solutions

Notice that moving beyond criticism does not mean being nice or taking things lightly.
In the last example, he has taken the matter very seriously. And he lets her feel the brunt of his anger and disappointment by refusing to get involved and letting her work on it by herself first.
But he still avoids the pitfalls of making it a personal criticism. A personal criticism would have escalated into an ad hominem argument, poisoning both of their moods and moving them farther away from a solution (and from each other).

Why Criticism Dooms Relationships

When criticism becomes pervasive the relationships start becoming toxic.
Three things often happen:

1. Partners behave more like enemies than teammates
2. Criticism begets criticism: fights multiply and good times disappear
3. The sense of "us" disappears and emotional distance grows

In *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage*, Gottman says (I paraphrase for brevity):

> *We need a supportive partner to share what matters to us: dreams, fears and feelings.*
> *But a criticizing partner makes us feel psychologically unsafe. We fear our vulnerabilities could be used against us.*
> *So we clam up, and we grow emotionally distant.*
> *And that's a lonely way to live.*

Examples of Criticism in Relationships

And here are a few real-life examples of criticism in relationships:

1. Sex And The City – Carrie and Aidan Fight

https://youtu.be/fdZhsn9Fgs0?t=161s

> **Aiden**: Oh, *your* stuff, *your* bathroom… You always do that, you never want to let me in"
> **Carrie**: I don't "always do" anything, and I have.. Let you in

"You always" is an open sign of criticism. And with *your* stuff *your* bathroom, he is communicating:

- You are (always) egoist and self-centered

Even more harmful for the relationship, he says she can *never* manage to let him in.
That's a defeatist, hopeless expression. When you talk like that, you are verbally admitting your relationship has no future and you have no power to change it.
From there on the argument only escalates, going into contempt, flooding, and ending with stonewalling (we'll deal with them in the next installments).

2. Mrs. Doubtifire – Divorce Scene

> **Miranda**: You set me up every time to be the bad guy.
> **Daniel**: You spend too much time with those corporate clowns you used to despise
> **Miranda**: I spend too much time with you, Daniel.

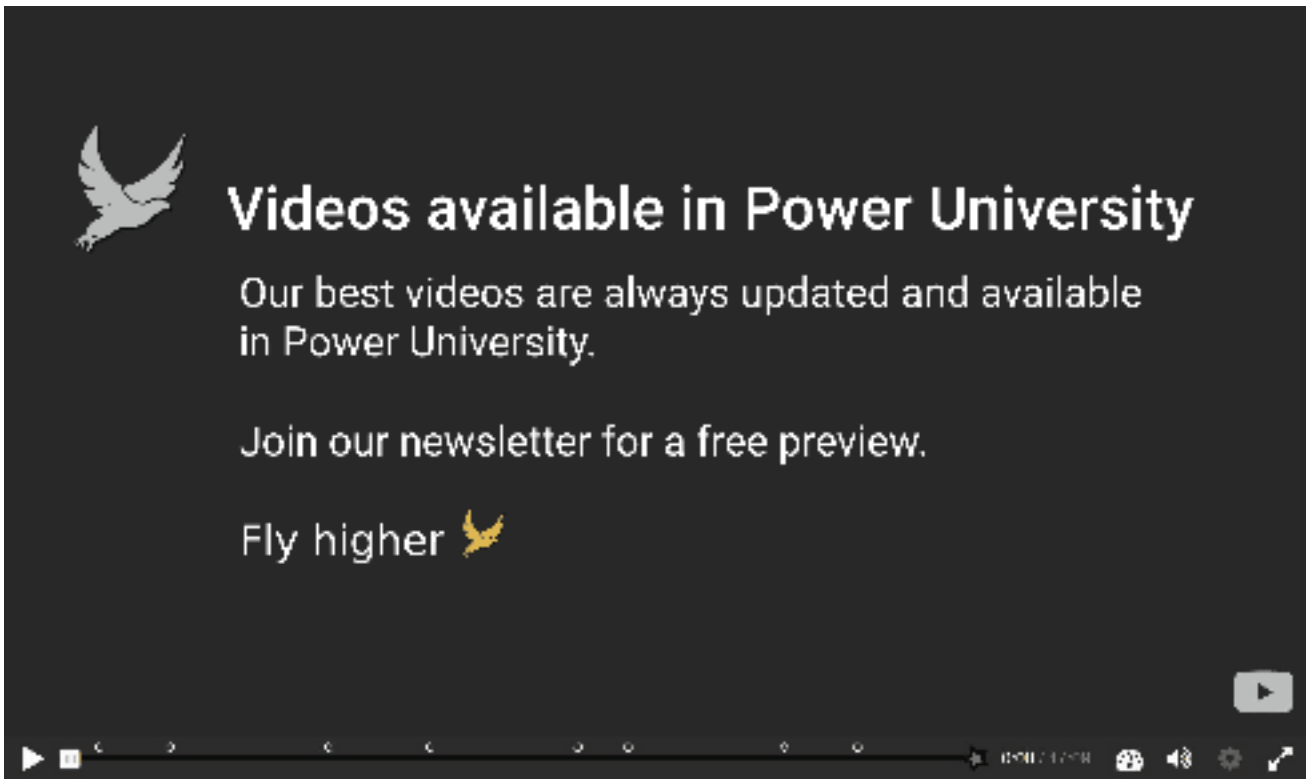
She says he guilts trip her. Because it's *every time* it's not circumstantial, it's a criticism of his persona. She is basically saying:

- You're a psychological manipulator

Daniel implies she has become a corporate clown -another personality criticism-.

Note: Daniel has other issues here beyond criticism. He is lacking a spine, especially after the divorce line (the correctly rewritten script below takes that into account).

3. Sex and The City – Carrie & Miranda Fight



> **Miranda**: Every time you get near him, you turn into this pathetic, needy, insecure victim.

"*every time you get near him*" is broad enough to qualify as criticism. Especially considering that what comes next is so aggressive that it would take a zen master not to take it personally.

> **Carrie**: You're gonna cut me out of your life like you did to Steve? The first sign of any little weakness or flaw, and you just write people off. My God, Miranda! You are so judgmental.

Typical of criticism, it leads to an escalation. Carrie's three hits are slightly different, but all point out to the same personal criticism, basically telling Miranda:

- You are a cold-blooded, heartless b*tch

Friendships tend to be more resilient. But if that were a romantic relationship, it might have scarred them for a long time.

Fix Criticism: Proper Relationship Communication

Here are the steps to move beyond relationship criticism:

1. Start With "*I*"

Effective complaints begin with a soft start-up, often stating your feelings. It might be an emotion or a physical state.

2. Talk facts

Focus on facts, not on the person.

3. State a positive need

How can your partner -or both of you- make it better?

Rewriting The Criticism Examples

And here's what the above criticism examples would look like by using the correct complaint mechanism:

Express Feelings	State Facts	State Need
I am so annoyed and hurt	That you label shared areas as "*yours*".What the hell is that Carrie. I feel like you are closing off to me.And that's the last thing we need -> this is "team framing"	Carrie…(pause for emphasis)Can you please be respectful about my things and a bit more welcoming towards me?(recruit her help to break negative cycle)
The way you shut off our party, that made me feel so crushed and unworthy	We are growing apart Miranda.And that pains me because I believe we still have a shot at making a good family.(empowering, hopeful frame)But we're far from it now and it will take both of us to change that.(team framing & realistic)	Now this is my mess, so I'll clean it.(takes responsibility, relieves her)But after I'd like you to sit down with me and talk it through. OK for you?(get compliance) Cool, go rest now, it's been a tense afternoon (smiles) -> this is repair attempt
Carrie, I feel so angry right now that I'm about to blow off	The last time you have been with that guy it was terrible on you and took a toll on all of us	I don't want to see you again in that state.And right now, with the anger I feel, I don't feel I could support you.

What It Takes to Move Beyond Criticism

Moving beyond criticism is not difficult from a technical perspective. Practice it consciously 20 times and it will start to come naturally.
It can be emotionally more difficult though.

Here's what it takes:

1. Ownership & Team Framing

I statements are a form of ownership. "*You*" passes the blame along. "*I*" takes responsibility.
Once you can take ownership of your part, look for ways to take a joint, or couple ownership whenever you can involve both of you.

Vulnerability also plays a role here. It can be hard for ego-protecting people to say "I feel hurt".

2. Vulnerability & Courage

Stating your needs can require lots of vulnerability when it's an emotional need.
In the feminist era, it can be hard for some women to say "I feel lonely". And it's no better for men. Hiding behind a *mask of masculinity*, they often prefer not to state any need at all.
That's why it's important to foster an open, criticism-free environment: because the alternative to vulnerable asking is aggressive fighting.

3. Emotional Intelligence & Repair Attempts

Emotional intelligence is your greatest ally in stopping criticism's vicious circles. If you are reading, and thinking of how this article applies to you, you are right now increasing your emotional intelligence.

With emotional intelligence, you can realize what's going on, step back and deploy repair attempts.
Repair attempts are anything a partner does or says to break the escalation of negativity.
We will discuss it more in-depth in another installment. But for now, here's an example of a successful repair

attempt.

4. Practice

Here's the good news of this all: the more you use complaints and vulnerability instead of criticism, the easier it gets.
It's a virtuous cycle.

It's Not About Suppressing Emotions

I want to stress this further again.

Fixing criticism is not about being *overly nice*, "letting your partner off easy" or even suppressing your anger.

As a matter of fact, you *should* embrace your feelings and anger (studies show suppressing emotions is bad for relationships).

Fixing criticism is about channeling your negative feelings away from destructive outlets and into helpful ones. And don't say to your partner that The Power Moves said it, but if you're in a fiery relationship, it's also OK to shout.

Summary

Criticism will make for a terrible relationship at best and soon destroy your relationship at worst.

The solution is swapping criticism with specific complaints. That's relationship communication 101.
And it's powerful.

If you have experienced both heavy-criticism relationships and criticism-free ones, you know it.
They're worlds apart.
You can't wait to end the former. And the latter are the relationships that make life a pleasure to live.

How to Make Someone Your Bitch: Trump Vs. Macron

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to make someone your bitch might seem like a weird title.

How do you even do that, how is it possible to consciously make something like that happen?

In this case study, Trump publicly put Macron in a submissive role to demonstrate dominance.
We respect Macron and understand this may have been a strategy of appeasement. But in real life, you must avoid these dynamics to avoid 'becoming someone's bitch'

This article will show just the dynamics of 'making someone's your bitch' and how you can avoid becoming anyone's bitch.

TPM Note: prefer getting respect & giving respect as a baseline approach
We do NOT endorse bullying or gratuitous humiliation. We help men become strong, high-value, respected, but also honorable men who lead other men and women forward.
This article's purpose is to teach interpersonal power dynamics, asserting healthy boundaries, and getting respect.

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- Intro
- #1. Preen Him
- 2. Touch Him With Impunity
- 3. Talk Of Him In The Third Person While He's Present
- #4. Refuse Their Influence
- How to Avoid Being Someone's Bitch
  - How to Counteract Preening
  - How to Counteract Hand-Holding
  - How to Counteract One-Way Influence
  - How to Counteract Condescending Third-Person Tone
- Summary

Intro

Macron recently traveled to Washington to meet with Donald Trump.

And the media went berserk about their deep friendship. Bromance, some wrote.

Sometimes I'm amazed at how dumb and superficial much of the mainstream media can be.
The New York Times even writes:

> Or perhaps mr. Trump was trying to please, or dominate, his guest

As if pleasing and dominating were synonyms. Or even if there were any doubts Trump was dominating Macron. Indeed, unless your idea of friendship consists of one party dominating the other, Trump-Macron is no friendship. The dominance display is so overt that, that you must truly lack any power-awareness not to see it.

Let's quickly analyze the signs:

#1. Preen Him

Principle:

⚖ **If you treat a guy like a girlfriend and he's OK with it… He's your bitch.**

Preening, as Allan Pease notes, is typical of couples and romance. And it rarely, if ever, pertains to friendship.

And here's the other thing about preening: while it is a sign of high devotion, it's also a sign of ownership. The party preening the other is communicating that "this person belongs to me".
And when a man does it to another man, it's awkward at best and a sign of physical domination at worst.

We all have a personal space indeed, and usually, people are wary of invading it. When they are not wary, it's because they are either very comfortable with you…. Or not scared in any way.
And not being scared means that they are far above in the dominance hierarchy… And that you are powerless of hitting back.

See preening in action:

> **Trump**: We have to make him perfect (touches Macron's lapel)
> **Trump**: There was a little dandruff <—- there likely was nothing, it was just an excuse to pull the power move

2. Touch Him With Impunity

Principle:

⚖ **If a guy asserts no boundaries… He's your bitch**

Trump repeatedly touches Macron in a way that communicates "I'm in charge".

Or, at times, in a way that communicates "you're my boy Macron (and I'm the boss)".

Here are some of them:

> **Trump**: (pats Macron's hand, pats Macron on the side, grabs Macron full frontal while looking at him like a : you big boy", kisses Macron on the temple, etc.)

Special mention, of course, to Trump taking Macron's hand and carrying him away.

That's a behavior you expect, again, in couples (hopefully from the man).
When a man does it to another man, it's both awkward and disrespectful. It shows, in that instance quite literally, that Trump is the leader and Macron is the follower.
At best.
At worst, it shows that one party takes the masculine role, and other party is the feminine.

And putting another head of state in the position of the girlfriend is not exactly how a "friend" should behave.

3. Talk Of Him In The Third Person While He's Present

Principle:

⚖ **If you can talk about someone next to you like he's not even there… He's your bitch**

Trump talks about Macron in the third person, as if he weren't there.

And he does it with a condescending tone.
He makes comments about Macron the same way a crassy boss would do of the latest intern to make everyone

laugh.

Here are a few examples:

> **Trump**: We have to make him perfect. He is perfect

"we have to make him perfect" as Trump pretends to remove a piece of dandruff. That feels like a father who is sending his boy out on his first date.
And Macron totally acts that part, too.

> **Trump**: I like him a lot

"I like him a lot" as he points at him. Yes, it's a compliment, but it's a domineering compliment.
Just imagine, would you go to your boss or company's CEO, point at him, and say "I like him a lot"? No, it would feel awkward, right? But is the CEO doing that to an employee?
Fair game, it's a compliment. But it's a compliment that highlights a power differential.

> **Trump**: He will be a great president. It's my prediction. It's only a prediction

This is a compliment similar to the above, again stressing the power differential. But this time Trump goes one step further: he takes it away in a push/pull power move.
It's as if he's telling everyone "he still has to prove himself (to me)".

#4. Refuse Their Influence

Principle:

⚖ **If he listens to you, but you brush him off… He's your bitch**

Macron went in there mostly to convince Trump about the Iran deal.

If Trump wanted to respect Macron, he wouldn't make any bold statement that he made up his mind without at least hinting the two will talk about it.
Instead, he does just the opposite.

Again, Trump is not behaving like a friendly host. He contradicts Macron, cuts him out, and makes "I" statements. He is basically communicating that Macron's opinion counts for nothing.

How to Avoid Being Someone's Bitch

Macron does little to counteract Trump.

To his credit, sometimes he puts his hand on top of Trump or touches him, but it's almost always as a follower or in response to Trump.
And Trump's power moves are so obvious that Macron's moves just seem like little drops in the ocean.

To be honest, Macron was not in an easy position:

1. He had already chosen the chummy friend role
2. Trump is a power-obsessed man
3. He was in the lion's den

However, fu*k the excuses. People like Trump will treat you how you will let them treat you, so it's up to you to stop the deluge.

Here are some ideas.

How to Counteract Preening

During the preening moments, Macron could have done a few things:

- Counter-preen

The most obvious. He could have reached into Trump's jacket and pretended to remove a hair, then make a joke it was easy to find the blonde hair on the dark jacket.
Without being abrasive or anything of course, but jokingly and in a friendly manner. Maybe even saying "ahaha thank you, lemme help you out to look perfect as well".

- Laugh, say Trump is always so service oriented

He could have framed Trump as service-oriented by saying something like "ahaha thanks, President Trump is always so helpful with me", then lightly slapping him on the back.
Such as he would frame Trump as the one working hard for him (the dynamics are: server/boss).

How to Counteract Hand-Holding

Countering the hand-holding was a difficult one as any insubordination would have been highly visible to everyone.

But then again, being taken by the hand was also very visible.
What to do then?

He could have avoided Trump's hand and lingered a few seconds longer pretending he wanted to take another question.
Or even less obvious, as Trump went to grab his hand he could have started speaking and said to the journalists:

> **Macron**: Alright, thank you everyone, it looks like Mr. President wants to go back in (laugh here as if you were making light fun of him). Thank you so much, see you later

That way, he would have followed Trump, but without looking like a puppet. He would have taken the stage, make a light joke about Trump's domineering stance, and "closed the stage".
All while keeping a friendly tone.

How to Counteract One-Way Influence

Macron could have said little while Trump gushed about internal politics and the "terrible" Iran deal.

But he could have done a lot indirectly.

Instead of sitting at the edge of the chair like a nervous schoolboy waiting for the teacher's question, he should have sat back.
That way, he wouldn't look like the insignificant man in the room who has been cut out. He would have looked as if he was the king kicking it back as Trump sweated out all the questions.
A slightly amused, relaxed smile on his face would have helped the image too.

How to Counteract Condescending Third-Person Tone

At each condescending remark, he should have bitten back with the same kind of humor.
Example:

> **Trump**: I like him a lot

> **Macron**: (smiling, making it obvious it's a game he's not taking seriously) I like him even more

Note that the above is a follower reaction. It's OK in this case, you can't escalate there. He's the guest and wants to keep a good relationship.
By saying something back, even as a follower, he'd send the message he's alive and kicking while also keeping a friendly tone.

> **Trump**: He will be a great president. It's only a prediction
> **Macron**: Thank you, thank you. I'm sure he'll make America great and will be a powerful candidate in the upcoming election

The latter is a backhanded compliment hinting that he's not omnipotent but has to go through elections again. And might not be re-elected.

Summary

Most of the media got the relationship between Trump and Macron completely wrong.

They are not friends.
Trump went out of his way to out-dominate Macron, and to do it publicly.

This article rectifies what has really happened. And gives you a few pointers on what to do when someone behaves with you the same way as Trump did.

Trump humiliated Macron and got his revenge in full -and then some- from the day Macron disrespected him at the NATO summit.

And when it comes to us: never let anyone run slipshod over you.
We teach how to become a high-value, respected man in our advanced course:

Check Power University

Contempt in Relationships: What Is It & How to Fix It (W/ Videos)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

What is contempt in relationships, and how do you fix it?

That's the topic of this article.

It will give you **concrete examples** with videos and tell you the steps you -and your partner- need to take to move past contempt.

Contents

- Why You Must Address Relationship Contempt
- What is Contempt
  - Examples of Contempt
- Consequences of Contempt
- Examples of Contempt In Relationships
- How to Fix Your Partner's Contempt
- How to Fix Your Contempt in Relationships
  - 1. Understanding Our Darker Sides
  - 2. Replace Contempt With Direct Communication
  - 3. Change Your Feelings
  - 4. A culture of appreciation
- Summary
  - Further reading:

Why You Must Address Relationship Contempt

Contempt is the single biggest predictor of divorce.

And I said that first to be your motivation.

John Gottman's research shows that contempt is the single biggest predictor of divorce in both heterosexual and gay couples.
Contempt is so harmful that it actively makes sick. In one of his many books, Gottman says that contempt in a relationship erodes our immune system.

So let's start fixing contempt by first understanding what it exactly is.

What is Contempt

Contempt is a type of communication that attacks our partner with ridicule and sarcasm.

The contemptuous party takes a position of judgmental superiority as it seeks to embarrass and shame our partner by painting him as unworthy.

Contempt uses sarcasm and cynicism in an indirect way, and it's slightly passive-aggressive in its nature. As with most passive-aggressive communication, it can be difficult for partners to detect and directly confront.
Contempt is the opposite of respect.

Here are some signs of contempt:

- Derisive humor
- Contemptuous facial expressions (eye rolling, sneering, raising upper lip..)
- Exaggerations
- Disdain towards partner
- Insults and name-calling (fat, ugly, bitch, loser, etc.)

Examples of Contempt

This is an example of contempt with derisive humor:

> I've been running around all day, then you come back and all you can do is flop on your lazy ass. It's pathetic. Do you want a bib and a biberon too, that way maybe you can manage to be a bit more pathethic?

This is an example of contempt with exaggeration:

> You would rather me to stay in tonight ahaha how unexpected, hooow unexpected (looks away). If I had to let you decide how to live my social life, I'd be here tied up with a gag ball in my mouth

And this is an example of contempt with disdain:

> You would wish "these people" would sleep on the floor

The last one is a real-life example.
That was what the mother of an ex-girlfriend of mine said about my parents when she heard they hadn't yet booked a place to stay.

Consequences of Contempt

Similar to criticism, but even more powerful, contempt makes relationships unsafe.

And worst than criticism, it makes our partner feel unworthy and inferior.
In that sense, in many ways, contempt is a power move and a tool of soft power (and a very nasty one, too).

If you let it fester contempt will drive a wedge between you two and break the emotional bond.
The relationship becomes a place where you need to defend and protect yourself. You don't go home after a long day and look forward to relaxing.
You go home after a long day and you're bracing for the next fight. Or walking on eggshells to avoid the next big painful argument.

And when we cannot be our true selves and when we don't have an emotional connection, guess what? You don't have a relationship.
Remember this:

> Any relationship where distance is safer than closeness is not a relationship.

With time, if you don't fix contempt, it will make enemies of you two. And at that point breaking up is not only unavoidable, but actually the best solution for both.

Let's see now a few contempt examples to better understand this dynamic:

Examples of Contempt In Relationships

Let's see now some examples of contempt in relationships:

#1. Forgetting Sarah Marshall

This is a typical example where the woman started focusing on the negatives of her partner.
Contempt was the consequence of her seeing her partner in a negative light.

https://youtu.be/RvNuTuiKyIo?t=55s

Russel Brand starts off highly critical, but he goes back into a productive stance when he says:

> **Him**: I've heard that women do fake orgasms, but I've never seen one. It really deeply upset me

That "it really deeply upset me" is great communication.
It's when she goes into heavy contempt that the fight moves to a whole new level:

> **Her**: You should have seen yourself at dinner. 'Oh, I'm Aldous Snow. Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit. 'No, no drinks for me, thanks. 'Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit.'

After that, it's a vicious circle of contempt and criticism.

#2. Terms of Endearment

Jack Nicholson starts opening up and, as it's often the case for the very first emotional openings, it's not easy for him.

When partners are opening that's the moment you want to be the most unjudgmental and open you possibly can. Those are the moments that bond partners together.

Contempt during an emotionally charged conversation is the most damaging because your partner will feel the relationship is not a safe place to be himself.

Let's watch:

> **Him**: It makes it rough, especially living next door. I'm starting to think I gotta watch what I'm doing…
> **Her**: (mocking with a disgusted expression) Bla bla bla

He is strong enough to look past the first contemptuous attempt and doesn't escalate.
But of course, he stops opening up. And you sure can't blame him when he refuses to turn towards her bid for emotional connection ("I feel humiliated") and leaves right after.

Note: Jack Nicholson in this movie -and possibly in life- is the type of guy with an avoidant attachment style. The quickest way to make avoidants drop their partners, of course, is by using contempt.

#3. The Life of David Gale

This isn't a relationship -yet- but it's clear there's something between the two already.

> **Gale**: (…) It was Berlin
> **Constance**: Ooh great. Oh, that's great, great. (…) Great. You are so weak.
> **Gale**: You're not my wife Constance. Thank God!

Contempt is her sneering at him, looking away, and repeating “great” in a mocking fashion.
She makes him feel unworthy and “inferior”, and ends with a criticism as icing on the cake (you are so weak).
Gale’s is a typical defensive reaction with aggression.

#4. Nonverbal Expressions of Contempt

Somehow Rihanna often uses nonverbals or contempt (or at least people love highlighting them):

And:

How to Fix Your Partner’s Contempt

If contempt is the opposite of respect, this means that women who have contempt for their men don’t have respect them.

So the key to fix contempt is to gain foundational respect from your partner.

Contempt stems from powerlessness and ineffectiveness as a man.

The Power Moves is fully dedicated to becoming the type of man who never have to even think about contempt.

For a quick heads up, focus on:

- Personal power & positive dominance
- Masculinity
- Leadership, including win-win leadership

Or for the quickest solution, go through Power University.

How to Fix Your Contempt in Relationships

Sometimes contempt is a sign that we don’t appreciate our partner anymore. If that’s the case, you should wonder if the relationship still makes sense.
At the very least though, you should try your best to rekindle the positive feelings before giving up.

In some other cases, contempt might not necessarily mean we think our partner is pathetic but it’s a general -and toxic way- people communicate with.

In either case, you are always well served by eliminating contempt from your communication repertoire.
Below are some practical steps to work both on your relationship and on your communication skills.

1. Understanding Our Darker Sides

Some personalities tend to use contempt more than others.

Here are personalities who, in my experience, are more likely to resort to contempt:

- People with a sarcastic wit (example from SATC)
- Passive aggressive people (example from Knocked Up)
- People whom we often refer to as “mean”
- Haughty people (example of haughty contempt in the picture and in the video)

It takes courage to look at ourselves when we behave as any of the above, but that’s the first step to curing ourselves.

2. Replace Contempt With Direct Communication

Contempt is indirect criticism.

Express your criticism openly instead. Anything is better than contempt.
But since we're here, learn to express your anger with the complaint format (I feel + state the fact + what your partner can do to help you).

3. Change Your Feelings

If contempt is a sign you're growing to dislike your partner you need to change that ASAP to save your relationship.

You could consider therapy, but the basics are simple: rid yourself of negative feelings and start liking your partner again.

Here are a few ways:

3.1 Look for positives

The biggest secret of a happy life is focusing on the positives.

Contempt grows its ugly roots in an environment where we see our partners in a constantly negative light. But it's rarely the case that our partner is as negative as we sometimes imagine.

Focusing on the positives will not only make your life better overall, but it will also help eliminate contempt and make your relationship better.

3.2 Revisit your past

Gottman says that talking about happy events of the past can help couples reconnect.

Think together of the best moment you've had. How you met, your first dates, your honeymoon.

4. A culture of appreciation

As you revisit your past and focus on the positives, build a culture that constantly celebrates the beauty of your relationship.

Evening rituals, sitting down for lunch, weekend getaways, date nights, etc.
Celebrate your partnership and contempt will have no space in a content relationship.

Summary

Contempt in relationships is the biggest predictor of breakups.
And it makes for miserable relationships -and miserable people-.

Sometimes contempt is a sign that we don't appreciate our partner anymore. Some other times it's bad communication habits that we picked up.

In either case, you and your relationship will gain by removing contempt.
This article shows you how.

Further reading:

- Fix the 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse (criticism, defensiveness, contempt, stonewalling)
- Get to know your partner
- Turn towards and build an emotional connection

- Get a positive perspective
- Accept influence

The Untethered Soul: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Untethered Soul teaches readers how to explore and control their minds for a more peaceful, happy, and fulfilling life.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Find Your Inner Voice
  - Getting in Touch With Your True Self
  - Shield Out Negative: Flow & Pain Resistance
  - Don't Attach Feelings to Thoughts
  - Let Fear Flow
  - Death Makes Life Meaningful
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Stop trying to change the outside world: the shift you need to be happy and peaceful is *within you*
- We mostly think negatively: meditate and learn to let negative thoughts go without affecting you
- Pain is OK. Don't fight it or you "bottle it up". Feel the pain and slowly let it go

Full Summary

About The Author:
Michael Singer is a spiritual teacher who has spent years with yoga and meditation.

Find Your Inner Voice

Our mind never stops humming in the background.
It's always churning out thoughts and interpreting what it receives from our senses.

The very first step towards enlightenment is being able to listen to that background voice, which *The Untethered Soul* calls the "Inner Voice".
The Inner Voice is our *self*.

Our inner voice influences our emotions, and our emotions in turn influence how we perceive ourselves. How we perceive ourselves is the *personal self*.

For example, if we often feel jealous -the self-level-, then we will think of ourselves as jealous persons -this is the personal self, how we perceive ourselves-.
But that's a mistake.

The Inner Voice Is NOT You

This is the key concept of "*The Untethered Soul*".

What you think and feel is not the real you.
Feelings and thoughts do not define you. Your inner voice is not you.

This is also a crucial lesson from Eckard Tolle, another famous spiritual teacher and author of "*The Power of Now*".

Getting in Touch With Your True Self

The only way to go past your inner voice is to meditate for 15 minutes minimum.

After a while, you will notice that your background Inner Voice has disappeared.
And that's when you can get in touch with your true self.

Shield Out Negative: Flow & Pain Resistance

Michael Singer talks about the negative events in our lives, and how to prevent them from leaving a long-lasting impact.

And here is an example for you:

Imagine you're driving and see your ex with someone else. You'll keep driving, but the thoughts of your ex will depress you for days to come.
That happens at the Inner Voice level, and it keeps pestering us for a long time because we keep holding and blocking the inner voice thoughts within us.
The author instead recommends you "lean away" from the negative, painful thoughts. Look at them. But don't dwell on them and they will not take over you.
Meditation will help you achieve the power to pull that off.

Examples of Blocking VS Letting Go

Examples of blocking are:

- God I'm so weak, I gotta get over her
- I need a new and better girlfriend to show her
- I want revenge on her

Michael Singer says we should learn instead to let the thoughts of the Inner Voice go by. Negative thoughts will come anyway, but you let them go instead of holding them.

Examples of letting go:

- It will be painful, but I won't resist and I'll get over it
- That image will run through my head for a few days and that's OK.
- It's just another event of my life, it shall pass

For more on letting go and traumas, also read:

- Letting Go
- The Body Keeps The Score

Don’t Attach Feelings to Thoughts

Most of the thoughts in our minds are not true.

They are random, or heavily skewed towards negativity. When we fully entertain them, think about them, and attach feelings to them, that’s when they become real.
And that’s when they poison our lives.

Learning to let negative thoughts roam without entertaining them and without attaching feelings to them is liberating.

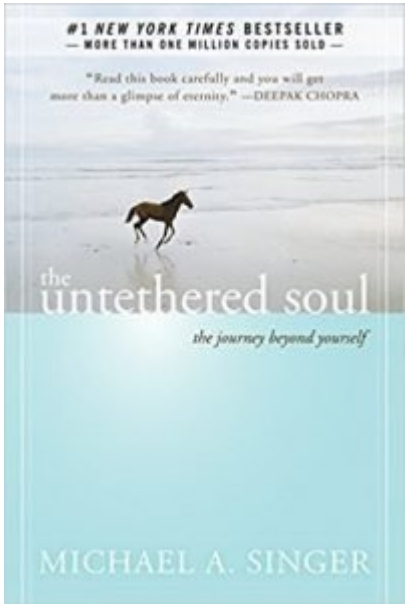
Let Fear Flow

The Untethered Soul explains how *for evolutionary reasons* we give more weight and importance to negative information.

But fear is just another thought of our Inner Voice. It’s not you. It’s not even part of you.
And the same as jealousy, instead of bottling it up, ruminating over it, and letting it consume you, you can accept it and let it go.

Death Makes Life Meaningful

Michael Singer explains how reflecting on death can help us make our lives more meaningful.
Also, read leveraging death for a better life.



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Real-Life Applications

Meditate
Meditation is not woo-woo stuff, it has real, proven benefits.

Letting go of the pain
This is something that has always been hard for me. I want to win, and I hate losing.
I’m very happy to be getting better at moving past pain now and it’s a life changer.

CONS

Disorganized
If you've been reading my summaries a bit you know that I like a tightly organized book. I don't think The Untethered Soul was well-structured.

Longish
It felt like a bit of lengthy, verbose prose at times. I think The Untethered Soul could have been briefer and built around the 2-3 key deep nuggets of wisdom it presents and how to reach that state.

Much hope, little how to
I found *The Untethered Soul* could have gone a bit deeper into how to reach the enlightened stage the author talks about.
"Let go of fear" is not as helpful as saying "it took me X years to reach this level of awareness, and every day I've done X, Y, Z".

There is Power In Pain
Sometimes you need to accept a painful memory and find a way through it. But other times there is power in wallowing in pain.
Pain and failures can be cathartic moments of growth and you don't necessarily need to overcome them.

Anger is what allowed me to grow and build the life the way I wanted it. I talk about it here:

PROS

Potentially life-changing wisdom
The Untethered Soul popularizes some key concepts of meditation and spiritual awakening, and that's a good thing.

Useful, practical knowledge
Albeit reaching the level of awareness and control it takes to let go of things is not easy, I believe it's a key, central skill of an empowered (and happy) life.
And while not easy, it's certainly within reach for all of us.

Review

The Untethered Soul is about the ultimate control: mind control.

It reminded me a bit of *Eleven Rings*, where Phil also talks about his meditation practice of letting thoughts come and go. He says after a while, you will realize those thoughts have less power over you.
Definitely, a book to read and cherish.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Relationship Destroyer #3: Meanness

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

It's understandable to be angry.

And some people, when angry, revert to this conditioning: hurting the person is making them angry as much as possible.

However, when we are mean in an effort to hurt our partner, we are actively tearing our relationship apart.

Meanness can sometimes be all that it's needed to destroy a relationship.
And even if we move on and heal, meanness will leave a scar.

From now on, you can bet, he'll always wonder if she has ever been honest with him

Contents

- What Is Meanness in Relationships
- What Cruelty Does
  - Examples of Meanness
- Cruelty in Relationships Examples
- Fixing Meanness
- Summary

What Is Meanness in Relationships

In the previous two installments of Relationship destroyers, we dealt with:

- Criticism
- Contempt

Both criticism and contempt are part of Gottman's research.

Meanness is something that I personally added myself, from my own experience and observations.
Meanness goes beyond criticism and contempt and is common enough that it deserves its own category.

Meanness -or cruelty- is anything a party says to cause the most possible harm to their partner.

It attacks the most closely held values and undermines people at an identity level. Either the personal level ("you") or at the relationship level ("we").
Cruelty is the opposite of loving and caring.

What Cruelty Does

Cruelty is often a point of no return.

It might be the ending salvo of the relationship.
Or it might leave an indelible emotional mark that prevents the return to a normal, healthy relationship.

Cruelty shows a previously unknown, ugly side of our partner.
And the question emerges: can we really trust our partner when they're willing to go this far?
And the answer will always linger in our heads:

> Maybe not.

Sure, they were angry, but we expect better from a life partner.
And can we still like them after what we've experienced?

The second main problem of cruelty is that it often references something real.
And if our partner really thinks so lowly of us, why the hell are they with us? That's the kind of question that destroys the emotional connection of a relationship.

Examples of Meanness

Here are some examples of retorts that qualify as overly mean:

> **Her**: And you know what I did? I went to my ex and sucked his big cock while playing "our" songs.

Whether or not that was true, he will not be able to get that out of his mind. And with just one sentence, you destroyed your relationship.

> **Him**: Stop acting like you're an artist, you have no talent whatsoever. And that's why you resent me and my business success.

Now she will never again be able to share her work with him and believe that he is honest in his praises.

> **Her**: And you're such a limp dick. I faked all my orgasms and I can't wait to find a real man!

Tries to attack his manhood. And these often work. Even men who don't take it personally will think of you like someone who is untrustworthy when things get tough because all you care about is "winning" the battle.

> **Him**: I didn't want to introduce you to my friends because I was embarrassed. You eat like a pig, snore and have more body hair than I do… You're not a real woman, you're a butch!

Same as above, tries to attack her at her identity level (femininity).

> **Him/Her**: I regret that I did it with you (/that we ever got together).

You will notice that a lot of these hurt at a closely held identity level. Masculinity, femininity, what we stand for, or erases history as a “we”.

Cruelty in Relationships Examples

1# La La Land

Here is a great example of how one single instance of cruelty can mark the point of no return:

> **Sebastian**: Maybe you liked me more when I was a failure because it made you feel better about yourself.

Meanness delivered calmly is worst than a heated screaming exchange.
It means you’re saying it rationally and really believe it.

Sebastian from the scene above is not only saying that she is a failure. He says she is a failure with a terrible character who can’t manage to be happy for her partner.

Since a healthy relationship is about mutual support and being happy for our partners, this type of cruelty spells the end of a (healthy) relationship.

2 Forgetting Sarah Marshall

This scene starts off already very badly. As we’ve previously seen it’s a perfect example of contempt -and some criticism to boot-.

https://youtu.be/RvNuTuiKyIo?t=59s

It moves into cruelty when she says:

> **Sarah**: And that does not make you a citizen of the world. It makes you full of shit.
> (…)
> **Sarah**: I hate your music
> **Russel**: Yeah, well, I fucked the housekeeper the other day.

Criticizing his ideology is mean because, contrary to typical criticism (“you’re so full of shit”), she tries to undermine all that he stands for. And she’s going out of her way to hurt him emotionally.
After her second attempt at meanness Russel finally adds his own, which puts the final nail in their relationship coffin.

Could you see this relationship going back to a loving and mutually supporting one after that exchange?
Or breaking up and staying good friends?
Exactly, that’s the magic of meanness.

Fixing Meanness

Meanness can become a mainstay of the relationship when:

1. Deeply disliking our partner
2. Response to meanness (the case of Russel above)
3. Anger management issue.

If it's #1 and #2 you should ask yourself if it makes sense to stay in the relationship. If you still find a reason to stay, then it's time to revamp everything and possibly consider therapy.

If it's #3 then you have to take responsibility for your personal change.
I had a girlfriend with a trend of burning bridges with family members out of anger fits when she would sink into meanness.

The quickest fix is counting to 10 before speaking or leaving the room when you feel you're reaching the boiling point.
Long-term anger management therapy, meditation, and working on communication skills will also help.

I remember an ex-girlfriend of mine who was once about to blow up. But instead of blowing up, she simply left the room and went into another room to sit by herself.
My respect for her grew tenfold after that.

Summary

There are situations in a relationship when one party will say anything to hurt the other.
These moments can break a relationship in one go, or make a damage for years to come in mere seconds.

Watch out then if you have a tendency of exaggerating when you're angry. If that's the case, it's best to walk away and take a pause.

How to End Defensiveness in Relationships: Examples & Fixes (W/ Videos)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Defensiveness is a relationship pattern that focuse on rejecting blame, rather than tackling problems.

It's of one of John Gottman's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and an indicator of breakup risk.

In this article you will learn what defensiveness is, you will see defensiveness examples, and non-defensive communication examples, and finally, you will learn to move past defensiveness in relationships.

Contents

- What's Defensiveness
  - Why We Get Defensive
- Consequences of Defensiveness
  - Relationship Consequences of Defensiveness
- Examples of Relationship Defensiveness
- Fixing Defensiveness
  - 1. Avoid using criticism
  - 2. Teach your partner about defensiveness
  - 3. Accept differences
  - 4. Soothe yourself
  - 5. Take responsibility
  - 6. Look at underlying concerns
  - Non-Defensive Communication Examples
  - Defensive
  - Non-Defensive
- Summary

What's Defensiveness

Defensiveness is a form of self-protection that many people naturally resort to when faced with feedback, criticism, and complaints.

Defensiveness is one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

As per John Gottman's research, when the four horsemen of the apocalypse engulf a relationship, divorce ensues more than 90% of the time.

The other three horsemen are: criticism, contempt, and stonewalling.

There are three types of defensiveness:

#1. Righteous indignation

Righteous indignation is pushback with an "how dare you" message.
An example of righteous indignation:

> **Her**: You work so hard every day that you forget when it's time to eat together

> **Him**: You mean I work so hard to put our food on the table?

The other type of defensiveness in relationships adds a counterattack:

#2. Defensive aggressive

The most common type of defensiveness in relationships does not simply defend but includes a counter-attack.

When we say "it's not my fault" the effect is that of communicating that "it's not my fault *because it's your fault*".

> **Her**: You work so hard every day that you forget when it's time to eat together
> **Him**: It's not my fault if I'm the only breadwinner here <- it's your fault I have to work this long

And then we have the:

#3. Innocent victim

This technique works like this:

The defensive individual seemingly accepts the feedback and goes one step further.
If the feedback says the dinner is not well-cooked, the recipient cries and blames himself for being a terrible cook and for falling short of expectations.

What's the game here?

With tears and self-shaming, the defensive individual feels like he can prevent any further attack and win our partner's sympathy.
This is most common for women.

Why We Get Defensive

For 99% of us, defensiveness is a natural response to criticism, complaints, and *negative feedback*.

Of course, different people have different thresholds for defensiveness.

For example, people with a *fixed mindset* are more likely to answer defensively because they always take criticism personally.
A high tendency towards defensiveness is a major issue when touchy partners get defensive even with well-communicated complaints.

Consequences of Defensiveness

Defensiveness does three bad things:

1. Tells our partner we don't care about their feelings
2. Escalates the argument into a fight
3. Destroy any chance of solving the issue as a team

"I Don't Care About You" Message

Defensiveness in relationships gives our partner the feeling we are not taking their complaints and their feelings seriously.

Imagine this scenario:

> **Her**: Oh God you're back, why so late! Everyone's already there, my parents will be so disappointed
> **Him**: Oh come on, who cares, it's just one hour, I had to work hard today

His defensiveness here makes her feel he couldn't care less about her feelings.

Arguments' Escalation

Defensiveness escalates fights when we hit back

> **Her:** Did you bring the lemons I asked you do this morning?
> **Him**: No, you know how busy I am, stop asking me sh*t, buy your own grocery, do something!

This is a typical defensive attack. Instead of admitting fault and mistake, he tries to clear himself by counter-blaming.

Relationship Consequences of Defensiveness

The result of defensiveness is:

1. Continuous fighting
2. A sense we're not being heard, understood, and cared for
3. Drying up of good feelings for each other

Not the kind of relationship you want.

Examples of Relationship Defensiveness

Here are a few defensiveness examples:

#1 – Blue Valentine

This is a great example of defensiveness stemming from a hidden contemptuous and judgmental attitude.

Her *passive-aggressive* approach is a very damaging way of voicing opinions and concerns.

Let's watch:

Albeit her way of communicating is very poor, his defensiveness adds to the problem

> **Her**: It doesn't ever disappoint you? <- doesn't make her point clear, it might be a critique?
> **Him**: (starts to get irritated) Why? Why would it disappoint me? <- defensive right away
> **Her**: Because you have all this potential <- still unclear, is she unhappy with her husband career?
> **Him**: So what? Why do you have to f*cking make money off your potential? <- defensive counterattack

His whole reaction is pure defensiveness. He probably feels judged and feels he needs to defend his lack of ambition.
But he will never know for sure if his life is unhappy because he escalates with defensiveness.
This conversation could have been a chance to understand each other and connect more deeply, but he will never know.

#2. SATC: Carrie and Aleksandr

This is an example of defensiveness following an attack with emotional out-pour:

> **Carrie**: How could you abandon me like that when I gave up my party for you
> **Alex**: I didn't abandon you<- defensiveness stripped to the bones :)
> **Carrie**: I sat on a bench, alone, in a museum
> **Alex**: Let's not do this now. I'm tired. I had a stressful day<- makes her feel uncared for

Leaving the room, in the end, is an example of refusing to engage, or stonewalling.

#3. The Break Up

The last one is super interesting as it's both very sneaky and very common.
Men do this most often and that's how many fights end up looking like he is calm and she overreacts.

Let's watch:

> **Her**: Oh come on, really? (…) I wanted 12. Baby wanted 12.
> **Him**: Why would you want 12 lemons? <- sneaky defensiveness: pretends he forgot
> **Her**: Because I'm making a 12-lemon centerpiece.
> **Him**: So, no one's even eating them? They're just show lemons? <- defends by framing her will as ludicrous
> **Her**: (..) I'm glad you find that amusing, but I cannot fill a vase with only three lemons <- she does great in staying calm
> (…)
> **Him**: Let's scratch the centerpiece, because the chicken could use a little lemon. Guess what? We make a better meal versus something visually nice to look at <- defends by disrespecting her idea, a power move

He frames her request as making no sense. That way, he makes her look as if she's overreacting for nothing. This is a type of behavior that drives many women in relationships crazy.
When he says "*better meal versus something visually nice*" he implies her idea was silly *and* that her cooking needs improvement.

That fight was 90% of his making and all because he used defensiveness when he should have owned up to his mistake.

Fixing Defensiveness

For all the harm that defensiveness causes, don't worry: there are many ways of extirpating it:

1. Avoid using criticism

A lot of defensiveness happens as a result of criticism and aggressive communication.
Avoid criticism and contempt and you'll avoid most of the defensiveness as well.

2. Teach your partner about defensiveness

If you're the one reading these articles and your partner doesn't, you must take it upon yourself to teach your partner how to communicate properly.

3. Accept differences

Gender differences are overplayed by books such as *Men Are From Mars,* but there's no denying they exist.

He doesn't care about a centerpiece of lemons. She should be more careful in reminding him how important it is for her or it's likely he'll forget.

Sometimes, you might also consider simply picking your battles and letting something else slip.

4. Soothe yourself

Being criticized is an emotional moment for many of us and that's when defensiveness becomes our natural response.

In *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* Gottman says that calming yourself is the very first step to avoid getting defensive.

5. Take responsibility

Sneaky, low-value people refuse responsibility. And that's where most of the defensiveness stems from. Be a real (wo)man and stand behind your f*ck ups.
Developing a growth mindset will help you tremendously in acquiring an "*extreme ownership*" mindset and avoiding defensiveness.

6. Look at underlying concerns

Many fights start because our partner cannot muster the vulnerability to go to the crux of the problem. And they attack a sign instead of expressing a need.

Instead of addressing the superficial attack, you might want to address the underlying cause right away. *Emotional intelligence* is what will help you here.

Example:

> **Her**: you always work so late, I'm tired of it <- the real complaint is that she wants more time with him
> **Him**: that's true I've been working a lot recently. Do you feel like I'm neglecting you?

And here's a great video example from Ashton Kutcher.

Non-Defensive Communication Examples

Defensive	Non-Defensive

Her: It doesn't ever disappoint you? **Him**: (starts to get irritated) Why? Why would it disappoint me? (escalation)	**Her**: It doesn't ever disappoint you? **Him**: Hmmm what do you mean exactly… **Her**: Because you have all this potential. **Him**: Thanks! What do you mean by potential and what do you think I should do with it **Her**: bla bla bla **Him**: I see, you have some good points. And tell me, does it disappoint you that in your opinion I'm not using my potential?
Carrie: How could you abandon me like that **Alex**: I didn't abandon you **Carrie**: I sat on a bench, alone, in a museum **Alex**: Let's not do this now. I'm tired. I had a stressful day	**Carrie**: How could you abandon me like (pause) **Alex**: I'm sorry. (pause) I'm so overburdened and I can see how that must have been painful for you. Come sit here. Tell me about it.
Her: Oh come on, really? (…) I wanted 12. Baby wanted 12. **Him**: Why would you want 12 lemons? **Her**: Because I'm making a 12-lemon centerpiece. **Him**: So, no one's actually even eating them? They're just show lemons? **Her**: (..) I'm glad you find that amusing, but I cannot fill a vase with only three lemons.	**Her**: Oh come on, really? (…) I wanted 12. Baby wanted 12. **Him**: Damn, I forgot! I'm so sorry. **Her**: How can I do a centerpiece now **Him**: Well, you can't I suppose, it was so stressful that it just slipped my mind. I'm sorry. Was it important for you? **Her**: You bet it was!! Bla bla bla… **Him**: I understand, now I see your point. Sorry. What can we do now

Summary

Defensiveness in relationships prevents us from listening and connecting with our partners.

It escalates fights that often would not even need to become fights at all and it prevents us from solving the problems.

To fix defensiveness, work both on how your partner communicates and how you react to it.

More on Improving Relationships:

- The 5:1 healthy relationship ratio
- Get to know your partner
- How to build an emotional connection
- Happy together: get a positive perspective
- Accept influence

Attached Review: Foundations of Attachment

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Attached (2010) introduces attachment style theory and suggests that partner attachment is a basic human need that entails a risk for being dependent on someone, but that adds many health and life benefits, making us stronger and more secure.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - #1. We're Wired to Be Dependent
  - #2. Attachment System Keeps Us Wired Together
  - #3. The Paradox: Dependency Makes Us Stronger
  - #4. The 4 Types of Attachment Styles
  - #5. How Attachment Styles Develop
  - #6. Avoidant Deactivating Strategies
  - #7. Attachment Styles in Intimate Relationships
  - #8. How Different Styles Deal With Conflict
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Attachment quality improves happiness and well-being
- Attachment style predicts relationship patterns
- Good intimate attachment provides a safety foundation that increases confidence and life effectiveness

Notes

About the Author:
Amir Levine, MD, is a psychiatrist and neuroscientist researcher at Columbia University.
He is the author of "*Attached*", a popular book based on attachment theory.

#1. We're Wired to Be Dependent

You know the dating mantra, don't you?

Make him chase, let her come to you, pretend you don't need him/her, and keep yourself busy so you don't grow dependent.

That's a wrong assumption, though.

Many dating advice books are based on the wrong presupposition that we can function equally well on our own.

But that's, well, wrong.

Amir Levine cites John Bowlby's work and says we have a genetically programmed need to be with someone. And

that has nothing to do with how much we love ourselves or how fulfilled we are.
Once we get attached codependency kicks in automatically.
However, that doesn't mean we become dependent and weaker. Quite the opposite. With attachment, we grow stronger.

#2. Attachment System Keeps Us Wired Together

The attachment systems are a pattern of emotions and behavior that brings us close to our loved ones.

The attachment systems activate in children when their mother goes away and it stays active through crying and sobbing until she re-establishes contact.
The same happens with adults and their romantic partners.

Protest Behavior Pushes Us Back Together

All our patterns of emotions and behavior we utilize to get in touch again with our mother as children or our partners are adults are called "protest behavior".

The author says evolution shaped our attachment system and protest behavior because staying closer to our loved ones helps us -and our children- to stay alive.

#3. The Paradox: Dependency Makes Us Stronger

When we have a solid attachment with our romantic partner and we know they are there to support us and care for us, we become stronger.

Imagine this simple analogy:

> **A solid relationship for humans is like solid foundations for a house**

We can reach out to the stars and go out in the world with more confidence.
We feel more secure in taking risks and being more vulnerable.

And the opposite is true: if we are insecure about our partner, our relationship gobbles all our energies and fills us with worries.

When we feel secure in our relationships, we feel more confident in ourselves. A solid relationship allows us to take more risks

> **To be independent, find the right person to be dependent to**

#4. The 4 Types of Attachment Styles

In brief:

50% are secure, 25% avoidant, 20% anxious, and the rest falls into a "disorganized" category (with unhealthy traits from both).

- Read the overview of attachment styles with examples

Anxious

- Want and can be very close
- Fear partner doesn't want the same
- Ge attached very (too) quickly

- Relationships take lots of your energies
- Very sensitive to partner's moods
- Spot moods early but are often wrong (but if they avoid overreacting they're also more accurate)
- Experience many negative emotions
- Misbehave, say things you regret
- Feel there's something wrong with them

It's important to notice though that if your partner provides all the security and reassurance, anxious individuals will drop most of their insecurities.
That's why anxious individuals are best with Secure.

- **Anxious attachment style with examples**

Secure

- Naturally warm and loving
- Enjoy intimacy
- Not too worried about relationship up and downs
- Effectively communicate needs
- Good at supporting the partner
- Have a realistic view of the blame

Read examples of secure attachments here:

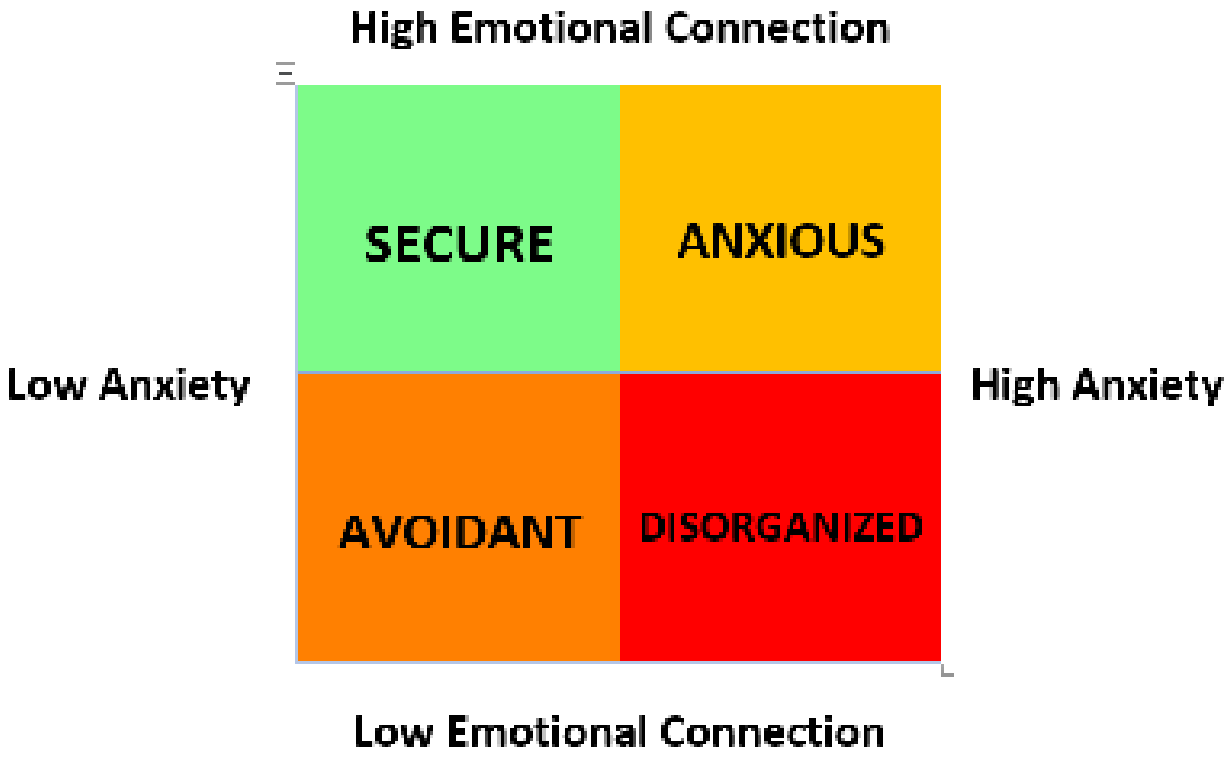
- **Secure attachment style with examples**

Avoidant

- Puts independence and autonomy above all
- Want to be close but feels uncomfortable with too much intimacy
- Not worried about relationship up and downs
- Doesn't open up
- Worried the relationship is "becoming a cage"
- Has an "ideal true love" they never meet
- Feel there's something wrong with the partners they're with
- Tend to be less happy and satisfied in a relationship

Here are examples of avoidant:

- **Avoidant attachment style with examples**



Now the question becomes: how does one become one or the other?

#5. How Attachment Styles Develop

It's a mix of all influences.

Genes, life experiences, and how our parents raised us all contribute to determining our attachment style.

There is a certain "stickiness" for attachment styles in adults: around 70-75% of adults remain the same attachment style during their life.
And yet, life and romantic experiences can change that even in adulthood.

#6. Avoidant Deactivating Strategies

Let's focus now on one of the potentially most harmful attachments.

Studies suggest that it's not true that avoidants don't feel emotions. Their attachment reactions still work under the hood, but they just are "better" at repressing them.

Indeed, more studies reveal that when avoidants go through highly stressful events their defenses break and they seem to behave as anxious people behave.
These are the techniques avoidants use to avoid fully entertaining their feelings:

- Professing not being ready to commit, but staying anyway
- Focusing on their partner's imperfections
- Reminiscing about an ideal ex
- Flirting with others
- Moving away when things are going great
- Going into impossible relationships (long distance, married partners, etc.)
- Keeping secrets
- Avoiding physical closeness

Once avoidants break up, they can sometimes see the truth and how good their relationship really was.

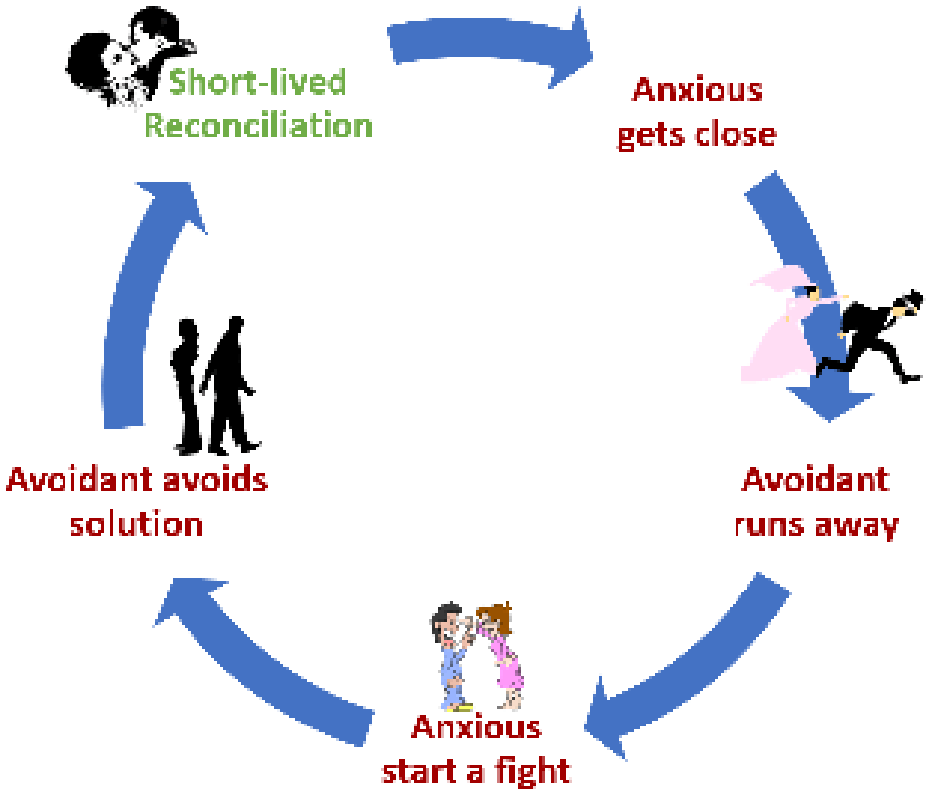
#7. Attachment Styles in Intimate Relationships

Here is some good news>

Secure individuals can date with both avoidance and anxiety, and this helps them overcome their limitations -as long as they stay secure-. Anxious become less anxious with secure partners indeed.

Anxious with avoidants is one of the worst and it's very common.
While there are fewer avoidants than secure, they are more often on the market because they have fewer long-lasting relationships. And they bounce back sooner, so they go back to the dating pool much quicker.

- **Examples of anxious-avoidant relationships**



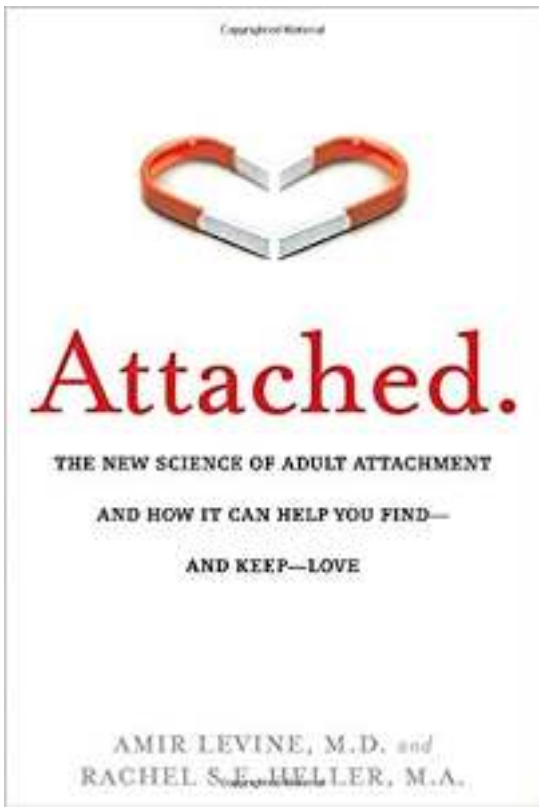
Avoidants don't usually date each other. They lack the emotional pull to stay together (and, I might add: they don't get the ego kick of being in control of their relationship).

#8. How Different Styles Deal With Conflict

Only secure people approach conflict openly.

Anxious are wary of their partners' response and can get scared about the whole relationship trajectory. When they engage in conflict, they exaggerate with strong accusations, cry, or use an angry style of silent treatment.

Avoidants also fear their partner won't be there when they need them. But to deal with these thoughts they distance themselves and find fault with their partners.



Real-Life Applications

Notice your partner's attachment
Notice what type of attachment your partner has. Unless you're both secure it will make you understand where most of your conflict stems from.

Date with attachment in mind
If you're single, look for a partner with a complementary attachment style.

Change yourself
Understand your limitations and move towards a secure style as much as you can

Ask your partner to change
Explain to your partner attachment styles and what it means for your relationship

Look for a great relationship
Don't be ashamed to "need" a great relationship. That's what human biology is all about. Worry instead about how to find a great boyfriend or girlfriend.

CONS

No Gender Data
The author says the stereotype of women being most anxious and men mostly avoidant is a stereotype. But it fails to provide numbers and that was a big question mark for me.
I researched it and numbers seem to say there are more avoidant men and more anxious women (read a study of middle school students here and an overview of studies here).
I wonder if the author missed it in access to political correctness. I do not know that…

PROS

Insightful
It took me a while to finish it because I wanted to make sure I was absorbing everything out of it

Well Researched
With lots of studies and authors mentioned, the Attached gives me the impression of a book I can trust

Great Examples
Many good examples and great charts.

Review

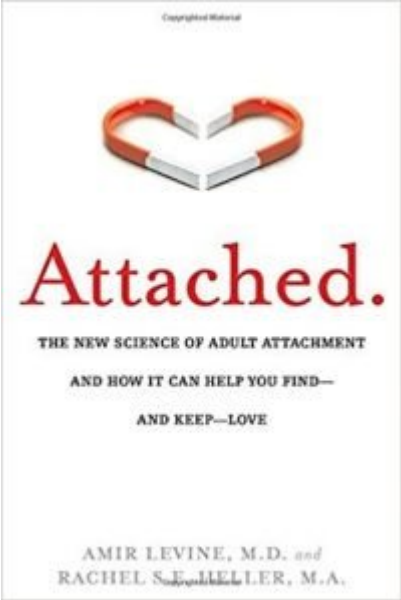
Amir Levine's "*Attached*" is a fantastic book on attachment styles and an incredibly helpful resource to better undersrtand people, relationships, and oneself.

It served as my foundational introduction to attachment theory, fundamentally reshaping my comprehension of interpersonal relationships.

In hindsight and after having learned more, I believe that what's missing to contextualize attachments is an evolutionary lens. That evolutionary lens would explain why certain attachment styles may be adaptive for certain environments and people, even if they're not 'secure'.

Check out the best relationship books or **get the book on Amazon**

Attached Book Summary: Which Attachment Style Are You?



Attached is an eye opening book on how our personalities (attachment styles) influence our relationships (and our happiness).

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/attached-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.7

Stonewalling in Relationships: Examples and Fixes

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In this article, you will learn everything about stonewalling in relationships.

You will learn what stonewalling is, what stonewalling does to relationships, and, most of all, how to stop stonewalling.

So let's start:

Contents

- What's Stonewalling
  - Men Are Usually Stonewallers
  - Stonewalling Explained Through Evolution
  - When Stonewalling Spells Relationship Doom
  - Why Partners Stonewall
  - Stonewalling Power Dynamics
- What Stonewalling Does to Relationships
- Stonewalling Examples In Relationships
- How to Get Through A Stonewaller
- How to Stop Stonewalling
  - 1. Stop arguing
  - 2. Call a break if you stonewall
  - 3. Practice self-soothing
  - 4. Trust yourself and engage
- Summary
  - Further Reading:

What's Stonewalling

IIn Why Marriages Succeed or Fail, John Gottman defines Stonewalling as:

> One partner withdrawing from the conversation and stopping to engage.

Stonewalling is expressed in a variety of different ways:

- Turning around and looking away
- Silent treatment
- Physically leaving the room
- Refusing to answer or talk about the issue at hand
- Yelling to stop the conversation

Stonewalling is the fourth and last Horseman of the Apocalypse, a nickname John Gottman uses for Criticism, Contempt, and Defensiveness.

The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse often go together and predict divorce in more than 90% of the cases. That's why it's crucial you fix them.

Stonewalling often happens often as a consequence of flooding, such as feeling so overwhelmed that we can't focus. But instead of exploding, the stonewaller implodes.

Men Are Usually Stonewallers

While criticism, contempt, and defensiveness are gender-neutral, stonewalling is mostly a male phenomenon. Indeed, **men account for 85% of stonewalling cases**.

Why is it more men?

Stonewalling Explained Through Evolution

The reason why men are kings of stonewalling arches back to evolution, explains John Gottman in *one of his best books*.

Women produce more milk when they're relaxed and oxytocin flows in the brains. So self-soothing during tense situations was advantageous for women.

Men instead survived more frequently in the wild when they quickly accessed their fight or flight response -a great state to survive but a terrible one to talk things out-.
Still to this day that holds true: men get flooded more quickly and it takes them longer to soothe and relax.

When Stonewalling Spells Relationship Doom

Shirley Glass, author of *Not Just Friends*, says that when wives complain about a lack of emotional intimacy they are still committed to the relationship.
But when they start withdrawing and stonewalling, it's a sign that they have become discouraged and are giving up.

Funny enough, men are happy about female stonewalling in the beginning because they believe the nagging has stopped and they have finally won some respite.
But it's a false sense of security: female stonewalling is often the sign the relationship is about to end.

Why Partners Stonewall

There can be different reasons why a partner stonewalls, including:

- He can't take it anymore (honest flooding)

- To willingly hurt or win an argument (a power move)
- Fear or unwillingness to vulnerably engage (avoidant strategy)
- Feeling of complete powerlessness
- To avoid further escalation

The last one is particularly interesting. Many stonewallers indeed erroneously believe that by withdrawing they are doing their part to make things better.
But they couldn't be farther from the truth.

Stonewalling Power Dynamics

Keep this in mind:

Stonewalling communicates powerlessness.

It's men who have given up arguing, negotiating -and winning- that retreat into a silent world.
As psychologist Shawn Smith explains, it's men who have given up on their marriage and who are about to lose their relationship who are also most likely to stonewall and avoid arguments (Smith, 2014).

Men who are in control of their relationships don't retreat like babies into a silent cave.
They confront the issues and take action.

They are good at controlling frames and enforcing boundaries. If she was wrong, they tell them as such.
If she was right, they are not afraid of admitting it and making good on their words.

The good thing is that many conflicts will disappear once men start taking action because their wives' respect for them will increase.
It's a positive circle: the less he stonewalls, the fewer reasons for stonewalling he will have.

What Stonewalling Does to Relationships

When women stonewall, it frustrates men.

But when men stonewall, it can truly hurt women.
Laboratory studies show that when men stonewall women's heart rate jumps (Levenson & Gottman, 1985).
Unbeknownst to most men, **stonewalling is emotionally painful for women** and damages relationships in the following ways:

1. It Escalates Arguments

A partner who refuses to answer can lead the other partner to see their engagement with more and more vehemence. The result is an escalation of the conflict.
And bitter feelings for both: the wife aggresses to reconnect, and he is more and more indignant by her reaction.

2. It Leaves Problems Unsolved

Checking out prevents any possible solution to problems and, if anything, it precipitates them and snowballs problems.

3. It Leads to Emotional Disconnection

With one partner fails to fully engage there can be no emotional connection. And emotional connections are the bedrock of good relationships.

4. It Triggers Sense of Hopelessness In her

When stonewalling becomes the norm, the couple loses the ability to talk and solve problems.
A sense of hopelessness about the relationship sets in, and that's the death of the relationship.

Stonewalling Examples In Relationships

And here are a few examples of stonewalling in relationships:

#1. Spread: The Avoidant Stonewalling

Kutcher has a typical avoidant attachment style in the movie Spread. And like many avoidants, he distances himself from relationships when they start getting too serious.

Stonewalling is one of their ways to keep emotional distance:

He stonewalls when he leaves.
But notice how by avoiding defensiveness when he's under attack he manages to stop the escalation.

#2. Spread: Defensive Stonewalling

This is an example of stonewalling with a mix of defensiveness and emotional overload.
Both the critique and the emotional intensity of "*I love you*" were too much for him to handle.

Let's watch:

Stonewalling after someone opens up their heart is, needless to say, one of the worst moments to leave.

#3. SATC: Emotional Overload

This is a more hidden, under-the-radar example of stonewalling in a relationship. But at the core, he couldn't handle her emotions.

Let's see:

If anything, this is a sneakier form of stonewalling in relationships.
By giving an appearance of caring in the beginning, he makes it seem as if she is overreacting (which she probably is, BTW :).

#4. The Godfather: Aggressive Stonewalling

Stonewalling isn't always necessarily peaceful and quiet.
Trying to forcefully stop the conversation is also a form of stonewalling, as exemplified here:

> *Godfather: "I don't wanna hear about it. OVER!"*

Maybe not an accident that her first comment after his aggressive stonewalling is "I feel no love for you anymore".

#5. Crazy Stupid Love: Powerless Stonewalling

In this example, he feels so powerless to listen and engage that he goes out of his way to end the interaction (another pun, sorry :).

Now that's some high commitment to stonewalling :).

I don't want to overload this post with too many examples, but if you're interested check out again Cal Weaver, later in that same movie he uses another stonewalling technique: pretending not to hear and talking about something else.

How to Get Through A Stonewaller

Let me give you the bad news first:

The best way to deal with a stonewaller is to make the stonewaller want to fix stonewalling.

But I know that's not always possible or easy.

So here are some quick tips for you:

- **Start softly**

Most men stonewall because they feel they are being overpowered by a barrage of highly-emotional complaints. Men take longer to warm up and prep up.

The solution? bite the bullet and go slower.
Talking always beats yelling and the one who goes slow and steady wins the race.

- **Repair and de-escalate**

When you see your partner begins to tense up or when he starts getting defensive, it's not the time to double down as most people do. It's time to repair and take a step back.

Remember: one step back, two forward.

- **Remember his ego: paraphrase**

Yes, many men (and women) have a fragile ego. Remember that and try to use

If their breath stinks, don't use the word "stink", but turn it into a positive. Say that you love to kiss their mouth when it's fresh right after the toothbrush.

- **Accept influence**

Remember that influencing is a two-way street. If you accept their needs and wants, they are more likely to accept yours.

As much as you can, make it a communal problem-solving.

- **Let him read this guide**

As I mentioned before, most men are clueless about stonewalling. They have no idea how painful it is for women and how deeply it can damage relationships.

If he is open-minded, mature, and strong enough to accept and incorporate feedback for improvement -and if you, the man, are reading this, you should be-, chances are he will be willing to help.

How to Stop Stonewalling

Once you understand that stonewalling damages your relationship, here's what you can do to combat it:

1. Stop arguing

If you notice your partner stonewalls, stop arguing because it will only get worse. Tell him you both need a break instead.

2. Call a break if you stonewall

If it's you who stonewalls, heed the signs. Such as, when you feel your heart rate increasing, diminishing focus, and

defensiveness kicking in, that's the moment to call a break.

Here are a few things you can say:

- I want to listen to you but this is getting too intense for me. Let's take a break and resume in 20 minutes
- I feel like I'm about to blow up and I don't wanna blow up to you. Give me please a few minutes to recollect
- I can't handle this anymore, please help me soothe and then we'll continue

3. Practice self-soothing

Watch during the break:

Gottman says men are more likely to think negatively about their partner during the break. Those breaks only make matters worse if you allow negative feelings to fester.
Instead, it's paramount you don't ruminate and truly take your mind to a neutral state instead.

Some good activities during the break include:

- Working
- Reading a magazine or book
- Take a walk around
- Listen to music

It's important that you only go back once you are fully calm, and it usually takes more than we think. Stay 5 minutes longer in the break *after* you already feel fully calm.

4. Trust yourself and engage

Finally, trust yourself that you can handle emotional arguments. And the more you do it, the better you become. And remind yourself that engaging is good for everyone: for you, for your partner, and for your relationship.

Also read:

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

Summary

Stonewalling is a refusal to engage with our partner.

It leaves our partner feeling ignored in the best case, and it actively hurts our partner and escalates the fight in the worst cases.
And of course, it prevents us from actually solving the issue.

In the long run, it leads to emotional death and hopelessness.
In this article, you have learned what's stonewalling and what you can do to deal with stonewalling in your relationship.

Further Reading:

- Develop intimacy by getting to know your partner
- How to build an emotional connection
- Decrease combativeness by accepting the influence

What Happened: Clinton Doesn't Take Ownership (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*What Happened*" (2017) is Hillary Clinton's memoir on the 2016 campaign elections.
She details the unfolding of the events that led to her stunning loss to conservative candidate Donald Trump, together with all the political manipulation, and the various culprits for the results.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - Coping With Grief
  - Why She Wanted The Presidency
  - Issue 1: Gender (and Sexism)
  - Issue 2: Clinton Chose Realism, But Bombast Won
  - Issue 3: Email Scandal Was a Thorn on Her Side
  - Issue 4: Lies Trumped Facts
  - Issue 5: Russian Meddling Helped Trump
  - Issue 5: The Nail in The Coffin Was James Comey
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Key Takeaways

Clinton says:

- Russian meddling was a huge factor in the election
- James Comey was the man who influenced the elections the most and gave the presidency to Trump
- Clinton should have campaigned less on policy and realism and more on "populism" like her opponent did

Notes

About the Author:
Hillary Clinton is a politician, Bill Clinton's wife, and a two-time presidential runner-up.

Coping With Grief

What Happened has some good points on how to cope with a scorching defeat. Here are some key points from *What Happened* by Hillary Clinton:

- Stay in touch with a support network of friends and family

It also helped her to hear how motivated people were to get into action.

- Don't allow rage to take over

Hillary did fume, but she made sure to use her anger and not let it take over (also read: how to use anger).

- Talk it over

She talked a lot to her husband Bill during long walks. They also spoke about the campaign to figure out what happened

- Irish wake

Another great way to combat cynicism is an Irish wake, such as celebrating right after a saddening event. The Irish wake version of Hillary Clinton was hosting a post-election staff party.

- Take a day off

Clinton took a day to "lay low" and regroup. I believe taking some time to grieve is indeed a great medicine.

- Back to work

She also soon started taking action again. She says her first task was a thank you letter to the campaign staff and making sure they were getting salary and health insurance coverage until the end of the year.

Why She Wanted The Presidency

What Happened tackles a common critique of Hillary's campaign: that she was a power-hungry woman who felt the presidency was "hers".

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Clinton wanted to be president because she honestly felt she could be of great service to the Country. She set out to tell her long history of public service but it wasn't easy with so many painting her as a crooked power-hungry politician.

She says she could have done a better job at highlighting her qualifications, but she's never been too good at bragging and showcasing and instead prefers talking about policies and strategies.

Issue 1: Gender (and Sexism)

Clinton never wanted to make gender a major focus of her campaign, but she says that misogyny is a strong influence in politics and in American life.

Politics is dominated by men and the fact that the American people elected a man who bragged of sexually assaulting women, she says, is the proof.

Issue 2: Clinton Chose Realism, But Bombast Won

Clinton approached politics with the idea of being realistic about policies' impact and what could be done.

For example, Sanders campaigned for free college for everyone without a realistic plan to make it happen, without considering how much it would cost in raised taxes for everyone.
But she has learned that big lofty goals are more important than carefully analyzed plans (My Note: I think she should have known).

She could have done more there, like, for example, rolling out her idea of "Alaska for America", such as redistributing to Americans the wealth of future Alaskan raw materials. But she scrapped it because her team could not make out the fine details of the plan.

Issue 3: Email Scandal Was a Thorn on Her Side

Every secretary of state had been using a private email account, but for Hillary, it turned out to be a huge problem that she could never clear.

The night television news spent three times as much time talking about the emails than about the policies.

With the email scandal obsession, it was hard for Hillary Clinton to reach people about her real intentions. And it was hard to make the facts speak louder. And the facts are that her email blunder was not a crime nor a security threat.

Coal Miners Blunder

With the media focusing more on email and blunders, Hillary's mistakes in communication always took full precedence over her policies.

So when she talked about "putting coal minders out of business" she never fully managed to make her real message come across. Such as that she wanted a greener economy *and* to help those coal miners as well.

Issue 4: Lies Trumped Facts

Trump was a new and different political beast the world had ever seen.
And according to PolitiFact and independent fact-checkers, he was the most dishonest candidate the site had ever measured. And Clinton was the most honest.

Trump never worried himself with reality and facts. He was all bombast

My Note:
That may be that Trump lied and spoke with slogans, but that doesn't change the fact that Hillary should have dealt with that more effectively. Hillary talks about "clear debate wins" over Trump, but I beg to differ.
Check here the analysis:

- Trump VS Clinton Debate I
- Trump VS Clinton Debate II & III

Issue 5: Russian Meddling Helped Trump

Russian hackers hacked the emails of the Democratic National Committee and the email account of John Podesta, Clinton's campaign chairman.

The email had nothing bad in them but were released at key moments during the campaign to distract voters. Such a key moment included the days after Trump's groping campaign went public.

My Note:
Clinton says the hacking of her email was released at key strategic moments. But so were Trump's groping comments, so she shouldn't play the virgin innocent here.

The Russian meddling was even more damaging with a host of Twitter and Facebook profiles and pages releasing a flood of anti-Clinton messages and fake news.

Issue 5: The Nail in The Coffin Was James Comey

What Happened gets very interesting here.

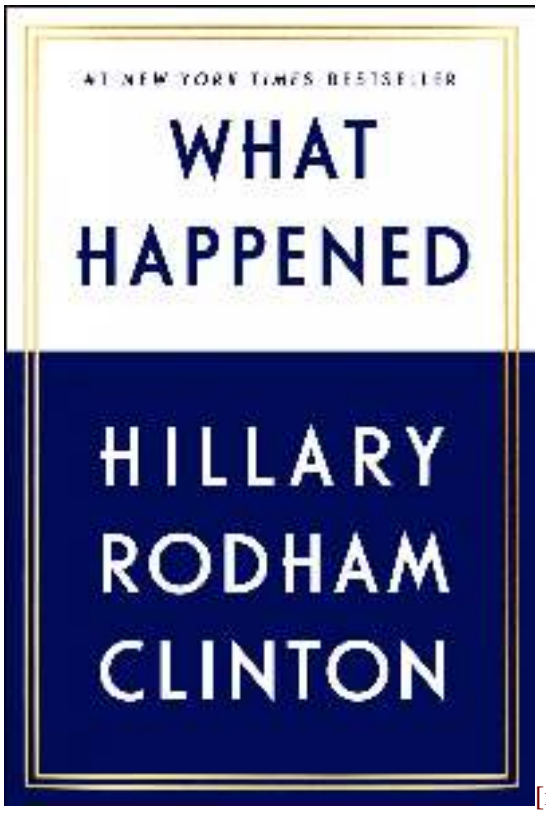
Hillary Clinton seems to put most of the blame for her loss on James Comey, the then-director of the FBI.
Both the CIA and FBI were aware of Russian cyberattacks to support Trump at least three months before the election. But while the CIA said so, the FBI never sounded the alarm.

Comey said he didn't do so because he didn't want to influence the elections, but that's exactly what he did on October 28 when he told Congress -and hence the world- that they had discovered new emails from the then closed Hillary Clinton case.

A week later, a few days before the election, he said the emails were not new, the FBI was already aware of them, and that the case remained closed and with no evidence of wrongdoing.

Clinton says that changed the fate of the election.
Nate Silver, one of the most respected statisticians in the US, gave Clinton an 81% chance of victory before Comey's revelations. After, it dropped to 65%.

Rod Rosenstein, Deputy Attorney General of the Justice Department, also condemned Comey's actions.



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Real-Life Applications

Bombast Helps
Sticking to policies only will lose you some voters. You need some communication punch and passion.

Deal With The World As It Is…
… And not as you wish it would be.
It seems to be sometimes Clinton refused to deal with the world as it is, making voters smarter and more rational than they actually are.

CONS

Little Ownership
I didn't see much ownership or self-analysis of her own mistakes. The power and passion of Sanders and Trump campaigns that she lacked barely gets any credit, but that was in my opinion one of the biggest contributors to the result.
And I believe she fails to see how damaging to her rep the Wall Street speeches were. And that was another huge stain on her image she never managed to clean.
And I see little disclosing of her own camp's dirty games (ie.: Brazile giving her debate questions).

Look at this video to see that, when you put all the excuses together, it looks quite ridiculous:

Bit Self Promotional
Too Much of *What Happened* by Hillary Clinton is about her life, achievements, and all the great things she had in mind. We could have done with a little bit less of that.

PROS

Fact Backing
I have to admit, I approached the book a bit skeptical, but I actually learned a lot from it. And I really changed my mind about what happened.
And she makes good, statics-backed points about the impact of Comey's revelations.

Behind The Curtain Peek
For those who are not aware of the working of this world, you get to learn quite a bit of the behind the scene of political campaigning.

Power Moves Awareness
What Happened by Hillary Clinton raises awareness that this is a world where many sharks will do whatever it takes to hobble you, if that serves them.
It's a powerful reminder and one of the founding principles of this website.

Review

I have to admit, after What Happened, I do believe that without external factors Hillary may have won the elections.
However, I also believe that Clinton would have easily won *in spite* of the external factors if she had presented herself better. And that's where What Happened falls short.

Check 4 UN-PC reasons why Clinton lost or check our videos on this topic.

Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay: 13 Questions to Overcome Relationship Ambivalence (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay tackles relationship ambivalence and helps readers decide whether to stay and work on the relationship or to cut their losses, break up and move on.
Mira Kirshenbaum, the author, calls that in between "ambivalence", and you want to spend as little time as possible being ambivalent.

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Bullet Summary

- Ambivalence -not sure whether to stay or leave- is the worst position to be in
- You don't decide by weighing the pros and cons: that's how ambivalence happens
- You decide with a diagnostic approach: when you find the prognosis, you know what to do

Full Summary

About The Author:
Mira Kirshenbaum has been helping people with relationships, either as individuals or as couples, for more than thirty years. I could not find any information regarding her educational background.

Introduction

The author says the worst position to be in is ambivalence, such as not knowing whether you want to stay or you want to go.

Most people, when faced with ambivalence, take the approach of weighing in pros and cons. But that, says the author, is the worst possible approach.

You shift from yes and no as you focus on either the pros or the cons, and that gets you stuck in ambivalence.
She proposes instead a diagnostic approach: that single answer that will tell you if it's too good to leave or too bad to stay.

Here are the questions you should ask yourself:

#1. If Things Were Ever Good

> **Diagnostic question**: When things between you two were good, would you say they were *really* good?

If you find that when things were at their best they weren't really that good, that's a bad sign. You can often fix what got broken, but you can't fix what never worked.
And you should consider breaking up.

#2. If You Had No Obligations

> **Diagnostic question:** If God said it was okay to leave, would you be relieved you can finally end your relationship guilt-free?

Some people might feel bad for leaving the relationship. This question will make sure it's not morals, friends, or any external forces that still keep you in the relationship.

#3. If There's Still Some Good

> **Diagnostic question:** Do you share, or look forward to sharing any activity which makes you feel close?

Even if there's just one thing that reliably bonds you and makes you feel good, it's possible that by fixing your problems you can have a good and healthy relationship.
This guideline excludes children.

#4. Lying

> **Diagnostic question:** Did you get to the point where you feel what your partner say is more likely to be a lie than the truth?

If you reached that point, there's no trust in the relationship and you'll be happier leaving.

> When you're married to a liar, your marriage is a lie

#5. Affection & Sex

> **Diagnostic question:** Do you both want to touch each other and make efforts to touch each other?

Sex is an indicator of health in a relationship. In relationships that are not going well you can predict there's less lovemaking. If for several months you go on without touching each other and there's no sign of that changing, it's a very bad sign.

#6. Problems: Acknowledgement & Action & Results

> **Diagnostic question:** Does your partner see or admit your problems as a couple? If yes, does he take effective action?

First of all, you need to make sure your partner knows how much the issue means to you.
If your partner still does not acknowledge and work on the problem, then how can you solve it? Chances are it will only get worse over time. It's also important that he actually *can* solve it.

#7. Can You Leave?

> **Diagnostic question:** Look at the reality of leaving and ask yourself: does it still make sense?

Some men leave thinking they'll date younger women, some women are afraid of leaving because of money issues. These imaginative realities are not necessarily real.
Look at what your life would be realistically, and then ask yourself again if you'd be happier.

#8. Are You Losing Self-Respect?

> **Diagnostic question:** Is your partner making you feel so bad that you started believing those accusations yourself?

If your partner is making you feel bad about parts of your personality that are important to you and if you start losing self-confidence in those areas, then you'll be happy to leave.

#9. Are You Avoiding Your Partner?

> **Diagnostic question:** In regard to disrespect, are you actively trying to avoid your partner?

If your partner is so disrespectful that you are trying to limit contact with him, then the level of disrespect has reached gigantic proportions and you'll be happy to leave.

#10. Support & Interest

> **Diagnostic question:** Does he show concrete support for and interest for what's important to you?

If he's interested and supportive of what matters to you or what you're trying to achieve, then it's a partner's there when it counts. And that makes it a relationship that is too good to leave.

#11. What If He Were Gone?

> **Diagnostic question:** If you were to break up, would you lose and miss something important in your life?

If there is not about him you would miss, then you know this relationship is too bad to stay. If there is something about who he is and does for you that really matters in your life, that's an important positive sign (but not enough to

say it's too good to stay).

#11. Do You Get What You Need?

> **Diagnostic question:** If you are a reasonable need, are you able to work it out?

If yes, it's a good sign that your partner accepts influence. If your partner cannot help you with your basic, reasonable needs, then you'll probably be happier to leave.

#12. Painful Emotional Intimacy

> **Diagnostic question:** Does it feel that getting emotionally close often results in pain for you?

Kirshenbaum says it's normal to occasionally get hurt when getting close to someone.
But if you feel hurt too often and it seems your partner's main interest in getting close is to harm, then it's a relationship where you cannot be close. And you'll be happier to leave.

This might be that he is emotionally unavailable, or that he has an avoidant attachment style.

Also, read:

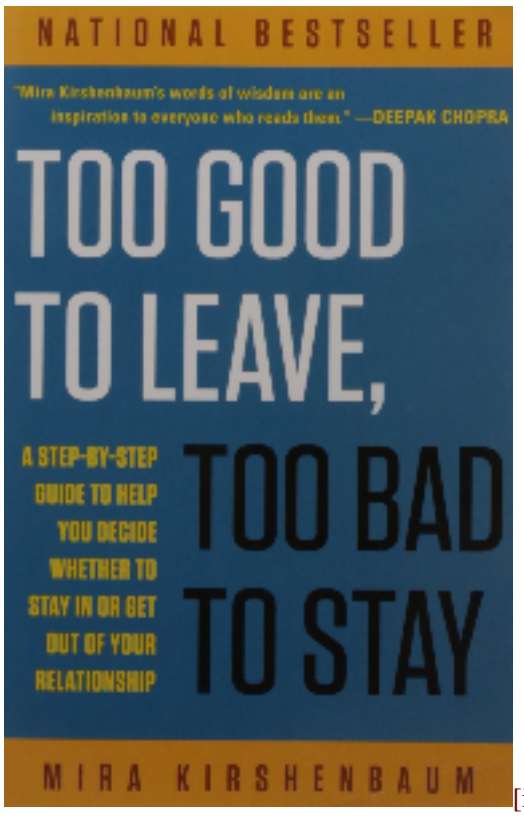
- **Anxious avoidant trap**

> When distance is safer than closeness, you don't have a relationship

#13. If All Problems Disappeared

> **Diagnostic question:** If all the problems in your relationship were solved today, would you still feel ambivalent?

If you're not sure you want to stay even if nothing were wrong, then you're not happy with your partner or your relationship. And you'd be happy to leave.



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Real-Life Applications

Decide. Then commit to your decision
Ambivalence is a terrible place to be in. Go through the questions instead and decide whether to stay -and then make your relationship better- or leave.

CONS

What about a final big shot?
I wish sometimes Kirshembaum would stress just a little bit more that it might be worth it to try this final solution: give your everything. For one month straight, just give. And if your partner doesn't improve, then you're 100% sure.
But don't get this wrong: the author is not encouraging you to leave and actually has great suggestions on how to improve things. But I feel that unconditional giving as a last resort is worth trying because it helps break possible vicious circles.

PROS

Can be a life changer
I think Too Good to Leave Too Bad to Stay can be a life changer for many people who are unsure about what to do with their relationships.

Eureka moments
Everything Mira says just makes a lot of sense. But it's that kind of "making sense" that is not readily available and obvious to everyone and that sometimes you must read or hear from someone else.
Then, after you do, everything clicks and makes sense. Eureka!

Deep wisdom
The author really has a lot of deep wisdom in between questions that just by themselves would be worth the price

of the book.

Review

“Too Good to Leave Too Bad to Stay” is a great book to help you take the difficult decision of whether to stay in the relationship and work on it, or breakup and move on.

I wrote an article inspired by it, if you are ambivalent right now, also check:

- **How to decide whether you should break up**

Get the book on Amazon or read the best relationship books

Should I Break Up? A Guide to Overcoming Relationship Ambivalence

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

When to break up is a daunting question, isn't it?

And the funny thing is that, as psychological research shows, the people *least* equipped to well diagnose their relationships are the partners themselves (MacDonald, Ross, 1999).

It's a daunting decision.
And it's good to get some expert resources to help.
By the end of this article, you will likely know whether to break up or stay together and work on your relationship.

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When to Breakup

This article is not a list of questions I randomly came up with.

It's a guide based on the work and clinical experience of Mira Kirshenbaum and it adds on top my research on science-based relationship literature.

This article is here to help. But the final decision maker, of course, is you.

Why You Need to Decide

If you are not sure whether or not you should leave or stay in your relationship, you are in a situation of ambivalence.
Being ambivalent is bad in many ways:

1. You are not committing to your relationship, likely making it worse
2. You do a disservice to both you, your partner, and the relationship
3. You destroy your self-esteem (it says to yourself you're indecisive)

Ambivalence is, on average, more of an issue for women, since they tend to be more risk and loss averse.
But independently of gender, everyone will gain by sitting down for one hour or two and coming up with a decision.

How to Use This Guide

A common mistake people make when they want to decide whether to break up or not is weighing the cons and the pros.

You will rarely reach a decision like that.

Much better is a diagnostic approach instead, which means looking at key areas of the relationship and looking for a big strike.

One strike in a single major cue means you must go.
On the other hand, no major negative strike and good positive signs mean you have solid fundamentals and you can work on them.

So let's start.

Diagnostic Questions

First of all, the basics:

A pattern of violence, substance addiction, and complete disregard for your health and safety are immediate grounds for breaking up.
No further ink is needed.

If there are no such obvious red flags, then here are the signs for you to weigh:

#1. Was It Ever Great?

> When things between you two were good, were they *really* good?

The answer to this question is important because you can often fix what's broken.
But **you cannot fix what never worked**.

If you look back at your past and see a lukewarm story, then you don't expect any magic and, if you want magic,

you will probably be happier ending your relationship.

#2. Are There Still Positive Emotions?

> Deep down, do you still like your partner, and does he like you?

This is an important question because some people have been so conditioned to repeat the “but I love him (/her)” mantra that they end up losing track of their present feelings.

Pause for a second then, and if you realize that your love is a ghost you will be happier with a breakup. It’s indeed very rare you will start liking and loving again after you’ve lost the positive feelings.

#3. Has Your Subconscious Decided?

> Have you taken concrete steps towards a life without your partner?

Some people have decided on an unconscious level to end the relationship, but cannot yet fully process that decision rationally.

Examples of unconscious decisions are:

- Applying to jobs in different cities (or accepting a job)
- Starting divorce papers
- Affairs you don’t even care about hiding

If you answer yes the answer to when to break up is “now”.

#4. If There Were No Consequences...

> If your parents wouldn’t be disappointed, if kids weren’t there, if you weren’t ashamed, if God said you can… Would you leave?

Too many people judge their relationship based on the impact it us on other people.

And other people *are* important. But for a correct diagnosis, first of all, you need to think about you and yourself only.

This question will help you obtain that clarity without morals and external influences involved.
A “no” is a very positive sign that your relationship might be too good to leave.

#5. Do You Look Forward to Something Together?

> Do you share, or look forward to sharing any activity which makes you feel close and happy?

Think about it:

If you share positive experiences that make you forget all your problems and make you feel there’s still love in the relationship, then you might be onto something.

At the very least, there’s a chance that by fixing the issue you can have an overall happy relationship.
A “no” here still doesn’t doom your relationship, but at the very least you should be able to discover (or re-discover) such an activity. If you aren’t even able to find or rediscover a pleasurable activity to do together, then it’s time to break up.

#6. Can You Get Your Main Needs Met?

> Can you get your reasonable needs without a power struggle or being completely ignored?

If anything that is dear to you requires a huge power struggle then chances are this is not a relationship based on love and mutual support.

Of course, the focus here is on fundamental needs. Not whether or not you get your favorite ice cream every day. But if, say, time together with your parents is a huge need of yours, does he at least *try* to accommodate some time together?

And if you really want children but your partner doesn't, then that's another obvious sign.

If he could not care less about your main needs, you should break up with him/her.

#7. Does Your Partner Stand in The Way?

> Does your partner block any need, goal or dream you'd be unsatisfied not to pursue?

Imagine you're old and grey.

Looking back at your life, would you feel that your life was not satisfying if you didn't pursue something that means a lot to you? That's the kind of need we are talking about here.

If your partner stands in the way or vetoes that option then you will know you need to break up.

For example:
You're unhappy at your job and you dream of starting your own company. But your wife threatens to leave you if you quit. Then you should break up with her.

#8. Is There Support & Interest For What Matters To You?

> Does he show interest and concrete support for what's important to you?

This is the other side of the coin for the above question.

If he's interested and supportive of what matters to you or what you're trying to achieve, then you have a partner that is there when it counts.
And unless you find any other major strikes, you should probably stop thinking about the breakup because you have a relationship that is too good to leave.

#9. Is There a Shared Sense of Mission?

> Does your partner share your same dreams and ambitions, or actively takes part in them?

The next step would not just be a supportive partner, but one who shares the same goals and works alongside with you.

Pay attention here though: if it's just about launching a company, then you're business partners. And if it's about winning X trophy, then you're done after you achieve it.
The best goals and dreams are deep and non-time-bound (ie.: spreading ideals, making the world a better place, etc.).

#10. Can You Talk About What Matters?

> Can you openly and freely discuss issues, fears, dreams, solutions.. ?

There are many ways your partner can frustrate your attempt to communicate issues that are important to you.

They include:

- Stonewalling
- Change topic
- Dismiss it and say it's not important
- Pretend to listen while not really listening

Whatever the style, if you can never talk about what's important to you, then things will hardly ever get better and you should break up.

#11. Acknowledgment, Action & Results

> Does your partner see or admit your problems as a couple? If yes, does he take effective action?

Maybe your partner can talk, but can he acknowledge there are important issues in your relationship that you want to address?

Some men and women are so defensive and ego-fragile that they can't admit there is a problem.
With these partners, you are not going to fix any problem.

And is he taking action? If he's taking action, are the results making the relationship better?
If he keeps failing to change for the better the last step should be to change with the help of a therapist.

#12. Is Emotional Intimacy Painful?

> Does it feel that getting emotionally close often results in pain for you?

Kirshenbaum says it's normal to occasionally get hurt when getting close to someone.
But if you feel hurt too often and it seems your partner's main interest in getting close is to harm, then it's a relationship where you cannot be close. And you'll be happier to leave.

> **Distance should never be safer than closeness**

#13. Affection, Touching & Sex

> Do you both want to touch each other and make efforts to touch each other?

Sex is an indicator of health in a relationship.

In relationships that are not going well, you can predict there's less lovemaking than there used to be.
And a lack of craving touch for long stretches of time is a deep sign of alienation.

Here's the answer, then: If you have gone a few months without touching, if you don't feel like touching and you don't see an imminent end to it, then you should break up.

#14. Is Sexual Attraction Strong?

> Are you attracted to your partner in a unique, different way than to anyone else?

Most of the related literature seems to convene that there isn't such thing as great enough sex to salvage a relationship that doesn't have anything else.

But if you are attracted to your partner in a way that you are not attracted to anyone else, then that's something special. And if you don't have any other major strike that tells you to break up now, you should stay and work on the rest.

#15. Are Your Differences Too Big?

> Are there irreconcilable personality differences that make a happy shared life together?

Differences are OK.

But some differences can loom too large.
By irreconcilable differences, I don't mean typical gender differences -overblown by books such as *Men Are From Mars*– or big by society's standards.

It simply means that the differences go at the core of who you are and how you imagine a happy life.
For example, one could prefer city life and another prefer rural life. And that's OK… Unless it goes to the core of how you see the perfect life.
If one dream of a rural lifestyle and the other cannot live away from the city, then that's the kind of irreconcilable difference that makes a breakup the best solution.

> Your relationships should reflect your idea of life, not the other way around

Conversely, if there are no core differences:

#16. Are Your Similarities Too Big to Ignore?

> Do you feel that deep down your partner is like you in some respect that's important to you?

A deeply shared similarity that makes us feel good is a strong sign that your relationship might be too good to leave.

What do I mean by that?

Liking rafting is not good enough. But if you both like rafting because you both love a life full of wild emotions, discoveries, and thrill-seeking, then that's deep.

Why is it important?
Because a deep similarity about a core aspect of our personality helps overcome hundreds of differences. And if you answer yes here, you know that it's worth staying in your relationship.

#17. Is It Still Fun?

> Do you still have fun together?

If you still have fun together, that's a strong sign you should not break up but work on your relationship.

Fun is an often underestimated, but crucial element of a healthy relationship, a happy family, and also one of

the most important elements of love.

#18. What Are The Other Options?

> Look at the reality of breaking up and ask yourself: does it still make sense?

Shouldn't deciding when to break up be all about love and the two of you?

Up to a certain point, yes.

But relationships don't happen in a vacuum and many people who misread the environment ended up making big mistakes.

Here's the exercise, then: write down your options and lifestyles in case of a breakup. Then write down your fears. Then research a bit or ask around.
Looking at reality you might realize working on your relationship is better than breaking up.

Example:
A woman might find out her sister's offer to host her wasn't that real after all.
And some men divorce thinking they'll still be able to see the children while dating younger women. And they're often wrong.

#19. Are You Losing Self-Respect?

> Is your partner making you feel so bad that you started believing those accusations yourself?

Does your partner make you feel bad?

Is he making feel bad about aspects of your personality that are important to you?
And are you start losing self-confidence in those areas?

If you answered yes to all of them, then you might actually be in a toxic relationship with an abusive partner.

And chances are that you'll be happy to break up.

#20. Are You Avoiding Your Partner?

> Are you actively trying to avoid your partner?

If your partner is so disrespectful and nasty that you are trying to limit contact with him, you have another terrible sign. Relationships should be a sanctuary of safety and support.

When you actively avoid your lover you have an enemy in your house, not a partner. And you should break up.

#21. What If He Were Gone?

> If you were to break up, would you lose and miss something important in your life?

If there is nothing about him you would miss, then it's time to break up.

If there is something about who he is and does for you that really matters in your life, that's an important positive sign (but not enough to say it's too good to stay).

#22. If All Problems Disappeared...

> If all the problems in your relationship were solved today, would you be happy to stay?

If you're not sure you want to stay even if nothing were wrong, then you're not happy with your partner or your relationship.
And you should break up with him.

Wait, Read This Before You Break Up!

Please note that these questions take for granted:

1. You communicated well to your partner what your issues are
2. He is aware of how important they are for you.

If you're not sure, tell him:

> **You**: *"I love you and want to keep loving you, but this current situation is destroying our relationship and I'm losing my feelings for you.*
> *You gotta help me to change that or I am afraid for our future as a couple. Are you willing to help me?"*

The day after, ask him how much he thinks the issue matters to you from 1 to 10.
If he says 9 or 10, then every single question fully applies.

Summary

This article helps you to decide whether you should break up or get back to work on your relationship.

Most of these questions go to the core of what a good relationship means. If you got even a single negative answer to any core question, then your only option is to bring the issue to your partner, in full clarity, and give it another last try for a couple of months.
Failed that, you should really break up.

This article also doesn't deal with the complexities and costs of divorce, for which you might want to consult a lawyer.

Attachment Style Test (Immediate Results, No Email)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for a scientific, reliable and free attachment style quiz?

You have come to the right place.

This attachment style quiz will give you an answer to what's your attachment style like. At the end of it you will have a much better understanding about yourself and about your relationships.

Note:
The following attachment style quiz is an adaptation -and simplification- of the work of Fraley, Waller, Breannan. Based on the results it gets for my clients I find it to be highly reliable.

Contents

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  - Anxious:
  - Secure:
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- What Determines Your Attachment Style
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Attachment Style Quiz

The quiz is quick, simple.

Below is a list of statements.
If you don't agree with the statement, simply move on to the next one.
And if you agree with one of the statements, mark down the respective letter next to the statement (A, B or C).

Answer thinking about you feel towards relationships in general, and not just about your last one.

- I'm scared that if we break up I won't find anyone else (A)
- I'm uncomfortable when my partner gets too close (C)
- During arguments I tend to say things I later regret (A)
- I don't question the relationship because of a single argument (B)
- My partner often urges me to be more intimately close (C)
- I worry I am not good looking enough (A)
- I might be seen as boring because I'm rather stable (B)
- I miss my partner, but when we're together for long I miss my own space (C)
- I'm comfortable speaking up if I disagree with someone (B)
- I don't like the feeling that someone else depends on me (C)
- I quickly get over jealousy if someone I'm involved in looks at other people (B)
- I am relieved if someone I'm involved with looks at other people because they won't try to make things too serious (C)
- I get depressed if someone I'm involved with looks at other people (A)

- If someone I'm dating acts cold I wonder what's happened, but I don't think it's about me (B)
- If someone I'm dating acts cold I am indifferent. Sometimes even relieved (C).
- If someone I'm dating acts cold I worry I've done something wrong (A)
- If my partner wants to break up I'll try to show them what they'll miss (A)
- If my partner of a few months wants to break up I'd be hurt but I'd get over it (B)
- Sometimes in a relationship I get what I want and then I'm not sure about what I want anymore (C)
- I have no problem in platonically staying in touch with an ex (B)
- I don't create much drama in my relationships (B)
- I often worry my partner might get involved with someone else (A)
- Emotionally supporting my partner is not easy for me (C)
- When I'm single I'm more anxious and "incomplete" (A)
- I bounce back quickly after break ups (C)
- I fear that if someone knows the real me they won't like me (A)
- It's easy to be affectionate with my partner (B)
- I often worry my partner will stop loving me (A)
- I'm comfortable with being dependent on my partner (B)
- My independence comes first (C)
- I don't share my deepest feelings with my partner (C)
- I'm afraid my partner will not return my feelings if I share them (A)
- I'm generally content with my relationships (B)
- I often think about my relationships (A)
- I don't like being dependent on my romantic partner (C)
- I get attached very quickly (A)
- I express my needs and wants rather easily (B)
- Sometimes I'm angry and annoyed at my partner without a clear reason (C)
- I'm hypersensitive to my partner's moods (A)
- If you're honest, most people are also honest and dependable (B)
- I prefer casual sex to sex in committed relationships (C)
- I am comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings (B)

Attachment Style Test Results

Tally the results.

- More A = Anxious attachment style
- More B = Secure attachment style
- More C = Avoidant attachment style

Anxious:

People with an anxious attachment style have great capacity for emotional intimacy and get attached strongly and quickly.

Relationships take up a lot of their mental cycles and a lot of their energy.
They tend to be more temperamental, more sensitive to their partner moods and, along with the positive feelings of

intimacy they experience lots of negative emotions as well, including worrying their partner does not return their feelings.

They can often get carried away and say mean things that they will later regret. As a result, their relationships tend to be mercurial and with lots of up and downs and lots of arguments and make ups.

Anxious people will greatly benefit from a relationship with a secure partner because someone with a secure attachment style will take away many of the worries, anxieties and arguments.

Read more about anxious attachment.

Secure:

Secure people are the most calm and confident of them all.

They are comfortable with intimacy without being overly worried or jealous. They communicate effectively and they tend to keep an even keel without any major swings of moods or emotions.

Read more about secure attachment.

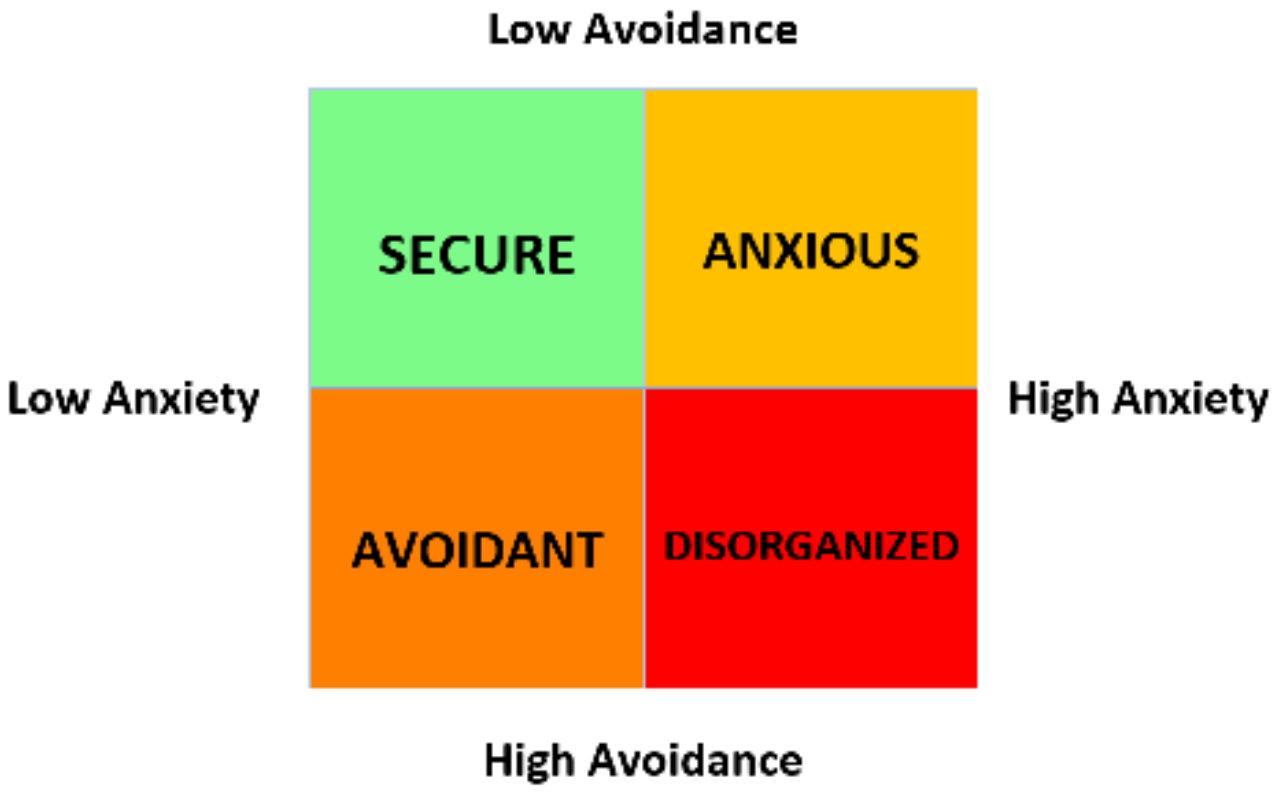
Avoidant:

Contrary to popular belief, avoidants also have the same needs for emotional connections and intimacy, but their brains often shuts down or overturns those needs.

So they end up being torn between the willingness for closeness and the rejection of it. They also have a strong need for keeping their own space on top, which makes for uncomfortable intimacy in the relationship.
That's why one of the questions was "you miss your partner, but crave your space when you're together for too long".

Avoidants often put independence and autonomy before their intimate relationships and they don't spend much time thinking about their relationships.
These are the "committaphobes" out there.

Read more about the avoidant attachment style and how to spot an avoidant.



What Determines Your Attachment Style

Your attachment style is measured on two different variables:

1. Level of comfort (or discomfort) with intimacy and closeness
2. Anxiety towards your relationship status and partner's love

The two usually go together, but a low number of the population (4-5%) are both insecure about their partner's availability and have high discomfort with intimacy.

Attachment Styles in Relationships

Often, for a number of reasons, avoidants end up with anxious.
These make for the fieriest of relationships with lots of fights and reconciliations and big emotional drama.

If you are an anxious, chances are you are more attracted to avoidants. You must overcome that tendency, because anxious and avoidants together make for very bad relationships.
I highly recommend you read this article to recognize the signs of impending danger:

- The hell of an anxious-avoidant relationship

Summary

With this free attachment style quiz you have learned what's your attachment style.

If it's the first time you approach this topic you probably learned a lot about your needs, wants and your past relationships. You now also know which type of partner is best for you.

If you're interested in relationships and developing the best relationship you possibly can, check the relationship guide in the store section. It summarizes all the best research and studies to help you improve your relationship with actionable and science-backed wisdom.

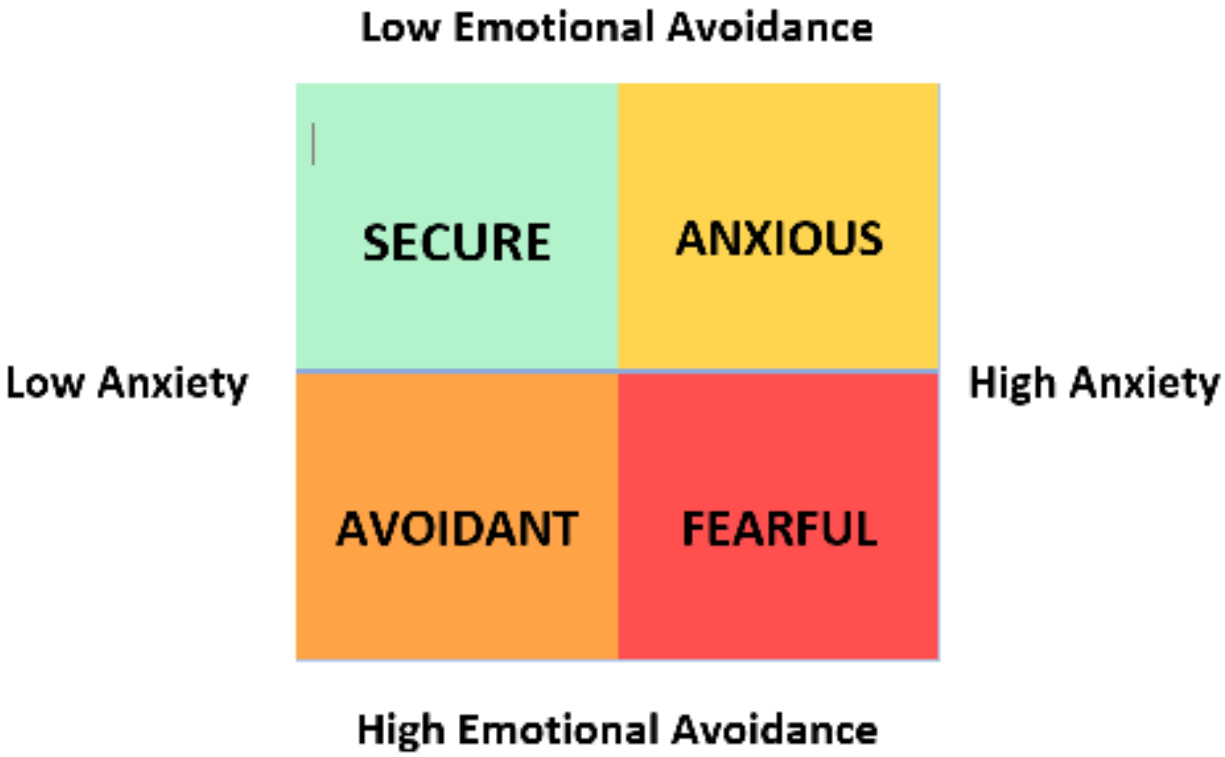
The 4 Types of Attachment Styles: An Overview (With Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Adult attachment theory provides insights into how humans pair bond and form relationships.

Research has shown that people tend to fall into different attachment styles.
And understanding them is crucial to understanding both human psychology, and relationships.

In this article, we explain the four attachment styles, where attachment styles come from, how to recognize the different attachment types, and what type of attachment makes for the best relationship.



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- Summary

What's an Attachment Style

Based on the original researchers of attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969), we define an attachment style:

> An attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space

Although most people refer to attachment styles when they talk about relationships, they don't necessarily pertain to relationships.
You can be attached to a friend, an animal, a person who doesn't have any emotional bond with you, or, of course, a parent or a child.

Why We Develop Attachments

Evolutionary theory may suggest that attachment styles likely evolved to ensure people stayed in relationships for the good of the offspring.

As The *Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych and Relationships* suggests, we develop an attachment to increase reproductive fitness:

> From an evolutionary standpoint, the attachment behavioral system refects an organized set of physiological and psychological mechanisms that encode and process early life experiences with attachment fgures to produce phenotypes (i.e. , attachment styles) that are more likely to increase ftness in particular environments (Simpson & Belsky, 2008; Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019). In this respect, attachment styles refect the adaptive calibration of life history strategies (Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019)

What attachment makes most sense depends on the environment.
That's why we mostly pick our attachment as children: because children take early environmental cues to predict what life will be like.

Great parents?
You get to be secure.

Distant, unloving, or bad parenting?
Insecure.

History of Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first started by John Bowlby in 1988. Quite surprisingly, there was no previous comparable theory for emotional attachment.

And it was quite a revolution.

Sue Johnson, an author of *Hold Me Tight*, places Bowlby ahead of Freud when it comes to humans' contributions to our understanding of psychology.

Where Do Attachments Come From

There are different takes on how attachment styles, depending on what they give more weight to:

- Genetically and/or pre-programmed at birth
- Through parent/child interaction
- With life experience

More Freudian authors like Harville Hendrix, author of *Getting the Love You Want*, says that we develop our attachment styles depending on how our parent cared for us during childhood.

Other authors like Steven Pinker and Jerome Kagan stressed the importance of later life experience.

While Bowlby himself and Lorenz believed that we are all wired to attach via our genes.

All Influences Matter

Well, as it's often the case with complex personality traits, it's very possible, and likely, that it's a mixture of them all that contribute to our attachment styles.

Genes, life experience, and parental caring (plus more) *all* contribute to shaping our attachment style.

And the proof that genes and parental care are not the be all end all lies in the fact that around 25%-30% of adults change attachment styles based on life experiences and romantic history.

That's also great news because it means you can change your own attachment style to achieve healthier intimate relationships.

Attachment System

The attachment system is a pattern of emotions and behavior that sets off when our loved ones move away from us.

It is already evident in children.
When their mother goes away and a child starts crying, that's his way of "bridging the gap" and re-establish contact.

The same happens with adults and their romantic partners.

Attachment Styles in Children

Attachment styles can already be recognized in babies.
For example, this is how the different attachment types react when the mother leaves the room:

Anxious: becomes extremely distressed when mommy leaves the room. When the mother returns, he is ambivalent: angry and happy at the same time.
It takes him longer to calm down, and when he finally pacifies he angrily pushes the mother away, often followed by more tears.

Secure: is visibly distressed when the mother leaves the room. But when she comes back, he is happy and calms down.

Avoidant: when the mother leaves and comes back, he acts as if nothing happened.
But it's only a facade: researchers show that the baby's heart rate is as high as those who show extreme distress. And their cortisol levels—an indicator of stress—are also high.

Parental Caring

It is a well-known fact that parental caring (or lack of it) has a strong influence on our psychological development.

In the early days of attachment theory research it was believed that the mother's caretaking style was the main determinant of the adult attachment style.

Today we know that there is indeed a statistically significant link between caretaking style and attachment style.

The Four Attachment Styles

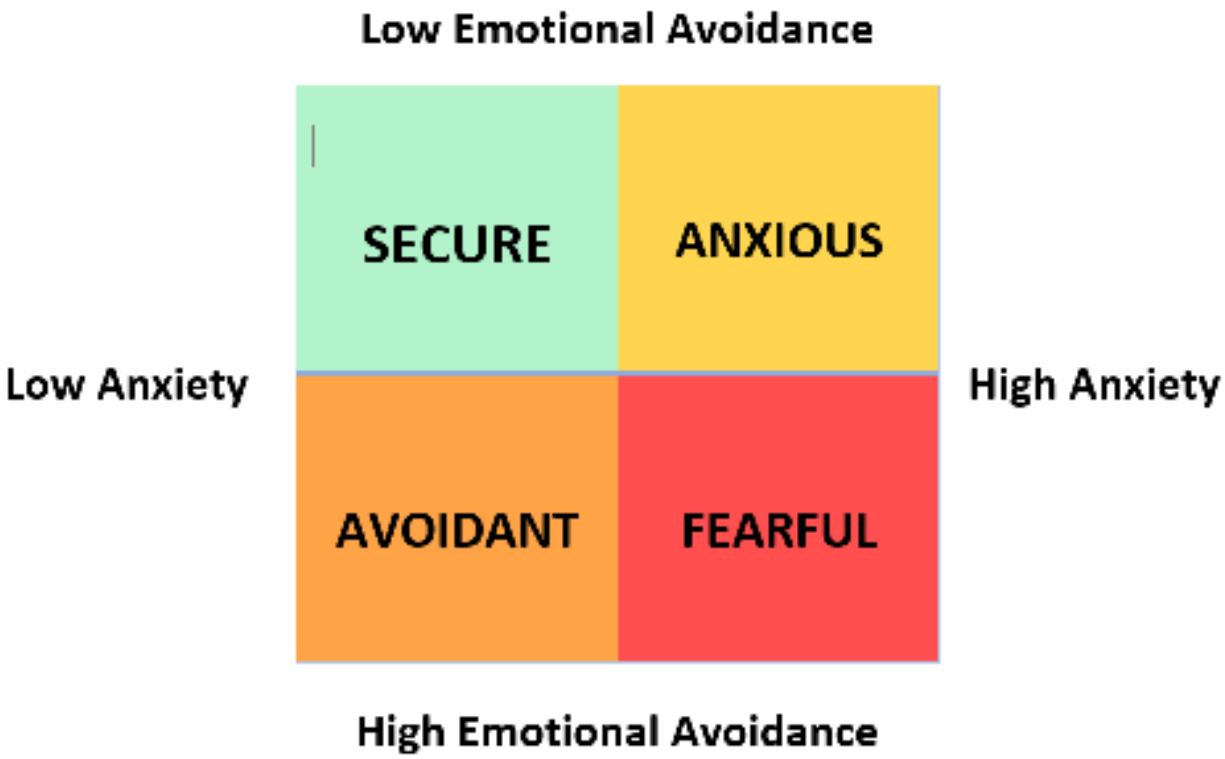
Earlier work on adult attachment used a three or four-category scheme.

Current attachment scholars conceptualize adult attachment along two broad dimensions:

1. **Discomfort with closeness** and intimacy (avoidance)
2. **Anxiety** about the ability to find and keep love

There are two more dimensions scholars tend to agree on: views of self, reflecting self-worth and lovability, and view of others reflecting their availability and trustworthiness.

But, for simplicity, we can still conceptualize attachment styles as a quadrant:



Amir Levine, an author of *Attached*, says that 50% of people have a secure attachment, 25% an avoidant attachment, 20% anxious attachment, and the rest fall into the fearful category (with unhealthy traits from both).

1. Secure Attachment Style

The secure attachment type is sometimes portray as the most stable, mature and "healthier".

And when looking for relationship partners, most people desire a secure-type of partner.

Secure attachment types enjoy intimacy and are not afraid of opening up. Their relationships tend to last long and they are the ones with the highest relationship satisfaction.
Secure types play little games because they tend to have a very healthy and mature mindset, similar to the following:

> **Secure**: "here I am, I like you. If you don't like me, it will hurt a bit but I'll understand. And if you also like me then there's no need to hide and play games".

You can work on yourself to become more secure and we'll talk about it in another article.

What Gives People a Secure Attachment

Many factors increase the likelihood of a child being secure, including:

- Mothers sensitive to child's needs
- Easy temperament as a baby (makes it easier for parents to be responsive)
- Good maternal conditions—marital satisfaction, low stress, no depression, and social support
- Fewer hours with a non-parental caretaker
- Genetic predisposition
- Life experiences (avoiding big romantic traumas)

Secure Attachment Style Example

Now you might be expecting an example that's all about being calm and rational.

And that might indeed be a secure attachment type.
But secure people are people just like everybody else. They also get angry, tense, and emotional. So I'll give you a better example.

An example of a secure attachment type in a very tense, highly emotional situation:

Don't be fooled: the fact that he is emotional does not preclude he might be a secure man

What makes it secure?

1. Embraces emotions
To begin with, he's not afraid of his own emotions. He doesn't hide them, neither to himself nor to her (hiding emotions, after all, is a way of playing games).

2. Vulnerability
He's not afraid of asking her "will you stay with me", which is very vulnerable and something that only a man who's not afraid of rejection can pull off.

3. Welcomes intimacy

He talks to her very openly about the two of them together in a relationship. Only a man who's not afraid of intimacy and commitment can do that.

4. Little fear
But he is also secure enough to know -and to say- he'll get over it if she decides to go.

5. Control
In a situation that is so emotionally charged, he is still relatively in control. And lets her go without doing any further drama or going crazy.

What about the other attachment types?

An anxious might have started screaming without making any factual points.

Or he might collapse, telling himself she doesn't want him and he must be bad.
An avoidant would have enjoyed the sex and either be OK with her leaving or, at least not, have promised to stay together forever. Also, an avoidant would have never shared his feelings so openly.

That being said, The Notebook can be quite of a corny movie, apologies to the male readers :).

- Read here for secure attachment drill down.

Insecure Attachments

As mentioned earlier, attachments tend to reflect a certain childhood environment.

Schmitt and his colleagues measured over 17,000 people's attachment styles from 56 nations.
They related insecure attachment styles to various indexes of familial stress, economic resources, mortality, and fertility.

And, as explained in *The Handbook of Relationship Initiation*:

> They found overwhelming support for developmental-attachment theory.
> For example, nations with higher fertility rates, higher mortality rates, higher levels of stress (e.g., poor health and education), and lower levels of resources tended to have higher levels of insecure romantic attachment.

Schmitt (2005a) also found that short-term mating was related to insecure attachment across cultures.
Spedifically, the dismissing attachment, a sub-type of "avoidant attachment" was linked to short-term mating in men. And fearful or anxious forms of insecure attachment were linked to short-term mating in women.

2. Anxious Attachment Style

The anxious attachment type, sometimes also referred to as "preoccupied" craves emotional intimacy.

Often, craves it too much and/or too early.

But at the same time that they want to get close, they're constantly worried about their relationship status and are afraid their partner might not feel the same.
They are very sensitive to their partner's moods and tend to be temperamental. With their doubts, worries, and mood emotional swings they make relationships very fiery. And often not in a good way.

Anxious Attachment Style Example

There are tons of anxious examples in the movies because they make for big entertainment.

This one of from La Dolce Vita:

What makes it anxious?

1. Craves intimacy
She wants so badly.

2. Fear
She's jealous and afraid of other women. Irrationally so. And she's worried about her relationship.

3. Mental cycles
This takes so much of her energy. She can see how passionate and absorbed she is. She probably spends her whole day thinking about him and their relationship.

4. Mood swings
She goes from threatening to planning a romantic and loving time together. If you're crazy, an anxious partner will certainly make you happy :).

5. Needs reassurance
She has probably a very low opinion of herself and needs constant reassurance. Low self-esteem is one of the reasons -albeit not the only one- that in the long term, anxious women have difficulty hanging on to secure men (read how low self-esteem dooms your relationships).

Read more about:

- the anxious attachment style and
- the toxic relationship it forms with the avoidant.

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3. Avoidant Attachment Style

Avoidant attachment types are uncomfortable with intimacy and being too close, and they keep partners at arm's length.

They don't open up fully in their relationships and need their own space not to feel suffocated.

From a neurological point of view, researchers seem to point to avoidants having the same need for closeness and intimacy as anybody else, but they suppress those needs. One of the ways they do so is by focusing on the negatives of their partners.
In the end, avoidants tend to be less happy in their relationships and to make their partners less happy as well.

Avoidants tend to be defensive and avoiding getting close is also a form of avoiding pain and rejection.

Dismissive attachment is a sub-type of avoidant.

Avoidant Attachment Style Example

Jack Nicholson in Terms of Endearment is an example of avoidant.

Notice how he tries to make a silent exit as soon as the family reunites:

Jack Nicholson might have been an avoidant in real life as well, and not just in the movies.

Why is it avoidant?

Distance

He is uncomfortable being introduced to the family. That would mean “making it official” and strengthening the ties.
And he makes a quick exit.

Further reading:

- Avoidant attachment types
- Signs you’re dealing with an avoidant

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4. Fearful / Disorganized Attachment Style

The fourth attachment type is also sometimes referred to as “disorganized” or fearful.

It takes the worst of the avoidant and the anxious but luckily it’s much less frequent (4-5% of the population).
They have a low opinion of themselves and find it hard to get close to their partners.

Unluckily I don’t have in mind a movie example of a fearful attachment style. If you have any ideas lemme know in the comments, I would be very happy to look into it.

Attachment Styles And Differentiation

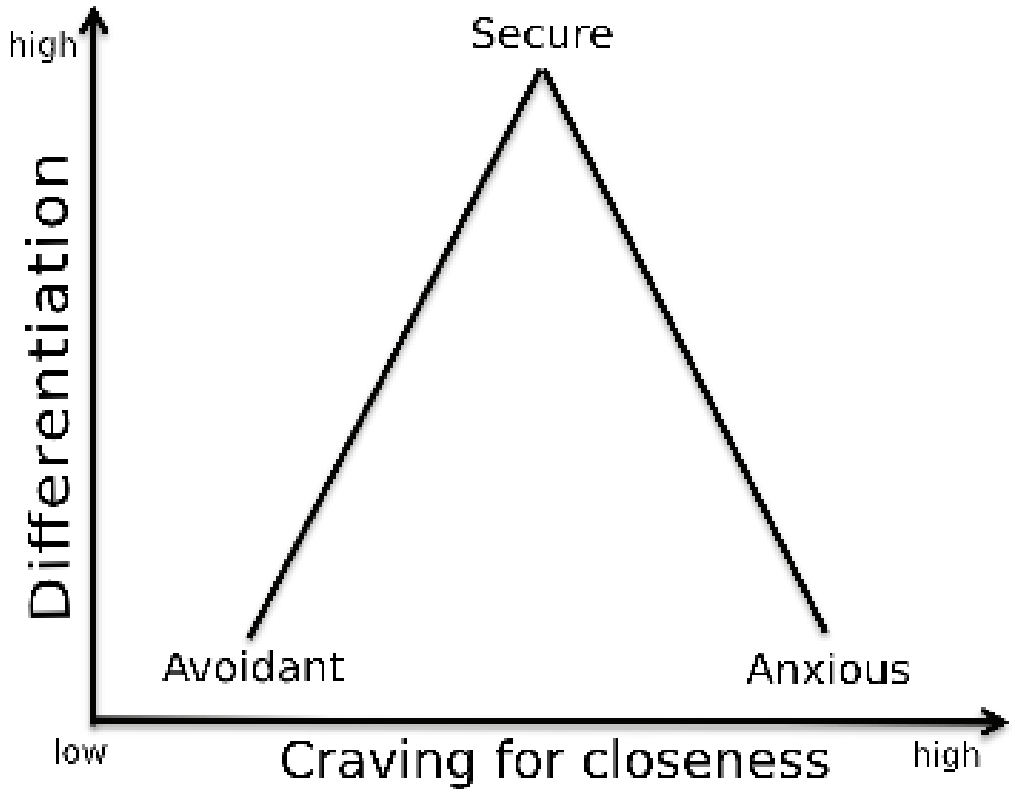
Schnarch defines differentiation as:

> “Differentiation is the ability to maintain your sense of self when you are emotionally and/or physically close to others—especially as they become important to you”

Differentiation is a concept developed by Murray Bowen as part of his Family Systems Theory (Brown, 2013 for an overview).

Differentiation is relevant to attachment styles because anxious people have low differentiation and tend to see themselves as one with their partners (enmeshed)
Anxious types instead feel too much differentiation and seek too much differentiation.

The secure attachment types tend to strike a better balance:



From de Azevedo Hanks, 2016

However, that differentiation of the avoidant can sometimes be a front.

For example, as a teenager avoidant, I always sought differentiation from my family by rebelling and starting verbal disputes.
But it wasn't healthy differentiation, it was more of a defensive differentiation, partly motivated by the resentment of the parents' judge role (also see Harris, 1967).
Being secure means being comfortable in who you are, as an individual, while also welcoming and enjoying emotional bonds with others.

Limitations & Lack of Attachment

Attachment theory seems to assume that an attachment is present. However, some psychopathologies, including psychopathy, are defined by a *lack* of attachment.

For example, in *The Handbook of Psychopathy*, Patrick points out that '*standard attachment-style inventories are not well suited to indexing the weak social connectedness that characterizes classically "detached" psychopathic individuals*'.

A lack of attachment is essentially different from affectively dysregulated externalizing individuals. In psychopathy, this lack of attachment is sometimes accompanied by a disinhibited pursuit of goals or resources.
Patrick's Triarchic model of psychopathy characterizes this combination as 'agentic disaffiliation', pursuing goals without concern for the feelings or welfare of others (Patrick et al., 2009).

Summary

Attachment theory will lead you to a better and deeper understanding of people.

But it will also give you a very practical understanding of how to get better relationships.
To do so it is very important to understand your attachment style first and to be able to recognize other's attachment styles as you date them.

Further Reading:

- Do women like as*holes or avoidants
- How to spot an avoidant attachment style

Throwing Someone Under The Bus: Real Life Example

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

What does it mean to throw someone under the bus?

It's a social move where you shift blame or sacrifice someone—often to protect yourself or gain power.

And while most people see it as disloyal or mean-spirited, the truth is: **sometimes, it's the smartest and fairest move you can make**.

In this guide, you'll learn the exact meaning of "throwing someone under the bus," see real-world examples, understand the power dynamics behind it—and know how to do it (or defend against it) strategically.

Contents

- Intro: Meaning
- When You Must Throw Under The Bus
- How to Throw Someone Under The Bus
- Example
  - #1. Flash a Fake Smile
  - #2. Power Move (Sarcasm)
  - #3. Cut Him Out
- Saving Someone From The Bus
- Summary

Intro: Meaning

> Throwing someone under the bus refers to social punishment for a social blunder, usually entailing ignoring

> someone, or cutting them out a conversation or social group

The person you throw under the bus is usually not an open enemy. And sometimes you might even have a good social relationship with them.

But they have made such a big mistake that they risk dragging you or others down with them.

At that point, as painful as it might be, you need to cut them loose to avoid a domino effect.
And that's when you have to throw them under the bus.

When You Must Throw Under The Bus

There are several situations when you need to throw someone under the bus:

- **They made an offensive comment**

Imagine someone making an offensive remark, a racist joke, or simply saying something stupid.
And then they look at you and smile, expectantly, as if to communicate you two are in cahoots or you two agree on the topic.

At that point, if you don't distance yourself from them, it will seem like you are tacitly agreeing with them.
And in many situations, you might not want that.

Something similar happened to McCain.
One of his own supporters made a silly remark about Obama. It was not an easy situation for McCain: accepting the comment would have won him points with the lady speaking and, possibly, with the audience.

But he knew it was not the right thing to do.
And so he chose to throw her under the bus by cutting her short:

Notice though McCain was too rough there. Throwing someone under the bus can be emotionally painful for people, so if you can somehow help them save face, you should.

- **They make a socially dangerous comment involving you**

Here's an example that happened to me some time ago.

We were sitting down with me, a friend, and a couple. The friend made a joke about me being a threat to their relationship status (for possibly going after her).
That's a kind of joke when you need to throw your friend under the bus.

- **They're butting in on a conversation they have no place to join**

You're having a private conversation, or you are hitting it off with a girl. And here comes a clueless guy trying to talk to you.
He might not have bad intentions, but at that point, it's either you give up your 1:1 conversation or… You throw him under the bus.

How to Throw Someone Under The Bus

The 'throwing under the bus' power move follows this structure:

1. Social faux that undermines you
2. Hit back (socially)
3. Move on
4. .. And leave him on the outside with no way of hitting back

Throwing under the bus is not about escalating or making a big fuss. It's about hitting and then moving on, leaving the bus lover without recourse.
It's a resolute yet subtle move from your side.

Here are a few ways:

- Turning your back on them
- Not replying
- Pretending they're not there
- Turn your face away
- Make a disgusted face for everyone to see
- Start a conversation with someone else, leaving him alone
- Leaving and letting him stand alone

Etc. Etc.

Example

Watch this video and see if you can spot the move:

Of course, you can, you wouldn't be reading here otherwise :).
Here's how she did it:

#1. Flash a Fake Smile

Throwing under the bus usually is not a nasty escalation or an all-out war.

In this case, Trump had authority over her, so avoiding any nastiness was a must.
And her smile keeps the semblance of acceptance and goodwill.

A smile or any sign of friendliness is not a necessary must, but without it's much nastier.

See a great example here:

#2. Power Move (Sarcasm)

Next comes the hit.

It could be coldly uttering "thanks" or sarcastically saying "very funny".
In this case, it was nonverbal sarcasm expressed to her with her smile.
It's as if she were saying:

> Funny, veeeery funny, Donald

Right after that, she cuts him out.

#3. Cut Him Out

The next move is to distance yourself from him or to cut him off from the interaction.

In the Donald Trump example, she turns her face away from him and toward the other guy who was speaking. That effectively ignores him and cuts him out of the interaction.
It also adds a further social slap as it communicates he's not worthy of her attention.

Saving Someone From The Bus

In this case, Donald Trump was partially saved by the man who laughed at his joke. That was a life preserver that he threw him. On the other hand, she was aided by the cowboy guy who kept speaking and all the others around who ignored the joke.

Indeed, the people around you can make all the difference in how a social power move will play out. Read more here:

- How to rescue friends from social assaults
- Saving friends from socially awkward situations

And that's one of the advantages of having lots of power: all the sycophants around will side with the power.

Summary

Throwing someone under the bus is rarely a pleasurable activity.

But sometimes, you just gotta do it to avoid letting the bus lover drag you down. This article showed you a great example of how to throw someone under the bus with great social grace.

Launch: Summary & Review (Jeff Walker)

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Launch (2014) shares a system and a set of steps to help digital marketers and content creators bring their products to market and maximize sales and revenues.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Launch Summary
  - Introduction: Don't Hope, Plan
  - Use Scarcity
  - Use Sequences and Stories
  - Build and Use A Mailing List
  - Product Launch Formula
  - Joint Venture Launch
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Launch Review

Bullet Summary

- You cannot leave your success to chance
- A mailing list is the most essential tool you can dispose of
- Use mental triggers to amplify your sales

Launch Summary

About The Author: Jeff Walker is an online marketing expert. He defines himself as "the creator of the Product Launch Formula", a system that helps digital creators effectively market and sell their products.

Introduction: Don't Hope, Plan

Most businesses succumb to hope marketing.

What's "hope marketing"?

It's hoping that by simply preparing a product, people will buy it.

They think their idea is a winner, their product will be successful, and then, when they finally find the courage to launch it and it's not really selling at all, they quit.

What's the alternative to hope marketing?

A well-planned approach in your launches.

Use Scarcity

Scarcity is a well-known principle as explained by Cialdini in *Influence*.

The author says a good way to use scarcity is to say that your product's price will rise very soon.
For example, you could offer a pre-launch price for a limited time only.

Use Sequences and Stories

Sequences are a great way to build excitement toward the last piece of the sequence.

Think about Harry Potter: what was the book that had fans the most excited about? It was the last one.
Think if you can set your product at the end of a series of sequences.

Stories sell much better than empirical data.
So when you devise your marketing strategy, make sure you do it by telling great stories.

Build and Use A Mailing List

Whatever you do, Jeff Walker says that **your mailing list is the most important asset you own**.

He introduces the idea of a squeeze page, such as a page where users must either leave their email or leave. Personally, I find it too aggressive and don't use it. I know some marketers use their homepage as a squeeze page, but I prefer having an introduction about the course there.

The emailing list is not high-converting, but in values-based business, I explain that my main goal is not to maximize profits but to live well with a business I love and that customers love.

> **The money is in the list**

Product Launch Formula

This is the sequence of a Product Launch Formula:

- **Pre-prelaunch**

The name of the game here is piquing interest and getting early feedback before you even start working on the product.
Don't seem like you're selling or you will turn people off.
The author has some good tips on how to structure the email for feedback.

- **Pre-launch**

Release high-quality content.

First part is why they should care, then what your content will do for them (use a story/case study), and then how your product will help them.

The last part should tell prospects how much they can expect to wait and the sweet deal you'll give to the very first customers (scarcity).

- **Launch**

Release and publicize your product

- **Post-launch**

Follow up with your buying customers and with the followers who haven't yet bought

Joint Venture Launch

I particularly liked the idea of the joint venture launch.

A joint venture launch means partnering with people in your industry to access their own list. You should prove to them that your product sells first (do an internal launch to your list first) and offer them something (a commission on every sale, for example).

If you find good partners to launch with, you could as well double your sales or even more.

[image]

Real-Life Applications

Partner Up!
Link up with people in your space. Don't just think of them as competition, think of how you can work together.

Plan Up!
Plan your launches. Get early feedback, then build suspense, then release on a market that is already ready to buy.

CONS

- **A bit sleazy?**

I am not a big fan of online marketing and what I call "persuasion triggers overload", which I find sneaky and annoying.

Yet, I am aware that if you want to run an online digital business, you need to take them into account.

Still, I don't always appreciate these techniques, and when I read the full title of "*Launch*", I am reminded of why I don't like them:

> Launch: An Internet Millionaire's Secret Formula To Sell Almost Anything Online, Build A Business You Love, And Live The Life Of Your Dreams

"Secret formula"…?

- **Big Upsell**

Launch has a lot of references to Jeff Walker's website and products. But then again, that's maybe part and parcel

of what a successful marketer is supposed to do.

- **Mental Triggers**

Some of the mental triggers Launch recommends are well known and everyone is already using them.
As a matter of fact, am I the only one who's put off by ads with a "limited time only" sticker?
To me, it reads spammy right away and makes me not want to buy a product.

PROS

Solid Foundations
The ideas of getting early feedback, planning, and preparing your market are all solid concepts.

Great Steps for Product Launch
For people without previous knowledge, the steps for a product launch can be real game changers

Launch Review

I'm not (yet) an expert on online marketing so giving a major recommendation at this point would be premature for me.

It's not earth-shattering information and you can find the same information online.

But as a newbie, I definitely did find lots of value in Launch.
And as of now, I can only recommend it.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Anxious-Avoidant Relationship Trap: Analysis & Fixes (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

An anxious-avoidant relationship, also sometimes referred to as an “anxious-avoidant trap”, is a relationship between an anxious attachment type, and an avoidant attachment type.

This article will:

1. Explain what an anxious-avoidant relationship is.
2. Provide you examples
3. Give you the tools to fix the anxious-avoidant trap

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- The Anxious Avoidant Trap
  - #1. Anxious Moves Towards
  - #2. Avoidant Moves Away
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  - #4. Reconciliation
- Why Anxious & Avoidant End Up Together
  - 1. Anxious types think it’s love
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  - 2. Borderline Personality Disorder
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The Anxious Avoidant Trap

The anxious-avoidant relationship, AKA "anxious-avoidant trap", is one of the most common forms of dysfunctional relationships.

It binds together the anxious and the avoidant, the two most antithetical attachment styles.

The anxious-avoidant attachment makes for a terrible relationship because, at its core, the two have opposing approaches to intimacy.

The anxious moves *towards* intimacy, and the avoidant moves *away* from intimacy to regain his space. The anxious need intimacy, and the avoidant needs to maintain independence.

Here is how the trap unfolds on a loop:

#1. Anxious Moves Towards

The anxious type needs and craves lots of intimacy.

And when he doesn't get it, his attachment system activates. In very simple terms, that basically means that he needs to get closer to his partner, both physically and emotionally.

#2. Avoidant Moves Away

The problem is that the avoidant partner reacts in the opposite way.

Avoidants get easily overloaded with too much intimacy and need to regain their space and autonomy by moving away.
When their partner gets too close or stays close for too long, avoidants start to pull away.

#3. Argument Ensues

When the avoidant partner moves away, the anxious partner starts arguments to get the attention they are lacking.

Arguments are often a front that doesn't address the real issue: the lack of intimacy.
Indeed, anxious types are often afraid of asking for intimacy because they're concerned their partner doesn't feel the same way.
Often, they do feel the same way, but they just express their love in very different and sometimes incompatible ways.

On the other hand, the avoidant doesn't address the issues because, well… The avoidant doesn't *want* to solve the issue!
Solving the issue would be easy, but it would mean giving up the physical and emotional buffer that they need.
Indeed, sometimes the avoidants enjoy the fights. Not that he likes the fights per se, but he enjoys what the fights can provide him: a good excuse to get more time on his own.

And if she complains, an easy excuse for him:

> you started the fight darling and you were rather nasty, now leave me alone!

Arguments Don't Get Solved Easily

During fights, anxious people tend to get flooded (basically, "overwhelmed", read more on flooding) and to focus on the negatives.
They overreact and say things they regret.

After the argument, the opposite happens: the anxious person regrets what they said and focuses on the positives of their partner. Now the anxious person wants to mend things and get close again.

But avoidants react differently: after an argument, they turn off their attachment system and only remember the negatives.
Now they want to stay away.. For a while.

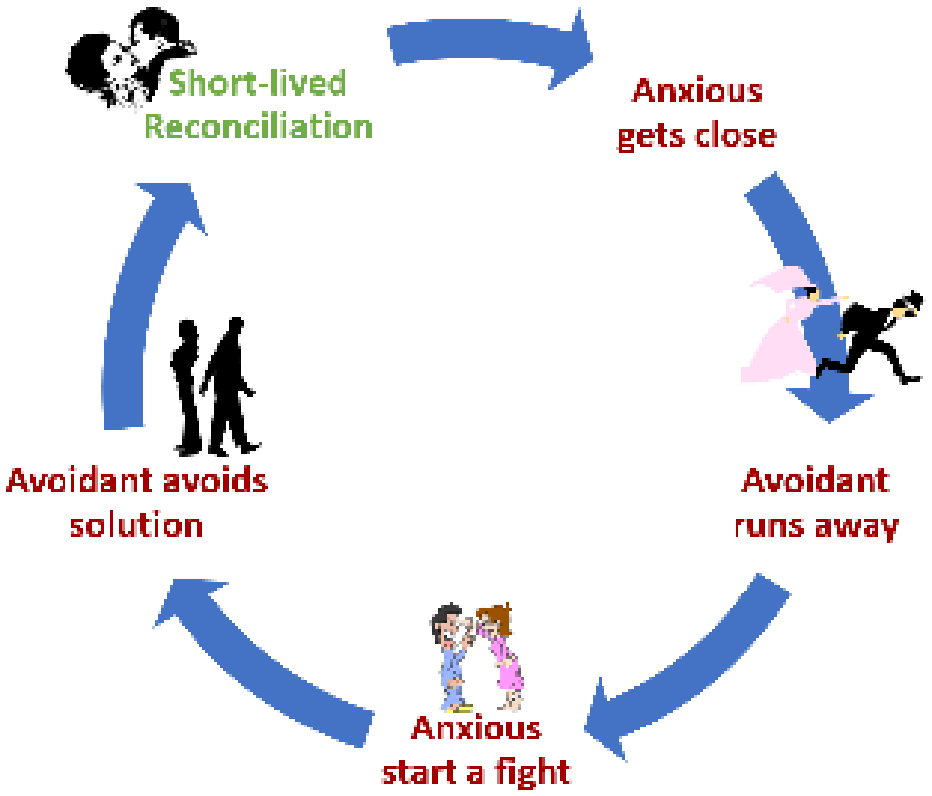
Which makes a reconciliation not always straightforward.

#4. Reconciliation

When reconciliation finally happens, it usually doesn't last long.

It's called the "anxious-avoidant trap", but it should be called the "anxious-avoidant cycle" instead. Because it is indeed a repeated pattern, on a loop.

Notice the pattern below: it's obvious that the unhappy moments far outweigh the positive ones. But still, couples stay together for far longer than the relationship's health would warrant—we'll discuss why later on.



The anxious is too much, and the avoidant is not enough
See that caption?
That caption is exactly what an ex-girlfriend of mine once told me.

> I'm too much for you and you're not enough for me.
> -My ex

It still rings in my ear.
Back then I didn't know about attachment styles, and yet I felt that with one single sentence she had fully summarized all our issues.
That's indeed a great summary of the anxious-avoidant trap.

Now, would you like to take a guess as to who was the anxious and who was the avoidant in that relationship?

Why Anxious & Avoidant End Up Together

If the anxious and avoidants are not compatible, why do they end up together so often?
Here are the main reasons:

1. Anxious types think it's love

Some sources, like Amir Levine, say that the anxious type confuses the ups and downs of their activated attachment system for "real love".

It's important to notice here that the emotional ups and downs are the exact reason why the anxious partner is so attached to the avoidant.

And the opposite is also true.

When anxious types meet a secure partner—a partner who's honest, direct, and *emotionally present*—they find him more boring.
They don't feel the "spark" they get with the avoidant and they think that "it must not be real love" -but it's worth

repeating that it's not really a spark with the anxious: it's just an activated attachment system going awry-.

It's a bit like for the ass*ole / nice guy thing where women sometimes find the latter too "plain" and boring. Avoidants are not the same as ass*oles, but they overlap sometimes and many often (mistakenly) equate the two.

2. Emotional codependency

Some avoidants get their sense of self-esteem when they compare their independence and "power" to how much their partner needs them.

This means that some avoidants only feel strong and independent with a partner who needs and pleads for them. A sad reality for some people: is that they feel strongly about the weaknesses of others.

And that's one of the reasons why avoidants do not date each other: they don't get the kicks of being the strong and dominant ones in the relationship.

In the most extreme cases, this can devolve into a codependent relationship.

3. A question of Numbers

Only 25% of the population is avoidant.

Yet you will meet avoidant attachment types much more often than the raw numbers would suggest.
It's because they are more often on the single market, they are more likely to "look around" when in relationships and they don't date other avoidants.

And they often end up with, guess whom? The anxious, of course.

Gender of Anxious & Avoidants?

Studies show there are more women who are anxious and more men who are avoidants.

This means the chances of the woman being anxious and the man being avoidant are much higher.

This is not to say that there are no anxious men or avoidant women. There are, and below is a video example.

4 Signs of Anxious Avoidant Relationship

By now, you probably know if you are or if you've ever been in an anxious-avoidant attachment.
Here are a few more signs for you:

- **Roller-Coaster Effect**

There's a constant alternation of great times followed by bad ones. Like in the circle above, and that's why the anxious-avoidant attachment is also called the anxious-avoidant trap.

- **Constant feeling of instability**

Anxious-avoidant relationships often last as long as secure ones. But there's always an element of uncertainty, which leads to dissatisfaction among both partners.

- **You feel treated badly**

It's crazy for the anxious attachment type that the avoidant partner treats them more poorly than people who are not as close. But that's how it can end up being for the most avoidant types out there: the closest person can be the biggest threat for them.

- **You feel trapped**

Deep down, you know that this partner and this relationship are not right for you. Yet it's hard for you to leave. But whether you are aware of it or not, all the ups and downs are actually addictive.

The Anxious Type Loses

Since anxious-avoidant relationships often last a long time, it's normal to ask: what happens?

Who gets the upper hand?

Does the avoidant get the distance he wants, or does the anxious person get the intimacy they need?

Well, in a way, neither wins.

Anxious-avoidant relationships indeed tend to be less satisfactory to both partners. But in the bleakness of the overall relationship, it's the anxious who loses the most.
Indeed, after every fight, it's the anxious that has to make concessions to the avoidant to reconcile and re-establish a minimum of intimacy.
And she is the one who has to settle for the little intimacy that the avoidant will dish out.

This is really not an ideal situation.
For the anxious, the relationship is mostly a barren desert of unmet needs with small oases of reconciliation (and again, it's worth repeating: the rare emotional rewards make people addicted in a similar fashion that drugs make us addicted).

And if you're anxious, you might want to ask yourself: Could it be that you can do better than that?

Anxious-Avoidant Attachment Examples

Now, we've talked a lot about theory.

Wouldn't it be cool to have a few examples of Anxious, Avoidant relationships in real life?
Well, I'm glad you asked.

Here I break down three famous movies with my own annotation so you can see *exactly* what we're talking about (I just love great real-life examples to make everything clear :).

#1. Five Easy Pieces

He is the avoidant type, and she is the anxious type.

> **Her**: (seeks closeness)
> **Him**: (gets annoyed)

#2. 500 Days of Summer

As we've said, the anxious-avoidant attachment is more typical with him as the avoidant, but there are plenty of relationships where the roles invert (will put the video example back up as soon as I can).

#3. La Dolce Vita

La Dolce Vita presents the typical fight-reconciliation loop of the anxious-avoidant attachment, with a touch of borderline personality disorder as well:

> **Her**: (seeks closeness)
> **Him**: (drives away)

Overcoming The Anxious Avoidant Trap

What should you do when you are in an anxious-avoidant trap?

That's the million-dollar question, and the answer to that, without knowing your situation, can only be "it's difficult to say".
But here are some truths that can help you decide on the best course of action:

1. The Relationship *Can* Last Long

If the anxious needs for intimacy are not too big and the avoidant needs for independence are not extreme, the relationship can hum along.

Indeed, as perverse as that might sound, anxious and avoidant relationships tend to be long-lasting.
Part of the reason is that **the ups and downs are addictive**, and some anxious people believe they might not be able to find "so much love" with someone else (don't fall for that BS).

However, long-lasting is NOT synonymous with good or healthy. And as we saw earlier, the anxious partner tends to lose out.
So make sure you take the necessary precautions.

2. Be Careful You Don't Become The Enemy

In some anxious avoidant relationships, the avoidant partner will become perennially annoyed with the anxious partner.

We have seen that example in the video above with Jack Nicholson (look at it again, it's really good to explain that dynamic).

It's also possible that the avoidant partner will start seeing the anxious partner as an enemy. They will keep secrets, stop confiding, and actively avoid their spouses.

To avoid it, try to grant the avoidant partner some of his much-needed breaks and avoid thinking in terms of "I'm right, he needs fixing".

3. Assess Your Options

Try to detach yourself emotionally and make an assessment of your options.
Here are a couple of helpful articles:

- How to decide when it's time to break up

4. Don't Take the Blame!

Many anxious types cannot understand why their avoidant partners are moving away.

They feel rejected, they take the blame, and their self-esteem tanks (read how low self-esteem can open the doors to abuse).

Don't fall for that trap: it's not you. And it's not your partner either, in a way. It's simply that you are both wired in a way that makes you two, shall we say, "wired for drama".
And sure, brain wiring does change and you can change it… But that's not to say that it's easy.

5. Make More Friends

There can be more hidden issues compounding anxious avoidant relationships.

But a more common and benign “aggravating circumstance” is the mismatch in the extroversion scale. For example, the avoidant might also be an introvert or an anxious extrovert.
I have already talked about the issues that extroversion mismatch creates with flatmates, where it ends up looking a lot like an anxious-avoidant relationship.
But the good news is that if the anxious is also extroverted, then it’s easier to improve the relationship.

And you do it by increasing the anxious social life.

More friends and acquaintances will help the anxious get her fill of “human connections” outside the relationship, while also giving some more time off to the avoidant.
Win-win.

P.S.:
Just watch out that one of those connections doesn’t become an emotional affair :)-.

6. Focus on Quality, Not Quantity

Learning to bond and connect with people is a life skill.

It’s a skill that makes great relationships and that can also help in the anxious-avoidant relationship.

How can it help?

Here is how: if the avoidant learns to be fully present, to build a human bond and connection, and to really care about the partner, then chances are that *less* time together will actually be needed for the avoidant.
Result: more quality time for the anxious and more lonely time for the avoidant.

And there are no risks of going wrong or overdoing it here: a focus on quality time can *never* go wrong.

The quality time technique seen from the avoidant

7. Try This Crazy Move!

Have your avoidant (or anxious) partner read this article, which will probably be an eye-opener.

After all, one of the reasons why it's so difficult for many couples to survive the anxious avoidant trap is that neither can understand what's happening, and they both end up blaming each other.

Then tell him, tactfully, that you are worried your relationship isn't going to last unless you two make the necessary changes.

If he is in it and *acts* on it, it's a very good sign you can fix it.

Don't Confuse The Trap For These

There are more relationship issues that can compound or be confused with the anxious avoidant attachment.

On top of the extroversion/introversion mismatch we have seen, here are a few:

1. As*holes Are Not Avoidant

Anxious, avoidant attachment is a common relationship.
And it's what some people sometimes mistake for "being in a relationship with an ass*ole".

But while the two can overlap, such as when you have an avoidant who is also an as*hole, an avoidant is not necessarily an as*hole (and vice versa).
Indeed, many avoidants can also be "*nice guys*". And people who look at your relationship from the outside might even be surprised at your issues with "such a nice guy", which increases the risks that the anxious self-blames BTW.

If you are interested, read more here:

- do women like ass*oles: what attachment theory says

If I had to pick a partner for an anxious woman, I'd actually pick an ass*ole for her over an avoidant.

2. Borderline Personality Disorder

The anxious partner might be confused or also present traits of borderline personality disorder.

BPs also switch from fears of abandonment to engulfment, but the swings tend to be wilder and more dramatic.

For more information on BPs, read:

- Stop Walking on Eggshells
- I Hate You, Don't Leave Me (best BPD resource I've read)

3. Emotionally Unavailable Men

The avoidant might also be emotionally unavailable because of trauma or personality.

The Godfather is an example of an emotionally unavailable man, as would be Mr. Big from Sex & The City.

Emotionally unavailable men do miss their partners and do want intimacy. But then they also miss their freedom and independence. Or their guard goes up again and takes the distance again.

Of course, they might pop back into your life just when you need them the least:

3. Highly Sensitive People

Similar to introverts, highly sensitive people have a very sensitive nervous system, which causes them to pick up cues from the environment that most other people miss.

However, they also get overwhelmed easily, which means they need to take "breaks" and sit down in the quietness

of their own space, both mentally and physically, sometimes actually sitting down in a dark, quiet room-.

Highly sensitive people can replicate the anxious avoidant trap by getting close and then needing "time off".
This is more of a benign type of emotional roller coaster, though.

Read more on HSPs here:

- The Highly Sensitive Person

4. Manipulative Relationships

This is a minority of cases, but I need to raise the red flag.

It's a sad reality of life that there are some sick people who purposefully dish out intermittent rewards to make people dependent and addicted.

These relationships might look similar to anxious-avoidant relationships as they also present high emotional highs and deep throughs.
The difference is that they are more extreme, and the avoidant is not so much an avoidant as he is an abuser, a "dark psychologist", a manipulator… Or call him, as you prefer, an asshole, anyway.

Chances are this is not your case, but making sure won't hurt.

Here are a few articles:

- Signs you're dating a sociopath
- Signs of gaslighting

If you suspect this might be the case, I recommend taking the situation very seriously.
You might want to talk to a therapist or someone who knows how to interpret the signs.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

SUMMARY

This article shows you the inner dynamics of the anxious-avoidant relationship.

As a recovering avoidant myself, I know this dynamic all too well, and I can empathize with you and your difficulties.
It's not a great relationship, especially for the anxious partner.

However, whether you are the avoidant or the anxious, the good news is that it's possible to become more secure in your attachment. And it's also possible to improve your anxious-avoidant relationship.

Avoidant Attachment: The Definitive Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

If you want to understand what's an avoidant attachment, you are on the right article.

By the end of this post, you will know what's an avoidant attachment, how people become avoidant, what are real-life examples of avoidant attachment, and, finally, how to overcome an avoidant attachment.

The avoidant can love… But in her very own way, with emotional pushbacks

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- What is Avoidant Attachment
- Avoidant Traits
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  - 2. Braggart
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  - 5. Potentially Dark Triads Traits
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  - 7. Get Closer Indirectly
- Don’t Confuse Avoidant Attachment With…
- SUMMARY

What is Avoidant Attachment

The *Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych and Relationships* defines avoidant attachment as:

> Attachment avoidance is characterized by a discomfort with closeness, a chronic distrust of others, and excessive self-reliance (Brennan et al. , 1998; Gillath et al. , 2016; Karantzas et al. , 2010)

In brief, **avoidants are uncomfortable with too much intimacy**.
Or, sometimes, avoidants are uncomfortable with intimacy, period.

The avoidants’ attachment system works the opposite way than for a secure and anxious type: when someone gets too close, they feel the need to get away.

Avoidant Traits

	Anxious	Avoidant	Secure
Traits	· Clings to relationships · Anxious during separation · Fearful of abandonment · Overwhelmed by emotions · Mixes thoughts and feeling	· Ends relationships too soon · Uncomfortable being emotionally close · Intimacy on a surface level · Unaware of thoughts & feelings	· Can form relationships, but also comfortable alone · Can manage emotions · Can separate thoughts and feelings
Differentiation	Low	Low	High
Attitude	Hesitant	Guarded	Confident
Barriers to Assertiveness	· Afraid to speak up for fear of creating distance or rejection · Fear of overwhelming others · Inability to identify and tune in to emotions · Make excuses for people’s patterns of boundary crossing [especially when attachment is already formed]	· Disconnected from own emotions, especially during conflict or stress · Prevents conflicts [or avoids] · Avoids discussing emotions [for fear of getting “too close”] · Confuses felt emotions as the result of an occurrence · Confuses partners’ search for felt intimacy as crossing his boundaries · “Lets things go” even when it bothers or hurt him	· May have difficulty identifying emotions · May have difficulty communicating emotions · May lack confidence to be assertive or speak directly
Goals	· Attachment’s self-awareness · Acknowledge value of close relationships & interdependence · Connect to emotions · Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants · Develop communication skills	· Attachment’s self-awareness · Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants · Develop emotional management strategies · Develop communication skills	· Attachment’s self-awareness · Develop emotional vocabulary · Develop and/or solidify assertiveness skills

Based on Hanks, 2016

Let's now review some typical traits of avoidant attachment personality:

1. Secretive

Avoidant individuals tend to engage in low levels of self-disclosure.

The authors of *The Handbook of Relationship Initiation* say it reflects their fear of dependence and lack of trust in others.

2. Braggart

Avoidant people tend to present an inflated view of themselves to others in order to appear strong and self-sufficient.
This approach often impairs, rather than promotes, the development of intimacy (Mikulincer, 1998).

3. Comfortable Wiht Impossible Relationships

Sometimes avoidant attachment types will go for long distances and other hopeless relationships.

It may be an unconscious choice to maintain their freedom and distance.

Aron, commenting on research showing that avoidant experience more unrequited love than secure types suggested it may be a way to experience love, without the relationship.

4. More Likely to Cheat

The avoidant attachment is part of the "player psychology makeup".

Such as, seeking more short-term mates, rather than long-term pair bonds.

As part of this shorter-tern strategy, avoidants tend to enjoy sex without commitment more than other styles do, suggests psychologist Martin Seligman (2002), although that doesn't necessarily mean they do have more sex.

When in a relationship, avoidant attachment types are more interested in individuals of the opposite sex.
This "interest" also translates to a higher incidence of infidelity among avoidants (*Dewall et al. 2011*).

In some studies, up to twice as much as the other attachment styles.
On the flip side, they are less likely to develop strong feelings for the affair partner (*Allen, Baucon, 2004*).

If you want to understand the unpleasant phenomenon of cheating a bit more also check the following

- How to overcome infidelity
- Why people cheat
- Emotional infidelity: what is it and how it happens

5. Potentially Dark Triads Traits

Quoting Lyons, M. (2019):

> research has found that those high in psychopathy (Jonason, Lyons, & Bethell, 2014) and Machiavellianism (Brewer, Bennett, Davidson et al. , 2018) have avoidant attachment styles

The avoidant attachment style supports the psychopaths' and Machiavellians' preference for short-term dating and uncommitted relationships.

6. More Likely to Date Anxious Types

We spoke about the Avoidant Attachment Style in the overview of the four attachment styles.

Avoidants rarely end up in relationships with other avoidants and Amir Levine says they become somewhat less avoidant when dating a secure attachment.

It's not uncommon for avoidants to end up with an anxious. When avoidants pair with an anxious, they form the toxic anxious attachment trap.
It's a type of dysfunctional relationship with lots of drama and lots of up and downs. I welcome you to check the article so you will know what you need to avoid.

7. Mentally Biased Against Relationships

The literature refers to the avoidant's biases as "deactivating strategies".

We list them here, together with examples:

Mental Biases	Examples
Black & White Bias	I could never live with her, this prove it I knew she wasn't the right one!
Generalizations	I was born to be alone We will never get along
Threats Bias	She's controlling my life, I gotta stop it She always pushes me, I must hit back
Unfavorable Comparisons	My mom is so much kinder My ex would have never done it
Malice Bias	She forgot her purse here on purpose She's obviously trying to annoy me

8. Unassertive

Overall, avoidants tend to be lower power than secure types.

Their closeness can be mistaken for power, but it's just a front.
Says psychologist Martin Seligman:

- **Lack of confidence**, especially in social situations
- **Regard people with suspicion**, guilty until proven innocent (bitter cynicism, not positive cynicism)
- Put **greater emphasis on achievement** than relationships
- Keep people and partners at arms' distance
- **They don't disclose**, they don't tell you how they feel

And they are also worst at assertiveness, an all-important communication skill.

Are Avoidants Truly More Independent?

We all have a fascination for autonomy and independence.

It feels like total unneediness and… Power!

And it's not totally untrue.

The *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology* says that "Attachment-related avoidance is associated with a reduced desire for closeness and intimacy".

However, it seems to be at least not *total* unnediness.

And studies prove that avoidants aren't so independent after all.

To begin with, avoidants are as happy to be accepted by others as anyone else. And their happiness increases when they know they will be socially successful (Carvallo, 2006).
And, under highly stressful scenarios, they behave like anxious attachment style types (Levine, 2010).

On the other hand, In the case of a loss, avoidants tend to suppress or avoid attachment-related emotions. Evidence shows that in general, individuals with an avoidant attachment style adapt well to loss (Fraley & Bonanno, 2004; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008).

I'd venture to say that avoidants have the same basic needs, but adopted an attachment that masks those needs.
So although the need is still there, they "cover it up", resulting in a strange mix of higher independence and lower intimacy, albeit still not 100% genuine.

Avoidant Attachment Examples

There are many examples of avoidant attachment in the movies. They make for a lot of excitement -to watch- and big emotional swings.

Check the article on the anxious-avoidant trap for a few more video examples on top of the ones here:

#1. Mr Big: Moving Away

Here's a typical avoidant: Mr. Big from Sex and The City.
Not exactly a great relationship, right?

We back up all our videos for Power University

What makes him avoidant?

When Carrie proposes to move to Paris, he doesn't want her to move "for him". He feels the tightening circle of responsibility closing in on him and has to break free.
The "relationship" he wants is the avoidant utopic relationship. It's a relationship where he can move any time he

wants, wherever he wants, without considering the impact on the partner.

Carrie is right when she says that it is about them and not about work. She's not fully correct though in believing it's fear that prevents him from getting close.
It's not so much fear, but more of a "reverse attachment" whereby every avoidant needs to push back to preserve their space.
Avoidands will miss their partners once they have regained distance. At this point, they will seek to reel their partners back in, only to need distance later on. And there goes the carousel again.

Note:
When Mr. Big says "I don't wanna talk about this anymore", that's stonewalling behavior right there.

#2. Craving Intimacy... Only When In Need

Mr. Big again, a perfect example that avoidants also want intimacy.

But in special situations, often when they're down in the gutter and need help up.

When in need an avoidant can look like he's healed. But it might be just temporary.

Overcoming Avoidant Attachment

To have a happy relationship -and happy life-, you need to overcome the shortcomings of the avoidant attachment style.
Here are the steps:

1. Own It

First step, is to acknowledge it.

And it's already something that very few men do.
Dismissing adults identified via interview methods almost always rate themselves "secure" on attachment questionnaires (Creasey & Ladd, 2005).

1.2. Keep It! There's Nothing to Fix

Also, don't jump to the conclusion you must "fix yourself".

The author for one is an avoidant and is NOT trying to change it.

If you want to do the same, you can stop reading here.
Otherwise, keep doing.

1. Work Around The Limitation

Have you learned how the psychology of avoidance?

Good.

Once you become aware of your deactivating strategies, you must ask yourself whether or not your thoughts are real or if they are exaggerated by your avoidant tendencies.

Are the imperfections you start noticing real deal breakers or is it that you're overplaying them to distance yourself?
Mental blocks also include fantasizing about sex with others and thinking she's pathetic for being so needy.

Work around them
Once you're aware of your mental blocks, work around them.
For example, when you feel the urge to pull away, explain what's happening to your partner. Tell her you need time

on your own… And that you will be back more energized to spend time together.

As a matter of fact, to help your partner understand, let them read this same article.

2. Associate Avoidance with Weakness

Knowing the science of avoidant attachment is also helpful.

And here's what the science says: avoidant attachment types also need intimacy. But they repress it subconsciously. And as we've seen studies show that when a big upset happens in the avoidant attachment type's life, they become insecure.
And that's another reason to strive for a secure attachment.

3. Drop Cool

Some avoidant attachment types think it's cool to be an avoidant because it makes them stronger.

As we've seen above, it makes you weaker. And only hurts the people around you.
Here's an example of avoidant hiding behind the mask of coolness:

Until you realize there is nothing cool in being avoidant, you will never truly emotionally mature

4. Associate A Secure Attachment to Strength

Know this:

A solid relationship with a secure emotional attachment will make you stronger and more confident.

Secure attachment types are stronger than avoidant ones, and part of it is because of the solid foundations they have with their relationship.
Instead of the quest for autonomy, look for a partner with whom to establish a secure attachment.

5. Find a Secure Partner

Secure partners have the power to make the anxious and the avoidant attachment types also more secure.
You will recognize secure types because they play little games and talk straight.

6. Drop The Idea of "The One"

Avoidant attachment types often look for mistakes in their partner as a subconscious excuse to move away. And then they tell themselves she wasn't the one.
There's no such as thing as "the one" who is perfect. Understand instead that you're an active participant in making the relationship as good as it can be.

7. Get Closer Indirectly

It's easier for avoidants to get closer if there's a shared task in between. For example, intimacy while cooking dinner and eating together is easier than sitting on a couch and hugging without doing anything.

So you can ease your way in with shared activities.

Don't Confuse Avoidant Attachment With...

The avoidant attachment is somewhat similar to an emotionally unavailable man and it's what sometimes women refer to as "an ass*ole".
But it's neither, really.

Emotionally unavailable

While emotionally unavailable is mostly neutral and cold, avoidant are capable of intimacy… Until they subconsciously block themselves. And while emotionally unavailable stays on an even keel, the avoidant goes through cycles of missing and then pushing the partner away.

As*holes

And while as*holes tend to be confident and not care about their partners, avoidants come in all shapes and sizes.

They can be confident, but also shy and un-confident. And they can also actually care about their partner.
But still unable to provide on the intimacy level of the relationship.

SUMMARY

Avoidants are uncomfortable with intimacy and constantly need to defend their space.
They subconsciously repress their needs for intimacy and they focus on they can more easily focus on the negatives of their partners.

Avoidant attachment types make for really bad relationships, especially when coupled with an anxious attachment style.
In this article, you learned what you can do to overcome the avoidant attachment style curse.

10 Steps to End Toxic Relationships You're Addicted To

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Getting out of a toxic relationship with someone you are addicted to can be difficult.

But you can do it.

And this post is here to help.

Note: I will write from a woman's perspective. But the same steps can apply to a man.

Contents

- Introduction: It's Not Love
- 1. Get leverage over yourself
- 2. Plan ahead of time
- 3. Keep a journal
- 4. Prepare your support network
- 5. Stop sharing life events
- 6. Do exciting things with new people
- 7. Lie to him
- 8. Give less, be more egoistic
- 9. Start an affair
- 10. If sex is great, get a vibrator
- 11. If you're on the pill, quit it
- 12. Get emotionally close to someone else
- Should You End a Toxic Relationship?
- SUMMARY

Introduction: It's Not Love

First of all, if you think it's love, know that it's probably *not* love.

Understand that "someone you love" and "toxic relationship" is an oxymorons. Just because you have feelings for someone it doesn't mean they are justified.

But, most importantly, it's not love but your *attachment system* has gone awry. It's possible that you have an anxious attachment style and you cannot tolerate the distance.

If he is an abusive partner, it's also possible that it's the abuse that is keeping you hooked.
Don't worry: there is truly no shame in that and it's more common than you think.
Relationship researcher John Gottman was shocked to hear that woman after woman told him that the hottest sex they had was right after a beating.
Of course, it was not the sex that was good, it was the perverse attraction of dominance and violence.

That's fine.
But from now on, you will only accept love from someone who's able to provide a healthy relationship.

And now let's follow the steps for getting you out of this toxic relationship you're in:

1. Get leverage over yourself

Most women go back to their abusers (*Buss, 2021*).

That is not a mystery, unluckily.
And plenty of ink has been written on the "why" that is the case.
This article though is more about the HOW, and how to execute the breakup.

And the "how" is that while now HE has leverage on you, you need to remove *his* leverage, and gain *your own* leverage over yourself.

No statistics or moral argument will do (Becker, 1997).
Instead, you want emotional leverage. Some way of doing it is to ask yourself:

1. How would you feel if a man treated your daughter/mother / best friend the way he treats you?
2. How do you differ from your daughter/mother / best friend? Don't you deserve the same?
3. How would your daughter/mother / best friend feel if she saw your partner abusing you?
4. What kind of role model are you being for the people you care about?

The difference is that your daughter has you, but… You don't have you. If you don't get out soon, your daughter won't have you either.

2. Plan ahead of time

Don't break up with the abusive partner at a moment's notice.

The attachment will be too strong and you'll suffer more. And the risk of getting back will be too strong.
Start thinking that you will break up instead, and plan your move in advance. The more you think about the breakup, the more the relationship will become a thing of the past in your mind.

And once you start considering your relationship finished, the act of actually ending it will be much easier.

3. Keep a journal

Keep a journal.

Why?

Because studies show that partners who keep a journal break up at a higher rate than those who don't.

But we'll go one step further.

I don't want you to keep just a normal journal with ups and downs: in your chronicles, you will mostly focus on the negatives of the toxic relationship.
A journal with a bias on a partner's defects and relationship issues will do two good things:

1. will focus your mind on the negatives and
2. it will build a wall between the two of you.

The journal is your secret to keep away from your partner.
And the more secrets you have, the less connected the two of you are. Use the journal afterward as well to remind yourself why, indeed, it was a bad relationship.

4. Prepare your support network

Do you know why lots of people go back to abusive partners?

Because they don't know what else to do and where else to go!

Crazy, isn't it?

Don't fall for that: options are power.
And **options will empower you to move on for good**.

Build a network of friends and family that will be there for you once you end your toxic relationship. Don't underestimate this step: it's important to have someone to confide with and someone to take your mind off.

This is one of the reasons women are more socially successful than men: they are better at building support networks.

5. Stop sharing life events

Stop confiding with him, stop sharing stories about your day, and stop telling your feelings.

Why?

Because it's that sense that "our partner knows us" that keeps us longing to get back to our partners.

But the opposite is also true.
The less your partner really knows the real you, including what's going on with your life, the easier it will be to leave.

The less information you feed your toxic relationship, the easier it will be to detach yourself.

6. Do exciting things with new people

What is it that often breaks people apart?

It's moving on with our lives while our partners don't change with us.

Start doing just that!
Go skydiving, start Toastmasters, hit the gym or an oratory club. Whatever it is that you might like and your partner won't do.

The more you move ahead without your partner, the more you will get out of your toxic relationship.. Naturally.
And if it involves adrenaline, all the better: it'll make you feel alive *without* your partner.

> Move forward… And he'll naturally be rear-view mirror stuff

7. Lie to him

Good relationships are built on honesty.

And **dying relationships are built on lies**.

When you start building a wall of lies between you and him, the disconnect between you and him will grow. And the larger it grows, the farther apart you move.

There is also a psychological factor here that helps, and it's cognitive dissonance.
Since we usually lie to people we don't really care too much for, your brain will also think that you must really dislike him if he's not worthy of the truth.

8. Give less, be more egoistic

Here is another tip straight from psychology:

The more we give, the more we feel like someone must be worthy of us.

But the opposite is also true: the less you give, the less you think he is worthy.
By giving less, you also set in motion a "vicious circle". Vicious circles are how most relationships end, and once you start on… You end up right where you wanted to be.

9. Start an affair

Simple, yet so effective.

Going home after the high of an exciting affair will quickly drive a wedge between you and the toxic partner in a way that nothing else can match.

There is a caveat though.
This is only valid if you can start an affair with someone "better". **Don't make the mistake of just sleeping with someone randomly**. That will make you feel bad and, icing on the cake, will subconsciously tell you that your partner is not that bad after all.

But find someone more exciting, and you're golden.

10. If sex is great, get a vibrator

If sex is one of the things that keep you close to him, get a vibrator.

If you only had sex with one person so far, it's easy to forget that orgasms can be had with… Pretty much anything.

For men, pay a hooker.
Get the hottest woman you've ever had. If you're into boobs, pick one with huge boobs.
If you're into assessment, pick the finest ass you've ever seen.

11. If you're on the pill, quit it

When you quit the pill, your hormone levels change.

That makes it possible that your feelings for him will change as well.

But getting back to condoms will also help. It will give you the feeling that you two are a bit more distant.

And it will give you the sensation you two are moving apart, which is exactly what you want.
And if he gets winey: even better. The more you can draw out poor behavior from him, the more you'll be able to leave the abuser.

12. Get emotionally close to someone else

Love has a lot of overlap with emotional intimacy. It's rare that we're in love with someone without any emotional connection.

Thus, if you can get emotionally close to someone else, then getting out of your toxic relationship will happen naturally.

Some smart colleague, someone in your same situation or, better of all, someone from your new activities is perfect.

Should You End a Toxic Relationship?

Well, if it's *truly* toxic, then yes.

If you are not yet sure, here are a few resources for you:

- Avoidant and anxious attachments
- Signs of abusive relationships
- Jealous boyfriend or paranoid boyfriend?
- Signs you're dating a sociopath

There is a lot more, but those will help you get started.

Most of all, check this article that will help you think through your relationship and come to a decision:

- Should I break up? Diagnostic questions to find out

SUMMARY

Toxic relationships often have a pattern of fighting and making up that's addictive.

That's fine, it's normal, don't beat yourself up over it.

The secret sauce is to start thinking you will end it beforehand. That will make your partner more and more alien to you. And in the meanwhile, you will start building a life outside your relationship. And will drive a natural wedge between you two.

Then add the other steps in here and getting out of the toxic relationship will be a breeze of pleasure.

The 4 Horsemen of Relationship Apocalypse (And How to Stop Them)

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse is a concept developed by psychologist John Gottman to describe four specific negative behaviors that can undermine relationships.

Based on decades of observational research at the University of Washington's "Love Lab," Gottman found that when these behaviors become a regular pattern, they predict relationship breakdown with over 90% accuracy. That's why understanding and fixing them is one of the most powerful moves you can make in your relationship.

This article gives you a quick but actionable breakdown of what the four horsemen are, how they show up in daily life, and what you can do to stop them from ruining your connection.

Contents

- What Are the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse?
- #1. Criticism
  - Antidote to Criticism
- #2. Defensiveness
  - Antidote to Defensiveness
- #3. Contempt
  - Antidote to Contempt
- #4. Stonewalling
  - Antidote to Stonewalling
- Summary

What Are the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse?

These four destructive behaviors: Criticism, Defensiveness, Contempt, and Stonewalling, are what Gottman calls the "Four Horsemen of the Relationship Apocalypse."

As an overview:

- Criticism and contempt suggest a lack of basic **interpersonal respect**.
- Defensiveness may point to ego fragility, and potential narcissism
- Stonewalling reflects a lack of interpersonal skills

Below is a practical overview of each, with real-life examples and fast antidotes. If you want to go deeper, follow the internal links to full guides for each issue.

#1. Criticism

Criticism happens when you attack your partner's personality or character, instead of focusing on a specific behavior.

Unlike a complaint ("I feel ignored when you don't text back"), criticism makes sweeping judgments like:

> "You only think about yourself. You're so selfish."

It shifts the focus from an action that can be addressed to who your partner is, making them feel defective or attacked. Over time, repeated criticism erodes intimacy and trust.

Antidote to Criticism

Use "I" statements that express your feelings without blaming, and focus on specific behaviors instead of general character judgments.

Example*: "I felt hurt when you didn't ask me about my day. I really value being checked in on."*

Partners on the receiving end of criticism must:

- **Analyze your behavior**: are you generally behaving in a respect-worthy fashion?
- **Analyze the criticism**: is it fair?
- **Analyze the criticism delivery**: is it framed respectfully, or as an attack?

If you're on the receiving end of unfair, aggressive, or demeaning criticism, you must **enforce boundaries of mutual respect**.

Read more about criticism here.

#2. Defensiveness

Defensiveness is a way of warding off a perceived attack, but it often ends up blocking empathy and resolution.

Partners become defensive when they feel accused, attacked, or unfairly blamed. Instead of listening or trying to understand, they deflect, deny, or counterattack—often without realizing it.

This is especially common in people with a *fixed mindset* or a fragile ego.

Unfortunately, defensiveness communicates to your partner that their feelings don't matter—and worse, it can make them feel alone or even crazy for bringing something up.

Example from the movie "Blue Valentine":

> **Both**: (attack and defend, without ever trying to understand each other)

Antidote to Defensiveness

Instead of defending or blaming, pause and try to hear the deeper concern. Take responsibility, at least partially, when it's fair to do so.

Example: 'I see why that upset you. I wasn't thinking clearly, and I get how that came off'.

Read more about defensiveness here.

#3. Contempt

Contempt is the most dangerous of the four. It goes beyond criticism and involves mocking, sneering, sarcasm, name-calling, or body language that signals superiority.

Contempt is not just hurtful—it's toxic. It often reflects deep-seated resentment and a lack of respect. Gottman found it to be the strongest predictor of divorce.

Example*:*

Contempt can be expressed with facial expressions or with mean comments that sub-communicate disgust, superiority, or lack of respect

Antidote to Contempt

The antidote to contempt is building a culture of respect and appreciation. Start by noticing the things your partner does well, and say them out loud.

Since contempt often stems from unresolved resentment or anger, work on emotional regulation, and if needed, take space before speaking.

For partners who are on the receiving end of contempt, you must **earn your partner's respect** first, and then **call out the poor behavior**.

Read more about contempt here.

#4. Stonewalling

Stonewalling is when one partner shuts down and withdraws from interaction instead of staying engaged.

This might look like silent treatment, walking away, or simply going emotionally blank during a conflict. It's common when someone feels overwhelmed or overstimulated—but the impact is disconnection and frustration.

In heterosexual couples, it's statistically more common for men to stonewall, and for women to feel emotionally abandoned when it happens.

Example from "Crazy, Stupid, Love":

> **Her**: (talks about the betrayal)
> **Him**: (doesn't reply, and jumps out of the car)

Antidote to Stonewalling

Learn to recognize when you're emotionally flooded, and take a short break (20+ minutes) to calm down. But crucially, return to the conversation when you're ready.

Read more about stonewalling here.

Summary

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are powerful predictors of relationship breakdown. Fortunately, they're also reversible with awareness and effort.

Men must learn to:

- **Earn respect from their partners**, enforce boundaries, and give respect back
- **Develop an antifragile ego**, move past 'thin-skinned narcissism', strengthen your mind and self-esteem, and learn not to take things too personally
- **Learn to face issues head-on**, without withdrawing

If you notice any of these patterns in your relationship, that's not a reason to panic, but an opportunity to change course.

Use the antidotes, behave like a high-power man who respects her partner, and you may have a healthy, long-lasting relationship.

Anxious Attachment Style? This Is How You Should Date

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Dating for individuals with an anxious attachment style can be tricky.

And if you follow the standard women dating literature, chances are that you are setting yourself up for pain and failure.

But don't worry, by the end of this article, you will know how you can date well as an anxious person.

Note:
I will write this article from the woman's perspective because statistically it's more likely you're a woman. But this article applies to both genders.

Contents

- Anxious Dating Needs
- Why Anxious Should Be Straightforward
  - 1. Common dating advice attracts avoidant partners
  - 2. When you feign disinterest he decides the level of intimacy (without you having a say)
  - 3. Fake beginnings mean future troubles
  - 3. Fakeness smells
  - 4. Lower self esteem
- Effective Dating For Anxious Types
  - 1. Accept Your Needs
  - 2. Show Your True Colors
  - 3. Express your needs
  - 4. Find a Secure Partner
- SUMMARY

Anxious Dating Needs

In short, this is what an anxious need from dating:

> They need intimacy but are afraid of showing their need for intmacy while at the same fearing that their partner does not want them.

With this premise, the dating literature is not helpful for anxious daters.
As a matter of fact, **the common dating advice is dangeorus for anxious types**.

If you have been reading any dating books for women, you will realize that most of the most popular ones can be boiled down to very few tenets they all repeat:

1. Show less interest than he does
2. Be unavailable
3. Pretend you don't want a relationship

Amir Levine in his seminal book on attachment styles though righteously points out that's a very bad strategy for anyone with an anxious attachment style.

Indeed, you should do the opposite of what the dating literature recommends.

Why Anxious Should Be Straightforward

Scarcity is a known principle that makes us want more of whatever is scarce (Cialdini).
So, in principle, it also works in dating (but with important exceptions).

However, it doesn't work too well for the anxious attachment style for the following reasons:

1. Common dating advice attracts avoidant partners

When you act like you don't want and don't need intimacy, guess who will be comfortable with you?

Of course you will attract partners who want distance

It's much better instead to show your true colors early on.

When you demand for the intimacy you need right from the beginning it's more likely you will find out early if the person you are dating can accommodate you or not.

You want to weed out as soon as possible emotionally unavailable men and avoidant men (with which you would form the terrible anxious avoidant trap).

- Find out here the signs of an avoidant

2. When you feign disinterest he decides the level of intimacy (without you having a say)

Guess what happens when you don't demand what you need?

The other party decides it for you.

The common dating advice is to never show interest so that he will show lots of interest, chase you and seek more intimacy with you.

That might "work", sometimes, if you meet a guy who chases a lot and wants to see you a lot.

But there is a huge problem with that.

And the problem is that you never get to know the real him, and you risk wasting a lot of time with someone who is not a good fit.

Worst of all, if you meet an avoidant, then you are allowing him to get his cake and eat it too.
Basically, he can enjoy intimacy when together and then drop off the radar for as long as he wants.

What's the alternative?

The alternative is that you date more honestly and more respectfully of you needs. Ask and demand how much you expect of him, so that you can quickly assess if you are compatible.

3. Fake beginnings mean future troubles

Dating is a bit like weighing each other up at the beginning.

And assessing for compatibility.

It's normal everyone tries to be in their best behavior.
But if being on your best behavior means behaving the opposite of who you are and what you need… Then it's more likely you will end up in all the wrong relationships.

By all means, show yourself at your best because your partner does the same.
But don't behave the opposite of what you want and need. If you have an anxious attachment style, pretending that you don't care is self-defeating.

I can guarantee you that playing the "feigning disinterest game" is self-defeating from personal experience.
One of my girlfriend was hiding her avoidant personality.
It was awesome in the beginning.
She fell in love, I fell in love… And then the train-wreck. Her demands were too much for me. She was an anxious, I was an avoidant.

Had she been honest from the start we'd have saved time and hearts.

3. Fakeness smells

When you act, you act.

And you can only act for so much and so long before cracks will start to appear. I can tell you as much as an avoidant myself and I could often see the games sometimes girls were playing.

From the random phone call of her waiting for the bus that, guess what, stops in front of my place to the text message complaining how busy she is to that forced reminder that "no, she doesn't think of me that often".
Guys with a bit of experience can see through that.

4. Lower self esteem

When we act contrary to our feelings and value, our self esteem tanks (read ego and self esteem). And you don't want that.
Low self esteem is also the breeding ground for abusive relationships.

Effective Dating For Anxious Types

And here's how an anxious attachment style can get better at dating.

1. Accept Your Needs

In 7 biggest mistakes women do in early dating I mentioned an ex girlfriend of mine who always fought her needs

for intimacy trying to appear stronger.

But that's not strong, that's weak.

Most anxious attachment style types indeed often feel the pressure of society -and feminism- on being more independent-.
But why should you listen to what others tell you to value?

But most importantly, it's only by getting what you need that you can grow more emotionally stable.
Studies indeed show that when an anxious meets a secure partner who can provide reassurance, they become less anxious.

Yes you read that right.
The best way to cure anxious attachment is by getting intimacy. Not by trying to repress it.

There is a partner out there who enjoys exactly the same things. No need to change yourself (when it's not needed).

2. Show Your True Colors

Once you accept yourself, it's time to also show your true self.

As usual, the virtue is often in the middle.

If you feel you need to hug someone tight the very first time you meet them, well… That you might want to resist.
And save it for at least until the first date has been going on for a few hours :).

3. Express your needs

If you've been dating for a while and need the relationship to move to the next gear, whatever that means for you, state it.
As Steve Harvey says, demands are often a sign of high quality.

4. Find a Secure Partner

Anxious partners become less anxious when they date a secure partner.
Try to date a secure partner.

SUMMARY

Understanding your needs and attachment style is the very first step to dating well as an anxious.

The anxious attachment style is the one that has to be more careful when it comes to dating as it's the style with the biggest needs.

As a man recovering from an avoidant attachment I can tell you that too many women wasted time and heartache on me.
And they'd avoided that with a more direct communication and by showing their true selves earlier.

Anxious Attachment Style: Overview, Examples & Solutions

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Do you have an anxious attachment style?

This article gives you a quick yet comprehensive overview of the anxious attachment style, including real-life examples, and what you can do to overcome the anxious' limitations.

Contents

- What Is Anxious Attachment
  - Attachment Systems Gone Awry
  - Why It Evolved
  - Traits And Behaviors
  - Thoughts
  - Behavior
  - Anxious Attachment Styles by Gender
  - How Anxious Become Anxious
- Drawbacks of Being Anxious
- Anxious Attachment In Relationships
  - Anxious Attachment With Avoidant Attachment
  - Anxious Attachment With Secure Attachment
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  - 1. Become Aware
  - 2. Be Selective In Your Dating
  - 3. Show Your True Self

- 4. Learn to use Direct Communication
- 5. Differentiate Love From Roller Coaster
- 6. Pick Partners Based on Intimacy
- 7. Find a Secure Partner

- Anxious Attachment Arguments
- SUMMARY

What Is Anxious Attachment

Individuals with an anxious attachment style crave and need intimacy from, but is fearful (anxious) that they may lose their partner, or never be loved back.

Sometimes also referred to as “anxious-ambivalent”, it is one of four possible attachment styles.

Attachment styles refer to patterns of interpersonal relationships, and they are most salient and most visible in romantic and intimate relationships.

Attachment Systems Gone Awry

People with an anxious attachment style have a highly sensitive and often active *attachment system*.

The attachment system is a natural, inborn mechanism to track the availability of our attachment figures (that would be: mothers for children and romantic partners for adults).

That means that any slight changes in the availability of the attachment figure -mother or boyfriend- make the anxious type feel threatened.
And she will not calm down until she gets close to his partner again or until the partner confirms his availability.

See a good example from the movie “La Dolce Vita”:

Why It Evolved

Why does the anxious even exist, if it seems so poor?

An evolutionary perspective posits that, to evolve, it had to work in at least some environments.

In the *Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych and Relationships* the authors suggest the anxious clings to its partner to maximize investment, and keep the commitment:

> attachment anxiety is assumed to be associated with physiological arousal and hyperactivating behaviors, designed to pressure a romantic partner to give more attention and support.

Feeney and Karantzas (2017) call it an egoistic approach that neglects the partner’s needs to fulfil one’s own needs and desires.

Traits And Behaviors

Thoughts	Behavior
Worshiping • Remembering only good qualities • Putting partner on a pedestal	**Constant Contact** • Calling and texting several times a day • Waiting with bated breath for his text • Moving around their house or workplace

Emotional Over-investment • Constantly thinking about him • Difficulty concentrating on other tasks	**Attention Seeking** • Threatening to break up • Tell him she'd be better off without him
Low Self Esteem • Fear you'll never meet someone new • "Maybe he will change… "	**Hostility** • Arguments out of nothing • Meanness & contempt (you'll later regret)
Anxiety & Pain • Feeling calm only in his presence • Discord causes major grief	**Manipulations** • **Games** such as: faking busy, not texting back, making him jealous • **Keeping scores**, waiting for him to make up, attacking the partner when he doesn't

Anxious attachment is also correlated with:

- **Rush disclosure** to speed up emotional intimacy, which often backfires (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991)
- **Devalue themselves** to others
- **Vulnerable narcissism** (Besser & Priel, 2009)
- **Anticipate rejection** so either don't approach, or fail to approach effectively (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2006)
- **Generally anxious**: in therapy, preoccupied adults demand extra appointments, contact therapists between sessions, and demand more support, yet seem unwilling to make progress

It's rarer, but sometimes the anxious attachment style pulls away instead of moving closer.
I give a few examples of pulling away in my article on the biggest mistakes women do in dating.

Anxious Attachment Styles by Gender

Studies seem to suggest there are more women with an anxious attachment style than men.

And there are more avoidant men, which means anxious women should be very watchful not to end up with avoidant men.

How Anxious Become Anxious

The current literature agrees that our attachment is part of genes, past life experiences, and part parental behavior.

In the case of the anxious attachment, it's possible that we had a distant parent who didn't soothe us enough.
That made us slightly "emotionally scarred", and we seek constant reassurance that yes, our lovely (mother/partner) is still there.

Dr. Karyl McBride in *Will I Ever Be Good Enough* says that narcissistic mothers are especially distant and make their children particularly insecure when it comes to receiving love.
Narcissistic mothers are more likely to raise anxious children, says McBridge offering this popular movie scene as an example.

However, other studies point out that it depends on what type of narcissism we're referring to. Write Spivak et al in the *Handbook of The Psychology of Narcissism*:

> *Otway and Vignoles (2006) found grandiose narcissism to be associated with recollections of parents as both cold and excessively admiring;* ***whereas vulnerable narcissism was found to be associated with anxious attachment****. In line with these findings, Young, Klosko, and Weishaar (2003) described grandiose narcissists as suffering from difficulties experiencing love or being loved by others*

Drawbacks of Being Anxious

Martin Seligman says in Authentic Happiness (2002) that anxious types:

- Feel they have little control over their lives
- Find others difficult to predict
- Cling to others and always fear rejection
- Flaunt their anger and distress

They also tend to have poorer communication skills and come across as lower-power and more submissive.
See the chart:

	Anxious	Avoidant	Secure
Traits	- Clings to relationship - Anxious during separation - Fearful of abandonment - Overwhelmed by emotions - Mixes thoughts and feeling	- Finds relationships too scary - Uncomfortable being emotionally close - Interacts at a surface level - Unaware of thoughts & feelings	- Can form relationships, but also comfortable alone - Can manage emotions - Can separate thoughts and feelings
Differentiation	Low	Low	High
Attitude	Hesitant	Guarded	Confident
Barriers to Assertiveness	- Afraid to speak up for fear of creating distance or rejection - Fear of overwhelming others - Inability to identify and tune in to emotions - Make excuses for people's patterns of boundary-crossing (especially once the attachment is already "formed")	- Detached from own emotions, especially during conflict or stress - Prevents conflicts (or avoids) - Uses distancing emotions (for fear of getting "too close") - Confuses fair standing up for oneself as rudeness - Confuses partners' search for fair intimacy as crossing his boundaries - "lets things go" even when it bothers or hurt him	- May have difficulty identifying emotions - May have difficulty communicating emotions - May lack confidence to be assertive or speak directly
Goals	Attachment's self awareness - Acknowledge value of close relationships & interdependence - Connect to emotions - Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants - Develop communication skills	Attachment's self awareness - Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants - Develop emotional management strategies - Develop communication skills	Attachment's self awareness - Develop emotional vocabulary - Develop and/or solidify assertiveness skills

Based on Hanks, 2016

Anxious Attachment In Relationships

Shirley Glass in *Not Just Friends* says that, in her experience, anxious types tend to marry secure attachment types.

This is compatible with what Harvile Hendrix says in *Getting The Love You Want*, such as that people go after the feeling of "wholeness" and get what they miss.

However, says Glass, they tend to replicate the maternal avoidant pattern when (and if) they look for an affair partner.
The anxious type then is likely to develop an emotional bond while the avoidant keeps the distance.

Anxious Attachment With Avoidant Attachment

Amir Levine in *Attached* says that anxious attachment types often end up with avoidant attachment types.

In my experience, I have often seen anxious together with avoidants as Amir Levin says.
And the numbers that Levine uses to back his theory also make sense to me.

When the anxious type is removed from their affection, they activate their attachment system. The attachment system monitors the distance from the loved partner, and when he is not present, it starts going in alarm mode.

That's why anxious types get very emotional and fearful when their partner is far away.
They soothe themselves; the anxious will then seek to re-establish a connection with their partner.

But when the partner is an avoidant, their attachment system is constantly activated, and the anxious will experience huge emotional roller coasters.
Now the bad news is that **many anxious types mistake the emotional roller coaster for love**.

If you are an anxious type and learn one single thing from this article is this: an emotional roller coaster is not love.

Many people indeed when they say that "women love as*holes" often actually mistake bundling together in the as*holes term avoidant types.
But more than as*holes women fall for the avoidants who activate their attachment systems.

Anxious Attachment With Secure Attachment

The anxious type is best served in a relationship with a secure attachment.

Secure types are not afraid of intimacy, they play less games and are happier to soothe you.

Anxious Attachment	Secure Attachment
Needs intimacy and closeness	Comfortable with intimacy
Overly sensitive to any possible sign of rejection	Consistent with their messages, don't push you away
Find it difficult to speak their mind and use protest behavior instead to communicate their needs	Considerate of your well being and it's possible you will learn a more direct and open style of communication with them
Need to be reassured	Happy to provide reassurance, often even early on
Need to know where you are standing in the relationship	Are happy to label the relationship, to commit, to make it official and to let you know where they stand

Overcoming The Anxious Attachment Style

Well, maybe "overcome" is not the right word.

There is nothing inherently wrong with being anxious.
But it definitely makes for sub-optimal relationships.

And since anxious types tend to be unhappy in relationships, it's best if you can move past its limitation and become more secure.
The following steps will help you on the way:

1. Become Aware

The very first step is awareness.

The more you know your limitations, the more you can fix them or work around them.

2. Be Selective In Your Dating

Says The *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology* relationship volume:

> such individuals appear to be relatively unselective in initial attraction contexts

That's a risk because **anxious must be even *more* selective**.

So make sure you don't jump on the first available person just because, well… They're there.

3. Show Your True Self

Anxious tend to be more afraid their partner will not return their love.

And they tend to buy into the idea they need to feign disinterest and play games to get the love they want (as peddled by *many dating books for women*).
And while that can be helpful sometimes (but not always!), that's a big mistake for anxious attachment types.
Remember this: to get what you want, you first need to be who you really are.

Read this more on:

- Anxious attachment style dating.

4. Learn to use Direct Communication

Direct communication means asking for what you want and what you need.

Use direct communication early, so you can weed out bad partners and you can keep having your needs met in the relationship.

Every time you find yourself starting a fight to get an emotional connection, remember to state you would love -or you need- to be close.

5. Differentiate Love From Roller Coaster

Many anxiety attachment types equate love with the heightened feelings of their activated attachment systems.
And the push and pull of the anxious-avoidant relationship further hook them in.
But that's not love. That's a toxic relationship. Don't fall for the dynamics of over-investing in partners who don't invest.

6. Pick Partners Based on Intimacy

Pick your partner based on how much he can satisfy your intimacy levels. Notice if he responds to your appeal if he gets to the bottom of it, and if he tries to satisfy your needs.

7. Find a Secure Partner

Studies show that an anxious partner in a relationship with a secure partner becomes more secure.

So drop the crazy and addictive antics of the anxious-avoidant relationship then and settle down with a secure partner.
Secure partners communicate directly and openly, don't play games, and don't shy away from intimacy.

Anxious Attachment Arguments

Anxious relationships tend to fall a predictable pattern.

From the outside, they can seem neurotic, and wild and, often, resemble *borderline personality disorder*, with which sometimes they can overlap.

#1. Anxious Creates Arguments

Anxious attachment does not go for direct communication.

Instead, they prefer creating arguments as a cover-up for the intimacy they crave.
Needless to say, that does not work.

#2. Anxious Feels Guilty

After the argument, the anxious partner feels terrible and seeks to mend the relationship.

#3. Anxious Seeks Contact Again

The anxious partner does not get what they want with the fight, and their need for closeness, intimacy, and love only grows larger.

So they seek contact again.

But again direct communication rarely takes place, and the anxious rarely says “I’m sorry” and never articulates the real reasons for their bad behavior.

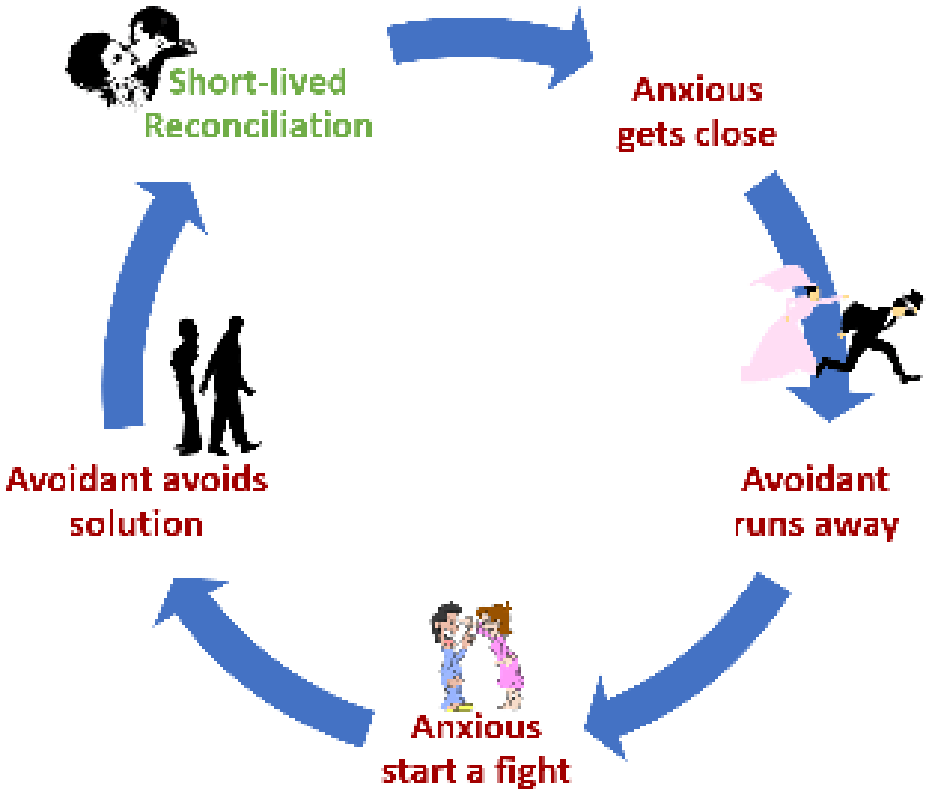
#4. Reconciliation

It takes courage and vulnerability to make the first step toward reconciliation, which might lead the fight to drag on longer than it needs to.

From a power dynamics perspective, the anxious partner needs contact more than her partner does, which moves the balance of power on the partner’s side.

#5. Rinse, Repeat

When they finally make good again, it’s only a brief pause before the cycle begins again.



SUMMARY

An anxious attachment style can be problematic in relationships.

But you still have the opportunity to experience a good relationship.

You have some work to do, and find the right partner.

This article gives you a deeper understanding of what anxious attachment means for you, and what you can do to

address it.

Further Reading:

- Overview of the four attachment styles
- Toxic avoidant attachment trap
- How to spot an avoidant
- How to date as an anxious

9 Easy Signs of Avoidant Attachment Style (From of An Avoidant)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you trying to recognize if your partner or the person you are dating is an avoidant?

Well, it's not always easy to guess.

But these proven signs of avoidant attachment will help you come up with a fairly reliable self-diagnosis.

Contents

- Why Should You Want to Spot Avoidants?

- Signs of Avoidant Attachment Style
  - 1. Sends Mixed Signals
  - 2. Doesn't Hold Hands
  - 3. Devalues You
  - 4. Values of Independence
  - 5. Keeps Ex-Partners (and you) Away
  - 6. Keeps Strong Boundaries
  - 7. Has an Unrealistic View of Relationships
  - 8. He Is Mistrustful
  - 9. Does Not Communicate His Intentions Clearly
  - 10. Difficulty Discussing Feelings & Intimacy
  - 11. Uneasiness With Your Families, Friends
- How to Test For Avoidant Attachment
- What to Do If He's Avoidant
- SUMMARY

Why Should You Want to Spot Avoidants?

It's a fair question:

Why should you even worry about it?

An obvious reason is that avoidant attachment types don't make for great intimate partners.
So if you care about having a great relationship -and you probably should- and if you care about a supportive and intimate environment, then you should also care about spotting avoidant types.

Spotting an avoidant attachment becomes even more important if you are an anxious attachment type since we have seen that anxious and avoidant form a toxic relationships together

Signs of Avoidant Attachment Style

These are the cues to recognize an avoidant attachment type early on:

1. Sends Mixed Signals

- Talks about moving forward, but somehow it never happens or he gets cold feet
- Sometimes he's very effusive, some other times very distant
- Alternates periods of lots of calls and attention with periods of no contact

2. Doesn't Hold Hands

Or:

- You had to do it first
- You have to ask
- You have to remind
- Doesn't want to do it publicly / with friends around

The same goes for other intimacy-related behavior.

Says The *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology* relationship volume:

> attachment-related avoidance is negatively associated with the desire to engage in intimate sexual behaviors such as holding hands, mutual gazing, and cuddling (Fraley, Davis, & Shaver, 1998)

My exes would have been better off if they had read this signal as the warning signal it is.

3. Devalues You

This is the dark side of the avoidants.
Not every avoidant has it, but it's another sign to watch out for (and a sign to watch out for with anyone, really).

Some of the signs:

- Makes fun of your body or your abilities
- Undermines you in front of others
- Jokes about himself and other women
- Talks about you being so into him
- Suggests you are overreacting, too needy, or too sensitive

- He disregards your emotional needs

Also read how to make him respect you more, an article heavy on games but which can be helpful to understand the most Machiavellian types.

4. Values of Independence

Avoidants place independence and, most of all, *their own independence*, above intimacy.

Many avoidants also value independence as a strong personality trait because they mistake independence for strength (in truth, as Levine explains, the opposite is true: strong relationships and strengthen intimate bonds make people stronger and mentally healthier).

Some of the signs:

- Encourages you to be more independent
- Looks down on what he calls "neediness"
- Has times of the day when it's best to call and other times when not to call

5. Keeps Ex-Partners (and you) Away

You can recognize avoidants because of their refusal to fully commit.

The most obvious signs are:

- His past relationships are short-lived
- He had a long relationship, but never moved in
- His relationships tanked once they moved in
- He moves often
- Goes on holidays alone
- Prefers not sharing a bed
- Not taking your hand on his own initiative when walking
- You rarely know clearly when you're going to meet again

Here is an example from Terms of Endearment:

6. Keeps Strong Boundaries

Avoidant types need their space and, when you cross them, they become passive-aggressive or aggressive (and, more rarely, assertive).

Here are signs of avoidant boundaries:

- "my things", "your things"
- Wants to keep his family, friends, colleagues, and partner as separate entities
- Has a strong preference for either his place or your place

7. Has an Unrealistic View of Relationships

This one might seem counterintuitive.
But avoidants can sometimes seem romantic. They believe in the perfect partner, in "the one" and they don't settle because, well… "it's not perfect".

The search for “the one” might be an unconscious mechanism to avoid settling down and getting intimately close to someone.

- Searches for “the one”
- Says arguments shouldn’t happen in perfect relationships
- Idealizes past relationships
- Has a preference for specific types of partners (often not easy to find)

8. He Is Mistrustful

Avoidants are afraid of getting close.

They tend to think that getting close will diminish their power, or that it will make them weak and prone to manipulation.

- Insists on prenups or on not marrying to avoid being taken advantage of
- Believes partners are out to limit his freedom
- Thinks that women act nice… Until marriage, then they change

9. Does Not Communicate His Intentions Clearly

Secure people know what they want: a strong and happy relationship. And, with time, they are not afraid of admitting so.

But avoidants never seem to move forward. And when you try to move forward or have “the conversation”, they will seem elusive and noncommittal.

Some of the signs:

- You are not sure where the relationship is going
- He leaves things murky and unclear
- Never says “I love you”
- Talks about possible big changes (relocating, taking a year gap) without consideration of what that means for you

10. Difficulty Discussing Feelings & Intimacy

- He shies away from discussion on feelings, the relationship, and the two of you
- Makes you feel uncomfortable to bring up topics about the two of you
- When you bring up a hot relationship topic, he somehow avoids it
- He just doesn’t seem to get what your needs are
- He stonewalls or leaves during arguments
- Prefers facts over feelings

11. Uneasiness With Your Families, Friends

The avoidant partner will be uneasy around your family and close friends because that’s when he fears things are getting too close.

He might want to have you a bit closer, but getting to know the in-laws and your circle might be definitely too much for him.
And of course, he might be afraid that “things are getting too serious”.

Jack Nicholson wants to be an outsider. Because he is not comfortable with being part of the family. Too much intimacy and “obligation” for him.
He needs his space.

How to Test For Avoidant Attachment

What if you could not just passively look for the avoidant signs but actively *test* for them?

Well, you can, and I recommend you do it early before you find yourself mired in a years-long relationship and realize that you are not happy and can never be happy.

Here are two ideas for you:

- Leave on purpose something at his place early in the relationship

How does he react? Is he annoyed by it?

- Do call him whenever you need him – even if it’s early

Why would you hold back? Because *women dating books* tell you to do so? That might not be a good idea. You can fake disinterest early, but you only increase the chances of ending up with an avoidant and being very unhappy later on.
better finding out early!
This is something that Amir Levine, author of *Attached* also recommends.

What to Do If He’s Avoidant

Now the difficult question.

What should you do if you realize he’s an avoidant?

Well, people *can* change.
But that doesn’t mean they *want* to change or that they can change *easily*.
As a matter of fact, change is rare and it might be better for you to base your decision on the fact that he won’t change.
I offer relationship coaching, and of all the anxious-avoidant I have coached not a single one managed to fix their intimacy issues.

Still, I cannot answer that question for you while writing here. You have to decide that.
I can point you to a few more helpful articles:

- How the anxious-avoidant relationship looks like
- How to decide when to breakup

SUMMARY

Spotting an avoidant attachment style is very important to understand how your relationship will look like. And with an avoidant, that means it’s low on intimacy.
Once you know that, it’s up to you to decide whether you’re OK with it or not.

Getting the Love You Want Review: Interesting Speculation, But Little Evidence

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Getting the Love You Want is a *relationship advice book* that focuses on how childhood wounds influence our relationships. It has lots of practical exercises to heal childhood wounds and improve our relationships.

TPM Scientific Check: Unproven hypotheses. Men better include agency alongside communion
This book prioritizes communion over agency, which can backfire for men. It presents a popular therapy-based model of relationships. However, it relies heavily on clinical observations and speculative theories, with limited empirical backing.
While some insights may be useful, readers should prioritize evidence-based frameworks such as evolutionary psychology, social exchange theory, and power dynamics. Men specifically should prioritize self-sufficiency to **maintain long-term attraction**.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Attuned Parenting
  - When Children Experience Rapture
  - Fixing Child Wounds (& Relationships)
  - The 5 Secrets of Great Relationships
  - Attraction Models
  - Why We Look for Our Parents
  - The Power Struggle of Dating
  - Conscious Partnership To Fix Each Other
- CONS
  - Little Evidence Backing The Psychoanalytic Approach
  - Evolution & Power Dynamics Matter, But Aren't Here
  - Drawing principles from therapy clients is textboot biased sample
  - Confusing attachment style denomination
- Review

Overview

- We have wounded children looking for salvation
  - We look for partners with the same traits as our parents
  - We appreciate partners with complementary traits to feel whole again
- We can consciously fix our childhood traumas with our partners
  - Understand first our wounds
  - Share them in an atmosphere of safety and trust
  - Focus on our partner's needs to help them heal

Notes

Above everything, we seek connection, says Harville Hendrix.

And what brings most couples to therapy is a lack of connection between them and the world around them. Their relationships are more of a “me VS you” than “us” (also read: how to fix combative relationships).
And the reason why they fail at connecting, says the author, is because of their childhood. Children need an attuned parent.

Attuned Parenting

Children need a caregiver who is present both physically and emotionally. It’s a caregiver who soothes you and takes care of you. An attuned parent also encourages the baby to express all emotions by accepting them.

> “are you angry, do you want to stop playing”?
> “happy baby, you are such a happy baby”

Attuned parents raise children who are more likely to create solid and satisfying relationships as adults. They are not attracted to people who abuse them and attract good mates with ease because they have a positive self-image (read how low self-esteem gives you abusive relationships).

My note:
Harville is basically describing a secure attachment type.

When Children Experience Rapture

The rapture children experience and that which scars them as adults are:

1. Neglect (not attending to our needs)
2. Intrusion (meeting their own needs through us)

The author says most children suffer both wounds as many families tend to have a neglecting parent and an intrusive one.

Fixing Child Wounds (& Relationships)

By connecting with our partners deeply we fix our children’s wounds heal. It’s because our unconscious mind doesn’t differentiate between the present and the past.
Hence building a strong connection with our partners both improves our relationships and fixes our old wounds.

Important note: you cannot connect if there’s lots of negativity in the relationships (also read the four Horsemen that destroy relationships).

The 5 Secrets of Great Relationships

Hendrix says that if he were to take all the insights he accumulated over thirty years and sum them up, it would be this:

1. Accept that your partner is not you
2. Be an advocate of your partner’s uniqueness
3. Make your relationship a holy space removing all negativity
4. Respect your partner’s boundaries
5. Practice the Imago Dialogue (mirroring, validating, and empathizing, below)

This is the author explaining Imago:

Attraction Models

The author explains why we are attracted to certain people and summarizes the theories.

Biological Theory

We pick mates that enhance the chances of offspring survival. Men go for beauty and fertility (young age) and women go for alpha qualities (also read *The Selfish Gene* and *The Moral Animal*).

Exchange Theory

Social psychology postulates we pick mates that are more or less our equal (also read The Social Exchange Rule).

That much is true and has been shown in multiple studies.

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Persona Theory

This refers to how a potential mate enhances our own self-esteem, and that we tend to pick mates who make us look good (also read how to have perennial high self-esteem).

Harville says there is some truth in this theory.

The Unconscious Drives Us Back to The Caregiver

The theory Harville Hendrix add is that of the unconscious mind pulling us towards mates that resemble our caregivers. It's something he sees over and over in therapy.

Why We Look for Our Parents

The author says that we seek mates who are similar to our caregivers to heal child wounds.

Our old brains believe we have finally found the ideal candidate to make up for the psychological damage of our childhood.
Indeed we look both for positive and negative traits from our parents, but the negative traits are far more influential.

Push or Pull & Attachment Theory

Parents who push children away raise children with an insatiable need for closeness (anxious), and parents who smother their children and never let them explore raise children who crave personal space (avoidants).

My Note: the theory makes sense… In theory. I am an avoidant and my parents gave me all the freedom in the world.

Feeling Rejected Scar Children

Children will invariably get the message that some of their behavior is not OK, which makes them feel like they are not accepted as a whole.

The parts that are not accepted become our "lost selves".
And we often project the traits of our lost self that we denied into our partner. For example, we might project our repressed anger onto our partner and feel that they are angry persons.

The author says the mistake many parents do is to ignore or disapprove of a baby's feelings.
He proposes instead that a parent always validates the child's feelings, even when they disagree. For example, they could say:

> **Parent**: "I can see you are mad, and you don't want to do what I ask. But I'm the parent and you need to do what I say".

Feeling Whole

To feel whole again we often look for complementary traits in our mates.

The Power Struggle of Dating

At a certain point, romantic love ends and the power struggle begins.

The author says that once the relationship is secure a switch happens and we activate all the latent infantile wounds. We find that those complementary personality traits annoy us, and the traits of our lost self that we longed for now wound us. The same way our parents hurt us when they neglected or repressed us.

Only a minority of couples manage to overcome the power struggle phase. The author says that the secret is to satisfy each other's childhood longings.

Conscious Partnership To Fix Each Other

The conscious partnership is all about fixing each other's problems.
The book has a lot of exercises. If you feel this is an issue you have in your relationship, then I recommend you grab a copy.
I particularly liked a central tenet, which is that to be loved, we must first love.

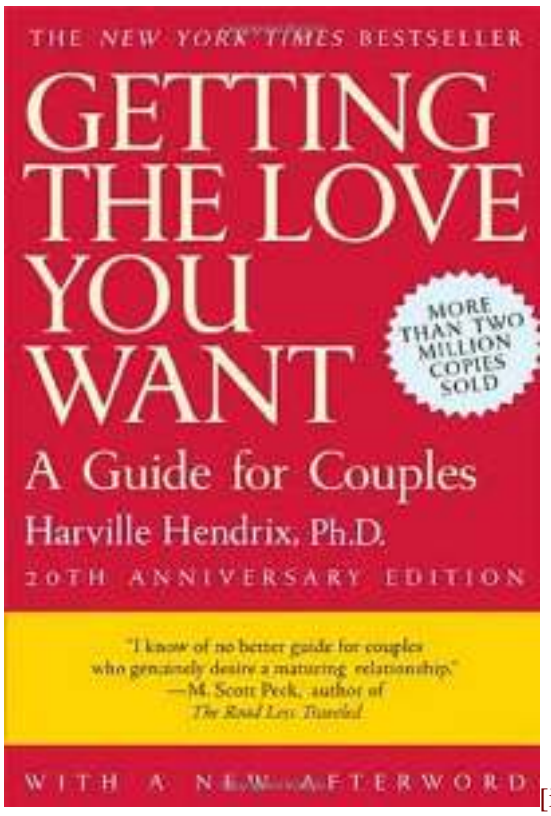
> **To be loved, we must first love**

Changing the approach to criticism

The author proposes a different approach to criticism in relationships.

Criticism indeed often tells as much about the criticized partner as it says about ourselves, which is what we should explore more.
Here is how to go about criticism:

1. Accept that the criticism you receive from your partner has some basis in reality
2. Much of the criticism of your partner is because of our own unmet (childhood) needs
3. Sometimes we criticize our partner for what we lack ourselves
4. Our criticism might come from our lost self and a wish to be more like what we criticize in our partner



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CONS

Little Evidence Backing The Psychoanalytic Approach

The book is very 'Freudian', and one may argue that Freud was a genius.

But Freud also jumped to many unscientific conclusions that proved to be wrong.
And I see the same tendencies in "*Getting The Love You Want*".

For example, the author says that we look for complementary traits in our partners so that we can feel whole again.
That *could* be the case.

But what if we want complementary traits because of the imprinting from our parents, as some theories suggest?

Or what if we look for similarities because we like and feel comfortable with what's familiar?

All these theories seem, to me, more plausible than this "whole" theory.

Evolution & Power Dynamics Matter, But Aren't Here

Childhood is important but it's not everything. And probably not even the most important element.

Mate value, sexual market dynamics, and availability of options often matter far more for who we pursue, fall in love with, and end up with.

Do you think that if a guy has a shot with an attractive woman who is exactly his type, higher mate value, and he has no other option, he will not pursue her because she's not exactly like her mother?
Please..

Drawing principles from therapy clients is textboot biased sample

I'm not convinced that you can create a comprehensive theory by looking at a therapist's experience alone.

First, there is the issue of how the case studies were captured and recorded. Second, how large was that sample? And third, there is self-selection bias. People who go to therapy are inherently self-selecting, and that's a well-known sampling bias.

Confusing attachment style denomination

Hendrix ends up talking of avoidant, anxious, and secure attachment types quite a bit but never mentions the theory. And calls them in different ways such as "fusers" and "isolators".

I found that strange because this book is basically an explanation of how attachment styles develop.

Review

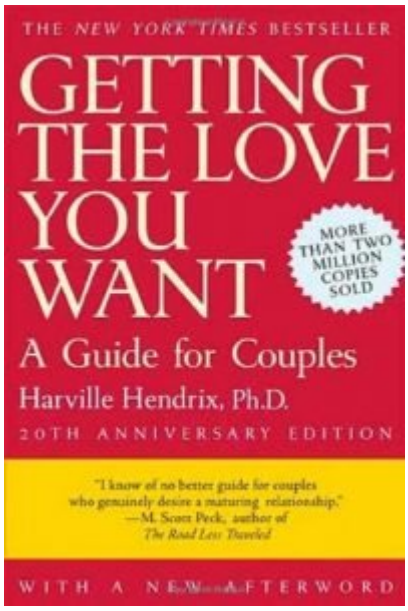
Getting the Love You Want is an interesting book with some potentially valid insights and exercises to help couples, but with important limitations.

It's not a book for everyone, possibly not for most, and most likely not for healthy and securely attached couples who didn't have childhood issues.

It's also not perfectly aligned with The Power Moves and it seems to speak more to a feminine quest for relationships as temples, rather than a masculine drive to achieve goals.

Check out the **best relationship books** or get the book on Amazon

Getting the Love You Want Summary: Heal Childhood Wound



A fantastic book on how infantile wounds affect our relationships.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/getting-the-love-you-want/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2

Protected: How to Recognize Your Partner Attachment Style

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

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Secure Attachment Style: Overview & Examples

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Secure attachment is one type of attachment style characterized by self-reliance, emotional maturity, and honest communication.

This article explains what a secure attachment style, is and how you can get one.

Contents

- What is Secure Attachment
  - Secure Attachment in Relationships
  - Where Does Secure Come From?
  - Science of Secure Attachment
- Secure Attachment Examples
- Secure is Best For Most
  - How to keep a secure attachment
- SUMMARY

What is Secure Attachment

Secure attachment types enjoy intimacy and are comfortable with it.

They are comfortable in asking for intimacy, giving intimacy, and talking about intimacy.
They are emotionally centered and tend to trust their partners and their partner's love without the need for continuous confirmation.

When secure people like you, they show you so and they are not afraid of saying it.
Secure types also tend to provide more emotional and practical support, without withdrawing or playing any games.

When secure people date, they look for consistency and reciprocal investment. That means that they give, but they also expect to get back.
That's the proper stance of an enlightened collaborator, the approach most conducive to social -and life- success. They despise games and don't make it a big issue to screen out people that don't respond to them -and that's one of the reasons why I advise that playing nasty dating games backfires more often than not-.

Are secure types supermen?

No, they're not supermen, but they do have a higher level of *emotional intelligence* compared to other attachment styles, are better at understanding their partners and they make, on average, better relationships.

Luckily, this is something you can develop -this is what this website is all about after all-.

Here is a quick overview of what secure types are like:

Mindsets	Explanations
No need for games	*Being close is what a relationship is about. I want it and my partner wants it too. And if not, I need someone else. No need for games.*
Comfortable with intimacy	*I'm not afraid of being hurt -it sucks but I'd get over it- and I don't need to run away. So I can fully enjoy intimacy.*
Treat partners well	*My partner is one of the persons closest to me. I can count on them and they can count of me. Of course I treat them well*
Give and take	*I give in my relationship, and I expect the same from my partner. Relationship is about mutual support. If they can't do that, they go.*
Take responsibility	*A relationship is built by two individuals. So, at the very least I control half of it. And I take responsibility for how my partner feels.*
Emotional intelligence	*I know that behind a partner's criticism sometimes there's fear, worry or anxiety. I don't take it personally but help them express it.*

Secure Attachment in Relationships

In a relationship the secure types tend to be:

- **Very good at conflict management**: they don't feed the need to act defensively or counterattack their partners
- **Quicker to forgive**: they tend to have a positive outlook on the relationship and of their partner, thus they are blameless, and are quicker to forgive
- **Ready to commit**: they tend to view sex and relationship more like two faces of the same coin. They are not afraid of commitment and "labeling" the relationship

In a relationship with a secure type, you will experience fewer up and downs, especially so if both partners are secure types.

Where Does Secure Come From?

Some sources say a secure attachment stems mostly from parenting and what's called "attuned parenting" (Hendrix, 1988).

But these days that's considered a limited view and it's been overseeded by more recent studies.

Today the consensus is that attachment styles are the consequence of several different influences, including parenting, genetics, and life experiences (*Levine, 2010*).

Here is a list of what contributes to the development of a secure attachment:

- Mother sensitive to child's needs
- Easy temperament of the baby (makes it easier for parents to be responsive)
- Good maternal conditions—marital satisfaction, low stress, no depression, and social support
- Fewer hours with a non-parental caretaker
- Genetic predisposition
- Life experiences (ie.: avoiding big romantic traumas)

If you're a mother, avoid this behavior (from the movie Terms of Endearment):

We back up all our videos for Power University

Science of Secure Attachment

A laboratory experiment showed that secure attachment types have easy access in their brain to themes such as love, closeness, and hugs.

And they don't register as easily topics such as abandonment, loss, and separation.

And contrary to avoidants, they still didn't access those areas when they were distracted. This makes secure people very confident in their relationships.

They are also more able to switch off negative thought patterns when they want to, which makes them bounce back quicker after an argument. That means that secure people have stronger control of their emotional selves, and they don't keep a grudge for days on end.

Definitely, something we might want to emulate.

Also because, as the *APA Handbook* suggests, secures tend to be the most attractive:

> In studies in which people perused descriptions of potential dating partners, participants tended to prefer descriptions of secure individuals the most and descriptions of avoidant individuals the least (Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996; Chappell & Davis, 1998; Klohnen & Luo, 2003; Latty-Mann & Davis, 1996

In truth, avoidants may be somewhat more attractive in the beginning.

But secures are probably "superior" in already formed relationships.

Secure Attachment Examples

I love the idea that a picture is worth a thousand words.

And a good video is worth a thousand pictures.

These video examples will clarify for you what's a secure attachment:

#1. Not Afraid of Emotional Pain

Being secure doesn't mean being cool and loving all the time.

It also means asking for the truth when that truth might hurt. It's the power of vulnerability.
Something that Ted from "How I Met Your Mother" shows very powerfully here:

The willingness to ask, to explore the emotional side of the relationship, and the courage to show heartbreak are signs of a secure attachment style. When he adds "forget I said anything" is a moment of weakness, but it's understandable.

#2. Not Afraid of Emotional Honesty

Call it "power of vulnerability", if you will.

But sure people are comfortable sharing their emotions.

And they can also be assertive to have their emotional needs met

#3. Secure is not (necessarily) confident

Let's dispel this myth.

Since secure speaks his mind, is not afraid of commitment, and doesn't play games people might think of them as some sort of very confident, super-human type.

But that's not the case.
Secure types can also come to be less confident, or be *too* vulnerable, and come across as less powerful.
Here's an example:

That being said, since secure have less of a need to hide, they also tend to be more assertive, and that is a big plus when it comes to social skills and social effectiveness.

Secure is Best For Most

There are plenty of advantages to being secure.

However, what "works best" really depends on the environment.
As the *Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych and Relationships* explains (caps mine):

> Although secure attachment is typically viewed as the most optimal and adaptive style within the developmental literature, an evolutionary perspective suggests that attachment security has an adaptive advantage in safe and predictable environments but NOT in harsh and unpredictable environments (Simpson & Belsky, 2008; Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019

However, since most people reading here do NOT live in harsh and unpredictable environments, most men and women living in civilized countries are better off with a secure attachment.

Psychologist Martin Seligman says in '*Authentic Happiness*' (2002) that of people with a secure attachment style:

- Remember their parents as warm, available, and affectionate
- Have high self-esteem and few doubts
- Regard others as trustworthy and reliable until proven otherwise (less likely to be bitter cynics, and are better

placed at being enlightened-collaborator)

- Strive and work on intimate relationships with those they love
- Admit when they are in distress (can be vulnerable while still coming from a high-power frame)

And when it comes to relationships, research shows that **the best predictor of happiness in a relationship is a secure attachment style**.

And the great thing about secure partners is that they have the power to lift up in their relationship satisfaction levels both anxious and avoidant attachment styles.

Secureness is a thing of beauty in relationships.

Secure Attachment and Power Dynamics

Secure people tend fare be better in most realms of socialization and come across as more confident.

See here:

	Anxious	Avoidant	Secure
Traits	- Clingy to relationships - Anxious during separation - Fearful of abandonment - Overwhelmed by emotions - Mixed thoughts and feeling	- Ends relationships too soon - Uncomfortable being emotionally close - Interacts on a surface level - Unaware of thoughts & feelings	- Can form relationships, but also comfortable alone - Can manage emotions - Can separate thoughts and feelings
Differentiation	Low	Low	High
Attitude	Hesitant	Guarded	Confident
Barriers to Assertiveness	- Afraid to speak up for fear of creating distance or rejection - Fear of overwhelming others - Inability to identify and tune in to emotions - Make excuses for people's patterns of boundary crossing [especially when attachment is already in [illegible]]	- Detached from own emotions, especially during conflict or stress - Prevents conflicts [illegible] - Avoids discussing emotions [illegible] of getting "too close" - Confuses fear of closeness as the result of assertiveness - Confuses partners' search for fair intimacy as crossing his boundaries - "Lets things go" even when it bothers or hurts him	- May have difficulty identifying emotions - May have difficulty communicating emotions - May lack confidence to be assertive or speak directly
Goals	- Attachment's self-awareness - Acknowledge value of close relationships & interdependence - Connect to emotions - Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants - Develop communication skills	- Attachment's self-awareness - Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants - Develop emotional management strategies - Develop communication skills	- Attachment's self-awareness - Develop emotional vocabulary - Develop and/or solidify assertiveness skills

Based on Hanks, 2016

So far, I haven't seen a single resource clearly explaining how to become secure, but I found that general self-help helps.
There is some information though on how to *remain* a secure attachment type.

How to keep a secure attachment

Attachment styles don't stay fixed for the whole life in every single case. A shift is possible and a secure attachment could become more anxious.

Secure indeed can exaggerate in feeling like their partner's well-being is their responsibility, and they can be overly inclined to forgive.

One way that can happen is if the secure partner continually responds to their partner's unacceptable behavior and keep tolerating it.

That's more likely to happen in inexperienced secure attachment types, but make a mental note anyway: too much cr@p, and you cut the cr@p.

Signs to Watch Out For

Here is what to watch out for:

1. If you start getting too jealous or worried (anxious)
2. If you are less trusting, start playing games and find it difficult to talk (avoidant)

Then you're in the wrong relationship.

Also, read:

- When to breakup
- Types of toxic relationship dances

SUMMARY

Secure attachment types are comfortable with intimacy and they talk straight.
They have stronger, more stable relationships and are happier in them.

Secure is the way to be and to become, and you can work on that.

For those who are already secure, keep in mind that poor partners can make you regress to avoidant or anxious. If you feel you're becoming less secure and more anxious, it's a potential red flag to investigate.

Winning Your Ex Back: Confident & Secure Re-Seduction

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Getting your ex back is easier than getting a completely new partner.

This article does not necessarily recommend that you should necessarily try to get your ex back.

But this post teaches you a reliable system to win your ex back.

Welcome back baby

Contents

- Intro
- 1. Acknowledge the problem
- 2. Address the problem head-on
- 3. Ask directly, but DON'T CHASE
- 4. Empathize with your ex!)
- 5. Offer support, without chasing the relationship
- 6. Offer something, then let HER come for more
- 7. Set up the next date
- 8. Make it a great date
- Why This Works to Get Your Ex Back
- Should You Try to Get Your Lover Back?
- Have you even lost her?
- SUMMARY

Intro

My name is Lucio.
I am a man, so this article takes the point of view of a man getting his girlfriend back -or, as more often was my case, a lover-.

Some steps can apply to a woman who wants to get back his boyfriend, but I believe this article is best tailored for men.

1. Acknowledge the problem

If your ex doesn't want to see you anymore, there is a problem.

And if you want to get your ex back, it's time to go into problem-solving.

2. Address the problem head-on

Needless to say, if you just keep trying to meet you will only push your ex further away.

And if you leave the issue unaddressed, you only allow it to fester and grow.

The best thing you can do instead is to address the issue right away.

Simply tell her you've noticed a change and you'd like to know how things are on her side.
This is very confident communication and how people with a secure attachment style communicate.

Notice that right away, **I take the pressure off**.

You don't wanna meet?
No big deal!

I want to make sure she knows I won't lash out, go crazy or have any negative feelings toward her.
This way you let your lover free to open up and, of course, she will start getting more positive feelings about you.

3. Ask directly, but DON’T CHASE

When your ex-lover tells you what’s the issue, you text that you’re cool with it and that you understand.

Don’t try to convince her that she’s wrong (yet) and don’t push for a meet (yet).

Most of all, don’t get emotional or over-promise change.
Not just yet. It may work, but it disempowers you and it **kills attraction.**

Instead, do this:

4. Empathize with your ex!)

If she shows an emotional side, or if she discloses some issues she’s having, that’s the perfect moment to empathize.

Empathizing will bring the two of you closer again, and getting some loving vibes is a great way to get your lover back.

5. Offer support, without chasing the relationship

Support is the bread and butter of good relationships.
And it's the first step towards renewed intimacy.

Of course, you want to get your lover back to give her some sexual support as well. And she wants it too, don't worry.

But if you were previously lovers, the sexual part is implied. There's no need to text flirt here, no need to make silly wink wink or to tell her what you'll do to her.
That's more likely to make guys horny. And sometimes women too, but it's too risky.

Show instead there's more on your camp.
This is especially important if your ex-lover is distancing herself because you were too aloof (avoidant attachment style).

6. Offer something, then let HER come for more

Don't make the mistake to try to get your ex back right after empathizing: it's too early.

Now you will let the pressure off instead.

And the vacuum will give her a chance to come to you.
Alternatively, even higher risk, higher rewards, is to bid her farewell.

This step here is the time of real reckoning: make it or break it. But as Casanova said, love is not for the timid of heart :). If she comes to you, chances look good.
If she leaves it there (for now) you must do the same.

Notice there are 3 positive signs that my former lover was changing here:

1. *Yeah we'll have it* (good but not enough)
2. *Always offer words of cheer* (a compliment: getting better)
3. *Give me your positive energy* (good enough to strike upon)

How does that old cliche go? Oh, right:

> Set them free. And when they come back they're yours

7. Set up the next date

Albeit that can certainly happen, women won't usually make full U-turns and ask you out.

That's why, at the first major signs of change, you want to move for an-inperson meeting.

Propose a meeting, but don't be timid.

Ideally, you want to re-enter her life by bringing that old whirlwind of passion back.
So propose something highly suggestive of sexual chemistry.

Any meeting is better than no meeting.
But of course, if you can make it to your place (or her place) chances are higher that you will get your lover back the way it should be done: with fireworks.

I could have taken the beer outside here and I think it would work well.
But since I don't have much time to waste, I aim higher:

8. Make it a great date

Behave as if you two are already back, and then let her come to you for more.

Why This Works to Get Your Ex Back

Well, let's recap what this post does to get your lover back.
You are:

1. Attuned to her feelings and quickly recognize something is going on
2. Addressing it confidently and openly
3. Cool if she doesn't wanna see you again..
4. .. But can still give her great sex
5. Together with emotional support
6. And will still be cool whenever she wants to look for something more serious

That's a rare breed there.
Of course, chances are she will be at least interested.
This takes us to the next point:

Should You Try to Get Your Lover Back?

In my case here, I had gone traveling for half a year while we were seeing each other.

We had had a great time together as unattached adults and I felt things were cool enough that we could safely reconnect.

Otherwise, I would advise you to try to get your lover back only in specific cases.

If she broke up because you couldn't give her the committed relationship she wanted then let her go (unless you're ready to give it now). If she was deeply in love, also let her go.
If you were deeply in love, best not to.

Have you even lost her?

When does it become "official" that your girlfriend, lover, or 'casual prtner' is not available anymore?

Well, when she tells you so for sure.
But communication won't always be so direct.

When she does not go along with your plans of meeting up without proposing an alternative, that's already a strong sign you are losing her.

A second time that she avoids making concrete plans, then you have already more evidence than you can possibly need.

Therefore here is the rule: two times that she is not forthcoming about meeting up, and she is (almost) officially an ex.

SUMMARY

Winning your ex back is easier than winning a new girlfriend over. The flame was there, so it's more about rekindling than starting it from scratch.

If you are dealing with a girl you are not yet sexual with and who has stopped replying to you, check what to text to

make her reply. If it seems hard to meet her, check getting dates with flaky girls.

Or best of all, check the complete guide on texting, from 1st text to date under the “speed learning” section.

Outliers: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Malcolm Gladwell explores in *Outliers* what makes the difference between successful and unsuccessful people, and his conclusion is one that many would rather not hear: often, it's simply chance, coincidence, and happenstance that make people successful.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction
  - Early Advantages Make The Difference
  - The 10.000-hour rule
  - Time Is Of The Essence
  - Language Advantages
  - Intelligence and Success Correlation
- Wisdom From Outliers
- CONS
- PROS
- Outliers Review

Bullet Summary

- Success is sometimes a matter of external factors
- Culture shapes us more than we think
- Long practice is the main difference between good and amazing

Full Summary

About The Author: Malcolm Gladwell is a Canadian journalist, public speaker, and author of several books on psychology and psychology fun facts.
Among his other best-sellers are *Blink, The Tipping Point,* and David and Goliath.

Introduction

In *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell makes the point that success in life is often a matter of early advantage and circuitous circumstances.

Hard work goes on top and it's also one of the most important variables, but hard work is also often dictated by circumstances.

For example, Bill Gates studied in the only middle school in the US with a computer terminal. There he had the chance to practice programming at a Ph.D. level.
Would Gates have become Gates without that circuitous stroke of luck? Who knows…

Early Advantages Make The Difference

Hockey players who were born in the first three months of the year (January to March) are over-represented in the

professional league.

Malcolm Gladwell says that's because of early advantages and reinforcement.

Children born at the beginning of the year had more time to develop physically, which gave them an early advantage. Then they got positive reinforcement with feedback, results, and encouragement to keep going. They ended up both having more opportunities to practice more and *wanting* to practice more, which kept them going.

Many professionals didn't become professionals because they were particularly good or talented. Just because they were born earlier and rode on that early advantage until the end.

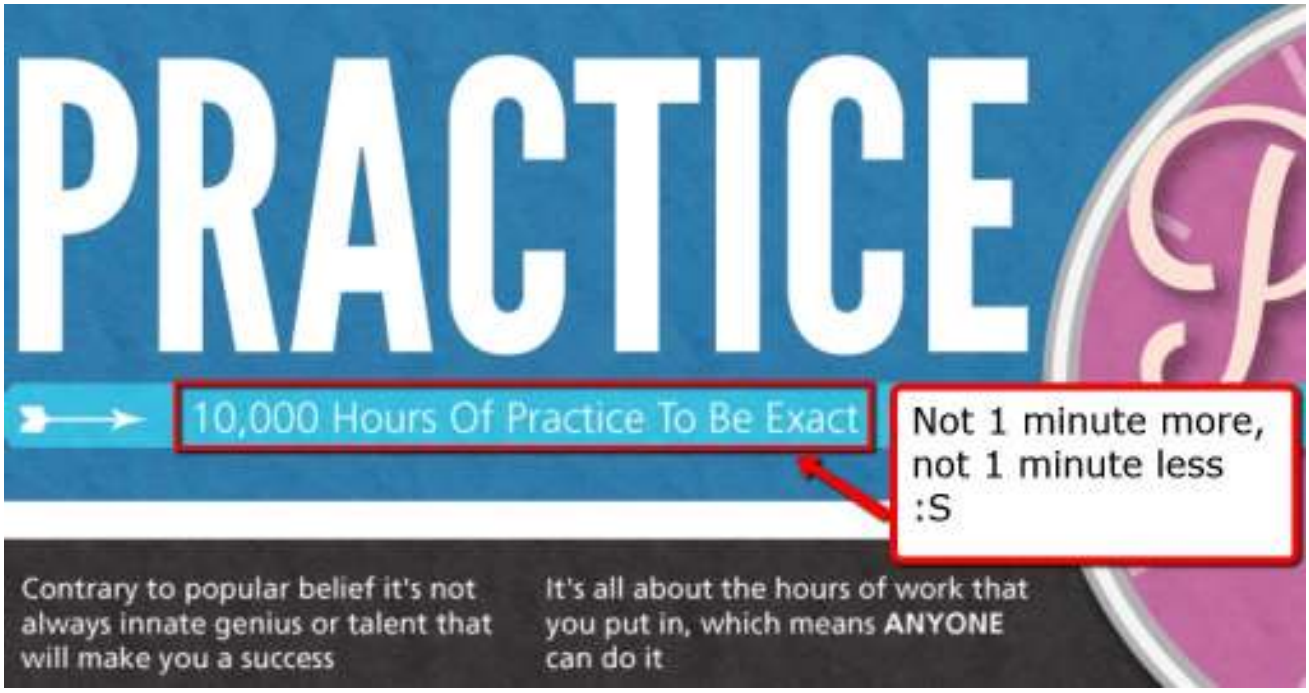
The 10.000-hour rule

Outliers are possibly most famous for the 10,000-hour rule, which Gladwell borrowed from psychologist Anders Ericsson, author of *Peak*.

The rule says that the people who reached the highest highs in their profession seemed to have trained for 10.000 hours, which is more than most of their "very good" or "good" peers did.

My Note:
This idea has been heavily criticized in the sense that training is a condition sine qua non, but it's also not enough to guarantee top performance by itself.
And reducing it to a number is simplistic and rather wrong.
Read more here:

- Why the 10.000 rules is a pop-psychology myth



The 10.000 rule, albeit wrong, has spread like wildfire

Time Is Of The Essence

Gladwell looks at many successful tech entrepreneurs and notices that their birth dates also show a pattern: they were all born during the personal computing revolution period.

Getting into business during the digital revolution made it somewhat easier to achieve what they achieved.

> Success was (also) a product of the time in which they grew up

My Note:
This makes little sense to me.

And it's more about sensationalistic journalism than true, deep analysis.

Gladwell is measuring his *contemporary* and *successful* entrepreneurs only. Of course, the birth date of contemporary entrepreneurs will all be similar because entrepreneurs are more likely to cluster around a certain age.

As we move ahead in time, more and more entrepreneurs will be born outside of the initial digital revolution. Yet, we aren't going to say that successful tech entrepreneurs must be born in a specific time window.

This is not to say that being born in a certain period, like for example in the early days of a revolutionary technology cannot be an advantage: it *can* be a huge opportunity.
But if Gladwell had measured how many also failed, he would have probably realized that the numbers were pretty similar.

Language Advantages

Some languages provide an advantage in dealing with numbers.

For example:

Chinese Helps With Math

Chinese for example has shorter names for numbers. What difference does that make? Well, people can hold in their short-term memories more of those numbers.
And that provides an advantage in mentally handling numbers.

English Has Logic Weakness

The logical structure of languages also makes a difference.
The English language is not logical in the way it structures its number after 10.
In Korean, Japanese and Chinese instead of the number 11 is "ten one", which makes logical sense.
And 24 is "two tens four". This allows Asian kids, says Gladwell, to be one year ahead by age 6 when it comes to math.

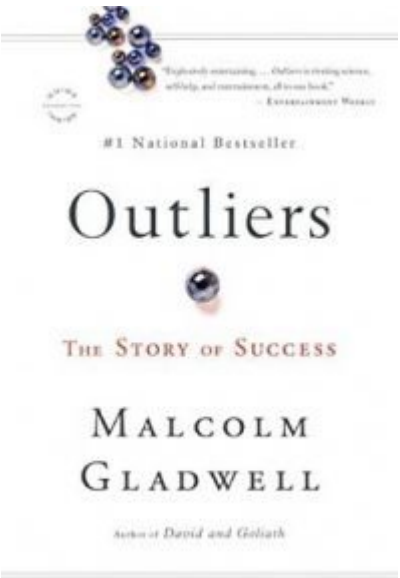
My Note:
And yet again, this is only half of what a good analysis should do.
How about age 24, or 50? Does that advantage stay constant, diminish, or totally disappear?
I suspect it diminishes and very possibly disappears as people internalize the link.

Intelligence and Success Correlation

IQ points translate into success only up until 120.

Any point above that threshold doesn't correlate anymore with success. To be successful indeed you don't have to be a genius, it's enough not to be too below average.

Gladwell also refers to "practical intelligence" as opposed to IQ, which he describes as knowing when to say what, to whom to say, and how to say it. Basically, that's social mastery and *emotional intelligence*.



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Wisdom From Outliers

This is what I enjoyed the most from "*Outliers*":

- **As long as you're good enough… Effort makes the difference**

There are likely many, many fields where you can be in the top 5%.

Not every single field, but there are many. Once you are good enough, then the amount of time, energy, and deliberate effort you put into those activities will make all the difference between you and the rest, and in the final results, you will get.

- **Don't listen to early results**

Sometimes you can see it early if you're good at something. But some other times not so. Stick to it for a while and don't give up at the first difficulty.

- **The longer you stay at things, the better you are**

As simple as that, yet so powerful. Also, read *Grit* by Angela Duckworth.

CONS

Outliers is an interesting read, but we need to raise a few red flags:

- **The 10.000-hour rule is misleading**

Naming a number of hours as a differentiator is preposterous. And the reality is, as usual, a bit more complex.

In different fields, the amount of training will have a different impact, and not everyone can become world-class at everything solely based on training.

Also more important than time is how people train, read The Talent Code, and the importance of deep practice.

- **Random patterns and shallow analysis**

Some explanation made me think of *Fooled by Randomness*, which explains how men see patterns where there are none.
For example, the idea that rice provides "rice cultures" with the ability to stay focused for longer seemed truly

nonsensical to me.

PROS

Some fascinating analysis
The Java founder, the Bill Gates story, the hockey players' patterns… All fascinating and highly instructive stuff.

Big humility lesson
Putting so many successes in context is a big humility lesson that can be useful to many of us.

Emphasis on consistency
Albeit I believe the "10.000-hours rule" is very misleading, it does have a great advantage: it highlights how much effort matters. And that's all in our control.

Outliers Review

I'll say it outright: "*Outliers*" is not my favorite type of book.

To me, it's more a collection of curiosity with a smattering of pop-psychology than a truly enlightening wisdom and deep analysis.

Outliers take complex life issues, apply some (random) research and popularize a few psychological principles in a way that makes them sound deep and smart.

And that makes for interesting reads for the layperson.

Whether or not they can contain life-changing advice or you can easily apply them to your life, that's another question.

There is one hugely positive, important pro in books like "*Outliers*" though: they help readers to think outside of the box and look at less obvious explanations and variables.
And it puts to rest the idea that "it's all talent" or "it's all work". It's both. Plus some randomness.

#1 Reason Relationships Fail: Breaking The Vicious Cycles

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

There are often many factors that lead to relationship failures.

But no matter what those factors are, the ultimate factor is always a vicious cycle.

This post will help you analyze vicious cycles and teach you how to break a vicious cycle in your relationship.

Contents

- What Are Vicious Cycles
- How We Get To Cycles Begin
- Vicious Cycles of Emotional Withdrawal
- Vicious Cycle of Combativeness
- Vicious Cycles Examples
- How to Break Vicious Cycles
  - 1. Be Proactive
  - 2. Start Well
  - 3. List of Appreciation
  - 4. List of What We Want to Hear
  - 5. Focus on Positives
  - 6. Start Positive Cycles
  - 7. Stubborn Giving
- What If You Can't Give
  - One Last Effort
- SUMMARY

What Are Vicious Cycles

I will define a vicious cycle as:

> A vicious cycle is a pattern of thoughts and actions where both partners get stuck in fighting, revenge and, possibly, negative thinking associated to their partners.

Notice that the most dangerous types of vicious cycles involve feelings.
It's relatively easier to break up fighting and arguments and move on. But it's more dangerous when it starts involving our feelings and our judgment.

Once partners get stuck in negative thinking indeed, it's possible that the negativity "crowds out love" and, if it goes on unchecked for too long, it can also kill the love.

And that's why it's crucial that you actively break the negative cycles.

How We Get To Cycles Begin

Healthy relationships start like this:

With a sense and a non-written agreement that both partners will make an effort to support and contribute to the other (and for the whole).

And they expect their partners to do the same.

Basically, this is the tacit agreement:

> We each do our best to respect each other and contribute to our common good

However, this is the tacit corollary to that agreement:

> But if you stop doing your best, and if you hurt me or disappoint me, then I might stop doing my best. And I might try to hurt you back

This second corollary is what allows vicious cycles to take hold and potentially destroy so many otherwise great relationships.

Can you already see when it's riskiest that vicious cycles take hold?
Vicious cycles are most dangerous when the relationship is composed of two individuals who are not willing to forgive.

Of course, sometimes it's not about "willingness", but "ability" and "strength" to forgive.

Making that first step back towards reconciliation takes strength.
It takes courage and vulnerability. Be that courageous (wo)man and you've already insulated yourself from vicious cycles.

Let's now analyze the two types of vicious cycles.

Vicious Cycles of Emotional Withdrawal

Emotional vicious cycles happen when the partners stop supporting each other.

It can start in different ways and at different times in the relationship. It can start with a sexual rejection in bed, or it can start with criticism and a big argument on a day we're particularly sensitive.

That day when our partner's actions are just that little bit more painful, then we will unconsciously vow that we will make them pay for it.
And we will hurt them by either pulling back or attacking them later on to even the score.

And guess what often happens from then on? A vicious cycle starts.
And when the mutual emotional shutdown starts, each partner feels too hurt and too "in debt" to even think they need to give to make the relationship whole again.

Mira Kirshenbaum, author of *z*, says that she has never seen a relationship in trouble where the mutual shutdown wasn't working its black magic.

Vicious Cycle of Combativeness

The other reason why relationships fail is when negativity takes hold with arguments and fights.
Arguments start becoming more and more common, and the good times start becoming less and less.

When the vicious cycle of combativeness reaches its apex, the couple avoids each other. And every time they meet, their walls are up because they cannot see anything good coming from their partner.
That's effectively the point when the couple behaves more like enemies than supportive partners.

This is also the case that Gottman discusses in his many books on relationships. The vicious cycle of negativity does include indeed the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Such as, criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling.

Note: Notice indeed that it's not just about fights and arguments. Arguments are fine.. As long as couples can go back to being supportive soon afterward instead of getting bitter. And as long as the positive times outweigh the negative ones.

Vicious Cycles Examples

And this is an example of the end stages of a vicious cycle. You can see that it's the N.1 reason why relationships fail: there's no good left. Only spite and poison.

And they got there little by little, slipping on the slippery slope of a vicious cycle.

I have also done an article on combative relationships, which is another advanced stage of negativity.

How to Break Vicious Cycles

Hitting back when we are hurt is a mutual reflex, so don't be too hard on yourself if you ended up in a vicious circle.
Apply instead the exercises below to fix your relationship.

1. Be Proactive

Prevention is the best cure for the N.1 reason why relationships fail.

How do you do that?

Every time you see your partner pull back, every time you see your partner holding a grudge, don't do the same.
But force yourself to give.

2. Start Well

A great predictor of how things develop, as Gottman found out, is how they start.
Make sure you start your interactions positively then.
Greet him with a smile and a hug when he comes back home.

3. List of Appreciation

Write down a list of what you love about your partner and read it to each other.

4. List of What We Want to Hear

This exercise might sound a bit weird and it's not would I would personally go for, but Harville Hendrix, author of *Getting the Love You Want* recommends it.

Your partner writes a list of what they want to be appreciated for.
Then you read it and tell them about every occasion you can remember when they showed those qualities.

5. Focus on Positives

Focus on the positives.
Think back to when things worked and focus on those times instead that on the last fight.
This is especially important for avoidant attachment styles who tend to dwell on the negatives.

6. Start Positive Cycles

People tend to react more quickly and more strongly to negatives than to positives.

For example, if your partner does something nice for you, you might think "wow that's nice," but you don't do or say anything.
And that's exactly what you'll need to fix. Reward positive behavior as soon as you see one.
As a matter of fact, look and hunt for positive behavior which you can praise!

That will help you start positive circles.

7. Stubborn Giving

This is my definition of single-handedly breaking down the negativity spiral.

It means that one partner, all by himself, will give and give even in the face of a hostile partner.
Do it for a month and chances are high, very high, that your partner will also start contributing. Stubborn giving is powerful stuff.

In a nutshell, you will recognize that every single exercise is about going back to positivity.
Indeed, the big secret is *making it a habit* to be good to each other. Gottman says that successful relationships have a balance of 5 positive moments to 1 negative. Securing a 5 to 1 ratio will prevent a vicious circle and give you a solid, healthy relationship.

What If You Can't Give

If you're in a situation where you simply cannot even imagine being nice and giving to your partner, then I see the only solution for you: your partner has to do it for you.

If neither is willing, then vicious circles, the N.1 reason why relationships fail, has destroyed your relationship too.
It might be the time to break up and take your lesson learned for the future.
If you're still ambivalent at this stage, take also a look at this article on when it's time to break up.

One Last Effort

Before giving up, I would suggest you force yourself into stubborn giving.

Every single person in a relationship with much negativity will answer that "no, they can't start giving".

And they won't.
And that's also why most people don't do much in life at all. They are weak in *emotional intelligence* and can't see beyond their immediate fears and basest feelings.
They would rather not try than risk their ego getting hurt.

I would encourage you to be brave instead and go for it. Give stubbornly for a month. It will be hard. And if it won't work, you can tell yourself you've done your best.
And much respect to you for trying.
And if works… What a win!
You just single-handedly prevent the N.1 cause of relationship failure to ravage your life.

SUMMARY

The N.1 reason why a relationship ends is too much negativity takes hold through vicious cycles.

There are two types of vicious cycles:

1. Emotional withdrawal (at a feeling level, there's no emotional bond anymore)
2. Combativeness spiral (at the behavioral level, arguments are the only way you communicate)

Things can start off seemingly innocently, but little by little negativity builds upon itself in a vicious circle until it squeezes out all the good in you and all that is left is bitterness and anger.

You fix it by focusing on the positive, giving without keeping score, and breaking the negative circle with "stubborn giving".

Do Girls Like Assholes? No, They Like Avoidants

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Do girls like assholes?

In part, yes.

And I highly recommend you first start reading about:

1. "asshole game"
2. then come back here,
3. then go to "how to be a good asshole".

However, more than "liking assholes", it's *some* asshole traits that are attractive.
And being "barely available" is one of those traits.

Let's learn more.

That's the wrong, low-quality way of being a jerk

Contents

- INTRO: The Asshole Myth
- Why Assholes Are Attractive
  - Assholes Are Not Women's Magnets
- What's an Asshole?
  - The Definition of Asshole is Wrong
- Girls Don't Like Aholes, They Like Avoidants
  - Who Do Avoidants Attract?
  - Secure Women Don't Like Assholes
- SUMMARY

INTRO: The Asshole Myth

I remember years ago.

A colleague of mine was complaining about women who, in his mind, “just want to be mistreated”.
And he said:

> Really, next time I’ll just go over to a woman and kick her. They always like men who treat them badly.

Urgh, what a bad attitude!

Was he wrong?

Not 100%.
There is latent masochism in some women -and people in general- that seeks abuse.
Hopefully, you are not interested in that subset.

But was he right for the majority of women?

Not really.
But we need to dig a bit deeper.

In a complex world, black-and-white thinking is bound to be wrong most of the time.

You see, high-quality women don’t really line up for assholes. And especially not the crudest, less attractive types -obviously, no?-.
But they like them just a tad better than *too* nice guys.

But that does not make assholes great. Just a tad better.
And women don’t like much of an asshole. Just a few traits.

Let’s see more.

Some assholes are attractive because they’re handsome, and they’d be attractive anyway

Why Assholes Are Attractive

Some of the (potentially) bad traits of the asshole are attractive.

And these include:

- Confidence (but sometimes over-confidence in assholes)
- Social skills (but sometimes used to one-up others)
- Dominance (or apparent dominance to protect a fragile ego, it depends)
- Strength (or apparent strengths)
- Some hints of seductive dark triad traits

And, in some cases, it's not to write off some women's tendency towards masochism and self-fulfilling low self-esteem.

But it's mostly what the asshole doesn't show that is attractive.
And those are the negative traits of the pushover.

Things such as:

- Over-chasing and over-investing
- Indecisiveness
- Putting himself last
- Over politeness

All the above traits scream powerless, fear, and subordination.
And of course, women are attracted to the opposite of that: competence, authority, and power.

So **it's mostly what sets the assholes apart from the too nice guys that make them attractive**. And not really being an asshole per se.

Indeed the asshole attractiveness is often overplayed.

In "*Attraction Explained*", psychology researcher Virem Swani well explains that assholes are only better than pushovers.
And research shows that most women, albeit not all, would otherwise prefer "kind men".

Here is an example from 500 Days of Summer:

Some guys may mistakenly think that guy was cool in his approach because he "had balls".
But again, that's not what's most effective.

Assholes Are Not Women's Magnets

The idea that girls like assholes and assholes get women like nobody's business is also somewhat wrong.

And it happens because of representatives' bias.
Such as, we see lots of too nice guys struggling in life. Then we see a few assholes getting women and we generalize that all assholes get girls and that all girls like assholes.

Of course, there are many assholes who are very successful and sleep with lots of women.
But there are also many assholes who don't get any women and end up bitter and on their own.

Example here from Sex and The City:

What's an Asshole?

There are many characteristics of an asshole.
Some of them include:

- Being rude
- Putting his needs first
- Being unruly
- Not listening to people around
- Disregarding her needs
- Etc. Etc.

But the two major overarching traits of the asshole are the following:

1. Self-centered ("me comes first")
2. Not fully committing to the relationship

However, most people use asshole as an umbrella term. And therein lie the mistake of why so many people wrongly believe that women do like assholes.

The Definition of Asshole is Wrong

One of the reasons that many think assholes are attractive is because of the vagueness of the term.

Jen Kim, for example, says that many women use the word assholes for pretty much any behavior or outcome they didn't want, including non-committing.

Someone doesn't want to commit? He's an asshole.
He doesn't call when he says he will? He's an asshole
Mean? Asshole.
Bitter, inconsiderate, emotionally unavailable, unfaithful…? Asshole, asshole, asshole, and asshole.

Girls Don't Like Aholes, They Like Avoidants

We have seen that girls do like some asshole traits associated with the "me comes first" attitude.

But what about the other side of the equation?
Do girls like assholes who can't commit?

Yes, they do. Quite a few of them, at least.
But those guys are *not* (necessarily) assholes. They have a name, and that's avoidant attachment men.

Avoidants naturally do the following:

- Send off mixed signals
- Pull her close… Then push her away
- Keep her at arm's length
- Unavailable when she needs him

… And all the other unavailable signals that many labels as the umbrella term of "assholes" but which are actually the typical signs of an avoidant personality.

Who Do Avoidants Attract?

Avoidants are especially addictive to anxious attachment-type women.

This is important, because if you're a woman and asking yourself "why do I always end up with assholes", well, here is the answer: it can be because you have an anxious attachment style.

Anxious and avoidant, together, form the highly volatile, highly addictive anxious attachment trap.

The anxious attachment trap, such as a relationship where she needs him but he stays noncommittal and out of reach, is exactly what people mistake as a relationship with an asshole.
People look at that dynamic and believe that assholes are attractive and addictive to women.

And albeit that dynamic of being out of reach is very attractive for many women who keep going after these guys, not every woman is into it.

Secure Women Don't Like Assholes

Amir Levine in *Attached* introduces a secure attachment-type woman.

You will see how her mindset would be impervious to assholes.
Here's what she says (I paraphrase for brevity):

> All men I have been with wanted to be with me in a relationship.
>
> I know that I get the message across that I'm someone who's worth getting to know, that there's a treasure to be revealed if they stick around.
>
> *But it's very important to me that the guys don't play games. When they call me right after, I show interest in return right away. Only two men in my life waited to call me back. And I cut any contact with them.*

Notice that her high self-esteem prevents her from thinking think it was she who was not good enough.

She thought *those guys* were playing games, and she is only interested in men who can communicate her affection openly.

This is the type of high-quality girl doesn't like assholes. And who rarely fall for them (albeit, never say never).
And they also tend to be higher-quality women.

SUMMARY

So do girls like assholes?

They like them better than the completely spineless guys, yes.

However, assholes are far from the peak of sexual market value.

And the guys that women often get hooked on are not assholes. It's avoidant men whom they get hooked on and that erroneously end up being labeled as assholes.

And we have also seen that some of the highest quality girls, those with a secure attachment style, don't like either assholes or avoidants.

Hence, often, it's lower-quality women that the assholes end up with.

I highly recommend these two articles:

- Asshole game
- How to be a good asshole

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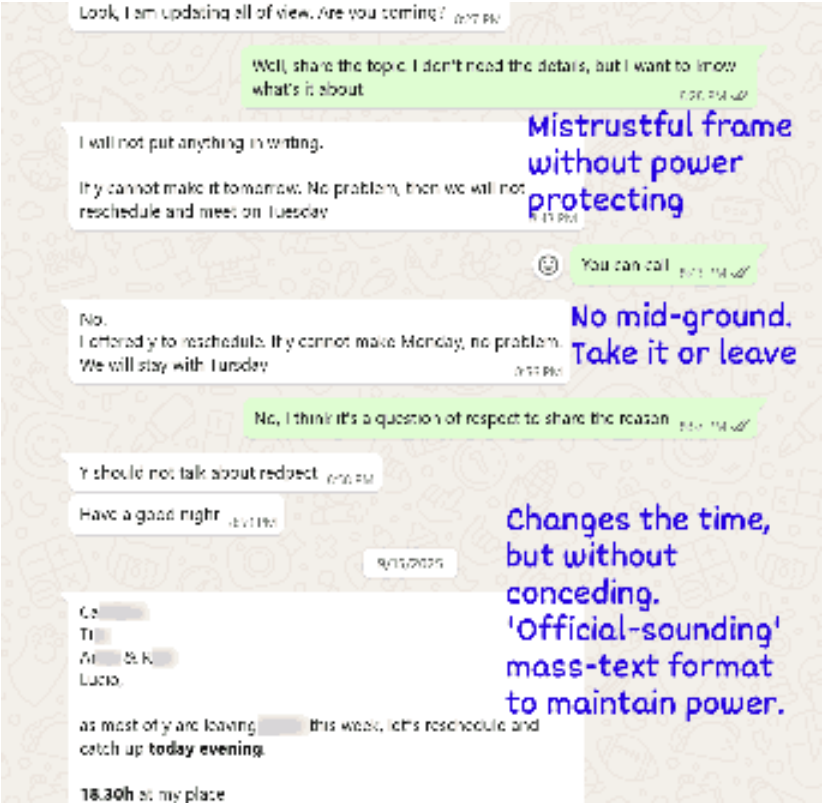
Power-hungry women and, most often, men, can make your relationship a living hell.

Unless you fully submit to them, that is.

But if you prefer a more equitable, supportive, and win-win relationship, this article is here to help.

We will explore:

- The psychology of power-hungry individuals
- Examples of power-hungry behavior
- What you can do with power-hungry people



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A conciliator person here would have 'power protected' her refusal to share the topic, for example saying that 'she couldn't do it for legal concerns', but that 'she was looking forward to explaining everything in person'.

But power-hungry personalities don't think about *sharing* power. They think about *hoarding* power and dictating terms.
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Can You Date A Power-Hungry?

This is the general rule:

> The more power hungry they are, the more undateable they are.

To be precise, you can still date them.
And you can also marry them.

But if you're the man, **she should NOT be power hungry with you and instead accept your leadership.**
Or, at least, you should be OK being the 'junior party' (not what our readership prefers).

It's one of these two or… You're in for endless fights for control.

Some women instead happily marry power-hungry men because **some women confuse power hunger for positive dominance.**

Power addiction is that it can truly work as an addiction.
Power addicts feel unsafe unless they're in control. In a relationship, that means that your needs will never be cared for -unless they overlap with his need for power-.

Power Hungry Are Always In Fight Mode

It's hard having true intimacy with power-hungry men.

For them everything is a fight to win, starting with the toxic mindset of "who needs whom the least".
Power-hungry men are focused not on win-win and adding more to the pie, but on taking as much as possible from that pie.
If the pie shrinks, such as if the relationship suffers, power-hungry men don't care: all they care is that they keep getting bigger slices… Until there is no pie left.

Sometimes it's hard for normal people to understand power-hungry men. These people fight for a whole host of things that make no sense to others.

Needless Fights: An Example

For example, imagine Kate, the wife, asks him to take her home when she asks so. Kate has a sister in the other part of the world and she wants to show Kate the newborn baby. Since Kate cares so much about family, she wants to take the Skype call on the big screen.

The power-hungry man might say yes.

If you're a normal person and your wife would tell you in advance that being home on time is crucial for her, you would do so because she pleaded to do so and you agreed.

But a power-hungry person?
On the way home, he might stop at the office. Or stop the car to make a call.

Why on earth would he do that?

It's because he sees a power struggle in going straight home and doing what she asked for.
If she gets home on time when she asked so, in his mind she acquires power. To avoid that, he comes up with an excuse to reassert his power.

In his mind, it's as if he was making this statement:

> **Power Hungry Mindset**: "I matter more in this relationship and I can do whatever I please. I am going to prove it to you now but thwarting your plans and wishes".

They Never Switch Off "Fight Mode"

They have the same mindset in the office and in their job, too, always about winning and displaying dominance.

And they carry that "need to win attitude" home. But there, it doesn't work. And they end up with truly poor relationships

Power Hungry Men Don't Allow Improvements

The most maddening part of dating a power-hungry man?

You can't discuss your issues.

It's hard fixing issues with them because guess how they interpret any attempt to bring the issue to the table?
Exactly, like a power struggle they need to win.
They'll see it as an assault on them and will fight to win.

Power-hungry men have different responses to your attempts at discussing problems.
Some of the most common:

- Fly off in a rage
- Pretend they agree and then do nothing (or the opposite)
- Agree in front of the therapist and then refuse to do any more therapy

Some relationship therapists report power-hungry men agreeing with their spouses and the therapist on the need to change.
Then they do the opposite of what they agreed, refuse to see the therapist again, or fly in a rage at home (the most abusive of them).

The more manipulative might lie, saying that the therapist is "destroying their marriage", and they will try to pitch the therapist as the common enemy.
In truth, of course, they just see the therapist as a threat to their dominance and hold of power.

In truth, power-hungry men are powerless to change and improve. And, often, they are powerless to save their relationships.

> **Power hungry men are powerless with their need for power**

Power Hungry, Domineering Women

Power-hungry men are more about winning and exercising control over her.

Power-hungry women can be equally dogged in 'winning' and getting it their ways.
But because of different evolutionary forces, women may also seek to control their men in two unique ways:

1. Securing his commitment
2. Securing his resources

And I have written a popular article on how women control relationships and their resources.
But here are two video examples to give you an idea of how power-hungry women exercise relationship control:

Have you noticed the difference?
The first time is the power-hungry woman who is direct and uses raw power. That's what you'd call a "domineering girlfriend".
The second one instead is using manipulation and soft power.

Power Hungry's Power Moves

Let's not review the tools of influence of power-hungry people.

We have already seen in different articles how jealous paranoids and *controlling* and abusive partners use power.
So let's focus here more on the *covert aggression techniques.*

Here are some of them:

#1. There's Something Wrong With You

When you talk about something you need, they will say or make you feel like there's something wrong with you.

They will label people with that same need are "bitchy", "neurotic", "amoral" or whatever.
So to distance yourself from that category you will automatically want to give up your need.

Lucio's Example: **When I acted too power hungry**

Lucio:
My ex-girlfriend wanted a gift for Saint Valentine. I gave the usual spiel about "imposed holidays" and how I felt about them.

And I told her that asking for a gift made me feel like those guys traveling in poor countries where local girls ask for gifts in exchange for sex. My girlfriend was half-Asian and at that one, she gave up.

Back then, those were my real feelings. Now I realize a compromise like a dinner out would have been fairer instead of going full-on with my influencing power.
Curing oneself of power-hungry shortcomings is also about awareness, self-awareness, and maturity.

#2. Says Yes – But Don't Do It

Another great -sarcastic great of course- technique is pretending to go along with it.
And then not doing it. Or doing it their own way.

This is mostly used by less assertive and more submissive partners. And that's why it's more common for power-hungry women.

For example, in her book *Why Men Marry Bitches*, the author recommends women do exactly this: say yes and then find a way to do it her way.

#3. Overwhelm Power

The overwhelming tactic can be used in a variety of ways:

- Emotional meltdown
- Verbal aggression
- A litany of “rational reasons”
- Ethical impossibilities

Whatever the technique, it’s a barrage that confuses everything.
What’s sure is that, unless you give up, the consequences will be uncleanly dire.

#4. Badgering Power Move

The power-hungry partner will keep coming and coming at you without end.

They will exasperate you so much that giving in seems like the only viable option.

As the example suggests, this is a favorite one for very young, budding power personalities.

#5. Power Through Fear

Another technique for power-hungry is to browbeat the partner with fear.

Power-hungry men might go mad to the point of scaring her.
And power-hungry women might threaten to break up to keep him on his toes.

#6. Victim Manipulation

They will pretend that *you* are making them sick.

#7. One-Up Power Move

This is the most childish and annoying.

But alas, it exists.

Whatever you say or do, they take it one step further.
You talk about a promotion, they talk about a big career change they have in mind.
You’re tired from work, they are exhausted from work.

Whatever you want to celebrate, they have to make it seem like it’s nothing compared to what they did.

Is Your Partner a Power Addict?

If you have read so far, you have an idea already.

However, there could be some confusion between power addicts and dominant or strong-willed personalities.

This section is to help you come up with an answer.

The Power Hungry Test

Try this test.

Pick an issue where it’s blatantly obvious that they are the one always deciding and then say this:

> **You**: “it’s not fair that you always decide”.

For example, if they always decide what meal to eat, tell them it's not fair they always pick.
And then watch where it goes from there.

How do they react to your appeal to fairness? Do they take this into account? If they try to have you say that you like their choices, say you like it indeed, but one evening per week you would like to pick.

If they accept your appeal, then maybe you're not dealing with a power addict.
If they resort to one of the above techniques to have it their way, then they are dealing with a power addict.

Diagnostic Question

Some power-hungry personalities are great at their game.

So good indeed that they will stop just one whisker away from you quitting the relationship.

They will just give you that one thing every once in a while right before you were about to go.

If that's the case, then you should ask yourself Mira Kirshenbaum's diagnostic question:

> **Diagnostic Question**: Do you often feel humiliated? Do you often feel in rage or depressed? Do you often feel like you're invisible or that your wants and needs don't count at all?

If the answer to the above questions is yes, then you are probably dealing with a power addict.
If repeated attempts to address the issues fail, you may need to reassess the relationship and consider whether it is meeting your needs.

In one observed case study, a spouse refused to comply with a partner's demand, demonstrating a potential 'protest behavior' in power-hungry dynamics:

> **Her**: (refuses to hold his hand) <— This is reaction is in line with a possible 'protest behavior' in reaction to a partner who may focus more on power than on communion

Should You Break Up From a Power Hungry?

As we said, there is an overlap between power-hunger and abuse.

To be precise: abusive men seek power and control over their partner, which makes them almost by definition power-hungry.
Power-hungry men, on the other hand, are not always abusive, but that also depends on how hungry for power they are. Hunger for power is a scale after all, and at high levels, it almost always becomes somewhat abusive.

If that's the case, and I don't usually make recommendations here, you are probably better off breaking up.
As George Simon explains in "*In Sheep's Clothing*", change is not easy. It requires you to acquaint yourself with the dynamics of power and take a big, assertive stand.

If your partner is "only" power-hungry and not abusive, you can first try together counseling.
But he has to be open to admitting that he has a power addiction first.

For more information read:

- When to break up diagnostics
- Accepting influence (and sharing power)

Why Do People Stay With Power Hungry?

The question comes naturally:

Why do people even stick it out so long in a relationship with a power addict?

Well, deep down many of us admire power.
And of course, that's especially true for women.

They will tell themselves "of course he's domineering, but he's also smart, capable, and blablabla".
In a world with a lot of too many *too-nice men*, a man who "always wins" might seem like a strong man to rely on, after all.

And as much as they hate their power-hungry men, they also admire them.

After years of living in the shadows of their power addict husband, some women might even think they wouldn't be able to handle life by themselves.

Don't Fall For The Gambler's Trap

Another reason why people stay with power-hungry addicts is the revenge factor.

Some develop the mindset that the only way to get back their pride and make up for their humiliation lies in undercutting your power-addict partner.

And that's why they stay: to score a win, save face, and get back their pride.
The best approach is to set firm boundaries rather than seeking indirect revenge, or moving on to better alternatives.

Fixing a Power Hungry

If your partner's need to win means that you will not get any of your needs met, it's tough to find a solution.

If you already calmly discussed the issue with him multiple times, I would suggest you try two things:

1. Therapy
2. Stubborn giving

Therapy means you bring your power-hungry partner for couple therapy and see if you can get anything out of it.
Stubborn giving is something I talked about in the vicious circle of negativity that destroys relationships.

It means you give and give and give and see if anything changes.
Try it out for two months and see if any changes happen.

If that fails, too, it's time to use your largest leverage, and tell them that it's either they change, or you must move on.

And if he still doesn't change, then follow through with your breakup.
Make sure you set timelines for change.

Persistent feelings of rage, humiliation, or frustration in a relationship indicate a power imbalance that needs decisive action.

Indeed, it's a mistake to think that the worst relationship ends in divorce. The worst relationships keep going in the face of the daily horror they dish out.

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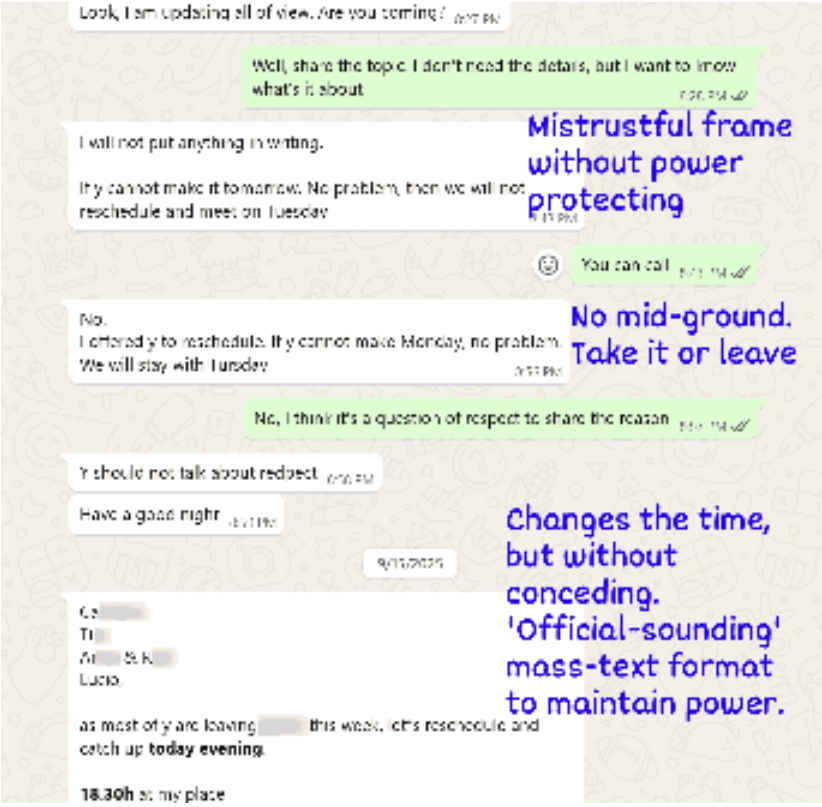

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If you're a normal person and your wife would tell you in advance that being home on time is crucial for her, you would do so because she pleaded to do so and you agreed.

But a power-hungry person?
On the way home, he might stop at the office. Or stop the car to make a call.

Why on earth would he do that?

It's because he sees a power struggle in going straight home and doing what she asked for.
If she gets home on time when she asked so, in his mind she acquires power. To avoid that, he comes up with an excuse to reassert his power.

In his mind, it's as if he was making this statement:

> **Power Hungry Mindset**: "I matter more in this relationship and I can do whatever I please. I am going to prove it to you now but thwarting your plans and wishes".

They Never Switch Off "Fight Mode"

They have the same mindset in the office and in their job, too, always about winning and displaying dominance.

And they carry that "need to win attitude" home. But there, it doesn't work. And they end up with truly poor relationships

Power Hungry Men Don't Allow Improvements

The most maddening part of dating a power-hungry man?

You can't discuss your issues.

It's hard fixing issues with them because guess how they interpret any attempt to bring the issue to the table?
Exactly, like a power struggle they need to win.
They'll see it as an assault on them and will fight to win.

Power-hungry men have different responses to your attempts at discussing problems.
Some of the most common:

- Fly off in a rage
- Pretend they agree and then do nothing (or the opposite)
- Agree in front of the therapist and then refuse to do any more therapy

Some relationship therapists report power-hungry men agreeing with their spouses and the therapist on the need to change.
Then they do the opposite of what they agreed, refuse to see the therapist again, or fly in a rage at home (the most abusive of them).

The more manipulative might lie, saying that the therapist is "destroying their marriage", and they will try to pitch the therapist as the common enemy.
In truth, of course, they just see the therapist as a threat to their dominance and hold of power.

In truth, power-hungry men are powerless to change and improve. And, often, they are powerless to save their relationships.

> **Power hungry men are powerless with their need for power**

Power Hungry, Domineering Women

Power-hungry men are more about winning and exercising control over her.

Power-hungry women can be equally dogged in 'winning' and getting it their ways.
But because of different evolutionary forces, women may also seek to control their men in two unique ways:

1. Securing his commitment
2. Securing his resources

And I have written a popular article on how women control relationships and their resources.
But here are two video examples to give you an idea of how power-hungry women exercise relationship control:

Have you noticed the difference?
The first time is the power-hungry woman who is direct and uses raw power. That's what you'd call a "domineering girlfriend".
The second one instead is using manipulation and soft power.

Power Hungry's Power Moves

Let's not review the tools of influence of power-hungry people.

We have already seen in different articles how jealous paranoids and *controlling* and abusive partners use power.
So let's focus here more on the *covert aggression techniques.*

Here are some of them:

#1. There's Something Wrong With You

When you talk about something you need, they will say or make you feel like there's something wrong with you.

They will label people with that same need are "bitchy", "neurotic", "amoral" or whatever.
So to distance yourself from that category you will automatically want to give up your need.

Lucio's Example: **When I acted too power hungry**

Lucio:
My ex-girlfriend wanted a gift for Saint Valentine. I gave the usual spiel about "imposed holidays" and how I felt about them.

And I told her that asking for a gift made me feel like those guys traveling in poor countries where local girls ask for gifts in exchange for sex. My girlfriend was half-Asian and at that one, she gave up.

Back then, those were my real feelings. Now I realize a compromise like a dinner out would have been fairer instead of going full-on with my influencing power.
Curing oneself of power-hungry shortcomings is also about awareness, self-awareness, and maturity.

#2. Says Yes – But Don't Do It

Another great -sarcastic great of course- technique is pretending to go along with it.
And then not doing it. Or doing it their own way.

This is mostly used by less assertive and more submissive partners. And that's why it's more common for power-hungry women.

For example, in her book *Why Men Marry Bitches*, the author recommends women do exactly this: say yes and then find a way to do it her way.

#3. Overwhelm Power

The overwhelming tactic can be used in a variety of ways:

- Emotional meltdown
- Verbal aggression
- A litany of “rational reasons”
- Ethical impossibilities

Whatever the technique, it’s a barrage that confuses everything.
What’s sure is that, unless you give up, the consequences will be uncleanly dire.

#4. Badgering Power Move

The power-hungry partner will keep coming and coming at you without end.

They will exasperate you so much that giving in seems like the only viable option.

As the example suggests, this is a favorite one for very young, budding power personalities.

#5. Power Through Fear

Another technique for power-hungry is to browbeat the partner with fear.

Power-hungry men might go mad to the point of scaring her.
And power-hungry women might threaten to break up to keep him on his toes.

#6. Victim Manipulation

They will pretend that *you* are making them sick.

#7. One-Up Power Move

This is the most childish and annoying.

But alas, it exists.

Whatever you say or do, they take it one step further.
You talk about a promotion, they talk about a big career change they have in mind.
You’re tired from work, they are exhausted from work.

Whatever you want to celebrate, they have to make it seem like it’s nothing compared to what they did.

Is Your Partner a Power Addict?

If you have read so far, you have an idea already.

However, there could be some confusion between power addicts and dominant or strong-willed personalities.

This section is to help you come up with an answer.

The Power Hungry Test

Try this test.

Pick an issue where it’s blatantly obvious that they are the one always deciding and then say this:

> **You**: “it’s not fair that you always decide”.

For example, if they always decide what meal to eat, tell them it's not fair they always pick.
And then watch where it goes from there.

How do they react to your appeal to fairness? Do they take this into account? If they try to have you say that you like their choices, say you like it indeed, but one evening per week you would like to pick.

If they accept your appeal, then maybe you're not dealing with a power addict.
If they resort to one of the above techniques to have it their way, then they are dealing with a power addict.

Diagnostic Question

Some power-hungry personalities are great at their game.

So good indeed that they will stop just one whisker away from you quitting the relationship.

They will just give you that one thing every once in a while right before you were about to go.

If that's the case, then you should ask yourself Mira Kirshenbaum's diagnostic question:

> **Diagnostic Question**: Do you often feel humiliated? Do you often feel in rage or depressed? Do you often feel like you're invisible or that your wants and needs don't count at all?

If the answer to the above questions is yes, then you are probably dealing with a power addict.
If repeated attempts to address the issues fail, you may need to reassess the relationship and consider whether it is meeting your needs.

In one observed case study, a spouse refused to comply with a partner's demand, demonstrating a potential 'protest behavior' in power-hungry dynamics:

> **Her**: (refuses to hold his hand) <— This is reaction is in line with a possible 'protest behavior' in reaction to a partner who may focus more on power than on communion

Should You Break Up From a Power Hungry?

As we said, there is an overlap between power-hunger and abuse.

To be precise: abusive men seek power and control over their partner, which makes them almost by definition power-hungry.
Power-hungry men, on the other hand, are not always abusive, but that also depends on how hungry for power they are. Hunger for power is a scale after all, and at high levels, it almost always becomes somewhat abusive.

If that's the case, and I don't usually make recommendations here, you are probably better off breaking up.
As George Simon explains in "*In Sheep's Clothing*", change is not easy. It requires you to acquaint yourself with the dynamics of power and take a big, assertive stand.

If your partner is "only" power-hungry and not abusive, you can first try together counseling.
But he has to be open to admitting that he has a power addiction first.

For more information read:

- When to break up diagnostics
- Accepting influence (and sharing power)

Why Do People Stay With Power Hungry?

The question comes naturally:

Why do people even stick it out so long in a relationship with a power addict?

Well, deep down many of us admire power.
And of course, that's especially true for women.

They will tell themselves "of course he's domineering, but he's also smart, capable, and blablabla".
In a world with a lot of too many *too-nice men*, a man who "always wins" might seem like a strong man to rely on, after all.

And as much as they hate their power-hungry men, they also admire them.

After years of living in the shadows of their power addict husband, some women might even think they wouldn't be able to handle life by themselves.

Don't Fall For The Gambler's Trap

Another reason why people stay with power-hungry addicts is the revenge factor.

Some develop the mindset that the only way to get back their pride and make up for their humiliation lies in undercutting your power-addict partner.

And that's why they stay: to score a win, save face, and get back their pride.
The best approach is to set firm boundaries rather than seeking indirect revenge, or moving on to better alternatives.

Fixing a Power Hungry

If your partner's need to win means that you will not get any of your needs met, it's tough to find a solution.

If you already calmly discussed the issue with him multiple times, I would suggest you try two things:

1. Therapy
2. Stubborn giving

Therapy means you bring your power-hungry partner for couple therapy and see if you can get anything out of it.
Stubborn giving is something I talked about in the vicious circle of negativity that destroys relationships.

It means you give and give and give and see if anything changes.
Try it out for two months and see if any changes happen.

If that fails, too, it's time to use your largest leverage, and tell them that it's either they change, or you must move on.

And if he still doesn't change, then follow through with your breakup.
Make sure you set timelines for change.

Persistent feelings of rage, humiliation, or frustration in a relationship indicate a power imbalance that needs decisive action.

Indeed, it's a mistake to think that the worst relationship ends in divorce. The worst relationships keep going in the face of the daily horror they dish out.

Am I Wasting My Time On Him? Check These 7 Signs

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Is he wasting your time?

This post will help you provide an answer to that question.

You will learn all the major signs of time-wasting guys who are not willing to get serious about long-term commitments.

And you will learn what to do about it.

Contents

- Signs He's Wasting Your Time
  - #1. He Says He's Not The Commitment Type
  - #2. Sends Mixed Signals
  - #3. He Talks About Other Women
  - #4. He Has No Jealousy Whatsoever
  - #5. His Future Doesn't Include You
  - #6. There Is No Relationship Growth
  - #7. He Never Initiates Contact
  - #8. He Says He Has Past Issues
- Look At The Whole
- False Signs He's Wasting Your Time
- What To Do When He's Wasting Your Time
  - How to Stop Time Wasters
  - SUMMARY

Signs He's Wasting Your Time

One swallow does not make spring.

And one sign in isolation does not necessarily mean he does not and will never get serious.

Keep in mind, indeed, that the signs in isolation can be misleading. So you must take that into account and look for patterns, quantity, and frequency.

The more of them you see and the more often you see them, the more likely it is that he is a time-waster.

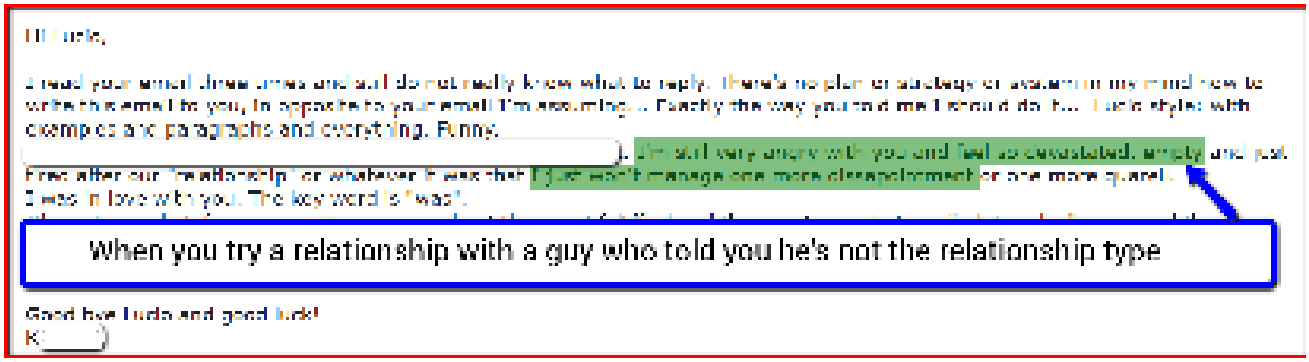
Let's start:

#1. He Says He's Not The Commitment Type

Telling if a guy is wasting your time can be easy sometimes.

As Greg Behrend says in "*He's Not Just That Into You*", if he says he is not the relationship type of guy, then stop wondering.
He told you all you need to know.

Don't be like my ex, who when I told her I wasn't the relationship type still tried to "reform me":



That ended up with her heartbreak and with my own "guilt baggage" (I met her again years later and it felt great to see she was doing well and I was able to apologize).

However, often, it's not that cut and dry and some POS of men will not tell you things directly.

Luckily, these are still several strong early indicators to tell you if your boyfriend or sexual partner is of the "time-wasting" kind.

#2. Sends Mixed Signals

Sending mixed signals is a clear sign he's not yet 100% ready to commit. That might change, but it's a first warning sign.

Mixed signals are also a major warning sign of avoidant attachment types, which don't make good relationship partners.

What are mixed signals?
Here are some examples:

- One day he's all over you, another day he's distant
- Today he talks about a holiday together, then he's not sure if he'll have time
- Last week he texted 2 times a day, now it's been 5 days, and no single text

Anything that makes feel you like "it's going somewhere" and then makes you unsure is a concrete sign of mixed signals.

#3. He Talks About Other Women

If he:

- Talks about other women
- Points to other women to ask your opinion
- Talks a lot about his exes
- Comments on other women's attractiveness in your presence

Chances are he's got more of a fuckbuddy / fun / fuckboy mentality. Or he might be an inveterate womanizer, or maybe even consciously willing to let you know he's not serious.

In any case, it's a strong sign that, if you want commitment, you might have to look for it with someone else.

#4. He Has No Jealousy Whatsoever

Conversely, if he's very open to talking about your ex or what you think of other men, that's a sign that he's not jealous at all.

Little jealousy could be a good thing… But no jealousy at all can also be a sign he doesn't want anything serious. Researcher John Gottman indeed found out that a complete lack of jealousy is often the precursor of a breakup. **Men who want their women for themselves should show at least a hint of protectiveness and jealousy**.

When I was dating I used to ask girls a lot about their exes and their other current options.
One because I'm curious -makes sense I started this website, no?- and two because, in a way, it was my signal that they should be looking elsewhere for a serious thing.

So no jealousy at all and him asking about other men is a big, big sign that he's wasting your time.

#5. His Future Doesn't Include You

If he talks about his future without including you in it, it can be a bad sign. *Especially* if you've been dating for a while.

If you just started dating, it's not a big signal as it might simply be a guy who takes his time instead of rushing in.

These are the signs when he talks about:

- The places *he* wants to see (not the places you should visit together)
- His projects and what it means to him (not the two of you)
- The cars he wants to buy (and not where he wants to take you with them)
- The money he wants to make (and now hot he wants to make you and him better off with that money)

As a matter of fact, **to find out if he is wasting your time encourage him to talk about the future**, and then see how he talks and related to the future.
Is it just him? Or is it both of you?

#6. There Is No Relationship Growth

Relationships that lead to commitment often get there following a path.

That path is not carved in stone, but there are a few common milestones that can provide you with good information.

It's a bad sign if he avoids anything that would send the message that the two of you are growing closer, such as:

- Avoids doing anything on Saint Valentine

- He has no idea where this is going
- Never introduces you as either his girlfriend or the one he's dating
- No gifts, ever
- The time you spend together stays the same (ie.: at his place and a little more)
- Has some stupid rules about "no sleepovers"

"Jokes" about not sleeping over also count. There is always a backdrop of truth in jokes.

#7. He Never Initiates Contact

Men who are serious about relationships and are secure in their attachment don't play "who texted to whom" games.

If the only conversation he initiates is about scheduling hookups, you have another bad sign.
Notice that only meeting for sex might be the start of an actual relationship. But it needs to take off and expand from there. And to test if he's serious, you might want to propose doing more things outside of his place (just don't propose to exchange BJs for a trip with her like a lady did to me, that's truly a terrible game).

#8. He Says He Has Past Issues

Yep, if he's saying it… Believe him.

You'd be surprised how many people hear those words but totally ignore them.
They tell themselves "well… Who hasn't".

But most people who have "normal" issues and exes don't talk about buggages.
Men who talk about baggage are often code-communicating they are still into their exes, that they are not ready to move on, and that they truly have commitment troubles.

Don't listen to your girlfriend saying it's OK, they are being bad girlfriends -or at least, bad at giving advice-.
Instead, consider it for what it is: an important warning sign that he might be wasting your time.

Look At The Whole

It's worth repeating:

One sign by itself might be misleading.
Don't stop and don't stress about each and any single sign.
But look at the whole.

How do you feel, overall?
Let me be frank: if you are asking yourself whether or not a time waster is already a negative sign.

False Signs He's Wasting Your Time

There are many articles around the web helping women decide if he's time wasters.

But they are seldom written by real dating experts and by people who really understand psychology.
That type of advice is not only generic but often misleading.

Here are some signs that don't necessarily mean he's wasting your time:

- **Meet / Doesn't Meet Your Friends**

Some guys are naturally outgoing and enjoy crowds and new people.

Some others are shy, *introverted*, or outright antisocial.

Thus meeting or not meeting your friends can often be more a reflection of his personality than his seriousness about relationships.

- **Never Takes You Out Anywhere**

Some guys love doing things with girls they've just met.
Some others are more about chilling because. It's not that they don't take *you* out much, it's that *they* just don't go out much in general.

So always double-check with this one with his lifestyle. If he's all work, or all work and video games, then don't stress it.

- **(No) Public Affection**

This is another sign that many women mistakenly use an indicator of a guy who's wasting their time.

It could be, but again, this is also often more a reflection of his personality.
Some men are highly effusive in public while others tend to keep the romance behind the curtains.

Some men show little public affection, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're not serious

What To Do When He's Wasting Your Time

And now, the big question.

Imagine after this article you realized that yes, he might be wasting your time.

What do you do?

Some very popular dating books for women would let you believe you better never ask for a relationship.
But that's the wrong approach.

Consider this: a survey showed that 60% of the women who got married were ready to walk away if the man wasn't going to commit. That suggests that those women were not afraid of fielding their demands.
And as Harvey righteously points out, asking for the commitment that you want is a sign of quality.

It shows you think you are worthy of a stable relationship and that you communicate clearly, without playing games (that's how secure attachment types communicate).

Here's how you can structure it:

> **You**: Tom, we have been seeing each other for a while now. And I really like you and cherish time this. I feel I need something more tangible and stable out of it. Deep down, I am looking for a committed relationship. How's your point of view in this.

Or instead, if you want to be more aggressive, already after the 2nd or 3rd time you meet after sex you can say what my ex-girlfriends said:

> **You**: I don't do sex outside of relationships.

If he replies with anything that's not a timeline or a tangible sign of commitment, start cutting back the time you spend together.

How to Stop Time Wasters

Some men are as*holes and some men play a lot of mind games.

These are the reasons why men waste women's time, including women who seek long-term commitment and a family:

- Ego validation
- Safety of emotional attachment
- To keep the sex coming

Unluckily, you cannot change that.
You can't change men, but you can stop men from wasting your time. And, after all, that's all you need to do.

The first and most important step is mental.
And it comes with the realization that hoping to only meet high-quality men and real leaders who will take a personal loss over your well-being will not get you anywhere.
Because those men are rare.

You must go from "is he wasting my time" to "am I *allowing* him to waste my time?".

The second step is to ask for what you want and need.
I have plenty of articles up on how to do that effectively while retaining your allure and femininity, so browse around.

The third step is to have a timeline.
If you don't get the commitment you want, you must break up (just don't put it in the form of a breakup threat).

The fourth step is following through with your breakup.
You'd be surprised at how many women get the commitment they wanted after a breakup.
But don't break up with that mind. Break up with the idea of looking for someone who can give you what you want.

> **You must go from "is he wasting my time" to "am I allowing him to waste my time?".**

SUMMARY

No, you're not being paranoid asking yourself if you're wasting your time with him.

As a matter of fact, you *should* be asking yourself that question. And then use this article and your gut feeling to listen for the answer.

When you're still not clear: **ask for the commitment you want**.

How to Get a Boyfriend ASAP: The “All-In Method”

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Getting a boyfriend is easier than you think.

Most women date badly, so if you follow these simple steps you will naturally put yourself in a position to get a boyfriend… *Fast.*

This article shows you *exactly* how to get a boyfriend.

Contents

- #1. Take Care of Yourself
- #2. Go Out A LOT: Help Chance Work Its Magic
  - Pick Places With Lots of Men, Few Women
- #3. Send Available Signals
- #4. Position Yourself Strategically
- #5. Fish The Office: Help Your Colleagues Make a Move
- #6. Cast The Widest Net: Use Online Dating
- #7. Give ‘Em A Chance: Boring Men Make Great BFs
- #8. Show Some Excitement
- #9. Go Meet Him – Don’t Flake
- #10. Don’t Hope For The Spark: Develop It
- #11. Don’t Be Too Needy
- #12. …But Don’t Play Too Unavailable Either
- #13. Move Forward In Unison
  - How to Test Men for Relationships
- #14. Demand Commitment (Early)

- You Got a Boyfriend. Now What?
- SUMMARY

#1. Take Care of Yourself

> 80% of your results come from mastering the basics

When I see a woman with unshaven legs, my heart cries.

I think you know the basics.
You only have to stick to them.

That's the ABC and you have to take care of the ABC.
For more details on taking your ABC to stellar levels:

- Increase your feminine appeal (femininity is in short supply, use it!)
- 3 effective seductive styles
- Seductive body language for women
- Avoid these dressing styles (please!)

#2. Go Out A LOT: Help Chance Work Its Magic

> Life is a number's game. And dating is even more so

Do a lot of *everything* social for one month.

- Events
- Meetups
- Couchsurgin meetups
- After work drinks
- Bars and clubs
- Join clubs
- Take up classes

After one month, assess what worked best, and do more of that (yes, you're going to be strategic about this, we're not joking around here :).

Pick Places With Lots of Men, Few Women

Which classes to choose from?

Well, *Data shows* environments with more women make men lazy and entitled.
So pick something that is either 50/50 women to men or that has more men in it.

Here are some great ones where you'll be the big prize in the room:

- Tech meetups (you're curious about that world, and might want to learn coding)
- Coders' meetups
- Gamers (even if you don't game, say you want to start)
- Chees clubs

- Sports bars (I know, they suck, but try it)
- Entrepreneurs meetups

Then, once you're there:

#3. Send Available Signals

> #1 rule of social skills: make it easy for people to do what you want

And as a rule of thumb:

The more you seek long-term, the safer you want to make men feel to approach.

Why?
Because some guys will approach *anyway*.

And it's those guys who make women lose hope in finding a good boyfriend.
Because when the bar is high it's mostly players and drunk slobs who approach.

When you lower the bar, you also get more men who are not on the fringes.
And you get far better prospects.

Here are a few signs of availability without looking easy:

- Smile a lot & be social
- Be warm to men who approach to invite more of the same
- Talk to your friends and glance at good prospects
- Look at him, then look down
- Look at him, then smile

For more pictures and videos, check out "does she like me", where I break down the signals of attraction.

Tilted head and showing the neck invite him to approach
Now to make sure your potential boyfriend comes to you:

#4. Position Yourself Strategically

> Not even the best womanizers can hit on an hidden woman… Let alone normal guys

I actively seek to meet women when I go out.

And sometimes I'd like to (friendly) slap some women to instill them with some wisdom.

They stare at a guy, smile, talk to their girlfriend, and then look at him again… They give me *all the typical signs of interest.*

But they never move from sitting in their big circles of friends! It's as if they're scared to make it easy for a cool guy they like to say hi.

Be smarter instead:

Avoid These!

1. Going out with guys (men won't approach)
2. Sitting the whole time
3. Staying in the middle of your girlfriends
4. Getting too drunk
5. Flirting with everyone and getting to know no one

Do the following:

1. Go out with one girlfriend, two top
2. Go out by yourself
3. Move around a lot
4. Don't smoke, but go out in the smoking area
5. Go to the bathroom often and by yourself
6. Go outside by yourself for a breath of fresh air
7. Look at people dancing by yourself
8. Admire the view (if there's any)

Don't be afraid of being a bit by yourself: we are past the jungle age and guys don't carry a club anymore.
Not the bad kind at least (allow me at least one bad joke per article :).

#5. Fish The Office: Help Your Colleagues Make a Move

> Lower the bar in your social circle

Most relationships bloom in workplaces or social circles.

Great, so you also know they got a job and are not bums :).

It's too good a market to ignore.
Some of your colleagues are wary of mucking it up at work.

But that's not going to stop you.

The solution?

Spread through the grapevine that you love your colleagues.
You don't date colleagues BUT are happy to meet them for a drink.
That makes you more precious and lowers the pressure for guys to ask you out.

And if you end up hitting it off, it will only seem like you've made an exception just for him (and you even boost his self-esteem, how nice of you :).

And of course, to hell with that "no-colleagues" rule, you never meant it to begin with.
It's a stupid rule anyway.

Also, read:

- How to hit on colleagues

#6. Cast The Widest Net: Use Online Dating

> Which net catches the best fishes? The wide one!

Sometimes women ask me this:

> Should I use online dating?

And I can't believe what I'm hearing.
Like, you're looking for a relationship, and you're not yet using online dating??

That's like saying you have been looking for a job but aren't sure if you "also" should look online.
Nonsense!!

Sure, I get why some women aren't there yet.
I remember laughing once at the online description of a Tinder profile:

> I wish you had spoken to me on the metro instead

Yeah, I wished he had done that.

But he hasn't, so… Get real.

Of course in person is ideal and you dream of finding a boyfriend who'll sweep you off your feet.
But while we keep that dream alive, be realistic as well.
Hope for the best but also cast your net as wide as possible and you will get as many boyfriend candidates as possible.

Why Online Dating?

Many great men can be more on the shy side.

And many great men might not even approach at all.
Why should you miss on those? It's a huge market!

And of course, there are many high-quality men who are too busy to go to lots of social events.
And maybe they don't take the metro because they got cool cars :).

Plus, as Hussey says in "*Get The Guy*", the guys who are most likely to approach you are also more likely to be players. And too smooth an approach can be a sign of a womanizer.

#7. Give 'Em A Chance: Boring Men Make Great BFs

> Rejection give women a rush of power… Which they will enjoy all by themselves :)

How to get a boyfriend in the shortest possible time?

Give as many men a chance!

Why It's Important To Give "Boring Guys" A Chance

The paradox of choice says that the more options you have, the more unhappy you are while pondering too much and picking nothing.

Modernity is a huge dating paradox of choice.

Urban life, dating apps, social media, and Hollywood movies make us feel as if there are exciting men everywhere. Advertising further raises our expectations beyond reality.

The result?
Women wait and wait… And wait.

But the reality might be harsher: there aren't *that* many great men. And the more time goes by, the fewer there will be (math says so!).

Don't let that happen to you: to get a boyfriend, give those boys a chance.

Especially the ones that seem "boring".
"Boring" is not a disqualifier (keep on reading).
Boring is the new sexy.

I'm not sure where to go… Maybe I'll just stay put for a while

#8. Show Some Excitement

> Emotions are contagious. And honesty is refreshing.

Scarcity does up your value… Up to a very limited point.

But unavailable games are also often abused and misused.
I talk about it more in-depth in the 7 biggest mistakes women make in dating. For here, suffice to say that if you really wanna use scarcity, tweak it like this:

> **You**: *I'm very busy and don't have much free time… But I can find some for someone who deserves it*

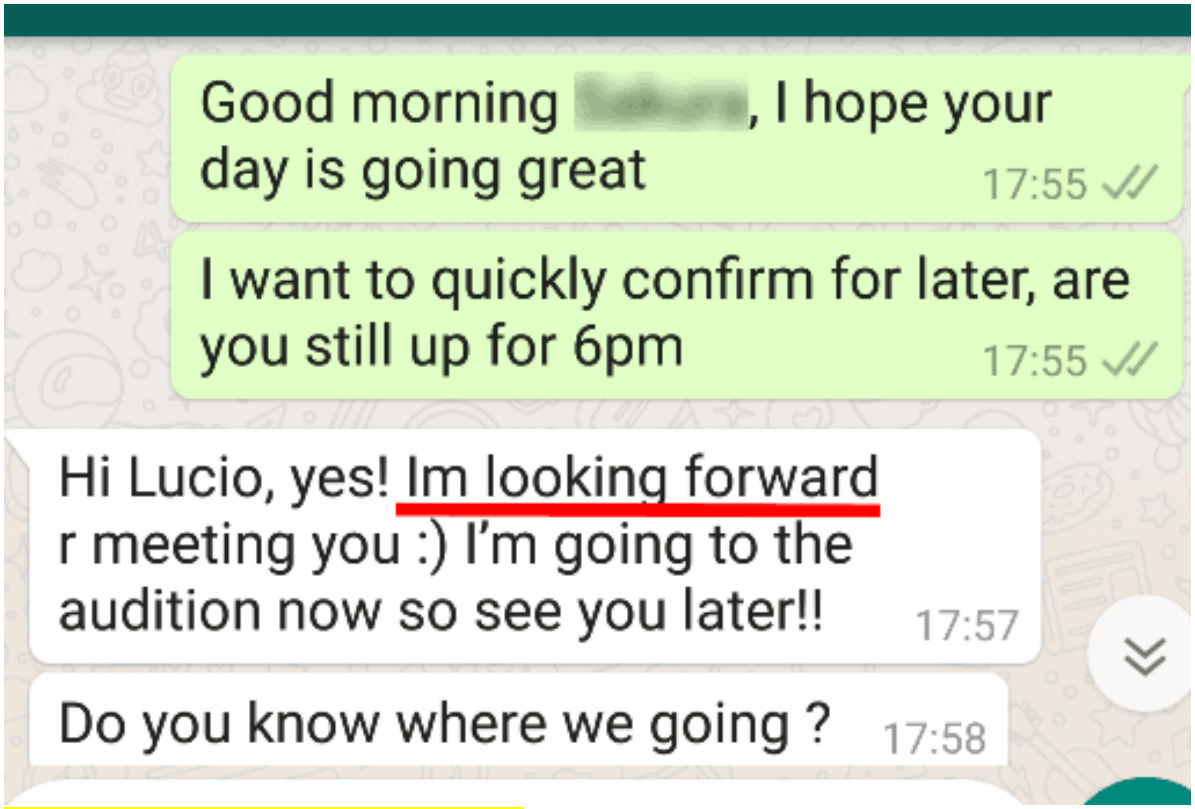
Bang!
Now you communicated scarcity -if you really need to do that- plus showed him the light at the end of the tunnel.
And you built him up.

What to Text Before the Date

But best of all is showing candid interest.

Emotions are contagious, so he'll likely feel the same.
Plus, an honest gal is so refreshing in this day of game players!

Example:



I was working hard on this website those days.
So if she was going to cancel, I'd have been half-happy. But after she sent me that message with an empathic "yes!" and that she was looking forward to our date?
Then I was *also* looking forward to meeting her!

#9. Go Meet Him – Don't Flake

> Not once in history did a woman get a boyfriend by *canceling* a date

Once you set out the date, don't flake.

Don’t cancel and try not to reschedule.
The reason is deeply psychological -and scientific-.

The Science Behind It

It’s the sad reality of back-rationalization (AKA “sense-making” *in psychology*).

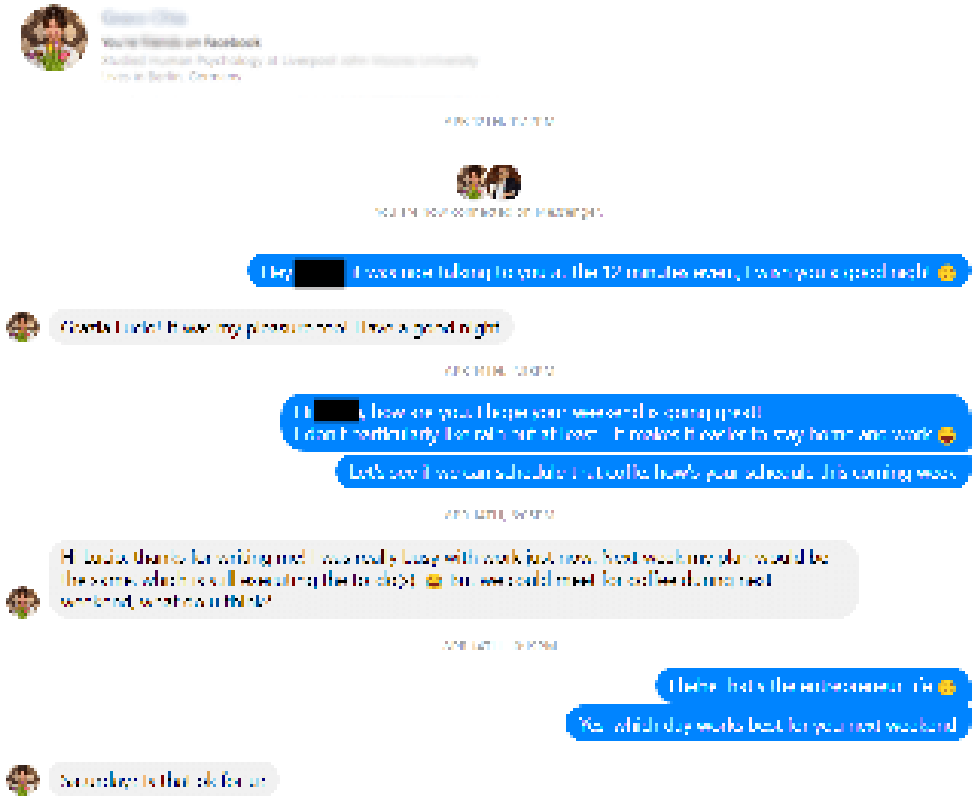
If you don’t make it happen soon, your mind will back-rationalize that maybe you didn’t like him that much.
That’s not true, but that’s how the mind works.

Example: Strike When It’s Hot

Many times I’ve had an underwhelming first encounter.
But we met quickly and things just happened.

Some other times I have had an amazing first encounter with a woman.
Then something happened and we had to reschedule the date.

And we never met again (example below).



We missed the first try. Missed the second too. And it never happened. It was a great connection, and maybe she’ll end up with some boring schmuck.

#10. Don’t Hope For The Spark: Develop It

> The spark is great. But love also builds over time: don’t depend on sparks, develop them

Listen to this story.

Aziz in his book *The Tao of Dating* talks about a girlfriend of his who had just been on a great date. The two daters talked for the whole night and they had so much in common.
But… She wasn’t sure she was going to see him again.
The reason? There was no spark.

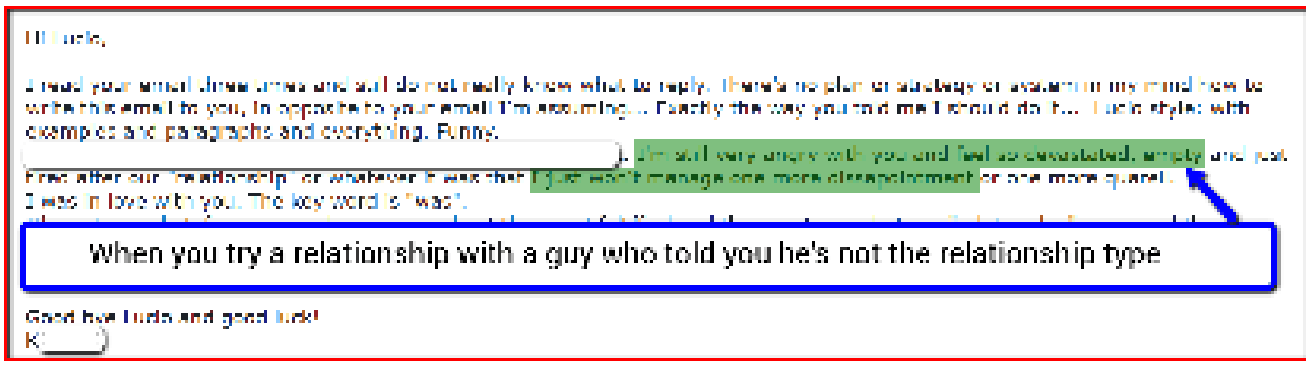
Spark's Great...

Now don't get me wrong, I love initial chemistry.

It's amazing.

But The spark is cr@p as a predictor of long-lasting love and of commitment. If you are wondering how to get a boyfriend, that's NOT by looking at sparks.

I and this woman had a *great* spark.
With lots of fireworks soon after, too.
And see how it ended:



> **Her**: I feel so devasted, empty

My heart sinks reading that.

I'll always feel guilty thinking of that relationship -and those lines-.
But I couldn't help it getting deep into it because the chemistry was so crazy and we were so into each other.

Again, chemistry -and sexual fireworks- are crappy predictors of relationship success.

.. But love develops over time

Love is often like *developing your passion*: it builds over time.

People who feel the butterflies are often anxious attachment type dating an avoidant attachment type. And that's the recipe for the worst relationship you can have.
Indeed anxious women craving intimacy often pass up the best boyfriends –secure attachment types– because, well… They're too stable.

#11. Don't Be *Too* Needy

> Let his momma smother him

This is another very popular basic advice you know already.

And it's mostly for the girls out there who want to get a boyfriend but get too needy when they're about to get one (check *Why Men Love Bitches*).
However, in my experience, this is a minority of women in the West.

But if it's you, well, try to keep a balance of contact. Let's say no more than 1.-2 times for every time he contacts you.

Also, read:

- How to make him chase
- How to slow down sex

#12. ...But Don't Play Too Unavailable Either

> In a world of gamers, honest women shine bright

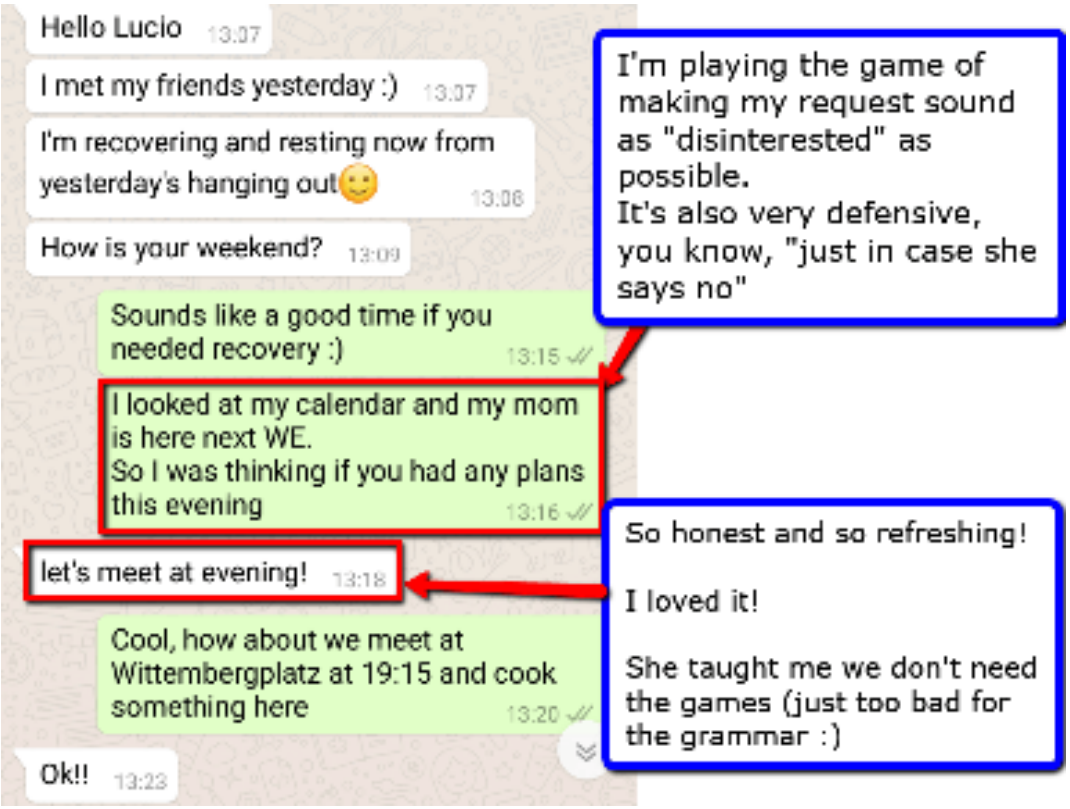
But don't play unavailable games either.
The whole dating advice industry is built on two (often wrong) fundamentals:

1. Be unavailable (make him chase)
2. Invest little (and make him invest much)

Both work, but almost nobody says they work only in specific scenarios and, often, with the wrong kind of guys.

It works with avoidants, the guys who can't commit, because they will be very happy that you keep the distance (and if you want to get a boyfriend, you need to screen these guys out).

If you want to get a boyfriend fast, I recommend you do the opposite.
Look at this woman and how she sped up the dating *while* also dropping games (and while also showing me a lesson and taking control of the dating process):



Also, read:

- **Female dating strategies**

#13. Move Forward In Unison

> Life is a tango. And there's no dance if the partner doesn't dance along

Bruce Bryan in *Never Chase Men Again* says that **high-quality men have little tolerance for egocentric women**.

Asking for the moon will not make you sound like a prize but like an entitled princess on a pea (and entitlement is a typical trait of low-quality women).

That's why you should move the relationship forward together with him. One steps him, one steps you. He comes towards you, you move further towards him.
He does something nice, you do something nice back.
That's how you advance steadily and resolutely toward a committed relationship.

Read more here:

- **How to get high-quality men with reciprocal investment**

How to Test Men for Relationships

If he doesn't do much to further the relationship, I like this technique: the big surprise.

For example, invite him home where you have a home-cooked dinner with a top wine, candles, and all.
Then, if he appreciates and gives back to you, he's a keeper.
If he doesn't, you might want to drop him.

And that's how to get a boyfriend the smart woman way. You quickly screen out the time-wasters who can't commit, and quickly find those who are happy to be your boyfriend.

#14. Demand Commitment (Early)

> *Good things come to those who don't wait*

Some dating coaches would want you to behave as if you never wanted a relationship in a million years.

I say I've never heard the biggest BS than that.

Some others swung in the opposite direction and would want you to ask for a relationship before sex. I say that's way out of line and will only work, again, with men you probably don't want as boyfriends (read: should you delay sex).

What Is The Solution?
The solution is to a**sk for commitment as soon as you have enough leverage to do so**.

In doubt, sooner is better than later.

Steve Harvey in "*Act Like a Lady Think Like a Man*" recommends you ask for a relationship early because demanding commitment shows you've got standards. And standards are a sign of quality.
And I couldn't agree more.

Here's the line my last committed relationship used on me:

> **You**: I don't do sex outside of relationships

We were already intimate, and the fact we were having a great time together was all leverage for her to come up with that very early -like 3rd date or so-.
She doesn't threaten anything directly, which you should never do, but does two great things:

1. **Shows her value**: she's not a fu*k buddy type of gal
2. ***Indirectly* implies we might not see each other without commitment**

Exactly like we like it: ruthless, yet feminine and kind.

> Shoot. Or get off the range

You Got a Boyfriend. Now What?

Now relationship skills take center stage.

But it would be beyond the scope of this article.
For now, congrats :).
Then later you can start reading about relationship strategies :).

Cheers!

SUMMARY

And here's a one-sentence summary on how to get a boyfriend ASAP:

1. **Cast your net wide**
2. **Meet many**
3. **Date many**
4. **Go deeper with a few you like**, and then it's:
5. **Commit quick or get off the pot.**

Sources:
While this article is primarily my opinion, it is also based on a copious amount of dating advice, lots of personal experience, years and years of observation, and *psychology and sociology*.

Love Maps For Strong Relationships: Examples & Exercises

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

As per John Gottman's research, love maps are a fundamental element to make relationships work in the long run.

Taking care of your love maps, or the knowledge you have about your partner, will make sure you keep a happy, long-lasting relationship.

This article will explain:

- What is a love map and how it's a form of strategic intelligence
- Why love maps are the foundation for a resilient relationship
- How you can use a love map example to proactively improve your relationship

Contents

- What Is a Love Map
  - Why Love Maps Need Updates
- Why Love Maps Are The Foundation of a Relationship
  - Love Maps & Love
  - Love Maps Are Like Insurance
- Examples of Love Maps
  - Updating Love Maps Prevents Affairs
- Love Map Questions
  - Love Maps Games
- SUMMARY

What Is a Love Map

John Gottman is funny sometimes.

He seems to have little sense of marketing and uses complex names that bare little resemblance to reality and which confuse instead of helping.

But the definition of a love map is super simple:

> A love map is the knowledge you have about your partner.

Sounds simple?
Yes, because it is!

And what, it gets better: **building a love map means getting to know your partner**.

But don't close the page just yet.
If it were just that simple, we wouldn't have even needed an article on it. But there is something more in store for you.

The more you know about your partner, the richer your love map is. Here are some examples of a love map:

- Major events in your partner's life
- Goals and dreams
- Worries and fears
- Favorite food, cities, holidays, etc.

Why Love Maps Need Updates

The bulk of the love map stays the same.

Once you deeply get to know your partner, you've got most of your map. But it doesn't end there, of course.

As your partner grows and changes, so should the love maps.

Updating love maps means **you stay curious about your partner, and it's crucial to keep the relationship strong.**
Why?
Because updating love maps sends the message that you care about your partner.

Updates are where most couples slip

At the beginning of a relationship, it's easier to build love maps.

This might be even more true in more traditional cultures or in cultures with longer dating periods before sex (of course, that's on average: staying longer without sex is obviously no guarantee that the couple is any good at building love maps).

As time goes by though it's unluckily rather common that couples start taking each other for granted and stop updating their love maps and asking about each other.
As Brene Brown points out in *Daring Greatly*, stopping to care, or disengagement, is the first sign of betrayal.
Indeed as we will see in the love map examples, that's the perfect recipe for romance to die -and extramarital affairs to blossom-.

Why Love Maps Are The Foundation of a Relationship

Gottman says that couples who stay together for the long haul stay together for a reason. And that's usually not because of great sex, lack of arguments, or power of will.

It's usually because they like each other. And liking has a strong relationship with how well we know each other and how well we keep being interested in each other.

Love Maps & Love

Without a love map, you can't really know your partner. And if you don't really know someone, how can you truly love them?

Staying together without love maps indeed sends a very bad message.
If you don't care to get to know the person, you basically communicate you are with your partner because you had no other options. You couldn't get any better, she's got a vagina (or penis), and boom, there you are.
Now, don't tell your partner, but even if that weren't true, you can *still* grow fond of each other.
Deepen those love maps, and start being together growing love and appreciation.

Love Maps Are Like Insurance

In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, Gottman says that deep love maps give solid foundations to a marriage. Couples with rich love maps indeed cope better with the stressful events in their lives.
A strong love map will strengthen the bond, and that bond will keep you going when the going gets tough.

On the other hand, if you don't start with deep love maps it will be easy to lose your direction when a major upset hits you.

Examples of Love Maps

Here are a few examples of love maps from relationships:

#1. Pillow Talk Love Maps

Bedroom conversation can often be the perfect time to expand our love maps. Pillow talk after an orgasm is also a perfect time to expand on sexual love maps.

Here is an example from “Crazy Stupid Love”:

https://youtu.be/vFvWh_XSnK4?t=60s
Note that the above relationship example is just starting. As we’ve mentioned, it’s easier to start with deep love maps. But it doesn’t mean everyone does it well.
Start well and you’re halfway through!

#2 Deep Romance Love Maps

Before Sunrise is the perfect example of love maps romance.

The whole movie is basically based on the magic and romance of love maps and getting to know the partner like nobody else has ever known them.

Here is a great example:

The opposite instead are relationships with no love maps, or with zero updates:

3. Dead Relationships Lack of Love Maps

The movie Fargo is an example of a completely absent love map.

Notice she tries to build him up without asking him how he feels, which is a bit of empty support.

But it’s on his side that it gets really terrible.
He knows nothing about his wife’s life and his “I love you” sounds empty and meaningless. When we love somebody we know nothing about, it’s fair to think we’re in love with our own made-up image, not with the person.

#4. Affair Love Maps

Now it gets even more interesting.

A lack of love maps pushes partners into affairs. Indeed *statistics say* that most affairs, especially for women, start in the workplace and with an emotional bond first –read here how emotional affairs begin-.

It’s not uncommon for affair partners to say “you understand me so much better” (love map is not the same as understanding someone, but you can’t have understanding without love maps).

Here is a good example:

Updating Love Maps Prevents Affairs

Updating love maps is indeed a great antidote to affairs.

It keeps the connection going and the romance fresh. And it creates a “team effect” with which the couple takes on the world a duo, not as separate entities.

Love Map Questions

To deepen your love maps you can ask each other any kind of question and branch off from there.

I would start from the deeper, most basic stuff.
Here are some examples:

Deep Maps

- What did you want to do as a kid
- Why you didn't do that
- How did you end up doing what you do now
- Does satisfy you?
- If not, what would you want to do now if you could do anything?
- Is that your dream?
- If not, what would you say is your dream life?
- If you could be paid the same you're paid now, what would you do?
- Don't you think you could do that, somehow?
- How would you like to be remembered
- Do you care about leaving a mark on this world?

Current Maps

- What are you busy with these days
- What worries you these days
- The best thing that happened to you in the last week
- What are you looking forward to the most in your daily life
- What are you looking forward to the most in the upcoming month
- Your favorite way to spend this evening?

Other People in Their Life

- Favorite colleagues
- Most hated colleague
- Most handsome/beautiful colleague
- Best friend
- How are your friends doing
- What's your relationship like with your friends now
- Has anything happened to your friend
- When did you last speak to your family
- What did you say
- Who do you look forward the most to seeing

Personal Preferences

- Best way to soothe?
- What dish do you look forward to the most
- Favorite sexual position
- How do you usually orgasm
- Best holiday ever
- If you could go anywhere, where would you go right now? Why?
- The next book you would like to read
- What team do you support if your team is out of the competition?

- Your most secret ambition you would never tell anyone
- A secret you have never told anyone

As you can see you can really go wild about it. And I bet many of these answers are unknown to you your partner.

Love Maps Games

Instead of asking your partner, let your partner come up with one of the questions above -or simply make your own questions-. Then you talk about what you think your partner would reply.

Then listen to what your partner says and use it as a discussion topic to deepen your love maps and to better get to know your partner.

SUMMARY

In a nutshell, why should you care about love maps and getting to know your partner better and better?

This why:

1. The better you know your partner, the more solid your relationship
2. The more you ask, the more you care (and the more your partner feels cared for)
3. The more you share, the deeper the bond and the higher the quality of the relationship

Bids for Connection: How to Build Emotional Intimacy in Your Relationship

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Bids for connections can build or destroy emotional intimacy, and may even make or break a relationship.

Recognizing them and 'turning towards' requires empathy and advanced social skills.

By the end of this article, you will know how to recognize an emotional bid and how to correctly turn toward, developing empathy and social skills on the way.

Contents

- What Is A Bid For Connection
  - 1. Turning Towards
  - 2. Turning Away
  - 3. Turning Against
- Emotional Connection & Relationships Impact
- Emotional Connection Examples
- How to Emotionally Connect
- SUMMARY

What Is A Bid For Connection

A **bid for connection** is any attempt—a question, a comment, a gesture, or an action—to get a partner's attention, affirmation, or emotional support. It's an invitation to engage, requiring "turning toward" to support a partner, and strengthen the emotional bond.

These **bids for connections are often unspoken**, which is why many men low on empathy miss them.

We can define "emotional connection" as follows:

> An emotional connection is the attunement couples have to each other's feelings.

We connect emotionally every time we recognize that something is meaningful to our partners and we turn towards them.
Every time our partner wants to connect with us (bid for connection) and we turn towards them, we build emotional connection.

This example will clear everything out for you:

Bid for Connection	Turning Towards	Turning Away	Turning Against
Wife screens the room and signs: *I gave that presentation today. I was so nervous...*	*Oh really? Tell me about, how did it go!*	Husband looking up: *Hmmmm OK.*	*Whatever, can't you see I'm working?*

Turning Towards & Emotional Connection

Turning Towards is the expression John Gottman uses for emotional connection.
This article is based in large part on Gottman's work, but I will be using the expression "emotional connection" in place of "turning towards".

1. Turning Towards

Turning towards is what builds trust and emotional connection. To turn towards, one must first recognize the bids for connection.

Recognizing Bids for Connection

Bids for connection are attempts for affection, attention or any type of positive connection.

In *The Relationship Cure,* Gottman says that recognizing bids for connection requires a bit of emotional intelligence as it's not always straightforward to recognize a bid for connection. Sometimes a comment is pure "transactional", meaning that our partner wants to get something done or just says something with no feelings or deeper meaning behind it.

However, as you get to your know your partner better -"expand your love maps" in Gottman's wording-, you will naturally become better and better at recognizing bids for connection.

Bids for Connection & Gender

As a rule of thumb, women make more bids for connection than men.

Men make less bids for connection when the health of the relationship deteriorates. Women instead keep making the same amount of bids independently of the health of the relationship.

This gives men a great chance to turn things around by turning towards those bids more often when things aren't going well.

When People Miss Bids for Emotional Connections

Missing a bid for connection is the equivalent of turning away.

And it's important to get bids for emotional connections right because Gottman research shows that people will not try again 80% of the times.

Recognizing Hidden Bids

Sometimes bids for emotional connection are not even verbally expressed but hide behind a complaint, a criticism or an argument. In *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage* Gottman refers to them as "longing behind the criticism".
Here's an example:

Notice how he recognizes her bid for emotional connection beyond her facade aggressiveness.

2. Turning Away

Turning away can happen because the partner:

- Lacks emotional sensitivity
- Doesn't care
- Is engaging in suppressed negativity (passive aggressiveness, stonewalling)

This is an example of a guy lacking emotional sensitivity and misses all the chances to turn towards her partner:

Notice his mistakes:

> "It's not that big of a deal"

And looks away instead of fully engaging

> I don't know what to say, what do you want me to do

He's obviously not paying attention to the emotional conversation going on. He needs to attune and turn towards -and she could do a better job to communicate it more clearly-.

Emotional Connection & Infidelity

A lack of emotional connection in the relationship is one of the major causes of infidelity.

The movie The Good Girl is fully based on infidelity born out of emotional disconnection:

3. Turning Against

Turning against is less often suppressed negativity and more often about full blown belligerence.

This includes the whole gamut of relationship killers: criticism, contempt, defensiveness and meanness. If belligerence starts to supersede the positive aspects of the relationship it can often give birth to a vicious circle of negativity.

Emotional Connection & Relationships Impact

John Gottnam followed newly wed couples for 6 years.

At the 6 year mark he noticed that couples who were still married turned towards each other 86% of the times. And couple that divorced turned towards each other only 33% of the times.

That's the kind of difference that turning towards each other and building emotional connection does for a

relationship.

Emotional Connection Examples

And as usual, here are some example to better understand through practical examples.

#1. Fake Turn Towards Example

Sweet Dreams (1985) has a great example of what I'd call a "fake turn towards".

Let's see:

He turns towards only verbally.

He has no follow up questions and, most of all, he doesn't turn towards with his body language. She gives him another chance when she says:

> Ask me something else? Come on, let's have a conversation

But he turns away once again. And he shows how clueless he is when he says "I don't want to have a fight with you". Of course she doesn't want a fight, she wanted some attention and emotional connection.

#2. Turn Away Example

Here's a real life example of turning away. It needs little explanations:

A good example of how learning to turn towards can drastically improve a relationship.

#3. Sexually Turning Away

Bid for (sexual) connections are particularly obvious when initiating sex.

Turning away or against in this case can be particularly painful for the partner as it's a double rejection.

Here is an example from "Wake Up That Libido" (1996):

#4. Turning Towards

And, albeit it was very easy for him to spot, here's a turning towards example.

Notice that the conversation soon takes a bad turn, but the beginning is typical turning towards.

Learn to turn towards and to stay on that emotional wave, and you're golden.

How to Emotionally Connect

To emotionally connect better, we can do a few things:

1. Improve your emotional intelligence

We can learn body language, nonverbal and typical situations when people make bids for connection (ie.: after a loss, when grieving, when feeling lonely etc.)

2. Communicate Clearly

Our partner can't read our minds and might not be highly emotionally intelligent.
That's OK, we can help train them!

Instead of hiding behind an argument, we have to make it clear to our partner that we are making a bid for

attention. This is how secure attachment types communicate.

3. Learn about your partner

Here's how to kill two birds with a stone: the more you know your partner, the stronger your relationship. And the more you know your partner, the more you will know when they are making a bid for connection.
Read how to get to know your partner.

4. Listening Without Offering Empty Reassurance

Sometimes it's difficult listening to our partner's pain. Especially if we feel like we caused. But responding with "don't worry, it will be fine" does not feel like support.
It feels like you don't want to be bothered by her feelings.
Much better instead to say something like: "of course you are upset, anyone would be upset".

5. Don't Dismiss and Minimize

Many couples fight because men dismiss their partners' emotions instead of attuning. To avoid dismissing emotions and keep a strong emotional connection in your relationship, avoid all of the following when she's sharing her feelings:

- Minimize them (or say she's exaggerating)
- Fix them
- Try to distract her from them
- Make fun of them
- Mock them
- Ignore them

Men shouldn't think of emotions as troubles that need to be fixed, but as opportunities for emotional connection.

6. Do The Following

1. Take turns to speak
2. Don't give advice, just listen first (women react more negatively to quick advise)
3. Force yourself to listen non-defensively even if it's about something you did wrong
4. Show genuine interest
5. Communicate your understanding
6. Take your partner side
7. Express a 'we against others' attitude
8. Express affection (say I love you, put arm around them)
9. Validate emotions (empathize)

SUMMARY

Turning towards our partner when they make a bid for connection increases our emotional connection in relationships. Emotional connection is the difference between great relationships and floundering ones.

For creating emotional connection from strangers, read: how to develop deep emotional connection.

Further Reading

- Get to know your partner for deeper intimacy
- Positive perspective for happy relationships

- Accept influence
- Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (criticism, defensiveness, contempt, stonewalling)

Accepting Influence: The Secret of a Successful Relationship

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Accepting influence is one of the cornerstones of a healthy relationship.

This article, based on John Gottman's research, explains:

1. The theory of accepting influence
2. Real life examples of accepting and refusing influence
3. How you can become more accepting of your partner's influence

Listening, caring about her opinion and accepting influence pays off (as long as you're not kissing up)

Contents

- What is Relationship Influence
- Why Relationship Influence Matters
  - Better Conflict Resolution
  - Incresed Influence
- Gender Dynamics: It's Harder For Men
  - Personalities Who Struggle Accepting Influence
  - It's A Balance: BOTH Must Accept Influence
- How to Accept Influence: Mental Shift
- Examples of Accepting Influence
  - #1. Refusal of Influence
  - #2. Fake Acceptance of Influence
- Accepting Influence Quiz
  - SUMMARY

What is Relationship Influence

Influence is the ability to affect a partner's attitudes, beliefs, and actions.

Accepting influences instead means influence means **taking your partner's opinion into account**, and being open to use her (or his) input **to decide together on what to do as a couple**.

Basically, it means that for decisions that impact both of you, both of you get a say.
Sounds fair, right?

And from a power dynamics point of view, accepting influence providers the relationship leader with more legitimacy and, ultimately, more power.

Why Relationship Influence Matters

Let's start with a big WHY.

Why should you care and why should you learn to accept influence?

Researches show that there's a strong correlation between accepting the partner's influence and both the level of happiness and the life expectancy of the relationship.

In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* Gottman says that 81% of couples that don't accept influence split up.

And of course, even if you don't split up, you end in a combative relationship which really does *not* make your life a great one.

Better Conflict Resolution

There's a strong correlation between accepting influence and the ability to tackle issues successfully.

Indeed The Four Horsemen of criticism, contempt, stonewalling and, most of all, defensiveness, are often the sign that a partner is resisting influence.

And it's not a coincidence that 65% of men increase negativity during an argument. It's because they are resisting influence with a barrage of counterattacks instead.

Incresed Influence

Contrary to what some might think, accepting your partner's influence is the best way to acquire more respect, power and influence.

Cialdini in his seminal Influence shows that even in business negotiations, giving and compromising on something is a great indicator of successful negotiation outcomes.

Women are also more likely to be kinder during confrontations when their partners accept their influence.

Gender Dynamics: It's Harder For Men

Accepting influence is harder for men.

Research shows that a majority of women—even in unhappy relationships—do accept influence.

It doesn't mean of course, that women are always agreeable or make fewer mistakes.
But it does mean they let their men influence their decision-making and that they do take their men's opinions and feelings into account.

It also seems that it's mostly and *heterosexual* men's issue. Heterosexual men are indeed the very worst at accepting

influence.
Research shows that same-sex couples, including gays, are far better at sharing power and influence.

No Bashing, But Knowledge For Power

The Power Moves is a website to grow and empower onself.

However, **power doens't come from dominating others.** Power means achieving your goals, which in a good life include a good and healthy relationships.

So **learning to accept influence is empowering because it improves relationship quality for both.**
Often, accepting influence also means that our partner is more likely to accept our influence. This is a basic principle of interpersonal dynamics based on reciprocity (Cialdini, 1984).

Personalities Who Struggle Accepting Influence

Some people are higher dominance than others.

And while dominance per se isn't necessarily bad, *domineering*, with a 'need for winning', generally is.

We called this approach 'power-hungry' before, and this personality has difficulty in accepting influence.

And these are exactly the people who need to work the hardest on themselves and on their relationships.
There's a different, more problematic breed of people who refuse influence, though. These are what we call "power addicts". For power addicts it's almost impossible to share power and accept influence.
I wrote an article on it:

- Relationship with a power addict

In a nutshell, it's hard to even get these people to change because they see changing/not changing as another power struggle they need to win (instead of a step towards a better life and relationship).

It's A Balance: BOTH Must Accept Influence

This article is also not to say that men should give up all their power, accept everything, and never influence their spouses themselves.

Relinquishing all power is the safest way to turn a woman off.
But it does mean that men should share more power and take their partner's opinion more into account.

Example of accepting influence from a position of power

In my last relationship, for example, I'd openly tell my girlfriend that the man should be the one in charge.
But it's a sharing the decision kind of thing, as she's the second in command.

And based on the division of tasks and responsibilities, of course, there are situations where I am the sole decision maker or she is the sole decision maker.
And the other simply trusts the partner to handle those matters.

How to Accept Influence: Mental Shift

There is a simple way to fix all influence-related issues in a relationship.

It requires a shift in the way people see the world.
It's about going from a zero-sum game of win or lose and "I" VS "her" to an "us".

It's about deciding together, finding compromises both are happy with and respecting our partner. We should want our partner to be happy and to participate in the decision.

Anything else is relationship-deranged thinking.

More, it's WEAK.
Only weak men stay in relationships they don't want.

So if you are in a relationship, ensure it's a *good* relationship.

And one of the best approaches to good relationships is leading the relationship, with win-win in mind.

A good mindset:

> If only one partner wins, then they're both losing

Examples of Accepting Influence

And here are a few ways of dealing with relationship power struggles:

#1. Refusal of Influence

Look at this example.

Grant Cardone utterly refuses her influence on the topic. And goes even one step beyond when he recruits the help of the people in the audience to isolate her.
Simply terrible.

See if for yourself:

Her reaction says it all.

#2. Fake Acceptance of Influence

The Godfather when Kay is leaving alternates from a fake acceptance of influence to outright refusal.

Fake Acceptance
When he says "I will change Kay" he is giving her a front about changing. But it doesn't sound sincere.

He doesn't take the time to listen to her, doesn't take the time understand her, which would show that he cares.
It's no coincidence that when he says: "I know how you felt" he actually totally misses the point.

Refusal of Influence
When he tells her the discussion is over, that's an obvious refusal of influence.

Accepting Influence Quiz

Ask yourself the following questions about. Does your partner:

- Listen attentively to your opinion and needs
- Make you feel what you say count
- Listen even when you're having an argument
- Takes care you share your point of view
- Respects you during disagreements and conflicts
- Avoid making it all about winning
- Believe in give and take
- Believe in "shared leadership"
- Use all his persuasion skills when deciding about something

- Approaches problems with a win-win mentality
- Approaches problems like you need to solve them, not win them
- Lets you finish to make your point
- Tells you when you have a good idea
- Usually looks for points of agreements
- Largely avoids getting overly emotional (or hysterical)

If you answer yes, then you (or your partner) can accept each other's influence.
If your answers are mostly no, then you need to work on this.

SUMMARY

Accepting your partner's influence, deciding together and caring about what she thinks is really one of the best things you can do in your relationship.

And it's exactly what high quality men, relationship leaders do.

It's one of the pillars upon which any healthy relationship rests.
I think the following quote will perfectly summarize this article:

> Accepting your partner influence communicates you care and respect her. And it means being in it *together,* as an *us* instead of *I*.

David and Goliath: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

David and Goliath is a book about underdogs, and how the seemingly weaker underdogs can find strength in their very same disadvantages to beat more powerful opponents.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Don't Compare Yourself to The Brightest
  - Focus on Uniqueness
  - The Curse of Wealth
  - The Power of Disabilities
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Always think how to turn your disadvantage into an advantage
- Don't compare yourself to the brightest: focus on your uniqueness
- Sometimes advantages can "U-turn" and, above a certain threshold, weaken us

Full Summary

About The Author: Malcolm Gladwell is a Canadian journalist, public speaker and author of several books on psychology and, frankly, pop-psychology.
Among his other best sellers are Blink, The Tipping Point and my personal favorite, Outliers.

Don't Compare Yourself to The Brightest

Malcolm Gladwell says we usually compare ourselves to the very brightest out there.

But it's a mistake because, in comparison, we suffer relative deprivation, which leads us to lose confidence and self-esteem.
The author says that's one of the reasons why top tier schools have a higher drop out rate: the students there compare themselves with the best of the best.

The alternative? Stop comparing yourself and follow your own path and uniqueness.

Focus on Uniqueness

Gladwell says that most of the times when the underdogs beat the most powerful opponent, they didn't go head to head in direct opposition. Instead, they fought with unconventional tactics leveraging their strengths.

If you are weaker then, don't seek direct confrontation, but leverage unconventional tactics that will level the playing field.
Read 33 Strategies of Warfare for more.

The Curse of Wealth

Gladwell says that children from very wealthy families can struggle more than poorer ones.

Why?

Because they don't learn the importance of hard work and fending for themselves.
This is also a topic explored in The Millionaire Mind and what Daymond refers to when he says that being broke can be an advantage (become a subscriber to read "The Power of Broke").

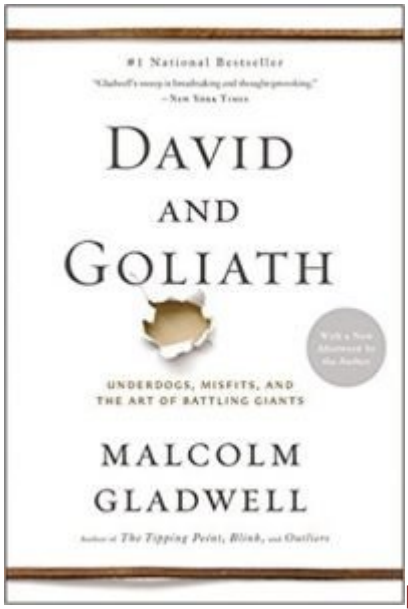
The Power of Disabilities

Malcolm Gladwell says that people with learning difficulties sometimes end up being much more successful than "normal" people.

Why so?

They work around their issue by developing strengths in other areas that normal people never took the time to explore.

For example, David Boies, one of the most successful lawyers in the US, is dyslexic. And since reading was difficult for him, he developed an uncanny ability to read witnesses and spot possible lies.



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Real Life Applications

Be Prepared to Unsettle
Gladwell says that entrepreneurs are much more disagreeable than the average, and that leaders took social risks by not compromising their beliefs.
The message: to reap big success, sometimes you have to be ready to piss off someone.

Steel Yourself
Watch out for too much mollycoddle in your life: it can take your hedge off. Keep pushing yourself instead.

CONS

Malcolm Gladwell books are easy and interesting to read. But they're not very factual.

For example:

- **The Revist of David and Goliath is Bogus**

I don't buy the way Gladwell revisits the David and Goliath history by flipping the script.

He says Goliath was probably affected by giantism, which made him slow and nearly blind.

David instead was a more effective fighter because of his slingshot experience.
Slingers, he says, were "the most important" part of the artillery back in the days and "time and time again" the decisive factor against infantry.
Hence, David was the one with the real advantage there.

The story makes no sense to me.
If Goliath was such an ineffective fighter, why would the Philistines send him to fight?
Because they wanted to set themselves up to lose? Doesn't make sense.

But mots of all, the way Gladwell tells the story, he makes it sound as if David's win was inevitable.
The way he overblows slingers' accuracy is also nonsense.
Snipers will miss many shots today with perfectly engineered rifles with a scope. Let alone if David couldn't miss with a slingshot!

Gladwell also overplays the power of slingers in history warfare: if infantry, cavalry and archers and *not* slingers were the numerically predominant fighting force, there was a good reason for it.
You can hear this story in his TED Talk.

TL;DR: the re-visitation of Goliath being the underdog rests on shaky ground at best.
Listen to Gladwell to learn how to deliver a good storytelling speech and to increase your critical thinking, but NOT to learn factual information.

- **Disjointed**

"David and Goliath" talks about underdogs, entrepreneurs, people facing big obstacles and the effect of a harsh punishment system. I find the link among all these topics tenuous.

PROS

I have been very critical above, but there are several good points in "David and Goliath".
For me, one of the best was this:

- **Great Insight on Entrepreneurs Psychology**

I loved the analysis Gladwell makes of entrepreneurs and leaders from a social perspective. Entrepreneurs, for example, are very high on disagreeableness.
And successful leaders took big social gambles by not compromising their beliefs to avoid making waves.

- **Good take on turning weaknesses into strengths.**

Turning weaknesses into strengths and stunning wins is certainly possible a surprising number of times in life. And if "David and Goliath" will help you just to get into that type of mindset, than it will have been worth it.

Review

David and Goliath, in a nutshell, says that advantages are not always advantages and disadvantages can instead become our strengths.

I didn't find the Gladwell particularly insightful here, but I like the message of using our weaknesses as our strengths (something I talk about in leveraging pain and failure).

From a mindset perspective of turning obstacle into advantages, I preferred The Obstacle is The Way.
But overall, David and Goliath has lots of great insight, some of which also very inspirational.
And of course, Gladwell knows how to write. All his books have been NYT best sellers, so you can definitely learn how to write a successful book and how to tell a story.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon.

Fondness and Admiration: Gottman's Secret to Stay In Love (Explained)

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to stay in love might sound like a silly question.

Turns out, it's true what someone said: there are no silly questions, only silly answers.

And the answer to "how to stay in love" is fondness and admiration.

Let's go step by step.

Contents

- The Beginning of Love
- After Limerence
- How to Stay In Love
  - Fondness and Admiration Examples
- When Love Expires
- Staying In Love Test
- Staying in Love Examples
- Exercises to Stay In Love
- SUMMARY

The Beginning of Love

Limerence is a term coined by psychologist Dorothy Tennov in his book Love and Limerence.

Since then, it has rapidly been accepted in the scientific community as a valid concept.

People sometimes refer to limerence as the "honeymoon phase", "butterflies in the stomach" or "puppy love".

Some sources even list “having a crush” as a form of limerence.

When in limerence we often feel the following:

- Happy and upbeat
- constant thoughts about our partner
- strong sexual attraction for our partner
- desire for reciprocation
- craving to see our partner
- hope and optimism for the future
- when reciprocated, a feeling that nothing could tear you apart

Now, that last point is the most important.

Because when limerence is still going strong, we don’t notice much of our partners’ flaws. And when we do notice, we also tend to accept them and to be confident that we can overcome them.

But what when limerence ends?

Turns out, what breaks many relationships is the failed transition between the “butterfly love face”, or limerence, and the “real” relationship right after.

Let’s dig deeper.

After Limerence

Dorothy Tennov says limerence can last from a few weeks to several decades, but the average is 18 months to three years.

Once the limerence is over, our blinders also come off.
The romantic attraction might still be there, but it’s not anymore the main driver that keeps us together.

And all the small issues that bothered us at the beginning started screaming louder and louder.
And if we are not careful contempt, criticism, and stonewalling can all plant their ugly roots right after limerence and poison our relationships.

And to stay together in a happy, healthy relationship we need something else.
What can we do then to keep love alive?

How to Stay In Love

Fondness and admiration are the second layer of Gottman’s solid foundation for a relationship to work (the first being love maps).

Fondness and admiration are the perfect antidote to the limerence expiration date and they are the perfect way to keep us focused on the positives.

Because of the positive atmosphere they foster, they are also the perfect antidote to vicious circles and contempt as well.

Fondness and Admiration Examples

Being fond of your partner includes the following:

- Feeling of pride for your partner
- Liking our partner

- Attraction for our partner

Here are a few ways to express it:

- It drives me wild when you… (come back home and start kissing me)
- I'm really proud of you… (getting that promotion)
- I love how you… (smell so good before coming to bed)
- I am really impressed by your… (knowledge on X topic)
- I really respect you because of… (strong values)
- I very much appreciate that you… (work so hard for us)
- Thank you for… (admitting that)

When Love Expires

When love expires without fondness, we could get a vicious spiral into the four horsemen of the apocalypse and a separation.

But it's also possible the couple stays together. Indeed, as Mira Kirshenbaum wrote, divorce is an overrated predictor of poor relationships.
Many poor relationships indeed never end. They just stay poor.

This is a perfect, sad example of a relationship fully devoid of fondness and admiration:

Staying In Love Test

Read the statements below and think whether or not they apply to you.
Do you:

1. Touch and kiss affectionately
2. Say "I love you"
3. Respect each other
4. Feel loved
5. Think of your partner fondly when away
6. Can easily list 3 things you admire about your partner
7. Feel accepted and liked
8. Feel proud of your partner
9. Enjoy his achievements
10. Can easily say you dated him
11. Feel he finds you attractive and sexy
12. Think there's fire and passion
13. Feel turned on by him
14. Would date him again if you could go back
15. Feel romance is still alive
16. Sleep showing affection
17. Feel glad when you see your partner
18. Appreciate the things your partner often does
19. Feel your partner generally likes your personality

20. Feel satisfied with your sex life

If you can say yes to more than 10 questions, your relationship is very healthy.
If you score poorly, not everything is lost. Sometimes fondness and admiration must be re-discovered beneath layers of negativity.
You can start with the exercise below.

Staying in Love Examples

Here's an example of appreciation I liked:

> **Her**: Thank you for admitting that

Coupled with her expression of sincere gratefulness, it makes it a great moment of appreciation and admiration.
If she wanted to go one step further she could have added "thank you for admitting that. I really love you when you are so honest".

Exercises to Stay In Love

In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work,* Gottman introduces an exercise helping couples rediscover fondness and admiration and stay in love.

The idea is to pick 3 positive adjectives from a list that describe your partner.
Then name situations when your partner recently showed those qualities. And tell them about it.

- Loving
- Graceful
- Thrifty
- Strong
- Committed
- Relaxed
- Tender
- Powerful
- Sexy

The idea of this exercise is not to do it once and end it. The idea is to kick-start a habit.

Creating Shared Meaning

The second level of this exercise is to go deeper. Explore with your partner why you picked the virtues that you picked.

And articulate why they are important to you. This is why you will better get to know your partner and you will create shared meaning.

SUMMARY

The beginning of love is always great.

But to build strong, healthy, and long-lasting relationships, we need to throw the basis and foundation for when the "butterflies phase" runs out.

We do it by building a culture of appreciation, fondness, and admiration.
This article gave you a few examples and an exercise on staying in love forever.

Go Pro: Why We Don't Recommend Network Marketing (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Go Pro* (2013) Eric Worre teaches readers how to become a successful networking marketing professional. Thanks to its step-by-step guide and the author's in-depth expertise, *Go Pro* is considered the Bible of network marketing.

TPM Strategic Audit: Tactical Persuasion in Predatory Systems
Go Pro is the definitive manual for Network Marketing (MLM)—a business model we generally advise against for our high-agency and ambitious readership. However, we maintain this review to understand the power dynamics and potentially manipulative dynamics of MLM (and as a warning for anyone interested in joining MLM organizations). Our readers can also learn from Eric Worre, an outstanding communicator.
See our **Entrepreneurship Hub** ↗.

Contents

- Main Takeaways
- Notes
  - Introduction
  - Worre's Three Levels of Network Marketer
  - Mechanics in MLM Sales Funnels
  - Eric Worre In Action: Power Dynamics
- Criticism
  - Family and Friends Burner Lister = Lost Social Capital
  - ⚠ MLM is NOT Entrepreneurship, It's No-Salary Salesman
  - It's Only The Founders Who Benefit (IF It Succeeds)
  - Overpriced Goods
- PROS
- Lucio's Experience With MLM
- Review

Main Takeaways

- MLM pitch is that network marketing is a dream job <— **TPM's note**: Only for a very few people (many of whom are the founders)
- It takes effort, time, and commitment
- Never stop learning, but most of all, never stop applying it

Notes

About the Author:
Erico Worre is an American author and self-made man. He is a proponent of network marketing and teaches people how to be successful at it.

Introduction

Eric Worre says being a network marketer is an amazing job. It can actually be a dream job. But as for anything else, you must put in the work.

Worre's Three Levels of Network Marketer

He says there are three levels of network marketers:

- **Poser**: want quick profit without time and effort investment
- **Amateurs**: they have some talent and will, but lack total commitment
- **Pros**: total commitment and drive to becoming the best they can possibly be

TPM Note: The 'pros' may as well consider putting that much work into their own business

Mechanics in MLM Sales Funnels

Worre breaks down the main sales work into these 'seven skills':

1. Finding Prospects

Professionals approach

1. Write down everyone you know
2. Write down everyone they know
3. Add 1-2 persons a day
4. Network with your recruitment goals in mind

2. Inviting

Think like a farmer more than like a hunter. Build trust and relationships: educate more than sell. Invite them to a presentation or to a seminar.
And invite your prospects in a way that's easy to replicate so that you can invite a large number of people.

Eric Worre also has a few power moves tips to be used for phone and face-to-face invites:

1. **Be in a hurry –** people are attracted to those who have lots going on
2. **Compliment**
3. **Make the invitation**
4. **If I were, would you? –** ask if they'd try the product if you gave them one
5. **Confirmation #1 –** ask when they think they will try it
6. **Confirmation #2 –** confirm commitment ". So if I call you at X, you tried it, right?
7. **Confirmation #3 –** schedule the follow-up
8. **Get off the phone –** close the conversation

This is the formula that will book you prospect meetings, says Worre.

TPM Note: Common 'hard selling' tactics, and only works with outstanding products
"These are 'Urgency Frames.' By appearing busy, you artificially inflate your status and lower the prospect's time to think. It may be effective with more naive and more passive (rather than assertive) people, but we don't recommend becoming this 'pushy' type of salesman. And overusing it with friends harms your relationships.
Also, without outstanding products, this will not translate nearly as well to income.

3. Present Your Product

It's never about you, it's about the presentation. Here are four steps to a captivating story:

1. your story
2. what you didn't like about your story
3. how does your product/company rescue you
4. your results and feelings

A quick win is to simply model your presentation on the successful people in your upline.

4. Follow Up

Eric Worre says the only reason for exposure is to set up the next one. It takes an average of 4-6 exposures for people to join but can take more than 10. So be patient… But persistent.

Some people won't believe enough in themselves or in network marketing. Be empathic: explain without getting defensive.
The author proposes you use the **feel, felt, found strategy**, such as: empathize first, say about someone who felt the same way, and how they changed for the better with your product.

5. Sign'Em Up

Assume they will join, reassure them you will be there to help, and always have the documents ready.
Here are some questions:

1. How much would you like to earn
2. How much time can you commit to that goal
3. For how long would you do it to get that income
4. If I can show you plant to do just that, are you ready to start?

6. Help Them Start

Make sure they know all the best practices and that they know where to get all the information and products.

For a great start, you need to set the right expectations and give them some early wins. Here is what you should make clear to them:

1. You're there as a guide, but success is up to them
2. Your task is to let them be independent of you ASAP

7. Attending Events

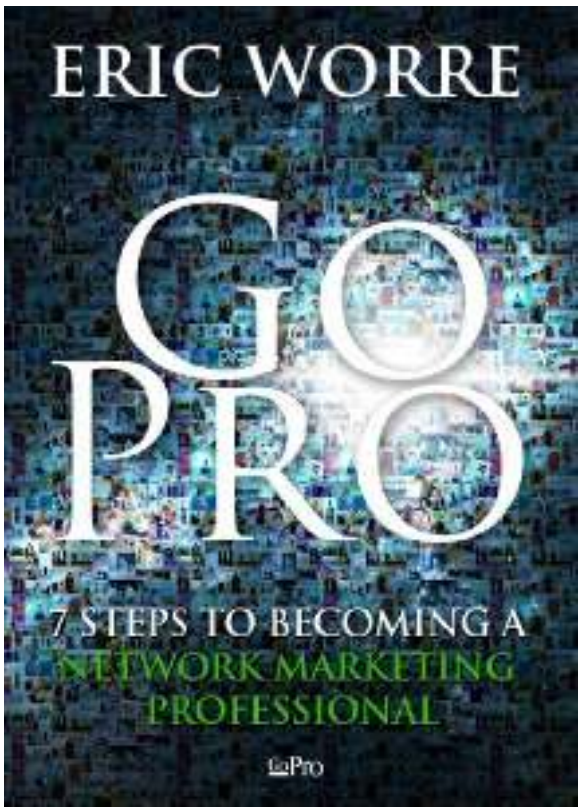
Do attend your company's destination events. They are huge learning and networking opportunities and being around those who made it will give you all the motivation.

Eric Worre In Action: Power Dynamics

I recommend you listen to Eric Worre. The guy is a wonderful communicator and a smart man.
If you want to check out this interview he's done with Larry King, it's masterful.

Notice what he says to Larry King:

He turns the hard question on King and makes it into a compliment, thus getting off the hard question and buying goodwill at the same time. Masterful.



Criticism

On top of thinking that most -but not all- network marketing schemes are quasi-Ponzi schemes pushing average, over-hyped products, I think this is another huge handicap of this business:

Family and Friends Burner Lister = Lost Social Capital

I don't like the idea of starting to pitch family and friends. They are obliged to listen to you because of your relationships, but let's face it: you will annoy most of them.

Why would you want to bother the people closest to you?

Start with those you don't know, and your family and friends will come to you once they see success.
But don't start burning the people close to you (that's my opinion at least).

Also, read here:

- **Why network marketing sucks you dry**

⚠ MLM is NOT Entrepreneurship, It's No-Salary Salesman

I don't believe you can call network marketing entrepreneurship. Unless you started it, you're not an entrepreneur. And you don't learn and you don't *earn* like an entrepreneur does.

Instead, **an MLM "Pro" is actually just an unpaid commission-only salesperson for someone else's company**. Real power comes from building the system, not being the most efficient cog in it.

It's Only The Founders Who Benefit (IF It Succeeds)

It seems to me that most network marketing companies only really benefit the owners.

And you're working for the founders' benefits much more so than if you were an employee, so I don't buy this idea of "being your own boss".

I struggle not to see network marketing schemes as pyramid-selling organizations as great for the top… And terrible for the bottom.
You can still make lots of money, but I believe you still need not only all the skills and dedication but also an early start in the company.

Overpriced Goods

This is a question I've always had: how can you have so many layers of marketers all making money on the final product without the final product being overpriced?

My answer is that you can't.
And if you want to be your own boss or be an entrepreneur, I would recommend you not to get into multilevel marketing.

PROS

The 3 Levels Examples
I liked the example of the 3 levels of people.

Good Sales Techniques
The sales techniques are a bit pushy at times, but it's a good process that Eric lays out in *Go Pro*.

Lucio's Experience With MLM

I have been approached a few times by random people who tried to "recruit" me to their teams.

Both of the guys who approached me acted like they were from a People's Temple sect. They invited me to their seminars and pitched me products with "magical effects".

They talked and plastered their Facebook walls about success and inspirational quotes.
They rambled on about "continuous learning", but they all seemed to me they had little depth in their skillset, both in sales skills and in social skills.

Review

While we may actually recommend "*Go Pro*" *to the few for whom networking marketing makes sense*, we generally discourage MLM as a business option.

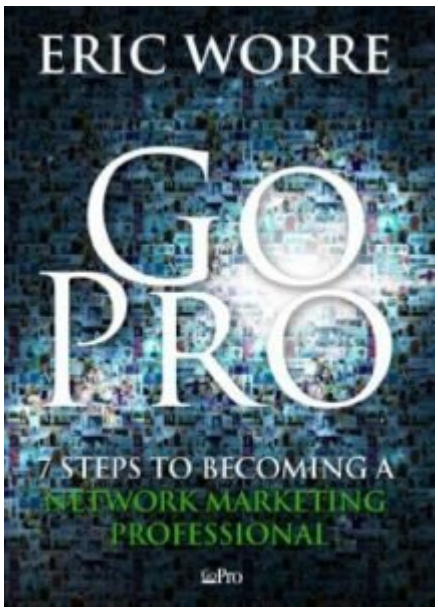
The network marketing model is a low-return business model where founders capture the vast majority of the added value while late joiners harm their closest relationships with often unwelcomed pitches.

This model also raises some ethical red flags and, from what I've seen in practice, it sometiems goes along with manipulation, low-level naive-self help based on 'motivation' and boosterism, and win-lose exchanges.
Read more here:

- Why you must avoid network marketing

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Go Pro Book Summary: Does Network Marketing Work?



A book on becoming a pro networking marketer

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/go-pro-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.8

The Magic Relationship Ratio: How to Stay Together

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

There's a magic relationship ratio to stay together, and it was a huge surprise for me.

The relationship ratio tells us that it doesn't matter whether couples fight a lot or not.
What truly matters, says John Gottman's research, is that no matter the conflict style the couple has, they will stay together as long as the positive moments outnumber the negative ones by 5 to 1.

Contents

- What The Magic Ratio Tells Us
  - Why 5:1?
- Examples of Negative Interactions
- Positivity
- How to Stay Together
  - Where to Start
- SUMMARY

What The Magic Ratio Tells Us

Gottman's research debunked an old myth:

Great couples fight less.

Indeed, in the past, and in large part also today, many believe that strong relationships have little fights in them. But research has dispelled that myth.

Indeed in *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail,* John Gottman explains that one type of successful couple, which he calls

“volatile”, fights frequently and, often fight vehemently.

But here is the key: as long as frequently fighting couples kept a ratio of positive to negatives of 5:1 during their arguments they remained happy and stable together.

Why 5:1?

Why 5:1 and not, say, 1,5:1?

Wouldn’t more positives simply be enough to outweigh the negatives?

Well, no.

Negativity has more power to inflict damage than positivity has the power to heal and bring us closer.

Relationships As Bank Account

Imagine your relationship as a bank account.

In a way, it’s not a big stretch since most social relationships entail a form of exchange.

For every positive interaction and act of caring, you deposit one Dollar. Every negative interaction is worth five Dollars.

To keep it positive, it’s not enough to be slightly kinder than you are mean. It means you need to be overwhelmingly kind to offset any meanness and contemptuous signs.

Examples of Negative Interactions

This should be obvious, but it’s worth repeating:

It’s impossible to keep a positive balance if negativity permeates our relationships.
The signs of negativity besieging our relationships are The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse:

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling

When they get together and the negatives start outweighing the positives, the relationship can spiral into a vicious circle and lead to a breakup.

And I added:

- Meanness

Meanness is a special case of a partner seeking to say the most hurtful thing they can say.
With that type of cruelty, you don’t go to minus five Dollars, but you might as well go to minus five hundred Dollars.

Positivity

The examples of positive interactions during conflict are the following:

- Interest
- Asking questions
- Kindness

- Empathy
- Affectionate

How to Stay Together

The analogy of the 1 dollar VS the 5 dollars is a good one because, Gottman says, it's all indeed about small daily actions and behavior.

For example:

- Turning towards instead of away
- A smile
- Affirming nod
- Hugging
- A kiss when you're back home

If they don't come naturally to you… Don't worry. Start by implementing them intentionally and consistently. Create a habit of daily, constant positive reinforcements.

Where to Start

How do you start making positive contributions to your relationship account?

Here is what Gottman suggests:

1. Start by getting to your know partner well
2. Then add a culture of appreciation, fondness, and admiration
3. And learn to read your partners' bid for affection
4. Learn how to turn toward those bids

If you get those four rights, chances are you will never have to worry about keeping a good relationship ever again.

SUMMARY

To stay together research has shown that the positives have to vastly outnumber the negatives.

That’s why it’s paramount that you build positive daily habits of doing many small nice things towards each other.

Positive Perspective: The Secret to Happy Relationships

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This article is about the Positive Perspective, John Gottman's concept that is the key to happy relationships.

By the end of this article, you will learn how keeping a positive attitude (positive sentiment override) will make your relationship a paradise.
And how a negative attitude (negative sentiment override) can destroy your relationship (and happiness).

Contents

- What's Positive Perspective
  - What a Positive Perspective Does
  - Keys to a Positive Perspective
  - Negative Sentiment Override
  - Vicious Circle VS Negative Sentiment Override
- Are You in a Negative Relationship?
  - Away Time Test
  - Positive VS Negative Override: Example
- SUMMARY

What's Positive Perspective

The Positive Perspective is the fourth level of Gottman's Sound Relationship House.
And it refers to how people see the relationship as a whole.
Basically: do you have a positive impression of your partner and your relationship or do you have a negative one?

When your relationship has a positive perspective, Gottman calls it a "Positive Sentiment Override"

What a Positive Perspective Does

In *The Seven Principles to Make Marriage Work* Gottman explains the positive impacts of the positive perspective. I paraphrase for brevity:

> When you have a positive image of your partners and your relationship, you will take notice of the positives and discount the negatives.

But if you have a negative perspective (negative override), you look with suspicion -or disregard- anything that your partner does positively.

Keys to a Positive Perspective

A positive perspective is partly a mental attitude of willingly focusing on the positives of a relationship.

But it also happens almost automatically if all the previous three levels of the sound relationship are working well.

Such as:

- Getting to know your partner

Remind yourself what you appreciate about your partner and say to each other.

- Turning towards

Instead of “doing your own thing” you engage with your partner and show that you care.

- Letting your partner influence you

On top of the three levels of the sounds relationship house, Gottman also mentions the importance of letting your partner influence you.
This means that you accept your partner and their influence in your decision-making and your issue discussions. Accepting your partner’s influence takes away the combative element and introduces teamwork. This is a crucial element of shared leadership, which is a key trait of effective leaders, both in relationships and in life.

Negative Sentiment Override

The opposite of a positive perspective is a negative sentiment override. In *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage* Gottman writes:

> When the negative thoughts about your partner overwhelm any positive thoughts about you. You keep track of grievances and offenses.

Basically, when you have a generally negative outlook you focus on the negatives you only see the negatives. Here’s a perfect example of negative sentiment override:

> **Him**: (Focuses on the negatives about her when she was alive. Only to miss her badly when she’s gone)

⍰⍰ **Lesson learned**: appreciate what you have, while you still have it.

Vicious Circle VS Negative Sentiment Override

A vicious circle is somewhat similar to a negative sentiment override.

The difference is that a vicious circle involves both partners and arguments with the four horsemen of the apocalypse (criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling).

Negative sentiment override instead can be from just one partner and it doesn’t necessarily translate into an open fight -just like the example above-. **This mindset is a sign of a lack of personal power** and internal locus of control. Instead of taking personal responsibility for your own happiness, you become a victim of your partner’s perceived faults.

Are You in a Negative Relationship?

Think about your current relationship and ask yourself if you often feel the following:

- Innocent and unjustly accused
- It’s your partner’s fault
- Hurt / angry/ disappointed
- Your partner is a bad person
- Your partner is annoying you
- There are many bad sides to your partner’s character
- Maybe you and your partner don’t fit well
- You want to get up and leave

- Under attack
- Vengeful
- Like you want to protect yourself
- Your partner is trying to control you

If you answer yes to a lot of the above questions, you might either be in a negative vicious circle or a negative sentiment override.

Away Time Test

Here's another quick test: when you're away from your partner, do you think of them positively or negatively? Do you think of what they do for you or what they don't do?
Of the good times together or of the bad times?

If you focus on the negativity, you're probably in a negative sentiment override.

Positive VS Negative Override: Example

The movie 500 Days of Summer provides a great example of the difference between a positive and negative sentiment override.

> **Him**: (loves everything about her)
> **Him**: (hates everything about her)

Nothing changed for the man in the example.
But the first one *idealized* her object of desire. It was *too much*. And the second part projected is anger and disappointment onto her, resenting everything about her and the relationship.

As for most things, **the key is in the balance**.
Balanced optimism is often the best approach.

Often how we view life reflects how we view our relationships.

And as much as anything else, we see what we feel in relationships. Feel positive, focus on the positives, and you will have a happy relationship.

This is something Tony Robbins also talks about a lot. Ultimately, **embracing a positive perspective is an act of personal power** because it means you **choose to be the leader of your own mindset and emotional state**, rather than being a victim of your circumstances.

SUMMARY

In life as in relationships, you get what you focus on. If you have an overall positive image of your relationship, you will naturally focus on the positives. But if you have an overall negative image of your partner and your relationship, you will only see the negatives.

So if you're wondering how to have a happy relationship, here are the keys to building a culture of positivity:

1. Celebrate the good times together
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Hold Me Tight: Emotional Attachment for Couples (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Hold Me Tight explains to readers that the most important element of any intimate relationship is emotional intimacy.

TPM Note: Valid points, but men must maintain agency and masculinity
It's not a coincidence that this book, with this title, was written by a woman. While what she writes also applies to men of course, men must balance attachment needs (communion) with pursuing other goals outside the relationship as well (agency). This approach also improves the relationship dynamics and **maintains long-term attraction**.

Contents

- Main Takeaways
- Notes
  - Introduction: Attachments Are Key
  - 1. Emotional Attachment Is a Basic Need
  - 2. Learn Your Attachment Type: An Overview
  - 3. Manage Your Insecure Attachment
  - 4. Prioritize Emotional Attachment Over Communication
  - 5. Ensure You Cover 'Emotional A.R.E.'
  - 7. Have The 7 Conversations
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- TPM Power Lens
- Review

Main Takeaways

- The emotional need to be close to our partners is wired in our genes
- Effective dependency means that we are stronger when (securely) dependent to our partner
- Communication fixes the signs of relationship troubles. To fix the cause, we need to build emotional intimacy

Notes

About the Author:
Sue Johnson is an English clinical psychologist, professor, and researcher. Her focus has been on couple therapy and adult attachment.

Introduction: Attachments Are Key

The author says that John Bowlby, with his attachment theory, revolutionized the understanding of human psychology.

And she would put him ahead of Freud when it comes to contributing to understanding human psychology.

1. Emotional Attachment Is a Basic Need

Sue Johnson says that love is the pinnacle of human evolution. It bonds us together and helps us survive.

We need emotional attachment as much as we need food, sex, and shelter.

When a safe connection is lost, we go into fight or flight mode. We get aggressive or shut down.

⚠ **TPM Note: It's foundational for men to increase self-sufficiency**
Even men who want a relationship are at risk of losing attraction if their first and main need is attachment to her. Prioritizing relationships is associated more with the feminine pole, and not with masculinity.
To maintain long-term attraction and positive relationship dynamics we advise men to always balance 'attachment needs' with agency, social power, and self-sufficiency.

Intimate Relationships Help Us Recover From Traumas

Having someone emotionally close to us whom we can rely on has been proven to strongly affect how people recover from traumas.

As a matter of fact, the secure attachment types survivors of 9-11 were even better adjusted *after* the trauma of 9-11.

2. Learn Your Attachment Type: An Overview

The author quickly goes over the different types of attachment styles.

She says it's normal that we all experience a bit of fear when we disagree and argue with our partners. The arguing impact different attachment styles very differently though.
It's a small blip for secure attachment types and avoidant attachments don't mind too much either.
But it's overwhelming for anxious attachment types.

3. Manage Your Insecure Attachment

Unsecure types descend into a "primal panic" when they fear for their partner's attachment -for example after a fight-.

And do two things:

1. They become clingy and demanding (=notice me, care about me!)
2. Withdraw and detach trying to soothe (=I won't let you hurt me, I'll stay in control)

They work at the beginning, but they set out on a vicious spiral of insecurity that pushes the couple farther apart.
Couples with demand-withdraw patterns are emotionally starved. Usually, it's the woman who pursues as she's more emotionally attuned.
The author says we fail to repair these dynamics because we are not attuned to our partners.

Also, read:

- **The anxious-avoidant relationship**

TPM Note: 'Hold me tight' makes me think of insecure attachment
In constant need of reassurance. Balance your attachment needs with self-love.

4. Prioritize Emotional Attachment Over Communication

Sue Johnson says that most couples' therapy so far focuses on fixing conflicts and power struggles. But those are only the signs, not the core of the problem.
Communication and negotiation will not fix the problem. Happy couples, she says, communicate no better than unhappy ones.

The best predictor of marriage solidity is the couple's emotional responsiveness (also read: turning towards).

> Marriage failure is not a conflict increase, but an emotional decrease

5. Ensure You Cover 'Emotional A.R.E.'

The basis of E.F.T (Emotional Freedom Techniques) is A.R.E.

A.R.E. stands for:

- **A**ccessibility: Can you reach your partner?
- **R**esponsiveness: Can you rely on your partner to respond emotionally
- **E**ngagement: Does your partner value you and stay emotionally close

Basically, these are the questions: Are you there and are you with me?

7. Have The 7 Conversations

TPM Note: The first four conversations limit the negativity in the relationship. They are what Gottman mostly focuses on in his Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. See our **John Gottman's hub**.

The next two conversations demonstrate how you can promote emotional bonding through forgiving injuries and sexual intimacy. The final conversation shows you how to care for your relationship on a daily basis.

1. Recognizing Demon Dialogues – First of all you identify the common emotional reactions that lead to arguments and negative cycles. This is basically where you learn *emotional intelligence*.

2. Finding the Raw Spots – You learn to look beyond the immediate reactions to better understand your feelings, craving, and deep needs.
Raw spots are particularly important because they relate to painful sensitivities that are particularly damaging when touched. The author says it often stems from past relationships (also read *Getting the Love You Want* for how our past influences us)

3. Revisiting a Rocky Moment – Break down and analyze some typical arguments. Go beyond the anger to understand how your deeper needs are shaping up your cycles of negativity.

The fourth conversation is the one that transforms relationships by making them more accessible, emotionally responsive, and engaged.

4. Hold Me Tight® – Here you learn to be emotionally accessible, responsive, and engaged. This is the bedrock of a solid relationship.

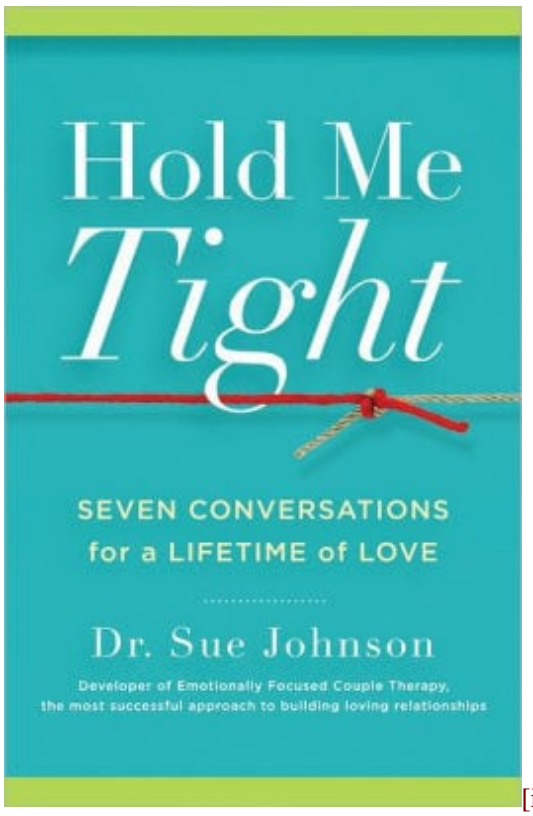
The last 3 all rest on the emotional foundation of the fourth conversation.

5. Forgiving Injuries– Forgive the past hurt so that you can move forward.

TPM Note: Forgive what's forgivable, not what's unforgivable

6. Bonding Through Sex and Touch – Emotional connection enhances physical connection and the two feed into each other in a positive cycle.

7. Keeping Your Love Alive – Here you learn to make you Hold Me Tight learning a mainstay of your relationship.



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Real-Life Applications

Here are my two biggest takeaways from "*Hold Me Tight*":

Embrace Your Emotional Needs
In 8 dating mistakes women make I mention an ex of mine who was always struggling to be independent from me. As Sue Johnson explains, that's a mistake: we are all wired for connection and emotional co-dependency with our partners makes us stronger.

Learn Emotional Intelligence
As one of the foundational skills for not only emotional intimacy, but also for win-win, cooperative relationships. You can check here a few examples for conflictual relationships.

CONS

7 Conversations Confusing
Listening to the audiobook, I find it hard to clearly define and differentiate among the seven conversations. Indeed I feel like we didn't need seven conversations. Hold Me Tight should have stayed the core and only concept and all the other conversations mentioned as support.

Too Long
Overall, it was a bit too long. The real pity is that it felt that the main core message was a bit diluted.
A lot of conversation examples could have been shorter for example, and more strongly tied back to the need for emotional understanding and emotional connection.
Same for the part on sex.

Excusing Anxious Attachment
The author says that the powerful emotions she experiences in couples therapy are not irrational but make perfect sense. That's true, but I wouldn't want it serves as a justification for the anxious attachment types to justify their behavior.

Anxious also need to take concrete steps to tackle their oversensitive attachment systems.

TPM Power Lens

Emotional connection strengthens relationships and it's a crucial skill and outcome for high-value men who want a relationship.

That said, attraction and respect rely on a balance of connection (communion) and independence (agency). High-value men cultivate both.

Review

Hold Me Tight is a good read for anyone who wants to understand relationships and human nature.

Particularly important is the concept that communication and conflict management is often about solving the signs and not the root problems.

TPM's take is that i**t's the women of strong men who should want to be held tight, and not the other way around**.

Check out the best relationship books.

Solving Relationship Conflict: 7 Proven Steps to Argue Well

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Great couples are not necessarily devoid of relationship conflict.

But they do know how to argue well.

This article, based on scientific research, will tell you:

- What is relationship conflict
- What destructive relationship conflict looks like (w/ videos)
- The concrete steps of constructive conflict

Contents

- What Solving Relationship Conflict Means

- Skills to Fix Relationship Conflict
  - #1. Self Soothing
  - #2: Soften Start-up
  - #3: Repair and De-escalate
  - #4: Look for Underlying Causes
  - #5: Accept Influence
  - #6: Compromise
  - Bonus: Communication Skills
- Types of Relationship Conflict
  - Solving Unsolvable Conflicts
- Relationship Conflict Types
  - Conflict Matrix
  - Is Zero Conflict Possible?

- Emotional Bond & Conflict Management
  - Conflict Management in Perspective
- SUMMARY

What Solving Relationship Conflict Means

First of all, solving relationship conflict doesn't mean eradicating conflict altogether.

Let's be clear about something right away: conflict is inevitable.

As a matter of fact, relationship researcher John Gottman says it should probably not be avoided at all. And conflict per se is not a predictor of break up.
But *how* you handle conflict is a predictor of breakups.

This article is about handling relationship conflicts in a way that can be healthy and productive.

Skills to Fix Relationship Conflict

Let's get right into it.
Gottman outlines six major skills to handle relationship conflict.
They are:

#1. Self Soothing

During conflict our heart beats faster and, especially if it starts heating up, it's possible that we enter into flight or fight.

Gottman refers to flight or fights as "flooding".
When that happens it's highly unlikely that we will have a productive conversation and very likely instead that we will escalate into criticism, contempt, meanness, and overall develop a very negative outlook of our partner and our relationship.

Solution:
The solution is to take a break whenever we feel we are getting too nervous. And this is especially important for men because they enter into flight or fight much faster than women.

#2: Soften Start-up

Interactions often end the way they began.

So if you begin with a belligerent or contemptuous attitude, it's not likely to get any better from there.
How to do that?
For the first three minutes:

- Avoid verbally assaulting your partner
- Avoid finger pointing body language
- Try to start slightly more calmly to avoid a defensive response

There's also a strong relation between emotional connection and soft start-up: the more attuned the couple is at an emotional level, the more natural a soft startup will happen.

#3: Repair and De-escalate

Repair attempts are all the techniques that strong couples use to de-escalate their conflict.

It's a fantastic tool for conflict management that avoids spiraling negative cycles.

Here are a few ways in which you can repair and de-escalate an argument heating up a bit too quickly:

- Say you're getting flooded and need a break
- Make a joke
- Tell your partner you appreciate how cool she is keeping it
- Say that you understand his point and you would also be angry
- Accept responsibility
- Ask for forgiveness

But also sentences such as:

> - OK, I'm not making myself clear enough, sorry, lemme rephrase it. What I mean is that..

> - Hmmm It feels to me like we're talking past each other now. Let's go about it one at a time. You tell me everything you wanna say and I will just listen. Then you will listen to me. OK?

Here's a great example of a repair attempt:

He realized they were going into a vicious circle and he broke the pattern

#4: Look for Underlying Causes

In *Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage,* Gottman says that perpetual gridlocked arguments (more below) often hide feelings and dreams that are not being clearly communicated.

The solution is to listen to our partner to get to know the real them. Once our partners feel safe to open up, they won't have to hide their feelings and dreams behind an argument and we can finally find better compromises.

Some good questions:

- OK… It sounds like you really care about it, could you explain to me why
- I really want to understand you here.. Can you tell me why it's so important to you
- OK. Well, what does it mean to you when I do X

Gottman says there are three levels to support our partners:

1. Listening (without criticizing)
2. Financially supporting them
3. Taking active part in them

Notice that the third is not necessary. But maybe you can still find a little compromise there. For example, with a sport-loving partner, you might not want to go run every day, but you could go once a week and run for half the distance.
Then wait for them at the ice cream parlor.

#5: Accept Influence

Accepting influence is most often -albeit non-exclusively- a problem for men.

Not accepting influence is really a bad omen for relationships: 81% of relationships where he doesn't accept her

influence end up in divorce.

Notice that accepting influence doesn't mean you have to agree with your partner's idea or solution. Nor does it mean that you are losing power: as a matter of fact accepting influence will give you less rebellion, more love, and more influencing power.
Accepting influence begins with wanting to understand what your partner wants, what her needs are, and what you can do to meet them and make her happy.

Read more here about accepting influence.

#6: Compromise

Relationships, where only one party gets his way are not good relationships (read about power addicts).
To get into a compromise mindset you need to give up the idea that one partner can be a winner and the other can be a loser.

The only way to win is when both win.

Bonus: Communication Skills

On top of Gottman's 6 basic skills, I would also add some good communication skills to stave off The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse.

We talked about it in the article on criticism.
And here's a quick wrap-up:

- Use I statements
- Complain about specific issues instead of general personal traits
- Focus on how *you* are feeling instead of how bad your partner was
- Describe what happened without judging
- Make sure you understand before you are understood

Types of Relationship Conflict

In *The Seven Principles to Make Marriage Work* Gottman introduces the three type of problems a relationship face:

- **Solvable problems** are situational issues. It might be what to eat today, or who will pick up the dry cleaning.
- **Perpetual problems** center around fundamental differences in personalities, lifestyles, or values. Most of the problems -69%- are actually perpetual problems that most couples will return to over and over again.
- **Gridlocked perpetual problems** are perpetual problems that the couple is not handling well and have become hot topics that lead to ugly conflicts.

Example of Unsolvable Gridlocked Conflict

Mrs. Doubtfire's divorce scene is an example of a gridlocked conflict.
It's recurring, it's based on personality traits and it has reached a point where she's lost all respect for him because of it:

The gridlocked conflict here is along the personality traits of seriousness (being a square) and playful (childish).

Solving Unsolvable Conflicts

Harville Hendrix, author of *Getting The Love You Want,* explains we often pick partners with traits that either

remind us of our parents or that " complete us".

This is how it works: at the beginning, we admire their different traits because they can make us feel whole or because we wish we had their traits.
However, after we've been together for a while those same traits start annoying us. And since they're so different than how we are, they are the most likely to arise gridlocked conflicts that turn nasty.

Trying to solve unsolvable issues that relate to personalities can be counterproductive. You can rarely solve them for good and it's easy to get drawn into personality battles.
Discussing them can provide an opportunity for understanding and growth.
Here are three strategies:

#1. Listen Without Persuading

Abandon the idea of winning, convincing your partner, or making your point across. One of the two of you will have to only listen until you fully understand your partner.

To make sure you fully understand your partner, you have to repeat your part. This is actually the most important part.
Since you will not fully solve most unresolvable conflicts -but hey, never say never!- the feeling that our partner understands is often enough.

#2. Find Areas of Flexibility

Once you fully understand your partner, if you have a positive relationship, you should normally strive to do something to make your partner's situation better.
Think of where you can compromise.

#3. Thank and Appreciate

Thank your partner for opening up. If no compromise was possible, agree to disagree and learn to appreciate them for their differences.

> Choosing a partner means choosing a set of unsolvable problems

Relationship Conflict Types

In *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* Gottman outlines the different personality types depending on how they approach conflict in a relationship.
Here are the three types:

- **Validating (high EQ arguing)**

They're calm and make an effort to understand their partner's point of view and their emotions.

Even when disagreeing in the midst of a fight they let their partners know they consider their emotions and opinion to be valid.
They use a lot of "aha" and "I see" and encourage the partner to share everything.

Validating couples tend to have traditional and defined roles. The wife takes care of children and sees herself as nurturing, the husband is the final decision maker and sees himself analytical.
They tend to be good friends and value the "we" of their marriage.

Risks: turning the marriage into a passionless arrangement and foregoing personal lives and self-development for the "we" cause.

But overall it's a solid marriage.

- **Volatile (lots of arguments)**

They fight frequently and have an even bigger time making up (which attention, it's not to say all fighting couples have stable marriages!).

Their quarrels are heated and they don't listen to each other: they try to persuade the other right away. They're all about winning.
They use a lot of "yes you do" and "no I don't", and "you're wrong".

They value full honesty and independence.

Risks: Too much bickering can consume their marriage, or lead violence in extreme cases. The teasing they enjoy can end up hurting

- **Conflict avoidant**

They minimize conflicts and they avoid "unsolvable" issues altogether.
They consider issues "resolved" when they can't find a middle ground and don't try to convince the other.

Avoidant couples prove that a marriage can work even without solving disputes. It's a different kind of "we" for avoidant couples: the bond is so strong that it trumps the disagreements.

Risks: They don't learn to address issues which can be an issue should they need to have an argument one day. Also, they are low on introspection and understanding, which can lead a partner to think their spouse doesn't really understand them.
When someone is too much an avoidant they believe there are no relationships conflicts in great couples. And that's wrong: conflict is unavoidable in relationships.

Conflict Matrix

These are the different mixes of personalities we can have.
"You" is the first half:

- **Conflict Avoider / Volatile**

This is a rare mix, and Gottman speculates it's because it never moves past the dating period. The avoider feels overwhelmed by the partner's combativeness. And you can feel they're too impinging when they push you to solve conflicts.

- **Volatile / Conflict Avoider**

Your spouse probably feels you always bring conflict into the marriage and that you are overly emotional

- **Validator / Volatile**

You find your partner argumentative and domineering. You don't think they give you a chance to express yourself and you wish you could function more as a unit.

- **Volatile / Validator**

You perceive your partner as too detached. You try to get a raise out of your partner sometimes and feel like your need for autonomy falls on deaf ears.

Is Zero Conflict Possible?

In a way, the avoidant style couple has very little conflict.

But zero conflict at all, it's probably not a healthy relationship. Couples need to hear their differences and they need to raise the issues that are painful for them.

So while disagreement and conflict might make us feel miserable at times, it's helpful in the long run.

Emotional Bond & Conflict Management

Finally, I would like to introduce a different point of view.

All the techniques we discussed are helpful.
But Sue Johnson, author of *Hold Me Tight*, says that **handling conflict is the tip of the iceberg, and the real core issue is a strong emotional bond**.

With a strong emotional bond, even poor conflict management skills will give you a solid, healthy relationship.

I believe conflict management skills are more important than Sue makes them out to be, but I also agree with her marriage.
Check this video: no conflict management could save the argument once they realize their emotional bond has vanished.

On the other hand, a strong emotional bond will automatically secure your relationship.

Conflict Management in Perspective

Conflict management is also one of the key skills of The Sound Relationship House by Gottman, but not the only one. The others are:

- Getting to know your partner
- Fondness and admiration

Remind yourself what you appreciate about your partner and say to each other. Fondness and admiration indeed help emotional bonding.

- Turning towards

Instead of "doing your own thing" you engage with your partner and show that you care. This is another tool to replenish your emotional bank account and show your partner that you care

- Positive perspective

A positive perspective ensures that you focus on the positives.

SUMMARY

Knowing how to handle relationship conflict is a key skill for a successful relationship.

But as important as it is, it's only when it's part of a bigger strategy of emotional attunement, appreciation, and positive perspective that it can be helpful.

This article showed you both how to solve conflicts in your relationship and how to put it in perspective of an overall healthy relationship.

Further Reading

- Get to know your partner
- Turn towards and build emotional connection
- Get a positive perspective

Or, for an overall overview:

- Best relationship ever, one-stop shop

How to Develop Deeper Relationship Intimacy: Shared Meaning

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Intimacy in a relationship is often correlated with how much shared meaning the couple has.

In plain English, it means this: the more common you have, the more you'll feel closer to your partner.

This article describes and explains the shared meaning and gives you a few ideas on how you can improve it to enjoy more relationship intimacy.

Spending time in nature could be part of their shared meaning

Contents

- What's Shared Meaning
  - Why Building Shared Meaning
- Creating Intimacy Via Shared Meaning
  - #1. Talking about your shared meaning
  - #2. Share a dream or vision
  - #3. Develop Daily Rituals
  - #4. Celebrate Anniversaries
  - #5. Develop Cultural Artifacts
  - #6. Start Joint Activities
  - 7. Write Down Your "Couple's Values"
  - Some Ideas for Shared Meaning
- Intimacy & Shared Meaning Examples
- Shared Meaning in Perspective
- SUMMARY

What's Shared Meaning

Shared meaning is all about sharing a common culture.

And what constitutes a common culture in a relationship?
Here are a few examples:

- References
- Inside jokes
- Daily habits
- Anniversaries
- Symbols and rituals
- Foods you both enjoy
- Couple secrets
- Knowledge of each other's dreams

But it's also all the little things you do sometimes that you don't even talk about. You might not talk about how much you enjoy a good Italian wine on the weekend for example. But if you do it constantly, that's part of your culture and shared meaning.

And if you are both loud and crass instead of bookworms, that's also shared meaning.

Why Building Shared Meaning

First of all, as we've already said, couples who develop shared meaning are much more likely to develop intimacy.

And second, shared meaning helps form the glue that keeps couples happily together for the long haul.

A new relationship indeed, with its butterfly love period, is naturally exciting. A new relationship doesn't have much shared meaning but it doesn't need any: limerence makes the couple stick together.
But limerance, or the puppy love period, ends.
And when it ends, shared meaning helps build a deeper connection that outlasts the initial infatuation.
Shared meaning indeed can create a deeper bond than the initial infatuation.

Shared Meaning is Friendship

Have you heard or read that friendship is the key to great relationships?

Well, that's actually true.

But what most articles don't explain is *how* to develop that friendship.
A shared meaning, together with knowing your partner well, forms the building block of a friendship. And friendship is what great couples refer to when they can't even think about the possibility of their relationship ending.

It's because they are so close to their partners and the shared meaning is so deep that losing their partners would mean losing a part of who they are.

Creating Intimacy Via Shared Meaning

In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* Gottman says that a shared meaning takes years to develop.

But there are many ways you can use to make that process faster and more effective.
Here are a few:

#1. Talking about your shared meaning

This one works like a charm.

I know, because I always do it when I am seeing a girl on a constant basis.

Remember the example of the couple enjoying a good Italian wine on the weekend?

We said that maybe they don't talk about it, but it's still shared meaning.

Well, what if they started talking about it instead as "their" thing?

When you talk about it, you make the shared meaning somewhat "official" and you strengthen it. It's not about your individual taste which happens to overlap: it's about the two of you.

#2. Share a dream or vision

Sharing a dream, goal or vision is possibly the biggest shared meaning you can have.

In solving conflicts we talked about how important it is to understand our partner's dreams. Working together towards that goal is an even bigger glue.

But it doesn't have to be something tangible: sharing a vision or common values also creates a larger meaning in life that transcends the smaller day-to-day differences.

#3. Develop Daily Rituals

Find out something that you can do at periodical time intervals together. It could be evening dinners or weekend getaways.

#4. Celebrate Anniversaries

Wedding anniversaries or birthdays are an example.

But it can go beyond that. It could be a spring picnic, or a winter hot wine at the same Christmas market.
Or a walk in the woods in autumn.

#5. Develop Cultural Artifacts

Pick something that is meaningful for you and make it a symbol of your relationship.

For example, I met my first girlfriend when we were both living in Poland and we both loved it. So some Polish food and drinks became our relationship symbols.

And of course, it can also be movies, cities, or songs -which you can start seeding from the dating period by the

way-.

#6. Start Joint Activities

Starting joint activities you can do together is another concrete example of a shared culture.
It could be a sport, volunteering, or even committing to raising your children with a certain set of values.

7. Write Down Your "Couple's Values"

Some counselors suggest you can also write down the values of your marriage.
I'm not a big fan of this one though.

People develop and writing down things can become constrictive.
If a partner realizes they're moving on, for example, they might silently start to believe you have no shared meaning anymore.
I believe it's best to let your shared meaning grow with you without committing to anything in writing.

Some Ideas for Shared Meaning

- Hug every time you're back home
- Cuddle time before falling asleep
- Exercise together
- Booking holidays during the same period
- Movie nights
- Chores together
- Taking breaks during heated arguments

Intimacy & Shared Meaning Examples

How I Met Your Mother has an example of inside jokes that fosters shared meaning:

Lily and Marshal also have lots of recurring moments of shared meaning and intimacy during the show:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7t0PHKc_tX0

Shared Meaning in Perspective

Shared meaning is one of the levels of the sound relationship house of Gottman.
It's very important, but don't forget the other layers:

- Love maps (knowing each other)
- Fondness and admiration (the other building block of long-term love)
- Turning towards (emotional bank account)
- Handling conflicts

SUMMARY

Sharing meaning and building a couple's culture is one of the best ways to reliably improve your relationship's intimacy and overall health.

It's one of the layers of Gottman's solid relationship house, and this article showed you examples and tips on how to grow your shared meaning.

Facts About Cheating & Cheaters (Science VS Myths)

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

There is a lot of poor information on the web about cheating and infidelity.

Facts that are grounded in data and research instead are scarce.

This article will list the most common myths VS the actual facts about cheating.

Contents

- #1. Unhappy Marriages Lead to Cheating
- #2. Affairs Are Based on Sexual Attraction
- #3. An Attentive Partner Can Find Cues
- #4. Cheating Decreases Relationship Sex
- #5. People Cheat When They Don't Get Enough X
- #6. Cheaters Treat Their Partner Poorly
- #7. Men Cheat More Than Women
- #8. Cheating Happens Mostly When Drunk / High
- #9. It's Not An Affair Without Sex
- #10. Talking About The Affair Makes It Worse
- #11. The Cheater Prefers The Affair Partner
- #12. Compatibility Is Higher With The Affair Partner
- #13. Betrayals Are Not Such a Big Thing: The Cheated Should Get Over It
- #14. Cheating is Commonplace / Rare
- SUMMARY

#1. Unhappy Marriages Lead to Cheating

Assumption: people cheat because their marriage is unhappy and their spouse doesn't satisfy them.

Fact:

While unhappy marriages can be a cause of cheating, it's not one of the major causes. And especially not for men.

Digging Deeper

Men indeed present little correlation between the level of relationship happiness and the incidence of cheating.

Shirley Glass, recording decades of couple's therapy experience, concludes that men who engaged in sexual affairs were as satisfied with their marriages as faithful men.

The link between relationship health and the incidence of cheating is stronger in women though.
Women in any kind of extramarital affair were less happy in their marriage than their non-involved counterparts.

Why do people get this one wrong

Some people believe that marriage dissatisfaction is a major cause of cheating because they hear the cheating partner complain about their marriage *after* they initiated an affair.

That's often back-justification coupled with unfair comparisons (or plain lying).
It makes little sense to compare the thrill of an affair with the daily life of a long-term partner.

#2. Affairs Are Based on Sexual Attraction

Assumption: affairs happen because there's better sexual chemistry with the affair partner.

Fact:

While better sexual chemistry can be one of the reasons an affair started, most of the time it's not.
What draws committed partners in an affair are the following:

- Thrill of the forbidden
- Exploring new roles
- Breaking free of old habits
- Rejuvenation
- Ego validation

Cheating for ego validation: "I still got it"

The last one is particularly interesting. Often people start a relationship with partners who are more or less their equals.

But as we grow older we experience more and some of us get wiser and more successful. Younger people can look up to us as role models. That's in stark contrast to our relationship partner, who keeps treating us the same way we were when we started out.

And that's when affair partners, especially men, begin relationships with younger coworkers.
The younger coworkers are more than a younger piece of meat. They end up being a bit of sexual partners, a bit of mentees, and a bit of provider of ego validation.

Rejuvenation:

And of course, for both genders, a new partner can wake up in us a side of us that we thought dead: strong sexual attraction, physical performance, and the puppy love we thought was only for teenagers.

#3. An Attentive Partner Can Find Cues

Assumption: a cheater will always leave cues, but naive spouses bury their heads in the sand.

Fact:

Most affairs are never detected, and it's not because anybody put their head in the sand. Some cheaters are just very good liars or very effective at creating double lives.

#4. Cheating Decreases Relationship Sex

Assumption: a cue that your partner is involved in an extramarital relationship is a decrease in sex or the decrease in sexual attraction.

Fact:

An unfaithful partner *might* have less sex in the relationship or avoid the official partner. But he can also have a higher sexual drive and *more* sex in the relationship.

Digging Deeper:

It's really hard to tell if a partner is cheating simply by looking at how often he or she initiates sex. But if you notice major swings compared to the past, either in craving sex or in rejecting sex, that might be a telltale sign.

#5. People Cheat When They Don't Get Enough X

Assumption: people cheat because they aren't getting enough of something in the relationship. Not enough sex, not enough love, not enough intimacy, etc.

Fact:

It's more likely that the partner who is not giving enough will cheat.

More Info:

Giving creates a deeper bond and makes us more invested in the relationship. A partner who gives nothing is also a partner who cares less about the relationship. This is one of the reasons I always recommend against the typical dating advice of giving as little as possible.

#6. Cheaters Treat Their Partner Poorly

Assumption: you can detect an unfaithful partner because he will treat you poorly.

Fact:

A straying partner might become more bitter and resentful. But could as well swing in the opposite direction and be much nicer to you. That can happen either out of guilt or to escape detection.

Digging Deeper:

When you notice swings from bitterness to exaggerated devotion and niceness, *that* might be a sign.

#7. Men Cheat More Than Women

Assumption: men are naturally hunters and naturally looking for opportunities. Women are naturally after love and commitment.

Fact:

While, there's some truth in the assumption the reality is, as it's often the case, more complex. In more open societies such as in the West and among younger generations, the incidences of infidelity between genders are comparable.

More Info:

Gathering reliable data on relationship infidelity is arduous. But based on the available surveys, women are catching up on men in the West -at least for the younger age brackets-.

We went from double the rate of affairs of men to women in 1953 (Kinsey report) to approaching parity in the 1990s (Michael Wiederman, 1996).
In older age brackets though men still cheat more.

This might be possibly due to the fact that men tend to retain sexual market value longer than women. And of course, the inverse of the coin: women's tendency to go after power and resources.

#8. Cheating Happens Mostly When Drunk / High

Assumption: most cheating happens when people are drunk, high, or partying.

Fact:

It's actually the growing presence of women in the workplace that has driven the recent increase in affairs' incidence. In Shirley Glass' clinical sample, 50% of women and 62% of men met their affair partners at work.

#9. It's Not An Affair Without Sex

Assumption: it's not really cheating unless there is sexual involvement.

Fact:

Extramarital affair is usually defined as sexual intercourse, but that definition is misleading. Indeed, *for evolutionary reasons,* emotional cheating is worse for women than sexual cheating (David Buss, 1994).

#10. Talking About The Affair Makes It Worse

Assumption: better to forget about the affair and move on.

Fact:

This is possibly the most damaging myth of them all. Once the affair has been discovered the best way to mend the relationship is to answer all our partner's questions and talk about what happened.

#11. The Cheater Prefers The Affair Partner

Assumption: to cheat people must think that the affair partner is somewhat "better" than their long-term partner.

Fact:

Most affairs don't happen because the affair partner is "better".

Frank Pittman indeed observes that the choice of the affair partner is based on how *different* they are from the relationship partner.
Another proof the affair partner is not often "better" is that in the vast majority of the cases that an affair is

discovered the unfaithful partner chooses the long-term partner.

Digging Deeper:

The affair can be more exciting though not because of real personality traits, but because of the affairs' very nature. The risk, the social hazard, the breaking of rules together…

The affair partner sometimes isn't even a real person. It's an idealization and that ideal never gets real because, well… You never deepen that connection with a life together. You only see the best side of the affair partner, but rarely the problems.
As someone said:

> The grass is always greener when you don't have to mow it

#12. Compatibility Is Higher With The Affair Partner

Assumption: the cheater has better compatibility with the affair partner

Fact:

Since the affair often rides on high emotions it might feel so. But the truth is different: 75% of cheaters who marry the affair partner divorce -a much higher incidence than the normal divorce rate-.

#13. Betrayals Are Not Such a Big Thing: The Cheated Should Get Over It

Assumption: a betrayal is not such a big thing, and especially not in modern times. It's common, so the betrayed partner should not make it such a big deal.

Fact:

According to therapists who treat couples, infidelity is the second most difficult relationship problem, second only to domestic violence (Survey of 122 family psychologists, Journal of Family Psychology,113, 361-366.).
And it often takes years for people to come to terms with betrayal.

#14. Cheating is Commonplace / Rare

Assumption: cheating is widespread, says the unfaithful partner; cheating is rare, thinks the faithful partner.

Fact:

Cheaters are highly influenced by the families and environment they grew up in.

The pattern of unfaithfulness can indeed often be traced in the family (Emily Brown, Patterns of Infidelity and Their Treatment). And cheaters tend to focus on other cheaters, so they end up seeing more of it. To them, it often really seems like cheating is everywhere.

Conversely, the faithful partner often comes from faithful families, and the people they respect are other faithful committed partners.
So they end up seeing more faithful people and to them, it seems like cheating is rare and "a big thing".

Source: *Anthony Thompson, Emotional and sexual components of extramarital relations, Journal of Marriage and Family, 46, 35-42*

SUMMARY

There's lots of great research and scientific findings on relationships and infidelity. And there's also a lot of terrible advice around.
This article dispels a few common myths about cheating and infidelity.

Make Your Bed by William McRaven: Lessons in Strength & Resilience (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 May 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Make Your Bed* (2017), Admiral William McRaven teaches you the mindsets, beliefs, and values of the tenacious, high-value men.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: Discipline is key, but add strategy and calibration
While the book doesn't add new strategic knowledge, it reinforces foundational discipline and some key TPM's value, like the necessity of facing 'life's sharks' to succeed and enact positive change. Remember calibration, strategy, and ROI though: an agentic man doesn't need to waste time doing his bed

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - Make Your Bed
  - You Need a Teammate
  - Life is Unfair: Get Over It
  - Use Your Failures
  - Dare Greatly
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- Start each day with a small win
- Going it alone is weak: find great teammates instead (including in your relationship)
- Dare greatly and face your fears

Notes

About the Author:
William Harry McRaven is a retired United States Navy admiral. He started off as a SEAL and served in the Persian Gulf War.

Make Your Bed

Make your bed is meant in part figuratively, but the book also means it literally.

The reason why you do your bed is to start the day with an accomplished task. You start with a win, and it puts you in the positive mood of someone who gets things done.

TPM Note: Go for figurative, and swap making your bed for higher ROI habits

You Need a Teammate

You need friends and teammates in life.

And I particularly loved that one of William McRaven's examples of a teammate is actually his wife.
It helped him get through a difficult time in life in which, without her, he would have become depressed.
That's very powerful and very vulnerable of him to say and he's right. The science of attachment indeed explains that having strong emotional support from our partners makes us stronger.

Life is Unfair: Get Over It

Life is unfair, and you should stop wasting your time and energy complaining about it.
That's how it is, do something about it instead of complaining.

Use Your Failures

McRaven's swimming team during his SEAL training was constantly arriving last.

That also means they'd have to go through intense punishment training called "the circus". The circus was so tough that many members would quit instead of finishing it.

But he went through it, and at the final swim test, his team finished first. That's a lesson on how to use your failures.

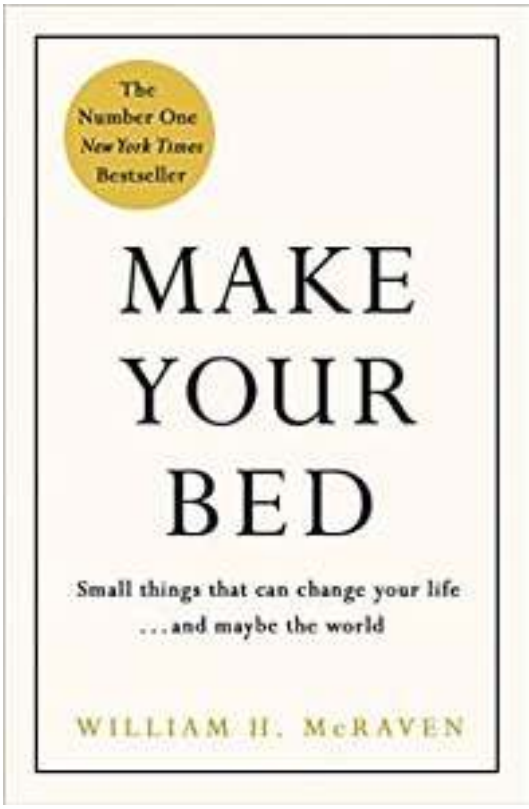
And if you want a more intellectual approach, I am a big believer in what Ray Dalio says: pain + reflection are your biggest growth opportunities.

Personally, I used my failure for motivation.
And my failure and my darkest days are the driving force behind this website.

Dare Greatly

There is always the possibility of failure. The more you go for bigger goals, the bigger the possibility of failure.

If you want to achieve anything significant in life, you must move toward the obstacles head first. Those who live in fear of failure and embarrassment commit the ultimate sin: not living up to their potential.



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Real-Life Applications

- **Stand Up to Bullies**

I loved the analogy of the sharks and the sharks of life.
That's basically the spirit of this website. Face the sharks and stand up to bullies. You do it for yourself, but also for the world.

- **Accept Life's Not Fair**

This is another big lesson. Life is not fair: accept it. And use your energies and wits to work around, learn from it, leverage it, or… To contribute to making it fair (without whining).

CONS

- **Never Quit…?**

I can imagine people who finish exhaustive training tend to feel proud they went through and tend to look down on those who quit.

The author indeed stresses the idea of never quitting and equates quitting to "ringing the bell" when a Navy SEAL would quit the training.

I think there are many situations when quitting is the best option.
Quitting your dull job, quitting before your risk severe injuries… Or even quitting Navy SEAL training if that's not your thing. Maybe you'll go ahead and do wonderful things without your life.

- **Make your bed… Literally?**

Personally, I believe it's a waste of time. And especially so for a driven man looking to maximize the use of his time.

You're going to sleep in it again in the evening anyway (or if you're like me, even work while you're lying on it).

PROS

- **Teamwork**

I love how to Make Your Bed stresses that having a strong network around you, including your romantic partner, is key to making you stronger.

- **Motivational… In a Positive Way**

Make Your Book is Motivational… But not in any empty way. It's motivation in a very powerful way. For example when it says that the smaller crew always finished first in his training. Nothing mattered, he says, but your will to succeed.

> Measure a person by the size of their heart, not the size of their flippers

There are a lot of sharks in the world. If you wanna change the world: face the sharks

Review

Make Your Bed is a powerful book on the power of persistence and heart.

But also on the importance of building a great supporting team around you, including your relationship.

I would give Make Your Bed 4 stars because, after all, the messages are well-known. Albeit they are experience-backed and well-told.

P.S.: for the next step in self-development after basic habits, see:

- **Foundations of self-development**

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

The Greatest Salesman in The World: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Greatest Salesman in the World is the best-selling book on how to become better salesmen. Og Mandino, the author, encourages readers to sell more by developing love and care for both people and prospects alike.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Habits Are the Foundations
  - Love Sells: Sell With Love
  - Persist
  - Don't Copy: Forge Your Own Path
  - Control Your Emotions
  - Take Action
  - Have Faith
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Excellence starts with great habits
- Trust and caring sell: develop a love for all people
- Learn to control your emotions

Full Summary

About The Author: Og Mandino was an American author, best known for this book, which has sold over 50 million copies. That easily makes "*The Greatest Salesman in The World*" the best-selling book on sales.

Habits Are the Foundations

The foundation of any excellent performance begins with the habits you shape (also read *The Power of Habits*).

Sadly, says Mandino, most of us are full of bad habits.
And they often start the very first moment we wake up: we snooze the alarm 4 times, then rush to work because we're late and we're grumpy and dozing off the whole morning.

Your first step will hence be to replace your poor habits with positive ones.

Love Sells: Sell With Love

Selling is about being good with people and gaining trust. And the best way you can show trust is with love.

The author recommends you internalize your love for people by repeating every morning:

> I will love everything and everyone

And when you talk to someone, repeat in your head:

> I love you

When you communicate with people from a place of love, they will also warm up to you.
It's amazing when you do it with people you don't have a good relationship with, and they will often turn from enemies into friends.

Persist

Don't give up. Your next customer, your next call, and your next reach out can be your sale.

If you start stringing failure after failure, stop and regroup before going into the next. And never end the day with a failure.

And if you just can't manage: put everything behind in your night's sleep and raise up on the next day fresh and invigorated.

Don't Copy: Forge Your Own Path

Do what other successful people do is a common suggestion.
The Greatest Salesman in the World proposes instead that you don't imitate others, but find your own secret sauce for success.

Control Your Emotions

Controlling emotions is a key skill for Og Mandino (also read *Emotional Intelligence*).

The Greatest Salesman in the World recommends you keep an even keel without getting too arrogant or too depressed.

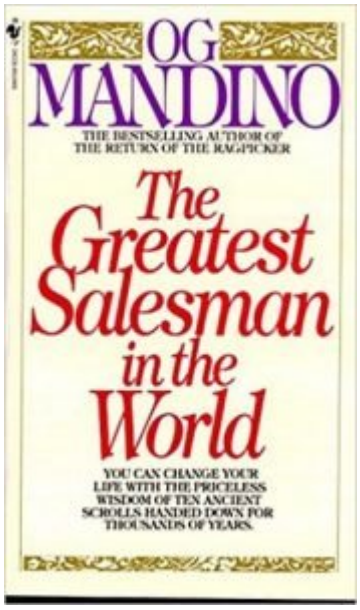
A great way to change your emotional state, says Mandino, is to stop taking things so seriously. And to laugh at yourself and the world.

Take Action

Procrastination is an ever-so-seductive muse. And you must destroy her with action.
Set up a plan of successive action steps and goals instead and get going right away.

Have Faith

Have faith in God above and ask for guidance.



CONS

No hands-on techniques
The Greatest Salesman in the World is all about mindsets. That means there are no actual sales techniques.

PROS

Much more than selling
The Greatest Salesman in the World is about much more than selling. It's about self-improvement.

Fictional story
If the author had shared the concepts in bullet points, *The Greatest Salesman in the World* wouldn't have been nearly as successful.
This book is a testament to the power of storytelling. Teaching with stories is much more powerful because we project our own personality in the story and we're more open to accepting and retaining the lessons.

Review

Sharing the concepts through a fictional story can be a great way of teaching.

The reader feels closer to the main character, projects his own persona onto him, and thus is more open to absorbing the book's lessons.

However, I'm not convinced that love and caring are either the only or most effective tools for selling a lot.

As a last note, "*The Greatest Salesman in the World*" is based on Christian beliefs and faith, which might be a pro for some and a con for others.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Not Just Friends: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Not Just Friends (2002) is a book about cheating and affairs. Shirley Glass the author, explains the stages of emotional affairs, the signs, and how to heal from emotional affairs as a couple.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Intro
  - After Infidelity Wait 3 Months Before Breaking Up
  - Walls & Windows: The Intimacy Divide
  - Partner's Reactions Can Be Traumatic
  - Coping With Trauma
  - Healing Together
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Don't give up right after the affair!
- Affairs are traumatic
- Rebuilding trust is a top priority
- You must rebuild intimacy with your partner (and cut out the affair partner)

Full Summary

About The Author: Shirley Glass was an American psychologist who focused on researching infidelity and helping couples recover from infidelity.

Intro

Not Just Friends goes deep and wide into infidelity and psychology. This is a very brief summary with further links to more in-depth articles.
And of course, I invite you to get "*Not Just Friends*" in full. Especially if you're interested in people and psychology: it's truly a treasure trove.

After Infidelity Wait 3 Months Before Breaking Up

Shirley Glass says the immediate reaction to ending the relationship is a mistake. It's like buying high and selling low.

She advises instead that you wait 3 months and at least try to rebuild your relationship.
If it still doesn't work, at least you can tell yourself you've done your best.

Walls & Windows: The Intimacy Divide

Shirley Glass says that the increase in modern affairs happens because of the increased opportunities for men and women to mingle.

Affairs often start at work, and they start as friends.

The affair begins when one partner starts spending more and more time with someone who was just a friend. Glass says that **the shift from friendship to affair begins when one or both start confiding to each other**. When that happens, the "friend" starts becoming more intimate and emotionally close than our partner. That's when the walls and windows change. The "friend" is the one with us in the house, and our partner starts moving outside.

Partner's Reactions Can Be Traumatic

Not Just Friends repeats this concept very often: an affair is a traumatic experience for the betrayed partner.

Don't listen to anyone telling you to "move on" or "it's just some sleeping around".
Healing must start with the understanding that it's psychological trauma.

Coping With Trauma

The rule of thumb is that women obsess and men repress.

But in infidelity traumas the betrayers repress and the betrayed obsesses. Glass says that obsessing is not pathological but it's a normal response.

Here are some good tips to let go:

- **Write down your thoughts**

Many obsess in fear that they could "forget" their pain.
When you write them down you can more easily let go. Also, write letters to the affair partner (without necessarily sending them) and write down all the questions you want your partner to answer.

- **Get the truth**

Secrecy fuels obsession. With the help of your partner, get the truth.

- **Emotional control**

You can schedule "obsession time slots" when you are free to think about the affair. Outside those times, distract yourself.

- **Avoid painful situations**

In the beginning, it's best not to avoid any situation that could remind you of the affair. The advice to face your fears right away is a typical example of bad folk wisdom.

- **Face flashbacks together**

It's incredibly helpful if your partner supports you in dealing with traumatic flashbacks. Little by little you can also revisit the crime scenes with your partner, for example, holding your hand.

Healing Together

These are the steps to healing together:

- **Safety first: cut contact**

The unfaithful partner must eventually cut all contact with the affair partner. If the betrayed partner asks to be present when the unfaithful partner makes the last call or sends the last text/email/letter, that's a fair request.

- **Tell the story with honesty**

You rebuild trust with complete honesty. If the unfaithful partner still has feelings towards the affair partner, he must confess so.
Sharing all (unavoidable) contacts with the affair partner too.

- **Accept ambivalence**

If the unfaithful partner feels ambivalent and still has feelings for the affair partner, he must say so. It's hard for the betrayed partner to accept that, but they must strive to.
Of course, if there are no feelings involved or if the unfaithful partner can move on quickly, it's much better.

- **Reverse walls and windows**

Cut out the affair partner and rebuild intimacy in the relationship.

- **Discussing the story of the affair**

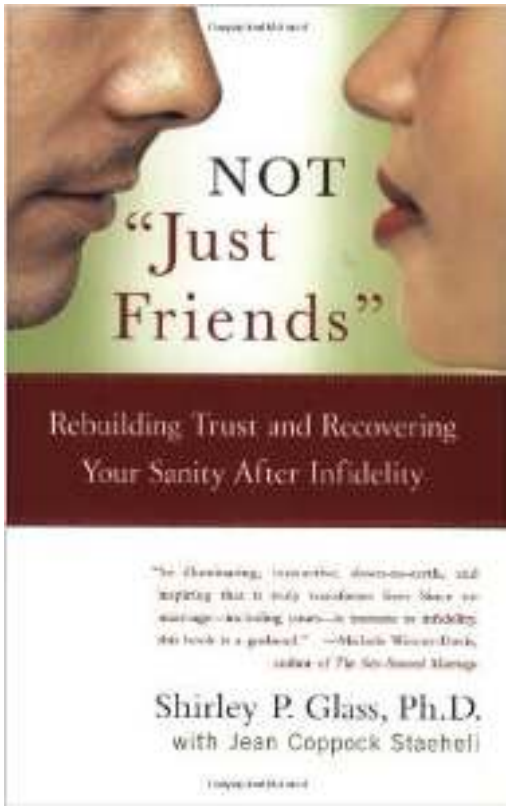
To fully heal and build a stronger relationship, the couple must discuss and understand what happened. Then also based on the shared meaning they reach of the affair, fix the weaknesses.

- **Restart loving each other**

It's important for quicker healing that the partners "bite their tongue" and are not too mean when they discover the affair. Little by little, they should start giving again and being warm towards each other.

For a more in-depth article based on Shirley's teaching, check out:

- Surviving infidelity



Real-Life Applications

You can decrease the chances of cheating
Albeit completely eliminating the chances of cheating is impossible, you can take many effective steps to make it less likely.

You can pick partners less likely to cheat
There are several variables in the personal history and personality traits that decrease the chances a partner would cheat

CONS

Length & Repetition
It took me a long time to finish reading Not Just Friends. If you want to read it because you're dealing with an affair, then you better be a quick reader and have lots of time :).

Little How To
The information is all there, but it's sometimes buried in long texts and paragraphs.
I believe Not Just Friends could be very much improved in a trimmed and shorter version: cut all repetitions, make it more schematic and this would become the Bible of affairs and surviving affairs -if it isn't already, that is-.

Sometimes Sources were off?
Glass says that 80% of sex addicts at a rehab center were corporate executives. But the source here doesn't say that. Also, the statistic is meaningless because a private center with very high costs will naturally cut off those who can't afford it.

Attachment Styles confusions
The naming of the attachment styles felt off and wrong to me. Maybe it's not because they were wrong but because I'm using to call them in a different way.

PROS

Extensive Research
Albeit some of the sources are a bit dated, there's lots of data and extensive research to back up the claims. Also a note on the date of the resources: humans don't change in a matter of decades, so good old research in psychology is much better than a less good recent one.

Review

Not Just Friends is a deeply insightful book on the topic of infidelity. It goes well beyond simple infidelity and into trauma recovery, human psychology, and even personality disorders.

Would I heed the recommendations?

I have to add that, although I love the book and learned hugely from it, I wouldn't necessarily heed the recommendation to work on the relationship in case my partner had an affair.

I think that, as a man, you lose lots of power if you stay -but then again, this comes from a guy who writes on a website called ThePowerMoves).
And as a proud man, I feel there are only two answers to cheating: that's the door or fair game on both sides from now on.

Check out:

- **Best relationship books**

Surviving Infidelity As a Couple: A 13-Steps Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Surviving infidelity is not easy.

Discovering an affair can be a traumatic event, and to heal properly, you must approach it as the traumatic event that it is.

This is **a guide to survive infidelity *as a couple* and to build a stronger relationship *together***. Or, at last, to give it your best shot.

Moving on by yourself or detaching from your partner may be valid choices, but it's just not this article's topic.

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How to use this guide

The guide is based on research and experts' opinions in the field, especially Shirley Glass and her book *Not Just Friends*.

The numbered titles are the steps you need to take in chronological order.

The smaller titles are aimed at either the unfaithful partner (in blue) or the betrayed partner (in pink).
But don't let the colors confuse you: the steps are the same whether the cheating partner is male or female.

I recommend you share this guide with your partner as well. Two people doing the right thing is not twice the healing power, it's 10x.

⚠ **Note: We don't necessarily advise everyone to stick together no matter what.**
In many cases, we may advise moving on. Especially for men, sticking together may come at the cost of self-respect and partner's attraction.
This guide is not for those who are undecided or prefer ending it. It's a guide for those who want to rebuild their relationships.

#1. Start Well: Confess The Affair

When betrayed partner corners the unfaithful spouse, the cheater responds in four different ways. Here in order of worst to best:

1. **Denial** only makes the recovery harder and further erodes trust
2. **Stonewalling** communicates he doesn't care enough to reply

3. **Staggered disclosures**: drags the pain further and prolong the pain
4. **Full honesty**: the only way to go

Unfaithful Partner: Admit It

Immediate honesty is the best way to face the problem head-on and rebuild trust.

Betrayed Partner: Channel The Rage

Nobody says it's easy, but I'm talking about what's useful for recovery here, not what's easy.
The betrayed partner can make things easier for the unfaithful partner to share the truths by avoiding being overly mean as a revenge tactic.

Anger is normal, but the worst offenses you can muster may preclude future options.
Exaggerated rage will also push your partner into a bigger wall of denials and stonewalling, which will delay full revelation and recovery.

Example

In the movie *This Is 40* the husband finally admits he has been hiding the truth for years because of her furious reactions.

It's not so uncommon, and you want to avoid that.

The Ideal Scenario

If you can muster to communicate love and understanding right off the bat, that immediately takes you into full healing mode.
Here's an example of what a betrayed partner told her husband (I paraphrase):

> **Betrayed partner**: If she can make you happier, then you should go. If you want to work on our relationship, I love you and I'm ready

The husband was aghast and immediately valued her so much more. Both went to work on it and not only saved their marriage but improved it.

Note: I'm not suggesting that you should do the same or that it's the best way to react. I wouldn't react like that in a million years.
But I am saying that if your goal is healing and you still have a functioning relationship, that might be the quickest way to jump into healing mode.

2. Don't Give up right away!

The first knee-jerk reaction after a betrayal is to abandon the relationship. While understandable, it's best not to jump to emotionally driven, rush conclusions.
Give it at least three more months before deciding. And if afterward you still feel like leaving, then you know your decision is rational.

Unfaithful Partners: Don't Jump Ship (just yet)

The unfaithful partner is caught between a rock and a hard place.

The pain and suffering that he caused at home on one side and the tough choices he needs to make between the affair and the relationship.

Statistically speaking leaving the marriage to build a relationship with the affair partner is rarely the best solution. You carry the unresolved issues with you and second marriages have an even higher divorce rate than first marriages (Hetherington, 2003).
And marrying an affair partner has *even higher* divorce rates.

Betrayed Partner: Don't Slam The Door

Shirley Glass, with decades of clinical experience curing unfaithful couples, says that the regret for not having done enough to save the marriage of extremely common.

Partners who quit too soon find out that being alone is harder and that they miss their partner more than they ever thought they would.

> **Giving up right after cheating is buying high and selling low!**

3. Arm Yourself with Patience

Healing from cheating takes some time, some effort, and some resolve. Sometimes more than some. As they say, love is not for the faint of hearts. You can do it.

Unfaithful Partners: Trust Takes Time

The unfaithful partner cannot stand to be under heavier scrutiny.

He often resorts to saying things like:

> **Unfaithful Partner**: You gotta trust me. It's either you trust me, or you don't.

But there's no "trust button" in people. **Trust takes time**.
And lemme be frank: you broke that trust, and now you gotta accept it takes time to rebuild it.

Betrayed Partner: It'll Be Up & Downs

Be ready that you will experience up and downs.

Some days you'll feel fully healed, but then the day after you'll feel like a fool for staying with a partner who cheated.

Especially if your partner hasn't fully come back to you emotionally yet you'll be worried and insecure.

During the final stages of recovery, it will be mostly steps forward. But then you'll have sometimes a step backward canceling all the gain you've done. Unluckily negative experiences carry more powerful than positive ones.

Note: healing comes first in frequency of occurrences and only later in intensity. This means that months down the road as you think you're getting better… BAM! There comes a flashback of stinging pain, anger, or disgust.
Don't worry: eventually also the intensity will dissipate, but it takes longer.

4. Answer Honestly...

Hiding from uncomfortable truths is a natural human reaction. But you have to face up to the issues if you want to solve them.

Unfaithful Partner: Open Up

The unfaithful partner has a key role in the healing process. He must stay close to his partner and let her know he will answer any possible question.
In the beginning share the basics, such as:

- The identity of the affair partner
- How you met
- How long it lasted
- Where did you meet

Refusing to share the identity is a common, major mistake. It protects the lover and keeps the spouse on the outside.
For the unfaithful partner sharing the story also helps close the affair. Daniel Wegner indeed shows that past relationships that remain secret increase desire and make the partner appear more appealing (*The Allure of Secret Relationships, 1994*).

Share Ambivalence

Unfaithful partners fear that sharing their ambivalence and emotional entanglement will upset their spouse and forestall any improvement.
Well, it will upset your spouse most likely, but honesty will also rebuild trust. And rebuilding trust is the most important thing right now.

Overcoming Ambivalence

Here's what you can do to overcome relationship ambivalence:

- Picture your life with the affair partner 5, 10, and 20 years from now
- Do you two want the same things?
- Does the affair partner what children? And you?
- Do you think the traits that attract will annoy you later on (likely)?
- How's your relationship going to be without the excitement of secretly?
- What if your affair will be on the same trajectory as your current relationship?
- Would you still divorce if it weren't for the affair partner

Sources:
The importance of transparency and answering all questions is backed by Peggy Vaughan's survey of 1.083 betrayed partners.
86% of couples stayed together and 72% rebuilt trust when the unfaithful partner answered all the questions. Only 59% stayed together and 31% rebuilt trust when the unfaithful partner refused to answer questions.

Note: there was a link to the survey, but the webmaster moved the page.

5. ... But Wait on Graphic Details

It's natural that the betrayed partner will obsess, and it will often be over the most painful bits of information.

Such as either graphic sexual details or evidence of love such as texts, gifts, or letters.
It's best to tread lightly here.

Unfaithful Partner: Open to Share... But in Time

Unfaithful partner should say they are open to share everything their spouse wants to know. They should share right away all the main parts of the affair. But they should avoid the graphic details.
Say something like this:

> I will tell you everything you want to know. I am concerned though the details will only bring unnecessary pain to you and harm our recovery. I'd rather wait a few days. And then if you still want to know, I'll tell you.
> OK for you?

Betrayed Partner: Test & Wait

In most cases getting all the graphic details is a mistake. And the craving usually disappears as the relationship improves.

Ask yourself whether the details will really help you move on. And if you are unsure, start with a single painful detail. If it helps you heal, then get more. If it only brings you pain without any further improvement, then drop it.

Example:

He feels good as soon as he hears it. But it's only because of the rush of winning the argument. The trauma will likely only be bigger for him now that the details are burned in his mind.
He would have most likely bounced back quicker without the graphic details.

6. Do a Clean Break

Healing cannot start in an unsafe environment: a clear cut with the affair partner is a fundamental step to restoring safety and moving forward together.

Unfaithful Partner: Cut All Affair Contacts

The unfaithful partner must cut any relationship with the unfaithful partner.

- If your partner so prefers, have the last call in front of them
- If it's a colleague, make it clear it's only business from then on
- If you stumble upon them, share all meetings with your partner
- If you meet them with your partner, stay close to your partner

If you cannot manage a clean break you must be honest about your ambivalence. When you are honest, you also get closer to your relationship partner because you break walls of secrecy. And, even if through pain, you become more of a team.

Betrayed Partner: Ask for Proof

You don't have to, but if it makes you feel better it's fair for the betrayed partner to ask to be present when the last communication of break up is sent.
If at all possible it's also fair for the betrayed partner to ask that the cheating partner stops attending whatever activity is shared with the affair partner.

7. Mourn & Use Social Support

Take some time to mourn and grieve.
It's important that you don't speed this process up to heal properly. This is valid for both the cheater and the cheated.

Unfaithful Partner: Mourn & Share

Few people will give you the benefit of the pain. They'll point fingers and add you deserve it. But keep those understanding people close: they're precious.

Your mourning is about the ending of the affair relationship.

Betrayed Partner: Mourn & Share

Share your grief with some good friends.
For women, it's important an important element of health and mental strength to have other female friends (Gottman, *The Man's Guide to Women*). It helps in healthy relationships and it helps even more now that you need support.

In this phase strive to view the affair partner as a human being as well. Demonizing the affair partner is unhealthy for you, for your relationship, and also for your partner: it's an easy way to let them off the hook.

Keep Family Out

It could be a bad idea to involve your family. It will be hard for them to forgive your partner in case you decide to stick together.
And keep the children out.

8. Rebuild Intimacy And “We Spirit”

The steps you have taken so far aim to rebuild intimacy in the relationship. The affair is highly damaging because it puts a human wedge between you two.
It creates a stronger, more intimate bond with the affair partner and keeps the spouse on the outside.

You need to cut with the affair partner and share everything with the spouse because that way you move the affair partner out and you rebuild the bond with your spouse.

Understanding the theory is important so that you can put all the practical steps in perspective.

Stop keeping your partner out!

9. Be all in

In Shirley Glass’ clinical sample, 80% of couples starting therapy with high commitment to save the relationship stayed together.

Less than half of couples who started with low commitment made it together at the end of the therapy.

Here are some arguments to motivate you and throw more resources and faith into the relationship:

Unfaithful Partner: Understand Affair is Unreal

Your affair wasn’t real.

When the affair is discovered it’s common to say “I love you but I’m not in love with you” to the spouse. And it’s common to think “you’re in love” with the affair partner.

But that’s likely to be superficial love. Part of it is fueled by secrecy and by the idealization of the romance.
You get to see the best of your affair partner without the downside, which creates an unrealistic image. As they say, the grass on the other side is always greener because you don’t have to mow it.

Also, keep in mind we often pick affair partners who are different than our spouses or different from ourselves. If that’s the case, experience shows that we will resent those same traits later on (Harville Hendrix, *Getting the Love You Want*).

At the end of the day, I can’t tell you what to do. But if you want to choose what’s most likely to be good for you, that might be to relish the experience you had and stick with your long-term relationship.

Betrayed Partner: Overcome Ambivalence

Here are a few exercises to help you decide and overcome ambivalence:

- Imagine a future without your partner: how does it feel like?
- Picture family events without your partner
- How would your children feel differently?
- What would you miss about the relationship?

> **The grass is always greener when you don't have to mow it**

10. Swap Bitterns for Kindness

We have seen in a previous article that negative vicious circles are a leading cause of breakups.

And affairs are very likely to lead to vicious circles.
The betrayed partner feels the need for revenge and the unfaithful partner avoids the spouse to avoid the negativity and the feeling of guilt.

Unfaithful Partner: Empathy & Boundaries

As we've seen the unfaithful partner can get impatient when trust takes time.

He would want to be welcomed with open arms, but that takes time.
And to accelerate the process, he must make an effort to resume caring.

If the unfaithful partner cannot manage to care, it can be a sign of lingering emotional attachment to the affair partner.

Set Boundaries for Disrespect

The unfaithful partner must set boundaries if he's dealing with continuous verbal abuse.
Crying requires your shoulder, and calling you a scumbag for days on end requires you to set boundaries
Here's one way you can put it:

> **Cheating Partner**: This affair has been disastrous on you, I know. I wish I could undo it… But I can't. But that doesn't give you any right to verbally abuse me.
> I want to help you and I want to get back on track, but that behavior only pushes me away.
> I want that you make sure this is the last time you use those words with me.

Setting boundaries of respect is something you do for both. Research shows that one put down will undo hours of kindness (Cliff Notarius, 1994).

Betrayed Partner: Out Meanness, In Kindness

It's not uncommon for the betrayed partner to hold back on any warm or caring gesture.

It's because they can feel as if any sign of kindness is a sign of forgiving.
What's also common is a sense of entitlement. In the worst cases, the cheated partner feels that their pain gives them a free pass to disrespect and demand without giving.

While that's completely understandable, it's super helpful if the betrayed partner moves out of this mindset as soon as possible.
Resuming caring also helps to overcome ambivalence on both sides.

> **There can't be no final healing until caring resumes**

Tips For Kindness

- Go First

Both partners look at the other partner for signs to stay and work at it harder. One must make the first move. Instead of waiting for the other, start yourself!

- Treat Kindness as In The Moment

Separate in your mind forgiveness from kindness. Treat all affection as "in the moment". If you feel you need a hug, go for it: it doesn't mean the cheating didn't hurt you or that you are forgiving it (not yet, at least).

- Fake It Till You Make It

Behavior can sometimes proceed and lead the way for feelings to follow. Start giving even if you don't exactly feel like it and see if that helps (chances are it will).

> **Choose happiness over righteousness!**

11. Explore the Affair History

Trauma experts Diana and Louis Everstine say that telling the story is an essential part of recovery (*Strategic Intervention for People in Crisis*).

And Judith Herman proposes to review the trauma by analyzing the life before the trauma and the circumstances leading to the traumatic event (*Trauma and Recovery*).

The best time to get into analysis mode is once you've established a safe enough environment. These are some of the questions you want to explore:

- Why did you get involved with someone else?
- Did you think about me?
- What was missing from our marriage
- Did I do anything wrong?
- What does your betrayal say about you

Both partners should work as a team to find out the answers.

How to Improve the Relationship

Introspection and understanding are helpful per se, but it's even more powerful when you can use them to address the weaknesses of your relationship.
Here are some examples of what you can address:

- Find new roles

The allure of an affair is to try on new roles for us. For example, a serious partner might enjoy being more free spirit with a younger partner.
The relationship couple then can try on new roles together instead of looking outside.

Example: I really liked the example of A Walk on The Moon, where the betrayed husband -an overly serious "square"- shows his willingness to work on the relationship by changing the tune and dancing to a rock song.

- **Sexual liberation**

Sometimes a partner can feel freer with an affair partner. But sex doesn't have to stay the same just because a couple has long been together. This can be an opportunity to look for more liberated sexual expressions.

- **Equalize give and take**

If there was an imbalance between who gives most in the relationship it's a great occasion to build a more equitable relationship.

- **Empathic listening**

A common refrain among betrayals is that the affair partner understands them better. And feeling accepted after years of no emotional connection can be supremely attractive.
But emotional intelligence and empathic listening are something the couple can learn and implement in their relationship.

You must be the opposite of this couple:

When you're in a relationship like the one Warren was in you're an easy prey of emotional affairs!

12. Finally, Forgive

If you execute together all the steps so far, they should naturally lead, eventually, to forgiveness. Forgiveness is not essential for personal recovery but it is essential for healing as a couple.
These are the overarching steps you have achieved: so far

1. Let go of anger
2. Create empathy and understanding
3. Create shared meaning

Now, if hasn't come naturally already, you can consider making a conscious effort to forgive.
Studies show that commitment to a relationship will help you forgive, and that forgiveness will further move you toward full healing (Ysseldyk, R., & Wohl, M. J. A. (2012)
Here's a post fully dedicated to forgiving:

- Forgiving infidelity: the steps you can take as a couple

13. Further Help

The steps outlined so far are "essential" and basic. But of course, there's always more you can do.
Here are more tips to stay together after an affair:

- Focus on the positive shared past (reminisce, tell stories, look at old pictures together)
- Imagine a positive future after all the turmoil
- Don't do solo therapy or you recreate distance (single therapy only to work out ambivalence)
- Men should ask about emotional involvement first and women about sexual involvement
- Reclaim territory: when ready you can experience the crime scenes together, holding hands
- Reclaim memories: do with your spouse what you did with the affair partner, but better and bigger (power move!)
- Build a shared vision of monogamy: the libertine partner should converge toward the stricter values
- If it's all too difficult a period of separation might help
- From what you've learned, cheat-proof your relationship

- Destroy the memories of the affair together as a symbolical rite of passage

Here is an example of destroying the signs of betrayal:

When Healing is Difficult

For completeness of information, here are instances when staying together happens less frequently:

- The affair is both sexual and deeply emotional
- Unfaithful men describe the affair as more emotional than sexual
- Both partners had affairs (around half relationship ended in this case)
- Unfaithful wives are childless and younger than 31 YO
- When cheating happens early (conversely long-term couples are more resilient, Gottman)

If you weren't happy, to begin with, this an excellent article on deciding whether to break up or not.
And don't be discouraged if you're in any of the above categories: that's only indicative.

Surviving Infidelity: FAQ

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions when it comes to affairs:

- **How long does it take to overcome cheating?**

It depends -you didn't see this coming, did you :)-.
If it's a deep emotional wound it's unrealistic to expect healing in less than a year. It could be years to fully heal, but here's the good news: most of the time things get progressively better.

- **Is it easy?**

No, it's not.
It's much, much better if the cheating partner cooperates. And it helps a lot if both partners know what they're doing (use this guide for that).

- **Will things ever be the same?**

No, your relationship will never be the same again after you discover an affair.
But asking for "the same" is the wrong approach: a relationship *always* evolves, even without any cheating.
And your goal should not be to come out of the affair with the same. That's weak sauce. Your goal should be to come out of it with a *better* relationship. As much as you don't believe it right now for many couples an affair was the catalyst for a (much) better relationship.

- **Can you stay together?**

There's no guarantee, but yes you can: many couples do that. And many couples manage to build stronger relationship, too.

Even Gottman reviewing the literature in *The Science of Trust* concludes that the prognosis of healing from betrayal is good when both partners are willing to make the journey.

SUMMARY

Affairs are traumatic events. But you will get through it and many couples manage to build stronger and happier relationships.
This article showed you how to survive relationship infidelity.

10 Questions For Your Unfaithful Spouse (For Closure)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Betrayal is a traumatic experience.

Common first reaction are storming out (forever), attacking your partner, or self-harming.

Resist all of them.

Much better is to get to the bottom of what happened, so that you can make the best possible decisions.

Contents

- Questions to Ask A Cheater
  - #1. How did you give yourself permission?
  - #2. Did you feel guilty after sex?
  - #3. What about previous opportunities? Have you had any, did you think of any?
  - #4. Why did it last if you knew it was wrong?
  - #5. Did you think about me at all?
  - #6. What did you say about us?
  - #7. Did you talk about a future together?
  - #8. What did you see in the affair partner?
  - #9. How were you different in the affair?
  - #10. Did you have unprotected sex?
  - ⍰♂Lucio's Question: When are you moving out?
- What If Your Spouse Lies?
- The #1 Question To Ask Yourself
  - Why Am I In This Situation?

Questions to Ask A Cheater

The following 10 questions are not random.

They are based on the work of relationship and infidelity researcher Shirley Glass, author of "*Not Just Friends*".

These questions will help you get to the bottom of the infidelity and help you decide whether or not you should stay in the relationship.

#1. How did you give yourself permission?

Ask them what did they tell themselves.

With this question, you want to gain deeper insights into his morals and values.
If they didn't think much, or if they never thought it was wrong, they value monogamy and fidelity very little.

It's also possible that they value you very little, or that they simply value people in general very little (also check: are you dating a sociopath?).

#2. Did you feel guilty after sex?

Similar to the above, but focused on sex.

If they deny or they seem insincere, you might have very different approaches towards sex and extramarital affairs.

Or you might have very different moral standards.

It doesn't necessarily mean they are bad.
Some people simply grew up in families where cheating is normal, and that influenced their approach to monogamy.
Still, it's something to keep in mind if full monogamy is very important for you.

#3. What about previous opportunities? Have you had any, did you think of any?

Ask them if they had previous opportunities for infidelity and, if so, how was this different.

You want to understand if your partner is constantly scanning for opportunities or if it was a one-off. It might be the case your partner has had more than one affair, or that he might do it again if it's simply a matter of opportunity.

Or it might be that this affair just grew out of weaknesses from your marriage.

Your Opportunity of Developing a Better Relationship

Pay attention here: if your partner says that there is a better connection with the new partner, it might be the case that the new partner listens and supports them better.

I know it's hard to admit it right now.
But this is an opportunity for you: if you learn to support and listen, then this is a chance to make your relationship better.

See an example of this type of emotional infidelity from Jack Nicholson:

Typical example of falling hard for the first woman who happens to truly listen to a man.

#4. Why did it last if you knew it was wrong?

Most partners will not answer they didn't think much of and will admit to at least a little bit of guilt.

This question explores whether or not the guilt recedes.
It's important to know because people react in different ways to an ongoing sense of guilt.

1. Suffer continuously and eventually end the affair
2. Get used to it and the guilt recedes (or the involvement increases)
3. Build mental models that allow them to suppress guilt

You want to know about this because among those mental models is painting the relationship and the betrayed partner as undeserving.
This is something you need to fix if you want to heal your relationship after a betrayal.

#5. Did you think about me at all?

This is likely to be painful.

The betrayed partners often see themselves as central elements in the affair. But often the unfaithful partner didn't think much of the betrayed partner.

If the unfaithful partner got emotionally involved, it will be even more painful to know that they think of their affair partner when at home but think little of their spouse when with the affair partner.

Part of the reason is because of the secrecy.

Secrecy and thought suppression increase the attraction of the affair partner (The Link Between Thought Suppression and Level of Arousal, Debbie Layton-Tholl).

This is one of the reasons why honest communication is crucial to moving on and healing.

#6. What did you say about us?

An affair is devastating because it drives a wedge between the couple.

With this question, you want to understand how close the two were and how far off you had drifted.

This question also helps demolish the wall between you two and start getting close again.
That's the key to healing. **If you want to heal you need to rebuild the togetherness and make the affair partner the one "on the outside"**.
Opening up with the spouse and cutting the affair partner out is the best way to do so.

#7. Did you talk about a future together?

This one will tell you a lot about how deep their passion and romance ran.

If their affair was deeply emotional, it's possible the two of them were planning to escape, elope and build a new life.

It will be extremely painful to hear, but don't overplay the significance of their plans: often it's just the kid's insight of the adult who dreams of a different life.
It doesn't mean they wanted to escape from you, it's just a psychological infant within them who longs to go back in time. Back to teenager-dating and restarting life.

It's still maddening, I know, but few people are 100% adults, 100% mature.

Since it can be painful to hear the answer to this one, you can consider leaving it for later on, when the traumatic shock has started to taper off.

#8. What did you see in the affair partner?

This goes at the core of the personality traits.

Often affair partners are very different from the spouse or from the unfaithful partner.

For the cheater, the difference is exhilarating in the short run, but in the long run, it would get annoying (divorce rate of unfaithful partner with an affair partner is the highest).
But few have the foresight to understand that.

#9. How were you different in the affair?

The answer to this question is important to understand the weaknesses of your marriage.

It's possible the unfaithful partner was attracted to new roles or newly found feelings.
For example, a strict and rational man at home, might enjoy being a free spirit with the affair partner.

When you know what it was, you can expand your personal roles and try on new personas *within* the relationship.

#10. Did you have unprotected sex?

And get ready to get tested if yes.

⍰♂Lucio's Question: When are you moving out?

Lucio:
While these questions are all valid, it's important to **maintain self-respect** and never to grovel or plead.

We'd all like to think we're unique or different, but the truth is that cheating is part of humans' evolved repertoire.

Honorable partners may make it a question of personal values to avoid cheating.
But many are not honorable.
And **spouses cheat because they're cheaters**. When opportunity meets a cheater, infidelity happens.

So once you've explored enough to be ready for closure, switch to the next phase: ending the relationship.
Do it swiftly and resolutely.

What If Your Spouse Lies?

It's certainly possible.

But the way they behave will tell you a lot about the truth.

Lingering silences, pauses, and half-sentences will let you know that there is much more that they don't have the courage to say.

Big shows of denying and minimizing might suggest your spouse is the kind of person who does not respect truth and honesty.

And on the other hand, honest and "hard to swallow" revelations can be seen in a positive light: your spouse might have cheated. But at least is honest and forthcoming.

Cheating is cheating.
But an honest confession after cheating may at display positive signs of a good character.

The #1 Question To Ask *Yourself*

And the question is…

Why Am I In This Situation?

Tough question, I know.

If you just found out, go easy on yourself.
Especially if you tend to over-blame yourself.

On the other hand, it's a fair question to ponder, and an opportunity to do better in the future.

Here are some good questions:

- **Did I pick the right person?** Was I a poor judge of character?
- Was I **too needy?** Or am I being needy now, hoping they will pick me/
- **Did I miss the signs?** Check the signs of cheating for future reference
- **Was I a good partner?**
- **Am I too naive**, believing that cheating is rare, or would never happen to me

If you're a man, I highly recommend this video for a major mindset switch:

> **Lucio**: high quality men don't demand or expect loyalty. But they naturally get it

Because I can tell you this: men who learn human nature aren't caught off guard.
Men who learn how to read people pick faithful partners.
And, finally, **high-value men don't get cheated** because women are overjoyed to be with them.

These are all skills that can be learned. We teach them here, and in **Power University**.

Second, it's also good to explore the overall health of your relationship, as that will tell you a lot about whether it's worth the work or not.

Check out this article:

- **Surviving infidelity**, if you want to stay together
- **Should I break up or not?** Diagnostic questions to help you overcome ambivalence

Stages Of Emotional Affairs: A Survival Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This article provides you with an overview of emotional affairs.

You will learn:

1. The stages of emotional affairs
2. How emotional affairs start
3. What's peculiar about emotional affairs (VS "only-sex affairs")
4. Cures and fixes

This article seeks research-backed answers and leverages the work and expertise of infidelity researcher Dr. Shirley Glass.

Contents

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- How Emotional Affairs Start
- Stages of Emotional Affairs
  - Stage 1: Platonic Friends / Secure Relationship
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- Examples of Emotional Affair
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- Gender Differences in Affairs
  - Women Have More Emotional Affairs
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- SUMMARY

What's an Emotional Affair

Let's start with the definition of an emotional affair:

> An emotional affair is a relationship characterized by intimacy and emotional involvement between a person and someone other than their official partner.

As a rule of thumb:

The higher the difference in intimacy between the new partner and the official partner, the more dangerous the affair is to the official relationship.

How Emotional Affairs Start

Before we jump to stages and cures, we must first understand how emotional affairs start.

Not all, but probably a majority of **unfaithful partners set out on the emotional slippery slope without any awareness** of how friendships morph into emotional and sexual affairs.
There might be some chemistry or some liking, but it's rarely love at first sight or "fatal attraction".

Where do They Start?

They start in places where interactions happen often.

As Schaefer points out in *The Like Switch* familiarity is a major element of the like equation, and emotional affairs are likely to start in places that breed familiarity and continuity of interaction.

If you are guessing "at work", you are right.
Writes Glass:

> Of course the workplace, with its daily interactions and increased female participation, has been the main driver of the increase in infidelity in the last decades.
> Indeed, 82% of all the unfaithful partner Glass treated in her career began as friends (Shirley Glass, 2004).

Stages of Emotional Affairs

Here are the steps that emotional affairs usually entail:

Stage 1: Platonic Friends / Secure Relationship

Most affairs start as friendships.

People who get involved in emotional affairs might be somewhat attracted to their affair partner in the beginning, but they don't usually set out to make their friendships into affairs.

Stage 2: Intimate Friendship / Insecure Marriage

The boundaries shift slowly and it's hard if at all possible, to pinpoint a specific moment when the friendship starts becoming too intimate.

But here are a few signs that you are entering stage 2 and that relationship is morphing into an emotional affair:

- Are you sharing things you don't tell your partner?
- Is your friend sharing details they don't share with other friends?
- Are you looking forward to talking to your friend?
- Do you often think of your friend?
- Do you look forward to sharing events in your life?
- Are you hiding this friendship from your partner?
- Are you trying to avoid other friends/colleagues seeing you when meeting?

It's at this point that the "friendship" starts becoming a wedge between the couple.
When you share things you don't talk about with your wife, you start creating a bond that is stronger than the bond you have with your spouse.

This is one of the reasons why a strong friendship and intimate connection in the relationship is one of the best antidotes to an affair.
As a woman in a strong relationship said:

> How could I have an affair, my husband is the first person I share all significant events with. I'd immediately have to run and tell him!

Now that's an emotional affair-proof bond.

Stage 3: Emotional Affairs / Emotionally Detached Marriage

At this point, the new romance starts taking more and more real estate in our minds.

The affair is secret, emotionally intimate and now also abounding in sexual chemistry.
We feel great with our affair partner and we love the feeling that our partner feels the same with us.

Here are signs that you are in stage 3:

- You are sexually excited in the presence of your friend
- You feel better with your friend than with your spouse
- Meetings start happening in secrecy
- The emotional distance in your relationship increase
- You are annoyed and uncaring in your relationship

This stage is especially dangerous for unhealthy relationships engulfed by criticism, constant fighting, and meanness.
Bad relationships indeed create a bad image of ourselves. When we contrast that with the way the affair partner makes us feel, it's like experiencing a rebirth.

This is important because you can't fully heal from emotional affairs unless you fix your relationship first.

Stage 4: Sexually Intimate Affair / Threatened Marriage

The affair might have been consumed or not by step 3. If it's not, then you reach the final step once it becomes sexual.

Notice that you're already having an affair even without sex and some sources put emotional affairs on the same level as emotional + sexual (but I disagree with that).

Interestingly enough, **the later sex happens, the more likely it is the affairs will be deeply emotional**.
It might be counterintuitive, but an emotional affair that is consumed later on will bond the affair partners much more strongly.

Examples of Emotional Affair

Here are a few examples of how emotional affairs come to happen:

#1. Emotional Affairs For Emotionally Starved Partners

Some relationships are at high risk of emotional unfaithfulness for a simple reason:

They had little emotional bonds in them! When a relationship has little emotional intimacy between the partners, then it's only normal that one partner will fall hard for a new partner that provides that emotional aspect that they are missing.

How do you know if your relationship is emotionally weak?
An emotionally weak relationship lacks the following:

- Knowledge of the partner (love maps in Gottman's speak)
- Understanding and acceptance
- Shared meaning (ie.: a "couple's culture")
- A positive emotional bank account (ie: fondness, appreciation, and liking for our partner)

Emotionally starved partners are highly susceptible to falling for the first person who will listen and understands.

See here a perfect example:

#2. Isolated and Lacking Human Connection

Emotional affairs can sometimes start when we need the most human connection.

It's not by chance that partners who are emotionally starved at home are more likely to fall for it.

Election (1999) is such an example

Cognitive Dissonance of Affairs

Not all, but most people have a sense of guilt when they engage in affairs.

They know it's wrong at some level, but the emotional bond with the new partner keeps them stuck.

To avoid cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) they lie to themselves or change their own stories.

Here are a few ways they deal with it:

- **Hiding the truth**

Unfaithful partners often suppress or gloss over any detail that is inconsistent with their values and wedding vows. When asked "how could you do that" they have a little answer because, well… They meticulously avoided anything that would help them answer that question.

- **They tell themselves "everybody's doing it"**

Some people resolve the internal conflict by telling themselves "it's not so bad, everyone's doing it".
And they focus on everybody else who is cheating while disregarding the faithful ones.

- **Unconsciously want to get caught**

As strange as it might sound at first, some get caught on purpose to release internal pressure.

- **Blaming the partner**

This is the most pernicious and dangerous one for the relationship.

The unfaithful partner focuses on the faults of the relationship and the shortcoming of his partner.
He tells himself his partner "deserves it", or he convinces himself that his relationship is dead. It often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as he withdraws more and more from his relationship.

The Stages of Revelations

The revelation of the adulterous relationship usually isn't a smooth process.

It starts with suspicion, and the first confrontations arrive when there's a little bit of evidence.
At first, it's adversarial. Then it moves towards information seeking by the cheated partner. And finally, it reaches the stage of looking for deeper meaning and possibly then fixing the relationship.

Let's explore the stages of revelations:

Stage 1: Truth Seeking

The beginning of the confrontation is often a difficult phase that may include anger and a barrage of question.

A softer start from the betrayed partner and honest communication from the unfaithful partner can go a long way in healing the relationship as a couple.

Bad example of truth-seeking:

Aggression and verbal abuse make it difficult for the unfaithful partner to be honest. It also starts a hostile dynamic that makes it difficult to move into a collaborative and healing phase.

Stage 1: Reactions

These are the most typical reaction to confrontations:

- **Denying**

Most people deny it at first.
When there's lots of evidence, denial adds insult to injury. And when the truth finally surfaces the betrayed partner has two wounds: the sad reality and the false reassurances.

- **Partial admissions**

Whatever they admit to, is often just a tiny fraction of the reality.

- **Lying**

Denying any emotional attachment or sexual involvement is another common reaction. Lying can be a sign that the affair partner is not yet ready to end the affair.

- **Gaslighting**

Gaslighting happens when the cheating partner tries to frame the betrayed partner as crazy. If your partner does it to you, you are probably better off breaking up.

Here is an example from the movie "Goodfellas":

Sometimes the cheating partner can give in to endless inquisition, or he might come clean to end the relationship.

Stage 2: Information Seeking

This stage is a bit calmer and neutral.

More lies are usually unearthed and the full truth starts taking shape.

To make the process smoother, show your partner that you will not use any information against him. And don't highlight his previous lies.
If it makes you feel better, some of those lies might have also been aimed at shielding you and rescuing the relationship.

See:

- Questions to ask the unfaithful spouse

Stage 3: Mutual Understanding

In this stage, you explore the deeper meaning of what the affair meant and what are the weaknesses of your relationship.

It's an important part of healing and it will strengthen the relationship by creating shared meaning.
Ideally, this phase also sets the stage for the improvement and strengthening of the relationship.

Stage 4: Fixing The Relationship

Not all couples make it to this stage.

But all couples should probably at least try.
It's indeed possible that while working at it, the couple re-discovers deep feelings about each other and enjoy a new honeymoon time.

If you are interested in at least exploring the possibility of recovering together, I highly recommend this post:

- Healing together from an affair

Stages for Cheated Partner

Affair revelation and discoveries are traumatic events.

Partners who didn't expect it can experience feelings of unreality, as if they were disconnecting from the world.

#1. Numbness

Some people can go numb and stay that way for a while without feeling much.
When they start feeling again the feeling won't be positive, but it's a step forward nonetheless.

#2. Relief

Surprised to read this one?

Well, this is for specific cases.

If the partner long suspected an affair, the first moments of revelation can be a big relief.
Finally, they can confirm they didn't imagine everything, they're not crazy and that, in a twisted way, they won for being right.
But soon after the relief comes a whirlwind of less positive emotions, including rage, disbelief and a general feeling that someone pulled the rag under them.

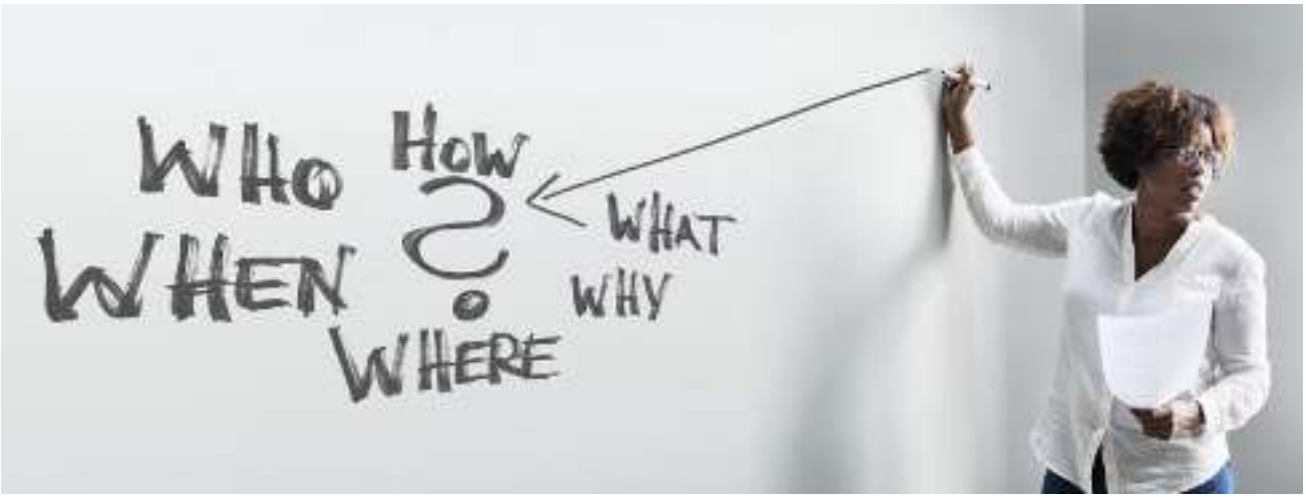
#3. Obsession

Betrayed partners obsessively relive the scene of revelation over and over in their minds.

They add up evidence and suspicion, cross-check dates, and try to make sense of what happened.
And they picture with horror their spouse with someone else.

#4. Endless Questioning

Betrayed partners have an unquenchable need to know.
Some cannot constrain their deluge of questions, and the interrogation often leaves both exhausted.



Stages For Unfaithful Partner

Because society disapproves of affairs and cheating, the unfaithful partner can often be very lonely in his struggle.

Here are the steps they go through:

#1. Shifting Emotions

Sometimes the initial emotions solidify and strengthen in the weeks and months that go by. But some other times they shift.

Defensiveness can turn into openness -which is good- or into aggression. And ambivalence can turn into decision paralysis or full clarity.

Here is a good post to diagnose both relationships:

- Should I break up?

#2. Realizes How Much He Cares

Sometimes coming out of the closet is like a big truth moment for the unfaithful partner.
He might have been planning to break up and elope with the affair partner, but all of a sudden he realizes how much he cares about the relationship.

#3. Impatience: When Are We Going to Be Good Again?

If they want to work on the marriage, the unfaithful partner might expect to be welcomed back with open arms and is annoyed to find now an untrustful and hurt partner.

#4. Grief: Should I Abandon One?

The involved partner mourns the loss of the affair partner.
This can be very painful to witness for the betrayed partner, but it's a good sign that the affair is over.

#5. Shame & Fear

The cheating partner is sometimes ashamed of his behavior and fearful that it might cost him both relationships (and a costly divorce).

Gender Differences in Affairs

There are important gender differences in both affairs and emotional affairs.

On average:

Women cheat less when they are in a happy relationship.
Men instead tend to end up in affairs independently of how they rate their relationship.

Many women in very happy relationships have blinders that screen out any potential affair partner. Even when a man makes a pass at her, she may discount it thinking it was just being friendly.

And that's a great example of how interest creates opportunity: if you're in a relationship with a player, he'll be looking for opportunities everywhere.

When they emotionally detach

Women tend to detach from the relationship before the affair begins. Men tend to detach after the affair has begun.

Sexual Designation

The two sexes differ as to what they usually consider a sexual affair.
For women, any kind of sexual intimacy, including kissing, counts as an entrance into sexual infidelity. For men, the threshold is sexual intercourse.

Women Have More Emotional Affairs

Historically men have had sexual affairs with less emotions and women have had emotional affairs.

But men are now having increasingly emotional affairs as well. In Shirley Glass recorded clinical sample, 83% of women who had extramarital sexual affairs, also had strong or very strong emotional attachment VS 58% of men.

Some people begin an affair because of sexual attraction and jump right into sex.

At that point, emotions might or not might not develop.
If they do, they are usually less strong than if the affair had been consumed later on. So, theoretically, quick sex is better than delayed sex.

Needless to say, emotional plus sexual infidelity is the most damaging to the relationship.

Signs of Emotional Affairs

Here are some cues that can be telltale signs:

- They look for more privacy
- More time away from home
- Refusal or inability to share details about mysterious commitments
- Less family involvement
- Interests in new activities
- Going to the gym, taking care of themselves, or buying new clothes/underwear
- More undercover expenditures
- Opposites pattern of behavior: sometimes too clingy, sometimes far away
- Avoids social gatherings with a spouse or excludes her
- Sex can happen more or less frequently and more passionately
- Emotional withdrawal and less affection

Emotional withdrawal will be stronger for people who have strong monogamous tendencies.
These partners can't manage two relationships at the same time and the affair takes over (*Reconstructing marriages after the trauma of infidelity*). When people have strong monogamous tendencies, you will also notice:

- Sex rejection
- Less caring
- Sometimes high irritability
- Forgetfulness
- No more saying "I Love you"

The signs are indicative and there is no surefire way to tell that someone is having an affair. Some people are very, very good at lying and compartmentalizing lives.
The woman in the movie "Up In The Air" is such an example:

For more about the signs of infidelity, check out "signs your partner is being unfaithful".

SUMMARY

Emotional affairs often start as friendships with people we interact often with.
They start out as friendships where both partners admire and like each other.
Little by little, they spend more time together, talk more and share more and more about themselves.
The emotional bond deepens, and they become emotional affairs.

Further Reading on Infidelity:

- Why people cheat
- How to pick a loyal partner

Signs Your Partner is Cheating: The Full List (Science-Based)

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Can you always spot the signs that your partner is cheating? Well, not always.

But if you are observant and keep your antennas up, chances are you can catch a cheating partner more times than not.

After this post, which leverages scientific literature and data, you will know what signs to look for.

Contents

- Signs of Cheating
  - #1. Changes in Behavior
  - #2. Has Less Time For You
  - #3. Renewed Passion for Life
  - #4. Changes In Behavior Towards Money
  - #5. Explanations Are Too Fuzzy or Too Elaborated
  - #6. More Demand for Privacy
  - #7. Avoids You
  - #8. Leaves Hints to Get Caught
  - #9. Little Things That Feel “Off”
- Strongest Signs of Cheating
- Compartimentalizer Leave Little Signs
- Tips to Uncover Betrayals
- SUMMARY

Signs of Cheating

There are many possible signs of cheating, but you should look for clusters and patterns rather than relying on a single piece of evidence -unless you catch them with their pants down, then you don't need anything more :)-.

Here are some key clusters:

#1. Changes in Behavior

The central tenet here is that an affair will change your partner's behavior.

This is not always true, of course, but it's a fairly reliable sign of a change in your partner's life.

Here is what is more likely to change in a cheating partner"

- More critical and unforgiving toward you
- Doesn't talk as much
- Unusually apologetic
- Excludes partners from social events
- Goes out by himself
- Refusal to be accountable for their whereabouts

#2. Has Less Time For You

The cheating partner needs to meet the affair partner.

And that time needs to come from somewhere.
That means, less time for you or for activities he used to perform.

These are some common signs related to time:

- More work trips
- Longer hours at work
- Less family involvement
- Misses social gatherings with a spouse or excludes her
- More weekend commitments

#3. Renewed Passion for Life

Sometimes life and relationships can grow stale.
An affair can bring a whirlwind of renewed passion and lust for life.

A cheating spouse might:

- Start going to the gym
- Buy new clothes/underwear / sexy or stylish garments
- Interest in new activities
- Abandon activities shared with the partner
- New diet and efforts to lose weight
- Happier, more confident (at least when not dealing with the spouse)

Here's an example of the dynamic I'm talking about from the movie "Election".

The man in the video has a boring relationship with his wife and the affair gives him wings:

Note: to fix these affairs, you need to fix your relationship.

#4. Changes In Behavior Towards Money

Unfaithful partners might need more expenditures for their side partners.

This means:

- More privacy around money
- Balance not adding up
- A different pattern of withdrawals
- More money spent on lifestyle and beauty

#5. Explanations Are Too Fuzzy or Too Elaborated

What happens if you confront them?

Well, the cheater will most likely not admit to cheating.
Not right away, at least.

Instead, he/she will come up with some explanations.
And to explain away their changes cheaters might be either overly detailed, or they might use blanket rules.

The blanket rules sound like these:

- New project
- I'm stressed out for work
- So many more demands with the new responsibility

You can expect lots of details instead from more shrewd individuals.

Changes in Details

It's an important sign if they were previously sharing stories about work, or a specific person, and now it doesn't happen anymore.

#6. More Demand for Privacy

Cheaters need more personal space to carry on communication with the affair partner.

An increased search for privacy or for personal space is a good indicator of betrayal.

Here are some examples:

- Locks the door
- Goes outside to speak on the phone
- Clears the browsing history
- Puts a password on his phone (and hides it from you)
- Stashes his phone away if you're looking
- Gets nervous if you get close while he's at the computer

#7. Avoids You

What Glass calls the “monogamous type” cannot stand the lie and cheating.

This type of personality cannot compartmentalize two different lives, so he will give off the most signals (*Glass & Write 1997*).

Often, he will avoid you altogether to avoid the lie.

#8. Leaves Hints to Get Caught

The monogamous type wants to end the dual life which is causing cognitive dissonance.

That’s why when confronted, they usually cannot muster the strength to deny or build a castle of lies.
They are more likely to passively confirm. Or to actively volunteer information.

Example:
Marshall in *How I Met Your Mother* is a typical example of a monogamous type:

Indeed if you fail to confront them they might either get caught on purpose, start leaving more and more obvious signs or they might end one of the two relationships.
And when you confront them, they are more likely to admit it (example from *A Walk On the Moon*).

#9. Little Things That Feel “Off”

So far we have signs that clearly go in one direction: either increase or decrease.

However, depending on personalities and relationships, some other indicators will just *change,* and we can’t make a blanket rule on whether they increase or decrease, improve or worsen.

Change is the only good indicator for:

- Sex frequency
- Passion
- Sex experimentation
- Warmth and kindness
- Irritability, criticism, and contempt
- Frequency of arguments
- Frequency of “I love you”

Stay away from sources that say an increase or decrease of any of the above is a strong sign of cheating.
That's just not true.
Different people will react differently when it comes to sex, kindness, and, yes, even the frequency of "I love you".

Kinder

For example, a partner feeling guilty might become nicer to you to overcompensate.

The same for a partner who wants to preserve both relationships: he might be nicer out of fear and subconscious prevention.
A partner who doesn't want to be in the relationship anymore and who is emotionally involved in the affair can instead become irritable and pick more fights than he used to.

Changes In Sex Frequency

A partner with an awakened sex libido will want to have sex more often, while monogamous partners might completely avoid sex with you.

Women also have a higher tendency to withdraw from sex with their husbands when they engage in affairs.
On average, though the changes when it comes to sex are not exaggerated. The rule of thumb is that there is no significant impact on marital sex as long as the affair stays secret.

Strongest Signs of Cheating

Some signs carry a very big weight in assessing whether your partner is having an affair or not.

These are the most obvious signs of cheating:

- Proposes you should see other people
- Doesn't want monogamy anymore
- Actively avoids talking about certain people or groups
- Doesn't answer when you ask if they are cheating
- Accidentally calls you by someone else's name
- Turns down dates more often
- Friends report you they've seen them with someone else
- Forgets anniversaries
- A sexually transmitted disease you didn't have (doh!)

We will now focus on the different psychological personalities of a cheater.

Understanding where your partner fits will give you strong cues on what to look for.

Compartimentalizer Leave Little Signs

Some cheaters are good at lying and compartmentalizing lives.

They are so good because it's not even "lying" for them, it's just having two separate realities.
They have no intention to abandon the relationship and, as a matter of fact, often take extra steps to keep their relationship safe.

Emotionally and sexually they show little changes and they often lead lives that allow them to easily cover their tracks (ie.: business trips, offshore commitments, nomadic lifestyle, etc.).
That's why it's very difficult to sniff out the cheating signs of a compartmentalized.

Sometimes the affair partner doesn't even know they were in a relationship.

Example:
The movie Up In The Air is a great example of a compartmentalizer:

Tips to Uncover Betrayals

And of course, you don't have to limit yourself to passively analyzing information but you can actively look for the signs of cheating.

Here are some examples:

- Check mileage on the odometer
- Count condoms (or viagra pills)
- Check credit card reports
- Hire a detective
- Check their phone while they sleep
- Voice-activated voice recorder (this is the highest rated on Amazon)

You can place it in their car or under the bed when you're away.
But if you don't find any signs, you might also want to consider that you're over-worrying.

SUMMARY

As we have seen you can't always and reliably tell if someone's cheating.

It depends a lot on their personality and psychological makeup.
Stay away from articles like "what every woman does when she's cheating" because they are simply untrue.

This article gave you a good overview of some of the most common signs of cheating and of how different personalities behave during affairs.

Why People Cheat: Psychology, Opportunity, & Avoidants

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

If you're wondering "why do people cheat" you're asking the wrong question, and you may be coming from an overly idealistic point of view.

The **real question is why are people faithful**.

This article shows you the key psychological drivers for extra-pair sexual interest and the psychology of cheating.

But first, an overview:

Contents

- Psychology of Cheating
  - The Science of Infidelity
- External Factors
  - #1. Lifestyles of Cheating Opportunities
  - #2. Libertine Social Environments
- Traits of Cheating Partners
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- Personal Troubles
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- Relationship Issues
  - #1. Cheating to Escape
  - #2. Power Struggles: Cheating to Get Even
  - #3. Loneliness: Cheating for Emotional Starvation
  - #4. Child-centered Relationships
  - #5. So Bad There's No Escape

Psychology of Cheating

People cheat because they had the opportunity to, and because evolution programmed them to take advantage of that opportunity.

This is true for any personality type.
From avoidants to dark triads who are most likely to cheat to 'good guys and nice girls' who may have lower intentions to cheat.

The Science of Infidelity

From a general point of view, cheating increases payoff in any cooperative relationship.
As *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology*:

> the greater net individual benefit of defecting in a trust game (i.e. , when one partner cheats but the other does not) suggests that human's evolved mating psychology is configured to motivate calculated deception (i.e. , infidelity)

And more specifically for relationship infidelity, **cheating is adaptive and inborn.**
Both men and women are 'programmed' with the possibility of cheating, as Harrison writes in the *Cambridge Handbook of Female Sexual Adaptations*:

> Since our brains process information in a manner to facilitate adaptive behavior (Cosmides & Tooby, 1987), it seems that selection favored at least some degree of extra-pair sex (Andrews et al., 2008)

Both men and women cheat because cheating can provide reproductive advantages.

For men, cheating can spread our genes wider and can help them produce better offspring or both.

And for women, it can provide superior genetic offspring from a higher mate value man, or at least increase genetic diversity for her offspring.

Cheating is indeed relatively common, and a human universal.
And you don't usually reach a wide "adoption rate" despite the heavy risks, unless it provides a genetic advantage.

Now for the really complex, this article explains what factors increases and psychological traits increase the odds of cheating.

External Factors

A few factors are independent of personality, values, and morality.

These factors don't "force" anyone to betray, but they increase the likelihood of cheating for everyone.
Here are some of them:

#1. Lifestyles of Cheating Opportunities

Professions and lifestyles that require lots of time away from our partners, for example:

- Regular travels
- Conferences attendance
- Military personnel on far away basis
- Nomadic lifestyles
- Long distance relationships

For most people, the workplace with its daily interactions and increased female participation, has been the main driver of the increase in infidelity in the last decades (Shirley Glass, 2004).
Road warriors and conferences, with alcohol mingling and hotel rooms readily available also lower the bar for cheating.

Example:
The movie Up In The Air is such an example:

#2. Libertine Social Environments

We are social creatures and we have a strong tendency to accept the values that our society and social groups embrace.

And also a rather strong tendency to act along the social-sanctioned rules.

A study in the Netherlands confirmed indeed that the sanctions -or lack thereof- from the group predicted the willingness to engage in extramarital affairs.

That means that if we have many friends who cheat, we are much more likely to cheat. If our friends don't cheat, or if grew up in an environment where cheating is highly sanctioned, cheating is much rarer.

Traits of Cheating Partners

As much as there are traits that increase the odds of finding a loyal man or woman, there are also traits that have been shown to correlate with infidelity.

- **Extroversion**
- **Sensation seeking** (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011)
- **Poor impulse control** (Brady et al. 2020)
- **High sexual permissiveness** & Unrestricted sociosexuality (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Rodrigues et al. , 2017)
- **Avoidant attachment style** (DeWall et al., 2011)

Family Influences

How we grew up has a huge influence on how we are. Including how we are when it comes to fidelity.

#1. Like Father, Like Son

Studies show that affairs and cheating are more likely to occur among individuals who have a history of affairs in their own family (*Emily Brown, Patterns of Infidelity*).

And the correlation is quite huge: Bonnie Eaker Weil recorded the data in her clinical experience and found out that 90% of unfaithful patients had at least one unfaithful parent (*Bonnie E. Weil, Adultery: The Forgivable Sin*).

#2. Parents' Bad Influences

Some influences are unconscious, deeper, or darker:

- Uncaring parents

Some parents are very hands-off and give their children all the freedom they want. Some children can take it as a sign of neglect.
If their partners also grant them all the freedom, they might act out more and more to get reprimanded -a sign of caring-.
Eventually, they might end up cheating as their ultimate effort to get a sign of love.

- I won't be cheated on: strike first

Sometimes a woman who sees a womanizing father make her mother suffer might vow, consciously or subconsciously, to never be like her mother.
This means she'll be like her cheating father…

- I won't be dependent like dad

If we see a parent who is stuck in a terrible marriage they have little control over, we might subconsciously avoid any strong ties.
Cheating then becomes a way to assert our distance and independence.

- Childhood abuse

Men or women who were sexually abused during childhood may engage in compulsive sexual behavior. It goes for both men and women (*Carol Rinkleib Ellison, 2000*).
The movie Mysterious Skin is a good example but it's too heavy and I won't post it here.

- Emotional incests

Some father snubs their wives and showers their daughters with gifts and attention (Patricia Love, *The Emotional Incest Syndrome*).
Some other times the daughter sees the father giving all the attention to a lover and not to her mother.
These girls develop the unconscious desire of being the other woman and go after married men.

- The caretaker

Some children grow up in an environment that forces them to take care of several members of their family. They give, give, give, and take little or nothing.
Most of the time, it's women.
These women tend to get stuck with cheating men who give them very little in return.

Relationship Phases

Some transitions can create discomfort and require some adjustments.

The more the couple has difficulties readjusting, the more cheating is likely to happen.

These are the major phases:

#1. Resisting Commitment (young relationship)

The couple hasn't fully tested yet their compatibility.

If they were wrong and living together proves difficult, partners can start being more open to extramarital affairs. And of course, some partners can find solace in cheating when they are afraid of commitment. Cheating then becomes a sort of escapism.

#2. Run Before It's Too Late (pregnancy)

The man can feel he's about to get trapped for good when the woman is pregnant. Cheating at this point is a way to break free and re-assert his freedom.

#3. Baby-Envy (parenthood)

The baby usually gets the lion's share of the woman's attention when he comes into this world. And hormonal changes happen.
Here are some common issues:

- Some men are less attracted to their women (see Madonna/Whore complex)
- Many women have less sex drive after a baby
- Some men are jealous of the mother/baby bond and feel left out

#4. Respite Cheating (turbulent teens)

When children become teenagers the household can experience some turbulent times, and marital satisfaction is often at its lowest during this period.
Cheating and having an affair can provide some respite. Also, some mothers can be reminded of their sexual yearnings by their own children.

#5. Should I Also Go (launching)

When children leave home, another critical phase rushes in.
Couples who experienced friction with their children can experience a re-blooming of their relationship.
But child-centered relationships are where children the glue can come apart. Or stay together while looking for outside sources of pleasure.

#6. I Can Still Do It (retirement)

Retirement is another major adjustment period. Some can feel a pang of meaningless, wondering if there's nothing more to live for. And an affair can give life the sparkle.
For some others, especially men, it serves to prove they are still young enough to find a mate.

Personal Troubles

As much as the relationship goes through phases, so do the people in those relationships. Cheating is more likely to happen during these phases.

#1. I've Changed... And You?

Sometimes we evolve, but our partner stays the same.
That's when cheating with a partner who is more like we are becoming is more likely to happen.

Some other times it's not about how we are becoming but how we would like to be.

Example:
We don't know if Mrs. Doubtfire cheated, but it's a typical example where an affair is likely to happen because of how apart the couple grew:

#2. Midlife Crisis

Midlife crisis can bring a host of issues, including:

- Existential crisis: is this all there is?
- Parents' death: are we next? Am I doing the best I can do?
- Am I still young enough? A younger mate can prove that
- Comfort level: not much more to strive for

Example:
The lovely movie *Lost in Translation* is an example of an affair during middle life crisis:

#3. Attachment Styles

Here's a quick lowdown:

Secure attachment types tend to have one relationship at a time, create a strong and solid emotional bond, and tend to cheat less. The monogamous types we talked about in signs your partner is cheating are usually secure attachment types.

Anxious attachment types crave emotional closeness but are always afraid their partner might not feel the same. They often end up in a relationship with the avoidant types (Amir Levine, *Attached*), which makes them feel starved for affection. They might cheat to get the emotional intimacy they crave, and they get attached very quickly to the affair partner.

Avoidant attachment types are fearful of emotional intimacy. For these types, an affair provides a way to get more autonomy, and research proves avoidant cheat the most: twice as much as all the other attachment types. And they are more likely to cheat multiple times and have more one-night stands (*Allen, Baucon, 2004*).

Example:
Mastroianni in La Dolce Vita is a great example of a cheater-avoidant attachment type

Relationship Issues

Cheating can be the consequence of troubles in the relationship. And when you can fix those relationship issues, you can also lower the chances (and the need) for cheating.

#1. Cheating to Escape

Sometimes life in the relationship can become a grey doldrums. And sometimes it can be straight-up painful.

Imagine having to attend to a sick parent or a child who's had an accident.
These tragic occurrences can take a huge toll on the couple. Cheating can be a way to escape emotional pain: the lover is the antidepressant.

#2. Power Struggles: Cheating to Get Even

Some spouses can feel smothered under the tight grip of their more powerful partner. Cheating can be a way to get

back at him and get even.

And of course, the most popular cheating is revenge against having been cheated.

#3. Loneliness: Cheating for Emotional Starvation

Some couples spend years or even decades without ever really getting to know each other.

When they finally meet someone who listens, asks questions, and wants to know their fears and dreams, then they are liable to fall for them hard.

Example:
There are many examples in movies, but I like The Good Girl which is basically all about emotional cheating:

You fix this issue by asking questions, listening empathically, and getting to know your partner. And by learning emotional intelligence and emotionally tuning in to your partner.

#4. Child-centered Relationships

Some relationships put children above everything else.
That also means though that there's no space for romance between the spouses.
And when there's no romance at home, partners look for it outside.

#5. So Bad There's No Escape

Sometimes people cheat at the end of the umpteenth terrible argument, or when they just can't take it anymore and they deeply want to move on.
They can cheat as a way to "force themselves" out of the relationship or to officialize that it's over.

How to Prevent Cheating In Relationships: 12 Steps-Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The most effective way to prevent cheating comes down to:

1. know how affairs usually begin
2. build a solid relationship
3. pick the right partner

By the end of this article, you will have a much deeper understanding of all three of them.

Contents

- How to Prevent Cheating
- 1. Avoid Emotional Slippery Slope
  - No Relationship Talk With Opposite Sex
  - Talk to Friends as a Couple
  - Attractive People Must Be Friends in The Relationship
- 2. Form a United Front
- 3. Stay Away From Old Flames
- 4. Confess Early Infatuations
- 5. Avoid Sticky Situations
- 6. Become Best Friends
- 7. Don't Compare!
- 8. Foster Fondness
- 9. Fix Relationship Issues
  - Child-Centered Marriages
  - Sexual Perspectives
  - Lack of Common Interests
- 10. Be Realistic
- 11. Pick A Safe Partner
- 12. Improve Your Relationship
- SUMMARY

How to Prevent Cheating

This article leverages literature, data, and research to give a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of cheating and infidelity.

It's a good starting point, and if you want to delve deeper, there are more links you can explore.

Let's start.

1. Avoid Emotional Slippery Slope

This is the most critical prevention if both of you want to stay committed.

Both you and your partner should know how cheating usually happens.

As we've seen in emotional affairs, most cheating starts as friendships in places of daily interaction -often work-. First, there's maybe some mutual liking. You talk, and you discover some common interests. Then you share something we wouldn't share with other people.
And little by little you open up and share things that you don't share with our partners. Then you start hiding your meetings… And you both know there's something going on.
And that's when the emotional affair has reached the deep waters.

These are the precautions you must take:

No Relationship Talk With Opposite Sex

Anybody who could potentially be an alternative to your spouse doesn't get to talk about your relationship with you. *Especially* if you want to complain about your relationship. If you want to talk to someone about your relationship, he or she must be a friend of the relationship, not just one of you.

Talk to Friends as a Couple

Helping a friend of the opposite sex with emotional support, confidentially, and without anyone else knowing is a well-beaten path toward infidelity.

If a friend wants to talk to you about their problems and there is some attraction going on: talk to him/her as a couple.

Attractive People Must Be Friends in The Relationship

Anyone who can be considered an attractive alternative must be a friend of both of you. Pay especially attention to:

- People who are different than yourself and your spouse

Frank Pittman notes that the choice of the affair partner is often not about "superiority" or attractiveness, but rather on how different they are (*Private Lies: Infidelity and The Betrayal of Intimacy*). Interestingly enough, Hendrix Herville notes that it's exactly those traits that will later annoy you the most (*Getting the Love You Want*).

- Friendly men

Women in happy relationships often have blinders that make any potentially interested men invisible. For women, friendships are also about being open and self-disclosing, but men can read these signs as interest.

2. Form a United Front

Strong couples, the couples who stay together and have each other's back, present a united front to life.

When you don't present a united front, it's easier for life situations and for other people to drive wedges between you two.
Children especially are particularly apt at pitting the two parents against each other to get what they want, so make sure you never badmouth your partner in front of the children.

Instead, approach friends, in-laws, and children, as a unit.

3. Stay Away From Old Flames

Former lovers are some of the most dangerous individuals for relationship fidelity.
And especially so when years have passed.

When you look into each other's eyes you often don't see the problems and hurt and the shortcomings. You remember the passion and it takes you back to your younger self. It's a feeling of both passion and safe familiarity: we are more excited and less afraid of being rejected.
And we long to go back in time.
But wanting to relive the bygone years is a fool's quest.

Note: if you are single though reconnecting with old lovers could be a good idea. Nancy Kalish's survey shows that rekindled romances stay together 72% of the time, much higher than the average. And if they were first loves, it's 78% of the time (*Nancy Kalish, Lost & Found Lovers*).

4. Confess Early Infatuations

The most difficult something is to confess, the more important it is that you do it.
If you started liking someone, don't feel afraid to tell your partner. It's only normal that we go through life being attracted to others.

It's important that we share feelings because research has proven that secrecy fuels desire and attraction.
Talking about it decreases attraction while at the same time increasing the bond between you two.

5. Avoid Sticky Situations

It's normal to be attracted to other people. What's wrong is to have the mindset that "if he/she was the right one for me, I wouldn't be attracted to someone else".
The right mindset instead is to not fantasize about those other people because many affairs start in the mind before they take place in real life.
And don't flirt with them, because flirting sends signals of availability.

To recap:

- Attraction is normal
- Don't act on it
- Don't fantasize
- Don't flirt with them

- Avoid risky situations such as time alone and drinking together
- Make him chase -and you'll automatically devalue him-

Example:

Nicole Kidman flirts a lot in this video, but she ends powerfully. By making him chase for a meeting and closing with a blowing kiss, she ends up like the most powerful of the two. And women don't drool after less powerful men.

6. Become Best Friends

It's a sad reality in many relationships that many topics become taboo and that we talk more freely with our friends than with our spouses.

Friends can be more friendly and accepting, less judgmental, and overall easier to get along with because they have fewer expectations from us.
But the more topics you keep off from your spouse, the more likely cheating and emotional affair become. The more you can behave like good friends, the more likely it is you're cheat-proofing your relationship.

In Emotional Affairs, I quote one woman saying:

> *I share all significant events with my husbands. How could I have an affair, I'd have to immediately run and tell him about it*

Now that's an emotional affair-proof bond.

7. Don't Compare!

Researchers Drigotas and Rusbult introduce a model sometimes called the CL(alt) model (*A Dependence Model of Breakups*).

It basically says that people are unhappy when their Comparisons Levels with expectations and previous experiences are negative for their current relationship. And when they compare their CLs to seemingly better Alternatives (alt), that's when they cheat.

I find the mathematical model interesting and, in this case, backing up something that we all can naturally grasp and understand.
When people compare a potential colleague or friend with their partner they are comparing the infatuation period, which is usually strong and unrealistic, with a long-term relationship.
And they are comparing the best version of the infatuation subject, which is a fantasy, with the real-life reality of their partner.
The comparison is bound to be unfair toward our partner.

Indeed, when people marry affair partners, the divorce rate is considerably higher than the average (*Glass, 2004*).

8. Foster Fondness

Relationship researcher John Gottman says that a big difference in the likelihood of cheating is how we feel and think about our partners when they're not there.

If we have a generally low opinion of them it will be easy for us to go along when the opportunity arises. We might even think that it's great we've had the chance we had.

If we hold our partners in high esteem instead and if we care about them, it's unlikely that we will cheat.

Read here for more information on how to foster fondness in your relationship.

9. Fix Relationship Issues

The more issues you can transform into strength, the safer -and better- your relationship will be. The issues below are some of the most critical to make the relationship cheat-free:

Child-Centered Marriages

Child-centered marriages can break the bond between the couple. How do you recognize if you have a child-centered marriage?
Try to answer the following:

- You talk little about your work, your life, your plans
- At dinner, you talk about children
- You only go out with other couples with children…
- … But you don't go out much at all
- Children are the main factor in deciding holidays
- Movies are always children's movies

If you are a child-centered couple, you should build a shared culture as a couple. Or your intimate bond will disappear and make your relationship more prone to cheating and affairs.

Sexual Perspectives

Steve Harvey says that when a man doesn't get enough sex, he'll automatically be looking for more outside of the relationship.

Well, Steve Harvey is not a researcher, but a different sexual perspective can be an issue. Usually, but not always, the man wants to have more sex than the woman.

Sometimes women want less sex soon after a child is born, and sometimes the issue is different approaches to sex. Men tend to want sex no matter the atmosphere in the relationship, but women want sex when they feel good about their partners.
And then, of course, men are OK to jump right into it while women sometimes prefer a slower start. Trying to find a compromise is possible most of the time.

The good news is that sexual drive tends to decrease in men and increase in women, so you only have to bridge the gap until you'll naturally converge in perspective :).

Lack of Common Interests

When there's no common interest, you spend less time with your spouse and have less to talk about.

And it's more likely you will eventually meet someone with the same interests and with more things to talk about.

But "lack of common interests" is often more about laziness than an unchangeable state.
Here are a few things you can do:

- Shake up your life: take up no hobbies
- Join a dance class, Toastmasters or do sport
- Go to church together
- Do yoga
- Start habits together (Saturday night out, Friday wine, etc.)

10. Be Realistic

John Gottman says that couples with high expectations tend to be happier.

But Shirley Glass says unrealistically high expectations can lead to affairs when they are not met.
A good dose of realism in your high expectation can be healthy then.

A common vulnerability leading to infidelity is the disillusionment that develops when expectations about marriage are not met. Individuals with high expectations can be easily dissatisfied because they expect more than any one relationship can reasonably provide. Unrealistically high expectations can lead to affairs, just as undeniably bad marriages can.

Example:
Maybe her expectations about “love” are a bit unrealistic

11. Pick A Safe Partner

We live in a world where saying that some people are more likely to cheat is almost taboo (also read The Blank Slate).

Well, don’t be afraid of the “politically correct police”, because different people also differ in their likelihood to cheat.

Some factors that reduce the likelihood of cheating are:

- Parents stayed together and didn’t cheat on each other
- Religious background
- Conservative political views
- Low number of sex partners

I have written already on the research of cheating and you can read more here:

- How to pick a loyal partner

12. Improve Your Relationship

Men tend to cheat when they are happy in the relationship as well, but a bit less. And women cheat considerably less when in a happy relationship.
That’s another reason to make your relationship great.

I have written a lot on this website on how to improve relationships, and they are all solid articles based on research. Instead of writing all of it, I invite you to take a look if you’re not yet experienced in relationship management:

- Get to know your partner
- Turn towards and build emotional connection
- Get a positive perspective
- Accept influence
- Learn conflict management skills
- Avoid the 4 Horsemen of The Apocalypse (criticism, defensiveness, contempt, stonewalling)

Or, for an overall overview:

- Best relationship ever, one-stop shop

SUMMARY

This article on how to prevent cheating reviewed a few key areas and common weaknesses in the relationship that often lead to infidelity.

By addressing them, you will greatly increase the chances that both partners will remain faithful.

How to Find a Loyal Girlfriend: 99 Traits of Faithfulness

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

What makes a loyal partner?

How do you recognize and pick a faithful and loyal girlfriend material?

This article reviews a number of sources and statistics to answer that question.

Contents

- Traits of Loyal Partners
- Traits of Cheating Partners
  - Personality traits:
  - Life History Risks:
  - Cultural Risks:
  - Opportunity Risks:
  - Relationship Risks:
- Shape Your Loyal Partner
  - Men: Be A Confident, Good Leader For Both
  - Women: Be A Good, Loving Woman
  - Both Men and Women: Be The Partner You Wish to Have
  - Build Total Relationships
- Gender Differences
- SUMMARY

Traits of Loyal Partners

If you want to pick a loyal mate, statistics say that the following traits correlate with fidelity:

- **Religious**
- **Traditional values** that include family, housework, and supporting family and husband
- **Monogamous social circle**
- **Lower partner count**
- **Later first-time sex:** Robert J. Levin and Amy Levin surveyed 100.000 women and found that only 16% of women reported extramarital sex when they lost their virginity after the age of 21. Compared to 48% of women who lost their virginity at 15 years old or younger.
- Lives in a **small town** and *likes* living in a small town
- **Monogamous family**
- **Present father**
- **Personal values** that include respect for monogamy, truth, and honesty
- **Secure attachment style**
- **Empathy and altruism** (as opposed to dark triad personality)
- **Conservative cultural background**
- **Introverted**
- **Serial dater until she commits to one**, instead of "simultaneous dater". Langlais et al.(2015) found that mothers who engaged in simultaneous dating drank more alcohol and had more unprotected sex even when they wanted a relationship
- **Neuroticism** (but findings are not consistent across cultures)
- **Prioritizes character over looks**: In numerous studies, Gangestad and his colleagues have shown that women who seek short-term mates place special importance on the physical attractiveness of their partners

I'm personally not convinced that having a "party phase" increases the risks.
Women who've never had "fun" in their younger years may grow very curious as older women (example from "Walk On The Moon").

Looks can give you many good hints. But the last word always comes down to character

Traits of Cheating Partners

As much as there are traits that increase the odds of finding a loyal man or woman, there are also traits that have been shown to correlate with infidelity.

Personality traits:

- **Extroversion** (Altgelt et al. , 2018; Orzeck & Lung, 2005; Yeniceri & Kökdemir, 2006)
- **Sensation seeking** (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011)
- **Poor impulse control** (Brady et al. 2020)
- **Sexual excitation**,albeit stronger for men (Mark et al., 2011)
- **High sexual permissiveness** & Unrestricted sociosexuality (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Rodrigues et al. , 2017)
- **Avoidant attachment style** (DeWall et al., 2011)
- **Dark triad** (narcissism, sociopathy, Machiavellianism)
- **Antisocial/low agreeableness**
- **Low religiosity**: less religious people were more likely to be unfaithful (Whisman et al. , 2007)

Life History Risks:

- **Poaching history**: poached you, you poached her, or poaching in the past
- **Right out of divorce/breakup** (re-enters the “assessment phase”)
- **Family infidelity**, albeit this can swing both ways with some children “swearing off” infidelity
- **Physical abuse as children** (sorry to add insult to injury)
- **Positive past experiences with cheating**, including not getting caught
- **Absent fathers** sub-communicating that men can’t be trusted to stick around and provide

- **Harsh environments** predispose for a “fast life strategy” of earlier sex and uncommitted sex

Cultural Risks:

- **Libertine cultures**
- **Libertine workplaces** or with common cheating
- **Lack of infidelity condemnation** (ie.: France)
- **High female empowerment cultures** may decrease the shame and stigma on female infidelity and high sexual partner count
- **Drinking and partying cultures**, linked with hookup culture

Opportunity Risks:

- **Travels a lot** for work or recreation
- **Attractive and freewheeling colleague**s who provide opportunities
- Lives in a l**arge metropolitan area**
- Many **attractive opportunities around**

Relationship Risks:

Remember that the quality and direction of your relationship heavily impacts the odds of cheating.
Some of the risks include:

- **Relationship dissatisfaction/unhappiness**, stronger predictor for women (Mark et al., 2011)
- **Declining sexual adjustment** (Scott et al., 2017)
- **Cheating partner and revenge**: Warach et al.(2018) found that sexual betrayal was the single best predictor of sexual infidelity of the personality dimensions they examined
- **Mate value mismatches**: she may cheat if she thinks she’s higher mate value, but also if he’s much higher mate value and she cheats because she believes he will as well (Buss and Shackelford, 1997)

This is great news because it means that as long as you stay a great guy and maintain a great relationship, most women will be faithful.
And as relationship researcher Gottman said “women in love are wearing blinkers (to other men)”.

Shape Your Loyal Partner

This article is about the traits of loyal partners and not so much about what you should do to ensure loyalty.

So I won’t go much into the details, but here’s a primer for completeness’ sake:

Men: Be A Confident, Good Leader For Both

- Be a good leader
- Don’t put up with cr@p
- Be open to her influence and shared decision making
- Be the best man she’s ever had
- Pay attention to her emotional needs

⚠ **Be careful of emotional infidelity**
Men are more likely to underestimate emotional infidelity because it’s psychologically less threatening. But to

women it's important, and many breakup or sexual infidelity start as *emotional* infidelity.

Women: Be A Good, Loving Woman

- Keep your financial independence
- Keep your social circle of girlfriends (helps both you and the relationship)
- Don't move in into his place (find a new place)
- Seek a balance of investment
- Be the best woman she's ever had
- Make him feel important

Both Men and Women: Be The Partner You Wish to Have

- Be loyal and address issues head on
- Keep taking care of yourself
- Ban criticism, contempt, defensiveness
- Keep learning and being curious about each other

Build Total Relationships

Research shows indeed that infidelity was rare in "total marriages", such as marriages that had psychological, intellectual, and recreational compatibility.

That means that when you go strong on an emotional, intellectual, and interests level, then you have a total marriage and you have few reasons to cheat.

Gender Differences

Men on average cheat more, albeit the difference has been closing in the West and is much smaller in open culture and among younger individuals.

What's also interesting is that men and women value different things when it comes to loyalty.
Such as:

- Women care more about emotional fidelity
- Men care more about sexual fidelity

SUMMARY

Infidelity is a widespread phenomenon.

How likely it is that your partner will cheat depends on a wide variety of factors.

Some of them are environmental, such as the availability of mates, society's culture, and the subculture they ascribe to.
Some of them are more personal, ranging from genetic makeup, values, and family background.

This article gave you a broad overview of the traits you need to pay attention to if you want a loyal partner.

How to Forgive a Cheater: The Definitive Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Infidelity is a traumatic event, but if you are searching for information on forgiving a cheater, you have already taken a few steps forwards.

Congratulations.

This guide has combed through much literature on infidelity to give you a neat guide on how to forgive and move on.

Contents

- Should You Forgive a Cheater?
- Forgiving a Cheater And Recovery
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Should You Forgive a Cheater?

I cannot answer that question for you.
It's a fair question and if there were deeper issues in the relationship this is a good moment for you to take stock of your situation.
I recommend this article to troubleshoot your overall relationship health:

- Should I break up or not

When You Should Forgive

What I can tell you is that if you want to rebuild the relationship, then forgiving is a must.

I've seen couples staying together that never moved into forgiveness and kept that constant, burning rage of resentment within them.

And it's not pretty.

Forgiving is also the final step to recovery. You can heal without forgiveness, but healing with forgiveness is the fuller, final stage.

In short: if you don't want to forgive, it's a respectable choice and you should break up. If you want to reach a fuller level of healing and/or stay together, then you should forgive.

Forgiving a Cheater And Recovery

Keep this in mind:

Forgiveness *is* trauma recovery.

There's no independent and parallel track for healing and forgiving: the two work together.

We talked about how to ease the pain of infidelity and how to heal together as a couple. As you heal together, you are also laying the foundations for forgiveness.
Here are the overarching steps when bundled together:

1. Letting go of anger
When you re-establish safety (contact with the affair partner cut) and restart compassionate communication, you are letting go of anger.

2. Empathy
When you search for the deeper causes and build shared meaning around the affair and why it happened, you were building empathy for each other.

3. Caring
With every compassionate listening, with every caring gesture, you are removing the last bits of revenge-seeking tendencies. And as your resume caring about each other you are moving towards forgiveness.

Forgiving Timelines

When to forgive is another difficult question to answer without knowing your situation or personality.
Here's what I can tell you though: if you wait too long, you are feeding feelings of despair and hopelessness. Not good either for you or your relationship.
If you forgive too soon, it's not really forgiving and you will try to rebuild your relationship on shaky foundations.
Ultimately, you have to forgive when you are ready to forgive.

Impediments To Forgiving

Forgiving is not always easy. These are some of the most common pitfalls on the road to forgiving:

1. Victim Mentality

The victim mentality is the one that can never move beyond pain… And beyond accusing the cheating partner of that pain.

It sounds like this:

> -I will never be able to move on from the pain that you have caused me

Or:

> -You ruined my life

Sometimes cheated partners have difficulty in moving beyond the victim mentality because they see themselves as the “good” side of the relationship, the saintly half that did nothing wrong.
As long as you keep dividing the relationship into “good” and “bad” you’re not doing yourself any favor. Reality is often more complex than that.

2. Suspicion of Ongoing Cheating

Safety is a necessary precondition for healing. You can’t move on and you can’t forgive unless you’re certain that the cheating has stopped.
It’s a protection mechanism: if you don’t let go of fear, you are in some way shielding yourself if cheating is once again uncovered.

What to do

If it’s true that cheating has not stopped and your partner is lying, you might consider breaking up here.
If you’re not sure, it’s fair to find ways to make sure: hiring a detective is a valid option.

A cheating partner should also welcome all chances he has to prove himself to be on the good side: it’s in everyone’s interest.
Once you make sure cheating has stopped… It’s time to move on.

3. Pain From the Past

If the betrayed partner is mired in anger, suspicion, and revenge-seeking in spite of everything else being clear, there might be other issues.
Some possible issues here:

- Painful infidelities in the family
- Sexual abuse
- Chronic low self-esteem
- Deep-rooted distrust or hatred of men/women

Those should be addressed separately.

4. Aggressive Suffering

Some victims unconsciously want to hold on to their pain. This is something that happens to victims of incest and domestic violence but can happen in very traumatic cases of infidelity as well.

The victims unconsciously believe that a full recovery would mean letting the cheating partner off the hook. If they’re not in pain anymore, that would send the message that cheating was not a big deal.

In a way, this is an aggressive form of pain as it aims to make the cheater feel forever guilty. Of course, this stance is unhelpful to anyone, first of all, the betrayed partner.
You might even push the cheating partner into the more caring embrace of another affair if aggressive suffering keeps going on indefinitely.

5. Self-absorbed Perennial Pain

Sometimes the betrayed partner cannot forgive because he can only focus on himself. This does not apply to every case of course, but in many cheating instances, the betrayed spouse is also part of the blame.

For example, a partner cheat after their spouse broke up with them. When they get back together, the betrayed partner still considers it cheating but fails to realize how his own actions -to break up- also caused the cheating -and the pain-.

If that's the case, allowing yourself to experience part of the cheater's pain, or to see things from his point of view, can help you move forward from self-absorbed perennial pain.
Even if you bare little responsibility though, looking at the situation from the cheater's eyes is important: compassion is a major element of forgiveness.

6. Too Early, Fake Forgiveness

Some partners jump too quickly into forgiving as a way to cut through the difficult confrontational period. It's a mistake and it doesn't help anyone.

The betrayed partner will be unhappy in the relationship because they haven't really moved on. And they'll wonder if it was the right decision.
Fake early forgiveness will also send the wrong message to the cheating partner: that cheating wasn't so bad.

You can't and should not pretend that cheating never happened or that it didn't hurt. It happened, and it was a mistake.
And it hurt, and that's OK.
Take the time you need to reach full healing and real forgiveness.

Steps Into Forgiveness

Mutual empathy is the most important ingredient to achieve forgiveness.

Keep in mind you will get there gradually.
It's a slow and sometimes barely perceptible process, but if you do it right it inexorably advances until, if you do all the rest right, you will have a stronger and healthier relationship.

These steps will help you get there faster and more deliberately:

#1. Look At Your Contributions

I know this will ruffle the feathers of many cheated partners.
But hold on.

Don't worry, it wouldn't even cross my mind to turn the tables on you if it weren't a helpful part of recovery.

It will not apply to ALL partners, but before ruling yourself out, please at least consider the possibility of your contributions: this is an important exercise.

Here are some examples of how the betrayed partner might have unwittingly contributed:

- Leaving your partner on the outside of a child-centered relationship
- Putting work first, second… And third
- Turning away and missing opportunities for emotional connection
- Being generally uncaring and taking the partner for granted

#2. Forgive Yourself

Betrayed spouses rarely feel guilty about their partner's cheating -but if you do, this applies!-.

But they can often feel guilty about having missed the signs, about having been so gullible, or they feel guilty for what the whole situation will mean to the people around them.

Before forgiving your partner, then, you must forgive yourself first.
The signs are only obvious in hindsight and you weren't gullible. And even if you were, let it go, we all are gullible at times and there's nothing wrong with it.

#3. Explore The Betrayal Together

Looking into what brought about the affair from a neutral perspective will help replace anger with understanding.

You should do this exercise with the cheating partner so that it will also build shared meaning, increase each other's knowledge and build a common understanding.

#4. Address Relationships Weaknesses

An affair is often the contribution of several weaknesses in the cheating partner, the betrayed partner, and the relationship overall.

Looking at cheating as the culmination of several joint weaknesses instead of just the cheater's fault will help you expand on compassion and empathy.
As you do it, start addressing and working on those weaknesses.
As the relationship improves, forgiving will be easier within a framework of a healthier, happier relationship.

#5. Accept Amends From Cheating Partner

The capacity to forgive is highly -very highly- correlated to the willingness and practical steps that the cheating partner takes in making amends.

Let's not forget this: **the cheating partner must actively seek forgiveness for the mistake**.
If they don't, let them this guide. If they still don't, they might have a case of entitlement mentality and feel entitled to extramarital affairs.

The more they are willing to make amends, the easier it will be for the betrayed partner to forgive.
Here are some ways the cheating partner can facilitate:

- End the affair pronto
- Allow the spouse to be present when drafting the final letter or doing the final call
- Be more concerned about taking care of the betrayed partner than defending yourself
- Show concrete signs you're working on the relationship
- Use your spouse's language of love to make it up
- Prepare and deliver a heartfelt apology

For the betrayed partner: get all the amends you can.
It's possible that it will be difficult for you to accept early amends as that would mean you're forgiving too early and letting them off the hook.
Don't let that mentality trap you: treat each amend separately and "at the moment". As you welcome them, you will also take gradual steps toward full forgiveness.

#6. Ask for Forgiveness

As a final step, once you're almost fully ready to forgive, you can reward your partner's hard work by asking for your own forgiveness.

Based on the first step when you looked at your own contributions, you can tell your partner what you're sorry about.
Don't underestimate this step: your partner will likely be very touched and it will catapult you into a renewed level of "we-ness".

#7. Grant Forgiveness

Finally, you're ready for the big step. Granting forgiveness. Here are the steps:

1. Acknowledge the pain it all caused
2. Say how you felt
3. Tell them you still hold them accountable…
4. … But that you are no longer angry…
5. … Because you have no compassion for their weakness and understanding of the situation
6. Explain forgiveness is for the past, but in the present and the future…
7. … You won't tolerate X, Y, Z (for example: further cheating)
8. Finally, end emphatically by telling them you forgive and are ready to move on
9. Make a final grand gesture: a hug, pull out a gift, or a card to remember this day

Stop blaming and start living

Rituals of Recommitment

It can also be helpful to perform symbolic rituals to mark the end of infidelity and recovery and to kick-start your new and improved relationship.
Here are some ideas:

1. Destroy Symbols of Cheating

Rona Subotnik and Gloria Harris propose to write down a list of all the wrongful acts that happened. Then tearing it up and throwing it into a river -or alternatively burning it and burying the ashes as a symbol of the death of the affair-.

Note: I might be a hopeless environment-friendly guy, but please don't throw it down a river :).
Burning it should do, then go have a picnic on that river and enjoy it clean and nice.

2. Courtship

Sometimes cheating can be very painful when the betrayed partner discovers typical courtship activities in the affair relationship.
It's even more painful if that courtship was missing in their relationship.

In either case, kicking off a renewed period of courtship with dates, romantic movies, and candlelight can benefit any recovering couple.
In case you need some inspiration for the music.

3. Renewing Vows

Renewing wedding vows is another way to strengthen the bond and officialize the new beginning. You might also go on a new honeymoon afterward.

Checklist for Banning Affairs

To prevent future affairs, here's a brief checklist of what you need to make sure of:

- You are aware of your past weaknesses
- You are clear about what constitutes inappropriate "friendship" out of the relationship
- You present a united front to the world
- You agree on what commitment means
- You are open to talking about future vulnerabilities and dangers
- You make your relationship a priority

For more information read:

- How to cheat-proof your relationship

Summary

Forgiving the cheater is the final step towards healing from an affair. You can heal without forgiving, but you cannot rebuild a strong relationship without forgiving.

Whether you want to forgive or not and whether you want to work on the relationship is up to you.
But if you want, this article showed you how to forgive a cheater and build a stronger relationship together.

Further Reading

- How to overcome infidelity
- How to prevent cheating
- How to forgive a cheater
- Why people cheat

- Emotional infidelity: what is it and how it happens
- How to pick a loyal partner

Resources

- Elizabeth Seagull and Arthur A. Seagull (1991), Healing the wound that must not heal: Psychotherapy with survivors of domestic violence
- Rona Subtonik and Gloria Harris (1999) Surviving infidelity: Making decisions, recovering from the pain, Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams Press
- Shirley Glass (2004): Not Just Friends

7 Types of Dysfunctional Relationships (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Dysfunctional relationships can lead to toxic relationships, vicious circles, and ultimately breakups.

BUT, if you catch them in time or if you can fix them, then you can also fix your relationship.

This article lists 7 of the most common dysfunctional relationship types.

Dysfunctional relationships follow patterns of behavior that are repeated over time, and that's why some relationship researcher calls them "dysfunctional relationship dances".

I will use the same expression for this article.

Contents

- What Are Dysfunctional Relationships
  - The Ugly Side of Dances
- Dysfunctional Relationship Dances
  - #1. Child and Parent
  - #2. Saint and Sinner
  - #3. Authority and Rebel
  - #4. Demand-Withdraw Dance
  - #5. Pursuer and Distancer
  - #6. Boxer and Avoider
  - #7. Reminder and Forgetful
- Fixing Dysfunctional Relationships
- SUMMARY

What Are Dysfunctional Relationships

Let me say this right away:

Almost every couple develops what some relationship researcher calls “relationship dances”.

Dances are interactions based on traits and behaviors that are repeated in a loop through the years.
There are advantages to relationship dances, such as familiarity and shared meaning.

Relationship dances can be healthy and helpful.
For example, if every time that one partner is down the other cheers him up, that’s a positive dance.

The disadvantage is that they can become inflexible, and potentially even constrict our personalities at times that we are growing or want to change -or that we *should* change-. And that’s when some partners have affairs: to try on new roles.

And of course, some of these dances are unhealthy and bring unhappiness to the relationship.

This is, then, the definition of a dysfunctional relationship:

> A dysfunctional relationship is a relationship where patterns of destructive, harmful or abusive behaviors, also called “dances”, are repeated over time

It’s important to distinguish between “one-off” events and patterns of behavior.
A one-off event can be abusive, but it doesn’t qualify as a “dysfunctional relationship” unless it’s repeated over time.

The Ugly Side of Dances

Harville Hendrix in *Getting The Love You Want* explains that we naturally seek partners who are different than we are.
The opposite traits are attractive in the beginning. But in a deteriorating relationship, they start to annoy us, they grow more extreme and they exacerbate the relationship problems.

Dysfunctional Relationship Dances

In dysfunctional relationships partners have their personality defined and validated by the other partner’s role.
This is a list of some of the most common and dysfunctional relationship dances:

#1. Child and Parent

In a child/parent relationship, the parent is the partner who has the highest authority.

But not only in the relationship but also in the outside world.
The parent may have a good career, an authoritative position, or hold major responsibilities, and he is held in high self-esteem by society and by the couple’s social circle.

The child admires his partner but also resents him.
The parent in exchange envies the freedom and freewheeling spirit of the child.

Albeit these roles were attractive to each other in the beginning, the couple might grow uncomfortable being in a child/parent relationship. It might feel incestuous, or we might feel our partner is not up to our level and/or too different.

Age Is No Always A Differentiator

It can be the case that the parent is older.

But it's not always the case. And sometimes it can also happen the older partner is the baby.
Vasco Rossi, a famous Italian rocker (yes, famous only in Italy :D), sings:

> (…) and maybe you're right, when you say that I'm a child… And you're 20 years younger

Vasco Rossi, a drug abuser and an alcoholic, is singing about her life partner who is more mature than he is in spite of the age difference.

Example:
The movie Mrs. Doubtfire is such an example. But Miranda / Steve relationship is even more obvious:

#2. Saint and Sinner

AKA: "savior & troublemaker".

In the saint and sinner dysfunctional relationship dance, there's a "good" partner and a "bad" and wild one.

And the bad one is busy reforming, taming, and trying to teach the wild one about the "normal" life they would like to share.

She might be the party girl and he might be the guy bringing her headache tablets the day after. Or he might be the philanderer and she is the one trying to make him monogamous.

But it's more codependence in the Saint and Sinner, and it replicates the parent/child relationship of teenage years. The sinner rebels, while the saint stays watchful.

#3. Authority and Rebel

In the authority and rebel dance, one partner is strong, judgmental, and intimidating.

And the other tries to carve his own space by resorting to subterfuge and small acts of rebellion.

The rebel sometimes learned to act behind their parent's backs as a child. When they grow up, instead of facing their partner openly and voicing their opinion, they might say yes and pretend to go along with it. Only to then do what they want to do when the partner is not watching.

This is a very bad dynamic that stifles the development of a solid emotional bond. They are also very prone to affairs and cheating because rebelling is used to commit and hide small acts of sabotage.

Example: Female Sinner

My father and my mother often tell the story of my mother's smoking.

My father was in the Navy and used to gather all the free cigarettes he didn't smoke.
One day he picked the stack to give to some friends. And there and then he realized… They were all empty.

Instead of coming clean about her smoking habits and risking facing a judgmental husband, she smoked behind his back.

This example might not qualify today as a saint and sinner, but back then people didn't think cigarettes were harmful and women often smoked as a sign of independence.

#4. Demand-Withdraw Dance

This is very common and possibly one of the least destructive on this list.

There are two types of demander and withdrawer:

1. Actual tasks: one partner asks to do a task, and the other postpones
2. Resolution: one partner demands to discuss or fix a problem, while the other withdraws (Papp et al., 2009)

Often the woman demands and the man withdraws.

Example:

The Break Up (2006), is a movie featuring a demander and a withdrawer. At the beginning of this video you can see an example:

#5. Pursuer and Distancer

Somewhat similar to the demand and withdrawal, but the struggle is over a deeper connection and less about a specific event.

The pursuer, often the woman, seeks an emotional connection or a discussion about relationship issues. And the man withdraws emotionally or runs away physically.

The running only makes the pursuer chase harder, and that often means an escalation with criticism and contempt, to which the man responds with defensiveness and stonewalling.

The pursuer and distancer are part and parcel of the "anxious-avoidant trap".

Watch out: this cycle doesn't usually go on forever. It usually sets off a vicious cycle that makes the relationship worse and worse.
As long as the wife keeps chasing, she's still invested in the relationship. But eventually, she will stop chasing after him, which means she mentally checked out.
And a break up soon follows suit.

Also see the "anxious-avoidant trap", a typical pursuer and distancer relationship.

> Anxious-Avoidant Relationship: Analysis & Fixes (W/ Examples)

#6. Boxer and Avoider

Gottman talks about boxers and avoiders when he describes the "fighting styles" of different couples.

The boxer is the partner who is a conflict engager.
He raises his voice, uses barbed words, and overall tries to get a rise out of the avoider.
The avoider is a conflict avoider though and shies away from any confrontation or tension.

The boxer feels there's no intimacy in the relationship not because there is no real intimacy, but because there is a mismatch in argument styles.

From a cultural perspective, the stereotype is that boxers tend to be from Latin or southern European cultures while conflict-avoiders tend to be from more withdrawn cultures.

#7. Reminder and Forgetful

In the reminder-forgetful dance, one partner is responsible and detail-oriented, while the other appears a lazy slacker.

It's similar to the demander and procrastinator, but the demander is not necessarily precise, while the response is all about "doing it properly".
The demander feels the forgetful is untrustworthy and a slob. The forgetful feel of the reminder is an annoying

square.

Fixing Dysfunctional Relationships

You are not stuck in any position or situation in life, but it's up to you where you will move and where you will end up.

The same is true for dysfunctional relationships: it's wholly up to you to stay stuck in them or transform them into healthy and invigorating relationships.

The simplest step is to start meeting halfway.

There's a strong element in dysfunctional relationship dances where the partners expect the other to be extreme and they automatically go on the other extreme end just to start with an advantage. Or sometimes just to annoy their partners.

Instead of falling for these hollow power games, start meeting halfway.

- The partner who pushes, backs off a bit
- The partner who retreats, meets halfway and shows more proactiveness

When you moderate yourself, you also make it easier for your partner to moderate themselves.

SUMMARY

Dysfunctional relationship dances entail each partner occupying a different extreme of temperament, goals, or personality.

But since they are not ready to accept their partner as they are, they end up arguing and fighting to get it their way.

StrengthsFinder 2.0: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"StrengthsFinder 2.0" (2007) helps readers find their strengths and innate talents. Tom Rath, the author, famously argues that people shouldn't focus on addressing and fixing their weaknesses, but go all-in on their strengths instead.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - #1. Focus On Your Talents and Potentials
  - #2. Don't Waste Time on Weaknesses
  - #3. Find PartnerS With Complementary Strengths
  - #4. And Work on Your Strengths
  - #5. Talent Becomes Strength With Work
  - Achievers' Personality
  - Commanders' Personality
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Strengthsfinder Review

Bullet Summary

- Focus on areas where you have the most potential
- Stop wasting too much time on your weaknesses
- Hire and partner up with people strong at what you're weak at

Full Summary

About The Author: Tom Rath is an American consultants and researcher on employees engagement, wellbeing and productivity.
Strengthsfinder is his bestselling book, in which he identifies 34 keys strengths people possess.

#1. Focus On Your Talents and Potentials

Popular self-development literature will tell you that you can achieve anything you want, no matter your starting point.

But Tom Rath righteously says instead that talent and potential *do* matter.
At least if you want to maximize your potential and achieve the most you can achieve.

#2. Don't Waste Time on Weaknesses

Most people waste a lot of time and effort trying to "fix" their weaknesses.

That's silly, because you struggle against your natural tendencies, come short against people who are naturally good in those areas and to cap it all off… You make yourself miserable.

Except When Weaknesses Hold You Back

Dropping your weaknesses doesn't mean ignoring anything you're not good at.
There are baseline competence levels in some areas that you want to reach.

For example if you're a public figure, CEO or representative and are terrified of public speaking, you should probably address public speaking. But it doesn't mean you will spend years trying to get better at public speaking, it means you will reach a level where you can comfortably speak to the press and effectively address the employees.

Basically: focus on your weaknesses only when they interfere with your strengths.

#3. Find PartnerS With Complementary Strengths

Instead of addressing all your weaknesses, find partners who are strong we are you are weak.
This allows you to work on your strengths while someone else does the best possible job in your areas of weakness.

This is called comparative advantage.

#4. And Work on Your Strengths

Tom Rath says your time is best deployed working on your strengths.

So if you're good at selling, become *great* at selling.

Why should you focus on your strengths?
Because you aling effort witih talent, you will make the quickest progress while getting positive feedback and results and while enjoying yourself.

#5. Talent Becomes Strength With Work

Do not confuse talent with strength. You still need to work at what you have. Talent per se means little. A talent only becomes a strength when you work on it.
Talent is having natural abilities at something, but results are erratic and random.
A strength is a consistent, near-perfect performance at a given task.

Achievers' Personality

Achievers are people who are extremely driven to achieve. The alarm rings and they can't wait to get out and start getting things done.
They overwork, but people who tell them to take a break don't understand: getting things done makes them happy.
It's their innate drive and reward system that allows them to work so much and keep going and going.

Dangers For Achievers

The danger of the achievers is that they burn themselves out and think of themselves as not good enough in spite of all they do.
Tom Rath recommends they remind themselves of their achievements and only tackle what they're good at instead of trying to do everything.

Commanders' Personality

Commanders are people who say what they think, no matter what.

In my experience they are proud of calling a spade a spade, and I agree with the author when he says that they can create fear and resentment.
They also tend to impose their will and command with directives instead of building support.

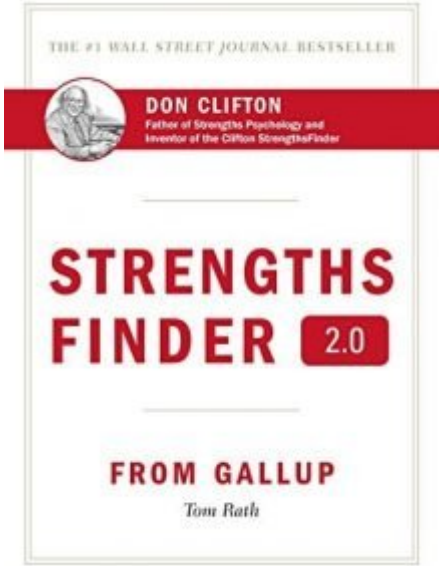
Recommendations:

Tom Rath recommends they soften their approach to fully maximize their strength.
For example, stop imposing your will and focus on your reputation as honesty and straightness.
Eventually, if you learn to build consensus, you won't have to rely on imposing your will.
A good read for commanders is How to Win Friends and Influence People.[image]

Real Life Applications

Drop the feel good idea of being great at anything you want
Yes, it's true you can improve at anything.
And maybe it's true you can be good at anything. But why wasting your time on being at something when you can be exceptional working on your strengths?
That's the message.

Weaknesses are OK
I believe that one of the reasons why people often waste time on their weaknesses is that they feel bad about them.
And working on their weaknesses becomes a way for them to try and improve their self esteem.
Don't be bothered by that: learn to love your weaknesses as something that positively define you for what you are not.



CONS

Here is what I would warn the readers of Strengthfinder about:

- **Categories of Personalities = Generalization**

The categories you end up with, such as "achiever", "WOO", "relator" etc. are neat and nice to read.
They feel like uplifting horoscopes.
But they're also simplification of reality and fail to address the "cross-skills" or "cross-weaknesses". In the end you're a complex web of different traits, categorizing yourself might not make you any favor unless you're aware of the limitations.

- **Paid Upsell**

The book gives you a free pass at the test, but it's limited and you need to fork out more $$$ for the full version.
Here's a free test I've taken on the web and which I liked. It got my weakness spot on: focus.

PROS

Great Life Tips
I couldn't agree more on working on your strengths. It's an important message that might be lost in the wave of "you can do anything" self help.

Strengthsfinder Review

Honestly, I am not a huge believer in the Gallup's Strengthsfinder method.

To begin with, it focuses on your strengths and not on what you love doing. And you're better off finding the intersection of the two, not just your strengths.
If you had to pick one between strengths and passion, I'd recommend passion because with a growth mindset you can develop your strengths.

Furthermore, that life is the greatest teacher of your strengths.
Do and experience a variety of different things, especially in your younger years.
Then pick one thing you love -and ideally you're strong at- and let it consume you.

That being said, if you need some help in deciphering yourself and are interested in personality tests, then StrengthFinder can give provide you with some good insights on what you're good at.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Body Keeps the Score: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"The Body Keeps the Score" provices readers with a scientific and comprehensive overview on traumas, including cures for traumas and PTSD.

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Bullet Summary

- Trauma is more common than most people think
- Traumatized patients vividly remember everything of the trauma their whole life
- You can cure trauma with yoga, mindfulness, supportive relationships… A few new interesting scientific breakthroughs

Full Summary

About The Author: Bessel van der Kolk is a Dutch psychiatrist, author and educator.
His main area of focus and research has been in the area of post-traumatic stress.

Introduction

Bessel van der Kolk says that trauma is more common than most people realize.
War, rape, accidents, assaults… They can all lead to trauma. And authors expert in betrayal says that betrayal can also often lead to trauma.

And many crimes many people *think* are isolated are not isolated at all.
In the introduction van der Kolk shares a few statistics about rape for example, and shows that it's unluckily a relatively widespread crime (read for example *Hunger, a Memoir of My Body*).

What's Trauma

Trauma is the consequence of a highly stressful or painful experience.

Trauma is often associated with war, but violent crimes and accidents also can lead to trauma. And as Shirley Glass explains, even harmful actions and betrayals by the people we love the most can be traumatic (read how to overcome infidelity).

Consequences of Trauma (PTSD)

Trauma can deeply affect the lives of people.

The consequences of trauma are often referred to as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
The individuals feels helpless or too overwhelmed to cope with further life adversities. Here are some of the consequences:

- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Difficulty trusting people (especially those without the same PTSD)
- Flashbacks

Flashbacks

Flashbacks are vivid memories of the traumatic experience.

Experiments shows that when patients relive flasbacks the left area of their brain responsible for rational thinking slowed down, which means they have difficulty in differentiating what's real and what's not.

Stress hormones shoot up and take much longer to go back to normal compared to a non traumatized person.
Also the mental area responsible for speaking slows down, sometimes leaving patients unable to speak.

Traumatic Memories Are Vivid

Normal memories tend to be stripped out of details and sensory inputs, and they change in time.
Such as, we remember the general feeling, but we don't remember the smell of the room.
And by the time we tell the story a few times, it will likely be quite different from the first time we recalled it.

Traumatic memories instead tend to be vivid and detailed. And they don't change over time.

Traumas in Children

Traumatic events are much more devastating in children because their brain neural connections haven't fully developed yet.

Those traumatic events can scar and change them for the worst.
Some traumatized children develop a strong focus towards negativity, and they see more threats, dangers and possibility for disaster where most other children see the positive scenarios.

How to Recover From Trauma

Mind and bodies are connected, and trauma leaves our body with an hypersensitive, always on alarm system.

#1. Yoga

Yoga helps practitioners understand the connection between mind, body and emotions.

For example, when an a rape victim started with yoga it wasn't easy. A pat on the back would send off her alarm system. But she stuck with it.
Some positions were particularly difficult, like the ones she'd have to do with her legs open. But she stuck with it without trying to repress her feelings.

It taught her that she could deal with those sensations without running away from them but tackling them head on.

#2. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about being conscious and aware of our body and emotions. That's especially difficult for PTSD patient as they tend to shut down emotions instead of addressing.
And that's exactly why it can be very beneficial to open up and deal with them instead. Tackling the issue can be the very first step towards recovery.

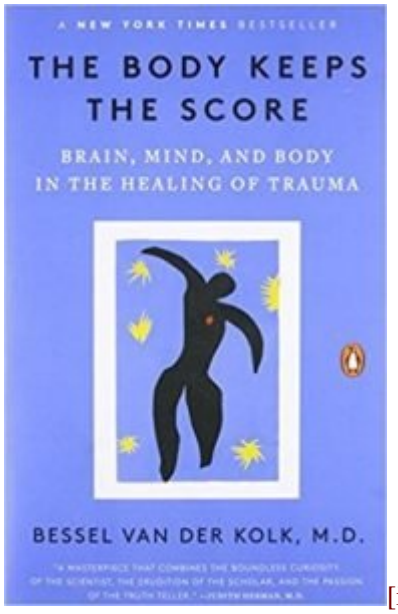
#3. Supportive Relationships

A supportive network of people around is also a crucial step to recover from trauma.

#4. Neurofeedback

Our brain functions on electrical signals.
And the intensity and type of the electrical signal influences how we feel and how relaxed or nervous we are.
When we are relaxed we produce alpha waves in our brain. But people with PTSD tend to be more hyper-vigilant and nervous.

But with conscious effort, we can learn to relax ourselves and produce more alpha waves. Bassel would show patients their own level of alpha waves on a screen, and let patients try to increase it consciously. The video could also display a reward similar to a video game, thus starting a positive feedback loop to relax and calm themselves down.



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Real Life Applications

You Can Overcome Traums
It starts with you facing the fears instead of drowning them in alcohol and drugs. But many people overcame it, many people are overcoming it, and you can do it too.

Another Great Review

I think someone who has first hand experience trauma is best placed to review The Body Keeps the Score.
I particularly liked this review:

CONS

The Body Keeps The Score is a misnomer
It might sound like a nitpicking, but I was bothered by the reference to the body keeping the score. There are nowadays researches pointing to smaller centers of sensory processing across the body, but it's mainly the brain which keeps the score.

PROS

Deep, wide, insightful
The topic of trauma is well laid out and explained

Start of the art tech
The author explains much of the current literature and approaches on curing trauma. Then he adds his own experiments and experiences and lays out the newest and most promising therapies. And some of them can give big causes for optimism.

Review

"The Body Keeps the Score" should be a must read for anyone tackling traumas or anyone who wants to understand trauma, patients and doctors alike.
Bessel van der Kolk reminded a bit of Ramachandran because of his sometimes unorthodox approach and willingness to try and experiment. And we need scientists like this.

Overall, it's a highly recommended read for anyone dealing with trauma, for trauma researchers and, in general, simply for curious people who want to better undersand human psychology.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

#Girlboss: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

#Girlboss is the autobiographical story of Nasty Gal's founder Sophia Amoruso and, as she put it, how a nonconformist leveraged her uniqueness to win, rather than fitting in and toeing the line.

Contents

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- Full Summary
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  - And Always Abide This Rule
  - Avoid Revenge: Focus on Yourself
  - Creativity + Business = Success
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- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Not being good a school doesn't mean you can't be successful
- Find out what you're good at and find a way to make a career out of it
- Getting your finances right is key to freedom

Full Summary

A #Girlboss is not just someone who is a boss or runs a business. Being a #girlboss is about being in charge of your own life.

Unconventional Path

An unconventional path means following what you feel like and avoiding what you don't want to do. There's a risk with an unconvetional path though, and that's the risk of failure.
However, that's a no risk, because the risk of failure is always present anyway.
Then, why would you do something that's not true to your nature?

The Importance of Following Your Bliss

Amoruso did try to fit in and she amassed a bunch of jobs she either quickly quit or was fired from. In the beginning she thought it was her laziness problem.
But it actually was that those jobs weren't for her.

Because when she negotiated clothes and resold clothes she loved, she worked so hard and passionately that she didn't even realize time was flying.

Be an Expert at What You Love

Once you understand what you love doing, then you need to become an expert at it. Which should be a pleasure anyway, as this is your thing.
As Angela Duckworth explains in *Grit*, passion deepens when we do what we like.

Ask to Get What You Need

Amoruso one day found herself on the road in the middle of a heavy rain downpour. She didn't have any money on her, but as a Greyhound bus approached she put her thumb out and hitched a ride. For free.
That hit her hard: to get what you want, you need to ask.

Break Rules – but not laws

The author invites the readers to think and move creatively, breaking rules.
But the day she got caught shoplifting and paid a fine to avoid jail-time, she realized it's not worth it to break the law.
Just break the arbitrary rules.

And Always Abide This Rule

And always abide the golden rule of the universe:

> **Do to others what you want them do to you**

Avoid Revenge: Focus on Yourself

One day Amoruso saw a competitor copy her whole website and try to pass it off as her own. I can imagine was a shocking and upsetting experience that must have been.
But the author swallowed her anger and rededicated herself to her business, working on making it better.
If let others sidetrack you from your work and passion, you'll turn your back on your creativity and innovation.
That's a lesson I often ponder as a public writer myself.

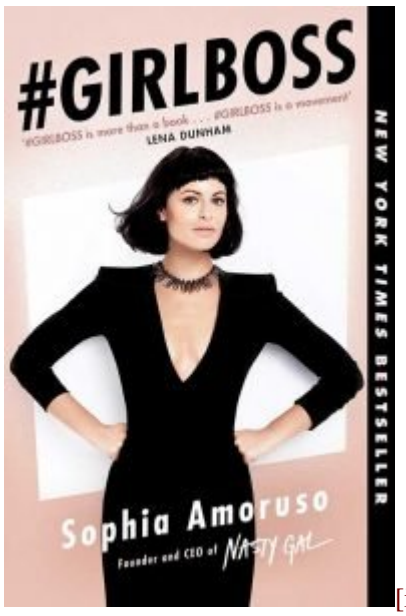
Creativity + Business = Success

A creative entrepreneurial approach questions the rules and challenges the status quo.
But often creative people forget the practicality of the business side. You shouldn't go too deep into either and too far away from one another.
And not to err too into the short-termism of business it's important you hold steady to your core principles.

Confidence

Sophia Amoruso says the biggest glow doesn't emanate from your clothes, but from your confidence. Confidence, as a person and as a brand, means also knowing what you stand for and having the courage to carve your own path in life.

And to Amoruso, it means talking and engaging to people, even strangers, without playing the "aloof game" to look cooler.
Because that actually hides a lack of confidence.



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Real Life Applications

Keep your anticomformista ways!
Your anti-conformism can be your surest-fire way to success. But:

Get great at what you do
You can't be an antinconformista and expect success because of it. That's how all the naughty struggling and entitled artist think and feel, and they deserve staying unsuccessful.
You have to work to deliver on your gifts.

Work around your introversion!
As an introvert myself, I particularly liked how Amoruso tackles this issue. She says people give too much weight to networking (read: Never Eat Alone). She says introverts have different skills and qualities they can leverage. And the Internet era make it easy to work around the introvert's limitations (indeed).

CONS

Scamming and Stealing
I don't think that's cool or gives you any bragging rights. I feel the author sometimes revels in her small-time illegal past, and that's everything but cool to me.
Sign of a sociopath.

> 30 Signs You're Dating a Sociopath (W/ Examples)

Bit Self Aggrandizing
It's understandable since she tells the story of her own success, but at times it feels a bit self-aggrandizing.

Interviewing Digression
I find her description of interviewing, hiring, and firing unneeded.

PROS

Perfect for nonconformists
It's really a great, great book for all artists, noncomformists and people who generally struggle in abiding the rules

while working for someone else.

Review

I liked #girlboss.

I didn't expect it to be honest as I thought this was some feminist-heavy book. It's not and it actually really spoke to me.

In many ways, I feel close to the early trajectory of Sophia Amoruso of struggling in jobs and occupations that didn't satisfy her unconventional nature.
And by leveraging her uniqueness -working hard on it-, she made it her own way.

I can really recommend #girlboss not just to women, but to all unconventional people who want more than a 9 to 5.

Read more book summaries or get the book on Amazon

How to Stop People Undermining You

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to prevent someone from undermining you?

I'm glad you asked.

This article will delve into the nasty social phenomenon of social undermining.

By the end of it, you will know:

- What does it mean to undermine someone
- Why do some people undermine others
- How to stop someone from undermining you

Contents

- Intro
  - How to Undermine Someone
  - Undermining VS Social Climbing
- Why do People Undermine Others
- Undermining Examples
- Why You Must Stop Undermining People
- How to Stop Someone From Undermining You
  - #1. Seek To Turn Them Into Friends
  - #2. Address it Directly
  - #3. Take it To the Surface
  - #4. Ignore It
- Don't Undermine: Build People Up!

- Also read:
- SUMMARY

Intro

We will work with this definition for "undermining someone":

> Someone is undermining you when they say or do anything which decreases your social status, calls into question your moral and ethics, seeks to decrease your authority in a relevant field or causes third parties to lose respect for you.

In simpler words, an underminer acts like an asshole who is out to disempower you.

How to Undermine Someone

There are countless ways to undermine someone.
Here are the most popular:

- Highlight their mistake
- Make a joke at their expense
- Directly challenge or attack them
- Laugh disproportionately at someone's mistake (it's a way to highlight it)
- Diminish their achievements (they cheated, lied, didn't do so great after all)
- Adding something after someone's finished talking

Here is an example from the last one.
Coming from Family Guy it's ironic and exaggerated, but it makes the point quite well:

Adding something is often a sneaky way of highlighting a mistake and stealing the show.
It's as if they were saying "good, *but* you forgot this, now *I* will fix it". And that decreases your authority (and increases theirs).

As you might have noticed, it's a common cheap shot of workplace warriors.

Undermining VS Social Climbing

In a previous article we have talked about social climbing.
Social climbing is taking value away from someone for our own social gain.

Undermining and social climbing are similar and there's often an overlap. Undermining however doesn't have to happen in social settings.

It's because the underminer is not only and not always motivated by social gain, but also by an (unconscious) need to feel better with himself.

And dragging people down is one way to achieve it, whether it's in a social setting or not.

Why do People Undermine Others

It's been my life experience that people undermine when there is envy, animosity, low self-esteem or somewhat of a "competition mentality".

- **Envy**

People undermine you when you're in charge or have more social power but they feel close enough to feel that *they* could be on top. And they resent it.
Undermining you is their way to bring you down so they can go up.

Laughing at someone is one way to undermine someone's status

- **Low self esteem**

Bringing people down is a (sick) way for some to build themselves up. A very sick way. Instead of working on themselves and building alliances of equally cool people, they try to drag you down to make themselves feel better.

- **Socially clueless**

Some people just don't know any better.
They grew up in a family where one-upping and microaggressions are the norm, and never realized how damaging it is.

- **Power move**

Undermining is a way of challenging someone and saying "I can tackle you" or "I'm above you / you're not that far higher up".
With these people, you better nip it in the bud or they will see your silence as a sign of weakness.
Never let the power mover smell blood.
But in my experience, power movers are a minority when it comes to undermining, and the majority are in the first three categories.

Undermining Examples

Here are a few real-life examples types of underminers:

#1. The Ironic Underminer

The ironic underminer throws a jab and then hides behind the "it was just a joke" defense.

Here is an example:
It was a hot day a couple of weeks ago. But it was a long time I hadn't rocked my Japanese-styled overcoat, and I decided to take it for a spin.
When I arrived at my location, I was greeted with a typical ironic undermining move:

> **Underminer**: Hey, nice jacket, are you feeling cold today?

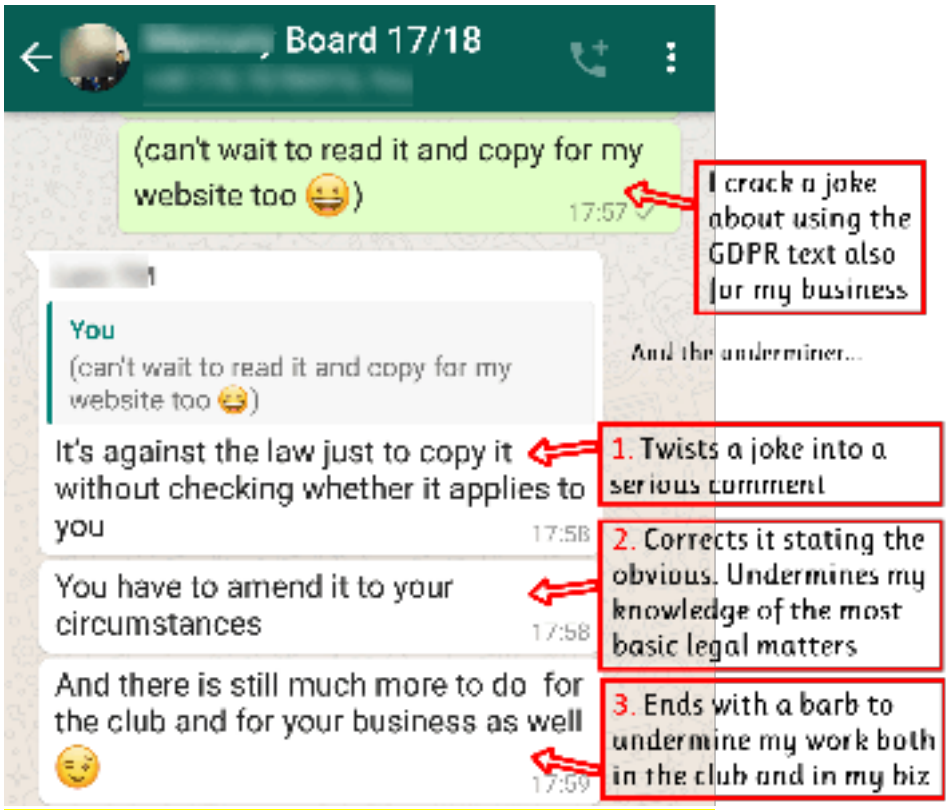
Well no, now that you say it my dear underminer, I finally realize what an idiot I was to overdress -eye-rolling-.

#2. The Serious Underminer

Has this ever happened to you:

You joke about something, and you think it should be obvious it's a joke. Then here it comes the guy who does not get, or pretend he doesn't get it, and schools you as if you what you had said was not in jest, but serious.

If you don't know what I'm talking about, here is a great example.
The topic was that opprobrium that is GDPR:



You can almost see the underminer's finger being wiggled there
Mine was rather obviously a joke, but the underminer twisted it as if it was a serious comment. And then proceeded to take the high-authoritative road on me.

This was undermining + power move.
It reminded me of this scene in Meet the Parents.

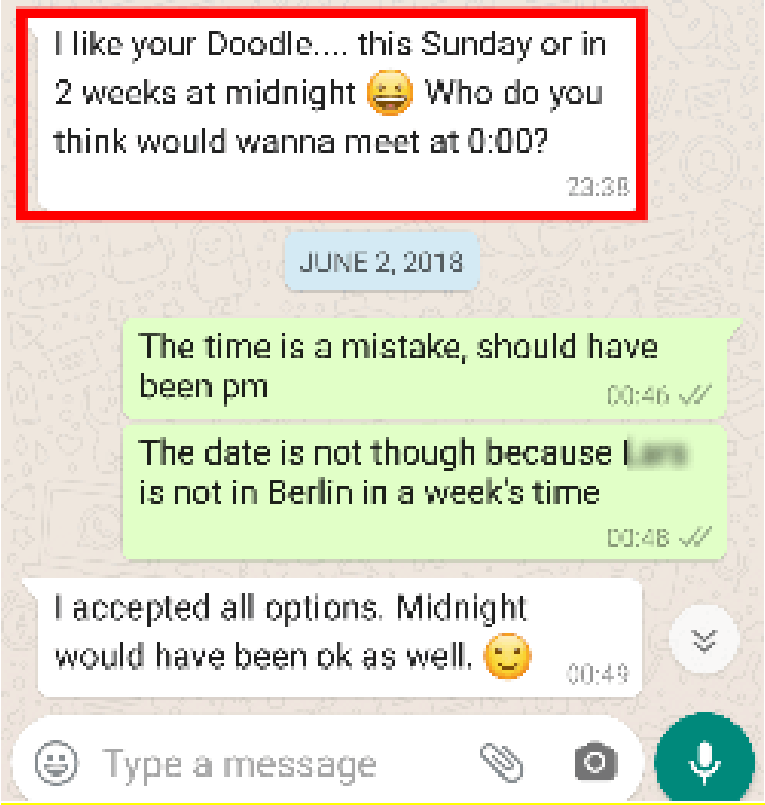
#3. The Inconsequential Mistake Fixer

Some mistakes are inconsequential.

People busy with their life will let it drop.
And socially skilled people would act like Carnegie suggest in *How to Win Friends* and help others save face.

But not the underminer. Any mistake they can fix is too good an occasion to pass up!

Look at this example:



The humorous delivery frames the "I got you SOB" undermining game

Why do some underminers like to fix other people's mistakes?
Fixing someone's mistake is a big shot of confidence for the ego starved. It says "I got you, I'm smarter". And the more someone perceives himself being lower on the value scale, the bigger the boost they get from undermining you.

If you are in a similar situation, deliver your correction in a serious tone, or you risk looking like a cheap underminer who derives joy from pointing out other people's fault.

#4. Undermining in Relationships

One of the most heinous forms of undermining happens in relationships.

It's one of the worst because relationships should be the safest place for us, and undermining instead tells our partners that it's not really "us", but it's you VS me.

Here's an example:

> **Her**: I have 37.000 followers on IG
> **Him**: 36.999 of which are mine

By saying "36.999 of which are mine" he is undermining her achievements and dragging her down. Terrible stuff for any relationship, please don't do that :).

Why You Must Stop Undermining People

If you catch yourself doing any undermining, start by not being too harsh on yourself.

I've been there, I sometimes still fall for it.

But at the same time don't accept that kind of behavior from yourself.
Here's why we must fix it and eradicate it:

It's Low Quality

Not undermining is not about being nice and friendly. Undermining is low-value behavior.
It's passive-aggressive, sneaky and the most glaring sign of "frenemy". High-value people either speak directly or ignore.

It Wastes Your Own Resources

When you undermine you waste resources and mental cycles on the negative aspects of life. On tearing people down instead of increasing your own value.
It makes you bitter and ugly -in the large sense of the word-.

It Doesn't Work

Undermining people won't increase your status. It's more likely to decrease it!
Not everyone will consciously understand what you're up to, but they will catch on to the negative, subconscious feeling of disgust that undermining evokes in most people.

How to Stop Someone From Undermining You

And now here's the meat of the article.

How to stop people from undermining you:

#1. Seek To Turn Them Into Friends

Remember this:

> Many underminers are undermining you out of jealousy and envy, ***plus*** because they think you disdain them

In social dynamics, I call this "self-rejection".
Such as, they think that you're high-value, but that your high value is unavailable to them -or potentially will be used against them-.
Or they think you will reject them -or have already rejected them-, they feel bad about it, and so they jump into "social attack mode".

That's why I recommend first and foremost to try to extend an olive branch, add more warmth to your power, and set-up collaborative frames.

Strategically, it pays off to be high-warmth.
Sometimes, it even pays to be kind first.
See this chart:

	You Seek Win-Win	You Seek Win-Lose
He Prefers Win-Lose	• He rebuffs you • You look naive for trying • .. Or you look superior • You got an enemy • **You both lose**	• You got an enemy • **You both lose**
He Prefers Win-Win	• He thinks he got you wrong • He feels bad he opposed you • Goes out of his way to show repentance and friendship • **You both win**	• You got an enemy • **You both lose**

So first, try to mend things.

Yes, you might be angry at the underminer. But remember that he might be undermining because he thinks you're an a**hole.
And even if you *are* a bit of an ahole, this strategy simply works better.
So show him first you can be a good friend, and then if that doesn't work move to the next steps.

#2. Address it Directly

Prolonged undermining can be annoying and can call into question your actual power, authority, or willingness to confront disrespect.

That's why addressing it directly, either publicly or privately, can be a great antidote.
You would start with something like this:

> **You**: Hey, I'd like to talk you about something. It makes me quite uncomfortable when you…

Two things to remember when you address it directly:

1. Either bring specific, clear and *recent* examples
2. Do it as soon as they undermine you

Otherwise, if you do it too long after they will play dumb, pretend it's not true, or say they were "just joking".

#3. Take it To the Surface

Undermining comments derive their power by being sneaky and looking *almost* like normal comments.

By questioning you want to push the underminer fully into the "bad guy" side, so that he will show himself for who he is.

At that point, once you make it clear for everyone to see what he was up to, you can either take the high road and drop it or you can address it directly.

I much recommend the former.
Here's how that would work with the first example:

> **Underminer**: Do you realize it's like 30 degrees today?
> **You**: It's a hot day, yes, why are you saying that
> **Underminer**: you're wearing a jacket
> **You**: And? Is there something wrong with wearing a jacket on a hot day?

See where you're going?

Now you're cornering him.
You're basically communicating "why the hell are you criticizing me", but playing his own game, without being direct.

Now he either comes up with something, and he looks judgmental and narrow-minded, or he has to backtrack.

If he backtracks, you won.

If he keeps going, you keep cornering him further before he is so over-extended that it's just natural to drop your social ax.
Like this:

> **Underminer**: yeah, it makes no sense to wear a jacket when it's so hot
> **You**: who says that, is there like a law prohibiting to wear a jacket on a hot day
> **Underminer**: not it's just silly
> **You**: I don't think so and you sound a bit judgmental today mate. Anyway, good seeing you

You can also use this technique in a bit more of a confrontational tone if the situation calls for it.
Here's a great example from "Horrible Bosses":

Notice his facial expression: perfect.

#4. Ignore It

This is pure basic frame control.

Both socially and mentally, never let an underminer get to you.

If you can't ignore it and it's taking a toll on your psychological well-being, then you need to address it with one of the two above options.

But if you can truly and honestly be superior and ignore it without the underminer actually denting your self-confidence and your social standing, then you're golden with just moving forward.

You won't waste energy on it and you can focus on yourself.

Eventually, the underminer will be naturally crushed by the huge distance that you will put between yourself and him.

And they will be free to move on to undermine someone else a bit more on their level.

Don't Undermine: Build People Up!

Now, here's an example of a socially skilled, warm and friendly fella.

Compare the first example of my jacket on a hot day with what a more uplifting guy said that same day:

> **Me**: Wow, cool jacket man, as usual you're on top of the game. Where did you get it

Who do you think I liked most?

But also, let's drop who I liked the most as maybe nobody gives a flying F about who I liked most.
Who brought good vibes for everyone? Who improved the mood and who *everyone else* also liked more?
Silly questions, right?

People who make friends, but also people who build alliances and are socially successful don't undermine people, they build them up!

How High-Value People Behave

High-value people don't usually have frenemies that they try to undermine.

They have friends. Or have enemies. Or largely ignore or keep a distance from those they can't make enemies, but don't want to be friends with.

If you have a problem with someone, you talk to them straight.
If you don't like someone, don't engage them and ignore them. Or say it to their face.
Like Scarface brilliantly explained:

Also read:

- How to spot a frenemy
- Dealing with subtly rude people
- Leaders who undermine others
- Social climbing
- Alpha male posturing (quit that shit)

SUMMARY

This article was originally entitled "how to lose friends and make enemies".
Then I changed it to make the topic clearer.

But that old title still tells the truth: undermining people will not make you friends and it can easily make you enemies.

All the while, you poison yourself and you broadcast low-value to the world.
They all sound great reasons to stop undermining and start building up.

Leadership & Self-Deception: Naive Advice in a Strategic World

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Leadership and Self-Deception explaines how our self-centered and self-aggrandizing tendencies can eradicate our natural empathy and kindness and ruin our relationships.

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- Full Summary
  - Self-Centered Box Thinking
  - We're Great – They're Flawed
  - Fake Out of the Box
  - Self-fulfilling Box Thinking
  - Self-Deception Starts With Self-Betrayal
  - Staying Out of the Box
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
  - Concepts could be simplified
  - New category for old (and disparate) concepts
  - Self-centeredness is not unnatural
  - Caring for others is not always our default 'nature'
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We are in the box when we consider our own needs as superior to others
- People can feel when we are in the box, even when we fake kindness
- To stay out of the box you must act on your natural instincts of empathy and caring

Full Summary

About The Author:
There isn't a single author as "The Arbinger Institute", a management consulting firm, decided to release the book with the name of the company and not of any single person.

Self-Centered Box Thinking

The authors talk about self-centered self-deception, which they call "being in the box".

We deceive ourselves when we see other people's needs as less important than our own. We may consider them as simple nuisances to our well-being and see them as objects.

We're Great – They're Flawed

Another consequence of box thinking is to inflate our own qualities and to magnify other people's weaknesses. The main issue of this distorted worldview is that of blaming others instead of looking at our own contributions.

Fake Out of the Box

The goal is to get out of the box.

But most people are only apparently out of the box.

How?

The authors say that sometimes we still harbor negative feelings about the people around, but we externally manifest positive feelings and nice behavior.
That's because people can perceive our real feelings.

> No matter what we do on the outside, people respond to how we feel on the inside

My note:
The authors seem to describe "passive aggressiveness" here.

Self-fulfilling Box Thinking

Our box thinking can feed on itself in a vicious circle.

For example, if we feel we are superior and more knowledgeable than the people around, we will block off new information.

And if we feel somebody is sneaky, we might force them to exhibit that exact behavior simply to confirm our own self-deception.
We treat them as sneaky, they answer with more negative behavior and there goes the vicious circle.

Self-Deception Starts With Self-Betrayal

The author says we are naturally social people and we naturally feel empathy.

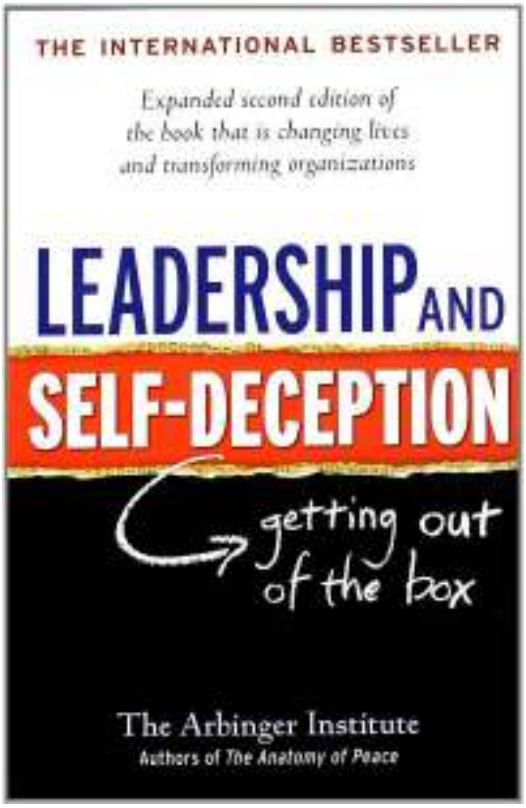
But sometimes we betray ourselves by not following our natural instinct of caring for the people around.
That's the first step towards self-deception.
Since you acted incongruent with who you are, now you need to change your worldview to accommodate your new action.
And you start seeing yourself as a self-centered person, and you will start acting more and more like a self-centered person.

And now, you're in the box baby.

Staying Out of the Box

To stay out of the box, you must keep honoring your instinctive natural feelings of caring.

My Note:
I wonder how do the authors know that the natural instincts will be positive.
Because, in my opinion, they're not.



[image]

Real Life Applications

See Yourself as You Really Are
If I had to derive one teaching from this book, would be to look at reality how it really is and avoiding
As Ray Dalio says in *Principles*: love reality.

Stop Blaming Ohters
This is a natural reflection for many of us. Resist that temptation. And since you're there, develop a mindset of Extreme Ownership to greatly benefit your life.

CONS

There are great ideas here.
But also much that left me wondering:

Concepts could be simplified

The book takes concepts that could be easy and makes them sound complicated by making a new category for them (out of the box or in the box).

I find bigger virtue in taking the complex and making it simple.

New category for old (and disparate) concepts

This is a technique people sometimes use to sound more authoritative, to simplify things (not in this case) or to repackage information in a way that it *seems* like new insight.

I personally find that the book puts too many and disparate human tendencies into this box.
And when there are too many things inside a category, then that category isn't useful anymore.

Self-centeredness is not unnatural

I feel sometimes the author makes a convoluted story to explain what's simply natural in human beings.
It's only normal that any form of live puts his well-being first.

Trying to paint humans' natural self-centeredness as misplaced does not help.
We should talk about ways to use and channel our natural inclinations for the greater good instead, not demonizing them.

Caring for others is not always our default 'nature'

I don't particularly like black and white thinking, and at times it feels to me that "Leadership and Self Deception" devolves into pure black and white thinking.

For example, when they say they encourage us to follow our *natural* instinct of being kind and helpful, that's black and white thinking to me.

As complex as that might be, we have both aggressive and nurturing instincts that co-exist.

PROS

Good idea to "step outside ourselves"
I liked the idea of "stepping outside ourselves" and viewing and considering people as people. It can be helpful for many of us in many situations.

Review

"Leadership and Self-Deception" didn't resonate with me.

I found it simplistic in its blanket rule approach of "we are all hardwired to be nice". Instead, **I find this approach naive, ineffective, and potentially even dangerous.**

But it can be good for people with a superiority complex or people who lack empathy.
It has plenty of great reviews, though, so maybe you will find it helpful for you.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Trump VS Merkel Picture: Body Language Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This article is about body language analysis.
Trump body language analysis and Angela Merkel body language analysis.

Contents

- Merkel VS Trump Body Language Analysis
- 1. Center of Attention: Trump
  - The Only Kid With the Ball
- 2. Investment Level: Trump
- 3. Defensiveness / Aggression: Merkel
- 4. Sheer Power: Trump
- SUMMARY

Merkel VS Trump Body Language Analysis

This picture of Donald Trump and Angela Merkel at the latest G7 made the waves.
I couldn't help but smile when I saw it.

Who do you think has more power here?

Jesco Denzel/German Federal Government via AP
Well, the German government released it believing they'd make Merkel look good. But it only shows how Trump runs the show.
Trump looks isolated, yes, but also the most powerful man in the room.
Here's why:

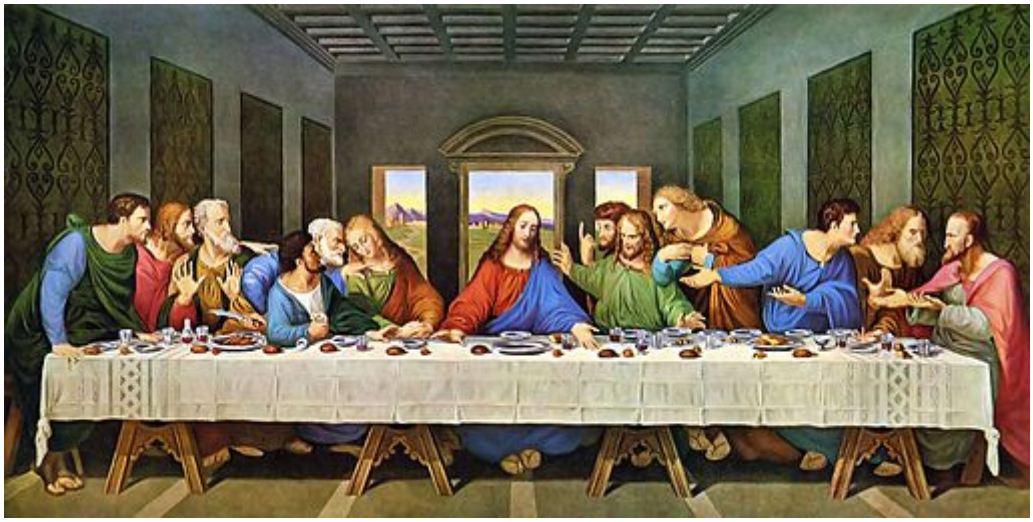
1. Center of Attention: Trump

To begin with, everyone's huddling around Trump. We know why from all the other news: it's because everyone wanted to convince him about something ("don't put up barriers", "don't talk to Nuke Man", "don't pollute the world" etc. etc…).
Which means that everyone wants something from him. Even if in a non positive way, that gives him all the power.

The Only Kid With the Ball

This scene took me back a few decades. It felt to me as if Trump were the only kid in the playground who's got the ball. And he wants to go home.
He's by far the most unpopular, but everyone needs him somehow. And now everyone's begging him to stay. Or at least to leave the ball.
That kid has all the power.

But what if we had no idea of what was going on?
Well, then Trump would look even more powerful. In that picture he's like the sun around which all planets orbit around. It reminds me a bit of the last supper:



2. Investment Level: Trump

The more someone is investing to speak and engage with us, the more they are communicating that *they* want or need something from us. Which gives us power.
In the picture Trump is sitting while all the others are standing. It's a rather obvious indicator that Trump is in the power seat -pun intended-.

3. Defensiveness / Aggression: Merkel

Merkel is in what is sometimes referred to as "towering position", such standing very close, in slightly domineering and threatening fashion, to someone who is sitting.
Merkel's hands are firmly planted on the table and she reaches out to Trump. It's as if she were the interrogator, grilling the suspect.

> **Merkel**: I know you ate the cookie. Just confess and mutti will not get too angry.
> **Trump**: Well… What are you gonna do about it

Trump on the other hand has his arms crossed, a well known and defensive position. It's also a position of someone

who is resisting influence, which is indeed the case.
However his chin is slightly jutting forward, which can be a sign of aggression or, in this situation, of defiance.
Merkel takes the point for being on the offensive, but Trump is not backing down in the slightest.

4. Sheer Power: Trump

Now this is interesting. Merkel has on her side a whole army of people.
And Trump is alone.

Merkel looks definitely like the most liked and supported person in the group.
But the fact that Trump is standing there by himself makes him look much more powerful. Nobody would pile on the weakest for a simple reason: there's no need to get everyone up in arms against the weakest. But it *does* take the whole gang to assault the toughest kid.
In that sense the fact that Trump, by himself, is holding up the whole onslaught makes him look powerful.
Isolated, but powerful.
It's a Trump one man army.
He looks rather comfortable too. As if he were saying

> **Trump**: Keep yapping… I've made up my mind.

To go back to that police interrogation parallel it feels as if the police are trying their hand. But have no real proof.
Hence: lots of barking, but ultimately very little they can really do.
Which is exactly the reality of the situation.

SUMMARY

This is an amazing shot.
It might become a historically symbolic picture, too.
In one single image, it tells the whole story not just of the G7 meeting, but of the whole US / West historical rift.

You might not like Trump, or you might disagree with most of what he does and say -you won't be alone in that camp-.
But the picture here is clear: he's isolated. But still the most powerful man in the room.

Steal Like an Artist: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In “Steal Like an Artist” Austin Kleon teaches exhorts artists to embrace the creational process by “stealing” from other artists, past and present, and to create something new by adding your own spin and art to theirs.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Give Up Originality
  - Start Imitating Your Heroes
  - Keep Hobbies and Leisure
  - Share Your Work
  - Keep A “Praise File”
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- There is no such thing as original art: everyone builds upon others
- Immerse yourself (/steal) from your favorite artists: imitate and then emulate
- When you realize you’re not quite like them, you’ve found your own voice

Summary

Give Up Originality

There is no such thing as a completely original form of art. No person lives in a vacuum and no art is created in a vacuum.
Everyone is influenced by the world and the artists that live around you and came before you.

Some artist can be pushed against the wall by the erroneous concept of “originality”.
Don’t let that happen to you.

> Don’t let “original” be your shackles

Austin Cleon says that art creation is a bit like making children. Same as the DNA of two people combine to give new life, new art is the mixture of different influences to create something new.
That means that the artistic process start when you find the right art to build upon -or to steal from-.

Start Imitating Your Heroes

Sure you can’t plagiarize, but you can imitate them.
Steal Like an Artist recommends you live and breathe the artists you like. Learn what makes them tick, and reproduce their own art for your own consumption. Then branch out to the three people that your favorite artists most learned from.

Eventually, you will realize that you are not quite the same as any of your artists -the author calls them “weaknesses” that you can’t quite replicate the same way-.
You have your own style and you can make your own contribution.
You’re another branch in the tree.

> Surround yourself with art worth stealing” username

Keep Hobbies and Leisure

The author recommends that as much as you love your art, you shouldn't drop other hobbies and passions of yours. They make you a more rounded individual and they are creative sources that will inspire you in your art.

Similarly, don't hole in at your workplace or home studio. But go out, or even change city and live in some other country.

Share Your Work

The author says there are benefits in being unknown and obscure, such as the total freedom of failing and experimenting.
Eventually you want to reach a certain level of fame though. The best way to do that is to share everything you do.

When you share you will receive some harsh criticism. The author says it's important you don't allow the negativity to drag you down or sidetrack you through anger.
And if you can't stop anger from getting to you, then you can use that anger for a source of creativity. Also read:

- How to leverage failure and anger

Keep A "Praise File"

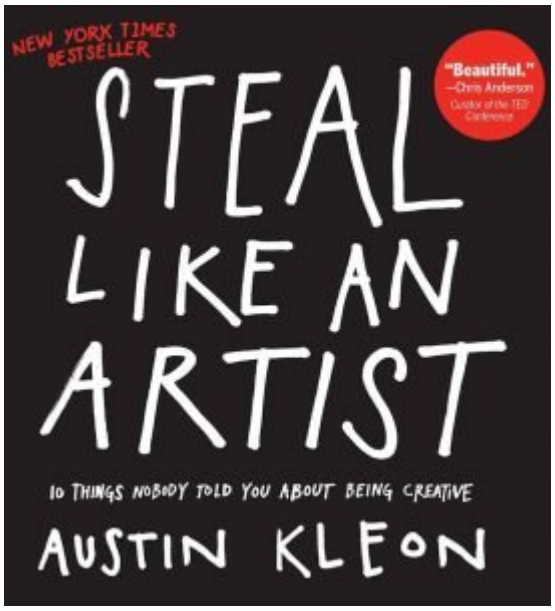
Austin Kleon recommends not only that you use anger as fuel, but also that you save all the praises you get.
You can then read through all the praises you got when you need an uplift.

My Note: This is not such a good idea, lest you remain slave of your own ego and narcissism
I don't like this idea.
It trains your ego to depend on other people's praises. Praise should only be used as a feedback tool, but not to derive ego satisfaction. Sophia Amoruso I recently read also is of the same opinion.

Read more here:

- How to build an antifragile ego

> Copy 1 person and you're influenced. Copy a 100, you're a genius



Real-Life Applications

Stop Stressing About "Copying"
I write a lot of reviews here so I end up speaking with authors. And quite a few of them hold many grudges against anyone who "copied" their work.
Yet I rarely think their work has been copied. It had quite a different flair in my opinion. Don't stress about copycats too much.
As Prada CEO said:

> We're not interested in creating products that nobody wants to copy

Just make sure, of course, that they're not copy-pasting your work and that you find your own voice even when you re-interpret old concepts.

CONS

One-Idea Book
Albeit I like the idea, Steal Like an Artist rotates around one single idea basically. I felt the same for The 5 Second Rule, for example.
But that might be a bit unfair to say as some of the other tips can also add quite a bit of value.

PROS

Brief and Easy
It might have been even shorter -but I often think that-, but it's certainly not long and drawn out. And it's very easy and pleasant to read.

Great Concept
I loved the idea. There's no such thing as new and 100% original. So don't stress about it, consume all media and feel free to say what's already been said… But with your own unique

Review

I absolutely loved the idea and concept behind Steal Like an Artist. I often thought the same -albeit not nearly as eloquently put- and I couldn't agree more with the author.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The 4-Hour Work Week: The Solopreneur Lifestyle

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The 4-Hour Work Week is a book for solopreneurs and digital nomads seeking to escape the shackles of a corporate job, create an online business, and live the life of their dreams.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - The 4-Hour Workweek Criticism
- CONS
- PROS
- The 4-Hour Review

Overview

- You don't need to be rich to live like a rich
- Working a job you don't like is a waste of life
- Time and freedom are equally important as money -and you can have them all-

TPM Strategic Note: Sovereign strategy for independent men
This is not a book about "working less", it's a book about escaping the 9-to-5 and living life on your terms, without having to chase VC money or deal with cofounders. It is a book about the 'new rich' lifestyle, rich in time and freedom, and with enough money to travel and experience the world.
Core Value: 9.5/10 for the "Sovereignty Mindset." **Current Relevance: 6.0/10** for the technical "How-To".

Notes

About the Author:
Tim Ferris is an American author, entrepreneur, investor, and was somewhat of a celebrity at the intersection of "self-development", "bio-hacking", and "solopreneurship".

> **Lucio**: Tim Ferris is a bit of an over-optimizer, sometimes a bit of a Machiavellian marketer, I don't follow him… But he's a smart guy, not a bad guru, and can be a worthy guy to learn from

Introduction

Tim Ferris calls the new generation of people who earn money while enjoying the freedom of no fixed place and time "the New Rich", abbreviated to NR.
These are the overarching steps to becoming a New Rich for The 4 Hour Work Week:

1. **D**efinition: what do you want? In the 4-hour work week it's a good life of experience free of grueling work and rigid structures. I'm in!
2. **E**limination: cut all distractions, material clutter, and useless tasks, and focus on the 20% producing 80% of results
3. **A**utomation: outsource, hire VA, and build processes that run without you
4. **L**iberation: now… You're free.

Millionaire Without Millions

Do you need to work like a slave to live like a millionaire?

Tim Ferris says that the common-sense rules of the world are nothing but fragile collections of socially reinforced illusions.

Meaning: no, being a millionaire and living like a millionaire are two different things. You don't need to slave away at a desk on a grueling, soul-crashing 9-5.

> **Most people will choose unhappiness over uncertainty**

Money Isn't Freedom

Tim Ferris makes a compelling point that lots of money and much ownership is not great and that sometimes it ends up being enslaving and oppressing.

They have riches, but the riches actually have them

Money Multipliers: WWW

Money is multiplied in life depending on the quantity of "W" you control in life, such as:

- When you do it
- Where you do it
- With whom you do it

The 10 Commandments

Tim outlines 10 rules that you need to consider and keep in mind;

1. **Retirement Is Worst-Case Insurance**. Working your whole life to enjoy the last years is a fool's errand
2. **Interest and Energy Are Cyclical**. Alternating work and rest is necessary to work at your full potential
3. **Less Is Not Laziness**. Our culture glorifying sacrifice over productivity is bogus
4. **The Timing is Never Right**. It's never the right moment for significant changes, and that's the exact reason why you should do them
5. **Ask for Forgiveness, Not Permission**. Don't give anyone the opportunity to stifle your growth opportunities
6. **Emphasize Strengths, Skip Weaknesses**
7. **Things in Excess Become Their Opposite**. As in the example of money, as also explained in Taoist philosophy
8. **Money Alone Is Not the Solution**.
9. **Relative Income > Absolute Income**. The per-year income is arbitrary and misleading. Time is equally important and it becomes *more* important once you reach the minimum amount for your goals
10. **Distress Is Bad**.

Conquering Fear

Tim Ferris uses some techniques from How to Stop Worrying and Start Living.
Here's his recipe to beat fear:

1. Define what's the worst-case scenario
2. Identify how could fix or improve on that worst-case scenario
3. Define the benefits

You'll see most of the time that the worst-case scenario is not that bad or you can take steps to either prevent it or fix it.
And the upside potential will still be there.

> **Conquering fear = defining fear**

It's Crowded In The Middle

99% of people in the world are convinced they cannot achieve great things, so they aim for average. It's crowded and the level of competition is the fiercest for mediocre spots.

If you're insecure, don't worry: that's what everyone else is. Don't overestimate the competition and underestimate yourself.

DreamLining

There's less competition for bigger goals and it will provide an adrenaline infusion.
Ferris defines "dreamlining" as putting a timeline on what sounds like unrealistic goals.

> **Don't overestimate the competition and underestimate yourself.**

Don't Get Stuck Making More & More

The 4-Hour Work Week introduces a slight variation of the hedonic treadmill.

Ferris says that people keep working when they use a financial goal instead of defining what they want and how they will remove themselves from their business.
They will keep repeating themselves "I'll work till I make X money", but X is a moving target and keeps increasing.

> **Until I make X money is code for "fat man in BMW"**

Tim Ferris then says how he escaped the US after he was fired to avoid taking an Uzi into a McDonald's and becoming a fat man in a BMW (hilarious).

> **NR is doing exciting things, not just owning enviable things**

The Busy Myth

Tim Ferris says we live in a world where "busy" is more important than "productive".
Being busy is a form of laziness: lazy thinking and indiscriminate action. And being overwhelmed is as unproductive as doing nothing and far more unpleasant and unhealthy.

> **Busy is a form of laziness**

Escape the Office

In an office environment, you are expected to work 40 hours minimum no matter if you can produce the same results in 5.
But a 9-5 is not the kind of place where you want to be productive, because the expectation will be to produce 8 times more to fill the 40+ hours.
9-5 is arbitrary, a collective social agreement, and a dinosaur of old legacies: you don't need that.

> **Doing less is the path of the productive**

Pareto & Parkinson

Tim Ferris introduces the Pareto and Parkinson's law to be more productive:

1. Focus 80% of your time on the 20% that produces the most results (Pareto)
2. Shorten the work time to limit your tasks to the important

Don't be busy: be productive!

Outsource & Delegate

The goal is to free your time to focus on better and bigger things, so even when you can do it yourself more cheaply it can still make sense to outsource.

Delegation dangers:

1. Automation to inefficient operations magnifies the inefficiency
2. Automation applied to efficient operations will magnify the efficiency

And don't forget:

1. Eliminate before you delegate: never delegate something that can be eliminated
2. Never delegate something that can be automated

Picking a Market

And here are Ferris' top tips for picking a good market:

- **Know the Market**

Don't speculate about your target market. Be a member of your target market instead, so you know it inside out.

- **Pick a Niche**

Don't go broad: too much free information, too many competitors. Don't do dogs and pets lovers, do training German Shepard instead.

- **Be First**

The author recommends you become the largest, best, or first. Be a big fish in a small pond instead of a big fish in a big pond.
Tim Ferris prefers first.

- **Price High**

Less competition, more customers with money who will return and complain less. Between 50 and 200, higher customers need to speak to someone.

- **One Clear Sentence**

Your main benefit should be one sentence. And *clear*.
Tim Ferris uses Apple's example of "one thousand songs in your pocket", which later Sinek will also use for *Start with WHY*.

> **People can dislike, but should never misunderstand you**

Getting Fired is Great

Tim Ferris quit 3 jobs and got fired from all the rest.

He says that it's a God-sent benefit to you.
Most people won't quit, but someone else makes the decision for you so you don't have to sit in the wrong job for the rest of your life.
I can only quit Tim Ferris here because it's so eloquently beautiful:

> Most people aren't lucky enough to get fired and they die a slow spiritual death over 30 to 40 years of tolerating the mediocre

God, I can't even start on how much I love that quote!

> **The average man is a conformist accepting misery with the stoicism of a cow in the rain**

Ferri's path into entrepreneurship has been similar to my own path, where I just couldn't take working for mediocre people anymore.
I discuss the motivation behind ThePowerMoves' business here.

Effectiveness & Further Tips

- Don't finish what you start if it's not worth it
- Don't read it unless you need it immediately
- Learn to be difficult and assertive
- Don't worry to offend someone when requesting effective communication: hard feelings pass, and foolish behavior sticks
- Check emails only once a day
- Batch things together and address them all together

The 4-Hour Workweek Criticism

There is much criticism of Tim Ferris online, including many of the claims he makes about his awards, successes and

I don't have enough free time to investigate his background and pick sides.
One of the reasons Ferris attracted criticism though is that both his advice and personal background sometimes fall into a gray area.

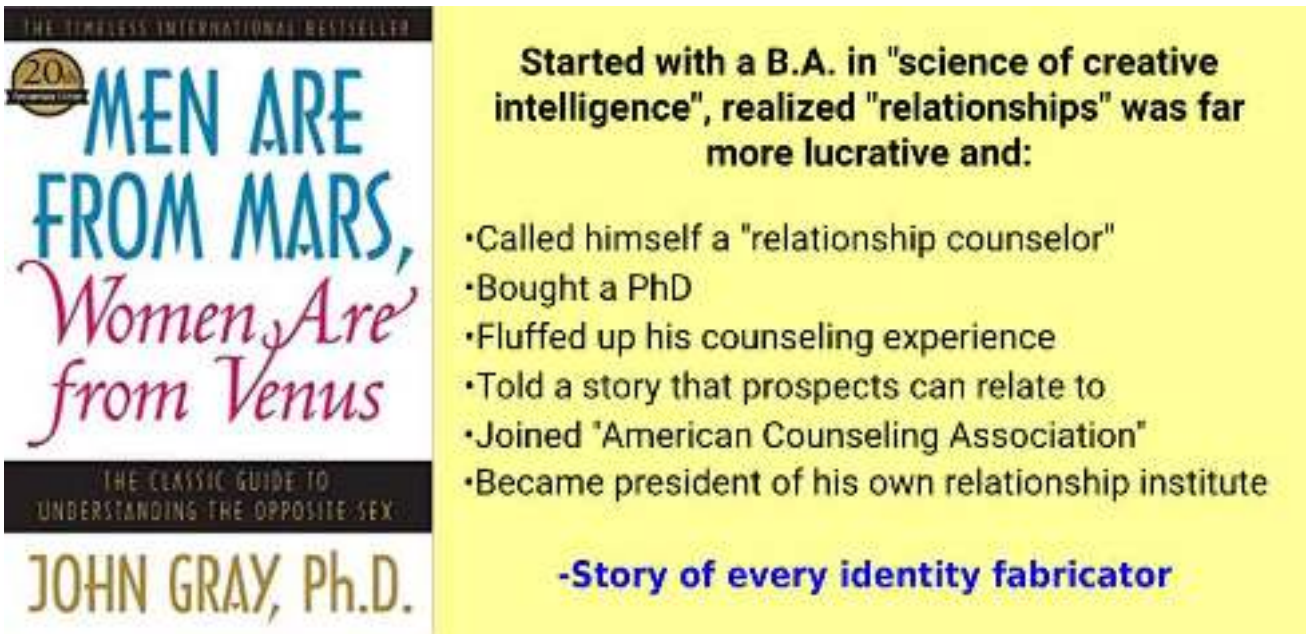
For example:

- **4 Hour Expert**

I didn't like the tips on how to sell your expertise by faking it.

Yes, Tim Ferris doesn't exactly tell you to "fake it", but let's not BS each other here, what he proposes is basically to build some easy reputation to then pitch your products.

It reminds me of some snake oil salesman who hit it big without having the expertise:



- **“Brain Quickening Pills” background**

Also, Tim Ferris was selling “brain quickening pills”, and… Oh well, let’s not get down that rabbit hole now :).

CONS

- **Time Wasted in Details**

The 4-Hour Work Week wants to be a how-to book, so the details suit the goal.
But in my opinion, it gets too much at times when he provides URLs and phone numbers (!) of companies, or talks too long about virtual assistants.

- **Scatterbrained**

From the meaning of life to speed reading to getting cheaper tickets: I had the same feeling as for *The 4-Hour Body*. Such as a bit too many topics in one book.
But I have to add this: I enjoyed them all.

- **Genetic, Mass Tourism Travel Tips**

Tim Ferris says that your destination is as safe as your place and that worries are overplayed. But that’s a wild generalization only valid for virgin first-time travelers -and even there, are plenty of exceptions-.

- **Misleading Information on Favelas**

Just a little later Ferris says he avoided favelas because of civilians with machine guns and pedestrians wielding machetes. Where did he get that idea?
The movie City of God.
Far from me to say favelas are safe -they’re not- but Ferris isn’t combating generalizations with that.
You can enter favelas in relative safety, they have electricity and running water.

- **Imprecise Travel Tips**

Travel tips tend to be quick and dirty, not adding much value in my opinion. Ferris mentions Taipei mentioned as part of his Chinese recommendation, but only Chinese people believe Taipei is in China :).

- **Sound Self Aggrandizing**

> *I could be racing motorcycles in Europe, scubadiving on a private island in Panama, resting under a palm tree between kickboxing sessions in Thailand or dancing tango in Buenos Aires.*

He's telling a story, but it does sound a bit like tooting his own horn at times.

- **Less Applicable Today**

As of today (2019), some of the advice and "how-to" information in The 4-Hour Workweek is oldish.
I live in Berlin and the cheap rent Ferris boasts is double what he mentions, if not triple.
I'm not sure his business ideas are also as relevant, I've met plenty of people who did the same as Ferris did in supplement and nutrition stuff.
But there's certainly a lot of information that is valid anytime, anywhere.

- **Poor Pick Up Advice**

The advice he gives to ask women for numbers is reminiscent of bad PUA style -Ferris is a friend of Neil Strauss- and not really that effective.
But the goal is just to overcome fear and not really to pick up so it doesn't matter in that case.

- **Poor Feedback Technique**

Ferris shares quite a few great communication insights, including negotiation techniques. But I was really surprised when he introduced the old "sandwich feedback technique" to deliver feedback.

It's not a good technique. Everyone knows it and everyone's waiting for the negative part, completely disregarding your compliment (example below).

Read "Thanks for The Feedback" for more information.

PROS

- **Autobiographical Description: Hilarious!**

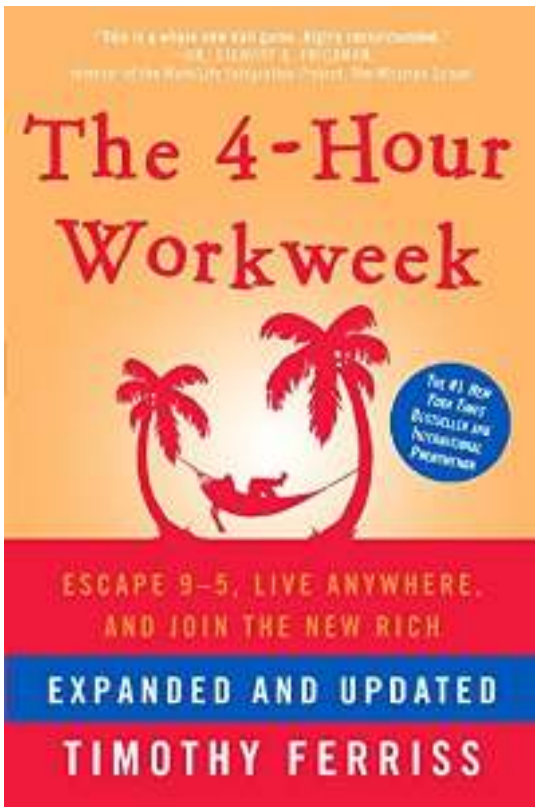
The autobiographical description of Tim Ferris is one of the best I've ever read. It's funny, exciting, and self-deprecating at the right point. Perfect.

- **Lots of Power Moves**

The 4-Hour Work Week has plenty of smart power moves and great social skills tips. For example, how to build authority and avoid the "founder" title as it screams startup.

- **Great Communication Tips**

Similar to the above, plenty of great *sales and influencing* techniques, both to negotiate with bosses and with providers.



The 4-Hour Review

Guys, I listed a lot of cons and sometimes Tim Ferris' advice can sound "gray area".

But don't get it wrong: "*The 4-Hour Work Week*" is a masterpiece for me and I listed it in my *best entrepreneurship books list.*

It's not just about the actual advice though, which by now has already aged quite a bit.
It's the mindset behind that I vibed with.

I see quite a bit of myself in Tim Ferriss. That guy is me, but just a bit brighter, smarter, much more successful, and taller. Albeit that last one is easy :).
Yeah, basically we're not alike at all :D, but I see many similarities and he really speaks my mind when he talks about the way of life of the New Rich.

Learn the truth about entrepreneurship

> The Entrepreneurial Power Model: A Master Guide to Leverage & Influence

The Science of Trust: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Science of Trust provides readers with an overview of the research literature on relationships, including but not confined to the work of the author John Gottman.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Unhappy Couples Are All The Same
  - Expressing Resentment is Wrong
  - Anger is OK
  - Who Dies Young
  - Trust in a Relationship
  - Sex and Domestic Violence
  - Sex and Communication
  - Betrayal and Trust
  - Dominance in Relationships
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Friendship is key for long-lasting love relationships
- More communication would greatly improve sex life
- Trusting trustworthy partners -and people in general- is great for the relationship for general health
- Mistrust and betrayal are more likely when he has more power, with negative effects, and when she cannot influence him

Full Summary

About The Author: John Gottman is an American psychologist researcher who focused most of his career researching relationships.
He is also the author of "*Ten Lessons to Make Marriage Work*" and "*The Man's Guide to Women*".

Unhappy Couples Are All The Same

You probably heard about Tolstoj's famous sentence:

> *All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.*

Well, Tolstoj was wrong.
Happiness provides the liberty of much diversity of expressions. Unhappy couples have all similar dysfunctions instead.

Expressing Resentment is Wrong

Gottman takes aim at many books that have been written without research, such as *The Intimate Enemy*.

The Intimate Enemy postulates that suppressing resentment is bad, so it advised couples to hit each other with rubber bands.
But that has no cathartic effect and instead only builds resentment.

Anger is OK

That being said, anger in itself is not bad.

Many therapists are wrong to believe that anger should be suppressed.
It's the escalation of anger that is bad, especially when expressed through the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

Escalation led to divorce after 5.6 years after the wedding.

Who Dies Young

Gottman says that there are people who, reliably, die young.

These are:

- Lonely
- Socially isolated
- Disconnected

And they're predominantly men.
Lonely people are more attentive to social cues but tend to misread them. They allow others to treat them unfairly in order to be liked, but they're also extremely suspicious of potential unfairness.
Such as, they withdraw to avoid the potential hurt of trusting someone, and end up not trusting anyone, including the trustworthy ones.

Something that some men should be attention to.
Read:

- The Truth about The Red Pill
- Growing past The Red Pill

Trust in a Relationship

Trust in a relationship translates in this sample question:

> Are you there for me

And Gottman adds "can I trust you to pick me over your family", "can I trust you to pick me over your friends".

Sex and Domestic Violence

Of the couples with domestic violence incidences that Gottman studies, most of them had dissolved after 9 years.

But here is a crazy piece of information:

Gottman says he was shocked to find out that women consistently told them that the best sex they had in their lives was after a beating by their husbands.
As I explain in how to make him crazy, there's a certain relationship between violence and arousal.

Sex and Communication

Gottman says that all the books on sex and communication talk either about sex or about communication.
He says, though there's a need for the two fields to combine.
Too many women fake orgasms and too many men think their penis is the only way of giving her an orgasm.

Betrayal and Trust

Gottman says we should not forgive when the pain was too deep, the betrayal too big and the masquerade too evil that forgiving would damage our own sense of self-esteem.

But when -and only when- both partners are willing to reconcile the prognosis is good.

Also, read:

- Scientific facts about cheating
- Signs your partner is cheating

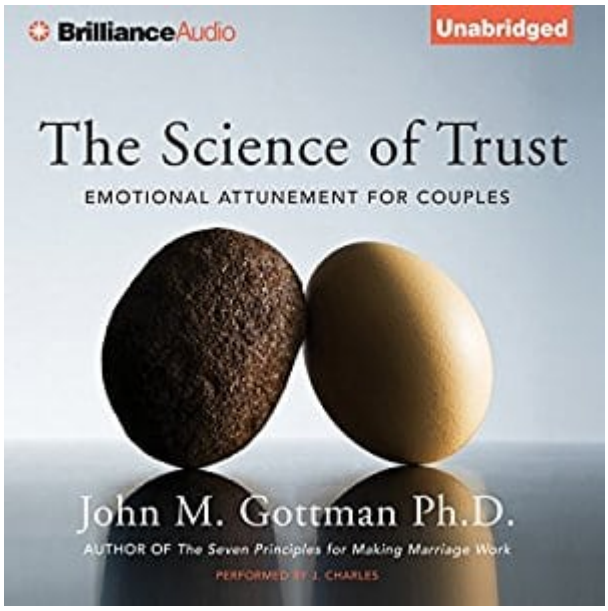
Dominance in Relationships

Gottman says that albeit men are more likely to emerge as leaders in initially leaderless groups, gender is not a good predictor of dominance when:

- groups meet for extended periods of time
- members know each other well
- when the tasks draw on skills and expertise more women's competence

But the dominance in family power literature is complex and inconclusive.
But Gottman quotes Understanding Family Process, a book from 1993. And you might be better served with these:

- How women control relationships
- Sexual power dynamics



CONS

For Academicians
Gottman made me chuckle when he made fun of that as a researcher he must define and give clear directives,

unlike Oprah or Dr Phil :).
But The Science of Trust does get very technical at times.

Too Long
The part on game theory was unnecessary way too long. It felt to me it had barely much to do with relationships at a certain point.

PROS

Great Summary & Review
The first chapter reviews all the major milestones in John Gottman's decades-long research. That's really good there.

Dialogues
I liked the dialogue examples, to which Gottman added his own commentary of what the couple was thinking to add further clarity and explanatory power.

Review

All John Gottman books are above average when it comes to content and relationship insights.

The Science of Trust is a bit more academic though and ends up talking a bit less about relationships and more about relationship literature, exploring Sue Johnson, Shirley Glass, attachment styles, etc.

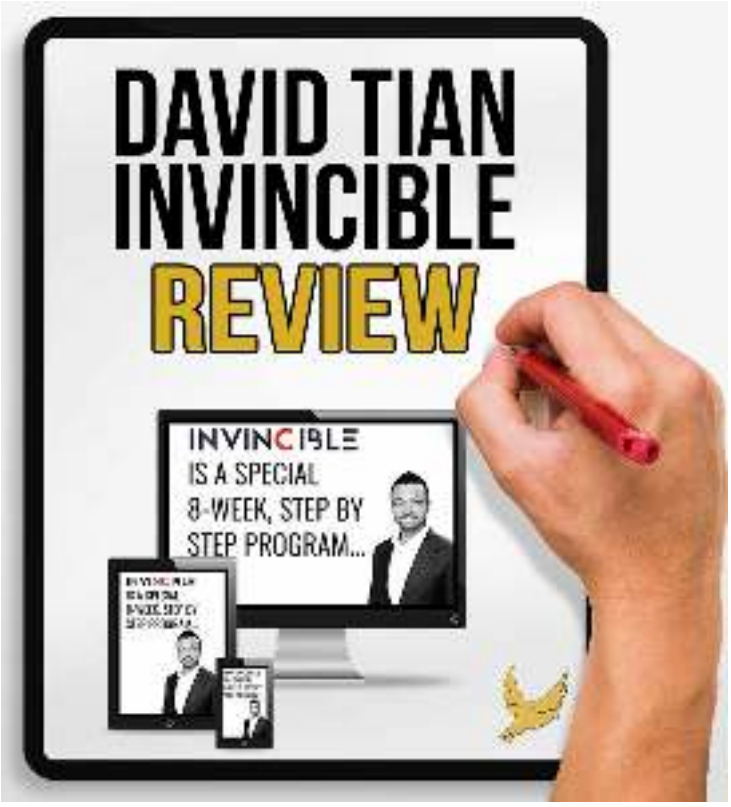
Gottman also gets very technical and somewhat lost around game theory, which felt a bit tangential to the relationship topic.
I wished for a more result-oriented book, this felt a bit more speculative.

Check out the best books on relationships or get the book on Amazon

Invincible by David Tian: Review & Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Invincible is a dating product for men by David Tian.
It consists of ad-hoc videos, recordings of live seminars, guided meditations, and a few examples from movies as well.



Contents

- What I liked
  - Focus on Fundamentals
- What I Liked Less
- Dating Skills Review Controversy
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

What I liked

I liked a lot of things from David Tian's Invincible program.
Some of them:

Focus on Fundamentals

I liked a lot that David Tian stresses the fundamental which goes well beyond dating. Basics such as:

- Women won't make you happy (but a life purpose will)
- Whatever you feed your mind will shape you
- You need a greater goal than getting women

Dispelling Some Seduction Myths

He says a few key tenets that seem to have been lost in much of the seduction circles:

- Being friends is not the end of the seduction but can often be the beginning (true)
- Getting introduced first is much better than cold approaches (true in many instances)

Value / Investment / Beliavability

David Tian explains that attraction is a mix of value, investment (compliance), and what he calls "beliavability" (whether she believes your sincerity).

What I found interesting though is that Tian says that your attraction level is given by the lowest level of any of the three.
I'm not convinced about that, to be honest, I think it doesn't make sense that a billionaire who's getting huge compliance will be thrown away just because he doesn't seem too "beliavable".
But I could maybe agree that the lowest level in each has a bigger weight than the simple average.

I also agree with him that **most players stumble in the beliavability area** and, while they think that being a player is always an advantage, that's actually not the case for men who want to date high-quality women.

This is one of the reasons why pick-up artists like Todd Valentine get a lot of shit-tets: they seem fake.

Also, read:

- **Players VS providers**: it's about quality, not a role
- Seducers types: the different types of seducers

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

Body language

Again, the author stresses what matters most: the fundamentals.

I think David Tian has a good grasp of body language.
He says that when you enter a club you should not look around as that makes you look insecure.
Stop instead, then look around. But when you walk, don't look around.

I don't fully agree, you can walk around a little bit and if you're a cool guy you should probably catch some eye contact from the gals. Smile a bit, then look straight again.
I often do it with great effects, and I'm not even attractive, I just carry myself well.

Overall great overview of body language, though.
Another two great tips:

- Chin slightly up as you walk
- Mirror her angle: if she angles away and you face her head it's low value

Also, read:

- Alpha male body language
- How dominant men speak (and from there go to how they move)
- The archetypes of dominance

Eye Contact

Blink as little as possible.
And then a great power move: the sticky eyes, something also Leil Lowndes talks about.
When you want to move eye contact away from someone, start moving your head first but keep your eyes on them for a second.
Then move your gaze away as well.

Conversation: Focus On Positives

Cut off the negative threads and expand the good ones.
If someone makes you a compliment don't let them get away with something generic.
But ask instead "what did you like about it", which will make them invest more in you.
Very good advice there.

Date Moving to Several Different Locations

I like the idea of picking a few date locations that progressively move toward your place. So it makes it easier to end up there.

Spend no more than an hour and a half on each place.
The more you move, change, and experience together, the more it will feel like you know each other for a long.

Great stuff there.

At Home

Keep the music and dim light on the way out so your place is ready for the pull.
Love the tip, will start implementing it.

Then tell them where's the bathroom right away as you go in.

I prefer instead to go to the bathroom myself before we leave and let her go as well.
Why?
Because it can beak the atmosphere if she goes to the bathroom as soon as she's in your house.
A few other great ideas:

- Put on a foreign movie with beautiful landscapes
- Know the movie so you know when to make your move
- Don't give her what she wants if she's not giving you what you want. For example, if she wants to make out but not have sex, then don't make out.
- Create contrasts: be passionate and heated when making out but boring and factual in conversation.

Take care of your voice

But what I really, really liked most was David Tian's introduction to speaking and voice tonality.
He introduces and the mellow way he can manage to speak is really fascinating.

What I Liked Less

Some things I like a bit less. For example:

1. Texting Advice

Tian proposes ping texts which are better than Kezia's texts, but still, I don't like the idea of the ping texts.

Read more on texts:

- Text flirting
- What to text when she doesn't reply
- How to text flaky girls

2. Exercises for Masculine Energy

Tian had a few exercises to build masculine energy which entailed listening to rap music and switching from calm to aggressive, for example by imagining an intruder at home.

They were not my cup of tea but could work well for you.

3. Longish

I had Invincible sometimes in the background just listening to the audio and other times to fill some gaps.
And it took me a long time to finish.
In my opinion, some fat could have been cut out and made a bit leaner and meaner.

4. Overlap With Other Sources

Tian says one of his mentors was Sebastian, which was also Chase Amante's mentor (read here: *How to Make Girls Chase*).

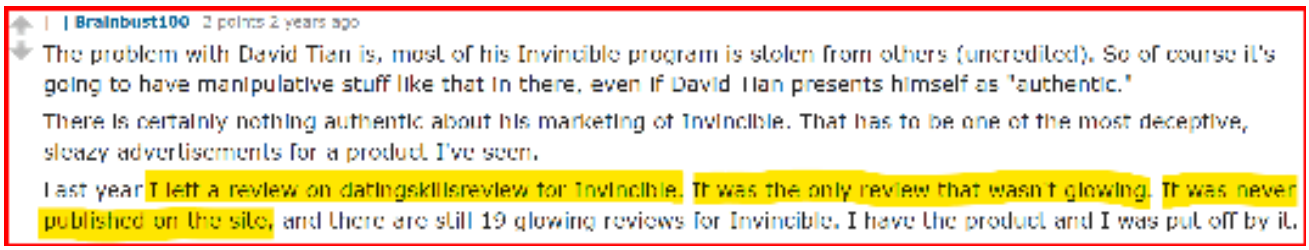
So there's some overlap with the value and investment part. But that's fine: valid content which correctly describes reality will always overlap when we're talking about the same topics.

Where I found the overlap a bit too strong is with Tony Robbins and programs such as *Personal Power II* and Robert Greene's *The Art of Seduction*.
Tian is very open about the overlap with Robbins but I haven't heard about Greene.
That was a bit befuddling for me since it was a sizable portion of the course.
"The Art of Seduction" is an awesome book though, so it won't hurt you to listen to that part.

Dating Skills Review Controversy

I was taking a look at other reviews of David Tian.

And stumbled upon this comment on Reddit:


| Brainbust100 2 points 2 years ago

The problem with David Tian is, most of his Invincible program is stolen from others (uncredited). So of course it's going to have manipulative stuff like that in there, even if David Tian presents himself as "authentic."

There is certainly nothing authentic about his marketing of Invincible. That has to be one of the most deceptive, sleazy advertisements for a product I've seen.

Last year I left a review on datingskillsreview for Invincible. It was the only review that wasn't glowing. It was never published on the site, and there are still 19 glowing reviews for Invincible. I have the product and I was put off by it.

Well, I had to test it out.
So I left an overall positive review for "*Invincible*", and also mentioned what I liked less.
Indeed, the review was never published in Dating Skills Review.

Also, read:

- **Affiliate scams**: don't put too much trust in online reviews

Real-Life Applications

Train, don't learn
You need to apply what you learn or you will forget and you're only wasting time. Learning is the first step, it gets you to the staircase. Then you need to start walking.
Consuming the content is useless. Training the content is what makes the difference.
True that.

Wear glasses if…
… you have big cheekbones. When there's space between your glasses and your face, it doesn't look good.
I thought this was a smell detail but really genius. I had never thought about it that way and it's very true. Indeed Tian has a good sense of style.

Review

So, what's the final verdict?

Positive.

I liked Invincible and my review of David Tian as a trainer would be equally positive.

He markets his academic credentials and Ph.D. a bit too aggressively, also considering it's in Asian languages and culture, not in any people or psychology-related field.

Yet, Tian shows a good understanding of psychology and of dating and Dating Power Dynamics.

I particularly liked he addresses most of the basics.

I would have personally liked Invincible to be a bit shorter and give proper credit to Robert Greene, but that might be just me.
Overall, thumbs up.
4/5.

Update:
After having gone through more courses and resources, and after having researched a bit more, I downgraded the product.

Also check out: **best dating resources for men**.

The Power of Now: Spirituality for Agentic Men (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of Now teaches enlightenment and spirituality through meditation and a specific approach to mindfulness that lets go of past and future worries to only focus 'in the now'.

TPM Strategic Take: Detachment as the Mental Power.
Detachment helps ambitious men overcome the 'me-me-me' syndrome, where weak self-centeredness makes you emotionally and socially over-reactive and behaviorally defensive and threat-oriented because you're too worried to 'look good' to yourself and the world. That's weak narcissism, and meditation and detachment can help you overcome it. See:
Spirituality for agentic men ↗

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  - Disempowered "guilt-tripping" on humanity
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- Review
  - The Power of Now for Ambitious Men

Overview

- Separate yourself from the overthinking mind
- Remove the negative influences of the past and the future: focus on the now
- When your full focus is in the immediate present, in the now, there's rarely any suffering

Notes

About the Author:
Eckhart Tolle is a German-born spiritual teacher and practitioner.

1. Forget Past and Future

Tolle makes the case that lots of our suffering and pain happen because we allow the past and the future to poison our present.
This makes no sense to Tolle because the past and future don't even exist.

> The past cannot survive in your presence: it can only survive in your absence

TPM Note: Look into the future for strategy and goal-achievement.
Use "power of now" to stay focused during intense work or quality time with your loved ones. But look into the future in your strategic mode.

2. Now is All There Is

Past and future are mental constructs that bear no reality.

Things only happen in a continuous stream of present moments.
When you feel something about the past you are feeling it now. So it's not true that you are feeling some pain from the past: you are experiencing it in the success of present, "now moments".

Our feelings indeed can only give you information about the now, about this specific moment.
What we call the past is nothing but a collection of once-present moments. And the future is made of present moments that have yet to materialize.

3. How "Now" Empowers You

Dwelling on past pains and future worries does nothing good for you.

If you deal with them in the now instead, you will only be dealing with smaller problems that you will be tackling without any future worries.

For example, you might have a huge project that is running behind schedule.
Most people project the future worry of not making it on time or having to face an angry boss in the now, which does nothing good neither for either them or the completion of their project.

If you tackle it instead in the now, you can focus on doing all the actions that need to be taken now, free of future worries.

> **The secret of life is dying before you die. And finding there's no death**

4. Pain is Focus on What You Can't Change

Eckart Tolle says that we experience pain when are unhappy about things we have little control over.
The past for example, or future issues we don't feel like we can fully control.

It's because we focus too much on the past and the future but we only have the present to tackle them. And the present cannot always fully tackle future events and it can hardly rewrite the past as well (albeit Tony Robbins shares a few techniques to change your past memories).

5. We Create Pain – And We Can Erase It

As much as the past and future are our own construct, so is pain.
It might feel like external circumstances bring pain to us, but that's not true: we create our own pain.

Accept Unavoidable Pain

The Power of Now doesn't deny that some pain is unavoidable.
Death of loved ones, for example, will always be painful.

Tolle says that you should accept unavoidable pain for what it is: a part of life that cannot be changed.
And you will avoid needless suffering.

Accepting means that you stop wishing it weren't, or that you stop blaming yourself for any possible contribution.

After all, being present in the now is not strictly about avoiding, suppressing, or ignoring all pain and negative feelings.
But it provides the strength to accept them.

> **Accept it as if you chose it**

6. Ego & Thinking Are The Enemies

We equate our ego with the thoughts in our minds.

The problem with that is that our mind is always projecting into the future to secure its survival.

This is why you cannot find the present moment as long as you are in your mind.
For Tolle indeed the enlightenment is to stop the incessant thinking of our mind.

Tolle says that Rene' Descartes got it wrong with his famous "I think, therefore I am".
He made the typical mistake of equating thinking with being and identity with thinking.

7. How to Live in The Now: 3 Steps to Enlightenment

To reach an enlightenment state you need to separate yourself from your constantly thinking mind and observe it as you'd observe a third party.

Tolle proposes several different ways to do that:

- **Ask yourself "What will my next thought be?"**

When you fully focus on that question your mind will stop its background humming for a while and you will create a gap in the flow of thinking.

- **Listen to your mind without judging**

Judging is an act of your mind, so when you allow your mind to judge its own thought you are allowing it free rein.

So for example if in the middle of something you feel like taking a break outside, follow that impulse instead of deeming it unrealistic.
Conversely, if you're outside taking a break, listen if your thought says "you should be working instead of wasting time" but don't judge it. Just acknowledge it exists.

This "listening without equating yourself to your emotions and thoughts" is a core concept of mindfulness and Eastern tradition.

- **Experience full alertness**

A great to focus on the now is putting yourself in a state where you are awaiting for something important to happen.

When you are in a state of tense awaiting your body and mind are fully alert without any spare resources for worrying about the past and future.

Active waiting can also be a tool you can use to enter a state of *flow*, for example before an exam or before a race. This is why, Tolle says, Jesus answered the disciples who asked him how to live a good and peaceful life:

> Be like a servant waiting for the return of the master

The servant, fully alert, is living in the now.

> **"The second coming of Jesus is in your enlightenment**

8. Relationships In the Now

Living in the now can be of great help to your relationship.

It allows you to listen without ego and without judging. And you will have no need to possess and restrict your partner.

However, it can also make your relationship difficult when only one partner lives in the now.
Eckhart Tolle says that light and darkness cannot coexist.
The non-enlightened partner will always try to bring you back to the pains of the past or the worries of the future.

> **Only light can recognize light**

Addiction & Relationships

The author says that any addiction starts with pain and ends with pain. Being addicted to one person is like being addicted to any other substance.

The addictions, states the Power of Now, stem from a personal refusal to address personal pain.

Relationships With(out) Yourself

When you are enlightened, says Tolle, you won't have a relationship with yourself anymore because you move beyond equating yourself with your ego.

9. Mind & Body Go Together

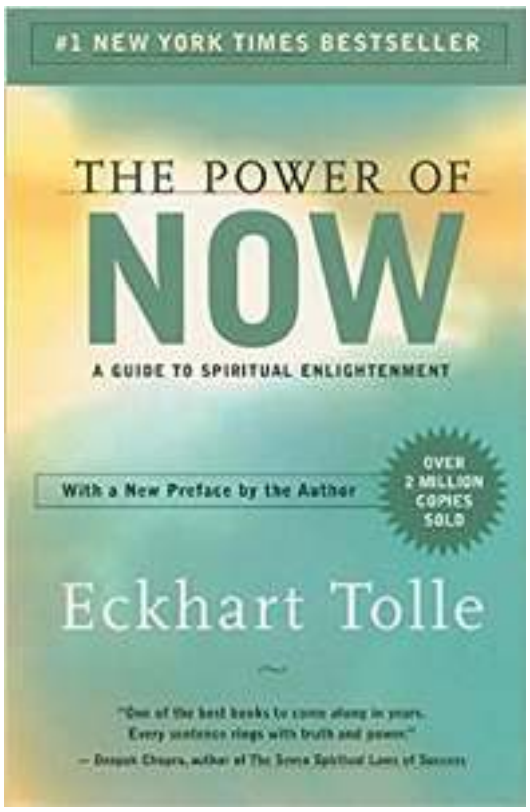
The author says that many spirituals got it wrong in trying to transcend the body.
Trying to repress the body is not the way to enlightenment.
Buddha only found enlightenment when he stopped his 6 years of abstinence. Jesus always embraced the body: he ascended to heaven with his body and told the disciples that "your body is a temple".

Interconnectedness of Everything

Eckhart Tolle says that he cannot tell you anything that you don't already know, deep inside.
And when you reach a certain stage of interconnectedness, you will recognize the truth when you hear it.

When you reach a high level of interconnectedness, you will realize that God is everywhere around you.
That's why Jesus said:

> **Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up a stone and you will find me there**



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Real-Life Applications

- **Accept it as you chose it**

Accept all that you cannot change as if you had chosen it yourself.

- **Use clock time**

Such as when you need to set deadlines for the future, only treat it as clock time instead of allowing the pain and worry to take over in your present.

- **Goals & Drive VS In The Now**

Some people might use "*The Power of Now*" as an excuse not to plan, make strict goals or push themselves through suffering.

I have a different approach: keep making goals and deadlines, but actively weed out all the worries the future brings into your present.
Plan in advance and enjoy your journey in the now.

CRITICISM

Past and present can add value to your life

While Tolle mostly focuses on the past and the future as a harbinger of pain, I couldn't help but wonder: what if the past and present instead mostly brought us good feelings and sensations?

Disempowered "guilt-tripping" on humanity

Eckhart Tolle answers a question by saying (I paraphrase for brevity):

> Of course, there's something wrong with you, and you are not being judged. Don't you belong to the human race who killed over 100 million members of its own species in the 21st century alone?

I think that's nonsense.
And it's naive empiricism -with the added insult of being disempowering-.
Check out this article on naive-self help to understand the logic behind it.

Just like Jordan Peterson, we believe here that the individual is not guilty of the sins of others -and especially not from *previous* generations-.

If you fell for Tolle's guilt-tripping we highly recommend this foundational article on "enlightened individualism":

Superficial guilt tripping on men

The author talks about the "collective female pain body" as due in large part to collective male violence and repression of women throughout the planet over the millennia.

I personally disagree, but it's also factually wrong as a patriarchal society is not "global".
Plenty of societies have been matriarchal.

See our articles on The Red Pill and Overgrowing The Red Pill.

Simplistic & misleading views on issues outside of meditation

For example, relationship descriptions are lacking in depth and evidence.

Even worse was the author's take on addiction. The author says that addiction is always the refusal to address personal pain.
That's not completely true in my opinion and can be deceiving.

Review

The Power of Now is an OK book on spirituality, meditation, and what some people refer to as "enlightenment" or "awareness", but also includes some disempowering mindsets that can lead to a loss of personal agency.

Ambitious men should be careful to only take away the positives from Tolle, but carefully avoid the parts that can lower their self-esteem, mental and social power, and the drive to achieve goals.

The Power of Now for Ambitious Men

Ambitious men need the ability to detach to remain mentally healthy and resilient.
However, they must combine that mental power with *social* power to and skills for more agentic pursuits and outcomes (including status, respect, and attraction).

Read more:

- **Foundations of self-development**
- **Spirituality for agentic men**

> Spirituality, Agency & Power: What Works, What Doesn't

I Will Teach You To Be Rich: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

I Will Teach You To Be Rich is a beginner's *personal finance book* that teaches the basics of money-saving, money accumulation, and simple but popular money investment strategies.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Adapt A Conscious Spending Plan
  - Automate Your Money Allocation
  - Be Frugal, Not Cheap
  - Don't Try to Predict the Market
  - Start Investing Early
- CONS
- PROS
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Bullet Summary

- Spend less
- Invest early
- Automate your investment

Full Summary

About the Author:
Ramit Sethi is an author, marketer, social skills coach, career coach, and personal finance coach. He is also the author of Earnable, Dream Job, Mental Mastery, How to Talk to Anybody, Advanced Connector Package, etc.

Adapt A Conscious Spending Plan

Samit says that a conscious split of income would look something like this:

- 50-60% fixed costs
- 10% investments
- 5-10% savings
- 20-35% spending

If you're struggling focus on making more instead of saving.

Automate Your Money Allocation

Samit recommends you set up a system that automatically allocates your money according to the above split.

Personally, this feels like an overkill and a limit on your personal enjoyment and freedom.
Maybe you can automate investing and automate some payments so you save time, but automate *everything*…?

Be Frugal, Not Cheap

Frugal is not the same as cheap. Frugal care about the value first, not just the cost. They think long-term and are willing to spend what they care about.
Cheap care about costs in a way that negatively affects the people around them.

Don't Try to Predict the Market

Nobody can predict the market, says Ramit who espouses the same theory of *A Random Walk Down Wall Street*.

Then, why not invest in index funds, which simply replicate the market?

This is an idea similar to *Unshakable* and *The Little Book of Common Sense Investing*.

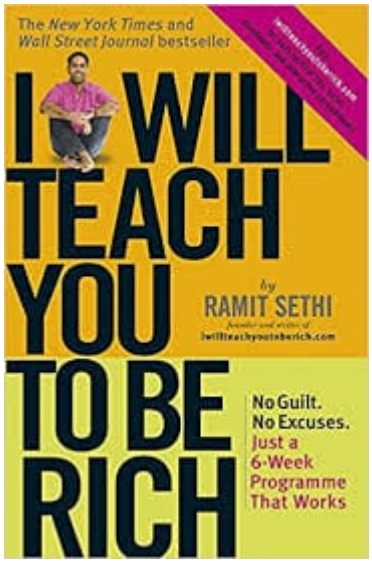
My Note:
Psychology applied to finance (ie.: behavioral economics) shows that it's *not* impossible to beat the market. It's just very difficult for most "normal" folks.

Start Investing Early

The earlier you invest, the more you'll be able to take full advantage of the compound interest.

I Will Teach You To Be Rich suggests maxing out your 401(k) if you have an employer which matches your contribution.
That makes a lot of sense of course.
And then add some Roth IRA -another form of retirement plan which you can better control- and lifecycle funds, which shift into safer investments as you approach retirement.

My Note:
However, I have to add that *Money Master the Game*, the top investment book Tony Robbins wrote with people of the caliber of Ray Dalio, does not recommend 401k and target-date funds.



CONS

A Bit Simplistic For Any Non-Beginner
Most people reading, understanding, and enjoying TPM as a go-to self-development resource will probably find this book a bit too beginner-level for them.

Misnomer: I Didn't Learn How to Be Rich
The title is misleading.

To me teaching someone to be rich is teaching entrepreneurship or hard skills. Teaching how to manage money is more like accounting or money management.
Read The Millionaire Fastlane to understand exactly what I mean.

> The Millionaire Fastlane: Summary & Review

The Compound System Only Works To Make Already High-Income Folks Wealthier
I find most of the personal finance books to be geared to people that either badly misspend or to people with a higher than average income.
For poor and low-income folks there's just too little spare cash to truly become "rich" in a lifetime.

Didn't Like Investment Recommendations
Some of the investment recommendations run against what I have read -and agreed with- in other books.

PROS

Love the Automation
I love the automation idea for some of the expenses and investments.
It saves not just money, but time. Which is also money, just better :).

Spend and Save
I felt particularly close to the idea of cutting mercilessly for all those things that don't really improve your life.
While spending for what you really love and making your life worth living.

Detailed How To
If you're really a beginner -and if you live in the US- I Will Teach You to Be Rich lays out a plan which you can follow step by step. That can be very useful if you fit the description.

Review

I Will Teach You To Be Rich is a good book on money management *for beginners*.

In that respect, much similar to *The Total Money Makeover*, *The Richest Man in Babylon*, and most other *personal finance books*.

The main weakness is that most personal finance books work best only under two scenarios:

1. You are spending too much and not optimizing -if you're being mindful already, you're covering the basics already-
2. You have a high income with which to "play around" -otherwise, the compound interest won't make you rich-

I'm glad these guys are out there to teach the basics to the first guys (those with easy credit card finger triggers).
But if you're not falling into both the first and second categories, then the benefits are limited.

I'm not a crazy spender myself, which makes the value of *I Will Teach You to Be Rich* more limited for me.

I'm more after entrepreneurship and internet marketing than paying off debt. But if you still need to get your spending under control, then *I Will Teach You to Be Rich* can help.

Also, see:

- **Best personal finance books**

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Passive Aggressive Behavior: Signs, Examples & Fixes

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Passive aggression is one of the four modes of communication. Passive aggression combines elements of both passive, such as the fear of confrontation and the difficulties in speaking up, with the drive, anger, and hostility of the aggressive style.

In a society that encourages competition while looking down on aggression, passive aggression might be on the rise.

Luckily, there are ways to protect yourself and, if you are passive-aggressive, to cure yourself.

This article explains how.

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive Aggressive	Assertive
Actions	Keeps quiet Puts himself down Apologizes for self expression Hides his disagreement Inconvenience himself	Expresses himself over others Belittles or disrespects others Ignores, insults, or talks to other opinions	Denies personal responsibility Passive aggressive Sarcastic Agrees to avoid discussion, then looks for ways to sabotage the agreement	Directly expresses needs, wants & feelings Expects others to be equally open & honest Accepts different opinions without disrespecting them
Looks	Makes himself small Looks down & hunch over Avoids eye contact Speaks softly	Makes himself large Looks threatening Penetrating eye contact Loud	Similar to passive	Relaxed Comfortable body language Frequent eye contact (but not glaring)
Beliefs	My needs are less important than others I don't have as many rights as others My contributions are not as valuable as others	My needs are more important and justified than others I have more rights than others My contributions are more valuable than others	My needs come first, but I don't expect others to meet my needs I am not responsible for my actions I am entitled to get my way, even if I make different commitments	My needs are equally important as others I have equal rights We both can make valuable contributions I am responsible for my behavior
Emotions	Fear of rejection Helplessness & low self esteem Frustration Resentment towards others who "succeed"	Anger Powerful (or All-angry) when winning over others Envy, potentially resentful for motivating others	Fear of rejection if being direct or assertive Resentful of people's demands & power Fear of being controlled	Positive feelings about self Positive feelings about establishing with others Feel all emotions
Goals	Avoid conflict Please others (no matter at what cost to me) Let others take control (including others over me)	Win at any costs Control others Always make sure others know who's in charge	Get it my way, without taking responsibility Get it my way, but without having to assert myself	Express himself Find an agreement Keep fair boundaries of mutual respect

Based on Paterson, 2000

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What's Passive Aggressive

This is a definition of passive-aggressive behavior:

> Passive aggression refers to types of behavior where resistance, criticism, anger or resentment are hidden or verbally denied.

The passive-aggressive individual can potentially express that anger in an indirect, covert, or subversive fashion.

For example, he might verbally agree on a course of action but then either fail to act in accordance with the agreement or act in ways that lead to opposite results.

Signs of Passive Aggressives

Some traits of the passive-aggressive:

1. Passive Aggressives Project Their Anger Onto Others

Passive-aggressive people often project their anger onto the people around them.

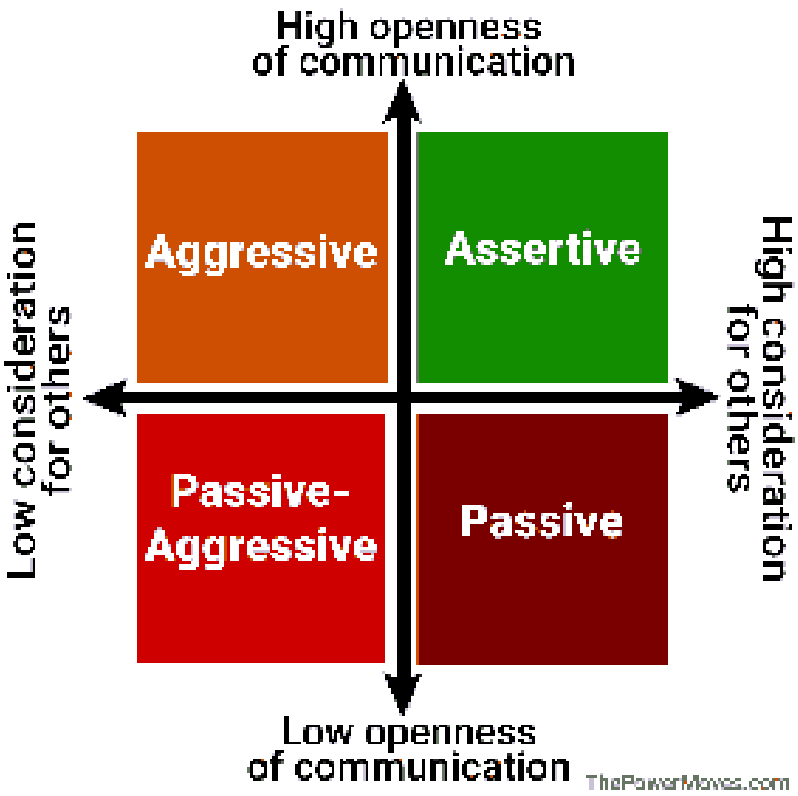
They feel like the world is out to get them, and that everyone else communicates anger as they do: in a sneaky and covert fashion.

The other person might not be angry at all, but that can change as they keep interacting with the passive-aggressive.

What happens is that the passive-aggressive eventually succeeds in annoying the people around, finally provoking real anger.
Once that anger finally turns into an argument, the passive-aggressive feel validated in their feelings of unfairness and external aggression.

2. Passive Aggressives Deny Their Feelings

Passive-aggressives are poor communicators:



The people around eventually catch up to the passive-aggressive covert anger, and they might ask them what's going on.

But the passive-aggressive is always on the defensive.
They feel like the world is out to abuse them and they don't feel like sharing their true selves.
And when people keep asking, they feel violated.

What's the solution?
Before you keep asking and asking, make sure you have a good relationship first, and make sure the passive-aggressive feels safe with you. Or don't keep demanding "how they truly feel" once they are first denied.

3. Passive-Aggressives Take Everything Negatively

Passive-aggressives like to take things negatively (Williams, 2020).

Why?

Because they often have repressed anger and like to be on the attack, so taking things negatively justifies their anger as well as subversive machinations against you.

This is another great reason why you want to avoid passive aggression at all costs: it poisons your interactions as well as your mood.

4. Passive-Aggressives Fight Covertly

Passive-aggressive can be quite Machiavellian.

When you make a mistake, they indirectly win without having to do anything, so they may withhold information that leads you to miss a deadline.

Or they could be the coworkers who "forget" to CC you in the customer email so that you don't stay in the loop.

Why do they do this? Usually, it's a form of punishment or perhaps a subtle way of making you do things without directly asking you to do it. A good example would be a family member who leaves his dirty clothes on top of the

washing machine. If you do the laundry and later confront them about it, then they can defend themselves by saying they never asked you to do it.

5. Passive-Aggressives Do Things Sloppily

Their work is half-assed.

It's as if these passive-aggressive are daring you to get angry at them -which is exactly what they want sometimes-.

And if you end up redoing the work yourself, they've just won.

6. Passive-Aggressives Remain Non-Committal

Passive-aggressive individuals are masters of ambiguity.

It can be very hard to pinpoint whether they're telling you yes or no, and it's often premeditated.
That way, they keep their options open and do whatever they please.

And when it comes to telling what you should do, they also often keep it ambiguous, so they can always accuse you later.
You know, "you don't have to if you don't want to", they'll say. But if you don't, they'll sulk.

67. Passive-aggressive murmur threats or profanity

The passive-aggressive might be seething with anger, but:

- He is afraid of his own anger
- He is afraid he will be punished if he expresses himself fully
- He is afraid of the confrontation, of the consequences, of engaging and "losing"

But when the anger is so strong, it can seep out at the seams. Save to put it all back in behind a fake smile if confronted.

Here is an example:

> **Him**: (irritated and fighting his own irritation, now speaking louder, getting aggressive) Ma'm! I answered your question
> **Her**: I'm sorry sir?
> **Him**: (now changes tack, moves back to passive, tries to smile more) Ma'm, I answered your question. I answered. I'm cooperating here, and there is no… (mutter)
> **Her**: (going on the offensive) Sir, you have no call in getting snippy with me, I'm just doing my job here
> **Him**: (retreats even further)

She was also not fully assertive, though.
A more assertive response from her would have been:

> **Assertive Option**: I understand this is frustrating but this is my job and I intend to do it properly. And to do a proper job, I need you to cooperate with me sir

8. Passive-Aggressives Have Weak Boundaries

Passive-aggressives, often fearing confrontation even with disrespectful people, often fail to erect and enforce their personal boundaries.

Here's how a passive-aggressive deal with boundaries:

- Doesn't protect personal space
- Reveals too much
- Get caught up in other people's troubles
- Neglect own needs for others
- Tolerates abuse
- Easily persuaded by one religious creed or another

9. Passive-Aggressive Are Extremely Indirect

Instead of asking you to do your part of the cleaning, they might clean only their side of the flat.

You know, "sending you a message", instead of speaking up.

Or they might leave their dirty laundry on top of the washing machine. And when you complain that you had to do the work for them, they'll say they "never asked you to".

10. More Signs of Passive-Aggressives

More signs and behaviors typical of a passive-aggressive personality include:

- Undermining others
- Ambiguity and avoiding responsibility
- Doing less than agreed, doing it late, or doing it sloppily
- Negativity (pouting, resisting influence, or creating arguments)
- Withholding important information
- Frenemy-type of behavior
- Backhanded compliments
- Microaggression or covert aggression & covert power moves

> 10 Techniques Against Microaggression

Signs of Passive Aggressive at Work

Passive aggression is commonplace at work for a number of reasons:

1. Display of emotions is frowned upon
2. Hierarchy makes it difficult for employees to communicate assertively with bosses
3. It's not easy for bosses to give candid feedback without violating policies
4. There's a natural competition among peers, but it often must be kept under wrap

That means that workplaces are hotspots for passive aggression. Both up and down the chain and, of course, laterally with your lovely colleagues.

Here are some typical signs of passive aggression at work:

- Questioning colleagues or reports in front of others
- Refusing to grant holidays or bonuses without proper explanation
- Removing a colleague from email communication

- Making very difficult questions after a presentation
- Arriving late or taking longer lunch breaks
- Using notes or e-mail to avoid face-to-face confrontation
- Complaining about policies & procedures, but doing nothing to change them

Passive-aggressives rarely attack directly.

But they might be doing so when they feel strong enough or when the pay-offs are particularly big.

A vengeful boss for example might "punish" a report for what the boss perceives to be a slight or disrespect, but the employee will never know because the boss will use some other excuse for his punishment.

Colleagues can turn passive-aggressive out of competition, or sometimes just out of envy.

Also, read:

- **Types of toxic employees**

> 8 Types of Toxic Employees & How to Deal With Them

Example of Passive Aggression Against Authority

Here's an example of passiveness out of strong hierarchies:

> **Him**: It's the way we prefer to handle it, Gerry
> **Gerry**: (passive, but plots on how to screw them behind their backs)

Looking at the scene only, this is passive.
But within the whole movie, it's passive-aggressive because he goes beyond everyone's backs to orchestrate a kidnapping to get it his way.

Make Friends, Not Enemies: Power Protect People to Prevent Passive-Aggression

This example also serves as a stark reminder to bosses and managers.

When it comes to politics and smart social strategies: to avoid turning employees into backstabbing enemies, you want to power-protect them, instead of dominating them and making them lose their face.

This is also part of our higher social strategy of "make friends, not enemies".

See:

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

Causes of Passive Aggression

What causes passive aggression?

Almost always it entails a submissive personality or a conflict-avoidant personality.
Clinical Psychologist Jordan Peterson also lists "high in agreeableness" as a possible cause of passive aggression.

There can be other causes though, including:

- Underlying personality disorder

- Medication
- Envy / Jealousy
- Sense of powerlessness / low self-esteem
- Fear of losing our partner (can be a sign of anxious attachment style)
- Nurture (learned the pattern of behavior from a parent)

Let's now dig deeper into childhood as it's one of the least understood causes:

Learning Passive Aggression At Home

Some present a relationship dance composed of a dominant partner and a subversive, passive-aggressive one.

If one of the parents is dominant and the other subservient, then some children are likely to develop some passive-aggressive personality traits.

Why?

Because **the children learn that powerful people shouldn't be approached directly**.
Here's a key sentence with which people learn passive-aggressiveness:

> **Mother**: OK, but let's not tell your father

With that, the child learns that people should not deal directly and honestly with authority, but are instead best served with underhanded tactics and going behind their backs.

The child learns to form coalitions against authority instead of honest conversation

Passive Aggression Techniques

Passive-aggressive people use similar techniques which are at the same time signs of passive aggression and, sometimes, their weapon of choice to attack others.

Here are the main ones:

1. Deny Feelings

> I'm not mad..

Passive-aggressive people don't embrace and admit their feelings.

When you question a passive-aggressive type about their apparent anger or dissatisfaction, they will deny their own anger -see again the video above from the movie "Fargo"-.

2. Delay Execution

Passive-aggressive people resist change internally, but they will always give you the appearance of complying and getting along.

That's why they will often say yes while delaying the execution as an act of subversion and/or to get out of tasks.

This is how many couples get locked in perennial infight. See here an example from the movie "The Breakup":

> **Her**: Well, I'm gonna go do the dishes.
> **Him**: Cool
> **Her**: It'd be nice if you helped me
> **Him**: No problem. <- passive aggression
> I'll get them a little bit later. I'm just gonna hit the streets here for a little bit.

Note: passive aggression is a type of communication and pattern of behavior. But it doesn't mean necessarily "being wrong".
The fact that he's passive-aggressive doesn't mean that she's right in asking to do the dishes right away.

> **Her**: Gary, come on, I don't want to do them later. Let's just do them now. It'll take 15 minutes.
> **Him**: (..) If I could just sit here, let my food digest, and just try to enjoy the quiet for a little bit.

He keeps being passive-aggressive because, very likely, his intention was never to do the dishes.

Note that he's not really hoping the issue will go away. Deep down he knows that it's only likely to escalate.
But he's going for what he perceives to be the path of least resistance.

3. Sulking While Faking Resolution

> Fine!

Sometimes the passive-aggressive can stonewall, hide behind silence, and refuse to answer.

But stonewalling might even be too direct for some extreme passive-aggressive types.
So he prefers to verbally agree while actually sulking and building resentment on the inside.

> **Him**: Fine. I'll help you do the damn dishes <- passive aggressive: complies while arguing even harder
> **Her**: Oh, come on. You know what? No. That's not what I want
> **Him**: You just said that you want me to help you do the dishes

Typical of passive-aggressive, he is pretending not to understand. Of course, she's not gonna be happy with his "resolution", but he fakes total ignorance to keep getting back at her.

Finally, note that this is also a common female behavior.
See "how women control relationships".

4. Substandard Execution

> I didn't have time..

Sometimes procrastination is not an option, in which case the passive-aggressive may decide to carry on the task… In the most sloppy way, he can manage.
Examples:

- A student half-bakes his paper project
- A husband overcooks the pasta while knowing fully well his wife likes it al dente
- Overspending while pretending he didn't realize there was a cap
- Complying with an attitude

See an example from "Raging Bull":

> **Her**: You want your steak?
> **Him**: Yeah, right now!
> **Her**: Good. There's your stupid steak. Can't wait for it to be done?
> **Him**: No, I can't wait.
> **Her**: Good. Okay? Happy? Happy? <- fake friendliness

When a passive-aggressive is confronted about his sloppy execution, he sometimes accuses back. For example, he could undermine the decision for the task, saying it made no sense.
Of course, they don't realize they should have said that *before* the event.

> How to Stop People Undermining You

5. Purposefully "Failing" to Help

> I thought you knew

The passive-aggressive, especially when behaving out of bitterness and envy, can be happy to see you fail.

That's when they will not help you avoid a mistake, even it would have been easy for them.

Of course, when you confront them, it will be an excuse-fest:

- I thought you knew it
- I didn't notice
- Oh I'm sorry, I thought you were doing it on purpose to test things

6. Defending Themselves

> I was just…

> **Her**: I was just going to buy some groceries

In the face of obvious evidence to the contrary, the passive-aggressive will try to look innocent. And might try to frame you as overly abusive, strict, or paranoid.

7. Silent Treatment

> Sorry I didn't see you..

Looking into someone's eyes and not saying hi is rather direct. The passive-aggressive behavior is sneakier.
They might pretend to look away, and when confronted they might say they haven't seen you.

8. Aggressive Body Language

> OK (rolling her eyes up)…

Sneering, behind-the-back gestures, and other nonverbal signals of disapproval are other typical passive-aggressive behavior.

In this example, De Niro's facial expression is a split second, but it communicates "you're talking smack".

Preference For Nonverbal Attacks

Why do passive-aggressive people rely more on nonverbal attacks than verbal ones?

First of all, it's less likely to cause confrontation.
And second, because they can always deny their action. You cannot deny a clearly stated verbal disagreement that everyone hears (unless you're Trump).
But if you just make a facial gesture and the recipient confronts you, you can always say: "*it's not true I'm undermining you, where did you get that from*".

9. Back-Handed Compliments

There are two types of backhanded compliments:

Offensive Compliments

Offensive compliments deliver an attack right next to a compliment.
For example:

- You landed a great job for your level of education
- Not bad for your actual skills

Complimenting someone else

Complimenting someone else, especially if the target has just failed, is a great way for the passive-aggressive to demote the target socially (also read social climbing).

Here's a great example from "Meet The Parents":

> **She**: The airline lost his bag.
> **Mother**: Oh! They didn't!
> **She**: Yeah, they did.
> **He**: What about you, honey?
> **She**: No, I carried on.
> **He**: That's my girl! <- indirect assault on Greg

10. Sarcasm

> I was just kidding…

Sarcasm is another popular tool to hide real feelings of bitterness and, sometimes, hatred.

And if someone calls the funny joker on the inappropriateness of the "joke", of course, they were just kidding (read here how to respond to inappropriate jokes).

Here it is Billy Batts using passive aggression on the wrong fella:

> **Billy**: He'd make your shoes look like fuc*ing mirrors. Excuse my language. He was the best. Made a lot of money too.
> **Tommy**: No more shines. You been away a long time. They didn't tell you. I don't shine shoes anymore.
> **Billy**: Relax. What's got into you? I'm breaking your balls a little, that's all. I'm only kidding with you. <- dang! Passive aggression, hiding his hand
> **Tommy**: Sometimes you don't sound like it. There's a lot of people around. <- great move! presses on, forces him to apologize again
> **Billy:** I'm only kidding. We're having a party.

As you can see from this example, passive aggression does not always mean "submissive", "afraid", "beta male" or however you associate it with.
Sometimes it can just be part of a larger social assault, and it can be used smartly.

Notice though that in the end, Batts snaps out of passive-aggressiveness to being purely aggressive.

11. Tentative Aggression

Sometimes it's not just employees but also bosses who avoid direct confrontation.

They avoid direct confrontation, but they still want to make sure they throw their weight around.

Here is an example from "Office Space":

This video example is a feast of passive aggression.

If the two bosses feel the employee's mistake is really that important, they should address it properly.
And if the employee feels he is unjustly targeted, he should be a bit stronger in his replies. Shaking his head instead is a typical sign that he is building resentment for what he perceives as unfair nitpicking.

Passive Aggressive Examples

In this section, we present passive-aggressive scenarios and how to address them.

Passive Aggressive Justice

Eva and Christie live together and they do grocery shopping every week when they drive to a mall: it's cheaper there.

In the morning Eva goes for the milk only to find there's nothing inside.
Eva doesn't drink milk, so she inquires:

> **Eva**: What happened to the milk
> **Christie**: oh my boyfriend was over yesterday, he probably had some, sorry!

Depending on her personality, Eva can answer in three ways:

> **Aggressive**: well, you should try thinking, if you can figure out how. . Is your boyfriend contributing to the household budget now? I hope he enjoyed my milk.
> (as she throws the milk carton out)

It's impulsive and emotional: anger is highly visible here.

> **Passive**: *That's OK, I'll get coffe on the way to work. Have a good day.*

This is passive because she doesn't express her needs or protect her rights. It might be because of low self-esteem: she is single. Her flatmate must be "better" for having a boyfriend. She feels unworthy of even complaining.

> **Assertive** (takes a deep breath): W*e have to rethink our shopping list I suppose, or shop at the local market when supplies are running low. But let's talk it over tonight.*

The breath is to release some anger. She makes an effort to be reasonable, but their needs have collided and it's time for a discussion. This is a responsible and sensible approach.

> **Passive Aggressive***: Ahm, that's OK, I'll find something else for breakfast.*

Then she sees Eva's yogurt, the last on the shelf. She feels a pang of anger and self-righteousness and takes it when Christie doesn't see her.
Typical passive-aggressive behavior: doesn't say anything directly to her face, but evens the scores behind her back.

When Christie will ask about her yogurt Eva might reply that "she had to have something for her cereals". How could Christie be angry?

Passive Aggressive Over Time

Lucia hates waking up in the morning, and her mother has to call her over and over again.

Lucia replies she will get up soon, but her mother always has to walk to her room to make sure.

With time, Lucia developed an understanding of when her mother reached the door and gets up right before she enters.

By complying with a delay, Lucia creates anger in her mother, who eventually tells her she'll call only once, and then she'll have to walk to school.

Now Lucia gets up right on time, but "makes her mother pay" by taking a lot of time in the bathroom.
When she finally comes out, she says:

> **Lucia***: Sorry, I guess it takes time when one is still sleepy*

Notice what she's doing there? She is indirectly blaming her mother for waking her up.

Years later Lucia is in college.
She buys the latest version laptop on her parent's credit card because she feels entitled to it. After all, her parents could not send her to the first pick of school.
When her father asks, she replies that it's almost mandatory for students to have a good laptop. But deep down, it was probably a bit of a vendetta for her.

Passive Aggressive Relationships

This is a typical dialogue in a relationship with a passive-aggressive personality:

> **Him**: I won two tickets for the football match, not that you would ever care to join though? <- implies she never wants to accompany him
> **Her**: Sure, why not <- She disregards her own needs and reservations. Maybe to prove him wrong
> **Him**: Really? I thought you didn't like football
> **Her**: Not much but you won the tickets
> **Him**: Then why you said yes. You always say yes and then find some reasons to back out. Will you really go this time?
> **Her**: Well sure… Unless it's too cold, I can't sit outside in the cold
> **Him**: Christie it's November, it's going to be cold. Forget it!

Passive aggressiveness in relationships can lead to vicious circles and breakups.

Effects of Passive Aggressive Behavior

Passive aggressive behavior is highly harmful to relationships.

And it takes a toll on "both sides": both the passive-aggressive and their victims fail.

Effect On Others: Stoking Anger & Hostility

Generally speaking, people don't like passive-aggressive types.

Passive aggressive come across as sneaky, underhanded, and weak but mean-spirited at the same time.

With their sneaky and underhanded tactics, passive-aggressive people can often get under the skin of their victims.

It happens because the passive-aggressive keeps calm and pretends to be shocked when the others blow up in anger.

As a matter of fact, some passive-aggressive types take pleasure in seeing others overreact and blow up. Especially if in front of others.
The effect can be similar to gaslighting, as we saw some cheating partners using it in their relationships.

This is how a blow-up through sneaky passive-aggressive maneuvers would look like:

Notice her face, eyes rolling, and his sneaky comment "who talks like that", which implies that *she* talks in that low register, not them.

Victims of passive aggression are also likely to become hostile and more aggressive.
Says clinical psychologist Harriet Braiker:

> Passive-aggressive actions actually incite your partner to greater hostility. Your passivity combined with the denial of your own deeply buried aggression becomes intensely frustrating to your partner.
> (…)
> Your passive-aggressive behavior makes you a participant in an interactive pattern of behavior that enables your partner to continually become angry with you.

Effect on the Passive Aggressive: Emotional Anguish, Low Status

As we've seen the passive-aggressive is rarely in control.

As a matter of fact, most of the time the passive-aggressive is as much of a victim.
He often suffers in silence indeed, under the belief that he is the one being unfairly treated. He builds up

resentment inside because he has no other safety valve to vent and doesn't have the strength and skills to stand up for himself.

It's not uncommon for passive-aggressive to wish ill fate on their mostly made "enemies". Or to imagine assaulting them.

Generally speaking, if he comes across as sneaky and not strong enough to speak directly and openly, people view passive-aggressive types as weak and cowardly.

That means that **passive aggressives stay stuck at the bottom of social hierarchies**, and rarely rise to the top of any social groups -and especially so in "high-power circles", where people tend to have the courage to be direct and open.

Dealing With Passive-Aggressive People

Here are a few ways to deal with passive-aggressive behavior:

1. Ignore It

Ignore, or at least don't overreact.

When you rage, nag, or criticize, you escalate conflict and give the passive aggressor a reason to keep up the covert operations.
It's possible they might drop the behavior if they see it doesn't get through to you.

2. Distance Yourself

Stay away from passive-aggressive people whenever you can: they're not healthy relationships and you have very little to gain from them.

3. Use the Same Strategy

Robert Greene in the *33 Strategies of War* recommends you never attack back directly but use the same game back on them.
This is especially useful if you are indeed dealing with someone who's using passive aggression as a power move.

4. Confront Them

If you are going to confront them, do it exactly when they display passive-aggressive behavior and explain to them exactly what they're doing.

Once they understand you know their game and can explain it in detail, chances are they will stop.
People fear those who can call them out -potentially publicly-.

5. Empower Them

Some passive-aggressive individuals resort to indirect communication because they feel powerless.

In those cases, it can help to empower them.

Tell your partner that you are listening, tell your colleague you care about their opinion, and give them credit.
Once they will feel heard their need for passive aggression will disappear.

Look at this example from Elon Musk's life:

> **Talulah**: (undermine Musks by framing him as a socially clueless nerd)

She's being highly disrespectful.
But not "in your face aggressive".
She is covert. Passive-aggressively undermining his authority.

Probably she feels lower value next to him.
Potentially, unappreciated as well. So she feels the need to back-stab him to "bring him closer to her".

Stopping Your Own Passive Aggression

Here are a few ways to stop being passive-aggressive if you are one:

1. Embrace Conflict

Overcoming your fear of conflict will go a long way towards making you a strong communicator and overcoming passive aggression.

2. Make Your Own Agenda

Some passive-aggressive follow people they don't want to follow because they don't have their own goals.
Decide what you want out of life instead and go for it. And stop following bosses and leaders that you don't respect.

3. Accept Your Feelings

Anger is a fair feeling. Even in romantic relationships, Gottman has shown that anger in itself is not dangerous.
Embrace it and channel it productively instead.

4. Practice Assertive Communication

Whenever you don't like something or don't want to do something, say it!

5. Compassionate Assertiveness

Why compassion?

Well, sometimes passive aggression stems out of self-absorption. We think others are out to get us, out to annoy us, or we make everything about us.
We need to see the situation from the other's point of view as well.

Using Passive Aggression

If passive aggression evolved in people… It probably served a purpose.

There are indeed strategic uses of passive aggression, as well as some limited situations in which passive or covert aggression can be useful, or even high-quality options.

Read more on **Power University** on how to strategically use passive aggression.

13 Best Relationship Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This is my recommended reading list of the best relationship books based on what I have reviewed so far.

It's a perfect reading list if you are short on time but are keen on improving your relationship.

Just a note: don't put too much emphasis on the position: any relationship book on this TOP 10 list is sure to be life… Ehmmm, a relationship changer.
Which is pretty much the same anyway, plenty of studies show that the biggest

To get the summary, click on the link "summary" on each book.

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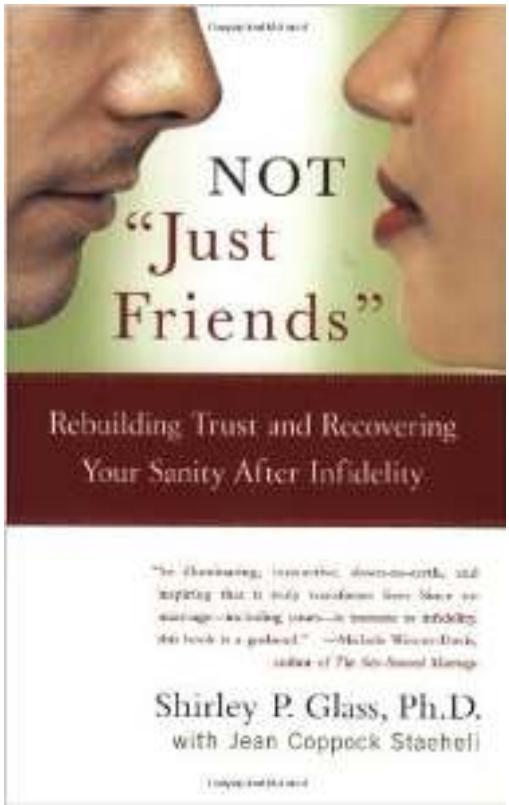
- 6. The Woman's Guide to How Men Think
- 5. The Man's Guide to Women
- 4. The APA Handbook – Vol. 3 Relationships
- 3. The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity
- 2. The Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych & Romantic Relationships
- 1. Seven Principles to Make Marriage Work

- Recap
  - Also, Read

12. Not Just Friends



by Shirley Glass
Summary | Kindle | Print[image]

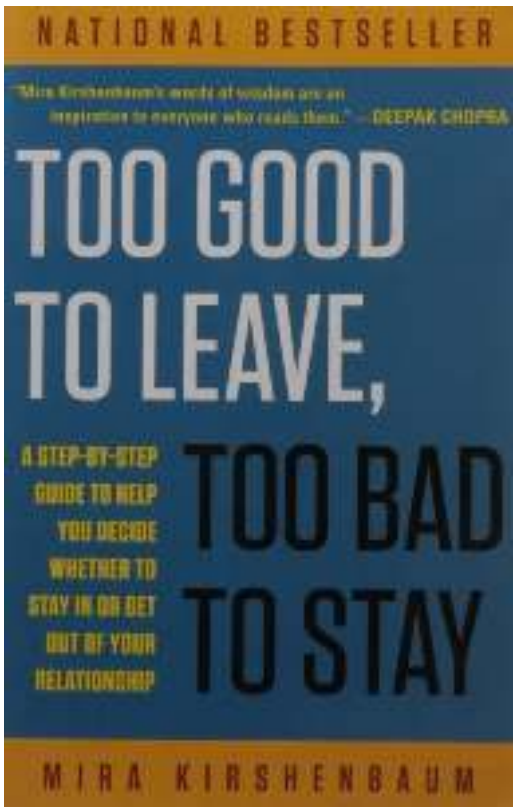
Not Just Friends is actually about cheating and affairs. Some statistics seem to point out that cheating happens, sadly, in around half of relationships.

If that weren't a good reason enough to learn and research how to prevent affairs, Not Just Friends will greatly expand your knowledge on love, passion, and emotional attachments.

A must-read.

> Quote: *Affairs are traumatic for the cheated partner, and should be treated as such.*

11. Too Good to Leave Too Bad to Stay



by Mira Kirshenbaum
Summary | Print | Audiobook

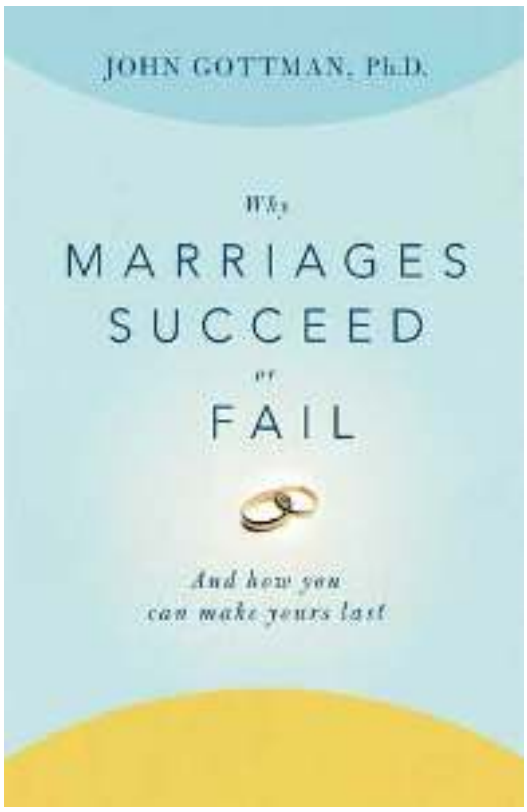
Mira Kirshenbaum's book focuses on helping you decide whether to stay and work on your relationship or break up.

However, it ends up providing much more than that. As she goes through the core questions you should be asking yourself, she also highlights what are the central elements that make relationships too good to leave (or too bad to stay).

A really outstanding book and a must-read to overcome any hint of ambivalence you might have.

> Quote: "*when distance is safer than closeness, you don't have a relationship*".

10. Why Marriages Succeed or Fail



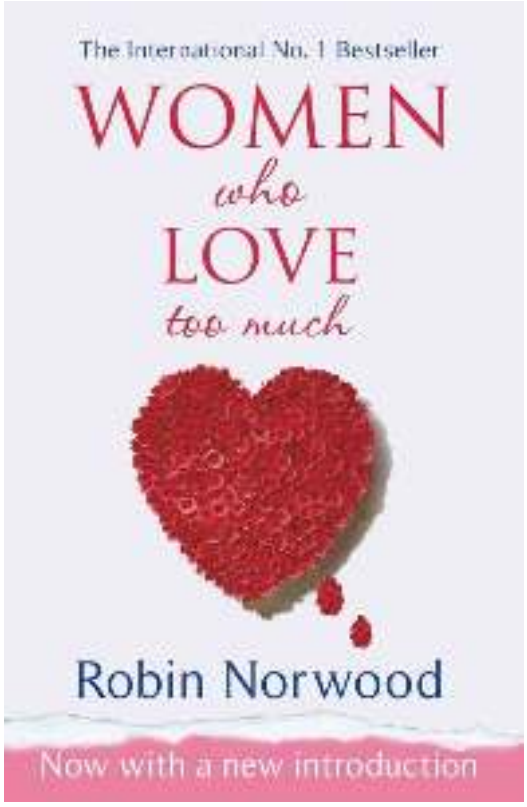
by John Gottman
Summary | Kindle | Print

Gottman debunks a big myth here: that there's little arguing in strong relationships. He goes on to explain the different types of relationships that different "arguing personalities" form, telling the readers what works and what doesn't.

All are based on years of observations and research. Fascinating, fascinating stuff.

> Quote: "*It's not about how much you argue, it's about how you argue*"

9. Women Who Love Too Much



By Robin Norwood
Summary | Hardcover | Audiobook

This will not be relevant to everyone, BUT, for those for whom it is relevant, it's a potential life-changer and life-*saver*.

I wish there was a similar book called "men who need too much love". Unluckily, there is no such book (yet). Luckily, Norwood covers that part as well.

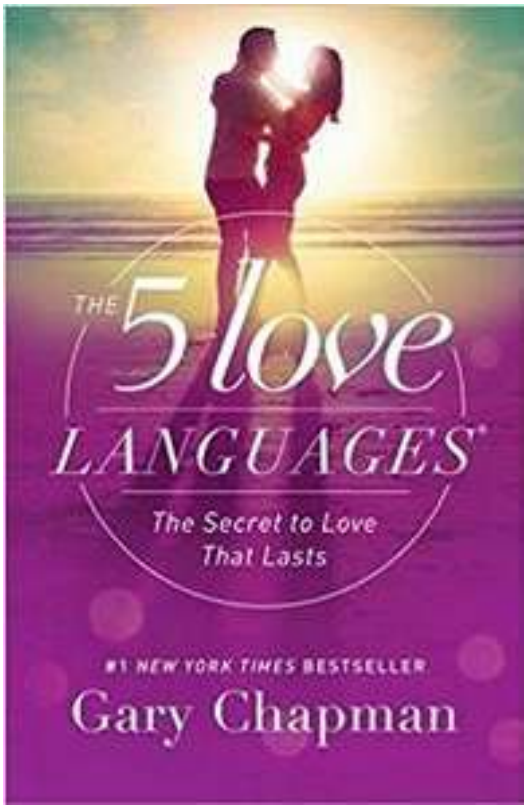
For more on abusive relationships, please check:

- **The psychopath's approach to dating and relationships**: a sobering and shocking read, really
- **Types of abusive men**
- Why Does He Do That: a book profiling abusers

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

> Quote: The choice is yours. If you choose to begin the process of recovery, you will change from a woman who loves someone else so much it hurts into a woman who loves herself enough to stop the pain.

8. The 5 Love Languages



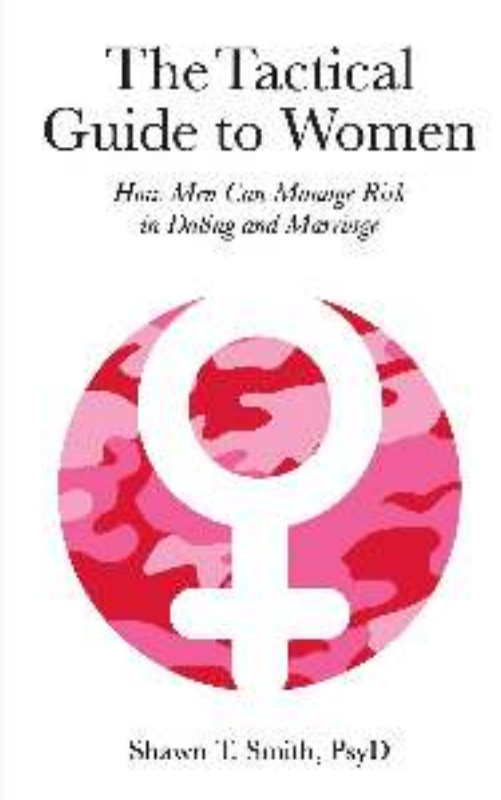
by Gary Chapman
Summary | Kindle | Print

The "*5 Love Languages*" is the biggest seller of them all on this list. As a matter of fact, Chapman holds the record of the biggest-selling books of all the relationship genres.

The "5 Love Languages" is a very simple book that shares a very simple concept. But let's not confuse easy with important!

We all have a favorite language to share our love, says Chapman. And if we don't use the same language as our partner, we are failing to communicate and understand love.
Definitely, something we should be aware of!

7. The Tactical Guide to Women



by Shawn Smith
Summary | Amazon

Albeit written for men, the focus of this book is what all relationship books should start with picking the right partner.

Pick the right partner, and you're already halfway through a successful relationship.

> Quote: "If I'm scaring you about marriage, good. It's a momentous decision"

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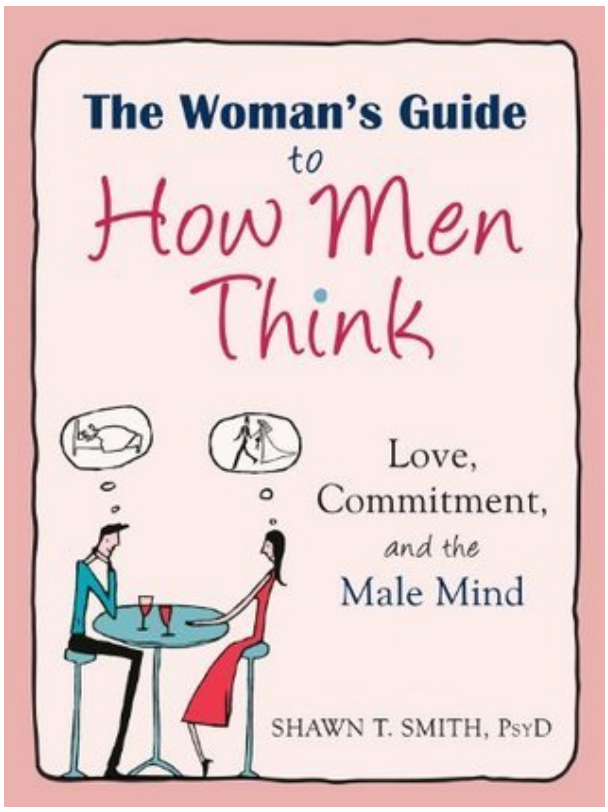
6. The Woman's Guide to How Men Think

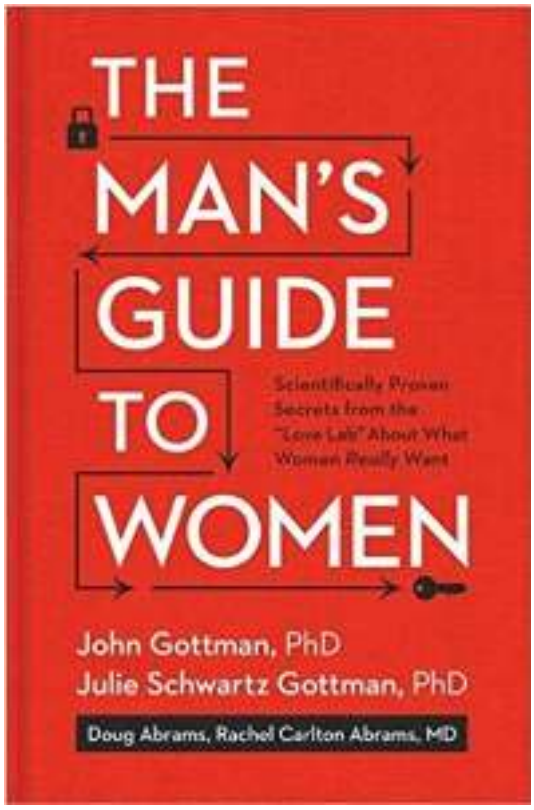


by Shawn Smith
Review (removed) | Audiobook

Women *think* they know better about relationships.
But, in truth, most women know little about men and are ill-prepared to be in healthy relationships with men.
This book helps women learn about men so that they both can enjoy better relationships.

> Quote: Maybe you've seen one of those cartoon diagrams of a man's brain in which most of the brain areas are labeled "sex." Those cartoons might be more accurate if they depicted a man's brain as one giant marketing firm designed to earn the affection and admiration of women.

5. The Man's Guide to Women



by John Gottman
Summary | Kindle | Print

I can already hear some guys chiming in: "why is there a book on men understanding women, but not one on women understanding men?".

Well, first of all, I have added that type of book to a second revision.
But this one still features higher because Gottman's research shows that men play a bigger role than women in determining the success -or lack thereof- of a relationship.

In a way, that empowers men. On the other hand, very few men understand of women (and relationships) work. Worry not, The Man's Guide to Women is here to fix that.

> Quote: "*relationships are 90% of your life's joy. Or sorrow. Which one is up to you*"

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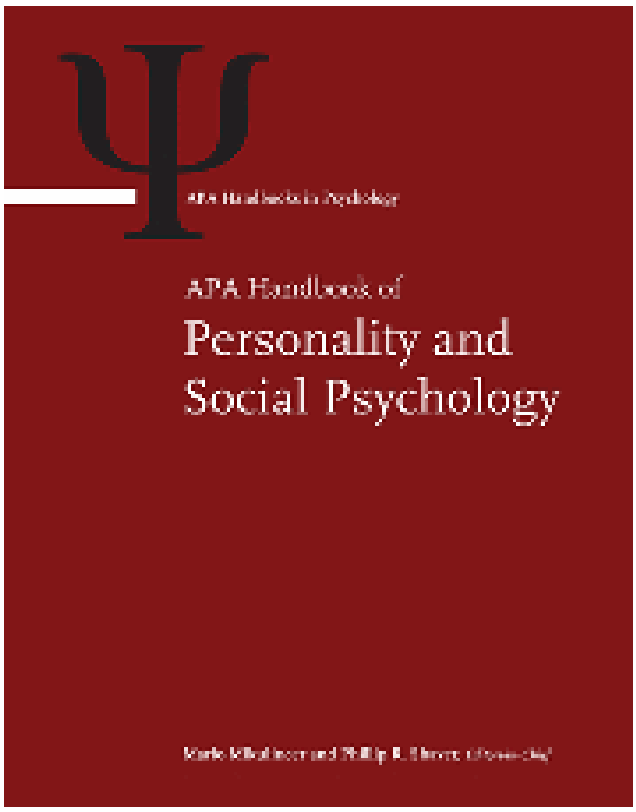
4. The APA Handbook – Vol. 3 Relationships



By Various Authors
Summary | Amazon

We just had to have at least a science-based handbook in here.

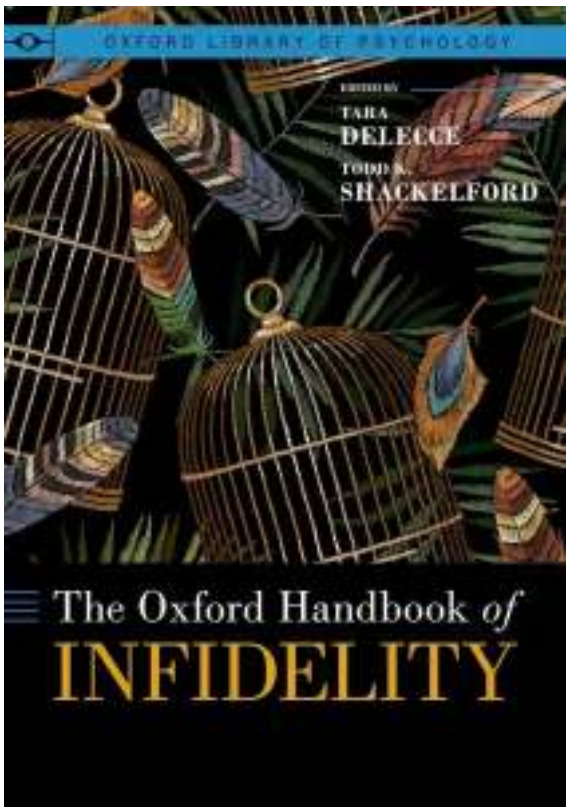
Frankly, it's not the best book on how to succeed in relationships.
That's not the goal.

The goal of this handbook is to provide an overview of the available empirical evidence on relationships.

And to gain a good understanding of most topics, you often need to look at the available evidence on that topic.

> Quote: "Additionally, social exchange perspectives (e.g. , Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) suggest that individuals seek the "best" mate they can attain on the basis of the limits imposed by their own mate value, which leads partners who have similar "market value" to pair up"

3. The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity



by Todd K. Shackelford, Tara DeLecce, et al.

Summary

While *The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity* focuses mostly on infidelity, infidelity is a crucial topic and risk when it comes to relationships.
As with any cooperation, it's always important to be careful of potential risks of defection.

For some, this may be a needed wake-up call.

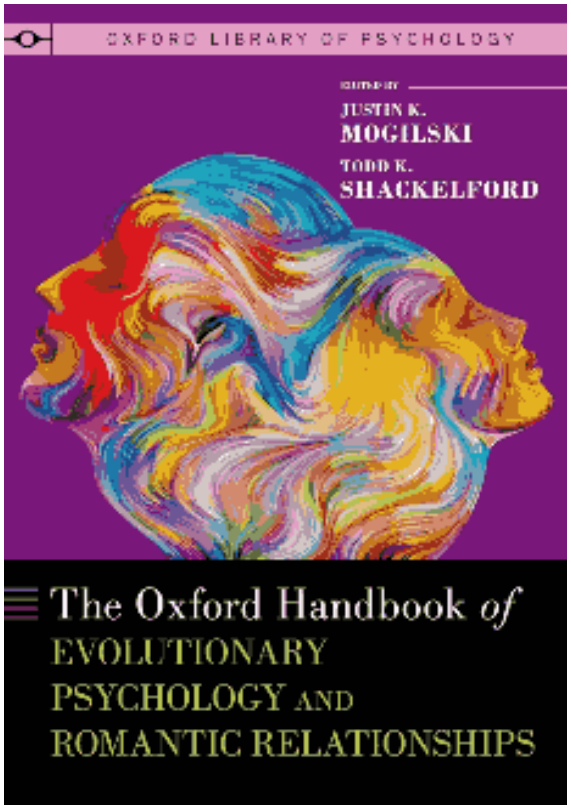
> Quote: The forces that drive people to seek new mates are in a continual battle with a socially endorsed ideal of lifelong bonds (…) Despite the best efforts of many well-intentioned individuals, innate inclinations often overwhelm the imperatives imposed by marriage or partners' strong intentions of fidelity. **We humans simply are not evolved to remain with one partner exclusively and indefinitely**. When we nevertheless do so, it is often with frustration and resentment.
> (…)
> In an era with long life spans and permanent marriages, **love's relative brevity tends to lead to disappointment**. Romantic love almost inevitably fades within a few years, leading to diminished commitment and broken vows
> (…)
> The prevailing expectation of monogamy, which appears difficult to uphold considering EDI rates, causes individuals to feel devastated when infidelity occurs (Campbell et al., 2012; Coontz, 2005).

We believe monogamy is certainly possible here.
But it may present important challenges in many Western countries that have become more liberal.

Also read:

- Signs of infidelity
- Why people cheat
- Traits of a loyal girlfriend

2. The Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych & Romantic Relationships



by Justin K. Mogilski, Todd K. Shackelford, et al.
Summary | Amazon

Another handbook in our top 3.

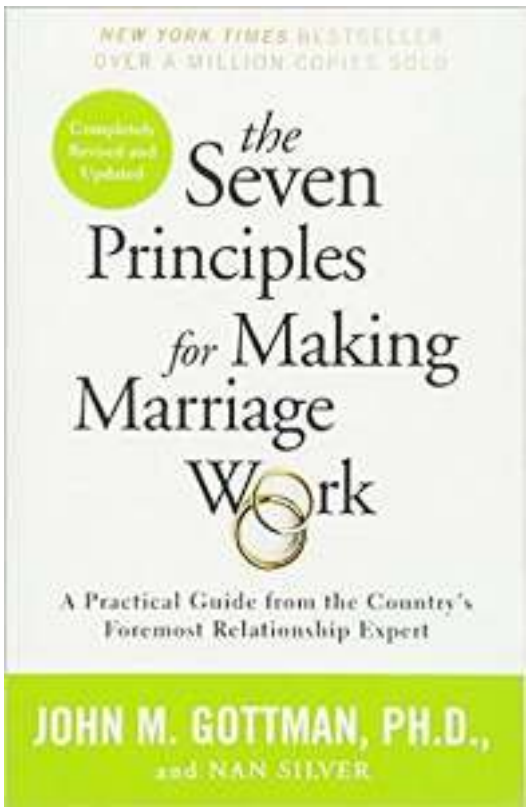
If you're looking for advice on how to make a relationship work, skip to #1.

if you want to learn about relationships and why they exist… Look on further.
This is the true #1 at the time of writing to explain the true dynamics of dating, love, and relationships.

As with any evolutionary texts, the most naive folks here should expect some "harsh truths" about human nature.
BUT there is also plenty to be optimistic for, including what this quote represents:

> Quote: Despite the often too prevalent perception of a war between the sexes in the social sciences (see special issue of Sex Roles, e.g., Vandermassen, 2011), to a large degree interdependent reproduction promotes cooperation rather than confict (Buss, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)

1. Seven Principles to Make Marriage Work



by John Gottman
Summary | Kindle | Summary

Dear reader, honestly… Every single book on this list could have been #1. They're just all so good.

In the end, I went for The Seven Principles to Make Marriage Work as it seemed to give a greater overview of what works and what doesn't.

Again, all based on years of observation and empirical research.

All you have to do is apply the information to your relationship and enjoy the big rewards.
What's not to love?

> Quote: "*Spend 10% of the gym time on your relationship and you get 3 times the benefits*"

Recap

Human relationships, including, intimate relationships, are one of the main determinants of a happy life.

Relationships also weigh heavily on our health and our longevity -probably more than all the biohacks so popular these days-.

Yet, it's exceedingly rare for people to approach them systematically and as an improvable skill.

This list of best relationship books is here to buck the trend: grab these books, learn what works, and improve your relationship -and your life-.

Also, Read

- Best leadership books
- Best dating books for women

- Best dating books for guys
- Best red pill books
- Best communication skills books
- Best psychology books

15 Signs of Abusive Relationship (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The signs of an abusive relationship are easy to spot when you know what to look for.

But they're not always obvious when you are *in* a relationship.
So this guide is here to help you troubleshoot your relationship. Keep this in mind: you don't need all the signs. One single sign might be enough to tell you all you need to know about your partner.

Note: I will use the pronoun "he" because most abusers are men.

Contents

- 1. Controlling Behavior
  - Fiefdoms of Control
  - How Control is Exercised
  - Seeking Power & Defending Ego
- 2. Possessiveness
  - Breakup and Possessiveness
- 3. Entitlement Mentality
- 4. You Cannot Criticize Him
- 5. He Does Not Accept Your Boundaries
- 6. Manipulations
- 7. He Disrespects You
- 8. He Feels Superior to You
- 9. He Strives for Good Public Image
- 10. Justifies Abuse With Your Allegedly Poor Behavior

- 11. Demands Public Perfection
- 12. Denies and Minimizes Abuse
- 13. Sees Everything As Personal Affronts
- 14. Escalating Intensity
- 15. Mutual Escalations
- Signs You're In Danger
- Why Do Women Stay in Abusive Relationships?
- SUMMARY

1. Controlling Behavior

Abusive men believe it's their right to control their partner.

What they think, what they say, and how they act.
If they are having an argument, he expects his word to be the last word, and he gets particularly angry in the face of defiance.
Here are typical attitudes of a controlling, abusive man:

- If I insist on something and you disagree, you are wronging me
- I know what's best for you and the relationship
- If you disobey my authority I have the right to take all the steps to re-establish it

Some abusive men can talk about "allowing" their partner this or that freedom. And they feel entitled to eventually remove the freedoms that they grant.

Example of Controlling Behavior

The most conservative and abusive men want to control when their partners are allowed to speak.

Example from Raging Bull:

Note: abusiveness is always this obvious of course. Sometimes it's much more subtle. It might be a doctor asking you "where did you get that from" to make you feel you're not qualified to answer. Or a professor saying that your statement is "unfounded".

Fiefdoms of Control

Not all abusive men are controlling about the same things, and most pick a few fiefs to establish their control.

For example:

- **Decision-making**: they control all major decision-making in the family
- **Personal freedom**: what you wear, where you can go, and at what time you're back

How Control is Exercised

Most imagine a controlling man as yelling and expecting deferential execution of their wishes.

Or maybe physically assaulting.

And that might indeed be the case.

But they can also use:

- Criticism: constantly criticizing and ridiculing your friends
- Incessant complaints
- Claiming it's in your best interest
- Pretending your behavior is hurting them

Seeking Power & Defending Ego

Research on domestic violence often reaches the conclusion that husbands who batter their wives do so to establish power in the family.

Some authors say that batterers' wives outclass their men in some sort of significant way for them, for example earning more or having a better education.

Batterers tend to seek power and believe in male superiority.
And when their ego and ideal position as "head of the family" comes under threat, they resort to violence to re-assert their position.

However, it's wrong to think that these men are low in self-esteem. As social psychologist Baumeister explains, violence is mostly committed by egotistic men with high or relatively high self-esteem.
But while they are high in self-esteem, they also have a very fragile ego they need to defend.

2. Possessiveness

Another big sign of an abusive relationship is abnormal possessiveness.

The abusive partner feels like he owns you, and that he can make decisions on your behalf.

Out of possessiveness, your partner might also try to isolate you from friends and family.
When you are isolated you are easier to control and you are more dependent on him.
Indeed, some abusive men see your friendships are a threat to them.

Breakup and Possessiveness

Possessiveness is one of the reasons why abusive men fail to see the seriousness of a breakup. Or they fail to accept it.

How can you break up with him, when he believes he owns you?
That's the twisted mindset of an abusive man.

3. Entitlement Mentality

Entitlement is another huge sign of an abusive relationship.
Abusers don't always and necessarily have a general entitlement mentality towards the world. But they do have one for their partners.

There are several layers to abusive entitlement:

Entitlement to Relationship

This is an early warning you must heed at all costs.

Some abusive men feel like they are entitled to have a woman. Even when she doesn't want them.

Here is an example from the movie "Beautiful Girls":

In a scene little after he will plow snow against her garage door to block her driveway as revenge for saying no.

Another example of abusive behavior. And the movie even portrays them as somewhat likable characters.

Physical Entitlement

This is mostly valid for the most traditional abusers.

They see you as an unpaid maid.
You might be supposed to clean the kitchen, do the laundry and take care of the kids.
But of course, the most important is that you take care of him.

Emotional Entitlement

Some abusers want you to pay attention and listen to them.

If he accomplished something great at work, you should be happy for him. Even if you have all the reasons in the world to be sad at that precise moment, it doesn't matter: the world revolves around him.

If he wants emotional closeness, you should drop everything you're doing to soothe him when he's down. And he can get aggressive if you failed to understand needs that he hasn't even expressed.

But no matter how much you give him, it will never make him better.
And it will never be enough for him.

Sexual Entitlement

Whenever he feels like it, you should be ready to go. If he does not feel like it, he won't move a finger (figuratively as well as physically).

The craziest thing?
Some abusive men might resent it if you don't reach an orgasm. Not that they care that much about you, often, but they might care about seeing themselves as great lovers.

Example of Entitlement

In this scene, Carlo feels entitled to ask Connie to make dinner and to leave when the dinner is ready without having to explain anything.

Expecting his wife to simply accept his behavior is an example of a huge, entrenched form of entitlement.

You know what will happen afterward, both in the movie and in many -albeit not all- abusive relationships?
Connie will interpret her own crazy behavior as an overreaction and will make excuses for Carlo. She will actually protect and defend him, saying it was her fault.
Connie might have overreacted indeed, but that does not make Carlo any less abusive.

4. You Cannot Criticize Him

Abusive men are above reproach.

Or at least, they don't want to hear any pushback.

If you complain about something, however valid, he sees it as nagging or provoking.

I don't want this scene on my website, but you can click here for an example.
Again, most abusive relationships will reach that level and might not get violent at all. But the *threat* of violence or the fear of violence is often present.
Or verbal and emotional abuse can follow when you criticize him.

5. He Does Not Accept Your Boundaries

Many abusive men want total control.

And they feel they have a monopoly on anger.

When you do get angry, he will try to squash you as soon as he can. And he might use your anger to put you down as overly emotional, irrational, or “full of spite”.

Holding up on anger is unhealthy of course, which might lead you to develop different symptoms, such as:

- depression
- emotional numbing
- eating and sleeping problems
- passive aggression

The icing on the cake? Your abusive partner might use any of the above to belittle you further or make you feel crazy.

Anger Does Not Cause Abuse

By the way, anger doesn’t cause abuse. And he isn’t abusive because he is angry.
It’s the other way around: it’s his entitlement and unrealistic expectations that cause him to be angry.

Anger Explosions as Control Tool

Many survivors of high-conflict relationships report that ‘explosive anger is rarely just a loss of temper—it is a strategic choice. Adelyn Birch, who documents these patterns from a survivor’s perspective, describes how abusers use these outbursts to create “one-trial learning,” conditioning the partner to walk on eggshells to avoid the next explosion.

6. Manipulations

Very few men exclusively rely on verbal abuse, battering, and intimidation to control their partners.

After all, the abuser does need some good times to make you stick with him.

That’s why most abusers are well-schooled in the art of power moves and mental games.
And the more intelligent and well-learned he is, the more refined his manipulations.
Here are some typical manipulations:

- Mood swings, which keep you off balance
- Denying what he has done or said, making you feel crazy
- Making you believe it’s best for you to do what he wants
- Using guilt and making you feel sorry for him
- Shifting the blame to others, including you
- Turning you against your friends or family (divide and conquer)
- Spreading rumors about you among friends and neighbors
- Accusing you of his own sins

7. He Disrespects You

Disrespect is not only a major sign of abusive relationships, but it’s the *core* of an abusive relationship.

Disrespect takes many forms and can also be covert.
For example, Keltner (1998) found that domineering men used more antisocial and value-taking teasing.

But whatever the form, you never abuse someone you respect and you don't respect someone whom you abuse.

De-Humanization to Keep Abusing

Many abusers go on with their abuse and disrespect guilt-free because they dehumanize you and objectify you.
Dehumanization and depersonalization allow them to sleep well and lead guilt-free lives while they keep abusing you.
This is the process by which otherwise normal people can act evil (Zimbardo, 2007). And it's one of the reasons why abusiveness doesn't improve by itself.

I have noticed that online communities such as The Red Pill, theoretically there to help improve men, are actually incubators of misogyny and female dehumanization.

Public Abuse

As we will see later abusive men often care a lot about keeping a spotless public appearance.
But some abusers are more careless and won't refrain from public abuse either.

8. He Feels Superior to You

A sense of superiority is not a prerogative of abusers: many men see themselves as "above" their partners.

Yet, when it's a sense of superiority in many different aspects of life, it's another indicator of an abusive relationship.

The abusive man indeed often sees you as beneath him in intelligence, competence, and sometimes even sensitivity.

Unfavorable Comparisons

Sense of superiority often mixes with disrespect and takes the form of comparisons between what he does -valuable and hard- and what you do -nothing and easy-.

If he works and you stay at home, you chill all day thanks to his hard work. If you both work, his job is more demanding and yours is easy.

Note: the character in the movie is not abusive overall, and indeed she's not afraid in the slightest. But this scene is abusive.
She starts the argument with the wrong approach too by assuming guilt. She is a bit contemptuous of him -which of course doesn't justify abuse-,

9. He Strives for Good Public Image

Not all abusive men do this, but many seek a public affable image and want others to believe they are good and respectable men.

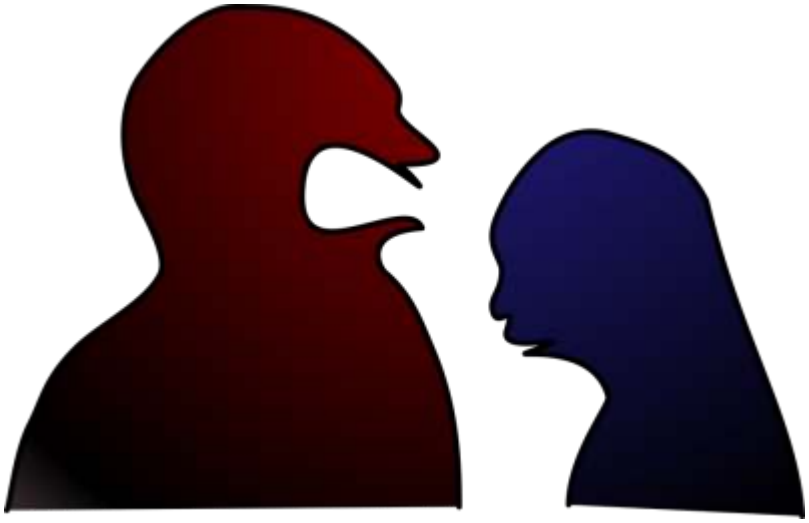
You Have Nobody to Turn To

Since people around think that your boyfriend is a good person, that makes it hard for you to even get support.
Who are you going to talk to?
Some might even think you're a lucky woman.
The good public image becomes another tool that he uses to keep you locked in an abusive relationship.

What's Wrong With Me?

The contrast between a nice public image and behavior and the treatment he reserves for you can be highly damaging for some women.

They wonder if they are at fault for triggering his buttons.
That further lowers their self-esteem, which in turn keeps them tied to the abusive relationship (read here the link between low self-esteem and abusive relationships).



10. Justifies Abuse With Your Allegedly Poor Behavior

The abusive man has always some good justification for his abusive behavior.

And they often include your (made-up) shortcoming and/or your machinations:

- She knows how to get under my skin
- She pushed me too far
- There's only so much I can take
- She's just terrible

Are Abusers Psychopaths?

Well, some of them can be, but the two pathologies are completely different and only seldom overlap (only around 5% of the time, says abuse researcher Lundy Bancroft).

Most abusers indeed do have a conscience, but use entitlement, dehumanization, or made-up excuses to work around it.

Indeed abusers do answer for their actions outside of the relationship. It's just with their partners that they make an exception.

11. Demands Public Perfection

Some men want to parade their women to make *them* look good.

These men will demand you look great, dress perfectly, and behave impeccably.

Even if you manage to behave at their high level of expectations, they are not really in love with you but with the image you provide them.

And they will viciously attack you afterward if you've had any minor slip-up that "made them look bad".

They might refer to you as “embarrassing them” even though you had no idea.

12. Denies and Minimizes Abuse

If after the abusive incident your partner minimizes or denies what happened, you are probably in an abusive relationship.

Only a few abusive men have a borderline personality disorder in which they insulate their consciousness (less than 10%).
Most other abusive men are consciously lying.

Psychiatric Symptoms

If the abusive partner really convinces her partner that the abuse didn’t take place, she can develop psychiatric symptoms.

Non Abusive Reaction:

There is a big difference between an abuser and a non-abuser *after* any incident which can resemble abuse.

A non-abusive person will feel bad about it and want to make up for it. Sometimes he can be as shocked and disturbed as you are.

With the denial and minimization of the abuser, you can instead expect that the abuse will keep going and very possibly increase.

13. Sees Everything As Personal Affronts

Abusers see abuse from their spouse where the was no abuse.

Imagine for example you are having dinner with a couple of friends of yours and they talk about a delicious restaurant they have been to but how incredibly expensive it was.

Your partner turns to you and says you should try. You reply something like “I don’t know dear, it sounds awfully expensive”.

For a normal man, there is nothing wrong there.
But an abuser might take it as an embarrassing, public assault on his manhood for “not being able to afford the place”.

Writes Baumeister in seminal work “*Evil*“:

> The driving force was his own pride, his high self-esteem, his male ego.
> He was so intent on being superior to her that he watched for any little episode or remark that could possibly be interpreted as reflecting badly on him, and whenever he found one he turned violent against her in response.

This is why I am personally very wary of “male pride” and alpha male posturing: they are antechambers to abuse.

14. Escalating Intensity

Be warned:

Research shows that domestic violence usually increases over time.

Couples typically start with insults or cruel remarks, then they might yell, then maybe they threaten to end the relationship or to get “really angry”.

Then finally they start hitting each other.

If you start seeing an escalation of aggression, don't hope it will get better: actively work on it (or end the relationship).

15. Mutual Escalations

Finally, it would be a huge, albeit common mistake, to consider abuse as a male-only problem.

Research by Murray Straus shows that *mutual* aggression is the norm.
And when only one spouse was abusive, he/she most often reported to be reacting out of injustice from the other.

Most people want to see violence in morally black-and-white terms with innocent, victims and evil abusers.
But most abusers only become violent when they think they have been attacked.

Sure, in many cases as we have seen that is wholly in their mind.
But in many other cases, both partners contribute to mutual hurt, violence, and aggression.

Signs You're In Danger

Safety expert Gavin de Becker lists the following signs as red flags of future violence or even potential murder:

1. Intuitive feeling you're at risk
2. He accelerated the pace, prematurely placing on the agenda such things as commitment, living together, and marriage.
3. He resolves conflicts with intimidation, bullying, and violence
4. He is verbally abusive.
5. He uses threats and intimidation as instruments of control or abuse. Including threats to harm physically, defame, embarrass, restrict freedom, disclose secrets, cut off support, abandon, and commit suicide
6. He breaks or strikes things in anger. He uses symbolic violence (tearing a wedding photo, marring a face in a photo, etc.).
7. He has been battered in prior relationships
8. He uses alcohol or drugs with adverse effects (memory loss, hostility, cruelty)
9. He cites alcohol or drugs as an excuse or explanation for hostile or violent conduct ("That was the booze talking, not me; I got so drunk I was crazy")
10. He has a history of police encounters for behavioral offenses (threats, stalking, assault, battery)
11. There has been more than one incident of violent behavior (including vandalism, breaking things, throwing things)
12. He uses the money to control your activities, purchases, and behavior
13. He becomes jealous of anyone or anything that takes your time away from the relationship; he keeps you on a "tight leash," requires her to account for her time
14. He refuses to accept the rejection
15. He expects the relationship to go on forever, perhaps using phrases like "together for life;" "always;" and "no matter what."
16. He projects extreme emotions onto others (hate, love, jealousy, commitment) even when there is no evidence that would lead a reasonable person to perceive them
17. He minimizes incidents of abuse
18. He spends a disproportionate amount of time talking about you and derives much of his identity from being your husband, lover, etc.

19. He tries to enlist your friends or relatives in a campaign to keep or recover the relationship
20. He has inappropriately surveilled or followed you
21. He believes others are out to get him. He believes that those around you dislike him and encourages you to leave him
22. He resists change and is described as inflexible, unwilling to compromise
23. He identifies with or compares himself to violent people in films, news stories, fiction, or history. He characterizes the violence of others as justified
24. He suffers mood swings or is sullen, angry, or depressed
25. He consistently blames others for problems of his own making; he refuses to take responsibility for the results of his actions
26. He refers to weapons as instruments of power, control, or revenge
27. Weapons are a substantial part of his persona; he has a gun or he talks about, jokes about reads about, or collects weapons
28. He uses "male privilege" as a justification for his conduct (treats her like a servant, makes all the big decisions, and acts like the "master of the house")
29. He experienced or witnessed violence as a child
30. You fear he will injure or kill you. You discussed this with others, you made plans to be carried out in the event of your death, or you planning to or thinking about doing so

If you have several of these red flags, there is reason for concern.
Get moving.

Why Do Women Stay in Abusive Relationships?

This is a very deep question and would require its own in-depth article.

There is no one answer fits all, but :

1. Low Self Esteem

For women with low self-esteem abusive relationships become a self-fulfilling prophecy. They don't believe they deserve a good man, and will unconsciously rule out better men and/or sabotage relationships with better men.
A man who mistreats them instead fulfills their own self-narrative of being unworthy.

Low self-esteem can sometimes be the consequence of parents who haven't given enough love or only gave conditional love (read *Will I Ever Be Good Enough?*).

Read more here:

- How low self-esteem leads to abuse

2. Masochism

This is something that few have the courage to admit. But that doesn't make it any less true.

Relationship Researcher John Gottman admits in *The Relationship Cure* that he was shocked to hear women tell him that their best sex was after their men got physical.

3. Perverse Attraction

Robin Baker, the author of *Sperm Wars*, says that women stay with men who successfully raped them because those men show strength and power over them.

Since rape can, sadly, be a valid strategy for procreation in *specific and limited conditions*, a man who is effective at raping can provide her with potentially good genes.
Indeed it seems like the incidence of pregnancies from rape is higher than from routine sex with a partner.
It's f*cked up, I know, but don't shoot the messenger.

And now that you know, this information can actually help you get over an abusive relationship.

4. Fear / Sunk Costs / Change Resistance

There is always some fear connected to change.
There are sunk costs, like the time you've spent together, and the things you have in common. Maybe children or marriage to void.
And the all too human tendency to stick with the devil we know.

The wonderful song Better Man is about an abusive relationship.
But there is otherwise nothing poetic about abusive relationships.
All I want to add here is that you can overcome and move on to a better life.

SUMMARY

The signs of an abusive relationship are obvious to any external observer who knows what to look for.

But not everybody knows what to look for.
This article gives you some better tools to troubleshoot your relationship.

If you found out you're in an abusive relationship, you should know that things rarely change. And you might better off ending the relationship.

If you don't think you're in an abusive relationship but are still unsure, check this article on overcoming relationship ambivalence.

Sources:

- Bancroft L. *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* (2003)
- Evans P. *The Verbally Abusive Relationship* (2010)
- Roy B. Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty (1997)
- Birch A. *30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics* (2015)

7 Types of Abusive Men: a Psychological Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Abusive men come in all shapes and sizes.

But we can differentiate a few specific types based on the external expressions of their abusive tendencies.

This post will provide you with an overview of the types of abusers, their psychology, and their modus operandi.

Contents

- Traits of All Abusive Men
  - 1. Demand Man: The Woman Is There to Serve Him
  - 2. The “Padre Padrone”: The Family’s Authority
  - 3. Mr. Right: I Know It All, You Know Nothing
  - 4. The Master Debater: I Must Win All Arguments, You Must Lose Them All
  - 5. The Sensitive Guy: “How Can You Do This to Him”?
  - 6. The Abusive Player: From Object of Desire to Object
  - 7. The Criminal Abuser: 360° of Abuse
  - Are Abusers Dependent on Women?
  - Psychopaths VS Violent Men
- SUMMARY

Traits of All Abusive Men

First, the most important thing:

The commonalities.

I believe that to truly understand human phenomena, it's always best to start from the deeper layer.
At the core, abusive men have a very distinct psychological makeup that seeks power and control.

All abusive men:

- Seek to control her partner
- Disrespect her partner
- Seek to lower her partner's self-esteem
- Undermine her independence (and independent partner can't be controlled)

The specifics of an abusive relationship can change because different abusers have different levels for each trait and they all find different ways to express their abusive "needs".

Lundy Bancroft, a professional counselor with decades of experience with abusive men, introduces seven archetypes of abusers.
Here they are:

1. Demand Man: The Woman Is There to Serve Him

The demand man believes that his woman is on earth to serve him.

His needs and wants take precedence over almost anything else. About your own needs, for sure, and often even above the children's needs.

If you are in a relationship with an abusive man of this type, he will order you around and expect you to drop anything else to serve him.
Just like a paid servant waiting on standby.
Except he doesn't pay you, he is always unhappy because his standards are too high to meet, and he treats you like dirt.

These are his main beliefs:

- It's your job to do things for me
- If I fail at something, I'll still get angry at you
- If I'm unsatisfied with anything, it's your fault
- You can't demand anything of me but I can demand everything of you
- Be grateful for whatever scrap I give you
- Don't ever criticize me
- In spite of it all, I am a loving person and you're a lucky woman

The demand man can be less controlling than others… As long as you meet all his needs.

2. The "Padre Padrone": The Family's Authority

Ludy Bancroft calls this type of abuser the "military general".

The military general is all about control.

And he takes "controlling" to a whole new level.
He wants to know everything you do in your life and most anything requires his approval.

Some of them, but not all, take the same uber-controlling attitude toward the whole family, while some others only focus on their wives.
When he takes control over the whole family, then I call them "padre padrone".

"Padre padrone" is an Italian term.
It's a wordplay of "padre", meaning "father", and "padrone", meaning owner.

It's a great expression because it goes to the core of what this type of abuser is all about **the "padre padrone" feels like he owns the family**, and he *acts* like he owns the family.

My experience with military generals

My former neighbor used to be a military general with his wife, and he built a custom-made chastity belt for her (I'm not joking).

And I have once dated the daughter of a padre padrone.
Without actually knowing anything about the types of abusive men, she said of him that he was "like a general".
It pained me to see how deeply that idiot had psychologically impacted her.
I still feel for that woman: that idiot scarred her for life.

Example: The "Padre Padrone"

You will not understand the words, but you will still understand the dynamics:

The "padre padrone" is more common in conservative and religious countries and, most of all, in "cultures of honors".
Cultures of honor *encourage* men to be and act more like "owners".
Men who don't act like owners in cultures of honors are mocked as spineless.
The protagonist of the video above later attacks another man and yells at him "are you a man, or are you a muppet?". That other man's fault? He wasn't controlling his family well enough.
Because real men, like him, control.

"Padre Padrone" are sometimes hyper-jealous and protective of the females in their household, so they sometimes overlap with the jealous-paranoid abusive type.

The Scarface character is a jealous "padre padrone" towards his sister:

Tony Montana in the movie Scarface also overlaps with the criminal abuser (N.7 on this list).

3. Mr. Right: I Know It All, You Know Nothing

Abusive men don't always beat their women or yell.

The violent abuser is the favorite representation of TV and movies, but there are more ways of being abusive.

Mr. Right takes most of his pride in knowing it all.

He believes he has superior knowledge and intelligence compared to you.

There are different types of "Mr. Right" and some of them pick specific niches of authority.
But the most extreme of "Mr. Rights" are the ultimate authority on… Pretty much everything. Including your life.

He knows what's the best course of action for you and he has an easy answer for any of your problems -you're just stupid not to see it-.
If you keep arguing with him indeed, you are stupid and you are disrespecting him.

A big area of his expertise, of course, is your shortcomings.

4. The Master Debater: I Must Win All Arguments, You Must Lose Them All

The "Master Debate" will listen to you.

But not to truly understand you, but to use anything you say against you and to win the argument.

The master debater does not scream and does not intimidate you -not physically at least-.
His weapon of abuse is different. He is usually very skilled in verbal production and in influencing people, and he uses all the persuasion and manipulation techniques in the book.

How do you recognize a "Master Debater"?

If a man always gets under your skin and you find yourself angry and resentful without any apparent reason, chances are you are dealing with the verbal and mental power moves of a master debater.

"Master Debaters" often deploy a technique part of "gaslighting".

How do they do it?

When you blow up and become emotional or aggressive, he uses your (legitimate) reaction as proof that you are the abusive one.
Women with master debaters are the most likely to blame themselves because their tactics are some of the hardest to even detect.

It's hard living with a "Master Debater", of course. Relationship researcher John Gottman found out that one of the keys to positive relationships is to accept one's partner's influence.
Exactly what Master Debaters don't want to do.

Example: Jordan Peterson

If Jordan Peterson were an abusive man, he would be extremely effective at it:

Note: NOT saying Peterson is abusive.
It's his verbal skills that can be used to get under your skin.
Peterson gets under Newman's skin here, so the example.

4.2. The Therapist

Therapist controllers use psychology and therapist-talk to maintain control.
But it's only a facade for their craving for power.

A good example:

> **Her**: (does not submit)
> **Him**: I'm a little bit concerned about how disrespectful you are to me
> **Her**: OK (does not submit)
> **Him**: What do you think about that. I'm serious <— His demands for control are cushioned in therapist speak

NOT saying the main this example is abusive.
But that abusive men who take a therapist angle use similar techniques.

5. The Sensitive Guy: "How Can You Do This to Him"?

The sensitive guy uses guilt to control you.

When we talked about emotional caretaking in signs of an abuser, this is the type of guy who demands it the most. He will not scream if your dinner is late, but he will go berserk if you don't sacrifice yourself for his emotional well-being.

Sensitive abusers tend to know some psychoanalysis and psychologist lingo, which they will use to play up their pain and to find faults within you.

He blames you for his pain, but when *you* are hurt, of course, he ignores it or minimizes it.
With time, he can get threatening and intimidating.

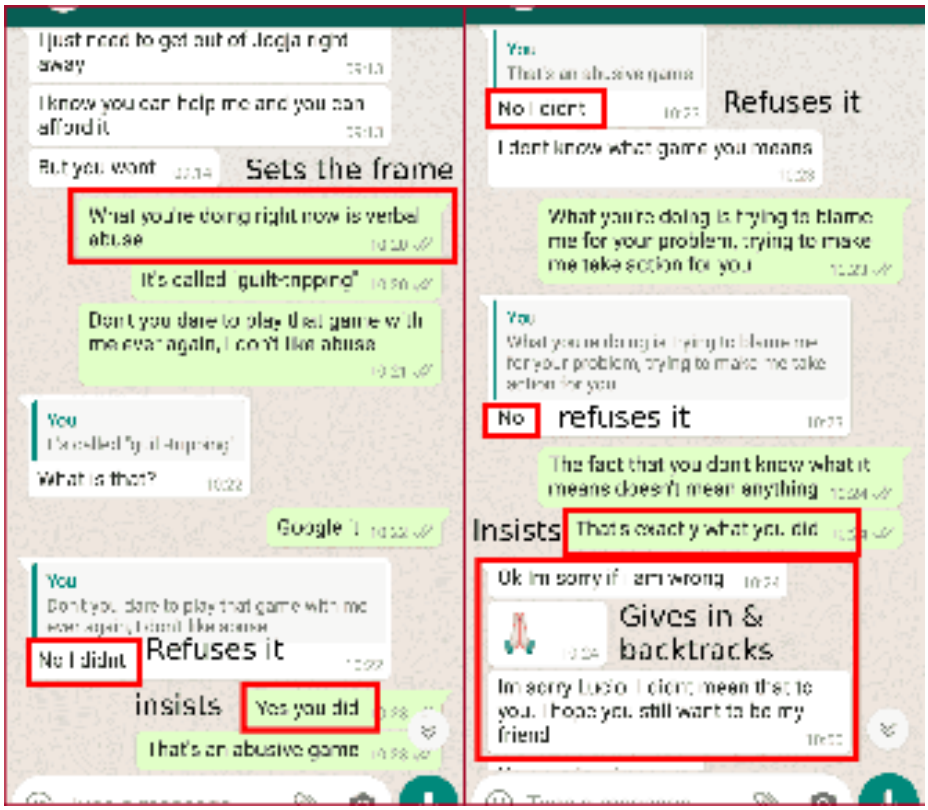
Example: The Good Girl

In the movie “The Good Girl” the protagonist has some traits of the sensitive abuser:

The Victim: Sensitive On Steroids

Similar to the sensitive guy, but he plays up his pains.
For example, to excuse his behavior, he will talk up his childhood abuse, previous women taking advantage of him, or life generally being so harsh on him.
Ben Shapiro uses this technique to verbally abuse his victims.

And here is an example of a woman using this technique with me (and how I handled it):



> **Her**: I just neeed to get out of Jogya right away. I know you can help me and you can afford me, but you won’t

She is framing herself as in bad need of help. And me as the only savior who can help her.
That technique worked great.
I was feeling really bad about it. But angry at the same time, because I knew the game she was playing.
And I held strong to my guns -“dominant frame technique“- to break free of that abusive game.

P.S.:
Don’t jump to the conclusion someone is an abuser. Recognize which is which and you might really help a poor soul out.

6. The Abusive Player: From Object of Desire to Object

The abusive player tends to look good and be a sexy man.

In the beginning, he can be head over heels for you and you might feel like a lucky woman.
How could this guy possibly be single?

As time goes by though his interest becomes only sexual.
He spends less time with you and does not want any restriction on his freedom.

Many abusive players see women only as sexual objects he uses to feel good about themselves and sometimes are narcissists and/or present sociopathic tendencies.

There is one book dedicated wholly to this type of abusive relationship, and it's called "*Psychopath Free*".

Example: The Pimp

Pimps can sometimes be a crossover between players and abusive men.

Pitching Women Against Each Other

Chronic infidelity is abusive per se.
But the abusive player also manipulates your feelings.

For example, he lies about other women and tries to pitch one woman against another.
This has a name, and it's called "dread game" in The Red Pill community, where men with abusive tendencies learn how to become better at it and how to play mind games.

But the true abusers, the ones with sociopaths and psychopath tendencies, take it one notch further.
They will say that other women are spreading rumors because they are jealous, or that they are trying to drive a wedge between you two.

Of course, not all those "other women" must be real.
He might simply make up some stories just to make you jealous, keep you on your toes, and increase his value.

As a last note, not all players and womanizers are abusive. Read more in "the psychology of a player.

7. The Criminal Abuser: 360° of Abuse

Some abusers are not aggressive only with their partners, but with everyone.
These are the ones who are most likely to have other criminal offenses on their record.

Why do women end up with these types of men?

Well, to begin with, he does not introduce himself like an abusive man who is going to batter and physically assault her.
He presents himself as a fearless man.
And because of his attitude, he can make women feel protected.

Of course, rationally that makes no sense.
It's like keeping a grizzly at home because he will keep other grizzlies away. It just doesn't work like that: if anything, he is more likely to attract other grizzlies (and behave like a grizzly, of course).

Indeed, this type of abusive man is the most likely to get threatening and physically aggressive.

Here are his central beliefs:

- Aggression is good and masculine
- Compassion and empathy are 'g*y'

An emotional connection with this type of abusive man is virtually impossible (and we might argue it's impossible with *any* type of abusive man).

Example Raging Bull

Since movies like to focus on the most visible and extreme elements of domestic abuse, there are plenty of examples of criminal abusers.

One of them is the character of Jake LaMotta, portrayed by Robert Deniro in the movie "Raging Bull":

Sadistic Abuser

If there were a scale of the worst types of abusers to live with, well… It would probably be "all of them".

But if one were forced to pick one, it would probably be the sadistic abuser.

The sadistic abuser, similar to the criminal abuser, leverages physical power and threatens you with physical violence.
But on top of being physically abusive, he also takes pleasure in inflicting pain.

These are also the guys who can be very dangerous for retaliation after a breakup. If you are engaged with a sadistic abuser, you must plan your breakup in advance.

Personally -and this is just my opinion here- I would even advise you not to just rely on the legal system but move away and make it impossible for him to know your whereabouts.

Are Abusers Dependent on Women?

Patricia Evans, the author of Controlling People, says that abusive men are actually *dependent* on their women.

Albeit that's not the case for *all* of them, it's true for many of them.
Abusers sometimes form a sort of co-dependent relationship with their spouses. And they can go into a tailspin when she tries to leave them.

As crazy as it might sound, Evans makes the case that some abusers are controlling because they are afraid of losing you and the bond with you. They have an extremely anxious attachment style, and, for some of them, controlling is the only way of keeping the relationship. As a matter of fact, controlling can be his way of "working on the relationship".

What they don't realize, of course, is that they are actually destroying that bond with their behavior-.

Susan Forward, author of "*Men Who Hate Women*" also agrees that misogynists, who tend to be verbal and psychological abusers, are most often afraid of being abandoned.
Misogynists can be highly entitled and demand to be "put first" by their women because they need the unconditional love that they didn't receive as children.
Also, see here an example:

> **Him**: But here's the bottom line, I was here before the kid, your loyalty should be with me (…) it's almost like a chain in command

Forward says that misogynists want to be put before the children because they never had unconditional love from their own mothers.

Needless to say, explaining a behavior, even when it's misguided and motivated by the willingness to be together, does not mean justifying.
No matter what are the reasons behind the abuse, *any* relationship with an abusive man is a toxic relationship.

Abusers Have Big, But Fragile Egos

Let's dispel a myth.

You probably heard this one: abusers are weak and low in self-esteem.

That's what everyone says, including sometimes therapists.
However, that's not true. As social psychologist Roy Baumeister well explains, most abusers are egotists.

Such as, they have *high* self-esteem, but *fragile* self-esteem.

That's why they perceive more threats and feel the need to lash out when something -or someone- threatens their high self-opinion.
They need to maintain their high self-esteem, and women who make them feel less of a man are a threat to their core identity.

Psychopaths VS Violent Men

Some abusers are psychopaths.
And some others, albeit they might present some psychopathic traits, are

There is a big difference between the two.
Relationship researcher John Gottman calls them "pit bulls and cobras" (Gottman, 2007). And psychology researchers Kevin Dutton, tells us that the difference between the two might be in their level of psychopathy (Dutton, 2012).

See here the difference:

COBRA	PIT BULL
Displays violence toward others	Usually only violent toward partner
Feels little remorse	Shows some level of guilt
Motivated by immediate gratification	Motivated by the fear of abandonment
Able to let go and move on	Obsessive; often stalks victim
Feels superior	Adopts the role of "victim"
Fast talker; spins a story for police	Greater emotional lability
Charming and charismatic	Depressed and introverted
Control means "not being told what to do"	Control means "constant monitoring of partner" (see: jealous BF)
Traumatic upbringing; violence prevalent in family	Some degree of violence in the family background
Impermeable to therapeutic intervention	Sometimes benefits from treatment programs
Manipulative: partner less likely to leave	Partner more likely to leave
Antisocial: 90%	Antisocial: 33%

And this is how they differ in the use of violence:

COBRA	PIT BULL
Violence: more severe	Violence: less severe
Use of closed-fist / strangling: 91%	Use of closed-fist / strangling: 62%
Threatened partner with knife or gun: 38%	Threatened partner with knife or gun: 4%
Actual use of knife or gun: 9%	Actual use of knife or gun: 0%
Violence outside relationship: 44%	Violence outside the relationship: 3%

You can notice that the psychopaths are "colder" in their controlling ways, and more effective.
The non-psychopaths are more emotional.

Probably, it's the non-psychopaths who are dependent on their women. But the psychopaths, unable to form emotional bonds, are *not* dependent on their women.

SUMMARY

If you have experienced dating an abuser, chances are you can look at one of the types and above think "oh, that was him".

But of course, there can also be crossovers and overlaps, where one abusive man shows the characteristics of several types.

In summary, you must distance yourself.

Why Does He Do That? Dynamics of Abusive Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Why Does He Do That (2002) explains and analyses the different types of abusive men, why and how they abuse women, and what you can do about it.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Myths About Abusers
  - The source of Abuse is His Value System
  - Early Signs of Abusiveness
  - Abusers Don't See Themselves As Abusers
  - Abusers Won't Change
  - Don't Do Therapy With Abusers
  - Cultural Reinforcements
- Real-Life Applications
- Lucio's Analysis
  - There is little scientific research, and it shows
  - Sometimes it feels a bit like a double standard
  - Christian targeting
  - Why Does He Do That? Because It Works, If You Let It
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Most abusers don't change**
- He's not out of control, **he knows what he's doing**
- Don't try to partition blame: **the abuser is the guilty party**

Full Summary

About The Author:
Lundy Bancroft is a consultant on domestic abuse. He spent decades coaching abusive men and learned much about their psychology and personality.

Introduction

Lundy Bancroft says that the similarities among abusive men outweigh their differences.
But society greatly misunderstands the widespread phenomenon of abusive men.
"*Why Does He Do That*" provides accurate information about abuse and helps women overcome this awful phenomenon.

Myths About Abusers

Lundy starts with a list of dangerous myths that are too pervasive in our society, including psychologists and doctors.

Some myths about abusers are that they:

- Lose control
- Are otherwise good people
- Have low self-esteem
- Are insecure
- Lack education
- It's mostly poor or minorities
- You can spot an abuser outside of their relationship
- Therapy will help

My Note: Self-esteem is a predictor of IPV
Bancroft shares some hard-hitting truths that some women badly need to hear.
However, research shows that self-esteem *is* a predictor of IPV.

Therapy won't help by making the abusers get in touch with their feelings. **Abusers need to get in touch with their partner's feelings, not their own**.

Some abusers are so self-centered and have such entrenched entitlement mentality that they genuinely think they are abused by their victims.

The source of Abuse is His Value System

After he debunks a lot of myths about the causes of abuse, the author makes the point that it's a bad value system that causes men to abuse.

Such value system includes the belief that:

- Women should serve men
- He is smarter / better than her
- He possesses her
- It's up to him to call all the shots in the family
- He's not abusive, it's her who deserves it

> The abusive mentality is the mentality of oppression

Early Signs of Abusiveness

Bancroft lists the following traits and red flags.

An abuser might:

- Speaks disrespectfully about exes
- Show disrespect toward you
- Make a show of generosity or do a favor you don't want
- Be very controlling and/or possessive
- Be self-centered

- Have issues admitting fault
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Move ahead too quickly with the relationship
- Treat you differently in public
- Pressure you for sex
- Intimidate you during arguments
- Have a general negative attitude toward women

It's important though to notice that a single warning does not give you any guarantee. Many non-abusive men will show one or some of these signs to a certain degree (minus physical intimidation, which should be a clear "run away sign").

Abusers Don't See Themselves As Abusers

An abuser minimizes his behavior by comparing himself to men who are worse than he is, whom he thinks of as "real" abusers.
If he never threatens his partner, then to him threats define real abuse.

And if he is a batterer, then it's his wife's fault who "knows how to push his buttons".

Abusers Won't Change

It's rare for any abusers to change.

They almost never start from an intrinsic motivation because they don't want to change and they don't think they're doing anything wrong.

The motivation must come from strong, extrinsic factors, such as the risk of losing their partner or major criminal consequences.
After they start on the path to change, then maybe intrinsic motivation will also help.

But deep, permanent change is sadly rare.

Don't Do Therapy With Abusers

The therapist wants the couple to work together. But a woman should not work with an abuser: that only serves to reinforce the abuser's case.

Cultural Reinforcements

The author makes the point that our society is too lenient on abusers. For example, he says, Eminem won a Grammy for a song of his, Kim, in which he murders his wife.

The song is indeed quite terrible:

Real-Life Applications

Track down previous partners
When in doubt and when he speaks disrespectfully about women and ex-partners talking to an ex-partner of his might save you years of misery.

And check out this article to catch the signs of a sociopath and learn the manipulative strategies of psychopaths:

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Lucio's Analysis

I loved "*Why Does He Do That*".

Yet, some parts left me unconvinced.

Standing against abuse is the only right thing to do.
Let's dig deeper:

There is little scientific research, and it shows

The author has much experience running men's workshops.
However, that may mean he has less experience from the *female* side.

Also, *Why Does He Do That* quotes little research.
For example, from the research we've seen:

Evidence Shows That IPV Is A Two-Way Street

I want to say this first:

Many women reading ARE true victims who contributed little or nothing to abuse.
Many are wonderful women who deserve and must get better.

Focus on that first, and move forward to a better life.

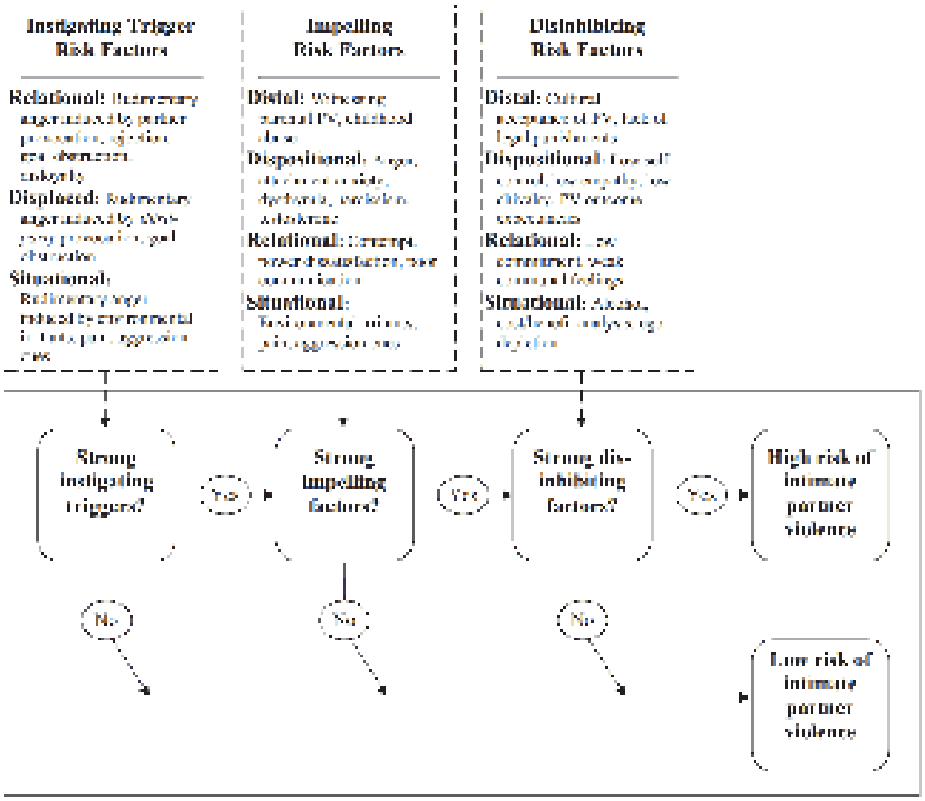
Now, that being said, if one wants to explore IPV properly, there is abundant research on this topic.

And the picture that emerges from research is quite different from what you may get reading this book.

To sum it up very quickly:

- **Partners are a poor match** and bring vulnerabilities for aggression
- **The *relationship* is part of the issue**, and turns conflictual and distressed
- ***Both* partners participate in the aggression**, with lack of communication and problem-solving skills, possible verbal provocation, and reciprocating hostile behavior that leads to physical escalation

In one picture:



by J. P. Forgas and J. Fitness, 2008, New York, NY: Psychology Press. Copyright 2008 by the Taylor & Francis Group. Adapted with permission.

For more I recommend the chapter on IPV in the *APA Handbook* on relationships:

https://thepowermoves.com/apa-handbook-of-personality-and-social-psychology-vol-3-interpersonal-relationships/
Once again, if you're reading here, it's possible that the blame lies with your partner.

And it's possible that your partner is just an awful person.
A POS is POS, and there is no excuse for that.

IPV May Be Linked to Infidelity Fears, Suggesting Possible Solutions

Abusive behavior is linked to control, sexual proprietariness, jealousy/paranoia, and fear of infidelity.

The fear of infidelity can be imagined or, sometimes, real. A point also made in the recent *Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives*.

In a few limited cases then, **a possible solution for some women may be to assuage infidelity fears.**
We in no way suggest this may solve most cases, or that a woman should allow anyone to monitor her: quite the opposite. But in some limited cases of women with otherwise good men who happen to be overly worried, assuaging fears may help.

In any case, this is the type of evolutionary-informed, solution-focused approach I wanted to see more of in the book.

Some Unsubstantiated Claims

Since there's little research, quantitative analysis, and few references, some claims end up being unsubstantiated.

For example, Lundy says:

> (…) although most abusers are men and most abused are female, the reasons are social and not biological.

Based on what exactly does he say?
To me, this betrays a lack of evolutionary insight of this ugly phenomenon.

Sometimes it feels a bit like a double standard

Again, let me say this first: many male abusers deserve all the criticism they can get. And more.

That being said, a good analysis must still be dispassionate, and look at all sides of the equation.
Lundy says that abusers criticize his program as "man-hating".

Well, I'm sure many abusers use that as a manipulative tactic to avoid fessing up to their crimes.

But at times I also did feel like some anti-male bias.

For example, **Bancroft says that "it depends" on whether physical aggression by women toward men is abuse.** His rationale is that since men don't experience physical aggression as intimidating, the long-term emotional effects are less harmful.
And he adds that it's rare to find a man who's lost self-esteem and freedom because of her partner's aggressiveness.

Well, I get his point, but… So what, only because the harm may –*may*!- be small, on average, then it's not abuse?
It still reeks of a bit of a double-standard mentality.

On another occasion, a woman asks if she is violent because she slapped or shoved his partner a couple of times.
And, again, he replies with "it depends". He says that if her actions did not harm, scare or control him, that's not violence for him.

Then, well… Shouldn't he say the same for men?
That if his action did not harm, then it's not abuse?

Hence, I didn't agree with that.

Biased Toward the Plaintiff

More than once I found the book too strongly on the side of the defendant.
For example, Bancroft writes:

> If you report to the court that you were assaulted or threatened, or that your partner broke a restraining order, your word is evidence. **Courts can, and do, file charges on the basis of victim reports alone, but tragically they can be reluctant to do** so in cases of domestic abuse or sexual assault

Tragically?

Why does he say tragically?

He laments that the courts don't (always) take the woman's word on abuse. But he himself says somewhere else that most (but not all) abuse allegations are accurate.

So why should courte take words as evidence?

Plus, since we're here, how does he know most allegations are accurate?
I actually also think that may be the case.

But still… How does he know that?

And what about those inaccurate ones?

Lundy never says…

And he adds everyone should be very, very cautious in accepting a man's claim that he's been unjustly accused.

That's a big twist of the principle of innocent until proven guilty.

And hey, maybe from a number's perspective, he's right. But he doesn't show numbers. And he never stops to think about the plight of false accusations (and convictions).

He never for a second admits that maybe, just maybe, sometimes plaintiffs can lie, just like pretty much anyone else in the world.

Basically what I'm getting to here is this: abusers are scumbag assholes. No bones about it. But so are liars who abuse the legal system to harm an innocent person.
That also exists, can happen, has happened, and *will* happen again.
But the author seems too feverishly lost in his (fair) crusade against abusive men to stop and consider that there are many NON-abusive men. These non-abusive men might be victims of false accusations, as they have a right to innocence before proven guilty.

Christian targeting

Lundy writes:

> To make matters worse, these religious sects have greatly increased their political power around the globe over the past two decades.
> As a case in point, consider the growing influence of Christian fundamentalism in the United States.

Honestly, I found this misplaced.
With increasingly secular Western civilization and with terrorism around the world, the author picks the example of Christian fundamentalism.

Why Does He Do That? Because It Works, If You Let It

That may be the ultimate, most disconcerting answer that Lundy never really gets into.

Abuse is widespread.
And that may suggest that it's evolution equipped some men with a predisposition towards this behavior.

For example, writes Arnocky, in the *Oxford Handbook of Infidelity*:

> these apparently diverse acts of aggression all have in common is, broadly, their robust **links to (typically) male sexual proprietariness** (…) **to control and monopolize women's reproductive decisions** to stymie infidelity, reduce paternity uncertainty, and prevent women's defection from the relationship (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Taylor, 2012; Wilson & Daly, 1996)
> (…) repugnant and societally damaging behavior **(e.g., IPV) may constitute adaptions** that require ultimate (i.e., distal) explanations that relate to their functional significance (Archer & Vaughan, 2001; Daly, 2014; Vandermassen, 2011; Welling & Nicolas, 2015)
> (…)
> domestic assault appears to function primarily to prevent infidelity, whereas in-pair sexual assault seems to be a response after infidelity has been committed (Camilleri & Quinsey, 2009; Daly & Wilson, 1992; Goetz & Shackelford, 2006)

The possible adaptive nature of IPV is a point made by several researchers, including David Buss.

And that's the powerful explanatory angle that Lundy Bancroft misses on: the evolutionary psychology one.
Including an evolutionary lens would have allowed *Why Does He Do That* to cover all angles, from the real-life examples Bancroft shares, to the deeper "why".

From what I've seen, research and power dynamics suggest:

- **Some men are motivated by control and abuse is a consequence of control** to prevent infidelity and defection
- **Higher 'sense of ownership' = higher odds of controlling**, and higher odds of abuse when men feel their control is slipping, or that their partner is evading their control
- **Controlling behavior may have been adaptive** for some context, an unfortunate truth that both good men and women must contend with to get rid of this problem

I believe that facing these uncomfortable truths is the unly way to freedom and liberation for both men and women.
So here's my intervention for you, dear reader:

Will you let this cr@p keep working on you?

Maybe it's time to stop trying to understand him, hope he will change, or try 'fix' things.
Maybe it's time to move on.

PROS

Great Overview of Abuse
A really, really great book to understand the phenomenon of abuse and the mentality and psychology of abusive men.

Much Needed Abuse Wisdom
Lundy does a great job dismantling some persisting myths about abuse. Society really needs this.

Deep Psychological & Power-Related Wisdom
Like for example high-dominance and abusive men are annoyed when their woman is at the center of attention because they see their partner as being supportive cast *to* them.
Or how abusive men prefer younger, less experienced, or vulnerable women because they can dominate more easily. Be aware of a man who's attracted by power imbalances, says the author.

Review

"*Why Does He Do That*" is a great book on the psychology of abusive men, relationship power dynamics, and potentially women's empowerment.

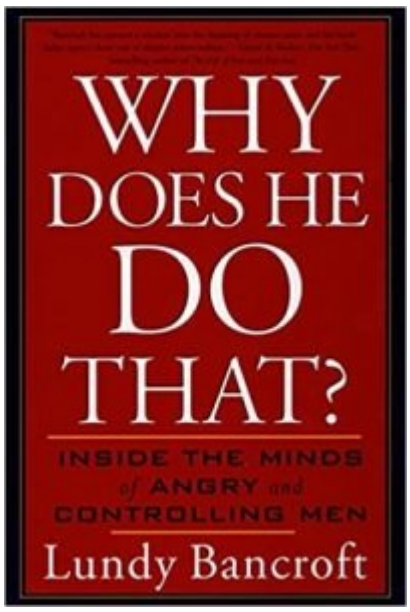
I learned a lot with Lundy Bancroft.
And I consider this book is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand not just the psychology of abusive men and toxic relationships, but also very useful for power dynamics and general psychology.
Some of these traits, albeit at a much smaller scale, also drive some otherwise non-abusive men. Like power-hungry men, for example.

I believe that this already great book could would have been even better with more research, evolutionary insights, and deeper consideration of dyadic dynamics.
Finally, female readers may have also benefited from more practical advice on how to handle these dynamics, or how to get out safely.

If you're interested in that, check out:

- **The types of abusive men**: psychology and self-defense

Why Does He Do That Summary: How Abusers Think | TPM



A great book on the phenomenon of abusive men. Their psychology, their mindset, and how you can spot them (and avoid them)

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/why-does-he-do-that/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.8

Relationship Problems: The Full List (+ The Cures)

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This article lists all the major relationship problems which have been proven to negatively impact relationships.

How to use this article
The aim of this article is to give you a quick overview of all the most common relationship problems.
It's all based on research and data.
It condensates, in a shorter and easier format, all the more in-depth articles and books previously appeared here.

If you need more details, you can then just click on the hyperlinks.

Contents

- #1. Lack of Intimacy: Friends But Not Couples
- #2. Emotional Unsafety: Fear of Being Vulnerable
- #3. Lack of Interest in Partner's Life
- #4. Ignorance of Our Partner: "He Doesn't Really Know Me"
- #5. Unmatched Attachment Styles
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- #7. Bad Communication: The 4 Horsemen
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- #10. Refusing Influence: When "Being Right" Kills Cooperation
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- 13. Affairs: The Ultimate Betrayal of Trust & Bond

- 14. Ambivalence: When Partners Are Not All In
- #15. Dysfunctional Relationship Dances: When Couples Get Stuck In Poisous Patterns
- #16. Abusive Relationship
- SUMMARY

#1. Lack of Intimacy: Friends But Not Couples

John Gottman in *The Man's Guide to Women* says that the biggest complaint of women in relationships is the lack of intimacy and emotional connection.

What men should know is that with more intimacy and connection not only they can also enjoy a better relationship, but they can also fix their two major complaints: too much arguing and not enough sex.

Emotional intelligence is key to fixing relationship problems related to intimacy. Here are two articles to help you fix the lack of intimacy:

- Build shared meaning
- Turn towards

#2. Emotional Unsafety: Fear of Being Vulnerable

In some bad relationships, partners are afraid of opening up and sharing intimate details.

They hold back on affection and signs of love in fear they might be spurned.

Amir Levine in The *Attached* explains that feeling secure in the relationship makes us feel secure in life. Not feeling secure in our romantic relationships instead makes us feel insecure about life.

To fix emotional unsafety both partners need to look and act in the relationship as a sanctuary to being oneself. And they both must restrain to use any personal details as a tool to attack and undermine their partners during arguments -which amounts to emotional abuse-.

- Example of an emotionally unsafe relationship to avoid

#3. Lack of Interest in Partner's Life

It's simple:

When someone is interested in us, we feel like they care. And if they're not interested, we feel like they don't care.

Being interested in our partners also enables intimacy, because it allows us to get to our partner more than anyone else.
When we feel like our partners know us better than anyone else, we feel bonded with them.

Knowing our partner is not something that we do once and forever. It's a continuous interest and curiosity that we keep for our partner.

- How did their day go
- What do they think about the latest scandal
- Why did they decide to vote for this candidate
- How do they feel about the new boss
- …

Keeping curious about our partners is also a way of saying "I care about you".

As a bonus, a common refrain of people who develop affairs is that “the affair partner understands me so much better”.
Knowing each other well and updating that knowledge with curiosity also becomes an antidote to affairs.
As one woman said:

> *I share all significant events with my husbands. How could I have an affair, I’d have to immediately run and tell him about it*

#4. Ignorance of Our Partner: “He Doesn’t Really Know Me”

This is the consequence of a lack of interest.

Many relationship experts agree that a crucial element that makes couples stick in the long run is a good friendship.

It can be hard to develop a strong bond though unless we know each other. Couples that don’t know each other well cannot feel understood and cannot develop a strong bond that transcends all other relationships.

- How to get to know your partner

As an example of how lonely it can be to live with a partner who doesn’t know us, I like this scene with Jack Nicholson:

#5. Unmatched Attachment Styles

Attachment style mismatches are an extremely common relationship problem.

Most people miss both the warning signs and the fixes though because, well… Very few people know about attachment styles.

Attachment styles in a nutshell

In a nutshell, people are categorized through attachment style depending on how they stand in relation to intimacy (here’s a quiz to find out where you stand).
Some people:

- Crave lots of intimacy and are afraid of losing it (anxious attachment style)
- Are afraid of intimacy and push it away (avoidant attachment style)
- Are comfortable with intimacy, both asking for it and giving it (secure attachment style)

You can already see from this description the worst mix you can have is between an anxious who craves intimacy and an avoidant who pushes back on intimacy.
That’s what I describe in this article as a match made in hell.

#6. Harsh Arguments: It’s Not About Arguing, It’s About How You Argue

It’s not true that arguments are an issue.

It’s *harsh* arguments that are an issue when they are not offset but more powerful and more frequent intimacy-building moments.

Arguments have a strong, strong tendency to start as they start.

That means that couples starting arguments harshly or with a heavy critical tone are likely to spin their wheels in the ugly swamps of pointless fighting.

Becoming more skilled at having arguments will mean that you will solve more problems, reach more resolutions, and have fewer and more pleasant arguments.
Here are the keys to better arguing:

1. Start gently
2. Take a break when things get too heated
3. De-escalate
4. Drop meanness and the mindset of hurting your partner

Here's how you can improve your arguments:

- Conflict management in relationships
- How to soften our critics

#7. Bad Communication: The 4 Horsemen

Communication.

How often have you heard this is the crux of all relationship problems?

Well, I've got news for you, Sue Johnson, author of *Hold Me Tight* makes a compelling case that great couples don't communicate any better than poor ones.
The key, she says, is in the emotional connection, not in the communication.

Communication overlaps with emotions

I agree with Jonson, but also partially disagree.

And research seems to be on my side.
Bad communication goes deeper than words and becomes entangled with feelings and emotions.

When you accuse your partner of a global deficiency instead of addressing the issue at hand indeed you're not just communicating poorly, but you are also negatively shifting the mood and emotions.

Communication styles to avoid

Avoid what John Gottman refers to as The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse, such as:

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling

And also read:

- Relationship unsolvable issues

#8. Negative Outlook: You Get What You Think Of

A negative outlook happens when the relationship has become so bad that we filter everything that happens through negative lenses.

Couples who are badly entrenched in their negative outlook see everything that happens through negative lenses.
That means that you mostly see and focus on the negatives and miss the positives.
And when you do see a positive, you spin its significance.

For example:

> ***Him***: *She is being strangely nice… She wants something or she feels guilty for being such a bitch*
>
> ***Her***: *He's being nice because his team won. If he could only care about me as much as his stupid football team…*

The antidote, for your relationship and for a better life as well, is to consciously focus on the positive instead. Here's an in-depth article:

- The positive perspective

#9. Vicious Circles: When Everything Positive Goes Out The Window

Vicious circles are what happens when you let a negative outlook take over.

Mira Kirshenbaum, an author of *Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay*, says she has never seen a troubled relationship that wasn't in the vice of a mutual shutdown -what I call here a "vicious circle"-.

When we start a relationship there is a non-written rule that we will do our best… As long as our partner keeps doing their best.
And the unspoken other side of the coin is that we will retaliate if our partner hurts us.

Little by little, each partner feels they are in debt and that they have to receive before they can start giving again. But so feels the other partner. The result? There is little giving in the relationship while they are both acting hurt and entitled.

- Here's how to fix a vicious circle

#10. Refusing Influence: When "Being Right" Kills Cooperation

Accepting influence means listening to what our partner says and taking it into account.

Not accepting influence means doing it our way without consideration for our partners.
It happens relatively often that, especially men, are not very open to accepting their partners' influence. And the impact is huge: More than 80% of couples who don't accept influence split up.

How to accept influence

How do you accept more influence, then? It's a simple shift, yet one of the tectonic proportions: you must go from "I" to "US".
And believing that there can be no win unless both partners are either on board or accept the decision.
Here's more information on the subject, including examples:

- Accepting influence
- Power hungry partners

#11. Power Struggles: When Winning Kills Cooperation

A consequence of refusing influence is that a relationship becomes a power struggle.

Partners think about how they can win instead of winning together.

Unluckily much dating literature for women and for men focuses on power games which don't always lead to the best relationships you can have -unless you're able to make a U-turn for the relationship-.
Some manosphere self-improvement circles like The Red Pill also teach men how to win and how to control

relationships instead of how to be successful at relationships as a team.

Here are some typical power moves:

- Becoming the prize
- Make him value you more
- Break up threats

#12. Resentment: When Fights With No Fondness Turn Love Into Bitterness

Bitterness is the feeling you get when the relationship is based on power struggles and games.

Partners caught in a vicious circle and mutual shutdown are also often bitter toward each other.
And of course, partners who use the four horsemen of the apocalypse are also often bitter towards one another.

The antidote is:

- Fondness and admiration

13. Affairs: The Ultimate Betrayal of Trust & Bond

Affairs are traumatic events which in a matter of minutes within the discovery shutter trust and goodwill.

- Signs your partner is cheating
- Why do people cheat
- The stages of an emotional affair
- Myths and facts of infidelity

And most important:

- How to prevent cheating
- How to recover from affairs
- Making your relationship cheat-proof

14. Ambivalence: When Partners Are Not All In

Ambivalence is straddling the fence, not knowing whether you want to stay in the relationship or not.

It's one of the major relationship problems because you stop giving fully, you second guess everything and you keep your options open.

The antidote, simply, is to decide.
But of course, deciding is not always is, and this is a really good article to help you decide:

- How to know when to break up (or stay)

#15. Dysfunctional Relationship Dances: When Couples Get Stuck In Poisous Patterns

Dysfunction relationships can actually stay together for a long time. However, they are simply not optimal.

Growing out of a dysfunctional relationship sometimes means growing as individuals first and foremost, because each partner enables the other like two planets in each other's orbit.

This is an article on some of the most typical dysfunctional relationships:

- The most common dysfunctional relationships

#16. Abusive Relationship

Fixing all the relationship problems will NOT help if you are in a relationship with an abusive man.

Doing any fixing with an abusive man is actually likely to make the problem worse because it focuses on joint responsibility.
And focusing on joint responsibility gives the abusive partner -most often albeit not always, the man- all the excuses to keep blaming you.

But you cannot fix anything until you first fix abusiveness -which is difficult and unlikely-.
More information:

- The signs of an abusive relationship
- The 7 types of abusive men
- Early signs of abusive men

And this article might help if you are mired in an abusive relationship (albeit it's not fully tailored to abusive relationships):

- How to get out of a toxic relationship

SUMMARY

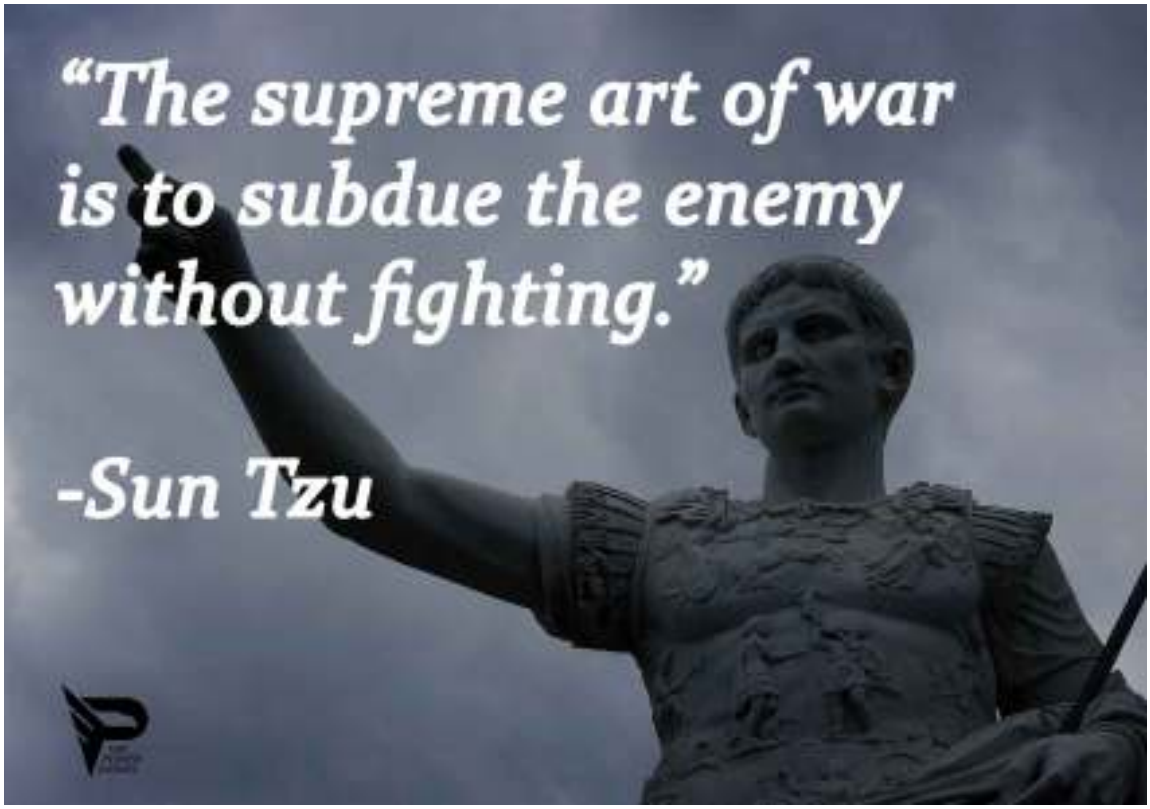
Guys, this will take you quite some time to read.
If you want to shorten your learning curve, consider getting my overview of the whole relationship literature in the store.

Sources: this article leverages decades of research and relationship literature. I won't list every single source as it would get way too long.

The Art of War: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Art of War is the most famous book on war, strategies, and "power moves".
Sun Tzu is the Chinese ancient Machiavelli, and the book is as much on warfare as it is on mindsets.



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  - Movement and Development
  - Six Field Positions
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- The Art of War – Review

Bullet Summary

- Only wage wars you can win
- Make your enemy move like you want him to move
- Don't abandon your position until you can safely do so

The Art of War – Summary

About The Author:
Sun Tzu was born in 544 Before Christ, and sources disagree on the details of his life and whereabouts.
We know though that he was Chinese, and like was a general, military strategist, writer, and philosopher.
His name is linked to this book, "*The Art of War*", which has heavily influenced Eastern and Chinese military strategy and general philosophy.

Introduction

First of all, says Sun Tzu, war is a grave endeavor to undertake and should not be started without detailed consideration.
That's why you should always start by gathering all the information available.

Detailed Assessment and Planning

The main message here is that not analyzing and not preparing well will lead to failure.
Sun Tzu describes the five fundamental factors, such as:

- mission
- climate
- ground
- command
- methods

> Failing to plan is planning to fail

Waging War

The chapter"Waging War" focuses on the costs of war.
This is a critical concept of *The Art of War* as Sun Tzu stresses that conflict is expensive and beating the opponent without conflict is always the best resolution.
If you must wage war, though, do it resolutely and as quickly as possible.

> **Everyone loses on long drawn out wars**

Strategic Attack

Destroying your enemy is not the highest form of war achievement. Capturing and subduing without fighting is.
These are Sun Tzu the best strategies for war:

- Upset the enemy's plans

- Prevent the enemy from joining forces
- Attack in the field

And worst of all, is to besiege walled cities.

Positioning

Before even moving you should think of avoiding loss.

An army should defend the existing positions until it's ready and capable to forge ahead in safety.
Don't move aimlessly, but learn to spot the opening that your enemy gives you. When you can spot a mistake, you can win with little cost and little strength.

> **You can conquer without being able to do it**

Forces

Creativity is important to win wars, but unbridled creativity can be dangerous. Creativity must be bound to reality and used in conjunction with proven, working methods.
Then it becomes a force.

Weaknesses and Strengths

The idea of this chapter is to attack when and where your enemy is least prepared and able to defend.

Make the enemy hurry to fight you, and he'll arrive tired. Appear where he doesn't expect you, and you'll catch him by surprise.
Hold positions that cannot be attacked and attack positions that are undefended or hard to defend.

My Note:
This chapter was very good and in many ways, it echoed the work of contemporary Robert Greene in "The 48 Laws of Power".

Maneuvers

Direct conflict is dangerous and costly, but sometimes it's necessary.

This chapter focuses on the logistics of war. It's good, but I don't think it's going to be useful to a modern reader. One because a modern reader is not very likely to be a general, and second because if he actually is a general, war has changed dramatically since then.

Adapting to the Situation

Every situation is unique, but you can recognize familiar elements in any unique situation.
While we want to stay creative, we also want to adhere to proven methods that work.

Movement and Development

This chapter details the movement of an army. It might be more antiquated given the modern warfare of rockets and airplanes, but some elements are still valid for infantry.

Some general rules, such as:

- Camp on high terrain
- Don't climb high ground to fight

- Move away from the river if you cross it
- Attack when the army is halfway through crossing a river

Six Field Positions

This chapter looks at the different types of terrain and the advantages and disadvantages of each.
These are the six types of terrain:

1. Accessible terrain
2. Entangling terrain
3. Temporizing terrain
4. Narrow passes
5. Precipitous heights
6. Far away

For example, accessible terrain is easy to leave and to go back.
Entangling terrain that is easy to leave but hard to go back should not be used to launch an attack. Because if the attack fail it's not easy for you to retreat to where you came from.

Nine Battlegrounds

Sun Tzu lists nine types of battlegrounds:

1. Dispersive (own territory)
2. Facile
3. Contentious
4. Open
5. Intersecting highways
6. Serious
7. Difficult
8. Hemmed-in
9. Desperate

Fire Attack

There are five ways to use fire in war, says Sun Tzu says you can burn:

1. Soldiers in their camp
2. Storages
3. Baggage trains
4. Arsenals
5. Hurling fire among the enemy troops

Intelligence

The Art of War makes the point that there is no such thing as an objective reality, but different interpretations of it.

How closely we interpret reality is a major element of winning or losing a war.
In a sense, all wars are wars of information.

My Note:

Sun Tzu was incredibly prescient here.

> **All wars are wars of information**

How to Use The Art of Wart in Everyday Life

Avoid wars whenever you can
This is not just for real, literal wars, but also verbal wars, legal battles, and long-standing "frenemies" relationships.

Only fight wars you can win
Don't willingly enter into wars that are difficult for you to win.

Approach life strategically
Generally speaking, applying the Art of War to your everyday life is all about thinking strategically.
I highly recommend:

- Power Intelligence
- How to be Machiavellian

And, of course, the best of all: Power University.

CONS

Translations Ruin It
With *The Art of War*, there isn't just the "simple" complexity of translating a (very) different language. But we're talking about translating a different language of a different era. Modern Chinese is also nothing like Sun Tzu's Chinese.

It Aged
Some principles of *The Art of War* stand the test of time and will keep standing the test of time for a long time to come.
But some other parts aged quite a bit.
For example, political strategies Bruce Bueno de Mesquita makes a compelling case that Sun-Tzu is perfect for despots, but not as good for democratic leaders (see "*The Dictator's Handbook*").

PROS

Deep Principles
Some principles, like don't fight if you don't have to and fight quiet if you have to, are really good not just for war but for everyday life.
The same can be said for preparation.

The Art of War – Review

The Art of War is the military equivalent of what "*The Prince*" is for political machination: a landmark text.

The Art of War is not just military warfare though and it goes beyond, encompassing philosophy and life strategy.

When it comes to actual strategy, If I had to pick *The 33 Strategies of War* and *The Art of War*, I'd probably recommend the former to most readers as it applies better to social interactions.

But Sun Tzu is also a monument to human ingenuity and a piece of history in itself.

Read more summaries or check out the best book reviews.

The Science of Love & Intimacy

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This is an overview of the relationship category.

It's a one-stop with all the information you need to achieve the best relationship ever.

Think of this as a compendium, the only one post you need to improve your relationship.

Contents

- Relationship Power Dynamics

- Relationships Dynamics
  - 1. Picking the Best Partner
  - What Makes Strong Relationships
  - What Breaks Relationships
  - Relationships to End

Relationship Power Dynamics

We start with what's relevant to this website: power dynamics.

- **How to Maintain Attraction**: the basics of power, control, and attraction in long-term relationships
- **The Stages of Power**: How power changes in intimate relationships depending on the stage of the relationship
- **How women control relationships**: in most relationships, women are the prize and have true power. I call this role "the judge", and it also exists in social relationships
- **When men and women struggle for power**: this is what happens when there is no clear leader and man and woman struggle to one-up each other
- **Power hungry-partners**: mostly men, but in a few exceptional cases it can be women. It describes why people very high in power-seeking don't usually make for great partners

Below are articles less focused on power dynamics, but equally helpful to master intimate relationships.

Relationships Dynamics

The aim of this article is to give you a quick overview of all the most common relationship problems.
Click on whatever interests you most to dig deeper.

It's all based on research and data. It condensates, in a shorter and easier format, all the more in-depth articles and books previously appeared here.

If you need more details, you can then just click on the hyperlinks.

1. Picking the Best Partner

There are several layers you want to take into account when looking for a great partner.

1. Personal Quality

Learning to recognize your partner's quality today is the greatest investment you make in your tomorrow:

- Traits of high-quality women

- Traits of high-quality men
- Traits of low-quality women
- Traits of low-quality men

2. Finding a Loyal Partner

Trust is crucial in a relationship.
And these are the best articles and indicators to find a loyal, trustworthy partner:

- How to pick a loyal partner -scientifically
- Signs of a fuckboy
- Psychology of womanizers
- 7 Questions to find out if he's a womanizer
- How to overcome infidelity
- How to prevent cheating
- How to forgive a cheater
- 10 questions for a cheater
- Why people cheat
- Emotional infidelity: what is it and how it happens

3. Attachment Styles

One of the most important traits you need to have compatible with your partner is attachment style.
It's as important as it is underrated. Few people talk about it because few people know about it.
Read here:

- Attachment styles overview
- Anxious attachment style
- Avoidant attachment style
- Secure attachment style

And most important:

- Test your attachment style
- Anxious avoidant: the match you need to avoid

This is possibly the single most important factor when it comes to matching personality traits for good relationships.
For more insights, check the relationship guide.

What Makes Strong Relationships

1. Accepting Influence

Accepting influence means listening to your partner and taking into consideration what they like and prefer.
Couples who don't do it split up more than 80% of the time.
Read:

- Accepting influence
- Power hungry partners

2. Emotional Connection

Sue Johnson, author of Hold Me Tight says that great couples don't communicate better than poor couples. They are just more emotionally attuned.
Read:

- Shared meaning
- Emotional connections: turning towards

3. Positive Outlook

Couples who have a strong sense of relationship see each other positively.
And this is true for life in general as it is for relationships. Having a positive outlook means that you interpret negative behavior as the exception and positive behavior as the norm.

- The positive outlook

4. Fondness and Admiration: Staying in Love

A great way to stay focused on the positives and stay in love forever is to cultivate a culture of fondness and admiration for our partners.
Read here how to do that:

- Fondness and admiration

5. Knowing Your Partner (Love Maps)

Knowing our partner and keeping alive the curiosity it takes to update that knowledge says "I care about you".

- How to really get to know your partner

6. Shared Meaning

A shared culture tells about your relationship together. The more shared meaning you have, the more unique and special your bond is.

- How to increase your shared meaning

7. More Positives to Negatives

John Gottman found out that there is a "magic ratio" of positives to negatives above which relationships are successful.

- The magic ratio of long-lasting relationships

8. Share Love Languages

Gary Chapman has such a simple and yet so revolutionary concept: if we don't speak the same love languages we can't communicate our love and appreciation to each other.

- The 5 Love Languages

What Breaks Relationships

And here's what has been proven to destroy relationships instead (here's a more in-depth overview article focusing only on relationship destroyers)

1. Ambivalence

Ambivalence is not knowing whether to fully commit or not. You can't have a good relationship while being ambivalent.

- Fix ambivalence here

2. Bad Conflict Styles

Arguing well is not necessarily a plus, but arguing badly does break the relationship apart.

- The secrets to arguing well

Avoid the following, also called The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse:

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling
- Conflict management: how to argue

Unsolvable Issues Bitterness

Conflict resolution is great, but don't go thinking you'll solve all problems.
Some relationship issues stem from core differences, which makes them perennial issues.
Here's how to deal with them:

- Solving unsolvable issue

4. Vicious Circles

When you argue badly, you accuse your partner of your unsolvable issues, and you lack most of what makes an awesome relationship, a bad thing starts happening: vicious circles.
Vicious circles are how most relationships end:

- Understand vicious circles and prevent them

Relationships to End

1. Abusive relationships

Abusive people rarely change, which means you can't work on a relationship with an abusive partner.

There are as many bad women as bad men, granted.
But most abusers are men, so this list mostly focuses on men.

You must avoid these guys altogether:

- Signs of an abusive relationship
- 7 types of abusive men
- Early signs of abusive men
- Paranoid-jealous

And albeit not tailored to abusive relationships:

- How to get out of a toxic relationship

2. Bad Relationship Dances

Relationship dances do not necessarily spell doom and some of them are not the end of the world (parent/child for example).
But still, if your goal is as awesome as you can be:

- Read here the bad types of relationship dances

3. Combative relationships

Great relationships should be sanctuaries of safety. That means no one-upping, no undermining, and not too many power games.

Combative relationships are how the most seemingly normal relationships end up being

- Video examples of a bad relationship

The Prince: Summary & Review (Machiavelli)

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Prince is a 16th-century classic of political strategy, power, and effective governance.
It's been heralded as the first treaty of realpolitik and "Machiavellianism" has since become synonymous with cunning, and callous manipulation.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Look at The Reality of How Things Are
  - 1. Learn to Be Bad
  - 2. Appearances Reign
  - 3. Kill, Don't Wound
  - 4. Do the Popular, Delegate the Difficult
  - 5. Mental Power: Growth Mindset
  - 6. Combine Cunning AND Strength
  - 7. Assess People by Those Around Him
  - 8. It's Safer to Be Feared Than to Be Loved
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review
  - The Prince: A Crucial Text for Self-Development
  - Godfather of Power Strategies
  - Learn More

Bullet Summary

- **Learn to be selectively bad**… A good person is otherwise lost among those who are not good
- Do the popular, delegate the unpopular
- **Neutralize opposition decisively**, don't wound or they'll seek revenge

Summary

About the Author:
Niccolo Machiavelli was an Italian diplomat and politician in the Florentine Republic.
He was also a philosopher and writer thanks to his book "The Prince". he has often been called the father of political science and modern political philosophy.

Introduction

A quick foreword: Machiavelli has become a synonym for cruelty, backhanded tactics, and amorality.

I beg to differ.

While he writes with no moral and ethical filters and advocates for "whatever works", his message is that it's best

for a ruler to create a peaceful and prosperous reign.

Could anyone disagree with that?

If a good ruler gives way to those who are not good, guess who will rule?
Let's not leave the world to the bad apples. Let's all learn some Machiavellianism for when we really need it:

Look at The Reality of How Things Are

Long before Ray Dalio made "love reality" a principle, Machiavelli taught us to look at the reality of what works and what people do, and not what they say and profess.

This is a principle that we espouse on The Power Moves.

1. Learn to Be Bad

Machiavelli says:

> A good person is bound to be ruined among the great numbers who are not good.

And that's another principle this website wholeheartedly embraces.
The prince who wants to hold on his power must learn how to be bad when necessity arises, says Machiavelli.
Read more here:

- Why to be good you need to be bad

> **A good person is ruined among the great numbers who are not good**

2. Appearances Reign

Once you learn to be bad, you need to learn how to *appear* good.
The vulgar crowd will always be swayed by the cover of the book, says Machiavelli. And the vulgar far outnumber everyone else.

> **Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are**

Also see:

> The Psychology of Political Manipulation

3. Kill, Don't Wound

I love this one.

If you need to wage war on an enemy, don't hit lightly so that take revenge. But either show no animosity or destroy them.

So if you have a bad boss for example, either you get him fired or accrue all the evidence to sue him and win, or be nice to him until you can. As Sun Tzu says: only wage wars you can win.

> If you must injure a man, make your injury so severe that you need not fear his revenge

4. Do the Popular, Delegate the Difficult

Delegate those tasks that are difficult, unpopular and likely to make you enemies.

And keep for yourself the tasks that are popular and that will make you loved.
Cesare Borgia for example sent one of his captains to subdue a rebellion with strength and cruelty. Once the region was under control, the people hated the new rulers.
Borgia then had the captains killed in public display on the square. And *he* provided food and entertainment.
Now everyone yells "long live to Cesare Borgia".

My Note:
Wow. This was really, deeply amoral.
I would probably draw the line at this behavior unless you could find some terrible captain deserving of execution and you send him to a final mission.

5. Mental Power: Growth Mindset

I feel that Machiavelli might have been one of the first authors to understand the power of a growth mindset and of an antifragile ego.

He says that the best way to avoid the dangers of flattery and the best way to learn what's really going on is to let people know that the truth does not hurt you.
Genius.

6. Combine Cunning AND Strength

Strength should always be accompanied by cunning. And cunning should not exist without the backing of strength.

> **Always back your words with the power to enforce them**

7. Assess People by Those Around Him

… Much before Jim Rohn ever did, Machiavelli said that the first way to estimate a ruler's intelligence is to look at the people he has around him.

8. It's Safer to Be Feared Than to Be Loved

And finally, the rule Machiavelli is most famous for.

Being loved is good, but it's based on the principle of obligation and reciprocity. And those are easily broken by people's natural propensity to self-interest, says Niccolo Machiavelli.

If a prince should choose between being feared or being loved, he should go for being feared.

However, Machiavelli also says, the goodwill of the population your rule on is better than any fortress you can build.
That's why he says that an act of violence and cruelty is OK, but you should then focus on bringing peace and prosperity.

Real Life Applications

One act of cruelty!
Machiavelli says that the prince must sometimes use violence and cruelty, but once he has achieved his goal he should revert to building goodwill.

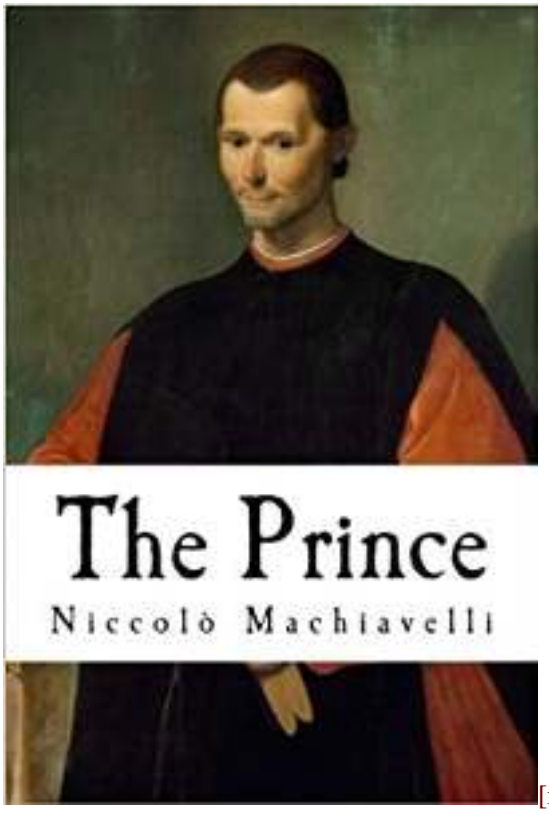
> If cruelty is needed: commit them all at once

Win by deception
Don't win by force when you can win with deception. Saves you energy and time and it's cleaner and neater.

> Never attempt to win by force what can be won by deception

Back your claims with the strength to defend them
The wise man knows that nothing is as unstable and uncertain as power or fame not founded on his own strength.

> You own nothing without the strength to back your claim



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CONS

Needs some historical background
Italy of Machiavelli's days saw a proliferation of smaller states and fiefdoms that was heaven on earth for power games and power moves.
But to get the most out of The Prince some background knowledge will help because Machiavelli doesn't always do it for the readers.

PROS

Great wisdom
What Machiavelli says makes a lot of sense.

Good cause
At the end of the day, Machiavelli recommends all his underhanded techniques for a good cause: installing a good ruler, bring peace and freeing Italy from the barbarians.

Review

The Prince is a classic of political science and a fundamental book for this website and its mission.

Machiavelli's fellow countryman Giulio Andreotti, the most successful Italian politician from the second world war till this day, was rumored to sleep with a copy of "The Prince" on his bedside table.

Andreotti, a political figure in the Christian-Democrat party who also sought Christian voters coined the quote we often use here:

> To think bad you may commit sin, but you get it right

The Prince: A Crucial Text for Self-Development

The Prince is a fundamental text for true self-development and growth.

What do I mean by that?

Well, it's one of the central messages of this website.

And it's that good people need to learn to be bad.

Incidentally, that also makes "The Prince" one of the best books for social well-being.

If people with morals and with good intentions don't learn how to be bad, power will always go to the bad apples.
It's simply a law of nature: while the good guys shy away from what it takes, the bad ones stop at nothing.
Of course the bad apples win out!

We need good people that know how to be ruthless instead. We need good people who take the power and then go back to being good.

Imagine if better candidates had known how to debate against Trump.
Imagine if the Assad of the world had met with a good-natured, but equally ruthless and more Machiavellian foe.
Imagine if the Hitlers of the past and of the future will always need good-natured, but equally ruthless and more Machiavellian foes.

Now you see where I'm going: we need good people equipped with the same weapons of the bad people!

Godfather of Power Strategies

The Prince is the Godfather of power dynamics literature, including the modern "The 48 Laws of Power", "The 50th Law" and "33 Strategies of War".

And, in a way, we find a touch of Machiavelli also in the message of Jordan Peterson, author of 12 Rules for Life (in the idea of the need for evil in good people).

The Prince is not as easy and not as "marketable" as the above titles, which were written with big sales in mind.
But Machiavelli is a genius, and The Prince is a classic.

Learn More

- best manipulation books
- best books on power
- TPM's analysis on the psychology of political manipulation

Social Mastery Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Contents

- Social Mastery Guide
- TOC
- Mindsets
  - #1. Develop a Growth Mindset
  - #2. Develop an Ego to Help You Move Forward
  - #3. Further Key Mindsets
- Social Knowledge
- Social Skills
  - #1. Remove Physical Fear: Martial Arts
  - #2. Learn How Not to Be a Social Burden

Social Mastery Guide

A Complete, No BS Guide To Mastering Social Skills

Studies show social relationships are the biggest determinant of an happy and satisfactory life (Diener & Seligman) while Robert Greene says that success without social intelligence is not real and will not last.

However you slice it, social skills skills are possibly the most importance competence you should focus on in your life. Social Mastery Guide is here to help you along.

This guide will cover, as quickly as possible, all the basics you need to go from awesome but socially underdeveloped caterpillar to awesome social master gracing the people around with his presence

TOC

Social Mastery Guide starts from yourself and your mindsets, then goes into the social skills you need, and finishes with the social knowledge and reading recommendations.

- Mindsets
  - Growth Mindset
  - Identity
  - Other useful mindsets
- Social Skills
- Social Knowledge

Mindsets

Any external improvement goes hand in hand with an internal improvement. And social skills are no exception: they start with you.
Below are the most important mindsets you need to develop.

#1. Develop a Growth Mindset

At the core a growth mindset says that you can get better -grow, indeed- in whichever endeavor you choose.
A growth mindset is at the core of any meaningful improvement effort, including improving your social skills.

To develop a growth mindset you must..

Read More

#2. Develop an Ego to Help You Move Forward

You probably think of yourself as not good with people.
And you're ashamed of "looking bad in public".
That's all normal, but to improve socially, we need to change.

You will build here an identity that will support your new social persona through beliefs and actions. You will become the kind of person who enjoys social interactions -both successful and unsuccessful-.
Your ego will not stand in the way anymore but it will grow stronger with failures.

To do that, you first need to choose the right identities for yourself, which are..

Read More

#3. Further Key Mindsets

The two biggest foundation are growth mindset and identity + ego. The following ones are also very helpful:

- You'll die… Soonish (and that's empowering)
- You're not that special after all (and that's freeing)
- Nobody owes you anything (overcome entitlement mentality)
- Leverage pain and failure for massive action
- Overcome limiting beliefs
- Leveraging loneliness to become a better -and more social- person

Social Knowledge

Check out:

- The best social skills books

Social Skills

#1. Remove Physical Fear: Martial Arts

I understand it might be odd that the very first item on a social skills guide is to "learn to fight". After all socializing is about making friends, adding value and bringing people up, right?

Right! That's true.
Yet, when it comes to a lot of social fears people have, it's often rooted in visceral physical fear, and that's where martial arts…

Read More

#2. Learn How Not to Be a Social Burden

Before starting to get *good* with people, you want to avoid the typical behavior that make you *bad* with people. These articles show you the biggest mistakes that make people social burdens.
Start avoiding all of those traits and behavior, understand the psychology of why they're bad, and you will already be in neutral position (quite something!).

- Top traits and behaviors of social burdens
- Group conversation mistakes
- The 4 top communication mistakes in relationships
- Social faux pas when an acquaintance shares a problem
- Social faux pas to someone who's mourning

#3.

Social Power Replaces It

My initial goal was to make the best compendium on social skills ever.

Eventually I turned this guide into a much better product, which is now the flagship course of this website.

Eventually, I will also update this guide with free resources and links to go from social burden to social master. Still, the course will take you exactly there and beyond.

As a Man Thinketh: Power Starts With Thought, But You Need More (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

As a Man Thinketh teaches readers to harness the power of thought, which, the author says, is the most important influence in our lives.

TPM Strategic Note: Thoughts are a foundational aspect of an empowered mind, but not enough
Your internal monologue and "Self-identity" act as the foundational 'operating system' for your feelings, emotions, and behavior. While James Allen correctly identifies that thoughts matter, **this book lacks both the modern psychological evidence and the tools and tactical "how-to" required to engineer an empowered mind**. At TPM, we view this book as the "Level 1" realization, t**o be supplemented with modern science and how-tos.** See our:
Spirituality for empowered men ↗

Thoughts impact mental states and mindsets, but you need deeper approaches for the subconscious

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Overview
  - Chapter 1: Thought and Character
  - Chapter 2: Effect of Thought on Circumstances
  - Chapter 3: Effects of Thoughts on Health and Body
  - Chapter 4: Thought and Purpose
  - Chapter 5: The Thought-Factor in Achievement
  - Chapter 6: Visions and Ideals
  - Chapter 7: Serenity

- As a Man Thinketh in One Quote:
- TPM Analysis
  - There's more than thought
  - Build a mind that acts independently of thoughts
- PROS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- To be the master of your life, be the master of your thoughts
- Good thoughts lead to a happy and successful life
- Poor thoughts lead to an unhappy and unsuccessful life

Overview

About the Author:
James Allen was a British writer known for his inspirational books, most well-known for his book, "As A Man Thinketh". He has been a pioneer of the self-help movement based on positive thinking.

Introduction

James Allen likens the mind and our lives to a garden.
If you plant the seeds of good thoughts in your mind, you will reap a healthy psychological state and a good life.
If you allow it to run wild bad weeds will poison your thoughts and ruin your life.

Chapter 1: Thought and Character

James Allen says that we are literally what we think. Our character is simply the sum of all our thoughts.
But that also gives us extreme power, because by changing our thoughts, we can change our character.

Indeed, "As a Man Thinketh" says that if we want to change our character and our situation in lif,e all we have to do is change our thoughts.

> **A man is literally what he thinks**

Chapter 2: Effect of Thought on Circumstances

The outer conditions of our lives are a reflection of our inner thoughts and our inner state.

The inner thoughts and our outer condition are not exactly the same because external conditions do have a major influence, says Allen.

However, there is a relation between the two and we can have a major influence on our outer condition with the way we direct our outer condition.

> **We are each the masters of our own destiny**

Locus of Control: You're in Charge

Since we can change our circumstances and our lives, the author makes the point that blaming and complaining are useless.

More than useless, actually, they poison our thoughts.
And he makes the point we all take and accept more responsibility in life.

My Note:
This concept is called “internal locus of control”. It means you believe you are in control of your life instead of being shaped by external circumstances and events.
It’s indeed of great benefit for you to switch to an internal locus of control and accept extreme ownership of your life.

Chapter 3: Effects of Thoughts on Health and Body

The mind influences our body as well.

Allen says that habits of thought will produce physical effects on our bodies, and if our thoughts are good, they will produce positive effects. If our thoughts are negative, they will produce bad effects.

While we might think that thinking about the risks keeps us safer, always thinking about diseases makes it more likely we’ll get them, says As a Man Thinketh.

> **A sour face doesn’t happen by chance: sour thoughts made it**

Good Thoughts Lead to Healthy Habits

As a Man Thinketh also links our thoughts to actual habits we form, which makes a lot of sense.

If we think about our health and care about it, we are more likely to form positive habits of healthy eating and exercise, which will lead to a better life.
Also read The Power of Habit.

Chapter 4: Thought and Purpose

As a Man Thinketh has two key messages in this chapter:

1. You need a purpose in life
2. Doubts and fears stand in the way of achievement

People without a purpose have too much time on their hands to focus on fears, worries and petty problems.
And in turn, worries, fears, and doubts are the greatest enemies of achievement.
They distract you, thwart your willingness to take action, and bring upon exactly what you are afraid of, like a self-fulfilling prophecy.
If you want to forge forward, you need to clear fears and pessimism from your path.

> **There is no accomplishment until thought is linked with purpose**

Chapter 5: The Thought-Factor in Achievement

The chapter states that all achievements in life -or lack thereof- are a direct consequence of his thoughts.
However, he also adds an important element: hard work.

The high achiever in As a Man Thinketh must sacrifice a lot to accomplish a lot.

Chapter 6: Visions and Ideals

Dreams and visions underpin reality, says James Allen.

Dream big, and you will achieve big.

> **The greatest achievement was once a dream**

Chapter 7: Serenity

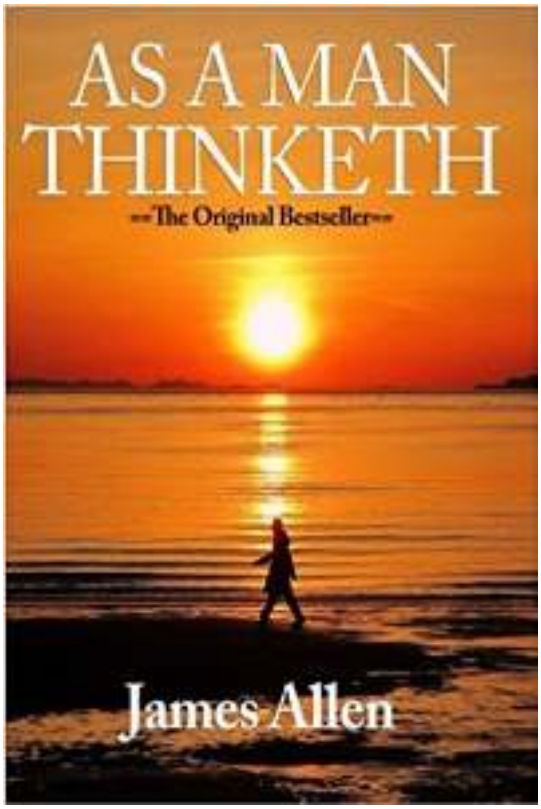
Calmness of mind is the last stage of wisdom, says Allen.

My Note: To achieve serenity, meditation can be helpful. Here are a few good resources:

- The Power of Now

As a Man Thinketh in One Quote:

> Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
> Watch your words, for they become actions.
> Watch your actions, for they become habits.
> Watch your habits, for they become character.
> Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.



TPM Analysis

Go through this article on naive self-help since it addresses many of the pitfalls common to books like *As a Man Thinketh*:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

There's more than thought

Albeit *As a Man Thinketh* advises you to *work* on what you want, one should still avoid the common mistake of thinking that thoughts and states of mind will do the work for you.

Thoughts are important to support action, but a**ction only will give you real-life results** like status, respect, and attraction.
Action achieves goals.

So learning to act despite thoughts is crucial:

Build a mind that acts *independently* of thoughts

Thoughts are crucial to a good and healthy inner life.

But I find that **the capacity to act despite negative thoughts is crucial to being an effective man.**

This is how an empowered and masculine man thinks: I feel great about myself, but I don't need to feel great about myself to do what I must do.

Learning to act even when in doubt or in fear is a superpower that allows you to win even when your mind is doubtful.

And that's habit, discipline, and the power of will.

PROS

Short and to the point
I write this of very few books, but AS a Man Thinketh is one of the very few books that adds no fluff.

Simple yet important insight: start with the mind
Most of our success and most of our behavior and sub-communication starts with our minds. This is something we agree on at TPM, and part of the approach we call 'from the inside out'.

See more here:

- **Foundations of self-development**: starting from the mind, letting good body language and behavior follow, and then earning external world's achievements

Review

As A Man Thinketh offers a single concept based on nurturing positive thoughts, a foundational yet insufficient aspect of an empowered mind.

James Allen has been a pioneer, although the successors turned more commercial and woo-woo, including *The Power of Positive Thinking*, *The Secret*, and various new age figures who peddled the same idea but framed it as science (see Joe Dispenza).

It's important to remember that while thoughts are important, **it's the capacity to act despite the thoughts that yields real-life results.**
And while thoughts are an important aspect of an empowered mind, you need to understand how to have better thoughts, and of what kind.

See here:

- **Foundations of self-development**
- **Spirituality for agentic men**

- **Confidence University**, the full course on an empowered mind

How to be Charming: The Art of Social Seduction

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Charm is the art of social seduction.

Once you learn how to be charming you naturally become higher value, more popular, and sought after.

This article explains what charm is and how you can become more charming.

Burt Lancaster was a charming man in “The Leopard”

Contents

- What’s Charm
  - Traits of Charming
  - Charms and Social Skills
- How to Be Charming
  - #1. Love People
  - #2. Converse Well
  - #3. Build People Up
  - #4. Remember Names & Details
  - #5. Acquire As Much Status As Possible
  - #6. Make Friends
  - #7. Be Smooth
  - #8. Stay Positive in Social Adversity
  - #9. Be “High-Power Humble”, Avoid Social Climbing
  - #10. Positive Vulnerability
- Charming Men Examples
  - #1. George Clooney

  - #2. Bill Clinton
  - #3. Leonardo di Caprio
- Examples of Non-Charming Behavior
- Sex Appeal and Charm
  - Men, Charm & Sex Appeal
  - Women, Charm & Sex Appeal
- Risks of Charm
  - Leading in Turbulent Years
- SUMMARY

What's Charm

Google Dictionary defines charm in very simple terms.

> Very pleasant or attractive

And that's exactly how it is.

Pleasant is the most important part: if you are not pleasant you can't be charming.

But the upper echelons of charming are not "either/or" but are *both* pleasant and attractive.
Attractive can be, and often is, sexually attractive.

But charm does not imply sexual attraction. An old lady can be attractively charming.
Charming is *social* seduction, not necessarily sexual seduction.
Thus, **even sexually unattractive people can still be charming**.

Traits of Charming

The traits of a highly charming personality are a mix of social skills, high personal value and warmth:

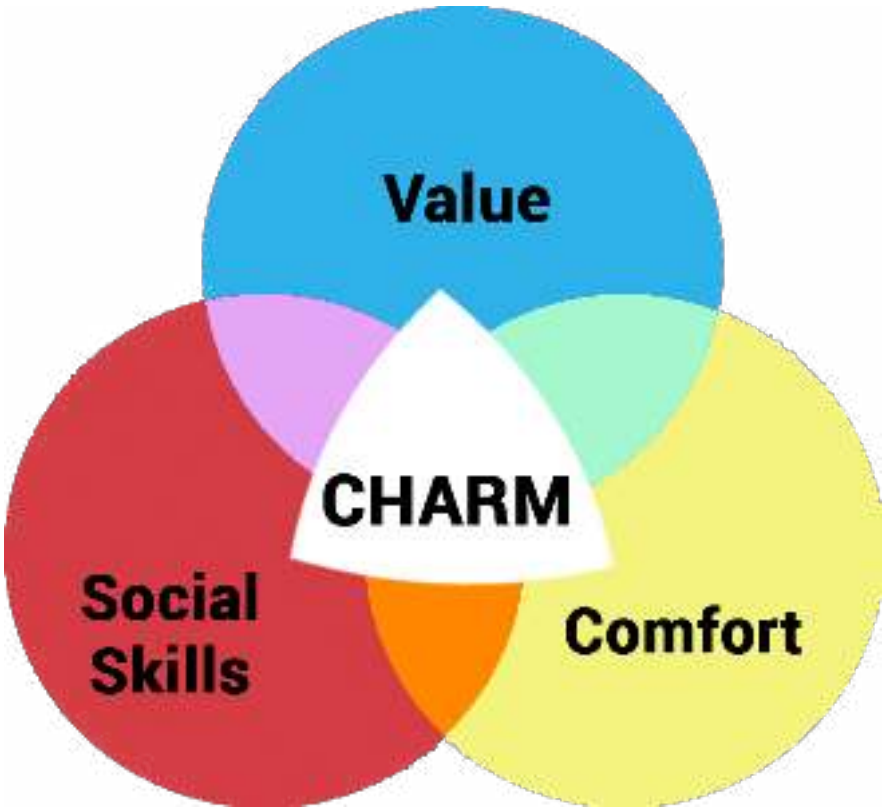
- Pleasant
- Calm and comfortable
- Warm & welcoming
- Uplifting
- Fluid,
- Socially in control, confident & calibrated
- Bonus: sexy (helps increase the value you share)

Charms and Social Skills

Charm happens at the intersection of highly developed social skills and high personal value.

High personal value includes a certain inner power and confidence.
We could define it as "comfortable in one's skin" inwardly.
And, outwardly, it turns into social confidence.

You can't be charming if you're self-conscious.
An inner lack of comfort projects outside an unappealing vibe of nervous and self-consciousness.



Focus on People

Social charmers have very well-developed social skills and they focus on the people around not on themselves.

They ask questions, take people under their arm, build people up and tell everyone how wonderful it is to see them. They also save people's faces and help mend disagreements.

If charmers were a book, they would Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends*.

Why Charming is Good

When the charmers make people feel good, everyone will love them (law of social exchange).

And the more people will love them, the more they will push the social charmer up in the social hierarchy.

That's the charmer's virtuous cycle.

Charmers and Value

Why is it important for charmers to be high-value?

Only high-value people can effectively build others up because you must intrinsically be high-value to pull others up.

The higher the personal and social value of the charmer, the more he can build up the people around and make them feel great.

How to Be Charming

Keep in mind that each single entry here is a skill, a talent, or an art in itself.

We won't go into the details of each one of them, but here's a quick primer on what you need to be charming:

#1. Love People

You can fake anything in life, of course.

And probably many politicians who are labeled as “charming” do overplay their love for people and social interactions (see politicians’ manipulations).
But in the long run, it’s way better to develop a natural liking for people and social interactions.

Here’s what charmers love:

- People
- Social interactions
- Networking
- Getting to know people

#2. Converse Well

Conversation is the invisible glue of social interactions, and being a good conversationalist is the bread and butter of charming.

Talk Little About Yourself
The world is full of self-absorbed ahole, and none of them is charming.
Talk little about yourself, and be ready to ask questions back.

Focus on Others
Listen to people, ask questions, compliment when you feel they’re looking for approval and take mental notes on what makes them tick. The more they come to crave your approval, the more power you get.

Humor
Humor is not necessary, but it helps.
Self-deprecating, uplifting or slightly sexual humor are particularly great.

See an example of Bill Clinton at the inauguration of Bush’s library:

P.S. Laura Bush is charming as hell.

#3. Build People Up

Charming is all about making the people around you feel great.
You can use:

- Compliments
- Self-deprecating humor
- Pompous introductions
- Saying others are way better

Mohammad Ali does it here with Tyson:

Ali is charming because he deprecates, looking humble, and builds Tyson up. Tyson loves it and so does the crowd (just listen to the cheering).
In turns, Tyson says Ali would win, which makes for a memorable skit that raises both men’s values.
Imagine if instead Ali had answered with “we will never know”.

#4. Remember Names & Details

Remember people’s names and details, then ask more about them as the conversation progresses or when you see

them later on. People will love you for it.

#5. Acquire As Much Status As Possible

The higher you are in the social hierarchy, the easier it is being charming.

One of the less understood reasons is that being high in the social hierarchy allows you to give a bigger "lift" to the people around you.

It also works socially, as everyone will admire you and think you are tremendously magnanimous -and charming-. Obama does this often, with his famous fist bumps to janitors and small shop stops.
See an example here.

#6. Make Friends

An easy way to be instantly charming is to walk into a place and know everyone.

People saying hi to you and you saying hi to everyone will immediately boost your social value (at least relative to the people in the venue).
A great scene to understand this concept is the scene from "The Goodfellas" where Harry takes Karen out).

#7. Be Smooth

Sometimes it's easier to understand things by looking at their opposite.

By "smooth" I mean the opposite of nervous and self-conscious.

Charming people relish other people and social interactions, and they happily move around the room smoothly and fluidly.

Thanks to their social skills they enter and leave groups with ease, flowing gracefully around the room.

#8. Stay Positive in Social Adversity

It's easier being charming when everything is swell and we're flying.

What differentiates the top charmers from the lucky break charmers is how they keep their composure when things don't go their way.

Keep a good attitude in front of a critique, smile at a social jab and you will show charming superiority.

> **Gosling**: (remains cool despite the aggression) That's one way to treat people

That's a charming way of answering to what might seem a social slight.

It shows superiority and a strong frame in the face of (social) adversity.
Here's another fantastic example with George Bush.

#9. Be "High-Power Humble", Avoid Social Climbing

Effective charmers are high-power.

And once you're high-power you can -and should- allow yourself to be humble.
Low power and humble equals self-debasing. But high-power and humble instead is charming and affable.

Humble people also avoid the "status rat race" like the plague.
The status rat race entails attacking and demeaning others to social climb and seem better by either "winning", or by

comparison.

Hence, avoid:

- Social climbing (example with Obama)
- Alpha male posturing
- Undermining others

These are all signs of combative behavior that make you come across as unfriendly, overly aggressive, and most certainly not high-status.

#10. Positive Vulnerability

Charming is different than the super confident, the cocky or the charismatic.

Charming is about relating to others, and vulnerability helps us relate.
A strong frame of confidence with the odd vulnerability is supremely charming.

Look at the charming master of them all, notice the vulnerability in his aura, how he shows cracks of discomfort that only make him more charming and attractive:

Warning:

- **Don't over-do vulnerability**, or you become too weak and feminine

Charming Men Examples

And here are a few examples of charming men and women:

#1. George Clooney

George Clooney is the archetype of the charming man.

Almost any video you take of Clooney and any real life interaction it's going to be an example of pure charm.

Good-natured, even on questions he doesn't like, gets a "woooh" from the ladies with the underwear joke and builds up everyone around him (except for his date, typical of avoidants, but that's another topic).

#2. Bill Clinton

If Clooney is the archetype of the charming sexy man, Bill Clinton is the archetype of the charming political man.

Notice how he meets a random man. And immediately puts his arm around him. And asking "where are you from".

#3. Leonardo di Caprio

Catch Me if You Can is a movie highly based on social charm:

Notice the strategic vulnerability at minute 1:05.

Strategic is the keyword.

If he had pretended not to notice the sexual game, he would have looked stifled or clueless. But if he had jumped on it, he would have looked to hungry and eager.
His fake coy reaction instead is smothering sexy charming.

#5. A Charming Hostess

I have been looking for a great video of some top charmer woman, ideally one hosting an event and greeting people.

I couldn't find one, but I remembered of this amazing story from Leil Lowndes' *How to Talk to Anyone*, I quote without paraphrasing:

The best example I heard of this high sensitivity was from one of my clients.

She was invited to brunch at the home of a wealthy socialite known as "Lady Stephanie."
Lady Stephanie's home was filled with beautiful objets d'art. Not the least among them was an exquisite collection of extremely valuable Fabergé eggs, which all the guests admired.

At the end of the elegant champagne brunch, my client told me she was walking out the door chatting with several other guests.
Just then, Lady Stephanie sidled up to one woman leaving at the same time as my client. "Oh, I'm so happy you were admiring my Fabergé collection," Lady Stephanie said, sliding her hand into the pocket of the guest's mink coat and plucking out one of her priceless eggs. "You must have wanted to see this one in the sunlight. Come, let us look at it together. It does reflect the bright light beautifully."

The mink-clad thief gulped and furtively looked around to see who had witnessed her gentle entrapment. My client and everyone in the foyer saw what happened, but took Lady Stephanie's lead and pretended naïveté of the attempted heist.

Carrying the charade a step further, Lady Stephanie and the sticky-fingered guest "admired the egg in the sunlight." Then Lady Stephanie, with her Fabergé egg secured safely between her perfectly manicured fingers, marched home to put the treasure in its rightful place. The attempted egg snatcher crawled back to her car, from her last attendance at Lady Stephanie's coveted bashes.

The hostess let the foiled filcher get away with a few slivered shreds of her ego left intact.
Why did Lady Stephanie come out ahead? Everyone who witnessed—and subsequently heard about—the thwarted burglary has renewed respect for Lady Stephanie. Snaring the thief, yet sparing her pride, helped Lady Stephanie keep her reputation of "hostess with the mostest".

Examples of Non-Charming Behavior

And now an example of behavior where charm was badly needed but everyone failed badly at social grace.

See the Oscar blunder here:

Here's the anatomy of the bull in a china shop:

1. The guy who says "we lost by the way" shows a bad temper about losing
2. The bald one is too socially crude in taking the winner's card out of Betty's hands (the presenter)
3. Beatty is terribly defensive and instead of easing the social tension he *increases* it
4. The co-hosts screaming "Warren what did you do" comes across as piling up

See here an analysis of that whole situation.

Sex Appeal and Charm

Charm makes both men and women high quality, but not necessarily sexy.

Let's examine a bit the relationship between charm and seductive sex appeal:

Men, Charm & Sex Appeal

For men who want to be successful with women, charm is *very* helpful, but not necessary.

You can be successful with women going through life as a lone wolf with limited social skills, by being edgy and

even by being an asshole (the approach of some Red Pill guru, though better to move beyond asshole game).

That being said, knowing how to turn on the charm is an important edge both socially and in dating.
Here is a great scene of charm with sex appeal from the movie “Eyes Wide Shut”:

Women, Charm & Sex Appeal

Charm in men denotes social confidence and a certain level of social dominance.
Building people up is also usually a sign of either social superiority or social equality (when lower-status men do it it’s kissing up).

When women do it too much, they risk coming across as overbearing, and if they look too dominant they lose in femininity.
That’s why women who want to keep a broader sex appeal should be careful to adopt a more feminine style of charming.

That being said, a slightly more demure social charm in women is also a sign of very high quality.

Risks of Charm

In *The Art of Seduction,* Robert Greene says that some people view charmers as slippery and deceitful.

This is especially true for direct and masculine ‘alpha types‘ people who don’t appreciate the charmer’s self-effacing and pleasing attitude.

Charmers tend also to be what during the European religious wars were called “politique”, such as people who don’t take extremist stances and prefer dialogue and moderation.
This is another type of crow where charmers don’t do too well in: extremists and hardliners don’t like them indeed.
They tend to see charmers as too intellectual, refined and slippery.

Leading in Turbulent Years

During turbulent years political charmers also suffer.

People look for conviction, charisma and strength in leaders.
The appeasing charmers tend to lose out to the charismatic men.

If you want to lead during difficult and revolutionary times, that’s when you should drop your charming ways, scream louder and embrace strong positions.

SUMMARY

Charming is a mix of social skills, personal value, and sharing that value to build people up.

High personal value and high social status boost the social charmer power.

P.S.:
We helped thousands of men become more charming, higher status, and more attractive with Power University.

The Lean Startup: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Lean Startup is a book on entrepreneurship focusing on how to effectively bring products to market.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Lean Startup Summary
  - The Determination Myth
  - Methodology Leads to Startup Success
  - Entrepreneurship is a Type of Management
  - What's a Startup
  - Lean Startup
  - #1. Minimum Viable Product (MVP)
  - # 2. Test Hypothesis (Measure)
  - # 3. Change Based On Feedback
  - # 4. Accelerate Business Growth
  - #5. Use Lean Methodology
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- The Lean Startup Review

Bullet Summary

- Launch quickly (MVP)
- Change and iterate as quickly as possible
- Use lean methodology to move quickly and efficiently

Lean Startup Summary

About The Author: Eric Ries is an American entrepreneur, blogger, and creator of the Lean Startup Methodology, which he explains in "The Lean Startup".
He studied at Yale and in 2010, he became an Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Harvard Business School.

Introduction

Eric Ries says that too much effort and human capital is wasted in startups that fail to leave their mark and add no real value to the world.
He believes that a good chunk of that failure is because of a wrong methodology which many entrepreneurs use.
And he aims to fix the issue with The Lean Startup.

The Determination Myth

Eric Ries says that determination leading startups to success is a myth.

It's an appealing one, because it gives us the false belief that perseverance is the key and we can all be perseverant

(I'm looking at you, Gary Vaynerchuck and Angela Duckworth!).
But it's not true, and it's an unhelpful myth.
We heard a few stories of people who won without ever giving up, but we don't hear about the many more who kept wasting time beating a dead horse.

Methodology Leads to Startup Success

Eric Ries says that success doesn't happen because you're in the right place at the right time.
And it's not the flamboyant stuff that makes success, or the dogged determination.

It's the boring stuff that leads to success. It's processes and methodology.
Startup success can be engineered following and taught.

Entrepreneurship is a Type of Management

Eric Ries says that most people in startup and entrepreneurship circles see management as dull and boring. They see management as the opposite of entrepreneurship, with entrepreneurship being instead daredevil and exciting.
But that's wrong.
Entrepreneurship needs management. A specific kind of management geared towards uncertainty

> **Entrepreneurship IS management**

What's a Startup

Eric Ries defines startup as:

> A human institution to create a new products and services under conditions of extreme uncertainty.

Lean Startup

This is startups' biggest problems:

Startups often build products that nobody wants. And they find out too late, when they spent all the budget and there's no more time to pivot.

The solution is a new way of looking at product development. A new way which emphasizes fast iterations, customers' insights, huge vision and great ambitions all at the same time.

Here's how you do it:

#1. Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

Some entrepreneurs can fall victim to analysis paralysis: talking to prospects, white board strategies and research reports.
There's no point in spending too long in the research phase: you can't predict the future on a whiteboard.

The perfect mix between no analysis and over-analyzing, says Ries, is a minimum viable product.
The quickest, simplest product you can assemble to start testing your assumptions right away,

An MPV is the bare minimum you can ship so that the first users -usually the innovators– can give you that early, precious feedback that will help you steer your development.

What if Someone Steals Your MVP?

Eric Ries says that one of the biggest push-back against an MVP is that other companies will steal your ideas.

This is something Jay Samit also discussed in Disrupt You, with the core concept being that nobody cares about your lousy idea.
And if the competitor can out-execute you once the idea is out there, you're doomed anyway.
The push behind a successful start up is to accelerate that build-measure-development feedback loops faster than anyone else.
Keeping your product under wrap, away from the feedback it desperately needs, will only make your failure more likely.

> **The only way to win is to learn faster than anyone else**

2. Test Hypothesis (Measure)

Marketing and product experiments must follow scientific methodology.
It starts with a clear hypothesis based on your visions and makes predictions on what's supposed to happen.
You need hypothesis because if you "just do it" and see what happens you will always succeed, even when you fail.

3. Change Based On Feedback

Based on the feedback you get, keep testing and refining your product and marketing as quickly as possible.
If you don't see results or if the feedback leads you somewhere else, consider pivoting.

These are the ten types of pivots:

1. **Zoom-in pivot**. This pivot can be useful when you see that one feature in your product gets far more traction and interest than the other features in your product. You can then "pivot" by offering a new product that offers only that one feature.
2. **Zoom-out pivot**. This is the above pivot in reverse. You broaden your product to include more features. Now what was considered the whole product becomes one (or several) features of a larger product.
3. **Customer segment pivot**. Your product may prove popular but not with the user segment that you had initially targeted. Therefore your product positioning may need to change and the value proposition, pricing, and channels would all need to be reviewed.
4. **Customer need pivot**. If you identify that the problem you are trying to solve with your product is not very important to customers, you may need to point your existing product at solving a different customer problem or you may need a completely new product.
5. **Platform pivot**. This talks about a change from an application to a platform or vice versa. (Examples of platforms are eBay, Airbnb, Uber, Android store etc.)
6. **Business architecture pivot**. Geoffrey Moore, author of Crossing the Chasm, tells us there are two types of business: high-margin, low-volume businesses and low-margin, high-volume businesses. You cannot be both but sometimes you can pivot from one to the other.
7. **Value capture pivot**. This pivot refers to changes to how you monetize or earn revenue. This is how the business captures value, typically by charging customers money.
8. **Engine of growth pivot**. Most startups these days use one of three primary growth engines: the viral, sticky, and paid growth models (more on that later). You can pivot from one of these growth engines to another.
9. **Channel pivot**. Here you change how and where you sell your products and services (in stores, online, through partners, in-app).
10. **Technology pivot**. This pivot is when a new technology can be used to achieve the same outcome. (This can be beneficial if the new solution has lower cost and/or better performance.)

4. Accelerate Business Growth

There are three main ways to drive sustainable growth:

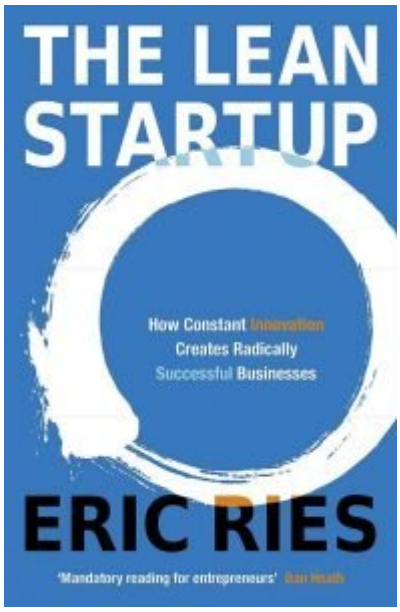
- **The sticky engine**: retaining most of your users and keeping a low churn rate (i.e. making sure your customers come back to use your product or service again—creating and keeping repeat customers).
- **The viral engine**: word of mouth and virality (i.e. current users recommend other users).
- **The paid engine**: spending money on marketing to acquire customers.

Note: The "churn rate" is your "people leaving rate". So, for example, for a product or service, it's the percentage of customers that unsubscribe in a given period.

#5. Use Lean Methodology

The last part of the book was mostly focused on the lean methodology, a product development system born in Japan with Toyota.
Here are a few techniques Eric Ries discusses:

- The 5 WHYs: ask "why" five times to go at the roots of the issue
- Small batch sizes: the idea of repeating sequentially the same tasks over and over instead of assembling the final product one by one won't allow you to spot the mistakes early



[image]Real Life Applications

Get everyone in the room when brainstorming issues
If you don't get everyone involved in the room, says Ries, the one not present is usually the one everyone will blame.
And if it's a junior employee most will assume the fix is to replace him; if it's the CEO most will assume you can't fix the issue. Both assumption are often wrong.

Reading is good, action is better
I totally agree with this one. To save time on knowledge absorption check my metasummaries.

CONS

Software-Centered

It's more tailored towards software development than on physical products.

Less interesting Lean Methodology
I found the part of the book discussing lean methodologies a bit less interesting.

Not so great examples
I found the examples that were supposed to confirm how awesome the Lean Startup method is to be somewhat lacking.

PROS

Great mindsets
The Lean Startup not only introduces an awesome methodology for launching successful startups, but also shares awesome and empowering mindsets.
For example:

- if a new employee breaks the product environment, it's no shame on the newbie. The senior developers should focus on building an environment that's not so easy to break;
- if something goes wrong always ask yourself: how can I prevent being in the same situation ever again (which the founding idea of Principles by Ray Dalio)

Awesome methodology
There's a good reason why this book has become so popular: the idea was groundbreaking. And groundbreakingly useful.

The Lean Startup Review

Years ago a former boss of mine sent me this book.

I had no intention of reading it though because back then I was fully focused on people and social skills and had no time for entrepreneurship.
But I played along pretending I was going to read it just because he was my boss.

Unluckily he didn't forget, and a few weeks later when he asked me I had to confess I hadn't even started it.
To which, he replied:

> **Sebastian**: hey, did you read the Lean Startup already?
> **Me**: Ehmm, it's in my to read list, gonna get there soon
> **Sebastian**: Oh my God, how can't you not read the startup Bible!

LOL, cheers Sebastian :).
I did read it now, and it's awesome.
Of all the entrepreneurship and wealth creation books that I have read, I consider "The Lean Startup" to be the most useful. I personally put "The Lean Startup" far ahead of Zero to One and even better than the widely acclaimed "Launch".
I have used Lean Startup methodologies for ThePowerMoves.com as well. And if I had to go back, I would use it even more.

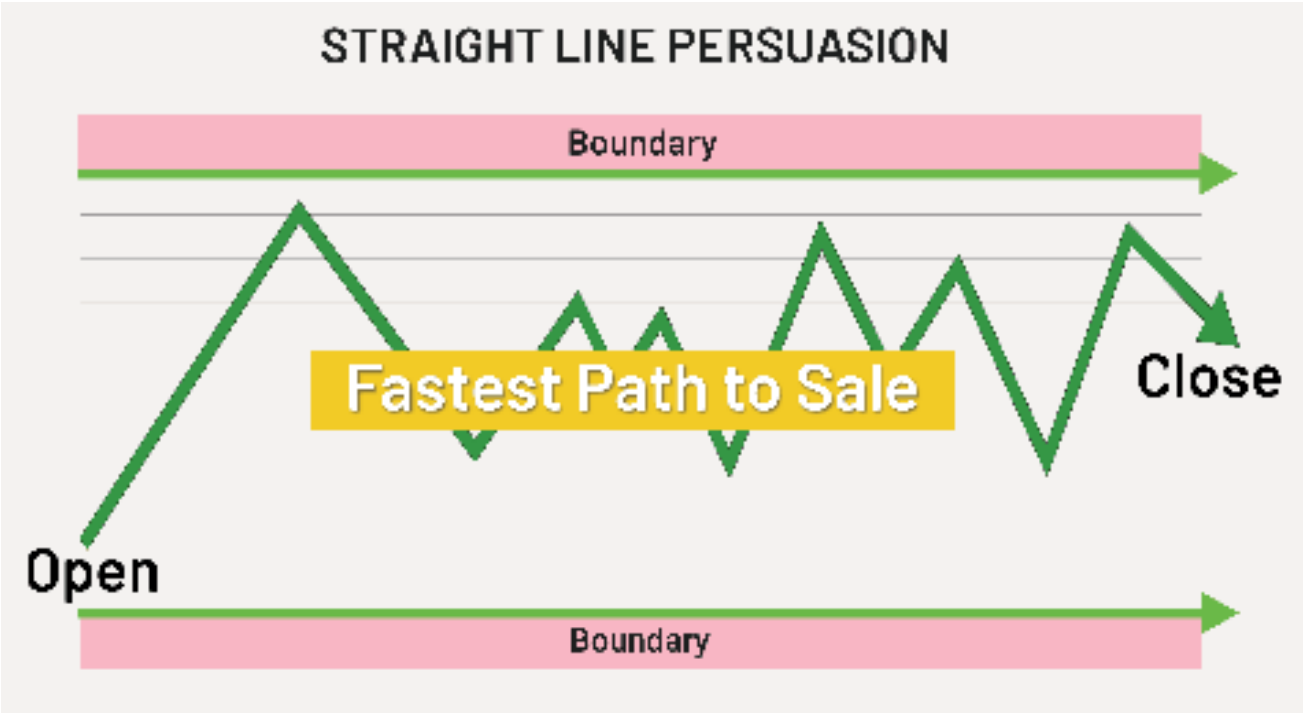
This is a must-read for anyone interested in entrepreneurship, startups or launching a product.

Check out the **best books on entrepreneurship** or get the book on Amazon

Straight Line Persuasion: Brutally Honest Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Straight Line Persuasion is a sales training program by Jordan Belfort, and this is a review of *Straight Line Persuasion* to help you decide whether it's worth buying it or not.



The "Straight Line Persuasion Model" in chart format

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Straight Line Script
  - Real-Life Applications
  - CONS
  - PROS
- Review
  - Is Straight Line Persuasion Worth It?
  - Should You Buy Jordan Belfort's Course?
  - Who Is It Good For?

Bullet Summary

- A straight line from meet to sale is the safest way to sell
- Never cut off the prospect, but always nudge him back towards your straight line
- Some people are born closers. Others will have to learn it

Summary

About The Author:
Jordan Belfort became increasingly famous after the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street* popularized his life of excesses (and frauds) on Wall Street.
We don't necessarily endorse the author here.

Introduction

Why some people are born closers?
Because they unconsciously master tonality, rapport and control of the sale. Straight Line Persuasion will break down for you how to do it consciously.
So that you can consciously train to become a master closer.

1. Three Tenets of Straight Line Persuasion

Persuading is helping people to overcome the internal obstacles that prevent them from taking action.
Jordan Belfort says that the key to selling is to maintain control of the interaction. And that's why he coined the term "straight line", you want to lead the prospect straight to the sale.

These are the three tenets of Jordan Belfort's Straight Line Persuasion:

1. Develop rapport quickly
2. Gather intelligence (do they have the money, is the product a good fit, are they ready to go?)
3. Control the interaction

Controlling the interaction means that, without breaking rapport or pushing, you gently nudge the prospect back towards the straight line towards the sale

> **Persuading is empowering people**

2. Art of Prospecting

Prospecting means finding people who are interested while at the same time you are weeding out those who aren't going to buy without wasting any of your time.

Qualify as quickly as possible while still keeping rapport. And use a script.
Belford recommends you work backward from the amount of money you want to make yearly until the amount of reach out you need to do daily.

The three keys here are:

1. Be enthusiastic as hell
2. Sharp as a tack
3. A figure of authority

> **Dials are the only things you can always control**

3. Mastering Tonality

This is where Straight Line Persuasions start hitting its stride.
Belfort begins with my favorite part of the course: reading the script and breaking down what works and what doesn't.

He focuses on tonality, here, and as you can imagine it cannot be properly explained in text.
Belfort says that tonality develops rapport at an unconscious level.
Take for example this script:

> Hi, John! This is , calling from Global Capital, in Tampa, Florida. How's it going today?

When you raise your voice at "Florida" you show pride of your job and conviction.

> Great!
> Now, if you recall, you attended a seminar last Friday at the Marriott Hotel, with one of our top Forex traders, James Arnell. Does that ring a bell?

Go up at the end of each block, as if you were adding "right?" and agreeing with him. You will build an unconscious yes ladder.
When you slightly raise your voice at "ring a bell" it communicates you expect them to remember.

> Now if you recall…

Use a tone of mystery at "now if you recall" which you achieve by stressing the "ca" portion in reCAll and going slightly up as if you were asking them a question. Squint your eyes so that your body language naturally supports your tonality.
The tone of mystery will nudge them into searching into their minds of their experience.
Genius.

> OK great, now the reason for the call today..

Drop your voice here, so it sounds like you're sharing an insider secret, and it implies scarcity (read Influence by Cialdini for more on scarcity).

> Is that you're one of the last of the group who hasn't actually enrolled yet

Put "one of the last of the group" all together, and you sound sharp like a tack

> I'd like to share an idea with you. You got a minute?

Go up at "you got a minute", to sound what Belfort calls the "reasonable man effect".

To learn more about tonality, check out:

- **How powerful men speak**

4. Being a Visionary

People won't buy into your goals, but they will buy into your vision. This is why Belfort also mentions it's important that you find your why.

In this module, Belfort steps back live coaching and demonstration to go into more theoretical knowledge of sales, human psychology, and body language.

Some good wisdom I enjoyed:

- Dress for success
- No goaties / pinkie rings

- Stand directly in front when talking to a woman
- Stand at an angle when speaking to a man

For more on body language, read:

- *How powerful men move*
- *Alpha male body language*

5. Inner Game of Sales

In this module, Belfort delves into the personal mindsets and beliefs that make a successful salesperson -or successful person, period-.
He talks for example about the importance of mastering your emotional states, facing your fears, and setting lofty goals.

6. The Straight Line System

Here Jordan Belfort goes back into the actual selling process.
He explains the three tenets of closing, such as the elements that need to line up in the moment of time when your prospect is ready to buy:

1. They love your product
2. They trust and connect with you
3. Trust your company

How to Ask

The more personal the questions are, the more you should make them sound off handed and informal. For example:

> Out of curiosity, what are you trading right now?

If he talks a lot don't interrupt but don't go off tangent with chit chat and unrelated topic. Empathize, make a comment and then go back to the straight line.
You're a busy professional: respect his time and your time.

7. The Art of Qualifying

Straight Line Persuasion goes back here into my favorite part: going through the straight line scripts with live coaching.
Here are a few examples:

> How much money do you have in the stock market, just a ball park?

Whenever you ask someone about money, always always go into a disarming tone. Imagine you were putting your hands up in front of you with open palms, as if to say "no pressure…. Just a ballpark".
This part was possibly the best in the course.

> Are you looking for that right now or do you have to raise the money

Another gem on par with the above one.

The volunteer got the tonality completely wrong and at first blush I totally miss it. Then Jordan Belfort delivers the same line and explains the difference.

Since this is a highly probing question, you have to deliver it matter-of-factly, with an inflection that says “we know how it is, no big deal! Just tell me, maybe I can help you”.

> Just for suitability purposes, how would you say your current financial situation is right now?

With this one you communicate rapport and that your questions are “just for suitability purpose”. Otherwise, you two could have a friendly chat with a beer.

8. The Presentation

In this section, Jordan Belfort goes into the actual presentation of your offer.
He explains the perfect tonalities to communicate:

- Scarcity
- Certainty
- Disarming

The parts I liked the most:

- How to box people in (use with integrity)
- Create urgency in the last part of the script
- Use a soft close, such as “sounds fair enough?”
- How to emotionally drive the prospect towards a state of certainty
- Handling rejections with looping

Presentation is key, so make sure to check out:

- **Speaking Pro** by Roger Love

> Speaking Pro by Roger Love: Review & Notes

9. Power of Language

Straight Line Persuasion delves here into the nitty-gritty of language and word choice.
Here are some gems:

- Virtually

Virtually gives you free rein to make as many bold claims as you want without committing 100% or lying.

- Huge upside with little downside

People are naturally inclined to look for worst-case scenarios. This sentence addresses their fears while also allowing them to dream at the same time.

- Incredibly easy to get started

People are lazy: they don’t want to do the legwork after agreeing. Remove the fear of big-time commitment.
If they’re afraid of consequences, say it’s incredibly easy to modify or change the terms.

- It’s a long-term relationship

It assumes you’re closing soon, reassures them and builds rapport.

- Please don’t misconstrue my enthusiasm for pressure

In case you feel you've been coming off too strong.

Save the Best for Last

Get progressively more convincing as you get closer to the close:

- If you only do half as well as my clients..
- All I ask is that you give me on shot..
- Believe me you won't be sorry

10. Becoming a Person of Influence

Jordan Belfort says you must respect if your customer cannot afford the product or if the product is not good for him.
But you should not accept a stall.
If he doesn't like the product but you feel it's perfect for him, loop back until you convince him with logic. If the stall is emotional, educate him on your company and your company building rapport.

Finally, Belfort restates again the importance of building relationships based on honesty and trust.

Straight Line Script

You could get the Straight Line Script, but unless you learn to deliver it well, it's just words on a paper. The advantage of Jordan Belfort course is to learn the delivery from him.

Here's a sneak peek preview of Straight Line Persuasion:

Real-Life Applications

Tonality is everything on the phone
On the phone, tonality absorbs body language as well and becomes 90%+ of your communication.

Move as you speak
Gesticulate, change your body language and your facial expressions as you speak and you will sound more natural.

Put yourself in the right state
Put yourself in a confident and enthusiastic state before calls.

CONS

Self-Help less valuable for me

Straight Line Persuasion dips into the self-help literature with mindsets, beliefs, and internal locus of control. That stuff is fundamental, and any comprehensive sales seminar should deal with it. But for a guy who has read hundreds of books on the topic, it wasn't the most useful part.
Still some good parts there though, and I loved this quote:

> There is no embarrassment in struggling – the embarrassment is in quitting

PROS

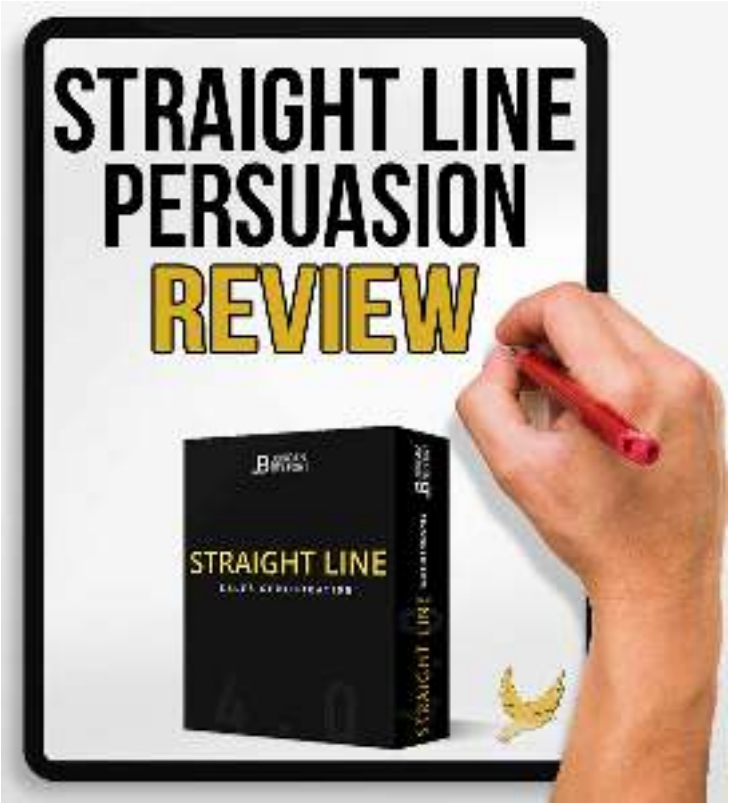
A real, proven closer
Jordan Belfort has proven his sales skills and the validity of his Straight Line Persuasion in the field.

Efficient system

Moving on a straight line is the most efficient way of selling.
The slower you go, the more room for mistakes and second thoughts you have. That's true for most things in life, and certainly is true for sales.
Of course, finding out what exactly "safe" means will make all the difference between being too pushy and Jedi sales master, and finding that sweet spot is part of the beauty of the art of sales.

Live coaching
Loved the part where The Wolf has people read his script and then breaks down what they do well and at they do wrong. I wished he had even more of that.

Some good wisdom
The way Belfort analyzes the interaction between tonality, rapport and human psychology tells me he's a guy who really understands human psychology.



TPM's review

Review

Let's be frank:

Jordan Belford has had a reputation as a top-tier manipulator.

However, that's in his past (?).
As a driven man, he saw a shortcut to riches, and went for it.

Is he now changed?
It's not up to me to judge.

When it comes to the product and the quality of his training, I was surprised to find out that the famed Wolf is much more than high-pressure sales.
He understands influencing and human psychology not just unconsciously, but in a way that he can consciously articulate.

I've been working in sales for many years and read and researched a lot on psychology.
I have worked with a few people whom everyone considered rockstars, and they all had a bit of that Jordan Belfort high-energy vibe.
However, the real challenge and where the true advanced level is, is in striking that balance between high-energy and empathic listening, in knowing when to sell hard and speak passionately, and when to shut up and let the prospect talk.

And I think that Belfort is very good at walking that fine line between the two different skillsets.

When it comes to selling, I rate Belfort higher than Grant Cardone or Gary Vaynerchuk, both of whom fall short in the listening and empathizing departments.

Why I picked It

Before starting the course, I wanted to better explore "high-pressure sales" tactics and approaches.

I have been in sales many years and sometimes I have had the feeling that some people scoffing at "pushy" salesmen and promoting "consultative selling" may instead be afraid of rejection and of coming across as pushy assholes. Some others instead reject it not because it doesn't work, but because *they* don't like it.

Instead, to be the best salesperson you can be, you should probably try different approaches, and maybe even cross that pushy line a few times to understand the limits.

With Jordan Belfort, I wanted to go to a guy who had a proven track record for being great at high-pressure sales. However, Straight Line Persuasion isn't about high-pressure tactics *at all*.

In many ways, that's a good thing…

Is Straight Line Persuasion Worth It?

At the original selling price of $2000 it was not worth it, in my opinion.

Now it's down to $498, which means that the higher price tag either wasn't selling much, or was getting a high refund rate.

And if at $2000, I considered it too pricey, at $498, it depends more on your own current level (keep on reading).

Should You Buy Jordan Belfort's Course?

For most people the brutally honest answer is that you can find better products.

To go a bit more granular:

If you're selling clothes at Primark with next to zero commissions and have no dreams to move ahead in life, this is *for sure* not for you.

On the other hand, if you are eager and motivated to advance in life and to learn as much as you can when it comes to selling, and if you have income to spare, then you can learn a thing or two about voice tonality.

But don't expect a complete system: there is no overarching structure to guide you from first contact, to sale.

Who Is It Good For?

I feel this course is best for intermediate and advanced salespeople.

True beginners can use the mindsets and self-help part of the course.

More advanced guys know that stuff already and the main added value for them will be voice tonality.
$2.000 for voice tonality was steep, but at $498 it may be worth it for you.

The Happiness Project: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Happiness Project is Gretchen Rubin's one year experiment on becoming a happier woman with simple daily action and without crazy changes such as quitting jobs, moving to another continent or giving up all material possessions.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- The Happiness Project – Summary
  - JANUARY: Boost Energy (Vitality)
  - FEBRUARY: Remember Love (Marriage)
  - MARCH: Aim Higher (Work)
  - APRIL: Lighten Up (Parenthood)
  - MAY: Be Serious About Play (Leisure)
  - JUNE: Make Time for Friends (Friendship)
  - JULY: Buy Some Happiness (MONEY)
  - AUGUST: Contemplate the Heavens (Eternity)
  - SEPTEMBER: Pursue a Passion (Books)
  - OCTOBER: Pay Attention (Mindfulness)
  - NOVEMBER: Keep a Contented Heart (Attitude)
  - DECEMBER: Boot Camp Perfect (Happiness)
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- You can become happier with a deliberate, daily effort
- To make yourself happy, make others happy
- The resolution chart was crucial to remind Gretchen daily of sticking to her goals

The Happiness Project – Summary

Gretchen Rubin says that when it comes to happiness, according to research, genetics account for 50%, life circumstances 10-20%, and all the rest is up to how we think and act (also read The Power of Positive Thinking and As a Man Thinketh).
Her personal happiness project consisted in focusing each month on a specific area of her life she wanted to improve.

JANUARY: Boost Energy (Vitality)

Research shows that happiness energizes you, and being energetic gives you higher self esteem and the firepower to entertain activities that in turn make you happier, such as socializing.

On the other hand feeling weak stressed and harder makes everything seem harder.

Gretchen decided to:

- Go to sleep earlier
- Exercise better
- Toss, restore, organize
- Tackle a nagging task
- Act more energetic (studies show acting energetic gives you more energy)

The result?
She was impressed by the mental energy boost she got.

FEBRUARY: Remember Love (Marriage)

In February The Happiness Project tackles the romantic relationship with her husband. The author reads Gottman books, such as The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work.

Rubin learns to argue well and to avoid the four horsemen of the apocalypse (criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling).
She finds out that we all have a negative bias which makes having less negative experiences more crucial than having positive ones (the magic ratio).
The author resolves to:

- Quit nagging
- Don't expect praise or appreciation
- Fight right
- No dumping
- Give proofs of love

Gretchen Rubin says she wished her husband would listen more, care more or notice more about her changes and needs (indeed The Man's Guide to Women explains men's behavior is more important than women's in happy relationships).
But overall, she was very pleased with the positive changes she could make single-handedly in her relationship.

At one point the author went full throttle: she decided that for a week she would go above and beyond in giving and asking for nothing. She dubbed it "week of extreme nice" (which is a great way to stop vicious circles BTW).
It was difficult and she was a bit disappointed her husband failed to recognize and appreciate her for it.

Read More on Relationships

As you can see, I researched a lot about relationships as well. If you want to master this area of your life check:

- Relationships overview
- All the problems in a relationship

MARCH: Aim Higher (Work)

Gretchen knew from her research that challenge and novelty are key elements of happiness, and that's why she decided to launch a blog. Enthusiasm is also more important than innate ability in reaching mastery because it fuels your willingness to practice.

- Launch a blog

- Enjoy the fun of failure
- Ask for help
- Work smart
- Enjoy now

I found especially interesting how she tackles here the arrival fallacy, such as the idea that when X will happen we'll be happier. That's often not true and we should all learn to enjoy the destination instead.

APRIL: Lighten Up (Parenthood)

In April Gretchel realizes that it's true that acting the way you want to feel works. Singing in the morning was indeed proving a major driver of happiness.

- Sing in the morning
- Acknowledge the reality of people's feelings
- Be a treasure house of happy memories (revisiting and remembering happy moments worked for her)
- Take time for projects

MAY: Be Serious About Play (Leisure)

The Happiness Project tasks for May:

- Find more fun
- Take time to be silly
- Go off the path
- Start a collection (didn't work for her)

Gretchen realizes that because something is fun for someone else, it doesn't necessarily work for you. Finding happiness with your happiness project is also about finding your own path and experimenting. And knowing yourself helps a lot.

JUNE: Make Time for Friends (Friendship)

The personal traits that most predict life satisfaction are the interpersonal one. Meaning: friendships, relationships and social interactions are some of the most important, if not THE most important elements of a happy life (also check social skills mastery).

- Remember birthdays
- Be generous
- Show up
- Don't gossip
- Make three new friends

Gretchen was focusing on making other feel good by "helping them think big" (also read The Magic of Thinking Big), which basically consisted in her telling people they should do and go for what they want.
And as she did that, she reached her first magic breakthrough: **to make yourself happy, make others happy**.

She focuses here on making new friends and being better at socializing.
She holds back on criticizing, make follow up questions, tries to understand when people are looking for opportunities to say more and she focuses on being warm.

JULY: Buy Some Happiness (MONEY)

The Happiness Project focuses here on the relationship between happiness and money. It's a complex topic, but you can boil it down like this: money does not and cannot buy happiness. But it can help.

- Indulge in a modest splurge (worked for her only when done rarely)
- Buy needful things
- Spend out
- Give something up

I really, really loved this part because it really spoke to me. Gretchen goes into some very key tenets of happiness for me which are:

- Maximizers and satisficers (The Paradox of Choice)

Maximizes look to all possible options before buying. They waste time and usually end up more unhappy than people who buy as soon as they find something they like (satisfiers).
And they are also more regretful when they find new possible options they *could* have bought.

- Underbuyers and overbuyers

Underbuyers only buy when something is strictly needed. And that leaves them worried, for example, their toilet paper will soon run out.
Overbuyers on the other hand have houses full of stocks they often end up throwing away.

- Spenders and keepers

Spender enjoy what they buy. Keepers keep things for some distant future. They often never use it until their beloved product has passed out of style, is expired or… They died.
As a damn keeper, I am working on this.
This is also true for ideas. For example Gretchen Rubin says she would think of a good idea for a post and then "save it" for the future. Much better to spend out, she realizes, and trusting in abundance.

- Buyers and discarders

Some people use things out over and over, trying to squeeze the last tiny bit of value out of dull razors, old underwear and ugly clothes they don't want to throw away.
This creates clutter and baggages. Learn to remove and throw out, instead.

AUGUST: Contemplate the Heavens (Eternity)

August in Gretchen's happiness project meant focusing on spirituality.

- Read memoirs of catastrophe (to enjoy what she has)
- Keep a gratitude notebook
- Imitate a spiritual master

The gratitude book didn't work for the author as she was doing it every day and it felt forced. If you do the same, do it more rarely.

Admit Happiness

Some people, says the author, are afraid of admitting happiness in fear of jinxing themselves. This only reduces their level of happiness though.

SEPTEMBER: Pursue a Passion (Books)

In the ninth month of her happiness project the author tackles the following mini-projects:

- Write a novel
- Make time
- Forget about results
- Master a new technology

The author talks to some people who doesn't believe you can pursue happiness and that simply focusing on happiness will make you unhappy.
They followed John Stuart Mill quote:

> Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so

But Gretchen Rubin, strong of her own personal successful experience of increasing her own happiness, strongly disagrees.

You're happy if you think you're happy

OCTOBER: Pay Attention (Mindfulness)

The author stops to reflect and enjoy the small things of life. Pushing her baby in a stroller, watching her play and savoring the beautiful daily moments with her family.

- Meditate on koans
- Examine True Rules
- Stimulate the mind in new ways
- Keep a food diary

I especially liked a passage in which she went to help her child trying to climb stairs. She wanted to take her newspaper with her to read and then she stopped herself.
That was it, she thought: a beautiful summer day, the sun, her husband nearby and her daughter learning to climb stairs. That was it.

NOVEMBER: Keep a Contented Heart (Attitude)

The author forces herself to laugh out loud even when she didn't feel like it, but if often worked:

- Laugh out loud
- Use good manners
- Give positive reviews (look for the positive in everything)
- Find an area of refuge.

The author realizes here that she has a tendency to being belligerent in conversation. When someone said something, she'd naturally look for ways why it wasn't true and for ways to contradict it.
I have this same tendency, which is something that Tony Robbins calls "mismatchers", such as people looking for contrarian examples.

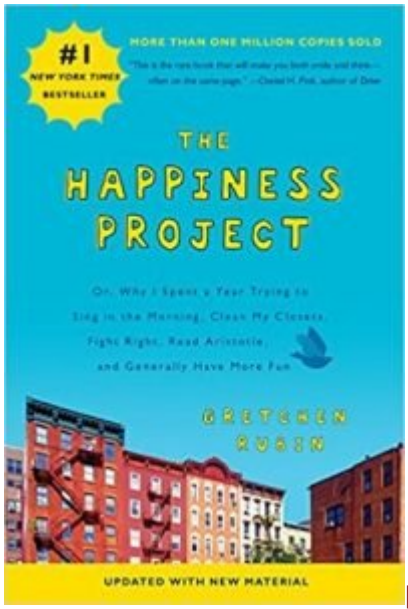
She realizes also that being critical can be addictive because it makes people come across as more intelligent and discerning as compared to people who agree and pontificate.
She resolves to move beyond it and to only give positive reviews.

DECEMBER: Boot Camp Perfect (Happiness)

December is the recap month for the happiness project.
Gretchen tries to put everything together and stick to all resolution she has done in the previous eleven months.

It's also a time for reflection.
She realizes that the biggest boosts in her happiness came from eliminating all those behavior, feelings and pattern of thoughts that made her feel bad.
Such as: too much clutter around, snapping, nagging, bad food, gossiping and "controlling her sharp tongue". She says she was able sometimes to stop mid sentence and change tone, or change tone before even speaking (this is emotional intelligence by the way).

But the most effective tool was her resolution chart. The resolution chart kept her focused and reviewing it everyday kept her goals present in her mind at every turn.



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Real Life Applications

Spend out!
Use what you love and makes you happy

Discard!
Throw out what you don't like and don't use (sorry, let me fix that: give it away or sell).

Admit happiness!
Don't be afraid of jinxing yourself. Admit when you're happy, celebrate it… And remind yourself of those moments

Move past disagreement
If you also tend to always look for counterarguments and counterexamples, only restrict it to areas where they will serve you well. Socializing is NOT one of them!

Resolution chart
A resolution chart is different than goals. Goals you hit or miss them. A resolution chart pushes you to try to be your best and when you fail it's OK: there's still tomorrow to do your best once again.

CONS

Research references?
Gretchen Rubin often says “research says…” but never links and rarely quotes any research. I wish she did.

She never meditated
The author said she never meditated because she didn’t feel like it.
If it’s a project of trying new things though, I felt she should have forced herself at least to try. Especially after so many were telling her it’s important.

PROS

Natural, everyday tone
I liked Gretchen Rubin’s writing style: conversational and natural. It flows naturally and that makes it a crossover between a novel and a great self help book.

No talking down tone
Grechen never pretends of being better than what she is and never lectures. She opens up on all the challenges and difficulties she faces, which makes The Happiness Project all the more valuable.

P.S.: she could use that same demure, everyday tone on her website too. “Blockbuster New York Times best seller” and “has an enormous readership” sound like unneeded self aggrandizing.

Humor
The Happiness Project is not only an easy read, but also often funny. Here’s an example that made me smile:

> That night I did a better job, largely because I was so tired that I went to bed at nine. Being asleep is a great way to avoid being critical.

Lots of wisdom
There’s really a lot of wisdom here. You can see Grechen is a fellow avid reader and she has learned a lot. I learned a lot too, thanks to her. And I love that.

Powerful message: little things matter
The Happiness Project shows everyone that to change for the better you don’t need to change your life or move to another continent. The little, everyday things are what makes all the difference.

Review

I loved “The Happiness Project”.
I wasn’t thinking I could ever give 5 stars to a book that seemed very light and doesn’t set out to improve you or teach you anything. But it doesn’t matter what it sets out to do: it *did* improve me and it *did* teach me a lot.

If you’re looking for ways to be happier, to improve yourself and even to get to know yourself better, chances are you will love The Happiness Project.

Edit: Eventually I demoted it to 4 stars. As good as it is, time showed me that it didn’t leave a mark.
Still highly recommend, though!

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

So Good They Can't Ignore You: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

So Good They Can't Ignore You (2012) is a self-help book teaching people how to maximize their talents and how to find their passions. Cal Newport, the author, turns the idea of "following your passions" on its head.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Don't Follow Your Passion
  - Career Passion Are Rare
  - Skills Trump Passion
  - Skills Trump Passion
  - Passion Mindset VS Craft Mindset
  - How to Get So Good They Can't Ignore You
  - If You Want Control and Life on Your Terms…
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Don't follow your passion when you're skill-less and inexperienced
- Working right is better than looking for the right job (and more likely to lead to passion and work fulfilment)
- Passion increases with mastery
- If you want independence and control, accumulate skills and experience first

Full Summary

About The Author: Calvin Newport is an American associate professor of computer science at Georgetown University, he has a PhD from MIT and he is a popular author of self-help books, including Deep Work.

Don't Follow Your Passion

We all know everyone wants to follow his passion these days. After all, even Steve Jobs said that.
But is it true?

Cal Newport says that "following your passion" is not good advice to find the work you love.
It can actually be very good advice, as it pushes people to search for some sort of "magic passion-stroke" as they jump relentlessly from job to job.
And Steve Jobs himself, he didn't actually follow his passion. He stumbled upon his passion and he got more and more passionate as he deepened his skillset.

> **Don't listen to what Jobs said, look at what Jobs did**

Career Passion Are Rare

To being with, says Cal Newport, it's rare that people start a job because they have a burning passion.
That alone makes it difficult for anyone to "follow their passions" because, for most people, there's not such an obvious thing as a burning passion ready to drive them.

Skills Trump Passion

Newport says that the happiest employees are those most skilled because there was a relation between years spent on the job and job satisfaction and "passion".

My Note:
However, it seems to me that Cal Newport makes a major assumption here because, of correlation, but correlation is not causation.

Skills Trump Passion

Passion, says the author, is a side effect of mastery.
Newport quotes Daniel Pink, author of Drive in explaining that the major factors that lead to happiness in the workplace are:

- Autonomy
- Competence
- Relatedness (feeling of being close to your colleagues)

Newport says that you become more competent and autonomous as you get better, which tells him that skills trump passion.

My Note:
But again, what if mastery is also the side effect of increasing passion? Or if the two simply influence each other?

> **Work right, don't find the right work**

Passion Mindset VS Craft Mindset

Cal Newport says that a craft mindset focuses on acquiring skills and what you can offer to the world. A passion mindset instead focuses on what the world can offer you.

The author says that a passion mindset, when it clashes with reality as it often does, makes you focused on why that job is not right for you, and all you see is negativity.
He urges the readers to set aside the question of whether your job is your true passion and instead you focus on becoming so good they can't ignore you.

Passion these days focuses on what they can get

How to Get So Good They Can't Ignore You

Cal Newport then talks about how we can get so good they can't ignore us.

He introduces deliberate practice (read The Talent Code) and talks about The Tipping Point, Outliers and the 10.000 hour rule.

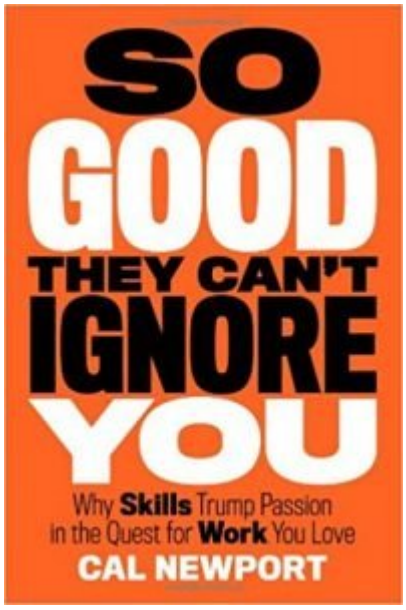
My Note:
It's unlucky the author mentions the 10.000 rules as that's rather poor science there.
Also see "self-help myths", "pop-psychology" and what the original researcher, Andersson, says in "Peak".

If You Want Control and Life on Your Terms...

… Get so good they can't ignore you.

Cal Newport says that the mistake many do today is to "follow your passion" blissful advice without having built what he calls "career capital".
Career capital is a skillet that allows you to sell something to make a living.

The author says you should pursue more control in your life only if when you can offer something that people are willing to pay for.



Real Life Applications

Don't jump from job to job looking for passion
Don't move from job to job looking for that missing spark of passion. Passion is, often, like love: it develops over time and with the deepening of the relationship.

You gain control through skills
You gain more freedom and control over your life by deepening your skills. Then you have more bargaining power with your employer and, well… With life in general.

CONS

Naive: they may not ignore you, but can steal all your credit

Ultimately, the approach of only being good is naive.

Yes, you may get so good they can't ignore you.

But they can recognize your great work, take your credit, and leave you with nothing for it.

Also see:

- Naive self-help

Unconvincing data

The data used to make the point there is not such a thing as a readily available passion didn't convince. The author mentions a few old interviews, but interviews are not great tools and I don't remember any numbers being

mentioned.

Unconvincing examples

The author uses a few stories to make the point too many quit their jobs to mistakenly follow their passions. There's nothing wrong with stories… If there are number backing them up.

But it felt to me it was *just* stories.

The examples of James as the poster child of this generation clearly shows what I mean. The author introduces James, a lifestyle designer who quit his job to live on his way by blogging.
James is clueless about monetizing his blog, and the author says says (I paraphrase for brevity):

> A distressingly large faction of these contrarians skipped the development of the means that would support their unconventional lifestyle.

Hmmmm, wait a second, based on what does he say "distressingly large faction"?
It feels like he's taking a swing at the generation Y trying to pass his perceptions for facts.
And here's the funny thing: I do agree with him. I have the same perception that this a generation which feels entitled to success. But it's a feeling, it's not based on numbers. I wished Cal hadn't tried to pass feelings for facts.
Also, I didn't particularly appreciate James got pretty much ridiculed for his supposed failure.

Too Much Meat on The Fire

"So Good They Can't Ignore You" starts denying that "following your passion" is a good advise.
Then it says that getting skilled is the best way to become passionate. All makes sense here and it's awesome insight.
Then it goes into explaining how to get those skills, which is a deep topic in itself and feels a bit hastened here.
And finishes off discussing the pitfalls of gaining more autonomy, resembling a bit The Four Hour Workweek. It felt too much to me.

PROS

Top, Top Insights

I loved the idea that passion takes time, something we've also seen in Grit by Angela Duckworth.
Cal Newport also hits the nail on the head when it comes to way too many people "following their passions" without any idea or skills to actually monetize those passions.
And again, his advice to be strategic and deliberate on winning your freedom and life control is awesome.

Review

First of all, I'd like to say this: do mind about your passion.

I feel "So Good They Can't Ignore You" goes too much on the opposite end of the spectrum in denying the role of passion. Chances are there is something that pulls you and draws you more than others.

Like Robert Greene says in Mastery, sometimes it's something you loved as a kid. Or what you love doing in your spare time.

That being said, this is a fantastic book.

Not only it is informative, but it can spare some major headaches to people who too quickly follow their passions.
All the while, it also provides a way on actually finding that passion (ie.: getting good at something).

And it also shows the proper way of conquering more freedom for those of us who can hardly handle a 9 to 5.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

How to Be Charismatic: A Practical Guide (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 June 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Charismatic people are natural leaders who gather a following of ardent supporters and followers.

Being able to switch on charisma at will is a wonderful skill that will make you more powerful, more liked and more of a leader.

This article will provide you with traits and examples of charismatic people and provide you an how to guide on how to become more charismatic.

If you lead people, charisma always helps

Contents

- Intro: What's Charisma
  - Should You Try to Be Charismatic?
- How to Be Charismatic
  - #1. Get a Life Purpose
  - #2. Show Uncompromising Saintliness
  - #3. Go to the Extreme – And Stay There
  - #4. Be Eloquent
  - #5. Speak With Passion
  - #6. Speak With Conviction
  - #7. Display Dominance When Needed
  - #8. Display Fearlessness
  - #9. Be Disinhibited
  - #10. Play Vulnerability Well
  - #12. Be Present In The Moment

- Charismatic Men in History
  - Dangers of Extreme Charismatic Leadership
  - Charisma and Social Skills
  - Why do People Follow Charismatic Leaders?
- Charisma Is NOT Loudness

Intro: What's Charisma

Charisma is a presence that excites us.

Charismatic people have something that most other people don't have. Something *they* don't have and wish they had.
We look up to charismatic people and we can't resist but following them and idolizing them.

It's that looking up to the them that gives charismatic men a strong social power.

Should You Try to Be Charismatic?

Short answer:

Absolutely yes.

Most people would gain from learning to be more charismatic.

Many traits of charismatic men are high quality traits that will make you an overall better person.
Confidence, conviction, a vision and a WHY in life, for example, are all high quality traits that will also make people more charismatic.

Eloquence, the ability to change people's states and persuade others, are crucial life skills that also happen to be charismatic traits.

So let's see how to do just that.

How to Be Charismatic

Here are 11 steps to be more charismatic:

#1. Get a Life Purpose

Have something you believe in.

A goal you're moving towards, a vision you believe in, a change you want to see in the world.

This is a world of lost souls looking for a master. And when you know where you're going people will instinctively want to follow you.

Even if you're not yet clear about the steps, the vision and drive are the most important aspects.
Where you're going matter less than having a strong cause, an ideal or a vision you communicate passionately about.

Just look at Greta Thumberg.
She knows sh*t about climate change, but she communicates with purpose and passion and the sheep follow her.

#2. Show Uncompromising Saintliness

Most people pay lip service to their values.

They say they respect religion, values, honor, etc., but everyone knows it's just words because, well… That's life.

And that's a great opportunity for those who actually walk the talk.
The few who actually honor their values no matter what impose their bigger-than-life presence on the masses of hot hair producers.

And we look up to them.

Example:

By putting values and tradition above the baseness of money, he shows the trait of charismatic saintliness.

#3. Go to the Extreme – And Stay There

Most people compromise, change their mind, say one thing and do another, show a face in public and another in private.

It's part of life, part of keeping an even keel and staying afloat. We come to accept it as simply how it is.

But deep down we admire the people who go on the extreme -and stay there no matter what-. They have guts, we think.
And especially in times of uncertainty and turmoil extremists gather a strong crowd of followers.

Girolamo Savonarola, in the picture, was a dangerously charismatic extremist.

With religious fervor and uncompromising puritanical zeal he set out to undo years of enlightenment in the world capital of enlightenment: Florence.

And with the zealot that only the most charismatic men can muster, he gathered a crowd of puritanic idiots to help in the dirty job.

He lacked the strategic oversight to understand when to stop and eventually was executed. But he did manage to stir much discontent and to burn and destroy much art before it came his turn to burn (dark pun).

#4. Be Eloquent

Charismatic leaders are masters in using the demonic power of words to elevate, incite, stir anger or to simply beat their opponents into (verbal) submission.

A good example of eloquence in the service of charisma is Jordan Peterson, author of The 12 Rules of Life:

Jordan Peterson gathered a huge following because he speaks well, with passion, and looks like he breathes lives into his deep well of knowledge.

#5. Speak With Passion

Eloquence is nice, but by itself, it's just words.

Eloquence by itself makes you an academic. But eloquence with passion, purpose and direction, now that makes you a charismatic leader instead.

This is an example of an impassioned speech:

Many charismatic men have led other gullible men to their own death.

#6. Speak With Conviction

Most people are constantly in doubt.

They don't know if they'll manage, they don't know what they will do with their life… And they don't know what they will do later today.

Not the charismatic.
The charismatic has an air of eternal confidence and certitude.
And it's frankly difficult not to be swept away by the mixture of passion and conviction of some of the most charismatic men in history.

Sometimes they appeal to nothing concrete.
They call up in arms for honor, "empires", values… And even peace (!). But they say it so convincingly passionately that, deep down, we all admire them and want to be on their side.

> **Benito Mussolini**: The keyword is one and one only. Winning. And we will win.

Here's another great quote from Marshall McLuhan that perfectly sums up the convinced charismatic man:

> I may be wrong, but I'm never in doubt.

Reverse of The Law:

Some charismatic people will speak with conviction even when they have no idea what they're talking about.

However, that cannot last long.
If people get to know you well and you keep talking nonsense, your charisma will quickly fade over time.

#7. Display Dominance When Needed

Pavid, fearful men are not charismatic.

Just think about it:

Would you admire and follow anyone if they withdrew when they're needed the most?

Probably not, because we want our leader to show strength when strength is needed.
When the chips must fall on the table, you must show your strength and resolve to make things happen.

People admire and follow those who are in charge. And as Machiavelli said, being feared is better than being loved.
Which is especially true in moments of crisis.

Ben Affleck is not afraid of laying down the law in Boiler Room:

#8. Display Fearlessness

A step above and beyond muscular leadership is showing fearlessness in the face of danger.

Al Pacino in Scarface can be a good example of fearlessness.

#9. Be Disinhibited

We all fall conventions, afraid of being judged and ridiculed.

Not the most charismatic men among us.
They are who they are and go for what they want without caring about what everyone else thinks.
And that's supremely attractive.

#10. Play Vulnerability Well

We all put on a mask in public.
We try to hide our emotions, to show ourselves stronger, smarter and better than we really think we are.
So when someone can show himself (figuratively) naked in front of an audience it impresses us all.

Dropping the mask can be a sign of strength, and it's also a sign that we are possibly more emotional than rational.
And again, it's emotions that appeal us the strongest.

Vulnerability also includes admitting and fessing up to your shortcomings without fears.
Look at Bush doing it here:

Instead of listening, pretending of knowing or agreeing, Bush admits he doesn't know.
And implies he doesn't care.
He's got other priorities, we imagine, and couldn't care less about the German healthcare system.
Very charismatic in a slightly asshol-ish way.

Reversal of The Law

Vulnerability can be a double-edged sword for the charismatic leader.
People want to believe the charismatic leader to be a sort of God, so you must be careful.

Vulnerability in showing anger and emotions, especially for past events, is OK if you frame it as your driving force.
But vulnerability as a show of weakness is a no-no.
Also read "vulnerability is not power".

#11. Be Adventurous

Some of the most charismatic characters show a daredevil side, a rebellious streak.

They live life their own way, sometimes even going against the grain of society.

That's exactly what makes Han Solo, a Stars Wars character, the most likable and charismatic man in the trilogy:

> Never tell me the odds

LOL, so typical Hollywood :). But it shows the adventurous spirit combating against "the timid bore of numbers and rationality".

#12. Be Present In The Moment

Have you noticed how many of these ascetic personalities manage to draw in the crodws by the millions:

- Sadhguru
- Russel Brand
- Jay Shetty

One quality that monks develop is the ability to be present in the moment.
Most people aren't truly present. They're thinking about what to say next, how to come across, what body language pose to strike, etc. etc.

But if you want the biggest hack to charisma, it's this:

Be present in the moment.
Focus intensely on the person in front of you, what they say, and what it says about them. And then react to it *in the moment*.

Psychologists call it 'flow', laymen call it 'in the zone', and some others call it 'presence'.

However you want to call it, this is the charisma superpower.

Charismatic Men in History

History is peppered with charismatic men.

Most dictators are charismatic men. They often take the helm of nations by riding the waves of discontent, rebellion or strong emotions.

They sometimes make up enemies so they can whip the crowd into a frenzy by pointing their fingers at something else.
They will ride that growing wave and as everyone is taken over by emotions, very few will realize how poorly equipped they are to actually lead a country.
For Hitler the enemies were Jews, for Lenin it was the rich capitalists oppressing the poor.
Let's hope we'll all be smart enough to recognize the next dangerous charismatic man before it's too late…

Some other examples of charismatic during histories:

- Joan of Arc
- Rasputin
- Robespierre
- Benito Mussolini

Dangers of Extreme Charismatic Leadership

Charisma can turn on you.

Robert Greene in The Art of Seduction uses the chilling example of Robespierre's own death as an example of the dangers of extreme charisma in the political arena.

Robespierre rode a wave of highly emotional rebellion that turned nasty with the reign of terror.
Eventually, Robespierre kept the heat of the terror on for way too long when the population wanted to go back to normal life. And in a few months he went from revered charismatic leader to everyone turning against him.

Charisma is indeed as volatile as the emotions it creates, says Greene.
The charismatic man often wins love and support by barging into a difficult situation as the savior. He provides a strong guidance and helps everyone right through the turmoil.

But once the people start feeling more secure or feel the times are changing, charisma is less needed and the charismatic man a thing of the past.
Some charismatic will try to keep the flames of danger and risk ablaze just to stay in power. Or because they don't know any better or what else they can do.
But people will tire of it and at the first sign of weakness will turn on you.

Robert Greene says you should then turn the heat lower when the adventure is over and slowly settle into a more boring routine.
People will admire your self-control and adaptability if done correctly.

The alternative is having an army to prop yourself in power, which you will need as charismatics tend to make quite a few enemies.

Don't Follow Charismatic Leaders

Once the dust settles charismatic leaders and rulers tend to leave a mess behind with their wild personalities.

The one who follows after a charismatic is left with a big clean up to do. Most people fail to understand how the mess was created in the first place though.
They miss the charismatic leader and blame the successor for the problems.

To avoid this situation Robert Greene suggests instead going in a completely new direction.
In the 48 Laws of Power he explains how Truman escaped that way the charismatic curse of Theodore Roosevelt.

Charisma and Social Skills

While to be charming it's imperative that you are socially skilled, people's skills is not a necessary requirement to be charismatic.

Indeed a charismatic man might also draw more power from being asocial. That communicates that you are all too consumed about your art, passion or mission to even care about people.

However, social skills and understanding of social dynamic is what would ultimately allow you to stay in power (or to stay popular).

If Robespierre and Rasputin had been more socially skilled for example they would have seen the writing on the wall and adapted their strategies.
But they were too self-absorbed and socially unaware to notice…

Why do People Follow Charismatic Leaders?

Charismatic leaders tend to hog all the power.

So why people follow them?

Haslam in the seminal book "The New Psychology of Leadership" says that:

- In times of crisis, people look at magical-looking leaders to solve unsolvable problems
- Followers go after charismatic leaders to fend off a sense of hopelessness
- Followers can relinquish the burden of responsibility at a time when they just can't seem able to cope

People are so looking for a figure who projects an aura of certainty in uncertain times that we even help would-be leaders to convince us that yes, they are the answer to all our problems.

Lipman-Blumen says that, in the process, we even push charismatic leaders to believe in their own infallibility. Until, eventually, reality catches up with us all.

But by then, lots of damage might have been done…

As Haslam concludes:

> The notion of the leader as the hero is bad for leaders, it is bad for followers, but, most of all, it is bad for the group.

Charisma Is NOT Loudness

Finally, there is much misunderstanding of charisma.

Some people confuse charisma with loudness, and "high energy behavior".

A high-energy, super extroverted man *can* be charismatic, but he might also be un-charismatically obnoxious. And a quiet man can be charismatic.

To better understand the difference, check out the Charisma University review.

How to Set Boundaries With Dominant Bosses: Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Setting boundaries can be difficult.

But it's much more difficult when you are dealing with individuals who are more dominant, have more power, or have a higher rank.

This article deals with that worst-case scenario: setting up boundaries with a boss, who also happens to be a dominant bully.

As our case study, we will be using Trump and Comey.

Contents

- Boundaries With Bosses
  - When Bosses Encroach Our Boundaries
- Case Study in Setting Boundaries
  - 1. Trump Power Move: Testing Boundaries
  - 2. Comey Power Move: Show Disagreement
  - 3. Reaffirming Own Boundaries: Body Language
  - 4. Showing Your Independence
  - Example of NOT setting boundaries
- How to Set Boundaries
  - What Will Happen When You Hold Boundaries
- SUMMARY

Boundaries With Bosses

Setting up boundaries with your boss is difficult.

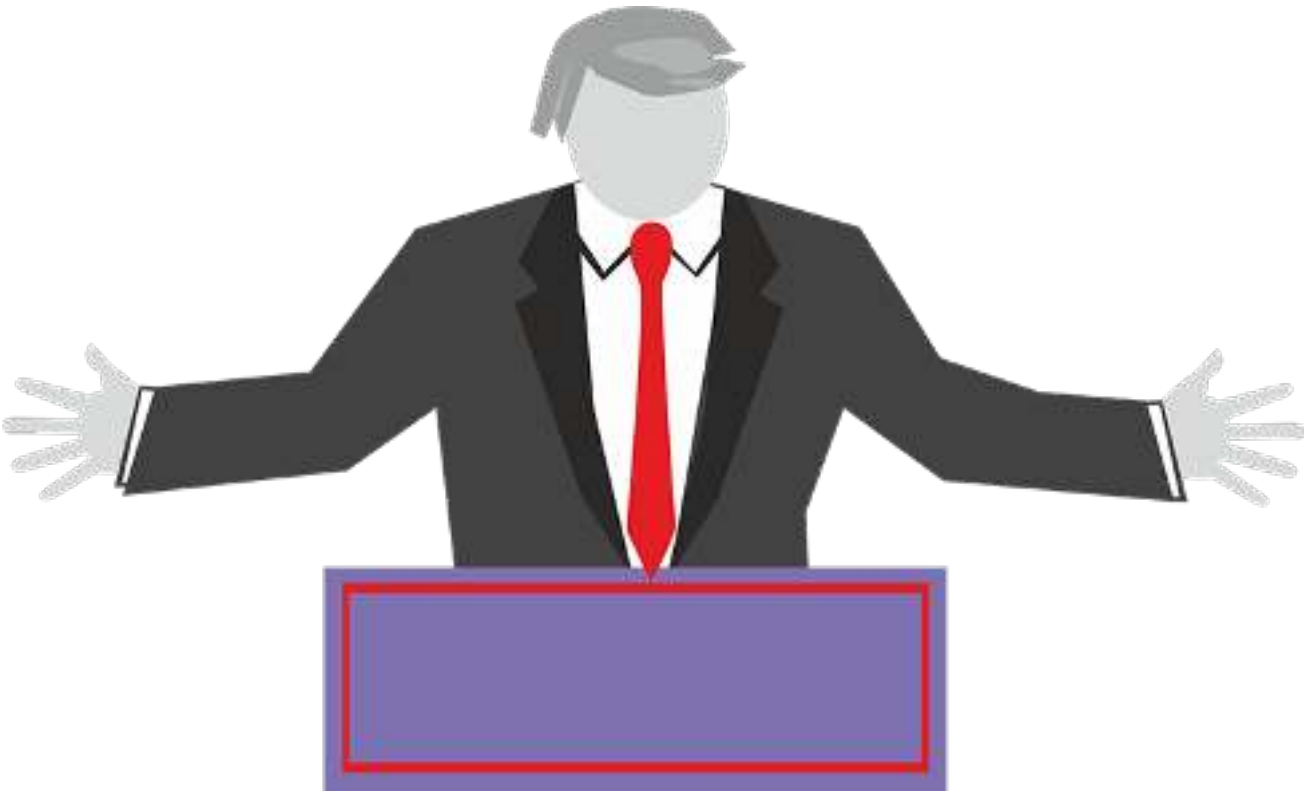
And that's why it's paramount you learn how to push back against any bullying.

Donald Trump VS James Comey is a great example of how to set boundaries with powerful people.
Trump was annoyed by the FBI continued investigation over the Russian interference in the US presidential election.

And according to Comey's autobiographical book A Higher Loyalty, Trump was pressuring him to drop the investigation and to confirm his allegiance to him.

Not an easy position, but a rather common one.

Theoretically the FBI is independent of the president, but most power struggles are independent of what the law and regulation dictate.
Furthermore, the president can appoint and fire the FBI director, which makes that independence even more theoretical.



When Bosses Encroach Our Boundaries

Comey's position is nothing unique.
The whole world over, many people find themselves in the exact same situation.

Here are just a couple of examples from the workplace:

Credit Manager Pressured For Returns

Imagine you are a credit risk manager who theoretically should only make sure your company's portfolio is safe and sound.

You are the one responsible for financial viability of the outstanding loans and you are the one who underwrites the credit lines.
But maybe you have a pushy boss who needs to show end of the quarter growth. And he's pressuring you to approve far bigger credit lines you'd be comfortable with.

Same situation as Comey VS Trump: your allegiance is theoretically to the company's financial only, but your boss can still pressure you with final authority on your job and with "soft power".

Consultant Pressured To Work Against Client's Best Interest

Or you might be a consultant, working alongside your customer.

Supposedly you should have the best interests of your client in mind.
That's what the internal regulations of your own company say as well.

But then your boss starts putting the screws on you and on your team to recommend to your customers a provider he is friend with.
You don't particularly like that provider, but your boss is making it clear he "would really appreciate it" if you could all recommend it and "they are good anyway".

Again, same situation where, out of personal ethics and values, you need to enforce your boundaries while also

avoiding a full escalation.

Let's see how Comey did it in a famous recorded video.

Case Study in Setting Boundaries

We know from his autobiography that Comey was hoping not to be called or singled out by Trump on his inauguration with the highest brass of law enforcement.

And I personally believe him. It fits well with the whole story and with what eventually happened. And he was also standing very far away, which a clear sign he wanted to stay distant.

But of course, Trump knew he had a riotous, difficult man on his team. He either wanted to send a signal of his power, or he wanted to offer another olive branch.
The way he spoke and moved, I believe it was a power display more than olive branch.

1. Trump Power Move: Testing Boundaries

Trump calls Comey over to him.

Comey is on the opposite side of the room and has to walk all the way to greet him.
It's as strong a sign of power as one can have.
Trump even open his arms, resembling Jesus welcoming the disciples.

As Comey walks over, Trump makes the joke:

> You're more famous than me

This is a typical power compliment.
As he pretends to build him up, he implies he might not like that. And of course, by saying that, he sets himself up as the yardstick to which everyone else must measure against.

2. Comey Power Move: Show Disagreement

Comey starts his walk with a slight bow of his head, which is a strong deferential sign.

But as soon as he Trump makes his power joke, he slightly shakes his head.
Awesome, awesome move:

Shaking his head Comey shows, in a subtle way, that he disapprove of that joke.
And since flunkies don't disapprove, he is showing that he is willing to keep a critical stance of the president.
That's a subtle, yet very strong public display that he is confident of his own means and that he can defend his agency.

How insubordination works

Small acts of insubordination are great to send the message that you are were willing -and possibly able- to defend your boundaries.

A slight critical remark, not laughing at your boss's jokes… These are all great ways to subtly and semi-publicly reaffirm your independence.

Notice that small acts of insubordination while you are still overall complying are examples of passive aggression.
But that's OK: passive aggression is weak *and* harmful in close relationships. But in the workplace and when you need to stand up for yourself, everything goes.

Small acts of insubordination reaffirm that you:

- are not afraid
- keep your independence
- are a strong character yourself
- you're not be trifled with

3. Reaffirming Own Boundaries: Body Language

As they shake hands Trump puts a hand on his back. It seems he might have been trying to make it more friendly than it ended being.

Comey indeed shows all the signs that he wants to keep the distance instead. He:

1. Extends his arm while still far away
2. Doesn't use his other arm to pat Trump
3. Keeps his eye contact brief and moves to the next person
4. Says "thank you", but no more
5. Tight-lipped smile: only a facade smile
6. Says hi to the vice president as well, another sign this is not personal
7. Goes quickly back

Everything Comey does scream "this is strictly business, we are not friends".

Notice that physical distance is also a sign of emotional distance and, possibly, of dislike.
If Comey had been too friendly and gotten too close, he would have sent the message, to Trump and to everyone else, that he was submitting and that Trump was going to have influence over him.

This way, with physical distance and "cold professionalism", he shows that he is adamant to keep his independence -and, by extension, FBI's independence-.

4. Showing Your Independence

Finally, Comey is very quick with his salutation and goes back to where he was coming from.
Another sign that yes, he will go to say hi because he's the president and he has to.
But that's it about his involvement with Trump.

Quickly going back to his position is another strong signal that he doesn't want to be too close to Trump and that he will hold to his position.

Example of NOT setting boundaries

Just look at the huge difference between how Comey behaved and how this other man behaved on that same day, just a few seconds earlier:

Isn't it obvious that Trump can easily influence that first man, but not so easily influence Comey?
Don't you have that same feeling?
Yep, guessed so.

How to Set Boundaries

To set your boundaries with meddling and powerful people, you also need to show some distance and to display your independence at every opportunity you get.

Since more powerful people can fire you, harm your or otherwise cause troubles, you want to keep your displays of

independence under wrap.
Overall, you say hi, you respect their authority and their position and you comply with everything you're supposed to comply with.
But at the same time you need to show that you are not for sale, that you won't bend down and that, yes, they better fly straight too because you're not that harmless after all.

If they try to get too close like Trump did, operate similarly to how Comey did:

1. Show respect for his position, but:
2. Keep your relationship strictly professional
3. Avoid looking like friends in public (company parties, lunches together etc.)
4. Keep distance, physical as well

What Will Happen When You Hold Boundaries

If you enforce your boundaries effectively and it's clear you will hold to your autonomy, two things can happen:

1. They will try to get rid of you (/fire you)
2. They relent, then leave you alone, then secretly respect and admire you

Whichever the case, you will earn the respect of everyone. Not least, you will earn the respect with that one person that matters the most: yourself.

Whether you end up with option one or two, depends on a host of things. Not least your social skills, the number of allies on your side and how strong your position is.

SUMMARY

Having to set your boundaries and defend your autonomy from a powerful individual can be annoying. It means that someone is trying to push you around and force you into a power struggle.

As much as it's tiresome, you will learn how to assert yourself and you can take pride in doing what's right. And you will grow your self esteem in the process.

This article gave you an example of setting boundaries and a few guidelines you can follow.

Best Personal Finance Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The best personal finance books are split into three categories depending on what they focus on most:

1. Books to save money
2. Educating on a specific topic (ie.: investment strategies)
3. Books to make money

Most personal finance books fall mostly in the first category with a smattering of the third category (making money).

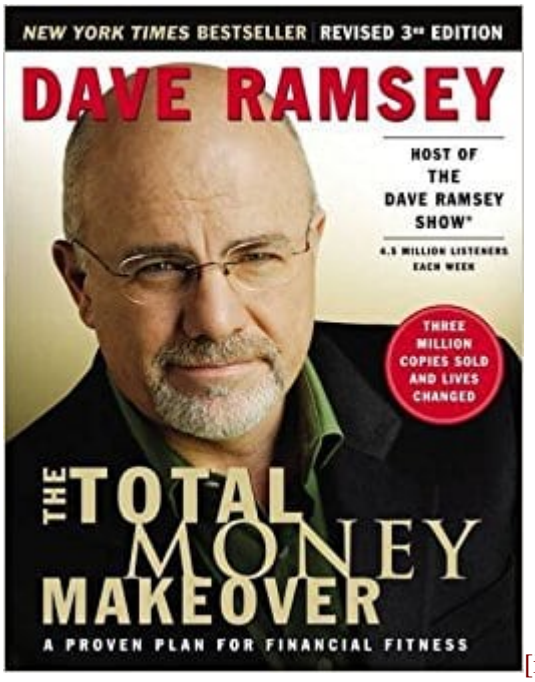
The best personal finance books on *making* money are not much about building businesses though.
They are mostly about investing your savings in the stock market and leveraging compound interest to get rich over decades.

That's for a quick overview of the personal finance literature, now let's start our best-of list:

Contents

- 7. The Total Money Makeover
- 6. The Millionaire Next Door
- 5. The Book of Common Sense Investing
- 4. Rich Dad Poor Dad
- 3. Money Master the Game
- 2. The 4 Hour Workweek
- 1. The Millionaire Fastlane
- Final Words
  - Also, Read

7. The Total Money Makeover



[image]

by Dave Ramsey
Summary | Kindle | Audiobook

I picked *Total Money Makeover* as the best book focused on saving money. Ramsey wants to move you from a spender mindset to a saver mindset.

This is really helpful for people who overspend and tend to have issues with debt and credit card over-usage. Dave Ramsey doesn't mince words and he can give you a much-needed wake-up call.

> Quote: "We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like."

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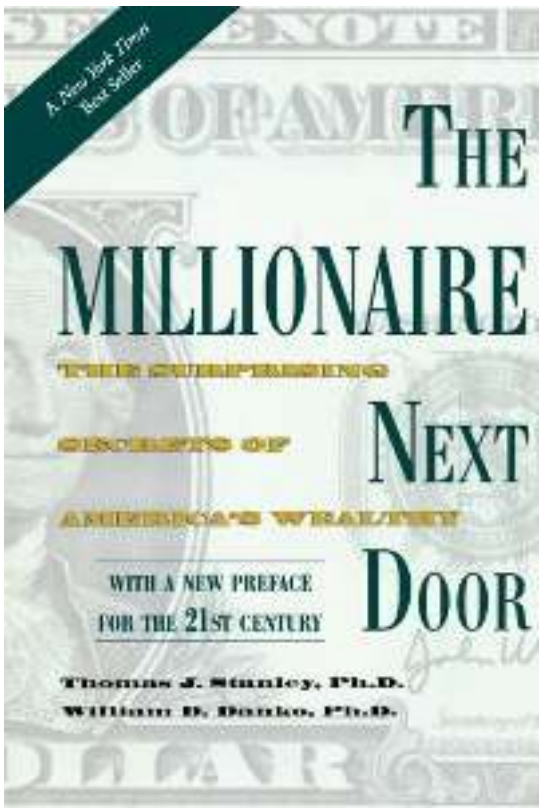
6. The Millionaire Next Door



by Stanley & Danko
Summary | Kindle | Audiobook

If you're looking to make money, what about some data?

The Millionaire Next Door is one of the best personal finances books -if not the best- because it's based on actual numbers. The authors surveyed real millionaires and find out how they live and how they think.

And if you were expecting flashy watches and extravagant holidays, that ain't it…

> Quote: "I am not impressed with what people own. I'm impressed with what they achieve (..) Strive to be the best in your field, don't chase money. If you are the best in your field, money will find you"

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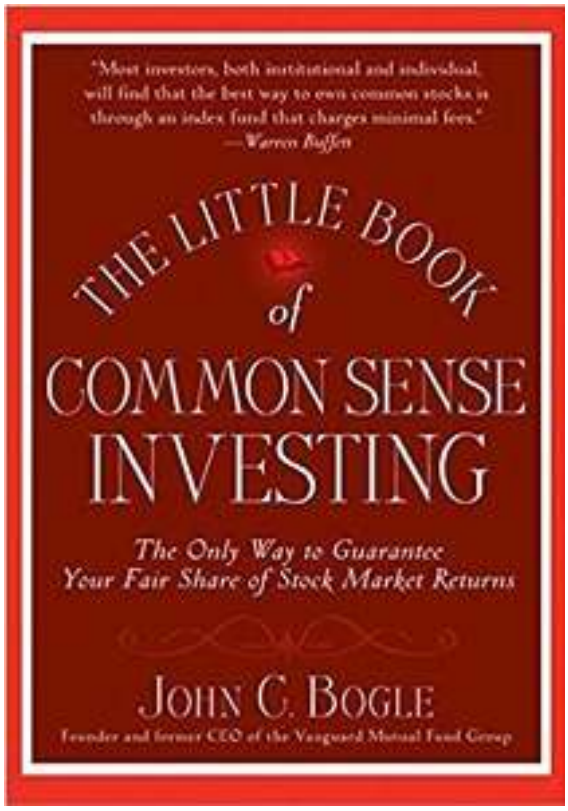
5. The Book of Common Sense Investing



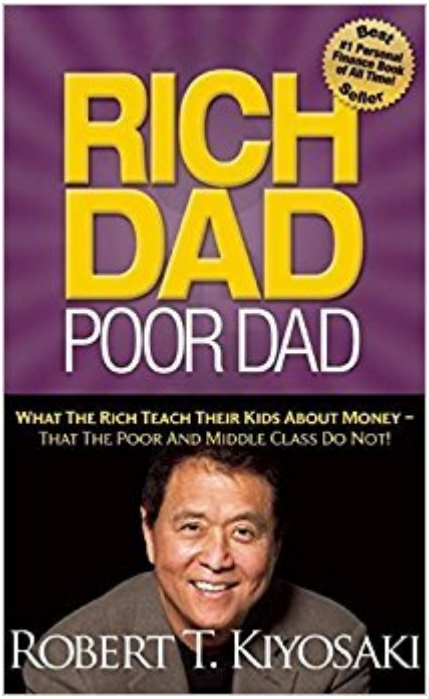
[image]by John C. Bogle
Summary | Kindle | Audiobook

The Little Book of Common Sense Investing focuses on investing. The message is simple but it's all you need really: cut the middlemen and replicate the market returns with ETFs.

Bogle says that's the safest, most lucrative, and even easiest and most comfortable way to grow your investments - and if it's worth anything, I agree :)-.

> Quote: Gunning for average is your best shot at finishing above average.

4. Rich Dad Poor Dad



[image]

by Robert T. Kiyosaki
Summary | Kindle | Audiobook

Robert Kiyosaki has received his fair share of critics over the years.

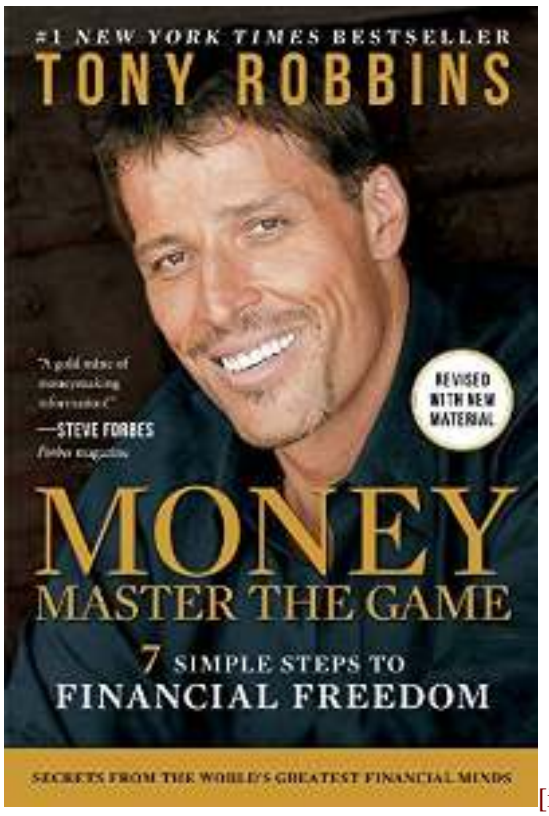
Rich Dad Poor Dad can seem indeed rather unscrupulous when it says that the rich pay little taxes and can get their holiday reimbursed by failing it as a business expense.

However, that doesn't make it any less true.

And that's why for me this is one of the best money books of all.
If that weren't enough, Kiyosaki's take on assets & liabilities is as simple as it is eye-opening.

> Quote: The lack of money is the root of all evil.

3. Money Master the Game



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by Tony Robbins
Summary | Kindle | Print

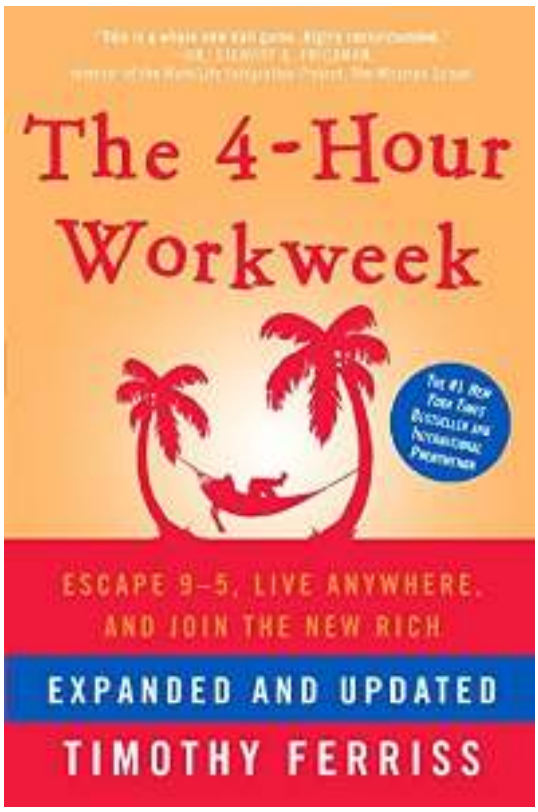
Money Master The Game shows a path towards financial freedom with a mix of prudent saving and smart investment.

Robbins teaches you how the mutual fund industry is robbing you, why you should avoid brokers, and why the 401(K) is *not* a good investment vehicle. All in simple terms everyone can understand. Powerful stuff.

And if that weren't enough, he caps it all off with a self-help sounding chapter that puts money in perspective. Money is only a tool, he says, and by itself won't make you happy. How not to agree with that?

> Quote: *we're drowning in information, but we're starving for wisdom*

2. The 4 Hour Workweek



[image]
by Timothy Ferris
Summary | Print

The 4-Hour Workweek is a crossover between a personal finance book, a self-help book, and a philosophy lifestyle book.
It's the most business-like book as well, and we chose it as #2 for a specific reason:

This book helps you understand that most personal finance books are for the very basic of comfortable living *only*.

For anything more than that, you need something different.

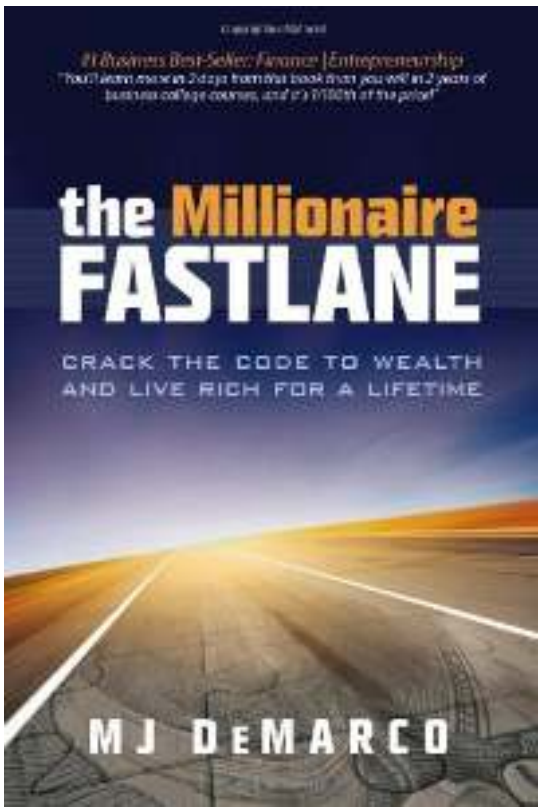
And albeit I'm not a huge fan of Ferris, he does a good job with this book.

With a vision of freedom and financial independence, and with a blueprint to get there, Tim Ferris doesn't fill you up with the hot air of empty motivation. He paints the dream for you. And then gives you the courage and the tools to go make it a reality.

It has aged a bit when it comes to the actual tools, but the mindset is what matter the most and those are eternal. Honestly, there are so many awesome quotes from this personal finance book that I'm stumped as to which one to pick.

> Quote: They don't have riches. The riches have them

1. The Millionaire Fastlane



by Mj DeMarco
Summary | Audiobook[image] | Kindle

DeMarco basically rips apart all the personal finance books focused on saving money and investing with compound interest. Awesome!

And we love a smart guy pulling the wool out of the masses' eyes around here.

Here's what I learned:

1. Saving & Investing is for suckers: employees, duped by the compound interest myth, trade invaluable time today for distant (and uncertain) riches. Not worth it.
2. The paradox of practice: if authors selling get-rich products got rich not with their methods but by selling their methods to you, are they credible?
   Great question. And a truly awesome read.

> Quote: *Dump the damn job. The job sucks*

Final Words

This best personal finance book list covers a very disparate range of topics. It goes from saving to investing to lifestyle.
But you can't go wrong with any of them: they're the best books when it comes to money.

Also, Read

- Best self-help books
- Best leadership books

- Best dating books for women
- Best dating books for guys
- Best red pill books
- Best relationship books
- Best communication skills books
- Best health and nutrition books
- Best psychology books
- Worst books
- Most overrated books

9 Traits of High-Value Women (With Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The traits of a high-value woman aren't just cultural or subjective but can be scientifically determined based on evolved mate value preferences and social exchange dynamics.

High-value women aren't just attractive—they lift the people around them, care for themselves, and know how to navigate life with grace and confidence.
In this article, you'll discover the 12 defining traits of high-value women, backed by psychology, research, and real-world examples.

A bit on the snotty side, but definitely conveys high value

Contents

- High-Value Woman Traits
  - 1. She is Feminine
  - 2. She Takes Care of Her Appearance
  - 3. Takes Care of Her Health
  - 4. She Is Kind, Cares About People
  - 5. She Is Emotionally Stable
  - 6. Positive Affect: Lifts People Up
  - 7. She Is Socially Skilled
  - 8. She's Straight, Plays Little Games…
- Approachable vs. Unapproachable Value
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- SUMMARY

High-Value Woman Traits

Definition & Methodology: We assess "value" through **Social Exchange Theory** (Blau, 1964), and the evolutionary concept of **mate value** (Buss, 2016). In contrast to men, we exclude 'power' as less relevant.
Definition: a woman who possesses more traits that make her socially and sexually attractive than traits that make her unattractive.
TPM Perspective: From a high-value man's perspective, more likely to be a net giver in his life.

This article leverages solid psychology, research, and the author's own experience.

A high-quality woman with the following traits is great girlfriend material but also makes for a stable and reliable business partner, colleague, or friend.

Let's start:

1. She is Feminine

While being attractive helps, femininity is even more foundational.

The fact that more and more women are losing touch with their femininity presents a great opportunity for high-quality women. They will stand out even more and reap more and more rewards.

Marilyn Monroe is a classic example of high femininity:

Monroe is extreme. You don't need to go that far, as it might even be too much for our current social environment. But it's a good example.

But what does feminine mean?
Read:

- How to be feminine
- Effective seduction examples: the feminine type

2. She Takes Care of Her Appearance

Being and appearing are a false dichotomy: they're not mutually exclusive, and they're instead linked.

Exceptions always apply of course and one can go into extremes of vanity and haughtiness. But within optimal intervals, **taking care of one's appearance signals about caring in general.**

Women who care about themselves are more likely to care their social standing, their careers, their family, their goals, and, eventually, their children.

All these external signs are important indicators of self-care:

- Personal hygiene
- Posture & body language
- Clothing
- Makeup

Nothing's sexier than perfectly applied lipstick

... And Doesn't Hide It

Pretending you put on the first old scruffy thing you saw in your wardrobe is a low-value way of trying to hide in the shades of mediocrity.

High-value women take pride in caring about themselves.
They know that appearances and perception shape reality, and they make no mystery that they take care of them.

Taking care of hersels maintains high-quality at any age.
Look at the difference between these 3 women, from the lowest quality to the highest:

The first one doesn't even try. The second one tries but doesn't know how to. And the third one cares and knows how to (and she is the oldest).

Beauty Matters

Beauty directly boosts both her social and mate value. In relationships, it also boosts her man's status.
But beauty isn't just about aesthetics; it is a primary signal of **genetic potential**, an important factor for men who want to have children.

Melania Trump has average social skills, but makes it up with beauty, high-status body language, femininity, and style

3. Takes Care of Her Health

Similar to the above, but addressing her body.
She takes care of:

- The food she eats (no fast food, no adding kilos of sauce & salt, etc.)
- Drinks (avoids pops, colas, etc.)
- Exercising

Overall, she keeps her body running smoothly.

4. She Is Kind, Cares About People

Kindness is one of the most sought-after traits in dating. And for good reasons. Kindness boosts the likelihood of:

- Supportive partner
- Win-win relationships

Contrary to what Hussey recommends in *Get the Guy,* women shouldn't walk around the bar asking people how they're doing as if they owned the place (that's the man's way).

But they do let people know they're happy to see them. Maybe a slight touch on their arm, a warm smile, a comforting word.
Or a simple "well done, I'm so happy for you".

See more here on how to combine femininity and power.

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

Cares About Her Partner

And of course, she cares about her partner.
And supports him to achieve what he wants to achieve.

With an important caveat, of course: she expects the same kind of treatment back.

That's why high-quality women don't get stuck in toxic relationships and that's why the asshole game is a poor style for long-term relationships with high-quality women.

Warning For Men

If a woman couldn't care less about your dreams, goals, ambitions… About your health… Then she's either extremely self-centered or lacks empathy.
Either way, she's not a high-value woman.
And she's not good relationship material.

Lucio's Example: **The moment I knew she wasn't for me**

Lucio:
Years ago I went to the hospital for an issue that could have been serious.

Once there, they told me I should get hospitalized for further checks.
I called my girlfriend to ask if she could bring me the laptop and some more clothes.
When she started talking about her job interview I waited and waited for her to ask about me.

But it never happened.

Eventually, I had to interrupt her to let her know I had to be hospitalized

I was sadder about her lack of empathy than about my hospitalization, and that led me to reassess the relationship.

5. She Is Emotionally Stable

Women tend to have wilder mood swings as compared to men, so they get a bit more leeway.

But a high-value woman is still expected to be:

- Relatively secure in herself and of her own worth
- Not going to make public drama
- Not excessively anxious
- No wild mood swings (a sign of borderline personality)
- Generally positive and uplifting

Being emotionally stable doesn't mean she doesn't cry or that she never gets angry. It doesn't even mean she can't have a nervous breakdown or have bouts of slight depression and self-doubt.
Those are normal parts of life and dealing with them openly is actually another sign of high value.

🤦♂️Lucio's Example

Lucio:
Years ago, me and an ex-girlfriend of mine were removing old wallpaper.

I was making fun of her as being largely ineffective.
I was surprised she was taking it so personally, but truth to be told I was also amused by what I perceived as her large overreaction.

These days I would have spotted the signs it was going too far, but back then I was quite a bit thicker and I kept going.
Then, at a certain point, said something like this:

> **Her**: My blood is boiling, I'm losing control

Little later she left the room to go decompress on her own.
I later rejoined her, apologized, explained I didn't realize I was going too far and then we resumed without further trouble

The only reason that didn't turn out to be a big argument and a drawn-out fight was her outstanding emotional intelligence.
Her realizing she was reaching her limits, articulating it well, and preventing a major blow up was a huge green flag of emotional and social intelligence.

And the fact she preferred to go decompress instead of blowing up is another major sign of self-control.
Both are signs of high-value women.

6. Positive Affect: Lifts People Up

People differ in their tendency towards negative or positive emotions. And that makes a large difference on someone's character, and someone's impact on others.

"Positive affect" of course doesn't mean "always happy".
That's just silly.
It means that she experiences more positive emotions and fewer negaitve ones. Ideally, her baseline mood is slightly on the happier side, interfacing the world with a smile instead of a growl.

Without getting into politics, what feelings, states, and emotions do you think the two women below evoke in the people around them?
Very different impact, right:

Which of the two lifts people up instead of tearing them down?

Example: When Negativity Is Out of Control

At the opposite end of the spectrum are women who are often angry or bored.

I had a girlfriend who'd often complain to me "I'm bored". And then expect me to lead her out of her state.
And when I'd be busy with my own things, she'd get cantankerous, argumentative, and bad-tempered.

That character doesn't work well with agentic men who want to focus on their mission.

7. She Is Socially Skilled

Great social skills are important for everyone, but they are even more important for women.

Women, on average, are more skilled than men at building social networks (Brizendine, 2006) and we could argue that social skills for women have been a matter of survival strategy (Wright, 1994).

In that sense, social skills are feminine, and charm is extremely alluring in a woman.

Advanced, "top socialite" social skills include:

- Turning down a guy's advances without hurting his ego (keep a friend)
- Release tense social situations
- Deflecting inappropriate comments without making enemies

Here's an example for the last one:

Him: (unprofessional innuendo)
Her: (fake smile, turns her attention to someone else to 'throw him under the bus' without nastiness)

Good Language Skills

Language highly correlates with intelligence.

But it goes beyond communication skills and intelligence.
It shows that she has read and taken care of her education.

It's especially useful if she speaks good English, since English is the current global lingua franca. Her good English is also a valuable asset for high-value men who tend to move in international circles.

Difference Between Men and Women
Women often tend to go broad with languages rather than deep. More women living abroad will try to pick up the local language than men. This is because of women's stronger drive to build social networks.

8. She's Straight, Plays Little Games...

The women's dating literature is all about playing games.
By far the three most popular are:

1. Make him wait for sex
2. Pretend you're not interested
3. Let him invest more

We've already debunked the idea of letting him wait for sex, the drawbacks of feigning disinterest, and the issues of making him invest more.
The issue with nasty games is that they are win-lose. And dating win-lose starts win-lose relationships.

This is not to say that high-quality women don't play any games at all.
Quite the opposite.

Games are part of the marketing package. What I'm truly referring to here are the nasty games.
Instead, the high-quality woman deploys games that build people up and make others feel good.

And, once in a relationship, she decreases the number of games because she knows that a relationship based on honesty and mutual support is superior to a relationship where she's constantly gaming her partner.

For example, the high-value woman does not:

- Try to make you jealous
- Threaten to break up
- Pretend his exes were better

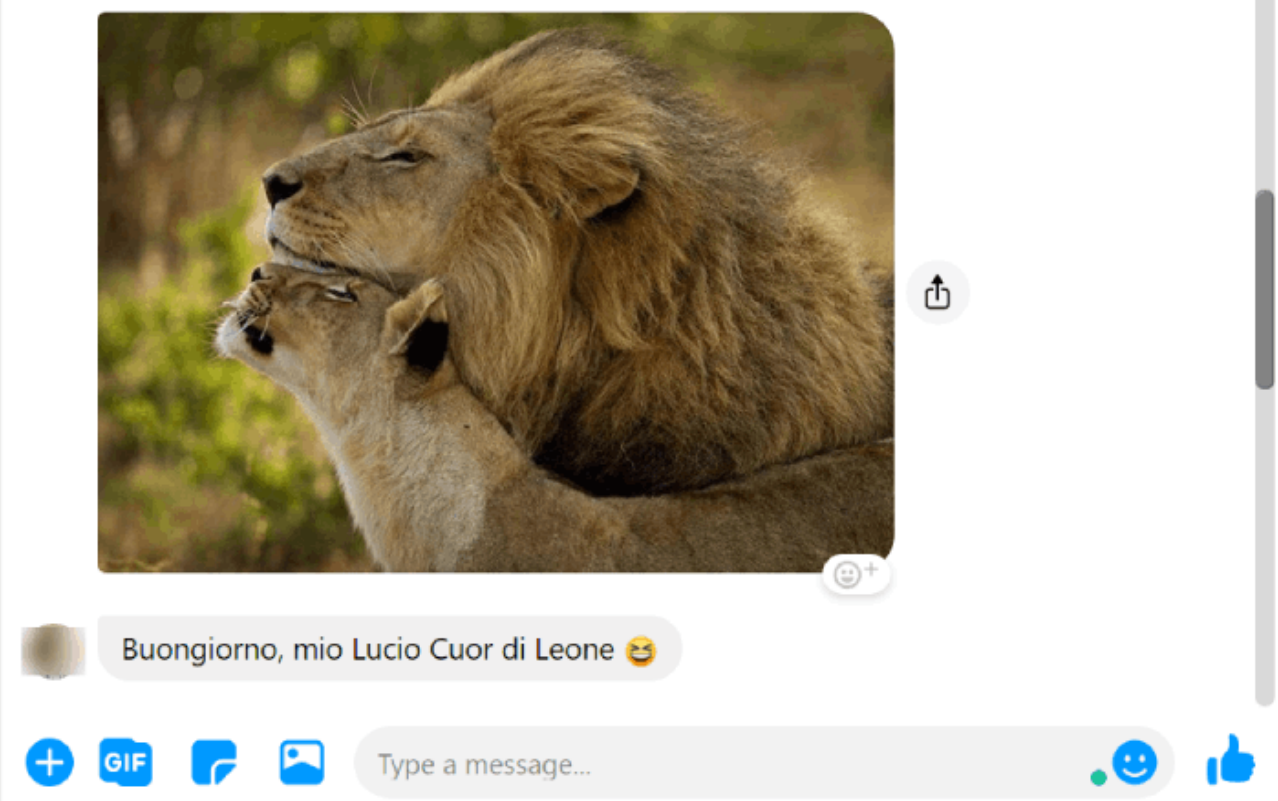
> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

... And Prefers Collaborative Approaches

Instead, she prefers building his partner up.

And she is not afraid of showing her fondness and admiration, because she knows that positive behavior begets more positive behavior.

This is the message one woman sent me:



Also, read more in:

- Fundamental strategies of social success
- Smart cooperation

Approachable vs. Unapproachable Value

There are two ways of being a high-quality woman:

1. Welcoming and uplifting to (almost) everyone
2. Unapproachable and only for a selected few ones

I put this one last because some women overdo it and end up looking bitchy and conceited, and that's not high-quality anymore but screams "gold-digger with little to offer".

However, there are ways to look "unapproachable and make it work. Maybe the topic for another article.

High-Value Women FAQs

Do guys like high-value women?

By definition, everyone likes a high-value woman, and everyone prefers a higher-value woman compared to a lower-value one.
However, power dynamics, attachment and subjectivity all play a role. Some men only feel comfortable with women closer to their own value, and many men in a happy relationship prefer their woman to any other 'higher value' woman.

Is a good career important for a woman's value?

While not as important to a man's value, a good career certainly boosts a woman's value because it correlates with her social status and income.
Some people get this concept confused because they conflate a woman's value as an individual with her mating value. A good career may matter somewhat less in mating markets contexts because while some men appreciate an ambitious and financially independent woman, many others feel more comfortable with a more stay-at-home partner.
That being said, a woman who combines personal success with femininity may be the peak of high value.

SUMMARY

In one sentence:

High-value women are feminine women who take care of themselves, as well as caring and taking care of the people around them, including their partners.

There is a lot of overlap between high-quality men and high-quality women, but also some major differences. This article provides you with an overview of the traits of high-value women.

Best Power Quotes (Explained)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Many lists of "best power quotes" are filled with empty platitudes or lack a true understanding of the raw power dynamics that make those quotes work.

Below is our definitive ranking of the best power quotes. Each quote is followed by analysis through the lens of power dynamics, leadership psychology, and social strategy.

Contents

- Power and Strategy
- Power, War, & Peace
- Power and Influence Quotes
- Power and Seduction
- Mental Power
- Power and Leadership Quotes
- Quotes On Powerful Women
- Power and Corruption
- Power and Honor
- TPM Power Quotes

Power and Strategy

> **"Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak."**
>
> — *Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

Sun Tzu wrote that all warfare is based on deception, which in his writing, often meant to appear the opposite of what you are. Weaker when strong to **catch an opponent off guard**, and strong when weak to discourage aggression.

> **"The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do."**
>
> — *Michael Porter*

A powerful reminder to focus on the few things that truly matter.

> **"He who has satisfied his thirst turns his back on the well."**
>
> — *Baltasar Gracian, The Art of Worldly Wisdom*

If you give it all until they don't need you anymore, you lose all your leverage. Better to give something valuable, imply there is much more in store, and negotiate a good deal while they still need you.

Also read:

- **Effective calculativeness**: The primer and first step towards smart giving

> **"Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt."**
> — *Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

Textbook element of surprise.

> **"Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake."**
> — *Napoleon Bonaparte*

Wise reminder that some of your enemies will harm themselves without you wasting time on them.

> **"Be nice, be courteous. But always have a plan to kill everyone in the room."**
> — *James Mattis*

Mattis reminds us that raw power must not come with an ugly face, and that a powerful man can also be a nice guy. It's indeed good to be welcoming, the only problem is being *too* nice, always, and without any power.

> **"Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far."**
> — *Theodore Roosevelt*

Roosevelt delivers the civilized spirit of Mattis's previous quote. It's an approach that underpinned much of America's foreign policy after WWII, an empire-supporting policy that worked fantastically well until recent times. And it's the international relations equivalent of our interpersonal strategy of 'power and warmth'.

> **"Never attempt to win by force what can be won by deception."**
> — *Machiavelli, The Prince*

Deception is often cheaper and has a higher ROI than open competition.

Power, War, & Peace

Looking at the best quotes on power and war, it turns out that **power is as related to war as it is to peace.**

> **"Let him who wants peace, prepare for war (Si vis pacem, para bellum)"**
> — *Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus*

Powerlessness invites predation.
Not planning for the worst fails to understand the competitiveness of human nature, and it's planning to fail.

It's probably no coincidence that peaceful and prosperous times in history came during unchallenged domination within (relatively) cooperative frameworks of trade (Pax Romana, Pax Britannica, and Pax Americana).

> **"An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind."**
>
> — *Mahatma Gandhi*

Powerful reminder on the dangers of continued lose-lose vendettas.

> **"Carthago Delenda Est"**
>
> — *Cato the Elder*

Because sometimes it's you or them.
A powerful quote for when a nagging enemy remains a constant thorn in your side.

> **"The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting"**
>
> — *Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

War is costly, and the highest ROI is always to get what you want, without war (an approach that also informs our foundational strategies of power).

Power and Influence Quotes

Influence, or your ability to change other people's behavior and states, is a form of social power.

> "The final key to the way I promote is bravado. I **play to people's fantasies. People may not always think big themselves. but they can get very excited by those who do.** That is why a little **hyperbole** never hurts. People want to believe that something is the biggest, the greatest and the most spectacular."
>
> — *Donald J. Trump, The Art of the Deal*

Ties back to our concept that some followers are easily impressed by bravado.

> **"You own nothing without the strength to back up your claim"**
>
> — *Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince*

Influence is soft power, but this is a strong reminder that hard power also matters. Soft and hard power influence each other. Without that strength, you depend on people's goodwill.

> **"A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon"**
>
> — *Napoleon Bonaparte*

This cynical observation on motivating soldiers to risk their lives supports our observation that, sometimes, great leadership is great manipulation.

But while Napoleon's quote frames military awards as useless baubles, they provide some benefits. For eaxample, status-related benefits such as peer respect, and psychic benefits like self-esteem and pride.

Power and Seduction

> **Be the flame, not the moth.**
>
> — *Casanova*

Casanova hits at a foundational law of dating power dynamics. As per the social investment model, the pursuer's heightened emotional and effortful investment signals lower value, which undermines attraction.

> **"The man who professes his love to a woman in words must be sent to school again."**
>
> — *Casanova*

Powerful reminder that early and uncalibrated vulnerability is rarely good for men.

> **"Everything in the world is about sex. Except sex. Sex is about power."**
>
> — *Oscar Wilde*

Oscar Wilde, an artist type of seducer, was onto something. Although sex isn't only about power, both leadership and power are crucial to successful dating. And the dynamics of dominance and submission are tightly intertwined with sex.

> **"Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac."**
>
> — *Henry Kissinger*

If it's true, as some say, that women are hypergamous, then hypergamy comes down to power.

Mental Power

Personal power starts from the mind and emanates outward.

> **"You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength."**
>
> — *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations*

The central tenet of Stoic philosophy is control of one's mind, independent of external events.
Control your mind, and you'll always better control the outer world.

??♂ Lucio's Note: I first read Marcus Aurelius' quote on 'choosing not to be harmed' in my school diary. It stood out among dozens of other quotes and felt like a power move to turn the tables on life. It took me a couple more decades to fully realize the power of this concept.

> **"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."**
>
> — *Eleanor Roosevelt*

This is mental-level frame control, the foundation of all advanced frame control.

> **"It always seems impossible until it's done."**
>
> — *Nelson Mandela*

Such a powerful antidote against pessimistic naysayers.
Naysayers let history dictate their future. Winners look for ways to make history.

> **"The best way to predict the future is to create it."**
>
> — *Peter Drucker*

A quote to go from passive planning, to active mover and shaker.
This is similar to 'reading body language', an important skill to gain intel. But never forget that the real power is less in reading, and more in *changing*.

> **"Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win"**
>
> — *Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

Winning starts with the mind.

> **"It's not the size of the dog, it's the size of the fight in the dog"**
>
> — *Mark Twain*

Fierce competitors always have at least a chance. Fighting spirit also always provides leverage because nobody wants to take the risk.

> **"It's in your darkest hours that men are born and characters are forged"**
>
> — *The Power Moves*

A powerful reminder whenever facing adversity.
Heroes are built on heroes' journeys of challenges.

> **"Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."**
>
> *— Winston Churchill*

You don't even strictly need enthusiasm as long as you keep going.

Power and Leadership Quotes

Leadership is the peak of social power.

> **"He who wishes to be obeyed must know how to command"**
>
> *— Machiavelli, The Prince*

Leadership isn't just a role, it's also a set of skills, character traits, and their signals, including effective dominance in both behavior and verbal cues.

> **"Weak men choose leaders who make them feel strong. Strong men choose leaders who make the collective stronger."**
>
> *— TPM's Value*

Briefer version: 'Weak men follow strength; strong men follow honor'.

Strength without honor can include bullying, which to some weak men is stronger and perversely attractive as a dark power they wish they had.

This quote links leaders' power to followers' power, part of our competence–control tradeoff model of leadership™.
Meaning: disempowered men are blinded by theatrical overdominance, overconfidence, and dark triad traits. These are emotional choices, masked as rational. It's more akin to **a social seduction process** by the leader.
Empowered men, themselves high in power and confidence, aren't impressed by strength alone, and tend to promote more honorable leaders who look after the collective interest as well. It's a more rational and masculine choice.

Ultimately, a despot's power grows with disempowered followers. A sentiment also echoed by Machiavelli in our next quote:

> **"The first method for estimating the intelligence of a ruler is to look at the men he has around him."**
>
> — *Machiavelli, The Prince*

Not only his intelligence, but also his character.
Narcissistic types seek sycophants, despot seeks loyalists, and leaders interested in achieving goals seek competence.

> **"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."**
>
> — *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

This is the ultimate quote on soft power.
Extrinsic motivators and aligned incentives are higher ROI: require less policing, and get more buy-in (Haslam, 2006).

> **"Treat your men as you would your own beloved sons. And they will follow you into the deepest valley."**
>
> — *Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

Sun Tzu proposes a model of honorable leadership based on prestigious leadership (Henrich and Gil-White, 2001).
This is more effective for empowered, high-competence teams than Robert Greene's 'credit-taking approach' in *The 48 Laws of Power*.

> **"Great leadership is great manipulation"**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

Effective leadership means turning 'Is' into 'We's', channeling self-interested concern towards the group, mission, or leader. While that's at times good and can increase the pie for all, overriding self-interest may entail not just persuasion and logic, but also manipulation.

This is especially true at the extremes, where individuals may risk their lives.

> **"It is much more secure to be feared than to be loved."**
>
> — *Machiavelli, The Prince*

An important reminder for leaders not to be *only* high warmth, but also high power.
Tools for rewarding are crucial, but so are tools for sanctioning poor behavior and removing poor team players.

> **"That which isn't good for the hive, isn't good for the bee"**
>
> — *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations*

Great mindset for a leader to have. And also effective for greater cooperation, a bigger pie for all, and overcoming the tragedy of the commons.

Quotes On Powerful Women

> **"If my strength intimidates you, I hope you realize that's a weakness of yours"**
>
> — *Anonymous woman*

Intimidation is only a thing for those who feel *below* her.

> **"Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."**
>
> — *Margaret Thatcher*

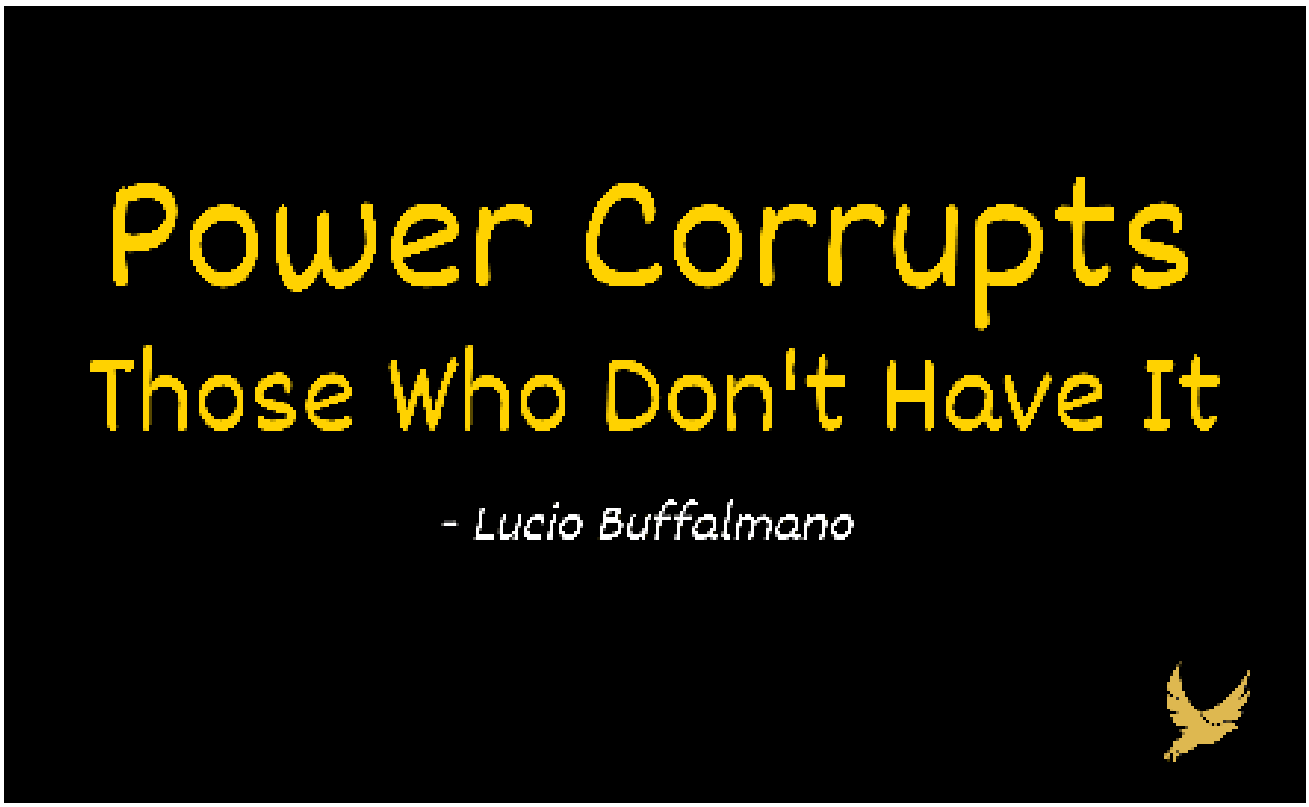
Good reminder to avoid uncalibrated bragging. Though the other half of the quote may feel dated with later cultural changes.

Power and Corruption

Power has long been associated with corruption in popular culture, often encapsulated by this most famous quote:

> **"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely"**
>
> — *Lord Acton*

It's not wrong: power *can* corrupt (Klaas, 2021). However, it's more nuanced. Power can also liberate, while a *lack* of power can corrupt, as highlighted by our next quote:



> **“Power corrupts those who don’t have it”**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

Power is the foundation of honor.
It’s required for honesty and assertive communication, and standing up for what’s right requires power to survive the fallout.

It is the *lack* of power—mental, social, and financial—that breeds corruption. Weakness forces people into the shadows of passive-aggressiveness and covert power moves. Poverty creates the desperation that leads to theft. Social neediness chains men to toxic leaders.

A dynamic made even clearer with Buffalmano’s quote on honor and power (below).

> **“No one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it.”**
>
> — *George Orwell, 1984*

This quote goes beyond ‘power corrupt’. The keyword is ‘seizing’ here. If someone is willing to risk everything to get power, he will risk everything to keep it.

> **“It is not titles that honour men, but men that honour titles”**
>
> — *Machiavelli*

True.

Power and Honor

> **"Honor without power puts you at the mercy of the dishonorable. Honor with power puts you above them."**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

The will to virtue without power can demand unsustainable sacrifices. It's a vulnerability among the many who are not honorable, and a strategic handicap that can make you comparatively *less* effective.
But honor with power is a legacy among the many who lack the strength to be both, and look up to it.

> **"If you want to test a man's character, give him power"**
>
> — *Abraham Lincoln*

Many nice-looking guys aren't nice out of choice, but out of fear of being assertive.
Power instead liberates people to be who they truly are. This is the insight in Lincoln's quote.

> **"In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."**
>
> — *Thomas Jefferson*

Good strategic approach to stand up for what's right when it matters, but minimize the costs for trivial stuff.

> **"If it is not right do not do it; if it is not true do not say it."**
>
> — *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations*

So simple, yet so honorable.

TPM Power Quotes

> **"To find your unique voice you must first quit singing on someone else's tune"**
>
> — *The Power Moves*

A quote about empowered individualism over collectivist psychology.

> **"Weak men seek refuge in the same tribe that strong men return to lead after they quit it"**
>
> — *The Power Moves*

This quote highlights the need for men to go through transformative life experiences before they can become life-tested, empowered leaders. These experiences are most formative when abandoning the safety of the tribe, and venturing into life on one's own.

Also see:

- Hero's journey
- ⍰ Explorer mode↗ (over monk mode)

> **"A good person is ruined among the great number of people who are not good"**
>
> — *Machiavelli, The Prince*

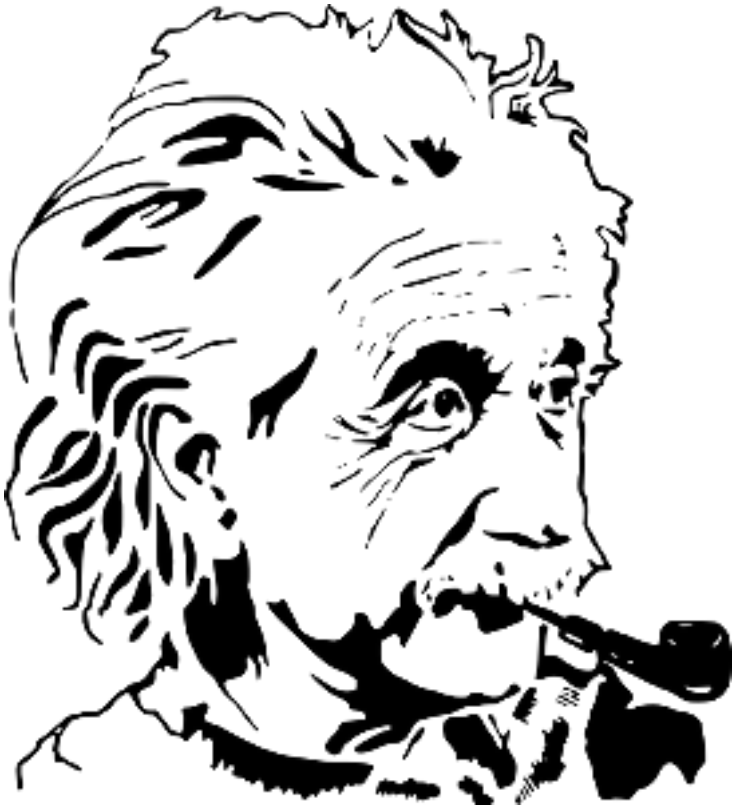
This quote lies at the heart of our mission.
Self-empowerment and power intelligence aren't just a precondition for a successful life; they're a precondition of *life*.
To master that power, we've been working for years on perfecting the best training tool. Check it out here:

Check Power University

Albert Einstein Letter to His Wife: the Idiocy of A Genius

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Many consider Albert Einstein one of the most intelligent men in history.
And few if have any have the honor to see their name associated with “genius” as much as Einstein has.



Maybe he was a genius.
And as far as I know, he might have also been the most intelligent person on earth (I doubt it, but who knows..).

But he is also the perfect example that there is no such thing as an all-defining, all-encompassing intelligence.
Indeed, as much as Einstein was smart with numbers and abstract reasoning, he was rather poor in emotional intelligence.

And when it came to relationships, Einstein was as clueless as the next guy.
Actually, he was *much* more clueless than the next guy.

This is the letter he wrote to his wife.
It outlines Einstein’s conditions that his wife had to meet to keep a happy marriage:

CONDITIONS

A. You will make sure:

1. that my clothes and laundry are kept in good order;
2. that I will receive my three meals regularly in my room;
3. that my bedroom and study are kept neat, and especially that my desk is left for my use only.

B. You will renounce all personal relations with me insofar as they are not completely necessary for social reasons.
Specifically, You will forego:

1. my sitting at home with you;
2. my going out or traveling with you.

C. You will obey the following points in your relations with me:

1. you will not expect any intimacy from me, nor will you reproach me in any way;
2. you will stop talking to me if I request it;
3. you will leave my bedroom or study immediately without protest if I request it.

D. You will undertake not to belittle me in front of our children, either through words or behavior.

When I first read this letter I had several different reactions at once.

At first, I wanted to laugh at the sheer stupidity and naivety: as if any woman -or human being for that matter- was going to gladly comply to that tone.
And who sends a letter to the person you are in a romantic relationship with instead of speaking, anyway?

But I also felt bad for him, for having so little understanding of human psychology. And of course, I felt bad for her for having such a husband.
I don't know any more details, but from that letter, it's not a hard guess that this was a dysfunctional relationship. Possibly even an abusive relationship.

What's most appalling is that not only Einstein didn't think the rules could backfire, but that he thought they would fix his relationship.
Obviously, Einstein understood little about people, women and relationships.

At least, he didn't suffer too much because of it. He was aware of not being very good with people, and he cherished his time alone.
That makes me think Einstein might have been an introvert and an avoidant when it comes to attachment styles.

Anyway, back to the story.

Einstein Wife's Reaction

What do you think his wife did?

She divorced him shortly afterward, of course. And looking at that letter, could we blame her?

Now you might think, "Eh, fair enough, I don't think the dude really wanted to stay in that relationship anyway so he was probably happy with the result".

Well, she also took his children though and…. Quite a bit of money from him. I don't think Einstein must have been too pleased about that.

Also, if Einstein wanted to influence, he also utterly failed.

So even purely from a cold-hearted, rational perspective, that was a dumb move.

Lesson learned?

Work on your social skills.
And, better yet, on your *power* skills.

Elon Musk Like Albert Einstein

Another man often introduced and hailed as a genius is Elon Musk.

I have analyzed Elon Musk emotional intelligence and social skills in this article here:

- **Elon Musk: genius or idiot?**

Or you can watch the video here:

How to Approach Girls In 10 Easy Steps

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Cold approaches as intimidating for most men.

Luckily, if you do it well, it's easy and with a high chance of going great.

This guide mixes personal experience with studies and data.
By the end of it, you will know exactly what truly works best to approach women.

Contents

- 1. Pre-Approach: Look High-Power
- 2. Let Her See You (Being Cool)
- 3. Glance at Her
- 4. Walk Up to Her
- 5. Say "Hey, Hi"
- 6. Start Talking (& Lead)
- 7. Start With Light Banter
- 8. Make Her Invest
- 9. Get to Know Her
- 10. Lead & Show Higher Power

- SUMMARY

1. Pre-Approach: Look High-Power

A great approach starts before even saying hi.

It starts with “who you are” -and how she sees you behaving-.

A popular study aptly called *“Getting That Female Glance“* observed forty men on fourteen evenings in three different bars and recorded their approaches and success rate.

The men who were the most successful did more of this:

Do more intra-sexual touching

Onlookers perceive nonreciprocal touch as a sign of a dominance-submission pattern.

That means that you’re high-status in the group.

Adopt open body language

Open body language signals confidence and comfort.
Also, see:

- sexy hands in pockets
- how to walk sexy
- body language of dominance

Take up more space

In many species, humans included, the most dominant member commands the largest space. You can check a few picture examples here.

However, don’t overdo it: it’s easy to go from comfortable to immature and tacky.

Glance around more

There are two types of “glancing” in the study:

- Type 1 is sweeping around the room
- Type 2 is more toward a target

Don’t overdo any of them as too much of the first means “scanning for threats” while too much of the latter can turn into “weird”.
The main point here: don’t look down or “collapse” into your drink.

Gesticulate more

Social power was communicated through the use of frequent and expressive hand gestures. You might want to add some gesticulation to your interactions.

Touch yourself more

No, not private touching.

But touching the beard or growth area is a display of manliness.

2. Let Her See You (Being Cool)

Alright, so now you’re cool and high-power.

What’s next?

Well, she has to see you being cool, or it doesn’t count.

This study confirms what's helped me get me results that cannot be matched by "random approaches".

So, what's the secret?

Simple:

By far the best, the best thing you can do to make your approach a welcome success is to have her be attracted to you *before* you even approach.
Don't worry too much about what that "attracted" means: anything is better than her not seeing you at all.

As a matter of fact, **even her simply *seeing* you, just seeing you, is much better than appearing in front of her as a total stranger**.

To have her notice you, you can use the behavior we discussed earlier.
Or:

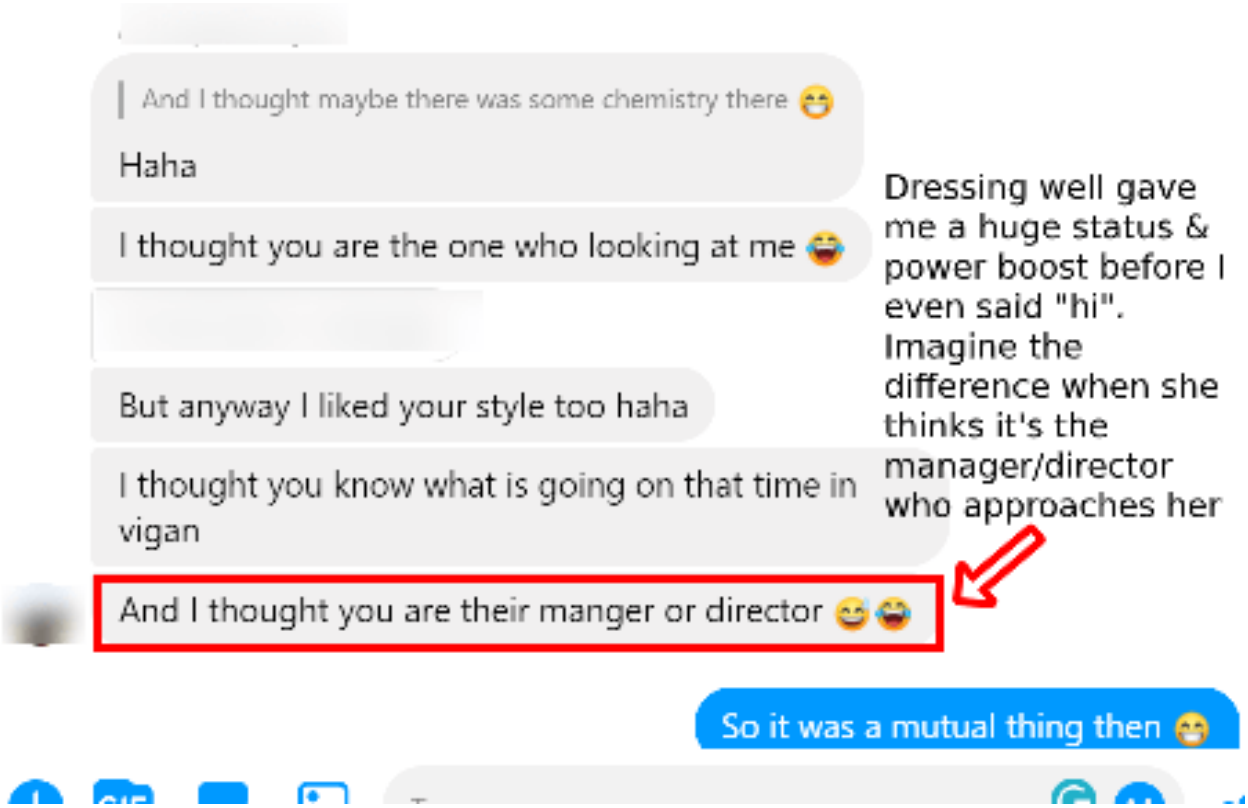
- Stand cooly watching the sunset while you sip your drink
- Walk past without looking at her with a confident smile
- Talk animatedly with a friend as if you couldn't care at all about the world around

Most of all, do your own thing without looking at her: let her look at you first.

Stand Out

A great way of being noticed, of course, is to stand out.

Here is an example of how it's helped me:



> **Her**: and I thought you are their manager or director

That's what she said after I approached her.

The girl thought I was the manager of the show.

Now imagine what a difference it does if a guy goes to say hi to a girl as a random stranger she didn't notice, or as a guy she thought was the head honcho of the night.
Huge difference, no?
Day and night, I'd say.

An easy and reliable way to "be cool" is taking care of the basics and how you move and behave (see "Power University"), plus having cool groups of friends in which you have high status.

3. Glance at Her

There is a caveat here, so bear with me for a second.

The issue with locking eye contact for long is that making it obvious you're looking at her gives your game away. And it can give your power away, too.

There's an exception for more advanced folks.
If she likes you and you're an exciting presence you can spark a certain "wolf preying on a lamb dynamic". And don't listen to the PC police, if she's into you, that can be very exciting.

She'll be wondering when you're going to make your move, and she'll be worried if she'll be cool enough for you (that's ideal, then once you're there build her up to show that yes, you think she's at your level).

Or don't look at her at all.

Anything less than confident and at the top of your game though, your safest bet is not to look at her.
Indeed, giving your game away if she doesn't perceive you as awesome (yet) would mean slotting yourself into the chasing position.

Note: however, it's still best if she has seen you before. Studies show females report discomfort in being approached by a male whom she hasn't seen or not yet made eye contact with (Renninger & Bradbury).

4. Walk Up to Her

Here are a few different ways you'll begin your approach nonverbally:

With Eye Contact: Smile and Walk Directly

If you're looking eye contact, you can start walking towards her.

However, here's an important tip: SMILE. If you start walking towards her without smiling it can seem confrontational.
You want her to be excited, to fear that she might not be up to your level… But you do not want her to fear *you*.

Without Eye Contact: Go to Her Side

You don't want to open from behind -God forbid- and to stand right in front of her and startle her.

The best approach when she hasn't seen you yet is from the side.

Playing The Game: Pretend You're There by Chance

Here is an advanced move for you.

What if you haven't done any eye contact and if you don't want to signal any interest?

A great move, in that case, is to pretend you ended up near her "by chance".

This is how most women will do it with guys they like and this is how you want to do it too.

A few ideas:

- Walk past and pretend you've just noticed her
- Go to the bar while she's there but pretend you're only there to get your drink. Then drop a casual "how's your night going"
- Go to the bathroom 5-6 minutes after she's gone and greet her as she walks out

5. Say "Hey, Hi"

You can face two different alternatives:

Smile And Just Say "Hi" If You've Been Exchanging Glances

If you have been looking at each other, you "both know what's up".

The best approach in this case is to don a sexy smile and say "hi" with the confidence of the man who knows he'll be well-received.

This is what you must think and sub-communicate:

> *You know why I'm here, and I know you like me too. And it's quite exciting*

More on what you say later.
But, in general, both my experience and research suggest that it's best to match the intensity of your approapco to the intensity of her invitation.

Let Her Look at You First If You Haven't Locked Eye Contact

Who's looking at who is a sign of who is pursuing who.

If you were looking at her first, it means you noticed her first while she didn't.
And it subtly but importantly slots you as the party with the lowest value of the two.

Instead, you will slightly nudge her to make her look at you first.
You can do it by placing your hand lightly on her arm, for example. Or you can start talking to her while looking ahead or past her (instead of looking at her like most guys do).
Then when she turns, very quickly, you return your gaze to meet her eyes.

Most of all, you want to avoid the all too uncommon "startling effect", such that she turns to face you and sees you staring at her.
That's very predatory, and not in a good way.
Just imagine turning around and seeing someone interested in you before you even realize what's going on:

When she turns and sees you staring at her

6. Start Talking (& Lead)

Plenty of ink has been poured on what to say to women since *The Game*.

And plenty of research has been done as well.

Combining altogether, it's safe to say that you want to avoid cheesy pick-up lines.

What you say depends on the situation, of course.

If she saw you being cool and/or if you had strong eye contact and she returned interest, then I recommend you keep on that good vibe and retain as much power as possible by not telling her you like her.

BUT, you can compliment her on something unique about her if anything truly caught your attention.

If she thinks you're cool upon approach, you help raise her to your level with a compliment and it communicates you're only interested in women you find attractive because of X.

Here are some good ways of starting an approach with a compliment:

> **You**: Hi.
> I love women with a good style and that dress is… Fabulous.

Start with an even bigger bang:

> **You**: I have to say… You have the sexiest legs I've seen in a while
> (pause, she laughs)
> My name is Lucio, hi

Starting strong is the best and my favorite way.
Look Gosling does it:

> **Him**: I find you attractive, do you find me attractive?

I generally don't recommend that so early though, it's too high risk.
His opening though was perfect.

Something simpler though for when you don't have a Hollywood script to support you:

> How's your night going

Or if the vibe was just great, go up there and smile without saying anything (or just say "hey").
That communicates that you know she's into you and will start the conversation with a collaboratively sexual undertone.

In this article a few more ideas of how to start a conversation.

Mindset: Carry the Conversation

The mindset here is that **it's up to you to make it a good interaction**.

If they're happy to have you and talk a lot, you can sit back a bit.
If they don't talk much, you must do the work.

Also, see:

- **How to Lead to Seduce Women**

7. Start With Light Banter

I found that the best way to start an approach is with some humor and some light laughing.

It does a few good things:

- Provides a valve to release tension
- Show you're a socially savvy guy, which increases attraction
- If you make her smile, she's already following your lead
- Provides good vibes
- Dispel doubts and fears

The last one is important.
The first moment you approach a girl indeed her brain is on full alert. And she is wondering if you are:

- As cool as you seemed
- Going to stick to her like glue (socially dangerous)
- Weird and causing troubles

She is hoping you're awesome, but she is also worried you're lame and she will have to reject you. Or worse, that you might be a threat.

Avoid Overly Serious

A failure to make the interaction light and fun in the beginning and starting off too seriously is a common mistake.
Many a great couple never got together, sacrificed on the altar of a too serious beginning: don't fall for that!

How to Make Light Banter

Flirting is great light banter.

Here are a few lines you can use:

> **You**: And what brought you here. Looking for some boys to have fun?

Or:

> **Her**: And how's your night going
> **You**: Give me a beer, and I'm always good
> (but make sure she knows you're joking, nobody likes an alcoholic)

Positivity is also great to show you're a well-adjusted and likely high-value man:

> **You**: What's not to love about tonight. An awesome, vibrant city, a light summer breeze, a beautiful sunset… Life is beautiful

And some more ideas here for you:

- Text flirting to get you laid

8. Make Her Invest

Having women do something for you subconsciously tells them that they must like you.

The earlier you can get her to do something for you and the more significant it is, the faster your approach will move to seduction.

For example, you can:

- Ask her to move a little bit
- Tell her to move with you
- Pick the most comfortable position for yourself (she invests more in the interaction if she's in the most uncomfortable position)
- Tell her to stop talking for a second (you need to have a good reason for this though)
- Ask her to show you something (pics of her art on the phone, her bracelet, etc.)
- Make her talk about herself -ideally, trying to prove to you she's good enough for you-

Also, research shows that a light touch increases compliance.
Before you ask her to move with you, or before you ask her to trade contact information, lightly touch her on the arm.

9. Get to Know Her

After the initial banter, you want to go a bit deeper.

The idea is that you want to show her that you are only interested in high-value women and you will only show deeper interest after she has proven to you that she is one.

Here are a few keys to getting to know her well:

- Talk about personal topics

- Talk about emotional topics (no work, weather, etc.)
- Keep it uplifting
- Make it light again for a second when it's too serious for too long, then go back
- Bring the conversation always back to her

How Long Should You Talk?

If there is sexual chemistry, keep it up and seek to move her to a sex location ASAP.

If things are going well, but not *that* well, just keep going.
Move her with you. For example, tell her you two should sit, or go out for some air. If she's following your lead, great. Ramp up intimacy, and then tell her you two should go somewhere alone.

But if you just want to swap contacts, it's important you don't make the interaction too long or too awesome. If you do it and then don't stick around, she might feel you're not serious, not ballsy enough, or not interested.

Max 7 minutes if you want to swap contacts.
And do this if she says no the first time.

10. Lead & Show Higher Power

Finally, women lust for men who are "better than they are".

Especially when it comes to power, status, and dominance.

This whole website is dedicated to power.
But an easy way of doing it is to honestly disagree with something she says and control the frame.

Also, read:

- **Dominance to get girls**

SUMMARY

Approaching a girl successfully starts before the actual approach.

Here are the steps of the ideal approach in summary:

1. Let her see you being cool and high value
2. Lock eye contact a few times to make her think about you and let her fantasize about your approach (or to come her come to you, big bonus)
3. Say hi (make it look natural, or go from the side)
4. If there's a lot of sexual tension, keep it up and seek to quickly move to a sex location
5. If not, banter and joke, in the beginning, to put her at ease and display your social skills
6. Generally, keep it light, but get to know her better, AND let her know you as well
7. Make her invest in you and the interaction
    1. Ask questions, and let her explain
    2. Task her
    3. Move her
8. Display leadership and higher power (frame control, openly disagree when you disagree, challenge her, strategically self-promote yourself, etc.)
9. Stick with her if you want to pull later, or propose you two should meet another day

Bright Line Eating: Review & Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*Bright Line Eating*" is a weight loss and weight maintenance program for food addicts revolving around strict adherence to a pre-set eating plan.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Intro
  - You Can't Rely On Willpower Only
  - Two Types of Insatiable Hunger
  - Where Do You Stand on The Susceptibility Scale?
  - Watch Out For Dangerous Eating Cues
  - Don't Liste To The "Saboteur Voice"
  - The Solution: Bright Lines
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Bright Lines Review

Bullet Summary

- Normal diet plans don't work for people with addictive hunger
- You win weight loss by changing your habits for life and sticking to exact measure
- Flour and sugar are addictive: you must give them up forever

Summary

About the Author: Susan Peirce Thompson says she holds Ph.D. in Brain and Cognitive Science.
She shares in the book that she is an addictive personality, including past addiction to all types of drugs and, later, to food.
She developed Bright Line Eeating as a program centered around the concepts of addiction personality and breaking free from food addiction.

Intro

The author says that 99% of obese people who try to lose weight fail.
And a vast majority of that 1% regains weight over the next years.

Bright Line Eating wants to change that for you, and it starts with psychology:

You Can't Rely On Willpower Only

The author says that most diets fail because they rely too heavily on willpower. Most people, even healthy ones, think way too often about food.

And since our willpower part of the brain is especially sensitive to glucose, it's right when blood sugar is at its

lowest that we crave the most and that we are the most defenseless.

My Note:
The concept of willpower has been at the center of a heavy debate in psychology, read more here.

Two Types of Insatiable Hunger

The insatiable type of addictive hunger comes with two traits:

1. It's unsatiable: eating more doesn't placate the hunger
2. Comes with an urge to be sedentary

Leptin is the hormone that should tell our brain to stop eating because we are full.
However, some people can develop leptin resistance. When we are leptin resistant, insulin stops leptin at the hypothalamus and at the brain stem level.

And what do we usually eat in the Western world when we're hungry? Exactly the type of sugar-laced food that makes us even hungrier.

And it's a type of hunger that is difficult to resist. The brain stem level is also called "the lizard brain" because it's the older part of our brain.
The brain stems control all activities related to our survival, which can make overriding the "lizard hunger" an almost impossible task.

Cravings VS Insatiable Hunger

Cravings are different than insatiable hunger.
Cravings are what push people to drive to a specific place an hour away just to get a specific type of food -their "fix"-.

Similar to the drug addict, says Susan Pierce Thompson, the food addict searches for food not to get high, but to get normal -just for a little while at least-.

The Phenomenon of Addictive Downregulation

Typical of addiction, food thins out all the dopamine receptors in the brain, which makes us less sensitive to taste.
But you don't need to be addicted to impair your dopamine receptors, eating enough flour and sugar will do the trick.
Yep, says the author, you should start looking at sugar and flour as drugs.

However, a less sensitive sense of taste is not the biggest issue. The biggest issue is that life in between bouts of eating is bleak.

From Susan Peirce herself:

Where Do You Stand on The Susceptibility Scale?

Bright Line Eating keeps the analogy between food and drug with the susceptibility scale, which is an interesting quiz to test how likely it is for you to become addicted.
It's been indeed my experience as well that some people just get hooked more than others.

This is important to know because diet plans based on moderation for people high on the addiction scale do NOT work.

Obesity For Non-Food-Addicts

Not all overweight people are necessarily addicted to food though.
One can have a slower metabolism, be clueless about nutrition and keep snacking on junk food.

Addicted Skinny

And not all skinny people are non-addictive personalities. Some of them can be high on the addictive scale but spend their whole life battling cravings.
They might abuse laxatives or spend a whole life obsessing about food and struggling valiantly to resist.
Not a good way of living.

Is Addiction Learned or Genetic?

A lot of is genetic, but strong emotional traumas can also create it.

Often it happens to children but can also happen in adults more rarely (that's why many PTSD war veterans, for example, develop addiction).

Watch Out For Dangerous Eating Cues

The author describes an experiment with rats that had food delivered together with a lever coming into the cage as a cue.
Later they started delivering the lever without the food.
As anyone who is familiar with Pavlov's dog experiment would know, the rats expected the food when the lever was provided and ran to the dish.

What was unexpected though was that some rats didn't run to the food, but ran to the lever. And started fondling, cuddling, and enjoying the dopamine rush even without the food.

What does this mean for people?

The Psychology of Signal Tracker (& Why Food is More Addictive For Them)

Well, some people who signal tracker (loving the signal) instead of a goal tracker will go through their days continuously being reminded of their addiction.
For example:

- the clock signals 8 pm and you start salivating
- office is empty and lunch breaks remind you of food
- the alarm goes off and breakfast comes to mind
- McDonald's golden arches appear on the horizon and you dream of junk food

Addicted people who track signals will have a harder time stopping overeating because everything reminds them of food.

Don't Liste To The "Saboteur Voice"

As we've also seen in *Phantoms in the Brain* Susan Pierce Thompson says that different parts of our brain all talk to us trying to pull us in different directions.
However, we believe that all of them represent us, that they are all "me".

Turns out, it's the left part of the brain that makes sense of the behaviors and impulses from different parts of the brain and assigns them a narrative that "makes sense".

This is bad news for people high on the addictive scale who have broken previous diet commitments. because they

will come to see themselves as “hopelessly obese”.
And over time that can lead to self-disgust and low self-esteem.

The Solution: Bright Lines

The solution is not to reduce portions “more or less” or to “stop for a period”.
You must stop bad behavior forever.
They must become part of who you are.
Repeated over time, your choices of food will become automatic, and you won’t need willpower anymore.

Your dopamine receptors in time will adjust again, and you will start to taste and enjoy vegetables as well and you don’t have crazy cravings anymore.

Here are the cardinal tenets of bright-line dieting:

1. **No sugar and flour** (forever)
2. **No artificial sweeteners**
3. **No dried fruits, juices, and smoothies**
4. **No alcohol**
5. **No snacking** (stick to 3 meals a day)
6. **No bites, licks, and tastes while cooking**
7. **Commit to your food**: decide the evening before what you will eat and stick to it
8. **Stay consistent**. Consistency is key
9. **Stick to the quantities**: use a digital scale for quantities (an eyeballing portion is an invite to the saboteur)
10. **No exercise as you ingrain the new eating habits** (you’ll do it once your diet is automated, in the beginning, it will only deplete your willpower)
11. **Coffee better not**
12. **Nuts and seeds only if you weren’t binge-eating on them**

Emergency Action Plan

There will be times when it’s tough and you need to prepare for them.
Here’s what Bright Line Eating recommends:

- Social support (find a buddy to call, or use the Bright Line support system)
- Prayer
- Meditation
- Gratitude
- Service (make it less about yourself and focus on others)
- Distract yourself

You Must Learn to Read Ingredients

Learn to read the ingredients and spot all derivatives of sugar and flour.
The rule here is that you need to read the list of ingredients in the product and if there’s no sugar or flour in the first three ingredients then it’s okay.

You Must Stick to The Plan

Bright Line Eating has lots of other tips and tools, like staying at Airbnb with its own kitchen and preparing your food to be on the road.

In case you fail once, you must:

- Go back to the plan ASAP
- Don't isolate yourself but find social support

[image]

Real-Life Applications

If You're Addicted to Food, Ban Some Food Categories…
If you tend to binge eat, then it might make sense to ban the foods you binge-eat on.

If You're NOT Addicted, Enjoy Everything (In Moderation)
If you're not addicted, not binge eating, or not mightily struggling to contain the weight, this book is not for you

CONS

- **Heavy on Marketing**

I find the tone in Bright Light Eating very marketing-oriented.
The author says for example:

> Thousands of people (..) used this method to lose collectively over 300,000 pounds

Collective loss says little from a scientific point of view though.
Or:

> The average Boot Camper, in 8 weeks, loses 19 pounds. Many lose much more

Well, of course, "many lose much more", it's an average number, hence it's also true that "many lose much less".
Also, the success stories at the end of every single chapter made me feel it was a bit too marketing-style.
HOWEVER, this doesn't have to be a con for the Bright Line Eating Bootcamp: products are effective or ineffective independently of marketing.

- **Ego Depletion is Not Certain Science**

The author places a big emphasis on the phenomenon of ego depletion as championed by Roy Baumeister.

However, the model of ego depletion has been criticized and there is not yet a consensus on whether or not it actually exists.
However the author makes valid points even if ego depletion didn't turn out to be an important factor, it would still not take much away from this program.

- **Supports The Unscientific China Study**

The author got into plant-eating after reading The China Study by T. Colin Campbell. I'm surprised that the scientist she is didn't go dig into the heavy -and valid, I believe- criticism that the book garnered.

- **The "addictive personality" is still a hypothesis, still needs more research**

Personally, I think this might be a case where research will back experience.
I've seen and met enough people who get easily addicted to all kinds of substances to believe that it just makes sense that some people are more likely to get addicted than others.
And the fact that if you have an addiction you're also more likely to have another (Michael Weaver, 2021) also seems to back the "addictive personality" hypothesis.

On the other hand, when it comes to how to cure and address food addiction, that might be anyone's guess -and Susan might as well be on the right track, for all I know-.

PROS

- **Interesting On Psychology of Food Addiction**

Bright Line Eating is a good read when it comes to the psychology of (food) addiction and addictive personalities.

- **Seems Well-Founded and Sound**

It seems to me like the author sought to ground her program and approach on scientific research. Whether that is sound, I cannot say for sure.
It seems to me that her main theory is at least logical.

- **Sounds Like A Great Program for Addicts**

If food addiction is indeed a thing -and it may be, for all I know-, this might be a highly restrictive, yet effective way of solving it.
Drug addicts can also learn a lot from this book.

Bright Lines Review

Bright Line Eating is not a book and program for everyone.

And it's not for the casual dieter who's not willing to commit. Such as, not the type of dieter who says to be on a diet and then "casually" gives in at the second invite.

This is for people who are very serious about weight loss, and who don't mind making huge and restrictive changes to their lives.
Ad it's especially suited for people with addictive personalities

Albeit I'm neither of those, I loved this book and it was eye-opening on the psychology of (food) addiction.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

The Perfect Voice by Roger Love: Review (+ $50 OFF Coupon)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Perfect Voice is a vocal training system developed by singing and speaking coach Roger Love.
Roger Love explains some basics of anatomy first and then gets into common speaking issues and solutions, vocal exercises to improve your voice, and daily voice warm-ups.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- The Perfect Voice
- Learn & Use Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Only Speak With Air Support
- Types of Voice
- Keep A Good Posture
- Drinks Lots of Water
- Voice Exercises
- Belly Breathing Exercise
- Birthday Candles Exercise
- Air to Fingers Exercise
- Scale Exercise
- Speak Low to Adjust The Larynx
- Volume Exercise
- Pitch Exercises
- Mouth Physiology
- Vocal Power or The Perfect Voice?
- CONS
- PROS
- More Voice Resources
- Roger Love Review

Bullet Summary

- Use diaphragmatic breathing
- Only speak when you have a belly full of air
- Make sure your larynx (in your throat) is not blocking the air

The Perfect Voice

About The Author: Roger Love is a voice and singing coach.
He is probably the most famous speaking and singing coach in the world, having worked with the likes of Tony Robbins, Gwen Stephany, Selena Gomez, and many more A-list celebrities.

Let's start with our summary and review:

Learn & Use Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, sometimes also referred to as “belly breathing”, consists of deeper breaths in which you channel the air deeper into your lungs, almost as if you were breathing into your belly.

Diaphragmatic breathing is better in a number of ways, including a better voice.

When you learn diaphragmatic breathing, you can control the stream of air that comes out of your mouth as you speak.

How do you know you’re breathing with your diaphragm?
Simple: **to learn diaphragmatic breathing, let your belly swell with air, instead of your chest**.

Roger Love says that your stomach should

- only move your stomach from your belly button to 3-4 inches above it
- only breathe from your nose

If you can control the airflow, you can also control the sound.

Only Speak With Air Support

You should create a continuous stream of air that comes out of your mouth as you speak.
That air should come as you push your belly back in.

Exercise with diaphragmatic breathing and speak only when your stomach is coming back in. Breathe in from the nose, then breathe out from your mouth slowly.

Roger Love has a few guided exercises with a few stock sentences, including the following:

> If my stomach is coming in in as I speak I’am going to sound a lot better.

Common mistakes people do:

- Raising their chest breathing
- Keep speaking after they’ve run out of air, trying to squeeze the last words in. And that sounds terrible
- Tension in the top part of the stomach
- Holding air trying to make it last longer

Types of Voice

Roger Love is simply amazing at mimicking the types of voices and what they do wrong.

Similarly for *Straight Line Persuasion* which is all about tonality, there’s no point in me “describing” how the voices sound.

But here are two examples I could find:

1. Nasal Voice

2. Airy Voice

The airy voice type is one of sex goddesses Marylin Monroe and Mickey Rourke:

This type of voice uses lots of air but does not use the air for actual speaking power and loudness because it does not engage the vocal cords.

The 6 Elements of Voice

- **Volume**

Most people speak too low. Fill the space around you and never have anyone ask you to repeat.
A good volume is a mixture of air and cord vibration.

- **Melody**

Melody is about going up and down and adding variety. Melody keeps people guessing and enthralled.
Most people are too close to monotone.

- **Pitch**

The too-low pitch sounds like you're too serious. Too high and people won't take you seriously.

- **Tone**

Too airy and whispery sounds fragile, like Monroe used to speak.
At the opposite end of the spectrum is that grating, irritating sound you hear holding the "A" in "graaaass", where it feels like you have no air left.

- **Pace**

How quickly or slowly you speak.

Keep A Good Posture

Keep a good posture and don't hunch over or you will constrict the airflow.

Drinks Lots of Water

Drink almost 2 liters of water a day.
It's the water that you drank the day before that will help you mostly the day after.

Voice Exercises

And finally the most important part: the exercises.

Belly Breathing Exercise

Many are afraid of breathing with their belly and holding tension there because they don't want to make it look as if they have a big tummy.

Let go of that fear.
Breathe from your belly and let the air go out of your mouth as in a whistle, very little.
Let a bit of air come out without pressure on your stomach.

Birthday Candles Exercise

Imagine you have a birthday pie in front of you, and you want to blow off the candles.
One by one, blow from your mouth, and at each blow push your belly back in.

The goal is to not create any tension in your stomach. Let it come in, then relax. Let it come in, then relax.

Air to Fingers Exercise

Put a hand in front of your mouth and speak. The air should come out NOT in bursts, but unobstructedly.

Roger Love says

> I need to connect all of my words together

Of course, you can say anything though.

Scale Exercise

- Gog

Repeat “gog” up and down the scale. This exercise helps find both your low, middle, and high voice

- Gag

Same but with a wider scale

Speak Low to Adjust The Larynx

First: find your Adam’s apple.

The larynx, or “sound box” is right behind it.
Swallow and it should go up.

Here is the thing though: when you speak the larynx should NOT go up or it will suffocate your voice.
To find out if your larynx goes up, put a finger on the Adam’s apple and start speaking. It should not move more than a quarter or a third of an inch and not nearly as close as when you swallow.

A larynx going up when you speak is one of the most common problems affecting speakers and you should fix that.

You fix that with a series of low-larynx exercises.
Repeat “mom” and speak like Yogi the Bear or like Sylver Stallone.
Repeat “mom, mom, mom” with a low pitch.

Volume Exercise

To get the best volume, simply get more air out of your mouth.

Put a hand in front of your mouth and count from one to ten, making sure that more air comes out of your mouth as you go from 1 to 10.

Remember that more air should not be “breathy” as with Monroe’s speaking, but a full voice.
To make sure your vocal cords are activated, repeat “caaaaaant” as you feel the vibration in the back of your throat.

Pitch Exercises

To reset your pitch say “hello” and keep the “o” going. Put your fingers on your stomach right below your rib cage and push in a quick motion.
Your “ooo” should start vibrating up and down.
Now try to stay only with the high pitch and let go of the lower part of the scale.

Mouth Physiology

Some of us make smile when pronouncing certain words and spread our mouths too long (especially “e”).
Smiling is great, but not while speaking because it pushes air into the nasal cavities and we don’t sound good.

To fix the smiling and spreading of mouths, put your index fingers on both corners of your mouth and push in as if you wanted to purse your lips a bit.

Then speak like that and recite the alphabet.

You don't need to smile to say "e". Say "u", hold your mouth like that, and then say "e".

Vocal Power or The Perfect Voice?

Both "Vocal Power" and "The Perfect Voice" cover the same exercises.

But The Perfect Voice is more compact and more tailored to actual voice exercises.
Plus, it also has online access to questions and answers from students and I learned hugely from the questions and answers because many of them are questions I also had.

I recommend "The Perfect Voice".

CONS

Videos might have helped
The program is in audio, and that's cool.
At times I thought that maybe a video version could have helped with a few exercises.

No Throat Tension / Mask
I wish Roger Love had dealt with throat muscle tension because I feel that's one of the areas I should target.

PROS

Brief and to the point
No beating around the bush, no thanks to Mom and Dad, no time wasted: everything is about voice here.

Warm-up exercises
I particularly loved Roger Love's warm-up exercises. One single track on your phone and that's all you need for your daily exercises.

Learn From A Master
Roger Love is really a master at what he does.
When he replicates people's voices it's almost funny how good he is. And that's very helpful to make you understand what vocal sins you are currently committing.

More Voice Resources

Some other resources I find very good when it comes to speaking:

- **New York Coaching**

I'm exploring this guy too these days. He is also crazy
good: https://www.youtube.com/user/NewYorkVocalCoaching

- **Felicia Ricci**

Felicia Ricci is also very good, she has a ton of crazy and helpful exercises. To overcome my throat tension I favorited this video of hers:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLgl3WEv2hivvXBkFjk4VxE8kqztYVIcPj&v=34iApX5IryE

Roger Love Review

Roger Love has some awesome exercises to help you improve your voice.

I have been a Toastmaster to learn public speaking for 3 years, went all the way from being scared to death to being

president of the club.
And I always felt my voice was my main weakness.

Well, believe it or not, after doing many exercises, people mentioned “voice” as one of my strengths. And that included people who were vocal experts. That was crazy for me and says a lot about what you can achieve if you apply these exercises.

It’s been months now that I do the exercises every single morning.
And since I have a tendency to speak by raising my larynx when I go out after exercising and I hear myself speaking… Wow, I ask myself how could any girl resist me :).

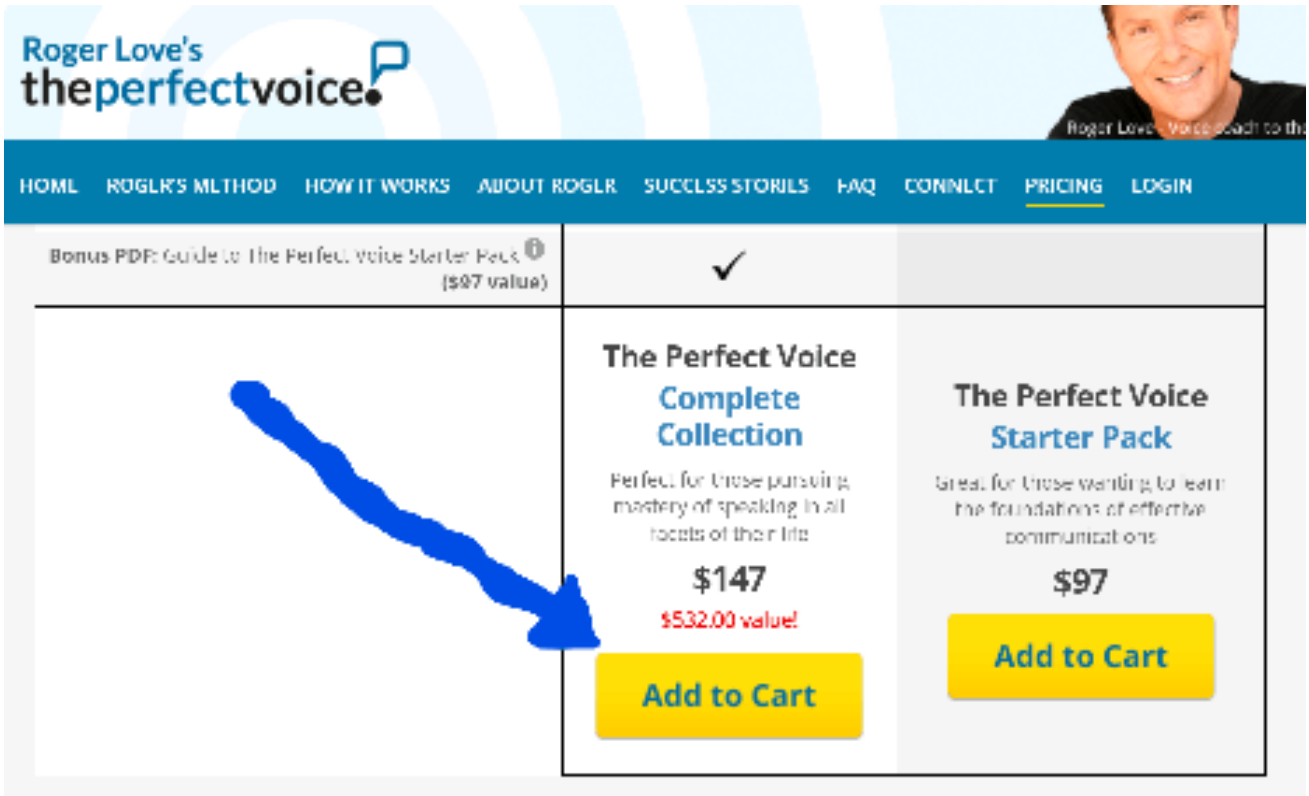
I think that because most of us speak every day since we were around two years old we fail to realize how important proper voice is.

Don’t do that mistake: it’s a fundamental tool of socialization, power, and influence. And it’s because we use it daily that we must make sure we use it properly.

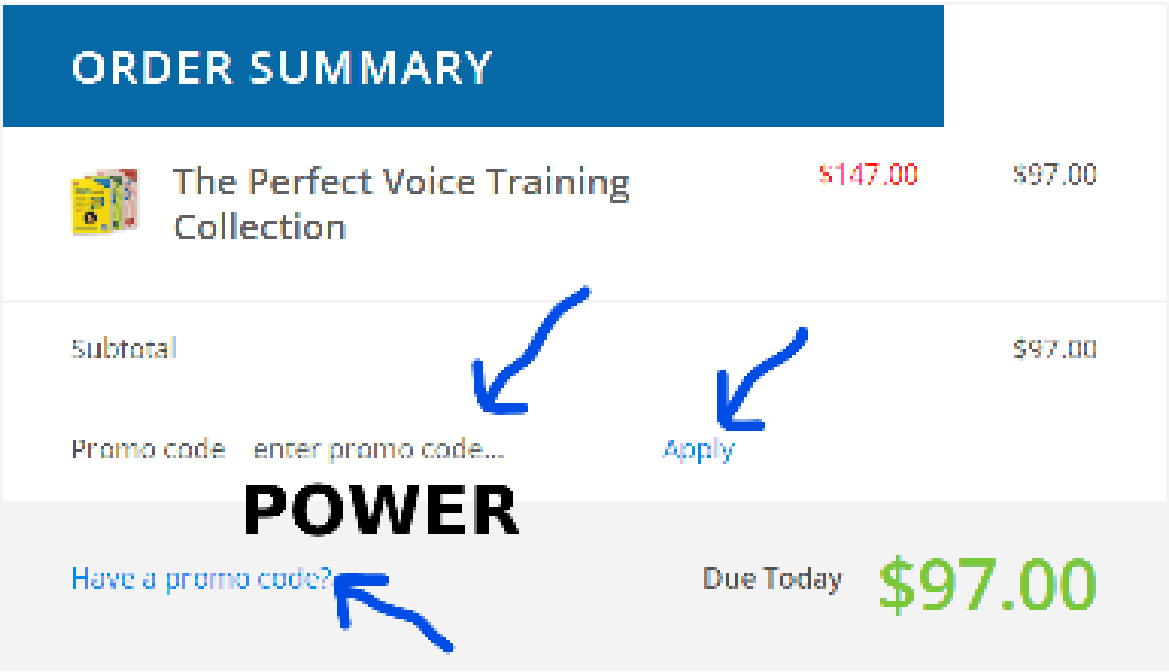
The Perfect Voice – Coupon Discount

Follow these steps to get your discount coupon:

1. First, click here: **Get The Perfect Voice With a $50 Discount**
2. Select the advanced version (which you will get at the same price as the basic one)



3. Enter the coupon code “POWER”
4. Click “APPLY”



After that, it's all up to you. Apply, and start doing the exercises :).

Click Here For $50 OFF on The Perfect Voice
Click on the link above, then write "POWER" as your discount code

Feminine Body Language: 10 Sexy Poses to Attract Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Feminine body language is seductive body language: the two go hand in hand.

And seductive body language is inherently *sexy* body language.

This article shows you the traits and "moves" of feminine and sexy body language, including examples and videos.

Contents

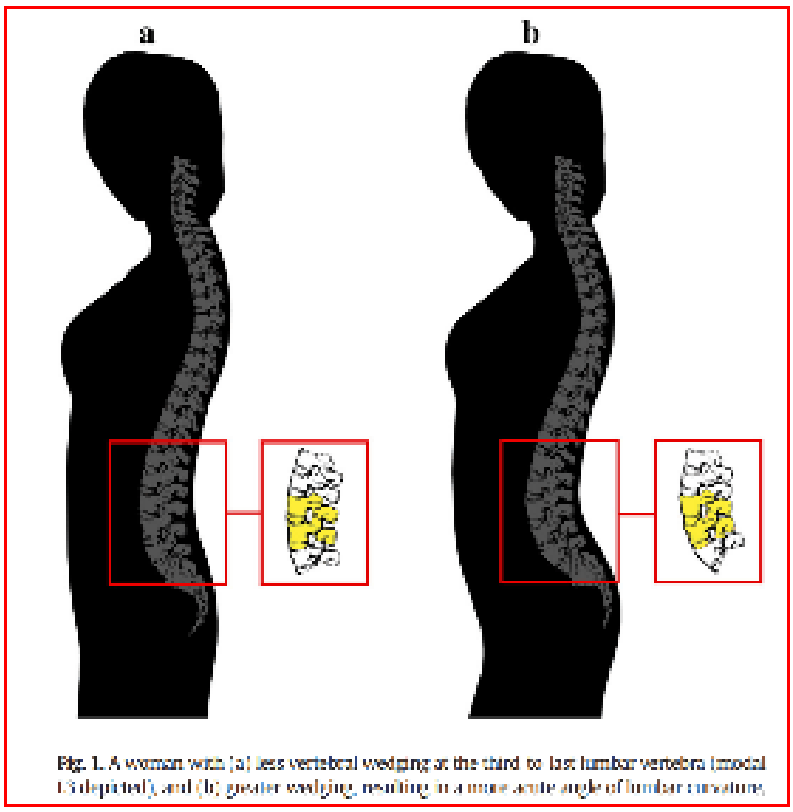
- #1. Body Curves
- #2. Flowing Movements
- #3. Legs Crossing
- #4. "Protect Me & Ravish Me" Gaze
  - Sexy EC Example: Angelina Jolie
- #5. Eye Brow Flash
- #6. Hair Flick
- #7. Facial Expressions
  - 7.2. Primal Smile
  - 7.3. Lips Moisturizing
  - 7.4. Sexy Winks
- #8. Sex Body Language
- #9. Attractive Body Language During Sex
- #10. More Attractive Body Language
- Types of Attractive Female Body Language
  - 1. Sex Body Language
  - 2. Submissive Body Language
  - 3. Aggressive Body Language
  - 4. Teasing
  - The Sexiness is in The Mix
- SUMMARY

#1. Body Curves

Curves are feminine.

Evolutionary psychology postulates that women developed breasts and larger buttocks as sexual attraction tools (Geoffrey Miller, 2000).

Women also have a more pronounced lumbar body curvature to optimize weight distribution during pregnancy, and men like women who "stick their ass out" more than men do (Lewis et al., 2015).



Source: Lewist et. al., https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2015.01.007
See here what the perfect curvature would look like.

Now back to real life:

In short, curves are feminine.

After all, just think about it: would you imagine a guy standing like in the picture below?
Exactly, me neither.
Because curves are feminine, and the female model below looks ultra-feminine and smoldering hot.
By bending her neck backward, she is also sending submissive signals for “sex readiness”, and it’s as if she were inviting men to ravish her.

Curves are sexy

Of course, you probably will not be standing like that any time soon at work or while queuing up for groceries.

But you can adopt the same principles in a more “civilized” and “acceptable” format.
First of all, avoid standing straight like a cadet in front of a general, that’s male-style or gender-neutral.
Instead, do the following:

- Take a slight step forward which will rotate your hip a bit
- Stand on one leg only and let the other leg loose so your hip is slightly inclined
- Arch your back slightly (see the difference below)

You can train in front of a mirror. And you might even want to record yourself.
No need to be shy: that's exactly what the sexiest women on the planet have done countless of times.

#2. Flowing Movements

Curves in static body language translate into flowing movement while in motion.

Flowing movement, even more than sexy, is what I would call sensual.
Smoldering sensual, if well done.

The best way to learn flowing movement is by learning dance.
Learning to dance teaches you how to move with allure, and also helps you to feel comfortable in your own skin.

Here is an example of flowing movement through dancing:

She will not move in her daily life the same way she dances of course, but you can rest assured that it will rub off and that she comes across as an extremely sensual, feminine, and sexy woman.

#2.2. Hips Swaying

This is one of my favorites.

It's both sexy and feminine to sway your hips while walking.

Marilyn Monroe is a typical example here.
If you want to see more, check the feminine seduction in *How to Seduce a Man*.

#3. Legs Crossing

Men and women sit differently.

And since feminine body language is often about accentuating the *differences* between men and women, sitting presents a great opportunity to display some advanced seductive body language.

For example, men don't sit like this, and that's why you should (just lose the heinous shoes please!):

Here are two attractive female poses:

3.2. Leg Twine

The leg twine is exquisitely feminine.

It communicates shyness and possibly discomfort and it does not ooze the sex appeal of a secure woman.

So, why are we even putting it here?

Because it's still very, very attractive. More in a feminine "protect me" kind of way.
And trust me, men love that. It was one of the secret sauces of Monroe's sex appeal.

So don't try to suppress it if it's coming naturally to you: it's endearing.

- **Leg twine examples** (2 sittings, last one is "half-twine" standing)

Or watch Monica Bellucci do it in the video:

Perfect legs cross.
Albeit some consider Bellucci the peak of languid seduction, she plopped on that chair too abruptly though. A more flowing movement would have been even more feminine.

3.3. Parallel Legs

According to Allan Pease in *The Definitive Body Language,* parallel legs are the seating position that most men find *the* most attractive.

Men cannot do parallel legs, so this one *screams* feminine sex appeal.
Don't worry if you can't manage the full parallel legs, "open parallel" is still OK:

- **Parallel legs for women**

In the picture going from perfectly parallel to “open parallel”, which is less “extreme femininity” and far better for workplaces.

Legs Cross In Motion: Sharon Stone Example

You are probably aware of Sharon Stone’s famous leg cross in Basic Instinct.

The vagina shot though, allegedly one of the most paused scenes in movie history, should not overshadow the erotic charge of the whole leg movements.

The leg rub right from the parallel leg position is much more sensual than the open legs shot.

#4. “Protect Me & Ravish Me” Gaze

In body language looking down is a sign of submission.

Two words about that as I know some female readers might bulk at the idea of “submissiveness”.
Some people lament that “in our society” submissiveness is connected to femininity. I see where they’re coming from and I get their point.
Still, those people don’t understand basic human behavior, drives, and psychology.

Submissiveness in seduction is in the nature of things and it’s very localized. It doesn’t really mean “submissive for life”.
It’s as much a sign of submission as it is a sign of choice (which is empowering).
It’s a way of saying:

> OK, I decided you are good enough for me. You got permission to go ahead.

Now that we clarified that, let’s get back to some real talk.

The best version of looking down is when you follow it with a lookup.
So it looks like this: **look at him, then look down, then look back up at him. Bonus points if you look back at him with your head tilted down**.
In short: up, down, up.

This move is very invigorating for men and makes them feel awesome. It’s possibly the best move you can make to embolden a man to come to you.

I still remember the first time I received a perfect “up-down-up” gaze.
It was years ago from a beautiful Kazakh brunette in a club in Prague.
Back then I wasn’t as book-smart when it comes to body language, but I immediately had a visceral pull towards her.

Also, read:

- Strong VS submissive women in dating
- Alpha females (some of them are feminine and submissive)

Sexy EC Example: Angelina Jolie

Angelina Jolie got the “up-down-up” to a science.

She is so smooth in doing it that most people wouldn’t even consciously notice it.
But it’s one of the main reasons why men are drawn to her like moths to flame.

The first one is subtle and can be used also with men you “only” want to be attracted to you. The second is more obvious.

#5. Eye Brow Flash

The eyebrow flash consists of a rapid raising and lowering of the eyebrows.

Eibl-Eibesfeldt recoded it as a flirtatious signal in many non-industrialized countries.
It’s less frequent in Western and American samples (Moore, 1985), but that’s exactly why you want to do it more.

It’s more feminine and playful, and you stand out.

Add on a pesky, slight allusive smile, and it’s sexy.
Sexy in a jaunty, cheeky way.

Even better and more allusive is if you can pull it off with a single eyebrow up (in which case, drop me a note in the contact section :):

The above flight attendant example is a 10/10 also because of the perfect voice tonality.

#6. Hair Flick

Oh well, you should know this one.

You’re probably doing it already as most women do it, consciously or unconsciously, pretty often.
But don’t skip it just yet. The fact most women do it naturally doesn’t mean you can’t do it consciously, better, or both.

It’s a bit like walking and talking: everyone does it and nobody thinks much of it.
Instead, it’s *exactly* these basic moves that make the difference between sexy women and non-sexy women.
This is an example of a hair flick.

#7. Facial Expressions

High-value women use facial expressions more often and more expressively than most other women (and most men).
Let’s review a few staples of sexy female facial expressions:

7.2. Primal Smile

We have seen Angelina Jolie twice already.
That makes sense, right? She is (was) one of the most beautiful women in Hollywood.

Well, here’s the thing though: Angelina Jolie is NOT the sexiest woman because of her beauty. She is the sexiest woman because of her body language.

If you have ever noticed Angelina Jolie’s smile, it is not a normal smile. It is broad. And wide.
She doesn’t smile as 99.8% of the population smiles. She opens her mouth fully.

Look at her:

Jolie’s smile makes her look slightly out of control and a bit mad (or “dumb”, someone said). But it’s sexy. It’s sexy in a primal, carnal way.

Did she carefully pick and trine that “carnal smile” to become who she is? That, I don’t know.
But I personally think so.

7.3. Lips Moisturizing

There is a connection between the size of the lips and the size of the vaginal labia.
And of course, lubricating lips is a not-so-subtle allusion to sex.

7.4. Sexy Winks

Winks are not the sexiest expressions of feminine body language. They're more boyish / friendly and a bit too obvious.

However, anything can be turned into sexy. Best of all, if you combine it with a sensually opening mouth, which is an obvious hint of the sexual.

#8. Sex Body Language

When you need to go nuclear, you drop the "y" from "sexy" and you go "sex body language.

Suggestive poses, finger in the mouth, and orgasmic facial expressions all belong to "sex body language".
Female porn "prepping" also belong to this category.

Signs of open sexuality include:

- Sucking a finger
- Licking a glass
- Faking an orgasm
- Mimicking a BJ on a banana or popsicle
- Openly touching oneself

They all have a place and they can all be extremely sexy… Under certain circumstances.
When you're already engrossed in a sexual atmosphere for example, while having sex, when you want to send a crystal clear message, or maybe with a guy who just doesn't get it.

This is the sub-communication of open sexuality body language:

> I'm a sexual being and I'm horny: fuck me

Sexually explicit body language outside sexually-charged interactions can easily become tacky though.
And you should be aware that this is something that transexual men often use.
I'd be wary of a woman who uses "sex body language" outside of very specific situations, and this is something I recommend only if you are a "pro".

#9. Attractive Body Language During Sex

Attractive body language is all about alluding to sex.

But what about the actual act of sex?

Well, this is a very interesting topic, but let's keep this article on more *public* expressions of attractive body language.
And maybe I'll do one post just for "during sex" body language later on.

For now, though, enjoying sex, reaching orgasm, and abandoning yourself to it is a very powerful way to be sexually feminine.
Indeed, we could probably say that an orgasmic face is, well, the peak of sexy body language.

Also on the topic:

- Mistakes women do during sex

#10. More Attractive Body Language

Finally, here are a few more that most people are naturally aware of:

- Glancing over the raised shoulder
- Neck touching
- Eye batting
- Shoe dangling
- Fondling a (long) glass
- Exposing the side neck
- Showing the internal side of the wrist

Example of going from most close and unfriendly (left) to most open (and submissive):

You can see more pictures and examples in:

- Does She Like Me

Types of Attractive Female Body Language

There are four types of attractive female body language:

1. Sex Body Language

Attractive female body language is a big win for sexuality.

However, when that sexual layer goes from hint to “in your face”, the woman can be perceived as lower quality as compared to more subtle women.

Sexual body language which is overly obvious will also eclipse everything else.
Your words, your job, your thoughts… They will all disappear when the sexual becomes too obvious.

What to do then?
You need *a touch* of sexuality and you need to reference sexuality. But don’t leave it by itself. Temper it with mixed signals or with other traits such as submissiveness.

2. Submissive Body Language

Submissive signals communicate sexual accessibility in a way that is coy and mixes the “protect me” with the “fu*k me”.

3. Aggressive Body Language

Aggressive is openly sexual while being forward and devoid of teasing and submission.

It turns the tables on him and she becomes the aggressor.

When it’s well done, it’s hot as hell and necessarily non-feminine. It can certainly have its place in steamy encounters, but like the purely sexual it’s best not to be used in public unless you’re already a pro.

See an example here from “Crazy Stupid Love”:

A good mix of aggressive sexual abandon mixed with push-pull during the first escalation to sex (read: how to postpone sex).

4. Teasing

Teasing is possibly my favorite.
It’s very powerful and it makes men chase like wild beasts as it sub-communicates the following:

> I might be up for it. But will you be man enough to catch me (/fuck me)?

The winks we have seen earlier are examples of good teasing.

The Sexiness is in The Mix

The above categories don’t work in isolation and there is often a mix of the different styles.

The most seductive women manage indeed to send mixed signals from all different categories, and they can move from one role to the next depending on the occasion.

As in the following:

- **Explicit & Teasing**

Ayda Yespica whom we reviewed in How to Seduce a Man mixes sex and teasing to perfection.

- **Explicit & Submissive**

This is possibly the most powerful of them all.

Marylin Monroe is the best example as she was high in purely sexual (orgasmic faces) and sky-high in submissiveness.

The submissive and protection-seeking body language would take the edge off of her purely sexual body language so she wouldn’t look “whorish”.

Explicit and submissive is indeed the only style that can be extremely sexually forward without being labeled as a whore (this is important because of men’s Madonna-whore complex). Monroe was indeed considered a high-value woman.

SUMMARY

Sexy body language for women must always have:

- Femininity
- At least a hint of sexual

In this article, we reviewed practical examples of attractive body language poses for women

In Seduction University we share the best poses for seducing and attracting men

7 Best Nutrition Books That Changed My Life

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Health, fitness, and, even more, nutrition are minefields

To begin with, science is relatively underdeveloped compared to other fields of study.
And, most importantly, the field is chuck full of quacks. Including quacks who do actually hold a “doctor” title, which allows them to be even more “successful” in their quackery and manipulative marketing.

Keep in mind that I removed most nutrition book summaries and reviews from the website.
The reason is, that there are very few that are really good and provide a broad overview.

So here’s an overview of the best books on nutrition, and which to avoid

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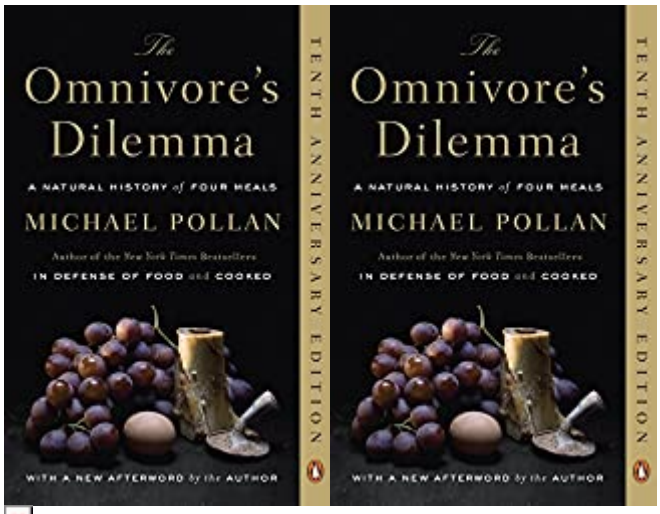
Contents

- 7. The Omnivore’s Dilemma
- 6. Younger Next Year
- 5. The Whole 30
- 4. Eat Fat Get Thin
- 3. In Defense of Food
- 2. Food Rules
- 1. Fat Loss Forever (Layne Norton)
- Nutrition Quackery
- Nutrition Quacks to Avoid
  - Health & Nutrition Books to Avoid
  - Also Read

7. The Omnivore’s Dilemma



[image]
by Michael Pollan
Summary | Kindle

A frightening, eye-opening account of the modus operandi of industrialized food production.

Reading of animal livestock given other dead animals as pasture might not make you sleep more nicely, but it provides a strong wake-up call on how seriously you need to take your nutrition.

> Quote: *"You are not what you eat. You are what your food eats"*

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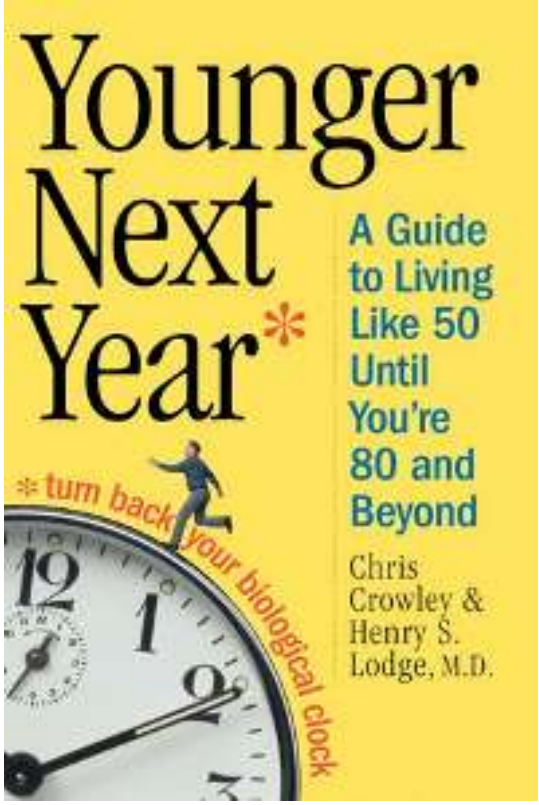
6. Younger Next Year



by Chris Crowley and Henry S. Lodge
Summary | Kindle | Audiobook

If you were to get Younger Next Year looking for a secret formula to eternal youth, you might be surprised.

You might be surprised that you already know the "secrets": great food, and constant exercise (cardio + strength training).

The groundbreaking idea of this awesome health book though is that you can preserve your vitality, strength, and independence well into your old age if you take care of yourself.

> Quote: "Aerobic exercise saves your life; strength training makes it worth living"

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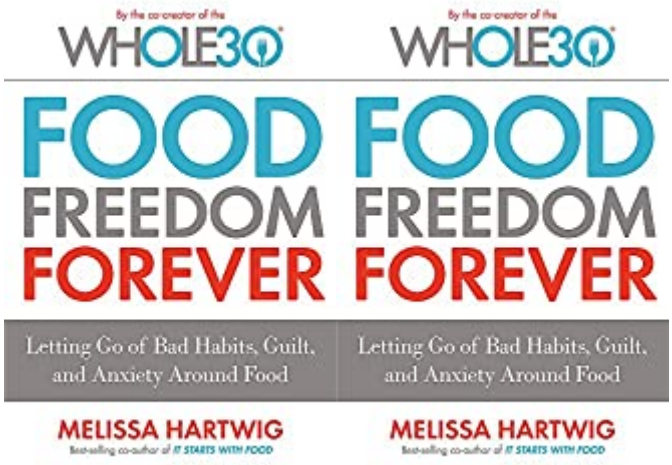
5. The Whole 30



by Melissa and Dallas Hartwig
Summary | Kindle | Audiobook

The Whole 30 cracks the top 5 of the best nutrition books for a simple reason:

The "troubleshooting approach" to nutrition supports your individual needs and preferences.

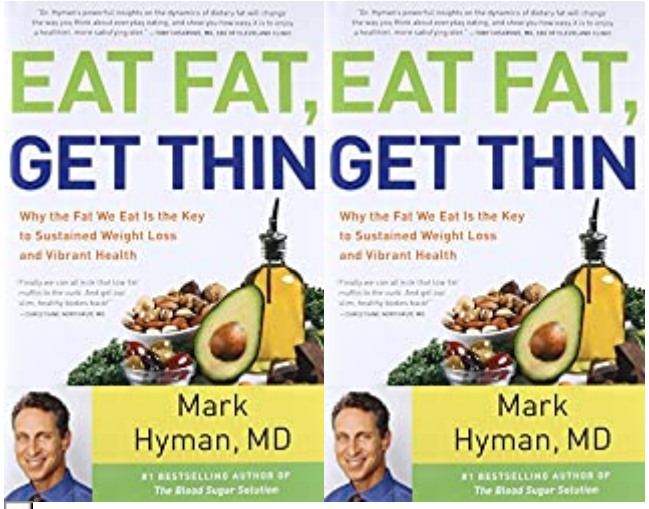
The idea is to stop eating ALL food that can cause allergies or bodily harm for a month and then see how you feel. If you can get rid of some pain or skin rash, or if you will feel better, then you know you weren't eating well. And that you can do better.

Great news.

Then you can restart to add foods one by one and monitor the results, so you can reach the perfect diet for you based on what matters most: results.

> Quote: *"You cannot out-exercise poor nutrition*"

~~4. Eat Fat Get Thin~~



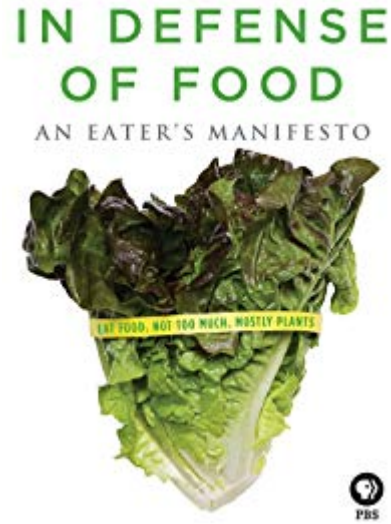
~~by Mark Hyman~~
~~Summary |~~ Print

~~There have been a few books in the last few years that re-rehabilitated (saturated) fat as a positive contributor to our health.~~

~~However, I have chosen Hyman for this best nutrition book list because Hyma says that also grain can be a part of a healthy diet when consumed in moderate quantities.~~

Note:
People like Hyman have the potential to change your life in the negative.
Mark Hyman does not provide any overview and, starting from the title of this book, his approach is highly misleading.
He sells a specific diet as "superior", demonizes whole classes of food, and over-hypes others.
As such, he fits the definition of a… Well, read below.

3. In Defense of Food



[image]by Michael Pollan
Summary | Print | Audiobook

I loved Pollan's anti-geek approach.

He says that most people who fancy themselves as "health-conscious" end up being geeks and "food label hunters". Such as those people you see on the supermarket aisles reading and comparing labels (I'm one of those :).

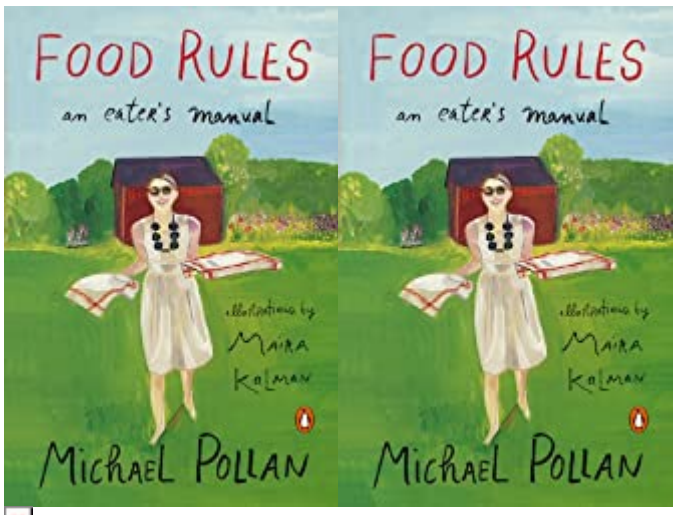
If you are doing the same, that's a poor approach, says the author.
Food labels are misleading (to say the least).

The solution?
Eat more whole food, and you won't have to worry about labels.

The only limitation of this book might be that the author proposes to eat less meat in favor of more plants.
That might be the only downside since I don't see how the leaner cuts of meat would be bad for you.

Still, generally speaking, a very well-balanced approach.
And that's exactly what you should be looking for in any book or nutrition coach.

2. Food Rules



by Michael Pollan
Summary | Print

I give another top spot on this best nutrition book list to Pollan.

Food Rules ends up this high for its groundbreaking simplicity.

Because of the many gurus, pundits, and dogmas around health and nutrition, you quickly realize this:

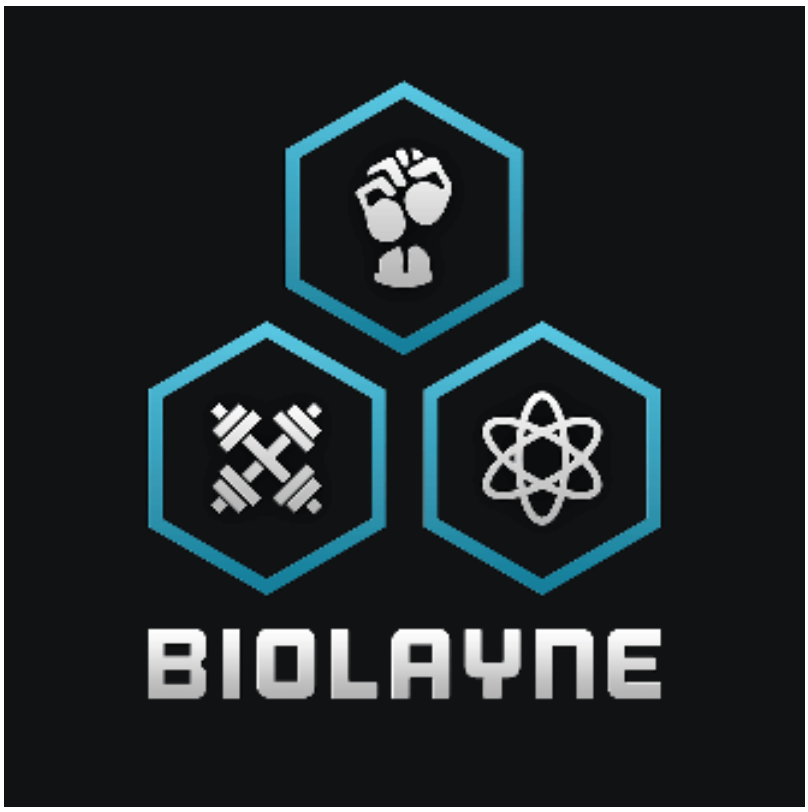
The more you read, the less clarity you gain.

Food Rules embraces no single diet, does not quote a hundred studies to legitimize itself, and doesn't ban any food or classes of food.

Food Rules gives you a few general and simple guidelines which you can start applying right away to enjoy a healthier life.

> Quote: "*If you're not hungry enough to eat an apple, you're not hungry*"

1. Fat Loss Forever (Layne Norton)



This is my #1 go-to resource.

A true “no BS scientist”, it’s also the #1 nutrition guy TPM can endorse.

Layne Norton is the guy. He holds a Ph.D. in nutrition and is an award-winning bodybuilder.
And Biolayne is his YouTube channel.

I’m truly grateful to Layne because he rescued me from the sea of zealots, quacks, and fake gurus.

And I’m certainly not the only one.
Says a very telling message in one of his “debunking videos” (aimed at Hyman, BTW):

> I actually developed an eating disorder from watching all these people talk about how bad food is.
> I was terrified to eat anything and as a result i ended up pushing this on my wife and son. It’s taken me a couple years to accept that there are no bad foods and now I have a pretty healthy relationship with food. Part of that is thanks to people like you Layne. Thanks so much for combating these ideas and thanks for the content
>
> *Max Mills, a commenter on Layne’s channel*

I haven’t yet read his book which seems to be tailored to fat loss and it’s not something I’m interested in right now.
Update: I have now, plus we reviewed it here.
But I’ve watched almost all of his YouTube videos.
And I can tell you: for a balanced, open-minded, and scientific overview of nutrition, look no further.

Nutrition Quackery

Generally speaking:

Avoid anyone who pushes a single specific diet or anyone who hypes up any specific fasting schedule.

It doesn’t matter whether it’s keto, carnivore, paleo, vegetarian, 16:8, one-day meals, or whatever.

Nutrition is very individual-dependent, and anyone who pushes a specific type of diet for everyone else is, at best, misguided.

Many are proselytizing to feel better about their own choices. But the worst ones are conmen seeking to line up their pockets.

How to spot quacks:

1. **Pushes one particular diet**
2. **Oversells the benefits of a specific diet**
3. **Pushes / oversells the benefits of fasting**, or whatever latest fad is being popular
4. **Does not mention the limitations of their favorite approach**
5. **Rarely or never mentions the all-important "individual factor"**, such as what works for some might not work for others
6. **Makes nutrition sound complex**, while instead, the best approach is to simplify things. But the more complex he makes it sound, the more of your time, attention, and money he can grab
7. **Lists "superfoods"**
   1. Bonus points if those "superfoods" come with a long list of miraculously-sounding benefits
8. **Lists "terrible foods"** (demonizing helps sell)
   1. Bonus points of if those "terrible foods" are responsible for the "cancer pandemic", "obesity pandemic", "heart disease pandemic", or whatever
9. **Talks about "hacks" and "bio-hacking"**, is nothing wrong with ""hacks", it's just that they often come with the obsessive-compulsive approach of the geek measurer, the charlatans, and the over-hyping of "superfoods" or "new techniques" (and, of course, the other side of the coin: the demonization of this or that food or chemical compound that you must absolutely avoid)
10. **Lists some (obscure) research that backs their argument, without mentioning methodology or limitations**
11. **Never mentions research that might disprove their point of view**
12. **Uses vague but complex-sounding or "alarming" terminology**, such as "toxic", "poisonous", "mitochondrial", etc.
13. **Speaks in definitive terms**, because confidence is the conmen's name of the game to manipulate you (and the opposite of what an actual scientist does)

Nutrition Quacks to Avoid

It's too many to list.

But just to name some of the most popular:

1. **Mark Hyman**, a keto zealot, and there are many like him
2. **Sadguru**, just avoid him in general, and even more for nutrition
3. **Tom Bilyeu, Lewis Howes**, + all other hosts. They're about VIEWS, not reliable information, so they chase the latest fad and hype.
   Specifically, those two both give space to any popular quack they can find, without ever asking the tough questions that a good host should ask.
   See here why you want to avoid Bilyeu.
4. **Paul Saladino**, you don't even need nutrition expertise, but simply basic power awareness to smell the BS
5. **Tim Ferris**, has lower-quality advice and an even worse attitude. He will take you down the dark rabbit hole of the geek approach to food and nutrition (eat X of this, X less of that other one, cheat day on Sunday, fast when on a full moon, add 0.1 grams of that one…)

Health & Nutrition Books to Avoid

And some books to avoid:

- ANY book that promotes a single, specific diet for the general public
- ANY book that promotes an overly restrictive diet for the general public

Some examples:

- Eat Fat Get Thin
- The Plant Paradox
- Grain Brain
- The Case Against Sugar (yes, limit sugar, but sugar won't kill you and the book is still not the best investment of your time)
- The Complete Guide to Fasting (fast if you wanna fast, but don't be a fool: it's no shortcut to any promised land, *do the basics* instead)
- Keto Clarity
- The China Study (be a vegetarian if you do it for moral reasons and you got all my respect. But twist the truth to make up non-existent super benefits, and you turn into a manipulative asshole)

Also Read

- Best self-help books
- Best leadership books
- Best dating books for women
- Best dating books for guys
- Best red pill books
- Best relationship books
- Best personal finance books
- Best communication skills books
- Best psychology books
- Worst books
- Most overrated books

There Is No Good Card for This: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

There Is No Good Card for This (2017) teaches readers *communication skills* for the most difficult situations in life: when tragedy strikes and when we are supposed to console others but don't know what to say.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Three Tenets of Difficult Communication
  - Don't Worry: You Can't Make it Better
  - Fixing Words
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Your kindness is your credential
- Listen more, speak less
- Small things have big impacts when people are under strain
- Don't be afraid of finding the perfect words: sometimes you can't do anything and "I'm sorry" and "how are you" are all you need

Full Summary

Intro: McDowell and Crowed ground their approach in trust. Trusting yourself and your ability to handle it without being scared you'll destroy everything.

The Three Tenets of Difficult Communication

These are the three tenets of showing up:

1. Your kindness is your credential
2. Listening speaks volumes
3. Small gestures make a big difference

Don't Worry: You Can't Make it Better

The author says there is a reason why most people don't know what to say. In certain situations, there are absolutely no words that can make things better.

Fixing Words

I find the biggest value of There Is No Good Card for This to be in their examples and fixing wrong expressions for good ones. And that's exactly the preview I will provide you with this summary.

Don’t Reproach Them:

- Why didn’t you tell me
- I’m so sorry, how are you

Don’t Try to Fix It (too soon):

Trying to fix the issue or cheer someone up too soon is a common mistake.

- You’re still young, you should try speed-dating!
- I see, I’m sorry to hear that

This is trying to cheer up:

- Oh don’t be such a downer, that guy was an idiot, cheer up! Come out with us
- I’m sorry Helene. Hey, I understand if you don’t feel like it, but we are going for a drink tonight. Maybe you wanna join, help you take your mind off it?

Avoid the word “should”:

- You should do X

If you must offer help, save their face:

- I have been through something similar before, if you want some pointers on it I am here. But I can imagine you’ve done your research already

Don’t Tell People You Know How They’re Feeling

Telling people you know how they’re feeling is often fake empathy. Don’t rush telling them you know how it is for them, everyone is different and it sounds dismissive jumping to conclusions

- I know how you’re feeling
- When it happened to me it was a difficult time. How are you feeling

Avoid “How Are You” in Obviously Difficult Times

“How are you” is very good on many occasions and too many people shy away from it. But in very hard times it puts people off because it’s obvious they are doing badly.

Mention Similar Stories

If you have stories of friends or about yourself in a similar situation, it can be very helpful to share them.

My Note:
indeed it makes the person feel more “normal” and less embarrassed for their troubles or mistakes.

However, don’t make it sound like you are trying to give an easy fix or they might feel you’re painting them as dumb for not having realized:

- Who cares what your parents think, everyone gets divorced these days, it’s no big deal
- When I divorced I was surprised my parents understood. But every situation is unique, how come yours are finding it difficult to accept

But Don’t Hijack the Conversation

If you mention similar stories, pay attention not to hijack the conversation

Don’t Pressure to Get in Touch

- I tried to reach you a few times, please let me know if everything is alright
- Hey, just sending you a text to say I’m sorry about X. If I can help, let me know. If not, know that my thoughts are with you

Don’t Make Excuses for Being Late

If you are reaching out late don’t make long-winded excuses on why you didn’t have time or didn’t know. It makes you sound very self-centered and very little concerned about them.

- Sorry for calling so late, I didn’t it happened or I would call earlier

Avoid Being Judgmental, Surprised, or Worried

Making too many questions out of surprise puts people on the defensive instead of helping them. And it sounds judgmental.

- Oh wow I can’t believe it, how did it happen

With this response now your friend feels like she needs to justify herself

- Oh wow, you guys seemed to be going great how did it happen?

Now not only she has to cope with the bad news but has to “report” to you all the bad details. Not exactly helpful.

- What about the children?

Sounds super judgmental, and now she needs to “convince you” it will be fine.

Don’t Say Platitudes...

For example:

- It’s God’s plan
- You’ll be stronger

Don’t Minimize the Pain

These tell the people that their reaction is “wrong” or their approach to life is wrong. It adds insult to injury:

- Everything will be OK
- Well at least it’s not a 90% chance, you gotta stay positive!

Don’t Overblow Encouragement

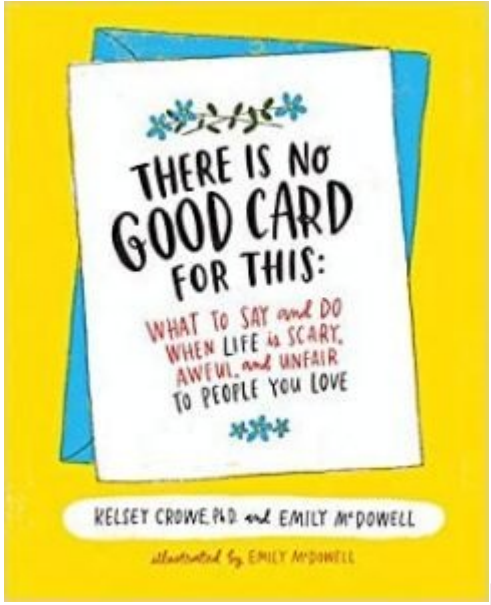
If you build them up too much you stifle their ability to open up and be vulnerable. For example:

- I have always admired how strong you are, if there is someone who can do it easily, it’s you
- I know you’re a strong woman, but I can imagine this is not easy. How are you doing

It also makes people feel like you are pitying them, like:

- God, you are so brave

Which basically says “how can you even put up with it”



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Real-Life Applications

Don't Be Afraid of Difficult Situations
Difficult situations and hardships are a part of life. It's not your duty to make people feel better and often it's impossible.
Say you're sorry is sometimes all you can do. And it's enough.

Offer Help Proactively
When you can, do offer your help proactively. Instead of asking "what I can do for you" say you can do X for them.

CONS

Hmmm, no cons really.
Maybe the examples were so good that categorizing them under specific chapters would have made the book even better.
For example, put all the bad examples for "fixing the issue too quickly" altogether. And then "minimizing the pain" mistakes all in a different chapter.

PROS

True Wisdom
The Is No Good Card for This spells true wisdom and tells the truth.

Awesome Examples
I particularly loved the many examples. They were great and abundant.

Review

There is No Good Card for This is an awesome book to improve our social skills and to increase even our empathy and emotional intelligence.
I put it in the top 10 of my most underrated books of all time.

You will probably read "There Is No Good Card for This" and think of all the times someone has made these blunders with you.
Or of the times you have done them yourself. Well, you don't need to keep it that way. With this book, you can fix

it!

Check the **best books on social skills** or get the book on Amazon

Power Negotiation: Gambits, Machiavellian Tactics & Street Smarts

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Secrets of Power Negotiating (1987) is a book on negotiation, negotiation power dynamics, and, as the author calls them, a list of "negotiating gambits" that will help you become a more astute negotiator.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. Ask for More Than You Expect
  - 2. Never Say Yes to First Offer
  - 3. Flinch At Their First Offer
  - 4. Avoid Confrontation
  - 5. Be Reluctant
  - 6. The Vise
  - 7. Higher Authority
  - 8. Get Counter-Concessions Right Away
  - 9. Never Offer to Split the Difference
  - 10. Overcoming Impasses
  - 11. Good Guy / Bad Guy
  - 12. Nibbling
  - 13. Taper Your Concessions
  - 14. Never Give Your Bottom Line Up Front
  - 15. Withdrawing the Offer
  - 16. Make The Other Feel Good
  - 17. Cherry Picking
  - 18. Time Pressure
  - 19. Walk Away Power
  - 20. Don't Use "Take It or Leave It"
  - 21. The Hot Potato
  - Justifiers Never Deliver
- Real-Life Examples
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Learn all the gambits: negotiating is a skill
- Never say you are the ultimate decision-maker, always say there is a higher authority above you that you must check with
- Flinch when the other party makes the first offer

Full Summary

About The Author:
Roger Dawson is a trainer, public speaker, author, and expert in negotiations.

Introduction

Negotiating is a super quick way of making (or saving) money. If you are negotiating a house, but even a car… Or a piece of furniture, you can make the equivalent of thousands of dollars in an hour.
And it's all bottom dollars: no taxes and expenses.

1. Ask for More Than You Expect

You ask for more for two reasons:

1. You never know he might be willing to give it
2. You will seem more cooperative when you will make larger concessions

But if you are asking for way more than plausible imply some flexibility or you might look out of touch with reality.

2. Never Say Yes to First Offer

Saying yes right away triggers two thoughts from the other side

1. "I didn't do as good as I could have" and he's not happy with the result
2. "there must be something wrong"

In the first case, they will be unhappy and the relationship will sour. In the second case, they might even pull out of the deal.

3. Flinch At Their First Offer

Always react with some shock at their first offer.
Most of the time, a concession will follow right away.

When you don't flinch and take the first offer seriously, then the seller (or buyer) will feel legitimized by their first offer and will try to defend it.

4. Avoid Confrontation

When you escalate an issue you push the other party to want to prove you wrong.

5. Be Reluctant

If you look eager, you show a weak hand and the other party will feel like they can do better.
Show yourself reluctant, instead, like you're not sure like they need to push you and cajole a bit more.

Playing reluctant at the beginning is a great way to lower their demands before the negotiation even starts

When people play reluctant on you

If somebody is pretending to be reluctant at your price, say the following:

> I'm afraid there is not so much flexibility on the price, but if you tell me what you are looking for (make him commit first) I'll bring to my team (higher authority) and I'll try to convince them (good guy/bad guy)

6. The Vise

The vise technique is a simple sentence:

> You'll have to do better than that

Then don't say anything and let them change their own stance with a concession.

Responding to the vise

An experienced power negotiator will answer in a way that makes the other party commit first without making any concession:

> How much better exactly

7. Higher Authority

Weak negotiators fall prey to their own egos and present themselves as the ones with final authority.
Much better instead if you can refer to a vague, higher authority that must approve.

With a high authority, you can:

- Play the good guy (you) and assign the bad guy to the higher authority
- Ask for tough concessions without seeming nasty (higher authority requirements)

The author for example would negotiate the best price he could get. Then he would say it looks good but he only needs to run it through the board.
After a few days, he'd get back in touch and say the board is being difficult and needed some better terms.

Higher Authority Example

The author used to take pride in being the owner of the flats he was renting.

Then he realized that people always bothered him with too many questions, asked him for exceptions, and didn't pay on time because they thought he must have been rich and not needed the money.
Then he started introducing himself as the middleman for some foreign investors instead.
And when they'd ask him to pay late, he'd say:

> I understand, sometimes it can get difficult, but on this property my hands are tied.
> They told me that if the rent is not due on time I must file an eviction notice.
> What can we do to get the rent on time?

Or when you want to say no to a proposal right away you could say:

> Yeah, I see your point, but the commiteee has already rejected a few proposals around that price

Putting Pressure Example

Imagine you're a buyer and would like to spend 20k on a product. The quote comes in at 25k though.

You could say:

> Wow, that's much more than I was expecting. I'd need to wait for the committee on that. I'd be comfortable giving you the go ahead for 20k, but anything above I'd need to hold off until the committee convenes.

And there you just created enough pressure that the seller might want to make the sale right away and give it at your price.

Dealing With Higher Authority

Ideally, you want to remove the recourse to higher authority right away. And you do that by having the other party admit that he can make a decision.
You could say:

> "If the offer (or car/proposal) meets all your needs, is there any reason you wouldn't give me a decision today?

If they are shrewd to avoid that, use the following 3 steps:

1. Appeal to their ego (they always listen to you, don't they?)
2. Get a commitment to recommend it 2 ("You will recommend it, won't you?")
3. Write "subject to" close (in your proposal write "subject to committee rejection within 24h")

8. Get Counter-Concessions Right Away

The value of a service or of a nice act quickly depreciates and becomes the status quo.
If you do a favor, that means you won't be able to get a favor back if you let too much time pass.
That's why you would get concessions for your own concessions.

How to ask it

Roger Dawson recommends you use the following sentence:

> If we can do that for you, what can you do for us?

My note:
I don't personally agree with that sentence, which feels highly impersonal and blatantly manipulative -also read Never Split the Difference–

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

9. Never Offer to Split the Difference

When people offer to "meet in the middle" play dumb.
Say that

> Oh, you mean like you could go down (or up) at X? Let me talk to my partners and see what they think.

And then you have just moved the negotiation range with the previous middle now being the low-bound.

10. Overcoming Impasses

When you're facing an impasse, put the big issue aside and deal with the other small ones. That will allow you to rebuild momentum.

11. Good Guy / Bad Guy

One negotiator will pretend they are angry at your proposal and might storm out.

The other one will say they will try to appease them… If you can make a few concessions here and there.

This is the most obvious example (and BTW: you should avoid negotiating with two people when you're alone in general).

It can be used in conjunction with higher authority, where the negotiator says that the committee doesn't usually like X but he'll try to soften them.

Counter Moves

When people use good guy/bad guy against the author recommend you:

- Shame them (come on, you aren't using a good guy/bad guy against me)
- Create your own bad guy
- When he shows up with someone else, jump in and say "I'm sure you're here to play the bad guy, let's skip that and find a win-win approach, fair enough?"
- Call the bluff in your mind, know what they're up but don't say anything

12. Nibbling

At the end of the negotiation, when the tension is releasing, try to have another go at something you couldn't get earlier. Or add something new.

Counter Move

You could say something like:

> Oh come on, you are getting an awesome deal (you're not trying to squeeze us with the last penny now)

Do it with a smile on your face so it's not confrontational and they know you're not taking them seriously.

And also:

- Negotiate all details in advance
- Make the other party feel like they won

13. Taper Your Concessions

Don't make a final big concession and then say "that's the most I can do".
If the concession is too big the other party feels like you still have room to go.
Decrease your concessions instead until you say "now that's it".

14. Never Give Your Bottom Line Up Front

Some people say they don't like wasting time negotiating and giving their final price in their opening sentence.
But these people, say the author, are doing it all wrong.

Some other times you can get tricked into giving your bottom line. For example, a customer might show up and say "we have 2 other similar products we want to go for.
But just to take a quick look, can you give us your absolute bottom line price".

15. Withdrawing the Offer

If you are dealing with a very interested party you can pretend your committee rejected your last negotiation round and is also vetoing the previous one.

Now the bottom line price you can do is X (X being higher than what you had told him before you were comfortable with).

This is a big gambit that can make or break a deal.

16. Make The Other Feel Good

You don't want to lose a negotiation just because of the other party's ego. Watch out not to push too much and to give something.

Also, read:

- How to Win Friends

17. Cherry Picking

Cherry picking is shopping around for options, then going to your favorite provider and trying to make him match his competitors on their favorable terms.

Countermove

You should try to stop your prospects from shopping around by showing your great knowledge in the field. Once they realize you can tell them what your competitors will propose, they might realize there's no point in wasting time.

18. Time Pressure

80% of the concessions happen in the last 20% of the allotted time.
Some unethical negotiators can use time against you, and that's why you should never reveal if you have a deadline.

When time pressure works on both sides, the side with the most options has the most power.

Sometimes you can leave your proposal on their table and with time they might find acceptable what at first they said they would never consider.

19. Walk Away Power

Learn to develop walk-away power.
The author says that the minute you pass the point when you are able to say "I'm prepared to walk away from this", you lost the negotiation.

But don't threaten to walk away abruptly, make it under the protection of the good guy/bad guy.

20. Don't Use "Take It or Leave It"

It's annoying and cantankerous. Use instead something like "sorry, but less than this I will have to drop out".

21. The Hot Potato

The hot potato is people trying to make their problem your problem.
Like "it's not in my budget" or "I can't authorize that".

Power negotiators always test the validity of such expressions.
For example, you could say:

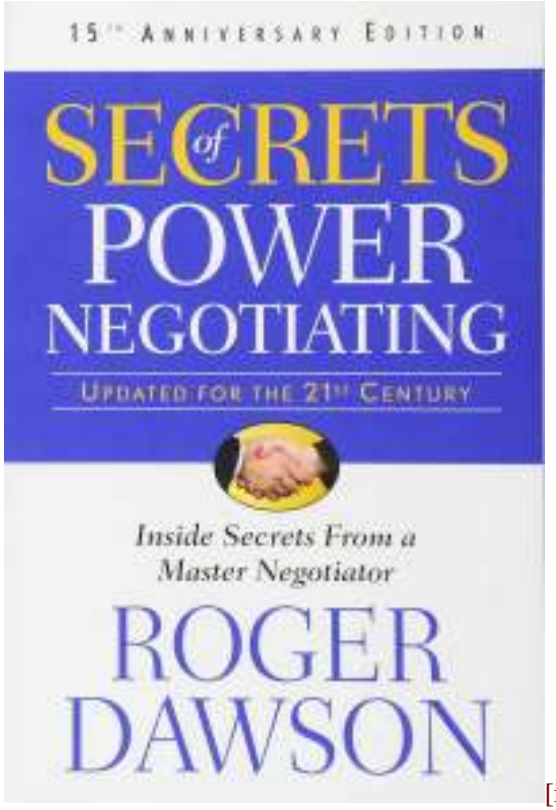
> Let's imagine this hypothetical scenario where I can find you exactly what you're looking for and you will love it and your team will love, is there any point in letting you know then?

or:

> Imagine I could show you a car that is twice as safe and in the best running condition you've ever seen but cost 10% more. You might still want to take a look at it, don't you?

Justifiers Never Deliver

Justifiers are words that tell you in advance your partner is not going to deliver.
They are expressions such as "I'll try my best" or "I'll see what I can do".



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Real-Life Examples

Here are a few articles where I apply many principles of Secrets of Power Negotiating:

- How to sell a house fast
- How to buy a house low
- Lowball technique in action

Real-Life Applications

Don't Be Intimidated by Title…
… They most often don't mean a thing.

Never Think You've Got the Weak Hand..
… That's the mistake most beginners do.

CONS

Some Examples Are Borderline Manipulative

The book is great, but not all examples are in my opinion. One is the complaint to the top hotel staff to get a discount on the room.

Some Awkward Moments
In one of the examples, Roger just does a nice sale of his CD during a dinner. Galvanized, he pays for both. When the guest says they would have paid for the dinner, he calls back the waiter to get his credit card back (and he had also picked the best restaurant expecting the guests to pay).
I couldn't help but think that was the cheapest move ever (and the second cheapest move is to pick the most expensive restaurant knowing your guests will pay, I always despised that behavior).

How Americans/Asians/Chinese negotiate
I found the chapters on local customs to be little more than folklore with some utter nonsense mixed in.
He says that part of the reason why Germans enjoy 3 weeks in a SPA and Americans only work is that America never experienced the life-changing effect of a war.
Little later there is some population-level stereotyping (ie, 'Asians people are… ').

A bit later again he says:

> Frankly, I doubted that they would ever make a transition to a free market economy because the Russians are not entrepreneurial at heart. Understand that the communist system removed all incentives from their way of life.

Again I'm scratching my head.

Bad Body Language
There are a few chapters on body language, but some of it is wrong.
He says that after all the countries he traveled to, smile was the only body language to mean the same in all languages. Not true, there are many more signs that are cross-cultural.

Long Winded Digressions
There are quite a few digressions from the main topic. Some of them are quite interesting though, like his take on the Amalfi coast:

> If you can find a balcony in Ravello and get yourself a glass of Chianti Classico while you savor the view that has enchanted visitors for centuries, you'll agree with me that life doesn't get much better than that. You can search if you want, but you might as well take my word for it: Life doesn't get much better than that. Maybe it does with a bottle of Chianti Classico.

Charisma / Charm Confusion
The author talks about the power of charisma and uses Clinton as an example. I feel he makes a major confusion here between charisma and charm (if you're interested read how to be charming and how to be charismatic).

PROS

SO Much Wisdom
The Wisdom of Power Negotiating is exactly the kind of wisdom that we promote here on this website.
This is the kind of "Machiavellian knowledge" and information that will make the victims of this world able to stand up for themselves against the sharks of this world.

Awesome Hostage Negotiation Explanation
The author goes into the training that hostage negotiators do and how hostage negotiation works. Fascinating stuff.

Review

I have listed a lot of cons.
But if you have been reading around here I always list a lot of cons for the best books. It's because I hold them to a whole different standard than most books.

And Power Negotiation is the kind of book that you have to hold to a higher standard simply because it's that book.

The first part is better than the second half which gets a bit too chatty and long-winded. But overall, this is a life-changing book. And a book everyone who wants to understand psychology and human nature should read.

This is exactly the kind of information that this website wants to spread to empower people.

Check out the:

- **best books on negotiation**
- read manipulative negotiation techniques

> 20 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics

or get the book on Amazon

Games People Play: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Games People Play (1964) is a psychoanalytical look at everyday social interactions in which Eric Berne, the author, looks beneath the superficial layers of lies and manipulation and lays bare the real motives of why we do what we do.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Games People Play – Summary
  - 1. Now I Got You Son of a Bitch
  - 2. If It Weren't For You
  - 3. Why Don't You – "Yes, But… "
  - 4. Wooden leg
  - 5. Forgiving Manipulation
  - 6. Frigid Wife
  - Fighting Against Sexual Tension
  - Therapist & Couple Relationships
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Games People Play – Review

Bullet Summary

- We keep playing destructive games to:
  - avoid facing our unresolved psychological issues and
  - make interactions easier
- We are mostly not aware of the games we play
- We can overcome our games when we understand what we're doing

Games People Play – Summary

About The Author: Eric Berne was a Canadian psychiatrist and founder of transactional analysis, a theory of social interactions to explain human behavior.
Albeit unique and distinct, Berne's theory has been influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud.

Introduction

Eric Berne says that we are rarely conscious of the games we play.
But we keep playing them, even the destructive ones because we inherit them from childhood.

In a way, they are comfortable because they absolve us from confronting unresolved psychological issues and can make some tense interactions easier to resolve.

My Note:
When people get stuck in a pattern of games, they develop "dysfunctional relationship dances".

This is the transactional analysis list of games people play:

1. Now I Got You Son of a Bitch

This might be the most famous game from the book.

An example of that of a wife who explodes when the husband forgets to throw the trash away.
Eric Berne says that she was actually waiting for an excuse to let go of her own anger.
And she was looking for a scapegoat, a reason to blow off.

2. If It Weren't For You

"If it weren't for you" is a game people play in relationships.
It consists in blaming our partner for not getting and doing what we really want and deserve in life.

The author says that most people unconsciously pick partners who will place limitations on them.
But the real reason we do it is because we are actually afraid of ourselves to go out and do it, so we can always use the excuse of our partners.

My Note:
sometimes that might be true. And sometimes people will use their partner as an excuse. But in my opinion, saying that people choose their partner just so they can use it as an excuse for not doing what they're afraid of is pushing the envelope too much.

3. Why Don't You – "Yes, But... "

You are probably familiar with the interaction in which we ask for an opinion but then proceed to refute all the suggestions we get for changing and improving.

Berne says that happens because we are not really looking for a solution, but we are looking for sympathy. We are playing the child, and the other gets to play the adult.

4. Wooden leg

We pick a limitation that we have and use it as an excuse for our bad behavior, poor results, or lack of motivation.
It's a game we use not to take full responsibility for our lives.

5. Forgiving Manipulation

The player here wants to manipulate someone into forgiving them.

He may for example break something on purpose but make it seem as if it were an accident.
The player here wants to move the host into a parent position so he can play the child.

He might have kept breaking things on purpose, and at a certain point, they both might know what was going on.

6. Frigid Wife

The woman makes the man horny, only to refuse him when it comes down to it.
She wants to take the role of the parent and force the husband into the child role. And she gets to reinforce her own prejudices about men who only want sex.

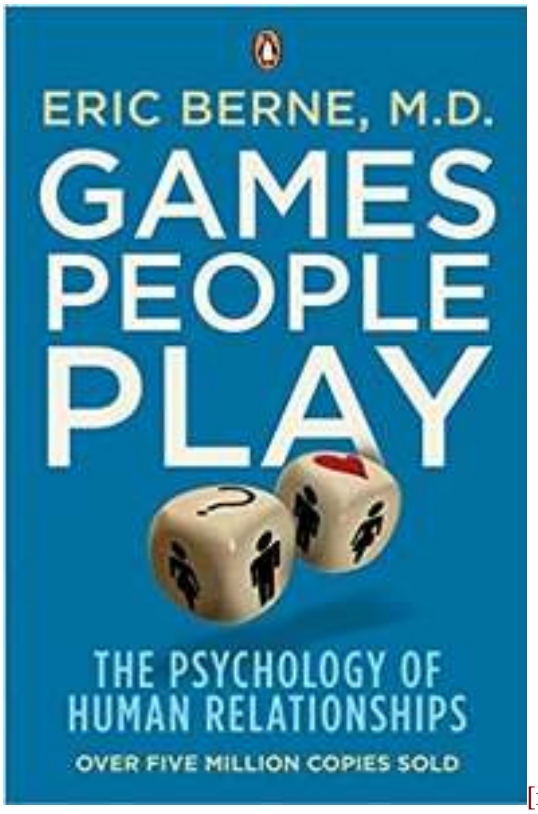
Fighting Against Sexual Tension

To avoid sexual tension, the player might want to start a fight to release the pressure.

Therapist & Couple Relationships

On the surface a couple in therapy might seem to engage in adult behavior, says Berne.
But in reality, deep down one individual is playing the child and using the therapist as the adult to complain about the other partner.

My Note:
This is a generalization and while it's probably true for a good number of people and couples, I doubt it can be generalized to the whole population.



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Real-Life Applications

Watch Out for Patterns of Behavior
If you notice a pattern of behavior that gets repeated over and over, watch out: it might be a destructive game you are playing to avoid solving your own issues.

CONS

Freudian
Freudian doesn't necessarily have to be a con. Freud was a genius. But when Freudian means "everything must be explained through childhood & parent relations", then to me it becomes a con.
I felt that Games People Play was way too Freudian in its explanations.

Technical & Confusing
Technical doesn't have to be a con, but when the technicalities fail to easily translate to something simple and easy to understand, then it can be a con.
I felt Games People Play failed to make the complex understandable.

Overly Dark
Life is more complex than everyone happily getting along and speaking their mind. For sure. But life is also more complex than a web of games and traps.

Not everyone “inherits childhood destructive games” and not all relationships are fraught with the games Eric Berne describes.
I wish Eric had stated that a bit more clearly in Games People Play.

PROS

First Analytical Look at Everyday Interactions
Games People Play was one of the first popular books to bring professional analysis tools to everyday interactions.

Good Sexual Games
I like sexual games. There was quite some wisdom there.

Great Games Description
Many games are well described and will make a lot of sense to you as you realize you have seen them happening in your life. It’s the Freudian explanations I have issues with.

Games People Play – Review

I had high expectations for Games People Play and was really looking forward to this book.
But reaching the end was a struggle and finally, I had to admit this book wasn’t going to deliver.

I usually would have quit much earlier based on my rule that anything I do should be worthwhile.
But since this book is so relevant to what I do and what I am interested in, I soldiered on.
But in the end, I had to just admit it: Games People Play just hadn’t delivered nearly as much as I was hoping for.

To be precise, I really enjoyed the game descriptions. Many of them are awesome. It’s the explanations that often left me scratching my head.

I still reserve the possibility of going back to Games People Play and hopefully getting more wisdom out of it.
But as of now, I found the book way too Freudian.

But Transaction Analysis Is Golden

Albeit “*Games People Play*” disappointed me, transactional analysis has been a huge game-changer in my understanding of power dynamics.

I can highly recommend Harry’s book, also based on transaction analysis and Berne’s work.
It’s called “*I’m OK, You’re OK*“.

Also, read:

- **The best psychology books**

or get the book on Amazon

Kick-Ass Copywriting Secrets: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

kick-ass Copywriting Secrets of a Marketing Rebel is John Carlton's guide to effective copywriting.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - It's His Needs, Not Yours
  - The More You Tell, The More You Sell
  - Don't Look Like an Ad
  - Headlines
  - Upsell
  - How to Launch a Product and Sell in A Weekend
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- If you sell to one in person, you can sell to a thousand with a good copy
- A salesman is more likely to become a great copywriter than an English literature major
- It's not about you, it's all about the reader

Full Summary

Carlton gives a bit of background and says he ended up in copywriting because he couldn't stand the corporate hierarchy -that rang a bell here-.
He was forced to succeed as a copywriter he says because he had simply no other option.
It doesn't matter where you are now he says, what matters is where you want to be. And learning to sell is one of the best ways to get there.

It's His Needs, Not Yours

If you understand what moves people, you can move them.
Here are some basic human drivers:

- Greed

> "and you can have it for a half of what everyone else has to pay".

- Sex, love & intimacy
- Self Improvement

Most people are depressed and despise where they are in life. Here's an idea:

> How to jump-start the quality of your social life by simply tweaking a tiny aspect of your personality

- Pleasure

We all crave the bliss and joy of a child. Here's an example:

> I've never laughed so much in my life. The secret of the happiest people in the world

The More You Tell, The More You Sell

Companies and marketers base their copy on the idea that people don't read flops. They base their whole campaigns on cute slogans while instead longer copy sells.

Don't Look Like an Ad

Everyone is trying to scream loud, but people can recognize advertising.
Get under the radar instead.

Headlines

The headlines are often the only piece of copy we read. It has to stop us in our tracks to invite us to read the rest. Three ways to do:

1. News he is interested in ("how to use the new tax laws to lower your property tax by half")
2. A spectacular benefit ("new pill makes you look 10 years younger)
3. Arouse burning curiosity ("why does this hacker smile every time you're online")

Don't care about what people or colleagues think about your ads. It only has to be good for the audience.

Upsell

You can double the amount you make by offering other products to your buyers. The best customers you'll ever have are those who have just happily bought from you, so always offer an upsell.

Put your best product forward and then capitalize on the goodwill.

How to Launch a Product and Sell in A Weekend

This chapter was awesome. Selling something quickly is not what I'm aiming at, but this chapter was awesome nonetheless as an inspiration for what's possible.
The idea is to pick a market with a passionate clientele and become an expert on a tiny, very specific fraction of that market.
Check the guide for the details.

Real-Life Applications

Copywriting Is Better Than In-Person Selling
I don't know why, but it only hit me with Kick-Ass Copywriting Secrets that being great at copywriting is better than being great at selling in person. The author says "if you can sell to one customer in person, you can sell to a thousand at the same time".
The author says that the skills are the same and the pitch is the same. There I have to disagree though.

Don't Hard Sell

And this is one of the reasons why I believe copywriting is not the same as in-person selling. Pushing hard to sell your product and showing lots of passion can work in person.
But it doesn't work as well in copy as you come across as disingenuous in pumping your own product (something I was doing wrong).

> **Don't hard sell, and offer instead the privilege of buying from you**

CONS

Sales Pitch The Same as Copywriting?
I personally don't believe that you can take your vocal sales pitch and make it a successful copy material. But hey, that's just my opinion and you know what they say about opinions :).

Audiobook Not Professionally Read
It's not bad and I love the passion in the reader's voice. But it's not flawless either. Anyway, it's not the most important detail. As the author himself says, don't waste too much in the form and look at the message instead (save the detail attention for the ad lol).

PROS

Good Content
kick-ass Copywriting Secrets stresses a lot of the basics that I haven't seen in some other copywriting courses (such as human nature and basic psychology).

Very Motivational
The attitude is very energetic and "can do", really serves to spur you into action.

Review

Good content and I also liked the author's attitude and mindset.

Read more summaries

Who Moved My Cheese: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Who Moved My Cheese teaches the readers human nature and self-development through a simple and entertaining parable of two little humans and two mice.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - #1. Act More, Think Less (ie.: we think too much)
  - #2. Don't Take Things For Granted (ie.: practice gratitude)
  - #3. Be Prepared for Things to Change
  - #4. Don't Cling to the Bygone Past (ie.: keep moving)
  - #5. Move Towards Your Fears
  - #6. Visualize Your Goals
  - #7. Your Life is The Result of Your Mindsets and Actions (ie.: take responsibility)
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Change will happen: don't grow dependent on the status quo and be ready
- Don't be afraid of venturing towards the unknown: the longer you live slave of your fear, the worse off you'll be
- Sometimes think less and act more

Full Summary

About The Author: Spencer Johnson was an American physician and author. He wrote several children's books as part of his series "ValueTales". His most famous tale is "Who Moved My Cheese?", which also happens to be one of the biggest best-sellers of self-help books.

Preface

As a parable, Who Moved My Cheese is not easy to summarize. So I won't try. Instead of giving you the story, I will tell you the lessons learned from it.

Just keep in mind this is a novel taking place in a maze, with two "little humans" and two mice.

The maze is a metaphor for life, and the cheese is a metaphor for what we really want in life.

#1. Act More, Think Less (ie.: we think too much)

The mice in the parable always went back and forth looking for their cheese.
The two humans instead, called Hem and Haw, plotted all kinds of strategies to make their search more efficient.
All that thinking though didn't really help them achieve better results.

As a matter of fact, it often only confused the humans more, and they would have been better off just scuttling

around as the mice did.

Lesson learned?

- Think less, act more

#2. Don’t Take Things For Granted (ie.: practice gratitude)

When the humans finally found a reliable source of cheese they were overjoyed.
Yet, little by little, they got used to it.
They started it for granted and they even became dependent on it.

Lesson learned?

- Stay grateful and don’t become overly dependent on anything

#3. Be Prepared for Things to Change

One day the humans woke up, only to find out that their reliable source of cheese was gone.

It wasn’t really gone, the humans had failed to see that things were slowly changing. The cheese was diminishing and it was also rotting a bit. But they ignored the signs and clung to the status quo.
They were back to square one, but now they felt horrible about it.

Lesson learned?

- Things never last forever: don’t grow complacent and look for signs of change

#4. Don’t Cling to the Bygone Past (ie.: keep moving)

The mouses didn’t sweat the change.
They soon got back on their feet and moved again. And soon found another cheese station.

The humans instead couldn’t psychologically accept the new reality. They clang to their old good past and revisited older cheese stations that were long depleted.
It might not be a coincidence that the humans in Who Moved My Cheese are called Hem and Haw.

Lesson learned?

- Don’t cry over spilled milk. Roll back your sleeves and get going again

#5. Move Towards Your Fears

After their cheese was gone Hem and Haw were afraid of getting back in the game. They had grown too comfortable, or “mentally fat” as I sometimes call it.
They were afraid of moving toward new alleys.

Lesson learned?

- The more you wallow in fear, the worse things will get. Move towards your fear and the death of fear is certain (cit.: Brian Tracy)

#6. Visualize Your Goals

Eventually, Haw started visualizing himself sitting on top of his all-time favorite cheese.
How wonderful life would be again?
That gave him the strength of venturing out into new and uncharted territory.

My Note:
90% of self-help books tell people to visualize their goals. But repetition doesn't make something that's not (always) true, true.
For more, check: self-help myths and pop-psychology myths.

#7. Your Life is The Result of Your Mindsets and Actions (ie.: take responsibility)

While Haw got moving, Hem stayed behind instead. He kept sitting at the old cheese station, getting hungrier and growing more and more emaciated.
Wallowing in pity and anger.

Hem's life wasn't easy.
In the beginning, he wasn't finding much cheese, but he was proud of himself whenever he could find any. He was growing more confident in himself and in his capabilities, also getting happier.
Eventually, Hem found a new big cheese station (ie.: he reached his goal by taking action).

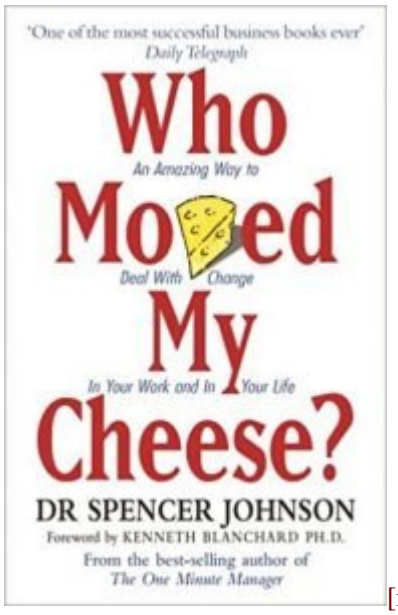
My Note:
In psychology, the mindset of taking responsibility is also often associated with an internal locus of control, such as the belief that we can change our circumstances and we can change our environment.

Lesson learned?

- Your life is the result of how you react to failure

As someone said:

> **Judge me not by the times I fall, but by the times I get up again.**



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Real-Life Applications

Who Moved My Cheese is a parable about powerful mindsets to adopt in life.
It's difficult to pick one as they are all great, but if I had to just go for one:

- **Keep on Going**

In the face of failure, don't dawdle on the past. Keep on going. The world belongs to people who stay gritty in the

endless pursuit of their dream.

> **Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm”**

CONS

- **Little People Have Little Power?**

Putting two people together with mice and giving them so little control over their lives didn’t seem to me like a very empowering metaphor.
Sure, the attitude that you will always do your best is super empowering (and freeing).
But oftentimes we can also do a lot to change our environment. And that didn’t shine through in “*Who Moved My Cheese*“.

- **Visualization Was Least Powerful Message**

While Who Moved My Cheese shares a lot of very empowering mindsets, I personally don’t think visualizing is the most powerful way to overcome an impasse.
Don’t get me wrong, visualizing is awesome, but I believe that visualization is only one of the many tools of mental power (and possibly not the most powerful).

- **Analyzing is Not Necessarily Bad**

Analyzing the situation before acting can sometimes bring you much bigger payoffs.

PROS

Great Wisdom
Who Moved My Cheese does a great job of outlining many of the typical human pitfalls.

Review

Who Moved My Cheese leverages a fictitious story to share deeper truths of life.

In that, it’s similar to *The Greatest Salesman in The World* for sales books and *The Richest Man in Babylon* for personal finance books.

Alongside top reviews, it also had many bad reviews by people who are annoyed by the fable format and the repetitiveness.

And while I’m not a big fan myself of the fable format, “*Who Moved My Cheese*” hits on many key psychological pitfalls we all have as humans.
And I think the author does a great job of mixing entertainment with important life and self-development truths.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

What to Say When Someone Dies (Dos and Don’ts)

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Few people really know what to say when someone dies.

And to be honest, most of the time there is nothing you can say or do that will magically make people feel great again.

However, you can avoid making some major mistakes.
And maybe, you can offer some good words of support.

This article will help you do just that.

Contents

- #1. I’m Sorry
- #2. Know That I Am Here
- #3. Know That I’m Close to You
- #4. I’m Close to You in This Moment of Pain
- #5. You Are in My Thoughts
- #6. This Sucks
- #7. He Was Such a Wonderful Person
- #8. This Must be Hard for You
- #9. Share a Memory
- Watch Out for These
  - 1. Don’t Say “I’m Sorry for Your Loss”
  - 2. Don’t Ask “How Are You?”
  - 3. Do Not Smile

- Always Avoid These
  - 1. Never Say “Now You Can Live Your Life”
  - 2. Avoid “I Know How You’re Feeling”
  - 3. Avoid “He’s in a Better Place”
  - 4. Avoid “You’ll be Better (Soon)”
  - 5. Never Say “If That Happened to Me…”
  - 6. Never Talk About Your Concerns
- SUMMARY

#1. I’m Sorry

As simple as that.

Some people think this is “too little”, and that they should do or say more.
And while it’s commendable of anyone to want to do and give more, they sometimes approach the situation with the wrong mindset. The mindset is that they think that they need to console someone or cheer them up.

And don’t get me wrong: the moment to cheer our friends up might come… But it’s *not* soon after their loss.
Indeed “forcing” people to feel better, and trying too hard to change their states might easily feel like violence.

What to do instead?

Hug And Say “I’m Sorry”

If you are very close, hug them as you say “I’m sorry”.

And If you are close, hug them, then release them.
Then add “I’m sorry” as you keep a hand on their arm to show your support with physical body language contact.

If you are not close, a handshake will suffice.

#2. Know That I Am Here

If you are close *and* able to offer your support, this is a great way to add more supportive power to your “I’m sorry”.

It shows the person grieving that they are not alone and that they can count on someone.
Most of all, it also offers immediate emotional support.

Absolutely use it whenever you can and feel free to modify it with the following:

- Know that I am here *for you*
- I am here with you
- You are not alone in this
- **I know it’s a difficult time. When all of this will be over, I’ll be there**

The last one is particularly good.
The whole experience of coping with a loss and having to organize the funeral and religious ceremony is overwhelming.
The bereaved often go ahead out of sheer must, but without fully understanding what’s happening on an emotional level.

When everyone starts showing up at their doorstep, they also need to face the social jungle and keep a stiff upper lip.

At least, everyone who shows up is sorry and supportive. But after? It's the days after that are often the toughest for the bereaved.

When you tell them you'll be there, you show empathy and take pressure away from them. It's not *them* who need to attend to you, it's you who will be taking care of them.
It's very touching and soothing.

#3. Know That I'm Close to You

"Know that I'm close to you" replaces " the above "know that I'm here" when you cannot offer your help or support.

You can use this one for example to end a non-personal communication such as a text message or an email.

#4. I'm Close to You in This Moment of Pain

This is similar to the above and you will use it especially when you knew the person who died.
In one sentence, it communicates you are close to them and that you too you are feeling the pain.

It joins the two of you in this moment of sorrow, and it makes the bereaved feel less lonely.

#5. You Are in My Thoughts

This one can be used a bit more freely than the three sentences above.
It doesn't require you to be particularly close to either the person who died or the person who is mourning.

"You are in my thoughts" is also another great way to end any non-personal communication such as an email or a text message.

#6. This Sucks

This is more informal and can be used if you are on a very friendly basis with the bereaved.

If you think "this sucks" is too slang and out of place, it might be because you don't talk like that or because you don't talk like that with the bereaved.
If that's the case, you shouldn't use it.

However, if you do talk informally but think it's too "slang", then you are focusing too much on form and you are making it too much about yourself.
Remember, if you feel the pain, communicating it with your own words and without a filter is the best thing you can do both for yourself and for your friend.
There is no shame in labeling a bad situation for what it is.

#7. He Was Such a Wonderful Person

This is a common, stock expression.

However, it's fine… *As long as you believe it.*

Don't use it though if you didn't think the deceased was indeed wonderful or if you didn't know him well enough.
If you weren't close and/or didn't know the person well, it sounds like you are either using cliches or, worse, that you are being insincere.

If you knew him just from the periphery of your social circle, it's OK to say "he always struck me as such a wonderful person" or "he always seemed such a beautiful soul".

#8. This Must be Hard for You

Telling your friend you are aware of his feelings shows empathy.

It will move the two of you closer at an emotional level and make him feel less alone in this moment of hardship. It also provides the bereaved the safety to act how he feels rather than faking “strength”. And he can use it as a chance to open up emotionally if he needs to (ie.: yes, it’s incredibly hard).

#9. Share a Memory

If you have a great memory that positively encapsulates who the deceased was for you, you can share it with some of the family members or you can go up to the funeral ceremony and deliver it to everyone.
You can rest assured everyone will remember that nice gesture.

However, don’t share it with the bereaved so early as that will hardly console them and might actually aggravate their pain.

Watch Out for These

While there are often no good words to cheer someone up, there are a few unhappy expressions you should avoid.

The expressions below either make the situation worse or make *you* look bad.
And yes, while the focus is on the deceased, it doesn’t mean we shouldn’t care anymore about our reputation.

1. Don’t Say “I’m Sorry for *Your* Loss”

I want to get this one out of the way ASAP.
“I’m sorry for your loss” is a perfect thing to say in a few specific cases. And the cases are:

1. When the death was expected and/or
2. When you didn’t know the person who died

In other cases the "*your loss*" part shows a terrible lack of empathy.
If a friend of yours dies you don't tell her wife about "*her* loss". It's *your* loss too.
If a child dies, you don't tell the parents "you're sorry for *their* loss". It's a tragedy and it should involve everyone with a heart.

2. Don't Ask "How Are You?"

How are you can be a fair question if you're very close or if the death is not devastating.

For example, when my grandmother died of old age it wasn't a shocking news for anyone.
So I asked exactly that to my mother. It was perfectly befitting because I cared about how she felt and because I really wasn't sure (was she devastated, was she sad, was she sad but overall OK?).

However, when the death is unexpected or obviously devastating and/or you're not close enough to ask that, it's a big mistake.

For example, would you ask your neighbor who's just lost a child in a car crash "how are you?".
How do you think she's doing? And how can she even reply to that? Of course, she's devastated.

3. Do Not Smile

Even if they say something funny or mildly hilarious, it's always best to flash out a big grin.
Or you'll end up looking like Michelle Obama, which her smile very much out of place:

Always Avoid These

Always avoid the following, I cannot think of any situation when saying them to a person who has lost someone would be ok:

1. Never Say "Now You Can Live Your Life"

Some deaths can relieve the family of having to look after the deceased. And it's true that they will be able to use more of their free time.

However, soon after death is not the time to talk about the benefits of death!
To get back to my example: sure my mother was going to be able to travel and enjoy more her own retirement. And we all knew it. But was I going to say that when my grandmother passed away?
No!
Both because it wouldn't have felt good in any way for my mother to hear and because it's quite disrespectful towards the deceased.

2. Avoid "I Know How You're Feeling"

You might know how they're feeling and you might have been in a very similar situation. But it still feels condescending and egoistical to the bereaved.
You see, they don't care that you know how they're feeling.

Notice that "I know how you're feeling" might sound similar to the previous "this must be hard for you", but it's not. "This must be hard" is about *them* and paces *their* reality.
Plus "must be" is a statement/question which they can deny, correct, or explain.

"I know how you're feeling" instead is about *you.* And it's a statement. You don't even know how to answer that.
Actually, the only sensible answer would make them sound like complete jackasses (which is, by the way: "no you don't").

3. Avoid “He’s in a Better Place”

Maybe you believe that. Maybe the bereaved believe that.
Maybe it’s even true!

But still, when tragedy happens it’s not the time to say it.
People miss their loved ones and don’t want them in a better place, they want them nearby.

Never broach the “he’s in a better place” topic when the wound is still fresh.

4. Avoid “You’ll be Better (Soon)”

That is true, isn’t it?

Of course, they’ll be better. Maybe even soon indeed. But again, this is not the time to say it!

Mourning and grieving will take some time and that time has to be respected and honored. Being sad is part of life and it’s OK. Saying “you’ll be better” feels like you are not respecting their current feelings.

5. Never Say “If That Happened to Me...”

Then you’d be destroyed. Or you couldn’t handle it. Or maybe you want to make them a compliment about how strong they are.
DON’T!
This is about them, and saying anything about you feels like you’re trying to steal the show and make it about you.

And talking about hijacking the conversation, please don’t:

6. Never Talk About Your Concerns

At the funeral, people talk.
And they talk about everything. And that’s OK.

It’s also OK to talk about different issues and help the bereaved clear his mind for a while.

But do not, ever, try to pitch, sell or “make it about you” in any way. That’s terribly insensitive and they will (righteously) resent you for it.

SUMMARY

Most people are worried about what to say when someone dies because they:

1. Are afraid of saying something wrong (as long as you're sincere you'll mostly be fine)
2. Think they have to make the other person feel better (it's the opposite: it's trying to make them feel better that is insensitive)
3. Feel bad being close to someone who's in so much pain (pain is a part of life and they will most likely be better eventually)

Your goal when offering your condolences is simply to express sympathy, compassion, and/or share the pain if you do. This article showed you how to do that well.

Also read: how to console someone.

How to Comfort Someone: 15 Do's & Don'ts

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How do you comfort someone when they tell you they have cancer, when they cry, or when they despair about losing their job?

What do you say or do?

If you have ever been in such a situation, or if you wonder what you should do, this article is for you.

Contents

- #1. Listen & Let Them Talk
- #2. Use Open-Ended Questions
- #3. Give Space and Time: Don't Rush Solutions
- #4. Help Save Face: Mention Your Troubles
- #5. Criticize Their Critics First
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- What to Avoid
  - 1. Using Their Pain to Troubleshoot
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  - 3. Assigning Blame
  - 4. Endless Loop Questions
  - 5. Saying they "had it all" (before their mistake)
  - 6. Making Light of It
  - 7. Fixing It
  - 8. "Oh My God" Reactions
  - 9. Empty Platitudes

- SUMMARY

#1. Listen & Let Them Talk

Understand this:

We are social animals.
And oftentimes one of the reasons people feel bad about bad news is not just the bad news in itself, but having to face their social circle with it.

Indeed, people loathe judgment and questioning from inept friends.

Spare your friends in a judgmental, disapproving, disappointed, and questioning tone.

Surprise your friend with some emotional intelligence, instead.
To begin with, ask fewer questions in the beginning and let them volunteer information.
As a matter of fact, help them volunteer information:

> **Friend**: Everyone is blaming me for our break up and my family just can't let it go. I didn't leave him and I do feel bad he's taking it so poorly. I wish we could have stayed together, but we were just too different
> **You**: Too different?
> **Friend**: Yes, I wanted adventure and variety, but he… Bla bla bla

Asking "what are people blaming you for" would put her in a bad defensive mood.
Another mistake here would have been to truncate the conversation before she's had a chance to "exculpate herself".

Let her make her case from an affirmative, positive place, without pushing her on the defensive, which is what everyone else is doing.

#2. Use Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions allow people the freedom to choose what to say. It gives a feeling of being appreciated for who they are.

> **Friend**: And the owner evicted me

The mistake here would be to ask:

> You didn't pay rent?

That would put your friend on the defensive. If he didn't pay rent now he needs to say "no I didn't, *but* it was because bla bla bla".

Instead, you say:

> **You**: How come…
> **Friend**: I was going through a very rough patch back then..
> **You**: I see. And how are you doing now…
> **Friend**: much better! Bla bla bla…

If they are done telling their story the question is great because it allows them to go from a "bad situation" to a

positive, which is exactly what you want.

#3. Give Space and Time: Don't Rush Solutions

Giving space and time means:

- Listen
- Accept silences
- Let them cry/be angry/complain

And it means that you:

- Don't force them to "see the positives" too quickly
- Don't tell them how "it's going to be better" too quickly
- Don't tell them how to fix it too quickly (most likely they're not ready for the solution)

Don't rush your solutions and don't minimize their pain.
Give them instead space to be sad, silent, or even cry.

It's most effective to change the state of crying people with light banter, smiling, and positivity.
But that's the mentality that you must fix it for them, and that's not always the case (especially in relationships).
The option I like most these days is to stay present and near. Maybe rub their shoulder and back a little bit, as if to say "it will be OK".

The idea you want to give is that "*I'm here for you… As soon as you are ready. But take your time*".
Crying is actually often therapeutic, so don't sweat it too much.

#4. Help Save Face: Mention Your Troubles

Sometimes people feel bad for a blunder or a particularly embarrassing situation.

An easy way to smooth out the transition from embarrassment to opening up (or to a laugh) is to share similar stories that happened to you.

> **Friend**: To be honest, it went bad as I involuntary emitted gas and couldn't recover from there (cheeks getting red)
> **You**: Damn, I can imagine. I remember when I once involuntary burped in front of the whole class. God, I wanted to disappear
> **Friend**: Burping is OK…. I farted!
> **You**: LOL, but you should have heard *my* burp. Godzilla and King Kong should merge into a single entity to reach half of that resonance
> **Friend**: Ahaha (now she's already off the hook, back to normal)

Sharing your similar troubles helps to "normalize" any situation and your friend won't feel any more dumb or isolated.

#5. Criticize Their Critics First

This is really next-level social finesse.

If someone has been fired, rejected, or harshly criticized, they find themselves between a rock (their ego) and a hard place (their social circle).
If they criticize their own critics, they look like they are complaining and that they are butthurt.
However, here is the catch, when we *don't* criticize those who refused us it feels like endorsing or justifying them, which is the equivalent of saying "indeed, I *do* suck and deserve their rejection".

So there they are, mumbling some BS like "it's ok to receive criticism", "it's great feedback" or, a bit better, "you can't appease everyone".

Help them out from that mental catch 22 and they'll love you for it. Here's how you do it:

> **Friend**: Carl broke up with me
> **You**: I'm sorry and I'm glad you seem OK. Can I be honest now? That guy was an asshole, how did you manage to stay together until now
> **Friend**: God yes! Listen to what he did… Bla bla bla

Or:

> **Friend**: No, that job thing didn't work out (embarrassed about it)
> **You**: Mate, what the f*ck were you even doing with those amateurs. I've heard that guy there, what's his name, the sloppiest of the bunch, he burned through 3 millions without getting a single client! Is that true.
> **Friend**: Bro, you can't even imagine how sloppy they are, bla bla bla
> **You**: Idiots! When are you joining us now

When you attack the people that took value away from your friends you show you're on their side. And second and most important, you give them permission to let their anger out and be really frank about what they think.
Now that's real bonding!
After they're done venting, they might even turn around and admit their mistakes.
At that point -and only at that point!- it will be sincere.

#6. Say You're Sorry

For anything you can do little about, like loss in the family or illnesses, these two little words are your stock answer:

> I'm sorry

Then, depending on how they look or how fresh the loss is, you can add:

> And how are you now

If the loss is fresh and obviously painful you don't want to ask "how are you". At that point, you can add:

> Man, I can imagine it must be hard. I want you to know that whenever you feel like, I am here for you. When you need to take your mind off, have a blast or simply just talk about it, I am here.

Then let them decide whether they want to continue the interaction now or at another time.

What to Avoid

I don't know how your own experience is so far, but in my case, it feels like more people do it wrong than right. Here are the most common mistakes when it comes to consoling someone or helping them out:

1. Using Their Pain to Troubleshoot

This happens whenever we want to make sure that we are safe. Our questions aim to relieve ourselves instead of supporting our friend:

> **You**: I lost all my files in my computer. Weeks and weeks of work, I feel like crying
> **Clueless**: Argh, how could that happen, didn't you connect your computer to Dropbox
> **You**: no, otherwise I could recover them now
> **Clueless**: oh good, because I have Dropbox and was getting worried, feeew

This is a bit exaggerated to make my point.
Most people would move back to you *after* they troubleshoot for themselves.
But granted, there are also many who are really *that* clueless like in the example.

2. I told You! And what did I tell you?

Few things are as annoying as the friend who always saw your problems coming long before they materialized.
And his close brother: the friend who warned you in advance.

A special place in hell belongs to those who didn't even warn you, but still say it anyway, just to make you feel even worse (this is a power move, BTW).

See a funny example from Family Guy:

3. Assigning Blame

And here comes the "you must have done something wrong" type of friend:

> **You**: I just didn't make it on time to break and rear-ended him. I have troubles moving my neck now and I'm even out several thousands. Sheeet!

> **Clueless**: Yes, but were you wearing the seat belts?
> **You**: Yes, but the airbag didn't go off
> **Clueless**: Oh, I see, you didn't do the regular inspection did you?

You can see clueless here is more intent on assigning blame than supporting.

Some people do it because they refuse to accept that there is also a lot of randomness in life. You can't control everything and assure safety.
Living entails risks. Even when you do everything right. Make your peace with it.

4. Endless Loop Questions

I still remember this one like it was yesterday. I was traveling, had slept very little, and was having some stomach flu because of some bad food I had.
This is what Deborah thought would help:

> **Me**: I'm not feeling too well, I might have some light food poisoning
> **Deborah**: You are sick? Why are you sick… You shouldn't be sick
> **Me**: ….

Those are not real questions.
Asking "why are you sick" puts the omen on them to explain, again, why they are not well. That's an endless loop question: the is no answer other than "ate some bad food".
And the icing on the cake is: "you shouldn't be sick", which made me feel as if I needed to justify myself for having chosen to get food poison.

5. Saying they "had it all" (before their mistake)

I remember years ago I was working in a goodish company in a good position. And of course, like all conservative parents, my parents weren't happy to see me leave big corp.
I was having some issues finding a new job and this is how it went:

> **Me**: I've been sending applications. It's not as easy as I thought though..
> **Dad**: (highly complaining tone) Oh dammit, but you had a good job
> (implies I made a mistake not holding onto it)
> **Me**: (eye-roll)

Another one could be:

> **You**: All the good guys are married, all the attractive ones are players and all the single ones are gays
> **Clueless**: What about your ex, he was a good guy, you two were good, why did you leave him

In this second example, Clueless is forcing you to explain yourself and re-defend your choice.
Chances are you won't stay good friends for long like that.

6. Making Light of It

Trying to relieve them of their pain too early is another common mistake.

People will get better, but they don't wanna hear you tell them. Or at least, not so soon.
It makes people feel like you're not appreciating their difficulties and that you think they are being weak.

And don't ever say "it could have been X":

7. Fixing It

John Gray calls men "mr. Fix it".
And he is not wrong: it's often men who fall for the "I need to fix their problem" attitude.

But when you think you can fix their problems in two seconds you are actually saying that you think they're incompetent.
And they might be incompetent! But people still don't want you to make them feel that way (read *How to Win Friends*).

I have a friend who always does it:

> **Clueless**: and what did I tell you? Now this is what you do. You go there and tell him X,Y,Z
> **Me**: Hmm that's not a bad idea (mental note: last time I talk to this guy)

Fixing people's issues is patronizing AF. It doesn't make you come across as more incompetent. It makes you come across as socially inept.

8. "Oh My God" Reactions

"Oh my God reactions" are exaggerated reactions to bad news.
Look at this example:

> **You**: no, Frank won't be coming tonight because we are not together anymore
> **Clueless**: oh myyy God!! are you serious??
> **You**: yes… (A bit peeved, doesn't know what to add) it was consensual
> **Clueless**: but you were such a great couple!!
> **You**: Well, it looked like, but..
> **Clueless**: How did *that* happen!!
> **You**: (look around, then loud) is there are any other seat available? I'd like to move

You will notice here that the "Oh my God" reaction is coupled with way too many questions that push you into defending yourself and your decision.
People facing difficult times need support, not a barrage of questions that makes it harder for them.

9. Empty Platitudes

Please avoid any of the following platitudes:

- Everything happens for a reason
- What doesn't break you makes you stronger!
- It's always darkest before sunrise. You'll be happy this happened

And anything God or destiny related:

- God doesn't give anything to those who can't handle it
- It's in God's plan

Trust me, even the most God-fearing person would be hard-pushed not to tell you where to put your God's platitudes.

SUMMARY

Comforting someone when they're feeling down is an important skill in the social master's arsenal.

This article, inspired by the book *There Is No Good Card for This*, taught you how to console and support a friend.

Once you have listened and let them off the hook, then you can start moving towards a more positive attitude. And we will focus on that in the next post.

Also, read:

- Rescuing friends from socially awkward situations
- Defending friends from social assault

Shoe Dog: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Shoe Dog is Nike founder Phil Knight's autobiography in which he talks of how he launched the biggest shoe empire in the world.
Nike today is one of the strongest brands in the world, but to get there Knight pulled through a few near-death experiences and lots of up and downs.

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- Summary
  - Importing Onitsuka
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  - The Early Nike Team
  - Nike Is Born
  - Onitsuka – Nike Lawsuit
  - IPO and Integrity
  - Integrity and Sweatshops Scandals
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Bullet Summary

- Phil Knight was hugely passionate about sports and running shoes
- An early partner who can hope easy doors for you is priceless
- A team of a hard worker who believes in your vision will make a world of difference

Summary

About The Author: Phil Knight is an American businessman and founder of Nike, Inc. He was madly passionate about shoes, and they used to call men with a passion for shoes "shoe dogs". That's why the name of his autobiography.

Importing Onitsuka

Phil started out importing Japanese running shoes Onitsuka Tiger in the US. He flew to Japan to pitch the managers of the company and wasn't necessarily expecting something to come out of it.

But he got there at the right time and the CEO agreed to start him off with 300 pairs of shoes. For the next months, he would sell the shoes from the trunk of his car.

World Travel

Phil Knight comes before the Steve Jobs-inspired generation of traveling to India and getting into "Eastern

philosophy".
So he just traveled the world instead and fell in love with the cradle of Western civilization: the Greek Acropolis.

Nike Temple

Phil Knight was so fascinated by it that he would stand for hours in front of the temple.
Years later he stumbled upon a play called "the Knights", where a king receives a new pair of shoes as a gift. Want to guess where did that take place?
In the Nike temple of course.

Partnering With Bill Bowman

Phil Knight was a runner himself and he had admiration for coach, Bill Bowman.

While working on his Onitsuka importing business, Bill accepted to join Phil to work on it.
That was great timing. Phil was training future Olympian athletes, and that was of great help to spread and give publicity to Phil's shoes.

The Passion for Soes: Shoe Dog

Phil was what in the industry was referred to as a "*shoe dog*", or someone who is obsessed with shoes.
He would take shoes apart, then assemble them again with different pieces and parts in his search for making them lighter and more performing.

However, Bill also helped with the shoe design himself. The first major sales success came from Bill's shoe-modified idea that Phil sent back to Japan for production.

The Early Nike Team

Phil Knight gives much credit to the early team of employees.
He says that one of the reasons for Nike's success was that early employees were all genius and misfits at the same time.
And because they were all misfits, they were able to see past their quirks and reach each other's hidden genius that most of society was missing out on.

Leadership Style

Phil Knight never micromanaged anyone (of course, the artistic types wouldn't like that anyway).
He believed in the mantra of telling people what to do and letting them surprise you with how they do it.

He also included the team in much of the company's strategic decision-making.
Including how to name the new company after they stopped the Onitsuka cooperation.

Nike Is Born

Indeed the company wasn't called Nike in the beginning. It was Blue Ribbon. But in 1971, when they decided to stop selling Onitsuka shoes and build their own shoes, they needed a new name.

The name Nike actually came up in Jeff Johnson's dream. It immediately reminded Phil of his previous experiences with the name (temple and novel) and they ran with it.

Why Did Phil Work Hard on Nike?

It might seem natural that Phil Knight would eventually think of starting his own line of shoes.
Yet one of the motivators to rely less on Blue Ribbon and Onitsuka was because of Onitsuka.
While Blue Ribbon was the exclusive US contractor for Onitsuka's track and field shoes, Phil heard that Onitsuka

was sending a manager to the US to look for other possible contractors.

That proved to be a major motivator for Phil Knight to work harder on his own line of shoes.

Onitsuka – Nike Lawsuit

In the early years of Nike, the budding company was threatened by a lawsuit from Onitsuka in Japan. To defend itself Nike counter-sued in the US.
Nike won that crucial lawsuit and it was a turning point: losing it would have put the company in jeopardy.

US Government Lawsuit

Phil Knight says that Nike's competitors, Converse and Keds, sued Nike for an obscure law on higher imported prices for specific types of shoes.

Albeit Phil had never heard of that customs law, it was real. In 1977 the government requested him to pay 25 million.

Phil Knight fully believed in his innocence, but he thought that fighting hard against the government would have destroyed goodwill. And he needed that goodwill. So he settled for 9 million.

IPO and Integrity

Phil Knight wasn't looking forward to an IPO.
He regarded Nike's culture of hard work combined with fun and play as one of the key characteristics of the company.
The IPO though would have helped solve some financial issues like bank over-reliance and difficult access to major credit. And the 25 million government lawsuit eventually convinced him the IPO was going to be helpful.

He designed the share structure in a way that would allow Nike to keep control instead of becoming "just another corporate machine".

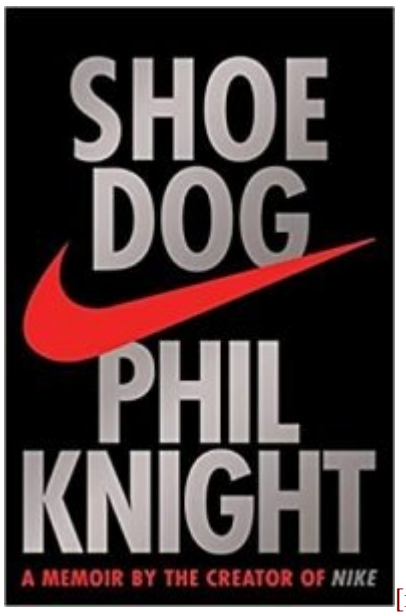
Phil Knight says that Nike managed to keep its culture and its strong ethical code, to which he attributes much of its international success.

Integrity and Sweatshops Scandals

Phil Knight says that Nike rented space in sweatshops just like many other corporations did.
But it was at the center of the cyclone because people knew that the Nike brand would bring more attention to the cause.

He says that the company always fought hard to improve the living and working conditions of all workers before the scandal broke. In one case, it was stopped by a local government official because workers earning more than doctors would be bad for the economy.

After the scandal, though, Knight realized they had to try harder and do more.



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Real-Life Applications

I think that the true lessons of "*Shoe Dog*" are not to be found in the actual words but in reading between the lines.

For me, they are:

- **Do Find Your Passion**

Reading *Shoe Dog* I was struck by the fact that Phil Knight was hugely passionate about sports and shoes.

This made me think of books such as *Grit* and *So Good They Can't Ignore You*. The former says you *develop* your passions, while the latter goes yet further saying that "following your passion" is bad advice for most.

Well, there are many exceptions to that and I think it's important instead you spend most of your time on something you are passionate about (or something you can develop a passion for).

- **Find Believers in Your Mission**

Shoe Dog shows that having early employees and cofounders who share your dream and work hard for it is key.

- **Find Great (and helpful) Cofounders**

A co-founder who can easily open a few doors thanks to his knowledge and connection can be a huge, huge asset.

CONS

- **Treating Sponsored Athletes Well? Some Silly Self-Promotion**

Autobiographies should all be taken with a grain of salt.
And "*Shoe Dog*" is no exception. Especially since Nike and Knight seem to have many public skeletons in the closets.

I found the part in which Knight says that he treats sponsored athletes well to be a bit ridiculous, to be honest. He prides himself on treating them as "real people" and not just vehicles to sell more.

However, that seemed a bit ludicrous to me: athletes paid millions don't need Phil's special attention and friendship. If anyone, then it's the lowest paid workers would need a bit more of that attention maybe. And that wasn't very forthcoming.

PROS

Great Entrepreneurship Lessons
Shoe Dog teaches more about entrepreneurship than many entrepreneurship books.

Review

Shoe Dog is an awesome memoir.
It's well written, with a captivating story and lots of lessons learned.

It teaches more about entrepreneurship than many books on entrepreneurship (including the difficulties of finding cash, even for fast-growing companies).

It also shows a lot of the power moves and dirty tricks companies use against each other.
Phil Knight's point of view is his point of view, of course, and I'd be very curious to hear what Onitsuka would say about him (for a different account on the Asian sweatshops, we have that point of view: check out *No Logo*).

In any case, inspiring entrepreneurs can learn a lot from Shoe Dog.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

Freakonomics: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Freakonomics is a mix of psychology, sociology, and economics.
Steven Levitt, the author, penned a best-seller thanks to a good mix of solid social-psychology principles and fun facts delivered within a frame of good entertainment.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Freakonomics Summary
  - Financial Incentives Are Just One of Many Incentives
  - Purely Financial Incentives Can Backfire
  - Which Incentives Work Depends on Context
  - Incentives Are Not Always as Aligned as They Seem
  - How “Experts” Exploit Us
  - Share Information, Because When In Doubt, People Expect The Worst
  - Correlation is Not Causality
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Bullet Summary

- Crime rates dropped because of the abortion law
- Economic incentives can crowd out moral or social incentives
- We all tend to jump to explaining events through apparent causation, but that can be spectacularly wrong

Freakonomics Summary

About The Author: Steven Levitt is an American economist and professor of economics at the University of Chicago. Stephen Dubner is an author and journalist, and he has a radio show and podcast.
Both of them enjoyed much success with Freakonomics, which then followed up with similar titles such as “Super Freakonomics” and “Think Like A Freak”.

Introduction

Freakonomics starts by taking aim at a pillar of old economic theory: that men are purely rational individuals who act on purely rational (and easily to computer) economic incentives.

Financial Incentives Are Just One of Many Incentives

For decades, economists loved the idea of economically rational incentives.
We are all rational, postulated the now almost defunct *Homo Economicus* framework.

Freakonomics does not deny that rational and monetary incentives play a huge role, but it takes a larger view on incentives.

It also includes social incentives, such as not wanting to look bad, and moral incentives, such as not wanting to do something which feels wrong.

Purely Financial Incentives Can Backfire

Focusing only on one side of the incentive equation, such as the financial ones, can indeed often backfire. The author uses the example of the now-famous daycare center in Hafa, Israel.
To reduce the number of late pick-ups by the parents the school started charging a $3 dollars fine for every time a parent would show up late.

Did that decrease the incidence of late pick-ups? No, it doubled it.
Why? Because the financial fine replaces the moral obligation. Now the parents felt that, by paying the fine, it would be OK for them to show up late.
Sort of a “pay per time”.

Lesson learned?

When you are thinking about introducing incentives, think instead if you can strengthen some already existing natural incentives. For example, the human need to not be unfair, which the daycare center could have leveraged.
If you are interested in the topic, I can highly recommend you read *Drive* by Daniel Pink.

Which Incentives Work Depends on Context

Imagine a contribution box where people can chip in money in exchange for bagels. It mostly relies on the incentives of wanting to be honest and wanting to look honest by the people who happen to be around.

What can it teach us about contextual incentives?
A lot.
Donations were higher when:

- It was a sunny day
- The overall office mood was higher
- During non-stressful holidays (Christmas and Thanksgiving are labeled as stressful)
- After 9-11 happened, which is probably because of a general surge in empathy

Incentives Are Not Always as Aligned as They Seem

Imagine you want to sell a house.

Theoretically, the interest of a real estate agent is the same as yours: selling it at the highest possible price.
However, the amount of commission the agent would earn for selling your house at a 10% higher price is not much compared to how much time they can save by closing the deal quickly and moving on to the next house.

Indeed data shows that when real estate agents sell their own houses, they keep them on the market longer to wait for a good offer.

How “Experts” Exploit Us

Levitt and Dubner explain how people in possession of specific knowledge can use our relative ignorance to cheat or overcharge us.

Lawyers and accountants are examples of experts who are in the position of overcharging their customers.
But also a car salesman can take the role of an expert when for example he leverages our fear saying that a cheaper model is “not so safe”.

When you feel someone is trying to play on your fears always delay decisions.
And then ask for a second opinion or research. The Internet is a God-send gift here in helping reduce the information disparity.

How Internet Change The Game

In the nineties, the prices of life insurance policies fell dramatically. Why was that? The author says it's because people were suddenly able to quickly compare prices.

Similarly, if you want to buy a house these days you can easily go online and look at the prices and you don't need to trust the real estate agent.

Share Information, Because When In Doubt, People Expect The Worst

Why do cars lose as much as a quarter of their value the day after they have been bought?
The author says it's because of the asymmetry of information.
Since the buyers cannot know what happened to the car and why you're really selling, they fear the worst.

Similarly, the very worst thing you can do on an online dating profile is to omit your picture. People will naturally think the worst.

Correlation is Not Causality

This is a mistake that people do all the time.
They see two variables move together and assume that one is causing the other. There might indeed be a *correlation* between the two variables, but the correlation does not imply causation.

Also read: Fooled by Randomness.

More Money Doesn't Win Election

A great example is that of money and politics. Usually, the candidate with the most expensive campaign wins. So people tend to think that money wins the election.

But the winner has more money only because people tend to back the favorite candidate at a higher clip. The author says that the winning candidate could cut their campaign spending by half and only lose 1% of the vote.

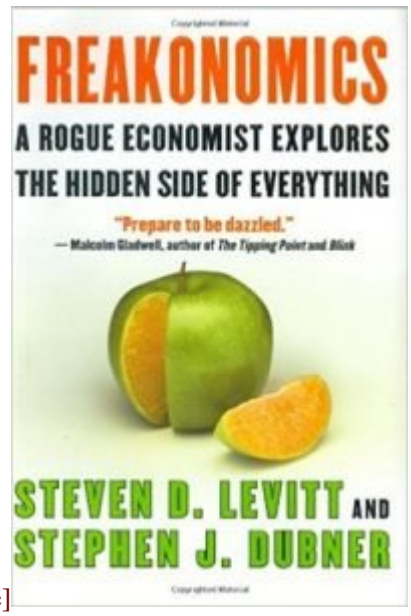
What's Near is Causal

When looking at what caused something, we also tend to give a disproportionate amount of attention to whatever is close and easier to be noticed.

For example, when the crime rate dropped precipitously in the early 1990s in the US most commentators said it was because of an improving economy, more police, gun control, and similar.
In reality, it was because of the abortion law. The most likely convict born in poverty in single-parent households. With abortion, fewer likely criminals were coming of age in 1989.

As Cialdini says "what's focal is causal".

My Note:
What causes crime to rise or fall is a heavily debated topic and I wouldn't necessarily jump to the abortion conclusion of the authors (albeit the increase in abortion might have certainly helped).

[image] 

Real-Life Applications

Don't Jump to Causal Conclusions!
It's tempting to see an event, look for a possible cause and automatically explain the event with the first cause we can find.
Especially so if there is an apparent link between the event and the "cause" we found.
But correlation is not causation.
P.S.: as a kid, it annoyed me to no end to see my parents always jumping to causal conclusions.

CONS

Bit Redundant
The second part of the book loses a bit of the edge

PROS

Pushes Us to Ask Deeper Questions
One thing Freakonomics does great and which I really appreciate it for, is to urge people not to stop at the first layer of analysis.
To get to the truth, we often have to first overcome our own biases.

Review

Freakonomics is a book that purports to use an economics approach to answer difficult questions with data and science.

In reality, it's a book of intriguing facts, data curiosities, and psychological biases.

Since most facts are indeed intriguing, the book has become a big success and a brand in itself.

I personally enjoyed it.
There is some interesting stuff and it's a good book, but it's not enough to make it into a must-read book.

Read This Instead:
If you're into psychological biases, go for "*Thinking Fast and Slow*". If you're interested in behavioral economics, go for "*Misbehaving*". And if you're interested in logical thinking and fallacies go for Nassim Taleb, for example,

"*Fooled by Randomness*".

In Short:
What Freakonomics does really well is to marry good information with the entertainment factor. So if you are looking for a book to entertain you AND to teach you something, I highly recommend it.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team is a book that, through a fable format, explains what works and what doesn't work with teams.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: Mainstream corporate, lacks depth and deeper power-insights
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team is a mainstream management model explaining why teams fail across five areas: trust, conflict, commitment, accountability, and results. It is useful as a simple corporate framework, but it is not a deep or scientific model of group behavior. From a TPM perspective, it should be read as a surface-level description of team coordination problems, which can be reinterpreted through underlying power, incentives, and status dynamics.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - Cohesiveness
  - #1. Trust: The Foundations of Great Teams
  - #2. Constructive Conflict
  - #3. Commitment
  - #4. Peer to Peer Accountability
  - #5. Focus on Collective Results
  - Great Team Spend Time Together
- Real Life Applications
- CRITICISM
- Review

Key Takeaways

- **Teamwork is a competitive advantage**: make it a priority
- **Trust is a key element** of performance, and it starts with the leader's vulnerability in admitting his mistakes <— **TPM Note**: leaders must avoid over-vulnerability and walk a line between openess, and maintaining authority
- **Everyone has to be on board** with the final decision, even when there is no consensus

Notes

About the Author:
Patrick Lencioni is an American writer of business books, particularly focusing on leadership and team management.

Foreword

"The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" uses a made up story to explain the key tenets of what makes a functional or dysfunctional team.
I will skip the story for the most part and focus on the key takeaways.

Cohesiveness

It's not easy to exactly define what makes team great, but there is a lot of consensus around one trait: cohesiveness. Cohesiveness is the adjective that identifies "teamwork".

The importance of cohesiveness can be routinely experienced in team sports, where a cohesive team of good or even average players routinely beat the dysfunctional team of stars.

Why Talented Teams Perform Poorly Without Teamwork

Patrick Lencioni says that the (potentially) star performers in poor teams waste time and energy in politics and game playing.
The politics and games take focus away from work and performance, resulting in lower morale, lower engagement and lack of focus.

#1. Trust: The Foundations of Great Teams

When there is trust the team is free to communicate openly about any issue, which leads to all issues being brought to the table.

And for all issues being brought to the table, everyone feels free to say what they think, and the best solution is more likely to emerge -without anyone getting hurt-.

To foster trust, the author says people must embrace vulnerability.
And the first person to show vulnerability should be the leader. In the parable of DecisionTech, the new CEO Kathryn Peterson started by sharing her weaknesses, her past mistakes and even admitting she had been fired in the past.

My Note: Oversimplification of open communication
There are deeper psychological and power-related issues that contribute to a team opening up or not, including diverging interests, level of competitiveness, advantages/disadvantages of cooperation, and dark triad traits in the team

#2. Constructive Conflict

Constructive conflict is what allows teams to openly debate ideas. And openly debate idea is the best way to increase the likelihood of reaching the best possible decision.
To be constructive a conflict must be focused on the topic and decision, and not on personal agendas.

#3. Commitment

Great teams know that a decision is better than no decision at all.

And they put their personal egos and agendas aside to stand behind any decision: even the ones they didn't initially want.

Lencioni says that it's critical that everyone gets a chance to be heard.
Once people feel that their opinion has been heard and considered that's often enough to make them feel as part of the decision making, even if the final decision is not what they advocated for.

#4. Peer to Peer Accountability

For me this was the best and most insightful part of "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team".

The author says that when good rapport develops in a team people also become reluctant to hold each other responsible for results and top performance.

Ironically, that's exactly what ruins those relationships as people hold back from what they really think and resentment can fester.

Also when there is no peer accountability, everyone feels less accountable for the final result. And the full omen of discipline and keeping a high standard falls to the team leader.

But when there is trust in a team people know that any possible criticism is not a personal attack but it's for the common good.
And they come to respect colleagues who help them tweak their performance as they know everyone is adhering to the same high standards.

#5. Focus on Collective Results

Great teams don't focus on personal achievements, but on collective, team achievements.

The author uses the example of Kathryn's husband, a basketball coach who had to let go of the most talented player in the team because he didn't care whether the team won or lost, but only for how much he scored.

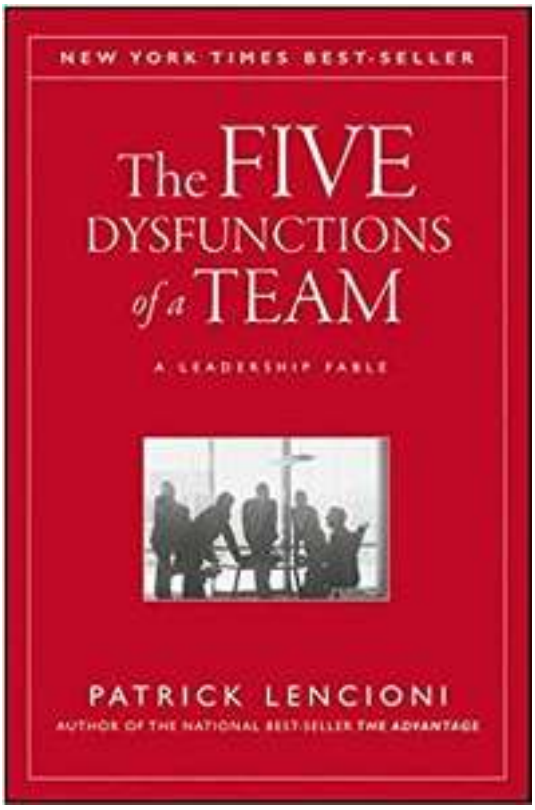
Lencioni says that the best goals are clearly defined and easy to measure.

My Note: Broad stroke take for average teams rather than top performer
I don't see necessarily a dichotomy between "own selfish interests" and team's interests.
Also, many star performers are often pushed to achieve by their high drive and hunger for victory. I don't think that superstars should be dropped by the team, but you should find solutions to make their talent work for the collective good.

For example, at DecisionTech Katryn's goal was to have 18 customers by the end of the year.
That was a common goal for everyone.
The result was that there were fewer fiefs in the company. The engineering department was willing to help and support the sales team instead of protecting its resource to achieve its own goals.

Great Team Spend Time Together

Lencioni makes the point that great, top-performing teams, spend a lot of time together.[image]



Real Life Applications

Hold Colleagues Accountable *Strategically*
Don't be afraid of holding colleagues accountable. If you don't, it will breed resentment. However, if you do poorly you can make enemies. So be careful. Do it *tactfully*, it will develop trust and respect.

Lead by Example
If you're the team leader, but also if you're a team member, never forget this simple rule: be the change you want to see in others.

> **Be the change you wish to see**

CRITICISM

Black & White View of Personal Ambition vs Collective Results
I feel that the personal drive for achievement does not stand in direct contrast to good teamwork. We all have our own egoistical drive and we should leverage the team for results, and not try to squash them.

Demonizies Selfish Drives: They're Natural, Not Always Harmful
Lencioni tends to label personal drives as "harmful", which is a common but imperfect way of looking at what is, after all, a natural drive for each one of us. Correct handling of selfishness is about managing and channeling, not repressing it or demonizing it.

Review

"*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*" is a corporate management classic touching on several foundational elements of effective team, but also missing out on other crucial aspects of psychology and power dynamics.

By largely skipping the 'darker' aspects of socialization, such as diverging interests, manipulation, or negative elements that must be handled, it's also a classic 'naive self-help'.

Read the best leadership books

Web Copy That Sells: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Web Copy That Sells is Maria Veloso book on web copy-writing. I found it to be a treasure trove of great insights.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Three Rules
  - The First Screen is Paramount
  - Questions Instead of Statement
  - Early Testimonials
  - Make Your Copy Look Good
  - Creating the Blueprint
  - Fleshing Out the Blueprint
  - The Price
  - Email Opt-In
  - Headline is Your 80-20
  - Some More Ideas
  - Zeigarnik Effect: Only One Path to Sales
  - Use NLP
  - Leverage Consistency
  - Cyrano Effect & Emotional Satisfaction
  - Trifecta Neuro-Affective Principle
  - Always Test Your Assumption
  - Some More Ideas
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Editorial copy usually beats sales-style copy
- Present the best benefits of your products in three different formats
- Always test your assumptions

Full Summary

The Three Rules

Maria Veloso has three rules to writing copy:

1. Don’t make your copy look like an advertising (editorial style always beat sales-letter style in all her tests)
2. Stop readers in their track

3. Capture email addresses (people rarely buy the first time)

The First Screen is Paramount

What users see first when they open your webpage is paramount. Therefore, make sure your headline is visible on the first screen and don't make the mistake many do of putting a big logo on your page.

Questions Instead of Statement

Questions are often more powerful because they get the reader to answer themselves instead of spoon-feeding information that is often rejected or not believed.
For example instead of saying:

> This diet will easily help you shed 10Kg
>
> What if you could lose 10Kg in the next one month?

When you ask a question, the reader is filling the canvas with his own colors, which is much more powerful.

Early Testimonials

Put the testimonials early in the copy as it helps made all the rest sound more credible.

Make Your Copy Look Good

Only 16% of readers read word for word (!).
Make your copy look "scannable" to the eyes by using bullet points, paragraphs, bold words, caps, underlining and pictures.

Also: present one idea per paragraph and use the "inverted pyramid" concept where you put the most important stuff on top.

P.S.: the P.S. is the second most read part of the copy, so put important stuff there.

Creating the Blueprint

First of all, you should identify your target audience. Once you know them well, the blueprint is the story-line that your copy should present. And you can develop it answering the following questions:

1. What's the problem
2. Why the problem hasn't been solved (you can dig deeper in the history of the issue and why past remedies are not ideal)
3. What's possible? (open the world of possibilities of what could happen for the prospect once the problem is solved)
4. What's different now? How will things change for your prospect? (explain how your product is the new and best way to solve the problem and give the prospect the world you painted in step 3)
5. What should you do now (buying your product, signing up to the newsletter etc.)

Fleshing Out the Blueprint

1. Inject emotions (does it frustrate you that… ; do you suffer from feelings of…; don't you just get mad when..)
2. Add bullets, bonuses, guarantee and trial closes
3. Credibility-building elements (testimonials, facts, quotes, case studies, stories)

4. Psychological and involvement devices
5. Replace rational words with emotional ones

Maria Veloso lists a whole two pages of emotional words you can use in Web Copy That Sells.
Final tip: replace the word “when” instead of “if” when describing what prospects will get, which assumes the sale.

The Price

Maria Veloso says that if you’re going for the editorial style you should never introduce the price before you have stated your offer.
I’m personally not sure this would work well for non-editorial sales pages.

Then she describes a few techniques to introduce price, such as dividing the price by 365 and stating the price per day, or by first mentioning a high price to anchor a high number and then positively surprise the prospect with a lower number.

Email Opt-In

Veloso says that the old “free newsletter” doesn’t work as well anymore and you should instead offer something for the visitors to give you their precious email.

Headline is Your 80-20

The headline is the most important part of your copy and the part where you should spend most of your time.
Write 40 or 50 headlines before you pick one, then narrow down to a few and let it sit for a day before you go back.
Your headline should answer the following question: what’s in it for me?

Veloso has an awesome example. For a discount club, instead of highlighting the savings, she would write:

Discover How to Give Yourself a 20 Percent Pay Raise— Without Having to Squeeze a Single Cent from Your Boss

Some More Ideas

- Make a promise in the beginning that you’ll reveal a big secret to make the prospect read everything
- Use a drop letter in the beginning of the copy
- Use multiple pricing structure
- Try to make your promises different (ie.: increase sales by 20, 30 or even 50%)
- Use a well-designed question to open your copy

> **It can’t be too long; only too boring**

Zeigarnik Effect: Only One Path to Sales

When we see too many interesting stories and links we are not satisfied until we explore them all. But this also means that we will not give enough attention to any of them.

You want to avoid it by making a clearer, simpler path to the action you want your prospects to take.

Use NLP

The author also gets a bit into NLP and hypnotic language.

Commands

> I wonder how quickly you are going to **buy this product**

Presupposition

> What will you do with your extra 2.000 Dollars of income?

Linguistic Bind

> While you're sitting there reading this page, you understand why you can't afford to waste anymore time

The first part is obviously true (sitting there reading this page), which lends credibility to the second part of the sentence.

Leverage Consistency

Ask a question in the beginning of the copy, such as:

> If I showed you a way to double your sales, would you be willing to invest 1h to learn the system?

At the end of the copy, after you tell them how it's possible to double their sales, you can remind of their initial commitment writing something like:

> Now that I've shown how you can undoubtedly double your sales, it's time for you to take action

You can read more here on the consistency principle.

Cyrano Effect & Emotional Satisfaction

The author says that what buyers really want is emotional satisfaction *during the sales process*. The benefits of your product actually become secondary.
She says that when you can give a lasting emotional experience during the sales process and you can get the buyers to like you, they will most likely be satisfied with the product almost independently of the product itself.

You can give an emotional jolt by either stirring pain or letting them imagine a pleasurable future.

Trifecta Neuro-Affective Principle

The best way to change your prospect's mind is to approach it from different angles. Usually, three is the best number.

You want to coalesce your idea or sales proposition to the essential three elements that must cover the following:

1. Emotional resonance
2. Redefinition (make the prospect see the problem in a new light)
3. Resistance (identify the objections and address them)

Then present them in three different channels so that you can cover all possible prospects' personalities.
For example you will use:

- Narrative

- Quantitative arguments
- Logic
- Aesthetic
- Humors
- Visual

The trifecta can be a stripped down copy you can use when you have little space and time. Otherwise, you can add and flesh out even more benefit when longer copy is needed.

Always Test Your Assumption

Finally, the author says that just because something worked for her or for clients of her won't guarantee they'll work for you.
You need to do your own testing.

And always test your assumption about your target audience.
Ask for feedback why they bought the product and what they liked about it. And then adjust your offer to reflect what the audience want.

Some More Ideas

- Make a promise in the beginning that you'll reveal a big secret to make the prospect read everything
- Use a drop letter in the beginning of the copy
- Use multiple pricing structure
- Try to make your promises different (ie.: increase sales by 20, 30 or even 50%)
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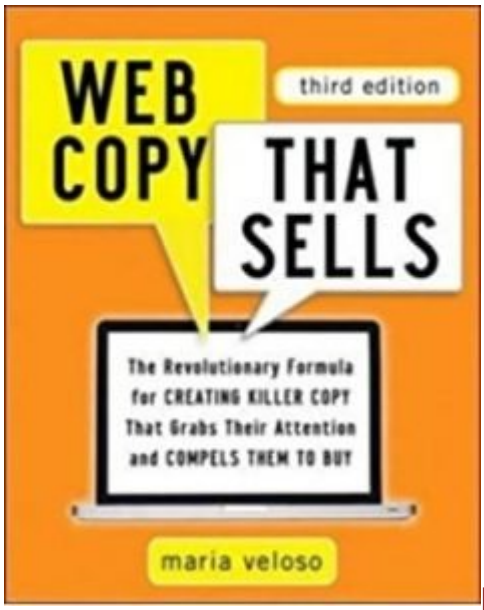

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CONS

- **Dated (in a funny way)**

Even the second edition by now is clearly dated in a world that advances and changes so quickly.

Myspace at 240 million users and Facebook at 100 million is all you need to hear to know it's basically a lifetime ago :).
However, that doesn't change the great wisdom of this book. The environment changes, but the human mind is still exactly the same.

- **Trifecta a Bit Confusing**

The idea of the trifecta seemed very powerful, but it was a bit confusing to me.

PROS

Overall Great
I have difficulties at pointing out all the great ideas I got from Web Copy That Sells because they were simply too many.

Review

I haven't read that many copy-writing books yet.

But of all the books and resources I have consumed on this topic, *Web Copy That Sells* is my favorite.

It opened my eyes on several copy-writing topics and I changed much of this website as a result of reading *Web Copy That Sells*.

Therefore, I can't do much else but recommend it.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

Never Split the Difference: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Never Split the Difference (2016) is a *book on negotiation* techniques in which Chris Voss, the author, makes the case that psychology, empathy, and rapport play a crucial role that has long been neglected and misunderstood.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - The 3 Voice Tones
  - Empathy to Win Negotiation
  - Allow Them To Say No
  - Make Them Say "That's Right"
  - Don't Use Deadlines as Weapons
  - You Must Learn About The Other Party
  - Anchor Their Emotions Low
  - The Tit for Tat Blunder
  - Make Them Feel in Charge With Calibrated Questions
  - Reinforce Commitment With The Rule of 3
  - The Three Types of Negotiators
  - Some Real Life Examples
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review
  - When Power Negotiating Works
- Overall Review

Takeaways

- Don't negotiate as if emotions didn't exist: they do exist and are often part of the problem you must tackle
- Use empathy: put yourself in the other person's shoes and label their feelings
- Make the other feel powerful, listen to them, summarize what they've just said until they say "that's right" and ask "how" and "what" questions

Notes

About The Author:
Christopher Voss is a former FBI negotiator turned into a businessman, public speaker, lecturer, and author.

The 3 Voice Tones

Chris Voss says there are three types of voices available to negotiators:

1. Late-night "FM DJ voice"

2. Positive playful
3. Direct and assertive tone of voice

The assertive one should be used sparingly as it says that you are trying to assert dominance either aggressively or passive-aggressively and people tend to push back.
Most of the time, you should be using the positive and playful.

Empathy to Win Negotiation

The author says that the old approach of "leaving the feelings outside of the negotiation" makes no sense.

How can you leave the feelings outside when feelings are part and parcel of the human experience and when feelings often are the main problem?

He says instead that a great negotiator always has empathy for the other side. That doesn't mean you agree, but it means you put yourself in his shoes.

Also, see this post on smart collaboration:

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Label Their Feelings

Once you recognize the feelings the other person must be feeling, you should put them into words and tell them about them.

In the book's example, with fugitives holed in inside a house, it was:

> **Chris Voss**: It looks like you don't want to go back to jail

And:

> **Chris Voss**: It seems like you're worried if you open the door they will come with guns blazing

Labeling decreases the intensity of the emotions.

Steps of Difficult Negotiations

1. Focus on clearing barriers to the agreement (why they don't want a deal is more powerful than why they want)
2. Label barrier or mirror the statement
3. Pause (let them talk and gather intel)

Allow Them To Say No

If the other person has a chance of saying no he is feeling safe and secure.

The mistake many salespeople do is to force a yes, which often is a hollow yes that will not lead to any follow-up.

Dump The Yes Ladder: Use the No Ladder

The author takes aim at the yes ladder and says that in spite of everyone raving about it, it's not the best sales tool because the final yes is not sincere.

Much better to let the prospect start with a no and empower him to choose the final yes instead after a series of "no"

that makes him feel in charge.

Example of NO Ladder

So, for example, when calling for campaign donations against the sitting president the caller would start by saying:

> **You**: Do you think the best day for America are ahead?
> **Him**: No
> **You**: And are you letting this president sit in office without a fight?
> **Him**: No

And then the caller would say: if you want to do something today to make sure that doesn't happen, you can give to the X committee, which is fighting hard for you not to make that happen.

The "no" script got a 23% higher return rate.

Make the Other Party Say No

The author says you must phrase your question to make the other party say no.

You can do it by saying something obviously wrong, like for example:

> So it seems like you are really eager to leave your job

Or you could talk about what they *don't* want.

Make Them Say "That's Right"

When they say "you're right" it's bad.
You say "you're right" when you don't own the conclusion… And when you plan on doing nothing about it.
When people say "that's right" instead you're doing great.

Don't Use Deadlines as Weapons

Chriss Voss takes aim at an old cliche of the negotiating theory: that you should hide your deadline or that will give an advantage to the other party.
He says hiding deadlines increase the risk of an impasse and they work both ways.

My Note:
I also find that a bit imprecise. As Roger Dawson says in *Secrets of Power Negotiating*, deadlines help the party with the most options and damage the party with fewer options (or who wants the deal the most).

You Must Learn About The Other Party

There is no encompassing form or fairness that everyone recognizes and none of us is really rational.
If you approach the negotiation table thinking the other party has your same opinion on what's a good deal or what's fair, you're wrong.

Using Fairness As Manipulative Technique

Chris Voss says that people who utter "we just want what's fair" are using it as a manipulation negotiation technique to get a concession from you.
I loved how the author uses it:

> I want you to feel like I'm being fair at all times, so please stop me if you like I'm being unfair and we'll

> address it

For more manipulative negotiation techniques also read:

> 20 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics

Anchor Their Emotions Low

If you need to offer something lower than expected, preface it by saying what you're about to tell them might be shocking and they won't like it.
That you're terribly sorry.
Then, once you set your expectations very low, you can say:

> but before I take it to someone else, I wanted to at least let you know. Here is what I can offer.

Faced with the options of nothing or something and having their expectations much lowered, they will take you up on the offer.

The Tit for Tat Blunder

You have been taught negotiations all wrong.

The author says that much of Western negotiation rests on the mistaken assumption that you always have to ask for something back.
Or that when you give something, you must necessarily get something back.

That paralyzed his team's effectiveness, he says.
For example, they wouldn't ask the kidnapper to put hostages on the phone for fear that they would say no and that they'd be embarrassed.
And they wouldn't ask much for fear they'd have to give something back. Everything was a race for the negotiator: if you ask, then you owe.

Make Them Feel in Charge With Calibrated Questions

Calibrated questions start with "how" and "what" and are designed to open up dialogue, make the other party feel in charge, and let them negotiate with themselves.
Some examples are:

- What caused you to do it (instead of accusatory "why did you do it")
- What did you have in mind when you…
- How could we go about doing it

Avoid "why" questions as they seem accusatory. And bite your tongue and never overreact.

> **There is great power in treating jerks with deference**

Reinforce Commitment With The Rule of 3

Earlier, we saw how useless empty yeses are.
To confirm and strengthen the commitment to a course of action instead, let them confirm the resolution three times.

1. First time they propose or agree to something, that's number one
2. Second time you summarize and let them confirm with "that's right"
3. Third time you ask a calibrated "how" or "what" question about the implementation

The Three Types of Negotiators

There are three types of different psychology and dispositions when it comes to negotiating:

1. Accommodators
2. Assertive
3. Analysts

It's a common mistake to think that assertive are the most successful.

Each style can be successful, but **to reach your peak potential you need elements from all three styles**.
A study also shows that 65% of some of the most successful negotiators are accommodators.

Some Real Life Examples

I had written a few posts before here on real-life negotiation.
Without ever having read "*Never Split the Difference*" before, I realize that most of the techniques I used there were exactly what Chris Voss recommends.
Check them out:

- Negotiating an unfair refund request
- Lowballing with psychology
- Make friends, not enemies

And a few sneakier tricks:

- Sell a house fast
- Buy a house low
- Manipulation techniques

In a way, Never Split the Difference also vibes well with *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in that it seeks to save people's faces and avoid needless escalation.
Here is a good example of when such an approach would have worked wonders:

Real-Life Applications

Keep this one in mind:

- **The More They Say "I" the Less Power They Have**

I loved this rule of thumb.
The more someone says "I" trying to sound more powerful, the more likely it is they're clueless and have little actual power.
More shrewd people use "we", "they" and "them".

CONS

- Splitting the difference works

Says Thomas Schelling in his classic '*The Strategy of Conflict*":

> The frequency with which final agreement is precipitated by an offer to "split the difference" illustrates the same point, and the difference that is split is by no means always trivial. More impressive, perhaps, is the remarkable frequency with which long negotiations over complicated quantitative formulas or ad hoc shares in some costs or benefits converge ultimately on something as crudely simple as equal shares, shares proportionate to some common magnitude (gross national product, population, foreign-exchange deficit, and so forth), or the shares agreed on in some previous but logically irrelevant negotiation.

- **A Bit Braggart**

My personal feeling is that the author came across as conceited at times.
The way he says "they're wrong" or "you're wrong" gives me a feeling of someone who's taking the higher ground on the reader.
Talking about a "student of his" who did a mistake, he is careful to highlight "this is before he was a student of mine". And I felt that was unnecessary.

- **Some Bad Suggestions** (or at left, very risky)

In an effort to make the other party say no to make him feel in charge, the author uses the sentence:

> it seems like you really want this project to fail.

That's not a good idea in my opinion because it won't just push the other party to say no, but it will also actively make them dislike you.

There was also a rent negotiation example, with the student/renter talking to the real estate agent. And the student, to make the agent say no, tells him

> "*it seems like you would rather run the risk of keeping the place unrented*"

That is a barely veiled threat and sounds very confrontational to me (in spite of the author presenting his method as "working along" instead of ever risking an escalation).

- **Seems a Bit Simplistic at Times**

At times it feels to me like "*Never Split the Difference*" is a bit shallow and simplistic.
It stresses so much these little moments of interaction as if they were the big secrets to changing everything.

The pause after you say X or the words "that's right" in the author's opinion are the turning moment of all successful negotiations.
As if all of them were infallible. And as if someone could not use different words to convey the same meaning (ie.: "that makes sense" instead of "that's right").

- **Unfocused**

Never Split the Difference is a book with lots of genius, but sometimes it feels like it's disorganized genius.
I had so many notes after reading it, but putting everything together to make sense of it felt like a major task on my part -whereas it should have probably been on the editor's part-.

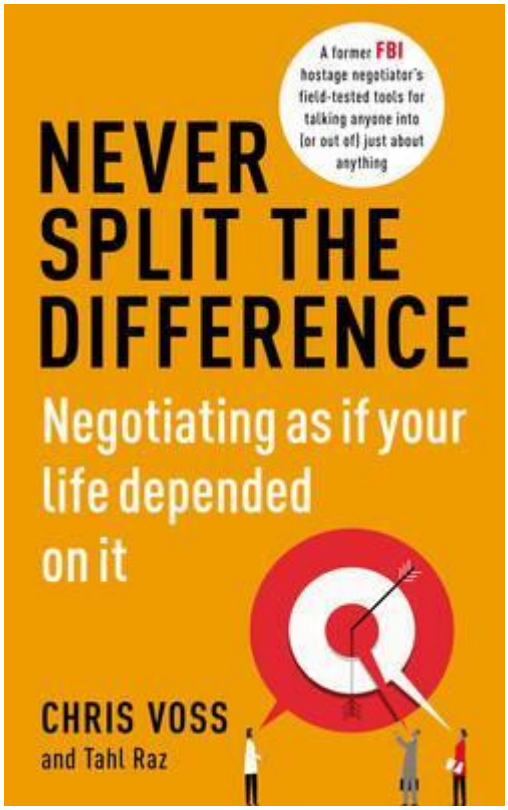
PROS

Lots of Genius

Never Split the Difference is one of the best books on negotiation. Chris Voss has a great grasp of human psychology and uses it effectively.

Brings Emotions to The Fore
I suppose that for several years, in many classes, the negotiation was taught as if the players were perfectly rational and one should keep emotions out of the equation.
That's silly, and Never Split the Difference makes that very clear.

Many Examples
I appreciated Never Split the Difference where there are a lot of dialogues and examples.



Review

I enjoyed Never Split The Difference.

Yet, part of me feels this cannot be the only book on negotiation you need.
Sometimes you will meet negotiating parties that are out to take advantage of you, scare you, or simply don't play by the fair rules.

And of course, there are times when more aggressive negotiation styles win:

When Power Negotiating Works

There are many situations in which you don't need to make the other feel powerful and in which you're better off crashing the opponent -also read *Secrets of Power Negotiating*–.
The author says that two pit bulls will only make a bloodbath where everyone loses. True.
But you don't necessarily need to give power to a chihuahua or to a pit bull to which you got a gun pointed.

Attention: I'm not saying you need to crush your opponent. I do am saying though that there countless situations where some aholes will take advantage of a weak opponent to bully him.
And many situations where you are better served by making a show of power instead of one of deference.

Basically: don't overgeneralize that one method is "superior". And train yourself to at least have the guts to be in charge and push back.

Overall Review

Never Split the Difference is a great book on negotiation that takes (good) psychology into account.
I wish it were written and organized a bit more clearly, but it's a must-read anyway for those who want to learn negotiation.

Check out the best books on the negotiation or **get the book on Amazon**

Words That Sell: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Words That Sell by Richard Bayan is a big collection of all the most common expressions copywriters use in their copy.
You can use it as an inspiration to compile your own copy.

Contents

- Full Summary
  - Part I – Grabbers
  - Part II – Description and Benefits
  - Part III – Clinchers
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Full Summary

It's not easy to summarize this book because it's a dictionary-style list of entries. But here are a few to give you an idea:

Part I – Grabbers

- Free!
- Free Gift
- Exclusive offer
- Win…
- New!
- Sale
- X off!

Part II – Description and Benefits

- Magical
- Special
- Fresh
- You'll fall in love with..

Self Improvement

- Fulfillment
- Rewards
- Self-mastery
- Life-enriching
- Unlock your…

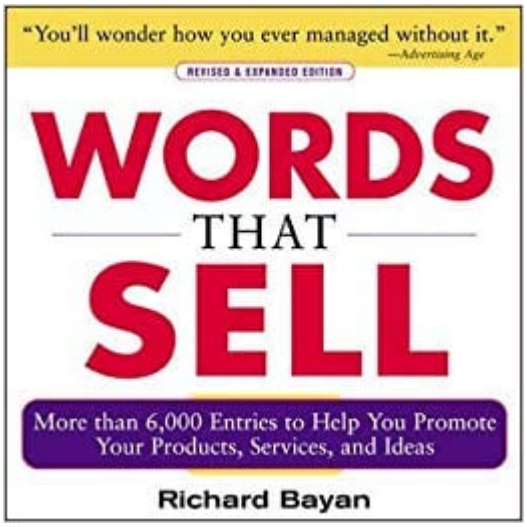
- Taps your inner strength
- Discover your inner talents..

Part III – Clinchers

- Without a doubt
- In short, this X will help you…
- Why settle for X when you can have Y?
- What have you got to lose?
- Ask yourself if you can afford not to…
- Put our X to the test
- Discover why our customers keep coming back for more

P.S.

- I should also mention that…
- Did you know that…?
- Don't forget:
- To claim your free X, simply…



[image]Real-Life Applications

Flick Through It
Flick through the book to your relevant section and you might get a few ideas to get you going in your copy

CONS

No Guidance
All words are tossed out in the same list, there is little guidance as to what might sound better for your specific needs.

PROS

Lots of Words
There are really a lot of words and expressions which can help you get unstuck when you're at a loss for words or

adjectives.

Sparks Ideas
I guess it can be very helpful also to branch out for new ideas. If you're writing about self-improvement for example you might not necessarily need to use the words in the book, but it can help you see other possible benefits of the product that you weren't even considering.

Review

In the era of Google Dictionary *Words That Sell* loses a bit of its utility. But it's still useful since the categories are very detailed. So for example you have " luxurious" or "money-making" and all possible related adjectives and expressions are categorized for that specific copywriting need.

Personally, I was looking for a "normal" book and I was a bit disappointed to find out there is little explanation or little guidance as to what might work better.
But it's supposed to be a collection of words and expressions, and it does what it's supposed to say.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

How to Build Emotional Connection With Women & Friends

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 July 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This world desperately needs men who can build an emotional connection with women-and anyone else, for that matter.

We have an oversupply of people screaming “me, me, me”, craving to be heard, rewarded, and “popular”. These entitled folks do not know how to connect with others.

This leaves **millions of women who are starved for a human connection.** And it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the empathic man who can make women feel bonded.

Learn how to bond and connect, and everyone will want you: men and women.

An example from a friend of mine I bonded with:

“Bro, it’s always awesome to hear from you, so psyched to see you again”. And I felt the same. That’s the beauty of bonding with people

Step by step, this is how you develop a deep emotional connection with someone:

Contents

- 1. Start Light: Vibing
- 2. Make People Comfortable to Open Up
  - Character Development
  - Techniques
  - If They Don’t Want to Open Up
  - Example: Emotional Connection With A Woman
  - Example: How Growing Distance Looks Like
- 3. (Sub-)Communicate You’re “Safe”

- 4. Alternate Depth and Light-Heartedness
  - Example
- 5. Joke and Laugh Together
- 6. Let Them Speak, Don't Fix Them
  - Example
- 7. Let the Bond Develop Naturally, Don't Force It
- 8. Develop "Us Bubbles"
  - Example: "Us-Bubble"
- 9. Experience New Things Together
  - 9.2 Do Something Crazy and Adventurous
- 10. Label and Cement the Emotional Connection
  - Example: Officializing Your Emotional Bond
- Bonus for Love: Spend a Whole Perfect Day Together
- Mindset of Deep Connection
- SUMMARY

1. Start Light: Vibing

Rather than jumping on the deep end, you start *vibing* first.

Vibing is a mix of both breadth and depth, but prioritizing breadth and light-heartedness.
We might describe vibing as:

> Generally upbeat conversation with rapid changes of topics and pace, some deeper-dives, and snippets of important information about oneself.

See "Seduction University" for an example.
But also read here for troubleshooting:

- **Avoiding the "too deep" trap**

2. Make People Comfortable to Open Up

How do you make people comfortable opening up?

The first and deepest aspect is always character-based.
And then we can add the "techniques".

Character Development

You want to:

1. **Accept people's dark side**, something we repeat often here, starting with *your own* dark side
2. **Grow curious about people**, besides bonding, you will also learn more about people and life
3. **Find pleasure in making people feel accepted and cherished**, which automatically makes you accepting of people
4. **Find pleasure in bonding and connecting**. Or even more: only accept as close friends those who can and also want to go deeper

Techniques

Here is how:

1. **Talk, share, ask and listen**. Talk about your experience, likes and dislikes, relate to theris
2. **Ask *personal* questions as well**. Without personal sharing it's just a distant, cold, forgettable chit-chat. The secret is doing it naturally. The mindset is that for you it's normal that close people share personal information
3. **Ask *deep* questions**, for example, "what do you think of… " or "how do you feel about that". They're one of the best ways to get to know people and are almost as important as personal questions
4. **Actively listen without judging**, pay attention, nod, and ask clarifying questions
5. **Empathize**, even more important than "sharing back". Berg and Archer found that people react more favorably to expressions of concern and interest than to reciprocation of intimacy of disclosure
6. **Share back your own story/experience/feeling**. Research shows that self-disclosure is one of the most effective techniques to develop rapport. Asking only is taking. Sharing back is a win-win.
   Best is sharing back with:
   1. Similar topic
   2. Similar level of "depth" / vulnerability
   3. Similar results
   4. Similar feelings you had
7. **Disclose something personal/intimate** *at the appropriate time*, after they disclose or as you get closer. A meta-analysis showed that people who engage in intimate self-disclosure are liked more than those who disclose nonintimately
   ⚠ Calibrate! Revealing "too much too soon" won't be reciprocated and will make you disliked
   - Don't be afraid of seeking support if you need, it makes your friend feel valued (Routledge Handbook of Communication)
8. **Reframe it positively or back to lighter conversation**, once people are done sharing and as soon as it's getting *too* heavy so you keep it fresh, vibrant, and upbeat
9. **Rinse and repeat**

That simple.

Extra tip:

Match your facial expressions to the feelings and mood of your speaking partner and to their story. It shows that you're attentive and in sync.
But to also be an uplifting force, over-match the positive feelings, and under-match the negative ones.

If They Don't Want to Open Up

In a few cases, people might be uncomfortable with deep questions.

That's OK.
You might have gone too deep, or it might be too soon and you need to develop more trust and rapport.

If they push back, this is what you do then:

1. **Stay nonplussed, say they're normal questions** for you but you're cool if they prefer not sharing. Hold the frame that is close to you means going deeper and personal
2. **Answer the question yourself first** to show there's nothing wrong with the topic. That shows that you're not asking anything you wouldn't share yourself, resetting the frame from "taking" to "sharing"

If they still dig their heels, it's possible that you are not comfortable yourself yet, or you are not projecting an aura of sincerity.
Step back to "safer" chit-chat and go deeper again later on.

Internalize That Going Deep Is Normal

Creating a deep bond is about leadership.

Leadership, and personal growth as well.

To execute this part correctly, you have to believe in that going deep is how you develop strong and win-win relationships.

Asking and sharing deep topics is the best way to both interact with others and *care* about others.

Whenever someone pushes back, you can reply:

> What else should we be talking about, the weather outside?
> This is how people get to know each, this is what matters to people: personal feelings, dreams and desires, what they truly like and dislike.
> Or at least, that's the only way I see to develop good relationships.

That's how you hold the frame of reference and acquire power and respect.

Example: Emotional Connection With A Woman

This is how deep connection looks like at the beginning of a love story:

> **Her**: I always feel this pressure of being a strong and independent icon of womanhood (…) but loving someone and being loved means so much to me <— something deep and personal, not something she would disclose to anyone
> **Him**: Sometimes I dream about being a good father, a good husband (…) but if I'm really honest with myself I'd rather die knowing that I was really good at something (…) than I just been in a nice and caring relationship
> *<— shares back something in the same vein, while also indirectly displaying drive and ambition*

They're both so emotionally invested.
And that emotional investment is golden.
Plus, they're probably thinking, "My God, I've never opened up so much with anyone else". And they both feel a *special* connection.

What he could do even better is to ask her questions to better understand her, before launching into his own story.

P.S.:
This is similar to how I got together with my first serious girlfriend.

Example: How Growing Distance Looks Like

> **Him**: do you smoke weed?
> **Her**: not really
> **Him**: (surprised, almost shocked) you don't? <— he expands on the huge difference between them
> **Her**: no
> **Him**: at all? <— he keeps expanding on their difference
> **Him**: like in the morning? <— and again…

Little later, she leaves.

3. (Sub-)Communicate You're "Safe"

The deep sharing in the above example can only happen if:

1. People trust each other to **listen without judging** them
2. People trust each other to **keep their stuff private**

The good thing is that by becoming a generally high-quality individual you naturally give off vibes of dependability (including privacy).
Some more tips to communicate confidentiality:

1. **Say it:** if they seem worried to share something, say that if they wish so, it will die with you
2. **Stay cool**: over-eager people are untrustworthy. Act like your world isn't gonna change either way
3. **Look away more often**: this is the nonverbal equivalent of "giving them more space"
4. **Stay silent**: the verbal equivalent of giving them more space

Do it as a priest would:

> **Godfahter**: (confesses his sins)
> **Priest**: (looks aways, stays quiet, does not judge him)

And never forget to empathize when they share an issue.
NEVER joke about a meaningful misfortune (example here).

4. Alternate Depth and Light-Heartedness

To go beyond small talk and "deep" is a popular advice.

And that's good advice.

BUT…

The mistakes that many do -and that I was doing- are:

1. Always trying to go even deeper
2. Over-focusing on depth at the detriment of fun/vibing
3. Staying deep for too long, until it feels "too much"

There are two issues with staying too deep for too long:

1. **It can feel invasive**: People are cautious when first sharing intimate details. Digging too much can make them feel like they're over-sharing. So take it easy with very personal details.
2. **It can feel "too grave"**: If you stay too deep, too long, at a certain point it feels "too much". Too serious, too dark, or too grave.
   As someone said, "girls want to have fun". So do guys, for that matter.

When it feels too invasive or "too grave", the conversation sputters, the "magic" breaks, and neither of you will know how to save it.

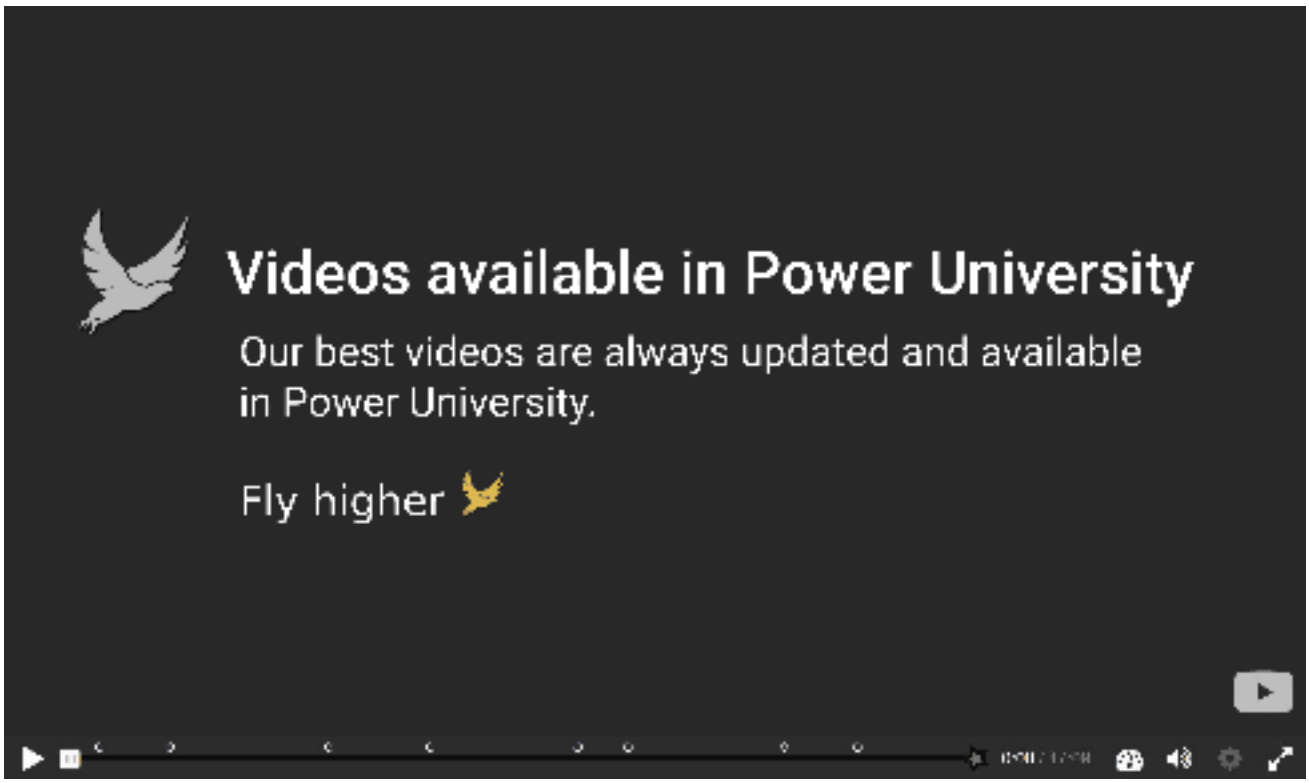
You both know that you had some magic for a while… But now it's gone.

The solution?

1. **Alternate**: light-heartedness and "depth"
2. **Keep it light throughout**: works better with more easygoing, fun-loving people and takes the edge off very personal questions in early dating

Example

Here's an example of "keeping it light throughout":



> **Him**: (with silly voice) Describe your first sexual feelings toward someone

They share very personal stories about themselves and "who they are". But under his leadership, they do so in a very light and fun-loving fashion.

Hawke breaks an important emotional and personal boundary.
And albeit "boundaries breaking" often implies a negative connotation, it's the opposite in developing an emotional bond.

An emotional bond requires you to break personal boundaries that other people cannot cross.

But *you* can, *because* you are emotionally close.

5. Joke and Laugh Together

Some people think the emotional connection is "deep talk" and childhood traumas.

Not true!

A connection can also be based on mostly joking and laughing.

Laughing releases oxytocin and sub-communicates you share similar personalities. Laughing together, to use the words of an ex-girlfriend of mine, communicates that you "ride the same wave".

I'd personally still have my moments of more serious talk.
But it's OK to have 80% of humor and laughter.

Unique Humor Bonds You The Most

As a rule of thumb:

The weirder the humor is, the more you two are bonded.

Laughing while watching a comedy together is good, but if you can laugh about the "killer penguin" story you just

made up, it's even more powerful.

The made-up "killer penguin" is a story unique to you two, and that creates the "us bubble".

Use Politically Incorrect Humor

Politically incorrect humor is also great.

It sub-communicates that you two trust each other, are both open-minded and also creates an "us bubble".

Sometimes I make it a point of being racier and raw early on indeed: PC is for acquaintances.
The "real" you with all its quirks and kinks is where the real emotional connection takes place.

Of course, please note that not everyone is ready for PC humor.
So test it early on, and if it doesn't work, cut it out.

However, as a general rule of thumb, most guys will gain by being more irreverent.

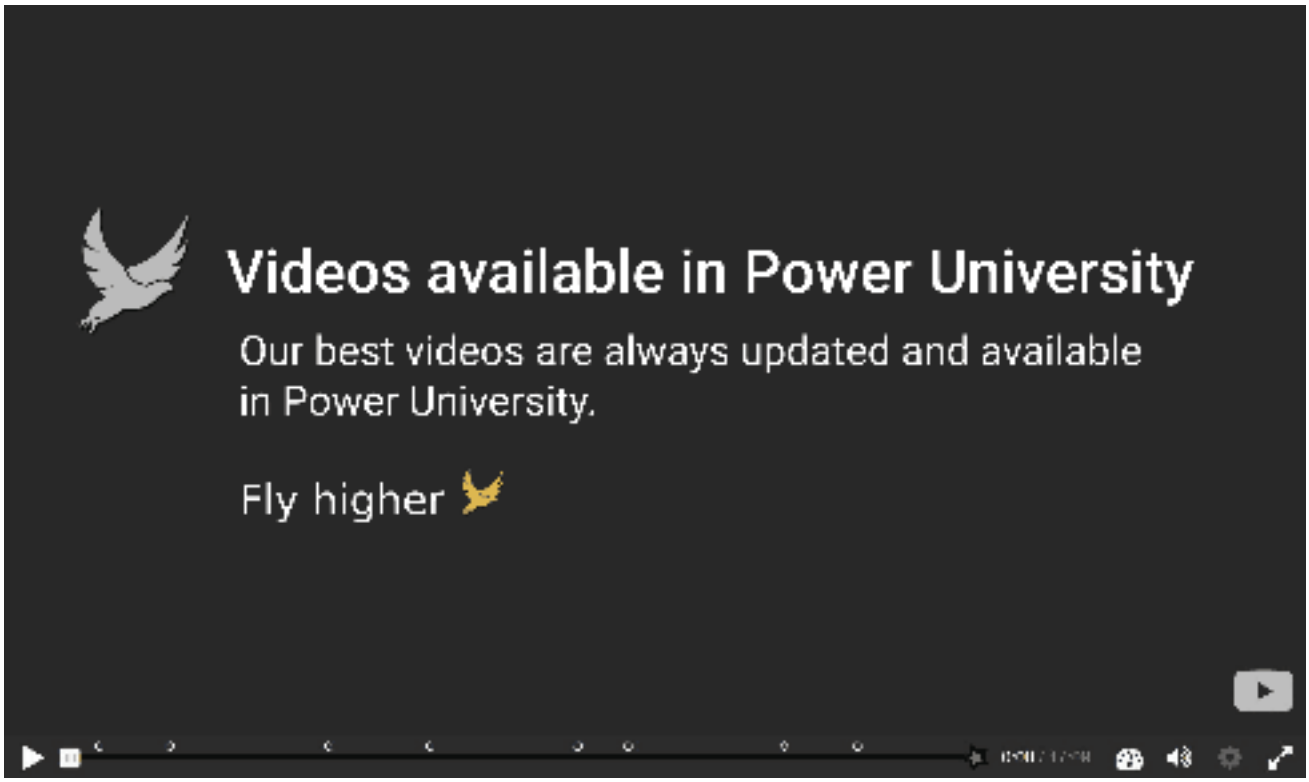
6. Let Them Speak, Don't Fix Them

Men have a tendency to "fix" things -and people-.

That's often a mistake when people are opening.
Instead of finding solutions or sharing facts, just let them talk.

Example

See here, and notice the dynamics:



> **Her**: I think I am afraid of death twenty-four hours a day. That's why I'm on the train. I could have flown to Paris. I'm just afraid of flying.

Did you notice her fear is irrational, and makes no sense?
Notice how Ethan Hawke does the opposite of what most men would do.

Such as:

1. **Talking facts, data, and "rationality"**: people want to be understood and accepted, not schooled on what's "rational" or "true"
2. **Fixing it**: there is a time for teaching. And it's not right when people open up first
3. **Encouraging**: "I believe in you, you can do it". Please don't go motivational guru on people. Not right away, at least
4. **Using her vulnerability to look cool**: worst of all, some men exploit vulnerability as their chance to social climb, look cooler, and do some alpha male posturing.

For example, they might say:

> **Doofus**: Ehehe I love planes instead. The more the turbulence, the more I sleep.
> I'm not afraid of death anyway…

Wow, that's a tough guy right there, eh?
How is she supposed to feel after someone exploits her vulnerability to parade his "superiority"?
She won't open up again any time soon, and she'd be right.

Notice instead how he is the epitome of full acceptance.
He just says:

> **Cool unjudgemental guy:** I bet

Boom.
That's the kind of man that makes people feel free to be themselves.

7. Let the Bond Develop Naturally, Don't Force It

It's not a sprint.

It's a marathon.

Trying to force the connection is a common mistake.

Some authors say that to make people fall in love, you have to repeat "me too" as often as possible and as quickly as possible.
Not true.
Just imagine the following:

> **You**: Maybe we can get an ice cream. I love their pistachio ice cream
> **Her**: Me too, I love pistachio!
> **You**: Especially pistachio ice cream with a cone, cones are awesome
> **Her**: Me too, I love cones!

You'd think she either has no personality, or she's forcing it.
And if a man thinks that, it's 100x worse for a woman.

Instead, you want to give time to people to come out of their shells and *then* connect.
Then it will be a deep connection.

Another common mistake in forcing a connection is telling people "I know how you feel".
That can be OK once you know someone or if you have a spectacular connection. But early on, in most cases, don't

tell people you *know*, it feels stifling. Let *them* share their feelings.

Plus, it can spectacularly backfire when you misunderstand people.

See here an example:

> **Godfather**: (tells her how she feels instead of asking and letting her)
> **Her**: (thinking to herself "God, he's so clueless")

He jumps in early with his *own* interpretation and builds a castle on wholly wrong foundations.
That was the last straw on the camel's back: now she *knows* there is no bond between them.

Indeed, relationship researcher John Gottman says you don't get any brownie points for "guessing their feelings right" and you should stop any mind-reading efforts. They'll be grateful you give them the time to do so themselves.

8. Develop "Us Bubbles"

Same technique in "how to make her fall in love".

I remember a late morning, a few years ago.

Me and a woman who later became my girlfriend were sitting on a bench, in front of a small park.

We were watching kids and dogs running and people walking by.
And we commented and made fun of the world that lay in front of our eyes.
As if we were watching a movie.

This is very powerful.
When you look at the world as if it was you two peeking from a window, you are communicating *"that's the world… and here it's us"*.

Little later she blurted out:

> **Her**: It feels as if it's just the two of us in the world

That was the moment I knew she was falling hopelessly in love.

Example: "Us-Bubble"

Here is a good example from Family Guy:

> **Both**: (perched in a little corner, observing and making fun of the world around them)
> (silence when they both feel the bubbling romance of love enveloping them)

And before you think this is staged…

This is almost exactly what happened to me with an ex of mine.
And right after the pause, her voice pregnant with emotion, she muttered "I feel like it's only the two of us in the world".

9. Experience New Things Together

What do you think people are more likely to feel for you:

You have coffee, dinner at a pizza parlor, and a walk in the shopping street.

OR:

You do a skywalk, visit a monument for the first time, or go to a small restaurant with a cool “wine-tasting” concept.

Notice that “skywalk” is the only “crazy” and out-of-the-ordinary thing in there.
You don’t need to do that the first time you meet someone -but it’s great for later-.
Instead, do the other two first. They are easy. BUT they feel like *novel experiences*.

People relish new experiences.
People feel alive when having new experiences. And they’ll feel alive *with you*.
You become a memorable person who brings life into their lives, who makes memories, and who expands their horizons.

That bonds people *positively*, rather than “just” bonding.

And if you’re a man and *lead* women in that new experience, then we also have seduction.

9.2 Do Something Crazy and Adventurous

Warning here:

People have different risk appetites, and it’s possible that you can overdo “crazy”.

BUT, if you keep it “low intensity”, it works for the vast majority of people.
And if it’s not enough… You can calibrate as you go (or find someone new if *they* are too crazy for you :).

Doing anything exciting or mildly risky also produces the same chemicals responsible for attraction and infatuation.
It works wonders in romantic settings but also deepens the bond with same-sex, straight individuals.
This is why soldiers develop a strong camaraderie.

Here is another classic movie (The Dreamers):

Nothing too crazy, but exactly what makes a love story memorable.

10. Label and Cement the Emotional Connection

Cementing makes the frame “stick”.

If I wanted to cement the frame in the example above and get us even closer, I’d have said something like:

> **Her**: It feels as if it’s just the two of us in the world
> **Me**: (pause) Yeah. It feels that way. I think we have a great connection. I’m glad we met

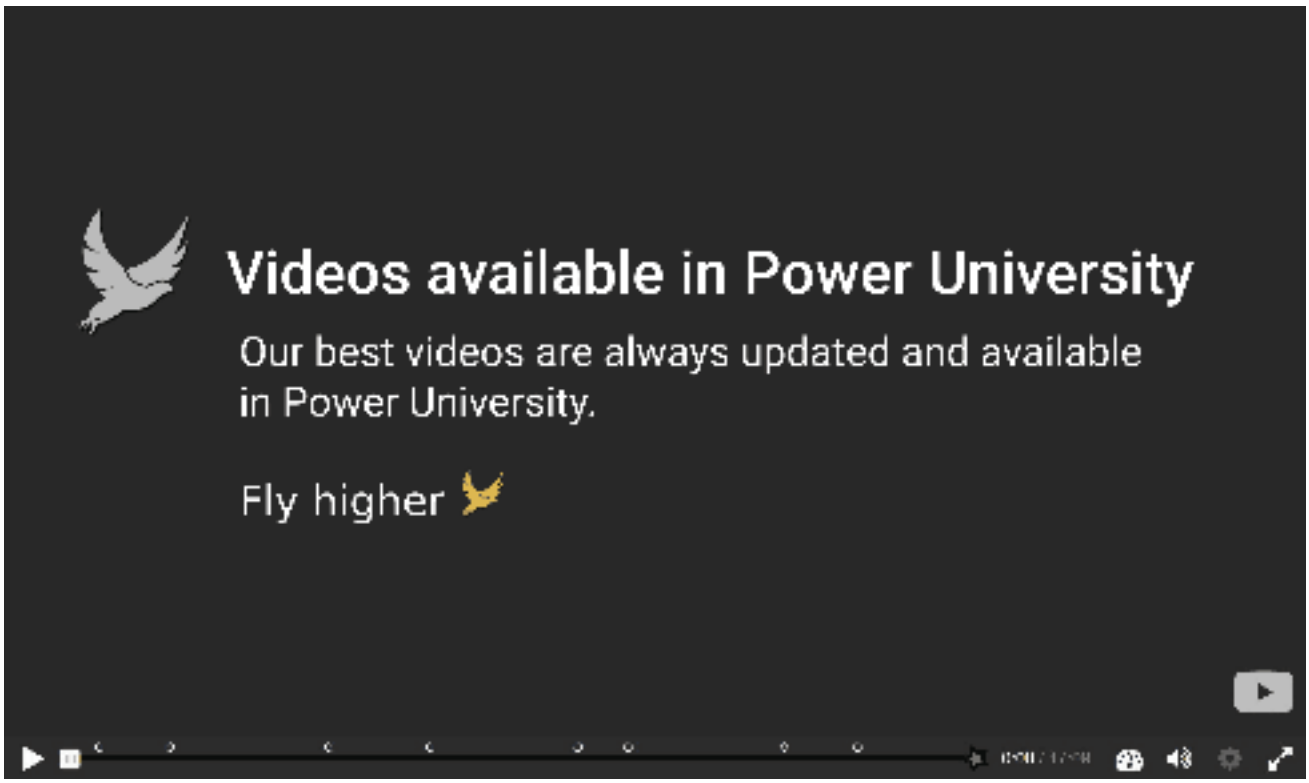
And then maybe kissed her.
That’s a properly executed powerful vulnerability.

Why would you do that?

Because emotions are fleeting and **when you label emotions, you strengthen them and crystallize them.**

Example: Officializing Your Emotional Bond

Again from this wonderful movie:



> **Him**: I wish I had met you earlier, I really like talking to you
> **Her**: Yeah, me too

That's textbook labeling and cementing guys.
Labeling increases both the power and duration of your emotional connection.

See:

- **Frame control basics**

Bonus for Love: Spend a Whole Perfect Day Together

We have so far reviewed several videos from "Before Sunrise".

And what makes "Before Sunrise" a textbook example of a deep emotional connection is the presence of:

1. **Depth**, as we reviewed so far
2. **Breadth,** with different experiences
3. **Time**, spending the whole day together

Spending lots of time through different venues and environments has a "time distortion field effect".

It feels both like you've just met, and yet like you've known each other forever.
Mix all together, and you get **an explosive cocktail that makes people think "all of my life, where have you been".**

The fact that you *don't* know each other for a long time (or never knew each other so deeply), creates a contrast that is the basis of "whirlwind romance".

If you can't do the whole day, or if you're just bonding with friends, afternoon to evening also works great.
For example, *do* first something, then go eat together.

Mindset of Deep Connection

This is the mindset to reliably build emotional connections:

> I believe that getting to know the *real* person behind our masks is the best way to interact with people, and it's good for me, and them.

Once you internalize that mindset, the next steps are the "courage" and spontaneity of the execution:

1. Become a person who is comfortable talking about deep and personal topics
2. Grow the courage to ask and share deep and personal topics
3. Learn the technicalities of vibing and keeping a good flow

Follow this guide, and you will be shocked at how quickly and reliably you can develop deep emotional bonds. Because here is the truth about this world:

Most people are more scared and more lonely than they care to admit.
And we all long for someone who comes along and cares and listens with empathy and acceptance -or, dare to call it, "with love"-.

Then it's not really about *making* people open up anymore.
It's about *allowing* them to.
And they will love you for that chance.

SUMMARY

A deep connection is an intertwining of souls.

It's supremely pleasurable, whether it's romantic or social.

Learning to go deep and develop emotional connections will take your social skills to the next level.

For advanced social skills, see Power University

How to Write Seductive Web Copy: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to Write Seductive Web Copy by Henneke Duistermaat is a book on copywriting for small business owners or freelancers.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. Who Are You Writing For?
  - 2. Benefits and Problems
  - 3. Your Value Proposition
  - 4. How to Write Persuasive Website Content
  - 5. How to Edit Your Text
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Find out who is your ideal customer and write for him/her
- Don't use specs and features but benefits and problems. You need to test if it for your audience benefits are better or if stirring problems is
- Make your text look good: most people scan instead of reading and put a call to action on every page

Full Summary

How to Write Seductive Web Copy is short and to the point, divided into 6 easy sections.

1. Who Are You Writing For?

Henneke says that the biggest mistake writers do is trying to write for everyone. When you try to everyone, you're really not writing for anyone.
The second mistake, she says, is to write what you want to write instead of what people want to read.

My Note:
I don't agree with that second part. I think that by being authentic you naturally attract the readers that vibe and like your personality. This allows you to be yourself and write what you love while you still write for someone: those who are like you (or want to be like you).

Instead, says Henneke, you should write for your ideal reader.
If you don't have one, it's time to sit down and come up with your ideal reader.

2. Benefits and Problems

People are not interested in you. And not even in your products. They are interested in what you or your product can do for *them*.

Features and specifications are dull.
Talk about the befits for them instead and the problem you solve.

The author says that even benefits can be dull and she asks whether problems to avoid are more powerful than benefits and pleasure to gain.
She says that depends on your audience and you need to test it.

3. Your Value Proposition

The value proposition is what you put under the headline in bullet points.
Henneke says that the bullet points need to be credible, concise, and clear. And they all need to follow the same structure (ie.: if the first is one line, then you should try to make all the other bullets fit in one single line).

4. How to Write Persuasive Website Content

Everything should support your selling efforts on your website.
Even your About page is not really about you, it's about what's relevant for your customers.

Make People Nod

I liked the idea Henneke introduce of "making people nod" with your copy.
Once you know who your ideal prospect is, you can introduce your copy with questions designed to make the reader nod. For example:

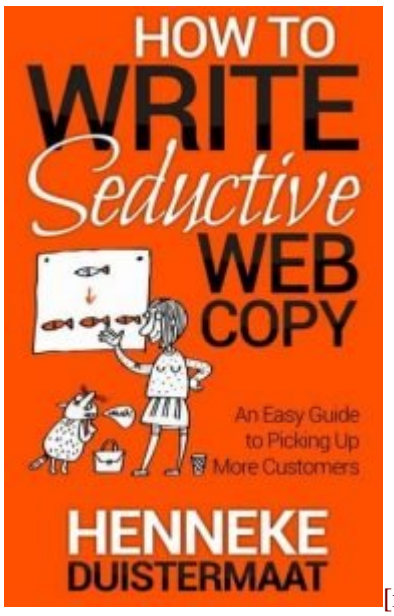
> Are you tired of being single?
>
> Would you like to have a loving life partner?

Stand Out Call to Action

Each of your pages should have a standout call to action. In different colors, or in bigger letters.

5. How to Edit Your Text

Use short paragraphs, with four sentences maximum.
Read your copy again and cut all the unnecessary and redundant information.
If an adjective or a word doesn't add value, remove it. Especially, eliminate all superlative. Let the reviewers laud you, don't do it yourself.



[image]

Real-Life Applications

Check Amazon Reviews for Ideal Reader
If you are not yet sure who your ideal reader is, you can check Amazon reviews for products in your category. Reading who they are and what they liked about the product can help you come up with the ideal reader (note though that many reviews are fake, as many authors launching books have teams for piloted reviews).

Don't Make Testimonials Too Sugary
Don't make your testimonials too over-the-top sugary or they'll lose credibility.

Use Picture Captions
Captions are one of those "highly read" bits of information in your copy. Use it!

CONS

How to Write Seductive Web Copy is short and to the point and with lots of great tips I have taken away from it. However, maybe I wished it were a bit longer.

PROS

Great Wisdom
I learned a lot from this book.

Review

How to Write Seductive Web Copy was a really good read for me.
It's mostly for freelancers and small businesses who have a 3-4 pages website, but I could still take a bunch of great nuggets of wisdom out of it. As a result of this book, I edited a few of my products and I believe that both the products and my knowledge, have improved.

Therefore, I can recommend How to Write Seductive Copy.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

10 Mind Games Men Play (& How to Handle Them)

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Why do men play mind games with women?

The answer is very simple: some men play games because they believe it will help them get laid.

This article shows the games men play, the psychology and strategy behind them, and how to handle game players.

Contents

- 1. The Bait and Switch Game
  - Handling The Bait and Switch
- 2. The Adventurer Game
  - How to Handle It
- 3. The “I Never Date X” Game
  - How to Handle It
- 4. The Chameleon Game
  - How to Handle It
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- 5. The “My Girlfriend” Game
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- 7. Games of Chicken
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- How to Handle It
- 9. “Beauty is Common & I’m Deeper” Game
- 10. The “Sex Provider” Game
- 11. Power Moves & “Negs”
  - How to Handle It
- 12. The “Dread Games”
- 13. Broken-Man Game
  - How to Handle It
- 14. The Average Joe Games
- How to Handle Men Who Play Games
- SUMMARY

1. The Bait and Switch Game

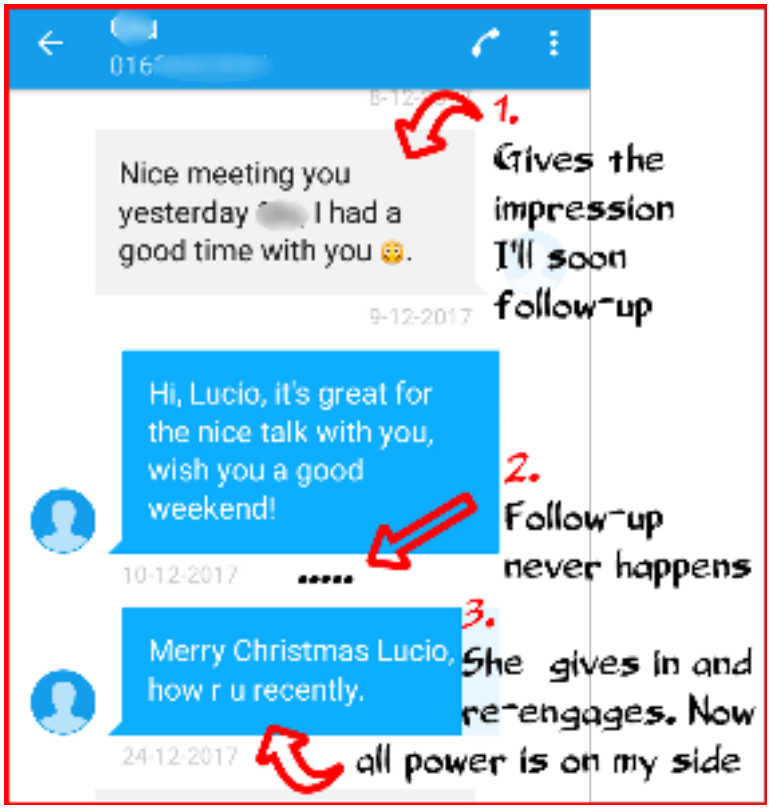
The bait is showing interest first, then switching with (fake) disinterest.

Not proudly, I’ve been doing it myself a few times.

Not really to play dating mind games, but because I’m driven and busy with my stuff. And I lose interest if I don’t see reciprocated interest and/or if the first date is not hot enough to make us lovers.

However, some men might use this one on you in an effort to make you chase.

Here is how it looks like:



This one also leverages the time-tested technique of mixed signals.
It first sends the signal that he had a good time, but then never follows up, sending the signal he’s not that interested.

That vacuum often leads her to invest more mental cycles in him, which only gets her more and more hooked.

Handling The Bait and Switch

A basic rule of life:

Never consider anything real until it's real.

Words are never real. They are warm air (in person) and a bunch of meaningless bytes (in texts).
Actions speak: is he taking you out, is he texting you, is he supporting you?

Also, make sure to work on yourself: these games always work best on fragile egos.

2. The Adventurer Game

This is a dating game that has been growing in popularity.

The plan is to date as a lover and presents himself as an adventurer, globetrotter, artist, or any other exciting seducer style.

Men use it based on the idea that women slow things down with potential boyfriend candidates.

But, here's what they try to angle for, women move much quicker to bed if they know that he will never be their boyfriend… And if he is excited.

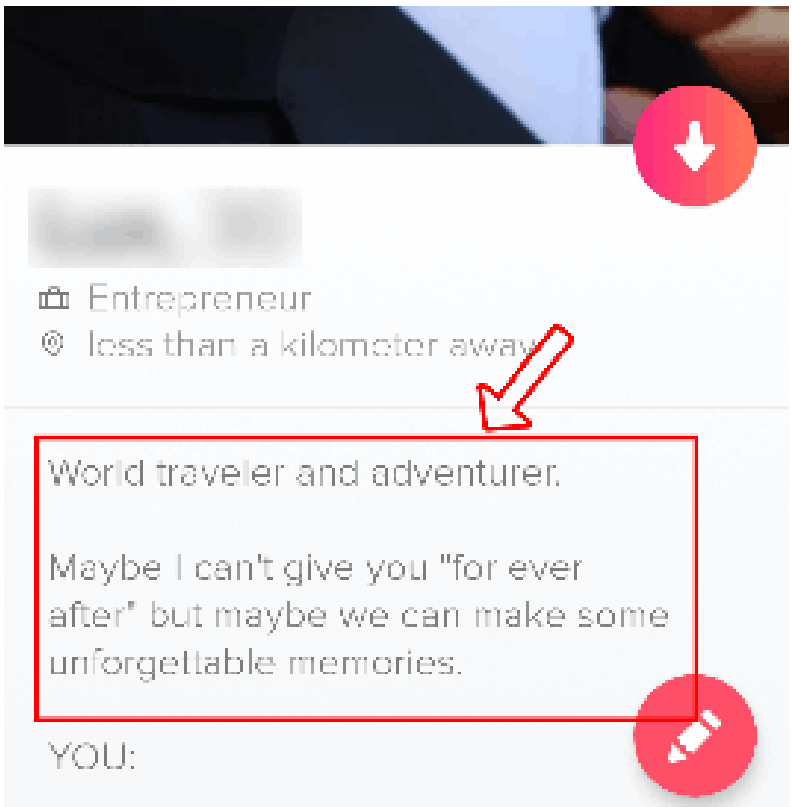
It's not a bad idea, also considering *all dating books for women* suggest to indeed let him wait for sex –a strategy I don't fully agree with-.

Very common in online dating

This game works well in online dating.

While traveling years ago I had a Tinder description precisely tailored to portray the "roguish" image of an adventurer.
I described myself as a free spirit traveling the world, a man who didn't like chatting but preferred to enjoy human connections in person, and a fun-loving daredevil who was happy to share adventures with some local women, as long as they were "cool" (ie.: 'down to it').

Something like this:



“unforgettable memories” often were not-so-unforgettable, basic hookups at my place designed to be quick and low-investment

Worked like a charm.

Also, read:

- What to ask to spot a player
- The psychology of the player
- 7 signs of fuc*boys

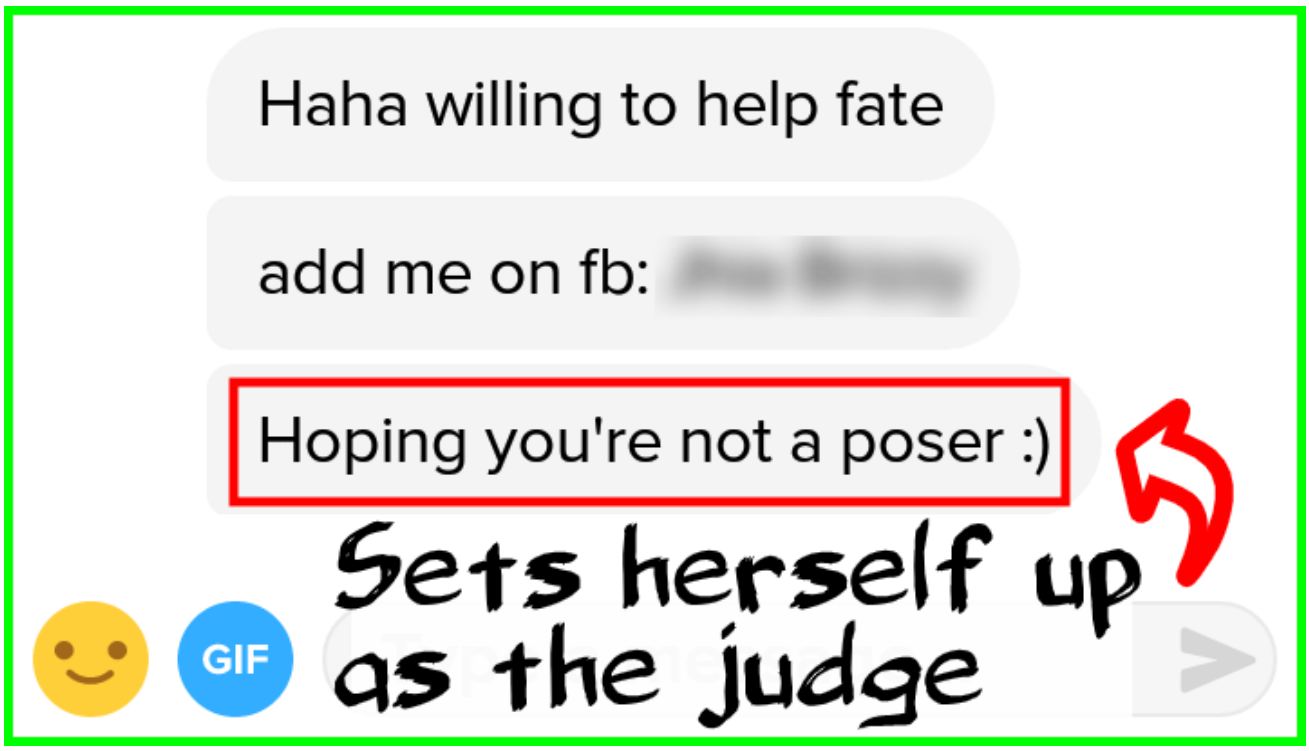
How to Handle It

If you want to shame him:

> You’re like the 10th guy who says that in the last two days. I think it’s insecure of a man to have to sell himself so hard

Then watch how quickly a pricked hot balloon can scuttle running for cover.

This woman also had an interesting approach to blowing the cover of my game:



With “hoping you’re not a “poser”, she is using inverse psychology to make me prove myself to her, drop the “adventurer” mask, and be more “real”. Not bad.

3. The “I Never Date X” Game

Technically, this is a form of “disqualifier”, a PUA technique.

The goal is to sub-communicate that “you’re not good enough for him” and that “he’s not interested”. Ideally, you then chase *him*.

So if you’re a brunette, he might say:

> **Him**: I only date blondes

The idea here is that people want what they cannot have, which is in part true.
And by writing you off and pretending you can’t have him, he is hoping to turn the tables on you and make you chase.

How to Handle It

If you wanna get your hands dirty in power moves, then:

> **Him**: I only date blondes
> **You**: Oh, really, usually blondes like other blonde men. No offense, but can you find any as a balding dark haired man

The trick is to NOT sound mean. You should say these like you’re really worried for him. As if to say “*Poor you, can you really find any of those girls you like?*“.
He’ll be thrown off and chances are high that he will reply with something like this:

> Yes, of course I can…
>
> No, they also like…

In either case, he is now proving himself to you.

4. The Chameleon Game

The sexual chameleon does what a chameleon does:

He adapts.

The sexual chameleon feigns interest in your same passions and pursuits and seeks to be just like the person you dream of date.

If your ex was either abusive or an asshole, the chameleon is kind and supportive. If your ex was a spineless too nice guy, the chameleon will act strong and decisive.

Here's a quick story as an example:

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **My chamaleonic experience**

Lucio:
I remember 4-5 years ago, sitting at the clinic and waiting for our turn. We had met the day before, and she was leaving the city on that same day.

So I helped her get medication for a condom mishap.

As we waited, she was showing me the pictures of the art gallery she had been to.
One image was a big wall painted in red. Nothing else, just a big wall with red paint.
I looked at it, thinking it was meaningless, but didn't say anything.

At that point, she blurted out:

> **Her**: But… You don't really like art

At that moment, I realized I must have been a bit chameleonic the day before.

Read more on how to develop a deep connection.

How to Handle It

First off:

Don't think that *all* chemistries and commonalities are manipulations. You would lose your spontaneity and not everything is a game.
But at the same time, always reserve final judgment until you see concrete proof.

To uncover the "we're alike" game, throw him some curveballs:

> **You**: Everybody loves X because he's good, possibly one of my favorite. What do you think of him

X is either someone almost unknown or a made-up name. You preface it with "everyone loves X" so that you will make it more difficult for him to admit he doesn't really know him.
If he bites saying he also loves him, he's trying hard to position himself as a kindred soul.

4.2. The "I Like What You Like" Version

A similar game is to present himself like what he thinks she wants.

Or going for a stereotypical "great guy image" he thinks will surely make an effect.

Here is an example from Sex And the City (before he started a fight of course):

> **Him**: Great guy! And how about his wife? Now that's my idea of a perfect marriage
> **Her**: (totally sold on him and fantasizing already) Totally

In this case, he presents himself as the perfect boyfriend candidate. But since he's such a high-value man, that works for him.
And he'd probably be able to have sex with her very soon.

5. The "My Girlfriend" Game

This is dangerous for women looking for a relationship.

And it's mostly women who have a policy of "making him wait for sex" that will encounter it (delay sex like this if you really must).

So what does he do?

He will give you what you want as quickly as possible so he can get what *he* wants.

How is he going to do that?

He will call you his girlfriend.

The idea is to make you believe you reached your (alleged) goal of being in a relationship so that you can now "safely" have sex.

Not all men will disappear after sex and not all men play this game with malice, so don't be next to him just because he calls you his girlfriend before sex.
However, it's a possibility you should consider.
Look for signs of unreliability, a lack of past long-term relationships, and a pattern of lies, however small they might be.

How to Handle It

Say that you prefer not to use labels until it's official and mutually agreed upon.

Don't say it in a mean way of course, and the more you like him, the warmer you want to be with your delivery.
If he's really great, then be excited as you say it, but add that "you don't wanna rush things".

And make sure you do it privately as anything similar in public would be a major embarrassment for him.

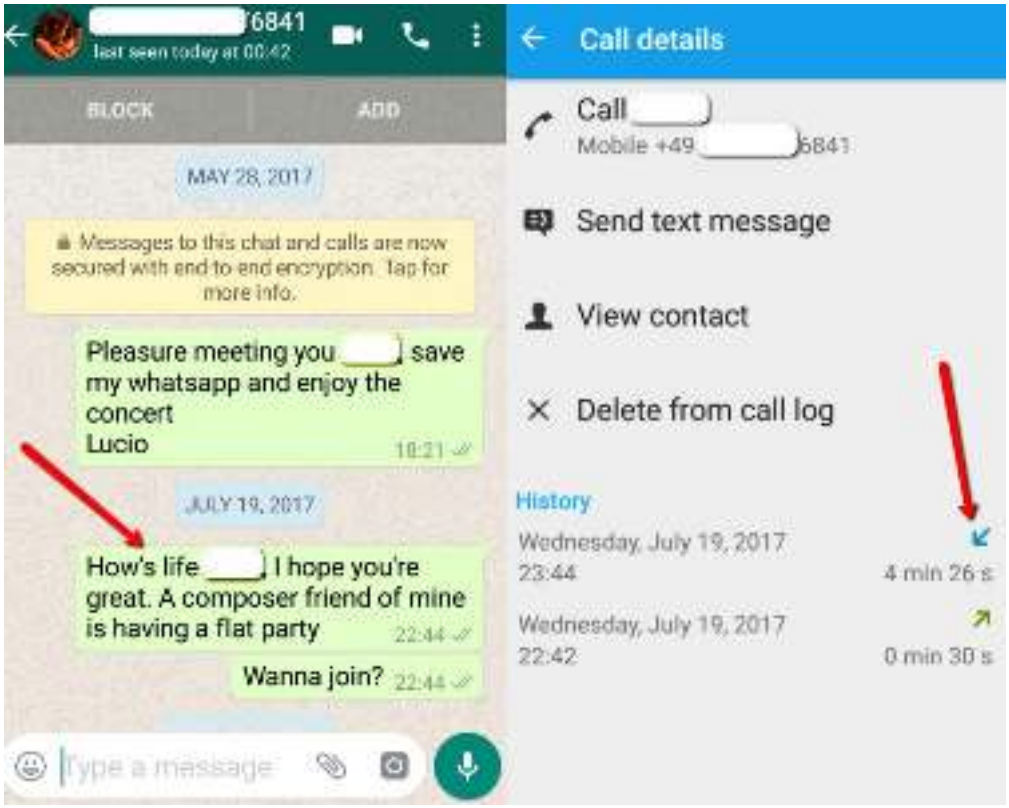
6. The Fake High-Value, With Fake Connections

When fake, this is quite manipulative.

He will first listen to your goals and dreams, and then fake that he has good connections in the industry you want to succeed in.
The most stereotypical example of this game is the model agent or model photographer -who doesn't know anyone in the modeling industry except the girls he's trying to scam-.

There is also a powerful, subconscious effect where you feel that to "fully unlock" that offer of help, you might have to give him back something first.
And gosh… What is it that he hopes you will give him?

I tried it a couple of times when I really had something to offer, and it works great.
This musician didn't reply my text and answer my call, but when I had something to offer… Quickly called back:



How to Handle It

Again, words are as cheap.

Let him come up with the facts instead and tell him:

> **You**: Thank you very much, I'd love to meet this great connection. When can you introduce us?

Then stay out of contact until he proves he does have value to offer.

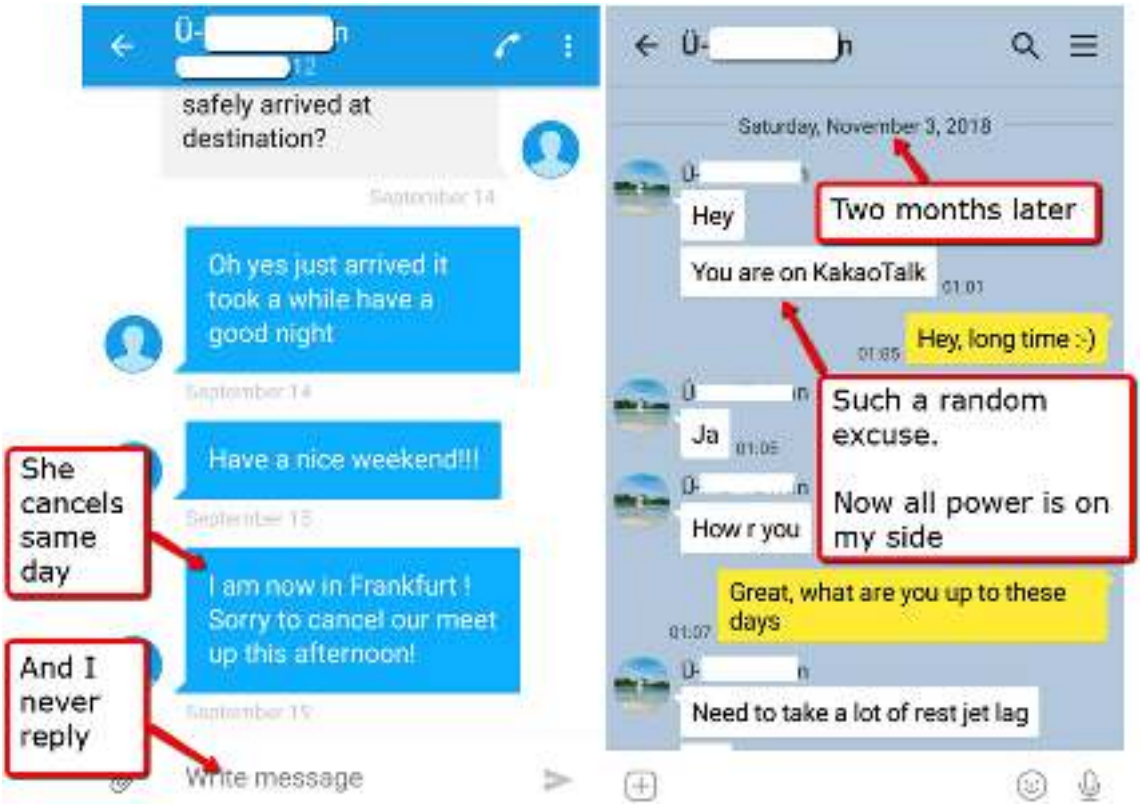
7. Games of Chicken

Games of chicken are power games to get the upper hand in the relationship.

Often, they're threats or ultimatums that put the whole relationship on the line unless she invests, chases, or… Put out.
When she crumbles and eventually follows through, she submits and gives him the reins of the relationship.

In a committed relationship, threatening to break up is a form of a game of chicken (albeit women play that more often).
Early in dating, simply not replying to a text can be a game of chicken.

In this example, it was a tit-for-tat game after she misbehaved by canceling on the same day with a weak a*s apology:



If she was playing a power game first… She lost it.
By the time she came around, the power was all on my side and… I had already mentally moved past her.
The only date I was willing to offer at that point was a "come over and we'll cook something together" type of date.

This is one of the reasons why I strongly recommend women to play little "chase me games": they mostly work with non-busy, lower-quality men and drive away all the cool ones (read more about the biggest dating mistakes women commit).

7.2. The False Takeaway

He pretends to walk away to make her chase.

If she doesn't go to him, the interaction is over.
But if she really cared, chances are she will go.
And once she goes, the power is on his side.

Example from “Under the Tuscan Sun”:

> **Her**: (laughs at his romanticism, framing it as “sappy”)
> **Him**: What?
> **Her**: No. It’s just that’s exactly what American women think Italian men say (laughs again)
> **Him**: (looks down, plays offended) thank you (walks away)
> **Her**: (walks to him) Marcello, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry

8. The Date Ending “Near His Place”

This isn’t really a “bad mind game”, but it’s still good for you to know about.

Men who are more experienced in the game, either because they’ve read about, or because they’ve been around, don’t date randomly.
They got a system.

And also won’t date far away from their home place.

Instead, he plans the date to make it seem spontaneous. But it’s designed to increase the odds of you two having sex.

Some examples:

- Doing something exciting (excitement rubs off as sexual attraction)
- Pretending to do something “spontaneously crazy” but actually planned
- Changing several venues and ending up close to his place

How to Handle It

If you like him, great: let him lead.

However, it might be better if he knows you’re not that naive and that *you* are letting him lead, rather than him moving you like a muppet.

So tell him:

> **You**: oh what a coincidence, we went through all these places and now we are just near your apartment. Isn’t that neat, John.
> Could it be that it’s not really a coincidence, John?

Say it not in a mean way but as if you wanted to say “you naughty boy” or “how random, eh?”

This is a great way to test how he reacts.

The best answer would be:

See “Seduction University”.

9. “Beauty is Common & I’m Deeper” Game

He’s trying to frame himself as experienced, deep, and interested in your personality.

Maybe you tease him he is only looking for sex, or that he is a fuckboy.
And as an answer, he will launch on a tirade that while “beauty is common”, he is looking for something deeper as well.

That way, he communicates pre-selection (other beautiful women probably wanted him) and that he can appreciate you for who you are on top of whatever flashy thing you got (big boobs, shiny hair, etc.).

Of course, it will be true for some guys.
But it's a minority.
So you have to judge based on other indicators you see of him.

10. The "Sex Provider" Game

Interesting approach:

Rather than pitching commitment, resources, personal qualities, a future together, or all the other things that most men offer… He offers (great) sex.
Either directly offers sex, or implies it with his heavily sexual undertones and mannerism.

Example:

> **Him**: Listen, sweetheart. Give me an hour in the sack, and you'll swear I'm the jolly green giant

The best players of this game do it more subtly, with stories, sexual talk, and body language.

Feel free to go for this one if you are so inclined -just be aware of the game, and that the great sex might or might not be true in the end.

And now the worst kind of mind games men play:

11. Power Moves & "Negs"

Some of the *early pick-up artists* advise "the "neg", shorthand for "negative hit".

The neg often was a back-handed compliment or a light insult.

Why would they do it?

To:

1. Lower the woman's self-esteem
2. Make her chase him to regain his approval (emotional power dynamics).

Is it effective?
Sometimes it can be.

It's an inherently lower-value game though because men who are obviously higher sexual market value wouldn't need to push women down -unless they're socially sadistic-.
It's lower-value men who need to push her down closer to his level.

These games, when repeated over and over in a relationship, are potentially dangerous because they can semi-permanently lower her self-esteem.
See "Seduction University" for more.

How to Handle It

This game often shows a value-taking mindset and personality.

Games designed to devalue and lower your self-esteem are the first red flags of potentially abusive men. And abusive men can only give you one thing: abusive relationships.

I have a whole article on how to play the same games back on him.
But best of all is to drop all games.

Say something like this:

See Seduction University.

12. The “Dread Games”

There is a whole class of red-pill men who discuss how to control women with the so-called “dread game”.

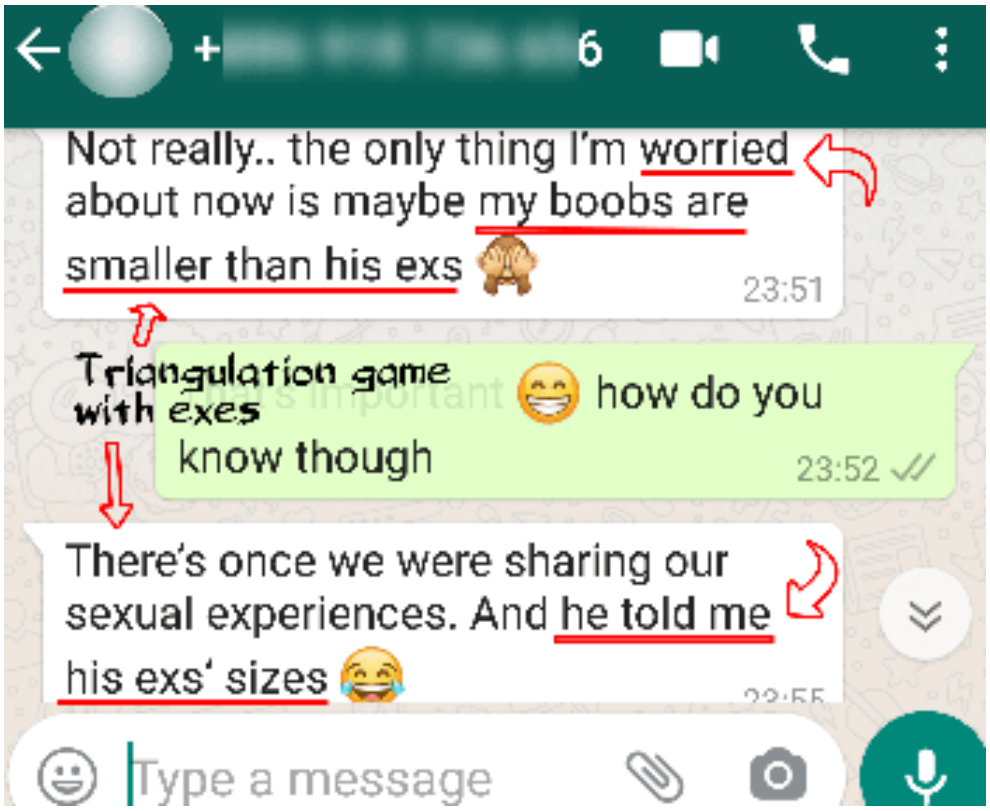
Dread games consist of keeping her in fear so that he can keep control of the relationship.

How to keep her in fear?

Some of the “techniques”:

- Never fully commit but string her along as much as possible (AMS’ advice)
- Triangulation games (see “The Art of Seduction“)
- Talk about “hot exes”

You can see here an example played on a friend of mine by her current boyfriend:



Did he really have so well-endowed exes? Who knows. Sure it’s helping him keep her on the edge though. But the fact she tells her *ex*-lover that, is not a great sign for him.

You can play the same back in what I call “my study exes game”, see “how to make him value more“.

Sadly, there is a subset of the male population in The Red Pill, a group often bordering on the misogynists, who purposefully learn how to play dread games.
For men, please see “how to move beyond The Red Pill” and become better leaders who don’t need to lower women’s self-esteem.

These games lead to toxic relationships.

Luckily, this website helps you spot value-taking men and abusers early and reliably, so you can avoid them.

Also, read:

- Are you dating a sociopath?

13. Broken-Man Game

You might be surprised that "broken men" can be attractive.

But they are very attractive to a subset of women referred to as "*women who love too much*".
These are women who always end up with men who need to be saved and rescued.

The best men at this game though do have *some* appealing traits.
Maybe they're rebels, or they've got a deeply romantic soul, or they're troubled writers… Or maybe they just need a little help to get back up.
Their appeal is to look like a diamond in the rough.

Some of them can seem fearlessly intelligent, scornful, and angry at society, somewhat melancholic, sad, and with an attractive artistic streak.
What are they hiding?
Who broke their hearts?
With a little bit of fixing maybe they can be hers. And since she fixed him, he will be eternally grateful.

Or so she thinks.
It appeals to her maternal side but, more times than not, he drags her down.

There is some overlap here with the "Byronic hero", but the "broken man" takes less care of hiding his darker side.

The movie "The Good Girl" presents a great example of "broken man seduction".
Unluckily the video was removed, but he comes across as a poetic soul who can't find satisfaction in a world that doesn't understand him.
And on his menial job, he bonds with her:

> **Her**: I hate my job
> **Him**: That makes two of us

And be aware, on top of the dark, many of these men are also (emotionally) abusive.

How to Handle It

Just stay away.
98% there is nothing you can do to help them and they will drag you down and emotionally abuse you.

14. The Average Joe Games

We have reviewed a few popular mind games men play in dating.

However, the most widespread games are the ones you don't need this post for :).

The *APA Handbook* on relationships for example mentions:

- **Exaggerating the depths of his feelings**

In Buss' survey, 71% of men admitted to having exaggerated the depth of their feelings to have sex with a woman.

- **Appearing better than he is** (richer, smarter, cooler…)

At the extreme are the men who rent a car or borrow to show off resources they don't have.

- **"Buttering up" compliments**

Gushing compliments about your sexiness, tastes, or personality.

How to Handle Men Who Play Games

See "Seduction University".

SUMMARY

This post showed you the mind games men play during dating.

Games men play in dating are not always and necessarily bad. Learning the types of games and their effects also helps you recognize the good men from the not-so-good (and from the abusive ones).

Meditations: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*Meditations*" is a collection of diary entries and notes from Marcus Aurelius, the enlightened Roman emperor. It's fascinating that a 2.000 years old book has almost all the mindsets you need to live an empowered life and take control of your mind (and life).
Marcus Aurelius is what on this website we would refer to as an "eagle". As a matter of fact, an eagle's eagle.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Logos
  - Death is Inevitable
  - Always Be the Best You Can
  - What's Your Purpose? Leverage Your Strengths!
  - Logic Trumps Emotions
  - Perception Trumps Pain
  - Personal Pain Means Little in Grand Scheme of Things
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- We all have certain talents. It's your task to find them and put them to use for yourself and for the world
- Whatever happens in your life, you decide what that means to you and how you feel about it
- Don't waste time on mean criticism, complaints, and what you can't control: stay focused and do your best on everything you *can* control

Notes

Marcus Aurelius was the last of the Five Good Emperors, five rulers who oversaw the Roman Empire during one of its most prosperous and peaceful times.

Aurelius was also a philosopher, and he ascribed to the Greek Stoicism, a Hellenistic philosophy founded in the third century BCE.

Logos

Logs can be roughly (very roughly) translated with "reason", and it's all around us. It's in trees, objects, and people as well.

Logos gives things its shape, but also order. And it's the reason why people are where they are. It's because of the logos behind people that one can be a slave or an emperor.

Now the interesting thing about logos is that it's a force of the universe, and it constantly moves the world toward its best possible form.

My Note:
The fact that logos move the world towards its best possible form is similar to the Leibnitz hypothesis that "we live in the best possible world".
That's certainly an interesting idea. However, the second law of thermodynamics actually says that matter moves towards chaos.

What's Empowering About Logos?

There is something very empowering about logos. If you believe that "everything happens for a reason" and in the greater scheme of things it's moving you and the world towards the best possible outcome, then three things happen:

1. You lose the desire to change things and "wish they were better"
2. You can acquire a strong sense of calmness
3. It gives you a strong positive bias with which you look at things

> **There is little to regret when it's all meant to be**

Death is Inevitable

Dying is a normal part of life.
It's the logos that decides when and where you will die, and there is nothing you can do about it.

And there is also nothing to be sad about it because it's a transformation more than an end.

When we die the logos that are part of us re-joins with the greater logos. From the greater logos, it might rejoin a new form of life in an endless cycle that moves the world forward.

Squeezing the Most Out of Life

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* has this great idea to get the most out of life: imagine you've already died. But somehow you came back and all the time you get is a miracle.
Wouldn't you be happier and do the most out of your time?

Also, read:

- How to leverage death for a fulfilling life

Always Be the Best You Can

Meditations say that since we all die and we don't know when it will happen, we must each moment we have very wisely.

It's no use wasting time complaining, for example. Marcus Aurelius, for example, didn't particularly enjoy spending time in court.
But it was part of what the logos had for him. He knew that it was a duty that comes with being the emperor, and he obliged to the best of his ability because complaining would have only meant wasting time, doing a poor job, and contributing to a poorly functioning court.

What's Your Purpose? Leverage Your Strengths!

Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* say that we all have certain strengths. Leveraging what we are naturally good at will make us more effective, happier, and fulfilled.
And if you want to really be happy, use your strengths in service of others.

Logic Trumps Emotions

Marcus Aurelius and the stoics held logic in high esteem and viewed emotions as dangerous when they clouded reason.

After all, the logos is reasonable as it moves towards an improved world.

Marcus Aurelius worked hard to stand guard at the gates of his mind. He never allowed strong emotions such as hatred, revenge or lust to take too much real estate in his mind.
He strived to keep his mind cool and collected.

And what would he do when feeling overwhelmed? He would meditate on logos to regain his balance.

Perception Trumps Pain

And now we get to one of the most important tenets and lessons from Marcus Aurelius' meditation. One that is today being repeated by pretty much all motivational speakers from Tony Robbins to James Allen.
And this is it:

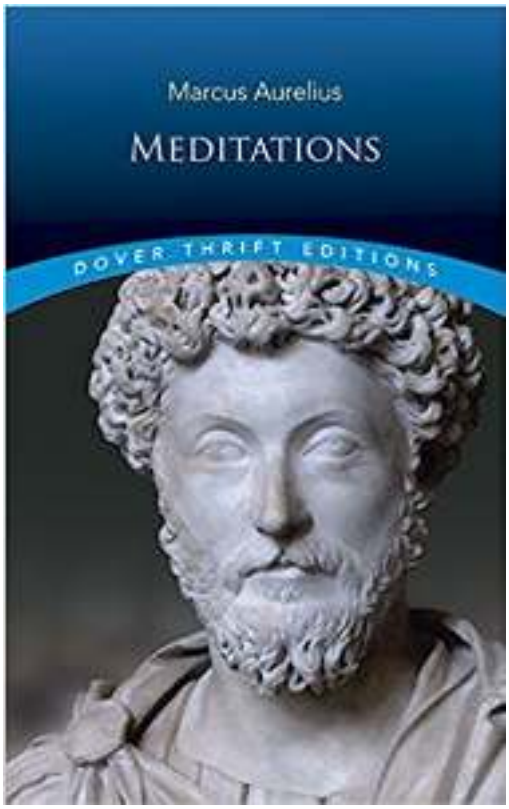
> Whatever happens to you, you choose what it means to you

This concept is very powerful to gain control of your mind and your life. If you are interested in how to take control of your mind and change your perception of the world, check Ultimate Power.

Personal Pain Means Little in Grand Scheme of Things

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* says that personal pain should be accepted if the serves to move the logos towards its desired, improved state.

This concept is very similar to Ray Dalio's "what's good for the whole is good to do".



Real-Life Applications

There is really a lot here to take from:

Rebalance Yourself Game
Everything you get sad, you catch yourself complaining or doing anything that doesn't help you or the people around you, make it a game to see how quickly you can rebalance yourself.
Do it often enough and you will see how with time you will gain more control and mastery over yourself.

Everything Changes – & Bad Things Happen
Everything changes and bad things will happen. Be prepared. Not in the sense of "being prepared for the worse". Quite the opposite. Be prepared by enjoying the good time you're having without being too hurt when eventually something bad will happen.

Control Your Mind, Control How You Feel
You have the ultimate trump card on all events around your life. You ultimately control what they mean to you. And with that, you can always choose how you feel.

Stay Focused on What You Can Control
Some things you can't control. You shouldn't be flustered by them and you shouldn't waste your time about them. Do your best to control and improve everything you can control instead (a major tenet in Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*)

Do Your Best
We can always go at any time. Always do and be your best with the time you have.

Most Criticism Comes From People Who Don't Like Themselves
Mean criticism can hurt us a lot.
Well, Marcus Aurelius says that most criticism, and most mean criticism, comes from people who are neither very happy nor very successful themselves.
Why bother about them, then?

Find Your One Thing
Find something you can love doing and where you can use your strengths and dedicate yourself to it.

CONS

Everything Happens for a Reason
I don't personally much with the idea that everything happens for a reason.
I believe things happen randomly.

Watch Out for Good Translation
Similar to other timeless classics like *The Art of War* and *The Prince*, there are different translations of this book available. They're not all of the same quality, so you must do a bit of research to find a good one.
By the way, you can get it for free online.

PROS

I can't list all the pros for a 2.000 years old books which almost by itself could make the whole modern self-help industry redundant.
This is not to say we didn't advance, we did. And yet a 2.000 years old book has more and deeper wisdom than 90% of modern *self-help books*.

Review

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* is the diary of a man who tirelessly worked on himself to become better and better and to gain deeper and deeper mental mastery.

These are the types of men who drive our world forward.

I find absolutely fascinating that a man who lived more than 2.000 years ago already had all the ideas that most of today's self-help industry is based on.
And I find it incredible that more than 2.000 years ago there was a man, at the head of what was back then the most powerful empire in the world, that tirelessly worked on himself to be the best man and leader he could be.

Why am I surprised?
Well, I was born with a "modernist" bias. I used to believe that everything new and modern was better. And that anything from the past couldn't possibly stack up with what's new.

Today I know that's silly. Great men are very similar, the whole world (and time) over.

And we could use some enlightened rulers of the stature of Marcus Aurelius today, couldn't we?

Read more summaries or **get Meditations on Amazon**.

The War of Art: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The War of Art (2002) describes the internal war against the "resistance" that any creative person must engage in in order to deliver their art, and achieve their true potential.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - The War of Art: The Resistance
  - How to Beat the Resistance & Do Art
  - Following Your Passion
  - Fight the Resistance Like a Professional
  - Focus on Process
  - The Obstacles Mindsets
  - Artists Battle Hierarchies
  - Focus on Art, Not What People Want
  - Pick a Territory And Specialize
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Everyone is afraid. The secret is running toward that fear
- Focus on your work, process, and skills. Let the results be a byproduct
- Let your dream drive you, yes, but focus on the process mostly. Day in and day out, commit to your craft

Summary

About The Author: Steven Pressfield is a writer and author. He prides himself on having struggled before eventually making it, and now he teaches others how to do the same.

The War of Art: The Resistance

What's the resistance in The War of Art?

Have you ever struggled to start what you wanted to start? Maybe a business, maybe a creative endeavor, maybe expressing a difficult opinion?

That's the resistance.

When Does the Resistance Kick In?

The resistance hates anything new and risky. This means the resistance kicks in every time we do something outside of the ordinary.

How Does the Resistance Stop You?

The resistance has many sneaky ways to keep you “safe”… And away from your dreams. Some of them include:

- Fear of failure
- Self-doubt
- Procrastination

How to Beat the Resistance & Do Art

Steven Pressfield proposes a few ways we can beat the resistance and ship our art:

- Always refocus on your dreams instead of your fears
- Fully commit yourself to your art (treat it like a full-time job)
- Accept that doing art also entails waging war against the resistance
- Embrace your fear: fear shows you the way
- Stay persistent and organized in the face of fear and resistance

> **Fear shows you the way you need to run towards**

Following Your Passion

We have been seeing a few different takes when it comes to passion:

- Cal Newport in So Good They Can’t Ignore You says you *develop* your passion.
- Robert Greene in Mastery and Angela Duckworth in Grit say instead that you first start with something you’re interested in, and then develop your passion over time.

Steven Pressfield in *The War of Art* takes a different approach.
He says instead that you already have a passion within you. It’s that thing that you really love doing, or that thing you wish you had done.

Pressfield says that the fear coming from the resistance is also an indicator that something is your dream. If you are afraid of failing at it, it’s because you care about it.
And if you care about it, you should run towards it.

The Unlived Life

The author says we live two separate lives: the life we’re actually living and the unlived life of our unrealized dreams.

It’s the resistance that is stopping you from embracing the unlived life or your dreams.
And if you let the resistance win, you will never live a fulfilling life.

Fight the Resistance Like a Professional

The best way to fight the resistance is to treat your dream like a professional.

Treating your dreams like a professional means that you don’t work on it for a few hours here and there, in hiss and fits. It means that you make it your main goal in life to pursue your dream.
You immerse yourself in it, you live it and breathe it.

Even if you have a main 9 to 5 job you can still treat your dream like a professional if you do everything in your power to move ahead towards your dream.

How to Be a Professional

Being a professional also means:

1. Knowing yourself (your strengths and your limits)
2. Delegating (get on board people with complementary talents)
3. Keep learning and growing

The best of the best keep learning and growing even when they're already at the top, like Tiger Woods and Madonna.

Focus on Process

Steven Pressfield recommends you don't focus on the goal and reach it as quickly as possible. That might lead you to set unrealistic goals and get discouraged along the way.

Instead, focus on the process. Pace yourself, ration your work, and execute it, day in and day out.

The Obstacles Mindsets

Instead of seeing obstacles as impediments to your goals, *learn to see them as opportunities* to get closer to your goals.
You will certainly face challenges, and each challenge you overcome is one step closer to your goals.

Artists Battle Hierarchies

I loved this part.

The author says that hierarchies are everywhere, and most people allow the hierarchies to define them and dictate their lives.

Hierarchies all oppose change and try to "pressure you" into a determined role.
Professional artists, thus must battle externally imposed hierarchies to stay true to their art and craft.

To learn more about hierarchies, freedom, personal power, and social dynamics also read:

- The Small Pond Syndrome

Focus on Art, Not What People Want

I've been reading a lot about copywriting recently.
I loved most of those books (*Web Copy That Sells* first and foremost), but one thing they all had in common which I didn't like, was that they all recommend you write for your readers.

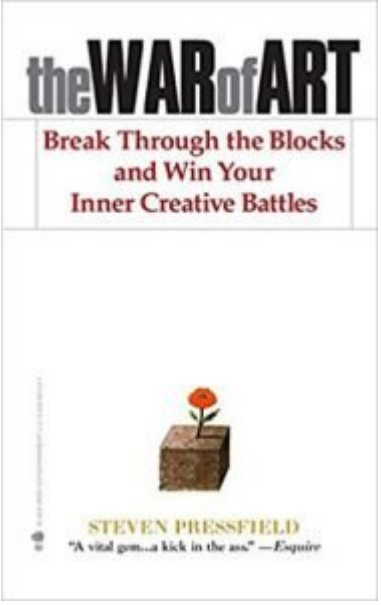
I like the opposite approach instead.
Write what you like and your readers will auto-select themselves.
Which is the same approach Steven Pressfield takes in *The War of Art.*

He says that instead of focusing on trying to guess what people want, professional artists focus on their art. Like Steve Jobs or Elon Musk.
Or the writer Rainer Maria Rilke, who recommended you write for yourself and your art will be much better.

Pick a Territory And Specialize

Pick a Territory in Pressfield's work is not just a physical territory -like, he says, the gym for Schwazznegger-, but a field where you can keep growing.
It can be computing or film-making like Woody Allen.

This concept is similar to *The One Thing*, which basically recommends you focus on one thing in your life.



Real-Life Applications

Run Towards Fear
Whenever you want to do something you are passionate about, it's only natural you will be afraid.
The amateur thinks he will conquer fear and then do it. The professional knows he has to sit with the fear.
Understand that fear only provides confirmation that you should do it.

Make Your Dream Your Full-Time Job
Keep chasing your dream with full dedication and unending perseverance.

Shun The Critics (and look in the mirror)
Those who are the meanest in their criticism are the ones who haven't expressed themselves yet. This is a concept very similar to Marcus Aurelius' Meditations.
And it's the same when we criticize others too vehemently. Look at yourself first. Are you not expressing yourself enough? Are you not going after what really matters and what you really love?

CONS

- **Some Nonsense Self-Help**

On his website, Pressfield says that talent means nothing (yeah, sure).
And that all is about work.
This is typical empty self-help that sells so well by telling people what they want to hear. But it doesn't really tell the truth.

Also see: self-help myths.

- **The War of Art?**

I don't really like this name.
It's confusing with *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu. And I also don't like this idea of "war against the resistance".
Guys, don't make the monster bigger than it is.

- **Some Woo-woo "Science"**

In the third part, The War of Art goes a bit off the rails describing how artists are a manifestation of the divine. It's an interesting point of view, but I don't particularly appreciate it. And it sounds elitist. Why are artists the conduit of the divine and not welders, sportsmen, and employees?
He goes into some further woo-woo "science" with the ego and the relation between illnesses and embracing our own real self.

The more rational among you will probably also not love that part. And you'd have a point, in my opinion.

PROS

Great Wisdom
The War of Art nails it both when it comes to resistance and how to beat it and ship your art.
I won't list all the pros here because they are too many.

Review

The War of Art goes a bit woo-woo in the last part but it's overall an awesome, awesome book.
It's one of those rare books that can combine inspirational content with potentially life-changing information.

I thought it was quite similar to Seth Godin's *Linchpin*, and then I realized that Seth Godin wrote his book later and together with Pressfield.

Anyway, I can definitely recommend it if you're trying to achieve something with your life.

Updated:
I demoted it from 5 stars to 4 stars because the advice is somewhat common in self-help and because of the "woo-woo" part.
Still a top-notch book though, and probably my N.1 recommendation for aspiring artists.

Get the book on Amazon

Small Talk Hacks: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Small Talk Hacks by Akash Karia is a book on social skills and conversations.
It's brief and to the point with good content.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - First Impression
  - Break the Ice
  - Memorable Verbal Impression
  - Become an Active Listener
  - Make Your Personality Shine
  - From Introduction to Intimacy
  - How to Revive a Conversation
  - Conversation Killers
  - Ending a Conversation Well
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Put yourself in a positive, enthusiastic state
- Prepare a quick elevator pitch about yourself
- Ask more personal questions to build a stronger emotional connection

Full Summary

Since most information is solid but is already been covered extensively on this website, I'll give you a more schematic overview:

First Impression

- Make a conscious choice to be enthusiastic
- Take care of your posture
- Smile
- Dress well

Break the Ice

- Use your surroundings
- Use the latest news and events

- Ask questions (and listen to the answers!)
- Just say “hello” (my favorite)
- Ask for an opinion (what do you think of the party?)
- Give a sincere compliment

Akash recommends you only do compliments when you really believe in them.
If you don’t, you can thank them without mentioning what you thought of the speech. For example:

> Thank you so much for your talk this morning – I really appreciate the time you took out of your busy schedule

My Note:
I disagree with telling anyone about their busy schedule. It’s guesswork and it feels intruding. How do you even know they’re busy? Who are you to infer about their lives?

Overcome Fear of Striking a Conversation

Akash says that to overcome the fear of approaching people you should first understand what exactly it is that you’re fearing. Then it will be easier to address.

Also, read:

- 11 Conversation Starters That Work

Memorable Verbal Impression

- Prepare a 30 seconds commercial (or elevator pitch, something interesting about what you do)
- Make your commercial specific to the situation
- Make them visualize what you say
- Practice your commercial
- Your commercial is only the tip of the iceberg: don’t over-rely on it
- Listen more than you speak

Become an Active Listener

- Nod your head when you agree with some points
- Rephrase what they have said and feed it back to them
- Stay focused on the conversation and don’t get distracted
- If you get sidetracked: refocus
- Don’t interrupt
- Ask questions
- Listen without worrying about what to say next
- Don’t sweat the pauses: don’t be afraid if there is a pause after he’s done speaking

Make Your Personality Shine

The author says that to become more charismatic it’s important to embody positive feelings and emotions.

From Introduction to Intimacy

- Invite approach with open body language and a smile
- Don't make snap decisions about people (albeit Blink says snap decisions are often correct)
- Be genuine
- Ask for help
- Ask how you can help
- Venture into asking personal questions
- Don't be pushy though, you want people to naturally open up rather than prying them open
- Research by Dan Ariely reveals that controversial topics make the conversation more interesting

Also, read:

- How to quickly form a deep and strong emotional connection

How to Revive a Conversation

- Exact same techniques to start a new conversation
- Just let it die, maybe the conversation has run its course

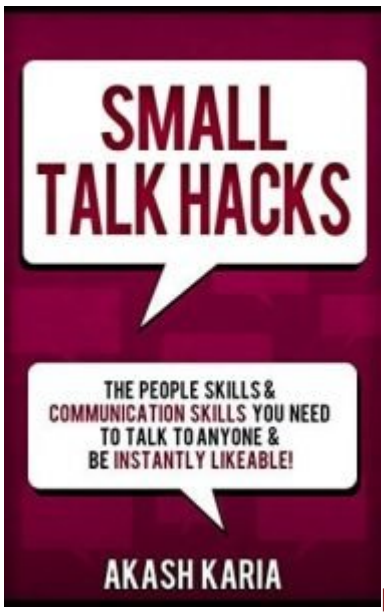
Conversation Killers

A few topics or behavior will kill your conversations (and social attractiveness). Avoid all of the following:

- Monopolizing the conversation
- Forcing your opinion on others
- Negativity
- Profanity
- Fishing for compliments by lowering your own value

Ending a Conversation Well

- Give a reason to leave
- Express appreciation
- Positive reflection (say what you particularly enjoyed about the convo)
- Exchange info and schedule the next meeting (optional)



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Real-Life Applications

All tips are highly practical and applicable. The ones I liked most are:

- Make a conscious choice to be enthusiastic
- Tailor your clothes
- Be specific about what you fear when it comes to social skills

CONS

Using the Latest News
Akash Karia recommends using the latest news to open up a conversation. I disagree with that idea, it's a shallow way of starting a conversation. Similar to Tim Ferris, I also believe you should not waste time with the news.

PROS

Brief & To The Point
No fillers and time wasters, only the good stuff.

Mostly solid advice
For the most part, it's solid advice. Much better than many other bigger sellers I have reviewed.

Review

Small Talk Hacks is a brief book that goes straight to the point.

It's a bit basic in the sense that most people who have been reading on social skills and/or are already good will not find a lot of revolutionary ideas, but for beginners, it's an awesome book.

And also for the more experienced, it can be a good refresher (or you can even find some new nuggets of wisdom).

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

Oscars 2017 Mistake: Learning Leadership From Weak Leaders

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Do you remember the 2017 Oscars mistake where La La Land was wrongly awarded the Oscar?

Much has been said and shown about that evening indeed, but nothing noteworthy when it comes to power dynamics, dominance, and leadership.
This article will review the 2017 Oscars mistake from TPM's perspective.

The key moment when Warren Beatty lost leadership (plus status and respect)

Contents

- Warren Beatty Oscar Mistakes
  - 1. Crumbles Under Pressure
  - 2. Gives Card to Faye Dunaway
  - 3. Relinquishes The Stage
  - 4. Doesn't Own Mistake
- Jimmy Kimmel: Meh
  - Joke's on You Type of Joke
- Jordan Horowitz Oscars Mistake
  - Overpowering Bully
  - Robs Beatty of The Chance of Making Amends
- Oscars Mistake: Lessons Learned
- SUMMARY

Warren Beatty Oscar Mistakes

First of all, let's start with Warren Beatty, the main presenter.

He is the one that made the mistake and he is the one that came off the worst out of it. Not because he made the mistake, of course, but because of how he behaved both before and, even more, after.

Let's see:

1. Crumbles Under Pressure

First of all, when Beatty sees the card, he realizes something is wrong.

However, instead of making sure he's going to do the right thing, he vacillates and looks indecisive.

Probably he felt the pressure of the whole auditorium waiting for the winner, including Faye Dunaway standing beside and prodding him to go ahead.
Usually, it's better to double-check and make sure that letting the people around rush you into something. Even if you realize everything was correct, you have really looked bad or "wasted time": people will actually enjoy the little diversion.

2. Gives Card to Faye Dunaway

This might have happened because Beatty wasn't unsure and maybe he felt safer with a second brain double-checking the information.

However, after the events, it's only normal people will think he was simply passing the hot potato so he could shift the blame.

As a leader, you should actively avoid any behavior which will make you look like you are setting up others to take the blame for you. As Simon Sinek says in *Leaders Eat Last*, the only job of a leader is taking care of his team.

3. Relinquishes The Stage

What I found to be the biggest mistake of all though is how he reacted after they eventually found out there was a mistake.
Even if it was live, even if it was being watched by millions… A mistake like that means little, really.
And if you fix it and own it you gain power and respect, *not* lose it.

However, Beatty doesn't fix, address or own the mistake in *any* way. He stays away from the microphone as Jordan Horowitz takes the lead like a bull(y) in a China shop.
Beatty also never seems willing to reclaim his microphone to make amends. Again, he stays in the background looking fearful and indecisive.

This was the moment the stage needed him to stand strong in his position as a leader.
And instead, he relinquishes it and allows someone else to take over (and do a bad job at it).

4. Doesn't Own Mistake

Finally, when he meekly returns to the microphone, he looks defensive and apologetic.

Jimmy Kimmel: Meh

Jimmy Kimmel was the second in command.
And he does do better than Beatty.
He is the one who reclaims the microphone from Horowitz and he does what anyone should do in these cases: cracking a joke (he references a similar mistake at Miss Universe 2015)

That was gold: cracking a joke to release the tension.

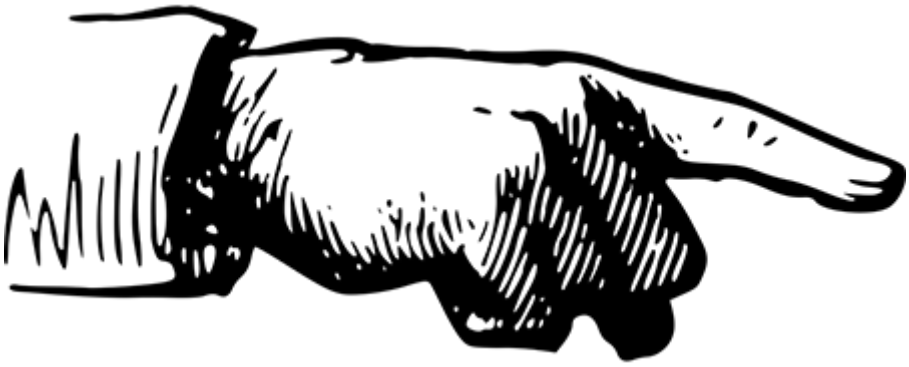
However, a little later, he makes another joke, this time a rather bad one:

Joke's on You Type of Joke

When from the side he screams to Beatty:

> Warren, what did you do!

That's one of those bad types of jokes. It's bad because it puts the whole pressure on Beatty, implying *he* did a mistake. Instead of helping, this type of joke puts people down.
It points at Warren as the scapegoat, and that's not how most people enjoy laughing because, unconsciously, everyone understands what's wrong with that.



What did you do?
This is, after all, another attempt at social climbing at the expense of someone else.

Jordan Horowitz Oscars Mistake

Jordan Horowitz took over after Beatty's mistake as the leader of the pack.
He was very dominant but way too forceful.

Overpowering Bully

He takes the microphone, calls people on stage, literally takes the card out of Beatty's hands, and even announces the actual winner: S.

There are times when it's best to be a leader and times when it's best to be smart enough to *enable* a leader to lead well.
Horowitz should have gone for the latter here because Beatty was the leader, and not him. He should have helped Beatty re-take the lead and supported him in making up for his mistake.

Instead, he hijacks Beatty's role like a bull(y) in a China shop.

Robs Beatty of The Chance of Making Amends

It's a rather antagonistic behavior because not only does it comes across as overly aggressive, but also because it robs Beatty of the chance of quickly owning and making up for his mistake.

If Beatty had taken the microphone first thing after realizing his mistake, he could have come out of it neutrally. If he had been able to crack a good joke and own it well, he would have come out *even better off*.

Horowitz instead contributed to making Beatty look timid and fearful.
Horowitz might not have won that Oscar, but he 'stole the show'… Although not in a positive way.

Oscars Mistake: Lessons Learned

1. **Stand the pressure to get it right**

The reason why Beatty made the mistake he made is that he gave in to the pressure of announcing the winner. Undecided on whether to double-check or bow to the pressure, he bowed to the pressure.

If you're in a similar position, prioritize getting it right instead of going with the flow.

2. **Take responsibility for a risky move**

In hindsight, after we know what happened, Beatty looked really poor for having passed the letter to Dunaway. It feels like he wanted to cover his as* in case something went wrong.

That's the opposite of what a leader should do.

3. **fix the mistake**

Own your mistake, apologize, take responsibility, and whenever you can, fix it.
If not, owning an apology is more than enough.
A mistake you own and take responsibility for will make you look better than if you had never done any mistake.
Guaranteed.

4. **Push the bully away**

And now finally to the main social power move lesson learned.
The host owns the stage.
And if it's your stage, it's your duty to manage the stage.
When some bully hijacks it, you must reclaim it.

It doesn't matter if he's younger, stronger, taller, balder, or angrier.
If you're the host, it's your duty to *be* the host.

Beatty should have walked toward the microphone and grabbed it. If Jordan Horowitz was still standing there, he should have asserted the right to that space as the host.

If it sounds too much to you, it's all a question of attitudes.
You are the host, you've made a mistake, YOU must fix it and correct it. It's your moral duty to make sure YOU do it.

Remember:

> **You're never an jerk for pushing back against a jerk**

Also, read:

- **How to be a good asshole**

> How to Be A Good Asshole

SUMMARY

The Oscars 2017 blunder was not a big mistake per se.
It would have been a big funny diversion if Beatty had owned it and provided the right leadership.

But because of weak leadership and a bully running slipshod, it ended up looking bad for almost everyone involved.

This article provided a socio-analysis of the now infamous 2017 Oscars mistake.

Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Don’t Sweat The Small Stuff (1997) is a simple self-help book sharing a deep philosophical take on life.
Richard Carlson, the author, recommends we take life a bit less seriously and we prioritize peace of mind, love, and relationships over the stresses of overworking and “achieving”.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - #1. Choose Relaxed Over Competitive
  - Let Go of Your Ego
  - Let Go of Resentment & Need to Be Right
  - Spread the Love
  - Your Thoughts Are Your Reality
  - Don’t Fight Against Your Problems
  - Don’t Be a Perfectionist
  - Nothing is An Emergency
  - Prioritize Relax
- Practical Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- There are no emergencies. Chill
- Stress is an acceptable, even admired form of mental illness. Don’t buy into it
- Don’t skimp on relaxing time: prioritize it

Full Summary

About The Author: Richard Carlson was an American psychotherapist, motivational speaker, and author.
His message was focused on the well-being and the joy of life over “achievement”.

#1. Choose Relaxed Over Competitive

The author says it’s not true that to achieve and get things done, we need to be competitive and stressed out.

It’s best to approach life with a relaxed and contemplative attitude, instead.
And you should never lose the ability to relax and take a breather whenever you need one, especially after having worked hard.

Here are a couple of great ways to enjoy a more relaxed life:

- Stop living life according to others
- Stop trying to please others

> You can't please everyone. Stay true to yourself instead

Let Go of Your Ego

We are all driven by a need to look good and "important".

When we give in to these cravings, we can do things that hurt the people around us.
Sometimes even in very small ways, like jumping in to fix a mistake so that we can "look good" or trying to impress them with how good we are.

But when we focus on impressing instead of understanding, developing human connections, and helping people for the sake of helping, we hurt our relationships

Much better instead to take a step back from our own ego.

> Let's all take a big step back from our own egos

Let Go of Resentment & Need to Be Right

Sometimes we harbor resentment out of small squabbles or little things someone said or did.
When we let that happen, we unwittingly turn small things into big ones.

Richard Carlson says that we do it because we tend to see forgiveness as weak and sometimes we feel like in a race to show who's stronger.
We might decide to cut a relationship with a loved one in the hope that they will come back so we can "win".
But maybe they're thinking the exact same thing.

Avoid it altogether by keeping small things small and letting go of the need to be right.

Spread the Love

Remind the people you love that you love them.
And cut some slack to the people who annoy. Chances are that nobody is actually out to annoy you, but that you are just having a bad day yourself.

> Treat yourself well by treating others well

Your Thoughts Are Your Reality

Our lives are a reflection of our thoughts.
And if we can change our thoughts.

Similar to many self-development authors like Tony Robbins recommend, Richard Carlson recommends that when you're feeling negative you deliberately change your thoughts to something more positive.

The author says that a good way to take control of your mind and thoughts is to spend some time alone, like meditation, yoga, or a walk in nature.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff has some content overlap with *The Power of Now* when it encourages the readers to focus on the present and to "live in the moment" instead of worrying about what might happen in the future.

Some books on meditation and the power of thoughts:

- The Untethered Soul

- As a Man Thinketh

> The present is the only time that exists: cherish it

Don't Fight Against Your Problems

The author says that a great obstacle to thinking positively is problems.
But more than our problems, it's actually how we *approach* problems.

We should not approach problems as if we need to fight against them, but we should approach them as an opportunity to learn from.
And focus on what you have instead of what's missing.

Also, read:

- Marcus Aurelius' Meditations
- The Obstacle is The Way

> You can't control the world outside you. But you control the one inside you

Don't Be a Perfectionist

Some people think that being a perfectionist will bring out the best in us. But Carlson instead says that perfectionism will only make us unhappy by focusing on what we did wrong.

Also, read:

- Daring Greatly
- The Gifts of Imperfection

Nothing is An Emergency

And finally, my favorite part.

I have repeated this to myself, to friends, family, and partners alike a million times.

When you're stressed out, when you feel you really destroyed your chance to achieve X, or when you get fired and everything seems bleak, stop for a second.
And tell yourself:

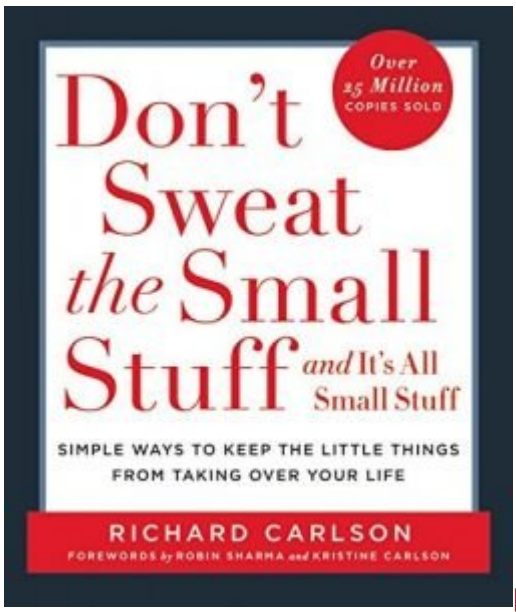
> Nothing is an emergency

And then go do something that makes you happy or get in touch with someone you love.

Prioritize Relax

The one thing that we too often seem to procrastinate on is relaxing time.
Indeed, in my opinion, the highest achievers among us will often feel bad even when relaxing, thus they have no relaxing time at all.

It's time you start planning some time for yourself instead without putting it off any further.
It might take a while to get used to that relaxing time is an important part of our life.
Life for anything else, stick with it and it will eventually become part of who you are.



[image]

Practical Applications

This is such an important life philosophy:

- **Don't Sweat the Small Stuff, and It's All Small Stuff**

I absolutely, absolutely love this title. And it summarizes a great approach to life.

Stop being a drama queen, it's just 90 years on a rock spinning around space.
No matter what you do, it's not gonna matter much anyway.
And that's truly empowering.

This is similar to Mark Manson's "*The Subtle Art of Not Giving A F*ck*", but expressed in a deeper fashion.

CONS

- **Bit Goody-Goody**

Sometimes Don't Sweat the Small Stuff felt a bit too goody-goody Pollyanna to me.
In the sense that yes, for sure, do good… But you also must be ready for those who aren't going to do go stuff. And as you do good, you must also be able to judge characters that are not going to do good things back.

- **Happiness Before Achievement… ??**

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff seems simplistic in its approach to life and "happiness" sometimes.
It says not to worry too much about "achieving" because you might forget about more important things in your life like your own peace of mind and your family. And those are what will make you happy.

But what about people who are happy while they strive to achieve as much as possible (read Be Obsessed or Be Average)? Or those people who can't help, but strive to achieve (read *Relentless*)?

PROS

- **Truly Great Life Philosophy**

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff shares a great life philosophy.
I know many people -and you probably do too- that take things often way too seriously.

This book can help you take a step back and, well, chill a little bit more.

Review

Don't Sweat The Small Stuff often reflects my own life philosophy.

Don't Sweat The Small Grades: My Experience

I remember in high school when most of my colleagues stressed about grades and desperately tried to copy during tests.
And I'd write my own paper without even trying to copy. The professor would go out and I still wouldn't copy.

This scene has remained emblazoned in my mind.
Our history and philosophy professor wouldn't even check if people were copying.
He gave us a test and then started reading the newspaper. Then, all of a sudden, he stood up.
Suddenly.
And the whole class exploded: everyone had their books out to copy, and everyone scrambled to hide them as quickly as possible, either back below the table or back inside their bags.

Everyone except one.
Because that guy didn't want to copy.
He wanted to write what he remembered, adding his own spin to events.
And because, well… He didn't really care about the grades.

Grades were small stuff.
And he didn't sweat the small stuff.

But A Few Things Matter, And Those You Should Focus On

So this book struck a chord with me.

I totally agree with it. But at the same time, I don't live according to it because I also enjoy achieving my goals and progressing.

As I explain in Ultimate Power, that's the power of holding two conflicting thoughts in your mind.
So for example I care about providing the best possible material and content on this website. And about that, I *care*.

This is something I'd invite you to do as well if you want to achieve while living a happy and fulfilling life.
Focus on a *few* things that matter… And don't sweat the rest of the small stuff.

Read more about how this philosophy helped me launch this business.

Small Stuff approach to Enlightenment
TL, DR: albeit I don't live as the book recommends in all areas of my life, I still have that same philosophy for most of my life.
And I can only recommend it to you.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Essentialism: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Essentialism (2014) teaches readers to be happier and more productive by focusing on fewer things and doing those few things better.

TPM Critical Note: An essential approach for ambitious men who want to reach the top of their chosen field
While it's certainly possible to be good at different things, it's still a good idea to narrow down to a few things you truly enjoy and want to excel at. Ideally, ambitious men will also pick one single objective that they pursue as their legacy.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Do Less But Better
  - The Pillars of Essentialism
  - "I Have To" VS "I Choose To"
  - You Must Accept Trade-Offs
  - Clear Out Time
  - 90% Rule: Only Say Yes To 9 & 10 Opportunities
  - Build Fences and Routines
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Live life by design, not by default: choose what matters to you and say no to all the rest
- Doing less also means doing more (and better)
- When you're not sure, ask yourself how important something is to you. If it's less than a 9 on a scale of 10, say no

Notes

About the Author:
Greg McKeown is a business and leadership consultant, motivational speaker, and author.

Introduction

The day Mckeown's wife was delivering at the hospital and he said yes to a business meeting was the day he realized something had to change in his life.
That's when the idea of Essentialism started blossoming.

Do Less But Better

Less but better applies to several different realms in life, including:

1. Pick One Thing to Focus On

It means that we can't be an expert at everything, so we must choose the field we like the most.

2. Buy Only What You Love

And it means that buying everything we just "like" will make us fool things that maybe we "like" but don't love.
And over time, they become clutter (take a look at the now uber-popular Marie Kondo).
Being full of things will not only not make us happier, but will saddle our level of joy and passion.

Don't Get Busy: Drop All That Doesn't Matter

Less is more also applies to our lives duties and work responsibilities.

Having our schedule and calendar full seems like an aspiration in today's society, but it will only increase your level of stress and often decrease your productivity.

What's the alternative?
Same as for everything else: focusing on what really matters the most to us.

> **Less Is More**

The Pillars of Essentialism

Essentialism by Greg Mckeown identifies 4 major pillars to live the essentialist life.
They might seem easy and obvious, but few of us are actively putting them in place:

1. Do Less But Better

The central tenet of essentialism is that of removing all that is not necessary so that we can free up more time to do more and better of what really matters.
This is basically the application of the Pareto principle.

2. Reject The Notion You Need To Do It All

Do you know all those long lists of "to-do" tasks?
Those lists that you will never see the bottom of? Those are the enemies of essentialism.

Not only do they make you feel less productive, but they make you spend most of your time on small tasks that matter little.
They *decrease* your productivity.
You don't need to do it all. You only need to do a few things, well.

3. Questions Yourself (and your plans) Accordingly

You don't pick what matters once and forever.
It's a constant process and update whereby you decide what matters and, even if it hasn't changed, you decide what to say no to based on what's important to you.

4. Ensure Changes Stay in Place

Once you're clear on what's important and what's not, what you will pursue, and what you will say no to, you must make sure you stick to it.

“I Have To” VS “I Choose To”

I loved how essentialism separates the “I have to” from the “I choose to”.
Mckeown says that those who say “I have to” are not following the essentialist path.

“I have to” is the learned helplessness with which most people approach life with passivity.
And we relinquish our power to choose, we give others the power to choose over us.

And here’s the great twist McKeown adds to the story: the people who adopt a life of helplessness aren’t just those who do nothing and let others control them.
It’s also those who do everything!
When you say yes to everything, you are not choosing.

> Saying yes to everything is relinquishing control of your life

You Must Accept Trade-Offs

When you embrace essentialism you also accept that you can’t do it all.

It might be tempting to believe we can do it all, or that we can do a few things more.
But you’re often best served by sticking to your core choices.

An example is that of Southwest Airlines, the largest low-cost airline in the world.
They focused on getting people from A to B, cheaply and with no frills. It could have been tempting to add meals, different classes, and reservations. But they said no to everything that would add further costs and complexities.

Clear Out Time

Schedule some time out for nothing but thinking.
You should use this time to avoid getting lost in the small details, which happens often, and to refocus on the bigger picture.

Greg McKeown proposes that you keep a journal, but instead of writing everything that has happened to you, you focus on writing as little as possible.
The idea is that by writing little, you only focus on what matters most. As you read through your journal, you will realize what matters most to you and the bigger picture will start to emerge.

Schedule Play Time For Inspiration

As you block out some time to take a look at the bigger picture, also add some time to play.
Playtime is an essential tool for inspiration and recharging your batteries.

Sleep As Much As You Need

Most of all, the essentialist knows that skimping on sleep is the silliest thing you can do.
Both because it’s not good for your health and because it even actually decreases your productivity.

My Note:
I couldn’t agree more that you shouldn’t skimp on sleep. However, the link between sleeplessness and alcohol level seemed very silly to me.

90% Rule: Only Say Yes To 9 & 10 Opportunities

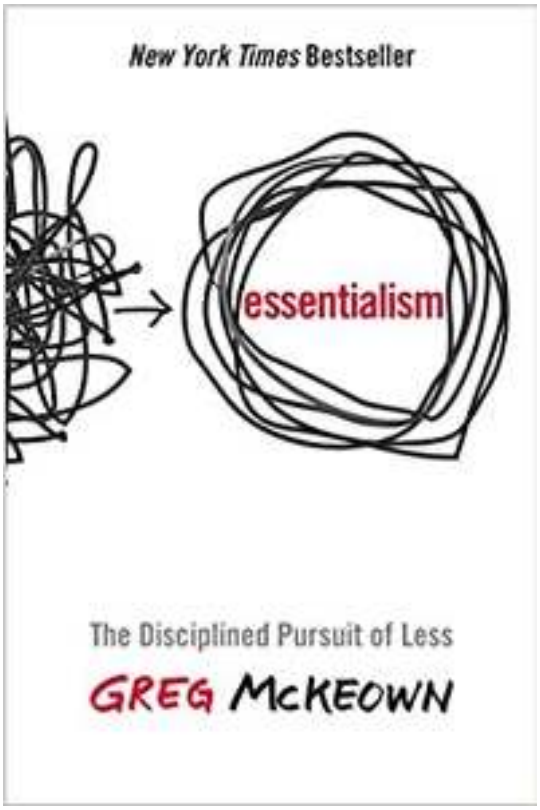
The 90% rule helps you become an essentialist by restricting your decisions only to what matters most. And you only accept -or keep- what scores a 9 or higher.

For example, when cleaning out your closet, ask yourself, what are the chances I will wear this again? If it's less than 90%, it's equal to zero.
Throw it away.

Build Fences and Routines

To help you stick to your new essentialist life, it can be helpful to put fences around your top 10% of priorities. For example, if you want to keep your family time pristine, you could say "no work whatsoever, ever, when it's family time" (this is a similar concept to Bright Line Eating for dieting BTW).

And of course, it helps if you develop routines that will make it easier for you to repeat your good habits.
Also, read *The Power of Habit*.



[image]Real-Life Applications

Write As Little As Possible Journal
I found the idea of keeping a journal where you write as little as possible very intriguing. Indeed it could be a great idea to force you to stay focused on the bigger picture and what matters most.

90% Rule
I loved the idea of the 90% rule so much that I included it in my guide Ultimate Power. Anything that you won't love at a level that is a 9 or a 10, don't accept it in your life.

You Choose, Not Have to!
Never tell to yourself that "you have to". Unless you're in chains, you always have a choice.

CONS

Some Bad Cliche Examples
I didn't particularly like the examples.
It's very common for authors to provide a theory, and then pick a few success stories and say "see? It works".

However, that's rather meaningless most of the time. It's an inductive fallacy that doesn't prove anything, to begin with (read *Fooled by Randomness*).
And everyone can "force" reality to be an example of almost everything we'd want.
Take Southwest Airlines for example.
I've seen this example played over and over. Some attributed its success to customer service, while others said they won because of how management treats employees (*Leader Eat Last*). And here, McKeown says they won because they applied "*essentialism*".

PROS

Simple Yet Life Changing Philosophy
Essentialism is basically the Pareto law applied all around your life.
And that can be life-changing for those who aren't doing it already. Which is, most people.

Review

Essentialism is a useful book that largely applies the Pareto law to one's life.

But Mckeown adds some extra tips, suggestions, and wisdom that make Essentialism a valid read read to improve your life -and your business, and your happiness.

The Elements of Style: How Good Writing Builds Credibility & Authority (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Elements of Style is the most popular book on how to write properly.
It covers all the bases and should provide the foundation for any writer out there.

TPM Strategic Review: Effective writing is a power signal
Just like body language, behavior, and voice are. Specifically, Strunk & White's guide is for **Low-Investment, High-Impact Communication**, obeying the law of least effort.
Use this approach for business and socialization, but always be ready to calibrate and do the opposite when you want to display knowledge, high SES, and IQ.

Contents

- Main Takeaways
- Notes
  - Use Active Voice
  - Write in The Positive Form
  - Don't Overstate Your Argument
  - Place The Emphasis At the End
  - One Paragraph: One Idea
  - Transition Words
  - Follow a Chronological Order
  - Related Words Should Go Together
  - Write Shorter Sentences
  - Make Sure Readers Know Who's Speaking
  - Stay Consistent With the Tenses
  - Use Similar Form for Connected Concepts
  - Write Concisely
  - Writing With Good Form
  - Elementary Rules From Elements of Style:
- Real-Life Applications
  - Don't Try to Look Smart By Adding Words
- CONS
  - Lacks Deeper Strategy: Impressions Are Important
  - AI Can Help You Learn Writing
- PROS
- Review

Main Takeaways

- **Don't use flowery and long sentence**s: they don't make you look smart but dumber
- **Remove all unnecessary words** (and djectives and most adverbs)
- Write in a **chronological sequence** and format in logical sequence (one paragraph: one idea, go from simpler to

more complex)

- Always **make it easy and clear** for the reader to understand

Notes

About the Authors:
William Strunk was an American professor of the English language at Cornell University. He is best known for his book "*The Elements of Style*", which was revised and enlarged by a former student of his, E. B. White, which is why the book is commonly referred to as "Strunk & White".

Foreword

"*The Elements of Style*" has lots of examples that I won't always write here. So if you are serious about getting the most out of this book, you should consider getting the full version.

Use Active Voice

These days many software designed to help you write better text will suggest you pick the active voice instead of the passive one.
And that's also something Strunk and White recommend.

What's active voice, and what's passive one?
This is passive:

> That the text was written in excellent form because I was feeling so inspired

And this is active:

> I was so inspired, I really wrote that text in excellent form

The rule of thumb is that to write in active form, the person performing the action should come first.
If you are not too sure, you can also install software that will let you know whether you are using too much passive form.

Write in The Positive Form

The Elements of Style recommends you write in the positive form instead of the negative one. That means you write what happens instead of what does *not* happens.
For example, this is a negative form:

> I did not make a good job that time

And this is a positive form:

> I did a rather poor job that time

Exceptions: When You Want to Stress Something

The general rule mostly applies to the use of "not" in sentences that you do not want to particularly highly.
Indeed, there are many exceptions where you can use the negative form to great effect.
For example:

- The fact that it *never* happened that the sun didn't rise doesn't mean it *never* will
- It's *not* just me… It's pretty much common sense
- He doesn't have it in him anymore (when you want to stress the negative instead of the positive)
- I don't know (instead of "I know little of that": sometimes negative is just more natural)

Don't Overstate Your Argument

When you overstate your argument with words and adjectives, you can actually lose credibility.
It's because overstatement makes you sound more partial and less authoritative.

This is especially true when writing technical texts as well as a copy to sell a product, where you would come across too "sales".

For example writing:

> I am 100% convinced that this season is going to be best we have ever seen so far

Write what convinced you it will be the best season:

> Based on the trend we see from the past year and the early booking so far, this season promises to be the best we have ever seen

As you can see the second example makes you come across as more authoritative. In the first sentence, people must believe *you*. In the second sentence, you let the data speak.

Place The Emphasis At the End

If you have a strong, emphatic word, you should place it at the end of the sentence. And if you have a strong, emphatic sentence, you should place it at the end of the text.

This is also true for more technical writing, where the last part of the paragraph should serve as a final summary and overview of the paragraph.

Exception: Aesthetic Writing

Sometimes you might want to get creative and scramble things.
In that case, you can grab the reader's attention right away with the emphatic sentence right at the beginning.

For example:

> Such a joy I might never experience again my life

However, don't overdo it or it comes across as too flowery and like you're trying too hard.

One Paragraph: One Idea

The paragraph should be your basic unit of text.

One paragraph should represent one idea or one topic.
And starting a new paragraph means you have moved on to a (slightly) different topic or idea.

It should be as long as it needs to be, but keep in mind that too big paragraphs represent what people refer to as "walls of text", which might scare the readers from even attempting to read it.
At the opposite end of the spectrum, too many short paragraphs also make your text hard to process.

Transition Words

Transition words or transition expressions help the readers make sense of the structure of your text (and of your thoughts!).

Examples of transition words are:

- Sequence words (to begin with, first, finally)
- Additional information (furthermore, moreover, on top of that..)
- Examples (for example, for instance, such as..)
- Summary (to sum it up, overall, in conclusion)

Follow a Chronological Order

If you are telling a story, tell it in the chronological order in which it happened.

Related Words Should Go Together

Place similar words and expressions near each other and keep them apart from other words and expressions where they might give rise to confusion.

For example:

> My girlfriend came to visit me while I was writing this article with a nice bottle of wine

That's a bit confusing.
Your girlfriend brought a nice bottle of wine or you were writing the article with a nice bottle of wine?
If your girlfriend came over with a nice bottle of wine, then rewrite this:

> I was writing this article when my girlfriend came over with a nice bottle of wine.

Much clearer right?

Write Shorter Sentences

While longer sentences are grammatically correct, they are not any easier to read and process.

I find that English-speaking people already tend to write shorter sentences.
I come from a longer-sentence language and I used to write long sentences even in Italian. That means that I had to retrain myself to use more full stops.

Make Sure Readers Know Who's Speaking

When you are writing text with a lot of dialogue, make sure the readers know who is it that is speaking.

The Elements of Style says that one way to do it is by inserting expressions such as "he said / she said" early in the dialogue.

Stay Consistent With the Tenses

If you start using a specific tense, keep using it all along.

Use Similar Form for Connected Concepts

Imagine this example:

> Andrea is a Mac user, but he prefers Android phones.
> Which is funny, because his dad prefers Apple phones, but uses a PC.

This example inverts the order of the preferences and uses different words to express preferences.
Better would be to say:

> Andrea is a Mac user, but he prefers Android phones. Which is funny, because his dad is a PC user, but prefers Apple phones

Write Concisely

I used to be a long, verbose writer because I used to take pride in my knowledge of language and adjectives. Unconsciously, I probably thought that writing was my way to show off my intelligence.

That was silly, and now that I'm more aware of basic power dynamics, I know that **over-investing is almost never a good idea** -not even when it comes to writing.
Much better instead to:

- Remove all words that add no real value
- Don't repeat the same idea multiple times with different words
- Adjectives and qualifiers such as "very", "pretty much", "rather" can be safely removed
- Use active voice (shorter)
- Read your material looking for ways to streamline

Writing With Good Form

Similar to writing long sentences, I used to like difficult adjectives or flowery expressions to show off how well-read I am and how wide and deep my vocabulary is.

Silly me: flowery language has the opposite effect.
When you use too many big words, people don't think you are smart, they infer you're trying too hard and you're not smart at all.

- Use simple words (unless to avoid repetition or to cause a specific effect)
- Limit the usage of adverbs (and don't rely on them to explain your text)
- Change your sentence structure (or your text will seem monotone)

Elementary Rules From Elements of Style:

1. Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding 's
2. In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last
3. Enclose parenthetic expressions between commas.
4. Place a comma before a conjunction introducing an independent clause.
5. Do not join independent clauses by a comma.
6. Do not break sentences in two.
7. Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars, an appositive, an amplification, or an illustrative quotation.
8. Use a dash to set off an abrupt break or interruption and to announce a long appositive or summary.
9. The number of the subject determines the number of the verb.

10. Use the proper case of the pronoun.
11. A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject.

[image]

Real-Life Applications

My main takeaway:

Don’t Try to Look Smart By Adding Words

This is a lesson that it took me a while to learn. But once I learned it, it made me more effective, authoritative, and higher power.

Verbosity is not a tool to show how smart you are. The more you try to look smart, the more you’ll seem try-hard. Write for clarity and understanding instead.

CONS

Lacks Deeper Strategy: Impressions Are Important

Your writing, just like your words, *must* show you’re smart.

IQ is power, it sells, it impresses, and it’s even attractive.
So the secret is not, of course, in hiding, but in HOW to show it well. It’s not with verbosity, we got that. But the book **doesn’t show how to write for strategic impression management.**

We teach how to sub-communicate intelligence and good traits here at TPM.

AI Can Help You Learn Writing

Probably the chapter on spelling was popular decades ago.

But today, with spell checkers, it's not nearly as needed (BTW: spell checkers will also help you learn good spelling for handwriting if you pay attention).

Same for the active and passive forms and the "unneeded adjectives". Yoast and Word give you those suggestions today.
And plugins like Grammarly and Ginger are getting smarter and smarter by the day in helping people write more clearly.

PROS

Many Examples

Clear and Concise
Strunk and Write put their writing where their mouth is: *The Elements of Style* is clear and concise.

Review

The Elements of Style tackles an often forgotten and underappreciated fundamental of high-value signaling: writing.

Personally, I'd have learned better if it had examples of longer sentence structures.
But I learned enough to make it worth the time, and learned even more by practicing, re-reading, and using modern tools for feedback.

Check TPM's best resources.

Why Submissive Women Beat Strong Women In Dating

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Why do men like submissive women?

And is it even true that men like submissive women?

This article will answer those questions.

Contents

- Submissive vs. Strong Women
  - Submissive Women Traits
  - Strong Women Traits
- Should You Be More Submissive?
  - Women Recommend Independence, Men Submissiveness
  - Why Some Women Trick Other Women
  - Why Most Men Don't Give Great Advice Either
- The Truth of Strong VS Submissive
- What Should You Do
- Women Aren't Going To Tell You!
- SUMMARY

Submissive vs. Strong Women

First of all, let's see what's the difference.

Submissive Women Traits

Needless to say, there is no mathematical formula or an exact mix of ingredients that "certifies" submissiveness.

That being said, here are the relevant traits of submissive women:

- Feminine
- Prioritize family and relationship
- Defers to her man for decision-making
- Takes traditional roles at home (cleans, cooks, caretakes)
- Prefers going out with her man and family rather than her girlfriends
- Supports her man to succeed rather than seeking her own personal success

Not all submissive women are feminine, of course.
But femininity comes more difficult for strong women and easier for submissive ones. So from now on, I will use "submissive woman" and "feminine woman" interchangeably.

Strong Women Traits

Strong women tend to be:

- Independent
- Working, possibly good income and career-focused

- Goal-driven (as compared to relationships-driven)
- In some important aspects, similar to men (ambition, drive, assertiveness, etc. etc.)

Strong women are comfortable with:

- Speaking up
- Traveling and going out alone
- Disagreeing, challenging people on their opinions and decisions

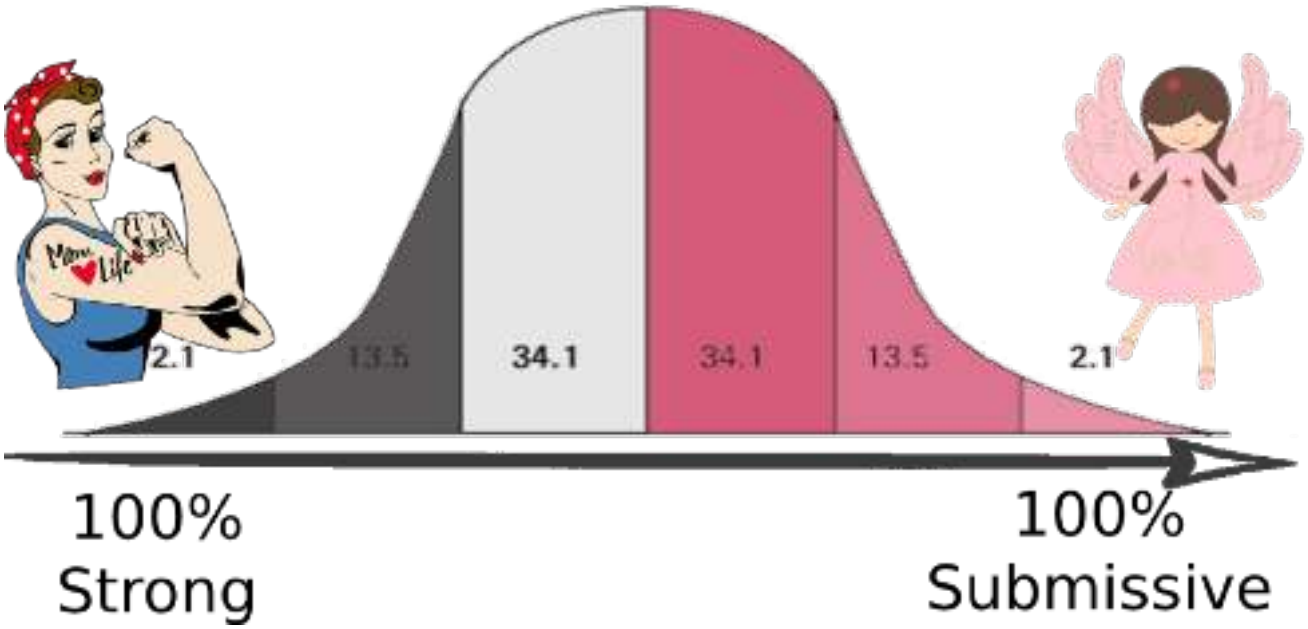
Strong women tend to be more independent, at least in appearance. So from now on, I will be using interchangeably "strong woman" and "independent woman".

Submissive & Strong: It's a Continuum

Of course, the two categories are a simplification.

Most women can be submissive or strong depending on the situation and, as well, depending on the man they are with.

And everyone sits on a continuum, not on polar opposites.
The majority of women cluster around the middle so they are either "slightly strong" or "slightly more submissive".



However, don't throw out the categories just yes. They are still helpful in understanding the differences.

Should You Be More Submissive?

The tough question:

> Should you be more submissive?
> Or maybe more independent?

Let's see what the dating gurus say.

The *women's dating advice* is heavily split among those who recommend you be an independent woman and those who recommend you to be more submissive (of course they'd never use the word "submissive" though!).

Both camps tend to be rather scornful of each other.

The proponents of the strong woman say that the submissive woman gets played and abandoned.
While the proponents of the more traditional role for women say the strong type is “lonely”.

Be Feminine! No, Be Strong!

For example, *Act Like a Lady*, the most popular dating book for women, is in the “be feminine” camp, and it has a chapter called:

> Strong, Independent -And Lonely– Women

And *Why Men Love Bitches*, in the “be strong camp”, is subtitled as:

> From Doormat to Dreamgirl

Where the doormat is the girl who is “too nice” (and submissive).
Only a few of the *best dating resources* espouse a happy middle.

Women Recommend Independence, Men Submissiveness

Now here is the other twist:

It’s mostly *men* who advise more submissiveness.
And it’s mostly *women* who advise more strength.

Why?
What’s going on there?

In my opinion, part of the reason is that women who write dating books have burned themselves and have a grudge against men.
The same happens in the male’s camp of course, where men schooled in the “Red Pill“, share rather misogynist views and “strategies”.
And this is one of the reasons why I recommend you don’t take relationship advice from dating authors.

But the main reason is a bit more perverse:

Why Some Women Trick Other Women

Women, just like men, seek to increase their sexual market value.

Don't take that advice
One way to increase one's sexual market value is to increase one's own appeal.

The other one is, guess what? The manipulative way of increasing one's own appeal is to lower the appeal of other women.

Women suggesting other women be stronger and more independent are (subconsciously) trying to make other women *less* competitive and appealing.
And by decreasing the appeal of other women, they automatically increase their own sex appeal.

Does it seem too far-fetched?

Just ask yourself this: have you ever heard a woman telling another woman to be more feminine?
Exactly, me neither.
Albeit, as we shall see, being more feminine is obviously the most competitive position to adopt in the dating marketplace.

So yes, there is much manipulation going on with women telling other women to be strong and independent.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Why Most Men Don't Give Great Advice Either

So does that mean men are right to tell women to be more feminine?

Well, partially.

But still, they're not 100% right.

When men complain about women being too feminist, masculine, or independent, they are often complaining that women are too independent *for them*.

They take issue with not being able to control their women, but instead of looking in the mirror, they go for the good old finger-pointing.

And of course, men also have an obvious interest in making their dating options larger and more palatable.
By telling women to be more submissive, men seek to increase their own dating options (as well as dating pleasure, since submissive women make for better relationships).

Therefore, I would recommend you always keep that in mind when dating advice comes from women -with the unconscious agenda of making you less appealing- or from men -with the unconscious agenda of making dating easier *for themselves*-.

Yes, you got it, it's just another form of cultural manipulation that serves to fight the infinite sexual war.

> Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

The Truth of Strong VS Submissive

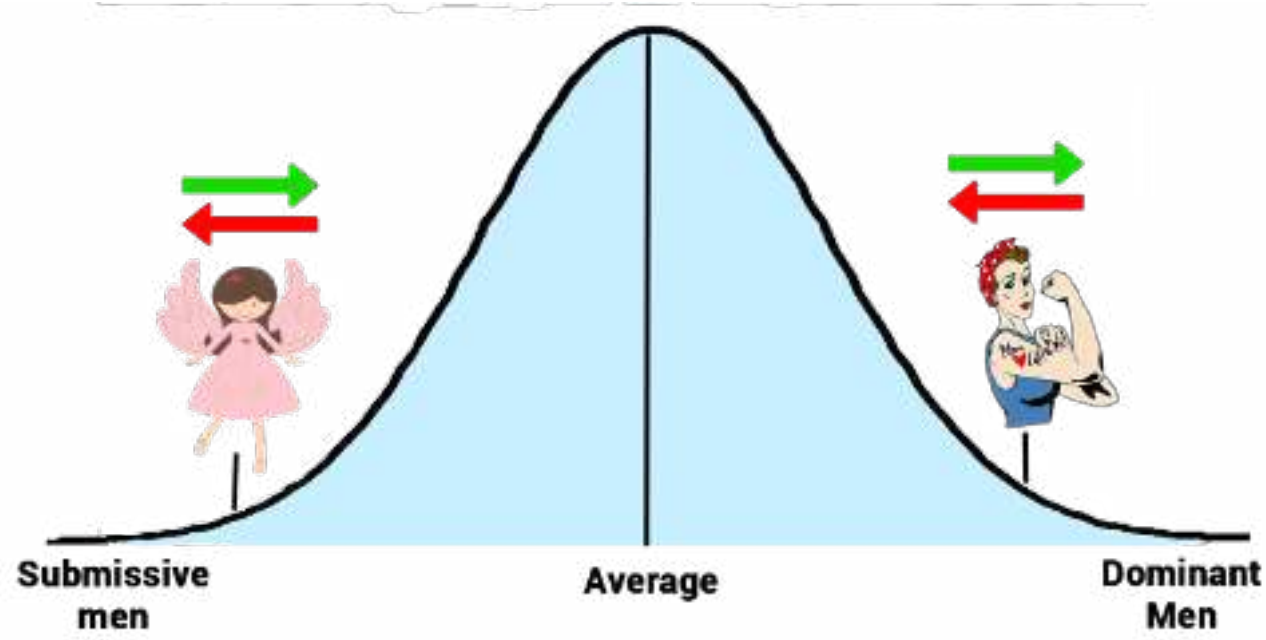
If we define "winner" as "having more options", then it's clear:

submissive women have more dating options.

This is because women prefer relationships with more dominant men.
And men prefer relationships with women who are more submissive (especially for the long term).

Mathematically, then, submissive women naturally have more options.
You can see this in the picture below.

The submissive woman (pink-clad angel on the left) is only at odds with very few super-submissive men. And she can date almost any man (green arrow to her right).
The strong woman is at the opposite end of the spectrum though. The pool of men she's interested in -and who are interested in her- is much, much smaller (only a few of the most dominant men).



Submissive women have far more dating options
This has been proven and confirmed by many pieces of research:

- Men prefer more submissive women, and women prefer more dominant men (Wu et al., 2016)
- Men don't like women who outsmart them (Park et al, 2015)
- People still feel men should earn more (Bertrand, 2013), and men tend to marry lower-earning women
- Men like women who look happy, not proud. The opposite for women (Tracy and Beall, 2011)

However, there are a few caveats:

#1. Both Extremes Are Unattractive

In some areas, there cannot be "too much of a good thing".

But as per the law of optimum balance, for most things related to humans, there often is such a thing as "too much of a good thing".

So it's worth noting that whenever a woman goes too far in each direction, either too independent or too feminine, it's usually unattractive.

One of the reasons Hillary Clinton lost is because, in an effort to look more dominant, she ended up forgetting to be a woman in far too many instances.

And at the other end of the spectrum, women who overplay the submissive hand, end up being annoying to men as well:

> **Her**: (mature woman acts like a baby caricature who can't function without a man)

If he hasn't had sex with her yet, he'll immediately want to f*ck her. But later, it will become annoying.

I highly recommend this article on dating balance:

> Why Balance Is Most Seductive

#2. Men Tend to Prefer Similar Levels of Assertiveness

Men prefer women who are more submissive.

Yet, often, there is a tendency for people to cluster around similarities. And thus, men also tend to prefer women who are not too far off from their level of assertiveness.

#3. Both Types Can Be High-Quality Women

It's not a question of quality.

Sure, if strong women lose in femininity, then they lose big.
But if they can manage to retain their femininity, then they can be very high quality (also see: how to be strong and feminine).

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

And the same is true for submissive women.
You can have both high-quality submissive women and low-quality ones.

What Should You Do

Does this make sense to you so far?

We covered quite a few topics and this was not the simplest of all articles.

Let's focus now on the practical applications of this information.

How can you use this information to become an even higher-quality gal?
I would say there are three major lessons learned here:

1. Stay Away From Extreme Strawmen

First of all, drop all the strawmen stereotypes.

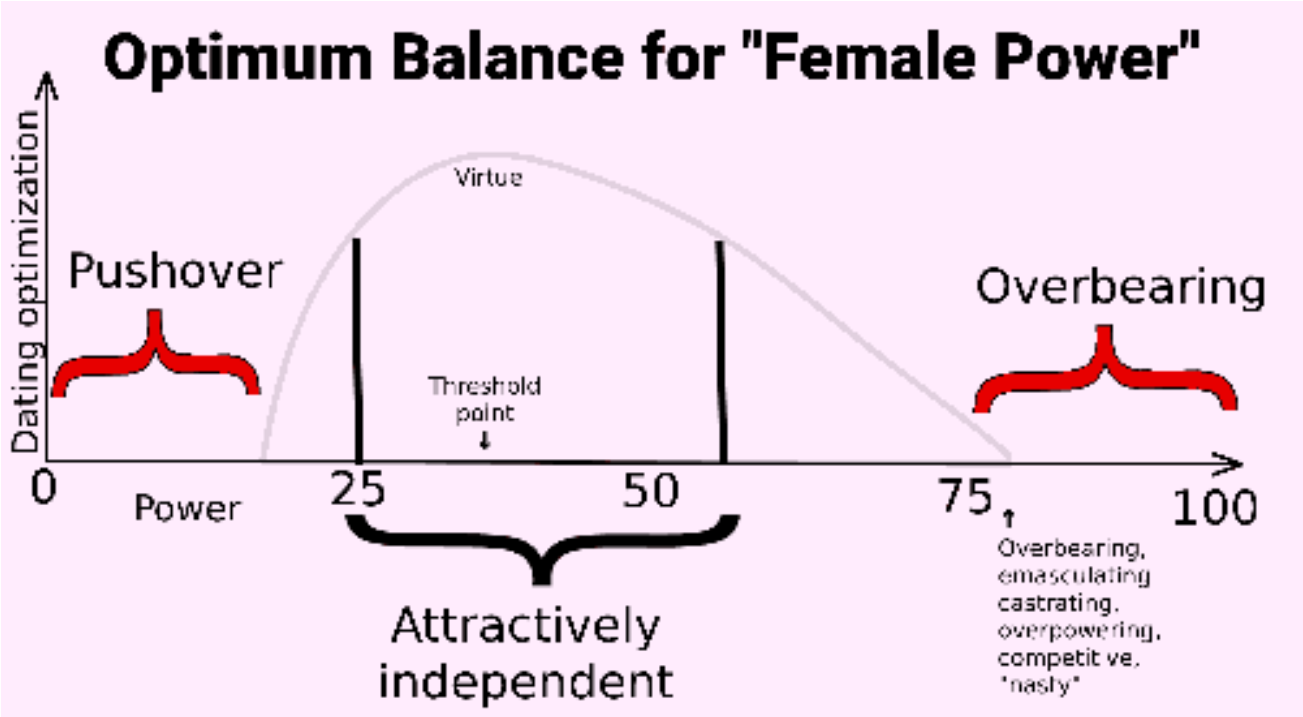
Most women railing against "too nice girls" and most men railing against "feminists" are screaming at strawmen-types of stereotypes that rarely exist in the real world.

The vast, vast majority of independent women are no family-destroying, man-hating lesbians.
And the vast, vast majority of traditional women are no pushovers who let men take advantage of them (on the contrary, men are often happy to provide for them).

2. For Maximum Appeal, Err On The "Slightly More Submissive"

Generally speaking, men maximize dating effectiveness by being slightly more on the mannish, high-power, dominant, and high-leadership side.

And women, of course, maximize dating effectiveness by being a bit more on the feminine and submissive side of the spectrum:



3. Tweak Your Style, Don't Change it

What you should do depends a lot on where you're standing right now (and what kind of men you like).

Best of all, in my opinion, is to embrace your natural disposition and tweak it if needed.

If you're too submissive and your man is doing whatever he pleases without respecting you, then some assertiveness training can help.

And if you are too on the strong woman side, you might gain from becoming more feminine and more accommodating.
This is especially true at the far end of the strong spectrum where the attitude is that "*I'm not gonna be nobody's woman*".
That attitude shrinks the dating pool to a puddle.

Also, read:

- Dating for successful women

4. Collaborate With Him, Avoid Power Struggles

If you're a strong woman, keep this in mind:

If you insist on dating on your terms, you will only end up with submissive men.
That's OK if it's OK for you.
But if you meet a man you like, you might want to consider not getting into a struggle for control against him.

This is especially important if you're a gal who likes dominant men.

Indeed, the three top seducing strategies we reviewed, all use a hint of submissiveness.

5. Do Display Submissiveness to invite Approaches

Evolutionary psychologist David Buss says:

> Signs of submissiveness and helplessness lower barriers to approaches.

> Acting submissive elicits approaches from more men, expands the pool of potential mates, creates greater opportunities for choice, **and ultimately increases the quality of the mate obtained**.

Yes, it's not just a question of quantity.
Strategic submissiveness can actually increase the quality of mates.

Of course, that's also more likely to attract men who feel like it's going to be an easy lay, or that she is going to be easy to control and discard.
So you must be watchful when deploying that strategy.

6. Don't Bash Or Convert: Adapt

Submissive women don't mind independent women because they are not as competitive.

It's from the strong women camp that the flak gets more intense.
Independent women resent more feminine women. And they also resent men who prefer feminine women.
All that flak is mostly out of self-protection. But it's an attitude that adds no value whatsoever to either you or the world.
It only poisons you and it looks spiteful.

If you're more on the independent side, avoid calling submissive women "weak" or "pushovers".
And see if you can learn a couple of things, instead.

Women Aren't Going To Tell You!

Do you know the Bruce Lee quote:

"Be like water my friend"?

Well, women, on average, are very good at being like water and adapting to their environment.
Well, human beings on average are very good at adapting to the prevailing social customs.
However, women are even more so.

What does that mean to us?

It means that most women in the West will say, and maybe even actually believe, that they are independent.
And most women in cultures that prize (or force) women into traditional roles, will say they are good, traditional housewives.

This means that you have to look at how they *behave*, not at what they *say*.

As a matter of fact, many women who flaunt their independence might as well try to cover up their *lack* of confidence and independence, which is a phenomenon called *reaction formation* in psychology.

SUMMARY

This was a bit of a complex topic.

Was it clear enough?

In summary:

- Submissive women have more dating options (most men go for more submissive)
- But some men prefer women closer to their dominance level (but not all)
- Strong/submissive has little to do with overall woman's quality
- Discard most general dating advice of "being more independent" or "more submissive"

Thanks for the Feedback: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Thanks for the Feedback (2014) is a communication skills book focusing on the art and science of feedback: how you can give it, how you can take it, and how you can make the most of it.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Receiving Feedback Well
  - The Three Types of Feedback
  - 1. Appreciation
  - The Three Feedback Triggers
  - Roadblocks to Good Feedback
  - Strive For A System Level View
  - Feedback Profiles
  - How Baseline Personality Affects Feedback
  - How Our Stories Affect Feedback
  - Strategies to Get The Most Out of Feedback
  - Increasing Ability to Take Feedback: Identity and Growth Mindsets
  - Recognizing Bad Feedback
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- To get the most out of feedback change your identity, switch to a growth mindset
- The story you tell yourself about the feedback will affect how you take it and act on it (and you control the story through emotions and thoughts)
- Always look at feedback as the intersection of two realities (what you see is not the same they see)

Full Summary

About The Authors: Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen are two business consultants who have spent decades helping people and corporations. They focus on communication, learning techniques, and communication.
Douglas Stone is a lecturer at Harvard Law School, and so is Sheila Heen.

Introduction

Learning about ourselves can be painful.
Especially if we accept the idea of “I’m not good enough as I am”. That’s what makes feedback difficult.
But we can all improve in both receiving and giving feedback. That’s what Thanks for the Feedback is all about.

Receiving Feedback Well

Receiving feedback well does not necessarily mean accepting the feedback.

It means engaging in the conversation skillfully, making good choices on whether and how to use the information, and managing our emotional triggers so that we don't get defensive.

Here are the two crucial steps to receiving feedback well:

1. Avoid looking for "what's wrong with the feedback" first thing
2. Make sure you understand what's being said

And, I would add:

- Even if it sounds strange, ask yourself "what if this were true"

The Three Types of Feedback

There are three main types of feedback:

- **Appreciation** (build a relationship, appreciate and encourage)
- **Coaching** (helping someone grow, change and improve)
- **Evaluation** (comparisons against others or a standard; align expectations, inform decision-making)

We need all three of them.
Appreciation might seem like it's not even feedback. But no relationship can stay healthy without enough appreciation.

1. Appreciation

Three qualities are necessary for good appreciation feedback:

1. Specific
2. Come in a form the receiver values and understands (check The 5 love languages)
3. Authentic (it must be deserved)

The Three Feedback Triggers

When we get defensive because of feedback is usually because it triggers strong reactions in one of the following areas:

- **Truth triggers**

Truth triggers mean understanding whether the feedback is true or not.
It can be more complex than we think, and most of the Thanks for the Feedback is also aimed at helping us understand how to skillfully analyze the feedback.

- **Identity triggers**

Identity is the story we tell ourselves about who we are.
If the feedback challenges the idea we have of ourselves, it's possible it will be highly destabilizing for us and we can either lash back or reject the feedback outright.
The author says that a huge determinant of how we take feedback at an identity level is whether we have a fixed or growth mindset.

- **Relationship** triggers

- Do we like the person giving us the feedback?
- Did the feedback giver treat us well?
- Do we trust them / are they credible?

Often we react more to the person giving us the feedback than to the feedback itself.
It might be the way they say it "how dare you talk to me like that" or "you're a fine one to talk".
Relationship triggers the risk to put two different "tracks" on the table that we should better not mix: our relationship and the feedback itself. Treat them separately.

None of these reactions are necessarily wrong, but they shouldn't stop us from tackling the feedback and looking dispassionately at the information the feedback carries.

Having a reaction to feedback is not a problem in and of itself. But it's a problem if it stops from engaging fully in the feedback conversation, which it can easily do.
Knowing and understanding our triggers will help us locate the source of our issues with the feedback and within us.

Roadblocks to Good Feedback

- Different data (we might be looking at different data)
- Interpretation (we might interpret the same data with our own biases and preferences)
- Psychological biases (we assign good intentions to ourselves, but not always to others)
- Blind spots (what we don't see about ourselves that others see; ie.: our body language, knowledge gap etc.)

Overall, the authors say, nothing guarantees "objective" feedback and there is always an element of subjectivity. Even when feedback is given based on strict numbers, someone still had to pick those numbers to evaluate us against.

Strive For A System Level View

Often feedback is given in a way that communicates "you are this way (and it's a problem)".
But often the problem is not in one person but in the intersection between two persons.

For example, a person snoring might not be a problem if the partner didn't have a light sleep. It's the intersection between light sleep and snoring that creates the issue.

The solution is to look at the problem from a system perspective. There is a reality, and there are several contributing factors to it, including all the people who are giving and receiving feedback.
Here are the levels you should look at:

- You + me intersection (personal differences)
- Roles clashes (is our issue part of the different roles we have)
- Environment (processes, laws, other players)

Feedback Profiles

We can recognize a few archetypes of people when it comes to receiving feedback:

- **Blame absorbers**

They fail to explore the intersection of the problem, and how everyone is contributing. And they always take the whole blame, which sometimes means they feel terrible about it (and it's often related to low self-esteem).
Another issue with blame absorbers is that they can easily build resentment over time.

- **Blame shifters**

They never acknowledge their roles in the problem.
“It’s him, not me”, “it’s the new update that screwed up everything”, “it’s a setup against me”.
It’s not relaxing to avoid blame, it’s exhausting to always have to shift blame. And it’s a very weak way to approach life.

How Baseline Personality Affects Feedback

Our baseline personality also heavily affects how we receive feedback.

1. Baseline Behavior

People who are generally happy and content and with high self-esteem take feedback better.
People who are generally unhappy, dissatisfied, and with low self-esteem take negative feedback harder.

2. Swings

There are differences in the mood swings people experience

3. Sustain / Recovery

There is also a difference in personalities when it comes to “moving on” from feedback, whether positive or negative, giving rise to four different possible mixes:

- Recovering quickly from negative feedback
- Recovering slowly from negative feedback
- Sustaining joy for positive feedback for a long time
- Sustaining joy for positive feedback only for a short time

The result is a quadrant, where ideally one would recover quickly from negative feedback while staying happy for the longest time on positive feedback.

My Note:
Ideally, I think you should aim and not be impacted by “negative” feedback at all.
This is what Ray Dalio calls “looking at yourself from above as if you were a machine”. Also, check Ultimate Power.

The authors say that *we can change our wiring*, which is true.

How Our Stories Affect Feedback

A major component of how we react (and act) to our feedback is the story we tell ourselves about it.

The authors say that thoughts + feelings = stories.

That means that what we think about the feedback and how we feel when we receive it will determine what we tell ourselves about the feedback.
And that will ultimately influence how we react and how we act upon that feedback.
To control how we feel and act on the feedback, we must control our feelings and thoughts.

Feelings
For example, if we are super tense while we receive feedback from our boss, we tend to see it more defensively because our body is in a fight or flight response (the response we have to a threat).
Calming ourselves down is a great way to positively influence how we will receive feedback and how we will think about it.

Thoughts
The thoughts are what we tell ourselves about the feedback, and we have an easier time controlling them. There is also a strong connection between thoughts and feelings, as thoughts can also generate feelings.
By controlling our thoughts we influence how we receive and act on the feedback.

Strategies to Get The Most Out of Feedback

- Be prepared
- Think about what the worst could be and accept it (same strategy in How to Stop Worrying and Start Living)
- Separate stories from feelings and feedback (this is self-awareness)
- Separate the feedback (not being great at X does not make you bad at Y or at your life in general)
- Step back from it (take the perspective as if you were coaching a friend)
- Look at it from 10 years from now (not such a big deal anymore right?)
- Accept you can't control how they see you

Increasing Ability to Take Feedback: Identity and Growth Mindsets

The three biggest aspects you can change to accept feedback are:

- Switching to a growth mindset
- Adopting a more resilient identity
- Accepting that you have complex and mixed intentions (you are not always as good and pure as you tell yourself you are)

Without a more resilient identity, our tendency is to simply reject the feedback to defend ourselves. With a more resilient identity, we don't have to accept the feedback in any case, but at least we can look at it rationally (and give ourselves a chance at growing).

Recognizing Bad Feedback

Some feedback might not be useful or it might not be motivated by a real willingness to help.
There is no exact formula to recognize them, but here are a few ways to spot them:

- The feedback entails a critique of the type "you'll never do anything in life"
- You ask for a change in feedback style but it keeps coming the way it hurts you most
- You change but there is always something more they criticize you for
- The feedback holds the relationship hostage (ie.: "feel free not to take the feedback, but if you don't we're done"
- The feedback is a threat, not a warning
- It's always only you who has to change

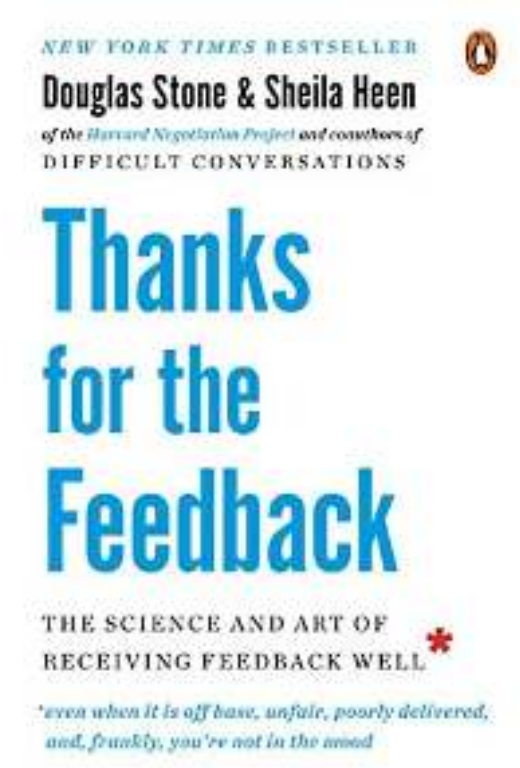
Also, watch out for relationship partners who tell you that you are the only one who has to change. That's a hallmark of abusive men and abusive relationships.

Turning Down Feedback

You can say "thank you, but not now" or "not now, not like that, I need time and space".
The authors also recommend you learn to use "and" instead of "but" to make your communication more appreciative while still being firm at the same time.

Take More Time
The first time you hear strong feedback you might naturally get defensive, or end up taking more blame than you

really should.
Give yourself time! Say that you didn't expect to hear it and that you need to think about it.



Real-Life Applications

Give Yourself Time
Don't jump to conclusions and don't let people rush you in to say anything. If you receive strong and unexpected feedback, say you didn't expect it and you need to think about it.

Calm Yourself Down When Receiving Feedback
Calm yourself down or help the person receiving your feedback calm down when they receive your feedback. This way, you will not perceive the feedback as a threat.

Think Positively About the Feedback
Always look at the feedback as an opportunity to improve.

Look at The System
When you want to give feedback, always consider the whole situation and how *you* are contributing to the problem.

If You're Defensive…
… Always ask yourself "what could be right about this feedback"

Don't Swarm People With Feedback
If there are many things to say, pick the top one they can focus on. You can also ask them what they are most interested in.

Use Positive Feedback to Spur Groups to Action
When you have to give feedback to a group for not conforming to something, say thank you to those who have done it already. You make a compliment, and those who haven't done it yet will be gently reminded. It's more effective like that.

40% of Happiness is Interpretation

Research suggests that 50% of our happiness is inborn, 40% is how we interpret things and 10% is circumstances.
Also, read Marcus Aurelius' Meditations.

CONS

- **Terrible Audiobook Voice**

The male narrator (whom I believe is the author himself Douglas Stone) might have a good speaking voice, warm and soothing.
However, it's not a good voice to read audiobooks, where you need a clear voice and perfect diction.
His voice is too "airy".

I struggled to understand him and cheered every time the woman started speaking instead (whom I believe is the author herself Sheila Heen).

- **Could Have Been Shorter?**

Thanks for the Feedback is quite long.
Most parts are very helpful and add loads of value, but I think it might have been more condensed.

PROS

Deep, Deep Insight
Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen touch on the deep psychological triggers here. This is stuff that can really improve people's lives (ie.: identity, growth mindset).

Great Examples
Same for Crucial Conversations, I loved the examples.

Review

I was thinking:

"Wow, *Thanks for The Feedback* is AWESOME!"

And then I realized it was from the same writers of *Crucial Conversations*, a previous book I've already plenty lauded and given 5 stars to.
And then, it made sense.

Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen write are some of the best authors out there.
They know people's psychology and they know their way around social skills.

For example, they say they don't know enough about the brain, which is exactly what knowledgeable people do.
And then they proceed to give you a highly relevant and deep overview of how our brain wiring affects feedback.
Hats off.

I think their books are some of the most underrated books out there.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

The 8 Best Psychology Books to Understand Human Behavior

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The best psychology books to understand people and human behavior—right here.

Creating this list of psychology books was both exciting and challenging.
Psychology is vast, and choosing the very best takes careful consideration.

This isn't just any list.
It's a carefully curated, *constantly updated* collection for anyone serious about understanding people and excelling in life.

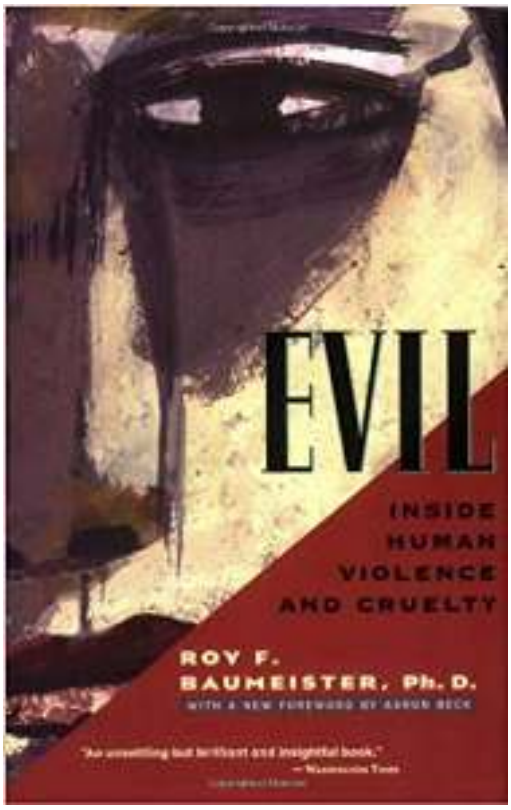
Let's dive in:

Contents

- 8. Evil
- 7. The Psychology of Social Status
- 6. The Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych & Romantic Relationships
- 5. The New Psychology of Leadership
- 4. The Dark Triad of Personality in Everyday Life
- 3. The Social Animal
- 2. The WEIRdest People In The World
- 1. Evolutionary Psychology

- Great Psychology Books
- Best For Psychology Students
- Best Applied Psychology Books
  - 5. Red Flags
  - 4. Learned Optimism
  - 3. Influence
  - 2. In Sheep's Clothing
  - 1. Power University
- Change Log

8. Evil



By Roy Baumeister
Summary | Kindle

Why do people act evil?
And how do otherwise good people end up acting evil?
Can people “get used” to evil and commit more and more of it, as in a slippery slope?

These are only a few of the questions that *Evil* provides an answer to.

It’s similar to *The Lucifer Effect*, but broader.

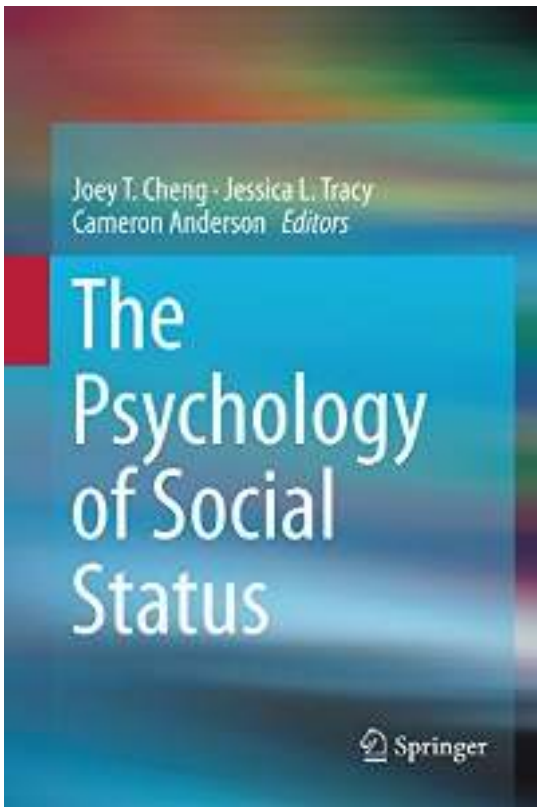
Busting the low self-esteem myth

The pop-psychology interpretation suggests low self-esteem makes people lash out against ego threats.

Baumeister explains that it’s instead people with *high but fragile* self-esteem who react violently to perceived ego threats.

> People will settle for any vaguely plausible argument when they want badly enough to believe that their hurtful actions are justified.

7. The Psychology of Social Status



By Joey T. Cheng, Jessica L. Tracy, et al.
Summary | Amazon

Theoretically more of a *social* psychology book.

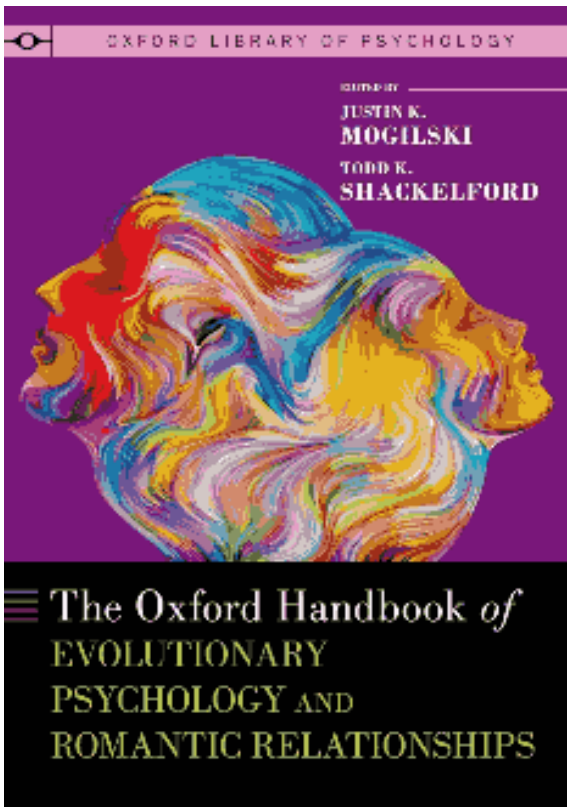
However, as social animals, the demarcation line between social psychology and psychology is blurred.

Plus, it's truly enlightening to understand people, how our minds work, and why we do what we do.

It replaces a spot previously held by *The Status Game* because it's more empirically sound.

> human hierarchies are the product of our species' evolved tendency to submit to those who wield force and intimidation, and to follow and learn from those who garner respect and admiration.

6. The Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych & Romantic Relationships



by Justin K. Mogilski, Todd K. Shackelford, et al.
Summary | Amazon

Combines the latest evolutionary psychology research, plus relationships.

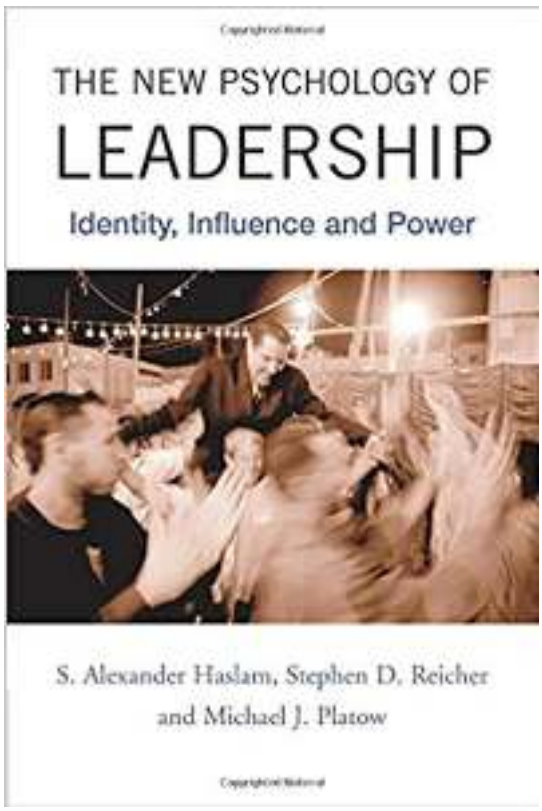
Survival, reproduction, and… Love.
This trio defines life, and the latter is what many believe makes life worth living.

And, from a learning perspective, *The Oxford Handbook* is on par with both the best evolutionary texts, and the best relationship books.
So you kill two birds with one stone.

As with any evolutionary texts, expect some amoral deep dive into human nature and psychology.
BUT there is also plenty to be optimistic for, including what this quote represents:

> Despite the often too prevalent perception of a war between the sexes in the social sciences (see special issue of Sex Roles, e.g., Vandermassen, 2011), to a large degree interdependent reproduction promotes cooperation rather than confict (Buss, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)

5. The New Psychology of Leadership



By Alexander Haslam
Summary | Amazon

The New Psychology of Leadership is not "just" about the psychology of leadership.

It goes deep into social identities, group dynamics, and inter-group dynamics.

All the wisdom it shares is backed by hundreds of studies and research.
And that makes it great both for the average readers who are going to learn more than with any other leadership book, and for the academic who wants to dig deeper into the research.

> Leadership that is grounded in shared identity will always win out over that which is grounded in ego.

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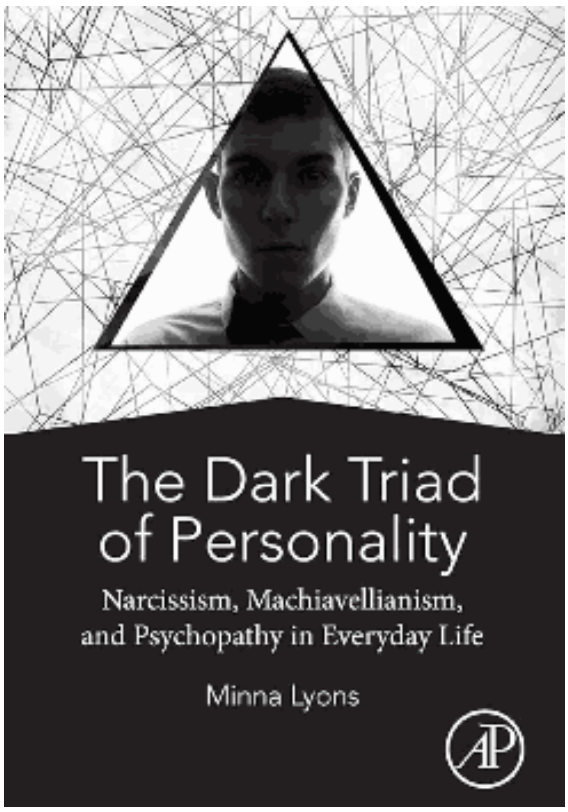
4. The Dark Triad of Personality in Everyday Life



by Minna Lions
Summary | Amazon

You could probably find a better book on narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism.

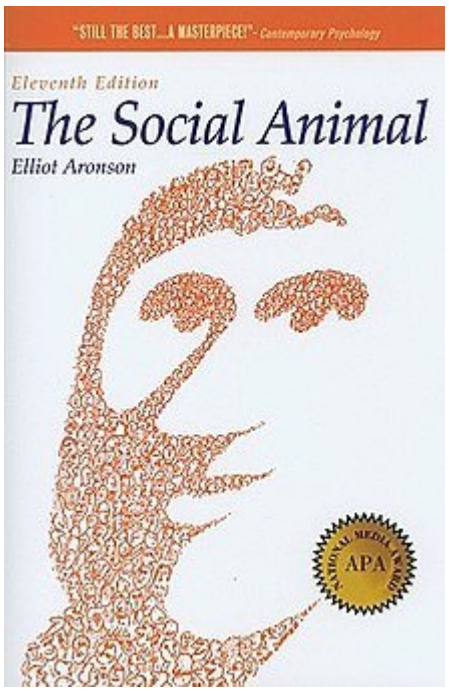
And to understand human psychology you need to understand the dark triad.

What earns *The Dark Triad of Personality* a spot on this list is that it combines all three, in one single book.

Plus, all backed by research.
What could you ask for more?
A good quote maybe. But handbooks aren't famous for great quotes . Here's me trying:

> The interpersonal damage caused by dark personalities could imply that individuals high on these traits are not "mad" (i.e. , mentally ill, needing some kind of interventions), but simply "bad"

3. The Social Animal



[image]
by Elliot Aronson
Summary | Print

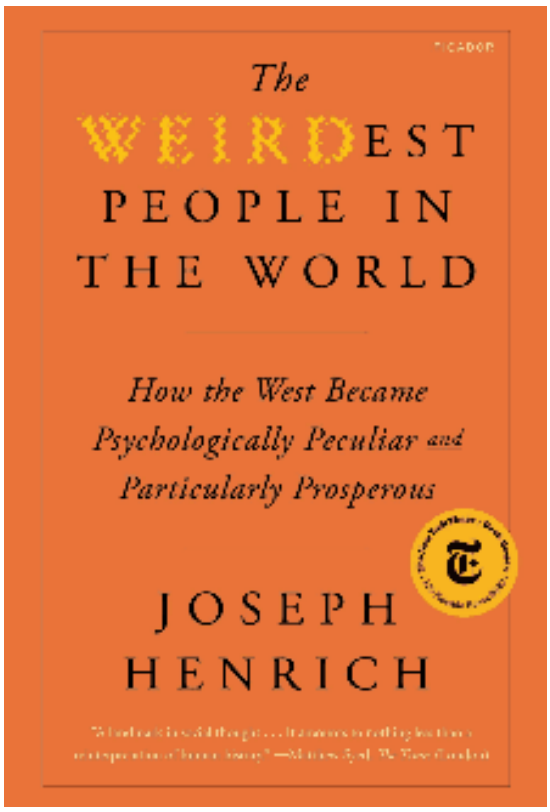
The Social Animal is in between a book and a university textbook.

And I have rarely seen anything so densely packed with research-backed, eye-opening information on people and human psychology.

The Social Animal is the quickest way to gain an overview of decades of research on social psychology.

> "People who do crazy things are not necessarily crazy."

2. The WEIRdest People In The World



by Joseph Henrich
Summary | Amazon

This book will transform how you view psychology while offering the best explanation of the past millennium of Western history and progress.

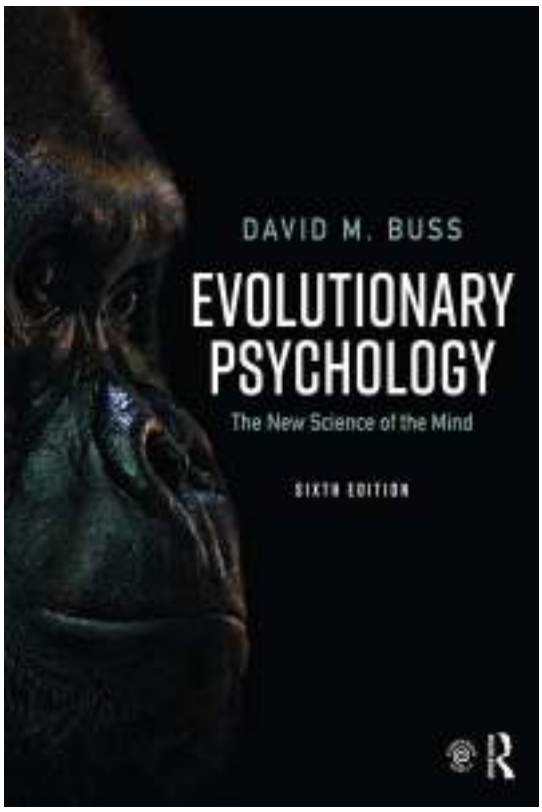
It beautifully connected the dots between individual psychology, social psychology, and cultural psychology.
And explains societal progress and innovation -or lack thereof- along the way.

That makes it a must-read not only for anyone interested in psychology but also for policymakers the all world over.

I'd also recommend it to anyone invested in humanity's progress and well-being.
As one of those people, I found Henrich's insights invaluable also for refining this website's values and philosophy.

> The result is that textbooks that now purport to be about "Psychology" or "Social Psychology" need to be retitled something like "The Cultural Psychology of Late 20th-Century Americans."

1. Evolutionary Psychology



[image]
by David Buss
Summary 6th edition / 7th edition | Amazon

All books in this list are fundamental pieces of the human mind puzzle.

And no puzzle is complete without all the pieces.

But I agree with David Buss that **evolutionary psychology is the meta-discipline that glues all the other branches of psychology together**.
Or, at least, helps make sense of all the psychology branches.

Even positive psychologist Martin Seligman agrees when he says "*natural selection reframes almost everything, and it has pervaded my thinking about psychology since* (Seligman, 2018)".

Take the popular fascination for "human biases", for example.
In "*How the Mind Works*" Steven Pinker argues that humans aren't as irrational as cognitive psychology might lead you to believe. You can understand how those 'irrationalities' made sense when you look at it through the lens of evolution.

Finally, evolutionary psychology, allows you to understand people across and beyond cultures, going at the shared roots that make everyone similar.

Only when you look at psychology through *evolutionary* psychology you can connect the dots.
I doubt anyone can fully understand dating, relationships, and human behavior without first understanding the basics of evolutionary psychology.

> "We are built to be effective animals, not happy ones"

Great Psychology Books

Outside the top list, but also insightful:

- **I'm OK – You're OK** to understand interpersonal emotional dynamics and 'judge power dynamics'
- **Machiavellianism – The Psychology of Manipulation** for Machiavellianism, manipulation and political manipulation. The original work by Christie & Geis' also superb
- **Will I Ever Be Good Enough** should be mandatory reading for mothers and children of narcissistic parents
- **The Highly Sensitive Person**: the Bible of high-sensitivity, helped me better understand myself
- **I Hate You Don't Leave Me**: the best book on the psychology of BPD (Borderline Personality Disorder)
- **Quiet**: best book on introversion
- **Emotional Vampires**: the layman's introduction to personality disorders, including their positive impact on society
- **Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness**: to learn, deal, and cure your passive-aggressive tendencies
- **Behave**: an interdisciplinary overview of why we do what we do

Best For Psychology Students

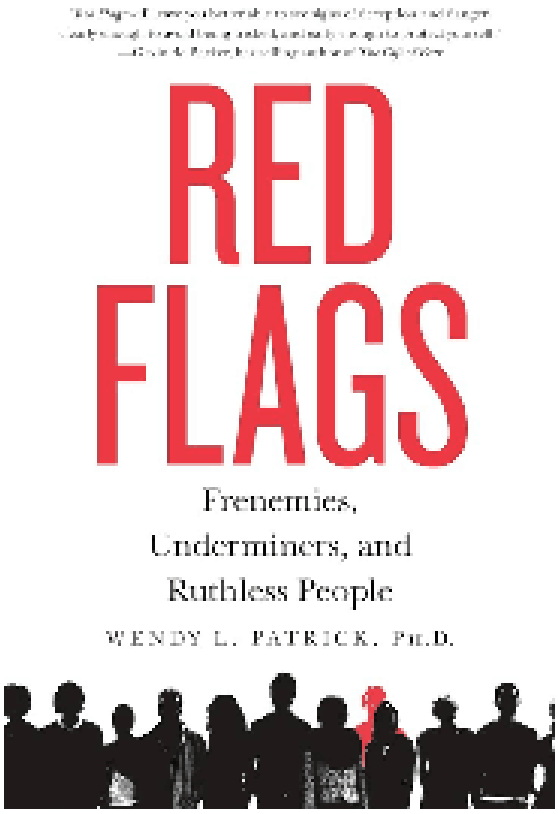
These books are the best psychology books for psychology students and researchers, as well as professors and academics:

1. The Hope Circuit: With tips on how to get published, and strategies good academic careers. Read between the lines, and you'll learn how Martin Seligman was so successful
2. Learned Optimism: A crash course on Academia's power dynamics. Read between the lines, and you'll see how the author's ambition, and not just intellectual pursuits, also shaped his moves and choices
3. Misbehaving: The story of how psychology -and psychologists- fought their way into a different turf discipline: economics. And, of course, of how economists tried to fight psychologists off.
4. The Undoing Project: The 'behind the scenes' of how science advances.
   Plus, how psychologists sometimes fail to apply psychology in their lives. Ie.: Kahneman and Tversky won the Nobel and still couldn't manage to keep their friendship.
   Maybe they should learn power dynamics as well :)

Best Applied Psychology Books

This list focuses on books that translate psychological theories and concepts into practical tools and actionable advice.

5. Red Flags



by Wendy Patrick
Summary | Audiobook

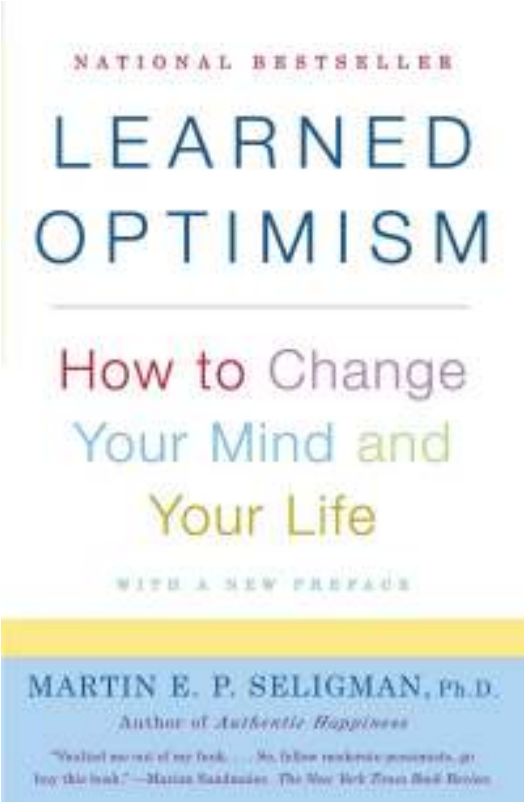
What could be more helpful than psychological insights on how to read people?

Especially how to read and avoid the toxic people that can ruin lives?

Wendy Patrick is one of the best authors for this task, with both scientific and first-hand experience.
And Red Flags stands as one of the best books I've read on how to read and recognize (bad) people.

> "What do you want?" we sometimes joke when someone gives us a big compliment. Actually, that is a very good question.

4. Learned Optimism



by Martin Seligman
Summary | Audiobook

Martin Seligman can at times come across as self-absorbed (and I dislike his blindly patriotic stance), but this book is very helpful for a man's mental empowerment.

In "Learned Optimism" you will pardon the cacophony, and learn how to be happier and more optimistic.
And, incidentally, also how to achieve more, enjoy better relationships, and, if you're interested, how to be elected in office -no kidding, optimistic politicians clean it at the polls-.

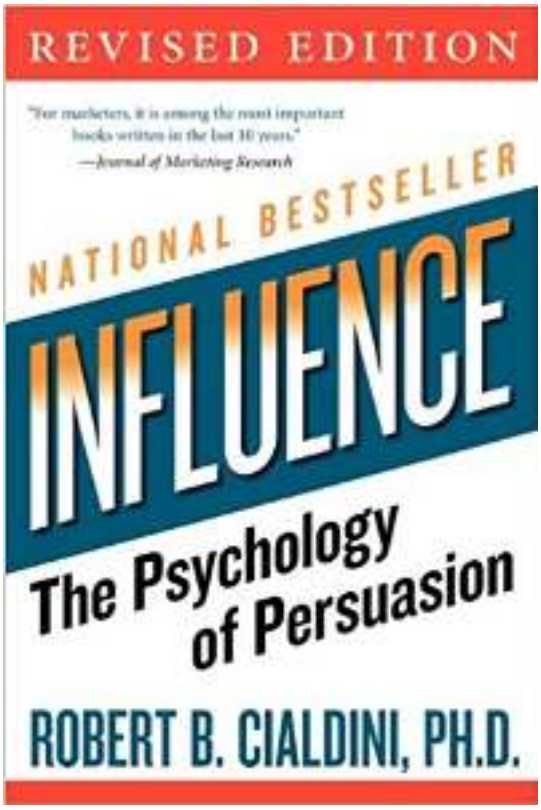
"Learned Optimism" is one the first books in the field that has come to be known as "*Positive Psychology*".
And, in the years, there has been a proliferation of "Positive Psychology" books.

But I still recommend "Learned Optimism" over all other Positive Psychology books.

Albert Ellis's books are equally good when it comes to self-development and becoming happier, more empowered people. But he is less about general psychology and more about drilling on specific techniques (REBT).

> What we want is not blind optimism but flexible optimism—optimism with its eyes open.

3. Influence



By Robert Cialdini
Summary | Audiobook

The psychology of persuading and selling had never been systematically researched in the world of academic psychology.

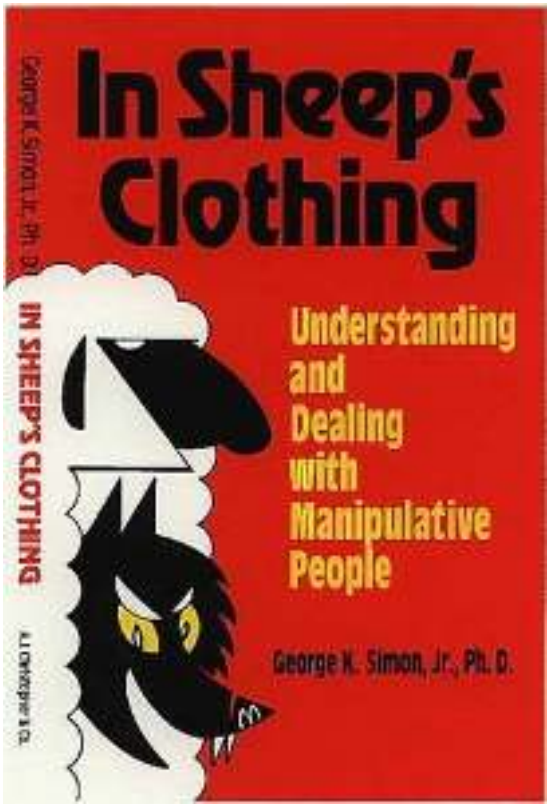
Until Cialdini burst into the scene with “Influence” in 1984.

It was long overdue for psychology to get scientific into persuasion, influence, and manipulation.
And “Influence” became an instant classic -and deservedly so-.

Even today, 35 years later, you’d be hard-pressed to find a better book on influence and persuasion.

> When we ask someone to do us a favor we will be more successful if we provide a reason.
> People simply like to have reasons for what they do

2. In Sheep’s Clothing



Summary | Audiobook

This is a big darling of The Power Moves.

Why?

Because it provides much backing for this website's philosophy and mission.
George Simon says that people in power have a tendency to be more abusive, more insensitive to others and more dangerous than most people are.

And even if you refuse to believe that this book still has truckloads of wisdom to teach.
It delves deep into the psychology of manipulators and power-hungry individuals.

Finally, it's a much-needed slap in the face to a really annoying tendency of some psychologists.
The tendency to look for the "deep reasons for abusive behavior", which often seem dangerously close to turning victimizers into victims.

No, it's not always about childhood trauma or deep insecurities. **Sometimes an a**hole is just an a**hole**.

Highly recommended.

> Power by itself doesn't have the ability to corrupt a person's character.
> It's the character flaws already present in people's character that lead people to pursue power and abuse it once they have it.

1. Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Reviews

Power University is a one-of-a-kind course that transforms psychological insights into practical strategies for real-world success.

This program integrates psychological insights with a focus on mastering relationships, social influence, and achieving goals.

It's all actionable advice designed to help you:

- Build genuine self-confidence
- Understand and read people effectively
- Navigate social dynamics to achieve goals
- Boost your social status and influence
- Develop attraction and relationship skills

With its comprehensive system, Power University goes beyond individual skills to offer a complete framework for thriving in life's most important arenas. Whether you aim to improve relationships, excel professionally, or increase personal power, this course equips you with the tools to succeed.

This isn't just learning—it's transformation.

Change Log

Removed:

- ***Nudge***: politics and political ideology more than psychology. And some question marks, including potentially misrepresented studies
- ***The Art of Seduction***, formerly a representative of "dark psychology" connected to dating. But it's too light on evidence to make the list, and we have *Seduction University* that better covers these topics
- ***Attached***, formerly here as an overview on attachment styles. But *The Oxford Handbook* provides a better evolutionary-informed framework to understand attachment styles, including their connection with life-history strategies
- ***Mindset: Psychology of Success*** (11.08.2024), While it introduced the growth mindset concept, more comprehensive resources can provide a better overview, including the advantages of a fixed mindset with positive self-views.
- ***Thinking Fast and Slow*** (29.06.2025) is on most psychology books lists for good reason, but we removed it to

avoid a “trees before forest” approach. The dual-process model wasn’t a new concept, and together with many cognitive “biases” make more sense when first seen through an evolutionary lens.

Added:

- ***The WEIRDest People in the World*** (28.12.2014)

Rank-changes:

- ***The WEIRDest People in the World*** moved to #2 as it helps you develop a foundational understanding of how cultures develop so you can ‘understand cultures cross-culturally’

Tony Robbins vs. #MeToo: Analysis Of Communication Failure

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

We talked about Tony Robbins already on this website before.

We summarized *some of his best work*, featured *Awaken the Giant Within* in our *best self-help books list,* and also reviewed his power dynamics with Gary Vaynerchuck.

As a great influencer Robbins makes for a very good case study indeed.

However, nobody's perfect, and Tony recently had a major communication blunder with his #metoo movement embroilment.

Let's quickly review here what his mistakes were.

Contents

- 1. Picks a Touchy Subject as an Example
- 2. Generalizes His Attacks to WHOLE Movement
- 3. Cuts The Woman Off
- 4. Fails to Address The Real Issue
  - Weak, Off-Mark Step Back
  - Bullying Tactics
- 5. Physical Push Back
  - Robbins Sounds Overly Dismissive
  - Voice
- 6. PR-Sounding Apology
- SUMMARY

1. Picks a Touchy Subject as an Example

Tony Robbins wanted to touch upon two different topics:

1. Victim mentality and why people should avoid it
2. People who fake harassment, pain, or wrongdoings to get attention

He could have picked a lot of examples for either of them. But he probably wanted to pick something recent and attention-grabbing.
So he went for the #MeToo movement.

However, the #MeToo movement is also a controversial subject. Especially when you go against it.
Up until here, nothing wrong though.
We should not shy away from controversial topics if they can help us make a sensible point.

2. Generalizes His Attacks to WHOLE Movement

The problem with Tony Robbins' comment is that he makes it sound as if they apply to the whole movement, not a few bad apples.

How could he have avoided that and still used the #MeToo movement as an example?
Well, he could have prefaced his comments.

For example, if Tony Robbins had said something like:

> The MeToo movement is doing a great, great job at finally taking to the fore a problem that for too long the world has turned a blind eye on.
> Too many sleazy men have been abusing their power to harass and extort sexual favors. Shame on them!
> At the same time, as for any large movement, there are some who are jumping on that bandwagon and falsely accusing people in an effort to get certainty and significance.
> I am speaking to this people when I say that if you are trying to…

Now even with that preface, some people would have still not liked his example.
However, probably nobody would have spoken against it and nobody would have taken it *too* badly.

Without prefacing his comments, however, it's only normal that many felt like he was attacking the *whole* movement. Which includes plenty of women who have faced *real* harassment, ranging from actual rape to annoying remarks.

3. Cuts The Woman Off

When a brave woman called Nanine speaks up, Robbins does not even pretend to listen.
That felt, to Nanine and to most of the audience, rude and overpowering.

4. Fails to Address The Real Issue

What Robbins says replies is also way off the mark.
He says:

> Not for you personally. What you see is people making themselves significant by making somebody else wrong and getting certainty.

Tony Robbins again perseveres on his initial communication blunder. He sounds as if all women behind the #metoo movement are making up stories.

Weak, Off-Mark Step Back

Then he adds:

> And there is nothing wrong with that, it just won't make you happy.

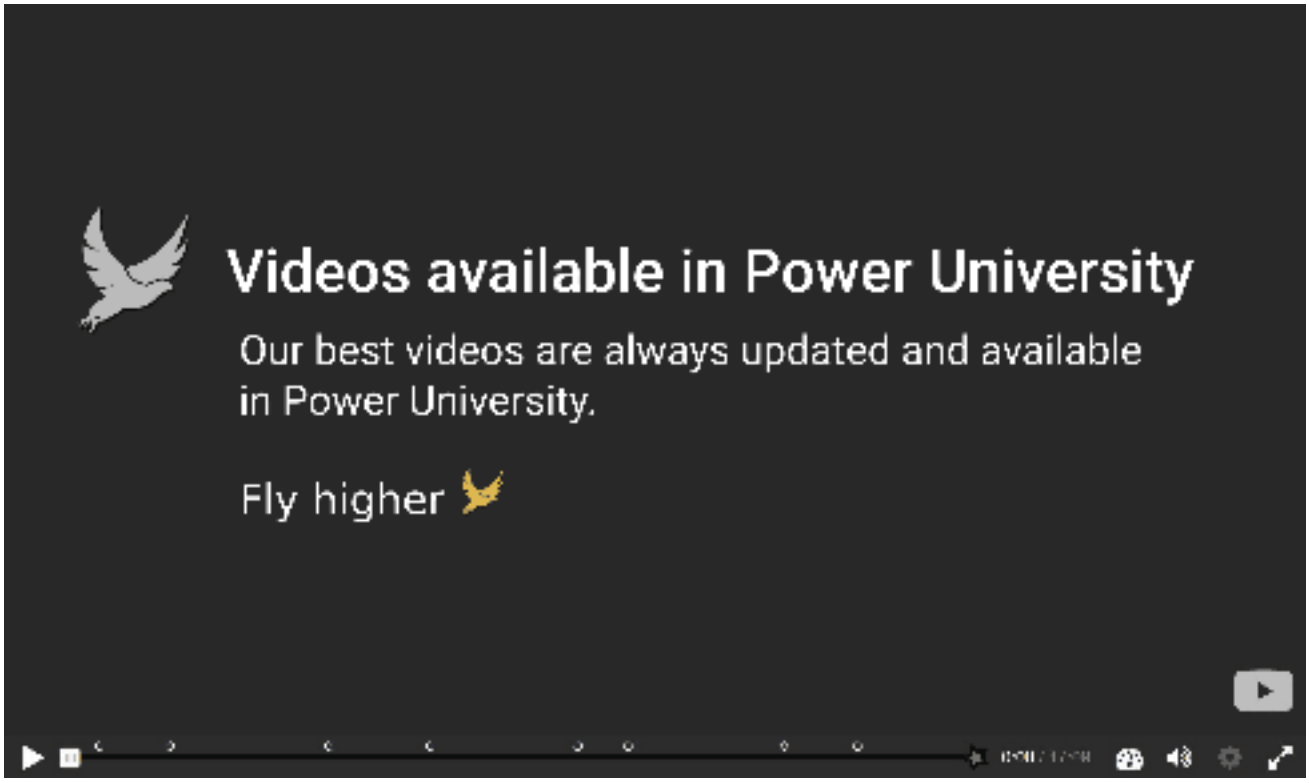
This is a weak step back.
If Tony Robbins is making the case of women making stories up, then *there is* something wrong with that behavior.
That was NOT what he had to take a step back on.
What he should have corrected was his stance that *all* women are making stories up, not that it's wrong of *some* women to falsely accuse people.

Bullying Tactics

Not only Tony Robbins doesn't listen to Nanine, but deploys a few tactics to isolate her and browbeat her.
He uses the example of Jesus to make his point, which lends "holiness" to his position. And he uses his trademark signature of getting people on his side by saying:

> Say yes and raise your hand

When the crowd raises their hands (and few seem to do it here) Robbins is not only shoring support for his position, but he is roiling the crowd against Nanine.
That must have felt really bad for her.



5. Physical Push Back

Finally, Robbins calls Nanine on the aisle.
We can hypothesize that Robbins probably thought he could not “lose” that battle without losing too much of his authority.
And, probably, he thought he was also right and was now going to show it to her and to everyone else.

However, the whole idea of pushing her back was terrible to begin with.
He’s a huge dude. And there he is, physically pushing around a woman who has been the victim of abuse. Of course, that image wasn’t going to go unnoticed by his critics.

Robbins Sounds Overly Dismissive

Robbins tells Nanine to put his fist out and then starts physically pushing her back, saying:

> Why are you pushing back? Why are you pushing so hard?
> When you push someone else it doesn’t make you safer.
> It just makes them angry

That sounds a lot like he is suggesting her -and women- to stop pushing back. He probably didn’t mean it that way, but it definitely sounds like he is dismissing the validity of standing up to one’s abusers.

Voice

Tony Robbins has a strong, raspy voice.
While that might have helped people to hear him and to sound more authoritative, it was not helping him here.

He only sounded more aggressive and intimidating, as the woman indeed commented.

6. PR-Sounding Apology

His apology was very good… Especially the part when he says “I still have much to learn”.

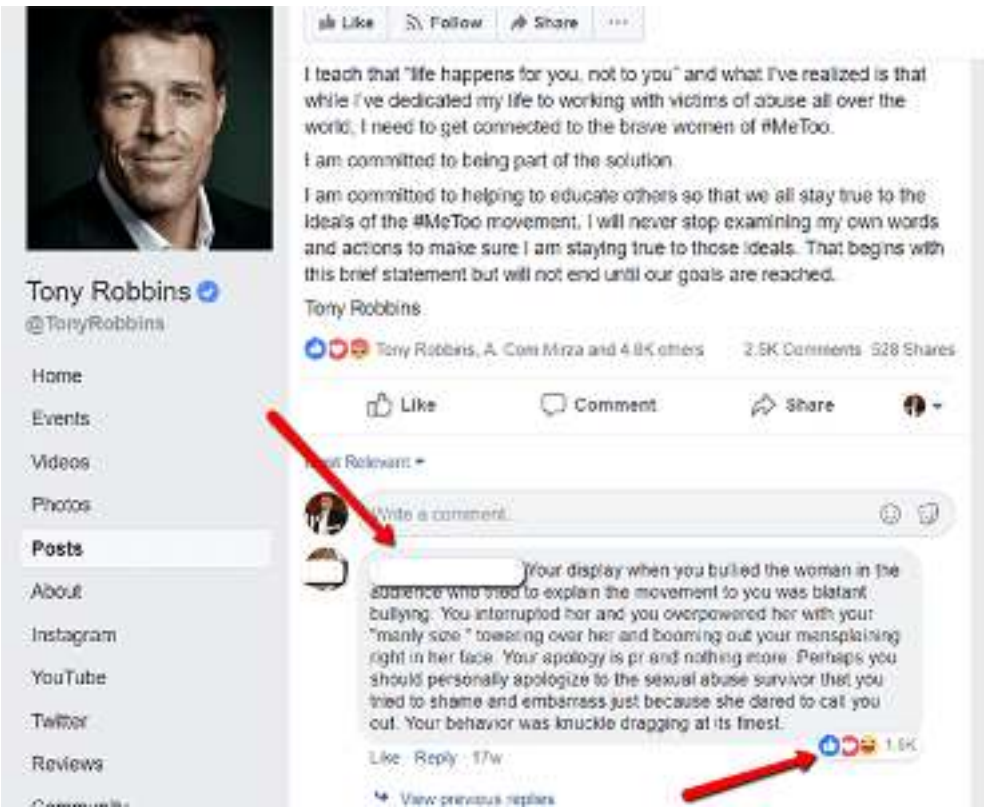
But a HUGE piece was missing to make it sound credible.
First, read it out:

> At a recent Unleash the Power Within (UPW) event in San Jose, my comments failed to reflect the respect I have for everything Tarana Burke and the #MeToo movement has achieved. I apologize for suggesting anything other than my profound admiration for the #MeToo movement. Let me clearly say, I agree with the goals of the #MeToo movement and its founding message of “empowerment through empathy,” which makes it a beautiful force for good.
>
> For 40 years I’ve encouraged people to grow into the men and women they dream to be. I watch in awe as more and more women all over the world find their voice and stand up and speak out. All of our growth begins with learning. My own started with a childhood marked by abuse. I am humbled that others have looked to the path I have taken in the decades since as lessons in their own journey. But sometimes, the teacher has to become the student and it is clear that I still have much to learn.
>
> I teach that “life happens for you, not to you” and what I’ve realized is that while I’ve dedicated my life to working with victims of abuse all over the world, I need to get connected to the brave women of #MeToo.
>
> I am committed to being part of the solution.
>
> I am committed to helping to educate others so that we all stay true to the ideals of the #MeToo movement. I will never stop examining my own words and actions to make sure I am staying true to those ideals. That begins with this brief statement but will not end until our goals are reached.

What was missing?
The initial idea that first got him to criticize the fake voices in the #MeToo movement is missing.
This apology feels like too much of a U-turn.
And when something feels too much of a U-turn, what do people think?

Exactly, they think it’s fake and PR.

Indeed THE most highly rated and upvoted comment on that post says exactly that. That his apology was a big PR stunt.



SUMMARY

Tony Robbins is a man who has helped many and he is someone who has done a huge amount of good.

However, that is not to say that he is perfect and does nothing wrong. And even as good as he is in leadership and communication, he makes mistakes like all the rest of us.
Tony Robbins bashing the #MeToo movement is such an example.

Overall, I think Tony Robbins could also limit his usage of “say hi” and push people to conform to him. That’s annoying to most independent thinkers -like yours truly-, and double annoying when he does it to get support against someone (in this case, Nanine).

Make Him Chase You? Why It's A Bad Dating Strategy

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Some women end up here looking for "let him chase you book".

And that's how I realized there is actually a book with the only goal of making men chase.

Well, it's not surprising.
That's what almost everyone says in the dating industry.
But that doesn't make it an effective advice.

Keep on reading and you will understand why "making men chase" often backfires.

Contents

- Intro: Debunking Dating Myths

- Do Guys Actually Like Chasing?
  - #1. The "Let Him Chase" Strategy Works With Lower Quality Men
  - #2. Instead of Chasing He Might End Up With More Available Women
  - #3. Men Like to Be Liked, Too
- How a Song Exposes the "Let Him Chase" Theory
- Science Exposes the Let Him Chase Theory
  - #1. Men Only Chase When Women Are Scarce
  - #2. Assertive Female Daters Win, Auction Theory Predicts
  - #3. Successful Daters Pick One Man And Avoid Distractions
- When You Must Cut (To) The Chase
  - #1. When There Are Few Attractive Prospects
  - #2. When You're a Good Prospect Yourself

- #3. When You're College Educated
- #4. When You're Still Young In A Difficult Market

- So, Should You Stop Letting Him Chase?
  - Be Selectively Hard to Get
- SUMMARY

Intro: Debunking Dating Myths

We have already addressed a few very common dating mantras in the women's dating literature.
Some of them:

- Let him wait for sex
- Make him invest in you
- Unavailable games (and other top dating mistakes)

Check those out later.

Do Guys Actually Like Chasing?

This is what some of the most popular dating books say:

Let him chase because that's what men want.

They are hunters at heart.
They like chasing the prey.
Millions of years of evolution shaped them that way.
They say…

Personally, I have always been skeptical of pop evolutionary psychology.
However, there is some truth here.
There is indeed an innate tendency for people to want what's scarce.
Robert Cialdini said it first in his seminal work "*Influence*".
And there is also a tendency for people to keep chasing what seems to be right at the edges of their reach ("cat string theory").

So let's say that "the let him chase theory" has a valid theoretical foundation.
In theory, it works.
Or at least, it works with some guys.
But **the major drawback of the "let him chase" advice is that it doesn't work with the best men**.

Let's dig deeper:

#1. The "Let Him Chase" Strategy Works With Lower Quality Men

The "let him chase you" mantra is a generalization.

And, like most generalizations, it works sometimes and with someone, and it backfires in some other situations and with some other men.

Letting him chase you is bad advice because it works with the lowest quality men.

Why?

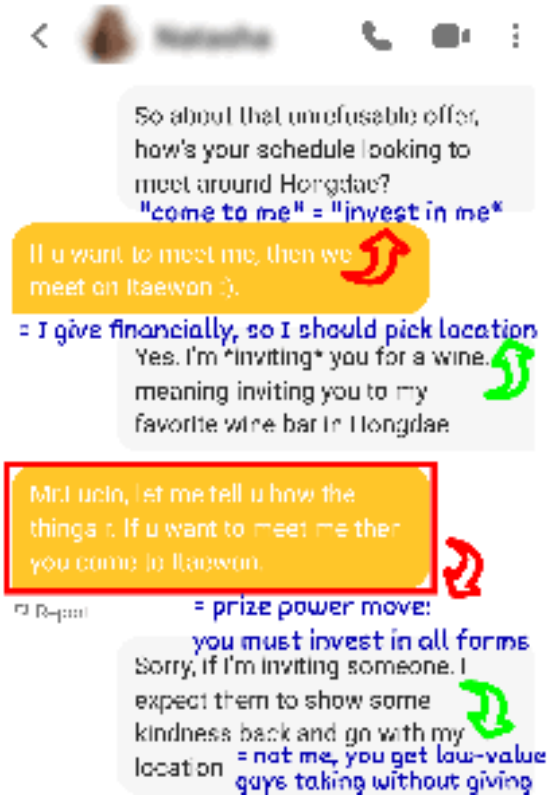
Well, think about it, what differentiates low-quality men from high-quality ones?

Three important traits of high-quality men are:

- High-quality men are busy and have their goals and visions
- High-quality men have dating options
- High-quality men are socially aware

Being socially aware means that they know what's going on and they will either outright avoid pursuing or stop as soon as you do it a little bit too much.

Here is an example, notice how I analyze her attempts to make me chase her:



What are the issues with this?

1. I, like most men, don't like overpowering women
2. I, like most intelligent men, see her power moves, and don't like dating or, God forbid, partnering up with uncollaborative women
3. I, like most men who feel like they have other options, prefer dating and meeting more feminine and more collaborative women

This is why, **letting him chase works best when you are *above* him**, in terms of general personal value, and when he idealizes you.
But since women prefer men who are around their same value, or above, the "let him chase" strategy is most likely to work with men that you often don't truly want as long-term partners.

And that's why "letting him chase you and invest" is a favorite technique of hookers and gold diggers: they are not looking for a win-win relationship, they're looking for a sucker who will dote on them.

#2. Instead of Chasing He Might End Up With More Available Women

Sure, under the right circumstances, some men will chase.

But guess what's another human tendency?

Men also tend to follow the path of least resistance.

Same as women, after all.
Imagine you are at home.
You have two options: eating an OK meal at home or a good meal outside. To go outside you need to dress, put on makeup, drive, and fork out more money.
Sure the restaurant would be nice, but… You're in PJ now, you have work tomorrow, and you're a bit tired. And you could just watch TV now. *And* save some money and time.
Chances are that, at least sometimes, you just stay at home.

Indeed that holds true oftentimes even the quality of the meal you can have at home is not comparable with the one at the restaurant.

It's the same for men and dating.
What's available right here, right now, often trumps the hard-to-get option.

#3. Men Like to Be Liked, Too

Men are humans.

And, like all humans, they like to be wanted.
It's a major inner drive and well known in psychology.

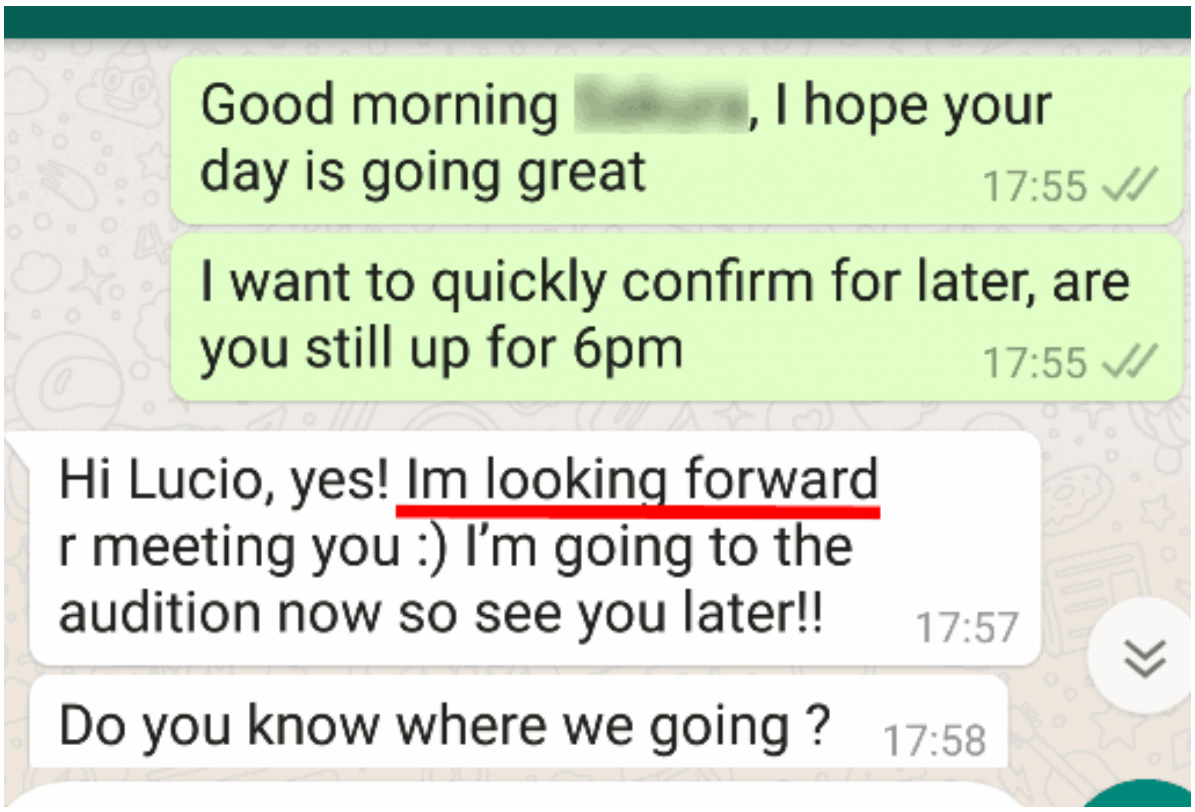
Psychology researcher Viren Swami and author of "*Attraction Explained*" puts it best:

> When we play hard-to-get, we give the impression that we dislike the person – and that just isn't conducive to sparking attraction

But you don't need to read any paper.
Simply ask yourself: how do feel when a man tells you that he likes you? Good, right?
So why do you think it would be any different for a woman to tell a man she likes him / respects him / adore him / loves him?

Indeed, from personal experience, I make the case that early honesty in dating, opening up, and showing appreciation, *helps* the woman's case.

From the How to Get a Boyfriend article, take this example:



I wasn't uber-excited about this date.
And if she had canceled I would have definitely seen the bright side of staying at home and keep working.

But when she replied she was "looking forward to meet" an immediate switch happened.
That was the equivalent of saying "I like you" and "I want to spend time with you". **It was the female equivalent of chasing the man and it made me feel great**.
I also loved her honesty, it showed me she was a woman that didn't play games.
I loved her honesty, I valued her much more and I was also looking forward to seeing her.

See an even more powerful example here in the forum.

How a Song Exposes the "Let Him Chase" Theory

I know none of you knows Vasco Rossi.

It's funny how everyone knows Pavarotti but nobody knows the greatest Italian rocker outside of Italy.

But for our purposes, you don't need to know him. You only need to know that his personal experience with the "let him chase you" is generalizable to many sought-after men.
In the song "Quanti anni hai", he sings:

> I thought of you, you know
> Tonight
> I thought of you later
> **She called me first**
> I couldn't say no
> Where are you going later (she asks)
> I don't really know, kid (he replies)

This song explains *exactly* the major flaw with the "let him chase mantra" when it comes to sought-after men.
Vasco Rossi lets us know that he preferred girl number two. But girl number one called him first. Girl number one

was there, and available. And probably made him feel good for showing her interest.
And now he is going out with her.

Maybe they'll never ever have a relationship.
Maybe they'll even hate each other. However, girl one has a shot. Girl two is playing second fiddle hoping for her turn… If it will ever come.

For all purposes, girl one who didn't play the "chase me game" won the dating game.
And the more successful a man is, the more likely this scenario will play out.

Of course, as for everything human, one can go to an extreme and lose out. Men will probably not want for long term the girl who throws herself at him. But we're not about that type of extreme here.

Science Exposes the Let Him Chase Theory

The best advice is based on experience, observation, and on some good science and data as well.

So let's review some data now.

#1. Men Only Chase When Women Are Scarce

In many animal species, humans included, male behavior changes dramatically when the gender split ratio changes.

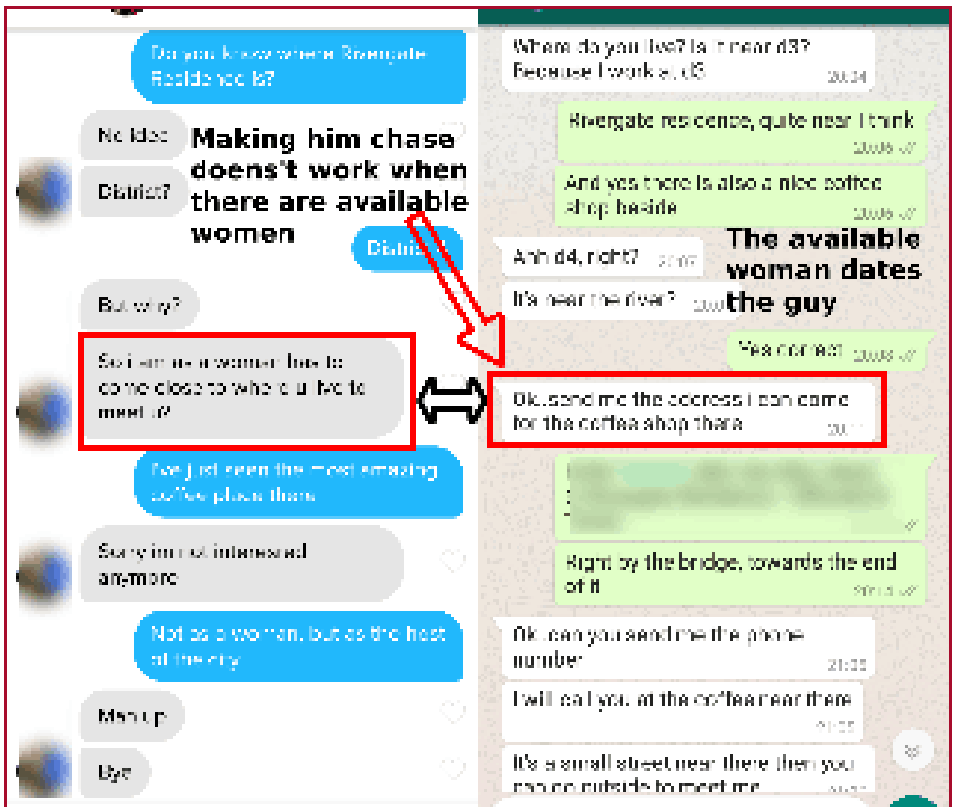
When women are scarce, the culture tends to become highly romanticized. Men pursue, chase, and engage in ostentatious displays to woo women.

In these favorable dating markets, she ABSOLUTELY should let him chase.
That's what he wants, that's what the culture expects.

However, the opposite is true when there are few attractive men and lots of attractive women.
As Birger brilliantly shows in his *Date-Onomics* **men chase very little -if at all- when there is an abundance of women**.

What does it mean to you?
Do not make him chase when there are plenty of (attractive) women.
That is likely the case if you live in big cities if you are a smart woman, and if you got a good education and career (also read: successful women dating).

Do you want to see a texting proof?
Here it is.
The exact same place, with two opposite approaches: one girl wants me to invest and chase, and the other one is more accommodating.
Guess who had a date that night:



The first woman is not wrong. Yet, because there were more available -and warmer- women, at parity of sexual market value, the guy does not chase the demanding woman. It's a simple law of offer and demand.

And just to be sure here: being more accommodating does *not* mean that you must sleep with him quickly.
The woman in the second text example did not come up to my place after our date. And we saw each other again.

#2. Assertive Female Daters Win, Auction Theory Predicts

Auction theory is the second big issue for the make him chase theory.

I'll try to be brief and simple.
In auction theory strong bidders are the bidders with more resources and more confidence they can win the auction.
These are the equivalent of women with a lot to offer.
Conventional wisdom would have that these bidders would win most of the time.

But that is not always the case.
Mark Gimein says that auction theory predicts, and empirical studies confirm, that weak bidders win more often.
This is because weak bidders, with less to offer, know they can be outgunned and they feel the pressure to "bring something home".

Weak bidders are the equivalent of more assertive female daters.
Assertive female daters win because they date more actively: they don't play "chase me games" and help men along the dating process.
In a way, weak bidders date more ruthlessly.

The strong bidders instead are more likely to hold out, keeping their powder dry for the imaginary great auction to come. The great auction is the equivalent of Mr. Right.
As you know, in real life Mr. Right is extremely rare. In the meanwhile, almost all "Mr. Almost Right" and "Mr. Good" have already paired up.

And that's why a high-quality woman with a great career often suffers in her dating life.

#3. Successful Daters Pick One Man And Avoid Distractions

This is a pet peeve of mine.
And it's the so-called "paradox of choice".

Barry Schwarz reviews the literature on decision-making to make the case that having lots of choices often leads to choice paralysis.
And, perversely, when a choice happens, we are *less* happy with it.

People with fewer options instead, knowing they don't have that much to choose from, tend to pick something quicker, be done with it, and… Be happier.

Modernity has tricked our brains into a huge paradox of choice.
We live in big cities where we are led to believe there is an endless supply of options, we can swipe a hundred profiles in a matter of minutes.
And of course, says evolutionary researcher David Buss, advertising of photoshopped supermodels makes us believe that the options are all much better than they truly are.

Women who fall for the paradox of choice make men chase more than it's effective because they falsely believe there are endless choices.
Keep that in mind next time you meet a good prospect.

When You Must Cut (To) The Chase

Let me say this first:

Reality is complex and any non-personalized advice must be taken with a grain of salt.

However, there are a few situations when dropping the "let him chase" theory and being decisive is a clear winner.

These are some of them:

#1. When There Are Few Attractive Prospects

When men have a lot of options men switch to a "players' strategy" and get lazy.
There is no hunter and chaser there and assertive women win the day.

#2. When You're a Good Prospect Yourself

As we've already seen, weaker prospects are naturally more aggressive.
If you think of yourself as a good prospect, chances are you tend to wait and dawdle.
And dawdling has rarely led to dating success.

#3. When You're College Educated

If you are consuming content here, chances are you are either a smart gal and/or an educated one.
Possibly both.

In the West -and in many other areas of the world as well- there has been a massive shift in the education and earning potential of the genders.
Women are kicking boys' asses. But that comes with huge dating handicaps. There are now more college-educated women in the West than men.
And that trend is not getting any better.

And since women, on average, strongly prefer "marrying up", that means that they are dating in a difficult market.
As we've seen, in difficult markets the assertive dater wins.

#4. When You're Still Young In A Difficult Market

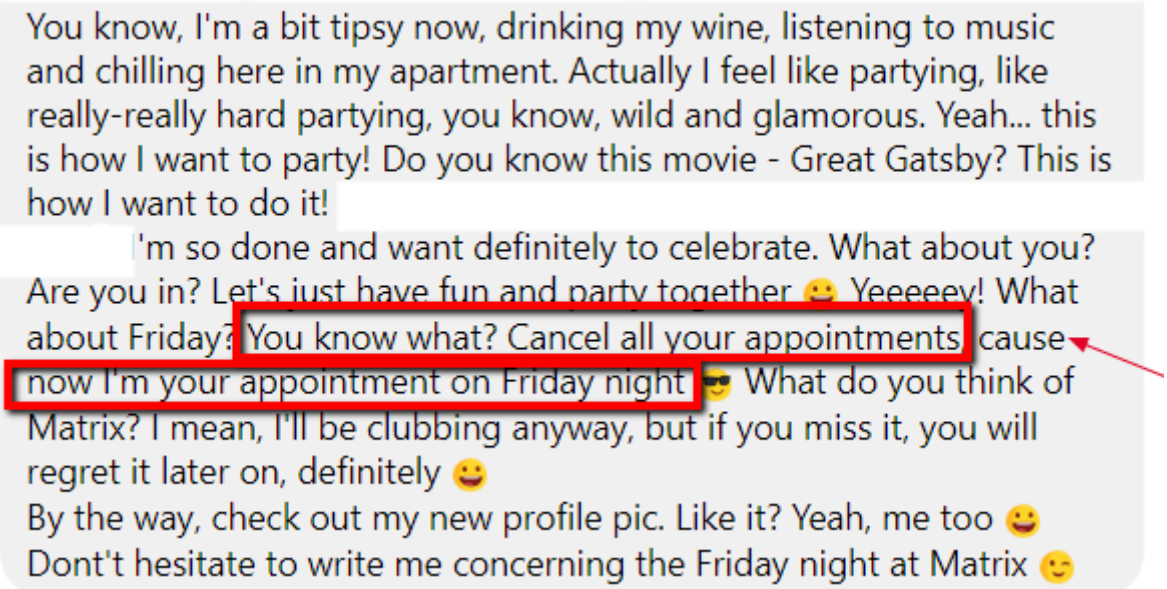
Difficult markets get worse with time.

And there is a simple way to explain this concept: remember the game of musical chairs?
Well, it's the same principle.
In the beginning, even if there are more high-quality women (players) than men (chairs), it's still easy to find a mate.
But as time goes by and more chairs get removed (bachelors who pair up), the game becomes more and more difficult and the percentage of people who don't find a seat (women staying single) increases.

Just like a musical chairs game, it becomes a mathematical certainty that dating in such a market will only get worse with time.

And as we have seen, women who locked in early weren't necessarily prettier or smarter. Often, they were simply more decisive.

What does decisive mean?
Here is an example from my last girlfriend:



So, Should You Stop Letting Him Chase?

Well, not always.

Sometimes it can be a good strategy.

If you're trying to *make a man spend on you*, for example, it's a great idea to stay just a bit outside his reach. Femme fatales have been doing this for centuries, and even an expert seducer like Casanova fell for it.

Or if you are confident he will not meet any other woman, the amount of chasing he does also increases the value he places on you.

It's difficult to give specific advice without knowing the specific situation, and that's exactly why you should stay away from generalizations.
However, as a rule of thumb, I would be wary of "let him chase games" in all these situations:

1. **He's a great guy and he's socially aware** (he sees through the game)
2. **There are few good male prospects** (lots of options, assertive female daters win)
3. **You have a history of getting angry over men who stop investing as much as you want** (that's a warning

sign for you)

4. **You live in a big libertine city with lots of options**
5. **You two have great chemistry** (chasing games will only douse water on the flame)

Finally, there is a great middle-of-the-road option that has the benefits of making men feel special and liked, and exclusive as well.
And that's being selectively hard to get.

Be Selectively Hard to Get

When a woman plays hard-to-get, men might end up wanting her more, but actually liking her less.

For some men, the most driven and abusive, that ends up looking like "fucking her and then throwing her away" just to "show her".

So is there a way to be wanted more and liked more?

Well, yes.
Enter, "selectively hard to get".

Being selectively hard to get means that **you are hard to get for most people, but "easy" for the man of your choice. Not because you are generally easy, but because he is special.**

Psychology research supports the idea that "selectively hard to get" is what men prefer the most.
And experience confirms that men do love easy women who are easy just for them.

SUMMARY

This article is no bashing of the "let him chase theory" here.

Whenever you can get people coming to you, that's all power to you.

But besides the fact that it might not be the best foot forward toward a relationship, it simply works against you in many situations.

This article explained why and when "let him chase" works against you.

And as for everything: balance. This is not a free pass to start doing all the chasing and romancing. Quite the opposite. The most skilled gals are great at "helping" the man along the romancing process (a story for another article).

So long,

Lucio

No More Mr. Nice Guy: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *No More Mr. Nice Guy* (2000) Robert Glover analyzes the personality and psychology of "nice guys".
The core message is that nice guys aren't really nice but are instead doormats who are nice out of fear of being assertive. Glover seeks then to provide readers with advice and solutions to become a more assertive and higher-power man.

Contents

- Takeaways
- About the Author
  - 10 Traits of Nice Guys
  - Why Nice Guys Aren't Really Nice
  - 6 Traits of "The Integrated Male"
  - How Do People Become Nice Guys
  - The Two Types of Nice Guys
  - 8 Steps to Overcome The "Mr. Nice Guy Syndrome"
  - Nice Guys Don't Have Intimate Relationships
  - Two Types of Relationships Nice Guys Have
  - Nice Guys Must Learn to Set Boundaries
  - Nice Guys Want to Be Good At Sex to Make Her Happy
- Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- **The nice guy syndrome is the naive belief that if one is really nice they will do well in well**. They will be loved, have their needs met, and avoid problems
- **Nice guys aren't really nice at all**, but are either guided by misguided beliefs, or afraid of assertiveness, aggressiveness, and confrontation
- **Nice guys need to work on themselves to improve**. They must become higher-value, higher-power men

About the Author

About The Author:
Robert Glover prefaces his name with "Dr.", albeit I could not find anything about his specialization.
We're not very big into titles here though and we prefer looking at the quality of the material instead.
On his own blog, Glover defines himself as an expert on "nice guys syndrome", helping men go from passive and resentful victims to empowered, "integrated" males.

10 Traits of Nice Guys

Most people have one or two of these traits, but nice guys have most of them:

1. Givers
2. Caretaker
3. Seek approval from others (especially from women)
4. Conflict-avoidant
5. Seek the right way to do things
6. Try to be perfect and avoid mistakes (so people don't think they're bad)
7. Repress their feelings
8. Want to be different from their fathers
9. They're more comfortable being with women
10. They exert tremendous effort to make their partners happy

They give because they think that's what makes them good.
And they tend to others because they put everyone's needs ahead of their own.

The nice guy is afraid of conflict, so he avoids it at all costs by being nice.
Since he avoids conflicts, nothing ever gets solved with him. He might disagree, but he doesn't say it or he might even pretend to agree, just to avoid conflict and arguments.
If you are thinking that sounds a lot like passive-aggressive, you got it right: the nice guy is the epitome of passive-aggressive.

When he disagrees, he still tells people what they want to hear. But, typical of the worst slimy people-pleasing behavior, he then reverses his words and decisions to please someone else.

Here is an example of a nice guy from the movie "I Love You, Man":

The ladies are talking smack about him, and his own girlfriend added some personal detail of his life that she could have probably spared. Yet when he shows up, he flashes a super fake smile.

Why Nice Guys Aren't Really Nice

Robert Glover says that nice guy is actually a misnomer and nice guys aren't nice at all.

Nice guys:

- Lie telling people what they want to hear
- Hide their true intention
- Use indirect ways and manipulation to get what they want
- Can be very controlling
- Only give to get
- Often brew resentment and anger

6 Traits of "The Integrated Male"

What's the "integrated male"?

Glover presents the integrated male as the antithesis of the nice guy and the type of man the nice guy should strive to become.

The key to the integrated male is total acceptance of who he is.

The integrated male:

1. Likes himself
2. Takes care of his needs
3. Is comfortable with his sexuality
4. Values integrity, and he speaks up
5. Sets clear boundaries and is not afraid of enforcing them
6. Accepts his flaws

Also, read:

> The 10 Traits of High-Value Men (W/ Examples)

How Do People Become Nice Guys

Nice guys received the following message in their formative years:

> It's not acceptable, safe or desirable to be who you are.

That can take many forms.
For example, parents who:

- Abandoned them early
- Had sky-high expectations for them and never rewarded them

The Two Types of Nice Guys

There are two types of nice guys:

1. Those who think they are bad and need to correct themselves
2. Those who think they are so good, lie to themselves to keep their self-image.

The former had a troubled and rebellious childhood and now he feels like he needs to make up for it.
The latter was the good boy of the family and he stays that way to keep his social identity and his self-identity.

8 Steps to Overcome The "Mr. Nice Guy Syndrome"

Glover recommends these steps to overcome the Mr. Nice Guy syndrome:

1. Force yourself to enforce your boundaries
2. Learn to please yourself first
3. Cut porn and learn to have sex for the sake of it
4. Face your fears
5. Repeat positive mantras
6. Eat well
7. Do sport
8. Spend more time with men

The last one, spending more time with men, is common advice in the manosphere.
See for example "*The Rational Male*", "*The Way of Men*" and "*Tribe*".

I recommend you also check out the article "how to become an asshole" (a good one):

> How to Be A Good Asshole

Nice Guys Don't Have Intimate Relationships

Nice guys cannot have intimate relationships.

Why?

Because intimate relationships require people to look within themselves and open up about who they really are.

But nice guys are always wearing a mask and always hiding their true selves. That makes their relationships unauthentic.

The mask of the nice guys is different than the *mask of masculinity* of the alpha male postures, but it's a mask nonetheless.
And that makes stands between true human connections and bonding.

Two Types of Relationships Nice Guys Have

There are two types of nice guys in relationships:

1. Those who get over-invested and over-involved at the expense of themselves
2. Those who are nice to everyone except their partner

Glover calls the second type "avoidants", possibly referencing to the avoidant attachment style, albeit he doesn't expressly reference attachment styles.

Nice Guys Must Learn to Set Boundaries

Boundaries are crucial for good emotional health and positive social life.

The author makes the point that **women want boundaries from their men** as that makes them feel more secure. As a matter of fact, she will test his boundaries to make sure they are strong and resistant.

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Win the Game

Nice Guys Want to Be Good At Sex to Make Her Happy

The author says that all the nice guys he has met had some issues with sex.

The issues span the whole gamut, but at the core **nice guys are ashamed and uncomfortable with their sexuality**.

The most interesting bit for me was that some nice guys pride themselves on being good lovers. However, **good lovers for nice guys means always putting the woman first**.

They are concerned with making her orgasm because they want to provide. And that also means that they approach sex like a robotic undertaking.
Ultimately, it's not enjoyable for themselves and often not nearly as enjoyable for the woman.

The author has a very interesting point here: be more like alpha males in nature.
Confident, competitive, and putting themselves first, including his own pleasure.

My Note: Go easy on "more like alpha males"
Nice guys can indeed gain with the goal of "being more like alpha males". On the other hand, this is one of the things that's SO easy to overdo.
Trying too hard to be an alpha male also presents its own issues and mental blocks.
At the very extreme, it's also potentially toxic. Also read: growing past the red pill toxicity.

Also, read:

- Sexual power dynamics

Learn About Power Dynamics

That wasn't a chapter in the book.

But if you want to truly learn how to stop being a nice guy, then read this website.

- **Start here**: especially the articles on how dominant men behave
- How to stop being a beta man

> What's A Beta Male: Stop Being One In 10 Simple Steps

Quotes

Here are a few great quotes I loved.

On approval-seeking:

> Just about everything a Nice Guy does is consciously or unconsciously calculated to gain someone's approval or to avoid disapproval

On women's pleasing:

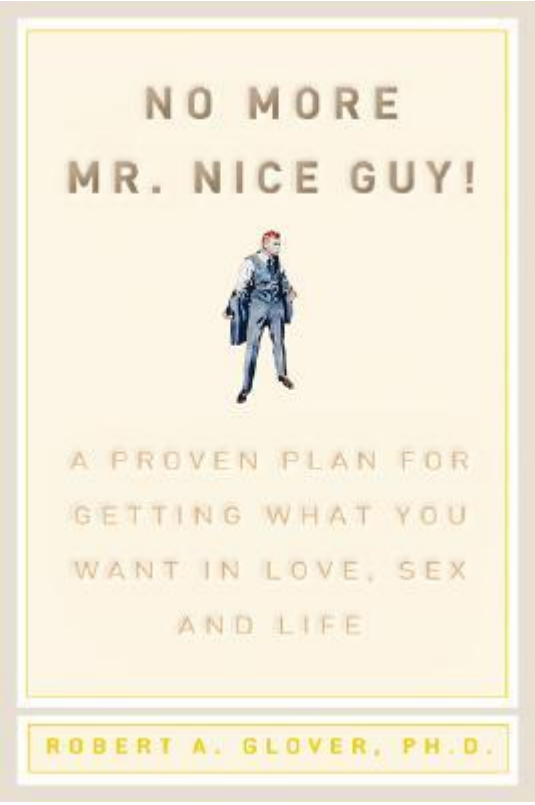
> One Nice Guy asked me, "If a man is talking in the forest and no woman is there to hear him, is he still wrong?

On the extremes of the nice guys:

> When our god fails to respond in the ways we expect, we humans tend to respond in one of two ways. We either blindly intensify our acts of worship or lash out in righteous anger

On values:

> Self-respect, courage, and integrity look good on a man.



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Real-Life Applications

No More Mr. Nice Guy teaches you what nice guys are and why it's best to move beyond it.
If you are one of them, then your task is to understand and become a more assertive, self-respecting human being.

What One Man Can Do, You Can Do
Towards the end, "*No More Mr. Nice Guy*" becomes a bit of a self-help, motivational book. And I absolutely loved this quote:

> **What one man can do, you can do**

Which is also one of the central tenets of Ultimate Power.

CONS

- **Fuzzy Category Problem: "Nice Guy" Is Catch-All For Any Self-Empowerment Issue**

On the plus side, this simplifies things.

But it's a downside because different people may only have SOME of these issues, and hence may need different solutions.

Clover's nice guy includes 'seeing things in black and white', 'fear of failure', 'passive-aggressive', and more.
I don't see the connection among these different issues. 'People pleaser' may be the canonical description for many of Glover's listed issues.

And in TPM's parlance, **'low power' is a better description for this 'syndrome'**, and offers more power-related, targeted solutions.

- **Personal Conjectures Presented As Facts**

At times it feels less like a book from a doctor and more like a text from a manosphere author who makes up random theories.

There is nothing wrong with that, but I believe that everyone should always mark personal conjectures as “my own speculations” instead of presenting them as facts.

- **Unscientific At Times**

The author says that after World War II boys have been disconnected from their fathers and forced to use their mothers as role mothers. So now men accept female definitions of what it means to be male.

Well, maybe that’s the case.
But until I see some data and statistics I must remain skeptical. Is the increase in divorce really as big as to justify Glover’s theory? Again, no numbers are provided.

- **Confusing**

First, the book says that nice guys become nice guys because they get the message they are not good enough. Then a bit later it’s because men grew up with females and female culture.

Which one is which?
Possibly the author meant that both factors contribute, but he should have made that clearer.

- **Men-Bonding Isn’t Necessarily A Solution For All**

Maybe spending time with other men can help some nice guys.

But I’d add caveats.
It’s more about the *quality* of men you spend time with (and the quality of women, for that matter).

And some nice guys need to date more, rather than man-bond more.

PROS

Good Starting Block For Nice Guys
I listed a lot of cons, but I always do so with good books because I hold them to a higher standard.
So don’t get it wrong, *No More Mr. Nice Guy* is a great resources for beginners.

Review

No More Mr. Nice Guy is a valuable self-help book for men lacking assertiveness and personal power.

That includes people pleasers, passive and passive-aggressive communicators, overly submissive men, etc.

We know a thing or two about too-nice guys here because they’re one of our core audiences and we’re proud to say that **hundreds of too-nice guys cured themselves with our programs.**

And we can most certainly thumb up Glover’s book.
Albeit *No More Mr. Nice Guy* is not an evidence-based book, Glover’s analysis are largely on point.

When it comes to “fixes” for nice guys, there are some good tips as well.
The book format limit people’s ability to address the root causes. So you may want to consider reading more here or, if you can afford it, consider Power University.

Check out the best red pill books, the best dating books for men, or **get the book on amazon**.

Powerful Phrases for Dealing with Difficult People: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Powerful Phrases for Dealing with Difficult People is a guide on how to communicate and navigate interpersonal relationships with difficult people and in difficult situations.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Use “I” Sentences
  - The 5 Steps to Deal With Difficult People
  - Dealing With a Bully
  - Dealing With Credit Takers
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Always calm yourself down before addressing the situation
- When it’s unexpected, say that you need to think about it

Full Summary

About The Author: Renee Evenson is a writer of business books on communication, customer service, and conflict resolution.

Use “I” Sentences

When you need to voice a complaint never start with “you”, lest it sounds like you are attacking people.
Use I sentences instead.

The same concept applies to relationships, and you can see many examples of “I statements” in this article on fixing criticism.

The 5 Steps to Deal With Difficult People

The author recommends five steps for dealing with difficult people or a bad boss.

1. Think first (think about the issue from all angles and calm down)
2. Gain a better understanding of the situation
3. Define the problem (once you understand, say how you see it and get a common understanding)
4. Propose your best solution
5. Agree on a resolution

Dealing With a Bully

I liked the dialogue the author presents on how to deal with a bully.
This was my favorite part:

> Going forward I expect you to treat me respectfully. If you can't, then please don't say anything to me.

Also read: what to do when your boss screams at you.

Dealing With Credit Takers

What do you do when someone in your team takes credit for the whole team's effort?

Renee Evenson recommends that you speak up right away while they do it.
Doing it after is always more difficult, and not doing it at all is the equivalent of giving your consent to their behavior.

Real-Life Applications

There are a lot of relevant lessons learned here, and they are particularly relevant to this website and this website's credo.

Tackle Challenges Head On
If something deeply bothers you, then you must tackle it. Failing to do so is a sure way of becoming a nice guy or a passive-aggressive.

When Unexpectedly Put On The Spot Say You Must Reflect On It
If you reply right away, you risk sounding too defensive and taking on too much of the blame.
I agree indeed that saying that you must think about it will not give you a win, but it's a powerful tool to limit your losses or completely erase the potential for losses.

CONS

- **Sometimes Simplistic, With Easy Examples**

Some of the examples were very interesting, but they were all solved too easily.
I wish I had seen some really nasty character with which it's truly difficult to deal with.

- **Sometimes "Not Bad Enough" For The REal World**

I feel that some of the examples were too direct and made your position too clear.
For example, with some people, you can build a better working relationship.
But with some others, you should mentally categorize them as an enemy and then move from there. If you try to address the issue with them, they might use it against you and only undermine you more subtly (and more powerfully).

- **Sometimes I Didn't Like the "5 Steps Formula" Applications**

The author uses the 5 steps format in every single situation.
I don't think that was always the best approach, and there is no size-fit-all in social skills.

For example, to a colleague who is giving big discounts to make a sale, she asks:

> "I'm wondering why you do that"

I feel that such a question is annoying to anyone because the answer is obvious, which would be “to make a sale”. Asking that question makes you come across as slimy. When the “why” is obvious, it’s best to approach it directly in my opinion.

For the readers, the truth is that you can’t escape developing your own personal power and social intuition.
Even the best advice requires social calibration.

PROS

Good Foundations
Some good, solid basics of communication here.

Review

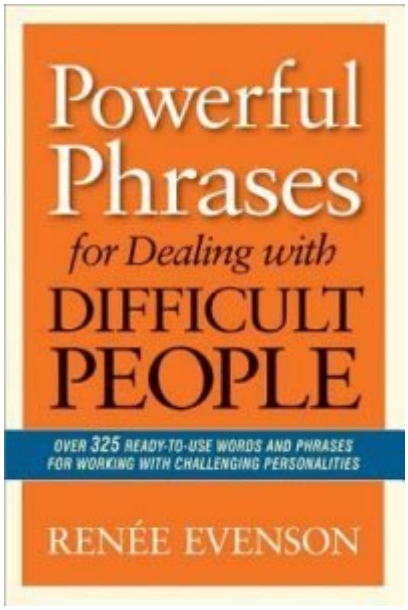
I was surprised to see the book with rather lowish reviews on Amazon.

I have seen plenty of bad books with good reviews, and “*Powerful Phrases for Dealing With Difficult People*” might be a bit basic, but it definitely shares solid foundations of communication.
In my opinion, it deserves more credit.

Overall, it’s not The Power Moves style of book I was looking for but I give it a nod when it comes to improving communication skills in difficult situations.

Check out the best communication skills books, and the best books on power, or get the book on Amazon

Powerful Phrases for Dealing with Difficult People: Summary



Communication when it's most difficult. Not groundbreaking but solid basic advice.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/powerful-phrases-for-difficult-people/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.51

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 Review: Does It Work Without Power?

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 discusses the role of emotional intelligence in life and career success.
Bradberry generally aligns with Goleman who initially said that emotional intelligence is a major predictor of career success.
While we don't disagree with that, we believe that power intelligence is an even better predictor.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Emotions Control Us
  - EI Outperforms IQ
  - There Are Only 5 Types of Emotions
  - IQ Does Not Correlate With EQ
  - Personality
  - The Four Realms of Emotional Intelligence
  - 1. Self-Awareness
  - 2. Self-Management
  - 3. Social-Awareness
  - 4. Relationship Management
  - CEOs are Low on EQ
  - EQ and Leadership
  - The Variables That Influence EQ
- Real-Life Applications
- CRITICISM
- PROS
- Review
  - The CEO Conundrum
- Final Thoughts

Bullet Summary

- EQ is more important than IQ in life success
- We are all wired to feel emotions first and logic second: you can't cut out emotions from good decision making
- Higher EQ will make for a happier and more fulfilling life

Full Summary

About The Author: Travis Bradberry is an author, business consultant, and entrepreneur. His consultancy provides businesses with emotional intelligence tests and training.

Note About The Test: Emotional Intelligence 2.0 comes with a test. But you need to purchase the book to get the code.

Emotions Control Us

Travis Bradberry says that unless we take deliberate steps to prevent it, we are hard-wired for emotions to control us.

That's simply human nature, it comes with the territory of how our brain is structured.
Everything coming from our senses indeed travels to the brain through the limbic system -where emotions are produced- before reaching the prefrontal cortex -where our rational thinking takes place-.

That means that emotions happen first, and our brains cannot stop them from forming.

EQ Lies At The Intersection of Rational and Emotional

It's the communication between the emotional part of our brain and the rational part of our brain that will determine our level of emotional intelligence.

So what does constitute emotional intelligence?

Says Tradberries:

What constitutes emotional intelligence is a good understanding of the emotional side of our brain from the rational side of the brain. Coupled with the ability to either delay action or take action as needed, in spite of the emotions.

EI Outperforms IQ

Daniel Goleman said it already in Emotional Intelligence: IQ does not fully explain the level of success people experience in life.

And after years of research, the author states, emotional intelligence (EQ) emerged as the critical factor to explain and account for success.

And it's so critical that each one-point increase in EQ leads to an increase of 1.300 dollars in annual salary.

My Note:
This is one of those statistics I would have liked to see fleshed out a bit more in-depth because like that it means little.
See the criticism section for more.

There Are Only 5 Types of Emotions

Travis Bradberry says that of all the people they tested, two-thirds cannot accurately identify their own emotions.

He says that part of the reason is that we have too many words and labels for emotions.
But at the core, there are only 5 of them:

1. happiness
2. sadness
3. anger
4. fear
5. shame

IQ Does Not Correlate With EQ

Emotional intelligence leverages your ability to recognize and understand emotions, in yourself and others, to manage your behavior and your relationships.

I was surprised to read the author say there is no connection between IQ and EQ as that's the opposite of what

Daniel Goleman says.

You Can Grow EQ

Contrary to IQ, you can learn and grow your EQ.

Personality

Travis Bradberry says that IQ, EQ, and personality are what make up individuals.
Personality traits such as introversion and extroversion. And he says that EQ is the only one you can change and grow.

My Note:
I disagree here. People can change personalities. I have changed my personality quite a bit

The Four Realms of Emotional Intelligence

There are four emotions that form a quadrant and aggregate along two primary competencies: personal competence and social competence.

Personal competence means being aware of your emotions and managing your behavior.

- Self-awareness
- Self-management

Social competence is the awareness of other people's feelings, moods, and behavior in order to improve the quality of your relationships.

- Social awareness
- Relationship management skills

1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to perceive and understand own emotions.

Just thinking and knowing about self-awareness increases it.
It makes for a much happier and more fulfilling life because people who can define themselves well know their strengths and can better pick something that interests them, motivates them, and allows them to leverage their strengths.

2. Self-Management

Self-management builds upon self-awareness and it's your ability to self-control and direct your behavior positively. Of course, it's about the most obvious "resisting" rage and strong emotions, but it's also about keeping an even emotional keel and persevering.

In my opinion, this is where success lies, as *Grit* by Angela Duckworth shows the ability to stick with things over the long run, even when we don't feel like it, is one of the keystones to success.

3. Social-Awareness

This is a bit the equivalent of self-awareness but directed toward others. It's your ability to feel and understand other people's emotions and moods.

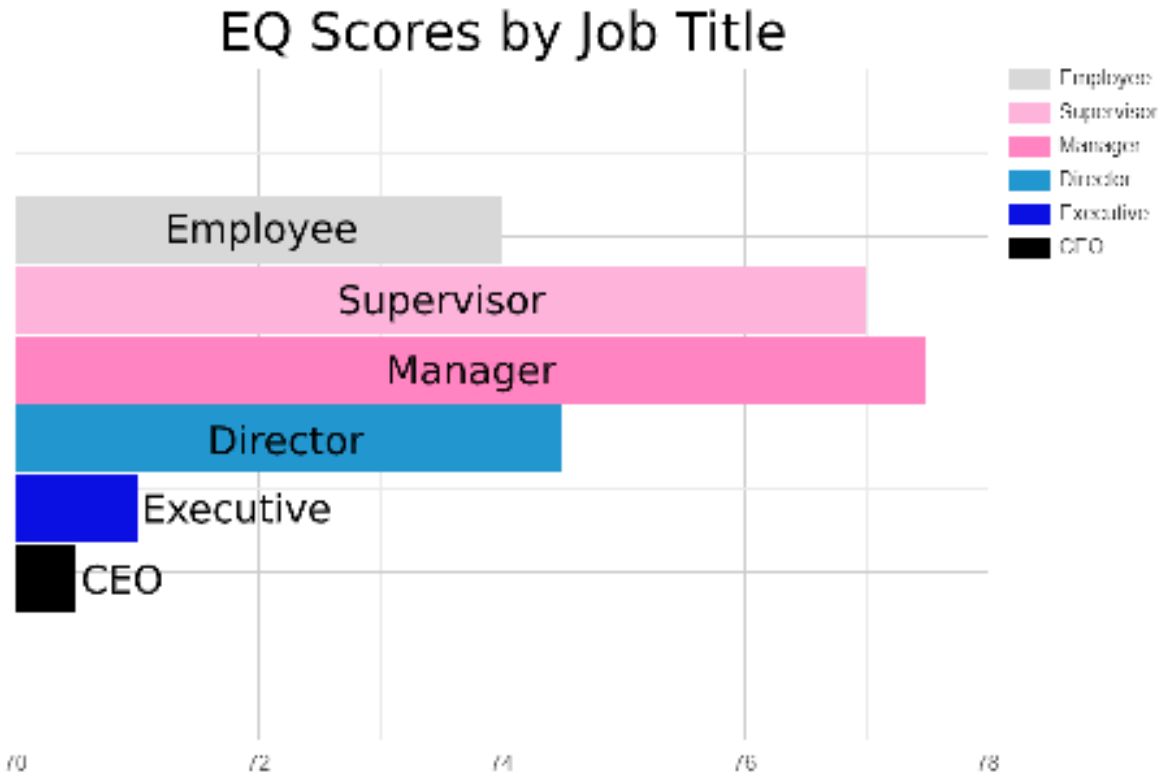
4. Relationship Management

It builds on and leverages social awareness to manage social interactions successfully.

CEOs are Low on EQ

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 measures half a million senior executives and employees (albeit on Forbes he says they were 100.000, which is which?).
It turns out that middle managers are the highest in EQ and CEOs score the lowest.

This is my chart replicating Bradberry's numbers:



EQ and Leadership

The authors say that EQ skills are more important to job performance than any other leadership skill.

People high in EQ also make better decisions because paying attention to our emotions is the best way to doing the most logical decision.

> **The most logical decision making pays attention to emotions**

The Variables That Influence EQ

There are several variables that influence EQ, including:

- **Age**

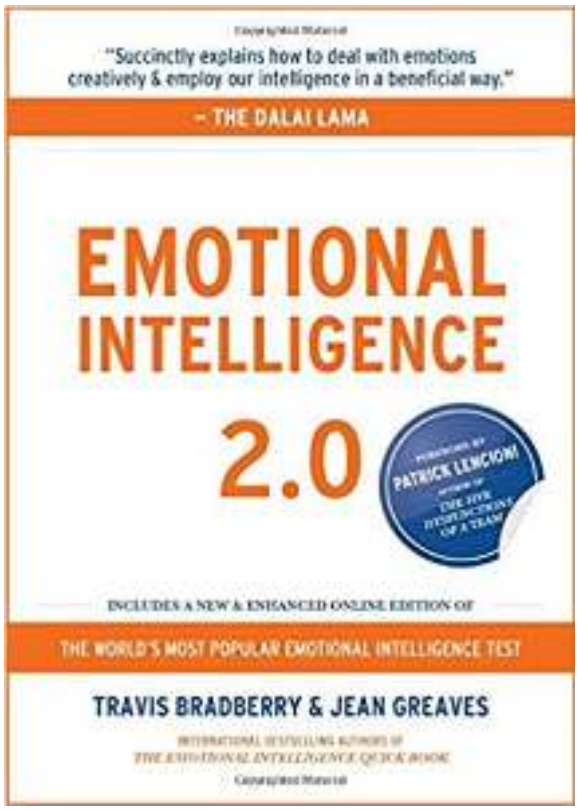
Self-management skills rise with age, but a conscious effort can cut that time short.

- **Culture (China Beats US)**

Chinese executives had higher EQ than their American counterparts, probably because of cultural reasons.

- **Gender**

Women score higher in EQ in general, and specifically in social awareness.



Real-Life Applications

These are my main takeaways from "Social Intelligence 2.0":

- **Manage Your Self-Talk**

Negative self-talk damages your ability to manage your own state and allows for negative emotions to take over.

To eradicate negative self-talk:

1. Ban words such as "always" and "never"
2. Replace negative self-talk such as "why am I so stupid" with more factual ones such as "this was a mistake"
3. Accept responsibility
4. Look at your mistake as an opportunity to learn something
5. Use this mistake never to make the same mistake again (the mistake becomes a principle, in Ray Dalio's words)

Also, read:

- Learned optimism

CRITICISM

I really enjoyed Emotional Intelligence 2.0.
Yet, there were many important points that didn't convince me at all:

CEOs Are Low on EQ – Wait, What??? Whole Theory Debunked!

In the author's own data CEOs are the lowest on EQ.

That should throw a monkey's wrench into the whole theory that EQ is the most important determinant of life's success.

Yet the author explains it away blaming the system (!). In their Harvard Business Review article, they say that companies are still promoting bosses based on knowledge and length of service.
The author's message is that "CEOs should do better since EQ is important for job performance".

Of course, the author is heavily biased because of the training he provides. And, in my opinion, it shows here.

Also, read:

- **The Myth of Emotional Intelligence**
- Why CEO/EQ is BS
- In Sheep's Clothing

No Mention of Criticism

There is a hot debate in the psychology world on whether or not emotional intelligence is even a psychological trait.

For once, not everyone agrees it can be measured. Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules for Life* has been a highly vocal critic. Others make claim it does exist, but it does not predict success in life.

Some Big Claims Without References

The authors say that EQ accounts for 58% of performance in all types of jobs.

Wow, now that's a statistic that makes little sense to me.
How on earth is that supposed to be even useful when there are jobs that are all about people and some that have very little to do with people?

Also, based on what do they say it? As a critical reader, I want to know, and there was no reference to back up that claim.

Extrapolation Bias Mistakes

The authors make huge generalizations after analyzing just 4 years of data.

In my opinion, this could be a typical *fooled by randomness* case. We see a trend and believe it's significant and consistent and it will keep growing over time.
Often, that's not the case (also read *Thinking Fast and Slow*).

Intuitive Predictions

The authors make a lot of "intuitive theories".
Such as, in front of a lack of data, they come up with their own explanation.

For example, when they saw a dip in the EQ results in 2008 they say it was connected to the crisis.
And that could be, but… How can they be sure?

Even worse, they see men "catching up" to women and they say it's because now men are encouraged to entertain their feelings. Wait, and they say that based on a 4 years time span?

Emotional Intelligence Test Not Open

You can only take the test of emotional intelligence if you get the key from the book.
In my very personal opinion, that's not a good move. Not even from a marketing perspective.

PROS

It Will Help You Lead A More Fulfilling Life
Emotional Intelligence 2.0 can help increase awareness of social skills and emotional competence.
For many people who still believe "emotions are for the weak", this can serve to show that no, emotional competence and social skills serve to lead a more fulfilling, happier, and even more successful life.

Some Good Tips
First of all, the message that EQ can be improved is a highly empowering one. And there are some good tips to do just that.
I'd like to add another: watching the YouTube videos on my channel can help you start seeing the social patterns.

Review

First of all, I'd like to tackle the biggest issue with Emotional Intelligence 2.0:

The CEO Conundrum

The data from the author themselves shows that CEOs are very low on EQ.

The author explains it away saying they are not doing a good job. However, they never wonder if being too high in EQ can be a drawback and it's the CEO role that requires a more decisive approach.

That could happen, for example, if their EQ tests was assigning too high points to high agreeableness, which can be a drawback for leadership positions.
But the authors never ask themselves that.

Overall, this is my opinion: EQ will improve your life. But if EQ means being very agreeable and caring too much about how others will feel, then you must know when to put EQ aside to make the hard decisions, no matter who is unhappy about it.
The authors never say that EQ means becoming paralyzed by emotions and others' feelings, but in my opinion, their EQ tests score high for people high in agreeableness, which leads to a lack of strong decision-making capabilities.

Final Thoughts

I don't think "*Emotional Intelligence 2.0*" does a great job of outlining the current state of scientific research.

I think it can actually muddle the water for most people who want to understand emotional intelligence, life success, and the impact of emotional intelligence on success (and relationships).

It can still be useful in a few ways though, such as in pushing people to listen more to their own emotions.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Gentle Art of Verbal Self Defense: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense teaches readers words, techniques, and mindsets to defend themselves against aggressive communicators and verbal bullies.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Principles of Verbal Self-Defense
  - Verbal Attackers Want to Get Your Reaction
  - Types of People Acting & Reacting to Verbal Bullying
  - Respond in Same Sensory Modes
  - Agree to Defuse The Attack
  - Rules of Engagement
  - The "Even You" Attack
  - Never Give an Order
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Don't react emotionally: that's what the verbal attacker wants
- Agree with them when they use general presuppositions
- There are many kinds of attacks, but once you know how to answer a few, you can answer all of them

Full Summary

About The Author: Suzette Elgin was an American linguist and science fiction author. She also authored non-fiction books and products, focusing on communication and verbal self-defense.

Principles of Verbal Self-Defense

These are the overarching principles you need to learn for effective verbal self-defense:

#1. Know You're Under Attack

Many people don't know when they are being victimized and instead, blame themselves for being too sensitive.

This is because the attacker often is not physically threatening or because he uses double-binding techniques. This is an example of a double-binding technique:

> **Verbal manipulator**: It's not your fault if you don't have any sense of humor, I would be the same in your situation

Now if you get snippy and angry, you do validate his statement.

How do you know when you're under a verbal attack?
Simple: listen to how you feel.

#2. Know What Kind of Attack You're Facing

This requires some experience and knowledge of the different types of verbal attacks.

#3. Fit Your Defense to The Attack

This requires some experience, knowledge, and training in verbal self-defense.

#4. Know How to Follow Through

This is about actually putting the strategy to work.
Some people know what they *should* do, but they don't do it.

Instead, they plunge head-on with their feelings and overreact, while some others do nothing and let the bullies run them over.

Verbal Attackers Want to Get Your Reaction

Suzette Elgin says that verbal attackers get a kick out of getting a reaction out of you.

Sometimes it's power-hungry men who are addicted to the sense of power that comes from stirring people's emotions.

Ben Shapiro uses the "get under your skin" technique:

Ben Shapiro is a great case study to learn verbal bullying techniques.

Types of People Acting & Reacting to Verbal Bullying

People fall into different categories during verbal attacks, including:

Blamer: they use words such as "always", "never", and "everybody". They accuse, sometimes talk louder, and wiggle their fingers.
They look confident, domineering, and powerful. But it's because they're insecure that they feel they need to use that aggressive style.

Placator: they use words and body language that express a desperate desire to please.
This is typical *nice guy syndrome*.

Computer: neutral. They don't use "you" or "I" and speak in instructions.

Distracting: they switch from one mode to the other

Respond in Same Sensory Modes

You should answer the attack using the same sensory mode as the attacker (ie.: sight, hearing, feeling).

Agree to Defuse The Attack

When the attacker uses general language, such as "everybody knows that X is done that way" or "anyone who cared about the budget would not throw money around".

And you reply:

> **You**: You're absolutely right

Or:

> **You**: That's true indeed

That takes the wind out of the attackers' sails.

Rules of Engagement

Whenever you are attacked:

1. Ignore the bait
2. Respond to the presupposed attack
3. Send the message you're not playing their game

The "Even You" Attack

Example of an "even" attack:

> **Verbal Bully**: Even a woman can understand that

Everything coming after "even" here is supposedly inferior. Taking the bait here would mean replying "listen, I can understand here as good as any man on this team".

A few good replies:

> **You**: The idea that women are somewhat inferior has been put to rest since a long time, but I'm really astonished of hearing it from you

Or

> **You**: When did you feel I wasn't meeting your standards

Avoid "why" or "what makes you think" because you give the attacker a chance to keep attacking.

Never Give an Order

… If you can send the message in any other way.
This is the same principle as in *Never Split The Difference*, and it's based on the idea that people don't like being told what to do.

Smart Use of Proposition

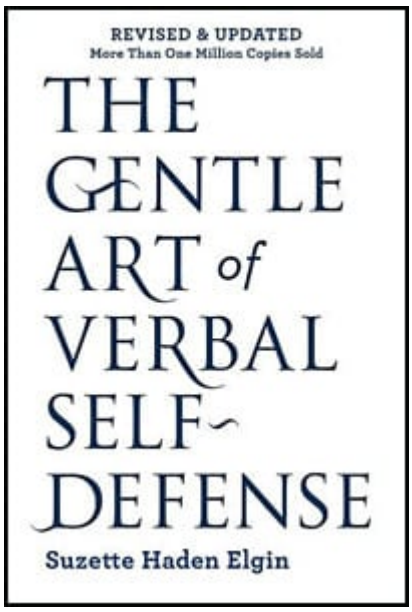
If you must ask a silly question, don't say:

> I know this is a silly question and I'm sorry I need ask it, but what did we decide on…

But say:

> I know this is a silly question and I'm sorry I need ask it, what did we decide on…

Might seem a small change without the "but", but it makes a big difference.



Real-Life Applications

Don't Take Ownership of The Offense
Same as in Verbal Judo, one of the core principles of verbal self-defense is that you should avoid putting your ego on the line. Refuse to take ownership of the offense.
Lots of verbal attackers take pleasure in getting under your skin: it makes them feel powerful. Don't give them that satisfaction.
Note: however, you must respond to direct public offenses or you look weak.

CONS

Time Has Passed
There are cassettes being sold of "The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense". And they go at 89 Dollars. That's a sign that the book has been around for a while.

Examples Are Less Culturally Relevant
Some of the verbal abuse made fun of women, saying things such as "even a woman would know how to do that". Today that stuff would get the bully in trouble very quickly.

Off-Topic
The book strays from its original goal of teaching people how to verbally defend themselves.

PROS

Some Good Wisdom
Some of the recommendations are very good and I took away some good wisdom.

Review

The Gentle Art of Self-Defense is a good book, but it wasn't "biting" enough for me.
It lets the attackers too easily off the hook in my opinion.

Yes, many times you don't want to react, and almost never you want to overreact. But sometimes you must push back because the attacker is trying to shame you, dominate you, or use you for social climbing.

In those cases, you must go on the offensive. And the book doesn't deal with those situations.

For more advanced techniques, browse this website.

Checkout the best communication skills books or get the book on Amazon

How to Date Effectively: A Scientific (& Pedantic) Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This is a guide on how to date effectively.

BUT.. It's not your typical article.
It's heavy on theory and science.

First, it presents you with the research.
Then, it draws a few conclusions on how you can date more effectively. If you are not interested in the theory, skip to the results.

If you're looking for more practically-oriented articles, please check:

- Dating for men: overview
- Dating for women: overview
- Proven dating strategies for men
- Proven dating strategies for women

Contents

- Science of Dating Well: Background
- Sexual Market Value: Supply & Demand
  - More Females = Less Male Commitment
  - More Males = Females Get Choosier
  - More Men = Courtship & Romance
  - More Women = Libertine Culture
- Dating Markets Women Should Avoid
  - Difficult Markets for Women
  - Difficult Markets for Men
- The Women Quality Oversupply
- Men Should Be Masculine… But Not Too Much
  - Masculine Men Make for Bad Partners
- Who's More Romantic? Men Are
- Are Men Intimidated By Smart Women?
  - Women Like Smart Men. And Handsome. As Much As Possible
- The Eligible Bachelor Paradox
- Hollywood Crates Unrealistic Expectations?
  - Advice for Men
- The Paradox of Choice
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- The Carol Syndrome
- High and Low Competition Markets
  - What Does It Mean
- The Strongest Currency: Sex
- Are We Monogamous?

- Pareto Law in Dating
  - What It Means To You
- Women Are Bad at Assessing Men
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- Attachment Theory: How Women Miss Emotionally Available Men
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  - Research on Ultimatums
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  - You Must Follow Through
- What We Learned so Far
- How to Date Effectively: Results
  - 1. Don't Let Him Do All The Work
  - 2. Date Assertively
  - 3. Consider Guys Without a Degree
  - 4. Give More More Men More Chances
  - 5. Settle Down Early
  - 6. Ask for Commitment
  - 7. Pick Environments With Good Gender Ratio
  - 8. Make Yourself Easy to Approach
- Summary

Science of Dating Well: Background

Love, sex, romance… Relationships.. Feelings
Some of what makes life worth living.

Conventional wisdom says that it's difficult to analyze this stuff with numbers.

And well, it might be. But that's not an excuse to shun science and data.
Because without any data, we only have personal opinions and platitudes left.

Which is exactly what most dating resources do: share advice which is fully based on opinions and almost completely devoid of any science or data.

Some of the most popular opinions in the women's dating literature for example:

1. let him wait for sex
2. let him invest (so you get the serious guys)
3. Let him do all the dating (it's the man's job)
4. let him chase you (men are naturally hunters)
5. buy her things (women like money)
6. don't buy her things (or you look like a provider while you should be a lover)

This article will present studies and numbers showing how these popular suggestions only apply in some specific circumstances.

Sexual Market Value: Supply & Demand

The gender ratio split, such as if a sexual market place has more female or males, has a huge impact on the behavior of the males and females in the population.

As we will see the impacts are so large that it influences not just dating behavior, but also cultural norms.

We will start with a few animal examples first, but don't worry: I'm not wasting time with random zoology here, the same principle applies to humans.

More Females = Less Male Commitment

Cichlids are fishes that, similarly to humans, nurture their offspring together until the children can live on their own without parents.
However, also similarly to humans, the offspring can sometimes survive just with the help of their mothers.
And also like humans, fathers sometimes deserted their mothers after birth.

Therefore cichlids made a very good subject for experimenting on gender ratio.

Mart Gross, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Toronto, writes in The Evolution of Parental Care:

> Males increasingly deserted their mates and the young in their care as the opportunity to remate increased in their environment

Basically, it means that males adopted more of a "player's strategy" by having sex and then moving on when there were more females around.

The same is also true for humans, as Anthony Walsh concludes in *Love: The Biology Behind the Heart*:

> Across a huge variety of species, from lobsters to humans, the sex ratio in a breeding population is the most important environmental factor affecting mating patterns in nominally monogamous species

Now what happens when there are more males instead?

More Males = Females Get Choosier

The consensus seems to be that male behavior is more strongly affected by gender ration.

However, females also become change their dating behavior when they can have their pick of the litter.

In dating environments where the male does not help raising the offspring, females pick the healthiest, strongest mates (or, in the case of humans, more attractive).

In dating environment where men do help raising the offspring though, she also looks at the resources.
Biologists Neff and Pitcher indeed says:

> It's been relatively straightforward to show that females prefer mates who bring the most resources.

Bottom line: when there are lots of men, men need to bring the goods to the table. They need to provide and prove themselves.

More Men = Courtship & Romance

Gender ratio changes whole cultures!

Harvard Psychology professor Marcia Guttentag in her seminal book *Too Many Women* shows that societies with more men emphasize romance and courtship.

This is probably because since men must compete for women, they make a bigger show of how much of a great provider and committed individual they can be (and data shows they work harder and make larger debts too).

Also the arts shift towards romance, courtship and female veneration. Artists paint idealized versions of women and, basically, put them on a pedestal.

Men who want to learn how to date well in environments with lots of women learn the art of being a gentleman. Ideal lovers, like Rudolph Valentino.

But here is the clincher!

Women Become Prized Possessions

It's not a game.
Men actually *do* value women more and appreciate their wives and girlfriends more (John Kim, 2013). They have a tendency to "lock down" their partners and defend them, and in these societies women tend to take more traditional roles at home.

More Women = Libertine Culture

But what happens now when there are more women instead.

Well, a lot happens.

Less Commitment & More Sex

Men commit less in the presence of many women.
And a culture of free sex and libertine values takes hold.

The current culture of college hookups might indeed be a consequence of an abundance of women in the sexual marketplace.
Jon Birger uses plenty of data and anecdotal evidence indeed that in college with fewer women there is no hookup culture.

Note:
there is a common idea widespread these days that the cultural values move from rigid to libertine to eventually circle back to rigid.
I don't believe in the "inevitability" of cultural shifts, and this view is severely limited by not taking into account the gender ratio.

When Men Are Scarce Women Care Less About His Looks

When men are scarce women care less about men's looks and focus more on the looks *of other women*. Such as, they shift their focus less on looking for the perfect mate and more on the competition.

If you are in an environment with lots of women, you have probably experienced it yourself. Women become much more critical of each other.

Especially, women become critical of feminine women, which they tend to shame because they represent the biggest threat in the dating market (also read feminine women VS independent women).

Women prioritize career when men are scarce

Researcher Kristina Durante concludes that:

> Whether a woman chooses a briefcase or a baby— whether she invests heavily in a career or in starting a family—is related to the local mating ecology and the availability of mates.

It makes sense after all. If finding a stable man willing to put on family is difficult, putting more energies into a career is a logical choice.
And partially, in my opinion, it's also an ego protecting mechanism (ie.: instead of risking to pursue a man and a family and not making, I turn it down first).

Feminism Rises

Marcia Guttentag's theorizes -and backs up with data- that feminist movements are energized by oversupplies of women.

Why is that so.

Because women come to depend on finicky and commitment-phobic men for a relationship.
But not to come to depend on men for everything else in life, they at least fight to win more independence in the social, political and economic arena.

Dating Markets Women Should Avoid

What does this all mean to you?

It means that, if you want to settle down or have easier access to member of the opposite sex without even needing how to date, it will pay off big time if you're an environment that is under-supplied by members of your own sex.

Difficult Markets for Women

When there are many women, the sexual market value of women goes down and men commit less.

If you are interested in dating more on your terms and/or finding a committed partner, it might be a good idea to avoid the markets with an oversupply of women.

Here are some of them:

1. Russia & EX URSS Countries

All the top 5 biggest alcohol consuming countries are located in the ex URSS (Wikipedia).

Italy in comparison is in place 87.
And while 65% of alcohol drinks in Italy are wine, in Russia more than half of the alcohol consumption is spirits.

What does that mean?
Lots of alcoholics.
In Belarus a whopping 11% of the population is physically dependent on alcohol.
Alcoholics are not gender neutral now. Most of them are men.

That leaves lots of women, chasing fewer eligible bachelors.

Have you ever wondered why Eastern and Russian women have a stereotype for being more feminine and attentive to their looks?
Now you may know why…

- **How to be feminine**

2. Big Cities

Lena Edlund in a paper called Sex and the City shows that urban areas see a bigger inflow of young women than young men.
Young men go to the city because of higher wages. Same for women. But also unskilled women move to the city, potentially looking for high earners.

That also means that well off male city dwellers have even more options that they would have otherwise.

This is statically significant because men have a much smaller propensity to pursue women based on their income and women a much smaller propensity of enjoying and pairing up with men who are below their socio-economic level.

3. College Degree Cohort

If you are a smart and driven woman, chances are that you are in a difficult market.

In the last decades women, by and large, have been overtaking men. In 1994 more women received a bachelor degree or higher.
And the disparity has only grown since then.

Nobody told them of the gender gap yet

4. Religious Groups

In the West women tend to be more devout than men and men tend to leave organized religions more frequently than women.
That means that church groups often see more women than men.

5. Thailand / Philippines

Everywhere there are more gay men than lesbian women.

However, in some places in the world a significantly large percentage of the male population crosses into gay/transexual.
Sometimes to the point of being indistinguishable from women (here's how to recognize ladyboys).

Not only these are men that disappear from the man's cohort, but they move into the women cohort chasing other men.

Difficult Markets for Men

And these are the sexual marketplaces that tend to favor women to the detriment of men:

1. Italy / Latin America

Italian men tend to take care of themselves much more than the average.
And they tend to be more forward with their dating.
The same can be said for some other Latin sexual marketplaces.

2. China

Decades of one child policy with a strong bias for male children led to a population with an oversupply of men.
Why do you think Chinese men must own a flat to date well? And why can Chinese women inquire about what the men own?
Because women have their pick.
Some commentators even say the Chinese economic boom is partly fueled by men trying to acquire goods that they can exchange on the sexual marketplace.

3. Technical Universities

Except of architecture which is already mostly women in many places, most technical universities are oversupplied with guys.

4. Tech Sectors

If you want to date well, stay away from silicon valley, tech startups and developers-centric companies. Go into HR instead.

Also read:

- **Sexual market value hacks**

The Women Quality Oversupply

Today all across the west there is a consistent, higher number of women obtaining college degree as compared to men.

The issue with that is that women don't like "marrying down" with men who are less educated and/or driven than they are.
Some studies show that would be easier for women if he had a good blue collar job with a sizable income. But as we know, blue collar jobs are disappearing…

This is true for most Western countries and it offers a good explanation as to why we see a decline in marriage rates among college-educated women.

The college gender gap is even wider among blacks

Men Should Be Masculine… But Not Too Much

Most people reading around here probably already know basic stuff such as:

- Deeper voice in men is attractive
- Beard is attractive
- Good body / muscle is attractive

These are all signs of masculinity. And, on average, they are attractive.
What most are less aware of though is that there is an upper bound. This Oxford paper titled "Lover or a fighter" reveals:

> Men's vocal attractiveness peaked at around 96 Hz. Beard growth had equivocal effects on attractiveness judgments. In contrast, perceptions of men's dominance simply increased with increasing masculinity (i.e., with lower-pitched voices and greater beard growth).
> Together, these results suggest that the optimal level of physical masculinity might differ depending on whether the outcome is social dominance or mate attraction.

Fascinating stuff.

The paper basically says that women want "mannish man"… Up to a certain point.
However other men keep assigning higher dominance level to manlier man without an upper limit.

People who know a bid about seduction knew that androgyny and some feminine traits on an otherwise attractive man can be very attractive (also read The Art of Seduction).

But this paper backs the idea that too much manliness is a turn off.
Why is that so?

Hard to say, and I recommend you distrust "ad-hoc" evolutionary explanations.
However, it could be that it's because very high testosterone is associated with men abandoning women.

Masculine Men Make for Bad Partners

Men with higher testosterone have been shown to:

- Marry less
- Cheat more
- Divorce more
- Make for general lower quality marriages (hitting, squabbles etc.)

Read Booth and Dabbs 1993.

Me love you long time (and then move on)

Who's More Romantic? Men Are

Most people believe that women are more romantic than men.
Yet studies show that men tend to be more romantic than women.

Why is that so?
Partially it's good old numbers. Women, on average, have more readily available options than men.
And men with little options tend to idealize and fantasize about women. White-knighting, treating them well and all that.

Partially, of course, it's also cultural.
And culturally it's more OK for women to embrace romanticism and it's less OK for men to do so.

Men still do it, but you don't see it.
You see women with their screensavers of Brad Pitt and posters of Johnny Depp -how come Depp is so more popular than Pitt by the way?-.
And you equally have men who pine after Catherine Zeta Jones' lips or dream of embracing Scarlett Johansson salacious figure before going to bed… But they don't say it and they hide their dreams.

Also, there is a major difference between men and women when it comes to romanticism. Women are eminently realistic. They might start a relationship that they adore him and romanticize about him… But they will soon grow restless if the relationship doesn't progress and he doesn't deliver the goods -from lover to more serious to official to babies-.
Men instead can keep idealizing a woman for the whole length of the relationship.

However, in my experience, women tend to idealize men harder and stronger when he allows her to take over the very feminine and submissive role in the relationship. That's when you will see women with puppy eyes and star in the eyes.

But, again, that often doesn't last forever.

Are Men Intimidated By Smart Women?

Men are intimidated by smart and successful women.

I bet you heard that a few times.

And men prefer dumb women.
You probably heard that too a few times.

But is it true?

It turns out, that it's not true that man want stupid women.

Indeed an increase in intelligence makes the woman more appealing.
However, there is an upper limit.
When he perceives her to be *too* intelligent, then her overall appeal does indeed decrease. And that limit is not that high. Around a 7/10 in perceived intelligence.

Man will *say* they like intelligent women. Even smarter than they are.
But in reality, they are *less* romantically attracted to them.
And *especially* so if the women are smarter than them (Park et. al., 2015).

Basically, men like intelligent women. But not so much very intelligent women. And especially women who are smarter than they are.
Determining why, Robert Burris says, it's not as easy though. But yes, it might be the good old ego thing.

Example

Ted in How I Met Your Mother didn't particularly appreciate a woman overplaying the dumb side:

Also read:

- **Dating for successful women**

It's the opposite for women:

Women Like Smart Men. And Handsome. As Much As Possible

For women instead there is no upper bound.
Women always preferred men who were smarter and more attractive.

And while women show a preference for looks over intelligence, women measure the two against each other. That means that a not so attractive man still has a chance if he is intelligent.

References:

Karbowski, A., Deja, D., & Zawisza, M. (2016). Perceived female intelligence as economic bad in partner choice. 102, 217–222. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.07.006

Park, L. E., Young, A. F., and Eastwick, P. W. (2015). (Psychological) distance makes the heart grow fonder: Effects of psychological distance and relative intelligence on men's attraction to women. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41(11), 1459–1473. doi:10.1177/0146167215599749

The Eligible Bachelor Paradox

Have you ever noticed that some very smart, articulate and often even attractive women remains bachelors?
And other less attractive and generally less

Why is that so?

Well, Mark Gimein provides an explanation with auction theory. He calls it "The Eligible Bachelor Paradox".
Gimein says that in auction theory -and in real life as well- weak bidders win the auction more often than strong

bidders.

In human dating terms, that means that women with less to offer end up with a mate more quickly and reliably than women with lots to offer (lots to offer = confident they can find a mate).

Why?

It's because the weak bidders, as we have seen before, focus more on the competition.
They know they can be outgunned and they are more in a rush to secure a win (ie.: a mate).

The strong daters instead wait around for Mr. Perfect. But in real life Mr. Perfect rarely shows up.

Bad, bad strategy.

Hurry! Difficult Markets Get Worse Over Time

The problem with waiting around is that gender imbalanced don't stay the same. But, just like a game of musical chairs, they get worse over time.

What happens is that while she awaits for Mr. Perfect, all Mr. Good Enough get scooped up by the more aggressive daters.

And she is left at 40 without any single good prospect around.

Hollywood Crates Unrealistic Expectations?

You've heard it before.

People -especially men who are more visual creatures- are now so used to airbrushed women, fake boobs and

plastic faces that they can't appreciate "real" women anymore.

That leads to unrealistic expectations that impairs their ability of loving and appreciating "real women".

But… Is it true?

Turns out, sadly… That might really be the case.

Douglas Kenrick and Sara Gutierres asked male college students to rate the attractiveness of potential blind dates after and before watching an episode of “Charlie’s Angels”.
The men rated the much more “real” potential dates as far less attractive.

A follow-up study exposed men to picture of female models or modern art.
The men who saw female models’ picture answered that they were less in love with their wives as compared to the men who saw pictures of modern art.

Advice for Men

Get more realistic about your expectations.
Most women grow hair when unshaven and, without bashing anyone, also actresses are much, much plainer without all make up.

The Paradox of Choice

The Paradox of Choice is a book I deeply enjoyed and even put it in the top 10 best self help books.

Barry Schwarz proves, with data and research, that when we have a lot of options we often don’t make any choice.
And when we make one, we tend to be less happy than if we had no choice at all.

The Paradox of Choice connects well with auction theory and further expands it.
In today’s society, with social media and online dating, everyone feels as if we were drowning in a sea of options.

How to Date Against The Paradox of Choice

Pick one and work on it.
People who pick and stick with an option and work on it are happier and more fulfilled.

Not sure… I’ll just wait

The Carol Syndrome

Is it true that very beautiful women don’t get approached much?

Yes.

José-Manuel Rey developed a mathematical model to prove it.
He says that when a man sees a beautiful woman, he runs the following paradigm in his mind:

1. She's beautiful
2. Many men want her
3. My chances are low
4. I will protect my ego and don't try at all

The key concept of The Carol Syndrome is that dating doesn't happen in a vacuum, and that all players considers his options in relation to other players.

Since we are all social creatures, this does make sense. And plenty of anecdotal evidence seems to support it.

High and Low Competition Markets

If we look at how often men reproduced in the past, we can get an idea of how competitive a market is for men.

When lots of men passed their genes, we can assess that a region is:

- Low in competition (every man got a shot)
- High in monogamy

When few men passed their genes, we can assess that a region is instead more towards polyamory and higher in sexual competition.

This female to male breeding ratio paper shows us that:

- In East Asia 91% of men have reproduced
- In Europe 77%
- In Africa 71%

There are no figures for India, but if we look at a Durex poll from 2005 India is one of the most sexually conservative places in the world.
The arranged marriages and few divorces leaves Indians with little comparative experience in the dating marketplace when they're outside of India.

What Does It Mean

These figures mean that, theoretically, guys going from high competition markets to lower competition markets might bring with them a higher level of training.
That's far from a given though, since men from high competition markets might have as well *not* have trained at all.

It does mean though, with a higher degree of reliability, that men from low competition markets will fare, on average, poorly in higher competition markets.

For a woman looking for a stable relationship, an environment with lower competitions is might be better.

My note:
These numbers left me scratching my head a bit.
Black women seem more protective of their men, which fits into the paradigm of more philandering men.
But traveling to Africa I have found it to be one of the easiest place to meet women and get laid. Black women are also warmer on approach than most other women. Also in Europe.
And they seem to play less unavailable games (and games in general) and help men along the dating process.

Everything I have researched made sense to me. Just this one is a conundrum I have yet to solve.

The Strongest Currency: Sex

> Women Give Sex For Stuff – Men Give Stuff For Sex

You have probably heard the story of Weinstein and how he asked for sex in exchange for help.
Now, let's be clear, that guy is disgusting.
His takes sleazy to a whole new level.

However, what he was engaging is nothing more than has been going for a long time. And women have been doing the same as well.

The difference is that women trade sex -or the hint of sex- to get stuff. And men trade stuff and favors for sexual favors.
Books such as Goal Digger Guide even teach women how to get stuff from men.

Daniel Kruger puts this theory, and something we all instinctively knew, on a research paper here.
The fact that there are far more women selling sex and far more men buying sex is also proof of how sex is traded in the sexual marketplace.

Also read:

- **The sexual market place**

Are We Monogamous?

Are humans monogamous?
It's a fair question.

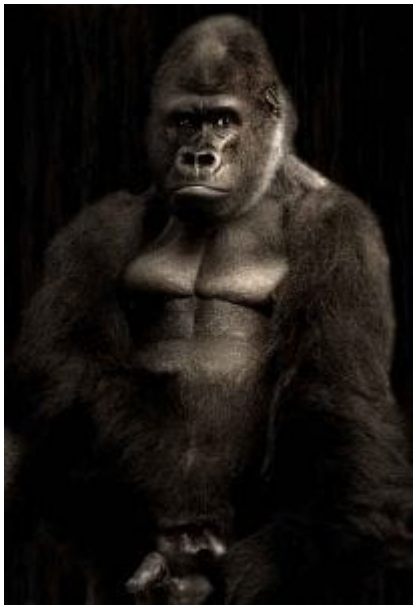
In short, evolutionary psychology tells us that we are "in between monogamous and polyamourous". We form pair-bonds, with the occasional cheating.

We can clearly see it in our behaviors.
Male humans do invest time and resources in the offspring, which is a crucial aspect of monogamy. But most of us know of instances of cheating around us, too.
In the scale of male parental investment, we are around the middle in the animal kingdom (The Moral Animal).

To make it short, humans have a tendency for monogamy. But also a tendency to cheat and move from

monogamous partner to another.

As we have seen before, the gender ration split also influence how monogamous couples are (more men means more monogamy).



Contrary to popular beliefs gorillas and silver-back have very small penises and minuscules testicles. This is the case because gorillas have their mating warfare at a physical level. *Not* at a sperm level.
Once they win the battle with other males, their females are theirs and they won't stray.
So they don't need much sperm (genitals) or to place their sperm deeper inside (long penises).
Obviously, we are different.

Pareto Law in Dating

CDC data and an ABC News Poll show that sexual partners are more evenly distributed among women than among men.

Albeit the polls show that there aren't that many men who are getting nothing, there is indeed a tendency for a few men to have much more sex than most others.

Note: I wouldn't personally trust self-reported data on surveys. Especially when it comes to sex. However Gladwelll in The Tipping Point makes a good case with data that is harder to lie about: sexually transmitted diseases.
And those show that a few "super infectors" were responsible for the bulk of a virus' spread.

This study by OKCupid showed that women are much, much harsher than men when it comes to scoring the opposite sex.
In that sample women rated 80% of men below average.

All seem to point to women having sky high standards.
Maybe too high?

What It Means To You

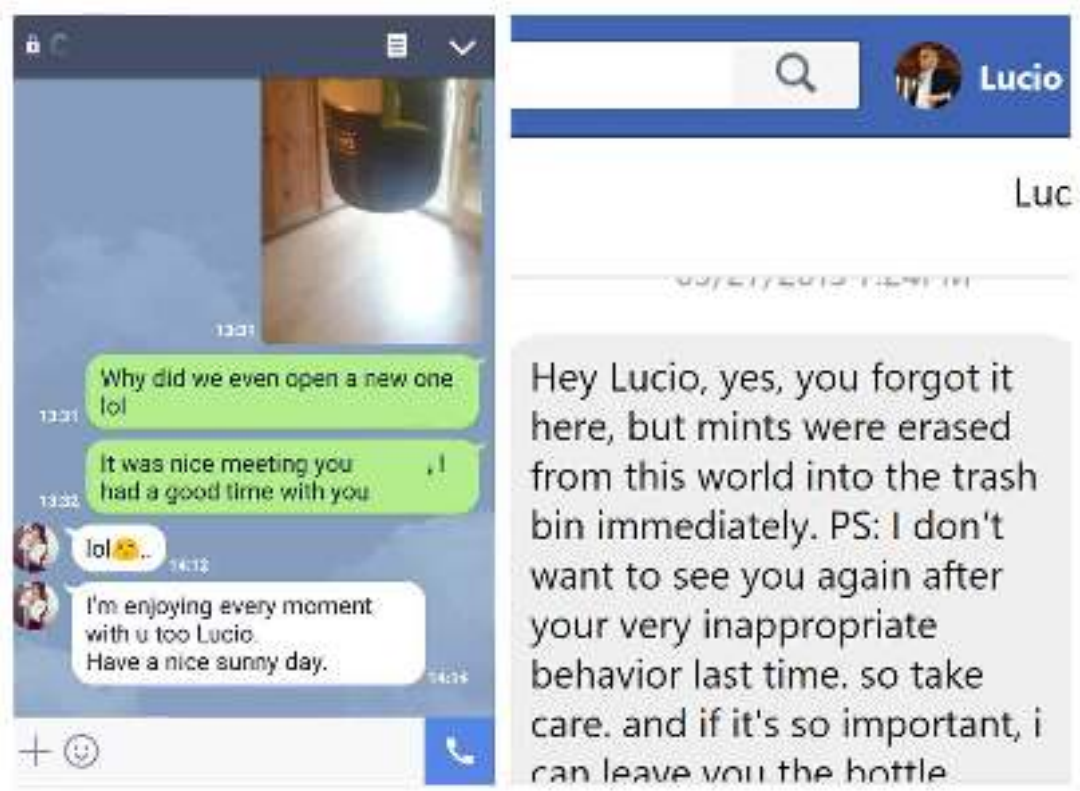
Many women complain that men don't want to settle down.
I suspect this is because many women disproportionately go for the top guys who, indeed, tend to settle down much less than more "regular" guys.

While this is certainly not true for everyone, either men or women, it might make sense for women to start considering a broader range of men.

Probably, considering that they actually rate men wrong the whole time…

Women Are Bad at Assessing Men

Based on lots of empirical evidence, I can tell you that women rate men wrong *all the time*.
Both in terms of short term and long term mate potential.



1 enjoys every moment; 1 thinks I'm a weirdo (the former was also much more attractive, so it's not all a question of SMV)
A woman I have never been intimate with basically proposes herself sexually to me in the belief that there is a queue of women wanting to have sex with me.
Another other woman whom I met at a parade and with whom I thought we had a good time together never replied.
And this other woman blocked me right away.

This girl I had a date with "enjoys every moment with me".
And this other woman never wants to see me again "after my very inappropriate behavior".

This ex girlfriend of mine believes I can get all the girls I want.
While another short fling told me in person she regretted it ever having done it with me (a very low point of my life BTW).

How does the same person go from top sperm donor to weirdo? And from guy who can get any girl to guy who doesn't deserve a reply?
He didn't go anywhere!
Women are simply terrible at estimating men's potential upon brief interactions.

The line between sexy and "go away" is so extremely easy to cross that most people wouldn't believe it until they actually experience it (or until evidence is provided like in this post).

I have approached women who reacted star-struck, and some other times like I had leper.

Over the longer term though, patterns start to emerge.
In short: women are terrible at assessing potential in the short term.

But over the long term women's assessments and reality start to align better.

2 think I'm the best; 2 block me

What It Means to You

Bottom line:

1. Do not rely on first blush impressions
2. If you're looking for a relationship, give some "weirdos" and "poor prospects" more leeway
3. Don't believe the first impressions of sexy guys: often they're not that better than normal ones

First impressions are by far the easiest to sway and the easiest to get wrong.
Players and womanizers are also the best at faking positive first impressions. And often they have little to show for except that they put women on a higher priority in their life -while the rest of their lives suffer-.

Attachment Theory: How Women Miss Emotionally Available Men

Are women passing up the best men for a relationship?

No scientific how to date guide could be complete without a look at attachment theory.
And attachment theory says that indeed many women do are passing up the best men and highest quality men for a relationship.

Amir Levin, author of *Attached*, says that some women, and especially women with an anxious attachment style, confuse an activated attachment system with love.

What does that mean, in practical terms?

It means that when women cannot get enough of their partner/fling, they confuse their craving for more time together as love.
But it's not love, it's simply that her emotional needs are not being met.

Basically: (emotionally) **unavailable men give women the *false* belief that they are in love**.

This means that women often end up with men with an avoidant attachment style, and that rarely makes for very good relationships.
And what happens when these women meet men with a secure attachment?

Men with a secure attachment tend to be higher quality men. They are more emotionally stable and they are comfortable giving intimacy and asking for it.
However, they are also more *available*, and they give women less emotional roller coaster.
And women who are used to emotional roller coasters find more stable men boring.
So when they meet a high quality, secure men, they mistakenly believe there is no chemistry. Which is wrong: most of the times love is developed over time.

Genders and Attachment Styles

Note: the opposite can also happen. Such as that men confuse an activated attachment system for love,. The movie 500 Days of Summer is the example of a man who falls madly in love with an unavailable woman.
But it's a bit less common.

Ultimatum Games & Dating

Nobody that I am aware of has yet applied ultimatum games to dating.

Which is highly surprising, since ultimatums can be a great tool to force a decision for the many "sticky topics" that often happen in dating, such as:

- Commit or leave
- Marry me or leave
- Make me a baby or leave

What's the popular dating advice here?
Some popular authors say you must ask for commitment. Some others recommend women never to ask men for commitment.
The latter is very bad advice.

Research on Ultimatums

John Molloy, author of *Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others*, assembled a team to interview 3,000 couples right after they got married.

60% of the recently married women said they were ready to walk away if their men were not ready to get married.

Note: Molloy's research is not a final proof that "ultimatums" and demands for commitment work.
However, I consider it to be a strong indicator for something that makes logical sense: that feigning disinterest in a commitment, marriage and "official status" is not a good strategy.

Why Ultimatums Works

Jon Birger in his wonderful *DateOnomics* makes the point that ultimatum work because they create scarcity (one of Cialdini's principles of influence).
I am not convinced about the scarcity principle in this case. I think demanding commitment work in part because of the threat, but also because demands increase the woman's value.

A woman who demands commitment indeed is also making a statement that she is a woman who expects to receive, and that is an indicator of value, confidence, and market value (because she believes she can get commitment from

someone else).
Also, it raises her value by placing her closer to the Madonna in the Madonna-whore dichotomy. And men love that.

You Must Follow Through

All the best negotiators (*Secrets of Power Negotiating, Never Split the Difference*) will tell you that if you don't follow through on ultimatums you lose almost all of your power.

Basically:

If you make an ultimatum, you must be ready to follow through.

What We Learned so Far

Here is how all this information translates to you:

- **Men Won't Necessarily Chase You**

Dating book best sellers tell you that you have to let men chase. Because they are hunters.
Not fully true.
Yes men do pursue and romance… When there are more women in the environment!
Otherwise men, like all human beings, have an ego and enjoy women who return their love and fervor.
Read more in: the myth of the chase.

Hunters at heart… Or just few preys?

- **Men end up with what's available**

All human beings have a tendency to follow the path of last resistance.
And when there are lots of women available -but even when there aren't that many-, men to end up with what's available and easier for them.

- **Men approach very beautiful women less**

Because they think she must be too difficult and their chances must be low.

- **Asking for commitment seems to work**

Not asking for commitment on the other hand favor the men: they get what they want without having to commit.

- **A few men get most of the sex**

The sexual marketplace seems to be a market where the Pareto law applies. Women are more evenly distributed and guys are more skewed towards a few big sex takers.

How to Date Effectively: Results

Bottom line.

WIIFY.
What does this all mean for you?

1. Don't Let Him Do All The Work

We have seen that the advice of "letting him chase" is meaningless unless we also look at the environment.

Making him chase you works. And it works great. IF the culture is one of courtship, women idealization and if men outnumber women (the two overlap as we have seen).

If that's not the case:

2. Date Assertively

Auction theory shows that women who date assertively pair up with men more frequently and more reliably.

Dating assertively of course does not mean to be masculine and/or to lead the dating dance. You still have to be feminine.

Dating assertively means to swap the culture of "feign disinterest, let him chase and invest as much as possible" to one of "show up and help him move the interaction along".

3. Consider Guys Without a Degree

Women show a strong reluctance to "marry down". And that so far has included men who don't hold a degree.

Women with a degree should probably be well served by considering also the pool of non college-degree men, where men are struggling with an oversupply of males.

This is especially true for cohorts where the gap is even wider, like black women.

4. Give More More Men More Chances

Ie.: stop only focusing on the top 10%.

The data shows what we instinctively know is true: the manliest men and the men with most options commit less and cheat more. And if you manage to settle with one, data also show they make for worse relationships.

Of course, if you are looking for fun, go after whoever strikes your fancy.

But if you are looking for commitment, you are probably well served by giving more men more chances and looking for more diamonds in the rough.

5. Settle Down Early

If you are in a difficult market, it's a mathematical certainty that things will only get worse.
Then, it can pay off to make an effort to settle down early.

6. Ask for Commitment

This article makes the point -through data- that “letting him chase, invest & wait” does not work in environments with an overabundance of women.

However, “have sex with him and never ask for anything” is not the solution. That does not work either.

Instead, ask for commitment.
There is no data as to how/when to ask for commitment.

7. Pick Environments With Good Gender Ratio

If you’re a woman, date in environments with more men (and the opposite for men).
Or consider countries where your traits are more in demand.

And if you want a relationship, countrysides are better than cities.

8. Make Yourself Easy to Approach

The Carol Paradox, or the idea that beautiful women are pursued less applies to beautiful women. But the truth is that all men are scared of rejection with *all* types of women.

The easier you make it for men to approach you, the more opportunity you will have.
Leil Lowndes says that men miss most female approach signals, which are too subtle for them. The solution?

- Look more welcoming (smile more)
- Make your signals more obvious
- Position yourself near him

If you want to read more, check this article:

- How to find a boyfriend
- **Dating strategies for women**

Summary

This article looked at data on dating, sex and relationships.
It then drew a few rules on how to date effectively based on that data.

The Sociopath Next Door: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Sociopath Next Door is a book dedicated to the personality disorder of psychopathy. It delves into the psychology of sociopaths, how they operate and manipulate, how they can harm us, and what we can do to protect ourselves.

Contents

- Overview
- Overview
  - Traits of a Sociopath
  - Some People Are Evil: Don't Make Excuses For Them
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  - Authority Trumps Conscience
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  - Covetous Sociopaths: The Worst Kind
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Overview

- Sociopaths are relatively common (around 1 in 25 in the US) and they are often difficult to spot
- Stop making excuses for bad people: some people have no conscience and you better know how to deal with them
- Sociopaths see the world as a big game where they want to attain power and domination

Overview

About the Author:
Martha Stout is an American psychologist. She completed her psychology training at the McLean Psychiatric Hospital and obtained her Ph.D. at Stony Brook University.
She served on the clinical faculty of the Harvard Medical School and works in private practice as a clinical psychologist.

Introduction

Not all sociopaths are violent and go on a killing spree. Most of them are not that conspicuous.
Most of them live among you and me.

Traits of a Sociopath

The American Psychiatric Association defines a sociopath as someone who possesses three of the following seven traits:

1. Failure to conform to social norms
2. Manipulativeness and deceitfulness
3. Impulsivity and failure to plan ahead
4. Irritability and aggressiveness
5. Recklessness, disregard for the safety of self and others
6. Consistent irresponsibility
7. Lack of remorse

The author adds superficial charm, which allows the sociopath to seem a captivating, normal individual with a gift for getting what he wants through social seduction or actual seduction.

I highly recommend this article on sociopath's sexual strategies and manipulation techniques:

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Sociopaths Lack Conscience

The author makes the point that the real biggest difference between sociopaths and others is conscience.
Sociopaths don't have a conscience.

My Note:
After some personal research, some sources say that sociopaths can develop a bond and may feel hurt and remorse for hurting someone they have a bond with (contrary to psychopaths).
And WebMD says that sociopaths have a "weak conscience" (contrary to psychopaths).

Some People Are Evil: Don't Make Excuses For Them

Martha Stout says that we often make excuses for people committing crimes.
We say it was the family of origin, a poor background, or a lack of options.

Most people fail to even think that sometimes malicious sociopaths can hide behind a socially recognized authority to cause harm.
We wouldn't think, for example, that a psychologist or a doctor might actively harm patients.
If it happens, we might even make excuses for them rather than think there must be something wrong with those people.

Similarly, good people are often the first to think and say that we all have a dark side. And that given the situation, we are all capable of unspeakable things.
But the author rejects this notion.
Stout says that sometimes we almost seem too fearful in simply admitting that some people are evil because of a lack of conscience.

Note:

Stout is right. Some psychologists even went as far as to say that “heroes” and evil are twigs of the same tree. That is not true, and if you’re interested check out my article Good & Evil.

> **Some people are just bad and evil. Stop with the relativism**

Power & Dominance Motivates Sociopaths

The author says that sociopaths want to win and dominate.
They like approaching life like a big game where other people are like pieces on a chessboard.

Sociopaths crave control over others. When they can diminish others and make them feel bad, the sociopath is happy.

My Note:
Indeed, if you read “Confessions of A Sociopath“, the author says she likes “ruining people”.

Do Sociopaths Know They’re Sociopaths?

Yes, but they see nothing wrong with it.
In fact, they often feel superior.

My Note:
Well, I’m sure that many of them went through their lives for quite some time before realizing they were sociopaths.

Sociopaths Can Have (Some) Emotions

Sociopaths can feel emotions.
Sometimes they are envious of others for having a conscience and a wider breadth of emotions and feelings.
And when they are envious of others, it’s possible they might want to destroy them.

The author says sociopaths feel “primitive affective reactions” resulting from immediate pain and pleasure and short-term successes and frustrations.

Sociopaths do get into relationships, but they don’t really love.
They can learn to fake emotions but don’t really feel them.

When Normal People Behave Like Sociopaths

Sometimes normal people can ditch their conscience.

Our conscience indeed binds to other people who also have a conscience. But in the presence of war criminals, sex offenders, and terrorists, we often disconnect our conscience.

These “monsters” are depersonalized. They become “it”, and everything goes against them.

Depersonalization also happens when a “us VS them” mentality takes hold. And sociopaths who gain control of tribes, societies, or nations can leverage them to commit atrocities.
We become the good people, they become the “its”, the enemies we must destroy.
And everything goes.

Also, read:

- Evil
- The Lucifer Effect
- Successful psychopathy

Why Do We Allow Sociopaths to Be Our Leaders

Martha Stout asks how come over and over in history, people allowed sociopaths to wreak havoc.

She says part of the reason is that the enemies become "it" when the rhetoric of the "monster on the other side of the fence" takes over.
Part is because we look around and see that nobody else is complaining (this is called the Spiral of Silence BTW), or we get resigned to "it's just how it is" or "it's how politics is".

But most of all, The Sociopath Next Door makes the point, we are programmed to obey authority. Even against our own conscience.

Authority Trumps Conscience

The author introduces the famous Milgram experiment.

The Milgram experiment shows that a figure of authority giving us order can trump our conscience and make us do things that we wouldn't otherwise do.

In the experiment, two-thirds of the participants administered highly painful electric shocks to people just because an authority figure in a white overcoat insisted they did so.

Our inborn tendency to obey authority serves the sociopaths of the world very well, Martha Stout says.
And that's why later in the book she encourages people to question authority more often.

Education is The Antidote

The author says that education is a good antidote to the tendency to blindly follow authority.

Not because education per se educates us to be better human beings, but because **someone who regards himself as an equal to the authority is less likely to blindly follow that authority**.

Indeed, when it was an ordinary man instead of a scientist to order the electric shocks, the obedience went down from 62.5% to 20%.

Note: our obedience also depends on how physically close we are to the figure of authority.
The farther away the figure of authority, the less people are likely to obey, for example, a "fire" order.

Historical Sociopaths (Sexual) Conquests

The author talks about sociopathic conquerors of the past, like Genghis Khan.

Once they conquered a new city the Mongols sometimes slaughtered the local population and had sex with the local women.

The authors say that 8% of the men living in the region of the former Mongol empire carry the same Y chromosome. That's 16 million people who live today as a result of Genghis Khan's legacy of genocide and mass rape.

Covetous Sociopaths: The Worst Kind

Covetous sociopaths are sociopaths who crave other people's belongings.

Not just things though, but they can be jealous of success, intelligence, or looks.

These people believe nature has slighted them, and if they can't enjoy what others have, neither should others be able to enjoy them.
And retribution becomes their goal.

Sometimes the victims haven't done anything against the sociopaths, and they are incredulous when a sociopath is attacking or sabotaging them.

What Causes Sociopathy?

Sociopathy is partly inborn. Up to 50%, to be precise.
What the other factors are, we don't know too well as of today, but these are some likely causes:

1. Childhood Abuse

Some research went into childhood abuse, but the results are inconsistent.
Childhood abuse does not seem to cause sociopathy.

2. Attachment Styles

Attachment styles have also been explored.

And a complete lack of parental care can cause incredible neediness (anxious attachment style) and the inability to form intimate relationships with others.
People with a total lack of parental care do have something in common with sociopaths, but they are not Machiavellian, charming, or charismatic.
They are simply indifferent and hostile (read Romanian Orphans and get the book for more information, this was an appalling and eye-opening story).

3. Local Culture

Marta Stout says that the overall culture has a strong influence on the incidence of sociopathy.

Eastern regions, with a more social culture of collectiveness, have much fewer sociopaths than the West, where the culture is more individualistic.
For example, in Taiwan, less than 0,2% of the population can be diagnosed as sociopaths, VS 4% in the US.

Rules to Survive a Sociopath

Martha Stout introduces 13 rules to deal with a sociopath:

1. Accept that sociopaths exist
2. Trust your instincts above what people say
3. Don't be too open to those who haven't gained your full trust
4. Question authority
5. Suspect flattery
6. Don't mix fear with respect. If they try to scare you into something they're not good leaders
7. Don't try to beat them at their own game
8. Cut contact
9. Sociopaths play the pity game: don't let your conscience succumb to people without a conscience
10. Three times a lie or a cheat is a pattern: let them go
11. Don't help them hide their true nature
12. Don't allow them to lower your self-esteem
13. Focus on yourself: living well is always the best revenge

Why Do We Even Have a Conscience?

The author wonders why do we even have a conscience when being conscious-less can be an advantage for the individual.

This section was a bit too off-topic for me, also because it's very well covered in other books and branches of research.
Also, read:

- The Moral Animal
- The Origins of Virtue

Sociopaths VS Narcissists

Narcissists are half sociopaths.
They can feel their own emotions but have no awareness of other people's emotions.
They lack empathy.

Narcissists suffer because they want relationships, but have difficulty in forming and maintaining them since they can't empathize.

The Drawbacks of Being a Sociopath

Sociopaths are often hypochondriacs, get easily bored, and often get addicted to drugs.

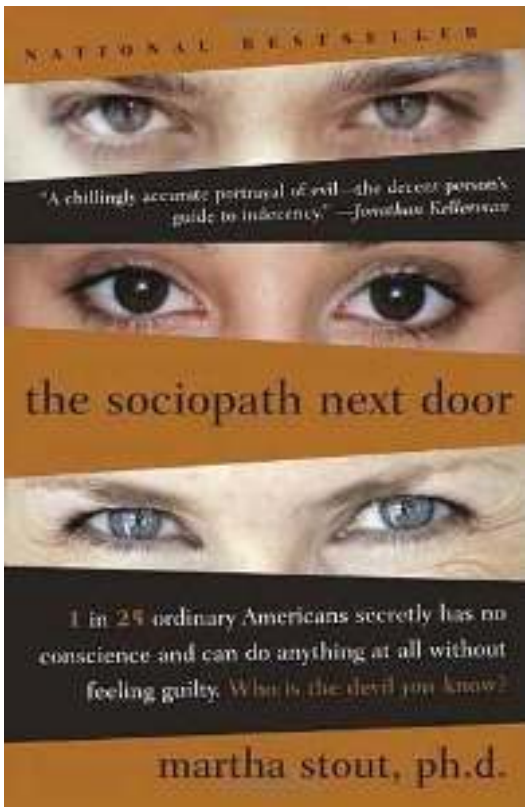
It's also not easy for them to obtain the success they want as they cannot sustain heavy workloads for the long haul.

This is why sociopaths are rarely in a position of power. **Sociopaths lack the staying power needed to get to the top power position**.
They go for the easy shot, the big heist, the shortcut. And of course, that rarely works.
When they get to the top of business organizations, they often do it by managing to disguise the amount of work they do or that they have done.

See more information about sociopaths in business organizations here:

- Snakes in Suits
- Bad Blood

The lack of conscience, turns out, also makes for poor decision-making.
Sociopaths are short-sighted and impulsive and learn little from mistakes. They often end up financially broke.



[image]Real-Life Applications

There Are Bad People Among Us
Keep your antennas up.
And learn how to act with these people.
This is one of the tenets of this website, too.

Don't Second Guess Bad People Too Much
Good people make too many excuses for inexcusable behavior.

CONS

Scientifically Not As Precise
Starting with the use of the term 'sociopath' that has no strong clinical or scientific backing.

Unneeded Excursus
A wonderful book, but it gets lost in unneeded detours.
The Freudian superego, the Milgram experiment, theology… They didn't fit the topic too well.
Same for the stories used as examples.

Untestable Clinical Diagnosis to Dead People
The author assigns sociopath diagnoses to a lot of historical despots or dictators she has never met. Like Gengis Khan, Nicolae Ceauşescu, Caligula and Benito Mussolini.
I'm Italian and I don't think that Mussolini was a sociopath. But it's hard to say. And that's the whole point: the author makes those diagnoses sound way too easy and obvious.

PROS

Martha Stout Question Go Deep… Deep Into Human Soul
Why do we allow sociopaths as our leaders, to wage war, kill and destroy on their whims, games of dominance, and

thirst for power?

Interesting Look on Cultures Promoting Anti-Social Behavior
The author makes the point that Western culture accepts manipulation and mind games in the name of success and individualism. That can make the environment more sociopath-friendly.

Review

While limitations exist for lacking stronger empirical foundations, *The Sociopath Next Door* is a good book for laypeople to understand sociopathy, and protect themselves.

In a way, we share a similar mission as we also help men with a conscience handle conscious-less people.

And it reinforced my belief that in this world we need ultimately good people who know how to be ruthless when the need to stand up to sociopath-like foes arises.

Read the best dark triad books

Stop Walking on Eggshells: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Stop Walking on Eggshells (2010) is a help manual for people who have a close relationship with a borderline personality.
The authors first provide an overview of borderline personality disorder (BPD), as well as advice on coping techniques and cures.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Traits of BPD
  - What BPD Means In Simple Terms
  - BPD In Relationships
  - Communication Misunderstanding
  - Why BPs Self-Mutilate
  - Suicides (Threats)
  - Communicating With BPs
  - Enforce Your Boundaries
  - 3 Cs and 3 Gs
  - Protecting Children From BPs
  - Distortion Campaigns
  - Risk Factors for BPD
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- BPs are slaves of their emotions and extremes in their feelings and behaviors
- Wild swings of emotions make it difficult for BPs to stick to things and nurture long-lasting relationships
- Self-mutilation, suicide threats, and the explosion of anger are common (and often tools to coerce you into paying attention to them)

Full Summary

About The Authors:
Randi Kreger is the founder of BPDCentral.com, which she claims to be the largest community dedicated to borderline personality disorder. Paul T Mason is vice president of clinical services at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Racine. His research on BPD has been published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.

Traits of BPD

Patients are classified as BPD when they present at least 5 traits of the following:

1. Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment
2. Unstable and intense interpersonal relationships, alternating between idealization and devaluation
3. Identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self
4. Impulsivity in at least two areas that are potentially self-damaging (e.g., spending, sex, substance abuse, reckless driving, binge eating).
5. Suicidal behavior (threats, self-mutilating behavior)
6. Affective instability due to a marked reactivity of mood (e.g., dysphoria, irritability, or anxiety ranging from a few hours to a few days)
7. Chronic feelings of emptiness
8. Inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger
9. Transient, stress-related paranoid ideation or severe dissociative symptoms

What BPD Means In Simple Terms

People with BPD feel and do the same as any other people do.

They just feel more intensely, and act more extremely.
Their more extreme behavior is a direct consequence of feeling more intensely coupled with generally weaker self-control.
Indeed, BPDs have difficulties regulating their behavior.

BPD In Relationships

People with BPD look to others to provide what they can't provide for themselves.
Such as:

- Self-esteem
- Approval
- A sense of identity

They look for a nurturing caregiver with never-ending love and compassion to fill their void.

BPs are always terrified of losing a relationship (extreme anxious attachment) while at the same time, they have such low self-esteem that they don't understand how anyone could be with them.
BPs have trouble differentiating between physical absence and abandonment and they can continually call their partners to reassure themselves they're not alone.

They seek long intimacy, but their behavior only makes intimacy more unlikely.

The best predictor for a BP to keep a relationship is to get into therapy and take steps to cure themselves.

Communication Misunderstanding

BPs often misread messages in the most negative way possible.

For example, if you cancel a date because you had to work longer, they might jump to the conclusion that you don't want to see them ever again because you don't love them anymore.

If you say you are so proud of your daughter, your BP wife might hear that you love your daughter more than her.

For BPs it's hard to understand that you might need to cancel and still want to see them.
Or even deeper, that you can be angry with them *right now*, but still overall love them.

Why BPs Self-Mutilate

The reasons why BPD self-mutilate vary widely, and include:

- Feeling alive
- Express anger at someone
- To number themselves
- Punish themselves and express self-loathing
- Relieve stress and anxiety
- Feeling in control of their pain
- Seeking relief from emotional pain
- Asking for help

If the self-mutilating behavior is taking too big of a toll on you, step back. The best way to support someone, in the long run, is to take care of yourself in the short run.

Suicides (Threats)

Between 8% to 10% of people with BDP commit suicide.
Many BPs also make suicide threats without actually ever attempting suicide.

When a BP is threatening suicide:

- Don't get into an argument about whether they're serious about dying
- Don't accuse them of manipulating you
- Be cautious to give in just to prove that you care (the same will repeat again and again)

Communicating With BPs

One woman says the only way to make her anger subside is when her husband tells her:

> I know you're scared and not angry (then hugs her)

And anger melts away.

One BP recommends not to tell BP to calm down because they are not in control of their emotions and it only makes them feel worse.

Enforce Your Boundaries

It's important that you enforce your boundaries and assert your limits for proper communication and behavior.

Don't say that you want it like that because it's "normal" or "expected".
Just state it the way you want it.

For example, you can say that when things get too intense and the BP starts screaming, you will stop the conversation and return to it later when you're both calmer.

Stay away from arguments on whether your arguments are right or wrong.

> **BP**: you're a selfish / bad person
> **You**: I understand you think I'm a bad person, but I feel good about myself and I'm proud that I respect myself enough to set this limit

Or:

> **BP**: you must hate me
> **You**: no I don't. Quite the opposite. I care about you that I want to work together to make a better relationship. But I also care and respect myself, which is why I'm bringing this up

And some more proper communications:

> **You**: There are no villains here, we just see things differently
>
> **You**: I'm not willing to take more than 50% of the responsibility
>
> **You**: I know you want an answer right now, but I need time to think

Whatever limits you decide to set, it's important you don't accept abuse and rage. It's bad for your relationship, for your self-esteem, and for possible children.

3 Cs and 3 Gs

The three Cs and three Gs are a system for dealing with people affected by BPD:

1. I didn't cause it
2. I can't control it
3. I can't cure it

And the three Gs:

1. Get off the BP's back
2. Get off the BP's way
3. Get on with your life

Protecting Children From BPs

If you don't have children yet, the authors recommend you postpone children until the BP has taken steps forward in therapy.

Some of the stories in Stop Walking on Eggshells really make you understand how difficult it can be to raise children with DBP.

Children might plot against their parents or lie to cause trouble to their parents. You must also be vigilant that they don't cause harm to other siblings.
BPs don't know boundaries, and in the extreme, that might mean abusing siblings.

But whatever happens, they say, remember that it's the disorder that is causing the problem and that BP children need love as much as other children (and maybe more).

> **Love the child, hate the disorder**

Distortion Campaigns

Distortion campaigns are webs of lies, false accusations, and other harmful behavior the BP engages in to damage you.

It doesn't have to be from intimate partners, and can also come from former friends.

The problem with BPs is that when you end a friendship or relationship they don't remember the good of the relationship. Or they fail to see you as a whole person with both good and bad.
You can easily become the embodiment of everything that is bad and evil for them.

To guard against possible BP revenge, think in advance. What can they do to harm you and what can you do to defend?
With prevention don't forget though that you might want to avoid stoking their fire with too an aggressive defensive plan.

Risk Factors for BPD

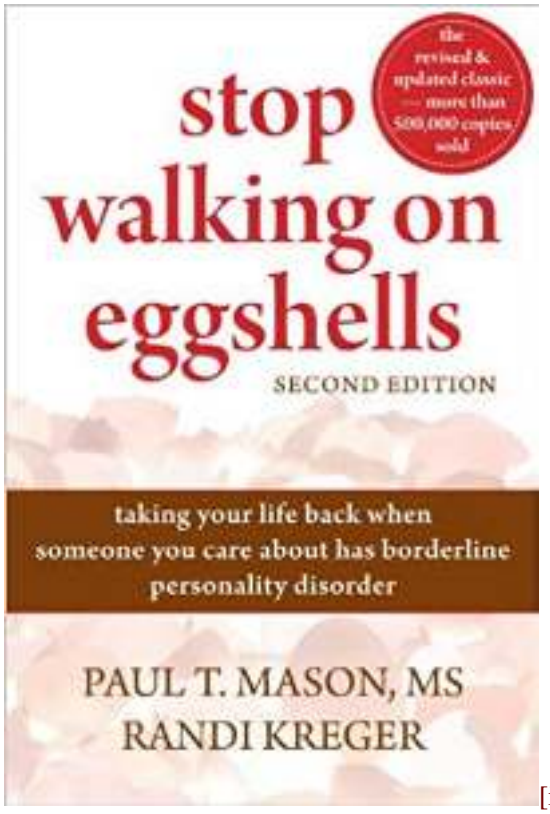
There are several biological and environmental risk factors that combine to increase the likelihood of BPD.

Environmental factors can include:

- Abuse (albeit it's not a major predictor)
- Ineffective parenting (from drug use to mental illnesses)
- Chaotic home situations
- Sudden loss of a caretaker

Stop Walking on Eggshells then goes into current medications and treatment. It says that mindfulness as part of Dialectical Behavior Therapy is very promising.

I won't get into the medications here as new drugs and researches come out every year and a few Google searches can provide more updated information.



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Real-Life Applications

Cure Yourself
If you are a BP there is good news: people do get better. Be willing to stare at the reality of things and work on yourself, do work on increasing your emotional intelligence (check Goleman, Tradberry).

Avoid BPs Who Blame You
BPs who yell at you, abuse you and make public drama while at the same time refusing any cure are low-quality people.
Having had an experience like that, I would advise you don't date them unless they are willing to take part in the blame and work on themselves.

CONS

Lots of Stories, Less Science
Quite frankly, I'm not sure this is a con.
I highly appreciated the author's heavy immersion into discussion boards to get real-life stories. This is not a medical text, but it's "medical enough".
Why did I even put it as a con then? Well, you know me… I like the resources and the data too.

BPDs Overlapping With Other Psychiatric Disorders?
The authors make some examples that seemed more on the sociopath/psychopath end of the spectrum. Like the girl at 14 who tried to hire gang members to kill her parents.

PROS

Great Overview
A very good overview of borderline personality disorder gives both the medical information and the practical, "day-to-day" translation of what it means.

Awesome Recommendations
The recommendations are very, very good.
The communication tips are of very high quality.

Review

I very much enjoyed "*Stop Walking on Eggshells*".

Without getting too technical and clinical, it gives a very good overview of borderline personality disorder. And it gives great suggestions and recommendations and how to handle BPs.

I had a girlfriend with BPD, and reading this book was a bit like a jump in the past. For a guy who had never experienced anything similar, it was shocking to see her starting to get drunk as quickly as possible to numb the pain and get my attention.

And of course, when she started scratching her hand more and more furiously till it started (lightly) bleeding.

If you are dealing with a BP, definitely get Stop Walking on Eggshells.

Check out the best psychology books or:

Get the book on Amazon

High-Value Man: Traits, Behavior, & How to Become High Value

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The idea of a **high-value man** is widely discussed in dating and self-improvement. But much of the online advice is vague, ideological, or disconnected from research.

In reality, the concept overlaps with several well-studied areas in social science, including **mate value** in evolutionary psychology**, social exchange theory,** and **status dynamics** in human hierarchies.

In this guide, we break down the **high-value man concept** using both behavioral research and real-world social dynamics. You'll learn the traits that create value, how those traits translate into attractiveness and status, and how men build them in practice.

Let's start.

High-value men must not necessarily dress snazzy. But good style and taking care of oneself are high-value traits

Contents

- Definition of High-Value Man
  - 1. Be High Power
  - 2. Be Goal-Oriented (High Agency)
  - 3. Take Care of Yourself
  - 4. Develop High Self-Esteem
  - 5. Acquire Some Wealth
  - 6. Be Competent (at least at something)
  - 7. Climb Social Hierarchies
  - 8. Carve Your Own Path In Life
  - 9. Take Responsibility
  - 10. Be Popular

- High-Value VS High-Quality Men
- The Ultimate Value Litmus Test
- SUMMARY

Definition of High-Value Man

We anchor our definitions of value on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), mate value from evolutionary psychology (Buss, 2016), and power as a multi-faceted construct defined as 'the ability to achieve one's goals (Buffalmano, 2024).
In one sentence:

> A high-value man is a man who possesses more traits and resources that make him socially and sexually attractive than traits that make him unattractive, enabling him to achieve goals and be a net value-giver to those around him

There are important nuances to this definition:

- **Context matters**: In some environments, people may not perceive someone's value, even if it exists
- **Visibility of value matters**: If others don't know, for example, that he's a billionaire he may be less attractive
- **Personal value & exchange value**: two broad categories of value are **personal value**, more related to genetic endowment and skills, and e**xchange value**, more related to resources one possesses or actions he undertakes (also see 'social investment model'). They cover *any* form of value that boosts attractiveness—not just looks or money

While subjectivity plays an important role in any value assessment, many traits also enjoy wide appeal with most people.
And those **wide-appeal traits make you high value almost anywhere, to almost anyone.**

So let's focus on wide-appeal traits:

1. Be High Power

High power is an umbrella terms that include crucial traits and social resources such as:

- **Mental power**
- High **status**
- **Respect** from others

High-value men **know how to *earn* that respect**.
In socialization, people test and social climb on others. When you don't defend or counter-attack, you lose status and respect.
This is an invisible game that most guys are unaware of -and that's why they linger at the bottom of the social hierarchy-.

An all-around high-value man tends to acquire high status and be a well-respected member of any group.
In some cases, he may as well go all the way to the top, becoming the alpha male of the group.

You can read more in:

- High power behavior
- How to speak high-power

Or better yet, get Power University.

1.2. Be High-Power In Your Relationships

High-value men enjoy full respect and, often, high devotion and love from their partners.

They know how to read and handle various dating games and how to spot dating red flags, so they tend to pick quality and collaborative partners.

They're the leaders, but go for win-win, instead of 'raw dominance'.

Very **high-quality men don't seek control because they don't need to.**
They have the self-esteem to believe they're top options. Plus, their women are naturally devoted.

Of course, they're not naive and know that everything is possible. But they're comfortable in the uncertainty. They have options, and an easy solution: if their spouse cheats, she's out. And a new and better one will get to enjoy him.

2. Be Goal-Oriented (High Agency)

Goal-orientation is masculine and high power.

While in the manosphere this was often referred to as 'having a purpose', high agency simply means caring about outcomes and goals, and may be as simple as caring about your job, or a fitness-related goal.

High agency men have no time for BS. They talk straight, and do not place women on a pedestal.
If successful in their goal pursuits, they also lead other men and accumulate resources.

Example: James Bond

James Bond is charismatic because he's always on a bigger pursuit:

> **Him**: I always wondered how I'd feel if I ever saw you again <— He did love her. But his purpose came first)
> **Her**: (slaps him) <— It's different for women. To her, he was first priority
> **Him**: (takes it in stride) Now I know. Was it something I said?
> **Her**: How about the words "I'll be right back"

Men with a purpose are naturally scarce, turning the dating power dynamics on its head, making *women* chase him.

3. Take Care of Yourself

Driven men with a purpose look at themselves as if they were machines.

And they have the mindset that the more they take care of the machine, the farther they will go.

Also, they know that the dichotomy of "being or appearing" is nonsense. The two feed into each other. Everyone

judges the book by its cover, so you also need to take care of that book cover.

Meaning:

- **Eat healthy**
- **Exercise**
- **Keep learning and investing** in yourself.

High-quality men are like high-quality wine, getting better with time.

3.2 And Take Care of The People Around You to Be A Leader

The next level is taking responsibility for the people around them.

Taking responsibility for others is what turns high-quality men into high-quality leaders.

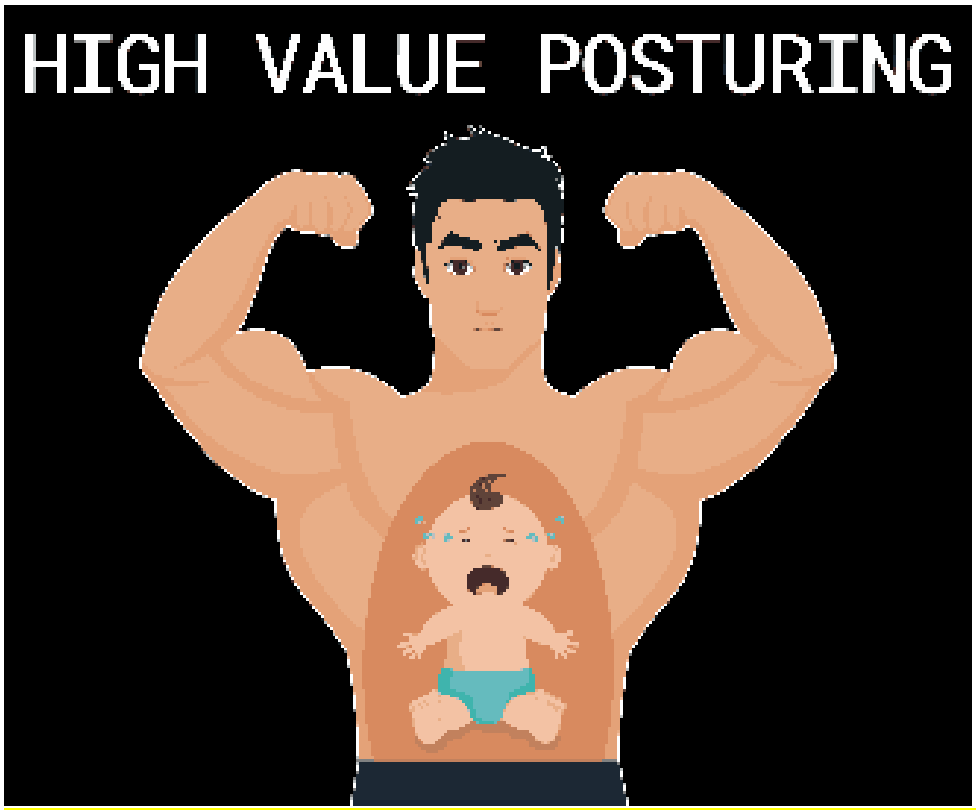
And, contrary to high-quality women, leadership qualities are almost a must for high-quality men.

4. Develop High Self-Esteem

This is foundational.

While it's conceivable to be high-value with low self-esteem, **external success without internal self-esteem is like building a tower on shaky foundations.**
Always in danger of crashing down. Plus, low self-esteem 'leaks' with subconscious low-value signals and incongruent behavior.

Dominant men without high self-esteem are like hollow dolls:



Appearances of high-value work in the short term. But not in the long run, and not with experienced men who can sniff a poser

And attention here:

It's *self-esteem*, not confidence.

Confidence is *great*, but self-esteem is even better.

Confidence ebbs and flows depending on your results and skills in a given field.
But self-esteem stays.
Confidence is founded on strengths and results, while self-esteem stays *despite* losses and weaknesses.

Also read:

- **How to signal high value**

4.5. Generate Your Own Self-Esteem

As long as you depend on external approval to prop up your ego, you're chasing validation and will always *depend* on others.
In TPM's parlance, you give the world judge power over you.

That's reactive, mentally fragile, and *not* associated with high-power masculinity.

High-value men have much stronger control over their self-esteem than most.
We have a full course on self-esteem, but for a preview, see:

5. Acquire Some Wealth

You do not strictly need money to be high value, but wealth is a major value booster.

Money is one of the most liquid forms of value because almost anyone is better off with more of it.
And it doesn't matter whether one is ugly, short, or dumb.
A wealthy man can still add value to most of the world's population.

That almost automatically makes him high value in many people's eyes.

Looks like a haughty jerk. But "high-value" has little to do with character quality

6. Be Competent (at least at *something*)

At the highest level, competence means being competent at *life*, achieving your goals, and excelling in your pursuits.

We built Power University to become *that* type of man.

But the minimum is being competent at your job. And the more competent you become, the higher value you become (at least in the area of your competence).

Read more:

- How to develop competence

7. Climb Social Hierarchies

Status is social value, so high-status men tend to be high-value.

Advanced **social skills are crucial because social value is largely a social construct**.
To be more precise, it's *power* skills, the agentic form of social skills, that help you gain status, respect from other men, and attraction from women.

Power skills relate to power intelligence, and some dark triad men may have a 'naturally' higher sense for power dynamics.
We teach these skills here and in Power University.

7.2. The Modern Exception: Tech Billionaires

While social competence was a necessity for millions of years in our evolution, modernity added new venues for gaining status and popularity.

One can become a tech mogul and still lack social skills and interpersonal dominance. They reached the top by *creating* their own hierarchies, becoming wealthy and famous.

But we still strongly recommend grasping the basics of interpersonal power dynamics, because even wealthy and high-status icons can fail at interpersonal power dynamics:

> **Talulah**: (disrespects Elon)
> **Elon**: (passive)

7.3. Be Assertive

Assertiveness is the sweet spot that allows the high-quality man to:

- **Speak up** for his rights, without undermining others
- Expect and **demand proper behavior**, while treating others respectfully
- **Get everyone's respect without making enemies**, because he's not disempowering others

The high-quality man adopts this mantra of assertive communication:

> Say what you mean, mean you what you say, without being mean

In contrast, the passive man is too afraid to speak and enforce his boundaries. The passive lingers at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

The aggressive man instead *takes* advantage of others' lack of power and assertiveness.
An aggressive man can be high-value. But his aggressiveness weighs against him as other high-power men will either avoid him, or fight him.

High-quality men know what's fair and not fair, what's friendly and what's rude, and what they can take and what they will *not* take.

8. Carve Your Own Path In Life

This is an *attitude* to life. It doesn't necessarily mean he's an entrepreneur or "doesn't have a boss".

But it means that he:

- Chooses for himself how to live
- Does not accept just about anyone as his boss
- Does not conform 'out of pressure' if he disagrees

This last one includes a certain "mental power".
High-quality men don't indiscriminately accept other people's values and "recipes for life".

There is no shortage of influencers telling men how they should behave these days. High-value men may listen to them all.
But, ultimately, they choose for themselves. They develop their own value system and have their own moral compass. And they only choose how to live their lives.

9. Take Responsibility

Responsibility is one of the foundational blocks of masculinity.

It STARTS from responsibility for yourself.
But can expand to your significant other, then to a group of people… And it may as well end with you taking responsibility for humanity.

The Responsibility Mindset

At the individual level, the locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they have -or don't have- control over their lives (Rotter, 1966).

These are the two types of locus of control:

Internal locus of control means you believe you are in control of your life.
External locus of control means you believe life events determine the course of your life and you don't have control over them.

The locus of control determines whether you feel like you're at the helm of your life or like a castaway in a

rudderless lifeboat.
And **high-quality men feel like they are at the helm of their lives**.

Taking responsibility starts with your own life first and foremost: you take responsibility for your current station in life, and for where you want to go.

Great leadership is an extension of this principle. It's the responsibility of taking care not just for oneself, but for those around.
This is also the healthiest way to be a leader in your relationship, which supports attraction over time and is a positive form of soft power, making others *want* to follow you.

Example: Horoscope

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Displaying value by displaying internal locus of control**

Lucio:
A girlfriend of mine once asked me if "I really didn't believe at all in the horoscope".

I took a second to reply, shook my head, and explained that no, my worldview is incompatible with horoscopes. The horoscope tells you what's going to happen to you as if it were all already written.

But I believe I'm in control and it's on me to make things happen.

10. Be Popular

Popularity and fame are like turbo-boosters of status, providing the famous person with fans and dating options.

Think of this scene for example without fame:

> **Attractive woman**: (speaks to reporter)
> **70+ year old overweight, balding man**: (sneaks from behind to interrupt and says she reminds him of an ex-girlfriend)

> **Attractive woman**: (flirts with him ?)

How would that have gone down without Jack Nicholson's fame and power?
Like a lewd weirdo that security would kick out in a blink of an eye, that's how.

Fame and popularity aren't all in high school popularity or social media following.
You can become a smaller local celebrity at your favorite restaurants, bars, and nightclubs.
Or simply in your company, or in your area of expertise.

Socially skilled men are also able to manufacture an appearance of popularity in the way they greet and talk to others.
We explain how in Power University.

High-Value VS High-Quality Men

High-value men are men from whom you want *something*.
High-quality men are men that you want more of *because you respect and admire them*.

High value is amoral, it's all about quantifying "value". High quality is about being an "honorable man" and includes pro-social traits and personal values.

A high-value man can be a total piece of sh*t.
As long as he has a lot of value to give, chances are that people will *still* seek him out.
But one cannot be a manipulative, compulsive lying jerk and be high-quality.

You don't need to be Mother Theresas to be high-quality, but you must have a conscience and a preference for win-win and adding value

Read more here:

- **Honorable man approach**

The Ultimate Value Litmus Test

Put a man in a room full of people.
And then observe:

1. **Level 1: Do others seek him out?** If yes, chances are he is very high-value and one of the highest-value men in the room because people *go to him*
2. **Level 2: Is he well-received when he engages others?** If yes, chances are he is high-value. People may not go to him, but are happy to engage with him
3. **Level 3: Is he not ignored when he engages others?** If yes, he has at least some status and power that people give him the bare minimum respect of not ignoring him

Negative value is active avoidance, social climbing on him, and generally disrespecting him.

The skilled socialite can *become* high value and reach level #2 in most groups he joins.

SUMMARY

A high-value man is any man who can make others better off.

There is a strong element of subjectivity when it comes to high value.

For example, a man may be a loser to the whole world. But as a child is almost always high value to his parents.

And if a loser can make a woman fall in love, he will also always be high value to that woman.

However, as this article showed, some traits tend to be sought-after by almost anyone.

Our article focused on these higher-level, broader-appeal traits.

Power University is our proven system to turn good men into high-value men

7 Signs of Low Value Men, and How to Stop Being One

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Looking to recognize a low-value man—and understand why some men fail to gain respect, influence, and attraction?

This guide breaks down the **key traits, behaviors, and patterns** that define a low-value man. By the end, you'll be able to spot low-value men, and avoid being one.

Contents

- Intro
  - 1. Submissive & Too Nice: Lacks Power
  - 2. Unattractive & Needy Around Women
  - 3. Lacks Wealth & Financial Literacy
  - 4. Lacks Drive & Purpose
  - 5. Sees Himself as Powerless
  - 6. Entitled But Incompetent
  - 7. Lacks Internal Compass
- Low Value vs. Low Quality
  - Case Study: Harvey Weinstein
  - From Low-Value to Life Mastery

Intro

We define 'low value man' in relation to social exchange theory, mate value from evolutionary psychology, and power defined as 'the ability to achieve one's goals'.

In one definition:

> A low-value man is a man who possesses more traits that make him unattractive than traits that make him socially and sexually attractive, is less likely to achieve goals, and is more likely to be a value taker than a value giver.

This article leverages psychology and power dynamics to uncover the most telling signs of low-quality men, and how to fix them.

1. Submissive & Too Nice: Lacks Power

Social value comes down to status, respect, and influence.

High-value men tend to have high status, get respect from others, and influence others.
Low value men, the opposite.

Low-value men lack the skills and character to gain social recognition.
Climbing social hierarchies requires assertiveness, power-intelligence and, sometimes, even the ability to be aggressive.
Passive too nice guys stay stuck at the bottom because they lack these skills. Instead, they fail because they:

- Don't enforce boundaries
- Let people disrespect them
- Allow bosses and colleagues to humiliate them
- Let their girlfriends abuse them and control the relationship

If they push back, they use passive aggression rather than direct communication.
The movie "Fargo" presents a great example of a low-value pushover:

> **Low-value guy**: They'll only deal with me <— Tries to influence others
> **High-value guy:** No, it's my money, I'll deal with it. I don't want you to muck this up <— Refuses and disrespects him
> **Low-value guy**: (offended) What you mean. No, see…. <— Fails to address the disrespect
> **High-value guy**: It's my show here, that's that <— Lays out the law
> **Low-value guy**: (puts his hands together in a praying pose and lowers his gaze) <—- He's been dominated. He failed to influence and accepts his role as the lowest status man

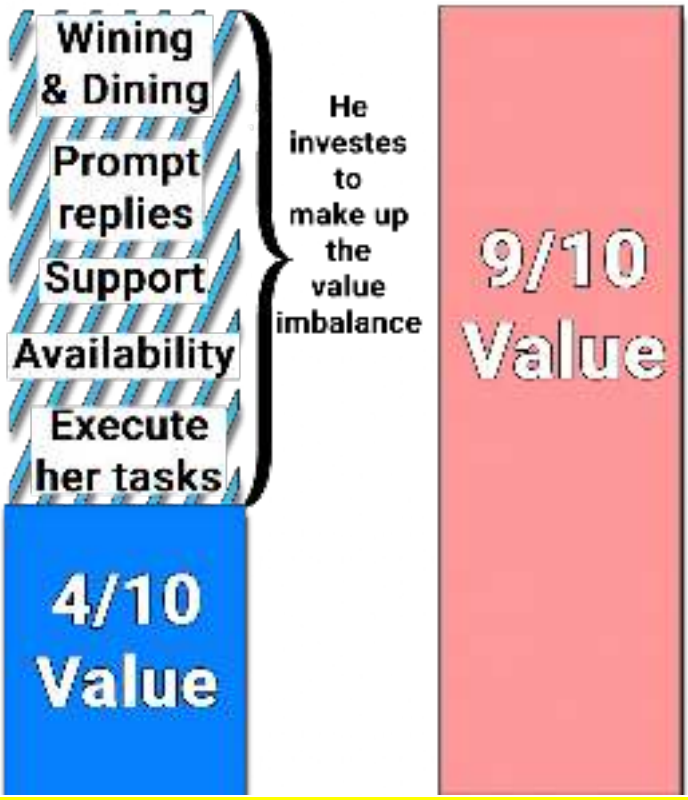
Low status alone doesn't make someone low-value, but it's an important element, especially if the group is important in the man's life.

2. Unattractive & Needy Around Women

In dating markets, value is most often referred to as 'mate value' (Buss, 2016).

High mate value men tend to be attractive and have dating options, while low-value men tend to have little dating options.

When they believe they have one option, they tend to develop oneitis and chase her as if she were the only available woman.
Lower value men invest more with time and money because they don't believe they can be enough for a woman.



Lower value men invest more because they believe they're lower value than she is and must 'make up' the difference.

They court more as providers rather than lovers because they don't believe that a woman could be interested in intimacy only with them.

See more in this foundational article:

- **Social Investment Model**: a primer on investment and exchange power dynamics

🤔Lucio's Take: **I lost all my respect when he displayed low-value behavior**

Lucio:
I once rode an elevator to work with a cute girl and a manager. The girl was talking to me only, sharing her fears about a presentation.
The manager jumped in:

> **Low-value manager**: (leaning deeply towards her, almost in front of her face, with high-pitched voice) Oohhh, you're shy of doing the presentation? <— Subcommunication ⍰⍰ "you're soooo adorable, I want to protect you, please tell me more about your fears so I can show you that I can support you"

He was chasing too hard, making the girl the center of his world. He signaled he craved a weaker woman to feel stronger.

Relationship Clinginess

Lower value men tend to be needy, sometimes overlapping with an anxious attachment style. They're fearful of abandonment and seek continued confirmation of commitment.

Some are too passive to even try to steer the relationship, but some others turn hyper-jealous and controlling.

3. Lacks Wealth & Financial Literacy

Money doesn't impact a man's character, skills, or charisma. However, money is one of the most universal forms of value because almost everyone prefers having more of it, than less.

Plus, financial resources in many societies correlate with power and influence.
So having money tends to increase a man's value, while poverty can lower perceived value in many social environments. **Poverty can also keep people away** because, deep down, people worry that poor people will soon turn into value-taking liabilities and/or ask them for money.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **I lost a friend because of money issues**

Lucio:
I once had a good friend in Prague who was generally a cool guy and had his way with the ladies. But he unfortunately had a gambling addiction and spent all the rest of his money on alcohol and cigarettes.

He'd often come out with zero money, and that impacted our friendship.
Eventually, I stopped getting in touch with him because it simply doesn't feel like a genuine friendship is one only takes, and the other is forced to give.

Financial Poverty Can Signal Poor Mindsets

Financial resources can also signal a man's character, education, and strategic intelligence.

Some poor people tend to focus on short-term consumption while disregarding future well-being.
People who lack long-term predisposition and financial know-how also tend to use money poorly. They buy liabilities and depreciating assets that keep them poor.

Sometimes consumerism is also associated with an entitlement mentality, not backed up by hard work, skills, and real earning power.
Look at this man, for example:

> **Him**: (buys an expensive bracelet because 'he deserves it') <— Entitlement mentality + reckless spending
> **Him**: (messages me to borrow 200) <— Loses social capital by acting like a value-taker (I was in monk mode working on TPM non-stop: purpose-driven and long-term thinking)

4. Lacks Drive & Purpose

Ambition is correlated with advancement, both in life and socially.
Lower value men often stay stuck or go backward because they lack ambition, drive, and purpose.

Low ambition also often comes with poorer habits that only compound to signal low-value to ambitious men and women, like excessive **gaming**, **smoking**, **junk food**, or **TV-watching** (instead of meeting real women).

This video of Brian is an example of a man low in any kind of drive, and finding satisfaction in consumption instead of production:

> **Brian**: (fat, eating chocolate while sitting on the couch) I loooove chocolate <— Knows it's not good for him but does it anyway, lacking discipline

Vicarious-Living & Low-Added Value Passions

If low-value men are passionate about something, it's often about things that do not really help them advance in life.

Being passionate about one's favorite team or influencer does little to help a man advance in life.

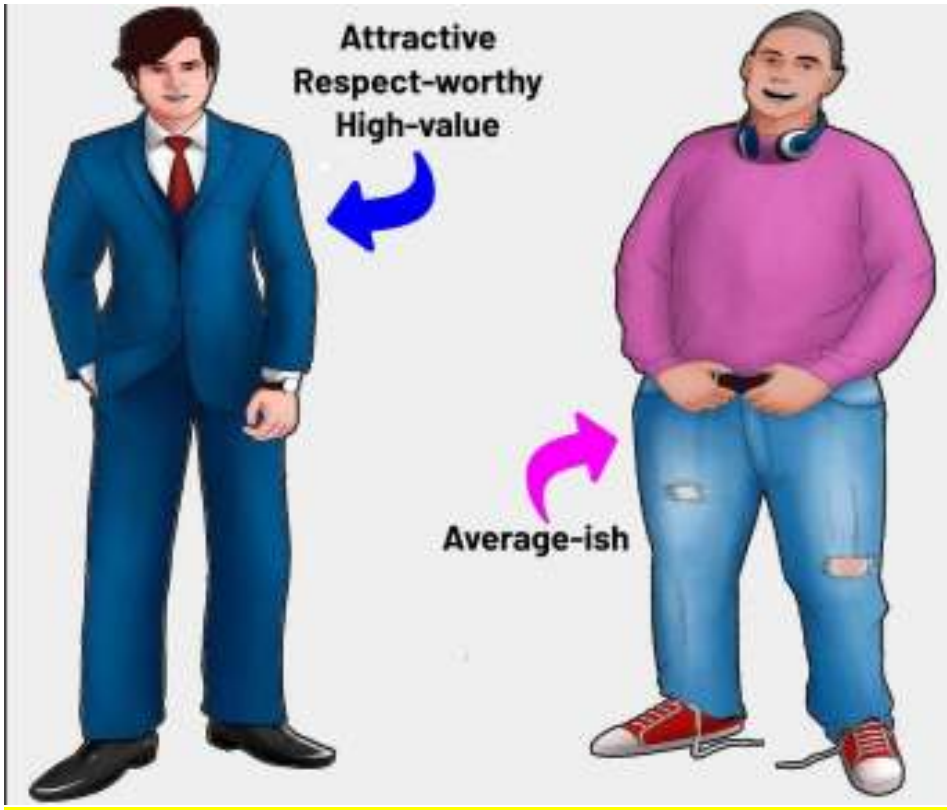
Apathy: Caring About Nothing

A low-value man doesn't care about the very things that could make him more high-value, such as:

- **Productivity**, how he spends (or wastes) his time
- **Career**, how much he makes, and how he could be promoted

- **Self-development** and what he could do to move forward

And of course, he doesn't care much about how he looks, either.
He is cool with being overweight, having cheap and ill-fitting clothes, and looking disheveled.



The exact same man, but one cares about himself and how he looks (and is high value), the other doesn't (and he's low-ish value)

5. Sees Himself as Powerless

Locus of control is the degree to which a person believes that outcomes in his life are determined by his own actions versus forces outside his control (Rotter, 1966).

In practical terms, it means:

- **Internal locus of control = you're at the helm**, steering your life in the direction you want
- **External locus of control = a castaway**, reacting to circumstances you feel unable to influence

This dynamic can lead to learned helplessness, a phenomenon studied by Martin Seligman, where repeated failure leads individuals to conclude that effort is pointless—even when control is possible.
Men with an external locus of control tend to struggle more with confidence, persistence, and achievement.

Also read:

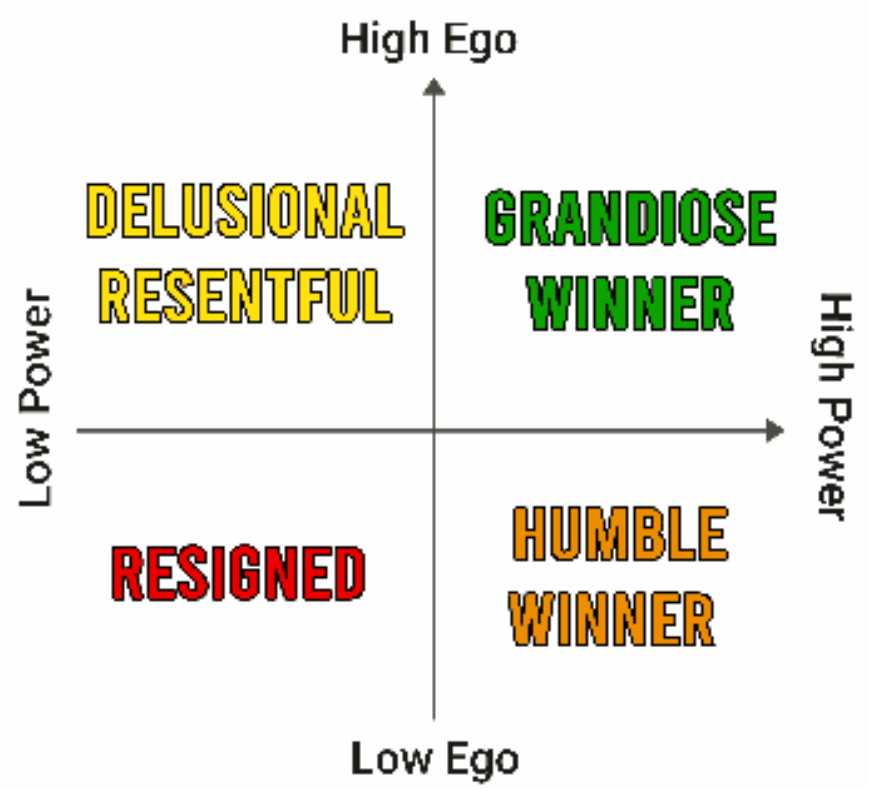
- **Self-empowerment for men**, starting from the mind

6. Entitled But Incompetent

Low-value men tend to have poor results in life, or they wouldn't be low-value.
Per se, that doesn't necessarily make them 'bad' and many low-value men can be kind people who can even attract some sympathy and help.

However, low value combined with a large sense of importance and entitlement mixes the worst of both worlds and crosses into a more socially repulsive territory.
These men **feel entitled to high status and special treatment, without having the value to get it**. People aren't willing to afford them the special treatment they demand, leading to constant disappointment.

These low-value men tend to grow resentful of others and adopt an antagonist approach to socialization that truly repels others (think of an angry antisocial person or the angry Karen meme).



Ego=Sense of self-importance, entitlement, and craved status; Power=Competence, confidence, actual status

High entitlement and high sense of self-importance with low confidence and life outcomes are associated with vulnerable narcissism, sometimes also referred to as 'failed narcissism' (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008; Krizan & Johar, 2012; Miller & Campbell, 2008).

This psychological profile can often go together, and be aggravated by:

- **Fragile ego**: in need of constant validation, defensive, and breaking down or lashing out when ego-threatened (Baumeister, 1999)
- **Fixed mindset** and performance orientation: believing that traits and skills are fixed and cannot be improved, and focusing on trying to look good instead of improving (VandeWalle, 1997; Dweck, 2006)

Men with a fragile ego and fixed mindset tend to stay low quality because they don't develop over time, are always defensive, and tend to be touchy and vindictive.

To overcome it, read:

- **The antifragile ego**

7. Lacks Internal Compass

High-value men rely more on internal references for their self-assessment, self-esteem, and decision-making.
But **low-value men rely more on others because they lack confidence and self-respect** to value themselves, including their values and criteria.

This is crucial for a man's mental power because it also means that others will control your emotions and self-esteem. A bad performance, criticism, or even a disapproving look is enough to collapse their confidence.
Low-value men also tend to fall more for judge types, disempowering teacher/pupil frames, and manipulation.

He Submits to Gain Acceptance

Fakeness is often a byproduct of this dynamic.

Low-value men fear that being themselves will make them disliked or ostracized, so they adopt different masks depending on the group they want acceptance from.
They suppress traits they believe are undesirable and exaggerate traits they think will earn approval.

Low Value vs. Low Quality

Value is your leverage, and quality relates to how you use your leverage, including the morals and ethics linked to behavioral choices.

It's possible to be generally high value, while being lower value in some other areas of life, and to display low-quality character that lacks integrity and honor.
From an ethical point of view, coercing, bullying or generally taking value from others is low-quality, even when it comes from a high-value man.

Case Study: Harvey Weinstein

Weinstein was high-value, but in dating he lacked honor and power, behaving low-quality
Weinstein was a 'pseudo-high value man'. He had some high-value traits such as ambition, work competence that allowed him to gain status, powern, and resources. He even the voice and presence of a hyper-masculine, 'alpha male type'.

Unfortunately, he had the psychology of a value-taker when it comes to dating and relationships. He was low power and sneaky, supplicating to women, and using what seemed like emotionally manipulative pity plays. That's not high value.

His modus operandi in dating also seemed to lack honor and integrity, making him a high-value man at work, but a low-quality character for society (and for many women who crossed paths with him).

From Low-Value to Life Mastery

For men ready to level up and become high-value, Power University shows you exactly how to develop the skills, confidence, and mindset that matter:

Check Power University

Will I Ever Be Good Enough? Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Will I Ever Be Good Enough helps the daughters of narcissistic mothers.
Karyl McBride explains how the lack of maternal love and support can scar women well into adulthood, she provides some pointers for cures and treatments.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - What Is Narcissism?
  - With Lack of Maternal Love, Children Internalize They're Not Good Enough
  - Mother-Daughter Relationship Dynamics
  - Two Types of Narcissistic Mothers
  - Narcissistic Mothers Never Get to Know You
  - The Six Types of Narcissistic Mothers
  - What About Fathers?
  - Dependent or Codependent Relationships
  - Steps to Cure Oneself
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Narcissistic mothers are all about themselves and give no love to their children
- Children of narcissistic mothers take all the blame for the lack of love and internalize the idea they are not good enough
- Daughters carry damaging self-limiting beliefs for their whole life
- Daughters can have problems getting in touch with their own feelings as well

Notes

About The Author:
Karyl McBride, Ph.D. is a licensed marriage and family therapist with decades of experience in treating trauma.
McBride is also an expert on narcissism and curing victims of narcissism.
She keeps a blog on Psychology Today writing about narcissism and "distorted love".

What Is Narcissism?

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) describes narcissism as a spectrum disorder, which means that **narcissism exists on a continuum**.
One could be a full-blown narcissist, but there can be many more people who have some narcissistic traits to different degrees.

Here are the nine traits that define narcissism:

1. Grandiosity with expectations of superior treatment from other people
2. Fixated on fantasies of power, success, intelligence, attractiveness, etc.
3. Self-perception of being unique, superior, and associated with high-status people and institutions
4. Needing continual admiration from others
5. Sense of entitlement to special treatment and to obedience from others
6. Exploitative of others to achieve personal gain
7. Unwilling to empathize with the feelings, wishes, and needs of other people
8. Intensely envious of others, and the belief that others are equally envious of them
9. Pompous and arrogant demeanor

With Lack of Maternal Love, Children Internalize They're Not Good Enough

Love and affection are something every child needs, but daughters of narcissistic mothers don't get enough love.

Without enough love and affection, psychological issues develop.

Daughters who don't get enough motherly love internalize the message that they are not good enough to deserve that love and come to believe they are not *worthy* of love.
Some of these daughters carry that message within themselves for years and years. Some, for a lifetime.

The idea of not being worthy of love leads to two opposite paths:

1. Destructive path
2. Perfectionist path

Which one the daughter takes, says the author, depends on whether they had someone else in the family who gave them love.
Albeit the paths seem polar opposites, they have the same roots:

#1. The Achievement Daughter

The achievement-oriented daughter wants to prove mother and herself that she is good enough (and deserving of love).
But the only way she knows how to do that is by doing more and more and achieving more and more.

She tries to fill the void with awards, money, great grades, a great career, etc.
Often, she becomes a woman who outwardly seems successful and accomplished, but she never feels accomplished.
And when she cannot manage to achieve, she feels worthless.

#2. The Self-Destructive Daughter

On the other end of the spectrum, the self-destructing daughter tells herself "what's even the point, I'll never amount to anything anyway".
The expectations of a mother were so high and she was never happy anyway, so why bother?

She sometimes gets addicted to alcohol, drugs, or food, and strings a bunch of poor relations (also read how self-esteem creates a loop of bad relationships).

My Note:
The author doesn't mention it, but in my opinion, some children may self-sabotage on purpose to prove their independence. This might be more true for men.
I know it was the case for me.

For both the perfectionist and self-sabotaging daughter, the path to healing is finding internal validation.

Mother-Daughter Relationship Dynamics

Karyl McBride details a few traits peculiar to the mother-daughter relationship:

1. You always try to win her affection, but you can never please her. The little approval is about who she wants you to be, not who you are
2. Mother emphasizes the importance of how it looks more than how it is
3. She is jealous of you (for looks, age, partners, relationship with fathers, life opportunities, taking attention away, etc.)
4. Mother suffocates expression of yourself, especially if they conflict with her own needs
5. It's always about the mother
6. Mother is unable to empathize (and daughter feels her feelings don't matter)
7. The mother cannot deal with her own feelings. If confronted, she will likely stonewall, clam up or lash out
8. Critical and judgmental (uses daughter as a scapegoat for own unhappiness and insecurity)
9. Treats you like a friend, not a daughter (can discuss personal intimate stuff and use daughter as emotional props)
10. The mother does not respect your boundaries

Dishonesty and Appearances

Narcissistic families and mothers sacrifice honesty for appearances.
What "people think" is often more important than "what my children feel".

You're There For Her

Daughters of narcissistic mothers believe they are there for the pure benefit of their mothers.
And the opposite is not true: the mothers don't care much for their daughters.

Daughters Try Hard to Be "Good Girls"

Daughters grow up believing that if they only try hard to be "good girls" they will get the love they need and crave.
That if they really manage to please people, then they will get some love.

Daughters Suffer More Than Sons

Daughters suffer more than sons.

A narcissistic mother sees her daughter as her own extension and puts pressure on her to either be exactly like her, or to be exactly like she wants.
The daughter is raised to try to be exactly like her mother wants her to be.

And they can also often be jealous of their daughters while they rarely are so of their sons.
Indeed the author says that most daughters who have brothers report their being favored over them (the exception being if they get married and bring a woman into the family)

Two Types of Narcissistic Mothers

The authors outline two types of narcissistic mothers:

1. Absent mother (under-parent)
2. Engulfing mother (over-parent)

The two styles sometimes overlap and a mother can swing from one to the other depending on the situation or period of life.
However, both types of mothers make individuation -or the development of self as a separate person- difficult for

the daughter.

The author has a few movies examples of narcissistic mothers, and this one is an example of an engulfing mother:

Notice the obsession with her daughter's achievement and her focus on looks.

Narcissistic Mothers Never Get to Know You

Narcissists have a superficial approach to emotional life.

Their world is image-oriented, concerned with how things look to others. She doesn't care and doesn't focus on who you really are.

But she cares about how you look, how you make her look, and what you can do for her.

The Six Types of Narcissistic Mothers

1. Flamboyant-extrovert
2. Accomplishment (success is what you do, not who you are)
3. Psychosomatic (uses illness and aches and pains to manipulate others)
4. Addicted
5. Secretly mean (nice in public, mean in private)
6. Emotionally needy (expect their daughters to take care of them)

The achievement mother can be especially confusing at times.
When the daughter works to achieve the goal the mother is not supportive because she it not living for her.
Then, once she achieves the goal, the mother gloats and uses her to show off.
The daughter the only way to get a positive reaction is to achieve more.

What About Fathers?

Fathers are often subservient to their mothers and pander to their needs. They revolve around mothers like planets around the sun.

The author says the narcissist needs a supporting partner or the marriage will not survive.
The husband accepts the role and, often, enables the narcissistic mother.

The father, for pandering to the mother, can look narcissistic. However, when in alone time with the daughter, it's likely that he can love. And that can make a difference for the daughter.

Example:

In Terms of Endearment, she is a narcissistic mother. And he would have ended up being the perfect father/enabler to a narcissistic mother

I had a girlfriend who had a full-blown narcissistic mother, and he perfectly fits the bill of "orbiting around her".

Dependent or Codependent Relationships

The daughter learns that she can't depend on her mother.

She grows up anxious, fearing abandonment, and expecting deceit at every turn.
She is more likely to develop an anxious attachment style, which makes her look for partners who either can depend on her or a partner that she can take care of.

They tend to end up in a relationship that is either dependent or codependent.

Dependent relationship: when she is in a dependent relationship she hopes to get the love that she never got from her mother. In the beginning, she's on cloud nine. But then she starts becoming too demanding, jealous, and needy. She will want him at all times to fulfill her emotional needs.
When the relationship starts going south, she will blame him for it.

Even in codependent relationships, she will switch back and forth with dependence because co-dependence is a front anyway. When under stress, her neediness will surface and she will look dependent.
Read: *codependent no more*.

Other Relationship Dances

Daughters also end up in different types of dysfunctional relationships.

Some other times she might choose emotionally unavailable men because that's what she's used to and because she herself is not in touch with her own feelings.

And in some cases, the daughter can pick men who are not nearly as accomplished, driven, or assertive as they are. When she can control them, she can't get hurt. And they end up with mostly passive men.

Relationship failures only deepen her low self-esteem.

Steps to Cure Oneself

1. Understand the issue you had and what it caused you
2. Grieve and process the feelings (allow yourself to feel the pain, the anger, the sadness, and depression. And cry a lot)
3. Begin healing

Steps of Grieving

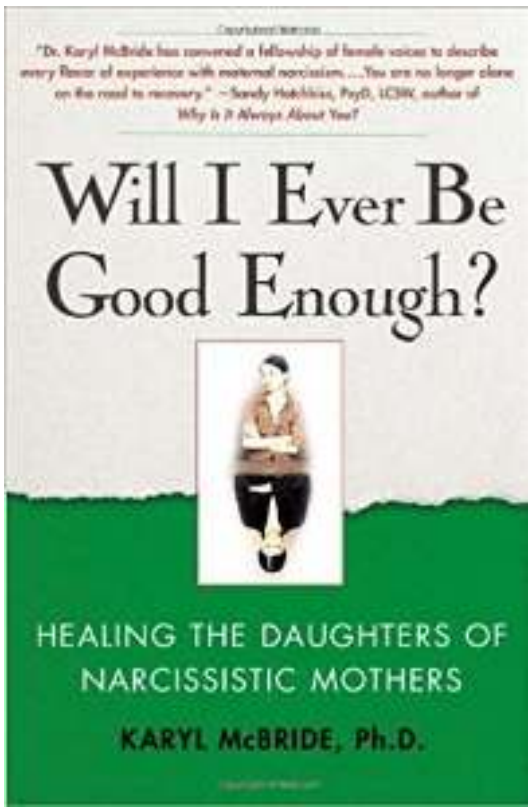
These are the steps you must go through before curing yourself:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

When you are angry, you might feel guilty as in our culture it feels like a sin to harbor bad feelings toward mothers. But don't worry: it's ok. Some narcissistic daughters only feel free after their mothers die. So don't be ashamed.

Steps to Healing

1. Accept your mother's limitations, and allow yourself to grieve
2. Separate psychologically from mother
3. Reframe the negative messages
4. Develop your own self and personality
5. Deal with mother in a healthy way (stop expecting love. It could mean in a detached way and in extreme cases no contact at all)
6. Treat your own narcissistic traits



CONS

Why Only Daughters?
The author says that the sons of narcissistic mothers are not nearly as badly affected.
That might be true… On average. But that might change when the narcissistic mother only has sons to "work with".
Then it might be the exact same game.

Could Have Been Briefer?
Maybe it could have been briefer.

Healthy men don't want to be mothered?
The author says that healthy men don't want to be mothered.
I think that's true. With some exceptions. Some men who *look* like they don't want to be mothered might still regress, which makes an "endless love" approach a potent seduction technique.

PROS

Curative
Will I Ever Be Good Enough is a book that will directly help anyone who's had a narcissist or emotionally unavailable parent.

Deep Wisdom To Understand Human Mind
Even if you didn't have a narcissistic parent, it all makes sense in this book. And you will *better understand human psychology*.

Positively Touching At Times
The work of Karyl McBride is a positive contribution to humanity.
There was one part that was especially touching.
McBride is talking about a little girl she was curing, the daughter of a narcissistic mother:

> I've had many children ask me to take them home, such as one darling eight-year-old who said, "*Dr. Karyl, do you know how to cook? How many bedrooms do you have at your house? Do you have any toys?*" Then she quietly added, "*If I can come home with you, I will do the dishes every day and even wash all your windows!*"

Touching, isn't it?

Review

Will I Ever Be Good Enough goes straight into my list of the best *psychology* books I have ever read and I have recommended it to many people and customers already.
It made me understand more about people, about parenting, and about my own life and psychology.

I realized that my mother had that kind of "I'll love you more if you are like this" attitude that conditioned me for a long time -and is still conditioning me-.
This book will explain to you exactly how it is conditioning you. And what you can do to fix it.

If that rings a bell, you must grab a copy of *Will I Ever Be Good Enough.*

And even if that's not your case, you will still understand so much more about human psychology.
Thank you, Karyl McBride!

Check out the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

The Psychopath Test: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Psychopath Test is an investigative analysis of the state of the mental health industry. Focusing on shortcomings and misdiagnosis, the author Jon Ronson raises important questions on whether mental-health diagnoses are true science or more error-prone personal judgments.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Psychiatrists Often Got it Wrong
  - Psychopathy Diagnosis Is Very Personal
  - There is A Psychiatric Label For Everything!
  - Psychopath In Business
- The Psychopath Test Criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- There are a lot of gray areas between sane and insane
- Diagnoses often contain a (sizable) portion of personal opinion
- We have too many mental disorders on record (347): not everything is a dangerous symptom that needs to be medicated

Full Summary

About the Author:
Jon Ronson is a Welsh journalist and documentary filmmaker. He focuses on science topics and controversial fringe politics, and his work is characterized by an investigative and skeptical attitude.

Introduction

It's difficult to summarize The Psychopath Test because it's the story of the author's own research into psychopathy. But it does not reach any conclusions or make any points based on research or on an overview of the literature.

But here are my main takeaways:

Psychiatrists Often Got it Wrong

Before the Hare Psychopathy Checklist, labeling someone a psychopath or not was fully up to the medical personnel.

And they would often get it wrong.

Hospitals, for example, admitted for treatment as psychopaths several healthy individuals who only wanted to prove that the system couldn't really tell people apart.

When the experiment was revealed, the psychiatric world was shocked.

One hospital then said to send more healthy people posing as psychopaths and they would recognize them.
They indeed recognized more than 40.
The problem was, no healthy individuals were purposefully sent.

That's what the Hare checklist wanted to provide: a standardized way of assessing patients that would eliminate (or reduce) human judgment.
Turns out, it might not have really done it:

Psychopathy Diagnosis Is Very Personal

The author reviews a few "gray area" cases and shows the limitations of Hare's checklist. The Hare Psychopathy Checklist is the instrument psychologists and psychiatrists use to assess and "label" people as psychopaths or not.

It turns out, a checklist might not be such a great tool and is very prone to human judgment. And human mistakes.

There is A Psychiatric Label For Everything!

The author makes the point that we used too many drugs. Sometimes people have issues that might not necessarily be the symptoms of psychiatric issues.

But, he says, the DSM has so many entries that almost any behavior could be labeled as a mental illness.

Psychopath In Business

Jon Ronson also goes into the overlap between psychopathy and business organizations.

If I remember correctly, at one point the book either claims or suggests that "the higher you go, the more psychopaths you meet".

The author interviews one of the most ruthless CEOs corporate America has ever seen, Albert Dunlap.
Albert Dunlap himself prided himself on having psychopathic traits that helped him in business.

My Note: Not a good example, since Dunlap crashed and burned
I didn't think that was a good example at all though, since Dunlap ended up in a big crash and burn. So if every psychopath were like Dunlap, there would be few of them as business executives.

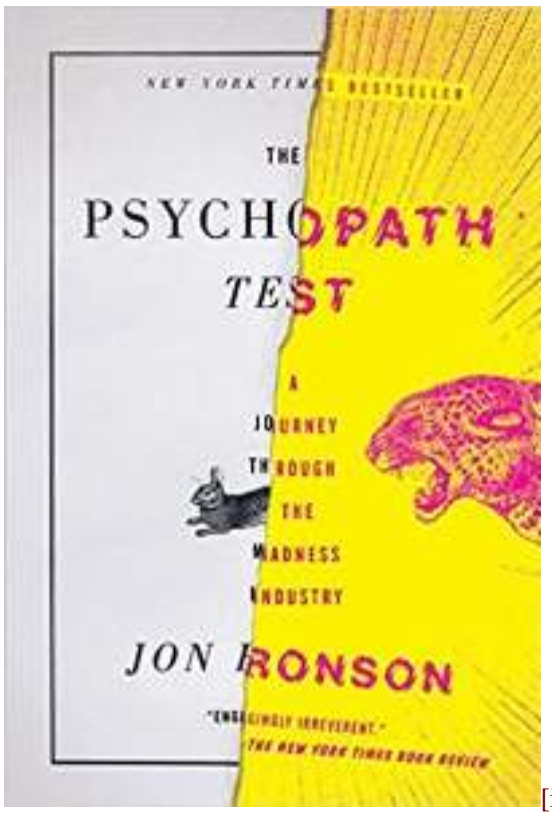
The Psychopath Test Criticism

The book has been criticized for its lack of scientific rigor and for the sensationalism it seeks to create.

Although no final judgment can be made by the title and as the saying goes 'don't judge a book by its cover', it still provides a first cue.

You can read Robert Hare's reply here. It's an instructive -and even entertaining- read.
Robert Hare says that Ronson is not an expert at spotting psychopaths, that his process of scoring people wasn't correct, and he casts doubts about Ronson's truthfulness by sharing some mischaracterizations about their personal exchanges.

That being said, Hare sometimes may come across as overly caustic and vindictive. What stood out to me is that Hare says that his checklist as "copyrighted material", potentially implying that Ronson appropriated material that he had no right to take or use.
Legal matters aside, I didn't feel it was the highest moral ground to withhold information that may help improve public awareness. And it also displays potential bias and a possible source of defensiveness.



[image]

Real-Life Applications

Don't Trust Diagnoses Blindly. And Don't Trust Self-Diagnoses
Diagnoses, often, are nothing but a personal opinions that leverage experience, research, and maybe a checklist. But they still keep that personal opinion in the mix.
Watch out especially for your own self-diagnoses, as they tend to be particularly poor.

CONS

There Is Gray… But Sometimes There Is Black and White
The author quotes the book *The Sociopath Next Door*. However, the messages from these two books are very different.

The Sociopath Next Door makes the point that it's sociopaths who want you to believe that everyone can do anything. And blurring the lines of "good" and "evil" only serves the sociopaths.

I side with Martha Stout here: *There are* evil people.
And good and evil don't overlap nearly as frequently as romanticized novels would want you to believe (also read "Do Good and Evil Overlap").

Disjointed
The Psychopath Test might as well have been called "A Random Walk in Psychopathy".
It felt random to me, without a single threat that would unify the different parts and chapters.

No Single Message
At the end of the day, if someone were to ask me "what's this book about", it would take me a long-winded answer which would say a lot while at the same time saying little.
I don't think that's a good thing because books like this usually leave me with little takeaways.

Sensationalist, Unscientific Categorization of Psychopath
As Ronson interviews a famous financial operator, he tries to score him on the Hare checklist. But he does so in a

light and shallow way.

PROS

Raises Some Good Questions
The Psychopath Test raises some very good and important questions. Such as:

- How much can we really trust mental diagnoses?
- How do we ensure we don't make grave mistakes (ie.: keeping non-dangerous people locked up and setting dangerous ones free)

Review

I didn't really get the point that "*The Psychopath Test*" was trying to make.

I listened to the audiobook and I failed to understand the author's main point and I failed to take away a main and coherent message from the book.

At the end of it, I didn't feel I had learned too much about either sociopathy, psychopathy, or mental illnesses in general.

Except, maybe, that labeling is difficult and possibly prone to lots of mistakes.
That, by itself, might be an important takeaway, though.

I think indeed the author was trying to somewhat discredit the psychiatric profession, but he falls short in admitting that was his goal.
That is what I missed from this book: a clearer stance from the author. Even if his stance ended with an "I'm not sure", he should have been clearer about it in my opinion.

Overall, all in all, I would say this:

If you want to understand psychopathy, this book is not for you.
If you want to read a more journalistic, captivating book on psychopathy and the issues around mental illness, then go for it.

Check out the **best psychology books**, the **best dark triad books**, or get the book on Amazon

Codependent No More: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Codependent No More (1986) is the first main popular book dedicated to codependent relationships. Melody Beattie, the author, shares what codependent relationships are, how they form, and how to get out of them.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Codependent Are Also Addicted
  - Codependent's Need for Control
  - Codependent's Psychology
  - You Must Detach Yourself
  - How to Heal
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Codependency is an addiction
- Codependent people lack self-esteem and they caretake out of a need for control and security
- Excessive codependent almost never helps dependent people and makes everyone worse off
- Healing from codependence starts with awareness and with taking care of oneself.

Full Summary

About the Author:
Melody Beattie is a self-help author who has been focusing on abusive and codependent relationships. She doesn't have a psychology-related background, but she has grown her expertise over decades of personal research and experience.

Introduction: Everyone's Unique

The author says *Codependent No More* is not a cookbook for mental health because each person is unique.

Codependent Definition

This is how Melody Beatty defines a codependent partner:

> Someone who has let someone else's behavior affect them and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior

The heart of not definition is not in the other person though. It's in the supportive partner who, as codependent, allows the loop to exist.
Curing codependency means fixing ourselves, not the dependent partner.

Codependent Are Also Addicted

Codependents aren't as crazy and sick as alcoholics, but they hurt just as much.
And they might be just as addicted as their troubled, substance-addicted partners.

The author is not sure whether codependency can be labeled a disease, but it can make you sick. Over-involvement indeed can lead to anxiety and if you forget about taking care of yourself, you can get dragged down into the dependent's abyss.

Also, it's not helpful to help anybody: the codependent might actually contribute to the dependent partner staying sick.

Codependents Don't Act, But React

Codependent people don't really act, but they are always reacting to others' behavior, troubles, and misdeeds.

The author says that learning how to non-react or to act less and/or in smarter ways, is one of the keys to fixing codependency.

Codependent's Need for Control

The author says that codependents become obsessed with helping and pandering to their dependent partner as a way of controlling their environment.

They have often been hurt in the past, and caretaking becomes a way of achieving some type of stability and security in their lives.

What they don't realize though is that their controlling and caretaking behavior is actually controlling *them*.
But they don't realize it because they don't have good *emotional intelligence* to understand their own feelings, thoughts, and drives.

Codependent's Psychology

Codependents tend to come from troubled families, but they deny it.
They tend to have low self-esteem and blame themselves for everything.

They set their feelings aside, fail to listen to them, and repress themselves (including anger).
Codependent people tend to be pushed over like *too nice guys*, and they often resort to passive aggressiveness.

Furthermore:

- Deny their problem
- Pretend it will get better
- Binge-spend, over-eat
- Have temper outbursts (and are ashamed of their anger)
- Seek love from people incapable of loving them (avoidants)
- Wonder if they will ever find love
- Have sex when they don't want to
- Can get sexually repulsed by their partner
- Fantasize of extramarital affairs
- Sacrifice themselves (for things that don't require sacrificing sometimes)

You Must Detach Yourself

I thought it was particularly deep when the author says:

> The codependent feels responsible so much because the people around them are responsible for so little. They are just picking up the slack

However, if you have been codependent for a while, it's safe to assume that you can't help the dependent.
And you're not helping him/her by caretaking. And you're certainly not helping yourself.

The best of all is to detach.

Stop feeling like you have to intervene.
Stop feeling embarrassed or guilty for someone else's behavior

> God hasn't abandoned you. We abandon ourselves. He is there, waiting for you to cooperate by taking care of yourself.

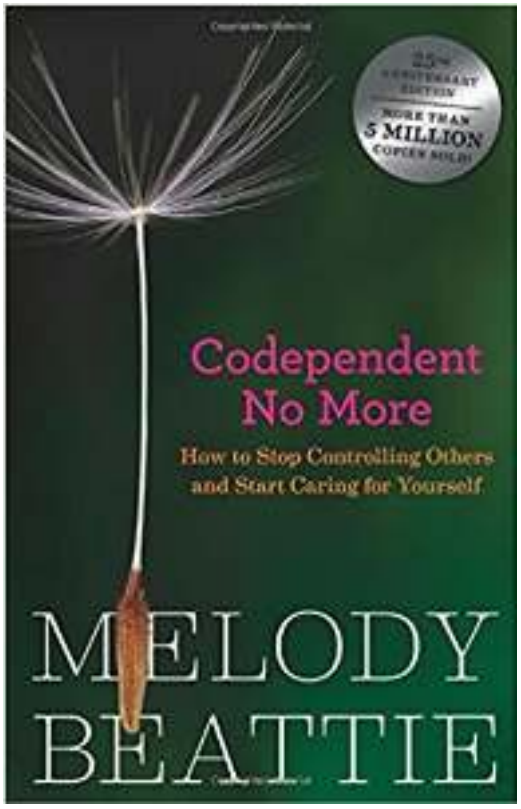
Let's quickly review the steps to healing:

How to Heal

- Awareness: understand you are codependent and you have an issue
- Accept you have an issue
- Accept yourself and accept your feelings
- Understand you cannot cure or change the dependent
- Detach yourself
- Learn you can listen with empathy without taking on the problems
- Deal with your feelings
- Rebuild your self-esteem (even a part-time job helps)
- Attend alcohol anonymously
- Make yourself a priority and take care of yourself

To me, this sentence is the very best one-sentence summary of the whole book (and the whole codependency issue):

> **She kissed the frog hoping to get a prince. She turned into a frog instead**



[image]Real-Life Applications

Don't Get Into Troubled Relationships
Don't get involved with low-quality men and low-quality women. You can only get dysfunctional relationships and it can easily turn into an abusive relationship.

CONS

- **Lacking in Psychology**

Codependent No More is a bit lacking in good, deep psychology.

The author, for example, says the codependent has been sometimes hurt in the past, but I didn't find a good explanation on how that has affected them.

Or she says that the codependent learned that it's wrong to state their needs. An alcoholic parent or spouse was happy to teach those rules. However, people don't usually internalize rules just by listening to other people. That's why I found the psychological analysis a bit lacking.

Check *Will I Ever Be Good Enough* for a book that explains very well -and deeply- how someone can end up in a codependent relationship.

- **Fuzzy Description of Codependent**

I found the description of the codependent to be way too generic to be helpful.
It's basically everything and the opposite of everything.
We didn't need such a long list of traits if there are no clear-cut attitudes that closely describe a codependent. It only makes the book *less* clear.

- **Lots of Off-Topics**

I felt a few sections went on too far and too long off topics.

The goal-setting chapter, for example, explains goals through *The Magic of Thinking Big* (not the most empirical or strategic book). Or alcoholism. Or whole chapters on anger.
Not that it's an issue talking a lot about anger, but is it really a defining trait of codependents? I wasn't convinced…

PROS

Groundbreaking
Before Melodie Beattie and Codependent No More, there was no widespread understanding of the codependent phenomenon. That's a huge testament to her work.

Warm, Down to Earth Tone
The author could well blow her horn to have almost single-handedly codified a new dysfunctional relationship dance.
Instead, she's warm, vulnerable, and down to earth.
Much appreciated.

Review

Codependent No More has been a groundbreaking book in related literature.
I find it to be a good explanation of the dependency/codependency phenomenon, yet not excellent

I thoroughly enjoyed it, but personally didn't find it deep enough to warrant a five-star.
Still, I can highly recommend it to people who are struggling with codependency.

Check out the **best relationship books** or get the book on Amazon.

The 5 Worst Books Ever: AVOID These

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

It's difficult to truly make a list of the "worst books ever".

One is because there are so many poor books.

And two, because it would probably include a long list of unknown books that most people, luckily, never read because they never made a single sale.

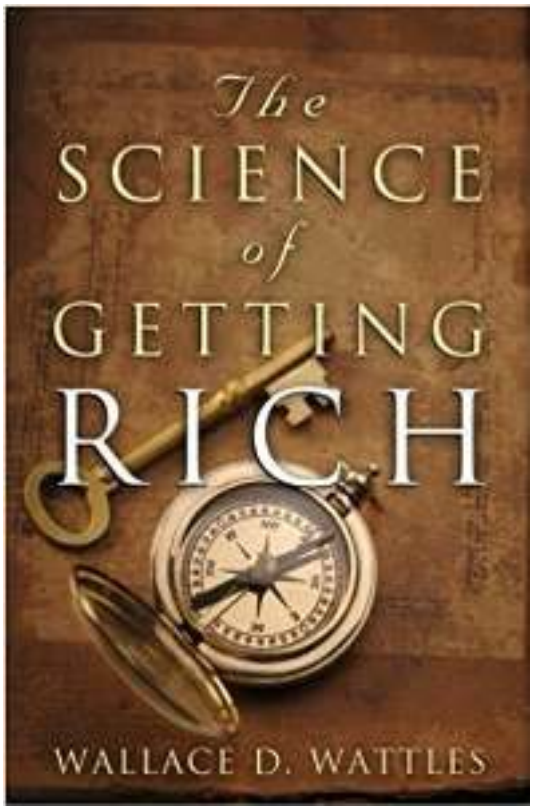
So this list actually contains the "worst *best-selling* books ever".

These books were previously summarized and reviewed on TPM.
But I removed them after I decided to only focus, review, and keep *great* books and courses here.

Contents

- #5. The Science of Getting Rich
- #4. The 7 Spiritual Laws of Success
- #3. You Can Heal Your Life
- #2. The China Study
- #1. The Secret

#5. The Science of Getting Rich



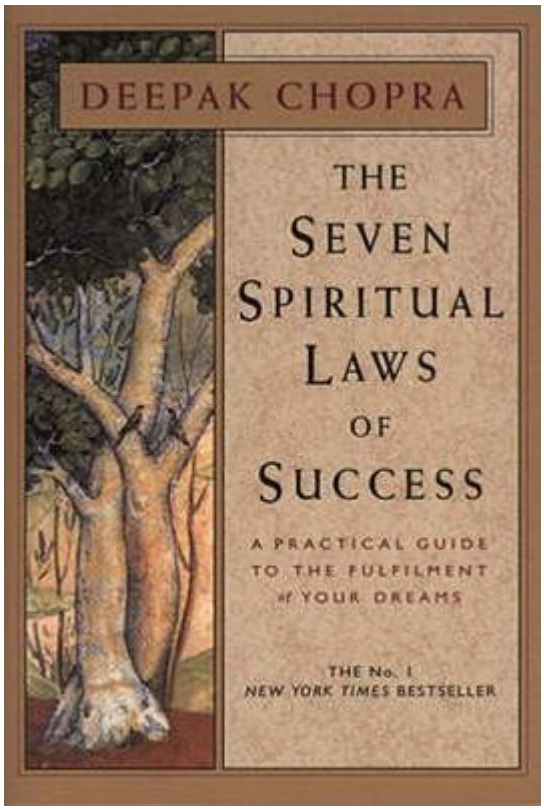
The Science of Getting Rich does not just feature prominently in this list of worst books ever, but would also score high in a list of "worst misnomer titles ever".

It's not science.
It's the law attraction again.

> Quote: A thought is a substance, producing the thing that is imagined by the thought.

So much for the “science” of getting rich (eye-rolling).

#4. The 7 Spiritual Laws of Success



I was particularly angry at wasting time on this book because I was somewhat expecting something good and, you know, actually *spiritual*.

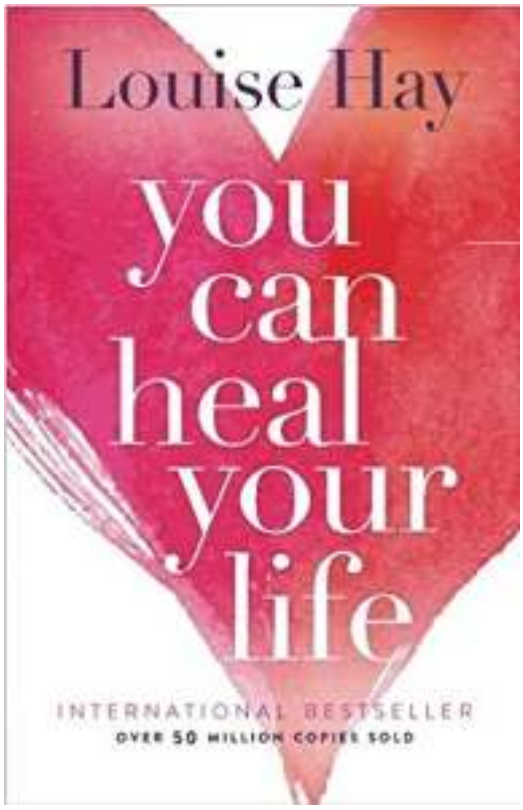
Well, I was wrong.

Both in terms of spiritual and, if at all possible, also in terms of “good”.
There is nothing spiritual here.

Again the law of attraction to the service of material wealth.

> Quote: I will release this list of my desires and surrender it to the womb of creation, trusting that when things don’t seem to go my way, there is a reason, and that the cosmic plan has designs for me much grander than even those that I have conceived.

#3. You Can Heal Your Life



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There certainly IS a connection between mind and body. And by extension, between feelings, thoughts, and body. It's not a new concept after all, the Romans knew it all along:

> Mens sana in corpore sano (healthy mind in a healthy body)

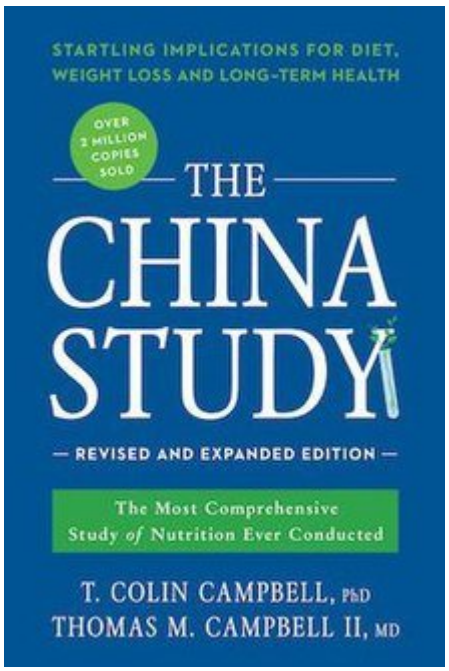
However, I feel that *You Can Heal Yourself* takes it a bit too far.

Saying that the cause of *most* issues is our thoughts and limiting beliefs is disingenuous. And saying that you can heal yourself by changing your thoughts is dishonest.
Especially in all those cases where there is actually little connection between diseases and a state of mind (ie.: baldness)

> Quote: Fear, and the tension it produces, can create things like baldness, ulcers and even sore feet.

I should spread the news to my bald pals: grow a set first and the hair will follow suit!

#2. The China Study



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Apparently, it's not just bad thoughts that can kill you.

Meat can kill you too.

But don't worry, because plants can cure you!
Indeed animal food causes cancer and a plant-based diet prevents cancer.

And plants can even revert cancer and heart disease.
That's what Colin Campbell, says in *The China Study*.

I wonder if that's the type of cure Steve Jobs was trying to follow rather than getting immediate medical attention.

But it's not the idea of the book I criticize, which might as well be the main result of The China Study (albeit that's also been heavily criticized).

It's the attitude of the author that made me dislike the book.

Campbell doesn't refer to himself as a vegetarian, but he has the fervor of the most crazed of them.
Instead of questioning his own theories and assumptions like every good researcher should do, he defends his theories and ideas like an angry bee defends his honey.

That's not the attitude of a scientist.

I think it was Ayrton Senna, an iconic F1 racer, who once said: *the day you see a gap and you don't go for the overtake, you're not a race driver anymore*.

I liked that quote and I think it beautifully translates to science and research as well.
Similarly:

> When you stop looking for the truth, you're not a scientist anymore

And here are a couple of quotes from The China Study.

Quotes:

> American diet was so bad for us that that it was destroying our hearts. The status quo boys didn't like it

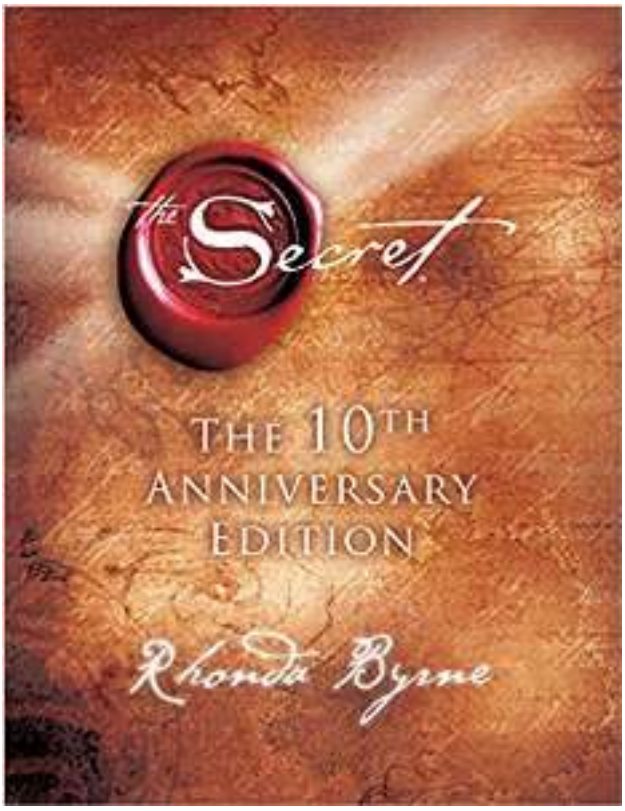
> (…) But the powers that be didn't let it happen

The status quo boys, that made me smile quite a bit when I first read it :).

However, it also made me queasy about the author's motives.
Why would anyone resent the "establishment" so much? The establishment is nothing but a product of human nature.
Resenting how things are is resenting life.

And of course, as someone said, "*when it's you against the world, you are either terribly wrong or about to make history*".
But you should at least be open to the possibility that it's the former…

#1. The Secret



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Would you be interested if I had the secret to making your dreams come true?

ALL of your dreams?
Including the ones you don't even know you have.

Would you still be interested if I told you that you don't even have to work hard?

Here it is: you just have to think about what you want. Believe you will get it. Then act as if you already have it.

That's, in a nutshell, what our top worst book ever says.

It's *The Secret.*
Fully based on the law of attraction.

Why N.1 Worst Book Ever

The Secret is the second most popular book on this list by sales, and it's the most damaging of them all.

The Secret not only perpetrates the audio… eh-em… The idea of the law of attraction, but actively advocates that you don't work hard on your dreams and goals.
Why not?
Because otherwise, you communicate to the universe that you don't really believe in it.

And if that weren't enough, it actively advocates that you behave as if you are already receiving what you ask for.
I suppose that if you demand to receive a lot of money, then you start spending all the little money that you *do* have.

I really hope it won't turn too badly for the people putting this book into practice.

Quotes:

> Food cannot cause you to put on weight, unless you *think* it can
>
> The law of attraction is a law of nature. It is as impartial and impersonal as the law of gravity is. It is precise, and it is exact.

Sure after this list we grew a bit desensitized to BS, but The Secret still manages to take it to a whole new level, doesn't it :).

And with these two last pearls of wisdom I believe, we can close in style this list of the worst books ever.

Cheers, fellas.
And let's watch out for what we read: time is our most precious resource.
And time wasted reading cr@p is no better than time watching garbage TV.

Also, Check:

- Best self-help books
- Best leadership books
- Best psychology books
- Best dating books for women
- Best dating books for guys
- Best red pill books
- Best relationship books
- Best personal finance books
- Best health and nutrition books
- Best communication skills books
- Most overrated books

How to Solve Perpetual Relationship Problems: A Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How can you solve perpetual problems that seem unsolvable?

Well, sometimes, you can't.
But some other times, you can.
Or you can work around them.

This article helps you address perpetual relationship problems.

Happy ever after means fixing perpetual problems
Note: this article is based on John Gottman's research.
Gottman uses alternatively "unsolvable problems" and "perpetual problems", and I will also use them interchangeably.

Contents

- What Are Perpetual Problems
  - Types of Relationship Problems
  - Relationship Perpetual Problems Examples
- Gridlock: When Perpetual Problems Get Problematic
- How to Solve Perpetual Problems
  - 1. Prevent It By Finding A Compatible Partner
  - 2. Approach With Open Mind
  - 3. Don't Try to Change Your Partner
  - 4. Understand Your Partner
  - 5. Pick Your Battles
  - 6. Argue Well

- 7. Communicate Directly
- 8. Accept Some Problems Will Take Time

- Unsolvable Problems Checklist
- SUMMARY

What Are Perpetual Problems

This is a definition of "perpetual problem:

> Perpetual problems cover the areas of friction, disagreements or problems that a couple finds difficult to solve once and for all and that keep re-occurring over and over again.

The reasons why fixing perpetual problems is difficult to vary and include personality traits, deep beliefs, irreconcilable habits, or difficulty or unwillingness to change.

Types of Relationship Problems

To help understand relationship problems it's helpful to put them into the contest.
Relationship researcher John Gottman says there are three types of relationship problems:

1. **Solvable problems** are topically related and situational. It can be about a disagreement on where to go for dinner, or on where to spend Christmas. They have no deeper meaning behind the issue and you can solve them with a compromise or an ad-hoc solution.
2. **Perpetual problems** cannot be solved because they center around completely different ways of seeing the world, different or contrasting values, or different personality traits and preferences. For example, deciding where to spend Christmas could be a perpetual problem if she wants to spend lots of time with her family together with him while he prefers alone time with her
3. **Gridlocked perpetual problems** are perpetual problems that the couple has not handled well and that have become chronic and painful issues in the relationship. For example, if every Thursday it's an argument about spending the weekend with her family and he is passive-aggressive every time he goes, that's a gridlocked perpetual problem.

Relationship Perpetual Problems Examples

Here are some examples of unsolvable problems:

- **Frequency of sex** (one wants or needs it more often)
- **Spending habits** (savers VS spenders)
- **Family ties** (spends lots of time with the family of origin VS highly independent)
- **Socializing** (wants to go out a lot VS stay at home partner)
- **Organizational requirements** (tidy VS disorganized)
- **Time management** (advance planner VS last minute planner or no planner)
- **Family planning** (wants children VS doesn't want children)
- **Relationship status** (marriage / just sex)

You will notice that lots of these problems relate to deeply entrenched personality traits.
It can even be as simple as being on time VS not being on time.

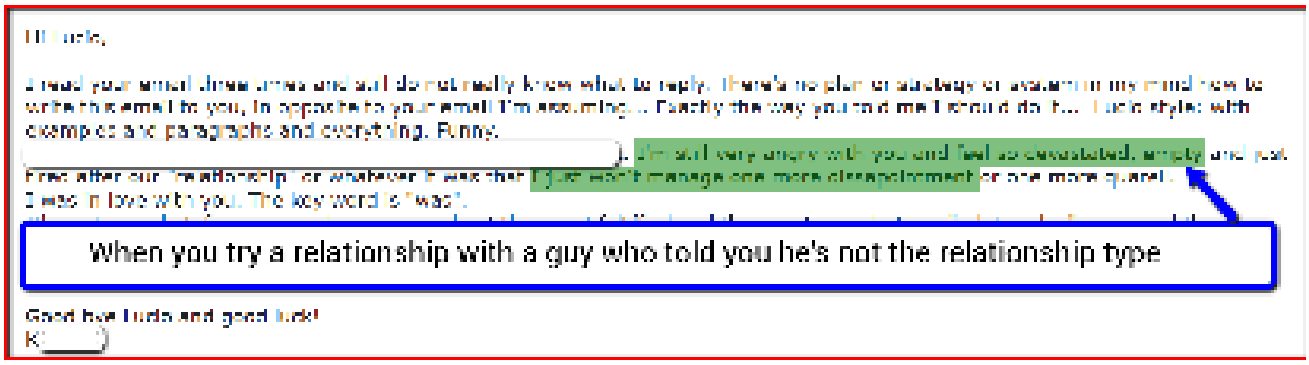
And since people rarely change, most of these issues will not find a permanent solution most of the time.

And that's OK, for some types of problems.
But it can get more complex when the differences relate to the relationship itself.

Ted and Robin in the series "How I Met Your Mother" were fighting against those types of unsolvable problems that doom a relationship.
See here an example:

Ted made the mistake of trying to solve one of those unsolvable problems that doom relationships.

Some women have done the same with yours truly, and that didn't end up well:



Some unsolvable problems lead to heartbreak
However, **there are also plenty of perpetual problems that are totally OK**.
The skill is in knowing which is which.

Gridlock: When Perpetual Problems Get Problematic

John Gottman says that some perpetual problems can turn the whole relationship sour.

This can happen when the problem is too big and important to both.
However, it can also happen when the problem is not really huge.

How can that be the case?
Small perpetual problems can become huge problems when one or both partners have a poor attitude towards it.
Indeed, says Gottman, most of the time it's not about the origin or cause of the problem but it's about attitude.

It's when partners refuse influence from each other and adopt a negative view of each other that unsolvable problems ruin the relationship.
One partner cannot accept that their partner is different from they are and start seeing their whole partner's personality in a negative light.
They either dig their heels refusing to budge or "go underground" by refusing to discuss the issue and silently build resentment.

Each partner starts believing they are "right" and "good" while the other is "wrong" and "the villain of the relationship".

Example of Perpetual Problem That's Become Gridlocked

The movie Blue Valentine has an example of a perpetual problem that has become a gridlocked problem:

You will notice she is ambitious while he is not.
She has not accepted how he is, and she is also not dealing with the issue openly. She comes across as judgmental and unhappy with him. While he feels under fire and becomes highly defensive.

How to Solve Perpetual Problems

Before I started delving into relationship literature, I thought that any successful couple had no unsolvable problems, by definition.

I was terribly wrong.
John Gottman says that **every couple has unsolvable problems**. And it just makes sense if you think about it: unsolvable problems relate to being different.
And since the chances of being exactly the same are quite slim, we will all have some unsolvable problems to deal with.

But here is the point:

The unsolvable problem will not ruin the relationship if we deal with them well.

Here is how to do it:

1. Prevent It By Finding A Compatible Partner

Somebody once said that when you marry someone you also marry a set of problems.

That is so true.
But the solution is simple: **when deciding who to partner with, make sure must make sure that the problems between you two are problems you can live with**.

Therefore a great and often under-appreciated relationship skill is learning how to date and prospect.

2. Approach With Open Mind

You can approach the conflict with an open mind and a negotiator mindset.

That means looking for solutions instead seeking "victory".
Talking about problems with an open mind will also get you into a mindset that you can talk about anything with your partner and that together you can solve any problem.

Now that's a great mindset to possess.
And if you learn some basics of negotiation and "pie-enlarging" strategies, that will surely help (check out the *best negotiation books*).

3. Don't Try to Change Your Partner

It's almost common knowledge that trying to change people doesn't work.
And John Gottman found out in his laboratory experiments that couples trying to change each other rarely improved their relationship.

The same related issue is trying to solve the problem in a way that you benefit the most. That's a bit like expecting and forcing your partner to change.

In the long run these "solutions" either don't hold or build resentment.

Again, think win-win instead and try to meet around the middle.

4. Understand Your Partner

Talking about your issues is a great opportunity to better understand your partner and build emotional intimacy.

What do they like best, why, where can they compromise, and what are they going to be happy with?

That's the mindset of *turning obstacles into opportunities.*

5. Pick Your Battles

Let's be practical here.

Maybe you want to spend every weekend with your partner, throw the trash out every single day, clean the dishes the second you finish eating, and never watch an action movie/football match with him.

But instead of going for every single item on your list, how about prioritizing and asking what's most important to you?
Pick your battle and differentiate what you *need* from what you really want and what would be nice to have.

6. Argue Well

We have talked a lot here about arguing well.

We introduced the four horsemen of the apocalypse and we explained what they are and how to avoid them.
For a deeper review check:

- criticism
- defensiveness
- stonewalling
- contempt

Suffice here to say that the basics of arguing well are to approach the conflict with an open mind and want to understand your partner first.
Only after seeking to understand seek to be understood and then address the issue with a win-win mindset.

If the conflict is highly emotional, it can help to prepare your approach in advance.
Here are some very good resources for dealing with difficult conversations:

- Difficult Conversations
- Crucial Conversations
- Thanks for The Feedback

7. Communicate Directly

Unsolvable problems often fester because we don't feel like we can be fully honest with our partners.

This is most common in partners who tend to be more submissive, too nice, or passive-aggressive.
But you need to be brave and tactfully address the issue with full honesty.

The example from Blue Valentine is a good example of a gridlocked issue where neither partner is owning up to their side of the problem.

Her side of the problem is:

- I wish we could be more well off
- I sometimes wish you were more driven
- I would like to see you leverage and use your talent

His side of the problem is:

- I feel like you are judging me
- I want you to communicate your thoughts freely
- I am happy with my life the way it is, are you happy with yours

If the two of them had discussed their position in full honesty, they would have gone to the heart of that issue. And they'd have had a chance to fix it.

8. Accept Some Problems Will Take Time

If you are already gridlocked, have some realistic expectations.

It's possible you will make strides, but it's also possible that it will take some time to bring the situation to a point where you both can be happy.

The first immediate goal should be to first stop resenting your partner.
It can help to lay out a plan of the "bare minimum" you can tolerate:

1. The bare minimum you require
2. Your areas of flexibility
3. A first draft of resolution

From then on, you can slowly move towards positive territory.

Unsolvable Problems Checklist

So far we reviewed that:

1. Problems are unavoidable
2. Some problems are unsolvable, and they're also unavoidable
3. Unavoidable problems don't (necessarily) undermine a relationship
4. When unavoidable problems become gridlocked they ruin the relationship

The question then is: are your unsolvable problems gridlocked?

Here is a checklist to find out:

- You don't talk about the problem (anymore), and yet it still pains you
- It feels like a war is about to break up when you broach the topic
- You talk about it, but nothing ever moves forward
- Both of you are entrenched in your position
- You are both more intent on getting your way than meeting a middle ground
- Nobody has ever tried to put themselves in the other partner's shoes
- When you talk about it, it can get mean and nasty
- The issue gets bigger with time
- You are disengaging from each other
- When you think about your partner, you think of gridlocked relationship problems
- You start resenting your partner

If that's your case, don't worry, it's never too late to start an open, honest communication.

It can help if your partner as well reads this article. Two of you are much more powerful than one.

SUMMARY

Every relationship has unsolvable problems because they simply stem from differences in our personalities, values, and background.

Worry not, unsolvable problems do not have to be a threat to the relationship.
If you can tackle them with humor and understanding, they can even spice up the relationship.

It's when the unsolvable problems undermine your team spirit that they risk starting a vicious circle that unhinges your relationship.

This article explained how to address and solve unsolvable relationship problems.

Atypical Seduction Techniques To Sweep Her Off Her Feet

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Sweeping women off their feet is possible if you use the right seduction techniques.

By the end of this article, you will learn 4 counterintuitive seduction techniques that will help you sweep women off their feet.

Contents

- INTRO
- 1. Swarm Her Heart With Unrestrained Passion
  - 1.2 Profess Love Early On
- 2. Pursue Her With Abandon
  - Warning: Chasing VS Persisting
- 3. Drop Babies Hints
- 4. The Broken Man Seduction Technique
- SUMMARY

INTRO

First off:

We don't recommend these techniques if you seek efficiency.

However, if you want to learn more atypical and advanced techniques, as well as learn the exceptions to the rule, then read on.

Men who sweep women off their feet break the rules and throw caution to the wind.
They're not afraid of risks, of potentially looking like idiots, or of charging head-first into a relationship.

Both the mainstream and pick-up artist seduction advice tells men to:

1. Don't chase
2. Don't invest too much
3. Don't rush things

And that advice makes sense.
However, when you want to go for memorable, you really need to break all the rules.

This article shows you that the exact opposite behavior of typical dating advice when executed well, overcharges your seduction by 10x.

Let's start:

1. Swarm Her Heart With Unrestrained Passion

The conventional wisdom is that you should not over-invest.

And that makes sense.

The problem with investing too much indeed is what it communicates.
It suggests that you believe she is more valuable than you are -higher sexual market value-. And your investment is

a way to make up for the value imbalance.

And since women lust after men who are "higher up" than them, they often don't really go crazy for men who over-invest.
That much is true.

However, in a cynical world where most men seek not to look to into her, a man who does the opposite can be supremely attractive.

Swarming her with passion includes:

- Texting her
- Calling her
- Scheduling dates
- Being upfront about your lust
- Being upfront about your willingness to see her
- Doing gallant things for her (opening doors, protecting her, checking up on her, etc.)
- Picking her up and driving her back

All of the above shows that you really like her.
And people love people who like them, it makes them feel good. Plus, it shows you've got the balls to go directly and unashamedly what you want.

Why it Works

Robert Greene in *The Art of Seduction* calls this style "Ideal Lover" and says that its allure is that of making the woman the center of his world.
Swarming her with attention, time and effort is not just about sex or finding a partner.
But it appeals to greater ideals of romance, love… Passion.

Rudolph Valentino is an example of a man who swarms her lover with unrestrained passion (at least on screen).
But many of Casanova's conquests were also based on over-investment and unrelated shows of affection.

However, don't think this is all about lovey-dovey stuff.

There is also a powerful element of sex here.
Indeed anything unrestrained powerfully hints at the sexual.

Have you noticed how serial-killer psychopaths have lots of women who want to have sex with them?
Well, the unrestrained passion touches on similar attraction triggers. But it removes the most anti-social traits of psychopaths and adds romance, making its appeal much larger and, I'd dare to say, almost universal.

Doing It Well

How do you do it?

First of all, the big distinction: there is a big difference between the run-of-the-mill, *nice guy* average Joe who over-invests and the way the Rodolfo Valentino-type of man operates.

What's the difference?

The average Joe is plain and boring.
There are hundreds of thousands of average Joe operating the same way.
An army of men in ill-fitting clothes and all working for the man.
Ordinary.

Plain.
Boring…
And ordinary is bland and unattractive.

Valentino instead is over the top.
He is passionate, outlandish, his style is out of this world.
Something like women have never experienced before.
He shows unrestrained abandon in his pursuit.
His out-of-this-world style suggests romance and sex that are also out of his word.

That's the way you gotta do it if you want to sweep men off their feet.

The Notebook beginning here, one of the all-time most favorite chick flicks ever, is all about him over-investing and blatantly chasing. Hanging with one hand at the risk of dying to get a date is the ultimate over-investment example.

Note of Caution For Women

Sadly, this is not just the style of incorrigible romantics and Casanova-style womanizers.

There is indeed an overlap between this seduction technique and the style of cluster B personalities (narcissists, psychopaths, and *sociopaths*).

Cluster B men make their targets feel like they are the only thing that matters, and the best woman they have ever met.
They add a shower of praise and admiration to stroke her ego and make her feel like a queen who's living the romance of her life.
They crowd her time, write her first all times, they are constantly on her mind.
And she's walking on clouds during the initial stages of romance.
But there is no happy ending. Once she is completely under his thumb, the romance turns into a nightmare.

The thousands of women who fall prey to sociopaths and who later join websites like sociopathfree.com are the eery testament that this technique does indeed make women go crazy (almost literally).

So watch out if some guy romances you like this.
It *might* be the romance of your life. But it might also be a sociopath who doesn't even know what romance is.

1.2 Profess Love Early On

Says Susan Forward *in her book* "men who hate but seduce women":

> Then, when he took me home that night, we were sitting in the car in front of my house and he kissed me and said, "I know this sounds crazy, but I'm in love with you. Now that's romantic. The next morning, when he called me, I told him that I wouldn't hold him to anything he'd said the night before. His response was, "I'll repeat every word of it right now." **Jackie felt like she was on a magic carpet from that evening on**. Mark's falling in love with her so quickly completely swept her off her feet.

And says the author herself:

> I believe that when a romance moves as swiftly as these did, there's an underlying sense of danger in the air. The danger may actually add to the excitement and stimulation of the affair.

And I believe she's right.

2. Pursue Her With Abandon

The popular dating advice is never to chase a girl.

And for good reason: in basic dating power dynamics chasing a girl is the same as over-investing.
It communicates that you have little going on in your life and few other female options.

That makes sense.
In general.

However, the simple fact that chasing evolved in men and comes naturally to almost everyone, shows that, at least sometimes, it worked -or its genes would have died with the very first men who started pursuing-.

And with a few tweaks, chasing can be turned into a technique to sweep her off her feet.

A note of caution though: this is not the easiest seduction technique.
Chasing a girl who doesn't want you over months can be ego-battering and outright scary.
And it's not the simplest to execute: it's a bit like a tightrope walk.
Indeed the difference between an effective chase netting you a girlfriend (or a lay) and a restraining order can be dangerously thin at times.

But it's doable.

Why It Works

We live in a fast-paced world.
Most men have little time for romance and the #meToo movement is only the last drop that makes men skittish of persistence.

It's a pity because calibrated persistence is a big female fantasy.
Lots of romances and even fairytales entail the man persisting and overcoming hurdles until she finally relents.

And in a world where everyone is too busy for romancing, the hard chase becomes all the more effective.

How to Do It Well

Chasing in style can be done in two different ways:

1. With the Valentino style, over the top
2. With constant pressure

Over the top would mean things like sending flowers to her workplace (always huuuge effect), delivering a small gift at her place, and sending a love letter full of flowers.

This is an example from Grant Cardone on how to do it with constant pressure:

> **Grant Cardone**: for 13 months I called her once or twice a month
> **Alena**: no returned phone call (from me)
> **Grant Cardone**: I spent the next 13 months pursuing her, doing everything I could. Meeting her friends, finding out what she'd like to do, finding out what turned her on, anything and everything

The constant pressure seduction technique is a bit more common and bland, so you should offset the chasing with lots of personal value.
Cardone in the video for example was still working hard on his life and becoming a more and more successful man.
That also made him attractive.
Had he been a bum, chasing incessantly would have probably gone nowhere.

The Bad Ways to Do It

The worst way to deploy this seduction technique is best summarized with the attitudes of the following sentences:

> Why don't you call me back
>
> You are the woman of my dreams
>
> Please give me a shot..
>
> I can make you so happy!

They are all examples of supplicating, begging, or clueless behavior.

Example: How Chasing Worked for Me

I very rarely used this seduction technique, and never until the end.
But I've dabbled in it enough to know first-hand it can work.

Here is an example:

Some years ago and for a period of time, I was calling a girl who picked up the phone but didn't want to go out with me.

When we met, she said she wasn't interested in dating but she kept a polite conversation going on.

After our interaction, I called her 2-3 times over a rather extended period of time while I was walking on the way home. And we'd had these very open talks about our lives.

I was careful to communicate I was interested, but I never bugged her too much about the meeting. Our calls had the frame that "I'm interested, but I'm not going to harass you".

If I'd ask her out and she'd decline, I'd always step back and make it seem it was nothing.

The last time I called her I could feel some excitement in her tone.
And by the end of it, she was inviting me to go out with her group.

I never followed up on that, but it was enough proof for me that I could make persistence work.

Note: chasing and persistent romancing become part of the culture when there are more men than women: read the article Science of Dating for more.
And also note that when you chase hard you might start the relationship with the balance of power skewed on her side. But you can correct that during the relationship.

Warning: Chasing VS Persisting

The difference between chasing and persisting is all in:

1. **Your personal value** (and how you can communicate it during your pursuit)
2. **Your emotional intelligence** (to make sure you walk that line of persisting, without ever becoming creepy)

It's absolutely not easy to do.
As a matter of fact, **it's easier to never chase, than to chase effectively**.

Also, read:

- **Straight-line seduction**

> Straight Line Seduction

3. Drop Babies Hints

The widespread dating advice is that you should not rush things and you should not show too much interest.

Rushing means you don't have many options and that you don't screen for high-quality women. Which, in turn, communicates you don't even like *her* and you would take just about anyone.
And albeit that's not necessarily true, in our culture rushing is also associated with poor decision making.

Again, that makes a lot of sense… In most normal situations.

But we're not talking normal here.
We're talking about sweeping off her feet seduction techniques.

And if you can evoke the allure of a great inseminator, things will move to bed with passionate abandon.

Why it Works

Let's not forget that dating, at the core, is nothing more than looking and screening for a mate to procreate.

Hinting at babies is only a more direct way to tap into that subconscious drive that *all women have*.

Research showed that women rate higher men who attend to children and that general displays of kindness are also favored (Bleske-Rechek, 2006).

If you do it well, it unleashes a strong, carnal sexual desire.
Not simply the more common desire for sex and sexual pleasure, but a **desire for impregnation**.

Shall we be even more explicit: a lust for your semen?

How to Do It Well

Don't broach the babies topic too seriously or too directly.
Albeit you could make that work too, I see more ways it would backfire than it would work.

Basically, you want to plant the seed for *her* to think about you as a great baby-maker, *not* you asking her to give you a child.

The ways to do it correctly then are:

1. Hint babies while making it clear you're not fully serious (Tinder text flirt for example)
2. Drop far-away hints and let her connect the dots

The second is the best option.

When to use it:

This is going to be much more powerful when women start thinking about children.
That's related to age of course, but also by culture.

A girl in the West in her younger twenties won't be thinking about children most of the time.
But in parts of the world where women give birth early, you might be astonished at how early the baby mindset starts.

Example: How I Seduced With Babies' Hints

Since this can sound very abstract, here is the most glaring example I have:

A couple of years ago I was having dinner and wine at my Airbnb place with a girl.

Given the circumstances, things were probably going to happen anyway (in the texting guide I show how I set it up as a first date).

But as they say, better safe than… Masturbating :).

Sitting at the table, we were also playing with the laptop as we got to know each other.
And I got to know she had had a bad childhood (to be accurate: a general-style abusive father).

At that point, I knew that showing old pictures of my happy-ish family and childhood was probably going to take her into fantasy land.
The fantasy land of the family she never had.

Then, once in the right mindset, I showed her the pictures of me as a baby.
And I let her connect the dots.
The dots being she could have had the same… Maybe starting that night :).

I expected it to be a good boost in attraction.
But I was quite surprised at *how* powerful it actually ended up being.
She went into a frenzy-like state, grabbed my hand, and started squeezing it.
A little later, you can imagine what happened.

4. The Broken Man Seduction Technique

The lives of 99% of men revolve around trying to look stronger, cooler, and wealthier than they actually are.

And that makes sense, one might argue: *for obvious reasons* women of all species are attracted to strong mates.

However, again, that's the bland way of dating.
And a run of the mills' seduction techniques doesn't sweep anyone off their feet.

Enter, the broken man.

Why it Works

To begin with, a too strong and perfect figure is unrelatable.
So it's not even an ideal one should strive for.

A shady past shows a glimpse of a deeper layer, a mystery. Maybe even a slight sense of danger.
And we know that's exciting.

A vulnerability, an uncontrollable emotion, even some tears, they are reminiscent of the byronic hero, the sexy but flawed man in need of fixing.
That works in two ways: the "normal" sexual attraction *plus* it evokes maternal instincts of protection (here's the female version of this seduction technique).

And it's particularly powerful when she thought you were an extremely high-value man, almost out of reach.
In that case, she will think that by taking care of you she can make you 100% hers.
And that's another woman's dream: the man everyone wants, just for herself. The only lady who found a way to complete him.

How to Do It Well

Doing it well means showing cracks and deeper layers of personality that you normally keep hidden.

From an overall frame of a sexual being, you are showing her a brief peek into your troubled soul.
In a way, you are gifting her that glance into yourself because no one else gets to see it.

She feels special.
And she feels bonded.

I am still searching for the perfect example in a seduction environment.

But in the meanwhile, this is the execution (outside of a seduction environment):

What makes it good?
It's a moment of fleeting weakness in an overall solid frame of high-quality men.
He is opening up, which takes courage. He is striving to control himself, which shows he is not a low-quality, out-of-control man.
And then he regains his balance.

Just a glimpse.
Maybe there is more, baby, but I can't spill all my beans just yet.

Bonus point if your vulnerability resonates with her.

The quick peek into your soul is the emotional equivalent of a skirt up in the wind. Sexy as hell, isn't it?

Doing it Wrong

Doing it wrong instead means showing your vulnerability:

- Too early (she might not be into you yet)
- Too often (you're not a constantly crying baby)
- Too much (being fully out of control is not sexy and a sign of BPD)

This is an obvious example of doing it too much.

SUMMARY

For sweep-off-her-feet seduction, you need to break the rules.

Yes, breaking the rules is risky, but big seductions require big risks.

On average, the better you get, the more rules you can break.
As a matter of fact, to get into really powerful seduction, the ones that she will remember for a lifetime, you need

to operate outside all the rules.

This article gave you four examples of how breaking most dating rules is the most effective way of sweeping her off her feet and delivering a memorable seduction.

More resources:

- Scientifically proven dating techniques
- Dating as a provider VS dating as a lover

The Leadership Challenge: A Critical Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Leadership Challenge* Kouzes and Posner analyze and break down what the most inspiring leaders do, so that you can do the same and achieve the same results.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Most Important Leadership Role Models
  - We Can All Learn to Be Leaders
  - The Five Practices
  - Foundation of Credibility
  - Vision + Challenge
  - Love
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
  - Lots of Team Inspiration, Little Leader's Power
  - Leadership In Challenging Times?
  - There Is More Than One Type of Leadership
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Embody the virtues you want to see in your team
- Be dependable, and foster trust. And starting by being trustworthy in yourself
- Develop a team vision and a team culture. Stack wins and celebrate successes

Full Summary

About the Authors:
Kouzes and Posner are two popular authors of leadership training and books. They also wrote "*The Truth About Leadership*".

The Most Important Leadership Role Models

Research shows that the people closest to us are the ones who have the biggest impact on us.

Even for teenagers who are in love with pop stars or sports athletes, the biggest leadership role models are still their parents.

Similarly, teachers, business bosses, and coaches are also ranked high.

We Can All Learn to Be Leaders

Kouzes and Posner say that in most fields it's not intelligence or talent alone that determines results, but it's effort

and continuous practice.

The Five Practices

1. **Model the way** (be clear about your values and embody them)
   - be clear about what you stand for: people don't trust flip-floppers
   - show instead of saying: you must embody the virtues you want to see in your team
2. **Inspire a shared vision**
   - make everyone feel responsible for behaving along the team values and goals
   - show the way and create a sense of hope
   - be forward-looking: imagine a future, inspire people with it, and draw a map to get there
   - talk to people, make them feel heard, and make them feel like they belong
   - tie big ideals in the shared vision, make people feel like they're doing something useful
   - use symbols and figures of speech to instill a shared culture
3. **Challenge the process** (overcome obstacles and stack small wins)
   - the status quo breeds mediocrity: look for new ideas to implement
   - people give their best under deadlines and challenges, and use them
   - emphasize the small wins along the way
4. **Enable others to act** (get others engaged)
   - great leaders foster a great team environment where everyone trusts each other
   - develop competence
   - empower the team: give them a sense of ownership
5. **Encourage the heart** (do it passionately and energetically)
   - encourage community formation
   - reward positive results: in person and unexpected positive feedback works best
   - celebrate wins

> **People commit to causes, not to plans**

Foundation of Credibility

The best leaders have credibility.

1. Honest
2. Forward-looking
3. Competent
4. Inspiring

A great way to gain credibility is: DWYSYWL: do what you said you will do.

Vision + Challenge

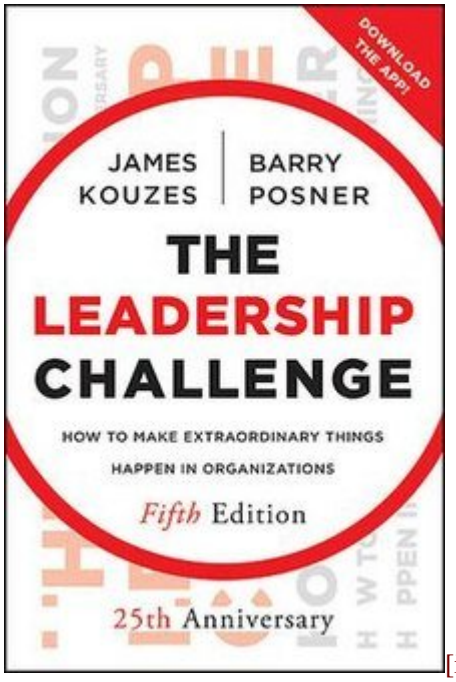
Great leaders have a great vision in mind. Nobody will follow someone who is not convinced in his own dream. The challenge is also almost a given. Few people have done their best when it was easy peasy.

Most everyone did their best when they face a challenge along the way.

Love

Love what you do, love your life, love the people you serve.

> **What you do speaks so loud that I can't hear what you say**



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Real-Life Applications

Show Up At The Party
Building community is a great way to increase team spirit, trust, and bonding. The leader however should take part in the celebration

CONS

Lots of Team Inspiration, Little Leader's Power

I find some popular leadership books like *The Leadership Challenge*, *Leaders Eat Last,* or *The 21 Irrefutable Laws* to all focus on character, values, and team inspiration.

And that IS important.

But none of them focus on crucial domains like charisma, power dynamics, and the interpersonal elements of power dynamics like dominance and submission.
I feel that's what's missing in much of the leadership literature -and that's why I started this website-.

Leadership In Challenging Times?

The Leadership Challenge seems to be about relatively quieter times at big companies.

The monthly team meeting, the feedback slips on the boss' desk, the employee of the month with the applause, etc. All are equally part of leadership, of course.

But there are times in smaller companies when the idea of the employee of the month seems silly and trivial. There are times when the only goal is to ship. Or win a big customer without which you're in trouble. Or simply

surviving to fight another day.

In those cases, leadership is more based on masculine qualities, leading the charge, and making things happen. That type of leadership doesn't show here.

There Is More Than One Type of Leadership

I have the impression that *The Leadership Challenge* makes it seem as if there were only one type of leader. However, that's not the case and different personalities can lead in effective -but different- ways.

PROS

Great & Deep Overview Of Being a Leader
If you have been studying psychology and communication, what you read here will not break new ground.
But it really puts everything together into a big and coherent framework.

Touches On Most of What Matters
The Leadership Challenge touches upon almost all that is necessary to be a great leader.

Survey-Based
Kouzes and Posner are to leadership a bit what Gottman is to a relationship: these guys have collected data for decades.
Now that does not guarantee they are right or know better than anyone else, and surveys can be notoriously poor formats of collecting data. However, they still give more quantitative foundations to what they say.

Review

The Leadership Challenge is a great book on 'big company' leadership.

I listed a few major cons there, but if you have been reading around here I am often more demanding of great books than of average ones.
That's because I raise the bar for great books and put them under heavier scrutiny.

The Leadership Challenge is both and exhaustive. It can be one of the very first reads for aspiring leaders, and a go-to manual when they need some refreshing.

And if you want more real-life leadership in free-forming groups, leadership in more challenging, or dating leadership, then this is your website.

Check out the **best leadership books** or get the book on Amazon

10% Happier: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *10% Happier* author Dan Harris shares his journey into meditation and mindfulness, and how it helped him improve his life.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Ego Is The Voice In Your Head
  - The Ego Is Never Happy, Always Wants More
  - Meditation and Mindfulness
  - Mindfulness Gives a Fourth Option
  - Mindfulness is NOT Pushover
  - How to Meditate
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Meditation will help you become more mindful
- Mindful means you are aware of what's going on around and within yourself
- And will you be able to better control your mind

Full Summary

Dan Harris wanted to make sense of meditation and mindfulness.
And use it to improve his life in practical terms: becoming less stressed and happier.

10% Happier is the story of how he achieved that.

Ego Is The Voice In Your Head

Dan Harris says that ego is the voice in our head. No in psychotic terms, but as the normal voice, we all have that comments on our actions and behavior.
The voice for example tells you "I'm too tired to go out".

But the author also expands on the notion of ego. He says it's also what makes you check the fridge when you're not actually hungry, and what makes you check your email -or your Facebook feed- a hundred times a day.

All these ego-driven actions do not do anything to make you happier.
And by learning to control the ego we can all become a bit happier.

The Ego Is Never Happy, Always Wants More

Dan Harris says that the ego is never satisfied, it always demands more.

Whenever you get what you want, a new toy or a new pay rise, it becomes your new standard and the ego starts wanting more.

The ego also loves compares.
It compares what you don't have with what others have, and it makes you jealous and unhappy.

The ego doesn't live in the present but in the past and future.
And it particularly loves living in the past. It loves revisiting old wounds to make you feel the pain in the present.

The ego is an endless pit of dissatisfaction.
And when you learn to control the ego, you learn to become happier.

Meditation and Mindfulness

Through meditation, we can learn mindfulness.

Mindfulness is the ability to become aware of our surroundings and our inner impulses without having to react to them.

Do you remember how our ego dwells in the past and worries about the future?
Well, mindfulness helps us stay in the present without letting the worries of the future and the pains of the past affect us.

Meditation also helps you to become more compassionate towards others and towards yourself.
A study even showed that people who meditate are more attuned with others, use less the word "I" and even laugh more.

Mindfulness Gives a Fourth Option

Most people have three modes with which they relate to the world around them.
They:

- Want something
- Reject something
- Zone out (ie.: don't care)

Mindfulness gives you a fourth option:

- Observing without judgment

Accept Negative Emotions (Without Denying Them)

Dan Harris says meditation does not cure everything (of course).

And it cannot make negative feelings and emotions go away.

However, it helps in the way you cope with them.
You do it in four steps:

1. Recognize the emotion
2. Allow it to exist
3. Investigate what it's causing
4. Separation: emotions are not you, so don't take them on board

Dan Harris says that rejecting emotions, or worst trying to repress them with drugs will only worsen the problem.
That's what he was trying to do with the trauma he was battling after having been a reporter in a war zone.

And that led him to a panic attack while on air.
Here's the video:

Mindfulness is NOT Pushover

The author says that many fear becoming more mindful because that could mean becoming "softer" and a *pushover*.

Not true.
Learning to control your ego does not mean you forget about your needs and wants.
As a matter of fact, it helps you gain clarity on what you want and need. And it helps you achieve your goals by becoming more productive and getting more creative ideas.

Indeed Dan Harris realized that stress and competition were not the most effective ways to fuel his drive.
And that controlling his urges was in and by itself a great mental challenge.

How to Meditate

Sit comfortably and focus on your breath.
Your mind will naturally wander, and that's OK. Every time, take it back to your breath.

Sometimes you will have some light discomfort while meditating, like an itching or a slight ache.
And that's when you can start to apply the principles of mindfulness: observe it without intervening.

As you do it more and more, you will be able to apply mindfulness to more complex thoughts and feelings.

How Meditation Helps

Dan Harris says that meditation helps with:

- Depression
- Drug addiction and smoking
- Binge eating
- ADHD
- Asthma
- Psoriasis
- Irritable bowel syndrome

Real-Life Applications

More compassionate towards yourself
If I take one great concept away from *10% happier* is that compassion doesn't just apply to the people around you.
But it applies to yourself as well.
It means you are more understanding of your mistakes and shortcomings, and you are less judgmental of your character and behavior.
Great stuff.

CONS

Bit Unscientific and Generic on "Ego"
I didn't find it to be very accurate in its psychological description.
As a matter of fact, I was reading about the ego I was starting to have a low opinion of 10% Happier.

PROS

Grounded and Practical
There are no woo-woo or big words here. Indeed the author found books such as The Power of Now too complex and wanted something simpler.
He achieved it.
10% is about what meditation and mindfulness do for you and how it can help you in daily life.

Review

10% Happier is a very good book.

It strikes a great balance between meditation and Eastern philosophies and the Western life of those who want to work hard and achieve.

That means no woo-woo stuff and a lot of practical tips on how meditation helped the author improve his life.
No need to go to India, tripping on LSD, or becoming a guru.

I especially recommend 10% Happier for people who are very driven -if you’re reading this website, chances that you are-, and people who might suffer from stress by overwork.

Quiet: The Power of Introverts (Book Summary & Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Quiet: The Power of Introverts,* author Susan Cain explains what it means to be an introvert, what the advantages and disadvantages are, and how society can win by getting the most out of both introverts and extroverts.

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Overview

- **Introverts are better at analyzing** and learning from mistakes
- **You can learn to be more extroverted**
- **Introverts are generally more sensitive** to stimuli and threats, and get overwhelmed more easily
- It's not true that extroverts are more socially skilled

Notes

About the Author:
Susan Cain studied law, and she is a writer and lecturer. However, she did a good job with her research on introversion.

Western Society Favors Extroverts

Susan Cain says that Western society has an extrovert bias and that extroverts' traits are more likely to lead to personal and career success.

She mentions Tony Robbins as an example that our culture equates high-powered extroversion -and borderline narcissism– and as the pinnacle of leadership.

Harvard Business School is also structured to make students more outspoken and extroverted.
And organizations emphasize teamwork, bosses want "interpersonal skills", and the entrepreneurs who get VC money have confident or overconfident personalities.

Even the authors who get published must convince publishers that they are "talk show ready".
Susan Cain says you wouldn't be reading to Quiet if she hadn't convinced her publisher.

And many introverts grow up believing "there must be something wrong with them".

Quiet: The Power of Introverts challenges all of that.

Are You Introvert or Extrovert?

Susan Cain says there is no standard description for introversion, but she gives a helpful list.

Introverts:

- Are drawn to their inner world of thoughts and feelings;
- Focus on the meaning of events;
- Recharge batteries with lone time;
- Feel good with little stimulation (ie.: quietly sipping wine);
- Prefer one task at a time and can focus;
- Are more immune to social status;
- Listen more, dislike conflict, and think before they speak
- Process information more deeply (think and ponder deeply)
- Pay more attention to warning signals
- Have more "muted" reactions to stimuli

Extroverts:

- Are drawn to the external life of people and activities
- Plunge in the events around them
- Need to recharge with socialization
- Prefer multitasking and jumping from one thing to another
- Are more risk-taking
- Tend to be more assertive, and dominant, speak more than talk, and are comfortable with conflict
- React more quickly
- Pay more attention to the reward (and can make mistakes rushing and taking risks)
- Amplify positive emotions (which can lead more easily to addictions though)
- Cheat more, exercise more, have more sex partners, and divorce more frequently

Quiet's Introversion Quiz

1. I prefer one-on-one conversations to group activities.

2. I often prefer to express myself in writing.
3. I enjoy solitude.
4. I seem to care about wealth, fame, and status less than my peers.
5. I dislike small talk, but I enjoy talking in-depth about topics that matter to me.
6. People tell me that I'm a good listener.
7. I'm not a big risk-taker.
8. I enjoy work that allows me to "dive in" with few interruptions.
9. I like to celebrate birthdays on a small scale, with only one or two close friends or family members.
10. People describe me as "soft-spoken" or "mellow."
11. I prefer not to show or discuss my work with others until it's finished.
12. I dislike conflict.
13. I do my best work on my own.
14. I tend to think before I speak.
15. I feel drained after being out and about, even if I've enjoyed myself.
16. I often let calls go through to voice mail.
17. If I had to choose, I'd prefer a weekend with absolutely nothing to do to one with things too many scheduled.
18. I don't enjoy multi-tasking.
19. I can concentrate easily.
20. In classroom situations, I prefer lectures to seminars.

The more yeses you give, the more introverted you are.
If you are split around the middle, then you might be an ambivert.

Susan Cain says there are no 100% pure introverts or extroverts.

And even if you are very introverted or very extroverted, that is not a predictor of your behavior in each situation.
It would be like saying that all men like contact sports. A lot of men do, but not everyone.

Shyness VS Introversion

People often confuse shyness with introversion.
And that makes sense actually, because the two can look similar and overlap.

Susan Cain says that shyness is the fear of social disapproval and humiliation, while introversion is the preference for an environment that is not overstimulating.
Shyness is painful for the shy individual, while introversion is not.

You can confuse them easily because the external behavior may look the same.
The shy person in the business meeting does not speak because he's afraid of speaking up. The introvert does not speak because he is observing, and processing data and information in his head.
But to the external observer, the two look very similar.

Brain Differences: High & Low Reactivity

Introverts have a more sensitive amygdala than extroverts.

The amygdala helps us detect changes in the environment, especially threats, and dangers.

Introverts are naturally more highly alert to changes (high reactivity), which makes them more prone to the release of cortisol and stress.

That makes introverts more reactive and sensitive in general.
Indeed, following this train of thought, it's not just that introverts get more easily flooded during social interactions: they are more easily flooded in any new environment.

Seeking or Avoiding Stimuli

Introverts prefer less stimulation. Fewer people, lower volume music, and a quieter, less chaotic environment -and less coffee, too-.
Extroverts, are the opposite.

An experiment showed indeed that introverts perform better with a lower level of noise while extroverts perform better with higher levels of noise.
Introverts also perform better when sleep deprived because sleep deprivation makes us less alert.

Nature or Nurture?

Introversion and extroversion, like all other major personality traits like agreeableness and conscientiousness, are about 40-50% heritable.

What about the other half?
Well, one theory is that when you are born with a certain tendency, you tend to seek out experiences that push you further along your natural tendency.

Risks & Opportunities of Nurture

So low reactive, extrovert children, climb more trees, jump more fences, and naturally grow more comfortable with the challenges and fears around them.

The risk if they grow up in a bad neighborhood is that they are more likely to end up in gang crime.
If they grow up in good families that channel them, say the author, they are more likely to become driven overachievers (Oprah and Richard Branson).
Taking it to an extreme, *sociopaths* have an extremely low level of reactivity. Lykken has controversially called psychopaths and heroes "twigs on the same genetic branch".
Also, read:

- Signs of a Sociopath
- Is Donald Trump a Sociopath?
- Do Good and Evil Overlap?

The risk for introvert children is that they have too little experience and grow up too afraid.
And they are more sensitive to both good and bad environments around them. If that's the case, they are more likely to slip into depression, anxiety, and social anxiety.
The upshot is that introverted kids also enjoy a bigger boost from stable home environments and good parenting. If they get such positive nurturing, they tend to have fewer emotional problems and more social skills.

Introverts Learn Better Than Extroverts

A study shows that introverts tend to make fewer mistakes because they are less impulsive and think more.

But the most interesting aspect is what happens after the mistake.
After the mistake introverts slow down.
Extroverts instead speed up. And don't learn as much from their mistakes.

Reward and Treat Orientation

This is because extroverts seek the win and the buzz and don't focus on the threats.
Any roadblock along the way is something they want to smash as quickly as possible.

Introverts instead are programmed to analyze the environment and look for threats and pitfalls.

Changing Our Personalities

We can certainly change our personalities.

But up to a certain point (rubber band theory).
For example, when we engage in positive self talk the amount of activity in our amygdala goes down and activity in the prefrontal cortex goes up.

But it's not powerful enough to switch off the amygdala altogether. The unlearning indeed is not total.
The prefrontal cortex can suppress the amygdala, but during times of stress, when the prefrontal cortex is too weak to soothe the amygdala, the fears can resurface again.

Self Monitoring

Introverts who were better at learning to act as extroverts score very high at a trait that psychology calls "self-monitoring".

Self-monitors are very good at scanning social environments and looking for social cues. Then they are very able to act and behave in ways that conform to the environment.

These are the ultimate social chameleons.

Introversion and Sensitivity

Introverts are more likely to be highly sensitive and to have a strong conscience.
They are more likely to be moved by a serenade or a kind act.

We don't know exactly how many introverts are also sensitive, but we do know that 70% of sensitive people are introverts. And even the other 30% need a lot of "downtime".

This seems to say that there is an overlap between introvert qualities and sensitivity.

Also, read:

- The Highly Sensitive Person

Introverts Understand Social Dynamics Better

A study showed that extroverts were better at gauging whether their conversation partner was glad to be talking to them.

And that seemed to confirm the obvious: extroverts are better at social skills.

But that was because the study measured the understanding while the conversation happened, and extroverts are better at multitasking.

When it comes to observation, studies showed either no difference or that introverts were better at picking social cues.

Communication Style

Introverts tend to be conflict-avoiders while extroverts easily engage in conflict and speak more directly.

Extroverts tend to talk about lots of topics, while introverts pick a few and dig deeper into them.

But the funny thing is that they can get along very well with each other.
Introverts feel extroverts are a breath of fresh air, while extroverts feel they can relax with introverts.

Agreeableness and Intimacy

Introversion is not correlated with agreeableness and enjoyment of intimacy.

Introverts are just as likely to search for the company of others. Just in smaller doses.

Introversion and Extroversion in Leadership

We all have a tendency to equate charisma and extroversion with competence.
And to follow the more outspoken leader, the one who seems to have a quick answer to problems.

But we are wrong:

Why The Super Extrovert Leader Myth is Wrong

The more extroverted and charismatic leaders have higher salaries, but not better performances.
Jim Collins research set out to study what made corporations outperform the market and didn't want to touch upon leadership.
However, it turned out that leadership was instrumental to outperformance.
And the best leaders, as exemplified by Adam Smith, were all unassuming, quiet, reserved, and mild-mannered.
Some people even described them as shy.

Basically, the myth of the highly extroverted charismatic leader as the effective man at the helm of the organization does not hold true in the research.

Susan Cain says:

> We need leaders who build not their egos, but the institutions they run.

Now the question: are introverts better leaders?

Introverts Are Better Leaders of Great Workforces

Extroverts manage to get higher performances when their teams are passive and do their job without exercising initiative.

Introverts outperform extrovert leaders when they are heading a motivated and active workforce.

What's the difference?
Introverts listen to the inputs from their team and are more likely to empower them and put those ideas to the test.

This research is still in its infancy, says the author, but it's highly promising.

Introverts Underrated Powers

- Alertness
- Sensitivity to nuances
- Complex emotionality
- Power of focus over the long haul (grit)
- Deeper analysis of topics
- Better at delaying gratification (a staple of long-term success)

- Learn better from mistakes (are more reflective and less likely to rush through)
- Less likely to get caught up in “deal fever” and “winner’s curse” (ie.: competitive mistakes)
- Better control their emotions (best traders tend to be emotionally stable introverts)
- See the dangers (not by chance the men who foresaw the financial crisis were outcasts not duped by groupthink)
- Less drawn to easy rewards like the lures of alcohol, sex, party, and drugs (don’t buzz as easily)
- Accuracy over speed

Alone Practice is Best Predictor of Success

Susan Cain says that practicing in groups is not the best and most effective way of doing deep practice because it requires unwavering, direct, and undisturbed focus.
It also requires working hard on the parts that are *most challenging to you*.
In most disciplines, that happens when practicing alone.

That’s a big advantage for introverts, who naturally prefer alone time to work.

Good Ideas Drown In Extroverts/Introverts Mixed Groups

Let’s imagine that extroverts have equally good ideas as introverts -and that might be an understatement!-.

The simple way how extroverts and introverts communicate will almost guarantee that great ideas from introverts will drown out.

Extroverts tend to think out loud and speak up. Introverts tend to be soft-spoken and to think through their ideas longer.
This means that extroverts’ ideas and opinions will get more air time and that extroverts’ ideas and points of view will often not be heard at all.

The issue is compounded by our tendency to rate talkers as smarter than quiet ones (while studies show the opposite).

Studies show that is exactly what happens.
Studies show that we are wasting introverts’ good ideas!

What to do then?

Brain Storming Doesn’t Work: Here’s What to Do

Brainstorming happens in groups and has four pillars:

- Generate as many ideas as possible
- Don’t judge or criticize ideas
- Be freewheeling, don’t censor your ideas
- Build on the ideas of fellow group members

But here is what research shows:

- People produce more ideas when they are alone
- The ideas they produce alone are of higher quality
- Performance gets worst as the group size increases (unless it’s online groups)
- Groups alter people’s minds in a way that promotes groupthink and conformity (and people actually believe they reached the conclusion on their own and without pressure)

What’s the solution then?

If you have talented team members encourage people to work alone when you are looking for creativity and efficiency

- Make people come up with ideas *before* the meeting
- Encourage electronic collaboration

Internet Empowers Introverts

Malcolm Gladwell's The Tipping Point popularizes the idea of connectors as super extroverts with hundreds of friends and connections.

But building a huge following is not a prerogative of extroverts anymore.

Today an introvert can start a website, a blog, a digital product, or even self-publish a book.

The Internet changed the rules.
The same person who finds it difficult to introduce himself at a bar can gather millions of followers online.

Real-Life Applications

Exaggerate When You Pitch Extroverts (and Politicians)
Politicians tend to be extroverts. If you need to pitch a congress, make your pitch more attention than you normally would because extroverts have a higher bar when it comes to sensitivity and you need more stimuli to get through.

Include Introverts In Your Organization
Keep in mind around one-third of your team is introverted.
Give them space in open offices, and allow your team to write down their ideas. And watch out for groupthink and for losing the introverts' best ideas to the louder extroverts.

Leverage Your Strengths
Whichever you lean towards, learn what are your strengths and play by them.
If the system is skewed toward open offices for extroverts, then don't play by the system's rules.

CONS

Some Off Topics
We didn't need to hear about Tony Robbins seminars in my opinion. A bit of it also felt like a couched attack on Tony Robbins.
I thought that part was irrelevant and way too long for the value it added.

Missed One Citation
Quiet is awesome and well-researched. At a certain point, the author said "introversion is a better predictor of grades than cognitive abilities".
That seemed huge to me and I wish she had given a reference for such a statement.

PROS

Helps You Understand People
If you have been reading around here for a while you know that I rarely give out five stars.
But as a man passionate about understanding people, Quiet has opened new doors of understanding for me.

Best Resource for Introverts and Extroverts
If you want to better understand introversion and extroversion, look no further.

Can Be Life Changing

For people who are struggling as introverts in a world designed for extroverts, they can actually face nasty psychological consequences. They can think they are not good enough for not coping well with open offices and multitasking.
For these people, Susan Cain's Quiet can be a life changer.

Quiet Review

I approached this book thinking I already knew about introversion and extroversion.
I thought Susan Cain's Quiet was going to confirm a couple of things and add one or two more.

I am glad I was terribly wrong: Quiet changed the way I understand introversion and extroversion.

And it deeply expanded my knowledge of *psychology and people*.

Including my own self-awareness.
Susan Cain says that introverts process and ponder more deeply. And introverts who are socially oriented spend a lot of time thinking about social dynamics and social interactions.
This is why I became good at analyzing social interactions and power dynamics.

This is a great read for those who want to understand people and psychology.
But it's also an important book from a leadership, organizational, and business point of view to get the most out of the many introverts in the workforce.

Check out the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

Best Pick Up Lines (And Avoid These Cheesy Ones!)

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for the best pickup lines?

For smooth pick-up lines that actually work?

You have come to the right place.
This article will tell you everything you need to know about pick-up lines.

And by the end of it, you will know how to use pickup lines to get girls.

Contents

- Best Pick-Up Lines
- Smooth Pick-Up Lines That Work
  - Example
- Good Canned Approaches
- Bad Pick-Up Lines: 10 Lines To Avoid
- Do Pick-Up Lines Work? What Science Says
  - Why Cheesy Pick-Up Lines Don't Work
- SUMMARY

Best Pick-Up Lines

The 5 best pickup lines are:

1. ***Hi, my name is Lucio, what's your name*** <— Neutral, *assumes* attraction
2. *This cue is infinite, is it always like that?* <— Social opener, doesn't give interest away
3. *I, couldn't help but notice X about you, are you always like that* <– Personally-relevant comment

4. *Hi, I liked your X, it looks great on you. My name is Lucio* <— Honest compliment, no games
5. *Hi, I'm gonna be honest. I find your walk very sexy. I wanted to meet yo*u <— Bold and direct, displays masculine confidence

Neutral conversation starters are how you would start a conversation.

The direct and honest style signal that you are approaching her because you like her.

Compliments tell her what you find attractive about her -without joking and without putting her on a pedestal-.

Finally, you can put all your sexual innuendos while actually delivering a neutral line.
That's the most advanced style.

See Ashton Kutcher doing it:

> **By the way, there is only one pick up line. Everything else is cheese.**

Smooth Pick-Up Lines That Work

Here are the only smooth pick-up lines:

- … (smile at her, say nothing, until she speaks first)
- Hi (sticks his hand out, palm up and gallant, as if he knew her)
- Me, you, going on an adventure. Right now

Now you may be wondering:

Why are they so different than most popular pick-up lines?

It's because **the problem with most popular pick-up lines is that they pedestalize women**.

You say something like "did you get hurt when you fell from heaven" and you immediately place her above you.

And **women don't like men who are below them**.
Women are programmed to like men who are higher value than they are.

So the smoothest pickup lines don't idealize her, don't place her above you, and don't sub-communicate that you're chasing her bad.

Example

Of coures, pick-up lines may work.

But they must be in the right situations, from the right man, and well-delivered.

Here is a good example:

What makes Sean Connery's pickup line good?
Well, to begin with, Connery comes across as a very high-quality man. So some cheese can serve to take the edge off.

Furthermore, he does not make it about her.
She mentions the word "pussy", and he makes it more about sex than about her.

He comes across as a womanizer who loves women, not a guy who is idolizing a specific woman.
Big freaking difference.

Good Canned Approaches

And now let's go to a few better options here, shall we?

> **"Excuse me.**
> **I know this is going to sound strange, but if I don't ask you now, I'll be kicking myself for the rest of the day. I'm running to meet a friend [i.e., I have friends and am not a stalker], but I think you're really [extremely, drop-dead] cute [gorgeous, hot]. Could I have your phone number? I'm not a psycho—I promise. You can give me a fake one if you're not interested**

That's actually the script that Tim Ferris proposes in *The 4-Hour Workweek*.

It's a bit reminiscent of the *early pick-up scripts*, and a few things are very wrong with it:

- I know this is going to sound strange (the idea is to "pace her reality", but only communicates you are doing something strange, which is not, and leads her to believe something strange is about to happen)
- Could I have your number? (asks for permission: bad)
- You can give me a fake one if you're not interested (takes the pressure off, yes, but also takes the pressure off from you, which can lead her to think you can't withstand social pressure. Plus, it's tentative)

The "kicking myself" bit is very popular around the web:

> **(…) but I would have kicked myself if I hadn't come to talk to you**

It's not too bad, but it's not the best either.
The issue with it is that it's too self-referencing. It's too much about yourself.
Are you into her, or are you just talking to her so that *you* will "feeling bad"?
Ideally, you want to make her feel that the chemistry was so good that you just had to talk to her, and not that you were just avoiding remorse.

> **'I just wanted to tell you, I think you are gorgeous and would love to get to know you better. If you want to have a drink and talk, I'll be over there. If not, that's fine.**

I like this one.
The issue with it is that while it does indeed take the pressure off, it also leaves it fully up to her to make the move.
And few women actually make the move.

> **Excuse me, but do I know you from somewhere?**
> **'Wow, I could have sworn I'd seen you in my classes / office. Well, now that I've got you here, what would it take for me to be able to take you out sometime?**

Not the worst, if you end it well.

In this case, it does not end well though.
Also, I like it most if it's true that she looks like a known face.
If you were using it as an excuse, then you're better off with something else.

Bad Pick-Up Lines: 10 Lines To Avoid

Let's dig some deeper.

We will now take a few pick-up lines and explain what's so bad about them from a social dynamic perspective:

- **Do I know you? Because you look a lot like my next girlfriend.**

Who would pick a girlfriend only based on first looks?

Only a guy with little experience and few options.

High-quality women don't choose boyfriends based on first looks, and they will be thinking: "do I want to be in a relationship with this guy"?
99% of the time the answer is "no".

- **Are you religious? Because you're the answer to all my prayers.**

Many pick-up lines follow this format: you are the woman of my dream and now I say it to you in a very corny way.
The problem is all the same: it's typical of low-quality men to put a woman on a pedestal without even knowing her.
It communicates low standards and that all you care about is superficial appearance.

- **Did the sun come out or did you just smile at me?**

While you build her up, you are also deprecating yourself. But it's not the good self-deprecating style of the high-value man.
This style of self-deprecation is more like the dog who wags his tail at any scrap she throws at him.

- **Kiss me if I'm wrong, but dinosaurs still exist, right?**

This style of pick-up line makes fun of you tricking her into doing something sexual with you.

And that's exactly the issue with it: high-quality men don't need to trick women into being sexual with them.

- **I'm lost. Can you give me directions to your heart?**

The dream of a woman is a man who makes her follow in love in a whirlwind of romance.

And that does *not* entail her giving instructions.
When women need to give instructions they either lose interest very quickly, they get annoyed very quickly, or, in the best-case scenario, they enter the relationship as a puppet down in power.

Here is an example from "Terms of Endearment":

> **Her**: "Don't worship me until I've earned it".

What an awesome explanation straight from the horse's mouth on why pick-up lines don't work :)

Let's go on:

- **Roses are red, violets are blue, I can't rhyme, but can I date you?**

Again, puts the onus on the woman to lead the dating dance.
But the man who dates successfully does not ask for permission.

- **Are you sure you're not tired? You've been running through my mind all day.**

Pick-up lines are bad enough.
That stalker pickup line can take it to the next level though.

- **Is there an airport nearby or is it my heart taking off?**

This is an example of the pick-up lines implying you're falling in love.

It's usually guys with little experience who fall in love very quickly.

They idealize women without even knowing them. But women, like everyone else, prefer people who can appreciate them for who they are, not for non-existing mental masturbation.

- **There's only one thing I want to change about you, and that's your last name**

Well, I have to admit… This one had me smiling.

Since marriage is becoming so much rarer in Western cities these days, this pickup line is so out of touch reality that it might even work if delivered as tongue-in-cheek.

- **Hi, how was heaven when you left it?**

Again, idealization of the woman.

This is a huge burden on women. They want to be women, with their defects and sexuality, and not weighed down by his immature madonna-whore complex.
Don't idealize people, take them for who they are.

- **Do you believe in love at first sight or should I pass by again?**

This one also had me smiling.

But it doesn't help your case any.
It actually frames your first time as not being good enough. And now she's the one calling the shots why you're the one prepping up for your second try?

- **Was your dad a boxer? Because damn, you're a knockout!**

Direct sexual compliments can work great.

But when you express sexual appreciation hiding behind a pick-up line, this is what it actually communicates: "I don't really think you'd ever screw me, so I'm just admiring".

- **Do you have a pencil? Cause I want to erase your past and write our future.**

This style is a poor style of being a provider, and while dating as a provider can be an effective dating strategy, fantasizing about her is never is.
"Erasing her past", again, communicates he is seeking a fantasy, not a real woman with a real life.

- **Are you a dictionary? Cause you're adding meaning to my life.**

Simply terrible.

And a very common reason why pick-up lines do not work: they communicate that without her your life is meaningless.
But women don't want men who are incomplete without them. They want men with rich lives, who are doing things and going places.

- **Did it hurt? When you fell from heaven?**

One of the most typical and cheesiest pickup lines.

It's the archetype pick-up line of putting women on a pedestal.
It's usually inexperienced men and too-nice guys who put women on a pedestal.
And neither of them fares too well in dating.

You must be a broom, ‘cause you just swept me off my feet.

It’s the man’s role to sweep her off her feet, not the other way around.
Drop the cheese and grow a set instead :).

You don’t need keys to drive me crazy.

And you don’t need much help to masturbate if you keep using those lines.
And trust me, you’ll train yourself quite a lot of it if by now you still didn’t get why pick-up lines don’t work.

Do Pick-Up Lines Work? What Science Says

Science is clear:

Pick up lines don’t work.
Or, to be more are accurate, are sub-optimal.

Quoting from The APA Handbook on Relationships:

> (…) both men and women found the cute–flippant lines to be the least desirable…

However, men still miss on this:

> However, consistent with hypothesized gender scripts, women rated them as less preferred than men

And more research confirmed the same:

> (…)
> Subsequent research, using different methods, has generally been consistent with Kleinke et al.’s (1986) findings (Cunningham & Barbee, 2008; Levine, King, & Popoola, 1994)

However, consistent with what we say here, it doesn't really matter for high-value men and lover type seeking short-term situations:

> research has suggested that the type of relationship desired influences a woman's evaluation of a man's opening line. Senko and Fyffe (2010) varied the nature of the relationship being sought by a woman (short vs. long term), the attractiveness of the male, and the opening lines in hypothetical scenarios. Consistent with evolutionary theory, if a long-term relationship was being sought, women preferred the direct or innocuous lines and associated these with intelligence and trustworthiness, but if a short-term relationship was the goal and the man was attractive, women had no preference for type of opening line.

So…

What does this mean to you?

Learn how to be a power-aware, high-value man.

Some starting articles:

- How to approach a girl
- How to meet girls
- Cold approach

But to any successful, power-aware man, science only confirmed what they already knew.

I scoured the web looking for the best pickup lines.

I paid particular attention to the "pick-up lines that work".

And… I couldn't find many that actually work.

Most collections of pickup lines are of the cheesy kind.
And if your goal is to sleep with a girl, or enter into a relationship with her, the cheesy pick-up lines are all terrible.

If you're not sure what I mean by cheesy pickup lines, this is an example:

> **Are you a magician? Because whenever I look at you, everyone else disappears!**

Even if your goal is to tell a funny pickup line to make her laugh, you can probably do better than that.
Both in terms of an actual introduction and in terms of starting with a laugh.

Indeed the laugh that most girls have is that kind of "oh God, I can't believe you said anything that cheesy" type of laugh.

Also, people interpret jokes as if there is at least some truth behind them. And the truth behind a pick-up line is not a good one.

Why Cheesy Pick-Up Lines Don't Work

There are two major reasons why pick-up doesn't work.

And that's that when you deliver them, it communicates the following:

1. You're not serious about seducing her, you're just there to joke around
2. Cheesy pickup lines put her on a pedestal, and communicate that she is out of your league (higher sexual market value than you)

And finally, the vast majority of people -and women- feel that pick-up lines are:

- A cheesy way of flirting, and an indicator of low social skills

Here is an example from a family guy for you.
Is this the line that anyone who's serious about getting to know a woman would use?

Exactly.
That's the line that a kid would use.

SUMMARY

Pick-up lines, especially cheesy pick-up lines, don't work.

However, some smooth pick-up lines can work well if you deliver them in a funny and self-amusing way that starts the conversation with a big laugh.
However, you must quickly change the dynamic to avoid a frame of you chasing her, and her on the pedestal.

Women do love men who make them laugh, and if you use a pick-up line to do just that, without coming across as cheesy and chasing, then you're good -and hats off to you, you're a socially advanced guy-.

To learn what works best, based on science and experience, see **Seduction University**.

Why Intercultural Communication Is a Waste of Time

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 August 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking to deepen your intercultural communication skills?

Read this before you embark on that intercultural communication course, or you might not be using your time in the most effective way -and you might be led down the wrong path, too-.

By the end of this article, you will know why intercultural communication is over-hyped and how you can better invest your time.

Contents

- Intercultural Communication Definition
- Why You Better Learn The BASICS
  - Differences Are Infinite, Commonalities Are Shared
  - Commonalities Run Deeper
  - Individuals Trump Cultures
  - Humans Naturally Adapt
  - Globalization Is Converging Towards A Global Nonverbal Language
- Intercultural Communication Over-Hype: Example
- How The Basics Trump Intercultural Communication
  - How to Get Out of All Sticky Intercultural Situations
- Who is Over-Hyping Intercultural Communication?
- Don't Study Intercultural Communication: Learn It
- The Basics You Need to Master
- SUMMARY

Intercultural Communication Definition

Intercultural communication is communication flowing across different cultures and social groups.

In theory, the bigger the cultural differences among those groups, the more difficult the communication will be. And in theory, the more you familiarize yourself with the other culture, the more effective your communication will be.

Why You Better Learn The BASICS

Learning the specifics of intercultural communication is a poor use of your time UNLESS you are already extremely proficient in all the other basics of communication and *human psychology*.

Why?

Think of it this way: imagine you are moving out of your parents and want to learn to cook.
Would you start by trying to master the art of making pizza while tossing the dough in the air?

Probably not.

You would start instead by learning how to switch on the oven and the burners.
Then boil pasta and add sauce.
Or grilling some meat.

Or whichever basic food you like most.

Well, learning intercultural communication before you are proficient in the basics of communication is like learning to toss dough in the air.
Fancy to look at, but useless if you first don't know how to switch on the oven.

Bottom line:

Intercultural communication is a "good to have".
It's the icing on the cake.
Learning the basics of communication and people psychology is a must-have.
Before worrying about icing, you must get the cake.

Differences Are Infinite, Commonalities Are Shared

The differences between cultures are important.
But even more important are the *commonalities* among human beings.

There are thousands of cultural differences. As many cultural differences as there are cultures, in fact.
But there are only a handful of *foundational* commonalities!

You learn the human commonalities once, they serve you well for a lifetime… And everywhere.
You learn cultural differences… And they only help you with *a* specific culture (on a superficial level).

Commonalities Run Deeper

The commonalities run deep.

For example, says the *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication*:

> Not only are the seven universal facial expressions panculturally recognized (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Matsumoto, 2001) but there is pancultural similarity in judgments of relative intensity among faces; that is, when comparing expressions, people of different countries agree on which is more strongly expressed (Ekman et al., 1987; Matsumoto & Ekman, 1989).

They are common because they are ingrained within us by common ancestry over millions of years.

A focus on the commonalities is a focus on what matters most.
It's a focus on what makes us human beings, on what makes us accept or reject people at a visceral level.

Cultural differences are more superficial instead.

When you make a cultural mistake you are branded as a foreigner who doesn't know any better.
Not great, but not terrible either.

But when you get the human basics wrong, you will be ostracized.

Individuals Trump Cultures

Quoting from the Routledge Handbook on Communication Skills:

> there are individual as well as cultural differences in individualism and collectivism (Pfundmair, Graupmann, Frey, et al. , 2015). Individuals differ as much as or more than cultures, and so it is the nature of the interlocutor that is important rather than the cultural background from which he or she comes (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2014).

Humans Naturally Adapt

There is also proof that humans naturally adapt to a new culture.

For example, Sussman & Rosenfeld found out that non-native English speakers automatically adopted the same social distances as Americans when they spoke in English.

My advice then is to hone that ability to adapt, like a good Machiavellian, instead of learning a set of outdated rules of intercultural communication.

Speaking of outdated:

Globalization Is Converging Towards A Global Nonverbal Language

Matsumoto & Hwang found out that some emblems are becoming recognized across cultural boundaries.

And other researches noted that mass media and the Internet may be pushing towards a universal set of emblematic gestures common across the whole world.

Intercultural Communication Over-Hype: Example

I remember some time ago reading a book on communication.
I don't remember the title of the book, but it had the customary paragraph on intercultural communication.

And what's the most typical example of intercultural communication for Westerners, especially business Westerners?

Japan of course.
One of the richest countries in the world, and one of the most culturally different.

Well, the example was a woman on a business trip in Japan.
Let's call Dana, and here's a quick recap of that story:

1. Dana met her prospects in the lobby of her hotel
2. They were in suits, she was in jeans and a shirt
3. The Japanese bowed. She didn't
4. They brought a gift, she didn't have any (and she didn't excuse herself and didn't try to make up for it… Smart:S)
5. They gave their business card with two hands, Japanese style
6. She grabbed it and shoved it in her pocket without looking at it

Soon after, the Japanese stood up and left.
And Dana was surprised!

The author gives us this cross-cultural communication failure and says: “see? This is what happens when you don’t learn intercultural communication”.

The author was onto something. That was a communication failure.
But it was NOT an example of failed *intercultural* communication.
That’s an example of failing at the *BASICS* of social skills.

- A bow -and lowering our head- is a sign of reverence in *any* culture.
- Bringing a gift is an offer of value and a symbol of reverence in *any* culture
- Failing to value a personal object given to you with much attention is a sign of disrespect in *any* culture
- Not matching the levels of deference and warmth is a communication failure in *any* culture

The woman in the example -if she was even real- is not the example of a woman who was not skilled at intercultural communication. She is the poster child of a severe lack of *emotional intelligence* and social skills.

How The Basics Trump Intercultural Communication

You can reach 80% of intercultural effectiveness with the basics.
And *without* knowing the intercultural differences.

Take the example from above, and see how you would behave if you had a solid foundation of social skills and social awareness.

Someone bows at you, but people don’t bow in your culture.

But if you know the basics, you know that matching deference signals with deference signals is the equivalent of exchanging olive branches (unless you are trying to dominate them).

And if someone gives you something of value -such as a gift- and you are familiar with the theory of social exchange-, you know that to be in balance you need to give something back.
For example, a socially smart woman in the example below would have profusely thanked them and apologized for being so “thick”. Then she would have said something like “please let me make it up to you”, then called the waiter and ordered a bottle and/or finger food for all of them.

And if would have immediately gone from a mistake into positive territory.

If you know the basics you also know that you show appreciation for what your guests appreciate.
So when someone gives you a business card with two hands, you will hold it the same way, look at it and then thank

them. And then give your business card the same way they did.
And you don't need to know the specifics of the Japanese culture in handling business cards.
Simple principle: when you are not sure, copy them.

How to Get Out of All Sticky Intercultural Situations

A warm smile and a welcoming attitude will get you over 95% of intercultural issues.

For the last 5%, you can say something like this:

> **Her**: Hi, you are so welcoming, thank you so much. I love this country. Unluckily I don't know the culture. So please, please, if I do anything that offends you, let me apologize in advance.
> Please let me know what I do wrong and what are the cultural and social norms here, I would love to learn your culture

Not only do you both verbalize and show your warm attitude, but you elect them as your teachers.
And now they will love you twice for it.

Indeed, it's my belief and my personal experience, that **a warm and welcoming personality doing intercultural communication mistakes is actually endearing**.

People understand when you come from a fundamentally good and respectful place and they will want to help you out.

Who is Over-Hyping Intercultural Communication?

If intercultural communication is not so important, why do so many seminars focus on it?

I don't know the answer to this question.

I have a few reasons in mind:

- It sounds cool to talk about "intercultural communication"
- Telling people to focus on the basics is much less sexy and appealing
- It makes for entertaining training
- It's simpler than actually learning the basics

Don't Study Intercultural Communication: Learn It

Based on the notion that time is the most limited resource we have, I believe that studying intercultural communication in a classroom is a colossal waste of time.

Go wherever you want to go and observe in loco.
It will make your journey more interesting and it will develop your social skills more deeply.

The Basics You Need to Master

All along this post, we repeated that the basics are what matters.

Well, what are these basics?
It's all that makes you a high-quality, socially skilled individual.

These are what I would call the "human constants".
Such as **basic principles of social communication that are valid with every human being**, wherever you go in the world.

Here is a quick list just to give you an idea:

- Body language
  - Comfort/discomfort signs
  - Taking up space / making oneself smaller
  - Aggressive/welcoming
- Voice
  - Tonality
  - Volume
  - Nervous cracks / confident
- Facial expression
  - Warm smile
  - Raising eyebrow upon meeting (friendly signal)
  - Micro-expressions
- Social behavior
  - Listening (respectful everywhere)
  - Asking questions (an indicator of interest everywhere)
  - Talking over people (dominant and disrespectful everywhere)
  - Matching and mirroring (if you don't know what's expected, mimic them)
- Fears and phobias
  - The whole world over we're afraid of the same things, including social fears
  - Save people face
  - Build people up in front of their peers
- Basic drives
  - The whole world over we all have the exact same drives: learn them and you can influence people no matter the culture
- Ego
  - The whole world over we all want to be: cherished, respected, loved, praised

SUMMARY

Intercultural communication is a subset of social skills.

Imagine your ability to relate with people is a tree.

Then social skills are the trunk. And intercultural communication is a twig on that tree, part of the branch of communication.

When you grow your social skills trunk, you *automatically* grow intercultural communication as well.
But if you grow the twig of intercultural communication you don't really grow your tree at all.
And that's the definition of time waste.

This means:

Focus on the trunk of social skills, not on the twig of intercultural communication.

The Better Angels of Our Nature: Is Pinker Realistc, or Naive?

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2011) author Steven Pinker explains that our world has been increasingly improving, moving towards peace and safety. But it's not written anywhere it will keep on going the same way, and it's up to each one of us to keep it on that positive trend.

TPM Strategic Note: From brawn to Machiavellian brains
From a strategic point of view, Pinker suggests that we evolved from power resting more on violence and raw dominance to a more sophisticated arena of **Cognitive and Social Manipulation (High-IQ Power).**
Old warlord approaches have been replaced, or at least co-exist more, with **Soft Power**. Understanding this historical arc is not only about "optimism", but also about **contextual calibration**.

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- Notes
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  - We Also Naturally Keep Violence in Check
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  - Violence Driver #2: Revenge
  - Violence Driver #3: Sadism
  - Violence Driver #4: Ideology
  - Peace Driver #1: Empathy
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  - States and Governments Brought Peace
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  - Doesn't Consider That Potential for Mass Destruction Matters (Nuclear Weapons)
  - Idealism and Poor Numbers
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Key Takeaways

- Humans are violent and peaceful at the same time
- The world has been increasingly moving towards a safer and safer place to be
- Constant improvement is not a given, and we must all contribute to keeping the good trend

Notes

About the Author:
Steven Pinker is a psychology professor at Harvard, and a popular author of science books, including "*The Blank Slate*", "*How the Mind Works*", and "*Enlightenment Now*".

Violence Driver #1: Personal Gain (Predation)

Steven Pinker never defends or justifies violence, of course, however, he does explain that it's a natural part of being a human.

Through *natural selection,* all organisms evolved to compete. And competition sometimes requires the use of violence to acquire scarce resources or preclude competitors from getting those resources.

This type of violence is called predation.

Violence in Daily Life

The most violent stage of life is toddlerhood, and though most humans rein it back as they age, we still continue having violent thoughts.
A university survey showed that between 80% and 90% of college students fantasized about killing someone in the past year.

We Also Naturally Keep Violence in Check

However, we also have natural inborn mechanisms to keep that violence in check, says Steven Pinker.

Violence is risky, for example.
Violence doesn't guarantee victory, and the person using violence might as well lose the battle. And even when winning, it's rare that he will suffer absolutely no consequences.

Also, violence against kin harms our own genes.

Dominance Hierarchies Reduce Violence

Since violence is dangerous for every single individual of a species and can also be counterproductive for the group, humans evolved dominance hierarchies and rank each with social status.

Steven Pinker says that dominance hierarchies are based on who *would* win a fight.
In humans, the hierarchies tend to favor males who have an advantage in size and aggression.

The male at the top has access to more women and resources, which means that as hierarchies reduce violence, they also encourage it to reach the top position.

In men, it's not as crude as it is in other animals, but remnants can still be seen today.
Indeed, it's men who still pursue women and value social status and prestige the most.

My Note: this is a very good point Steven Pinker mates.
However, it's not completely true in all cases. When women outnumber men, men pursue very little and the need for competition diminishes among men while it increases among women.

This is something Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules for Life* talks about (and something this website often addresses).

Dominance Became Less Important

The author says that as humans developed into hunter-gatherer societies women became more interested in commitment from men than simple sperm from the most dominant.

Indeed, since raising children cost lots of effort and resources, women also wanted loyal men who would provide help. And that increased *male parental investment.*
The author says that's what produced our innate tendency to be generous and loyal to our loved ones (albeit not always loyal).

Violence Driver #2: Revenge

Steven Pinker says that the desire for revenge, including the long-term desire for revenge, is one of the major drivers of worldwide violence.

The author says that acting on our vengeful feelings makes us feel good, but that doesn't explain why the feeling even developed in the first place.

Steven Pinker says that most likely we developed the feeling of revenge as a deterrent. If an attacker knows that the victim or the parent will want to exact revenge on him, he will likely relent from his plans.

Violence Driver #3: Sadism

Sadism is the willingness of some people to inflict pain on others for their own pleasure.

The author says sadism is a far less common motivator for violence, and it's even less common in today's society.

The author says that sadism is an acquired trait that can become addictive.

Violence Driver #4: Ideology

Ideology strives to create a better world.

But it's actually similar to predation: we deploy violence to get what we want.

Steven Pinker says that we are wired to fall prey to ideology because of our natural *psychological biases:*

- Ingroup/Outgroup: we divide the world between the group we belong to and the others
- Polarization: grouping together people with similar ideas increases extremism
- Groupthink: when an ideology is adopted by the majority few people will question it
- Social Conformity: disagreement within a group is often repressed through social pressure

Luckily, we also have many natural drivers for peace and love.

Peace Driver #1: Empathy

Empathy is the altruistic concern we have for others.

Steven Pinker says we developed empathy to take care of our children.
One corollary is that we tend to like more people who have baby-like facial features.

Empathy eventually expanded to also include non-relatives, which further fueled the exchange of favors and resources.

Empathy can also lead to exploitation and unfairness.
People in line at a hospital, for example, were more willing to let a 10-year-old girl skip the line when they were told she had a serious illness. However, that does not take into account that in the line there might be people who need attention even more urgently.

Peace Driver #2: Self Control

The limbic system, the most ancient part of our brain, drives us to take advantage of an immediate opportunity even if the long-term consequences don't make it a good opportunity at all.

The prefrontal cortex instead, the area of the brain that governs complex decision-making and rational thinking, controls the impulses to make more rational decisions.

The prefrontal cortex provides self-control and willpower.
Even when it comes to violence, the prefrontal cortex often reins us in, and we can strengthen our own self-control through practice.

Peace Driver #3: Morality

Morality can be a strong driver against violence.
For example, morality provides a driver for a more equitable society and for a fair system of law.
Morality also controls violent tendencies and promotes sharing and caring.

However, morality has also been the cause of violence.
Let's think for example of times when homosexuality was regarded as immoral and gay people were killed in the name of "decency".

But Steven Pinker says that, on net balance, the effect of morality is more positive than negative.

Peace Driver #4: Reason

The reason could be used to increase our capabilities of destruction. And it has certainly been used that way.

However, sentient beings are more likely to pursue personal gain through the common good, which ultimately benefits everyone.

Overall, the net effect of the reason is that of decreasing violence and conflict.
Steven Pinker refers to the Flynn Effect when he says that reason is increasing in the world as global IQ also increases.

The overall increasing cognitive abilities involve abstract reasoning most of all, which is crucial in empathy because it helps us see things from other people's perspectives (also read: *Emotional Intelligence* and *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*).

Research shows that people who are good reasoners are more likely to hold cooperative stances on world politics and act less violently.

States and Governments Brought Peace

Steven Pinker settles the silly idea that nomadic tribes and hunter-gatherers were peaceful at heart.
They were instead in constant warfare for hunting land and watering holes.

With the switch to agriculture around 5.000 years ago city-states and governments began to form. That led to a decrease in violence because the government had a monopoly on violence.
Every legal system grants the government the sole right to the use of force and violence. Private citizens instead are persecuted when they commit violence.

More State Power = Less Violence

As the states became more and more powerful, they could strengthen their monopoly on violence.
This was especially evident and accelerated in the 15th century as Europe emerged from the Middle Ages.

With Trade Honest Toil Paid More Than Violence

As states and governments spread and as society became less violent, a virtuous circle formed.
Trading in honesty and peace provided a better way to get wealthy than through the use of violence.

Humanitarian Revolution

The third big revolution came in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The idea that began to spread was that everyone deserved to be treated with humanity. Even if of a different religion and even if suspected of witchcraft -while in the Middle Ages that meant burning on stakes-.
The humanitarian revolution also decreased the number and usage of slaves.

And it also improved the condition of criminals and outlaws. The rule of fair law started replacing the old eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, and torture, which once was common even for relatively smaller crimes, started disappearing.

Peace Among Powers

I found the statistics of The Better Angels of Our Nature to confirm something I had always suspected myself as a bit of a history buff: great powers have been progressively waging fewer wars.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the major European powers were at war 85% of the time. Between 1850 and 1950 that figure was down to 15% of the time.

And in the 1980s the great powers had been at peace for the longest time since the fall of the Roman Empire.

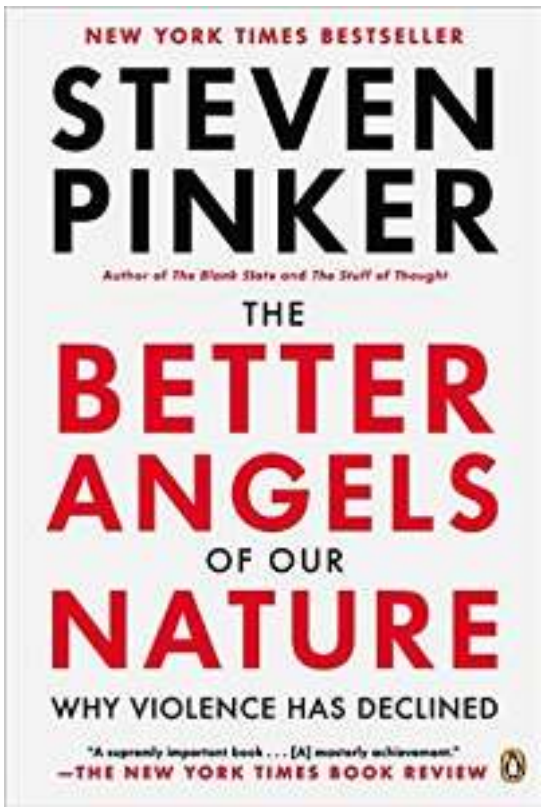
The author says that, overall, also smaller wars, genocides, and terrorism have decreased (yes, even accounting for 9/11).

Rights Revolution

The author says that the rights revolution of the ’60s and ’70s also decreased the violence against minorities. Steven Pinker says the rights revolution could be seen as a continuation of the humanitarian movement.

The violence against minorities and their living conditions have improved across the board. For women, racial minorities, and LGBT people of course.
But also corporal punishment against children has sharply decreased.

And of course, even animal rights and protection have been improved beyond the rosiest expectation.



TPM Takeaways

Gain Sophistication: More Than Dominance

Positive dominance is still a foundation for a man's empowerment because it's based primal biology. But it's not engouh.
Dominant bullies in the past may have fared better. Today, they only 'win' in primary school, then fall back to being low-status, low mate value men who struggle to even find a mate, let alone a quality one.

Don't Believe Warped Statistics

Please stop looking at the news and thinking that life is dangerous "these days". We are on a long-term, upward wave that moves towards a better and better world.
Steven Pinker indeed makes the case that, in spite we're living in a much safer world, most people's perception is that we live in a more dangerous world.

Criticism

There has been plenty of criticism of Pinker and his approach to data and science.

Here are my main points:

Simplistic, Post-Hoc Narratives Are Speculation & Storytelling

Several parts of this book are Pinker's speculations on "what could be happening" to explain this or that crime rate increase or decrease.

That may have some merit.
And can make for an interesting conversation, or an interesting first hypothesis to test.

But it's not scientific or empirical.

Also, I sometimes felt that Pinker over-simplified and over-attributed the cause of complex phenomena to overly simplistic explanations that may be part of the story, but are unlikely to be the full story.

Overall… Take this all with a big pinch of salt.

Naive Empiricism Sounds Scientific, But It's Not Great Science

A book that reviews data from, well… Before there were even written records, is bound to be flawed when it comes to numbers.

And even when analyzing historical records, the author can only analyze a *small* portion of reality. And when the data is available, the collection of that data is flawed for various reasons.

However, the author does not address these concerns and prefers instead to give a semblance of science to his own hypothesis (which, BTW, is a hypothesis I agree with).

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, author of "*The Black Swan*" and "*Fooled by Randomness*", has cast some serious doubts over Pinker's methodology.

Pinker, in a very un-scientist-like fashion, replied trying to shove one up Taleb in a response titled "Fooled by Belligerence", and that wasn't very pretty (note: there was a link but Pinker has taken down the page).
Frankly, I would have expected better from Pinker. Taleb attacked him ass-holish style, but that's Taleb.
Pinker replies like a different type of bully: the "smart alec type" (also see: archetypes of dominance).
Sapolsky, in his wonderful book "*Behave*", also criticize Pinker, both for his ideological stance and for his (lack) of data analysis.

I also think Pinker's numbers are unreliable.
However, even if I agree that Pinker's methodology and numbers are unreliable, it doesn't necessarily mean that his thesis on the decline of violence is also wrong.

Check out this article on the cognition process:

- The three pillars of wisdom

> How to Learn: The Three Pillars of Mastery

Doesn't Consider That *Potential* for Mass Destruction Matters (Nuclear Weapons)

Steven Pinker does not weigh strongly enough on what, in my opinion, is a major deterrent to wars among major powers: the *cost* of war.

Nuclear war is a common example.

But even without nuclear missiles, war today is far costlier than it's ever been.
That's a major deterrent to start any war. So war may not start for cost-benefit accounting, and not necessarily that we've all become "more civilized".

I recommend this article on naive self-help (the part on naive empiricism):

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Idealism and Poor Numbers

I quote Hanlon in *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives*:

> For Pinker, the crucial turning points are the invention of printing, the Age of Reason, and the Enlightenment. North American intellectuals frequently offer idealist explanations that magnify the importance of Great Books and intellectual movements, something we might call the "humanist fallacy."
>
> It is not easy to improvise oneself as an historian (…).
> Pinker relied instead on large "data sets" compiled by people – Rudolph Rummel and Matthew White – who were not themselves conversant with criminal archives. They relied on books, in English exclusively (…) fantastically exaggerated, which had the effect of magnifying the decline in violence over the centuries.
>
> Another weakness was to place the low homicide rate of the eighteenth century on a different level than today's rate, forgetting that without the advent of ambulances, cell phones, and advanced surgical teams working in operating rooms, today's rates would be comparable to those of recent centuries past.

Review

The Better Angels of Our Nature seeks to quantify a trend that, looking at history alone, seems to be moving toward a less violent, more cooperative civilization.

As a history student, I had the same feeling, including an even more obvious general trend towards greater technological and scientific development, and human empowerment.

However, while I still believe the trend is real, it's not necessarily because of Pinker's data and analysis.

Check out **TPM's best resources**.

How to Avoid Being a Social Burden

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Party poopers are a form of social burden, and nobody wants them around.

They spoil the party, dampen the mood, and end up being social burdens for everyone around.

By the end of this article, you will know exactly how not to be a party pooper.

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What Is A Party Pooper

This is a definition of a party pooper:

> A party pooper is an individual who takes value away from either people or social gatherings.
> The party pooper lists among his top skills the ability to make people want to move away, to make social situations akward for anyone around, or to suck the fun out of any group.

Taking value away means that the party pooper ends up being a social reject.
Albeit that might have to do with the way he looks, most of the time it's because of how he behaves.

In this article, I will use interchangeably the words social burden, social reject, and party pooper to identify the same patterns of behavior.

Behavior of Social Rejects

And here is how the social rejects manage to make their presence highly unwelcome to any social groups:

1. Poor Hygiene

This is the most obvious.

Nothing makes people want to move away like smelly or dirty individual.
Bad breath also counts.

Have you ever noticed the scene of drunk people speaking right in the face of some poor fella, with the drunk getting closer and closer while the poor fella backs away?
That's how social rejects behave when they drink too much.

If you tend to bad breath, carry mints.
If you have braces and food tends to get stuck, carry a toothbrush in the bag or go rinse your mouth from time to time.

Example of food residue in your teeth:

2. Terrible Fashion

Bottom line:

The better you look, the more welcome you are.

With a few exceptions.
In social relativity we explained that social value is relative to the group, so for example looking awesome in a suit might not make you the most welcome guest at a goth party.

But, on average, looking good in any type of attire will still make you more welcome even in very different social groups.
And, as a rule of thumb, the worse you look, the less people want to be around you.

On average, the more hipster, narcissistic, vein, or fashion-conscious the crowd is, the more your style will matter, and the more ruthlessly they will cut you out if you don't fit their definition of "cool".

The same principle applies to marketing and product placements BTW.

Here is an example from Sex And The City:

In Samantha's opinion, the "nobody in a tracksuit" carrying the bag devalues the bag. That's the exact same

influence that a poorly dressed social burden devalues his host group.

3. Interrupt Rapt Conversation

Party poopers join groups where people are engaged in deep conversation and are not looking for anyone else to join.

In this case, they either get thrown off the bus (example below) or, if the people speaking are too nice to drop him, they will get in and be hated for it.

Edit: see PU for the example.

4. Dampen The Mood / Off Sync Irony

The party pooper makes things awkward by being out of sync with the group's mood.

If the group is low energy, they enter too high-energy.
And if the group is too high energy, they bring the mood down.

Usually, it's better to go higher energy in a low-energy if you can bring the group's mood up.
People indeed don't go out to be bummed out and reflect on world troubles usually.
They go out to smile, socialize, meet new people, and generally have a good time.

Example from "Crazy Stupid Love":

Coming low energy or introducing sad and depressing topics is the stereotypical behavior of the party pooper.

However, social burdens, and being socially unintelligent, rarely manage to improve the group's mood.
They try to liven up the mood too early, at the worst possible moment, or by bringing people down. Family Guy makes fun of this behavior in its Kool-Aid skits.
Or this is what a party pooper might say:

> **Party pooper**: come on people, wake up, we're going to have fun, and you're acting like a bunch of dead zombies

The party pooper does not understand that you don't make people feel good by treating them like crap. That way, the group will only want to isolate him.

5. Asking Too Much Without Giving

One of the most common ways people make others want to run away: asking for stuff without giving anything in return.

The rule of thumb is that the higher up you go in the social hierarchy, the more people will want a piece of your success (or a piece of you).
But the people high up are getting tired of those asking for stuff.

And it's especially annoying when the social burden has nothing to offer in exchange (theory of social exchange).

6. Hovering Around Groups

You know those guys who stand at the fringes of your group or your conversation, hoping against hope to be introduced?
And then, when you keep on talking, they stay there and never go away?

Yeah, those… Those are great examples of social rejects.
They don't understand that they are not welcome and make everyone in the group feel awkward for *forcing* them to

make him look like an idiot.

How do you avoid this?
Only approach groups that are open to you.
If you stand near them and they don't welcome you or if you are standing near and there is no pause in the conversation for you to join, then keep moving.

An option to scout for people to talk to is to stand at the edge of a social gathering, but in a corner where people cannot see you so that you don't lose any status for being seen on your own. From there observe who is open to new people and conversations and then go say hi (learn body language to make the scouting easier).

7. Awkward Comments

There are a million ways to make things awkward and put people on the spot and I cannot give you them all here.

Many of them include discussing socially what is not supposed to be said, asked, or done in social settings.

However, some examples are:

1. Asking a girl out in front of a group
2. Revealing someone's secret in front of others
3. Mean jokes about someone in the group
4. Asking intimate questions publicly
5. Sexual advances to someone in the group
6. Revealing someone's group crush (especially if the crush is in the group)

Here's an example from 500 Days of Summer:

Also, read:

- Handling awkward social situations
- Defending people from social assault
- Handling a drama queen in public

8. Not Taking Hints

Here's a quick story to show what I mean by party poopers not taking hints:

I remember many years ago.

It was a hot summer day in Italy.
One girl, let's call her Summer was in the car talking and making out with a local older guy. Her girlfriend stayed with me, a friend of mine, and a friend of the guy in the car.
Let's call him Smart.

Smart kept asking me and my friend what we were up to and what we were going to do.

That seemed a strange question, but we didn't make anything out of it.

He asked again soon later, and then he said he should probably get going.

But he stayed there.

Then he finally lured us away and told us if we could please go and leave him alone with the girl.

Me and my friend were not taking the hints that we should have left the two of them alone.

Talking about a social burden becoming a sexual burden :).

Well, at least we had the benefit of being young and stupid.
Some adults though never understand that there are times when one should just leave.
It can be two friends who want to have their own conversation.
Or two lovers who want to move forward.

When in doubt: ask, or say that you're thinking about going.
If they answer something along the lines of "OK", they're being nice and want you to go.
And if you just leave, you can't be too wrong.

Example: Annoying Interviewer Doesn't Take Hints

The interviewer of Robert Downey Junior doesn't realize that the interview is being a slow-motion crash.

He just cannot get the social hints:

> **Interviewer**: (doesn't get the obvious signs that the actor is getting irritated)

9. Trying Too Hard

Trying too hard is one of the most obvious social blunders of the party pooper.

It can take many forms, including:

- Trying to crack jokes even though people are obviously not finding them funny
- Pretending to know what they're talking about
- Not sharing the group's culture but trying any way to fit any
- Interjecting with nothing of value (or with value-taking comments)

As a rule of thumb, when you have nothing of value to add, you are usually better off listening, nodding, and asking questions than to try and say anything.

And when you just don't fit in the group you are usually better off to move on.
Remember: the long-term solution to a happy social life is finding groups where you can be yourself and where you're accepted for who you are instead of trying to fit in with groups to which you don't belong to.

This scene from Gran Torino is a good example of a social reject trying too hard. In a social situation, he might not be assaulted quite like that, but most people will think he's an idiot nonetheless.

10. The Socially Inept

Finally, this last category of party poopers encompasses the whole category of the socially oblivious and socially challenged.

These are the far too common guys who:

- Stick with the same person for far too long
- Talk for way too long
- Tell flat stories that have no punch lines
- Talk about themselves too much
- Takes over the group and takes it nowhere
- Zoom in one single person making it awkward for everyone

You can read some examples in this article on a group conversation.

SUMMARY

Party poopers do two things:

1. Bring down the mood
2. Take away social value

In this article, we reviewed the most typical behaviors with which social burdens make socializing worst for

everyone.

Avoid these behaviors, and you will never be a party pooper in your life.

Do Good and Evil Overlap? A Heroes & Psychopaths Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Do good and evil overlap?

Do heroes and criminal psychopaths share the same personality traits?

More than one author and researcher speculated that was the case.

This post will delve into the literature to provide clear answers to the above questions.

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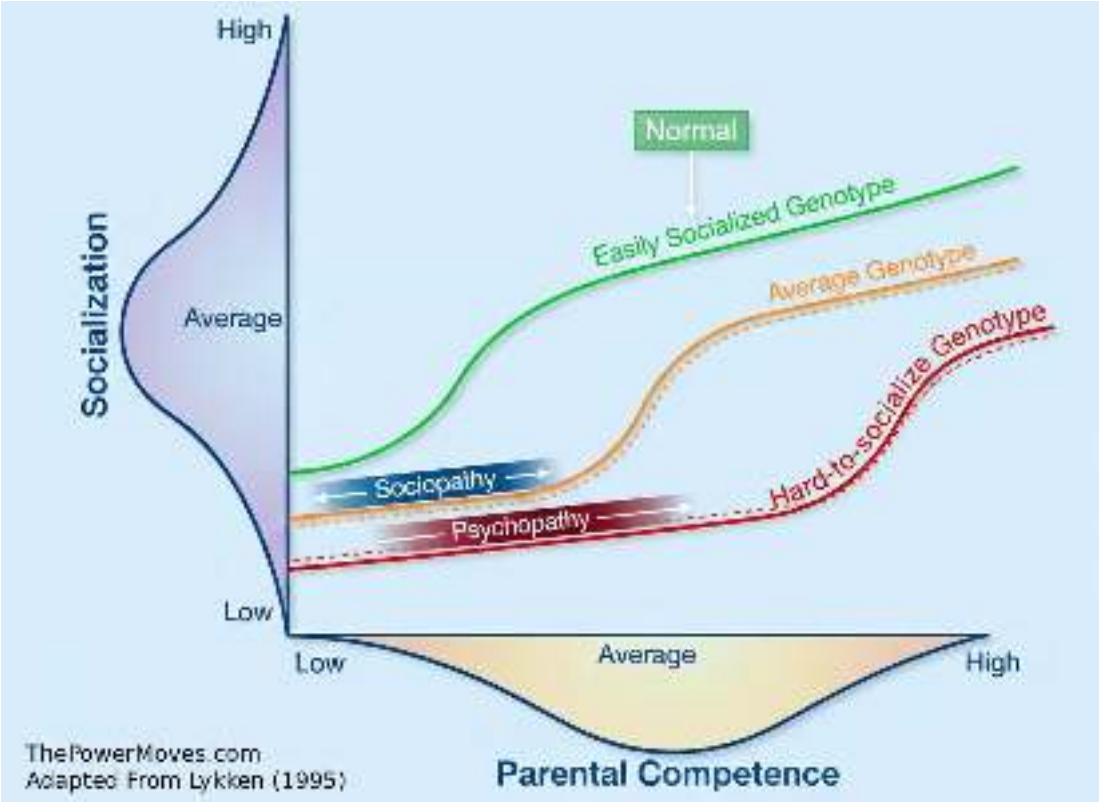
Are Psychopaths Heroes?

In his book *The Antisocial Peronalities* David Lykken provocatively proposes that psychopaths and heroes share a common root.
Lykken, a pioneer in the study of psychopathy and antisocial personalities, says:

> I believe, in short, that the hero and the psychopath may be twigs on the same genetic branch

This is a theory of successful psychopathy referred to as 'Moderated Psychopathy Model', and Lykken thought of parenting as the moderator effect:



The Lykken model of antisocial genotypes. Redrawn from Lykken (1995, p. 11). Copyright © 1995 Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

In general, it's also not uncommon sometimes to relativize evil and ascribing it to circumstances, rather than innate predispositions.

But is it true?
Are there little differences between people?
And are criminals more likely to be heroes?

This article digs deeper into the overlap between psychopathy/evil/heroes, and the relativity of evil.

What's a Psychopath

Psychopathy is a mental illness and the exact definition varies.
Wikipedia defines it as:

> A personality disorder characterized by persistent antisocial behavior, impaired empathy and remorse, and bold, disinhibited, and egotistical traits

Despite the common public perception, not all psychopaths are out-of-control criminals.
The high-functioning ones can better control their impulses even if they feel little for the people around them. And they enter into relationships, hold jobs, and can form families.

Psychopath's Mask

The high-functioning psychopaths "wear a mask" to blend in and often have families and jobs.

Individual cases rarely provide strong evidence, and much more so when anonymous and online.
But out of curiosity, I asked a self-identified psychopath on Quora about the idea of 'wearing a mask.' They described it as a persona constructed to blend in with others.
Note: This is a single anecdotal account and should not be taken as representative of all psychopaths.

> **Me**: Thank you! I'm curious about when you wrote on "wearing a mask". Do you mean to play the part and pretend to have feelings and empathy?
> **Psychopath Individual**: Indeed. It is a persona constructed to blend in with everyone else.

This is in line with general research.
Psychopaths typically show a marked deficit in conscience, empathy, and guilt. While there may always be some exceptions, these traits are generally diminished compared to non-psychopathic individuals.

One can expect that a lack of conscience and empathy, even in high-functioning psychopaths, removes a psychological inner brake against predation.

High Crime Incidence

Dr. Stephen McWilliams writes that psychopaths are around 1% of the US population and makeup around 25% of the inmate population.
This paper suggests that "93% of adult male psychopaths in the United States are in prison, jail, parole, or probation."

Even though these statistics may seem on the high end, the overarching consensus is that psychopaths commit more crimes and more violent crimes than non-psychopaths.

These patterns suggest a potential challenge to the simplified narrative that heroes and psychopaths share key moral traits.

Heroes vs. Evil

A hero is an individual who goes incurs personal costs to help others and contribute to society.

It's this idea of not caring about consequences, which seems to be shared by low-functioning psychopaths and heroes, that has led some to speculate the two may be similar.

What's Evil

While 'evil' may sound simplistic, we can properly define to make it meaningful.

We use the word 'evil' for people with a complete lack of disregard for others' well-being, no conscience, no empathy, and who actively harm others either for their own gain or for their own pleasure (sadism).

That *might* include psychopaths.
The lack of conscience that characterizes psychopaths often removes one inhibitor to evil, but not all psychopaths are evil.

And not all evil individuals are psychopaths.

In recent years there have been a few papers criticizing the link between psychopathy, violence, and recidivism. But they bring little data and they run against a much larger body of evidence that does link psychopathy to a much higher incidence of violent behavior (Scott McGreal).

When Good and Evil Intersect

It does seem that the positive heroes have a set of personality traits that make them more likely to get in trouble and cross into the "bad side of the river" a bit more often.

According to Andrea Kuszewski, a behavioral therapist writing for Scientific American, people who are more likely to engage in acts of heroism are also more like to be:

- Impulsive
- Argumentative
- Rule breakers
- Authority-challenging

As you can see heroes are not likely to be good, quiet, and peaceful the way a Dalai Lama or Gandhi would be (albeit Gandhi was allegedly abusive with his wife).

But a bit more similar to a character such as Indiana Jones or Han Solo.

However, that is not to say that good and bad are very similar.
And that is not to say that psychopaths are also heroes.

Common Traits of Heroes & Psychopaths

Heroes and psychopaths do have some traits in common, including:

- Low impulse control (acting without thinking of consequences)
- Boldness (remaining calm in threatening situations, associated with self-assured and assertiveness)
- Sensation seeking (engaging in risky practices for the thrill)
- Fearlessness

Much of the overlap indeed seems to be in the "ability to take bold and uncommon actions", including putting themselves in danger of facing long-term consequences.

Research on Heroes & Psychopaths

Here is some academic evidence to help us make sense of this topic:

#1: Psychopaths and Heroes From Same Branch

A study by Smith, Lilienfeld, Coffey, and Dabbs aptly called "Are psychopaths and heroes twig off the same branch?" set out to investigate Lykken's hypothesis.
And it says:

> (…) These findings raise the possibility that some psychopathic personality traits are modestly associated with heightened levels of heroic altruism (…)

Let's unpack it.

Overall traits related to fearlessness, fearless dominance, and boldness had modest positive correlations with heroic actions.

Traits related to disinhibition also showed mixed results. Impulsive non-conformity showed modest positive correlations. And traits such as 'carefree nonplanfulness' showed modest negative correlations.

Measures of antisocial behavior and delinquency had some of the strongest correlations in the surveys, and antisocial behavior and delinquency showed moderate positive correlations with heroism.
Scott McGreal, commenting on the survey on Psychology Today, notices that the survey doesn't say *when* the antisocial behavior happened. Based on more research and data, he speculates that it seems likely that the antisocial behavior happened early in life.

Some evidence points to the contrary, and extraordinarily brave heroism was unrelated to personality dimensions (Walker, Frimer, & Dunlop, 2010), including those associated with psychopathy (Benning, Patrick, Salekin, & Leistico, 2005).

However, overall, there seems to be some truth to the claim.
Fearless Dominance is also associated with engagement in occupations involving high levels of physical risk (Lilienfeld, Latzman, Watts, Smith, & Dutton, 2014), suggesting that some individuals with psychopathic traits may channel their propensities for venturesomeness and risk taking in prosocial directions.

Conflating 'good' aspects of psychopathy with antisocial psychopathy

But one of the biggest risk here is conflating the potentially more positive aspects of psychopathy, with the more antisocial ones.

In the original study itself, **core psychopathic traits related to meanness (ie.: 'coldheartedness') showed small to moderate *negative* correlations with heroism**.
And Miller & Lynam (2012) found that the trait of fearless dominance measured by Smith et al. is only weakly related to antisocial behavior, which may undermine the link between heroism and antisociality.

#2. Sensation Seeking and Psychopathy

Recent research suggests that there is a strong correlation between antisocial behavior and sensation seeking.

Sensation-seeking is the tendency to engage in risky practices such as unsafe sex, excessive drinking, drug abuse, and reckless driving.
And there is some evidence -but far from final- that sensation seeking might also be linked to pro-social behavior and heroism.

For example, Israeli war veterans decorated for bravery were higher in sensation-seeking than non-decorated veterans.
However, I personally would be very wary of considering war decorations as a sign of pro-social behavior.

Scott McGreal says that people who score high in sensation-seeking see risks not only as exciting opportunities but also as challenges that they can cope with.

Naturally, that can lead to an increase in both anti-social and pro-social behavior.

#3. Psychopath & Heroism In First Responders

The study Psychopath & Heroism In First Responders investigates the relationship between psychopathic traits and heroic behavior in emergency workers VS a control population.

There was a small positive correlation between antisocial personality disorder and heroism (similar to the first paper that found that a history of antisocial behavior has a small correlation with heroism).

But among the supposedly psychopathic traits, only boldness and fearlessness were positively related to heroism (and only in the community sample, not in the first responders).

Within the first respondent population, meanness and disinhibition were negatively correlated to heroism and other altruistic behavior.

Research Conclusions

Although the research is not very deep, it seems that the overlap between heroism and *some* psychopathic traits is limited.
The fact that one of those traits is fearlessness says little about the link with psychopathy because, by their very nature, most heroic acts *require* some fearlessness.

Differences: Psychopaths Are Not Heroes

Albeit there are some commonalities, the differences may be even larger.

Lykken claims that empathy -the capacity to empathize with others' pains and feelings- is the main feature that differentiates psychopaths from heroes.

However, there is more.
Psychopathy can include several traits that are antithetical to the concept of heroes.

- Meanness
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of remorse
- Cold-hardheartedness
- Interpersonal antagonism
- Selfishness

Selfishness in particular may stand in contrast to heroism.
Psychopaths are driven by personal gain and personal wins against others.
That does not make psychopaths positive heroes.

I also asked a self-identified psychopath about whether they would risk themselves to help others. Their response, 'Certainly not, we're very selfish', aligns with the general understanding that psychopaths prioritize personal gain.

This is a single perspective, but it aligns with general tendencies of psychopathic self-interest.

Short-term Heroes vs. Lifelong Taking

While it's possible that the boldness/fearless aspect of psychopathy may promote 'heroic' behavior in the short term, the 'full suite' of psychopathic features still tends to promote a life history that's more self-serving, and potentially predatory.

Write Widiger and Crego in *The Handbook of Psychopathy*:

> Although it is not difficult to imagine a psychopathic person without a criminal record (…) it is perhaps difficult to imagine a psychopathic person not having a history infused with unethical, predatory, and other disreputable acts.
> Skeem and Cooke (2010) made a distinction between criminal and antisocial behavior. "Criminal" behavior is

> sanctioned by the legal system, whereas "antisocial" behavior is more inclusive (…) "Snakes in suits"may not in fact break many laws, but they significantly bend, massage, and work the rules to an unfair, self-serving advantage.

Conclusions: Some Heroic Behavior, But More Generalized Selfishness & Taking

In summary, Lykken's initial insight has some merit, but it's simplistic, only partially valid, and, in many important aspects, incorrect.

Specifically, **the fearlessness/boldness facet that some consider related to psychopathy can promote heroic behavior** more than in non-psychopathic ones, especially compared to more fearful and inhibited people. But not everyone considers boldness to be the 'core' of psychopathy, and **the 'full psychopathy suite' comes with more facets that promote selfish and predatory behavior** rather than heroism.

An extreme version of the belief 'psychopathy promotes heroism' may be naive.
Excessive relativism is a distortion of reality and, potentially, a weakness that increases naivete and increases the odds of predation.

For a sobering wake-up call and what the psychopath's selfishness and amorality can lead to, please take a look here:

- **The psychopath: profiling of a sexual predator**

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

TPM's Mission: Making Good People 'Selectively Bad'

At TPM, we explore how fundamentally good individuals can strategically cultivate traits often labeled as 'bad'. Not for exploitation, but to protect themselves, stand up to predatory behavior, and as strategic tools for self-

advancement.

I believe indeed that the world needs fundamentally good people who know how to be bad. Otherwise, the lever of power will always go to the most unscrupulous, unethical, and immoral of individuals among us.

This research strengthened the view that the possible overlap between good and bad shouldn't extend to the point where we confuse the two. Ultimately, people with a good predisposition are more likely to help others and add value. People with a predatory predisposition are less likely to support others and more likely to *take* value.

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Nonviolent Communication: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Nonviolent Communication helps its readers solve conflicts by focusing on people's needs and avoiding judgments.

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Bullet Summary

- Leverage compassion both in interpersonal and internal communication
- Express how you feel with "I" statements instead of "you"
- Voice your needs and requests both non-offensively but clearly
- Look for win-win and full satisfaction instead of compromise

Full Summary

Communication is a major part of everyday life and of our relationships.
If we want to function well with people, we need to learn to communicate effectively.

Avoid These Violent Communications

- Moral judgement (insult, criticism, labels)
- Judgmental words
- Demands (you must)
- Comparisons (violent)
- Accusatory words

The words we use impact the way we behave.
O.J. Harvey studies the world literature looking for how often words depicting people as "good" or "bad" would come up.

He found out that countries with a larger usage of bad words also had more incidents.

My Note: Correlation is Not Causation
This doesn't say much, however. Correlation is not causation and it might as well be that more violence leads to more negative words and not the opposite.

Labels, for example, impair our observation skills because they imply a judgment (ie.: "liberal" or "conservative").

Nonviolent Communication's Goal

The goal of nonviolent communication, or NVC, is to:

> help us communicate our feelings clearly by observing objectively, identify feelings, and communicate with compassion.

The components of nonviolent communication are:

1. Observations
2. Feelings
3. Need
4. Request

Example

Imagine as an example that your son left his toys all across the floor.
You would not start yelling at him right away (of course :).
Instead:

- first you observe the situation;
- then you ask yourself how it makes you feel (angry, frustrated, worried for the family's safety?);
- next you identify what need you have (clean house, safe environment?);
- finally you ponder for a second what's the best way to voice your request in a way that influences them without hurting them.

For example:

> Son,
> when I see your toys spread across the kitchen's floor
> I feel frustrated because I need our house to be clean and safe.
> Do you think you can pick up your toys and take them to your room when you are done playing?

Starting with "I" instead of "you" is a staple of communication manuals.

Observation Without Evaluation

Observing without evaluating is one of the keys to nonviolent communication and one of the most difficult steps to master.

For example the phrase: "Mark always comes late at work" already implies an evaluation.
Rephrasing it in a way that is object would say: "Mark does not arrive before 9am".

Another example, even more relevant for relationships, would be:

> You never to listen when I speak to you

Instead, it's better to be specific:

> The last two times I tried to talk to you about it you left the room

Ask Yourself: What Do You Want

The author talks about creators and victims, which is basically what most other resources refer to as internal vs external locus of control.

You go from victim to creator by asking yourself what you want.

Take Responsibility

Taking responsibility means that you don't blame anyone else for your own feelings.

What someone does is a stimulus, but it's never the cause of our response.
Our response is up to us, and our overall emotional well-being is up to us.

Also read:

- Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

Example

Imagine that someone tells you:

> You are the most selfish person I met

Sounds harsh, right?

There are a few ways people normally react to strong accusations:

1. Change self-narrative, blame themselves and feel depressed
2. Get angry or defensive, lash out and blames back

A better reaction though would be to walk through your own feelings and verbalize them.
For example:

> I feel offended and dejected when you say that because I have really been trying to take your needs into account

This response will clarify your own feelings and get you more easily down the road of resolution.

The last and best option of them all would be to put your ego aside and ask for clarification:

> OK. What makes you say that. Do you think I'm selfish for something specific that I have done?

And later you can add:

> How do you think I could show more consideration for you and your needs

When you use this type of communication you will often find out that people will self-soothe and calm down because they feel heard and understood.
Powerful stuff.

Communicate Your Needs

Marshall Rosenberg says that many of us are not skilled at communicating our own emotions and needs.

That leads people to passive aggression and grow anger and resentment.

The best you can do, both for yourself and the people around you, is to communicate as directly as possible.

Use Positive Language to Verbalize Your Request

Similar to communicating our needs, voicing our request should be done as directly as possible.

The author says that a great way to cause less defensiveness as possible in the listener is to communicate what you want them to do instead of what you want to stop doing.

Positive language also helps to make your needs clearer.
For example, if a wife tells his husband not to spend too much time at work, he might not be sure what she means. Does it mean he is stressing himself too much or that she wants him to spend more time at home with her?
Positive language avoids misunderstandings.

Nonviolent Communication For Self Talk

Marshall Rosenberg says that can use nonviolent communication to talk to ourselves as well.

Way too often indeed we label ourselves negatively and we are way too harsh.
Instead, the next time you are being judgmental towards yourself, focus on your unmet needs.

How to Listen Well

To listen well Nonviolent Communication recommends the following:

- Listen empathically (try to feel what they feel)
- Don't try to cheer them up
- Don't offer immediate solutions or advice
- Ask questions
- Repeat their last words (it will lead them to expand and clarify)
- Paraphrase what they said to make sure you understand

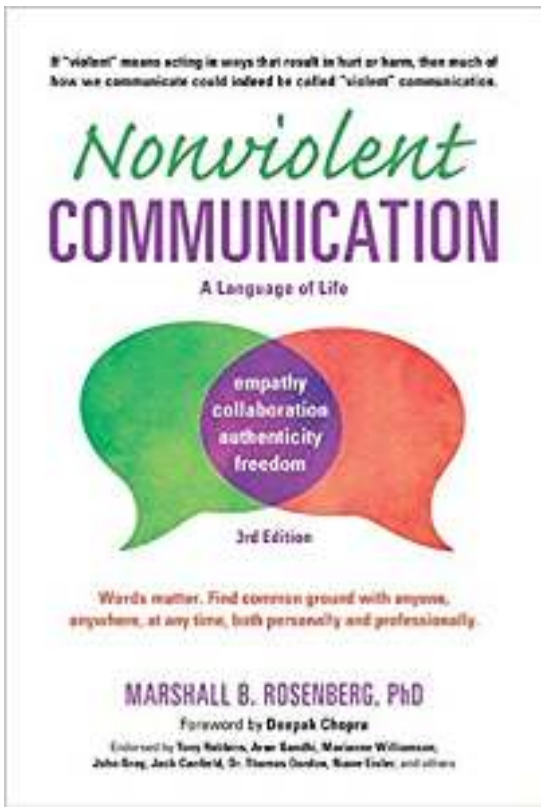
More Resources

If you are interested in reading more on communication in relationships, check out:

- How to really get to know your partner
- Criticism
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling

For more great books on communication:

- Difficult Conversations



Real-Life Applications

Use Positive Language Instead of Negative One
One of the biggest takeaway for me is to use positive language for what you want people to do, instead of what you *don't* want them to do.

CONS

Bad Battering Example
I feel that using the example of a man beating is wife for communication is wrong and underlines how many people do not understand the psychology of abusers.
Most abusive relationships have nothing to do with bad communication and you only fix them by distancing yourself from the SOB.
Also, in general, watch out for relativism: there *is* a difference between good and evil.

Examples Were a Bit Simplistic at Times
Some of the examples are a bit simplistic and too "easy". I would have liked to see some harder communication challenges to crack.

PROS

Empathic Approach For a Better World
I liked how the book stresses the importance of clearly understanding our own feelings and striving to understand others' feelings.
It might sound touchy-feely… And that's exactly the mistake that most do.
If everyone read and applied the lesson from Nonviolent Communication we would certainly live in a better world.

Review

Nonviolent Communication is a good manual on effective communication.
I can recommend it both for general communication and for communication within a relationship.

Read the **best communication skills books** or get the book on Amazon

Psychopath Free: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Psychopath Free (2015) explains the psychopath's strategies to control partners.
It's based on the author's own experience, plus what he has learned networking and helping other psychopath survivors. Ultimately, this book is a guide to help people who have been -or are- in a relationship with a psychopath.

TPM Note: This book offers a highly instructive first-hand experience, yet victim-framed and lacks scientific grounding
We encourage readers to complement this book with more rigorous scientific guides on narcissism or psychopathy, and to consider self-development to become less naive, more power-aware, and more resilient.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - The Author Refers to 'Psychopaths' as 'Manipulative Individual'
  - Spotting Toxic People
  - The Psychopath Relationship Cycle
  - Why They Destroy You
  - Gaslighting and Projection
  - Psychopaths' Targets
  - Psychopaths Put You on the Defensive
- Criticism
  - Unscientific, Imprecise
  - 'Victims' Profile' Misses the Real Key: Easy Targets (Low Power)
  - Lists Obsessive Behavior as 'Typical'
  - Psychopath's Descriptions Are Contradictory
  - Some Claims About the Author's Website Raise Questions
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Psychopaths feel nothing, but they fake emotions to make you fall in love and hook you in
- It starts with love and idealization, then they turn the tables on you, and then they dump you
- Psychopaths feed on unhealthy needs: cure those, but don't become a dark person

Notes

Jackson MacKenzie says that getting involved with a psychopath is a dark journey that will take you into depression, rage, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts.

But it will also open your eyes to human nature, society, and your own self.
And ultimately, it will heal you and make you stronger.

Psychopath Free is a book to help you along that journey.

The Author Refers to 'Psychopaths' as 'Manipulative Individual'

The author says that a psychopath is a manipulative individual.
They are completely devoid of empathy and intentionally harm others without any feeling of remorse or regret.

The author says that in psychopaths behave the exact same way as sociopaths and narcissists.
Their relationship, says the author, follows the same pattern:

1. Idealize
2. Devalue
3. Discard

TPM Note: Imprecise and incorrect
'Sociopaths' is not an actual diagnosis and while psychopathy factor 1 may include narcissistic traits, it's also very different from psychopathy factor 2. Many psychopathy factor 1 may not get attached in the first place.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Spotting Toxic People

Psychopath Free has a list of 30 points to spot and recognize toxic people.

Here are the ones that I found most relevant:

- **Gaslighting** and crazy-making (deny their lies and manipulative behavior)
- Always your fault (you're too sensitive or crazy)
- Can't understand you (you're always explaining your feelings)
- Hypocrisy (high expectations for you that they don't meet)
- Lying and excuses
- Focus on your mistakes (and ignore their own)
- Selfishness
- Need for attention
- Provoke emotions, then accuse you of being too emotional/jealous
- They have cheering fans that adore them (and exes and potential lovers)
- Encroach your boundaries
- Disrespect you
- Withhold attention (and undermine your self-esteem)
- Expect you to read their mind (if plans changed, you should have guessed it)
- In the beginning, constantly initiate communication
- They seem to be fascinated about you
- Positively compare you to others in their lives, BUT
- Later on, negatively compare you to others in their lives
- Your qualities become your faults (albeit that happens to "non-psychopaths" too)
- Cracks in their masks (fleeting moments when they look completely different)
- Easily bored
- Surrounded by former lovers and potential mates
- Pity plays and "poor me" stories

- Push/pull (showering of attention, then ignoring you)
- Sacrifices on your end, but little on their end
- Early humble and sweet appearance turns to arrogance

For more on spotting toxic people check out this article:

- Full list of toxic people

Or read on dark psychology:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

The Psychopath Relationship Cycle

The relationship stages with a psychopath follow a pattern of three stages.

1. Idealization Stage

In the idealization stage, the psychopath makes their target believe they have met the love of their lives.

The author calls it “love bombing”, including constant praise, make you the center of their world and constantly texting first. He is just making that stuff up to hook you in.

The psychopath will try to convey a few key feelings to strengthen his hold on you:

1. We are so similar
2. We have the same hopes and dreams
3. We share the same insecurities
4. You’re so beautiful
5. I’ve never felt like this before
6. We are soul mates

Once you are fully hooked, the psychopath moves to the second stage.

TPM Note: No strong evidence was found for narcissists ‘Love bomb’
As leading narcissism researcher Keith Campbell states in his book. Love bombing also doesn’t jibe well with personalities who prioritize power, since it gives power away.

2. Devaluing Stage

The first step of the devaluing stage is testing.

The psychopath wants to make sure that you are fully under his spell.
He might go radio silence for a few hours and days when he was previously always texting you.
Or he might use dirty words in bed to test your reaction.

When you react, he will say he was just busy and imply that you’re too needy or jealous.

Of course, he orchestrated everything on purpose.

During the devaluing stage the dynamics change: he is not chasing you anymore. Now you are chasing him.

You start to be afraid that he might be losing interest, that he might be pulling away.
The threat of breakup is indeed always in the air after the idealization phase.

You are terrified of that possibility and will try your hardest to be on your good behavior, walking on eggshells.

The psychopath makes you feel that it's you who is ruining everything, and you start believing indeed that you are too needy, jealous, and "not good enough" for the psychopath.

You crave his approval.
You hope that if you can only change your behavior or if you can only prove to him how good you are, then he will love you again the way he used to.

The psychopath will actively funnel your internal fire.
He will use a few tried and tested techniques, including:

- Gaslighting (lie and then deny his lie; make you jealous and accuse you of being crazy)
- Silent treatment (letting you stew on your own bad feelings)
- Triangulation (joke with an ex, flirt with someone new)

TPM Note: This denotes target dependency and low self-sufficiency, not just 'psychopath strategies'
It's a two-way streets. It's neediness that co-contributes to 'making you fearful for the relationship to end'. The other person's manipulative tactics rely on that foundational neediness.

3. Discard Stage

Eventually, the psychopath will dump his victims for a new and fresh target.

MacKenzie says that they will do it in the worst way possible.
If you're traveling to see them, they will dump while you're in transit. If you're going through a tough time, they'll probably dump you right in the middle of it.

They will jump right to the next target, leaving you a mess while they go about happy and carefree.

The author says they will make it a point to hurt you and to show you happy they are now.
Why?

MacKenzie attempts his own explanation:

Why They Destroy You

They destroy because psychopaths are obsessed with winning.

A psychopath at the same time despises weak victims who beg while at the same time enjoying their power over them.

Their obsession with social dominance also wants to make sure they are getting a better partner. And what's the best way than to harm and impair the previous ones?

And, finally, they hate you.
You remind them of what they don't have: love and empathy. They feel superior for not having those feelings, but they also must fake those qualities day in and day out.

Gaslighting and Projection

Gaslighting is not always obvious.
Sometimes it's just about denying a small event or denying ever having said something.

It increases as you drift more and more into a typical abusive relationship.
They will deny the obvious, while you repeat to them over and over exactly what they said. Only to realize though that you sound petty.
They look calm, and you look increasingly nervous and on edge acting, indeed, a bit crazy.

And in case you can present actual evidence, the psychopath will punish you with silent treatment and withdrawal.

Psychopaths' Targets

Psychopaths settle for targets who don't truly see their nasty behavior.

And the ones they dump are the ones that catch on their games, even if that means they will act crazy and wild.

Here are some characteristics of the best targets for psychopaths:

- Givers
- Insecure people who find self-worth in taking care of others (co-dependent partners)
- Feel happy to make others happy
- Conflict avoiders (set aside issues to maintain a semblance of harmony)
- Passive-aggressive (people who won't stand up to them)
- Forgivers (forget and don't behold grudges)
- Strive to see good in others
- Looking for life-long partners

Psychopaths Put You on the Defensive

The author says that the psychopaths will accuse you to put you on the defensive.

It's because when you defend yourself, you seem guilty by default. And even if you're not actually guilty of anything, when you defend your own opinion and assumption start to change.

It's difficult not to defend sometimes if you are not used to this type of behavior.
How can you not defend yourself when your partner, the one who supposedly loves you, believes you're a bad person?

Once you're on the defensive the psychopath can relax and sit back while you bring about your own submission and emotional demise.

> **Psychopaths feed on unhealthy needs, not everyday kindness**

Criticism

This will be a long list of cons because I had quite a few reservations.
However, keep in mind that I am always more critical of (potentially) great and life-changing books and there is much good in Psychopath Free.

Unscientific, Imprecise

The author presents his book as the description -and solution- for a relationship with a psychopath, sociopath, narcissist, histrionic, or borderline personality disorder.

Obviously, these are different personality disorders with different characteristics, different behavioral patterns, and they require different approaches.

Lacks in Logic Sometimes

Just as an example, the author says that an element that makes the breakup so painful is that the next target gets from the psychopath something that you never got.

The author implies that the next target *factually, always* has it better than you.
But that's a statistical impossibility because it would mean psychopaths always move towards better and more serious relationships.
Obviously, that's rarely the case.

'Victims' Profile' Misses the Real Key: Easy Targets (Low Power)

The author suggests this when he says that these toxic dynamics feed on 'unhealthy needs'. Later, he also suggests that victims may have been passive and submissive for too long.

He is absolutely correct, that was key, and there are more crucial traits that boost the odds of becoming a victim, including:

- Lacking experience
- Naive/idealistic
- Insecure attachment
- High neediness / low self-sufficiency
- Isolated/introverted
- Potentially low sexual market value, few options

These are all symptoms of the same source: **the targets most at risk are lower power.** Please note that by no means is this to suggest that the blame lies anywhere else than with the perpetrators.
Instead this is an empowering realization, because it also suggests the best solution: boosting mental and social power.

Lists Obsessive Behavior as 'Typical'

The author discusses the "typical behavior" of a psychopath's victim, which includes stalking-like behavior. I don't know how typical it actually is, but it seemed like the textbook's wrong approach to a breakup.

Psychopath's Descriptions Are Contradictory

First, it says psychopaths know how to touch you, give you great sex, and have a tribe of adoring fans.
Then it says that in the beginning you pity them and you feel like helping them (note: this seems more aligned with vulnerable narcissism).

Which one is which?
They don't seem very compatible descriptions, and if it's two different styles, the author should have made that clearer.

Some Claims About the Author's Website Raise Questions

The book talks a lot about the forum the author has founded and I checked it out when I first wrote this review. The forum is closed to new members and had this notice:

> PF has grown from a small website into a thriving community with millions of monthly visitors

I checked PF's traffic with a popular tracker at the time, and it wasn't anywhere near what was claimed.

PROS

Helpful Resource
Psychopath Free has helped thousands of people, and that's always great to hear.

Some Valid Insights
We always appreciate and value first-hand experienceo on this website (it's one of our core pillar for accuracy).

Review

Although weak on science and rigor, *Psychopath Free* offers a valid, first-hand, arrowing experience of an emotionally destructive relationship with a potentially psychopathic or sadistic individual.

While this is no excuse for the abuser, the author doesn't list the target's own weakness as a major vulnerability for such predation. One may notice that being a loner, closeted and without prior relationship experience, and potentially with an insecure attachment style, may have created a vulnerability cluster. And it may have sent out 'exploitability signals'.

That being said, we are happy if this book can help anyone avoid the same experience, or recover from one. And hopefully our website on personal empowerment can also offer some useful guides.

Start here, for example:

- **Best dark triad books**
- **Foundations of self-development**

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

11 Types of Toxic People You Need to Avoid

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking to better understand toxic people?

It's great you are researching that because toxic people can ruin your life.

By the end of this article, you will know the signs of toxic people and how you can avoid them.

Contents

- Toxic People to Avoid
  - 1. Emotional Vampires
  - 2. Addictive Personalities
  - 3. Drama Queens
  - 4. Evious-Bitter
  - 5. Narcissistic
  - 6. Sociopaths & Psychopaths
  - 8. Chronic Liars
  - 9. Power Obsessed
  - 10. Passive Aggressive
  - 11. Hypersensitive & Weak Egos
- Dealing With Toxic People
  - 1. Play the same game on them
  - 2. Close your body language
  - 3. Get busy
  - 4. Get away – and stay away

Toxic People to Avoid

At the highest level, a toxic person is a subset of a 'taker', such as someone who takes more than they give, and makes you worse off.

Toxic people are often described as emotionally draining, stuck in an endless cycle of negativity and who drag everyone around them down.

Don't try to fix them, because the vast majority of the time you can't them.

Here are some of the most toxic personalities you must avoid:

1. Emotional Vampires

Emotional vampires act and believe as if everyone has to pander to their problems and emotional needs.

Your issues don't matter because, well.. Theirs do.
They never stop to wonder if they are bothering you, or if you have something else to do. In their mind, you are on this earth to act as their emotional tampon.

There are several types and layers of emotional vampires:

- Conversation hoggers (you can't get a word in)

- Victims (always in trouble and need your help)
- Validation seekers (want to hear how good they are)

The Good Girl has an example of some of the worst kinds of emotional vampires.

That's a mix of emotional vampire dom, drama queen, and addictive personality.

2. Addictive Personalities

You can be certain of two things in life: death and that an addict will always try to get without giving.

Addictive personalities tend to get addicted more than others, to *all* kinds of substances:

- Cigarettes
- Alcohol
- Food
- Drugs
- Sex
- Gambling
- Thrills

You name it.
And they're always looking for the next fix.

Stay away from these toxic people unless you want to see the ugly effect of addiction and pay for their next fix (and the one after that, and the one after that…).

3. Drama Queens

Everything is drama in the life of a drama queen.
They have one problem after the other, and they love blowing things out of proportion.
If one problem miraculously gets solved -rarely thanks to their initiative- another one looms even larger.

Don't even try to help them out or recommend them a course of action: they have an approach of importance to life. You just wouldn't understand how hard it is, they will say.
It's not like they can fix it, you know.

They prefer complaining and complaining.
Their life, the war on TV, the economy, their spouse…

Drama queens will never change, they attract drama or they make it up.
So unless you enjoy drama yourself, stay away.

4. Evious-Bitter

These are the people who are jealous of those who have it better.

Of course, those others don't have it better because they worked harder or because they were good.
Nope.
They got lucky.
Or cheated, or slept their way to their promotion.

These toxic individuals show their hands with backstabbing, backtalk, spreading rumors, and mean comments.

Also, read:

- **Is your boyfriend very jealous, or paranoid-abusive?**

5. Narcissistic

Narcissists have low empathy, and it's all about them.

They live in a world of appearances, and think of themlseves are better than they aer.
And if you couple that with weak ego, you understand why they are always seeking confirmation.

To keep up their image of high status, this brand of toxic people obsesses with what others think and with the external signs of wealth and power.

Notice her attention to form and her vanity.
And of course her reaction to her daughter's news. Even her daughter's pregnancy is about how it negatively affects *her*.

6. Sociopaths & Psychopaths

Sociopaths and psychopaths can be openly violent.
But they can also be hidden and sneaky.

They are extremely selfish, they feel no empathy or regret, and are obsessed with domination and winning.
This makes for an explosive mix.

Indeed, they often see life as a big chess game.
And the people around them are the pawns they will try to move -or destroy- with their games and machinations.

Possibly sociopaths and psychopaths are some the most toxic individuals on this whole list.

Regina in Mean Girls also presents narcissistic and sociopathic traits:

6.2. Vacuous, High-Functioning Psychopath

The high-functioning psychopaths and sociopaths pretend to have feelings to better integrate (and play their games).

But they are vacuous underneath, and remain unable to attach and empatahize.

> What do you mean. That's a question right there.

LOL, that says everything you need to know.

Being Vacuous can be a reaction to abuse experienced as a child. A good movie for this type of dynamics is the movie Mysterious Skin -but it's a difficult movie to watch, you've been warned-.

8. Chronic Liars

Sometimes there are good reasons for which even honest people need to lie.

But chronic liars are different. They don't lie because they have to. And sometimes not even because it's good for them.
Chronic liars just lie all the time.

Sometimes it's simply counterproductive to lie… And they'll still lie.

Are you waiting for them?

They are almost there, just a couple of blocks away.
They don't show up in the next 10 minutes?
They're just *one* block away now…

And once they get there, no they didn't lie about their location!
They were late because of traffic or because they'd been held up.

Chronic liars are toxic because a life with them is a life of second-guessing, doubting, and continuous fighting.
The dynamic will be you accusing and yelling and them denying. A relationship of cat and mouse, and you will soon lose all respect for a mouse who can't talk straight.

You can't have a relationship with chronic liars.

Finally, chronic liars who are very good at lying, also tend to have a strong gaslighting effect on people (ie.: make you feel crazy).

9. Power Obsessed

Power-obsessed people see every feedback, argument, or decision as a battle they need to win.

They can never admit they're wrong and they have huge trouble accepting even the smallest input from the people around them.

Do you want to change the channel on the TV and they weren't even watching?
Just a minute, they first need to finish hearing something.

Do you need them to make a detour to pick up the cleaning?
Not today, they need to rush home to make an important -and nonexistent- call.

Men with a power obsession always know better and always need to get it their way.

Women most often fall prey to power-obsessed men because they confuse their initial steam-rolling ways for strong leadership.
But it's not strong leadership.
These men are in many ways similar to abusive men and make for an impossible life.

Also, read:

- Power-hungry men

10. Passive Aggressive

Passive aggressive people don't have the courage to be direct and don't have the strength to set boundaries.

They will never complain, but they will keep building resentment inside.
Eventually, resentment will start spilling in ways normal people would have never seen coming:

- Huge explosions bringing up years of wrongdoing you had no idea of
- Small acts of insubordination you don't see the point of
- Backhanded compliments
- Secretly being happy for your troubles
- Scheming and plotting against you
- Undermining you in front of others

11. Hypersensitive & Weak Egos

People with weak egos are the everyday version of toxic people.

They go over the moon with compliments -forgetting that compliments mean nothing-.
And they swing the opposite side for every minor criticism. They get defensive, attack, or go berserk on a full-blown identity crisis.

A relationship with weak-ego people is very difficult because you always need to mince your words and think hard about how you can deliver the feedback.
But no matter how hard you try, they'll still get hurt and do nothing with your feedback.
Except for hating you just because you said it, of course.

Borderline personalities have particularly weak egos with wild mood swings.

Dealing With Toxic People

If you have anyone remotely resembling the toxic people on this list, detach yourself.

Detaching yourself is always the best solution.
But when that's not possible, here are a few alternatives:

1. Play the same game on them

The best defense is the attack.
For example, to a toxic individual always asking for stuff, ask the same back:

> **Toxic Person**: hey, do you have 50 I could borrow
> **You**: damn you beat me to it, I was just thinking of asking you the same. Suppose you don't have a 20 to spot me then?

If they badger you with their problems, cut the interaction short:

> **Toxic Person**: and then they did this X and Y to me, can you believe it, unbeliavable…
> **You**: yeah I can imagine. Look I'd like to stay and chat, but I need to go now

Alternatively, you can start talking about yourself. See how they react. Do they bring the conversation back to them all the time?
They have no social skills -and couldn't care less about you-. You don't need those types of friends.

2. Close your body language

While they speak:

- Cross your arms
- Stand further back
- Point your feet away
- Make little eye contact
- Check the time

Then when you speak, open up again.
Basically, here you are using your body to play the same game on them: a game of selfishness.
It's a terrible race to the bottom of course, but as long as it helps you get away from toxicity, be it.

3. Get busy

Pretend your phone is ringing, tell them you gotta run, say you got no time, and mention you're in a rush.
Use one excuse after the other until they understand you're not there for their toxic behavior.

4. Get away – and stay away

No, really, the best solution is to get away.
If it's someone in the family, reduce contact.
There is no shame in scaling back with a narcissistic mother or a psychopathic father.

They have done enough damage already and there is no need for more.

11 Types of Toxic Relationships

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Toxic relationships suck, don't they?

They poison your life and yet, sometimes, people don't even realize they are in a toxic relationship.

Well, here is a rule of thumb for you: good relationships make you happy and fulfilled more times than they make you sad, depressed, or disappointed.

Anything else likely has some shades of toxicity.
This article presents you with 11 types of toxic relationships to help you troubleshoot and learn.

Contents

- Toxic Relationships
  - #1. Abusive Relationship
  - #2. Psychopath / Sociopath Relationship
  - #3. Narcissistic Relationships
  - #4. Scorecard Relationships
  - #5. Mutual Assured Destruction
  - #6. Competitive Relationships
  - #7. Downward Spiral Relationships
  - #8. Toxic Relationship Dances
  - #9. Never-Ending Bickering
  - #10. Power Struggle Relationships
  - #11. Emotional Roller Coaster
- Getting Out of Toxic Relationship

Toxic Relationships

To begin with:

What is a toxic relationship?
This is a high-level definition that will include *any* type of toxic relationship:

> A toxic relationship is a relationship that, on net balance, subtracts from your general well being.

It might not be as easy as it seems to assess whether your relationship fits into that description, though.
The reason is that most toxic relationships are not always all bad and pure evil. Most toxic relationships also present some good -or kind of good- moments during which partners dupe themselves into believing that things are not that bad, after all.

Don't be a self-duping fella, though. Check out here, and if you see any hint of these in your relationship, start planning how to move on.

#1. Abusive Relationship

The abusive relationship is the poster child of a toxic relationship.

It's not always true that it takes two to tango, and in abusive relationships, the abusive partner can be the one responsible for *all* the toxicity.

Both genders can be abusive, but the sad award here goes to men: the majority of abusive individuals are men.

Abusive relationships can be violent, but not all of them are.
Some emotionally abusive relationships look perfectly normal on the outside. The abuser can be a professor, a doctor or a polished-looking office worker.

Example

Here is one non-physically violent example from The Breakup.
His way of disrespecting her publicly is verbally violent and emotionally abusive.

#2. Psychopath / Sociopath Relationship

Not every single relationship with a psychopath leads to a toxic relationship. But when they do, they often cause immense pain.

Sociopaths are obsessed with social dominance and winning and they see the world as a big chessboard. And you might be a pawn in it.

It's possible they will fake feelings and pretend to love you only to make *you* fall in love with them.
Their relationships usually follow a known pattern:

1. **Idealization** (bring you up and make you believe you two are soulmates)
2. **Devaluation** (turn the tables: they stop coming after you and start devaluing you)
3. **Discard** (they move to the next target, sometimes dropping you in the most painful way possible)

If you want to read more there's a book with a great description of a sociopath relationship called Psychopath Free.

Example: Framing Him As An Abuser

Most psychopaths and sociopaths are men.

But there are some women too.
The movie Gone Girl is a great example of one.
And this is a real-life gone girl:

#3. Narcissistic Relationships

If you like emotional shallowness and selfishness, then pick a narcissistic partner.

Narcissists have a grandiose sense of self -often not backed by reality-, and believe the world revolves around them. They are all about appearances and what others think of them.

Narcissists also lack empathy.
Indeed, they only care about you as long as you can help their sense of grandiosity.
The most narcissistic of narcissists also only care about their children when and if they can help their own sense of grandiosity. That, of course, can have devastating effects on the children's psyche.

Narcissists are also manipulative and play plenty of games.
You cannot develop a relationship based on mutual knowledge and appreciation and you cannot have a deep or even a normal, but real emotional bond, with a narcissist.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Example

There are a few different kinds of narcissists and there several good movies that portray them.
This one is from American Beauty.

Notice the distance between them, both physical and emotional. He is acting rather crazy of course, but that's also the point: she is not one bit concerned about what's happening to him. Or God forbid, how to reconnect with him.
And she could care less to keep her daughter out of their problems.
Indeed, as soon as her daughter walks in, she tries to use her to pile up pressure on his husband.

#4. Scorecard Relationships

Keeping tabs means keeping score as to who has done what.

Don't get it wrong here: most healthy relationships *do* entail a give and take (law of social exchange).
However, the focus in great relationships is on giving and the pleasure of giving. And the partner does the same.

The give and take thus happen naturally because both are happy to be giving.
John Gottman's research confirms that the happiest relationships do not keep score.

The relationship becomes toxic when the focus instead is on what we get. Giving only becomes a tool to get something, and that's a draining, poor relationship to be in.

#5. Mutual Assured Destruction

Mutually assured destruction (MAD) is a term borrowed from military strategy.

And in a relationship, it's the most toxic way of keeping score.

The mindset is: "you hurt me, so I hurt you back". And it keeps on going forever. Or until one destroys the other.
These relationships lack an adult and lack a partner who is mentally strong enough to stop the nonsense.

Example

The movie The Break-Up shows a lot of mutual harm.
Especially after the actual break-up:

Warning: MAD is rather common during divorce proceedings. Women also tend to stay stuck in “destruction mode” longer than men. That’s why a prenup can be a smart choice.

#6. Competitive Relationships

Great relationships are mutually supportive.

One partner wins, and he wins for the team.
Poor, toxic relationships instead see the partners trying to tear each other down.

Often it’s the man who starts it.
It stems from internal insecurity, and he starts the competition to feel superior and in charge. The woman is then forced to do the same to defend her dignity and/or to stop the onslaught.

The men who engage in competitive devaluation have usually a fixed mindset and weak egos.
To fix this dynamic, it often helps to:

- Develop a growth mindset
- Develop a resilient ego

Example

Here is a great example of what a competitive relationship looks like:

He also always and only refers to his wife as “beautiful”. And he says she looked exactly like the woman he wanted.
Another sign of narcissism.

#7. Downward Spiral Relationships

In the downward spiral, one partner self-destructs and the other follows suit.

This is an all too common toxic relationship among drug addicts.
One partner does drugs or starts doing drugs and then introduces the other to the drug scene.

In the beginning, all seems great.
The new experiences, the excitement of the forbidden, and walking the path together all make for memorable feelings.

The partner introducing the other to the new experiences takes on the role of the shepherd and leader.
If it’s the man, it’s very exciting for the woman to have him lead her into a new path, and she can come to idolize him (see Christiane F for a movie example).

Then they keep going down together, each dragging each other down.
It often entails lots of drama and possible escalation into violence (see Sid and Nancy).

Example

The song we found love in a Hopeless Place is about a downward spiral type of toxic relationship until she finally breaks free.
And he keeps spiraling down.

#8. Toxic Relationship Dances

Toxic dances are relationships where one partner takes on a role that only exists in relation to the other.

Not all dances are toxic relationships.
For example, the man taking a more traditional male role and the woman taking a more traditional female role is not toxic.

However, there are instances where dysfunctional relationships become toxic.

Here are some:

- **Authority & Rebel**: one partner lays down the law and the other undermines it
- **Parent & Child**: one partner plays the wise and rational side, the other the clueless baby
- **Saint & Sinner**: the saint rescues and the sinner gets in trouble (dependent/codependent)
- **Chaser & Runner**: one partner seeks intimacy and contact, and the other runs for independence
- **Planet & Sun**: one partner demands and expects, and the other caters to every whim (often in narcissistic relationships)

Example

Here is an example of a parent-child relationship dance from Sex And The City:

Read more here on dysfunctional dances:

- Toxic relationship dances
- Anxious-avoidant trap

#9. Never-Ending Bickering

Gottman's research says that conflict is not always bad.

However, two conditions must be met:

- You argue well
- You keep a 5:1 balance of positives to negatives

It's difficult to keep a positive balance when you are arguing all the time.
And you cannot argue well when there is criticism, defensiveness, stonewalling, and contempt.

Contempt is the worst of them all.
Contempt communicates that we feel our partner is inferior and not good enough. It's an emotion of superiority and disgust, and disgust is the opposite of love.

When contempt enters a relationship a vicious circle starts which results in divorce in more than 90% of the cases.
And divorce is often better than a toxic relationship.

Example

The argument in Forgetting Sarah Marshall has lots of contempt, both verbals, and nonverbals:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=55&v=RvNuTuiKyIo

> **Her**: 'Oh, I'm Aldous Snow. Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit. 'No, no drinks for me, thanks. 'Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit.'

That's a lot of contempt there.

#10. Power Struggle Relationships

Some individuals, most often men, are power addicts.

Being a power addict means that every little suggestion, argument, dispute, or feedback is distorted into a war.
A war that he *needs* to win.

Power addicts aren't always direct about it though.
Sometimes they just make up excuses to delay or deny you so that you can't "win" with your request.

Maybe you want to change the channel on the TV and they aren't even watching.
But they reply: "wait a second, I need to hear this"

Or maybe you ask him to take you to the dry cleaner on the way home.
And they speed towards home saying "sorry I really need to run home to make an urgent call".

They make up stories because they *need* to have the last word.

Some women fall for the power addict because they confuse their steam-rolling approach for strong leadership.
It's not strong leadership, though. And most certainly it's not good leadership.

Power addicts make for truly toxic relationships, and refusing influence has been shown to be a leading indicator of break-ups.

#11. Emotional Roller Coaster

The big question:

What really keeps people in a toxic relationship?

It's the roller coaster effect.

Some people indeed do not really want to get out of a relationship.
Some partners are perversely attracted to their toxic partners.

And what causes that attraction is the roller coaster of feelings.

When a toxic relationship can drag you down, down, down and then take you up, up, up, that's extremely addictive to our brains (something we mentioned in how to drive him crazy).

Not all toxic relationships present a roller coaster of feelings and emotions, but those that do are the hardest to break free from.

Example

The Oscar-winning "La Vita E' Bella" presents an avoidant/anxious toxic relationship with the typical roller coaster effect:

Notice all the drama, how devastating it is for her.

But then… He comes back and rescues her.

When he rides back, she forgets all the nastiness that preceded it.
She forgets it was *him* who abandoned her there.

Now, she feels that he is her rescuer in shiny armor.
And that he is the only one who can make her feel great.

Getting Out of Toxic Relationship

How to end a toxic relationship?

If the advice was as simple as “just end it”, toxic relationships probably wouldn’t exist at all in the first place.

Some life roadblocks can get in the way.
Children, low self-esteem, fear of repercussions, lack of options, financial dependency, or social pressure are just but some of the obstacles to breaking free from a toxic relationship.

However, as a rule of thumb, human psychological biases often make changes seem much scarier and more difficult than they actually are.

Indeed usually, under heavier scrutiny, most of the roadblocks can be removed or mitigated.

Research for example says that a divorce is better for children than growing up in a house with a bad relationship.
And tackling a lack of options and financial dependency is the same as saying that you are going to improve and upgrade yourself.

What about social pressure?
People who pressure you to stay in a toxic relationship are not the people you should listen to.
They either don’t care about you or don’t know what you’re going through.
In either case, they should have no say in what’s best for you.

> **You can’t fly with the eagles if you keep hanging with the turkeys.**
> **Break free.**
> **The quicker, the safer; the earlier, the better.**

30 Signs You're Dating a Sociopath (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you worried you might be dating a sociopath?

It's a good idea to double-check: they are terrible partners.
Spotting early sociopath signs can make the difference between a happy life and a personal tragedy.

By the end of this post you will know how to spot -and hopefully avoid- dangerous sociopaths.

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Sociopath Signs

The best line of defense against a sociopath is realizing early before you get involved.

And then *avoiding* getting involved at all.

Look out for these signs:

1. Gaslighting

Gaslighting is the “technique” with which psychopaths make their partners act and feel crazy.

Gaslighting can start small.
They might say something, then deny they ever said it.
And you will wonder if you imagined it.

Or they will manipulate you to make you jealous, angry, or on edge.
When you naturally get emotional or overreact, you are too sensitive, bipolar, or “crazy”.
You will look at your own emotional behavior and tell yourself “maybe I am too emotional indeed”.
You will start taking more and more of the blame for any problem, as you get sicker and sicker and the sociopath controls you more and more.

That’s the essence of gaslighting.

Gaslighting Video Example

Here is an example from the movie “The Goodfellas”:

Gaslighting Power Play

Adelyn Birch provides an overview of this dynamic.

First, the sociopath will make you emotional.
Then, they will accuse you of being emotional and put you on the defensive.
As you get more emotional they will stay calm and collected while you will look more and more, indeed, a bit too flighty.

Looking at the difference between you and him you will think you are going too far. At that point, you will begin to calm down, retreat and possibly apologize.

When you apologize they will possibly play offended and hurt. They might drag it over for a while just to hurt you even more.
And finally, they will “pardon you”.

When they forgive you, they effectively take the power position.

They first stirred you into going wild, then made you feel irresponsible, and then they took the parent role who grants absolution.

You feel terrible, vanquished, and maybe even a little bit grateful for pardoning you. And for accepting you for the crazy one you are (again, gaslighting).

Here are the steps:

1. Make you emotional

2. Accuse of drama
3. Forgive you (power position for them)

See here for more on gaslighting:

> What Is Gaslighting? 17 Signs (& Solutions)

2. You're Explaining Simple Feelings That Shouldn't Need Explaining

If you find yourself trying to explain how you feel, the options are two:

1. You might indeed be highly sensitive (Borderline Personalities are)
2. He cannot understand your feelings

As a good rule of thumb, it's always good to look at ourselves before pointing fingers.
But if you are explaining very basic and normal reactions, then you have a big red flag here.

Sociopaths do not feel the same way you do. They don't even have the feeling you're trying to explain.
If they stare at you with a blank expression, you might be staring at a soulless individual.

Similarly, if you find yourself explaining the basics of social interactions and the basics of common respect, something is wrong.

3. He Demands a Lot While Giving Little (Hypocrisy)

They ask a lot of you, but provide none of what they demand of you.
That includes demands for faithfulness while they themselves often cheat.

Example

Harvey Keitel plays the part of a sociopathic pimp in the movie "The Pick-Up Artist".
He demands fidelity while being extremely jealous and violent:

4. There Are Constant Lies and Excuses

Sociopaths lie continuously, often even for small stuff there would be no point to lie about.
That's what befuddles many partners of sociopaths. "What's the point of lying about that", they wonder.

Well, many sociopaths are pathological liars.

Of course, being sociopaths if they get caught they have no remorse.
They might get angry though, or give you the silent treatment to "punish you" for having uncovered their lie.

5. They Always Draw Attention to Your Mistakes

Once you are out of the initial idealization phase, any small mistake of yours won't go unnoticed.

But they don't like being criticized when *they* make something wrong.
Sociopaths, manipulators, and toxic people don't like taking the blame.

They are quick to turn the conversation back to you, especially to remind you of whatever small mistake you had done.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

6. You Wonder if They're Normal

Sometimes you will wonder if they're normal.

Or human.

They dread being found out for not having human feelings and conscience.
This is probably one of the reasons why they make it a point to make you believe that *you* are not normal.

Sociopath Relationship Example

The character in "American Psycho" has no feelings about breaking up with his girlfriend, and for a normal, empathic person, he looks "strange":

7. He is Selifh and Attention-Seeking

The world revolves around them.
They demand constant attention and adoration.

That's why they often have a small crowd of cheering fans.

You won't notice in the beginning though: they only crave attention from you.
But as the relationship moves forward they will be less and less reliant on you and more and more looking outside the relationship for validation.

This is also part of their evaluation process, and if you are hooked, it might be very painful for you.

8. You Are Playing Detective

If you have never been the jealous type before and now you are researching and stalking them, that's another sociopath sign.

The reason why you are playing detective is because they are giving you a reason to be suspicious and distrustful.
Sociopaths do it on purpose sometimes: they want you on edge.
They want you to suspect their involvement.
It proves to them they are controlling you. And they enjoy that.

9. They Have a Small Band of Admirers

Sociopaths often have a few people around who like them and applaud them.
The sociopath might be using them for favors, money, attention, or… To make you jealous and increase their appeal.

Sometimes you are the only one who can better recognize them because you are the only one really close to them.

And if they are exes, chances are they are very undiscerning or very low-quality people.

10. You're Afraid Of Fights to End the Relationship

If you are afraid that any fight might spell doom for your relationship, chances are you are already hooked.

And they're taking advantage of it, keeping you on your toes and controlling you through your fear.

Sociopaths surreptitiously -or openly- threaten to end the relationship.
When they don't threaten to do so directly, their *behavior* does the talking. Their behavior communicates that they don't care much anymore about you and the relationship.

This is part of their "dread game", and they are playing cat and mouse.

Dump them yourself: it will hurt less.

Also, read:

- **Psychopaths' control techniques**

Sociopath Emotional Distance Example

The American Beauty bedroom argument scene looks like a sociopath trying to own another bigger sociopath (or a normal man, him, finally standing up to a narcissistic woman)

11. They Started Having a Contemptuous Attitude

This is part of taking the judge's role in the relationship.

In this case, a negative judgment.

What does it mean, in simple words?

They criticize you with an air of superiority.
They have a smirk on their face, or a look of mild disgust as if they were challenged.

Teasing can become a mainstay of your relationship, but it's often not funny teasing. It's biting and hurtful.

At this point, you can start to feel resentful and the relationship has started becoming a truly toxic relationship.

12. They Withhold Attention

Another sign of sociopaths is that of using attention as a test and control tool.

When you do something wrong when they want to punish you or simply when they want to feel powerful and hurt you, they will go radio silent.
The first time they do it and you chase them worried and scared, they know they have you.
And they will relish it.

13. They Expect You to Read Their Mind

Some sociopaths might not communicate basic information, but they still expect you to know what they haven't even said.

This is part of their overblown sense of importance and of their entitled mentality.

14. You Know Something is Wrong, But You Want Them to Like You

If you said yes this is a big sign that you are in a toxic relationship.

If you realize there is something wrong with your relationship, you have finally caught up to some of their games -and to the reality of things-.
But if you still want them to like you, they have their fangs in you and are deeply controlling you.

15. There Are Lots of Crazy or Abusive People in Their Past

Another big sociopath sign is when they tell stories of crazy people in their past.

Violent parents, bipolar exes, crazy exes who still want him, abusive bosses… Is it possible that the whole world is stacked against them?
Or maybe *they* are the crazy ones?

Also, make no mistake, you might be the next crazy one they'll talk about.

16. They Make You Jealous Through Other People (AKA: Triangulation)

While in the beginning all their attention was on you and they had eyes for nobody else, in the middle of the relationship they will do their best to make you jealous.

It might start with their exes popping up, FB flirting with mysterious girls, remarks from other women, etc.

They are trying to plant the seed of doubt in your mind, making you more and more insecure.

If you want to play the game, read this article on how to make him value more to respond in kind.
However, just be aware that the only solution is to move forward and leave them behind.

Manipulative Behavior Example

Regina George in Mean Girls is the poster child of a manipulative sociopath.

Of course, you might not have such an obvious, glaring example -but it happens too!-, but the concept is the same

Read more on manipulation and dark psychology:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

17. They Pursued You With Abandon (AKA: Love Bombing)

First off:

some types of womanizers also pursue with abandon, and they're not necessarily psychopaths.

But love bombing, as it's often called, *can* be a big red flag that you are dealing with a sociopath.

Love bombing is their twisted plan to make you fall in love.
For example:

1. Mirror your dreams, hopes, and fears
2. Writes you first and all the time
3. Move every fast
4. Compliment you all the time
5. Say they've never felt like this before
6. Imply or state that you TWO are soulmates

They are fully fascinated by you.
And you love it.

… Until you don't anymore.
Watch out.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: Never seen any evidence for love bombing
Research couldn't find it in narcissists (Campbell, 2020) and, as far as I'm aware, there is no evidence in other dak triads either. It's more pop psychology than proven psychology. It also doesn't seem logical that high-value men would use this tactic. I remain unconvinced

18. They Compare You to Others

In the beginning, they will be comparing you favorably.

You are the best thing that has ever happened to them.

Maybe you are giving them new hope in life, or maybe they are so happy that you are making them forget their terrible exes.
Also, watch out specifically for physical and body shape compliments: sociopaths are often very superficial.

But in the devaluation phase, the comparisons start to become negative.
Sometimes what were your best qualities become your major faults. Their exes weren't so bad after all and maybe… You just don't compare all too well with them.

Now if you are hooked an interesting thing will happen: their criticism will push you to prove yourself to them. You are putting up a desperate effort to win their love back.
Don't even try or hope though. The truth is that they never loved you. It's not about you: sociopaths cannot love.

19. Some Behavior Doesn't Add Up (AKA: Cracks in Their Mask)

High-functioning sociopaths and psychopaths wear a mask.

They *pretend* to have feelings, they *pretend* to understand your feelings and they *pretend* to be nice and kind.

But they are putting forth a persona.
They *don't* have feelings, they have *no* empathy for you -and for anyone else for that matter- and they are *not* kind.

However, even the best actor sometimes will slip.
Their mask will come off, and then you will be able to peer behind it.
When something does not add up, take notice: it might be the sign of a sociopath.

20. They Are Easily Bored And Need Stimulation

Sociopaths are easily bored.
That's one of the reasons why they surround themselves with people and why they engage in machiavellian games: they need constant new stimulation.

21. They Try to Make You Feel Guilty

Some ilk of sociopaths will leverage your sense of guilt or your willingness to help others.

If that's the case, their bad behavior is always justified by their hurt and their pain.
Who's the culprit? Abusive parents, an ex who really hurt him, or sometimes you who is being so mean to them.

Also, see here:

- **Text example and analysis of guilty tripping** (or pity play).

22. There Is Lots of Drama in Your Relationship

Sociopaths might *say* they hate drama.
And yet there is always so much drama in their life. And now, there is a lot of drama in your life too.

Drama is one way in which sociopaths fight boredom.
If you've never had much drama in your life, but now you always do, then it should be easy to pinpoint the culprit.

23. You're Experiencing Emotional Roller Coaster

There are often wild emotional up and downs in a relationship with a sociopath.

When they have been too mean, they will get closer again so that you keep staying under their thumb.
Or maybe they treat you differently in public and in person. They might be mean and disrespectful in front of a

stranger and then reel you back in behind closed doors.
Or be nice in public only to treat you with contempt in private.

Sociopath Roller Coaster Example

Marcello Mastroianni in La Dolce Vita is an example of an avoidant with an anxious partner.
Notice her emotional swings.
She is in the dumps *because* of him. But when he shows up again, she feels like he is her savior.
The only one who can make her feel great.

Warning: Be especially careful with emotional roller coasters, because they are emotionally addictive

24. He Is Becoming Your Entire Life

Do you find yourself spending all your time with him and thinking all the time of him?

This could be the greatest love story ever.
Or the biggest heartbreak ever.

Tread with caution.

25. You're Enjoying Great Sex

Some sociopaths and abusive men use sex as a tool to make their targets swoon for them.

They make it a point to do it well, to make you come, and to make your fantasies come true.
Sometimes, sociopaths and psychopaths will push the boundaries of sex and push you to do sexual acts that are new to you.

Sandra Brown says that a few psychopaths will also dominate or demean you during sex to increase their power and control.

26. They Are Arrogant

Sociopaths might be humble and unassuming.
But that's part of the persona they put forward to make them more likable and approachable.

As the relationship wears on they become more and more themselves: arrogant and mean.

27. They Gossip, Demean, and Backstab Others

Sociopaths often dislike "normal people".
And strong jealousy for people more successful than they are.

They will gossip and talk behind people's backs. In the beginning, you might feel special for hearing their confessions.
You might even start disliking or resenting some of the people they talk about.
And that's part of their game: recruiting more people on their side.

But their side is always switching. And it's very possible they will be doing the same about you.

28. There Are Lots of Games and Manipulation

To a sociopath, relationships are a string of games and manipulations.

Here are some of them:

- Put you on the defensive (and when you explain yourself you sound guilty)

- Make you feel guilty
- Use you to make another woman jealous
- Use another woman to make you jealous

Sociopath Mindset Example

The movie “Gone Girl” is a good example.

If you’ve seen it, you know what I mean.
And if you think it’s just a movie, here is a real-life example:

Sociopaths are amoral, and see you as a pawn.
That lady in the video saw her husband as a green card and a money provider.
When she thought she had no more use for him, she fabricated a story to get rid of him, and take all of his belongings.

29. When You Corner Them, They Talk Nonsense (AKA: Word Salad)

Sometimes you might manage to back a sociopath into a corner.
For example, you might have final proof of their wrongdoings.
Or you read this article and tell them exactly what they are up to.

In that case, they might come up with what *psychopath survivors* refer to as a “word salad”.

Word salads are illogical conversations that go nowhere and only serve to confuse you, muddle the water, and possibly put you on the defensive.

They include:

1. Going back to previous topics that were already discussed and resolved
2. Bringing up old wrongdoings of yours
3. Condescending tone to make you overreact
4. Accuse you of their own wrongdoing to make you overreact
5. Switch personality and techniques to confuse you
6. Play the victim

Finally, if you keep your cool and keep pushing and pushing, you will see the face of a sociopath you have never seen before.
They lose their cool and will watch them implode as they struggle to regain control.
That’s great news for you: you are breaking free of their control.

Word Salad Example

Donald Trump is a world-class master of word salads:

Notice how, while saying little, he manages to go from accused to the accuser

30. Your Feelings Are Telling You Something Isn’t Right

Last but not least: listen to your feelings.

And listen to me when I say this.
It’s not a good relationship if you are:

- Walking on eggshells afraid he might leave you

- Being disrespected
- Always defending yourself
- Wondering if you are crazy
- Trying to appease him
- Desperate to like him
- Plotting how to win him back
- Having wild mood swings you've never had before
- Depending on him for 100% of your happiness
- Being anxious (especially if you weren't before)
- Crying and apologizing all the times
- Afraid he might get violent

More Psychopath Signs

Finally, these traits have been found to correlate with psychopathy:

- Caffeine addiction
- Night owl circadian rhythms (ie.: sleeping late)
- Not yawning when others yawn (which most emphatic people normally do)
- Talk a lot about sex, money, and food ,(and little about family, religion, and spirituality)

One Question to Spot Sociopaths

Credit to Susan Cain for this genius question.

Cain says that empathy and a sense of proper are one of the key elements to a happy and healthy relationship.

What's one of the best ways to test empathy and respect for other people?
It's how embarrassed -or not embarrassed- people can get.

Being embarrassed by certain behavior or situation means we care.

And sociopaths and psychopaths will never be embarrassed.

So here is your question:

> **What was the time you were most embarrassed?**

Then watch how they react.
Normal people will know exactly what you mean. Maybe start getting embarrassed right away as they feel the pinch of their embarrassing memories.
Some people will be happy to share embarrassing stories as it helps them share their burden -and laugh about it-.

But a sociopath doesn't like that question.
He will take longer to reply because they need to make up a story.
And chances are their story will feel off.

If you are in doubt, ask for two stories.
If they can't come up with two stories that normal people would be embarrassed by, you have a major early sign he might be a sociopath.

Limitations of This Article

Some sociopaths have become good at hiding their true colors.

If they have been at it for years, chances are it won't be easy to spot them. And your task won't be any easier if you don't have any experience with sociopaths, psychology, or abnormal personalities.

This is a conversation I've had with a psychopath on Quora as I explored this topic deeper:

> **Me**: Thank you! I'm curious about when you wrote on "wearing a mask". Do you mean to play the part and pretend to have feelings and empathy?
> **Psychopath**: Indeed. It is a persona constructed to blend in with everyone else.
> **Me**: I see. Do you think that age relates to how good one person becomes in molding that mask? Has anyone ever realized you were wearing a mask?
> **Psychopath**: Yes, age means more experience. Nobody has ever realized I was wearing a mask so far. But time will tell

As you can see, it's not always easy to see the early signs of a sociopath.

However, the sociopaths who are most likely to fly under the radar are also the sociopaths who are least likely to wreak havoc in their life. Indeed, many sociopaths have a normal life with families and hold jobs.
But don't expect emotional intimacy with them.

The Hard Thing About Hard Things: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Hard Thing About Hard Things is a business and entrepreneurship book in which author Ben Horowitz shares his experience as a tech founder and CEO, sharing with readers what it was like to launch and run a company during the dot.com revolution.

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Bullet Summary

- People will love you when they perceive that you care about them
- Don't hide the company's problems: you'll gain trust (and everyone knows anyway)
- Treat the people leaving well and the ones staying will keep working hard

Full Summary

The book starts with some biographical details about Ben Horowitz, which I will skip here.

Become a Man: Put People Who Matter First

I particularly liked the moment when Ben Horowitz realized he wasn't doing enough for his family, and that he had to do more.
He says:

> I had to stop being a boy. And become a man. I had to put first things first. I had to consider the people I liked

> most before I considered myself.

That for me was one of the deepest moments in the book.
Isn't that really the moment when we become grown-up, responsible, and wholesome men?

Little later he adds:

> I started being the person that I wanted to be

If you take one thing away from this book, let it be those two bits.

Fire Compassionately But Quickly

When you need to fire someone, do it and do it quickly.

Don't let rumors spread, don't let people be terrified.
And do it compassionately.

> If you treat the people who are leaving unfairly, those who stay will never trust you again.

This part really resonated with me because I became an estranged, internal enemy of the startup I was in when it unethically fired some of my colleagues.

The Persuasion Moment That Saved the Day

Ben Horowitz was dealing with an angry customer who wanted to get rid of him and his services as quickly as possible.
Ben says:

> Frank, I will do exactly as you say.
> I've heard you loud and clear.
> This is a terrible moment for you and for us. Can I use your phone, I will call the team to give instructions.
> But before I do, let me ask you one thing, if my company made the commitment to fix all the issues, how much time would you give us.

The answer was 60 days, and Horowitz saved the company right there and then.

Share Every Burden

As a CEO you won't be able to share all the burdens you have.
But do share all the ones you can.

The more people on an issue, the more likely you will solve it (and the less stress on you).
Also, read:

- Vulnerability is Not Power

Be Transparent About the Company's Problems

There might be a tendency among CEOs and upper management teams to keep the issues secret.

But that's the wrong approach, says Ben Horowitz.
For three reasons:

1. Trust
2. The more people on a problem, the better
3. Bad news travels fast anyway

Finally, you want to have a culture that is open to problems.
Build a culture that awards people for getting problems in the open where they can be solved.

The maxim of "don't bring me a problem if you don't have a solution" is toxic. It leads people to hide all the issues they cannot solve, which are the ones most likely to wreak havoc.

> My single biggest personal improvement as CEO occurred on the day when I stopped being too positive

Another big lesson learned is to stop trying to be always positive.
Also, read:

- Principles by Ray Dalio

Hire Executives Suited For Your Current Growth Stage

Hiring executives from big firms because you *plan* on being a big business is the worst idea.

Look for executives who have *grown* companies to the stage you want to go instead.

People, Product, Profits: In That Order

Take care of people first because they build the product, and people and products together will give you profits.

Keep Great Employees

… Especially when things are not going well.

The other employees will perceive it as an indicator of the company's imminent demise.
Worst of all if they go to another company you are friendly with.

People will see it as an act of betrayal, and will wonder "what kind of CEO is this if he can't keep his own friends from poaching people?".

How to Minimize Politics

Ben Horowitz found two strategies to minimize politics:

1. Hire people with the right ambition
2. Build processes for known issues and don't deviate

Furthermore:

- Watch out for what you say -and say as little as possible-

The right type of ambition is seeking success through the company's success.
The wrong kind of ambition is seeking personal success and career development regardless of the company.
A manager only seeking to further his own status is extremely demotivating for good employees: why should they keep working to advance their selfish manager's career?

Building processes means for example that you have a structured way of assessing salaries and salary increases.
And that you pick a defined structure for job titles (and don't think it's a silly formalism).

The executives' salaries involve the board of directors.

Rebel Employees: The Enemies Within

The Hard Thing About Hard Things shares some very good psychology on why some employees might become internal enemies of the organization.

These are some of the top reasons:

1. Feels disempowered
2. He's fundamentally a rebel
3. Too naive and believe that everything wrong is management's fault

I found this part really good and I wish he had even talked about it longer because it's something that few other leadership books mention (Robert Greene does it a bit in *The 48 Laws of Power* and *The Laws of Human Nature*, and I do a lot here as well).

Also, read:

- **Toxic employees**

Institute Manager-Employees 1:1 Meetings

Horowitz says that managers' and employees one on one meetings are very important.

Employees should set the agenda and not the other way around and managers should do 10% of the talking and 90% of the listening.
That makes people feel heard and helps spot problems early, while also spreading good ideas.

This is even more important with introverted employees, says Horowitz.

Peacetime VS Wartime CEO

Most management books describe peacetime CEO.
But when the company is going through life or death moments, you need a wartime CEO.

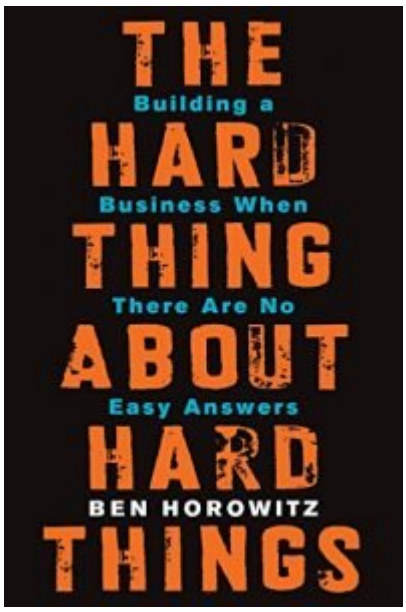
What's the difference?

Peacetime CEO: is reasonable, respectful, minimize conflicts, and thinks long term. He follows protocols and makes contingencies and backup plans.
He is interested in the company's culture and reads and promotes activities aligned with the culture.

Wartime CEO:— has no time for conflict minimization and protecting egos. He is obsessed with the immediate dangers and opportunities.
He violates protocols, allows the situation to define the culture, and has no backup plans.

Quote

> **It's the moments where you feel most like hiding or dying that you can make the biggest difference as a CEO.**



Real-Life Applications

Stop Trying to be Positive
You're not fooling anyone when you try to spin every single bad news into a positive one. Be honest instead about the company's issues and challenges.

Whatever the Chances, Your Task is the Same
Whether you have a 50/50 chance or 1 in a 1.000 your task is the same: make the most to make that chance a reality.

CONS

Some War Jargon
This is a bit of a pet peeve of mine, so don't like it as a real con.
I'm not a big fan of using war jargon when discussing business.
Being a CEO is not going to war. And doing better than a competitor is not the equivalent of killing them. There is quite a bit of that in this book.

Happy to Hire a Psychopath?
The author tells the story of a candidate he loved. When a reference came in negative not only it didn't raise a red flag, but it convinced the author the new guy was the perfect hire.
What did the reference say? That the candidate had said to a report "bring me the numbers or I'll put a bullet through your head".
Frankly, if the author was happy to hire such an individual, I wouldn't fully take his autobiographical word for his management style. I would like to hear what his reports had to say.

She Pronoun
I found the use of the "she" pronoun awkward. At times it just felt unnatural, a bit like Trudeau calling mankind "people kind" (cringe).

One and Twos types of CEO
The author discusses CEO succession introducing the psychological differences between type one and types two CEOs.
I didn't find it either relevant or helpful in relation to CEO succession.

PROS

Keeps it Real
Horowitz keeps it real when he says that there is no one solution for difficult situations and difficult questions.
I like that approach of keeping it real instead of trying to play the oracle.

Ethical While Talking Straight
I liked a lot Horowit's attitude of talking straight while still being ethical.
Good stuff (and looks like it works too).

Great Psychology
There is some good psychology here. I particularly liked his mention of employees who can start working against the organization when they are natural rebels.
That stuff is true and deep and I haven't seen it anywhere else.

Review

The Hard Thing About Hard Things is an OK book and in between a memoir and a management book.

As for any autobiography, I'm skeptical about the full veracity of the content -at least when it comes to the author himself-.
Also, I wasn't happy to read that Horowtiz has been linked to some shady funding of tokens and NFTs with his venture capital firm.

Back to the book, I think it can be a good read for CEOs of fast-growing companies.
If you aren't or aren't planning to be in that position, you might read something else first.

Check out the **best entrepreneurship books** or get the book on Amazon

Delivering Happiness: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Delivering Happiness* author Tony Hsieh shares his story as an entrepreneur, and how he achieved success by focusing on employees' and customers' happiness.

Contents

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- Full Summary
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  - LinkExchange Lessons Learned
  - Zappos Competitive Advantage
  - Zappos Strategy
  - Best Decisions Are Bottom Up
  - Never Lose Sense of Urgency
  - How to Be Happy
  - Happiness and Business
- Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
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Bullet Summary

- Don't follow pleasure (the next high), follow a higher purpose (meaning of your life)
- Focus on one thing, and be the best in the world at it
- Don't hire for bottom-line profit, hire for culture (and you'll get long-term profits)

Full Summary

Delivering Happiness starts with an overview of the tiger Asian families' culture and how they use their children as bragging tools.

Then Tony Hsieh goes on to describe how he evaded his musical studies duties and how he went about his first entrepreneurial ventures as a young boy.

All stories are hilarious and highly instructive, but for the purpose of this summary, I will skip them.

Starting As Unhappy Employee at Oracle

Tony Hsieh started at Oracle with an easy job that paid good money.
And in the beginning, he was glad about it: good money and little work.

However, common to many people with an entrepreneurial mindset, he eventually realized it wasn't making him happy.

And as his side business started taking off, he quit focusing on LinkExchange, his first company.

LinkExchange Success

After he sold LinkExchange to Microsoft for 265 million dollars he was a rich man.

He went on a cruise, partied with his old pals, and then started exploring other interests.

- Poker (he got into poker and learned that if you apply a set of math rules you'll win in the long run)
- Rave culture (loved techno raves' dancing culture: everyone talks to everyone without ulterior motives and people, a symbol that it's possible to make the world a better place)
- Trader (and lost lots of money)

Poker and Business

The author learned that in poker you can make a lot of money if you sit at a table with tired people and lots of chips.
But at poker, you can only pick the table.

In business, you can invent a new table or make the table bigger.

LinkExchange Lessons Learned

Tony Hsieh realized that when he hit 100 people the culture changed.
They were hiring people for all the wrong reasons, he says.

Yes, they were smart and motivated, but most of them had the following in mind:

- Work a few years, then move to the next resume-building company
- Get rich and retire

The author learned that hiring people and taking care of the culture was crucial to build a company where people could be happy to work.

The author also wasn't very happy after he sold the company.
The money was good, but he had lost a reason to work hard for.

Zappos Competitive Advantage

The author says that Zappos' competitive advantage, in his opinion, are three:

1. Brand
2. Culture
3. Pipeline

All the rest can and will be copied.

Zappos Strategy

Through the course of *Delivering Happiness,* the author makes it clear what he focused on to make Zappos a success:

1. Wow the Customers

Zappos' strategy was to "wow" the customers.

2. Be The Best at One Thing

They wanted to be the best at something crucial and important instead of trying to be good at different things.

And they picked customer service.

They once called customer service as a test/prank and complained they couldn't order a pizza. And the customer service rep helped the caller order a pizza.

Exception: in Zappos' case though the customer wasn't always right. If they mistreat an employee or abuse the system, then they would "fire the customer" (the same concept in *4h Work Week*)

3. Don't Outsource Customer Care

Customer care was too important for Zappos and they never thought of outsourcing it. They thought about building a center in the Philippines or India, but they never thought of not owning it and running it themselves.

4. Let Your Product do The Marketing

Don't spend money on marketing, but reinvest it into making your product and your N.1 priority the best in class.

That will do the marketing for you.

In Zappos' case, it was customer service.
Not just good customer service reps, but the whole process. From free shipping to free returns to making contacts easy.

The author realized that over the lifetime of a customer at least once they were going to get in touch.
And they wanted to build relationships, one customer at a time.

5. Culture: Build a Tribe

After his first experience, the author focuses on culture and not building a company with a "tribe" spirit.

Hsieh believes that people in the best companies have interactions outside the office as well.

They didn't hire people that would make a difference on their bottom line simply because they weren't a good cultural fit.
That's not how most companies operate, and that's why most companies don't have a great culture, says the author.

5. Values

Zappos wanted to codify its culture in a set of values.
That set of values would then serve also for making hiring decisions.

Also, read:

- Corporate manipulations

Best Decisions Are Bottom Up

The author believes that the best decisions are made bottom-up, by the people who are closest to the issue and the operational details.

The role of the manager, he says, is to remove the obstacles for people to operate.

Never Lose Sense of Urgency

The author says that becoming great is a constant, never-ending effort.

You should never stop striving to become more efficient and going things better and better. Don't settle because good is the enemy of great.

And never lose your sense of urgency in improving and moving forward.

How to Be Happy

The author says that whatever your goal is if you ask yourself why a few times, we all want it because it will make us happier.

And it makes sense then to study a bit the science of happiness, which is particularly important since we are very bad at guessing what we actually like.

For example: achieving our final goals will not sustain our happiness.
What's the answer then?

Happiness Framework #1

Happiness is the result of:

- Perceived control
- Perceived progress
- Connectedness (amount and depth of your relationships)
- Vision / Meaning (being part of something bigger than yourself)

You can apply them to your business as well like the author did at Zappos.

Happiness Framework #2

The second framework is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
Once the basic needs of people are met, then higher ideals such as belonging and meaning matter more.

In business, it means that increasing the salary is rarely the best way to make employees happy (read more with *Drive* by Daniel Pink).

Happiness Framework #3

There are three levels of happiness:

1. **Pleasure** (chasing the next high, it's hard to maintain and it's the shortest lasting)
2. **Passion** (flow, where peak performance meets peak engagement; second longest lasting)
3. **Higher purpose** (being part of something bigger that resonates with you; longest lasting)

Most people chase pleasure thinking that once they can sustain it, they will then get to passion and maybe a higher purpose.

Instead, it would make sense to do the opposite and start with a higher purpose.

Happiness and Business

I loved the final tying of happiness to the business.

Delivering happiness makes the point that when you can bring happiness and fulfillment into the very fabric of your organization, then you have laid out the foundation of a sustainable business.

Quotes

On not settling for good enough:

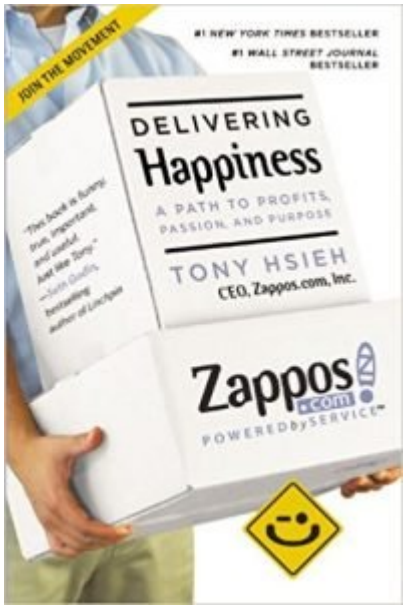
> **We must never settle for good enough, because good is the enemy of great**

On happiness and money:

> **Money alone isn't enough to bring happiness. Happiness is when you're actually truly ok with losing everything you have**

On chasing passion, not money:

> **I had decided to stop chasing the money, and start chasing the passion**



Real-Life Applications

Make Progress Steps Smaller
Make your progression steps within the company smaller and more staggered so as to give people more of a feeling of progress.

Keep Sense of Urgency
If you want to get great, always keep a sense of urgency in moving forward.

When You Snooze the Alarm Too Often It's a Bad Sign
I liked how Tony Hsieh realized that he didn't like working at his company anymore when he snoozed his alarm six times.
That's an awesome indicator.
I used to have the same feeling in my previous jobs.
Now I wake up happy and excited.

CONS

Too Much Meat on The Grill
Albeit interesting most people probably didn't need to read all the details of tiger Asian families and the author

cultivating worms.
The poker foray could have been sorted too.

Huge Zappo Ad
The second part of the book turned out to sound like a huge advertisement for Zappos.
Some bit felt a bit like bragging too.
Their huge parties with tutu dancers, fireworks, and "you name it, we probably have it" was reminiscent of *The Wolf of Wall Street* attitude.
And the people who "tried to sneak in to enjoy the fun", well… That's how all catered parties are.

Grandiose Speaking
I changed my mind after I finished the book and read about the author's research on happiness. But as I listened to the audiobook, some statements sounded way too overblown.

> We were part of a bigger movement, it was no longer just about Zappos, we were helping to change the world
>
> Collectively, this marked the beginning of the next leg of our journey to help change the world
>
> We had announced to the world
>
> Zappos is about delivering happiness to the world

After I finished the book, I got the author's point of view. But as I read them it felt a bit narcissistic.

Paternalistic and patronizing?
This idea of engineering a workspace to make employees happy feels somewhat paternalistic and somewhat patronizing.
Not necessarily a bad aim, but it feels like communists who wanted to tell people how to behave so they could all be happier.
If you think of the example of the customer who called to ask about a pizza, to me it feels unfair to put on the customer service employee the expectations that he couldn't just tell the "customer" he's got the wrong number.

PROS

Deep Wisdom!
Such deep wisdom is in this book to build great companies.

Groundbreaking Message
Building companies to maximize fulfillment and happiness is a revolutionary idea.
I was trying to make the same in my Toastmasters club and Delivering Happiness gave me a framework that I hadn't thought of myself.

Review

Delivering Happiness is an awesome book.

It tackles a bit too many topics maybe and I think the first autobiographical part was unnecessary.

I still loved it, but I am afraid that some might miss the great ideas in the midst of so many different threads.

Just think of the title itself: I would worry that many will discount Delivering Happiness as a non-business book.

I hope that's not the case.
Because Delivering Happiness is a must-read for people searching for happiness, entrepreneurs, and business leaders alike.

Read the best entrepreneurship books or **get the book on Amazon**

Sexual Communication by David DeAngelo: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Sexual Communication is a dating program teaching men how to communicate with men. It focuses on flirtatious communication.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Don't give women what they want (answer questions with questions, tease them, flirt)
- When women test you, don't take it personally but think to yourself "oh yeah, very funny"
- Joke with women that you will get married and then later joke that you are going to divorce them

Summary

DeAngelo says that when it comes to sexual communication many of the rules of normal communication are reversed.
For example, being nice will not make women like you, and pursuing someone will not increase your chances of getting them

Four Steps Process to Sexual Communication

DeAngelo says there are four steps to sexual communication:

1. Sparking the attraction (approaching a woman, flirting, opening)
2. Building sexual tension (cocky and funny, arrogance)
3. Amplifying the attraction (two steps forward and one back; leaning back; taking your time; take her home then leave the room)
4. Physically advancing (smelling, kissing)

Don't Ask but Tell Her

Asking and pleading are weak.
Lead instead.

And tell her what to do.

Show You're Selective & Judgmental

Don't be too judgmental, but do communicate you have standards for what you accept.
Standards communicate that you have options and are a high-quality man.

For example, you can say that only certain kinds of people get into your flat.

Women Are Biologically Designed to Cheat

DeAngelo says that because women are most attracted during ovulation, they are biologically designed to cheat. However, heightened attraction doesn't necessarily mean they will cheat as they might simply have more sex with their partners.

Test From Women

Women will always test.
DeAngelo says that you shouldn't take it personally these days he just laughs when a woman tests him.

But he doesn't give many more details.

Never Answer All Her Questions

Don't answer with serious replies, it's incredibly boring.
Answer questions with questions instead.

> why do you want to know?

If she asks you what kind of job you do, say she couldn't handle the answer.
Or that it's top secret.

If she asks what car you drive, say you drive a spaceship.
Or a ridiculous car.

If she asks you if you will take her somewhere, say no and that you will take her somewhere else at a different time.

And try to answer in ways that implicate her.
For example, if she asks "what are you doing on Friday" tell her "why, were you planning to invite me on a date".

Don't Be Controlled

If she says she doesn't like something, do it more before you stop.

She doesn't like the stations? Turn the volume up. Don't go full ahole and can change it later, just show you're not to be controlled by her.

Cocky Funny

As *The Game* showed, David DeAngelo was big on cocky funny and still is.

The secret is to be cocky PLUS add irony to it.
If you're just cocky, you'll appear insecure and arrogant. If you just use funny, then you'll come off as being an entertainer.

Be Territorial

If she wants to drive your car, say she can't…
If she picks the remote at your place, say "women don't touch the remote in my house".

It's not about being domineering and controlling, that's weak.

But when you are territorial, women feel safer.

Steal Her Frame

Joke with her first that you are just a sex object to her.
And tell them first that you two are just friends.

Evolution of Showing Off Goes Awry

Men evolve to impress women to the point where they can drive themselves to extinction.

Peacocks, for example, attract women with their huge colored tails (also read: *The Mystery Method*). However, that tail also makes it more likely they will not survive. The same goes for big horns.

Interesting theory, albeit in no way connected to sexual communication.

CONS

- **Many Off Topics**

Too many unnecessary off-topic.

- **A bit slow rhythm**

The rhythm was a bit slow with some repetitions. It reminded me a bit of this character from The Goodfellas:

- **"I have a friend who… "**

David DeAngelo often resorts to this sentence. There is nothing wrong with it, but it feels like you are listening to someone at a bar and you're not sure whether that friend exists or not.

- **DeAngelo's Signature Cocky Funny a Bit Overused**

Deangelo was the first to come up with cocky funny, and I think that's an awesome way of approaching interactions.

However, it has its time and place.
In my opinion, he overuses it.

In another product, he says "think of a cocky funny answer for everything". For example, when a woman asks him what he does, one of his stock replies "oh funny you ask that, I'm a slave trading business". I'm not saying that's not good… At times. But not every time and personally I'm not a huge fan of it.
Some of the examples sounded dangerously close to cheesy pick-up lines.

PROS

Some Good Examples of C/F
There are a few good examples of being flirty and using cocky/funny

Review

I wasn't impressed by this program.

It's fluffy and disorganized and the good examples of flirting and cocky funny are too diluted and not worth the time to go through the whole program.

In the end, the actual bits of sexual communication were maybe 10% of the course, and it's not really sexual communication, but more like flirty communication.

Check out the best dating books for guys.

The 5 Most Overrated Books Ever

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you curious about some of the worst overrated books of all time?

You have come to the right place.

After *the worst books ever,* this list is about the most *overrated* books of all time.

Please note: overrated does NOT (necessarily) mean bad.

Being overrated can sometimes be a surprising indicator of quality indeed.
To be overrated in the first place means that a book must have sold a lot, become very popular, or heavily influenced culture and people.

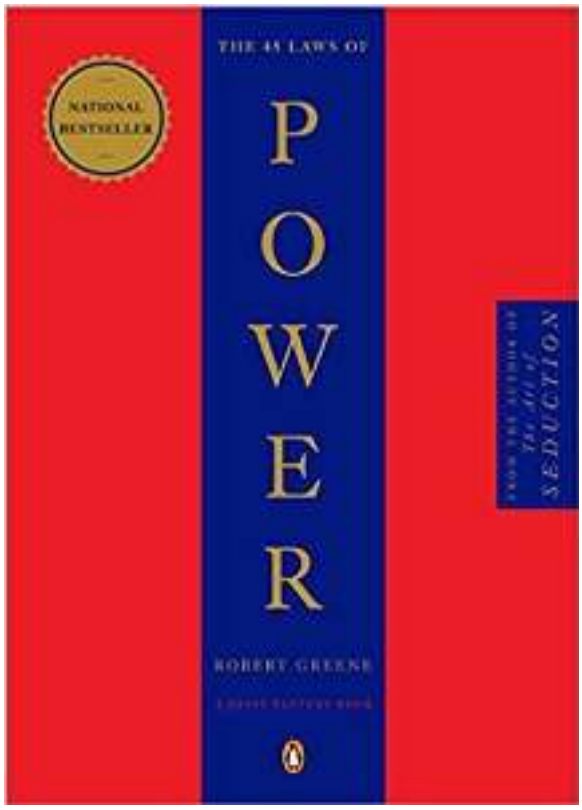
Indeed for this list overrated means that the book's sales, success, or notoriety has outstripped its value, content, or usefulness.
OR, alternatively, the book's notoriety has become so great that people are failing to see some of its flaws in them.

Here are the top 5:

Contents

- #5. The 48 Laws of Power
  - What makes The 48 Laws of Power so popular?
- #4. David and Goliath
- #3. The 4-Hour Body
- #2 Outliers
- #1. Think and Grow Rich
  - Update:

#5. The 48 Laws of Power



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Robert Greene is one of my favorite authors.

And *The 48 Laws of Power* is a very good book and a great read.

However, it became so famous that the hype has outstripped the content (it's the opposite instead for his other books *The 50th Law* and *The Art of Seduction*).

The examples of power moves in this slightly overrated book are all classical history. And sure people haven't changed, but it's not as powerful as giving us an actual video, or a more modern example that we have all witnessed.

Also, some of the laws are very theoretical and hardly applicable.
Take for example:

- Re-create yourself
- Assume formlessness

What's one supposed to do with them?
They are too theoretical. You put the book down and you enjoyed the read, but you haven't really gained a much greater understanding of power dynamics.
Or, equally important, how you can apply the principles.

This is, BTW, one of the reasons that prompted me to start ThePowerMoves: good demand for this kind of information but not so much quality content (and BTW, The 49 Laws of Power *is* an example of quality content).

> Quote: (..) Act like a king to be treated like one

That quote is an example of the power that will, more often than not, backfire. Unless you have first built yourself into someone who can also produce the results of a king, that is.

See Lucio's take on Robert Greene:

What makes The 48 Laws of Power so popular?

Part of it simple drive.

People want to succeed and want to find an edge.
Or a shortcut.

But there's something else:

- **Robert Greene's writing mastery**

Robert Greene makes each law compelling and memorable.
He crafts artfully assembled sentences that make you smile as you ponder the depth of the brutally cold reality they describe.

Want an example?

> "Slay the overbearing father, disparage his legacy, and gain power by shining in your own way".

How could anyone not be enthralled by reading about that?

- **Marketing**

The 48 Laws of Power had a big marketing machine behind it that helped propel it forward.
Fake or semi-fake news such as "banned in American" prisons was part of the marketing machine.

- **Thirst for power -with little resources-**

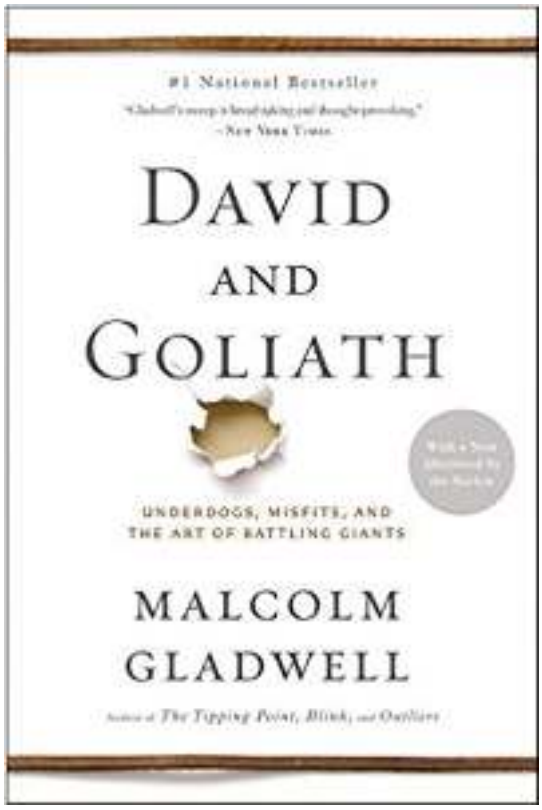
There are very few resources on power and power games.

Well, today there is an even better resource :).
Check out this post:

- **The 48 Laws of Power VS Power University**

> 48 Laws of Power VS Power University: Which One Should You Pick?

#4. David and Goliath



[image]

David and Goliath is yet another Gladwell's best-seller.
But it's also one of those books that if you asked me what it's all about 3 months after I read it, I wouldn't be sure.

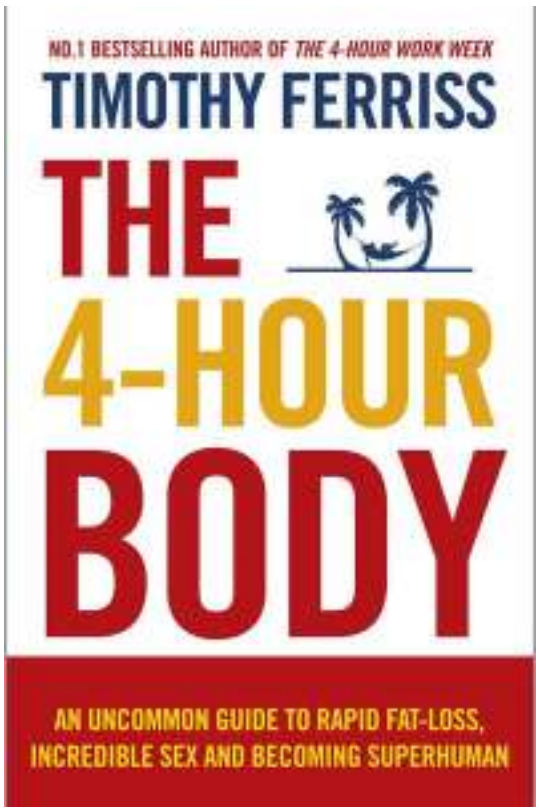
It's disjointed, and the central story of how the odds were on David's side in his fight against Goliath makes no sense.
You can watch the underwhelming Ted talk about it and see it for yourself.

Overall, a feel-good book with some good ideas and uplifting underlying optimism.
Do read it, but make sure you read the fundamental books first.

> Quote: (..) The powerful are not as powerful as they seem – nor the weak as weak

Except maybe, sometimes, they are…

#3. The 4-Hour Body



Like all other books on this list, *The 4-Hour Body* is not (too) bad.

And if you live and breathe the Ferris way of life, you'll love it.
But if you don't live and breathe the Ferriss style, chances are you'll be left scratching your head.

What's Ferriss style, you might ask?
The Tim Ferris way of life is over-geekiness applied to self-improvement.

Ferris looks for the "hack", the latest tech, the last bit of possible optimization.
And then recording and comparing everything (often forgetting that correlation is not causation though).

> Take 4 grams of X, order 7 milligrams of Y, drink the shake at 7:05… Then compare and record the millimeters of your penis erection to yesterday's erection…

That's how the 4-Hour Body sounds.
Minus the penis part.

But not so minus the penis as you might imagine.
Indeed in this nutrition manual for math PhDs, Ferris even throws in his surefire way to make a woman orgasm.
And he does it in the perfect "hack and measures" Ferris' style: tested and measured to the square millimeters of contact (three square millimeters in this case, and I'm not joking). For an overall time of 15 minutes of perfect efficiency.

She got off a perfectly timed orgasm. Ferris got off measuring the whole process.
Everyone's happy.

> Quote: (..) I had just taken my total testosterone from 244.8 to 653.3 ng/dL (nanograms per deciliter), while cutting my estradiol (estrogen) in half

… That's just another day for Ferris preparing lunch :).

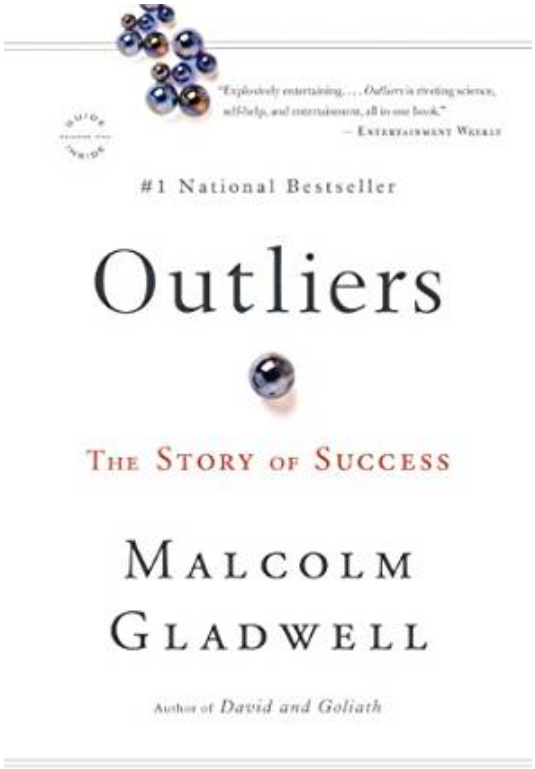
See Lucio's take on Ferriss:

Also read:

- **Optimize to live, don't live to optimize**

> Biohacking Porn: Quit OCD, Embrace Life

#2 Outliers



[image]

Another Gladwell book on the most overrated book list.

I hope the author won't stumble here any time soon :).

It's nothing personal indeed: the books are good.
Some are *very* good.
And some parts are *awesome*.

Now back to this post.
Why is Outliers overrated?

Consider this:

> Spend 10.000 hours doing something and you will reach the top in whichever field you've picked.

Does it make sense to you?

If you have a critical mind, red flags will pop up all over the place.

What about your initial talent, the type of discipline you're training for, *how* you train, how passionate you are

about it, the competitiveness in the field, etc., etc.?

Obviously, it's quite silly to set an amount of time and say that you will be an expert if you train for that long.
And yet that's exactly what *Outliers* popularizes.

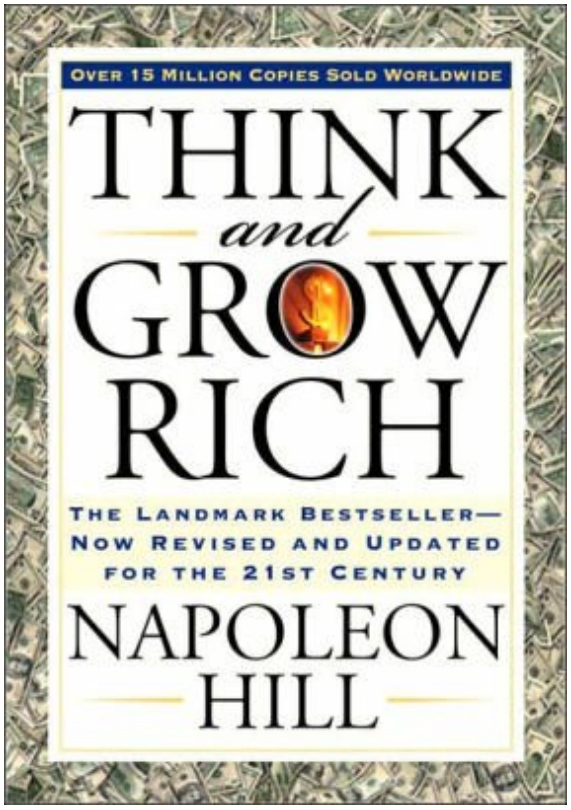
Anders Ericsson, the author of the original research that the "10.000 hours rule" takes inspiration from, had to write a whole book to set the record straight (*Peak*, the best book on the science of performance).

Outliers, like some other Gladwell books, is 4-5 stars for captivating and entertainment value and a bit less for factual, applicable, and reliable information.

> Quote: In fact, researchers have settled on what they believe is the magic number for true expertise: ten thousand hours

LOL.
"Have settled", "they" (those bunch of crazy number crunchers, you know..).
Way to twist reality and misinterpret research, a heavy-weight competitor for the title of the biggest pop-psychology myth ever.

#1. Think and Grow Rich



[image]

With 70 million copies sold, *Think and Grow Rich* is the absolute N.1 best seller in the self-help category.
Ever.

I've never heard anyone daring to criticize this sacred monster of self-development.
And to be fully frank, it's a groundbreaking book and I personally also took one major lesson learned from it.

But except for some of the wisdom in it, I felt *Think and Grow Rich* was a colossally overrated book.

What made it unpalatable?

First, of course:

1. Quackery Sold as Science (Ie.: LIES & BS)

Hill writes of his own *personal takes* on the law of attraction, infinite intelligence, faith, and desire.

And that's cool.

What's not cool is when he sells his ideas as facts and science.
Which is exactly what he does.

He flaunts "evidence" where there is none. He attributes scientific rigor to mental lucubration that is neither falsifiable nor provable.

And when not even Hill can muster the courage to claim scientific rigor for his mental constructs, he says that "science will prove" -LOL-.

2. Money Focus (And Nothing Else)

Take anyone whose only focus in life is "getting rich" and chances are you have just met someone with unaddressed psychological issues.

Indeed most -albeit not all people chasing money are on a fool's hunt. A few lucky ones will realize it when they actually get the money.

For all the rest, Think and Grow Rich provides validation to keep doing the wrong thing. And it will keep them from facing their real issues.

The Scrooge McDuck-ian exercises of DESIRING money as deeply as you can (caps from the author) and visualizing yourself *touching* the money are particularly misguided and ill-conceived in my humble opinion.

3. Full of Power Moves: Teachers' Frame, Smart Alecking

Like an oracle dictating the latest commandments, Napoleon Hill writes in a very dogmatic tone.

Which is probably one of the ingredients that made Think and Grow Rich so popular.
People have a tendency to obey charismatic men who speak with convictions.

Why Nobody Dare Criticize It: The Spiral of Silence

The Spiral of Silence is a social theory postulating that when most people in a group accept something as true, then single individuals are loath to voice disagreement.

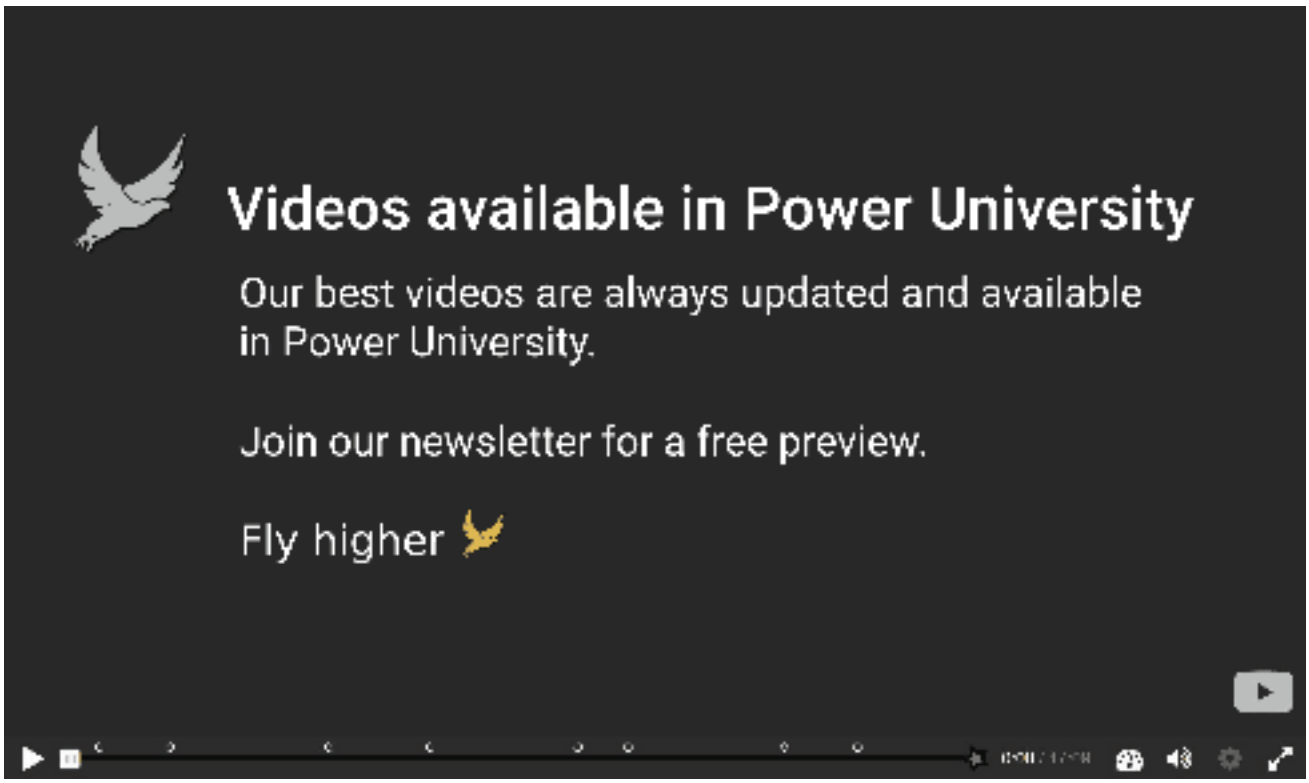
So, to avoid being black sheep, the disagreeing individuals silence themselves.

The funny thing is that, once an idea takes hold, there can be many disagreeing individuals. In extreme cases, a large portion or even a majority of the group.
But nobody speaks up, and everyone continues to perpetuate the lie.

The bigger, more accepted, and more praised an idea or product becomes, the stronger will be the pressure on the individuals *not* to voice their disagreement.

And this is what I feel is happening with *Think and Grow Rich*.

A funny skit on the "silencing power" of the Spiral of Silence:



And please note that I myself was a victim of this spiral of silence.

On my first read, I tried hard to find the positives in this book and downplayed my criticism. I wanted to tell the truth, but “without going overboard” and while seeking bridges with the majority of praisers.

Quotes:

> There is plenty of evidence to support the belief that the subconscious mind is the connecting link between the finite mind of man and Infinite Intelligence (now if he had only provided one such evidence…)
>
> The reality of a “sixth sense” has been fairly well established (“fairly well” LOL)
>
> So far, science has not discovered where this organ of the sixth sense is located, but this is not important (of course not). The fact remains that human beings do receive accurate knowledge, through sources other than the physical senses (“the fact remains”, LOL)
>
> The time will come when the schools and educational institutions of the country will teach the “science of prayer.” Moreover, then prayer may be, and will be reduced to a science (“time will come when… ” Nice move from Hill to look like an oracle ahead of his time)

The above quotes wouldn’t be enough to get you a passing grade on a high school science test. But they made the job of selling 100 million copies.
In a way, that’s also the beauty of the human experience :).

Update:

I’m so glad Coffeezilla addressed it at a bigger scale:

Also, Check:

- Best self-help books
- Best psychology books

- Best leadership books
- Best dating books for women
- Best dating books for guys
- Best red pill books
- Best relationship books
- Best personal finance books
- Best health and nutrition books
- Best communication skills books
- Worst books

Snakes in Suits: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Snakes in Suits (2006) examines the type of high-functioning psychopath that is not necessarily violent and who instead of a jumpsuit dons a suit to make it to the top of their organizations.
Psychopathy experts Hare and Babiak analyze the damage these career psychopaths cause to companies and employers and offer some (limited) advice to employees and HR departments.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Psychopaths Can Climb The Corporate Hierarchy
  - Where Psychopaths Work (& Don't Work)
  - Psychopaths Commit Lots of Crime
  - Psychopathy Doesn't Necessary Make People Criminal
  - For Psychopaths, Other People Exist Only for Them
  - Psychopaths Have Little or No Emotions
  - Psychopathy is Both Nature and Nurture?
  - The 5 Phases of Psychopath's Ladder Climbing
  - Psychopath Have Good Grasp of Human Psychology
  - Psychopaths Are Poor Team Players
  - Superficially Good at Communication Skills
  - Spotting a Psychopath at Work
  - Dealing With Psychopaths
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Psychopaths can be your colleagues
- They manipulate people to accrue power, for example by pitching them against each other (divide & conquer)
- Psychopaths are attracted to bigger, dynamic corporations with little structure and supervision
- They are unfit to work in teams: don't share information and are often happy to see others fail

Full Summary

About the Author:
Robert Hare is a Canadian psychologist and researcher, and recognized as one of the most renowned names in psychopathy research. Hare is also the author of "*Without Conscience*"and a chapter in *The Handbook of Psychapthy*.

Psychopaths Can Climb The Corporate Hierarchy

The big question is:

Can psychopaths climb the corporate ladder?

The typical answer was that it's unlikely because they lack the ability to work in a group, and the staying power and the work ethics that fuel a corporate climb to the top.

This is the same theory that Martha Stout espouses in *The Sociopath Next Door*.

However, says Hare, their research proves the opposite.
There are four reasons, the authors say:

1. Psychopath traits make them seem attractive candidates on job interviews (charm, charisma)
2. Psychopathic behavior may look like leadership qualities (taking charge, making decisions, and making others do what you want)
3. Business today is more fast-paced and "leaner and meaner" making the environment more suited to psychopaths
4. Environments that are high-risk and fast-paced attract more psychopaths, and there are more such businesses today

Snakes in Suits makes the point that psychopaths *can* sneak into corporate structures and potentially remain undetected for a long time.
During that time, they can acquire lots of power and create much harm. This is a point of view with which Dutton, author of "*The Wisdom of Psychopaths*" also agrees with.

For more on the research, read:

- **At the top, it's psychopaths and Machiavellis**

Where Psychopaths Work (& Don't Work)

The authors say that psychopaths won't seek employment in smaller and tightly controlled firms such as a family bakery and they won't like rigid and highly structured bureaucracies.
They are rule breakers and wouldn't function well in them.

They don't usually work on jobs that require routines and structures. They don't have work ethics and don't believe in an honest day job for honest pay.
It's difficult to picture a psychopath working 5 or 6 years in a routine nine to five hoping to become a manager.

This is not to say they never work in routine or dead-end jobs, but it's very likely their performance will be poor, self-serving, unreliable, and possibly entered with made-up qualifications.

Where Psychopaths Work

Think of:

- high-pressure sales
- predatory repair people
- pump and dump stock promoters
- Internet scammers (Tai Lopez manipulation techniques)
- fraudulent counselors
- shady professions of all sorts

Psychopaths Commit Lots of Crime

Both male and female psychopaths commit more crimes and their crimes tend to be more violent than those of other criminals.

Psychopaths make up about 15% of the prison population. And many of the remaining 85% can be described as sociopaths or having an antisocial personality disorder, similar to but often confused for psychopathy.

Some people with APD are psychopaths, but many are not. APD is much more common than psychopathy (2 or 3 times more common).

Lack of empathy, grandiosity, and shallow emotions are not necessarily diagnosed with APD.

Aggressive and malignant narcissists, such as narcissists with antisocial behavior, are also difficult to differentiate from psychopaths.

Psychopathy Doesn't Necessary Make People Criminal

Just having a psychopathic personality disorder doesn't automatically make someone a criminal.

Some lead seemingly normal lives without making waves with obvious crimes.
But they still cause emotional, economic, and psychological pain.

They don't make warm and loving parents and children or family members.
And they don't make for reliable friends or colleagues.

For Psychopaths, Other People Exist Only for Them

Psychopaths have a huge sense of superiority and sense of entitlement. They think nothing of taking property that belongs to others.
They believe other people exist only for their own pleasure and well-being.

And since they see most people as inferior, weak, or too easy to deceive, many psychopaths believe that their victims deserved what they got.
In some extreme cases, they will say that they are doing a favor to the victim by allowing the victim to support them.

The people around are only valuable until they can provide something.
Once they are no more useful, the psychopath will discard them at once.

Psychopaths Have Little or No Emotions

Psychopaths' emotions are poorly developed and weak at best. But they do understand that others have something called "emotions".

Some psychopaths will take the time to learn emotions to better manipulate their victims.
But they do at a superficial level and good observers can sometimes tell the difference.

Also, see:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Psychopathy is Both Nature and Nurture?

It's both.

But a better question would be how much either nature or nurture accounts for.

Genetics seem to account for at least 50%.
The environment will have a tough time overcoming what nature has provided, say the authors.

The 5 Phases of Psychopath's Ladder Climbing

Snakes in Suits present five phases of a psychopath's climb on the corporate ladder:

1. **Entry** (job interview faking previous employment, awards, and using charm)
2. **Assessment** (how useful you are, either an easily influenced pawn with informal influence or a patron with formal influence to protect against attacks)
3. **Manipulation** (positive information about themselves and negative information about others)
4. **Confrontation** (discard pawns and use patrons)
5. **Ascension** (take the patron's position)

Of course, all employees try to understand the power structure and take advantage of it.
But the psychopaths do it with the aim of little intent to provide anything. And they have no loyalty to the company or teams.

Psychopath Have Good Grasp of Human Psychology

Many psychopaths seem to be very good at understanding and leveraging human psychology.
The authors say it's not sure if it's an innate talent or if they simply work harder at it.

Their biggest challenges are individuals with strong personality traits such as dominance, assertiveness, and narcissism.

These guys, narcissists especially, are the least likely to seek assistance and guidance and they are most surprised to find themselves conned.

Psychopaths Are Poor Team Players

Even the most well-behaved psychopath won't be able to form good teams. They can't collaborate with others, especially with those whom they see as adversaries.

Psychopaths want to see others fail as that's more likely to make them look good.
They don't share information to keep the advantage, and when they share information it's often with an ulterior motive.

The authors say that the same is true for Machiavellians and narcissists.

Superficially Good at Communication Skills

Some psychopaths are very good socially, at least at first blush.

Often the skills are more superficial than real.
They talk confidently, they are not afraid of self-promoting, and they go straight to the people with power, seeking support.
Since they don't feel social pressure, they are freer than most other people, so they can jump in at any time.
And they rely on the fact that a confident delivery will often obfuscate the actual message.

And since they don't have feelings and boundaries, they can easily switch personalities to fit the situation.

But Not All Psychopaths Are Smooth

However, not all are smooth operators.

The non-smooth relies on bullying, coercion, abuse, and humiliation (also read: meatheads in "The 7 Archetypes of Dominance").

"*Snakes in Suits*" is not about these guys, but keep in mind that if the smooth approach fails, the smooth psychopath can resort to bullying, threatening and aggressive tactics.

Spotting a Psychopath at Work

1. Verify all information on a CV (psychopaths lie)
2. Check references
3. See examples of work
4. Pay attention to facial expression and emotional communication: psychopaths are often either too shallow or overacting
5. Stick to facts, don't fall for the charming chit chat
6. Don't expect HR to make a psychological diagnosis
7. Don't count on your abilities to detect lies: even people trained in spotting lies are as bad as non-trained ones. Don't guess but look at corroborative evidence

Dealing With Psychopaths

1. Learn as much as you can about psychopathy
2. Avoid labeling anyone as a psychopath (you can't make a diagnosis, and it might lead to litigation)
3. Knowing yourself or the psychopath has an advantage by knowing you better (your weaknesses, your fears)
4. Understanding your utility to psychopaths (what can they see in you?)
5. Understand your hot buttons (ideally you will realize you're being pushed in real-time and won't even show a reaction)
6. Understand how psychopaths manipulate people
7. Build and maintain strong relationships with superiors and colleagues (psychopaths like spreading rumors and "dividing and conquering")
8. Keep delivering great work (a psychopath boss will use poor work against you)
9. Keep a spotless reputation (the more people can stand by your good work and ethics the better)
10. Discard first impressions (they tend to be positive with psychopaths)
11. Avoid psychopathic bonds (read are you dating a psychopath) and be careful of those who want to isolate you
12. If there is any abuse, seek help immediately
13. Work through your feelings of shame (if you are being conned, at the beginning you'll be ashamed. Don't!)
14. If you're the boss, do the best you can
15. Consider leaving

Also, read more on dark psychology and manipulation:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

Further Reading

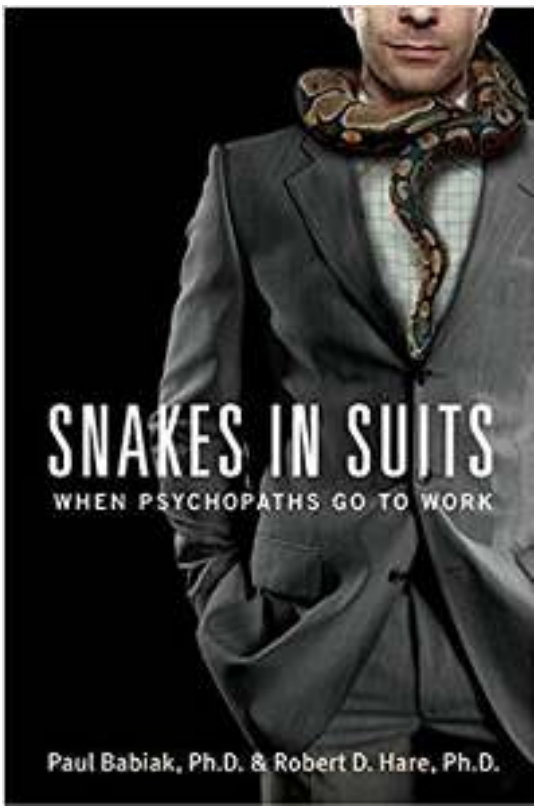
If you're not a psychopath and want to have a good career, you must get ready with some effective work strategies.

Read:

- Mastering office politics
- Effective career strategies

And for women:

- The Woman's Guide to Winning at Work



Real-Life Applications

Watch Out for Superficial Charm
Watch out for the people around you who are charming and flattering.

Take Notes of People Who Push Your Buttons
Pay particular attention to people who are able to push your buttons. The first time you should see it as a blessing so you can work on your own self-awareness.

CONS

- **Inductive Reasoning at Work?**

The author seems to imply that even psychopaths that live a seemingly normal life cause emotional and psychological pain with their behavior.

But how can he be sure? Hare has mostly studied criminal psychopaths. Maybe he simply has never run into a psychopath that does not cause (much) pain.
He knows much better than I do, for sure, but I had to raise this question. As Taleb says in *Fooled by Randomness* the fact that you've never seen a black swan doesn't mean there isn't one.

Actual psychopaths are convinced Hare is a victim of confirmation bias. But then again, they might be biased.

- **Sometimes Contradictory**

Some examples of psychopaths doing well in sales didn't add up with the fact that psychopaths don't really plan on doing much for their companies.

- **Jerks and Psychopaths (??)**

I didn't get the last section talking about how jerks are more successful with women than nice guys.
How's that connected to psychopaths?
Also read: "why psychopaths seduce more women" and "how psychopaths manipulate and control women".

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

- **Sensationalist**

I find Snakes In Suits to be a bit sensationalist in the way that it wants to represent psychopaths as these effective, cold-blooded machines with a target for the top spot.
Some are, but many others are just plain dumb as well.

- **Potentially Overstate Psychopaths' Ability to Gain Power & Wreak Havoc**

I don't doubt that many men and women high in psychopathic traits can gain power and do gain power in many organizations.

However, by focusing only on how they can acquire power and much less on the traits that undermines psychopaths' ability to advance, the book may overstate the phenomenon.

In my opinion, Snakes In Suit exaggerates the power and ability that most psychopaths have to climb ladders.

For example, Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules for Life*, states that psychopaths climb hierarchies much less than people think because 'psychopaths must move from place to place'.

I believe the truth may be more in the middle.
Psychopaths climb hierarchies far more than Peterson may believe. But Robert Hare may fail to acknowledge that p**sychopathy is on a spectrum. And lower scorers can also add value to the organization.**

PROS

Great Overview
It's a great overview not just of psychopaths at work, but about psychopaths in general.

> **Those who seek power are invariably the least fit to hold and wield it**

Review

Snakes in Suits is a good book, but I expected a bit more given its popularity and given the author's credentials.

I have to wonder if Hare, who mainly worked with criminal psychopaths, might not be a bit biased.

After all, he draws his experience from the worst subset of psychopaths. Does he really have much experience with white-collar psychopaths?

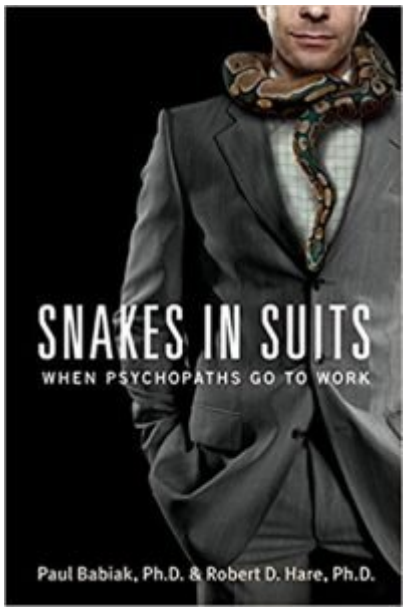
With that in mind, I found "*Snake in Suits*" a very instructive and enjoyable read, albeit a bit light on data.

Also, read:

- Best psychology books,
- Best dark triad books

or get Snakes in Suits on Amazon

Snakes in Suits Summary: Are Your Colleagues Psychopaths?



Sociopaths at work.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/snakes-in-suits/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.5

Is Donald Trump a Sociopath? Why The Answer Might Be “Yes”

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Is Trump a sociopath?

By the end of this article, you will know the answer to that question.

Contents

- Why It Matters

- What’s a Sociopath
  - The World is A Game
  - Can Sociopaths Make Good Leaders?
- Trump & The Signs of Sociopathy
  - 1. Superficial Wit & Charm
  - 2. Compulsive Lying
  - 3. Inflated Sense of Worth
  - 4. Impulsiveness
  - 5. Word Salad
  - 6. Aggression
  - 6. Machiavellianism
- What Do Psychiatrists Say
  - Is It Fair to Diagnose Trump?
- How Do You Impeach a Sociopath…
- Why It Matters Beyond Trump
- SUMMARY

Why It Matters

Whether Trump is a sociopath or not, is a very important question.
Because:

1. The US is the most powerful, nuclear-armed country
2. If a sociopath can win a democratic election, what does that say of society?

To me, the second question is even more important than the first.
Because fingers crossed, chances are good that will go through the Trump years without a war.

But what about the millions of countries, counties, cities, businesses, and organizations the whole world over?
Aren’t they *all* liable to be run and mismanaged by sociopaths?

Probably so. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.
Let’s go step by step.

What’s a Sociopath

A sociopath has no empathy for other people.

He is very selfish and has little of the feelings that usually make people add value to society.

Such as:

- Has no conscience (no sense of right and wrong)
- Has no empathy (ie.: doesn't care if you suffer)
- Has no remorse (can cause harm without feeling bad)
- Feels no guilt

Contrary to psychopaths who have very little emotions, sociopaths do get emotional.
Indeed, they are impulsive, aggressive, and prone to emotional outbursts and fits of anger (Dr. Scott Bonn, Criminologist).

Obviously, Trump could not be a psychopath as he is too emotional and thin-skinned.
He does have little empathy, though. Just as an example, he allegedly -and personally confirmed- that he used his father's funeral to pitch a crowd of real estate brokers on his new building complexes (New York Times).

The World is A Game

On top of lacking empathy for others, sociopaths are supremely selfish.

They are known for seeing the world as a big chessboard (*The Sociopath Next Door*). The pawns and the pieces on that chessboard are the pieces that they move, manipulate -and sometimes get rid of- to get what they want.

In a sociopath's world, you might as well be the pawn.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Can Sociopaths Make Good Leaders?

Mitchel Anderson writing for the theteeya makes the point that a sociopath could hardly be a good fit for a fiduciary role.

Someone in a fiduciary role indeed should act in the best interest of the people he represents.

So the question here is simple:

> Can someone who doesn't care about anyone but himself serve the best interest of the people?

Some authors made the point that psychopaths can make good leaders.
But I disagree. I couldn't possibly see here how the answer to that question could ever be a yes.

Indeed to sociopaths, you only matter depending on what you can do for them.
What you have done in the past, is quickly forgotten.

This means that if Trump is a sociopath, he feels no obligation to the people who elected him.
Not even to his own voters, whose utility is nil after the elections.

Also, read more on the dark psychology of leadership here:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

Trump & The Signs of Sociopathy

Now let's see how Trump scores against a few known sociopath traits:

1. Superficial Wit & Charm

You might not like the guy, but one of the reasons why he has so many adoring fans is that he can be charming and he certainly looks charismatic.

Here are some examples:

2. Compulsive Lying

This one probably doesn't need any videos for confirmation.

What I find most telling though is that Trump routinely lies about facts that have data and statistics that people can easily check:

Psychologist Craig Malkin says that Trump might be at a stage where he needs to bend reality to fit with his aggrandized vision of himself.

3. Inflated Sense of Worth

This is what the Mayo Clinic lists as one of the top signs of sociopathy:

- Arrogance, a sense of superiority, and being extremely opinionated

Does it sound like someone you might have seen on TV? ⍰

4. Impulsiveness

To use Trump's beloved hyperboles, there has never been a more impulsive president:

5. Word Salad

Word salad is not an “official” trait of antisocial personality disorder.

However, it’s how “survivors” of psychopath/sociopath relationships commonly refer to it (MacKenzie, 2015).

Word salad is a mixture of old stories, accusations, excuses, and plain nonsense that you are most likely to encounter when you cornered a sociopath with evidence of their wrongdoings.

When that happens, the sociopath has lost his manipulation edge and is now struggling to reclaim it.
To me, a great example of word salad is how Trump entered the debate right after the sexual assault scandal:

6. Aggression

Often high functioning sociopaths keep their latent aggression under wraps.

However, when their manipulative, more socially acceptable ways fail, they can resort to threats, bullying or even violence.
And violence is often visible in Trump’s world.

On terrorists, he said the US should “take out their families“.
He often punctuates his speeches with references to destroying, military power (an “armada” sent towards North Korea), or sometimes just plainly beating someone:

Unluckily, he also threatened the use of military force (more than once) and, scariest of all, nuclear weapons: S.

Vindictiveness

Vindictiveness is a subset of violence for sociopaths, and Trump has shown plenty of that too.
In this video, he bashes Rosie O’Donnell with unrelenting hatred.

And in this other video, I show you how Trump went out of his way to punish Macron after Macron had tried to stand up to him.

6. Machiavellianism

Finally, Trump is a supreme manipulator.

If Machiavelli had written *The Prince* during these years, he would have probably written extensively about Donal Trump -I surely will in the book I’m writing :)-.

Trump is a master at unhinging his opponents, looking dominant, and coming across as the most powerful man in any social exchange.
As a matter of fact, he makes it a point to always look the most dominant.

What Do Psychiatrists Say

Dr. Bandy Lee — a forensic psychiatrist — has met with members of Congress to express concerns about Trump’s mental state and fitness for office.

Lee leads the National Coalition of Concerned Mental Health Experts, an ensemble of mental health professionals who are worried about the potential consequences of Trump’s leadership.

Dr. Lance Dodes, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and a fellow member of the National Coalition of Concerned Mental Health Experts says:

> Donald Trump’s speech and behavior show that he has severe sociopathic traits.

> The significance of this cannot be overstated. While there have surely been American presidents who could be said to be narcissistic, none have shown sociopathic qualities to the degree seen in Mr. Trump. Correspondingly, none have been so definitively and so obviously dangerous.

Lee, Dodes, and the National Coalition's positions are not without criticism though.

Dr. Jeffrey Leiberman, the chair of Columbia University's Department of Psychiatry, says that commenting on Trump's mental health as a psychiatrist is both unethical and imprecise.

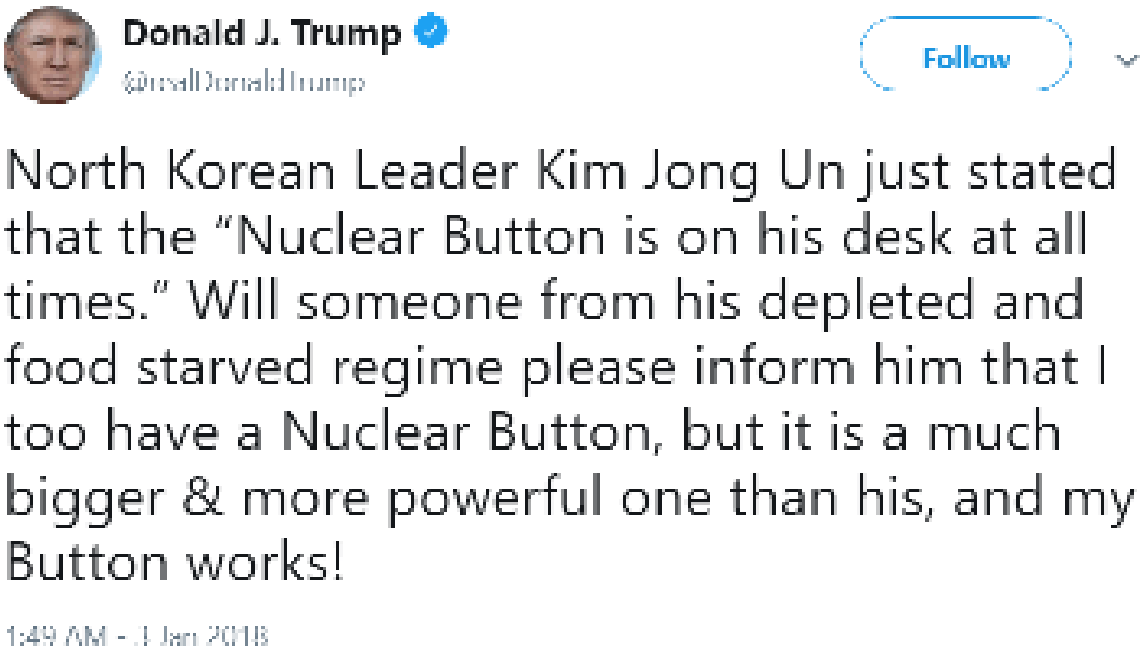
Unethical refers to the Goldwater rule. The Goldwater rule discourages clinicians from making diagnoses of public figures that they have not directly examined.
Imprecise because, well, you can't really diagnose a patient without a close examination and structured tests.
And finally, Leiberman says, it's a political statement to diagnose a political leader (read the full statement here).

Personally, I would add that anyone who has read any books on sociopathy will find shocking parallels between the examples depicted as sociopaths and Trump (see "*Confessions of a Sociopath*" and, most of all, "*Without Conscience*").

Is It Fair to Diagnose Trump?

I personally believe that it's ludicrous to call "ethics" and "fairness" into the equation when the president brags about the efficiency of his nuclear arsenal ready at his fingertip.

It's *not* a political statement caring and worrying about the potential consequences of a president who threatens nuclear war.
It's what every good and sensible person should do.



What I am worried, about is something else instead:

How Do You Impeach a Sociopath...

… with the nuclear button?

Overall, we should always question whether a leader is fit to serve the people or not.

However, I would make the point that questioning Trump and trying to remove him from office might have unintended consequences. And it might risk causing more harm than good.

When a sociopath who has lost touch with reality feels encircled, he might indeed act in two different ways:

1. Make sure to bring down as many people as he can with him (ie.: a war)
2. Purposefully cause a global emergency to ride out his personal troubles (ie.: a war)

It's not such a far-fetched thought.
It's simply how the mind works in some borderline cases.

As we have already seen in history:

Historical Examples of Cornered Sociopaths

When the war started going south for Nazi Germany, Hitler *accelerated* his genocide machine by diverting more resources to it.

And his last order was to destroy all infrastructure in Germany, a clear example of "I'll take everyone down with me" (Nero Decree).

In the last days of World War II, rather than facing the shame of defeat Japanese military major Hatanaka attempted a coup d'etat. The idea of some military high commanders in Japan was to "keep fighting until the last man, until the last house".
Such as: if I must go down, I'd rather bring everyone and everything else down in total destruction.

Muammar Gaddafi is another typical example of the dangers of cornering a sociopath who's lost touch with reality. He called the protesters who later overthrew him rats and vowed to turn the country into hell rather than surrender.

Now one thing that these people had in common was this: they didn't have many other options. And they didn't have a nuclear option at their fingertip.
And don't you think it's at least plausible they would have used a nuclear option if that had given them even the slightest chance of winning? Or simply the chance of just hurting their enemies?

I believe they wouldn't have thought twice about it.

That's the reason why, paradoxically, I think there might be more to fear from a politically dying Trump than 4 years of unencumbered Trump.

Personally, I would approach the demise of a sociopath with the nuclear button very carefully.

Hit Quick, Hit Silently

A slow legal impeachment is dangerous because Trump could logically see his end coming. And he could carefully plan his diversion plans.

Personally, I believe that the safest way to overthrow a dangerous leader is with a coup d'etat from behind the scenes.
Like in the old days.

Why It Matters Beyond Trump

Hopefully, fingers crossed, we will ride out of this mess without any catastrophe in sight.

But unluckily, as I mentioned in the beginning, this goes well beyond the US elections.

Robert Hare, Psychopathy researcher and author of *Snakes in Suits*, suggests that similar dynamics are at play in every single business and in every single organization the whole world over.

I would like you to reflect on it.
A world where anyone with the temperament of Donald Trump and with a complete lack of conscience can reach the levers of power is not the best world to be in.

We can do better.

I am a big believer that to make this world a better place we need people who are fundamentally good but who know how to be bad.
Fundamentally good people who, when facing evil can switch off their morality and play the same game.

If Sanders, Jeb Bush, or Clinton herself had been better prepared to play the game, Trump would not be president.

Niccolo Machiavelli said:

> ***A good person is ruined among the great number of people who are not good***

He was right.
And when bad people win and good ones lose, we *all* lose.

A better world is a world where more and more empathic people can meet evil with evil. That's a world where power goes to better leaders.
And that's a better world to live in.

A good idea, for now, could be to resist voting to endorse the person who looks most charismatic and/or dominant.
And pick the best and most empathic one instead.
And my second invite to you is to learn to be selectively bad so that we can all win together.

Cheers my friend.
And don't let the sociopaths win :).

SUMMARY

We cannot answer for sure whether Trump is a sociopath or not.

It's impossible to make a diagnosis without an in-person visit, and it's highly unlikely that Trump will ever consent to such a diagnosis.

However, it's not far-fetched to think that Trump is indeed a sociopath. He has shown several signs of antisocial personality disorder on more than one occasion.

The 6 Best Book Review Sites for Non-Fiction Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

We list on this page the best book reviews websites available.

Methodology
This ranking is based on 500+ book reviews that we published and that we researched beforehand, comparing how others reviewed them and with a focus on:

- Critical thinking
- Reviewer expertise and track record
- Bias, incentives, and manipulation risks
- Usefulness for high-performing readers

Note: We focus on non-fiction books, mostly focusing on psychology, power, strategy, seduction/dating and men's self-empowerment.

Site	Strength	Weakness	Best For
Amazon	Volume	Unreliable/gamed	Quick sentiment
Goodreads	Social filtering	Mixed expertise	Community input
TPM	Critical reviews	Niche focus	Serious learners

Contents

- Intro: A List for Ambitious Men
  - #6. Amazon
  - #5. Google Books
  - #4. Goodreads
  - #3. Derek Sivers
  - #2. Nat Eliason
  - #1. The Power Moves
- Low-Utility Sites for High-Achievers
  - The New York Times
  - Most Book Review Websites
- How to Use Book Review Websites
  - What to Look For in Site Book Reviews

Intro: A List for Ambitious Men

Most book review sites are written for bibliophiles, hobbyists and fiction readers. This list is different.

If you are a high-agency man, your time is your most limited resource.
You don't need "flowery prose" or "star ratings" from average readers; you need a **Strategic Vetting** that tells you if a book's logic is sound and empowers you, or if it's "naive self-help" that wastes your time.

Below is an audit of the best—and worst—sources for high-stakes non-fiction intelligence.

#6. Amazon

You might have heard of this one :).

Amazon is the most popular book review site.

I make a stop on Amazon for almost *every single book review I write*. First of all, because I get affiliate links from Amazon :). And once I'm there, I also always visit the review section.

With time I have learned the ins and outs of the system, and this is my opinion on Amazon as a book review site:

Pros

- Quantity of books: there is a review for almost any book out there
- Quantity of reviews: plenty of reviews for each book
- Sorting: I love the option of sorting by stars or by highest voted

Cons

- **No expert reviewers:** anyone can review on Amazon. That's a bigger issue for information products than for, say, a vacuum cleaner.
- **Average rating = average of average folks**: most people are average, and few are experts. Average people are less likely to be power-aware, logical, and critical thinkers. And they're more likely to fall -and mistakenly provide high ratings- to useless naive self-help
- **Swayed by fans/hater reviewers**: at Amazon, you don't even need to buy a book to review it. I'd be surprised if lots of reviewers didn't even read the book, but only vented their opinion or supported a friend/idol (or trashed an enemy)
- **Most fake reviews**: since Amazon is mostly there to sell books, and not to review them, it also happens to be the most targeted by fake reviews. Including, of course, from the author themselves
- **Smaller book reviews are completely unreliable**: albeit all books have fake reviews, the less popular ones are the easiest to swarm with fake reviews
- **Confirmation bias**: people tend to buy what they like, so you get more fans and fewer critical reviews
- **Not really a book review site**: finally, Amazon reviews are *not* a content reviews section. Many conflate the book quality with the Amazon or seller service. You'll often see 1-star reviews complaining about the book handling, shipping, or status. Those add up in the final rating.

I'll give you an example that covers a lot of the cons of Amazon as a book review site: the book *The Secret*.

The Secret is a book that tells you *not* to work on your dreams and goals. Anyone in his right mind who wants to achieve his goals wouldn't know what to do with such advice.
But The Secret is a best seller and it has a sky-high rating.

People who buy The Secret are probably already the law of attraction aficionados, so their ratings are as credible as Trump supporters on Trump's mental fitness (or Clinton supporters on her pay-per-play habits, let's not be partisans).

Overall:

A solid, all-season place to get book reviews from all sorts of readers. Just keep in mind the shortcomings (and the high number of fake reviews).

#5. Google Books

Google Books is smaller than Amazon, but I found the book reviews to be slightly better and more objective.

As an open, grassroots project, it has many of the same advantages and disadvantages as Amazon.
Such as:

Pros

- Higher quality reviews compared to Amazon

Cons

- Easily deceived, especially for smaller books. If you read a book like Published you will realize that in an open system, lots (most?) of the reviews can be fabricated.

#4. Goodreads

Goodreads is a social network of book reviews.

The idea is just awesome: you can write your own reviews, exchange opinions with friends, or simply just follow people you trust.

Pros

- You know the reviewers
- You can better target subject matter experts compared to Amazon/Google Books

Cons

- **Facebook of books**: I joined it with the idea of only following reviewers I liked, but I immediately got friend requests from pretty much all the Facebook friends who were also in there :)
- **The best reviewers are not there**: not all the top reviewers are on Goodreads because they have their own websites

#3. Derek Sivers

A successful entrepreneur and later solopreneur who lives life his way, Sivers reviews books without affiliations.

Pros

- Does not mince words
- He's been a successful entrepreneur: he has the results to back his business book reviews

Cons

- No categories: summaries are all mixed on a single page, going from history to biographies to self-help

#2. Nat Eliason

Nat applies good logic and critical thinking, and he's not afraid of calling things like they are.

I find that we often agree on many books -with some due exceptions-.
I discovered Nat's website recently and I will soon be going through some of his top book picks that I haven't yet read.

#1. The Power Moves

We review books through the lens of Power Dynamics and Social Engineering,

Pros

- **The BS-Filter:** We cross-reference claims against empirical evidence and real-world effectiveness

Cons

- **More limited offering**, we focus on power, strategies, seduction, psychology and smart men's empowerment

Low-Utility Sites for High-Achievers

Site Type	Best For…	ROI for High-Status Men
Amazon / Goodreads	General Popularity	**Low** (Too much noise/fake reviews)
NYT / Kirkus	Literary / Prose	**Zero** (All fluff, no tactics)
The Power Moves	**Power & Strategy**	**Higher** (Actionable Intelligence)

I didn't find the following book review websites to be very good sources for prioritizing your reading list:

The New York Times

The New York Times reviews read more like a book themselves than book reviews and it sometimes focuses on literary merit and 'narrative' rather than actual content. That is useless for a man who needs to extract insights, frameworks, or strategies.

Most Book Review Websites

Most book review websites are for people who want to sit with a cup of coffee, a blanket on their feet, and a cat nearby.

These websites cater a lot to people who "read for reading's sake".

That doesn't fit my goals and my audience's goals. We read to improve, develop and move ahead in life -of course, most of us also love reading too, but it's not the *only* motivator-.

General book review websites include:

- Kirkus Reviews.

- BookLikes.
- BookPage.
- Omnivoracious.
- Bookreporter.

Pros:

- You can find quality men and quality women for good, loyal, and stable partners

Cons:

- No for high achievers: reading for reading's sake is not for highly driven people

How to Use Book Review Websites

I often read reviews before I start reading the book.

It helps me prepare my mind for the information I am about to absorb, which makes my reading and my knowledge acquisition all the more efficient.

I also read reviews after I read the book, especially so when I'm not sure I fully got the message.

On my after-the-book review reading, I look for the following:

- Criticism of the book (some imperfection I missed?)
- Opposing information (what are other theories in the field?)
- Similar books (which I might get)
- Is the book still valid (or are there new current thoughts and/or studies that disprove the book?)

What to Look For in Site Book Reviews

To make your reading efficient, you should find book review websites that give you clear and concise information.
I especially look for reviews that highlight:

- Main concepts in the books
- Main drawbacks
- Criticism (from the reviewer or from the rest of the literature)
- And finally: does the reviewer recommend the book?

That's why for me it's so crucial to trust the reviewer.
I need to trust the reviewer almost, and sometimes even more so, than the author of the book.

That's why I'm not the biggest fan of Amazon reviews.

And that's why I don't like book reviews from big newspapers -like The New York Times-.
They all tend to be too flowery, long, and unstructured.
You finish reading the book review and you're not even sure: did the reviewer liked the book or not. Does he recommend it or not?

I'm not looking for a literary piece.
I'm looking for information that makes my knowledge acquisition as efficient as possible.

Also, read:

- Best book summaries websites
- Best books

The Manual: What Women Want (W Anton) Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Manual is a dating book for men. It has some good mindsets and dating advice mixed with some less good content.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Men and Women Are Equally Valuable
  - There are Different Standards of Beauty for Men and Women
  - Be Strong
  - Be Confident
  - Be Selfish
  - Don't Explain Yourself
  - Be Charming
  - Be Happy
  - Hide Your Player Status
  - Communicate Directly
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Don't believe that women are more valuable than you are
- Be protective of her, but put yourself first
- Show strength and confidence: women don't like vulnerable men

Full Summary

The Manual is divided into two parts: theoretical information and more practical information.

Contrary to most dating coaches, W. Anton says that knowing the theory is more important.
Once you internalize the correct mindsets, your actions will follow naturally.

Men and Women Are Equally Valuable

The author says that our society tells us that women are more valuable.
And that's why men chase women, buy them gifts, and generally treat them like a hot and rare commodity.

He says it's because putting women first is good for society and societies that cherished women beat those who didn't.
So today we only have societies that idealize women.
The culture in our society is to kiss up to women, but that's not effective in actually sleeping with women.

My Note: Simply Not True
This is made up of evolutionary psychology.
It's not true that men and women are equally valuable, and it's not just socialization and culture, but also nature.
Also, read:

- **Sexual marketplace dynamics**

If you want to be good with women, the author says, you need to ditch that mindset that women are more valuable and put yourself first instead.

My Note: Adopt Correct Mindsets
There is nothing wrong with the understanding that women are on average more valuable than average men.
As long as you aim at becoming a high-value man, you don't need to worry about the average.

There are Different Standards of Beauty for Men and Women

W. Anton says that men and women are judged on a very different set of standards.

It's not that men are more visual, it's that all that matters about a woman are her looks. To reproduce effectively she needs to be a female, young, and have a good body.

For men, it's different. For men being young is of no significance.
A man to be attractive must be born a male and be less vulnerable than females.
And the latter is not a quality you can see in a picture.

My Note: Not fully true
The overall point he makes is not fully wrong: women are more heavily judged simply on the basis of looks.
But it's not true that looks or age don't matter in a man: they still do.
Also, read:

- **The sexual market value** (of men and women)

And that's why, the author says, your height or looks matter little to women.
It's more about making them feel safe and secure and being strong.

Be Strong

W. Anton says that from an evolutionary perspective protection is the number one priority during pregnancy.

And that's why women are attracted to men who look stronger and less vulnerable than they are.
So, sorry Brene Brown, but it looks like to get women, men can't really be vulnerable :).

My Note: there are exceptions
I do agree actually that men shouldn't look too weak.
However, this is also a generalization. Some well-placed insecurities and vulnerability can make men even more attractive (read: seduction techniques you wouldn't think work).

Be Confident

The author defines confidence as:

> The ability to appear certain by tolerating uncertainty. To be dominant, optimistic, and courageous with women, and never act intimidated by them.

I fully agree with the second part.
I don't buy into W. Anton's first part of the sentence though. Indeed, he stresses and repeats that confidence is about

appearing to be certain.
Even when you're not.

Trying to show yourself certain even when you're not will make you look like an idiot when eventually you are found out for a blowhard who didn't know sh*t.
In those cases, you are better off relying on the strength of a philosopher's frame. Also, read:

- **Frame control techniques and examples**

Be Selfish

The Manual makes the point that to attract women you have to put yourself first.
It's not about being domineering and controlling, and you should actually be protective. But not to the point that you are inconveniencing yourself.

I kind of agree here.
However, don't make it a big rule. If you are a cool guy, a good act of chivalry could easily give you a point.

Also, keep in mind that taking care of others is a major leadership quality (*Leaders Eat Last*). And women love leaders.

Don't Explain Yourself

I liked this insight on not explaining yourself.

The author says that insecure people volunteer explanations for their actions or motives. Telling people why they did what they did or said what they said.

Get rid of it because it's very insecure.
Women will test you and sometimes try to push you on the defensive. But you must remain steadfast.
Also, read:

- **How to deal with women's shit tests**

Be Charming

The author says you shouldn't go overboard to make women laugh, entertain or, God forbid, play games (like *The Game* teaches).

And he makes a very good point.
He says that studies telling people that women like men who make it laugh have it backward. It's not that women like men who make them laugh, it's that women simply laugh more with men that excite them.

I don't think it's that straightforward and some good banter, especially initially, helps.
But Anton had me nodding there: a very very good point I had never thought of.

Also, read:

- How to be charming

Be Happy

The Manual makes the good point that happiness attracts women.
I would add that happiness attracts everyone, but that still holds true.

Be happier indeed :).

Hide Your Player Status

W. Anton recommends you do not brag about being a womanizer or wanting to enjoy many women.

P.S.: see here on how to brag effectively:

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

There is nothing special for the woman being one in many and it means you are no longer selective.

They might still be attracted to you, but it will be harder for them to trust you. And if you cannot make them comfortable and come across as trustworthy, you won't go far.

The point, he says, is that women want men that other women are interested in. But not men who are interested in all women.

That's quite genius there and deserves a quote:

> **Women want men all women want; not men who want all women.**

Communicate Directly

A big tenet of "*The Manual: What Women Want*" is direct communication.

And in the dichotomy "cold approach VS social circle", Anton prefers the cold approach.

He says you should always:

- Go straight for the woman you like (make a beeline)
- Do not talk and make friends with her friends
- Tell her you found her attractive
- Tell her you want to see her again because you find her attractive

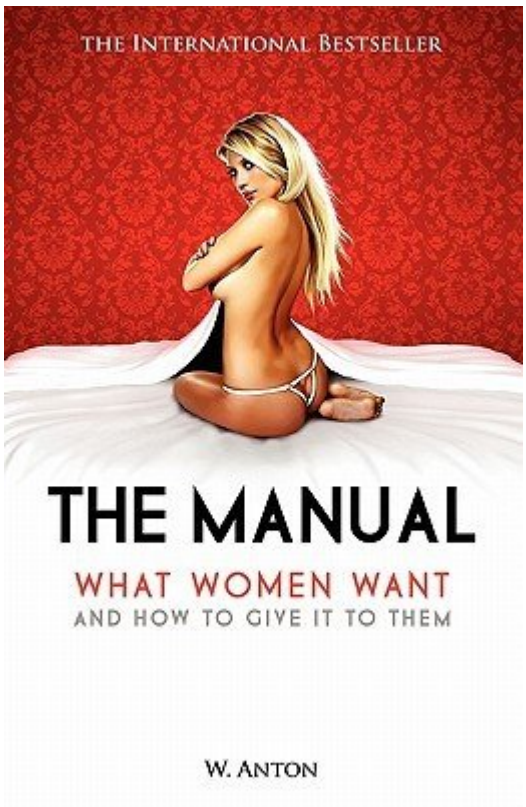
Also, read:

- How to approach a woman

> How to Approach a Girl: 9 Science-Based Steps

Women communicate indirectly

However, women communicate the opposite way: indirectly.
So you should look for the significance behind her words. For example "my feet hurt" means she wants to sit down. Or if you are at home, you can interpret it as a green light for a foot massage.



Real-Life Applications

There are quite a few applications to real-life from The Manual.
But the one I liked the most is this:

Attempt but Don't Lose Interest
It's OK to attempt to bring a woman home early, but don't lose interest if your attempt fails.
I find that after a woman's initial refusal, I lose a lot of interest and that hasn't served me too well. I will heed this suggestion whenever it fits the situation.

CONS

Poor Evolutionary Psychology
There is some made-up evolutionary psychology that the author pitches for facts.
For true facts, pick one of these:

- Best evolutionary psychology books

Some Bro-Science Typical of Low-Level Manopshere Blogs
The Manual has some of the stereotypical, negative manosphere traits.
Such as:

- It starts with the bro science of evolutionary psychology
- Some anger towards women (it says that most feminists are lesbians, but I doubt that)
- Says that money doesn't matter (money won't hurt you for sure)
- Some typical alpha-male posturing:

> (…) the majority of the public consists of unattractive people who would rather not hear that they are unfit for survival or at the mercy of genes.

Indeed, by simple mathematical properties, it's true that most men are average. However, I am not particularly fond of how the author describes it.

He then goes on mocking "clueless researchers" for sitting in labs donning white coats while studying women. Again, he is social-climbing on others to look better.
Honestly, the author could have done a better service to the readers if he had actually *read* some science before talking about science (something nobody forced him to talk about it and he could have just based his book on his personal experience).

Some Bad Dating Advice
In my opinion, The Manual has quite some bad dating advice.
Including:

- Invade personal space

The author recommends that if you want to talk to a woman in a group, you should walk straight to her in spite of whatever is happening in the group.
He says:

> By doing this, he completely invades the personal space of the group, interrupts the conversation (..) demonstrating his confidence loud and clear.

That's not confident, it's socially inept, and it also demonstrates a major lack of social intelligence.
And while it can be attractive in some instances, social intelligence is a highly prized quality by many women -especially high-quality women-.

- Approach from the front and never from the side

Instead, research shows that women prefer being approached from the side.
Anton also says that it's ideal if a woman has not looked at you before your approach. Terribly wrong. Read how to approach a woman for the full science of approaching.

- Style is highly overrated

Really?
In my experience instead, it's highly underrated.

- Walk with her if she's in a hurry

There are situations where you can follow a woman wherever she's going. However, more times than not you risk looking like a follower, a social burden, and a man with little to do.

- Make your first meeting as long as possible

I disagree. You're better off ending yourself instead of letting it sputter and having her eject.

- Try to kiss on a first date

Anton says that you must kiss a woman before you sleep with her.
Of the last 20-30 women I have been with, I think I only kissed a minority of them before having sex.
And since Anton seems so into "being alpha", *Alpha Male Strategies*, who markets his style as the alpha-male prototype, says that "alpha males don't kiss".

Less Good Life Advice
The author seems to suggest that all men chase an "imaginary need for status", good careers, and accomplishments for women. He says that once men learn instead how women think and how dating works, then they won't care

anymore for their jobs.
It seems like the author is suggesting men should not have their own dreams or mission in life, and should not strive to improve their lot. But a ma who is not striving to move forward in life is at high risk of becoming a low-quality man. Even if he is successful with women, if he *only* chases women, that's more like a lower-quality fuckboy.

Men who go places don't (only) do it for women. Some men are driven and hungry for success in all areas of life, sometimes independently of women.

And finally, there are some men who never had problems getting girls, and that's why they are free to also focus on other areas of life.

PROS

Some Great Gems
W. Anton had more than a few awesome gems here. Some I already mentioned. A couple more are:

- People refer to nations as female so that men are happier sacrificing themselves for them
- Expressions of helplessness are attractive in women as it highlights vulnerability (feminine) and youthfulness (reproductive value)

It's also a helpful read for *too-nice guys*, and there are several funny lines.

Review

The Manual is certainly an interesting read.

It will teach a lot to pure beginners and *too nice guys* putting women on a pedestal.
But also more experienced can come out of it with a couple of great new ideas.
I did have a couple of unexpected "aha moments" and I am very glad I read The Manual.

However, I also had many "this doesn't make any sense" moments.
And several "this is not true" and "this is counterproductive" moments.

Overall, mixed with the good bits there is too much made up bro-science and some bad advice. And I don't feel I can recommend it The Manual to all audiences.

Check out the **best dating books for guys** or get the book on Amazon

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Verbal Self-Defense: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Verbal Self-Defense teaches readers words and techniques to defend themselves against verbal bullies.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Verbal Abuse Has Physical Consequences
  - There Is No "Only Kidding"
  - Verbal Vampires Want to Know Everything About You
  - Level One Abusers: The Annoying Ones
  - Level Two Abusers: Dangerous Ones
  - Why People Abuse You
  - Love Yourself
  - Verbal Defense Techniques
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Verbal abuse has physical consequences: never tolerate it
- Prevent abuse with good posture, confidence, self-love, and spotting abusers as early as possible
- Some techniques for dealing with abuse: stare at them in silence, laugh about yourself, yell and scream, and tell them their behavior is unacceptable

Full Summary

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Verbal Self-Defense also deals with the very basics of voice confidence, body language, and posture.
But since you can find that information anywhere else, we will skip it here.

Verbal Abuse Has Physical Consequences

Lillian Glass blurs the lines between verbal and physical abuse.

Indeed, if physical abuse has psychological and emotional consequences, verbal abuse also has physical consequences.

There Is No "Only Kidding"

Abuse is abuse, and there are no jokes when it comes to verbal abuse.

The “it’s only a joke” line is just the way with which people hit you while covering their backs.

By adding “just joking” they are denying their own attack, basically robbing you of your ability to hit back or get offended because, “hey, they didn’t mean it, it was just a joke”.

Verbal Vampires Want to Know Everything About You

For Lillian Glass verbal vampires are those people who want to get as much information and energy out of you but give nothing back.
The author says you should stop sharing about yourself.

Level One Abusers: The Annoying Ones

Glass differentiates between two levels of abusers.
The first-level abusers are annoying but not necessarily destructive.

Here are the types of level-one abusers:

- **Shock ’em and rock ’em**: say something crazy to get a rise out of you. They may actually like you but are psychologically immature
- **Sarcastic/sadistic**: they use irony, but they also know there’s nothing funny with it because they are always dark and gloomy
- **Verbal hammers**: they never let up
- **My dog’s bigger than yours**: they need to get a leg up on you by parading their bigger wins
- **Trashers**: sarcastic/sadistic they’re gloomy and dark, but they’re direct about it
- **Sugary fawner**: make you lots of compliments to get something from you
- **Backhanded complimentors**: say something nice followed by something nasty
- **Self-consumed**: only discuss what they care about

Level Two Abusers: Dangerous Ones

The level of two abusers are not just annoying by can be dangerous for your health

- **Interrogators**: never stop asking your questions
- **Meddling**: enjoy telling you what to do
- **Condescending/dismisser**: they know it all and brush off your recommendations
- **Sneaky underminers**: undermine you behind your back
- **Yellers/screamers/ragers**: they communicate like an erupting volcano
- **Guilt-producing accusers**: they use guilt to try to control you
- **Liars**: not telling you the truth communicates disrespect toward you
- **Verbal icicles**: they withhold their words and you never know how they’re feeling and what they’re thinking

Also, read:

- **How to handle people who undermine you**
- **Handling guilt-tripping**

Why People Abuse You

Glass lists a few reasons why people would abuse you, including:

- Envy

- Self-sabotaging behavior: this is the case of people with low self-esteem
- You remind them (unconsciously) of someone
- They mistrust people (including you)
- They don't like you/you don't like them (and it shows)
- They're miserable and want everyone to feel the same
- Competition (for example when one partner improves)
- I had it bad, now I want you to have it bad too

Love Yourself

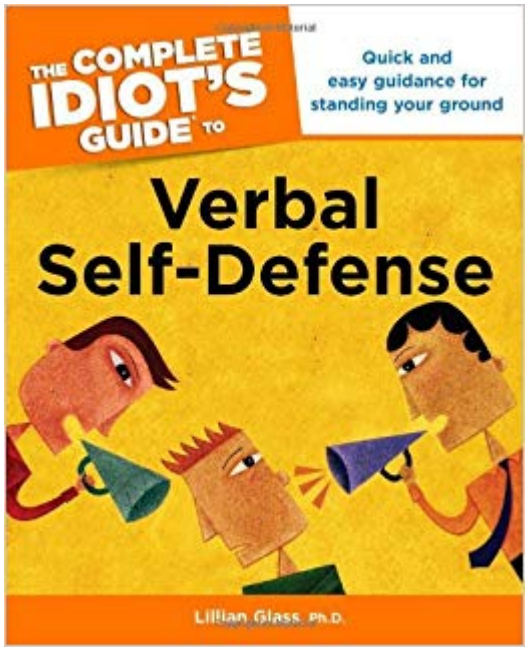
Glass stresses a lot the basics of prevention, going from good voice to posture.
And one of those basics is loving yourself.

When you love yourself and you have high self-esteem, you are less likely to become a victim. And you are more likely to naturally stand up for yourself and enforce your boundaries.

Verbal Defense Techniques

- Silent, expressionless stare
- Silent, expressionless stare + look of disgust
- The naked truth: tell him the real truth about him
- Fight fire with fire: use the same techniques
- Laugh about yourself: if you laugh about yourself, he won't have anywhere else to go
- Hugh-hush: if he keeps talking and criticizing, hush him like a little baby
- Excuse me? Are you talking to me?
- Verbal explosion: start yelling
- "This is unacceptable"

The author makes the point that you never go physical, threaten to use violence, or threaten their livelihood (Ie."I will ruin you").



Real-Life Applications

Don't Verbally Abuse Children
Be especially careful not to sound too critical or harsh to children. It can mark them for their lifetime.

When You Improve You Make Enemies
I found particularly deep the point that when a partner improves the other might get abusive because he/she feels threatened. This can happen with partners and friends.

Don't Stare: Move Your Gaze
The author makes a good point that you shouldn't be staring on end into people's eyes. But move your gaze from one eye to the other, then to the whole face, then to the face then again to one eye.
Indeed, people who keep staring at you without ever moving their gaze are weirdos.

CONS

Diagnosis from Afar
Recalling interactions from her clinic the author often makes diagnoses of people she's never met. That's not how diagnoses are supposed to be carried out.

Too Many Overlapping Categories
The categories of abusers and abusive styles are too many in my opinion. They overlap a lot and it's not helpful to just add more and more categories.

Too Diluted
There is a lot of repetition that is highly unnecessary in my opinion (what the chapter will be about, key takeaways, what we have just talked about, etc.)
Furthermore, I don't think it's very helpful to go into voice tonality, voice exercises, and posture in a book on verbal self-defense. Yes, those parts are important, but anyone who's serious about self-development will tackle those independently and they want a book on verbal self-defense to be deep and strictly about verbal self-defense.

Bad Advice on Voice
The author recommends you breathe from your mouth, which my favorite voice coaches discourage.

PROS

Some Valuable Advice & Techniques
There is a lot of great stuff in the book. The idea of never going nuclear and threatening to take someone's livelihood for example, was great.

Sounds Important Warning on Verbal Abuse
I appreciated that Glass takes verbal abuse and the consequences and dangers it entails very seriously.

Review

A bit diluted, but overall it's a good resource to learn about verbal abuse.
And it's an OK resource to learn how to deal with verbal abuse in terms of power games.

There were some really good gems that I used for Power University, and that's always the greatest compliment I can pay to an author.

Read the best communication skill books, the best books on power, or get the book on Amazon

The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump is a book by 27 psychiatrists and psychologists who assess and analyze Trump with one big question in mind: is it safe for the world to have Trump as US president?

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Trump Might Be Hedonist
  - Trump Might Be Narcissist
  - Narcissism Scale
  - Types of Narcissists: Trump is Grandiose
  - Trump Presents Bullying Behavior
  - Is Trump a Sociopath?
  - Lack of Self Esteem
  - Flight or Fight State
  - Trusts Nobody: Constant Warring Mindset
  - Mentally Ill Leaders Aren't Always Ineffective
  - Functional Impairment Should be Measured
  - Dangerous is Not a Psychiatric Diagnosis
  - Trump Relationships (Father, Wife, Daughter)
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Trump might be a pathological narcissist (possibly a malignant narcissist) and a sociopath
- But the question is not Trump's psychiatric diagnosis (many US presidents had psychiatric disorders), but whether or not he's dangerous (and he might be)
- Short term it would be safe if the military did not act on possible Trump's orders (as it happened in the final days if Nixon's administration)
- Long term, we need presidents to undergo mental health checks like military personnel have to

Full Summary

There are too many authors for me to keep track of the audiobook, hence I will refer to "authors" without specifying names.

Trump Might Be Hedonist

Present hedonists live in the present moment without much thought of the consequences of their actions.
A present hedonist will say whatever it takes to increase his self-esteem and prop his ego, no matter what's real or

not and no matter what's dangerous and what's not.

The author guesses that Trump stopped his emotional growth at age 13.
Without therapy, present hedonists do not mature beyond their age of trauma.

Extreme present hedonists have impulsive thoughts that lead to impulsive actions. Sometimes digging their heels to avoid the consequences of their actions.

When in a position of power, it's the people around the extreme hedonist that have to scramble to make up for his initial impulsive actions.

As a present hedonist, Trump is unfit to be a president.

Trump Might Be Narcissist

More than one author stressed Trump's narcissism.

Narcissists have a huge ego that always needs feeding and recognition.
However, they actually have a very fragile ego. That means they cannot handle criticism.

They also see other people as simply mirrors: only useful as long as they reflect the special view of themselves that they so long to see.

Narcissism Scale

Craig Malkin says that on a scale from 1 to 10, being between 4 and 6 is actually healthy.

The vast majority of healthy people do feel a little special, even if only privately. They are more optimistic, happier, and more consistently confident than people on the lower end of the scale.
And executives in the middle of the scare are rated as far more effective than those with too little or too much.

In that case, it's a slightly unrealistically positive self-image. Imagine it like slightly rose-tinted lenses: they change the perception of the world around you, but not so much as to change reality.

Moderately narcissistic teams are far less depressed and have even better relationships.

Narcissism is bad though when you are at either end of the scale.

However, one author says: **almost all presidents would score high enough to be considered narcissists**.
However, the more it raises, the more likely it is that it becomes counterproductive and leads to behavior such as stealing, breaking the rules, extra-marital affairs, and cheating (on taxes for example).

Pathological Narcissism

At the heart of pathological narcissism lay three dangerous "EII":

- Intolerant (acting as the world owes them)
- Exploitation (using people to make them feel special, no matter what it takes)
- Empathy-impaired (ignore the feelings of everyone else because only their needs matter)

Types of Narcissists: Trump is Grandiose

There are many types of narcissists, and the ones we are more familiar with are the extrovert types. They are known as "obvious", "overt" or "grandiose" in the research.

This type of narcissist seeks and craves the spotlight.
And Trump is this type of extrovert, loud narcissist.

Trump Presents Bullying Behavior

I quote here as it's very interesting:

> Relational aggression, often referred to as emotional bullying, is a sneaky type of bullying that manifests as social manipulation.
> (…) Goal is to ostracize others to gain social standing and to control others

Indeed, I can convene Trump has shown at times a type of behavior that could be considered bullying.

Is Trump a Sociopath?

The first author makes the case that Trump might be a sociopath.
A sociopath does not have impaired empathy, but a total lack or almost total lack of it.

When narcissism and sociopathy combine, they form a pattern called malignant narcissism. They are so driven by their desire to be special that everyone around them is just a pawn for their self-aggrandizing.

Lack of Self Esteem

Trump lacks self-esteem, which leads him to take action to prove himself to himself and to the world.

My Note: This Might Be Incorrect
There might be some truth here, but it's not presented correctly. As psychologist Baumeister shows, abusive people have big egos, but *fragile* self-esteem.

Flight or Fight State

Trump can devolve into survival mode at a moment's notice.
He has little calm in-between states and is often attacking and counterattacking as if his life depended on it.

Trusts Nobody: Constant Warring Mindset

Trump doesn't trust anyone.
And he sees the world as a place of sharks where you are either a victim or you victimize others.

Mentally Ill Leaders Aren't Always Ineffective

Craig Malkin says that equating mental illness with incapacity stigmatizes the mentally ill and is not always correct.
Instead, what's key is a danger to themselves or others.

A diagnosis of NPD (narcissist personality disorder) does not by itself mean that a leader will be ineffective.
Steve Jobs likely had NPD (abusing staff).
He was probably a high-functioning NPD, such as he could maintain "good enough" relationships and keep his outbursts from completely blowing up the workplace.

Functional Impairment Should be Measured

Craig Malkin says that instead of measuring mental illness, we should be measuring functional impairment.
Such as how much their mental state -or illness- allows them to manage their tasks, their relationship, and their feelings when it comes to decision-making without causing danger to themselves or others.

NPD can lose touch with reality in ways that can become dangerous.
For example, when reality does not allow them to be admired and recognized as they crave, they need to "bend or invent" a reality in which they remain special.

When that happens, narcissists become dangerously psychotic.

Malkin makes the point that Trump might be at this stage as he denies having said statements that are on record and can easily be checked.

Dangerous is Not a Psychiatric Diagnosis

We shouldn't worry whether Trump is mentally ill, but if he is dangerous.
And dangerous is not a psychiatric diagnosis.

One does not need to be mentally ill to be dangerous, and the association between violence and mental illness is tenuous.

Trump Relationships (Father, Wife, Daughter)

There were also some golden nuggets on the relationship between Trump and his father, Trump and his daughter, and Trump and his romantic relationships.

Some authors say that Trump shows some traits which are in common with abusers as well. For example, overreacts when he feels his ego threatened.

With his daughter, Trump said that if he wasn't happily married and his father, he would date her. And seemed to go happily along with a radio host telling of Ivanka that "she is a piece of as*"

Real-Life Applications

Let's All Be Less Complacent
We have enjoyed a few centuries of democracy now and we might have grown complacent that it's a safe system to guarantee peace and prosperity.
But two centuries is nothing.
And we shouldn't be complacent about it.
Let's all remind ourselves that it's our duty to contribute to a prosperous and peaceful world

CONS

Sometimes Feels Politically Biased
Some passages sounded politically motivated.
A Jewish doctor discussing how the most conservative fringes of his family think and behave, for example.
Or I quote another example here:

> (…) And offered loving support to those who suffered hatred.
> (…)
> That's us, that's the United States of America

I cringed a bit there.
We didn't need an author who pretends to speak for a whole nation.
We wanted an expert's opinion on mental health. With evidence and video examples, I can check, please.

Lawsuits And Protests as Evidence?
Sometimes I find very shaky grounds on which to "accuse" Trump that had little to do with a clinician's opinion.
For example lawsuits of sexual harassment. Lawsuits cannot serve as evidence. Just consider that in the US millionaires are simply easier targets to make a quick buck.
Or another bit in the book mentioned about the protest against Trump's victory as the largest in US history. Again,

that says nothing.

Fluctuating Quality
Some authors wrote incredibly deep pieces that enlighten the readers and taught me so much -Craig Malkin was my favorite-.
But some other authors were not as engaging and deep.

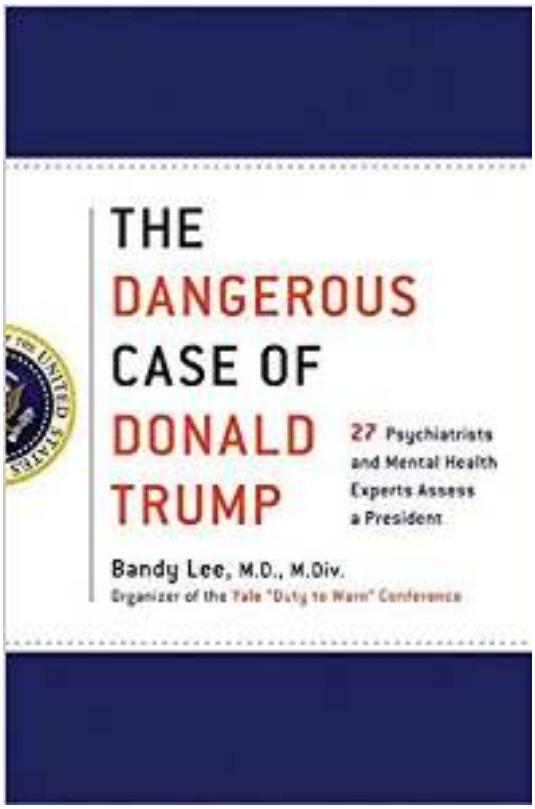
Some Weak Accusations
Sometimes it felt as if the authors were just out to tell us how "bad" Trump is.
Most people knew that.
I think The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump would have strongly benefited if it had only been about impartial analysis.
For example, speculating on how Trump would have performed poorly on the Cuban missile crisis shouldn't have any place here.

Same Topics Over and Over
As every new author takes over, they sometimes repeat topics that other authors have already said.
For example, we didn't need to hear about the Goldwater Rule more than once. And we didn't need to hear that military personnel must go through mental examination but the president doesn't.
It's true, and it's important, but once was enough and would have saved time and space to make the book even more popular and widespread.

At Times Unscientific & Unprofessional
I quote what one of the authors -one of my favorites BTW- says:

> Hitler, Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin know doubt all fall into the category of malignant narcissists.

The underlining is mine of course because, ehm, well… No doubt?
Psychiatry is not an exact science. And anyone giving a diagnosis from afar, to someone whose language they don't even understand is bound to come across as (highly) unscientific.



PROS

Great to Understand Psychology
You really get a lot of different opinions on the same person, which makes The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump a fantastic resource to learn more about psychology, psychiatry, and mental disorders.
Loved it!

Great to Understand Narcissism
Since so many authors suggested Trump might be affected by NPD, you get a lot of comments on narcissism from high experts in the field.
Also not bad for sociopathy.

> **Trump's aim is not accuracy, it's domination**

Review

I listed a lot of cons, but I enjoyed *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*.

Both as a warning against the dangers of an unfit president and to learn more about psychology and psychiatry.

I'd like to use the last sentence of this article to sound a warning to us all.
Because I can see in myself and in many others around me, the dangers of complacency. It's not written anywhere that a democratic leader cannot cause a disaster.
And it's not written anywhere that the West will keep staying peaceful and prosperous.

But it's up to each one of us to make it possible for us to avoid worldwide disasters and we all move forward together.

Let's all remind ourselves that it's our duty to contribute to a prosperous and peaceful world.

Check out the best psychology books, and best dark triad books, or get the book on Amazon

How Women Make You Chase Them: 17 Mind Games Exposed

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Ever wondered *why* some women make men chase them — even when they're not that special?
This guide breaks down the **psychological triggers and power dynamics women use** to make men pursue, invest, and even obsess.

Once you know these tactics, you'll stop falling for them — and start flipping the script.

Contents

- How Women Make Men Obsessed
  - #1. Deny Him First
  - #2. Make Him Jump Through Your Hoops
  - #3. Disappear: The Vacuum Effect
  - #4. Use Push-Pull
  - #5. Enforce Your Boundaries
  - #6. Cry… And A Knight Will Show Up
  - #7. Show Your Naughty Side
  - #8. Pretend to Disappear (False Takeaway)
  - #9. Stay Mysterious
  - #10. Be (Somewhat) Difficult to Get
  - #11. Tell Him You Don't Want a Relationship
  - #12. Look Inexperienced, Madonna-Like
  - #13. Jolt His Life, Make Crazy Memories Together
  - #14. Make Him Compete With Other Men (AKA: Triangulation)
  - #15. Reach Out Less Than He Does

- #16. Threaten the Break Up (AKA: Games of Chicken)
- #17. And If You Broke Up, Make Him See You Happy

- Warning For Women: Don't Make Him Chase You
  - Bad Advice on Making Men Chase

- SUMMARY

How Women Make Men Obsessed

These are advanced techniques to make men chase and obsess.

Many of them also work on women, though.
So sometimes you will see examples of men using these techniques on women. It's all good: the dynamics are the same.

So let's start:

#1. Deny Him First

People want what they can't have.

And women have been unconsciously knowing and using this physiological trigger long before Cialdini codified it in his seminal book *Influence*.

Indeed, when you deny him, you shake him from the foundation of his ego. Many men at that point will want to prove you wrong and show you how good he actually is.
And the chase begins…

Example

Aurora in "Terms of Endearment" uses this technique with her body language:

She denies him without even uttering a single word the moment she starts walking away.

Risks of This Technique

Quite simply, he might not pursue you again.

Some men are proud and have a big ego, and not only they might stop chasing you, but they might actually actively dislike you.
Men who dislike you still keep chasing you, but more from a position of "I'll bang her just to show her than disappear".

Some other high-quality men are just too busy to chase, and they prefer focusing on women who are into them -and women who play fewer games-.

Also, this technique works best when men outnumber women in quality and/or quantity. But that is not the case in the West these days.

#2. Make Him Jump Through Your Hoops

Denying him is risky and he might just disappear.

So to improve on that technique, you show him there is a "light at the end of the tunnel".
But he must deserve that light.

When you prod him, you tell him what he must do better.

And you imply that he needs to step up his game.
For example:

> **You**: Oh that doesn't work with me mister

Or

> **You**: You must be doing better than that

Or more direct:

> **You**: I like you, but I prefer gentler man. Can you be a bit more gentle please

Have you noticed what these all have in common?
You kinda deny what he's doing *right now*, but you also show he's in with a chance.
Indeed, **the secret to making him chase you while jumping through your hoops is to show him that, if he plays it well, he can (eventually) get you**.

This is less risky than outright denying him, which in my opinion makes for a better alternative.

Example

Ryan Gosling has a dominant version of this technique.
You want to have the same effect of having him chase you and prove himself to you. But you want to be more gentle:

Risks of This Technique

Since you setting yourself up as the prize and *telling* him how to get you, this technique shows a lot of confidence and resolve.

But that's a double-edged sword.

Some men will be intrigued that you're laying the gaming cards right on the table.
But some others might be annoyed that you're taking the driver's seat. These men are usually socially smart enough to see the game, but not socially smart enough to turn the tables. They might just leave the table instead.

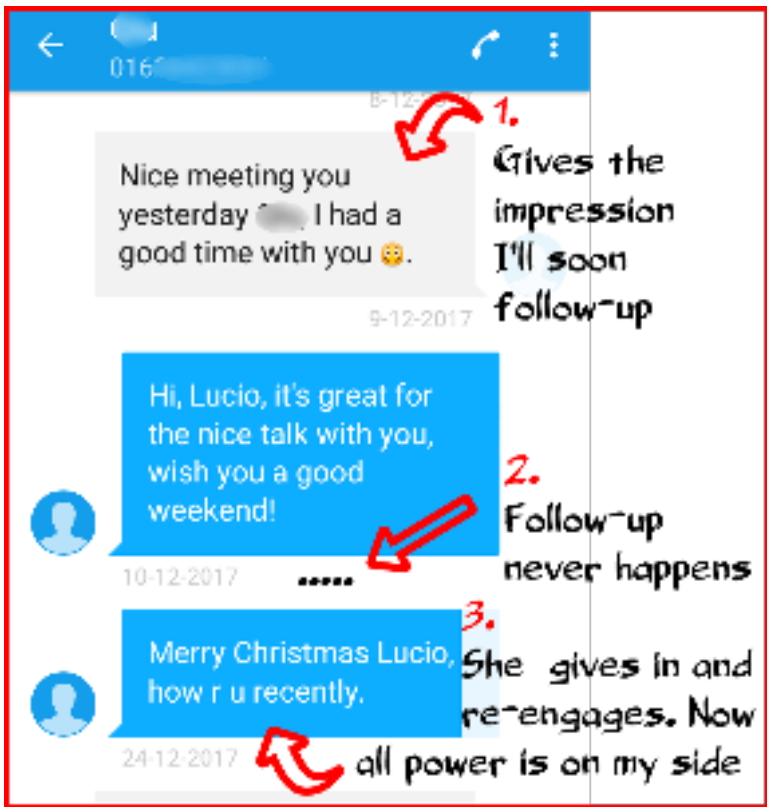
And the most driven and socially smart men?
If they want to play, they will turn the table on you. If they're more looking for a serious and collaborative relationship, they might take this game as a sign that you don't like them too much and/or you're not a collaborative partner.

#3. Disappear: The Vacuum Effect

Another sneaky way of making him chase you is to disappear right when he expected you to be there.

For example: take two days to reply to his text after a great date.
Or if you're talking a lot already, go radio silent for a whole day.

You can make it as early as after a first date if it was really good (example below).
But usually, it's safer a bit later in the interaction.



Danger:
He might see through the game playing and simply refuse to play. Or he might misread your momentary withdrawal for lack of interest.

#4. Use Push-Pull

This is a technique we discussed in how to make him crazy about you.

The idea is similar to the vacuum but at a faster pace.
You compliment him and be all affectionate, and then you're distant and indifferent all in the same evening.
Or you criticize him and drive his morale down, and then build him back up saying he's "still" the best you ever had.

Danger: socially smarter men might see through it and dump your game-playing a*s for engaging in it. And if you do it too much some more rational men might see it as a sign of instability.

4.1. Sexual Push-Pull

The push-pull is extremely exciting also when it's sexual in nature.

A good example of push and pull is a woman who wants to resist (push), but who is too excited to resist (pull).
This is a good example of sexual push and pull:

https://ody.sh/wgd00sc1Vo?t=58

#5. Enforce Your Boundaries

Yes, enforcing your boundaries makes me chase.

It's micro-chasing, but it's the type of chasing that makes men want a relationship.

Whenever he mistreats you, babies you, belittles you or teases a bit too hard, draw your line in the sand.
He will feel compelled to apologize and win you back. And he will realize that you are a high-quality woman who

does not accept bad behavior -or bad relationships-. And that's wife-material, right there.

Example

Karen in "The Goodfellas" draws her line in the sand with much power and emotion.

Depending on your character, this might be *too* powerful and emotional, but it's a good example to understand the dynamics.

Not accepting bad behavior communicates you expect to be treated well and fairly. And guess what good and serious men will want to do? To treat you well and fairly.

#6. Cry... And A Knight Will Show Up

Yes, the old damsel in distress.

Don't roll your eyes, this is about what works, and the damsel in Distress is an old classic because it works (Smith, 2017).
It awakens the "protector" instincts and you will gain femininity points.

Crying also works in relationships. Men are susceptible to women getting upset as they feel like they are responsible to appease them (John Gottman).

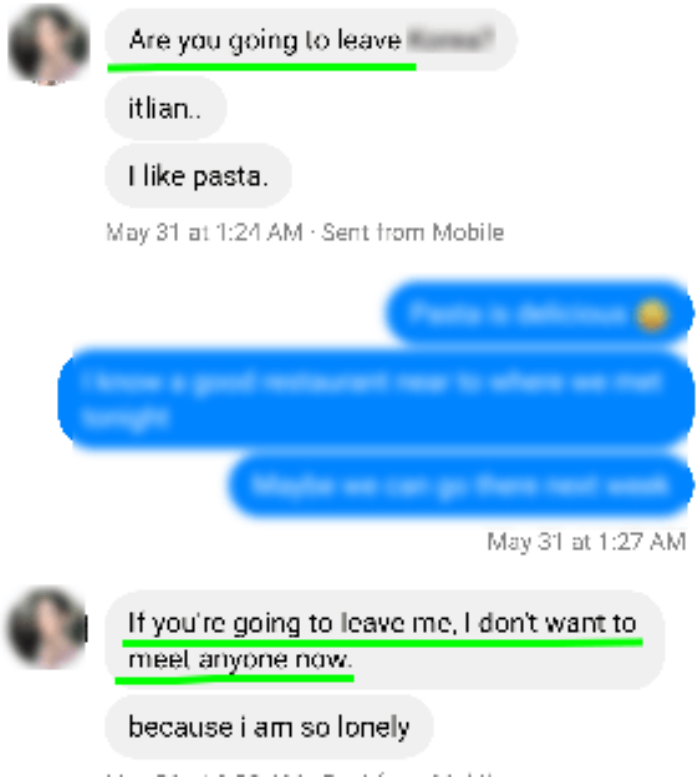
Danger:
If he cares about you, crying will really work magic. But if he doesn't, you only become a bigger burden. As a rule of thumb, best if you don't do it too early and without a good reason.

6.1. Show Signs of Exploitability To Awaken His Protector's Instincts

In "scientific dating strategies" we reviewed the "exploitability signals".

Exploitability signals attract both male vultures looking for easy prey, and "good men" looking to protect and invest.

With a little tweak, you can get the best of both worlds: raw sexual attraction, and men falling head over heels to provide.
Here is a great example:



She mixes exploitability signals with "selectively hard to get" signals, asking to only date men who will still be around.

Super effective.

Read more here.

#7. Show Your Naughty Side

Why showing your naughty version makes him chase?
Well, you should know this one.

There is an old saying where I come from.
And my area is not very well known for its finesse, so pardon the French:

> A hair of pussy pulls more than a cart of oxen

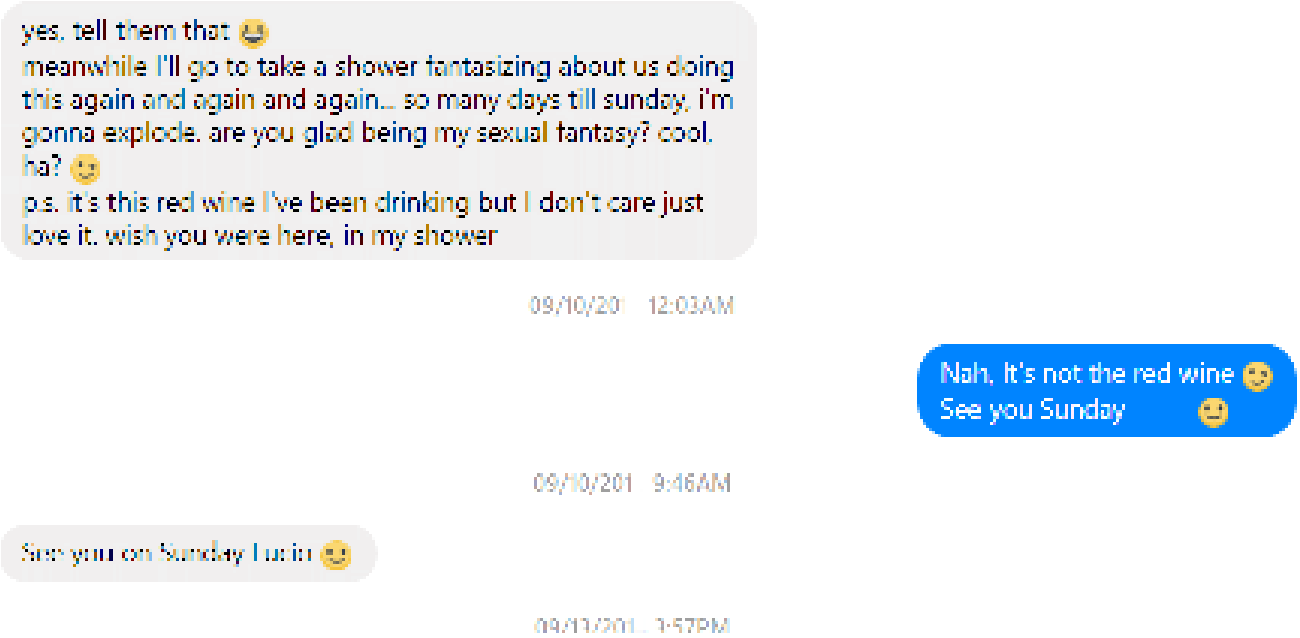
I suppose back when the saying started women weren't shaving much :).
The figurative meaning is that the *sexual* pull of a woman is the strongest pull one can exert.
And there is a lot of truth there.

Research from evolutionary psychologist David Buss also proves that one of the best and most reliable techniques to make men chase is to hint that you are primed for sex (Buss, 2016).

The best way to do it is not with direct sexual invites but through teasing.
Here is a good example:

The girl in the above text often flirts with that style. And I used to think about her more than I would otherwise think of her because I associate her with sex.

And of course, you can keep using this technique after you've had sex already.
The below is not your typical flirting text.
But I wanted to show it to you as an example of how many women have the wrong mindset when it comes to chasing, honesty and sexuality:



Did you think that it was "too much" and she made it too obvious she was into me?

If so, you might still be stuck with the mindset of "don't show your cards and pretend you're not that into him".
But **her raw sexual honesty made me so much more excited about seeing her**, made me quite horny, and also drew me closer to her.

In the short run, it did give me more power -and if you don't want to do that, you could take the "fantasy" bit off-. But in the long run, it increased her power.

Even today, as I was looking for this old text, I got horny and would have gladly chased her if she wasn't in a solid, happy relationship :).
On the other hand, men have little fantasies of women who hide their sexual drives and attraction.

Risks of This Technique

As a rule of thumb: **sexual hints that make men chase in the short term make women poorer candidates for the long term** (ie.: men will chase for sex, not for relationships).

That's why I only recommend being sexually more direct if you've already had sex with him -like the second text example-.
Otherwise, keep it at a teasing level -like the first text message-.

#8. Pretend to Disappear (False Takeaway)

This is a very good, neat technique to make him chase you.

The early pick-up artist used to call it a "false takeaway" (Neil Strauss, 2011), and it consists of you physically walking away, or emotionally withdrawing.

This is best used when he has done something wrong, and it's a good alternative to the "enforcing your boundaries" that we saw above. This one is more suited for less assertive women, and for women who prefer a more submissive and feminine style.

Whenever he does something wrong, withdraws. Or move away.

You can supercharge this power move if you leave before sex and while you were getting physically and emotionally closer, maybe at this place, right when he thought he was about to get it.
Some of the women I want the most are the ones that left or interrupted our relationship right before physical escalation, or in the middle of emotional intimacy, right when I was getting to like them.

Example

This is an example from the movie "Under the Tuscan Sun":

Notice that not only she chases him, but that he has a strong emotional impact on her

Risks of This Technique

If you use it when there is no real reason, you will look emotionally manipulative.

And while it works best with men who are high in power and who want to possess you and control the relationship, it can also backfire the most with those men.
Some of them will become obsessed, and turn into stalkers. You will not want to see them again when they started behaving like that, but they will, and they can become a threat.

#9. Stay Mysterious

Have you ever noticed how much people hate knowing the end of a movie?

Review websites go to great lengths to plaster "spoiler alerts" because people get really angry when they know what's going to happen.
And they lose interest in watching the movie altogether.

That's why you don't want to be a movie with a known ending.

Never tell him that you are going to have sex after a certain number of dates, or days.
Never say that you are going to do it when you go back to his, or you ruin the anticipation and his feeling of conquest.

Even about your life, don't be an open book, but keep some mysteries.
Be a developing story

#10. Be (Somewhat) Difficult to Get

The common advice here is often wrong.
It's not the woman who is hardest to reach who makes men chase the most.
The woman that men chase the hardest is the woman who is *mildly* available (Walster et. al., 1973).

You must use some judgment here and tread carefully.
If you are too unreachable, he might end up with more available women. And if you initiate contact too frequently, he might lose interest.

Also, read:

- Proven dating strategies for women

#11. Tell Him You Don't Want a Relationship

Warning: this is risky.

That being said when you say you don't want a relationship, some men will think there must be something wrong with them.
They will think they are not good enough to make you want to be in a relationship.

Result?
They will chase even harder.

The obvious risk here is that some other men who want a relationship will just take your word for it and look for better alternatives.

Risks

Example

The movie 500 Days of Summer is a good example of a man who chases her even harder the moment she says she doesn't want a relationship.

Danger:
"not needing a man" has become such a popular crying battle and such a common aspiration for some women that some guys have grown tired of these antics.

#12. Look Inexperienced, Madonna-Like

Men want to have sex with the whore, but want to marry the Madonna (Madonna-whore complex).

So while earlier we said you can make him chase sex by acting very sexual, you can also make him chase a relationship by acting.
Here are a few ways to do it:

- Say you only do "serious dating"
- Seem uninterested in sex and men
- Never have sex on the first two dates

- Keep your partner count low, and reveal it strategically
- Don't do any sexual crazy stunts the first few times you have sex

Danger: some men prefer experienced women as they see the virgin-like woman as puerile. However, these men are a minority.

#13. Jolt His Life, Make Crazy Memories Together

Many of us secretly crave more excitement in our lives.

If you can live some micro-adventures with him, chances are that he will want more of you in his life.
I will never forget the woman who took my hand and started running to make it on time and reach a shop that was almost closing. And I'm sure some women will never forget our whirlwind romances together.

Even just being lively and silly will make some want to chase you because you a breath of fresh air in their lives.
This works particularly well with men who are older, more sedentary, more boring, or who secretly miss some spontaneity in their life.

Example

It doesn't have to be anything crazy.
Running under the rain while holding hands and slightly intoxicated is enough.
Or running through a museum like in the movie The Dreamers:

Risks of This Technique

This might not work with some of the most rational men out there.
Well, let's be precise, with some of the most *rationally looking* men it will work even better because they are secretly craving for some release.

But a few of the most soulless, boring ones might not see any attractiveness in the wilder and "crazier" side of life.
But maybe you don't want those guys? :)

#14. Make Him Compete With Other Men (AKA: Triangulation)

This is what Greene calls "triangulation" in *The Art of Seduction*.

It's quite obvious, isn't it: put him in a race and he'll race harder to win.
Also, you will look more in demand -scarcity principle-, which further drives him forward.

However, be careful with triangulation. It's very easy to do this wrong in any setting other than in real life.
The best is having a man flirt with you in person while you do not flirt back (nearly as much as him).

Danger: do it too much, too early, and you look like a floozy. Or like a game player.

Example

This is an example of doing it wrong:

She probably realized later that it was not the best strategy and tried to get some points back.
And it was a very good move to get some points back indeed, but overall still a net loss.

#15. Reach Out Less Than He Does

You knew this one.

This is the #1 advice any publication provides.
It's not wrong though, but it can easily backfire if you do it too much.

The secret is to give, but not so much that you become bored.

Otherwise, another very, very mind-fu*king strategy is to give a lot, build him up for the whole initial phase, and then withdraw.
That's the sociopath way though, and it's more something you need to guard against than something you should actively do.

A technique I prefer instead, which is also far healthier, is to build up the relationship together. You give something, and expect him to do the same. Then you keep on building one step each until you have a great relationship.

Also, see:

- **Make him chase the healthy way**

#16. Threaten the Break Up (AKA: Games of Chicken)

Warning: only use sparingly, and if there is a good reason.

Avoid constantly and directly threatening to end the relationship. That's low-quality and high-quality men who will run away (especially those with a secure attachment style).

The correct way of deploying this technique is with this frame:

> If he is not giving you what you want, like for example exclusivity, or an official status, you make it clear that you are not getting your needs met. Since you like him, you hope he will turn around.
> But if he doesn't, you will have to move on.

It's an attitude that he either chips in and moves things along, or you will look for some other high-quality man who will fulfill your expectations.

You can convey it with your attitude.
But if the attitude is not enough, then don't be afraid of being direct with your request:

> **You**: Mark, I have a great time with you, and I really like you. At the same time, I don't do sex outside of committed relationships and I am looking for something more serious and, potentially, long term.
> I would like to know where do you stand on this.

#17. And If You Broke Up, Make Him See You Happy

If you break up, make sure that he sees you:

- Happy
- And with another man being "friendly"

Just don't make it too obvious.

Make it seem like you're just living your life. And that guy around you, don't make it too obvious either.
He might be a new lover. Or your ex might still make it on time… If he only chases you hard…

Warning For Women: Don't Make Him Chase You

Please note:

All the above techniques on making him chase do work and are based on solid psychology.
BUT they only work with certain types of men, and can backfire with smart men (especially the ones who read our work).

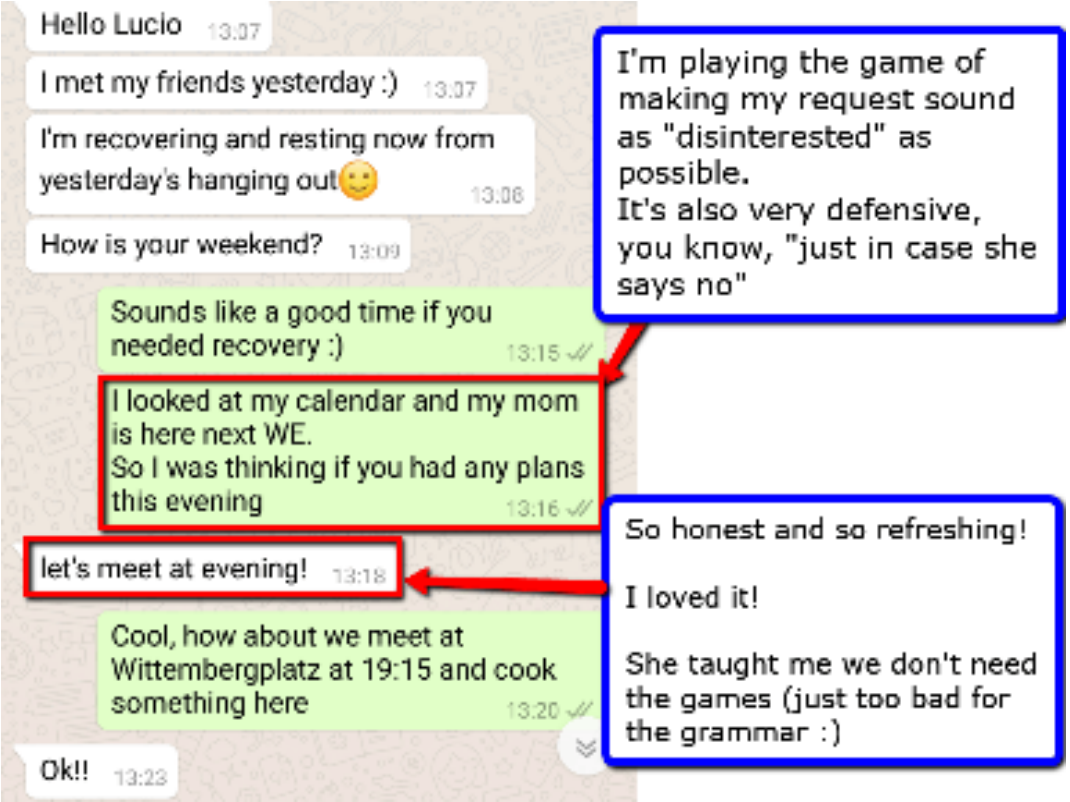
I have said it on this website more than once.

Data and game theory show that in the Western world with more high quality women than men techniques designed to make you scarce and make him chase are often more likely to damage you than help you.

You should be aware of the risks and limitations before embarking on any game designed to make him chase you.
You can read more here:

- Do men really enjoy the chase?
- Should you make him wait for sex?
- How to make him invest more in you
- The science of dating
- Common mistakes women do

And here is a good example of how dropping all the games and showing your beautiful self, interest, and attraction included, can work better than any "scarcity-based" games:



You can read the whole forum entry here.

Bad Advice on Making Men Chase

There is a lot of “feel-good advice” out there for women.

Two examples:

- **The high-quality woman that men chase endlessly knows her real attraction isn’t physical.**

That’s Mark Rosenfeld, writing for The Thought Catalogue.
And that’s also a lie flying in the face of plenty of scientific evidence: physical attraction is an important driver of attraction.

- **Focus on your life and career and be confident**

You *should* be focusing on your life and career and be confident, but don’t expect that it will bring you more and better options.
Women who follow this advice without learning human nature are at higher risk of staying single (and sometimes bitter).
Indeed, research shows that men *say* they want women who are smarter and more successful than they are. But they don’t really *pursue* those women.
Read more about dating for successful women.

However, you can still have a great career and still be a pursued feminine woman.
Not easy, but possible.

Read more here:

- How to be feminine
- How to seduce a man

SUMMARY

Overall, I recommend you focus less on making men chase, and more on moving the relationship forward together.

However, there are times when knowing the dynamics and techniques of making people chase can work in your favor and still be part of a healthy relationship.

This article has given you a few techniques you can still put in your dating arsenal and use when the right occasion presents.

And of course, hopefully, it has helped you to better understand men, psychology, and people in general.

Cheers!
Lucio

The Lucifer Effect: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Lucifer Effect* (2007) Zimbardo argues that good and evil coexist in the same person and that the circumstances around us will dictate which one will prevail. By knowing better how the circumstances influence us, we can all make sure that good wins out.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Moral Disengagement Breeds Evil
  - How Evil Is Created
  - The Stanford Experiment
  - Abu Ghraib Was Predictable
  - Corporate Evil
  - Ethical Disobedience For a Better World
  - Banality of Heroism
  - What is The Lucifer Effect
- Criticism of Stanford Experiment & Lucifer Effect
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- There are both good and evil in the world
- The barrier between good and evil is nebulous
- It's possible for angels to become devils and vice versa
- The conditions around us can be more important for our behavior than our personality
- **To prevent crimes of obedience: assert personal authority and take full responsibility for your own actions** (a foundational value of this website)

Full Summary

The Lucifer Effect speaks at length of various experiments and circumstances. I will focus instead on the main takeaways here.

Moral Disengagement Breeds Evil

Most people, most of the time, are moral.
But imagine morality like a gear shift, and like a gear shift, it can go neutral.

When that happens, there is no more morality to stop our actions, and if our car persona happens to be standing on a slope, we can easily go downhill and do things that we wouldn't otherwise do.

How do we disengage morality?

Well, four major ways, according to my understanding of The Lucifer Effect:

1. Deindividuation (loss of self in the group's dynamics)
2. Dehumanization (we don't consider our victims to be humans and "like us", so morals don't apply to them)
3. Anonymity (people commit more crimes when they can stay anonymous)
4. Diffusion of responsibility (the more the people, the less we feel responsible for helping or for inflicting pain)

Plus:

1. The neighborhood effect: run down in the Bronx and clean and neat in Palo Alto (broken window theory)
2. Time pressure (if we're in a hurry, we are less likely to help)

Failing to Recognize Porosity of Good and Evil Invites Evil

Zimbardo says we all want to construct a simple world where good and evil are opposite.

But they are not.

Our Western societies also tend to induce us into mistakes as they glorify the individual and the individual choices (dispositional approach).
But the individual acts in a bigger social setting, and takes on different roles within his life.

If the social setting and the roles he takes on tilt a certain way, they can overpower otherwise moral and ethical people.

This is important, because when we fail to understand how we can all produce evil, then we invite evil

> **To prevent evil, we need to learn evil**

How Evil Is Created

Zimbardo lists a few steps that have been shown to overpower personal ethics to induce evil acts (based on the Milgram experiment)

1. Pre-arrange a form of contractual obligation
2. Give them meaningful roles to play where they can activate previously learned responses
3. Use rules and remind them that "rules are rules and must be followed"
4. Change the semantics from "hurting someone" to "helping the experimenter/science/country"
5. Create diffusion of responsibility (they won't have to take final responsibility)
6. Start small and build up to bigger acts of evil
7. Increase the steps in small amounts so, that each step seems almost like the last
8. Start rational and just and when you act evil people won't recognize the difference
9. Make the costs of quitting high
10. Offer an ideology of a lie to justify the evil acts

Hence, the ways to stop the crime of obedience are to assert personal authority and take responsibility for one's actions.

The Stanford Experiment

Zimbardo spends a lot of time discussing his own famous Stanford Experiment.

Students who started as normal and mentally healthy human beings soon began to change as they started embodying

their characters of guards or inmates.

The prisoners became passive and submissive. They learned helplessness.

The guards on the opposite started acting mean and evil.

As things spiraled out of control, several prisoners had to be released early and the whole experiment had to be stopped because it was taking on a very bad twist.

One prisoner had an emotional breakdown.
The prisoner later recounted saying he was faking it to be released. But Zimbardo says he just made that up because he felt ashamed of breaking down.

Abu Ghraib Was Predictable

Zimbardo draws a parallel between his Standford experiment and the scandals of the Abu Graib prison where US military personnel abused -and recorded the abuse- local civilians.

The author says that it wasn't a case of "bad apples".
They might have been good people on different occasions. Indeed, similar abuse happened in the UK military as well, and it included a former war hero.

He says the responsibility should be looked at in the system that made it possible.

I couldn't agree more that it's the system that we should look into even more than the individuals' faults.
However, I didn't personally find the "systemic analysis" to be too enlightening for me here.

Corporate Evil

Zimbardo makes one more point which I love.
He says that organized systems can sometimes produce evil as a byproduct of legal or operational frameworks which do not take into account an ethical framework.

A system can produce evil as a byproduct of pursuing its goals of profits, ideology, or end results.

The author also talks about "mediate violence", such as situations where authority can inflict pain without physical assault.
Such as by firing, giving bad reviews, yelling at an employee, undermining, etc.

Also, read:

- **Corporate manipulation**
- The myth of emotional intelligence

Ethical Disobedience For a Better World

This is by far my favorite chapter and something I strongly believe in.
We should all wonder if the authority that is giving us orders only has the title of authority or also the moral compass to be in charge.

Always take responsibility for your actions.
And always look critically at authority.

> **In life, always take responsibility. It also helps the world being a better place.**

Banality of Heroism

The author finally says that as much as there is the possibility of evil and we can witness evil in daily circumstances, heroism is the same.

There is a hero in each one of us.

Turns out, Bowie was right. We can be heroes. Just for one day.

> **Heroes are everyday people like you and I**

What is The Lucifer Effect

The Lucifer Effect in psychology alludes to the fact that all human beings can commit cruelty under certain conditions.

As a website on psychology, games people play and the darker side of socialization and human nature, good and evil is a topic I explored a lot.
Also, take a look at:

- To be good you need to be bad
- Good and evil: are heroes a twig on the branch of antisocial personality?
- 12 Rules for Life

The hero's motto:

> **I did what everyone could and what everyone ought to do**

Great stuff.

Criticism of Stanford Experiment & Lucifer Effect

The Stanford experiment has been vociferously criticized.
The name itself is a misnomer, as the lack of scientific rigor does not make it an experiment, but as the author himself admitted, more of a demonstration.

The results of the "experiment" have not been replicated in similar successive experiments and I invite you to read this article which is the dialogue between Brian Resnick and Zimbardo. It's an incredibly interesting article.

Zimbardo says at one point:

> The single conclusion is a broad line: human behavior, for many people, is much more under the influence of social situational variables than we had ever thought of before.
> I will stand by that conclusion for the rest of my life, no matter what anyone says.

Would he stand by that conclusion for the rest of his life if he were presented with contrasting evidence?
I don't think a scientist should ever say he will stand by it for the rest of his life.

I also found it sad for science in general that Zimbardo didn't want to hear about a colleague of his with a different opinion.
Zimbardo answers the question of whether he thinks the critics might not be in good faith:

> I'm not saying good faith. That's what their claim to fame is the importance of social identity.

As I said in another article, scientists should look for the truth.
When a scientist stops searching for the truth, he is not a scientist anymore.

However, Zimbardo also makes good points in defense of his experiment.
This is what Zimbardo says, describing the guards' brutality:

> Were these acts of brutality—and their striking parallels with real-world prison atrocities—nothing more than a function of social demand characteristics in a fraudulent "sham" study, as Blum and other critics have argued, or do they tell us something important about human nature?

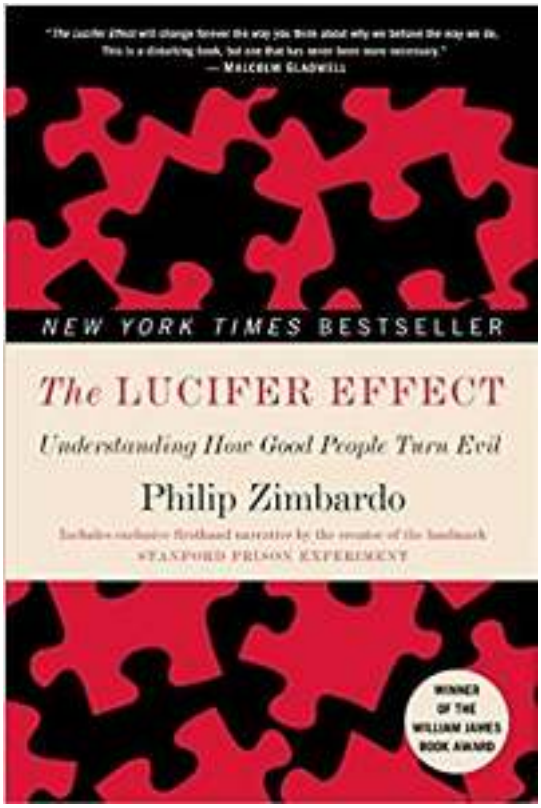
My opinion is that the Stanford Experiment has been overblown.
But Zimbardo is right: the circumstances around us are very important in determining how we will -and whether we will act like good people, or like not-so-good people-.

Also, read:

- The replication crisis
- Psychology myths

The Genovese Blunder?

The Lucifer Effect also talks about the famous Genevose stabbing where 38 witnesses didn't lift a finger -or a phone- to help a woman who was being assaulted -repeatedly and at different times- in the street.
Well, turns out the story was largely made up.
The New York Times which ran the original story also admitted to mistakes and inconsistencies in the original article.



Real-Life Applications

Keep Your Moral Compass
We can do things we don't want when we crave to belong or when we let others dictate our actions.

Assess Others Realistically
And like Dalio says: learn to love and appreciate reality. And appreciate reality means that we can overestimate our ability or people's ability to stand up to evil. An ounce of prevention and preparation can go a long way.
That also means building systems and organizations that are evil-resistant.

Assess Your Group & Use Mental Energy Against Groupthink
Research shows that going against public opinion takes a cognitive toll on our brains. Keep that in mind next time you disagree with a group and be prepared to prepare that cognitive price.

Assess Your Leaders & Use Personal Power Against Obedience
This is a fundamental step to avoiding organized evil.
Also, see this article and this video:

CONS

Could Have Been Briefer & "Denser"
I find *The Lucifer Effect* to contain important wisdom that's crucial for our whole civilization. But it gets lost in too many details.
The description of the Stanford Experiment lasts 5-6 chapters and I didn't feel I needed all of that. The same few themes repeat over and over through different events and experiments while a briefer description of one and a simple mention of the rest would have sufficed.

Why Women Stay in Abusive Relationships
The author says that starting fair and just and only later becoming unfair and evil creates confusion and people don't realize the change. He says that that's the "reason why abusive women stay with abusive spouses".
But that's a vast oversimplification.

PROS

The Lucifer Effect Can Improve Humanity
This is wisdom that can make the world a better place. Let's all learn from it and apply the principles to prevent abuse and evil.

Great Self-Development Message
I find The Lucifer Effect to contain a great message that encompasses both personal development and human development as a whole: asserting personality authority and taking responsibility for moral actions will make us better human beings and will prevent crimes of obedience.
And it will make it more likely that we will help out.

Review

The Lucifer Effect is a great book.

I think it's a pity that Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment and the psychology replication crisis may taint this fantastic book in some people's eyes.

On the con side, listening to this book wasn't the best experience because it can be convoluted at times and should have been cut in some parts. For example, unnecessary details on the Stanford Experiment might lead people to miss the important point Zimbardo makes.
And I don't think *The Lucifer Effect* is edited for mass appeal, which might make it harder to digest for the masses.

And that's a pity because this is a *very* important topic.

In a way, *The Lucifer Effect* is what we advocate with The Power Moves. Personal power and responsibility for a

better self and a better world.

And this is a message we both share:

It's only with individual empowerment that we can prevent crimes of obedience group-led atrocities.

Check out the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

The Dating Playbook For Men: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Dating Playbook For Men is a *dating book for men* that teaches men how to date more successfully and how to live a more fulfilling life.

Contents

- Main Takeaways
- Notes
  - The Grounded Man
  - Be Happy Without a Woman
  - Be In Love With Who You Are
  - Don't Prove Yourself
  - Always Be Having Fun
  - Jerks and Good Guys
  - Take Action
  - How to Approach
  - Texting
  - Date
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Main Takeaways

- You can't wait for a woman to make you happy: you must build your own fulfilling life
- Love yourself. Work on yourself because you want, not because you're not good enough (you are)
- Take lots of action
- Never change yourself: be you and look for a woman with whom you naturally get along

Notes

The Dating Playbook For Men spans self-help, dating, sex, and relationships. I will skip the relationship bit.

The Grounded Man

The author talks about the "grounded man", which would be his version of a high-quality man.
The grounded man:

- He knows what he wants
- Takes action towards his goals
- Has something more important going on in his life than women
- Does not sacrifice his self-worth for the attention of a woman
- Has a strong set of values that he lives by

- He does not *need* a woman, he wants a woman

The first two chapters basically discuss the grounded man and push the reader to look at himself and ask: are you living the life you really want?

The key, says Ferebee, is to care less and less about what others think of you.
Admit it, he says, you are on your own.

> **The more you value yourself the more people will value you**

Be Happy Without a Woman

The author says that some men are looking at external factors, including women, to make them happy.
But a woman will never make you happy.
Nothing external will ever make you happy as a matter of fact.

You have to find your own why. That is something that motivates you and gets you up in the morning

Happiness, says the author, is living in integrity with what you value. And they have to be your *values*. You need to live by your own rules to be happy and fulfilled.

Also, read:

- **High-value men**

Be In Love With Who You Are

The author stresses the importance of linking yourself.

You must love and appreciate who you are. You choose to grow and develop, but because you choose to, not because you need it.

Reading a book like *The Dating Playbook For Men,* says the author, shows that you don't allow your ego to get in the way of your personal growth.
And that puts you already in the top 1%.

I tend to agree here, and self-acceptance is something I stress here:

- **The 9 fundamental laws of power**

Don't Prove Yourself

The author says that you shouldn't prove yourself to women.
Some men try to talk women's off on how good they are, or "trying to show higher value" as some *pick-up artists say*.

The author instead says that beauty should not be enough for you.
You should check if her values match your value system, and if she doesn't, she's not girlfriend material for you.

Also, read:

- **Passing shit tests without passing them**

Don't Try to Get Women to Like You

Indeed, The Dating Playbook For Men advocates that you don't even try to get all women to like you.

You should always be yourself and be on the lookout for women who vibe with who you are.

Always Be Having Fun

Life is short and we must live it to the fullest.
Bring that child together into this life and enjoy yourself.

People want to be around people who enjoy life.

Jerks *and* Good Guys

Andrew Ferebee says that women want both jerks and good guys… In the same guy.
Women want when who respects them and can be nice to them. But also men who can assert themselves and impose themselves when the situation calls for it.

He says that many men want the girl next door who's pretty, but can also get nasty in bed.
Well, women want the same thing for men.

And I agree.

Take Action

Andrew Ferebee says that to get good you must take a lot of action.
Going out two nights a week should be your minimum.

He recommends bars and clubs because that's where you get the highest density of women and where you can get the most interactions per hour.

How to Approach

After the self-help part, the author goes into how to approach women.
He says that if it's weird you should acknowledge it openly. For example: "I'm really shy" or "I know it's weird but.. ".

Try to make her talk more than you talk, but when you do pose some questions, make sure you don't fall into interviewing mode, with one question right after another. Instead of using questions, think of using statements.

Try to keep talking for longer so that you can build a connection.
Very quick interactions with phone numbers, says the author, don't go anywhere.
And when you exchange phone numbers, make sure you stay one minute longer after the phone number.

Seed The Date

The author says you will meet more women on a date if you seed the date during the interaction. For example, you could ask her: what's the best place in town to go for under 25 Dollars?
Then you can invite her to that place (my note: I don't like this method).

Social Skills First

Andrew says that before getting into seduction and women, you should focus on your social skills and your understanding of social dynamics.

I totally agree, and it's the same about power: first, learn social skills, then think about power.

Texting

The author says that if you got her phone number early in the night, text her during that same night. For example: "what are you doing" or "where are you".

If you cannot meet her right that same day, the goal is to build rapport (my note: agree much here, it's difficult

building rapport via text).
As a rule of thumb, keep your text as long as hers or shorter.

Read more:

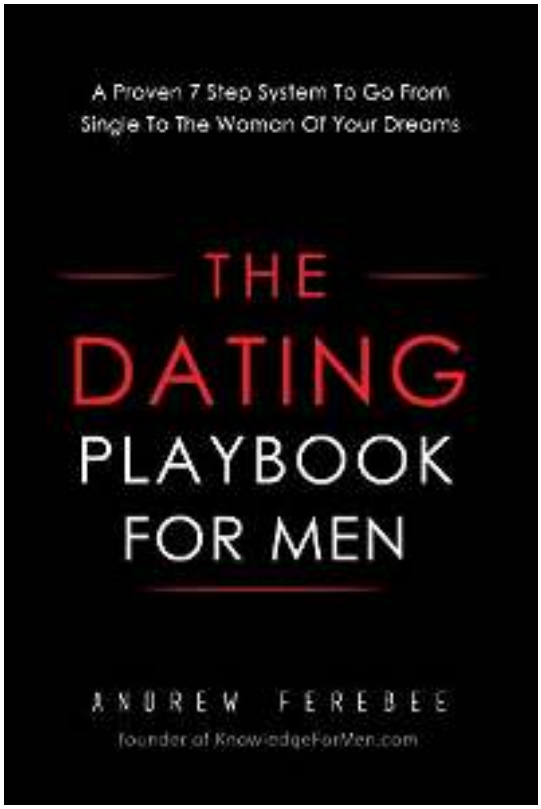
- Text flirting
- What to text when she doesn't reply
- Texting a flaky girl

> **Great texting cannot solve bad interactions**

Date

The author recommends dates in the evening or night, going for happy hour, yogurt, or coffee. He recommends you pay and sits side by side instead of across from each other.

Change venues whenever you can and when you want to invite her home just say that you're going back to your place for a couple of drinks and she should come with you.
If she refuses, don't get fazed by it or you'll ruin the date. Just keep enjoying the time together instead.



Real-Life Applications

Avoid Social Date Events
I loved one of the reasons why the author recommends

Make The Drink In Front of Her
I couldn't help but nod and confirm that this is small but genius advice. More than one woman told me that wouldn't have drunk if I didn't make the drink in front of them or opened a new bottle.

If You're Taking Her Back to Her Place…
… Ask her to use her restroom to get inside.

CONS

Maybe not Deep Enough in Dating Advice
From a book titled "*The Dating Playbook For Men*," I was expecting a lot of techniques and dating strategies. There are some, but it falls a bit short in the nitty gritty in my opinion.

Sometimes I Disagreed
The mindsets are very good and the dating advice is good more times yes than not. But still, there are a few recommendations that very much fall flat in my opinion.
For example, the author recommends you don't make the phone number your goal. Very true. And then he recommends that to ask for her phone number you say "let's exchange contact real quick". With the "real quick" which supposedly "increases conversation rate". It sounded contrived to me and came from a mindset that *does* make the number the goal.

Or:

- He recommends you keep sending texts from the moment you agree on a date till the day of the date, which I also don't agree with.
- "Never skip foreplays", while I hold more a belief that you should always walk the shortest line possible towards the first time you have sex, and often you can get there without foreplays and even without kissing

Some Opinions Presented As Facts
Sometimes I felt as if the author based his attraction theory on what fits his narrative rather than what's actually grounded in reality. For example, he says that you should move ahead in life. True. And then he adds "women are attracted to momentum more than success. Well, are we sure?

Pep-Talkey
At times it feels a little bit too much like a pep talk. "You are enough", "you are perfect as you are" etc.

Upsell
There is quite a bit of upsell in The Dating Playbook For Men.

PROS

Holistic Approach to Self-Development
I'm not a fan of dating books talking about self-help. But it's still important, and Andrew hits the nail on the head on that topic.

Very Good Insights
Andrew Ferebee shares a lot of solid advice and he gets lots of stuff right.

Good Psychology
The author has a good grasp of psychology and the psychology of dating.
For example, he says that sex is the ultimate form of submission for a woman, which indeed is a shrewd observation.

Review

The Dating Playbook For Men is 50% dating knowledge and techniques and 50% self-help content. In a way, it's not too dissimilar from the very popular *Models.*

Personally, I prefer books to be laser-focused on a specific topic, but that's also a matter of preference.

Overall, this is a very solid book.
It has both good self-development content and good dating advice.

Read the best dating books for men or get the book on Amazon

10 Social Skills Activities to Get Good With People

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for social skills activities that will help you make friends and get better with people?

Great! By the end of this article, you will know exactly:

1. Which activities will improve your social skills
2. Why and how
3. How to prioritize

At The Power Moves, we specialize in *advanced* social skills that give you status, respect, and attraction.
But those advanced results are built on the foundations of good social intelligence. And these activities help you improve your social skills, while also making friends.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- Social Skills Activities
  - #1. Martial Arts
  - #2. Toastmasters (Public Speaking)
  - #3. Eye Contact Experiment
  - #4. Bar Hopping (Solo)
  - #5. Dance Classes
  - #6. Improv Classes
  - #7. Acting Classes
  - #8. Action, Action, Action: Any Social Activity
  - #9. TV and People Watching
  - #10. Throw a Party
- SUMMARY

Social Skills Activities

The following are social skills activities that help people become more socially effective and confident.

#1. Martial Arts

You cannot get good with people if you are afraid of them.

And although this is not the most common issue for people with underdeveloped social skills, it's common enough to warrant your attention.
Ask yourself:

- Are you afraid of others?
- Do you fear enforcing your boundaries?
- Are you always giving way to others?
- Does the fear of other people's judgment paralyze you from doing what you want?
- Do you avoid picking up the phone in public places?

- Are you afraid that someone might get angry or violent because of negative feedback or complaint?

The above are all indicators that you might be physically afraid of people.

Now don't get me wrong: at times being physically afraid *does* make sense. And most people *do* feel physically afraid at least some of the time. But it's unhealthy when it's too much, when it happens too often, and when it happens in social settings where there is very little to fear.

What you will learn:

- Getting hit is not the end of the world
- You can defend yourself (even as a smaller, weaker, and slower person)
- Most people, even fighters, don't wanna fight
- Finally, you will remove your fear of people

Note: if you are not physically afraid, then you can skip this one and read more about how to overcome social anxiety with martial arts. And of course, I shouldn't need to say this, but violence sucks. The goal is not to be afraid, *not* to become a meathead.

#2. Toastmasters (Public Speaking)

Public speaking is one of the most common fears in the world.

Indeed, someone famously said that most people would rather be in a funeral casket than delivering the eulogy.

But this is a very limiting fear for someone who wants to enjoy an enriching life full of social activities.
The fear of public speaking is not just stopping you from speaking on a stage indeed. The fear of public speaking is stopping you from speaking to any group of people.

Why do we fear public speaking so much?
It probably stems from our fear of being judged by the group, which might then lead to ostracism and isolation.
And eventually, to death.

However, that's a highly maladaptive trait and you shouldn't accept it.
Delivering a bad speech, saying something everyone disagrees with, or even collapsing and fainting on stage will not lead to any terrible consequences today.

And I can guarantee you this: taking up Toastmasters as a social skill activity will be a huge, huge improvement not only in your social life but also in your overall confidence and happiness.

What you will learn:

- Introducing yourself to groups
- Speaking confidently to groups
- Asking questions and contributing to your company's meetings
- Cracking a joke in the presence of some strangers

#3. Eye Contact Experiment

Bottom line:

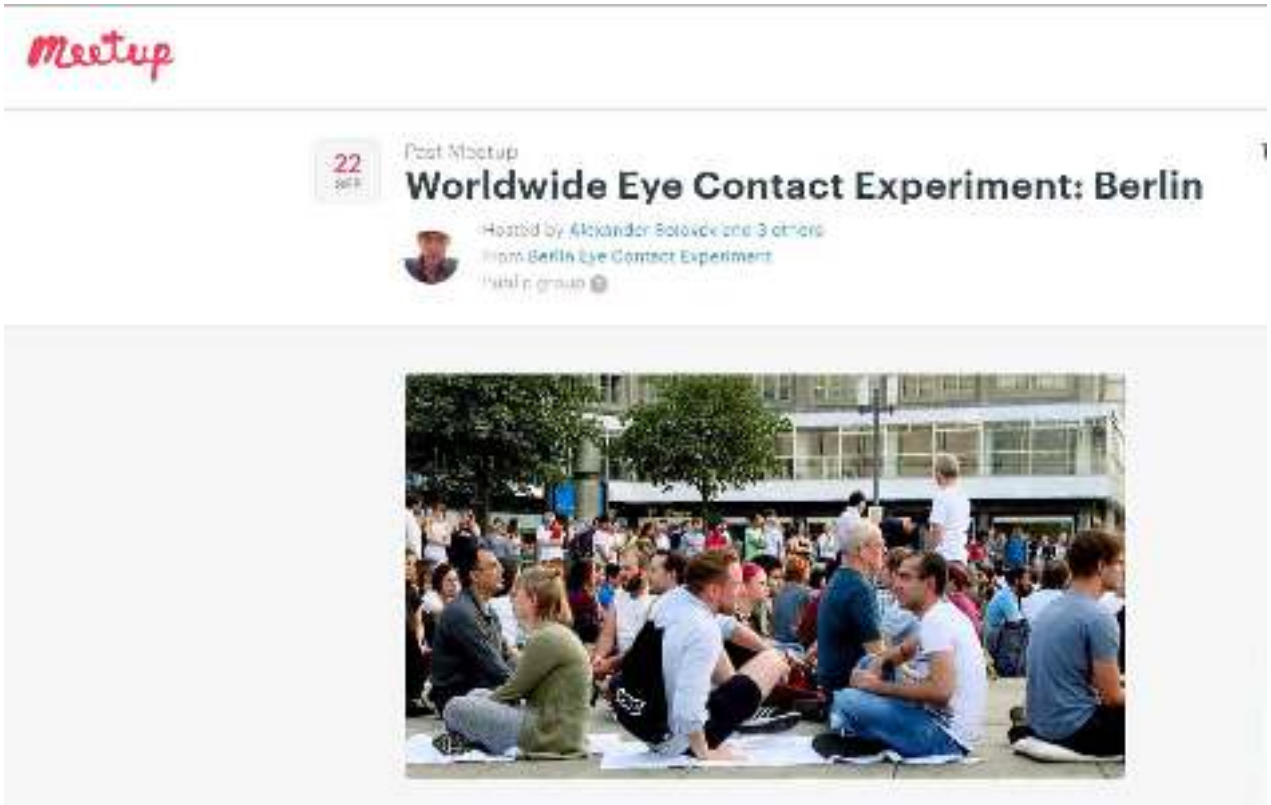
you cannot improve your social skills if you are afraid of looking people in the eyes.
And even if you are not afraid of looking staring into people's eyes, this is an awesome social skills activity to push the boundaries of your comfort zone.

The eye contact experiment has become a popular social skill activity in many cities, with both meetups and Facebook groups.
Check your local meetup and sign up for one.

And if it's not there?
Well, go ahead and create one.

What You Will Learn:

- How eye contact affects people
- Holding eye contact with strangers
- Remove the fear of prolonged eye contact
- It can be very helpful in your romantic relationship too



#4. Bar Hopping (Solo)

There is comfort in numbers.

Going out in groups is like having a base camp.

Do you feel observed? A girl shoots you down? A guy you like is with another girl?
Well, At least you got your friends to retreat to and regroup.

But going out alone?
Nope, you're alone pal.
If there are no places to sit, you're standing all by yourself.
If a girl rejects you, you got nobody to go back to.
And of course… The fear of being a wallflower that people will laugh at. Will you even find someone to talk to or will you look like a loner the whole time?

Indeed the first time I started going out by myself I felt obliged to talk to someone. Because being by myself, I

would look weird, I thought.
So in the beginning I forced myself to be social, to talk to people.
And I learned that the more you do it, the more social you become and the easier it gets in the evening. Which is quite a revelation if *you're an introvert*.

However, with time, my biggest conquest was of *overcoming* the need of talking to anyone.
Now I can enjoy an evening out without talking to anyone.
It's a freeing sensation, trust me.

To start going out by yourself I recommend you go to clubs first.
It's easier as fewer people are talking and sitting and there is always the dance floor to dance (or look at).

Bars are a bit more difficult as people are more "expected" to talk, mingle, and be with friends, so tackle them later or be prepared to be a bit trickier.

What you will learn:

- Personal confidence
- Social resilience
- Overcome fear of judgment
- Ultimately, you gain huge personal freedom

#5. Dance Classes

To get good with people you have to overcome your discomfort with physical proximity.

It's a rather common discomfort for many, and you can notice it when people step away from others or when they refuse to come close.
It's particularly common when people have fewer clothes on, and indeed it often overlaps with discomfort with sexuality.

And dance classes will get you more comfortable with physical proximity and sexual vibe.

What you will learn:

- To be comfortable with physical proximity
- Not to step away from people
- Hold your own and stand your ground
- Physically defending your space from possible intruders
- Sexual comfort

Unless you're playing a sexual cat-and-mouse game like in this video from The Goodfellas you should always avoid walking backward.

#6. Improv Classes

I am a Toastmasters guy.
At the time of writing actually, I am the president of the largest and most successful Toastmasters club in Berlin.

I am not *as* afraid anymore of public speaking.
However, I am *still* afraid of going on stage with zero preparation to talk about something I have no idea of.

Improv classes will not only remove the last stage fright in you, but it will also make you an overall more confident communicator.

You're afraid of approaching a girl? Well, after some improv classes, you know that you can come up with something on the fly. And even if you can't come up with anything, you've probably experienced that it's not the end of the world.

Improv comedy can get really weird, so if you're not into comedy, you might want to mix it with non-comedy improv (Toastmasters has those too):

What you will learn:

- Grow comfortable approaching people
- Confidently tell a non-rehearsed story (without fearing you will miss the punch line)
- Grow more comfortable approaching members of the opposite sex

#7. Acting Classes

This is a great social skill activity to improve one of the very basics of communication: nonverbal communication.

Many people who are not good at socializing indeed are poor at understanding how people feel. And that's because they don't pick up on major non-verbal cues.

Acting classes will teach you to read facial expressions and to use your facial expressions better.

What you will learn:

- Read other people's nonverbal language
- Use your body language to support your communication
- Make your communication congruent and stronger
- Increase your self-awareness

Overall, you will become a more holistic communicator and you'll learn to better read social dynamics on the fly.

#8. Action, Action, Action: Any Social Activity

Once you have removed your major fears and you have laser-focused on your biggest areas of improvement, it's time to broaden your social horizons.

Feel to go to all the social events you actually enjoy.
But make sure they are varied so you get the benefits of different social environments (Leil Lowndes calls it scramble therapy).

Two or three times a week do some of the following:

- Meetup groups of topics you like
- After work drinks
- Bars/clubs
- Speed dating
- Sport activities
- Networking events
- Concerts

What You Will Learn

- Enjoy all different kinds of social gathering
- Socialize for socialization pleasure
- You will shift your identity from loner / socially challenged to an apt social person

#9. TV and People Watching

You probably know the recommendation of watching TV with the sound off.

It's a valid one, but I don't actually think you necessarily need the sound off.
I have learned hugely with the sound *on*, and I think the audio can often give more value anyway. After all, tonality is huge to understand people.

I would personally start paying particular attention to difficult social settings.
Like dating TV series where people pick or reject others or games with winners and losers.
Or arguments.

As you learn the more extreme versions of facial expressions and body language, you can then move to the more subdued daily ones.

For the daily ones, I find bars to be particularly useful.
Watch how people approach others, and how they are introduced, and try to guess what they're feeling (nervous, annoyed, excited?).

What You Will Learn

- Take the acting classes lessons to daily life
- Learn the nuances of human expressions
- Improve your empathy and emotional intelligence
- Predict how people feel and how they will react

i'm watching you pal

#10. Throw a Party

Finally, it's time to go from attendee to organizer.

It will require a whole new level of social skills. Indeed, as you move from socializer to organizer, leadership qualities are needed.

You are now the host and not only need to speak to people, but you need to make sure that people are having a good time and everyone is enjoying themselves. You will need to step in to get the wallflower talking, and you might need to make introductions and help groups out of sticky social situations.

This is your final crowning though.
Once you can be a good host, chances are that you are well on your way to becoming a social master.

What You Will Learn:

- Leadership skills
- High-quality woman / man traits
- Higher social skills like
  - Helping people out of sticky social situations
  - Throwing rude people under the bus
  - Dealing with underminers
  - Fending off social climbers
  - Dealing with overly dominant men

SUMMARY

To learn social skills, focus on your major weaknesses and fears first.
If you are really afraid of something, the best technique is usually to expose yourself to it a little bit little, small step after small step.

As you remove the major fears you are not socially challenged anymore but simply move to the “not socially skilled stage”, which is where the majority lies.

From there on, you can focus on honing your skills until you become a social master.

A Return to Love: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

A Return to Love teaches readers to connect with infinite love -God-, and find strength and inner peace.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Unhappiness Stems From Fear
  - We Need to Overcome the Notion That Love Is Naive
  - We're All Bound in Love
  - God Enters Us When We Can Let Go
  - Let Love in Your Heart for Better Relationships
  - Welcoming God in Your Life
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- You don't need to follow a specific religion to experience God and infinite love
- We are all bound by God and infinite love
- We can experience God when we allow ourselves to let go

Full Summary

Marianne Williamson says that to experience more happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment we need to allow all-powerful love in our life.
All-powerful love means embracing God, but it doesn't necessarily have to be a Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist God. Love encompasses any religion.

Unhappiness Stems From Fear

The author says that we are raised in a culture based on fear and competition. We fear not getting good enough grades, not getting enough jobs, and not being able to provide for ourselves and our families.

But fear is a vicious circle, and fear begets more fear.
To embrace love we need to break fear's negative circle.

The problem is even bigger in the West, where our culture is extremely competitive and individualistic.

Ego is The Enemy

Our ego makes us act selfishly and make us chase status and power.
Following our ego might lead to material success, but it will rarely lead to happiness.

We Need to Overcome the Notion That Love Is Naive

Worst still, our western culture has a core belief that too much love is naive.
And the idea that being too loving will set us up for failure and pain prevents us from enjoying pure, unadulterated love. Both in romantic and non-romantic relationships.

We're All Bound in Love

The author embraces Carl Jung's idea of the collective unconscious.

In the collective unconscious, we are all bound spiritually. It's only our physical bodies that keep us from realizing that we are all connected.

You Don't Have to Put a Name on It

Williamson says that some people can refrain from embracing love because they are skittish about the word "God". But you don't have to put a label on it, and you don't need to call it God.

God Enters Us When We Can Let Go

Some people convert to God when they are at a very low point in their life.

And the usual cynics then say that they converted to religion because they are at their weakest and they need something to hold on to.

But **people sometimes convert to God during their most difficult moments not because they are weak, but because they are finally able to let go**.

It's that uncluttered mind, free of fear and resistance, that God is finally able to touch.

Those who can give themselves to God join a much greater power, bigger than themselves and bigger than any other single human being.
That's what happened to George Foreman:

Let Love in Your Heart for Better Relationships

Looking at people through God's eyes means looking at others looking for the best in them.

Embracing God and love for God in your life will also make you less dependent on others. You won't be as needy, and that can make for better relationships.

Williamson also says that when you're hurt or angry the best course of action is often to let go of the pain and hatred. Hatred only breeds more hatred.

Welcoming God in Your Life

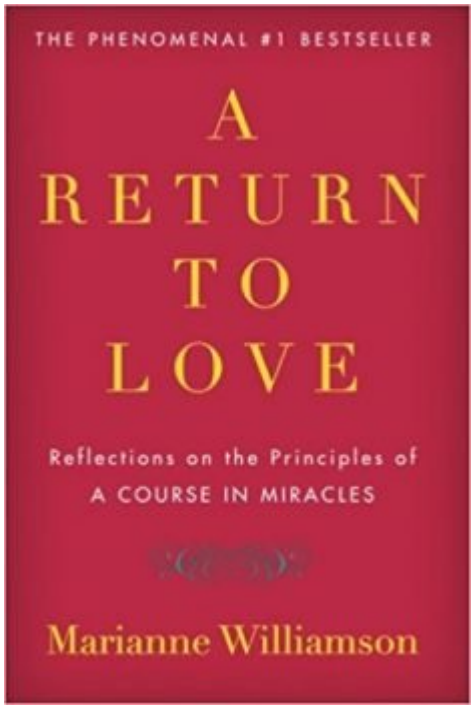
There are three steps to allow God and infinite love in your life:

1. Empty your mind to receive from the universe
2. Pray to God and ask for guidance
3. Surrender your thoughts and let God take over

The author makes the case that helping and focusing on the now will help you connect with God and welcome love in your life.
For more on meditation also read:

- The Power of Now

- The Untethered Soul
- 10% Happier



Real-Life Applications

Let Go, Focus on Inner Light
I think the message of letting go and focusing on your inner spirituality is quite powerful and can do a lot of good for many people.
Even highly driven people can slightly adapt and let go of all things they can't control to focus on what they want to achieve.
Powerful.

CONS

Love Can Conquer All?
I found some parts of A Return to Love to be a bit simplistic and, yes, naive.
Empathizing with prisoners will work wonders with *some* of them. With the most inveterate it won't do a thing instead.
Actually, it will only allow them to take advantage of you.
Also, read Good and Evil, *The Sociopath Next Door*.

Prayer Cure AIDS?
At times the author makes claims that are unverifiable and pitches her opinion as facts when, well, they are not really facts.
If you can manage to go beyond those incongruousness though, you'll be able to enjoy the deeper wisdom of A Return to Love.

PROS

Powerful Philosophy
I believe that following part of Williamson's advice can do a lot to help people improve their lives…

Review

I had to let go of my anti-new-age blinders to get the most out of A Return to Love, but I'm grateful I managed.

I don't fully agree with all of the book and I won't necessarily apply most of it right away.
But reading it with an open mind was a powerful experience in open-mindedness and acceptance.

Read the best books collection or get the book on Amazon

Anything You Want: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Anything You Want,* author Derek Sivers talks about entrepreneurship, happiness, and life philosophy.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - What Makes You Happy?
  - It's Either Hell-Yeah or No
  - You Don't Have to Change The World
  - Persist With New Ideas
  - Keep Your Business Plan Simple
  - Define Your Target – And Say No To Everyone Else
  - You Don't Need Big Money
  - Make Decisions Based on Your Customers
  - If Troubles: Move to Next Idea
  - Delegate While Keeping an Overview
  - Do It If You Like It
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Self-awareness is important for good business and good life: what makes you happy?
- Prioritize your business decisions based on what will benefit your customers
- You don't need "change the world visions": you can do great if all you want is to do what you love while making enough to live

Full Summary

About the Author: Derek Sivers is an entrepreneur who launched and then sold a successful tech business during the Dot-com era and then focused on doing things he likes, without caring about money.
He describes himself as an introvert and a bit of a loner, and one of his quirks is that he takes pride in answering all emails people write him. I wrote to him by the way and I can testify that his claim of replying to everyone is indeed true -albeit it's one-line replies and, for full disclosure, I've heard a fellow entrepreneur say he's got an automated system for quicker replies :)-

What Makes You Happy?

Anything You Want talks a lot about happiness and the intersection of money, business, and happiness.

One of the keys to getting all three of them right, says Derek Sivers, is to understand what makes you happy, what you're passionate about, and what makes you unique.

Once you know that, you will have a huge advantage in finding and doing what really stimulates you. It's going to make your highs higher and it's going to help you and guide you through the tough times.

Sivers uses a rather popular image in the self-help literature to help you figure out what you want: think you're nearing the end of your life.
What do you regret you haven't done? What do you wish you had done more if you hadn't let yourself get caught up in the pettiness and small things of life?
Then do more of what you really wanted to do.

It's Either Hell-Yeah or No

This is a concept similar to *Essentialism* and *The One Thing*.
In a nutshell, it says that you either do something because you really love it, or don't do it all.

I find this is a great way to prioritize in life and make the most of your time.

You Don't Have to Change The World

We live in a world where everyone is aiming for the moon.

Indeed several books, like *Bold* and *The Magic of Thinking Big* want you to believe that you should have outsized goals to succeed.

But Derek Sivers says that you don't really need any ambition to change your field -or the whole world- with your business.
Sivers for one, never had such grand ambitions. And he did just fine.

Similarly, if you only want to pay your expenses or free your time, that's a very valid goal.

My Note: I really loved this part. I want to be and do the best I can, share the best information possible with this website, and sell the best information-based products you could find. Yet, I don't really care about making huge bucks.
All I want is the freedom to do what I love.

Also, read:

- **A value-based business**

Persist With New Ideas

The concept Derek Sivers has of entrepreneurship and ideas is similar to Jay Samit's "zombie idea" concept (read *Disrupt You*).

Such as, yes, keep persisting, but not on the same ideas. But keep persisting in generating projects that add value and improving on them.
Do the bare minimum and then show it to the world. Get the feedback and keep working on them if they're good or move to the next thing (similar to *The Lean Startup*).

Keep Your Business Plan Simple

Sivers explains that there is no need to make your business plan long or full of jargon. You won't make a better impression, but a poorer one if you try to embellish it.

Keep it simple instead and keep only the high-level figures in it.
That's all you need in the beginning -and that's all you know often: the rest you figure out as you go-.

Define Your Target – And Say No To Everyone Else

The author says that once you define your target audience you should keep it large enough that you don't come to

depend on one single customer or modify your product for one single customer.

But at the same time, you remain focused on your values and target audience so that you stay true to your goals. As you grow successful you will receive more and more requests, and it's not only OK to let some requests go unfulfilled, but that's exactly what you should do sometimes.

For example, the author received a lot of solicitations from music executives who wanted their latest hottest talent on his website CD Baby.
But he always refused because he designed his website for musicians *without* a label.

You Don't Need Big Money

The author says that you don't need much money to get you started.

It's not money that makes the business grow, it's the value added to helping people.
So start helping out.

As a matter of fact, being low on cash can boost your productivity and become an advantage (also read: *The Obstacle is The Way*).
You will build your business on the foundation of a lean company based on your vast knowledge, creative problem-solving, and maximizing resources.

Make Decisions Based on Your Customers

When you have to make decisions, always ask yourself: what do your customer want and need?
Then do what's best for them.

If Troubles: Move to Next Idea

If you are struggling to keep your business afloat, it might mean you need to move on.

Every business fixes a problem, and if that problem disappears, then it's simply time to change. Worry not: as long as you keep adding value people will be happy to come to you.

Delegate While Keeping an Overview

Derek Sivers says that not learning to delegate is a crucial mistake for self-employed people.

You need to free your own time to focus on the strategic vision and grow.
Or maybe because in the future you want to take time off or dedicate yourself to something else. Sivers echoes a bit of *The E-Myth* when he says that a good business is a business that you can leave for a year and come back to find has grown without you.

The author makes a good point that you should let your employee know that you delegate to them because you trust them.
This helps develop a culture of trust and faith (also read: *Drive*)

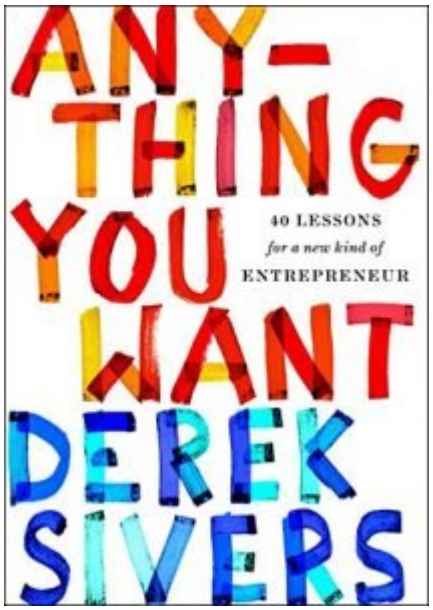
But the opposite is also a common problem: delegating too much. Make sure you keep a system that allows you to keep an overview and approve the most critical decisions.

> **Trust. But verify.**

Do It If You Like It

I love this part.

Derek Sivers says that if you really like doing something by yourself, you should probably do it even though that could mean doing it less efficiently, a bit more slowly, or a bit more expensively.



Real-Life Applications

Don't Get Spiteful
You will eventually stumble upon a customer who will scam you or try to rip you off. Don't let that poison you to the point that you take it out on all customers or that you change your business in a way that would penalize many of your customers.

Prioritize Fulfillment
Chasing money will hardly make most people happy.
If you enjoy a lot doing something, it might make sense for you to keep doing that. Even if it might mean slightly less explosive growth or even making less money.

Review

I vibe deeply with Derek's philosophy and that's why I really loved "*Anything You Want*".

Reading this book reminded me of the English saying "preaching to the converted".
It's in a way similar to *The 4-Hour Workweek*, but less geeky, more philosophical, and, well… It comes from a guy who's built a relatively big business and who, in my opinion, has a lot of credibility for putting his money where his mouth is.

Overall, I could recommend this book to entrepreneurs. But, most of all, I can recommend it to solopreneurs, as they are called today. It's especially good for introverted solopreneurs and people who want to live life their way, on their own way.

Read the best entrepreneurship books, or get the book on Amazon

Braving the Wilderness: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Braving the Wilderness* author Brene Brown explores her trademark topics of belonging, human connection, and self-worth.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - We All Look for Belonging
  - Not Belonging in Our Family Is Worst
  - How We Can Feel Like We Don't Belong
  - True Belonging Means Belonging to Yourself
  - The Wilderness Meaning
  - We're More Divided Now That We're United
- Braving the Wilderness Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We all seek to belong, but **we shouldn't allow our need for belonging to drive us into sectarianism and ingroup/outgroup dynamics**
- We are often lonely once we become part of a group of like-minded individuals
- **Real belonging starts not with a group, but within ourselves**: self-acceptance. Then you belong everywhere

Full Summary

About the Author: Brene Brown is a social researcher and has become very popular in the latest years thanks to the huge success of some of her books and TED Talks. She is also the author of "*Daring Greatly*", her biggest success, and "*The Gift of Imperfection*".

We All Look for Belonging

Belonging is one of our primary needs, and it can be deeply painful when we don't find it.

Brene Brown seems to know it well as she shares her childhood stories of not being welcome among whites and being only half-welcome among blacks.
But when she'd show to her blacks' classmates' houses she could still remember, as a four years old, the shock of their black parents in seeing a white girl.

Not Belonging in Our Family Is Worst

But worst of all is when you don't feel like you belong in your own family.

Brene Brown desperately wanted to be part of the cheerleading squad. Her mom had been a cheerleader in that

same school and her father had a start football team.

She practiced non-stop and went on a two weeks liquid diet.
She actually excelled at her trial performance but was told she just wasn't cheerleading material.

Unluckily, it wasn't just the cheerleading team that Brown didn't feel like belonging to. Her own parents voiced their disappointment and she felt rejected in her own family.

That led Brown to drinking problems.
She joined the AA anonymously and her sponsor told her she'd better go to Co-Dependent Anonymous for a better relationship (read *co-dependent no more*).
But even there she was spurned.

My Note: If you experience the same, check out this book
If you have had a similar feeling of rejection from your own family, I recommend the book Will I Be Ever Be Good Enough. It goes much more in-depth and it will help understand the deep-seated reasons for perfectionism and/or self-destructive behavior stemming from a lack of love and acceptance

Deep-Seated Belonging Problems

But Brene's drinking problems and co-dependent relationships were only the symptoms of her internal wounds.
And she only overcame them when she addressed and tackled her emotional wounds.

How We Can Feel Like We Don't Belong

There are many ways in which people can feel like they don't belong.
The most common are:

- We wanted to join, but the group spurned us
- We tried so hard to gain someone's acceptance, but we didn't manage
- We managed to join the group, but we don't feel a connection and we feel like outsiders

True Belonging Means Belonging to Yourself

True belonging happens when you *stop* trying to gain the acceptance of others.

Fitting in means that you change yourself to be like the group you want to be part of.
When that happens, you won't be experiencing real connection because you don't show up being true to yourself.

Belonging instead means accepting who you are, being who you are, and having the people around take you for the real you.

I quote Brene here:

> The spiritual practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being a part of something and standing alone in the wilderness.
> True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are.

The Wilderness Meaning

Brene uses the wilderness because it's both scary and tempting.

The wilderness is what lies outside our comfort zone.
It can be something new, something we are avoiding, or a place where are forced to confront our uncertainties and

vulnerabilities.

It's different for everyone. It might require you to engage in introspection, spiritual learning, or personal development.

To keep going in the wilderness you must learn to engage in *difficult conversations* and motivate yourself not by fear, but by joy.
And you will learn to trust yourself and others and to show up as you really are: trusting and vulnerable.

Developing Trust & Vulnerability

Both trust and vulnerability are qualities that we can all learn to develop.

Brene Brown lists seven qualities that will make us trustworthy:

1. Be reliable
2. Own your mistakes
3. Respect boundaries (read how to enforce boundaries)
4. Keep personal and confidential information safe
5. Make decisions with integrity
6. Be non-judgmental
7. Be generous

We're More Divided Now That We're United

There was a time when we believed that the Internet was going to build a "global village" that would make us all closer and more united.

Instead, it only made it easier for like-minded people to stand with other like-minded people. It's tempting to try to find belonging among those who think like us. But often the result is that it entrenches our ideas and might make us more extreme and bellicose.

And certainly more divided.

Brene Brown indeed makes the case that inside groups of like-minded individuals, we isolate ourselves from the world and we are all more lonely than ever.

For true belonging, we need meaningful connections and not factions.

Braving the Wilderness Quotes

On using respectful language:

> When people call the president of the United States a pig, we should reject that language regardles of our politics and demand discourse that doesn't make people subhuman

On sub-human language:

> When we hear people referred to as animals or aliens, we should immediately wonder, "Is this an attempt to reduce someone's humanity so we can get away with hurting them or denying them basic human rights?

On not tolerating dehumanization:

> We must never tolerate dehumanization—the primary instrument of violence that has been used in every

> genocide recorded throughout history.

On accountability VS dehumanization:

> Dehumanizing and holding people accountable are mutually exclusive. Humiliation and dehumanizing are not accountability or social justice tools, they're emotional off-loading at best, emotional self-indulgence at worst. And if our faith asks us to find the face of God in everyone we meet, that should include the politicians, media, and strangers on Twitter with whom we most violently disagree. When we desecrate their divinity, we desecrate our own, and we betray our faith

On the importance of understanding each other even when we disagree:

> People often silence themselves, or "agree to disagree" without fully exploring the actual nature of the disagreement, (…) deepen misunderstandings, which can (in turn) generate resentment

On looking inside instead of outside:

> Stop walking through the world looking for confirmation that you don't belong. You will always find it because you've made that your mission. (…) The truth about who we are lives in our hearts. Our call to courage is to protect our wild heart against constant evaluation, especially our own. No one belongs here more than you.

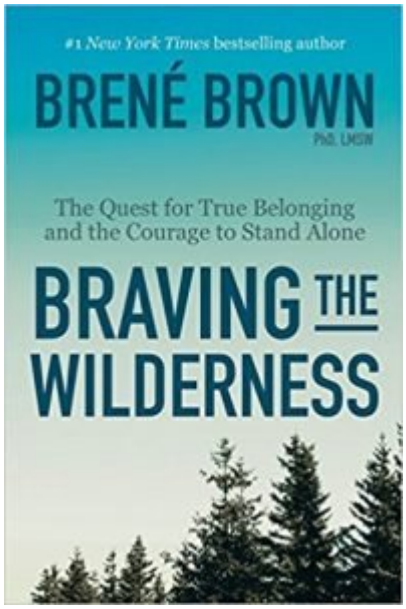
On the necessity to avoid changing yourself just so that you can belong:

> If I get to be me, I belong. If I have to be like you, I fit in

On ultimate personal enlightenment:

> **You are only free when you realize you belong no place—you belong every place—no place at all. The price is high. The reward is great**

Deep, wise words.



Real-Life Applications

Stop Trying to Fit In
Fitting in with this or that group won't do a thing to make you feel better and more connected. You are much better off knowing yourself and belonging to several different groups through human connection (VS a connection through ideology).

Connect With People, Not Ideology
What I learned and liked the most from *Braving the Wilderness* is that we should connect with people through human empathy and not through ideologies.

CONS

Conjectures & Buzzwords Instead of Analyses: This is Not Research!
The author often uses the term "research" in her writings.
But this is not scientific research *in the least*.
I personally very much dislike any attempt to position as research what's not research. Research is not the ultimate truth, so there is no need to present one's theories as research-based!
Indeed I liked many of the author's theories and conjectures and agree they're valid for many cases. *But it's not scientific*.

Jumping to Conclusions From Conjectures (or Meaningless Data)
Brene uses voting patterns to say that people have surrounded themselves with like-minded peers.
She says that today 80% of Americans live in areas that overwhelmingly voted either for Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. I wouldn't consider that any valid set of data.
Or she connects the bottling up of anger to mass shootings. But many other Western countries have the same culture as the US and don't go on a shooting rampage (Brene as a hunter and gun owner might want to consider gun culture here).

I, Me, Mine
The author's work often gives me the feeling to be lot about "me, me, me".
It doesn't have to be a con, she simply draws heavily from her experience in a way.
Yet at times, it feels as if these books are a self-therapy session of an entitled individual who's showing off her success to the world.
I don't think it's so relevant to tell us how much her husband loves her. Many of her readers might not find such a man. And I didn't think her personal story of success and Oprah's appearances are very relevant to the audience for example.

"Accept Thyself" Double-Edged Sword
I have said the same in all other of Brene's books, including *Daring Greatly* and *The Gifts of Imperfection*.
Accepting oneself to me is a double-edged sword that might stop people from chasing their dreams and goals with the passion, drive, and hunger that we sometimes need to succeed.
By choosing to "selectively not accept" where we are, we can muster more power on our side. And no, that does not mean we must lower our self-esteem. I don't accept my current situation and have very healthy self-esteem.

Into The Wilderness Metaphor
I am not particularly fond of the "wilderness" imagery, as if everyone was supposed to go on a dark and dangerous journey of self-discovery.
One, not everyone's path to self-discovery will be wild. And two: why should it be so dark anyway?

PROS

Deep Wisdom on Dehumanization: Join In
Brene Brown hits the nail on the head when she says that dehumanization has allowed the worst atrocities to happen.
It's a similar message in *The Lucifer Effect*, but I feel that Brown has gone more deeply than a book that was theoretically dedicated to exploring evil.
Brene Brown's *Braving the Wilderness* also presents a deep, engaging, and powerful antidote to hatred and dehumanization.

Life-Changing Message of Self-Belonging
I found Brene's message of self-belonging to be enlightening. It added a new

Review

There is a part of me who loves Brene Brown's work and a part of me who feels it's goody-good over-analyzing which is specific to the author's life and not highly generalizable.

I think getting into Brene's work to get the most out of it requires that people be selective for the great wisdom it contains while at the same time staying critical of what they should not pick up.

For example, in Braving the Wilderness I particularly loved the idea that you should belong to yourself first and foremost.
That's enlightening and it added a new layer of understanding of myself. It's something I was unconsciously doing already, but it gave me a new goalpost to strive towards. And it made me certainly a wiser man.

But then advice on anger and extreme self-acceptance falls a bit flat on me (read: how to leverage pain and failure). Sometimes I have the feeling that Brene's work might serve as a balm instead of fuel for high achievers.

Overall: great, great work. Absolutely recommended.

Read the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

Built to Last: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Built to Last* author Jim Collins presents his research on what differentiates visionary companies, such as companies with a long track record of superior performance, from average or "just good" companies.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - It's Not About Great Ideas & Top Leader
  - The Immutable Core of Lasting Companies
  - The Changing Parts
  - Visionaries Companies Walk the Talk
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Visionary companies have purpose, values, and culture handed down from generation to generation
- They attract and retain people who believe in the same values and thrive within the ranks
- They allow their employees to experiment and try out new things

Full Summary

The so-called "visionaries companies" surveyed in Built to Last include Walt Disney Company, Marriott Hotels, Merck, Sony, HP, and Johnson & Johnson.

The top companies often described as "visionaries" were then compared to companies in the same industries and with similar products which were described far more infrequently as "visionaries".

The authors then analyzed both groups to find out what the differences were.
Built to Last is the product of that research.

It's Not About Great Ideas & Top Leader

Companies that last are not based on ideas.
Ideas come and go. Some that seem good will work great and some that seem OK will work great. But few of them will ever keep delivering big profits for decades.

Sony indeed not only wasn't born with any good idea, but it had *no* great idea.
The founder started a brainstorming session after launching the company to evaluate possible business ideas.

HP also had no specific idea but experimented with lots of stuff that today would sound farcical.

It's not even about great charismatic leaders at the top. The top leaders are very often modest and down to earth.

Great companies are great organizations that churn out great leaders and great ideas continuously.
The great product of these companies is the product itself, the organization that allows them to keep producing

great ideas, great products, and great people.

The Immutable Core of Lasting Companies

Lasting companies are built around an immutable core.
What's the core?

- Core = Values & Purpose

Purpose.
The purpose is the main reason why a company exists.
Disney's purpose for example is to bring happiness to millions.
The purpose is a guiding star, it's not ever something you're done with and gets done with. You always strive and keep producing towards that purpose.

Values.
Values are company specific and they are all about who you are.

Culture.
Values shape the culture of a company, and companies that are built to last have a very strong culture. Even a cult-like culture.

Purpose & Ideologies
Great companies have a great purpose than simply producing a product. Great companies put that purpose and vision before the bottom-line profits (also read *Start With WHY*).
They form ideologies that go from generation to generation so that retiring leaders don't take their culture with them.

Continuous Improvement
While the ideologies stay the same, the manifestations of those ideologies always change. Great companies always strive to come up with new ways of fulfilling their purposes.

Continuous Experimentation
Visionary companies allow their employees to experiment. This isn't indeed just Google. 3M for example does the same, and the Post-It, a blockbuster for the company, was the result of an employee's pet project.
Compare it to Norton, a similar company in the same industry, which actively discourages employees to pursue interests outside its traditional product line.

The Changing Parts

The core stays the same in great companies, while other elements change over time.

Goals
Collins uses the acronym BHAG, which stands for "big hairy audacious goals". The concept is similar to *Bold* and *The Magic of Thinking Big*, such as designing big goals that motivate people who are 100% committed to realizing them.

One example, which is a very popular one in management textbooks, is the moon landing -albeit many believe it never actually happened-.
But also the 747 plane from Boeing is an example of a BHAG.

Never Good Enough
Comfort is never the goal for companies and people who want to achieve great goals and accomplish great things. Great companies always have a hunger for more and more.

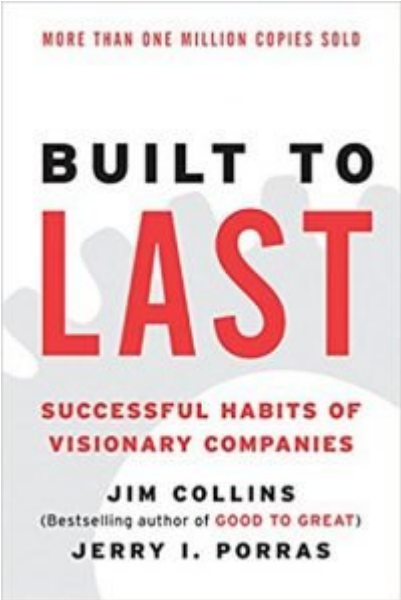
Recruits Stay Only if They Fit

Since the culture is somewhat cult-like new recruits either fit in and thrive or leave soon.
Walt Disney was a particularly severe example of cult-like culture. To fit in with the culture of family fun they would not hire men with facial air for their parks and anyone cursing in the presence of the founder would be fired on the spot.

CEOs Are Bred and Groomed
Companies are built to last groom their leaders internally. They always have a lot of talent to choose from because employees are highly engaged and are given a lot of free reins to experiment and learn.
They also tend to plan in advance their new CEOs, with GE choosing Jack Welch's successor seven years before Welch retired.
Jack Welch was only the most famous BTW, but GE enjoyed a century of Welch-caliber CEOs.
In contrast, non-visionary CEOs are often hired externally, don't groom the next leader, and sometimes, Collins & Porras say, even hinder any possible competition (also read *Snakes in Suits*).

Visionaries Companies Walk the Talk

While most companies boast and brag about big values, visionaries companies actually take steps to live those values.



Real-Life Applications

Work For Visionaries Companies
Why would you work for a company that doesn't allow you to go beyond your role description? If you are reading here and trying to become a better man, you also deserve a better boss.

Envision a Company, Not a Great Product/Idea
Instead of focusing so much on an idea or a product, focus on building a great conduit for great idea*s* and product*s*.

CONS

Unscientific
This is a study of correlation. They take one successful company and then look for the differences with less successful companies and say "oh, here is what's different, here is why visionary companies are better".
I believe that's unscientific and prone to all kinds of errors and biases.

Long and Repetitive

The wisdom is great and valid. But it could have been delivered in a shorter format.

PROS

Good Wisdom
It all makes sense and many a board member and CEO would gain reading these pages.

Review

The theory is there and even though I said it's not highly scientific, I also believe that pretty much everything *Built to Last* says makes sense.

However, few companies are actually willing and able to walk the talk.
Up to you if you want to beat an awesome company that lasts, delivers, and adds more value than any other company in your industry.

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The No Asshole Rule: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The No Asshole Rule,* author Robert Sutton analyzes the impact of assholes in the workplace.
The author says that while some skilled asshole can provide short-term benefits for the company, they are highly poisonous to morale and culture, and companies should never tolerate them.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - What's an Asshole
  - 12 Actions of Assholes
  - Lick Up, Kick Down
  - Assholes Are Bad for Business
  - Why Businesses Tolerate Assholes
  - Big Power Differentials Breed Assholing
  - Asshole Behavior Can Grant Short-Term Benefits
  - Promoting an Asshole-Free Workplace
  - Avoid Assholes – Or You Might Turn
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Asshole behavior can provide some benefits for the individual as we mistake aggression for high status
- However, assholes poison the environment and leave people and companies worse off
- Assholes are often cowards as they abuse down the organizational hierarchy and brown-nose upward
- Some companies tolerate assholes because they might be talented

Full Summary

About the Author: Robert Sutton is a researcher and professor of management at the Stanford University School of Engineering. He holds a Ph.D. in organizational psychology.

What's an Asshole

Robert Sutton that we are all assholes *sometimes*, and in certain periods of our life.

However, the certified asshole is the one who constantly bullies or puts others down and leaves their victims angry, humiliated, or afraid.

Since their behavior is continuous, their effect is also cumulative, and even low-reactive people can start feeling their bite after a while.

Also, read:

- **How to be a GOOD asshole**

> How to Be A Good Asshole

12 Actions of Assholes

You can spot an asshole from the presence of these daily behaviors:

1. Personal insults
2. Invading personal territory
3. Uninvited personal contact
4. Verbal and non-verbal threats and intimidation
5. Sarcastic jokes and teasing
6. Scornful emails
7. Public shaming or status degradation
8. Undermining someone's social status
9. Interruptions
10. Two-faced attacks
11. Dirty looks
12. Treating people as if they were non-existent

However, the main rule of thumb is this: how do you feel after the encounter? Do you feel oppressed, humiliated, or overall worse off?

Also, read more here:

- **The asshole social strategy**

Lick Up, Kick Down

Often assholes can keep living in the organization or even advance because they treat customers and superiors well and reserve their worst behavior for people lower down in the organization.

Assholes Are Bad for Business

Assholes lower the morale of the organization and lead to disengagement in the environment where they are left free to act.

It has a huge on the organization as people are more likely to quit, take days off, talk behind people's back,s and even steal.

When assholes get in positions of power their ability to devastate the work environment increases.

> **Assholes are bad for business**

Why Businesses Tolerate Assholes

Some businesses and organizations tolerate assholes in the name of their apparent bottom-line impact or their talent and skills which makes them difficult to replace.

Sutton, however, says that in the long run, it's always damaging for the company to put up with assholes' antics.

He says that anyone who cannot get along respectfully with the people around should be considered incompetent no matter their amount of skills or talent.

And the company culture should be clear that all employees deserve to be treated with fairness and respect.

The payoff for the business is higher loyalty and employee morale.

Big Power Differentials Breed Assholing

Sutton says that the rule of thumb is:

the greater the status difference between managers and employees, the more the bosses tend to disrespect lower-ranking employees.

Thus, to reduce and discourage assholing behavior businesses would do well to reduce the status differentials and flatten the organization, potentially also decreasing the pay difference between employees.

Asshole Behavior Can Grant Short-Term Benefits

The author says that aggressive and threatening behavior can provide some benefits in the business world. A bit the same way it would work in wild animals or in a mafia organization.
Sutton says this happens because **our brains associate aggression with high status**.

However, this doesn't mean that an organization should promote assholes or that asshole behavior is good. Indeed, behavior that can help win over a rival manager or team seldom translates into advantages to the whole organization (also read *Snakes in Suits*).

Furthermore, assholes are more likely to drive away the very best of the employees, those with options and greater skills.
This ensures that the organization bleeds talent and turns into a toxic, talent-poor environment.

Promoting an Asshole-Free Workplace

As we've mentioned before, flatter hierarchies and lower pay differential help.

Founders and upper management can also help by fostering a culture that restrains internal competition and fosters cooperation.

Subtler approaches also include replacing aggressive and warlike words and phrases such as "enemy", "battleground", "trenches" and similar.
Using pronouns such as "we", "us" and "our" instead of "I" and "me" can help remind people that we're all together in it.

However, the biggest rule is to get rid of assholes ASAP. If you let them fester, it might be too late: they drive the great people away and hire and attract other assholes.

> **Dealing with assholes means getting rid of them ASAP**

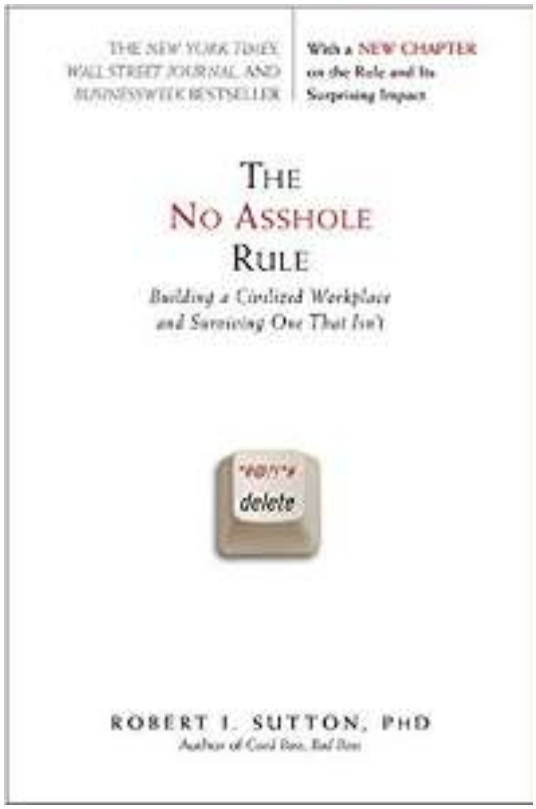
Avoid Assholes – Or You Might Turn

Sutton says that if you keep hanging with assholes at work, you will eventually start behaving like one.
For example, he realized that he started treating his wife worse while he was employed in an asshole-infested team.

If you can't change jobs, at least try to reduce contact with the assholes.
And I particularly liked Sutton's recommendation of increasing your emotional distance from the asshole.

Also, read:

- Dealing with an asshole boss
- How to deal with a boss screaming at you
- Signs of a bad boss



Real-Life Applications

Use Assholes (or Distance Yourself)
I agree with the author saying you should keep your distance from people disrespecting others or trying to get under your skin.
However, as the guy behind a website called The Power Moves, I'd actually welcome you to use the occasion to also spar with them and hone your power moves skills and social dominance understanding.
It's too good an occasion to let it slip.

CONS

Lack of Details and Coping Strategies
While most of the analysis is good, there is a lack of powerful coping strategies. This is not a how-to book or a power move resource for you to destroy or learn how to effectively disable assholes.
It's not also highly detailed in the analysis of social dynamics of domination and aggression.

PROS

Well Researched
The No Asshole Rule is not just a personal opinion, but it's a well-researched and data-backed work that I appreciated.

Good Psychology
I liked Robert Sutton's psychological analysis and understanding of the phenomenon of workplace bullying and aggression.

Review

The Asshole Rule is a quick and helpful read.

Personally, I find that a blanket “no to assholes” might be more of a moralistic stance than a highly realistic one. And I’m not sure that more asshol-ish behavior might also not lead to long-term success, in certain industries.

I wish I had seen some advice on how to handle assholes.
But if you want to learn to play the asshole game against assholes this might not be the right book for you (this website is).

But I recommend The No Asshole Rule to people who are responsible for business culture. And to those who want to understand better overly aggressive, dominant, and overall unpleasant people.

Also, read:

- **Toxic employees**
- **Office power moves**

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The Marshmallow Theory: Is Waiting the Key to Success? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Marshmallow Test (2014) is a psychology book detailing the story of the famous, same-name experiment on self-control, delayed gratification, and their link to personal success.

TPM Takeaway: The time horizon impact of life strategies
Human decision-making is a conflict and tradeoff between short-term gratification impulses and long time-horizon. However, **it's not true that waiting is superior and it depends on context.**
Waiting within a long-term horizon works when the odds of larger future rewards are high, but immediate consumption works when rewards may disappear. In general, for most men in civil societies, extending time horizons works, but not always.

Contents

- Overview
- Marshmallow Theory
  - What the Theory Suggests
- Notes
  - How the Test Worked
  - Self-Control vs. Urges
  - Self-Control is Genes, Nurture, & Context
  - Teaching Children Self-Control
- Does the Theory Hold?
  - Addendum: Replication with broader samples shows weaker effects
  - Trust and context matter more than we thought
  - Cultural variation
  - Bottom Line: What the Science Now Suggests
- Review

Overview

- Children who were able to resist the urge of eating the treat showed higher concentration and scored higher on SATs
- Self-control is genes, nurture, and also the context
- We can increase our self-control with techniques and mind re-framing

Marshmallow Theory

The Marshmallow Theory refers to the idea that **delayed gratification**—the ability to wait for a larger future reward instead of taking an immediate smaller one—is a key predictor of long-term success.

It originates from Walter Mischel's "marshmallow test", where children were given a choice:

> One marshmallow now, or two marshmallows if they waited 15 minutes.

The follow-up studies revealed a surprising pattern:
Children who were able to wait tended to do better later in life—academically, socially, and even in terms of health and career success.

What the Theory Suggests

- **Self-control is foundational:** The ability to delay gratification is linked to executive function and emotional regulation.
- **Environment matters:** Later studies showed that children's trust in the reliability of adults (and their environment) also plays a big role in their decision to wait or not.
- **It's not just about willpower:** Cognitive strategies (like distraction or reframing) can improve impulse control—skills that can be taught and trained.

Related Concepts:

- **Impulse control**
- **Executive function**
- **Future orientation**
- **Trust in authority/environment**

Is It True?

The marshmallow theory is valid, and the ability to delay gratification is an important trait for long-term success in many environments, but not all. And it may not be as important as it was originally thought.

Read our criticism section for more.

Notes

The Marshmallow Test details the famous experiment involving children's capacity to resist temptation. It then expands on the importance of delaying gratification and how we can improve our *emotional intelligence* to delay gratification.

How the Test Worked

This is how the marshmallow test worked:

The children would first pick their favorite treat. The researcher then would tell them they would leave the room and they could either have the treat now or enjoy it later once they'd come back.

The researcher also told the children they could call them back if they couldn't wait any longer.
And then, they would leave them alone and observe.

Later in Life

Children who resisted for longer were better at concentrating as adults, scored higher on their SATs, and were better at maintaining personal relationships.

The children who were able to resist showed more activation in their prefrontal cortex, while those who ate the marshmallow right away showed more activation in their ventral striatum, which is linked with pleasure and

addiction.

Self-Control vs. Urges

We have two systems in our body and mind: one that instantly reacts to the environment -and wants to eat-. And one that controls and, if necessary, restrains our behavior.

The author calls the former system “hot system” and the delaying strategies the “cold system”.

When we engage in activities that distract us from the stimuli, we are engaging in the cooling system.

The hot system is ready to grow from birth, but the cooling system is only developed during childhood. And this is one of the reasons why very small children find it harder to resist: they haven’t developed cooling and coping mechanisms yet.
Children under four indeed usually don’t have any cooling systems. But the cooling system can keep developing until we’re adults.

Self-Control is Genes, Nurture, & Context

As for many other personal traits, self-control is partly genetic and partly environmental.

For example, the authors say that a parent can teach children distracting techniques by handing them a toy when he’s upset.

But self-control is also environmental. For example, sexual restraint doesn’t necessarily mean that the same lack of control will be exhibited in different environments and situations.

However, here is the most interesting thing for me: **if you think self-control is limitless you’ll be able to control yourself much better**.
This is another great example of how our own beliefs shape our reality.

TPM Note: Unstable environments prime for immediate gratification
In some contexts immediate gratification works better. This is also related to fast life theory, also linked to psychopathy. Children in unstable and risky environments are primed for faster life and immediate gratification to secure early reproduction.

Teaching Children Self-Control

The authors have a few tips for teaching children self-control:

- Reward effort (not outcome, as also recommended for a growth mindset)
- Be consistent
- Teach that actions have consequences (good actions lead to good results and vice versa)
- Be a good role model
- Teach them to always give their best
- Teach “what if”: “if my hand moves towards the sugary food, then do X to distract yourself”

Personally, you can also:

- Focus on the long-term meaning and consequences
- Distance yourself from the source of temptation

Does the Theory Hold?

As it’s been the case for many classic psychology experiments, the marshmallow test has received criticism and

faced some replication issues.

The researchers were clear that a bigger sample size could reduce the link between the delay of gratification and overall success in life.

And they were also clearly not advocating any policy changes because being able to delay gratification in children wouldn't necessarily mean they would be more successful in life.

Yet the experiment became so popular that, as is sometimes the case, it has taken on a whole different significance. Namely, that children who could control themselves were going to do great things in life and that children who could not control themselves were doomed.

Of course, the reality is often slightly more complex than that.
Indeed, the original marshmallow experiment has several drawbacks, including:

- Some children might obviously be less interested in sugary treats than others
- Children in the tests were few
- Children in the test were all from Stanford University: either children of professors or students
- Poorer children might have a predisposition and drive to consume faster

Indeed, when the study was replicated, it was found that:

- Success of the marshmallow test at age 4 predicted success at age 14 with a correlation that was 50% smaller than the original test
- Correlation almost vanished when taking into account intelligence and family background

Addendum: Replication with broader samples shows weaker effects

In short:

- **Watts, Duncan & Quan (2018)** conducted a high-powered replication using a much larger and more diverse sample (from the NICHD study).T
- They **did find a link**, but **the effect became much smaller** after controlling for:
  - **Socioeconomic status (SES)**
  - **Parental education**
  - **Home environment quality**

Tyler Watts, who replicated the test, sums it up as follows:

> Take two kids with same background, parenting, ethnicity, gender and cognitive ability and their ability to delay the marshmallow gratification matters little.

That means that the ability to delay gratification is not a unique lever but a consequence of a much bigger picture. And the second study shows that teaching children how to delay gratification might not have such a major impact on their lives.

Conclusion: The ability to delay gratification **is not uniquely predictive** of success—it's one factor among many, and heavily influenced by environment.

Trust and context matter more than we thought

Kids from less stable environments may eat the marshmallow early **not due to poor self-control**, but because:

- They've learned that **delayed rewards often never arrive**.
- They're **rational actors** in an untrustworthy environment.

This makes sense from an evolutionary psychology perspective as recent theories have also suggested.

Conclusion: The marshmallow test is as much about **environmental trust** as about individual willpower.

Cultural variation

- In some cultures, **group conformity or respect for adults** may alter how children respond to authority and delayed rewards.
- Delayed gratification may be **less predictive in non-Western societies**.

Bottom Line: What the Science Now Suggests

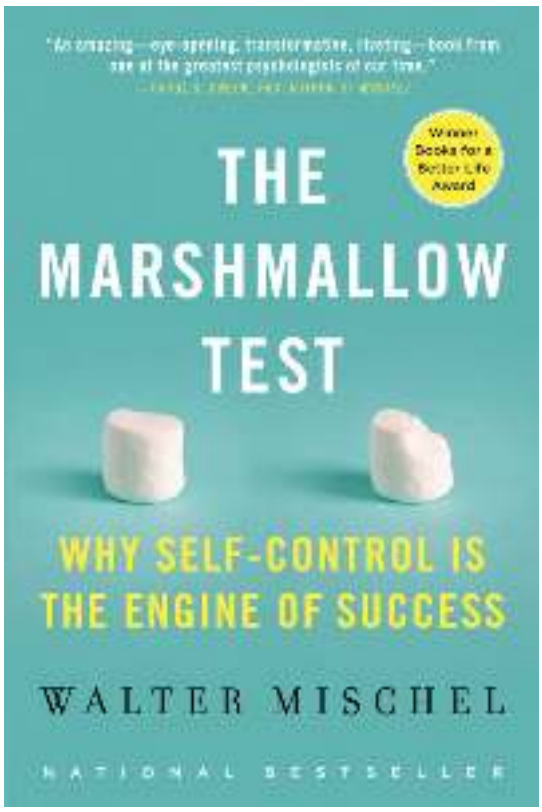
The marshmallow theory is *partly* true: The ability to delay gratification can be helpful when rewards are certain, and it reflects executive functioning that are often important for long-term success.

But:

- It's not destiny
- Outcomes are mediated by socioeconomic context, trust in adults, and learned behavior
- Training, context, and support matter more than just willpower

You can read more here:

- **Pop psychology myths**



Review

The Marshmallow Test is a good book on a famous experiment and later theory that showed that impulse control supports delayed gratification and is an important element of long-term thinking and long-term success.

Like many other classical experiments, the marshmallow test has been called into question by the replication crisis.

While some of the criticism is valid, we must be cautious not to throw away the baby with the bathwater. The ability to resist urges and temptations is a crucial factor for one's level of long-term success and fulfillment.

The bottom line is this: long-term success often requires some short-term pain. And that's the message we agree with: for a better tomorrow, learn to bite the bullet today.

However, for long-term success, you also need more. See, for example:

- Power intelligence
- Competence and high value
- Smart cooperation

Ego Is the Enemy: Summary & Review (Ryan Holiday)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Ego is The Enemy teaches readers about the dangers and pitfalls of our ego. If we don't get control of our ego, says author Ryan Holiday, it will stop us from being the best individuals we can be and it prevents us from achieving our full potential.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - What's Ego?
  - The 3 Phases of Ego
  - Make It, Don't Fake It
  - Ambition VS Egoism
  - How to Control Your Ego
  - Pride Prevents Us From Bigger Achievements
  - Find Purpose, Not Passion
  - Rein Your Ego When You Encounter Sabotage
  - Live in Reality
  - The Danger of Success
  - Ego Makes You Approval Seeking
  - Focus on What's Important to You
  - Ego Destroys Great Teams
  - All the Dangers of Ego
- Ego is The Enemy Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CRITICISM
  - Ego Is Needed And A Healthy Ego Is Good
  - Some Jumping to Conclusions
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Ego blinds us and inflates our sense of worth, distorting reality
- When ego and pride get to us, we lose track of what really matters and what we need to focus on
- There are many techniques to avoid ego-take over, including being eternal learners and paying homage to everyone who's helped us along the way

Full Summary

About The Author:
Ryan Holiday is a popular author of several self-development books. He learned from Robert Greene and helped Greene write *The 48 Laws of Power*.

What's Ego?

This could be a definition of the harmful type of ego that Ryan Holiday wants to warn us against:

> Ego is the unhealthy belief in your own importance

The 3 Phases of Ego

Holiday divides Ego is The Enemy into three phases, with the ego playing a different role in each one of them:

1. **Aspire** (talk less and do more; drop the 10.000-hour rule: it takes infinite time to master)
2. **Success** (ego gets big here and undermines your own success)
3. **Failure**

Make It, Don't Fake It

Ryan trashes the idea of "faking it till you make it".

Make it instead, focus on becoming so good that you don't even think about faking it.

It's the ego that wants you to fake it. It's the ego that wants to look good and successful and looks for the *trappings* of success instead of real mastery.

Ambition VS Egoism

Ryan Holiday distinguishes between ambition and egoism.

Ambitious people strive to excel in their field and be the best they can be, regardless of whether they become famous and receive accolades and congratulations.

Egoists instead chase after fame, popularity, and accolades, whether they are actually skilled at what they do or not.

How to Control Your Ego

Here are a way tips and mindsets to control our egos:

- Eternal learner: remind yourself that there is always something new to learn
- Know that mastery is an eternal pursuit (sweeping the gym floor every day)
- Find someone more skilled than you are to learn from
- Teach to beginners
- Trust others and learn to delegate (our ego stops us from delegating by telling us we're the only ones who can perform well)
- Share recognition with others (often they'll do the same back)
- Think, recognize, and say thank you to all the people who supported you

Pride Prevents Us From Bigger Achievements

Pride and ego are connected but different.

Pride helps us justify our ego, and tells us how good we are after a major success that we've had.

However, pride blinds us to new opportunities and room for improvement.
Pride makes us defensive when someone criticizes us or shows us that we could do better. And instead of looking at reality and ways we could move forward, we get busy defending ourselves and bragging about what we've done.

Find Purpose, Not Passion

Ryan Holiday notices that we are constantly bombarded with the message of “finding our passion”.

But, he warns that “finding our passion” is often a fool’s quest.

Holiday proposes purpose and realism instead of passion.
What’s the difference? The purpose is passion tempered with a healthy dose of realism and perspective.
The realistic side is always checking in and making sure that we are moving forward on the right track.
Because achievement cannot rely on daydreamers.

> Achievement’s foundation lay on realism, not daydreaming

Rein Your Ego When You Encounter Sabotage

Ryan says that it’s almost a given that as you strive valiantly towards your goals, you’ll meet not just total indifference, but possibly even covert or open sabotage.

Some people will indeed go out of their way to make you fail.

It’s easy then to be sidetracked by incredulity, hurt ego, or even reactive impulses of revenge.
But that’s exactly when you need to stay calm, put your head down and get on with the most efficient and effective work you can produce.
You can’t afford to be jerked left and right by your ego.

Stay The (Un-distracted) Course

This concept is what Ryan refers to as Euthymya, which would roughly translate to “tranquility”. It’s the tranquility of following your path without worrying about distractions.

Live in Reality

Contrary to the very popular advice these days of the “reality distortion field” and “law of attraction” Holiday recommends you focus on reality and don’t allow your mind to create abstract versions of reality.

Here Holiday ties realism back to the concept of pride.

Pride will take an actual achievement, but unrealistically blow it out of proportion. This tendency will make us forget the reality of the situation, and that’s always that there is so much more to do.

> Live with the tangible and real, even if—especially if—it’s uncomfortable

The Danger of Success

Success is especially dangerous when it comes to ego.

When you become successful the tendency is to tell your story in an embellished form. The struggles you’ve overcome, the demons you’ve conquered, and the accomplishments seem all but obvious given your immense talent.

You keep telling that story to people and to yourself and your talent becomes your identity and your accomplishments become what you’re worth.

And that’s when you get trapped.
You become scared of trying something new and of being found lacking because now your story is that of an almost infallible being.

Instead, always keep telling yourself the truth, remind yourself of your lowest moments as well and stay grounded

by taking pride in being an eternal learner.

Ego Makes You Approval Seeking

Finally, ego makes you a slave to others by making you seek the approval of others.

People with an outsized ego are not really focused on results, self-control, and achieving self-mastery. They are after accolades and hand-clapping.
And they are eternal approval seekers.

Focus on What's Important to You

To live a fulfilling life you should focus on what really matters to you.

If you don't know what's really important to you, it's easy to be swayed in life by shining toys and money. And indeed this is especially true with money.
Because if you don't know how much you need, the answer with money is always the same: you need *more*.

And chances are that as you chase money, your quality of life will suffer.

Ego Destroys Great Teams

As teams become more successful, the people in it grow and become stars.

But as their sense of self-importance grows bigger and bigger, they start claiming and fighting for the spotlight all for themselves.

That breaks the team and rarely leads to more success.
Take the example of the Lakers with Kobe Bryant and O'Neal. The bickering between the two eventually led to a breakup and O'Neal leaving the team, which interrupted a streak of 3 championships in a row (you can read the account of their trainer Phil Jackson in *Eleven Rings*).

Instead, realize that your strength comes from your team, and the more you push your team up, the more they will push you further up.

All the Dangers of Ego

Ryan says that ego is responsible for a lot of our failures, undoing, and overall ineffectiveness.
Because of ego:

- We delay doing what we should do
- It poisons our relationships as we seek to hog the spotlight
- It blocks us from thinking long term
- Encourages us to be greedy, which rarely makes us happy and fulfilled
- Shifting blame: when things don't go well, we rather blame someone else

Ego is The Enemy Quotes

On ego is the enemy:

> Your ego is the enemy—it blocks us from improving by telling us that we don't need to improve. Then we wonder why we don't get the results we want, why others are better and why their success is more lasting.

On the silliness of "passion":

> The critical work that you want to do will require your deliberation and consideration. Not passion.

On overcoming entitlement mentality:

> Who can afford to be jerked around by impulses, or believe that you're God's gift to humanity, or too important to put up with anything you don't like?
> Those who have subdued their ego understand that it doesn't degrade you when others treat you poorly; it degrades them.

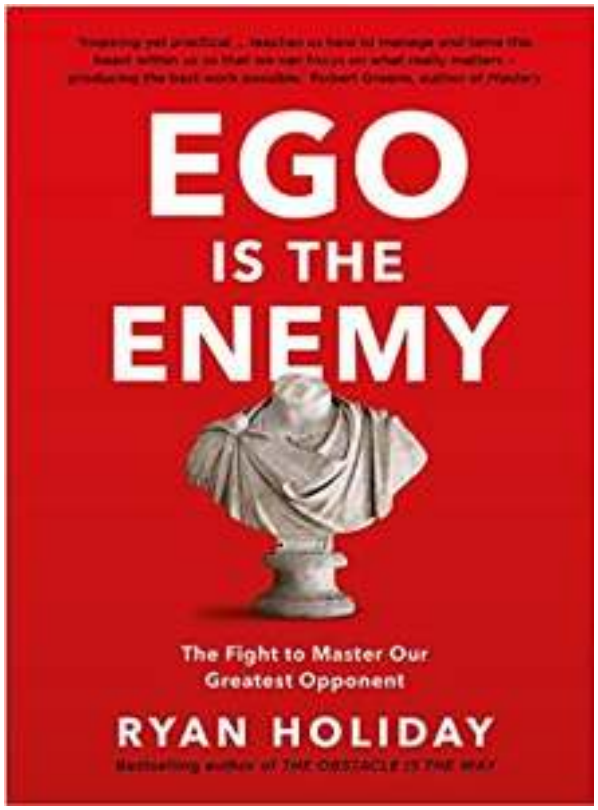
On teamwork:

> Soccer coach Tony Adams expresses it well. Play for the name on the front of the jersey, he says, and they'll remember the name on the back.

On doing your best:

> Your potential, the absolute best you're capable of—that's the metric to measure yourself against. Your standards are. **Winning is not enough. People can get lucky and win. People can be assholes and win. Anyone can win. But not everyone is the best possible version of themselves.**

Amen to that.



Real-Life Applications

Ground Yourself In Reality
Take with a pinch of salt all the literature telling you to "build your own reality". They make a great point when they talk about beliefs and focusing on your goals, but never, never forget to also firmly ground yourself in reality.

Be Aware of Your Ego

Be aware of how your ego is either helping you or hindering you toward your goals. Indeed, I agree with Ryan: ego can be a major drag on a happy, successful, and fulfilling life.
I would also like to add though that you can leverage your ego instead of just getting it out of your way. Check out Ultimate Power.

Don't Build Your Own Cage
As you get successful, don't make your story, and don't teach from a place of greatness. Otherwise, you build your identity around perfection and that will become your own cage (*fixed mindset*).

Don't Shift Blame & Play Ostrich
Once our ego has grown, we can find it hard to accept and own failure. And that's when we hide, rage, and shift blame. Don't allow your ego to ever grow so big that you cannot face failure. We all fail, it's all about how we react to it -or act *around* it-.

Develop Ego Resilience
Develop a growth mindset and an antifragile ego.

> The bigger the ego the harder the fall

CRITICISM

My main criticism is around the concept of "ego is the enemy".

It's not.

It's a poorly developed ego that is the enemy.
But a good ego supports you:

Ego Is Needed And A Healthy Ego Is Good

Ego is important to a happy, fulfilled, and successful life.

Even focusing on achievement alone, ego allows us to compete, strive to reach our goals, and do our best to surpass our past achievements.

Some psychiatrists even say that narcissism in moderate doses is positively correlated with healthy self-esteem and positive personality.

However, *Ego is The Enemy* focuses on those instances when the ego doesn't help us anymore and stands in the way of our success.
It doesn't mention how ego is important or helpful, and how "attacking" the ego can lead to more harm than good.

Even ChatGTP knows that:

The idea that ego is inherently bad and must be eliminated, as argued by Ryan Holiday in "Ego is the Enemy," is a matter of perspective. Research and psychological theories suggest a more nuanced view:

Arguments Against Eliminating Ego

1. **Healthy Ego:** A balanced ego is essential for self-esteem and personal identity. It helps individuals set boundaries and pursue goals.
2. **Psychological Resilience:** Some degree of ego strength is necessary for resilience and coping with life's challenges.
3. **Motivation:** A moderate ego can drive ambition and achievement.

Arguments for Reducing Ego

1. **Humility:** Reducing ego can foster humility, improving relationships and openness to learning.
2. **Collaboration:** Lowering ego can enhance teamwork and empathy, leading to better collaboration.

Feasibility

Completely eliminating ego is neither realistic nor advisable. Instead, managing and balancing it to avoid arrogance and narcissism while maintaining healthy self-esteem is a more practical and beneficial approach.

Some Jumping to Conclusions

The author leverages a lot of historical examples to make his points, and I like that.

However, I didn't like the determinism with which some examples were presented. For example, did Napoleon overreach because he believed in destiny?
Maybe, but we don't know that. And there could be a million other reasons why he over-stretched, including hubris, lack of knowledge of Russian winters, etc., etc.

The more scientifically-minded among the readers will find a few of those examples to be a bit of a stretch.

PROS

Great Wisdom
Those who seek to become the best versions of themselves will find a lot of wisdom in "*Ego Is the Enemy*".
And learning about our own ego is a necessity for those who want to move forward in life.

Ryan's Realism
I absolutely love Ryan Holiday's real take on life.
He doesn't BS you with stuff like "love, love, love, and people will love you".

Review

Ego Is The Enemy is a good book if you disregard the bellicose approach to ego in general and redirect it to the worst expressions of ego only.

In that sense, it lists several ways in which the ego can indeed be a hindrance to a happy and successful life.

Maybe it's no coincidence that Ryan's mentor was Robert Greene, author of *The 48 Laws of Power*: he is great at writing best-sellers.

I have to admit the title of the book, "*Ego Is the Enemy*", made me a bit skeptical.
I know some people truly have the mindset that you need to "destroy your own ego", and I think that's wrong: you don't need to "destroy" your ego. I think you should *use* and recruit your ego and then it can become your ally instead of your enemy (read: the power of the antifragile ego).

However, that's not what Ryan really meant.
He is not recommending anyone to "destroy" one's ego.
He simply focuses on all the ways that ego can impair us and stop us from what should always be our number one goal: being the best possible version of ourselves that we can be.

So, do I recommend "*Ego Is the Enemy*"?
Absolutely.
Ryan delivered another awesome gem to guide us on being the very best versions of ourselves.

Read the best books collection or get the book on Amazon

The Effective Executive: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Effective Executive teaches corporate executives how to get the most out of their time and effort with foundational strategies of prioritization and time management.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Eight Practices of Effective Executives
  - Effectiveness Can Be Learned
  - Time Management
  - Build on Strengths
  - Put Things First
  - One Thing At a Time
  - Demand More of Yourself
  - Focus on Contribution
  - Listen First, Speak Last
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- **Effectiveness is learned**: study it and practice and you'll become effective
- **Start by analyzing your current use of time**: how do you spend it? Make it more efficient and consolidate it
- **Focus on contribution and results, not on effort**

Notes

About the Author:
Peter Drucker was a management consultant and author who penned no less than 39 (!) books.
The Effective Executive was first published in 1966, and it's mostly aimed at executives of big corporations.

Eight Practices of Effective Executives

1. **Ask what needs to be done–** focus on what your company needs and will make the biggest impact on your goals
2. **Ask what's good for the organization –** focus on what's good for the company, not yourself or other executives
3. **Create an action plan –** action without planning can be harmful
4. **Assume responsibility for your actions –** assign responsibilities and take ownership of your action items
5. **Communicate your plan–** both up and down the chain
6. **Seek opportunities –** threats avoid problems, and opportunities increase the bottom line

7. **Make your meetings productive –** meetings are either productive or a waste of time. Make meetings effective and end them on time
8. **Go from "I": to "we" –** It doesn't matter what's essential for you too. Instead, what's necessary for the company is what matters

> **A meeting is either productive or a total waste of time**

Effectiveness Can Be Learned

A central tenet of *The Effective Executive* is that effectiveness can be learned and should be learned. Indeed, an effective executive must learn to be effective.

You need to lead by example, and you can only demand efficiency if you first learn to be efficient yourself.

Time Management

The number one priority of effectiveness is managing your time well.
To do that you must:

1. **Track your time**: to learn where you spend it
2. **Manage your time**: eliminate the unnecessary, prioritize, and outsource
3. **Consolidate your time**: put large blocks of focus time together

Simple yet great idea: Simply by tracking you will improve your effectiveness.
Why? Because you won't want to write "1h wasted on the YouTube cat videos" :)

Build on Strengths

Effective executives focus on what they can do well.
This is the idea:

> Make your strengths so strong that you weaknesses won't matter anymore.

With an important caveat: unless your weaknesses are moral and ethical, in which case you need to address them.

Similarly, effective executives focus on what their teams and the people around them can do well. They delegate based on people's strengths and delegate tasks in a way that compensates for their own weaknesses.

Put Things First

Prioritization is the essence of effectiveness. Always start with the most urgent and important task.

One Thing At a Time

Multitasking is a myth.
The effective executive focuses on the most important task first until it's done. That's the secret of those who seem to be doing so many things, Drucker says, they do them one at a time.

Learn What to Say No To

On top of prioritizing and doing things one at a time, learning what to say no to is as important as choosing what to dedicate yourself to.

For more on effectively saying no, read:

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

Demand More of Yourself

Our growth is highly dependent on the demands we place on ourselves. Effective executives demand a lot of themselves.

Focus on Contribution

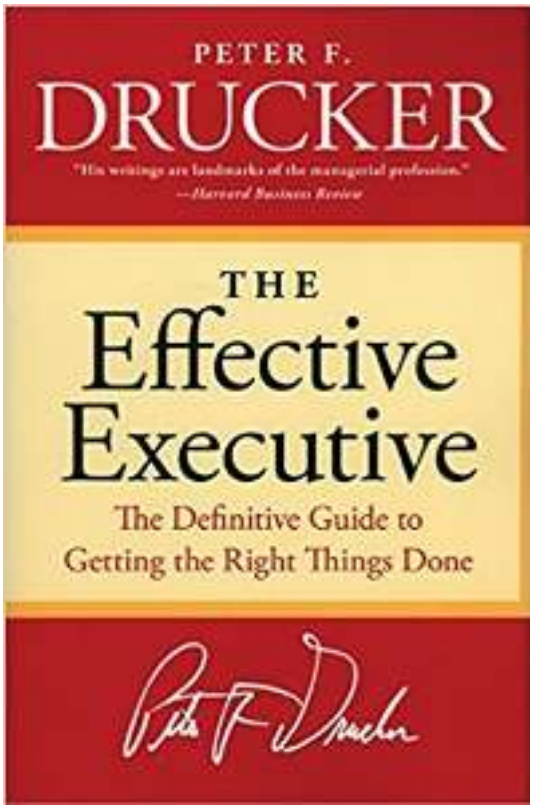
People who rise through the rank don't focus on their tasks, but they always ask themselves "what can I contribute" and "how can I help the organization move forward".

Drucker says that those who focus on the effort are always junior employees. And those who focus on contribution are top management material.

Listen First, Speak Last

Listening first is a staple of many communication manuals.
Next though, you also want to speak with authority. See:

- **How to act and talk like an executive**, and be promoted to executive roles



Real-Life Applications

Focus on Contribution
To me, the biggest and most helpful tip from *The Effective Executive* is to focus on contribution. To move away from your tasks to doing and providing whatever it is that will move the organization forward.
When you equip yourself with that mentality, you have the mentality of a CEO.

Track Your Time

I like the idea of tracking your time as a tool to increase your efficiency. It can be an effective tool to eliminate waste.

CONS

So Successful That You Will Know Much of This Stuff
If you have been reading about self-development, a lot of "*The Effective Executive*" advice won't be new to you. But it can serve as a good reminder.

Bannister Effect Myth
The Effective Executive perpetuates the self-help myth of the Bannister effect, which is more of a psychology feel-good story than reality.

PROS

Many of The Basics of Effective Time-Management Are Here
Most of the basics on how to be efficient are here.

Review

What can I say, "*The Effective Executive*" is a classic with raving reviews, but it didn't make a huge impression on me.

There is nothing wrong with it.
But I personally didn't find anything groundbreaking, either.

Even if all the tenets are true and make sense, they are not new to anyone who's been around self-development for a while.

Also, as the founder of a website on Power Moves, I'm not a huge fan of laws that look good on paper but seldom apply in reality.
For example "do what's good for the company" leaves a bit "meh" when we know there are plenty of examples of people who got successful by doing the opposite.

Also, see:

- Managing your boss effectively
- 10 Techniques for self-promotion

Read the best books collection or get the book on Amazon

Originals: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Originals by Adam Grant focuses on highly successful professionals who make originality their centerpiece. Grant seeks to distill what makes these people successful artists so that the readers can replicate the "secret formula".

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - How Originals Are Different
  - How to Hone Your Creativity
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Produce lots of work on your way to a masterpiece (instead of focusing on doing one only perfectly)
- Always question the status quo: it was created by people like you and people like you can change it
- Become an expert: don't be the guy who "does the artist" without knowing squat about anything

Full Summary

Originals are co-authored by Sheril Sandberg as well, author of *Lean In*.

There are plenty of examples in the Originals.
I find the examples to be interesting but too based on correlation to be real proofs for the theories.
Hence, I will skip most of them here.

How Originals Are Different

The author says that there are two paths to success: conformity and originality.

Originals have the same fears and the same doubts as conformists. But what differentiates originals is that they take action in the face of fears and doubts.

Why is that so?
Adam Grant makes the point that they know in their hearts that failing is better than failing to try.

How to Hone Your Creativity

Originals present a few major ideas to improve our effectiveness in our creative endeavors. These are the ones that I liked best:

- **Question the default -and reject it if you find it better-**

Questioning the default starts with curiosity, such as pondering why the status quo even exists.
Keep in mind that the rules and the status quo are set by people, and they can be improved by people -and you- as well.

A study of customer representatives found that people who used Firefox or Chrome were happier and more effective on the job.
The simple fact of rejecting the default browser meant that those people looked for better alternatives to the status quo.

My Note: This is meaningless and does not imply causation
That study says nothing about correlation or causation.

- **Protect your downside**

While you might think that entrepreneurs necessarily take a risk, you can differentiate between risk-it-all entrepreneurs and risk-averse ones.

And a study of entrepreneurs revealed that those who kept their day job instead of going broke, for example, were 33% more successful.

- **Develop domain experience – then broaden it**

Contrary to popular belief originality really thrives on experience.
Domain experience allows the originals to see patterns and improve their intuitions. The “eureka” moments are much more reliable when they come from an expert.

However, when you develop deep and continued expertise in one field only, you tend to become defensive and have difficulty changing.
And that’s why you must combat that by broadening your interests.

For example, scientists who also engaged in artistic pursuits were several times more likely to win the Nobel Prize.

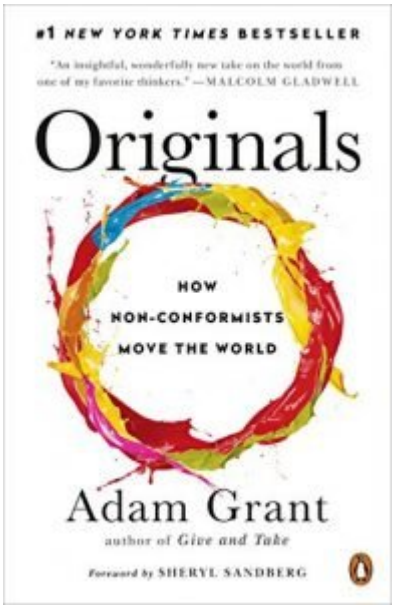
- **Become an idea machine**

In the creative arts, quantity equals quality.

Albeit most people assume that there is a trade-off between quality and quantity, it turns out that quantity is one of the most predictable paths to quality.

- **Procrastinate on purpose**

You can increase your creativity by taking a break before starting your task.
This happens because when you start a task and finish it, your mind stops thinking about it. But when you start a task and then interrupt you let it “marinate” in your mind and allow it to connect laterally with other information in your mind.



Real-Life Applications

Produce Lots of Ideas
I really loved learning the concept that to do great work you need to produce lots of creative ideas. I'd like to see some more research on it, but for now, I take it for good as it does make some sense indeed.

Get Angry *For* Something (Rather Than *At* Someone)
If you vent against someone you get angrier and your rage will accomplish little. If you get angry for something you can channel that energy into something more productive.
For example, in creative endeavors or in making it possible nothing similar will ever happen again.

CONS

Not Really Scientific
There is very little empirical evidence here.

Highly Reliant on Correlation
Originals rely heavily on correlation to explain things. For example, it says that because Nobel prize winners who engaged in both arts and science were more likely to win the Nobel prize, then that must mean that broadening your interests makes you more successful.
Or it says that Leonardo didn't finish the Mona Lisa for 15 years as an example of effective procrastination. But that is *not* proof that procrastination is effective.
That is terrible evidence. Also, read:

- Fooled by Randomness
- The Black Swan
- How to Lie With Statistics

Jumped To Conclusions With Dalio's Bridgewater
See our review of *The Fund*.

Bad Advice on Psychology of Persuasion
The author recommends that if you want to have your idea accepted you should start with the negative aspects of it. That will make you a more credible source.
But anyone who's studied psychology knows that's a gross over-generalization. What's effective is highly contextual

and depends on the type of audience you're facing.

PROS

Some Awesome Ideas
There are some great ideas here for people who are looking to improve the quality of their work.

Review

Originals is an OK but not great book that ultimately fails to either leave any significant mark.

Adam Grant, the wonderboy of academia, is really good at packaging pop-psychology books that sell.
And he knows that to do that, he must entertain his readers, rather than share actual empirical evidence.

In that sense, *Originals* is similar to Malcolm Gladwell's books.
It takes some (unpublished or obscure) social science research and seeks to apply it to daily problems in life.

That approach is interesting and piques people's curiosity.
And, if successful, it's potentially useful in the sense that it may provide a novel take or solution.
However, when the goal is to impress and entertain, truthfulness often pay the price.
Meaning, the book is a good past time, and not effective.

And being a non value-adding past-time, to me, is the ultimate sin of pop psyhcology

So, is it *Originals* the good type of pop-psycholgoy, or the bad type?

Let's say that it's neither, really.
Just an OK book that you can probably skip.

get the book on Amazon

The One Minute Manager: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The One Minute Manager (1982) is a guide for managers on how to maximize time and employees' morale in the most time-efficient way possible.
Based on the idea that managers are very busy, it recommends short and quick appraisals to keep employees happy and motivated.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Avoid End of The Spectrum Extremisms
  - Define Short and Clear Goals
  - Give Immediate Positive Feedback
  - Give Immediate Criticism
  - Let Employees Know They'll Be Reviewed
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Pick a few key goals and make them easy to measure and short to write -and to review!-
- Give quick and accurate praise every time you see a positive performance
- Give prompt and accurate criticism while making sure the employee feels valued

Full Summary

About the Authors: Kenneth Hartley Blanchard gained a Master of Arts in sociology and counseling and a Ph.D. in education administration and leadership. He also founded The Ken Blanchard Companies with his wife to provide leadership training to corporates.
Patrick Spencer Johnson was a physician and author, also famous for his children's books and for the best-selling "*Who Moved My Cheese*".

Avoid End of The Spectrum Extremisms

At the end of the spectrum, there are two types of managers who get it wrong.
They are the managers who:

- Never tell employees what they're not doing good to preserve the relationship
- Only speak to employees to correct them and tell them what they're doing wrong

Define Short and Clear Goals

Define goals with your employees that are each 250 words or less.
When you define goals so clearly and briefly you can review them in one minute or less.

You also need to keep the total number of goals manageable, or you might end up with too many goals to keep track of.
One easy way of doing just that is to focus on the 20% of tasks that will give you 80% of results (Pareto principle).

Give Immediate Positive Feedback

Most managers give feedback only when something is wrong. This creates the wrong impression and can genera unneeded resentment and anger.

Instead, give quick praise -"one minute praise"- immediately after the employee has done something well.

Employees feel that you care about their work and contribution. It encourages them to keep up the hard work.

Employees see that someone cares about their work, and the positive reinforcement pushes them to do and deliver better and better work.

Give Immediate Criticism

Similarly, as immediate feedback, if something is not done or delivered to your satisfaction, you should let the employee know right away.

Give criticism that is fair and precise as soon as you see work that is sub-par.

Ken Blanchard says that the key to giving criticism that does not poison relationships is to give negative feedback while still communicating that, overall, you still value the employee's work and contribution.

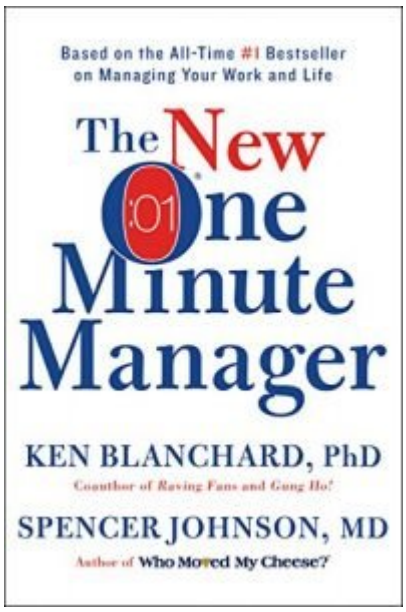
You do it by giving the criticism fair and square and then adding that they are valuable employees and they're doing well in other fields.

One-minute criticisms are effective because the employee feels that they are being reviewed fairly and timely.

Let Employees Know They'll Be Reviewed

The author recommends that before giving one-minute feedback you let the employees know they will be reviewed. if you don't, they might feel like you are spying on them.

My Note: Telling "I'm going to review you" might feel odd
I don't fully agree here. As a manager, your role *is* to look at their performance. To me, it feels much more invasive if someone would tell me "now I'm going to review you".
Much better is to go about your life and then simply notice and catch good or poor performance alike.



Real-Life Applications

- **Give Criticism Right Away**

The biggest takeaway for me is to give the criticism right away. If you don't, you are basically allowing passive aggressiveness to poison your life.
You will grow resentment while the other person has no idea why.
In the workplace, that might lead to firing someone while the person had no idea they were doing a poor job. And that's how workplaces can turn toxic without even anyone having any bad intentions.

- **Give Positive Feedback**

It's true what the author says: many do not communicate their appreciation. And that's all goodwill that is lost.

CONS

- **Letting Employees Know You'll Evaluate Them**

The authors recommend you tell people that you are going to evaluate them.

But that feels somewhat odd because the job of a manager *is* to keep oversight on people.
There should be no need to say that.

When you tell them once again you're going to evaluate them, that feels very micro-managing to me and akin to a power move. A bit as if to say "watch out, I'm watching you now".
Not a great people's strategy in my opinion.

PROS

- **Good Advice**

The advice is very very good. Easy to implement, clear, and very effective. Thumbs up, great.

- **Simple and Clear**

Many books could take a leaf out of The One Minute Manager. Clarity and simplicity make the message stronger.

Review

I was a bit put off by the tile thinking that was a marketing ploy for rehashed information.

Instead, while it might not break any new ground, it focuses on simple and yet key advice that many managers would do very well to implement.
And not only the manager, but we could also all learn and gain hugely in giving prompt and clear praise and criticism.

Also, read:

- Best career books
- Best leadership books

Get the book on Amazon

Advanced Dating Techniques: Notes & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Advanced Dating Techniques is a dating program for men by David Deangelo, with the goal to improve men's seduction knowledge and skills.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Address your limiting beliefs
- Always be flirting
- Use cocky and funny: be cocky and then take the edge off with humor

Summary

About the Author: David DeAngelo, whose real name is Eben Pagan, was an early pick-up artist and then turned dating coach and marketer during the first wave of pick-up artists entrepreneurs, which included RSD founder Tyler Durden.

Limiting Beliefs

If a belief is limiting you, you can challenge it by thinking of any experience that disproves it. Or you can amass

experiences that disprove it.

Empowering Beliefs

Consistent effort CREATES luck.

Fundamentals

Newcomers always look for the routine or the sexy trick. But there are no silver bullets. Learn and master the fundamentals instead. Focus on them before you even start thinking about the fancy tricks.

Assert Own Reality

When you assert your own reality you are the dominant one in it.
Build your own reality where others are a guest in it.

Beliefs of Successful Men

A high-quality man has the following beliefs:

- I put myself and my life first
- I don't let women gain control over me
- I deserve high-quality women
- I'm indifferent to the outcome
- I'm in control and don't let outside events control me
- I don't tolerate disrespect to myself, my time, or my property
- I'm a catch
- I judge people on character, not looks or possessions

Look at Body Language

Pay attention and learn body language because it accounts for 93% of communication

My Note: Partially true
This is only partially true. That study is one of the most misunderstood and misquoted studies ever. Also, see self-help myths and pop-psychology myths.

High Novelty Seeking

High novelty seekers get more action. Try new things, go for more experiences, and take risks.

Approach Anxiety

There are four major fears when you approach a woman:

1. Embarrassment
2. Rejection
3. Verbal confrontation
4. Physical violence

To overcome fear, imagine the worst possible outcome and laugh about it.

Also, read:

- Cold approach strategy

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

CONS

- **Lots of Theory & Little Seduction**

Deangelo talks, I quote “your DNA spontaneously comes apart and half of it goes to make sperm”. Little later “sex is a very economic game. A woman produces one egg per month”.
Deangelo even starts reading passages live, which felt way too theoretical for me.

- **Slow Rate of Speech**

Deangelo is slow and often repeats the same phrases twice. That might work to make it seem more important and deeper, but for those who are looking for efficiency, it only makes the whole product that much longer.

- **Overuse of Cocky Funny**

It felt like a few of the lines here were just one little step forward from cheesy pickup lines.

- **Light In Terms of Techniques and Details**

Whenever it comes to techniques the program feels to be lacking.

For example in approaching difficult situations, the author lists a bunch of approach types but gives little examples and little wisdom on each.
And just so you know, among those approaching types there is “entertain her with magic”, which I don’t think is very effective.

- **Didn’t Like Some Advice**

In my opinion, some of the seduction advice was not that good. For example, Deangelo shows some of his texts when she doesn’t reply or when he’s chatting online.

It seemed a bit childish to me and went nowhere.
Also the “fun” of sending the picture of an ugly guy… Definitely not my thing.
If a woman were to send me a picture of an ugly woman to look better in comparison I’d think she’s a low-quality woman or has very low self-esteem if she needs to make fun of others trying to look better.
That’s the definition of social climbing, and it’s not high-quality behavior.

Review

The Advanced Dating Technique program is a long program with interviews, questions from the audience, and lots of talking.

I haven’t taken extensive notes as I listened and little struck my fancy.

There are quite a lot of limiting beliefs, but it’s not as deep as dedicated self-transformation programs like in Tony Robbins’ *Personal Power II* for example.

And the second part on actual seduction I found it a bit watered down, not too unlike DeAngelo’s Sexual Communication.

The whole program was too slow and too discursive in my opinion for those who are looking for quick implementations of seduction techniques.

I now tried a couple of different products from DeAngelo and didn’t vibe with them.

But DeAngelo has been an early move he's been a very successful entrepreneur at what he's done. I think one can learn plenty from him.
You give it a shot and maybe you'll have a different experience.

Check out the **best dating products for guys**.

The Signal and the Noise: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Signal and the Noise is halfway between a book on statistics and a book on human psychology and biases. It helps readers understand the human mind's limitations when it comes to numbers, probabilities, and forecasting.

TPM Takeaway: Don't Trust Too Much Forecasters and 'Experts' Predicting the Future
With social media and AI slop people drown in noise, mistaking volume for value and confidence for competence. Overconfidence and sometimes the use of numbers and trends can be manipulative. You win by identifying the 20% of signals that actually move the needle.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - 1. Don't Trust Predictions of Complex Systems (Like Economic Predictions)
  - 2. Use Logic, Not Just Data
  - 3. Use Bayes' Theorem to Avoid Over-Weighing Latest Info
  - 4. Spread Your Data Sources
  - 5. Don't Try to Beat the Stock Market… Copy Lawmakers
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Takeaways

- Forecasts are difficult in many human endeavors
- More data can only add noise: in complex issues better focusing on a few reliable signals
- Watch out for those who seem too confident: they're more likely to be wrong

Notes

About the Author:
Nate Silver is an American statistician, writer, and entrepreneur. He is a Special Correspondent for ABC News and the founder and editor-in-chief of FiveThirtyEight, which he later sold to ESPN.

1. Don't Trust Predictions of Complex Systems (Like Economic Predictions)

There are so many economic indicators and so much data and historical data that we might guess economic predictions are accurate.

But they're not.

To begin with, the GDP predictions we often hear are actually part of an interval.
For example, a GDP forecast growth of 1% means that economists are 90% sure that the growth will fall between 0.5% and 1.5%.
But even interval predictions are rather poor.
Indeed from then, 1968 economics have been wrong with their interval around half the time.
Not only are they bad at predicting economic growth, but they are also overly optimistic in their own predicting

abilities.

And economics is even worse at predicting depression.
Out of 60 depressions worldwide, and a single year ahead of time, economists were only able to predict two of them.

Why Are Economists Such Poor Forecasters?

Because the economy is influenced by a staggering amount of factors, and they are all interwoven and interdependent.

Since many of these factors are interdependent, it's even difficult to define causality.

Nate Silver then turns to analyze the failure to spot the 2008 financial crisis. For more on behavioral economics also read:

- The Undoing Project

2. Use Logic, Not Just Data

Having more data might not be the solution to better forecasting.

Indeed **just adding more data might lead to false positives and show correlations where there is none**.
For example, for 30 years the Superbowl seemed to have a strong correlation with the stock market.
It reached a point where the chances of that relationship being a mere chance were 1 in 4.700.000. Yet, it was simply chance.

Indeed, having more data can often only increase the quantity of noise, which makes it even harder to spot the signal.

TPM Note: Always combine logical analysis with science
As part of our 3-pillar system

Weather Forecast Example

Long-term weather forecast is such an example.

Models with hundreds of data points failed spectacularly and models with humans who tried to pinpoint more meaningful signals and used less data fared better.

Instead simpler models that only take into account CO2 in the atmosphere and CO2 projections did much better.
One single signal is highly correlated with global warming, and that's all you need.

3. Use Bayes' Theorem to Avoid Over-Weighing Latest Info

The author introduces the Bayes Theorem to help us overcome our natural biases and embrace a more data-driven approach.

One of our *psychological biases* is that of over-weighing new information and discounting the old information we had.
The Bayes Theorem instead considers all information and puts each one of them in perspective as we keep adding more data points.

4. Spread Your Data Sources

Political scientist Philip Tetlock began to notice which type of forecasters turned out to make more accurate predictions.

He realized that those who were right most often had a different approach: they would combine many pieces of data together.
Instead, the ones who were not nearly as successful would rely on one big idea or fact.

My Note: This might seem in contrast to what was previously said
But I think it's only an apparent contradiction.
The poor forecasters were probably watching only one big signal that wasn't well correlated to their predictions.

Hedgehogs and Foxes

Hedgehogs are people who rely on one big idea or claim.
They are brasher and seem more confident. Sometimes they claim they know the truth and can look very charismatic.

Foxes instead look at all the information available and tend to look past ideologies. They change their opinions if the data changes.

Hedgehogs are much more "media-friendly" as they garner much more attention with their confidence and brashness. However, they are also much more often wrong. Indeed their chances of getting it right are just a little greater than pure chance.

Sigmund Freud is a good example of a hedgehog.

5. Don't Try to Beat the Stock Market... Copy Lawmakers

The author says that beating the stock market is difficult because it tends to be relatively efficient.

Most of the trades are done by large institutions that do indeed analyze stock fundamentals, so the link between prices and fundamentals tends to be corrected.

There is however, one group in the US that is rather good at beating the stock market. And those are the members of Congress, who tend to fare 5-10% better than the market returns.

Congressmen also have insider information through lobbyists and, of course, direct effect on the market through legislation.
A coincidence?

How to Predict a Bubble

Nate Silver still proposes a couple of ways to predict if the stock market is nearing bubble territory though:

1. **A sharp increase in stock prices** (if S&P 500 increased at double its long-term average over five years, 62% of the time it ended in a severe crash)
2. **P/E ratio** (if it's much higher than the long-term average of 15 you have a good indicator that a bubble is forming)

However, it's not irrational for many money managers to keep buying as a bubble is forming. When the market goes up and they make money, they reap big rewards.
When the market collapses, they either only lose their job or nothing. And since everyone's buying, it's unlikely they'll be singled out as the guilty ones.

Real-Life Applications

- **Watch Out For Finding Meaning in Patterns**

Someone said we humans are pattern-making machines. However, those patterns are often made up. So watch out

for not reading too much into patterns.

- **Watch Out for Charismatic & Confident Forecasters**

People who seem super confident in their own predictions are often also more likely to be wrong. I repeat: overconfident people are more often wrong.

CONS

Longish
The Signal and the Noise could have been briefer.

Repetitive
Lots of concepts repeat and could have been combined.

Review

"*The Signal and the Noise*" may be one of the best books on statistics and forecasting available for the general public.

It sits at the convergence of numbers and psychology, and reminded a bit of Nassim Taleb's work.

Read the best books collection

Hooked: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Hooked studies “addictive products” and explains what entrepreneurs and marketers can do to make their own products addictive.

TPM Strategic Audit: Win The Dopamine Arms Race
Hooked is a dual-use manual for **Social Engineering**. For the entrepreneur, it provides the ‘Hook Model’—the industry standard and goal for building high-retention, habit-forming products. For the high-agency man, it’s a **Vulnerability Assessment and self-defense tool,** exposing the psychological triggers that hijack your attention and monetize your loss of productiviy. Wisen up and don’t let them win. **Reclaim your focus.**

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - How Habits Form
  - The Most Successful Products Form Habits
  - The Hook Stages
  - Two Questions for Ethical Concerns
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Get other users to provide the first triggers for you: you get free ads and network effect
- Make the first action to engage with your product as simple and quick as possible
- To make addictive products give variable rewards

Full Summary

About the Author:
Nir Eyal earned an MBA at Stanford University and founded an advertising business with some of his fellow students placing advertisements on Facebook. Eyal grew interested in psychology and behavioral engineering, and “*Hooked*” is the result of his research.

How Habits Form

Habits form through repetition, and the more you do them, the more automated they become.

Indeed repeated action forms pathways in our brains. And those pathways will stay there even when we manage to stop a habit.

That’s why, sadly, most alcoholics will start drinking again within one year of finishing a detox program.

The Most Successful Products Form Habits

Products that become habits in their users have a marked advantage over the competition.

Users use them more often and stick for the long term. Sometimes forever.
Even if it's not always good for the users, the habit-forming products will keep exercising a strong pull over the users that will make it hard for the user to ditch.

Habit-forming products also have high entry barriers.
For a new product to take its users, it must be *much* better.
And sometimes even when they are markedly better it's still not enough.

Take the QWERTY keyboard, for example. It is by far not the best, but no other keyboard layout can usurp QWERTY's stronghold among its users because that would mean getting used to a new layout, and it's not going to happen any time soon.

The Hook Stages

Nir Eyal says that for a product to hook its users, it needs to go through four stages:

1. **Trigger**: the event that makes us try the product (initially it's external, then it becomes external)
2. **Action**: what do we need to do to use the product
3. **Reward**: deliver pleasure
4. **Investment**: what we give in exchange for pleasure (ie.: money, time, information)

1. Triggers

The trigger initially is external because we don't know about the product.

But over time the pleasure of the reward builds internal mental triggers.

The most frequent internal triggers are emotions, and most often negative ones. Such as boredom, loneliness, confusion, or fear.

However, the reward is often able to give a positive jolt (often a dopamine hit).

Once we get that dopamine a few times we form pleasure links between a certain action and a reward we get.
Over time we will automatically repeat the cycle over and over by ourselves.
When that happens, we're hooked.

The more popular and catchy a product becomes, the more the trigger can be started by other users. Social networks, for example, add people thanks to the invitation from already existing users.
Free advertisement.

2. Action

To take action an individual must be sufficiently motivated and able to take action.

To be effective a trigger must offer a simple choice of action. The simpler the action to perform, the lower the entry barrier, and the more people will perform the needed action.

3. Rewards

What makes people really hooked is the itch for the reward. The itch is more important than the reward itself.

And the best way to hook people and keep that itch strong is with unpredictable rewards.

A reward which is always present, and always the same, grows us bored.
It's the anticipation and excitement of unpredictable rewards that hooks us.

Think of Facebook for example. You check it looking if there is a red notification of a like or a message. But it's not always there, and that's one of the key variables that keep us going back for more.

It's similar to when we scroll our feed. Lots of time is just boring stuff. But sometimes we'll find something awesome that makes us laugh, excites, or even bother us or saddens us.

4. Investment

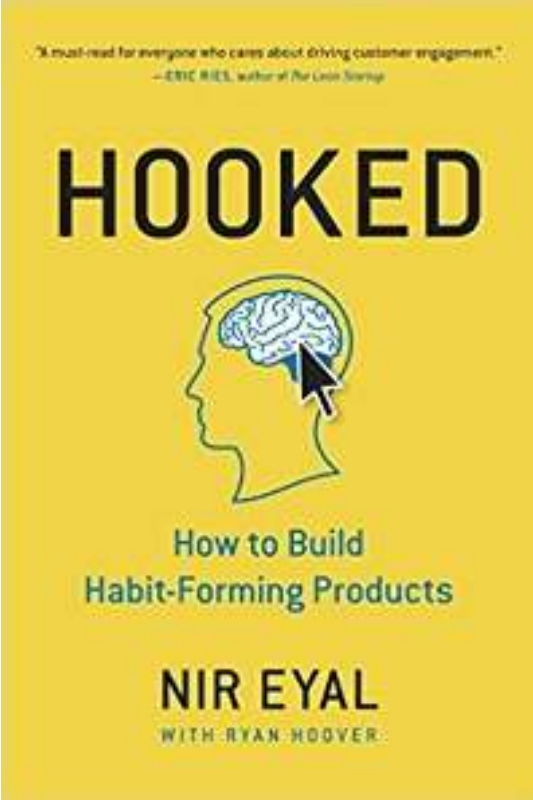
When we invest in something we feel it's more valuable.

And investment also works to justify in our mind that what we invest in must be worth it.
So if we've done something many times we tell ourselves that it must be valuable.

Two Questions for Ethical Concerns

Producing and working on products that get people hooked can raise some ethical questions.
Nir Eyal proposes two questions to test if your habit-forming concept is ethical or not:

1. Does your product enhance people's lives?
2. Would you use the product yourself?



Real-Life Applications

- **If You Wanna Get Stuff Done: Don't Get Hooked**

If you're a high achiever who wants to be productive and get things done, you must control your hooking machine. Get un-hooked at unproductive stuff and get hooked on what drives you towards your goals.

CONS

- **I wasn't convinced about the investment stage**

I wasn't convinced by the fourth stage of forming habits. So people get hooked to, say, Facebook because they "invest" scrolling on their feed?

It doesn't seem to make much sense to me.

I think that if you prod people for answers, they are quite honest that scrolling on their Facebook feed is pretty much useless.
It's just that they can't help it.

PROS

Good Overview of How Apps & Social Networks Work
Hooked is a good book to understand how some apps and most social media hook people in.

Short and To The Point
Little time and space waste. I appreciate that.

Review

Hooked is an OK book on what makes certain products addictive.

While it's a valuable overview, more psychologically-informed readers may not find much new ground broken. The author also writes more from an entrepreneur perspective rather than an expert on neurobiology, and I wished for more practical examples and guides, including in how to stop being hooked.

Read the **best psychology books**

Sam Walton's Made in America: A Strategic Review of Entrepreneurial Power & Mindset

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Sam Walton: Made In America is the autobiographical account of the man behind the biggest retail chain ever built. Sam Walton, an ordinary hard-working American, a frugal individual, and a man with a simple mission: serving his customers as best as he can.

Contents

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- Full Summary
  - The Humble Beginnings
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  - Put Customers First
  - Putting Small Business Out of Business?
  - Price Wars
  - Employees' (Mis)Treatment
  - Invest, Invest, Invest
  - Walton's Mistake: Walmart's Power Moves
- Sam Walton Personality
- Real-Life Applications
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Bullet Summary

- Invest in your future: be willing to make no money today for a bigger tomorrow
- Continuous improvement: look what others are doing well
- Experiment: try out new ideas, you rarely can know in advance what will work

Full Summary

About the Author:
Sam Walton was an American businessman and entrepreneur. He is best known for founding the retailer Walmart Wal-Mart grew to be the world's largest corporation by revenue and the biggest private employer in the world.

The Humble Beginnings

Sam Walton was born in 1918 in a lower-class family. His parents didn't have much but always took proper care of him.

His father was a hard-working man, but he never managed to start his business because, out of pride, he refused to take out a loan.

Lesson learned: there is nothing wrong to take a loan if it helps you move forward toward your goals.

The Hard Work

At a young age, Sam Walton helped his mother in the milk business. He would milk the cow and then go out and sell the bottled milk.
In 7th grade, he took his first official job delivering papers in the neighborhood.

Walton attended college and never stopped working to finance his studies.
Indeed he even managed to expand. His papers delivery business became a small business where he hired new delivery men.

Lessons learned:

1. Hard work pays off
2. You can make a good income as long as you provide value.

Walton's First Shop

In 1945 Sam Walton opened his first discount shop.
He was doing well, but he was always looking for ways to do better.

And he took ideas from all over the place. *Especially* from his competitors.

Back then checkouts used to be scattered around the store. But when Sam saw a store that only placed two checkouts at the front, he loved the radical idea.
He immediately did the same and saved money reducing the number of cashiers. And he made it more efficient.

When visiting a supplier Walton noticed the staff huddling together and cheering at the beginning of a workday. He loved the idea and immediately did the same in his new flagship store.
The "Walmart cheer" was born.

1962: The First Walmart

Walton was a very successful man in retail.

But it was relatively late, in 1962 that he introduced Walmart. In one of his usual journeys observing competitors and other retailers, he became convinced that discount stores were the future.

In a way, Walmart was another experiment for Sam. Walmart indeed was ugly to start with, but the question for Walton was: would shoppers shop strictly because of the lower prices?
It turned out, they would.

Put Customers First

Walton always wondered what he could do to make shopping better and easier for customers.

When he realized that farm families drove into town on Saturday to stock up he analyzed their behavior. They would need to go to different stores that were small and specialized.
They'd need to find parking each time, and all stores would close early.

He answered with bigger, one-stop stores, long opening hours, and free and abundant parking.

Lower prices and a better shopping experience was the best way to attract customers in Sam's mind, and he never stopped looking for ways to improve on both.

Putting Small Business Out of Business?

Sam Walton's stores were so successful that every time he would open a new one in a new town, local smaller shops would go out of business.

That drew a lot of criticism from Walmart.
But Walton had a different philosophy: if customers shopped at Walmart it was because Walmart gave people a better experience.

Walton indeed wasn't afraid of other big retailers: he thought that competition improved their acumen and made Walmart better.

The Big Discounts

It was in trying to lure customers away from a local Kmart that Walmart came up with its first big discount tactic. The local manager wanted to make a big promotion on laundry detergent but to get the prices down he needed to order 3.500 cases.

At this point, Walton thought that was crazy.
But he finally got around that the idea could have worked and went ahead with it.

And big orders for lower prices have since become Walmart's modus operandi.

Lesson Learned: lower your prices to sell more and you still come out with a bigger profit.

Price Wars

In Little Rock, a new Kmart opened and tried to lure customers away from Walmart, again, with low prices.

Walton gave the order that everything in Walmart has to be as cheap or cheaper than the Kmart's items.
During the ensuing price, toothpaste reached an all-time low of 6 cents when Kmart finally gave up.

Lesson learned: every time a new competitor moved into town Walmart had to push its prices as low as possible.

Employees' (Mis)Treatment

Walton always put customers first.

But **initially, he didn't put *employees* first**.

One day in 1955 a store manager called Sam to say he'd raised his stores' employees' wages from 50 cents to 75 cents. These were pitiful wages even back then -less than 5 dollars in 2018 terms-. But Sam was unmoved. He told the store manager to immediately cancel the raise and restore the lower wages because he hadn't hit his goals yet.

However, Walton changed their idea after a trip to England in 1971.
There he saw a store that would list its employees as "associates", and he began thinking that it'd be wonderful if Walmart could consider employees as associates instead of employees to be managed.

He also grasped here a fundamental truth: if he treated his employees well, they'd treat his customers well.

Upon his return to America, he decided then to call his employees associates and he started a cash and stock sharing so that all employees could take part in Walmart's success.

Invest, Invest, Invest

Walton was making good profits with Walmart, but he didn't let his money grow.

Or, God forbid, enjoy a lavish lifestyle.

Instead, Walton used the proceed of his stores to open up new stores.

During the first 8 years, Walmart was considered by some a failure because it was financially treading water. Instead, it was expanding and leveraging its earning power.

Walton's Mistake: Walmart's Power Moves

Usually defining moments for companies happen in their early stage.

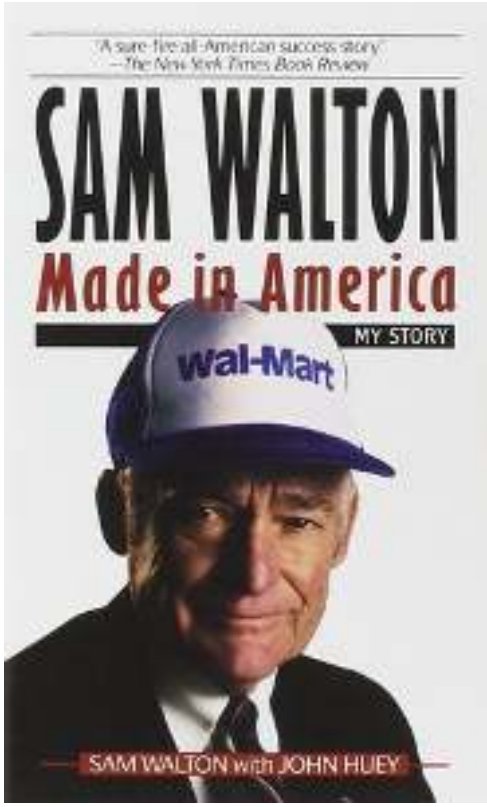
Instead, it happened much later for Walmart. In 1974 the company was doing so well that Walton decided he could enjoy an early retirement.

He promoted Mayer, one of his two vice president executives to CEO, and stepped aside.
But he soon realized that the company split in two: one favoring Mayer and the other side favoring the other VP.

Two years later the internal faction was becoming so big that Sam met with Mayer to claim his CEO job back.
But Mayer left together with *dozens* of top-level managers who supported him.

Walmart's stock prices fell so low that Walton worried whether he'd be able to even salvage the problem.
But he quickly hired new managers and convinced David Glass, an old friend, to replace Mayer.

David Glass turned out to be awesome in the post and a major help in rescuing Walmart and pushing it to even higher heights.
He was indeed later nominated CEO of Walmart.



Sam Walton Personality

1. **Frugality**: Sam lived in a normal middle-class family. No sportscars, no big mansion
2. **Continuous improvemen**t: Sam always looked for ways to do better. He always visited other shops pondering what he could improve for Walmart
3. **Start & fix along the way**: Walton didn't start with beautiful stores. The first Walmart was ugly. But he knew he could fix that later
4. **Prioritize**: Sam was happy to start with very ugly stores because he went by priorities. Beauty wasn't the top

priority. Getting wares cheaply was

5. **Try new things**: Walton wasn't afraid of trying new crazy things to see if they would work
6. **Think long term**: like Jeff Bezos, Walton was happy to enjoy little earnings to invest in the future
7. **Life is unfair**: early on a major setback showed Walton that life is unfair

Real-Life Applications

- **Look What The Competition is Doing Right**

This is the biggest takeaway for me.
Most people put their egos ahead and look at the competition to gloat about what they're doing better.
Instead, Walton would strictly look at competitors to see what they were doing well.

- **Watch Out for Power Struggle**

When Sam promoted one of his VP as CEO a power struggle erupted.
Always watch out when you need to promote one person out of a small pool of candidates as people will naturally be jealous.
Learn power dynamics and office politics.

- **Watch Out When You Demote Powerful People**

Taking the job away from Mayer when he was the CEO was a risky move. Nobody takes demotions from a power position lightly.
Always watch out for who you give power to -and how you can take that power away in the most efficient way possible-.

CONS

- **Autobiographies Have Obvious Limitations**

As an autobiography, you have to keep in mind that Walton might have a tendency to embellish his own story.
Indeed I think he would have come across even better if he had put some more third-party criticism.

- **Caring for Associates?**

Honestly, at times all the words of affection and caring for the "associates", or employees, sound a bit empty marketing speak.
Of course, Sam Walton might have really believed in what he said, but that stands a bit in the way of Walmart being one of the richest corporations and one of the lowest-paying employers in America.

Also, read:

- Corporate manipulations

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees (W/ Examples)

PROS

- **Treasure Trove of Mindsets of Success**

In today's tech world it would be easy to discount *Sam Walton: Made in America* as yesterday's success story.
Instead, it's jam-packed with mindsets of success. It might be one of the biographies in which I've learned the most

so far.

Review

Sam Walton: Made in America was such a great read.

It would be easy to discount this book as irrelevant for many for the younger generation, or for many tech entrepreneurs.

After all, what's got a retailer to teach?

Well, it turns out: a lot.
The mindsets are the same whether you're in tech, retail, or arts.

And this is probably the biography I have enjoyed and learned the most from so far.

I am starting to see a trend among those who build multi-billion dollar companies.
The trends I'm seeing are:

- Life for the company: always at work, only live for work
- Frugality
- Investment in the future at the cost of fewer earnings today
- Always be learning
- Experiment with new ideas
- Money is *not* the sole or prime motivator

Great learning stuff.
Even though I'm not a big fan of a life *only* for work, I learned hugely from this book. I can only recommend Sam Walton: *Made in America.*

Read the best books collection or **get the book on Amazon**

Winning: Jack Welch's Approach to Leading High-Agency Businesses (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Winning* author and famed General Electric CEO, Jack Welch teaches all he knows about running a record-breaking corporation. Welch shares how to be a great people leader, and how to establish a corporate culture that encourages innovation and team spirit.

TPM Note: Welch is the prototype of a successful, high-agency CEO
Jack Welch engineered a corporate ecosystem designed to aggressively filter for excellence and terminate mediocrity. This is the blueprint for Aggressive Differentiation—the process of identifying, rewarding, and retaining "A-Players" while treating "C-Players" as a tax on performance that must be eliminated.

Contents

- Main Takeaways
- Notes
  - Foster Culture of Candor
  - The 20-70-10 Approach to Human Resources
  - Hire Well, Fire Fair
  - How to Be a Leader
  - Concrete Mission and Values
  - Strategy is Following Through Your "Aha Moments"
  - How to Change
  - Dealing With a Bad Boss
- Jack Welch Criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Main Takeaways

- Foster a culture where people feel free to contribute their ideas and speak their mind
- Organizations have top, bottom, and average performers: know who stands where and treat them accordingly
- Make your mission concrete and measurable; embody and enforce the values to accomplish your mission

Notes

About the Author:
Jack Welch is a legendary former CEO of General Electric (GE). In his 20 years tenure from 1981 to 2001, he increased GE's evaluation by 4.000%.
And when he left the company he received a severance package of 417 million, a record-breaking payment.

Foster Culture of Candor

Jack Welch says that most of us have a culture of telling small lies for a quieter life.

For example, we don't tell our friend he's getting too chubby, or we wouldn't say that our mother's cooking was terrible.

But that culture of small lies for a quieter living can be destructive in an organization.
An organization should have a culture of free talking.

Unluckily that's not the case for most businesses. In most businesses, people hold back and don't voice their opinions and ideas.
And that's an immense waste of brainpower.

My Note: Ray Dalio approves
This principle is similar to the culture of "radical open-mindedness" from Ray Dalio's Principles and to "Radical Candor" by Kim Scott.
Jack Welch says that it's the boss who must talk about candor, demonstrate it himself first, and reward it.
He did so by instituting what came to be called "workout" sessions.

Work-Outs

GE would organize groups of 30 to 100 employees to discuss opportunities and better ways of doing things.
The key? They were anonymous employee meetings without bosses.

Bosses would only show up in the beginning and promise that they would give an immediate answer, on the spot, to 75% of the recommendations and ideas.
And they would resolve the remaining 25% within a month.

Basically, GE would force bosses to address the proposals of their employees and allow employees to speak without fear of retaliation.

Work-outs sessions led to an explosion of productivity, says Welch.

> **Don't just pay for hands when you can also have brains – for free**

The 20-70-10 Approach to Human Resources

Jack Welch says that people management is one of the most important tasks of any manager and organization.

The "20-70-10" rule refers to percentages of the total workforce, and it means that:

- **20% = performers**, give them recognition, training, and compensation
- **10% = poor performers** and should go
- **70% = average**, you should strive to keep them motivated and lift them into the 20%

Welch encourages managers to differentiate employees according to the 20-70-10 rule and manage them accordingly.
At GE, managers actually had to rank employees on the 70-20-10 scale. "Managing accordingly" means **promoting and rewarding the top 20% and firing the bottom 10%**.

Develop A Rigorous Evaluation System

Jack Welch says it's paramount that evaluations are not done subjectively and on an ad-personal basis.
You must establish an objective evaluation system and rate your employees against it.

Sure, coming up with an evaluation system won't be easy, but that's not an excuse not to do it.

Flat Organizational Chart

Everyone should know fully well who they report to and what their responsibilities are.

But also go for as flat an organizational chart as you can afford.
Welch says that the more layers, the more vices, bureaucracy, and issues you will have.

Hire Well, Fire Fair

There is an abundance of good people around, but you must make sure you're able to spot them.

Welch says that the very first test is making sure that candidates possess the following three traits:

1. **Integrity**: they must be candid, honest, and reputable
2. **Intelligence**: doesn't mean Ivy League, but you want a smart workforce
3. **Maturity**: ability to cope with failure, and that mix of confidence and humility that comes from experience

Once you make sure a candidate possesses the three traits above, you should hire people who are positive and optimistic. People who are excited about working for you and can lift people's moods up.

I found it particularly interesting that Welch adds more crucial traits for senior management hires. One is "authenticity", or being who they are without wearing a mask. And the other is "heavy-duty resilience".

Heavy-duty resilience means that someone has been knocked down and beaten up badly, but bounced back to run even harder.

Institutionalized firing

Welch has been criticized for instilling a very competitive culture.

When every year the bottom 10% of performers are let go, there is naturally some fear in some employees.

But Welch says that firing staff instead should be done on the basis of performance evaluation systems. With a fair and objective evaluation system, it should come as no surprise to anyone that someone is being let go.

How to Be a Leader

Winning by Jack Welch has very good recommendations on how to be a good leader.
Here are some that I particularly liked:

- **Develop people**: leadership is about developing people
- **Exude contagious positive energy**: be a shining beacon of inspiration, help people stay optimistic and confident
- **Gain people's trust**: give credit, act fairly and honestly
- **Make the tough call**: sometimes leadership means making tough and unpopular calls. Don't shy away: you're not a politician up for re-election
- **Rock the boat**: it's your duty to chase possible issues and to push people to action
- **Celebrate**: make a big deal out of wins and achievements, give credit, and celebrate

Also, read:

- 13 laws of leadership, based on sound social-psychology

Concrete Mission and Values

The mission statement is your goal, and the values refer to how you plan on achieving your goals.

Many companies have vague missions and values that mean nothing, while Welch says both need to be crystal clear.

For example, GE's mission was to be number one or two in every business they operate in. That's clear, descriptive, and measurable.
Values need to reinforce your mission and make it possible you will achieve it.
In GE two of them were: "be intolerant of bureaucracy" and "see change for the growth opportunity it brings".

To show that you truly value your values, reward people who live by them, and punish those who don't. People will respect that you are serious about them and you will attract and retain people who live your values, instituting a self-reinforcing cycle.

Above all, **make sure your leaders live and breathe the vision**.

Strategy is Following Through Your "Aha Moments"

Welch says that your strategy is not a complex academic matter or rocket science.
It's all about coming up with "aha moments" and following through them with the right people.

Coming up with aha moments is the senior management's responsibility. The best way to come up with the strategy is to gather the senior management and analyze the market, the competitors, and the current trend.

Once you decide on a course of action, it's all about putting the right people behind you to make it happen.
For example, you need dreamers and visionaries for innovation and you need efficiency experts to cut costs.

In sum:

1. Look for "aha moments"
2. Staff the best people to realize your "aha moments"
3. Relentlessly chase the execution of your "aha moments"

Always Look For Best Practices

To always keep improving Welch recommends you are always on the lookout for best practices whenever you can spot them.
And even when you implement them, make it the company's religion to always keep working and tweaking them.

How to Change

Sometimes change is easy, like in death or glory cases.

But most of the time, most people naturally resist change.
To make change easier you should make a business case of why change is necessary or why it makes sense to do it now. Then communicate it relentlessly.

You could still have people resist change, and that's something you can't accept because resistance can kill your efforts.
As an employee, **resisting change is one of the biggest political mistakes you can make**. As a manager, says Welch, you must get rid of the people who resist change as early as possible.

Put in charge of the change those who are enthusiastic about the idea and promote and hire the people who will get behind them.

In sum:

1. Make sure everyone knows why you're changing
2. Hire, promote, and put in charge those who are excited about the change
3. Get rid of those who resist change

4. Always look and see new opportunities for change

Dealing With a Bad Boss

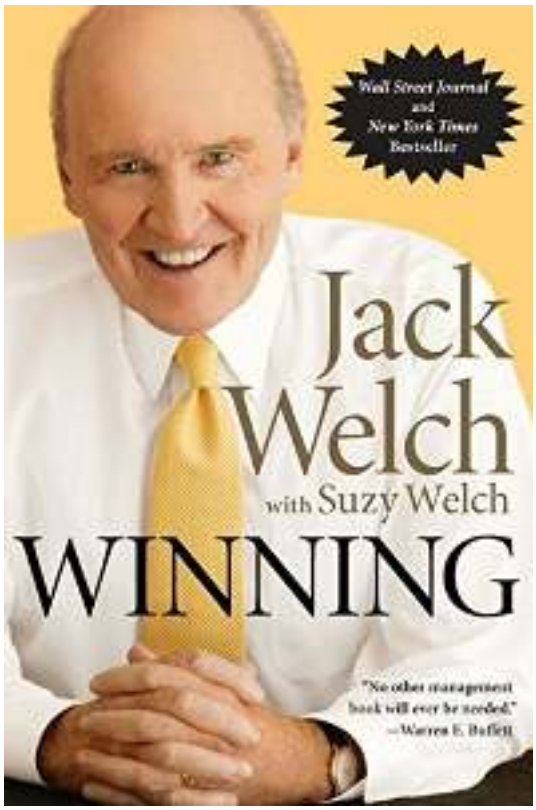
First of all, Welch recommends you ask yourself if the problem is you or the boss.
Ask yourself if your boss is a jerk only with you, or with everyone else.

I was surprised to read Welch saying that **9 times out of 10, sitting with your boss to talk about your issue will only hurt you**.
He is right indeed, and when I read that part my respect for Welch went up: this guy doesn't dole platitudes and says it how it is.

Lastly, ask yourself if the boss will be around for the foreseeable future. If he is, it might be good for you to change jobs.
But if you decide to stay, then stop complaining: you are there by choice.

Also, read:

- **How to manage your boss for your own career advancement**
- Dealing with a bad boss
- What to do when a boss yells at you



Jack Welch Criticism

Jack Welch has been a controversial CEO.
In my opinion, some criticism stems fomr Welch's polarizing figure:

1. Direct and opinionated
2. Staunch free-market supporter
3. Staunch Republican, sometimes

Couple that with his “hack and slash” approach to making corporations lean, and you are bound to have a controversial leader.

Anyway, here are a few criticisms that have been leveled at Jack Welch:

John Maxwell in *21 Irrefutable Rules of Leadership* says that the true measure of a leader is how well the organization fares after the leader has departed.

Welch seemed to embrace that rule when he said that his work should be evaluated 20 years after he left GE. But so far GE hasn’t been doing that well.

Much of GE’s growth came from its involvement in financial services, and that, of course, didn’t fare well during the financial crisis.

Simon Sinek in *Leaders Eat Last* makes the case that leaders should care about employees, and he’s very critical of Welch.
First of all, he puts Welch’s performance in perspective. He says that during the 20 years of Welch’s tenure, the whole S&P 500 enjoyed a huge bull market, and all companies grew a lot.
Second, Sinek points out, Welch fostered a culture focused on short-term gains to appease Wall Street. He would push employees for continuous earning growth, and that pushed employees to cut corners.
That’s a culture very effective for short-term gains, but a recipe for long-term disaster.

Real-Life Applications

- **Fire Publicly When You Need to Send a Message**

Jack Welch says that when someone embroils you in a scandal because of unethical behavior you want to send a strong message to say that type of behavior is unacceptable. Instead of letting them go for “personal reasons” you should fire them publicly.

- **Don’t Set Goals At The Beginning of The Year: You Don’t Have Enough Information Yet**

Don’t set growth goals in stone at the beginning of the year.
You want to measure results compared to your market and the competition -stretch goals-, and you want to leave budget for possible opportunities that arise along the way.
You can use the same principle for your personal goals: my goals indeed are in constant motion.

- **Assume the Crisis is Worse Than it Seems**

Skip the denial phase and imagine the crisis is worse than what you imagine. That way you make sure you will tackle it appropriately. You want to expose and define the problem before anyone else does.

- **Try Different Jobs to Find One You Like**

Doing what you like has a huge positive impact on your life.
Think of what matters to you, then try a few jobs you think might fit. Keep iterating until you’re happy with what you found.

CONS

- **Money Is The Main Motivation?**

Winning seems to consider money as the main driver to reward and motivate people. While money is important, many people -most?- are actually not primarily motivated by money.
You can read more in *Drive* by Daniel Pink.

- **Most Suited For Big Corporations**

This is not necessarily a con, but just to make you aware: *Winning* is mostly tailored to winning in big corporations. The rules can be different in start-ups and one-man shows.

PROS

- **Great Wisdom on Leadership**

There is more wisdom on leadership in *Winning* by Jack Welch than in most books I have read on leadership.

- **Awesome How-To Guide**

Winning is not just filled with lots of wisdom, but it also provides a how-to guide for managing results.
And it's not just useful to CEOs, but also for people who want to understand what they need to do and provide to move up the corporate ladder of effective organizations.

- **Great Wisdom on Politics & Career Strategies**

Jack Welch is not one to hide behind political correctness.
He tells it how it is, and that makes a great book to understand office politics, career strategies, and how to become an executive.

Review

Winning is a fantastic book on agentic, goal-oriented management for men who want to be honorable, but also put the mission first.

Warren Buffett says that *Winning* is the only management book you'll need.

I don't particularly vibe with Welch's "up or out" policy, I can see a point in which heavy turnover hampers team cohesiveness. And I can see how it might start poisoning the work environment with fear and individualism (VS team-spirit).
But I can see why Buffett lauded *Winning* so lavishly.

I thoroughly enjoyed Winning and found much, much wisdom in it.
This book is really, really good.

If you want to build a business, if you want to be a leader, or if you are looking to learn more about what you must do to rise through the ranks, I can only recommend this book.

Check the **best career books**

First Things First: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 September 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Author Stephen Covey in *First Thing First* invites readers to reflect on what's important for them, and then prioritize accordingly based on what will help them reach their goals.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Find Out Your Values
  - Decide What's Important to You
  - Set Goals Congruent With Your Values
  - Differentiate Urgent VS Important
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Decide what your values and principles are: that will be your "moral compass"
- Find out what is important for you, the objectives you want to achieve in life
- Draft your goals based on your moral compass and your objectives
- Always prioritize and put first what's important to you

Full Summary

About the Author: Stephen Covey, the author of First Things First, is also the author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,* which is one of the best-selling books ever in the self-help genre.

Find Out Your Values

Putting first things first means executing not based on "general priorities" or on "what comes first".

But it means taking the time to think through what your values and principles are.
That's your internal compass.
And you should always use your internal compass when considering your tasks.

Decide What's Important to You

To decide what's important for you Covey invites the readers to picture the future they want.

From that future, you would like to have, walk backward and outline the steps you need to take today to reach your destination.

Once you know what steps you need to take today, you also know what's important to execute.

Set Goals Congruent With Your Values

Once you know what's important to you and what your values are, you can set your goals.

You want to set your goals in a way that you will achieve what matters to you while still staying true to your values.

To Covey, that makes the difference between goals that are reached and leave you unhappy versus reaching your goals while you are fulfilled and satisfied.

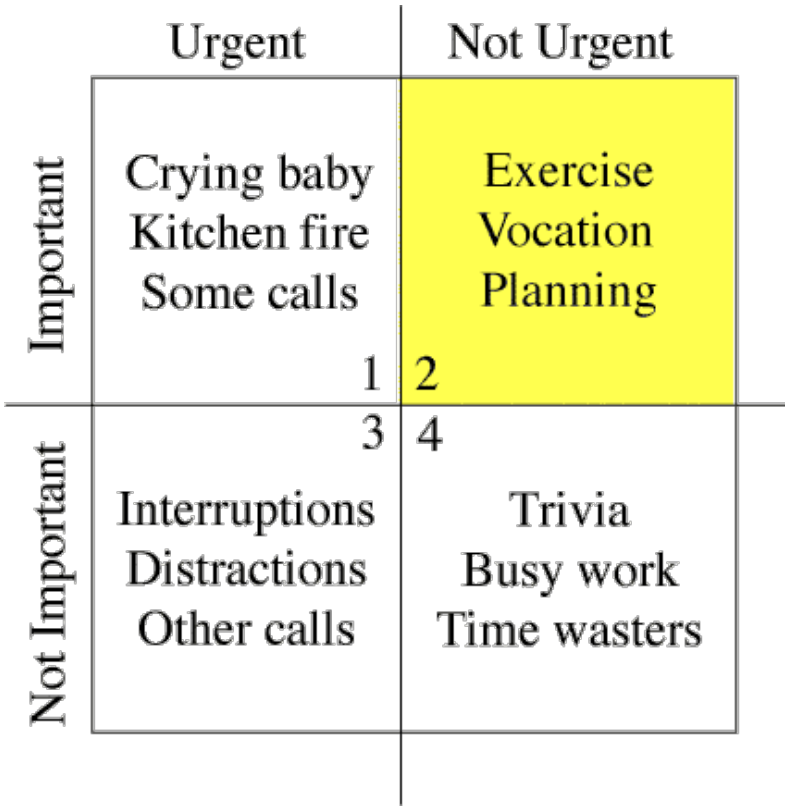
Differentiate Urgent VS Important

Once you know your goals, you will be able to escape the mistake that most people do.

Covey says that most people do first what they think is important and urgent.

However, urgent and important are often *not* the same thing.

And if forced to choose between doing what's urgent and what's important, most people pick urgent.
People feel important and in demand, if they are rushing from one thing to another, and tackling the urgent novelty we get an adrenaline rush which makes us feel energized and alive.

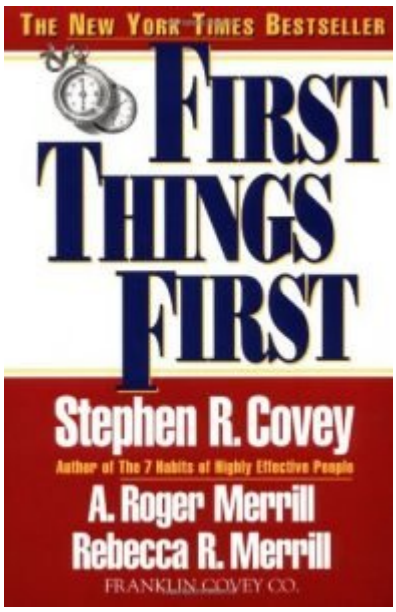


Why You Should Pick Important

Covey makes the case that we should pick important over urgent more often.

Why?
Because **important tasks are what lead to long-lasting happiness**.

Especially when urgent is not also important and would have little consequences, we might all gain turning them down more often.



Real-Life Applications

- **Don't Compartmentalize Your Life**

I agree with the idea of not seeing your life as independent silos of "work", "family", "friends", "hobbies" or whatever else you have.
Indeed I believe that if you need to make different compartments, you're probably not happy with some of them.

CONS

- **Unnecessarily Long**

The principle and idea behind First Things First are crucial. However, it could have been delivered in a much shorter format.

- **Somewhat Bland**

While the concepts of First Things First are good, they are also rather obvious if you have been reading about self-development for a while.

- **Contrived Prose**

The writing is often unnecessarily complex and contrived. And sometimes just plain poor.

- **Sometimes Proselytizing**

I had the feeling "*First Things First*" indirectly tried to inculcate certain goals and ethics into the readers.
An example of "important tasks" is time with the family, for example, as if that were important to everyone. And it recommends valuing interdependence and cooperation instead of independence and competition.
Yeah, I agree for great relationships, that's true. But it's not a good career strategy, so it depends.

PROS

- **Simple Yet Deep Wisdom**

The idea behind First Things First has the potential of improving many men's lives.

Review

Peter Drucker, an author of *The Effective Executive*, first came up with the sentence "*first things first*".
Stephen Covey takes that same idea and builds a whole philosophy around it.

I find that First Things First is especially useful to all those people who have not taken the time yet to reflect on what's important to them.
If you haven't done it yet, this is an absolute must and it will be a life-changer.

And for all the others who have taken the time to think about what's important for them, it serves as a powerful reminder.

However, as powerful as the concept is, I find the book too long and verbose.

Check the **best books collection** or **get First Things First on Amazon**

Good to Great: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Good to Great,* author Jim Collins investigates and explains the secret sauces that make great companies great.

The Strategic Verdict: Great on institutional excellence but naive for individual success
While the "Hedgehog Concept" is a potent tool for success, the book's "Level 5 Leadership" theory can confound quietness for competence, correlation for causation, and the company's (possible) benefits with individual success.
Core Value: 7.0/10 (Essential for understanding corporate "idealism"). **Strategic Utility:** High for **Focus**; Low for **Power Dynamics**.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Hedgehog Tactic: Do One Great Thing, Over and Over
  - The Hedgehog Realization
  - Poor Companies Try Without Sticking
  - New Tech Is a Means to An End
  - Level 5 Leaders: Great Leaders = Great Companies
  - Hiring Great People
  - Stay Realistically Optimistic
  - Foster A Culture of Openness
  - Rigorous Self-Discipline
  - 3 Levels of Discipline
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Overview

- Find one thing you can do better than anyone else and stick to it
- Focus on hiring and keeping the best people
- Foster a culture where people feel free to speak their minds and where problems are addressed head-on

Notes

About the Author:
Jim Collins is an American researcher, author, speaker, and consultant. He earned his bachelor's in Mathematical Sciences at Stanford, worked a year and a half for McKinsey, and then return to Stanford to get an MBA.
Colling focuses on business management, business excellence, and business sustainable growth.

Methodology of Research

With *Good to Great* Collins wants to explain how to join the ranks of the elite companies.

To do so he examined US public companies and divided them into three groups. The main differentiator between each group was their stock market returns:

- **Good to great companies**: companies that went from the market average return to 3 times or greater the market returns
- **Direct comparison companies**: companies that stayed "just good" despite having the same shot at greatness
- **Unsustained comparison companies**: companies that briefly became but slid back to mediocrity

Let's see how they did it:

Hedgehog Tactic: Do One Great Thing, Over and Over

Think of the continuous competition of the hedgehog versus a fox.

A fox tries many different tactics to eat the critter, but the hedgehog always has the same powerful answer: curl up in a spikey ball.
And he wins over and over.
He can win with such high reliability because he has found one effective method of defense that he is so good at.
He doesn't need anything else, he simply repeats what he's great at.

And that's what companies that go from good to great do.
Companies that go from good to great have found the one thing they can excel at.
Here is what they ask themselves:

- What will we be passionate about?
- What will we be the best in the world at?
- What is one key performance indicator we should concentrate on?

The Hedgehog Realization

The title is actually incorrect.

It's because, Jim Collins explains, companies didn't usually wake up one day and said: "this will be our thing".
Great companies found their winning strategy randomly but stuck with it.

Sure, in retrospect and from the outside it seemed like a huge shift.
But there usually is no new strategy, launch event, or mission statement change. Instead, the push in the new hedgehog direction was a sum of tiny steps.
Each step delivered better results and further justified and motivated people to keep going until a full-blown strategy became obvious.

One example is Zappos, which focused on selling shoes while delivering the best customer experience.

Poor Companies Try Without Sticking

Comparison companies instead did not strive to consistently build momentum in one direction.

Their method instead is to throw everything and "see what sticks". They try several different changes, but since the following results are underwhelming, they change again and try something new.

New Tech Is a Means to An End

Companies that make the leap from good to great see new technology simply as a means to an end, not as an end in itself.

They have one strategy and one goal, and technology simply helps them get there faster.
And if the technology wasn't helping them towards their goal, they didn't even adopt the new tech.

Underperforming companies instead saw the new technology as a threat or as a competitive advantage in itself and scrambled to adopt it without an overarching plan.

Lesson learned: use technology as a facilitator for your goal, not as a goal in itself.

Level 5 Leaders: Great Leaders = Great Companies

Jim Collins refers to leaders of great companies as "level 5 leaders".
A level 5 leader:

- Great people, leaders, and team players
- Fanatically driven toward results
- Want to see their company succeed *even after* they're gone
- Share credit and shoulder the blame
- They are modest and understated
- Most often come from within the organization

By contrast, **two-thirds of underwhelming comparison companies had CEOs with huge egos**.
These ego-driven leaders didn't seem to care much about what would happen after them and often had no succession plan.

Sometimes, highly charismatic leaders are also counterproductive when that means that people don't have enough space to air their concerns and ideas.

TPM Note: This doesn't mean that modesty promotes leadership!
It only means that in Collins data, some top companies seemed to have more modest CEO, but it's unclear how Collins measured modesty. And even then, these companies were only 1% of the sample. Instead, as Pfeffer notes in his criticism to this book, **narcissism and several dark triad traits seem to facilitate leadership acquisition.** Research on narcissism also suggests it may be beneficial in some circumstances and valuable within an 'optimum balance'.

Hiring Great People

Great companies make human resources a priority.

They want to put the right person in the right position, but they focus more on who to hire than what to hire for.

They never hire the wrong person even when they badly need professional skills, and hire more great people even when they don't have a specific opening for them.

When they spotted the wrong person they acted immediately *to keep their workplace as**ole free*.

Three HR rules:

1. When in doubt, don't hire
2. When you know you need to make people changes, act quickly
3. Put your best people on the biggest opportunities (not problems)

Lesson learned: put the right people in the right position and winning is almost assured.

Stay Realistically Optimistic

I particularly liked this part of "*Good to Great*".

Collins says that great companies confront reality even when it's ugly. But even when things seemed to go all wrong,

they still retained unwavering faith that somehow they would make it and come out winning.

For more on the science of optimism check out our positive psychology overview.

Lesson learned: success requires confronting the ugly realities while never losing faith.

Foster A Culture of Openness

To make sure people don't hide from the truth great companies have a culture where people are free to express worries, concerns, and problems.

This is the same concept that Jack Welch's *Winning* refers to as "candor" and Ray Dalio's *Principles* refers to as "radical open-mindedness".

Rigorous Self-Discipline

Companies going from good to great have strong self-discipline in pursuing their hedgehog strategy.

They work hard and single-mindedly on their goals.

However, this must be a culture institutionalized in the company that people are *willing* to adhere to.

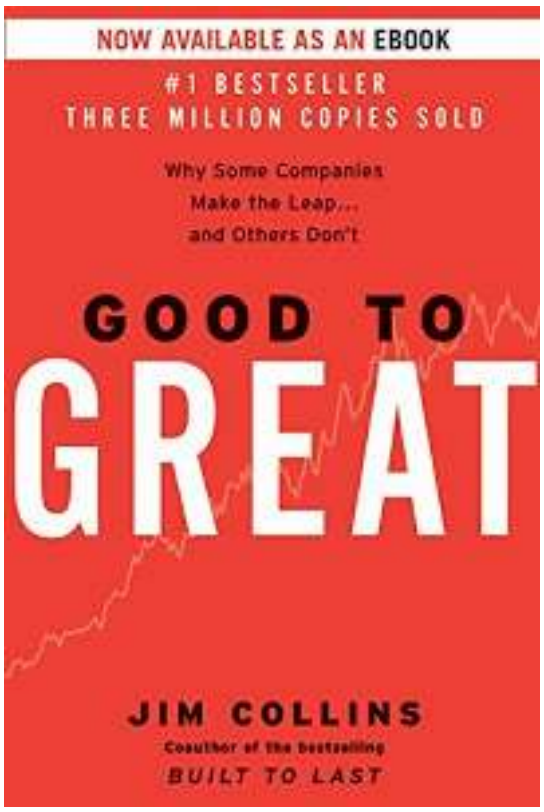
Indeed when the culture is mandated top-down by a tyrannical leader, companies might enjoy a brief spell of greatness, but that usually doesn't last.

An example is Stanley Gault, the CEO of Rubbermaid. A self-styled "sincere tyrant", he took the company to new heights. But soon after he left the company lost 59% of its value because no real culture was established.

3 Levels of Discipline

To summarize what it takes to go from good to great, Collins says it's a discipline at the three key levels:

- **Disciplined people**: great people focused on excellence and the hedgehog strategy
- **Disciplined thought:** honesty and openness
- **Disciplined action**: unrelenting focusing on what matters, putting first things first



Real-Life Applications

- **Stay Realistically Optimistic**

I particularly loved what Jim Collins calls the "Stockdale Paradox".
Such as staying grounded in reality while you keep being optimistic about the final result.

I find this concept to be immensely helpful since in the past, with the "self-esteem movement", self-help used to be full of "feel good" and "reality distortion" BS.

The truth is that to move forward in life you must look at reality. But it's also true that you must keep your faith, confidence, and self-esteem even when things are not great.

Hence, you must do both: **believe you'll eventually prevail *while* you also stay hyper-realistic**.

CONS

- **Is There No Recipe to Follow?**

The moment I read that great companies had no initial strategy was the moment I thought Good to Great was an exercise on theory with limited applications.

Indeed, if poor companies just try different things without finding a great strategy and great companies *stumble* on their success… What's the difference between good and great?
Because if the difference is "chance", then what's the use?

- **Some Romanticized Accounts**

I found some stories to back the theories to be a bit "romanticized".
Darwin Smith, CEO of Kimberly-Clark for example, works on a farm during holidays and mingles with plumbers and electricians.

- **Stock Market Returns As Yardstick?**

Of course, it would be difficult for the author to find any data which is more readily available than stock returns to judge a company's effectiveness.

However, every time the author says that a company did well after X left or took office, I gotta wonder.
Did the whole market experience a bear or bull market? Did anything else occur? Was the market simply reacting to external events the company had no control over?

In brief: stock market returns to judge a company's effectiveness is only a good yardstick if you also consider what happened to the rest of the stock market.
And even then, are you sure they are not doing great because they are following strategies that work today, but that will doom them tomorrow?
Case in point: Fannie Mae and GE were examples of great companies.

- **Abundant Inductive Reasoning & Statistically Not Iron-Clad**

I personally felt that the scientific methods used for the analyses in "*Good to Great*" are not the best in class.
There is a lot of inductive reasoning here and lots of correlation (and correlation does not mean causation).
Be aware of the limitations.

Review

Good to Great provides provides valuable ideas on what makes companies effective, although its explanations raise some questions since analyses are largely retrospective rather than predictive, and the methodology on some traits wasn't fully clear.

In hindsight, quite a few of the companies listed as "great" in Jim Collins' book didn't turn out to be so great. I wouldn't take that against "*Good to Great*", though. As an old article in The Economist once said: "market domination is only a snapshot in time".

A bigger question mark from TPM's point of view is the leadership analysis, which seems to promote a naive model of 'success leaders are honest'.

But overall, it's a good book.

Check the **best books collection.**

What I Know for Sure: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

What I Know for Sure is Oprah Winfrey's autobiographical book in which she shares how she went from a difficult childhood to a media mogul and celebrity.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- What I Know For Sure – Summary
  - The Main Message: You Can Turn Anything Around
  - Early Childhood
  - Childhood and Teens
  - Hardships Made Her Stronger
  - Be Your Own Source of Self-Worth & Love
  - Implementing Gratitude in Our Lives
  - Overcoming Fear of Judgement
  - The Importance of Saying No
  - Pursue Excellence to Beat Racism
  - Let Go and Enjoy the Moment
- What I Know For Sure Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Whatever happened to you, you can not only overcome it but leverage it
- Be grateful for what you have: you'll be happier and even have more
- Don't use others for self-validation: love and fulfill yourself

What I Know For Sure – Summary

About the Author: Oprah Winfrey is an American media entrepreneur, talk show host, and vocal supporter of female empowerment initiatives.

The Main Message: You Can Turn Anything Around

The overarching message of "*What I Know for Sure*" is that no matter how badly you feel your life is, you can turn it around.
It's your responsibility to do it though, and nobody else.
Complaining won't take you anywhere and only make things worse.

And as Oprah showed it, you can do it.

Early Childhood

Oprah didn't have a happy and easy childhood.

Her mother was an unwed mother and she felt shame and regret about her pregnancy. She hid it until Oprah was finally born in 1953.

Oprah grew up lonely and raised by two inattentive grandparents.

Childhood and Teens

By most people's standards, things not only didn't improve much for Oprah but got much worse.

Oprah was still alone and lonely.

And she was sexually abused for four years between the age of 10 and 14. She even got pregnant and hid her pregnancy until the baby was born.
The child only survived a few weeks before dying.

Hardships Made Her Stronger

However, **Oprah believes that the hardships and tragic events of her childhood also underpin her huge achievements**.

Loneliness taught her self-sufficiency, to depend on nobody else for love and happiness but on herself.
And she acquired the mindset that nobody was there for her. She would have to fend for herself.

Be Your Own Source of Self-Worth & Love

Even though as a young woman Oprah was very successful career-wise she was looking for validation through a man's love.

She didn't just want a man's love, she *needed* it.
In a particularly dramatic scene, Oprah once tried to stop a boyfriend from walking out on her by throwing his keys in the toilet.

My Note: Common low self-esteem issue
is rather typical behavior for women with low self-esteem and children who grew up without parental love. Also read: *Will I Ever Be Good Enough.*

Oprah makes the point that instead of depending on others we need to focus on ourselves as our own source of love and self-worth.
God, she says, has provided you with the ability to love yourself the way you deserve.

Implementing Gratitude in Our Lives

Like most people, gratitude didn't come naturally to Oprah.

And like most of us, she used to focus on what she didn't have.
What she didn't have and immensely bothered her, was a lean physique.

She tried all kinds of diets and was obsessed with staying thin. Then one day, after a health scare, she realized that she worried about how she looked instead of being grateful for having a healthy body.

And from that day on she changed.
She focused on what she had and she was able to love the image she saw in the mirror.

Overcoming Fear of Judgement

A major sticking point on her way to success was the fear of judgment.

Sometimes Oprah also expressed the opposite of what's fear of judgment for most people: the fear of being too successful.

It started in third grade when a teacher compliments her on the homework she had done.
That day she feared that her classmates would dislike her for being too arrogant. And that became her number-one fear for years to come.

Oprah believes that her weight gains were her unconscious way of saying "I'm not special". By being fat she would send the message that she was normal just like everyone else.

But by hiding her talents she could never win.
She would be anyway too much for some and not enough for others.
And she decided to focus on herself instead.
The only person she had to impress or prove something to was herself. When she adopted that perspective fear stopped controlling her life.

The Importance of Saying No

When she started hosting her talk show many people would show up at the studio asking for her help.

And Oprah would try to help everyone all the time.
At a certain point, it got too much to handle though and she had to wonder what was driving her to help more people than she could handle.

And the answer was that she wanted to be liked and that, again, she feared that people wouldn't like her if she said no.

Once she understood it was fear that drove her, she realized she had to learn to say no.
It wasn't easy for her also because, she says, in her childhood violence made it difficult for her to enforce her boundaries.

But the first step was to accept that she was a kind and caring person even if she needed to say no.
And she started deciding based on what she wanted to do.

Pursue Excellence to Beat Racism

African American activist Jesse Jackson once visited Oprah's high school and said that the best way to beat racism was to pursue excellence.

Oprah wrote that down and stuck it on her mirror so she would see it every day.

Let Go and Enjoy the Moment

Oprah Winfrey talks about one of the moments she was the most nervous in her life.

Dancing with Tina Turner.
She was so afraid she would ruin the show that she is shaking and uptight on stage.

But eventually, she was finally able to tell herself "this is your dream, enjoy or you will squander". And she finally allowed herself to let go of her self-consciousness and enjoy the moment.

This is the video of that performance:

What I Know For Sure Quotes

On using pain to achieve success:

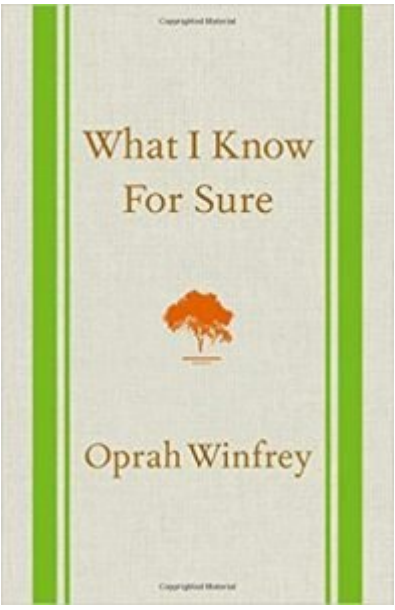
> Turn your wounds into wisdom

On gratefulness:

> Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more

On cultivating happiness:

> The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate



Real-Life Applications

When Everything's Against You: Pursue Excellence
Whenever people or society are against you, whenever people want you to lose, whenever the cards are stacked for you to lose… Your answer must always be: *get so good they can't ignore you* (in Oprah's words: pursue excellence).

CONS

- **Sista-Science**

Sista-science is my way of spoofing the expression "bro-science", such as science that is not proper science but personal intuition or some bits of pop science mixed with personal opinions.

Oprah's conclusions on emotional affairs and why people cheat feel a lot like bro-science.
There is research and evidence in those fields, so we don't have to "guess" for answers.

- **Some Platitudes**

The advice on "depending on ourselves" for our own love is a popular one -the popular book *The Mastery of Love* is an example-.
However, attachment theory shows that we can all be more confident when we have a strong partner to be attached

to.

- **Some So-So Dating Advice**

Oprah says that “if a man wants you, nothing can keep him away”. It’s an awesome book, but don’t take that one at face value.
Also read: the 8 most common women’s dating mistakes.

PROS

- **Great Message of Hope**

What I Know for Sure delivers a great message of hope for anyone who has been through is going through a difficult time.

- **Powerful Life Advice**

You can’t argue with life advice such as “enjoy the moment” and “celebrate more and you’ll more to celebrate”. That’s true and it’s life-changing.

Review

By reading “*What I Know For Sure*“, I got the feeling that Oprah has a tendency of jumping to conclusions without second-guessing her judgment enough.

However, I also believe that she has developed strong self-awareness.

And I think that’s one of the positive sides of What I Know For Sure: it deals with fears and insecurities that many of us have, and it can help grow our sense of self-awareness.

Overall, I could recommend What I Know for Sure to almost anyone, but *especially* to those who had a difficult childhood or are facing difficult times.

But whether you should read it or not also depends on whether you like Oprah or not, though.
If you like Oprah, you will like the book.
If you don’t like Oprah, you might learn a thing or two… But you’re better off spending your time with some other authors you like

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

The Invisible Gorilla: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Invisible Gorilla is a psychology book on cognition and human biases. It builds on the most famous study on inattentive blindness and expands on the numerous ways by which our intuitions can deceive us.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Second-Guess Your Intuitions
  - We Believe We See More Than We Do
  - We See What We Expect to See
  - Our Memory Is Not Accurate
  - Deceitful Self-Confidence
  - We Know Less Than We Think We Do
  - We See Causation Where There Is None
- The Invisible Gorilla Video
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We can't always fully rely on our cognitive functions
- Intuition, being based on our cognitive functions, can't always be trusted
- Many of us tend to overestimate our capabilities and skills -especially those with little skills!-

Full Summary

About the Authors: Daniel James Simons is an experimental psychologist, cognitive scientist, and professor of psychology at the University of Illinois Christopher F. Chabris is an American research psychologist and professor of psychology at Union College.

Second-Guess Your Intuitions

Chabris & Simon say that sometimes self-help books tell us to trust our intuitions and gut feelings.

They make the case instead that our intuitions have many limitations and we shouldn't be trusting our "gut instincts" all that much.

This seems to be a reference to pop psychologist Malcolm Gladwell and his theory of "thin-slicing" in "*Blink*"

We Believe We See More Than We Do

Usually, we notice what's unusual.
But that also means that **we miss a lot of what appears to be usual.**

And if we are very intent on observing or paying attention to something, then we are likely to miss also something *very* catchy, conspicuous, and unusual.

The authors, for example, devised the gorilla experiment.

They told people to count how many times the players pass the ball to each other.
Then they would have a man dressed as a gorilla walk smack in the middle of the experiment for 9 seconds and beat his chest.
A full half of the people were so focused on counting the ball passes that they didn't notice the gorilla.

We See What We Expect to See

Similarly, sometimes we are so focused on looking for a specific item that we fail to see anything else happening around us.

The authors say that 65% of car-motorcycle accidents happen because cars turning into driveways fail to spot the motorcycle.
It's not that they weren't looking, but they were looking for *cars*. And they failed to recognize the oncoming motorcycle.

Our Memory Is Not Accurate

The author's survey revealed that 47% of people believe memories don't change.
And 69% believed that memories are like videos accurately portraying all that actually happened.

But that isn't the case.

We forget a lot, obviously.
But sometimes we also make up memories.

Some other times we remember without important details.
And other times we remember *adding* some details.

For example, one experiment had students read 15 associated with sleep like "slumber," "drowsy" and "tired."
However the word "sleep" wasn't there, but when students were told to recite the words they read, they inserted "sleepy" in there.
That happened because we are more concerned about meaning than exact words.

Failure of Source Memory

Another interesting phenomenon related to memory is the "failure of source memory".
That happens when people tell a story that happened to them but that actually never happened to them.

It simply happened to a friend of theirs, or they heard it a few times, and they make it their own.

Deceitful Self-Confidence

More than half of people believe they are smarter than the average.
Which of course makes little sense since 50% would be average or below.

What's most interesting though is what came out of a survey of chess players.
Chess players are ranked internationally along with a point system. And the majority of them thought they were underrated by at least 100 points.
And the interesting point: **the lower the skills of the players, the more they thought they overestimated their skills**.

More Confidence Doesn't Mean More Skills

But unluckily, **the more people act self-confident, the more they tend to believe and trust their skills and knowledge**.

A famous experiment at the University of Rochester showed that doctors that gave a prescription without looking up the disease were rated as more trustworthy than doctors who didn't look up the disease.
But the doctors who took the time to double-check were right more often.

This is one of the reasons why charismatic men tend to draw such a major following: they look secure and people trust them.

We Know Less Than We Think We Do

The more we are familiar with something, the more we believe we "know" it.

However most people failed to accurately depict the functioning of a bike, and probably most of us have no idea how a toilet actually works.

We also tend to overestimate our understanding of a topic if we receive lots of information about it.

However, lots of information can often lead us astray as we get lost in the noise of the short term -also read The Signal and the Noise-.

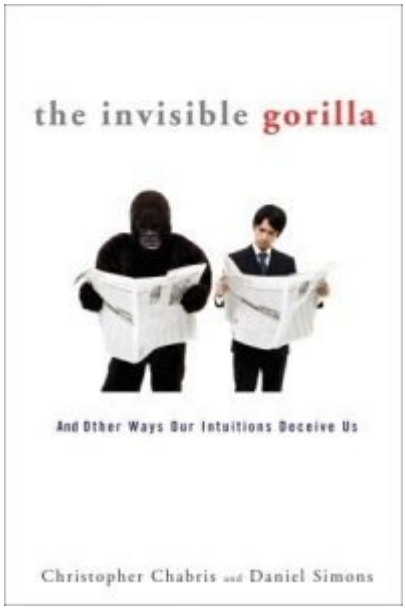
We See Causation Where There Is None

Humans look for patterns.
And end up seeing a lot of them. Often, where there are no patterns at all.

We are most at risk of seeing non-existing patterns when two events happen at the same time.
Then our brain immediately goes "ah, this happened, it must be because of that".

Also, read:

- Fooled by Randomness



The Invisible Gorilla Video

This is a video of the famous experiment.

Half of the people who were instructed to count the ball passes hadn't noticed there was a gorilla walking right in the middle of that group.

https://youtu.be/LZYLBTeMT6g?t=3s

Real-Life Applications

- **Beware of Over-Confident Individuals**

Those who looked overly confident are either really well prepared or… They might just be super wrong.

- **Don't Trust Those Who Believe They're Underrated & Underappreciated**

It's often those with the lowest skill level to believe they deserve more and that they are being unfairly judged.
Of course, also keep in mind this might not *always* be the case and of course, many *can* indeed be unfairly judged.

CONS

- **Needless War on Intuition?**

The authors take aim at intuition right from the title.
However, the biases they talk about do not necessarily disprove intuition or its usefulness.
It feels that it's an unneeded war against intuition. And, at the end of "*The Invisible Gorilla*", there is no strong case against intuition.

- **Too Long**

The invisible gorilla experiment was an interesting one, and the other experiments the authors describe are also interesting.
But it feels padded and "*The Invisible Gorilla*", the book, could have all been briefer

PROS

Some Good Insights
Even as an avid reader of psychology, I learned a couple of good things. Like why so many cars fail to see motorcycles.

Review

The Invisible Gorilla builds on a famous experiment to make a larger case on human cognition and biases.

For most people with a keen interest in psychology, some of the content will not be new.
But I found a few new tidbits here and there.

Check the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen provides parents and educators with the knowledge and techniques to communicate with children in a way that reduces friction and tantrums and improves the children's behavior.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction
  - Acknowledge Their Feelings
  - Explain the WHY
  - Don't Punish but Enlighten and Instruct
  - Let Them Make Their Own Mistakes
  - How to Praise Effectively
- Video-Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- When kids have a tantrum, don't attack them or minimize their feelings but acknowledge them
- Talk and communicate about the rationale behind your rules
- Never give your children negative labels

Full Summary

About the Authors: Elaine Mazlish (1925 – 2017) was an American parents' educator and author. Adele Faber studied theater and drama before earning her master's degree in education. She then studied children's psychology and made a professional career in the field.

Introduction

"*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen,*" says that blaming your children for your parenting woes is the wrong approach. Instead, you should focus on improving your communication with them.

With better communication, you can improve their behavior, your relationship with them, and very possibly even improve their future.

Faber and Mazlish propose a model based on listening, sharing your feelings, and respecting your kids.
Here are a few takeaways from "*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*":

Acknowledge Their Feelings

The authors say that many times children don't listen because parents fail to acknowledge their feelings.

Imagine for example you're shopping at the mall and your 5 years old begins to complain he is hungry.
You tell him to wait and he gets louder:

> I am hungry. I want food now

As the kid raises his voice many parents would raise their voices back telling him to be quiet.
But most kids won't listen and only get noisier.
The authors say that much of children's behavior is tied to how they feel, and when we fail to address it he feels ignored and spurned. He cannot understand why he should behave when he is feeling bad and you fail to address his concerns.

Instead, address the underlying cause of his misbehavior:

> I can understand you are. It's been a while since breakfast, eh?

Remember that the same rule of honesty applies to communication with children. Don't pretend you understand it is a tantrum if you don't.

How to Acknowledge Their Feelings

A mistake many do in communication is to minimize people's feelings. Telling them it's nothing, that it's OK, that they can get it replaced, or that they will smile about it tomorrow.

This is bad practice with adults already, and it's even worse with children.

Instead, you want to take people's feelings seriously. Pace their own reality. If they cry because a sticker got unstuck don't tell them it's nothing, but try something like this:

> It's terrible. One of your favorite sticker ripped. And now your album is not a perfect album. Sure, we can get another sticker on top, but right now it's broken. I can imagine how upsetting it is. If I would get a scratch on my new car I would very upset as well.

When you can make kids feel understood they won't have as much a need to keep crying and misbehaving.

But remember: **all feelings can be accepted but certain actions must be restricted**.

Steps to Acknowledge Kids' Feelings

1. Listen quietly and attentively
2. Acknowledge with one-word answers ("uhm.." "I see")
3. Give the feeling a name ("annoying", "what a shock")
4. Provide his wishes in fantasy-land ("If I had a magic wand I'd make a burger appear", "I wish I could make the rain stop")

Explain the WHY

Sometimes children will throw tantrums against your rules.

Imagine your kid is resisting the bedtime rule and wants to stay up for longer.
The first thing you would do is to explain the reason behind the rule:

> When you stay up late you will be tired in the morning

Then you can offer more information as to why that's a bad thing. For example:

> When you are tired in the morning you will not have energy for school and you will find it difficult to focus and concentrate

But what do you do when your child refuses to listen?

Don't Punish but Enlighten and Instruct

The authors say that punishment leads to an escalation of anger.

Your child is also more likely to grow bitterness towards you, making it more unlikely he will listen in the future. And in some cases, children fail to see the connection between punishment and wrongdoing. When that's the case, punishment is utterly useless in helping them learn.

My Note: It's potentially harmful, not just useless
Continuous punishment when the kid fails to see the connection between punishment and wrongdoing can lead to learned helplessness

Here is a better approach the authors recommend with the example of a child coming home late:

1. Speak to her child about why she came back late
2. If they complain about being grounded, ask why they'd feel mistreated
3. Explain the rationale behind the grounding: you are concerned about their safety
4. Talk about possible solutions you'd both be happy with
5. Come to an agreement
6. If they fail to follow up with the options you agreed, take the necessary precautionary steps

Let Them Make Their Own Mistakes

It's uncomfortable seeing our children doing mistakes and struggling when we feel we know better or we could help them quickly.

Yet it's often best to let them find their own answers and solutions.
The authors say that you shouldn't always intervene when you see them struggling to tie their own shoelaces.

In extreme cases of children wholly dependent on you, they will grow a feeling of helplessness and worthlessness. The children of overbearing parents feel infantilized and violated. Like they are not allowed to be themselves.

Here are a few ideas the authors propose:

1. Let them make their own choices whenever the consequences are not dire
2. They can learn to coordinate their free time and homework duties as long as they do them
3. Encourage them to seek advice outside the home, from their teachers or spiritual leaders
4. Make peace with his struggles: struggles are how people grow

How to Praise Effectively

The authors offer a few pointers on how to give effective praise:

1. Don't say they did great, say you really liked what they did
2. Praise selectively and when well earned: too many praises will lose their values
3. Don't hint at past weaknesses

4. Never use negative labels

The danger with negative labels is that the children will start believing in them and they will never manage to shake them off.
Labels can also become self-fulfilling prophecies when children start believing in them. Wouldn't it be a pity if your child started living up to your label of "lazy", "slow learner" or, worst parenting of all, adjectives such as "stupid"?

Video-Summary

I particularly liked this summary on Youtube:

Real-Life Applications

Make People Feel Understood
Don't tell people "it's OK", but let them express their feelings. Help them express their feelings and if you truly understand what they're going through vibe with them and/or offer your own similar story.
More on communication:

- Crucial Conversation
- Difficult Conversation
- Nonviolent Communication
- Four communication mistakes men make with women
- Effective group communication

CONS

Some Examples Are "Easy-Level"
Some of the examples depict rather well-behaved children that immediately improve their behavior.
I like to see realistic scenarios and harsher scenarios: when you can deal with the worst, you will walk on the easy.

PROS

Solid Principles That Work
Overall, the ideas and psychology behind "*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*" are solid and effective.

Review

My communication with children has been rather limited, so take my opinion with a big pinch of salt.

Overall, "*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*" seemed a good book from my point of view.
At times I wished it would make the case for stronger leadership. My opinion is that you are the parent, and that role comes with duties, difficulties, and heavy responsibilities.
Those responsibilities require that sometimes it's your way even if kids don't approve. And that doesn't have to be necessarily disrespectful.

However, overall, this is a great resource for parents, soon-to-be parents, and anyone who wants or needs to communicate effectively with children.

Check the **best psychology books** or **get the book on Amazon**

Dangerous Personalities: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Dangerous Personalities*, author and former FBI agent Joe Navarro describes four dangerous personality types, together with advice on what we can do to defend ourselves.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction
  - 1. Narcissists
  - 2. Emotionally Unstable Personalities
  - 3. Paranoid Personalities
  - 4. Predatory Personality
  - Comorbidity and Traits Overlap
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Be aware** of your physical surroundings and who you get emotionally close to
- **Take warning signs seriously**, hunches and early red flags are important signals
- **Predators have no conscience**, moral or ethical stops. Stay away

Full Summary

About the Author:
Joe Navarro is an American author and former FBI agent. He is also the author of the body language manual "*What Every BODY Is Saying*".

Introduction

The four dangerous personalities Navarro describes are:

1. Narcissist
2. Predator
3. Paranoid
4. Unstable

1. Narcissists

Narcissists believe they're above the law and above society's rules.
They will lie, cheat, or even kill if it's in their best interest.

Joe Navarro says that an example of two narcissists are Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling, the men behind the Enron

scandal.
Lay and Skilling cooked Enron's books and encouraged their 20.000 employees to invest in Enron, resulting in thousands of people losing their life savings.
What makes them narcissists, says Navarro, is another typical narcissistic trait: entitlement. The two of them believed they were entitled to get every single (stolen) penny.

Barnie Madoff is another example of dangerous narcissism, highlighting a sense of superiority and a lack of empathy.

Defense:

Let them know early on that you won't tolerate disrespect

2. Emotionally Unstable Personalities

Emotionally unstable personalities are like victims searching for an oppressor.

They store and remember wounds, whether real or imagined and use them as ammunition.
Emotionally unstable individuals have a huge need for love but little ability to maintain a healthy relationship. You can find a lot of them in cults because they offer unconditional acceptance without the need for building a solid relationship.

My Note: Is This BPD?
it feels to me here that Navarro is describing a borderline personality disorder.

Also, read:

- Walking on Eggshells
- Anxious attachment style

Defense:

Don't get dragged down into their emotional drama.
Be especially watchful they try to blame you for it. If you're in a relationship with it and they continuously threaten suicide, harm, self-harm or hold the relationship hostage, consider moving on.

3. Paranoid Personalities

Paranoid personalities see threats everywhere and from anyone.

President Richard Nixon was paranoid.
Navarro says that we can see it by his growing list of enemies and in his claims that he couldn't confide with anyone.

Hitler was also paranoid, as he managed to string together 2.000 years of unconnected events to build a case against Jews.

Navarro says that paranoia was beyond Paul Jennings Hill's homicide of Dr. John Britten. Hill, a right-wing Christian extremist, believed it was OK to murder doctors performing abortions in order to save unborn children.
And paranoia can lead people to join hate groups such as KKK and Aryan Nation.

My Note: I don't think paranoia is the main reason to join hate groups
Sure paranoia can lead someone to join hate groups.
But so does ignorance, past wounds, a need for (toxic) bonding, personal failure, and, as well, hatred.
I don't see paranoia as a major reason to join hate groups.

Defense:

Keep your distance if they try to recruit you into their false vision of reality. Do not try to change their minds as there is no changing these people's minds.
If the solution to their false beliefs is violence distance yourself and consider alerting the police.

4. Predatory Personality

Predators have no conscience.

They are cold, remorseless, and completely indifferent to the harm they cause.
This is the kind of mind that makes serial killers.

It seems here that Navarro is describing low-functioning psychopaths. Also, read:

- Do good and evil overlap
- Sociopaths signs
- Psychopath Free
- The Psychopath Test
- Snakes in Suits
- The Sociopath Next Door

Defense:

They will try to control you and coerce you. It might be physical, mental, or both. Distance is the best solution.

Comorbidity and Traits Overlap

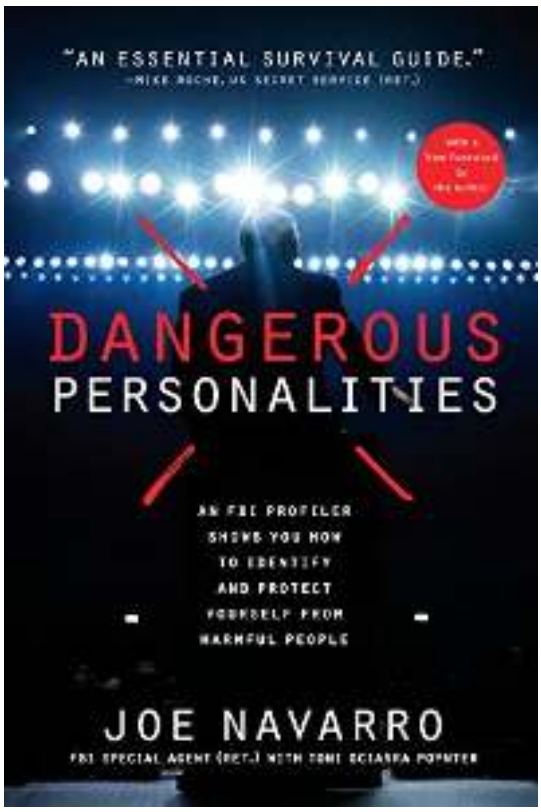
Sometimes the traits of dangerous personalities can overlap.
Navarro says that one trait has the tendency of heightening the others, and only makes individuals more dangerous.

Ask yourself the following:

- Do they negatively affect your emotions?
- Do they behave antisocially, unethically, and erratically?
- Are they manipulative?
- Do they often act impulsively and out of control
- Do they have a strong need for instant gratification?

Tips for Avoiding Dangerous Personalities

- Establish boundaries and enforce your boundaries
- Stay active during the day: highest rates of violence occur between 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m
- Keep emotional distance before you get to know people very well
- Always be aware of your physical surroundings



Real-Life Applications

Stay Watchful
As much as you look left and right before crossing the street, always take stock of your physical surroundings. And simply be aware there are some dangerous people out there.

CONS

Overall, I found *Dangerous Personalities* to be somewhat similar to *Emotional Vampires* in that it seeks to popularize the complex psychology of personality disorders.
But there were a few elements I didn't like, including:

- **Stigmatizing & Fear Mongering**

Navarro says that a dangerous personality can be nice but not good because being good means having honorable intentions.

I find that's a very broad brush with which to paint emotionally unstable people.
I have had relationships with emotionally unstable people, and while at the height of their emotions, they could have been dangerous, that doesn't make them mean or devoid of goodness.

- **You Can't Diagnose People From Afar**

In "*Dangerous Personalities*" Navarro diagnoses people without ever having met them.
How can it say for example that Enron's Jeff Skilling and Kenneth Lay were narcissists and not, say, sociopaths?
That really made the book seem more like an attempt at grabbing people's attention than a book that sought to be accurate.

- **Sensationalism Makes It Poor Psychology**

Dangerous Personalities may come across as sensationalism-seeking.

I wouldn't personally consider emotionally unstable people to be highly dangerous. I wouldn't even consider people manipulating others with suicide threats to be highly dangerous, since they rarely follow through (and self-harm is not as dangerous as others-harm). And of those who kill themselves, the vast majority don't take any other lives with them.

- **How Were Dangerous Personalities Picked?**

I gotta wonder how narcissists and emotionally unstable made the list of "dangerous" personalities.

- **Designed For Laymen, But Ends Up Only Being More Confusing**

People who have been reading or know about mental disorders will be put off by the labels and category-lumping.

Predators, for example, are sociopaths, psychopaths, and possibly malignant narcissists.
And emotionally unstable are histrionic and borderline.

But the author does not identify his categories by these names, and I must wonder if that will help the layman or further confuse him.

PROS

Good Book to Make People More Alert
Dangerous Personalities can serve to raise alertness on the dangers that some personalities can pose to us and to the people we hold dear.

Review

I loved Navarro's previous book *What Every BODY is Saying,* but *Dangerous Personalities* left me lukewarm.

Sure, a book that was going to analyze famous events and personalities looking for a diagnosis wasn't going to be medically 100% accurate, we knew that.
But I fear that approach might only confuse people, who will go around making random diagnoses of the people in their lives and labeling "dangerous" people who aren't really dangerous and who maybe actually need help.

Yes, it was an entertaining read, it taught me a few things and it strengthened a few concepts. But in my opinion, it's a pop psychology book looking for sensationalism, and as much as it can help someone, it can also harm others.

What I did like, though, is that sensationalism in this area of life can be helpful.
"*Dangerous Personalities*" can help awareness of the dangers of this world, and that evil does exist.

Check the **best psychology books** or **get the book on Amazon**

The Happiness Advantage: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Happiness Advantage* author Shawn Achor says that happiness is not the consequence of success, but more like the cause of success.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Be Happy to Be Successful
  - Happiness Makes Us Healthy
  - Happy People Outperform
  - Happiness Is A Stress Antidote
  - We Can Become Happier
  - How to Be Happier
  - Focus on Positives
  - Focus on Growth After a Failure
  - How to Build Habits
  - Internal Locus of Control
  - Get Social Investment
- The Happiness Advantage TED Talk
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Don't wait to be successful to be happy: be happy to be successful
- Shawn says that happiness is the joy of striving after our potential
- We can raise our baseline level of happiness

Full Summary

About the Author: Shawn Achor is an American author and entrepreneur, and also famous for his advocacy of positive psychology.
Achor arrived at psychology with a slightly uncommon path. He received his master of arts in Christian and Buddhist Ethics, then was a teaching assistant to Tal Ben-Shahar's popular "Happiness" course. And from then on, he deepened his passion and expertise in the topic of happiness and mental well-being.

Be Happy to Be Successful

Most people chase money and success to be happy.

But these people, have it backward.

Shawn Achor says that decades of research prove the opposite is true: **happiness leads to success much more reliably than success leads to happiness**.

It's best to be happy and let success and money derive from your positive states.
How can that be?
That's the case because happiness and positive states of mind are powerful performance boosters. They give us more motivation and physical and emotional health and they make us more energetic and creative. And that translates into success.

To quote the author (I edit for brevity):

> **Our brains are hardwired to perform at their when they are positive.**

So please don't wait for tomorrow's success to be happy, but start right now. You will be happier today and you will increase your chances of success.

Happiness Makes Us Healthy

Happiness is often not the result, but the cause of good health.

Tests show that happy individuals are better off at fighting cold viruses. They have fewer symptoms and actually have fewer viruses in their bodies.
It seems like the happier you are, the stronger your immune system.

My Note: Correlation is not causation
do be happier. But correlation is causation. What if happier people were happier because they were healthier and stronger?

Another study linking happiness levels and the lifespan of a group of nuns showed that there was a seven-year difference between the happiest and saddest nuns.

And another study even showed that happiness predicts lower blood pressure and heart rate.

Bottom line: a happy life is a healthy life.

Happy People Outperform

Turns out, a smile on your face makes you perform better.

A study asked children to do a series of tasks.
But they asked one group to think about something that makes them happy before starting. Result? The children primed for happiness completed the tasks both more quickly and with fewer mistakes.

Similar studies reached similar conclusions with adults. Even when mimicking a business deal negotiation.

Bottom line: feeling bad puts you at a massive disadvantage. Being happy raises your level of performance.

Happiness Is A Stress Antidote

People who watch videos that induce joy recover from stress more quickly than those who watch neutral or sad videos.

Psychology refers to this property as the "undoing effect", such as the ability to recover and erase previous unhealthy or negative states.

We Can Become Happier

Here's the great news:

studies confirm that we can permanently raise our happiness baseline and adopt a more positive mindset.

While scientists once believed happiness was mostly hereditary, today we know that we have far greater control over our emotional states and well-being than previously thought.

We will always have up and down, but we can raise our baseline so that we can enjoy higher highs and higher lows.

Again, yes you can become happier. The happiness advantage is available to everyone who puts in the effort.

How to Be Happier

And now the juicy part. How to exercise our happiness advantage and become happier?

#1. Meditate

Monks who spend years of meditating grow their prefrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain most responsible for the feeling of happiness.

But don't worry, you probably can start getting good benefits much quicker. Research shows that regular meditation can rewire our brains for a permanently higher level of happiness, lower stress, and even improved immune functions.

You can start with just ten or fifteen minutes a day.

#2. Find Something to Look Forward To

Anticipating future rewards lights up the same pleasure centers that the actual reward will.
Even just *thinking* of watching our favorite movie can raise our endorphin levels by 27%.

#3. Perform Acts of Kindness

Acts of altruism decrease stress and increase our mental health.

#4. Create an Uplifting Environment

Our environment and surroundings can have a huge impact on our mindsets and well-being.

Make your environment a positive and uplifting one, take a break during the day, and spend 20 minutes outside in good weather.

And watch less TV.
Studies show that watching less TV can make us happier. And the correlation is even higher with violent media -and TV is filled with negative and violent reports-.

5. Exercise

Physical activity has a strong impact on our mood.

Exercise releases endorphins, but it's not just a short-term fix.
A study showed that 45 minutes of activity three times per week increased the mental health of depressed patients for more than six months.

Indeed a study shows that movement is more effective in curing depression than anti-depressant medications.

6. Spend Money (On Experiences)

Who said money can't buy you happiness?
It can!
Just make sure you don't spend on "stuff" but on experiences. Here are six smart ways of spending your money to maximize happiness:

- Experiences over stuff
- Many small pleasures instead of a big one
- Spend money on others
- Buy now, enjoy later: buy a treat and eat after your workout and book your holidays way in advance. Delaying consumption creates positive anticipation
- Spend money to buy time: for example, pay to clean your house
- Buy happiness-boosting activities: invest in yourself, get a personal trainer, join a class, book a trip, go to the movies, eat at your favorite pizza place, etc.

7. Exercise a Signature Strength

Doing things you are good at and leveraging your strengths and skills will also make you feel happier.

Here are a few ways of using a signature strength:

- When you're in need of a happiness shot, revisit a talent of yours and use it.
- Exercise a trait, value, or strength of character that is part of who you are: even better than a skill
- Use your signature strengths daily: the more you use it, the happier you become."

Focus on Positives

Our brain cannot hold two feelings and thoughts at the same time.
This means that if we focus and think about the positives in our lives we won't have space to think about negatives. Even if all that's happening around us is negative.

Shawn says that we need at least 3 opportunities for each threat we perceive. Above 6:1 is too much and we might have too Rosy an outlook. Below 3 we might focus on threats too much and pick up more on the negatives of life.

This is an old concept that already Marcus Aurelius' Meditations stressed two thousand years ago. However, that doesn't make it any less effective.

The Happiness Advantage makes the point that **we can train our brains to focus on the positives**.
Here is an idea on how to do just that: every evening write down three positive things that happened to you during the day.

Focus on Growth After a Failure

After a failure or negative event, we can usually follow three different paths:

1. No change, and you end where you started
2. More negativity
3. Use adversity and failure to become even stronger

Also, read:

- How to leverage pain and failure

How to Build Habits

It takes little energy to keep a body in motion.
But it takes lots of energy to get started.

It's not much different than forming habits and the respective neural pathways in our brains.

The key to keeping our habits going, says Shawn, is to make it as easy as possible to repeat the habit every single day.

And the inverse is true for habits you want to stop: make it hard to keep them up!
Move into a flat with smoke detectors where you can't smoke inside and it's freezing cold outside.

Internal Locus of Control

In a nutshell, an internal locus of control says that we are in control of our own life.

To flesh it out a bit more, a huge driver of happiness, confidence, and emotional well-being is the belief that we are in control of our life and that we are the master of our own fate and life.

People with an internal locus of control are also more productive at work and in life.
Psychologists say that these gains in productivity, happiness, and health have less to do with how much control we actually have and more with how much control we *think* we have.

How to Regain Control

When we're very stressed and can't keep up it can be difficult to feel like we're on top of things.

What to do then?

Put your negative emotions in writing. Brain scans show that putting your negative emotions into words diminishes their power.
Then focus on micro-tasks you can execute. Doing the first step will get you going and accomplishing small tasks will give you confidence.

Lesson learned: acquire and develop a belief that you are in control of your life and only focus on the things you can control. And worry not about the ones you can't control.

Get Social Investment

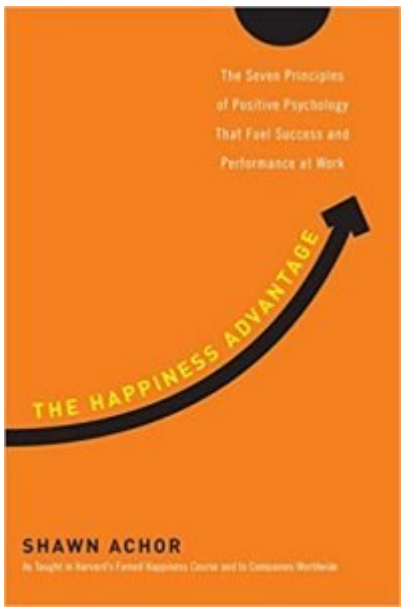
The more social help and support you get, the happier you are.
Try to build a solid network of people around you.

The Happiness Advantage TED Talk

Real-Life Applications

There is really a ton of incredible life-improving wisdom here.
Here are a few gigantic takeaways:

- Don't consider happiness just mood: it's your new work and life ethic
- Force yourself to scan the world for positives and write them down every day
- Reframe failures as opportunities for growth
- Don't let limiting beliefs shackle you
- Believe that your action directly affect outcomes and you can reach the goals you want (internal locus of control)



CONS

- **Marketing-Talk**

The first part of the book is to talk about how great the book will be.
A bit of *Pre-Suasion* is good, but I felt it was too long.

And it just sounded silly at times, like the expression “cutting-edge science”. As a guy who’s been working in tech a bit, we always had to laugh at the buzzword “cutting-edge technology”. Until we started seeing a new level of cutting-edge tech: the “bleeding edge tech”. Now those guys took it to the next level of cutting-edge frontier :).

In my opinion, that type of language in a book that wants to be grounded in science is out of place.
Not because science must be “serious”, but because “serious-sounding” increases authority, and people are more likely to be swayed by sources that they perceive as being authoritative.

- **Could Have Been Briefer**

It was longish and drawn out.

- **Seven Principles Not Best Layout**

I didn’t think the layout of the seven principles was very clear. I believe The Happiness Advantage could have enjoyed a better structure.

PROS

- **All-Around Great Wisdom**

A lot of deep wisdom here, leveraging solid research.

- **Life-Changing Advice**

I have read several positive psychology books. But this is the best one I have read so far.

Review

Shawn is not a psychologist himself, which lowered a bit my expectations before I started reading “*The Happiness Advantage*“.

But I had to change my mind: this is one of the best books on positive psychology, including the *ones written by actual psychologists*.

What makes "*The Happiness Advantage*" stand out is the extreme focus on practical advice.

This book doesn't only help to make the readers happy, but also the people *around* the readers happier. Because remember: with your happiness, you have the power to make others feel happier too.

Check the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

9 Ways to Handle A Girl Hitting On Your Boyfriend

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

What do you do when another girl is hitting on your boyfriend, or publicly flirting with him?

It's always a difficult situation, and it' normal if you get emotional.
But worries not.
By the end of this post, you will learn exactly how to put the bitch back in her place.

Contents

- When Another Girl Flirts With Your Boyfriend
  - #1. Don't Go Wild In Public
  - #2. But Don't Pretend It's OK
  - #3. Do Get Wild in Private
  - #4. If You Can Stop Her Easy – Stop Her
  - #5. Join Ther Conversation
  - #6. Step In With Another Man
  - #7. Mark The Territory
  - #8. Flirt With A Couple of Guys (Make Your BF Come to You)
  - #9. Use "Us VS You" Body Language
- What if She Knows You Two Are Together?
- What If Your Man Enjoys It?
- The Ideal Situation
  - Teaching Your Boyfriend
- SUMMARY

When Another Girl Flirts With Your Boyfriend

Handling a woman who is flirting with your boyfriend is a very difficult social situation to handle.
Only the best, most socially skilled women can do it well.

Why?

Because this what most women do:

1. **Overreact**, and you look aggressive, bitch, defensive and possibly, more into him than he's into you
2. **Do nothing** and you send the message that you are weak -and at that point, she might as well go for your boyfriend-

This post will help you to put the bitch back in her place without falling for either of those two extremes.

First of all though, always make sure it's not all in your mind.
A bit of jealousy can even help the relationship, but excessive and unjustified jealousy only ruins them.

Once you are sure it's not just you but some girl is actually flirting with your boyfriend, then it's time to think strategically:

#1. Don't Go Wild In Public

If you snap at the flirting floozy, you are likely helping her out.

You are helping her shore support on her side while you're destroying your value.

It's usually very easy for her to say they "were just talking".
And that's what it will look like most people.
Worst is that men are often clueless or insensitive enough to indeed confirm the floozy's version.
When that happens, she wins on all front:

- She drives a wedge between you two
- You look like a crazy jealous bitch
- And your boyfriend even takes their side :S

Avoid any scene in public.
You only got much to lose.

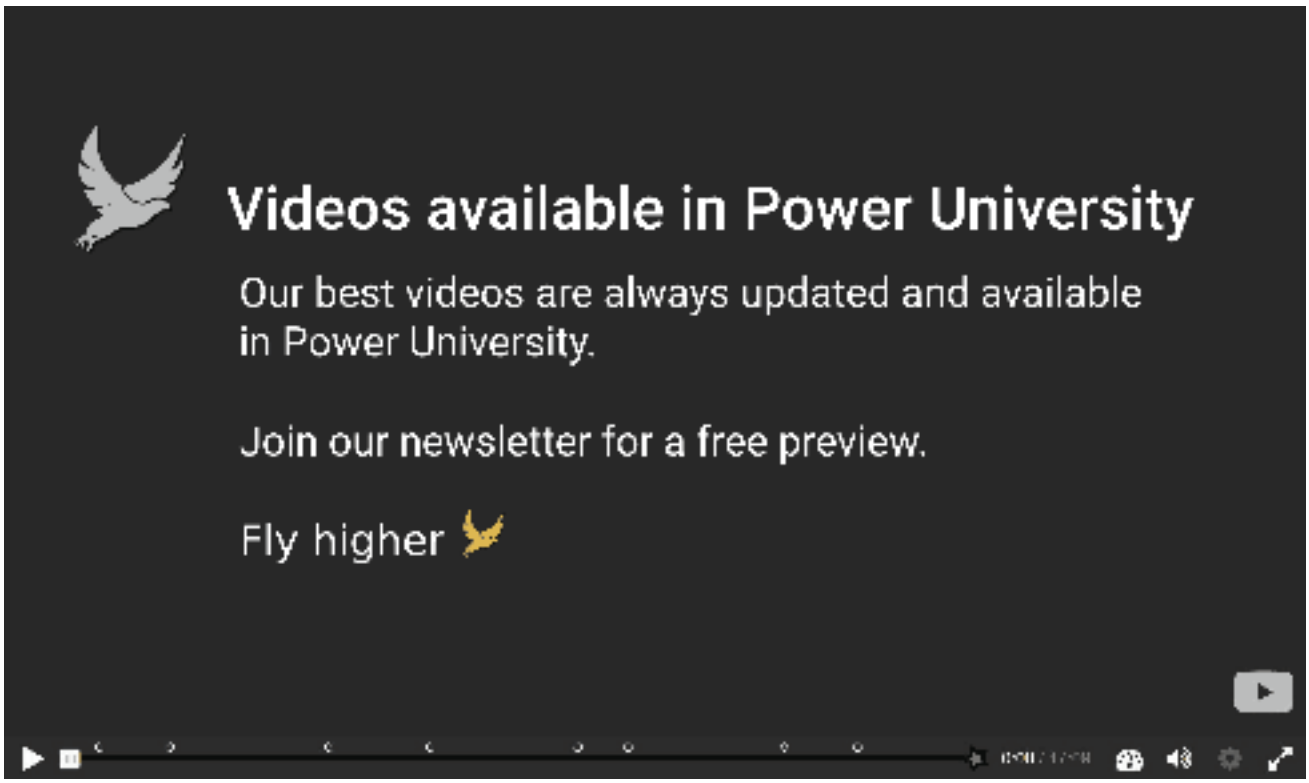
#2. But Don't Pretend It's OK

At the same time:

Don't pretend you're cool with everything if you're not.

Stuffing anger inside builds resentment leads to passive aggression and will only spoil your relationship.

See an example from Sex and the City:



And unless you're being cunning and it's part of a larger strategy, **don't be a friend with the flirter: she's not your friend**. The most aggressive homewreckers might interpret your friendliness as a sign of weakness, and as a green light to go ahead.

Also, avoid telling your boyfriend everything is OK if you were not happy with his behavior.
Talking about your jealousy might be difficult, but pretending all is OK not only kicks the can down the road, but it might make the problem worse.
He will think it's OK to keep doing what he was doing, and you will grow more and more resentful.
That's exactly what the homewrecker wants. Don't give her that win.

#3. Do Get Wild in Private

In spite most advice tells you to avoid making scenes, it's OK to run slipshod on the flirting floozy… *In private*.

You don't have to, of course.
But you can.
It's only in public that you must remain calm and collected.

But when you confront her when she's alone, then you're going for the clean killer job.
It's just you and her. And if she runs her mouth around… It's her word against yours.

#4. If You Can Stop Her Easy – Stop Her

Getting angry in public is a big no-no because the risk of looking socially uncool is very high.

But if you can stop her in a sexy, adroit way while you expend little effort, then it's OK.

Case in point:

Why did it work well here?

She's sitting comfortably and her boyfriend has his arm over her. The threat instead is all alone on the outside. By blocking her way it's easy to keep the threat at bay while she's standing out there in the cold.
What can she do?

If she perseveres, she'd look thirsty, overly aggressive and she would easily be socially ostracized by anyone else who's watching.

You can do the same in similar situations, such as:

1. The people around are all on your side
2. You are sitting or leaning against a bar and she's on the outside
3. Your boyfriend is hugging you
4. You are very self-assured your boyfriend will take your side

#5. Join Ther Conversation

If you are far away, join the conversation and test the water.

Don't necessarily introduce yourself as the girlfriend as that might seem very defensive. **Use it as a test instead, and see if your boyfriend will introduce you as his girlfriend instead**.

If your boyfriend doesn't introduce you as her girlfriend, you can communicate so with your behavior.
Standing closer than social distance, putting a hand on his arm when you are asking something, or using an insider joke will all send the sign that she's intruding.

Then, once it's obvious you two are together, notice how she reacts.
If she keeps flirting once your relationship status is obvious, then you know that she is disrespecting you.

#6. Step In With Another Man

Few things will radically shift the dynamic as you walking on your boyfriend and another girl with a couple of men on the prowl.

They are like hound dogs who are going to go after the woman, and free your boyfriend from the threat.
Showing up with a couple of guys also sends a strong message to your boyfriend, and it shifts the dynamics in *your* favor.

What if you don't have any male friend nearby?
That's when you come up with a power move.

Tell one or two guys there is a cute female friend of yours you'd like to introduce and waltz in.

#7. Mark The Territory

This is a very standard response.

And it's very effective.

It's things like hugging him, kissing him, holding his hand.

It can come with a slight downside though, as it might send the message to your boyfriend that you are afraid of competition. Some men are happy about that as it confirms in their mind that they have power in the relationship.
Some honest men are a little bit put off by that behavior, because they think you shouldn't need to do that.
And yet some other men might be reminded of how much they miss freedom -even when they don't really miss it-.

So unless you're really going great together, or using "mark the territory" as a sort of game you both run on each other, don't overdo it.

#8. Flirt With A Couple of Guys (Make Your BF Come to You)

Here is a more powerful version of territorial pissing.

Make your boyfriend take action for you.

You go in and then once you feel that the time is right, ask him to do something *for* you or *with* you.
Maybe you need to sit down, or you want to go get a drink. Or he needs to introduce you to someone.

When you are able to move your boyfriend with you or, even better, have him move to do something for you, you send a super strong message.
The message is that: he is *talking* to you, floozy. But he takes *action* for me, you floozy.

And since action trump words: 1 for you; 0 for the floozy.

#9. Use "Us VS You" Body Language

This can be very easy to execute and packs a devastating wallop on the floozy.

If the two of them are talking on in front of each other -as people usually do-, you enter the conversation by standing to the *side* of your boyfriend.
This sends a super strong message "us" VS "you". "This is us here, and then there is… Wait, there is nobody else".

See an example from the movie "Spread":

The way the woman enters the scene clearly says "I'm with her, I'm supporting her, and you're standing on the outside". Message received loud and clear

What if She Knows You Two Are Together?

Let's not sugarcoat it.

If she knows the two of you are together, she is an enemy.
She is communicating one of the following:

1. **Wants to get under your skin or hurt you** (that's why you keep cool in public)
2. **Does not respect you or fear you** (that's why it's OK to confront her)
3. **Wants to steal your boyfriend**
4. **Needs the ego validation of having men into her** (these types of gals usually sleep with men but don't steal boyfriends)

What to do with these type of women?

Some women try to befriend the aggressor.
That can work very well with men. But it doesn't work nearly as well with women, unluckily.

How you act with these types of women depends on your relationship and on the level of threat she poses.
Working behind the scenes to keep your boyfriend away, which in literature is a form of "mate guarding", can be a very effective technique.

If you are more on the aggressive side, a private conversation where you clearly tell her to stay away can also work well.
Show her that keeping up with her adulterous ways will cause direct troubles and you might give her a good reason to stop.

Indirectly helping her to find another man might also work if she's looking for a boyfriend.

What If Your Man Enjoys It?

First of all, it's not the end of the world.

Because that doesn't necessarily mean all that much.
Indeed most men *would* enjoy a woman hitting on them.

Unless he's a celebrity most guys don't get hit on that often. So, in a way, it's understandable, and common, that he could be all elated about it.

That said though, it's definitely a positive signal that is missing if he doesn't draw a line.
Because *there are* men who understand what's happening and who are strong and sensitive enough to put your well-being ahead of their ego validation.

But if he doesn't, hold your horses and avoid attacking him as if he had already eloped with the woman.
If the two were just chatting and laughing, that's still within the confines of acceptable behavior.

The Ideal Situation

We have examined a few effective actions you can take when another woman flirts with your boyfriend.

However, the ideal situation is you doing nothing and your boyfriend doing all the action.

He should step back from the flirtatious woman, physically and/or emotionally, and draw the boundaries.
A few ways he could do that:

- Drop the GF line
- Introduce you as her girlfriend
- State how happy and satisfied he is
- Take a physical step away from the touchy-feely floozy
- Move towards you

And of course, if he really wanted to go overboard and sink her:

- Kiss/hug you in front of her
- Tell her she's so cool that he should totally introduce her to a single friend of his

Of course not all men do that.

Some boyfriend sees the opportunity of another woman flirting with them as a way to assert (sexual) superiority on you. Some others will enjoy the ego validation or the social boost they're getting for the evening.
They rarely realize when they are being played like a pawn and rarely understand that they are actually *losing* value in the process.

And what would really boost their value would be to gracefully but clearly deflecting her.
Just like this guy:

Teaching Your Boyfriend

Finally, you can explain to your boyfriend what's happening. Explain what he is getting out of it in terms of ego validation and that you expect more of him.
If that fails, the reverse question rarely fails:

> **You**: how will you feel when another man will hit on me and I will go along with it?

Then monitor his reply and the successive behavior.
You never know, from that bad experience your boyfriend might even learn how to become a higher quality man.

SUMMARY

A flirtatious woman hitting on your boyfriend can be a highly emotional situation.
Especially if she's an attractive one and especially if he seems to gloat on it.

The first and most important step is to refrain from making a public scene.
Even if you want to take him aside to only berate him, don't do it while you are still out as everyone will pick on it.

For the rest, follow this guide and, most of all, teach your boyfriend what's the proper behavior.

Statistically speaking, you should be most worried if it's two old friends meeting again.
And the worst of all if it's two old lovers meeting again.

If she's just a random girl, take comfort in knowing that the chances of the two of them sleeping together are objectively very low.

The Art of the Deal: Inside Trump's Overachieving Mind (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Trump: The Art of the Deal (1987) is the autobiographical account of Donald Trump, taking us through Trump's Machiavellian mindset and business moves as he strikes deals and grows rich.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction: He Does It For The Pleasure
  - Passion For Work is Key to Success
  - How to Get to The Top
  - Stick With What You Know
  - Get Leverage: Provide Something Others Want
  - It's About the Best Deal, NOT the Location
  - Trump's Approach to HR
  - How to Deal (or "use") the Press
  - How to Leverage Threats
  - Deliver the Goods
  - Trump's Not Impressed by Academic Credentials
  - Modern Art is PR
  - Show Strength With Aggressive People
  - Test People
  - And Don't Forget to Enjoy Life
- Best Quotes
- Criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Enjoy life**: life is fragile and success doesn't change that. Do what you're passionate of
- **Do your best**. And if it doesn't work, move on without regrets
- **Promote yourself**. But also make sure you deliver the goods

Full Summary

About the Author:
Donald Trump is an American magnate and businessman. He started out in real estate, then expanded into media and show business, and he eventually entered politics.
However, it's unclear whether Trump wrote the book himself or whether it was his ghostwriter, Tony Schwartz.

Introduction: He Does It For The Pleasure

If you get the latest version the introduction is from Trump himself and he uses that space to make a political point. I will skip that part and go straight to the juiciest bit. Here is the quote from the original version:

> I don't do it for the money. I got enough. Much more than I'll ever need. I do it to do it. **Deals are my art form**. Other people play beautifully on canvas or write wonderful poetry. I like making deals. Preferably big deals. That's how I get my kicks.

And now let's start:

Passion For Work is Key to Success

Donald Trump opens the book by explaining how much he works.

He usually arrives at the office by 9 and leaves the office by 6. Up until here, it might sound like a typical employee workday. But he rarely stops for lunch and when he goes home, he often continues making and taking calls until midnight.
And it goes on all weekend as well.
He makes at least a dozen meetings a day and at least 50 calls.

Trump also has his own special version of "mindfulness" and focus on the present.
He says:

> I try to learn from the past. But I plan for the future. By focusing exclusively on the present.

And, most of all, he wants his work to provide fulfillment. He says:

> **That's where the fun is. If it can't be fun, what's the point.**

How to Get to The Top

Trump says of his style of deal-making:

> I aim very high and then I just keep pushing and pushing and pushing to get what I'm after. Sometimes I settle for less than I thought but I still end up with what I want.

#1. Deal With the Top

Trump says that at a certain point at the beginning of his career, he wondered why so many of his deals fell through.

Then he realized that it was because he wasn't dealing with the top guys. **Anyone in an organization who's not the founder or at the top is an employee**.
And employees won't fight hard to make things happen.

They'll speak to their boss, and if their boss says no without even looking at it, they'll drop it.
Employees fight for their salary, bonus, or salary increase, *not* for making things happen.

#2. Think Big

Trump says:

> Think big. I like thinking big. To me it's simple: **if you're going to think anyway, you might as well think**

> **big**. Most people think small. Because most people are afraid of success, afraid of making decisions. Afraid of winning. **And that gives people like me a great advantage**.

What a shark mindset.

That is why Trump didn't exactly follow in his father's already successful footsteps. His father was a developer of affordable and rent-controlled housing in New York boroughs.
But Trump wanted Manhattan and Fifth Avenue, the central locations.
He wanted to build something big and monumental.

The quote of this part:

> **I could earn a modest return. But then again, modest isn't my favorite word**

#3. Total Focus

Trump says that one of the keys to thinking big is total focus. He says:

> I think that one of the keys of thinking big is total focus. I think of it almost as a controlled neurosis, which is a quality that I've noticed in many highly successful entrepreneurs.
> They're obsessive, they're driven, they're single-minded. And sometimes they're almost maniacal, but it's all channeled into their work. **Where other people are paralyzed by neurosis the people I'm talking about are actually helped by it**.
> I don't say this trait leads to a better life, or a happier life. But it's great when it comes to getting what you want.

Trump is talking about the single-minded focus on "more, more, more" and "win, win, win".

#4. Protect the Downside

If you know my summary, I rarely quote straight from a book.
And yet I find many passages of The Art of The Deal so compelling that it's hard not to quote them.

> It's been said that I believe in the power of positive thinking. In fact, I believe in the power of negative thinking. I happen to be very conservative in business. I always go into the deal anticipating the worst. If you plan for the worst—if you can live with the worst—the good will always take care of itself

I agree, and I have grown to consider this mindset such an important part of the success that I added it to my "Ultimate Power" eBook (now part of Power University).

> **Protect the downside and the upside will take care of itself**

#5. Don't Gamble

Protecting your downsides also means you don't gamble your money.
Trump says:

> People think I'm a gambler. I've never gambled in my life. To me, **a gambler is someone who plays slot machines. I prefer to own slot machines**. It's a very good business being the house.

As Warren Buffet said: "gambling is a tax on ignorance".

#6. Keep Your Options Open

An effective technique with which you protect your downside is by maximizing your options.
Always keep several balls in the air, says Trump, because invariably some deals won't happen, even when they seem very promising.
And, it might happen, sometimes it won't make sense for you to pursue a deal another ball in the air becomes more promising.

Similarly, when a deal happens he always thinks of several different approaches to make it work.

This is an exchange Trump has with a real estate broker:

> **Donald Trump**: The bid sounds low. If you can get them higher, I might be interested.

But then, he adds:

> The truth is, I really don't wanna sell the yard at any price. To me those 100 acres overlooking the Hudson river are the best undeveloped real estate site in the world.
> On the other hand, I don't want to rule out anything.

#7. Ask Everyone for Opinion – But Not Consultants

Trump believes in his instincts and he rarely hires consultants or "number crunchers".
While he admits they are the best in their business, he sounds slightly disparaging towards an experience he had with McKinsey for example.

On the other hand, Trump believes in asking opinion to people.
For example, if he's thinking about buying a property he asks the people living around the area. He asks the cab drivers. He asks about crime, schools, and shops.

He says he's learned more from conducting his own research that way than from hiring any consulting firm. That way, with a feel "on the ground", he can then build and use his own instincts.

This approach, Trump says, is quicker and action-oriented. Consultants take a long time and a lot of money for a result that has little or no conclusions.

Further, Trump says:

> When it comes to making smart decisions, the most distinguished committee working with the highest paid consultants doesn't hold a candle to a group of guys with a reasonable amount of common sense and a lot of money on the line.

#8. Look After Your Money

Trump believes in spending what you need to spend -and what you have to spend-.
But not more.

And he believes in looking after his expenses and not throwing money around.

He learned from his father that every penny counts. Because "before too long, the pennies turn into dollars.
He says:

> To this day, if I feel a contractor is overcharging me, I'll pick up the phone, even if it's for $5k or $10k, and I'll complain. People say to me, "what are you bothering for, over a few bucks?"…
> My answer is that the day I can't pick up the telephone and make a 25 cents call to save $10k is the day I'm

> going to close up shop.

And then another great quote:

> The point is that you can dream great dreams. But they'll never amount to much if you can't turn them into reality at a reasonable cost.

#9. Take Care of Appearances

Trump makes the case that how you present your assets makes the whole difference.

I loved this quote so much that I recited it more than once in my life.
Says Trump:

> I can always tell a loser when I see someone with a car for sale that is filthy dirty. It's so easy to make it look better. It's no different in real estate.

He then adds it wasn't applying as much in NY where people would buy almost anything. But it's a mistake to be lulled by good times: markets always change.
And as soon as there is a downturn, cleanliness becomes a major value.

On another occasion to make his site look busier and faster-moving, he gave the order to find all the available bulldozers and make them move around on fake tasks.

#10. Get Great People and Push Them Hard

Trump says that a huge of what brings success is getting the best people and then pushing them to do their best job.

He says:

> My philosophy is always to hire the best from the best.

He adds later:

> Hire the best people from your competitors, pay them more than they were earning and give them bonuses and incentives based on their performance.
> That's how you build a first class operation.

Even if his ex-wife Ivana Trump who was managing his castle, says:

> The castle is doing great. But I still give Ivana a hard time about the fact that it's not yet number one. I tell her she's got the biggest facility in town, so by all rights it should be the most profitable.

Trump seems to have a business-like approach to his intimate relationships too. He loves the fact that Ivana is "almost as competitive as he is", and then adds: "I can say this much: I wouldn't bet against her".

That's probably not the approach for what most people would consider a good relationship.

Stick With What You Know

On a deal that seemed good on paper, Trump pulled out at the last minute because he didn't have a good feeling about it.
He says:

> That experience taught me a few things. The first is to listen to your gut, no matter how good something looks on paper. The second is that you're generally better off sticking with what you know. And third that sometimes the best investment are the ones that you don't make.

Get Leverage: Provide Something Others Want

Trump says that if the other party realizes how badly you want something, you're dead.

The best place to negotiate is from a position of strength, and you get that with leverage.
Leverage means to have something the other party wants. Or better yet, *needs*. Or, best of all, simply can't do without.

That's not always the case of course, and that's where imagination and salesmanship come in: convincing the other party it's in his best interest to make the deal.

Trump provides a few great examples in *The Art of the Deal*. My favorite was his move with the founder of Tiffany.

Leverage Information Advantage

Trump was often able to scoop up deals because he had information that the other party didn't have.

Trap Your Opponents

Then he would try to get a commitment before the other party would catch wind of the situation.

For example, when he was buying the land for Trump's tower, he signed a letter of intent. When the seller put on the contract the usual "prior to board approval" clause, he gave it back to him saying nonchalantly that he wanted to sign the LOI to move quicker.

Then, once he had the letter of intent, he later threatened to go to court when the seller wanted to back out of the contract.

Since the seller needed cash, Trump had them.

It's About the Best Deal, NOT the Location

Trump says that buying properties is not about location.
He writes:

> Perhaps the most misunderstood concept in all of real estate is that the key to success is location, location, location. Usually, that's said by people who don't know what they're talking about. First of all, you don't necessarily need the best location. What you need is the best deal.

Of course, if you have a great location you might need less promotion. But a bad deal in a great location is still a great deal.
And you can further enhance an area where you've done a great deal with great promotion.

Trump's Approach to HR

Trump's philosophy is that if you catch someone stealing you must go after him very hard.

However, he made an exception once.
Here was the power move genius: Trump had an extremely capable supervisor who'd also make sure nobody under him would steal.

However, that was also because he was a con-man himself with a tendency to steal.
But Trump thought: I only need to keep an eye on *him*, and he would make sure everyone under him does not steal.

So he kept him on board.

How to Deal (or "use") the Press

In the course of *The Art of the Deal* Trump uses and leverages the press in many different ways.
Let's see:

#1. Spin Questions into Positives

Trump says it's best to give truthful answers to the press and not to get defensive.

But you will always get asked tough questions, and what you do at that point is spin around your answer to give something positive.

He says:

> Instead, when a reporter asks me a tough question, I try to frame a positive answer, even if that means shifting the ground.
>
> For example, if someone asks me what negative effects the world's tallest building might have on the West Side, I turn the tables and talk about how New Yorkers deserve the world's tallest building, and what a boost it will give the city to have that honor again.
>
> When a reporter asks why I build only for the rich, I note that the rich aren't the only ones who benefit from my buildings.
> I explain that I put thousands of people to work who might otherwise be collecting unemployment, and that I add to the city's tax base every time I build a new project. I also point out that buildings like Trump Tower have helped spark New York's renaissance

I have already noted in the past Trump used this technique in How to Win a Debate. You can see him using the defense against his allegations of sexual misconduct:

And of course, also check out:

- Basics of frame control
- Frame control techniques

#2. Promote With Bravado

Trump says he uses bravado to promote.

> **I play to people's fantasies.**
> People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. **That's why a little hyperbole never hurts**. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular.

Basically what he's saying here is that otherwise timid people love a leader who sounds self-assured and larger than life.

"Playing to people's fantasies" is a law that Robert Greene borrowed for his "*The 48 Laws of Power*", by the way.

#3. Use Sensationalism for Coverage

Sensationalism and bravado will also give you bigger coverage:

> They're always hungry for a good story, and the more sensational the better (…) The point is that if you are a little different, a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold or controversial, the press is going to write about you.

#4. Denigrate Competition

Trump says he is very competitive and he'd do nearly anything to win -without legal bounds-. Sometimes that means denigrating the competition, and that's what he would do.

In *The Art of The Deal*, Trump talks about a few interesting public power moves he pulled to score a win.

In some of those cases, picking a quarrel not only served to eliminate a competitor but also to promote a site he was working on.

#5. Use Press as Pressure Point

Trump also used the press to put pressure on people.

For example, he was about to scoop up a great deal in Manhattan for a piece of land where he would later build his Trump Tower.
But rumors began circulating *before* he signed. He was afraid that competitors would rush in and drive up the prices.

So when the press called him up asking if he had bought, he said "yes".

Trump also says that the press works particularly well with politicians.

How to Leverage Threats

Trump is trying to help an old woman who is about to lose her farm to bank repossession.
He calls the banker to see what he can do, but the banker replies there is nothing he can do, the farm is going to be auctioned and no one is going to stop it.

"That really got me going", says Trump.
That's his reply:

> You listen to me, if you do foreclose, I'll personally bring a lawsuit for murder against you and your bank on the ground that you harassed Ms Hill's husband to his death.

All of a sudden, the bank officer sounded very nervous and said he'd get right back to Trump.
Trump says:

> Sometimes it pays to get a little wild.

It does indeed.

Deliver the Goods

Trump says that a big show is important, but ultimately you also gotta deliver the good.

He uses the examples of two presidents: Carter and Reagan. They had the guts and balls of aiming high and that's what got them there. But eventually, people started catching up on the fact there was little substance behind them.

Trump's Not Impressed by Academic Credentials

Trump says he was not particularly impressed by academic credentials.
He realized there was nothing particularly awesome or great about his classmates at Wharton.

What he got the most out of it, was the paper degree. To Trump, it doesn't mean much, but it means a lot to a lot of people he does business with.

Modern Art is PR

Trump tells the story of an artist friend of his and how he made 25k in a few minutes. He took buckets of paints and splashed them over canvases on the floor.

That was it.

Plenty of collectors wouldn't know the difference between a 2 minutes splash job and paintings he really cared about.

> I always thought that a lot of modern art is a con. And that **the most successful painters are often better salesmen and promoters** than they are artists.

Then Trump keeps joking that the art world is so ridiculous that knowing what he knew might make his paintings even more valuable. Not that he was ever going to find out anyway… People weren't even going to be able to tell the difference.

Show Strength With Aggressive People

Trump discusses his experience with a very tough and domineering teacher in military school.
And he discusses how he "played him".
It helped he was a good athlete -which showed competence, I'd add-.

But mostly, Trump says, he finessed him in two ways by showing:

- He respected his authority
- But he didn't intimidate him

These guys go for the jugular when they smell weakness, but if he saw the strength that wasn't trying to undermine him, he'd treat you like a man.

Test People

Trump says he likes testing people.

For example, he knew of a lawyer with a reputation for being a tough guy. Trump was looking for a tough lawyer. Instead of asking him if he was tough, he tests him by saying:

> I don't like lawyers. All they do is delay deals. They're always looking to settle instead of fight.

When the lawyer "proved" his toughness, he told him what he needed and then hired him.

When talking to a young lawyer who looked even younger, he told him:

> I'm not so sure that a lawyer as young as you are can handle a project like this.

Trump knew he was a good guy when he replied:

> To tell you the truth Mr. Trump I've never had a client as young as you who could afford my bill.

A good way of passing the shit test.
And Trump respected that.

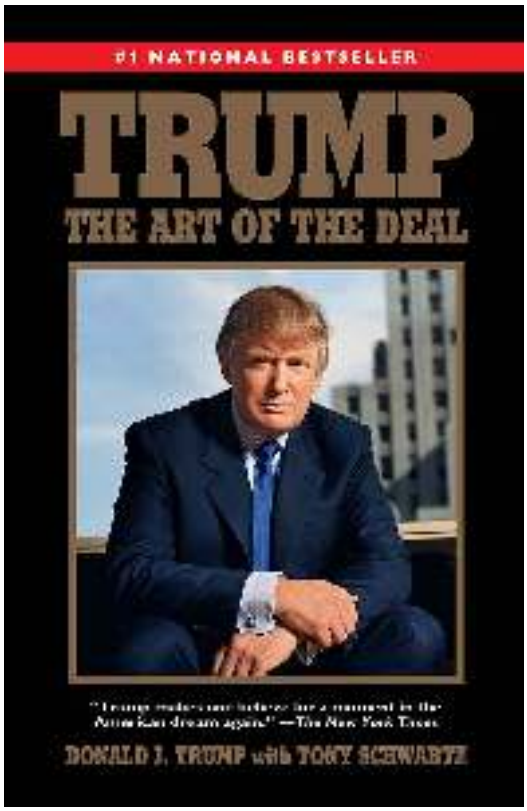
And Don't Forget to Enjoy Life

Finally, Trump says:

> Have fun. I don't kid myself. **Life is very fragile, and success doesn't change that**. If anything, success makes it more fragile. Anything can change without a warning. That's why I don't take things too seriously.

And more:

> Money was never a good motivation for me, except as a way of keeping score.
> The real excitement is in playing the game.
> I don't spend too much time worrying about what I should have done differently or what's going to happen next. If you ask me exactly what the deals I'm about to describe all add up to in the end, I'm not sure I have a very good answer.
> Except that I've had a very good time making them.



Best Quotes

Plenty of quotes are *already* in this summary.
But here are a few more:

> I hate law suits and depositions. But the fact is that if you're right, you gotta take a stand. Or people will walk all over you.

On Parties:

> Frankly, I'm not too big on parties. Because I can't stand small talk. Unfortunately, they're part of doing business, so I find myself going to more than I'd like.
> And then try hard to leave early.

On politicians and money:

> Eventually I realized politicians don't care about what things cost. It's not their money…

On the casino business:

> I like the casino business. I like the scale, which is huge. I like the glam. But most of all, I like the cash flow.

On getting steady:

> I dated a lot of different women by then. But I never got seriously involve with any of them. But Ivana wasn't someone you'd date casually. Ten months later, we were married.

Talking about an architect working for him:

> She is a classic. She has a mouth that won't quit. Which is probably why she's so good in sales. I like to tell her that she must a very tough woman to live with.

The unspoken rule among Gs:

> He tells me he has a deal he'd like to discuss. He doesn't say what it is, but with certain people… You don't ask.

On easy returns:

> Even by making this relatively minor things, I could earn at least a modern return on my investment. But then again, modest is not my favorite word.

On partnerships:

> In every partnership, you're only as strong as your weakest link.

On New York real estate:

> (…) this is particularly true in New York real estate, where you are dealing with some of the sharpest, toughest, and most vicious people in the world. I happen to love to go up against these guys, and I love to beat them.

On incompetence:

> Dishonesty is intolerable. But inaction and incompetence can be every bit as bad.

On cost-conscious realism:

> You can dream great dreams. But they'll never amount to much if you can't turn them into reality at a reasonable cost.

On skyscrapers and money:

> Skyscrapers are machines for making money. He meant it as a criticism. I saw it as an incentive.

On people's strategy (and having a man open up to him):

> There are times when you have to behave aggressively. But there are also times when the best strategy is to lay back.

On giving:

> What I admire most are people who put themselves on the line.
> I am not terrible interested on why people give. Because their motivation is rarely what it seems to be. And it's almost never pure altruism. To me what matters is the doing.
> And giving time is far more valuable than just giving money.

And finally.
What's next?

> Fortunately, I don't know the answer. If I did, it would take the fun out of it.

And:

> **The dollar always talk, in the end.**

Criticism

Who really wrote it?

Tony Schwartz, the co-author of *The Art of the Deal*, has been very vocal and critical since the publication.

He said that with this book he put "lipstick on a pig" and in another interview he said that if were to write the book again it would probably be titled "the sociopath". (A label that Trump's niece also used).

Both Schwartz and the Random House head Kaminsky, the publisher, said that Trump wrote nothing of the book.

Is This Really Trump?

This book shows a level of introspection, self-awareness, and zen that you'd wonder if the Trump we see as the president is the same Trump who wrote this book.

To begin with, there is no in-your-face self-promotion in *The Art of the Deal*.
He even says he learned not to act on impulses, and that chance and randomness helped him get what he wanted.

Is this the same guy that some authors diagnosed as a dark narcissist?

Did he change? Was he painting himself in a better light here?
Or is it true that Trump wrote little of this book?

On the other hand, I do see a lot of typical Trump here.

His take on art, for example, or his typical power moves.

Some PR management

For example, spinning his plan of sheltering homelesses as charitable rather than a move to force the last holdout residents.

But if you can read between the lines, you'll only learn more about Trump, and the psychology of certain personalities.

Some Ethical Grey Areas

In some passages, Trump shows the deal shark that he is.
For example:

> Developers are suicidal, because banks are foreclosing them. It's a great time for a smart buyer.

But most of all, it's when he wanted to let homeless people inside a building to force the last owners to sell low, that it crosses the line.

Real-Life Applications

This book is very applicable, from mindsets, to strategies and techniques.
Here's a midnset I liked. After the loss of his UCFL, Trump says:

> I wasn't happy. But I was relieved. My attitude is do your your best. And if it does't work, move on to the next thing.

That's a very positive, healthy attitude.

PROS

Deeper Than Most Give It Credit For

The psychology and the philosophy behind *The Art of The Deal* are outstanding.

Trump's analysis of the neurosis that leads to success is spot on, as his philosophy on enjoying because life is uncertain.

Trump makes a lot of reflections here which are actually quite deep. For example, he discusses of people who will never find out about their talent because they simply never tried -for lack of good fortune or courage, he says-.

Interesting Childhood Stories

There is a lot here to understand what Trump is all about.

Sometimes you have to peep through the cracks though, as he's likely trying to give a more positive impression -as everyone else would of course!-. For example, he says he was very aggressive in school, even giving a black eye to the music teacher :S

Great Sales and Marketing Training

Some of the marketing and sales techniques in *The Art of the Deal* are best in class.

I particularly loved the way Trump frames his Trump Tower as the "place to be". His competitor shot himself in the foot by lowering the prices and leaving Trump Tower the upper section of the market.

Then, Trump used “hard to get” techniques to sell space which made people want it even more.

Review

The Art of the Deal is a great book to understand both Trump and the mindsets of an overachieving type of man.

It’s also a good wake-up call for some too-nice guys, and the strategies it shares offer some more limited but still valuable learning opportunities.

Trump is a unique kind of man.
Trump sees life as a competition, that’s obvious. When he realized that people in Manhattan drank a lot he thought that, as a non-drinker, “he was going to have a big advantage”.

Unfortunately, there may be bias involved when it comes to juding this book.
Some may not like Trump.

I find him entertaining and his approach worked well to boost his family’s wealth, become famous, and take him to office. However, some research suggests that certain personality traits can be a liability in leadership roles that require more selflessness, long-term collaboration and diplomatic nuance
Edit: this was originally written a long time ago and turned prescient.

But I loved this book, and I truly didn’t expect to agree so much with Trump.

The Art of the Deal isn’t just deal-making and power moves, but also life philosophy.

It’s packed with great mindsets. And it’s entertaining, with powerful quotes and hilarious expressions that will make you smile -ie.: the Italian who looked like a WASP-.

It presents little of the Trump we see today.
I will not weigh in on whether or not Trump actually wrote it and if it’s a realistic portrait of Trump back then.

But whatever you think of Mr. Trump, but “*The Art of The Deal*” is the crowning masterpiece of over-achieving deal-makers.
This is *The Prince* of deal-making.

Check the:

- best books on manipulation
- best dark triad books
- best books on power

or get the book on Amazon

P.S.:
Did you enjoy this review?
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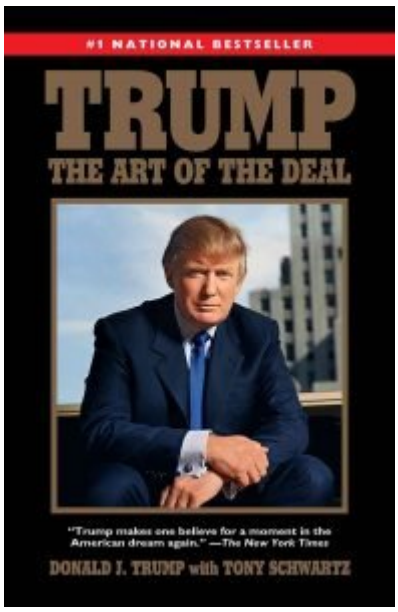
The Art of the Deal Summary: Trump’s 10 Secrets to Success



One of the best books on deal making, money making, power moves and negotiation.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-art-of-the-deal/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

How to Lie with Statistics: 9 Steps to Spot Bias (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*How to Lie with Statistics*" (1954) is a wonderful book on how Machiavellian marketers or politicians can use statistics and numbers, to provide an impression of "objectivity", while instead manipulating and swaying people's opinions with half-lies or falsehoods.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. Introduction: Learn The Basics
  - 2. Statistics Biases
  - 3. Changing of Meaning
  - 4. Manipulating the Charts
  - 5. Proving Without Proving
  - 6. Percentage Increases/Decreases
  - 7. Correlation Is Not Causation
  - 8. Biased Averages
  - 9. How to Critically Approach Statistics
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Watch out for missing data**: 3 days to cure a cold with X drug is no good if you healed quicker without drug
- **Ask yourself about possible statistical biases** that could go into a survey/statistics/sample
- **Ask yourself about possible second motives** from the individual presenting the statistics

Full Summary

About the Author:
Darrell Huff was an American writer and freelance journalist, penning both magazine articles and several books. He is most famous for "*How to Lie With Statistics*", and it seems like he knew a thing or two about lying with statistics. Huff was allegedly paid by the tobacco industry to ridicule the evidence against tobacco smoking and health problems. Basically, **Huff was using his own techniques to lie and manipulate**. Alex Rheinart explains that Huff was also commissioned to write a follow-up book to defend the tobacco industry and discredit the growing body of evidence against the health effects of smoking.

So let's learn how to lie with statistics so that we will never fall for it.

1. Introduction: Learn The Basics

The ideal sample is:

1. Large

2. Measures only one trait while controlling the other
3. Removes all sorts of biases.

Such a sample is hard to obtain, and most “statistics” instead have all sorts of biases. *How to Lie with Statistics* lists a few of them.

2. Statistics Biases

The following biases are some of the most common and highly disruptive biases when measuring a sample:

#1. Asking People

People tend to answer what makes them look good. Or with what they wish they’d do, or with what they would like to do.

They will not always answer instead with what they actually do.

Even when you meet a fella who wants to tell you the truth and nothing but the truth, will he be able to remember exactly what you’re asking for?

Thus if you ask people what they actually like, they will rarely come up with the truth.

#2. Self-Selection Bias

Many studies are flawed by design.
For example, if I send a questionnaire out most people replying will be people who maybe have more time to reply.

If I ring people’s doors to ask a question, it will be people who are more often at home. For example, unemployed people, and people who don’t travel much.

Even if I stop people in the street I will end up selecting friendlier or more agreeable personalities.

#3. Pleasing the Interviewer

Whenever I ask a question about touchy subjects, there might be an in-built bias to please the interviewer or to try to look ‘good’.

#4. Small Sample Biases

It’s easy to come up with true statistics that mean very little -or that are deceitfully misleading-.

For example, if you wanted to prove that a medication is very effective in curing a cold, you could assemble many small samples. Then you can measure how long it takes to get better in each.

Since the samples are small, normal variation will likely give you a group that, by chance, healed quicker.
And you can publish the result of the group that fared the better

#5. Intervening Factors Biases

Another issue of comparing statistics across countries or times and, in general, in real life, is that of intervening factors that it’s difficult to account for.

For example, one study once linked milk to cancer because countries that consumed more milk had a higher incidence of cancer than countries with low milk consumption.

Darrell Huff explains that countries with more milk consumption were also richer and lived longer. That by itself can explain the higher incidence of cancer. And if you also factor in that cancer is more likely to happen in old age, that could explain the difference in cancer rates. Milk notwithstanding.

3. Changing of Meaning

Sometimes bureaus change their description or what a word means or a word comes to acquire a totally different meaning.

So for example when you calculate the number of “farms”, you should adjust for the changes in the census, because what is considered today a “farm” is not the same as it was fifty years ago.

4. Manipulating the Charts

There are many ways to “massage” your charts:

- **Raise the starting point**

To show bigger improvements you can make a chart start not at zero, but at the latest number in your data set.

For example, if you want to show an improvement from 20 to 22 and then 23.5 and you start your chart from zero, the improvement will look small.
But if you make the chart start at 20, it will look like a huge change.

- **Leverage Volume**

If you want to show the increase in something -say, salaries- a fair way would be to use bar charts that only change in height.

If you want to make the increase look bigger though you can use geometrical shapes. Say for example you choose the icon “bag of money” to show the salaries increase.
When you increase the height of the bag of money you don’t just change the height, but you also change the width. The result is that your bag of money will acquire a total area that is 4 times bigger, not twice.

- **Don’t Label the Axis**

Another trick is not to put measures and labels on a chart.
Make the reader draw his own assumption and if the chart looks impressive, he will make favorable assumptions.

5. Proving Without Proving

This one is almost pure marketing.

Say that you cannot prove that your new drug helps cure a cold. But you can prove that it kills thousands of germs. Maybe even more than your previous drugs. Maybe 30% more?
It might not do a thing to help people overcome a cold, but it certainly sounds good.

Or advertisers could say that physicians smoke brand X of cigarettes more than any other cigarettes.
But does that mean anything?
Physicians might not have much insider knowledge of “healthier cigarettes”. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as healthy tobacco.

6. Percentage Increases/Decreases

When people talk about an increase of 10%, you should always wonder: increase compared to what?
The previous month, the previous week?
And was it an increase across the board or did they pick a figure that increased the most?

Also, people who want to give different impressions can easily switch from percentages to whole numbers depending on which one sounds better.

The percentage drop is even easier to massage.

For example, describing the move from 13% to 10% as “a drop of 3 percentage points” sounds much better than “a decrease of 23%”.

Cherry-Picking the Best Figure

Similarly, you can express the same fact by calling it in many different ways, depending on what your goals are and what sounds more impressive -or less scary-.
For example:

- 2% percent return on sales
- 12% return on investment
- 5 million profit
- 35% increase in profits

7. Correlation Is Not Causation

And here is the big one, one that I have been criticizing in so many of my book reviews.

Many publications use correlation to imply causation.
Take for example the famous case of “studying leads to higher salary”. While that makes a lot of sense, it’s not so straightforward.

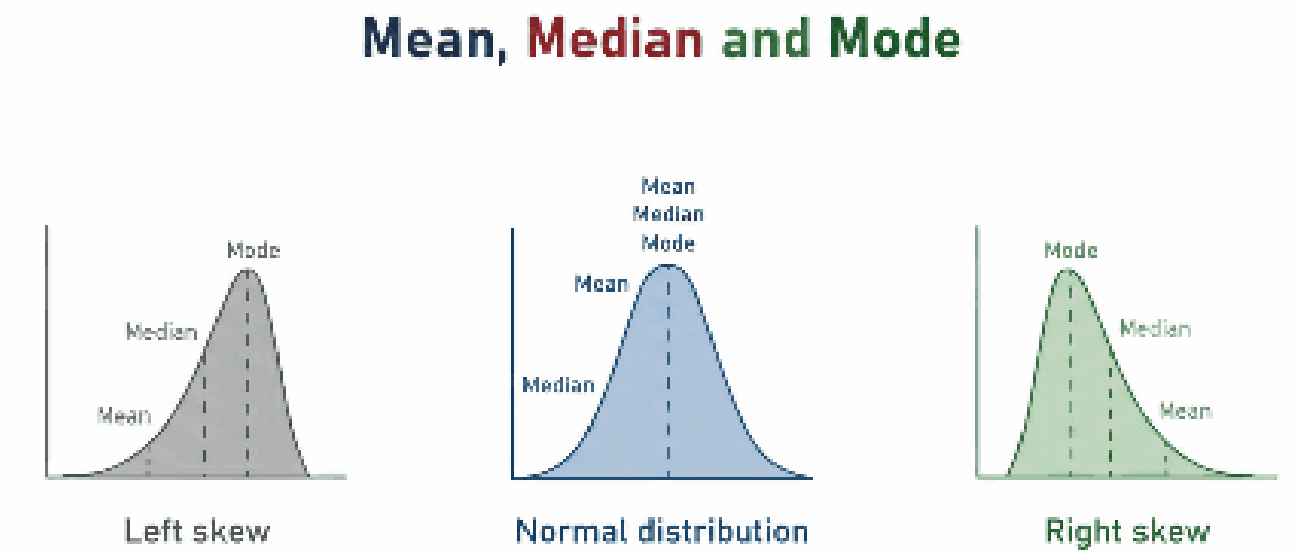
Kids who go to college are disproportionately bright and rich.
The bright and rich would have likely earned more than non-college degree individuals even *without* a college degree.
And it’s not true that “the more you study, the more you earn”.

The most dishonest individuals can also look for a correlation and then plug a cause that works well for them.
Politicians do it often. For example, a recent US president took the crime statistics of a single US city where crime had increased and blamed Democrats for it.

Also, read:

- Fooled by Randomness

8. Biased Averages



There are three different types of averages:

- **Mean:** add all values and divide by the total quantity
- **Mode:** most common value in a data sample
- **Median:** value in the middle of the sample

Data Point	Description	Example (Salary)
Mean	Average (Total / Count)	$120,000 (Skewed by CEO)
Median	Exact Middle	$45,000 (More realistic)
Mode	Most Common	$35,000 (Entry-level)

In normal distribution —as it's often the case for human traits— the three will be similar to each other. But in data sets with irregular distributions —for example, income and salaries— they will be very different.

And the biased statisticians can pick the one that most suits their needs. Or simply use the most common mean when the mean hides a very different reality. For example, a CEO could say that at company X the salaries went up 40% in the last 10 years. But he wouldn't say that they went up 1% for doormen and security, 5% for low-level employees, and 30% for the C-suite.

9. How to Critically Approach Statistics

Darrell Huff proposes five questions we can ask ourselves to analyze whether statistics are not misleading us:

- **Who Says So?**: The first question you should analyze is the source. Is the source inherently biased? Is it an advertisement, does a researcher want to defend his theory, does a newspaper want to sell more with a sensationalist story?
- **How Does He Know?**: How did he conduct the research? Is the sample big enough? Did he send a questionnaire, did he stop people in the streets? What could be wrong with that?
- **What's Missing?**: What other influences have not been taken into account? Was there a large control group and does the author mention it? If the author is using percentages, does he also give the raw numbers for a more complete picture?
- **Did Somebody Change the Subject?**: Changing the subject happens when we move one result to a similar, but actually different environment.

For example, a politician critical of how expensive prisons were for the public said it would cost less to house inmates in a hotel than in Alcatraz. However, he changed the subjects from "total costs of inmates daily" to "daily charges of a hotel". Of course, the latter does not include surveillance, food, healthcare, rehabilitation, etc.

- **Does it Make Sense?**: Sometimes statistics can make no sense. And the fact that we're dealing with numbers should not lead to a suspension of common sense.

One example from Darrell Huff is the following: "Since life expectancy is only 63 years, it's a sham and a fraud to set the retirement age of 65 because virtually everybody dies before that." Even in the 1939-1941 period that wasn't true and just by looking around one could have realized it was wrong.

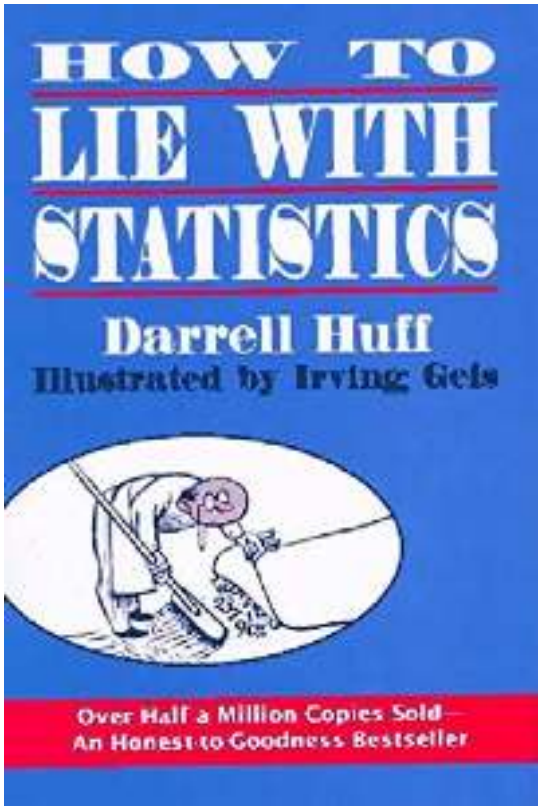
Sometimes old truths can be taken for granted even when they're not true anymore. A major appliance company right after WWII was planning on making smaller appliances to accommodate the declining birth rate. Then one of the guys looked around and realized that he and his friend were not planning to have fewer children. Just looking around would have revealed that wasn't true, but everyone was taking old statistics as gospel.

The last example is that of "plotting the results ad infinitum". We see a trend and some poor statisticians will plot the results in the future. But trends rarely continue forever.

I see examples of this all time, and even intelligent authors don't realize it makes no sense. For example, when

Goleman in "*Working With Emotional Intelligence*" said that each increase in EQ means an increase of x amount of income. But that makes no sense, because EQ is a bell curve, and you can't keep adding points forever. Furthermore, adding 1 point when you're around the middle is very significant. But adding one when you're already more emotionally intelligent than anyone else will mean little because you're already at the top.

> **Proper treatment cures a cold in 7 days. But left to itself it will hang on for a whole week.**



Real-Life Applications

Always Critically Read Data
Don't be ready to believe the numbers "because they're numbers". Anything can *be bent to fit propaganda* or a biased individual.

CONS

- **Don't Stop at The Criticism, Even Flawed Statistics Can Be Valuable**

Some people start to learn how to apply critical thinking skills but stop at the first level of critical thinking.

Such as they are able to pinpoint the limitation of this or that piece of evidence
But they don't realize that even imperfect statistics can add some value compared to not having any statistics at all.

Even flawed statistics might be a strong warning signal or it may capture an important trend.

For example, the author criticizes the statistics that women who attend college marry less than the national average while men who attend college marry more. Instead of dismissing that result, one should ask if that makes sense and why it's happening.

And there are very good reasons why that is the case!
Also read: a scientific approach to dating and why successful women fail at dating.

PROS

- **Great Education Against Cheats and Power Movers**

The more people read books like this, the fewer people that are easy to dupe and swindle.
And that will make for a better world to live in.

- **Short and To The Point**

No fluff, no repetition: I love it.

Review

How to Lie with Statistics is five stars, must-read book for those who aren't aware of the pitfalls and "sneaky tricks" that hide behind statistics -ie.: most people-.

I believe that books such as "*How to Lie with Statistics*" will make for a better world because critical thinking skills are so crucial to an empowered, civil society.
The more people read it, the more we will we can think critically, assess claims better, buy better, and even vote better.

It's also good for a psychological understanding in a way. With "*How to Lie with Statistics*" you will learn how our mind can unwittingly make wrong connections.
And, of course, it's great for power moves. Because you will learn how unscrupulous researchers, companies, and journalists can willfully manipulate data to sway people.

Also, read:

- Best manipulation books

Or get the book on Amazon

The Social Animal: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Social Animal*, author Elliot Aronson provides an overview of social psychology.
Aronson has made it his life work to constantly update the book as new research improved our understanding of social psychology, so "*The Social Animal*" remains until today *one of the best psychology textbooks* available.

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Bullet Summary

- We like to preserve a positive and congruent image of ourselves and we'll go to great lengths to ensure it
- To persuade a knowledgeable audience, present both sides of the argument; present one for ignorant audiences
- To inoculate people from persuasion present a small persuasion attempt that people can refute (a bit like a vaccination shot)

Full Summary

About the Author: Elliot Aronson is an American psychologist and researcher. He helped refine the theory of cognitive dissonance and has received several prizes and awards for his work and research, and he has taught,

among other universities, at Harvard University.

Introduction

I was almost afraid of summarizing The Social Animal.
There is so much great information in this book that you can't really summarize it.
Consider this to be an appetizer.

Social Psychology: A Definition

Elliot Aronson defines social psychology as:

> "the influences that people have upon the beliefs, feelings, and behavior of others".

We Like to Think Highly of Ourselves

One of our major goals as human beings is to maintain and enhance a positive view of ourselves.

The self-serving bias is such an example. We think that others' success is often because of situational circumstances but we think our success is because of the disproportional qualities we have.

Basically, **we take credit for the good and deny the bad**.

Conformity & Individuality

Aronson defines conformity as:

> A change in a person's behavior or opinions as a result of real or imagined pressure from a person or group of people

In the face of conformity pressure, individuals tend to avoid voicing their dissent.
On occasions, individuals go with the flow of the majority even when they otherwise have strong personal reservations.
Depending on the situation individuals might even deny what seems incontrovertible evidence of the truth if the group does the same (Solomon Asch experiments on line lengths).

Over the course of twelve judgments, three-quarters of the individuals conformed at least once with the majority even in the face of clearly wrong opinions.

Brain scans showed a lot of activity in the amygdala among the people who resist. The amygdala is associated with pain and emotional discomfort, telling us that going against the group is painful.

Factors That Increase Conformity

There are many factors that can increase or decrease conformity, including:

- **The unanimity of the group**:3 people in the group same effect as groups of 16
- **Presence or absence of other dissenters**
- **Prior commitment to the truth**: only 6% conformed VS 25% without commitment
- **Accountability**: people held accountable for accuracy had less conformity
- **Requests for accuracy**: accountability and request for accuracy are more powerful together
- **Self-esteem**: high self-esteem people are more independent
- **Self-assessment of status**: how secure the individual feels in the group, which higher security linked to higher

independence
- **Culture**: conformity more prevalent in collectivist societies
- **Gender**: small difference but women are consistently more conformist
- **Group traits**: experts, high social status, similar or different from the subject

> **Doing crazy things doesn't necessarily mean you're crazy**

Does Conformity Change Minds?

It depends.

In the case of Asch's experiment of guessing the length of a line, group pressure only changed *public* opinions, and *not* what people believed to be true.

However, Leon Festinger says that when reality becomes more complex and uncertain, people rely more and more on "social reality".
When reality is difficult to assess indeed individual conforms to the group not out of fear of punishment and exclusion, but because the group supplies the only viable information (experiments on littering in a parking lot to show conformity to social norms: people kept the place clean if it was clean).

Elliot Aronson proposes not to use the term "conformity" which is too general but using instead three terms depending on the response to social influence:

- **Compliance**: conforming out of fear, bending to power
- **Identification**: we are attracted to the person or group, and want to be the same (and the opposite: if we don't like we're less likely to conform). Works mostly if we don't have strongly held opinion on a subject
- **Internalization**: we wholeheartedly agree and identify with the group or source of influence. The credibility of the source is important here

It's an important difference.
In compliance, the behavior changes only until the group or threat is present (albeit permanence can be increased with a commitment to stay within the group and if we discover our changed behavior is good for us).
For example, I might say in public I don't like a political candidate but then vote for him in private. In identification and internalization instead, the behavioral change is permanent.

Conformity and Letting People Die

Elliot Aronson talks at length about conformity and diffusion of responsibility in reviewing the famous cases of the Kitty Genovese murder and the Darley-Latané experiments.

He says that it's possible for people to fall ill in the middle of a crowded street with nobody helping. That's another case of conformity, and it happens because:

- People look at others to see if it's serious, and if nobody acts nobody will
- If someone's on the floor already people think that if nobody intervened there's no need to
- We don't need to feel guilty if we can keep on walking

Help will be less forthcoming if:

- It's difficult to assess the seriousness
- Helping is costly or dangerous (people are less likely to help bloodied victims)
- You don't think you can actually help

- You will be stuck with the situation for long

The tendency to help can be increased:

- People can help easily
- Helping will have a strong and direct impact (fewer people help when pain is intense because they don't think they can do much)
- If there is a sense of "shared meaning" (ie.: camping where people feel like kindred souls)
- It's difficult to move away (ie.: in a subway car VS the street)

The Power of Advertising

Aronson explains how the power of advertising is highest in children, but they quickly catch on.

Skepticism goes up not just with age but also with education. However, that's not to say that skeptics are immune to commercials.

Usually, there is a relationship between exposure, or how often we are exposed to a commercial, and to how much we believe it to be true.

Aronson says that candidates who spend the most money on TV commercials are also most likely to win the election

My Note: Causation or correlation?
This was a major flaw in The Social Animal for me as the author didn't question the causation here.
For example, he didn't consider that politicians who get more donations to run ads are also already more likely to win.

The Central and Peripheral Routes to Persuasion

There are two ways to persuasion: weighing arguments with facts and figures or in a "less judicious" manner. Aronson doesn't exactly use the terms here, but it seems like the old argument of "logic VS emotions".

And we are more susceptible to the peripheral routes than we'd think.
For example:

- Slogans that rhyme convince us more
- Clever nicknames (ie.: "death tax" to convince people against succession tax)

Communication Persuasiveness

Aronson says that there are three major variables that command the persuasive power of communication:

1. The source of communication (who says it)
2. The nature of the communication (how he says it)
3. The audience (to whom he says it)

1. The Source

People will ask themselves the following questions when it comes to influencing:

- Does he have anything to gain (even an unattractive or immoral person can be persuasive with nothing to gain or something to lose)
- Is it trying to influence us
- Is he attractive or likable (we associate attractiveness of communication with the message)

Liking's limitations: Elliot Aronson explains that athletes can influence the cereal we eat and beautiful women can get us to agree on an abstract topic. But it's unlikely they influence us on, say, the presidential candidate or the morality of abortion.

The author summarizes the research on the source of communication as such:

> Individuals who are both expert and trustworthy influence us. Trustworthiness (and effectiveness) can be increased if he argues a position opposed to his or her self-interest and does not seem to be trying to influence our opinion. People we like can strongly influence where trivial opinions and behaviors are concerned, and even if it is clear they're trying to influence us and profit by doing so.

2. The Nature of Communication

The research is far from conclusive, but it seems the case that an emotional appeal is more powerful than a logical one.

- **Fear works if the receivers have high self-esteem**

fear can make people more likely to act or less likely. It depends on the receiver's self-esteem.
People with negative self-images want to crawl into bed instead of taking action. To help everyone take action, make the message scary but make people feel they can do something about it, and then give clear instructions on what to do.

- **Fear fails with abstract threats**

Fear fails with abstract threats. Global warming, for example, has failed for years to rally the masses because it has no face.
If we could put a face on global warming like Bin Laden was the face of terror, it would be easier to get people to take action.

- **Personal examples and experiences trump data**

People are more influenced by one vivid, clear personal example than by lots of data.
For example, instead of giving data on the benefits of insulating their house, it was more effective to tell people "adding up all the cracks you have a hole the size of a basket. Wouldn't want to fix a gaping hole in your kitchen?"

- **One-sided or two-sided arguments?**

Presenting two sides shows more objectivity, but also that the issue is controversial.
On average the more well-informed is the audience, the less they'll be influenced by one-sided arguments (and vice versa). On average the more one person is leaning towards the argument of the communicator, the more the one-sided argument will be effective (and vice versa).

- **Strategizing on order of presentation (go first or last?)**

Speak first if the election is several days away and you speak back to back (the primacy effect of your speech will ruin your opponent's subsequent speech and the latency effect of your opponent's speech is mitigated by the far away election).
If the election is imminent and there is a coffee break between speeches, speak second (the primacy effect is mitigated by the break and the latency effect is strongest with the election nearby).

For a complete guide on when to go first or last, check this post.

- **What if the Message is Highly Discrepant With Beliefs**

When people disagree with the message, the beliefs of the audience will change the most if the communicator has

high credibility -because they can't discredit him-.

When the communicator has low credibility he will influence people the most when the discrepancy between the audience's beliefs and the message is small -otherwise, it would be easy to discredit him-.

3. Audience Characteristics

- **Low Self-esteem individuals are more easily influences**

An individual with low self-esteem is more easily influenced than high self-esteem people. Low self-esteem people are less likely to experience internal conflict between themselves and the communicator and more likely to go along with the speaker.

- **Political Orientation: conservatives struggle with uncertainty**

Conservatives have a greater need to manage uncertainty and threats and are more influenced by appeals to fear and black-and-white arguments.
The author says that liberals respond to more nuanced and fact-based arguments.

- **Prior Experiences**

What happens before the communication impacts the influencing power of communication. Eating good food or being in a good mood are more conducive to influence.
Telling people that there will be an attempt to influence decreases the influencing power (also read: *Pre-Suasion*).

- **People Want to Protect Their Freedom: Don't Push**

The author says that pushy salesmen induce a reaction from people to re-assert their freedom and avoid doing what they're told (explicit social pressure is different from implicit one).

- **Focus On The Message (or distraction)**

People who were distracted during the influencing message experienced more changes in their opinions.

- **Amount of Information: KISS**

Adding too much information can dilute the power of the message.

How to Resist Influencing Attempts: Inoculation

Elliot Aronson says that it's possible to "inoculate" people from influencing attempts the same way we inoculate people from flu: with a small dose exposure.

Just like with virus vaccines**, when people are presented with a watered-down message that they can refuse themselves, they are more able to resist a bigger influencing attack later on**.

The author makes the point that the previous American policy of promoting American values and denigrating communism wasn't helpful. It would have been better to teach students the pros and cons rather than simplistic sloganeering.

I quote the author as this is very powerful:

> The person who is easiest to brainwash is the person whose beliefs are based on slogans that have never been seriously challenged.

We’re Not Rational: Psychological Biases

The Social Animal delves a lot into psychological biases as well.
By now psychological biases have become such a popular hit in pop-psychology books that I will skip them here.

The most interesting for me were these:

- We all think we are smarter and better than the average
- **Loss aversion**: loss-based messages are more powerful than gain-based ones
  Edit: Not true on loss aversion
  And subsequent research showed that gain frames can work better, depending on context. See more in the*Routledge Handbook of Persuasion*
- **Confirmation**: We seek confirmation of our initial hypothesis, we confirm it and we feel certain about it (and it’s often wrong)
- **Hindsight bias**: “we always knew it, it was obvious”
- **Personal Responsibility**: we assign personal responsibility for outcomes that are otherwise difficult to explain (ie.: most people will think that a subject who hasn’t gotten anything at the flip of a coin worked less hard. Blaming the victim is strongest in people who believe the world is fair!)

If you want to explore psychological biases, read:

- Thinking Fast and Slow
- The psychological causes of the financial crisis
- Fooled by Randomness

Put Your Best Foot Forward

Is it true that you should start with your most impressive feature first?

Yes, it is.

When it comes to forming impressions the primacy effect -what comes first- powerfully trumps what comes in the middle and what comes last -the latency effect-.

Elliot Aronson says it’s for two reasons: the first item prepares us for what comes next, and we tend to give a positive spin to all the rest. And we pay less attention to what comes after.

Memory Failures

Memory is a reconstructive process.

Often we change memories to reflect the image that we have of ourselves.
For example, when we believe that something is good for us and want to start adopting it, we might remember having done it more often in the past (Example: brushing teeth).

Sometimes people can even “recall” memory that never truly existed.
This is one of the reasons why Elliot Aronson states that the majority of self-reported sexual abuse stories might not reflect reality.
The reason is that repeated instances of traumatic events aren’t usually forgotten.

Behavior is NOT Personality

Subtle situational variables often have an outsized impact on our behavior.

That also means that our behavior is not always and necessarily a reflection of “who we are”, but it’s more a

consequence of the specific situation we are in.

Usually, when we judge our own behavior after a mistake or non-flattering event, we “know” that it was situational. But when we observe other people’s actions we tend to attribute their behavior and their results as a direct consequence of their personality traits and “who they are”.

Similarly, we assume that people’s attitudes are a great indicator of their behavior in a way that discounts the situational variables.
And we see attitude-behavior relationships even when there might be none.

Social Roles Influence Behavior

Individuals have many social roles in life which will lead them to behave in different ways depending on which roles they have.
Of course, when we observe just one of their behavior we generalize to their full personality and believe they are much more homogeneous than they actually are.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) is so important, and with so many deep ramifications that you should devote some time to make sure you understand it.

Elliot Aronson defines cognitive dissonance as:

> a state of tension that occurs whenever an individual simultaneously holds two cognitions (ideas, attitudes, beliefs, opinions) that are psychologically inconsistent.

The driving force behind cognitive dissonance is cognitive discomfort, and people will try to convince themselves (and others), change opinions, or justify their actions in a way that will make them feel good.

The theory of cognitive dissonance does not see human beings are rational creatures, but as rationalizing human beings.
That means that we are not so much motivated to be right, good, or fair, but to *believe* we are right, good, and fair.

Looking for confirmation

Once we make a decision on something, we try to insulate ourselves from cognitive dissonance by only looking for information that confirms our good choice.

It’s not uncommon for example that people who bought a car go back to enjoy the advertising material for that car.

And we also change the way we remember things to protect our decisions.
Jones and Kohler found that people tended to remember plausible arguments agreeing with their beliefs and implausible arguments for the opposite opinion -which would strengthen their belief in the correctness of their decision-.

> **We are rationalizing creatures more than rational ones**

Self-justification trap

When our behavior is inconsistent with our beliefs we will change our behavior, our beliefs, or the meaning of our behavior to avoid cognitive dissonance.

For example, when the US administration decided to bomb North Vietnam they ignored the intelligence saying that heavier bombing was useless and was only strengthening the communists’ resolve.

The way out of the trap is to bring in advisers who were not involved in the earlier decision -and thus immune to cognitive dissonance-.

Foot-in-the-door technique

One way to leverage cognitive dissonance in changing opinions and behavior is to make people commit to a small course of action first.

This helps people feel committed to the cause and when a bigger request is made later on cognitive dissonance will pressure people into accepting the larger request.

The bigger the gain/loss the bigger the dissonance

Imagine a situation where cheating would give you a huge advantage. If you decide not to cheat, you will become a much stronger and more vocal supporter of honesty.

This is because since you had to forego a big gain because of honesty, now you need a bigger justification for it. Your justification is that cheating sucks and must be punished severely and honesty is the only way to go.

Internal & External justification: achieving long-lasting change

Imagine we commit an immoral act.

We could go two ways to justify it to ourselves -and potentially to the people around-: external or internal justification.

External justification seeks “excuses” and extenuating circumstances in the world around us. We were tired, we were pressured, someone gave us a big wallop of money, etc.

But if it’s difficult to find an external justification, then we will change our own internal beliefs to align action with beliefs.
This is very important because it means that **if you want someone to truly change their beliefs forever you should let them take action or commit to something without any major reward**.
That way, without any external excuse for their behavior, they will change their internal beliefs. In short: the smaller the reward, the greater the attitude change.

Similarly, bigger threats to influence behavior do not change long-term behavior as much as smaller threats.
And working hard towards a goal makes that goal all the more attractive (justification of effort).
However, putting a lot of effort into something also means that we will try to convince ourselves that we are happier with the results, For example, people who spend a lot of time and money to get in shape might try to convince themselves that the results are good.

Amplifiers of dissonance

Dissonance theory says that the biggest attitude changes will happen when:

1. **We feel personally responsible for our actions** (we can’t blame anyone else)
2. **Our actions have serious consequences** (the stakes are higher and we can’t move on and forget)
3. **Self-esteem is at stake** (we really need to protect our ego, and people with high self-esteem experience more cognitive dissonance when they do something cruel or stupid)

That means that people with low self-esteem will find it easier to commit immoral actions.

Related to the third point, narcissistic personalities with an overblown sense of self get angrier and more aggressive when their ego is threatened.
Cristina Salmivalli and her colleagues though suggest that high narcissistic self-esteem, is not genuine self-esteem

but stems from insecurity. This type of paper-thin self-esteem is present in bullies.

My Note: True, also see Roy Baumeister
Baumeister indeed explains that people most likely to lash out violently have big but fragile egos.
Also see: *Evil*.

Justification of Cruelty

To avoid cognitive dissonance people who commit or have to commit cruelty try to blame the victim in order to reduce cognitive dissonance.

Ironically, the more good people want to be and the nicer they think they are, the more they need to frame the victims as terrible people,
And the higher their self-esteem, the more they need to blame the victim -lower self-esteem people already see themselves as not-so-great people so their need to offload blame is smaller-.

Also, read:

- The Lucifer Effect.

When cognitive dissonance undermines us

Imagine your resolution was to quit smoking.
But you didn't manage and started smoking again after two weeks.

That could be a blow to our ego, to try and fail.
So to protect our ego we would downplay the importance of the resolution and the seriousness of smoking.
We would look for confirmation that smoking isn't so bad, that "everyone does it" or we could take a daredevil approach of "you only live once".

This is a very maladaptive approach: we'd be happier in the short run, but in the long run, it will make us unhealthier and will also reduce the chances we'll ever try and succeed again.

What's a better alternative?
Probably it would be to lower our expectations of success.
Instead of going cold turkey, we could try to half the amount of cigarettes.

How We Skirt Cognitive Dissonance By Not Paying Attention

Sometimes we avoid cognitive dissonance by not paying attention to what we're doing.

Elliot Aronson says that's the case for example with condom use. Most people know it makes sense to use condoms and we should all be using them.

But when they don't use a condom they fail to even consider the possibility of putting on a condom. They are in a state of denial and hypocrisy.

How do you get people to take action when they already believe it's the right thing to do? Aronson came up with a clever experiment to make people confront their own hypocrisy.

Physiological Effects of Cognitive Dissonance

Under certain conditions, cognitive dissonance can have physiological effects.
For example, make hungry and thirsty individuals less hungry and thirsty.

Cognitive Dissonance or Simple Observation?

We have seen how easily people can change their opinions based on their actions.

But how do we know that they are experiencing cognitive "pain" and not simply looking at their behavior and simply changing their own perception in a calm and dispassionate way?
Indeed that's what Bem proposed.

And it turns out, in some circumstances, there is little cognitive discomfort indeed.

Elliot Aronson says that we change opinions without discomfort only when we don't have a clear belief, to begin with.
But when we do have a fairly clear opinion or belief, then the discomfort and the threat to our self and ego do come into play.

Aggression: Nature or Nurture?

It seems clear that aggression has an instinctual component.
But it's not entirely based on instincts either. There is evidence showing that culture and situational variables influence our aggressive responses as well.

For example, primates who are induced into an aggressive state will attack… Unless they're in the presence of the alpha male of the group. In this case, they will flee.

Is Aggression useful?

There is a current of thought believing that limiting aggression would also limit our human achievements -for example, Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules for Life*-.

For example, the drive behind "conquering space", "attacking" a mathematical problem, and "mastering" a science are all in a way connected to aggression.

Elliot Aronson though says that's a mistake as it uses too large a definition of aggression. He defines aggression as "*an intentional action aimed at doing harm or causing pain*".
Thus, says the author, **equating aggression and hostility with advancement and achievement is to confuse the issue**.

And the world needs a different breed of people. He quotes Loren Eiseley when he pays tribute to our ancestors but then also says:

> The need is now for a gentler, a more tolerant people than those who won for us against the ice, the tiger, and the bear

I really liked this part, it makes a lot of sense to me.

Violence Breed Violence

Answering with violence and aggression with violence and aggression is likely to lead to a self-reinforcing cycle.

Retaliation almost always exceeds the initial offense because the pain we receive feels more intense than the pain we inflict.
And even if we induce more pain than we received, we will justify each increased round of aggression by blaming the victim and convincing ourselves that they deserve it all.

Also behaving aggressively increases testosterone, which in turn contributes to further escalation.

> **There will never be a war to end all war**

Gender and Violence

Women display much lower physical aggression but they seem to engage in more forms of social aggression.

Nikki Crick and her associates call it relational aggression. This includes activities such as:

- Spreading false rumors
- Isolating
- Malicious gossip
- Ruining someone's reputation

Is the difference in gender aggression style biological or cultural?
Evidence points to both biology and culture.

For example, Australian women showed greater evidence of physical aggressiveness than Swedish and Korean men.

Alcohol and Aggression

Alcohol works as a disinhibitor. It reduces social fears and makes us less cautious.
But there is more than that.
Alcohol also makes us more socially stupid. When something happens we respond to the earliest and most obvious cues and miss all the subtleties.

So for example, if someone steps on our toes we react to the pain as if it were purposefully inflicted instead of considering the situation and the excuses that we received.

More Inhibitors of Aggression

More contributors to aggression are:

- Pain and body discomfort (more aggression in the heat)
- Expectations are high but we get blocked
- We are drawing near our goal but something stops us
- There is hope for change (hopeless people accept even the worst of conditions)
- Perceived social unfairness (exclusion, taunting, humiliation, and rejection. Example of Columbine)
- Exposure to violence (even on TV or by seeing guns laying around; mostly effective on those who already have a disposition for aggression)
- Anonymity
- Violent pornography (normal pornography is harmless)
- Children seeing aggression rewarded (but aggression punished might not work as disinhibitor and might be better not to show violence at all)

Disinhibitors of Violence

- Personal responsibility
- Accountability
- Punishment (but applied judiciously in the context of a warm relationship)
- Child education to internalize values that denigrate violence and aggression
- Using empathy to stop the dehumanization process (empathy-training exercises in children to identify other people's emotions lead to a sharp decrease in aggression)

Do Violence and Sex Sell?

Aronson says that sex and violence can hog all the attention to themselves and overshadow the product.

My Note: No final answer provided here
fair enough, but *can* overshadow the product is not a final indictment. That's not to say, indeed, that sex and violence cannot be deployed effectively to sell.

Violence to Attract Attention

The Social Animal dedicates space to the question of violence and rioting to attract media attention to social injustice.
Aronson says that in an apathetic society, it can work to attract attention indeed. However, violence rarely leads to rectification of what was wrong.

> **There will never be a riot to end all injustice**

Prejudice

Many authors say that the best way to change our beliefs is to expose ourselves to many instances that prove our beliefs wrong.

However, Elliot Aronson makes the point that's not the case.

Bombarding people with facts that prove their prejudices wrong won't change the prejudices but only create new mental subcategories -ie.: "intelligent black guy", and "female good with numbers"-. Basically, they tell themselves they are just running into exceptions.

Two Forms of Sexism

One form of sexism antagonizes women. The other one seems benevolent and seems to favor women but is actually patronizing.

Prejudice Acts Both Ways

Prejudice can work against minorities but sometimes also discriminate in favor of minorities.

We Are Predisposed to Prejudice

Stereotyping is not necessarily and always an act of abuse, and it's not always negative either.

Often it's simply how our mind works. And it's a system of organizing and simplifying otherwise complex information about our world.
Sometimes the information would be too complex for our brain otherwise, and even when it might be not, we still have a tendency to save as much cognitive power as possible.

However, the specifics of prejudice are learned.

Causes of Prejudice

Elliot Aronson says there are five basic causes of prejudice:

1. Economic and political competition
2. Displaced aggression
3. Maintenance of status or self-image
4. Dispositional prejudice: some people have a greater tendency to hate (authoritarian personality)

5. Conformity to social norms

Stereotype Is Strongest in Uncertainty

Stereotypes are strongest in ambiguous situations and when we don't have clear answers and information.

In ambiguous situations, people tend to choices and attributions consistent with their stereotypes.

How to Reduce Prejudice

Elliot Aronson dedicates a long chapter to prejudice, what affects prejudice, and how to effectively combat prejudice.

Here is how to reduce prejudice:

1. Equal-status contact without economic conflict (ie.: state-sponsored housing)
2. Inevitability of contact (leverage cognitive dissonance in accepting the situation and seeing it positively)

However, the ideal scenario is rarely present, and the following increases prejudice:

1. Economic conflict (private homes with minorities and whites believed their house values would go down)
2. Competitive settings like de-segregated schools where minorities started at a marked disadvantage (blacks and latino increase hostility towards whites partially as an attempt to regain lost self-esteem)

Liking, Loving and Interpersonal Sensitivity

Elliot Aronson introduces the chapter with a slight, entertaining dig at Dale Carnegie's "*How to Win Friends and Influence People*".

Indeed, praise does work in making people like us as long as it doesn't come across as manipulative and the praiser is not in a position to benefit from coddling us.
Not only do we feel manipulated, but also like the praiser is attempting to limit our freedom by trying to trap us.

It's similar to receiving favors.
And with favors, it's often more effective to get people to make favors to us than not us doing favors to them (remember justification of effort? They will convince themselves that we must be very deserving fellas).

Aronson summarizes the findings by saying that **praise and favors do not always have a positive effect**. How they impact liking and influencing depends on the situation.

Flaws make us more attractive

The pratfall effect explains how we will "too perfect" individuals more after they make a mistake. But we will like average people less when they make mistakes.

Confidence and Gullibility

Evidence suggests that the more insecure we feel, the more we will like people who like us and compliment us. People with low confidence will also seek less attractive partners because they want to minimize the risk of rejection.

People who are more secure of themselves are less needy and less easily swayed by a smooth talker.

Social contact makes us healthier

Social exclusion and rejection cause physical symptoms while social contact can make us physically healthier.

We like most people who grow to like us

We like people who like us, but even more, we like people who grow their opinion of us. Thus starting from the negative and going into the positive is more powerful than always staying positive.

To be effective though the change must concern the same traits and it must be gradual (ie.: happening over time).

Falling in Love

People fall in love with those who are near them.
The major factor of love is proximity.
The second most important one is similarity (in values, attitudes, beliefs, and personalities).

Intimate details make us closer

Sharing intimate and personal aspects of ourselves, both positive and negative, helps the development of close relationships.

> **Honest self-disclosure strengthen relationships**

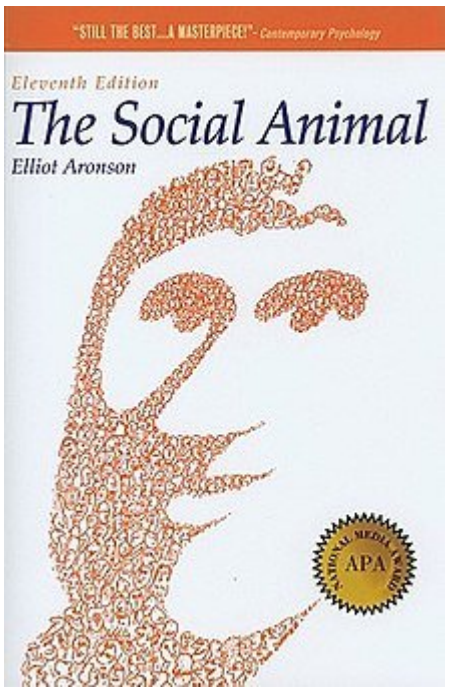
Honesty Best Medicine for Relationships

If all the wisdom in The Social Animal weren't enough, Aronson drops another life-changing gold nugget when it comes to relationships.

He says that humans seek "gain" and novelty. But in love relationships that are always stable, there is little to gain because our partner already loves us.
And there is much to get hurt about because our partners are so important to us that a small criticism can take us down.

How to cure this conundrum?
Honesty and authenticity!
Honesty is the key to long-term relationships, says Aronson.

Why?
Because with honesty we can get real feedback that will give us a bit of that "loss and gain" experience that keeps the relationship fresh. It won't allow us to take our partners for granted and it will keep the relationship from becoming dull and boring.



Real-Life Applications

There is so much information here if you want to maximize your effectiveness with people. For example:

- **Take Away Excuses to Make People Act**

To increase donations to a non-profit an experiment was added to the pitch "even a penny will help". The effect was extremely powerful because it took away the excuse of "I don't have much money". People donate more and even gave bigger donations.

- **Link to Self to Retain Information**

We have an egocentric memory. Such as, we remember better what we think is related to us. Thus, when you want to remember something, relate it to your personal experience and ask yourself what it means to you and/or how you can use it.

- **Leveraging Cognitive Dissonance**

To induce positive attitudes toward an object or opinion, get people to commit themselves to the object or opinion. If you want people to harden or soften their moral attitudes, respectively tempt without them committing or tempting them enough that they commit the deed themselves.

- **Speak First to "Destroy" Your Opponent's Presentation**

When you speak first you imprint people with your message. When your opponent starts speaking they are still thinking of your speech, and that "pollutes" your opponent's presentation.

- **Don't Be Afraid of Criticizing: it Gains Admiration**

The Social Animal shows that negative evaluations increase the admiration we feel for the evaluator -as long as it's not evaluating us :)-.

CONS

Even great books like *The Social Animal* can have a few cons:

- **Sometimes jumping to Conclusions**

At times while "*The Social Animal*" I felt like it was jumping to conclusions, making the inference sound obvious truth when it wasn't.

For example, the author says that US residents in the South have a bigger sense of honor and are more likely to get into gunfights because in the past a reputation for being tough was useful to protect their kettle. Well, that *might* be the case indeed, but how can we be sure?

Later it says that our mind is predisposed to stereotyping -and thus prejudice- because our ancestors needed to quickly assess friends VS foes, members of a friendly tribe, and members of enemy tribes.
Again, these *evolutionary psychology* explanations are mental lucubrations that do *seem* to make sense, but they are *not* science.

- **Doesn't Always Ask Difficult Questions**

I feel that at times the author doesn't stop and ask the difficult questions. For example, when he discusses racism his position always seems to be that "we are all the same".
What if instead he asked if there were even the tiniest inborn differences among different ethnical groups?

Or he talks about violent pornography perpetuating the "myth that women enjoy rape". The vast majority of women *don't* enjoy rape, but it's a fact that many women want more dominant men and that some women have sexual fantasies revolving around sexual aggression and domination.
I feel "*The Social Animal*" could have made a footnote for some of those thornier aspects.

- **Not Always Purely Scientific**

The author at times jumps in with his opinion and views.
Sometimes that's great, like for example when he weighs in giving his own opinion on the research. Some other times, it felt a bit moralistic for a scientific text.
An example is the criticism of a society showing how violent solutions are both predominant and violent like for example Arnold Schwarzenegger and James Bond becoming (negative, in his opinion) cultural icons.

- **Small Samples in Scientific Method Explanation**

The last chapter of "The Moral Animal" is dedicated to explaining the scientific method in social psychology. The author explains that the correct method is to have two random groups which will make sure that we can only measure one variable.

However, he does not talk about the size of the groups, and sometimes his examples are based on small samples. With small samples it's quite possible that the two groups won't be homogenous at all, with one group presenting, say, many more individuals who are richer, smarter, aggressive, or whatever you have it.
As *How to Lie With Statistics* explains, small sample sizes are prime examples of wrong conclusions.

- **Slight Political (Liberal) Bias?**

At times it feels like "*The Social Animal*" presents a slight liberal bias.
For example, it introduces the F-scale of authoritarianism where F stands for "fascist" and doesn't address the criticism. It also only enumerates the "cons" of authoritarian personalities, like insecurity, being highly dependent on parents, and suspicion.

And just to be clear: I think what Aronson says is true and enlightening. But without also adding criticism and the advantages of an authoritarian personality -and there should be some?- the text seems less balanced.

P.S.: I read that previous versions were even more strongly politically on the left.

- **Change Behavior Instead of Attitude**

Changes in attitude can lead to changes in behavior. But it's difficult to change attitude with, say, education.
It might be easier to change behavior to change attitude.

- **Too Long on Some Topics, Ignoring Others**

If the book wanted to be more of a textbook, I found it to expand too much on certain topics and too little on some others.
For example, the racial issue is most relevant to the US and I would have liked all the space on race and prejudice to go to some other big issues of social psychology.
But that's up to personal preferences of course.

PROS

The Moral Animal is the best social psychology book I have read so far. And one of the very best books I have read on psychology.

- **Great Overview**

One of the biggest advantages of "*The Social Animal*" is that you get a solid overview of the whole field of social psychology.

- **Wisdom With Little Fluff**

Little stories and little fluff but lots of wisdom. Just like I love it.

- **Great Influencing Manual**

This is more great material in influencing here than in many books on the influence that I have read.
Also read: best books on influence and persuasion

- **Deep Relationship Wisdom**

There is more wisdom on relationships in "*The Social Animal*" than in a few dedicated relationship books I have read.

Review

The Social Animal is simply the best and most comprehensive book on psychology available today.

The amount of wisdom and information in "*The Social Animal*" is simply staggering.

That doesn't mean you won't need any other book on the topic: if you're hungry for knowledge, you do.
But if you're in a hurry and want a good overview, then pick this one first and the rest when you've got time.

Check the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

The Social Animal (Brooks): Notes & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Social Animal* author David Brooks explains fundamental psychological concepts via the story of a man and a woman, seen developing throughout their lives, from birth to death.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Humans Are Too Complex for Schemes
  - Science of Love
  - Relationships
  - About Sex
  - Human VS Machine Thinking
  - Attachment Styles
  - Flight or Fight Natural Tendencies
- The Social Animal Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We overestimate the importance of money for happiness and underestimate relationships. Research shows that relationships are the most important determinant of happiness (deep relationships and good marriages on top)
- What we think of ourselves often bears little resemblance to what others think. Always ask for feedback
- What makes our brain so special is the ability to handle abstract, “fuzzy” representations of reality and compare them

Full Summary

About the Author: David Brooks is a journalist and a political and cultural commentator.

Humans Are Too Complex for Schemes

Humans are too complex for neat progression and boxes of meaning.
Maslow does the same, but **the latest research casts doubts on the idea of simple progressions the way Maslow describes**.

My Note: I’m so grateful for this!
The Maslow hierarchy was always a pet peeve of mine.
Introduced and presented all over the place, with so few people who ever questioned how good of a model it was to actually understand people and human behavior.

Science of Love

People tend to end up with people who live nearby and tend to choose spouses with similar intelligence.
And an important way of measuring someone's intelligence, says David Brooks, is through vocabulary. The author says that we have so many words to impress mates.

A few more interesting tidbits:

- **People seek the highest possible return in the dating marketplace**
- **The richer he is, the higher his sexual market value, and the younger the spouse**
- **A woman's attractiveness is a great predictor of the husband's income**
- **Men can compensate for their qualities**
  - Shorter men can be more successful than taller ones if they earn more (Dan Ariely calculated by how much)
  - A black man should earn more than a white one to do well
  - Asian men need to earn more than white ones to have the same level of attractiveness
  - Also read: **sexual market value hacks**
- Women resist dating outside their ethnic group much more than men do
- Men are more romantic
- Women have a better sense of smell

Bodies More Important Than Faces

Men rate women with attractive bodies and unattractive faces consistently more highly than attractive faces but unattractive bodies. The body takes precedence because it's more important for reproduction.

And while men look at cleavage, women look for signs of trustworthiness.
My Note: albeit it's not wrong, this is also a gross oversimplification.

Also, read:

- The science of dating

Relationships

- Marital satisfaction is U-shaped: happiest in the beginning, unhappiest when children are adolescents, then climbs again
- Social skills are not connected to IQ (only 5% of IQ explains *emotional intelligence*)
- Women react more strongly to relationship stress and men to assault on their status
- Relationships are the biggest determinant of people's happiness
- Extroverts are happier than *introverts* cause they have more relationships

About Sex

- Men have higher sex drive which stays more constant but dips because of an unclear, invisible understanding of their partner's menstrual cycle
- Women's sex drive is influenced by many variables
- Religious women experiment less but their desires are the same.
- Women are attracted by female and male bodies, her body lubricates even while watching animal sex
- Women's sexual tastes are more influenced by education than men's (educated women are more likely to perform oral sex and experiment)

- People with one recurrent sexual partner are happier than people with multiple sexual partners

Human VS Machine Thinking

David Brooks says that the human mind works differently than a computer because it's capable of "fuzzy thinking". Such as we make up "gists" of what things are and we can make patterns.

Once we make up gists, we can make lots of things with them.
We can connect dogs with wolves, we draw parallels between cats and dogs because we can think that "this is sort of like that". We use our neuro-imagination to draw parallels.

It seems easy but it's very complex.
Taking two things that do not exist -our gists- and comparing them to a third thing -a description of something- that also doesn't exist is something a computer cannot do.

Attachment Styles

David Brooks says that there is no one best parenting style.
As long as the parenting is coherent and predictable, then the attachment will probably develop a secure attachment style.

Avoidant attachment children tend to have a parent who are emotionally withdrawn and psychologically unavailable. They don't communicate well with children and don't establish rapport.

The attachment styles of children also predict how good their relationships will be.
Also, read:

- Dating as an anxious attachment
- The anxious/avoidant trap

Flight or Fight Natural Tendencies

Some people tend to flee stressful situations. Some others have a bigger tendency to fight.
The author repeats a few studies on performance saying that top performers train to learn and improve while mediocre ones train to have fun (also read: *The Talent Code*).

The high achievers also do one thing they are good at and do it over and over again (*Good to Great*).

The Social Animal Quotes

On learning the world VS adjusting to the world:

> We spend much of the first halves of our lives trying to build internal models that fit the world and much of the last halves trying to adjust the world so it fits the inner models

On human intelligence VS machine learning:

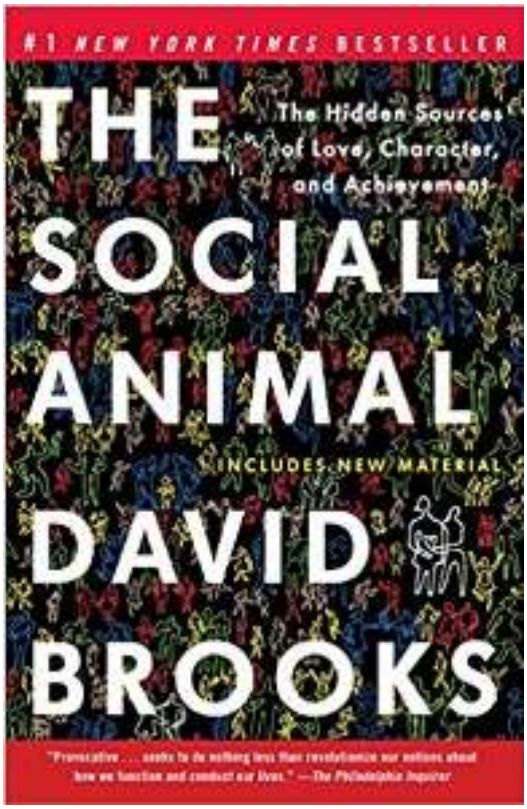
> We are smart because we are capable of fuzzy thinking

On school VS "passion" (I disagree with this):

> School asks students to be good at a range of subjects, but life asks people to find one passion that they will follow forever

On failure:

> Much of life is about failure, whether we acknowledge it or not, and your destiny is profoundly shaped by how effectively you learn from and adapt to failure



Real-Life Applications

- **Don't Trust Neat Theories of Categories**

Humans are very complex.
Neat theories that put things in order and inboxes are often too big simplifications of reality to even help us understand ourselves.

For example, the Maslow hierarchy looks neat with its order of needs. But, as David Brooks says, research shows it's more complex than that.

- **Watch Out for Status Inflaters**

Status is not objective.
Some people are status inflaters, they trick people into perceiving them as having higher status than they actually are.

Some people punch below their weight instead, for example applying to jobs they're overqualified for because they're afraid of competition (or because they find comfort in "winning").

- **Ask People for Feedback**

There is little overlap between what people think of themselves and what others think of them. Thus, always ask people for feedback!

CONS

- **“The Social Animal” Book Title**

Honestly, I have put off the use of the title “*The Social Animal*” since there is already a book with that name by Elliot Aronson.
The two books are also somewhat similar, providing an overview of many different studies on people and psychology. I wonder what Aronson thought of that.

- **Introduces Research Without Digging Deeper**

The author introduces several pieces of research but rarely tells us anything about those research.
For example, *The Social Animal* talks about *the Marshmallow Test*, a very important study, but also a study that has been effectively criticized recently, which other studies failing to replicate part of the initial findings.
Hence, you must take this book with a grain of salt sometimes.
The same goes for *Grit* and *Emotional Intelligence*.

- **Sometimes Sensationalist**

In the description of the neurons, we get the usual spiel of “possible” connections among neurons which is higher than the particle of the universe. That really tells you nothing.

- **Sometimes Correlation Mistaken for Causation**

I saw in “*The Social Animal*” several issues of correlation for causation.

For example, the author says that people with one recurrent sexual partner in a year are happier than people with multiple sexual partners.
However, it fails to take into account that people with multiple sexual might be driven by an internal “dark push” that makes it harder for them to stop (also read: psychology analysis of womanizers).

PROS

- **Great Concept**

The idea of narrating the lives of two people and explaining it through studies and psychology is a very good one. I believe it added value and made David Brook’s work stand out from all the insignificant, *journalist-penned pop psychology books* that add very little value.

- **Sometimes Funny**

A few jokes here and there will make you smile. It’s always good to laugh, even when you are busy deepening your knowledge

Review

I’m ambivalent about *The Social Animal*.

There were a lot of golden nuggets and many interesting tidbits that I had never heard before, and I love that.
There were also a few pop psychology “myths” that the author didn’t go to the bottom of.

The structure of *The Social Animal* is its biggest peculiarity.
The idea of going through two people’s lives to investigate the human-animal in different periods of its life is fascinating.

Basically, a linear approach instead of the usual vertical one.

However, I'm not sure how the final product works well. Not because Brooks did it or didn't do it well. But I wonder on a more general level if such a broad undertaking might not just be too much to chew for a single book. I felt that "*The Social Animal*" touched upon extremely interesting topics but it could not stop long enough to go deep enough.
Obviously, the author needed to move on with the story.

Overall though, I am glad I read The Social Animal and took away quite some novel wisdom.

Check the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

Sperm Wars: A Misleading Classic of Evolutionary Mating Theory

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Sperm Wars (1996) looks at dating and sex from an evolutionary biology perspective and through the slightly controversial perspective of "sexual conflict".

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - The Arms' Races Between Sexes
  - The No-Fapping Big Lie
  - Cheating Tendencies
  - What's Important to Have Big?
  - Quality As Important As Quantity
  - Poor People Get Cheated More
  - People Pick Gender of Children Depending on ROI
  - Rape & Prostitution
  - What Men & Women Like
  - Strategies for Reproductive Success
  - Long-Term Relationships Can Be Most Successful
- Sperm Wars Criticism
  - Conclusions of Criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Women can gain by pitching one men's sperm against the other with back-to-back sex with different partners
- The strategy of focusing on fewer children can be more useful than going for quantity
- When you're poor daughters are better and sons are better when you're very resource-rich (thus, the Chinese did it wrong for decades)

Notes

About the Author:
Robin Baker studied zoology and earned his Ph.D. with a thesis on the evolution of the migratory habit in butterflies.
He later left the academic world to focus on his writing.

Note: Skipping the Stories

Sperm Wars introduces lots of stories that go along with the theory.
Some of the stories are interesting, some even funny and, some have been noted, can also function as entertaining

soft-porn reading.
I will skip the stories for this summary.

The Arms' Races Between Sexes

Sperm Wars paints a somewhat bleak picture for those like me who see genders as complementing each other. Instead, it shows Robin Baker shows how males and females in a relationship can have major incentives in tricking and deceiving one another:

- Women hide their fertile days because:
  - She can more easily deceive her partner if she wants to cheat
  - Keeps her partner interested in her at all times
  - Confuses herself as much as her partner, leading to more routine sex
- Women are more likely to have extra-marital affairs during ovulation
- Men ejaculate more when they have been away from their partner (unconsciously preparing for possible cheating and sperm wars)
- When women change partner she almost always moves up

The No-Fapping Big Lie

There is a big craze around the Internet on "no-fapping". Interestingly, Robin Baker says that it's a lie that men and religion impose on men to defend themselves from single men.

The author makes a big case that masturbation helps in sperm wars because it "cleans" the pipe of older and less lively sperm. Instead, a man who masturbates has more lively sperm which is more suited to engage and win sperm wars.

Note: Probably true
Eric Castle from the Mayo Clinic says that masturbation doesn't have such a big effect on conception.

Cheating Tendencies

Sperm Warms says that women are much more likely to have sex with a man who is not their partner during their fertile days and is much less likely to use contraception (data for this statement is missing).

Soon after the cheating, however, there is a tendency for her to run back to her long-term partner.
Reason why?
So that she can be inseminated by both and thus promote sperm competition.
Let the best ejaculator win.

What's Important to Have Big?

The author says that penis size matters little in sperm competition.

Instead, the testes' size matters a lot as more sperm gives a major advantage in sperm competition and increases the chances of fertilizing the egg. Especially in non-monogamous species, which is why males of non-monogamous species have larger testes.

The author says women are interested in their buttocks more than the penis and muscle (*Body Language of Love* confirms this).

Also, read:

- Sex at Dawn

Quality As Important As Quantity

The author says that in poor conditions where many children die, people tend to produce lots of offspring.

However, Baker says that a strategy of focusing on fewer children and nurturing them properly, and giving them more resources is equally effective.
One single child can also work, but it's very risky as it can fail spectacularly if the child fails to reproduce.

A balance between investing in resources before having children and actually having children is important.

Poor People Get Cheated More

The author suggests that poor men get cheated more.
Men of higher wealth and status instead obtain partners earlier, reproduce earlier, and are more likely to do the cheating.

Read more on cheating, faithfulness, and infidelity:

- How to overcome infidelity
- How to forgive a cheater
- Why people cheat
- Emotional infidelity: what is it and how it happens
- How to pick a loyal partner

People Pick Gender of Children Depending on ROI

Poor people are more likely to have a daughter because daughters are more likely to guarantee reproduction -and you can be sure that the child is hers- and are more likely to marry up.

It's best to have boys for high-status couples instead because men with lots of resources can have multiple children that they can all cater to.

And indeed, Baker says, that's what we see: American presidents, for example, have 60% of sons.
It's not yet clear how women can "decide" which gender, but it seems to be the woman who achieves the gender bias.

My Note: Small sample size
the theory might be good, but the example is not. I believe that the number of presidents' offspring is too small to derive any meaningful data.
Different researchers have reached different conclusions here, so this might be true, but I'm not 100% sure as of now. If it's true, it's by a small-ish factor.
Also read: *Fooled by Randomness* and *How to Lie With Statistics*.

Rape & Prostitution

The author says that rape and prostitution can both be effective strategies.
Indeed prostitution might have been so successful on our part that, in a way, we are all sons of bitches (that one had made me chuckle :).

There are also many drawbacks though, including the risks of disease.

The author wonders how come rape is not more common since it can actually be successful.
One of the reasons is that it's risky. It often involves a physical fight and also a high risk of retribution from possible partners, family, or tribe members.
He postulates that most men can become rapists given the conditions because most wars, which provide a safer

environment for rapists, show widespread raping.

Once a woman has been raped, it might be good for her to conceive though, and the author says that a woman is more likely to conceive from rape than from routine sex with her partner.
The author also makes the interesting claim that women often stick with abusive men who successfully raped them because they "proved their strength" (VS a man who tried but didn't succeed).

> **Prostitution has been so successful that, in a way, we are all sons of bitches**

What Men & Women Like

Men mostly look at the beauty, age-related to fertility- and reproductive fitness.
Women look a lot at status.

My Note: Depends
As Aronson explains in *The Social Animal* women also behave like men and look at beauty mostly when the status is the same or difficult to assess. Otherwise, they go for status.

Crucially, and this is what I credit to Sperm Wars the most, is the notion that **men respond to traits such as weakness and dependence which can indicate fidelity**.
Also, read:

- **Sexual market value**
- Sexual market place

Strategies for Reproductive Success

The author says that men are much more similar to themselves than women are to other women.
However, they also pursue four different strategies for reproduction:

1. Bisexuality
2. Sperm warfare specialization
3. Avoiding sperm warfare
4. In between avoiding and engaging in sperm warfare (the majority of men)

The strategies tend to be in equilibrium in society.
Basically, **it's not true that everyone should try to be as "alpha" as possible**. Because there are enough sperm warfare specialists a strategy of monogamy can be equally or more (or less) effective.
It seems best instead to pursue your strategy also based on your biological predisposition.

Long-Term Relationships Can Be Most Successful

Although few people pursue a lifetime of pure monogamy, most find success in long-term relationships.
Amongst the advantages, there is that of not getting caught cheating and much, much lower risk of diseases.

Sperm Wars Criticism

I have researched this book, and studied dozen more evolutionary handbooks by high-authority institutions like *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology*, or the *Oxford Handbook of Infidelity*, just to name two.

The concept of Sperm Wars has become very popular, and many researchers mention Robin Baker.
So Baker is no lightweight and he enjoys at least some recognition among scholars.

That being said, I didn't come out of this with a lot of trust in this book and its conclusions.

Here are some notes:

- Robert Martin, a biology Ph.D., writes in Psychology Today that there is "humans have no special biological adaptations to cope with sperm competition".
- **Killer sperm is, at best, unproven**: Studies show inconclusive results on "killer sperm" in both humans and animals
- A study suggests that sperm traits are female-inherited, which means that male competition won't affect sperm as directly as Sperm Wars implies
- **Non-paternity rates are much smaller:** The author reports that 10% of children are not fathered by a long-term partner. That's a lot -albeit it would still leave 90% of faithful cases-, but it's also not true. If you take DNA tests as a father because you are not sure, then your chances of not being the father are around 1 in 3. But on the overall population the median among estimates is 3.7% (and even lower for those fathers who don't have any suspicions) One of the sources is here and another one here)

Conclusions of Criticism

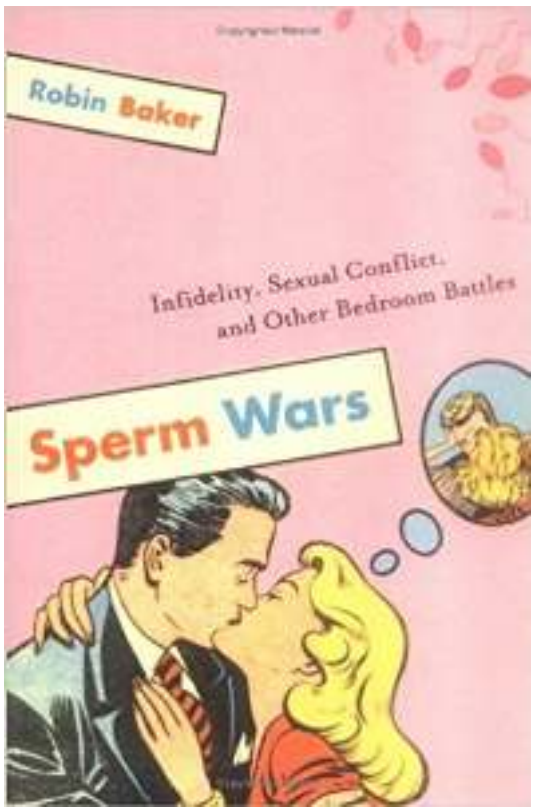
We most likely evolved several adaptations to increase our odds of conceptions, and these adaptations may include competition with others.

Sometimes men and women also have diverging interests, and we can expect there a 'sexual arms race'.

However, the war of the sexes is nowhere near as bad as the author makes it out to be and for most couples there is probably larger scopre for cooperation than deception -albeit cheating while the other partner suspects nothing can also lead to high rewards in such a system-.

Same goes for 'sperm wars'.
It likely played a role in human evolution and still partially do. But not nearly as badly as the author says. There is also no proof -and so far it seems more likely no than yes- that "killer sperm" and "blocking sperm" even exist.

It may be worth noting that Baker also wrote some novels regarding sperm competition. This may suggest a personal fascination with the topic that may lead him to for beyond what a rigorous scientific approach would warrant.



Real-Life Applications

Learn Nature, Then Choose What to Follow
I think a great takeaway here is that nature can be fucked up and that a lot of our evolution can be maladaptive as well.

Thus, learn biology, and then reflect on what you really want and what's really good for you and the people around you.
Because that's not necessarily what our prime urges might push us into.

CONS

- **Unproven Claims Presented as Fact**

I really wonder why the author presents claims that are unproven and highly speculative without warning the readers about their very nature. He could have easily told they were speculation and he would have avoided so much criticism.

Was it a case of looking for sensationalism?
To remain in the biological realm I would call such choice maladaptive.

- **Homosexuality / Bisexuality Explanation**

The author tends to explain almost every behavior in light of "better suited for procreation", which in my opinion is a very common mistake that does not take into account that, when so thousands and thousands of traits are interplayed, a lot of behaviors and mutation are just purely out of chance.

However, out of all the theories in Sperm Wars, the one on homosexuality as a maladaptive offshoot of adaptive bisexuality made the least sense to me. I won't go into details but it seemed a rather poor theory to me.

- **No References**

Attention: the author makes it clear that Sperm Wars won't leverage references because it's the popularization of his other work, Human Sperm Competition, which is heavily referenced.
However, as a guy interested in both the practical application of science and the science itself, I would have liked an in-between version.

- **Confuses Correlation With Causation**

The author says that since rape is common during wars, then men must all have a tendency to rape.

However, there is also a correlation element, such as men who go to war are more likely to be violent themselves maybe?
And of course, a situational element, where an environment full of violence can lower the bar for more violence.

PROS

- **Instructive Read on Sex Arms' Races**

If you have not read many books on evolutionary biology Sperm Wars can be a shocking eye-opener.
In a good way.

- **Good Resource for Understanding People**

There are many good concepts here, and you will learn a lot about *psychology and human behavior*.

Review

Sperm Wars shares some deeply insightful content but also, unfortunately, quite a few unfounded claims that cast some shadows on the whole.

That makes it difficult to rate this book.
Part of me loved it and it had a lot of new information that led me to a deeper understanding of the arms race to reproduction.
But it also has a lot of conjectures, key disproved information, and no scientific reference.

When I first read it, I almost wished the theory was true because it presents such a beautiful and elegant theory that explains things so well.
But beauty and elegance are not synonymous with truth.

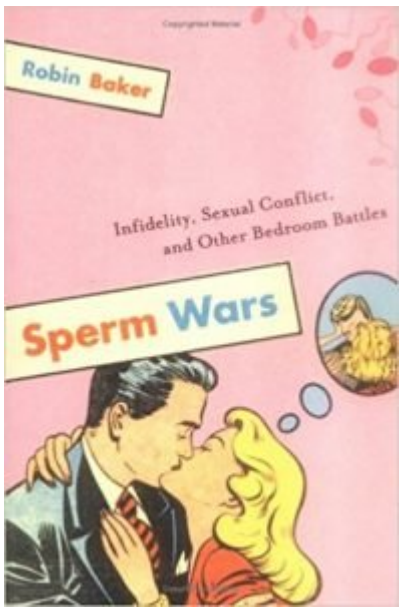
Overall, I would give *Sperm Wars* four stars for the value it provided me the first time I read it, and zero stars for scientific to warn readers that they must do their own research with this book.
And a big strike against it for scientific integrity: some information in "*Sperm Wars*" is highly misleading. And the author does nothing to warn the readers his conclusions are highly speculative at best and either unproven or with plenty of discordant evidence available.

Check the:

- **best red pill books**
- **best evolutionary psychology books**

or get the book on Amazon

Sperm Wars Summary: Eye-Opening, But Flawed



Some deeply eye opening content but also, unluckily, quite a few unfounded and wrong claims that cast quite some shadows on the book as a whole.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/sperm-wars-book/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
1.8

Secrets to Winning at Office Politics: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Secrets to Winning at Office Politics instructs the readers on the intricacies of office politics, career strategies, and effective self-promotion for career advancement.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Organizational Facts of Life
  - Forget Fairness: Look for Leverage
  - Political Games
  - How People Commit Political Suicide
  - Is It You, Your Boss, Or Is It Just a Toxic Environment?
  - The Four Ps of Power
  - Parent, Child, and Adult Role
  - Rules For Long-Term Success
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Stop using “playing politics” as a pejorative for other people: we all do it and it’s a key tool to success: so you better get good at it
- Realize that your boss will have a major impact on your life: make it a priority to have a good relationship
- Make friends, not enemies

Full Summary

About the Author:
Marie G. McIntyre is a carer coach specializing in career advancement and success, and she runs a consulting service for people seeking advice.
Her approach is that politics are nothing “bad”, but a normal aspect of work and life. A normal aspect, as well as a crucial one for your career goals.

The Organizational Facts of Life

Marie says that the sooner you accept the following realities, the faster you will go down the road of positive realism in the workplace (and in life):

1. Organizations are not democracies
2. Some people have more power than others
3. Virtually all decisions are subjective
4. Your boss has control over much of your life

5. Fairness is an impossible goal.

Forget Fairness: Look for Leverage

The author says fairness doesn't exist and you should look for leverage instead.
She points at a few key levers for leverage, including:

- **Power of results**

Strong political power boosts your results and strong results boost your political power.

- **Power of knowledge**

When you become the repository of sought-after information and expertise your power increases exponentially.

- **The Power of Attitude**

Friendly, helpful, and cooperative. The type people *want* to work with.

- **The Power of Friends**

Here it is for you, simply and life-changing: make friends, not enemies.
Friends and allies increase your leverage, fights, and enemies decrease it.

- **The Power of Empathy**

When you can make yourself a trusted person who can listen to people, keep secrets, and possibly dispense some good wisdom you will develop a strong network of trusted confidantes.

- **The Power of Network**

Your network is the total sum of the people you can call for support, help, or information. As someone said, your network is your net worth. Also read: *Never Eat Alone* by Keith Ferrazzi.

Political Games

The author outlines a few typical "political games" people tend to stick with, including:

- **Suck-Up Players**

Their strategy is to have the best possible relationship with the boss by kissing up to him, pampering him, and always agreeing with him.
It's often not a good strategy as many managers are not looking for sycophants and these games often come across as spineless.

- **Control Players**

They resist what others are telling them to do, either because they are dominators and enjoy telling others what to do, or because they naturally resist and resent outside influence.
Too much control game often degenerates into useless power struggles

- **Shunning Players**

They isolate and ostracize people from their group for being different or for not conforming to the rules.

- **Put-Down Players**

They are rude to others so that they can feel better about themselves.

- **Scapegoat Players**

They always offload the blame to someone else. Their colleague, the customer, and the other department.

Also, read:

- Archetypes of political players, and how to deal with them

How People Commit Political Suicide

Marie McIntyre says there are a few patterns with which people kill their own chances in the workplace.
Some of them are:

- **Becoming the problem**

When you complain a lot, adopt an adversarial attitude, or constantly create problems, then you are only on your superior's map in connection to a problem.
And when that happens too often, then *you* become "the problem".
And corporate life tends to be short for people who become the problem.

- **Negative self-talk**

When you develop negative self-talk and the connected victim mentality, it's easy to start seeing the environment as toxic and your colleagues and bosses as unfair enemies.
Then you begin to treat them accordingly and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that leads to your demise.
Instead, break the negative self-talk and

- **Foolish reaction to change**

The author says that you can either embrace change, look for another place to work, or be a pain in the butt and possibly become the problem. The choice is yours.

Also, read:

- **Political landmines you need to be aware of**

Is It You, Your Boss, Or Is It Just a Toxic Environment?

The author dedicates a portion of *Secrets to Winning at Office Politics* to recognizing whether the problem is you or the environment you're in.

She talks about the attribution error, which is a *psychological bias* that leads to blaming others for our problems.

To do a correct analysis the author recommends you take n objective, dispassionate look at the environment around you. Are your colleagues happy? Or is everyone complaining and keeping a "cover your ass" (CYA) file?

If you realize you are in a toxic environment the author invites you to change workplace or you can easily transform into a toxic person yourself.

The Four Ps of Power

The author highlights four Ps that you need to address and improve upon to increase your power and political clout.

They are:

- **Power Assessment**: Look at your situation and ask yourself how you can improve your leverage position
- **Performance**: how can you make your organization more successful?
- **Perception**: How can you make your work, projects, and results more visible to the higher-ups?

- **Partnerships**: How can you make more friends, allies, and supporters?

The author outlines very good ideas on how you can improve each one of them.
I particularly liked the idea of improving perceptions, for example by making a report or monthly update of your daily tasks, thus giving them more visibility.
The author was in HR and she started recording and categorizing the complaints they would get from employees, thus providing a pulse check to upper management which she eventually presented to upper management.

Parent, Child, and Adult Role

The author says that power issues often grow out of the parent and child role that people take in relation to others -instead of the adult role that we should all take-.

Upward relationships become difficult for those who see the manager as a parent because they will either react rebelliously or be submissive and overly compliant.
The author writes:

> Rebellious employees tend to be oppositional and anti-authoritarian, just like two-year-old and teenagers.

Taking the child role with colleagues results in one of the following:

- Competitive child who needs to win
- Self-sufficient child who plays alone
- Bully who pushes people around

My Note: Great observation
I love the explanation of the child's role in terms of over-compliance and rebellion.
This is also a great insight from the *transactional analysis*.
But the lateral relationship with colleagues seemed quite a stretch and it didn't convince me fully.

Parent & Child Managers

Parental managers come in two flavors:

- **Dominating**: overuse direct authority with orders and harsh reprimands. Employees respect authority but usually don't like tyrants.
- **Smothering**: see themselves as attentive and scrupulous, but employees usually see them as annoying micro-managers

Child managers instead are afraid of managing people because they are afraid of being too domineering and not being liked.

Rules For Long-Term Success

Finally, I found Marie's final rules for long-term success to be very good:

1. **Be honest and ethical in all your dealings with people.**

We're not living in tribes and many of us don't live in small villages anymore. But, eventually, your good or bad reputation will spread. And if people can't trust you, there goes your credibility and leverage.

2. **Believe in yourself. If you don't, why should anyone else?**

Insecure people commit all kinds of political faux pas.

3. **Believe in your work.**

It will make a difference in your results, your attitude, and your joy for life.

4. **Do the best job you can.**

Most people don't do the best job you can. It seems crazy to high achievers, but that's also an advantage of them: it's easier to climb the ladder.

5. **Keep your commitments.**

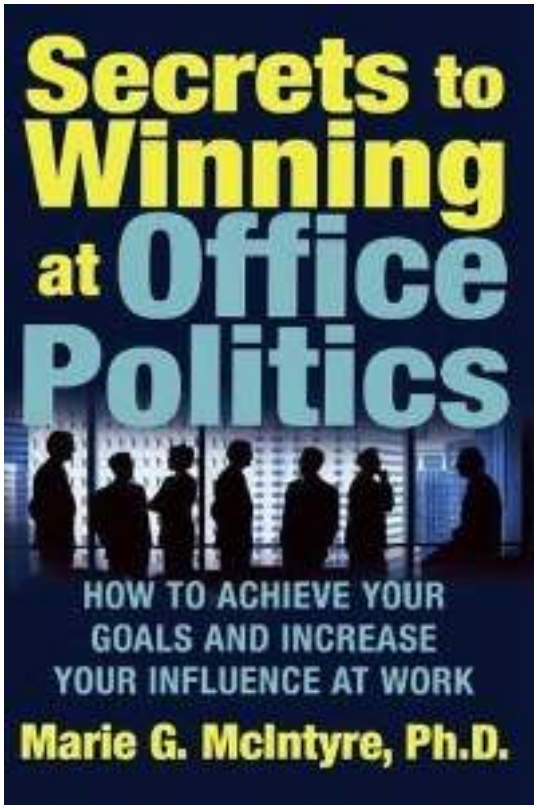
So simple and yet so life-changing to help establish a strong reputation.
On the other hand, if you want to remain in the limbo of nobodies, miss deadlines, be sloppy, and don't keep your word.

6. **Be a pleasant person.**

We see people who can give us good vibes and we avoid those who give us bad vibes.
Be a person that people want to be around and your stock can only go up.

7. **Feel true respect for everyone.**

This is something that you can't fake until you make it.
It must come from a place of genuineness.



Real-Life Applications

- **Don't Let Politics Distract You From Results, But…**

Don't allow politics to suck all your energies away from your deliverables. People saying "it's who you know, not what you do" are rarely powerful and accomplished. Your results are one of your best and strongest tools for political power.

- **… Do Learn Politics**

However, politics can make your life and your ascension much easier -or quite impossible-. Learn to play the political game.

- **Expose Yourself to Read People**

Learning to recognize and deal with different people and personalities is one of the most important skills you can learn to increase your political power.

- **Dump Your Complaining Friends**

If you spend too much time with people who complain about work, make no mistake: that's no support group. That's a bitching club that will keep you stuck, unhappy, and politically powerless.

CONS

- **Could Have Been Briefer**

Some concepts repeat a few times and I feel the book could have been condensed a bit.

- **Sociopath Label**

The sociopath label is applied a bit too freely.

- **Freudian Labels**

I loved some explanations of power issues in terms of Freudian terms. However, as it's often the cause of Freudian theories, it can lead to the over-explanation of every issue in terms of childhood experiences.

PROS

- **Great Overview of Career Strategies**

A very good book to get an overview of common political mistakes, and career strategies for personal success.

- **Great Psychological Profiling of Office Player**

I very much enjoyed and liked Marie McIntyre's psychological profiling of different kinds of office players.

Review

When I picked up "*Secrets to Winning at Office Politics,*" I thought I was going to get some sort of "hand to hand" combat guide to do well at work.

But this is not *The 48 Laws of Power* applied to work, and that's also its strength!

The author skips many of the power players to focus on general power principles and the core fundamentals of what matters to get ahead: make friends instead of enemies, and deliver great work.

I can recommend *Secrets to Winning at Office Politics.*

Check the **best career books** or get the book on Amazon

The Red Queen: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Red Queen* (1993) author Matt Ridley zigzags with ease between psychology, history, sexual strategies, and mounds of research to much light on why we are the way we are.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Reproduction Is Everything
  - Conflict Trumps Cooperation
  - Selection Within Most Important
  - Sex & Diversity
  - Sons Are Higher Risk
  - Why Men Want to Sleep Around (And Women Not As Much)
  - Fighter or Lover? Depends on Whether Women Choose
  - Selection Can Be Random!
  - What's the Human Mating System?
  - What Mating System is Best?
  - Sex Arms' Race
  - Why You Don't See When Women Are Fertile
  - Men Seek Beauty, Women Status
  - Men Are Different Than Women
  - Differences Between Races are Negligible
- The Red Queen Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Sexual evolution shaped us the way we are more than anything else
- There is an inherent war of the sexes between genders, but the war within sexes is equally strong (both mitigated by a mutual gain in cooperation)
- By our nature, women are coyer and men more sexually aggressive. To deny it, or to deny that men and women are different, is an utter failure of understanding humans

Full Summary

About the Author: Matt Ridley studied zoology and focused on the mating systems of different birds. He earned his Ph.D. researching the sexual habits of pheasants.
He later moved on to become a science journalist, moving between business engagement and scientific writing.
He is also the author of "*The Origins of Virtue*".

Reproduction Is Everything

Everything evolved to make reproduction more efficient.

People who developed traits and behavior that made them more likely to reproduce passed on their genes.
Therefore, anything that increases the chances of reproduction was passed on at the expense of everything else.

> **It's about REPRODUCTION of the fittest, not SURVIVAL of the fittest**

Conflict Trumps Cooperation

The balance between cooperation and conflict is a great theme of the human species.
Ridley says that the appearance of selflessness is misleading: animals are serving the interest of their own gene.

Selection Within Most Important

The selection within the species, says Ridley, is more important than among different species.
Why so?
Simple: you don't need to run faster than a cheetah, you only need to run faster than another member of your tribe.
And **you are already smarter than all other animals, but what matters is how much smarter you are compared to other humans**.

The author says that humans haven't yet had a society where competition is good for the whole.
And it's the same for genes in a pool of genes. Every gene only "wants" to get into the next generation (note that as Dawkins explains that "willingness" is of course figurative).

Sex & Diversity

The author says that sex is burdensome.
However, it evolved because it provides a genetic advantage thanks to the variability it bestows.
Since each child will be different than each parent and also different by the simple average of the two, he will make sure that evolution keeps happening.

Sons Are Higher Risk

Sons can provide more benefits to their parents because if they do very well they can reproduce more than daughters.
But if he is not a competitive son then it's more likely he won't have any offspring at all.
Women instead are "safer" as they tend to reproduce even when they are not at the top of the pack.

Indeed high-status couples have more male children.

The author also says that more dominant women and more emotionally independent women gave birth to boys more often.

Why Men Want to Sleep Around (And Women Not As Much)

The sex that carries a baby for nine months has less to gain with extra mating.
The sex that can have as much sex as he can and always gain instead naturally likes to sleep around.

On average, says Matt Ridley, it's true that **men are after quantity and women are after quality**.

How many men are after quantity depends on how much they invest in their children (male parental investment, check *The Moral Animal*). The less they invest, the more they want to mate with… Pretty much any female.

What's "Quality"?

Quality is not such a straightforward issue.
In species that do not help the female rearing children, quality is purely on personal traits. But i**n species that contribute to raising children, then quality also means having lots of resources**.
Thus, it's difficult to be a high-quality man for human females without having any resources.

Also, read:

- **Lovers and providers** (and friends)
- **Pick your best strategies between lover and provider**

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

Fighter or Lover? Depends on Whether Women Choose

The author says that when women have a say in their choice of mate fighting becomes less relevant for men.

Such as: **fights matter when women don't have a choice** and the female always goes to the winner.
But in species where women choose, fights among men matter less.

So pick your seduction style carefully:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

Selection Can Be Random!

I really loved this part of *The Red Queen.*

The author first wonders why so many animals have crazy ornaments and colors, and wonders why.

He introduces two different theories:

1. Fisher says that women choose mates that look handsome independently of indicators of genes
2. The good-gene theorists say that women only pick those handsome men because it's a display of good genes

Overall, it seems that women do pick random beauty traits that have little or no connection to health.
The first shift towards a certain trait happens randomly maybe, but then as more women start liking that trait, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

What's the Human Mating System?

The author wonders: are we monogamous, polygamous, or what?

He says there are 5 ways to answer this question:

1. **Study modern people directly** (monogamous is the answer)
2. **Look at human history** (powerful men enslaved concubines)
3. **Look at modern simple societies** (they're less polygamous than early civilization and less monogamous than our current society)
4. **Study apes** (men's testes are not large enough to be as promiscuous as chimps but larger than fully monogamous gorillas)
5. **Compare humans with other high social structures** (as it teaches us that we're designed for a system of

monogamy plagued by adultery)

Why We *Tend* Towards Monogamy

The author discusses the size of testicles, previous societies, and data to infer that females tend to be monogamous with instances of cheating.
Men push for polygamous societies but most of the time they also go (or settle) for monogamy.

Even in polygamous societies, the author notes, humans form bonds, and even kings with hundreds of concubines usually elect one woman as the N.1.
The author mentions some theories saying men prefer younger women also because they tend to form longer bonds, while chimpanzees don't care about the age of their sexual partner.

However, it might be foolish to talk about humans having a mating system at all. **Humans seem to very much to adapt to the prevailing opportunity.**

So contrary to what the church might say, or what some liberal books such as *Sex at Dawn* might suggest, the truth is that we adapt and be a bit of everything.

What's pretty much stable instead is that the male is the seducer and the woman is the seduced.
And we share this pattern with most of the animal kingdom.

What Mating System is Best?

A polygamous society represents a victory for a few men and a loss for many.

Anti-polygamy laws might do more to protect men than women (women would gain by taking a super resourceful-rich man even as a fourth wife).

The author says that we became monogamous because having one single father to help with the children helped to rear the child. But if the wealth discrepancies grow, then we move toward a polygamous society.

Is It True That Matriarchal Societies Are Peaceful?
The author says that yes, it seems to be the case that if most women have it their way, then societies are more peaceful.

Sex Arms' Race

The author also delves quite some time into the popular and interesting topic of the sexual arms race.

For example:

- Men ejaculate more when they have been away from their wives
- Women keeping a provider and sleeping with a hunk
- Women are more likely to be unfaithful if the marriage is going badly
- Unfaithful women have less high fertile types of orgasms (albeit my quick research found no evidence for "type of orgasms" that facilitate reproduction)
- Women have sex with their lovers when they were more fertile

Also, read:

- **The tools of human sexual conflict**

> Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

Sexual Differences

This means that unfaithful women are more likely to father a child from their lover.
Which makes sense to me, otherwise why would they have a lover in the first place?

In their sexual fantasies, 50% of women say they never switch partners, while men say the same only 12% of the time. But women much more fantasize about sex with a familiar partner than with a stranger as compared to men.

If you are interested in infidelity (and in finding a faithful partner) here are a few good links all based on scientific research:

- How to overcome infidelity
- Why people cheat
- Emotional infidelity: what is it and how it happens
- How to pick a loyal partner

Why You Don't See When Women Are Fertile

There are a few major theories to explain why human females, contrary to most animal species, hide their most reproductive days:

- Hide fertility from him so he sticks around to make love to her
- She hides it so that it's easier for her to sleep around
- He cannot be sure he was the father which helps her protect the children from infanticide

This makes the woman the chooser because if she wants competition she should advertise her fertility and let the competition ensue. By hiding it instead, she can play around better.

Men Seek Beauty, Women Status

Matt Ridley says that experiments repeated all over the world show that women place more value on status and resources while men give more importance to beauty.

The interesting thing is that higher-earning women value the earning capacity of their husbands more, not less than low-earning women. Seems to be a case that high-quality women want even higher quality-man (also see: a practical guide on female hypergamy).

Women also look for and love qualities that are indicators or likely to lead to status and resources.
They universally love, for example, dominance and appreciate status symbols such as expensive cars and clothes.

Also, read:

- **Sexual market value**: an overview
- **Sexual market place**

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

Men Are Different Than Women

Matt Ridley takes aim at the modern tendency of some to deny the differences among genders, or to ascribe all differences to nurture.
He says that it's not all nurture, but also nature, that women are more nurturing (at least towards infants) and men aggressive.

He says that four differences stand out in all repeatable tests:

1. Girls are better at verbal tasks
2. Boys are better are mathematical tasks
3. Boys are more aggressive
4. Girls are better at some visual tasks (reading characters and moods) and boys at others (reading maps)

And gays are more like women than heterosexual men in some of these respects.

Differences Between Races are Negligible

The author says that the differences among races are much smaller than the differences between genders. Something that I also always believed, he says that what makes people similar is much stronger and runs much deeper than what makes us different.

He says that the differences are so small that it just makes more sense to study what makes us similar instead (and what makes men and women different).
Also, read my article in a similar vein:

- Why intercultural communication is a waste of time

> **It's human universals, not differences that are truly intriguing**

The Red Queen Quotes

On reproduction being all it matters:

> Reproduction is the sole goal for which human beings are designed. Everything else is a means to that end.

On the reproduction of the fittest

> Evolution is more about reproduction of the fittest than survival of the fittest

On status, sexual success, and female hypergamy:

> Which woman would not rather be John Kennedy's third wife than bozo the clown first

On men wanting to be polygamous:

> **In most societies men strive to be polygamous but few succeed**

On some hard-hitting sexual truths:

> Men are more violent and women are more nurturing. I'm sorry if this is a cliche', that can't make it any less factual.

On genes' importance:

> I find it hard to believe that the fact that 83% of murderers and 93% of drunk drivers are males is all due to social conditioning alone

On human constants being more important than smaller differences:

> To a martian, an anthropologist studying the differences between races seem like a farmer studying the differences of weed in his field. A martian is far more interesting in the typical weed plant. It is the human universals, not the differences that are truly intriguing.

Real-Life Applications

Women Are Not Highly Promiscuous… But Watch Out
Albeit women are not highly promiscuous, they might still gain by keeping a provider and cheating with another man.

CONS

- **Some Wrong Generalization**

The author says that even in apparent acts of selflessness animals are serving their own genes. And yet I bet we could think of thousands of cases where that's not the case.

He also says that power in current society does not predict mating success -just look at childless Hitler, so consumed by ambition to be childless, he says-. That's not based on any data and I for one believe it's the opposite. Also, what has Hitler to do with it? One example says nothing.

- **Wrong Information on Kamikaze Sperm (and possibly more)**

The Red Queen takes for good the theory in *Sperm Wars* that humans use "kamikaze sperm" to attack other men's sperm in the vagina.
As we have already seen in Sperm Wars' review, there is no evidence for killer sperm.
Also, the author mentions a study of men and women watching sex scenes and says that women were not aroused by gay scenes. I remember the opposite and that women got lubricated at *any* sex scene.

- **Some Unfounded Assertions**

The author says "evidence suggests that women are slightly better than men at running countries". What *evidence* suggests that? Albeit I believe that might even be true, I'd be really curious as to how that evidence has been collected -and I suspect hasn't-.

- **Competition Not Good For The Whole?**

The author repeats a few times that selfish drives trump altruistic ones.

And that might be true. However, I feel he often pushes the envelope too much. For example when he says that a society with free competition is not good for the whole.

And yet look around yourself.
Your computer, your cellphones, your clothes… Everything you see around you was motivated at least in part by competition and a healthy selfish drive.

- **Sometimes I wished For More Depth**

In discussing research on how dominant women give birth to more boys and submissive women give birth to more daughters, the author comments on the "dominant/submissive" label: "whatever that may mean".
I know it's difficult to define, but some readers might have liked to know how it was measured exactly.

Also, the author quotes a rather popular study saying that one inch in height equates to 6.000 in yearly income.

But that makes no sense if you think about it: sure an inch for someone who's 2.2 meters tall won't add much value -and quite possibly *subtract* value-, right (law of diminishing returns).

- **Some Wrong Conclusions**

The author says that the mating system (monogamous or polygamous) depends on how much a woman stands to gain by marrying a man with another woman or by picking a less well-off single man. And that depends a lot on how wealth is distributed and if other women can prevent the sharing of their men.
The author then says that in spite of men being active seducers, they are spectators on whether a society is monogamous or polygamous.
But that makes no sense, because legal framework and wealth distribution is also, of course, heavily influenced by men in society.

- **Sometimes Repetitive**

A few concepts, like men who stand to gain by mating with many females, repeat several times across The Red Queen. Since it's such a simple concept, I think it could have been briefer by explaining deeply but once and for all.

- **Mixing Animals & Men**

The Red Queen goes back and forth between humans and animals.
Fair enough, we are animals and this is not even a con. However, it's a warning for people who are mostly looking at what sexual evolution means for humans: they will have to wade through quite some examples from the animal kingdom.

PROS

- **Great Overview of Sexual Dynamics and Sexual Power Dynamics**

Matt Ridley provides a very valuable and rare service these days: the overview of a well-learned, critical, and smart man.
He reviews evolutionary psychology of course, but he also touches on psychology and ethnology. His critics of Margaret Mead and his harangue against Freud and Skinner all provide the reader with high-quality learning.

- **The Scientist's Humility**

The author says:

> Half of the ideas in this book are probably wrong. The history of human science is not encouraging. Galton's eugenics, Freud's unconscious, Durkheim sociology, Mead's culture-driven anthropology, Skinner behaviorism, Piaget's early learning and Wilson's socio-biology. All appear in retrospect to be riddled with erros and false perspective.

However, I very much disagree with that. Just because something was wrong in the past, it doesn't mean we'll keep committing errors (also read *Fooled by Randomness*). And eventually, little by little, we get closer to the truth.

- **True Scientist's Disdain for PC**

Ridley approaches science as a scientist should.
He says for example:

> Not that racial and cultural differences can't exist. As much as a black man has a different skin color than a white man, so it's also quite possible that he also has a different mind

And more than once he goes against the grain of society saying that men and women are much different by their very genders.

Review

The Red Queen is a great book.

I have written a lot of cons, but I always hold great books to a higher standard.

Some parts I felt like I could have written myself.

And if you haven't yet read much about evolutionary psychology, The Red Queen will be an eye-opener.
And I leave you with one of my favorite quotes from Matt Ridley (and there are many):

> I sometimes feel we are fated never to fully understand ourselves. Because part of our nature is to turn every inquiry into an expression of our nature. Ambitious, illogical, manipulative and religious.

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Workplace Poker: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 October 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Workplace Poker* (2016) author Dan Rust shares Machiavellian wisdom and insights on office politics, games colleagues play, and career strategies.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - #1. Observe… Without Getting Emotionally Involved
  - #2. There is No Family At Work
  - #3. Extreme Corporate Cultures
  - #4. Maximizing Your Output
  - #5. Strike A Balance Between Emotional Thin-Skinned & Bulldozer Thick Skinned
  - #6. Think Well Of Your Steps
  - #7. Working Your Boss
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Work with your boss, but never make it seem like you're working with him
- HR and bosses want you to believe the workplace is like a family. But you better not buy that.
- Too much of a thin skin won't allow you to maximize your potential and too thick a skin won't allow you to develop a deep connection. You gotta be closer to the thick skin, but not all the way

Notes

About the Author:
Dan Rust is a career coach and public speaker.

#1. Observe… Without Getting Emotionally Involved

Dan Rust says that to understand people you have to look at them without getting too emotionally involved and without attaching labels to them.

The moment you label someone "nice" or "jerk", you start avoiding them, or looking for confirmation… Or don't look much at all. And you decrease your ability to really understand that person.

> You can't get inside someone else's head until you get out of your own

Over time you will develop a realistic understanding of people that will become your "baseline" for your observations. Once they deviate from that baseline, you know that you need to pay attention.

The author says that 83% answered they know their colleagues "well" or "very well" in a recent survey. Yet they

couldn't answer basic questions about them.
But to master workplace poker, you need to know the players.
You need to know what's important to them, how driven are they, how introverted/extroverted they are, and what they think of the company and the boss. Even meet their spouses any time you can.

#2. There is No Family At Work

Businesses love to talk about human resources and some bosses love to talk about their employees like family (as in Onward, the story of Starbucks).

Well, don't buy that BS.

Employees don't really matter: it's their output that matters.
And when it comes to downsizing, there is no family.

So don't be the laid-off employee who thought he was in a "family".
There is no family at work: families don't have an HR department, laws, and etiquette. And families don't fire people, not even when things go terribly wrong.

There is nothing wrong with it, it's just the nature of things.

Also, read:

- **Corporate lies and manipulations**

#3. Extreme Corporate Cultures

Dun Rust reviews different types of corporate cultures, and differentiates five of them:

- **Cult of personality**

It revolves around the ego of a key decision-maker or founder, with Marissa Mayer and Donald Trump as two examples.

To survive in these companies understand that everything revolves around the boss and everything is about propping up the boss. Understand what he wants and likes, but know that whatever you do it might never be enough.

- **Culture of Contraction**

It's a culture of paranoia where people are always watching their backs.

- **Coliseum Culture**

It's those environments built to maximize the competition among employees. You will see ranking and scorecards to keep employees striving for the top.

- **Perma-Grin Culture**

These are cultures where everyone must smile and keep a positive attitude.

- **Inbred Culture**

Companies have been around for a while, with leaders who have been in the company for decades. They take pride in their insular environment and in "how we do things over here".

#4. Maximizing Your Output

Workplace Poker also has a deep, extremely valuable chapter on how to perform at our best.

Some of the information I take away:

- Schedule a block of work of 90-120 minutes
- Take a short 15-minute break between sessions (not longer or you'll have trouble getting back to your task)
- Enjoy a late afternoon nap of 20 minutes

#5. Strike A Balance Between Emotional Thin-Skinned & Bulldozer Thick Skinned

Some of my favorite parts of *Workplace Poker* were in the author's description of personalities.
Particularly I enjoyed the descriptions of what Dan Rust calls "Velcro Butterflies" -very touchy and sensitive to rejection- and "Teflon Rhinos" -nothing penetrates their thick exterior-.

There are a lot of advantages to being thick-skinned, including:

- Rejections don't slow you down
- Not intimidated by influential and powerful people
- Ignore useless criticism
- Persevere through obstacles
- Accept no excuse
- Drive yourself and people around very hard

However, there are also some drawbacks.
Not allowing the "bad stuff" in also often means that rhinos don't let the good stuff, which makes it harder for them to develop deep and genuine connections.
People also often feel "railroaded" by their intensity and directness and they choose to avoid them.

In the continuum, **the most successful people tend to be on the thick-skinned side, but without going to the extreme**.
In the face of rejection, they acknowledge the pain and they're honest with themselves when they feel the fear of rejection and judgment holds them back.
People who hit the ideal sweet spot also learn to be less reactive, overcoming the butterflies lashing out -internally and with passive-aggressive style– and the rhinos' shutdowns.

Extreme Rhinos: extreme rhinos tend to do well… For a while. But their extreme overconfidence eventually leads to major mistakes and missteps and to spectacular crashes and burns.

#6. Think Well Of Your Steps

Some people "go with the flow" and tell themselves that "every mistake is a chance to learn".

Sure, that much is true, but you should still think deeply about important decisions in your life and strive to maximize your potential -and diminish your mistakes-.
What do you choose for your college, first job, career changes, or industry changes… They all have major impacts on your life.

Some mistakes the author lists:

- Being drawn to the novelty and possibilities and not considering the drawbacks of a new job
- Need to move away from mistakes by changing job
- Impatience of moving on and seeing only the positives of a new job

#7. Working Your Boss

Dan Rust has some great tips on how to improve your relationship with your boss.
This is just an appetizer:

- **Let him see you work**

If you are too quick on your work though, there is a danger it might seem like it wasn't complicated enough. You want your boss to think you are quick, *not* that the job was easy.
The solution is to "romance" the process and sell it as part of your personal branding.
A good way of doing it is to mention the difficulties you have had and overcome in the process:

> Hi, I am done with the job. It wasn't easy to find all the information so I asked Brian from accounting. Some of the figures were missing, but fortunately I could secure a meeting with Cristina and she filled me in on the missing data.

If you finish ahead of time and now are free, say something like this:

> I just wanted to let you know that I finished the project ahead of schedule, so I have some extra capacity. Do you know of anyone who could use my help?

This is a double yummy: he gets to know you are done early, that you want to help, and that you respect him so much to ask him first. Now he will put you on what he thinks is the priority, thus further increasing your visibility.

- **Let him know you take extra work**

before deciding to help someone on a project you should mention it to your boss. Something like:

> I'm planning to help Donna on the Mayfair project, but I wanted to run it past you first just in case there are other projects that you think should be a higher priority, or need a little extra help.

- **Don't let them see you sweat**

If you are having real challenges, it's best to work on your weaknesses on your own and not let your boss see your mighty struggles.

I remember my very first as a project manager. I had taken over a project way too big for my knowledge and sent the wrong email to all the "important" stakeholders in CC. The previous project manager, who was still responsible for it was furious. He called m up and reamed me on the phone.
As he screamed on the phone, I just kept repeating, calmly "yes. Yes. You're right. Aha. That makes sense".
Then I picked up my mobile, called him, apologized, and told him I wasn't comfortable with his tone.
Why did I do that move?
Because my boss was sitting nearby. And he never got to know of my blunder.

Real-Life Applications

- **Go To Company Events**

Always take part in company events, go to after-parties, mingle, and make new friends. It's not only an opportunity to make friends and deepen your network, but also to observe colleagues in a more natural event.
It was always eye-opening for me to see how your colleagues operate when drunk -and you might even get laid ;)-.

- **Leverage Your Subconscious For Judgement**

The author says, righteously, that most of what you read on body language in the media is designed to grab attention more than to enlighten on the subject. The biggest misconception is that specific movements have a specific meaning behind them, but that's often not true.

Instead, take a brief look at someone and then look away. Chances are that your unconscious will be better at a snap judgment than a conscious look trying to "decode" single gestures.

- **Be Careful Not to Take All The Blame**

Taking the blame is what leaders do. It's what John Maxwell says in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* and what the Navy SEALS Willink and Babin say in *Extreme Ownership*. And they are right.
But many people are not in a position to safely do that, points out Dan Rust, and I couldn't agree more. Make sure then that you don't let other responsible people off the hook if that would mean career suicide for you.

- **Don't Give Space to Enemies**

If you have an enemy at work, *too nice people* will keep a lot of distance out of discomfort. But this gives them room to maneuver against you. It's best instead to stay very close to them.
Without being aggressive, show you're not afraid, show they're not getting under your skin, and show them they better drop it… Because you are no easy target.

CONS

- **Some Unneeded (& Pointless) Evolutionary Biology**

The author writes:

> In our natural state there are no fat (or even pudgy) humans because they get caught and eaten by predators. There are no unmotivated or disengaged natural humans because, again, they get caught and eaten by predators. And there are no dumb natural humans because, well, ditto.

I don't particularly agree with that.
The "natural state" is not this perfect environment where everyone's fit and smart.

- **One Historical Exaggeration**

To introduce his "Patton style" the author describes Patton as fighting insurmountable odds. He writes:

> Patton's army had many new and poorly trained soldiers, inadequate equipment, uncertain information about the enemy's positions, unpredictable weather, and scarce medical supplies.

That makes no sense to me when you consider Patton was fighting an enemy -the Germans- who were in full retreat and in much worse conditions (plus "unpredictable weather?").
Anyway, this is not a big con, but you know I'm retentive :).

PROS

- **Deep, Meaningful Content**

I have read many books on social games and workplace politics. And I have the say, the depth and value of content Dan Rust shares in *Workplace Poker* is really impressive.

- **Deep Psychological Insights**

Very good and deep insights, at the level of *some of the very best psychology books available.*

Review

Workplace Poker is the best book on career advancement that I have ever read at the time of writing this review.

Dan Rust not only tackles the games and politics but also the mindsets of winners and the keys to top performance.

And if that weren't enough, Dan Rust is also a master storyteller, which makes "*Workplace Poker*" not only a treasure trove of information but also a truly pleasurable read.

Check the **best career strategies books** or get the book on Amazon

The Manipulated Man: Summary, Review & Criticism (Esther Vilar)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Manipulated Man* (1971), author Esther Vilar argues that women contribute nothing to society and, contrary to what feminists believe, women are not oppressed but shrewd manipulators skilled at controlling men for their own benefit.

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Bullet Summary

- **Women manipulate men to take care of them**
- **Men happily oblige because they don't know any better** -thanks to indoctrination and societal pressure
- At the core, **women are stupid and men are the only ones who move society forward**

Full Summary

About the Author:
Esther Vilar studied medicine at the University of Buenos Aires and emigrated to West Germany in 1960 to continue her studies in psychology and sociology. She worked as a doctor for a year and then had a string of jobs before making a name for herself as a critic of the feminist movement.

1. Men Have It Bad, Women Have It Good

Vilar says it's the opposite of what feminists say:

It's *men* who "have it bad" and women who enjoy an easy life.

For example, Vilar points out that:

1. **Men go to war, women do not** (or don't have to)
2. **Men retire later** *in spite they have a shorter life expectancy*
3. **Men have no say in whether or not to have a child** (women decide whether to abort or keep it)
4. **Men support women** (the other way around is exceedingly rare)
5. **Men work all their lives** (women temporarily)
6. **Men are poorer than women**

My Note: A mix of truths (albeit still generalizations), and an unsubstantiated claim

Some of these statements were true, or partially true at the time Vilar wrote.
At least when looking at society in general, rather than looking at individuals.

Some of these claims are still true today like men having little say on whether or not to have a child.

But for "men being poorer" there was no data and I have no idea how she came up with that.

I'm personally also unconvinced by her conclusion that "women have it easier".
In my opinion, it would be equally possible to make a list of why women have it harder than men.

At the end of the day, life is what you make it to be and what you focus on. And it's not written anywhere men *have to* work harder all their lives, or "have it worse" than most women do.

2. Men Are Intelligent, Women Stupid

One theme of the book that some readers are speechless about is Vilar's claim that men are strong, intelligent, and imaginative while women are weak, unimaginative, and stupid.

My Note: Some unsubstantiated claims
It would be easy to dismiss this claim as "nonsense", yet I believe it's only fair to give it a proper analysis, which we will do in the "criticism" section.

Women:

- Are happy to do house chores because it's "at their level"
- Will not pursue sciences even when given the opportunity and freed of house chores
- Couldn't care less about politics
- Only have material demands, never intellectual
- Are not embarrassed by men's intellectual superiority because have no ambition there
- Only care about what immediately impacts them
- Are unemotional: they just pretend of having feelings

Men:

- Are intelligent
- Advance the sciences
- Are interested in technical machinery

3. Men Shouldn't Treat Women Like Equals

Men often mistake women as being at their same level, says the author.

So they give them the right to vote (ugh!), access to universities, and try to free them of house chores by inventing all kinds of systems and machinery.

But women still don't do what men thought they would do.
They don't go into politics, they don't advance the sciences and they don't busy themselves with any meaningful intellectual pursuits.

4. Women Enslave Men

Another theme of *The Manipulated Man* is women's enslaving of men.

But one might wonder: if men are intelligent and women mostly stupid, how can they enslave men?

To this contradiction of sorts, Esther Vilar replies that **women enslave men by leveraging their stupidity and looking childlike**.
Men feel compelled to look after women because… Who would it otherwise?

The second pillar of enslavement is society-conditioning.
Men simply grow up with the idea of having to take care of women and they never challenge it.
And society then self-reinforce that idea. If a man doesn't work, provide, and take care of a woman, then he is considered a failure.
The pressure then keeps him there, working even in jobs and positions that he despises.

The third pillar is indoctrination.
Who takes care of children?
It's women, and women indoctrinate them into the ways of society, such as: taking care of women.

Read below for Vilar's list of 'control tactics'.

5. The Emancipated Female: Rare, & Barely An Exception

Esther Vilar finally makes an exception to the rule of parasitic women's style of living.

The exception is the "emancipated" female.
However, the exception is more appearance than reality, as the author proceeds to dismantle the idea of emancipation.

She categorized emancipated females as follows:

1. Has to work because he can't manage to sustain her
2. Cannot have children
3. Is ugly
4. Is actually emancipated
5. Has a particular interest in a certain career

Only beautiful women can be truly emancipated because an ugly woman has no sexual market value, no leverage, and never really had any other option.

The emancipated female still takes advantage of the system though.
To begin with, it's easier to rise quickly through the ranks for the simple fact that she is a woman. Since there are so few women around, she stands out.
And still, she makes a big show of how hard it is being a woman in a man's world and how many headwinds she had

to face.

The women who actually achieve a lot provide great help for the majority of women who keep living on a man's dime.
They can point their finger at them and say "look what I have given up (to stay at home and be with you)".

How Women Enslave Men

1. Conditioning from childhood
2. Social conditioning: it's masculine to work, feminine to do nothing
3. Pressure from society (not providing is seen as a failure)
4. By looking silly and child-like on purpose (leverage his protecting instincts)
5. Pretending that housework is difficult
6. With their stupidity, they become inscrutable to more intelligent beings
7. Make him feel smarter and stronger (and like they can't do stuff themselves)
8. With sex (she needs it less than him)

I agree that women have developed several tools for controlling men.
But so have men, which is part of how the sexed engage in sexual conflict.

However, I disagree with the idea that women always win, and by default.
Sometimes women are also victims and manipulated, and not always the manipulators.
Men also play games and manipulate, after all.
For more, read on:

- How women control relationships
- Games women play
- Manipulative games women play

For a more correct review of how women actually control men, see:

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

Criticism

I loved "*The Manipulated Man*".

And for when it was written, it was brave, courageous, and provided a much-needed counterweight to feminism.

Yet, there is also much to criticize:

1. Tin Foil Hat Level of Conspiracies

Conspiracy theories sometimes are correct.

But rarely so when they paint against the grain of human nature and social dynamics.

Here are some conspiracies in The Manipulated Man that left me a bit cold:

1. **Women manipulate male children into serving other women ➡** but women handicapping their children runs against evolutionary pressure
2. **Women all pretend that house chores are dull, but they actually like them ➡** data? Evidence? Surveys?)

3. **The press all conspires to paint men as rapacious wolves ➡** a "WIIFT" is missing. What's in it for the press to *conspire* against men?

I don't think there is any "female design" to indoctrinate men, and I don't think the press all converge into sharing an ideology that is good for one gender and terrible for another.

Why would male journalists want to handicap themselves?

Sure, some of them do it because it's a sexual strategy. But it's a weak form of sexual strategy, and many men are aware of that.

Also, **I don't buy the idea that people can be so easily manipulated into doing things that are obviously bad for them**.
If you do your own research you will realize that influencing people to take action that goes against their beliefs and interests is far from simple (check *The Social Animal* for example).

2. Staying at home only good for her?

The author paints the choice of staying at home for the woman as only good for her and her selfish needs.
And it never really considers that it might actually be good for everyone.

Instead, here is a possible different view: it's good for her, it's good for children, and it's good for society too since those children grow up with more supervision.

And that means, in turn, less crime, better education, and a better future for them and society.

I'm not saying this is *the* truth, I'm only saying that the choice of the woman staying at home is not as simple and clear-cut as the author makes it out to be.

3. Overall, poor understanding of human nature & power dynamics

The Manipulated Man is genius as it is politically incorrect at times.

For example, when it explains that (many) women are not interested in intellectual pursuits and focus instead on what's practical and useful (for them).

However, in other passages, it is equally poor in *basic psychology* and human understanding.
For example, the author says that women don't care about men and only want to impress other women. She says women dress up for other women, not for men.

So here I say it: **it's just plain wrong of Esther Vilar to say that women don't care what men think**.

Women *do* care, and care a lot, about what men think.
As a matter of fact, we could probably say that what men think, for women, is a matter of procreation and non-procreation and, therefore, a matter of life and death.

4. Factually wrong in several instances

The complete lack of scientific basis in "*The Manipulated Man*" surfaces in several factually wrong passages.

For example, I quote:

> (..) But women are not capable of the unconditional love a child should have. This can easily be proved. Women only care for their own children, never those of others.

And:

> Without any emotion – love, hate, or malice – she is bound to the man who works for her.

The assertion that women have no emotions or feelings is nonsense.
If that were the case, women would all be classified as psychopaths. But they're not.

5. Fails Basic Social Dynamics Principles

The Manipulated Man never stops considering the transactional element of human social dynamics.

Esther Vilar never considers that the "contract" between men and women is just another transaction, which often results in both parties being, if not really happy, at least "cool with it".

And some men are actually happy with the non-written contract of "I support you, you take care of the house and let me have sex".
While some other men are actually pimping it by giving women resources while banging them without any hustles.

Instead, she lumps all men-women relationships into the category of "women manipulate men".
And that's taken me to the other critic:

6. Simplistic view of society

The gender roles and society described in *The Manipulated Man* are extremely simplistic and very black and white.

It's reminiscent of communism and Marxism.
And indeed the people who glorify this book are often part of their own cult.

All nuances are lost here.
Reality is complex, exceptions abound, and people have countless and sometimes even competing drives… Any black-and-white theory is almost bound to also be wrong in many aspects.

6. The "women are stupid" assertion

To be clear: it's not true that women, on average, are less intelligent than men.

However, it is a fact that men are responsible for more scientific discoveries and groundbreaking new products.

Many women indeed are eminently practical and, *on average*, less interested than men in philosophical theories, scientific pursuits, and new discoveries.
And some women are indeed content to settle for less and let their men do the work.

That much is true.
But *not* that women are stupid.
There is no real difference in IQ between men and women.

7. The "Women Bad, Men Good" Nonsense

It's true that men pursue more scientific discoveries and are more active in advancing society.

However, it's also true that they pursue more weapons of mass destruction and start and engage in more destructive endeavors that set society back.

In a nutshell, men both build more and destroy more.

So far, overall, the trend has always been towards more advancement than setbacks.
But it's up to all of us to keep it that way.

The Manipulated Man Reception

The Manipulated Man is a recommended reading in male-rights movements such as Red Pill and MGTOW.

On the other hand, it has, of course, managed to royally piss off feminist movements, with the author receiving a number of death threats -which is shameful-.

If you speak German, this is a video interview of Esther Vilar with Alice Schwarzer, a famous feminist leader in Germany (a nation where feminism is huge).

Schwarzer told Vilar that she is not only sexist but also fascist.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y24CRiaOly8&t=181s

Calling people who disagree with some aspects of feminism “fascists” is a typical feminist power move

The Manipulated Man Quotes

These are some of the most shocking, entertaining, eye-opening, or utterly nonsensical quotes I have found in the book (I let you pick which is which):

On the wedding ring as branding:

> Apart from a wedding ring – worn to show that he is being used by a particular woman for a particular purpose – a proper man wears no ornaments.

On “the system” screwing up men:

> No matter what a man’s job may be – bookkeeper, doctor, bus driver, or managing director – every moment of his life will be spent as a cog in a huge and pitiless system – a system designed to exploit him to the utmost, to his dying day.

On men stuck working for women:

> (…) but he will never be able to say, Ì’m bored. I want to do something else!’ The woman who is exploiting him will never permit him to look for something else.

The definition of “woman”:

> What is a woman? A woman, as we have already said, is, in contrast to a man, a human being who does not work.

On women growing more stupid as they age:

> Women do not use their mental capacity: they deliberately let it disintegrate. (…) It is not essential for their survival. Theoretically it is possible for a beautiful woman to have less intelligence than a chimpanzee and still be considered an acceptable member of society.

On prostitution:

> By the age of twelve at the latest, most women have decided to become prostitutes. Or, to put it another way they have planned a future for themselves which consists of choosing a man and letting him do all the work. In return for his support, they are prepared to let him make use of their vagina at certain given intervals.

On women's practical nature:

> A woman takes interest only in subjects that have an immediate personal usefulness to her. For example, if she reads a political article in the newspaper, it is highly likely that she wants to cast a spell on some political-science student, not that she cares about the fate of the Chinese, Israelis, or South Africans.

On men being better even at typically female jobs:

> If one wishes to have an unusual culinary treat, generally one will not find it at home but at a restaurant, where, of course, the chef is male (LOL)

On men stupid enough to fight women's wars:

> Without thinking, men fight women's wars, father women's children and construct women's towns. Women just sit back getting lazier, dumber and more demanding – and, at the same time, richer.

On men unable to see women for the stupid beings they are:

> (…) are incapable of seeing women as they really are: with nothing else to offer but a vagina, two breasts and some punch cards programmed with idle, stereotyped chatter;

On using prostitutes instead of women:

> It would be more economical for a man to satisfy his sexual needs with a prostitute instead of rushing into marriage ('prostitute' in the conventional sense – strictly speaking, most women belong in this group).

On women and animals:

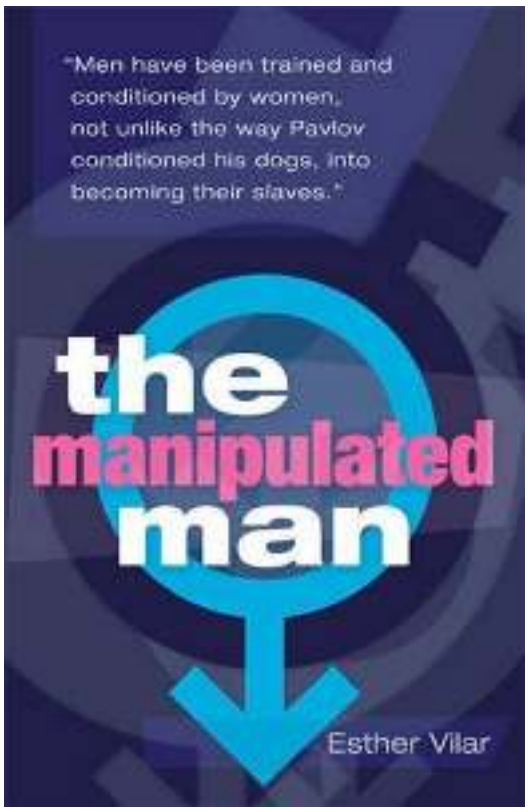
> Women live an animal existence. They like eating, drinking, sleeping – even sex, providing there is nothing to do and no real effort is required of them.

On the nonsense of "female instinct":

> Unfortunately, this famous feminine instinct is really nothing but a euphemism for statistical probability. Women interfere and give opinions about everything (..) According to the law of averages, their forecasts will be correct now and again.

On women attending college to find a husband:

> If a woman leaves the university with an engagement ring on her finger, she has earned her degree



Real-Life Applications

Don't Become a Butler
Watch out for the tendencies of women to task men and watch out for the rather common pattern of men doing everything for their girlfriends and wives.

CONS

Please read the "The Manipulated Man Criticism" section for a more in-depth overview.

- **Misogynist & Often Too Harsh**

I found some paragraphs and passages' tones to be way too harsh (and needlessly mean). For example:

> they (women) have a choice – a choice between the life of a man and the life of a dimwitted, parasitic luxury item.

Or:

> (…) women are good for almost nothing.

- **Nasty View on Some Professions (Doctors)**

The Manipulated Man says that men are in a certain line of work because of female manipulation.
Doctors are one such example. I quote:

> The fear of being rejected by society must be considerable. Why else will a doctor spend his life opening up nauseating growths, examining and pronouncing on human excretions? Why else does he busy himself night and day with people of such repulsiveness that everyone else is driven away?

I found that description very nasty. What if a doctor took pride in helping people? Is there no altruism in *The Manipulated Man*'s world?

PROS

Can Be Eye-Opening
For men who have been buying too hard into the idea of having to provide for women, this book can be an eye-opener.
If they can move past their normal, knee-jerk pushback, that is.

Hard, Un-PC Truths
I have to hand it to Esther Vilar, she shares some unpopular truths. But the fact that they are unpopular doesn't make it any less true.
Some examples:

1. Women don't need to be intelligent (at least the attractive ones)
2. Many relationships are indeed a non-written exchange of sex for support
3. Many women do position their relationships with men serving them
4. Some emancipated angry women end up being so for lack of options

Review

This is one of those (few) books that it's really, really hard to rate.

The Manipulated Man has some genius content that you won't read elsewhere.
And it can be eye-opening and useful to some men, helping them break free of relationships where they act as servants more than partners.
Even to men who have not been running around for women, it could still further open their eyes to some intra-sex dynamics.
It's a great read after No More Mr. Nice Guy, in that sense.

On the other hand, it's also terrible in many other areas.

From a mindset point of view, by painting a world where women have it easy and men do not, Esther Vilar provides an easy valve for men who want to complain.
Complaining might be simply a bad mindset of learned helplessness, or actual misogyny.

Scientifically speaking, *The Manipulated Man* is farcical. And it also fails in its understanding of basic facts of human psychology, including *evolutionary psychology*, and the true dynamics of the sexual marketplace.

Women don't have the power they have over men only because they're good manipulators.
Women tend to have more power because, on average "sperm is cheap and gestation is not".
It would be too long to explain here the power dynamics of the sexual marketplace, but, in many areas, Esther Vila simply spreads misinformation.

In a nutshell: **The Manipulated Man can be eye-opening, but it can also be a virus of misinformation**.

I would give it:

- 4.5 stars for groundbreaking view on women manipulating men into "butlering" them
- 0 stars for scientific rigor, general misogyny, social and psychological mishaps, sweeping generalizations

That being said, would I recommend you read *The Manipulated Man*?
Yes, totally.

Get ready to discard a lot of information, then delve in and avoid becoming some bitch's butler :).

Also, see:

- The **best red pill books**

The Female Brain: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Female Brain* (2006) author and researcher Louann Brizendine explains how the female brain works, and what's so peculiar about it when compared to the male brain.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction
  - Differences Between Women and Men
  - It's Not True Women Are Less Good At Math
  - Women Are All About Social Harmony
  - Women Also Seek Power (In Their Own Feminine Way)
  - Women Are Obsessed With Males' Attention
  - Female Self-Esteem Is Based on Relationships
  - Women Better at Spotting Lies to Catch Men
  - Cheating & Genes' Shopping
- Criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- More than 99% of male and female genetic code is the same, but that 1% impacts everything and makes a big difference
- Men are more about rank and open aggression, and women are more about building relationships and putting themselves at the center of that web of relationships
- Women's neurological reality changes much more than men's both with age and menstrual cycle

Full Summary

About the Author:
Louann Brizendine received her B.A. in neurobiology from Berkeley in 1976, attended Yale School of Medicine, and completed a residency in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. She is both a researcher and professor at the University of California.
She definitely has the academic credentials.
In 1994, Brizendine also founded the UCSF Women's Mood and Hormone Clinic, where she had to chance to gather much data on women and biology.

Introduction

Dr. Brizendine starts *The Female Brain* by saying that at the time of her studies, all subjects of research and studies were males.

When she inquired the professor about it, the answer was that “women are too fickle because of their menstrual cycle and would pollute the data”.
She set out to change that.

Differences Between Women and Men

- Women have 11% more neurons in brain areas for language and hearing
- Emotions and memory formation areas are bigger in women
- Women are better at expressing emotions and remembering details of emotional events
- Men remember as well only when the amygdala is activated (if fear and danger are present)
- Women are better at reading emotions
- Men have larger cores of the most primitive part of the brain: the amygdala which registers fears and triggers aggression
- Men will go quicker from 0 to a fight while women tend to defuse conflict
- Men are on average 20 times more aggressive than women (just look at the prison’s population)
- Women have better social skills and emotional intelligence than boys
- Women have more up and downs than men
- Men have more activity in visual processing areas (and that’s why they fall in love, at first sight, more than women)
- Women are more sensitive to touch in the release of oxytocin, which causes bonding
- Men need to be touched 2 to 3 times more to maintain the same level of oxytocin
- Men and women feel anger in the same amount, but:
  - Men have bigger amygdalas where anger is processed
  - Men have more testosterone to stimulate and heighten response to anger
  - Women have relatively bigger pre-frontal cortex to control that anger
  - Women override their anger response with fear of retaliation and conflict aversion to keep the relationship
- However, when a woman acts on her anger, her faster verbal circuits unleash a barrage of words that a man can’t match (scientists speculate)
  - Men are not as good in verbal production and that might cause frustration and escalation of fights (which might lead to physical reactions)

It’s Not True Women Are Less Good At Math

The author mentions the (in)famous speech of Harvard’s president Lawrence Summer, who in 2005 said that the differences in performances between men in women in the sciences are biological.

Louann Brizendine instead says **that women are under-represented in math and sciences not because they are less capable, but because their interests lie elsewhere.**
Sciences are more solitary professions, and women are more drawn to professions that allow them to connect.

Women Are All About Social Harmony

The author says that women are programmed to keep social harmony.
And keeping social harmony is a matter of life and death for women even in the 21st century.

The author brings examples from children as well as adults, explaining that girls play as a means to connect, while men make the game center stage (and in turn, the game becomes a means for social rank, power, and defense of territory).

Men also have verbal production which is more about aggression and status. They brag, command, override others' time to speak, etc. They do not avoid conflict and aggression and competition is part of their genetic makeup.

Women Also Seek Power (In Their Own Feminine Way)

Don't be fooled by the lack of aggression and conflict.

It doesn't mean that female brains are not wired to use everything in their power to get what they want.

They simply use a different weapon and defend a different territory: relationships.

The female's goal is to organize the world in a web of connections so that she is at the center of it (and that's why the friend-zone is a real thing).
And she walks a fine line between making sure she's at the center of her world of relationships without souring those same relationships.

The aggression in women is just different and, in many ways, more subtle.

> **Power matters to both sexes. We just approach it differently.**

Women Are Obsessed With Males' Attention

Women during puberty start shifting their focus and attention to becoming sexually desirable. And they become obsessed with being attractive to boys.

Girls Compete for Male Attention

The teenage years also bring about heightened competition among women, especially for male attention.

They use subtle tools such as spreading rumors to undermine a rival. That way they can cover their tracks and hide their real intention -ie.: "I wasn't trying to be mean, I'm sorry"-.

The author mentions Mean Girls and those who think that's just a movie, they probably should learn to observe better.
I remember some female classmates of mine during middle school. One liked me and somewhat chased me, but I just couldn't respect her when I saw her games of shunning and exclusion towards another girl.

Female Self-Esteem Is Based on Relationships

Interesting golden nugget here:

Women's self-esteem is based on maintaining positive and intimate relationships with others.

Men's self-esteem, on the other hand, is based on being independent of everyone else.

One of the biggest stressors for women is losing their intimate relationships.

Women Better at Spotting Lies to Catch Men

The author mentions a speculative evolutionary biology theory postulating that women got better at emotional intelligence to catch men's lies.

The argument goes that men who were good at telling lies had an advantage in reproducing, and women who were better at emotional intelligence and spotting those lies had an advantage by not falling for those lies.

Cheating & Genes' Shopping

The author mentions a theory that is well known to people who have been reading about *evolutionary psychology*: cheating for genes' shopping.

Brizendine says that women want to settle down with a nurturing man. But once the house is secure they have a "biological urge" to seek around men who have the best genes.

Also, read:

- **The tools of sexual conflict**

My Note: Evidence somewhat lacking
however, the author cites "female birds" to back her claim. And well, birds are not really humans, are they?
We have already reviewed this theory on Sperm Wars. The conclusion is that "gene shopping" does indeed exist, but it's far more limited in humans than some sensation-seeking publications suggest.

Women who are in adulterous relationships orgasm less with their partner. And since orgasm can help insemination, women seem to unconsciously want to "help".
That's why, the author says, men seem to care so much about whether or not their woman reaches an orgasm: it can be a signal that she is being faithful.

My Note: Little evidence here
This theory provides no real evidence. If a woman is having an adulterous relationship it can easily be because she likes the other man more, right?
And liking him more could be the explanation for the orgasm instead of "helping" him fertilize her.

Criticism

As might be expected for a book that purports to be all about biology, but isn't, "*The Female Brain*" has received quite some criticism.

A Nature review tears it apart for being highly unscientific and moves three major criticism against its content:

1. It overstates the differences
2. It's unscientific and of overall poor quality
3. It focuses too much on hormones without considering the system that secrets and "reads" those hormones

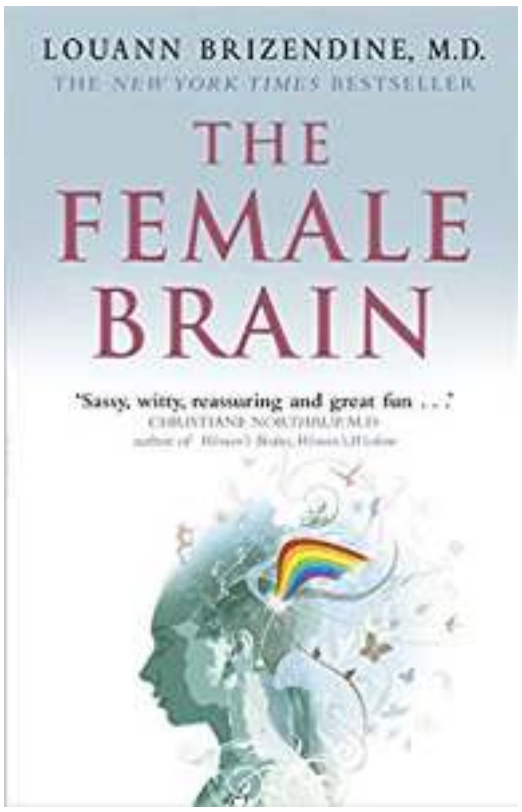
The New York Times review doesn't go as far as stating that "*The Female Brain*" is unscientific but makes the point that the lacking bibliography simply doesn't allow the reader to judge for themselves.

Innatist Bias?

Brizendine acknowledged that maybe she went too far on innate differences in the sexes. She says that "Males and females are more alike than they're different" because, she adds, "after all, we are the same species."

And my personal point of view is that there are brain differences between men and women, and those differences can in turn be encouraged and "expanded" -as it often happens- or discouraged by culture.
The book might exaggerate a bit the differences and forgets to mention that we are talking about *average*, which means that the high variance present in the individuals can easily "buck the trend".

I feel that was Brizendine's biggest sin: not presupposing enough, and enough times, that she is talking of "*on average*".
When you don't say that, people get easily triggered.
Especially in this day and age, where people *still* prefer to hear that boys and girls are, after all, almost the same (she the "tabula rasa" bias)



Real-Life Applications

Love & Exclusivity Lead to Orgasm
The author says that exclusivity in a relationship can help women reach orgasm because it removes one important worry from their lives, and allows them to relax.

CONS

- **Not 100% Scientific**

There are several studies and research quoted, but also several anecdotes, evolutionary biology speculations, and her own experience in the clinic. That's always a rather bad sign for me because personal experience, especially when not systematically tracked, is prone to all kinds of biases.

- **Bit Unstructured**

I found that some information repeats, like for example women and social skills or women and their interest in developing and keeping positive relationships.
I would have preferred a structure more based on clearly defined topics instead of a more free-wheeling one.

PROS

Great Overview of Differences
The book provides the reader with an accessible format to understand some basic differences between men and women.

Review

The Female Brain is a good book with much to learn from.

There are several imperfections in "*The Female Brain*" -some of them outline above- and, overall, it's not as scientific as we would expect from a woman of Brizendine's academic background.

However, in spite of much criticism and some flaws, most major assertions are, on average, accurate to anyone who's been reading and observing human nature.

Thus, this book can give readers a very good overview of the psychological differences between men and women.

Overall, we can recommend *The Female Brain*.

Check the **best psychology books** or **get the book on Amazon**

The Book of Pook: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Book of Pook is a collection of forum posts by Pook with much dating advice, self-development tips for men, and several manosphere and Red Pill concepts of intersexual dynamics.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Introduction
  - Approach
  - Mindsets
  - Relationship Management
  - Female Mindset
  - Rules of Being a Man
  - Rules of Life
  - Women Prefer Being A King's 10th Wife, Than A Peasant's First
- The Book of Pook Quotes
- Criticism
  - Preacher Attitude (teacher's frames)
  - Literary Bloat & Fluff
  - Generic & Average Advice Better Fits Beginners
  - Sometimes Contradictory
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Focus on yourself and the life you want instead of what people around tell you to get
- The high standards you have for others, have them for yourself first
- Never be ashamed of being a man and never be ashamed of your own sexuality

Notes

About the Author:
"*The Book of Pook*" is a collection of forum entries published by Pook in the forums of Sosuave.com.
Pook is a nickname, and nobody knows exactly who the man behind the nickname is. Except for a few tidbits of information, like his job as a DJ, Pook always maintained anonymity.
The "Book of Pook" has not been published by Pook himself, but someone gathered all his posts and put them together.

Introduction

The Book of Pook shares its wisdom through parable-sounding stories, fancy literary devices, and lots of dialogues. I will tease out the wisdom here without any of the flowery language.

Approach

Here are some of Pook's rules on approaching:

- **Make it fun for yourself** (when he started doing it fun for himself his interactions improved and he wasn't afraid anymore)
- **Don't make her your object of desire before approaching** (or it will induce anxiety)
- **If you see her every day, be patient instead of overly aggressive**

And finally, what has become a mantra in the community:

- Rejection is better than regret

Also, read:

- Strategies to approach women
- Step by step guide to effective approaches
- Cold approach power dynamics

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

Mindsets

- As you think, you shall become (taken from "*As a Man Thinketh*")
- The greatest risk is avoiding all risks
- Control testosterone, don't be controlled by it (like jerks are)
- Keep an air of mystery: don't reveal much of yourself (great for shy and introverted)
- The high standard you have for a girl must first be applied to yourself
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket: always have a backup
- Success is a habit
- Don't think that getting a girl equates to success, and getting rejected will not equate to failure

Relationship Management

To enjoy a good relationship:

- Accept and live your masculinity
- Enjoy her femininity
- Don't accept but challenge her indifference
- Punish disrespect and reward good behavior (basics of operant conditioning)

Also, read:

- How to maintain control in relationships
- How dominance gets you girls
- How leadership gets you girls

Female Mindset

When it comes to the female brain, The Book of Pook says that women:

- Love being treated like a little girl
- Love being objectified by men they like
- Don't care about philosophy and big mental constructs
- Use meaningless words: judge them by their actions instead
- Love being fucked when you have *your* pleasure in mind (instead of hers)

Also, read:

- **Games women play**
- Games women play to get relationships

Rules of Being a Man

1. Make your dreams and passions your priority
2. Don't walk on eggshells: never apologize for being a man
3. Strive to win at what you do
4. Solve problems instead of blaming
5. Don't prove yourself to anyone but yourself

Also, read:

- The traits of high-quality men

> **You only need to prove yourself to yourself**

Rules of Life

- Respect is all. Walk away from any signs of disrespect
- Sexualize your presence, go for women romantically, not as a friend
- Trust your gut
- Always believe and act like you are the catch
- Believing you're the catch cures neediness
- **Focus on improving yourself, not getting the girl**
- Improvise and change: don't be constrained by routines
- Think like someone great to become a great someone
- Make it fun with women, keep boring philosophical talk for your friends (or yourself)
- Imitating the jerk's behavior won't work: imitation is suicide, and you gotta find your own way
- Take care of yourself: look good, workout, eat right, wear nice clothes
- Don't give her too much attention (don't be always available, don't always text first, be willing to flake)
- Learn and adopt dominant body language
- Be ambitious, build your life the way you want it to be

Women Prefer Being A King's 10th Wife, Than A Peasant's First

This is one of Pook's most famous quotes.

And women may indeed be better off being with a high-status man, even if a "one of many", than being the pedestalized woman of a lower-status man.

Quoting from The *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships:*

> some theorize that **women would actually be better of as junior wives to very rich men than sole wives to poorer men** when disparities in resources are especially great, with implications for women's intrasexual mating competition

This is a basic consequence of the social exchange nature of mating markets.

See more here:

- Mating market dynamics

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

The Book of Pook Quotes

On female hypergamy:

> Women would rather share a successful man than be attached to a faithful loser.

One one-itis:

> Either go for MANY or go for NONE. If you go for ONE you will become an AFC.

On "good girls":

> The 'innocent, nice girl' is often the horniest and likely uninnocent.

On the qualities that women prioritize (see the post on SMV for the science of what women want)

> Many women consider your looks, your career, what you can offer them, before your integrity and character.

On female's practical nature:

> Woman's sole mission is union, either for pleasure or the fruits of children. She cares nothing for your philosophy and all except to either use it to catch interest in a guy or to enthrone herself.

On sexual objectification:

> Women, in sex, desire to be treated as an object and relish it.

On mind before anything else:

> In order to be successful in the world, you must be successful in your mind.

On focusing on yourself and your own happiness and fulfillment:

> "I know how to get laid, make money, get a girlfriend and build a career. *And yet why am I not happy?*" "Because," Pook continues, "*My entire life has been focusing on everything except me.*"

Criticism

Preacher Attitude (teacher's frames)

In many of his posts, Pook speaks as the wise dispenser of truths, enlightening the world with his words.

That charismatic preacher attitude can give you lots of followers.

But more empowered men who already achieve dating success and are at least at knowledgeable as Pook may find those teacher frames grating.

Personally, I also find it narcissistic (see the "smart alec" in "archetypes of dominance").

Made-up 'Laws of Nature'

The Book of Pook sometimes refers to "laws of nature" to sound more authoritative.
That fits well with the guru image he wanted to portray, but I rarely found them to be real "laws of nature".

Literary Bloat & Fluff

Many enjoy the "purple prose" of flowery, ornamental writing.
I personally find it time-wasting, pompous, and unmasculine.

I like information straight up, with lots of wisdom, backed by data, experience, and a deep understanding of human nature.
Hopefully, all three are combined.
And that was not the case here.

Generic & Average Advice Better Fits Beginners

The parable style is good for mindsets. But not for specific, deep pointers on how to exactly change, act or behave.

Example:

> Be a guy, talk like a guy, act like a guy. Do action things.

What are "action things?". And how exactly are they going to help men? Masturbating also requires action but it might not be very helpful.

Empty Pep Talks Are

Pep talks are OK for beginners, but more masculine men and advanced operators find it empty.

For example, "*The Book of Pook*" says:

> I bet when you were a kid, you were a natural Don Juan.
> I bet you got all the girls in the sandbox. As a child, you knew how to treat women (..)
> Some of these factors include that you….
> -KNEW there was MALE and FEMALE.
> -Realized girls had cooties and could destroy a guy (…)

This makes no sense. Most young children aren't natural Casanovas (and I'm 100x times more effective as an adult).

Sometimes Contradictory

The Book of Pook sometimes seems more intent on coming up with a memorable quote and a beautiful sentence

than actually delivering information in a systematic, coherent fashion.

For example:

> All men are called to be leaders, even if it is not to guide other men you are meant to guide your own household, protect it, and keep your wife and children from the paths of error, defending your fruits of Nature from the locusts and storms of Time.

Basically, Pooks tells men to be the provider, which is the opposite of Pook's own advice of focusing on yourself and being a player.
I don't disagree with either, but they just don't sound very compatible.

PROS

- **Holistic Approach to Life**

The very best aspect of The Book of Pook for me is that it invites the readers to apply themselves to build the life of their dreams, take care of themselves, and overall enjoy a good and happy life.
Women should be an addition to that life, and he even considers it a fair choice not to have any women at all in one's life.

- **Groundbreaking**

Pook has been a groundbreaking influence.
He has been a great influence on the MGTOW (men going their own way) movement and on the red pill as well.

- **Misogyny-Free**

Overall, I really liked the fact that Pook really seems like a guy free of any misogyny.
He invites people to build their dream life and enjoy women but without any of the ugliest attitudes of some fringes of the manosphere.

- **Pook Sounds Knowledgeable**

Sometimes a few passages made me think that Pook is actually very knowledgeable about seduction and seduction strategies.

For example when he says that beginners should kino and touch a girl, but that very advanced and attractive men can, and probably should go, without touching.
I agree with that. The idea is that when you don't touch her and there is a lot of attraction, it can work like an erupting volcano when you finally start attacking each other.

Review

The Book of Pook delivers many valid insights that at the time of writing were both advanced and unique, but dispersed in a lot of noise that dilutes the content.

That makes it a challenging book to properly review.

It's been a book that has helped change the game, in some ways.
Pook was one of the first to tell men to focus on themselves, to stop looking at women like notches around which to base their self-esteem, and to apply high standards to themselves first.

But it also has a lot of generic content, redundant information, and even contradictory or counterproductive advice.

Overall, I feel that ***The Book of Pook*** **is great for beginners, while more advanced men can skip the full book.**

Also, read:

- **Best dating books for guys**
- Best red pill books

The Rational Male: 10 Red Pill Laws by Rollo Tomassi (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Rational Male (2013) is a red pill book summarizing part of Red Pill philosophy, mixed with Rollo Tomassi's own interpretations and ideas.

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Key Takeaways

- **There is no "the one"**: there are countless partners with whom you can have a great relationship
- To control the relationship: **need her less than she needs you**
- **Entertain several different women at once**: it gives you an abundance mindset ('Plate theory')

Summary

About the Author:
Rollo Tomassi is one of the leading voices in the male-focused online community known as the "Red Pill".
The "Red Pill" focuses more on the intersexual sexual dynamics and sexual power dynamics of the more general male self-development.
Rollo Tomassi is also the author of "*Preventive Medicine*", "*Positive Masculinity*", and "*The Player's Handbook*".

Our Review of Rollo:
We find Rollo Tomassi could improve his critical thinking skills and address some personal biases to provide better analyses and strategies.
Read more in our full analysis:

> Rollo Tomassi: Red Pill Guru, Or Misogynistic Bias?

1. Quit Oneitis & Internalize This: There's No "The One"

The definitive dictionary of power defines oneitis as:

> The tendency for an individual to pedestalize one woman and feel like she is "the one" and it's either he gets her, or he is desperate

Oneitis is an old concept harking back to the very beginning of pick-up and manosphere (check *The Game*, *The Mystery Method*, and David DeAngelo).

In short, oneitis refers to men who obsess over a single, specific woman.
So you would say that a **man suffers from oneitis when he loses his mind for one woman and thinks she's so awesome that he must absolutely be with her or he's ruined.**

Rollo suggests that this is in part due to the mistaken belief of "The One", such as there is a woman (or a man) out there who is just right for you.
And you "just" need to find her.

I agree with Tomassi here: this idea makes no sense whatsoever and it should be so obvious that we don't need to discuss it any further :).

I don't think there is much connection though between oneitis and "the one" mindset. Oneitis relates more to chemical reactions and lacks options than to beliefs.

2. Control The Relationship By Not Needing Her

Tomassi borrows a concept from social dynamics called "Principle of Least Interest" (Waller, 1937).

And it means that "the person who needs the other person the least, controls the outcome".

Tomassi says that whether or not you want to see relationships through the lenses of power dynamics or not, it doesn't matter. The power dynamics will be at play anyway.

And, well, I couldn't agree more :).

On the other hand, this is also a potentially toxic approach.

My Note: Partially true if powe is the goal, but potentially toxic if the goal is win-win
Many elements determine power in a relationship.
But a focus on "needing her less" can lead win-lose or lose-lose approaches. The *APA Handbook* on relationships

for example says a power-first apporach makes you less satisfied in the relationship.
For more, read:

- **Relationship power dynamics**: the basics
- **How to maintain power and control** (the effective way)

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

3. Don't Just Be Yourself: Grow

You know the old self-help mantra, right?

It's:

> Just be yourself

Tomassi criticizes that approach and invites the readers of *The Rational Male* to focus on growth and self-development to become a high-quality man.

He uses his own example, of what happened to him when he started truly working on himself.
He went from "worst, bottom-scraping beta" to rockstar and alpha father. What you do with your life and who you become in your life, says Rollo, is up to you.

That's true indeed.
Also, read:

- Mindset: The Psychology of Success
- How to develop a growth mindset
- Ultimate Power

> **The danger is not aiming high, but aiming low and achieving it**

4. Date Several Women (Plate Theory)

Plate Theory equates plates with women and says that **men should not commit to a single woman and instead keep their options open** (ie.: spinning several plates at once).

Tomassi doesn't say a man should never commit, but he does recommend not doing so before 30 or before he fully understands the lifetime value of men and women, what he really wants from life, and the dynamics of the sexual marketplace.

Writes Rollo Tomassi:

> A man is as confident and valuable as his options. This is the essence of abundance mindset – confidence is derived from options.

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

Spinning Plate for Abundance Mentality

Spinning different plates doesn't mean that he must be sexual with all of them, or that he must keep spinning them

all.

The idea is to have several different leads to help you internalize the idea that there are many women out there, that many women can suit you, and that you don't have to take cr@p from any of them because you can easily be next to her.

Spinning Plate for Best Girlfriend Choice

Spinning plates allow men to gain more dating and female knowledge, to discern low-quality women from high-quality women and, when he wants, it allows him to make a more informed choice.

Indeed, I would add that quantity is not antithetical to quality. **Quantity is an enabler of quality**.

And when you want to stop with a woman, you know that it was a choice you have done based on options and knowledge, and not on desperation.

> Quantity enable quality

Be The Prize

Rollo Tomassi also says that the attitude that you are the prize of the relationship must underpin your plate spinning

When you are the prize, women will also accept non-exclusivity more, because, says Tomassi:

> Women would rather share a successful man than be sadddled with a faithful loser

Which is a quote he attributes to Pook (read *The Book of Pook)*.

5. Unplug & Take The Red Pill

Unplugging or "taking the red pill" is common red pill parlance for "coming to see things as they really are".

In this case, it would be men dropping the mistaken assumption from society and embracing the manosphere theories and tenets.

Rollo Tomassi says there are typical stages of the red pill awakening:

1. Denial – refusing to let go of previous beliefs
2. Anger – awareness the pill makes sense, anger at society for feeding wrong ideas
3. Bargaining – trying to keep some old beliefs
4. Depression – the red pill can be a tough one to swallow
5. Acceptance – becoming a knowledgeable, healthy rational male

6. Strategize With Value In Mind: Men's SMV Increases, Women's Decreases

Our current culture pretends that men and women are the same.

But that's crap, implies Rollo.
And nowhere is this more visible than in the sexual marketplace.

Women reach their peak at around 23 YO, while men are just starting their ascension, peaking at 36.
Tomassi says:

> At age 23, while a girl is enjoying her prime value, a man is just beginning to make his own gradual ascent. By age 36, the average man has reached his own relative apex. It's at this phase that his sexual/social/professional

> appeal has reached maturity.

And while women's market value is mostly a consequence of their physical attractiveness, male attractiveness is only one factor.
Thus a rich 50YO will be more value than an average, run-of-the-mill 30YO. That can hardly be the case for women.

> Sexual Market Value: A Practical Analysis

My note: Misleading for men
At 36, most men haven't reached maturity but their *peak*. While a 23-year-old woman loses sexual appeal as she ages, new 20-somethings enter the dating market—and **most 35+ men in the West struggle to attract women in their early 20s.** Top men do not struggle, but they're not the norm, but the exception.

Women Are Duped Into Losing Strategy

Tomassi also seems to suggest that the current cultural climate of women being the same as men leads them to the mistaken assumption that "they have time".

But when they reach their 30s after they spent their early 20s partying they eventually realize, sometimes too late, that their value is dropping fast.

I tend to agree with that.
Also, read:

- **Dating for successful women**

7. Keep a Woman's Interest By Displaying Value

Tomassi says you should never say it outright that you are seeing other women.

You should make it clear though if you're not ready for commitment or you are stealing her time.
And lying to get women is what low-quality men do.

Tomassi recommends:

- Sub-communicate with your behavior that you have options
- Don't be too available
- Don't be there for her during the weekends

Also see:

- **How to display value**

https://thepowermoves.com/value-signaling

Be Careful of Hypergamy

And remain high-status or you'll lose her interest to hypergamy.

Hypergamy means "marrying up", referring to the supposed tendency of women to always want higher value men.
For a balanced and scientific overview of female hypergamy, see:

> Stop Whining About Hypergamy (& Do This Instead)

8. Pass Shit Tests to Prove Your Value

Women test men to determine one or more of these factors:

1. **Confidence –** first and foremost
2. **Options –** is he into me or am I his only option?
3. **Security –** is he able to provide long-term?

Also, read:

- **How to pass the female shit test**

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Win the Game

As a general rule though, I recommend testing women instead of focusing on passing her tests, since **it's the person who tests the other who has power** -also read "the judge role in power dynamics"-.
Some tests for women:

- **Ask women this crazy question**: and test their moral mettle (alumni only)
- **Tell women to leave a tip**: see how much and if they leave any
- **Tell her "got get that baby"**: see how she reacts (alumni only)

9. Control Frames Like The Alpha Buddha

Listening to The Rational Male I was curious to see Corey Worthington's interview, which for Tomassi exemplifies "alpha male behavior".

It's awesome indeed:

My Note: Not the best example of an alpha male, though
It's a funny interview, and he's impressive for his age.
But there are better examples.
For example, saying that he won't remove his sunglasses because they're famous sounds like an excuse to deflect social pressure. Higher power would "*because I don't want to*". Or to push her on the defensive with something like: "*I'm not telling you to remove your shirt am I, so why are you telling me what I should or should not wear*".

Also, read:

- **Frame control techniques**

10. Follow The 9 Iron Rules of Tomassi

Tomassi lists 9 iron rules:

#1 Frame is everything

Control the frame, but don't give the impression you are consciously doing so.

#2 Never share your sexual partner's count

Albeit Tomassi does so in the book, and it's 40 :).

In my experience though, most women don't care about it anyway. And if they asked, they never pressed me for a final number.

#3 Don't wait for women who make you wait

Any woman who makes you wait for sex is not worth it.

I couldn't agree more, except for fringe cases like very religious or virgins until late in life.

#4 Don't ever live with a woman you're not marrying

Either you're married or you're going to within six months.

I disagree with this one. Living together is an important test ride.

#5 Never allow a woman to be in control of birth control

LOL, this one had me smiling. Use a condom, guys!

#6 Women are incapable of loving a man the way he expects them to

I'm not sure about this one.
What exactly is the way a man expects to be loved?

#7 Develop new relationships: don't fix broken ones

Your time and effort are better spent looking for new ones than fixing the unfixable ones.
I agree. Albeit sometimes it can be difficult to know what's "unfixable". See here for some help on relationship diagnostics.

#8 Never help a woman figure out why she won't f*ck you

This rule says that in the current paradigm, women are the sexual selectors but you shouldn't flip the script there and be the prize of the relationship (honestly I missed the connection between the title of this rule and its content)

#9 Never self-deprecate

Don't self-deprecate or try to appeal to her sympathy or sense of guilt.

It's easy to do self-deprecation wrong.
But it's OK to self-deprecate when your qualities speak for themselves, or when you are coming across as too good (see: availability and self-rejection).
Also, some women -"women who love too much"-, love to fix strong but troubled men.

> **Women ask for Mr. Dependable but fuck Mr. Exciting**

The Rational Male Debunked

There is plenty of great advice in *The Rational Male*.

Especially for beginners.

But that's also the limitation: it lacks refinement for more advanced men.

Here is all the criticism of "*The Rational Male*":

1. Unsubstantiated & Inaccurate Claims

Several claims are unscientific, factually inaccurate, and even illogical.

Some examples:

1.2. “Women obey the imperative of fucking the alpha man while marrying the nice guy”

“Imperative”?

What does it even mean?

That’s already a red flag for lacking rigor.

Women, like any other living organism, seek to get the best they can get.

Women’s strategies are complex and context-dependent.
They’d rather pick an alpha male who commits, if they can -and high-quality women, can-.

And while in some cases women may choose a high mate value man for children and gladly get another man to invest -‘dual mating strategy’-, it’s not as widespread as the author implies.

Obvious data on **non-paternity rates disprove Rollo’s “female imperative”.** Or, at least, they disprove that women are *successful* at executing the strategy.
Data is hard to find, the median estimate of cuckolded men is 3.7% (One of the sources is here and another one here).

That means that 98+% of women father children from their “official” partners.
The data does not support the idea that most women are acting on the imperative of getting genes from an alpha and getting support from a beta.

Among men who took a DNA test suspecting they were not the biological father, 1 in 3 were cuckolded (meaning 2 times out of 3 they are the actual father).

There would be more to opine, but the evidence is already strong.

Update: Rollo’s Answer

He didn’t expressly say he was answering to TPM (an expected power move).

But chances are he was.

And Rollo said that our criticism is wrong because you should also include women who had children from other men and remarried.
And *then* you’d get at around 40%.

Albeit this new take has some merit, it’s still wrong because those new male partners aren’t necessarily providing for the whole family and they may have children on their own.

Finally, investment in mothers with children may be a mating effort, not an investment in children.

Finally, a mother who remarries is not always winning investments, but she’s failing as a mother and putting her children at increased risk.
Studies show that stepfathers in the household is the single greatest risk factor for child neglect and abuse, including higher incidence of infanticide (Dalay & Wilson, 1988).

1.3. Women Are Incapable of Loving (??)

My experience differs.

And I can’t help but wonder here: **are these authors expecting a woman to love them as their mothers would**?
Like unconditional love, no matter how naughty -or useless- he is?

Then it’s not women’s fault if they had wrong expectations.

2. Misunderstanding of Basic Scientific Principles & Logical Fallacies

Rollo says:

> I completely disagree with idea that women will only fuck (or want to fuck) one guy at a time. I could outline several women I know from experience in this (…)

To begin with, this is straw-manning: whoever said that "women will only fuck one guy at a time"?

Second, this is called inductive reasoning, such as looking at a few cases and generalizing to the whole population. It's prone to all kinds of personal biases and rarely leads to good conclusions.

For the record, there are plenty of women who enjoy casual sex. And still, women want to sleep around much *less* than men want to (Ridley, 1993).

2.2. Increasing sex partners not a risk for VDs (wrong)

To make the point more sex does not mean higher risk, Rollo says:

> In my lifetime I've had sex with over 40 women and I never once caught a venereal disease (..)
> I can also point to men I know who contracted Herpes from the only women they'd ever had sex with. (..) you can equally be a rock star and tap hundreds of women without any consequence and you can be a virgin saint and contract a disease on your wedding night

To begin with, I'd hope Rollo used a condom at least some of the times.

When it comes to what I partially agree with him: the fear of VD might be overblown and VDs should not be your (main) reason to decide for monogamy.
But that quote above is the equivalent of the "95 YO who smokes two packs of cigarettes a day, hence cigarettes are not bad" fallacy.

The danger is also that **the more the woman is OK with not using a condom, the higher risk she is**. Sometimes I even use it as a test. I pretend I'm not using any condom and see how she reacts.

2.3. Monogamy serves women's interests (not fully correct)

Rollo writes:

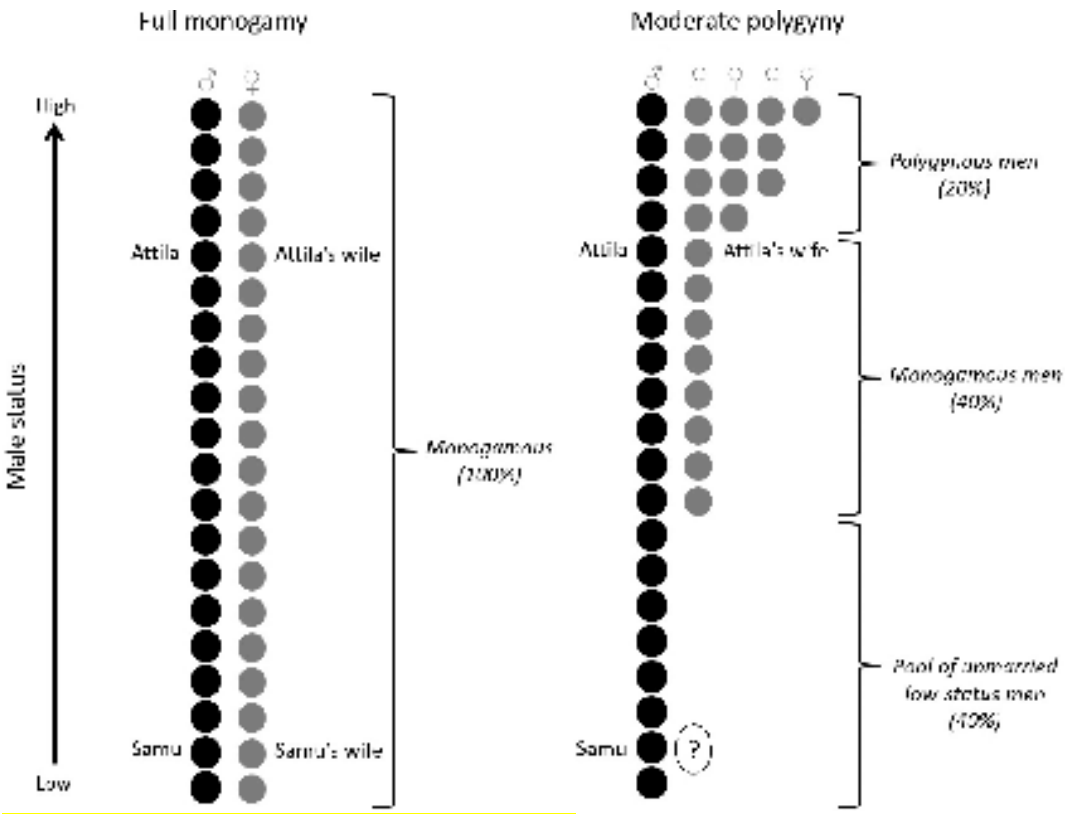
> Monogamy as a goal is a tool of the feminine imperative

That's not true.

Rollo confuses what's good for a sizable sub-group, with what's good for the whole group.
But there are no groups in dating and intersexual dynamics -or in life in general-.
There are *individuals*.

A high-status man suffers from monogamy because he could more easily get more women.
But **a high-status woman gains from monogamy because a high-status male will be under pressure to commit to her**.
And a lower status male gains with monogamy because the cultural expectation helps him get a woman (see Kanazawa, 2007).

In chart:



It's low-status men who gain most from monogamy

2.4. Women manipulate men to not take care of themselves (illogical)

Rollo says women tell men that "looks don't matter" so that men won't take care of themselves.

Why would they do so?

Because, Rollo says, it allows women to keep having sex with the alpha males they are attracted to while still being able to rely on the resources of their less attractive partners.

It's an imaginative theory.
But imaginative doesn't make for "accurate".
And it doesn't stand to logical scrutiny.

Anyone with a basic grasp of intersexual dynamics would agree that women gain if all men cared more about themselves because they'd have more to choose from.

See more on games that women play here:

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

3. Made-up, pop-evolutionary psychology (storytelling, opinions, & fervid imagination)

Rollo often references *evolutionary psychology*.

But it's seldom evidence-based.
Instead, storytelling, opinions, and personal biases sold as facts are the bane of "*The Rational Male*".

Personal conjecture can be valid as hypothesis.
But hypotheses must still be logical.

The authors' hypothesis sometimes lack logic.

4. The Male-Side Bias Fails to Provide A Good Overview

This is what David Buss says:

> Popular explanations blame patriarchy, masculine hegemony, and toxic masculinity <— this is the feminist point of view
> Manosphere bloggers, on the other hand, blame women who seek sex with "alpha chads" (high-status males) and exploit lower-status men who are "betas" for their investment <— this is the red pill point of view
> There is some truth to each of these contrasting accounts, but also ways in which they lack explanatory depth.

Basically: manosphere bloggers are the feminist equivalent.

I agree with that, albeit the red pill is probably closer to the truth than the opposite camp.

So allghouth there are good analyses in "*The Rational Male*", I believe it fails to provide a good overview of dating and dating power dynamics.

Why?

Because **Rollo Tomassi has a strong male bias** and, I suspect, an anti-women bias as well.

For example, Rollo focuses on the games women play, and men falling for them.
And there are certainly women who dupe men.
And women, in general, are better and very effective at controlling relationships.

Also, see:

- Female Domestication: how women control men in relationships

But the view of men played by women is simplistic. Men play their own games.
Both genders, at times, seek to take advantage of one another.

The way I see it, you can't pass for an unbiased analyst sitting at that table and laughing at blatant gaslighting:

4.2. The focus on the female dual sexual strategy misses the male's counterpart

Rollo Tomassi focuses on the dualistic female dating strategy (AKA: alpha fucks, beta bucks).

But he fails to see -or mention- that men also have a dual strategy (Wright, 1994).

The male dual strategy is this:

> Marry the pious girl and fuck the floozy

This dual strategy, when taken to an extreme, results in the Madonna-whore complex.

5. An Over-Generalization Fest on "Women Nature"

Tomassi has many categories for men.

There are "alphas", "alpha providers", "beta who don't know the rules", "red pill men who opened their eyes" etc.

But women all seem to be the same.

All are driven by their biology the exact same way.
All playing games and all looking for an alpha to inseminate them and a beta to take care of them.

I found this over-generalizations one of the major drawbacks of “The Rational Male”.
It’s also not very informative, because not all women are created equals and different women have different tendencies for cheating.

I’m not the only one to feel this way.
The “almost colleague” guys over at Charisma on Command feel the same:

> **Charlie Houpert**: (…) the rational male Rollo guy and (…) he was like women are irrational and women are like this.
> I was like yes and so are men and i feel like the narrow focus it’s just a common tactic that I’m startirng to notice.

It was a great interview, by the way, check it out.

To be clear, men and women are different and, as Jordan Peterson says, are particularly relevant at the extremes.
But Rollo Tomassi still makes the two genders more different than they are, and *over*-generalizes.

Also, read:

- Signs your partner is cheating
- How to find a loyal partner

This Rational Male Is Quite Irrational

In brief, it’s funny:

the rational male tries hard to self-frame as rational, but there is way too much personal bias to be truly “rational”.

Call it, if you want, “rational posturing” -similar to alpha male posturing, a common thing in the manosphere-.

Some Fragile And/Or Weak Mindsets

Example:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

CONS

Besides the more factual rational male debunking, some of the cons include:

Lots of Misogyny Red Flags

I don’t say this gladly.

I know it’s potentially bad for business since quite a few men reading here are from red-pill communities.

But still, I could sense a misogynist bias in “*The Rational Male*“, as well as from the author in general.

For example:

> Since we live in a feminine defined reality, women's game is not considered subterfuge, it's simply how women are, or the feminine mystique

Feminists say the exact same thing… Except that, we live in a female-repressive society.

Or:

> Women are utterly incapable of loving a man in the way that a man expects to be loved by a woman. (…) Men believe that love matters for the sake of it. Women love opportunistically.

It feels at times as if The Rational Male frames women as generally machiavellian and conniving. And generally more so than men.

He hides behind the fact that "men adn women are different", which obviously are -duh!-. But it's funny how **in Rollo's analyses, women differ from men in mostly *negative* ways**.
That's a definition of misogyny (Forward, 1986).

A video-analysis for more:

Generic, Catch-All Dating Advice Lacks Refinement

On TPM we caution against "catch-all" advice and we prefer nuanced, context-based approaches.

Generally speaking, catch-all advice is often beginner-level advice.
And to get to the next level, you truly need to move beyond it.

Also, see our analysis on the "limitations of alpha male game".

Some of the advice I disagreed with includes:

Writes Off The Provider Strategy (Which Can Be Effective)

The author doesn't seem to consider that being a provider in a monogamous relationship can be a valid dating strategy and/or life choice for (some) men.

Again, I am NOT saying monogamy is good and you should go for it: I am happily single and *not* considering marriage.
But I am saying that not all men who decide to enter 1:1 relationships are stupid or irrational.

This is funny, in a way, since Rollo, married and still married tells men not to get married.
While me, single and never planning on marrying, tell people that it's a fair choice to enter a serious and potentially monogamous relationship, if they so choose.

Also, read:

- **Alpha male game**: pros and cons
- **Lover and provider sexual strategies**: which one should you choose?

And see:

Refusing the "let's just be friends" ("LJBF")

The idea behind not being her friend is sound.
But rejecting the "let's just be friends" sends the wrong message.

Ie.: it makes you sound butthurt and like you *really* wanted her as GF.

Instead, I recommend men say: “Sure, we are friends and we should stay friends”. Then never contact her again and be too busy she contacts you.
Or check out here how to handle it via text.

This isn’t just my opinion, by the way.
Research has shown that friends are well-positioned for mate poaching and that boyfriends and husbands have good reasons to be worried about their friends (the obvious caveat: friends must be attractive).

The “be as mannish as you can be” to get laid (fails the “law of optimum balance”)

Tomassi says men must be masculine to attract women.

That’s most certainly true… Up to a point.
The law of optimum balance also applies to dating.
And studies suggest women *do* have an upper limit and there is such a thing as “too masculine” in attraction.

Green in *The Art of Seduction* also explains that a touch of femininity can help disarm women’s defences.

Soso Advice for Relationships

I agree with developing options and being the leader of the relationship.

But, as for everything: balance.

Gottman’s research shows that men resisting women’s influence have worse relationships.

Reading “*The Rational Male*” it felt to me like the leadership advocated in there was more of a “my leadership against you”.

“Needing her less” can also be a double-edged sword.
If you approach relationships with one foot out, then… Be a man and don’t get into a relationship at all.
Also, read “how to maintain attraction“:

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

Some of These Mindsets Might Lead to Low-Quality & Abuse If Taken To An Extreme

Psychology research shows an overlap between men who buy into male superiority, men who seek power, and abusive men.

Men who buy into the idea of male superiority feel less of a man when they are not in control or when their wives outclass them in some meaningful way (ie.: earn more, speak better, higher education, etc.).

And to protect their ego they can lash out to “re-assert” their dominance.

Note:
I am NOT saying this is the case for the author, for the Red Pill, or for most of the advice in “*The Rational Male*“.
But *some* of the mindsets behind “*The Rational Male*” series might make abusive relationship dynamics more likely.

Also, read:

- **How male pride can lead to domestic abuse**

Low-Power, Victim Mindsets

Some takes from Rollo are disempowering.

How can you be empowered, and still believe that you're a victim of this supposed "feminine imperative that governs the world"?

Feminine Imperative Governing the World (?)

Many legal systems, in many Western countries, favor women in divorces.

But the "feminine imperative" shaping cultures and "feminine indoctrination" making men puppets is something I disagre with.

It's both a simplistic view of a complex world, *and* disempowering.

"Men VS Women" Frame Can Lead to Anger & Bitterness

The theme seems to be one of men VS women and their feminine society.

Rollo Tomassi's work seems based on the idea that if one gender wins, the other must lose.

To borrow from game theory, this is a 'defection mindset'.
And defection strategies make the pie smaller for all -and is a poor strategy for long-term relationships (Axelrod, 1984; Ridley, 1996; Malhotra, 2007).

But, as the latest *APA Relationships Handbook* outlines, **there is much overlapping interests and much scope for win-win cooperation, which is why pair-bonding evolved and spread**.

Also see the "empowered individualist" article:

> Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

PROS

- **Can Be Eye-Opening For Beginners**

Rollo Tomassi can be eye-opening for many men who haven't yet put 1 and 1 together.

But also some men who settle down too early, look at monogamy as the only option, never realize the risks of marriage, or lack any basic power awareness around dating power dynamics.

- **Good Analysis of SMV**

Good albeit not perfect analysis of the sexual market value and how it changes depending on gender and age.

- **Some Great Reflections on Feminism & Femininity**

I quote here with some smaller omissions for brevity:

> *The characteristics that define masculinity (..) are now the aspirations of women to the point that ridicule of the feminine female is the order.*
> *(…) not only does this put undue, unrealistic ideals upon them, but also devalues the merits of their own femininity.*

100%.

- **Good Read to Understand Games & Manipulation**

Especially women's games.

- **Great Busting of Some Myths**

For example, that ‘looks don’t matter’ and that ‘women are as sexual as men’.

Neither of these are true -albeit men can do much to work around looks.

Review

The Rational Male is a great entry point into basic principles of intersexual power dynamics, dating strategies, and ‘red pill’ philosophy.

It’s not easy to evaluate in a single sentence because it mixes great content with some poor assumptions.

Overall, much of what Rollo Tomassi is true, to a certain extent.
In my opinion, it’s the generalization of those principles, together with the extremization of some of the women’s tendencies that leads to a distorted picture.

Do I recommend you read “*The Rational Male*“?
Absolutely.
But I also recommend you do so with a critical mind.

Also, check out:

- Best red pill books
- Best dating books for men

or get the book on Amazon

And if this review was helpful, **Power University** turns smart men into winners.

The Way of The Superior Man: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Way of The Superior Man (1997) is a self-help text and a popular manosphere book mixing spiritualism with relationship and sex advice.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Find Your Life's Purpose
  - Embrace Your Masculine Energy: Polarization Attracts
  - Embrace Her Drama
  - For Real Passion: Let Go, Ravish Her
  - Leverage Sexual Energy: Don't Release
  - Face Your Fears, Do Your Best (& Get Friends Who Do The Same)
- Real-Life Applications
- CRITICISM
  - Accepting Drama Is For INFERIOR Men
  - Unfounded Conclusions: Sexual Chemistry = Bad Relationships?
  - Convoluted Gospel-Sounding Woo-Woo
  - "I want you my bitch"
  - Woo-Woo & Unscientific
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- **Embrace your masculine energy** (or feminine energy if you are a woman)
- **Find your purpose**: respect everyone, but follow your purpose first (and before her)
- **Don't wait for a future moment to be happy**: your moment to embrace is always *now*

Notes

About the Author:
Born as David Greenberg, David changed his surname to Deida.
His biography seems a mix of medical background with more ascetic practices, such as developing yoga techniques for intimate relationships.

Find Your Life's Purpose

David Deida recommends you know what you are on this earth for and that you *find a WHY* for your existence.

He recommends you **go to a quiet place and think.** Think about who you are, what's important to you, and where you want to go. Do it for as long as it takes until you find your purpose.

He says that your woman will test you to see if you found your WHY and if you are serious about it. She wants to know that you can stay the course and **she doesn't want to be your first priority in life**.

She will also prod you and test you to see that your happiness does not depend fully on her and that all your eggs are not solely in her basket. But deep down, she wants to relax and let herself in your direction and leadership.

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Win the Game

Put Your Purpose First

Deida writes:

> Admit to yourself that if you had to choose (..) the perfect intimate relationship or achieving your highest purpose in life, you would choose (..) your purpose.
> (…)
> Tell your woman that you love her, but you cannot deny your heart's purpose. Tell her that you will spend 30 minutes (…) in absolute attention and total presence, but then you must return to carry on your mission

The idea of finding one's purpose has become a central tenet in the manosphere.
Also, see:

- The Tactical Guide to Women
- The Rational Male
- Alpha male strategies

Embrace Your Masculine Energy: Polarization Attracts

David Deida's book is heavily based on the male and female energy of the yin and yang philosophy.

Both men and women have both male and female energy within them, but for a harmonious, passionate, and successful relationship there has to be a balance where the man embraces his masculine energy and the woman embraces her feminine energy.

When neither genders embrace their gender-specific energy the relationship lacks passion. When one gender is not embracing their energy, the other partner is forced to make up for it.

A man who does not embrace his masculine energy is forcing the woman to act more like a man.
And **a man who embraces his masculine energy allows the woman to celebrate her femininity**.

Indeed, if you want more femininity or masculinity in your partner a great way is to increase your gender-specific energy and purge yourself of the opposite gender-specific energy (ie.: be less feminine as a man and be less masculine as a woman).

Deida says:

> If he spends more time in the mirror and his own radiance and life force makes him happier than his woman she will be upset (..)
> If he spends more time combing his air than he spends receiving radiance, then there is no polarity.

My Note: Exceptions apply in seduction
Narcissistic men and more feminine men can be very successful with women. Just listen to the song "You're so vain" and you will hear a woman who fell desperately in love with a narcissist who was all about his own image.
Also see: "archetypes of lovers".

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

The Masculine Traits

You need to define your own masculine traits, but The Way of The Superior has a few pointers:

- Lead the relationship
- Find a life purpose
- Live his own personal truth
- Stick to his value
- Live with integrity
- Seeks freedom
- Faces his fears

Also, see more examples in "alpha male traits" and "how to be an alpha male":

> How to Be An Alpha Male In 10 Simple Steps

Embrace Her Drama

David Deida advises men to welcome their women's drama, embracing it with love and a good spirit.
He says:

> You can't escape the tussle with the feminine.
> Learn to find humor in the unending emotional drama the feminine seems to enjoy so much. The love that you magnify may realign her behavior, but your effort to fix her and your frustration never will

He must seek to understand what she really needs because women will rarely say what they actually need. And t**he vast majority of the time her turmoil stems from not feeling loved**.
As *most relationship books* advise, Deida says you must listen to understand, not fix.

My Note: Generic advice is terrible advice. What if she's a drama queen?
I think that telling men they must endure a woman's drama can be counterproductive. Some women are troublemakers and the drama leads to toxic relationships.
See for example borderline personality disorders, or bad personality matches with the anxious-avoidant trap.

See instead a different approach to handling relationship drama:

https://odysee.com/High-Status-Dominant-Man-Handling-Drama—Example:f7341b3eb09580b6e367ca53ebc42a653eed2280

Women also use drama as a way to control men, or as a manipulative relationship game to acquire power, so I actually don't recommend men to "embrace drama".

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

For Real Passion: Let Go, Ravish Her

The Way of The Superior Man embraces love in its most animalistic aspect.

Deida writes:

> When was the last time you really ravished your woman? That is, when was the last time you really "took" her, savagely, lovingly, with no inhibition whatsoever?

He makes fun of “neutral” loving:

> If you want real passion, you need a ravisher and a ravishee; otherwise, you just have two buddies who decide to rub genitals in bed.

The female can do her part by letting go of her sense of direction to allow her partner to exercise direction (ie.: be the leader in bed).

Finally, Deida says I’m sure not without some criticism by some of the readers, that “the difference between rape and ravishment is love”.

> **The difference between rape and ravishment is love**

Leverage Sexual Energy: Don’t Release

Deida puts it gently, but in practice, it’s about delaying coitus.

He says:

> Third level man walks away from her without consuming the desire

Albeit I wasn’t really sure what this “third level man” meant, he advises men not to peak during intercourse and to keep that energy to stay hungry and motivated during their life pursuits.

To enjoy sex without coming Deida says:

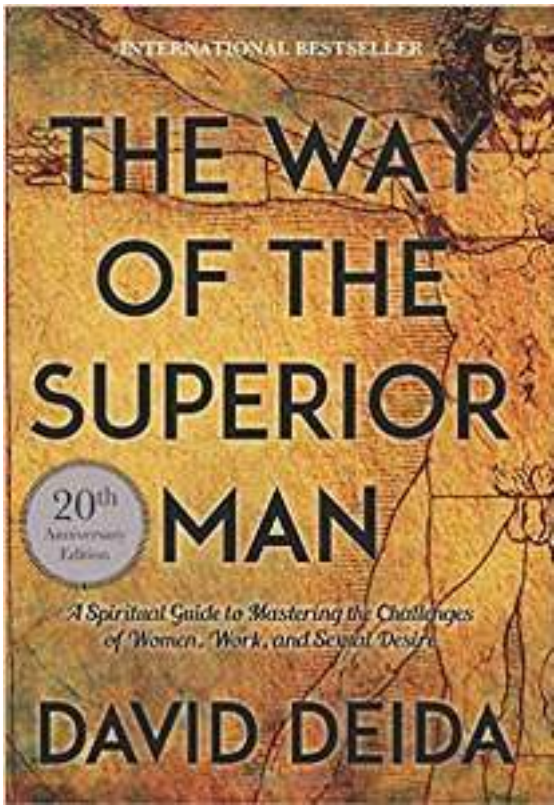
- Relax your muscle instead of tensing them. When your face contracts, relax it, when your breath gets short, breathe deeply
- Focus more on your partner than on yourself

My Note: But also focus on yourself, sometimes
this is something that I did a lot when younger. I used to ejaculate less because I made it more about her. If you’re not ejaculating because you make it too much about her, then it’s not coming from a good place (read: No More Mr. Nice Guy). If you do it consciously to keep your sexual energy, then it’s OK. Otherwise ravishing and coming are not mutually exclusive of course-

Face Your Fears, Do Your Best (& Get Friends Who Do The Same)

Deida exhorts the readers to do their best in life, to go after their grand vision, and to be intolerant of mediocrity.

Men should have friends who do the same and who help and push each other. With love and caring, our friends should hold us to our highest standards and nudge us towards facing our fears and pushing our limits.



Real-Life Applications

- **Pursue Your Goal, Not Duties**

It's easy to get distracted by to-do lists and duties others pile on us. But it's up to you to make sure that your duties and tasks align with your goals. Otherwise, you're a puppet on someone else's strings.

- **Stop Putting Contingencies on Your Happiness: NOW Is Time to Be Happy**

Don't think that once you reach X you can relax, be happy and enjoy life. It rarely works that way. Your life is now, now is the time to be happy.
As David Deida says: every moment waited is a moment wasted.

> **Every moment waited is a moment wasted**

CRITICISM

Accepting Drama Is For INFERIOR Men

I don't believe that you should "embrace drama" and that "the love you magnify may realign her behavior".

That's not effective advice for men who wish to retain masculinity, power, and leadership.

Deida writes:

> **A superior man sees his woman's moods not as a curse, but as a challenge and an amusement**.
> There are many ways to creatively deal with her moods and help her to open. Tickle her. Take off your clothes and dance the watusi. **Sing opera for her**. Make animal sounds. Shout at her louder than you ever have and then **kiss her passionately**. Press your belly into her until she melts. Lift her off the ground and spin her around. Occasionally, talking with her helps, but not as often as humor and physically expressed love

This is saying to “lift her moods when she gives you drama and shit”.
That’s a terrible approach, in my opinion, rewarding bad behavior and the opposite of what one should do.

Unfounded Conclusions: Sexual Chemistry = Bad Relationships?

The author says that the woman who most turns you on sexually will turn you off for the rest of your life.

I’d like to know based on what he says that.

So, for a happy relationship in Deida’s words, one should pair up with partners whom they *don’t* find sexually attractive.

Convoluted Gospel-Sounding Woo-Woo

The Way of The Superior Man, a bit like *12 Rules for Life*, has some good ideas. But in my opinion, they get lost, and not amplified, by the rhetorical embroidery.

Here is an example:

> Her gift, if she is a good woman, is to test you with her darkest moods, over and over and over, until your consciousness is unperturbed by feminine challenge, and you are able to pervade her with your love, just as you are here to pervade the world. In response to your fearless consciousness, she will drench your world in love and light.

Ehm, what?

I think the content, teased out from the text, could work well for some men. But put it like that, it’s more about sweet-sounding prose than about delivering concrete wisdom.
If the author wished to keep it like that, which is OK because it does sound beautiful, would have at least added, after or before, the meaning in plain English.

“I want you my bitch”

That was just so corny in the audiobook.

And don’t fall for the ‘dominant sounding approach’.

It’s lower value chasing behavior.

Woo-Woo & Unscientific

The concept of polarization between masculine and feminine makes sense for certain traits and behaviors, but the way it’s represented her feels shallow, unscientific, and not entirely accurate in its generalization.

I quote the authoritative *Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Behavior*:

> Looking at selected pop psychology books and ancient civilizations is not the best way to understand the differences and similarities between men and women – instead, we need to turn to scientific evidence

And that’s even without getting into the various sweeping generalizations that sometimes just feel plain illogical.

Deida says that ‘variety is feminine’, but instead it’s men who enjoy more sexual variety and score higher on thrill-seeking.

Even “*Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*” was superior in its stereotypes and generalizations.

PROS

Reconnect With Your Dark Desire
The part I liked the most was the reconnection with our animalistic and darkest desire. The

Review

I'm not the best reviewer for new age and spiritual texts.

I like information straight up, clear, concise, and accurate. That's not what you get in spiritual texts.

And I didn't like "*The Way of The Superior Man*".

Too convoluted, too many teacher frames, and too gospel-sounding.
To convince me, one should say something that makes rational sense, that I experienced, that *you* personally experienced, or that is supported by evidence.

Unluckily, the author doesn't even provide his own experience and examples to back up the facts.

I felt like it was a mumble jumbo of gender generalizations and watered-down manosphere packaged in a cool-sounding but information-poor new-page format.

Moving beyond the writing style I did like a lot of concepts and some of them are very profound and life-changing. What I found most interesting Deida's elevation of animalistic, carnal desire to a Godly, sublime experience.

But overall, I prefer "King, Warrior, Magician, Lover".
Give it a try, and let me know what you think.

Check the:

- **Best red pill books**
- Best dating books for men

> Best Red Pill Books

Or get this book on Amazon.

The Charisma Myth: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Charisma Myth (2012) teaches readers how to be more charismatic. Olivia Fox Cabane, the author, shares tons of great wisdom and insights with both good psychology and lots of practical tips.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Introduction
  - We Assess First: Friend or Foe, Intentions & Power
  - The Three Elements of Charisma
  - Obstacles to Presence, Power & Warmth
  - Overcoming the obstacles
  - Creating Charismatic Mental States
  - Charismatic First Impressions
  - Speaking and Listening with Charisma
  - Charismatic Body Language
  - Difficult Situations
  - Types of Charisma
- CRITICISM
  - Charisma Types Are Not Scientific Categories
  - These May Be Forms of Power, Not Charisma
  - Sometimes Had to Question the Effectiveness
- Review

Overview

- Charisma is something we can all learn
- Charisma is presence, warmth, and power. Too much warmth = too nice, too much power = arrogant and distant
- There can be some downsides to charisma like jealousy and isolation: use vulnerability

Notes

About the Author:
Olivia Fox Cabane earned two degrees in law, but then started getting into social skills and charisma because she was just too bad with people. She had to learn charisma and social skills and, eventually, turned to teaching others how to learn charisma and social skills.

Introduction

We can all learn charisma.

You don't have to be naturally outgoing or handsome. Indeed charisma will make you make your more attractive. And introverts can be very charismatic as well and it's actually an advantage for certain forms of charisma.

3 quick tips for charisma boosts:

1. Lower the intonation of your voice at the end of the sentences
2. Reduce your speed and quantity of nodding
3. Pause for two seconds before you reply

We Assess First: Friend or Foe, Intentions & Power

Olivia Cabane says that upon first meeting someone we want to assess whether they are friends or foes.
And whether they have the power to act on those intentions.

That's true, and based on this innate human drive, we also derive one of our basic laws of power here.

Also, read:

- Mix the power with warmth

> Power Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

The Three Elements of Charisma

The three elements of charisma for Cabane are:

1. Presence
2. Power
3. Warmth

Power without warmth is impressive but can come across as cold, arrogant, and standoffish. Warmth without power can be likable and can come across as subservient and eager to please.

I agree with that.
Also, see:

- Mix the power with warmth
- Signs of submissiveness you need to avoid
- Signs of power you need to adapt

Presence

Presence of being aware of what's going on.
When we are not present in the conversation or in the environment it shows that we are not charismatic.

Here is how to acquire more presence:

- Learn presence with meditation
- When your mind wanders focus on your breath or toes to come back to the present

Power

Power is the ability to affect the world around us, whether it be by influence or power over others.

You recognize power based on:

- Appearance
- Other people's reaction to us

- Body language

Warmth

Warmth is the goodwill we have towards others. It says whether we want to use our power to help others or to harm them.

Obstacles to Presence, Power & Warmth

The following are common obstacles to unleashing our presence, power, and warmth:

Physical Discomfort

Physical discomfort affects our mental states which in turn affects our expressions, body language, and social skills performances.
To combat physical discomfort:

- Wear clothes that fit well
- Eat well
- Get all the rest you need
- Recognize: take a moment to notice if you're tense
  - Fix it: fix what bothering you
  - Reframe it: see it in a different light. How is it good, how can you use it?

Mental Discomfort

Anxiety, dissatisfaction, self-criticism, or self-doubt make you uncharismatic

Fix uncertainty like this:

1. Lie down, close your eyes, and relax
2. Take 2 or 3 deep breaths. Imagine the air in, then exhale all your worries
3. Imagine a benevolent entity of your choice (God, Fate, the Universe, etc)
4. Imagine they come to collect all your worries
5. Feel the weight being lifted off
6. **Avoid comparisons**: you must stop yourself every time you compare yourself to others
7. **Avoid self-criticism**: we perceive imaginary attacks as real ones

Self Doubts

- Impostor Syndrome: we don't believe we are good enough for our tasks
- Knowing that most people feel the same way can help reduce their power
- When you feel nervous remind yourself it's normal to be nervous

Overcoming the obstacles

Chapter four of *The Charisma Myth* is all about overcoming obstacles.
Olivia presents a three-step process:

1. **Destigmatize Discomfort**
   - Realize discomfort is normal
   - Realize everyone feels the same way

    - Stop trying to stop the discomfort
    - With 7 billion people, know that many feel the same way: it's a communal effort and you're not alone
    - Think of people who have gone through it before, especially those you admire
2. **Neutralize negativity**
    - We are programmed to focus on negative outcomes: combat them by focusing on positives
    - Remind yourself that you may have a more negative representation of reality
    - Thoughts are just brain electrical impulses: knowing it makes it easier to dismiss them
    - Name negative experiences and depersonalize ("there is a shame" instead of "I'm ashamed", also read Daring Greatly)
    - Imagine the whole world and slowly zoom towards you: you're not alone
    - Consider times you've previously felt the same and done well
    - Neutralizing is not the same as suppressing: don't try to suppress negative thoughts!
3. **Rewrite reality**
    - Imagine what's good about your negative situation
    - Imagine all the future positive scenarios this negative one will create

In a nutshell, when you are in uncomfortable situations:

1. Shake and remove physical discomfort
2. De-dramatize: the feelings are normal because that's how the brain is wired
3. De-stigmatize: millions have felt and are feeling the same way
4. Neutralize: your thoughts have a negative bias and may not be accurate
5. Re-frame: think of how what's happening is or will be positive or how you can make it positive right now

Remember, one of the most charismatic things you can do is to get comfortable with discomfort. The best approach to do it is to lean into the discomfort instead of denying it or trying to suppress it.

Stretching your comfort zone

- Hold eye contact for longer than it's comfortable
- Violate personal spaces
- Hold the elevator for everyone, enter the last face towards the people
- Start a conversation with a stranger

Exercises to get comfortable with the uncomfortable:

- The best way to do this is to delve straight into it rather than try to deny or suppress it.
- This allows you to achieve full presence (a highly charismatic trait) as well as provide sensations to focus on rather than how unbearable the situation is
- Learn to stretch your comfort zone by putting yourself in uncomfortable situations. (I.E attempt to hold eye contact longer than is comfortable, violate your personal space bubble a little bit)

Creating Charismatic Mental States

Olivia Fox Cabane proposes many techniques to control our mental state.

Visualization

- Visualize a time you were confident and crushed it

  - Imagine every detail of that situation
- If you're about to go through something such as a big speech:
  - Visualize yourself being highly confident and winning over the crowd
  - Imagine receiving a giant 20-second hug from someone you care about: it will release oxytocin which calms the flight or fight response down

Gratitude

Gratitude is the antidote to resentment, neediness, and desperation

- When a minor annoyance bothers you, take a minute to appreciate your health, life, decent weather, design, and texture of buildings, etc.
- Imagine yourself from a 3rd personal view, and write all of the positive things you can observe

Goodwill

Goodwill is great for becoming warmer

- Find three things to appreciate about someone
- Visualize people as wearing angel wings

Self Compassion

- Self-confidence is our belief in our ability to do or learn something
- Self-esteem is how much we approve or value ourselves. It's a comparison-based evaluation.
- Self-compassion is how much warmth we can have for ourselves. It's based on self-acceptance

Studies show **it's healthier to focus on self-compassion rather than self-esteem** because it's not based on others.

- Exercise: List 5 ways you already care for yourself when you're having a hard time
- Exercise: take several deep breaths; imagine someone who loves you; let them tell you that you are forgiven and that everything about you is perfect, everything down to your imperfections. Even as you are right now, you are perfect.

Using Your Body to Change Your Mind

Our mind affects our body language, but the opposite is also true.

- Use propose posture, take up space with confidence poses, and smile
- Chose your music carefully: it heavily affects your mood

Charismatic First Impressions

People like those who are similar to us. In both speech, demeanor, appearance, etc.

- Wear clothes similar to those that you want to attract
- Develop a good handshake (and avoid overpowering alpha male handshakes)

Break The Ice

- Compliment something someone is wearing.
- Ask an open-ended question, ie.: "What's the story behind that, where is it from, etc."

- Using lingo that relates to what they are interested in (same as Leil Lowndes recommends)

Graceful Exits

- Don't linger until it's weird: leave on a high note
- Offer them something when you leave
- Don't worry about what you said, or what to say: A MIT study shows that **how you make them feel matters**
- If you need to save someone from a conversation, focus your warmth and charisma on the person who's going to lose and ask"I'm really sorry, but X is needed to do Y, would you mind if I take them?". This gives them the impression they had a say in the matter and avoids hurting their feelings.

Speaking and Listening with Charisma

To listen with charisma be present, don't interrupt, and process what others said for two seconds before speaking.

To speak with charisma

- Speak about positive topics
- Make people feel good when you speak to them
- Find positive connotations
- Take a compliment in full: don't negate and don't say "it's nothing" or you make the person who gave you the compliment feel they were wrong to compliment you
- "You can get more friends in two months by becoming truly interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."-Dale Carnegie.
- Use metaphors and create images
  - But don't use images when discussing negative things.

Deliver High Value

- Speaking to someone means you demand time and attention. So you must deliver on it
- Make what you're saying entertaining
- Give interesting or helpful information
- Find a way to arouse good feelings

Voice Power

- Speak slowly, and slowly
- Pause frequently
- Lower intonation at the end of sentences
- Smile: it heavily affects how you sound and speak

Charismatic Body Language

Mirror Body

- Mimic the motions of those you are speaking to: it creates a sense of trust
- Be selective: if you copy all weird body language you will arouse suspicion (and some motions may be gender-specific)
- Use variations in amplitude. If they go big with a motion, maybe go small.

- Only do what's comfortable
- Don't mirror someone who is angry: break them from their angry pose by handing them something or something, then move into a non-angry one.

Be the Big Gorilla

- Envision a big gorilla and move like it
- Don't be concerned with mild collisions when you walk with confidence

Regal Posture

- Imagine James Bond: doesn't fidget, doesn't look to earn approval
- Don't reassure or please people you speak to. Assume that you are already bringing enough and that they have to bring the rest.

Don't Overdo It

- Now that you are conveying power, be careful not to overdo it, as you might intimidate some people
- Keep soft eyes
- Tilt your head down just a bit. This seems respectful and makes you seem more knowledgeable

Difficult Situations

To deal with difficult people:

Divide and Conquer

- Don't try to win over a big group of people at once.
- Understand which strategy you want to use with each person.

Make them Rationalize in Your Favor

- Use the Benjamin Franklin effect: ask someone to do you a favor and it will make you seem more likable (cognitive dissonance as per Festinger, 1957).
- Ask for their opinion, which will make them feel more valued
- Find a way to remind them of a past time they helped out, and attempt to praise them for the warmth they had for doing that
- Find a way to present your idea as based on their previous idea or action

Expressing Appreciation

- Show appreciation by saying stuff like," You did a great job!" rather than "Great job!"
  - Appreciate specific traits and action
  - Remind people they had a choice with you, and express gratitude. That will further make them happy with their decision.
- Show people how their involvement has helped: they will feel driven to help support it.

Delivering Bad News

- Increase comfort as much as possible
- Have distractions such as items for them to fidget with, candlelight, or background music

- Prepare yourself to come from a place of compassion when you speak

Presenting With Charisma

- Make the core message as simple as possible (ideally in one sentence)
- Use stories with characters similar to the audience
- Start on a high note and end on a high note: don't end with a Q&A
- Stand with a wide stance
- Arrive early to study the stage and own it

Delivering Criticism

- Find a comfortable and quiet environment
- Get specific with your criticisms
- Depersonalize: let them know it's about their behavior, not them
  - "When you wait till the last possible minute to work on the presentation, I get nervous." is the proper critique. "Why do you feel the need to wait till the last possible minute?" Is not
- Start on a positive note, such as bringing up their accomplishments
- End on a positive note.

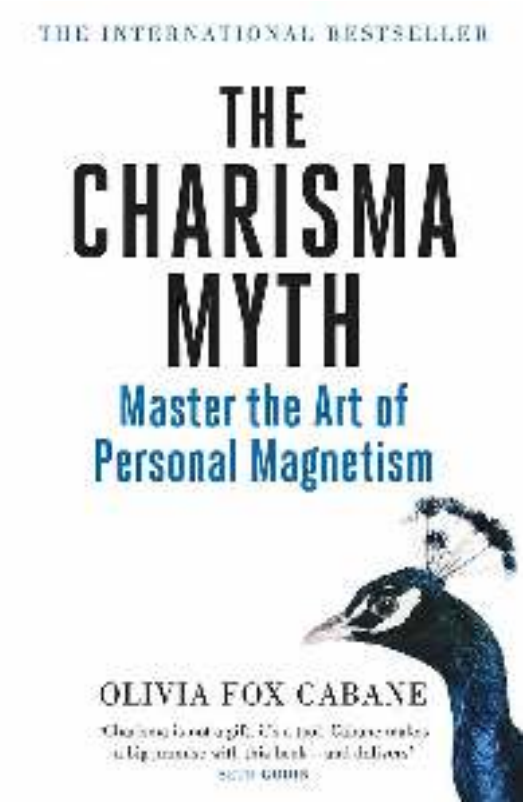
Also read: Thanks For The Feedback

Types of Charisma

There are four types of charisma:

1. **Focus**: Elon Musk, is all about presence. Listening and zooming in on what people say making them feel listened to and understood. The risk is little warmth and coming across as submissive, don't use it when you need to be authoritative and need immediate compliance
2. **Visionary**: Steve Jobs, great to make people believe you, requires you to project full belief in what you say and full confidence you can achieve it. The vision should ideally include something for good
3. **Kindness**: Dalai Lama, primarily focused on warmth, great to create an emotional bond and make people feel welcome; avoid when you need to be authoritative
4. **Authority**: The most powerful of them all, based on status and confidence. Stalin and Mussolini leverage authority and charisma. They are not necessarily likable, like Michael Jordan. The risks are that people will not tell you the truth because they're too intimidated

Different styles better suit different personalities and different environments.



CRITICISM

Charisma Types Are Not Scientific Categories

There is no known scientific, universal, or widely accepted definition of 'charisma'.

And that is all the truer for Cabane's four types of charisma. **They may be a useful practical framework as long as they make sense to you, but they are not established** empirically tested categories. They are Cabane's own conceptual model.

Other authors may define or categorize charisma differently, so we should not assume these are the only—or fundamental—types of charisma.

These May Be Forms of *Power*, Not Charisma

At Power Moves, we would also question whether these are truly different *types of charisma*.

We see them more as **different forms of interpersonal power and leverage**. Focus creates leverage through attention and making people feel understood; Visionary charisma through the ability to mobilize people around a vision; Kindness through goodwill and social bonds; and Authority through status and perceived power.

In other words, what Cabane calls different types of charisma may be better understood as different mechanisms of influence and interpersonal power. For us, the more fundamental question is not *"What type of charisma do you have?"* but *"What gives you leverage over the interaction, and why do people respond to you?"*

Sometimes Had to Question the Effectiveness

The author recommends one of her clients go with a very graphic mantra to get the people in his organization to comply.
And adds about her choice that "it's harsh, but it works".

However, that's not always true. As Elliot Aronson very well explains, harsh messages can have the opposite effect

unless the audience has high self-esteem, can act on the recommendation, and knows how to act on it.
For a book on so much good stuff on psychology and influencing, that was an important detail I needed to point out.

Clinton Asking Janitors For Foreign Policy?

I also had to question both the effectiveness and source veracity of Clinton supposedly asking staffers and janitors of the white house for recommendations on foreign policy.

Clinton is a typical example of how to be charming, but that behavior seems everything but effective or charismatic to me.

Body language advice on 'being a gorilla'

> Imagine You're A Big Gorilla Charging Down The Street

I found that advice on body language to be only seldom effective, as it fails the law of balance.

Review

The Charisma Myth is a good book combining the author's theory on charisma, exercises, and lots of practical tips.

If you are familiar with NLP techniques, Tony Robbins, body language, and social skills, some of the content will not be new to you.
But Cabane still manages to add unique takes on charisma, though here at The Power Moves we may refer to that as social strategies, rather than necessarily 'charisma'.

Also, see:

- Best social skills books

9 Signs of Frenemies: How to Spot a Frenemy

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Frenemies are jealous and resentful when you win, and secretly happy when you lose.

Unluckily, frenemies are so common that you most likely have some in your life.
Luckily, this post tells you how to recognize the signs of a frenemy, and how to handle them.

This guide helps you do just that:

Contents

- 1. Jealousy for your achievements
- 2. Secretly relishes your failures
- 3. Underhanded ways to hurt you
- 4. Talk negatively behind your back
- 5. Conspicuous absence of 'likes' to your positive status updates…
  - … Or they make negative comments
- 6. Ask lots of questions without (good) advice
- 7. Passive-aggressive sabotage
  - Deliberate "mistakes" to damage you
  - False "mistakes" to hurt you
- 8. Nice words with incongruent body language
- 9. They make you feel worse off
- Fighting Frenemies
  - How to Fight Frenemies
- Assessing Frenemies' Danger
- Frenemies change over time
- Learn More

1. Jealousy for your achievements

Unfortunately, frenemies can be family members as well

Frenemies don't see themselves as in control of their life and their success, and they take little action toward bettering themselves.

Their personal successes don't come from their own advancement, but from the *comparative* advancement that takes place when people around them fail.
When you fail, it provides them with a relative advancement within their own circle of reference, it makes them feel good by comparison, and it gives them something to gossip about.

Their "strategy" to feel good then is to see you fail, to make others feel like you failed, and to make yourself feel like you're failing.
Here is how they do it:

- **They devalue your achievement**

Some of the most extreme and out-of-control frenemies can't control their jealous tongues.
And they will comment off the cuff that your achievement was "OK", "lucky the top performer wasn't there" or "well, you finally made it, you've been training so hard for it" as if to say why did it take you so long.

- **They avoid complimenting you on your achievements**

They will not compliment you when you win, or they will do it with a tense face and a fake smile.
If they are part of the audience, their clapping will be barely audible: they don't want to add a single decibel to the sound of your success.

- **They blame you for their failures**

When people blame you for their failure or say that they achieved less because of your actions, that's a strong sign that they see the world -and the relationship with you- as competitive.
You can never be real friends with these people, frenemy is the only possibility.

Here is an example:

> **Frenemy**: If you hadn't done X, I would have won

I have personally heard this format a few times, and it never failed to identify a frenemy

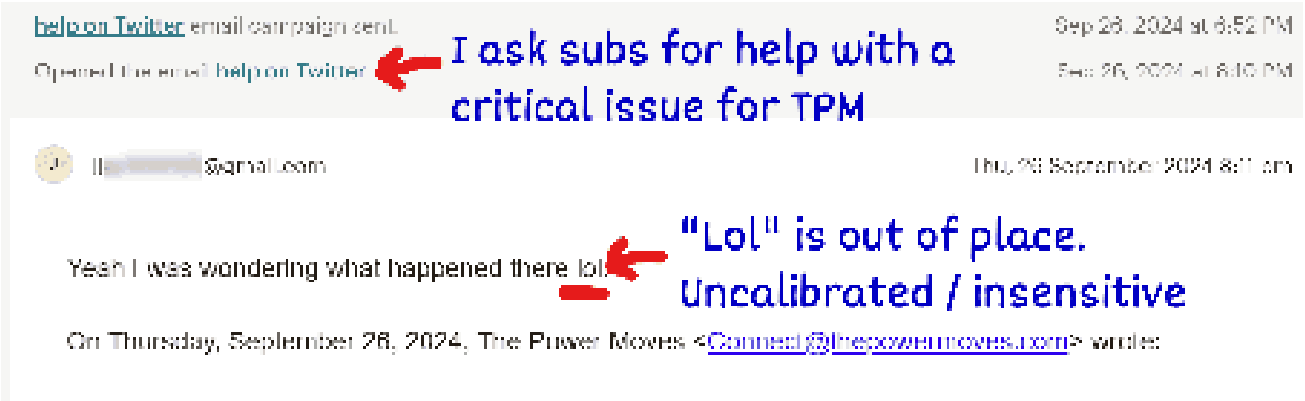
2. Secretly relishes your failures

Signs include:

- They want to know more
- Can't hide a smile
- Bring the topic up again

And of course, **frenemies can't empathize and will not help**.

Real-life example:



> **TPM**: Help us save the channel. If TPM was ever helpful to you, share it with a Tweet on this thread
> **Him**: I was wondering what happened there lol

Not only he doesn't help, a missed opportunity, but adds a "lol".
It was the last thing I found funny at that time, so it's an uncalibrated reply *at best.* Most likely, it's the sign of a frenemy.

Here is what an empathic friend would have replied:

> **Smart empath**: I was wondering becuase I check it often. Sorry to hear man, I can imagine the mess they're creating for you. There is so much value there, the least I could do was to also share how much it helped me. Keep moving and I know TPM will emerge even stronger from this

Now that's a great message that mixes empathy with optimism and power.
The best of both worlds.

3. Underhanded ways to hurt you

Since they must keep a semblance of friendship but deep down they also want to hurt you, frenemies heavily engage in passive aggression.
For example:

- **Complimenting someone else to hurt you**

The more astute players will devalue their frenemies not by attacking them, but by raising the value of their

opponents.

Here is an example from Meet The Parents where a compliment to one ends up being an obvious dig to someone else:

If your "friends" seem to often end up praising your opponents, it might be a sign they're not a friend at all.

- **Delivers hurtful remarks masqueraded as "humor"**

Hurtful humor is one of the main ways frenemies let out their spite.
You know how this one goes. They make a hurtful remark and then they hide behind the "I'm just joking" shield.
Read: how to deal with mean jokes.

- **Delivers underhanded compliments**

Delivering compliments that seem nice on the surface but that are actually thinly veiled attacks.
For example:

> **Frenemy**: Good job. When you can pull yourself together you're not that bad

Obviously this one suggests that most of the times you *can't* pull yourself together.

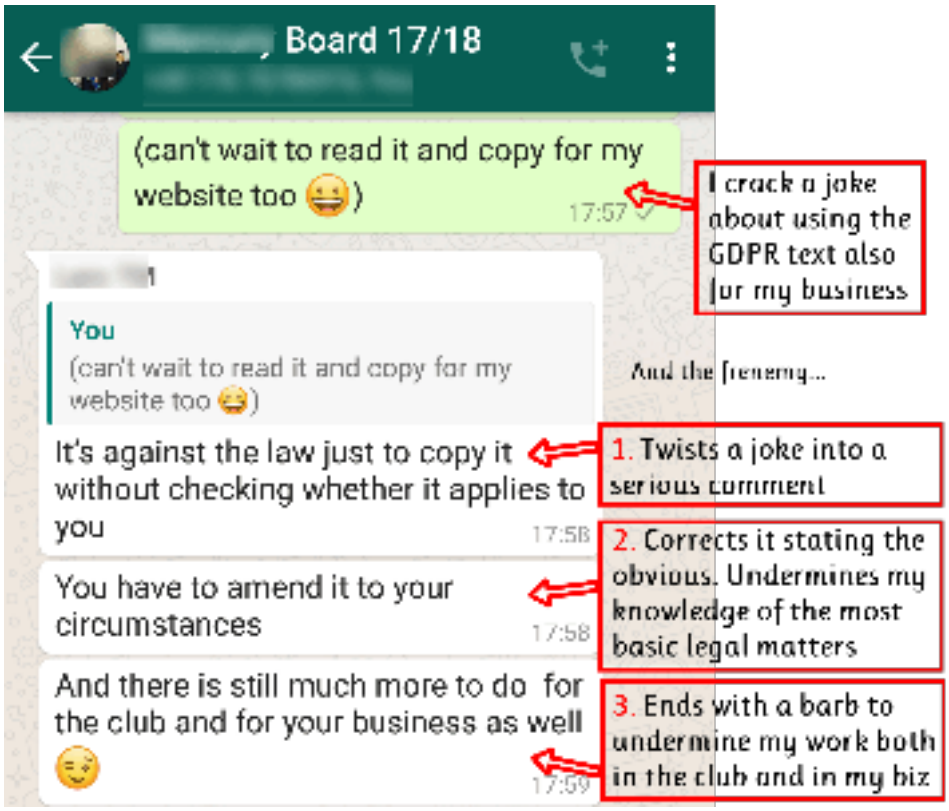
Or, as Robert Greene notes in The Laws of Human nature, praising the money you made with your success, thus implying it your venal streak and degrading your work to a mere money-grabbing scheme.

- **Delivers destructive criticism masqueraded as "feedback"**

Frenemies will look at opportunities to sink you.

They make it sound like a duly correction, or even like a bit of advice.
But the meanness in it is bursting at the seams.

This is an example from a WhatsApp group of mine. We were talking about GDPR:



But if you take care of developing an antifragile ego they're actually doing you a favor here: the more criticism you

get, even mean criticism, the more likely it is you can improve.

4. Talk negatively behind your back

Frenemies are very open about your shortcomings… Just not in your face.

But they will run their mouths to your group, your other friends, and just about anyone with whom they can assault your social status.

Frenemies love gossiping (at your expense)

- **They hurt you by reporting "what that other person said"**

You can often spot a frenemy because they will be all too happy to report something bad that someone said about you.

Of course, they won't agree with it, but deep down you can see a twinkle in their eyes that they are overjoyed at the chance of hurting you.

5. Conspicuous absence of 'likes' to your positive status updates…

Try to run this experiment:

Showcase a big win or an achievement of yours on Facebook. Then notice who likes it and who comments on it.

You might think that a "like" is easier to fake than a compliment, but **many frenemies are so paralyzed by envy that they can't even bring themselves to like your status update**.
If you ask them later on if they saw your good news, of course, they will say they haven't been using FB all that much and missed it.

But the biggest giveaway is this: they don't like your update but they inbox you for more info.
If that's the case, reply late and vaguely.

… Or they make *negative* comments

Look at this example.

I uploaded a picture to celebrate this website hitting 5.000 visitors a day.

I knew that the lamb saag looked dangerously like a human waste… And I wanted to see who would point that out.

There was enough in that picture and status update to say something positive. Or to make a joke about the dish's look and *then* add something positive.

Instead, look at this comment:

He's happy for me, BUT… Delivers a negative comment

I love finding out who my frenemies are.
In this case: two birds with a stone: the snide commenter, and the frenemy who liked the snide, without liking the picture.

6. Ask lots of questions without (good) advice

People who are interested in you and happy to help will ask lots of questions, but they will also *share* their own experiences and *give* you good advice.

Frenemies will also ask you lots of questions, only to:

- Gain more intel about you
- Hope you have negative news
- Relish your negative news

They ask you, almost afraid that your answers will be positive, and they won't give you any (good) advice.

If your news are negative, they'll secretly be happy and tell you that "it's OK and you will do fine".
Frenemies will never tell you to get up on your feet and get working because that's what makes you successful. And they don't want that.

Instead, they will provide bland feedback, useless "support", or even harmful advice.
Like in Mean Girls:

"So adorable" – she hates it. Typical frenemy.

7. Passive-aggressive sabotage

If they often end up hurting, sabotaging you, or otherwise decreasing your performance, you have a strong indicator you're dealing with a frenemy:

Deliberate "mistakes" to damage you

This one belongs to the very worst category of frenemies and the ones you absolutely, positively must remove from your life.

Here is what a deliberate mistake would look like:

> **Her**: Jenny! I'm so sorry honey! I forgot to tell you this is an all white party. They won't let you in like that

Yep, she just forgot, how scatterbrained of her.

False "mistakes" to hurt you

They might say something means about someone… Only to realize you're friends with them, or they're just like you.

> **Him**: Ahah of course nobody wants to date him, look how ugly he is, he is balder than a bowling ball! (turning to you and trying to make the people around laugh at you)
> Oooops, sorry man, didn't mean to offend bald people

He surely didn't mean it…

Also see:

- **Emotional manipulation**

> How to Spot Emotional Manipulation and Protect Yourself

8. Nice words with incongruent body language

Some frenemies will smile and talk nice to you.
But their body language will betray their real emotions.

This whole exchange of shoe-shaming from SATC screams fake and frenemy to the core:

When you can spot a similar pattern in your friends… There is probably no friendship there.

9. They make you feel worse off

This is the biggest telltale sign.

ESPECIALLY if you have grown some power-awareness -if you're not, be careful, you may not even realize who the real friends and frenemies are-.

However, chances are that you may still feel at least positively or negatively after interacting with someone.

If you feel negative after interacting with someone, that's what we define here as a "taker".

Takers take from you.
Taking can be anything. From money, to psychological well-being, to emotional support, to simply taking time.

If you feel worse after interacting with someone it's time to cut them off.

The evidence is clear: good friends make you healthy.
But poor friends make you unhealthy.

Don't do that to yourself.
Cut off the frenemy.

Also read:

- Toxic people
- How to spot a taker

Fighting Frenemies

Should you fight a frenemy?

Not openly.

I wouldn't approach a frenemy with a fighting mindset at all.

First of all, you don't have anything to gain and it will displace your energies from something better.
Life is not meant for fighting frenemies.

And second, frenemies are a normal part of life.
It's simply how many people are wired, and wherever you go chances are that you will deal with at least some of them.

The only exceptions are environments of super high-quality people where everyone is going after their own dream and goal and where everyone is more focused on *self-development* than on social climbing and pushing others down. Try to move into such an environment and spend less and less time with the frenemies.

But if you really want to fight your frenemies…

How to Fight Frenemies

Alright, I've given you the peace & love spiel.

Now, if you really wanna fight them here is how:

- **Play the same game back on them**

Whenever they attack you, don't stand here like thunder from a clear sky hit you, but hit back.

Here is an example of the bald offense:

> **Him**: Ahah of course nobody wants to date him, look how ugly he is, he is balder than a bowling ball! (turning to you and trying to make the people around laugh at you)
> Oooops, sorry man, didn't mean to offend bald people
> **You**: I don't know if he's ugly maybe he's got the moves. Something that wouldn't hurt Mr. Pudgy here (touch his belly or pinch his arm).
> Oh, guys, I always wanted to ask you this but always forgot..

Note that touching is also a sign of dominance which will make you come easily on top.
And now it's difficult for him to retort without escalating. But escalating would mean he shows his ugly face, and in either case, you win.
The last sentence there moves on -always a good idea after you deliver a strong blow- and shows leadership qualities.

- **Rub your success on their faces**

In the example of the party, find a way to get in anyway. Then be the diva in the place of the white sheep.
Remember, with frenemies **the very best revenge is runaway success**.

- **Shame them**

A good technique is to shame them for their behavior.
You can do so by going meta and explaining what they are doing, or by giving them more rope to be even nastier, so that they can show themselves for who they truly are.
Also see: dealing with people who undermine you.

Assessing Frenemies' Danger

Even if you decide not to fight them but to minimize contact, which I hope you will, it's still good practice to assess how dangerous they can be.
This is the rule of thumb. When they go for:

- **Direct attacks**: they feel superior to you and are trying to intimidate you OR they're very dumb and not dangerous
- **Indirect attacks**: they feel weaker than you are or are sneakier and socially shrewd. They're potentially more dangerous

Direct attacks can be more unsettling but at least the competition is out in the open.
With indirect attacks, you're never sure what they're up to and what rumors they're spreading. Watch out.

Frenemies change over time

Frenemy is not a constant.

We only have frenemies who are around our own level of success, achievement, and social status.
Too high up, and they're in another league. Too low down, and they're not a threat to our ego and social status.

That means that if you are going through a rough patch and a frenemy of yours is going strong he won't see you as competition anymore and you'll drop off his frenemy radar.

That guy won't be a frenemy… Until you get back on your feet.
Or until he gets back on his knees.

So the best way to get rid of frenemies? **Move ahead in life and leave the frenemies in your dust**.

However, that won't remove frenemies forever unluckily.
As you move ahead, new frenemies who before thought you were too beneath them will pop up.
And in a way, the more successful you become, the more you will attract envy and jealousy. And the more you will see the ugly face of fren-dom.

Welcome to planet Earth.

So smile, don't get too hung up on frenemies. And to paraphrase someone:

Many frenemies, much honor.

Learn More

- How to manipulate a manipulator
- Passive aggression and signs
- Covert power moves frenemies are likely to use

Emotional Vampires: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Emotional Vampires (2000) describes five types of toxic personalities in a professionally accurate fashion, but in simple words, and teaches readers how to defend themselves against antisocial, histrionic, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, and paranoid personalities.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Intro
  - 1. Antisocial Vampires
  - 2. Histrionic Vampires
  - 3. Narcissistic Vampires
  - 4. Obsessive-Compulsive Vampires
  - 5. Paranoid Vampires
  - How Emotional Vampires Trick You
  - Healthy VS Personality Disorders
  - Dealing with Emotional vampires
  - Emotional Vampires Aren't Evil: Just Immature
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Not all vampires are mean: they're "just" hollow
- When you are at your weakest vampires don't see someone in need of help: they see an opportunity
- Vampires are childish: they see their needs. But they don't see yours. That can make them dangerous.

Full Summary

About the Author: Albert Bernstein is a clinical psychologist, speaker, author, and business consultant. He focuses on dealing with difficult personalities, a topic he often explores on his website.

Intro

The "vampires" of Albert J. Bernstein are some of the most renowned personality disorders:

- Antisocial
- Histrionic
- Narcissistic
- Obsessive-Compulsive
- Paranoid

Each of them is driven by an immature and impossible need that, to them, is the most important thing in the world. But to most people, it only serves to make their lives a living hell (if they allow the vampires to do so).

The difference between emotional vampires and other disorders is the impact on people's lives.
Writes Bernstein:

> When people are driving themselves crazy, they have neuroses or psychoses. When they drive other people crazy, they have personality disorders.

I love a good and simple summary :).

1. Antisocial Vampires

Antisocials hate boredom.
They love parties, sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. And in their pursuit of excitement often end up breaking both laws and social conventions.

Protection Against Antisocial Vampires:

Recognize them before they turn on the charm: check their references and their past. What they've done in the past is the best reference for what they'll do in the future.
Get to know them well before you open your heart or your wallet.

2. Histrionic Vampires

They live for attention and approval.
Drama is their keyword. In all sense: what you see is not what you get and they make a big fuss out of everything. Looking good is their specialty, and all else is an unimportant detail.

- Think they never do anything unacceptable (either mistakes or immoral thoughts)
- Their behavior is more directed at fooling themselves than fooling you
- Many self-help gurus and public speakers are histrionics
- Seductive histrionic may hit on your BF or hit on your GF not to steal them but for the attention

3. Narcissistic Vampires

They live out their grandiose fantasies of being the most talented, most skilled, smartest, and all-around best people in the world.
Writes Bernstein:

> It's not so much that they think of themselves as better than other people as they don't think of other people at all.

- If they can't win big they find small ponds that let them be big fishes
- They find people whose need to be needed makes them feel adored
- Superstar narcissists have super high standards which don't accept failure from them and the people around
- They hate passive aggression but attract it because of their aggressive ways of dealing with failure
- Expect loyalty and can spend quite a bit to get back at people (exactly what Trump says in The Art of The Deal)

> **Narcissism means never having to say you're sorry**

Protection Against Narcissistic Vampires

They don't do much of anything that isn't self-serving. But if you can manage to tie your interests to theirs, then it's possible they will take you places.
If your boss is a narcissist, says the author, your success and happiness are contingent upon indulging their every whim. Do that, or move I'd add.

> **Narcissists wear expensive watches so they can look at them when someone else is talking**

4. Obsessive-Compulsive Vampires

They're somewhat opposite to antisocials: they are addicted to safety.
The way to achieve safety is by full control over everything and scrupulous attention to detail.

- Take long to make a decision
- Will rarely if ever show appreciation
- Confuse process with the product: how things get done can become more important than getting it done
- Puritans and perfectionists are obsessive-compulsive
- They kill visions: don't listen only to them when it comes to big ideas

Writes the author:

> For people who only want everything to be right, Perfectionistic vampires can cause an incredible number of things to go wrong

5. Paranoid Vampires

They see patterns and things that others can't.
But since they see a bit too much, sometimes what they see is true and they come up with a new theory or foil a dangerous plan. But other times it isn't and they just drive themselves -and the people- crazy.

- Their goal is to reduce ambiguity in life
- Search for "truth" and explanations where there might be no simple truth
- Live by concrete rules and expect others to live by them as well
- Search for evidence of deviation, and they usually find it
- Moralists, visionaries, theorists (and goo therapists) have a touch of the paranoid

Protection Against Paranoids:

If you are hiding something, they will find it. Tell the truth.

How Emotional Vampires Trick You

Emotional vampires use the same techniques as hypnotists.
They are:

- **Misdirection**: focus attention on them, not on what they're doing
- **Identification**: they identify the most likely victims who are most likely to give them what they want
- **Isolation**: they isolate victims from others
- **Control**: they use your own desires to control you
- **Alternate reality**: they create illusions based on what you want and need

- **False choices**: put you in a bind where one choice seems impossible. And leverage the fear of negative consequences being bigger than the consequences

And this is how you recognize the danger signs of hypnosis:

- **Deviating from standard procedures**: if you find yourself doing unusual things for someone, watch out
- **Thinking in superlatives**: when you think of someone as “best” and “most”, it’s a warning sign
- **Instant rapport**: it’s usually the result of someone presenting a fake persona just you would like to meet one
- **Lack of concern with objective information**: if you feel sure about something without concrete proof, watch out
- **Confusion**: if you feel confused don’t do anything until you figure out what’s going on
- **Isolation**: if you’re getting too much into them and letting go of everything else, watch out (also read: Psychopath-Free)

Healthy VS Personality Disorders

The author asks: if emotional vampires are a bit like children, what does it take to be a grown-up?

Well, the answer is this:

- Perception of control: emotional vampires see themselves as victims of fate, “things happen” and they don’t learn from mistakes
- Feeling of connection: becoming an adult means learning to live by the social rules:
  - Other people are the same as I am: empathy is what maturity is about. To vampires, other people only supply their needs
  - What’s fair is fair: vampires’ idea of fair is to get what they want
  - Others have the right to deny me: vampires believe whatever they want should be given to them regardless of how others feel

Finally, the author says that to grow is to do things that are difficult. But at this one, vampires are better. Because of their immaturity, they operate at the edges of creativity.

Dealing with Emotional vampires

Emotional vampires lack integrity. They are hollow inside.
When they give you something or offer help, they usually have an agenda.

They are most dangerous when you need something and your guard is down. Where most people would then see someone in need, emotional vampires see a golden opportunity.

> **Emotional vampires see your weakness as an opportunity**

The best strategy to contain them is what you’d use on children:

- setting limits
- arranging contingencies
- being consistent
- keeping lectures to a minimum
- rewarding good behavior and ignoring bad
- occasionally putting them in time-out

Emotional Vampires Aren't Evil: Just Immature

Emotional vampires are not necessarily evil, says Albert Bernstein.

But their immaturity leads them to operate without distinguishing much between what's good and bad (and what will be good and bad for the people around).
He says:

> Emotional Vampires are not intrinsically evil, but their immaturity allows them to operate without thinking about whether their actions are good or bad.
> Vampires see other people as potential sources for whatever they happen to need at the moment, not as separate human beings with needs and feelings of their own.
> Rather than evil itself, vampires' perceptual distortion is a doorway through which evil may easily enter.

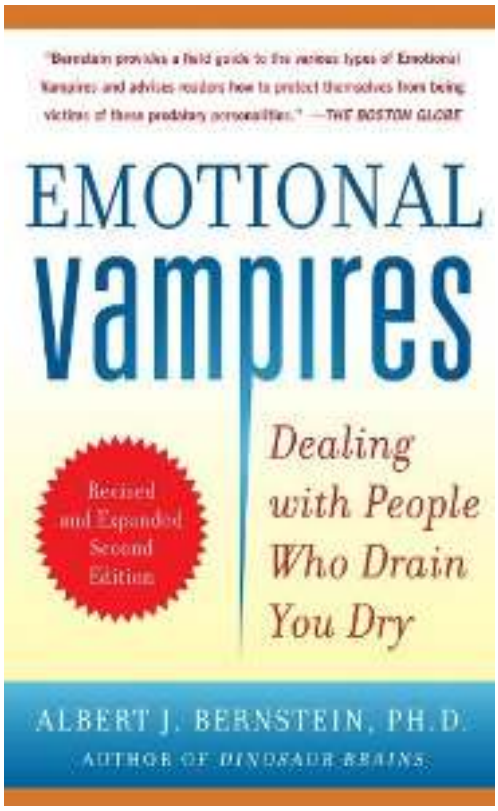
These are the mindsets that can make them dangerous:

- My needs are more important than yours
- Rules apply to others, not me
- It's not my fault, ever
- I want it now
- If I don't get my way, I throw a tantrum

My Note: sure, they are not *necessarily* evil, but some can be.
And sometimes the distinction can only be one of semantics, with the effects being exactly the same.

Also, read:

- Do Good & Evil Overlap: Heroes and Psychopaths analysis
- Are You Dating a Sociopath



Real-Life Applications

Cultivate Your Weirdness & Rebellion For Creativity
The author says that creativity cannot be turned on and off like a water tap.
Creativity comes from rebellion and it's only called creativity when it produces something useful. Other times it's called "being weird" or "having a bad attitude".
People who like things as they are don't create anything new.

CONS

- **All Greatness & All That Work Is From Personality Disorders?**

It seems like the author ascribes all that is good in the world to personality disorders:

> Though there is plenty of narcissism without greatness, there is no greatness without narcissism

Of obsessive-compulsives, he writes:

> Without Obsessive-Compulsives none of the world's difficult and thankless tasks would ever get done, nothing would ever work the way it should, and none of us would do our homework, ever

Of antisocial vampires:

> Most of history's great deeds of exploration, financial daring, and physical courage have been done by people who would meet the criteria set down here for Antisocial vampires

I don't know how other readers felt, but to me, it felt like "normal" people without personality disorders do very little for this world. They don't advance the world, do little thinking outside the box, and present little fringe behavior.
That's not necessarily wrong per se, but as of now, I am just not sure that's correct at all.

- **Can You Really Generalize For All of Them?**

The descriptions of each personality disorder are superb. But when the author generalizes to all of them, I gotta wonder: can you really generalize about such different personalities?

- **Pathological Giving Because of Male Dominance?**

In the chapter on histrionics, the author writes:

> This pattern of pathological giving, though not specific to women by any means, does correspond to what has been expected of females throughout thousands of years of male domination.

I disagree that "thousands of years of male domination" pushed any woman into giving.

- **Not All Undiagnosed Illnesses Are Made Up**

Talking about histrionics the author says that they "invented the undiagnosable illness". This might confuse histrionics with hypochondriacs. And I felt that a note saying that undiagnosed does not equate to somatization could have helped.

PROS

- **Insightful**

The information is top-notch.
While reading, I could exactly point out to a few people in my life and clearly understand their pathology.

- **Simple & Practical**

While the information is from a high-quality, professional source, Emotional Vampires is laid out in simple terms for everyone to understand -and put to use-.
Anyone, with any level of previous knowledge, can learn and improve their social skills with Emotional Vampires.

- **Hilarious**

Albert Bernstein writes with humor and lots of innuendos. And that helps to make Emotional Vampires a real pleasure to go through.
His “narcissism means never having to say you’re sorry” cracked me up and is just one of many examples.

Review

Emotional Vampires is an outstanding book to get a quick overview of some common psycho-pathologies.

Like the more famous Dangerous Personalities, it popularizes complex psycho-pathologies, but it does so in a simple fashion that turns out to be very effective and helpful.

But it just happens to do so very well. It’s one of the best, clearest books you can read to get an overview of some of the most common personality disorders.

The more academic type might scoff at the mundanity of the descriptions. But “*Emotional Vampires*” does a great job of marrying accurate information with a format that is easily accessible to anyone.

Highly recommended to every non-medical reader out there who wants to understand personality disorders.

Check the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

Best Red Pill Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Most ‘red pill book lists’ online are either marketing fluff, manosphere echo chamber, or ideological propaganda. This list is none of that.

Here, ‘red pill’ means **truth**: the uncomfortable, politically incorrect, but *useful* insights about power, psychology, human nature, and intersexual dynamics.

The books below are the ones that open your eyes and make you more effective in the real world. Some come from the manosphere, some from academics, some from social science, and some from authors who’d never label themselves “red pill” at all.

That’s the whole point: **truth isn’t owned by any camp**.
If a book reveals reality, it’s red pill—whether it comes from a feminist, an economist, a political scientist, or a dark-triad researcher.

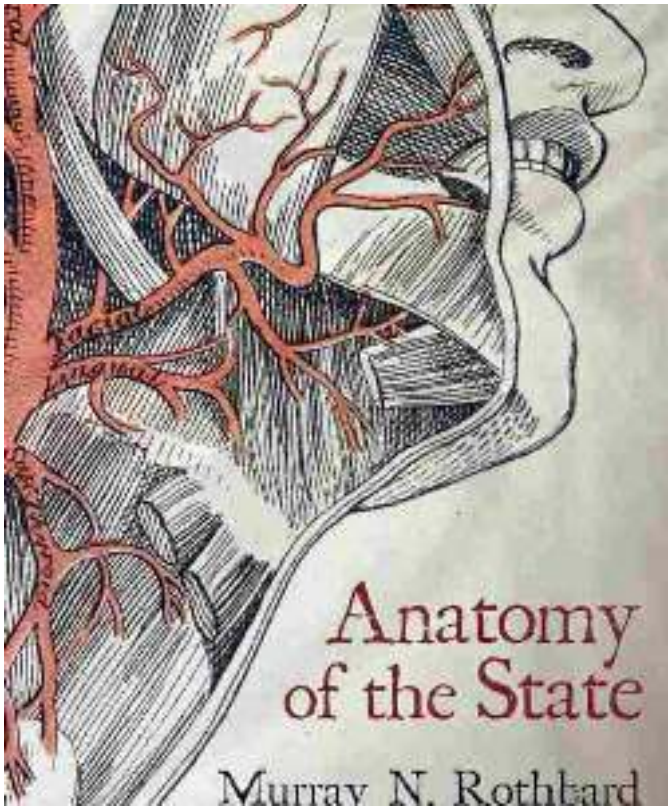
This is the definitive reading list of the best red pill and manosphere books:
curated, vetted, explained, and linked to full summaries and reviews.

Note: Personally reviewed and constantly updated
Every book has been personally read, vetted, and reviewed by Lucio. This is not a list compiled by someone who just looked up the more popular books. And this page is **continuously updated** as new, high-quality titles emerge.

Contents

- 14. Anatomy of the State
- 13. The Gervais Principle
- 12. The Dictator’s Handbook
- 11. The 48 Laws Of Power
- 10. Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism
- 9. Leadership BS
- 8. The Unplugged Alpha
- 7. The Millionaire Fastlane
- 6. The Evolution of Desire
- 5. King, Warrior, Magician, Lover
- 4. Seduction University
- 3. The Wisdom of Psychopaths
- 2. Decoding The Gurus
- 1. When Men Behave Badly
- Bonus: Power University Course
- What’s a “Red Pill Book”?
- More Good Red Pill Books
- Change Log
- More Reading

14. Anatomy of the State



By Murray Rothbard

Summary

For those who've always considered the government a provider of safety and stability… This is the red pill for you.

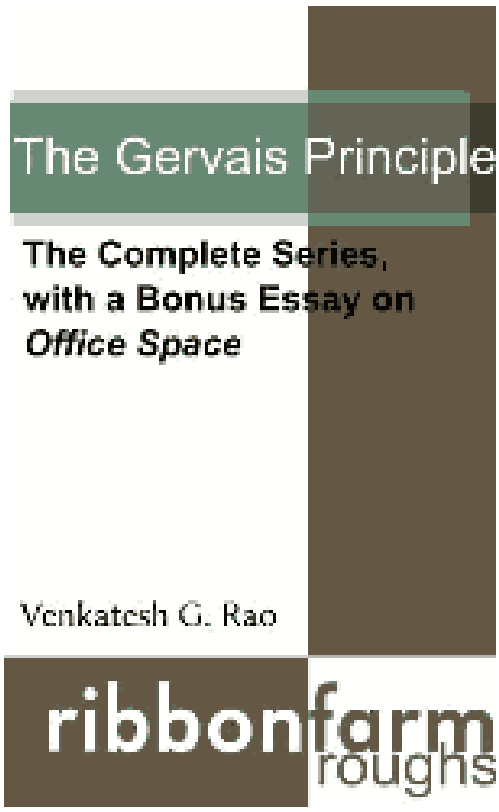
It's really short and to the point, and comes also in audiobook form, so it should be easy to go through.

The author presents state and state leadership as power players who seek to maximize their own well-being.

Take the anarcho-capitalist, free-market bits with a pinch of salt, though.
While the former is solid power dynamics and potentially eye-opening, the latter is either untested or dubious.

> Quote: A robber who justified his theft by saying that he really helped his victims, by his spending giving a boost to retail trade, would find few converts; but when this theory is clothed in Keynesian equations and impressive references to the "multiplier effect," it unfortunately carries more conviction.

13. The Gervais Principle



By Venkatesh Rao

Summary

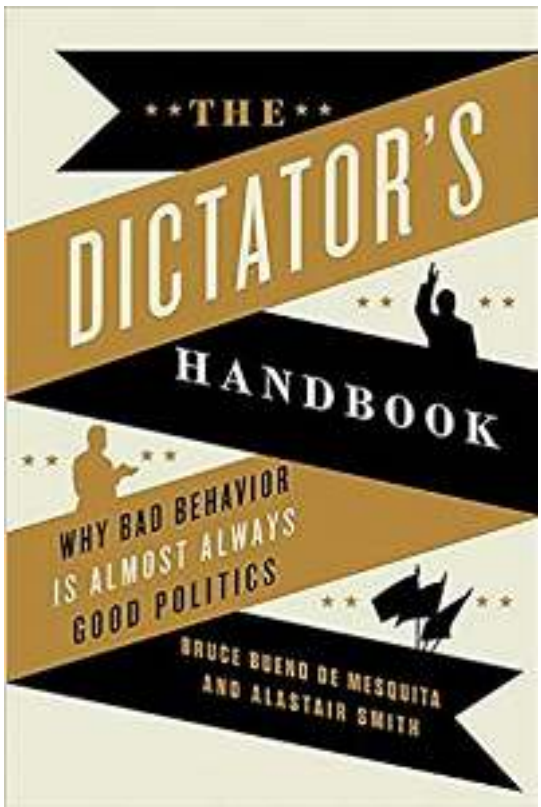
Absolutely loved *The Gervais Principle*.

Albeit the analysis may be simplistic and overly cynical, it's still one of the best books to open your eyes to corporate manipulation (<- and that one is the best post to understand corporate manipulation, BTW).

Rao, wittingly or unwittingly, even describes the dynamics of becoming a top-dog sociopath as a red pill awakening process:

> Quote: "The image is derived from Plato's allegory of the cave, which I won't get into here. Suffice it to say that it divides people into those who get how the world really works (the Sociopaths and the self-aware slacker Losers) and those who don't (the over-performer Losers and the Clueless in the middle)."

12. The Dictator's Handbook



by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita
Summary | Amazon

Originally, this spot belonged to "*The Prince*" by Machiavelli.

In a way, consider this position as shared between the two books.

The Prince heralded as the first treatise of political philosophy and realpolitik, is a classic.
It has boatloads of wisdom, but it's not an easy read.

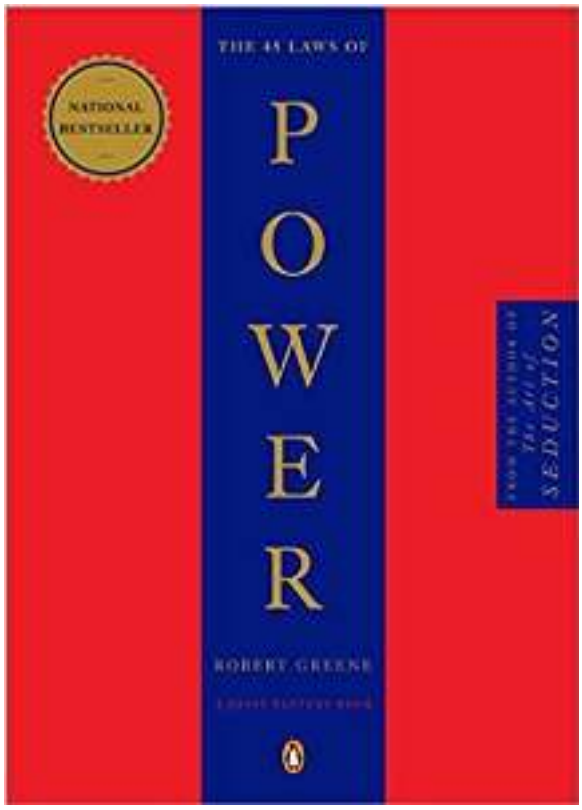
Same for "*The Logic of Political Survival*", which is the book where de Mesquita shares all his data, and deeper logic.

So I gave the official spot on this list to "The Dictator's Handbook". In theory, it's a guide on how dictators operate to acquire and maintain power. But in truth, it explains the power dynamics of politics and how incentives of personal gain and power truly determine policy.

"The Prince" and "The Dictator's Handbook" are red pill power dynamics applied to politics.

> Quote: "Everyone sees what you appear to be, but few experience who you really are"

11. The 48 Laws Of Power

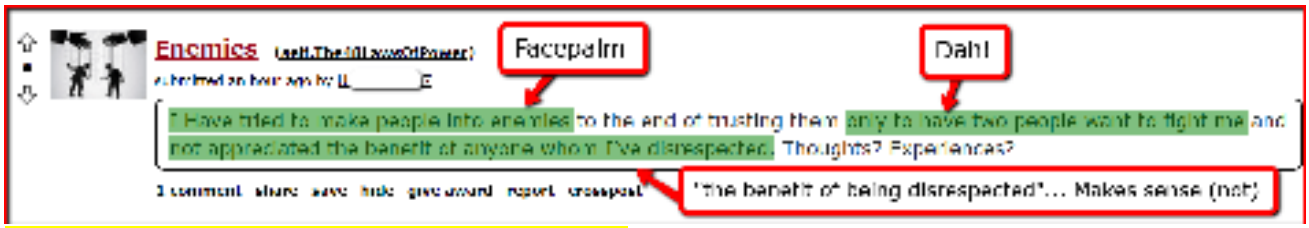


[image]
by Robert Greene
Summary | Audiobook | Print

Now, here is a book and an author that needs no introduction.

I must preface it with a warning: **getting into power reading books requires that you first understand basic social skills**.

I see hundreds of men who jump into power without basic social skills, and the results are disastrous.
See an example here:



Source: 48 Laws of Power subreddit (recovered thread)
That was so common that I dedicated some time to pick The 48 Laws of Power Apart.
Plus, I modernized with current examples and then did an article on the bad applications of the laws.
See here:

- Updated 48 Laws of Power
- Misapplications of the 48 Laws of Power

Even more important if you're looking for real-world skills:

- **48 Laws of Power VS Power University**

> 48 Laws VS Power University: What's Best to Advance In Life?

Now, back to us.

How is “The 48 Laws of Power” useful?

It’s useful to understand the darker, self-interested side of human nature.
And of course, it drops a substantial amount of gold on the unspoken rules of socialization.

> Quote: *“Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter”*

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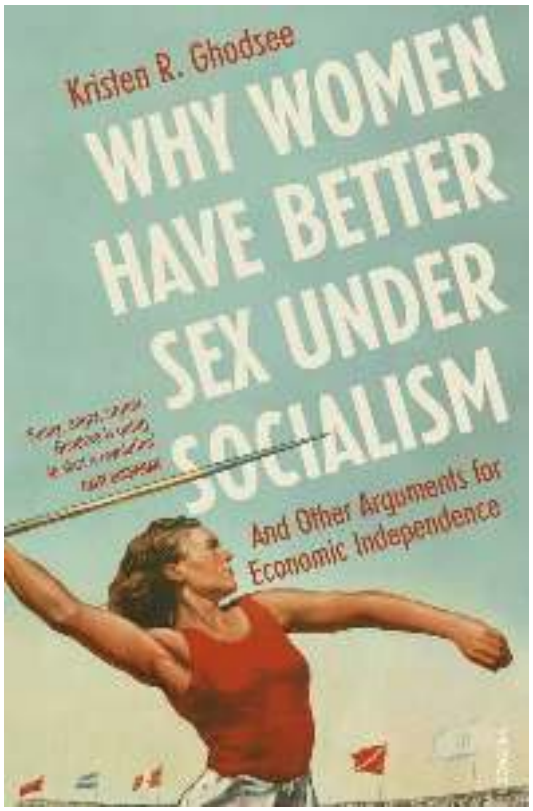
10. Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism



By Kristen Ghodsee
Summary | Audiobook

You might be surprised to see this book here.

Why?

Because the author is a feminist.

But hear me out before you close the page.
The truth is rarely to be found wholly in one camp alone. And rarely one faction is 100% right and the other 100% wrong.

So to truly understand intersexual dynamics, or to truly understand anything, really, you should look at both camps with as much of an open mind as possible.

For true red pill enlightenment, let *truth* guide you, not ideology, gender belonging, or what you wish to see.

And Ghodsee has a point when she says that men, as a group, have an incentive to keep women down.
The patriarchy is *vastly* overblown by feminists. But it’s not *fully* made up, either.
As much as some (male) researchers like to scoff at it, the patriarchy the feminists talk about has a backdrop of

truth. And the backdrop of truth is that **since most men cluster around the average, most men *do* need women to be powerless and poor** (or those men would never get sex, since women want men who are *more* than they are).

Many men *do* want to keep women powerless because it increases their sexual odds of mating.
Powerful women are bad news for lower-quality men. When most women also have power, then those women wouldn't want any of those men who are now beneath them (see "female hypergamy").

Ghodhee makes a good case that men want capitalism with restricted female access to resources because that gives them an advantage.
And she's right.

Unluckily, except for what I've just described and a few more important nuggets of wisdom, the book as a whole is only average as it's weakened by heavy feminist and leftist biases.

> Quote: "*Ultimately, this thing we call government, is not inherently good or bad, it is a vessel that is steered by those who happen to control it at any one moment in time*"

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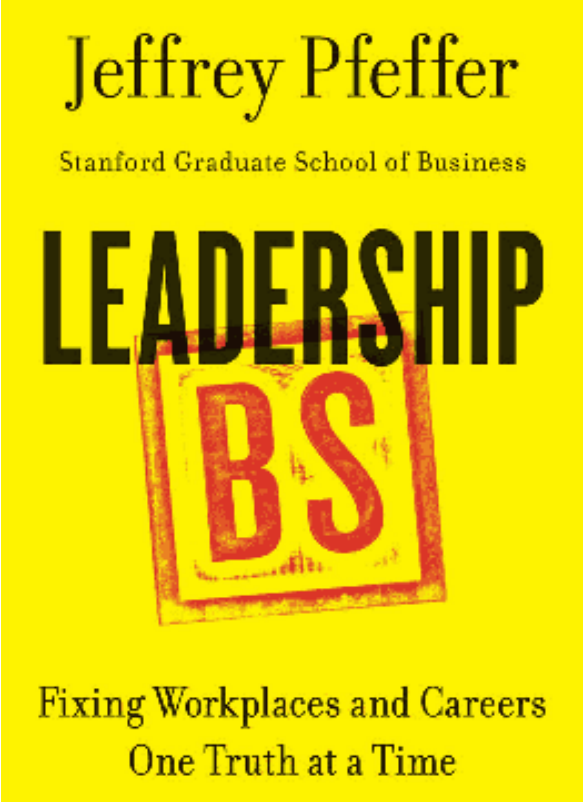
9. Leadership BS



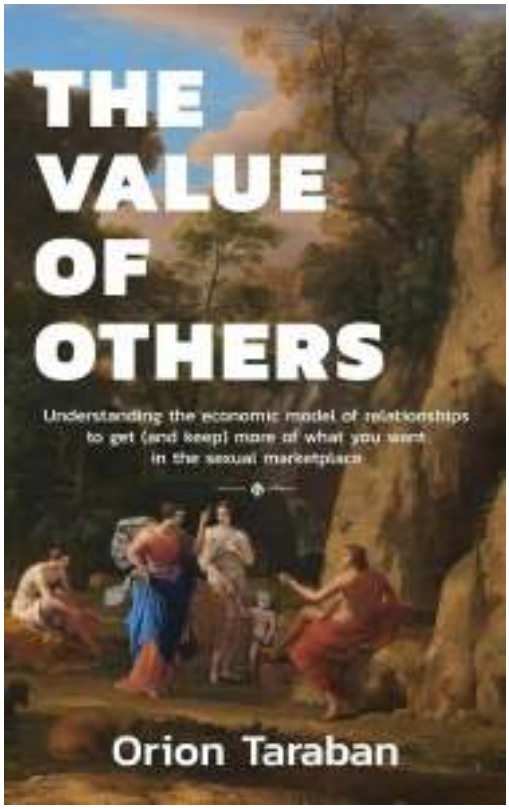
By Jeffrey Pfeffer
Summary | Audiobook

Leadership BS is the antidote to, well… All the leadership blue pill BS that happens to be the majority of the leadership industry and book.

This book brings you back to earth on how things most often *are* -rather than "how it'd be cool they were"-.

> Quote: Go home and throw out the numerous leadership books—or better yet, give them to career competitors.

8. The Unplugged Alpha



by Orion Taraban

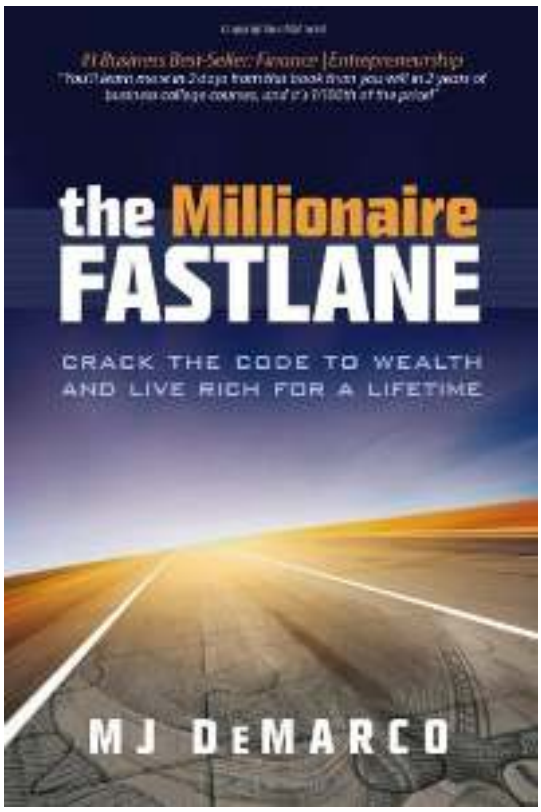
Summary

The Value of Others looks at dating and relationships from a social exchange and behavioral economics point of view.

Taraban's book dethroned from this position *The Unplugged Alpha*.
The Value of Others is less focused on practical takeaways for men and sometimes lacks a deeper understanding of short-term dating dynamics. But it provides a deeper analyses and a broader overview.

> Quote: *People don't want relationships, they want value*

7. The Millionaire Fastlane



by MJ DeMarco
Summary | Audiobook[image] | Kindle

The best red pill book on personal finance bar none.

The two biggest takeaways:

1. The paradox of practice: It tears apart the "I will make you rich" courses and books. MJ says that the only way those guys are getting rich is by.. Selling said courses.
   They don't know squat about getting rich in any other way. If you want to learn from them, learn how they *sell* the courses, not what's *in* the courses.
2. Saving & Investing is for suckers: The central tenet of the personal-finance literature is the famous "compound interest".
   DeMarco flips the script claiming that compound interest is trading invaluable time today for distant (and uncertain) riches (a distant) tomorrow.

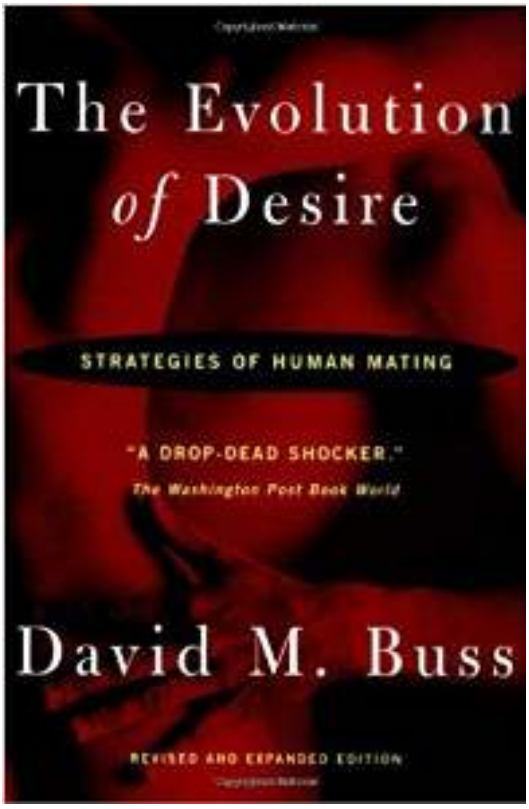
I couldn't agree more with both of them.

> Quote: *Dump the damn job. The job sucks*

Update: Unscripted

Unscripted is the second book by the same author, revisiting many of the same themes, and expanding on them. If you have to choose between one, I think *Unscripted* may be more comprehensive -and more practical, too-.

6. The Evolution of Desire



By David Buss
Summary | Amazon

If the red pill is about truth, here is an idea for you:

Skip all authors with manosphere or feminist backgrounds -they're biased against the opposite gender-.
Skip all authors with too strong a sense of belonging to specific groups or ideologies (any group is a set of "basic rules" set in stone is an ideology).

And pick a book based on science and evidence, instead.
"The Evolution of Desire" perfectly fits the bill.

There are many *evolutionary psychology books* I could recommend.
But if I had to pick just one, "The Evolution of Desire" is the briefest and most compact overview of intersexual dynamics.

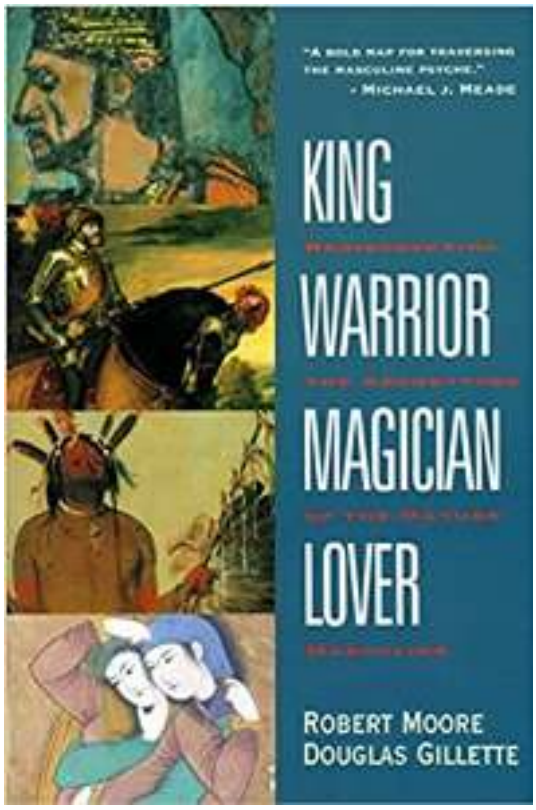
You can get the juiciest content on these articles for free:

- The sexual market value
- The sexual marketplace
- The intersexual conflict

Or just go for this website's ebook, which is a mix of experience, on top solid science (next entry).

> Quote: *"Desirable people are always outnumbered by those who desire them"*

5. King, Warrior, Magician, Lover



By Robert Louis Moore & Douglas Gillette
Summary | Amazon

Even more than a "red pill book", this is a typical "manosphere book".

It's all about reaching the full potential of a man, with the King being a high-power, value-adding leader.

Similar to "King, Warrior, Magician, Lover", are also:

- The Way of Men
- The Way of The Superior Man
- Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging

But, in my opinion, the above three are lacking when compared to this classic.
"The Way of Men" relishes into the *shadow* of the warrior, promoting factions and fights on other tribes. "The Way of The Superior Man" is too woo-woo and weak on science when it comes to the stereotypes of feminine and masculine. And "Tribe" is too heavy on "initiation and belonging", trumping healthy individualism.

When I first read "King, Warrior, Magician, Lover", I was almost angry. Angry at myself for having read it so late.
Of course: it always makes sense to start with the classics!
Much of what it means to be a good King and a good Warrior also reflects much of The Power Moves value, whereby "to be good, you need to know how to be bad".
Equally, the good Warrior uses his destructive drive to wage war on what needs to be destroyed.

> Quote: The Warrior is often a destroyer.
> But the positive Warrior energy destroys only what needs to be destroyed in order for something new and fresh, more alive and more virtuous to appear.
> Many things in our world need destroying…

4. Seduction University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Checkout

Obvious disclaimer:

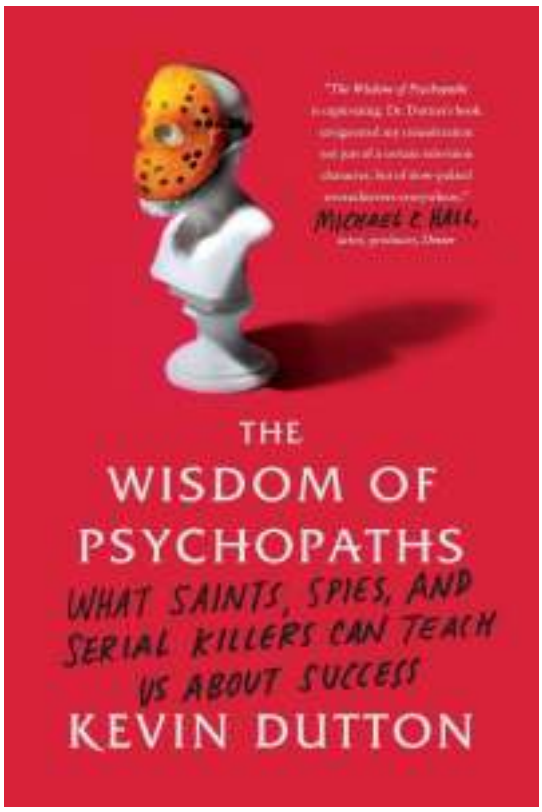
I am the author of this course.

But there is a reason why it's here.
It features higher than Buss because it has the same scientific grounding as Buss, plus personal experience (Buss is not a player :).
And it features higher than the red pill books because it's more scientifically grounded and just better at being your guide for better dating because it focuses on strategies, techniques, examples, videos, and step-by-step processes.

Seduction University leverages the best insights about sexual dynamics (both intrasexual, and intersexual), sexual power dynamics, and what's been proven to work to actually seduce and maximize your dating success.

> Quote: *"Effective processes are the main difference between the talker, and the effective slayer"*

3. The Wisdom of Psychopaths



by Kevin Dutton
Summary | Audiobook

"The Wisdom of Psychopaths" has lots of negative reviews online.

And it couldn't have been any different.

After all, telling people that amorality, drive to power and ruthlessness can provide an edge in life was bound to ruffle some feathers.

Yet, we do know that dark-triad men get laid more than the average man.
And we've shown that Machiavellianism and ruthlessness help you get to the top in business.

Dutton is clear that it's not boundless psychopathy that provides an edge in life.
It's *low to medium* doses of psychopathy *plus* the ability to decide where and when to be pro-social or ruthless that provide an edge.
And both Dutton and I espouse the theory that it's possible to be "good psychopaths", such as to use psychopathic traits without harming innocent people -or even to add value to society-.
As a matter of fact, I have long said on this website that to be good, you need to know how to be bad.

Machiavelli said it first:

> A good person is ruined among the great numbers who are not good

So, yes, there is plenty we can learn from psychopaths. *Especially* if you want to be a force for good.

Also from Dutton:

- The Good Psychopath Guide
- Sorted! How to Get What You Want in Life (The Good Psychopath Guide II)

> Quote: 'There are two things that rises at the top: the cream, and the scum".

2. Decoding The Gurus

By Chris Kavanagh and Matthew Browne
Review

A large chunk of famous people are dark triads.

And so are most gurus, influencers, and various personalities who seek to teach others.

Including many in this very same list.

Decoding The Gurus is the best available resource to understand the guru phenomenon.

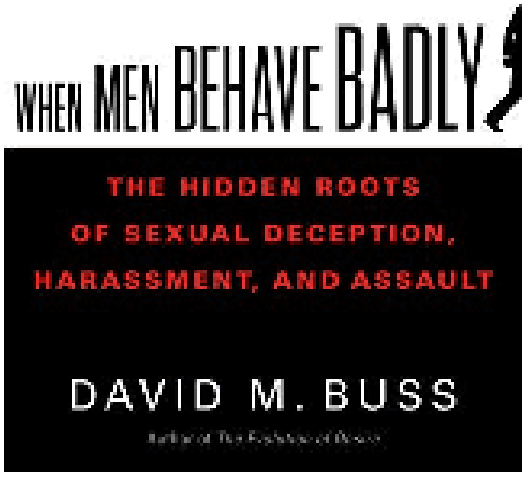
And to help you get rid of your very human tendency to believe, look up, or subordinate yourself to them.

(Our website also does the same, BTW).

Do you know Scott Adams?
If you do and don't see the narcissism and red flags, let this be your wake-up call:

> Quote: I'll issue a spoiler upfront. We looked at some people and some are particularly irritating to look at. Jordan Peterson series spring to mind (…) I think **it is some achievement that Scott Adams is by far the person I disliked the most** that we've covered and I'm really going to struggle to say anything about him, **because he's such an a**hole** (..) he's an a**hole

1. When Men Behave Badly



by David Buss
Summary | Audiobook

Don't let the title fool you:

It's not a tirade against men -if it were, trust me, I wouldn't have put it here-.

David Buss is a true scientist, and quite impartial -albeit just a bit more male perspective would have made it even better, to be honest-.

Indeed, the very first thing he says is that both feminists and manosphere bloggers do get something right. But they both lack a deeper understanding -and an unbiased view- of intersexual dynamics.

And we agree with that.

If you want to learn about sexual conflict and the more cheating, amoral, and manipulative nature of intersexual dynamics, this is your book -as well as the course below, which is more on the practical side-.

And as a testament to Buss telling just how it is, look no further than this quote:

> Quote: Are these acts morally abhorrent? Absolutely. Few things seem more evil than directing abortion-inducing blows to a pregnant woman's belly. (…) Evolution by selection operates according to the ruthless currency of relative reproductive success. It is indifferent to the suffering of individuals. It is indifferent to our moral evaluations. Just as evolution has created male lions that kill the baby cubs sired by their rivals in order to bring a new female back into estrus, human males may have evolved a circumstance-contingent psychology that inclines them to brutalize incipient offspring sired by rival men.

Bonus: Power University Course

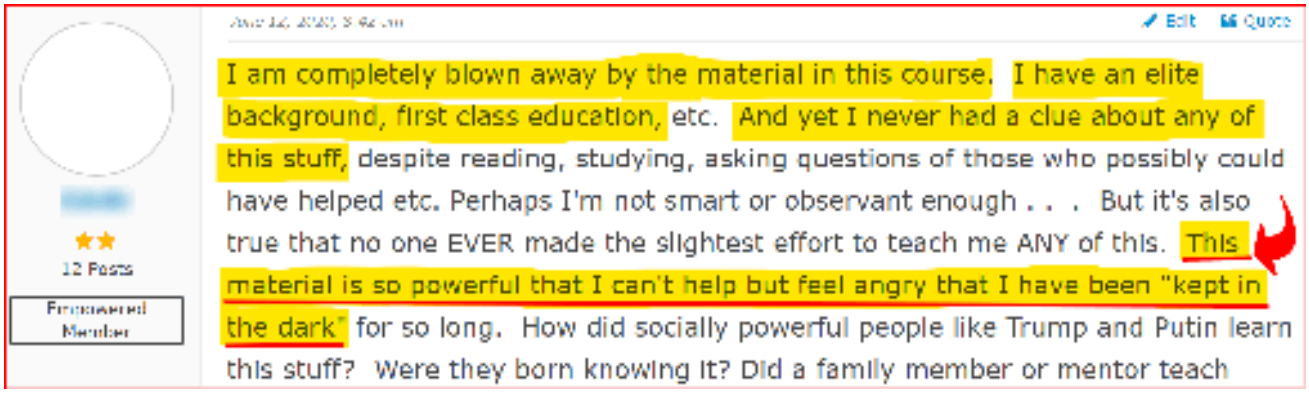
By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Reviews

Power University isn't technically a "red pill book"—it's a course.

But when seeking an edge in life, a course with videos, quizzes, and self-assessments may help you absorb and apply concepts better than a book.

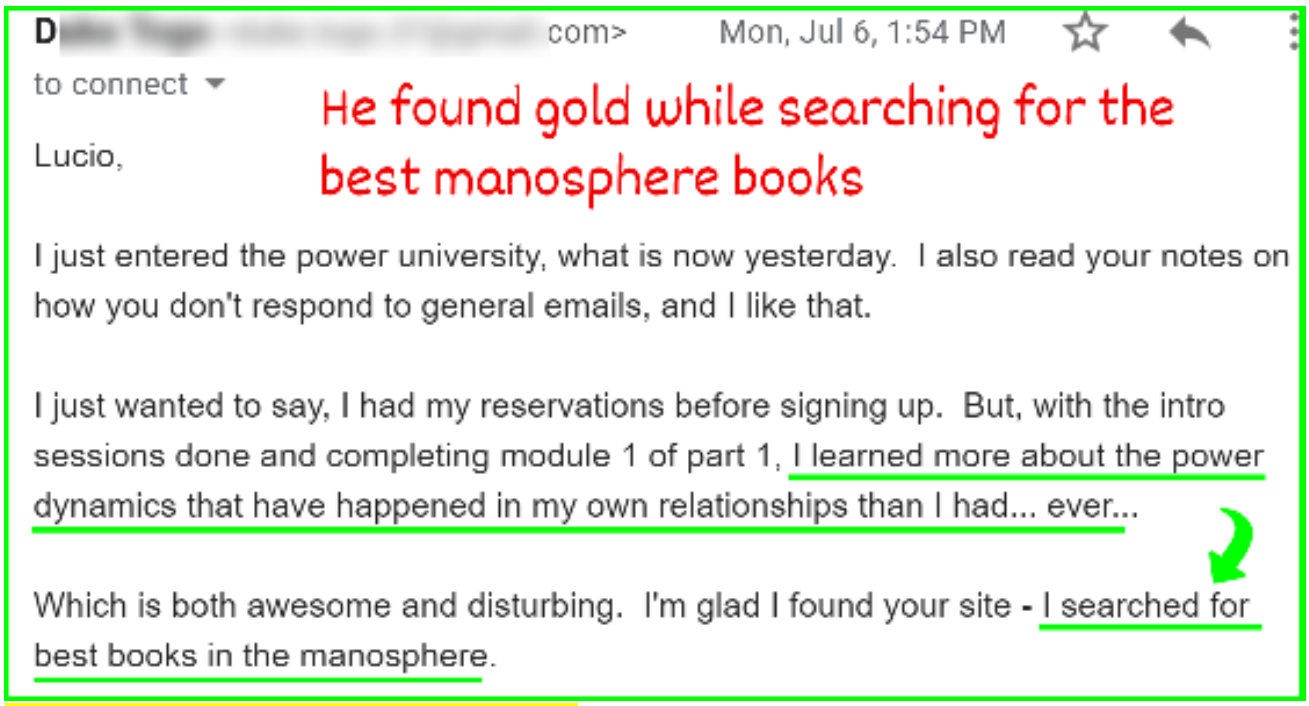
PU is also not designed to reveal red pill truths, but to **leverage red pill truths to achieve goals.**

Full disclosure: I'm the main creator of Power University.
Still, it tops the list because customer feedback aligns with red pill insights, like this one:



> **Alumnus**: This material is so powerful that I can't help but feel angry that I have been kept in the dark

Some of our customers joined Power University right after reading this list actually:



Email feedback from a Power University customer

Power University distills into practical strategies all the resources from this list and beyond, including research-based and scientifically grounded handbooks. It's your "how-to" guide to gaining status, respect, and attraction—or, as we like to say here, "how to be a winner."

Also see:

- Should I start with PU if I lack social skills?
- Power University reviews

What's a "Red Pill Book"?

Intersexual dynamics is one of the major topics of the red pill, so this list prominently features the best books on intersexual dynamics.

But "red pill" also refers to any deep and truthful wisdom that people don't openly talk about. Truths and realities that, for various reasons, society either hides or refuses.

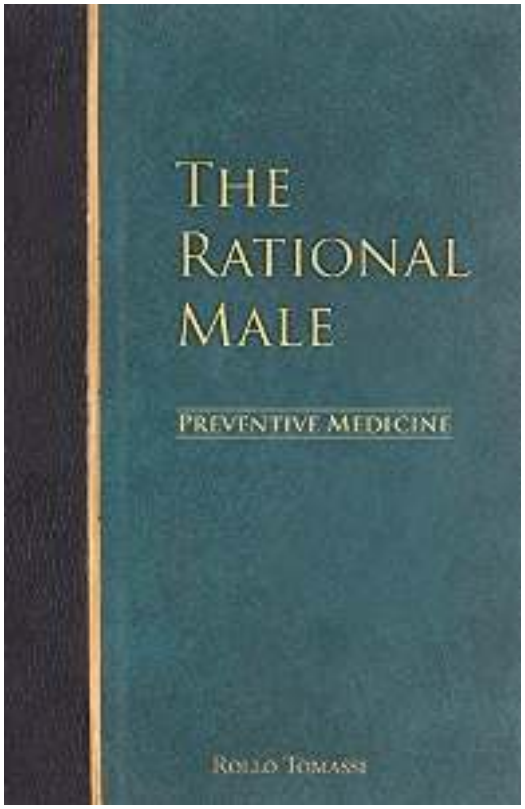
In its wider meaning, "red pill' refers to anything that helps us reach a higher level of knowledge and/or effectiveness by going beyond the mainstream information.
This reading list embraced that wider meaning of "red pill".

Some people say the Red Pill can bring to the surface uncomfortable truths which can make people depressed. But I never bought that.
I think that anything "Red Pill", by definition, makes us more effective human beings. And that, in my book, will always mean empowering, not disheartening.

More Good Red Pill Books

Somewhat outside of the TOP 10, but popular red pills books:

The Rational Male – Preventive Medicine



by Rollo Tomassi
Summary | Audiobook

Rollo Tomassi is one of the most popular voices in the red pill community.

If you're a beginner, then the first book "*The Rational Male*" provides an overview of the most foundational red pill framework of dating and intersexual dynamics.

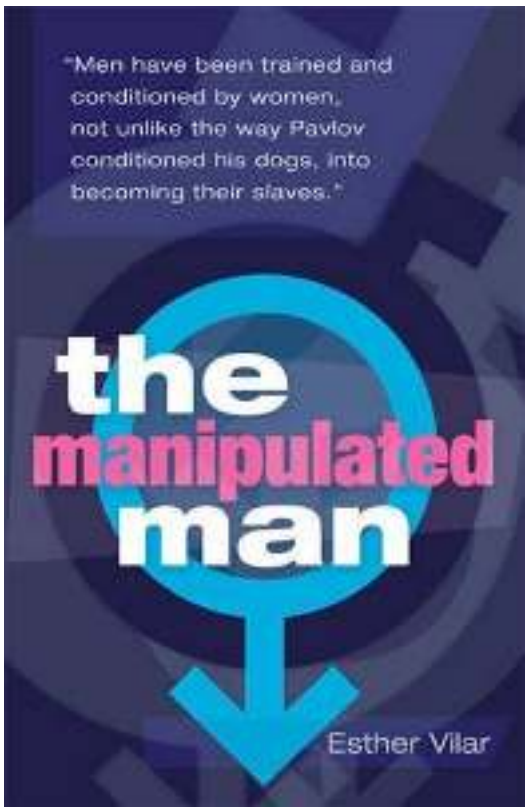
I preferred "Preventive Medicine", since the first one was a bit basic for me.

Rollo's take on games women play, the true meaning of women's manipulation attempts, and how women control providers are good starting points.

At the risk of losing readership though, I gotta raise a warning: the bitterness and covert misogyny of authors like these aren't good for you.

> Quote: *"Men need to man up is the battle cry of every single woman older than 30"*

The Manipulated Man



[image]
by Esther Vilar
Summary | Kindle | Print

This is pure shock and awe ped pill therapy.

Not for the faint of heart and not for beginners: it will raise *cognitive dissonance* alarm bells left and right.

Unluckily, as much as Vilar's work hits like a kettle of gunpowder, it also comes from a place of little understanding of sexual marketplace power dynamics.
Vilar fails to see that (many) women not working and (many) men working is often a fair deal that most men enter *willingly* because average women have higher sexual market value than average men.

In the wrong hands and at the wrong time, "The Manipulated Man" might push some men into the wrong path, fueling misogyny, a defensive mindset, and "fearful defection", such as giving up on relationships -or women- just out of fear of losing.

This is a pity because it's true that women, just like men, may manipulate their partners. And that's especially dangerous for men who are not aware of those inborn tendencies.
Female manipulation should be put into a wider frame of sexual conflict and manipulation, which cuts both ways.

For more, check out these articles:

- **Sexual conflict**: how both genders fight the sexual arms race
- **How women manipulate men** (w/ video examples)

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

> Quote: *"Without thinking, men fight women's wars, father women's children and construct women's towns. Women just sit back getting lazier, dumber and more demanding*"

Change Log

- *The Unplugged Alpha* replaced (30.11.2025), replaced by the deeper analyses of '*The Value of Others*'

More Reading

Also somewhat related to red pill wisdom:

- The dictionary of power dynamics
- Best evolutionary psychology books
- Best dating books for women
- Best dating books for guys
- Best psychology books

Too Jealous Boyfriend? 7 Signs He Might Be Paranoid

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Some jealousy is normal in a relationship, and even healthy.

But *too much* jealousy can be a worrying sign of either paranoia or an abusive personality.

This article will show you the difference between a jealous boyfriend who remains within normal and healthy parameters, and a paranoid boyfriend who might become an abuser.

Contents

- Intro: Science of Jealousy
- Signs of Jealous Paranoia
  - 1. He Chased Hard And/Or Invested a Lot
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- SUMMARY

Intro: Science of Jealousy

Evolutionary psychology suggests jealousy is hardwired in humans.

Quoting from The *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships:*

> romantic jealousy is part of the suite of psychological mechanisms promoting intrasexual competition to maintain—rather than simply attract—longer-term mates, and both sexes report high levels of jealousy (Buss, 2013; Scelza et al., 2020).

Some jealousy is not just normal, but *good* for relationships.
Relationship researcher John Gottman says that no jealousy whatsoever is often the precursor of a breakup.

However, as for most things, **there is an optimum balance of jealousy and too much of it is becomes maladaptive and toxic.**

Unfortunately, jealousy seems to be flat bell curve with fat tails of extremes. In simple words, too much jealousy is relatively common among men.
Bloshinsky in the latest *Cambridge Handbook of Male Sexual Adaptation* claims that jealousy accounts for far more cases of family violence (e.g., spouse and child abuse) than social class, poverty, alcohol, or drug addiction combined.

Jealousy must be taken seriously because it's also a leading cause of stalking and murder.

Signs of Jealous Paranoia

These are the signs that a jealous boyfriend is going too far:

1. He Chased Hard And/Or Invested a Lot

Jealous paranoids play to their victims' fantasies of being taken care of.

This is something that some women crave at a subconscious level.
For some others, it's a similar experience as being swept off their feet.

These men are often very proactive in the relationship, including early on, and do so without being asked.
To some women, it can feel like a God-sent gift.

With so many men who play games, it can feel like a refreshing change.
You don't need to bend over backward to make him invest in you. He does all the chasing himself!

2. He Is Dominant (Even If Protective-Dominant)

Take this example by Wenda Patrick in her book Red Flags:

> Jessica is (…) impressed by his assertiveness.
> Not only does he order for both of them and select the wine, but also he demands that the waiter send back Jessica's steak when it is prepared incorrectly.
> Jessica perceives Richard's taking charge of the situation as comforting because it demonstrates that he can take care of her needs.

Sounds like a dream man?

See how it evolves:

> As their relationship develops, Richard quickly establishes himself as Jessica's sole source of support. He takes over paying the rent for her apartment and convinces her to quit her job because his income can support them both.

Guess how it evolves after that?

Richard is a controlling, jealous-paranoid man who makes Jessica's life a nightmare.

3. He Always Finds Faults in You

Paranoids are to lies and inconsistencies as perfectionists are to mistakes.

There is never "honest enough", there is never "enough proof". They will always be on the lookout for the smallest hint of duplicity and deceit.
And they will find it!
Not because it's necessarily there, but for the simple principle that people usually find what they are looking for.

No normal living gal can live up to a paranoid's standards of purity and honesty.

4. You're Never "Honest Enough", You're Never Showing Enough "Proof"

You provide all the proof you can, you tell the truth as truthful as it can be.

Yet, it's never enough.

Understand: if that's the pattern of your relationship, it's not you. It's that your boyfriend isn't just a jealous boyfriend. He might be paranoid. Or abusive-paranoid (the line is often blurred anyway).

5. He Says Someone Hurt Him In The Past... Badly

Take their pain seriously, and always give the benefit of the doubt.

But also be aware that's exactly how emotionally abusive men operate. They make stories of hurt in the past to control you with your own guilt.
And if you show yourself to be too understanding, they will use it against you: "How dare you tell me that, don't you know how hurt I was"?

6. His Punishments Are Never-Ending

Paranoids believe in punishment.
In eternal punishment.

If you have done a misdeed, don't expect them to forgive and forget. It will always be about "that time that you did X… ".
Again, this is a hallmark of some types of abusive men as well, so watch out for men whose impulse to punish is too strong.

7. He Says That If You Love Him, You Will Listen and Comply

This is a typical "double-bind" game.

Here is how it works:

> **Jealous boyfriend**: OK. Where did you go for lunch
> **Her**: Why are you asking me, I feel oppressed always having to explain
> **Jealous boyfriend**: if you feel oppressed to explain something so simple, then you don't love me

Then you have another sign of abusive-paranoid.
These are double binds and emotional manipulation to steamroll you into compliance, and they do *not* happen in healthy relationships.

8. He Isolates You From Friends and Family

Paranoids may try to isolate their victims to control them better.

If you find yourself spending more and more time with him and less time and less time with your friends, ask yourself this: was it he who was pushing and maneuvering for isolation?

If yes, you have another big check mark.

Also, read:

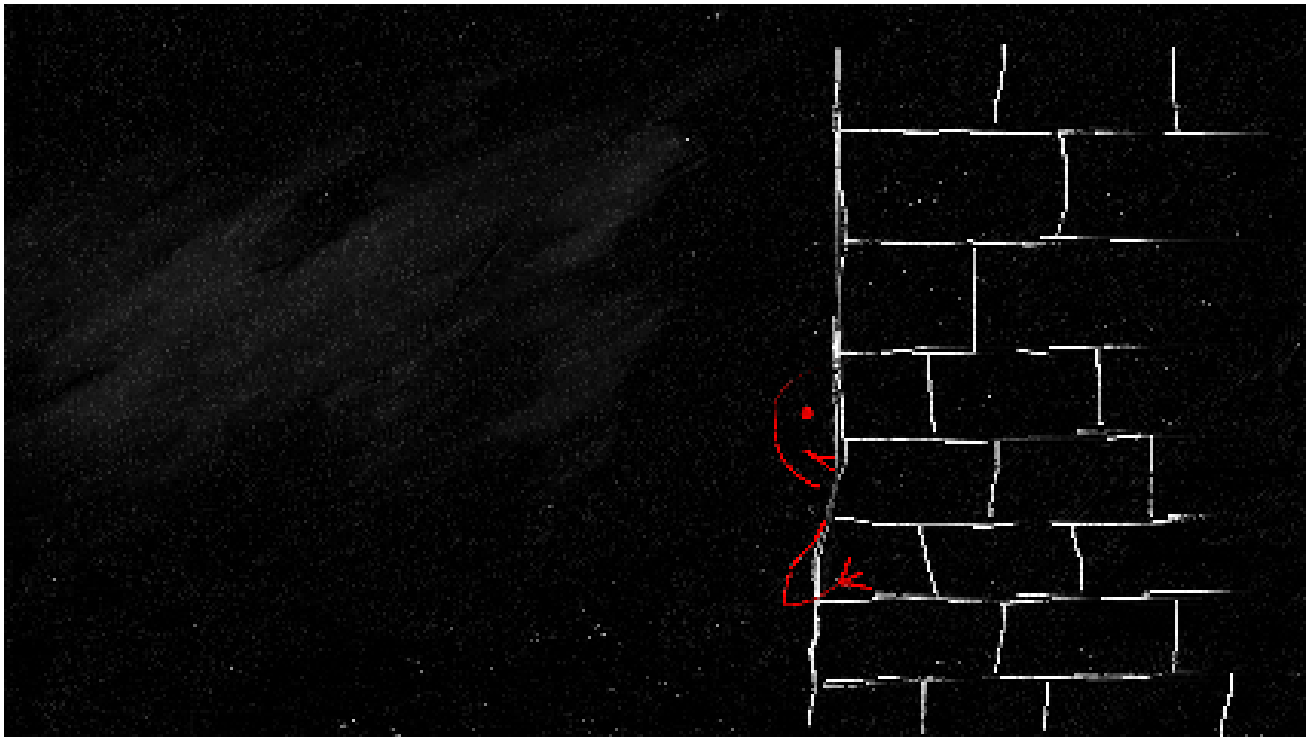
- Signs you're dating a Sociopath
- Psychopath Free

9. He Chases You Back After You Breakup

Paranoid often wants you back.
Especially if you ended it.
Often this has more to do with vengeance than with love, and that's another big sign of abusive behavior.

Of course, sometimes even healthy boyfriends will want you back. The difference in your past relationship.
Did he present the above 6 signs? Then the fact that he wants you back is only the confirmation that he was not a "normally jealous boyfriend", but an abusive paranoid.

It's best not to be too polite here, as they will easily confuse politeness and friendship for rekindled love.
When you go, be gone.



Dealing With Toxic Jealousy

Most women try to reassure their boyfriends that they haven't been up to anything wrong.

But that's the wrong approach.

It shows the jealous boyfriend that all their questions are appropriate and that they will receive an answer.

1. Nip It In The Bud

As soon as the jealousy creeps up, she should douse the flames with plenty of water:

> **Her**: Matt, may be overreacting here, but it sounds like you're checking up on me, and that's kind of frightening. Let me tell you this once and forever: I'm a one-man woman. As long as we're dating, you can be sure that I'm not seeing anybody else. You don't need to check up on me.

2. Answer Big Questions – Not Little Ones

The big question is this: are you faithful?

Answer that one honestly. If you're not faithful, then break up.
If you are thinking about being unfaithful, then tell him that he is destroying the relationship.
And if you don't want to be together anymore, then end it.

But once you answer honestly, then refuse to answer all the small questions like "what did you do at 7:15 PM".
There are never enough details anyway, they only fuel more questions, more doubts, and more jealousy.

The only way you can win the jealousy game is by refusing to play it.

3. Don't Compromise, Don't Agree to "Tests of Love"

Some jealous boyfriends might ask you to provide "proof of love".
Such as moving in together, calling at a certain time, providing GPS locations, etc.
Do not!

The problem is in their paranoia, not with your actions.
No matter what you do, they will always find a reason to be paranoid.

They might try to cajole you by saying that's exactly how they were hurt in the past and now they need that reassurance and then they will be fine.
Most likely, it's a slippery slope.

Don't you trust me?
Then OK, consent to their first request -as long as it's small- and see what happens.

If a second "proof of love" and request for control follows, that's it.

4. Don't Try to Deceive Him & Don't Lie

Don't think that a small fib will spare you pain and questioning: it's a very short-sighted strategy.
As we've already seen, these guys are hound dogs and are quite likely to find out about your lies.

And the more lies a jealous boyfriend catches, the more he will feel justified in his jealousy (or paranoia).

5. Put Them in Their Own Double Bind

This is a frame control technique.
Take the example of dialogue above:

> **Jealous boyfriend**: OK. Where did you go for lunch
> **Her**: Why are you asking me, I feel mistrusted always having to explain
> **Jealous boyfriend**: If you feel mistrusted to explain something so simple, then you don't love me
> **Her**: No, it's the opposite, if you love me, you will trust me and you will care for me as long as I don't do anything that hurts you directly. This is not caring JB

Then stick to your guns: if he loves you, he must show it by not trying to control your every move.
The good thing is that many paranoids have a strong moral code, and this technique will work wonders.

6. He Might Be Sick, But He Can't Make you Sick

If you have been with him for a while, you might have come to accept that, yes, "he is a bit sick".
And that might be the case. However, you need a mindset switch here: the fact that he is sick does not mean he is allowed to make you sick.

7. My Way or The Highway

I usually don't recommend people threaten the end of the relationship.

But it can be an effective technique to "give it a last shot".
It looks like this:

> **Her**: You jealousy is ruining our relationship. And it's also ruining my life and I can't allow that. Either you trust me to be faithful or we cannot go on like this
> **Him**: Are you threatening to break up with me?
> **Her**: I wouldn't use the word "threat", but you need to stop this witch-hunt. Because, if you cannot, then yes, I'm afraid I won't be able to go on like this

If you are not sure whether to break up or not, read this:

- How to overcome relationship ambivalence

Avoid Vicious Circles

A really toxic pattern can start when he questions her about her feelings.

In the beginning, she still loves him and swears him so.

But because jealous paranoid boyfriends never get enough reassurance, he will keep asking and asking, pushing her farther and farther away.

Ah, how ironic that his own need for love will actually kill her love.

The problem is that once she has started with the pattern of saying "I still love you", she will likely keep saying so even as she drifts away, making the final breakup all the more dramatic.

He will accuse her of lying, stringing him along, and killing him on purpose.
When it's not working anymore, be honest. Just say it.

Abusive Jealousy In Gay Couples

Jealousy is not limited to men, of course.

Women can be jealous, too, and jealousy can be very vicious and violent in same-sex relationships.

Claire Renzetti who studied lesbian couples, notes indeed that the ego threatened in same-sex relationships is even stronger.

Not only someone flirting with the abuser's spouse is a threat to their control, but it's also an ego threat to their self-esteem because they could have been interested in both of them, but they choose their partner.

Also, read:

- What to do when someone flirts with your boyfriend
- What to do when someone flirts with your girlfriend

As reported by Baumeister, the violent lesbian typically wanted to be the boss and the dominant partner, but found herself falling short in either money or education.
Hitting her partner was a way to claim the dominant position she craved but didn't feel she could claim on other bases.

How to Stop Being a Jealous Boyfriend

Improving is possible.

Valentola and colleagues in the latest *Cambridge Handbook of Sexual Psychology* state that therapy of pathological jealousy may not lead to abrupt changes, but improvements are possible.

If your form of jealousy is on the paranoid end of the spectrum, it won't be easy for you to contain yourself.
This section will be difficult, but it can help:

1. Accept Your Reality

Accept that you:

1. See more than most people see and much of what you see is not true. There is no shame in that
2. Are too jealous, and that's ruining your relationship: taking responsibility is the man's job, so do it

This is difficult. Very difficult. All paranoid resist and cling to the idea that their suspicions and the patterns they see are real. But if you can manage to start double-guessing yourself, hats off to you: you are taking huge strides.

2. Check Reality: Hire a Detective

Now, some girlfriends do cheat.
It might be a minority, but it happens.
This will be very atypical advice, but to clear the air, hire a detective.

Don't do the "research" yourself: if you are paranoid, it will only drive you crazier. You will find "proofs" and inconsistencies all over the place.
Put it in the hands of a professional, and be done with the results.

3. Come to Terms With the Worst-Case Scenario

If a detective still doesn't help, what about this final liberation: imagine she is indeed cheating you.
She is sleeping with another man.

Big whoops.

You weren't her first (probably), and if your relationship won't last forever you won't be her last anyway -and it won't if you keep all that paranoid behavior up.
It's not the best scenario, but it's not the end of the world either.

3.2 Switch Mindset

Now I'll be blunt.
If you're badgering her with endless questions, secretly checking on her, and if she has to report her routines to you, then you're being an abusive prick.

Stop acting as if she *owes* you her whereabouts and coordinates.

As a matter of fact, stop acting like she owes you fidelity. Nobody owes you anything, especially if you keep acting like an obsessive jealous friend. That's an entitlement mentality and you're only pushing her away.

Focus on being the best partner you can be.
Then maybe you can expect something in exchange. Not now. As an abusive obsessive partner, you have no right to make any demands.

4. Test for Paternity

It's safe to assume that men developed jealousy because jealousy would make it harder for them to raise children that are not theirs.
So go to the source of the problem: will the children be yours or not?

Albeit non-paternity is rare (median estimates at less than 3% for non-suspecting men), it can help assuage super jealous boyfriends to test for paternity.
Yes, chances are your girlfriend or wife won't like that, but if it's the only way to reassure you, then it can be good for both.

Test it and get it over with.

5. Forgive and Move On

Paranoids tend to turn small betrayals and small lies into huge castles in the sand.
They weave stories around it, they mull over small transgressions and make them as big as Saturn.

Know yourself: know about this tendency and consciously stop your train of thoughts when you see it's taking you in that good old rabbit's hole.

How Jealous-Abusive Relationships Start

> **Jealous boyfriend**: So, how was your day off?

She thinks back on her hectic yet banal day.
She'd like to share something meaningful, but there was really nothing worthwhile to share: cleaning the flat, grabbing lunch with her sister, getting her nails done, and then running for some groceries.
Sure, her sister is thinking of a divorce, but she made her promise not to say anything about it so she can't say that:

> **Her**: The usual. You know, errands. Stuff like that. Nothing special.
> **Jealous boyfriend**: Yeah, I figured you must have been busy
> **Her**: Yeah, quite a bit, it's funny how you end up being busier on your free days eheh
> **Jealous boyfriend**: That's why you didn't pick up the phone
> **Her**: Yeah, I was having lunch with my sister, she wanted to talk about some girl stuff, that's why I called you later
> **Jealous boyfriend**: Yeah that was quite a long lunch

Jealous boyfriends often start small.

Later on in the relationship he will not take such a long detour and his questions will be much more direct and in the worst cases even aggressive.
But in the beginning, you're not even sure if he's just curious or jealous…

> **Her**: She's going through some stuff, yes
> **Jealous boyfriend**: What else did you do
> **Her**: Nails, cleaning the flat.. And some groceries
> **Jealous boyfriend**: OK. Where did you go for lunch
> **Her**: Uptown, near her office
> **Jealous boyfriend**: Was it just you and her?

Now it's getting a bit intense, her voice goes up, as if it finally hits her he might be jealous and checking up on her:

> **Her**: It sounds like you're checking up on me
> **Jealous boyfriend**: Ahaha no, I'm just curious, that's all

At this point, she is actually glad and flattered that he cares. And deep down, she also likes that he might be a bit jealous.
She doesn't know yet if it will be a recurring pattern.

Still, as long as it's a few questions, she thinks she can live with it.
The first time it will dawn on her that he might be a paranoid jealous boyfriend is when he will come up with something out of the ordinary. For example, this same conversation will become:

> **Jealous boyfriend**: OK. Where did you go for lunch
> **Her**: Uptown, near her office
> **Jealous boyfriend**: Oh, that's funny, I was driving in front of your place today and your car was parked there…

When that hits, it's more than just a big warning.
If your first proof is that your boyfriend is not just jealous, he's jealous paranoid.

Jealous Boyfriends & Abuse

Some women enjoy jealousy and control in the beginning… And then they realize too late they are fully embroiled in an abusive relationship.
And at that point, it's definitely not so nice anymore.

Look at the reaction of the woman in black to the man's jealousy in this Goodfellas scene:

She thinks she is lucky that her boyfriend is so jealous.

Also, read:

- Signs of abusive relationships
- 7 Types of abusive men

SUMMARY

Jealousy is normal, even healthy and it can help relationships.

Unluckily, some people confuse "too much of a good thing" for a minor offense. Instead, when jealousy becomes paranoid jealousy the relationship is well on its way to becoming abusive.

This article provided you with the warning signs to spot when too much jealousy is a leading indicator of an abusive relationship and a few ideas on how to fix it.

How to Eat Pussy: Step-By-Step Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

WARNING: This article contains explicit images. If it's not for you, stop.
If on the other hand, you're wondering how to eat pussy, keep going.

Contents

- 1. Relax & get in the mood
- 2. Warm her up
- 3. Tease your way to the main dish
- 4. Use your fingers
- 5. Eat her out: focus on clitoris
- 6. Get into a steady rhythm
- 7. On the home stretch: keep going
- 8. Ease down once she reaches the orgasm
- 9. Enjoy yourself

- Pussy Eating Position
- Quick Tips to Eat Pussy
- Eating Pussy Mistakes
- Pussy Licking FAQ's
- Technical Aspects of Eating Pussy
  - 1. Where is the clitoris
  - 2. Early Licks

1. Relax & get in the mood

An environment conducive to sex and romance will always help women to orgasm and get into the mood.
Dim the lights, switch on the candles, put on good music.

Most of all, though it's a frame of mind that you want to convey: that sex is natural and good. You want to provide an environment of safety where she can trust you and where she can be herself and let go.
Be the chaperone of that world of pleasures: take her hand and let the dances begin.

2. Warm her up

Imagine the clitoris as the final prize of a journey, not the beginning.

Start kissing her inner thighs and slowing moving to her vagina.
Then kiss her lick the labia and the area around her vagina.

Feel free to look at her here, but avoid any inquisitive look as if to ask "is this OK".
Look at her with lust and passion.

Then go up to her lips as well. Kiss her.
Kiss her with her vagina juices still on your lips: show her that during passion there is no disgust (but be prepared not all women will like this: be quick to get the hind and keep going without breaking the mood).

3. Tease your way to the main dish

Make it a bit of a tease.
Build your way up to the clitoris, groan as if you're just about to go for it.

Then go right back to kissing her thighs and then slowly again to the vagina.
If the mood is right she will be begging you to begin eating her pussy in earnest.

4. Use your fingers

In the beginning, use your hands to caress her, running her around her side, touching her breasts, her legs, her thighs.

Penetration is not strictly necessary: you can successfully eat pussy without ever going inside.
However, it can be a bonus. In my experience, even women with no vaginal sensitivity prefer cunnilingus with fingers-action.

Don't stick your fingers inside too quickly though. You can begin playing with the entry of her vagina as soon as you start seeing her pussy getting moist.

When she is ready, enter her and use your finger either to stimulate her G-spot or to simulate a penis action.

G-spot Stimulation

To stimulate the G-spot, your palm must face upward and you must look for a spongy area that feels different from the surroundings of her vagina wall.
You can stimulate it left and right or with a "come here" motion.
Some women will recoil with you find it: it's not a bad sign, but it means it's too early. Go back to it when she's nearer orgasm.

Penis-Like Motion

If you use your fingers to stimulate a penis, start slowly, without pulling the fingers fully out. And accelerate as she nears the orgasm.

5. Eat her out: focus on clitoris

Alright, we have explained enough that to eat pussy well you need to prep it up, make her comfortable, build your way to it and tease her.

All appetizers are important, but the main dish is the main dish. And the main dish of your pussy eating marathon is the clitoris.

The clitoris is what will most likely and most reliable give her an orgasm.

The Clitoris is Very Sensitive

The clitoris is a highly sensitive area. The tongue is good for it because it's soft and naturally moist. However, some women might still recoil if you attack it too early or too aggressively.
Another good reason to warm your way up to it.

6. Get into a steady rhythm

Once she is moaning deeply and you're fully focused on the clitoris, don't switch. It's not the time to tease anymore.

Most women prefer a steady rhythm that accelerates as nears peaking time. But if you are getting tired and find it difficult to get quicker, focus on keeping the steady rhythm: she will love it as well.

7. On the home stretch: keep going

Some women will get hotter and hotter when they near the orgasm. They will quiver and move, some even try to pull back or swaying their hips.

Keep it steady, don't let her go and don't stop!
She wants you to finish her off now.

Don't ask questions when she is nearing the orgasm:

Note: unluckily both YouTube & Vimeo are quite conservative and this video got flagged by the community of prudish.

8. Ease down once she reaches the orgasm

This is where penetrative sex differs from cunnilingus.

With penetrative sex, you can keep going and give her multiple orgasms.
But with cunnilingus you want to stop because many women switch from a positive sensation on their clitoris to a negative, even painful one right after orgasm.

In doubt, stop.

9. Enjoy yourself

Sex is pleasure.
Giving pleasure is pleasure and making love is the best activity in the world.

Relish the moment, ravish her and lose yourself in pussy.

Pussy Eating Position

Most people think of a missionary position when eating pussy.
And that's all fair and good.

Here are a few variations for you to consider though:

- **She standing**, him on his knees: this might feel demeaning to some men. But it's a good way to start sex. Imagine she's coming off the shower, freshly shaved and half-naked. You attack her while on your knees and

then transition to horizontal

- **Sitting on his face**: I'm not a big fan of this one as it feels less in control and your movements are also impaired. But don't knock it off until you tried it…
- **She standing**, him laying down –like this–
- **Doggie style licking**: Get her down doggy style and lick her from behind. Make sure she's thoroughly clean if you know what I mean -and avoid if you're not sure-
- **69**: eating pussy properly during a 69 is easier said than done. And that's exactly the reason why you should challenge yourself to it.

Quick Tips to Eat Pussy

Here are a few more guidelines:

- **Cut your fingernails short**: this is really important, *especially* if you use your fingers inside of her with a penis-like in & out motion.
- **Warm-up your hands**: if you have a tendency to get cold hands during winter, warm yourself up first. A great simple way is to wash your hands with hot water
- **Wash your hands**: it's basic hygiene, and it will also help some women relax and feel more comfortable. Don't be the guy women have to remind basic hygiene to
- **Praise the pussy**: tell them her pussy is turning you own, but even more: show it
- **Ask what she likes**: some rules apply to almost all women, but there is huge variance among women -much more so than among men-. So ask her what she likes
- **Experiment**: women often don't know what they like. And some don't feel comfortable sharing. So experiment and discover

When it comes to bear, some people say not to keep a stubble for men.
I have a stubble most of the times and no lady ever complained. You're not rubbing your cheeks against her after all -albeit you might. Now *then* it might better not to have a stubble-.

Eating Pussy Mistakes

- **Making it a chore**

I remember years ago when it was about to end with an ex-girlfriend of mine.
She complained that I looked bored. I was indeed and all I wanted to do was "repaying her the favor". From there it quickly devolved into an argument.
Worst cunnilingus ever.

If you do it, do it passionately.
Otherwise, don't it at all.

- **Asking questions during cunnilingus**

Unless you're a very beginner, try not to ask questions.
Most guides tell you to "ask her", but the truth is that rational verbal interaction during sex and orgasms douses the flames. It's like saying that you don't have enough chemistry, and people who are overcome by passion and lust usually don't discuss rationally while doing it.

Try to go off based on her reactions instead, and if you still have questions, there is always after sex to talk.

- **Badgering before she's lubricated**

If when you're about to insert a finger in her pussy you notice it's not yet well lubricated, wait, and work with your tongue a bit more.
The worst you can do is to hard-finger a dry vagina with violent up and down motion.
A penis on a dry vagina is unpleasant enough, but fingers are worst (only topped by fingers with long fingernails).

Pussy Licking FAQ's

Here are a few common questions on cunnilingus:

- **Is it better to give orgasm with your penis or with your tongue?**

To answer with man-speak: is it better to drive a Ferrari a Porsche?
It depends on the model, the driver and what you feel like. Both are great and it's best to have both.
But the Ferrari is just that little better.
Orgasms with your penis are the Ferrari: some women might deny it, but making her come with your penis is superior. At the very least, she will hold you in higher esteem.

- **Does cunnilingus provide strong orgasm?**

Absolutely.
Women can experience several types of orgasm. To keep it short -but admittedly at the cost of being imprecise-, we can differentiate two main types of female orgasms: vaginal and clitoral.

Vaginal tend to be more powerful, with some describing it as "deeper". Vaginal orgasm, in some women, is more elusive. Clitoral orgasms are a bit easier to reach, and eating pussy tend to give clitoral orgasms.

- **I hate eating pussy, do I have to?**

No, you don't have to.
However, it's a great skill to have.

Why should I learn to eat pussy?

Countless reasons, including better and more diversified sex life.
Also, there might be a time where you don't feel like having sex and want to give her an orgasm. Or you want to last longer and switching to cunnilingus will give you some time off.

- **Do women like their pussies being licked?**

Absolutely.
I have never met any woman who said no to cunnilingus and never heard any woman saying they don't. Some never tried it, but that doesn't mean they wouldn't like it.

Women who refuse might be self-conscious.

- **What if she passes gas?**

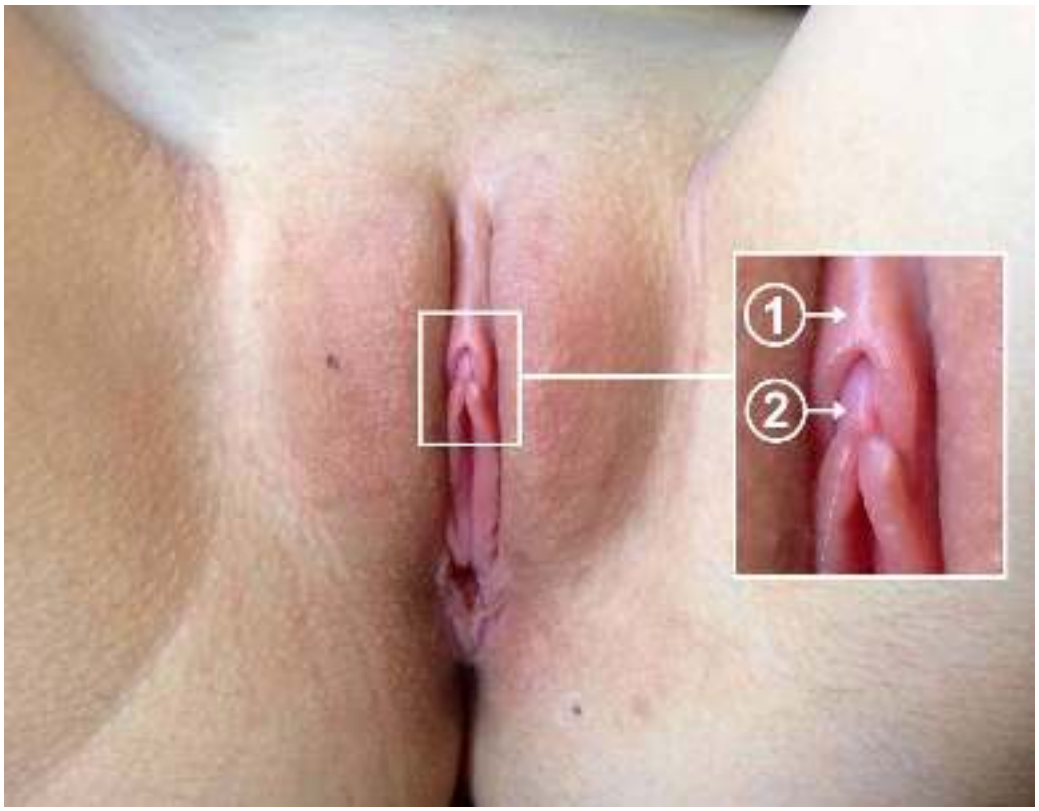
Hopefully, she will pull you up if she has to. If she is pulling you up, it might be a good idea to actually *go* up :).
However, some women will also pull you up when they're hot and steamy because they want to be penetrated.

Technical Aspects of Eating Pussy

Here are some more technical aspects for beginners.

1. Where is the clitoris

The clitoris is here:



CRW09 [CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], via Wikimedia Commons
On the first licks place your thumb ride above it and pull the skin up so you can lay it bare.

Don't get too hang up on pictures and anatomy though: you don't need it.
When you feel a little bump with your tongue, that's the clitoris.

The clitoris will also enlarge when aroused, and you might not even need to pull the skin up.
I remember a woman once saying "oh my God I was so horny, have you seen how big my clitoris was".

2. Early Licks

It's OK to straight for the clitoris to give her a quick jolt of excitement before you even remove her panties.

At the very beginning the labia of the vagina will be closed in resting position, looking like this:

Evoluke [CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], from Wikimedia Commons – Cropped
To be sure you find the clitoris, separate her labia and lick with an upward option: you will surely lick the clitoris that way.

How to Last Longer In Bed: The Full Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

It's good to last longer in bed, right?

Being able to keep going and going at will, and then release when you feel most like it.
Well, it turns out there are many ways to control your erection and ejaculation to last longer.

Many men can last longer with her on top. Try it out.

Here are the best ones:

Contents

- 1. Make Sex The Norm: Fuck More
- 2. Stop-Start Method
- 3. Distract Your Mind From Sex
- 4. Switch Positions
- 5. Break Through The Wall. Then Coast
- 6. Add Non-Penetrative Sex To The Menu
- 7. Make Her Come First
- 8. Do It Romantically: Slow Down
- 9. Train Your "Hold Back Muscles" With Kegel Exercises
- 10. The Nice Guy Solution: Make It About the Performance
- 11. If You're Too Horny: Masturbate
- 12. Practice Lasting Longer With Masturbation
- 13. Cialis / Viagra / Medication
- 14. Extended Pleasure Condoms

- 15. The Squeeze Method
- 16. Get Drunk

- The Holistic Approach: Healthy Life

1. Make Sex The Norm: Fuck More

If you have just started having sex, sex is still something “out of the ordinary for you”.
Your mind and body are reacting to the novelty by taking advantage of it as quickly as possible.

This what your subconscious mind is saying:

> **Your subconscious mind**: Quick! Impregnate her!
> **You**: But I’d like to last longer
> **Your subconscious mind**: are you kidding me? The last time you had sex was 1 year ago… With an inflatable doll. This is our chance, shoot now!

You don’t need any crazy technique to overcome this issue: time and quantity of sex will naturally silence that voice.
Your nerves will placate and you will slowly but surely settle down into a longer-lasting routine.

2. Stop-Start Method

This is a very popular method to last longer in bed.
It consists of having sex in fit and starts: thrust few times, then stop. Thrust a few times, then stop.

It works, but if this is your only method and you don’t do anything else during the stops, it makes the overall sexual experience less natural and passionate.
And it could be harder for her to reach an orgasm. But add some position switching and it works wonders.

3. Distract Your Mind From Sex

An old classic.

Take your mind off the sex with deeply un-arousing thoughts.
You will reduce the pleasurable sensations you are experiencing and it will make you last longer.

This is the technique that Marshall uses in this episode of How I Met Your Mother:

Right, that’s something to also keep in mind: don’t indulge in too much bone-killing thoughts or it might just work too well :).

4. Switch Positions

This is one of my favorites.
It allows you to stop while at the same time being dominant in bed.

Instead of just stopping indeed: change her position.

A typical session of mine looks like this: begin by bending her over and penetrating her from behind. Then go missionary on the bed. Follow with a doggy style. Then make her go on top.
Finish it from the back with her flat on her belly.

You don’t need to follow the same steps of course, but definitely do switch position.
Hell, they don’t even need to be all sex positions. Stop and kiss!

4.2 Do It In Positions You Don't Like

When you feel like you're more at risk of coming, do it in positions that you least like.

I'll come out of the closet: I don't particularly enjoy blow jobs. Then if I didn't want to come, I'd make a switch with her giving me head.
Think of positions and sexual acts you don't particularly love, and do more of those.

5. Break Through The Wall. Then Coast

You know that feeling you get when you start moving very quickly, and very quickly you're short of breath?

There is an expression in Italian for this: "rompere il fiato".
It doesn't have a precise equivalent English, but the best translation would be "get into your stride".

When you start running and before you get into your stride it feels like you're done after one minute, right? It feels like you just don't have it in you anymore.
But that's not true.
You have it in you to go on *for hours*.
It's just a matter of enduring and outlasting those "short of breath" moments of intense difficulty. And then you get into your rhythm and coast.

It's the same to lasting longer in bed.
You need to overcome those key moments when you're almost about to come. That's the moment to slow down, change position, squeeze your snake… Whatever it takes until you hit your stride.

6. Add Non-Penetrative Sex To The Menu

It's reductive to think of sex as just penetration.

Especially if your worry is to last longer for her because women don't see sex like men do. They have a wider, more holistic view of sex that goes beyond pure penetration.

Engage in more foreplay, kiss more, use your tongue and fingers… Then even if the penetrative sex won't last as long, it's not a problem. Because it's only *one* item on the menu, and the overall sex *did* last long.

7. Make Her Come First

If you fear of not lasting enough in bed is to make her orgasm, then what about making her come first?

Do lots of foreplay, learn to give proper head, use your fingers… And then go for it with your penis after she's done. She'll be very happy that you will not last too long :).

8. Do It Romantically: Slow Down

The hotter the flame, the faster it burns.

There is a direct connection between how quickly he goes, and how soon he peaks. A quicker tempo can overload the tip of the penis with stimuli, which leads to the inevitable ejaculation.

A slower rhythm stimulates the tip of penis less, allowing him to last longer in bed.

> He who goes slowly, goes far

9. Train Your "Hold Back Muscles" With Kegel Exercises

Kegel exercises are a series of exercises to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles.

Stronger pelvic floor muscles, in turn, will help you hold back more easily and last longer.

The biggest hurdle with Kegel exercises is to actually find those muscles as it's not as simple as doing curls.
But it's not that difficult either.
Do this to find them:

1. Stop urination mid-flow (but don't it as an exercise per se)
2. Try to lift your penis up vertically in front of a mirror and make sure you're not using abs and glutes' muscles
3. Tighten the anal muscles you normally use to prevent passing gas

Then your exercises will be about contracting and releasing those muscles, several times a day. Start laying down on a mat first as it's easier. And then you can do even while seating. At the office… Or while reading ThePowerMoves :).

10. The Nice Guy Solution: Make It About the Performance

It's funny.

When I started having sex the thought of how to last longer in bed never even crossed my mind.
As I matter of fact, I had the opposite problem: how to come.

It was because all my focus was on making it a good experience for her and showing my prowess.
This is a mindset that Robert Glover discusses in No More Mr Nice Guy. Such as that some men make it too much about the woman. So much so that they forget about themselves and the pleasure of sex in itself.

Needless to say, that's not a good solution if you go all the way.
But, if you can move the focus from the sex to the physical performance, it can be of help.

11. If You're Too Horny: Masturbate

A common issue that stops men from lasting longer in bed is that they are too horny.

Being horny is good, but when that horniness translates into quick ejaculations, not so much. A method as old as the penis itself then is to masturbate with frequent intervals so that you never go too "quick shooting caveman".

12. Practice Lasting Longer With Masturbation

Since you're there, you can use masturbation as your training ground.

When you're about to peak, try all the methods.
Try:

- Breathing deeper and relaxing
- Contracting your pelvic floor muscles
- Squeezing the tip of your penis
- Slowing down
- And even switching imaginary position

You will get to know yourself more and will understand what works best for you.

13. Cialis / Viagra / Medication

For many men, the idea of lasting longer is not so much not to ejaculate, but to keep having sex.
And they want to avoid ejaculation because when they come, they lose the erection.

Well, if that's the problem, then Viagra easily fixes the erection issue.
And it's undoubtedly effective to keep going. It can also be of great psychological comfort knowing that in the worst case there is still effective medication out there.

However, don't make this your go-to solution.
First, work on yourself and use all the methods here, which are natural and work wonders.

14. Extended Pleasure Condoms

There are several makers on the market of "extended pleasure condoms", here is one example on Amazon.

They use chemicals such as Lidocaine and Benzocaine that work like localized anesthetics. They numb the tip of your penis and reduce the sensations. Reduced sensations allow for longer lasting sex sessions.

The downside is that they might reduce your sensations too much, so you need to find the right balance. If you want to use this method, you could try removing some of the chemical lube with a little rinsing.

15. The Squeeze Method

It consists of grabbing your penis and squeezing the tip of it just when you're about to peak. It can work… But not always. When it doesn't work, it completely ruins the ejaculation by taking all the pleasure out of it.
And it kills the mood.

Learn how it works and use it when needed. Just don't make it your only and main tool.

16. Get Drunk

I put this one as last.
But it's not a "last but not least case" as this is the worst long term technique for lasting longer. For obvious reasons :).

But that's not to say that it doesn't work.

Have you ever heard of “whiskey dick?”.
Some call “whiskey dick” the lack of erection due to alcohol consumption. But whiskey dick is also the inability of coming during sex.

I remember years ago coming back home with a hot girl from a night out at a club.
She was a true club queen and of the hottest girl I had ever been with.
And yet… I banged her to sleep like in the Marshall video above… And I didn’t even come!

Yes, if you have good erections alcohol works.
It’s the same concept of the extended pleasure condoms: alcohol is a suppressor and it decreases your sensations.
Except it’s not localized and runs through your whole body.

I shouldn’t put this warning here, but just to be sure: don’t use this as a long term solution.

The Holistic Approach: Healthy Life

Mens Sana in Corpore Sano.

That’s the millennia-old secret wisdom.
The Romans knew it, and it means “a healthy mind in a healthy mind”.

Eat well, exercise, meditate, rest and have plenty of sex,
And chances are you’ll never again look again at an article on how to last longer in bed.
You can start here for nutrition:

- Best health and nutrition books

Does He Like Me? 31 Scientific Signs He Does

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Let's be honest with each other right off the bat:

until he openly says so, or until he takes concrete steps to make thing happens, you cannot be 100% sure whether he likes you or not.

BUT, if you learn to read the signals, you can get a pretty reliable idea of whether he likes you or not.

These 31 signs are good indicators that he *does* indeed like you.

Contents

- 1. He Shows Off
- 2. He Gets Slightly Aggressive ⚠
- 3. He Moves Closer
- 4. He Pays You Compliments…
- 5. … Or He Criticizes You
- 6. He Looks For Opportunities to Touch You
- 7. He Flirts With You
- 8. He Makes Fun of You
- 9. He Gives You Lots of Attention …
- 10. … Or He Ignores You
- 11. He Tries to Make You Jealous
- 12. He Gets Nervous
- 13. His Friends Talk to You About Him
- 14. He Badmouths Other Men
- 15. You See Him Often
- 16. He Connects With You On Social Media
- 17. He Likes Your Pictures
- 19. He Remembers And Asks Questions, Or…
- 20. … He Doesn't Remember What You've Just Said 10 Seconds Ago
- 21. He Helps You Out
- 22. He's Always Free For You
- 23. He's Jealous of Other Men
- 24. He's Always Ready to Chat

- Does He Like Me? Yes! When Signs Are Obvious
- Male Signaling
- Focus on Helping Him Like You!

1. He Shows Off

Research shows that men attract women's attention by showing status and social power.

Some of that peacocking is effective.

However, keep in mind that some men aren't nearly as smooth.

For example, they may brag too much or too obviously.
Or they may seek to attract attention in stupid and boorish ways:

- Brag about their money
- Get aggressive with other men in front of you
- Blast their car stereo

The list of all the stupid stupid things men believe are impressive to women is rather long.
But whenever he does something "strange" in front of you, consider it might be a ploy to impress you and get your attention.

2. He Gets Slightly Aggressive ⚠

This might sound nonsense to some women -and, it is :)-.

But some men aren't skilled at the dating game.
Sp they can get aggressive with their friends, or even aggressive towards you.

In young men that aggression can manifest in games where he takes advantage of physical games to hold you or restrain you -a slightly more advanced version of the old "pull her air" kindergarten game-.

Still, also take this is a red flag.

3. He Moves Closer

Men who like you will try to reduce the distance with you.

They will sit close to you, press their leg against yours, and find an excuse to hug you

Exception: some will do the opposite and avoid you. Either because they are playing a shunning game or because they are too shy.

4. He Pays You Compliments...

Very simple: if he is complimenting you, he is trying to win your favors.

However some men will try to be less obvious about their compliments, and instead of telling you they like you, they will say they "love your sense of style".

5. ... Or He Criticizes You

Some men will completely try to avoid compliments in an effort to seem higher status.
And they might instead do the opposite and criticize you.

This is a power move to lower your self-esteem that the *old pick-up artists* called "neg".

6. He Looks For Opportunities to Touch You

The *APA Handbook of Psychology* includes physical touches in the signs of flirtation.

Men who like you will try to make some physical contact.

They might touch your arm while making a point or place a hand on your back when they tease you or flirt with you.

When more inexperienced, they will touch you wrong and treat you like one of their male friends.

For example:

- High five you
- Shake hands (with too much power)
- Put their arms around your neck like one of the boys

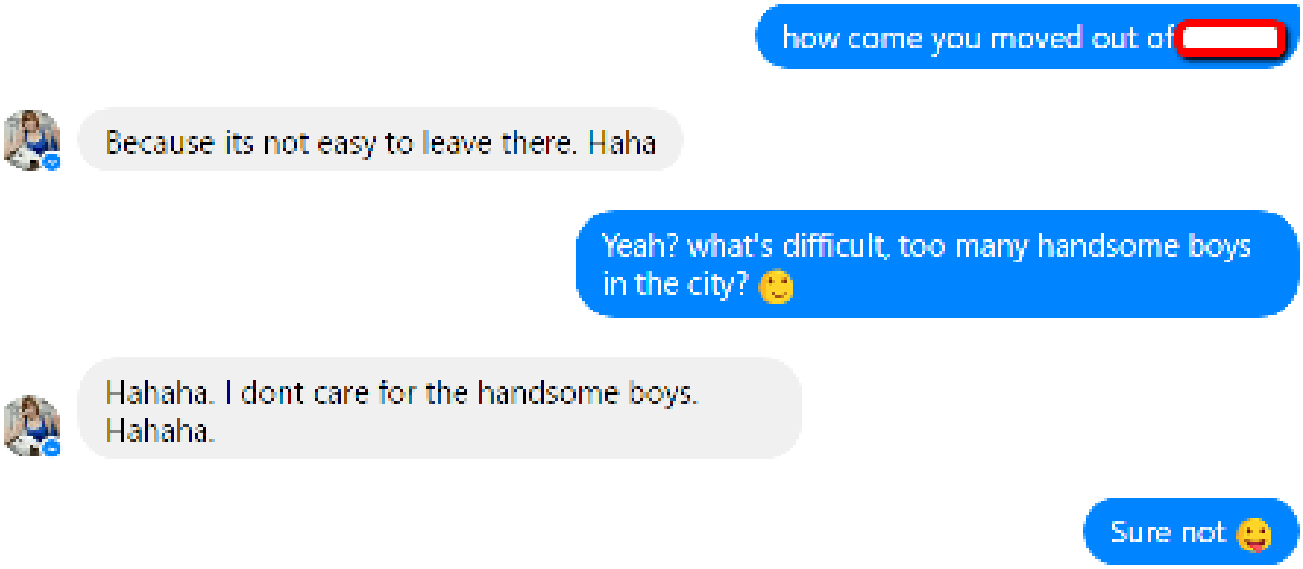
Even though sometimes awkward, men who take a lot of opportunities to make physical contact are sending you a positive message of appreciation.

7. He Flirts With You

Men who are a bit more well-versed with women will find great ways to flirt with you and make you laugh.

He might:

- He jokes that you like him
- He hints at the sexual
- He frames you as a "dangerous" woman
- He tells you that you're trying to seduce them or other men



8. He Makes Fun of You

Making fun of you is a middle way between the "aggression" we saw earlier and flirting (done badly).

The game, at the core, is actually not that friendly: he wants to socially dominate you, lower your status, and position himself above you.
However, it's still a sign that he likes you.

9. He Gives You Lots of Attention ...

Some men make no effort to play the dating game, conceal their cards, or flirt well.

They just put it in your face instead. Not their penis, of course, but their interest.
They will:

- Fully focus on you, even with other people around
- Looks at you all the time
- Make you one question after the other

- Listen raptly to your stories
- Drop conversation with others if you enter the group

Sometimes they look slimy in the process. However, with these guys, your answer to the question "does he like me" is pretty obvious: he does.

10. ... Or He Ignores You

There is a (terrible) Italian song whose lyrics seemed to tell my story as a teenager.
It goes:

> I pretended not to give a damn
> To be more interesting
> But now I am really…

That's what boys will do.
They will ignore you on purpose to play the mind game that they are not interested in the (hopeless) to draw you in and make you pursue her.

If you notice that some men are being a bit too taciturn around you, avoiding you just that little bit too much, then they might be doing it on purpose.

11. He Tries to Make You Jealous

An old game that I bet you played as well.

If he makes a show of him with other women, looks at you while he talks to other women, and generally tries to show off "options", then he is interested in you.

What he's doing here is trying to inflate his sexual market value, parading his opportunities and trying to make you chase.
In simple terms: he is showing off for your you and yes he likes you.

12. He Gets Nervous

As much as you wondering "does he like me", guess what other men are wondering?
Exactly, the exact same: "does *she* like me?"

However, men are more in the hot seat than women are.
Men are expected to make the first move, ask her out, and make things happen.

That makes a lot of men rather nervous.
So when you spot stuttering, blushing, and nervousness around you, these are all signs that he likes you.

Here is an example from Crazy Stupid Love doing his (awkward) approach:

13. His Friends Talk to You About Him

The last date I went to was with a girl I met at a party of a common friend.

This common friend, believing he would help, started talking me up and telling her what a great catch I was.
He thought that was going to help. He wasn't really.
But that's how a lot of (clueless) friends will help you answer the question "does he like me".
They will:

- Talk him up
- Ask you what you think of him
- Tell you that you two look cute
- Suggest you two should go out
- Discredit him

About the last one? Of course, some friends are jealous and aren't really friends but frenemies. But that's also a good indicator that he likes you :).

14. He Badmouths Other Men

Now here is another power move men will play when they like you: they will talk badly about the "competition".

What they are trying to do here is to lower other men's statuses to look good in comparison.
He is selling himself to you, showing off, and it's a big sign that he is into you.

15. You See Him Often

Some men are direct, they don't waste time and don't beat around the bush.

But some others prefer circling around their prey for longer, entering your mind and your social circle before they even hint at wanting to enter anything else.
This is the approach Robert Greene espouses in *The Art of Seduction*.

These guys might start stopping at the bar where you work, eat where you usually eat, or walk the streets of your commute.

Many years ago I saw a girl I went on a date with.
She was walking across the street though and I was on the other side. Well, guess what? I turned back, ran in the opposite direction, then crossed the street much further away, and then… "Just happened to walk right into her".
We got together later on and she never knew what I had done.

The point is: if you start seeing them often then coincidence would warrant, then there might be something.

16. He Connects With You On Social Media

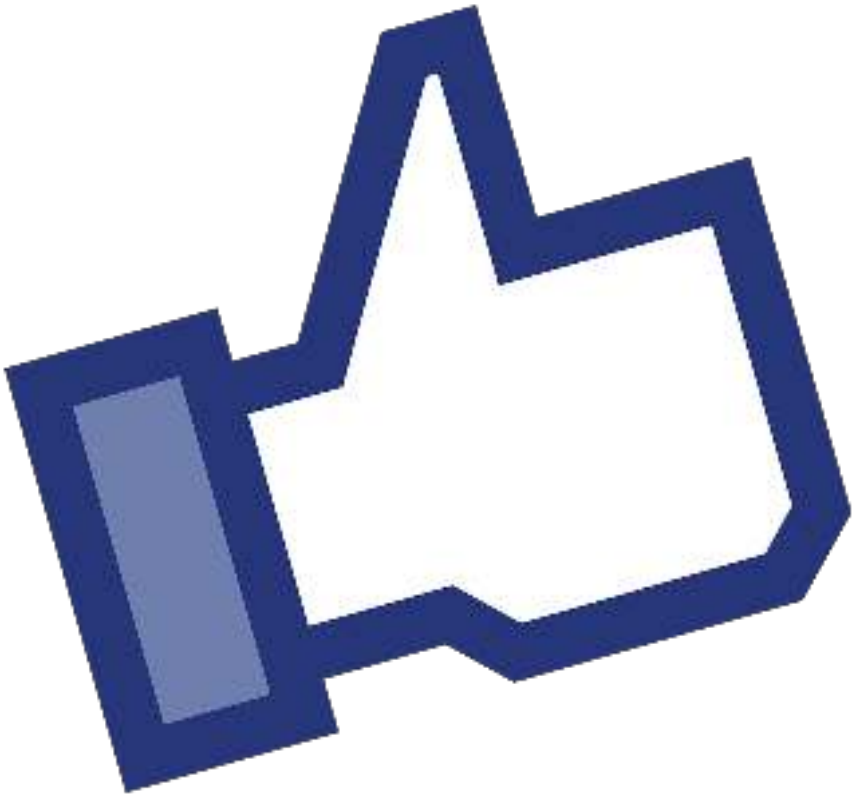
Men rarely add other men they've just met on Facebook.

But they do often add women they like.
A connection on social media is often a sign that they want to be closer. And not in the digital sense…

17. He Likes Your Pictures

There is a new way for Generation Y and Generation Z to show love and affection.
And it's to like her pictures and her status updates.

If he comments on your status, knows about your cousins and aunties, and asks you about your last trip, then it's a clear sign he's been stalking you. And that he likes you.



19. He Remembers And Asks Questions, Or...

Men aren't as good as women at remembering people-related details.
And they tend to be selective with their attention. So if they remember what you said and ask follow-up questions, that's a good sign.

20. ... He Doesn't Remember What You've Just Said 10 Seconds Ago

Some men will be too nervous to be talking to you to even remember what you've just said.

They will ask you the same question again, ask you clarification about something you've just said or forget your name for five times in a row. This is a sign that he is nervous and that he likes you.

21. He Helps You Out

Most men's main dating strategy is to show women that they are reliable men that you can depend on.
Helping you out is their way of showing that yes, they're there for you and that they make great long-term partners.

Neil Patrick Harris in the movie "Gone Girl" is an extreme example of how men who want to be providers for her behave:

22. He's Always Free For You

If he is always available when you ask something it means that either he is a good Samaritan, that he has nothing to do, or… That he likes you.

Most likely the third though.
When men make time for you, they show you that you are a high priority for them. Big sign.

Do you want to be triple sure? Ask him to do something together on a big-match day.

23. He's Jealous of Other Men

Jealous behavior is a sign of possessiveness and he wants more than just friendship.
It's not the sign of a very high-quality man to be jealous before the two of you are even together, but alas.

If he:

- Says you deserve better than the guys you're dating
- Gets defensive when other men talk to you
- "Rescues" you from strangers

These are all signs that he likes you.

24. He's Always Ready to Chat

Most guys don't want to chat with women they don't like.

So if he is always happy to answer and chat with you, chances are he is also fantasizing about you.

Does He Like Me? Yes! When Signs Are Obvious

And these are more obvious signs that can almost reassure you that yes, he likes you:

1. He approaches you

2. He asks you out

3. He tells you that "you deserve so much better"

4. He double-texts you

5. He is disappointed if you can't meet him

6. He tries to get you alone

7. He tries to have sex with you

Male Signaling

On average, men are easier to understand and decipher than women.

To answer the "does he like me" women's question Greg Behrendt and Liz Tuccillo, former consultants for the Sex And the City show, wrote a blockbuster book to basically tell women that men are simple and direct.

Albeit they chose a somewhat depressing name with "*He's Just Not That Into You*", the core message is simple: it's easy to tell if a man likes you or not.

Here is the video from the Sex And the City show that gave birth to that book:

However, as for most things people-related, there are plenty of exceptions in dating.
And some men tend to be less direct and less "easy" to decipher than others.
Often men who make it more complicated for you are:

1. Shy
2. Younger
3. Inexperienced

From these types of men, you can expect less direct messages and somewhat more scrambled communication.

Focus on Helping Him Like You!

Finally, instead of focusing on reading mysterious signs, avoid the mistake most women do: being too passive in the dating game.

Indeed in difficult dating markets the more assertive daters, will win making it easy for them to understand you're into him. This is a good strategy and the only mistake that can happen is that she *thinks* her signs are obvious but she won't catch them.
It happens more often than you think because men are often rather daft.

Then there is the second type of woman.
The who plays hard to get.
Maybe they have read *women's dating literature* and get schooled on "feigning disinterest" in an effort to make him chase. This technique can work if he is on a hard pursuit. But it often backfires because men end up with the women who *show* their liking.
Because men are afraid of rejection. And they prefer to go with women who also like them.

What does that mean to you?
You must make it safe for him to do something: *show* him you like him!

Smile at him when he looks at you, and create sexually charged moments with silence and eye contact… Touch him while speaking.
Unless he's completely clueless, then he will know:

https://youtu.be/bIo0JNIvX8o?t=134s

Just don't look at your own hand when you touch him, which screams insecurity, and you'll do great :)

7 Steps to Sleep With Thai Women

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Thinking about meeting Thai girls and getting laid in Thailand? .

I've been in your shoes before. Many times.
Look somewhere else for temples and food. But if your goal is to sleep with Thai girls, this guide is for you.

I write this article based on first-hand experience, having been to Thailand many times, dated Thai women both in Thailand and in the West, as well as having been an acute observer and listener of other people's experiences, including coaching men to achieve their dating goals in Thailand.

Strategy, Value & Honor Note: Be better than a sex tourist!
This guide analyzes the asymmetric Sexual Market Value (SMV) and cross-cultural mating strategies related to Thailand. While the article's focus is on achieving intimate outcomes, full consent is always implied and only the minimum first step. TPM promotes a life of personal empowerment, optionality and honor. We distinguish between the "high-value strategist" and "low-quality tourist".

First, a reminder: you have sex with Thai girls the exact same way you have sex with all other women.

But these tips will help you to maximize your potential:

Contents

- 1. Use Your Higher Mate Value
- 2. Avoid The 'Farang Jerk' Trap
- 3. Dress Well, Display Status
- 4. Leverage Dating Apps
- 5. Move Fast
- 6. Prioritize DTF Girls (if you seek short-term)
- 7. Never Lead With Money

- Bonus: Don't Mislead, You Can Sleep Around Without Lying
- Thai Girls Traits
  - Physically In Shape
  - 'Flatter' In Breast and Buttocks
  - High Variance In Quality
  - More Traditional & Supportive
  - Traditional & Compliant, Including In Bed
  - Phone Addicts
- Thai Girls: Easy, or Wife Materials?
- What to Expect In Thailand
- How to Date High-Status Thai Girls ('Hi-So')
  - How to Date Any High Quality Woman

1. Use Your Higher Mate Value

Foreigners and white men enjoy a sexual market value boost in Southeast Asia, meaning: you become more attractive (good SMV boost).

If in your home country you have lower relative SMV, for Thai women you are still better than local average men. If you are average, you become attractive man. And if you are a high-value man, your sexual market value goes through the roof.

There are several reasons for this, including that foreigners are perceived as:

1. Wealthier
2. Higher status
3. Smarter / better educated
4. More masculine & ambitious

Contrary to what some say say, money is only *one* reason why foreigners are popular in Thailand.
Indeed, you don't need money at all to get laid in Thailand. **I spent more money dating in Europe than in Thailand**.

For many Thai women, white men are also a status symbol.
Some women, and this is true across East Asia as well, are proud to have never dated a local guy -up to you what to think about that-.

Men who fail to realize their increased value miss many opportunities.
Don't do the same: act and behave like the high-SMV hunk that you are.

Limitation: Thailand and Bangkok have been overrun by tourists, so moderate your expectations. You won't be a unique snowflake in the age of globalization (unless you go *really* remote).

In Summary: you are of higher value in Thailand, act like it.

2. Avoid The 'Farang Jerk' Trap

Unluckily, there are some bad apples among tourists.

Jerks, strong of the currency exchange and the "white man boost", get even "jerker".
They go on a power trip and believe that "rude" is how you display power.

Locals put up because they need tips, and so these jerks don't even realize the ceiling of their behavior.
They may date a bit because of the SMV boost and they will think they're "slaying it".
But they repel the highest quality Thai women.

Differentiate yourself from these fools: understand the difference between a high-quality man and an asshole.
A high-quality man is knowledgeable of his value, moves fast, and demands respect. But he also respects people and makes it a women for the women he dates.

In Summary: Be confident and high power, but also warm

3. Dress Well, Display Status

Most tourists in Thailand wear shorts, ugly shirts, and flip-flops—no wonder many guys believe you need money to date well.

Sure, it might be comfortable, but if your goal is intimacy with Thai women, then don't be a slob and dress the part.

I remember being out with a friend in Thailand who wanted to meet up with a nurse he was seeing. I was with him and his girl was somewhere else with a girlfriend. So it seemed like a good fit. Typical of Thai girls, she asked him to send them my picture.
He did.
Her reply?

> **His Girlfriend**: Wow

My friend seemed even slightly jealous.
But there was nothing to be jealous of. I'm not a "wow" guy *in the slightest*. The only thing I had going on for me was an awesome white shirt in a world of ugly T-shirts.

In Summary: if you want to sleep with Thai women, dress like someone who sleeps with lots of women (ie.: well).

4. Leverage Dating Apps

Dating apps allow you to take maximum advantage of your value boost and cast your net wider.

As per the point above, upload a couple of pictures where you are well dressed, ideally looking cool and powerful with a suit and tie. I met a few women who were not sure whether to meet me or some other guy and then chose me.
Always the curious and investigative type that I am, I asked to see the profiles (and conversations) of those guys. I was shocked at how hunk-like some of them were. Rugby players, big gym types, and plainly handsome men.
But I had well-dressed pictures.

Go for something similar:

Well dressed but with a smile so you don't look stuck-up
Again, this is not the West.
Some Western girls will think you're trying too hard, but it works wonders with Thai girls in Thailand.

In your description, avoid saying crap like "traveler", "adventurer" or "globe-trotter". You already have "white guy" and "exotic points", you don't need to play those games to inflate your value. You *will* look try-hard by stressing your "lover" qualities.

Write instead something like:

> "busy man who prefers a coffee or drink to long chats :)".

This way, without coming across as abrasive, you make it clear you're not into long chats and prefer meeting in person.

In Summary: to have sex with Thai girls, take pictures in good clothes, and cast your net wide with dating apps.

5. Move Fast

One of the advantages that foreign men enjoy in Thailand is that they are almost automatically considered sexier than local men.

When it comes to providers, friends, or lovers, it's far easier for you to be considered a fast-moving lover.

That means, in practice, that you can allow yourself to move faster.
And that's exactly why money often doesn't even come into the picture.

Here is a good approach:

1. Check in advance your hotel doesn't stop guests
2. Meet close to your hotel
3. Propose you grab a drink and go back to the pool

4. Go to your room instead (say nothing, most of them know what's up)
5. Start kissing their neck
6. Move to the bed

If you prefer instead finding a long-term girlfriend, read this post:

- Lovers VS providers: choosing your best dating strategy

In Summary: meet up, and aim to go straight to your place.

6. Prioritize DTF Girls (if you seek short-term)

DTF stands for "Down to F*ck." In psychological terms, you are looking for women with **High Sociosexuality**—those comfortable with uncommitted, short-term sexual strategies.

If you take full advantage of your high-value status, you have lots of options.
And the advantage of having lots of options is that you don't need to put up with delay games, investment requests, "chase me" games, etc.

Simply **next the gold diggers and time wasters and move to better prospects.**

In Summary: to sleep with Thai women, ruthlessly cut through the time-wasters to focus solely on the ones who want to sleep with you.

And if your goal is to find a quality girl?
There is plenty of that as well :)

7. Never Lead With Money

Money changes the nature of dating.

If you 'throw' money on Thai girls, you move from a sexy foreigner to a guy who must pay for intimacy -NOT

sexy-.

Avoid it.
Cut off women demanding money or gifts and stick with the women who like you for who you are. *After* you get together, *then* you're more free to invite them fo whatever you lie.

Exception: if you're very wealthy and don't care to throw around money, then it can be an effective and genuine approach to dating.

In Summary: don't make it about the money, make it about the two of you.

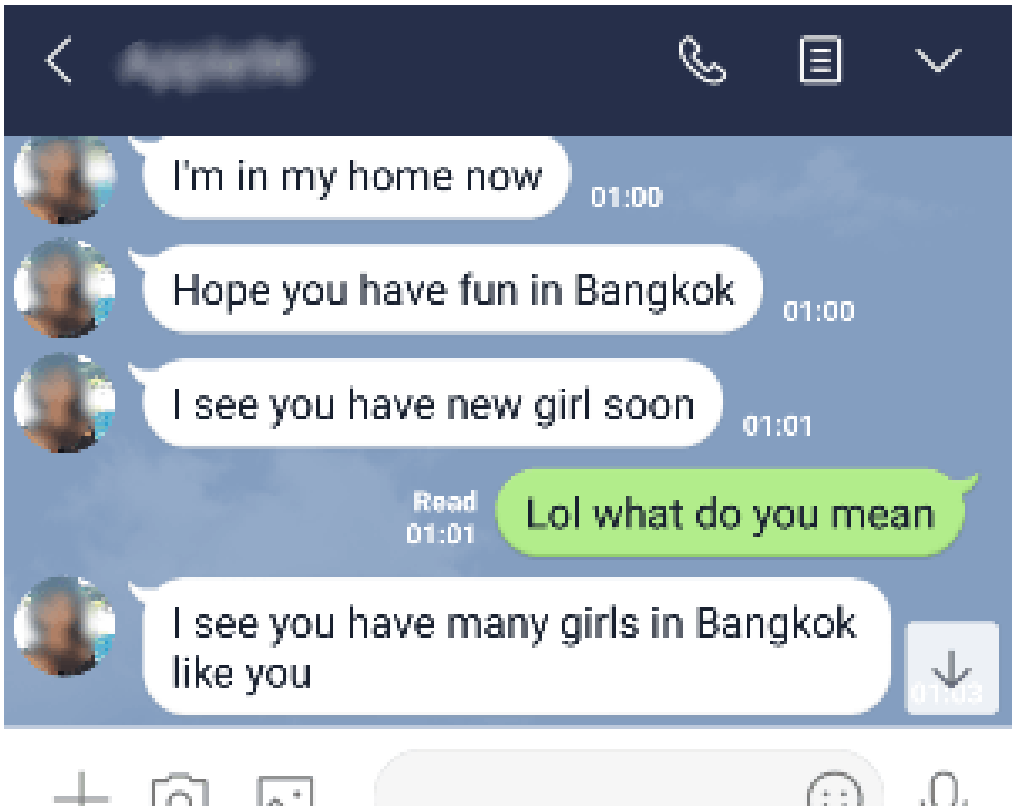
Bonus: Don't Mislead, You Can Sleep Around Without Lying

There is this idea among some white men that Thai women expect dating to lead to something serious.

I don't know if I've ever heard anything more stupid. Most women adapt to the man's approach and are not stupid. If you move more like a player, they know full well what's up.

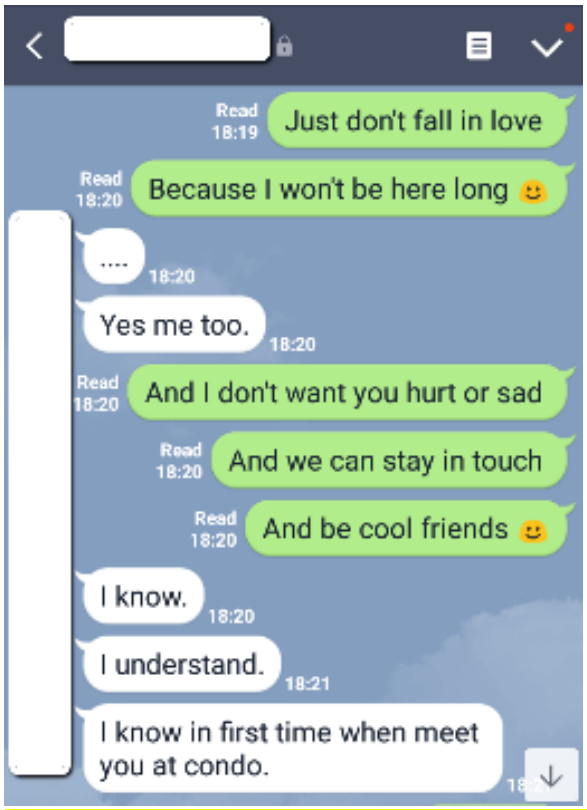
But sometimes you meet a more traditional girl though and, because of less-than-ideal verbal communication, a misunderstanding might happen.
So if you don't want anything committed, avoid chatting with them too much or text too often after sex.

As a matter of fact, it can be a good idea to actually show that you're not long-term material.
You can hint at it, say it straight up, talk about your travel plans, or even be open about your other Tinder and Line chats.
They will see it and understand:



She saw my texts and understood it was a one-time thing
But this shouldn't be an issue. When you're not too available, women will understand without having to have any "conversation".
Sometimes in my life, I have had some great connections and kept in touch against my better judgment (one more example here), and that wasn't a great idea.
The truth is that it's almost impossible to have a "special connection" with a woman you have sex with and keep it

“as friends”. One of you is bound to fall and want to do more.
When you’re in doubt, be clear (and you’ll find out most of the time they know what’s up):



“I know in first time when meet you at condo” LOL

Thai Girls Traits

Thai women tend to be:

Physically In Shape

Attractiveness depends on personality and tastes.

In terms of “exotic beauties”, I would probably place Thai girls below Koreans -who enjoy bigger bosoms- and Kazakhs -who enjoy the mix of high Mongolian cheekbones and white Russian beauty-.
But above Japanese and Chinese.

Even women with *good* curves, will consider themselves “fat”.

Thai girls are awesome, both in personality and body, including great chest and booties. And yet they consider themselves as fat and “too fat for Thai guys”.
Looks like Thai guys *really* like thin :).

These attractive Thai women convincingly called themselves “fat”

‘Flatter’ In Breast and Buttocks

Locker-room talk mode on: I always thought of myself as more of an ass guy.

However, you realize how important breasts are when you find yourself with a *really* flat-chested woman. Completely flat is different than small breasts.
It’s a strange, androgynous feel that 100% straight men won’t enjoy.

And Thai women, often thin, also have a higher incidence of flat chests than other nationalities. Some of them keep a bra anyway so you might miss on it.

And, like many other Asian women, the incidence of flat asses is far higher than among white women and, obviously, than among black women.

Not my type. But I know some guys who like it

High Variance In Quality

The Thai women that will sleep with you fast aren't the highest quality for long-term.

Culture and nurturing also matter, and this is true anywhere in the world.
Unfortunately, women raised more in poverty tend to adopt a faster life strategy (Ellis, 2009) focused more on short term: short-term uncommited intimacy, fast consumption, little saving, and higher risk for disloyalty.

English also tends to be poor.
I met women from online dating only to find out she was talking through a translator and could not speak English. I attended one of the best Toastmasters in central Bangkok and even there I couldn't find a single girl with good English -including one who had lived in the US for years :S-.

Of course, please, never forget this as for everything else, this a general tendency, and you can always find plenty of exceptions.

More Traditional & Supportive

Thai girls have traditional roles, and see themselves as supporters of the male figure. It won't be a rare occurrence that Thai women will offer to cook you food or bring you food from their places.

It's common for Thai women to give and invest early on in the relationship

Traditional & Compliant, Including In Bed

There is a bit of a cliche that Asian women are more submissive.

Well, as it's often the case, cliches have a backdrop of reality in them. And Thai girls in bed tend to be more submissive -and passive-.
To put it with the words of what one Thai woman once told me "do whatever you want to me".
LOL, I bet you now really want to get a Thai girl don't you :D.

Phone Addicts

These days you'd be hard-pressed in finding any girl -or anyone really- who's not addicted to their smartphones.

Yet, Thai women are also addicted to pictures. If you date one, get ready to delete a lot of meaningless selfies, food pics, "just woke up" bed pictures, and lots of Line GIFs (Line is the local Whatsapp BTW and it's much better).

Thai Girls: Easy, or Wife Materials?

The hookup culture in Thai big cities is strong.
Thailand and Thai girls have a reputation for "easy sex", and for good reasons. If you're a white tourist, you will meet plenty of girls who will quickly and easily come back to your place.

But that might be misleading: Thai women are quite extreme in their sociosexuality distribution. Indeed, as much as there are many easy-to-sleep-with women, **there are also more reserved and sexually inexperienced Thai women than in the West**.

Of course, more reserved Thai women are also more hidden: you're not gonna meet them in bars and clubs.

You need more social circles to meet more reserved and more wife-material Thai girls.
Day game is also good, but you need to be good at overcoming the strong initial resistance of more conservative and shier women.

However, traveling in search for 'loyalty' is fraught with risks and men must be power-aware to avoid traps.
I highly recommend this video on how to do safe 'geomaxxing':

- ▯ **Geomaxxing: hidden risks, and how to fix them** (YouTube opens in new window)

What to Expect In Thailand

Thai girls are awesome and Thailand is fantastic.

But, as for anything, there are pros and cons.
This is what I don't like about traveling to Thailand:

Some street harassment

Your white skin may be attractive to many women, but… Not just women.

Street vendors, pimps, and various hustlers can get annoying.
Taxi drivers will slow down and some will even honk if you refuse to look at them.

And all rickshaws and tuk-tuk drivers seem to think every white man needs a lift.

And that's not even to mention the street ladyboys (Kathoey):

Ladyboys hustling

Guys, if you are not into ladyboys, watch out.

There are many, and many are distinguishable from women.
They like foreigners of course, so you're a target for ladyboys.

If you like them, you're in luck.
If not, well… Be careful.

Note: there is no hating on ladyboys here and this is not a space for hating on anybody. They can be as wonderful as anyone else.
We refer to the behavior of *some* of them in the streets of Thailand.

Read here how to spot ladyboys.

> How To Spot and Avoid The Ladyboy Surprise – Definitive Guide

A toxic dynamic of power, dependency, & deception

Do you know the toxic dynamics in an abuser and abused relationship?

The abuser is stronger, on paper. The abused provides a facade of niceness while fighting back with passive aggression and covert power moves.

That's the macro-level dynamics in Thailand: foreigners are higher power and locals are kind and love their money.
But behind the fake niceness of the "land of smiles", Thailand is ready and happy to swindle tourists.

Many "bad" tourists & 'sexpats'

With millions of tourists, there is everything in Thailand.

From couples to female solo travelers to the thriving community of digital nomads in Chiang Mai.

However, there is also a seedy underbelly to Thai tourism.

Many foreigners are only there for low prices and prostitution. Including, sadly, underage prostitution.
Even some of the most popular massage clubs in Bangkok have underage women -though they say they're 18. Yeah, sure-.

For example, thousands of German retirees live in Phuket and Pattaya, which have become open-air brothels.
Not wanting to shame-attack anyone. But it's a fact that many low-status men end up in Thailand, and we wish better for our readership.

How to Date High-Status Thai Girls ('Hi-So')

There are more dating opportunities for men in SE Asia, Thailand included.

However, the advantage *inverts* with higher-status Thai women, locally referred to as 'Hi-So'.

A high-so Thai woman has power and status and has traveled the world. She won't be impressed just because you're white -and maybe repulsed by the negative stereotypes

Average Westerners in Thailand are *below* the Western average.
They may be good catches for lower and middle-class local women, but they don't have any extra appeal for higher-status ones.

Instead, Westerners face a prejudicial stigma with higher-status women.
This is a classic example of Negative Social Signaling. Because the 'sexpat' demographic has saturated the lower-tier market, high-status Thai women use defensive filtering to avoid being associated with tourist-level dynamics.

These 'sexpats' often date lower-class, party-types, or 'darker' women who unluckily are still stigmatized as 'less appealing' in Thai culture.

It's different in, say, the Philippines.
The Philippines experiences widespread lower socio-economic conditions, so the fewer foreigners there are more appealing across the board -including higher status women-.

But because of the general low-value of many white expats, **Westerners face a stigma of sleaziness and lower**

standards with the higher-class Thai women. As a group, that frames them as lower value for the upper class.

Of course, you're reading here, so you're better than that.
But in a society that values conformity and social approval, high-class Thai women may still have reserves in fear of being judged as promiscuous.

Solutions:

- **Become *locally* high-status**
- **Socialize and meet via social circle**
  - Socialize within chambers of commerce and the likes
- **Dress well, but match it with good income** or you're framed as a 'gamer PUA-type'
- **Learn Thai**
- **Display you're different & above the average expat**. That must become part of your 'game'

How to Date Any High Quality Woman

Geomaxxing and the "White Man Boost" are great for a shortcut, but a true man of power doesn't rely on a plane ticket to get laid.

A man of power learns to seduce anywhere, and then, *on top*, deploys the best strategies and tactics to achieve his preferred outcomes.
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How to Be Vulnerable As A Man, Without Looking Weak

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Some self-help gurus say that vulnerability is key to strength, connection, and interpersonal success.

But is that really true?

In reality, vulnerability is a double-edged sword.
Used wisely, it can be a powerful tool.
Used in the wrong context, it can destroy respect, status, and attraction.

In this article, we break down the truth about vulnerability—when it works, when it backfires, and how to use it strategically.

Let's dive in.

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- The Drawbacks of Vulnerability
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  - 2. You Can't Be Vulnerable In Result-Based Organizations
  - 3. You Can't Be Vulnerable Upon Meeting Someone
  - 4. Some Masculine Roles Don't Allow For Vulnerability
- Vulnerability In Dating
- Vulnerability In Relationships
  - Example of Bad Relationship Vulnerability
  - Vulnerability in Relationship Examples
- Evolutionary Theory of Vulnerability
- How to Be Vulnerable – And Effective
  - 1. Admit fears when everyone else has the same fear
  - 2. When you're strong, a weakness makes you more relatable
  - 3. In momentary weaknesses
  - 4. When it shows an emotional, appealing human side
  - 5. To gain trust and make others open up

- 6. When your vulnerability doesn't stop you
- 7. In supportive, intimate close relationships of equals
- 8. In "scorched earth" power moves
- 9. When you have the power to own your moment of weakness

- SUMMARY

What's Vulnerability

> **Vulnerability is the courage of showing up and be yourself, without a mask, and with all your flaws.**

If the definition sounds fuzzy, it's because it is.
Brene Brown made vulnerability popular in self-development with her best-selling "*Daring Greatly*" and several podcast appearances.

However, she never defined it precisely. So let's see some examples of vulnerability to gain more clarity:

- Talking about your weaknesses
- Speaking of what embarrasses you
- Sharing an unpopular opinion
- Standing up for yourself

And vulnerability is also:

- Confessing your love
- Crying in front of people
- Asking forgiveness

Basically, **every time that we put our ego on the line and do something that might hurt us, we are being vulnerable**. When we risk embarrassment, public criticism, and, the big one when we risk *shame*, we are being vulnerable.

Vulnerability takes courage. Sometimes lots of courage. And people admire the courage of vulnerability.
That's what the vulnerability pundits say, at least. And well, they're (often) right.

So… Should you be vulnerable?

Sometimes, yes.
We've already seen it can be used against microaggressions, as a technique for frame control, and to shame others into more value-adding behaviors.

But should you *always* be vulnerable?
Absolutely not.

The Drawbacks of Vulnerability

Vulnerability has two main drawbacks:

- **Vulnerability displays your intentions**, and you don't want to always be an open book
- **Vulnerability can be a display of weakness**, and you don't always want to show your weakness

When that weakness is "too much", critical, or not shown and perceived against the backdrop of a stronger, powerful frame… Then you move away from "admirable vulnerability" and into "pathetic weakness".

> **There is a thin line between vulnerability and pathetic weakness**

I will now show you a few examples of vulnerability done wrong.

1. You Can't Be Vulnerable If You Want to Lead

Vulnerability often backfires both in gaining status and leadership, and in *keeping* it.

As Blau points out in his seminal text *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, calling attention to one's weakness signals the withdrawal from status competitions (Blau, 1964).

And vulnerability can also undermine an established leader.
Call this the '**commander's burden**'.

Being a good leader often means displaying the confidence and strength that you want your team to embody.
And sometimes means keeping your weaknesses to yourself.

This will not be very popular to say, but it's inherent to leadership power dynamics.

In this example from Smokin' Aces, Bateman, the man in the hotel room is supposedly the leader.
But when he overshares his insecurities, he comes across so slimy that he becomes disgusting:

> **Vulnerable leader**: I'm pretty much a pantywaist. I don't say this to be self-deprecating.
> I don't have much of an opinion of myself. I'd much rather be like you guys. Dog-pile of piss-poor physique on top of a small cock and hereditary alcoholism

His "vulnerability" sends him straight from leader to a slimy guy not deserving to lead.

This is an especially bad case of vulnerability because he *exaggerates* his flaws and because they have just met, which compounds the issue.

But the principle still applies: **people in leadership positions don't always have the luxury of vulnerability in front of those whom they lead**.
The harsh truth of leading people is that most of the time, you need to keep your personal worries and weaknesses to yourself.

When you share your full self with your subordinates, *at best*, they will think of you as "one of us". And you can't be "one of them" with your subordinates. You are *not* one of them: you are the leader and the one giving them tasks.
And at worst, you lose all authority and respect.

2. You Can't Be Vulnerable In Result-Based Organizations

So you can't be too vulnerable as the leader.
Maybe you can be vulnerable with your superiors?

Well, a little bit more maybe.
But still, not so fast.

In any result-based business, too much vulnerability gets you easily labeled as a softy or crybaby.
Look at this example from Platoon:

> **Red**: (looks like he's about to cry, with a begging attitude) Bob, I gotta bad feeling… (high-pitched voice) I don't think I'm gonna make it outta here.. You understand what I'm saying to you?

You can bet he lost much of his boss's respect when he showed his vulnerable, scared side.

Also, read:

- Executive strategies: coming across as powerful at work
- Career strategies
- Mastering office politics

3. You Can't Be Vulnerable Upon Meeting Someone

Anything you do during the first phases of getting to know someone will have outsized consequences.

Why?

Because people naturally tend to extrapolate information and generalize it to your whole persona.

Even just a 20 second "opening up" about the hardship of life in the first 2 minutes of conversation will have people unconsciously slap a negative label on you.

In short: **vulnerability during introductions and early socialization is a big no-no.**

4. Some Masculine Roles Don't Allow For Vulnerability

Some roles do not and *cannot* accept vulnerability in themselves and in others.

High in competence professions like doctors or external consultants can lose authority when too vulnerable.
Charismatic leaders during uncertain also need to show unwavering conviction
And army officers also should avoid vulnerability.

Showing vulnerability when you have one of these roles or when you are interacting with one of these roles will almost automatically harm your status.

Showing vulnerability when you have one of these roles or when you are interacting with one of these roles will almost automatically murder your status.

Here is a good example of vulnerability shown to an individual in an invulnerable role from the movie *Paths of Glory*:

> **Officer 1**: (crouches on the floor, crying and sobbing)
> **Officer 2**: (trying to preserve officer's 1 status and reputation) Act like a man. There will be a lot of dignitaries, newspapermen out there. How do you want to be remembered?

The roles of army leadership allow for little or no vulnerability

Please note, this doesn't mean that army leaders are invulnerable or "stronger".
They are just as strong -or as weak- as anybody else.
It simply means that the *expectation* in those environments is that you need to hide your vulnerability. And **people who don't hide their vulnerability lose all their social status** in those roles and organizations.

And it means that if you want to move ahead in those organizations, you gotta play the "hide your vulnerability game".

Vulnerability In Dating

Brene Brown in "*Daring Greatly*" shares the story of a young fella who embraced her vulnerable advice.

After dating a girl for several months, this is what happened (the dialogue is my own making from the story):

> **Him**: I love you
> **Her**: You're awesome, but maybe we should start seeing other people

The young fella went back to his dorm and told the story to his roommates. This is what happened (dialogue is mine adapted from the story):

> **Roommate 1**: What were you thinking man
> **Roommate 2**: Women only like men who run the other way
> **Him**: I was daring greatly
> **Roommates**: (nodding) Right on dude

Brene goes on saying that (I paraphrase for brevity):

> Vulnerability is not about winning or losing. It's about courage. Vulnerability is subversive and uncomfortable. Even dangerous at times.

Vulnerability in this case made the poor student lose, I'm afraid.

Vulnerability might not be about winning or losing.
But if you also want to win, then you would be well served to learn when vulnerability is *not* the most effective alternative.

Example:

> **Girl**: what are you looking for?
> **Guy**: It's probably hard to believe, but I've never been in a relationship before, I've never had a girlfriend (…)

I admired that guy. And I respect him.

But that male respect does not translate well into an effective dating strategy.

He didn't need to say that he has never had a girlfriend.
That *might* lead some women to want to take care of him and make him their baby-lover.
But it's a minority of women and you need to have lots of other qualities.
And if you don't have them or don't want to be a "babied lover", then don't spill all the beans that so much lower your status.

Vulnerability In Relationships

A few relationship authors advise couples to open up about their struggles and insecurities.

As much as I believe in supportive and loving relationships and as much as I love and appreciate honesty, sadly I don't think you can always be open about everything and anything.
At least not without some consequences. And not without losing power, status, and, potentially, attraction.

Please note that losing power, status, and attraction, are also bad for the relationship, not just for you.

So vulnerability done wrong is a lose-lose.

Let's see some examples.

Example of Bad Relationship Vulnerability

Here are some examples that I paraphrase from a relationship book.
It's a couple fighting because of his jealousy.

Here is the dialogue the author suggests:

> **Him**: This is not easy to talk about, but I want to try. I know it's not cool and I don't know what's wrong with me but I was feeling some jealousy tonight. You and Matt, you seemed quit close. Both intellectually and physically. I felt hurt and lonely.
> You know, I have been getting chubbier lately, developing a paunch. I need some reassurance. Do you still find me attractive?
> I would love it if you'd look at me the way you seemed to be looking at Matt.

This was an otherwise great book.
And still, the author missed basic dating psychology. The author says that such vulnerability would improve the relationship and even make him stronger.

I disagree.
That's bad vulnerability. This is not about momentary weakness. This is deep insecurity and nonexistent self-esteem, a big turnoff.
The relationship wouldn't be stronger and her respect for him would tank.

If he wanted to share his jealousy, it would be OK, but I would do it like this:

> **Him**: Hey, I need to talk to you about something. The way you were talking and joking with Matt, that felt like flirting to me.
> I didn't like it and it made uncomfortable.

He might have even shared that "it hurt him", which *might* be OK, depending on the type of relationship they have -if he's the leader and highest value, he would likely lose some value-.

But all that part that "he needed reassurance", that's the equivalent of asking her "baby me please".
And some relationships *can* work that way. But it's more relationships of equals -or her above him-.
Not relationships where the woman admires him and thinks the world of him and not relationships where she feels like she married the best possible catch.
Not those.

Sometimes vulnerability only gets you babied!
And here is another example of doing vulnerability all wrong, from a female perspective:

> **Her**: After the birth of our child I can't seem to get in shape anymore. I have been 15 kg heavier and I can't manage to shed it anymore. Those tiramisu cups are too good for me to give up.
> And worse of all… You don't seem to look at me like you used to.
> I'm feeling ugly and unattractive. Even at work, my colleagues are not flirting with me anymore. Not that I care about that, but it's another signal that I am not as attractive.
> Can you hold me please?

There is nothing wrong with her sharing her need to be held. Quite the opposite.

Sharing worries about her weight, which depends on what personality her partner is, especially after she adds that "she can't manage to shed it and those tiramisu caps are too good". Men tend to be stricter than women, and *especially* driven men.
My first reaction there would be to ask "how hard have you really tried".

And adding that other men find less attractive is completely unnecessary.

Vulnerability in Relationship Examples

Yes, women control most relationships.

But they don't respect much the men who let themselves be controlled.

Maintaining attraction in relationships, especially for men, has a lot to do with remaining the leader of that relationship.

Here is an example of vulnerability done wrong in a relationship:

> **Him**: Yeah, it's about the fact that my book is a big fat f**king failure. You know, I already feel like sh*t (…) I'm sure this is all really sexy

> **Her**: (takes the lead)

He loses the leadership of the relationship, and he loses relationship power. And yes she will respect him less.

Same woman, a different way of expressing vulnerability.
In this example, he might gain some points:

> **Aleksandr**: What if it's not enough, eh? (opens up about his worries)

Aleksandr looks much more masculine in his vulnerability.
He is in a time of crisis, but he doesn't show irreparably low self-esteem.
Instead, he is the kind of successful man, with lots more success potential, going through a tough, high-pressure time. That's the type of men women want to help because they're likely to deliver once back on their feet.

Evolutionary Theory of Vulnerability

The truth is, there is also a lot to gain from hiding our vulnerability.

It's because there is much to gain in hiding weaknesses that hiding weaknesses is the "default setting" for most people.

Just think about it, in a world where everyone is good at hiding vulnerabilities, the person who admits too much vulnerability will naturally look weaker and dumber and, comparatively, less attractive.

On the other hand, in a world where nobody manages to hide their vulnerability, the first human being who managed to hide theirs would look comparatively stronger, brighter, and more secure. A real catch.

Hiding vulnerabilities can also people secure a higher mate value partner. And that's the exact reason why people hide weaknesses.
Instead, showing too much vulnerability without being able to also market one's good qualities can lead to a worse partner.

And that's what the peddlers of vulnerability fail to warn people about: vulnerability *can* be damaging when misused.

How to Be Vulnerable – And Effective

There are situations where vulnerability can make you more relatable, improve your relationships, and even make you look stronger and sexier.

Here is when vulnerability works:

1. Admit fears when everyone else has the same fear

When everyone else has the same fear, admitting it first actually makes you more leader-like.

I remember once sitting around a table when the book "*Games People Play*" came up. I said right away that I had to go through it so slowly because it was "way too F complex".
People burst out in laughter and one guy admitted: "man, I'm glad you said that, it was the same for me".
If nobody had shared the uncomfortable truth, we'd all been left with a big lie and failed to really connect.

2. When you're strong, a weakness makes you more relatable

Research shows that when people who seem "too good" make a mistake or show vulnerability, they are much more

like.

This goes back to the example above on jealousy.
It can be OK to admit jealousy if you are an otherwise relatively secure, relatively fit, relatively well-off person.
On the other hand, the worse you are compared to your partner, the more vulnerability is likely to damage you because your partner will unconsciously think "I can do better than this".

3. In *momentary* weaknesses

An otherwise strong personality having a moment of weakness, then building themselves back up is extremely endearing.

Women love it as well in men, as it's the type of Byronic man that only needs a bit of their "fixing", which hopefully will make him dependent on him as they get to keep an overall awesome guy.

4. When it shows an emotional, appealing human side

Vulnerability can show our human, emotional side.

Women love it when it comes from a man who seemed always so strong and in control.
Here is The Godfather:

> **Godfather**: I killed men. I killed… I ordered the death of my brother. He injured me (starts sobbing) I killed my mother's son. I killed my father's son (starts crying)

5. To gain trust and make others open up

Revealing a weakness first can be a strategic move to make people comfortable and help them open up.

Especially when people seem to put up a wall against you, revealing your weakness first can be the best way to *show* that you provide a welcoming and open environment where to share without judgment.

5.2. To 'share back' after others shared their vulnerability

Don't force this and don't invent stuff.

But if you can relate something similar, then studies find that it increases trust.

6. When your vulnerability doesn't stop you

You know those public speakers who say "My knees are shaking and I'm super nervous" and yet they look like they own the stage?

That's the type of vulnerability people *love*.
Make yourself the kind of person who delivers and people will love you for your weaknesses and honest vulnerability.

7. In supportive, intimate close relationships of equals

Finally, let's admit it: a relationship where you can really be yourself is awesome. If you develop that kind of relationship with your partner, then be your vulnerable self.

However, these relationships should be partnerships of equals.
If he or, more rarely, she is the leader of the relationship, too much vulnerability on the leader's side will result in a decrease in admiration and respect.

Don't get angry at me for saying it. Don't hate the players. And actually, don't hate the game either. That's just the way it is. That's just the way we're wired.

8. In "scorched earth" power moves

What's this?
Well, see check the power dictionary for a definition, and see here an example:

- Vulnerability to checkmate an aggressive superior

9. When you have the power to own your moment of weakness

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Man**: (shows his broken heart on camera)
> **Host**: (laughs)
> **Man**: (looks up with disappointed face) Come on, are you really gonna laugh right now?

Absolute G.

SUMMARY

Vulnerability in the sense of "showing up" and "risking embarrassment" is foundational because you cannot succeed without risking failure.
Learning to act despite the risk of failure and embarrassment makes you a stronger, more agentic and goal-oriented man.

But vulnerability can as easily backfire and *weaken* you when it's uncalibrated.
Socially, **vulnerability works best with a backdrop of high power and high value.**

Also, read:

- **Why a growth mindset is NOT power**

Does She Like You? 35 Signs She Does

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 November 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Wondering if she likes you?

Women can be subtle with their signals, but if you know how to read body language, the signs are clear.

This guide breaks down 35 surefire ways to tell if she's into you.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 1. She listens to you with her head sideways
- 2. She asks you questions and fills in the pauses
- 3. She is interested in what you say
- 4. Holds her head on her hand
- 5. She laughs at your terrible jokes
- 6. She 'Preens' and fixes her hair
- 7. Acts like a baby
- 8. She seeks more (lone) time with you
- 9. She handles cockblocks for you
- 10. She protects herself
- 11. She moves backward while looking at you
- 12. She is angry… But she's actually excited
- 13. She draws attention to your nether region
- 14. She draws attention to her erogenous zones
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- 20. She asks you if you have a girlfriend
- 21. She tells you of her relationship woes
- 22. She asks you if you know any single guy
- 23. She tells you of her ideal guy… Who sounds a lot like you
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- 29. She tells you you look good
- 30. She lets you know she is single
- 31. She texts you a lot
- 32. She sends you long texts

- 33. She sends you her pictures
- 34. She drunk-text you
- 35. She looks down, then up

- Does she like me? More Cues She does
- Theory of Female Signaling
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1. She listens to you with her head sideways

Allan Pease says that tilting one's head is a sign of attraction.

And research confirms that women do it during flirting.

In some contexts, showing her neck is also a sign of submissiveness, sub-communicating that she accepts your leadership and higher dominance.

2. She asks you questions and fills in the pauses

If she asks you lots of questions she either likes you or she's making up her mind about you.

To differentiate between the two:

1. Any question she can think ⍰ she likes you
2. Questions about you, your past, your possessions, your exes ⍰ she's making up her mind

With the former, she's either smitten, anxious, or 'wanting more' from you -including just wanting to listen you talk.

If the latter, she is weighing you up for a role in her life.

3. She is interested in what you say

Don't flatter yourself: you might not be the most interesting person in the world.

And that's great news!

Because with her attention she is trying to let you know that she wants something more than your sweet-sounding words.

4. Holds her head on her hand

Imagine a position where she holds her head in one hand -picture below- or both her hands together.

It's as if she were putting her goods on display.
She says "Here is my face, here are my lips… You may kiss them".

5. She laughs at your terrible jokes

Research shows that women laugh to get men's attention.

Laughing during social interactions obeys standard social power dynamics.

Women don't dignify lower-status men with much attention -or laughter-. If she laughs at your jokes, it means she considers you a worthy dating option.

6. She 'Preens' and fixes her hair

What's "preening"?

It's prepping herself up and "showing the goods", such as:

- Straightens up emphasizing her breasts
- Tilts her hips to show her curves
- Hikes up her skirt and shows her legs

- Adjust her clothes
- Fix her hair
- Applying make-up or lipstick (especially if while looking at you)

If you are at a bar or in any place where you can approach her, she preens to get your attention.

7. Acts like a baby

Whenever one gender regresses and plays the baby, it's a sign of a strong intimate bond.

And sometimes, a willingness to be dominated.
When women act like babies with you, it's a sign that they want a big daddy to take care of them ;).

Baby behavior includes:

- Giggling
- "Escaping" from you
- Covering her face
- Hide-and-seek games
- Acting out
- Peekaboo games

8. She seeks more (lone) time with you

One of the most powerful -and helpful- signs of attraction is when she's helping you move the interaction forward. And the more intimate that time is, the stronger the sign is.

That includes:

- Moves you somewhere secluded
- She stays when her friends leave
- Tells her friends she's cool with you
- Refuses the obligatory "girlfriends going to the bathroom together thing" to stay with you

At that point, you don't need to wonder "does she like me", because she is communicating to you, loud and clear, that she does.
So get moving, because attraction has an expiration date and you must strike while it's hot.

9. She handles cockblocks for you

You don't need to worry about cockblockers with more assertive women who like you.
Because they will be doing it for you.

This is basically another form of being alone with you and sends an even stronger message because she is willing to fend off external threats to make it happen.
And that's a strong statement of attraction.

See an example from 500 Days of Summer:

So don't be an idiot and don't even engage the cockblocker: she's already cast her vote and you've been elected :)

10. She protects herself

This might sound counter-intuitive, so hear me out.

While the more confident and assertive women will open their bodies, the more submissive and reserved ones might close them.
This is nothing but another sign of submissiveness.

It's as if she were saying:

> "*you're the dominant one here, go gentle on me*".

Now when you see this sign of attraction, you have gotta be careful: it *might* be a positive sign, but it can also be she is generally submissive, or also possible, **it can also mean that she is attracted, but not yet comfortable**…
If she likes you, you can probably get together by pushing it a bit, but to be even safer -and make her feel safer!- talk a bit more. Connect with her a bit more.

Then, as soon as you notice her opening up and smiling more, you can make your move.

11. She moves backward while looking at you

She is re-enacting a dominant-dominated dynamic that usually ends up in bed (prey-predator dynamic).

Go on the assault brother, she wants you in.

12. She is angry… But she's actually excited

When women are executed but are not getting the cigar, so to speak, they often get cattier.

So when you see:

- Fake angry, but can't hold smiling when you tease them
- Angry for no apparent reason

Then it can easily be because they like you.
Another strong indicator of sexual chemistry is when you sexually tease them or jokingly objectify them, and they

get fake angry. But they're actually glad you're doing it.

Case in point:

Sometimes, there can be a fine line between anger, excitement, aggression, and sex. If you want to enjoy some speedy seduction and steamy sex, you have to learn how to walk that tightrope.

13. She draws attention to your nether region

I remember many years ago, sitting on the couch at my place with a Kazakh girl (I seem to remember) beside me.

She was nervous and exhibited closed body language. So I thought to take it easy and slow.

Then she crunched over, analyzing and commenting on how great my belt buckle was.

That's when I realized I was taking it *too* easy :).

She doesn't care about your jeans, belt, or buckle my friend… She cares about *un*buckling.
Or, well, lemme fix that: hopefully you have nice clothes and she *also* likes your belt. *And* what's lying beneath :)

In any other similar situation in which a girl is drawing attention to your nether region, it's a glaring sign that she likes you (sexually) and you gotta get moving.

14. She draws attention to *her* erogenous zones

As we mentioned earlier, while more reserved women close down, more assertive and sexually confident women open up instead.
And that can include pointing to the erogenous zones of her body.

They might touch her uncovered bellies complain about the cold, fix their decollete… Or let a hand hang right between her legs.
Catch the drift…?

15. She shows her neck

Do you like vampires?

Most women do.

The act of biting on her neck is more than just a sexual hint: it's sexually arousing.

Vanessa van Edwards says that showing the neck releases pheromones. We're not too convinced of the pheromones prat, but showing the neck is a value cue for interest because it displays submissiveness.

Similar messages are:

- Placing a hand on her neck
- Running her fingers on her neck

16. She touches you

If while talking she looks at opportunities to touch you, then you have another huge indicator of interest.
For example:

- Laughs and reaches for your arm with her hand
- Places her hand on you to emphasize a point
- Touches your arm (and maybe asks if you've been working out :)

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* says that **touching the knee is a strong indicator of her interest.**

Here is a good example:

Another powerful sign of attraction within a group is when a girl gets up to go to the bathroom or get another drink, and she touches you briefly.
That's the equivalent of saying "I'm going to come back to you".

17. She makes you horny: sexual tease

Some women, the master seductresses among them, are masters of sexual tease.
The sexual tease is basically telling him:

> I might be ready for it… Will you be man enough to come take it?

That's the kind of sexual provocation the top coquettes go for.
It's like waving the red flag in front of the bull.

When you find yourself horny in a way that you'd like to f*ck her hard, almost as if to deliver punishment, then you know you're dealing with a master coquette.

Don't go thinking it will always be as obvious as Sharon Stone crossing her legs. I mean, it might be, but more

frequently it will be something like this:

- Raising her eyebrows
- Slightly wetting her lips
- Touching the side of your leg, below your belt
- Flashing one eyebrow only

Notice the slight tease of this win, pure sexual tease:

18. She jokes a lot with you

Similar to the sexual tease, but with less sex.
As much as guys flirt with women they like, so women flirt with men they like.

19. She is nervous

You might think that men are the only nervous ones asking "does she like me".

But women equally obsess over "does *he* like me".

And if you spot signs of nervousness, chances are that she likes you. A lot…

You will see this one, especially from younger women, inexperienced women, and women who think you're out of their league.

If that's the case, you have to put her at ease, and let her feel that yes, she has a shot with you because you like her too.

And, ideally, quickly move forward.

Speaking of nervousness, the *APA Handbook of Psychology* also includes coyness as a signal of interest.

20. She asks you if you have a girlfriend

Oh boy, this is a big sign of attraction.
Any girl who asks about your relationship status is interested in changing that relationship status.

Never answer this question with a joke such as "nah, girls don't want me". Women get worried at that one instead of laughing and you will break the mood.

Instead, avoid answering too directly and hinting that you might be free. Especially tonight, if she wants to come back to you just for a drink.. ;).

21. She tells you of her relationship woes

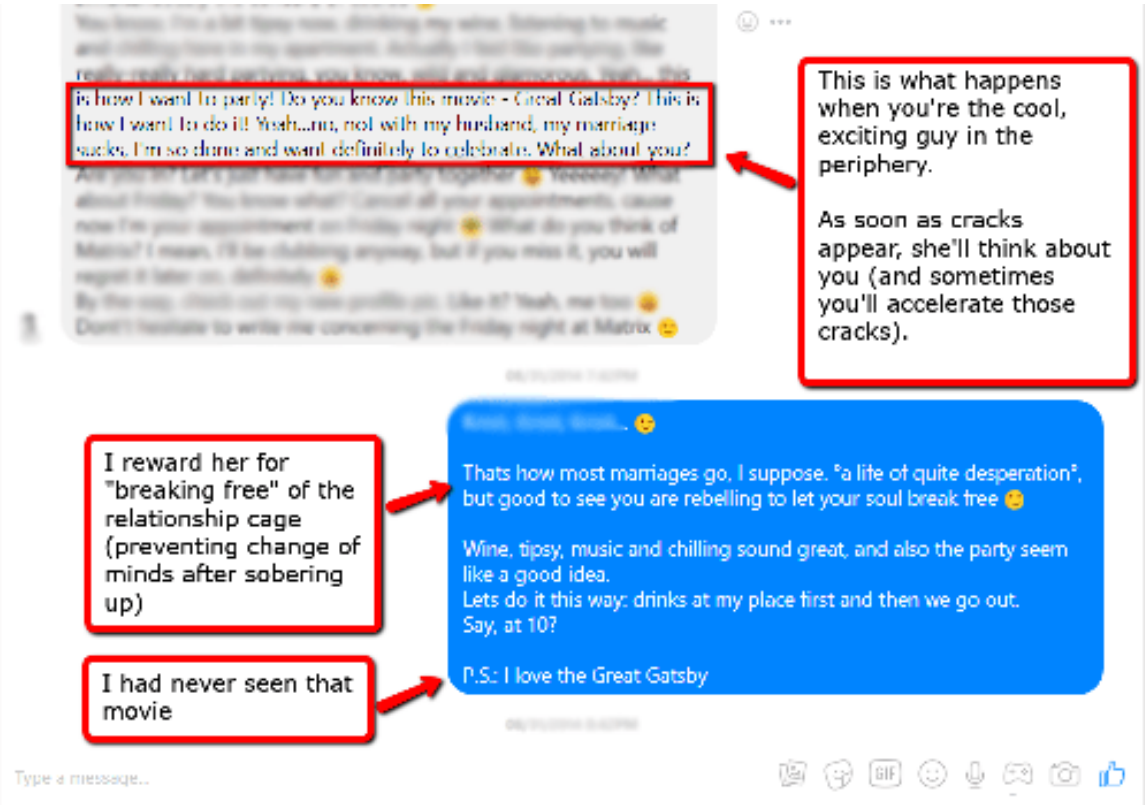
Careful here, because:

- You're either in the friend zone
- She wants YOU to be her bofyriend

But if you're a cool friend, you may still have a chance. Sexual chemistry will increase when she complains -and maybe cries- about her current relationship.

That's how some women end up having sex with friends and sometimes even gay friends.

Basically, 8/10 a woman complaining about her boyfriend is really bad news… For her boyfriend. And a strong sign of attraction for you.



The biggest sign is, of course, when she sends you a message out of the blue saying her relationship is going very badly. That's like saying "I need rebound sex".

22. She asks you if you know any single guy

Women don't usually ask men to make intros.

If she asking you for a friend of yours she is actually asking about you.

23. She tells you of her ideal guy… Who sounds a lot like you

If she tells you about her ideal and said ideal guy sounds a lot like you, then you don't need to ask yourself "does she like me".
She is basically telling you.

Now, guess where I'm from…

24. She comments on your pictures and statuses

Usually, it's men who do this -and do it all wrong of course-. And when it's women who do it to you, it's a big sign she is interested in you.

25. She hints you two should spend time together

People don't ask to spend time with people they don't like.

So any time a woman hints at spending time together, especially the two of you of them alone, that's a strong sign of attraction.
It can be a coffee, lunch, or a request for help because "you're so knowledgeable" about something.
They're all signs that she is helping you move the interaction forward.

An example from the movie The Terminal here (and raise your hand if you'd gladly take that opportunity with Catherine Zeta-Jones):

26. She gets physically close

Says *The Handbook of Relationship Initiations*:

> Research on nonverbal communication shows that intimacy and liking are conveyed through forward body lean, smiling, eye contact, close proximity, direct body orientation, and frequent gesturing, among other signals (see Burgoon, 1985).

Most signals are about her getting closer and showing comfort.

Same if she is looking for opportunities to get close to you, hug you, and touch you.

Especially telling are all situations where sexually erogenous areas come in direct contact. Pressing her breasts against you, or crotch her against your leg for example. All signs she's excited by you.

27. She asks your friends about you

People don't ask about people they don't like.

If a girl is asking your friends about you, she likes you.

Sometimes, she will try to hide her feelings though because she's actually happy to let you wonder "does he like me".
And she will try to gather intel about you "under the radar":

28. She's available for you

If she's always available to talk, hang out, or text, there is little wondering "does she like me", because it's clear that she does.

29. She tells you you look good

I cannot count the number of men I'd like to slap in the head when they ask me if a girl is into them and they tell me that the girl is complimenting their looks.

Heck! She is *telling* you she likes you, what else does the poor girl have to do?
Of course, she might play the "we're still friends" cards if you're really friends, but she still likes you. So keep going.

This is what a girl was telling a guy who was asking me for advice:

> **Her**: You're such a handsome guy
>
> **Her**: (talking about a girl he had started seeing) You can do better than her
>
> **Her**: (talking about her interest in engaging her vagina a bit more) Ah, I have spiderwebs down here
>
> **Her**: I like a guy who slams me against the wall

And he asked me what he should do with her…
Here is a tip: if she is telling you what she likes, maybe you should try doing that.

30. She lets you know she is single

Women who tell you they are single do it for two reasons:

1. They feel bad about it and need to get it off their chest
2. They want you to change their relationship status (and get their clothes off their chest)

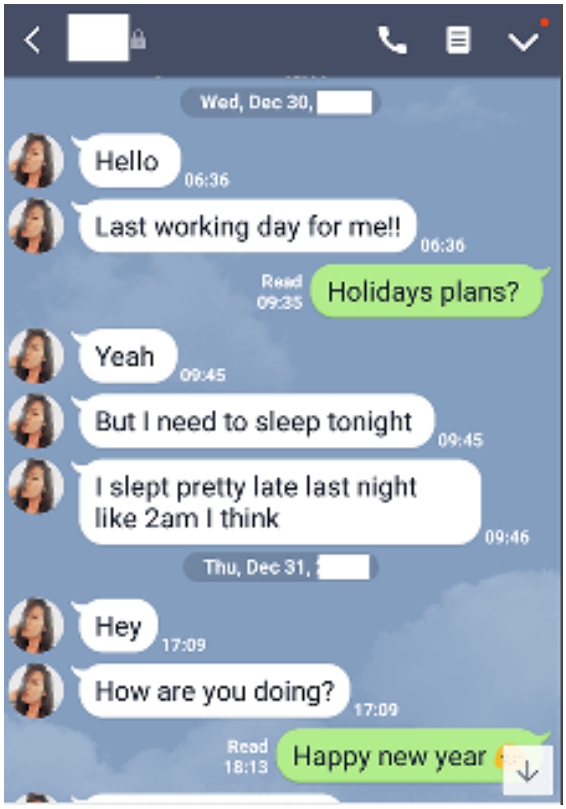
More often than not it's the second.

31. She texts you a lot

She texts you a lot and often writes first.

This is a big sign of attraction, and you should move the conversation ASAP from texting to in-person.

And from in-person to your place.



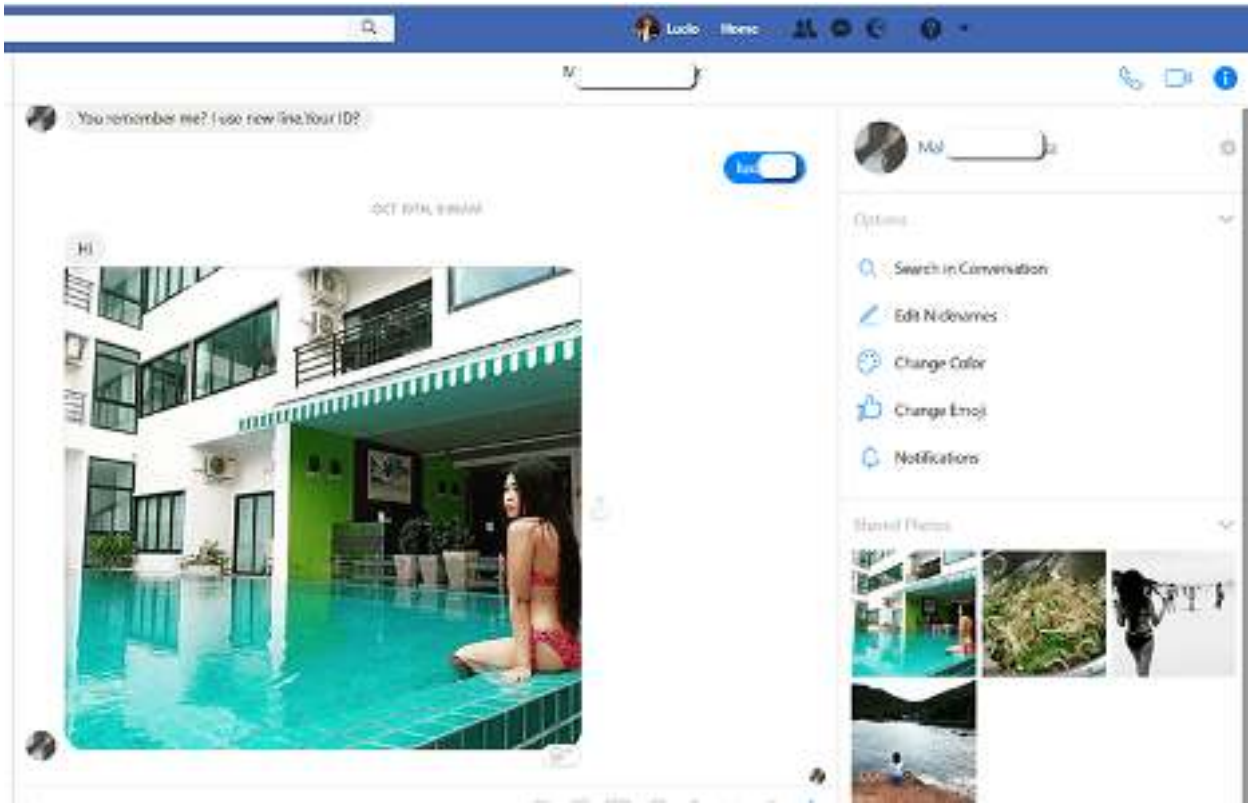
32. She sends you long texts

The length of texts is an indicator of investment which, in turn, is an indicator of interest.

And a woman who is investing in you is doing so hoping you do the same. If you like her, don't stand there wondering "does she like me", invest back in her and escalate investment together towards the bed -and maybe a relationship-.

33. She sends you her pictures

She sends you hot pictures of herself -or pictures she deems as hot anyway-.



Cheap move. But still a sign that she likes you

It's possible that she asks you what you think of said pictures. Even sneakier -and funnier- if she sends you made-up pictures and says "just woke up".

If you want to get together with her, don't fawn at her picture but don't ignore them either (like I've done in the picture above).

Show appreciation or, alternatively, you can go the sexual way and tell her "you don't know what I'd do to you now". The risk though is that she will feel like she "has you" and that you have nothing better to do than sexting. And sexting is not a high-value man's pastime.

34. She drunk-text you

There is a saying in Latin:

> In vino veritas

Meaning "in wine lies the truth". And if she's inebriated the truth is this: she thinks about you.
Any drunk or high texting, and possibly even fake excuses of drunk-dialing, are all major signs that she likes you.

35. She looks down, then up

Looking at you and then down is another sign of submission.

Which, in turn, is often a sign of attraction -but not always, don't confuse fear with attraction!-.

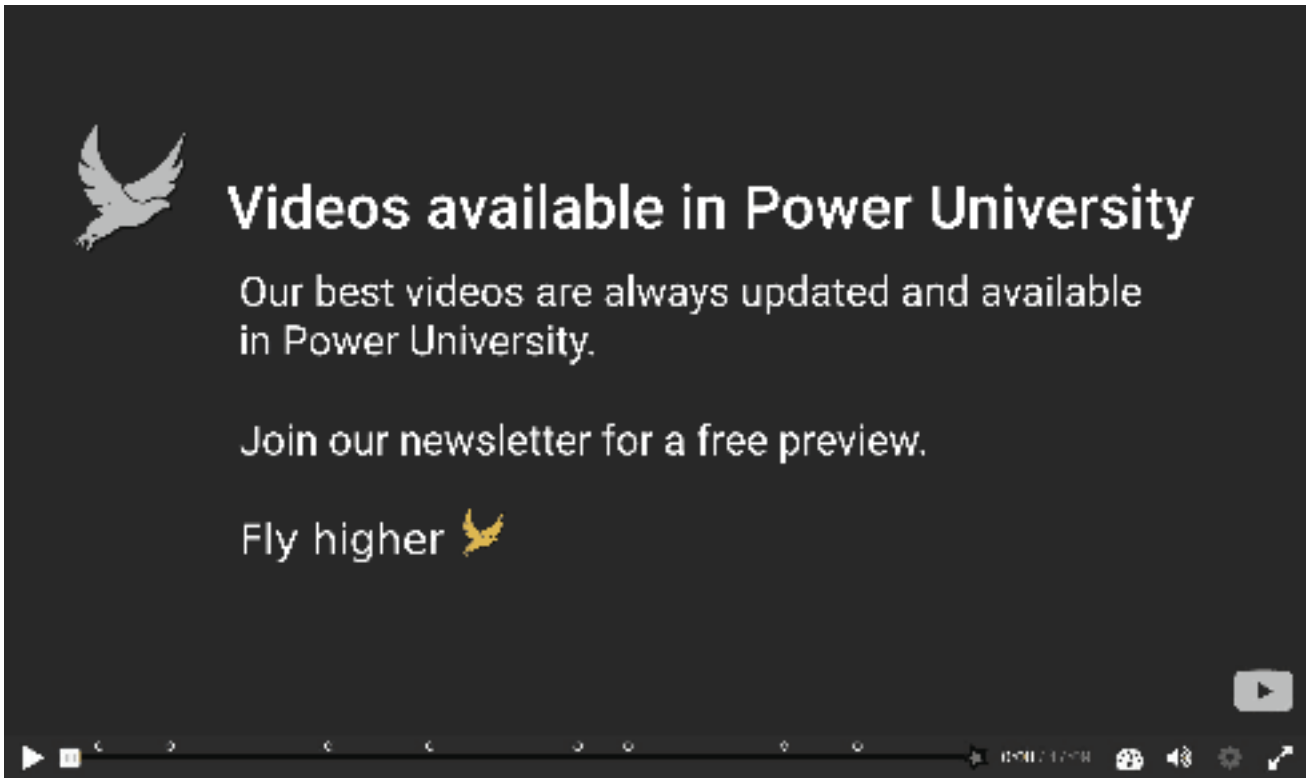
Angelina Jolie does it often when she mixes together the coyness and the vixen:

Does she like me? More Cues She does

More verbal and nonverbal cues that signal attraction:

- Looking over the raised shoulder
- Talks to her friends but looks over at you
- Speaks to her phone loudly when you're near (a nervous reaction as she tries to get your attention)
- Talk to her phone while she's looking at you
- Looks at you sideways
- Tags her jewelry while looking at your or speaking to you (especially the necklace)
- Dangle her shoes, going in and out with her feet (mimicking another in and out)
- Goes up and down with her hand on the glass or the stem of the glass (seen this twice, always ended up well)

Look at a similar example here, fondling with a pen:



Great and realistic scene. Also, notice how she walks backward and "protects" herself. Read more in "dominance and seduction" and "leadership and seduction".

- Invades your personal space (she wants to get physically closer)
- Shows the inner side of her wrists or arms
- Caresses herself
- Feet pointing towards you
- Pupils dilate
- Looks up to you
- Mirrors your body language
- Strikes pose (wants to be admired and to increase her value in your eyes)
- Shows off her goodies (straightens up, shows her leg or her breast)
- Asks you if you have a condom (she's agreed to sex, just want to have it safe)

Theory of Female Signaling

Assertive women make it easier for you.

Some other women though -including the ones who read women's dating literature either signal too subtly, or "play disinterest" to make him chase -an often bad idea by the way-.

The goal of subtle signals is to gain power.
It frames the situation like it was *him* who wanted her, and not the other way around.

And, as with any covert power moves, subtle signals allow her to deny any intent.

Elicit Real Signs of Attraction

Finally, instead of wondering "does she like me" and reading body language and hints like a detective, try to *elicit* those signs.

Help her like you!

Display high value, dress well, show social confidence and status… And more and more women will want to be with you.

We have one full course that helps good men gain more women's attraction.

Summary

Reading the signs of attraction requires a good knowledge of body language and emotional intelligence.

Don't forget though that **the biggest priority is making yourself into a man who *elicits* signs of attraction**. Such as becoming a high-value, attractive man.

Then, you can start enjoying more and more signs of attractions coming your way. This post helps you read and internalize all the signs of attraction so that you will never have to wonder again "does she like me".

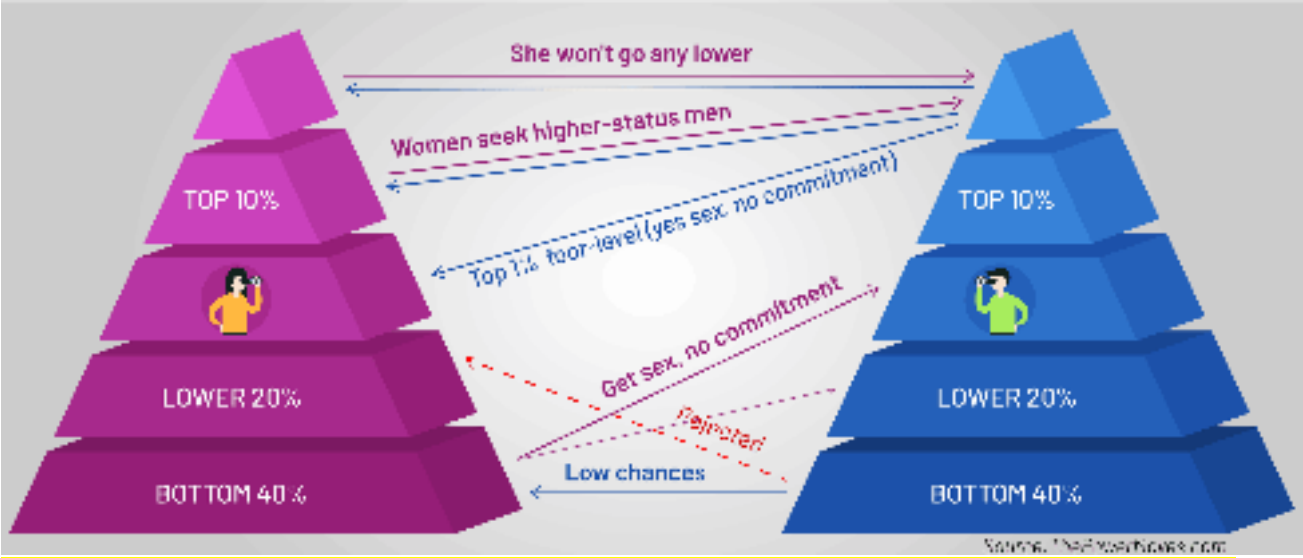
Hypergamy Explained: Realpolitik, Mating Value & Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Hypergamy is a female drive to seek partners who possess higher levels of status, resources, or personal efficacy.

In the realm of **Social Power Dynamics**, hypergamy acts as a primary market force. It influences how individuals negotiate their value in the sexual marketplace and determines how attraction and leverage fluctuate within long-term relationships.

While often misunderstood—or dismissed by ideological narratives—hypergamy is a clinical reality of human evolution. This article moves past the "gender war" rhetoric to provide a technical analysis of what hypergamy is, how it governs intersexual power, and how a high-status man can leverage it to his advantage.



Tom men win because women would rather pick them. Lower status men struggle because same-value women demand better men for their more costly and valuable reproductive system

Intersexual Dynamics in a Nutshell:

- **The Leverage Gap:** Women seek men who are "more" than they are (Hypergamy).
- **The Status Trap:** Men who offer "same-status" value often face lukewarm attraction or rejection.
- **The Power Inversion:** While women hold the "gatekeeper" power at the bottom and middle of the social pyramid, **Top Men** hold the ultimate leverage at the apex.

That's the preview.
Keep on reading for more.

Contents

- What's Hypergamy: A Definition
- Hypergamy & Dating Dynamics
- Hypergamy and Monogamy
- Does Hypergamy Apply to Wealth or Genes?
  - 6 Feet, 6 Pack, 6 Figure: She Wants it All (?)
- Are Men Also Hypergamous?
  - Men's Version of Hypergamy: Younger, Hotter, More
  - Does Hypergamy Lead to Cheating?

- Who Gets Cheated?
- Factors That Limit Hypergamy
  - Thank God for Hypergamy
- Benefiting From Hypergamy
- SUMMARY

What's Hypergamy: A Definition

Female Hypergamy refers to a mating preference for partners who rank higher in a dominance hierarchy (status, wealth, intelligence, or physical prowess) compared to her own level.

To put it simply, women are attracted to men who are "more than they are".

What women include in that "more than they are" can vary depending on her personality or circumstances but, often, includes income, power, social status, intelligence, and looks.

Some people deny hypergamy or try to frame it as a misogynistic construct.
But **hypergamy is real**, it makes sense from an evolutionary point of view, and many studies support it (eg., Buss, 2008)

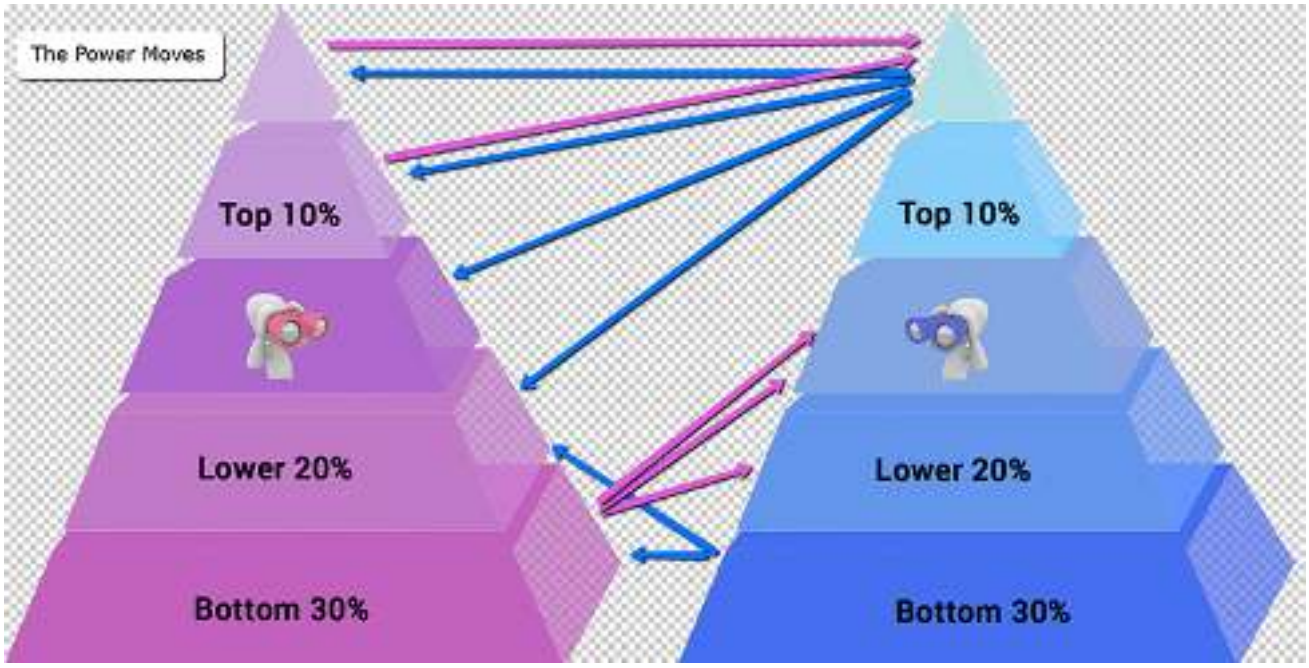
Denying hypergamy means not understanding the basics of evolution and human nature.
However, some manosphere communities only focus on *female* hypergamy, and with a tinge of misogyny.

So let's learn better.

Hypergamy & Dating Dynamics

Let's imagine society as a big pyramid.

Actually, let's draw a simplified version of two pyramids:



At the bottom sit the people with the least status, looks, and resources.

Intersexual dynamics dictate that at the lowest level of the pyramid, women have more power than men because women's reproductive system is costlier, scarcer, and more valuable.

Lower-status men would be happy with same-status women. But women don't get too excited with their fellow low-value men.
In the middle of the pyramid, women still have more power than middle layers men.

Overall women, being the demand in the sexual marketplace, have more power when it comes to dating and relationships.

However, **at the top, the power relation inverts, and men become more powerful**.
Top men become more powerful -by far more powerful-.

In terms of potential for attracting mates, for men, power and resources matter more than looks to get to the top of the pyramid.
Few if any models can out-fuck an average-looking tycoon -possibly even an ugly one-.

This all goes back to biology.
Since men don't have to wait for almost a year to reproduce again, they can impregnate several women a day. In the case of ancient kings and some modern-day tycoons, that's exactly what happens.

Women instead carry the full burden of procreation both in time and resources. Men *can* take care of their offspring, but women *must*. This means that women are far more concerned with securing help and resources than men.

That is the core of female hypergamy.
When resources are scarce, hypergamy grows more pronounced. However, as we will see later, we are *not* living in such an environment today,

Hypergamy and Monogamy

Evolutionary psychology is clear:

> From a reproductive point of view and in society with vast differences in resources, it's best for a woman to be the 10th wife of a king than the first wife of a king (Kanazawa and Miller, 2007).

It means that **strict monogamy *reduces* the power of highly attractive and successful men**.
Because that super top guy could otherwise freely and openly have his own harem.

Monogamy can increase the power of attractive women because there will be lots of pressure on their highly successful male counterparts to commit to her (plus the legal system helps them in case of separation).

Monogamy is also good for average men because average women will spend less time eyeing high-quality men who, on average, end up with high-quality women.

And for very poor-quality men?
Well, those fare poorly in almost any relationship system.

However, the institution per se does not have unlimited power. Institutions and laws follow culture more than the other way around. And it's more the *distribution* of resources that influence hypergamy and monogamy.
And it functions like this: **the more skewed the distribution of resources is, the higher hypergamy pays off and becomes the norm**.

On the other hand, the more well-spread the resources are, the less hypergamy drives women's behavior.
In that case, women prefer having a guy just for them, and similarity and "love" strengthen monogamy -albeit humans rarely are 100% monogamous anyway, and especially not men-.

Does Hypergamy Apply to Wealth or Genes?

Animals differ on "male parental investment", such as how much males invest in their partners and in helping raise the children.

Human males are around the middle of the scale when it comes to male parental investment. They don't invest as much as women, but they invest quite a bit.
This is crucial to understand dating and hypergamy.

In nature, the female of species who cannot expect any help from the male counterparts *only* mate based on genes (ie.: looks, physique, prowess, cunning, and any other attractive trait).
Meaning: when women cannot get any help to raise offspring, they mate based on genes and attraction.

But attraction is not simply what *she* likes but, in good part, also what *other* women seem to like.
Why?
Because she wants offspring that can also find a mate to further procreate.

Thus, **female attraction is highly social**: what she likes is heavily influenced by what other women seem to like. This is why there is also a strong cultural element on what women find or don't find attractive. Looks are a proxy for how likely it is that he -and in turn, his children- is able to impregnate other women.

But now the hypergamic twist.
Some male species do help females raise children. When that's the case, females who can expect help from males also screen men on their resources *and the availability of those resources*. Commitment is the measure of the availability of those resources.
This is true for human females, who seek proof of love and caring as a sign of commitment.

Women are not just attracted to resources per se, but also to behaviors that are likely to lead to power and resources such as drive, dominance, strength, intelligence, etc.
We can speculate that one of the reasons why women don't like men whose lives revolve around them is because those men are less likely to climb dominance hierarchies and amass resources (ie.: too focused on them means less focused on other life endeavors).

6 Feet, 6 Pack, 6 Figure: She Wants it All (?)

In any negotiation, the best result you can get is 'everything'.

Women seek *both* good genes *and* abundant resources.

Some researchers and authors speculated that women pursue two different and separate dating strategies in the sexual marketplace: good genes from sexy men and resources from rich men.

However, the two strategies are *not* different and do not run in parallel. A woman seeks both, and she'll be happiest with both good genes and plenty of resources.

A woman may prioritize one or the other depending on goals, circumstances, and life phase -partying or settling down-.
And, in some rarer cases, she may seek to get both from different men.

6 Pack VS 6 Figure: Which Wins?

When she cannot have both, studies suggest that **women give more weight to status than looks**.

When the status is similar, or when the status is more difficult to glean -as it's often the case in rich Western societies-, they prefer looks.

Of course, there are many influences at play, including her temporal frame -short-term VS long-term-, and the

environment.
In dire environments with few resources, resources take center stage.
In most modern societies looks fare comparatively better.

This is why many Western women say they don't care about money.
Sure, sometimes it's virtue-signaling, but still: you don't hear it nearly as often from women in poorer countries.

Are Men Also Hypergamous?

Evolution shaped women to be hypergamous because it's good for them.
And for the species.

But evolution equally works on men, of course.

Men also seek to maximize their sexual returns.
However, what maximizes male returns is different than what maximizes female sexual returns.
So **"male hypergamy" looks much different than women's hypergamy**.

This is because, evolutionarily speaking, and contrary to women:

1. **Men gain from sex with lower SMV women**: because of a disparity in casual sex returns between the two genders. Most men are happy to have sex with lots of women, including some lower-value ones
2. **Men don't need women's resources**: since men don't get "stuck" with gestation and child-rearing

So, obviously, it's not like men care less about her money or status because they are "nicer" or "less manipulative".
Men and women simply have different incentives, including different opportunities for cheating and manipulation.

Men developed equally self-serving strategies, so don't use hypergamy to hate women. Hate the game, if you want, but not the players.
Or, much better, simply learn to enjoy the game.

Men's Version of Hypergamy: Younger, Hotter, More

Male hypergamy has been proven (Buston and Emlen, 2003).

It's a case of a study confirming the obvious everyday life where men lust after attractive women. Often, young, and more attractive than they are.

Best of all, if there are several available.

That's male hypergamy.

As per female hypergamy, men's sexual drives aren't bad per se.

Hell, **male hypergamy built our civilization** (see forum entry)!

Just look at how hard many men work to climb dominance hierarchies and accumulate resources.
Men work harder than women to actualize their own hypergamy.

In simple terms:
Male hypergamy trade status, power, and resources for looks. Female hypergamy trade looks for status, power, and resources.

Does Hypergamy Lead to Cheating?

I sense that Red Pill authors discussing hypergamy are driven by the fear of being cheated on.

Some blogs, and even some (slightly more) scholarly books such as *Sperm Wars*, often misquote the statistic that "30% of children are not fathered by their partners".
Although it's not a totally made-up number (see the 25% and 30% studies, for example), they are cherry-picked and misleading.
These publications quote statistics such as the ones from fathers who tested their children because they doubted their paternity. Obviously, that's either silly or in bad faith because it's not a representative sample (also read *How to Lie With Statistics*).

Fear sells well after all, and it works to create communities. The gold old ingroup VS outgroup, with the outgroup being mean and untrustworthy and "us" being good, you know.

But back to us now: what about actual research?
Michael Gilding estimates the non-paternity rates at between 0.7% and 2%.
Other estimates, in the cases of fathers who are confident of being the actual fathers, it ranges from 1.9% to 2.9%.

Let's say that, on the overall population, it's from 1% to 3%. Can be lower if you feel secure with your spouse. And *much* higher, around 1 out of 3, if you're not sure (but watch out you're not being paranoid).

Now don't get me wrong, these are still *high* numbers in my opinion, but they're far from the scare-mongering, finger-pointing, and slut-shaming of some manosphere authors.

Bottom line:

Non-paternity is part and parcel of human mating.
But not nearly as common some authors suggest.
As a matter of fact, it's more likely for *men* to cheat. *Especially* if he is of high status.

Who Gets Cheated?

Studies show that it's men from the lower classes who get cheated the most.

And that makes sense from a hypergamy perspective: women seek men from higher social classes. And men from lower classes simply have a lot more men who score higher than them.

So here is your first clue about not being cheated: **to reduce your risk of cheating, be a high-status man**.

Well-respected theories in evolutionary psychology also postulate that women who cheat are sometimes after better genes -the "sexy son" hypothesis.
So being smart, handsome, athletic, healthy, etc., etc. also helps.
Researchers point out that higher risks of non-paternity also happen in non-married couples, couples who are often physically distant, and couples with concurrent partners (no shit Sherlock, eh? :).

Factors That Limit Hypergamy

Many factors limit real-world hypergamy, boosting the odds of stable relationships.
The main ones are:

- **Female hypergamy is capped by her SMV**. Basic social exchange theory postulates that individuals seek the best they can get *based on the limits of their own mate value*.
  This is why most men don't approach the most attractive women (Huston, 1973) and most women don't chase the top 1%
- **Female hypergamy is limited by top men's preference for top females**: higher-status men prefer good-looking women first. And for long-term, they also prefer good-looking *and* high-quality women. Studies show

that men are almost as picky as women for relationships (Swami, 2015). That also limits women's upward mobility.

- **The scope for switching is limited by "switching costs".** Only *significantly* higher mate-value men are worth a switch and a marginally better man doesn't warrant mate-switching (Buss, 2021). So if your relationship is solid, she's not going to leave you for your friend because he's 10cm taller, speaks one octave lower, or makes 5k more.
- **Good relationships protect against hypergamy** (Gottman, 1999). As one woman said to couple therapist Shirley Glass: "*how could I have an affair, I share all significant events with my husbands. I'd immediately have to run and tell him*!"

And as well:

- **Western countries' safety nets decrease financial hypergamy (and the need for a man)**. When the state ensures her and her offspring's survival she doesn't need to rely on richer / more powerful men (Ghodsee, 2018).
- **Higher equality in modern societies decreases hypergamy**. I quote the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships*: "*Homogamy (…) has been rising (…) Studies have shown that in America during the period of 1970s–2010s, assortative mating increased economic homogamy*"
- **Women's wealth shields against financial hypergamy**. Women's success in many Western countries alleviates the "need" for resources
  BUT that means hypergamy shifts to *attractiveness* (Moore, Cassidy, Law Smith, & Perrett, 2006) and, we can guess, to high SMV alpha male and smooth lover types
- **High-power women date more like men**. Says the *APA Handbook of Social Psychology*: "*women in nontraditional gender roles—perhaps those women high in occupational prestige—display a mating psychology shifted toward that of men*"
- **Homogamy offsets hypergamy**: homogamy is the tendency to marry partners who, in some important ways, are similar to how we are. Research (Byrne et al., 1966), shows that individuals prefer similar partners, especially when women evaluate *long*-term partners (Regan et al., 2000).
- **Infatuation decreases hypergamy**: contrary to what some authors seem to imply, the obvious truth is that women *do* fall in love. Researcher John Gottman says that women in love are like wearing blinkers when it comes to other men (Gottman, 2016). Something I've also personally experienced.
- **Personality matters**. Yes, some general tendencies apply to most women. But personality matters and some women care comparatively less about status or looks

So, yeah… If you're sufficiently "cool", you can chill :).
And if you're not… Work on that instead of complaining.

A VW Golf is enough for most women – and 90% of men can afford one in the West

Thank God for Hypergamy

The above mitigating factors do not completely cancel out women's hypergamy.

Yes, in the end, she wants a great man.
And she'll be happier with a somewhat higher-value man.

And thanks, God!

Women wanting better men are great for humanity.

If you're not OK with that, you can find plenty of women with low hypergamy (or who cannot *actualize* their hypergamy).

They may not just be great partners themselves, though.
Be my guest.

Benefiting From Hypergamy

Guys shouldn't focus too much on hypergamy.

To begin with, because you can't control it.
Second, it does not matter as much in most Western countries.
And third, because it makes you come across as insecure.

Learn more here:

> **Lucio**: top 10% men love hypergamy

High-power and life-effective men date more and better thanks to hypergamy.
And even if they enter a relationship, hypergamy keeps women attracted.

SUMMARY

Female hypergamy became popular in some manosphere circles.

But I find that it's sometimes discussed with too much misogyny and too little science.

Plenty of data and research suggest that women *do* like men who are "better" than them: hypergamy is real.

But since women are constrained by their own sexual market value and richer Western women have enough money on their own, boys and girls often date each other around the same socio-economic class.

And since nature developed pair bonding to make us stick together (for a while), they often also end up happy (for a while).

Bottom line:

Focus on becoming a high-status man who can *profit* from hypergamy instead of becoming a man who *complains* about it.

We teach how in **Power University**.

How To Text a Girl: 3-Texts Process to Get Dates

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Ever met a girl you liked…

… And she never replied to your texts?

Don't worry, you're not alone.
And this article will teach how to text a girl *to get dates*.

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1. Set The Date in Person

This is about how to text girls, not "how to ask girls out via text".

Why not?
Because there is an easier, more effective way. And that's the good old "in-person" way.

via GIPHY

2. Send an Ice-Breaker Text

You will send the first text a few hours after having met her, and ideally within the same day. If you're busy and you forget, just do it ASAP as soon as you remember.

The very first text you will send is a simple “nice to meet you” type of text.
It serves a few key functions:

- Breaks the texting ice
- Opens the new communication channel
- Reminds her your name
- Saves your number in her phone (if she hasn’t done it in front of you)

Simple and effective.

Plus the comment on her dog invites a further reply

First Text Examples

Here are a few first texts examples:

- Nice meeting you X –(your_name)
- Pleasure running into you X, I hope Y (whatever she was doing) went well :) –(your_name)
- Nice meeting you X, save my number –(your_name)

A quick mention on the last one: you will use it when she hasn’t saved your number in front of you. When that’s the case, this message has the great advantage of her following your lead: exactly the type of relationship you want.

Otherwise, I like the second a lot. It’s short and considerate at the same time and often elicits a response.

2. Second Text + Date

The second text that you will send her will:

- Show you remember her
- Tell me something more about you
- Possibly ask for the date already
- Overall, confirm that you’re a well-adjusted man

The structure is:

1. Write her name
2. Ask and/or comment about what she said (her weekend or plans)
3. Add some information about you (possibly something interesting)
4. Move to schedule the date

If you can make her 3 & 4 consequential great (ie.: I tried this amazing coffee place, when are you free so I can show it to you), but it doesn't necessarily have to.

Second Text Examples

> **You:** *Hey Jane, how are you, I hope your Sunday zoo turned out awesome! Did you see the pandas? :D. I left early Friday and then worked all weekend, daaamn. Only positive: being productive feels good! :).*
> *On our coffe, how's your schedule this week? Except of Monday and Wednesday I'm open so far, lemme know your free days and we'll set it up.*

- Make her part of the text match your part (or your part slightly longer is OK)
- Balance "I" with "You"
- Don't be afraid to make your 2nd text slightly longer

3. Confirm The Date Text

One of the biggest rookie's mistakes is to believe that just because someone said something, it's going to happen. Instead, on the day of the date, send her a text to confirm the appointment is still on. I usually do so in the morning if the date is in the evening.

Date Day Text Example

Something like:

> **You**: *Hey Vivian, I wanted to quickly confirm for today. See you at 7pm at Subway X*

At the time of writing this guide, I'm not 100% sure which one of the two options to recommend to you. The first is more dominant and some girls like it.
But to some other girls, it can feel annoying that you're dictating and taking her time for granted without taking them into consideration.

How to Text a Girl: Special Tricks

These are some good psychological tools that will increase your chance of meeting up:

1. Ask Her if She's Safely Back Home

Here is a simple, neat trick to increase the chances she will reply to your text ten folds: ask her if she has gotten safely back home.

This is an extremely helpful technique because whether she replies or not to your first text makes a huge difference. You will indeed few women who haven't replied to your first text.

2. Make a Small Change to Assume The Confirmation

One issue with setting up dates in person and then confirming via text is that:

1. Time passes and things (and emotions) change
2. She might not write the date down on her calendar
3. People are not very likely to stick to oral commitments
4. Written commitment has much higher follow-through rates

How do you use this information to make sure your date sticks? Well, here's the trick that I use:

Send her a text changing the time of the meet
Then ask her "OK for you"?

It will do a few great things for you:

1. Remind her of the meeting in written form
2. Make her confirm in written form
3. Show you're busy and in demand (many demands on your time)
4. Let her follow your lead once again

You change the time to an insignificant amount, like half an hour, so that it won't make any real difference, but that

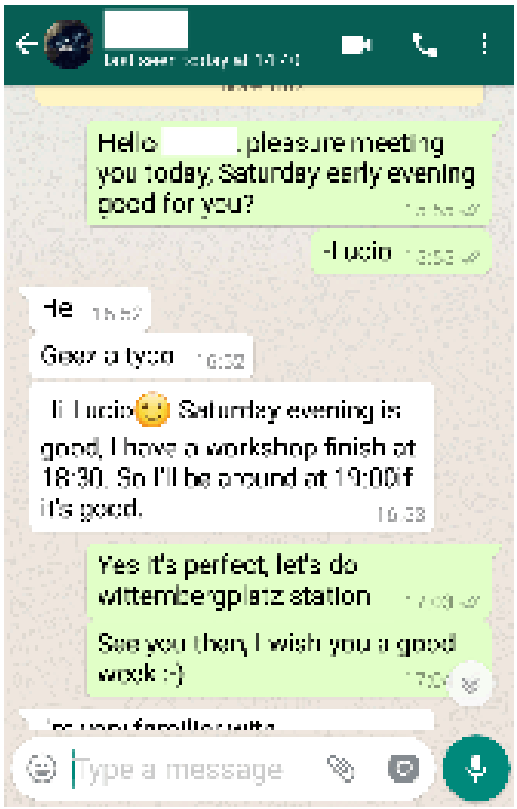
will reach the above four goals.

Alternatively, if changing the time even by a small amount is not possible, send her a text specifying the exact location. Your goal is to have her confirm that yes, it's OK.
Something like:

> **You**: *Hey Christina, do you know Subway X at all? It has many exits, so let's make Exit B Tuesday at 7pm*

3. Straight to Date Text

If your first meeting went very well, you can combine the first message into the first greeting and into the dating confirmation.



When to Text Her: Timeline

When texting a girl properly, timing is everything.

Some elements of timing you can't control unluckily. You don't know what she's doing and sometimes all it takes is an unanswered text at the wrong time of her day and your chances sink.

However, you shouldn't worry about what you can't control. Your task is to maximize your chances, and this timeline helps you do just that:

> **You**: *Pleasure to have made your acquaintance, Jane ;)* – (your_name)

[3 hours later]

> **Her**: Great to meet you too L

[16-36 hours later]

> **You**: *Hey Jane, how are you, I hope your Sunday zoo turned out awesome! Did you see the pandas? :D. I left early Friday and then worked all weekend, daaamn. Only positive: I feel good when being productive :).*
> *On our coffe, how's your schedule this week? Except of Monday and Wednesday I'm open so far, lemme know your free days and we'll set it up.*

[30 minutes later]

> **Her**: *The pandas were sooooo cute! :D. How about Tuesday evening?*

[20 minutes later]

> **You**: *Pandas are the best :D. Tuesday is good, let's say 7pm at X, good for you?*

[15 minutes later]

> **Her**: *Yes, see you then!*

[10 minutes later]

> **You**: *Cool, see you Tuesday Jane, I wish you a good night :)*

[5 minutes later]

> **Her**: *Good night!*

[Tuesday, 11 AM]

> **You**: *Good morning Jane, I wanted to quickly confirm for later at 7pm, are you still up for it? See you later.*

[20 minutes later]

> **Her**: *Yes, see you later, right outside the subway*

[5 minutes later]

> **You**: Let's meet on the square at exit A, it's easier to find :)

Power Move Note: I never like girls telling me where we should meet, I correct just to take the lead. Consider doing the same.

[Tuesday, 6:30 PM]

> **You**: Hey Jane, are you on time?

[Tuesday, 6:35 PM]

> **Her**: *Just a few minutes late, on the way!*

[Tuesday, 11:35 PM]

> **You**: Hey Jane, I had good time with you, I wish you a good night

[Wednesday, 00:15 AM]

> **Her**: *I had a good time with you too, good night!*

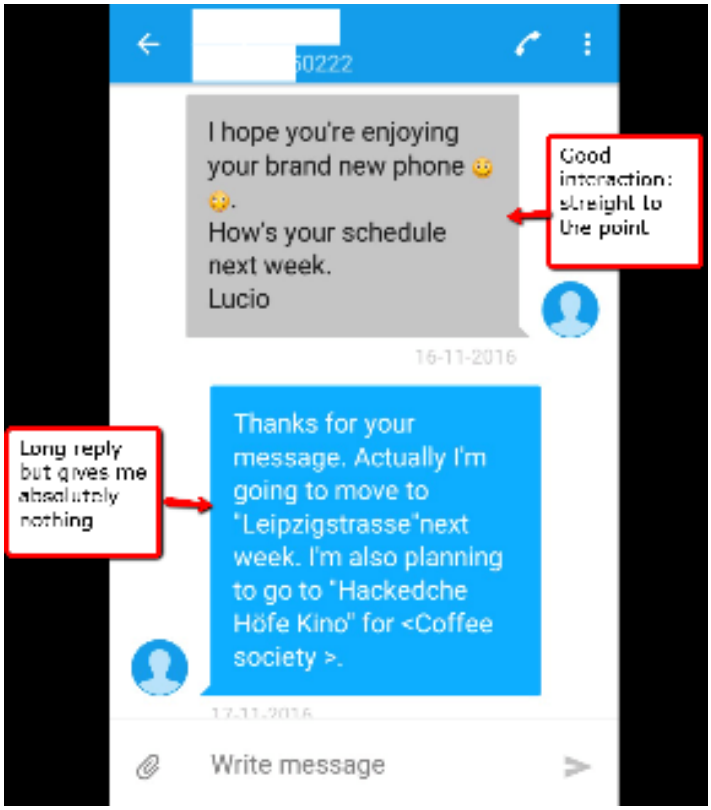
How to Text Her In Difficult Situations

And now let's get into what is possibly the most interesting part of this guide. The special situations and some psychology of texting.

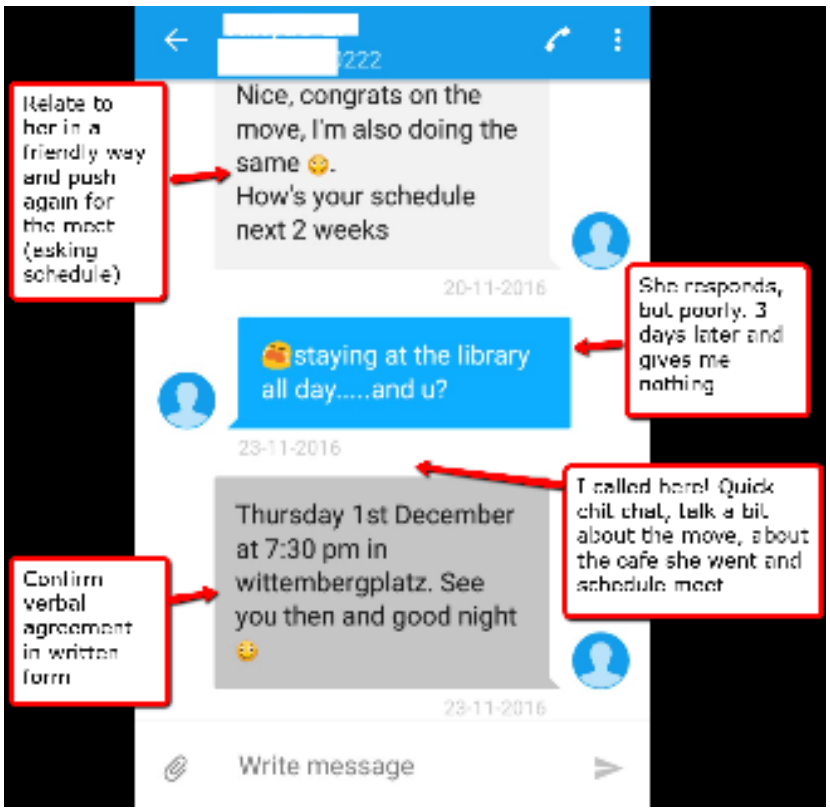
1. She Replies But It Goes Nowhere

When it takes her too long or she gives you nothing: call her. It shows you mean business and will force her to come up with an answer.

Here is one such example:



And right after the call:



Note: I didn't use her name in this example. It was my mistake because I hadn't saved her number right away and later forgot.

2. If She Proposes Alternatives: Refuse

If she proposes you an alternative to the two of you meeting on a date, think of it this way:

- Does it help the two of you get together, yes or no?

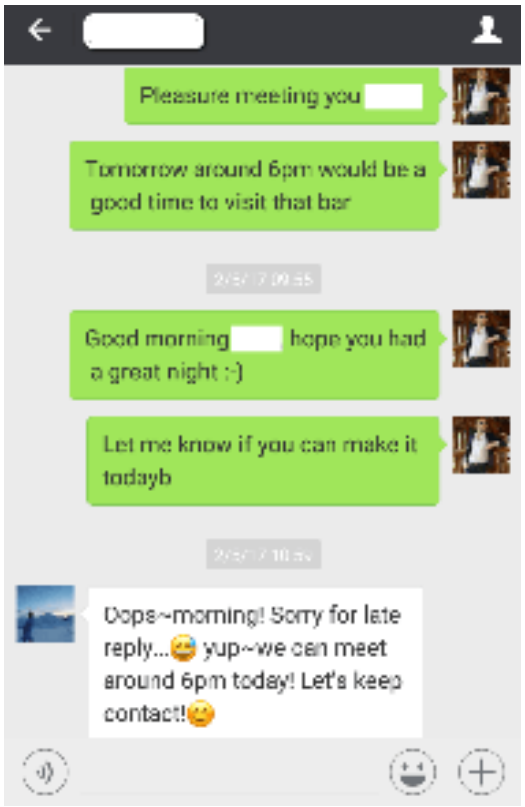
Any time it's "no", refuse.
But don't give up.
See this example:

3. When There Is No Time: Push

There are some situations where you are either leaving the place or she is leaving.

In those situations, it's done or die, so all the rules on not chasing go out the window, and double texting and pushing are fair game.

In this example, she was leaving in two days, and my "let me know if you can make it" forces her to say yes or no.

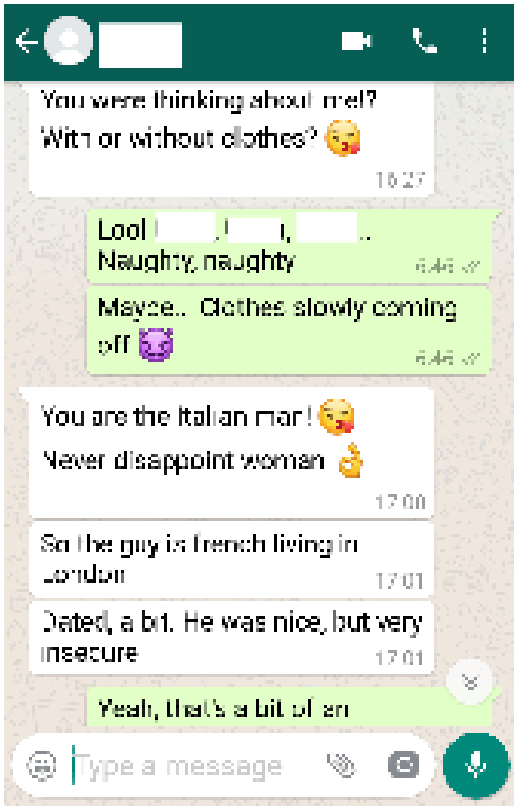


4. If She Flirts, Don't Go, Caveman

It won't happen often, but some women will test you a bit with sexual stuff.

My recommendation is that you don't take the bait here and do not go caveman.
That's what most guys would do, and they reveal their cards too quickly.

Only escalate sexually by text if you can meet her right away or if you can keep the sexual emotions riding high for a long time -which is not easy-.
Otherwise, emotions will come crashing down and rarely she'll be excited to meet you later.



Notice that I don't let her down by avoiding the topic altogether.
I validate her and give her a reply that makes her feel wanted. But my answer doesn't go overboard. It builds a sexual atmosphere but more in a sensual way, without going, caveman.
And then goes back to normal.

P.S.: if a girl is talking to you about other men it's either you are in the friend zone or… She likes you. If there is sexual chemistry, it's a strong sign she likes you.

Also, read:

- Text flirting full guide

And here is a good video on text flirting:

5. If She's "Spontaneous": Cut That Crap

Some girls will eventually drop you the "spontaneous" line. They like being spontaneous or they will meet you "spontaneously".

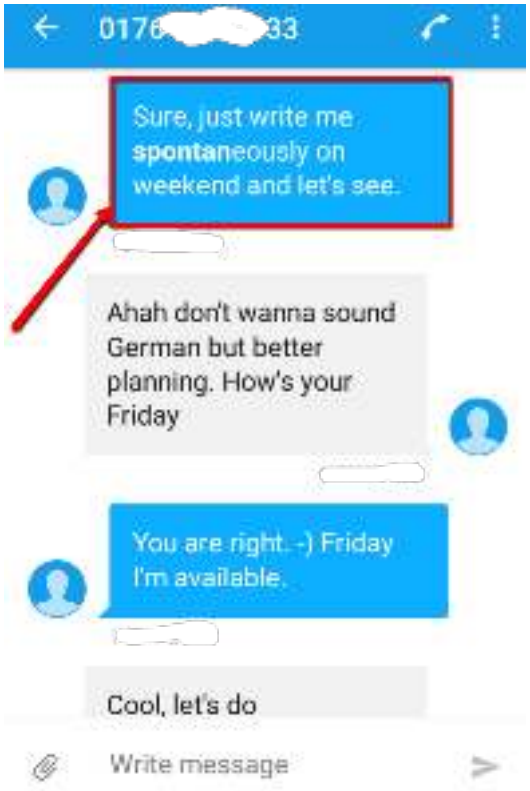
Don't let them get away with that. Two bad things will happen if you accept it and check back with them later:

1. You allow them to stall you

2. They get in control of the interaction
3. You chase them when you check in on their “spontaneous” schedule

What to do then?

You pin them down, right there and then, on proper behavior. Proper behavior, of course, is to plan and make it happen.
If the girl likes you, or often even if she’s uncertain about you, she will like you more right after you pin her down (of course :).
See a case in point:



Note: better doing it jokingly than sternly. It’s easy coming across the wrong way in the text.

also read:

- What “spontaneous” really mean

5. If She Blows Up: Good!

Sometimes you will make a bit too mean of a joke, or she is a little bit too touchy. Or maybe she’s just very invested in you and what you say matters a lot to her.

Whatever the reason, it’s not an uncommon occurrence that some women can get snippy or even hurl some insults at you.

Here’s how you handle it:

1. Don’t reply right away (or you look reactive)
2. Let her stew on her mistake (make her fear she alienated you)
3. Do NOT take a step back or apologize

Not too dissimilar from “handling a boss yelling at you“.

However, remember this: **anger and sexual excitement are often two sides of the same coin**. You can even piss off women on purpose, but it's more of an advanced technique.

However, this is "how to text a girl", and you cannot release that sexual tension while texting.

Depending on the relationship between you two, you can avoid replying. And depending on how aggressive she was, you can demand an apology (and if she was really out of order, you should).

In the example below, I realized I had done a mistake: she WAS trying to impress me. So I didn't demand an apology but struck a conciliatory tone instead.
However, notice how all the three points above still apply:

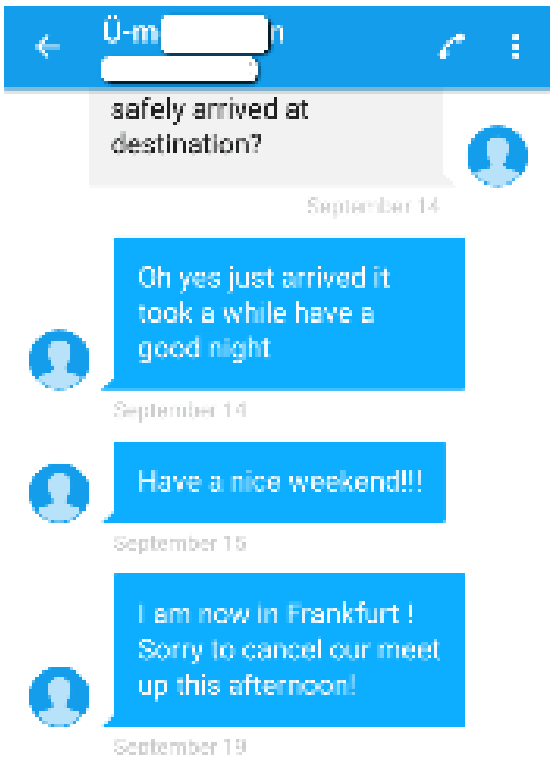
6. What If She Cancels The Date?

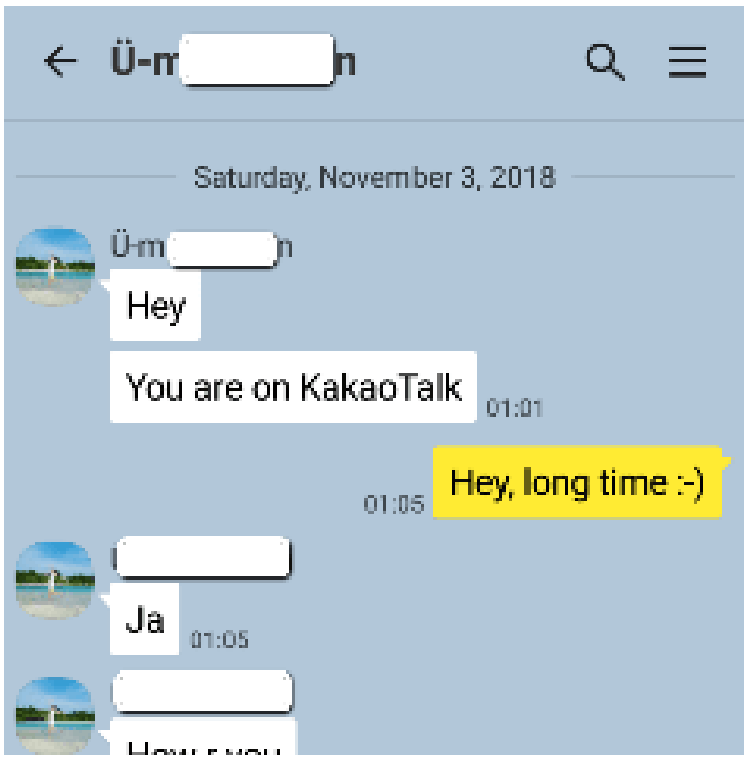
What if she texts you to cancel the date?

If she cancels in advance and sounds apologetic about it, it's OK.
Tell her "no problem", then drop it and call her a few days later to ask how are things and reschedule.

If she cancels on the same day, without warning you in advance or in a curt manner, I recommend you do not reply.

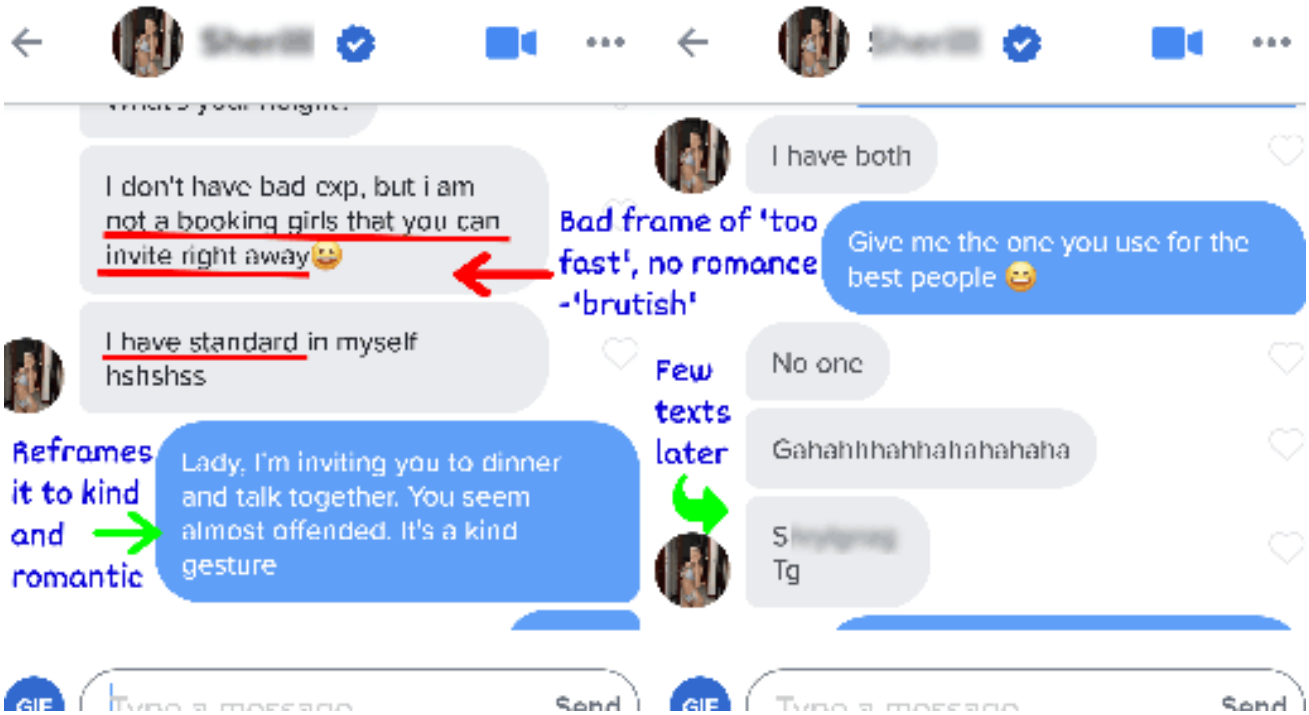
And some of them will turn around:





7. If She Complains You Move Too Fast, Reframe It

For example:



Also see:

- Frame control techniques
- How to lead in dating

Calls VS Text

The last word on calls VS texts.

When the topic of “how to text a girl” comes up, there are usually two camps: “you don’t text, you call her”; and “texting is better”

As usual, any black and white answer is wrong most of the time.
There are times to call and times to text.

On average though, yous should prioritize texting.
The reason why? It’s not just about what you like, but what most women like.

And most women nowadays prefer texts, especially so with people they aren’t yet too close with.
One of the reasons some men say you should call is because it shows you’re not afraid. And Aziz in Modern Romance says that indeed many men are afraid of calling. But here is the twist: many women are afraid of picking up!

So what happens, often, is that you call to show you’re a direct, “brave” man and she ends up dodging you. And if you two are not close, a single time of her dodging you spell doom for your chances in 90% of the instances.

This is one of the reasons why I recommend you stick to texts.

Unless… Unless she doesn’t reply twice in a row. Then try to go for a call, but please expect your call might not be extremely well received :).

Other exceptions when to go to for calls:

- Her texts are super brief
- You cannot manage to pin her down on a date
- She calls you first (don’t go back to texts if that’s the case)
- You call her, she picks up and it goes well (stick to calls afterward)

The Texting Commandments

1. You shall text with an objective in mind
2. You shall not be her chat-pal
3. You shall not send too long texts
4. You shall think before you text
5. You shall not get sidetracked by her questions
6. You shall ask her out quickly
7. You shall make it easy for her to say yes
8. You shall not accept friendly invites
9. You shall assume she will say yes
10. You shall confirm the date on date-day

And here is a diagram of how to text a girl well:

Summary

This is a simple and effective process to text girls.

It's not meant to make you spend a lot of time texting, but in taking you from texting to dates.

No, it won't *completely* remove any instance of flaky girls, non-replies, and go-nowhere texts. But it's as close as possible to transform those phone numbers into dates and lovers.

How Women Control Men: The Secret Psychology of Relationship Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Women control men—it's a critical dynamic fueled by personal benefit and often enabled by men themselves.

From frame control to psychological manipulation, power frequently shifts without awareness.

This guide is your complete breakdown of **why women control men,** the specific tactics and **techniques** they use, and how to recognize, counter, and **defend against these moves** to maintain power, and improve your relationship.

The TPM Female Relationship Control Model
A behavioral framework describing how control shifts in relationships through value positioning, moral authority (judge role), emotional pressure (drama/nagging), behavioral compliance (tasking), and identity enforcement (shame). The model explains how acceptance of covert frames leads to psychological and material investment, internalization of standards, and long-term power asymmetry.
This article is a neutral analysis of recurring relational dynamics. It does not claim that *all* women or *all* relationships follow this pattern. Our goal is to help readers maintain respect, attraction, and **win-win relationships**. For the sake of balance and completeness, remember that **men also employ their own distinct set of tactics to influence their partners**.

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Intro: Domestication Dynamics

Few women are the official "relationship leader"—but they're often de facto leaders and wield greater interpersonal influence.

A typical woman controls the relationship this way:

1. **Be the prize**, or the higher value partner
2. **Demand his investment** to make up the value imbalance ('compensatory investment')
   - Tasking to direct his investment and execute her priorities
3. **Set the foundational frames** of what's good/bad
   - Drama & nagging to control his behavior against her standards
4. **Be the judge** dispensing emotional rewards and punishments
   - Blaming, criticism & shaming when he fails to conform
     Ie.: 'You're failing as a man' frames

Women control the *deeper* levels of the relationship—and men *react* at the *superficial* levels.

Deeper layers exert deeper influence, so you must focus on them

Men don't challenge the deeper layers and:

- **Accept she's higher value**
- **Accept the non-written rules** that they must serve and provide
- **Accept she's the judge** of good/non-good behavior and relationship quality

Let's see exactly how that happens:

1. Emotional Pressure (Nagging & Drama)

Drama and nagging serve to increase his commitment and mold his behavior.

In Brief:

1.2. Nagging

Nagging is a long-term, semi-permanent behavioral-shaping tool.

It works in part through conditioning of reward and punishments (behaviorism): do what I like, and you make me happy (and maybe get the cookie); don't do what I like, and you fall from my grace and get my nagging wrath (negative reinforcement).

I quote clinical psychologists and Ph.D. Harriet Braiker (a woman, BTW) verbatim:

> Nagging is the human equivalent of shock grids to the rat.

Eventually, he internalizes the rules.
When that happens, nagging puts a "voice" in his head that makes him feel in the wrong when he doesn't follow the rules –*her* rules-.
And, eventually, he *does* follow her rules:

> **Him**: for years now she has insisted that I sit when I urinate (video of him sitting to urinate)

Nagging sets the priority of what's important. It says "change who you are".
Just like water molds rock over the years, so long-term nagging is low-intensity pressure that, over time, sculpts the man just like she wants him.

1.3. Drama

Drama is a concentrated, shorter-term compliance tool.

If nagging sets the priorities of what's important, **drama sets the priorities of what's *urgent***.

Nagging says "You're not OK", while drama says "What you are doing *right now* is not OK, move your ass *now* to change it".

Here is a drama example:

> **Her**: (emotional, yelling, shoving him) Hooooneey, go, do something (points towards where he needs to go)! Harry! Hurry! <— Drama + tasking
> **Him**: (takes action)

Drama also **increases his investment and breaks his frame**.
Faced with drama, most men *react*, lose power, invest more… And fall into her frame.

Instead of, say, walking away or telling her to quit the drama, they follow her lead and get emotionally ensnared.

The secret of drama is emotions.
Emotions with a self-righteous attitude that assumes she's right.

Since men don't use this tactic, they fail to see it for what it is: a power move.

Most men take ownership of her drama and make it *their* priority to fix it.
When that happens, they accept the unspoken frame that it's their duty to serve her.

2. Authority Hijacking (Blaming & Criticism)

Blaming and criticism are verbal aggression tools that frame the attacker as higher power.

Most men, unaware of power dynamics, defend themselves, and sub-communicate the following:

1. Admits guilt
2. Confirm she's in charge
3. Confirm it's his duty to make her happy

Imagine the following:

> (Enters home, places 2 bags of groceries on the kitchen table and she looks through the bags)
> **Her**: OMG where is the cheese! Didn't I tell you this morning to get the cheese? I can't believe you forgot it, it was such a simple task! How am I going to cook without the cheese!

Since he made a mistake, many men defend themselves.
The problem with defending is that it does not address the real issues: her aggressive tone, and the covert frames.
The covert frame is that he is responsible for serving and executing her tasks (and doing so properly).

Poor reactions also include:

1. **Make excuses** (terrible)
2. **Try to fix the superficial issue** (bad: it doesn't address the *main* issue, the disrespect)
3. **Escalate** (so-so, it's still reactive)
4. **Ask her to calm down** (bad)

How to Deal With Blaming

Here is how you handle blaming instead:

> **Her**: (attacks him)
> **You**: I am not comfortable with your tone

You don't address the perfunctory cheese issue but, calm and collected, you go to the crux of the matter.

> **Her**: What do you mean my tone, what are you talking about, you didn't buy the cheese!
>
> **You**: I forgot the cheese, true. But how does that give you the right to be aggessive and nasty <— Own the mistake and address the bigger issue

Then, hold your frame it was nasty, and you don't accept it.
After you gain control, THEN you can address the deeper issue:

> **You**:
> It's not about the cheese, but about us.
> Cheeses come and go, but *how* we deal with each other stays.
> And nasty communication makes for nasty relationships. NOT what I want.
> I want a healthy and respectful relationship.
> (pause)
> Is it clear?

With that, you addressed the power dynamics: you are *not* a punching bag for her anger.

Now you can move to the root causes of *this* particular issue.

Assign her priorities back to her

What's important to her but not to you is her responsibility.
Tell her that if it matters to her, she should handle it, as you have your own priorities.

3. Setting the Frame & Moral Authority (Judge & Shaming)

Shame is the superpower of the judge's role.

When women use shame in a relationship, they attack something that every man feels deeply inside: what it (supposedly) means to be a man.
Some of the most powerful attacks on manhood are:

- Unsuccessful
- Weak
- Impotent
- "Pussy"

In relationships women can leverage shame to cage men into provider roles.

It's often easy for women to do that.
Society still sees and nudges men to be providers.
And several psychologists noticed that many men have an inborn drive to defend and provide (Smith, 2014; Miller, 2015).

That's good for society -for example, children benefit from a man's support-.

However, **women often enlarge the scope of "what it means to be a man" to fit what *they* want and need**.
So providing becomes:

> **Her**: I'm unhappy. Make me happy (or you're not a real man)
> **You**: OK, let me try some monkey dancing

> **Her**: Protect me. Buy a house in the good part of town (or you're not a real man)
> **You**: OK, working hard on that promotion…
>
> **Her**: Make me satisfied (or you're not a real man)
> **You**: OK, I'll try harder

Holly Elkins's boyfriend even committed the worst crime with this game.

Of course, providing for a woman is great *if part of a balanced give and take.*
High-quality providers in healthy relationships do more good to society than players.

But many men focus on their duty to give, without thinking about their right to ask back:

> **Tom**: I want to walk away from all this work I hate, it's destroying me <— He is suffering
>
> **Wife**: I bet on you <— ⍰⍰ Don't b*tch. I bet on you to provide a luxury lifestyle for me, don't disappoint me!
>
> **Tom**: She bet on my relentlessness, so I had to find a way <— All his work was to make his wife happy

Tom is a good guy.
But he still suffered her decision not to have children while he wanted them.

There is a big difference between a relationship leader and high-quality man who *chooses* to provide for a kind woman, and a submissive guy (or a clueless guy being manipulated).

4. Behavioral Compliance (Tasking)

Tasking is the most visible means of control.

Many women will start tasking early on to test his mettle.

For example:

- *"Can you hold my bag?"*
- *"Pass me a napkin"*

- "(Pointing at the tip box) *That's for the tip*"

The more he executes her tasks, the more likely it is he will commit and invest. Thus, tasking is a screening tool for providers.

Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) suggests that the more he complies, the more he believes it's the right thing to do
And he will rationalize his actions (Eagleman, 2011) telling himself that "she must be worth it". So task executions confirm and strengthen that she is 'the prize' of the relationship.

Tasking may also start later, though.

If you're high-status and socially confident, she didn't dare to try controlling you -and you probably rebuked early attempts-.

But a woman's domestication attempts don't stop.

And tasking, together with all the other control tools, will start when *she* is power-up.
Ie.: after commitment, moving in together, or after marriage.

Also see this article on power stages:

> Relationship Power Dynamics: Strategies & Insights for All 9 Stages

Example: Nagging + Tasking + Drama

Notice her attitude, and how hard it is for him to resist:

> **Her**: (high emotions, dramatic approach) I went to the market, I cleaned this entire condo, and I've been cooking for the last three hours. Come on, help set the table
> **Him**: Don't you wanna finish it yourself?
> **Her**: Set the table!

Her conviction and righteous attitude make her frame iron-solid.
She speaks as if it's a foregone conclusion that she is right and he is wrong.

He *seems* strong and independent, but he is *re*-acting.

It's more of a mother/child dynamic.
The mother knows what's right to do and he's being a rebellious kid not living up to her righteous expectations.

Read more on tasking and execution strategies:

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

5. Value Signaling (Prizing)

Female domestication is more effective when she positions herself as the relationship prize.

If she convinces him to be higher value, then the human innate sense for social exchange dynamics pushes him to 'make up for the difference'.

For most women, it's not hard to be the relationship prize.
General mate value dynamics tell us that most women ARE higher value than most average men.

So the first solution for you is simple: to avoid being domesticated and less attractive, work on your mate value.

P.S.:
Our mission is exactly that.
We help good men become more empowered, confident leaders.

Why Do Some Women Seek to Control Men?

The question comes naturally to any inquisitive mind.

Why do women work so hard to control men and take the reins of the relationship?

It all goes back to biology, evolution, and male parental investment.
We'll simplify for brevity.

Male parental investment measures how much males invest in their offspring.

Matt Ridley explains that in species where the male does not invest, females only care about his genes.
She does not care about his resources, fidelity, or investment because she can't get them anyway.

In the animal kingdom, human men are in the middle of male parental investment.
Meaning: men invest in their children, but *not always*, and *not as much as women*.

So here is why women want to control men:

Women seek to control men to ensure they will provisioning and support and for women and children

We can *speculate* that women who better controlled men have been more successful over evolutionary time.
They had more children who survived and thrived, and spread their "controlling genes" far and wide.

And that's why women's approach to relationship control is the norm, rather than the exception.

Even without evolutionary arguments aside, life is just better and easier for a woman who can control her man.
And that may provide an additional incentive for seeking control.

Men Also Seek Control... But Differently

Of course, evolution exerted the same pressure on men.

Men who could better influence and control their partners also out-reproduced men who failed to influence.

Men's control is different, though.
And it's more centered around ensuring her sexual fidelity (Buss, 2021).

Much more has been written about male control, including in academic textbooks.
I find that reassuring for this article's thesis.

Proof of one gender control can at least suggest the other gender may be doing the same -both for gaining an edge, and as part of a co-evolutionary sexual arms race-.

In brief, men tend to control more for fidelity, and women tend to control more for continued provisioning.
And we can expect both genders to also develop strategies to escape that control.

As preliminary supporting evidence, Buss confirms that some men hide some resources.
And that women's jealousy is more emotional, in fear of losing his investment, while men's jealousy is more sexual in nature (Buss, 2016).
We're now waiting for brave psychologists to test the rest of this article's theses.

Domesticated Men: Less Sexy, But More Useful

Over the long term, women's control of men is an act of domestication.

He goes from free-grazing wild beast to cart-pulling ox.
Semi-neutered ox :).

A domesticated man is less attractive and sexy.
Higher-status men are less likely to be domesticated. Hence, **successful domestication signals that he is not a high-value man.**

So men who fall for the domestication process cannot maintain long-term attraction.
And they may also have to worry about her loyalty, since women prefer higher-status men.

Video version of this article ↗

In **Power University** we share practical solutions to maintain leadership and attraction in win-win relationships

The Laws of Human Nature: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Laws of Human Nature* (2018) author Robert Greene attempts to explain and demystify something that should be so simple yet it's so difficult and elusive: our own nature as human beings.

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Bullet Summary

- Choose the important people in your life based on their strength of character first and foremost
- Understand, accept, and use your dark side: both the repressed desires and your aggression
- Use your mortality to instill in yourself a sense of urgency

Full Summary

About The Author: Robert Greene is a popular writer of *books on power*, psychology, life strategies, and people's strategies.
Albeit not a psychologist himself, Green distinguishes himself for the depth of his understanding of human nature - particularly the "darker side"-.
Robert Greene is also the author of "*The 48 Laws of Power*", "*The Art of Seduction*", "*Mastery*" and "*The 50th Law of Power*".

About the "Laws of Human Nature"

Greene has always taken the time to research his books thoroughly. In the case of "*The Laws of Human Nature*", it took a whole 6 years.
And expectations were sky-high.

Drawing from different disciplines and from the most desperate authors such as Ramachandran, Kahneman, and Jung, Greene says:

> Consider the law of human nature a code book for deciphering human nature.

Introduction

Robert Greene says that modernity might lead us to believe we are transcending human nature.

But the opposite is true: we have never been more enslaved by human nature as we are today.

Our emotions have only been heightened by social media, and viral news makes it all the easier to inflame hearts and evade rationality. And it's easier than ever for manipulative politicians and leaders to manipulate us.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

And look at our tribal tendencies, which digitalization has only made easier.
Now we can find our little groups and insulate ourselves with groupthink and herd mentality (see "red pill analysis" as an example).

The aim of "*The Laws of Human Nature*" is twofold:

1. Help people judge others more effectively while making it difficult for the more destructive types to harm you
2. Learn your own human nature for true self-development

> We are all cut from the same cloth, and we all share the same tendencies. The sooner you realize this, the greater your power will be to overcome the negative traits within you

#1: Master Your Emotional Self

> **The Law of Irrationality**

We think we are rational, but we are not.

To achieve our potential, we need to learn how we are irrational and reactive to the world.

Ask yourself where your irrational drives come from.
Why are you angry, why are you being resentful?

Greene talks about the 2008 financial crisis and expands on psychological biases.

The author says that history shows there have been men of great rationality, which are proof that yes, we can be rational and increase our chances of success by becoming more rational.

> The longer you can resist reacting, the more mental space for actual reflection

#2: Transform Self-love into Empathy

> **The Law of Narcissism**

Narcissism has been on a steady rise in the last decades and it has climbed to record highs with the latest generations.
We are all a bit narcissistic. But your goal is to move to a *healthy* narcissism.

To do so, you must be honest with your self-absorption: don't dupe yourself that you're altruistic

Healthy narcissists are driven and focus their drive outward, they incorporate feedback and recover quickly from failures and setbacks.

In his usual historical examples, Greene talks about Stalin. Stalin came to loathe his closest friends because he had to play a charming game with them. And why should he be charming with anyone?

This is an important lesson about how power can turn friendships into enemies.

Also, read:

- How to overcome an entitled mentality
- **Winner narcissists VS losers narcissists**

> Turn off the internal monologue to tune in to the world

#3: See Through People's Mask

> **The Law of Role-playing**

Humans are consummate actors, we all wear a mask and we all learn how to lie.
We adapt ourselves to our groups and we are so good at acting that we don't even realize we do.

In this chapter, Greene goes into body language, but the value of learning language from a book is limited.

Also, read:

- The Mask of Masculinity

#4: Determine the Strength of People's Character

> **The Law of Compulsive Behavior**

Character is a primary value when evaluating people to work for or partner with.
Their characters matter more than their charm, intelligence, or charisma.

The strength of someone's character comes from the core of someone's personality. It comes from genetics, good parenting, mentors along the way, and continuous improvement.

Strong characters stem from a feeling of personal security and self-worth.
They:

- Can take criticism and learn from experience
- Don't easily give up because want to get better
- Not insecure about their personal status, they can subsume their interests to that of the group

Weak people:

- Are overcome by circumstances
- They're slippery and evasive
- Don't improve much because they can't take criticism

Try to test people's character by making a joke, criticizing them, or giving them a challenging task. And associate only with strong characters. Put the strength of character above intelligence and charm.

Accept Your Character

Robert Greene says that we all have a rather strong and set character through our genes and childhood. Refusing to accept it is refusing to influence it.
Instead, we need to learn how we are wired and then we will have a certain control to smooth our edges.

#5: Become an Elusive Object of Desire

> **The Law of Covetousness**

Instead of focusing on what you want, focus on what others want, on their repressed desires and fantasies.

What you offer should be new, unfamiliar, and exotic. Or at least, presented as such.

#6: Elevate Your Perspective

> **The Law of Shortsightedness**

Keep a long perspective, and avoid being pulled by new trends and new shining objects. Stick with what you start and prioritize based on your long-term goals.

#7: Soften People's Resistance by Confirming Their Self-Opinion

> **The Law of Defensiveness**

As Carnegie says in *How to Win Friends*, to be interesting, be interesting. Make others the focus of attention.

Similar to Chris Voss, To influence people Robert Greene recommends you stop trying to push them. Instead, take a step back and assume an inferior position. Ask them for advice, and make them feel good.
Make a small favor for them, and induce them to reciprocate.

Don't remind them of the favors you have done for them in the past. It doesn't make them feel grateful, it reminds them of their dependence on others and we want to feel independent.
Instead, remind them of what they've done for you in the past. Confirm their self-opinion as good people.

Also, read:

- What's in it for them
- What's in it for them examples

#8: Change Your Circumstance by Changing Your Attitude

> **The Law of Self-sabotage**

You are not a pawn, you are an active player. Mind and body are one, and one influences the other.

Don't see yourself as limited by birth: think that you can grow and improve.

Also, read:

- Personal Power II
- Awaken The Giant Within
- How to develop a growth mindset

#9: Confront Your Dark Side

> **The Law of Repression**

We all have a dark side, but most of us mask it.

Greene uses Carl Jung's terminology of "the shadow", which consists of all that we try to deny about ourselves and that we regret.

But denying and hiding it causes a whole host of problems. Depression and anxiety come from not being our true selves, from always playing a role.

We internalize all the ideals of our culture such as "being nice" and having pro-social values, which are often

necessary for the smooth functioning of our society. But in the process, it pushes a big part of our personality into that repressed corner that Jung called the shadow.

Greene instead welcomes the reader to include our dark side in who we are, to accept it and to use it for good and to fuel us towards our goals.

For more on the dark side also read:

- To be good you first need to be bad
- 12 Rules for Life
- Relentless

You often recognize people with a repressed dark side by their exaggeration. Too much masculinity, for example, betrays a yearning to be dominated.
Or too much saintliness, hiding their sexual appetites or their hunger for power.

Here is how to introduce the shadow within ourselves:

- **See the shadow** (look for opposite traits in yourself, emotional outbursts, insecurity)
- **Don't run from it** (the tendency will be to run away: don't)
- **Embrace it**
- **Use it** (to fuel your hunger)

#10: Beware the Fragile Ego

> **The Law of Envy**

We always compare with one another, and it rarely leads to good results for us.
Learn to develop your self-confidence from internal sources instead of comparisons. And deflect the envy by drawing attention away from you.

We disguise our envy to ourselves because that would mean we have to admit our inferiority. So we blame instead the system, bad luck, unfairness… Or the object of our envy himself.

Also, read:

- How to spot a frenemy

Do the following to overcome your own envy:

- Move closer to them (and you will see they have issues and problems just like anybody else)
- Compare with those who have less to reduce envy and increase gratitude
- Practice "mitfreude", the happiness for your friends
- Transmute envy into a desire for emulation and raise to their levels
- Admire others as a sign of human nature's potential

#11: Know Your Limits

> **The Law of Grandiosity**

We all have a need to feel superior to others. But the more successful we get, the more superior we feel, and that creates a disconnect with reality that can easily become our downfall.

- Come to terms with your grandiosity needs
- Concentrate energy: focus deeply and completely on one thing
- Practical grandiosity: focus on goals that stretch you but that you can reach
- Let loose your grandiose energy

#12: Reconnect to the Masculine/Feminine Within You

> **The Law of Gender Rigidity**

Greene says that we all tend towards the feminine or masculine, but we have both.
When people go too far in repressing the opposite gender within them, they will leak out in a caricature form.

And it's often the people with internal conflicts who lean too strongly towards one gender while trying to suppress the other.

Greene says that hostility towards the opposite gender is stronger in men.
It's born out of a sense of insecurity and he says it's possibly because of the hostility men feel towards their mothers for a time when they were fully dependent.

The author invites the readers to **embrace the opposite gender within us**, which will unleash double the power (and will help us better connect with each other).

#13: Advance with a Sense of Purpose

> **The Law of Aimlessness**

Similar to what he recommends in *Mastery*, Greene invites younger readers to explore and try different things to find their passion and purpose.

The biggest obstacle you will face in pursuing your purpose is those drudging moments of difficulties, pain, and boredom.
Greene says you should learn to get into the flow, and once you experience it, you will become addicted and always want to come back to it.

#14: Resist the Downward Pull of the Group

> **The Law of Conformity**

This was by far my favorite chapter.

Here Greene goes a bit into *social psychology* and sociology.

We are attracted to numbers and groups, we like losing ourselves in the group's energy.
But we also have an urgent need to fit in. We like to tell ourselves we are independent, but we are not: the people around us exert pressure on us, and instead of denying it we should leverage it.

Differences among groups are often exaggerated to create stronger feelings of "outgroup/ingroup" and of similarity among the members.
Don't fall for the tendency of denigrating your enemy: see him for who he is, and learn from what he does better.

> We must come to the conclusion that the primary group we belong to is that of the human race.
> Anything else is regressive and far too dangerous.

#15: Make Them Want to Follow You

> **The Law of Fickleness**

The Laws of Human Nature is a great book.
And this chapter on leadership stood out for the quality of its psychological dissertation on leadership.

Leadership is always built on a dichotomy, Greene says. On one side, people want to be led and they look up to a great and strong leader.
At the same time, they resent him. They resent his position, the power he has, and the power he has *over them*.

People in power though see only the smiles, and they mistake it for unending approval. When they make a mistake and people will be clamoring for their heads, they are taken by surprise.
They shouldn't, it's just the normal release of aggression and pent-up resentment that is channeled against the leader.

As a leader, you must be seen working harder than everyone else, says Greene.
Also, read:

- How to be a leader
- Best leadership books
- Leadership and power for women

Greene also recommends that it's better to start tough. You always have time to show your soft side. But if you start soft, people might think of you as a pushover.

#16: See the Hostility Behind the Friendly Facade

> **The Law of Aggression**

Our culture, civilization, and society tend to repress our most aggressive instincts.
But we all have it, it's what made us the apex predator on earth, and instead of repressing it, we should *use* our aggression.

Also, if you don't, you will be run over by those who do. Aggressive people tend to obsess over the objects people, which is a sign they want to swallow them whole.

Take stock of physical obsessions, like anger in being overtaken or always wanting to be front and center.
Case in point with Trump:

Fight the aggressive types indirectly, and avoid making them feel not in control, which is their greatest fear.

Also, read:

- How to leverage your dark side
- The Art of The Deal

#17: Seize the Historical Moment

> **The Law of Generational Myopia**

Ibn Khaldun was the first to come up with the idea of "generations" and "generational cycles".

Every generation has its spirit, its peculiarities. Like individuals, they will also have their shadow and their

repressed yearnings.
Often, like individuals, they swing in the opposite direction of their most repressed feelings.

The generation you are born into shapes the way you are, and presents unique opportunities for you.
Greene recommends you don't go completely against the grain or you will end up isolated and in trouble. Instead of bucking the trend, it's best instead to redirect the flow of your generation.

#18: Meditate on Our Common Mortality

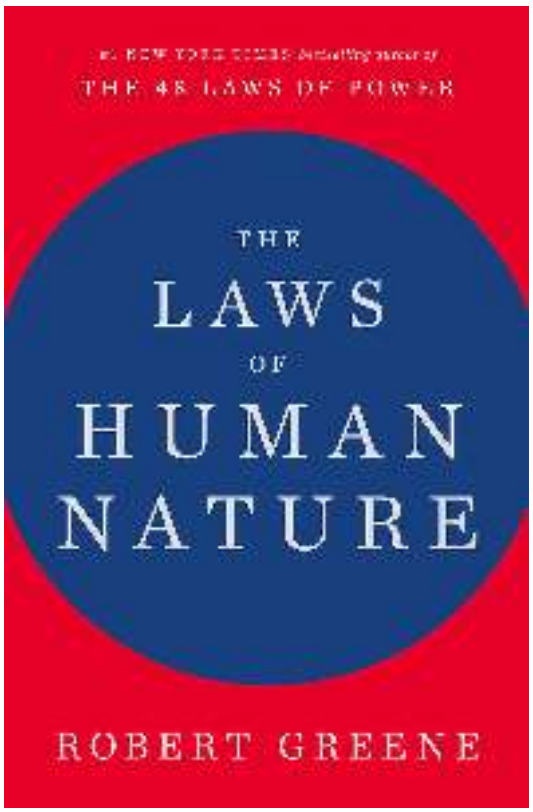
> **The Law of Death Denial**

We all try to avoid thoughts of death, but it's a mistake.
Death is there, whether you like it or not. And to echo the sentiment all across *The Laws of Human Nature*, Greene invites the readers to use and leverage reality rather than trying to fight it or forget it.

Meditate on your death so that you will make the most of your time, instilling a sense of urgency in your purpose and goals.

Also, read:

- How to leverage your mortality for life



Real-Life Applications

Accept people for who they are, not for what you want them to be
Don't project your emotions onto them, and don't try to change who they are.

Watch out for fake illnesses to control you
Partners sometimes can fake or exaggerate illnesses to force their partners to play by their rules.

Criticism

Albeit "*The Laws of Human Nature*" is possibly my favorite book from Greene and *one of the best self-help books ever*, there is still some criticism to be mentioned.

Let's start from the author:

> **Lucio**:
> Robert Greene doesn't have the deepest experience on social power dynamics and seduction.
> And his work tends to be low in empirical evidence.
> Howerer, he has a deep grasp of human nature. Far surpassing many psychologists on this topic. And especially so when it comes to the darker side of human nature.
> His focus on that dark side also makes Greene stand out in the mass of (naive) self-help books to deliver some of the most striking, unique, and helpful self-development books available

Some criticism now relating to *The Laws of Human Nature*:

1. Very Freudian

I find Robert Greene to be *very* Freudian.

Much of what the personality traits he ascribes to childhood and parents and he often invites the readers to investigate people's past.

I am not too sold on that.

And neither are revered psychologists such as Martin Seligman.

2. Sometimes Poor Interpretation of Events

In a few instances, the laws and recommendations are based on wrong assumptions.

For example, Greene says we should try to better understand trends and future events. Wolfgang was so good at predicting the future, tells, Robert Greene. He even predicted the unification of Europe, which started happening after WWII!

But that makes no sense.

Wolfgang didn't predict anything, he simply *said* something would happen.

And on a long enough timeline, whatever you say is bound to happen. I can say today that "Europe will divide once again", and on a long enough timeline, it's quite likely that I'll be right (sadly).

Also read: *Fooled by Randomness.*

3. Too Many Personality Types

If we were to count the personality types of *The Laws of Human Nature* we'd probably end up close to one hundred.

I love a good psychological analysis, but they seemed a bit too many and the descriptions were not always deep enough to warrant their own category.

4. Personal interpretations presented as truths

The Goldwater rule says that psychiatrists shouldn't attempt to diagnose people from afar.

Well, Greene also fortunatley is not a psychiatrist, because he also diagnoses long-dead individuals :).

That's totally fine and I appreciate his courage to speak like many of us would speak in everyday life. But he presents his diagnoses as obvious, foregone conclusions.

Even if our armchair diagnoses are right, and sometimes of course they are, they shouldn't be presented as foregone conclusions.

And, after all, it's a power move to sound more authoritative: remove all "maybes" and people will follow you (charismatic leadership style).

5. Lacks Coherent Narrative & Structure

The Laws of Human Nature gives career and workplace advice (coddle to your boss) under the chapter on group dynamics.

The content was great and I even took notes for potentially adding something to Power University. But it felt like an offshoot, without a good narrative around it. The book would have benefited from better structure.

6. Exaggerated, Unrealistic Historical Examples

Some of the famous Greene historical examples are exaggerated and add a lot of bombast for (possibly) marketing and mass appeal.

For example, here is an example to explain the importance of reading body language: a woman sits at a doctor's practice and the doctor asks her: "does your husband know about your affair?". He knew by watching her signs of nervousness and the way she said "hi".
As *plenty of body language experts explain*, you cannot jump to that type of conclusion without being wrong more times than not.

Another example is Haig.
Greene says that Haig rose through the rank playing one of the games that he so well describes until the point when he became chief of staff and told the cameras "I am in charge here".

But just look at the videos and it seems like Greene embellished the facts:

Haig did not say "I'm in charge", he said, "I'm in control… *Here* at the White House, *pending* the *return* of the vice president, if something came up I would check with him, of course".

Big difference.

7. People Don't Change? Well, Sometimes, They Do...

Greene says that people don't really change.

And I'm glad he says that because the current trend in self-help over-state the case for change.

Most people don't change indeed, and some traits are notoriously hard -or impossible- to work on.

On the other hand, some people DO change.
Not only in skills, which are obviously improvable, but also in mindsets and behaviors.
I can see how I changed myself, my mindsets, and my behaviors.

And it's not just my opinion.
Longitudinal research also tells us that people DO change over time.

PROS

- **Great Analyses**

I won't list a hundred pros because one suffices: *The Laws of Human Nature* displays a depth of analysis on the human nature that few other texts can match.

And that's what I like about Greene: he understands people and psychology to a degree that few other authors have matched.

Review

I guess I can count myself as a big fan of Robert Greene.

I loved most of his books.

And "*The Laws of Human Nature*" ranks up there with Greene's very best work.

The Laws of Human Nature is different than his previous work, though.
It's more holistic and more self-focused. It's about how we all are, our shortcomings, and what we can do to most past our limitations and develop ourselves.

In that sense, it's the ultimate self-help book grounded in psychology.

I took away several notes and I almost felt bad to eventually delete the file from my phone.

Whether you want to improve yourself or better understand people, *The Laws of Human Nature* makes for a great read.

Check the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

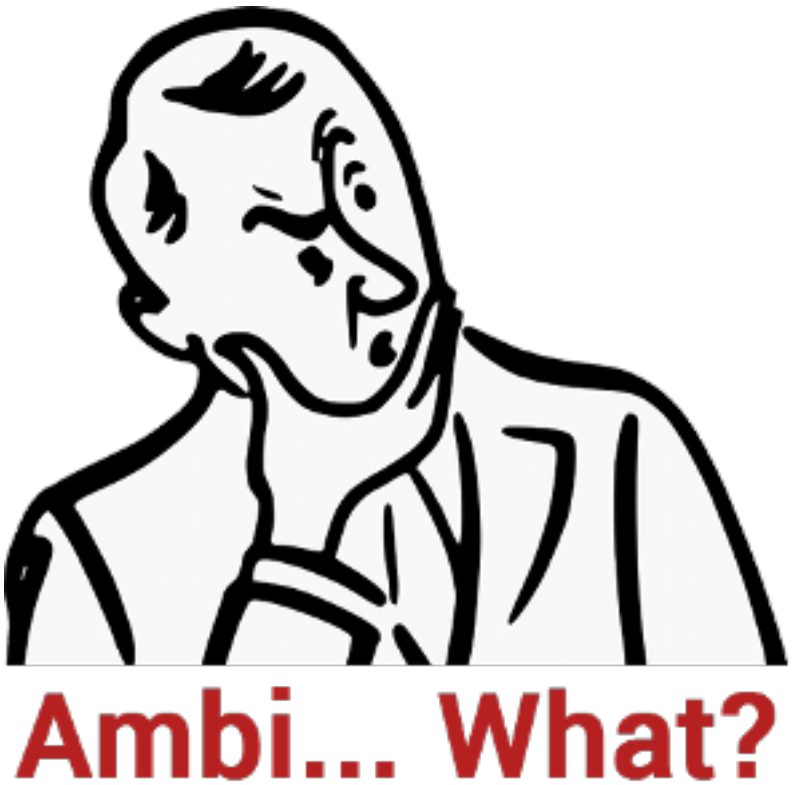
Ambivert: What It Means, & How to Become One

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Are you introverted or extroverted?

If you struggle with that question, it's possible that you are an ambivert.

This guide will help you find out if that's the case, what it means to you, and what are the advantages of being an ambivert.



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What's an Ambivert

An ambivert is an individual with the traits of both introversion and extroversion.

Basically, an ambivert is in the middle of the extroversion continuum.

Carl Jung was one of the first to discuss the "middle" of the road between introversion and extraversion.
And albeit Jung didn't use the exact word "ambivert", he said that ambiverts account for the majority of the population.

More recently, Adam Grant found confirmation for Jung's theory when around two-thirds of his research subjects didn't identify themselves as either introverted or extroverted.

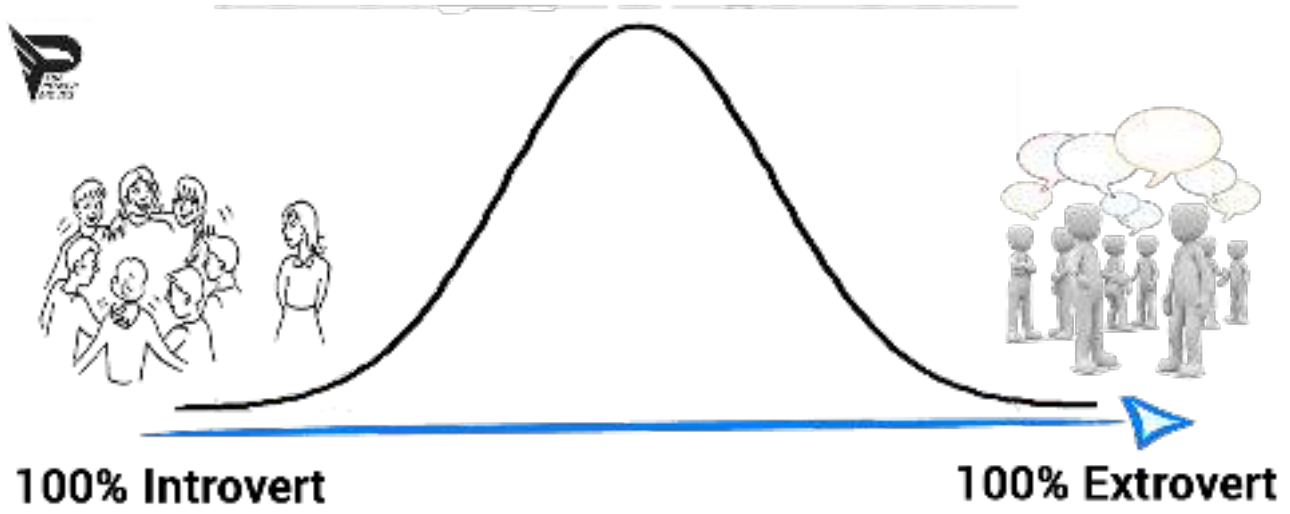
Extroversion Is a Spectrum

Extroversion, like many other psychological traits, is a continuum.

And what Jung and Grant noted makes a lot of sense if you think about it: in most distribution curves there are more people in the middle than at the opposite ends of the spectrum.

However, numbers can be misleading here.
People who *really* are in the middle, which we could call "purebred ambiverts", might not be the majority. Maybe around 20% of the population.
And most people will still lean more toward one end of the spectrum or the other.

That's why it's important to realize in which direction you lean the most.



Ambivert Traits

It can be frustrating to hear “it depends”, right?

You’re looking for answers but instead of clear-cut, black-and-white answers, you get that annoying, noncommittal “it depends”.

Welcome to the life of an ambivert.
Introverts and extroverts can clearly tell you whether a social situation is either fun or overwhelming, but for introverts, it depends.

For example:

- extroverts get energy from social settings, they want to interact with people and look forward to interacting with people.
- Introverts lose energy from social settings and prefer quiet time and solitude. They crave their own time

But ambiverts?
Sometimes they crave their alone time. And if they have been alone for a long time it can get difficult for them to “warm up” to people and social settings. But **once they are warm up, ambiverts can love social interactions**. And they can look forward to meeting and mingling with new people.

Signs That You’re an Ambivert

Here are some statements that ambiverts would agree to.
I:

- Enjoy a party, but then want to go home
- Like attention.. sometimes, depending on the context and mood
- Enjoy conversation (like extroverts) but not so much small talk (like introverts)
- Find it difficult sometimes to assert me
- Can be very reserved in some situations
- Prefer meeting new people with people that I know around
- Can find me in both extroversion and introversion descriptions
- Am excited about going to social events, but find it a bit intimidating in the beginning
- Enjoy lone time, but it can get too much after a few days
- Think before I speak (unlike extroverts), but don’t have problems putting thoughts into words (like introverts)
- Adapt to the people around (listen with talkers and talk more with silent people)
- Can get lost in a conversation (like an extrovert) as much as in my own thoughts (introvert)
- Sometimes mistrust people, but other times I can open up very easily

If you can recognize yourself with many of the above statements then, yes, chances are that you’re an ambivert.

The Ambiverts Advantage

For a long time, I had considered extroverts to hold an advantage over introverts.

After all, people are essential to success, and if you love interacting with people, then it’s easier for extroverts to make friends and build alliances, right?

Well, no, not really.

Ambiverts actually fare better with people.
By being in the middle of the spectrum, they have an easier time understanding, adapting, and interacting with everyone.
As we saw in the guide on how to find a perfect roommate, it's very easy for introverts and extroverts to end up hating each other:

Topic	Extroverts	Introverts
Eating	Want to eat together	Want to enjoy food alone
TV / Sport Events	Watch TV and sport together as a shared event	Watch the match alone (and comment it on an online forum)
Use of common spaces	Camp out on common areas (and hope roommate will come out)	Stay in the room (hoping roommate will get the fuck out so *they* can go out)
Feelings towards the other	• weird • slippery • always avoiding me • doesn't like me	• "too much" • overbearing • all over me • likes me too much

But ambiverts?
They understand and get along with everyone.
This makes it easier for them to be a social chameleons and to connect and bond with people.

Larry Kim indeed found that ambiverts are more adaptable and better mold the context and the situation.

Ambiverts are also more:

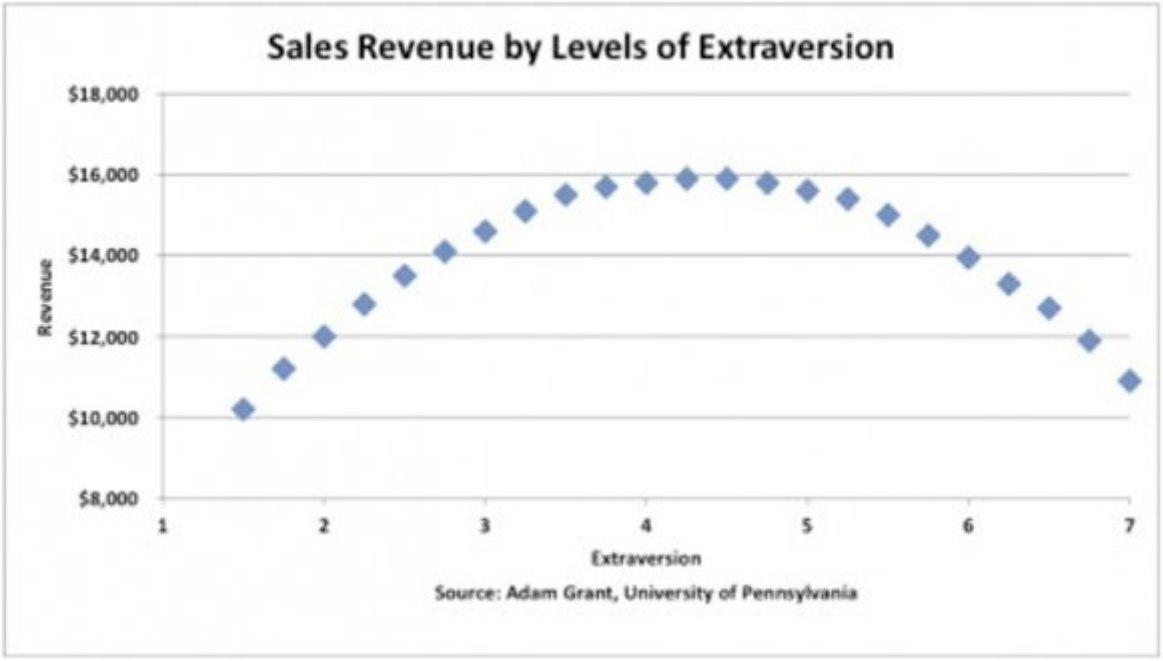
- **Emotionally Stable**: Hans Eysenck, the psychologist who first used the "ambivert", says that they avoid the extreme hypersensitivity of introverts and over-dominance of extroverts
- **Socially Intuitive**: Daniel Pink says that ambiverts have a better intuition of social intricacies such as when to speak and when to listen, when to push, and when to step back
- **Resilient**: While extroverts and introverts suffer in environments that do not suit them, ambiverts can do well both in difficult social settings and in long stretches of lone time
- **Empathic**: By sitting in the middle, it's easier for them to understand both introverts and extroverts. This ability tends to make ambiverts also less judgmental

Ambiverts Sell Better

Take a profession that most people consider people-related and that, to be good at, you need to be good at relating to people.

That profession is sales.

Usually, you'd think that extroverts are the best suited for a sales job. Instead, a study found that ambiverts generated 24% more revenue than introverts and a whopping 32% more than extroverts.



Source: Adam Grant
Since I have been in sales for several years and I have seen all types of sales personalities, this is what I suspect happens: extroverts, so in love with the socialization process, end up focusing too much on *socialization* rather than on *selling*.
And **extroverts' eagerness to talk makes them poorly suited to getting to know the prospect and selling to the prospect in a way that meets his needs**.
So in love with their own voice, they end up monopolizing the conversation. They overwhelm the prospect, listen too little, and do not position their product in relation to the customer's needs.

The ambivert instead, says Grant, strikes a better balance between enthusiasm, assertiveness, and the inherent need for listening that a good sales process entails.

Adam Grant also conducted a meta-study on the link between extroversion and income, and the result was that there was *no* connection.

What Influences Your Ambiversion

As an ambivert, you are liable to move up and down the extroversion scale.

Some factors that will influence your extroversion levels are:

- Location
- How well do you know the people
- How "socially warmed " you are
- Who is around you (you probably prefer some known people)
- How long you have been alone
- How long you have been socializing

Depending on how the situation and your mood change, you can present strong extrovert tendencies or strong introvert attitudes.

Can You Become Ambivert

Can you become an ambivert?

Sure you can.
And given that there are several advantages to ambiversion, you probably want to.

I started as an introvert and now I have moved more towards an ambivert middle.
And I'm not alone. I have read of *more people* going through the same development.
I still love my own time, my peace, and my quietness. But I also look forward to socializing, especially when there are some people I know in the audience and people that I like.

But, since I learned how to socialize well, I also love interacting with total strangers. As a matter of fact, I sometimes look forward to making new acquaintances and entering new social worlds.

You can also go from extroversion to ambiversion, but the following tips are more suited for introverts:

1. Increase Your Social Skills

The big secret to becoming more ambivert is to simply get better with people.
Then you will make friends more easily, you will know you can trust yourself to have a good time and you will know that you can excuse yourself at any time if you don't enjoy the interaction.

Also, read:

- Activities to get good with people
- Group conversation
- How to avoid being a social burden

2. Develop A Positive Social Circle

When you have people you like around you, you will love interacting with them and you will naturally start behaving like an extrovert and thinking like an extrovert.

Socialization will become more pleasurable and you will look forward to it.
Going out to meet them will be a pleasure, seeing them will be a pleasure, and meeting new people in the presence of the people you already like will become easier.

On the other hand, avoid toxic people, frenemies, and anyone who doesn't uplift you and doesn't want the best for you.

Also, read:

- How to spot frenemies
- Dealing with underminers
- Toxic people
- Signs of toxic relationships

3. Pick The Right Places

There will be places and locations that you enjoy.
And there will be places and locations that you loathe.

The solution?
Simply, increase the former and limit -or exclude- the latter.

If you don't like clubs and noisy bars, avoid them or you will always end up retreating into your shell and telling yourself "I'm just bad with people".
And since you're there, maybe your party friends are not the best fit for you while you're still fully on the introversion end of the spectrum.

On the other hand, if you are very much extroverted, you should probably avoid places that fit introverts best or you will always tell yourself "I need noise and people" and you'll never tone down your extrovert extremes.

4. Pick The Right Jobs

The stress therapy of "doing the opposite of what we like to grow and adapt" is a failed one.
It's best instead to stretch ourselves with small steps.

Here are a few professions where Ambiverts perform well and that will help you gradually move toward the middle of the spectrum:

- Sales positions

As we have seen ambiverts are very good at sales. And as a salesperson, I can tell you that a lot of time is spent on preparing a presentation, entering data, and managing loose ends: it's not all about talking to people.

- Negotiation

Same for sales: ambiverts are good both at imposing their needs when they need to, and listening to the other party when they have to.
Both are fundamental skills for effective negotiation.

- Management

Bosses who talk too much and don't listen to their reports don't make for great bosses. And managers who hide behind big screens to create a barrier between themselves and their teams are not usually the most loved and effective leaders.
The best managers know how to walk that line, and being in a managerial position while you try to be the manager you can be will stretch you toward that good middle ground.

- Teachers and educators

Teaching and education also require a mix of lone work to prepare the lessons, listening to students, and speaking time. Another great profession for ambiverts.

Criticism of Ambiversion

There have also been critics of the concept of ambiversion.

Both criticisms below raise good points and, to understand yourself and gain deeper self-awareness and emotional intelligence, it's important that you understand them before you're too quick to jump into the "ambivert bandwagon" (yes, it's becoming a thing :).

Love Socialization But Get Drained: Still Introvert

For example, some psychologists say that if people enjoy socialization and talking to others but do get drained and need to "recharge", then they are not ambiverts.
They are simply introverts who enjoy socializing.

Love Socialization But Get Overwhelmed: Still Extrovert

Susan Cain, in her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts* says that people who are very sensitive to external stimuli tend to be introverted.
However, there is a different approach to it. And the different approach says that sensibility to external stimuli and extroversion are two very different things.

Highly sensitive people get overwhelmed by external stimuli. Too much light, too loud noises, too many people… It can all get too much for them.
However, that has nothing to do with extroversion.

So you can have an extrovert who gets easily overwhelmed, but that doesn't mean that he has an "introvert touch" and that he is an ambivert.
It simply means that he is an extrovert who happens to be highly sensitive.

SUMMARY

Ambiverts sit around the middle of the extroversion continuum.

At the core of their strength is **social adaptability**. If you are an introvert, that's great news for you.
If you are not yet one, you can train yourself to take the edge off of your extremes, and your quality of life -and quality of socialization- can increase dramatically.

Alpha Female: 10 Types of Power Women

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Alpha females are high-power women who often also are high-value and have high social status.

Being a high-powered woman is not easy.
But the best alpha females can combine femininity with power.

This article shows you the different types of alpha females, and how you can spot them -or *become* one-.

Contents

- The Types of Alpha Females
  - 1. Sexual Alpha Female
  - 2. The Butch Alpha Female
  - 3. The Alpha (Fe)Male
  - 4. The Feminine Alpha
  - 5. The Ultimate Alpha Female
  - 6. The Charming Alpha Female
  - 7. The Behind The Curtain Mistress of Puppets
  - 8. The Driven Alpha Female
  - 9. The “Pussy Power” Alpha Female
  - 10. The Abrasive (Fake) Alpha
- Signs of Alpha Females
- How Women-Express Power
  - Wide Variety of Alpha Females
  - The Role of Alpha Females

- Walking The Alpha Line

The Types of Alpha Females

These are some of the main types of alpha females:

1. Sexual Alpha Female

The sexual alpha female is the woman who is comfortable with her sexuality and is not afraid of *leading* all her interactions with a constant vibe of hinted -or not so hinted- sexuality.

She might add a touch of (fake) baby innocence, naivete, and even madness, like Marilyn Monroe.
All extremely powerful in driving men crazy.
Look at Monroe's facial expression, a mix of orgasms, madness, and the promise of never-ending sensual abandon:

At the extreme end of sexuality, she can be "all in your face". This alpha female revels in making people socially -and sexually- squirm in her presence.

Think of Sharon Stone and her "leg crossing" in Basic Instincts.

Don't confuse her with the histrionic...

The sexual alpha female should not be confused though with the *histrionic* woman, who puts on an act of sexual abandon to fill her craving for attention.

The difference between the histrionic and alpha females is all in the results.

While histrionic women spin their wheels in sexuality and go nowhere in life, the top sexual alpha female knows how to leverage her sexual power to go where she wants to go and get what she wants to get.

The High-Functioning Sociopath Alpha Females

Most high-functioning female sociopaths have a strong sexual charge and fully leverage their sexuality for power.

Sharon Stone is in Basic Instinct the Hollywood representation of a high-functioning sociopath.
In this forum entry, I describe my romance with a high-functioning alpha female sociopath:

- **Seducing an alpha female**

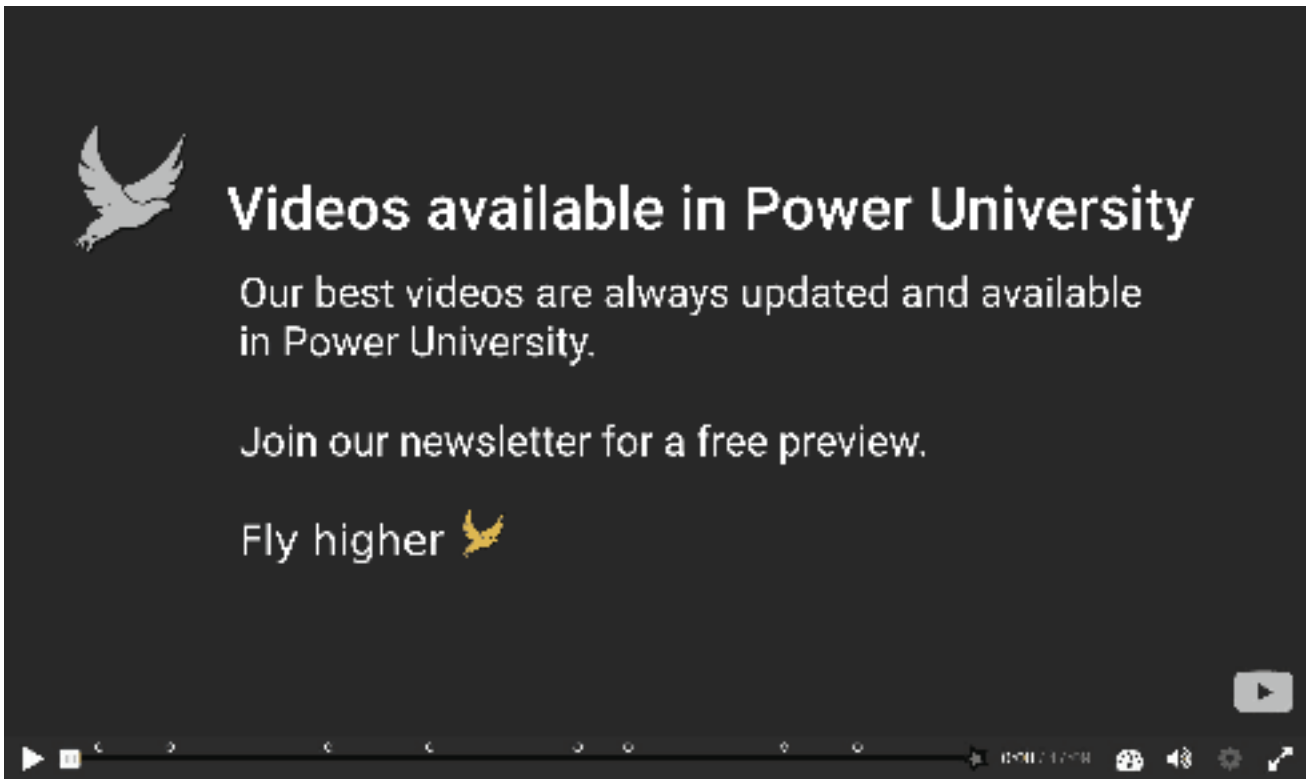
Fake Sexual Alpha Female

Another easy-to-confuse low-quality variant is the woman who always introduces talks, and jokes referencing sex.

The alpha female *owns* her sexuality and uses it to get what she wants and to put pressure on the people around her.

The low-quality, wannabe alpha female instead *hides* behind sexuality. She has the rebellious streak of a child and she is nervous and insecure.

Madonna at Letterman was one such example:



Confidence and power are not synonymous with “fame” and success, and you can see there is no real confidence and power there.

2. The Butch Alpha Female

Pardon the name, no intention of being offensive, but it just makes sense.

The butch alpha female resents the femininity of some women, resents the social pressure of “having to conform to feminine ideals” and she makes it a point to stress her un-femininity.

The butch alpha female is often politically far away from the mainstream. She can be a hard-core feminist, a no-global, or even a militant in a subversive group.

Usually, men don’t like butch alphas… Unless she’s hot.
In this case, her masculine traits can make her all the more fascinating to some men.
Including making her the darling of men hiding homosexual tendencies, as Robert Greene brilliantly points out in *The Art of Seduction*.

Uma Turman in the movie “Beautiful Girls” plays a butch alpha female:

Notice her exaggerated, un-feminine movements.
Making fun of the guy’s bald head, a typical one-upping male game, and then kissing that head, an overly-dominant move.
Then jumping across the bar like a male teenager, and later pouring shots like a truck-driving barfly.

3. The Alpha (Fe)Male

When the alpha female completely leaves behind her feminine traits, she assumes all the qualities -and limitations- of the alpha *male*.

When that happens, it’s the female genitalia that qualifies her as an alpha female, but from a social power point of view, she’s otherwise playing by male rules.

These women are very rare.

When you read in the history books of women leading armies or taking up arms, they sometimes are alpha (fe)males.
And some other times they are exaggerated and romanced works of literature where they served more as inspiration for the armies than actually leading the fighting themselves.

Joan D'arc, leading armies, is a historical exception (and likely wasn't nearly as feminine as this portrait)

4. The Feminine Alpha

The feminine alpha is a woman who apparently shows no interest in power.
Except for securing a man who *does* hold power, that is.

But don't go thinking these are gold diggers.
These are high-quality women who get high-quality men, as simple as that -and no, this is not an endorsement of Donald Trump below, but power certainly boosts a man's prospects-.

Many wives of tycoons, high-quality men, and super-driven men are feminine alphas.
They take a step back and avoid the limelight unless they really have to.
But when they have to… They do it with class and tact.

Feminine alphas, together with sexual alpha females, are the most lusted for women, albeit by different cohorts.
Feminine alphas tend to appeal more to high-quality males while sexual alphas slightly more to the masses -but then again, the appeal is so broad on the male population that there is a huge overlap-.

Our political credos notwithstanding, Melania Trump is a feminine alpha female
Trump has explained it better than I could:

> **Interviewer**: you said that women have one of the great acts of all time. The smart ones act very feminine and needy, but inside they're real killers.
> **Trump**: I feel that the smart ones are the ones that really go out and do it, without waving the banner of women's liberation.

Exactly right.

5. The Ultimate Alpha Female

The ultimate alpha female combines the assertiveness and cunning of her male counterpart with the femininity and sexual energy of her female side.

Her ability to switch from "in need of protection female" to the assertive hard driver makes her a versatile player who can get a man to do the hard work for her and lead herself when she has to.

Old-school, highly driven, and successful women were very good at this.
Their hunger and fierce independence allowed them to go toe-to-toe with their male counterparts.
But living in a more repressive, male-dominated, and not yet feminist-imbibed society they *had* to develop their femininity.

Sophia Loren always struck me as a woman who could flawlessly marry the two sides.

Please check this picture and look at those tiger eyes. Dripping lust for pure feminine power. She mixes the sexual, the assertive, and the feminine all into one.
Spectacular.
Heaven must be a place guarded by Ultimate Alpha Females :).

Recent Example

More recently and to have a visual reference, the character of Pam Grier in Jackie Brown is a good example.

Going from sensually chill:

Too assertive and cut-throating:

But even more, I like the portrait of Claudia Cardinale in “Once Upon a Time in the West”.

See the analysis and video here:

- **Alpha female in the Wild West**

6. The Charming Alpha Female

The charming alpha female has mastered social skills to a T.

She revels in social environments and no matter her age, she’s always the queen.

But she’s not a club queen or a big group entertainer: her biggest power lies within small groups or one-to-one conversations.
She talks to you and makes you feel like you’re the only one in the world.

The charming alpha female smiles warmly like she’s really happy to see you. When she asks you how you have been she puts a hand on your arm to emphasize the emotional bond. And then she floors you when she asks about something you really care about, something you’d never think anybody would remember in a million years.
But the charming alpha female does because that’s her power: people.

Everyone loves her, and everyone thinks the world of her.

Similar to the feminine alpha, She is perfect to go along with a high-quality man, since she complements him well. They won’t quarrel over who’s in the leadership role and she makes for a great partner to accompany him to functions, balls, and gala dinners.

Charming alpha females defy age, a constant issue for more sexual females, because their power is not based on either aggression or looks.

But then again, don't listen to me, I have a soft spot for a smart and feminine woman with great social skills… :).

7. The Behind The Curtain Mistress of Puppets

These are the women who *officially* defer to a man… But who *actually* controls him?

Most women control their relationships anyway, but with alpha males, it's not always as easy.
It takes indeed… An alpha female.

The game of control of influence among alphas can actually end up being an up and down of emotional swings, male obstinacy to subdue an unconquerable woman, and a game of chicken as to who needs the other the least.
But alas, she exerts huge power over him.

Cleopatra with Mark Antony is one of the most famous historical examples. But, more recent and better documented, Josephine also had Napoleon eating out of her alpha palms.

And, of course, mistresses behind the curtains might be much more frequent than we think. But we'll never know because these alpha females know that their power is strongest when those curtains keep them in the dark.

8. The Driven Alpha Female

Driven alpha females are women with big goals, ambitions, and passions.

Sometimes they put their own personal life on the back burner and don't start families. And if they do, they still keep working on their goals and dreams… *Hard*.

Oprah is another example, albeit sometimes she overdoes it:

"Driven" alpha female doesn't mean that she has to be any less feminine, though.

Mother Teresa was also a driven alpha female.
An example for us all, she shows us all that you don't need to be aggressive or overbearing to lead the change that you want to see in the world.

9. The "Pussy Power" Alpha Female

On the fringes of the alpha females' galaxy lays the pussy power alpha females.

I call them "pussy power", which sounds endearing, but it's not really a healthy form of power.

Growing up with feminist ideals they see themselves as the banner carriers of pussy power in a world of (repressive) men.
They make it a point that they "don't need a man" and (secretly) harbor resentment against a world that is (still) dominated by men (in their opinion at least).

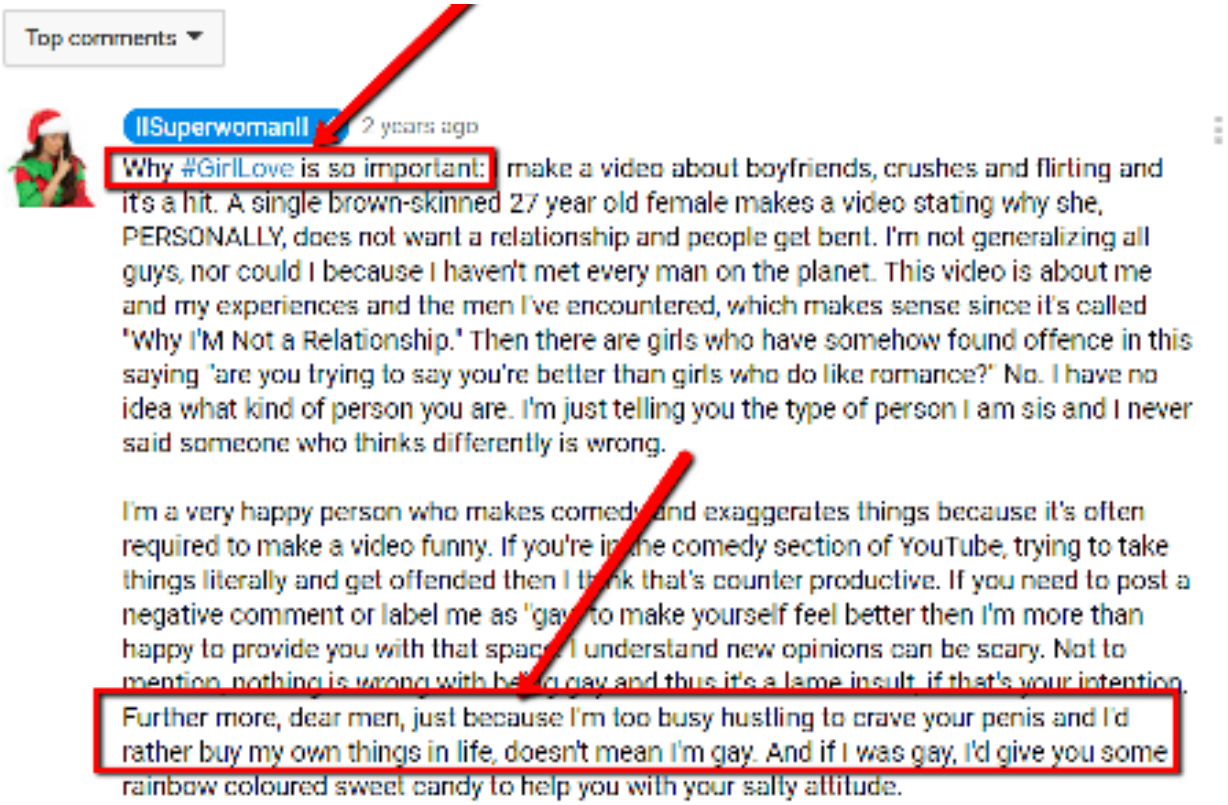
They do use their sex appeal, more and better than butch alpha females, but contrary to the Ultimate Alpha Females many of the Pussy Power gang haven't developed their femininity quite as well and powerfully.

This is a huge pity as they don't realize that by dropping the combative mindset and embracing their full femininity they might live a happier, freer life –*and* get double the power-.

They can flash boobs and asses, especially if it helps to sell. But they do so in a more aggressive fashion as if to scream to men:

> "*you'd like it, but you don't get any. And I might as well give it to another woman. Who needs a man anyway*".

I don't mean disrespect towards the subject of this example, and I don't know her well enough, so take it simply as the first example that came off the top of my head.
Lilly Singh felt to me was leaning towards the pussy power alpha female:



Unneeded appeal to "girl love" and generalizing the behavior of a few idiots to the whole male population are sometimes signs that bitterness has crept in and mental radicalization has taken place.
That's when an otherwise top-notch alpha female becomes a darker, "pussy power" alpha female.

10. The Abrasive (Fake) Alpha

Finally, a special note goes to the "fake" alpha women.

These are women who yell, subdue, and aggress.

They are mostly value-taking aggressive women, and they often struggle to remain at the top because of their uncalibrated and largely poor social skills.

Similar to the histrionic woman, behind a facade of confidence and determination they over-extend and crash and burn in a fiery ball of fury, fire, and smoke.

Sometimes these women are straight-up *sociopaths*. Women in sex professions such as hookers and strippers tend to grow rough around the edges and end up *looking* like alphas, but not always high-quality ones.
They seem strong and hard-driving, but their flare-ups make their lives more difficult than they should be -both for them and for the people who share their lives with them-.

Tyra Banks had a famous Fake Alpha Female moment:

This is *obviously* not submissive and it's clear she's the leader of the pack. But it's not a "high-quality alpha female leader".
It's out of control, and abusively aggressive.
Most high-quality, emotionally stable people would frown upon disapproval.
Top-quality (female) leaders don't behave like that unless there is a *real* reason or an emergency.

Signs of Alpha Females

Female expressions of power are often different than male expressions of power.

It often ends up being more indirect and subdued.
And also the signs you need to watch for more are more indirect and subdued.
Here are some of them:

1. Other Women Point at Her

When they are standing in a group, you will notice that most other women turn towards one particular woman with their bodies or their feet.
That woman is often standing in the center, and she is the alpha female of the group.

Whenever there is a lull in the conversation or when people are not sure what to do, the other women will look at the alpha female.
See here an example from Mad Men (girl in blue who says “Lovely to see you”):

https://ody.sh/N7hOP7ou5y?t=277

2. Other Women Follow Her Cues

Humans are *social animals*, both men and women. But women, even more so.
This means that women are very attuned to what the group says and does and, most of all, to what the alpha female says and does.

3. Punishments and Rewards

The alpha female makes the rules within the group. And while most women would not say anything or simply let a mistake slip, they are not afraid of stepping in.

Example from the now-classic Mean Girls:

4. Alphas Can Socially Destroy Other Women

In the case of really powerful alpha females, they can single-handedly decide on who’s in or who’s out, who gets a nice social boost, or who gets the boot.

For fairness to Tyra, here is another example where she cracks the whip in an extremely effective way -albeit possibly too ruthlessly-:

(some videos are kept in our programs)

5. When The Alpha Leaves, There is a Big Shift

Here is an interesting social phenomenon and a good way to understand the social standing of the alpha in the group.

When a group member leaves, little changes.
But when the alpha leaves, the group dynamics change abruptly.

If the group loved the alpha female and she was the glue of the group, there will be a sudden drop in social interactions and everyone will be looking around for the new leader.

But if the group hated the alpha, there will be an increase in smiles and social interactions. It’s as if the group was finally liberated of a tyrant and now they can finally be themselves.

5. Hatred & Drama Among Two Women

Alphas can co-exist… Barely.

You might see instances of two women at the top who start a partnership and rule together.
Or you can see a big flare-up where they contend for the top spot and both hate each other.

However, the final alpha female is always the one who stays. And the one who leaves has just relinquished the top spot to the real alpha female.

Samantha Jones should be on any list of alpha females :).

6. They take charge when you approach one of her hens

God this one has annoyed the hell out of me more than a few times.

You approach a shy girl in her group because you like her… But guess who replies? The meddling alpha female of the group of course.

I specifically remember once when I was talking to a shy cute girl and she liked me. And I liked her too.
And then the alpha female stepped in asking me questions and interrupting our flow. In the beginning, I was confrontational with her hoping the shy girl could step up to "reclaim" me.

So I told the alpha female I was having a good conversation with her friend and if she didn't mind we would like to keep it that way, one-to-one.
But nope, she stayed there and the shy girl was too shy to step out of her alpha's long shadow.

So I tried to be more friendly towards her alphaness, but she would still monopolize the conversation and step on the poor shy girl's toes.

In the end, Miss Alpha did not "allow" her hen to exchange contacts.
Talking about beyond annoying alpha females :).

How Women-Express Power

We can't do a proper article on alpha females without first prefacing it with some female power theory.

Louann Brizendine, author of *The Female Brain* says that women in new situations will not look for pecking order like men do, but for connections.

Indeed, while men are more focused on top-down hierarchy, women tend to have a more social approach to power: they look for alliances.

Punishment and dominance are more subtle and happen more in terms of social inclusion or social exclusions (the "shunning game" is a typical female political game).
Indeed some authors said that while men have an "up and down" approach to power, women more often present an approach of "in or out".

Wide Variety of Alpha Females

There are a few different ways of being an alpha male.
But they are not too dissimilar.

There are far more ways to be an alpha female.
And they can all be very different.

This goes back to the different styles of dominance and the differences between genders.
A man can hardly use a female style of power and be considered an alpha male.

But a woman has more leeway.
She might use very feminine ways of wielding power and she'd be an alpha female.
Or she can use more typically masculine ways of wielding power. In that case, she would not be considered a feminine woman, but she'd still be an alpha female anyway.

The Role of Alpha Females

A good, strong group of women needs an alpha woman.

When there is no alpha there is no conductor. The players look around, waiting for someone to take the lead, but nobody steps up.
Group conversation is poor, stalls, or is hijacked by social burdens who shouldn't be leading in the first place.
But without a leader, there is little the group can do to regain its footing: it's at the mercy of the events -and of poor improvised conductors-.

The alpha female instead functions as the main conductor. She dictates the music (topics), the tempo, and the mood.
In difficult social situations, she will carry the day. If one of her girlfriends is in difficult waters, she will step in to socially rescue her. If someone interrupts, she will throw them off the bus.

If she is a bad alpha female, it will be a bad dance.
But if she is good, everyone gets to play and have fun.

Walking The Alpha Line

The alpha female is not an easy role.

It's more difficult than being an alpha male.

An alpha female has the tough job of "walking the line" between the more assertive and controlling male traits and the more typically reserved female ones.

If she goes too into the male traits, she can become gender deviant. And nobody would say so in the current political climate of PC, but the truth is that most people -and men- would condone and accept a man for being too aggressive.
But most people -and men- are much less likely to grant the same benefit to women.

In my opinion, this is one of the reasons why Hillary Clinton lost the election -or you can read her own excuses in *What Happened* if you prefer-. She went too much into the masculine.
It might not sound fair, but the reality could care less about what we think is fair and unfair.

Furthermore, if alpha females care about it, going too much on the male side lowers her sexual market value and comes at a cost in dating.

However, walking the line is not impossible.
Much respect and much spoils are to be earned for those women who venture and succeed.

Here are some resources to help them along the way:

- How to be feminine
- Strong women VS submissive women
- How to be powerful *and* feminine

SocialSelf Course Review: Is David Morin's Work Worth It?

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

SocialSelf is a platform founded by David Morin to learn and improve social skills to make friends and enjoy a good social life.
Awkward to Awesome is one of the offered social skills courses where David Morin teaches socially struggling men and women how to be more socially confident and successful.

TPM's review™
Contents

- About the Authors: David Morin & Social Self
  - Don't Brag… Unless You're Trump
  - Group Conversation
  - How to Decrease Social Anxiety
- PROS
- CONS
- SocialSelf vs. The Power Moves
  - Socialization's 'Darker Side'
- Review

About the Authors: David Morin & Social Self

David Morin is the founder of SocialSelf, a platform dedicated to helping people improve their social skills and build meaningful connections.

He started SocialSelf out of a passion for making interpersonal psychology accessible and practical for everyday use.

Before founding SocialSelf, David had a successful venture and exit in Sweden, but realized that true fulfillment came from bonding with others, and helping others enhance their social lives.

The SocialSelf platform positions itself as a resource for men who are not naturally extroverted. So the approach is not the high energy typical of some other platform and courses like Charisma on Command's *Charisma University* or RSD's *Blueprint Reloaded*, but **a quieter approach that best fits introverts**.

Here are some tips from one of the courses we reviewed:

Don't Brag... Unless You're Trump

David Morin says that bragging is bad and doesn't work, but he also tackles some exceptions (and what might look like an exception).

For example, you might think otherwise by looking at popular people who brag (like Tony Robbins, for example). But they're not popular because of their bragging but *despite* it.

However, David Morin says it kinda works for Trump because he's on stage and there the rules change.

Indeed, those "friends" are likely to disappear soon when the popular braggart falls out of grace.

In general, we agree with Morin that bragging is not good.
However, there are ways to make bragging work:

- How to signal value
- How to brag effectively
- How to display value in dating

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

Group Conversation

There are videos of actual group conversations, with David's written comments on what was good and what was wrong.

I absolutely loved that part.

It also included videos of sharing food, and here is a good tip there:

- when you're eating, ask a question *before* you take a bite, so you don't create awkward silences while you eat

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: also consider not thinking of silences as awkward, but as natural lulls. Be comfortable with silences, and silence will be comfortable for all

How to Decrease Social Anxiety

To decrease social anxiety, focus on your speaking partne,r which will get you out of your mind and erase the fear of being negatively judged.

PROS

- **Real-life footage**

I never liked courses with people speaking in front of a camera. Especially not social skills courses, where people, in my opinion, should learn by watching real-life footage.

So when I saw that David Morin actually organized a gathering with real-life interactions to use for his course I thought that was pure genius.

I want to do the same one day.

- **Good basic information on social skills**

"From Awkward to Awesome" covers most of the basics of socialization with good information for social beginners.

- **Chance of asking questions**

Some social skill courses tell people to "write an email" if they have any questions or they *create a private group* where "alumni" can talk to each other.
With David's course instead, you can leave a comment right below the video to reach straight to the authors (albeit my comment didn't get a reply, but I was probably a bit of a special case :).

- **David Morin walked the talk**

David shares his story as an awkward person himself and not very socially talented.
That makes him a great teacher for the socially shy and the beginners who are looking to get a better grasp of the unwritten rules of socialization.

CONS

- **Some interactions were a bit at a superficial level**

Some of those interactions were a bit too surface-level and small-talk-ey for my taste.
That's a matter of personal opinion of course and maybe the fact they were filmed didn't help people to loosen up.

- **Skips the 'darker aspects of socialization'**

While on our website and courses we include topics such as manipulation, red flags, and dark triad strategies, David Morin and SocialSelf focus more on general social skills.

- **Less focused on social power dynamics**

Which may make it more challenging for typical nice guys to gain status and respect. Especially when moving within more competitive contexts.

SocialSelf vs. The Power Moves

Both frameworks sit under social skills, but they aim at different outcomes.

SocialSelf focuses on getting along, smoothing interactions, and making friends.
TPM, instead, focuses on using social skills strategically to move ahead, gain leverage, and shape outcomes.

Same arena, different game.
Read more about these two different approaches in:

- Social Skills vs. Power Skills

Or watch this video:

> **Lucio**: Social skills are about **communion**, fitting in, and being liked. Power skills are about **agency**, moving upward, and being respected and attractive

Socialization's 'Darker Side'

SocialSelf also approaches relationships from a place of honesty and genuineness, something we appreciate.

Where we depart, is that we believe that knowledge and mastery of the 'darker' side is still necessary to lead a successful and quality life. And this remains true, and it's probably even truer, for men who want to *avoid* manipulation and be instead 'honorable men', an approach we also champion and prefer.

We also develop traits like power intelligence and skills like strategic thinking that apply not only to socialization, but to achieving goals in general.

Social Self	TPM (Power-Aware Self)
Focus on social skills	Focus on power skills
Goal: Seek belonging	**Goal:** Seek agentic goals (ie, status, influence, and attraction)
Lifestyle: Social	**Lifestyle**: Able to 'walk alone' if preferred
Risk: Staying too nice, overlooked, and failing to attract or maintain attraction	**Risk**: Staying too calculative, overly focused on power dynamics
Upsides: Socially skilled, enjoy a happy social life	**Upsides**: Gain confidence, job promotions, and date around

What's right for you?
Answer these questions:

- **Beginner and not interested in getting ahead?** Go with SocialSelf.
  David Morin and his team are great. If you then seek more 'results', consider TPM.
- **Ambitious smart man with enough social skills?** Consider TPM to achieve goals

If you're ambitious but still poor at social skills, check this article:

- Should beginners start with power or social skills?

Review

SocialSelf articles and courses are solid, and David Morin is a good teacher who knows what it takes to go from wallflower to enjoying a fulfilling social life.

Specifically, *Awkward to Awesome* is unlike anything I have seen since it's real-life footage of an event.

The videos cover most of the basics when it comes to conversations and social skills, including storytelling, social status, introducing yourself, etc., etc.

David Morin also seems a genuine guy, which is not always the case with people in the social, dating, and self-help industry.

Morin's approach to social skills is quite different from The Power Moves.
We focus more on gaining confidence, status, respect, and attraction.

David Morin and SocialSelf focus more on a happy and fulfilling social life.
Less 'as a leader' or 'alpha male', and more of a happy group of people who like each other.

I think both approaches are valid and they must not be mutually exclusive, but can be complementary.

What Are Frenemies? How to Deal with Them and Thrive

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Frenemies are people who are formally friends, but who do not support you or help you.

With their underhanded and passive-aggressive behavior, they can make you miserable.
And with their covert aggression they undermine your social status and chances of success.

This article will help you deal with the frenemies in your life.

Contents

- What Are Frenemies
- Signs of Frenemies
- How to Deal With Frenemies
  - 1. Make Them Friends (Not Frenemies)
  - 2. Don't tell them directly they're "bad friends"
  - 3. Don't tell them you're not friends anymore
  - 4. Pretend you didn't notice their maneuvers
  - 5. Ostracize them from your social group
  - 6. Use them for motivation
  - 7. Play the game
  - 8. Cut them off (fade them)
- If You're The Frenemy
- When Frenemies Are Your Family
  - When the frenemy is a brother
  - When the frenemy is a father

- When the frenemy is a mother
- The Psychology of Frenemies
- The Sociology of Frenemies
  - The Closeness Rule
  - Frenemies change over time
- SUMMARY

What Are Frenemies

A frenemy is someone you know and interact with, but who has not your best interest in mind.

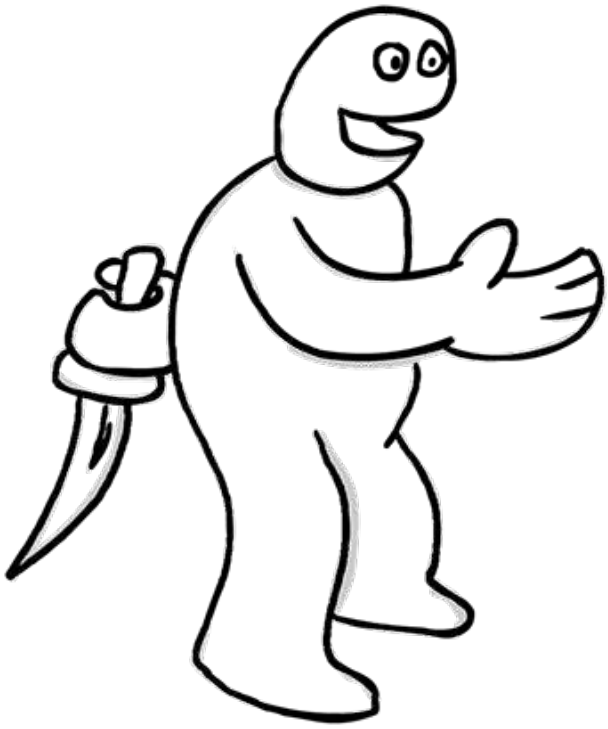
But deep down, something feels “off”.
Often, it’s because they are jealous, envious, or overly competitive.

A frenemy can be a colleague, someone you may call a friend or, sadly, even a family member.

More manipulative frenemies maintain appearances and may pretend to be warm and supportive.
If they’re good, they may succeed in hiding their uglier feelings of resentment, envy, jealousy, and anger.
So they may fly under the radar for quite some time.

But even if successful, they never want the best for you.
Frenemies are sad when you win.
And they are happy when you lose –schadenfreude-.

Sadly, frenemies are so common that they may as well be the norm rather than the exceptions.



Signs of Frenemies

Here are typical signs of frenemies:

1. Jealous of your achievements
2. They find underhanded ways to hurt you
3. They talk behind your back
4. They don't like your status updates
5. Lots of questions without (good) advice
6. Passive aggressive sabotaging
7. Nice words with incongruent body language

For the full guide please check:

- How to spot a frenemy

How to Deal With Frenemies

Here are a few ways to deal with frenemies.
Remembering that frenemies are often suffering a hurt ego, focus first and foremost on the N.1 solution here:

1. Make Them Friends (Not Frenemies)

Surprised to see one as the first item?

Well, let me remind you of two things:

1. More friends mean more power
2. Frenemies are often frenemies because of crushed ego

Sometimes people become frenemies because they don't feel like they can access your high value.

These frenemies are the like the fox in Fedro's fable: the fox says the grapes are not good, but it's only because he can't reach them.
But lower those grapes for the fox and he'll immediately love them.

Example: Bring Along, Instead of Bragging

Here is a real-life example for you:

Imagine a friend of yours gets rich and brags about how cool it is to drive Ferrari, eat caviar, and bang bitties.
Then he asks you "and how are you doing man?".
How would you feel?
Maybe you'd turn a bit into a frenemy.

Now imagine this other scenario: a friend of yours gets rich.
And he invites you to see his Ferrari. Then he takes you for a ride… And then lets you drive it! Now a smile creeps up on your face, it's the first time you drive a powerful sports car, and all thanks to your friend!
Then you two go out, and since he's just become a millionaire he pays for your dinner… And then invites you to a nightclub full of hot pieces of asses. All on his dime for old times' sake.

I bet you're not so likely to turn into a frenemy now, are you?
On the contrary, you are probably extremely thankful. He is your new hero!

What's the difference?
The difference is that the second guy made his value accessible to the friend. **And when you build people up, friends don't turn into frenemies**.

Now you might not want to let everyone drive your car and pay for dinners out to everyone. And indeed you

shouldn't.
But there is a simpler way: be friendly and raise people's status. As a matter of fact, to avoid jealousy, **the better you become, the more warm and friendly you should become**.

And once you start showing a welcoming side of your character and raising the social status of the people around you, you will see that most of the frenemies will U-turn.

But, of course, not all frenemies can be converted.

Some are just too spiteful, angry, and vengeful. Some of the hungriest and most driven folks don't see you as "above them" and any overtures will only make them feel worse.
"who does he think he is", they will think when you offer to share your wins.

Here is how to deal with the more difficult ones:

2. Don't tell them directly they're "bad friends"

Unless it's a spouse, a family member, or a proven good friend who mysteriously changed, don't confront them directly.
Direct talk is helpful *sometimes*, but counterproductive most of the time.

What will likely happen is this: they will deny their games and jealousy and they will resent you even more.

3. Don't tell them you're not friends anymore

Some guides online recommend you officialize the ending of your friendship.
I can't think of anything more stupid to do.
Officializing the end of your friendship is akin to officializing the beginning of a new relationship: that of an enemy.

If you can avoid being friends, then end the friendship with a good old fading:

4. Pretend you didn't notice their maneuvers

If you can't fade them and if their underhanded maneuvers are not damaging, pretend you don't notice their snarky remarks and underhanded tactics.

The feeling that they can't get to you is poison to them.

5. Ostracize them from your social group

The goal here is to:

1. Let everyone else realize what people they are
2. Not letting the frenemy know you're ostracizing them

Frenemies are full of hatred and jealousy, it won't take them long for people to notice.
Your job is to make that process faster and smoother: you want everyone to think badly of the frenemy and highly of you.

To do that, you will keep being warm to everyone, frenemy included. As a matter of fact, increase your charm and charisma so that everyone can notice the huge difference between you two -ie, a high-value woman or man VS a spiteful one-.
Take advantage of all the occasions in which they will over-extend themselves with their envious remarks to highlight their game for everyone -read how to deal with an underminer on how to do just that-.

6. Use them for motivation

If you have been stung by a frenemy's backstabbing or snide you know it can be quite upsetting. Use that emotional surcharge to move ahead in life.
Once you'll be far ahead, then you'll only have to do the psychological work on your side to forget them.

> **The best revenge is a runaway success**

7. Play the game

Feed them slightly negative news not to make them too jealous while you build your political power and move ahead in life.

When you're ready to move forward and get rid of them, it will be swift and final.

Also read:

- **How to outplay a manipulator**

8. Cut them off (fade them)

This is the most important step.

The *APA Handbook* on relationships says that friends are healthy.
UNLESS they're bad friends.
Poor friends and toxic people are UN-healhty.

Keep this in mind: the poison that frenemies bring into your life makes you worse off.

You don't need that.

However, we still recommend being strategic.

Don't cut them off abruptly or that may turn them into enemies.
Instead, fade them.

Fading someone means slowly but surely disappearing from their lives.

It works like this:

- Pick less and less of their calls
- Answer late to their texts. If they reply quickly, answer at an hour when they aren't likely to be texted back.
- Say that yes, you should catch up eventually… you're just so busy these days and traveling often.
- When you meet, tell them you can only meet at X time (time that works for you) for X amount of time (no more than one hour) and at X place (a place which is convenient for you).

Then rinse and repeat until they fade out of your life.

If You're The Frenemy

Dear readers,

To become the best possible people we can be, we need to face reality.
And reality says that we all have a dark side of bad feelings, repressed emotions, and secrets we would rather not share.

But worry not: we all have it.

Some of us have a bit more, and we might even be born with it. According to psychoanalyst Melanie Klein certain people are prone to feel envious.
She recognized it in babies as babies who showed a greedy attitude in hogging their mothers and resenting their fathers and siblings.

I can't go back that far with my memory, but I wouldn't be surprised if I was such a baby.
But here is the good news: we can all overcome it. I am in the process of stamping out any frenemy feelings from myself.

Here is how:

- Develop an antifragile ego
- Develop a growth mindset
- Own your dark side
- Remind yourself that successful friend make you more successful
- Develop your own goals, chase relentlessly and all else will matter less

And here are a few more techniques that Greene recommends in The Laws of Human Nature:

- Get closer -and you'll realize it's just people with nothing special-
- Compare yourself with those who are lower than you as well
- Turn envy into a desire for emulation
- Admire high achievements as a sign of human potential

When Frenemies Are Your Family

You would hope that frenemies are limited to people from your outer circle, right?

Well, in an ideal world, there would be no frenemies at all.

But of course, you know that we don't live in an ideal world. And sometimes our frenemies are the people who can hurt us the most: our own family members.

This deserves its own section because in some cases family frenemies can really scar people psychologically and for life.

When the frenemy is a brother

Evolutionary psychology tells us that among kin there is a natural, non-written battle as to who's getting more resources from their parents.

Sometimes that means pleasing their parents more, getting higher grades in school, or, of course, trying to paint the other brother(s) and sister(s) as unworthy.

Many of these relations normalize once you are an adult, once you are out of the family nest or once either of you stops depending on your parents' resources and approval -weaning off approval takes longer, and sometimes a whole life is not enough-.

The best way to address it is to first become an adult yourself.
Then helping your kin get closer to your parents, take a step back and act very warm and loving with your brothers and sisters.

When the frenemy is a father

It's a sad reality of life that in some rare cases, a frenemy can be a parent.

Most of the time it happens to same-gender children.

For some fathers, it's the fear of losing the "lion's position in the house".
If you are the child, you can make it easier on your father by showing respect and keeping him in the top dog position. Even *nominally* keeping him there is often enough.

Some other times the frenemy relationship with a father happens because he doesn't see in you the traits that are important to him and/or he doesn't see himself in you.
You see, mothers *know* that you are their child. But when a father sees nothing of himself in you, a nasty process of emotional rejection can take place.

You should never try to appease your father as that would mean living a life that is not true to you.
And you should not display the opposite but actually equivalent reaction, such as trying to prove him wrong by doing the exact opposite of what he wants.

What you can do is try to explain the dynamic of what's happening to him and that you love him but that he is ruining your relationship with that behavior. You love and have your own way of living life.
Wouldn't it be wonderful if he could accept you as you are, because you love him just the way he is?

Alternatively, you could do therapy with him.

It works with some fathers.
With some, it doesn't and they'd never join a therapy with you. You have done your best.

When the frenemy is a mother

Having a frenemy relationship with a father is terrible.
But with a mother, it's even worse. The impact they can have on the psyche of their children is disastrous.

Mothers sometimes fear losing the position of queen of the house. They can be especially jealous of the father/daughter relationship.
She will try to put you down, criticize you, and drive a wedge between you and your father.

In some other cases, and the two often overlap, the mother can resent the youth and opportunities their daughter is enjoying.

For example, if the daughter is traveling and enjoying an easy life, you can recognize a frenemy mother by the comment she makes on you "party all the time like a floozy".
If you have a rich husband she might say that you "go through life squandering other people's money" and "what are you going to do if he leaves you?"

In some cases, mothers will flirt with their daughters' boyfriends and in extreme cases sleep with them or, it happened to, make out with them in front of their daughters.

These are usually highly narcissistic mothers.
In case it's not full-blown -narcissism is on a scale-, you can talk to her or do therapy.
But if it's full-blown narcissism, there is usually no changing it.

The work you must do here is on your side, and it's mental.
You must first understand the impact it's had and it's having on you. Then work on yourself to make yourself independent of your mother's unhealthy effects.
Once you are independent, you can resume the relationship.
But if you still get nothing good from it and only pain and abuse, you can consider cutting contact forever.

If you are in this position I can recommend the wonderful book *Will I Ever Be Good Enough*.

Here is an example of a narcissistic mother who is more concerned about her appearance than her own daughter's

pregnancy:

You can notice her reaction: the reaction of a daughter who is still dependent on her approval but cannot get it.

The Psychology of Frenemies

Frenemies are common because it's human nature.

We are at the same time both *social animals* and egoistical, self-serving machines.

Our friends, often, are both allies *and* competitors (David Buss, 2019)
When we look at ourselves we don't do so objectively or by comparing ourselves to our previous selves. But we look at ourselves *in comparison* with others.

That means that when a friend of ours is going places and doing amazing things, on one side he is doing well for himself.
But from our subjective point of view, he is also making us feel bad. His successes are a constant reminder that "we are not OK".

In a way, **the phenomenon of frenemies is a consequence of ego-protection**.

A more dangerous twist that frenemies can take is not to look within themselves at all, but to blame the object of their frustrations. This is how many hate groups feed themselves.

The Sociology of Frenemies

The success of our friends have very real consequences for our lives.

Just imagine this situation: you are making 50k a year, the most in your social circle. Men think you're very good at your job, women want you and you feel like a big shot.
Then more and more people start getting 80k-a-year jobs.

And one of them lands a 120k promotion with a top employer. He's on fire and it looks like he might one day lead that company.

In theory, that's good for you because they can help you secure future jobs and you know that options are power. But they are also making you comparatively worse in your group. People don't look up to you anymore, they don't come to you for career and life advice and women don't want you nearly as much.

See where I'm going?
Frenemies are the norm because the success of our friends can make us worst off. Their successes are pushing us down in the social rankings.

Note: saying it's normal it's NOT the same as saying you shouldn't do something about your frenemy's feelings. As a matter of fact, you should do your darn best to rid yourself of jealousy and freudenschade. They are ugly feelings and they poison you.

The Closeness Rule

People, usually, do not develop envy and jealousy for people who are either too far up or too lowly beneath.
If a guy is a first-level manager at his company, he doesn't usually develop frenemy feelings towards the CEO or Jack the door guard.

Why is that so?
Well, to begin with, from a social point of view, the people in our social circle are usually the ones who are around the same level.

Similarly, geography plays a role because far away people are not in our social circle. We don't feel in competition with someone who is doing our exact same job but at the other end of the world (unless you're competing in the digital space *maybe*).

And from a psychological point of view, people compare themselves with people they know and people who are in the same situations: those are the guys you can beat and those are the guys who can beat you.
Similar people are our competition, not the people far up or far down. And similar people end up being our psychological yardstick to reward us if we are beating them, or to punish us if they are beating us.

In a nutshell: **frenemies only develop with people who are near us**, both from a geographical point of view and from a "station of life" point of view.

Frenemies change over time

As a consequence of the closeness rules, it derives that frenemy is not a constant.

If you are going through a rough patch in life and a friend of yours is going strong he won't see you as competition anymore and you'll drop off his Freudenschade radar.

That guy won't be a frenemy… Until you get back on your feet and go up to his level.
Or until he's on his knees and comes back down to your level.

That creates an interesting phenomenon.
You might have a mentor one day, or some high-flying friends. They seem nice and kind to you, albeit they baby you just that little bit.
But then you start getting better and better… Until you start approaching their level. And maybe threatening to surpass it.
And then, you can either have an open enemy.. Or a frenemy.

That's why Greene in *The 48 Laws of Power* says "never outshine the master". Only outshine him when you don't need him anymore.

SUMMARY

Frenemies are a normal part of life because it's a normal reaction to who we are as humans.

If you are a frenemy, your task is to work on yourself to develop your mental side. That way you will become a better -and stronger- human being.

If people around you are frenemies, try to make them friends if you can. If you cannot, cut them out of your life. And if you cannot cut them out your task is to neutralize them as much as possible until you can remove them from your life or outgrow them.

You Are The Placebo: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *You Are The Placebo* (2014) author Joe Dispenza teaches readers to use their own mind to have the same effect as a placebo: health benefits without drugs.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
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  - Crazy Placebo Stories
  - Why Your Mind Can Change Your Body
- You Are The Placebo Meditation
- You Are The Placebo Criticism
  - The Positive of You Are The Placebo In One Video
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
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Bullet Summary

- Placebo often work better than drugs – and we can be our own placebo
- We can't change the DNA code but we can change the expression with our thoughts
- When you vividly imagine what you want to happen with emotions you are rewiring your brain and reshaping your genes
- Practice gratitude for what you want to happen in your life

Full Summary

About the Author: Joe Dispenza has no Wikipedia page, but we know he is a chiropractor, the author of several books on meditation and self-healing, and somewhat of a self-help guru.

Introduction

The central idea behind "*You Are The Placebo*" is that, since Placebos do work by affecting our minds, we can learn to act on our own bodies the same way a placebo works.

Crazy Placebo Stories

Much of the book, and especially the beginning, is about crazy stories of placebo effects, both positive and negative effects.

For example, a man diagnosed with cancer and told he was going to live only a few more dies, soon died.
But the autopsy revealed that it was not cancer and neither pneumonia he had contracted that killed him.
Basically, the man died because everyone around thought he was going to die.

Another example is a group of elderly who improved their health by immersing themselves in the atmosphere of

the years when they were young.
Simply thinking and feeling young, makes them younger.

My Note: Good stories, but not statistics
Stories are great and they were all impressive. However, stories are also misleading -read "*How to Lie With Statistics*"-.
I would have preferred some general statistics as well.

Why Your Mind Can Change Your Body

Joe Dispenza says that if you can envision a future with full conviction, you can change the expression of your genes, reorganize your cells and change and heal yourself.

The author also mentions quantum physics and, since matter and mind are not separate, it's scientific that you can change matter with your thoughts.

You Are The Placebo Meditation

Your meditation should last between 45 minutes and one hour.

If you need to do something later, set an alarm 10 minutes before you need to get going so you don't end abruptly. The timer will also help you to get rid of the time distraction: once you set the time, forget about both the time and your task list.

To change your mind, your meditative experience must be greater than the past experiences that are conditioning you.
You must feel inspired, invincible, and get goosebumps.
It's more important to believe that your prayers have been answered than to do it every day.

These are the meditation steps:

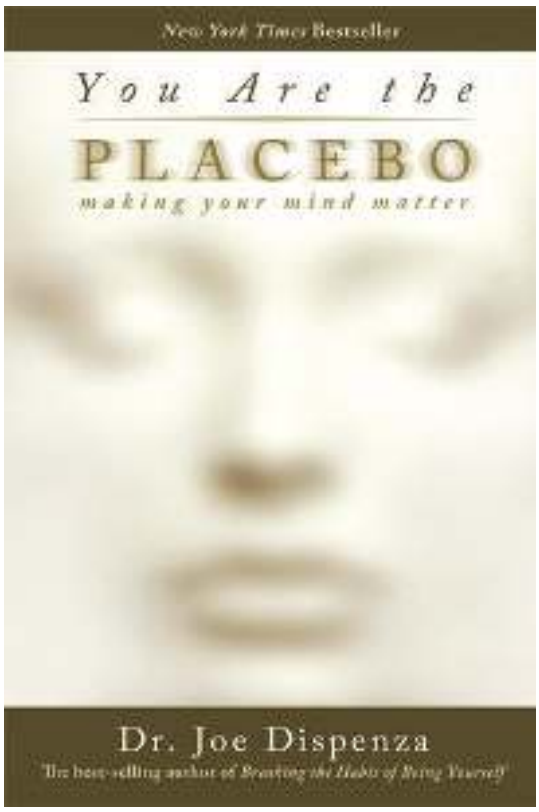
1. **Induction** for 10 to 15 mins (relax and get into an alpha state, focus on "space" instead of things, don't visualize but try to sense, for example where your nose is)
2. **Stay in the present moment** for 10 to 15 mins (disconnect from your body, from past and future to go where all possibilities exist)
3. **Change your beliefs** for 20 to 30 mins (make new decisions with such intensity that their power is great than your neuro-conditioning, "your task is to move into your new state of being" and you should get up that you feel completely different)

If it sounds fuzzy, well, the book's explanation was fuzzy for me.
Especially for the third part, it wasn't very clear.

If you're not experienced Dispenza recommends you do the first part for a week, then one and two for a second week, and then all together in the third week.

Also, read:

- The untethered soul
- The Power of Now



You Are The Placebo Criticism

I haven't found much on the web regarding Joe Dispenza.
This website is highly disparaging but offers little proof.

David Gorsky, Ph.D., suggests that using a placebo without medicine to alter physiology can be dangerous.
He says that subjective improvement sometimes stands in the way of objective non-improvement, which is idiotic in cases in which we have good medicine to treat the issue.
That makes a lot of sense.
He says that a placebo without lying to the patient has been ineffective so far.

Of course, that might not necessarily mean it will stay the same, or that it cannot work in a few cases. And if it can work in a few cases, maybe we can increase the chances that it will.

That's basically the idea behind You Are the Placebo.

My opinion is that the science behind "*You Are The Placebo*" is spotty.
Dispenza repeats "neurons that fire together wire together", which is a *well-known neuro-phenomenon*, but his interpretation of quantum mechanics to self-healing seemed much less scientific to me.

But hey, one doesn't necessarily need science to be helpful.
It's possible that something is helpful but science still needs to catch up with scientific measurements.

BUT… At least we need proof.
This leads me to the second issue with this book.

No Proof for Biggest Statements

The author tells the story of a woman who could see with her eyes closed.

She would wave back at the author with her eyes closed and eventually also be able to see behind her, at 360 degrees, with her eyes closed.

It actually made me angry that the author didn't record it and/or offer any proof for it: if he is onto something so life-changing it's his duty to show proof of it so that more people can get that kind of help.

The fact that there was no proof either for that story and for many other stories in the book is bound to arouse suspicion.

And it's not about being suspicious, it's about a critical approach that it's our duty to keep as readers.

Good Stories But Less Statistics

The stories are great and very telling.
Yet, stories can be misleading. I would have preferred some statistics on the effects of placebo on top of the stories.

Please note, this criticism is *not* to say that Dispenza or "*You Are The Placebo*" do not contain positive information. *They do*.
But it's just no more, and no more scientific, than all the rest of the "positive thinking crowd" has been saying for a long time now.

The Positive of You Are The Placebo In One Video

Look at this video and you will realize why I am ambivalent about this book.

Some pompous sounding reference, a great gift of gab but… Little science behind it.

Yet, what he says *can be* very helpful.

Yet, what he says about obsessing over the negatives and the past issues is true. *The habits of our mind* do make who we are. And we should all take care of seeding and harvesting positive thoughts.
As usual, take the good out of it, and drop the bad… And possibly don't throw too much money into it :).

Real-Life Applications

Be An Optimist: You'll Live Longer
Optimists live longer. Try to be a bit more optimistic then.
Also, read:

- Authentic Happiness

CONS

Sometimes Feels Like an Ad
At times *You Are The Placebo* feels like an ad for the author's seminars. And a bit of an upsell. In the end, the author says that you can either do your own tape for meditations or… You can buy his recordings.
To be fair the author also explains how to do your own tape. But since few are going to record their own instructions, it also works as a neat sales technique.

No Science
The "science" behind this book feels very "woo-woo" and there is a glaring lack of proof.

PROS

Positive Advice on Working on Our Thoughts
The information on meditation and working on our thoughts can be very empowering. Positive Psychology, as well as cognitive behavioral therapy, has proven that changing the way we think does change how we feel.

Review

You Are The Place is based on positive thinking and the law of attraction.

Albeit all those books claims some sort of (woo-woo sounding) science behind them, You Are The Placebo aspires to more science since Dispenza prefaces his name with a “Dr.”, and it indeed offers some more real-life examples, some experiments, and factual stories.

However, more science and stories did *not* equate to more proof, and You Are The Placebo offered very little to quell the doubts of the most critical thinkers.

Placebo works, meditation, and self-healing are extremely interesting topics that I want to address deeper. However, I didn’t find You Are The Placebo to be a good source for a good, dispassionate discussion on either topic.

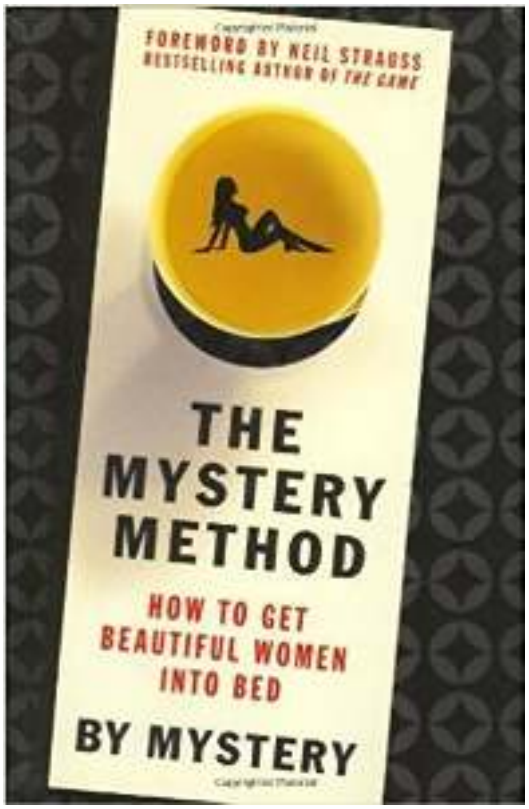
I would give it 5 stars for the positive change it can make in people’s lives. But I can’t give it more than three because **big claims require big proofs and I haven’t seen many of those**.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

The Mystery Method: Steps, Notes, & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*The Mystery Method*" is a system for meeting and seducing women developed by Erik von Markovik, also known by his nickname "Mystery".
"The Mystery Method" is also the title of Mystery's first and most popular book, in which he explains in detail how you can use his system.



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Bullet Summary

1. Attract in the beginning
2. Build comfort in the middle
3. Escalate to sex in the end

Full Summary

About the Author:
Erik von Markovik is a Canadian “pick-up artist”.

Neil Strauss’ book “*The Game*” says Erik worked as a magician before making a name for himself in the first online forum boards dedicated to “pick up”.

Erik von Markovik then started coaching and selling seminars to teach men how to meet and attract women, and he reached wider notoriety when Neil Strauss’ book “The Game” first came out.

Over the years, Mystery has faded somewhat into the background. Some say he lost control of his company after a legal battle, more entrepreneurial folks took over the industry -see “*RSD* by Tyler, and more natural and effective approaches took over.

Introduction

Erik von Markovik, AKA “Mystery”, says that the purpose of life is to survive and replicate.
To survive people learn martial arts (the art of war). To replicate, they can learn Venusian arts (the art of love).

The mystery method is divided into three phases with three phases within each. For a total of 9 steps.

The Mystery Method 1st Phase: Attraction

A1: Opening

Approach the group and make yourself the center of attention
Here are a few key characteristics of this phase:

- **Peacocking**: using flashy and attention-grabbing clothes and features to attract
- **3-second rule**: approach within 3 seconds of seeing someone you like or you talk yourself out of it and/or lose your chance
- **Canned opener**: the PUA of the days relied heavily on canned openers and opinion openers (ie.: asking questions about weird stuff)
- **False time constraint**: say that you can only stay for a bit to avoid coming across as clingy and/or like you’re going to hound them
- **Neg**: a backhanded compliment or a light insult to lower your target’s self-esteem and show that you are not impressed
- **Body rocking**: bob back and forth to give people the idea that you might be leaving soon (my note: careful how you do it, it can look silly if poorly executed)

Also, read:

- 9 steps to approach a woman
- Cold approach VS social circle VS online dating

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

A2: Female-to-Male Interest

Create attraction with one of the following techniques:

- **Demonstrate high value**: signal high value to show you're a high-value man, through:
  - stories
  - magic
  - routines
  - humor
- **Cocky funny**: the style of David DeAngelo
- **AMOGing**: the techniques to deal with an alpha male if he tries to cockblock you, or if he tries to undermine you
- **Push and pull:** do a compliment, then take it away. Show interest, then take that interest away

Also, see:

- Types of cockblockers (and how to deal with each)
- Sexual market value
- Sexual market value hacks

A3: Male-to-Female Interest

1. **Confirm interest**: If all goes well, she will show signs of interest. Confirm by reading the body language that she interested in you
2. **Qualify her**: Once she shows interest in you, you want to qualify her and
   1. **Go beyond looks**: show that you appreciate her for something beyond her looks

Also, see:

- The female signs of interest

Mystery Method 2nd Phase: Comfort

The goal of comfort is to make her comfortable with your presence.
You want to start the comfort phase when you are alone with her.

C1 – build rapport

In this phase, you will be talking about you two and about life.
You want to create rapport and a sense of common understanding.

The Mystery Method, again, focuses on a lot of routines to use such as:

- The Cube: it's a story you tell her, and then you read her personality based on the answers she gives
- Esp Routine: make her guess a number between 1 and 4, and tell her it was "3"

Also, read:

- How to bond and connect

C2 – build an emotional and physical connection

The goal of this phase is to double down on the emotional connection and start getting more physical by touching her more

1. **Touch her more**: you want her to start being comfortable with your touches
2. **Calibrate your touches**: if she likes it, touch more. If she pulls back, stop and talk more before going for the touch again

The early pick-up artists used to have problems with "how to kiss girls".
Eventually, Neil Strauss, AKA by his nickname "Style", came up with a routine for that one too:

- Evolution phase-shift routine: tell a story of how animals start having sex, and kiss her as you tell the story starting from the forearm to the neck till you reach her lips (my note: this always sounded extremely corny and contrived to me)

Also, read:

- 4 ways men touch women wrong

C3- Intimacy

To start intimacy, you must be in a sexual location, and you start the process of intimacy by first making out.

My Note: You might even skip making out
Just like *Alpha Male Strategies* says, making out might not be necessary for sex.

The Mystery Method's 3rd phase: Seduction

S1 – Foreplay

Before you begin with the heavier sexual stuff, Mystery reminds us that you must have built enough comfort.

The less comfort you have, the more last-minute resistance (LMR) you will face.
And if she is very uncomfortable with you, you can also get a full-out rejection.

S2 – LMR

Mystery dedicates one whole phase of his Mystery Method to dealing with LMRs.

The methods include:

- **Freezing her out**: ignore her and pretend you don't care anymore about her. The idea is to have her come to you once you stop pursuing her.
- **False takeaway**: you pretend you are about to leave to make her come after you

Here is an example of a false takeaway:

Personally, I'm not a big fan of the "freeze her out".
And the false takeaway puts the whole seduction on the line. It can work, but it's too risky considering that you are so close to the finish line.

Read here for more effective techniques for LMR:

> 10 Ways to Overcome Any Last Minute Resistance

S3 – Sex

This is the last step, and what the whole mystery method is built around: reaching sex.
However, the better you make that experience, the more likely it is that the woman will want to see you again.

Criticism

There is much good advice in *The Mystery Method*.
It was also a forerunner and the first modern book to bring Machiavellian strategic thinking into seduction.

I wouldn't be surprised if Mystery is very effective at getting groups' attention. And that may also lead to meeting and picking up women in those groups.

Mystery is also generally right that many attractive women are not alone *in night venues*, so **Mystery's method of social status-seeking qualifies as good advanced game, and it's a valid approach for clubs.**

But there are important drawbacks.
Let's start:

Mystery Was NOT Effective: 8h Rule & Average Results

There, I said.

Now let's explain it.
Mystery was a forerunner of the game. He was the best… In the crowd, he was in.

But get some dating experience, and learn to read between the lines… And you'll see the cracks.

Here is what you can glean from *The Game*:

1. **Mystery said you need 8 hours to sleep with a woman, but successful players know it's NOT TRUE**. Anything faster is "a fluke", said Mystery, while doing *club* game, which is often even faster
2. **Mystery seduced few women** at his "Project Hollywood" *despite going out every night*. The quality is also debatable (you can find Katya's pictures)
3. **Mystery lost his girl to "Herbal".** Katya played him, made *him* fall in love, lived free at his place, then cheated on him *with his friend*
4. **Mystery was collecting 'go-nowhere numbers'**. He declared that "phone numbers are wood" at 'Project Hollywood'. Why? Obviously, because his numbers weren't going anywhere

♂Lucio's Take: **98% of my seductions wrapped up within 3 hours**

Lucio:
While Mystery proposes longer courtships, even calling faster seductions 'flukes', my experience has been the opposite.

Women can feel bonded, safe, and attracted within 1h *if you do it well.*

Consider that I'm also less attractive than Mystery. And **I did it *repeatedly*** with attractive young women.

Edit:
Mystery has been doing the podcast rounds in 2024.
In one of them a young guy calls on a podcast, says he's got the skills down and he can get women back to his place within an hour. Mystery starts saying "That's now how it's done". Guy replies "I've done that repeatedly".
Hilarious.

Mystery Method Is Not The Most Effective Dating Approach

Good systems do two things:

1. Simplify a complex world
2. Provide practical guidance to achieve results

While Mystery method was valid for a first attempt at codifying succession, it may not have stood the test of time.

Indirect -& Slow- Game As Default Approach

The whole Mystery Method is based on games and hiding interests.

There is little room for being direct or simply liking each other and/or just having strong sexual chemistry.

Acting on that chemistry or verbalizing your liking for someone when it's obvious you both like each other can be much more powerful to move faster.

Not For Introverts: Groups & Night Game Focus

Mystery is all about groups.

I was shocked to hear a recent podcast, with a 50-year-old Mystery, talking about the "myth" of opening a girl by herself.

Here is this supposed "master", calling a "myth" what I have done many times over.

And, even if you haven't done it, it's just logical:

What's stopping you from opening and seducing a girl 1:1, rather than via groups?
If anything, it's gonna be faster!

Mystery, relying so much on "opening and merging groups", is also mostly about night venues.
He says that for the first 5 minutes, he talks all the time, even rambling.

By definition, it tends to be a highly social, high-energy type of game.

And that means that the **Mystery method is not good for introverts or men who don't like night venues**.

To me, it's a HUGE limitation.
Also because many of the best women don't do bars and clubs.

Fails 1:1 Dating

I suspect that Mystery needs 8 hours to sleep with a girl because he goes for group attention first, rather than woman's seduction**.**

Mystery's approach of holding court works for first impressions *in social groups*. But that could be his issue in making women feel bonded 1:1.
Research on narcissism supports this: early charisma when holding court, but struggling 1:1 in intimate settings.

This is not to say you must drop 'group game'.
But it's to say that you don't necessarily need group game. And if you do, you're more effective switching to something different when you're 1:1 with a woman.

I mostly do 1:1 approaches and dates, for example.
And I can make most women open up fast, either over food only, or at a second venue for a smoothie/drink. Then invite home, and close.

Some So-So Techniques

Some concepts, in my opinion, are context-dependent.

For example "demonstrating higher value" through stories.
Can be great.

But with some women, it can be better to let them talk.

"Body rocking" can also easily make you look like somewhat of a weirdo with ADHD.

Negging is a great concept, but lower value

The neg per se a good idea, and it can work well.

I use it sometimes, too:

And see the full explanation here.

However, not to be used at all times as your baseline behavior.

The power dynamics of the neg is that **the neg only works when the man is lower value than the woman.**
The neg may help make up that difference. But it's much better to NOT be lower value in the first place.

I see where Mystery is coming from though: in clubs, attractive women almost always have more power than men.

But negging will backfire if she thinks you're a cool guy.

More Mystery Method Limitations

Skipping the pop-psychology takes on evolutionary psychology and focusing on practical techniques:

Some good concepts don't generalize to all contexts: you need calibration

Some ideas are good in principle or in some situations, but not good to adopt as your baseline behavior.

For example, being the center of attention at parties or in groups can work great sometimes.
It will certainly get you lots of, well, attention.

But attention does not equate to results.

Often it's best to be the silent guy who only focuses on the girl he likes.

Also read:

- **The myth of high-energy**

Mystery takes some good ideas to the extreme, where they turn unhelpful

Some concepts are great and were groundbreaking.

Like peacocking, for example.
Peacocking, as in "being seen" or standing out, is *great*.

But early Mystery has been known to take it too far to be effective with many high-quality women.

See an example of Mystery being too extreme:

> **Conan**: (shames Mystery for looking like a clown ⍰)

PROS

- **Helpful to beginners**: For its time, the Mystery Method might have been an eye-opener for many readers. And I suppose it can still be, for some
- **Good fit for party lovers**
- **Many valid concepts** of dating power dynamics, including:
  - Nudging her to show interest
  - Qualifying her
  - Qualifying her for something different than their looks
  - Rewarding her for good behavior
  - The time constraint

For all of them though, one should know when it's the right time to use them, and when it's better to go direct and honest.
For example, there is no point in telling women you'll leave soon if they are happy that you're there.

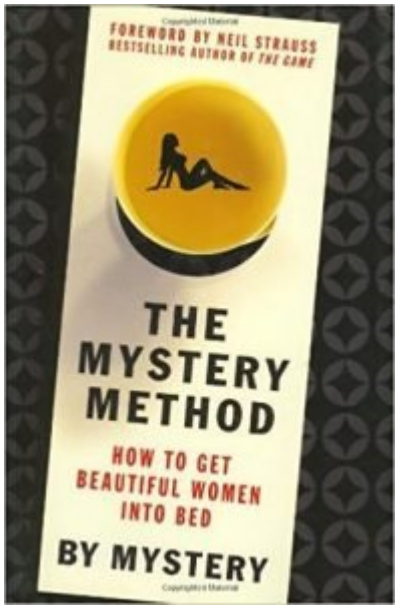
Review

The Mystery Method is an important book for pioneering a movement and introduced several valid concepts and techniques, but it's not the most effective tool for successful modern dating.

If you're anything like me, not particularly extroverted or clubbing-type, then Mystery Method won't suit your personality.

Check the **best dating books for guys** or get the book on Amazon

The Mystery Method Summary: 9 PUA Tactics Reviewed



The Mystery Method is Erik von Markovik first and most popular book on dating advice for men. It had some good

idea for the time, but it's an overly complicated system. Especially for anything outside of clubs.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-mystery-method/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.2

Tribe: Is Man's Nature Tribal, & Our Future Tribal? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Tribe (2017) is *a manosphere and self-help book* in which author Sebastian Junger highlights the flaws of our modern civilization which, in his opinion, is making us more comfortable, but also unhappy and unfulfilled.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Agricultural Revolution
  - Money Bring More Mental Issues
  - Self-Determination for Happiness
  - Tribal Society Enforced Sharing
  - Initiation for Males Was a Good Thing
- Tribe Book Criticism
  - Are we supposed to miss war?
  - "Back Then Was Better" Bias
  - Unfounded Conclusions
  - Anti-Capitalist Sentiment
  - Naive Idealism
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We all have a need to belong and connect, but modern societies don't provide it and we are all sicker
- Egalitarian societies have lower levels of mental illness
- Crisis, including wars, bring people to a more tribal and collaborative mindset, and suicides and mental illnesses decrease
- Individualistic societies push people to act against the common good

Full Summary

About the Author: Sebastian Junger holds a bachelor of arts in cultural anthropology. He has worked as a journalist and, later, as an author of several books.

The Agricultural Revolution

Sebastian Junger says that the agricultural revolution first and the industrial revolution later changed two fundamental things in the way humans live:

1. Accumulation of personal property allowed people to act more individualistically
2. People live independently from any communal group

The author says that more individualistic choices end up being harmful to the community. And that today people can go a whole day -or a whole life- living among millions without ever feeling part of any community. Basically,

being fully alone while being among millions.

And while happiness cannot be measured, mental illnesses can. And modern societies have seen a huge rise in mental illnesses.

Money Bring More Mental Issues

Sebastian Junger says that countries with big income disparities are at a much higher risk of developing mood disorders.

People living in urban areas are also more likely to develop depression and women in the most affluent families were the most likely to experience depression.

A survey among lawyers also found that the most overworked and successful corporate lawyers were less happy than their more chilled public defendant counterparts.

Self-Determination for Happiness

Junger mentions the self-determination theory, which holds that to be happy humans need to feel three things:

1. Competent in what they do
2. Authentic in their life
3. Connected to others

These are intrinsic values that far outweigh extrinsic values such as money and social status. But our society focuses on extrinsic values, says Junger.

Tribal Society Enforced Sharing

The author says that tribal and ancient societies punished egocentric individuals who acted against the common good.

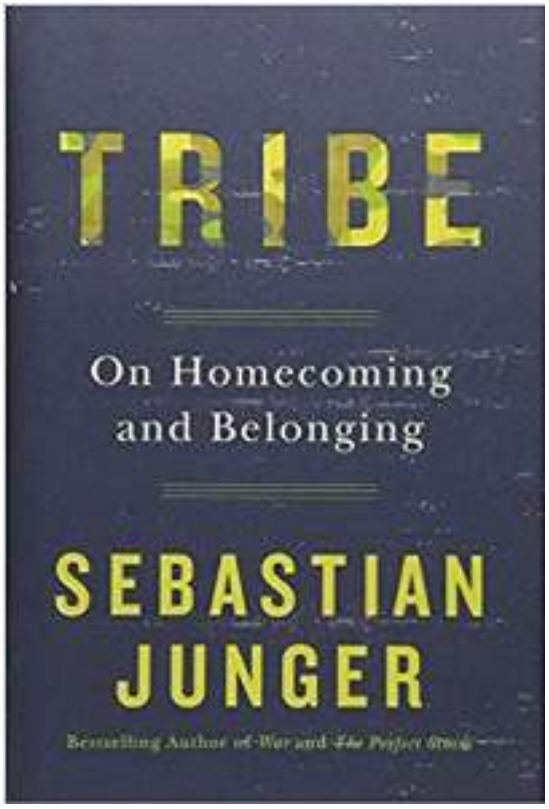
“Failure to share” was punished as severely as theft and murder, says the author. But modern society doesn’t have a similar check.
Today taking from others is simply called “fraud” and not sharing is the norm. He then compares modern executives who would be punished in hunter-gatherer societies.

My Note: The madness of tribal crowds and the rose-tinted glasses
In Tribe there is a description of an old pictorial image of a man struck by several arrows.
The author says that “execution was common in the past towards men who tried to control disproportionate resources”.
That image didn’t evoke in me any good feelings of groups caring for their members, but the actual brutal opposite. And it felt like Junger was wearing some truly distorting rose-tinted glasses. As Friederich Nietzche said, madness in crowds is the norm. And we shouldn’t be supporting that madness.

Initiation for Males Was a Good Thing

The author says that because our society doesn’t provide initiation for men anymore, men are seeking it in different forms.
They haze on each other, drive too fast, and act recklessly to show that they are ready to be men.

My Note: I don’t think initiation would cure all those ills
I think it’s simplistic to think that an initiation ritual would eliminate all risk-seeking behavior.



Tribe Book Criticism

I enjoyed the book, but there is much, much that I disagree with.

Are we supposed to miss war?

Sebastian Junger presents statistics and stories to show that people are closer during extremely difficult times such as war.

He quotes individuals who said they were all happier during wars and all closer and more united. I quote:

> I asked Amatasovic if people had ultimately been happier during the war. “We were the happiest” Amatasovic said. And she added “and we laughed more”.

I’ll be highly critical here, but this is the rhetoric and mindset of fascists.

Yes, maybe *Amatasovic* was happier.
And maybe she laughed more.

But what’s the point?

I’m sure the author didn’t mean that wars are good, but it sounded dangerous like putting rose-tinted glasses on some of the most atrocious times of human history.

As my grandmother said about WWII: “may those times never come again”.
I take more responsibility than my grandmother: it’s up to us to never make those times happen ever again.

“Back Then Was Better” Bias

To me, the whole book sounded a bit like the typical rose-tinted view of the past when “things were better”, which is a common bias of naive self-help.

Unfounded Conclusions

The author describes a scene from an old cave painting of possible execution.

And then talks about how foraging tribes punish males who tried to control a disproportionate share of the group resources.

I don't see how the author could make such a connection between the two, and I think it's simplistic to think that the group simply acts in the interest of all its members. It's more complex -and sometimes darker- than that.

Anti-Capitalist Sentiment

Junger says that the agricultural revolution allowed people to act more individualistic which, in turn, means acting against the common good.

I personally strongly reject that idea.
I don't think that acting individualistically necessarily means acting against the common good.
It's a complex topic, but capitalism can often -but now always!- harness individualistic pursuits to improve everyone's lives.

Seems to Encourage Violent Demonstrations

The author says:

> There are occasional demonstrations against economic disparities like the Occupy Wall Street protest of 2011. But they were generally peaceful and ineffective. The racial demonstrations (..) led to changes in part because they attained a level of violence that threatened a civil war

Again, the author seems to pitch tribalism and violence against other "tribes" as the way for a more just and fair society.
I disagree with that point of view.

Like Elliot Aronson says in *The Social Animal*, "*there will never be violence to end all violence and protests to end all injustices*".

Naive Idealism

I found some passages to be idealistically empty.

The author, for example, says that because foraging tribes need to share food for their own survival, they have adopted communal ways of living. When one man tries to take control of the group, other males will stop him. And that, he says is:

> Clearly an ancient and adaptive behavior that tends to keep groups together and equitably cared for

That is reminiscent of the "noble savage" of Rousseau, and to me, it's always sounded like a naive idealization.

I highly recommend two articles here.
The first is on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

And the second that I especially recommend if you're attracted to this "tribe ethos" is this manifesto of personal empowerment:

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

PROS

I have been highly critical so far.

Yet, I am glad I have read Sebastian Junger's *Tribe*. And I learned a few more things.

- **I learned that it's overseas wars that psychologically harm soldiers the most**

Israelis fighting to defend their homeland -or supposed homeland- had low levels of PTSD. But Americans shipped overseas to fight wars they have no idea about, among troops that have little in common with each other, had higher levels of mental issues.

- **Great book to understand people's need to connect**

Tribe is also a great textbook to understand humans as social animals. To understand our need to connect and belong.

Review

Tribe is a good book that makes valid points about human nature, and particularly human nature. Where it fails from our point of view is in turning analysis into idelogical aspirations.

Junger sees men as part of a tribe with long-lasting traditions to adhere to, while **we see empowered men carving the life they prefer as *individuals*, being bigger than any tribe.**

I can agree with its central idea: that modern society is a trade-off. Yes, it does offer lots of comforts and a safer existence, but we pay the price with more mental issues and a lack of communal living and emotional connection. However, I *completely* disagree about the balance of that trade-off.

To me, the tradeoff is positive.
This is a society of freedom, there is something for everyone. Even for those who want more communal living.

And I also disagree with Junger's interpretation of the past.
Whenever he criticized modern society for undoing the past, I thought that was a great thing.

No more "initiation" for young men?
Great!
Who wanted to be "initiated" into a culture they didn't have any choice?

No more executions by a hundred arrows against those who did a mistake by "trying to get too much of the shared resources?"
Great!
No more crowds madness.

I suppose Sebastian Junger prefers collectivism somehow.
While I just don't see individualism as a necessarily bad thing. Especially when that individualism provides those individuals more freedom to live life however they please.

See:

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

In a way, "*Tribe*" echoed the manosphere approach to male tribalism and it reminded me of *The Rational Male* and, even more, of *The Way of Men* by Jack Donovan. "The way of men" for Donovan is to band together to defend (and attack) men from other tribes.

I find the "tribal" mentality backward, dangerous, and harmful to all.
It's not just a male thing, of course.
It's the same BS that we see in feminist books where the tribe is composed of women -see *Lean In* where Salzberg invokes the support of other women for the simple fact of being women-.
And to me, that's the opposite of what civilization, progress, and self-empowerment are about.

Self-empowerment is not about joining a gang and being "initiated", self-empowerment is about becoming your own man and deciding which groups you want to join -if any-.
Again, please read this foundational article on individualism.

I think there is much to learn from *Tribe* by Sebastian Junger. But I also think it can lead people astray on the wrong kind of idealism.

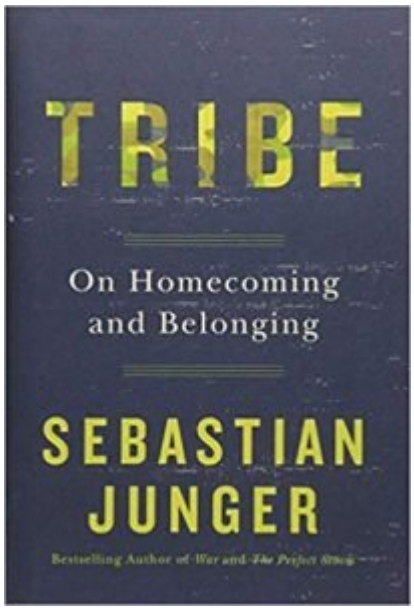
No, I don't think we need more tribalism.
We need *one* single tribe that embraces *not* all the people close to us, but *all* humanity and *all* forms of living.
As Robert Greene says in "*The Laws of Human Nature*", our only belonging is to the human race. Anything else is backward and way too dangerous.

Also, read:

- **Best red pill/manosphere books**

or get the book on Amazon

Tribe Book Summary: Is Junger's Philosophy Right For Men?



Tribe by Sebastian Junger explains how our tribal instincts are making us all unhappier in our impersonal and individualistic modern societies. I find Tribe to be a great book to understand humans as social animals. But not nearly as good in its interpretation of the data and rose-tinted view of "tribes".

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/tribe-sebastian-junger/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

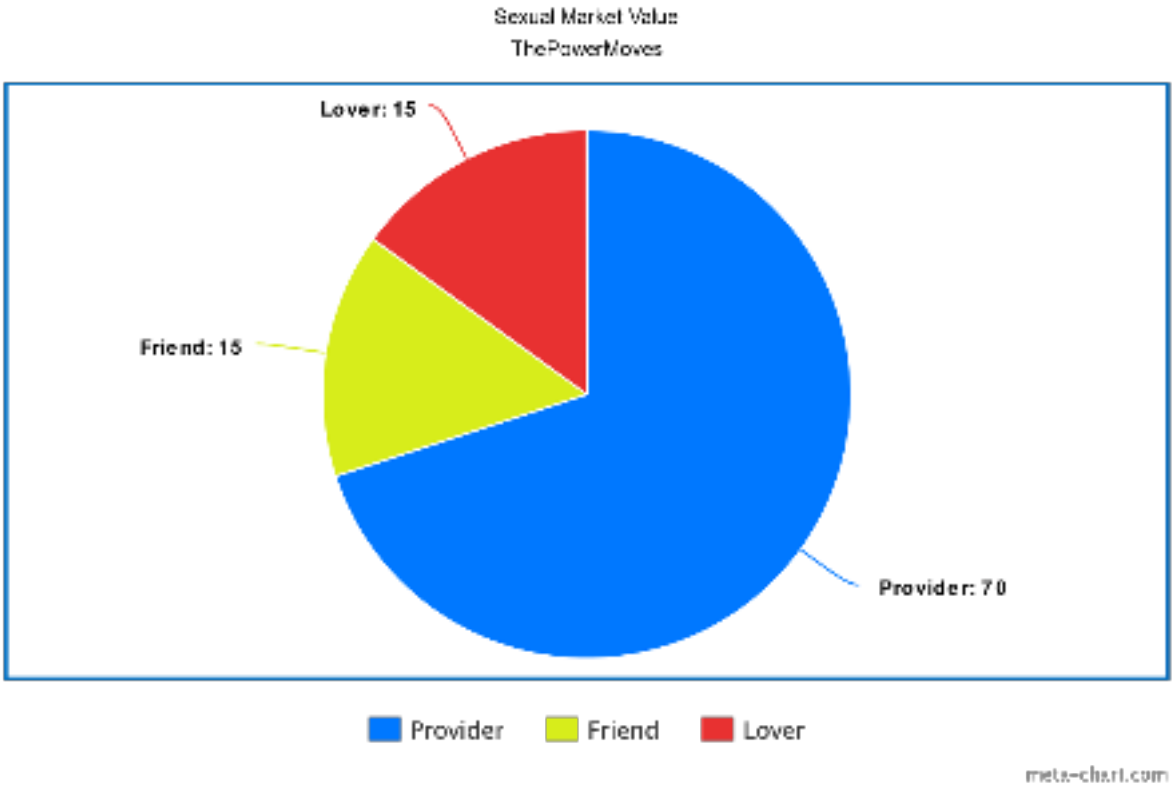
Editor's Rating:
2.8

Lover, Provider & Friend: The Truth of Men's Sexual Roles

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Lovers, providers, and friends are the three main roles with which women classify the men who pursue them.

Most men date as providers.
But a sizable minority uses a "lover strategy" or a "friend strategy".



This article explains the '2 + 1′ main male sexual strategies', and that their success is largely dependent on sexual market value.
Let's start:

Contents

- 1. Lovers
  - Low-Quality Lovers
  - High-Quality Lovers
- 2. Providers
  - Low-Quality Providers
  - High-Quality Providers
- 3. Friend
  - Low-Value Friend: The Orbiter
  - High-Value Friend: The Mate Switching Option
  - Friends & Social Circle Game: The Connectors
- Why Guys Get It Wrong
- Quality is The Differentiator
  - Low-Quality Player is Worst Option
- The SMV Power Scale

- The Best Is… The Best of Both
- SUMMARY

1. Lovers

Sex first, later we'll see
Lovers present themselves as sexually attractive men.
They showcase their experience and knowledge of women, their success with women (pre-selection), and, possibly, the promise of great fun between the bedsheets (Cashdan 1993).

Lover Category: An Explanation

From an evolutionary psychology point of view, men are around the middle in male parental investment (Trivers, 1972; Wright, 1994).

In a nutshell, that means that men don't just give out sperm, but they invest in their women, offspring, and intimate relationship.

The lover's strategy is to remove all the support and *only* give sperm.
Lovers avoid any investment because:

1. **They have good genes**: so they can avoid providing anything if they don't feel like
2. **Don't have resources to offer**: so they present themselves as lovers because they don't have other options
3. **Don't make their resources available**: they willingly avoid investing in any way, so they can be lovers (this can be an avoidant personality, a player, or a dating strategy)

The Rationale Behind The Lover Strategy

The appeal of the lover's sexual strategy is that, if executed well, it can lead to quick, "no strings attached" sex.

That makes sense: women indeed tend to move slower with boyfriend candidates.
When women want a boyfriend, they want that boyfriend to stick around. And to make him stick around, she might try to make him invest, chase, and wait for sex.
Those strategies can indeed increase the chances that he will stick around after sex -but I don't necessarily

recommend women that course of action because cool men don't like this game and it works mostly with lower-quality men-.

So if he removes himself from the provider and boyfriend candidate and if he is sexy and cool, then she might take him up for the fun of the sex -and, potentially, for the unconscious desire of getting his genes-.

Of course, there is no such thing as a strategy that always works best. It depends on the woman, on the situation, and on the guy.

Furthermore, not all lovers are good lovers. And we can divide between "low quality" and "high quality" lovers.

Low-Quality Lovers

Let's get back to that previous example from the Red Pill poster.

The mistake he does is in the generalization.
And generalizing that lover equals a high-SMV man.

But that couldn't be further from the truth.
As for anything, there are different levels at which a dating strategy can be implemented.

And albeit it's true that lovers *tend* to be more sexually experienced and socially skilled, that's a vast generalization.
And there are plenty of low-quality lovers out there.

The Movie The Pick-Up Artist from 1987 is an example of a low-ish quality type of lover.
The one who pursues women and *thinks* of himself as a lover, but who actually doesn't really get laid:

He runs around like a kid, acts like a creepy entertainer, and he fails to truly attract any woman he talks to

And you can still go much lower in the lovers' category.
In a way, a junkie who fucks another junkie woman is also a lover. He has nothing to give, cares more about his next hit than the woman, and he does not invest in any way (because he can't).

Needless to say, you don't want to be in this category.

High-Quality Lovers

High-quality lovers are high-value men.
They may even have plenty of resources, but either are not too willing to share them or don't even put them on the table.
Alternatively, they might not have resources but are very skilled, socially charming, and very attractive.

They put their good looks, game, and any other sexually attractive quality on display. And might actively disqualify themselves from the boyfriend's role.
But since they are overall high-quality men, women still like them.

There are plenty of examples of high-quality lovers and this is one of them:

(see SU for private videos)

Nothing Guarantees You to Always Win

A high-quality lover is a thing of beauty.

But of course, there is no silver bullet out there, and not all women will want to take up lovers on their offer.

A few women are adamant in asking for resources and/or investment. These can be super driven towards a relationship, women who have ridden enough penises and want to settle down as *gold diggers*, or *extremely* principled and religious women.

Some other women might be worried about their reputation and some others, of course, might simply not like the guy -subjectivity still plays a role, even when one is an objective high-value man-.

However, there are plenty of women who will take the lover's offer and enjoys a good life.

If you are interested in more resources:

- Psychology of womanizers

Drawbacks for The Lovers

Lovers tend to be very hit-and-miss.

If it works, it works fast.
If it backfires, there is no turning back.
That makes it a high-reward, high-risk strategy. And at times, in social circles where he has time and a reputation to take care of, a more prudent approach might serve him better.

Another risk is the after-sex: if it happened too quickly, he pushed too much, and/or if he is not good to bond and connecting with her, she might write him off as a one-night stand.

2. Providers

I haven't even seen your Red Corvette yet, but… I'm interested
If the lover is the man who gives sex and little more, the provider gives sex and *more*.
The provider is the man who is able and willing to invest.

What's "investment"?

Investment can be money, emotional support, help with their career, etc., etc.
For most guys, investment is the mix of all of them, and more, that comes with a relationship.
It includes time, emotional support, help, and, often, a commitment to exclusivity (exceptions apply, see below).

Basically, the provider is the typical guy in a relationship.

The Average Provider Guy (& The Exceptions)

The provider role is an often misunderstood role in the dating community.
Again, there are good reasons why.

It's because *most* providers are average guys with little of the exciting qualities of lovers and, as a matter of fact, few resources to share as well.

The provider role indeed is the main default role for most guys.
Probably around 70%-80% of men's main default role is a provider.

And of that 70%-80 % of men who go the provider route, 80% of them cluster around the average.
For simplicity, we will discuss the extremes here. But keep in mind that the average is far closer to the lower end than to the top.

See here for dating and sexual exceptions.

Low-Quality Providers

Serve first, sex maybe later. Maybe, we'll see about that. Just keep serving for now.
The majority of providers with regular office jobs are average, and since they are all interchangeable, we could probably cluster 80% of providers in the lower band.

From the same movie of the previous Ryan Gosling example, here is the example of a provider in the low to the middle range:

> **Carl**: I thought I did everything right. Got married, had kids, the house… What do I get for it? I get cuckholded

But even here, we can go much lower than Cal.
There are guys in menial jobs, minimum wage, and, of course, the guys who borrow to seem like better providers.
Have you ever heard of the guys who rent a supercar, max their credit cards, and blow a whole month's salary on an evening out with their special gal?
Exactly, those…

In the movie "Gran Torino" Clint Eastwood is grooming Thao to become more of a provider.
Look at this scene where Eastwood lends him the Gran Torino:

Eastwood is probably actually hurting Thao.
In an effort to "impress" the girl, he implies that he must work harder to provide for her, thus underlying the value disparity between him and her.

The White-Knight Provider

A specific sub-type of low-quality provider is the so-called "white knight".

A white knight is a man who idealizes her princess and bends over backward to do anything she needs because "she's the queen" and it's his duty to serve her.

That's also a terrible mindset and a bad position to be in: these guys enter the relationship in what's one of the weakest positions possible.

And some women are very willing to help them along the way.
See an example here.

And read more here:

- The betaization process
- Games women play
- I'm the prize power move

High-Quality Providers

Two areas make a provider a high-quality provider:

1. Personal value
2. Resources

The higher you go with both, the higher the overall provider quality of the guy.
And the two are not separated as some might think: studies prove that **more money makes men more attractive**.
And of course, making money also often requires a lot of attractive traits, including personal drive and resourcefulness.

Some former high-quality lovers who want to stop sleeping around also can make for high-quality providers.

Supertop Providers

However, there is an upper bound limit you can reach with personal value alone.

To reach the super upper echelons of top high-quality providers you will need lots of resources.

The super top providers are the guys who open the tab and let everyone in their group have a good time.
They throw money around, everyone loves them, and when they leave with a chauffeured car or their own Ferrari they don't even look at the tab: they are enjoying the hot girl in their arm, and couldn't care less about the few thousands they've spent.

The movie "Showgirls" contains an example of a top provider:

Driving Ferrari and getting a BJ while pouring champagne. Classic.

This is also the territory of powerful tycoons.
Silvio Berlusconi is an example of a provider at the far end of the spectrum.

Modern tycoons are the equivalent of the old bygone days of kings and monarchs. At that level, getting sex becomes very easy and it's often not even about providing anymore. **Getting laid for top providers is not about providing, but it's about the *experience* of their lifestyle**

Indeed at the far end of the provider spectrum, for the men who enjoy that lifestyle, **excesses of providing turn into lovers/players** (as well as a target for fathering his kids).

However, many super-rich men don't end up having sex with countless women. Men who get very rich are often driven by a mission that goes beyond women -and women can become a distraction for outsized achievements-.

Flashy Displays of Wealth Turns Providers Into Lovers

When a man shows off *lots* of wealth, he is playing less in the provider category and more in the lover category.

A study found out indeed that flashy displays of wealth lead observers to consider him more of a "fling" sort of man and less of a "long-term provider".
This is called "conspicuous consumption".

In brief: **flashy displays of wealth increase his lover status.**

The unwritten contract there is this: come with me, I'll splurge on you, give you a night of luxury, and then you're free to go.

I'm not a fan of this style, but it goes to show that, at the top, the roles blur.

Read more:

- Alpha fux, beta bucks

Drawbacks for The Providers

Average providers, such as most men, will be screened and qualified (much) harder.

Entering a relationship moving slowly as the provider often also means that it will be more of a relationship of equals when it goes for him or, more often, that she is the prize.

Also, she might end up playing the Madonna role during dating. That might even mean that she will never show her true colors and never really be herself.

3. Friend

"Hmmm… You're still having all those fights with Cristina? You could get so much better you know…"

“Friend” has taken a really bad rep in the male dating world.

It has gone mainstream with the term “friend-zoned“. The friend-zoned man is a man who spends time with a woman in the hope of eventually dating her, but whom she has no intention of ever dating.

This is a dynamic that, indeed, happens relatively often. And it’s a terrible situation to be in.

But, again, this is a generalization of the worst type of friend applied to the whole “friend” population.
“Friend”, per se, is a neutral word.
And along with the clueless friend-zone idiots, you also have cool guys who just happen to have fun with female friends.

Let’s dig deeper to come out of generalizations and misunderstandings.

Who is a Friend?

Friends tend to be somewhat less exciting than lovers and not as available as providers.

They can cheer her up, listen to her, and share good times together.

They might be interested in a relationship with her, but they don’t necessarily have to be.
He might be a *nice guy,* but doesn’t have to be.
And he might be at her beck and call, but he might as well not be available at all.

As you can see, a friend can really be anything because, well, it’s a very generic term.
So let’s dig deeper.

Low-Value Friend: The Orbiter

The low-value friend is the “friend” that the manosphere usually refers to.

These guys typically hang on to her because they are interested in sexual favors and, even more often, in a relationship.

Since all relationships entail an exchange, if his value were zero or even negative, she probably wouldn’t want him around.

Indeed low-value friends have *enough* value that they don’t embarrass women when they tag along *and* enough value to offer some sort of help and support.
But they don’t have enough value to have sex with -lover category- or be in a relationship with -the provider category-.

Basically: **a low-value friend’s sexual market value is not negative, but not high enough for sex or boyfriend candidates**.

If low-value friends are not discerning enough, which they often are not or they wouldn’t be low-value in the first place, they can end up exploited by some women.

Neil Patrick Harris in Gone Girl is the example of a friend who is being taken advantage of:

High-Value Friend: The Mate Switching Option

A high-value friend is a high-value man that she’d consider a great partner.

In some cases, he’s a great socialite who can bond with her.
He may be smart and with great advice.
Or he may be just attractive, “cool”, or high-status.

Maybe all of them.

Research presented in the latest *Oxford Handbook of Female Adaptations* confirms that:

1. **Women prefer friends with the same quality of a good mate**
2. **Friends are often favored for long-term partners** over strangers
3. **Friends are well-positioned to get a woman with a boyfriend**

And the *Handbook of Relationship Initiation* acknowledges that among cross-sex friendships, there is some sexual tension.

Of course, as we understand here, these are true for high-value friends only.

This is an example of sexual energy between friends (author's videos in our products).
That long pause you hear is everyone being aware of that tension.

Sexually-Charged Friends

At the top of the sexual chemistry, the two "friends" avoid being alone because they both know the risks.

Sex with old-time friends who have always been attracted to each other releases long-running, pent-up sexual attraction coming off all at once.

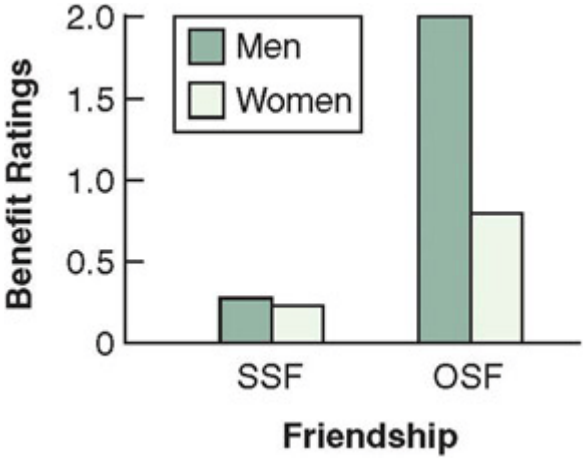
Should You Refuse Female Friendships?

Some men who pursued a woman refuse friendships as a matter of honor.

Rollo Tomassi, popular red pill author, and author of *The Rational Male*, recommends men to always reject the offer of friendship.

I think instead that makes men come across terribly butthurt.
And if you apply the "never befriend a woman" advice, you'll end up with lots of male friends and little contact with real women.

There are many benefits of having female friends.
Here is how both men and women rate the benefits of friendship:



Source: Bleske, A., & Buss, D. M. (1997)
OSF= opposite-sex friendships and both genders see it as more beneficial than same-sex friends.
Opposite-sex friendships are a great way of learning about the opposite sex's thinks, which is very helpful for your mating efforts (Buss, 2016).
Makes sense, no? If you want to seduce women, it helps to be familiar with women and know how the *female mind* works.

Friends & Social Circle Game: The Connectors

Wouldn't it be cool to have models enter your life without ever cold approaching?

Enter the power of the "connectors", or "super-friends".

Connectors achieve great dating success, as well as sometimes life success, by befriending, socializing, and entering the social circles of high-value men, as well as very attractive women.

The connectors make it a point to be *friends* first. They make lots of high-quality people, including women. And, eventually, some of those women they keep meeting will like him and naturally move from friends to dating and, potentially, relationships.

This guy here is a *great* example of a man who has built abundance in his life with both business opportunities and women by making it a point of being a friend first:

> **Michael Sartain**: question is, how do I get out of the friend zone? Point is, I'm not trying to get out of the friend zone. I keep going out, and they keep me introducing to more people
> (…) doing all these things that a friend would do, while still being an alpha male

For men who are good at connecting and socializing, this can become a lifestyle choice where the man has an endless supply of attractive women.
Of course, this method only works if you plan on staying in the same place for the long run.

Drawbacks & Risks of Friends

Connectors, of course, are the exception.

And successful connectors need to be based in big cities with lots of high-quality people and successful women.

So unless you are a top-notch connector in a top city and unless there is huge sexual chemistry the friend position has the lowest value in the sexual marketplace.

He has been around for a while, she knows him and if she hasn't found him exciting so far, what are the chances that it's going to change any time soon?

Most "normal" guys should avoid dating with a friend-first strategy.

Why Guys Get It Wrong

There are two ways of getting it wrong:

- **Too naive**, like most guys
- **Too "red pill"**, which lacks nuance and sometimes is too cynical

The naive guys have no idea of effective dating strategies, their own positioning, and of, course, no idea of sexual market value.

The red pill crowd tends to fall for the "alpha f*cks, beta bucks", where the "lover rocks, provider is beta".

This is not completely wrong, but also a huge generalization and overall bad sexual marketplace theory.

Just look at this example below:

(self.TheRedPill)
submitted 4 years ago by TRP ENDORSED RedPillDad

Read some recent posts about struggles to get the sex part going (zero sex after 10 dates). Thought this would help...

Even if a woman isn't on the prowl, she'll scan her surrounding environment for allies, enemies, new threats and opportunities. Upon meeting a guy, she instinctively begins a process of qualifying and disqualifying. She'll categorize a guy as either a LOVER, LOSER, PROVIDER or FRIEND.

Lovers attract. Losers repel. Providers are those marriage-material Plan B guys she keeps in reserve, and Friends are the dependable, utilitarian guys or emotionally-supportive girlfriend substitutes she enjoys having around, but has no sexual attraction to.

> **Red Pill guy**: Providers are those marriage-material Plan B guys

As it's often the case with the red pill, he's not completely wrong.

But he's also not right because he fails the nuances (plus, it may be a case of what I call "alpha male posturing" (and this is why you must quit the posturing).

The red pill take implies that all providers are lower value.
But, probably, **albeit as a group lovers are higher mate value than providers, plenty of providers are higher mate value than lovers.**

This is something the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology* also mentions:

> The second major assumption of the dual sexuality hypothesis is that (…) men with high-quality genes pursue mainly a short-term mating strategy (…) and their willingness to provide paternal care is low.
> This assumes that (…) men who can provide paternal care lack cues of genetic quality. Such an assumption is, however, likely to be unfounded.

I disagree it's "unfounded".
A good case can be made that it's well-founded *at a group level*. But unfounded when *over*-generalized.

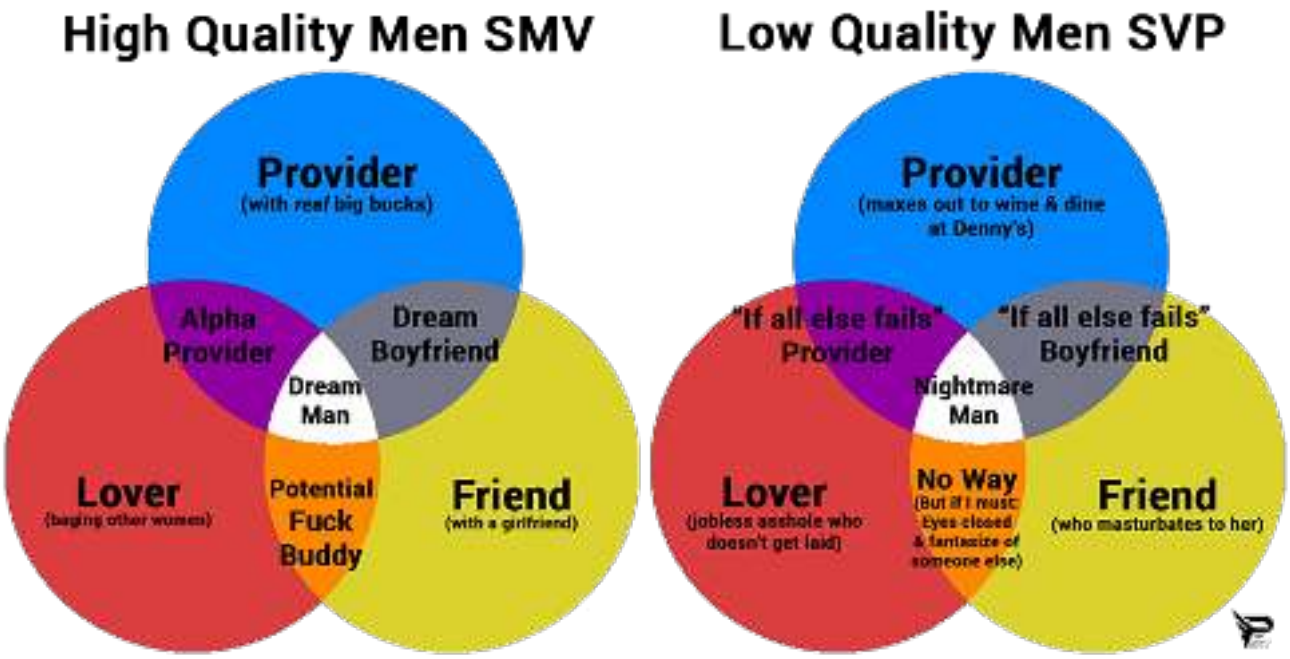
Quality is The Differentiator

If you have noticed, there is a thread running through the dating strategies.

And that thread is that the high-quality guys do well across all dating strategies.
And poor guys do poorly across *all* dating strategies.

In atypical seduction techniques that work we saw the example of Grant Cardone, who chased his wife for a year.
He was pursuing a provider strategy and chasing hard.
Yet, he won her over because, overall, he was still a high-quality guy going places.
That's because **it's the man who makes the sexual market value, not the role**.

Look at this sexual market value chart divided by male positioning:



Basically what this article explains is simple: be a high-quality guy and you will date successfully with whichever approach you choose.

Low-Quality Player is Worst Option

The second consequence of our analysis of sexual market value across dating strategies is this:

Lower-level guys fare badly across *all* dating strategies, but the lover is the worst role for them.

Why?

Because a low-quality lover has nothing.
He has low value as a lover, cannot provide enough value to even be around her, and he has no resources whatsoever.

The SMV Power Scale

Here is the ranking in the sexual market value that I assign to each male positioning:

1. **Value negative** (she actively avoids him)
2. **Low-quality lover / Nothing** (has nothing of value or negative value, she doesn't want him around)
3. **Average Friend** (can provide support, and might have a chance, but can be taken advantage of)
4. **Average Provider** (can provide support and "good enough" genes)
5. **High-quality friend** (raises her status, might introduce potentially good prospects)
6. **Good Lover** (can provide good genes but little support or he's not willing to support)
7. **Top Provider** (high-quality man with resources with which he *could* take care of many different women and good genes to boot)

For biological reasons **at the top of the pyramid power and resources matter more than looks** in terms of his power of sleeping with lots of new women.
Few if any models can out-fuck an average-looking tycoon -possibly even an ugly one-.

The Best Is... The Best of Both

These categories are on a continuum, of course.

Assuming anyone could do as they please, most men would like to play around, at least for a part of their life.
But most men would also enjoy a relationship with a great partner.

Few me would never wish to sleep around, not even one bit, and few men would swear off seeing a woman more than once:

Most men are on curve. Most men would love to sleep around more, but would also like to keep seeing a great woman

Ultimately the most attractive man is this:

The most attractive man is the man she sleeps fast with like a lover, feels comfortable with like a great friend, and who she hopes may be turned into a great boyfriend.

This man takes the best traits from all of the different roles.
Especially from the provider and the lover.

Look at this text a woman sent me:

What she's describing is a mix of provider and lover traits. And that's why she kept writing me non-stop.

I am not high at anything, I just got lucky in that example above.

But the principle is that at very high levels and at very low levels all strategies are similar.

Low-value players chase women unsuccessfully just like low-value friends are orbiters and low-value providers don't find a girlfriend.

Instead, a top provider has also all the traits to be a top player. And a top player has all the traits to amass resources and be a top provider or a top friend -if he wanted to.

Because, again, it's the man behind that strategy that makes the most difference.

SUMMARY

The dating strategies of lover, provider, or "friend first" are the three most common dating strategies men deploy.

For men interested in finding a romantic partner the "friend first" is the least time-efficient and effective.

Entering as a lover first and as a provider/stable partner later is a good strategy and can give him more power at the beginning of the relationship. But it has higher risks.

The provider first is the most typical strategy, relatively safer -as long as she likes you.

But for a great relationship, you want to be high quality in all of them: lover, provider, and friend.

Also, read:

- **Provider OR Lover? Choose your strategy**

Deep Work: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Deep Work* (2016) Carl Newport suggests that the solution for higher productivity, more free time, and higher life satisfaction lies in acquiring the skills for "*deep work*", such as the single-minded focus on work that allows us to do more, in less time.

TPM Power Note: Productivity and competence are power—but not enough.
Newport risks overselling productivity competence while underplaying strategy, positioning, and workplace politics. Besides Newport relying on some pop-psychology, the truth is that you must also *market* your skills, compete effectively, self-promote, and navigate power dynamics to turn competence into real-world results.

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Overview

- Deep work -the ability to focus and immerse yourself in a task- is the only work that will advance your life, career, and achievements
- Train your deep work skills: the more you do it, the better at it you get
- Design a life with habits and routines built around producing deep work
- Deep work is taxing: once you've done enough, stop working. Otherwise, you're wasting time on shallow work

Notes

About the Author:
Cal Newport holds a Ph.D. in computer science from MIT. He is the associate professor of computer science at Georgetown University and the author of several self-improvement books on productivity and competence.

Introduction

Deep Work is divided into two parts: the first part tells you what deep work is and why you need it.
The second part explains how to learn it as a skill and how to implement it in your life.

Deep Work Definition

I will quote Cal Newport here:

> Deep work is the ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task. It's a skill that allows you to quickly master complicated information and produce better results in less time.

Deep work creates value for you and for the world.

Shallow work is the opposite.
It works on simple tasks and/or those you perform distracted, and which tend to create little value to you and the world.

Basically, you want to do less shallow work and more deep work.
Here are some examples of shallow work.

Shallow Work Examples

- Checking emails
- Replying to texts that add no real value
- Checking your Facebook feed
- Updating your status
- Interacting with various push notifications
- Checking your phone
- Important work but distracted

Do less of the above.

Why You Need a Shallow Work Shield

Cal Newport makes the point that our current society seems to push people towards more shallow work.
Just think of the following:

- Open office spaces with constant interruptions
- "Culture of business" where running around is seen as productive
- Expectations of fast response on all communication channels
- Push notifications of all kinds
- Addictive social media is built and designed to trap your mind

Basically: the world is pushing you into shallow work. But if you are driven and want to deliver big results, you need to buck the trend.

That is why if you want to achieve it is so crucial that you build the skill and culture for deep work.

The Elements of Deep Work

Here are the major elements of deep work:

1. **Single-tasking**: multi-tasking is a myth, it decreases your productivity. Do one thing at a time
2. **No distractions**: set blocks of time where you don't allow yourself to be interrupted
3. **Intense focus**: the more you're into the task, the more and better you will deliver
4. **Staying power**: the longer you can stay at it, the deeper you will go

Don't Switch Tasks: Attention Residue Phenomenon

Cal Newport discusses the phenomenon of attention residue.

Attention residue is the "mental contamination" that different tasks produce on each other.

Imagine you are writing a post on the best lessons learned from the book Deep Work. But you crave a distraction and want to quickly check the emails.

Giving in to the distraction takes you away from your immersion in the task of writing and interrupts the flow.

Now imagine in your inbox you see two emails.
Once you decide to reply right now, it further takes you away from the mental cycles that are needed to write a good summary.
The second one, you can't deal with it right now and you go back to writing.

When you go back to writing you need to "warm-up again" from scratch. And the email you could not reply to is still lingering in your mind as your next "to-do task".

Now you need time to get into the writing mood again, and your mind is "polluted" by the task you've just finished in the past and the one you still have to do in the future.

Meaning for you? Stick with one task.

Attention residue is the reason why you should not constantly switch between tasks but rather stay focused on a single one for as long as possible.

The Skills for Deep Work

Deep work is a skill that you can increase with training.
The more you do it, the better you get at it.

Cal Newport says there are two key components you need to develop to increase your deep work:

1. **Concentration skills**: the ability to fully focus on your tasks
2. **Beating the craving for distraction**: unless you overcome your brain's craving for a quick distraction, you will never get into deep work

And of course, the two are heavily interconnected.

How to Develop Deep Work Skills

Cal Newport proposes four rules to get good at deep work:

1. **Work Deeply**: you need to structure your life around deep work. Divide your days into time blocks. Each time block is for doing one thing and one thing only

2. **Embrace Boredom**: it's when we are bored that the craving for distraction gets us the easiest. You must train yourself to stick with a task long after it's gotten boring. To help fight the craving for distraction don't fill your day with tasks but leave out some time where you allow your mind to relax, wander and recuperate
3. **Quit Social Media**: they are designed to pull you away from deep life and they are the kings of distractions. Quit them for 30 days and see if your results will improve
4. **Drain the shallows**: look at your day-to-day work and remove all the unproductive tasks. The example is a company whose productivity went up after they removed Friday from the workweek: employees just were focusing more during the other days to get the same amount done

Finally, Cal Newport recommends we develop routines that support deep work.

Habits and Routines for Deep Work

The author says that we have a limited amount of willpower.

My Note: Is willpower really limited?
It's an open issue, read more about pop psychology myths-.

That's why we should strive to conserve our willpower for what really matters.

One way of wasting willpower is trying to combat distractions.
If we don't *develop good habits* that support our deep work, we will be using our willpower trying to wrestle our attention away from shallow work, social media, cat videos, and all other distractions.

How to conserve willpower?
To avoid wasting our willpower, we should develop a lifestyle that supports deep work.
Cal Newport proposes four different alternatives:

1. **Monastical lifestyle**: cut off all distractions
2. **Bimodal monastic**: you alternate periods of monk lifestyle to a "normal" life
3. **Rhythmic monastic**: you partition your days for deep work -ie.: 9 to 5 and leave the evening off-
4. **Journalistic monastic**: you fit deep work into your schedule any time you can

Also, see:

- **Monk Mode**

Rest And Sleep Well

Finally, you need to rest and sleep enough.
Plenty of research from different fields shows that getting enough rest and downtime does not take time away from productivity but *enables* deep work, concentration, and productivity.

Not getting enough rest and downtime is harmful to your productivity.

Here is why you need rest and downtime and how to use it:

1. **Plan downtime to recharge your batteries**: downtime is a bit like plugging your phone into mains. It's simply something you have to do to keep enjoying all your top functionalities. Plan it into your days
2. **Use downtime for inspiration**: our unconscious has more power than our conscious mind. By taking breaks or going for walks we can leverage the power of our unconscious to come up with ideas and solution
3. **You waste time working too long**: deep work is highly taxing and our capacity for deep work is limited (4 hours on a whole day for masters with chunks of 60 to 90 minutes). Any work that we do outside of our (current) capacity for deep work is most likely going to be shallow work and time-filling

To make downtime an integral part of your life Cal Newport recommends that when you stop working, you stop working *for good*.
No more checking emails, no WhatsApp group with your coworkers, and no mental cycles spent on work.

The proof that it works?
Cal Newport finishes work at 17:30 and rarely works weekends.

> **Productivity is about depth of work, not amount of time**

Real-Life Applications

Plenty of life-changing advice in this book:

- **Get Rest – Or You're Wasting Time**

This concept is simple and yet it's crucial for many agentic men to grasp.
Much of the time we spend "working" is wasted time. Once you can't stomach deep work anymore, you are better off stopping to work because you're not really doing much anyway.
Do something else.
Improve your intimate relationship, work out, listen to music, and do something you're passionate about. Or yeah, check your social media too maybe.
But stop wasting time on shallow "work".

- **Say No to Distraction -And Yes to Passion-**

Saying no to distractions is hard. But it's all the hardest if you are trying to give your attention to something you don't love.
That's why it's crucial in life that you give your deep work time to something you love. Say no to distractions, but only to say yes to what you love.

On the techniques for "saying no to people", see:

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

- **Use Your Unconscious for Groundbreaking Ideas**

I loved the concept of using downtime -and your unconscious- to come up with new ideas. You can take a break from your work and go for a walk to let your mind wander.
Or you can also meditate with a piece of paper nearby and then quickly jot down new ideas that come to your mind.
I have had some of my best ideas while meditating.

Deep Work Video Summary

And here is a Deep Work video summary with some of the examples I haven't touched on in this summary and review:

CONS

Not Always Accurate on Latest Research

Deep Work makes ego depletion -such as the idea that our willpower is limited- a central tenet for its recommendation.

However, the concept of ego depletion has been called into question.

Not hearing counter-arguments reduces the authority of the author for critical readers like myself.

Social Media Bashing

The author says he is not telling you to abandon social media.

BUT… Then proceeds to spend a good portion of the book in what sounded to me a lot like social media bashing. I find it unnecessary.

The author says that social media ruins most people's productivity. And that may be true -albeit even there, did he measure that to be sure?-.

But *most* people aren't going to maximize their efficiency anyway -and maybe not everyone even should seek that-. *Most* people were watching TV before social media, listening to the radio before TV, and loitering before the radio. The point is: people who don't care about maximizing efficiency will always find something to do that is *not* work.

Driven people instead are more likely to find a way to be productive, no matter what technology is available. And they're a lot more likely use social media for good.

Social media can be a bane or it can be a tool you can leverage. It's up to us how we use it.

"*In Today's World You Need…*" Fallacy

Have you ever noticed that so many speakers use this format:

- "In today's world you need X"
- "In today's world you can't allow yourself to be X anymore"?
- "Today it's more difficult than ever"

Then you read that book when it's a few decades old and you smile.
And you realize how hollow those sentences are.

The truth is that no matter the world and era you live in you can always do more and be more and you should *always* strive to be better no matter in which period you live.

That's why I didn't particularly enjoy Deep Work's recurrent references to "today's world".
I don't think we need more deep work *today*.
We need more deep work today, as much as we will need more deep work tomorrow, as much as we needed deep work yesterday.

Sometimes Extremist

At times, it felt to me like *Deep Work* was being extreme with its tenets.

From deleting social media to not checking your phone if you are waiting in line to not checking the Internet if you need a piece of information.

I can't think of not using the Internet while I write: it helps me write better, research information, double-check resources, and write better reviews.

The idea of not checking your phone while waiting in line also seems like an unnecessary time waste. You can use that downtime to reply to what you need to reply to.

PROS

I won't list a bunch of "pros" here for a simple reason: **it's the concept of Deep Work that is life-changing**.

When you develop your skills for deep work you can do more and better with less time. More results together with more free time, fun, and better relationships?

Review

Deep Work is a great book, with a simple, yet foundational proposition: making your work time matter.

Deep Work is not revolutionary in any way as it repeats a few well-known concepts of productivity. BUT.. It combines some research with personal experiences and insights to make it valuable.

The changes that *Deep Work* inspires lead to what Cal Newport calls "Deep Life", such as a life free of distractions and meaningless tasks. A deep life has deeper work, deeper relationships, and deeper satisfaction.

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Never Outshine The Master: A Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This article is a case study for The Law of Power N.1 “never outshine the master”, from Robert Greene‘s *The 48 Laws of Power*.

It also deals with other foundational laws of power, such as making friends instead of enemies, setting up collaborative frames instead of antagonist ones, and the importance of political intelligence within work-related teams.

⍰⍰ For the complete book guide, see the main **48 Laws of Power guide**.

Contents

- Hubris Can Be Your Downfall
- Never Outshine The Master
  - The Mistake: Over-Dominance Makes Enemies
  - Keeping Good Boss Relationships
  - Lessons Learned 1: Make Allies, Not Enemies
  - Lesson Learned 2: Develop Competence
- When You Should NOT Be Inclusive
- When It’s OK to Do a Power Takeover
- SUMMARY

Hubris Can Be Your Downfall

In a few instances in your life, you might have the power to lead groups.

And sometimes, you might even feel like you have the power to *replace* any leader above you and do a “power takeover”.

A power takeover happens when someone from a lower power position overthrows the leader and imposes himself as the new group’s leader.

However, more times than not, it’s more about the *feeling* and the hubris to challenge authority than actually having the power to do so.
And that’s how many driven men with an otherwise brilliant future end up crashing and burning.

People who fail to realize the risks of challenging and embarrassing their bosses *reduce* their political power.

This is exactly what happens in the example we will analyze.

Never Outshine The Master

The scene we analyze is from the movie Platoon.

This group has two different types of authority: the formal authority which is the lieutenant, called Wolfe, and the de facto authority, which is the sergeant, going by the name of Barnes.

The lieutenant has the official authority of rank.
The sergeant has the authority of subject matter expertise, meaning he is the expert on how to wage war.

Barnes is also aggressive and domineering, while the lieutenant is younger, more submissive, and looks the least

confident of them all.
Thanks to his aggressiveness and knowledge, Barnes ends up controlling the group.

However, he makes one mistake.

Let's watch the video:

The Mistake: Over-Dominance Makes Enemies

The mistake Barnes does is that he uses too much force to wield his power.
And that puts him on a collision course with Wolfe.

There is a quote from Alain Prost, a Formula 1 racer, and he said:

> My aim is to win by going as slow as possible.

It's similar to power.
You want to set up your interactions in a way that you can get people to follow you by using the *least* amount of brute force you need.

Why would you want to do that?

Because when you rely on brute force alone, you give you up the other form of influencing: the one based on people *wanting* to obey because of intrinsic motivation or because they admire you.

If you bellow orders like you are their Gods and they are ants, you will grow resentment while at the same time decreasing the goodwill.
The more that resentment grows, the more people will hate you and want to get rid of you.

Better instead to power protect.

Making The Boss Your Enemy is Peak Ineffectiveness

This is what happens to Barnes.

He is the most dominant person in the group, that's for sure.
But he made an enemy out of his boss. That's a position that, for anyone, is hard to keep for a long time. Stung by the embarrassment, chances are high that the lieutenant will want to get rid of him on the first occasion.

Even within the group, Barnes' position is not likely to be as strong following his display of dominance.
When he put himself against the lieutenant the group knows that Barnes has an enemy. And even if Wolfe is a weak enemy in terms of personality, is he a powerful one in terms of ranks?
And they know that the lieutenant might want to get rid of Barnes whenever he can -and that he *can* do it by virtue of his rank-.

This is a similar mistake that a few generals committed during the Obama administration. They got all haughty and mighty based on the troops they commanded but failed to realize they also needed political support.
Result?
They got fired.

Keeping Good Boss Relationships

In this example, Barnes could have easily stayed the undisputed leader of the group *and* avoided any personal squabble with the lieutenant.
All he needed to do was to help the lieutenant save face.

How could he have done that?

For example, he could have prefaced his orders by saying

> **Barnes**: if the LT agrees we do this, this and that

Then all he had to do was look towards the LT expecting a nod or a “yes”.
Of course, Wolfe would have confirmed, he knew that Barnes was the most respected man, the most experienced one, and the one in the best position to decide.

Another option for Barnes was to give his orders and then look toward the Wolfe and ask him:

> **Barnes**: Do you agree with it?

Most likely the lieutenant would have said yes.
Or if Wolfe was more emotionally intelligent, he could have asked a question back or added some perfunctory details just to seem like he wasn’t following 100%.
And that would have been OK: Barnes would have still been the leader. And the lieutenant would have probably been grateful that Barnes saved his face.

Barnes position in the group would have grown stronger, not weaker.
The group would know who’s the real leader while they would also know that Barnes has no enemy in the lieutenant, but a puppet who listens to him.

Huge power boost for power even within the group’s ranks.

Lessons Learned 1: Make Allies, Not Enemies

The problem of imposing your will, throwing your weight around, and, even worst, going against official authorities, is that you make enemies.

The boss won’t say anything if he’s intimidated by you and he knows you’re stronger -as it was in the example from Platoon-.
But he will maneuver behind your back to torpedo you.

Similarly, if you impose your will within your group, you can rest assured resentment will rise.
They will keep following your orders because they have to, but they will be waiting for your downfall -and very happy to contribute to it-.

This is a common issue for many power-hungry, driven people.
They watch movies like The Godfather or Scarface and get heady believing that destruction is power.

But the real reason why people like Scarface crash and burn and people like The Godfather got successful is that the latter has made many more friends than enemies.

> **Make friends, not enemies: friends are power, enemies will be your downfall**

Lesson Learned 2: Develop Competence

There are several reasons why Lieutenant Wolfe was so easily jumped over, including typical submissive signs, younger age, and lack of confidence.

But the main one is that he was a green-horned, inexperienced fella who knew nothing. And Barnes was knowledgeable and competent on how to run war -or at least, he acted like it-.

This leads to our second lesson learned for strong leadership: you must develop competence and subject matter expertise.
Competence will give you the respect of the people who serve you.

When You Should NOT Be Inclusive

Inclusivity and democratic leadership can shore up your power by creating a web of alliances and by building goodwill.

But in a way, it's similar to the concept of vulnerability as we talked about in "vulnerability is not power".
The truth is that inclusivity is powerful when used at *the right times*.

The rule of thumb is this: **a powerful leader being inclusive is even more powerful while a weak leader being inclusive is perceived as even weaker**.

And even when you are a powerful leader, there are important exceptions when *you have to impose your will.*

These include:

- **At the beginning of your leadership**

Especially for *people who are too nice* at the beginning of their leadership, it's best to err on the tough side than on the "nice" one. This is because, as we said, a strong leader who is inclusive is more powerful.

But if people have been perceiving you as weak and not possessing strong leadership qualities, then inclusivity can be seen as a sign of weakness, fear of taking decisions, and fear of telling people what to do.
It's best to show strength in the beginning instead.
When you are a bit tougher at the beginning you can, later on, show that your inclusivity is out of magnanimity, not fear.

- **When the group has no clue**

One of the great advantages of inclusive leadership is that by including more people in the decision making you leverage *the power of a larger mastermind* and you are more likely to reach good decisions.

However, if the group or your counterpart has no idea about the subject, you are better off *explaining* your decision rather than asking for opinions.

That's because you would most likely have to override all their suggestions and they might feel spurned and rejected. Avoid it by deciding, explaining, and letting them *grow* into people who are worthy of being included. But they must earn that position.

- **When the group is lost and is looking up to you**

When the group is lost and they are looking up to you, that's not the time to pose questions or be democratic. They are looking for leadership.
For strong leadership.
That's the time to tell them what to do and *show* them the course of action.
And these are *exactly* the times that will buy you goodwill when things are going well.

- **During times of crisis**

Times of crisis require charismatic leadership and a strong leader.
The group will be more than happy to follow without being included.

- **When you're facing a challenge**

When someone within the group or from outside the group is challenging deferring to the group or, worst of all, to the challenger, will be perceived as a sign of weakness by both the group and the challenger.

When facing a leadership challenge it's time to put your foot down and show why you're the leader. And you must defuse that challenge.

Basically, here is the power move rule when it comes to inclusivity:

> Always be inclusive when things are easy and decisions matter little.
> Take full reins of command when things are uncertain and when you need to shore up power during a leadership challenge.

When It's OK to Do a Power Takeover

A power takeover is fine… As long as you can pull it off effectively.

Do it effectively, here is what needs to happen:

1. You can remove your boss
2. The group supports your takeover
3. Those above your boss are likely to accept it
4. Your boss is in no position to take revenge

Ideally, you are taking the power from a leader who was ineffective, incompetent, or hated.
That's the example I talk about in "how to neutralize a bad boss", and if you can rally the troops in your support and put enough power on your side, you will be welcome as the savior.

Just make sure you act the part of the savior once you're in charge and don't become little tyrant N.2 (or little incompetent N.2 :).

SUMMARY

As a rule of thumb, inclusive leadership will make people want to follow you.
And that's the hallmark of great leadership: when people *want* you as the leader and they *want* to follow you.

You can't always be inclusive of course.
But whenever you can, that should be your goal.

The worst possible person you can leave out of the decision-making is your boss. Whenever you jump in front of your boss, that's the definition of a golpe.

And whenever you execute a golpe, there is only one good way to do it: by taking out the leader, eliminating his power to take revenge, and taking his position.
Any other option, sooner or later, is likely to end badly for you.

See more examples here:

- Modern laws for modern top-1% men
- Why The 48 Laws of Power is Wrong: to learn more about the exceptions

Becoming Supernatural: Is Joe Dispenza Legit?

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Joe Dispenza is a chiropractor, healer, and ascetic, and in "*Becoming Supernatural*" (2013) he teaches readers how to change their bodies by using their minds.

This article will provide you with a review and criticism of both the book and Joe Dispenza's general approach.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction
  - You Can Change Your Future
- Joe Dispenza Review
- Real-Life Applications
- Becoming Supernatural Video Review
- CONS
- Dispenza Review

Bullet Summary

- We all have the ability to be supernatural
- By entering the quantum field of "unlimited possibilities" you can manifest the future you want

Full Summary

About the Author: there isn't much biographical information about Joe Dispenza. We know though that he is a chiropractor and an influential self-help author, and he runs seminars to teach people how to self-heal. He is also the author of "*You Are The Placebo*", and "*Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself*".

Introduction

Joe Dispenza says that we all have in us the ability to be supernatural.

As a matter of fact, we are supernatural by nature, but we need to learn to unlock that power. Dispenza invokes meditation as his tool of choice for doing what he refers to as "the uncommon".

He says that we have the capacity to tune into frequencies that takes us beyond the material world and hook us into streams of consciousness and energy.
Once you learn to make your mind work at that higher level of frequency, then you can intentionally change your body's chemistry.

At that point, it's possible that you can heal yourself.

Typical of Dispenza's work, Becoming Supernatural purports to marry the mystical to science. The author says that changing our bodies with our minds is scientifically explained by quantum physics.
When we learn to access the quantum field, then we access a "field of unlimited possibilities", as he calls it, because we leverage quantum physics. Quantum physics notoriously states that sub-particles are not in a defined spatial position but possess qualities of both matter and energy.

Becoming Supernatural also presents a lot of stories and anecdotes on the power of self-healing.

You Can Change Your Future

A topic central to Joe Dispenza is that we all live pains of the past by reliving them over and over in our, which brings us further pain.
Instead, he says we should do the opposite, and live in the present our future blessings.

Dispenza says that if you feel and embody the present high-frequency emotions like gratitude and love for future events, then you are likely to live that future.

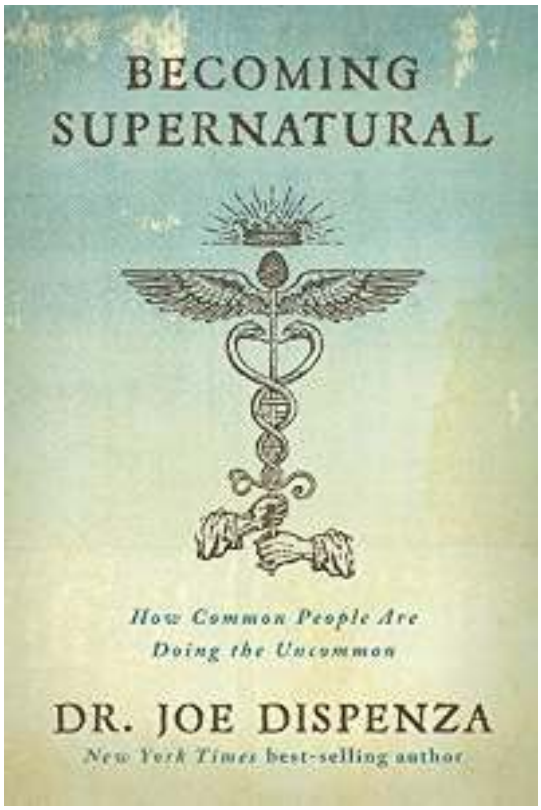
On top of envisioning a healthy body, Dispenza said that we can envision material possessions as well, which sounds a lot like the law of attraction.

For more on the law of attraction also read:

- The Secret
- You Can Heal Yourself

For more on the power of thinking also read:

- The Power of Positive Thinking
- The Power of Your Subconscious Mind
- Think and Grow Rich



Joe Dispenza Review

There is little online on Joe Dispenza.

If you search for "is Joe Dispenza legit", you will find a critical-sounding thread on his own forum's website, but the page has been moved.
This website sounds aggressively disparaging but offers little proof, and these days it's way too easy to leave a

smearing review against otherwise innocent people.
The Reddit community at "IsThisBullshit" is overall critical but, again, that doesn't say much.

From what I gathered, much of the criticism of Becoming Supernatural echoes what I have already said in *You Are The Placebo*.

Joe Dispenza says that writing this book is a risk for him and his reputation.
He says that "certain people", including people in the scientific community, might call his work pseudo-science.

He used to care about what those people would think, and he tried to have them approve of his work. Then, eventually, as he realized that his work was changing lives and that he could never win the approval of the scientific community
So he simply stopped caring.

In a way, it's fair that someone stops pursuing the "approval" of a category that refuses to believe in his results.
I think Joe Dispenza shouldn't stop or change the direction of his work and research to appease anyone.
I will go even further: we *need* people who don't allow the rigidity of a given set of beliefs to shackle the human potential of finding new and better ways of doing things.

On the other hand, I can't help but think that such a stance can also be an easy cop-out.
It could even be used as a ploy to point fingers against an out-group to further stoke the support of the in-group of followers (ingroup-outgroup is a well-known sociological phenomenon that can be used to convince people and you can read here how Tai Lopez uses it).

The scientific community calls people who profess science but offer little proof "pseudo-science" (or pop-psychology in the social sciences).
Personally, I wouldn't even call it pseudo-science. If you can't offer proof that is replicable and falsifiable, then *it's not science at all*. Simple.

The burden of proof lies on those who claim a scientific background to their theories. If you don't provide scientifically falsifiable data, then you are not doing science and you should not call your work scientific.

I haven't seen much scientifically falsifiable data in Becoming Supernatural.
The data has been proven in the author's own (expensive) seminars.

If you can't provide scientific backing, it doesn't mean that your work is not good and it doesn't mean that your work is not of high quality and life-changing.
It simply means that it's not scientific.
BUT, if your work is helping people, then I believe that it should be in your best interest, and in the interest of the people, and it should be your moral duty, to document and offer proof of your results so that more people can take advantage of it.

If you don't and if you keep claiming scientific rigor, then it's normal that some people will get suspicious.

The fact that those seminars are expensive, private endeavors, albeit not constituting any proof against Dispenza, have to make a critical mind seek even more solid proof.

Overall, my opinion is that the science behind Becoming Supernatural is spotty. I leave instead an open mind and open heart on affecting -and changing- our physical bodies with our minds, but I don't appreciate authors who try to pitch scientific rigor when there is none (yet).

> **Big claims require big proofs**

Real-Life Applications

I sounded very critical in this review, but there are still big takeaways for me that we could all heed more:

- We are often more powerful than we think we are
- Meditate is good (read: The Power of Now)
- Think positive and be grateful: it will do you a lot of good both mentally and physically

Becoming Supernatural Video Review

Here is a critical review of the book:

And there are more like that.

CONS

On top of the criticism offered above, here are some more relative to the text in itself:

Too Long & Repetitive
Becoming Supernatural could have been briefer.

Truisms
Dispenza says that he has proven that common people can do the uncommon. However, that doesn't say anything. It's a truism.

Big Words & Generic Statements
There are a lot of big words that sound profound and deep but end up leaving you with more confusion rather than more clarity.
Some generic expressions also don't help to pinpoint what we're talking about. Starting from the title for example, what's "common" and what's "uncommon"?

Upsell for Seminars
Sometimes I had the feeling that Becoming Supernatural pitched a bit too strongly the seminars and ended up being a teaser for booking a seminar seat or the meditations' audio files.

Dispenza Review

I would give this book higher ratings and I would applaud Joe Dispenza's work in exploring new paths.
IF he didn't try to present his work within a scientific frame.

Giving a scientific label to something you are not proving scientifically and/or not allowing independent scientists to replicate must be, by definition, pseudo-science.

That's NOT to say that what Dispenza teaches doesn't work.
I do believe that what you think *does* shape you and there is much good you can take from Dispenza's work.
But as of now, the way the author and the way Becoming Supernatural position itself does not win my stamp of approval.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

Women's Tactics to Get Men's Commitment, & How to Respond

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Women try to get men's commitment in many ways.

A few women are honest and direct about it.

While some others deploy nasty dating games to make him invest, as well as manipulative relationship games to make him stick around.

This post will focus on some of the most popular games and techniques women use to make men commit.

Contents

- Commitment Games
  - 1. We Are More Than Just Sex, Aren't We?
  - 2. Move Your Ass You Son of A Bitch
  - 3. I Give You Mine You Give Me Yours
- More Commitment Games
- Why Women Play Commitment Games
  - Men Must Get Ready for Commitment Games
- Are Commitment Games Bad?
- SUMMARY

Commitment Games

In honor of Eric Berne, founder of transactional analysis and author of *Games People Play*, I will use a similar nomenclature for women's commitment games.

Below are three of them broken down in detail.
Further down is a list combining all the dating games women use for commitment.

1. We Are More Than Just Sex, Aren't We?

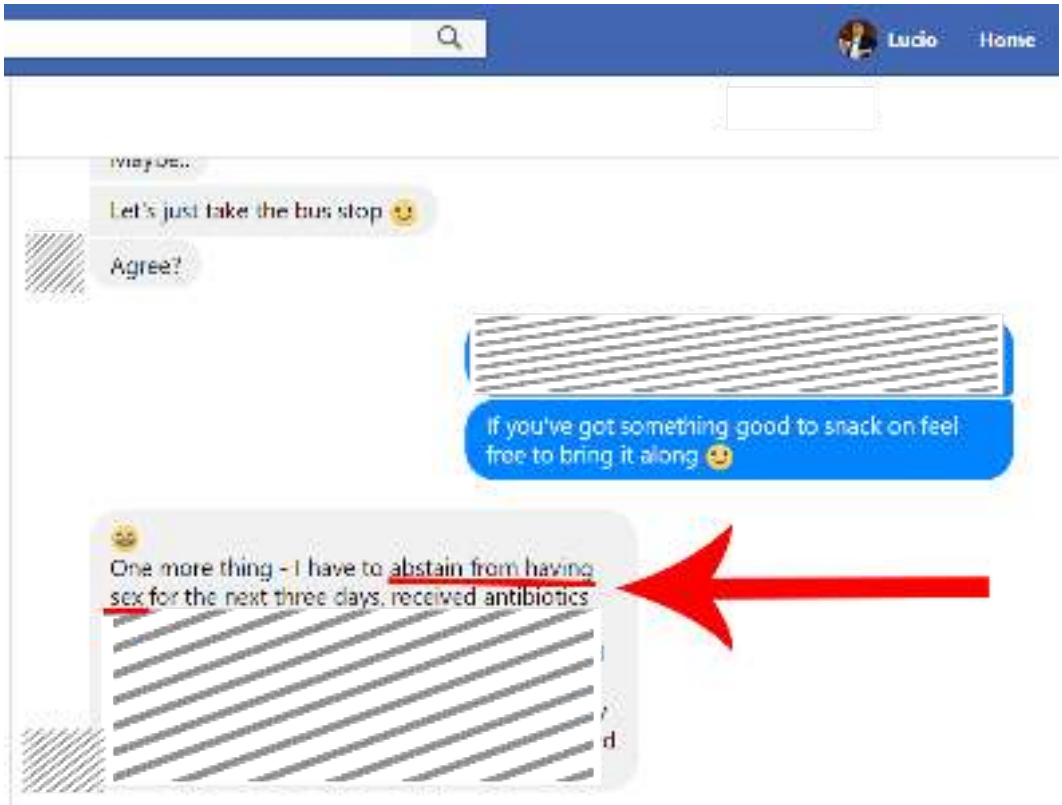
You will see the WAMTJSAW when the man and the woman have been having sex for a while -or for just a few times- but there is still no official status or the |conversation" hasn't taken place yet.

Her aim is to prove, with facts, that the two of them are more than just sex.

She can't make him wait for sex now that the relationship is already sexual, and making him invest and making him chase become much more difficult in this relationship phase.

However, she can withdraw sex. At least temporarily.
Indeed, if she can get to spend time with him without having sex, then he implies, with action, that he wants more of her than just a vagina.

Enter the game "We Are More Just Than Sex, Aren't We?".
See one example here:



We will just talk. Smiley face :)

Answering The WAMTJSAW Game

Once you understand the dating power dynamics you also understand where she is coming from.
And you have no point in getting angry or worked up.

As a man striving to be a high-quality man and as a budding master socialite, your answer must take into account both what you want, and what *she* wants and needs. That's what leaders do: they take an "us" approach.

Action-wise, you have three options here:

1. Refusing to meet without sex
2. Meeting with reserve

3. Letting her have it

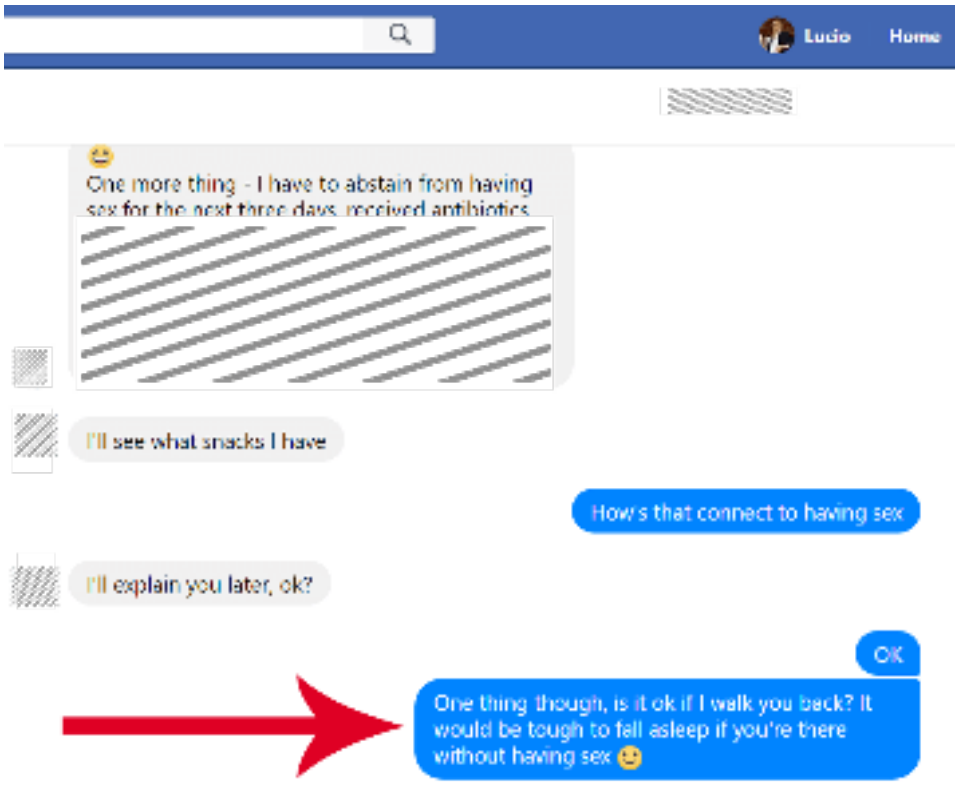
Refusing to meet is like a slap in the face that says that you indeed only see her as a piece of meat and that you don't want a relationship.
But even if you don't want a relationship, I would discourage you from going down that road. It doesn't mean you have to meet, but you should at least have the courtesy of clarifying your position and explaining to her that you don't want more than sex.
At that point, she is free to decide.

Number three is your tacit consent to a relationship and, basically, you let her win the game.
I personally don't recommend this one either because it lets her win with a rather underhanded tactic. It sends the message that games are a good way for her to get what she wants.
Even if you want a relationship, there are better ones.

I recommend instead two different options:

1. Meeting with reserve
2. Meeting and escalating to sex anyway

This is an example of meeting with a reserve, from the same previous conversation:



You must be watchful here of how you walk this tightrope: you want to deflect but without sounding like you don't want her around without sex -yes I know there are different ways of having sex dear reader, but I have my preferences :)-.

I like this approach, positioning it as if having her around without having sex would be too hard for you.

Also, I was going to have a conversation with her about this, but in person. I didn't like the way she set the whole meeting up and then only mentioned sex as if it was an afterthought. Sex is *not* an afterthought between two people in a budding relationship, meeting only a couple of days a week and with strong chemistry.

Finally, don't forget the last option: making her come to your place and escalating to sex anyway -as long as the

"issue" was not a real and serious issue, of course-.
Just make sure you treat her well afterward and it's still a win-win.

2. Move Your Ass You Son of A Bitch

MYAYSOB is a rather nasty game.

It consists of parading other options and leveraging jealousy to compel him into action.
Here is one example:

Her message in this case communicated

> "*move your ass to get serious you SOB cause there's men who are willing to wine and dine me… And I might pick one of 'em*".

After I prodded her, she probably felt like she had made her point clear enough and that going forward would have created too big of a rift.
She probably also didn't want to risk overplaying her hand and come across as nasty.

And that's why she presented me with a candy.
This whole game, including the last candy, certainly didn't gain her any points.

Dealing With MYAYSOB

One of the reasons why it's great getting good at reading social dynamics is because we can become discerning about the people we accept in our lives.

If you see nasty games *before* the relationship, what do you think is going to happen *during* the relationship?
These are the same type of women who will threaten to break up, "go out and party" (implied "meeting someone"), or worst of all… Divorce you and take all you've got :).

High-quality alpha females tend to be more direct with their requests. High-quality but submissive women might

not be as direct, but they have one thing in common: they avoid the nastiest games.

The women you need to protect the most against are the ones who are smart and assertive enough, possibly also attractive and hot… But who doesn't have morals and ethical qualms?
Like in this example.

I recommend you test women who play these types of games. Ask them questions, don't offer them a relationship for as long as you can, and see what they come up with.
Then, if you want to give it a try at reforming them, you can tell them something like this:

> **You**: *why are you telling me that. Why are you telling me of your date*

Then, it's time to bust your PIMP hand and show that you don't take that attitude lightly. You do want to push her on the defensive here:

> **You**: *that was totally unnecessary, why do you feel the need to say that*

Then you want to shame them a bit:

> **You**: Frankly, I think it's rather nasty of you to parade others dates you are having. I am very disappointed in you

Then, if you think they are worth it, you can introduce how you see a healthy relationship and see if she can fit your standards.

3. I Give You Mine You Give Me Yours

IGYMYGMY… That really worked out well as an acronym didn't it?

I don't have a text or a video to show you, so you're in for a story treat:

A girl I was seeing worked as a real estate agent, showing flats around.
One day she was showing a flat to a guy. Now you would never guess, but this guy was a surfer and underwear model.

You can imagine my excitement as she recounted the story :).

Well, you would never guess what happened, but The hunk asked her this:

> **Hunk**: Would I offend any guy inviting you out for dinner?

At that point, I wondered if I would have ever heard that story, had she said yes :).

But well, since she actually told me the story, she turned him down.

See the message here?
First of all, she is communicating that yes, there is someone who might get offended -me-. And people who get offended are emotionally invested. Thus, if I confirmed, I would have also implied that we are probably moving into "serious territory".

And second, what is she doing?
She is giving me her commitment.
But since most relationships entail an exchange, she is indirectly also *asking* me for a commitment back.

It's a much, much nicer and gentler version of MYAYSOB.

It's basically saying:

> **Her implied message**: "*I'm giving you my exclusivity in spite of great options out there. What are you gonna do, Lux? Are you going to give me yours too, or what?*"

Dealing With IGYMYGMY

As per usual, your reply will depend on whether or not you're OK with a committed relationship.

If you are interested in a relationship, I would avoid telling her "you did well". And I would also avoid "thank you". Better instead to make a mental note that she is offering you exclusivity and she likes you. And to jump straight into the "conversation", explaining where you stand and your possible future together.

Then let her work a little bit to reel you in.

If you are not interested in a relationship I would avoid doing what many guys would do here, such as telling her "*why didn't you say yes*".
That's brutal and really uncalled for.
You need to go into the hard conversation here and explain you're not looking for a relationship. Next, you know what you gotta do: put that nice fish back into the sea.

Here is how it went between us:

> **Me**: "OK" (very nonchalantly)

A long pause ensued. She looks down. Then she finally blurted:

Her: "*aren't you glad I said no*?"

You can imagine how it went from there.
Between us, I just checked her Instagram. Damn, she looked awesome in that Christmas party dress (if it weren't for some idiot beside her :).

More Commitment Games

Different women have different ways of pushing men into commitment.
Some of them are the following:

- **Waiting game**

The waiting game, unless she is dealing with a super relationship type of guy, is a rather bad strategy to get a commitment.

- **Play like a man and feign disinterest**

This is the strategy that one very popular *dating book for women* recommends.
I think that a risk/rewards analysis makes it a retarded strategy -I explain why in the women's dating literature review Pussy Power-.

- **Dropping hints**

Dropping hints is another typical technique. It can take many forms, ranging from "my girlfriend just got engaged" to "it's San Valentine in one week".
Hints are very simple, but not too bad: most men will get what women mean and she avoids any nastiness.

- **Shaming** ("you're the only one who can't commit, look at your friends!")

Not a very good option.
It puts her *hard* in the chasing position, it leads to a lot of fights and if he gives in it will rarely be the start of a great relationship.

- **High-pressure games** (threats, jealousy, ultimatums)

IGYMYGMY we saw earlier is an example of the larger category of "high-pressure games", which also includes threats and ultimatums.
I recommend women not to use high-pressure tactics and men to women's high-pressure games as a warning sign of worse to come.

Why Women Play Commitment Games

Women play commitment games because, often, they need to.

Some women ask directly, and that's good, but not all women are as assertive or as vulnerability-resistant-. It's only normal that some women will resort to some less direct games.
That's not a bad thing, and it's actually a quality many men seek and appreciate.

Most relationships follow a known and relatively predictable pattern of power.
And after sex and prior to official commitment, it's one of those rare phases where he has more power than her.

At that point, unless he volunteers the commitment, it's her who needs commitment the most. And all the games we have seen here are trying to achieve the same goal: make him commit.

Spending more time together says "we are more than just sex". Parading other suitors says "hurry up to commit". And "I am giving you commitment," says "will you do the same?".

Men Must Get Ready for Commitment Games

After sex happened a few times with a woman and before commitment, men usually are in a "rest" phase.

They got the sex they wanted, and now they feel like it's done and dusted. And they can take it easy. If they were dining and wining her, now they might try to meet more often at home.
If they were making her a lot of gits, now they might slow down with their giving. And if they went the lover way and never invested much in her. They might be lulled into believing it will always stay like that.

But it rarely "stays like that" and it's only the calm before the storm.
Women are more pragmatic and work more on a biological clock: not all, but most women will eventually try to tie him down and, later on, will work to domesticate him once in the relationship.

Are Commitment Games Bad?

Not necessarily.

As already seen, they can simply be the signs of less assertive personalities and that's a feminine quality that many men seek and appreciate.

They *can* be nasty, of course, and we saw one such example.

But some other commitment games are actually a very good sign.
The **IGYMYGMY is an example of high-class game**.

It's a very nice and gentle game to nudge the relationship towards commitment.
And it's exactly what I advocate women do in this previous article on escalating mutual commitment. It gives first, and then giving prompts more giving in return in what becomes a virtuous cycle.

If done well, it also leverages what Cialdini calls *The Law of Reciprocity*, which is a nice bonus to increase compliance in the receiver.

SUMMARY

When sex has happened a few times and exclusive commitment hasn't happened yet, most women will get antsy.

They want to progress things into a more serious and committed relationship, and while some will ask directly for it, many others will resort to games.
Games are not necessarily nasty, but they can be.

And men should watch out for what kind of games they will use: they are most likely a great predictor of how they will behave in the relationship.

Recommendation for Men & Women

Women should ask directly for commitment or use gentler games.
Men should only accept direct requests or kinder games. Nasty games and coercive tactics are a bad omen. He should consider her, not girlfriend material, or, at the very least, put her under heavier scrutiny.

I'm OK – You're OK: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*I'm OK – You're OK*" (1967) introduces transactional analysis to the general public.
Thomas Harris, the author, shows readers how to apply PAC to our daily social interactions, how to self-analyze ourselves, and how to learn to become more discerning, rational, and empowered human beings.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - PAC: Parent, Adult, Child
  - The Four Life Positions
  - Parent & Child Play Games
  - Parent & Child
  - Complementary Transactions and Crosses
  - Strengthening Our Adult (& Overcoming Inner Child & Parent)
  - Types of Transaction
  - Intimacy Is Only Possible With "I'm OK"
  - The Hippies Example
  - Children With Child-Dominated Parents
  - Psychoanalysis Is Parent-Child Transaction
  - Religions Are Parent-Child Transactions
  - PAC & Power Relations
- I'm OK – You're OK Criticism
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We all born with a default "Not OK"…
- … But we have the power to change our "Not OK" status into "I'm OK"
- Learning how our inner Child and Parent work is how we strengthen our Adult, our mind, how we get rid of games, and improve our relationships

Full Summary

About the Author: Thomas Anthony Harris was an American psychiatrist. After receiving his M. D. from the Temple University School of Medicine, Harris joined the navy, to which he returned after he completed his residency and where he made a good career until he became Chief of the Psychiatry Branch of the Navy. He later opened his own psychiatric practice in Sacramento.
Harris was a good friend of Eric Berne, founder of Transactional Analysis and author of the popular book "Games People Play". Harris disagreed with Berne on a few concepts, but was overall a major proponent of Transactional

Analysis.

PAC: Parent, Adult, Child

Transaction analysis postulate there are three distinguishable modes within each one of us that we use to process information and respond to the stimuli around.
These are the parent, the adult, and the child.

- **Parent**

The Parent is the collection of all that the child has recorded during his early years of life. All rules, admonitions, and limitations belong to the parent.
Harris says that since the children's lives depend on the parents, everything from them is recorded as "true".
If the parent sends discordant messages the child might partially block out the parent, which is weakened or fragmented.
If the parents were very intense in their rules, it might be harder for the adult to question and abandon those rules later in life.

- **Child**

Since the child has no words in his early years most of his recollections are feelings.
The child, dependant on the mother, is always looking for signs of approval or disapproval. The child has no way to understand what causes approval or disapproval, which frustrates him and leads him to conclude: "I'm not OK", which is hardwired in our brains and cannot be canceled.
Same for the parents, adults can be transferred back to the child in grown-up transactions.

- **Adult**

The adult grows as the child seeks answers for himself. He realizes there is different data from what is taught by the parent and what is felt by the child.

I quote Thomas Harry here:

> The adult is different from the parent, which is judgemental in an imitative way and seeks to enforce sets of borrowed standards, and front the Child, which tends to react more abruptly on the basis of prelogical thinking and poorly differentiated or distorted perceptions'

The parent taught and demonstrated life. The child felt, wished or fantasized. The adult finds out.
The adult has the power to examine the child to see whether or not the feelings are appropriate to the present or if they don't serve him well anymore and are simply responses to archaic Parent data.

Thomas Harry says that a secure youngster is one who finds that most Parent data is reliable: They told me the truth.

The Four Life Positions

Transaction analysis says there are four positions an individual can find himself in:

1. **I'm Not OK, You're OK**: the default of all children
2. **I'm Not OK, You're Not OK**: if the mother is cold and non-stroking or aggressive and brutalizing. An adult locked in this position rejects stroking and emotional connection from everyone else in life. Sounds a lot like scarring children with low self-esteem.
3. **I'm OK, You're Not OK**: children of abusive parents, while recovering from wounds, can switch to a criminal stance were they see themselves as OK, but they parents -and later the world- are not OK
4. **I'm OK, You're OK**: this is the only conscious position and a decision we make.

I'm Not OK, You're OK is the default position for many. And the default position of every child.
If the child very early thinks "I'm not OK", he also concludes that his parent, the big provider of all his life needs, must be OK.

Once we feel that we are not OK in a world of OK people, that's when we play games, says the author.
Games people play are a form of relief of the "Not OK" position.

I'm Not OK, You're OK is a position which can be changed *once it's understood*.

Parent & Child Play Games

The author says that one of the reasons why parents and children play games is because the outcome is predictable.

There is a certain security in games, even the ones that harm us and our relationship.

When the adult is in charge, the outcome is not always predictable. There is the possibility of failure. Or of success. But it's only the adult that gives us the opportunity of changing and developing.

Thomas Harris says that all games have their origin in the childhood game of 'Mine Is Better Than Yours'. Back in our childhood years as it is the same in our grown-up years, it brings momentary relief from the Not OK position.

Parent & Child

Thomas Harris goes on to explain what are the cues of parents and children. The parent looks judgmental and the child looks at the parent's mercy.

He says:

> When we blame and find fault, we replay the early blaming and fault-finding which is recorded in the Parent, and this makes us feel ok, because the Parent is ok, and we are coming on Parent. Finding someone to agree with you, and play the game, produces a feeling well-nigh omnipotent.

Complementary Transactions and Crosses

Thomas Harris explains that when transactions happen between the same modality -ie. parent to parent or child to child- they can go on indefinitely.

Uncomplimentary or crossed transactions can cause troubles and communication stops.
Here is a classical example from Eric Berne:

> **Husband**: Dear, where are my cuff links?

This is an adult stimulus as he seeks information.
If the wife answered as an adult, she would reply:

> **Wife**: In your wardrobe I think

But if she's had a rough day she might reply in ager:

> **Wife**: Where you left them!

That's a parent reply.
If she had replied:

> **Wife**: Why do you always have to yell at me?

That would have been a child response.

A person who is dominated by the “Not OK” child tends to read all the stimuli as attacks and as a reflection of his low value.
The “Not OK” position is not to be found solely on the responses of course. It can also hide in the opening message.

For example:

> **Husband**: Where did you hide my cuff links?

The overall communication sounds adult, but secondary communication here is in the word hide, which comes from the parent.
At this point, the wife can decide how to reply.
If her “Not OK” child is hooked, chances are she will go off at the “hiding” insinuation.

Aroused feelings, says Thomas Harris, is a sign that the child has been hooked.

Strengthening Our Adult (& Overcoming Inner Child & Parent)

When we have no idea about our inner Adult, Child, and Parent, the result is a “contaminated adult” and we often resort to substandard behavior that does nothing good for us and for the people around.

There are a few ways with which we can strengthen our adult:

1. **Learn to read the signals** when our parent or child has been hooked
2. **Restrain the automatic & archaic responses** of parent and child
3. **Pause**: give time to the adult to come trough
4. **Question your Parent and Child data**: ask yourself if your old data is true, if they are appropriate responses and if they are serving you well. The very process of questioning is the Adult in action

The more we get to know the content of our Parent and Child, the more we can separate them from our Adult.
And the more we separate the three, the more we develop and strengthen our adult and we free ourselves up.

Thomas Harris says that this is the home remedy of “sorting yourself out”.

The last step, once you learned to sort yourself out, is to do this:

- Learn to see the PAC in others

That’s the equivalent of increasing your emotional intelligence.
It’s what George Thompson in Verbal Judo refers to when he says that the biggest skill of learning verbal judo is to non react to the emotional communication of others.

Types of Transaction

Transaction Analysis divides human to human exchanges into six types:

1. withdrawal
2. rituals
3. activities
4. pastimes
5. games

6. intimacy

Games are a particular type of transaction that has two different characteristics: an ulterior motive and a payoff. The famous book Games People Play by Eric Berne is actually only focused on Games, a very specific part of transaction analysis.

My Note: This helped me understand "Games People Play"
this was super helpful to put some things into perspective. While I previously didn't consider Games People Play to be a good book, I then re-evaluated it again. And I will eventually read it again now that I have a broader understanding.

Withdrawal, rituals, activities, and pastimes, keep people apart and stand in the way of an emotional connection (also read: turning towards based on Gottman's research). Games make the relationship combative.

Intimacy Is Only Possible With "I'm OK"

The author also discusses relationships and how we can improve our intimate relationships.

He says that there is no simple way to define intimacy, yet we can say that **intimacy is only possible when coming from an "I'm OK, You're OK" stance**.
And when:

- There are no games
- The Adult is emancipated

The Hippies Example

There are many awesome examples across "I'm OK, You're OK", here is one I liked:

> A clear social example of this phenomenon is the hippie movement. The flower children extolled a life of Child-Child transactions. Yet the dreadful truth began to become apparent: It's no fun to do your thing if everybody else is only interested in doing his thing. In cutting off the Establishment they cut off the Parent (disapproval) and the Adult ('banal' reality); but, having cut off this disapproval, they found they had also cut off the source of praise.

Children With Child-Dominated Parents

When parents are dominated by their children, they can end up into struggles with their own children.

Writes Thomas Harris:

> If the Child in the mother has a strong not ok position, and it is easily hooked by such life hitches, or obstacles, or disappointments as the obstinate behaviour of a small child who also has a not ok Child, the way is open for a take-over by the Child in the parent, which triggers a regressive sequence of events with more and more archaic circuits taking over in a screaming game of 'Mine Is Better' with mother winning the final round with 'I Am Bigger'.

Finally, he says:

> Summarily, we may say that the solution to the problems of all children, regardless of their situation, is the same solution that applies to the problems of grownups. We must begin with the realization that we cannot change the past. We must start where we are. We can only separate the past from the present by using the Adult, which can learn to identify the recordings of the Child with its archaic fears and the recordings of the

> Parent with its disturbing replay of a past reality.

Thomas Harry goes on to discuss PAC with teenagers, for which I invite you to get the book.

Psychoanalysis Is Parent-Child Transaction

Harris is highly critical of Freudian psychoanalysis.

He says that it recreates a Parent-Child dynamic that lasts for a long time.
Transactional Analysis instead has simpler and more clearly defined concepts, works quicker, and holds the patient responsible for what happens in the future no matter what's happened in the past.

I like that approach.

He says:

> Even if the Adult in the individual gets him to the psychiatrist's office, the Child soon takes over and a Parent-Child situation develops. The patient's Child expresses feelings and anticipates a relationship with the psychiatrist's Parent in the transactions of the first hour. The psychoanalysts refer to this as transference – that is, the situation provokes a transfer of feelings and related behaviour from the past, when the patient was a child, into the present, in which the Child in the patient responds as it once did to the authority of the parent. This unique transaction is fairly common in life, and there are elements of it present in any contact with authority, as, for instance, when one is stopped by a highway patrolman. Psychoanalysts maintain that the patient has improved when he has succeeded in avoiding this kind of transfer of feelings from childhood. At this point in analysis, the patient does not have to pick and choose what he is going to reveal about himself to his analyst. In other words, the patient no longer must be afraid of the analyst's Parent. This is referred to in traditional psychoanalysis as overcoming resistance.

But the author says that normal psychoanalysis is slow while Transaction Analysis skips both transference and resistance.
He says that slapping people with a "diagnosis" does no good, and I also agree with it.

Religions Are Parent-Child Transactions

Says Thomas Harris:

> Central to most religious practices is a Child acceptance of authoritarian dogma as an act of faith, with limited, if not absent, involvement of the Adult.

Since religious people have in the religious dogmas such a strong parent within them, they are often anxious in scorekeeping their behavior against the parent's dogmas.

The confession of the Child to a religious priest says "I'm sorry, I'm not OK, please forgive me, I'm awful".
Confession without change is a game, says Thomas Harris.
Instead, the confession of an Adult makes a critical assessment of where change is possible and looks for ways to make that change happen.

He also further discusses the games that "sinners" play in relation to religion, all of which are extremely interesting.

PAC & Power Relations

I found it very interesting, and highly relevant to the topics I write here on The Power Moves, that some people resist giving the parent role in relationships.

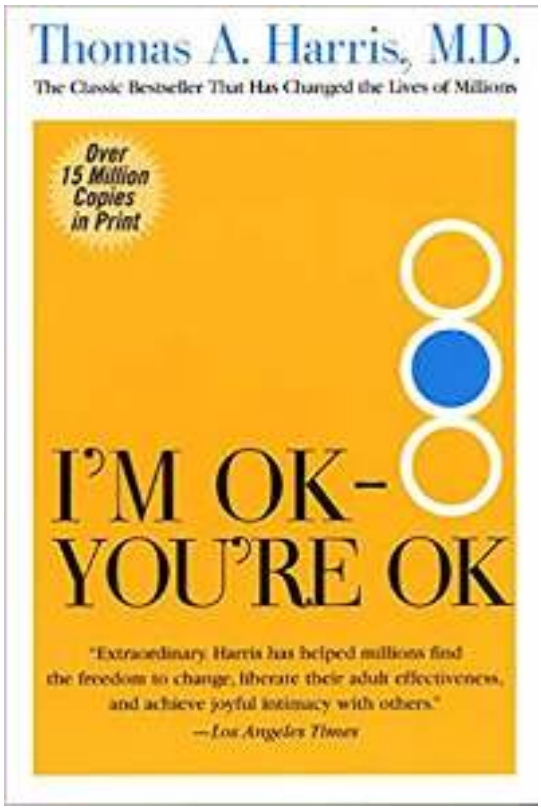
Thomas Harris says:

> Some parents unknowingly undermine treatment efforts because they really do not want to give up the Parent-Child relationship(..). Their position of power is threatened when the adolescent starts operating in the Adult; unless the parents are equally Adult, the transactions will cross.

And more:

> These parents see autonomy in their youngster as a threat to their control of him and may decide they liked it better the way it was, before treatment. Familiar miseries may seem more comfortable to frightened parents than the risk of trusting their teenager to develop his own inner controls.

Awesomely deep!



I'm OK – You're OK Criticism

As a book that helped me better understand the world, myself and actively helped shed some parental baggage and improve, well… I aam a bit of cheerleader.

Yet, "I'm OK – You're OK" also presents a lot of mistakes and generalization, as does Transactional Analysis in general.

The moment transaction analysis tried to shoehorn every behavior into its model, it became obvious that not everything fits into it.
And that's how it is for most models: reality is too complex to fit it all into one simplified model.
So when transactional analysts represented alcoholism as a "life script" for example, they only made themselves sound a bit ridiculous (see: rational wiki).

"I'm OK – You're OK" also presents plenty of exaggerations. It ends up sounding a lot like cheerleading for the method instead of presenting facts and ideas.

And that's not how a scientist should approach things.

And, finally, Harris is critical of Freud.
But Transactional Analysis falls for the same mistake: jumping to conclusions with no evidence.
How can transaction analysis say that "children are born with a default "not OK""?
I for one believe that many children selfishly put themselves at the center of the world, are very optimist -Martin Seligman proves it-, and can also have very high self-esteem.

Real-Life Applications

The real-life applications of I'm OK, You're OK are multiple and potentially life-changing. Including:

- **Learn to see the child in you**

Are you still dependent to mother, seeking her approval?
Or are you dependent on someone else, seeking their approval? I someone getting under your skin, and you are you reacting too aggressively?

Those are all signs you are engaging them from a child position.

- **Learn to see people taking a parent role against you**

In life, you might cross your path with people who are trying to take a parent role over you, to make you feel guilty or make you act as they wish and please.
Learn to see the signs of a judgmental parent.

- **Are you still listening to old parent data (ie.: values)?**

Your parents might have taught you values that are not good for you to obey. Examine them and drop them.

- **Learn to see the child in others**

As you learn to approach life with your adult first, learn to see the child in others.
Are they dependent on you? That gives you lots of power and leverage over them.
But if you want a more equitable relationship, you might not want to engage people as children, but help them develop their adult and have adult-adult relationships.
Also read here.

CONS

- **Jumping to Conclusions**

Rather typical of many psychoanalysts, Dr. Harris often jumps to conclusions without prefacing that he has no data to back it up and that it's a hunch more than a certainty. For example:

> The motility which gives birth to the Adult becomes reassuring in later life when a person is in distress. He goes for a walk to 'clear his mind'.

Linking motility of the child to reassurance and later the "going for a walk" of the adult as a way of regaining certainty is certainly plausible, but it seems a huge stretch to me.

- **Fitting The World Into The Model** (instead of the other way around)

One of the reasons why I'm not a big fan of relying too much on models to describe reality is that people often end up stretching reality just to fit into their model.

Which is what happens sometimes for this text as well:

> Once I observed an eleven-year-old, nonverbal, autistic boy evidence the seeming perception of the I' M NOT OK-YOU'RE not ok position by an intense, repeated hitting with his fist, first his counsellor, and then his own head. It was as if he were acting out his view of life: You're not ok and I'm not ok. Let's smash both of us.

To me, this is extremely interesting, but also sounds like a possible instance of over-interpretation.
The boy might simply have problems that are not (necessarily) a consequence of "I'm Not OK, You're Not OK" position.

- **Some Important Correction Need to Be made**

The book makes some obvious mistakes that, in light of more recent development, we know not to be true.
For example, it says that psychopaths develop from a position of "I'm OK, You're Not OK" following battering. But that's not true, psychopaths are born.

- **Unrealistic View of "I'm OK, You're OK" Not Playing Games**

Albeit transaction analysis should be all about games, it's simplistic in its approach that "I'm OK, You're OK" people don't play games.
I don't buy this idea of "purity" once everyone is "confident enough in his own skin" that he doesn't "need" to play games".
Some people might play *fewer* games, that's true. And maybe, fewer nasty games. But it's not zero.

- **Dogmatic**

"I'm OK You're OK", like many old-school psychoanalytical approaches, talks in terms of dogmas and ultimate truths. Even without the evidence.
Needless to say, I reject that approach -and it's not scientific-.

- **Sometimes Conservative**

Albeit it doesn't sound conservative as it's highly critical of religion, a few passages are very conservative and judgmental.
For example, writes Thomas Harris:

> Sexual intercourse without personal intimacy can only result in a loss of self-esteem. This is true also in marriage.

Who says that?
I don't think that's true at all. Or at the very least, certainly not true in *all* the cases.

PROS

Without listing all the pros and even considering its important limitations, transaction analysis and this book, in particular, are enlightening.

Something I haven't yet outlined and which I deeply appreciated is this:

Great Explanation of The Connection Between Internal Confidence and Games
I find the idea that people in "Not OK" positions play more games to be quite often true. Indeed one of the characteristics of high-value men and high-value women is that of playing fewer games and being more direct.
That stems from internal confidence and a higher self-esteem that allows them to show their true selves.

Review

I'm forever grateful to this book and to transaction analysis.

Not only it expanded my understanding and my own research on human behavior, but it also helped me understand myself much better.
And, in many ways, it cured me and upgraded me.

And even though it was never intended that way, I consider it a fundamental book to understand power dynamics.

Check the:

- **Best psychology books**
- Best books on power

or get the book on Amazon

Soft Power: The Key to Subtle Social Dominance

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Soft power is a critical arena for persuasion and influence in our modern world, shaping both interpersonal and international relations through attraction rather than coercion.

This concept underpins modern social dynamics because coercion is often illegal or ineffective, and leadership is based on people *accepting* to follow.

This article examines the dynamics of soft power, drawing on scholarly insights to provide a robust framework for understanding its mechanisms.

Social influence is neither mystical nor manipulative: it combines high value with advanced social skills

Contents

- Intro
  - How Soft Power Creates Social Influence
- How to Wield Influence With Soft Power
  - 1. Become a High-Value Individual
  - 2. Set the Frame
  - 3. Foster Emotional Dependence on Your Rewards
  - 4. Test Their Worth (& Assess Responses)
- Social Influence and the Parent Role
  - When the Submissive Party Rebels
- Soft Power in International Relations
- Resisting Soft Power
  - 1. Recognize the Dynamics
  - 2. Undermine Their Authority

- 3. Reject the Child Role
- SUMMARY

Intro

Chitty's experiential theory in *The Handbook of Soft Power* describes soft power as:

> Attraction-based influence, both intended and unintended, rooted in human experiences of cognition and feeling

Social influence operates subtly, relying on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or physical dominance, aligning with soft power's emphasis on shaping preferences through appeal.

It functions at a psychological and social level, distinct from hard power's coercive mechanisms.

Human communication, encompassing verbal and nonverbal cues, prioritizes persuasion over physical confrontation. In contemporary society, power is predominantly *soft* power, relying on attraction and shared values rather than force.

In many interactions, one individual exerts dominance at a mental and emotional level, establishing the frame of reference for the relationship. This frame sets unspoken norms—what's acceptable, humorous, or desirable (setting 'cultural and normative standards').

How Soft Power Creates Social Influence

Socially influential individuals wield soft power because of a fundamental human drive:

People seek approval and appreciation from high-value, high-power individuals.

Approval from such individuals delivers an emotional reward, while disapproval inflicts emotional punishment.

To secure rewards and avoid punishment, individuals conform to the high-power person's standards, often willingly submitting to their influence.

In Power University, this website's flagship course, we term this dynamic "the judge." The term "judge" captures how dominant individuals wield soft power by establishing norms and evaluating others' compliance. **The socially dominant individual's soft power lies in shaping others' actions through their judgment**.

This is soft power because it involves minimal coercion: **the submissive party willingly adheres to the dominant party's norms, actively seeking their approval**. They desire to remain in the judge's favor, reflecting the notion of attraction-based influence.

Also read:

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Power & Control

How to Wield Influence With Soft Power

To exert social influence, three elements are essential:

- **High value/high power** (overlapping but distinct attributes)
- **Warmth** (overlapping traits that project friendliness and approachability)

The greater your capacity to inspire admiration, give, or evoke positive emotions, the more soft power you wield.

Also read:

- **Availability and value**
- **Warmth and power**

> Power Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

Here are practical steps to enhance your soft power:

1. Become a High-Value Individual

Higher personal value forms the foundation of interpersonal influence.

A high-value woman or high-value man naturally dominates social interactions, while a low-value woman or low-value man struggles to exert influence.

Personal traits and skills are interconnected, not isolated. Enhancing one attribute elevates others, creating a cumulative effect:

- Confidence
- Sexual attractiveness
- Knowledge & life wisdom
- Income
- Personal drive
- Competence

For instance, boosting competence increases confidence, income, and social appeal, reinforcing overall value.

2. Set the Frame

A frame is a set of beliefs, morals, and perspectives that shapes how individuals interpret reality and judge behavior, a concept central to soft power's normative influence.

Frames determine power because they establish:

Norms of conduct—what's fair, acceptable, or desirable—akin to imposing a legal system.

Setting a frame is akin to establishing your normative system, guiding others' behavior within your standards.

Adopting another's frame means conforming to their rules and values, often strategically set to benefit them. Recognizing frames is crucial for mastering social dynamics.

Part of mastering social dynamics involves identifying frames and determining whose standards govern the interaction.

Consider this scene from *Mrs. Doubtfire*:

Her frame deems the party frivolous; his frame views it as fun. Her stronger frame prevails, establishing her as the judge and him as the defendant, illustrating soft power's normative dominance.

Also read:

- **Frame techniques**

3. Foster Emotional Dependence on Your Rewards

Conversely, instill emotional apprehension of your disapproval.

The socially influential individual dispenses rewards and punishments based on their frame, reinforcing their soft power through emotional leverage.

In social influence, rewards and punishments are primarily emotional, aligning with French and Raven's "reward power" framework (French & Raven, 1959, as cited in *The Basis of Social Power*).

Rewards include:

- Compliments
- Acceptance
- Smiles
- Time with them
- Happiness

Punishments include:

- Withdrawal
- Criticism
- Scorn
- Disapproval
- Unhappiness

Unhappiness is particularly potent in close relationships with significant power imbalances. The dominant party's mere displeasure can prompt the submissive party to seek reconciliation, a dynamic prevalent in intimate relationships.

Women wielding strong social influence often need only express annoyance to elicit compliance, as seen in this *Scarface* example:

Tony possesses hard power, but Elvira's soft power dominates, ultimately controlling the relationship ('relational efficacy').

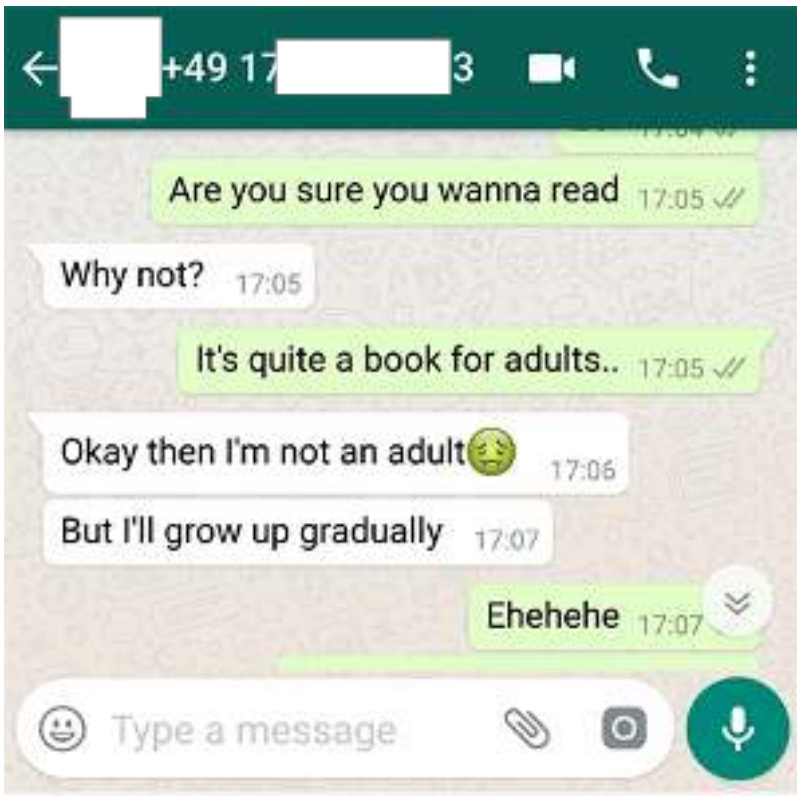
This pattern is common: women often control relationships through soft power, leveraging emotional and normative influence.

Caution: Judging power typically accrues to the more experienced, skilled, or high-value individual, but sometimes it goes to whoever assumes the judge role first. Avoid passively accepting others' frames.

Encourage Them to Prove Themselves

In judge-dominated relationships, the judged party often seeks to prove themselves, reinforcing their submissive role.

This dynamic cements the judge's influence, as the judged invests in gaining approval.



In this example, I position myself as the judge by framing a group of "adults" who engage with complex texts, implying she's not yet mature enough. This prompts her to prove her worth, reinforcing my soft power. Later, clarifying it was a jest fosters healthier dynamics, as manipulation isn't necessary for soft power.

Soft power doesn't require games; focus on core power principles for authentic influence.

Beware of Shaming (A Potent Soft Power Tool)

The judge role can escalate to harder power through "shaming attacks," which leverage coercive emotional pressure.

Shame attacks threaten social ostracism, evoking primal fears of exclusion, historically akin to a death sentence.

They employ terms like "evil," "treason," or "dishonorable" to marginalize the target.

Shamers often impose their ethical frames, assuming self-appointed authority without formal legitimacy, positioning themselves as arbiters of "good" against the nonconforming "other."

They frame their judgment as representing collective values, declaring:

> "This is what's right; you don't conform with *us*, so you're unacceptable."

Shame attacks can push targets onto the defensive, often conceding to seek forgiveness, a tactic that amplifies the judge's influence.

- Defending against shame attacks
- Dealing with judgmental people: Charlie Sheen interview

This interview exemplifies shame attacks delivered from a judge position, leveraging moral authority.

Shaming should be used sparingly to enforce collaborative norms, not domination, as it risks long-term relational damage. While some charismatic leaders use it, historical figures like Robespierre and Savonarola, who relied on shaming, faced dire consequences, underscoring its risks.

Robespierre's reign of terror and Savonarola's destruction of secular works in Florence, driven by shaming, led to their executions, highlighting shaming's volatile nature.

Avoid Identity-Based Shame Attacks

The most damaging attacks target core identities, exploiting deeply held values.

Identities vary, but common vulnerabilities include masculinity for men and beauty or femininity for women, as these are culturally significant markers.

While such attacks may be warranted in extreme cases, habitual reliance on them marks manipulative behavior. Ethical influencers avoid identity-based shaming, focusing on constructive influence.

4. Test Their Worth (& Assess Responses)

Testing, a term from pickup culture, involves:

> Assessing others' value to determine their suitability for you.

Soft power accrues to those who evaluate others.

Simple questions can serve as tests. In influential dynamics, responses aim to impress or avoid disapproval, not merely exchange information.

When the judged seeks to impress, they reinforce the influencer's dominance.

An example from *Meet the Parents*:

De Niro's direct questions intensify pressure, maintaining his judge role. Stiller's attempt to deflect with humor fails as De Niro reinforces dominance with "but you didn't pick it."

Testing can escalate to interrogation, as in this *Wolf of Wall Street* scene, where DiCaprio's character submits under questioning, highlighting soft power's evaluative strength.

Social Influence and the Parent Role

Some theoretical context:

The judge role overlaps with the parent-child dynamic in transactional analysis, particularly as interpreted by Thomas Harris in *I'm OK – You're OK*.

Teen rebellion often targets parental judgment, seeking autonomy from emotional influence, akin to resisting soft power's normative frames.

In adult relationships, **the judge fosters emotional dependence on their validation**, prompting investment and self-improvement to gain approval, much like children with parents. This dynamic is prevalent in romantic contexts, where women often wield judgment power due to higher power in the social marketplace

The parent role and social influence converge, as seen in this video:

This references Power University, offering practical social power strategies.

When the Submissive Party Rebels

Rebelling against a judge's influence without dismantling their authority keeps you within their frame, as the video notes, reinforcing their soft power.

Such rebellion reflects emotional dependence on their judgment, akin to resisting yet remaining under their

influence.

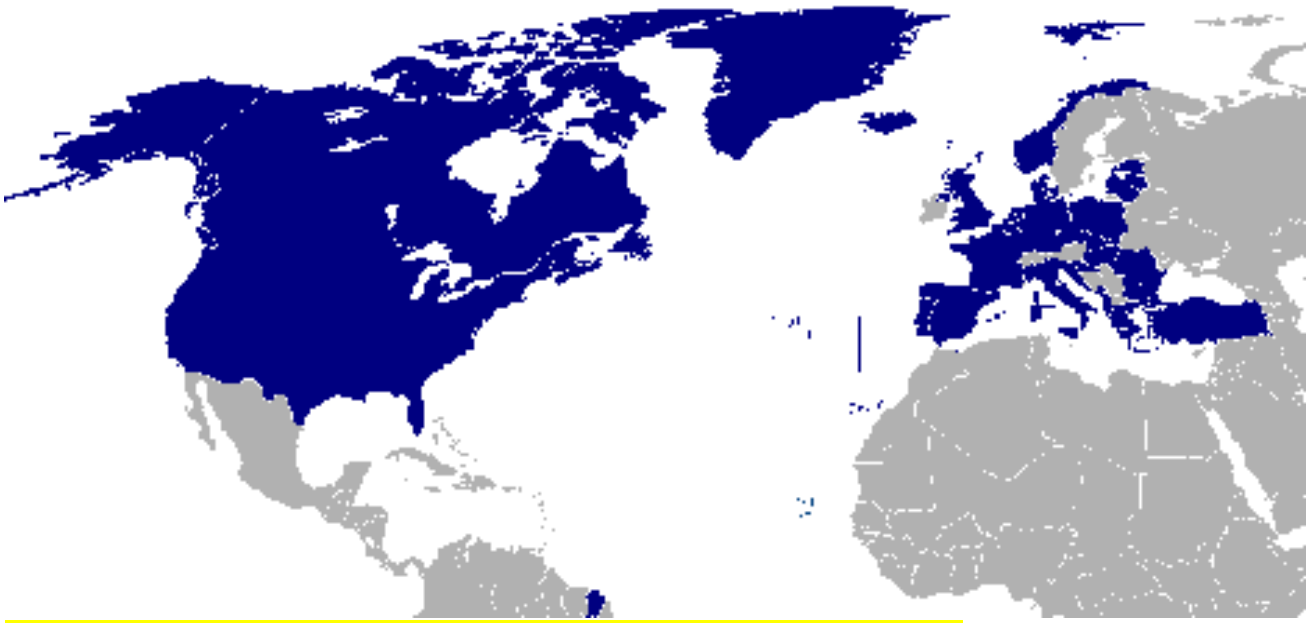
An example from the article on female relationship control:

His rebellion resembles a child's defiance of maternal authority, highlighting soft power's emotional hold.

Soft Power in International Relations

Soft power is equally pivotal in international relations, shaping global influence without military force.

Since the last major war ended in 1945, global power has been negotiated more through soft power than hard. The USA didn't have to invade any European countries: all the major European powers wanted to be on the Western, democratic side.



Western soft power attracts allies, and the free market makes them rich and powerful

And the same is true for most former USSR countries: they all looked West, rather than east.
The USSR was undermined from within, with soft power.

Resisting Soft Power

Soft power can be constructive, as in mentorship or guidance from trusted figures, fostering growth.

However, resisting manipulative or overbearing influence is crucial, such as from controlling figures or exploitative actors.

To resist soft power, do this:

1. Recognize the Dynamics

Identify when others attempt to assume a judge role, imposing their norms over you, a skill vital for social empowerment.

This article aids recognition. Certain phrases signal judge dominance, as shown here:

When encountering these, avoid overreacting or seeking justification. Reflect that they're assuming a judge role, preparing you to counter strategically.

2. Undermine Their Authority

First, mentally reject their authority. Then, challenge their influence by questioning their legitimacy or frame, dismantling their soft power.

3. Reject the Child Role

Avoid both compliance and rebellion, as both reinforce a child-like dynamic. Respond calmly and assertively, maintaining adult autonomy.

SUMMARY

Soft power drives social and geopolitical influence through attraction and persuasion.

It hinges on two pillars:

1. High personal value
2. Advanced social skills (encompassing persuasion, negotiation, and power dynamics)

High value attracts followers; social skills and strategies amplify influence. Mastering these principles empowers individuals and nations alike to influence others.

The Slight Edge: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Slight Edge* (2005) author Jeff Olson explains that the secret to becoming successful in life is repeating the small daily habits and actions, over and over. Then the compound effect will naturally carry you to success.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The First Ingredient: Your Philosophy
  - The Choice: Up or Down. The Core of The Slight Edge
  - Master The Mundane
  - Don't Fall For The Quantum Leap Mentality
  - Start With a Penny
  - Two Life Paths: Threats or Possibilities
  - Use Mentors
  - The 7 Slight Edge Principles (Habits)
- What to Read After The Slight Edge
- Real-Life Applications
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Every day, do the actions that will carry you to success
- Do it consistently, day in and day out
- Do it even when it's boring, even when it would easier to do something else
- Positive habits compound over time, but so do negative ones. If you compound negative habits, you go in the opposite direction of success

Full Summary

About the Author: there is not much information about Jeff Olson online, but what's sure is that he is an American self-help speaker and author, and he is the founder and CEO of a cosmetics company.

The First Ingredient: Your Philosophy

Changing your philosophy in the slight edge mindset means changing how you see the daily, small things of your life.

Building to-do lists won't do you any good unless you change your mindset about all those actions.
And the correct philosophy is this: everything matters. Especially the small daily actions and habits which, over time, either build up to make you a success, or build down to lead you to failure.

The Choice: Up or Down. The Core of The Slight Edge

The core of the slight edge, and I quote Jeff Olson is this:

> Little productive actions, repeated consistently over time—add up to the difference between failure and success
>
> *Jeff Olson, The Slight Edge*

The Slight Edge will keep applying whether you want it or not, and it goes both ways.
If you get into the habit of doing what will move you towards your goals, day in and day out, you will surely be successful.
If you let yourself go and you snooze, eat junk food, and waste time, it will lead you in the opposite direction of your dreams.

Master The Mundane

Here is why you need to master the mundane:

1. Little daily actions are easy to do, but also easy *not* to do
2. Results are invisible (in the beginning)
3. Little actions seem insignificant (but they add up)

The small daily actions won't always be exciting. Sometimes they will be boring. And sometimes they might even be hard.
And they take time.
You will not get to see results right away. And that's exactly why most people don't do them

Mastering the slight edge means to learn mastering the daily and mundane. You don't start from the top right away, you need to get there, and getting there means repeating small little actions day after day.

Don't Fall For The Quantum Leap Mentality

People with a "jackpot" mentality don't apply the slight for exactly the reasons we mentioned above: it's easy not to do, it takes time and in the beginning results are unnoticeable.

It won't make no difference today whether I write this post or snooze. It won't make a difference whether I gorge at McDonald or I eat my usual healthy dinner.
But in the long run, you bet it *does* make a difference.

People who don't understand the slight edge pursue the big break, the quantum leap.
They seek opportunities to make one million today. Basically, **most people chase lottery tickets** that rarely yield the results they want -and often yield the *opposite* results-.

Slight edge people do get to experience quantum leaps. But only after they have been working at it for a long time. Basically, when you apply the slight edge your success will be in "brewing" mode for a while before it eventually explode -same concept Peter Diamandis talks about in Bold for diffusion of disruptive technologies-.

Start With a Penny

The Slight Edge advocates starting.

Yes, learning is important.
But action goes hand in hand with learning and reading.

The key to starting on your road to success is starting. No matter what you start with, you gotta start.

Two Life Paths: Threats or Possibilities

Successful people believe in the future and in a world of possibilities. They believe they can change their life. Unsuccessful people live life blaming others and they never take responsibility for their life.

Successful people shoulder a responsibility to make others successful.

Use Mentors

To shorten your learning curve Jeff Olson recommends you pick a mentor. A mentor should be someone who has already done what you want to achieve.
Make sure that he is a good role model that you can emulate.

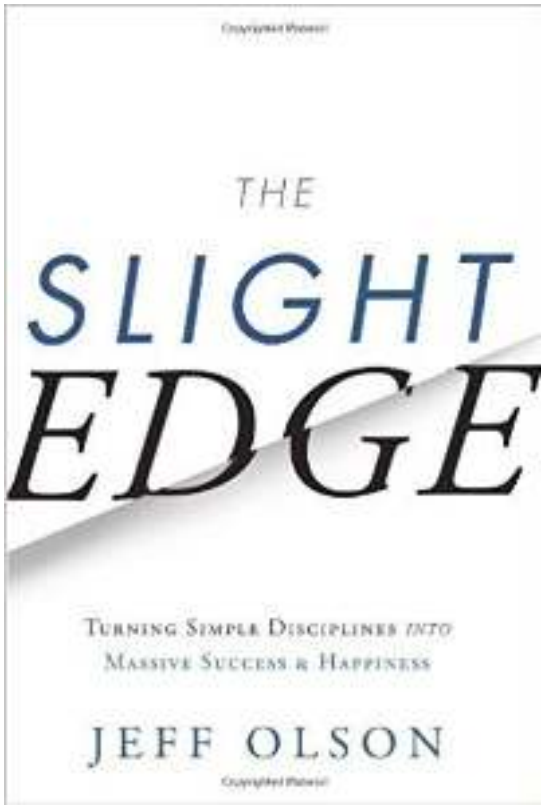
Also read:

- Career strategies

The 7 Slight Edge Principles (Habits)

Here are five positive and powerful slight edge habits:

1. Show up
2. Show consistently
3. Cultivate a positive outlook (see the glass half full)
4. Commit yourself for the long haul (10.000 hours rule)
5. Cultivate burning desire backed by faith that you will make it
6. Pay the price (sometimes you gotta give up something)
7. Practice integrity (do the right thing even when nobody's watching)



What to Read After The Slight Edge

One of the core principles of the slight edge is that of continuous growth and improvement.

I especially loved the story of Olson speaking to a shoe-shiner who dreamed of sending her daughter to university but she couldn't afford it. She was an avid reader, but she only read novels.
And Olson wonders "what if she had read good self-development books instead?"
I couldn't agree more.

Jeff Olson quotes and recommends many books, including:

- The Happiness Advantage
- As a Man Thinketh
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- The Power of Habit
- Think and Grow Rich
- The Magic of Thinking Big

Real-Life Applications

The whole concept of the slight edge is transformative and something you should definitely apply to your life. There were a few more gold nuggets I loved though, including:

Make Happiness a Priority
The model that most people follow, such as "achieve the result and then be happy" has been proven over and over not to work.
Do the opposite instead: make happiness a priority which, in turn, will make it much more likely that you will also achieve your goals.
Slight edge + happiness = success.

Quotes

Here are a few great quotes I loved:

> How long will it take? Chances are it will take longer than you want it to—and that when the time arrives, you'll be astonished at how quick it seemed.
>
> *Jeff Olson, The Slight Edge*

> The Slight Edge is all about living in the moment
>
> *Jeff Olson, The Slight Edge*

> Be happy and the reason will appear
>
> *Robert Breault*

CONS

I think The Slight Edge contains a simple, yet foundational truth for a successful life, so take these cons as small pebbles in an otherwise great text.

- **Keeps Building Up Suspense**

The concepts in The Slight Edge are transformative, yet simple. But the author didn't simply deliver them in a straightforward fashion: he builds up to them and creates suspense. It's a good idea to make them more memorable, and sometimes it worked wonders. But some others sometimes I thought it was too much.

- **The Compound Effect Applied to Investment is Risky**

The compound effect is a truth of life and it's important.

However, I personally can't stomach anymore the compound effect applied to financial investment. One because it's everywhere, and second because it's not true.

Just think about it: does it makes sense that something will keep on growing *forever*? How can you rest assured the stock market will keep on growing from now until when you retired? You can't! So the "compound effect" presented as the safest way to become a millionaire is built on a lie (also read: Fooled by Randomness and The Millionaire Fastlane)

- **Sometimes Statistically Superficial**

This is nitpicking, but you know guys I'm a highly critical reviewer.

The author says that by analyzing the words in tweet messages they could predict health. But the doctor who introduced the study didn't predict overall health, he only measured the *correlation* with *one single* medical ailment.

I'll give you one example to show you how these correlations can be meaningless: jogging is likely to be correlated with a higher incidence of knee injuries, sprayed ankles, and dog bites. Does it mean jogging is unhealthy? Of course not.
Also read: How to Lie With Statistics

- **The Legacy Argument**

I'm really not a big fan of legacy. I feel it comes from an unhealthy place. It contains a lot of entitlement mentality with the idea of "being remembered", which sounds rather egocentric to me.
The truth is that, on a long enough timeline, nobody will be remembered. And that's fine.

- **Sometimes Repetitive**

The book could have been much shorter. Especially if you read a lot of self-development texts much of the information won't be new to you.
But repetition can also help people internalize the message better, so this one is very personal.

PROS

The Slight Edge goes at the core of success. Both in terms of achieving material success and an happier, more meaningful life.
That's all the "pros" you need :).

Review

The Slight Edge is an excellent, excellent book.

If you want to be successful, the slight edge is your formula.

It is in many ways similar in content to The Compound Effect, and both are excellent books because they go at the core of what it takes to be successful.

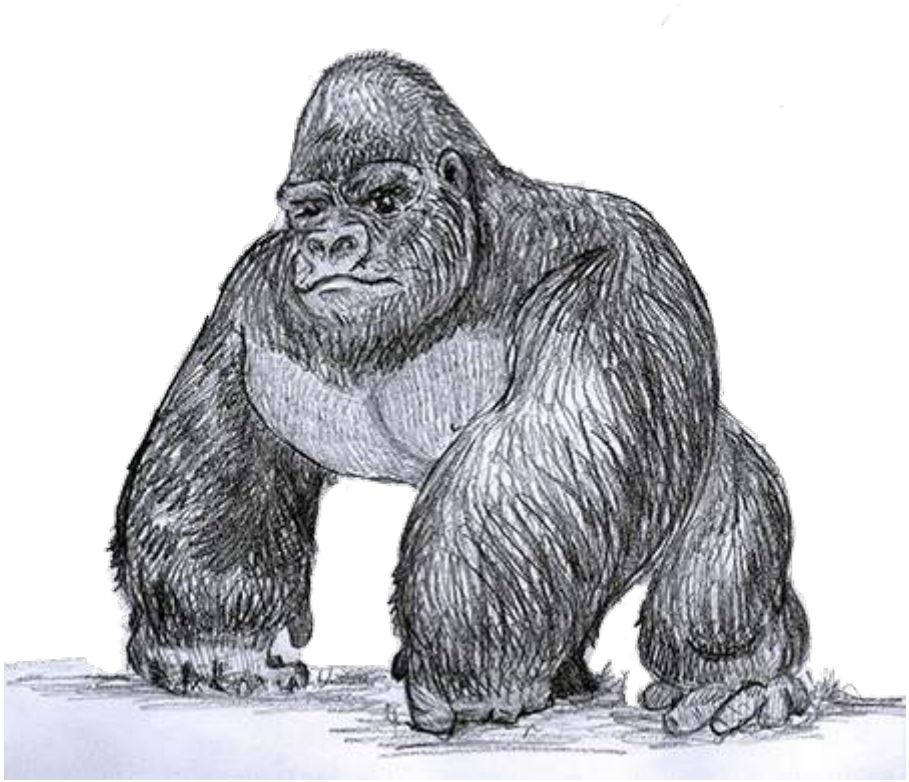
Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

Alpha Male Posturing: Why You Must Quit That Sh*t!

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Alpha male posturing is the ensemble of behaviors that seeks to show off how "alpha" one is.
It includes exaggerated self-promotion, bragging, social climbing, status inflating behavior, and of course attacking others to feel better by comparison.

This article will show you why people do it, how it works psychologically and socially and, finally, it will give you a few pointers on moving past that value-taking mindset.



I feel so alpha.. As long as I can ridicule the betas.
Contents

- Alpha Male Posturing: A Definition
- Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks
- Alpha Male Posturing Example
- Psychological Payoff of Alpha Posturing
- The Bigger The Cuck, The Better I Feel
- Social Pay-Offs of Male Posturing
- Alpha Male Posturing Video
- Why Alpha Posturing is Weak
- When Criticizing Others is OK
- Moving Past Alpha Posturing
- SUMMARY

Alpha Male Posturing: A Definition

Here is a definition of alpha male posturing:

> Alpha male posturing includes all the behaviors and attitudes that seek to inflate one's own social status and self-esteem by creating an outgroup of "inferior" people to be attacked and ridiculed.
>
> *The Power moves*

Some Red Pill circles use various slurs to ridicule and frame 'non red pilled' as "inferior".
But most groups that develop an edge of toxicity always develop new epithets for the inferior groups.

The key in this definition is "inflating one's own value".
Because, at the core, alpha male posturing is nothing but an example of social climbing: it's about pushing people down so that I can pull myself up.

Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks

You have probably heard about this maxim:

- **Alpha fucks, beta bucks**

And if you've taken a walk on the red side of the underworld, you've probably come across terms such as "cuck", "beta" or "beta bucks".

As a matter of fact, you can barely get by a single post or article without being peppered with those labels.

For the record:

- **Cuck** means "cuckold", as in men who are so unattractive that their women cheat on them with alpha males or some lover-types.
- **Beta** means "beta males", which is a portrait of weak men as opposed to "alpha males".
- **Beta bucks**, refers to more boring and plain men who supposedly buy sex and get into relationships by wining and dining her (ie.: a pejorative word for a "provider role").

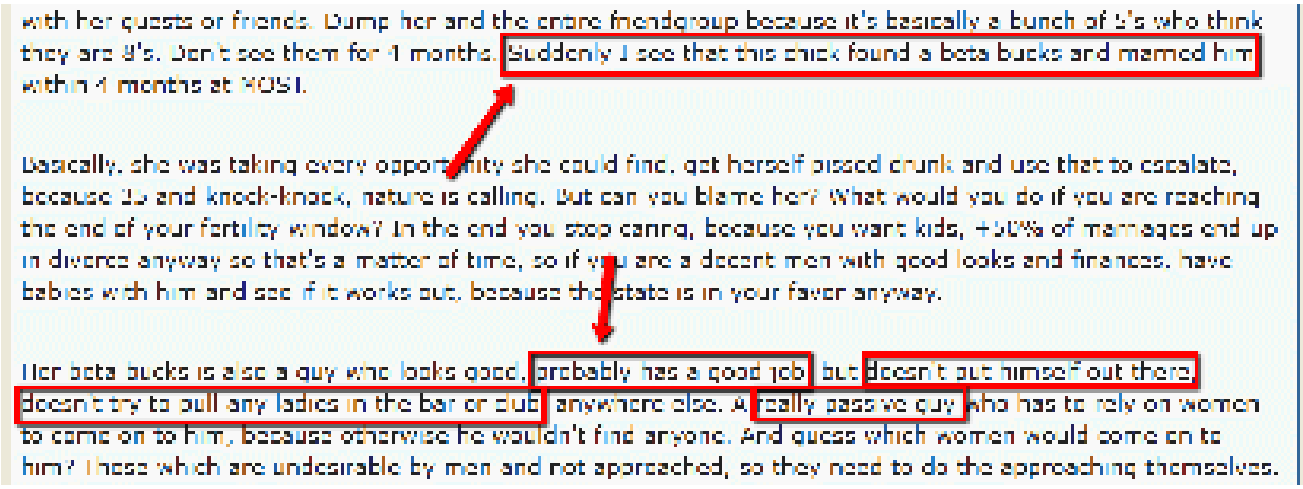
All these terms sound rather mean and, for their purpose, they have to be.
They have to be to serve the purpose of group-cohesion and psychological self-protection (ie.: they are so bad that and so different that I could never be one of them)

Let's see:

Alpha Male Posturing Example

I didn't need to dig much to find an example of alpha male posturing.

On the very first page of The Red Pill on Reddit I found the perfect example (original post here):


with her guests or friends. Dump her and the entire friendgroup because it's basically a bunch of 5's who think they are 8's. Don't see them for 4 months. Suddenly I see that this chick found a beta bucks and married him within 4 months at MOSI.

Basically, she was taking every opportunity she could find, get herself pissed drunk and use that to escalate, because 35 and knock-knock, nature is calling. But can you blame her? What would you do if you are reaching the end of your fertility window? In the end you stop caring, because you want kids, +50% of marriages end up in divorce anyway so that's a matter of time, so if you are a decent man with good looks and finances, have babies with him and see if it works out, because the state is in your favor anyway.

Her beta bucks is also a guy who looks good, probably has a good job, but doesn't put himself out there, doesn't try to pull any ladies in the bar or club, anywhere else. A really passive guy who has to rely on women to come on to him, because otherwise he wouldn't find anyone. And guess which women would come on to him? Those which are undesirable by men and not approached, so they need to do the approaching themselves.

The poster is describing how an ex FWB he was seeing -a “plate” as per Rollo Tomassi plate theory-, met another man and soon got married.

The message implies that the poster does not know the new guy, yet looks how much inferring he does:

1. Probably has a good job (ie.: stable and likely boring)
2. Doesn’t put himself out there (ie.: doesn’t try to improve)
3. Does not approach women
4. Is a really passive guy

Now, what is this poster actually doing and communicating?

What this poster is doing is this: he picks a random guy whom he doesn’t even know and **points finger so that he can look good by comparison**.
What’s not written but implied in this communication is this:

1. I didn’t need a good job to fuck that girl because I’m attractive
2. I put myself out there: I’m a brave alpha
3. I’m not a passive guy: I’m a brave alpha
4. Like me because I’m alpha

The game is this: **make someone else look shit so that I can look good by comparison**.
As we will soon see, this is an inherently weak game.

Psychological Payoff of Alpha Posturing

People posture for both social status and ego-massaging.

When we criticize others we also feel superior.
We get to be in the power position of judges, we get an ego boost from others nodding their head at us and we shore up our flailing self-esteem.

Here is the interesting phenomenon now: the original poster or commentator gets the biggest boost in terms of social status, but the whole community as well gets a boost in self esteem and a smaller social status boost by jumping on the bandwagon.
Here is how:

An Orgy of Ego Self-Massaging

By commenting and agreeing, everyone basks in the limelight of the original commenter.
They get to make the original commentator feel good and increase his status while they also get a small boost social status by following in his footsteps.

And everyone gets an equal boost in self-esteem by feeling superior the “cucks” out there.
Win-win… Or so it feels.

It’s often a cyclical ego-propping anyway. Today you post and I prop your ego by agreeing with you, tomorrow I post and you prop mine.

So you get a whole army of people all moving in circle and following in each others’ footsteps, building up each other’s self-esteem while they all point to the cucks in the middle of merry-go-round circus.

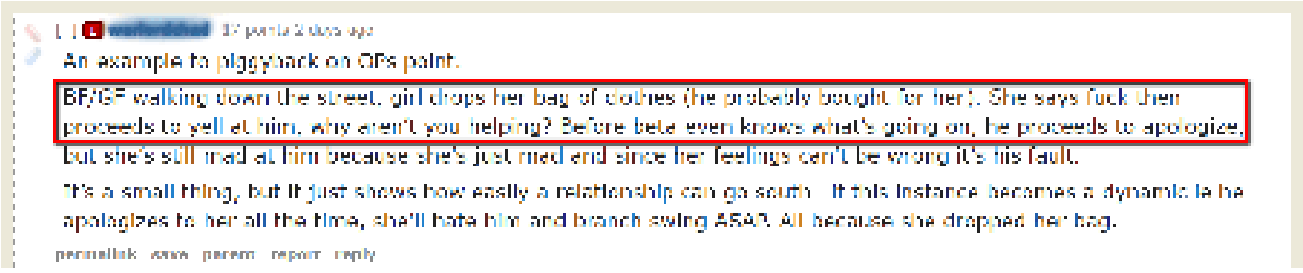
In a way, it’s a big online circus of emotional self-help.
Let’s all point out to an enemy out there and then let’s all feel better by making fun of him and up-voting each other.

The Bigger The Cuck, The Better I Feel

Here is another off-shoot phenomenon of posturing.

The worst and more ridiculous you can make your opponent appear, the better you feel.
Which is one of the reasons why these communities are no actually good for learning. The issues they discuss are designed to make them feel good, not to really examine, learn and improve.
This technique is similar to the strawman fallacy, where the attacker exaggerates the negative traits of the opponent so to score an easier win –a strawman example used by Tucker Carlson–

Look at this example:


An example to piggyback on OP's point.

BF/GF walking down the street, girl drops her bag of clothes (he probably bought for her). She says fuck then proceeds to yell at him. Why aren't you helping? Before bete even knows what's going on, he proceeds to apologize, but she's still mad at him because she's just mad and since her feelings can't be wrong it's his fault.

It's a small thing, but it just shows how easily a relationship can go south. If this instance becames a dynamic (e.he apolagizes to her all the time, she'll hate him and branch swing ASAP). All because she dropped her bag.

permalink save parent report reply

Notice that this example is so far out there you wonder if he is describing something he saw or if he's making it up as an extreme example.
Now of course, it *might* even be real, sure there are dysfunctional relationships with similar dynamics where the man accepts that kind of abuse.
Yet they are *rare*, and they are not the norm.
But by making it seem like the norm, the people in that community get to feel even more special.

And of course, with that black and white thinking they don't get to learn social dynamics and dating all that well.

Social Pay-Offs of Male Posturing

Social climbing is nothing new.
It happens in most social groups, and at all levels of abstraction.

Nations want to feel superior to other nations, men want to feel superior to women and different professions want to feel superior to other professions.
It's all the same game: build your own cool ingroup, point fingers towards an inferior outgroup, and feel good by comparison.

Basically it works like this: **if we can find a group of people who's inferior to us, we can then feel great by comparison**.
And if we can't find one, let's make one up!

And that's the addictive part that tribes offer to their members: the ego boost and self-esteem massaging of "tribe superiority".

This is a well known phenomenon in sociology and dictators of all times have used it to shore up political support, remove people's attention from more important issues or carry out ugly personal vendettas against this or that social group.

Prosecutions, progroms and lynchings are extreme examples that leverage similar dynamics of social climbing and posturing.

Alpha Male Posturing Video

I was looking for a video example on alpha male posturing, and then realized that this guy basically made a video caricature of one of the core messages of this post:

“The most alpha thing you can is to judge others to put beneath you to make yourself feel superior” LOL, nailed it!

Why Alpha Posturing is Weak

Posturing is weak.
And albeit “insecure” is often abused these days to criticize anyone we don’t like, posturing *does* often communicate insecurity.

One research for example shows that when men speak loudly, women rated them as more aggressive.
But, crucially, also insecure.
And that’s not attractive.

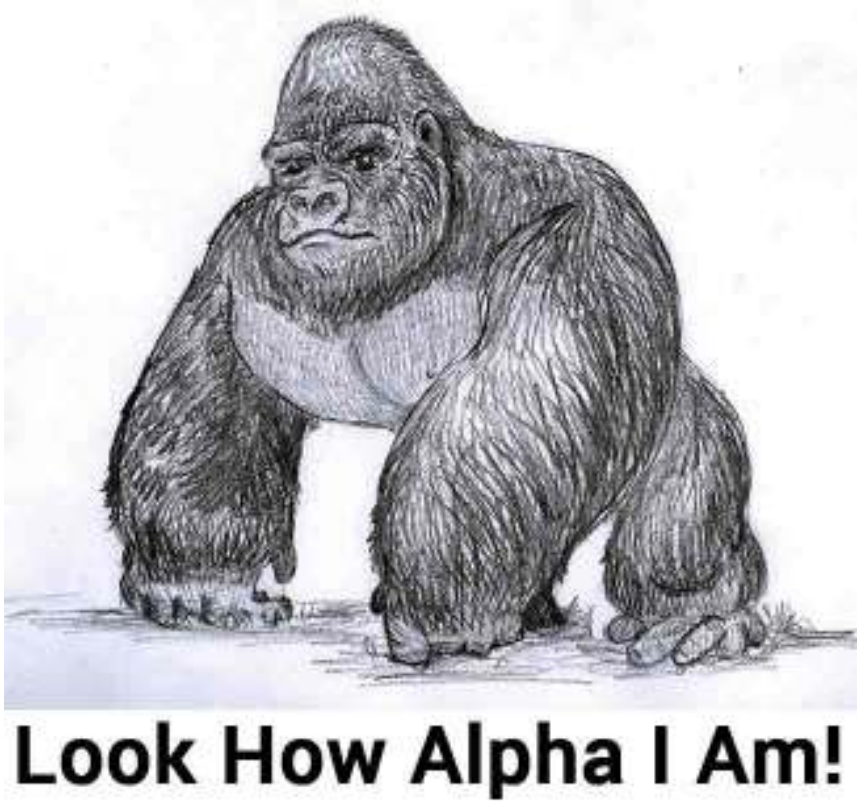
Alpha male posturing says the following:

- Communicates lack of deep confidence
- Social climbing says you’re nowhere near the top
- You look nasty to anyone who’s not playing posturing games

If we go back to the original definition of alpha male posturing:

Alpha male posturing seeks to *inflate one’s own social status and self-esteem* by creating an outgroup (..).
When you need external props and when you need to expand so much effort to pump your own ego and self-esteem, you are also inherently communicating that you need that self-esteem boost because you don’t have enough.
And that’s the definition of insecurity.

When we point fingers and try to look better by comparison, we are by definition engaging in social climbing. And when we engage in social climbing it means we are far from the top.



When Criticizing Others is OK

There are a few exceptions when criticizing can be used strategically to bond and connect with people.

I talk about such an exception in my article on making women compliment you. In a nutshell, when you strategically criticize someone far away in a way that you make you and a girl both feel superior, then you are indirectly complimenting her and creating an “us” frame which can help seduction.

In that case, and in a few other rare exceptions, fare game.

Moving Past Alpha Posturing

Moving past alpha male posturing means growing as men and persons.
It means reaching a point where our self-esteem is internally-generated and doesn’t need any nasty behavior for props.

Here are a few articles and resources to get you started:

- Moving beyond Red Pill anger
- On the fairness of women “having it so easy”
- Anti-fragile ego
- **Power University**

SUMMARY

This article showed you what (alpha male) posturing is, how it manifests, and why it exists.

If you see posturing behavior in yourself, don’t worry, there is no shame: it’s a natural human tendency -men more than women-.

But natural doesn’t mean “good”.
And if you want to move forward in life and develop yourself -like *really* developing yourself-, then you gotta police your posturing tendencies for a while and eventually most past it.

And since you’re here, drop the need for social status as well:

- The futility of social status

The God Delusion: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The God Delusion is Richard Dawkin's seminal work in which he seeks to prove there is no God and that the world would be better off without religions.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Agnosticism Is Not 50/50
  - Disproving God's Proofs
  - Who Made God: The Infinite Regress
  - How Religions Got So Popular
- The God Delusion Criticism
  - Religion Cannot be Criticized
  - Focus on Famous Personalities
  - Strawman Attacks
  - Flimsy Evidence of Correlation Between Morals & Religion
  - Religion the Cause of Wars.. Or Just a Factor?
  - Blames on Religion What's Human, Not Religious
  - Some "Proofs" Are Not Real Proofs: IQ VS Religiosity
- The God Delusion Quotes
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- God as portrayed in the Bible is the far opposite of a good and enlightened creator
- There is no moderate Islam: Islam is a religion of war
- It would be a better world without religions

Full Summary

About the Author: Richard Dawkins, studied zoology at Oxford. He has been a professor of zoology at Berkely and, later, at Oxford. Dawkins was Christian until his teenage years, at which point he dropped Religion in favor of the theory of evolution.
He is also the author of The Selfish Gene, and he's always been outspoken about his rejection of religion and agnosticism.
Or rather, as he puts it:

> I am agnostic only to the extent that I am agnostic about fairies at the bottom of the garden
>
> *Richard Dawkins*

Agnosticism Is Not 50/50

He says that the position of agnostic people who refuse to answer is tempting, but it's not correct.

Saying that you cannot answer does not make the odds 50/50. Whether we cannot know that my red is the same as your green does not make the chances 50/50, he says.

Basically, Richard Dawkins hints that agnosticism is a cop-out.
However, I wasn't too convinced by Dawkin's reasoning here.

Disproving God's Proofs

In the third chapter Dawkins discusses and, he says, debunks, the proofs that some prominent theologians brought forth during the millennia.

One of them is that if we go back in time there must a point where we cannot go back anymore, and that must be God.
Dawkins says that the idea of "regression" implies that God is immune to regress, which he challenges.

He also challenges the "design" theory which is the most popular these days. The design theory says that we are simply too complex to have evolved randomly.
Yet, says Dawkins, evolution proves just that: that it's not only possible, but highly likely.

Then he addresses the popular but flawed criticism against evolution which is the lack of "transition fossils". Quote is friend Matt Ridley, author of The Red Queen, Dawkins says that there are plenty of "transition" fossils.
And anyway, it makes no sense to speak of "transition" in evolution because we are always in transition.

My note: indeed the "transition" fossils argument makes no sense.

Who Made God: The Infinite Regress

Dawkins says that God presents an infinite regress that he cannot help us escape.
If we demand who created us, then a God complex enough to create musk ask the same question: who created him?

Dawkins says that the infinite regress proves that while God is not technically disprovable makes it highly highly unlikely.
I don't see how that helps explain anything though.

How Religions Got So Popular

Dawkins wonders how is it possible that religions spread so far and wide. And he makes the case it's a consequence of other traits that we posses.

He says that children listen and believe their parents because it best serves their survival chances.
However, that also makes them open to "external viruses" in the form of beliefs. Including religion, that thus replicates from one generation to another.

My note: it does make sense, this was a smart thought by Dawkins. Albeit I gotta question its true power and children are notoriously rebellious to their parents as well.

The God Delusion Criticism

Richard Dawkins wrote a remarkable book. Yet quite a few passages and arguments didn't convince me much. Including:

Religion Cannot be Criticized

Richard Dawkins says that religions enjoys protection from criticism in our society.
It's OK to discuss almost anything, but when it comes to religion there is this idea that it must be respected.

I think that partially is the case. But that's the case for so many topics today that I wouldn't really make it a
Furthermore, the idea that "we should all respect religion" also leads to much stronger attacks from non-religious and atheists.
Let's say it's a hot subject, but I wouldn't say it cannot be criticized.

Focus on Famous Personalities

Richard Dawkins spends much of the book talking about the religious beliefs of prominent historical personalities and scientists such as:

- Albert Einstein
- Thomas Jefferson
- Benjamin Franklin
- Adolf Hitler
- Josef Stalin

Albeit they are all interesting references and I enjoyed reading about them, I thought it was too long. And I really don't see how the religious beliefs of any single person could prove -or not prove- of the existence of God.

Strawman Attacks

In several instances during the course of the book I felt like Dawkins was attacking strawmen.

When he challenges the idea of God as both omnipotent and omniscient for examples he is talking a God who "intervenes" in human matters.
But that's only one interpretation of God that, frankly, is also the most childish and most easily disprovable.

I sense more strawmen with the people he picked to criticize. He talked and quoted at length of priests and theologians who were so bitter and aggressive that they obviously made too easy targets.
It's as if a priest decided to smear atheists by talking of his neighbor atheist who hates him.

Flimsy Evidence of Correlation Between Morals & Religion

I personally don't believe that if there is a correlation between morality and religion it's going to be strong.

But I was also not convinced by Dawkin's data, especially the one overlapping "red state" and crime.
That one is pure correlation and says little at best, and it's very misleading at worst.
Also read: Fooled by Randomness.

Religion the Cause of Wars.. Or Just a Factor?

Dawkins implies that religion is a major cause for divisiveness, animosities, wars, and violence.

Especially in the beginning, Dawkins seems to imply that without religions we wouldn't have had any crusades or terrorism.
I find that extremely simplistic.

By modern standards, the crusades were little more than field trips in terms of destruction. And we have terrorism of all kinds, not just religious.

Later Dawkins changes and says that religion, with its divisiveness, can feed on humans' natural tendencies of

forming ingroups and outgroups. And with that, I must agree.
I believe religion can be a factor, and in *some* cases it can be a major factor and driver of violence.
But anybody who says that religion is the main cause of wars and we would be very peaceful without has not really understood human nature.

Blames on Religion What's Human, Not Religious

Sometimes I feel like Dawkins commits a mistake many people commit; that of confusing human nature with the excuse that allows human nature to hide its real ugly motives.

The truth is that religion is often simply an excuse.
The early Christians didn't make much of gay people. Today, they do. Plenty of non religious people hate on homosexuals and they probably use some other lame-ass excuse as "it's immoral" or "it's disgusting" or "it's not a mannish thing to do".

Some "Proofs" Are Not Real Proofs: IQ VS Religiosity

Some of the proofs against the existence of Gods are not real proofs.

For example, what's the statistical *correlation* between IQ and religious beliefs and between education and religious beliefs should prove?

I think Dawkins should have been the first to say it was no final proof.

For example, at the extremely low end, animals have very low IQ and don't believe in God.
And a high IQ man like Jordan Peterson is very religious (albeit maybe Dawkins doesn't think very highly of Peterson :))

And we can't be sure that if we had 1.000 IQ levels then we wouldn't believe at a higher rate.
The truth about IQ measures is that we measure a very small range. And again, small ranges can be more misleading than enlightening.

The God Delusion Quotes

Plenty of awesome quotes from Richard Dawkins ranging from the funny to the deep, including:

> George W. Bush said that God told him to invade Iraq (a pity God didn't vouchsafe him a revelation that there were no weapons of mass destruction)
>
> *Richard Dawkins*

LOL you gotta love Dawkin's biting humor.
And more:

> If you die a martyr you will go to an especially wonderful part of paradise where you will enjoy 72 virgins.
>
> Spare a thought for the unfortunate virgins.
>
> *Richard Dawkins*

> Look carefully at any region of the world where you find intractable enmities and violence and I cannot guarantee that you will find religion as the dominant label for ingroups and outgroup, but it's a good bet.
>
> *Richard Dawkins*

And one wonderful piece of rational poetry here:

> We believe in evolution because the evidence supports it. We would abandon it overnight if new evidence arose to disprove it.
>
> No real fundamentalist would ever say anything like that.
>
> Not all scientists would change their mind as quickly, but they all at least pay lip service to it as an ideal–unlike, say, politicians who would probably condemn it as flip-flopping.
>
> *Richard Dawkins (edited for brevity)*

And the most famous quote:

> **We are all atheists about most of the gods that humanity has ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further.**
>
> *Richard Dawkins*

Real Life Applications

Question everything.
Including a book that tells you there is no God.

CONS

Sometimes it feels like a a bit too much anger transpires for believers and religious people.
For example a man wrote Dawkins saying that after he became an atheist his girlfriend wasn't any more sure about his moral standing.
Dawkins replied that as his girlfriend found out something about him, he too found out something about her and he'd have to wonder if he was too good for her.

I found that a bit judgmental.
I personally don't think that religiosity makes a huge difference between a high quality woman and a low quality one as it often comes with pros and cons.

PROS

Deep, well researched, well written and argued, even funny. Whether you like it or not, The God Delusion is solid work.

Review

Richard Dawkins makes some great points and *The God Delusion* is a worthwhile book to read.

My opinion is that, in the end, Dawkins didn't really "prove" there is no God.

He makes a compelling case against "human manifestations of religion" and the church, but that's rather easy to be honest.
And it's a far cry from proving anything.
I'm afraid, we are not going to find any proof about God's existence -or nonexistence- in any book.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

How Spot and Handle Social Climbers: Examples & Solutions

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

You've likely encountered a social climber. They're the person who seems to be constantly trying to get ahead, often by being overly friendly with those in a higher social class, dropping names, or subtly putting others down.

While the **social climbing definition** might seem simple, the **psychology of a social climber** is a complex mix of ambition and insecurity.

This article will not only help you understand **what a social climber is** and their common **characteristics**, but also reveal why their overt attempts at gaining status often backfire, harming them more than they help.

The harder you try to climb, the try harder you look

Contents

- Who Are Social Climbers
  - Bad Social Climbers
- Types of Social Climbers
  - 1. Fake Complainers
  - 2. Posturing Climbers
  - 3. Sarcastic Climbers
  - 4. 'Look Down On You' Climbers
  - 5. The Absentees' Climbers
- How to Deal With a Social Climber
  - 1. Ignore Them
  - 2. Stop Them In Their Track
  - 3. Explain Their Game
  - 4. Confront Them

- SUMMARY

Who Are Social Climbers

Social climbers deliberately try to gain a higher social status by seeking higher status people, bragging, or putting others down and look better by comparison.

It's important to note that social climbers per se aren't inherently bad people.

High-quality men and high-quality women all seek to increase their social status.
And that's a good thing. It's what makes them high-value in the first place.

However, ***good*** **social climbingis calibrated and doesn't even look like climbing.**
The people we call social climbers instead do not have that calibration and may even *lose* status (Blau, 1964).

Bad Social Climbers

'Social climbers' has a negative connotation in common parlance, and refers to **social climbers who are too obvious or too aggressive**.

You could call these 'value-taking social climbers', defined as:

> Value-taking social climbers seek to raise their social status not by virtue of their qualities or by helping others out but by attacking, ridiculing, and generally by depressing other people's statuses.
>
> *The Power Moves*

This type of social climbing is *costly*, and you better stop it.

Types of Social Climbers

Here are some examples of social climbers:

1. Fake Complainers

Fake complainers exaggerate or outright invent problems.

However, their problems are never "neutral", but are designed to make themselves look good by making others look bad of course.

They complain of people asking them for money, younger guns seeking them as mentors, men or women hitting on them all the times, etc.

Here is one example:

That wasn't great acting but it's enough to see what I mean
Now that example is a bit theatrical for emphasis of course, but that's the gist behind fake complainers: pretend others are seeking you -and bothering you as they pursue- for some great quality of yours.

Among the fake complainers, we often see drama queens, highly emotional individuals, and borderline personality disorders.

Why Fake Complainers Fail

Most people don't rationally grasp what the social climber is doing, but most people will still instinctively dislike them.
Or, in the best-case scenario, they will instinctively know that they are not the highest quality people.

And that's because social climbers are rarely at the top, but almost always struggling for the middle-of-the-road social slots.

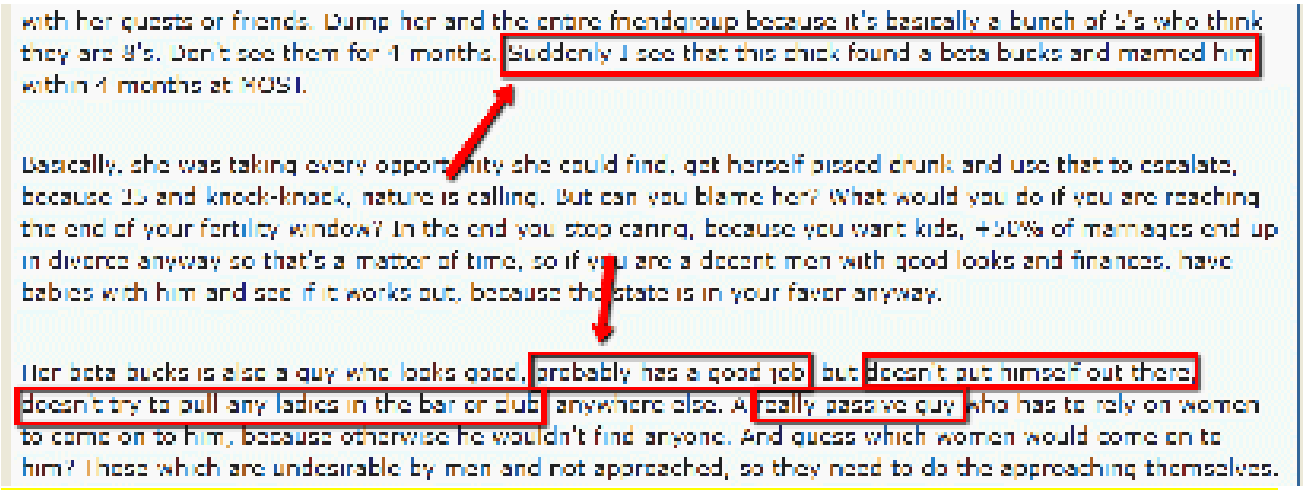
2. Posturing Climbers

Now here is another gem of social climbing tech.

The technique of the posturing guy is to finger at an imaginary straw-man enemy and accentuate his flaw and shortcomings and laugh.
The idea in the social climber's mind is that by criticizing someone people will think that he must be the opposite.

In principle the idea is not completely wrong: studies indeed show that critical reviewers are perceived as more intelligent than positive reviewers. And usually, people criticize those who are very different from them, thus the idea of "by making someone look like shit, people think I'm golden".

However, it doesn't really work like that in practice.
One of the main issues is that social climbers are often too obvious about their hidden agenda. We talked about in Alpha Male Posturing, and here was an example from that article:


with her guests or friends. Dump her and the entire friendgroup because it's basically a bunch of 5's who think they are 8's. Don't see them for 4 months. Suddenly I see that this chick found a beta bucks and married him within 4 months at MOSI.

Basically, she was taking every opportunity she could find, get herself pissed drunk and use that to escalate, because 1b and knock-knock, nature is calling. But can you blame her? What would you do if you are reaching the end of your fertility window? In the end you stop caring, because you want kids, +50% of marriages end up in divorce anyway so that's a matter of time, so if you are a decent man with good looks and finances, have babies with him and see if it works out, because the state is in your favor anyway.

Her beta bucks is also a guy who looks good, probably has a good job, but doesn't put himself out there. Doesn't try to pull any ladies in the bar or club, anywhere else. A really passive guy who has to rely on women to come on to him, because otherwise he wouldn't find anyone. And guess which women would come on to him? Those which are undesirable by men and not approached, so they need to do the approaching themselves.

"I'm saying he's "beta male", so you can infer that I'm alpha. Oh, P.S. I've never even seen the guy I'm ridiculing".

Why Fake Complainers Fail

Some postures are smoother and their game will work with people who are not very socially smart.

But with high-quality men high-quality women social climbing, falls flat.

At the end of the day, this is why posturing guys always fail:

> Nastiness qualifies the sender much more than it qualifies the receiver.
>
> *The Power Move*

3. Sarcastic Climbers

The sarcastic player increases his social status by looking smart… While he makes you look stupid.

You ask a normal, straightforward question and they reply with a joke at your expense. You make a comment about politics and they sigh, "Oh well, I suppose universal suffrage wasn't the best idea after all".

Why Sarcastic Players Fail

Sarcastic players might be the hardest to spot. Indeed, as long as they don't exaggerate, most people consider them

high-quality, smart guys who can quickly think on their feet.

However, although it will win the nod of approval of most people, the creme de la creme of the most socially attuned ones will still see it for what it is: a crack in the wall from which obvious signs of egotism and insecurity are seeping through.
And a stinking sense of superiority.

4. 'Look Down On You' Climbers

I had one such example just yesterday.
Here is how it went:

> **Friendly guy**: *"what are your goals for 2019*
> **Me**: *"bla bla bla"*

Now the social climbers started hovering around the group, and to be warm and inclusive I make space and then pass the question back to him.

Look how it went:

> **Me**: "And what about you, what are your goals for 2019
>
> **Social Climber**: Why, what's so special about 2019

See what his game is?

He is angling to show off that New Year's resolutions are "beneath him". Which might be, I also think most people do New Year's resolutions for all the wrong reasons.
But it's still trying to make *me* look bad and decrease my social status to make *him* look good and gain social status.

Now most people here would have gone on the defensive, which would have given him indeed a chance of winning and scoring social points.
Oh well, not that night and not with me, I suppose:

> **Social Climber**: *Why, what's so special about 2019*
> **Me**: *"It's a new year*

Said slowly, with the intonation of "It's… A new year… You dumbass"
And then proceeded to hold my frame it's normal and "good" to make the new year's goal which thwarted his weak attempt at social status climbing.

This is the tonality, facial expression, and attitude I am talking about:

Why Aggressively Superior Players Fail

Superior players are some of the worst.
Not only do they look aggressive and daft to everyone in earshot, but they also make enemies.

And the golden rule of social power is that you want friends, not enemies.

5. The Absentees' Climbers

Social climbing 'in absentia', derived from lating for 'while absent', is one of the easiest forms of climbing.

With this tactic, the social climber picks on someone who is not physically present to push him down while he pulls

himself up by comparison.

Social climbing in absentia tends to be mostly verbal because, most of the times, you can't turn your back or ignore someone who isn't there, but you need to mention them and talk about them.

Some examples:

Direct Attack Social Climb

- That guy is an idiot
- She's such bi*ch
- He's so incompetent

They sound like simple slanderous comments, but the hidden message is "I am better".

Storytelling

The story can then either show the social climber getting mad recognition he doesn't even care about or, worse, it will show the social climber belittling others and getting away with it.

Example: *"Everybody was lost, so I just took charge and saved the day"*

It can be either value-giving, or it can be value-taking when pushing others down.
Example:

> **Him**: (tells a story of a handyman who recognized him, and he's annoyed and demands that he just does his job and gets out)

The storyteller in the examples draws social value from the power dynamics of "you know me, I don't know you". He frames the handyman as one of the many (lower-value) people who pester him, while he has no time for such people because he's higher value.

Bragging is also common in storytelling, for example:

- *"Such a good game, I scored 3 and everyone was like "dude, you're a beast"*
- *".. Then I whipped it off and she went craaaazy"*

How to Deal With a Social Climber

Now on the other side of the equation: how do you deal with a social climber?

Here are a few great tips:

1. Ignore Them

If they do it not in front of you like in this case, ignore them.

When they engage in social climbing the really socially smart people see that.
Basically, social climbers are taking away their own value: let them do that.

When you recognize their behavior and address it you also dignify their action with your attention. You bring them to your own level.
Why bother.

2. Stop Them In Their Track

When people are using you for their social climbing effort, they are actively undermining you, and you should intervene.

Whatever they say against you, look at them like they said the most stupid thing in the world.

For example:

> **Social Climber**: (looking at someone else in the group, but referring to you) He doesn't know any better
> **You**: Mate… Why are you saying that. The way you speak you make me sound like I am an idiot and I am not cool with that.
> Why are you doing that?
> **Social Climber**: ? What do you mean, I just meant…
> **You**: No man, you said I don't know any better. I don't know why you feel like you need to treat people that way. Maybe it's some inferiority complex or something, but whatever it is, if you cannot talk to me politely, please don't talk to me at all.

Also read: how to throw people under the bus.

The last one is my favorite:

3. Explain Their Game

This is a technique we already spoke about in the Alpha Male Handshake.

It consists of you eloquently and openly explaining to everyone what they are up to.

Basically, you summarize this article explaining what they're doing it (pushing people down), why they're doing it (to gain social status) and why it's nasty (high quality people pull people *up*, not down).

If you execute it well, you will shame the social climber while at the same time shooting your own value through the roof.

4. Confront Them

While most guides, books and websites recommend you confont them, I don't actually like this option.

As I have stated many times already, the social climbers are actively harming themselves and they are jealous of you.
Going straight to them will not make them stop being jealous of you.

The only time I would recommend you confront them is when what they say is actually, really harming you (a minority of cases).

Otherwise, if you are angry, I recommend you use that anger to fuel you even further ahead.
Remember, the best revenge is always success.

Also read:

- Dealing with underminers
- How to spot a frenemy
- How to deal with people who are subtly rude

SUMMARY

We all have within us, and men especially so, the tendency to engage in social climbing.

There is nothing inherently wrong with it, unless it's poorly executed, or when it turns overly nasty.

It's much better instead to climb by virtue of your presence and value.
Because this is the rule of over-climbing:

> You social climb your status to the middle, never to the top.
>
> *The Power Moves*

Also, read:

- Social climbing in leaders: a case study with Obama
- How to gain status, the good way

The Madonna-Whore Complex: What it Means to You

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

The Madonna-Whore complex is the tendency of some men to categorize women as either pious Madonnas, or as "too easy to bed", oversexed whores.

Most men, to varying degrees, inherited the Madonna-whore complex.
And is has a much bigger impact on our lives, dating, and psychology than most people imagine.

In this article, we review where it comes from, what is it, why it exists, and what it means to you.

It's often the same woman that different men, in different environments, categorize as "Madonna" or "wh*re"

Contents

- The Science
  - It Has Something To Do With Conservatism
  - It Has All To Do With Biology
- Are There Madonnas & Whores?
  - Madonna-Whore Continuum
- Men Should Discriminate
  - But Men Should Also Drop The Dichotomy
- Why Women Hate the Madonna Whore Complex
  - What It Means to Women's Dating
- SUMMARY

The Science

Freud said that the Madonna-whore complex arises from the male bonding with his mother, and other theories posit that it's a cold and distant mother that leads to males' Madonna-whore complex.

Neither theories are well-supported.

Instead, evolutionary psychology suggests it's part of evolved psychological preferences to maximize reproductive fitness and paternity.

Unfortunately, that doesn't mean it's adaptive, or good for you.
As for most things, there is probably an 'optimum balance' of effectiveness within which the complex is adapative, but turns *mal*adaptive at the extremes.

Furthermore, we contend here, unless it's well contextual and calibrated, it's also generally not good for your relationships.
As Richard Dawkins suggested, *selfish genes* don't care about how you feel.

It Has *Something* To Do With Conservatism

Many believe the dichotomy is a conservative thing.

And… That is part of it.
More than economical conservatism though it's about traditional values and "male parental investment".

Studies showed that men who invest in women are more jealous.
And, we can speculate, demand and prefer more "pious" women.

However, albeit conservatism may have something to do it with, it's not the full story.

And liberal men are not immune to the dichotomy.
They're just less *visible*, because:

1. Conservatives are more open about it
2. Liberals may hide it more
3. Players don't care because they won't marry her anyway

Furthermore, women who attack men on the basis of the Madonna-whore complex often do so by defining men as "conservatives" or "backward".
And that further pushes liberal men to hide and suppress their Madonna-whore tendencies.

However, when push comes to shove, you can rest assured: **most men, including liberals and womanizers, prefer to marry the least sexually experienced woman**.

Here is an example from Ted, a character in the series *How I Met Your Mother* who is otherwise portrayed as liberal and rather open-minded:

> **Ted**: But even if I meet the girl of my dreams right this second, I'm still one night and nine months away from having a family of my own. And that's assuming the mother of my children is a huge slut.

Ted is falling for the Madonna-whore trap.
Because a woman might want to have sex with him quickly, he labels her as a "huge slut".
A bit harsh, isn't it -and a bit low confidence in his own qualities, too-?

And Ted Mosby is portrayed as a rather liberal guy in that show.

Why is it that even libertines who deny Madonna-whore with *words* still obey it in practice?
It's because of evolutionary psychology.

Let's finally dig into it.

It Has All To Do With Biology

The Madona-whore is not really complex per se.

Being able to judge women on their openness to sex posed great advantages for our male ancestors.
I paraphrase Robert Wright:

> The Madonna-Whore Dichotomy is based on the idea that if women do differ in terms of the likelihood of cheating and sleeping around, then it makes sense for men to divide them into Madonnas and whores.
>
> And it makes sense for men to spread their genes sleeping with whores while they marry and invest in the Madonna who will never cheat on them
>
> *Robert Wright, "The Moral Animal"*

That's why it makes sense for men to gauge how open to sex women really are.
Men who could accurately assess women's "easiness" -or "readiness- to get down to sex, were more able to:

- **Impregnate the whores** -quicker to bed and who required less courtship and investment-
- **Marry the Madonna** -who will not squander their life investment with a bastard child-

We can speculate that those men who capitalized on their Madonna-whore complex maximized their investment per child and left behind more offspring.
Those offspring were also more likely to inherit the Madonna-whore complex.
And that's why we still have it today. It's a complex that yes makes relationships less enjoyable and which yes places a yoke on women, but which was been effective in passing on more genes. And as we already: genes don't care much for feelings.

Basically, the Madonna-whore complex is an inborn system for men that makes evolutionary sense.

Now the big question is: do women really differ on the imaginary continuum from Madonna to whore? And if it (possibly) served us so well during evolution, is it still useful today?

Are There Madonnas & Whores?

If Madonna-whore thinking evolved in men does it mean that women do indeed differ in their tendencies towards Madonna –feminine and nurturing- and whore -serial sexual seekers-?

In our articles on why people cheat and how to find a loyal partner we share countless studies showing that **women differ in their inclinations to cheat** (and the same is true for men of course).

In that sense, dividing women into "Madonna" (ie.: not cheating) and "whores" does make sense for men.

Writes evolutionary psychology researcher David Buss:

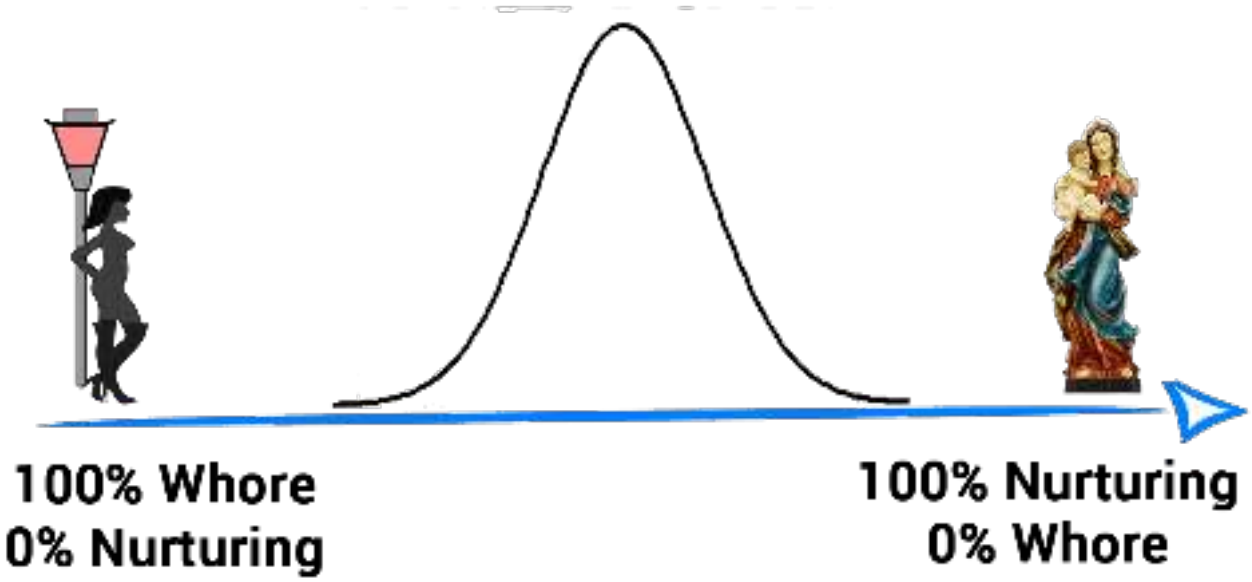
> Loyalty is important to men because it helps them ensure paternity. And **the single best predictor of extramarital sex is premarital sexual promiscuity.**
> People who have many sex partners before marriage tend to be more unfaithful than those who have few sex partners before marriage.

After all, let's not hide behind PC here: it's pretty obvious that there are "safer" women and there are more dangerous women when it comes to cheating, swindling, and running behind their men's backs –*and some women even write books on how to do it*-.

However, that is not to say that "safe" or "not safe" women are necessarily all that different when it comes to their attitudes toward sex and family life.
Indeed, dividing "Madonnas" from "whores" is an oversimplification and a form of black-and-white thinking.

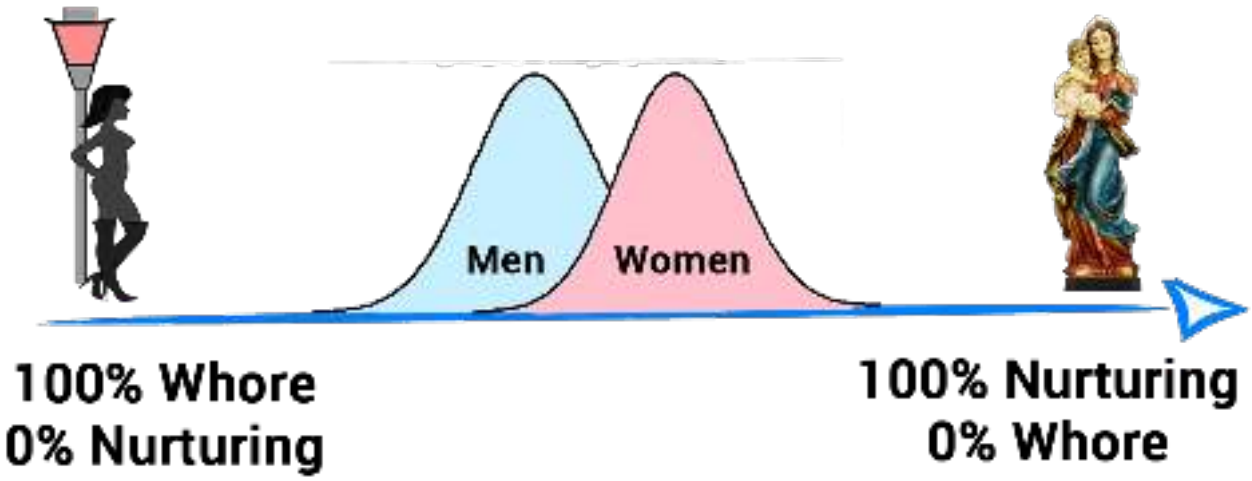
And the reality, as usual, is more varied.
Sure, there are some women who are not interested in sex at all and there are women with little nurturing feelings, but *most* women simply present *both* sides.

Madonna-Whore Continuum



This is a case in which a continuum might be more confusing than value-adding.
Indeed there are virtually no women who crave sex and have zero interest in a great relationship, *plus* zero interest in a family.
And there are virtually no women who are crazy about child-rearing and relationships but have *zero* interest in sex.
In a nutshell: **the Madonna-whore dichotomy as two separate categories without overlap is bogus because most women are a mix of both**.

However, if we had to consider the net result of the two different tendencies, then most women will cluster slightly more on the relationship-nurturing side -at least as compared to men-.
Here is the chart as compared to men, who also rarely present extremes of "100% whore":



Men too can be thought of as "dads/Giuseppe" or "whores/players"

Men *Should* Discriminate

While I exhort readers not to be judgmental, I also encourage them to be discriminating.

Discriminating for everything: friends, business partners, and… Intimate partners.

People differ, and so do women.

There are low-quality women and high-quality women.

And there are many signals that tell you whether a woman is more likely to be faithful or not:

- **Traits of a loyal girlfriend**

> How to Find a Loyal Girlfriend: 99 Traits of Faithfulness

Somebody said that the most important investment you make in life is the person you choose to marry.
And I couldn't agree more.

However, here is the clincher: **the Madonna-whore dichotomy isn't the best tool to discriminate women**.

Keep on reading…

But Men Should *Also* Drop The Dichotomy

While I exhort men to discriminate for long-term partners, I recommend men drop the Madonna-whore in dating.

It's not the best tool to choose a great woman, and it's terrible for dating effectiveness.

Here is why:

Why It's Poor for Discriminating

People are more similar than different, and that's true for women as well.

Sure, certain types of women are more likely to cheat and sleep around.
And some types of women, together with certain specific traits, are more conducive to a safer, more loyal girlfriend.

But the Madonna-whore as a dichotomy rather than a continuum is unhelpful because most women have *both* sexual urges *and* nurturing feelings *at the same time* and the two are *not* mutually exclusive.

That means that if you find a woman with a high sex drive, it says little about her qualities as a mother or partner.
And the other way around is true: a submissive woman who is rather asexual and inexperienced doesn't necessarily make for a great wife, mother, or long-term partner.

Why It's Poor for Dating

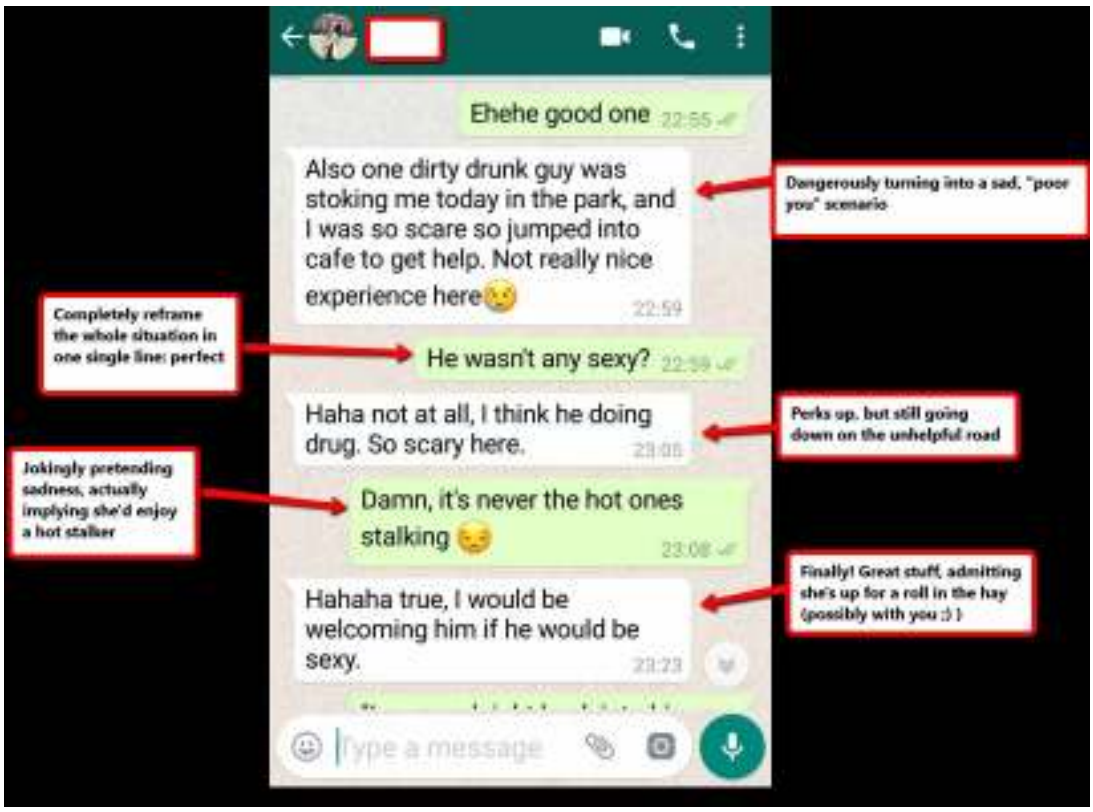
A man who approaches dating with a Madonna-whore mindset will *expect* women to:

- make him wait for sex
- make him chase
- make him invest

And he will get *exactly* that.
You often get what you expect, in life -and especially so in dating-.

Indeed women are wonderful when it comes to adapting, and if he is probing for Madonna qualities, chances are that she *will* be a Madonna for him -ie.: play him-.
The best way to learn how she really is instead is by (pretending) to completely drop the Madonna-whore.

Actually, it's even better to play up her whore side: that's the technique of going the lover way and you get to know her sexual side quite quickly.
Here is an example from my text flirting article:



Men are better served by teasing out her “non-Madonna” side early on

Why It’s Poor for Relationships

When the woman is forced to enact a Madonna role, she must hide her more sexual side and pretend to be someone she’s not.

He will never get to know the real her and she will never get to be her real self.
A real bond and connection are impossible when people wear such thick masks of course, and that’s, in my opinion, a life tragedy.

As an ex-girlfriend of mine told me, one of the reasons she really liked me was:

> I can really be myself with you
>
> *Lucio’s ex GF*

Be the guy who allows her to be herself: drop -or tune *way* down- the Madonna-whore complex.

At the extreme, the dichotomy becomes so strong that men cannot have sex with their wives.
Then, it becomes a pathology.

Why Women Hate the Madonna Whore Complex

Women hate the Madonna whore complex.

And, in part, it’s for good reason: it places a huge yoke on them to act more like Madonnas while they have to hide their more sexual and aggressive side.

Look at this example from Sex And The City:

She is afraid he will think of her as a whore and won’t marry her

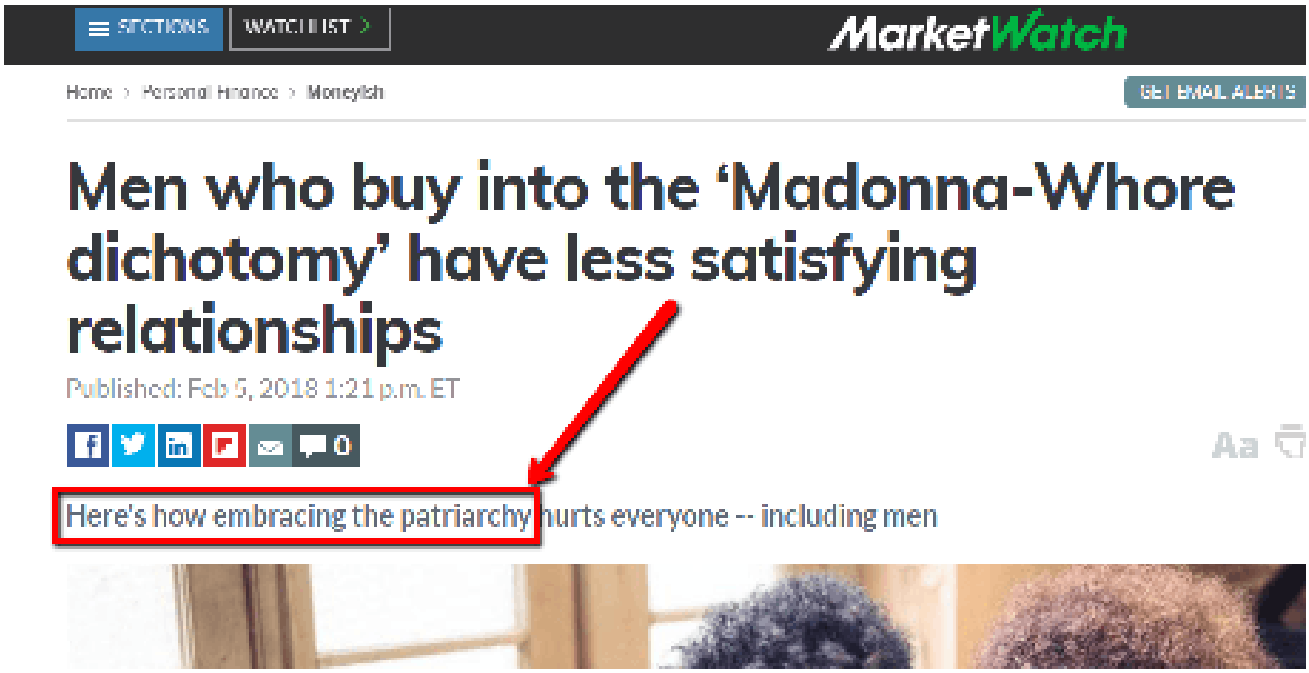
> **Charlotte**: Or maybe I do. I don’t know what I want. But I’m afraid if I don’t, you’ll dump me. And if I do,

> then I'll be the up-the-butt girl. And I don't want to be the up-the-butt girl, because I mean… **Men don't marry the up-the-butt girl. Whoever heard of Mrs. Up-The-Butt?** No, no, no. I can't. I want children and nice bedding, and I just can't handle this right now.

Charlotte would like to try it, but she is afraid that she will think of him as "the whore", and not get serious with her.
In simple words, Charlotte is worried about what the Madonna-whore complex means to her -and she might be right.-

So, yes, it's understandable that women feel caged -and judged– by a nonsense male instinct like the Madonna-whore complex -it's *their* complex, after all, what faults does a poor gal who enjoys sex have?-.

However, some women who take up arms against the complex sometimes fail to understand the actual reasons behind it and use it as a tool to shame men.
Take this example from an article on the first Google page for "Madonna-whore complex", blaming the "patriarchy":



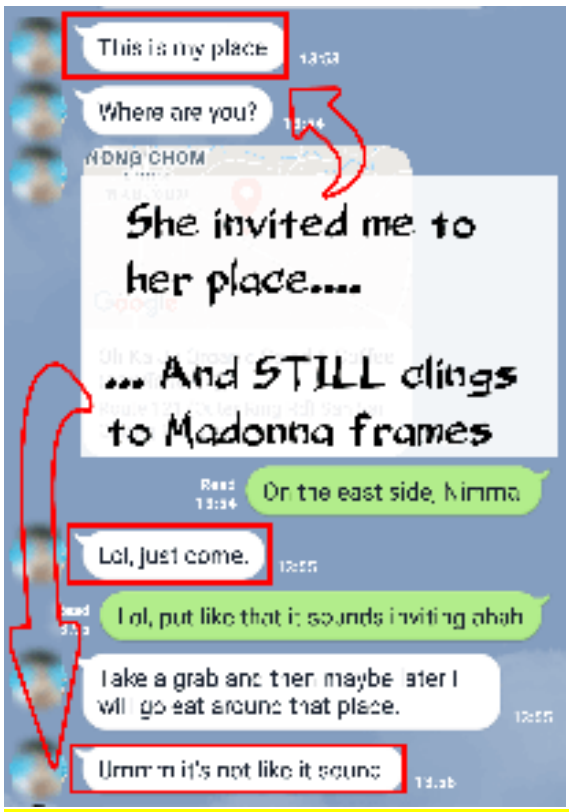
It's true that the relationship suffers, but "patriarchy" has little to do with it
If you allow me, it's a rather typical feminist approach to focus on power and power dynamics while missing out on the true biological reasons for certain behaviors.

... But Still Obey It

In spite of many women resent the male Madonna-whore complex, they still abide by it.

And still seek to come across as Madonas thus, indirectly, confirming the existence of the Madonna-whore dichotomy (and contributing to keeping it alive in men's minds).

See an example here:



In spite she invited over from Tinder, she still hides her sexual intent and portrays a more Madonna-like image

What It Means to Women's Dating

Sadly for women, many men hold a too-strong Madonna-whore dichotomy.

That means that, in some cases, women will be forced to choose between a relationship with a man who sees her as a binary "angelic" or "evil" or no relationship at all.
Women who show their Madonna side and hide their whorish one will do much better with the following types of men:

- Men who invest a lot (believe in old chivalry ideals)
- Chase a lot (believes in fixed roles)
- Are proudly conservative (conservatives wear more masks)
- Are very religious (most religions see sex as sinful)
- Younger (tend to idealize women more)
- Less experienced
- Less educated

Whether or not it's worth it to pursue a relationship with a man big on Madonna-whore, it's up to her.

Please, please, stop putting me in a box

SUMMARY

The Madonna-whore complex is men's tendency to categorize women as either "wife material" -the Madonna- or as "sex material" -the whore-.

Albeit some men deny it, almost everybody acts and thinks based on the dichotomy.

I's generally a good thing to be discerning about women's faithfulness and nurturing skills.

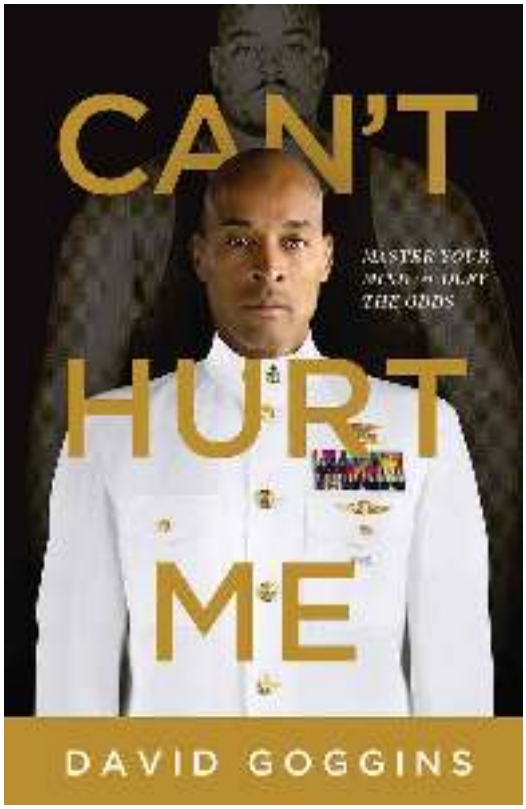
However, the complex is also a limiting belief that oversimplifies reality and makes men less effective at dating and relationships.
Most women have a component of *both* Madonnas and whores.

But since most men will not move beyond the dichotomy, most women would do well dating with the dichotomy in mind.

Can’t Hurt Me: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Can’t Hurt Me (2018) is David Goggins’ autobiography in which he shares his personal life, his mindsets, and his approach to life while rejecting any form of self-development balance.



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Quick Review

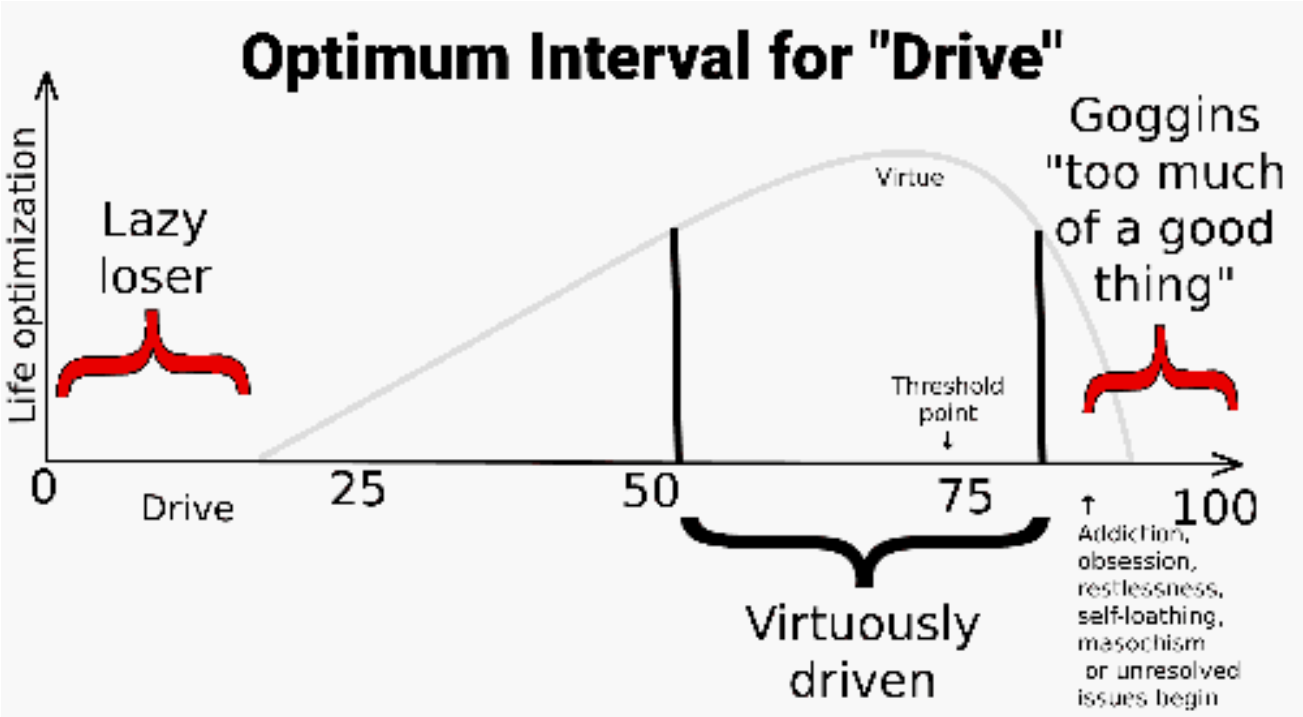
Can't Hurt Me is an extreme real-life example of how a man turned pain and anger into motivation and drive.

We called it here "leveraging your dark side" here in the past, and it can be extremely useful.
It's also most certainly better than wallowing in pain without reacting.

But I largely moved past that stage of being driven by anger and pain.
And I find that it's both more fulfilling and equally effective to be driven by a willingness to build.

So **I don't recommend that most readers be anger or pain driven** if they can instead use more positive 'pull' approaches.
Call it a "pull" approach, being pulled by a drive to build, rather than a "push" approach, as in being pushed by pain and anger.

And **I wouldn't recommend going as extreme as Goggins** because extremes are ineffective (law of optimum balance).
While Extremes feel sexy and "badass", but even if you want to focus on effectiveness only at the detriment of your life, more thought-through strategies that include rest and breaks are often superior over the longer term.



Bullet Summary

- When you're thinking of quitting: **accept the pain and refuse to quit as a possibility**
- Push yourself daily to **do what you don't want to do**
- Week after week **expand the limits of your comfort zone** little by little
- **Use enemies and hardships as fuel for your motivation**

Full Summary

Intro

Life is unfair and the sooner you accept it, the sooner you can prepare for it.

The best way to approach it is with a "*Can't Hurt Me*" mentality.

Goggins says he was the ultimate underdog and the weakest man. And to survive, he had to develop his own mindset.
He wasn't looking for money, fame, or even a pat on the back. He was looking for fulfillment. And the only way to find was within himself -by going to war with himself-.

Unshackle Your Mind

David Goggins says:

> You are in danger of living a life that is so soft and comfortable that you will never realize your true potential.
>
> *David Goggins*

Can't Hurt Me is David Goggins' solution to push your boundaries and help you meet your true potential.

Mission 1: Write Down All Your Difficulties

David Goggins tells the story of his abusive father -a general style of abusive by my own estimations-.

And he exhorts readers to do the same: take stock of all the difficulties and hardships you faced -and face- in life. Including, he says if you had too easy a life so far and never had to push yourself…

Because, as he says, "you are going to flip that shit" (ie.: use your limiting factors to fuel your hunger and success).

I also particularly liked this quote of Goggins as he tells the story of his "solution" to school problems by cheating:

> I started cheating my ass off (…).
>
> It worked. (…)
>
> I thought I solved the problem while I created new ones by taking the path of least resistance
>
> *David Goggins*

Mission 2: Own The Truth of Your Shortcomings

Goggins talks about moving out with his mother to escape his abusive father.
He talks about racial hatred, money problems, and the "*mask of coolness*" he wore as a teenager to hide his insecurities.

The author says that our mind will always follow the path of least resistance and unless you learn to beat your own mind, it will always keep you "safe and stationary in life".

In this chapter, he says you must be brutally honest with yourself. Don't tell yourself you're "plumb" and that it's OK to be overweight if deep down you'd like to be slim.
Tell yourself you're fat.
Any self-improvement starts with brutal honesty.

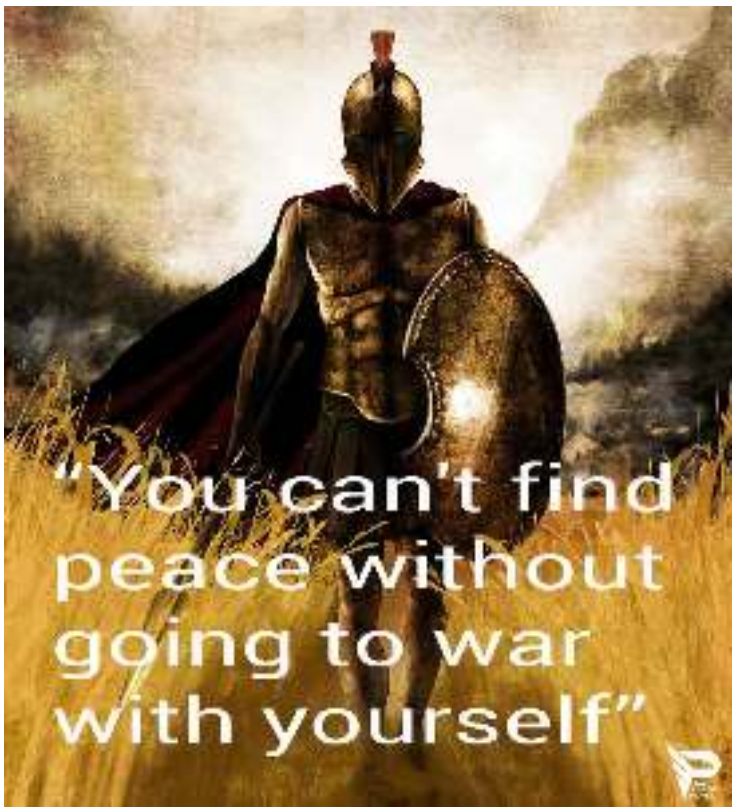
Mission 3: Do All The Things That Make You Uncomfortable

In this chapter, David Goggins talks about pulling out of military training for medical reasons.
Diagnosed with sickle cells, he had a choice of staying in the training or quitting. And, faced with the first obstacle, he used the excuse to quit.

Officially, he didn't quit, but deep down, he knew the truth. And that bothered him and undermined his confidence.
If that would reply today, when he learned to control his mind, he says that "he wouldn't give two f*cks about sickle cells".

This is the chapter where Goggins sees an advertisement for Navy SEALs and realizes that there can be answers to suffering.
That was the first time in a long time that he was alive.

Goggins says you must do something that makes you uncomfortable and something that you don't want to do every day.
Even if that's doing your bed, ironing your clothes, or waking up early and going for a run.
Start small, then slowly build up.
That's how you callous your mind.



-David Goggins

Mission 4: Pick An Opponent & Beat Them With Excellence

Here Goggins talks about BUD and SEAL training.

He says that everything is a mind game. SEAL training is a mind game and people don't realize the gaming part in it until it's too late and they quit.

What's the mind game?
The mind game is that all pain eventually ends. And when you can understand that, it then becomes only a matter of enduring long enough.

Beating them with excellence delivering what they thought was impossible and showing yourself at your best while they are at their worst is what Goggins refers to as "taking their soul".

My Note: Stealing the Schedule
here is where Goggins steals the schedule file for hell week. Not cool in my opinion. And he does it with the other only black guy in the crew, definitely not helping the stereotypes he will later complain about.

Mission 5: Visualize Challenges, Why You're Doing It, What's The Fuel

Goggins says that SEAL training is about showing that you can handle much more than you think you can, and with that comes a change in mentality.

Goggins says that the callous mind can help you overcome the toughest moments.
Remembering what you've been through and how that strengthened your mindset can help you bypass the negative thought loops that kick in when you want to give in.
But when you accept the pain and refuse to give in or give up you engage the sympathetic nervous system -your fight or flight response- to change the hormonal flow. It's similar to when you don't want to run but then you go anyway and you enjoy it, and the author says that you can tap on that switch on call.

The reason why you want to push the hardest when you want to quit the most is to help you callous your mind.

You want to get to a point where not doing the things that you know you should do haunts you.
If you didn't go for a run on a given day, you want in the evening to be bothered by it. If you skip what you were supposed to be doing and it doesn't bother you, you're not there yet.

When you visualize you might want to visualize the final success, but it's important you also include the challenges, the reason why you're doing it, and the darkness which is fueling you.
You need to have those answers to be ready when difficulties will inevitably arise.

David Goggins says that to answer those questions you might want to slow down during intense exercise to think more clearly and then re-accelerate again.

Mission 6: Build Your Cookie Jar of Accomplishments & Use For Motivation

In this chapter, Goggins talks about pain as his reward for finishing the race. The pain was the reminder that he had done it, and he was proving to himself how strong and callous he was becoming.

He says:

> In the most painful time of my life, I saw the most beauty.
>
> *David Goggins*

He introduces his concept of a "cookie jar", which is the place where you put all of your victories and all the times when you show resilience and mental callousness.
When you need motivation, you can open the bookie jar and remind yourself of all the great things you have accomplished.
The cookie jar is not to make yourself feel good, it's to remind yourself what a badass you are so that you can use that energy when you need it.

Mission 7: Remove the Governor From Your Brain With Constant Incremental Growth

Goggins introduces the 40% rule. It means that when most of us feel like we are hitting our limits, we are only at around 40%.

But unless we learn to stay in the pain and push beyond the discomfort, we will always fall very short of our true potential.

Mission 8: Plan Your Life to Make The Most Out of Your Life

This chapter and the next were extremely interesting for a critical look into special operation groups.

Most people have a huge overblown image of special operations such as the Navy SEALs.
Goggins says that SEALs are more normal than most people would guess. They were living rather mainstream, Goggins says, a bit like the "accomplished Harvard" of the military.
Most of them after BUDs didn't want to test themselves by starting from zero. They'd rather hit the gym to get big instead of pushing themselves to the limit.

The author also implies some racism in the forces, reflecting that people are just people in whichever organization they are -he says he met Michael Jordan in his prime and it was a huge revelation when he realized he was just another human being-.

David Goggins was not interested in being the "aristocracy of the military". Settling down comfortably was not what he was looking for and that's why he went into ultra-marathons.
His stories are quite crazy here and the author encourages the readers to squeeze as much as possible from their

day.
A 40h workweek is a 40% effort he says, and that's mediocrity.

> The best way to overcome anything in life is to become a master of what you're afraid of.
> Become a master of your insecurities.
>
> *David Goggins*

Mission 9: Sustain Greatness by Staying in Constant Pursuit

Goggins here shows the mindset of the underdog in the military. When his feedback said he could have been more gregarious he reflects that indeed he was not "one of the boys".
"Of course, I wasn't", he says, "I came from nothing".

He thought that because he made it anyway, he was part of the group. But he realized he was part of the *teams*, not the *brotherhood*.

But Goggins uses the evaluation to swing in the opposite direction; if he was uncommon also among the uncommon, "so the f*ck be it".

Lucio's Note:
to me, this shows the strength and the drive that comes from the undergo, "not belonging" mindset.

Goggins goes to Ranger School here and compares it with the SEALs, which makes it a good reading for anyone interested in special operations in the US.

Finally, he talks about the overachiever mindset. He says that the over-achievers focus on what they *didn't* win, what they *didn't* manage, and what they missed. Even when they won hugely in their careers.

> It's easy to stand out among everyday people and be a big fish in a small pond. It's much more difficult when you're a wolf, surrounded by wolves.
>
> Torch the complacency you feel gathering around you, continue to put obstacles in front of yourself because that's where you will find the friction that will help you grow even stronger.
>
> Before you know it, you will stand alone.
>
> #Can'tHurtMe #UncommonAmongstUncommon
>
> *David Goggins*

Mission 10: Write All Failures, Learn From Them & Go At It Again

This chapter describes Goggins' quest to beat the pull-up world record, including the description of his failures. And it's to failures that this chapter is dedicated.

In the last chapter, Goggins talks about naysayers and jealousy from friends and family –frenemies-.
Your successes are dangerous to them. Only if they are good, they will use it as motivation to move forward.
And he wants to exceed even God's expectations of what he thought Goggins was capable of.

David Goggins & God

Finally, Goggins talks about his view of life, including spirituality. He believes in a God who knows everything and holds everyone accountable.

His biggest fear was not living to his full potential when he will meet his creator.

Real-Life Applications

Here are a few ideas:

- **Take Pride in Suffering**

Goggins says that motivation is cr@p. I mostly agree with it. Much better instead is building your whole ego and self-esteem around proven strategies that help you move forward.
Taking pride in your ability to suffer and endure is one such great technique.
Also read: the antifragile ego.

- **Triple Down On Your Weaknesses**

Now, this is a counter-intuitive recommendation as most authors these days recommend people to focus on your strength.
And that's the best approach from a point of view of maximizing your effort and output. But if you want to callous your mind and strengthen your resolve, then focusing on weaknesses is best.

- **The Mind Game of Endurance: All Pain Ends**

David Goggins says that people who quit the BUD training for SEALs fell for the illusion that pain would never stop.
But it does. It always does. It's difficult to realize it though during the peak of pain. And that's the mind game of endurance: taking yourself out of the pain experience in itself until you can outlast it.

- **Leaders Shouldn't Show Weakness**

David Goggins says that leaders can't show weakness.
I don't think that's always true, but it's *often* true. And it's a good reminder after the concept of "vulnerability" has become so popular and venerated with the work of Brene Brown (*Daring Greatly* & *The Gifts of Imperfection*).
Also read: vulnerability is not (always) power.

- **Admit Your Fears & Insecurities to Get Stronger**

We go back to the positive elements of vulnerability here.
Admitting your fears and weaknesses allows you to gain more strength and confidence.

- **Leverage Pain For Your Goals**

This is something I actually used myself. Both in my life and to launch The Power Moves.
See "leveraging pain".

Criticism

I enjoyed reading *Can't Hurt Me*.

And I used a similar strategy to motivate myself (see the video above).

But there are also many points I not only disagree with but that I believe are counterproductive for anyone approaching self-development.

In brief, most of our criticism comes down to the fact that *Can't Hurt Me* badly fails the law of optimum balance:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

1. It's Weak & Needy to Need Grueling Training For Self-Esteem

I'll make a bold, counterintuitive claim: this is not a strong mind, it's a weak mind.

Some people *need* to exercise or they can't feel good about themselves.
They'd lose self-esteem and fall apart without training.

A strong mind is more resilient.

Compulsive Exercise Isn't Power

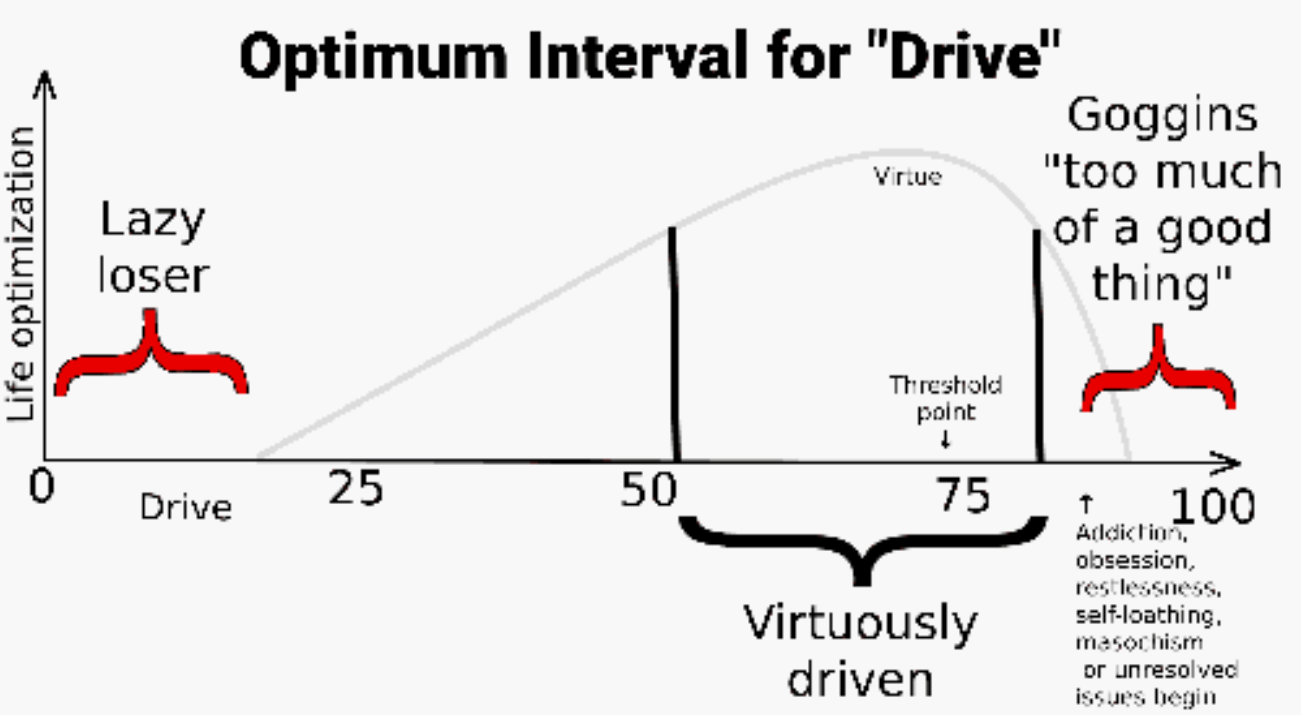
Research back this up with a link to narcissism.
Narcissists exercise more, but have also higher rates of *compulsive* exercise, bulimia, and disordered eating thoughts and behaviors (Lichtenstein et al., 2017; Gordon & Dombeck, 2010; Dakanalis et al., 2015).

2. Extremes Are Unhealthy & Ineffective

David Goggins' approach to life may not be healthy.

The law of balance states that many positive traits are only good within certain levels.
After a certain point, there is a "threshold effect" above which "too much of a good thing becomes bad".

David Goggins, in my opinion, isn't necessarily an example of being driven but enters into obsession and, potentially, self-loathing.
See this chart:



Consider the possibility that Goggins might have not truly worked out his pain and abuse.
He might not be *driven* by pain and abuse, but **David Goggins might be *at the mercy* of his dark side**.

If you're in a similar position, I invite you to consider resolving your past issues before you emulate him.

Motivation On Top of Deep-Seated Issues

Goggins reminded of Liver King, another 'extreme guy' when he said:

> **Liver King**: When I talk about the 85% of the population that suffers from self-esteem issues, that's me. This is why I work myself to death in the gym, this is why I do 12 to 15 blood-burning workouts a week. Just to feel

> like I'm OK

There you are: thrashing his own body around "just to feel like he's OK".

Marrying The (Wrong?) Girl Just To Make A Point

Speaking of the thin line between being motivated or at the mercy of others, Goggins asks:

> I married the daughter of the man who called me a nigger, what does that say about me?

Well, it can say that you "showed" it to him and had your revenge.
Or… It can say that you let that person decide for you who to marry.

Since Goggins never spends a second talking about his wife and relationship, it may be a fair assumption that it's the latter and that he's not thrilled about his choice.

3. Disempowering Talking Down to Fans

Some people can gain from (Goggins') motivation.

If that's you: great.

I personally don't because I'm intrinsically motivated.

And **listening to someone constantly yell that you need to be more is disempowering** because the implied frame is that "you're not being enough".

Empowered men replied with a "fuck y*u" to that.

And, just like most any other "guru" out there, it's disempowering because they take a teacher's "I know better" frame. And assume that you don't know enough about how to live your life.
In Goggins' case, it assumes you're being too lazy, or that you need their yelling to make the most out of your life.

It's a mental covert power move that empowered individuals tend to reject.

Also, read more on teachers' frames:

- **Growth mindset power dynamics**
- Teacher's frame

4. Can You Immunize Emotional Pain With Physical Pain?

David Goggins says he "prepares" for that "call that his mother is dead":

> **David Goggins:** I'm training for the time when I get that two o'clock in the morning call that my mom is dead. Or something happens tragic in life I don't fall apart

But I'm afraid there is no amount of running that'll let you run away from that emotional pain in life.
You just gotta accept it, and go through it.

Running Away From Pain?

I gotta wonder:

Is David Goggins running for something, or is David Goggins running away from his pain?

Because Goggins' biggest challenge may be NOT to run more or longer, but to sit down and process his pain

instead.
And I don't know you, but it may be worth considering it may be the same for you.

Courage is having fear and doing it anyway, not removing fear

You can also see that much in the book if you read between the lines.

At a certain point, Goggins admits that he was afraid of going through BUDs again.
And it's normal. No matter how often you do something painful, you gotta accept there is no way to "callousize your mind". There will always be some fear and reticence in doing it again.

Courage is in pushing through that fear, not removing it.

And confidence is in knowing that, if push comes to shove, you can do it again if you must.
Not in doing it over and over again and still having to face the fact that you're still afraid.

5. You May Gain With More Positive Motivation (Pull Approach)

Goggins comes from a dark place and his coping mechanism is more darkness.

Similar to what Robert Greene says in *The Laws of Human Nature* I believe we need to learn and embrace our dark side. I believe it's necessary in the world (to be good you must first be bad) and helpful in life.

But I also think that when darkness and anger are your only drivers, then you are not using darkness but you are *being used* by them.

And there are other options in life, even for people with Goggins' background. Tony Robbins had similar abusive experiences as a child but turned super successful with a much more positive view of life. If forced to choose, I'd recommend the Robbins way.

Also, see Darryl Strawberry talk about this:

> Pain can lead you into greatness. But then, what comes after that? You're still in pain..

6. Antagonizing Yourself Reduces Your Self-Esteem

Even when talking about his own mind, David Goggins makes it into an enemy.

He says that "our mind has a tactical advantage" and he had to "go to war with himself".

But it's unhealthy to think of your inner self as an enemy undermining you.
You can't win if you're at war with yourself.

Antagonizing life as an enemy is... Weak &

In the first opening statement, David Goggins says that life is unfair and it will "f*ck you up". And the sooner you accept it, the sooner you can start preparing for it.

I disagree with that attitude, it's inherently negative and pessimistic.

7. The Bellicose Approach Makes You More Enemies Than You Need

Many other SEALs don't like David Goggins.

Part of it is jealousy, I'm sure.
Part of it might even be racism.
And part of it is because Goggins believed none of that BS nationalistic, militarist, and leadership manipulation.

But part of it is also Goggins' approach.

Goggins talks about BUD instructors as his enemies and "taking their souls".

I believe that mindset can be helpful but, as Goggins himself will admit, can also put you on a collision path with the people around you. Exactly what happened to Goggins when he antagonized his instructor.
To be effective in life, it's much better to have a good relationship with your boss.

And that, as Goggins realizes with good self-awareness, also cost him dearly at times.

In another instance, Goggins was sitting at a doctor's office talking about his diagnosis.
Goggins says he didn't want to show fear to avoid "showing his cards". I know that feeling, and I've been through it as well. But it's not a healthy approach: the doctor is supposed to help, you can only lose by thinking of him as an enemy.
The best you can do for yourself is to think of your doctor's appointments as opportunities to get healthier and to do your best to get the best support.

Edit:
Or just look at this video: **Goggins rages at the haters without realizing he is *making* his own haters.**

> **Goggins**: (ranting at the "haters") bitch you don't fucking know me (…) maybe it's a fat motherf*cker at home, lazy, with no distance or dedication. Maybe you're jealous. Who knows. But I'll guarantee you this: I'll be back better than ever

Frankly, it's an awesome video.
I truly like it, and it's a valid response and attitude toward haters.

On the other hand, as for everything, there are pros and cons.

That attitude is far more likely to grow your haters -and give them even more control over your life-.

And then, there's another issue with that approach:

8. Building Your Ego Around Strength Is Fragile

Listen to the video above.

Goggins says: I will be back better than ever.

The problem with that is that it's a lie.
It's simply a fact of life, and pretty much unavoidable that you cannot always come back better.
If you trash your body like Goggins you're almost bound to get injuries. Some of them will be serious.
And even if you avoid injuries, you'll get older and weaker. Even less smart… And you'll eventually die.

And that's OK… As long as you don't have a fragile ego built around "always being better and stronger and "more".

Because, if you do, you'll be ill-equipped with coping with any setback.

9. Masochism Covered As Drive

At a certain point, as Goggins describes in detail all his body punishments and his reveling in pain, I had to wonder if it wasn't just too much.

I see pain as a necessity to achieve something bigger, but at times it felt that it was a pain for pain's sake.
Sure, building a callous mind, but… I'd rather go through pain for as many benefits as possible, not just for the sake of pain.

10. Goggin's Cheating: An Ethical Grey Area

David Goggins earned my respect when he said that by cheating in school he was actually hurting himself.

But he lost it later on when he rather proudly tells the story of him and his other buddy stealing the schedule of hell week from the instructors.

A little later in the 6th chapter, he shares the story of two friends of his who cheated by impersonating each other. For a man who presents himself as an example to follow, that wasn't cool in my opinion.

PROS

- **Using pain for fuel**

"*Can't Hurt Me*" is one of the best books on turning pain into fire and fuel to forge ahead.

- **Example and showing the way to operate at the limit of human suffering**

Also one of the best books for operating at the limits of our capabilities and, ultimately, a great book to understand the mindset and psychology of the people who never stop and always ache for more.
In that sense, it's a great read back-to-back with *Relentless*.

Goggins is bigger -and smarter- than a SEAL

Some former SEALs never leave the military and make their former life their new ego and identity.

Those guys didn't enter the military, the *military entered their minds*.

Some others are stuck selling the SEAL brand and the war experience to push *books and courses on leadership*.

Goggins instead entered the SEAL as a job, did it, learned, and then moved on.
He didn't fall for the traps of nationalism, projecting his ego into the group, or developing his pride around "being part of special ops".

Finally, and most importantly, contrary to guys like Jocko Willink, Goggins never feel for the military manipulation and "great leader manipulation" -be that leader a man, or the image of a flag-.

I respect and appreciate that.

Review

Can't Hurt Me is a captivating and entertaining book on pushing one's limits.

However, at times it becomes "unhealthy pushing".

To make a parallel:

Imagine you own a car you love, and you land it to a friend.
He starts driving and keeps it stuck in 1st gear, full RPMs. Knowing that's not good for the engine, how would you react?
You'd tell him to knock it off because you care about your car and don't want to take it to the mechanics.
The same goes for yourself and your body: you also want to take care of your body and not push yourself to the hospital type of "limit" because that's stupid.

So sometimes I had to wonder where "drive" ends and "mental issues" may begin, as the line seems to blur at times in *Can't Hurt Me*.
The book may as well be titled "*Can't Hurt Me*, Cause I'm Hurting Myself to Death Already".

That is the reason why I warn the readers that this is a path that I wouldn't necessarily recommend to most people -

and not to the ones I care the most about-.
There is a lot of darkness and demons. And yes, darkness is an important fuel to achieve big in life, but it should *not* take over your life.
Also, you don't want to take over that combative mindset of "you against the world", since it's often not the most effective stance to influence people and get things done.
Use 20% darkness to give you a boost and for the rest be motivated by beauty.

Keep that in mind and enjoy *Can't Hurt Me* by David Goggins.

Disempowering "You're A Pansy" Frame

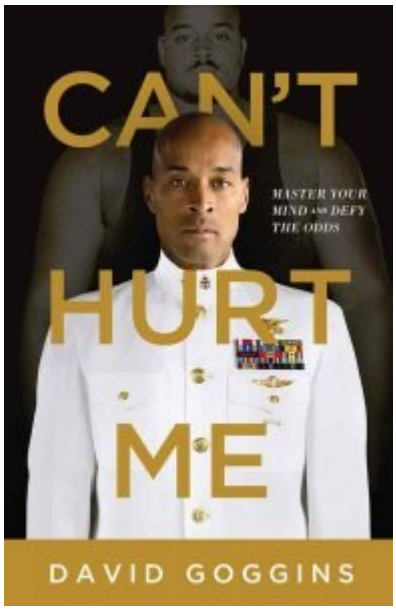
Finally, it's very disempowering to accept as "motivation" someone yelling on a camera how supposedly weak you are for not doing what he chose to do.

In all honesty, I believe that if you accept or enjoy that frame, you'll never be an empowered man.

Alpha males don't accept people telling them how supposedly beta they are.
And certainly do not elect them as teachers.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon.

Can't Hurt Me: Lucio's Take



If you think you're pushing your limits, Goggins will show that you have probably so much more to go.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/cant-hurt-me-david-goggins/

Author: David Goggins

Editor's Rating:
2.5

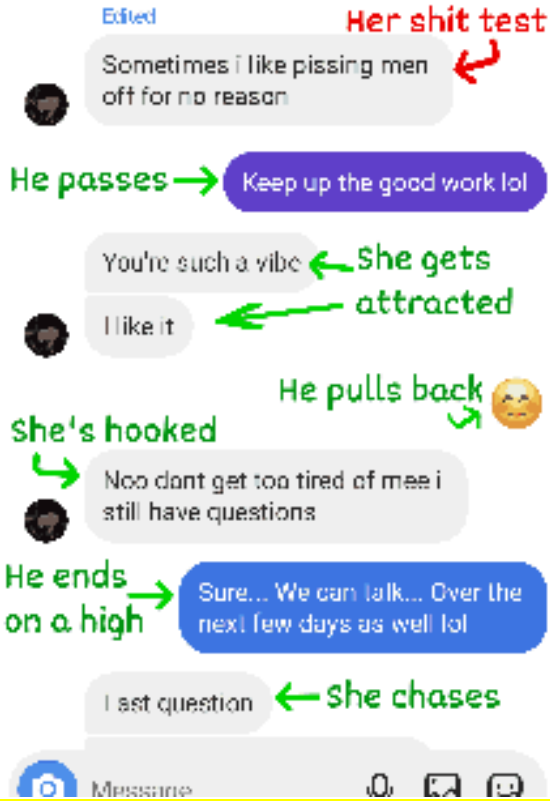
Shit Tests Guide: What They Are, & 8 Ways To Pass Shit Tests

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

A shit-test is a social challenge to test and assess the target's confidence, intentions, and skills.

Shit-tests most often refer to dating and women's shit testing men. In this case, **a shit test is a tool for the chooser to evaluate the pursuer**.

By the end of this article, you will know all about shit tests.
Including how to "pass" them. Just like this:



This example shows the perfect mindset to pass shit tests. Keep reading…

Contents

- What's A Shit Test
- Why Do Women Test Men
- What Do Women Test For
- Are Shit Tests Good for You?
  - Shit Test Power Dynamics
- Dealing With Shit-Tests
  - 1. Ignore It
  - 2. Own Who You Are
  - 3. Shame Her
  - 4. Own Her Accusation
  - 5. Put Your Foot Down
  - 6. Turn It Back On Her
  - 7. Agree/Disagree & Amplify
  - 8. Focus On Leading The Game, Not Reacting to Her Tests

- 9. Turn The Power Tables: Test Her!
- Don't Confuse Shit Tests For Red Flags
  - How to Solve Shit Tests For Good

What's A Shit Test

"Shit tests" are power moves and one-ups to challenge, test and assess others.

Although shit tests are a foundational element of social power dynamics, they are most often associated with dating. The term comes from the early pick-up artists (see: *The Game* & *Mystery Method*).

In dating **women use shit-test to assess a man's mate value and social skills and decide whether he's good enough for her**, or not.
To gain social status, men's respect, and women's attraction, you must "pass" these tests.

For this article we'll focus on women's shit-tests within dating contexts.

And here is one example of shit-testing in dating:

> **Her**: What's your name?
> **Him**: They call me Chip
> **Her**: Ohh, You can't get them to stop? <— Frames him as low status, clueless, and powerless
> **Him**: Ahaha that was funny

"You can't get them to stop" is a shit test because it frames him as low-status and powerless in his peer group.

It's also a one-up: she disrespects him and, unless he responds well, she socially dominates him.
When he laughs, he:

- **Agrees** to that disempowering frame
- **Let her get away** with the power move
- ***Rewards*** her for disrespecting him.

Women don't like lower-power men (hypergamy).
So, because of his lack of power awareness and skills, he's out.

Had he handled that well, he could have seduced her, instead.

Why Do Women Test Men

The reason is simple.

Women shit-test you because you are the offer, and they are the choosers.

Foundational dating dynamics dictate that in most dating situations, men start at a lower value than women (exceptions always apply, of course).

When you are the chooser, you shop around and test the merchandise.
It's basic self-preservation instincts: you want the best available for your budget -the budget being her sexual market value-.

That's the main reason.

But women also test men to "see what they can get away with" within relationships.

And some relish their power over men, including with public attacks:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Her**: (publicly rude to him)

What Do Women Test For

There are different theories on what women test men for.

For example:

- Women test for **confidence**, and proof they have **options** and can provide **security** (Rollo Tomassi, author of *The Rational Male*)
- Women test within the genders' arms race with men over-selling themselves, and women **ensuring those men are not posturers** (Chase Amante, author of *How to Make Girls Chase*)
- Women test for **strength** (W. Anton, author of *The Manual*)
- Women test to **find men who are better than they are** (Leil Lowndes, author of *Undercover Sex Signal*)

And scientists haven't said much yet as they still need to catch up :).

But the authors above are all right.
The specific reason can also change depending on circumstance, character, life phases, and interaction phases.

For example, upon first meeting, she wants to ensure you're not a weirdo.
Later on, she wants to test if you're as high-value as you portray yourself to be.
And a little later she wants to test if you could make for a good provider or a lover.
If she's looking for a relationship, she might also want to make sure you're not a player.

Avoid that shit test

Are Shit Tests Good for You?

There is some misconception around shit tests.

One misconception is whether shit tests are good or bad for you.

Dating coach Todd Valentine for example says they're good:

> **Todd**: (a shit test) it's a compliment and it's an opportunity

And, in many ways, he's right.
Shit tests mean that "you're still in the game".
However, whether they're bad or good depends on what level you're at.

To understand this point, let's go back to the budget analogy.

When something is "too cheap for her", ie.: a low-quality man, she won't be interested and won't even test it.

It's the merchandise -and men- around her budget and value that catches her attention and calls for some testing.
That tells us this:

It's **the men who fluctuate just around her value who get the most shit-tests**.

But what happens if she expected Fiats and instead a Ferrari is suddenly available?
Ie.: what happens if she gets a shot with a high-value man?
Then testing doesn't even enter the picture because she'll be busier trying to please him

Just imagine the following scene: Brad Pitt goes out of a movie premiere and tells one of the screaming gals that she can go with him.
Can you even imagine her shit-testing him on the way to his suite?

Exactly…

So it's not true that high-value women test more than low-value ones.
Women test depending on how their value relates to *yours* (and lots of PUA over-gaming makes women more dubious).

Shit Test Power Dynamics

When she is testing you, she is putting up hoops for you to jump through.

And people who put up hoops are the ones with power in an interaction.

From a perspective of power dynamics, **shit-tests say she feels more powerful than you**.
And when you're in a mindset of "passing" shit tests, you are confirming that indeed she has more power, and she has higher sexual market value.

This is why this article, and in a way, this all website, is all about how *not* to jump at all.

Dealing With Shit-Tests

Throw that shit test back!
In the beginning, I wrote "passing shit tests" as the title of this section for brevity and for SEO reasons.

But I just had to scrap it.

The idea of "passing" shit tests is a bad mindset to begin with.
One because it reinforces the idea that she is putting the hoops -and hence she is in the power position-.
And two because it conjures a "you vs me" frame, and we'll see later why this is often not the most effective way of seducing.

So let's get into it:

1. Ignore It

This is the all-season workhorse.

Whenever you can't think of anything good or whenever you don't feel it's worth your attention and effort, ignore it.

Bad joke, underhanded comment, frenemy trying to devalue you… Are women shit-testing you?
Pretend you didn't hear it, act as if it didn't register and you will show tremendous superiority.

Example:

> **Her**: *you said that? OMG, are you that kind of guy?*
> (pretending she didn't say anything, keeps going with the story)
> **Him**: yeah, and you won't believe what she replied, listen to this..

2. Own Who You Are

Women sometimes test men to check their roles.

Such as, either:

- Friends
- Providers / Boyfriends or
- Lovers

Men often fail tests because they have no idea what they mean.
And when they do, they still don't stick with one but try to fit the bill of what *she* wants. But since most of the time, they are also not sure what she wants, they hem and haw and, finally, end up looking weak and insecure.

Solution?

If you're hell-bent on getting her, pick what you believe she most likely wants and then commit to it.
Or, even better, **pick your role and own it.** Then, pick the type of woman you like, and then *you* shit-test women for what you want while being fully yourself.

Here is an example for each "role".
Lover:

> **Her**: I bet you say that to every woman
> **Him**: No. Only to women I find attractive
>
> *Lover Type*

"Reformed" lover:

> **Her**: I bet you say that to every woman
> **Him**: I used to.
> I used to be very active in dating -and with great results-.
> It was a great time, but now I'm looking for something different. Don't get me wrong, sex is still important, but she must great as well. What are you looking for.
>
> *Reformed Lover*

Provider / looking for more than casual sex:

> **Her**: I bet you say that to every woman

> **Him**: Why are you saying that
> **Her**: You look like a guy who would hit on a lot of women
> **Him**: *(looks at her, serious and slightly disappointed)* That's a bit offensive
>
> *Provider*

Men who know where they stand and are unapologetic about it look strong and confident.
Often, they turn the shit test right back at her without even trying, just by being themselves.
They end up socially dominating her, which is supremely attractive to women and is a preview of the bedroom physical domination that might come later.

3. Shame Her

I like this option.

Instead of playing the game, you shame her for playing games.

It's a powerful technique to stamp out games and combativeness from relationships but also works in earlier interactions.
Basically, you want to shame her for playing a "me VS you game" and make her follow your lead into a more collaborative "us in this together" form of seduction.

Look at Juan Antonio playing a similar game in Vicky Cristina Barcelona:

> **Him**: (after inviting them to travel with him, including having sex together) What offended you about the offer? Surely not that I find you both beautiful and desirable.
> (…)
> **Her**: Well, I can't guarantee the lovemaking because I happen to be very moody
> **Him**: Let's not negotiate like a contract. **I came over here with no subterfuge and presented my best offer** (= I'm being straightforward and honest, not playing any games, can you do the same?). Now I hope you will discuss it and give me the pleasure to take you with me to Oviedo.

That's the power of confidence coming from genuine and (positive) vulnerability: the man who doesn't need to hide and owns who he is.

Also, see this article on "enlightened collaboration":

3.1. Use "Collaborative Shaming"

Collaborative shaming is pure TPM's tech.

You can use it to turn a confrontational "me VS you" frame into a more collaborative one -with you as the leader, of course-.

See here one real-life example from the forum:

- **"I'm not that easy" shit test**

4. Own Her Accusation

Own her shit test, but *reframe* it.

Look at this example:

> **Her**: You are just looking for sex
> **Him**: I wouldn't call it "just". Sex is one of the pleasures of life and a strong sexual chemistry is very important

> to me

Now she is forced to agree (and comply with you) or to disagree and break rapport.
In either case, it's *you* who is testing her.

And own your shortcomings, too –example here-.

5. Put Your Foot Down

Women want confident, high-status men.

So they may use a power move to test him.

And **high-status men don't take disrespect**.

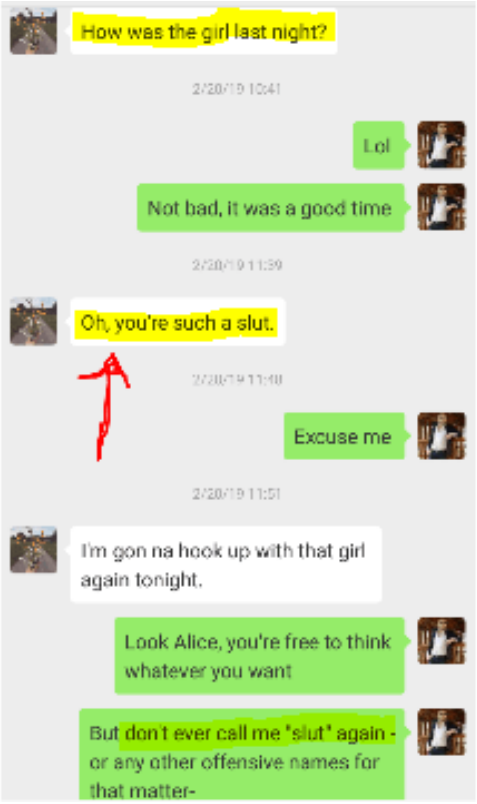
However, many men miss it because the disrespect can be very small.
In that case, it's also a test of his social skills and power awareness.

For example:

> **Me**: I like your style, you're very unique <— Compliment, it's a 'give'
>
> **Her**: Everyone is unique <— This is a micro-aggression (ie.: slightly direspectful brush-off).
> ⚠ If I agree, she dictates frame, I submit, and attraction decreases
>
> **Me**: I don't think so. Many people all look and think the same <— Sticks to his guns
>
> **Her**: True <— Agrees/submits ⍰⍰

See how that changed everything after.

And you must draw your line in the sand for bigger disrespect:



Always draw a big line in the sand with any personal disrespect
Never, ever accept disrespect.
You shouldn't even think "shit test", you should think "this is inadmissible".

6. Turn It Back On Her

Imagine this dialogue:

> **Her**: (haughty look, turning away) You're so into yourself <— ⍰ ⍰ 'You trying to be the prize'
>
> **Him**: Me? I'm so into myself? (turns to her, gets closer, louder but smiling) <— Counter-attack, dominance with warmth
>
> Look at you, with the slim fit biker jacket, (reaches out to her scarf) the Italian scarf, the coiffed hair (touches her hair)
> Yeah, nice try (pats her head) <— Babying power move ⍰⍰
>
> **Her**: (lowers her gaze, smiles) <— Pleased by the compliments… And that he 'won'

This an exchange I had on a date with an attractive woman, and a little later we went back to my place.
I cannot re-run the interaction to split-test it, but I'm confident this was the turning point on the way to bed.

7. Agree/Disagree & Amplify

This is a popular frame control technique in male self-development circles.

It's not my favorite but it can work for higher energy guys.

See "Power University" for more.

8. Focus On *Leading* The Game, Not *Reacting* to Her Tests

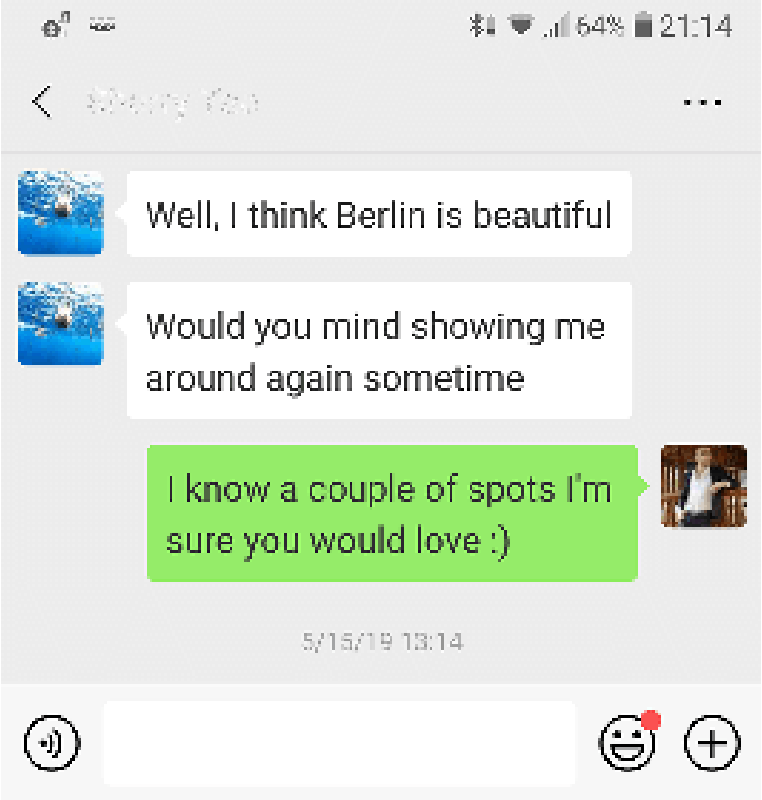
Here's the clincher:

The mindset of passing shit tests is inherently lower value.

Instead, **the ultimate stage of mastery and un-neediness rises above the game**.

At this stage, you see the games, but you're confident that your value will shine through, and slightly disappointed by game players. She's losing *you*, not the other way around.

The man who focuses on leading moves forward instead.
Look at this example:



I let her have the win
The man with the "pass the shit mindset" may go for a smartass reply such as:

- *Get in the queue and hopefully you'll get lucky*
- *I need to check my schedule*
- *Only if you buy the drinks*

But I don't need that.
Also, notice that "a couple of spots I'm sure you would love" is a type of text-flirting and a veiled hint at sex (his place) and sexual anatomy (G-spot).

9. Turn The Power Tables: Test Her!

The highest mate value men are not passing tests, but *fielding* tests.
They're overly worried about signaling value, because they expect women to also show off for them.

The better you become, the more *selective* you become.
And then it's *you* who tests others -and women-.

See some examples:

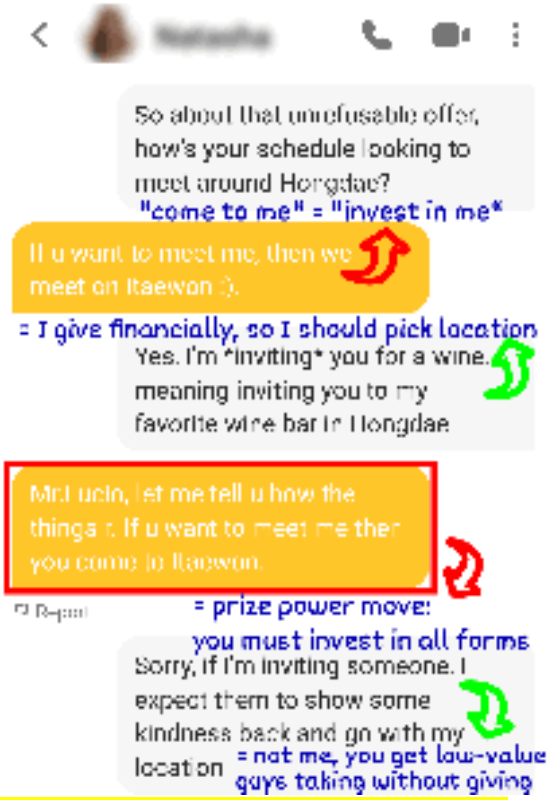
- **Shit-test for feminists**, and screen out the most bitter ones
- Ask women this crazy question (and judge them by their reply. Alumni only)
- If you pick up the tab, tell her to leave a tip (see if she does, and how much)
- Tell her to get something addressing her as “baby” (alumni only)

Don’t Confuse Shit Tests For Red Flags

Finally, burn this into your mind:

Some shit tests are red flags about her character.
When that’s the case, you don’t need to “pass” the shit test, you need to “pass up” on the b*tch.

See an example here:



This is not a shit test, this is shit behavior!
You can give her a couple of chances to change tack.
But, usually, these are low-quality women who make for bad dating and terrible partners. And you can do better.

How to Solve Shit Tests For Good

Shit tests aren’t about clever replies. That’s lower-level gaming.
They’re about power, frame, and who is evaluating whom.

Once you stop thinking in terms of “passing” tests and start focusing on leading the interaction forward, the dynamic changes completely.

That shift requires frame awareness, power dynamics literacy, and a unified seduction strategy.

That’s what **Seduction University** is designed to teach.

Join Seduction University

Lean In Review: Analyzing Power, Feminism & Reality

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

In *Lean In* (2013) author Sheryl Sandberg shares her story and her views on gender issues and workplace inequalities, while also providing guidance and career advice for women.

TPM Strategic Note: The Feminist Power Play
This is an important text for serious students of inter-gender power dynamics. While Sandberg identifies real-world friction points, the work is biased toward a social re-engineering agenda that fails to account for biology, evolutionary psychology, and the hypergamic drivers of human attraction. By treating evolved traits as as if they were 'cultural bugs' the author's solution would only create different issues like relationship instability and a loss of sexual attraction.

Contents

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Core Claims

- Women are naturally less confident and ambitious and should strive for more
- Society and men should accept that it's also men's duty to take care of children
- Women should stick together because that's more power

Summary

About the Author:
Sheryl Kara Sandberg is an American technology executive who worked at Google, and then at Facebook as the company's COO.
She also gained popularity and media exposure for being an advocate of women in business, and an outspoken commentator on gender issues.

Double Standard: Ambitious Women Are Disliked

The author says that society holds a double standard for men and women: men are expected to be aggressive and ambitious, and people don't usually hold it against them.
But when it's a woman, both men and women tend to dislike an overly ambitious woman.

Successful women are also seen with suspicion, and Sheryl Sandberg cites the experiment of similar CVs of successful men and women. But while the man's success was appealing, the woman's success was worrisome.

That much is true indeed, and it's one of the central points of my article the real reason why Hillary Clinton lost.

TIP: Negotiate With "We"
Since both men and women don't really like very assertive women, it's a good idea for women to negotiate from a "we" perspective rather than "I".

Also read:

- Masculinity vs femininity
- Masculinity

TPM Note: Sandberg identifies the "ambitious woman" penalty but skips most solutions.
See warmth and power and **How to combine power with femininity**

Women Should Assert More

A good chunk of the book is good psychology on the differences between men and women.

Sheryl Sandberg says that women tend to have less self-esteem and react differently than men to wins and losses. In victory, men are more likely to think they have done while women look for more external causes and "circumstances". In loss, women tend to shoulder the full blame and to think that they are not good enough while men look at external circumstances and at scapegoats (see: political players).

The author also says that women have a higher degree of impostor syndrome, such as the feeling of not being good enough for the role they have.

My Note: True, but should be done strategically
I agree that some women are too lacking in assertiveness and confidence to have a good career.
Sometimes though it felt like Lean In was exhorting women to become more like men. I would advise women instead to seek a balance. Also, see Fran Hauser's *The Myth of the Nice Girl* Or consider Robert Greene's approach in *The Laws of Human Nature*, recommending that men and women become aware of their pros and cons by merging the two genders' advantages into one.

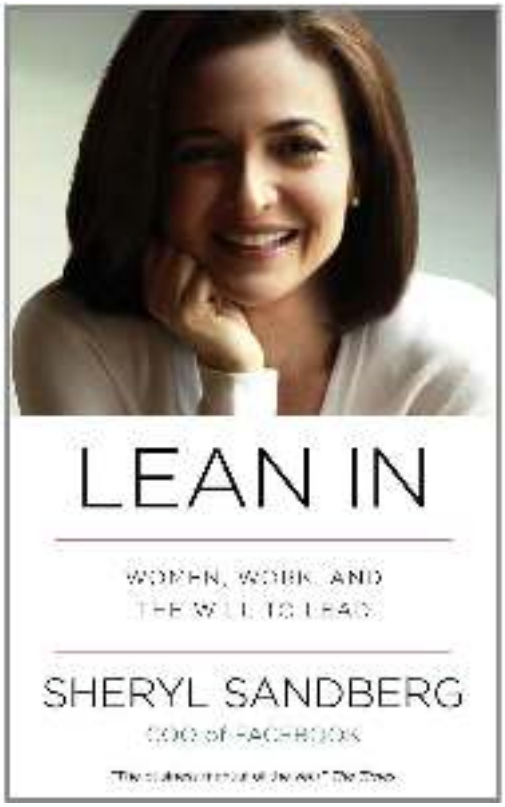
Don't Let Family Planning Stop You

The author says that too many women allow family planning to curtail their potential and possibilities, often becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For example, a woman thinking of having a baby might not apply for higher positions, turn down important projects, or outright refuse promotions.
What happens though is that having a baby often takes longer than most expect and in the meanwhile she is not growing -not herself and neither her career-.
When she eventually wants to go back to work, she should do so in a position that does not challenge her, which makes her less willing to go back at all.

Instead, Sheryl Sandberg proposes that before she is actually pregnant and must -or want- to go on maternity leave, she keeps growing and going for all the high visibility and stretch positions that she can.

I like this approach.



Lean In Criticism

There are good reflections and some great tips for women's careers in "*Lean In*".
But there is also a complete disregard for *basic psychology*, human nature, and biology driving the behaviors she criticizes. And I disagree with several of her conclusions.
let's go in order:

#1. Are Ambitious Women Disliked Or... ?

Sheryl Sandberg says that ambitious women are disliked.

She is not totally wrong.
But not correct, either.
It's women who look *overly* ambitious without any femininity that may be disliked.

Unfortunately, we'd add, and it's the same for men.

But the good news, which is what Sandberg does not talk about and which is most important to women, is that **women *can* be ambitious if they present themselves in the right way**.

Also, read:

- **How to combine power with femininity**

#2. Are Men & Women Equal for Child-Rearing?

Sheryl Sandberg notes that women are more likely to take work leaves when a baby is born.

Does anyone find that strange?

She also states that society should accept that it's OK for men to do child-rearing as well while the woman pursues

her career.
I'm not a big fan of "society should" do this or that, but I get her point.

But she never stops to consider that **mothers tend to be more important than fathers for children**.
Part of it might be culture, definitely, since children see their friends that are closer to their mothers and expect the same from them. Yet, culture doesn't develop in a vacuum. Cultures often stem from biology and inborn tendencies as well.
Women have historically taken care of children because, obviously, they deliver them and because, later, they suckle them.

That's one of the reasons why the maternal bond is usually stronger than the paternal bond. Saying or **implying the two parents are the same fails to account for biology and developmental psychology**.

To be clear: this is not to say that women *have* to keep taking care of the children. I'm pretty sure children can turn out awesome even with just their fathers.
But it says, again, that Sheryl Sandberg's "*Lean In*" fails to truly analyze -and understand- basic truths of life.
There is a reason why all societies show a tendency for women to take care of children and for men to take care of the providing.

#3. Misses Basic Human Nature & Psychology

Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* questions (complains?) the current gender split in top job positions, about double standards, basically, "how things are".

Yet the answers always seem to be a big "it's unfair".
It never questions whether or not there are deep reasons behind the current state of affairs.
It never considers different biology, psychology, and sexual needs.
It does not consider that **there are biological and sexual reasons why men are more driven**.
Men *need* to amass more resources for competing in the sexual marketplace and for securing a woman. Women don't have nearly as much of a need.

Male and female different drives and needs are often deep-rooted and they won't change because Sheryl Sadzerbg wiggles a judgmental finger with her recurrent "women/men should" and "society should".

For the sake of clarity: this is not to say that things should stay the same. Cultures change and, with time, our drives and nature changes as well -the latter *not* within our current lifespan though-.
But Sheryl Sandberg never addresses the underlying principles: she stops at the top layer. And that, in my opinion, fails to deliver meaningful insights and information.

For a better overview, see:

- **The real reason why men have more power**

#4. Is Equality of Outcomes True Equality?

Sheryl says that a sign of true equality will only happen when business ownership and business executive positions will be equally split between men and women.

To me, that's not a sign of equality in any way.
Equality is equality for opportunities, and then let the final "split" be decided by market forces and, even more importantly, by personal preferences.
And not, like the author says, by "committing to change the leadership ratio", which is deeply un-meritocratic.

Equality enforced by a 50/50 gender split is not equality, not a meritocracy, and not something a healthy society must strive for.

Since it's like more women *want* to stay close to their children as compared to men and since more men are *on average* more hungry for power and upward social mobility, it's likely that the split might not be 50/50.
But it doesn't have to be 50/50 to live in a society that provides equality of opportunity.

Again, this is another fundamental failure in understanding basic human nature.

#5. Men's Reactions to Women's Success Isn't Just "Ego Thing"

Sheryl Sandberg states that men fearing more successful female partners do so out of an "ego issue"

Part of it is ego indeed but, again, the author fails to question the reasons why that is the case.
Since most have it, then we need to look for deeper causes. And the deeper cause is evolution. Evolution shaped men that way. It's possible to speculate that men don't want more successful women because, deep down, they know that women would not respect them. It's a well-known fact indeed that women want men who are "more" than they are (female hypergamy).
And men, righteously so, are worried about partners who are "more" than they are.

Similarly, Sheryl Sandberg encourages women to marry men who are more "equals", again failing to realize that women really pine after men who are better than they are.

#5. Tribalist and Sectarian Approaches

I quote straight from the Lean In book:

> We need to look out for one another, work together, and act more like a coalition.
> As individuals, we have relatively low levels of power. Working together we are 50% of the world population and therefore have real power.
>
> *Quote from Lean In*

> We should strive to resolve our differences quickly, and when we disagree, stay focused on our shared goals
>
> *Sheryl Sandberg*

> There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women
>
> *Lean In, quoting Madeleine Albright*

There is much more talk of coalitions and "common fight", including a story where the author expected an ally in another woman but felt betrayed when her colleague was hostile.
Now, being hostile sucks. But did she expect an ally just because it was another woman?

This is not good for the world at large because **tribalism almost always indirectly implies an out-group, an enemy to fight**.
But fighting against whom?

We don't need more tribes and hostility, we need more bridges and more empathy for fellow humans.

It goes both ways, of course, and we said the same for men who shared that mindset:

- The Way of Men
- Tribe by Sebastian Junger

Ultimately, the author does include also men, but it feels like it's a perfunctory olive branch. And of course, only for men who espouse her worldview.

Check our Manifesto of Individualism.

#6. Women Should Act More Like Men?

In the end, Sheryl's receipt for a "better world" is for men to be more like women and for women to be more like men.

I believe there is great power in acquiring cross-gender qualities and traits, but I believe it's best achieved while sticking mostly to one's own gender.
Why for example should women become men with a skirt when they can leverage their own strengths to achieve success, maybe even opening their own business instead of bending backward to fit into men's businesses?

Also, consider that women who become too masculine in the way Sheryl seems to recommend lose points in the dating arena, and that's one more reason why women tend to be less aggressive than men: it's a sexual strategy -also read strong women VS submissive women in dating-.
And of course, Sheryl Sandberg never warns women of the risks that being less feminine carries in the sexual marketplace.

CONS

For a more complete review read the "Lean In Criticism" paragraph. On top of that, I didn't like the following:

Shoulding All Over The Place
Lean In is huge on shoulds. What women should do, what men should do, what society should accept. I really don't like that attitude.

One-Sided Look to Discrimination
there are disadvantages to being a woman, for sure. And this book explored all of them and then some. But there are also advantages, and the fact that Sandberg barely mentions any is not a badge of impartiality.

PROS

There is much good in Lean In, including:

Good Text for Career Women
Lean In is a good book for women seeking a successful career, and the author knows a thing or two about a successful career.
For more, read:

- The businesswoman guide to success in male organizations

Some more wisdom on political savvy would have helped, but then again, "*Lean In*" wasn't meant as a career strategy book.

Some Valid Psychology on "Intra-Gender Competition"
I liked some of Sheryl Sandberg's analysis of women's animosity against women.
She says that many women who make it in a man's world resent other women and try to push them down.
That was on point.

Review

There are plenty of good analyses and tips in Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In", but also important misunderstanding of evolutionary psychology, inter-gender dynamics, and some bias.

For a book that is so popular and so well written and for a woman who is so accomplished, I expected more in terms of psychology, sociological understanding, and even strategic thinking.
To me, there is a rather appalling lack of understanding of the basic principles of human nature.

Sharyl Sandberg says she's not a scholar nor a sociologist. It shows. But that's not an excuse to remain ignorant of the deeper picture.

Finally, same as I do for men exhorting men to "stick together", I also deeply regretted the sectarian mindset that women should "band together".

Also see:

- **The businesswoman guide** to succed in male organizations

Tao Te Ching: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Tao Te Ching is a book of ancient Chinese philosophy. Lao Tzu, the author, is one of the "founding fathers" of Taoism.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Just Do What Needs to Be Done
  - Perception of The Nature of Things
  - Don't Try To Be: Just Be
  - Don't Get Attached to Material Possessions
  - Don't Be The Loud Mouth
  - Achieve Greatness In The Little Things
  - The Best Cure is Prevention
  - The Art of Non-Action
  - Be Like Water My Friend
  - Seek Truth, Even When It Hurts
- TPM Takeaways
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Focus on the small things and the big things will take care of themselves
- Never underestimate your enemy: the underdog often has the advantage
- Seek the truth: even when it hurts

TPM Takeaway: Stealth power and invisible influence
This is one of the earliest manuals on Soft Power and 'Passive Influence'. It teaches the 'Art of the Underdog'—how to win by yielding and how to lead by following. We DO NOT advice to apply this as your baseline strategy because dominance is important for a man's success, but when you cannot dominate, stealth power may be the second best option.

Full Summary

Tao Te Ching is a collection of gold nuggets that serve as deep food for thoughts.
I will list here the ones that I liked the most:

Just Do What Needs to Be Done

> Just do what needs to be done, never take advantage of power.
> Achieve results, but never glory in them, achieve results but never boast, achieve results but never be proud, achiever results because this is the natural way.

> Achieve results, but not through violence. Force is followed by loss of strength. This is not the way of Tao. That which goes against Tao comes to an early end.

Perception of The Nature of Things

> That which shrinks must first expand, that which fails must first be strong, that which is cast down must first be raised, before receiving there must be giving.
>
> This is called perception of the nature of things.

Don't Try To Be: Just Be

> A truly good man is not aware of his goodness, And is therefore good.
> A foolish man tries to be good, And is therefore not good.
>
> A truly good man does nothing, Yet nothing is left undone.
> A foolish man is always doing, Yet much remains to be done.

This is a strong message for men who chase external guides for qualities that they should find within.
For example, masculinity. It's not masculine to learn how to be a man. It's better to think of it how to 'rediscover your manhood'.

Don't Get Attached to Material Possessions

> He who is attached to things will suffer much.
> He who saves will suffer heavy loss.
>
> **A contented man is never disappointed**.
>
> He who knows when to stop does not find himself in trouble. He will stay forever safe.

Later on, Laozi says:

> Therefore the sage seeks freedom from desire.
> He does not collect precious things.
> He learns not to hold on to ideas.

⍰⍰♂ **TPM's note**: This is an important aspect of mental power. Chase all the possessions you wish, but never become dependent or attached to them. The more attached you get to things, the more you stand to lose. The more they are just tools for you, the more antifragile you become.

Don't Be The Loud Mouth

Be the 'silent killer' instead, getting things done without talking about them.

> Those who know do not talk. Those who talk do not know.
>
> Keep your mouth closed.
>
> Guard your senses.
> Temper your sharpness.
> Simplify your problems.

> Mask your brightness.
> Be at one with the dust of the Earth.
> This is primal union.

Achieve Greatness In The Little Things

> Practice non-action.
> Work without doing.

And what I liked most:

> Achieve greatness in little things.

Furthermore:

> In the universe great acts are made of small deeds.
> The sage does not attempt anything very big, and thus achieves greatness.
>
> Easy promises make for little trust.
> Taking things lightly results in great difficulty.

While saying "the sage does not attempt anything very big" might seem in contrast to much self-help of today, which clamors for big goals, I think this is genius.

It's a message of consistency, such as that great things are achieved through small, daily actions.
Take the small things very seriously and the big things will come.

The Best Cure is Prevention

> Peace is easily maintained;
> Trouble is easily overcome before it starts.
>
> The brittle is easily shattered;
> The small is easily scattered.
>
> Deal with it before it happens.
> Set things in order before there is confusion.

And later on:

> People usually fail when they are on the verge of success.
> So give as much care to the end as to the beginning;
> Then there will be no failure.

The Art of Non-Action

The art of non-action is something that Robert Greene in *The Laws of Human Nature* describes as Eastern and feminine qualities of waiting for troubles to dissipate and for the enemies to destroy themselves.

> It is better to become passive in order to see what will happen.
> It is better to retreat a foot than to advance only an inch

> This is called being flexible while advancing,
> pushing back without using force,
> and destroying the enemy without engaging him.

And on one of the biggest sins one can commit:

> There is no greater disaster than underestimating your enemy.
> Underestimating your enemy means losing your greatest assets.

And on the force of desperation:

> When equal forces meet in battle, victory will go to the one
> that enters with the greatest sorrow.

This hints at the power of the underdog. Sometimes you should play up your underdog qualities.
Also, read:

- The Art of War

Be Like Water My Friend

Long before *The 48 Laws of Power*, Lao Tzu said it:

> Therefore the stiff and unbending is the disciple of death.
> The gentle and yielding is the disciple of life.
>
> Thus an army without flexibility never wins a battle.
> A tree that is unbending is easily broken.
>
> **The hard and strong will fall**.
> The soft and weak will overcome.

To me, this suggests that being "strong and unyielding" is often the cause of your downfall.
It's true, also considering that tough exteriors often hide internal issues.

A little later Laozi writes in Tao Te Ching:

> The weak can overcome the strong;
> The supple can overcome the stiff.
> Under heaven everyone knows this,
> Yet no one puts it into practice.

Seek Truth, Even When It Hurts

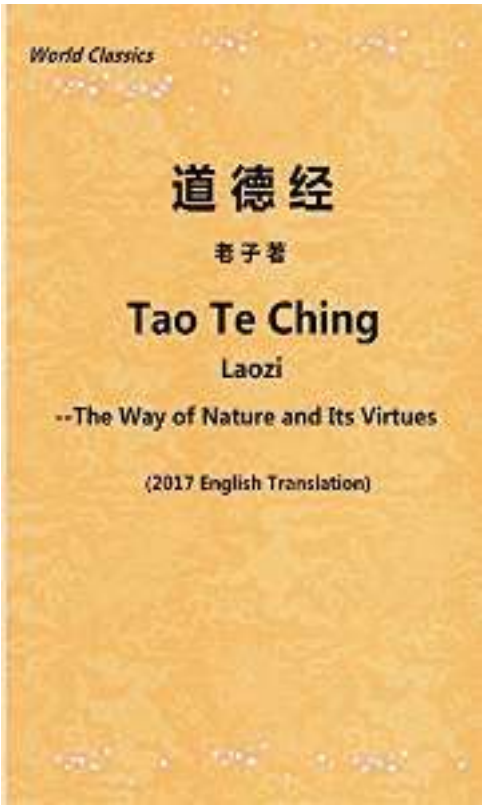
And finally, one of my favorites:

> Truthful words are not beautiful;
> beautiful words are not truthful.

This is similar to what Greene says in *The 50th Law* and what Ray Dalio says in *Principles:* learn to love reality, even when it hurts.

I wholeheartedly agree with it, and that's one of the reasons why I dislike so much the Law of Attraction as

espoused in books such as *The Secret*: it's a big, feel-good, empty lie.



TPM Takeaways

- Use indirect strategy when direct dominance is too costly
- Focus on results, not words
- Influence with prestige and buy-in, not force
- Be bigger than 'things' and possessions

CONS

Tao Te Ching is an outstanding text, but it doesn't come with some cons:

Cryptic
Like many old classics, *Tao Te Ching* is not the easiest read.
As soon as it starts, it differentiates between two "Tao": one which can be named and expressed, and the Eternal Tao, which is inscrutable.
Just to add to the complexities, it says that Tao is "darkness within darkness, the gate of all mysteries".
Just keeping things simple, you know :)

Low Dominance & Status
It's not a guide to gain status, leadership, or dominance, all qualities that are crucial for a modern man's success.

PROS

In the audiobook version, I had a lovely soothing voice, which made the whole experience a bit similar to The Power of Now: a mystic trip into wise-dom.

Review

The "*Tao Te Ching*" is an ancient text mixing spiritual concepts with plenty of valid strategies that work best in self-effacing cultures.

Part of its power and allure lies in its Messianic writing style that allow anyone to read in it whatever they want. As for TPM, we find it valuable, but our readership of ambitious men must be accompanied by more how-to guides to turn wisdom into results.

Check the **best books for men's empowerment.**

Eating Animals: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

Eating Animals is Jonathan Safran Foer's deep investigation into the animal food industry.
Eating Animals finally tries to answer the deep question of whether or not it's ethical for us to eat animals. And the answers stare deep into the soul of us all who are still eating animals -at least farmed and raised the way they do today-.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - How We Got to Intensive Farming
  - Factory Farming & Animals' Torture
  - Dangers of Factory Farming
  - Are There Alternatives?
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Eating animals today is not only a food choice: it's a moral and ethical choice we all need to make
- Modern farming is often akin to torture for animals
- Eating meat is not intrinsically bad, but it's bad when it entails suffering -and today, it often does-
- We can all contribute to stopping this ongoing inhumanity

Full Summary

The book connects personal stories and childhood memories with Jonathan Safran Foer's investigation of animals as our source of food.

I won't go into the details here, but there is one quote that by itself is worth the whole book.
Her grandmother, a jew fleeing the nazis, was close to starvation but when a Russian farmer offered her food she refused it because it was pork.
When Jonathan Foer asked how could she refuse any food in a life-and-death scenario, how could any type of food matter?
And she replied:

> If nothing matters, there's nothing to save
>
> *Ms Foer*

Similarly, I would ask: if animals' suffering does not matter, then is humanity even worth saving?

How We Got to Intensive Farming

Foer says that prior to 1923 livestock was raised in small farms and their lives were not too bad.

But in 1923 Celia Steel got the wrong order. 500 chicks instead of the 50 she had ordered.

She tried to raise them indoors and… It was a success. So to speak. By 1935 she had 250,000 chickens. And in the 1930s it started becoming a widespread phenomenon. An industry.

Factory Farming & Animals' Torture

The modern practice of raising as many animals as possible in as little space and in the most efficient way possible is called factory farming.

The author, as much as I do, invites the readers to check pictures on Google to get an idea for themselves.

Foer goes into detail in describing the harsh existence of animals in factory farms. At times, it feels like they are centers for torture.

Dangers of Factory Farming

The author goes deep into the impacts of intensive farming, which is not limited to the moral considerations of animals.

Modern farms are huge polluters and they might easily become the breeding ground of the next pandemic.
The author talks about the Spanish Flu and how destructive it's been. A modern pandemic would be much *worse*.

Poor Quality of Meat

And don't go thinking that because it's "modern farming" and regulated you are getting quality meat.

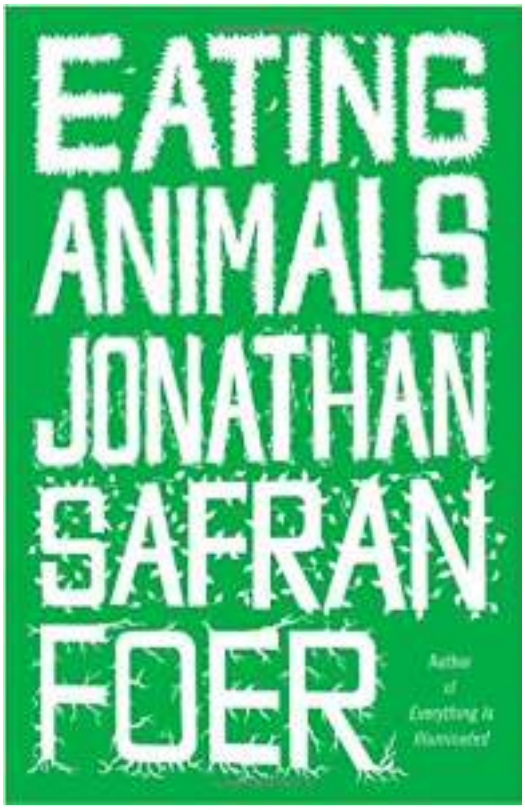
Intensive farming produces crap meat -what would you expect anyway when the animals the meat comes from life in those conditions?-.
Animals are often ill and diseased. They eat poor quality, genetically modified food which is still mixed with other dead animals. And they are kept alive with massive doses of antibiotics.
We are eating meat full of drugs and antibiotics.

Are There Alternatives?

Foer is not a pie-in-the-sky writer and explains that going back to the old days with the current population -and with the current fewer workers in farming- is impossible.
Even if everybody wanted to buy from family farms, that wouldn't be possible. If we were to take all the family farms in the US, their output would not even be enough to satisfy Staten Island's population.

However, if consumers started demanding more animals' rights and buying only from selected farms, then the intensive farming industry would be forced to heed the change and adapt.

In the meantime, Foer has adopted his own solution: vegetarianism.



CONS

Here are a few things I liked less about Eating Animals:

“Back Then Was Better” Mindset
Foer seems to have a typical “back then was better” mindset. And attention, I am not saying that back then animals’ condition was not better. It might have been.
Yet at times, it feels like a bit of a rose-tinted glasses. I grew up in a rural area right at the passage between farming and the service industry, with plenty of leftovers from the old days.
The killing of animals was brutal. My grandmother’s way of killing chickens by pulling their necks was a nice way of going about it. I personally saw my grandmother’s neighbor doing it in much more cruel ways.
And that’s only one example and I won’t go into much more detail, but it certainly wasn’t good back then.

PROS

Eating Animals is one of the most humanist books in modern literature.

Can Make The World a Better Place
In my opinion, as the most powerful and as the only intelligent specie on the planet, we have a responsibility towards all other forms of life. Eating Animals takes that responsibility seriously as it should.
The more people read and understand it, the better the world we will live in.

Eye Opener
Do you know the people who mock PETA saying “People Eating Tasty Animals”?
Well, I’m not a vegetarian, but I’d really like to see who uses eating animals as a badge of honor after eating this book. Jonathan Foer’s work can help many people open their eyes to the ongoing torture that modern farming is.

Good Psychology
Foer provides good psychology on why most people keep eating animals. He says most people know it’s bad for animals, but we prefer distancing ourselves. And we conveniently forget how similar to us all animals really are.

Review

We are on our way to treating all human beings with dignity and respect. Much to go there, but we have done a lot. When it comes to animals though we are in the opposite stage: suffering is the norm and respectful treatment is the exception. This is legalized torture.

As humans, we have a responsibility to make sure that our planet has as little suffering as possible.
To me, it's ridiculous to think of going to Mars or becoming an "interplanetary specie" when we are still so backward on this Earth.

We are the most powerful and the only intelligent specie on this Earth. That does give us huge advantages.
But it should also give us responsibilities. As someone said, with great power comes great responsibilities.

And Eating Animals is a great step in the right direction to take that responsibility.

Check the **best books** collection or get the book on Amazon.

How to Be a 3% Man: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

"*How to Be a 3% Man*" is a dating book for men by Corey Wayne in which he embraces the high-masculinity, alpha male approach to dating. Wayne's goal is to teach men how to behave and think like high-quality, top 3 percent men, so that they can date equally high-value and attractive women.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. Be a High-Quality Man
  - 2. Go For What You Want To Be a 3% Man
  - 3. Find Your Masculine Energy
  - 4. Prepare For & Respond to Women's Tests
  - 5. Treat Her Like a Lover
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
  - How can chasing be feminine?
  - Lean Back, Spread Out, Say Nothing… Is It the Best Strategy?
  - Sometimes Black & White Approach
  - Women Have Different Values: No Empty Patriotism
  - Men Biologically Programmed to Mate With Dominant Women?
  - Alpha Males Set Definite Dates?
  - Alpha Males Don't Double Check Her Number is Correct?
  - Some Random, Unneeded Psychoanalysis
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Have your own mission in life**, a mission that goes beyond women
- **Don't be an open bo**ok and don't talk all the time: it's a fact that women prefer a mystery
- **Let her chase a relationship**

Full Summary

About the Author:
Corey Wayne is an American dating coach for men. He runs a YouTube channel with advice on dating, relationships, and "games".

1. Be a High-Quality Man

This is the very basis of Wayne's teaching.

If you want to meet high-quality women, be a high-quality man, with a high sexual market value.

The main thing I really liked about Corey Wayne is his focus on being a genuine, straightforward man.
Little games, little gimmicks, and no manipulation.

By the same token, while you want to be a high-quality man to attract high-quality women, Wayne advises readers to stay away from low-quality women.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Refuse Devious & Dishonest Partner

He says that women sometimes learn to be dishonest from their parents and that much is true.
Also, read:

- Why people cheat
- Emotional infidelity: what is it and how it happens
- How to pick a loyal partner

I like to summarize it in this way:

> **Become the person you want to attract**

2. Go For What You Want To Be a 3% Man

This quote, modified by me for brevity, goes to the core of what being a 3% man means to Corey Wayne:

> *Women love a guy that is his own man despite what others think of him. A confident man who goes for what he wants in life without fear. A man that is centered, in control of himself, who has purpose, and knows where he is going.*
> *A woman wants a man she can't have her way with, and no matter what she says or does, she is not going to be able to sway him from his path or from his purpose in life.*
>
> *Corey Wayne, How to Be a 3% Man*

And this is how Corey Wayne defines an alpha male:

> *A true Alpha Male, a man who goes for what he wants and has positive expectations that he will achieve his goals, will choose his purpose and his passion over a woman if faced with the choice. Masculine energy, after all, is about purpose, drive, mission, succeeding, accomplishing, breaking through barriers, achieving goals, etc.*

3. Find Your Masculine Energy

Corey Wayne says that masculine energy is:

> Masculine energy is about drive, purpose, mission, succeeding, accomplishing, overcoming obstacles, and achieving goals.
>
> *Corey Wayne*

For Wayne that also means that if he must decide between her and following his mission, he will choose his mission.
And that's what, he says, women find appealing.

Also read:

- What is masculinity
- How to be more masculine

> How to Be More Masculine: The 10-Step Guide for Men

4. Prepare For & Respond to Women's Tests

Corey Wayne says that women will test you.
They will want to test you and push you to see whether you will cave in and show the strength that they wish you have.

Corey Wayne shares a lot of examples from his dating stories in "How to Be a 3% Percent Man".
For example, a girl called him before his date and said she had to do grocery shopping before their date. But Wayne told her he was going to be there at 7 pm and expected her to be there. When she said "I might not be here," he said, "then I'll take your mother out".

Personally, I think that approach can either work great, and make her very submissive, or it can backfire badly.
See a few different techniques for women flaking:

- **What to do when a girl cancels a date**

5. Treat Her Like a Lover

Treating her like a lover ensures that you don't end up being her friend.

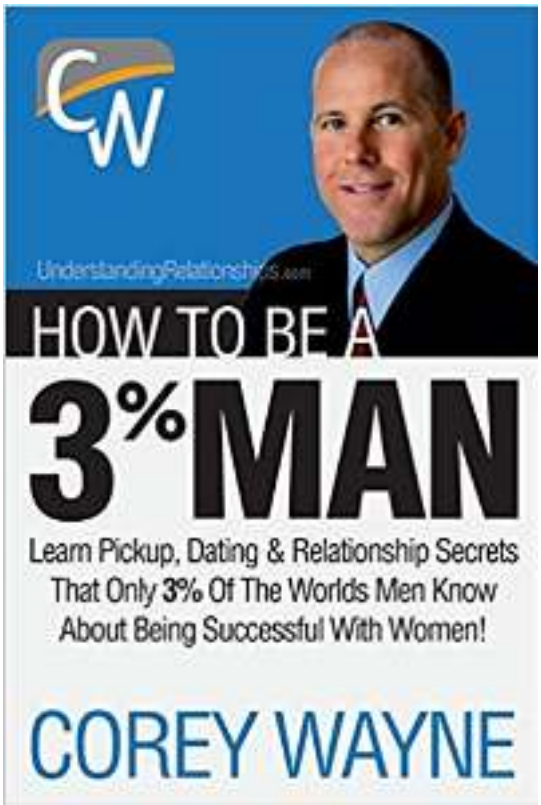
How do you treat her like a lover?
While *nice guys never make a move*, the lover knows that the purpose of a date is to have fun, relax and, eventually, lead to sex.
The lover knows that leadership gets you the woman.
That's why they plan their dates in a way that is most likely to be conducive to sex.

There shall be no group dates before sex, no lunches, and no movies. The idea of a date is to bond together.

Finally, the lover is not afraid of walking away -the early pick-up artists used to use the "false takeaway' to make her chase. Also, read *Mystery Method*.

My Note: Lover or Provider?
Personally, I prefer the lover approach indeed.
But I think the provider can date equally well, and what's most effective for you also depends on your preferences and qualities.
Also, read:

- **Should you date as a lover or as a provider?**



Real-Life Applications

Most of "How to Be a 3 Percent Man" is highly applicable information to dating and romance.
A couple of ideas I really liked:

Write Down Your Ideal Woman
Write down, in minute detail, what your ideal woman looks like and what her personality is like.
Then write a letter to this person telling her exactly what you adore about her as if she is already in your life.

CONS

There is much I liked in "*How to Be a 3% Man*," but a few things I disagreed with, including:

How can chasing be feminine?

Corey Wayne says that chasing is the very act of submissive women and that's why men who chase are not successful.
Submissive women don't really take much action themselves. And the dating marketplace dynamics are pretty clear: women are the demand and men are the offer. For the most part, it's men who need to make the move. And that's why women rarely chase at the beginning of dating.

Lean Back, Spread Out, Say Nothing... Is It the Best Strategy?

With his number and detail orientation, Corey Wayne says that you should sit back, spread out and let women talk 78% of the time while you stay mysterious, say as little as possible, and never show your hand.

I agree that strategy often works to make her invest more *if* she already likes you.
But it can as easily backfire.
Women will not chase men who show zero interest in them. Leaning back and contributing as little as possible is at high risk of showing women that you don't want them, and they might easily write you off.

Much better, in my opinion, is to give something to keep her interest. Don't lean back but lean in if she does the same. Don't do your best to avoid talking but contribute and reward her for sharing and qualifying herself.

Sometimes Black & White Approach

The author takes some general tendencies that are true at a population level but extends them as blanket rules.

He has a very black-and-white view of men and women, in many ways not too dissimilar from Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus, and Deida's *The Way of the Superior Man*, which indeed he references.

However, as it's often the case, the reality is more variegated than "men are rational women are emotional".
And that's what was missing here: the fine details and important exceptions that make you go from good to great.

Women Have Different Values: No Empty Patriotism

Corey Wayne dedicates his book to "American Soldiers".
Fine.

Later on, he says that masculine means going to war to defend family -you don't go to war to defend the family these days- and country and she is more attracted to him because he was willing to sacrifice his life for the country (and for the family).
I very much disagree with that. Women are practical. Men's ideals matter little to women, and "patriotism" is the epitome of the typical male ideal, but *not* women's ideal.

Men who abandon them and their children to go die for an empty ideal of "country" might even gain some points in women's hearts.
But trust me that the men who will be gaining her vagina are the men who do not go die for some random abstraction and idealism.

Men Biologically Programmed to Mate With Dominant Women?

Wayne says that men and women are biologically programmed to mate with the most dominant member of the opposite sex (see: hypergamy).

He is right for women.
Women do want more dominant men. The most popular forum topic here is a girl asking how to meet dominant men.
And you can read here how dominance will help you with girls.

But it's not actually true that men seek the most dominant alpha female. Men seek women who are more submissive than they are. Some men like women around their value of submissiveness while some other men like much more submissive women.
But almost all men prefer more submissive women.

Alpha Males Set Definite Dates?

Sometimes I feel like Wayne is a bit stuck in the mantra of "be alpha, be alpha, be alpha" and he loses sight of what's most effective instead (which is not always "be as alpha as possible").

When he says to take up space for example, or to lean back or to tell women what to do.
But I also feel that behavior can break rapport with women. And it can come across as insecure sometimes because it's exactly the most insecure people who swing in the opposite direction to cover up their insecurities (see: alpha male posturing)

For example, he says that alpha males tell women where and when to meet in exact terms, without needing

confirmation. Yet I feel that's bogus and self-defeating because confirming reduces flakes.
When you can write on the same day telling her the exact spot where you will meet it serves as a powerful reminder and much-needed confirmation -also read how to text flaky girls and how to text-.

See an example here:

Does it seem "weak" to you? It seems very effective to me, instead. We met up, had a good date, and also ended up having sex

Alpha Males Don't Double Check Her Number is Correct?

Similar to the above, I feel that Wayne is too focused on appearing alpha rather than doing what works.

When he said you should not double-check that her number is correct, I think he meant you should not look like you are afraid she gave you the wrong number on purpose, which makes sense. Yet if you had a great connection it makes no sense to suspect she would give you a wrong number and it makes sense to double-check it's correct. I often call her right there and then to confirm and to let the save my number.

This is nonsense to me, and I highly recommend this article:

- **The limitations of alpha male game**

> Why "Dating Like An Alpha Male" Is Costing You

Some Random, Unneeded Psychoanalysis

There is random psychoanalysis sometimes.
I feel the author has a good self-awareness of how his parenting affected him, but I also feel he is not correct when he says that not hearing "I love you" necessarily makes children insecure. More than insecure, there is a tendency to make them feel approval-seeking, which is different (also read *Will I Ever Be Good Enough*).

PROS

I listed a list of cons, but there is also much that I liked from “How to Be a 3 Percent Man”, including:

Healthy Approach to Relationships
For the most part, Corey Wayne espouses a healthy win-win approach to relationships.
He stresses the importance of caring, being present and attuned, loving each other, and helping each other grow.
However, keep in mind that Wayne’s approach is more for relationships rather than for womanizers.

Holistic Approach to Seduction
Corey Wayne says that an attractive man is attractive to all women and what works with X woman is most likely to work with Y women as well. Despite the growing popularity of my article on how to sleep with Thai girls, that’s something I also deeply believe in.

Good Take on Vulnerability
As I said before, I feel Corey Wayne pushes too much the envelope on “being as alpha as possible”.
But I also liked his take on “not showing too much vulnerability” as that’s not attractive at all. Especially early on.
Also, read Vulnerability is Not Powerful.

Review

The more advanced students of social arts and social dynamics might find few blemishes in “*How to Be a 3% Man*“. But on the other hand, this is a wonderful book for the vast majority of men who want to cover many of the basics in one single book.

Corey Wayne is somewhat in between mainstream like Mark Manson –Models and *The Art of Not Giving a Fuck*– and the more “Red Pill” manosphere and pick-up authors such as *Alpha Male Strategies*, Rollo Tomassi, or W. Anton-.

However, I prefer Wayne’s work to Mark Manson’s as it’s more technical. And I prefer Wayne to some “Red Pill” author as he is free of bitterness towards women.

I personally found a few imperfections in “*How to Be a 3% Man*” -check the “cons” section-, but it’s an overall solid piece of work.
And for most normal people, that’s all they need to go from 20% to 70-80% and be fine.

Check the:

- **best dating books for men**
- best red pill books

or get the book on Amazon

Best Leadership Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 December 2018 · Archived copy · Original

This is a selection of the best leadership books that we personally review and examined.

Although it's called "best leadership *books*", it's actually a "best leadership *resources*" list, since it considers any source of knowledge such as videos, courses, or podcasts.

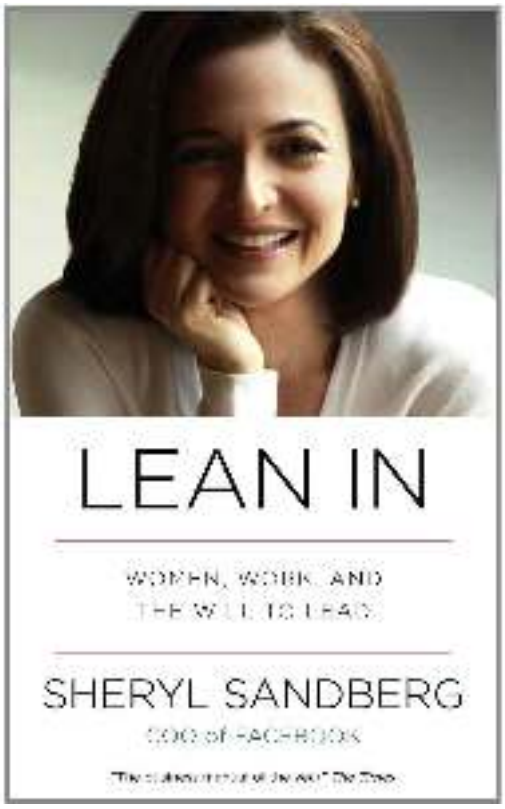
Note on selection: Every resource has been reviewed by Lucio Buffalmano
Unlike many 'best leadership books' lists online, every entry on this page has been analyzed through the lens of real-world power dynamics and social psychology. This ensures that the advice you see here isn't just 'popular' but strategically sound

Contents

- 14. Lean In
- 13. How To Win Friends And Influence People
- 12. Extreme Ownership
- 11. The Leadership Challenge
- 10. Leaders Eat Last
- 9. Eleven Rings
- 8. The 21 Irrefutable Laws Of Leadership
- 7. Drive
- 6. Delivering Happiness
- 5. Principles
- 4. Underboss
- 3. Radical Candor
- 2. Leadership BS
- 1. The New Psychology Of Leadership

- Bonus: Power University
- Good Leadership Books
- The Leadership Literature
  - More Best Of…

14. Lean In



Summary | Audiobook

We don't support Sheryl Sandberg's 'help other women's angle because we find it divisive, tribalist, and un-meritocratic.

That being said, Lean In contains great wisdom for women in business.
Just one example: women should negotiate from a "we" position because assertive women are disliked across the board.

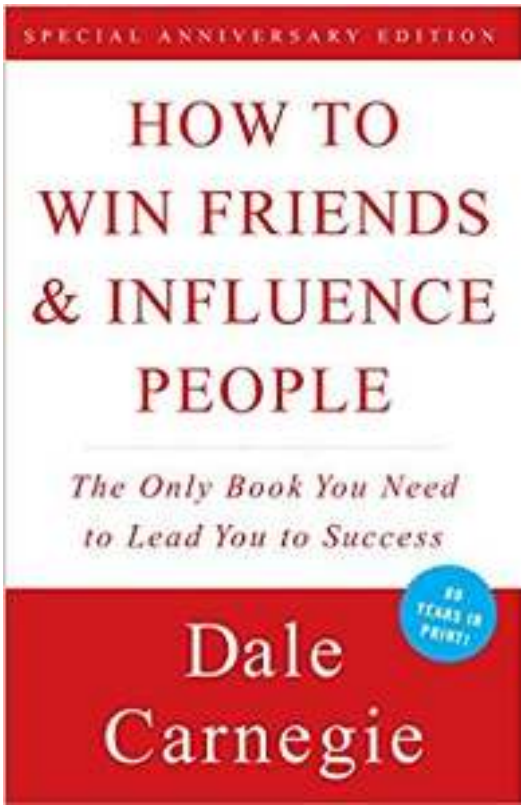
Dig deeper on these strategies in these posts:

- **How to combine femininity and leadership**
- The Businesswoman's guide to business success

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

> Leadership Quote: Done is better than perfect

13. How To Win Friends And Influence People



Summary | Audiobook

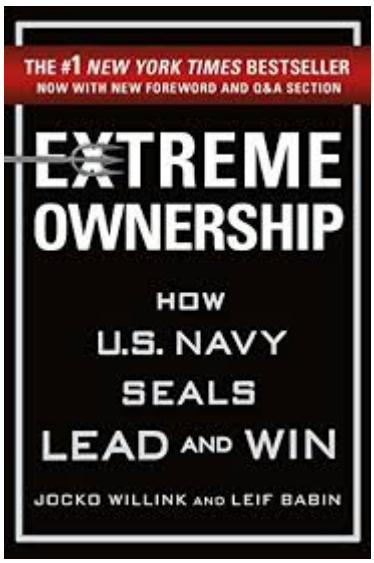
How to Win Friends and Influence People is not strictly a leadership book *per se*.
But it can help many current and future leaders understand that top-down "orders" often breed resentment and have little buy-in.

This is not to say that strong top-down leadership has no place: there are times and situations when it's the way to go -or the *only* way to go-. But as a rule of thumb, authoritarian leadership is not good for long-term performance -and, often, for the survival of the leader himself-.

Also read: saving face and never outshining the master.

> *Leadership quote*: Any fool can criticize, complain, and condemn—and most fools do. But it takes character and self-control to be understanding

12. Extreme Ownership



Summary | Audiobook

I'm not a huge fan of the work of former military personnel leveraging war and experience to sell books.

And it's not for moral reasons, but for the limited know-how to add value to the readers.
Such as, they have leadership experience, which is great, but often only in a very limited scenario, which is not good, and little knowledge of research literature, also not good.

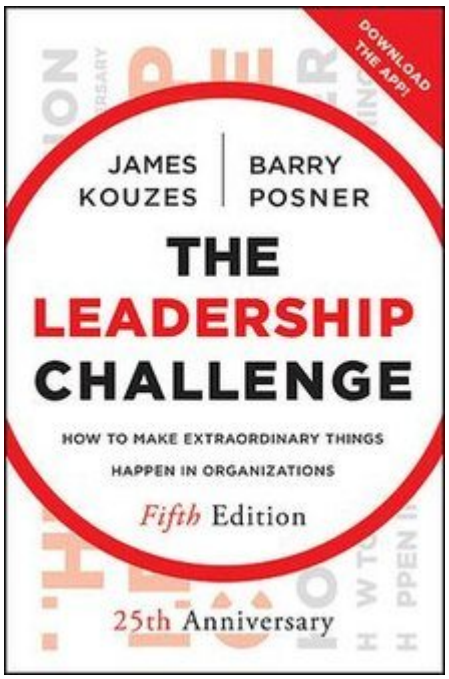
So in some cases, it feels like they're selling hype to the civilian population who wants to buy some "danger" and "excitement" through vicarious living.

In this specific case, it also feels hypocritical -who took ownership of finding those weapons of mass destruction?-.

Anyway, let's now get to the content, and *Extreme Ownership* shares some important mindsets that leaders the whole world over would benefit from.
The title of the book itself is probably the main takeaway: leaders must take responsibility for everything which happens in their team.

> *Leadership Quote*: There are no bad teams. Only bad leaders.

11. The Leadership Challenge



Summary | Amazon

This is a top “manual” type of leadership, a great starting opint for any aspiring leader.

> *Leadership Quote*: Exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behavior they expect of others

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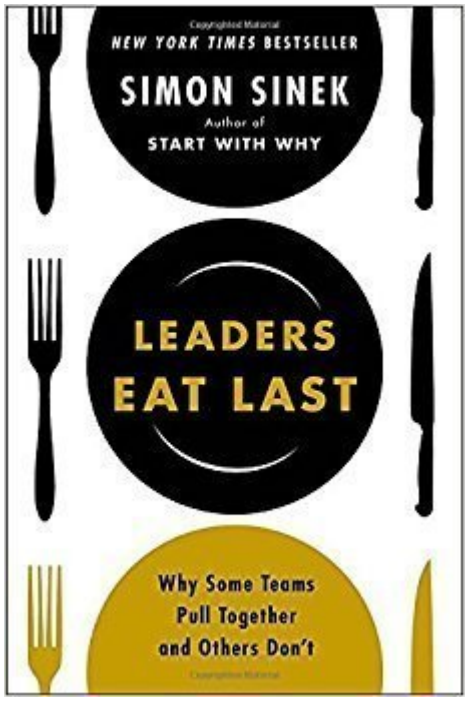
10. Leaders Eat Last



Summary | Amazon

Leaders Eat Last is one of the best leadership books because if all leaders heeded Simon Sinek’s message we would live in a much better world.

Unlikely, it's inherently also naive if you take it as a how-to leadership guide because it refers to how the world *should* be.

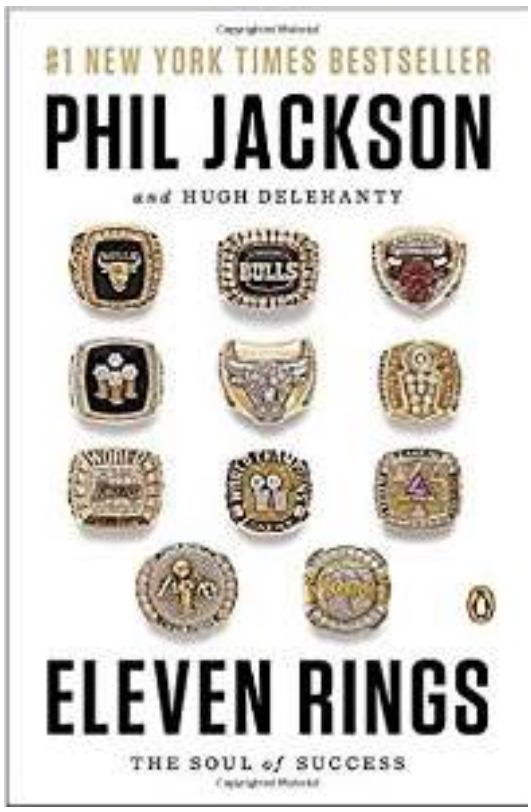
Sinek says that leaders, by virtue of their positions, enjoy a plethora of advantages.
However, great leaders also need to shoulder the *responsibilities* of leadership, which include leading by example, eating last when food is scarce, and taking care of the people by shouldering the risks and downsides.

I don't fully agree with Sinek's assertion that leaders are not responsible for final results and I disagree with some of the "softer" approaches. In life, there also happen situations when an iron first is more needed.

That being said, *Leaders Eat Last* is a wonderful book and a must-read for anyone who aspires to be the best possible leader they can be.

> Leadership Quote: You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him

9. Eleven Rings



Summary | Amazon

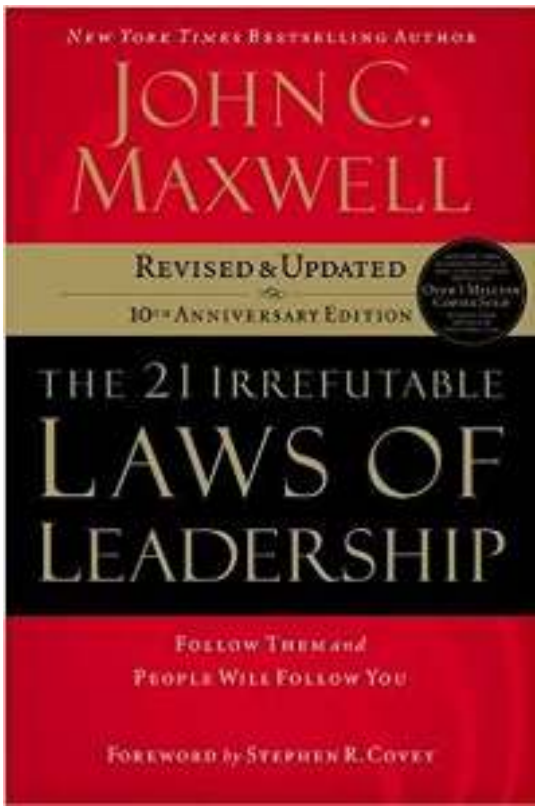
If you are planning to lead top-performing teams, then you might learn a thing or two from the guy who has coached some of the most talented, motivated, and driven men in the history of basketball (including Michael Jordan, Pippen, and Kobe Bryant).

It's particularly interesting because some of the top athletes he coached didn't like each other and were quarreling for the leader's position in the team (Shaquille O'Neal VS Kobe Bryant) while some others were pure rebels by nature (Dennis Rodman).

Lots to learn about leadership here when it comes to super-driven individuals working together.

> Leadership Quote: the secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from the guys who are undecided.

8. The 21 Irrefutable Laws Of Leadership



Summary | Amazon

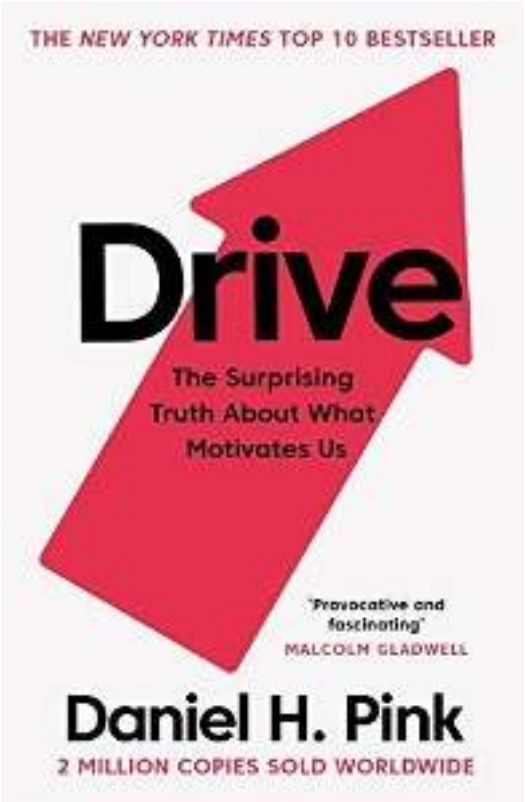
My absolute favorite lesson is Law N.1, which Maxwell calls “The Law of The Lid”.
It states that the effectiveness of the leaders is the maximum threshold to which the team can operate.
I personally apply an even wider meaning to this rule. To me, it means that any leader must be in some form or respect “superior” to the team in some important and recognized trait.
That could be decisiveness, strength, wisdom, experience, or strength of values and beliefs (charismatic leadership).

I have indeed seen plenty of managers who could NOT keep good people in their teams because they were, simply, inferior individuals in core aspects of their personalities -including, crucially, in ethics and morals-.

In a nutshell, **to be a great leader, be a great man** (or great woman).

> Leadership Quote: leadership isn’t how far we advance ourselves but how far we advance others

7. Drive



Summary | Amazon

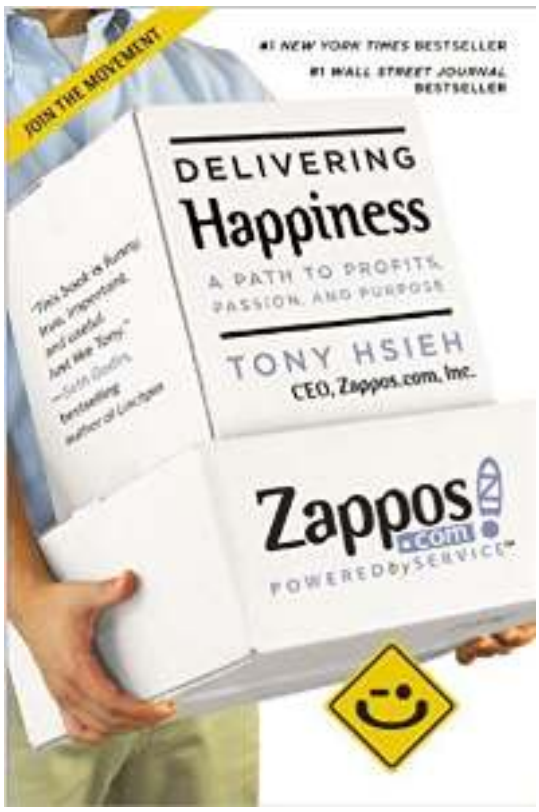
Drive can fix some of the most glaring deficiencies of managers' understanding when it comes to human nature.

All the information on *human psychology* and what motivates people is out there.
It doesn't require managers, leaders, or anyone else to reinvent the wheel. It requires some basic reading and not going through our lives with our eyes shut (figuratively).

"*Drive*" is one of the best leadership books because it provides one of the most important pieces *to understand human nature* when it comes to work, team performance, and motivation.
And it's this: extrinsic motivators such as salary and material rewards don't produce passion and motivation. On the contrary, they can crow out intrinsic motivation.
To learn more about the phenomenon also read *The Social Animal* by Elliot Aronson.

> Leadership Quote: control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement

6. Delivering Happiness



Summary (review removed) | Amazon

Leadership has been linked to decisiveness, strength, and courage, and also to empathy and vulnerability.

But to happiness? Not so often!
This is why we propose this book: to offer a different take as a reminder that **morale matters** because it's linked to mental empowerment, the foundation of personal effectiveness.

> Leadership Quote: money alone isn't enough to bring happiness.. Happiness is when you're actually truly ok with losing everything you have.

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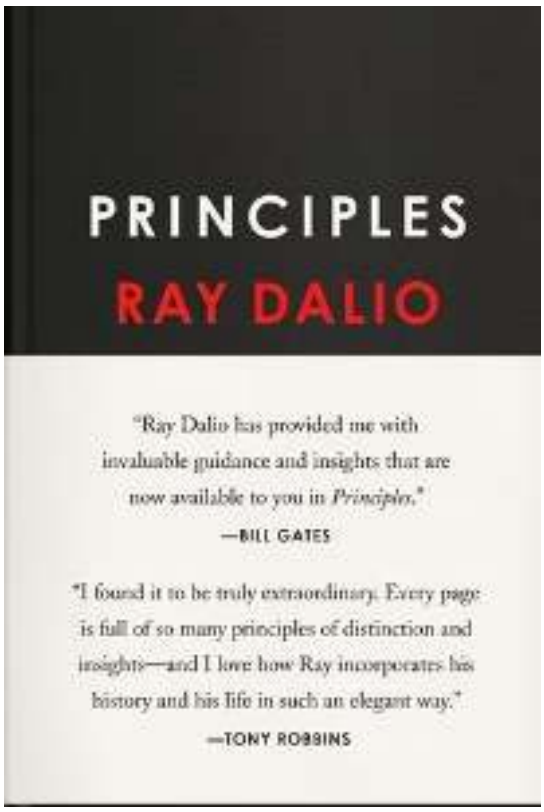
5. Principles



Summary | Amazon

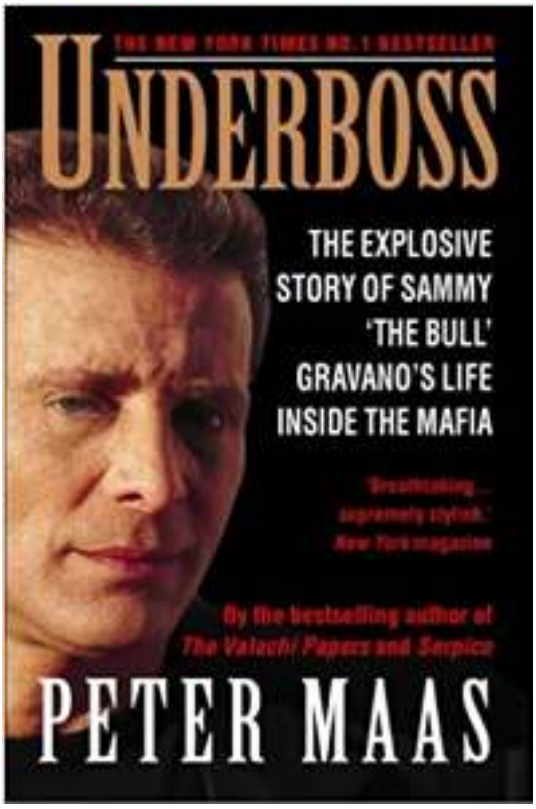
If you want to develop a culture that is all about growth, learning, and, ultimately, top performance, then *Principles* by Ray Dalio is simply the best organizational book available.

It's not easy to implement because the key principles of radical open-mindedness and radical transparency require a buy-in into meritocracy that goes beyond ego and personal fiefdoms of power.
In many ways, they go against the "default" human nature that most of us are born with.

Yet, by developing an antifragile ego and a growth mindset, we can all tap into what's our next stage of human wisdom and power.
And maybe, on the way there, build a multi-billion company as Ray Dalio did :).

> Leadership Quote: truth – more precisely, an accurate understanding of reality – is the essential foundation for producing good outcomes.

4. Underboss



By Peter Maas

Summary

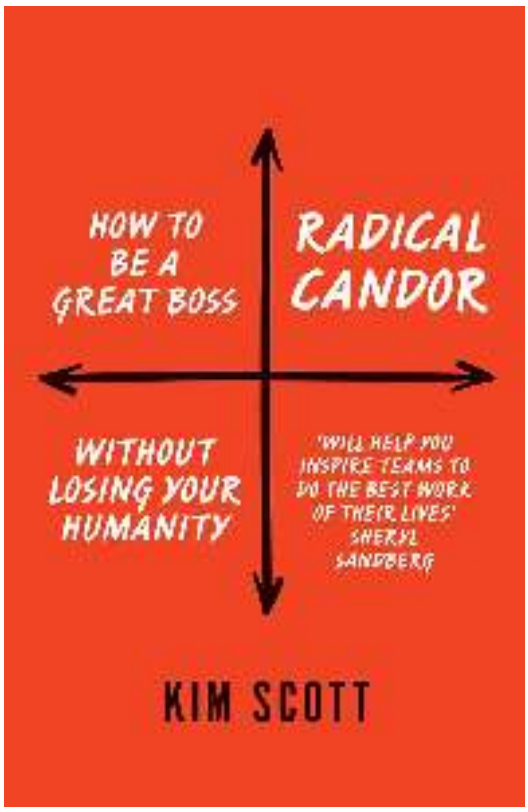
What's so good about this book?

While all the others books here *talk* about leadership, Underboss *shows* you leadership.

Especially, you will learn from the failures of leadership, and the Machiavellian aspects of leadership.
And that makes it one of the best on this list, much more "real life" than bla bla bla on what makes a great leader.

> Leadership Quote: "It was a big disgrace for the family. A real black eye. You give him up in five minutes to the Genovese family? Would you want your father giving you up like that? That was a bad, bad move Paul made. A real bad move. You want to know your boss is going to fight for you tooth and nail

3. Radical Candor



By Kim Scott
Summary | Audiobook

If you're looking for leadership books that can help you in your business or in your team at work, look no further.

Kim Scott's approach is designed to develop top-performing teams via both radically honest feedback and personal caring toward the people.

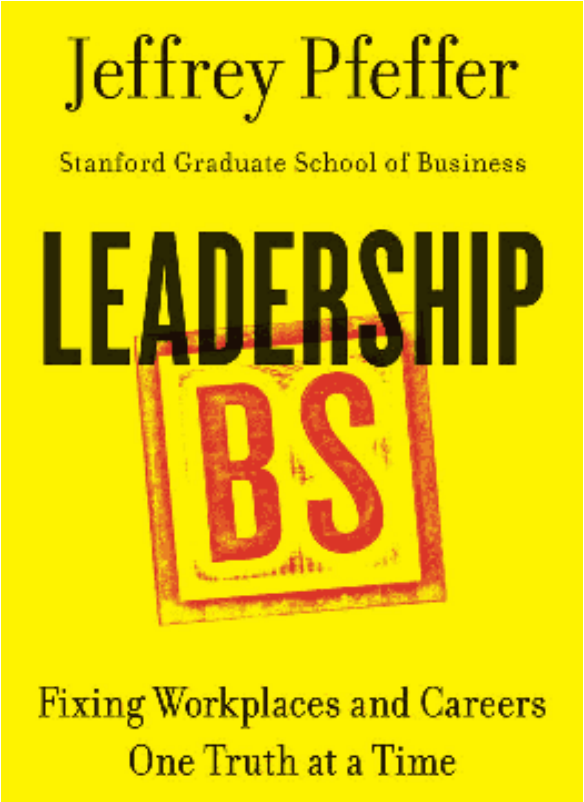
It's best suited for best-performing companies and teams. You probably cannot use the wisdom of this book if you're in a company where office politics is the name of the day and if you're not yet a high-level manager. For that, read "best career strategies books".

But if you want to create the best possible working environment, where people can grow the most and where your work is performed in the most effective way possible, look no further.

Once again though, we must warn you about the naive-risk if you take this "how things *should* be book" for "how things actually are".

> Leadership quote: I once worked for a man who told me, "In every relationship there is a screwer and a screwee." Needless to say, I didn't work for him for long.

2. Leadership BS



By Jeffrey Pfeffer
Summary | Audiobook

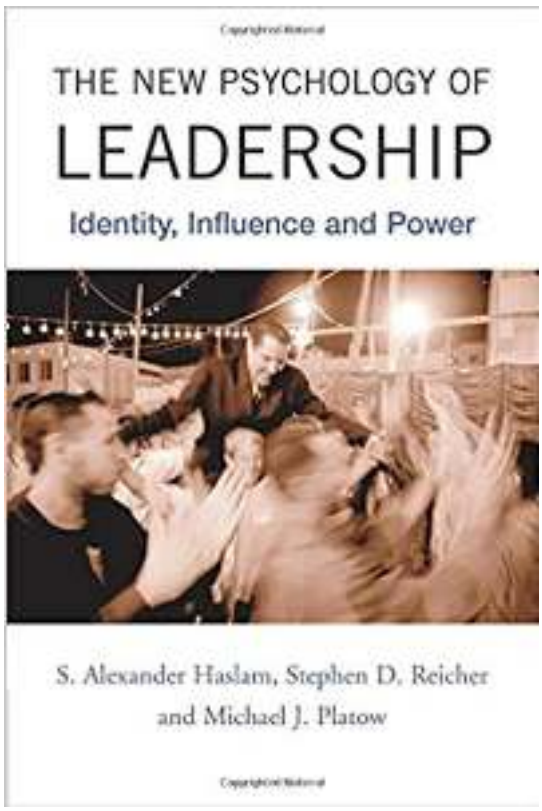
A mandatory read especially after “Radical Candor”.

Leadership BS will bring you back to earth on how things most often are -rather than “how it’d be cool they were”-.

Also very much in line with this website and the work we do: describing how things truly are, so that you can be the most effective you can be, and achieve your goals.

> Leadership Quote: Go home and throw out the numerous leadership books—or better yet, give them to career competitors.

1. The New Psychology Of Leadership



By Alexander Haslam
Summary | Amazon

This book is heavy, long, full of academic research, expensive, and difficult.

But it's the most empirical book on the list. It's not a compendium since the authors also introduce their own concepts and theories. But overall, we found it to be the most instructive and insightul by a fair margin.

> Leadership Quote: Leadership that is grounded in shared identity will always win out over that which is grounded in ego.

Bonus: Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Reviews

Focus: Real-world power dynamics and goal achievement

Format: Multimedia Course.

Power University is relatively expensive, harder to consume casually (for example, at bedtime), and requires more mental effort.
But it can be a good fit for those who want something more immersive and strategic.

While the majority of this list focuses on the written word, **Power University** is included here as a living resource for those who prefer a multimedia approach with video examples as well.

The second major distinction is a focus on not only management, but also goal achievement, self-advancement and power dynamics, including how to *become* a leader, how to maintain respect and influence, and how to advance at work.

In practice, it can serve as a bridge between the research-heavy foundations of *The New Psychology of Leadership* and the practical execution required in corporate boardrooms.

Best for: Men who want an integrated, application-focused system that combines research with real-world scenarios.

Less ideal for: Readers who prefer a book format, people on a budget, and it is less tailored to women, as version 9.0 primarily focuses on men

Key Leadership Components:

- **Behavioral Modeling:** Video analysis of executive presence and frame control.
- **Organizational Politics:** The social and power dynamics of workplaces, teams, and boardrooms
- **Self-advancement:** Strategies for combining effective leadership with self-advancement in competitive environments (which standard books often gloss over)

> **Objective Note:** This is an internal resource, and we analyze it with the same critical lens as the external books on this list

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Good Leadership Books

Outside of the TOP 10, but still with plenty of wisdom:

- **The One Minute Manager**: simple but good primer
- **Onward**: Onward embodies the spirit of the leader who is driven by passion and deeply in love with his craft, with a 'family approach' to this team (albeit I think employees shouldn't fall for that: your company is never your family)
- **The Hard Thing About Hard Things**: A golden nugget about the psychology and dynamics of "enemies within", such as the disgruntled employees who do little work and secretly undermine the team's efforts.
- **Good to Great**, on what distinguishes great leadership from average one (share credit and take blame; modest; want to see the company success even after they're gone)
- **The Five Dysfunctions of a Team**: One of the best leadership books to understand the importance of teamwork, trust among team members, and how the free flow of opinions and information differentiates top-performing teams from average ones.
- **Creativity Inc.**: Possibly the best leadership book when it comes to creative organizations and creative cultures.

The biggest takeaway for me: share the problems and the reasoning behind your choices. People will take ownership and will not waste time second-guessing what's happening.

- **Winning** If you want to model a hard-driving, results first and people-second type of leader, then Jack Welch is your man. Warren Buffett said it's the only book you'll ever need to read on management. I don't necessarily agree, but it's definitely a significant endorsement -and I also actually loved the book-.
- **The Truth About Leadership**: Kouzes and Posner are two big names in the leadership literature. And for good reasons: they write simply and without frills while going at the core of what it means to be a great leader. In this wonderful book, they boil it down to ten simple rules, all backed by research.
- ***The Dichotomy of Leadership***. Leadership has no extremes: it's about walking the line. A few great takeaways from this book, include that great leadership also means knowing when to follow, when to ask for more junior members' opinions, and establishing a good relationship with your boss even if you don't agree with him (or like him).

The Leadership Literature

Let me say this straight:

A good chunk of the popular literature on leadership is poor.

It's naive because it talks about how things *should* be, rather than how things *are*.
And sells what *sounds* nice, rather than what actually gets you in leadership positions and keeps you in power.

I highly recommend this article on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

More Best Of...

- Best self-help books
- Best psychology books
- Best dating books for women
- Best dating books for guys
- Best communication skills books

Monk Mode Changed My Life (Here's How)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Monk Mode isn't just a trend, it's a tool of male success.

High-value men use it to cut distractions, eliminate weakness, and focus every ounce of energy on growth, status, and long-term wins.

In this guide, you'll learn exactly how to use monk mode to sharpen focus, build discipline, and transform your life — without burnout or isolation.

I'll also share how monk mode changed my life in ways that I would have never dreamed of. Monk mode gave me my dream business-mission and a life of freedom.

Let's dive in.

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  - Monk Mode Example
- How to Start Monk Mode
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  - 2. Plan Your Time
  - 3. Cut Out Waste-Time
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  - 5. Set Up Relief Valves
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    - 2. Weekly monk
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    - 5. Monk for life
- Is Monk Mode Right For You?
    - Socially anxious: don't let it be your excuse!
    - Introverts vs. Extroverts
    - Highly driven: it's a must for you guys
    - When to Avoid Monk Mode
- My Monk Mode
    - Work, Work, Work
    - Productivity Gain

What Is Monk Mode

Monk mode is the deliberate elimination or scaling back of anything that doesn't move you towards your goals.

Many men use it for self-development and mental clarity, so monk mode for most men means the elimination of pointless social interactions, dating, unhealthy habits, and time-wasting social media usage.

Why Monk Mode Works

Monk Mode "works" because it boosts productivity by eliminating all distractions.

In a way, all highly productive people are in monk mode, they just might not call it that way.

Monk Mode works because it allows you to focus deeply on the few things that matter, and that's the definition of efficiency.
If you want to reach your maximum potential, then you must cut out unnecessary time waste and spend more time honing your craft -or yourself-.

Finally, monk mode will increase your resilience and independence. If you were able to cut people and pastimes from your life, what does it say about you?
It says that you're independent and self-reliant.
A good monk is his own man.
And that will shoot up your confidence and self-esteem.

> **Successful monks are their own men**

Monk Mode Example

Here is one example of monk mode: it was the 31st of December when I wrote the first published version of this article.

It was near midnight, and fireworks were raging in the sky.
Part of me wanted to go in the big square, celebrating with my nephew who's visiting town with his friends.

But I had bigger goals to pursue.

That was the perfect capping of my monk 2018: a year with little socialization, lots of work, and a turning point in my life for the positive.

The following chapter is about how monk mode has worked for me (so far).
Later, I will present you with the general theories on how to effectively enter monk mode if you are inclined to do so.

How to Start Monk Mode

Here are the steps to start a successful monk mode that yields results:

1. Have a Purpose

If you are starting a monk mode without a clear purpose, then I would ask you if you are running or shielding from something.
A monk mode must have something you want and need to focus on.

It can be a skill you want to deepen, a (side) project you want to work on, a mental state or confidence level you want to reach, but might even be a posture you want to improve -or all of them together-.
It can also be all together, but it must be clear and *focused*. General self-improvement must be with you for your life and doesn't necessarily need a monk mode.

Ideally, you will make your purpose a *measurable* purpose.

2. Plan Your Time

Plan in advance what you are eliminating and what you will be doing during that time.

This is especially important if you are trying to overcome small addictions in your life and if you're not used to solo time.

Once you said no to your games, socializing, drinking, or whatever, then they must stay forbidden -unless they're part of your relief valves, more on it later-.

Also, remember this: your plans **cut out what's wasteful, not what you don't like**.
If the two overlap, great, but otherwise you must cut what's useless *depending on your purpose*.
If you're trying to improve social skills, then your monk mode will be monk-only relative to your typical friends but you'll go out to meet random events. If your goal is to become a professional videogame player, then, of course,

video games are not a wasteful activity for you.

3. Cut Out Waste-Time

A monk can cut out two different time wastes:

- Cut useless socialization
- Cut daily time waste

A serious monk mode will seek efficiencies in both realms.
A *really* serious monk who wants to go places quickly will ruthlessly cut waste in both areas. Those are what I call "holed-in monks".

But you don't have to go extreme right off the bat.
At a very low level of intensity, a budding monk will seek to cut out smaller activities. For example, you can start cutting out "Friday happy hour" and "Saturday clubbing".

At very high-level intensities, the pro-monk will do the opposite. **The pro-monk starts from a clean slate by removing *everything* that does not directly serve his purpose.** Then, he will only add non-purpose related activities that are important for his physical health or mental sanity -monk mode can be taxing, especially for extroverts-.

However, you must be strategic when cutting down, because the tendency is to start off too extreme.
Imagine you want to make your car as fast as possible, and you want to remove all unnecessary parts to cut down on the weight.
Well, you don't want to be that driver who doesn't even enjoy driving anymore because there is nothing left except for the steering wheel and an extremely uncomfortable driver seat.

Cut down all unnecessary activities, *while still* keeping your sanity *and* a good quality of life.

If you can't manage to go full monk yet, it's OK. You can work your way up to higher levels of monkdom step by step.
And that will help develop your mental resilience.

4. Add Enough Physical Exercise

If you go on a high-intensity monk mode and you do desk-based work -which will be the case for most of us-, then you won't be moving much if at all.

That's very unhealthy unless you intersperse it with some physical exercise.

I exercise while listening to audiobooks to maximize *all* of my time. You might prefer taking a walk every once in a while or going all out with weights in the gym.
Whatever you do, don't skimp on exercise (and sleep).

5. Set Up Relief Valves

Monk mode, proper monk mode, can be highly taxing.

If you are planning to decompress then you are just chilling and taking a break, so don't call it monk mode because that's *not* monk mode.

In my case, for example, the social relief was the weekly Toastmasters meeting -which also helped my development with public speaking and leadership experience since I was the president-.
And my personal relief valves are small "goal-hitting" celebrations I do in between work when I order food I love and open a nice bottle of wine.

You will be looking forward to these small celebrations and they will make your day.

Some other times I just listen to music while eating and/or dance around instead of the usual audiobook.

These all helped me stay cheerful and mentally strong.

Monk mode develops a new superpower: independence

5 Approaches to Monk Mode

There are different ways of going monk:

1. Hourly monk

The monk of the hour only allocates a few hours a day to monk mode. This is more akin to "*Deep Work*" than to monk mode.
But if you do it consistently and while removing time waste, then it's also, in a way, a mini-monk mode.

2. Weekly monk

Depending on your work, you could pick weekends for your monk mode. Or the other way around.

I like this approach because if you want to work on social skills you will never completely go off the grid for long stretches of time.
And if you are a more extrovert type of guy, you will still get your fill of socialization and can keep the monk efficiency for as long as you want.

3. Seasonal monk

I like this variant a lot, and in good part, that's what I did by intensifying my monk mode during winter and relaxing it during spring/summer.

You can pick a few months of the year when you will do monk mode, and then go back to "civilian life" during the

rest of the year.

If you live in a cold country for example winter is a perfect period to go monk mode.

Bears and some animals go into hibernation, you go into monk mode. No wonder we've become the most dominant species in the world :).

4. Intermittent monk

Work your ass off, achieve some big milestone, and then pull the plug and take it easy for a while.
A life of high efficiency and mini-retirements spread all over is an awesome life if you ask me.

A friend of mine did this also while working for a big corporation.
He'd put in a massive amount of time that accrued on his holiday, and he'd deliver such quality work that nobody would dare bust his balls when he eventually took off for months.

5. Monk for life

For some people and for some lines of work, a forever monk mode might do the trick.
This is not my style though and not something I'd recommend for many types of endeavor.
What's the point of a 100%, forever monk mode if you're not going to enjoy the fruits with some of the people that matter the most to you -or who *will* matter the most-?

Also for most lines of work, it's best to maintain some people contact, which will keep you grounded and will sometimes provide much valuable input.

Is Monk Mode Right For You?

Monk mode will work at different levels depending on personalities:

Socially anxious: don't let it be your excuse!

Socially anxious men should NOT use monk mode to stay within their comfort zone and avoid the world.

It's OK to take a break if they are not being successful. But they must use the break in a way that will really move them forward. Studying theories socialization, meditating, taking up some good courses, and then going out there more centered and knowledgeable.

Introverts vs. Extroverts

Monk mode is surely easier on introverts.
Introverts recharge their batteries with alone time and they won't suffer nearly as much from socialization withdrawal.

Monk mode will be tougher on ambiverts and extroverts.
The good news is that they can manage to stay away from socialization and social time waste, they will come out of monk mode so much more powerful: they controlled their urge to socialize and talk. What else can they do?

Highly driven: it's a must for you guys

Monk mode is the bread and butter of highly driven, self-development-focused men.

They can zero in and get so much more done in so much less time.

Or all of them together. But not monk mode.

> **Monk mode requires no effort for the driven man: it's what he naturally falls into**

When to Avoid Monk Mode

Young men must prioritize social and life EXPERIENCE for optimal growth.

Watch this video to better understand why Monk Mode may not be optimal for young men:

My Monk Mode

My monk mode was an "85% social monk mode" and a "95%+ wasteful activities monk mode".

For most of the year, I went out only on Wednesdays to a local Toastmasters club where I was the president. Otherwise, I got groceries delivered at home, ordered takeaway food, and did the vast majority of my purchases online -of course-.

Exceptions were a small holiday in January, some dates, some rare walks outside, and some loose ends I was forced to take care of.

A big change compared to my past life.
As an introvert, I've always been comfortable on my own. And I never "needed" socialization much.
But since my past life entailed a "normal" office job, more dates and more women, more friends, and more outings, monk mode surely was a revolution in my life.

What have I been doing?

Work, Work, Work

I worked every day.
Including every weekend.
As a matter of fact, I worked every single day of the year.

Just to be clear, in "work" I include reading and researching, which are a big chunk of what drives this website. Sure, they are pleasurable for me, but so is most of the work I do. Monk mode is not supposed to be painful.

Some evenings I ended the day where I really looked forward to my habitual meditation because I was mentally exhausted, but I felt great.

Productivity Gain

I worked hard to make my time as productive as possible.

I listen to audiobooks while eating, and I started shaving my head with a razor instead of a clipper. How does that make me more productive, you might wonder?
Because the clipper is too noisy while I can listen to audiobooks using a razor! That's how crazy I've been in my quest to squeeze productivity from anywhere I can.

I also mostly structure my days around routines. Not every day the *exact* same, but *very* similar.

My cooking is also simplified: it's both healthy and simple to prepare.
And the single biggest productivity hack for me, as simple as that sounds, has been online groceries.

And 2018 is when I put The Power Moves on the map of men's self-development thanks to 1 post a day, many videos, and launching the first version of our course.

People Skills: Summary & Review (Robert Bolton)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

People Skills is a book on social skills by Robert Bolton.
Bolton says it's the culmination of 6 years of work and research on communication skills, and it focuses mostly on assertive communication

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Roadblocks to Communication
  - Listening Skills
  - Submission – Aggression Continuum
  - Pay-Offs of Each Type
  - Assertive Communication
  - Conflict Resolution
  - The 3 Qualities of Great Communication
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Submission and aggression lead to sub-par lives: assertive communication is the only solution
- Empathy is crucial for good relationships and it's on a continuum from apathy to sympathy
- Avoiding conflict builds resentment: proper conflict resolution instead allows relationships to thrive

Full Summary

Robert Bolton prefaces *People Skills* saying that albeit interpersonal communication is the human specie's greatest achievement, most people communicate poorly.

Poor communication has heavy consequences, which include loneliness, emotional distance as well as overall personal effectiveness.

Roadblocks to Communication

There are

- Criticizing
- Name-calling, including putting down or stereotyping
- Diagnosing
- Praising Evaluatively
- Ordering
- Threatening

- Moralizing
- Excessive/Inappropriate Questioning: closed-ended questions are often barriers in a relationship;
- Advising
- Diverting: Pushing the other's problems aside through distraction.
- Logical argument: Attempting to convince the other with an appeal to facts or logic
- Reassuring

Judging

Criticizing, name-calling, diagnosing, and praising are all variations of judging our speaking partner.

Listening Skills

People Skills dedicates several chapters to listening.

Listening is a combination of hearing what the other person says and *involvement* in what he says.

Robert Bolton divides listening skills into 3 clusters:

- **Attending skills** (body language, eye contact, and overall reassurance that the listener is psychologically present)
- **Following skills** (door openers, encouragement such as "hmm-hmm), open questions, and attentive silence such as not trying to fill every single silence out of nervousness but letting the speaker have some time to add further thoughts)
- **Reflecting skills** (paraphrasing, reflecting feelings & meanings, summative reflections, all making sure you understand each other while communicating understanding and acceptance)

Clarity of understanding is fundamental for anyone striving for effectiveness in life.

> **Vague solutions to vague problems lead to ineffective action.**

Reflective Responses

Reflective responses help the speaker to open up and feel accepted. And eventually, more ready to hear your point of view.

Bolton says you should keep using reflective responses until the speaker:

- reaches the core problem
- explores and begins to understand his basic problem
- experiences your acceptance and accurate empathy

Sometimes people will give you questions that will not make it easy for you to let them open up.
Bolton recommends that you discard the question and reflect on the meaning of the sentence as if it were a remark.
Example:

> **Sean**: I thought about this and I have no idea what to do. What would you do?
>
> **Morris**: No easy, this one's really got you stumped!
>
> **Sean**: Totally. It's one of the toughest choices in my life.

In the above example indeed jumping in at his question would have been too rushed.
It was too early to offer an opinion, it's best instead to let the speaker fully come clean and share all his burdens and

thoughts. *Then* he *might be* ready. After what Burton calls the "additive responses" to share your opinion, you should do more listening and reflective responses.

Submission – Aggression Continuum

Robert Bolton says that a useful way of thinking about assertion is to place it on a continuum going from submission to aggression.

Submission – Assertion – Aggression

Robert Bolton touches a bit on the "*too nice*" syndrome.
I really liked it when he said that **the submissive individual is also disrespecting others because he implies they are not strong enough to handle a confrontation** and/or their own responsibilities.

This is how Bolton describes instead an aggressive individual:

> Almost always wins arguments, may speak loudly and may be abusive, rude, and sarcastic.
>
> Sometimes it feels like they're carrying a "chip on their shoulders".
>
> May berate clerks and waitresses for poor service, dominate subordinates and family members, and insist on having the final word.
>
> Tends to overpower others with the point of view that: "this is what I want; what you want is of lesser importance—or of no importance at all."

And here is instead the description of an assertive individual:

> Utilizes methods of communication that enable him to maintain self-respect, pursue happiness and the satisfaction of his needs, and defend his rights and personal space without abusing or dominating other people.
>
> While meeting his own needs, he does not violate the needs of others or trespass on their personal space
>
> True assertiveness is a way of being in the world which confirms one's own individual worth and dignity while simultaneously confirming and maintaining the worth of others.

Pay-Offs of Each Type

Each strategy often has its own physical and emotional payoffs:

Submission Pay-Offs

Submission is appealing to many because it avoids conflicts and because it's a way of getting people's approval. He also has fewer responsibilities, living in the shadow and protection of those who do take charge and responsibilities. If things go wrong, he has no decisions to take and no blame to shoulder. That way he makes no waves whatsoever and can live a "quieter life".
Finally, submission can sometimes be used to control others -the author quotes Friz Perls here-.

Cons of submission: the more indirect a person is, the less healthy he is.

Aggression Pay-Offs

A sense of power and control and, often getting things his own way.

Cons of Aggression: many behave aggressively because they feel weak and, in the long run, it does make them weaker by making lots of enemies (case in point here: smart leaders don't make enemies).

Finally, aggression tends to alienate people. Aggressive people often don't respect people who submit to them and

yet they fear an equal relationship.
But, romantically, dominant-dominated doesn't work well in romantic relationships either as the dominated individual will grow to resent the dominant one.

Also, read:

- Power Hungry Men
- How to Win Friends And Influence People

Assertion Pay-Offs

As you can imagine, the assertion is the best option the vast majority of the time.

Assertive people like themselves and have fulfilling relationships with interactions that release positive energy in both.

Assertion has few cons and it also reduces tensions and anxieties.

> **Listening and assertion are the yin and yang of communication**

Assertive Communication

Typical assertive communication contains three parts:

- Nonjudgmental description of the behavior to be changed
- Disclosure of the asserter's feelings
- Clarification of the concrete and tangible effect of the other person's behavior on the asserter.

This is a template for assertive communication, to be stated as succinctly as possible:

> "When you [state the behavior nonjudgmentally], I feel [disclose your feelings] because [clarify the effect on your life]."

Make your message factual and don't infer anything about the other person's motives, feelings, intentions, or personality.

Be Ready for Push-Back

Most people have a strong tendency to get defensive, so when you send an assertive message you are likely to experience a "pushback".

Robert Bolton dedicates a whole chapter to the "pushback phenomenon".
To handle the push-back Bolton introduces a six steps process:

1. preparation
2. assertive message
3. silence
4. reflective listening to the other's defensive response
5. recycling steps 2 to 4 as often as necessary
6. focusing on a solution.

Persistence, says Bolton, is a crucial aspect of assertion. People struggle to become assertive or they think it doesn't work because they give up too soon on the very first defensive response.

Conflict Resolution

Bolton says that conflict can certainly be destructive and harmful. Yet the absence of conflict is not positive either.

He quotes Gibson Winter saying that:

> Most families today need more honest conflict and less suppression of feeling (…) We cannot find personal intimacy without conflict…. Love and conflict are inseparable

My Note:
John Gottman suggests with his research that there are plenty of happy and long-lasting couples that don't really ever fight.
Yet, I suspect, Gottman measured couples who were not angry at each other and passive-aggressive. Because people who repress negative feelings breed resentment that hardly makes for happy relationships.

Conflict Resolution Method

Bolton's conflict resolution method has three steps:

1. Treat the other person with respect
2. Listen until you fully understand and can reflect content, feelings, and meanings
3. Briefly state your own views, needs, and feelings

Listening will make sure that you can focus on their emotions and help them overcome their heightened emotional state.

Bolton uses a wonderful example from Mark Anthony saving his own life with a speech using this method, great stuff.
Also, read:

- Crucial Conversations
- Difficult Conversations
- Verbal Judo

Different Ways of Dealing With Conflict

These are some common bad ways of approaching conflict:

- denial of the problem
- avoidance
- capitulation (builds resentment, also check 12 Rules for Life)
- domination (builds resentment and it rarely gets real buy-in)
- compromise

All of them might have a reason to be from time to time, but overall they are win/lose strategies and poor long term options.

Bolton says something very interesting I have also noticed:

> I have discovered that many of the less assertive people capitulate when lacking "position power," but they dominate when in a position that places them over someone else.

A much more helpful approach is instead to consider both people's needs:

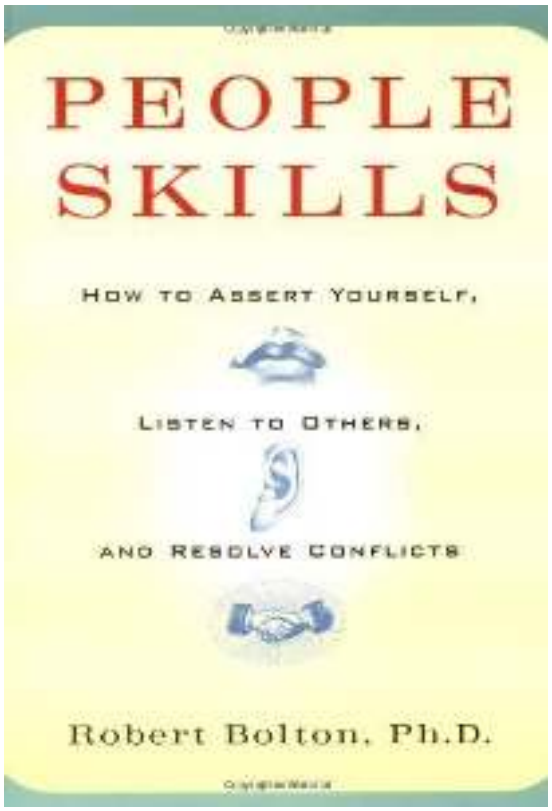
1. Define the problem in terms of needs, not solutions
2. Brainstorm possible solutions.
3. Select the solution that meets both parties' needs
4. Plan who does what
5. Implement the solution
6. Check later how well it turned out

The 3 Qualities of Great Communication

Communication skills are crucial, but they are not enough and you need the right personality traits for effective interpersonal skills:

- **genuineness** (honesty and openness about one's feelings, needs, and ideas)
- **nonpossessive love** (accepting and loving people for who they are)
- **empathy** (seeing, hearing, and feeling things from their point of view)

Finally, the author introduces the apathy-empathy-sympathy continuum and explains how, again, virtue is in the middle.
Great stuff again and I invite you to get the full book for more.



Real-Life Applications

People Skills is all about practical applications in our day-to-day life. The most pressing takeaway for you guys is to find the sweet spot between submission and aggression.

CONS

I loved People Skills, yet I think that:

The "I feel" part of the assertion format can be out of place sometimes
Thanks to John I have also come to agree that Bolton's standard format is not suitable for all situations.
The "I feel" part for example is out of place at work, where you're supposed to be more factual and results-driven.
And it can also be best left out when

It Could Have Been Briefer
There are a lot of quotes and a few tangential topics that could have been removed.

More Examples
There are a lot of examples, yet some more examples could have taken the place of all those quotes and references and the book would have become a real "how to" of assertiveness.

Bad Generalization on Aggression
This is really a detail I'm nitpicking, but Bolton says:

> The widespread aggression in our society has made it increasingly dangerous to casually enjoy simple pleasures we once took for granted. The evening stroll in the park (..)

That has little to do with "widespread aggression", also taking into account that, as he says, the vast majority of people are submissive these days.

PROS

I cited and leveraged this book for Power University, so that says a lot about the boatloads of wisdom and insights it contains.
Not only the assertive communication part but also the psychology is enlightening.

Review

People Skills is a highly underrated book.

It's a manual of assertive communication and one of the best communication skills books I have read so far.

I also quoted it and leveraged it for Power University, which is the biggest compliment I can pay to any author since I only use the best of the best for Power University.

The major con is that Bolton applies his "assertive template", which includes very high levels of emotional vulnerability, even in situations that do not fit that tone -like the workplace-.
John correctly first noted this issue.

Edit: downrating (thanks to John!)
"People's Skills" has been downrated from 5 stars to 4.5 after John correctly pointed out that applying Bolton's format to all situations can lead to a lot of misapplications.
Please read more here:

Check the:

- **When communicating at work avoid the "I feel part"**

For more good books:

- **Best communication skills books**
- Best social skills books

or get the book on Amazon

Best Dating Books for Guys

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

There are *countless* dating books for guys.

And countless courses, podcasts, blogs, and YouTube channels as well.

So, how do you choose who to learn from?
This is where this list of best dating resources comes in handy.

Someone could say that I am well-placed to help you prioritize your learning.
Together with plenty of personal experience in the field, I bring a decade of intense studies in *psychology*, *evolutionary psychology*, seduction, games women play -and manipulative games women play-, as well as social and power dynamics.

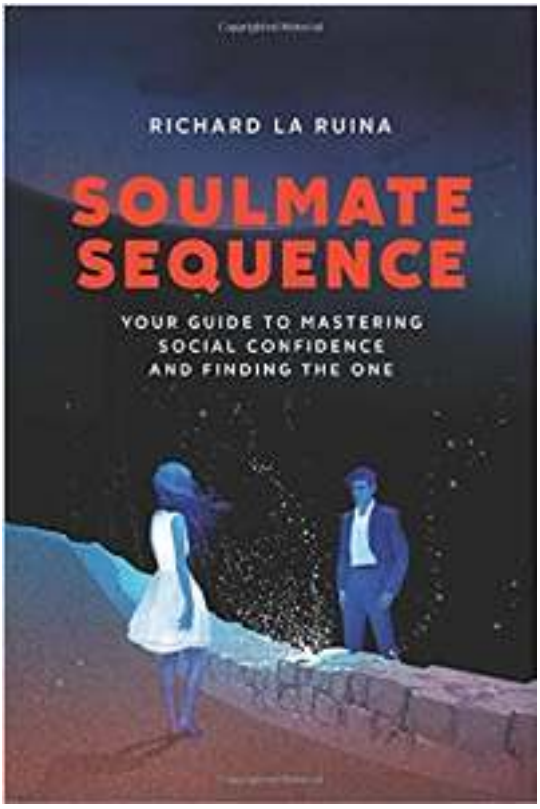
And here are the current best dating books for men:

Contents

- 13. Soulmate Sequence
- 12. Attract the Right Girl
- 11. Models
- 10. How to Be a 3% Man
- 9. The Man's Guide to Women
- 8. Alpha Male Strategies
- 7. Minimal Game
- 6. The Art of Seduction
- 5. Fundamentals of Female Dynamics
- 4. Swoon
- 3. How to Make Girls Chase
- 2. Mate
- 1. Seduction University

- Best Dating Courses for Guys
  - 4. Invincible
  - 3. One Date
  - 2. The System
  - 1. Power University
- Dating Literature for Guys: Overview
  - Wrapping Up

13. Soulmate Sequence



By Richard La Ruina
Summary | Amazon

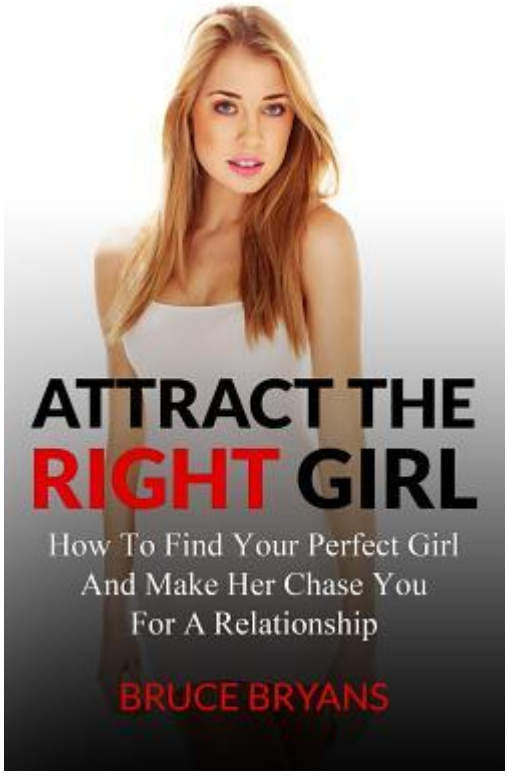
Richard La Ruina explicitly says that he now writes as a happily married man who always preferred relationships to swinging.

So “Soulmate Sequence” tends to be slightly more geared toward providers and guys seeking a relationship.
La Ruina understands dating psychology and social dynamics, and the only reason the book is not any higher is because it’s not 100% focused on dating, but also on socializing, making more friends, networking, and even how to make a good impression on your soulmate’s parents.
Finally, it also contains tips for women, so it’s not exclusively a dating book for men.

On the plus side, if you want to learn how to have good conversations that flow naturally, then this one might have some of the best dialogue examples on this whole list.

> Quote: The key to all success in all social interactions, as I’m sure you’ve noticed, comes back to making other human beings feel good.

12. Attract the Right Girl



by Bruce Brian
Summary | Kindle

This is the only dating book for men I have read to truly turn the tables on dating.

Bryan does not focus on getting the girl, but on choosing the right girl. And he has tons of great advice on how it feels like when you truly meet a high-quality life companion.

For example, he says that a good woman will make you feel like you matter to her, and that what you do matters to the world.
That is true, and that's what I experienced in the only relationship I truly miss in my life.

when you meet that woman, he says, you will want to do things for her. He says:

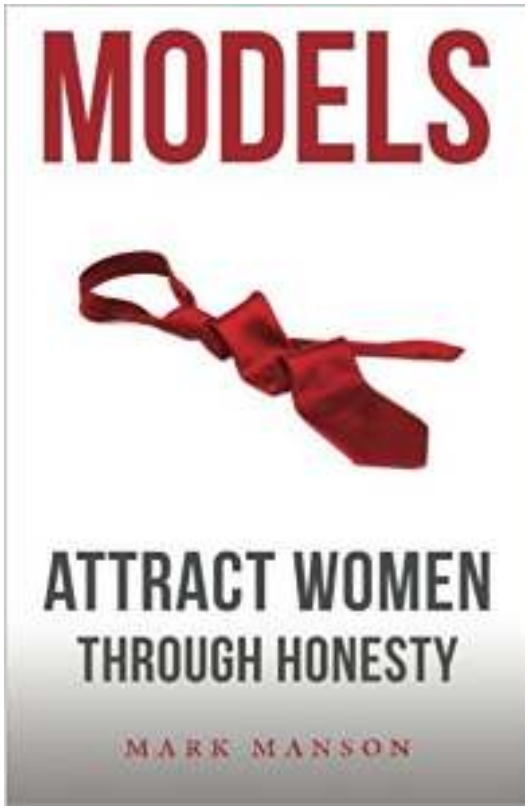
> It's a strange feeling in which you'll WANT to take care of her and treat her like a queen.
> You'd fight for her if the situation called for it, and you'd gladly make the sacrifices necessary to ensure her happiness.

But don't worry, this is not a white-knight book.
Bryan says that the right woman will do the exact same for you, supporting you through your life endeavor physically and emotionally, taking care of you and of your castle.

Update: *The Tactical Guide to Women* approaches dating with the same angle but in a more thorough and scientific fashion.

> Quote: Dating an average woman that isn't a good match for you or who isn't highly attracted to you or interested in adding value to your life is actually WORSE than being single.

11. Models



by Mark Manson
Summary | Amazon

Models are in between a self-development text, a high-level "mindsets" text, and an actual book on dating strategies and techniques.

Indeed, the reason it's not featured any higher in this best dating books for men list is that it's a bit *too* general and "general public friendly".

What do I mean by that?
I mean that either because he really believes in it or in an effort to reach a wider general audience, Mark Manson takes a rather "safe" stance.
In simpler words: this book is a bit like "PC-dating advice".

He says for example that relationships are more fulfilling than sleeping around, that being honest is better than playing games, and that embracing vulnerability is the most powerful thing you can do
And those make most book reviewers nod in approval while making for wonderful Instagram quotes.

And it's not that they are not true, but… Not always.
Sometimes, or often, the opposite is true.
Too much vulnerability is bad, for example.
And it's also true that sleeping around can be great fun. And it can be better than relationships in certain periods of life and, for certain womanizing personalities, it can be better for, like… Ever.

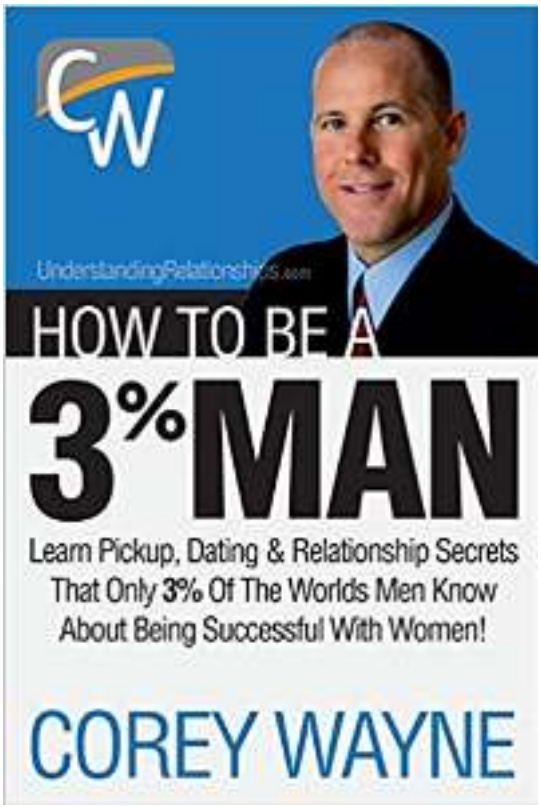
Also, I'm ambivalent about Mark's message of "dropping all games and being honest".
That kind of message does not equip the readers with the knowledge and understanding of dating dynamics.
Because women *do* play games -just like men do, it's simply part and parcel of being humans-.

But still, *Models* is a great book coming from a healthy and secure mindset, and I can give it a big thumbs up.

> Quote: Challenge yourself to find the good and beautiful thing inside of everyone. It's there. It's your job to

> find it. Not their job to show you.

10. How to Be a 3% Man



by Corey Wayne
Summary | Audiobook

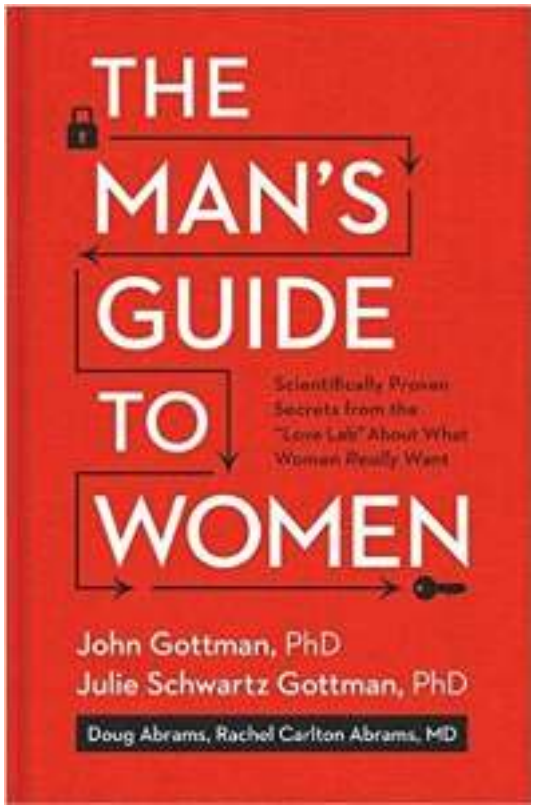
How to Be a 3% Man is the most popular book on this list, at least going by Amazon's reviews.

I found a few issues and blemishes in there, especially when it comes to the actual social dynamics and psychology of dating.

But there is a reason why it still makes its way into this best dating books for men list.
And it's because it covers most topics and most high-level mindsets from a position of genuine and in a way that will provide a big bang for the buck to the average guy reading it.

> Quote: Masculine energy is about drive, purpose, mission, succeeding, accomplishing, overcoming obstacles, and achieving goals

9. The Man's Guide to Women



by John Gottman
Summary | Audiobook

Many guys reading the "best dating books for guys list" want to date better because they want a girlfriend and a relationship.

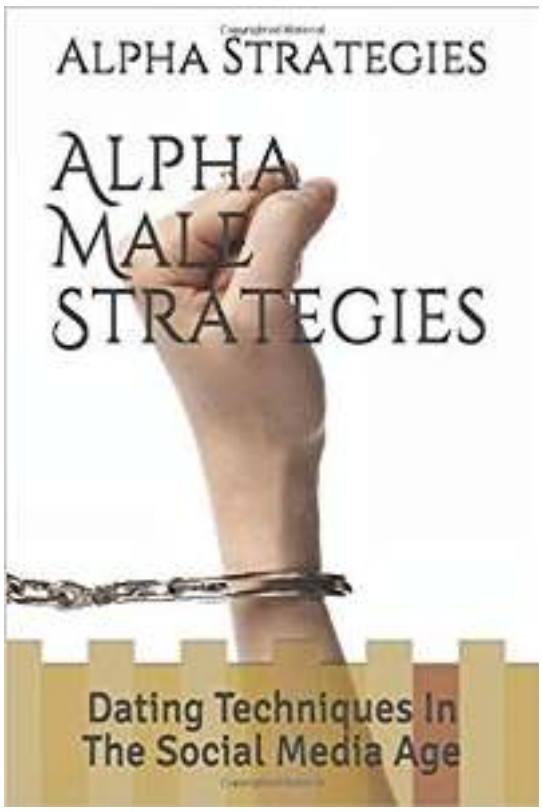
Well, then these guys need to get a professional when it comes to relationships.
Because the Achilles' heel of the dating literature indeed is that often -but not always- the authors focus on "being alpha" while understanding little of relationship dynamics and what makes a relationship successful.

And that's why I put a decade-long researcher on relationships such as Gottman on this list.

His book mixes proper advice on understanding women with how to develop a strong, happy, and (hopefully) long-lasting relationship.

> Quote: News flash: Men, you have the power to make or break a relationship

8. Alpha Male Strategies



By Alpha Male Strategies
Summary | Audiobook

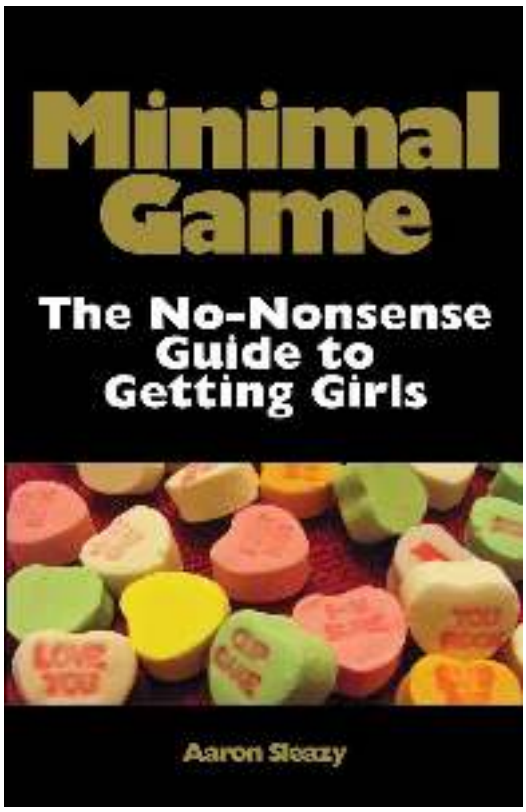
Dating is seen from a red-pill perspective.

That means that AMS not only condones but encourages manipulation and "stringing women along for as long as possible" because, you know… Women deserve it.
And of course, the old red pill tenet that "women are incapable of loving a man".

That being said, except for those two major drawbacks, this is a solid book.
AMS has a unique and very different approach from most other sources on this page. He focuses on a man's purpose, which should always be ahead of a woman.

> Quote: If you want your woman to submit to you in the bedroom, then you better damn well make sure she's submitting to you outside of the bedroom, it's that simple.

7. Minimal Game



By Aaron Sleazy
Summary | Kindle

Aaron Sleazy approach to games and dating is anti-PUA.

He says that men and women have been meeting, dating, and mating for all our history. This is something that comes naturally, and overcomplicating the process with complex systems and acronyms is going to move farther away from your goals, not closer.

Sleazy's approach is based on three simple, solid, and foundational aspects:

1. Maximize your sexual market value by working on yourself
2. Make yourself an interesting and attractive human being *who is similar to the women you want to attract*
3. Don't spam-approach. Target your approaches to women whom you like and who are most likely to like you

Why is it important to be similar to the women you like?
Says Sleazy:

> For the very most part you will meet women whose life has some connection to yours. Everything else is a pipe dream.

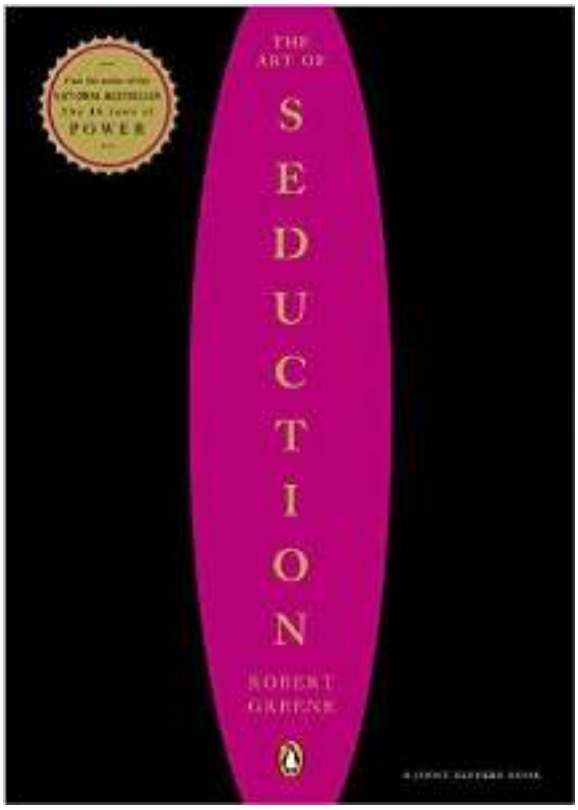
Maybe "pipe dream" is a bit on the hyperbole side, but it's difficult not to agree with Sleazy on the importance of similarity and market positioning.

Aaron Sleazy's approach to the game is simple, and especially well-suited for the layperson who does not want to become a "PUA" (Sleazy made a name of himself debunking the PUA industry).
Sleazy's approach is not about walking up to as many random women as you see.
It's about target selection. And dropping slight hints, and then seeing if they bite. If they bite, they like you, and you can take things further.

I like Sleazy's approach.

> Quote: Seduction isn't making someone do what they don't want to do. Seduction is enticing someone into doing what they secretly want to do already.

6. The Art of Seduction



by Robert Greene
Summary | Audiobook

Lemme say this right away:

"The Art of Seduction" is not the best go-to resource to date and seduce in the modern world.

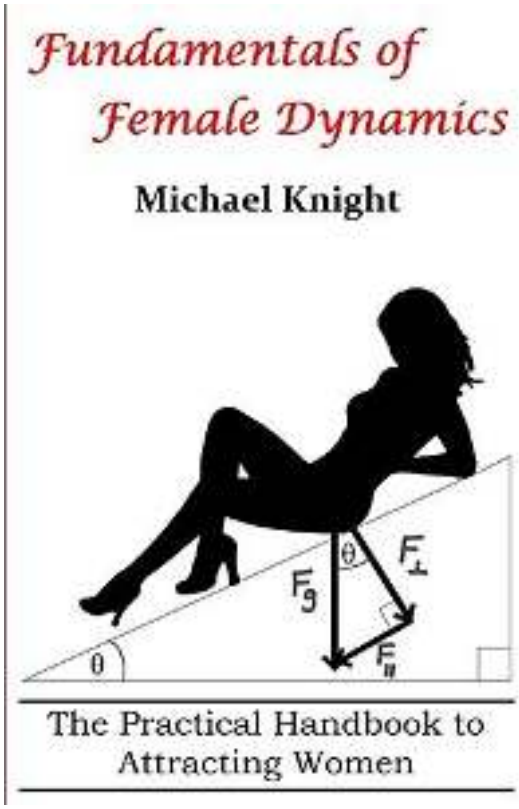
Greene uses his typical flowery language that sells and markets so well to depict a slow-burning type of seduction that would perfect… On paper and if people had all the time in the world.
But in a fast-moving world, most of the time, you are probably better off with a quicker and more efficient "in or out" approach.

Robert Greene doesn't seem to be a womanizer himself indeed.
BUT, he is a deep connoisseur of human nature and psychology.

And no other dating book for guys goes so in-depth when it comes to the psychological analysis of seducers and in-depth psychology of seduction -including the dark psychology of seduction-.
Indeed, "The Art of Seduction" is a favorite of mine as one of the deepest texts when it comes to understanding not just heterosexual seduction, but also social seduction.

> Quote: There is too little mystery in the world; too many people say exactly what they feel or want.

5. Fundamentals of Female Dynamics



by Michael Knight
Summary | Kindle

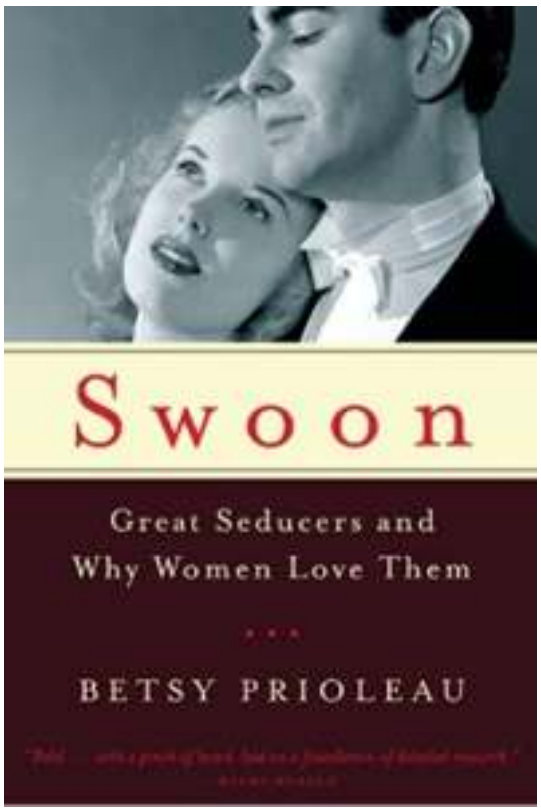
Fundamentals of Female Dating, one of the very best dating books for guys, is a great example that the link between quality and popularity is a very tenuous one.

Indeed, albeit its great content, *Fundamentals of Female Dating* remains one of the most underrated dating books for men.

Well, at least now you know about it :).

> Quote: Persisting through adversity is what truly separates the men from the boys.

4. Swoon



By Betsy Prioleau
Review

Just like Robert Greene, Betsy Prioleau reviews some of the best seducers in history.

And in her groundbreaking analysis, she contradicts almost everything written by (male) dating coaches on this list.

Most dating coaches tell you:

- Don't invest
- Don't state your emotions and feelings
- Don't chase (and make her chase, see below)
- Don't compliment girls too much

And what do some of the best seducers in history do?
They wear their hearts on their sleeves, they pursue with abandon, compose poetry, and profess their devotion and intentions from the very beginning.

This book tells us that hard and fast rules don't apply and it's more about *how* and *who* does certain things.

And it's also more than a list of "Darwinian traits", the author explains, as she shows us example after example of successful seducers who were neither particularly attractive, rich, or dependable.

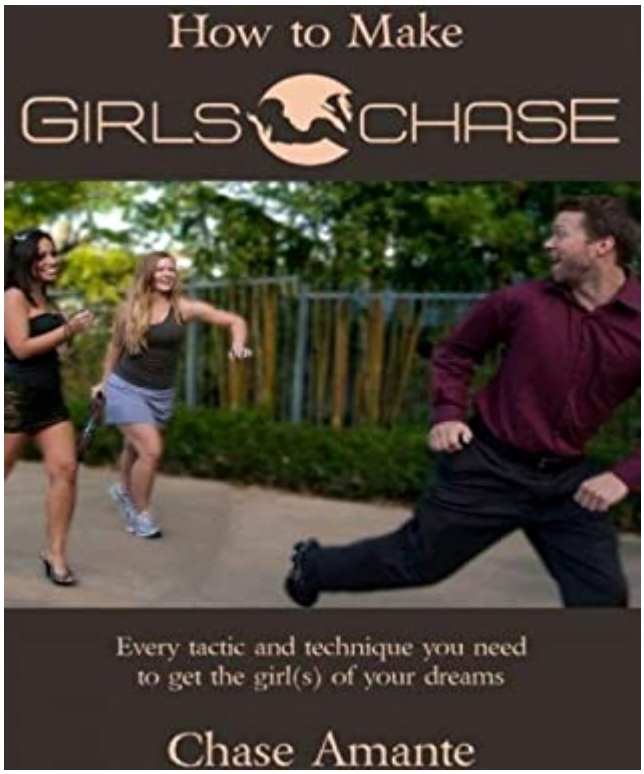
Swoon is more for advanced folks, though.
Most guys who want to improve their dating are probably better served with other books on this list. Operating like the seducers in this book is more for certain types of personalities, and it's a fine line between an effective seducer who wears his heart on his sleeves and makes women swoon… And a guy who comes across as desperate (or a stalker).

But for those who *really* want to understand seduction and seduction power dynamics, this is your book.

> Quote: Gamer convert Neil Strauss says he studied with pickup artists for two years to "become what every woman wants—not what she says she wants, but what she really wants." But he went to the wrong school. Real-

> world enchanters provide a different message as well as a different grade of woman from Strauss's sad assortment

3. How to Make Girls Chase



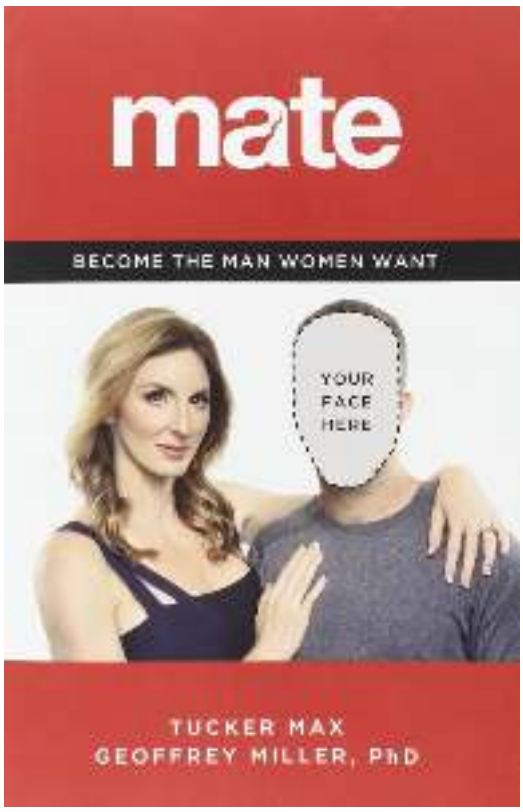
By Chase Amante
Summary & Review

Chase Amante started his website after having been involved in the early "pick-up community", back when it meant asking opinions, working groups, "negging" and learning "routines".

Chase's approach was simpler, more direct, more 'conversationally normal', and with a stronger focus on being a high-value man (although still downplaying some aspects of a man's sexual market value).
All combined with a solid understanding of *human psychology* and dating dynamics (=high mating intelligence).

It's been a while since "How to Make Girls Chase" was published and, as far as I am aware, it hasn't had any updates.
And despite that, it remains one of the best dating books for guys.

2. Mate



By Tucker Max & Geoffrey Miller
Summary | Audiobook

Tucker Max knows how to rack up a lay count.
And Geoffrey Miller knows the science of dating and attraction.

So… Do we get the perfect combo of both worlds?

Well, “What Women Want” is more oriented toward long-term relationships and better geared toward a provider style of dating.
But most guys don’t want to be pick-up artists, and that’s one of the reasons why “What Women Want” ranks so high on this list.

The second reason is that this is the best book to actually understand what women want, as it tackles the fundamentals better than any other resource on this list.
And since the basics account for 80% of your success, “What Women Want” gives you the biggest bang for the buck, in the shortest amount of time, at a price that is much cheaper than any other course featured in this list (including my own).

> Quote: If she just wanted to come, she’d have stayed home with a bottle of white wine, Fifty Shades of Gray, and her vibrator. If she’s with you, it’s because she wants more than just an orgasm. She wants a sexual connection. She wants to feel sexually desired.

1. Seduction University

by Lucio Buffalmano
Overview

Technically not a book, but dating is best learned with videos.

Seduction University bridges the gap between science, experience, power dynamics, and seduction.

What's unique about Seduction University is:

1. **Combining science with experience** (hundreds of papers are cited here and there are videos, dialogues, and texts examples all over it)
2. **Addressing dating and dating strategies both as a provider and as a lover** (most resources teach or recommend one *or* the other, but both work, and both have a place in men's life)
3. **Addressing power dynamics, manipulation, mind control, and games people play** (something that was sorely missing)
4. **Seduction**: most dating books and courses are about getting a girlfriend, or getting sex. But seduction is where it's really at

> Quote: Sometimes the difference between disgusted self-rejection and one of the best days of her life lies only in his emotional intelligence.

Best Dating Courses for Guys

Let's be honest:

It's difficult to learn dating and any social skills without being able to look at real-life examples.

Maybe you are sending off nervous vibes, or you are teasing too much, or you come across too submissive… But you will never know unless you see examples of submissive and effective behavior.

And that's where courses come in handy: they can *show* you videos.
So here is the list of the best dating courses:

4. Invincible

by David Tian

Summary & Review

David Tian seems to be mostly focused on the Asian population with his marketing, but the product and content are good for everyone.

He mixes Tony Robbin's material with concepts from "*The Art of Seduction*" (without crediting the latter),
Tian places a strong focus on fundamentals and he shows high mating intelligence with a good understanding of dating dynamics and *human psychology*.

The high price tag, the highest in this whole list, contributes to the weight down and doesn't help it feature any higher.
Plus the fact that it has few real-life examples.

---

3. One Date

By Chase Amante
Summary & Review

One Date is one of the best products when it comes to content and information.

No mental states, no "transformation", no colored pills or anything: just great content and information.

Chase introduces a new concept here, such as how to structure a date depending on the type of woman. So you get an "excitement" type of date, a "connection" type of date, plus a compliance-heavy type of date.

That rings very true to me and it's an important distinction to make.
On the other hand, if you want a long-term girlfriend, you probably should seduce following your own style and attract in your life the type of woman that best vibes with you.

I rate it "only" N.7 overall and N.3 in the course list because of the podcast/interview style, which I didn't particularly like -I think there are more efficient ways to deliver information on a course-.

Otherwise, big thumbs up for content and information: Chase and the team are great teachers.

---

2. The System

By Todd Valentine
Summary & Review

The System is here as a placeholder for Todd's work, and the same could be said of most of Todd Valentine's products.

To begin with, I really like Todd's attitude.
He masterfully mixes practice and real-world knowledge with scientifically sound, mating-intelligent information.

And the second advantage of Todd's course is that he shows the actual infields.
Todd is not a teacher who stays put in the class. He gets his hands dirty, so to speak, and puts his face where his mouth is.

Even as a non-beginner, I still could learn a lot and tweak my style in a way that further increased my effectiveness.

1. Power University

Fellas, you know this:

Women want men who are more than they are.
More dominant, more confident, more leader-like, more money-endowed.

In a word: more powerful than they are.

And that's where a complete course on how to gain not just attraction, but also status and men's respect is foundational in dating.
That respect you get from men is also respect you get from women. And it's a must-have antecedent to attraction.

Ie.: no respect, no attraction.

Get a free preview with our newsletter.

Dating Literature for Guys: Overview

The overall dating literature for men is spotty.

You ca find some good stuff, some *great* stuff, and also some not-so-good information.

The issue is that it's a field originally attracted men who were:

- **On the spectrum, with poor social skills**: jumped into seduction without good social skills
- **Bitter towards women**: and spreading misogyny
- **High dark triads**, doing all the classical things dark triads do, including selling half-baked courses

Worry not though, the dating industry for men has evolved massively, and today there is plenty of good advice. This article distills the best dating and seduction advice for men. And tells you why they're on this list, and what you are going to learn in each one of them.

Wrapping Up

You have just finished a list of the best dating advice for guys available on the market.

I only include products and books I have personally consumed -but I have consumed a lot, including almost all of the most popular names in the seduction space-.

However, I always remain open-minded to new entries.
This list, like all our other lists, is a work in progress that will always be updated.

Sign up for the newsletter or like the Facebook page for any updates.

Change Log

I removed "*Date-Onomics*", "*The Evolution of Desire*", and "*Attraction Explained*". All great books are based on solid science and research, but all the relevant and practical information is teased out in "Seduction University", so they were redundant.

I also removed "*No More Mr. Nice Guy*", since albeit it can be useful for some guys, it's not strictly a dating book for men.

Creativity Inc: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Creativity Inc.* (2014) author Ed Catmull shares the secrets that he learned over 30 years as president of Pixar on how to develop a culture fostering innovation and creativity.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Creativity Inc. Summary
  - Barriers to Creativity
  - Removing Barriers Is Company's Responsibility
  - Look For Solutions, Not Blame
  - Leaders Must Give The Example
  - Honesty: Share the Problems
  - You Are Not Your Idea
  - People Before Ideas
  - Don't Push Too Hard on Efficiency
- Creativity Inc. Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- It's the organization's task to ensure a culture that fosters creativity within the structure of a financially viable company
- There must be no stigma on failure in a creative organization
- You are not your idea: learn not to treat your ideas as if they were a part of yourself

Creativity Inc. Summary

Creativity Inc. contains a lot of stories about Pixar and Steve Jobs. I will skip them in this summary to focus instead on the condensed nuggets of wisdom.

Barriers to Creativity

Ed Catmull says that there are a few barriers standing in the way of creativity that people and organizational culture need to overcome:

- **Fear of change**

Clinging to the status quo and what's worked in the past.

- **Fear of speaking up**

A good culture that wants to foster creativity must make it easier for everyone to speak up, criticize, and share ideas. It's especially important in hierarchical organizations where lower-level employees can feel intimidated by

bosses and management.

- **Fear of failure**

The fear of failure, present in almost each one of us, stands in the way of trying, thinking, and executing new and daring ideas.

- **Fear of uncertainty**

Many of us tend to cling to the “devil we know” rather

Ed Catmull though doesn’t depict fear as an “always bad evil” -like in *Linchpin* for example-.
An appropriate amount of fear indeed also helps to keep the company financially sound and it can help us make good decisions.

The goal, he says, is to uncouple fear from failure:

> One of the biggest barriers is fear, and while failure comes with the territory, fear shouldn’t have to. The goal, then, is to uncouple fear and failure—to create an environment in which making mistakes doesn’t strike terror into your employees’ hearts

Removing Barriers Is Company’s Responsibility

Bringing fears to zero is probably not possible nor advisable.
But since most people’s fear are so strongly embedded, the need for most creative companies is to reduce fear and the fear of failure.

And reducing fears is the organization’s responsibility.

And that’s, in my opinion, the biggest added value of Creativity Inc: as the leader of a creative organization, Ed Catmull shares all his learning on how to foster an environment that is open to failure, to learning, and to the sharing of ideas.

Look For Solutions, Not Blame

When a problem comes up, companies with a healthy culture that fosters creativity look for solutions rather than blame.

A quick way to realize if your company has a bad mindset towards failure is to ask yourself what happens when a mistake is discovered. Do people shut down and turn inward? Or do they try to untangle the root causes of the issues? Do people ask what’s the solution or do they ask “whose fault is this”?

Leaders Must Give The Example

The best way to foster a culture that is open to mistakes and learns from them is through the leaders.

The leaders must give the example of admitting, analyzing, and learning from their mistakes.
When they do that, everyone around will feel it’s safe to do the same.

Honesty: Share the Problems

Ed Catmull says that by sharing problems and sensitive information you make your employees feel like owners of the company.

And when they are aware of the problems they also become part of the solution.
“Your employees are smart”, says the author, “that’s why you hired them”. and they know when you are delivering a

message that's been heavily massaged. They will be looking for the hidden meaning and spending energy on gossiping.

Similarly, when you deliver solutions to implement, share the thoughts behind the solution.

You Are Not Your Idea

A concept I love and which for me was the biggest takeaway from Creative Inc. is that we need to delink ourselves from our ideas because, simply, we are not our ideas.

That means that if we propose something and people don't love it right away or, shudder, are criticized and rejected, then be it because you are not your idea.

This is a very important concept for leaders because defending your idea is plainly dumb and it means that you will not (necessarily) reach the best solution.
Your goal, as Jay Samit also explains in *Disrupt You*, is to give your ideas the biggest and harshest criticism possible. That's the safest way to implement great ideas, not to waste time, and also to make people feel like part of the solution.

Ed Catmull doesn't say, but not taking criticism too personally is a consequence of a *growth mindset* -also read: how to develop a growth mindset-.

People Before Ideas

It's people who generate ideas and people who implement them. People always come before ideas.

And No Team Before Others

Catmull says that in unhealthy organizations groups believe that if their objectives trump the others, they and the company would be better off.
In a healthy culture, teams realize the importance of balancing competing desires.

Don't Push Too Hard on Efficiency

The author relates a few projects and solutions that were aimed at increasing efficiency. But they did not only not increase efficiency, but stifled creativity.

He says that efficiency, cost-saving, and standardization are part and parcel of business and should be pursued. But not without an attentive analysis, because when efficiency or consistency of workflow are not balanced by equally powerful opposing forces new ideas are not afforded the attention and protection that they need.
The emphasis is placed on safer projects that have proven to work well. It "feeds the beast" by keeping production going, but it does not lead to creativity.

I quote Ed Catmull here:

> So if your primary goal is to have a fully worked out, set-in-stone plan, you are only upping your chances of being unoriginal

Creativity Inc. Quotes

Here are some key quotes from Creativity Inc.

On problems and our incapability to always spot them:

> What makes Pixar special is that we acknowledge we will always have problems, many of them hidden from

> our view; but we work hard to uncover those problems, even if doing so means making ourselves uncomfortable; and that when we come across a problem, we marshal all of our energies to solve it.

On problem-focus rather than on blame and person-focus:

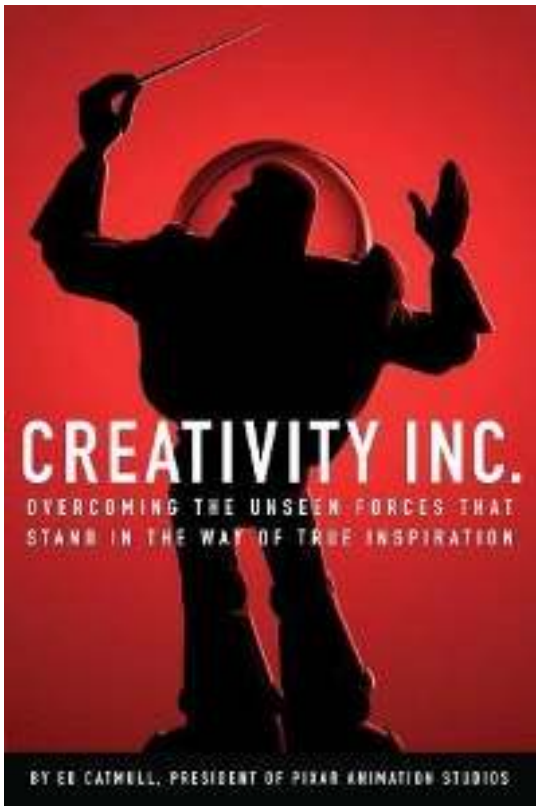
> The center of a healthy feedback system, we must remove power dynamics from the equation. You must enable in other words to focus on the problem, not the person

On collaboration:

> You must accept that collaboration brings complication

And this is possibly the best summary, right at the end of Creativity Inc.:

> *Unleashing creativity requires that we loosen the controls, accept risk, trust our colleagues, work to clear the path for them, and pay attention to anything that creates fear*



Real-Life Applications

As a leader:

Don’t Assure What You Can’t Assure
We all have a tendency to quell fears and make people -and ourselves- feel better at the moment. That can lead us to grant reassurance when we are not actually in a position to reassure.
Catmull, for example, promised that “nothing would change with Disney’s merger”. And that was the dumbest thing he ever said, he admits.

Be Aware of Lack of Information and Complexity
As the leader, you might think you know what’s going on or, worse, that you must act like you know what’s going

on.
And when things are going well we tend to think we are doing great. But sometimes it's just randomness and we must guard ourselves from the trap of convincing ourselves we are right -or acting like we know it all-.

CONS

I think Creativity Inc. contains a lot of golden nuggets on leadership and it's a must-read for anyone working in a creative organization.

Yet, it was not super enjoyable for me to listen to because:

It Could Have Been Briefer
I had the unabridged version, and I found it too long.

Too Many Details on Pixar and… & Jobs
I wasn't particularly interested in Pixar and the stories behind their movies, and there was quite a lot of that in here.

Wage Fixing Scandal
Ed Catmull has been at the epicenter of a wage-fixing scandal to keep employees' wages low.
This is why Power University makes the point not to really trust what owners and execs say.
Words are cheap, actions speak louder. But actions are often hidden, so look at where the personal interest lie.

Also, read:

- **Corporate and CEO lies you must be aware of**

PROS

Overall, Creativty Inc. is probably the best book on institutionalizing creativity at an organizational level.

Review

On the plus side, *Creativity Inc.* is one of the best books when it comes to running, leading, and structuring a financially viable company.

And there is also much wisdom from a leadership point of view -sharing the problems was one of my favorites-.

If you are not into Steve Jobs' life and personality, or into Pixar's movies and work, then the unabridged version might be a bit too long and detailed.

Check the:

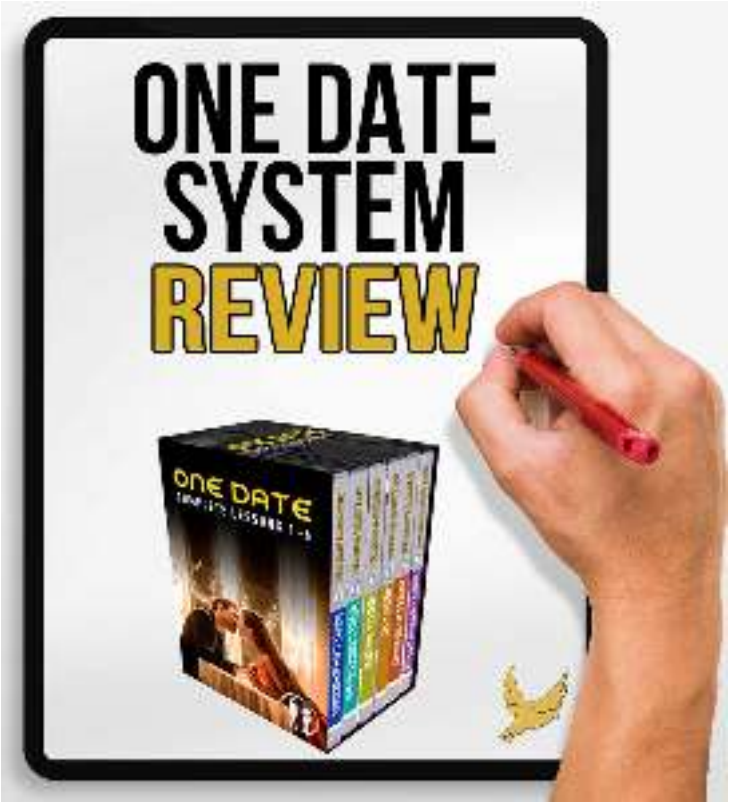
- **Best leadership books**
- **Best career books**

Get the book on Amazon

One Date System by Girlschase: Review & Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

One Date by Chase Amante is a dating course for men on how to meet, date, and attract women.
"One Date System" refers to the number of dates Chase recommends men to go through: just one single date, and seek to make sex happen within that first date.



Contents

- Exec Overview
- One Date Summary
  - Focus on Fundamentals
  - VAC
  - SAC
  - Breaking Rules & Arousal
  - Signs She's Ready
  - Leaning In
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
  - Chase Amante Development
- One Date VS Seduction University
- Review

Exec Overview

- **Focus on fundamentals**: they are your 80%
- **Balance value and attainability** to come across as high value, but she can get you
- **Test what kind of girl she is and date for her type**

One Date Summary

This review is for *One Date System* and Module One. I canceled the successive charges.

Focus on Fundamentals

Chase says that the two most important fundamentals are:

1. **Leading** (asking her on a date, to come home with you and making your move)
2. **Personal Fundamentals** (voice, body language, posture, fashion)

If you don't do anything else but focus on doing those two, you'll be successful.
The fundamentals are what make you a high-value man, with a high sexual market value.

Also, read:

- **Learn to get girls with leadership**
- **How dominance gets you girls**

> How to Lead A Woman In 5 Simple Steps: Create Trust & Attraction

VAC

VAC stands for:

- **Value** (your value)
- **Attainability** (how attainable your value feels to her if she can get you)
- **Compliance** (have her follow your lead, start building it soon, and escalate it)

VAC is foundational to Chase's model as he learned it from Sebastian Drake and further adapted it, developed it, and wrote about it.
But to get a girl to sleep with you, Chase says you should focus more on SAC:

SAC

SAC stands for:

- **Similarity** (she should feel you two are connected and somewhat similar)
- **Arousal** (if she's not aroused at all she won't be able to reach that point when she's ready to have sex)
- **Compliance** (if she's not compliant then she doesn't follow your lead until intimacy)

These are the three key core principles you should hit with a woman. Each woman will need more of one or the other, and you should structure your date and present yourself based on what she prefers.

You want to start with a connection, then some arousal, then compliance.

Thrill-seekers, novelty seekers, and high-energy girls might want more arousal, and they build that connection

through arousing activities.

To find out who she is:

- Ask her to do something small for you. If she does it, she's a compliance girl, if not:
- Do arousing stuff (flirting, teasing, banter, or breaking small rules)
- If the first two don't work you need to build a connection

> How to Build Deep Emotional Connection

You could see the SAC mode as going from most sexually switched off to readier for sex.
If she's not very compliant and does not respond well to arousal she needs more similarity and connection.

Chase says that the same girl might seek different values from different guys, but most girls usually need an emotional connection.

My Note: SAC is our 'power and warmth'
SAC seems to draw upon Fiske's research on competence and warmth.
We call it here 'power and warmth' as we believe it better describes the dynamics and better help students to internalize.

> Social Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

Breaking Rules & Arousal

There is a connection between how much a woman is sexually open and how impulsive and thrill seeker she is.

The more she is into arousing activities, the bigger the rules you have to break.

If she's not very sexually open, tone it down or you risk scaring her off.

The triggers for arousal in the brain are the same for risky and high-adrenaline behavior.
Risk and excitement are on the same wavelength, meaning that if you do something crazy together she can misattribute her excitement as sexual excitement for you -something Vanessa van Edwards also advises. It's kinda true, but also partially debunked pop-psychology-.

Such as **fear and excitement increase *either* attraction or repulsion**.

So it only works if she's *already* attracted.
Says Dr. Grande:

> **Dr. Grande**: Later on studies were done that showed that if an individual found someone to be unattractive before arousal **they would found them more unattractive after arousal**.

Chase also mentions some rules you can break, check the course for more details.

Signs She's Ready

At a certain point, dates shift mood and it means she's ready for the next step (going home, possibly).
Some signs are: smiling at you, getting closer, stop talking for a while, looking at you lustfully, touches you more.

Also, read:

- Signs she likes you

> Does She Like Me? 35 Proven Signs of Attraction (W/ Pictures)

Leaning In

Chase says that the old PUA advice of not leaning is not good.
If she likes you and you like her, you want to lean in, especially if she's sharing about herself and your connection is increasing.

In a way, it's about vulnerability: you put yourself out there and you give her the chance of doing the same.

Real-Life Applications

There are many gold nuggets I took away from One Date.
Some of them:

Don't Go Back to Previous Phases
If you go back to a previous phase of the courtship -ie: from the intimate spot back to the dance floor- it will feel like you two are moving backward.

Build Romance Back After Pauses
When you go back after for example the bathroom and she cooled off you want to cool off a bit too until you warm up again

CONS

Since Chase has produced some strong material in the past, the expectations for *One Date* were higher than for the average dating course.

One-date & lover approach: it's not a universal "best" strategy but it's dependent on context & individual

I agree with Chase: ideally, you get together on a first date.

And most of my sex from dating girls has come from the first date. So I'm all in with that ideal/model.

However, I don't believe in "one size fits all" approaches.

Strategies' effectiveness changes depending on people and contexts.
And I don't think the one-date and lover strategy perfectly applies to all situations, all girls, all cultures, or all guys' personalities.

Dating strategies, like most life strategies, depend on context.
For example, the lover strategy works best for attractive men, in more libertine cultures.
It works less well with more conservative women, and with less attractive men.
For some situations and for some guys, slower dating might actually be more efficient.

This is why I believe that taking one strategy and saying "this is what always works best" is wrong.

Also, read:

- **Should you date as a lover or as a provider?**

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

That article will give you a few pointers on what's most effective for you.

Lots of studies' quotes

Chase seems to position the marketing of One Date as scientific.

And to justify the science behind it, he often quotes studies.
I think a link in a written format is cool, but quoting lots of papers on a video takes a lot of time away.

Presenting yourself to her taste VS screening based on who you are

"One Date" is based idea of presenting yourself to the girl to fit what *she* likes.

One may refer to this as a "chameleon strategy", and it's somewhat of a manipulative technique and one of the games some men play.

If it's not *too* manipulative, then it can be an OK strategy and it's something I also tend to do naturally.

But the *opposite* philosophy of being who you are and screening for those who are like you is also valid.
And it's more valid if you prioritize great relationships.

Also read: "*The Tactical Guide to Women*", where psychologist Shawn Smith explains that to date well, and to reduce the risk of ending up with some low-quality or crazy woman, you should focus on screening *her*, rather than screening yourself at all costs.

Dripped Content

You only get access to the first module with the first payment.

Then you have to wait a month for the new module (and pay extra for it).
That's quite unwieldy and I like freedom. What if I want to skip some parts or finish everything in a couple of sitting?

Although I'm thinking of doing the same for Power University, I thought the timeline was too slow.

Default Purchase Locks In Monthly Charges

It was my bad that I didn't realize that 67 USD was *only* for the first module, but I was surprised when I found out that I was going to be billed on a monthly basis.

At an additional 99 USD/month, I wanted to stop at the first module, but I had to contact support to cancel the charges for the subsequent modules.

Can't Speed Up Videos

I'm used to watching videos at 2x, but you cannot change playing speed in One Date and Chase is definitely not a fast talker.

In the end, I had to record the videos while away from the computer and then play them back at the speed I wanted. That took me more effort and time than I wanted.

Podcast "Two Guys Chatting" Style

I didn't particularly like the interview and, sometimes, the chatting format. It feels to me like it's not very efficient to deliver information and dating strategies and techniques.

But some people might like that.

Female Model Didn't Make One Date Better

There is a paid model besides Chase in One Date videos, and I didn't find her to add value.

Chase sometimes asks her what she thinks. She goes unscripted, and often adds little value and in at least one occasion even contradicts Chase.

For example, talking about fashion as a fundamental, her comment was "Who cares".

Not the smartest comment to make when the producers claim that fashion is important.
It was a funny sketch, but she also broke Chase's frame and disempowered him—and low-power behavior is *not* attractive.

Small Detail On Protective Touch

Protective touch makes a lot of sense, but it somehow backfired in the video example.

There was a pedestrian crossing in the video and it would have been better to forge ahead or slow down, but still expect the car to stop since it was their right of way. It's usually best to claim your right of way when it's your turn to walk, lest you look overly cautious or too yielding (=submissive).

Discouraging Direct Approaches?

Chase seems not to like direct sexual openers much.
For example, he says that if you are sitting next to a girl and tell her she has amazing legs "that's going to be a long bus ride".

Makes sense :)

I see where he's coming from, yet I've had some good success with direct approaches.

Again, what he says is true for most situations, but direct sexual can work wonders in certain situations (we dig deeper in our trainings).

PROS

The information is great, so the whole course is a big pro.

- **Great Nuggets Even For More Advanced Folks**

For example, if she ends the date that's not good for you. What you can do then is to make light of it or you can ask her one more question and then tell her to head out. Smart move.

Another one was about compliant attitude. If one resolutely leads, it may work, but it's better if she clearly follows out of her own volition, and if you ask her to do things and she does it.

- **Some Good Psychology**

Breadcrumb effect, asking investment and increasing it, Benjamin Franklin Effect… A lot of psychology is about social influencing and goes well beyond dating as well.

- **Honest and Sincere**

Sometimes you read some guys writing on dating -and I felt the same with Chase sometimes too- and it feels like they have this attitude of "fuck her or you suck".

One Date is not like that.

It's very open about all times it doesn't work out and all the times it didn't work out for the producers. That's something most people will better be able to relate to and I liked it.

Chase Amante Development

Sometimes I felt that Chase could fall into black-and-white advice.

It was the case with paying for dates for example, or with not using FB.
Ie.: 'not paying (always) works better' and 'you're (always) better off quitting Facebook'.

And I saw where he was coming from and agreed with some of the social reasoning behind it… Yet the generalization is just that: a generalization (plenty of women I slept with through Facebook, for example, once even fixing a first bad date which is rare).

And paying for dates can work wonders if you can make it look like you have so much that you don't need to care for money (also read the article on successful providers).

But in "One Date", he seemed much more on the "it depends" spectrum here.

For example, in spite of it being marketed as "one date," he says that you can do it on more dates.
Or he says that if you get early or strong to rejections on LMR you can also discuss it rationally -instead of just emotionally and getting sexier-.
Those are exceptions, yes, but to understand the general dynamics it's important to also understand exceptions.

One Date VS Seduction University

One Date helps you at the tactical level with dates.

Once you're past the 'get dates' stage and you want to **attract, lead, and keep high-quality women**, that's where **Seduction University** comes in.

SU focuses on dating and relationship leadership, making women fall in love, and be a man women feel *lucky* to even have.

Check **Seduction University**.

Review

One Date is a solid dating course that advocates for a fast approach, aligning with my preferences and lifelong experience, and offers guidance and tips on how to best implement this strategy

You saw a lot of entries in the "cons" section there, and that begs me to repeat:

I run this website as the place where you can come to find top-notch reviews on anything related to people and life strategies.
To provide top-notch reviews, I always dig deeper into high-quality content.
And Chase usually delivers high-quality content.

One Date Format

The format of "two men interviewing each other in front of a camera" wasn't my cup of tea.

I believe a different format may have allowed Chase and his team to better showcase the depth of their knowledge and expertise.

It wasn't terrible, mind you.
And the information delivery was focused, without much time wasted on chit-chat.

One Date Material

Of all the male dating material I have gone through, Chase Amante feature around the top.

He is one of the guys who get the psychological nuances best, and who has the experience to connect the dots between real-world, and theory.

As of now his former ebook *How to Make Girls Chase* is one of the highest-rated dating books for men I have reviewed. So the expectation for One Date was higher.

I haven't gone through the whole course, but for the first part of it, I can say that I liked it.

Also see: **best dating resources for men**.

Assertiveness: How to Stand Up for Yourself – Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Judy Murphy's classic book on assertiveness is a short guide on how to become more assertive communicators. The full title is: "Assertiveness: How to Stand Up for Yourself and Still Win the Respect of Others".

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - What's Assertiveness
  - The Advantages of Assertiveness
  - Assertive VS Aggressive VS Passive
  - How You See Yourself Determines Your Assertiveness
  - Elements of Assertiveness
  - Assertive Messages Examples
  - Train & Push Your Limits
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Assertiveness is about demanding fair treatment
- Assertiveness is all about respect: for yourself and for others
- There is no magic bullet: you will have to try hard daily. But you can train at home and in easier situations

Full Summary

Judy Murphy starts with an important question:

What's Assertiveness

Assertiveness, the author says, is not about being liked.
Assertiveness is about standing up for your right to be treated fairly.

The Advantages of Assertiveness

There are many advantages to becoming and learning to communicate assertively, including:

- It gives you confidence and enhances your self-esteem
- It helps you gain respect
- Improves your decision-making skills
- Reduces bitterness when your needs and wants aren't met
- You become a better problem solver
- You gain the feeling you're in control of your life

Assertive VS Aggressive VS Passive

The author says that the difference between all three of them can be summarized with one word: respect.

Aggressive people do not show respect for others while passive people do not show respect for themselves.

Since assertive means respecting both yourself and others, says the author, you don't need to change your style whether you speak with a lowly service worker or with your boss.

How You See Yourself Determines Your Assertiveness

Judy Murphy says that how you see yourself determines how assertive you are.

People with low self-esteem and who see themselves poorly tend to have bigger difficulties in being assertive.
Similar to what happens in intimate relationships, people with low self-esteem allow others to trample their right because they don't see themselves as worthy of proper treatment.

Hence, to become assertive, you need to develop healthy self-respect.

Elements of Assertiveness

The author outlines four major elements of assertiveness:

- **Basic assertions**

Basic assertions are very basic statements of what you want, don't want, or feel like.
They can be something like "I want to go to the Italian for lunch" or "I'm talking to someone now, can I call you back?"

- **Empathy**

Empathy recognizes the needs and feelings of the other person.
One example is "I realize this can make you sad, but I need to tell you the truth"

- **Escalation**

Escalation means that you become increasingly firm, or explain the consequences of non-compliance while you also remain calm and rational.
Indeed, remember this: you escalate the conversation, *not* your tone or mood.

- **"I" and "me" statements**

Honestly, this one wasn't too clear for me, but it seemed like the typical "assertive" sentence structure, for example:

> When you call me stupid, it makes me angry and it does not want to make me deal with you. If you want to have a functioning relationship with me, I want you to use respectful words

The author says that you can use this format to avoid labels, accusations, or escalations.
For example instead of saying "you are rude", you can say "I feel like you are acting rude".

Assertive Messages Examples

The author goes on to present many real-life examples.
I will only present one here quoting the author, and it relates to a working situation where a colleague of yours is talking behind your back:

> Cristina, you seem to have a problem with me.

> We don't have to be friends, but we do have to work together.
>
> When you are openly hostile toward me, it is disrespectful and makes me feel negative about working together.
>
> As your colleague, I deserve your respect. I would like to improve our communication.
> I want you to know that I will no longer accept your aggressive attitude toward me.
>
> If it doesn't cease, I'll be setting up a meeting for us with Human Resources to discuss it further.
> I would appreciate it if you would consider how you speak to me and treat me with more respect

The author says the colleague is likely going to be shocked -indeed-. If she keeps doing the same or gets threatening or aggressive, your next step will be indeed to escalate the matter with HR. You defined your boundaries and if they keep being overstepped, then you have to escalate.

Train & Push Your Limits

The author says that most people are looking for a magic pill that will solve all their problems. She wished she could provide such a pill, but unluckily there is none.

She understands that position because she was here. And she tried hard and slipped many times and at times felt like there was no hope. But, she says, with persistence and practice you will eventually get better.

She also says it's normal in the beginning to overdo it and be a bit confrontational or aggressive.
It's because pushing yourself will require so much force in the beginning that you will naturally over-push it.
That's also part of becoming a more assertive individual.

Practice at Home

Because it's so difficult and because the tendency is to overdo it, the author recommends that you practice at home with a friend, or a family member, or in front of a mirror.

And you can use minor daily interactions where you otherwise would have let it slip, like with a wrong order, just to train your assertive skills.

Finally, the author says that you can learn by watching more naturally assertive individuals and role-modeling them.

Real-Life Applications

Role Play and Train in Front of Mirror
I liked the idea of role-playing and training in front of a mirror. Using smaller daily occasions to practice your assertiveness is also a wonderful recommendation.

CONS

I Didn't Like Some Examples
I disagreed with some of the communication examples.
Some didn't seem to be very effective to me, some were not the best possible options, and some were even slightly unethical.
For example in one of the case studies, a man calls a company to "assertively" ask for money back on an item that

is out of warranty. That's not assertive, that's aggressive.
Or, better, that's cunning and sly.

Some Misspelling
This is a detail, but there were several misspellings. From calling the book "audiobook" to "nerve-racking" to some sentences repeated twice.

PROS

Short & To The Point
I'm a sucker for a book that can share helpful advice in a short and concise format and doesn't waste any time. "Assertiveness: How to Stand Up for Yourself" is one such book.

Review

I didn't agree with some of the examples but I appreciated the structure and short format.

Also see:

- Best assertiveness books
- Best communication skills resources

Or get the book on Amazon

The Truth About Leadership: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Truth About Leadership,* authors Barry Posner and James Kouzes share their findings on what makes great leadership, as per the results of their own large-scale survey.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Fundamental Truths About Leadership
  - Leaders Are The People Closest to Us
  - Learning Leadership
  - Leadership Is a Matter of The Heart
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
  - Surveys Are Not Great Data
  - Leadership Isn't (Only) A Matter of The Heart??
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Leaders are the people nearest to us, not the big names and heads of companies
- Great leadership is great leadership regardless of generation or culture
- Leadership can be learned and improved upon

Summary

Posner and Kouzer start by saying that, although much has changed in the world and the generations are much different than the preceding ones, the concept of leadership has not really changed.
As the authors say:

> Good leadership is good leadership, regardless of age

Fundamental Truths About Leadership

The authors list a few key fundamental truths that emerged from their research:

1. **You have to believe in yourself:** before you can make an impact on anyone, you have to believe you *can* make a positive impact
2. **Credibility is the foundation of leadership**: others have to believe in you as well. Competence, your track record, and your ability to get things done is a key element of credibility
3. **Your values drive commitment**: what do you stand for? What do you care about? Leaders must be self-aware to provide (emotional) security in times of uncertainty. You must know your why, and to be credible you must make sure your values are aligned with your organization
4. **Focusing on the future:** if you don't know where you're going or what you're trying to achieve, how can you

ever lead? Leaders must be forward thinkers: spend time thinking about the future and talk about it

5. **Leaders need a team**: a leader cannot go at it alone and needs others. To foster a team a leader must do what's best for others, not for himself. Emotional intelligence is key and a good relationship with the team has been proven to lead to better results. If IQ is not accompanied by EQ it's more of a predictor of failure, says the author
6. **Trust rules**: trust is the glue holding the team together. To earn trust do what you say you will do and take responsibility for mistakes
7. **Challenge leads to greatness**: it's during challenging times that leaders can get the most out of their teams and achieve greatness
8. **Leaders lead by example**: as a leader, you must go first. You either lead by example or you don't lead at all
9. **Best leaders keep learning**: the best leaders have a growth mindset and strive to always improve
10. **Leadership is an affair of the heart**: trying to separate emotions from "business" and decisions is a mistake. Leaders are in love with their teams, company, products, and customers

Leaders Are The People Closest to Us

The authors quote statistics to make the point that we are wrong in thinking that the biggest leaders and influences are famous people or the people at the very top of the organizations.

The leaders who have the most impact might be people who are above or more advanced than us… But who are still very close to us.
77% of people said their role model was, in order, one of the following:

1. A family member
2. A teacher or a coach
3. A religious leader / religious community

In any organization, the leader who has the most impact is the direct bosses, and not the upper management or the CEO.

That means that chances are that you can soon have someone looking up to you as a leader.
What kind of leadership are you going to provide?

> **Someone is looking up to you right now for leadership**

Learning Leadership

The authors say that learning comes before good leadership. Learning is the master skill, and when you engage fully in it, you are bound to experiment with the thrill of improvement and the taste of success.

Here the authors talk about growth mindset –check Carol Dweck's book– and deliberate practice.

Leadership Is a Matter of The Heart

I must quote the authors here because it's just too beautiful and poetic:

> Nothing external is going to save us: not government, not companies, not technologies, not heroes on white horses. But imagine what can be done when people experience the power of the human heart.

And:

> Love is the soul of leadership.
>
> You don't love someone because of who they are. You love them because of how they make you feel.

The authors say that we businesses often try to make business something different than emotions and feelings, but they say that everything being equal we work harder for people we like.

That makes a lot of sense, yet I can see quite a few caveats to add here -read the "cons" section for a bit more details.

> **The purpose of leadership is to create a legacy, not a legend.**

Real-Life Applications

Make Sure Your Values Align to Your Organization
God, I can't stress this enough. Whenever my values were not aligned with my employer I was never motivated to do anything and I could have not led a bee to a honey-hive

CONS

Surveys Are Not Great Data

I loved The Leadership Challenge, it's straight and to the point, and what it ways makes sense.
Yet most of its data seems to come from surveys, and what people say is often much different than what they really feel or do.

Leadership Isn't (Only) A Matter of The Heart??

The author quotes Goleman and emotional Intelligence to make the point that great leaders demonstrate more affection to others and others to them.
That's what the authors refer to when they say that "leadership is a matter of the heart".

Yet *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* shows that while managers have high EQ, CEO have less EQ than middle managers.

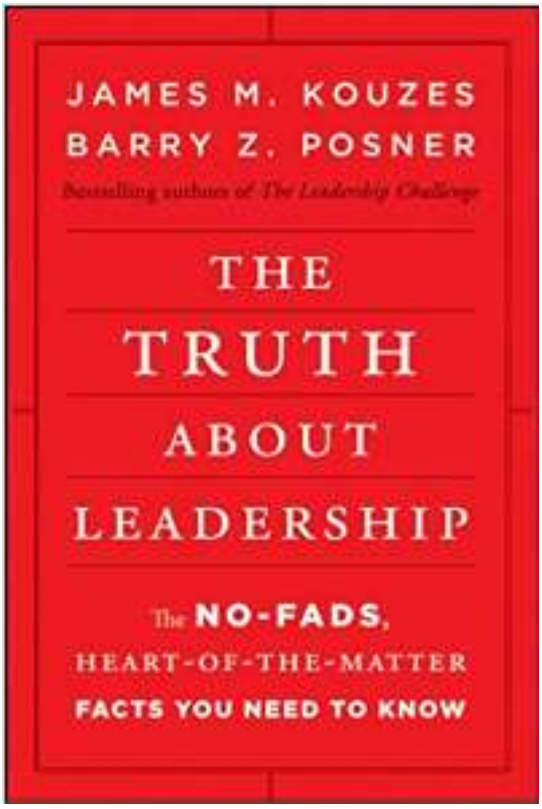
Ultimately, leadership may sometimes include heart, but **leadership is much more about power and strategy.** Knowing when to 'show heart' and when to show strength makes the difference between a pushover leader and an effective one.

Also read:

- Machiavellians at the top
- Social cabliration

PROS

Simple, without any frills, The Truth About Leadership goes to the core of what it means to be a great leader.



Review

Kouzes and Posner, also authors of *The Leadership Challenge*, are big names when it comes to leadership literature.

And *The Truth About Leadership* does not disappoint: short and to the point, it goes to the core of what leadership is really all about.

That being said, we warn our ambitious readers that **leadership also requires power, social dominance, and smart social strategy.**

Check the best book collection or get the book on Amazon

Joe Dispenza Reviewed: Pseudoscience, Influence, and Red Flags

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Joe Dispenza is a chiropractor and self-help author. He has become popular for his books, seminars, and talks on curing illnesses with thoughts and meditation.

Contents

- Joe Dispenza's Main Theory
  - Dispenza's Main Sources
- Joe Dispenza Critical Analysis
  - Lack of Scientific Evidence
  - Suspicious Reasons for Avoiding Academic Rigor
  - Suspicious 'Science-Sounding Appeals': Pseudoscience?
  - Suspicious Claims of Scientific Evidence
  - Merit of Dispenza's Methods
- Takeaway: Not Recommended

Joe Dispenza's Main Theory

Joe Dispenza's main theory is that your mind has the power to heal your body, and you can unlock that self-healing process by interrupting negative thought patterns and replacing them with positive ones. Dispenza sells seminars and guided meditations to help through this process.

Across three Dispenza's books that I've read, some common themes include:

- **Law of attraction**: By entering the quantum field of "unlimited possibilities," you can manifest the future you want

- **Thoughts are absorbed at a cellular level:** Dispenza says that by repeating the same thought pattern over and over again, people absorb it at a cellular level.
- **Past negative thoughts crystallize:** recurrent thoughts with feelings create states of being, and negative thought patterns create a negative states of being. With repetetition the negative state of being is conditioned, and we adopt negative states of being from past events that keep haunting us
- **You change negative states of interrupting negative patterns and installing new ones**: Become self-aware: to first change of your negative loops, create new alternatives with better thoughts, and emotionalize your thoughts
- **Meditations help you remove negative patterns and install better thoughts:** Dispenza offers seminars to help in this process

Dispenza's Main Sources

Dispenza draws from previous popular self-help concepts and systems such as 'law of attraction', 'positive thinking' and NLP, mixed with some more scientifically sounder principles from cognitive behavioral therapy.

Similar to Dispenza are:

- The Secret, for the 'law of attraction',
- You Can Heal Yourself, with Dispenza's exact same theory

For more on the power of thinking, Dispenza's concepts are included in:

- The Power of Positive Thinking
- Think and Grow Rich

Joe Dispenza Critical Analysis

For this review, we have read three Dispenza's books: *'Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself'* (2012), "*Becoming Supernatural"* (2013), and *You Are The Placebo* (2014).
We also watched several of his popular YouTube appearances with several different interviewers.

Lack of Scientific Evidence

Joe Dispenza claims scientific backing, but science either disproves or provides no evidence for his claims.

In *'Breaking the Habits of Being Yourself*' Joe Dispenza presents quantum physics as the scientific explanation for his methodology.
He says that thoughts are energy, and that energy and matterare one and the same.
Because they are the same, then it means that your mind (energy) can change the body (matter).

Dispenza says you can use your thoughts to change the matter of your body by entering what the "quantum field where all opportunities exist".

I am not aware of any evidence to back up such claims.

Example: Big Claims Lacking Evidence

In '*You Are the Placebo*', a book that is largely a collection of how powerful the placebo effect is, Dispenza tells the story of a woman who could see with her eyes closed.

She would wave back at the author with her eyes closed and eventually also be able to see behind her, at 360 degrees, with her eyes closed.
Unfortunately, the author didn't record it and/or offer any proof for it. That only raised my suspicion and, if

someone were to take the claims for true, the only feeling I can think of is anger and disappointment. If the author was truly able to deliver such results, it would be his moral duty to share evidence and methodology so that more people can get that kind of help.

Suspicious Reasons for Avoiding Academic Rigor

In '*Becoming Supernatural*', Joe Dispenza says that what he writes is a risk for him and his reputation.
He says that "certain people", including people in the scientific community, might call his work pseudoscience.

Dispenza says he used to care about what those people thought, and he tried to have them approve of his work. Then, eventually, he realized that his work was changing lives and that he could never win the approval of the scientific community. So he simply stopped caring.

It's fair for Joe Dispenza to pursue his own path without trying to appease anyone.

On the other hand, such a stance can also be an easy cop-out.
It could be an excuse for embracing and selling concepts that may not work, or at least theories that cannot be tested or proven.

It may also be a psychological tactic to increase support.
Point fingers against an out-group to stoke the support of the in-group of followers (ingroup-outgroup dynamics, see how Tai Lopez uses it).

Suspicious 'Science-Sounding Appeals': Pseudoscience?

In several videos and in '*Breaking the Habit of Changing Yourself*', Dispenza anchors his claims in quantum physics.

He claims that quantum physics underpins his concept of genetic changes through meditation.
And he talks about thoughts as 'energy'.

He presents little evidence or sources for these claims.

I want to be clear that no scientific backing doesn't necessarily mean that someone's work is ineffective or doesn't help people.
It simply means that it's not scientific.
However, **it's suspicious to try to claim scientific rigor without proper empirical evidence.**

This may as well be the definition of pseudoscience. If anything, some attempts at scientific evidence feel so clumsy that it may even barely qualify as pseudoscience.

The fact that such claims may help sell expensive seminars may also add extra suspicion about someone's motives.

Suspicious Claims of Scientific Evidence

> **Lucio**: These claims of prayers 'working in the past' seem nonsense to me

The worst red flags for me were trying to claim scientific evidence where I didn't see any.

Two examples from '*Breaking the Habits of Being Yourself*':

Example 1: The Prayer Impact on The Past

The scientific "proof" that thoughts and prayers can impact reality both in the present, future, and past was this article inquiring whether 'retroactive prayers' work.

Dispenza claims that prayers in the present affected outcomes in the past. But, the researchers used 'retroactive

prayer' as tongue-in-cheek.

To a critical mind looking for evidence, Dispenza's claim may sound ludicrous.
Think about it this way: I could "pray" today for a meteorite to hit the Earth, then I show you the evidence that a meteorite hit the earth millions of years ago and I tell you "see, my papers worked (in the past)".

If one believes in this kind of 'evidence', he may even believe in Santa Claus and the tooth fairy.

Example 2: Thoughts Change DNA?

In 'Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself' Dispenza quotes a study called "Modulation of DNA by Coherent Heart Frequencies".

This is an extremely interesting study showing that the heartbeat of people was able to alter the structure of DNA in terms of denature (unwind) or renature (wind).
You can read a review of the same study on this paper, where it says that heartbeats can also be detected by other people within 5 feet and cause physiologically relevant changes.

However, it's the heartbeats, which emit a light electromagnetic field, that changed the DNA samples.
Not the thoughts directly.

Joe Dispenza takes it to mean that *thoughts* can change the DNA, which is much different.
Dispenza then makes another big jump by stating that positive thoughts can change the expression of genes. And I haven't seen any science backing this up.

Merit of Dispenza's Methods

There is plenty of useful advice that Dispenza mixes with the more dubious ones, and none of them is any novelty in the self-help literature.

For example, it seems perfectly reasonable that our thoughts indeed impact our moods, that moods lead to action and reaction from the world around us, and that some people can indeed get stuck in negative thoughts.

For these people, the advice of interrupting negative thought patterns and focusing on more empowering alternatives is a valid approach that can genuinely help.

Some of Dispenza's advice, like the usefulness of 'knowing yourself to better change yourself' is also a truism that holds true, no matter how obvious it may sound.

Meditation is also a well-studied phenomenon with plenty of evidence to backup its positive effects. (That doesn't mean Dispenza's claims may not still be overblown though; check this beautiful piece on the matter by David Gorski, Ph.D., for example).

Finally, when it comes to real-life outcomes, the placebo effect is a proven mechanism. So even simply believing that something may help can truly have a positive effect on someone's mood and even health.

Takeaway: Not Recommended

Dispenza's public claims and books raise several red flags that undermine trustworthiness and authority, including false-sounding claims of scientific evidence, and some overblown claims of meditation's outcomes without evidence.

Pitching expensive seminars based on already shaky claims also adds extra suspicion about bias and motives.

Unfortunately, people who approach self-healing teachers can be in a position of need that makes them easy prey for confident marketers.

I personally enjoyed reading Dispenza's books, including '*Breaking The Habit of Being Yourself*', and there is plenty

of good advice from the author that could genuinely benefit many.

If one could consume Dispenza's work and books with a strong critical mind, it's possible he could benefit from it. However, some equally valid authors and books share the same wisdom, without as many red flags or 'upsell risks'.

So, all in all, we'd rather redirect our readers towards different sources.

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In 'Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself' Dispenza quotes a study called "Modulation of DNA by Coherent Heart Frequencies".

This is an extremely interesting study showing that the heartbeat of people was able to alter the structure of DNA in terms of denature (unwind) or renature (wind).
You can read a review of the same study on this paper, where it says that heartbeats can also be detected by other people within 5 feet and cause physiologically relevant changes.

However, it's the heartbeats, which emit a light electromagnetic field, that changed the DNA samples.
Not the thoughts directly.

Joe Dispenza takes it to mean that *thoughts* can change the DNA, which is much different.
Dispenza then makes another big jump by stating that positive thoughts can change the expression of genes. And I haven't seen any science backing this up.

Merit of Dispenza's Methods

There is plenty of useful advice that Dispenza mixes with the more dubious ones, and none of them is any novelty in the self-help literature.

For example, it seems perfectly reasonable that our thoughts indeed impact our moods, that moods lead to action and reaction from the world around us, and that some people can indeed get stuck in negative thoughts.

For these people, the advice of interrupting negative thought patterns and focusing on more empowering alternatives is a valid approach that can genuinely help.

Some of Dispenza's advice, like the usefulness of 'knowing yourself to better change yourself' is also a truism that holds true, no matter how obvious it may sound.

Meditation is also a well-studied phenomenon with plenty of evidence to backup its positive effects. (That doesn't mean Dispenza's claims may not still be overblown though; check this beautiful piece on the matter by David Gorski, Ph.D., for example).

Finally, when it comes to real-life outcomes, the placebo effect is a proven mechanism. So even simply believing that something may help can truly have a positive effect on someone's mood and even health.

Takeaway: Not Recommended

Dispenza's public claims and books raise several red flags that undermine trustworthiness and authority, including false-sounding claims of scientific evidence, and some overblown claims of meditation's outcomes without evidence.

Pitching expensive seminars based on already shaky claims also adds extra suspicion about bias and motives.

Unfortunately, people who approach self-healing teachers can be in a position of need that makes them easy prey for confident marketers.

I personally enjoyed reading Dispenza's books, including '*Breaking The Habit of Being Yourself*', and there is plenty

of good advice from the author that could genuinely benefit many.

If one could consume Dispenza's work and books with a strong critical mind, it's possible he could benefit from it. However, some equally valid authors and books share the same wisdom, without as many red flags or 'upsell risks'.

So, all in all, we'd rather redirect our readers towards different sources.

Socially Awkward: Signs & Fixes (W/ Video)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you afraid you might be socially awkward?

Or do you know you are and want to know how to stop being socially awkward?

In either case, you have come to the right place.
By the end of this article, you will know what is socially awkward and, if you are, you will know how to stop it.

Sadly, social awkwardness is a leading cause of bullying

Contents

- What's Socially Awkward
  - Socially Awkward Is Not Shy
- Signs of Socially Awkward Individuals
  - #1. Inadvertently Offends Others
  - #2. Spoils Group Conversation
  - #3. Seeks Arguments (Instead of Consensus)
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What's Socially Awkward

Some guides online define socially awkward as a person who is nervous and creates embarrassing social situations.

But I hold a different view.

Some socially awkward people are *not* nervous.
They are not shy, they are not introverted, they are not embarrassed… And many of them have no idea they are being socially awkward in the first place.
Indeed the most disruptive social pariahs are confident and lout.

To include also those awkwardly confident fellas, this is my socially awkward definition:

> Socially awkward is that person who makes social interactions difficult, painful, embarrassing, or generally unpleasant for the person or group of persons he is interacting with.

Socially Awkward Is Not Shy

People who have become good at spotting social dynamics can easily recognize socially awkward individuals.

But if you are still developing your *emotional intelligence*, then it's easy getting confused and to think of "shy" as socially awkward and "outgoing" as socially competent.

But it's not always that simple.
There are plenty of loud, outgoing, socially active people who are *still* very socially awkward -below there are examples-.
The difference indeed is not in how socially active they are but in their social intelligence.

Signs of Socially Awkward Individuals

Here are the signs and behaviors that characterize socially awkward individuals:

#1. Inadvertently Offends Others

Respecting oneself and others is the definition of assertive communication.
And it's also one of the most basic and important rules of socialization.

Some of the worst socially awkward individuals fail to understand it and engage in one or more of the following:

- Cut people off
- Shout to be "better heard"
- Hijack the conversation
- Make mean jokes that embarrass people or make them cringe
- Make politically incorrect jokes that are badly out of place
- Verbally threaten or abuse others

In this example, Vaynerchuk lacks basic etiquette and breaks rapport with Seth Godin:

Aggression and disrespect not only make people and bystanders feel awkward but at the extreme end also potentially make them feel threatened.

#2. Spoils Group Conversation

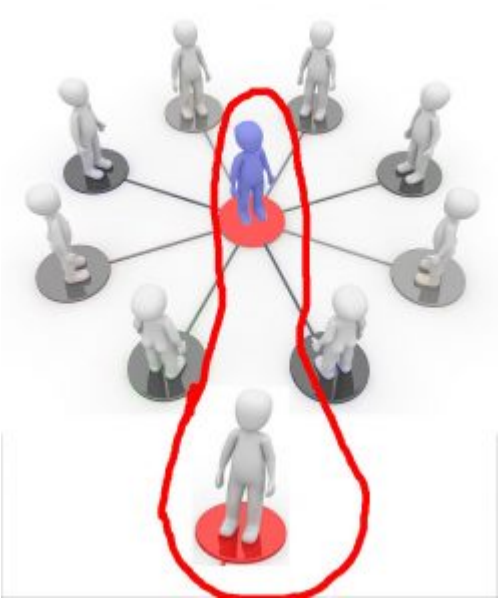
Group conversations are the worst time to be socially awkward because among the group a silent, tacit agreement takes place among everyone.

And it's this one:

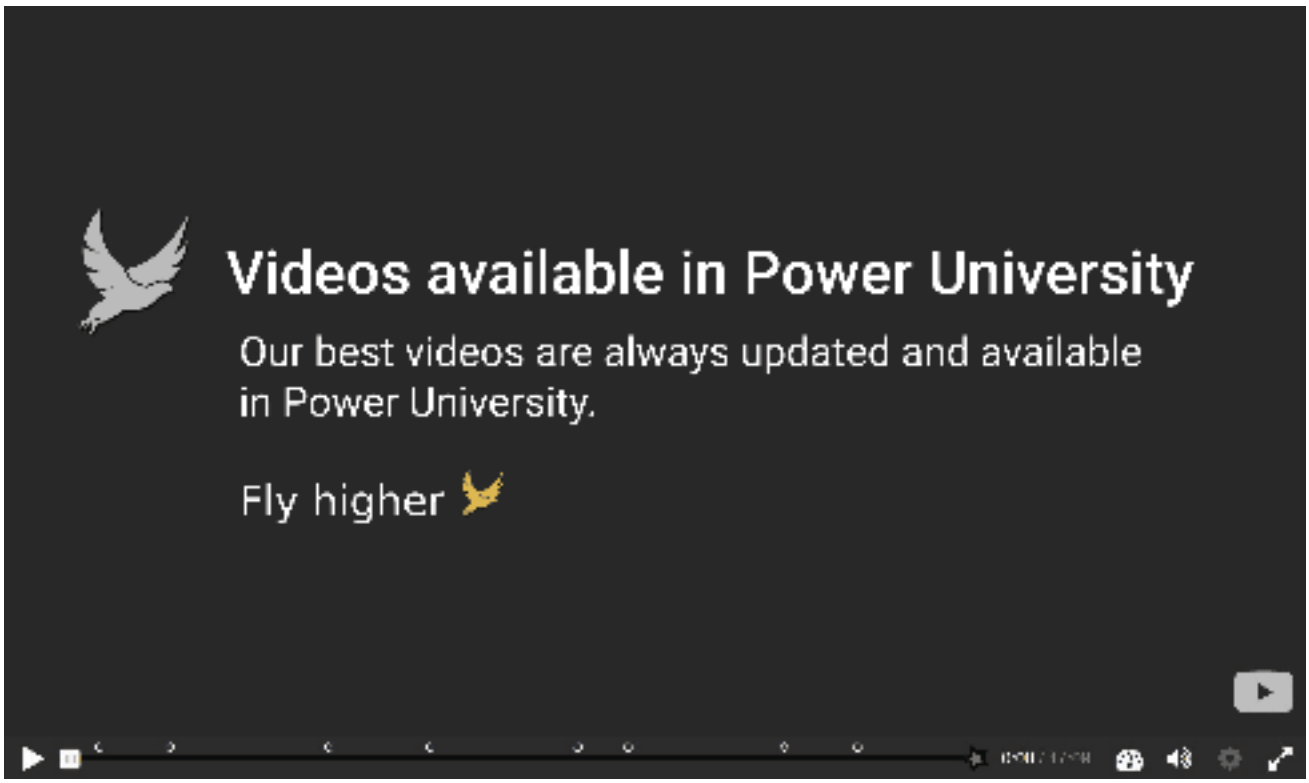
> **Group**: (thinking) This guy really doesn't get it. When he is he leaving so we all can be cool again?

The socially awkward individual does the following to alienate everyone around him:

- Monopolizes the conversation
- Asks personal questions that put people on the spot
  - Ie.: "how much do you make", "did you guys have sex" etc.
- Fails to understand he is boring the group
- Brings everyone down
- Always brings the conversation back to him or his topic
- Zeroes in on one person and leave all others out



I recently analyzed a "socially awkward" attempt to join a group conversation.
And it's from Ivanka Trump at the G20.
Look at the video:



She is being awkward because she stands too far, jumps in too early, and displays many signals of nervousness. You can read here the whole analysis.

Do This Instead:

Understand that group conversations are seldom about conveying meaning.

Group conversations are most often a "social lubricant" to collectively bond and/or have a good time.
And, finally, people don't care about your stories and opinions that much, really.

Also read: a step-by-step guide to group conversations and effective conversation starters.

#3. Seeks Arguments (Instead of Consensus)

We all have a tendency to push back on ideas that run against our beliefs and cause us cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957).
And we also all have a tendency to want to show off.

But while the socially smart resist the temptation and seek to understand and look for commonalities, the socially awkward sees it as an opportunity to show off his "superiority".

The worst kind of socially awkward individual makes it about winning rather than socializing.
Here is an example from Family Guy:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYKScQ3gn2I
Don't be that ass

Example: Awkward Dating

The impact of seeking arguments is even more disastrous in dating scenarios:

> Many years ago I went back to a girl's place with a bottle of wine as we chatted and flirted along the way.
>
> That must have been an easy one, right? Well, it should have, yes.
>
> But when she aired her very left-wing opinions on genders, gypsies, and "integration policies" this dumbas*

> escalated what was a bonding conversation into a discussion (super un-sexy).
>
> I started explaining why my ideas were "right", and I wanted to prove it. I wanted to win.
> Of course, there are no winners in those scenarios, only losers.
> Rapport was shattered, romance was gone… And an icy awkwardness descended until I went home in my hand's company soon after :).

Do This Instead

Switch your mindset from fact-finding, winning, and showing off to building people up, making friends, and finding commonalities.

#4. Breaks Rapport

Socially awkward individuals engage in social climbing and posturing without even realizing how obvious it is.

To show off their superiority one of their most powerful tools is "NO".

A "NO" is a conversation stopper and communicates you fully disagree, that you know better and that the two of you are miles apart.

"I'm Better Than You" Awkwardness

A "NO" is also often a power move in the sense that it gives soft power and authority to the person using it. At the price, of course, of rapport, harmony, and conversational flow

I'll give you a real-life example.
A friend of mine wanted to recruit me for a start-up she wanted to launch. We had a brief phone conversation, which went a bit like this:

> **Her**: (…) *That's the idea basically*
> **Me**: *I like it! Sounds like raising some capital for marketing will be needed to get early traction*
> **Her**: *Not really, it's more about partnerships..*
> **Me**: *Yeah, that too, both are important. Maybe central Europe is a great market to start with*
> **Her**: *No, it's best to..*

Power analysis: I don't answer with "OK" because that would be an admission of submission.
I confirm what she says, then raise my opinion to her opinion's level adding *both* are important.
Then I move to another topic to take the pressure off and avoid an escalation: I am trying not to make this awkward.

But again she keeps "NO-ing" me -probably 3 times during the conversation-.
With every NO she communicates that:

1. I have no idea what I'm talking about;
2. She knows more;
3. She's the one calling the shots.

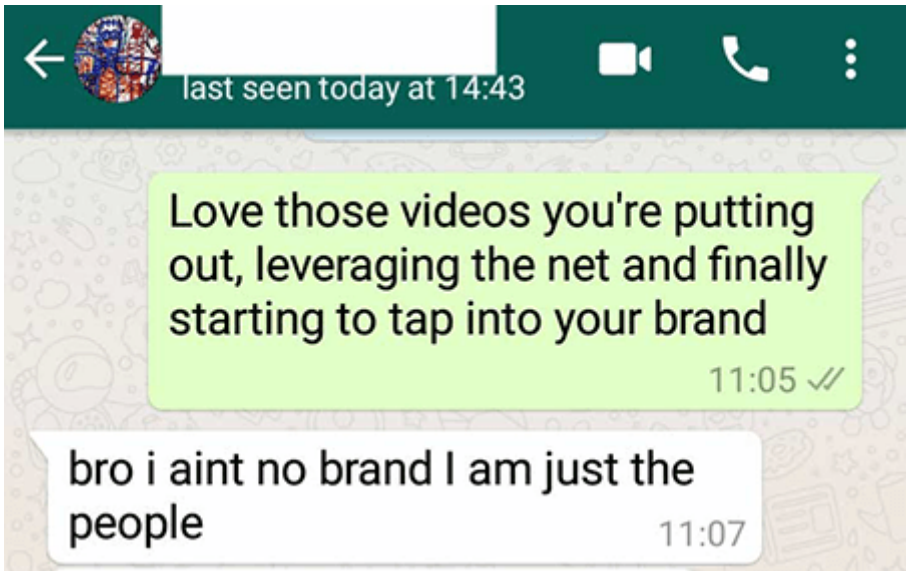
Finally, she makes it extremely awkward because it becomes obvious that if we disagree so much… Why the hell is she even talking to me?

"You're Wrong" Awkwardness

A "NO" is particularly terrible when people reach out to you with a compliment, a gift, or a bonding message.

Opening with a compliment, in certain situations, is an act of submission and vulnerability.

Receiving a “no” embarrasses us and makes us want to exit the conversation, wondering how could we have been so stupid in initiating it in the first place.



Do This Instead

What to do then?
Unless they are offensive, back-handed frenemy-style “compliments”, you always accept the compliment, even when you’re not too sure you fully deserve it.

#5. Is Visibly Nervous

Humans have mirror neurons that make us feel what others are feeling.

That means that when we are very nervous and when we feel awkward, chances are that we make others feel awkward as well.

Milton from Office Space is a good example of social awkwardness stemming from social anxiety:

The exceptions here are socially confident, socially smart, and high self-esteem individuals. They won’t be feeling awkward just because *you* feel awkward.
But of course, they are the exception (get Power University to become one)

Do this Instead

Well, obviously try to relax.
But if you can’t, don’t try to hide your nervousness. It might seem counter-intuitive but the awkwardness springs mostly from the friction between hiding it and pretending it’s not there while it’s actually plainly obvious to everyone.

When you can instead confess you are being nervous, you allow people to relax. And you show yourself for being vulnerably courageous.
It’s now in the open and he doesn’t even seem nearly as nervous and awkward after all.

On a date, there is nothing more chilling and relaxing than a woman admitting that she is a bit nervous.

Also read: how to overcome social anxiety.

#6. Lacks Emotional Intelligence

This is the catch-all of social awkwardness.

If you look at the video example from above, the awkwardness is all in failure to understand each other:

They are not communicating with one another, they are communicating *past* each otter.
Everyone has their own script and they are going through it regardless of what the other says or feels.
The two managers there fail to listen to Peter, they fail to listen that he has taken care of it and that he needs no guidance.
And they obviously fail to see how frustrated he is.

People who lack emotional intelligence:

- Don't understand when people need to go "deeper"
- Fail to realize the obviousness of why routines and pick-up lines don't work
- Believe that "winning" is a good social strategy
- Can't read body language and nonverbal cues and take words at face value
- Don't understand where personal boundaries lie
- Lack empathy and don't understand how others feel

No Emotional Intelligence, No Real Relationships

Failing to empathize and understand one another has deep, far-reaching consequences that go far beyond social awkwardness.
The biggest consequence is that without emotional intelligence you will never have great relationships.
As a matter of fact, you won't even have "good" relationships.

Look at this example:

Seth Godin wants to discuss important questions he cares about. They relate to him and his life and they are perfect occasions to go deeper.
But Gary Vaynerchuk lacks emotional intelligence and fails to realize it.
Vaynerchuk is forcing Seth Godin to conform to his style of relationships: superficial and emotionally shallow.

What To Do

Emotional intelligence is a key ability that you need to cultivate.
If you have none, there is no easy fix: you need to basically start learning people from scratch.
That's the bad news. The good one is this: it's very possible!
This website offers a great guide because that's a process that I have gone through myself (through the years).

For more examples of creating a deep connection, check how to develop a deep emotional connection

Summary

Socially awkward individuals lack emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and, sometimes, even empathy.

That's the root cause of the issue, which then finds several different expressions of "daily social awkwardness".

In some people, the issue is compounded by a lack of confidence and nervousness which, in turn, makes others feel nervous as well.

If you want to know how to stop being socially awkward, this is the deep solution: increase your emotional intelligence and your understanding of social dynamics while you keep training in real life as well.

The Black Swan: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Black Swan (2010) is a book on probabilities, risks and humans' psychological biases. Nassim Taleb, the author, also teaches readers how to avoid common mental pitfalls and becoming better, more rational thinkers.

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Exec Summary

- History, the world and our lives are dominated by unlikely, large and unexpected events
- Most people, mistakenly, focus on the likely and probable
- We all see patterns and causality where, in reality, there is a lot of randomness

Summary

The Black Swan, especially in the last chapters, present more mathematical and technical details which, for the most part, I will skip in this summary.

This is my best introductory quote to The Black Swan:

> In this (personal) essay, I stick my neck out and make a claim, against many of our habits of thought, that our world is dominated by the extreme, the unknown, and the very improbable (improbable according to our current knowledge)–and all the while we spend our time engaged in small talk, focusing on the known, and the

> repeated.
>
> This implies the need to use the extreme event as a starting point and not treat it as an exception to be pushed under the rug.
>
> I also make the bolder (and more annoying) claim that in spite of our progress and the growth in knowledge, or perhaps because of such progress and growth, the future will be increasingly less predictable, while both human nature and social "science" seem to conspire to hide the idea from us.

1. What's a Black Swan

Here is the definition:

> A black swan is a highly improbable event that catches most everyone by surprise and can potentially disrupt human activities or create havoc.

Conversely, a highly expected event *not* happening is also a black swan.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb says that a small number of black swans explain almost everything in our world, from religions to historical events to our own personal lives.

As the world became more complicated and interconnected, the potential effects of predictable events decrease, while the potential effects of black swans have further increased.

> **A black swan is a low probability, large impact event**
>
> *Nicholas Nassim Taleb*

2. You Cannot Measure Black Swans

Black swans, by their own nature of being so unlikely and lying outside most people's grasp, are extremely difficult to measure and compute.

The umeasurability of black swan and the human tendency of discounting their very possibility, is a central tenet in the book.
Nassim Nicholas Taleb has had first-hand experience in a field highly susceptible to black swans and yet theoretically full of data and measures.
That field is finance and trading.
Taleb mocks and taunts the mathematical models of investment banks, saying they all operated under the false assumption that there are tools to measure uncertainty.

The author says that many models of portfolio and risk management exclude the possibility of a black swan.
This was the case for Long Term Capital Management, where the Nobel-prize winning founders, so sure of their mathematical models, loaded up on risk and created a time bomb.
At the very first black swan, within a few years of its inception, LTCM risked taking the whole financial system downturns out that "long term" is relative :)-

Bell Curves Deviations Promote Black Swans

I feel the title is either wrong. or misleading.

Bell curves don't directly promote black swans.
But drafting bell curves or thinking in terms of bell curves may contribute to making them more unexpected and, potentially, disastrous.

Taleb's point anyway is that bell curves measure the normal and the average, and they ignore the large deviations

and the unexpected.

Training for Failure

Taleb says that organized sports that forbid certain moves make trained athletes weaker to unexpected events. Fighters for example train with rules, which makes them more vulnerable in a street fight because they are trained not to expect illegal moves.

> Those who win the gold medals might be precisely the most vulnerable in real life.
> In real life, you don't know the odds. You need to discover them.

A Wise Man Knows He Doesn't Know Anything

Taleb promotes a focus on "anti-knowledge", such as a focus on what we don't know.

He says we should not try to predict black swans, but adjust to them. And when we adjust to them, we can position ourselves not only to limit the downsides but also to take advantage of possibly positive black swans, which Taleb calls "serendipitous black swans".

> **We need to adjust to black swans' existence instead of naively trying to predict them**

Read more on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

3. Recognition Is Random As Well

Nassim Taleb says that recognition, awards and rewards often don't really go to the people who helped the world the most.

For example in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks people who got the glory were those who were *seen* as performing heroic tasks or those who gave the *impression* of performing heroic tasks.
Taleb says one example of the latter category is Richard Grasso, chairman of NYSE who "saved the stock exchange" and received a huge bonus for it. What did he do exactly? Ring the trading bell on television.

But we don't see and don't reward those who actually worked behind the curtains to prevent catastrophic events. So we reward the central banker who is presiding on a recovery after a recession, but never the central bank who helps prevent a recession.

Sometimes we actually *punish* those who help prevent a catastrophe because their measure can create bottlenecks or cost money.

Great People Were Lucky

One of the most, hardest-hitting theories of Taleb is that of randomness of rewards.

We live in a society that glorifies the individual here in the west, and we like to think that windfalls are always deserved.
But Taleb makes the very credible point that, more often than we realize or care to admit, **success and who we choose to remember or forget is rather random** –Einstein has displaced so many others equally deserving, says the author-.

Just to be clear, he does not say that successful people are not talented, but simply that they are less uniquely talented than we think.

And I find that to be a liberating and empowering message.

One of the most famous and criticized notions from The Black Swan is that, simply by randomness in a large population, you are bound to have successful traders. But that success might have nothing to do with talent. He says that in a large enough population you will have a Warren Buffet or a Ray Dalio, but that doesn't necessarily mean they must be talented and/or that their results will keep being that good over the centuries.

My Note: Warren Buffet bets on bullish America, but what if turned bearish?
Buffet indeed is mostly long, and he bets on the stock market going up and the economy doing good.
The economy has done great during the years he's traded. Would he do as well during prolonged recessions? Who knows…
And again, this is not to accuse Buffet, he is a legend and I respect and admire him.

4. Anecdotes and Quotes Are Not Evidence

Nicholas Nassim Taleb talks about the tendency of narratives to be built around influencing and convincing instead of searching for the truth.

He says:

> (…) I call this overload of example "naive empiricism": a succession of anecdotes collected to fit the story do not constitute evidence.
>
> Anyone looking for confirmation will find enough to deceive himself -and no doubt his peers-.
>
> (…) By searching you can always find someone who made a well-sounding statement confirming your point of view. And on any topic it's possible to find someone who said the exact same opposite.

5. The Triplet of Opacity

Nassim Taleb also deals with history in his Black Swan Essay.
And he doesn't just say that we can't predict the future, but also that our understanding of past events is highly flawed.

These are what he calls "the triple of opacity":

- **The illusion of understanding**: we think we know what's going on but the world is more complex (and random) than we realize
- **The retrospective distortion**: we only see events after they happened, and they seem clearer and more organized than they actually are. Our mind "explains" and connects events that are actually random.
- **The overvaluation of factual information:** especially at the hands of authoritative and learned people, who think they have the tools to make connections and predictions. Even more dangerous, because "the more intelligent the person, the better sounding the explanation"

Taleb says that "nobody really knows what's going on", and he lays out a few great examples for each point.

Narrative Fallacies

Taleb says we all engage in simplification of the world that often turn out to be distortions more than simplifications. And on top of distortions, in those simplifications, we all leave out the black swans.

6. Mediocre Stand VS Extreme Stand

Some professions and that are scalable and produce few winners and masses of losers (extreme stand).

And some professions and fields are not scalable and are more equalitarian (mediocre stand).

Authors and book sales are one example of the extreme stand, where the biggest authors sell thousands of times more than the thousands of average selling authors combined.

Average human height and average weight are examples of mediocre stand, and they can be easily measured with a bell curve.

It's in extreme stands that the black swans are most disruptive. You can lose or make a fortune in a single day or in a single unexpected event.
Taleb refers to the two as being victims to the "tyranny of the collective" or "tyranny of the accidental".

Be Careful of "Scalability"

Nassim Taleb would actually recommend people to pick a profession that is not scalable.
Scalable fields are very risky because they present huge disparities between efforts and rewards. They are dominated by a very small amount of giants and an army of dwarfs struggling to make ends meet.

Extreme Stand and Knowledge

Dealing with mediocre stand means that you can more easily measure the whole population by looking at a few hundred cases.

But in extreme stand, measuring a few hundred cases will likely tell you very little. If you take earnings for example, the chances you will pick a Bill Gates in your sample are very slim, but the people like Bill Gates exert a huge influence on the world.

Knowledge in extreme stands grows slowly and erratically with the addition of new data. Sometimes it changes extremely, and possibly at an known rate.

In Taleb's opinion financial markets belong to extreme stands -albeit your investment manager doesn't know it, he adds :)-.

7. News Make You Understand *Less* of The World

I could not agree more with Taleb when he talks about the media often confusing people about the world instead of helping them understand.

The author says that the media falls for the bias of looking for causes to random events, but makes the process even more credible -and dangerous- by using an army of fact checkers to give n appearance of thoroughness.

He says:

> It's as if they wanted to be wrong with infinite precision instead of accepting being approximately right… Like a fable writer.

Media brings the sensational and the black swan to the fore, which leads us to overestimate its impact, while it leaves in the dark all the other black swans, leading us to severely underestimate them.

Nationalities Narratives

Taleb says that in looking for causes we often fall into the "nationality" narratives, such as assigning a cause to someone's behavior that hinges upon their nationality or their background.
He says that sex, profession, and social class are much better predictors of behavior and personality than nationality.

He also adds evolutionary psychology as another popular field where people go hunting for causes, and I could not agree more -and be equally annoyed by-.

8. Black Swan and Rational Limits

Taleb talks about how we are liable to exaggerate the risks of known black swans, such as terrorism, and radially underestimate the black swans that we know nothing about -most of them anyway-.

He also introduces system 1 and system 2 thinking from Thinking Fast and Slow by Kahnemann and The Society for Judgment and Decision Making, which I will look into becoming a member because it sounds awesome.

The Round-Trip Error

Taleb calls the round-trip error the tenedncy to confuse "no evidence fo black swans as evidence of no black swans".
That's system one at work, and you have to make an effort to use system two and correct the initial mistake.

9. Snake Oil Humanitarians

This is another of Taleb's theories that also long been a pet peeve of mine.

He says that politicians throw money at publicized disasters. But to do so, they divert funds from equally important causes and who says which cause is more important?
Exactly, there is no real study behind it and no really well-thought theory. It's just a publicity, media-driven stunt sometimes.

Again, we focus on what's visible, but not on what's unseen.
And, the author says, these unseen consequences can be, and generally are, more meaningful.

> It was so noble on their part to do something so humanitarian, to rise above out abject selfishness.
>
> Did they promise to do so with their own money? No, it was with public money.
>
> (…)
>
> Have the guts to consider the silent consequences when standing in front of the next snake oil humanitarian

10. Risk-Taker Genes: Be Aware of Risks

Taleb says that we have inherited the genes of those who took risks, which makes us often more risk-seeking than it's actually warranted.

He says he is not against risk, but against the encouragement of uninformed risk-taking.
We take risks often not out of bravado, but out of ignorance and blindness to probability.

Says Taleb:

The fools, the Casanovas, the blind risk-takers, are often the ones who win in the short term.

Of course, in a black swan environment, one single rare event can come up to shake up species after a very long run of fitness.

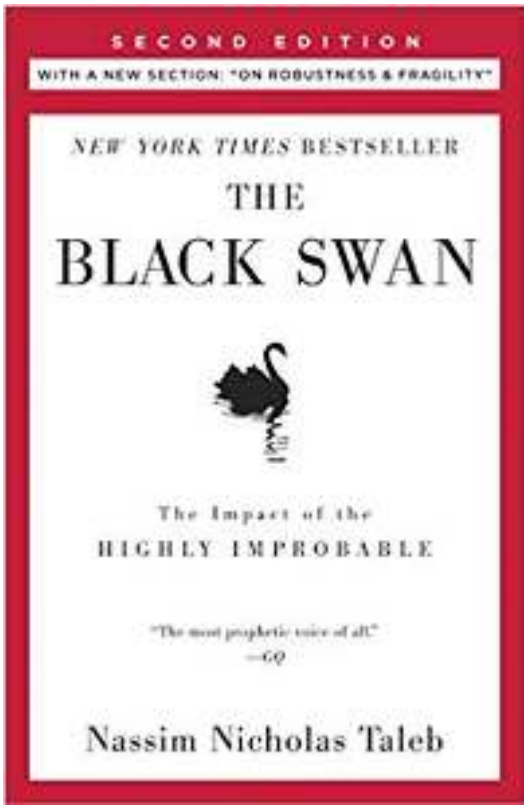
11. Black Swans and Evolution

Some people have a tendency to see evolution as this magical invisible wand that moves species towards better and better states.

Nothing could be further from the truth.
As Taleb says:

> Evolution is a series of flukes. Some good, many bad. You only see the good. But in the short term it's not

> really clear which traits are really good for you.
> (…)
> This idea that we're here, that this is the best of all possible worlds, and that evolution did a great job seems rather bogus.



Quotes

I absolutely love Nassim Taleb's writing style and many of the quotes made my listening day :).
Some of them:

> Black swan logic makes what you don't know far more relevant than what you do know.

On "experts":

> Our inability to predict in environments subject to black swans (..) means certain professionals, while believing they are experts, are in fact not.
>
> Based on their empirical records, they dont know more on their subject matter than the general population.
>
> But they're much better at narrating. Or worst at smoking you with complicated mathematical models.
>
> They are also more likely, to wear a tie.

On wars and avoiding wars:

> Who is more valuable, the politician who avoids a war or the one who starts one and is lucky enough to win.

On "fuck you money":

> This is sometimes called "fuck you money," which, in spite of its coarseness, means that it allows you to act

> like a Victorian gentleman, free from slavery.
>
> It is a psychological buffer: the capital is not so large as to make you spoiled-rich, but large enough to give you the freedom to choose a new occupation without excessive consideration of the financial rewards.
>
> **It shields you from prostituting your mind and frees you from outside authority–any outside authority.**
>
> (..)
>
> Note that the designation fuck you corresponds to the exhilarating ability to pronounce that compact phrase before hanging up the phone.

I personally especially enjoyed the injections of Nassim Taleb's humor across the book, for example:

> Line up a thousand of authors, or people begging to be published who call themselves authors instead of waiters.

About an intellectual discussion he was having in Italian:

> He was so charismatic, so convinced and convincing that, although I could not understand much of what he said, I found myself fully agreeing with everything.
>
> (…) At some point during his speech he turned all red with anger, thus convincing me -and the audience- that he was definitely right.

I also love his biting, irreverent irony, for example:

> Creatures with the largest cortex have the largest intelligence.
>
> We humans have the largest cortex. Followed by bank executives, dolphins and our cousins the apes.

On "John Nash" hype, and game's theory inability to predict anything:

> (..) in which the most notorious player is John Nash, the schizophrenic mathematician made famous by the film "A Beautiful Mind".
>
> Sadly, for all the intellectual appeal of this method and all the media attention its practitioners are no better at predicting than university students.

On philosophers VS "normal" human beings:

> You can also see masses of tourists, laughing at the caricatures that lower-level primates represent.
> Now imagine being a member of a higher level species, say a real philosopher, a truly wise person. Far more sophisticated than the human primates

Real-Life Applications

Therapeutic Applications of Black Swans Rationalizations
Taleb says that our tendency to rationalize events in a way that seems obvious can make us feel guilty for what happened.
"I could have done X" or "I should have seen that coming" are poisonous thoughts that cause unnecessary suffering. Taleb proposes to fix it with a narrative of unavoidability. Tell yourself it was bound to happen". He says that writing daily diaries is a great way of acquiring that mentality.

Don't Feel Guilty for Extinctions
Some of us today carry a feeling of guilt for what "we are doing to the world and other species". But, the author say, species have been going extinct for millions of years, they always have and always will. And we don't have to feel guilty for it.
Life is simply much more fragile than we think.
Also read: don't fall for the guilt-tripping culture.

Watch Out for News and Pundits
Experts sometimes know little more than normal people when it comes to predictions. And news often confound you instead of making things clearer.

Watch Out for Those Who Refer to The Past for Future Predictions
Talking about commentators who like to say that "New York will always come back because it always has", the author says:

> I'm sure that Carthage and Jerico had their own no less eloquent pundits saying "our enemies have to destroy us many times but we always came back more resilient than before"

CONS

I recognize some of the criticism leveled against The Black Swan such as diverging, digressing, and going off-topic. But to me, those are no real cons.
This is a work of philosophy as well, and I enjoyed those digressions because they added value most of the time.

However, I disagreed with the following:

Too Much Randomness?

Albeit I agree with much of what Taleb says, I find that sometimes he ascribes too much to randomness. Talking about how many manuscripts The New York Times rejects, he says "imagine the thousands of literary geniuses we will never hear about".

Yet, I have to wonder if there are really that many literary geniuses.
maybe there are, but I'm not convinced.

Disregards the Tendency for Quality to Rise to The Top

The author discusses how a scientist and researcher can become famous and highly esteem simply by randomness circumstances and a lucky initial break.
Albeit that makes a lot of sense and nobody ever considers it enough, I also believe there is a (strong?) tendency for the cream to rise to the top. And that tendency has also the power to buck a few unlucky breaks along the way.

The Gulag Mistake

Talking about the human fallacy of looking for a cause, one of the examples the author provides is that of the rise of the Russian mafia who was brutal because hardened by their "gulag experience".

Albeit I agree with the concept, that connection is a bit up in the air

He uses the example of rat labs to say that hard experience weakens the rats instead of making them stronger. However, he does not acknowledge that it's not just about physical deprivation, and suffering has shown to potentially alienate people from ethical and moral considerations.

The Later You Are, The Longer it Takes?

The author says that when a project is late, most people expect it to be closer and closer to completion the more time passes by.
But instead, he says, once you are beyond the deadline, the more time passes the further in the future the completion date moves.

However, that didn't make sense to me, not rationally nor mathematically.
If it were true, there would be an acceleration towards infinity, and that is simply not always the case -albeit it might be with certain projects that were impossible to begin with, but those are a different case-.

The More Bankruptcies, The Better?

The author says that an often under-appreciated advantage of capitalism is that corporations that go bust are transferring wealth to the citizens.

I can see where he's coming from and that's very smart and I had never thought about it.

Yet, I'm not sure I fully agree or that you can apply that to the majority of corporations. Many companies simply fail because their products are not good enough.
Thus, they didn't make a favor to anyone but they *wasted* resources.

Wrong & Terrible Example of The "Italian Boy"

Taleb talks about the story of an "Italian boy" who captured everyone's attention for, in the author's opinion, all the wrong reasons. The name of that kid is Alfredino Rampi.

It's not true the boy was saved, unluckily.
And I feel it was the wrong example to make his point because that story *is* incredibly heartbreaking.
I wasn't alive, and yet I will never forget the story of Alfredino.

It's the story of a boy who fell head first in a well, narrow and deep. The rescuer and everyone around could hear his cries for help and his tears. Rescue operations went on for days, also on live TV.
In spite of everyone's best efforts nobody managed to save him.

Alfredino died in a well in the most tragic, heart-wrenching circumstances. And that, in my opinion, makes it a terrible example Taleb picked to make his otherwise valid point.
And I extend a prayer to Alfredino (and all others who are suffering)

PROS

As I type these words I'm still needing to emotionally state shift from that Alfredino Rampi story which always affects me deeply to think of.

That being said, this book is wonderful.
To me the pros are both practical and intellectual:

- Better understanding of life, the world and reality
- Improving one's own rational and critical thinking
- Increased confidence understanding that successful people are no better than you
- Better decision making through better understanding of risk and probabilities
- Increased quality of life cutting out the noise

To Read After The Black Swan

Here is what I recommend reading after The Black Swan:

- Fooled by Randomness
- Antifragile
- How to Lie With Statistics

Video Review

Review

I understand how Taleb can be a divisive figure.

One of the top reviews on Amazon says that The Black Swan is “too demeaning of others”.
Some reviews complain about digressions and circumlocutions.
Some others call Nassim a conceited author, criticizing almost everyone but himself.

I can see where those reviews are coming from because, in a way, they are true.
Yet, it’s exactly those points that make a deep deep philosophical text -albeit with practical applications- into a masterpiece that is also a pleasure to read.

And yes Taleb does sound conceited at times, but he is so open and so frank about it that you just can’t help but laugh along.
Furthermore, he does have the chupatz to walk the talk, which makes him the perfect villain or, better yet, the perfect anti-hero: the Robin Hood of modern academia.

This is a very personal review because I could have written almost everything Taleb says myself -if I only were as smart as he is, that is :).
And I feel Taleb is a kindred spirit.
From his background to which he refers to “Mediterranean” to his historical references to his language skills going beyond English to his rebellious, slightly anti-social biting humor.

But mostly, I feel very much close to his pursuit of a life free of financial and mental chains.
Here is what he says on “fuck you money”:

> It shields you from prostituting your mind and frees you from outside authority–any outside authority.
>
> (…) it literally cured me of all financial ambition–it made me feel ashamed whenever I diverted time away from the study for the pursuit of material wealth.
>
> I wanted to become a “flaneur”, a professional meditator. Sitting in cafes, lounge, unglued to desks and organization structures, sleep as long as I needed, read voraciously, and not owe any explanation to anybody.

This exactly how I feel and that’s why I am pursuing my own way of “fuck you income”.

As you might have guessed by now, I can highly recommend The Black Swan.

Check the best books collection or get the book on Amazon

Men Explain Things to Me: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 January 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Men Explain Things to Me is a collection of essays by Rebecca Solnit, and it is considered to be a feminist manifesto.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Murder is Extreme Authoritarianism
  - Women Taught to Defend, Men Not Told Not to Offend
  - We Win Together
  - Men Harassing Women Are At Large
  - Volunteer Police Force
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Violence does not have a race, religion or nationality but it has a gender: and it's the male gender
- But, of course, there are plenty of good men
- We win together

Full Summary

About the Author: Rebecca Solnit is an American writer, author, and journalist. She received a master's degree in journalism and writes about different topics including gender issues, the environment, and politics. She said her father was an abusive man who hated women.

Murder is Extreme Authoritarianism

The author says that murder is at the extreme end of authoritarianism.

Authoritarianism is the belief that a man has the right to decide what a woman should or should not do.
With murder, he decides whether you live or die.

My Note: In some cases, it might be. But not always
I don't fully agree here.
There are different kinds of motives behind murders. Jealousy, fit of rage.. There are different situations and in my opinion, authoritarianism is not a major or prominent motive.

The author says that it can happen also if she is obedient, because the desire to control is not assuaged by obedience.
And it's a form of entitlement mentality: the entitlement to inflict suffering and deaths.

The author goes on to list a few examples of abusive men who assault or killed their spouses -or former spouses- that wanted to leave them.
Also read:

- Signs of abusive relationship
- Psychological analysis of abusive men
- Is your boyfriend too jealous and controlling?

Women Taught to Defend, Men Not Told Not to Offend

Talking about rape, Rebecca Solnit says that university courses teach women how to prevent and avoid rape, but nobody tells men not to rape.

The author says that's part of rape culture.

My Note:
Well, she might have a point indeed, but it still makes no sense to me to say that's part of "rape culture". For two reasons:

1. It's so obvious one should not rape that everyone should know. It's the same reason you don't tell an adult "don't kill", because everyone knows it
2. It's unlikely that rapists would change behavior based on obvious recommendations

It's like complaining because nobody tells thieves not to steal. They would steal anyway.

We Win Together

I was very pleased to read the author portray feminism as "together" instead of the all too common "women VS men", which I cannot stand either when it comes from women or from men.

I quote her:

> Women's liberation has often been portrayed as a movement intent on encroaching upon or taking power and privilege away from men, as though in some dismal zero-sum game, only one gender at a time could be free and powerful.
>
> **But we are free together or slaves together.**
>
> Surely the mindset of those who think they need to win, to dominate, to punish, to reign supreme, must be terrible and far from free. And giving up this unachievable pursuit would be liberatory.

I could not agree more.
Also read:

- The Fundamental Power strategies for life (developing win-win relationships is one of them)
- Power-obsessed men
- Accepting influence

Men Harassing Women Are At Large

The author cites a few cases of beating, harassment and stalking in which men are rarely prosecuted and often free soon after the facts.

I have to convene here that stalking is an issue that few legislatures tackle well.
And it's not easy to tackle at all. How do you prevent stalking for example before a real crime is committed? It's not easy.
But sure we must try.

Volunteer Police Force

The author refers to “volunteer police force” as to the army of people who, also thanks to the Internet, seek to “keep women in their place” (she is indirectly referring to The Red Pill as well).
She says this is part of the larger “rape culture”.

I thought this was a very deep food for thought and indeed there might be an element of fear and/or thirst for control that pushes men to crack down on women.
The accusation was there, but I didn’t see much deep psychological analysis to back up her point of view (if you wanna see one, read this analysis of the Red Pill).

CONS

Poor Data and Statistics
The data and statistics in “Men Explain Things to Me” seemed to me more like headline-grabbing style data rather than data stemming from well combed and well put together research.
For example: “*a woman is beaten every 9 seconds in this country*” says very little to me.
How many men are beaten, how many children, how many people in general?
Good data would compare violence against women to violence in general, but that’s not what was done here.
The statistics thrown out like that is meaningless -also read How to Lie With Statistics-.

The Genies Are Not Going Back… You Sure?
The author says that social conquest and victory are forever and there is no going back. I very much disagree.
Not only because it’s not written anywhere that one cannot back, but because empirical evidence from history shows the opposite.
Iran went back to the veil, the world plunged back to the Middle Age and we are still stupid enough to wage plenty of wars.
No, genies do go back.
And that’s why it’s our duty to make sure they stay out and that we pull out more of them.

Little Original Content

The book spent, in my opinion, way too long on Strauss Khan's, Virginia Wolfe and anecdotes.
I was expecting some original work and thoughts, but some of the content was more like a commentary or criticism of past events.

Victim Mentality?
At times, I feel there is some victim mentality here. When the author talks about all women knowing the feeling that "this is not their world" to me feels like disempowering, victim mentality.

PROS

What I liked most of "Men Explain Things to Me" is the bridge-building element of it. It's a book about positive change, not a book against men.

Actually, it goes even one step further, saying that we win together. And that, won me over.

Review

I have reviewed a few anti-feminist books such as The Feminist Lie and Men on Strike and was really curious to read on some influential feminist work.

I have to admit: I approached "Men Explain Things to Me" thinking I wasn't going to like it.
Well, I don't think it's the best book ever for gathering information because of weak data, over-reliance on anecdotes, and the usual gleaning over of gender differences in biology and psychology.

But overall, I actually enjoyed "Men Explain Things to Me".

Check the best red pill books or get the book on Amazon.

The Little Book of Stoicism: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Little Book of Stoicism (2019) is a concise, yet deep overview of Stoicism. Jonas Salzgeber's goal is to provide the reader with a manual choice for an enlightened, Stoic life.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Stoicism: An Overview
  - The Stoic Happiness Triangle
  - You Must Only Do Your Best
  - Do It For Your Values, Not For An External Prize
  - How to Become a Stoic
- Real-Life Applications
- Stoic Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Stoicism is a practical philosophy on how to live well
- The modern positive philosophy is basically confirming (and repeating) what the old Stoics applied thousands of years ago
- We're responsible -and capable- of controlling our happiness despite what happens around us

Full Summary

Jonas Salzgeber begins *The Little Book of Stoicism* by saying that he learned all kinds of subjects in school.
All kinds of them, except, well… How to actually *live* well.

And that's exactly what the ancient world philosophy used to be helpful for: a practical school of thought to help people lead better lives.
Stoicism was one of the best schools when it came to groundbreaking ideas on self-empowerment. And Salzgeber sets out to explain to his readers, in simple words, plain English, and with practical examples, what Stoicism is all about.

Stoicism: An Overview

Stoicism is a *practical* philosophy on how to improve our characters, control our mental states despite external circumstances and, overall, live a good life.

So much was stoicism a practical philosophy that **stoics saw themselves as warriors of the mind**.
What really mattered for stoics was how well you could apply the principles to make a real difference in your character and in the quality of your life.

After a long dark age in which Stoicism fell by the wayside of philosophy, it's now finally staging a comeback into

mainstream self-development.
It started with Viktor Frankl, author of *Man'sSearch for Meaning*, and got more impetus thanks to popular recent authors such as Ryan Holiday.
Positive psychology, by accident or by influence, is also helping the spread of Stoicism by confirming with "recent" studies what Stoics have been saying and practicing millennia ago -Salzgeber says a good start on positive psychology is "*The Happiness Advantage*" by Shawn Achor-.

Whatever is happening to Stoicism though, this truth won't change: it's an incredibly helpful philosophy and you can only improve your life when you will start practicing it.

The Stoic Happiness Triangle

The Stoic Happiness triangle could be a registered trademark of Jonas Salzgeber.
He devised it as a tool to explain Stoicism in a way that it's easier for the new students to remember and understand some of the basic tenets of Stoicism.

At the center of the triangle is eudaimonia, which is the ultimate goal of the philosophy: a thriving life.
The three angles of the triangle, partially reinterpreted with my words for brevity, are:

- **Arete**: strive to always express your highest self
- **Selective focus**: focus on what you can control, and take the rest as it comes
- **Take responsibility for your mental state**: you are responsible for how you feel. Whatever happens around you cannot impact you negatively unless you allow it

Jonas calls the "tower of strength" the decision of not giving outside events power over you, and I could not agree more.

This is of course not an easy task.
As a former mentor of mine once told me, it's a "mountain without a peak". Such as, it's a life endeavor. You get better and better yet never really reach a finish line.
Your Stoic pursuit is a never-ending journey.
But that's also the beauty of it: since it's such a sweet journey, walking the path is a reward in itself.

You Must Only Do Your Best

This is one of my favorite concepts -and there are *many* great concepts-.

Salzgeber says that you will never be perfect in all you do.
And that's OK.
Sometimes you won't even *know* what's the best thing to do, let alone be perfect at it.
And that's also OK.
Your goal is not perfection. Your goal is "only" to act with your best intentions and to do your best, given the constraints of your current knowledge and circumstances.
"Just" do your best. No less, no more.

Do It For Your Values, Not For An External Prize

Salzgeber says that we must strive to be our best selves for ourselves and for the pleasure of withholding our values.

Chances are that we will also reap more life benefits when we strive to do our best.
But we should never do it for the befits alone which, if they happen, are only the cherry on top of the pie.
This also ties back to focusing on what you can control: the reward is not under your control. Your actions are.

How to Become a Stoic

Salzgeber dedicates a major portion of his work to teaching the readers how to become practicing Stoics.

He lists 55 different practices to get you well on your way to making you a happier, healthier, and stronger human being.
They are all great, and here I pick a few I particularly liked:

- Art of Acquiescence: Accept And Love Whatever Happens

Instead of fighting, aggressing, pushing back, and complaining… Try accepting instead.
I believe this is an important message in a world of self-help that sometimes seems to perversely yell to people that "you can change anything".
Yeah, maybe you can change quite a few things. But maybe you can also accept a few of them and move on?
And especially for those things you can hardly change, the art of acquiescence will definitely help improve your life.

I particularly liked Jonas' words when he says:

> I try to accept everything as if I had chosen it

- Win at what matters

Here the author exhorts focusing on what really matters to us and spending our time wisely.
Because many of us live like we're going to live forever, squandering our time only to realize too late that we're running late.

- Equanimity game

Here's the author quote Brian Johnson, a guy whom I also love and listed in my "*best free book summaries websites*" list.
The equanimity game consists in catching your mind going into negative or unproductive states and see how quickly you can get back to a healthier, happier, or more productive state.

The equanimity game is like training for your mind.
And the result is a stronger mind and a happier life.

- Take action

The author reflects on how many of us allow rude behavior to go on unchecked while we bottle up our anger and steam inside… Instead of simply asking the person to fix their behavior.

That's very true and something that most of us can improve on. Especially the more passive-aggressive ones. You can read more on 8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness, Assertiveness: How to Stand Up For Yourself, and People Skills.

Real-Life Applications

The Little Book of Stoicism is all about practical applications:

Enjoy Things In Life Without Becoming Materialistic
Salzgeber says that Stoicism is about enjoying the beautiful things that life has to offer without clinging to them.
And I loved that.
This idea of loving and enjoying life, including material aspects of it, but without descending into a hedonistic treadmill of consumerism is a concept I hold dear.

De-link Happiness From External Circumstances
A crucial tenet of Stoicism is that of not allowing external circumstances of dictating our moods, happiness, and mental states.
A real power of strength, as the author puts it.

Everything's Training
I love the idea of looking at life as a big training. It helps develop a growth mindset, lowers the pressure, improves your performance and, finally, it increases your ability to learn from your mistakes.

Stoic Quotes

The Little Book of Stoicism has a plethora of awesome ideas and great quotes.
These are some of the quotes I liked most.

On going after truth, not dogmas:

> Zeno (founder of Stoicism) is our friend. But truth is an even greater friend.

On Stoicism as a Philosophy for Life:

> Just as there is no use in medical study unless it leads to the health of the human body, so there is no use to a philosophical doctrine unless it leads to the virtue of the human soul

On focusing on process more than on results (this also reminded me of the role of luck and chance in life as in *Fooled by Randomness* and *The Black Swan*):

> The wise man looks to the purpose of all actions, not their consequences; beginnings are in our power but Fortune judges the outcome, and I do not grant her a verdict upon me

On starting on your Stoic journey:

> How long are you going to wait before you demand the best of yourself?

There were a few passages that made me chuckle, for example:

> The idea of Stoicism (…) is finding its way back into the lives of ordinary people like you and me (no offense).

On freedom, materialism, and happiness:

> You don't need more and more stuff. You need less. And you'll be freer.

And finally:

> **True wealth lies in wanting less**.

CONS

Not Fully Agree on Forgiving & Kindness
Albeit I love and wholeheartedly agree with 98% of what the author and Stoicism profess, in that 2% there is what in my opinion is a bit too much of a "live and let live" or "water off a duck's back" type of attitude.
The idea of not fighting back when you're treated meanly is one that I respect and that has a place in life.

However, I see pushing back on both meanness and on the assholes of this life as not just something you do for yourself, but something you do for the world at large as well.
That's one of the founding credo of this website. But then again, I write on a website called "the power moves" :).

Some Repetitions Sometimes
The author says that the story of Hercules bears repeating. I'm more the type of reader who likes streamlined texts with no repetitions whatsoever. So at times, I thought the book could have been condensed a bit further.
But this is a con that you will find in most of my book reviews, and *The Little Book of Stoicism* is well within reason. Especially if you consider the vast amount of wisdom it packs in what's, after all, still a small package.

PROS

I thoroughly enjoyed The Little Book of Stoicism, and I think these are some of its biggest pros:

- Kettle powder of great mindsets

There is a crazy high amount of concentrated life-changing wisdom here.

- Wonderful overview of Stoicism

If you want to get an overview of Stoicism, from its history to its most life-changing ideas, this is your book.

- Simple and practical

Salzgeber shows a knack for simplifying great ideas. The Little Book of Stoicism will clarify this wonderful philosophy even to complete beginners.

- Highly effective self-help manual

Finally, *The Little Book of Stoicism* is one of the best self-help manuals available.
The author starts it off by saying that school doesn't teach you how to live, and by the time he ends it he does a great job of filling in for our educational system :).

Review

I read The Little Book of Stoicism in one fell swoop on a long-haul flight back to Europe.
And albeit sitting in a cramped airplane is not most people's definition of a good time -especially when children sit nearby :)- this book made it a really enjoyable flight.

For the sake of disclosure, I must say that this is probably the first review where I have been in touch with the author before reading the book.
But I also feel confident that I can keep my impartiality in my reviews.
I respect my readers, my website, and my values too much to do anything else but write high-quality reviews -and that includes no favoritism-.

The Little Book of Stoicism is a great read and I can highly recommend it.
If one were to ask me what they should read to understand stoicism, I would preface my answer saying that I'm not the biggest expert in the field. And then the first book I would recommend to them is The Little Book of Stoicism.

Check the best books collection or get the book on Amazon

Fundamentals of Female Dynamics: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Fundamentals of Female Dynamics is a dating advice book by Michael Knight that explains how dating and female psychology works.
I found it to be one of the *best dating books for guys* I have had the pleasure to read.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Women Are Attracted to Confident Men, Not Assholes
  - Healthy Entitlement
  - The Formula for Dating Success
  - Passing Congruence Tests
  - How to Generate Attraction
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- What makes you successful at dating makes you successful at life
- Be a man people would want to associate with: the women in your life will be a reflection of your life
- Walking the line between wanting her but not needing her and showing that interest without trying to buy her affection is the intersection where dating success lies

Full Summary

Fundamentals of Female Dynamics mixes self-development content with high-quality dating advice.
Here are some of the many passages which I enjoyed:

Women Are Attracted to Confident Men, Not Assholes

Michael Knight says that high-quality women -or any woman who has had a decent childhood for that matter- won't be attracted to assholes per se.

But assholes do possess some attractive qualities such as confidence and self-esteem which makes them much more popular than, say, unconfident nice guys (also read *No More Mr. Nice Guy*).

Also, read:

- **How to be a GOOD asshole**

> How to Be A Good Asshole

I also liked Knight's take on the "neg", an old pick-up technique consisting of delivering a veiled insult to women you liked (read *The Game* and *The Mystery Method*).

He says that insults are not attractive per se, but it's the male communication that he is not dependent and needy of her approval that is attractive.
And that's why he recommends men should not be filtering their thoughts.

I agree with Knight and I can't help but quote him here because he says it better than I ever could:

> The types of women for whom you actually need to become an asshole to attract are the same ones that you should probably avoid
>
> *Michael Knight*

Also read: women like avoidants, not assholes.

Healthy Entitlement

The author says that unhealthy entitlement is to believe that you have the right to be with a woman.
This unhealthy sense of entitlement leads men to "prove" to women that they are better, and engage in what I call "one-up games" (read "combative relationships").

Healthy entitlement instead is to believe that there is no reason why you are not good enough to be with a woman.
A healthy sense of entitlement entails the belief that you are no special. But neither are the people, and the women, around you.

The author further delves into a very good analysis of the mindsets of taking action.

> Persisting through adversity is what truly separates the men from the boys.
>
> *Michael Knight*

The Formula for Dating Success

The author, an engineer by studies, concocts, shares, and explains one of the coolest formulas I have ever seen -and that even a math-challenged like myself could still understand-:

> N= W · fd · fi · G · fa · fl
>
> N= Number of dates

W= the number of women in your environment;
fd= the percentage of those women you find attractive;
fi= the percentage of women you interact with;
G= your "game constant", or your personal level of attractiveness ranging from $0 \leq G \geq 1$
fa= percentage of women who are available;
fl= percentage of women who are not made inaccessible by external circumstances

The author divides the constants into those over which you have direct control and those over which you don't have direct control on. And he says that, in the end, dating is also a numbers game.

Passing Congruence Tests

The author has a chapter on what creates women's attraction which he calls "The Four C's of Female Attraction (Cleanliness, Confidence, Congruence, Consistency).

I especially loved the part on the congruence test, also referred to as "shit tests" sometimes.
He says they are a form of flirting, and I partially agree.
And I liked how it advises the readers on effective ways of handling them. Especially when he links them to

relationships and how important it is for men to enforce their boundaries in long-term relationships.

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Pass Shit Tests

How to Generate Attraction

The author says that there is no magic pill to generate attraction, and I like his honesty.
Yet, he still provides 8 good rules on how to help generate attraction. I invite you to get the full rules and descriptions.

A few book concepts I like are not forcing a bond and connection, not qualifying yourself, and not trying to impress.

> Confidently, unapologetically and assertively show your honest intent to a woman while simultaneously remaining outcome independent
>
> *Michael Knight*

Real-Life Applications

Don't Buy Women's Drinks As An Exchange
Knight says that buying a drink in itself is not the issue. It's the possible exchange of "my drink VS your time" that might be an issue.
If you can pay for drinks without triggering that exchange, you're all good. If it's very early in the interaction and you're not sure you can, better not to buy.

Fear of Rejection is Maladaptive: Overcome It
The author says that our fear of rejection stems from our ancestral environment of living in tribes.
In this day and age, it still makes sense to have our cavemen wiring in social circles such as office and family. But in a bar in a big city or a mall downtown?
Not so much. There it's not only not nearly as helpful, but it can also be actively harmful.

Don't Convince Logically
Knight says that a terrible mistake many men do is to try to convince women *logically* that they should be together. But that rarely, if ever, works.

Say That You're Nervous Instead of Trying to Hide It
If you're very nervous and it shows, you're better off saying rather than trying to pretend it's not there.
I agree and this is an example of positive vulnerability.

Show Your Interest
I fully agree with the author that when a woman shows interest in you, you should show interest back as well. This is something I also recommend to women in my article on mutual escalation and making him invest.

Show Her You Won't Judge Her For Being Herself
Another crucial mindset of high-quality men that leads to great relationships.

Aim For an Enjoyable Learning Process
The author says that to achieve sustainable growth and improvement, you should make your process enjoyable.
He says that "a key to making a plan sustainable is learning to enjoy the process".
I agree.

Persistence Can Work… If You're Outcome Independent
Again the author drops another pearl that goes against much common dating strategy advice when he says that, if

you can manage to be persistent while being outcome independent, then it can work.
This is something I talk about as well in uncommon dating techniques that work.

CONS

Sometimes Disagreed On Causes and Psychology
Sometimes I didn't fully agree with the author on a few analyses.
In my opinion, he seems to not give enough credit to the usefulness of resources in attracting women -read the traits that matter in the sexual market value and high-quality providers for more-.

Sometimes Disagreed on Nature VS Nurture
The author says that women (and men) who bought into the "standard narrative of dating" expect you to dine and wine them.
I don't believe much in "cultural narratives".
I believe it's more an innate drive in women to make sure he will provide and stick around more than a cultural narrative.
Similarly, I don't believe that it's a cultural narrative of double standards that makes women appear as sluts, but it's a natural consequence of the quite natural Madonna-whore dichotomy.

Some Small Typos
An editor might have caught some small typos. But again, I'm not big on typos either :).

PROS

I really enjoyed Fundamentals of Female Dynamics and I agree with much of what the other says.
These are some of the best features:

- Great analysis

Albeit I don't agree with everything -obviously-, I find the author to have a very good grasp of dating dynamics and of psychology. This is something that is rather uncommon in the dating industry.

- Genuine

Knight espouses and teaches a very genuine form of dating and self-development.

- Dating advice for high-quality men

The author himself says that what it takes to be successful in dating is what will make you successful in life.
I agree, this is the type of approach that makes high-quality, securely attached men.
And he manages to convey those traits very well in his work.

In Knight's words:

> Lead a life that you are proud of, and thus a woman who shares your values would be proud to join.
>
> *Michael Knight*

Review

For full disclosure, this is only the second review I have ever written where I have been in touch with the author before reading the book, which was kindly provided by the author himself.

However, the dynamics of how we got in touch say everything about the quality of this book.
I was writing my review for *How to Be a 3% Man* and, as it's often the case, I was searching for other reviews

online..
That's when I stumbled upon Michael's work. I agreed with a lot of what he said and I thought his analysis was uncommonly deep and spot on.
That's when I reached out to him.

When I finally could get myself into the book a few weeks later, my first impressions were confirmed: I loved it. Unluckily, *Fundamentals of Female Dynamics* is also proof that popularity is not a good indicator of quality. Too many more popular titles either can't hold a candle to this concise text or share sub-par, sometimes even counterproductive advice.

On the other hand, good for you who are bucking the trend and reading this review: now you can get your hands on this little pearl :).

In a nutshell:
I loved *Fundamentals of Female Dynamics* and it's now one of my top recommended dating books for men.

Also see:

- **Best dating resources for guys**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

The Power of a Positive No: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

"*The Power of a Positive No*" (2007) teaches readers how to say no and how to be more assertive in negotiations as well in life.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - No Enables Yeses
  - Why Saying No Is Difficult
  - The Three Approaches to Saying No
  - Solution: The Positive No
  - Steps to a Positive No
- Real-Life Applications
- Great Quotes
- Also Read
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- "Nos" are necessary for the "yeses" of your life
- Find and communicate what you must say yes to before you deliver your no
- End with a yes to find a mutually satisfactory agreement

Full Summary

About The Author: William Ury is an American anthropologist, academic, and negotiation expert. He is one of the co-founders of the Harvard Program on Negotiation. He also co-authored the negotiation classic "*Getting to Yes*" and "*Getting Past No*".

No Enables Yeses

The author says that our nos enable our yeses.
You cannot avoid saying no to some things in life if you want to say yes to what really matters to you.

In this sense, learning to say no enables you to live a fuller, richer, happier life by prioritizing what's important.

Why Saying No Is Difficult

The author says that saying no can be difficult because it sits uncomfortably between the exercise of your power and the nurturing of your relationships.

My Note: True, plus there are further sources of discomfort
I think Ury is right.
However, the "fear of no" goes deeper in my opinion. The difficulty in saying no for many arises from different

psychological sources as well. Fear, submission, lack of self-esteem, and fear of judgment, are also major stumbling blocks for people who have trouble saying no.
Also, read "No More Mr. Nice Guy" and for a deeper approach check out **Power University**.

The Three Approaches to Saying No

The author says there are three main approaches to saying no:

1. **Accommodate**: say yes when you wanted to say no
2. **Attack**: a poor, destructive way of saying no
3. **Avoid**: try to avoid any commitment, neither yes nor no

The accommodation is an unhealthy yes because it neglects our real interests and buys a false temporary peace. In the long run, it's likely instead that it will do the opposite by growing our resentment and our discontent and it will make us more and more passive-aggressive.

Solution: The Positive No

A "normal" no starts with a no and ends with a no.

A positive no instead begins with a no and ends with a more conciliatory tone.
Often, it can end with a yes.

The key to a positive no is respect.
Respect for yourself *and* for the other individual.

Example of Positive No

How does it actually work?
Take for example a ma who needs more time off from his parents to have more time with his own family.
He would say something like this (adapted from the book):

> Mom, I have a family as well, and they need me. I want to spend more time with them.
> I will not be coming to visit every weekend anymore.
> I propose to find a solution so that we can spend some time together while I also spend the necessary time with my family.

1. The sentence starts with a matter-of-fact assertion and a declaration of intent (1. express your yes).
2. Then it delivers a final no (2. assert your no)
3. And it proceeds to seek a solution that will make everyone happy (3. propose a yes).

Steps to a Positive No

The steps to a positive no are:

1. Prepare your positive no

1. Uncover your yes
2. Empower your no
3. Respect your way to yes

2. Deliver your positive no

1. Express your yes
2. Assert your no
3. Propose a yes

3. Follow through on your positive no

1. Stay true to your yes
2. Underscore your no
3. Negotiate to yes

The author dedicates a chapter to every single step.

Real-Life Applications

Here are some of the major takeaways I took with me:

- **Base Your No On A Yes**

One of the biggest mistakes is that we ground our “nos” and refusals on what we are against. And that is more likely to lead to escalations, push-backs, and angry feelings.

Instead, we must ground our no, and deliver our “nos”, starting from what we are saying yes to.

For example, instead of saying you don’t have time for coffee with a friend, say you must spend all your time to finish an important project. Then say that’s the reason why you must say no to a coffee right now.

This is a simple, yet huge takeaway to revolutionize our communication.

- **Give Benefit of Doubt**

To make your communication easier, you might give people the benefit of the doubt.
For example, if they get into the pool without showering first, you might approach them saying that the sign that it’s mandatory to shower before getting into the pool is a little difficult to see.
It helps them save face and gives them a second chance to choose proper behavior without feeling like they lost.

- **If “No” Is Difficult: Focus on Yourself**

The author says that sometimes delivering a “no” can be difficult because we want to try to make it as sweet as possible on the receiver. That’s a way of “managing their reactions”, but their reactions are not up to you.

Your focus should be on delivering a “no” which is honest, frank, and respectful. How they react is not up to you

- **Let People Rage**

Sometimes your “no” will be met with anger. Don’t backtrack right away and don’t attack. They are probably going through the stages of acceptance and need time to accept your decision.

- **Empathize, Don’t Sympathize**

Sympathizing, or feeling their pain might lead you to drop your position. Instead, empathize, which means to show you understand them.

Great Quotes

On respect:

> Even in the face of the other's provocations, keep showing respect, remembering that you give respect not because of who they are but rather because of who you are.

This is not a motivational quote, but you can get enough of them by opening your FB or Instagram :).
This one made me laugh and it was so cute that I wanted to share it with you:

> Once I was watching the film Hook with my daughter Gabriela, then five years old.
> In one scene, Captain Hook says vehemently to Peter Pan, "I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!"
> My daughter looked up and commented: "He shouldn't say that. He should say, 'I don't like you but I'll play with you sometimes.'"
> The wisdom of opening a door is known to five-year-olds but often forgotten in adulthood.

Also Read

If you find this content interesting, then you will also find these books or lists of best books interesting:

- People Skills
- Difficult Conversations
- How to Win Friends and Influence People
- Verbal Judo
- Crucial Conversations
- Never Split The Difference (more on negotiation but great wisdom on communication psychology)

CONS

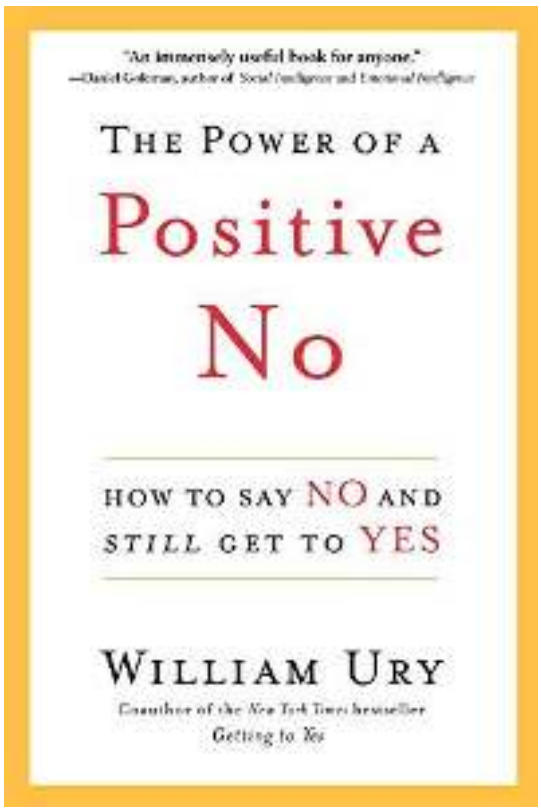
Sometimes Some Exaggerations
This is really unconnected to the content, but sometimes I felt the author exaggerated a bit too much on the examples.
Talking about a Cold War crisis he referred to "total annihilation" and "end of the world" scenarios. But as much as nuclear war would prove tragic and disastrous, it wouldn't necessarily lead to "total annihilation" of every form of life or of every human.
This is nitpicking, but I'm very big against generalizations and exaggerations :).

PROS

I loved this book because of the great wisdom it contains on proper and effective communication.
As well:

Great Real Life Examples
The Power of a Positive No helps you learn with a lot of examples. Exactly like I like it :).
And some of the examples Ury shares are very helpful when it comes to communication and influencing.

Great Influencing Techniques
Remaining calm as Hugo Chavez raged and went through the stages of acceptance: genius.



Review

I absolutely loved The Power of a Positive No: it has boatloads of great wisdom, wonderful examples, and real-life applications.

It's a great text to improve your communication, increase your influencing skills, and, as well, become a more assertive individual in life.

Also, read:

- Best communication books
- Best social skills books

Or get the book on Amazon

Boundaries: Summary, Review, & Criticism (Henry Cloud)

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

"*Boundaries*" (1992) by Henry Cloud draws from *psychology* and religious teaching to help readers draw their boundaries, become more assertive, and say no when they need to say no.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Boundaries Full Summary
  - Boundaries Derive From God's Nature
  - Emotional Distance is Temporary Boundary
  - Boundaries to Save Relationships
  - Don't Help Those Who Don't Learn
  - Boss Employee Relationship Troubles
  - Did Your Family Make You Feel Guilty?
  - Boundaries Attract High-Quality People
- Boundaries Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Clear boundaries are essential to a healthy lifestyle
- Christians struggle with boundaries in fear they won't be lonely
- People who can't respect your boundaries were taking advantage of you

Boundaries Full Summary

About the Author: Henry Cloud is an American Christian author. He holds a BS in psychology from Southern Methodist University and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Biola University.

Boundaries Derive From God's Nature

Henry Cloud and John Townsend say that boundaries derive from the very nature of God.
God is a distinct being, separate from his own creations as well and he is responsible for himself. He tells us what he likes and dislikes, who he is, and who is not.

God gives us his own boundaries.
No, he doesn't set limits on what people can do, but he sets his standards. And when they behave outside his standards it's like he is saying "you can be that way if you want, but you can't come to my house".

Emotional Distance is Temporary Boundary

The author says that emotional distance is a temporary boundary for when you need to be safe, but it cannot be a long-term state or solution.

The author says though that it's good to keep your distance and emotional distance if you have been in dysfunctional relationships or abusive relationships.
And you need to make sure you see concrete signs of sustained change before even thinking of going back and opening yourself up again.

Also, read:

- 7 types of abusive men
- Abusive paranoia

Boundaries to Save Relationships

The author says that people put up with a lot to be in a relationship because our need for relationships is one of our biggest needs.

But it should be the opposite, he says.
He asks poignantly:

> How many marriages could have been saved if one spouse had followed through on the threat "if you don't stop drinking.. " or "hit me" or "yelling at the kids" I will leave until you get some treatment.

Don't Help Those Who Don't Learn

Henry Cloud introduces the law of cause and effect as a natural law that gives you the fruits of what you sowed.
And if you sow badly by drinking, smoking, and spending more than you earn, than chances are you will reap poorly.

But the law can be suspended when people keep helping and intervening to prop up the individual who keeps repeating the same bad behavior over and over again.

Sometimes this happens in codependent relationships, but in introducing the law of responsibility, the author says that people must be responsible for themselves.
And helping irresponsible people does not help them and drags you down.

Set Boundaries Or Resentment Will Grow

People who fail to set boundaries are likely to grow to loathe the people who overstate their unstated boundaries.
The author mentions people who say nothing for decades and then "express" their feeling by filing for divorce (this made me chuckle).
Or parents who "love" their children by giving their everything and giving in all the time while the children grow up feeling unloved. then those parents wonder "after all I've done?"

This is not too dissimilar from what Jordan Peterson says in *12 Rules For Life*, whereby parents who allow children who disrespect them eventually grow to resent them.

Also, read:

- Overcoming passive aggression
- How to enforce boundaries with powerful people

> **Adults live within their means and pay for their own failures**
>
> *Henry Cloud*

If Someone Asks You for Money

If people who are always in trouble ask you for money this is what you can say:

> I'm sorry you lost another job this year. But I won't lend you any money until you pay back the other loan. However I'm available to talk for support.

Boss Employee Relationship Troubles

A boss-employee relationship can trigger authority complexes in some individuals.
A boss can evoke unresolved authority issues with a parent or a teacher.

These people tend to overreact and feel they have been put down when the boss gives feedback or asks for something to be done differently.

To have boundaries, the author says, means to take responsibility for your own transfers (note: "transfer" is a phenomenon in psychology by which the patient projects love or hatred towards an authority figure).
Look within yourself and wonder why you have such strong reactions. Do they remind you of your mother or father?

My note: So true
This is very deep indeed. I have a quiz to check if you have this issue in Power University.
Also read I'm OK you're OK.

Competitive Feelings

Similarly, too strong competitive feelings at work might be unresolved issues from a childhood struggle with a sibling.

Did Your Family Make You Feel Guilty?

The author says that some people have difficulties setting boundaries because their parents and family of origin made them feel guilty for defending their own space.

People who grew up in these families still feel guilty for setting up boundaries as adults.

Boundaries Attract High-Quality People

The author says that a funny thing happens when we start setting our boundaries.
People who cannot accept our "nos", the people whom you probably don't want in your life, will disappear.
And you start attracting high-quality people who can accept your "no" instead without resorting to anger, manipulation or taking it personally.

Not taking things personally is also a hallmark of people with a growth mindset. Read here how to develop a growth mindset.

Also, read:

- High-quality women
- Low-quality women
- High-quality men
- Low-quality men

Boundaries Quotes

On being an adult:

> To be an adult you must live within your needs and pay for your own failures

On truth and knowing yourself:

> There is always safety in the truth, whether it be knowing God's truth or knowing the truth about yourself.
>
> Many people live scattered and tumultuous lives trying to live outside of their own boundaries, not accepting and expressing the truth of who they are.
>
> Honesty about who you are gives you the biblical value of integrity, or oneness.

On people who don't respect your boundaries:

> Boundaries are a "litmus test" for the quality of our relationships.
>
> Those people in our lives who can respect our boundaries will love our wills, our opinions, our separateness.
>
> Those who can't respect our boundaries are telling us that they don't love our nos. They only love our yeses, our compliance. "I only like it when you do what I want.

Real-Life Applications

Own The Problem
If you don't like your job, if you are working too much overtime, if your job is driving you crazy, you must do something about it.
Stop looking at yourself as a victim and own the problem.

CONS

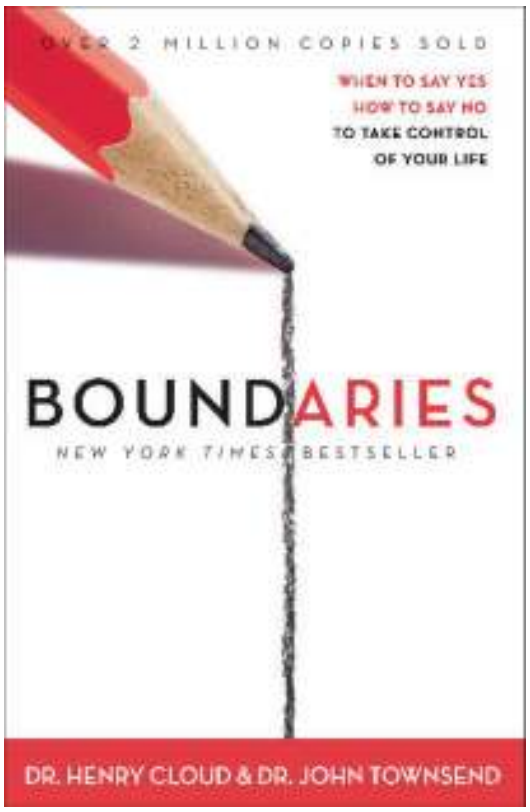
Independently of one's religious creed and fully respecting Cloud's writing, knowledge, and beliefs, I always wish for more data, more psychology, and fewer scripture references.

PROS

There is some good wisdom in *Boundaries*.
I especially liked the analysis of the authority issues some people have -I know I have it- and the analysis of codependent relationships.

And the idea that people who don't respect your boundaries are there to prey on you is also in line with the philosophy of this website.

Great Audiobook Version
The reader of the audiobook version is a top speaker. Great vocal variety, great dialogues, great tonality.. Really gives life to the book and it feels like listening to a play.



Review

Boundaries have great psychological depth and, if you're religious, this is your N.1 book to draw your boundaries, learn to say no, and become more assertive.

Henry Cloud is a licensed psychologist, and it shows.

If you're not religious, you might find all the scriptures' references off-putting.
Boundaries are peppered with Biblical references. In my opinion, it was too many.
But I still enjoyed the good-quality content.

Check the **best social skills books** or get the book on Amazon

The Art of People: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Art of People,* Dave Kerpen teaches readers how to increase their people's skills and build strong and functioning social relationships.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- The Art of People Summary
  - The 11 Skills to Master The Art of People
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- People skills start by understanding yourself first
- Learning to understand people is key to getting along with people
- Make sure you put people in positions where they can excel

The Art of People Summary

Dave Kerpen starts telling his story of showing up to parties with Jessica Alba and Paris Hilton and being paid 5 to 10k just for being there.

Yet, he was miserable.
LA's jet-set is not the best place to build connections, he says. And he realized that to be happy, and successful both in business and in life, you need to be good with people.

I couldn't agree more.

The 11 Skills to Master The Art of People

Here is the list of the 11 skills to master the art of people:

- **Understanding yourself**

The author says that the Myers-Briggs personality test, one of the most popular tests today and one espoused by Vanessa van Edwards in *Captivate*, is actually a poor test for people's attitudes (and *he's right*).

The author says instead that the best personality test is the Enneagram of Personality.

The author says that self-awareness is the fundamental building block upon which *the art of people* is built and you can't get good with people unless you learn about yourself first.

- **Understanding people**

To understand people, you must listen more and ask deep questions.

Like for example "what's the most exciting (personal) project you're working on right now", "if you had enough money to retire, what would you do today", "if you weren't doing what you're doing right now what would you be

doing and why", "who's been the most important influence/role model on you", "if you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be".

The author also quotes the famous statement from Dage Carnegie, author of "*How to Win Friends and Influence People*":

> **To be interested be interesting**
>
> *Dale Carnegie*

- **Meeting the right people**

The author recommends wearing something "strange" and "attention-catching".
This is an old technique that the pick-up artists called "peacocking" (*The Game*, *The Mystery Method*) and Leil Lowndes called "What's It" in *How to Talk to Anyone*.

I have never been a big fan of this theory. I believe that you can catch attention without wearing red or orange shoes.

I liked here his suggestion on leveraging LinkedIn, such as: write all schools, organizations, and activities you've been part of, adding everyone you know, ask for intro through LinkedIn instead of directly inboxing.

Also read: conversation starters and pick-up lines.

- **Connecting with people**

Always accept the drink or candy that you are being offered.

The author says that showing your authentic self is a great way of connecting with people.
He recounts a story of him not being able to fight off tears and crying on stage, as it happened to more executives right after.
They all bonded with each other and remembered that event as a courageous, life-changing day.

My Note: I agree, but I also need to warn the readers that vulnerability is not always your best choice. Also read: vulnerability is not power.

- **Influencing people**

To change people's minds avoid the sales pitch.

Dave Kerpen explains that you people don't like being sold to.
Instead, focus on storytelling. It allows you to share about yourself and it allows people to connect with you at an emotional level.
It's not a technique, it's more authentic.

- **Changing people's minds**

Don't tell people it's your idea, ban "I have an idea" or "I have a great idea".
Let them believe it's their idea instead. You can do it by feeding broad or vague strands they can flash out themselves to feel like they did it.

Finally, the author repeats a big mantra of sales books: to ask for what you need.

> **You never get what you don't ask for**

- **Teaching people**

Don't tell people how to do something, show them.

One of the keys to teaching well is to first understand what people are good at. You can spend years teaching something to someone who's not suited for the job. They will be able to teach you in a matter of weeks if it's something they're naturally good at and love doing.

- **Leading people**

Dave Kerpen says that a leader must only do three things: 1. setting a vision for your team; 2. making sure you have the right people sitting in the right position in your team, 3. making sure you have enough resources and money to succeed.

Also read: best leadership books.

- **Resolving conflicts with people**

The author recommends hiring slowly and firing fast.

People stay in dysfunctional relationships and abusive relationships for way too long. Much better to get out fast when you see the signs that relationships aren't working.

- **Inspiring people**

Inspiring the audience is about them, not you.
They don't really care about you, you must make it about them.

The author also says that when he started sharing inspiring quotes his social media following exploded.

My Note: I am not a big fan of "inspirational porn". It's empty and not the best use of your time in my opinion.

- **Keeping people happy**

The author recommends you come up with surprises and thoughtful gifts.

Another good idea similar to *Never Eat Alone* by Keith Ferrazzi is to introduce people who can be helpful to each other and mention their strengths.

Also read: The Happiness Advantage and The Happiness Project.

Real-Life Applications

Ruthless Prioritization
The author borrows the name "ruthless prioritization" from Sheryl Salzberg, author of *Lean In*, and I love the concept.
It consists of shaking ends at the beginning and at the end to signal the allotted time, going straight to the point, providing value, and doing and saying no more than necessary.

Call The Bluff
If you think someone is bluffing you should call the bluff and test their hands. Maybe they are not bluffing and then you will have an indicator they might be trustworthy. But if you realize they are bluffing, then you know what you are dealing with.

Don't Criticize Publicly
The author recommends never to criticize people in front of others. It leads to shame and resentment.
Instead, set out a 1:1 meeting and praise publicly.

CONS

"Contact Me & I'll Answer As Soon As I Can?"

Personally, I always felt odd when an author said that.
Who can make that promise?
And how can you make that promise if you want to build *meaningful* relationships, which take time and can hardly be done via Twitter or Linkedin?
It sounds more like a technique to get more followers, to be honest, so the author can write:

> The #1 LinkedIn Influencer of all time in pageviews, ahead of Bill Gates, Jack Welch, Mark Cuban and Barack Obama

That's not my style.
But probably in social media speak it might be proof of something. Though of what, I'm not sure.

Be Happy or Be Right? Relationship Power Dynamics
I disagree with this mantra of some men that in a relationship you can either be happy or right. To me, that's weak sauce. Also, read female relationship control.

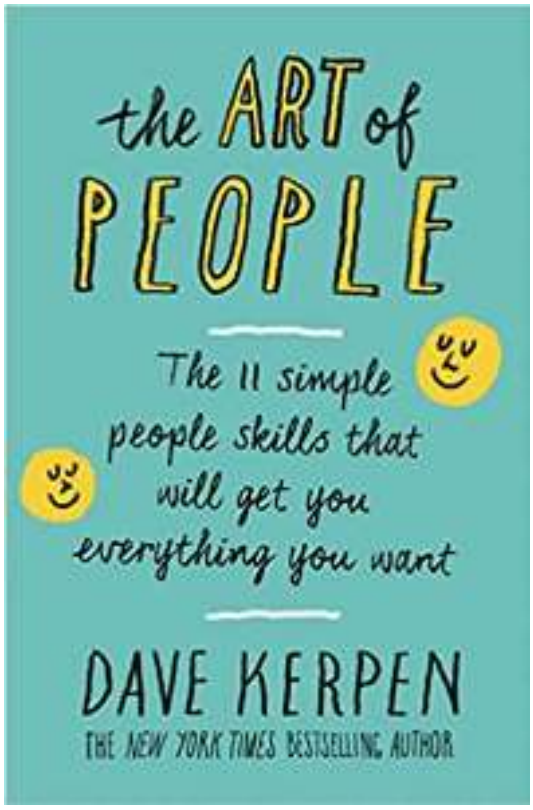
Poor Example of Feedback Sandwich Technique
I think the sandwich technique to give out feedback does not work well. Everyone knows it and nobody listens to the positive part because they all know it's a fake construct to actually deliver the bad part.
To do better, check out *Thanks for The Feedback*.

Sending Private Inspirational Content?
Dave Kerpen shares how to grow your audience by sharing helpful and inspirational content (EEI: educational, entertaining, inspiring).
I'm not a fan of inspirational content, but fine.
However, I really didn't like the recommendation of sharing good content privately. I think it's overbearing. And busy people would probably not react too well to receiving even more personal messages of content *they didn't ask for*.

Don't Seek to Convince But Change Your Mindset?
The author tells the story of an argument he had with his wife and that instead of convincing her he finally changed his mindset only for his wife to eventually come around and agree with him.
I don't agree with that attitude though.

PROS

A good overview of social skills and some good tips.



Review

I got a few great new ideas from The Art of People.

I didn't agree with a few tips and recommendations but overall I think it's a good book.

Check the **best social skills books** or **get the book on Amazon**

Own the Day, Own Your Life: Summary & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Own the Day Own Your Life* (2018) Aubrey Marcus shares his approaches to nutrition, training, self-help, and life optimization.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. Water, Light, Movement
  - 2. Breathing & Freezing
  - 3. More Fat, Less Sugar, or Skip Breakfast
  - 3. Supplements
  - 5. Drive Time, Alive Time
  - 6. The Power Plants
  - 7. Doing Work & Finding Your Mission
  - 8. Eat a Weird Lunch
  - 9. The Power Nap
  - 10. Training
  - 11. Dinner
  - 12. Hangover Cure
  - 13. More, Better Sex
  - 14. Reduce Stress
  - 15. Sleep
  - 16. Bring it Home
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Eat less sugar and refined carbs
- Exercise
- Get sleep, sex, and reconnect with the people around you

Full Summary

Own the Day, Own Your Life describes what an ideal, typical day would look like.

The idea is not to live your life perfectly on *one* ideal day but to move towards that ideal with healthy choices *every* day.

So let's start to see what a perfect day looks like.

1. Water, Light, Movement

As soon as you wake up, do the following:

1. Drink water (or, ideally, the water cocktail below)
2. Stand in the light for 5 to 10 minutes
3. Exercise (any kind of movement will do)

Morning Cocktail Mineral:
Filtered water
3 grams of sea salt
squeezed lemon

Water at room temperature and make sure the salt dilutes and does not stay at the bottom.

My note: Brita may be useless
the author recommends the Brita filter, yet some sources say that Brita filter often end up *increasing* bacteria counts (read the study here) and its health effects are disputed.
I'm still debating whether or not to buy a Brita, but I'm more leaning on the no side.

2. Breathing & Freezing

In this section, the author talks about breathing to oxygenate your blood and ice showers.

Here is the breathing:

1. Inhale through the nose deep into your belly
2. Exhale naturally
3. Do it until you're light-headed or feel tingling in your extremities

Light-headedness and tingling sensations are signs that your blood is oxygenating. Usually, 30 breaths are enough, but for some people, it takes up to 50.

The shower part was way too complex and long in my opinion, mixing the deep breath, hot water, then super cold for a minimum of 3 minutes, and then hot again.
the author recommends having a friend with you because you might faint and if there is water in the floor of your shower it's even risky you might drown.

Too complex for me.
A healthy life should also be a simple life to follow. If it starts getting full of complex habits and rules to follow, it becomes a chore, and I don't always see the added health benefits to add more complexity to your life.
So I will stick with my few seconds of cold showers :).

3. More Fat, Less Sugar, or Skip Breakfast

The author talks about the bonehead "war on fat" that we waged for decades and how wrong it is.
It's not fat that is harmful, but it's sugar.

My Note:
Sugar is not really harmful if it's consumed in moderation.
Also, the author says he likes smoothies for breakfast but in other health books I enjoyed the recommendation was not to go for smoothies because they break the fibers in both fruits and vegetables.

3. Supplements

Aubrey Margus sells supplements, so I made sure to take his supplements advice with a grain of salt.

The NHS also says most adults don't need supplements

In the end, out of all the supplements he suggests, I narrowed it down to the following:

- **Vitamin D** (if you live in regions with little sun during winter)
- **Pro-biotics**
- Possibly Melatonin

Magnesium might also be useful for you but not for me as I eat lots of nuts. Iron might be useful for you if you don't eat enough meat.

5. Drive Time, Alive Time

In this chapter, Margus talks about how much time we all waste on commutes. And, worst of all, what a nasty impact it has on most people's moods.

He recommends instead you practice mindfulness.
Keep your eyes open, see everything but focus on nothing.
Let elements, other cards, and pedestrians enter your field of vision, notice them but don't lock your eyes on them.
Stay on the overall picture.
Keep breathing with your belly, and become aware of everything.

Also, read:

- The Power of Now

6. The Power Plants

The author says that nicotine, caffeine, and even cocoa leaves have a place and can be useful.
Just not the way that most people use them today.

He does for example use caffeine and nicotine in the form of patches or chewing gum when working late.

Later he will also say that it's possible to enjoy marijuana and wine, as long as you don't exaggerate.

7. Doing Work & Finding Your Mission

Finding your mission means that you will not just one day, but every day in your life.

The author talks about flow and how he reaches flow (for more on flow and peak performance read Flow: *The Psychology of Optimal Performance*, *Grit*, *Deep Work*).

The author also talks about how he uses oil scents as an anchor. He says that if you get into flow while scents are wafting in the room you can replicate that experience later with the scents first.
I'm not a big believer in this technique and it feels like adding unnecessary complexity, such as preparing the oil scent, and it makes you, in a way, an addict.

8. Eat a Weird Lunch

This chapter is another good overview of healthy foods.

Eat proteins
The author recommends proteins (grass-fed beef, wild-caught salmon, free-range eggs), fibers (chia,

asparagus, avocado, greens, onions).

Go for slow carbohydrates
When it comes to carbs, go for “slow” carbs.
Carbs that are metabolized more slowly include: quinoa, sweet potatoes, fermented or sprouted grains, and some fruits.
Fibers also slow down the absorption of carbs.

Use prebiotics
No, it’s a misspelling :).
Prebiotics are food that helps your already existing gut bacteria thrive, and they include: raw asparagus, raw garlic, raw leek, onions, almonds and pistachios, and blueberries.

Probiotics
Probiotic food adds bacteria to your gut.
Good probiotic food includes sauerkraut, greek yogurt, and dark chocolate.

Omega-3
Chia, wild-caught salmon, mackerel and sardines, grass-fed beef.

Antioxidant
Eggplant, grapes, berries, tea, wine, chocolate, garlic, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, black rice, turmeric, and black pepper.

Finally, the author says you should diversify your meals.

9. The Power Nap

Aubrey Margus is a big proponent of the power nap.

And so am I, for that matter :).
Power naps are one of the reasons why I hate office jobs so much: almost nowhere can you take a power nap -and the other reason is the artificial social hierarchies-.

The author mentions a study that compared the effects of caffeine, more sleep time at night, and a power nap on people’s level of concentration. And guess which one won?
The power nap.

Binaural beats
In this chapter, the author also goes into binaural beats, which he says it’s his N.1 favorite bio-hack.
The author uses them for his power naps.
The idea behind binaural beats is that they hit sound different sound frequencies in your left and right ear which can affect how you think and feel.
You can find a few of them on YouTube and there are also apps available: remember to use headphones though.

My Note: I haven’t tried binaural beats yet.

10. Training

This is what the author proposes:

- Mobility and flexibility – 15 minutes
- Cardio – 10 minutes
- Muscular endurance – 8 minutes
- Strength – 5 minutes

- Power – 3 minutes (maximum force workout)

After training it's also the best time to enjoy a wine or some cannabis. The author enjoys this time to connect with people as well.

11. Dinner

If there is a time for bread, that is for dinner, and after the workout.

Chocolate
The author also talks about chocolate here and popcorn. He says that most chocolate bars today are not real chocolate but add dairy and a ton of sugar which makes them unhealthy.
Natural chocolate is a healthy food and you should consume it. As long as it's in its natural state.

Popcorn
Popcorn is similar, with commercial brands adding highly unhealthy trans-fats and omega-6 vegetable oils.

Tell Yourself Positive Things About the Food You'll Eat
What you think and what you tell yourself about the food that you are about to eat will influence how your body will receive that food.
So think positively about the food you are about to eat, think that it's healthy and it's going to nourish you.

Eat Slow & Chew Well
Digestion starts in your mouth. People who complain of stomach pain are often fast eaters.
Instead, eat slowly and chew your food well.

Foods to Help You Digest
Foods that help you digest quicker include pineapple, papaya, and ginger. Ginger can help you digest up to 50% quicker.
Since Margus prepares his perfect day with sex in mind, digesting quicker will help you get over the "fullness" feeling quicker and, later enjoy a fuller feeling in your pants quicker (referring to guys here of course).

Avoid Gas-Inducing Food
If you have sex as an appetizer in mind, then it's best if you avoid foods that make you full of gas.
Avoid or limit the fermentable types of fibers like legumes, Brussels sprouts, and asparagus.

Dessert: Slow Down Sugar Intake
Your goal is always to slow down the absorption of sugar. And the two best foods to help you slow it down are fat and fiber.
That's why a sweet dessert after a high-fat meal if you must have that dessert, is the best solution. Add cinnamon for further sugar intake slowdown.
The author also recommends stevia and monk fruit as healthier options for sweeteners.

Go For a Walk
Low-intensity physical exercise after a meal also helps to drop sugar levels.

12. Hangover Cure

Aubrey Margus doesn't recommend you exaggerate with the alcohol of course, but he knows that sometimes it will happen.
This is what to do when you go down a bit harder on that wine:

1. Re-hydrate: drink lots of water, 1 liter, until you pee twice
2. Use molybdenum supplements, 300mcg evening and morning
3. Green tea like matcha balances out glutamate

13. More, Better Sex

To improve your sex life, here is the Own the Day advice to increase testosterone:

- Eat fat
- Get sleep
- Lift heavy

Marcus Aubrey says that it's crazy that in America people talk about "getting lucky" and "scoring" with their own partners. He recommends sex every day and trying something new.

Avoid pornography as it's unrealistic and focus on your partner.
Oh, and lastly, all the advice on not masturbating is bogus.

14. Reduce Stress

Marcus' advice to reduce stress is to limit the tasks and work-related activities to the ones you really need and to increase the time for yourself and the ones you love.

His mantra is: do it well or don't do it at all.
Also, read:

- Essentialism
- Deep Work

> **Do it well or don't do it at all**

15. Sleep

The author says that our ancestors probably didn't sleep for 8 hours straight but slept multiple times during the day at different intervals.

You can do the same if you can afford but, in any case, you should stop stressing about how many hours you sleep per night.
You can focus instead on your 90 minutes of sleep cycles per week, which will make it easier to manage and remove the pressure from every single night.

16. Bring it Home

Here Margus talks about visualizing, the placebo effect -including Dispenza's work– and our need for community and tribe -including *Tribe* by Sebastian Junger-.
I partially agree with what he says but found several major flaws in both the two books he mentions.

He says there are four keys to positive and compelling action:

1. Know what and how to do it
2. Believe it will work
3. See the value in what you're doing
4. Get support from the people around

Real-Life Applications

Avoid Cold Beverages With Your Meal
I loved this recommendation as it was a mistake I often did.

Lots of liquids are not good with your meal anyway. And cold ones further hamper and slow down your digestion.

Eat Fat & Fiber With Sugar
If you must eat carbs, eat them with fat and fiber.

CONS

Albeit I liked "Own the Day, Own Your Life", there were also some parts that didn't convince me.

Geeky, "Bio-Hack" Approach to Life
Most of all, it's the geeky approach of measuring grams, repeating the "process of maximum health" and dividing foods into "bad and good" that I'm not a fan of.
And the "bio-hack" half-baked solutions that come with it.
Let a nutrition Ph.D. tell you why it's BS:

> **Layne**: quit believing the bio-hacking BS

Use Inefficient Tools to Eat Slow?
I didn't like the recommendation of using less efficient tools to force yourself to eat slowly. If you know that you should eat slowly and chew well, then eat slowly! No need to handicap yourself to follow through on something you know you must do.

Masochist Sex Advice
I didn't particularly enjoy the recommendation of "having to try something new" and experiencing pain and S&M. I think that's up to people's tastes and preferences.

Some Made-Up Evolutionary Psychology
The author says that our ancestors slept at different times of the day. However, he has no way of knowing that for sure.
It's an opinion, an informed opinion at the very best, but not a fact.
He also says that we are "*programmed to love others and even sacrifice ourselves for the good of the tribe*", which is simplistic evolutionary psychology at best (*see here the best books on evolutionary psychology*).

Sleep Advice Is Too General
The author provides readers with a sleeping target to reach. But sleep is very personal and different people need different times. It's not good, in my opinion, to give a general, catch-all target.

Unnecessary "Bro Swearing"
All the swearing reminded me of "*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck*": good content, but all the swearing just felt try-hard "trying to sound cool".
Especially saying "goddamn miracle" was really unnecessary in my opinion.

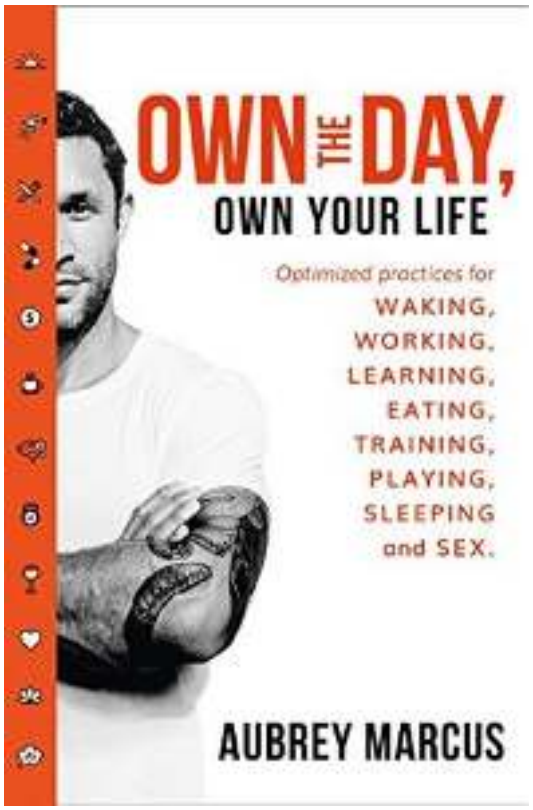
Some Historical "Evidence" Was Forced
The author uses the example of Sparta as an example of a culture of sacrifice, virtues, and strength that underpinned its success.
That's preposterous.
Athens kicked Sparta's asses multiple times and in the course of history, it's been much more powerful and influential without any of Sparta's militarism.

Some Over-Optimization Advice Like Sleeping With the Dominant Hand on Top
The author says that to maximize your safety you should sleep on the side that leaves your dominant hand on top.
Why? So that if an intruder breaks in then you're at your most ready.
But people move during their sleep. And you just gain a split second for an event that will probably never happen in

your life -while you might be sleeping on the side you like least for a lifetime-.

PROS

- Compact
- Packed with actionable advice
- Overall semi-sensible
- Very good overview of health and nutrition



Review

Own the Day, Own Your Life is a good book with a "life optimization" flavor.

However, the typical demonizing of "bad foods" and the misplaced hyping of "good foods" is misleading.
And the overselling of supplements leads me to take one star off.

At times, I also felt the recommended habits were a bit geeky, overly complex, and overly-engineered approach to living.
See more here.

https://thepowermoves.com/biohacking-porn/
But it's still a good book.

Overall, *Own the Day, Own Your Life* is a solid resource to provide an overview of a healthy and "optimized" living approach to life.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

Covert Power Moves: How Men Lose Status & Attraction, Without Realizing (& How to Fix It)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Most men go around life socially blind.

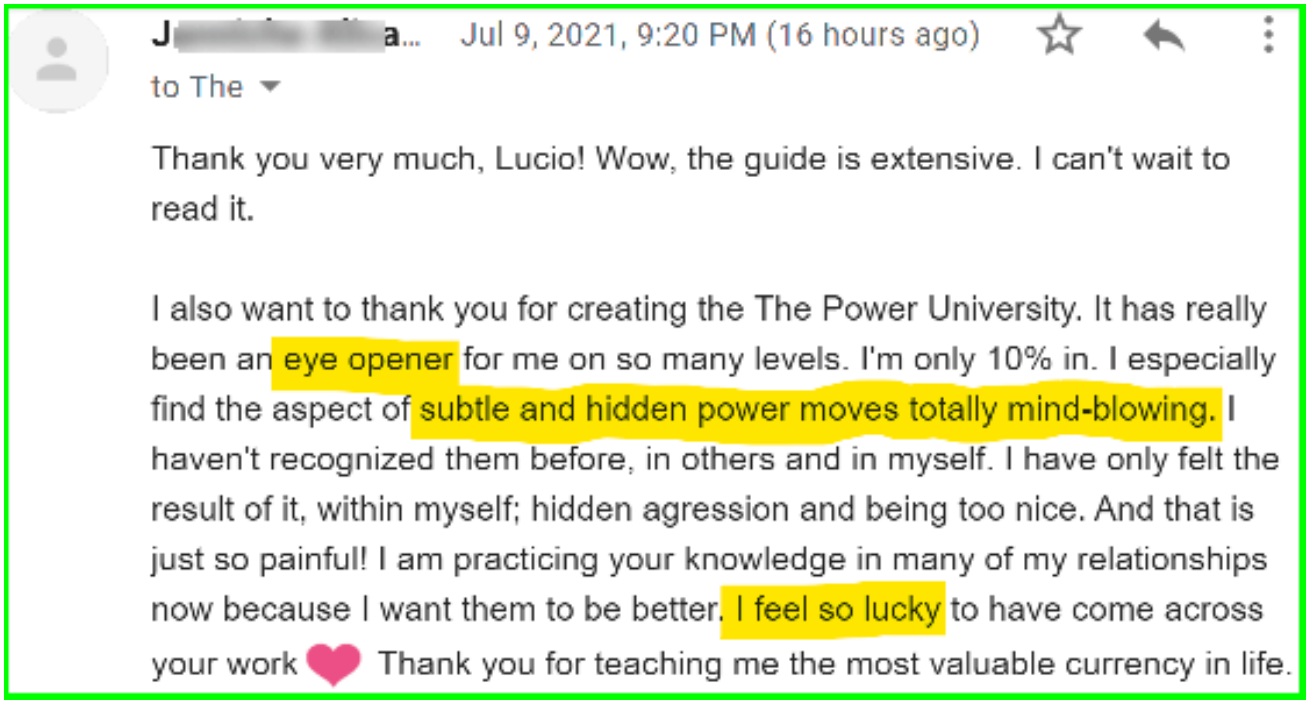
They lose status, respect and attraction… And don't even realize it.

Most people may refer to this as **covert aggression**, but it's different.
At TPM, we've identified a more nuanced phenomenon: the **Covert Power Move™**. While covert aggression isn't an obvious attack, even if covert, a power move is often disguised as a neutral interaction.

By the end of this article, you'll see why 'aggression' is just the tip of the iceberg.

Covert Power Moves™ Defined (TPM Concept):
Behaviors or statements that appear neutral, friendly, or supportive, but subtly increase the actor's power while disempowering the target. Unlike traditional aggression, covert aggression, or passive aggression, covert power moves can disguise themselves as compliments, encouragement, apologies, or neutral interactions, allowing the actor to 'retreat under cover' and deny ill intent. Covert power moves can disempower even when not intended to harm.

P.S.
Here's what a student of ours said about this concept: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to The

Thank you very much, Lucio! Wow, the guide is extensive. I can't wait to read it.

I also want to thank you for creating the The Power University. It has really been an eye opener for me on so many levels. I'm only 10% in. I especially find the aspect of subtle and hidden power moves totally mind-blowing. I haven't recognized them before, in others and in myself. I have only felt the result of it, within myself; hidden agression and being too nice. And that is just so painful! I am practicing your knowledge in many of my relationships now because I want them to be better. I feel so lucky to have come across your work Thank you for teaching me the most valuable currency in life.

> **PU alumnus**: Eye-opener (…) the subtle and hidden power moves totally mind-blowing (…) I feel so lucky (…) Thank you for teaching me the most valuable currency in life

By the end of this article, you will also learn the same.

Here are 3 common covert power moves:

Contents

- 1. "I Was Busy"

  - Case Study
  - 1.2. “Sorry I didn’t reply”
  - ⍰ Handle It Eagle Style: Empathize Or Ignore
- 2. “I’m Sorry”
  - The Made-Up Sorry ⍰
  - Case Study
  - ⍰ Calibration
- 3. “Well Done”
  - ⍰ Case Study
- 4. “You Can Do It”
  - Case Study
  - 4.2. “Keep Up The Great Work”
- Understanding Covert Power Moves
  - Covert aggression is convenient for the attacker
  - They disempower you, even without ill intent
  - Calibration and smoothness are key

1. “I Was Busy”

General rule:

⚖ **The more people are too busy for you, the more subservient to them you are**.

Sub-communication:

> ⍰ **I was busy (with more important things) to take care of your (less important) thing**

It’s even worse if the topic is personal or about meeting.
Then YOU are a low(er) priority

Even if they were genuinely busy it’s disempowering.

Think about it.
Would anyone be too busy for:

- The boss at the job they love/need
- The dream man they want to be forever with
- The friend they admire

Exactly.
It’s not about busyness, but about priorities.
“I’m too busy” ⍰ “you aren’t high enough a priority”.

Similar expressions are:

> I didn’t have time
>
> I had to take care of a few things
>
> I meant to get back to you, but then a few things came up…

Case Study

Imagine:

> **You**: Hi Gina, I wrote you the other day to schedule a coffee
> **Her**: Yes, sorry I was crazy busy these days

It's a terrible text because it thread-expands her non-reply.
Now, let's analyze common responses:

Bad Responses

- **What were you busy with?** It thread-expands on the reasons to avoid you. If "busy" was an excuse, it forces her to lie
- **OK, when are you free?** Chases too soon. Sub-communicates you're always free for her, while she's *not* free for you

These also commit this huge exchange mistake:

⚠ **Don't ask without leverage or you turn into a value-taker to avoid**
Not being free for you = no leverage (yet). When you ask without leverage, you dig deeper into the value-hole. You become a value-taker to avoid.

Better Responses

Here's how a more power-aware man could respond:

- "***No worries, life happens***". You don't dig deeper. But you're still one-down
- ***"All good, sorry I didn't follow up***". Implies you're also busy. Good for business as well
- "***All cool. I just got back in town and wanted to ping you***". Implies you weren't waiting around for her and got your own life
  - + "*How have you been*", great technique to move on fast after a power loss. And reminds her that she's not traveling to cool places like you

And a real-life example:

> **Me**: speaking of food, let's do a coffee or a meal together one of these days
> **Her**: Ok if I'm not busy
> **Me**: LOL that sounds like game playing :D
> **Her**: ahaha what do you mean?
> **Me**: you know, like "I'm busy, I'm hard to get… Chase me" :D

1.2. "Sorry I didn't reply"

Here are the possible responses ranked in terms of effectiveness:

Clueless	Smarter	Power Mover
No you didn't ☹	*All good*	*Same :D.. just got back from a crazy world tour (share picture). How have you been!*
I was waiting for you	*We all get busy*	*Better that way, I was a monk during our launch phase ⍰. Thankfully we're done now! (share pic of champagne celebration).*
Why didn't you	*Yeah, life can get hectic sometimes. I heard (her employer name) pushes you guys hard ⍰*	*Reply…* (pretend don't understand)*? Oh right (you just remembered her). Sorry I'm really bad with names..* (fake embarrassed)*?*

⍰⍰ The "power mover" overdoes it. It's reactive, "power bean-counting", and too high-investment

⍰ Handle It Eagle Style: Empathize Or Ignore

The most "un-needy" approach ignores or empathizes.

Something like:

> **You**: all good, everyone's so busy in this city :)

Leave it to her to show interest and re-initiate.
If not, on to new opportunities.

2. “I’m Sorry”

General rule:

⚖ **The more people are “sorry”, the more you’re framed as the victim**

And, in general, the person who can hurt or harm the other the most has more power.
That’s why apologies often disempower you.

Imagine these situations:

> **Her**: Honey, I’m sorry you felt hurt that me and Max spoke at the party
>
> ⍰ Sub-communication: *I’m sorry (that you’re so afraid of losing me)*

And:

> **Coach**: I’m sorry that I yelled at you in front of the team
>
> ⍰ Sub-communication: “*I’m sorry that I (can) yell at you (while you have to take it) in front of the team (and ruined your reputation… Because I can ruin your reputation).*

And a video example:

> **Him**: “I’m sorry for what happened (…)
> I called you an asshole, I kicked you out, I called you a whore… I’m sorry “

He reminds her that he kicked her out (dominant) and that he made her feel bad (powerful).

⍰⍰ ⍰ Notice her reaction: completely ignores it, and moves on with her new frame.
Perfect.

The Made-Up Sorry ⍰

Some people invent reasons to say “sorry” just to disempower you.
A good way to both check it and downplay it at the same time:

> **Her**: I’m sorry if I was rude to you
> **You**: If you were rude, don’t do it anymore. But I didn’t even notice

Read more here.
⍰ Another example here.

Case Study

In general:

- **Display you weren’t too hurt or bothered**
  - Minimize the time spent on the “sorry” to avoid expanding on a negative.
    ⍰ Remember: you’re NOT the type of guy to be “sorry” for

- **Focus on their mistake more than your hurt**
- **Focus on expectations & solutions** to ensure it won't happen again. Crucial in closer relationships

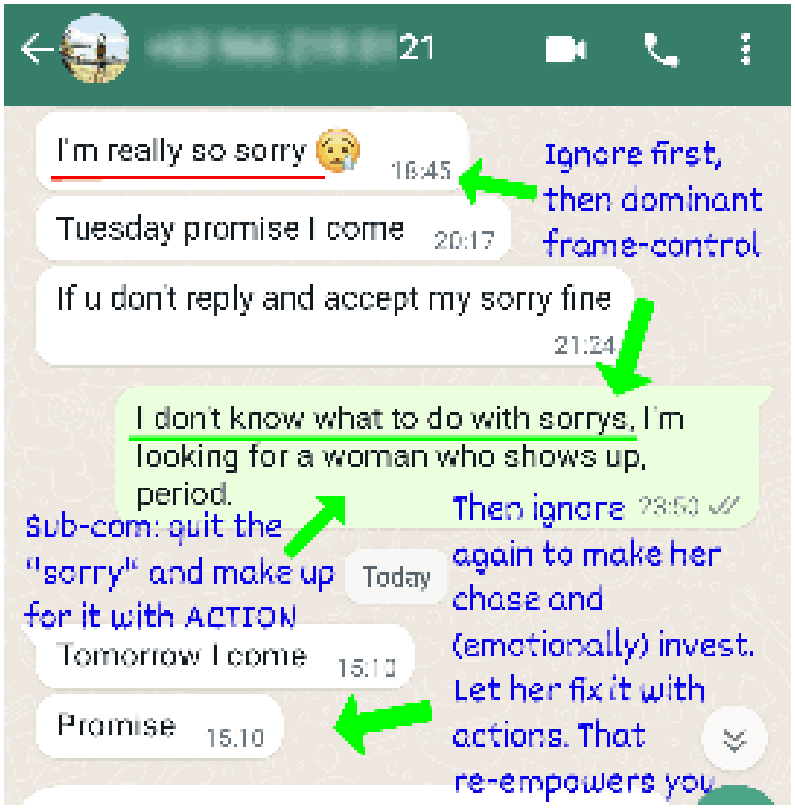
Examples

Valid approaches include:

- … <— Say nothing, nod or just say "OK". Let them stew in the doubt of whether you accept or not
- ***All good, I'm doing great. Anyway, I've heard that…***
- ***I forgive you*** <— A power move that shifts the power from them to you. YOU had the power to forgive or not, and decided to
- ***⍰ It's not about sorry or not sorry. I expect better*** <— This fantastic judge-style response shifts the focus to your high expectations, sub-communicating high-value

⍰ Example

If you have leverage and someone was inconsiderate, don't be afraid of being assertive. For example:



> **Me**: I don't know what to do with your sorry. I'm looking for a woman who shows up

She *did* show up next time.
And she even quit playing the games she was playing. Still not enough to make for a great LTR, but still much better for as long as we dated.

⍰ Calibration

Note: This is a high-pressure response.
Use it only when the other person has shown a strong disregard for you or your time. In a healthy relationship, this would be over-assertiveness (Value-Taking).

Please don't think ALL apologies are bad:

Apologizing is often a good sign

Due apologies are green flags of good character.
To recognize good apologies VS bad ones, see Power University.

"Sorry" Re-Empowers You If:

- **Repeated and/or heartfelt**
- **Accompanied by fear** of losing you
- **Accompanied by concrete actions and** reparations
- **Costly**, through effort or their own disempowerment
  Ie.:
  - Public apologies
  - Traveling to meet you
- **From higher-power people** who aren't expected to apologize to lower-ranks

Example:
A high-ranking legal expert in our business yelled at anyone.
She did it to me, too. But she came to my table to apologize while I was at lunch with a colleague. That was a meaningful apology because she was much higher rank than I was.

3. "Well Done"

How does this LinkedIn post feel to you?

> **Him**: She has done an amazing job (…) For that reason, we are giving her an opportunity to work in Brazil for the next 3 months

This is patronizing.

It puts off high-power men.

> ⍰ **Sub-communication**: I'm the judge of her work and becuase she made me happy, we give her this little, time-limited reward (but if I judged her job poorly, she wouldn't get anything)

The power is all on him.

It's like a dog's treat.

The gift is conditional on you executing *his* tasks the way *he* likes.
Stop doing the job the way he likes, and you're out of treats.

How about Alex finds her job in Brazil for as long as she likes?

⍰⍰ **Your approval first**
It's OK to feel emotionally validated by awards and rewards.
But remember: you're bigger than any employer. And the approval that matters the most is your own.

⍰ Case Study

Think about it, and we'll review it in the case studies lesson in Power University.

4. "You Can Do It"

Such as:

- You can do it
- I believe in you
- Go there and smash it

⍰ Sub-communication:

1. **Their encouragement is helpful**. It empowers *them*, not you
2. **You *need* their encouragement**. It disempowers you
3. **They're above you**, or more advanced because people below don't encourage superiors
4. **The end result is crucial**: often a disempowering mindset (see "Ultimate Power")

Even worse are encouragements like:

- **Be confident / strong / cool**

Which sub-communicates you are not confident / strong / cool enough.

A colleague once told me before a sales call:

> **Him**: Don't be afraid, remember that he shits and farts just like anyone else

Superficially supportive and encouraging.
But opened the mentally disempowering "fear" thread. And implied I likely was afraid, disempowering me to everyone in earshot.

Case Study

1. **Don't say "yes I will be"** because that confirms that their encouragement was, at least, fair to give
2. **Careful denying you're not worried**, especially if you are. Denials still expand negative threads and seed

doubt. Better to avoid altogether

3. **Ignore / make little of it**. A very detached “thanks”, without looking at them, can do

Or:

4. **Make fun of the uselessness of the “encouragement”**. Ie.: “*Yes, I was actually planning on going there scared sh*tless, but thanks for reminding not to*“.

4.2. “Keep Up The Great Work”

The speaker:

- **Self-frames as judge** of your work
- **Self-frames as experts** to judge
- **Places you below them**, or at least not above them since lower-status people don’t usually judge superiors

However, since it’s a stock sentence, don’t necessarily make too much out of it.

More techniques in PU.

Understanding Covert Power Moves

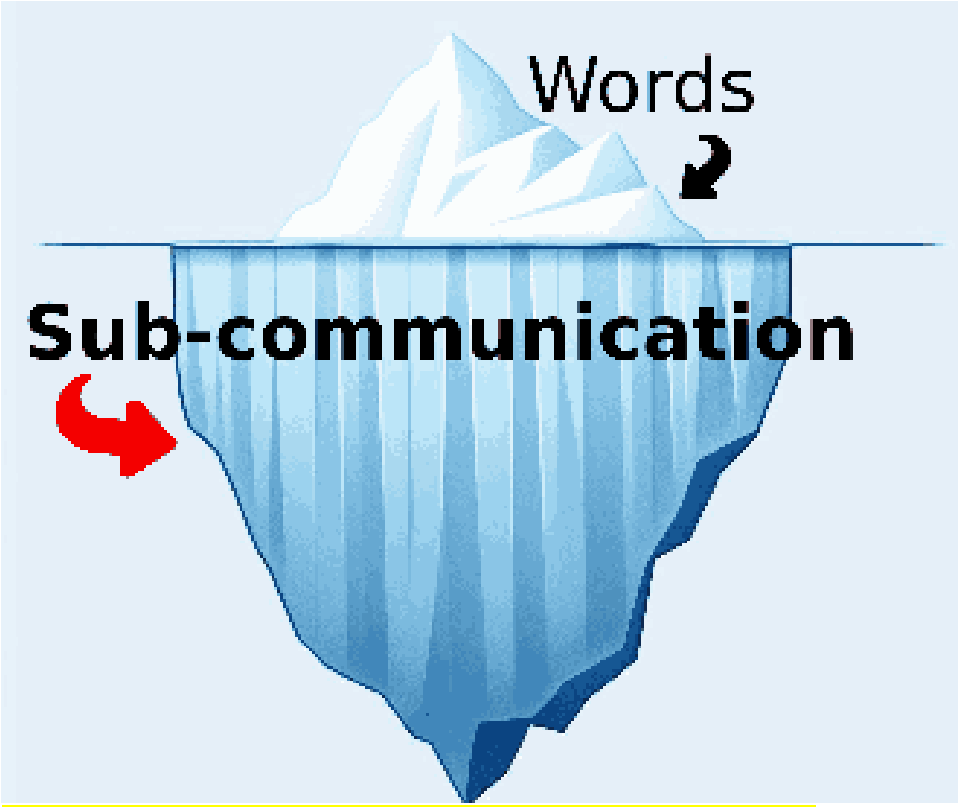
In simpler words, a covert power move is…

Anything that disempowers you, but that on the surface seems neutral, apologetic, or even friendly.

Some power moves are obvious, and anyone can recognize them as attempts at asserting dominance.

But cover power moves are more hidden.
Sometimes they’re “jokes”, tests, or hide behind conventions or truthful sounding statements.

Because they’re covert, many men miss them.



It’s in the sub-communication that you lose status, respect, and attraction

Most men don't even understand the basics of power dynamics and social power dynamics, after all.
Let alone if they can understand the more advanced stuff.

But, as they say, **life doesn't care about your ignorance.**
You still lose power, status, and attraction.
And fail to assess characters.

Covert aggression is convenient for the attacker

Although not all covert power moves are aggressive, some can be.

Covert aggression is convenient for the attacker because it can be highly damaging, with little risks and costs.

Quoting from *The Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships*:

> Compared to direct tactics of overt aggression, third parties can more easily dispute as to whether indirect, covert tactics were intentionally meant to harm
> (…)
> are less likely to open aggressors up to revenge and third-party retaliation, making them ideal for actors aiming to avoid costly injury (Bjorkqvist, 1994; Krems, 2016; Vaillancourt, 2013)

Ie.:

- **Indirect attackers can deny the attack**, or deny ill-intent
- **Indirect attackers face less revenge or retaliation**, often because the victim didn't even realize the attack

They disempower you, even without ill intent

The covert power moves we focus on harm you.

However, people aren't always ill-intentioned.

Some people project their disempowering mindsets onto you.
Or they may be clueless and don't even realize they're disempowering.

So don't conclude that every covert power move is a red flag.

Also, many covert power moves are *both* honest, *and* disempowering.

Calibration and smoothness are key

Handling covert power moves requires slightly more advanced skills.

You now dipped your feet with this article. Our alumni become full masters with Power University.

Check Power University

Dating for High-Value Women: 5 Myths Debunked With High-Value Male Psychology (Start Here)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

⚠ **Archived, but timeless: This page was written when TPM served both men and women.**
While TPM now focuses exclusively on helping men gain power, respect, and attraction, we're keeping this page available for women who still want psychology-based dating strategies that include the perspective of ambitious, high-value men.

The dating advice on this website may be different than what you are used to.

And that's because **most dating advice for women is unscientific, generic, and coming from teachers with limited experience and limited knowledge of male psychology**.
In a nutshell: a good chunk of your typical dating advice for women is a crapshoot.
Sometimes good, sometimes good *with certain guys and situations*, and oftentimes counterproductive.

Contrary to most "dating tips for women" you find online we ground our approach in psychology, data, research, and quite a bit of personal experience.

Below I list some of the most common myths, together with advice for a better approach.

Contents

- #1. Make Him Chase
- #2. Make Him Invest, While You Give Little
- #3 Feign Disinterest (& He Will Chase More)
- #4 Wait… As Long As Possible for Sex
- #5. Men Want Independent Bitches
- #6. Be Successful… And Men Will Come
- Getting Your Facts Straight
- Proper Dating "How-Tos"

#1. Make Him Chase

But who chases…?

This is the N.1 dating advice for women: you should make him chase.

The idea is that the more he chases, the more he will commit to you.
And there is some truth in that, you can read here how to make him chase.

However, it's generic advice and it's poor for high-quality women. This advice mostly works with lower-quality men and in very specific situations.

The rule of thumb is this: men who are lower quality than you will chase you.
Men around your same sexual market value will most chase you if they are clueless.
Higher-quality men will not chase you, but move on.

> Read More

#2. Make Him Invest, While You Give Little

But who invests without getting anything in return?

The second most popular advice is to make him invest as much as possible.

Things such as: picking you up, paying for dinner, doing you a favor, etc.

The idea is that the more he invests, the more he will like you and the more he will commit.
And there is much truth in that.

However, same as for chasing, **it's mostly men who feel they're not good enough who will try to "buy" their difference away**.

Here Is How to Balance Investment Right

#3 Feign Disinterest (& He Will Chase More)

…But know the risk: that he will end up with your more available girlfriend

Feigning disinterest is nothing but a form of making him chase more and invest more.
Yes: they are all connected.

In modern society, **feigning disinterest doesn't work too well** because there are more high-quality women than men, most men have a fragile ego and most men are not ready for a long and drawn fight to her heart (and vagina).

Also, read:

- **Value and availability**: it's a better strategy to be high value and "barely attainable"
- **Selectively hard to get**: this is the best of both worlds. You combine a "hard to get strategy" together with making him feel special for being the chosen one

#4 Wait... As Long As Possible for Sex

Opens in 3 months' time

Again, not fully wrong.

But, again, a huge generalization that sometimes will work and, many other times, will backfire.

Here are some better "rules of thumb" for you:

- Wait if he's conservative
- Wait if you're in a conservative culture
- Wait if you have deeply ingrained beliefs about waiting
- Go for it if you're in a whirlwind romance
- Go for it if you have great chemistry and passion is running high
- Go for it if you have been on a long nice date and sex feels like the "coronation of a splendid time"

If you have sex early, you can use the "selectively hard to get strategy". And let him know that you don't usually do that. That way, not only early sex won't take any points away, but he will actually feel special (and hopefully you're not lying).

When to Delay Sex (& When Not To)

#5. Men Want Independent Bitches

… Except it's wrong more times than not…

This advice comes from women, almost never from men.

In part, this is intrasexual manipulation.
And in part, it's wishful thinking from very driven women who wished that strength wasn't a handicap in the dating market. And I can totally understand that.

Of all the most typical advice here, this might be the most potentially dangerous one.
It's true that there are a few women who are "too nice". But it's really only a few of them. And many of them will still just do fine when they meet the guy who's ready to commit (the girl who used to drop unreturned gifts at in my mailbox is now happily engaged with a much better guy than I am, without ever becoming any bitchier).

In short: only very few women would benefit from the advice of "toughening up".

More women instead could benefit from the opposite advice.
How to be more feminine, how to make men want to care for them more, and how to be able to seek and turn relationships into win-win.

As Aziz says in The Tao of Dating:

> *Respect for female strength does not translate into male attraction*

At the end of the day, whether we like it or not, more feminine and more submissive women have more dating options.

This is not to say that strong women have no chance.
For example, the strong woman is better suited to finding a more submissive man and controlling the relationship. These relationships tend to be more stable and last longer.

However, if you want to have more options, including with high-quality men, then it's best if you learn the whole spectrum: from the driven and strong woman, to mellow and supportive.

How to be Powerful, Yet Feminine

#6. Be Successful... And Men Will Come

Well… Partially.

But this is a double-edged sword.

To begin with, some men will avoid more successful women out of fear that they will overpower them.
And successful men have lots of options and don't necessarily go after other successful women.

Psychopaths do target successful women, especially when they seem lonely and out of options.
But you're better off avoiding those.

In short, while successful men attract women, success and good careers don't work nearly as well for women.

Like it or not, successful women are still required to be feminine, independent of how successful they get.
Read:

- How to be feminine
- Attractive body language for women
- 3 seductive styles for Women

Successful Women Dating

Getting Your Facts Straight

Alright, we addressed some dating myths and fixed them with some better strategies.

Now let's build on that with even better dating techniques.

Here are a few key articles to get you started:

- 9 Scientifically proven dating strategies for women

- Learn games men play
- Traits of high-quality women
- Low-quality behavior to avoid
- Best dating books for women

Proper Dating “How-Tos“

- How to be feminine
- Feminine body language
- How to get a boyfriend
- How to seduce a man

And if you want to go straight for what works best, with step-by-step actionable advice and plenty of real-life examples, then see **Seduction University**:

> Seduction University

The Highly Sensitive Person: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Highly Sensitive Person* Elaine Aron provides a thorough and detailed description of the personality traits and psychology of highly sensitive people.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Highly Sensitive Person: Overview
  - HSPs Statistics
  - Environment's Variables on HSPs
  - Possible Difficulties Growing Up
  - HSPs Children
  - Genders of HSPs
  - HSPs in Society
  - Thriving As An HSPs
  - Sleep & HSPs
  - Social Skills for HSPs
  - HSPs At Work
  - HSPs & Relationships
  - Don't Deny Your Darker Side
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Highly sensitive people have a highly sensitive nervous system
- HSPs see and feel social and environments cues earlier than most
- But HSPs also get overwhelmed quicker when there are too many stimuli

Full Summary

About the Author: Elaine Aron, Ph.D., has been a researcher of love and relationships.
Her book, The Highly Sensitive Person, has been the result of five years of research and was the first -an so far still the only- big popular book that discusses the psychology of highly sensitive people.

Throughout the course of this summary and review we will also use HSPs as an abbreviation.

Highly Sensitive Person: Overview

A highly sensitive person has a highly sensitive nervous system. It's a trait which is probably inherited, and it means that:

- You're aware of the subtleties in your surroundings
- You are easily overwhelmed in highly stimulating environments

Being **a highly sensitive person has both advantages and disadvantages**. In our Western culture though, it tends to be interpreted more negatively.

Once over-aroused, HSPs are not very sensitive and understanding anymore because they can get overwhelmed and need to disconnect and be alone.
Non-HSPs instead become more understanding of others in highly chaotic situations.

HSPs Statistics

Based on a sample size of 300 people the author says that 20% were either extremely or "quite" sensitive", 22% were moderately sensitive and 42% said they were not sensitive at all.

The author comments that most people are not sensitive, and that's why many HSPs can feel uncomfortable around people "pumping their radio" or yelling.

My Note: The statistic says little
This statistic is small and says very little. It seems to be self-reported and it's really not clear what "quite" is supposed to mean.
However, it might give us a rough idea and it makes me think that HSP is a spectrum trait, like extroversion.

Environment's Variables on HSPs

The author says being an HSP is not a fixed constant and can change over time.

For example, after a month in a remote cabin, everyone can become more of an HSP and most people become more sensitive as they age.

The author also says that most people have a highly sensitive side to certain stimuli or in certain environments.

My Note: Most is not all
This "becoming more sensitive with age" is relative. I was much more of an HSP as a kid than I am now.
Indeed, I have lost and/or overgrown some HSP traits like emotional sensitivity.

Finally, individualistic and more socially aggressive cultures such as the US provide worst environments fro HSPs

Possible Difficulties Growing Up

The author says that many highly sensitive people had parents, teachers, and sometimes doctors who wanted them to "overcome" their high sensitivity, and it's possible they had a more difficult childhood as compared to non-highly sensitive peers.

HSPs Children

HSPs children under stress tend to produce more cortisol, tense up their vocal cords more leading to higher pitches.

Elaine Aron here talks about attachment styles and the importance of having a secure attachment style.
You can read more on attachment styles here:

- Attachment styles overview
- Secure attachment style
- Anxious attachment style
- Avoidant attachment style

Genders of HSPs

The author says there is an equal split of male and female who are HSPs. But since men are “not supposed to be HSPs”, they can encounter more difficulties.

HSPs in Society

The author says that HSPs tend to be more cautious and conscientious. They think about the possible alternatives, the dangers and the risks.

HSPs tend to be the ones who tell the more aggressive counterparts to take it easy and think things through, which at times can make them unpopular.

HSPs often take “advisory” roles such as historians, writers, artists, judges, philosophers, theologians, therapists and teachers.

The author calls the historically more gung-ho individuals “warriors”.

My Note:
I very much disagree with this division of society between “HSPs and warriors”.
The author makes the point that HPSs are sometimes perceived as being weak and that’s not the case. But then she seems to have a superior attitude towards non-HSPs and I disagree.
And I say it as a mild HSP.

Thriving As An HSPs

Elaine Aron says that it’s important for younger HSPs -and older as well- to stay out in the world and trying new things.

However, the author also warns on striking a balance on not withdrawing too much and not pushing yourself too much either.
She says that withdrawing too much, like some HSPs do, might not be the correct answers because stressors, to an extent, will always be there.

It’s better to learn a coping mechanism to better deal with life, instead.

She says that HSPs can find their own spot in this society and be successful at their own pace.
Habituation is a process that works for everyone, HSPs included. Habituation is the repeating of a certain action which, over time, becomes easier and less stressful

Sleep & HSPs

Elaine Aron says that HSPs need more good sleep than non HSPs.
HSPs take longer to adjust to jet-lag and do worse with night shifts and mixed shifts.

Here are some tips that apply to everyone and to HSPs in particular:

- Respect your circadian rhythms and sleep when you’re sleepy
- Remove pressure from sleeping: tell yourself you’ll just lie there with your eyes closed
- If too many thoughts rush through, read or do something
- If you are experiencing sleep deprivation, take more vacations, periodically.

Social Skills for HSPs

One of my favorite parts of “The Highly Sensitive Person” is Elaine Aron’s analysis of social skills books and courses.

She says that **many social skills courses and books are written by highly extroverted, non-HSPs people who encourage everyone to be more like themselves**.
They talk about “working a room”, “being the center of the attention”, “winning over a crowd”.
You shouldn’t strive to be more like them.

The others are psychologists who sometimes talk about “curing” and “conquering”, which can make HSPs feel flawed.

You don’t have to accept the extroverted definition of social skills, such as “working a room”, “never allowing an awkward silence”, “always having a great comeback”.
You should indeed find your own way to social skills like “talking seriously”, “listening well”, “allowing silences during which deeper thoughts can take place”.

The author instead recommends you work on your over-arousal and appreciate your introverted style.

Also read my review of Charisma University.

> **Refute the social skills definition of extroverts**

HSPs At Work

HSPs don’t like to mingle, go for after-work cocktails and play politics.

That can make them look suspicious, or lose points.
Elaine Aron recommends that you, formally or casually, let people know of your good feelings about them and you let your superiors know about how much you love your job and care about the company.
Also read: how to develop a fruitful relationship with your boss.

My Note: Skipping company’s parties can be harmful
I often avoided company parties and sometimes it costed me in office politics and work relationships.
People often fail to understand that your commitment to *work* and your goodwill for coworkers does not necessarily translate to your commitment in s*pending time* with them.

The author also mentions The Prince by Machiavelli and recommends you learn some of the games people play and the social dynamics of the world around you.
This is your website for that :).

For Employers

HSPs tend to be conscientious, good with details, loyal, thoughtful of the needs of customers and clients and often gifted.
In short, they make for wonderful employees.

They dislike aggressive self-promotions, so you must be watchful you don’t overlook them when considering promotions.them when it’s time for promotions.
HSPs perform poorly when you are watching over their shoulders, so avoid “keeping an eye on them’

Since they are so sensitive to the social environment, they can also function as canaries in the coal mine to give out early warnings of impending troubles.

HSPs & Relationships

Elaine Aron says that while some HSPs tend to fall in love harder than others, some others rarely do because they have an avoidant attachment style.

But she also adds that “rarely” is not never and when they do, they can fall in love very hard.

On average, HSPs tend to be more prone to love.

The author also discusses the role of self-esteem on love, and for more details you can read self-esteem and relationships.

Sex

HSPs might be more sensitive to sexual stimulation which might make HSPs sexual lives' more satisfying and require less variety.

However, the author is guessing here and she says she cannot say for sure.

The HSPs Emotional Roller Coaster

HSPs relationships can become an emotional roller coaster as the HSP seeks intimacy and then needs space.

What happens is that the HSP gets close and spends time with his partner, but then gets overwhelmed and needs time on his own.
That leads to a close-distant dynamics which can lead to relationship turbulences and can look very similar to an anxious-avoidant trap (check the article, it's very good).

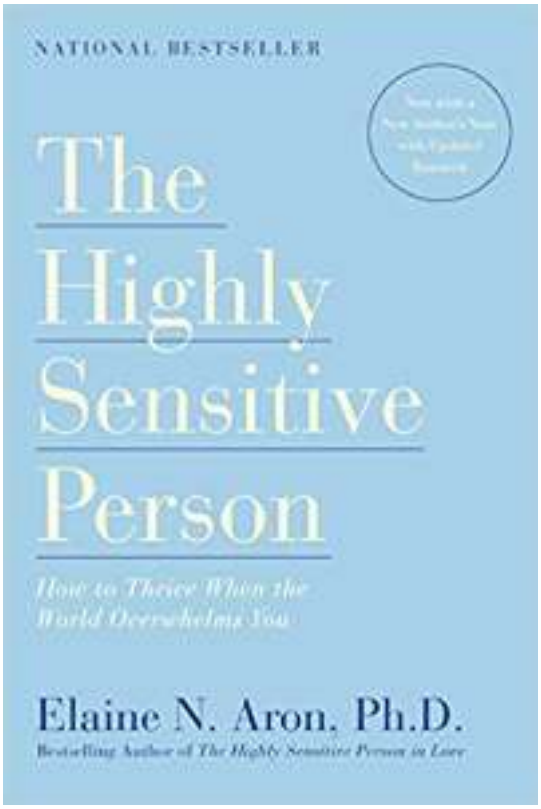
Don't Deny Your Darker Side

The author talks about Jung's "shadow" concept, something Greene also talks about in The Laws of Human Nature.

Elaine Aron says that HSPs can have a bigger tendency to reject and deny part of themselves.
For example, their strength, power, or the capacity of being tough. Some deny their anger, their need of being alone, or their need for others.

There are plenty of resources on this website to strengthen your assertiveness, including Power University and the following books and articles:

- Drawing boundaries with powerful people
- To be good, you must be bad
- Boundaries
- The Power of a Positive No
- People Skills



Real-Life Applications

Don't Mis-Diagnose HSPs
HPSs are around 15-20% of the population. That's quite a few people, and they can be easily confused for shy, fearful, weak and, of course, introverted (read Quiet: The Power of Introverts for more on introversion).

Use Music Consciously
The type of music you listen to affects anyone, but especially so HSPs. Don't listen to arousing music when you need to decompress.

Watch Out For:
HSPs can be more sensitive to medications. and they might fall more easily for the latest guru, shaman or snake oil salesman.

CONS

Some Doubtful Sociological Analysis
The author says that the world is, for better or for worse, under the control of increasingly aggressive cultures. She says that it's normal because when two cultures come into contact the more aggressive "naturally takes over". That's not necessarily true, or the world would be evolving progressively towards more and more aggression, which is not the case -also read The Better Angels of Our Nature or simply look at Athens VS Spart, with Athens often beating Sparta militarily and, even more so, culturally and in terms of overall influence-.

Some Made Up, Rose-Tinted Glassed History
The author says that the aggressive Indo-Europeans took over pacific cultures which had no wars, slavery, monarchy, or domination of one class over another.
This is just "LOL" to me.
Sounds like a naive view of "everything was heavenly until those bad guys arrived". In my opinion, it rarely if ever works like that.

Read on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Chapter on Spirituality
The chapter on spirituality seemed a bit out there to me and not necessarily relevant to HSPs specifically.

Some Diagnosis From Afar
Sometimes the author diagnoses people without ever having met them. For example, she says of Vitkor Frankl, author of "Man's Search for Meaning": "Frankl, an obvious HSP".
Well, maybe he was. But "obvious… " ?

PROS

Groundbreaking Information on HSPs
The Highly Sensitive Person can be enlightening for HSPs who were not aware of them being HSPs.
And it can improve their quality of life.

Social Skills Courses Analysis
I absolutely loved Elaine Aron's take on social skills courses and advice. I couldn't agree more: introverts and HSPs should not try to follow extroverts' advice.

Review

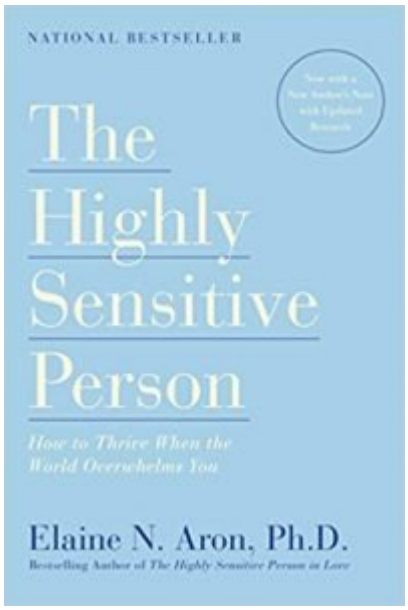
The "Highly Sensitive Person" has been a groundbreaking text.

As a possible HSP myself, it was also highly instructive. It's possible that I me better than most at reading social cues because of my HSPs traits.

I recommend "The Highly Sensitive Person" to those who think they could be HSPs, to people living with HSPs, to educators and employers, and to everyone who wants to understand people and human nature.

Check the **best psychology books** or get the book on Amazon

The Highly Sensitive Person Summary: The HSP Guide to Thrive



A wonderful book to understand the life and psychology of highly sensitive people, which is a relatively large of the

population.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-highly-sensitive-person/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

I Hate You Don't Leave Me: Understanding Borderline Personality Disorder (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

I Hate You Don't Leave Me is a guide to understanding borderline personality disorder. It explains who borderlines are, how they feel, how they behave and, very helpful for their relatives and spouses, how to best deal with them.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Incidence of BPD
  - Comorbidity & Similarities
  - BPD Criteria
  - Degrees of Borderline
  - It's A Mix of Nature & Nurture
  - Borderline Relationships
  - The Workplace for The BPD
  - Genders & BPD
  - Borderline's Gullibility?
  - Unstable Self-Image
  - Sexual Freedom is Bad for BPD
  - Dealing With BPD
  - Prognosis Of BPD
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
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- Also Read
- Review

Bullet Summary

- BPDs are impulsive and have wild mood swings
- BPDs have troubled interpersonal relationships
- Over time BPD tend to improve, and improve even quicker with good therapy

Full Summary

> Borderline individuals are the psychological equivalent of third-degree burn patients. They simply have, so to speak, no emotional skin. Even the slightest touch or movement can create immense suffering
>
> *Marsha Linehan*

Incidence of BPD

Some studies say that around 6% of the US population suffers from BPD, but Jerold Kreisman says that figure

might be an underestimation.

Among patients seeking psychiatric care, between 15% and 25% are diagnosed with BPD, making it one of the most common of all the personality disorders.

Comorbidity & Similarities

BPD present similarities, and sometimes coexists with: depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder (manic-depressive), schizophrenia, somatization disorder (hypochondriasis), dissociative identity disorder (multiple personalities), attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, drug abuse (including nicotine dependence), eating disorders, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, hysteria, sociopathy.

90% of BPD present at least one more other major psychiatric disorder.

BPD Criteria

One individual is diagnosed with BPD if he presents 5 of the following 9 criteria:

1. Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment
2. Unstable and intense interpersonal relationships going from extremes idealization and devaluation (also known as “splitting”)
3. Lack of clear sense of identity: unstable self-image or sense of self
4. Impulsiveness in potentially self-damaging behavior (spending, sex, drugs, reckless driving, binge eating)
5. Recurrent suicidal threats, or gestures, or self-harming behavior
6. Severe mood shifts and instability in reaction to day-to-day events (intense episodic sadness, irritability, or anxiety)
7. Chronic feelings of emptiness
8. Frequent and inappropriate displays of anger
9. Transient, stress-related paranoid ideation or severe dissociative symptoms (unreality or paranoia)

The author says that these 9 symptoms can be grouped into 4 categories:

1. Mood instability (criteria 1, 6, 7, and 8).
2. Impulsivity and dangerous uncontrolled behavior (criteria 4 and 5).
3. Interpersonal psychopathology (criteria 2 and 3).
4. Distortions of thought and perception (criterion 9).

However, Jerold Kreisman warns, people shouldn’t make the mistake of considering each symptom as its own constellation: they are all related and they all move together like pistons in an engine.

In a nutshell, life for the borderline is a relentless emotional roller coaster with no apparent destination.

Degrees of Borderline

Jerold Kreisman says that some researchers suggest changing the definition of borderline to move from a “yes” or “no” to a more modular definition.

Such as, to make the BPD a spectrum disorder (like introversion and HPS, albeit neither of those are disorders of course).

This would make sense because there are different “levels” of being a BPD. Some function better in society while some others struggle more and present more marked signs.

It's A Mix of Nature & Nurture

Causing BPD is a mix of genes (nature) and (nurture) life experiences.

Says Jerold Kreisman:

> The available evidence points to no one definitive cause—or even type of cause—of BPD. Rather, a combination of genetic, developmental, neurobiological, and social factors contribute to the development of the illness.

Many studies have also found a history of severe psychological, physical, or sexual abuse in BPD.

Borderline Relationships

Borderlines cannot stand loneliness and desperately seeks relationships. Even when they feel mistreated by others, an abusive relationship is better than loneliness.

Relationships for borderlines tend to be, like their life, a difficult emotional roller coaster.
Writes Jerold Kreisman:

> Too much closeness threatens the borderline with suffocation. Keeping one's distance or leaving a borderline alone—even for brief periods—recalls the sense of abandonment he felt as a child. In either case, the borderline reacts intensely.

Borderline's behavior is also incompatible with loving and stable relationships.
With their erratic behavior and their need and fear for intimacy at the same time, they often end up repelling the people with whom they most want to connect.

In this sense, borderline's relationships resemble a lot the anxious avoidant relationship trap (check the article it's very well done), with the borderline alternating between an anxious (craving intimacy) and an avoidant (running away from intimacy) attachment style (read here an overview of attachment styles).

The "I Love Him" Fallacy

The need for physical closeness to avoid chronic loneliness can push the BPD into serial sexual relationships with disappointing -or even violent- results.

BPD, with their fragile ego and low self-esteem, often repeat the same mistakes and go back to their abusive exes. Their dependency is often disguised as passion, and you will hear the BPD justify their destructive behavior by repeating "because I love him".

Co-dependent Relationships

The BPD unrealistic goal is to find a perfect partner-caregiver who gives it all and is always ready to tend for them.

The quest often leads to partners with complementary pathology leading to toxic relationships and destructive relationship dances.
If she is a BPD for example, she can end up with an insecure man who displays fake confidence and needs a helpless partner to feel strong and in control (also read: codependent no more).

Warning:
When a partner needs you "down", he will resist all your attempts to improve and get better.
In a codependent relationship, your partner is needy and desperate.
If you want to really improve, consider breaking the relationship.

Testing For Commitment

The author says that the threats and the rage are sometimes a way to test for commitment (not to be confused with shit tests during the courtship phase).

The Workplace for The BPD

Albeit BPD have major difficulties in their personal lives and personal relationships, they can function well at work.

Indeed, as long as their job is well structured, it can work as a sanctuary from their turbulent personal lives.

They don't function as well in highly competitive or random and unstructured jobs.
A highly critical supervisor can also make the hypersensitive BPD overreact and fly in uncontrolled anger (remember that the BPD is hypersensitive to rejection).

Job Hopping

The constant BPD's quest for happiness and contentedness often leads to changing the environment around, which often includes people and jobs.

Genders & BPD

BPD is prevalent in both genders at roughly the same rate, but the severity of the symptoms is greater among women.

Borderline's Gullibility?

Cults and sects appeal more strongly to the borderline because they yearn for direction and acceptance.
They also have a tendency to idealize, which the charismatic cult leader is all too happy to fulfill.

The borderline is also very vulnerable to black and white thinking and depicts reality as either "good" or "evil", something that is also often present in cults.

Unstable Self-Image

The borderline goes from a high opinion to a destructive self-assessment in a matter of hours, sometimes based solely on a single feedback or a silly mistake.

Borderlines tend to have a fixed mindset, such as, they believe that their traits are carved in stone and they are either great or idiotic. And they switch between the two at the drop of a hat.
Read here how to develop a growth mindset.

Most of BPD's self-esteem is achieved by impressing others, so pleasing others becomes critical to the BPD's own self-love.

A Bit Like a Child

The borderline experiences life a bit like a child, with the same intense emotions and perspectives.
And the same fears of abandonment.

Also read transaction analysis for child-adult exchanges and I'm OK-You're OK.

Unable to see his world through adult eyes, the borderline continues to experience life as a child—with a child's intense emotions and perspective. When a young child is punished or reprimanded, he sees himself as unquestionably bad; he cannot conceive of the possibility that the mother might be having a bad day. As the healthy child matures, he sees his expanding world as more complex and less dogmatic. But the borderline remains stuck—a child in an adult's body.

Sexual Freedom is Bad for BPD

Strict cultural norms provide a safer, more structured environment for BPD.
Periods of great freedom, less structured relationships and open sexual mores are more difficult for the BPD to handle.

The shifting role patters for women might be one of the reasons why women have a higher incidence of BPD's symptoms, says the author.

Dealing With BPD

Jerold Kreisman introduces here his " SET" paradigm to communicate with BPD.
SET sands for:

- **Support** (I statements, ie.: "I am sincerely worried about how you are feeling")
- **Empathy** (ie.: "you must be feeling really awful")
- **Truth** (emphasize the BPD is ultimately responsible for his behavior)

Support statements must help the BPD feel like she is cared for, which is something she struggles with, since the BPD feels like she needs to earn acceptance again and again.

This is Jerold Kreisman example of a response to a suicide threat:

> I recognize how bad you are feeling and your wish to die. I know you said that if I cared at all for you, I should just leave you alone.
> But if I cared, how could I possibly sit back and watch you destroy yourself?
> Your communication of your suicidal plans tells me that, as much as you may wish to die, there is at least some part of you that doesn't want to die. And it is to that part that I feel I must respond. I want you to come with me to see a doctor to help us with these problems

After the immediate danger Truth statements can focus on the destructive patterns the BPD falls into and the need -and opportunity- for them to address them.
You must remind the BPD that she must take responsibility and not blame others.

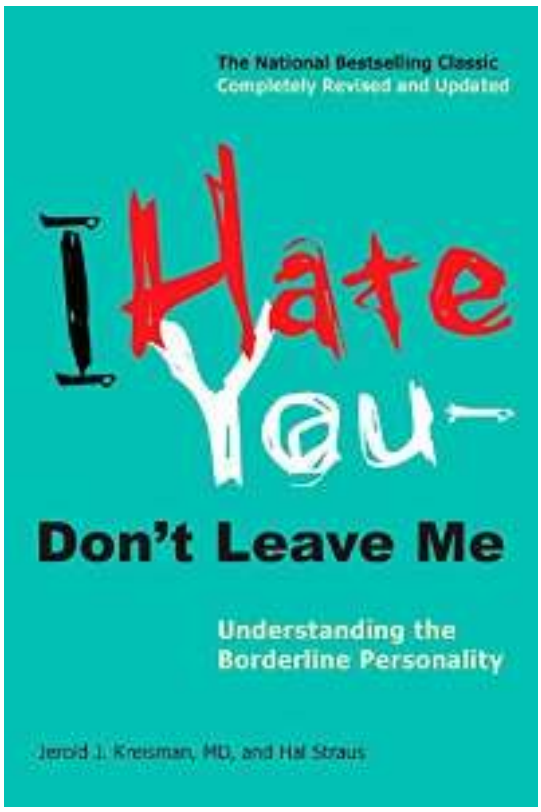
Prognosis Of BPD

BPD tends to improve over time, with or without therapy.
Therapy helps accelerate the improvement rate though.

Classical psychoanalysis is best avoided because it's an unstructured environment in which BPD do very poorly.

Most other approaches work, albeit it's difficult to pinpoint which one works best.
Jerold Kreisman describes them all and I invite you to get the book for more details.
The most important element, anyway, is a good and trusting relationship with the therapist.

Medication tends not to be helpful long term, but can be used for short term relief.



Real Life Applications

Handling Suicidal Threats: Take Them Seriously
Often, the suicide threats or suicide attempts are not a wish to die but rather a way to communicate pain and a plea for attention and intervention.
Addressing it can result in continuous confrontations, ignoring it can result in death.

Accept Feeling Bad
BPD add to their woes by "feeling bad about feeling bad". The author recommends BPDs accept feeling bad as a more constructive approach to improving themselves.

CONS

Psychoanalyzing Historical Figures
The author provides a prompt diagnosis to several movie characters and historical figures.
That's not really a scientific or prudent approach in my opinion. He should have at least prefaced that diagnoses saying they are far from accurate.

Tattoos An Indicator of BPD?
The author says that the societal increasing fascination with tattoos and piercings may be a reflection of borderline tendencies in society.
To me, this is an example of seeing connections where there are likely none (read "Fooled by Randomness").

Some Poor & Irrelevant Social & Historical Analysis
There is some bad social analysis in my opinion.
For examples, writes the author:

> the looming possibility of a catastrophic event—the threat of nuclear annihilation, another massive terrorist attack like 9/11, environmental destruction due to global warming, and so on—contributes to our lack of faith in the past and our dread of the future.

I think you can pick any era and list a hundred reasons why people should “lose faith in the past and dread the future”.

PROS

Instead of listing all the pros, this is simply the best overview of BPD I have ever read.

Also Read

- Stop Walking on Eggshells
- Emotional Vampires
- The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump
- Attached

Review

“I Hate You Don’t Leave Me” is a wonderful text to understand the borderline personality disorder from all facets. Highly recommended to any BPD, to anyone living with BPD, and also to anyone who wants to better understand people and human psychology.

Check here the best psychology books collection or get the book on Amazon

Protected: Highly Sensitive Person Test: FREE & No Email

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

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10 Male Dominant Archetypes For Status, Respect, Attraction

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

There are different ways of being a socially dominant, respect-worthy man, without being a jerk.

Having helped thousands of good men become empowered men who earn status, respect, and attraction, we are experts on the topic.

And with this article, we give the main types of dominant males.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. Meatheads (Physical Dominance)
  - ⍰Self-Defense
  - 1.2. Drill Sergeants
  - ⍰ Self-Defense
- 2. Smart Alecs (Holier Than Thou)
  - Examples
  - ⍰ Self-Defense
- 3. Masters of The Universe
  - Examples
  - 3.2. Flashy Masters
  - ⍰♟Self-Defense & Strategy
- 4. Jesters
  - Example: Russel Brand
  - ♟⍰ Self-defense & Strategy
- 5. Charmers: The Power of "Smooth"
  - Examples
  - 5.2 (Social) Seducers: Charmers on Steroids
- 6. Authorities: The Power of Excellence
  - Examples
- 7. Charismatics: The Power of Confidence
- 8. Cold-Blooded
  - Example: Putin VS Obama
  - ⍰ Self-defense
- 9. Dominant Extroverts: Life of The Party
  - Example
  - 9.2. The David: Hat Trick of Dominance, Warmth, & Energy
- 10. Made Man
- What's Best & What Should You Pick?
  - Learn more

1. Meatheads (Physical Dominance)

Dominance with the (unstated) threat of violence.

Violent men belong to category.

But it's not just gangbangers and criminals.
Many dominant men in civil society also present a layer of physical intimidation.

Take Trump and his infamous handshakes for example.
And of course, sometimes that mask of civility can comes off and display the real bully behind the facade.
Like with former congressman Grimm:

> **Congressman**: Let me be clear to you, if you ever do that to me again I'll throw you off this fucking balcony
> **Interviewer**: (defensive, retreats) Why, why, I just wanted to ask you
> (…)
> **Congressman**: You're not man enough, I'll break you in a half. Like a boy

Cons	Pros
Less effective in society	Effective with timid opponents
Constant intimidation = lots of enemies	Fast results (when it works)
Risky (escalations, ostracization, revenge, etc.)	

⍰Self-Defense

- ⍰ **"Threats don't punch"**. So keep your cool

See Power University's lesson on physical threats

1.2. Drill Sergeants

You get many drill sergeants in army barracks and sports teams.

But, sometimes, you'll get shades of drill sergeant in business as well.
And, sadly, in some families too (see controlling and abusive men).

Somehow people find their yelling entertaining.
So TV shows bank on the allure of unbound, limitless dominance and authority:

⍰ Gordon Ramsey

Cons	Pros
Top talent flees (brain drain)	"Effective" with some lazy asses
Squashes creativity & improvement	Total control
"Little yelling rooster" effect	Quick obedience
Volatile personalities may lash out	

⍰ Self-Defense

It's a game of respect within the theatrical disrespect:

- Never be intimidated, BUT
- Respect their authority
- Love the game
- Push yourself hard
  - Excel in the drills, ideally.
- Display (inner) strength

If you dislike the organization -or don't appreciate being yelled at-, move.

2. Smart Alecs (Holier Than Thou)

If meatheads say "I'm physically stronger", smart alecs say "I'm mentally stronger".

They hide behind a facade of knowledge, but don't be swayed. They are playing the dominance game just like every other power-thirsty individual.

Examples

- ⍰ Seth Godin
- ⍰ Ben Shapiro

- Alan Greenspan:

Notice the arrogant "I know better than you" expression

> **Her**: Well, you are romantic Catherine so you can be excused about objective discussions <— ⍰⍰ you're "feelings first", naive, can't be taken seriously

Cons	Pros
No good friends	Looks intelligent
Ineffective at persuading	"Effective" at winning debates
Ineffective in getting high-value men's buy-in	Access to high-power circles (philantropist/genius relationship)
Poorer leadership outcomes	"Effective" at getting under people's skin
Toxic in relationships	Covertly bully others without being blamed ⍰ ⍰⍰♂

⍰ Self-Defense

- Remain calm (or they'll say you get emotional because you're losing)
  - Don't get physical in civil society (or they'll frame you as too-stupid-brute who can't talk. A gaslighting experience.)
- Undermine their "intellectual power" & get under their skin. Say they're:
  - Posturers, without real intellectual achievements
  - Have little reputation in their field
  - If successful, he peddles watered-down stuff to the masses

> **Corona**: I will buy you and put you in my garden to write books, maybe you'll manage to sell one <— Frames him as a failed intellectual, a posturer
> (…)
> **Smart alec**: Illiterate <— Smart alec power move

🡅 ♟
After landing the perfect blow Corona should have said Mughini was spiteful and angry because the "truth stings". But he let himself be pulled into a verbal brawl without clear winner.

⍰ Growing past your smart alecking

3. Masters of The Universe

They're the "alpha types" with:

- Social dominance
- Confidence / hubris
- Success

Examples

- Donald Trump
- Jamie Dimon, who said he would beat Trump because he is "as smart and as tough as he is". But I'm pretty sure Dimon thinks he is both smarter and tougher.
- ⍰ Wall Street type in The 25h Hour

More on the aggressive side:

> **Mylett**: If someone spoke to my son like I speak to these people I'd rip their heads off

Cons	Pros
Fragile ego if self-esteem relies on success only	Successful approach to life
Over-dominance win-lose = poorer relationships	Attractive

3.2. Flashy Masters

They:

- Talk loud

- Dress snazzy
- Challenge others
- Make a big show
  - Create drama
  - Staged beefs
  - Provoke

Examples

- Conor McGregor
- Muhammad Ali
- Andrew Tate

Cons	Pros
Puerile/childish	⍰Monetizes attention
Condemns you to keep winning (or you become a big-mouthed clown)	Can shortcut to success
Polarizing: many haters	Polarizing: many followers (but many losers :)

⍰♟Self-Defense & Strategy

- Ignore their big talk if it's not your style
- Ignore them if you're above them
- Focus on work
- Beat them with results (rather than talk)
  - Talk after you beat them
  - If you're past your prime, retire and deny them the upset

4. Jesters

- High energy
- Loud
- Mischief

Their weapon is sarcasm, covert aggression, and social embarrassment

Example: Russel Brand

> **Interviewer**: (serious question)
> **Russel**: (ignores, makes a show, disempowers the interviewer)

Cons	Pros
Not the highest power	Break rules others must obey
Limited scope	"Humor" provides convenient cover for attacks
Less attractive (exceptions apply)	

♟⍰ Self-defense & Strategy

1. Don't pretend you're having fun if you aren't
2. Don't play the same game if you're not experienced
3. Don't escalate (unless it's well called for)
4. Don't kiss up to them or try to get their attention

Instead:

1. Enjoy their show if it's good
   - Take yourself less seriously if you're the target
2. Ignore them
3. Act normal
4. Escalate and draw your boundaries IF they overstep

⍰ **Jesters and dominance styles**

5. Charmers: The Power of "Smooth"

Social seducers

Examples

- George Clooney (more jester-like)
- Bill Clinton (higher power)

> **George**: (smiling, joking, building people up)

Cons	Pros
May require extraversion for longer-stretches	Attractive
	Win-win
	Versatile
	Everyone likes you

5.2 (Social) Seducers: Charmers on Steroids

They are charmers on sexual and/or romantic steroids.

A bit less "friendly smooth" and a bit more flirting and sexual innuendos.

Example from Catch Me If You Can:

> **Abagnale**: (confident, strong eye contact) My name is Frank Taylor. I'm a copilot for Pan Am. I'd like to cash this check here, and then I'd like to take you out for a steak dinner.
> **Her**: (overwhelmed, immediately spellbound)

Of course Hollywood overdoes the reactions.
But the concept is valid.

Cons	Pros
Depreciates fast	Powerful (when it works)
High risk	
May require good looks	
Small target population	
Other men may dislike you	

6. Authorities: The Power of Excellence

The power of authorities come from their rank, expertise, and the value they add.

As per social exchange principle, the more value you can give, the more power you wield.

Examples

- Any confident skilled man
- Any confident expert

> **Wolf**: (curtly tasks them)
> **Vincent**: Please would be nice
> **Wolf**: Come again? Set it straight Buster, I'm not here to say please, I'm here to tell you what to do (…) you better fuckin' do it and do it quick.
> I'm here to help. <— Switches to a giver frame, good move
> If my help's not appreciated, lotsa luck gentlemen. <— Lays out his leverage with the value he has to offer

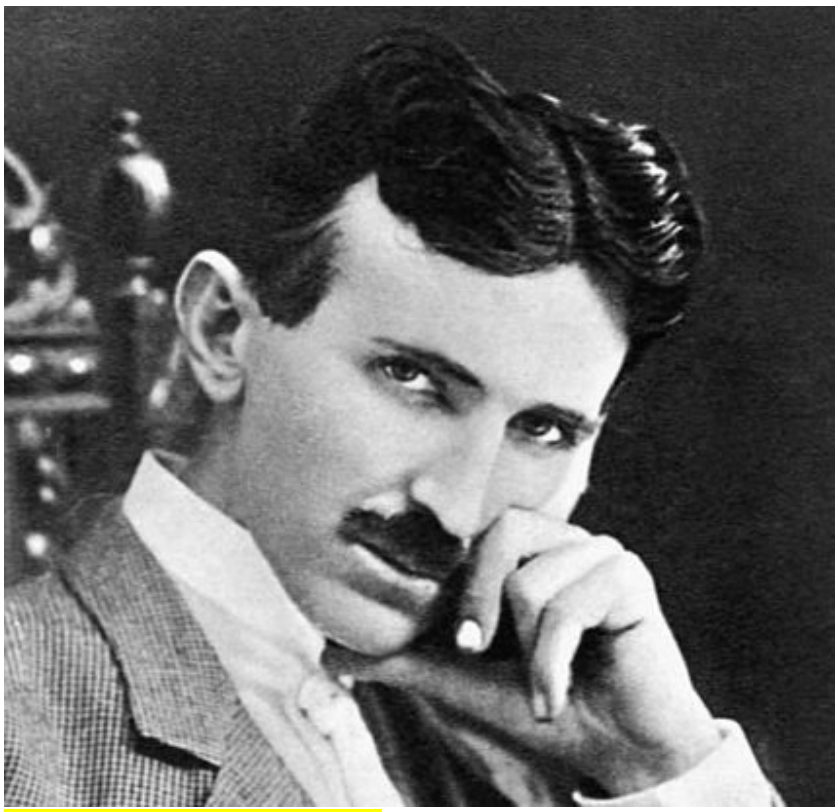
The Wolf can be curt and dominant to two killers because they need his expertise (and because he acts and moves like a respect-worthy man).

Cons	Pros
Limited to the domain of expertise	Makes money
	Supports confidence

7. Charismatics: The Power of Confidence

Charismatic leaders have:

- A mission (in business and work)
  - Trust they can achieve it
- Confidence
- Intensity



Tesla: piercing eyes of conviction

Cons	Pros
High-power men may see you as competition	Most people flock to charisma
Analytical men need to see some hard skills	Attractive

8. Cold-Blooded

They could smile now, kill someone in half an hour, and don't feel a thing.

They can unsettle others with their presence, social pressure, or with "off" vibes.

Example: Putin VS Obama

Obama is taller and leads the most powerful country.

But he still ended up power down in 1:1 interactions:

> **Putin**: (serious and straight faced, never laughs, sometimes angry and always intense, lets silences heap pressure on people)

Note:
It's a valid style even for "good men", for example when pursuing important goals.

Cons	Pros
No "emotional intimacy"	Feels "highly effective/professional"
Less attractive	Effective to make others fear you
	Gains respect

⍰ Self-defense

- Lower your warmth
- Don't fill the silences
- Be more deadpan/less expressive ⍰

⍰ **How to deal with cold-blooded men**

9. Dominant Extroverts: Life of The Party

Dominate with impudence, energy, and "friendly dominance"

Similar to the jester, but less sarcastic, more physical, and higher in power.

It can turn more value-taking with one-upping and social climbing, so:

⍰ ⍰ Only push down lower-status people.
⍰ Better yet: bring the fun, without pushing anyone down ⍰⍰.

Example

From "Il Sorpasso":

Notice:

> **Him**: (takes both arm in arm) <— Friendly and dominant
> You look Spanish <— Statements keep more control
> **Her**: Yes…
> **Him**: Ah, I got it right, the granny must have been joking around with a bullfighter <— LOL ⍰. Shatters personal boundaries with a racy joke

And:

> **Her**: You've never written us
> **Nephew**: Yes…
> **Him**: Yeah eh, he's a rascal this nephew <— Jokingly piles up, but also diffuses tension

And:

> **Her**: You'd always run through the house as first thing, do you remember?
> **Him**: (jumping in) <— Reclaims center-of-attention
> sure, he even told me about it <— Prevents the "family-only" talk and becomes "family insider"
> go on, make your run through the house. <— Host power move, frames him as a little kid
> Friendly kid, he's a good guy <— "Good judge" power move

And:

> **Him**: Uncle Miche', such a "piece of woman" (gesticulates) <— Player self-frame
> I'll tell you later <— Pulls Michele up, worthy of his "men's only talk"

⍰ Aggressive Push-Pull

1. Boundary-breaking power move (push)

2. Cover, or rapport-rebuilding kindness (pull)

Note:

⚠⚠ He does not pull back “Occhiofino” because he’s the lowest-status man
⚠⚠ Different tonality for pushing (helps him get away with it)

Cons	Pros
Requires extraversion	Great fun
Can rub the wrong people off	Good for parties
Poor for professional, rank-based organizations	Charisma on steroids

9.2. The David: Hat Trick of Dominance, Warmth, & Energy

This is the best way to pull-off high-energy, while staying dominant and high-warmth.

Only pulling others up, with a real-life example that beats any movie:

> **Davide**: (dominant, loud, vulnerable, and extra warm. Hugs men, holds their hands, pulls people up, and steals the show)

⚠ Full analysis here (scroll down for David’s style details)

10. Made Man

The calm and confidence of the top dog, with little to prove.

Cons	Pros
Poorer higher-energy environments	Respect
Poorer in newly-forming groups	Admiration
You must earn those stripes to be congruent	Best mix of respect, fear, and prestige

What's Best & What Should You Pick?

Different styles suit different personalities, situations, and different stages of life.

Also, keep in mind that **power is the common glue among all the different dominant types.**
You can't be ANY of these if you're a passive, low-confidence, submissive man.

And you'll do great in any case if you're just high-power and respect-worthy, without any specific style.

But if you prefer a style, or an inspiration, I recommend you decide depending on your personality.

On average, the more masculine type who speaks and moves less is more powerful, influential, and authoritative.

I recommend borrowing some moves and skills from social charmers and charismatic.
But with a masculine edge and incorporating the timeless principles of power.
That gives you status, respect, and attraction.

Learn more

- Confident social behavior
- Low-confidence social behavior
- Confident speaking
- Unconfident conversation signals you must avoid

Power University takes you all the way from good man, to respect-worthy, high-status, and attractive

Charisma on Command: Review & Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Charisma on Command* Charlie Houpert dives deep into charisma and explains how to become more charismatic.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - The Elements of Charisma
  - The 12 Charismatic Convictions
  - Leading The Charismatic Way
  - Command Attention: Don't Just Be Interested
  - Action Plan
  - The Is No Single Moment
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Charisma on Command Review

Bullet Summary

- Charisma can be learned
- Start with the conviction that whatever happens, you will be fine
- Allow yourself to be your real self

Summary

Charlie begins *Charisma on Command* by sharing some of his personal stories and how he became interested in charisma.
He says he was not extremely bad with people, but also not a naturally charismatic and outgoing personality.
He got down to learn people's skills though and he now shares that information with the world -and on Charisma on Command-.

The Elements of Charisma

The key elements that compose charisma are the following:

- **Conviction** (the belief that things will work out fine)
- **Energy** (bring high energy, uplift people)
- **Presentation** (the marketing, how you present yourself)

Steve Jobs is one of the examples of conviction.
But, says the author, there is no secret formula you can replicate for conviction, you simply have to believe that you can do it and, even if you fail, it will be fine. That way, you can give it your best shot with full conviction.

An example of high energy is **Will Smith**.

And the presentation is about style, posture, voice, and, among others, storytelling. Charlie Houpert dedicates a

whole good chapter to storytelling.

The 12 Charismatic Convictions

The author identifies 12 charismatic convictions:

1. I'm OK, I will be OK
2. I care more about my character, not others' opinion
3. I have impeccable integrity (albeit Donald Trump is also charismatic)
4. Don't try to convince others to agree or follow you (that's needy)
5. Communicate your purpose
6. – 12. The charismatic person dares to go there first

Charlie says to be more concerned about your character than your reputation, albeit I agree with Robert Greene in *The 48 Laws of Power* and would keep an eye on the reputation as well.

Leading The Charismatic Way

I really liked the way Charlie Houpert approaches leading. He says that before even thinking of "rallying the troops", leadership begins at a much smaller scale.

You begin by saying what everyone else is thinking first and doing what everyone else wants to do but don't dare. You lead by breaking social rules that are standing in the way of better connecting with other human beings. And by being yourself even when that means looking goofy or silly.

My Note:
On looking goofy, silly, or sharing a weakness, I need to raise the same red flag I raised with Daring Greatly, The Gifts of Imperfection, and The Mask of Masculinity: too much goofiness, too much show of weakness and vulnerability is not good.
Also, read:

- Vulnerability is NOT (always) charismatic

I do very much agree with Charlie though when he says that bringing up the topic of money, sex, and relationships is a leader-like, charismatic thing to do.
And I also agree with his "touching more than most people do", "use honest praise more than most people do" and "communicate how you feel even when it's not the nicest thing to say".

In Charlie's words:

> The charismatic person is attractive because he is whole.
>
> If you want to demonstrate charismatic qualities, don't deny any aspect of yourself. Don't shy from the truth. Live with integrity. Do what amuses you. Say what you think. Share what you feel. Don't wait for anyone's permission. Don't seek anyone's validation.

Command Attention: Don't Just Be Interested

I liked that Charlie Houpert had the courage to call into question the most famous quote from the sacred monster of social skills' textbooks: *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie.

He says that "to be interesting, be interested" works at a dinner party, but in most other open social events, it falls flat.
I agree with that, there are times when you need to do some more of the talking.

Charlie talks about being the center of attention but then turning the spotlight on the people around you as well, with which I also wholeheartedly agree.

Action Plan

The final chapter is an action plan to put together everything Charisma on /command shared and embeds it in your life and in the new natural you

Day 1: Foundations
Day 2: Eye contact (soft gaze on both eyes, don't fix on one eye)
Day 3: Smiling
Day 5: Storytelling
Day 6: Voice
Day 7: Incantations
Day 8: Dress
Day 9: Gesticulations (this Tony Robbins example)
Day 10: Messing around
Day 11: More eye contact
Day 12: Touching
Day 13: Positivity
Day 14: Revisiting charismatic mindsets
Day 15: Take stock of honesty and trust

I must quote Charlie Houpert here:

> This is about character. About trust. Charisma is a comfortableness with the world. We feel it when we sense that someone is real. We trust their actions and feel we can let our walls down with them. We trust them and we trust their intentions. The foundation of that trust is honesty. Honesty first with oneself. Then with the world.

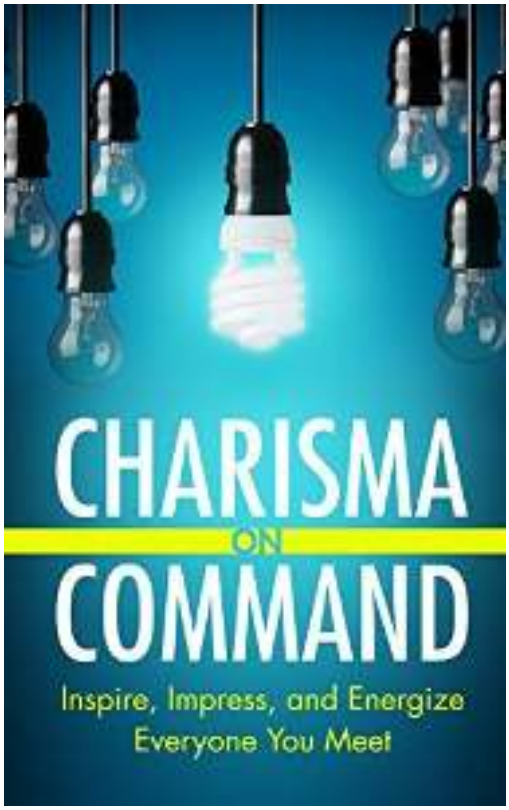
Day 16: Genuine compliments
Day 17: No filler words
Day 18: Get loud
Day 19: What are you stressed about?
Day 20: Vocal range
Day 21: Messing around (again!)
Day 22: Shining on others
Day 23: Posture
Day 24: Killer eye contact
Day 25: Gesticulations, posture, and touching
Day 26: Slow your speaking
Day 27: Energy and incantations
Day 29 – Having fun, messing around
Day 30 – Assessment

The Is No Single Moment

Do you know how people sometimes say "that was the moment when I realize that.. " or "that was the moment I became.. "?

Well, I always smelled BS when people say that, which feels more like marketing than reality.
That's why I loved Charlie Houpert when he said:

> People often ask me the moment I realized I had made a huge leap forward in my presence and charisma. The truth is, there is no single moment.
>
> *Charlie Houpert*



Real-Life Applications

Look At People In The Eyes While Speaking
The tendency is often to look away while we speak. Make it a point to look at people in the eyes while you speak to them with fewer breaks that most people normally take.

Always Address An Audience With "You"
If you are presenting or delivering a speech, don't address people as "people" or "you guys", but use "you", as if you were speaking to each single one of them. This was a very good tip.

CONS

The main con for me is the first one:

- **Charisma Requires High Energy & Loud Voice… Really?**

This is one of the elements I disagree the most with the author. He says that you need to be loud and bring the "high energy".
That is true… *Sometimes*. But it's not a general truth. Not for social skills, social power, or charisma.
As Olivia Fox Cabane explains in *The Charisma Myth*, there are many types of charisma, and most don't entail high energy and booming voices (one example of quiet charisma is Elon Musk).

Charlie is NOT that extreme, but the advice on touching, loudness and smile remind me of this Family Guy skit:

Also read:

- **The myth of high energy**

- 7 Types of Dominance (check the last one, The Godfather, who is obviously highly charismatic)
- How to be charismatic (with the different types of charisma)
- Charisma University Review (the course by Charlie Houpert)

- **Most Links Have Expired**

I was really curious to see some of the videos Charlie references to, but the links were mostly expired.

- **Overlap With Tony Robbins**

Charisma on Command exercises, such as anchoring
(Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) and changing states are taken from Tony Robbins as in *Awaken The Giant Within* and *Personal Power II*.
That's not necessarily a con, Robbins and the exercise is great, but maybe a clearer reference to the original author would have been nice.

- **Some Pop-Psychology Not Deeply Researched**

The author quotes a popular study on how the simple act of smiling makes us happier. Yet that study failed to replicate.
Here is a quote:

> The combined results from 1,894 participants were inconsistent with the findings reported in the original study. The data provided no evidence that inducing participants to have particular facial expressions led them to rate the cartoons differently.

Interesting enough, Charlie and Ben addressed this point in their podcast:

I don't necessarily agree with their conclusion that science can't be trusted so it's best to leave it out.

Bad science can't be trusted, and lower trust should be awarded to low-power studies. Otherwise, science is a wonderful tool to explore reality and tease out effective strategies and approaches.

On the other hand, I agree that science shouldn't be your be-all, end-all tool.
I've read plenty of books written by scientists who tried to extend their theory or results to real-life, and their lack of personal experience translated into some really poor advice.

Also see:

- The three pillars of knowledge

https://thepowermoves.com/three-pillars-of-learning/

- **Frames' War Mentality**

Charlie Houpert is not a "frame domination" kind of guy, and I appreciate that a lot.
But there were a couple of instances where that type of "war of frames" mindset showed up. This example:

> Every interaction boils down to two sets of beliefs banging into one another. The beliefs with greater conviction win.

It might be due to the fact that Charlie started out as a dating coach. And this is a very popular mindset in manosphere circles and older pick-up artists (see *The Game* and *The Mystery Method*). I don't think that's a great mindset to keep at all times, though.
Frame negotiation or reframing might be more effective techniques in many circumstances.

If you think about it, what can a “frame war” mindset give you?
Battles and combative relationships, of course. That’s why I prefer a different approach.

Read more here:

- **Frame control techniques**

PROS

Lots of Wisdom
There is lots of great advice in Charisma on Command.

Compact & Practical
NO time wasting, no repetitions, no BS: Charisma on Command is brief, practical and dripping with good information and advice. Exactly how I like it.

Charisma on Command Review

Compact, great content and highly practical. I loved the book Charisma on Command.

I disagreed with a few crucial points, namely that Charlie Houpert presents one type of charisma as if it were the only way of being charismatic or the best one.
He recommends high energy, to speak louder, to lift people up, and he says:

> I remember the first time someone told me I was the most extroverted guy they knew.

As a more introverted type of person, I don’t think people should force themselves to be more extroverted or high-energy.
I believe that *introverts*, ambiverts, *highly sensitive people*, and quieter people should find their own way of mastering social skills and not follow the extroverts’ diktat of loud speaking and a used car’s salesman smile plastered on their face.

That being said, everyone can learn and improve with Charisma on Command.

Check the **best social skills books, best communication skills books,** or get the book on Amazon

Trust Me, I'm Lying: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

"*Trust Me, I'm Lying*" (2012) is a sort of memoir/confession diary of Ryan Holiday, a self-referred "media manipulator".

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Techniques to Manipulate Media
  - HARO Is Self-Promotion
  - Is The Web (Dis)Empowering?
  - Degradation Ceremonies
  - The Link Economy Degrades Information
  - Corrections REINFORCE The Original Mistake
- Real-Life Applications
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- Review

Bullet Summary

- The current digital media system has poor quality or non-existent quality controls
- That makes it prone to easy exploitation. And that's bad news for (almost) all of us
- The news is all about sensationalism to get your clicks and sell your time to advertisers
- The best marketers are Machiavellians who manipulate the media to sell

Full Summary

"*Trust Me, I'm Lying*" is divided into two sections: the techniques to manipulate media and the consequences of a media system and landscape which is so easy to manipulate.

The whole book is peppered with personal experiences and Ryan's commentary, which is the real added value of "*Trust Me, I'm Lying*".

Techniques to Manipulate Media

Qw quickly reviews here the Machiavellian techniques by Ryan Holiday describes to manipulate the media.

As a note, Ryan uses the term "blogger" to describe any kind of digital interaction with an audience, going from an actual blog to a tweet to a bigger news portal.

- **Help pay bloggers' bills**

Help a blogger who is starting out, and they will remember later on when you need some coverage.

- **Tell bloggers exactly what they want to hear**

Bloggers don't really look at facts.
Indeed, sometimes they start with a story already in mind and are only looking to cherry-pick quotes to fit their

narratives.

If you want to be cited and quoted, don't tell them facts: tell them what they want to hear.
Another technique is to pass them something that looks and seems juicy like a (fake) "leaked document".

- **It doesn't have to be good, it just has to be shareable**

The news you publish and the information you pass to bloggers must not be good or, God forbid, true. It must be "shareable".

Gloom doesn't get shared, but anger does. Positive and surprising emotions are shared.
Reasonableness and neutral emotions don't get scared.

> **If an article or quote doesn't get shared, does it even exist?**

- **Tricking their readers is key**

This technique is basically what's today called "clickbait".

Clickbait means using an attention-grabbing headline that might or might not be connected to the full article.
However, once the click has happened, the ad impression has been delivered and the blogger is happy.

As a media manipulator, you should approach bloggers the same way they approach their readers.
Give them a sense of mystery, raise a feather-ruffling question, and see them do the same as their readers.

> **A great article is no more valuable than a clickable poor one**

- **Sell so they can then sell**

The rules have changed in online media.
Bloggers are not looking anymore for loyal readers: they are after the ad impression's "smash and grab".

Sensationalism and scoop are the new keywords and golden graals of modern digital publishing.
Sex, scandal, hatred, extremism, sensationalism… This is what sells, and this is what you must give them.

> **Bloggers steal your time to sell it to advertisers**

- **Killer headlines**

Headlines are the equivalent of first impressions.
Actually, even more: with the news you don't get a chance of changing anyone's mind if they don't click first.

Information that can't be turned into a killer headline is not worth publishing, so you must help the blogger make a killer headline.

> **Perusive readers are no better than accidental readers**

- **Page views are king**

Bloggers and journalists are under pressure to produce as much content as possible.
They are low paid, and often their pay is tied to how much revenue and clicks they can generate.
It's a hard and difficult pressure environment to work on, and that means they will really appreciate it if you can help them get some traffic. So when they write about you, share their news on your personal and company's blog.

- **Use sound-bites**

Bloggers need a high churn of information. That means that deep and well-thought information does not work: you must share with them sound bites.

> **Bloggers take the audience at their worst and make them worst**

- **Fake it when necessary**

Most news and articles are dull… Unless you can help the bloggers find an "interesting" angle to take.
If that means exaggerating or bending the truth, then be it. Everyone is doing it anyway.

HARO Is Self-Promotion

HARO is a tool to connect journalists with expert resources.

In theory.

In practice, Ryan Holiday says, it's a tool for self-promotion that looks like research.
It's also the perfect tool to cherry-pick quotes from experts -or so-called experts- to fit the journalist's narrative.
The blogger receives a lot of quotes and opinions and he can just sift through them to pick the ones he likes the most to reverse-engineer the piece that he had *already* decided to write.

My Note:
I should know something about it :).

Is The Web (Dis)Empowering?

Since much content on the web has been engineered to consume your time and get your clicks, Ryan Holiday says that the myth that the web is empowering is just that… A myth.

The web is another huge time-sink.

My Note: I don't fully agree
The way most people use the web is a time-sink.
But it can also be tremendously empowering. Internet certainly did make my life much better -even before ThePowerMoves.com-.

Degradation Ceremonies

From a psychological and sociological point of view, Ryan Holiday raises a few important points on the darker drives of human nature that lead people to gang up, bully, harass, and abuse others.

He calls them "degradation ceremonies", and people find a perverse sense of joy and accomplishment in tearing apart someone else.
By building a monster, it makes us feel better to be "normal" or "better than them".

Snarky writers, says Ryan Holiday, are afraid of being criticized and laughed at, so they lash out first.
Attacking makes them feel stronger and in control.

And, of course, jealousy also plays a role. But hitting back at snarks is difficult because the moment you hit back you descend at their level, how they got to you, and give them importance. So they are free to spread their gall and hatred.

The Link Economy Degrades Information

Ryan Holiday quotes the creator of the expression "link economy" and he says that guy is an idiot.
The link economy is one of the main drives of rubbish journalism.

It creates a system of distributed responsibility similar to the subprime mortgage crisis, where everyone takes care of short-term gains while producing rubbish content.
“Don’t believe me? Here is a link, go check the resources”. But nobody checks them and the rubbish piles up.

> **The link economy is designed to confirm and support, not to question and correct**

The link economy has changed the system from what’s happened to what someone has said.

Google’s Backlink System is Bogus

Here Holiday makes a great point I wholeheartedly agree with.

One of the biggest contributing factors to Google’s SERP position is backlinks. The idea is that if a page gets linked to a lot, then it’s high quality. But there is nobody to check and ensure quality, so you can get pages with nice pictures to attract a lot of backlinks, which in turn helps the whole website.

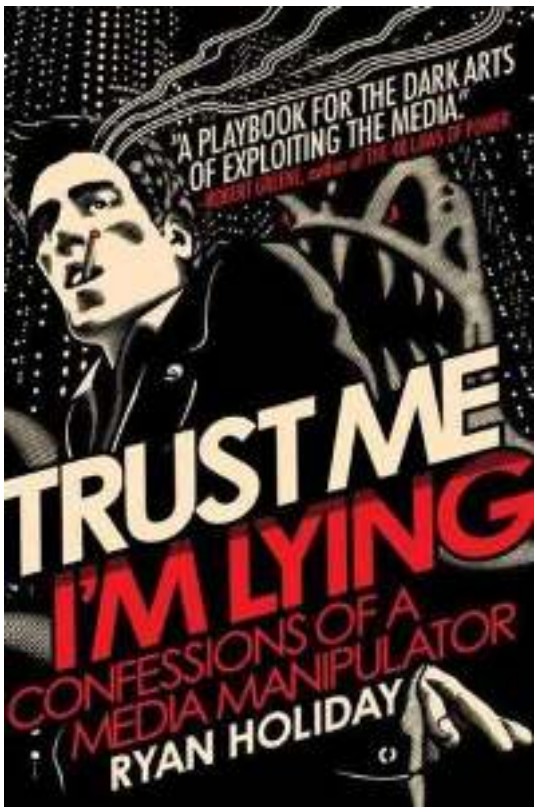
But, at the core, the backlink system is not based on quality but on what’s shareable.

Corrections REINFORCE The Original Mistake

Ryan Holiday lists many instances in which unscrupulous bloggers published wrong information and later refused to withdraw the article.

Often the correction comes in a new post that only a fraction of the readers who read the initial wrong information read.
Or it becomes an update at the bottom of the article with the wrong headline staying exactly the same.

From a psychology point of view which is most interesting to this website, however, I learned of a study showing that corrections often reinforce the original mistaken article.
Those who saw the correction remembered and believed even more strongly in the initial mistaken claim.
This is because the correction re-introduces the initial claim into readers’ minds and forces them to re-run it, which reinforces the association.
We’re not only bad at remaining skeptical, but we are also bad at correcting plainly wrong information.



Real-Life Applications

If you are in the publishing industry, there is a lot you can learn here. A few golden nuggets:

Take Control of Your Wikipedia page…
… Or someone else might, and you never know what they are going to write. And just so you know, journalists all rely on Wikipedia.

Learn "Media Speak" to Increase Your Critical Thinking
Here are a few rules to keep in mind as you read and listen to the news:

- When you see "leaked" or "official document", know that some random guy or a media manipulator emailed the blogger with a probably fake or made-up document.
- When you see "breaking" or "we'll have more details as the story develops" know that what's in the news has not been double-checked and it's the equivalent of made-up rumors.
- When you read "sources tell us", know that those sources are rarely vetted and they are desperate for attention.
- When you read "exclusive" know that the source has cut a deal for favorable coverage. And that he probably gave that "exclusive" to other websites as well.
- When you read "we reached to so and so", know that they sent an email 2 minutes before publishing long after they had already prepared and finalized the article.
- When you see "updated" know that there has likely been very little editing and someone just copy-pasted some new lines from some other random sources (see link economy)

CONS

I loved and deeply enjoyed "*Trust Me, I'm Lying*", but there are a few points I need to raise:

- **I'm Not Too Convinced of "Manipulations' Effectiveness"**

Reading "*Trust me, I'm Lying*" you might get the feeling that we live in a world where smart manipulators can get

people to write whatever they please to influence public opinion.
But I see the world as a bit more chaotic and random (see *Fooled by Randomness)*.

He talks a lot about his campaign for the Tucker Max movie which, in the end… Resulted in relatively poor performance -a relative commercial flop-.
That to me says a lot about the limitations and complexities of being a media manipulator: you're not the master of puppets. You're just an actor… In a play full of actors. And your influence is bound to be limited.
Indeed, as Holiday admits, the system can end up turning against you, and "it feeds on itself".

- **These rules don't apply to all websites (anymore)**

These rules don't apply to all digital publishing and websites. It's not true anymore today that a "persuasive reader is the same as an accidental one" since Google likely measures bounce rates, dwell times, and other indicators of quality interaction with the users.

The same goes for the article's length: Google prefers longer articles for SERP placement.

It might still be true for more news-heavy sites though.

Review

I really enjoyed "*Trust Me, I'm Lying*".

I don't believe like Ryan Holiday seems to believe, that back in the days of TV it was better. As a matter of fact, I believe today it's much better.

But it's still a wonderful insider's view of the digital news publishing industry.
As Ryan Holiday says, whether you see it as a weakness or as an opportunity, depends on you.
But I hope that even if you see it as an opportunity, you won't use it for really bad causes.

And for all of those who don't work in the digital blogosphere, this is still a wonderful book to increase your critical thinking, distance yourself from the rumors mill that the news is, and, even more deeply, to better understand the world and human nature.

As Robert Greene, author of *The 48 Laws of Power* said: "self-interest is the currency that runs the world".
And the media landscape reflects a system of warped, toxic self-interest that doesn't add up to do good for the whole.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

Alpha Male Body Language: 7 Poses to Gain Status

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

What does the body language of an alpha male look like?

If you have that question in mind, this article is for you.

This post will show you exactly what dominant body language looks like, without becoming a caricature or a total asshole.

Contents

- 1. Take Up "Enough" Space
  - Sit Comfortably
  - Stake Your Claim (without overdoing it)
- 2. Head Parallel To The Ground
  - Eye Contact: Keep The Gaze Up
- 3. Make Yourself Comfortable
  - Lock In
- 4. Adopt Open Body Language
- 5. Move Purposefully, Quit "Self-Soothing"
- 6. Adopt Good Posture
- 7. Walk High Power
- 8. Stand Still: Let Others Orbit Around You
- 9. Let Others Come to You
- 10. Bonus: Use Nonverbals
- Calibrate!
- The Golden Alpha Rule: Be Congruent

1. Take Up "Enough" Space

Principle:

⚖ **Dominant men take up space while submissive ones make themselves smaller.**

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Behavior* states that body openness and expansiveness in adults are positively related to dominance (J. A. Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005)

As for everything, **to maximize your social effectiveness you must use balance and calibration.**
⍰ Guess where these 3 are most appropriate:

⁉️ 1 and 2 good for bars and getting attention. Too much for work (unless you're top dog). Reclining with just one arm is a good mix

Sit Comfortably

Principles:

- Knees and feet shoulder-wide or slightly more
- Cross legs with "figure four"
- Stay comfortably upright

⁉️ Examples:

1. Shoulders ⍰⍰, head could be more upright, legs too feminine
2. Shoulder and head ⍰⍰. Legs fit the “hipster/metrosexual vibe” but not masculine
3. Upper body ⍰⍰, legs could go down more straight
4. Great for hoods and male friends. Too much for workplaces and can feel try-hard

⍰ Good examples:

1. Upper leg could be more parallel to the floor. But good
2. Great overall, but uncomfortable position. Only keep it briefly, then you can stand up

Stake Your Claim (without overdoing it)

Ie.:

Feels “overdoing it territory”

2. Head Parallel To The Ground

General body language principles:

- **Straight head** is the perfect mix for most situations
- Chin jutting forward challenges others
- Chin tucked in with aggressive eye contact/expression readies to fight
- Head hanging low is submissive

A slight chin-up for men is OK.
Strike a good balance:

Too forward leaning

Straight

Too backward leaning (just off)

Eye Contact: Keep The Gaze Up

General principles:

- Keep your gaze straight
- Hold eye contact “appropriately long enough”

And the direction of breaking eye contact is also important.

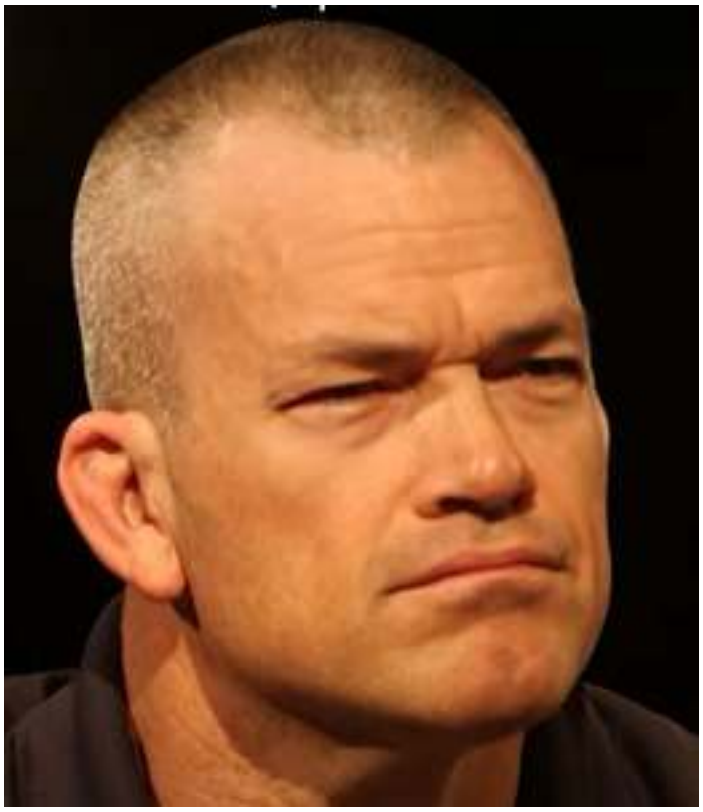
- Break eye contact to the side or upward
  - Downward is submissive
  - Upward is dominant

⍰♂**Lucio’s Take**: Learn and then chill

Lucio: Gaze “straight up” feels unnatural to me.
I keep a straight head, good posture, and walk with purpose.
I don’t mind a slightly lower-pointing gaze: it’s better to take in the environment.
In safe areas I know, my gaze is out of focus. It sub-communicates confidence and self-sufficiency.

Also powerful:

High-Intensity Gaze When Focusing



See-through people

Similar to the “out of focus” I like:

⍰ **More about the “see-through”**

3. Make Yourself Comfortable

General principle:

⚖ **Physical comfort sub-communicates mental comfort.**
Including confidence and a sense of control over the environment.

Lock In

Principle:

⚖ **The more uncomfortable they are compared to you, the more power you gain**

Some ways to lock in:

- You sit, they stand
- You recline against a bar, they stand
- You sit on the inside of a booth, they’re outside
- You’re on the quieter side of the sidewalk (close to the wall), they’re on the outside
- …

⍰ Yours truly:

4. Adopt Open Body Language

General principle:

- ⚖ Close body language sub-communicates fear, defensiveness, and discomfort.
- ⚖ Open body language sub-communicates confidence, and comfort.

Many examples online for closed VS open poses.
Besides the basics:

- Touching the tie
- Checking the time
- … Any “excuse” to cover your body

⚠ Defensive body language can become permanent over time.
If this is you, fix:

- Scrunched posture
- Hunched head
- Rounded shoulders

⍰⍰ See Power University for the group analysis

5. Move Purposefully, Quit "Self-Soothing"

We can cluster body language signals in:

- Signs of **comfort** VS
- Signs of ***dis*comfort**" (AKA "displacement signals")

Comfort is associated with confidence, social confidence, and control over the environment.
Discomfort, is the opposite.

How do people signal discomfort?
It often comes down to touching and self-covering.
While studies show that touching *others* is more dominant, touching the self signals low confidence.

Therefore, minimize "self-soothing" and "displacement signals" such as:

- Touching yourself
  - Face or back of the neck
  - Scratching itches
  - Wringing hands
- Playing with jewelry
- Opening up the collar of a shirt
- Rocking on your toes
- …

6. Adopt Good Posture

Albeit good postures is not a must for alpha males, it's still important.

And, generally speaking, high-quality men have better posture.

Common posture issues:

1. rounded shoulders
2. head leaning in
3. hunched back posture

Careful with:
⚠ Over-compensating poor posture
⚠ Over-doing good posture when everyone is chill or spreading out
⍰ Example: Bieber seemed unnaturally straight, sticking out like a sore thumb

⍰ **Posture & posture exercises** (PU alumni only)

7. Walk High Power

Quick tips:

- **Shoulder sway** is masculine (similar to Bond's video above)
- **Gap between legs**. Don't overdo, but don't press them together either

See PU for more.

Parallel Feet or "Outward Pointing"

"Outward" is masculine, parallel is more refined.

Bad joints, crass behavior, but masculine

Look Ahead If Fast, "Take In Environment" If Slow

High-power slow is:

- ⍰ I own my time, don't have to hurry for anybody

- Slight smile for “happy with the world and who I am” vibe
- Eyelids lower to sub-communicate “contentedness and comfort” ▯ Example

High power fast is:

- ▯ I’m on a mission (get out of my way)
- Look straight ahead

▯ Daniel Craig in Specter:

Tips

1. **Walk on a high-power song** that makes you feel a boss. Learn the movements, then replicate them without song. ▯▯♂ My go-to song was “*I wanna be your slave*” by Manneskin
2. Image yourself James Bond style, gun holstered inside your jacket.

Or think of swords sticking out straight, on a straight back to help your posture:

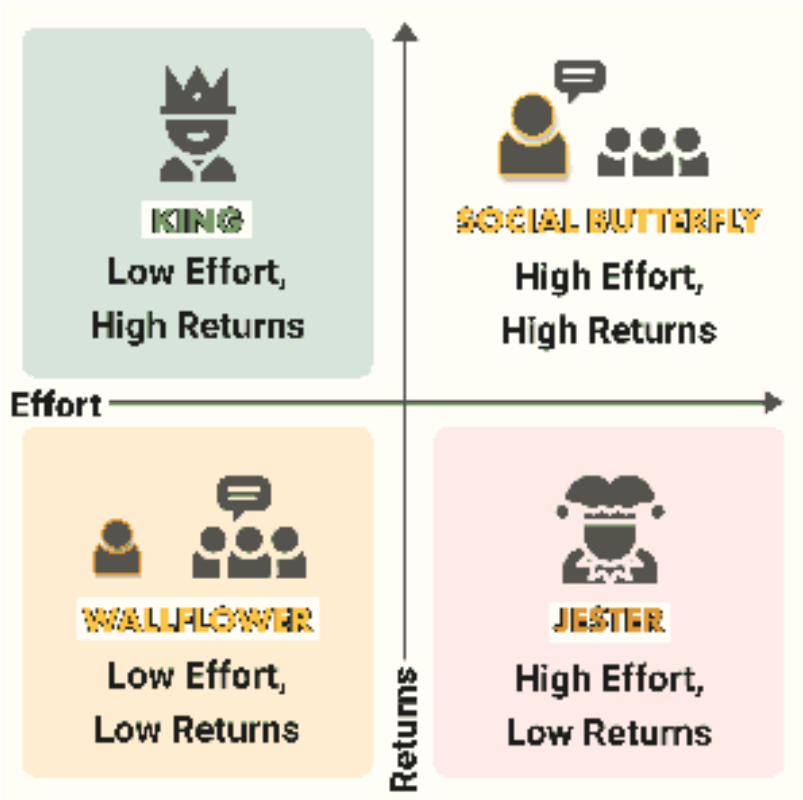
8. Stand Still: Let Others Orbit Around You

General principle:

⚖ **Alpha males don’t move for others because others move for them**

Castiglione calls it “Sprezzatura”, and it’s basic Social ROI, true for assigning tasks and having people execute. But also for how bodies move during normal socialization, and for the sub-communication of power via “stillness” of movement.

It’s explained by the Social ROI matrix:



The king/alpha male gets high returns, with less effort

And it's why on this website we caution against the "high energy approach" championed by many social skills coaches.
High energy can work, in the right environments.
But it's easy to overdo it and become the low-status jester.

In Power University we also teach how to be high-energy *and* high power.

9. Let Others Come to You

Alpha males do not *actively* seek attention.

Or, at least, they do not seem like they are -alpha males can be Machiavellian, of course-.

Actively seeking attention is more feminine and "BPD-like".

However, **alpha males get attention as a consequence of being the highest-status men** in the group.

That attention, in turn, sub-communicates power and "top dog status".
It goes back to the fundamental laws of power.
Having people around you communicates they need you and want you.
They want to talk to you, be around you, get your opinion, your approval, f*ck you, or be seen with you.

Notice how Trump, a man focused on being the most powerful and dominant man in the room leverages this principle:

> **Hillary**: (bolts off stage like a schoolkid)
> **Trump**: (remains grounded and lets everyone else come to him)

⍰⍰♟ Who looks presidential?
Easy: Trump is already acting like the alpha male in charge of the country. Hillary instead looks like she may be a

bit too nice to protect people's interests.

10. Bonus: Use Nonverbals

Less expressive men can also be dominant.

But nonverbals are high-power because they are low-investment.
Such as, it's high power to communicate whole sentences without a word. Or to make others crack under pressure without saying anything.

And research shows that emotional expressivity is attractive in dating.

Facial Expressions

A calibrated balance is often the most effective.

For example, no smiles are cold and broad smiles communicate warmth. But slight smiles are higher power (Wang, Mao, Li, & Liu, 2017) while *still* communicating enough warmth:

⍰ Crazy Stupid Love

> **Her**: That would not work on me
> **Him**: (Stares at her with slight smile ⍰) <— ⍰⍰ "It sure will"

♟ **Perfect dating move**
No words could top that. "Of course that would work on you" would make her deny, and arguments are *very* unseductive.
⍰⍰ He fails with "it's obvious that you like me"

⍰ Disappointed:

Sub-communication⍰⍰ “I’m disappointed, and you deserve no words”. Pressures others into explaining without a single word

⚠ Careful because facial expressions can be feminine or passive-aggressive.
In PU we explain the difference.

⍰ The “Inquisitive Look“

⍰ from an ex-girlfriend during early dating:

> **Me**: What about Enrico
> **Her**: (looking tense) Enrico, what do you mean
> **Me**: Enrico, don’t you remember?
> **Her**: (getting worried) No…. Did I say Enrico in my sleep? <— ⚠ This can frame me as jealous (and lower-value mate guarding. Not good)
> **Me**: … <— ⍰⍰ I ignore and stay silent to sub-communicate I’m NOT worried
> **Her**: (growingly worried) OMG, I don’t know if I said it in my sleep, I have no idea who is Enrico
> **Me**: (sideways glance, pursed lips, slightly corrugated eyebrows) **<— this is the inquisitive look**
> **Her**: … I’m sorry, I don’t know, I really have no idea how Enrico is, really Luc…
> **Me**: Enrico is the name of the breakfast we had last time
> **Her**: Ooooh ahaha true, OMG I was thinking I said it while sleeping, I’m sorry! Ahaha yes I would love an Enrico ahah <— ⍰⍰ Excited and exaggerated laughter as tension release

This exchange sub-communicated (and expanded) this: “I’m very into you and I’m afraid of doing anything that may jeopardize us”.

Use pauses and facial expressions for a similar effect: high power and “cool”, without any attack.

Hand Gestures

⍰ Example:

> **Judy**: (spins her hand to say “go ahead”)
> **Guy**: (speaks)

⍰⍰ Use hand gestures for self-defense.
For example, raise your hand and speak louder to subcommunicate you’re not to be interrupted.

Hand-Tapping

To sub-communicate patience running out, or demand faster action.

 Confrontational, from The View.
Less confrontational but more powerful from Bush:

> **Bush**: People understand that (slams his hand on the table) the House of Representatives needs to pass (…)

Tapping on their body can also be more benign "affectionate dominance".
Imagine your woman beats around the bush, and you want to get going.
You can tap on her side as if to say "Come on baby, wrap it up".

Hand-Tapping Self-Defense
Keep talking, raise your hand or touch their arm and look at them, as if to say "One moment".
If it's your boss raise your hand as if to say "Sorry, got ya", nod, and add a smile.
If you were wasting time, cut to the chase in any case.

Calibrate!

General principles:

1. **Mind your rank**
   - Lower rank: allow superiors to be more dominant as a beginner
   - Higher rank: march your rank with body language
2. **Mind people's property & space**
3. **Be more subtle in high-society**
4. **High-power, without being a d*ck**. Keep an appropriate balance for your goal, don't make enemies:

Case study: too dominant, invading personal space

I leaned against the gate of a kart track beside the owners.

I knew it was too much, but wanted to test things out.

…

See Power University for Lucio's real-life examples.

Calibrate to culture and environment

Touching oneself and others is also cultural and environment-dependent.

For example, Allan Pease in *The Definitive Book of Body Language* compares Italian and English cultures.
People in Rome touch each other hundreds of times. But in the UK barely touched each other at all.

The Golden Alpha Rule: Be Congruent

Here's the harsh truth:

Low power behavior will always leak out until you develop the *mind* of a high power man.

And because of the leakage principle™, when signals are incongruent, people always trust your lower value leaks more. And they feel like you're a **poser**.
It's a simple law of value signaling: lower value leaks are more credible.

That's why at The Power Moves we start with the mind first, as per our foundations of self-empowerment. And we ensure our alumni internalize these mindsets in **Power University**.

Also see:

- Archetypes of high-status men
- High-status behavior
- High-status speaking

Better yet, internalize these principles to apply them with maximum congruence:

Check Power University

How to Be More Dominant and Socially Confident: A Guide for Top-10% Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

How do you become a dominant man without being a jerk?

True dominance isn't about aggression or bullying. It's about **projecting confidence, asserting yourself**, and **commanding respect** in a way that others respond to.

And when done right, **effective dominance** helps you gain **status, respect, and attraction**—whether in your career, social circle, or dating life.

As the leading resource on social power dynamics, we've taught thousands of good men how to develop high-status behavior. In this guide, you'll learn **10 simple but powerful behaviors** that show you're a **confident, dominant man**—without ever overcompensating or trying too hard.

Contents

- 1. Lead
  - 1.2. Move First
  - 1.3. Lead Your Dates (Dating)
- 2. Strategic Host Behavior™
  - 2.2. Address The Group
  - ⍰ Over-doing The Host: Obama VS Putin
  - ⍰ 2.3. "Show" The View
- 3. Assign Tasks
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- ⍰ 4.3. Use Pauses to Exert Social Pressure
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- 5. Low Emotional Investment Signaling™
- 6. Touch Others (When Appropriate)
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- 7. Defer With Power
- 8. Stand Your Ground
  - 8.2. Stand Your Jokes & Comments
  - 8.3. Stand Your Physical Ground
- Develop Effective Dominance™

1. Lead

Dominant men are leaders.
And dominant behavior enhances perceptions of competence regardless of actual competence (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009).

Leading signals social confidence and high status.

1.2. Move First

⍰⍰ **Lead when entering new venues**. Many men feel uncertain. It’s your opportunity to provide leadership

General principle facing uncertainty:

⚖ **Lower-status men look around while dominant men take initiative**

Ie.:

- Speak up
- Greet newcomers
- Walk first

⍰ Example:

> **Tony**: (Starts walking up the stairs) <— While people are tentative in new environments, Tony (over)-confidently leads the way on his first time there
> **Omar**: (Annoyed, rushes in front and brushes Tony)

🡅♟ **Strategic Considerations: let your superior go first**
Tony bulldozzes upward, without political considerations. This is dominant, but may not be *positively* dominant. Advancing while maintaining relationships is often more effective.

⍰ **PRO Tip**: **As an official leader, leverage group expertise for the best response**
Involve your best experts to craft the best response and you'll be a more effective leader.

1.3. Lead Your Dates (Dating)

Effective dominance is crucial in dating.
And one of the most effective ways to combine dominance with dating success is to lead forward, and adding warmth.

Some ways of displaying win-win leadership include:

- Move her away if a fight erupts
- Guide her
  - hand walking in front
  - Arm in arm
  - Hand on her lower back
- Help her get up

⍰ Example:

> **Him**: (offers his hand to help her up)

⬆♟ Not just gallant, but effective
Letting her go first sets the frame that it's also *her* decision to leave together. Prevents future games and increases attraction. Plus, it's the mix of leadership and gallantry women dream of (and a healthy approach to maintain relationship leadership and attraction). This is *effective* dominance.

Video in Power University.

2. Strategic Host Behavior™

Host Behavior™ refers to behaviors and frames that signal authority, expertise, or ownership in a given environment—physical or social—while guiding others—often projecting power subtly through kindness and service-oriented prosociality

Host behavior is perfect Effective Dominance because they're often **automatically dominant *and* warm.**
Some typical host behavior:

- ***"After you"***, when through doors or boarding/exiting
- **'Follow me' gestures**
- ***"You can sit here"*** invites
- **Checking in** with people, ensuring they're doing well
  - ⍰ Ask '*How is your night going*' or '*How was your X*', and you lead from the first move

Good host behavior is high power and high warmth because the host leads, while also caring for others.

Leader: (invites in, rotates towards the forward direction) After you
Follower: (focusing on the leader)

⬆ ♟ Great mix of power and warmth
He looks halfway between guest and direction. The guest, focused on the leader, yields control of the environment. This is also *effective* dominance.

2.2. Address The Group

Whenever appropriate, address the full group and you almost automatically become high status.

A great way to do it is with 'service leadership', for example:

- **Get the check first** ➡ Count how much it is for each, announce it to all
- **Propose a place** to higher-status individuals, decide ➡ Announce it to the group.
- Open Google Maps first ➡ **Lead the group**

⍰ Over-doing The Host: Obama VS Putin

Remember: balance and calibration.

If they guide you *without* being hosts, it's a power move.
But if they're genuine hosts, they're doing their job. Act high power, but don't steal their role.

Obama tried to take the host role:

> **Obama**: Where would you like to sit (shows Putin the way)
> **Putin**: (walks from behind, shows Obama where he can sit) <— Curt, but forced to do it to defend his genuine host role

⬆ ♟ Strategy: let Putin go first

Obama was ahead, but unsure what to do.
He could have:

- Let Putin go first through the door saying “after you”
- Strategically slow down or stop near the banquet to let Putin catch up
- Say “T*hank you for this*” to self-frame as being served
- Casually ask “*Looks amazing, where shall we sit*” <— The simplest and most natural solution is often best

⍰ 2.3. “Show” The View

A common power move among politicians.
Example:

> **Trump**: (opens up pointing to something on his left)
> **Macron**: (opens up and tries to Make Trump follow on his left)

Macron did it because he “played at home” in France.
And Trump did it because he’s Trump :).

3. Assign Tasks

Principle:

⚖ **Powerful men tell others what to do (task) and low-power men execute.**

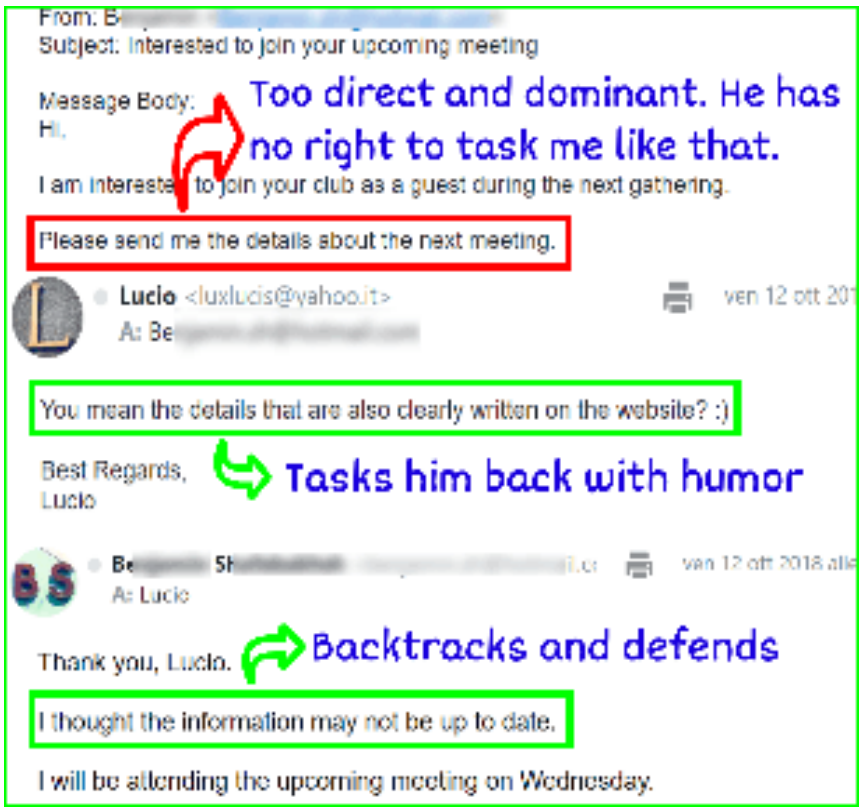
⍰ 3.2. Reject Tasks When Disrespectful

Dominant men task others even they *lack* formal authority (see “types of political players“).

However, **you lose status when others task you without authority.**
And you lose even *more* when they’re not respectful (ie, without “power protecting“).

You must defend your boundaries—lest you lose status, respect, and attraction-.

In this example, a guy reached out to me as the president of the local Toastmasters:



⬆ ⍰⍰⍰He had no right to task me like that because of social exchange dynamics.
We provide free self-development opportunities. So it's on *him* to make it easier on me. Cherry on the pie: his tone.
P.S.:
He was SUPER friendly in person. That always happens after dominance showdowns.

See more on tasking and executing strategies:

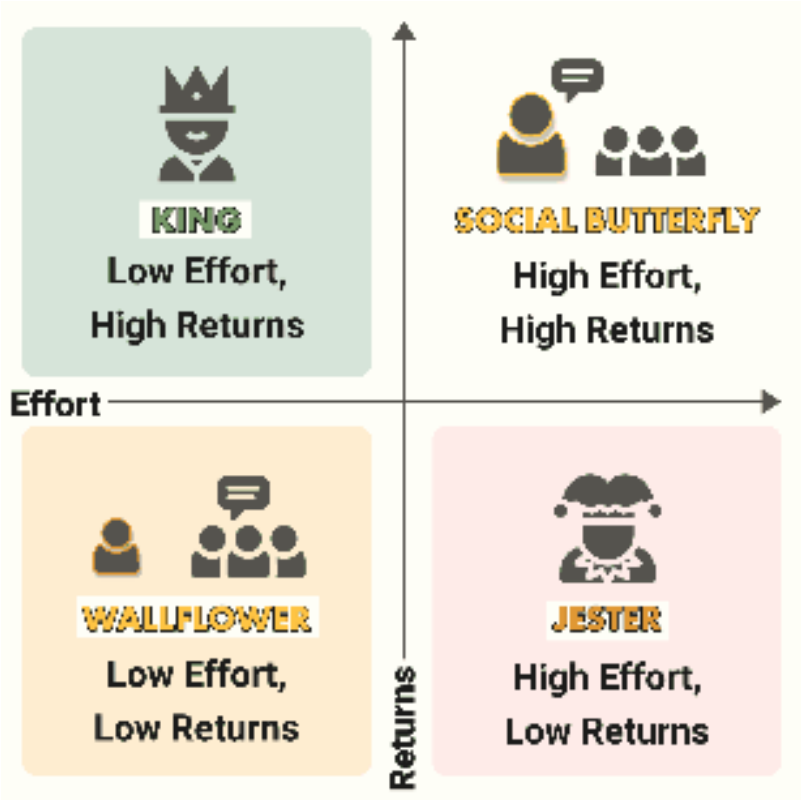
- **How to maintain power while performing other people's tasks**

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

More in PU ⍰.

4. Minimize Visible Effort

Remember the social ROI matrix:



⚖ Less effort for more reward = more power

Ie., it's more dominant to:

- **Invest less** than others in the interaction/relationship
- **Speak less** while getting the same attention/buy-in/execution
- **Move less** while others come to you

4.2. Let Others Come to You

General principle:

⚖ **Lower-value seeks higher-value**

> **Hillary**: (bolts off stage like a schoolkid)
> **Trump**: (remains grounded and lets everyone else come to him)

⬆♟ **Trump looks the "presidential part"**
Hillary's actions raise doubts about her ability to protect voters' interests.

⚠ **Careful with high-energy attention-seeking**
⍰ Get attention without looking like you chase it or crave it.

⍰ 4.3. Use Pauses to Exert Social Pressure

General principle:

⚖ **Confident men handle silence and tension better than less confident men.**

⍰ Example:

> **Him**: (Intense) What do you love about it

> **Her**: (Gets tense. Pours her heart into her reply)

⬆ ♟ THIS is effective "vulnerability"
After he's shown power, *then* vulnerability makes him "positively safe". See 'how to do vulnerability right'.

4.4. Use Nonverbals

Negative nonverbals are especially dominant.
Disapproval for example sub-communicates failure to meet your standards.

▯ Video examples

▯▯Watch out. Facial expressions can be passive-aggressive instead of dominant.
Power University explains when to use and when not.

5. Low Emotional Investment Signaling™

Investment Signaling™ refers to strategically controlling how much time, energy, or resources you use in interactions. High-investment signaling can display financial abundance and increase 'social credits', but *emotional* investment signals eagerness and frame yourself as lower value, whereas **low-investment signaling conveys independence and higher value**.

Principle:

⚖ The less invested party signals high self-sufficiency and value, while the more invested party chases and sub-communicates lower-value

Longer texts, over-texting, or initiating more often as in the previous examples all signal higher investment.

▯ Example:

> **Her**: (emotionally highly invested)
> **Him**: (emotionally uninvested, leaves)

⬆ Many of the most attractive cinematic figures of power masculinity displayed lower emotional investment.

6. Touch Others (When Appropriate)

Principle:

⚖ **The higher the power, the more the freedom to touch and move closer**

Welcomed touching is high power but win-win.
Unwelcomed touching and 'invasion of space' are domineering power moves.

As *The APA Handbook of Nonverbal Behavior* states, 'more dominant men touch others more, and will invade personal space more, than less dominant men' (Knapp & Hall, 2010).

⚠ **In doubt, avoid touching**
Touching and personal distances are contextual. Since it's not strictly necessary for status or respect and it's easy to overdo it, avoid it if in doubt.

6.2. Touch With "Affectionate Dominance"

These can be "motherly touches":

- Patting
- Cheek pinching
- Face touching (Brando in *The Godfather*)
- Temple kissing (Trump on Macron)

▯ Example:

Tony Robbins: (laughs, kisses his temple) I love you son of a bitch (pats Gary on the belly)

♟ **Gary does OK ignoring, but touching back would have been better**
Gary doesn't let that sidetrack him ▯▯.
Better yet: 1. Touch Robbins back saying "*Thanks*" but without looking at him; 2. 'Say "*but seriously though*" to demand Robbins pay attention; 3. Move on

6.2.3. "Fix" Their Looks or Personal Items ▯▯

Since this is something couples mostly do, it's a power move from anyone else.

- Preening
- Fixing shirt collar
- Adjusting tie
- Removing lint
- …

Power players use fixing as an excuse for a power move.
▯ Example: Trump with Macron.

▯▯ Even when value-adding, encroaching personal space is still a power move.

▯ **PRO Tip: Power-protect before helping**
Ie.:
1. Do it privately rather than publicly
2. Ask "*May I*"
3. Justify your move, e.g.: "*Bro, there is a lint, lemme remove it*"

▯ 6.3. Defend Against Inappropriate Touching

For example:

- **Touching personal stuff without asking**
  - ⍰ Touch them back to even the scores. If they take *from* you, resist it

- **Taking some of your food**
  - ⍰ Say '*Ask for it bro (I'd say yes, but ask)*'. Or highlight it with humor if they're higher status '*Yeah keep up the dominance displays*'

Some domineering men may try to intimidate you via third parties:

- **Bullying someone else**, including "jokingly"
- **Raging** in your presence, kicking a chair
  - ⍰ Mobster in Carlito's Way slaps a chair

⍰ Never be intimidated
Display that you're unaffected by opening a new topic or talking to someone else. If you can, make light of it. For example, 'chill bro' or one-up with a joke such as 'that chair took some mean beating'.

A good self-defense example is in Power University.

⍰ 6.4. Lead Affectionate Displays With Friends

Confidence and dominance are NOT synonymous with pushing others down.

Instead, we highly recommend using your dominance to lift others up, and develop good win-win relationships.

Be the first to initiate friendship gestures with your friends for the best of both worlds:

> **Leader**: (opens up his arms for a hug)

🡅 ♟ Great mix of power and warmth
⍰⍰♂ I also often initiate a hug with my friends

7. Defer With Power

This is crucial for all beginners:

You can be a subordinate AND still be confident and respect-worthy.

> **Alonzo**: (confidently asks for permission) OK?
> **High-power underling**: (turns towards the decision-maker slowly, quietly, and with purpose) <— Defers with high power composure. EFfective dominance calibrated to the lower status role

⍰⍰♟Notice the slow speed, the silence, the purposefulness.

8. Stand Your Ground

8.2. Stand Your Jokes & Comments

> **Dr. No:** Do you know much about guns, Mr. Bond?
> **Bond**: No (looks away). I know a little about women (looks straight at him, holds the silence)

8.3. Stand Your Physical Ground

Principle:

⚖ **Lower-status men move for higher-status men**

Ie.:

Low Power	High Power
Steps out of the way	Walk straight or take half a step. Expect others to give some space
Moves sideways ⍰	Stays straight
“Slinks in” half-open doors	Open doors fully. Push sliding doors open when in a rush
Crunches over when it drizzles	Walks straight (cause you’ll get wet anyway)
Waits on escalators or apologetically squeaks by	Nudges & reminds people of his right of way

⍰ Nudging for your right of way

In Power University Lucio shows how to do it in real life.

Develop Effective Dominance™

> Effective Dominance™ refers to **balanced and calibrated dominance** to achieve the benefits of high dominance, while avoiding commonly associated costs such as loss of prestige, antagonizing high-value people, or social exclusion

Dominance follows the law of optimum balance and calibration: it’s great when calibrated, and when within an ‘optimum continuum’ that depends on context and goals.
When dominance is too low, you move into ‘too nice guy’ territory. And when it’s too much and uncalibrated, you become aggressive, overbearing, and obnoxious, creating issues both interpersonally and in social

hierarchies—people dislike you, isolate you, or actively confront you.

Effective Dominance looks at dominance amorally, and refers *only to optimal behavior to achieve goals. That may,* unfortunately, include coercion or bullying tactics, at times.
For that reason, we usually prefer an *Honorable* Dominance™, which adds an ethical layer of preferring win-win, uplifting, and avoiding bullying others, even when doing so could benefit you.

Learn more:

- Dominant expressions (what you must do more)
- Submissive body language (what you must get rid of)
- Submissive expressions (what you must avoid saying)
- Alpha male body language for poses and movements

While this article showed you to be dominant, **Power University shows you to become *effectively* dominant** through a structured system and practical exercises—so you get the benefits without the costs:

⍰ This is a Power University preview. Alumni go to the curriculum for the full system + exercises⍰

Dominant Conversations: 10 Ways to Speak With Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Want to dominate a conversation and **speak with confidence?** Anyone can learn to speak with dominance and confidence—without becoming a jerk.

At The Power Moves, the #1 resource on social power dynamics, we've helped thousands of men become more confident and positively dominant.

This article shows you 10 communication strategies to dominate conversations with assertiveness and poise—without ever becoming a jerk.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. Lead The Conversation
  - 1.2. Control The Tempo
  - 1.3. Control Emotions
  - 1.4. Control The Tone
- 2. Enforce Boundaries
  - 2.2. Defend Your Right of Speech
  - 2.3. Defend Against Power Moves
- 3. Pursue Your Conversational Goals
  - 3.2. Confirm Common Understanding
  - 3.3. Ask Questions, Expect (& Demand) A Reply
  - 3.4. Push Through to Make Your Point
- 4. Teach
  - 4.2. Give Feedback
  - 4.3. Judge
  - 4.4. Correct And Contradict Them (when appropriate!)
- 5. Control The Frame
  - 5.2. Answer From Your Frame
  - 5.3. Summarize & Close
- 6. Dominate Removing Words
  - 6.2. Use Pregnant Pauses
  - 6.3. Wield Pressure With Silences
- 7. Be 'Positively Aggressive' (when needed)
  - 7.2. Speak Over Others
  - 7.3. Cut People Off
  - 7.4. Criticize & Attack
  - 7.5. Push Others On The Defensive
- 8. Display Rationality & Logic
- 9. Speak With Charismatic Conviction
- Bonus: Use Dominant Expressions
  - Use Loaded Keywords

- Learn More

1. Lead The Conversation

Powerful men dominate conversations by controlling the:

- **Tempo** (rate of speech and topic duration)
- **Tone** (happy, sad, serious, etc.)
- **Scope / Topic**
- **Frame**
- **Contributions** (who speaks)

⍰⍰ To lead with warmth get to know people:

- **Ask questions**
  - Genuine questions to get to know people, combining power and warmth
  - Probing questions when something feels off (e.g.: *'Why would you do that'*)

1.2. Control The Tempo

Expressions for dominating conversations include:

- *Go ahead*
- *Get to the point*
  - *Let's focus* <— more power-protecting
- *Slow down*

1.3. Control Emotions

General principles:

High Power	Low Power
Set the emotional tone	Adapts
Tasl & results first	Relationship & feelings first
Anger can happen	Never show anger
Emotionally stable	Mood swings
Can-do, “there is always a way”	Can’t do

⍰⍰ Group conversations can differ.
Strategically men won’t chase attention like jesters.

1.4. Control The Tone

Great example of attractive conversational dominance with a woman:

> **Her**: My spies told me you were quite a regular at Studio 54 <— Hypes it up
>
> **Him**: ⍰ <— ‘Whatever’ attitude, displays superiority
>
> **Her**: That must have been an amazing time
>
> **Him**: ⍰
>
> **Her**: Why don’t you tell me about that
>
> **Him**: I rarely think about the past. What I care about is what can happen today. Tonight. What may happen tomorrow. <— Sets his frame with intellectual dominance
> Yes? <— “Feeds the yes” to end with an agreement and rebuild post-victory goodwill ⍰⍰
>
> **Her**: Yes <— Accepts his worldview and power

🡅♟ Go for mature intellectual dominance as an older man
The man who’s been there, done that, centered and unflappable. He does not change state for her: *she* adapts to him.

For powerful conversations with girl, see:

- How to lead in dating
- How to be positively dominant and confident in dating

2. Enforce Boundaries

Powerful conversation is dynamic and dyadic.

Meaning, it isn’t just how *you* speak, it’s also how you react to *others.*

Dominant speakers may try to cut you off, undermine you, or disempower you.
You can’t let that happen:

2.2. Defend Your Right of Speech

Raise your hand with a serious expression to reinforce your words

2.3. Defend Against Power Moves

Ben knows how to handle his Charisma on Command cofounder:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Ben**: (talks)
>
> **Charlie**: (laughing) But can't answer every single question <—- Derisive, disempowering
>
> **Ben**: Nono <—- Blocks, defends his frame and speaking time
> But I'm just thinking, I'm just thinking <—- Insists and talks over until he "gains the floor"
> (…) <—- Explains why his original observation is valid

⬆️ ♟I prefer a lower intensity approach, but it's solid ⍰⍰

3. Pursue Your Conversational Goals

Dominant men get things done.
If they have an objective, they pursue it.

3.2. Confirm Common Understanding

Ensure that teammates or subordinates understand:

- ⍰ "*Did you get it?*"
- ⍰ "*Is it clear?*"
- ⍰ "*… OK, if not clear please ask*"

The most dominant form tells them to repeat.

3.3. Ask Questions, Expect (& Demand) A Reply

The *Routledge Handbook of Communication Skills* reports that asking questions is dominant.

However, you lose power if you ask and others don't reply.

And while low-power men accept brush-offs or non-replies, higher-power men insist to get what they want.
It becomes a mini power showdown.

⍰ Example:

> **Her**: Well, thanks, I got one now <— Vague
>
> **Him**: You went out this morning and bought a gun?
>
> **Her**: Well, let's say I got one, OK? <— Brush-off
>
> **Him**: (ignores the brush-off) Somebody loaned it to you? <— Asks again as if it were the most normal thing in the world.
>
> **Her**: (replies) <— Still vague, but he got more info. And displayed power

♟ If you need to know, ask again
If he accepted her brush-off -say, laughing-, he'd lose power and respect (and attraction).

3.4. Push Through to Make Your Point

Principle:

⚖ Dominant men plow through interruptions while others get sidetracked

This is especially true for important matters and public speakers.
You're higher power than the crowd. But if they sidetrack you, you plunge at their level.

> **Theresa**: I've listened very carefully to…
>
> **Crowd**: (laughs) <—- Disempowering
>
> **Theresa**: (repeats louder, more dominant) <— ⍰⍰ I mean business and have no time for games

🡅♟ Repeat without the most damning part
Theresa smartly skipped "*I've listened very carefully*", the most contentious part.

4. Teach

Principle:

⚖**High-status men teach, low-status men learn**

And we respect teachers far more than learners.

Also see:

- Dominant teacher frames

> Why Teachers Disempower You (Teacher-Pupil Frames)

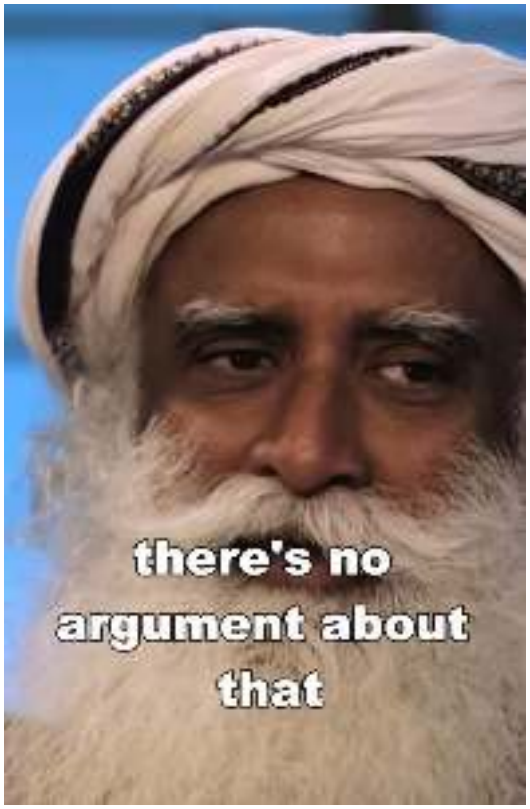
However:

⁉️♂ **Don't push lectures, make others *want* to learn**
Lecturers are annoying and needy. Make others *seek* your expertise. Use achievements or *sub*-communicate expertise.

4.2. Give Feedback

Feedback sub-communicates high-status and high expertise.

⁉ Especially dominant is to correct others' mistakes:



> **Host**: (explains his mission)
>
> **Sadhguru**: (corrects the supposed mistake) <— Power move ⁉️
>
> **Host**: (nods and looks in reverence) <— Too 'nice', relinquishes all intellectual authority

⬆ Dominant, but also too disempowering towards the host

⍰ Video

4.3. Judge

- **Give compliments** when appropriate
  - *"Good job"* <— ⍰⍰ I assess your work / you work for me
  - *"You're a good guy"* <— ⍰⍰ I judge your personality
  - *"He's a nice guy"* <— ⍰⍰ More dominant and dismissive if the recipient is present
    Trump does it often.

- **Criticize when appropriate**

At a higher level, powerful men judge people in general:

⚖ **High-power men set the frame of good/bad, and judge others accordingly**

See more in:

- Judge power dynamics

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Emotional Control

4.4. Correct And Contradict Them (when appropriate!)

Correcting and contradicting are obvious power moves to display conversational dominance.

⍰ Example:

> **De Niro**: Let me ask you a question Greg (…) Can you really trust another human being?
>
> **Greg**: Sure, I think so
>
> **De Niro**: No, the answer is you cannot <— Contradicts him and imposes his frame, no f*cks given

♟ **Don't overuse this.**
It breaks rapport, and hwen misplaces it signals lack of calibration.
Negotiating and redirecting are superior for influencing and persuading.

5. Control The Frame

Dominant men control the conversational frame.

At the most foundational level, they set the frame of what's right, fair, and "normal".

5.2. Answer From Your Frame

Mindset:

⍰ My answer is in my total control

"Yes" and "no" answers follow other people's lead.

To dominate the conversation start a new sentence from scratch:

> **Her**: Madrid first. Have you ever been there?
> **Him**: I've heard they don't eat dinner until midnight <—- Implies "no"

⬆♟ High power and 'cool'
"No" would disempower him. And would end the conversation.
Instead, he answers while maintaining power and keeping the conversation going. Plus, he sounds cool.

⍰ Video here.

Even higher power:

> **Cruise**: I'm sorry, first wave to the beach you mean the front?
> **General**: France! Satellite shows (…) <—- Implies "yes"

♟ Be more dominant with subordinates
⬆ "Yes" sub-communicates it's a legitimate question, inviting discussions.
Instead, he *implies* the "yes" with his explanation, and plows on. And with the louder dominant voice, he sub-communicates it's *not* a discussion.

5.3. Summarize & Close

Summarizes the conversation shapes the meaning.

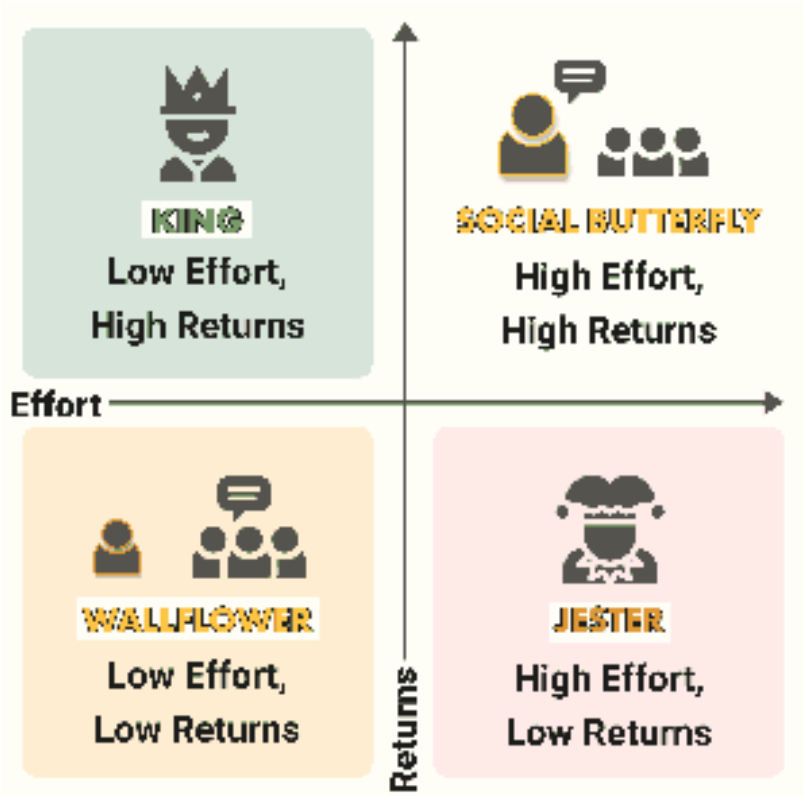
Or, at least, you get a power boost with the last word.

⍰ Trump does it with Schumer and Pelosi:

> **Trump**: I will do XYZ, thank you (ends the discussion)

6. Dominate *Removing* Words

Remember the social power matrix:



Higher status men invest less by using fewer words (exceptions apply)

So communicate more non-verbally.
Bonus points, research also shows that higher expressiveness is more attractive (examples in PU).

6.2. Use Pregnant Pauses

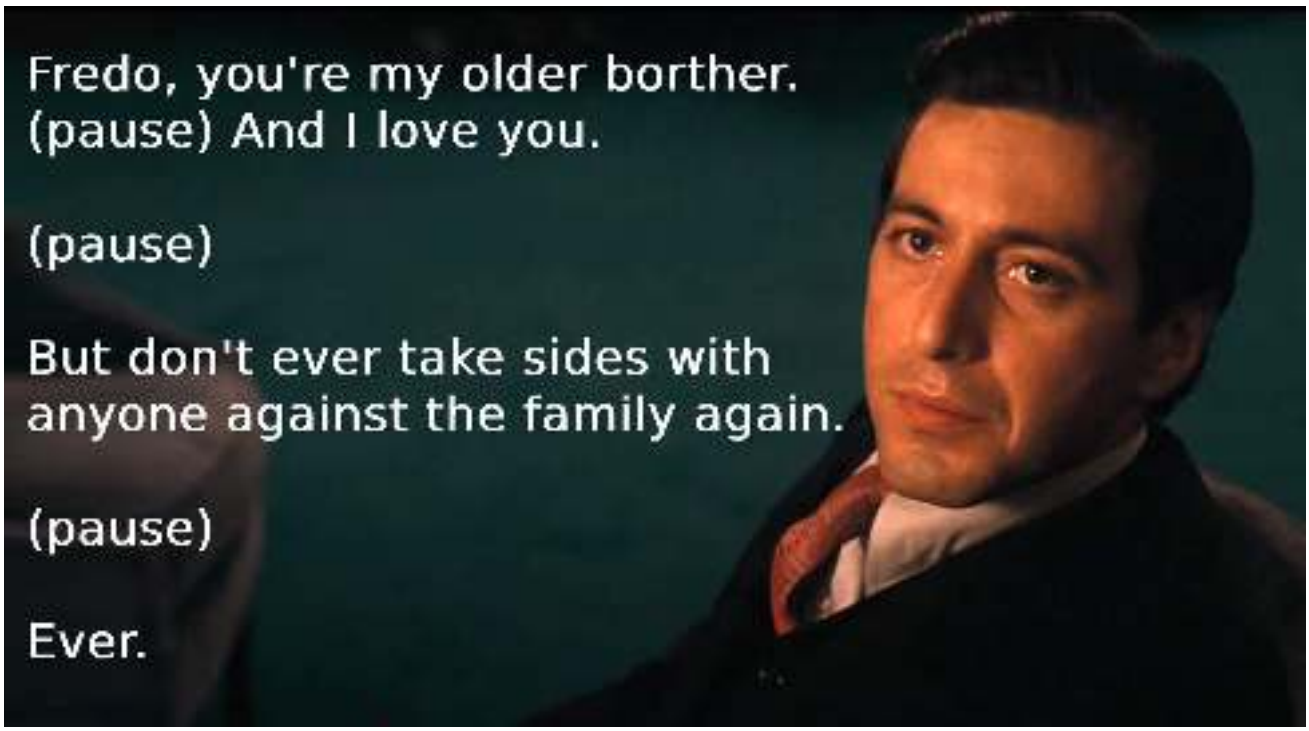
Principle:

⚖ **Confident men hold the pauses, anxious men rush to fill them**

Good tips for when you have power:

- Sit with the silence (without rushing to fill it)
- Speak slow (⏸ "What I say matters")
- Use pregnant pauses for effect
- Wait 2 seconds before replying

⏸ The most famous cinematic example of "pregnant pauses":



> **Godfather**: Fredo, you're my older brother, and I love you <— Notice the collaborative frames
> (pregnant pause)
> But don't ever take sides against the family again.
> (pregnant pause)
> Ever.

6.3. Wield Pressure With Silences

> **Di Caprio**: (straight to business)
>
> **Banker**: Excusez-moi Jordan, Swiss custom requires 10 minutes of chit-chat before business can be discussed <— Seeks to set the rules. And frames Di Caprio as a brute "in the wrong"
>
> **Di Caprio**: … (stares at him)
>
> (Power showdown) <— Who conforms to whom determines who's in charge
>
> **Banker**: Yeah… Of course, let's get down to it. What would you like to know <— Conforms to Di Caprio, who's now the "de fact" highest status man

Social pressure creates fear or at least discomfort in the submissive party.
⍰ Example:

> **De Niro**: (direct, dominant questions with little warmth)
> **Stiller**: (nervous and over-reactive)

🡅♟ Stiller makes a joke to relieve pressure. But instead of accepting it -a friendly move- De Niro piles more pressure, culminating with the "but you didn't pick it" power move.

If Stiller wanted to defend, he could have said:

> **De Niro**: They say geniuses pick green…. But you didn't pick it
> **Stiller**: Who says it <— Question his authority

Then, he could have taken the judge role with "*Hmm, I'm not convinced. Anyway…* ".

⍰ 7. Be 'Positively Aggressive' (when needed)

Aggression is the darker side of dominance.

We don't recommend it as your standard approach.
It makes enemies, destroys social capital, and research also found that aggressive language is less persuasive.

BUT… There is a place and time for almost anything, and it can be useful for self-defense.

So, it's good to know when and how to be aggressive.

⍰ 7.2. Speak Over Others

Dominant and aggressive individuals trample your right to speech if you let them.

If you saw Trump's debates, it's shocking how many times he interrupted, spoke over, and robbed opponents of their right to speak.
And whenever others fought him, he won almost all the times.

⍰ Example:

> **Bush**: (speaks)
>
> **Trump**: (sticking his hand out as if to say "hold on") Excuse me Jeff, Jeff. I was…
>
> **Bush**: (tries to speak over Trump)
>
> **Trump**: EXCUSE ME! One second
>
> **Bush**: (lacking power and conviction) No..
>
> **Trump**: More energy tonight, I like that. Look… (keeps talking)
>
> **Bush**: I was asked the question (pointing towards the interviewer, hoping they'll intervene to save him)
>
> **Trump**: It was my obligation (finishes to make his point)

♟Jeb Bush too submissive and passive to be a leader
Jeb Bush was unprepared to deal with Trump at his level of dominance, aggression, and Machiavellianism.
He even smiles at Trump, who caps it all off telling Bush "Go ahead". And Bush starts speaking on cue like a puppet on a string.

⍰ 7.3. Cut People Off

Domineering men cut others off.

If others accept it, they confirm their lower status.

⍰ Example:

> **Sergeant**: Elias is a troublemaker… (gets interrupted, and turns to Barns)
> **Barns**: (louder, without looking at the sergeant) Elias is a water walker…

⬆ Barns hollows the sergeant's authority.

⍰ 7.4. Criticize & Attack

Criticism mixes aggression with judge powers.

⍰ Example:

> **Trump**: What a stupid question. What a stupid question that is (walks away shaking his head)

⍰⍰♟Dominant, but poor leadership
Trump made the mistake of telling her "I watch you a lot", subcommunicating what she says matters to him (narcissism plays a role there). We enocurage men to be high-quality, honorable leaders here.

Video here.

7.5. Push Others On The Defensive

The dynamics of attack and defense are a critical dimension of frame control.

The attacker controls the frame and dominates, while the defender reacts.

⍰ Example:

> **Defender**: And that's where the confusion is coming from
> **Aggressor**: There is no confusion

> **Defender**: (smiles nervously, keeps apologizing)

⬆ The defender isn't really sorry. He apologizes because he is out-dominated.

We see here once again that "dominant" is not always "good". The interviewer crucifies a guy without giving him any chance to speak (⍰ see full analysis here).

8. Display Rationality & Logic

Rationality and logic are associated with agency and masculinity, and also signal high value as cues of high IQ.

For example:

> *If we do X, we likely get Y—a logical outcome, as seen in…*

9. Speak With Charismatic Conviction

The pinnacle -or nadir- of dominant speaking are dictators, populists, and cult leaders.

⍰ Benito Mussolini:

> **Mussolini**: (confident, optimistic, pompous, loud, R-syllables mimic roaring, pregnant pauses) <— A public speaking genius

Mussolini says "(we declared war) to give a long period of peace and justice".
It's illogical, but it's persuasive to reframe aggression as 'just' and 'for the greater good' ⍰.

It won't convince empowered men, but works with disempowered followers.
They bask in the strongman's power and the (supposed) "group glory".

⍰⍰ Mussolini and many dictators mix a poetic use of language similar to Peterson, Jay Shetty, and Russell Brand.
BUT add dominance and power.

Also see:

- **Empowered individualism**: the ultimate guide for personal power

Bonus: Use Dominant Expressions

- (Yo) ***listen*** (to me)
- ***Wrong!***
- ***And you think there is nothing wrong with that?*** <— Judge power move
- ***No, answer my question***
- ***Sorry, I don't wanna hear about it right now***
- ***Tell me something more interesting***
- ***Shut up! / Silence! / Quiet!***

Use Loaded Keywords

The *Routledge Handbook on Persuasion* lists these 'power words':

God Terms	Devil Terms	Charismatic Terms
Fact	Communist	Freedom
Progress	Nazi	Democracy
Performance	Fascist	
Critical thinking	Deadbeat dad	
Empowerment	Terrorist	
Prosperity	Hate crime	

Learn More

- Confident social behavior
- Low-confidence social behavior
- Unconfident conversation signals you must avoid

⍰ This is a preview from Power University. Alumni go to the curriculum for the advanced version + exercises !

30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics (2015) covers the manipulation tactics that sociopaths, psychopaths, and male abusers use to control women in intimate relationships.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Who Are The Manipulators
  - The Signs You're Being Manipulated
  - Manipulation Tactics
  - Beware of Emotional Highs and Lows
- Also Read
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- Be aware of abnormally quick escalation of intimacy
- A loving relationship doesn't hurt you
- If you feel worse off and your self-esteem is disappearing, seek support

Notes

Adelyn Birch begins with an important distinction: "normal" manipulation VS pathological manipulation.

We all play the game of trying to influence each other, but there is a significant difference between pathological manipulators. **Pathological manipulators have no other way to relate to others and they cannot have a healthy and loving relationship**.

Also read:

- **Persuasion VS manipulation**

> Persuasion vs. Manipulation: Understanding the Fine Line

Who Are The Manipulators

The author says that the most skilled and dangerous manipulators are part of the dark triad, such as psychopaths, narcissists, and Machiavellian personalities.

They have no empathy and manipulate others for their own personal gain without a single care for the consequences

The Signs You're Being Manipulated

The author lists a few key signs to look for to understand whether or not you are being manipulated.

I interpret them and combine a few here:

- The joy of love has transformed into a fear of loss
- Your happiness is entirely dependent on your relationship
- You go from extreme highs to extreme lows
- You are unhappy more often than not but still fear losing the relationship
- Your relationship feels very complex and hard to explain
- You feel like you are responsible for ruining the best thing that happened to you -you're just not sure how-
- The relationship becomes an obsession, you over-analyze it
- You never know where you stand with your partner, making you anxious
- You often ask your partner if something is wrong
- You are often on the defensive, explaining yourself
- You developed issues with trust, jealousy, and insecurity
- You feel like you can't make your partner happy anymore
- You feel barred from expressing negative thoughts and emotions
- Overall, you feel less confident, secure, and intelligent… You've gotten worse
- You feel like falling short of your partner's expectations
- At times you can lash out with anger
- You bend over backward to make your partner happy

The caveat is if all your relationships have had a similar pattern, in which case you might want to look at yourself first.

Manipulation Tactics

Here is a shortened list of the manipulation tactics:

- **Intermittent Reinforcement**

Positive reinforcements, attention, and rewards on an intermittent basis.
This is the same dynamic that makes people addicted to gambling.

- **Negative Reinforcement**

Punishment or withdrawal when you do something the manipulator doesn't like.

- **Intentionally Cause a Meltdown**

The manipulator will back you into an emotional corner, cause you to melt down, and then accuse you of being crazy.

- **Shifting Focus**

When you bring up an issue the manipulator will try to turn the tables on you. For example, asking how you can be so mistrusting, or how you dared to go through his personal information.

The focus will often shift to your negative traits, and the manipulator will make it clear how unattractive he finds them.

- **Premature Disclosures**

Faking vulnerability by revealing personal information about themselves creates a false sense of intimacy.

- **Triangulation**

Placing -or making up- a third person between you and them to make you jealous.
The author also quotes Robert Greene's The Art of Seduction here.

- **Playing Victim**

Skilled manipulators blame the victim and/or pretend they are the victims.

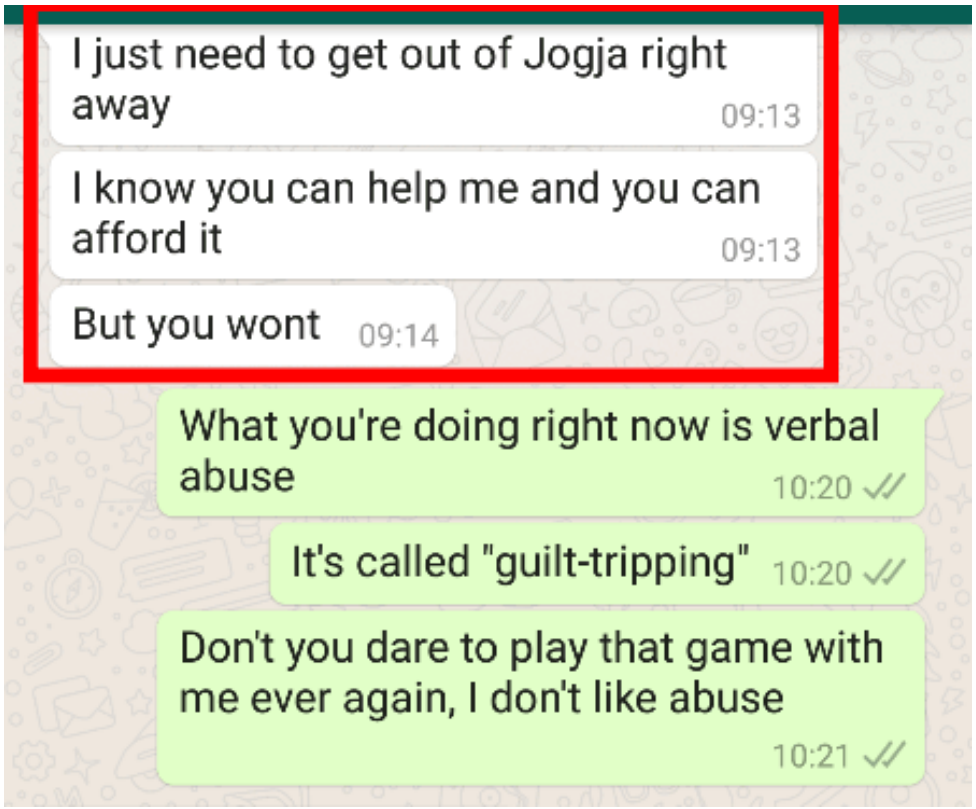
- **Indirect Insults & Abuse**

They undermine your confidence with advice, suggestion, or camouflaged offenses.
If you address it or take offense, the manipulator will deny any wrongdoing and possibly blame you for always twisting things.
Also read: how to stop people from undermining you.

- **Guilt Tripping**

Making you feel guilty for not wanting to do something *they* want you to do.

You can see a real-life example of "guilt-tripping" that a woman used with me in this text:



And it *was* working.
I was feeling guilty, and also angry at the same time for the manipulation. People who are not aware of the game will only feel bad, without knowing why. And they might either comply or allow their whole day to be ruined because of the manipulation.

- **Shame**

Manipulators express disgust or make unfavorable comparisons to make you feel ashamed of yourself.

- **Lies**

Manipulators lie and pretend to have feelings they don't really have.
They tell you exactly what you want to hear and they make promises they don't intend to keep.

- **Crazymaking / Gaslighting**

Deny ever having said or done something they obviously said or did.
If you feel like you need to record your conversations, chances are that you are a victim of crazymaking.

A highly recommended focus article on gaslighting and covert manipulation:

> What Is Gaslighting? 17 Signs (& Solutions)

- **Minimizing**

They pretend that something they did was inconsequential. And you can rest assured they will do the same action again in the future.

- **Withdrawal as Punishment**

They withdraw emotionally as a form of punishment, also called silent treatment and stonewalling (my note: albeit stonewalling is not really the same).

- **Invalidation of Feelings**

Invalidation consists of rejecting, minimizing, ignoring, or even criticizing and making fun of someone's feelings.

- **Superficial Charm**

Manipulators have a superficial charm and charisma that hooks people in. But it's a superficial layer hiding an empty shell.

- **Intentional Forgetting**

Pretending to forget something important or something you cared about.

- **Traumatic One-Trial Learning**

They establish dominance with an act of intense anger or aggression. The idea is to train you to avoid confrontation or touching certain topics the manipulator does not want to address.

- **Belittling**

Belittle the victim's opinions, actions, or achievements with sarcasm, criticism, or jokes.

- **Put You on The Defensive**

The manipulator will oftentimes seek to create social dynamics where you are defending or explaining yourself.

- **Fear**

The manipulator instills fear in you, with the biggest fear of being the state or unstated threat of ending the relationship.
The author says that since the person who creates fear is also the only one who can relieve it, we end up giving all the power away.

- **Pity Play**

Manipulators take advantage of the fact that people with a conscience don't want to see others suffer.
The pity play comes in handy when they have been caught red-handed, and for example, they will tell you their wife is destroying them and they can't believe they're not able to love again with you.

- **Justification & Rationalization**

The manipulator makes up rational-sounding excuses for their bad behavior.
When you love and trust someone, the tendency is to try to understand them and explain their behavior away.
Manipulators use rationalization to help you do that.

- **Flattery**

Flattery is not always obvious and can be hidden and disguised.
For example, they can ask your opinion, or disagree at first and then come around, or compliment you to a third party knowing it will get back to you.
It's especially powerful when they flatter a quality you care about which is seldom noticed or appreciated: then you feel understood.

- **Love Bombing**

Rapid pace of intimate escalation, lots of texts, calls, gifts, and endless attention.
⁉️♂️ **Lucio's note**: There is no evidence for narcissists using love bombing (Campbell, 2020) and, as far as I'm aware, neither for other dak triads. Logically speaking, it's also not a technique high-value men would use. I remain unconvinced.
See here:

- **Trance & Hypnosis**

Trance is highly pleasing and can be induced with music, candle-lights, dance, massage, or slow sex.
Psychopaths, with their intense focus and stare, can help induce a trance.
Also, read:

- Music for trance and romance
- **Seductive environment for trance**

Also see:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Beware of Emotional Highs and Lows

Adelyn Birch says that emotional highs and lows are addictive because the highs are fueled by dopamine, which induces euphoria.

During the lows, it's not like we want to detach ourselves, but instead, we crave going back to the high.
And that keeps us hooked.

The author says that learning theorists found out that intermittent reinforcement of rewards alternated with punishment develops the strongest emotional bond.

Says Adelyn Birch:

> Relationships based on intensity are actually the same as an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Interaction with your partner fosters a specific pattern of compulsive behavior and is not really an intimate relationship at all: It's an

> addiction, in the true sense of the word.

Since most manipulative relationships have more lows than highs and since the manipulative person is overall harmful, this is a trauma bond.

Watch out, because some of the most amoral and high-functioning psychopaths will use this purposefully to control you.
Please read this article on psychopaths' strategies:

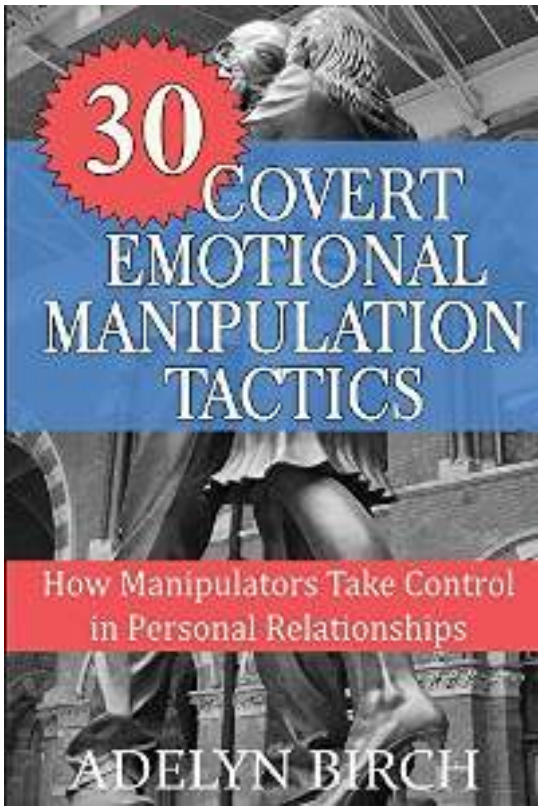
> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Also Read

- Signs you are dating a sociopath
- Signs of abusive relationships
- 7 types of abusive men
- Anxious-Avoidant attachment
- Is it time to break up?

Real-Life Applications

Watch Out for Power Imbalances
The author cites Dutton and Painter's paper to make the point that powerful emotional attachment develops when there are intermittent good-bad behavior and a power imbalance.



CONS

I loved "*30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics*", and my cons are few and limited:

Some Overlap
Some of these 30 Covert Manipulation Tactics overlap and could have been combined.

I Wasn't Sure About Some Statements
Sometimes I wasn't totally convinced about what the authors claimed. For example, she says that in intermittent reinforcement the more infrequently love is offered, the more addictive it becomes. I'm not sure based on what she says that's a very generic statement that says little and doesn't hold true.

Dangerous Personalities?
I was very surprised the author recommends Joe Navarro's "*Dangerous Personalities*" since I found that book to be low-level pop psychology and I actually recommend you skip it (on the other hand, I loved Joe Navarro's *What Every BODY Is Saying*).

PROS

- **Brief and To The Point**

Some reviewers complained the book is a bit too short. I could not disagree more.
This is the book that people in an emotionally abusive relationship can pick and get their answers from in a matter of a couple of days.

- **Deep Wisdom**

Even for a guy who has been studying and reading psychology for quite a while, I still learned something new here. And I love that.

Review

I really liked "*30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics*" and I learned a lot reading it.

Specifically, it helped me to deepen my understanding of emotional abuse and the dynamics of power in relationships.

I also loved Birch's presentation of invalidation as an emotionally harmful behavior and her analysis of bonding through intensity and intermittent reinforcement.

In short:
highly recommended.
Both to those who fear being in an abusive relationship and to those who *want to better understand psychology* and relationships.

Check the:

> 7 Types of Abusive Men: a Psychological Analysis

or get the book on Amazon

Brandwashed: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Brandwashed* (2011) brand consultant Martin Lindstrom talks about the games and techniques that corporations and marketing departments use to persuade -or manipulate– consumers to buy their products.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Brandwashed Summary
  - Fear & Guilt
  - Fake Freshness
  - Does Sex Sell?
  - The Axe's Sex Perfume
  - The Brand Wave
  - Celebrities' Pixie Dust
  - Asian Countries Are More Brandwashed
  - The Most Powerful Persuader: Other People
  - More Brandwashing Manipulation
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Brandwashed Review

Bullet Summary

- Brands are everywhere and you cannot escape them
- Brands and marketing influence you in ways you are not even realizing. Pay attention and inform yourself.
- Ultimately the biggest influence is other people (who in turn are influenced by marketing though)

Brandwashed Summary

Martin Lindstrom uses lots of examples, anecdotal evidence, and plenty of humor. I will skip most of them in this summary.

Fear & Guilt

The author says that fear and guilt are the marketer's 1-2 punch.

And the easiest target for fear and guilt are mothers. Particularly new mothers.
For new mothers the world has become a new giant trap and, the author says, "you have never seen germophobia until you have seen a new mother".

Marketers exploit it by pitching sanitizers, humidifiers, car seats, bigger cars, digital monitors, and many more. Some of these products do little, and an excessive war on germs is possibly counterproductive by lowering the babies' immune systems.

But if mothers don't buy the latest technology, they feel guilty.

Finish Touch Food Ruse

Food producers exploit women's guilt with "finish touch food".

These are ingredients that are similar -or the same- as frozen or prepackaged meals, but by simply combining them themselves, she feels like she is being a better mother (for example: separate dough, mozzarella & tomato sauce to give the appearance of a home-prepared pizza).

Germophobia

Hotels put a thin sheet of paper on top of glasses and toilets to give the impression they have been sanitized and cleaned or, even better, that they have never been used before.

The author mentions a hotel worker saying that glasses are barely rinsed instead.

Fake Freshness

Martin Lindstrom says that many seals on the packaging are useless and only serve to give the consumer the (fake) feeling of freshness.

Heinz, producer of ketchup, leads people to believe that the ketchup bottle should be refrigerated after opening. That serves to give the idea that ketchup is prepared from fresh tomatoes, but it's not -and it doesn't have to be refrigerated-.

Restaurants, including sometimes some McDonald's franchises, use green leaves and fresh tomatoes and vegetables behind glass displays.
Smoothies stalls show fresh fruits even though they might not use fruits at all, and fruit juice packages place perfectly photoshopped fruit images on their carton -albeit they're more water and sugar-.

Shampoos and cleaning products also use fruit aromas, albeit they don't clean any better and don't even use fruits at all.

Placing frozen fish on ice cubes also increases sales, albeit the ice cubes do exactly nothing to increase the freshness and quality of the frozen fish.
In some countries, people actually believe that frozen food is fresher thanks to clever marketing pitching freezing as the best way to "freeze the freshness in time".

Does Sex Sell?

Lindstrom says that sex sells also within the same gender.

You can use appealing males to sell to men who want to be more like them -and, also, partially out of homo-erotic feelings says the author-.

He then analyzes the phenomenon of boy bands and says that they are all similar and also appeal to older women. The appeal for older women is not just sexual, but it's part sexual and part reminiscing of their teenage years.

My Note:
My previous knowledge clashes with what the author says.

What I had previously read was that women get subconsciously lubricated when they see any sex scene, from heterosexual to gay to even animal sex.
This was not the case for men.
But heterosexual men who presented the strongest disgust for gay male sex were often also the ones that got horny about it. A relatively well-known phenomenon in psychology is called "reaction formation".

The Axe's Sex Perfume

The story of the Axe sex perfume was one of the most captivating for me.

The marketing team of Axe started by finding out that the biggest male sexual fantasy is being in a hot tub surrounded by 3 or 4 naked women.

Then went out with different to study the different approaches they had when meeting members of the opposite sex.

Through a process of segmentation, they clustered men into six different psychological profiles:

1. **The Predator** (hides his insecurity with an air of bravado, uses high fashion brands, and is constantly on the prowl targeting lone women, hopefully, drunk women to whom he can lie)
2. **Natural Talent** (athletic, intelligent, cool. People like him, and women find him attractive. He is not deceptive)
3. **Marriage Material** (gentle, respectful, and self-confident, the kind of guy you want to bring home to meet the parents. Albeit women complain, there are many marriage material men)
4. **Always Good Friend** (closed gays and gays turned out in this category and many heterosexual guys who like women but whom women only want as friends)
5. **Insecure Novice** (clueless, they resemble the predator in that they make some women uncomfortable but they are more pure and less deceptive)
6. **Enthusiastic Novice** (clueless but come across as eager rather than creepy. They keep going as they try their best)

Axe targeted his product in the following order: 1. insecure novices; 2. enthusiastic novices; 3. natural talents

Here is an example of an Axe commercial:

And this is family guy spoofing the Axe commercial
In the end, the commercial worked too well and was bought too often and too much by novices that it came to be linked to losers and nerds.

The Brand Wave

When a brand becomes too popular, it can backfire as we saw in the Axe example.

When a brand becomes too widely adopted, it becomes in danger of falling into the "generational lap".
Such as, the new generation seeks to disconnect itself from the previous generation, and refuses to buy the same brands that their parents buy.

Celebrities' Pixie Dust

The author talks about the sometimes difficult dichotomy that celebrities need to walk. If they seem too poshy, people will dislike them. If they seem too "normal" and they spend too much time with their fans, they seem too normal and their magic will disappear.

Asian Countries Are More Brandwashed

Martin Lindstrom says that Asian countries are more Brandwashed than Western ones.

I agree with him.
He says it's because the culture, being more collectivist, places a higher emphasis on fitting and being part of the group.

Society and our friends play an even bigger role in inducing conformity and in shaping individuals' choices.

The author calls it "herd mentality", and while I loved his honesty, I think that cost him in terms of reviews and

ratings.

Russian-Chinese Insecurity & Brand Consumption

He says that brands are also stronger where money is “new”.

Those places, like Russia and China, are more insecure and they need brands and expensive brands to make up for their past.

The Most Powerful Persuader: Other People

Martin Lindstrom ends the chapter with what he says is the biggest persuader of them all: people.

We are social animals, and we look at what others buy and we listen to what others say.
Mostly, we tend to look up to people we admire and who have a strong reputation within our network.

More Brandwashing Manipulation

There are a few more marketing tricks and manipulations companies deploy, including:

- **Leveraging smell**

Malls and shops produce and release smells strategic to compel shoppers to buy.

- **Priming Children**

The author says that the younger we are when we start using a product, the more likely we are to keep using it for years to come.
Cookie Dough gives out freebies to pregnant mothers in the Philippines to prime children with the smell and taste of their products. Selling to children

- **Selling to children**

Young boys want to be superheroes and young girls want to be princesses. There you have Batman, Spiderman, and Barbies.

- **Leverage panic** (or stoke it) to sell “solutions” to the problems

One example is hand sanitizers placing their products as pre-emptive against an epidemic.

- **Sounds**

Some sounds evoke cravings, urges, and positive sensations. The sound of a baby crying, and a fizzling stake, are all positive associations that make us act.
The sound of a soda opening and being poured into a glass of ice cubes also provides strong positive associations. The author helped a brand of soda engineer the sound of opening their can which they later used in all commercials. When that sound is played at sporting events, the brand sees an uptick in sales, and people aren’t even aware why they bought the soda.

- **Addictive food**

The author talks about how food companies purposefully engineer their food to taste better and become more addictive.
The content of this section resembled *Fast Food Nation* and *Salt Sugar Fat.* And if you don’t know what I’m talking about, you definitely want to look into it.

- **Time**

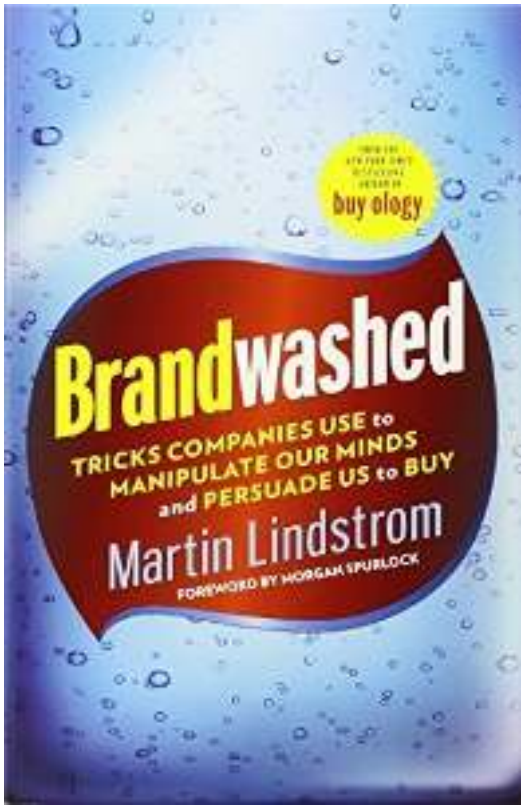
Mentioning time in the sales copy helps sell better because we are reminded of our mortality and that we should better enjoy life while we're here.

- **Nostalgia marketing**

Nostalgia marketing is especially potent during uncertain times. Coupled with our tendencies of remembering our past as better and rosier than it actually was, we long to go back to a time of safety and security.
Companies are playing to the phantasy that the past was safer, more natural, and more secure.

- **Celebrities / Authorities**

When we perceive an authority giving advice the area of our brain responsible for the decision-making process shuts down.
Celebrities can help blur that line between expertise and authority and when they represent a product, we tend to believe them simply because they are successful using the product -or so they say-.



Real-Life Applications

Wearing Fake Brands Can Undermine Your Sense of Authenticity
In an experiment, women who were given fake goods cheated more than women who were given original goods. Wearing fakes can adversely impact the way we look at ourselves.

CONS

- Not Very Scientific

The author talks about focus groups "confirming his theories". Not only that's not a very scientific approach to finding out the truth, but focus groups can hardly "confirm" any theory.

PROS

- Eye Opening

Brandwashed contains some eye-opening content on the reality of marketing and decision-making.

- Great Psychology

Albeit it's not super scientific, I learned quite a few new things when it comes to people and psychology.
The analysis of the royal family was spot on. They need to walk a tight line of not appearing like common people while also not appearing to over-spend contributors' taxes.

Brandwashed Review

I felt some of the claims were unfounded, unsubstantiated, unscientific, or exaggerated.

However, there is also a huge amount of terrific, eye-opening information here.
Indeed I was very surprised that

Indeed, I was surprised that the overall rating of Brandwashed wasn't higher.
I think it's an underrated text and I recommend it to all marketers, smart shoppers, and to anyone interested in *people and psychology*.

Check the **best books on manipulation** or get the book on Amazon

Dark Psychology 101: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Dark Psychology is an overview of the dark psychology of manipulation and brainwashing.
It reviews some key fields of study of "dark psychology" and offers a few points on how to use dark psychology for personal gains.

TPM verdict overview: slop content useless for smart, high-value men
Most 'Dark Psychology' books on the market are thin and unscientific. Many are written by anonymous pen names with no verifiable credentials. We audited several, including *Dark Psychology 101* and its sequel see if they hold up to real-world scrutiny. They are mostly slop marketed to beginners.
Beginners who want power and influence: **focus first on becoming a high-value man**.

Contents

- Dark Psychology Summary
  - Get to Know Your 'Dark Side'
  - Six Steps to Change Thought
- FAQs
- Scientific Dark Psychology Resources
- Review

Dark Psychology Summary

About the Author:
Michael Pace, a pen name, is the author of several books on "dark psychology" and manipulation. He also wrote "*Dark Psychology 202*", which is the advanced and expanded module of the "Dark Psychology" mini-series.

Get to Know Your 'Dark Side'

The author lists a few benefits of getting to know your dark side, including:

1. Become aware of how criticism of others is often a defense mechanism. Sometimes we accuse others of our own flaws.
2. Understand how your words sometimes hide fear and anxiety, jealousy and envy
   See: low power communication
3. Accept yourself fully
4. Freeing of guilt

When you become more self-aware, you learn the motivations behind your actions, you can better change and improve yourself, and you can better influence others.

Robert Greene, author of *The 48 Laws of Power* says the same, and we agree. Basically, **this is about self-awareness**, a genuinely useful concept.

Six Steps to Change Thought

The author says there are six main steps in changing people's thoughts that cult leaders use:

1. Ensuring that a person is not aware that anything suspicious is happening.
2. Creating a physical and social setting that is isolated <— **TPM Note:** A common manipulation tactic

3. Making the target feel powerless <— **TPM Note:** this only works if you have absolute control over the environment. Otherwise, it's more likely to backfire
4. Using punishment and reward to disassociate the individual from former behavior and lifestyle
5. Using reward and punishment for making the group and its ideals seem highly appealing
6. Exerting absolute authority over the targets <— **TPM Note:** absolute control obviously 'works' and doesn't require 'dark psychology', but it's unrealistic for most people

TPM Tactical Note: Low-practicality theory. High value, status, and power are the foundations
These 6 steps are standard in cult literature, but impractical for 99% of contexts. High-level influencers focus instead on soft power and frame control, making others believe the new idea is either great, or theirs.
'Dark psychology leadership' in daily interactions is less cult-like 'absolute authority' and more as being a charismatic, attractive, high-status man exerting emotional leverage from a judge authority frame.

FAQs

Should I read Dark Psychology books?

Not really. Most "Dark Psychology" books, including *Dark Psychology 101*, are thin, unscientific, and full of generic advice. Many of their 'techniques' are too obvious, frame you as a 'taker', and are especially likely to backfire with high-value men and women.
Ambitious men are better off focusing on becoming high-value, learning power dynamics, and studying evidence-based influence. Check the **Best manipulation books** and TPM's Dark Psychology Hub instead.

What are the 4 types of Dark Psychology?

There are no four types of dark psychology, and people often confuse it with 'dark tetrad' (DT), composed of **Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Sadism**. Machiavellianism is strategic manipulation for personal gain; Narcissism is seeking admiration and exploiting others; psychopathy is bold, remorseless and often predatory; Sadism is deriving satisfaction from others' discomfort.
Understanding these types helps you recognize and defend against 'takers' who make you worse off.

What is the dark theory of psychology?

There's no single formal "dark theory." Most books use the term loosely to describe the study of manipulation, persuasion, and coercion. TPM's approach emphasizes **scientific and practical understanding** — spotting manipulative behavior, protecting your influence, and using psychological insights for high-value action, rather than following unproven gimmicks.

Scientific Dark Psychology Resources

Dark psychology is simply the use of psychological principles for more manipulative and predatory ends.
For deeper insights into dark psychology, see:

- **Dark Psychology hub:** a primer on dark psychology
- **Manipulation hub**: a primer on manipulation
- **Gaslighting**: a primer on the pattern of behaviors that manipulators use to confuse victims and maintain power and control (and see gaslighting examples)
- **Dark triad psychology**: three traits often associated with psychological manipulation. See:
  - Psychopathy

- Narcissism
- Machiavellianism, potentially the closest to 'dark psychology' of the three

And finally, there is this website's flagship course "**Power University**", which is an overview of power dynamics and persuasion (including dark psychology).

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

Review

Dark Psychology 101 is a very short text of below-average quality, lacking in theoretical depth and largely devoid of any practical takeaway.

The author builds up suspense, saying "how great this or that technique works", but then offers bland and generic advice completely devoid of evidence or examples. Lots of driveling, and a little information.
Potentially a 'dark psychology technique' to pitch his other books, but more likely to just undermine the author's credibility.

The smart and ambitious men who constitute our readership are better off looking somewhere else.

Check the:

- **Foundations of self-development** <— Beginners start here
- **Power intelligence**, and why it matters
- **Naive self-help**, so you avoid falling for hype over results

And if you really want to stick to dark psychology, then go with a more effective and scientific foundation:

- **What really is dark psychology**

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

9 Low Status & Submissive Behavior To Avoid

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Your **body language** and subtle **submissive behaviors** often speak louder than any words, silently killing your **status** and **power**. If you're wondering **how to fix submissive behavior** and stop being ignored, you've come to the right place.

As the leading resource on social dynamics, we've helped thousands of good men eliminate the **signs of submission** that undermine their value.

This guide breaks down the **9 low-status behaviors to avoid**—from over-deferring to a leader to **submissive body language signs**—and shows you exactly how to **assert power** and gain the **respect** you deserve.

Contents

- 1. Over-Deferring To The Leader
  - 1.2. Sucking Up to The Leader
  - 1.3. Monitoring the Leader
  - 1.4. Turning Toward the Leader
- 2. Deferring to The Group
  - ⍰ Leader Seeks Group Support to Isolate Enemy
  - 2.3. Adapting to Others' Mood
- 3. Defensiveness
  - 3.2. Sideways Body
- 4. Excessive Movement
  - 4.2. Excessive Nodding
- 5. Signs of Low Confidence
  - 5.2. Over-Compensating

- 6. Lower Value Sub-Communication
  - 6.2. Too Nice In Dating
  - 6.3. Chasing
- 7. Lower Status Sub-Communication
  - 7.2. Averting gaze
  - 7.3. Begging nonverbals
- 8. Excessive Social Fear
  - 8.2. Rushing Away
  - 8.3. Backing Down A Social Challenge (Looking Down)
- 9. Too Nice & People Pleasing
- Don't Forget… Signs of Low Self-Esteem
- Learn more

1. Over-Deferring To The Leader

Principle:

⚖ **High-power men act, submissive men *re*-act**

Deferring is expected, normal, and often *smart*.
But *over*-doing it is disempowering (and dishonorable), especially with average leaders.

Principle:

⚖ **Your leader sets your upper bound. The more you defer to poor leaders, the more you disempower yourself**

1.2. Sucking Up to The Leader

For example:

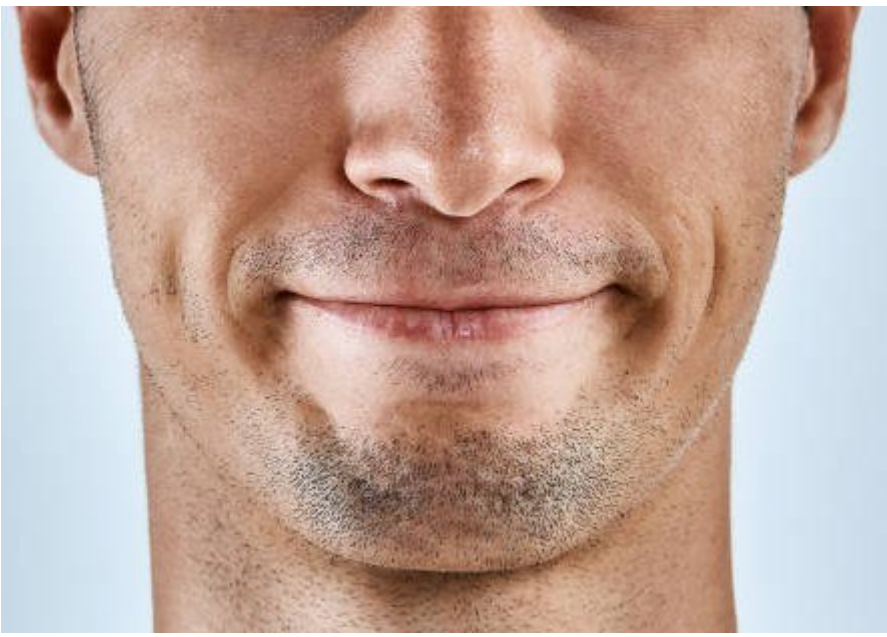
- Supporting him no matter what
- Excusing poor behavior
- Excessive laughter

Video here

Here's a better approach instead:

⍰ ⍰ Use the tight-lipped smile for non-funny jokes

Maintains rapport, and it's high power:



⍰⍰ "Wasn't funny, but I'm showing a smile for support"

1.3. Monitoring the Leader

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Behavior* confirms that low-status men look more at leaders.
And they avert eye contact when looked at by high-status men (Ellsworth, Carlsmith, & Henson, 1972).

Let's revisit the previous example from "The Wolf of Wall Street".
Notice the pattern of eye contact and gaze.

> **Underling 1**: (stares at the banker)
>
> **Underling 2**: (looks at boss and banker)
>
> (…)
>
> **Low-status**: (…) that kind, that kind of stuff.. (looks at the leader, nervous smile, nod) <— ⍰⍰ "I'm done, you high-status guys can take over

⍰ ⍰⍰ Learn and align, and there's no need for monitoring
Understand your boss: what he expects and likes, and reduce monitoring because you won't need to.

1.4. Turning Toward the Leader

Try to spot who and why displays submissive body language:

> **White lady**: (turns towards the men, and "his" man) <— ⍰ ⍰ "I'm just supporting cast"
> **Blue lady**: (engages her, without turning towards the men) <— ⍰ ⍰ "I don't depend on him"

⍰♟ Stand beside your boss for political gains, turn towards the speaker for power
Don't rotate towards your boss. Rotate towards the speaker. It's a better mix of power and political strategy.

Video here.

Also, read:

- Leadership and dating
- How to Become a Leader: step by step

2. Deferring to The Group

Classical Asch experiments tell us that many people conform to the majority even when they disagree.

However, not everyone conforms, though.
Social Psychologist Aronson explains that high self-esteem and high-status men are more likely to resist.

Meaning, low-status and submissive men are most likely to conform.

Principle:

⚖ **Empowered men lead, while submissive men follow the majority**

For example:

- **Over-seeking social support** for trivial matters
  ⍰ Example he looks around looking for social support. Better than fearful, but avoid it anyway
- **Withholding opinions** before others speak
- **Fearful scanning** after a joke or comment
  ⍰ Look at others *expecting* good reactions instead

⍰ Leader Seeks Group Support to Isolate Enemy

> **Leader**: (disempowering joke) What's it with you man
>
> **Red-head**: What
>
> **Leader**: How much did you pay for this brown rock <— Wants to ridicule him
>
> **Red-head**: What difference does it make <— Sees the trap ⍰⍰
>
> **Leader**: (looks away incredulous) <— ⍰⍰ "You're so dumb"
> What difference does it make? Diamonds are supposed to be colorless <— Looks around for social support
> (Laughs AT his friend) <— ⍰⍰ "You're so laughable dumb"

🡅♟⍰ Keep it with individuals, never the group
The redhead loses because he attacks the group, instead of Dillon-only.

♟Strong leaders handle it themselves
Using the group depletes social capital, and "siccing" the group for personal beefs is low-quality ⍰

2.3. Adapting to Others' Mood

General principle:

⚖ **Leaders set the mood, followers adapt**
And the faster you adapt, the more power you give away

> **Him**: That guy was like "don't let the door hit you on the vagina" <— His frame : "that's funny"
>
> **Her**: (distant and serious) Yeah I heard him <— Her frame: "it's not funny"

> **Him**: (decreasing laughter) I thought that was hilarious <— He adapts to her

⬆ ♟ **He adapted *slowly*** ⍰⍰
⍰ When you must adapt, adapting slowly is a great technique to maintain power.

⍰ Training Day example of extreme and disempowering adaption
This also comes down to emotional power dynamics, and frame control.

See:

- Frame control techniques
- Frame control basics

3. Defensiveness

In confident body language, we showed that submissive people close their bodies.

The same applies to socialization, including:

> **Her**: (makes herself smaller) I… I have two questions
> **Trump**: No it's OK
> **Her**: (hand on heart, arm over her body and crotch) But you pointed to me

Video here
⍰ Extra analysis on the video

3.2. Sideways Body

Even with the audio on mute, it's easy to spot the behaviors and body language of submissivness:

> **General**: (walks towards him full frontal)
> **Cruise**: (sideways body)

♟⍰⍰ Walk straight on when crossing path
Some men, especially in narrow aisles, angle away when crossing path with other men. Be mindful of it, don't overdo it.

⍰ Forum entry

4. Excessive Movement

The principle is:

⚖ Submissive men move for dominant men
Including movement to physically accommodate higher status men, or out of social anxiety.

> **Him**: (many and excessive head nodding, hand on heart, purpose-less gesticulation, reactive laughter, big "(too) nice guy" smiles)

4.2. Excessive Nodding

Compare:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Brad Pitt**: (nods up, once ⍰)
> **Interviewer**: (nods in bursts, frequently, too quickly, and with his whole body)
>
> The issues:
>
> - Too fast
> - Too often
> - Whole-body rocking (VS head only)

5. Signs of Low Confidence

Any behavior that signals low confidence is associated with submissiveness.
Including:

- Insecurity
- Tentativeness
- Social fear
- …

5.2. Over-Compensating

Overdoing feels suspicious, suggesting underlying insecurities.

Common areas people overdo:

- Masculinity <— Confident men don't overthink their masculinity
- Sexual innuendos <— Men comfortable around -and used to sex don't over-joke about it
- Jokes about (being) "gay" <— Straight men who are comfortable in their hetero sexuality and have no issues with gays don't over-joke about homoeroticism
- 'Flaws'

Principle:

⚖ **Timely and limited remarks about flaws show confidence. Too many signal unresolved issues**

⍰ Example from a dating coach:

Indian Dating Coach Tinder Bio:

> Married to a white girl, with a half-brown baby on the way. Just joking, I'm single. <— His many Indian and 'white guys/women' references reek of inferiority complex. "Married" also signals 'boyfriend type'

6. Lower Value Sub-Communication

Principle:

⚖ **Lower-value men over-invest to bridge the value gap**

⚠ **Don't over-invest ⍰⍰♂**
It signals lower personal value!

Ie.:

- **Over-give** give too much or without a reason
- **Over-compliment** without getting equal compliments back
- **Chase**, showing more interest than they show in you

6.2. *Too* Nice In Dating

There is a difference between nice, which is good, and servile, which is unattractive.

This is servile:

> **Her**: (drops glasses)
> **Viktor**: please, please, please please (cleans them against his shirt) <— Acts as her humblest servant
> (Follows her) <— Chasing

⍰ Only in a Hollywood movie an attractive woman would ask him out

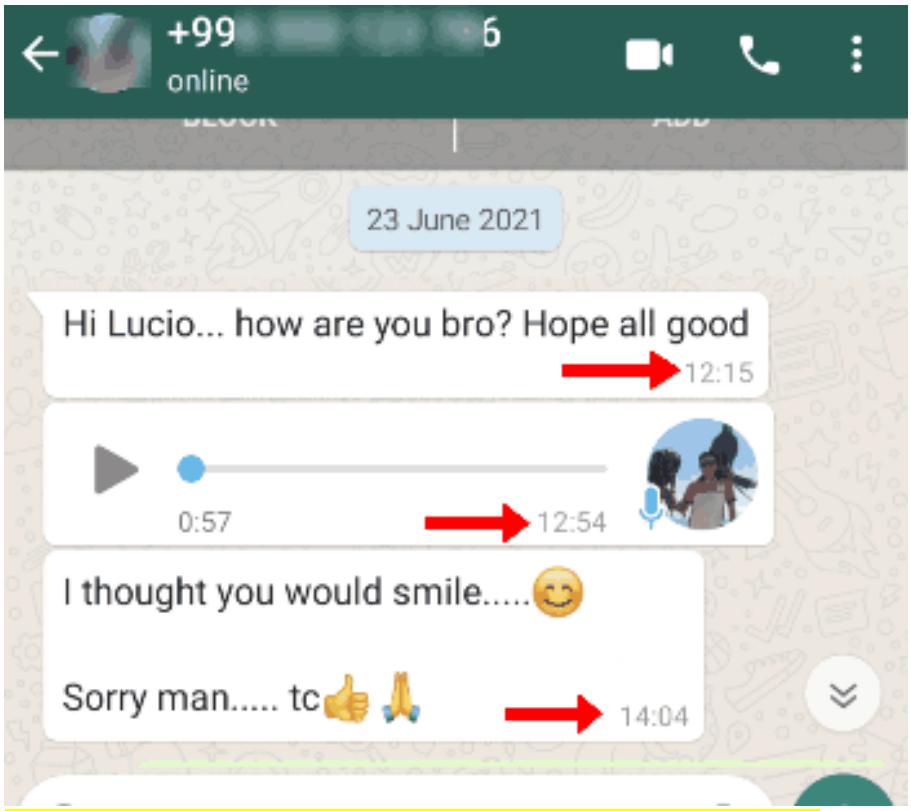
Also see:

- Positive masculinity in dating

6.3. Chasing

There are a million ways to chase, and they also apply to making and keeping friends.

An obvious and common form of chasing is to send too many texts:



⍰⍰♂ I thought he was a baby who'd sulk the whole day without my reply

7. Lower Status Sub-Communication

While being lower status in some contexts is perfectly fine, you may still want to avoid over-signaling it.

7.2. Averting gaze

Especially during tense exchanges:

> **Schumer**: Yeah, lemme say something Mr. President (looks ahead and low, not at Trump) <— Trump stares heads on (predator). Schumer attacks verbally, but looks away.

♟ ⬆ Schumer did OK, looked at Trump a few times ⍰⍰
Turning for eye-to-eye convo would be uncomfortable and high investment, but a few glances displayed confidence.

Video here

7.3. Begging nonverbals

Video example and picture:

8. Excessive Social Fear

8.2. Rushing Away

> **Godfather**: Thank you so much, can I offer you something
> **Roberto**: (rushes towards the door, anxiousness escalates into a panic and struggles to open it)

⬆ ⁉ **Apologize and make up for mistakes without over-submissiveness.**
If you cross the wrong person be kinder the next time, bring a gift, and let your behavior be the apology. Alternatively, straight talk: *"I'm sorry* (hands up palms outward), *I made a mistake the last time. I respect respect-worthy men like you, and I didn't know who you were*".

⁉ **Move faster when needed, but with purpose**
It's good to be mindful of other people's time. Rather than rushing, think 'effective & purposeful'.

8.3. Backing Down A Social Challenge (Looking Down)

> **Man 1**: It's a free country (starts stare contest)
> **Man 2**: (holds for a while, then lowers his gaze to sip, and angles his face away)

Video here

⁉ Strike a good balance of speed and purpose
It's good to be mindful and respectful of other people's time. But you can move faster and purposefully, without rushing.

9. *Too* Nice & People Pleasing

'Kindness' from a self-confident man is an attractive trait.
It makes you prestigious.

But a low-confidence, low-status man being too nice signals weakness and social fear.

Too nice	Strategic higher power
Takes flyers because he can't say "no"	Smiles confidently and says 'all good', without taking the flyer
Stands if only one seat is free	Invites older people to sit. If they don't, he sits
Bears others despite wanting to go	Acknowledges, and empathizes, adds something uplifting, and says he must go
Agrees despite he disagrees	Validates, finds bridges, says he sees it differently, and then speaks his mind
Over-apologizes multiple times, overly servile	Apologizes once, looks in the eyes to make his point, and if needed makes it up

Don't Forget... Signs of Low Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is foundational.

It's the internal grounding that allows you to project an honest aura of power and confidence.
And with that inner confidence, you're congruent and remain true to yourself.

We address confidence and self-esteem in **Power University**.

Learn more

The original old video:

- Confident social behavior (do more of this)
- Confident speaking and conversations (say more of this)
- Unconfident conversation (stop saying this)

Our mission is to help good men become high status, confident men

Buyology: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Buyology* brand consultant and author Martin Lindstrom introduces and explains the emerging field of neuromarketing.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Why Coca-Cola Outsells Pepsi
  - Making Product Placement Work
  - Subliminal Advertising Can Work
  - Shocking Anti-Smoking Messages Failure
  - Sexually Suggestive Advertising Bombs
  - Controversy Sells
  - Beauty Sells… Sometimes
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We are largely irrational buyers
- Product placements don't work (unless it's a structural part of the story)
- Sex can help sell.. But can also eclipse and make us forget about the product

Full Summary

Martin Lindstrom begins Buyology by explaining what's one of his main research tool: the fMRI.

In a nutshell, the fMRI measures the amount of oxygenated blood in the brain, giving us a hint over which area of the brain gets activated.

Why Coca-Cola Outsells Pepsi

Martin Lindstrom talks about the famous blind experiment in which Pepsi was rated as tastier than Coke.

Malcolm Gladwell in Blink says it's because Pepsi is only better in smaller quantities.
But that's not the case, Lindstrom says.

The reason why Coca-Cola still outsells Pepsi is that people want to like Coke more.
Lindstrom says that the scans show a "tug of war" between the rational part of the brain who prefers Pepsi and the emotional one who prefers coke.
More often than not, the emotional side of the brain won out.

Making Product Placement Work

To make product placement, the product must make sense within the show's narrative.

If the product is not a perfect fit for the show or the movie, then it might as well be wasted advertising money.

Subliminal Advertising Can Work

Some famous reports that gave vast publicity to subliminal advertising have been fabricated or exaggerated.

You can probably hardly change people's deep-rooted beliefs with subliminal advertising, but it does work in increasing sales for a brand.

Subliminal advertising works indeed, but it depends heavily on our already existing internal associations.
It's indeed possible that a quickly flashing image triggers an identification in our mind before we realize it's happening but only if have already stored information in our brain about that image.

Flashing a smiley face VS a sad one for a split of a second on a video for example increase consumption of alcohol.

Letting Guard's Down on Subliminal Messages

Subliminal messages are particularly powerful because they reach us with our guard low.

When we see a log or when it's obvious to us we are watching an advertisement, the logical part of our brain is engaged and we put our mental barriers up.

For example, red Ferrari, Nascar cars and cowboy images all can easily remind people of smoking even without any logo on them because of the already existing association we have between them and the cigarette brands that latched onto them.

The interesting thing in these cases is that the messages went down unfiltered into people's brains.
Since they weren't rationally aware of the advertising, their "defenses" against advertisement and cigarettes weren't activated at all.

Shocking Anti-Smoking Messages Failure

The author discusses an antismoking message of people smoking and coughing blotches of fat on the table.

But the ad failed because people ignored the coughing and seeing other smoking lit up in their brain the areas that induce cravings -in this case, craving for smoking-.

Sexually Suggestive Advertising Bombs

Sexually suggestive advertising can be ineffective by "blinding" people to the logo.
This is an effect called "vampire effect".

Controversy Sells

The author makes the point instead that controversy sells.

Sometimes controversy and sell together sex sell, but Lindstrom says that evidence point to controversy being the most powerful contribution.

He also mentions American Apparel's success with the media, and you can read from their marketing director Ryan Holiday in "Trust Me, I'm Lying – Confessions of a Media Manipulator".

Beauty Sells... Sometimes

The author says that women can be turned off by extremely attractive models on advertising as they cannot relate to them.

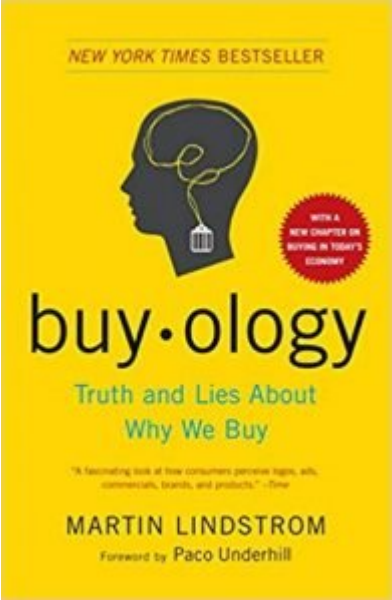
A study showed that more natural and more relatable models in advertisement were more effective in brand association and recall.

However, sometimes beauty can help sell thanks to mirror neurons. The author uses the example of male models for male underwear.
Mirror neurons make us feel like the attractive people in the advertising.

My Note: Mirror neurons are controversial
Mirror neurons are an elusive and overblown pop-psychology myth.

Lindstrom says we are witnessing a convergence between perfect, natural, and relatable.

My Note:
Personally, I didn't find the author very conclusive here.



Real Life Applications

Don't Fall For Brand-Religion
Some brands managed to develop rituals and a cult-following which resembles in all aspects a religion.
Don't be duped into that.

CONS

Generalization
Sometimes I felt like the author generalizes too much.
He takes one single even and generalizes a rule saying "nope, it doesn't work".
But that it didn't work once doesn't mean you can make a rule out of it.

Lots of Threads But Little Conclusions
Buyology presents lots of different threads and ideas, but there is not much overarching structure.
And there are also little conclusions. Overall, it opens lots of topics but it doesn't make a strong point on any.
I can highly recommend The Social Animal for some more evidence-based and conclusion-reaching book on psychology, influencing and advertising.

fMRI Overselling
Lindstrom presents fMRI as the ultimate scientific frontier to dispense truths and he never mentions the limitations. In my opinion, that made him lose credibility for an otherwise good book.

PROS

Lindstrom brings a lot of new and fresh perspectives into the world of marketing and into the world the developing neuro-marketing.

Review

Buyology has very low ratings on Amazon, but I disagree with those ratings.

I found that Buyology contains extremely interesting information and deep reflection.
Not as good as Lindstrom's own sequel "Brandwashed", but good nonetheless.

Overall, it's an important book for anyone working in marketing.

Check the **best books on manipulation** or get the book on Amazon

How to Stop Being Unconfident In Conversations

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Low confidence in conversations is common among what we call here “good men”.

That’s a problem because **when you give too much power away in conversation you lose status, respect, and attraction**.
Others reject your leadership and authority *-even if you’re knowledgeable-*.

Research also indicates that using ‘powerless forms of speech’ can prevent you from being persuasive.

That’s why it’s best to remove all signals of low confidence from your conversations.

Luckily, we know how to do that because we helped thousands of good men do the same.
Let’s start with an overview from research:

Type	Sentence Example
Hesitations = uncertainty	*"Well, I, uh, you know, um, would like to borrow a dollar."*
Hedges qualify the utterance	*"I guess I sort of like you and kind of want to know you."*
Intensifiers fortify the utterance	*"I really believe that and agree with you very much."*
Over-politeness = subordination	*"Excuse me, if you wouldn’t mind too much, I’d love if you could please close the door.*
Tag questions weaken sentences	*"This is fun, don’t you think? Much more fun than yesterday, isn’t it?"*

And now let’s dig deeper with TPM’s wisdom:

Contents

- 1. Nervousness
  - 1.2. Filler Words
  - 1.3. Upward Inflection (Upspeak)
  - 1.4. Trailing Off
- 2. Defensiveness
  - 2.2. Over-Justifying
  - 2.3. Over-Minimizing
  - 2.4. Bowing to Social Pressure
- 3. Running For Cover
  - 3.2. Virtue Signaling Cover
  - 3.3. “I’m Joking” Cover
  - 3.4. “I Obey” & “I’m Not Allowed” Frames
- 4. Indecisiveness
  - 4.2. Beating Around The Bush

- 4.3. Flip-flopping
- 5. Over-conforming
  - 5.2. Confirming What Others Said
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- 7. Fawning
  - 7.2. U-Turning
  - 7.3. Approval-Seeking (Rushing In)
  - 7.4. Parroting The Leader
- 8. Over-reactive & Unmasculine
  - 6.2. Reacting More Than Others
  - 6.3. Losing Your Girl's Respect With Over-reaction
- Learn More

1. Nervousness

General principle:

⚖️ **Confident men are comfortable in social settings, while unconfident ones display signs of social anxiety**

Luckily, it doesn't matter how you feel.
As long as you remove the signs of social anxiety, you'll look confident.
And, little by little, also *grow* confident.

1.2. Filler Words

> **Big boss:** Speak as you might to a young child. It wasn't brain that got me here, I can assure you that
> **Junior**: Well, ehm…

⁉️ Avoid tail filler words
Pay attention to filler words *at the end* of sentences ❓

Careful With Over-Using...

- "I mean": an example here, notice "come on" used defensively
- "You know what I mean"
- "I'm like… "
- "And then I was like… " / "and then he went like…"

1.3. Upward Inflection (Upspeak)

Rising in pitch or volume similar to a question

> **Her**: Annie (upspeak), this is Becca (upspeak) my friend from work (upspeak)

1.4. Trailing Off

To progressively get quieter, without finishing the sentence

> **Low-status guy**: Yeah, yeah, french fries, “pomme frittes” ehehe, and that kind, that kind of stuff.. (trails off and looks at the leader)

♟ **Cut short, without trailing**
People trail off after realizing they spoke too long and/or are going nowhere.
Resist the urge. In the example above: keep the volume up, then add “Anyway, on to you guys (gesture towards the boss)“.

⍰ PUA approach trails off

2. Defensiveness

General principle:

⚖ **Confidence advances, submissiveness backtracks and defends**

In confident conversations, we saw that dominant men lead, ask questions, take the judge role, control the frame, and, potentially, interrupt and attack.

Well, unconfident men do the opposite.
They relinquish any control and justify and defend.

2.2. Over-Justifying

> **Cop**: You know it’s a 50km/h zone don’t you
> **Submissive**: (long face, low gaze)
> **Cop**: Then why did you speed <— Overstepping. He has no right to shame you
> **Submissive**: I didn’t see the sign and I didn’t realize, I thought I was going slower…

⚠ **Submissive *implies* guilt**
Misplaced submissiveness makes you look slimy AND guilty

Other options:

- ⍰ **Don’t self-snitch** and don’t admit
- ⍰ **Own it** Ie.: “I just sped officer”

⍰ ⍰ Remove “Because” To Retain Power

“Because + explanation” feels like you’re justifying to others.

⍰ Example:

> **Asker**: Why would you think that?
> **Low power**: Because… (provides a reason/justification) <—- Expends effort while the asker judges

But:

> **Asker**: Why would you think that?

> **High power**: Why would I NOT think that

2.3. Over-Minimizing

- I **just** meant
- I wanted to add this **little** thing
- I **only** want to clarify that…

Imagine a person speaking like that at a meeting.

Do you think he'd sound confident and authoritative, the type of man to advance at work?

Not really.

2.4. Bowing to Social Pressure

> **Owner**: Free apps!
> **Group**: (glares)
> **Owner**: I got free apps
> **Group**: (glares)
> **Owner**: What? (Opens up his arms) <— ⍰⍰ "What did I do wrong"

⍰⍰♟ **Approach it like *they*'re off**
⍰ = I'm giving you a gift, you have no reason to be a dick
⍰ *"What the hell is wrong with you guys"*

3. Running For Cover

A good use of covers is crucial in life.
However, when they're unneeded or when you overdo it, they reek of weaknesses.

3.2. Virtue Signaling Cover

> **Him**: If he doesn't want the child, he should not be forced to pay. Not that I would ever fight it, but… <— It's weak because it's clear he opposes it (and he'd rather fight it in court)

3.3. "I'm Joking" Cover

> **Him**: (mischevious joke) Nono, I'm joking <— Worst of both worlds. As*hole intent, with too nice guy fear

⍰⍰♂Guy I knew also did this for perfectly acceptable jokes ⍰.

⍰ **Read more here**.

3.4. "I Obey" & "I'm Not Allowed" Frames

- "*they* said I could do it"
- "I was told"
- "*they* allowed me"

They all sub-communicate “powerless flunky”.

⍰ ⍰ Strategic “offloading”
Use higher authorities to deliver negative news without paying the price. ⍰

For more on conversational influence, see the basics of conversational frame control:

> Frame Control Power Dynamics: The Basics

4. Indecisiveness

The *Routledge Handbook on Persuasion* refers to a class of ‘hesitant’ language as ‘powerless language’.

Here they are:

4.2. Beating Around The Bush

General principle:

⚖ Empowered men are direct, disempowered men are indirect

Examples ⍰

4.3. Flip-flopping

> **Waitress**: You all done here sir?
> **Him**: Ahhhh.. (she takes it away) yeah, yeah <— He only decides after the waitress decided for him
> **Her**: Oh, you don’t wanna finish that?
> **Him**: (looks back towards the dish) no, yeah, nonono, I’m fine
> (…)
> **Her**: the establishment owes him a sneaker
> **Him**: (looks at her) right, right. Well, I mean, I guess, you know…

♟⍰ Pause, think, decide
When unsure, keep the status quo (ie.: leave the dish)

Also read:

- How to be confident on dates
- How leadership helps your dating

5. Over-conforming

General principle:

⚖ High-status men shape the world around them, while low-status ones conform

5.2. Confirming What Others Said

> **Leader**: what do you think Tim?
> **Low-status**: I agree with what you guys said <— WHAT, exactly?

⍰ ⍰ High-power option for “nothing to add”

Say:

- *I’m not informed enough to add valuable insight*
- (pause 2 seconds) *I agree with what X said*
- *I don’t have a strong opinion on this*
- *I think it’s too difficult to say. I’d rather pick any option and improve as we go with the market’s feedback*

⍰⍰⍰If it’s teamwork, add that you’re eager to get going with the action.

5.3. Backchanneling Confirmation

- *Aha*
- *Uh-huh*
- *Mm-hmm*
- *Got it*
- *Understood*
- *Right right*

General principle:

⚖ **Moderate backchanneling increases interpersonal bond⍰⍰ but excessive backchanneling disempowers**
Over-doing it sub-communicates “flunky taking in orders”.

⍰⍰⍰ **PRO-Tip:** Switch “aha” for neutral “yeah” and “got it” or a high power “makes sense”

6. Insecurity

6.2. Ask Permission For Your Rights

Imagine a meeting among colleagues:

> **Colleague 1**: (chips in)
> **Colleague 2**: (chips in)
> **Colleague 3**: Yeah, can I share my opinion <— You’re equals, no need to ask

But remember that, as for most low-power expressions, context and situation make all the difference. Politeness as a high-status and credible man can enhance a speaker’s credibility (Bradac and Mulac, 1984).

For more, see:

- Power protection to learn when and how to respect others
- Social calibration, to lean when and how to calibrate

6.3. Over-Discounting

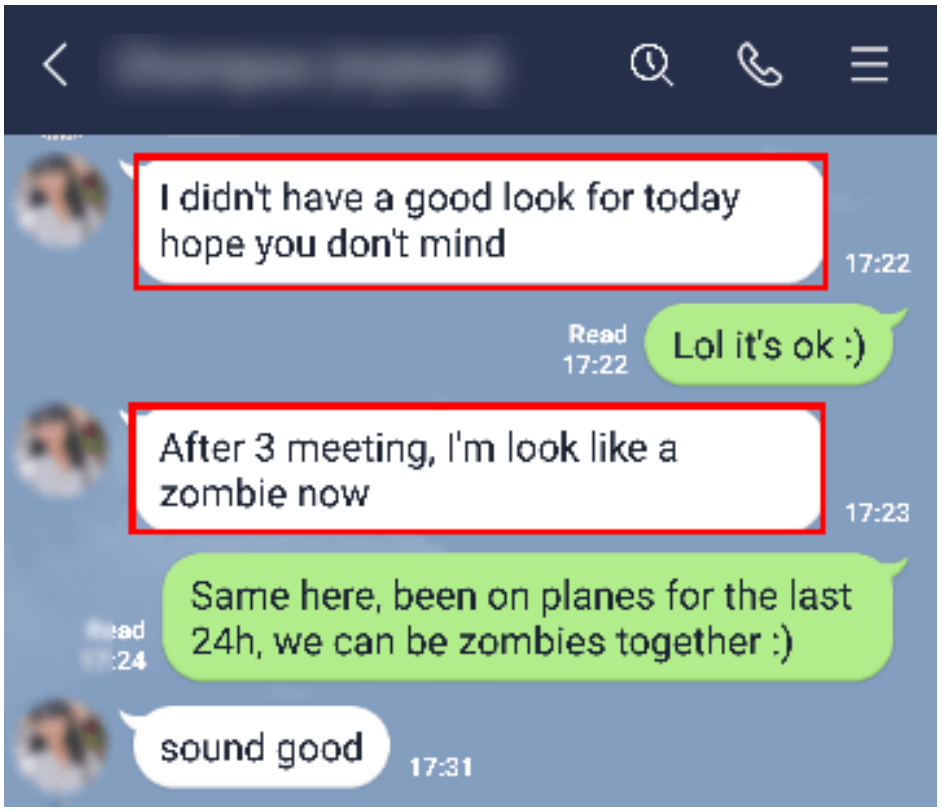
To lower expectations:

- *This may sound silly, but…*
- *(…) Sorry I’m just rambling aloud*
- *I hope this is not completely stupid…*

Lowering expectations is a great strategy *when used appropriately*.
Not when over-used ⍰.

General principle:

⚖ **Fragility is afraid of failing and looking bad, confidence isn't**



> **Her**: I didn't have a good look for today, I hope you don't mind
> **Her**: (…) I'm looking like a zombie

♟⍰⍰ Notice my strategic responses.
But I was also respecting her less and less

— ⍰ Confident men can do this to gain trust and grab attention
As for most things, there are exceptions. A smart use of 'hedges' can enhance persuasiveness (Durik et al., 2008). If you're already a credible speaker, you share openly when it's "just an (uninformed) opinion". And a pre-amble of "just sharing a crazy idea" can be a fantastic attention grabber.

6.4. Weak Attacks

Anger without conviction, intensity, or power is weak:

> **Frank**: What are you talking about now, come on you listen to me ah <—- "Come on" pleads. And "ah" is a reinforcing tail filler words. Both signal weakenss

♟ **If your anger doesn't intimidate, don't get angry.**
⚖ Anger that doesn't affect others disempowers you.

⍰ Example of weak pushback
~~Old example~~ (author's exclusive videos in PU)

⍰♂ “Empty yelling” loses you respect

Lucio: My boss yelled, “Do you think we’re a joke?” after I left before his meeting the day before. I said no, but his weak yelling confirmed *he* was a joke of a leader.

Also read:

- How to stop being passive aggressive
- How to become assertive

7. Fawning

General principle:

⚖ Leaders pursue goals, lower-status men pursue leaders

7.2. U-Turning

Genera principle:

⚖ Empowered men Low-power followers speak based on what the leader says

> **Low-status**: They suck, they’ll never win
> **Leader**: Actually, they bought some strong players, they’re quite good this year
> **Low-status**: Yeah, I didn’t really mean “never”, and…

⍰ PRO-Tip: Contradict them
As both a test and power move. Great for dating

7.3. Approval-Seeking (Rushing In)

Ie.:

> **You**: I thought it was terrible that you…
> **Submissive**: (emotional) Nooo, I didn't mean it that way, what I meant was <—- Rushes to clarify/justify and get in your good graces again

⬆ I had that exchange with an ex.

7.4. Parroting The Leader

> **Leader**: Mark you did great with X, it was…
> **Subordinate**: Mark did fantastic, my favorite was X <— What a concidence, just what the leader highlighted

⍰♂ Fawners Disgust Me

Lucio: Fawining is weak, petty, and fake.
I may use fawners for short-term support, but never rely on them. Turncoating is their MO and will be the next leader's bitches.

More ⍰

8. Over-reactive & Unmasculine

- **Over emotional**
- **Over-expressiveness**
  ⍰ Charlie example of exaggerated facial expressions
- **Over-excited & high-pitched**
  ⍰ F1 commentator sounds effeminate
  ⍰ Shaun share his SWAT experience with too high energy and a victim frame. Franzese shares the same story, calmly and with a cool guy self-frame
- **Mimicking women's voices or behavior**

⍰ Charlie mimics woman's voice

6.2. Reacting More Than Others

> **Guy 1**: Blew a whole fucking platoon to pieces. Bad shit
> **Guy 2**: Yeah, they got two lieutenants and captain
> **Guy 3**: Jesus (looks around) <— ⍰⍰ "I'm the virgin novice"

♟ ⚖ **Always err on the side of under-reaction**

⍰ Video here.

6.3. Losing Your Girl's Respect With Over-reaction

> **Him**: (laughs, "my God" intonation, emotional word salad)
> **She**: (silent and disappointed)

🡅 ♟ **Let her start the "sensitive topic"**
Or rause it strategically so you don't look overly affected.
⍰ Ie.: ask her what she thought about it.

PRO Tip: Focus on present
Avoid past & hypotethicals. Dwelling on what you can't change is lower value. Winners focus on present, future, and action.

⍰ More examples (PU alumni only)

Learn More

- Confident social behavior

- Unconfident social behavior
- Unconfident conversation signals you must avoid

Or see a preview of our flagship course:

The full and more advanced version is available in Power University

The Psychopath Whisperer: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Psychopath Whisperer* (2014), Dr. Kent Kiehl describes in captivating prose his long-time studies and researches on psychopaths, and how he came to the momentous discovery that psychopaths are different because they have a different brain structure.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Profile of Serial Killers
  - Mass Murderers' Profile
  - Psychopaths' Connection With Children
  - Parole Boards Are Ineffective
  - Prisoners' Manipulation
  - Prisoners' Power Moves
  - Psychopath Traits Exist in All Of Us
  - Misuse of The Word "Psychopath"
  - Acquiring Psychopath Personality With Brain Damage
  - Female Psychopaths
  - A Different Way of Reforming Psychopaths
- Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Psychopaths become serial killers when they also present paraphilia
- Don't ever trust a psychopath: they are consummate liars and manipulators
- Psychopaths' brains function differently. Thus, most psychopaths are born psychopaths

Full Summary

About the Author: Kent A. Kiehl is a neuroscientist who dedicated his life to studying psychopathy. He is a professor at the department of psychology, University of New Mexico

The Profile of Serial Killers

Talking about a serial killer he was interviewing, Kent Kiehl reflects that he didn't fit the typical profile of a serial killer.

He says:

> Most serial killers are driven to commit their murders, usually in association with sexual dominance or sadism.

> Serial killers like Ted Bundy would meet criteria for psychopathy and they also have paraphilia, a sexual-based disorder like sadism.
>
> The drive to kill comes from the latter.
> The lack of emotions, empathy and guilt comes from psychopathy.
>
> When you combine psychopathy with paraphilia you get a very dangerous person.
> Fortunately, such people are very rare.

However, psychopaths who don't derive pleasure in killing or hurting others still can end up being serial kills when they get angry very easily and easily resort to violence.

Mass Murderers' Profile

Most mass killing are committed by individuals suffering from *psychosis*, not psychopathy.

Individuals with psychosis have a distorted perception of reality, sometimes hearing, seeing, smelling or believing things that are not real.
Indeed in his book "The Wisdom of Psychopaths" Dutton shares that the psychotic ward in prison tends to be more dangerous than the one housing psychopaths.

The most dangerous types of reality distortions when it comes to psychosis and murder are "auditory commands hallucination."

Not all psychotic patients commit crimes of course, but psychotic symptoms do increase the risk of homicides (44 times more likely than among non-psychotic individuals).

Schizophrenia is one of the main disorders associated with psychosis and albeit people affected with schizophrenia are less than 1% of the overall population, estimates say they commit between 5% and 20% of all homicides.

But if the psychotic patient receives cure, then the risk of homicide drops precipitously.

Psychopaths' Connection With Children

The author talks about psychopaths who didn't remember the names of their children or their date of birth.

He says that a lack of connection with their children is one of the most salient features of the psychopathic condition.

Parole Boards Are Ineffective

Parole boards are not very good at assessing the likelihood of prisoners to re-offend outside of prison.

A study, says the author, shows that psychopaths are actually more likely to convince parole boards to let them out. Which is an issue since psychopaths are more likely to re-offend than non-psychopaths.

Professional judgment from a psychiatrist and psychologist is also unreliable.

Scientists' risk assessment tools do better at predicting risks (some of the variables used are: age, gender of victims, types of prior crimes, age of first criminal behavior etc.).
Kent Kiehl's aim was also to help improve the risk assessment.

Prisoners' Manipulation

During his first stint in prison, the author fell victim of prisoners' manipulation before realizing what was on.

A huge and violent sex offender disliked Kiehl.
And a more friendly but equally aggressive one psychopath defended the author.

Except… It was all a ruse.
Both of them had organized the game to manipulate and eventually get something out of the Kiehl.

Kiehl realized and confronted the friendly psychopath, who eventually admitted the game.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Prisoners' Power Moves

There were some interesting Machiavellian strategies to learn.

The author talks about Richie, an inmate who had recently arrived in prison.

While all other inmates were huddled to watch TV, Richie walked in the room in front of the TV completely naked. He went outside in the rain, then walked back in and went back into this cell.

All other inmates looked incredulous or pretended not to notice, but everyone noticed.

By acting crazy in front of everyone, the new inmate had shocked everyone and grabbed the initiative.

In the subsequent interview with Richie, the author reveals that Richie had done it on purpose. He wanted to make an impression right away and "establish himself".
"Even the big ones get nervous", said Richie, and if you don't establish yourself they think they can test you.

By doing crazy shit that people didn't expect, he would steal the initiative, get people to react and think about him. And by the very nature of his seemingly unstable behavior, people would think twice before crossing him.

Psychopath Traits Exist in All Of Us

Kent Kiehl says that psychopathic traits exist in all of us.

But fortunately, the distribution is skewed, meaning that most people have few of the traits and score low in each one of them.
Some more people score a bit higher and very few people score very high.

Misuse of The Word "Psychopath"

The author talks about how the word "psychopath" is misused often by both people and the media.
Sometimes it's used as a derogatory term, but not from a medical point of view.

Diagnosing A Psychopath

He then goes on to show how a psychiatrist would score a psychopath using Doctor's Hare psychopath scale (read: The Psychopath Test for a critic on the test).

He takes the only two killers of American presidents' history and scores both of them on the checklist.
This was a wonderful exercise both for those who want to become a psychiatrist and for those who just want to understand psychology and psychiatry better.

Don't Rely on DSM

The author says that the sacred book of American psychology, the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder) should only be your starting point.

He says that it's shaped by science, politics and economics. And not necessarily in that order.

It's also helpful to consult previous versions of the DSM to see how the definition has evolved -an why-.

Acquiring Psychopath Personality With Brain Damage

There have been reported incidents of head traumas in which patients with damaged paralimbic system became psychopaths.

Paralympic brain-damaged patients have problems with:

- aggression
- motivation
- empathy
- planning and organizing
- impulsivity
- irresponsibility
- poor insight
- lack of behavior controls
- decision-making skills
- recognizing nuances of voice and facial expressions
- apathy
- promiscuousness
- lack of respect for authority

sometimes:

- grandiosity
- confabulation

All of symptoms we find in psychopaths.

It's not so common to damage our paralimbic system. It can happen to football players who suffer repeated concussions for example.

All this led to one conclusion, later confirmed by brain scans: it's the paralimbic system that is the problem with psychopaths.

Female Psychopaths

There is not nearly as much research on female psychopath.

Part of the reason, is because there are fewer female psychopaths. Research suggest around one female psychopath every ten male psychopaths.

The rate of psychopath in female prisons is around 15% to 20%.

A Different Way of Reforming Psychopaths

The author discusses an important experiment with the most difficult youth psychopath offenders.

To begin with, punishment does not work equally well in deterring people from action. And it does not work well with most psychopaths.

My Note: intelligence may help psychopaths rationally avoid self-defeating behavior while computing the long term consequences. And that does not work with low IQ psychopaths.

The experiment's main idea was to break the cycle of violence that often sets in between psychopaths, guards and "correction" system (in connection to the guards the author also mentions The Lucifer Effect by Zimbardo).

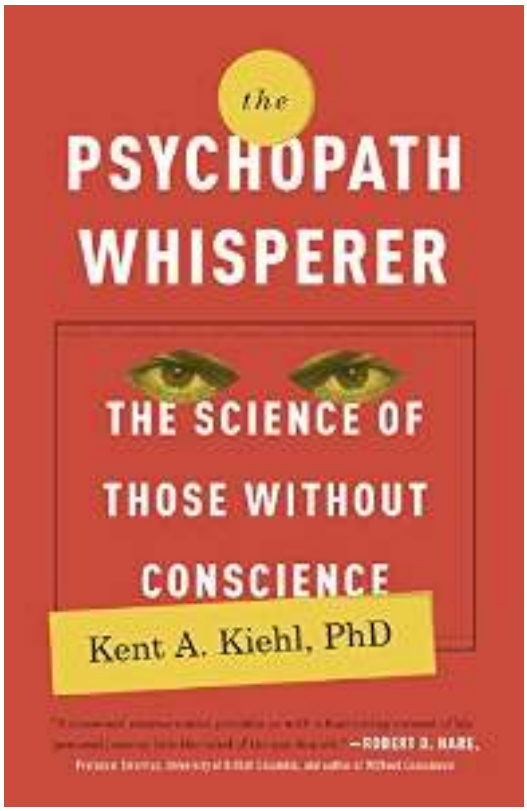
Decompression Model

The correction system, with its escalating use of force and , was exacerbating the problem instead of helping it solve.
Kiehl says that the inmates, victims of the vicious cycle, become "compressed" and the only answer left for them is violence.

There is also a natural tendency for some people to resist control and authority, which contributes to the escalation.

The idea of the experiment was to gradually decompress the youth and help them develop pro-social bonds.

The decompression model was a big success.



Quotes

The Psychopath Whisperer is both informative as it is hilarious and entertaining.

I will list here some of the best and most ironic quotes.

Here talking about his first visit at the high-security prison:

> First steps into this new environment I smiled to myself that my first concern, a cavity search, had not come to pass as I went through security.
>
> I made a mental note to get even with the senior graduate student who had told me that cavity searches of new staff were common in Canadian prisons.

Talking about missing razor blades for shaving.

> “The inmates get razoers?”
> I inquired with a puzzled tone. “Yes”, she said laughing, “and they often disappear. I don’t ask where they go”.
>
> “I realized that doctor Ren was wise in telling me to sit closest to the door during my interviews”.

On psychopath’s characteristical traits and how they handle life in prison:

> Another difference between psychopaths and other inmates is that psychopaths don’t get distressed by being in prison.
> Most inmates get depressed when they get inside, and they find prison to be a stressful experience. A hallmark feature of psychopaths’ disorder is that they don’t get bothered by much of anything. They don’t ruminate and they don’t get depressed.”

On psychopath lying and you calling them out on it:

> Lying is common in psychopaths, so I have to trust my gut feeling and review his file again later.
> Because **you can’t trust a psychopath to be telling the truth**, you have to review all their files to review everyting they say.
> If you catch them to lie, you have to be willing to call them on it and see how they respond.
> Just sit in the chair closest to the exit in case you piss them off.

On a psychopath retelling the story of his homicide:

> Knives were flashed, but they were no match for Grant’s 9mm handgun.
>
> “Bambam, bambam, two down” he said, pointing is index finger and thumb in classic gun pose.
> “One of my better shooting days”.
>
> The words were spoken with such calmness, with such matter of factness that I wondered if they were true.
> The file confirmed it. Two shots center mass to both accomplices.

On psychopath’s grandiosity:

> Many psychopaths are so grandiose that they feel they can do a better job defending themselves than an experienced lawyer could do.
> Despite the fact that most of them didn’t finish high school.

On rumination, worrying and psychopaths never having OCD:

> Psychopaths never ruminate on anything.
>
> Rumination is a process that often contributes to depression and in extreme forms to obsessive-compulsive disorder.
>
> The process of rumination is often associated with some anxiety or subjective feeling of concern or worry, and this can help precipitate change in the individual in order to reduce the anxiety.

> The psychopath experiences none of this.
>
> Indeed, if you ask a psychopath if he has ever worried about whether he left the house with the stove on (a common problem among those with obsessive-compulsive disorder), he will look at you like you are an alien, in stunned disbelief.
>
> Psychopathy and OCD are at the opposite end of the spectrum.

On the case of psychopathy with a particularly low emotional intelligence:

> Brian rated some some of the stimuli with severe moral violation as far less immoral than everyone else rated them.
>
> in particular, Brian rated one picture of a man holding a knife against a woman's troat as low on moral severety.
>
> Later during the debriefing Brian confessed that he knew most people would rate that picture as "high" in immoral content, but he said he was not sure if it was "much of a violation".
>
> As much as he tried, it was abundantly clear Brian lacked the emotional connections that the rest of us take for granted.

Note though that as far I understood, this was the worst case of emotional intelligence impairment and most other psychopaths had at least some shred of understanding of how others would interpret emotions (and some also develop some attachment themselves, especially the non-severe psychopaths).

Real-Life Applications

Watch Out for Superficial Glib
Psychopaths speak quickly, animatedly, and often interrupt frequently. They can come across as quick-witted and likable, but the gut feeling is that "there is something not quite right".
Listen to that gut feeling. The more experience you make with both psychopath and people in general, the better your gut feeling tend to become.

Psychopaths Cannot Grasp Abstract Concepts
Psychopaths cannot understand metaphors, which makes metaphors and abstracts concepts a great test to see if you are dealing with a psychopath. The blank expression they give you is a major tell of a psychopath.
Read here more signs of sociopaths in relationships.

CONS

- **Maybe Less Personal Stories Could Have Made It Briefer**

Some stories were yes interesting but unneeded -like being held on suspicions of murder at the airport-.

- **One Million Dollar Calculation**

To compute the saving of the decompression model the author says that each person adds, on average, one million to the economy during his lifetime.
Then he proceeded to add up psychopath's murders, weighting them at one million each, to estimate the cost savings.

That's didn't make much sense to me.

To begin with, I suspect that psychopaths would kill mostly within segments of the population that are into shady business or not extremely productive.
Thus, an amoral commentator might say, it's all to be seen whether removing someone from a shady business actually increases the well being of the world.

Furthermore, in an overpopulated world struggling to contain emissions and pollutants, fewer people might do more good than more people.

- **"77% of Psychopaths Are In Prison".. Fact?**

The author says that 77% of psychopaths are in prison.

Then he adds "fact".

I would have appreciated some numbers to back it up and I don't like the word "fact" when dealing with statistics that, by their own nature, seem rather unreliable.

The psychopaths most frequently in prison are low functioning ones, and some of the high functioning ones might never get convicted or diagnosed to make it into the statistics.

PROS

- Best book to learn about psychopathy I have ever read
- Wonderful text to learn more about the intersection of abnormal psychology and criminality
- By learning more about abnormal psychology, you deepen your general understanding of "normal" people and psychology
- Deep reflections on the intersection between psychopathy, illnesses, the judicial system and the law
- Highly entertaining

Review

I learned a lot from "The Psychopath Whisperer".

It is not only highly informative, but also extremely captivating.

At times I just sat listening to the book as you would listen to a great triller or novel.

Highly recommended to anyone studying psychology and human behavior, psychiatry, and, of course, to anyone researching psychopathy or working with inmates.

Check the **best dark triad books** or get the book on Amazon

Charisma University Review: Good, but Hungry Men Need More

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Charisma University by Charlie Houpert, is a social skills course aiming to teach the art of charisma.

At TPM, we've been on a similar mission to help good men not just become more charismatic, but more empowered and effective in all areas of life.

So here's a detailed review of Charisma University, including what it gets right—and where it might leave room for more.

Contents

- About The Authors

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- CONS
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  - Charisma University + Power University

About The Authors

- **Charlie Houpert** majored in philosophy, wrote the *Charisma on Command* book, and started out dabbling as a dating coach
- **Ben Altman** is the co-founder of Charisma on Command. Unfortunately, the two had a fallout and Ben isn't featured in *Charisma University* because he'd be a great role model for masculinity and power.

TPM's reviews™

SUMMARY

1. First Impressions

The first rule: don't try to impress.

Charlie says you must hit 4 key emotions to make a great first impression:

1. **Positivity** (light-hearted, fun)
2. **Trust**
3. **Respect**
4. **Show interest**

My Note: Not sure the order *must* be hit in sequence
These elements often overlap and unfold together. And for men, I'd prioritize respect over light-heartedness.

⍰ Example: Obama First Impression

I love that Charlie uses lots of examples, but didn't always agree with them.
Take this supposed example of charismatic first impression:

> **Obama**: (slaps a man on his shoulder for 6 times)

TPM Note: Obama overdoes it. It's not charisma, it's *dominance*
First off, this is more about asserting dominance than charisma. And while Obama is often a solid role model, these forceful pats are *overly* dominant.

⍰ Example: Jennifer Lawrence & Charismatic Vulnerability

Charlie says that revealing a weakness early makes you likable and charismatic.

That's situational.
If you come across as cool and high-power, a vulnerability makes you more attainable and relatable.
But **if you're not yet high-power, vulnerability only makes you a bigger loser**.

Look at the example in *Charisma University*:

> **Jennifer**: (shows "vulnerability")
>
> **Interviewer**: You're not worried about peaking too soon <—- power move!
>
> **Jennifer**: (looks up and raises her arm) <— Sub-communication ⍰ 'That was SO off'
> Well, now I am.
> (with annoyed tonality) God… <— Shames the interviewer

From TPM's point of view, ***Charisma University*** **fails to highlight the bigger lesson learned in this example**.

Jennifer wasn't just being vulnerable. She was a great social strategist by being vulnerable *at the right time*.
Her exasperated "God" was a high-power counter. It framed the interviewer as tactless and trying to undermine her moment.

Misplaced vulnerability can be insecure, submissive, or socially awkward.
Also read: vulnerability is NOT power.

> Vulnerability Is NOT Power: Don't Believe The Hype

Be More Interesting: Break Boring Rituals

Charlie recommends capturing attention when someone asks you typical, "ritual" questions.

For example, instead of replying "good" to "how are you", you say "jolly", or "never been better".

These can work in the right moments, but be careful not to overdo it, or you can come across as try-hard.

2. Confidence

The second module builds on Tony Robbins' work.

The exercise for confidence is as follows:

1. Think of a time you felt great
2. Move like when you felt great
3. Repeat to yourself an incantation (ie.: "I'm a f*cking God")

There were good tips in this module, but I'm not a fan of this approach for developing confidence.
While short-term 'whipping yourself into state' is useful, I prefer focusing on deeper fundamentals for long-term changes.

3. Expert Conversation

Charlie presents here the ground rules for having good conversations:

1. Don't think you need to have a master plan
2. Say what you think without filters: the more you talk, the more "ammo" for conversation
3. Make people laugh faster
4. Go deeper faster and discuss things people relate to the hardest (values, motivations, emotions)
5. Use your body more (gesticulate on a wider plane)

I liked Charlie Houpert's analysis of verbal expressions and body language mismatch.
For example, if you approach someone head on, you better speak straight, or else you look incongruent.

⍰ Example of Great Conversation: Will Smith

I once again didn't fully agree with Charlie's example of 'charismatic conversation':

> **Will Smith**: (stands up and runs circles around the table mimicking a headless chicken, eliciting laughter while looking goofy and silly)

TPM Note: "funny"… *Maybe*. But NOT masculine
While this 'jester approach' to social dominance grabs attention, I advise men to focus on foundational power and **avoid this over-the-top approach**.

For me, **Will Smith became respectable when he *stopped* dancing, sat down, and spoke with confidence**.
That Will Smith was respect-worthy, masculine, and leader-like.

4. Storytelling

Storytelling was Charisma University's best module.

The mindset of telling a story, says Charlie Houpert, is not to go from A to Z, but to calibrate to the audience's reaction.

Here is some good advice on telling a riveting story:

1. **Find an overarching question underpinning your story** (ie.: "what happens?" or " who was that guy stalking you"?)
2. **Drop a line to capture attention** (ie.: "oh my God, the craziest thing happened to me last time" or "you're gonna love this one guy")
3. **Tell the story in the present tense**
4. **Rising action: anything you say must contribute to the main point** (ie.: If your story is about you afraid of walking down an alley, everything you say must contribute to that suspense, for example sharing your feelings and shaking body)
5. **Expand the climax** (don't rush through the climax but expand it)
6. **Wrap up** (a piece of advice, a lesson learned, or a little joke)

Charlie also mentions that you tell stories about yourself to signal value and gain credibility, respect, or liking.
This was called "demonstrate higher value" in the dating literature.

5. Magnetic Presence

For magnetic presence comfort, confidence and power are crucial, says Charlie Houpert.

He stresses the importance of posture -his tip: imagine a hook pulling you up- and voice.

A couple more good ideas:

- Move people from one level of energy to gain influence
- Touch people more and let your hand linger for 1 or 2 seconds

⍰ Example: Terry Crews' 'Magnetic Entrance'

My disagreement forms a pattern: Charisma University examples are "over the top" personalities.
But this isn't the only—or necessarily the best—way to succeed socially.

See for yourself:

> **Terry Crew**: (enters dancing and yelling)
>
> **Ellen**: (unfazed, removes the pin from his chest) You danced so much your pin came out <—- Power move. Sub-communicates 'you *slightly* overdid that'

Is that a "magnetic presence"?
Maybe to some, but I'd advise that **it's best to learn to be "magnetic" without becoming a dancing monkey**.

Ellen's comment also framed Terry like a low-power jester.

Power dynamics is clear on this.
At parity of returns, lower effort is superior:

Social ROI matrix, part of 'Social Investment Model' (Buffalmano, 2026)

Low-Energy Magnetism

Charlie Houpert says that you can be magnetic with lower energy.

But most of his examples are high-energy. And he says that Marlon Brando's low-energy charisma works "only because it's scripted".
But Marlon Brando was a legend in real life as well.

See this example:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

This is how a masculine man confident man behaves.
Not dancing around like headless chickens.

Also see:

- The Godfather analysis (a typical “low energy” charismatic man)
- Signs of social power
- Dominance archetypes

6. Leadership

This is the module I enjoyed the least.

It’s mostly one type of leadership: inspirational leadership, and draws heavily from Tony Robbins.
It felt tangential to leadership.

Our take on leadership emphasizes power dynamics, which we find often more relevant and practical.
We dig deeper in Power University, but you can check:

- Leadership 101
- How to be a leader
- Leadership power dynamics

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

CONS

I enjoyed Charisma University, and I’m grateful to Charlie.
Many of our readers and community members found us through him:

That said, these are the cons based on how we approach social skills:

1. High Energy Approach to Socialization (Jester Risk)

Charisma has no universally defined or empirically tested measures.

So while one can list many ways of being charismatic, Charlie leans into high-energy 'charisma'.

Including jokes, "silly role plays", lots of laughing, loudness, etc., etc.
That works best in bars or clubs.
Even modern-day (2022) Charlie confirms that:

> **Charlie**: Especially in a bar / night club scenario, which I think is what I'm tending towards more

And for *those* places, he's right, high energy works well. But that makes it **less suited for men who are less into bars and clubs.**
And at higher risk of falling into a jester role.

Also, read:

- **The high-energy myth**

> The Myth of High Energy Socializing

2. Power & Status Are Higher Priority, But Not Covered

Our main "con" comes down to this.

While charisma is a form of influence and power, the foundations are different.
In our view, mastering power first is more important for men.

Charisma-related traits are only effective in achieving life-relevant goals IF you can also be confident, positively dominant, and strategic.

And by "life-relevant goals" I'm referring to *results* that most men want.
Such as:

- Dates & mates
- Social status
- Career promotions
- Networking with high-value men

Charlie suggests so himself on his podcast.
Him and Ben discuss what makes you attractive, and Charlie says:

> **Charlie**: Charisma on Command focuses on personality (but) If you're rich and powerful you can be a jerk and don't need to be attractive. (Power) it's what people respond most strongly to

Ben then says that charisma/personality is the quickest to change.
But it takes the same time to learn how to behave powerful and gain respect. And I think that's priority #1 for most men.

2.2. Charlie Himself May Refine His Approach For Status & Respect

I think Charlie has the "feel" for power dynamics.

In this example, I could see that he *felt* the disrespect.

However, I wished he had defended himself more strongly.

In this instance, Charlie's response leaned toward being *overly* accommodating, further empowering the attacker:

> **Graham**: (disrespectful)
> **Charlie**: (complies and losing power, status, and respect)

 Same goes for signs of naivete.

3. Could Be More 'Masculine'

I'm not even the biggest advocate for 'masculinity'.

But while charisma and masculinity are different, respect, status, and attraction often require a baseline of masculinity.

Charisma University's approach sometimes prioritizes energy and humor over this baseline. But many 'good men types' may benefit from more masculinity.

4. Some Examples & Role Models Were Poor

There are *plenty of* examples in Charisma University we agree with.

But some, including the ones we reviewed here, could be improved:

- It's not a "great first impression" to slap others like you're trying too hard to dominate them
- It's not "magnetic presence" to dance and shout -and then get "owned" by the host
- It's not "great conversation" to run around like a headless chicken

These examples may even take some men off-track.

Will Smith & Charisma

Will Smith himself, a frequent example of charismatic mastery, raises questions for me.

While charismatic in many ways, what's the value of this brand of charisma if it doesn't prevent cheating, public shame, or manipulation?

I'd rather have the power dynamics skills to get a better partner.

5. Teaches Men And Women As If They Were The Same

Charisma University targets both men and women.

Charlie and Ben say that it's largely applicable across cultures, and for both genders. Say Ben and Charlie:

> **Ben**: 95% of the lessons don't have to be modified, they just are for people (…) you don't have to modify it
> **Charlie**: 98% is going to be the same

I partially agree with the intercultural aspect.

But I agree less with the cross-gender applicability.

On average, **men benefit significantly more from power, dominance, and leadership.**

Women who talk louder and touch others may gain power, but lose femininity and pay a hefty social price.
Studies also show that.

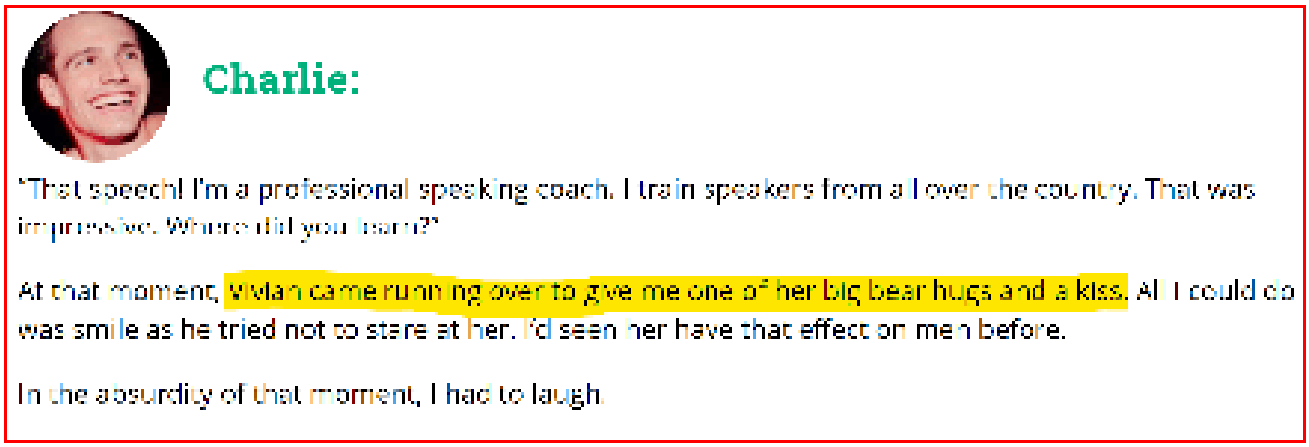
Maybe that's why *Charisma University* felt low in masculinity.
You try to cater to both, and you end up with a sub-optimal middle ground.

6. Sometimes Reactions Over Results

Principle:

High-energy folks get more *reactions*, but higher-power folks get more *results*.

See an example on Charisma University's own sales page:



Charlie:

"That speech! I'm a professional speaking coach. I train speakers from all over the country. That was impressive. Where did you learn?"

At that moment, Vivian came running over to give me one of her big bear hugs and a kiss. All I could do was smile as he tried not to stare at her. I'd seen her have that effect on men before.

In the absurdity of that moment, I had to laugh.

> **Charlie**: Vivian came running over to give me one of her big bear hugs and a kiss. All I could do was smile as he tried not to stare at her

That "big bear hug" was disrespectful.

Charlie's passive acceptance cost him status and attraction. He should have assertively checked that, *not* reveled in it.

Just think about that:

You're socializing, and a random girl barges in and *interrupts while you're talking to someone*.
It's disrespectful to you, and to your speaking partner.

She did it because she felt confident Charlie wouldn't enforce his boundaries.

Finally, that woman was potentially "marking territory".
And boosting *her* social status displaying her power over the event's speaker -often high-status just for being on stage-.

Don't let people interrupt you and don't let your female friends use you for social climbing. It's low power and unattractive.

7. Lacks Scientific Backing

Ben and Charlie opened up about not using science:

> **Ben**: People say "do you have any studies to back that up".
> Well, I have my experience, the people I've coached, and watching other people. And that seems to me far more valuable than if I rely on a study

And I partially agree.
Great intuition and lots of experience are invaluable.

But science and experience are NOT mutually exclusive.
Charlie's later comments also show some room for improvement in understanding how science works.

Science *improves* intuition and experience with more data points (see our 3-pillars model).

PROS

Among *Charisma University's* pros:

- **Lots of Examples**

Charisma University has lots of real-life examples and good breakdowns. Just as I like it.

- **Good Overview**

Especially for those who prefer a party-style, extroverted, talkative approach to socialization.

- **Charlie Communicates Clearly**

Charlie is the "explanator in command" and a master speaker.
I learned even more from Charlie's presentation, than the material.

Charisma University: Lucio's Take

We liked Charisma University and it's great for younger beginners, but found it lacked key lessons on social power, status, and masculinity.

Course Provider: Organization

Course Provider Name: Charisma on Command

Course Mode: Online

Course Price: 597$

Editor's Rating:
3.5

Charisma University VS Power University

This table helps you pick the best for you:

Goal	Charisma University	Power University
Life usefulness		✅
Ease of learning	✅	
Status, respect, and attraction		✅
Speed of learning	✅	
Scientific		✅
Price	✅	

Or see here full comparison.

Charisma University is simpler and faster because it has a smaller scope.

By contrast, Power University is Lucio's life mission to provide a comprehensive system to turn good men into confident and competent men who win at life.
That intrinsically makes it a deeper, more robust, but also more challenging program.

So, in brief:

- **Go for Charisma University if you're an extroverted teenager who wants something quick and easy.** You trade smaller improvements for smaller investment
- **Go for Power University if you're serious about your self-development and want to achieve significant goals in life**

P.S.:
And if you're a "good guy", I also recommend PU.
Charlie may be a bit 'too good guy' himself to transform nice guys.

What People Say About CU & PU

Let's see what someone who tried both told us:

In the past I tried Charisma University but while I thought the content was good I didn't feel like it worked well for me for three reasons: 1) I found it difficult to turn the action guides into habits that stick, 2) the high energy style of charisma is quite exhausting for me, and 3) I feel like being quick to laughter and speaking through a smile etc makes me come across as low-power and makes people respect me less.

> In the past **I tried Charisma University** but while I thought the content was good **I didn't feel like it worked well for me** (…)
> the high energy style of charisma is quite exhausting for me, and (…)
> I feel like **being quick to laughter and speaking through a smile etc makes me come across as low-power and makes people respect me less.**

It's a public post from our forum.
And #3 is what we highlighted in this review.

And the same person, comparing *Charisma University* VS *Power University*:

#2 - May 30, 2023, 7:34 pm Delete Edit Quote

Hi Jack,

I first found TPM when I looked for reviews of Charisma University. I didn't look through anything else on the site though until months later.

After going through CU and realizing it wasn't for me I stumbled back here by accident and decided to join PU.

Needless to say, that was one of the best decisions I ever made.

Posts

owered
mber

Of course:

This is not to say that this person's experience applies to everyone else.
Charisma University may be better for *you*, so you must decide for yourself.

FAQs

Is Charisma University Legit?

Charisma University by Charisma on Command is a legit course on social skills.
Whether it's good for you depends on your level and your goals. While more advanced men may wish for a bit more refinement and depth, *Charisma University* can be great for beginners.

Is Charisma University Worth It?

Charisma University is worth it for people who love Carlie Houpert and want to learn the high-energy, extroverted approach to socialization.

Based on what the authors and their former COO disclosed, Charisma University wasn't worth $900 based on the high refund requests, and around half of their buyers ask for a refund at the current price of $600

Charisma University REVIEW

Charisma University is a good course on social skills.

While anyone can learn from it, it's best for younger men who prefer an extroverted, "high-energy" style for parties and fraternities.

The high-energy approach is a possible limitation, confirming what researcher Elaine Aron says:

> Most social skills courses and books are sold by high-energy extroverts, who teach the high-energy extrovert way to social skills.

It's good for introverts to learn to act extrovert, but quieter men can play their strengths.
After all, the silent type is often *more* powerful.

Charisma University + Power University

A good option for beginners could be to get *Charisma University* first, and then level up with *Power University*.

This is the approach this Redditor took:

I was still too afraid to talk to people on my own. So I came across two social skills courses. Called "charisma university" by Charlie houpert And "power university" by lucio buffalmano These two courses alone transformed my social life. I found out that charisma is actually a learnable skill. You don't have to born with it.and you don't need to be funny, for people to like you. How to nail first impressions. How to tell amazing stories. How to be apart of groups.how to maintain friendships. How to handle confrontational people. And most importantly, understanding power dynamics. Within a year I changed my life. My only regret is never starting sooner.

> **Redditor**: charisma university" by Charlie Houpert and "power university" by Lucio Buffalmano transformed my social life (…) most importantly, understanding power dynamics. Within a year I changed my life. My only regret is never starting sooner

Many Power University alumni indeed find that learning power dynamics changed their lives, and it got them great results (measured in our survey).

See if it's for you:

CHECK POWER UNIVERSITY

A New Earth: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *A New Earth* Eckhart Tolle presents spirituality as a new evolutionary level that humanity has to evolve into, if we want to survive and thrive. Or else, we will face possible extinction.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Enlightenment Is Detachment From Materialism & Ego
  - Avoid Identifying Yourself With Things
  - The Core of Ego
  - Moving Beyond Ego
  - The Power of Transcending The Ego
  - The Mind In Our Body
  - This Too Shall Pass
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Video Summary – A New Earth
- To Read After " A New Earth"
- Review

Bullet Summary

- The ego, or the belief we are what happens to us, is a major cause of pain and suffering
- Past events and pain haunt most people: you must let the past be the past
- Accept things as they are

Full Summary

Eckhart Tolle says that The New Earth will be either a transformative book or it will be useless.
Which one it will be, is up to the reader.

Enlightenment Is Detachment From Materialism & Ego

Tolle says that people identify themselves with their ego and with material possessions.

Transcending both is what all great religions and philosophies have been about, from Buddhism to Christianity.

Fear, greed, and a thirst for power have been the driving forces of untold devastation and pain in our history.
And they all originate from our ego: the desire of strengthening our self-image.

Religions Are Failing Us

To be precise, it's not religions that are failing us. It's our interpretation of religions.

Religions are great tools to lead people down the path of enlightenment, but the way people approach them today is

wrong.

Religions, from tools to help us rise above human dysfunctions, have become divisive instead of unifying.
Many preachers also have a poor approach towards sacred texts and rituals: it's "either you believe it, or you are wrong".

It's against this backdrop that new movements of spiritual enlightenment have started blossoming outside of religions.
Tolle believes that the big religions should embrace them or else they'll eventually die out.

My Note: Good point
I agree with Tolle here and this is what Richard Dawkins, author of "The God Delusion" has failed to address in his scathing text against religions.

Avoid Identifying Yourself With Things

Tolle merges a criticism of the human tendency to identify with the things we like and own with a criticism of modern consumerism.

He says brands sell us things we don't really need by lulling us into the false belief that "more" and "more expensive" equals "growth" and "improvement" (for the science of brand marketing read: *Brandwashed* and *Buyology*).

There are other forms of identification that might seem better but are equally harmful:

- Identification with body
- Identification with gender (a woman, a mother..)
- Identification with appearance (and we will suffer when looks fade)
- Identification with an abstract construct in our mind (internal chatter)
- Identification with results or what we think of events

There Is No Good Or Bad

Tolle also touches on a key tenet of Stoicism, which is that there are no good and bad events, but only what we make out of them.

> **The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about it**

Waking Up to The Illusion of Ownership

Tolle says most of us sadly only realize the futility of ownership on our deathbeds.

We should probably all strive to detach ourselves from material possessions before we are about to die.
But simply giving up things is often not the answer. Some people going down the road feel "superior" for giving up material possessions, and they are still playing the same ego-driven game.

Also, read:

- Leveraging Death for Life

The Core of Ego

At the core of our mistaken approach to ego is the identification between our thinking voice and ourselves.

Such as, we believe that we are the voice in our heads.

We then expand from there to believe we are our opinions, our choices, our genders, our cultural background, etc., etc.

This is a key concept in Tolle's philosophy which he also discusses in *The Power of Now*.
If you are interested in ego, you might also want to check out *Ego Is The Enemy* by Ryan Holiday, Antifragile Ego, and Ultimate Power.

Ego Never Stops

The ego "uses" you to get more and more. It's never satisfied and the power of wanting and desire is bigger than the pleasure of achieving and owning.

That keeps you running and struggling all your life… Until you realize too late how futile it all was.

What Tolle is referring to is a well-known concept in psychology called the "hedonic treadmill".

Being Right & Social Climbing

Eckard Tolle points out a few ways the ego manifests (and reinforces itself) in our life:

- Complaining
- Game-playing (check Games People Play)
- Criticism & underhanded compliments (typical of frenemies)
- Gossiping
- "Winning" through our children
- Being right (and making others wrong)

And, I would add, social climbing is another typical example of ego-driven, socially awkward, and low-quality behavior that too many people engage in.

Alpha-male posturing is an example of ego-driven social climbing and social attacks.
Here are a few real-life examples:

Moving Beyond Ego

Our ego creates much pain and many negative emotions that poison our lives.

To move beyond ego you need to become aware of it. And albeit not necessarily easy, that is all that you need to do.

Ego and awareness are incompatible with each other.

Awareness is the knowledge that your thinking self is not you, that your thoughts, your opinions, and your background are not "you".

You are a part of the universe, and the current manifestations of your thoughts, positions, opinions, victories, and possessions do not define you.

The Power of Transcending The Ego

Eckart Tolle's philosophical system also touches upon conflict resolution. Conflicts are often precipitated by the ego.

We need to win, we need to defend ourselves, we need to even things out, we need revenge.

Enlightenment instead is about rising above. If you transcend the ego, there is nothing to offend, there is nothing to it, there is nothing to take revenge for.

My Note: This will empower you personally
This is one of my favorite concepts of “A New Earth”.
In a way, “A New Earth” is also a book about power. When you can transcend the ego, you become so much more powerful.

> **Sometimes letting things go is an act of far greater power than defending or hanging on.**

The Mind In Our Body

Tolle talks about our mind influences our body. The stories that our mind tells us influence and condition our body, and they often do so in a negative way.

The author also focuses on how we let past events and emotions long affect us even though they are, by all means, gone and dusted and should be. He exhorts the readers to let go of past pains and negative emotions.

Tolle calls it “pain body”.

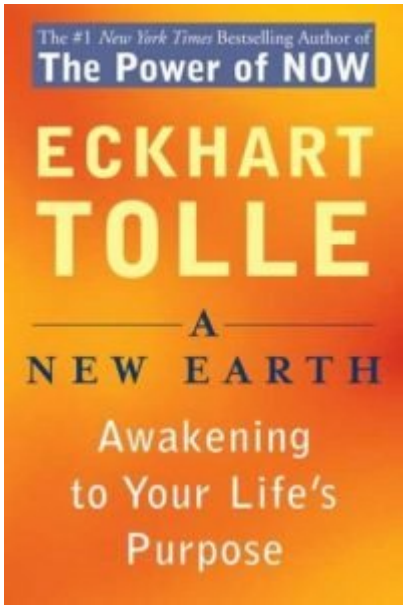
My Note: BS on “past generations”
I fully agree with Tolle that old events and clinging on to pain is harmful both for our mind and body. I disagree though that we carry the “pain of past wars and pains” from older generations.
The connection between mind/body is also the central tenet in Joe Dispenza’s work as well, check You Are The Placebo, Breaking The Habit of Being Yourself, and Becoming Supernatural (Note: I personally consider Dispenza a quack and snake oil salesman).

This Too Shall Pass

Realizing that everything is transient and that everything will end does not mean that we enjoy less our pleasures and more easily endure our pains.

It means that we can endure our pain more easily and enjoy our pleasures more.
Why?
Because we can finally let go of the fear of losing our happiness, our possessions, our “victories”…

> **You can lose what you have. But not who you are**



Real-Life Applications

Stop Expecting All Must Go Well
Tolle says that one of the reasons we are unhappy is that we expect success and things to go well.
This is a deep, entrenched entitlement mindset and it basically predisposes us to anger and unhappiness.
Let go of the belief that things must work out (and read *The Happiness Advantage*).

CONS

I really love Tolle's work and I loved "*A New Earth*". However, I see my task as a critical reviewer to point out all flaws.
So here they are:

- **Eckart Tolle's Reading Voice (Audiobook)**

Tolle's voice is droning and soothing at the same time.

That makes it perfect to read a meditation track or to induce a trance-like experience.

But not for reading a text where you want to clearly understand the words.
For that, you need better enunciation.

- **Simplistic, Rose-Tinted, Mistaken View of Evolution**

Tolle said life took the risk of moving to land from the comfort of the sea.

That really makes no sense from an evolutionary point of view: I have no knowledge of life being "comfortable" anywhere. Life was challenging in the sea as much as it was going to be on land.

As a matter of fact, it's much more likely that life expands where it's easier to live rather than where it's more difficult.

- **Are We At A Crossroad? Maybe Not…**

After a simplistic view of evolution, Tolle says that we are again at a crossroads today.

Our modern weapons and climate change mean that we either enlighten ourselves or we face destruction.

Again, I don't see a simple and well-defined "crossroad" of evolution: I doubt there are many well-defined "now or never" moments in evolution and, if they are, they only become apparent in hindsight.

Otherwise, saying "now or never" is just another (poor) effort at becoming a bigger pundit, garnering more followers, as well, as selling more. Basically, just another power move.

- **National and Racial Pain Bodies?**

Tolle says that since we carry the pain of our past, the pain body is larger among blacks, Jews, and nations that saw much devastation.

I think this is a big BS and it's also a dangerous victim mentality.
See: why you must stand up to the victim culture framing you as the oppressor.

- **Opinions for Certitudes = Some Woo-Woo Content**

Some of Tolle's ideas are revolutionary and immensely helpful.

Some others, like the pain body, are made-up opinions that deliver no good. He still presents them as unquestionable truths though.

- **Bad Scientifical Interpretations = Some BS Content**

Some others still, are his own "truths" of what is either not true (his views on evolutions) or the author's own opinion on debatable scientific theories.

For example, the author says the universe will contract again. But that's only *one* theory among many circa the future of the universe and, currently, not the most popular (indeed the universe is *accelerating* its expansion, possibly resulting in what's been dubbed "big freeze").

- **"Nature" Is In sync With the Universe?**

The author also says that "nature", contrary to humans, is in sync with the universe.

That's why few animals died during the 2004 Tsunami: animals could "feel" something was amiss.

When I read stuff like this I want to punch stuff :).
Animals die and went extinct by the millions because of natural disasters. There is no proof that animals can "sense' impending disasters and then again what the hell does it even mean "nature" and "animals"? that's so egocentric it hurts.
There are millions of species, some of which for sure can't feel shit.

We, humans, *are* part of nature.

And hello, the reason why so few animals died during the tsunami might have something to do with the fact that nobody counted them and/or that there weren't many animals in the heavily populated coastal areas.

PROS

A New Earth presents many ideas and concepts which can indeed lead to enlightenment and, as well, to a happier, more worry-free life.

- **You Are Not Your Thinking Voice**

I find this concept extremely powerful and potentially life-changing. When you stop believing and behaving like everything you think is "you", you can acquire an enlightened life poise.

- **You Are Not What's Happening to You**

By extension, when you can learn that what is happening to "you" is indeed not really happening to "you", but just "happening", you can then learn to step back and become a higher-functioning individual.

- **Great Ego-Analysis**

Very good analysis of the ego and the consequences of our egos.
Also great job in linking ego and some nasty social behavior such as gossiping, social attacks, and frenemy-like behavior.

- **The Secret of The Greatest Power Move**

Tolle didn't intend it that way, but if you are able to transcend or momentarily step back from your ego, then you acquire huge mental (and material) power.

Video Summary – A New Earth

This is a video summary touching on a couple of ideas I haven't analyzed here:

To Read After ” A New Earth”

Here are some books you will like:

- Tao Te Ching
- The Power of Now
- The Untethered Soul
- The Four Agreements
- The Power of Positive Thinking
- The Power of Your Subconscious Mind (didn’t like this one)
- Who Moved My Cheese
- Man’s Search for Meaning

Review

I really like the concepts and ideas in “*A New Earth*“. They are revolutionary.

What’s holding the book back, in my opinion, are Tolle’s examples, historical references, and own interpretations of evolution.
To any critical and intelligent reader, they are the equivalent of nails grating a chalkboard.

However, overall, I still recommend “*A New Earth*“. Especially to anyone who’s too into consumerism or too touchy.

Check the best books collection or get the book on Amazon.

Getting to Yes: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Getting to Yes (1981) is a classic of negotiation literature.
William Ury and Roger Fisher, the authors, shifted the way the Western world thinks and teaches negotiation tactics and techniques, helping to go from a model of pure strength and power, to one of collaboration and win-win.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Be Soft on People, Hard on Problems
  - 4 Steps of Principled Negotiation
  - 1. Separate People From The Problem
  - 2. Focus on Interests, Not Positions
  - 3. Generate Options for Mutual Gain
  - 4. Insist on Using Objective Criteria
  - Seek Alternatives: BATNA
  - Dirty Negotiation Tricks
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Read After Getting to Yes
- Review

Takeaways

- Separate the problems from the people: attack the problem and respect the people
- Negotiate based on interests, not on positions
- Look for shared interests
- Be open to change opinion based on facts (if you want the other party to be open to your influence as well, which you should)

Notes

About the Authors:
Roger Fisher studied law at Harvard and later became a professor at Harvard Law School. William Ury studied anthropology and later dedicated himself to negotiation tactics. He is also the author of "*Getting Past No*". Both Ury and Fisher are co-founders of the Harvard Negotiation Project.

The main aim of Getting to Yes is to avoid adversarial negotiation (positional bargaining), clashes of egos, and escalation that lead to nowhere -or lead to lose-lose-.

Be Soft on People, Hard on Problems

The authors argue that most people fall into two different categories when it comes to negotiation: the soft approach and the hard approach.

The hard approach is assertive or aggressive and seeks to win. The soft approach is more concerned with the relationship, has difficulties saying no, and tends to be more associated with submissiveness.

The soft approach is great… When dealing with other soft negotiators.
However, it loses big when facing other hard negotiators.

My Note: So true, and goes deeper than just negotiations
True, that's why I make the point that people must learn the power moves of the bullies of this world.
Also read: to be good you must learn to be bad.

Finally, the authors argue that you don't have to choose between hard and soft.
You should be hard on the problems that your negotiation addresses while being warm and respectful towards the people.

Differentiating between the people and the issues is one of the key tenets of Getting to Yes and what the authors call Principled Negotiation.

> **Successful negotiation requires being both firm and open**

4 Steps of Principled Negotiation

Principled Negotiation is based on four steps:

1. Separate people from the problem
2. Focus on interests, not positions
3. Generate options for mutual gain
4. Insist on using objective criteria

1. Separate People From The Problem

In negotiations, it's easy for egos to get in the way.

When you identify people with positions -or problems-, it's most likely that negotiations risk to escalate and/or reach an impasse because you end up in adversarial negotiations.

In adversarial negotiations often people end up stuck not because the proposed solution is not good for them, but because they don't want to seem like they are caving in.
Separating people from problems also helps people save face, as recommended in How to Win Friends and Influence People.

- Clarify perceptions (reach common understanding of both parties' needs and goals, put yourself in their shoes)
- Recognize and legitimize emotions (emotions are a common source of adversarial negotiations and escalations: acknowledge them, let people vent and never take things personally)
- Communicate clearly (miscommunication, false assumptions, and lack of understanding are at the roots of depersonalization and adversarial negotiation)

The authors also stress the importance of listening and understanding, which is the principle of "seek to understand, then to be understood" in The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

When you talk about a problem you also want to separate people from problems and avoid "you sentences" which sound accusatory (also read how to criticize correctly).

> **Constant battle for dominance threatens the relationship**

2. Focus on Interests, Not Positions

When you focus on positions you blind yourself to alternative solutions and it's more likely that you end up in adversarial positions (ie.: my position VS your position).

While we seek to win with our positions, we can find many different to meet our interests (example: instead of "I want the window open VS you want it closed" it's "I need fresh air" and "you need to stay warm").

3. Generate Options for Mutual Gain

Here you seek solutions and alternatives for win-win and mutual gain.

If it's not necessarily mutual gain, it can still be the limitation of damage which, in many situations, is still a win-win (example: landlord agrees to pay back part of the rent rather than ending up in court is still a gain).

4. Insist on Using Objective Criteria

Using objective criteria and agreeing on fair standards is all the more important when the parties are in direct opposition.

These are the types of negotiations that are at the highest risk of becoming adversarial and laying out and adhering to fair standards and criteria will help keep the negotiations focused on the issues.

For example, you could say:

> **You**: Look, you want a high price and I want a low price. Let's figure out what a fair price could be.

Now you have a shared goal and you might mention a few ways to find out.

If the seller comes out with a certain price, ask what's the theory behind that price and frame it as a way of looking for the common goal of reaching a fair price.

Seek Alternatives: BATNA

BATNA stands for Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement and rests on the assumption that you are only as powerful and strong as the quality of your alternatives.

Fisher and Ury introduce BATNA talking about how weaker parties can negotiate with more powerful ones.
The key is investigating and developing alternatives. If they can find good alternatives, it can be a good idea to let their negotiating partner know, which will strengthen their position.

Sometimes for weaker parties, the best alternative will be to not reach an agreement at all.
If that's the case, they should resist pressure and walk away.

Dirty Negotiation Tricks

Most people respond to dirty tactics by doing nothing and hoping it won't happen again. It's usually not a good solution (Hitler-Chamberlain example).
Responding in kind is also not a good idea.

Ury and Fisher's solution is to draw attention to the trick and then negotiate fairer rules for the rest of the negotiation.

My Note: Sometimes you can strategically pretend you're falling for it
It's certainly a good solution… In some situations. But not the best in all situations. As Robert Greene says in "The 48 Laws of Power", sometimes it can pay to pretend you are falling for their trick.

If you are interested in dirty negotiation tricks I have a specific lesson on it in Power University which summarizes all the literature on negotiation, psychology, and manipulation.

Check:

- **Manipulative negotiation techniques**

> 20 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics

Real-Life Applications

There is plenty of genius advice in “Getting to Yes” and I have learned a few crucial tips that improved my negotiation skills.
Here are some:

- **Start With The Highest/Lowest Number You Can Justify**

It does make sense to go into a negotiation with the highest number you can justify without being embarrassed.

That’s because, in the absence of exact criteria, people will estimate how well they are doing based on how far they have moved from the initial number.

However, if you go too high, you risk not being credible. That’s why the authors recommend a number that you can somehow justify.

- **Mention Third-Party Sources When Making First Offer**

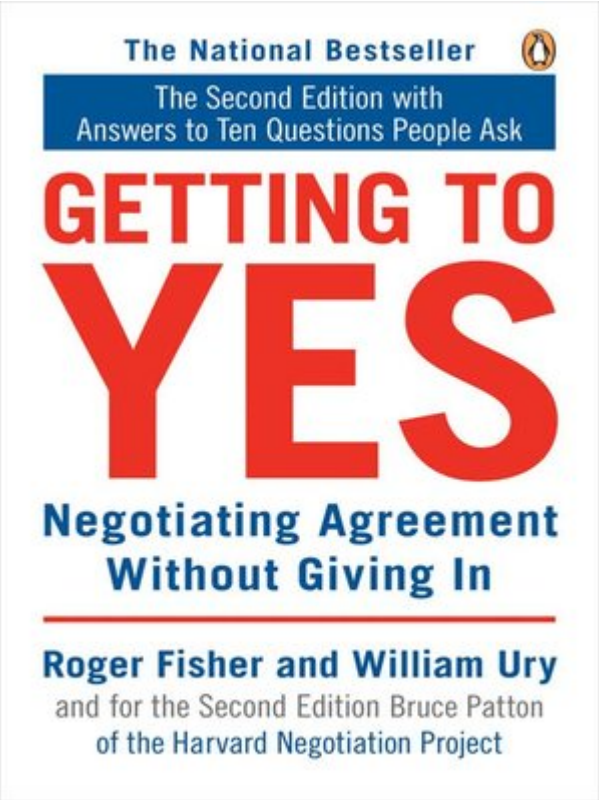
Since your first offer will be rather high (or low), and if you move too quickly away from it you lose credibility, the authors recommend you don’t take ownership of the first number.

How to do it?
Mention a third-party mentioning the price, or say “one factor to consider is..”, or you can say that a similar house elsewhere would sell for X amount of money.

That way, you don’t take ownership of the price, you don’t come across as an overly aggressive bidder and you leave yourself room from moving away from that number without losing face and credibility.

- **Aspire for Good Results**

There is a strong correlation between aspirations and positive results. So within reason, aspire for good results and expect a good outcome for your negotiations.



CONS

- **Potentially Naive as It Ignores Deception**

One of the reasons the book has become so popular could be that people like to read about win-win and cooperation. But ignoring deception and manipulation could make the work less realistic.
For example, says Schilling in his seminal *The Strategy of Conflict*:

> *Mutual accommodation ultimately requires, if the outcome is to be efficient, that the division of gains be in accordance with "comparative advantage"; that is, the things a player concedes should be those that he wants less than the other player, relative to the things he trades for. Each needs, therefore, to communicate his value system with some truth, although each can also gain by deceiving.*

- **Few Examples**

At times I wished for more examples.
There is one example which is genius, and that only whet my appetite for more.
A few more examples at that level, and Getting to Yes was going to be the best book on negotiation ever.

- **Text Negotiations Benefit Fast Talkers?**

The authors say that texts, being so quick, favor fast talkers. I don't see how that could ever be true since texts don't convey voice and slowing down the tempo is as easy as delaying your responses.

- **In-Person Negotiation Isn't Better With Power Imbalances**

The authors strongly prefer negotiation in person. And that makes sense. However, they don't mention that in negotiations where one party has much more power, the weaker party can often gain with some distance.

- **When Attacked: Sit Back**

When the other party attacks you personally, don't get defensive and don't attack back.
Let them take off steam and then move back to the common problem.

- **Do Build a Connection**

Building a human connection before getting into it is a great way to help negotiations flow smoothly.

And finally:

> **The most powerful argument is convincing them you're asking for no more than what's fair**

PROS

The basics of effective negotiation are here. And the example of getting back money from a rent-controlled apartment was genius.

Read After Getting to Yes

- The Power of a Positive No
- Difficult Conversations
- Never Split The Difference
- The Secrets of Power Negotiating
- The Art of The Deal
- Influence and Pre-Suasion by Robert Cialdini

Review

"Getting to Yes" is a classic of negotiation techniques, and for good reasons: it's a seminal book.

The biggest issue of many negotiations, in my opinion, is in getting into an adversarial position, and "Getting to Yes" is all about moving past that.

It's not as strong on "power moves" in my opinion but its main concepts of focusing on problems, common interests and not escalating bad behavior were revolutionary and are still the foundation of any successful negotiation.

Check the **best books on negotiation** or get the book on Amazon

Getting Past No: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Getting Past No is a popular book on negotiation. It teaches how to negotiate when things get difficult, when it seems like you reached an impasse, or when your negotiation partner is refusing to negotiate.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The 5 Enablers of "No"
  - The 5 Steps of Getting Past No
  - You're Enough to Fix Bad Negotiations
  - Listen & Step Into Their Side
  - Reframe: Move From Positional to Problem Solving
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Put your ego away and focus on the goal
- Listen to them first if you want to be listened to later
- Make it easy for them to say yes and compromise
- Always (re)frame the negotiation as an attempt at finding a win-win ("**enlightened collaborator**" technique)

Full Summary

About the Author:
William Ury is an American anthropologist, academic, and negotiation expert. He is one of the co-founders of the Harvard Program on Negotiation and, based on what he learned on the HPN, he previously co-authored the negotiation classic "*Getting to Yes*".

The 5 Enablers of "No"

William Ury first addressed the causes of poor negotiations which are more likely to lead to a "no".

He summarizes them into five high-level stumbling blocks:

1. **Your Emotional Reaction**: When facing difficult opponents it's easy to take things personally and escalate instead of staying neutral and focused on the solution
2. **Their Negative Emotions**: Same for the other side. Great negotiation doesn't just handle their emotions, but also the other party's emotions
3. **Their Position**: Inexperienced negotiators negotiate from positions instead of general needs and outcomes (the difference is that there are many ways of achieving a good result when you focus on needs)
4. **Their Dissatisfaction & Skepticism**: People sometimes stick with uncooperative positions simply not to lose face or not to "lose" to you. Or because they don't trust you and are skeptical

5. **Their Power**: If they have much more power than you have, they might focus on winning or power-bending

> **If angry, count to 10 before you speak. If very angry, count to 100**

The 5 Steps of Getting Past No

William Ury lists five major steps for dealing with difficult negotiations, and they are:

1. **Go to the Balcony**: To control their poor behavior you must control your own. Take a break when things are getting intense instead of giving in or counterattacking. or find an excuse to take a break
2. **Step to Their Side**: They expect you to dig in, counterattack or refuse. Instead, listen, find a way to say yes, and acknowledge their points (acknowledging doesn't mean you agree)
3. **Reframe**: When they attack or criticize, don't say "no" or "but", but nudge them towards the challenge of meeting each side's needs. Don't teach but ask problem-solving questions
4. **Build Golden Bridges**: Once you're moving in the right direction, resist the temptation of pushing and cajoling. Instead, find ways that make it easy for them to say yes: save face and make the outcome look like a win for them.
5. **User Power to Educate**: If the other side still refuses to nudge and you might need to use power, do so to educate and never to punish or embarrass.
   Pushing people into a corner only leads to a lose-lose.
   Right after the display of power, go back to the golden bridge.

> **Focus on getting what you want, not on getting even**

You're Enough to Fix Bad Negotiations

It takes two people to escalate, but one is enough to avoid an escalation and bring it back to a more productive one.

When you overreact emotionally you become part of the problem.
Going to the balcony allows you to avoid those nasty escalations that lead to lose-lose arguments.

But going to the balcony also means that you avoid caving in when you feel the pressure is getting too high.
Your worst enemy is yourself: you can only make the concession you'll later regret.

> **You are the only one who can make the concession you'll later regret**

Listen & Step Into Their Side

Every human being has a deep need for recognition. By listening to them and acknowledging their point of view, you help them feel recognized and treated like human beings.

That greatly enhances your chances of negotiating for a win-win.

These are the steps to effectively step into their side:

- Listen
- Let them know you listen by paraphrasing what they said
- Acknowledge their point and feelings
- Apologize if appropriate
- Agree with all you can agree on
- Replace "but" with "yes, and… "

See here a case study on poor listening skills:

- Why Gary Vaynerchuck Has No Emotional Intelligence

> **Listening is the cheapest concession you can make**

Reframe: Move From Positional to Problem Solving

William Ury talks here about moving from positional negotiation (ie.: this is my position VS yours) to a mutual effort of problem-solving.
This is the key tenet from his other wonderful book *Getting to Yes*.

Whenever the other party goes into positional and confrontational bargaining, you must reframe it to a more helpful win-win approach. Here's how:

- **Ask problem-solving questions**

Avoid questions with one-word answers. For example, if you ask "can we make an exception to the policy" it's too easy for them to say no.
A question like "OK, what could we do to find a way here".

- **Ask "what if" and "what's your advice"**

To move towards possible cooperative options for agreement.

The idea is that you let them move towards the issue with their proposal instead of telling them.

- **Ask "what makes that fair"**

When they come up with a solution that is one-sided to move towards more independent standards of resolution.

- **Reinterpret negative behavior**

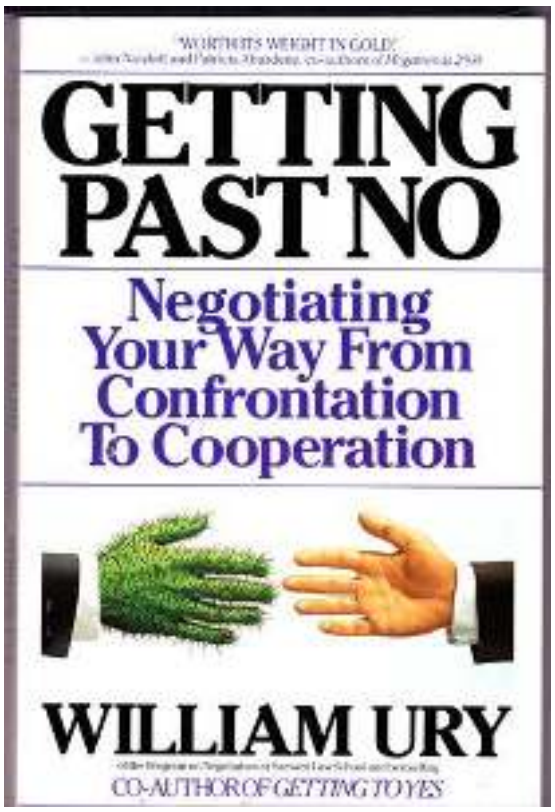
Whenever you get an insult and a comment, drop the insult and only focus on the positive side of the comment.

Alternatively, you can reinterpret what they said as if they meant whatever is useful to move the negotiation along.

Also, read:

- **Frame control techniques**

> **To change the game, change the frame**



Real-Life Applications

Some great, great power moves pills on this.
For example:

- **Blame the lawyer to gain time**

If you want to gain time but don't want to make it seem like you don't trust them or that you are indecisive, you can say that your lawyer insists on checking contracts out… "you know how lawyers are".
Or you can say "you put a lot of thought into this didn't you" and then you add "well I'd like to do the same", fold the proposal, and put it in your briefcase.

- **Paraphrase their point to make them feel powerful**

In the chapter on "stepping into their side," William Uryr says you must paraphrase their position.
When they can confirm or correct you, you also give them control and a feeling of control and satisfaction.

Great, great observation there, I had never thought about it before.

- **Propose alternatives for him to select**

When he chooses one of your options, it becomes his idea.
I might add here, it's even better if you allow him to flash out that proposal.

- **Reality testing questions instead of threats**

Instead of threatening, you can let them reach the conclusion of the nefarious consequences by asking "what do you think will happen if we don't agree" and "what do you think we will do".

If they still don't bite, you can end with a statement about what the consequences will be.
For example: "I got a job offer that would help me earn more. I'd like to stay here, I enjoy working with you, what should I do… "

- **Use force to instruct and teach, not to punish**

When you punish someone, you increase the chances of escalations, mutually destructive behavior, and lose-lose.

Instead, if you must use force, do it in a way that won't destroy your relationship.

Your goal is to show that not agreeing is the worst solution for them than agreeing.

Always remember to provide them with a way to save face when they go back to the negotiation table (also read: how to make friends and influence people).

> **Bring them to their senses, not to their knees**

CONS

Getting Past No is a wonderful book with little cons, but I could find a few blemishes:

- **Some Examples Were Too Submissive**

William Ury makes a great point that ego and thin emotional skin get in the way of effectiveness.

And I totally agree.
Yet a few times his characters' examples ended up being too lenient in my opinion.

A budget director, for example, tells a department's head that she had already put his name on the list of budget cuts. Without talking to him first.
In the example, he totally ignores her action and keeps focusing on a solution.
But her action was very disrespectful and she went over his head: that set a bad precedent. He should have definitely addressed that and defended his boundaries.

PROS

Among many pros:

- **All the basics of difficult negotiations are here**

All the basics of effective negotiation against difficult people are here.

- **Great examples**

There are plenty of examples in "*Getting Past No*", and many of them are really good.

Review

Getting Past No is a wonderful text on negotiation.

Many of the basics for dealing with difficult negotiators are here.

That doesn't mean that negotiating will become *easy*: moving past your ego, the central tenet of "*Getting Past No*", is not easy.

But once you know what's good, you can at least train towards it.

Check the **best negotiation books** or get the book on Amazon

Controlling People: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 February 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Controlling People (2002) teaches how controlling people think, what their needs are, and why they do what they do.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Controllers Are Afraid of Losing Connection
  - Backward Connection
  - Signs of Independence Are Threats to Controllers
  - Controllers Are Extreme Pretenders
  - Controller Are Highly Dependant
  - Controllers' Techniques
  - Stalking is Controlling
  - Control Through Ganging Up
- To Read After Controlling Men
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- For controllers, intimacy means being one with themselves
- Controllers perceive their partners' signs of independence as threats
- Some controlling batterers really believe their partners "made them" violent because they see them as part of themselves
- Most controllers control and manipulate unconsciously

Full Summary

About the Author: I couldn't find much information about Patricia Evans and her background.
She seems to focus on abusive personalities and provides seminars and consultations on abusive relationships.

Controllers Are Afraid of Losing Connection

First of all, says Evans, we all try to control others to some degree, especially so in intimate relationships.

And when we are afraid, a degree of control makes us feel safer.
However, controllers take it to an extreme. And for them, controlling is always on.

Patricia Evans says that most controllers aren't rationally and consciously trying to control you.

They try to limit your freedom and shape your behavior because they are afraid of losing you.

In the controllers' warped mindset, an independent partner is a threat. To a controller, controlling equates to working on the relationship.

Backward Connection

Some controllers establish a “backward connection”.

A backward connection is typical of batterers and abusive men. Since they don’t perceive the difference between themselves and their partners, they really believe that it’s their partner who made them attack them.

Signs of Independence Are Threats to Controllers

Since controllers see their partners as part of themselves, signs of independence and own judgment are seen as a threat to the relationship and to themselves.

Other signs of separateness include:

- Having an own opinion
- Requests
- Thoughts
- New ideas
- Suggestions
- Questions
- Beliefs
- Objections
- ….

Even looking for government support to help the family when in need can be a threat to a controller.
It’s a sign of seeking independence, a sign of acting on one’s own volition.

The most interesting aspect for me though was that **controllers often target and devalue their partner’s most glaring gift or uniqueness**.
Because that gift, especially if creative, is the most important -and threatening- expression of their individuality.

Controllers Are Extreme Pretenders

Patricia Evans says that in many relationships there are pretenders and controllers.

Pretenders look for a dream and when they meet someone they project their own fantasies onto him or her.

Controllers are pretenders who will want to keep their fantasies alive by trying to adapt their partners to their dream.

Controller Are Highly Dependant

Controllers paradoxically see themselves as very independent, but in truth, they are highly dependent on their partners.

Also see:

- Codependent no more

My Note: Not sure I agree
I’m not sure I agree here.
George Simon, author of “In Sheep’s Clothing” says instead that controllers are *not* dependent on their partner as “many clinicians seem to believe”.
Controllers seek power and control, but they are able to move on and can function independently.

I believe the evidence shows that the truth is in the middle here: some controllers might be dependent. But many are not. It seems like psychopaths, tend not to be codependent because they don't form attachments.
See for example the difference between "cobras" and pit bulls" in "The Wisdom of Psychopaths".

Controllers' Techniques

Patricia Evans also lists a few "techniques" that controlling men use to keep their women emotionally weak and dependent on them:

- Devalue her
- Don't listen to her
- Listen in a distracted or preoccupied way
- Find fault in what she says
- Imply she should have known better
- If she complains, persuade she's too needy or demanding
- Have her listen to your troubles to explain why you can't listen to hers
- Say she doesn't appreciate what you do for her
- If you make more, say that gives you a greater right to decide
- Always ask for what she does in exchange
- Deny any imbalances in the relationship
- Ask rhetorical prosecutorial questions
- Deny you were criticizing but you were only asking an innocent question
- Imply she's overly sensitive
- Make her feel guilty for misperceiving your intentions and hurting your feelings

Stalking is Controlling

Stalking is controlling connection at a distance.

When the stalker gets a reaction from the victim, he feels connected to her.
Even if the reaction is negative, she is reacting to him, and he's now in her mind and they're connected.

Control Through Ganging Up

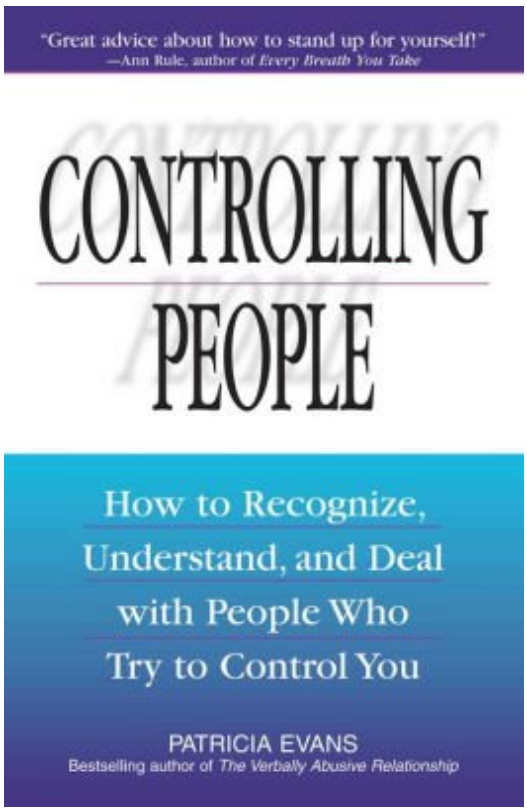
Ganging up with someone against someone is also a form of control and an unhealthy way of bonding.

Gangs often find a spurious reason to be together and a spurious reason to hate each other.
Patricia Evans says that hate is an excuse and that ganging up is a substitute for real bonding.

She also talks about hate groups, religious extremists, and Taliban states.

My Note: I couldn't agree more
I totally agree and that's one of the reasons I gave such low reviews to Lean In, Tribe by Sebastian Junger, and The Way of Men by Jack Donovan.
They all, in one way or another, cheered for ganging up.

> **They gang up in fear of standing alone**



To Read After Controlling Men

- 7 Types of Abusive Men
- Jealous Boyfriend or Controller?
- How Women Control Relationships
- Soft Power
- How to Make Him Value Her More
- Games Men Play in Dating
- Games Women Play to Get Relationships

Real-Life Applications

This is my own very personal real-life application and not endorsed by Patricia Evans:

- **Leave a controller**

The author mentions a few cases of men who willingly tried -and even managed- to overcome their controlling ways.
But as Lundy Bancroft, author of Why Does He Do That says, that's a tiny minority. And the majority doesn't change.

CONS

- **Complex**

I would have preferred a book more clearly laid out, with chapters and key concepts explained and flashed out.

It felt instead like a long, slightly disjointed talk.

- **Lots of Stories & Anecdotes**

At times it felt like it was a lot of stories and circumstantial evidence but not as much data and research.

- **People who define you are manipulative and controlling?**

I really have to disagree with this definition of controlling people.

Evans is talking about a specific controlling manipulative technique delivered from a judge role.

But what if those who define you are actually right, or at least somewhat right?
And what if they define you positively? Would that still count as controlling?
Enlarging the definition of "controlling people" and casting the net so wide seems to me like a witch-hunt a case of "crying wolf" a bit too often or, might even be, at times, being indeed a bit too touchy.

I often find people who define me highly annoying. Especially when they know little about me.
But I wouldn't define most of them as "controlling".

- **Providing justification for controllers?**

I don't say this lightly, but at times it felt as if the author wasn't taking a strong enough stand against controllers.

Understanding the psychology of controllers is great -that's what I'm all about-.
But are we sure that batterers feel one with their partners? And does that exempt them from also being violent assholes?

PROS

Some good insights on the mindsets and psychology of controllers.

Review

I had very high expectations for "*Controlling People*".
And there were some great foundational information and new perspectives for me.

Like, for example, the idea that controllers are extremely dependent and, often, believe they are actually working on the relationship.

However, overall, it was an OK read.
Maybe I had too high expectations, or I didn't really get some parts, but it left me wanting.

Check the **best dark triad books** or **get the book on Amazon**.

Bad Blood: Summary, Review & Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Bad Blood (2018) is a fascinating story of intrigue, power, Machiavellianism, and, most likely, what happens when a sociopath ends up at the helm of a company.
Carreyrou, the author of "*Bad Blood*", chronicles the story of Elizabeth Holmes, the founder of Theranos. When it became clear that Holmes lied on her company's technical capabilities, she went from the richest woman alive and inspiration for millions of businesswomen, to an international pariah.

Contents

- Summary
- Summary
  - The Big Unicorn That Came Back to Earth
  - Elizabeth Holmes' Great Idea
  - Theranos Never Really Had a Working Product
  - How Elizabeth Misled Kissinger, Murdoch Mattis & Everyone
  - From Bully to Angel
  - Is Elizabeth Holmes a Sociopath?
- Real-Life Applications
- PROS
- Review

Summary

- Wildly acclaimed media darling Elizabeth Holmes managed a company for over a decade without a functioning product
- Kissinger, Mattis, Murdoch, and plenty of smart men all fell for the lies and charm of Holmes
- Don't believe the hype of what the media sell

Summary

About the Author: John Carreyrou is a journalist, and was the first to uncover the lies behind Theranos and her founder Elizabeth Holmes. As it's often the case, he took a lot of flack for going in first but, eventually, he was vindicated.

The Big Unicorn That Came Back to Earth

I personally was surprised by hearing how actually big Theranos was since I had never heard about it before.

But it *was* big.
Theranos raised over $700 million of venture capital and at its peak had a valuation of $9 billion, making her founder Elizabeth Holmes a multi-billionaire.

The evaluation and money raised were based on false assumptions, optimistic projects, false data, and lots of lies and fabrications.

Elizabeth Holmes' Great Idea

Elizabeth Holmes, like many others, is scared of the needles that are necessary for blood tests.
And she set out to change the way blood tests are run: with a wearable patch.

Not only the wearable patch would render needles useless, but by keeping it on for a whole day, doctors could receive real-time information about patients.

It was genius.

On paper…

Theranos Never Really Had a Working Product

Of course, the product never really lived up to the hype.
And not even to the most basic expectations that a medical device should meet.

It's crazy to realize how far Theranos got without ever really having a working product.

It would be laughable… If it weren't for all the people who personally suffered the consequences.

People Were Mislead By Theranos' Analysis

Theranos' test analysis was unreliable.

But that didn't stop Elizabeth Holmes to guarantee their dependability. And the people who trusted her paid, sometimes, with their own health.

How Elizabeth Misled Kissinger, Murdoch Mattis & Everyone

Bad Blood is particularly interesting for me as a researcher of human behavior and, particularly, as a researcher and writer on power moves, games people play, and bullies.

Elizabeth Holmes duped a seasoned negotiator like Henry Kissinger General Mattis, who is the same guy who said: "be nice and courteous but always have a plan to kill everyone in the room".

Obviously, Mattis had no quote to defend against a smart manipulator, because this is what she said of Holmes:

> (Holmes has) One of the most mature and well-honed sense of ethics
> -General Mattis

But this is no indictment of Mattis or Kissinger.
After all, plenty of professional investors and big pharma companies had been duped into the lie and fraud.

Learn more on manipulation:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

From Bully to Angel

But as Bad Blood shows, Holmes was also a bully.
Just for not everyone to see.
For the public, she was the image of the revolutionary startup founder with a dream.
And she was a female with blue eyes, blonde hair, and a highly charismatic persona.

Here are some key passages of her big lies:

- **Elizabeth Playing The Fighter for Better World**

Elizabeth Holmes often played the role of the startup founder who is going to make the world a better place.

Listen to her saying:

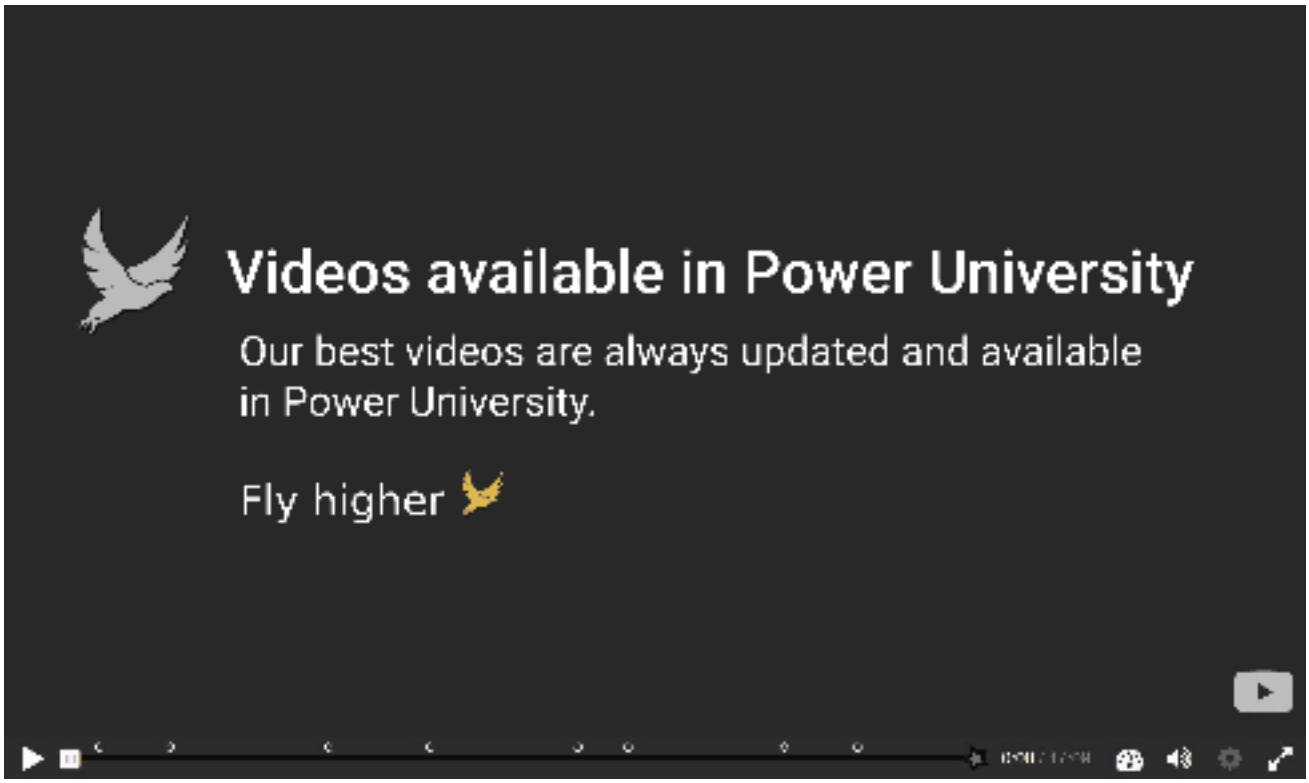
> **Elizabeth**: We have a belief system that this is not about us or technology, this is about giving people a basic right

LOL.

- **Stirring Deep Emotions**

Holmes often mentioned the pain of sick people as a way of stirring strong emotions in the audience.

In her Ted Talk, which has since been withdrawn, she talks about her uncle, and how depressed she was when he got sick:



Then, she would frame herself up as the woman working to solve those problems.

But John Carreyrou explains that she was never in any way close to her uncle.
But that didn't stop Elizabeth from weaving a tear-jerking story that made it seem as if the two were so close.

- **The rebel against entrenched interest**

Here she is on Mad Money's show playing the role of the rebel who changes the world in spite of everything:

> **Elizabeth**: First, they think you're crazy. Then, they fight you. Then you change the world.

LOL, what a lying POS.
These are the people I think of when I started this website. The people we all need to be aware of.

- **The narrative**

Almost all businesses seek to weave a story in their marketing because that's what captures attention and that's what helps sell.

Holmes's narrative was that of the girl who was afraid of needles and who now fights for a better, cheaper, more inclusive healthcare system.

Look at her showing the letter from her childhood self:

- **The #GirlPower angle**

And you must love how she took the "GirlPower" angle to shore up support for her lying and cheating.

Here is what she says as Theranos became more and more embattled:

> "Until what happened in the last four weeks, I didn't understand what it means to be a woman in this space," she says, shaking her head. "Every article starting with, 'A young woman.' Right? Someone came up to me the other day, and they were like, 'I have never read an article about Mark Zuckerberg that starts with 'A young man.' "

What a conniving b*tch, and I bet many drank the cool aid and sided with her.

Here again, pushing the "female in science" narrative:

If you want to be a successful woman in business, ditch the sociopaths and check out "how to be a successful businesswoman in a male world".

- **The Steve Jobs references**

Elizabeth Holmes secretly invited parallels with Steve Jobs. Starting with the black turtlenecks to dropping out from Stanford going against the grain.

And, of course, the "reality distortion field" that ended up distorting reality… A bit too much.

In my opinion, she overdid her effort to be charismatic and sometimes ended up being spooky and eery.
She wanted to be charismatic in this video, but it ends up being unnatural and fake.

Since she didn't understand that, it makes me think that Elizabeth was emotionally challenged and lacking in basic social intelligence.

- **Lyin' till the end**

Elizabeth Holmes kept lying and going after the journalists and magazines uncovering her story until the very end.

This is one of the public interviews when the flames of the scandal were already raging high:

John Carreyrou says he could not sense any heartfelt apology here and there were no apologies to all the patients who had been hurt and fed a lie.

Is Elizabeth Holmes a Sociopath?

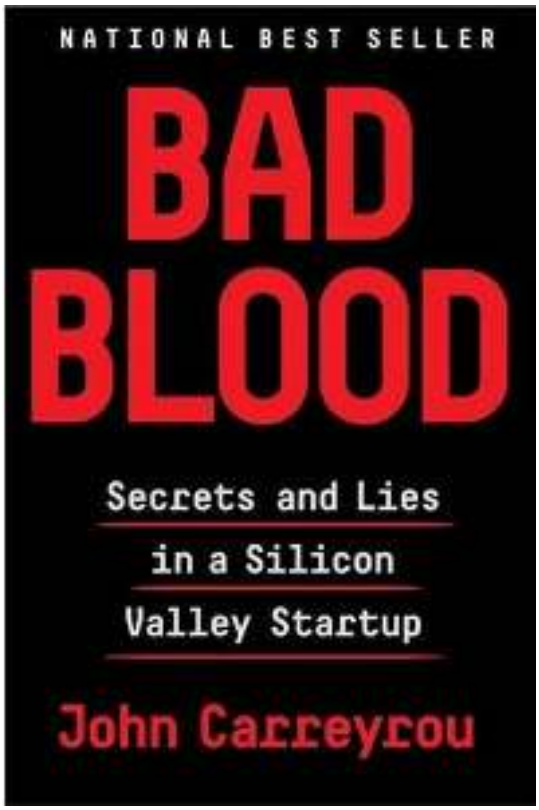
It's funny, during the whole book I kept thinking "God she's such a sociopath".

All the signs seemed to check and with her attitude, she reminded me so much of Donald Trump.
Like Trump, as described by Comey's book *A Higher Loyalty*, Holmes demanded absolute loyalty from the people around her and she would fire them on a whim if they didn't comply with her or with her distorted view of reality.

And like Trump and many other sociopaths, she was ruthless in accruing power and getting rid of anyone standing her way.

And then, towards the end, the author John Carreyrou says:

> A sociopath is defined as someone with little or no conscience.
> I'll leave it up to the psychologists to define whether Holmes fits the clinical profile, but there is no question that her moral compass was badly askewed



Real-Life Applications

- **To score big: actions must back ambition**

Alright, Elizabeth Holmes' actions and deceits are disgraceful. However, it's undeniable that she achieved a lot.

For me, a big revelation was when Elizabeth spent 5 days at her computer sleeping one or two hours per night as she researched SARS.

PROS

- **Well Researched**

We must mention the fact that the main woman, Elizabeth Holmes, is missing from the interviewees.
But Bad Blood is an extremely well-researched book. And, frankly, you might excuse me if I wouldn't very much trust anything Holmes has to say anyway.

- **Well Written**

The author manages to combine a descriptive and informative text with the pace and excitement of a novel.
The details he pays attention to, also often go at the core of the psychological profiles of the people involved.
Great job.

- **High-Quality Audiobook**

Some books lose a lot of value when their audiobook have low-quality narrators or bad voices.
It's not the case for Bad Blood: perfect narration and wonderful voice interpretations.

Review

Bad Blood is a wonderful investigative piece of work into the history -and the mind- of a highly ambitious woman.

You will learn A LOT from Bad Blood.
But not the way you'd learn from a self-help book: here you need to tease out your own lessons learned.

Here are a few of them:

- **Media narratives are meaningless**

The media loves to glorify -or destroy- people.
It sells well, and people, in general, love a myth.

Elizabeth Holmes was celebrated as the youngest, brightest self-made female billionaire in the world and graced the cover of all major magazines, including Forbes.

Then well.. Reality eventually caught up.

But consider that, many times, reality might never well catch up and we might all be celebrating some lying, conniving, callous sociopath.

- **Sociopaths Are Dangerous**

High-functioning sociopaths, the few that can manage to work hard and stay at things for long enough, can be very dangerous to deal with.

I discuss how to handle them in the workplace in my course Power University.

In Short: Bad Blood is a lovely book. You will learn a lot about human nature while also enjoying a story that reads like a novel.

Does Being a Sociopath in Business Pay?

It's a complex question, but in short: yes, it can work in your favor.
Especially if you can limit the more aggressive and antisocial tendencies and keep the narcissism, drive for power, and Machiavellianism.
I recommend you read "empathy VS sociopathy in business".

And I also recommend you read this article:

- **Corporate manipulations**

Check the **best dark triad books** or **get the book on Amazon**

100 Dollar Startup: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The $100 Startup is about building a fulfilling life of freedom and meaningful work by doing what you love.
It's mostly about solopreneurship, but there are plenty of examples of solopreneurs who grew to hire small teams.

Was it good?
Yes, I absolutely loved it.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Exchange Freedom for Value
  - The Formula of Effective Solopreneurship
  - Nomadic is Great, But Focus on Work
  - One Page Business Plan
  - Fire Your Worst Customers
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- The pursuit of freedom starts by finding a way to provide value to others
- It's possible, and possibly easier than you think, to build a business
- People want the fish, not to learn how to cook. And don't sell features but benefits: people buy emotionally

Full Summary

Chris Guillebeau prefaces The $100 Startup saying that in this blueprint for freedom, you won't find "secrets", shortcuts, gimmicks or visualization exercises.

If you think you can visualize money and manifest them, put the book down, he says, because this is about practical things you can do to work your way to freedom.

BANG!
He spoke to my heart, and I was sold.

Exchange Freedom for Value

To get freedom, you must give something of value. Chris Guillebeau defines "value" as:

> You create value when you do something useful and share it to the world

The Formula of Effective Solopreneurship

The mantra of "follow your passion" is also half true.

Yes, your passion matters, but if nobody wants to buy what you're passionate of producing, then you can't make a living out of it.

The formula of effective solopreneurship is this:

- Passion & skill + usefulness = success

Nomadic is Great, But Focus on Work

Guillebeau says:

> Some of the failures relate to unrealistic expectations. Some people want the sun and fun, or the 300 dollars a day, without the work.
>
> Part of the allure of working from anywhere, many aspiring entrepreneurs focus much more on the "anywhere" part than on the "work" part.
> Since the "work" part is what sustains everything, it's best to focus on it since the beginning.

I couldn't agree more with Chris Guillebeau here.
If you go to the most popular world centers of "digital nomads", most people aren't making a dime on their digital businesses.

And I also loved what he says next:

> After all, the best thing about location independence is possibitliy. The fact that you can head off to Argentin or Thailand on a whim doesn't necessarily mean that you actually will.

BANG!
Possibility is indeed the most beautiful thing of location independence.

One Page Business Plan

Planning is important, but action tramps plan and most people spend way too much time on drafting a business plan.

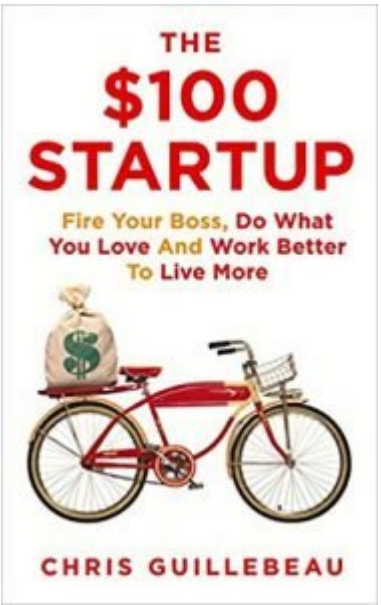
The author instead invites in drafting your business idea or mission statement within 140 characters.
To simplify, think of your service and the group of people who will pay for it: put it together, and you have a mission statement.

Fire Your Worst Customers

Guillebeau says that a guarantee sometimes is not enough because it doesn't pay back the time wasted.
So he proposes to give a 110% price back guarantee, which is an idea similar to what Tim Ferris proposes in The 4 Hour Work Week.

The author also quotes Tony Hsieh, author of Delivering Happiness. Tony says that most people are honest, but there are a few who might try to take advantage of your guarantee.
You should stop immediately doing business with them.

Alternatively, you might try offering no guarantee at all and making it a big deal about it.
You will have fewer customers but more committed ones (and no complaint).



Real Life Applications

- **If you go for consultancy, pick a specific niche!**

Avoid “life coach” or “business coach”. Find a niche you can be an expert on and make sure your customers know what they can expect when they hire you.

- **Think in terms of shared beliefs and values**

I love how the author doesn’t recommend the usual marketing approach of segmenting your market by the old age/gender/location splits, but instead to think of your core market in terms of shared beliefs and values.

- **Focus on Bottom Line**

There are hundreds of vanity metrics and thousands of things you can do about your work and website that do NOT impact your bottom line.
Remember to act more in accordance with your ultimate goal: building a viable business.

Spend only on what has a direct relation to sales and income.

A board of director would never accept as “results” the number of likes on a post.
And neither should you :).

- **Share yourself, not others**

Talking about others will make you disappear.
Find a way to share your unique voice and opinion instead.

- **Only scale if you really want to**

Don’t feel forced to “scale”. Once you reach a good income, staying small might be the best way to maximize your life quality.

- **Work on making the business independent**

The author touches on the concept of working “on” the business instead of “in” the business.
This is an idea from The E-Myth Revisited, based on taking time off from the business to think and devise systems and processes to make the business independent from yourself.

CONS

- **Some generic advice**

“The 100 Dollar Startup” looks at many kind of different business, so some of the advice is necessarily vague and generic and might not be helpful to actually start a business in a specific vertical.

For example, the author says:

1. Choose a product or service
2. Build a website (consider WordPress)
3. Offer your product / service
4. Choose a payment method (consider PayPal)
5. Advertise / share your work

That’s true but it’s so general to the point of not being useful.
Or he mentions how to launch a product, but if you’re at that stage, you’re probably better off with some specific -like Launch by Jeff Walker-.

PROS

- **Great mix of advice and case stories**

I loved the idea of mixing solid advice with working success stories.

- **Emotional mission statement examples**

I really loved the example on mission statements translated into “emotional” versions.
Some of the were very good and it helped me a lot to overcome my innate distaste for “dry business statements”.
And it helped me in my own business.

Review

I reached out to the author through HARO when he was looking for side hustle examples and this website was still a side hustle (but I never heard from him :).

I see some parallels with Tim Ferris’ work here, but The 100 Dollars Startup is no knock-off.
It’s a good book with powerful case studies and solid advice.

I really enjoyed and can highly recommend to every buddying solopreneur out there.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

Atomic Habits: Summary, Review, Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Atomic Habits (2018) is a comprehensive overview of habits, including how to start new ones, how to stop bad habits, and how habits can revolutionize your life (in the long run).

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Small Daily Habits Make the Difference
  - Focus on Systems, Not Goals
  - Change Identity First
  - The 4 Steps of Habits Change
  - How to Make Habits Changes Easy
  - Choose a Field You're Good At
  - Push Until The End
- Real-Life Applications
- CRITICISM
  - Pop-Psychology Fest
  - Grifting for more?
  - Compound effect… Nonsense
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Small (atomic) habits compound over time** to lead to completely different lives
- **Make good habits easy to start and rewarding to finish…**
- … And **make unhealthy habits hard to start and painful to finish**
- Habits are built on repetition, not time!

Summary

Atomic Habits start with the same concept as "*The Slight Edge*" and "*The Compound Effect*": daily habits might seem small on a daily basis, but they compound to make big differences (except they don't always compound, but more often add up, including with diminishing returns).

Small Daily Habits Make the Difference

James Clear says that it's the small daily habits that compound over time to make the difference.

If you train today or not instead of binging on that chocolate cake it won't make a difference in your lifetime.

But if you skip training and keep binge eating for months, it will make a huge difference.

This is a well-known concept in the self-help industry.

If you don't understand that it takes time though, you might be disappointed during the first period of a new habit.

But you must have faith and stick through (also read Think and Grow Rich for more on faith).

> **You don't rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your systems**

Focus on Systems, Not Goals

I liked the idea behind "systems above goals" in Atomic Habits.

It's not so much because systems will naturally take care of the goals, but it's because of *who you become* with the systems.

Here is why you should focus on the systems:

1. You will soon revert to your old self once you "achieve" your goal
2. Winners and losers have the same goals: it's the systems that make the difference
3. Goals can lead to a warped approach to happiness (ie.: "I'll be happy once I achieve it")

In the words of James Clear:

> Goals are good for setting directions. Systems are best for making progress.

Habits are not about getting something: they are about becoming someone

Change Identity First

James Clear differentiates between outcomes, processes, and identities:

- **Outcomes**: what you get
- **Processes**: your habits and actions
- **Identity**: who you believe you are

To effectively change your processes and habits, you should strive to change your identity first.

Once you choose an identity and then become that person, you naturally start acting in accordance with your identity.
And the results will follow.

However, identity and actions are interlinked.
As a matter of fact, we often set our identities based on our actions. That's why it's important that we show up even when we're not feeling it: because that will help build our identity.

Of course, it takes time.
But every time you follow through, it's a new vote of confidence in your identity.

The 4 Steps of Habits Change

Atomic Habits revisits the same habit loops of The Power of Habit, such as:

1. **Cue:** we see, hear, think, or remember something
2. **Craving**: we start looking forward to the reward we get
3. **Response**: you act (the actual habit)
4. **Reward**: you get your reward (good taste, filled stomach, etc.)

However, what's new in Atomic Habits and what's one of the biggest added value is James Clear's explanation of

how to make your behavior change easier.

How to Make Habits Changes Easy

Here is how you can make it easier for yourself to change habits:

Step	Good Habit	Bad Habit
Cue	Make it obvious	Make it invisible
Craving	Make it attractive	Make it unattractive
Response	Make it easy	Make it difficult
Reward	Make it great	Make it terrible

To make the cue easy you can leave “reminders” around your house. To follow through with healthy eating, for example, you can find a restaurant that will deliver healthy and good food.

And to make a cue invisible you can make a rule to never have in your house any soda, for example. Then you won’t have a “drink the soda” cue.

#1. Make it Obvious

Making the habit obvious has several steps:

1. **Implementation Intention**: decide on a time, place, and location and say “I will (do X) at (X time) in (X location)
2. **Habit Stacking**: do one good habit after another, and once you start with one it will be easier to keep going
3. **Environment Design**: shape your environment in a way that will help reinforce good habits and eliminate bad ones

The environment is key, says the author, because our willpower is limited. People who successfully master their habits focus more on making it easy for them than on fighting their own urges.

#2. Make it Attractive

And here are a few ways to make a non-inherently pleasurable habit easier to start and stick to:

1. **Temptation bundling**: do something you like while you engage in an activity that is harder to stick to
2. **Reward yourself**: do a pleasurable activity after your more difficult action and you will look forward to doing the hard task to get to the good stuff
3. **Pick the** right people: join people, groups, and cultures where your desired habit is the norm
4. **Habit swapping**: there are many ways of addressing the underlying need and you can probably swap an unhealthy habit with a healthy one (for example: go for a run to let go of steam instead of drinking)

#3. Make it Easy

The easier it is to take action, the more likely the habit will stick. Remember, it’s not about willpower, it’s about developing a system that makes your habits easy.

1. **Drop Perfect**: showing up consistently is more important than doing it perfectly
2. **Law of Least Effort**: always look and engineer the simplest way that you can start and act on the habit you want to build. Reduce friction by joining a gym on the way to work and only watching TV after you say the name of the TV program to increase friction and reduce thoughtless watching
3. **Two-minute rule**: at the beginning, your habits should be easy to follow through. Start small and built over time

4. **Extra friction**: makes it impossible to waste time on bad habits. Ask your partner, for example, to change the password on your social media and don't get it back until the weekend

#4. Make it Rewarding

The first three steps increase the chances that you will perform the action. Increasing the reward instead will make it more likely that you will repeat the behavior and, hence, turn it into a habit.

James Clear recommends you use a habit tracker for a few reasons:

1. They create a visual cue
2. The progress you see is encouraging
3. Checking boxes of "I did it" lists is satisfying
4. They provide stronger proof that you are changing your identity

And, finally:

- Establish a punishment for skipping the habit

It's possible you will skip a few beats and stop a streak. When that happens, start again ASAP.

Choose a Field You're Good At

I enjoyed James Clear's reflection on nature VS nurture and hard work and genes.

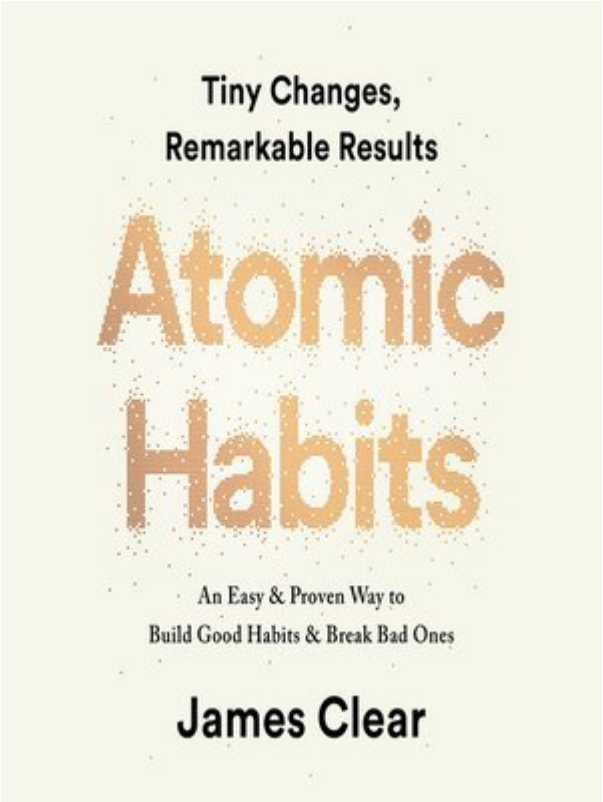
Basically, he says that with hard work we can all advance, but if we choose a field where our natural abilities support us the most, then we will achieve success more easily and we will stick to our habits more easily.

> **Genes don't determine your destiny: they determine your area of opportunity**

Push Until The End

As habits become routines, they become less interesting and we get bored. That's when you need to stick through them if you want to achieve high levels of success.

> **The greatest threat to success is not failure but boredom**



Real-Life Applications

Focus on repetition, not on time!
In spite of what snake-oil salesman Tai Lopez says, habits are not built over time but over repetition.

Focus on Identities
this is something I often also repeat. Focus on identity first and foremost. Also, read The Antifragile Ego.

CRITICISM

Pop-Psychology Fest

Many of the anecdotes smell of half-bogus to me.

And there is plenty of poor pop-psychology.

Just an example:

- **Heroin & veterans to break bad habits (myth?)**

James Clear says that the veterans who used heroin in Vietnam didn't become drug addicts at the same rates as non-veteran addicts because of the different environments.

Let me preface that I'm not familiar with the full study and I haven't reviewed it.
However, it felt to me like a possible jump to conclusion and not necessarily true.

For example, non-veterans heroin addicts may end up using heroin because of a particular affinity for drug use,
Or they may end up to heroin because they're already addicted to other substances.
Finally, non-veterans heroin users may just have a higher addictive personality in general compared to the vets.

In any case, I think it would have been better to dispel those doubts.

Grifting for more?

I guess buying the book is not enough.

So:

- **Constant references to the website**

It's OK to reference the website. Once or twice. But doing it so often makes people feel like they are missing a lot of they don't follow the website. think

- **Email required for add-ons**

James Clear says he's humbled and proud about the size of his… Mailing list.
And to get all the bonuses he mentions in the book, you need to sign up to, guess what? His mailing list.
I find it very annoying. I don't want to sign up to no mailing list I am "forced" to sign up to and from which I'll immediately unsubscribe anyway.

Compound effect... Nonsense

This idea that your effort compounds over time just as it happens with interest is BS.

Or, at least, it's BS in many human endeavors.

In truth, **in many human endeavours continued effort hits a point of diminishing returns**.
Weight training, for example, boosts muscle mostly during your first year, and then becomes diminishing returns.
Same goes for work and business, where working every day on a bad idea won't automatically turn into a successful business. Instead, poor early results maybe the signal that it's not a great idea.

Obviously, this is not to say you shouldn't maintain effort over time. But it means that you must be smart and strategic in what you invest in, rather than simply hoping that compound will one day magically turn you into hulk or a billionaire.

PROS

- **Best overview of habits**

Atomic Habits is the best book on habits I have read so far.

- **Sensible author**

I liked James Clear's take on genes and hard work. He doesn't push no silly "you can do anything" narrative and tells it how it is.

- **Helpful and Practical**

Follow the ideas of this book, and… You're on your way to your new and more successful you.

Review

Atomic Habits is the best book on habits I have read.

Unluckily, there are many of the usual pop psychology tropes, nonsense anecdotes, and rhetorical devices typical of self-help.
But it's almost impossible to get a mainstream self-help book without those these days.

To me personally, it wasn't super useful.

BUT… I can see why it can be helpful to some.

It's far more practical than the previously most popular book on habits, "*The Power of Habits*" -which I always found to be more theoretical than practical-.

It repeats a few well-known concepts for anyone who's been around self-development, but it ties it all together well within the topic of habits and success.

Check the **best books collection** or **get the book on Amazon**

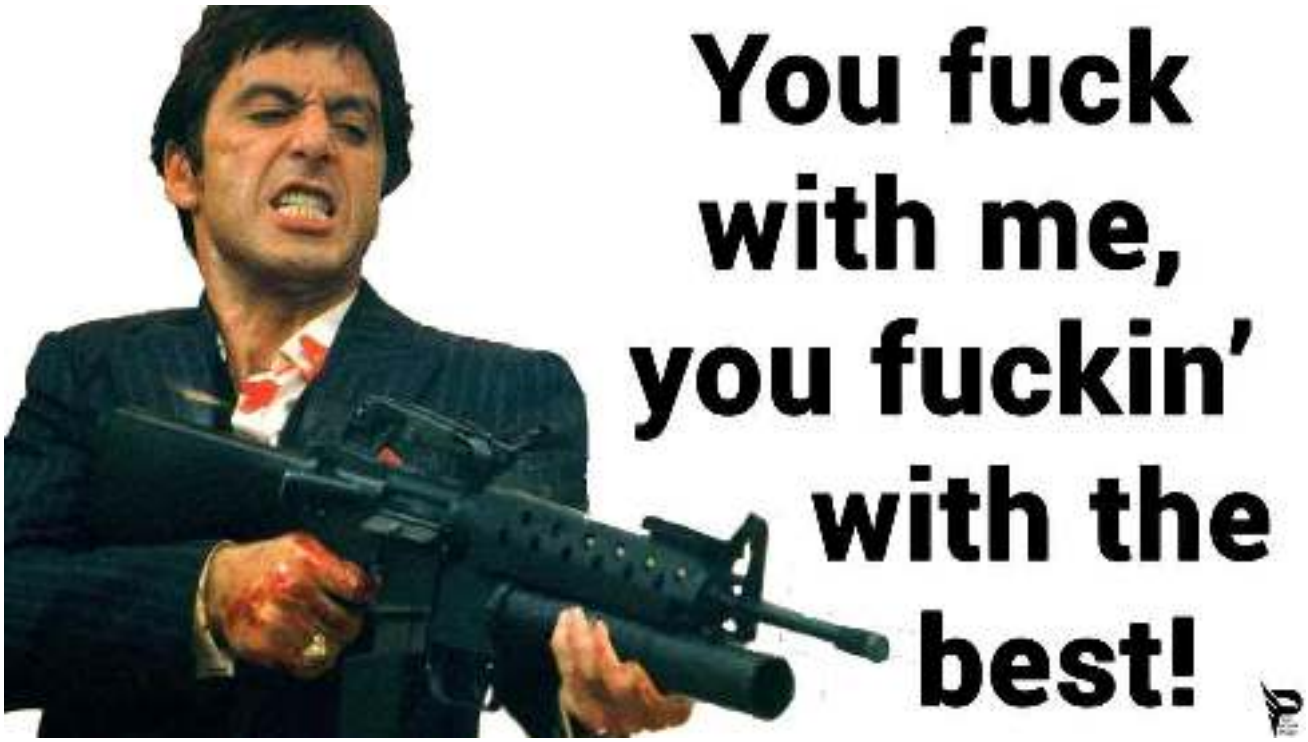
Tony Montana Teaches How to Get Power (Scarface)

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

This article analyzes the fictional Tony Montana character looking for the personality traits that facilitate the acquisition of power.

At The Power Moves, we are experts in men's empowerment to gain status, respect, and attractive mates.
So if you're wondering 'how to be like Tony Montana', this article tells you exactly what the main Scarface traits are.

⚠ **Note of caution:**
Tony Montana met an early demise because some of the same traits that facilitated his ascension also set him up for failure. While many men look at Scarface as an icon of masculinity, our strategic approach may be a better model for men interested in honor and long-lasting success.



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- 2. Always Be Leading
- 3. Be Ruthless
- 4. Be (Street) Smart
- 5. Have Boundless Ambition
- 6. Be Hungry For Success
- 7. Have a Sense of Entitlement

- NEGATIVE TRAITS
  - 1. It's a Big Gamble
  - 2. The Hunger Stems From Sense of Inferiority
  - 3. Relationship Muppet
- SUMMARY

1. Be Bold

Boldness is a crucial characteristic to skyrocket upward and gain power quickly.

Timid men hem and haw and they miss all the chances for quick ascension. Sure, they might slowly and steadily get there, and that approach might be even advantageous in many cases, but they don't go up as quickly as Tony Montana does.

You can clearly see the difference in mindset between Tony and his appeased bosses.

In the case of Tony Montana that boldness often becomes impulsivity, as he acts and reacts *too* quickly and hastily.

1.2 Be Ballsy

Balls, courage, and daredevil are a subset of boldness.

You can hardly be bold without being courageous. And if you're afraid, sometimes you must force yourself to act anyway.

There are many instances in which Tony Montana's display of fearlessness allowed him to move ahead quicker. This example is particularly interesting from a power perspective because it allows him to go from defensive to aggressive:

2. Always Be Leading

If you want to get power without waiting, you gotta *lead* to the top because nobody will carry you there.

Tony Montana always takes the lead.

He walks in first, he speaks first, he jumps on the deal and opportunity and he takes responsibility ("I go on the streets for you, one milli here, on milli there..).

Tony Montana is a man of action.
But notice that he still expects his partners to do the menial tasks for him. That's a hallmark of power: don't do for yourself what you can let others do for you.

Get the Power!

3. Be Ruthless

People are not going to make way for you and many are not going to be happy about you overtaking them.

At times, you'll need to be ruthless.

In the criminal world, ruthlessness might as well be a necessity to go up very quickly (but it can also help in business).

Tony Montana is plenty ruthless.

At times, he has trouble containing his mean streak with the people dearest to him as well.

Unluckily, ruthlessness and intimidatory tactics are not confined to the criminal world and they can provide an edge in business and politics as well.

Donald Trump is ruthless, and many sociopaths that climb to the top are ruthless, if you read the book Bad Blood Elizabeth Holmes, was mean and ruthless and Albert "chainsaw" Dunlap was ruthless, with some sources describing him as a psychopath.

These guys all crashed and burned and Trump is possibly in the process of crashing and burning, but before burning, they burned plenty of people along the way.

And that is one of the reasons why I always repeat that if you want to be good, you have to learn to be bad first.

This world needs fundamentally good people who know how to be bad.

I started ThePowerMoves and this channel in the hope that more people will receive this message and join the "be bad to be a good movement".

Anyway, let's move on.

4. Be (Street) Smart

Whenever you see someone going to the top, rarely it's a case of violence and terror alone.

To become a linchpin, you almost always need some skills and intellectual abilities as well.

Obviously, Tony Montana wasn't book smart and while he might not have been the smartest criminal ever, he was far from stupid.

Several scenes show us how is able to see the power moves much more clearly than the people around him:

And this other scene shows us how Tony has a much better sense of his own value.
Again, compare the different attitude of Tony to his friend Manny:

In this other scene, Tony Montana shows a great understanding of human psychology and leverage.

Omar wanted to get the money and the coke from Tony to look good on the big boss.
but by holding both money and cocaine, Tony knows he's got the leverage to go straight to the big boss Frank.
Stupid people let themselves be exploited. Smart ones know when they have the power to back up their big demands.

Finally, most low-level criminals and most non-criminal poor people as well, behave more like animals when it comes to impulse control and immediate gratification.
They see something they like it, they take it, they eat, they drink, they spend it, and tomorrow… Well, we'll see about tomorrow.
To better understand this phenomenon that differentiates successful people from non-successful ones, also read *The Marshmallow Test*.

There is one crucial moment in Scarface where Tony Montana shows he can take a loss today in exchange for a bigger gain tomorrow.

Many violent men with no brains here would have taken the money here, partied, and felt they had "hit big".
Not Tony Montana.
He's in to go to the top.

5. Have Boundless Ambition

You don't reach the top without ambition and without a strong drive.

Self-help is a huge industry, and it's very helpful, yet there is only ONE major element that stands above all else to achieve high levels of success. And that is drive and ambition.

And if you want to skyrocket to the top quickly, then you need boundless ambition

6. Be Hungry For Success

What's the difference between boundless ambition and drive for success?

Well, there are many ways of being driven. Some men get sidetracked in their life by pursuing lots of short-term sexual adventures.

But while men who reach the top can also enjoy women and other passions on the side, they are usually driven first and foremost by winning, money, or dominating their field of choice.

You can see here the difference between Tony and a few other characters in Scarface:

The higher your drive and the fewer distraction you have, the more you can achieve.
This is why the MGTOW movement in many ways, makes sense. And that's why monk mode can be a life-changer.

If you want to fuel your growth and success though, even better than pretending there are no sexual distractions, is to *leverage* your sexual drive for non-sexual achievements.
This is what in Napoleon Hill refers to as "Sex Transmutation" in *Think and Grow Rich*.

7. Have a Sense of Entitlement

There is also another important trait that many individuals with boundless drive and ambition possess, and that is an exaggerated sense of entitlement.

A sense of entitlement without skills and hard work is an extremely negative trait that just by itself dooms men and women to be low-quality individuals.
Get rid of your sense of entitlement unless your skills and hard work match your entitlement or, even better, far exceed it.

But when it's coupled with skills, bold actions, and relentlessness, then a sense of entitlement is crucial to gain power and skyrocket to success.

5.2. Despise Your Boss

People with boundless ambition and a sense of entitlement also often have authority issues.

And if you want to get power as soon as possible, that's not a bad thing. You just need to keep it under wrap until you have enough power to overthrow him.
If you do it too early though, like Robert Greene says in *The 48 Laws of Power*, you're toast (see here an example of out-dominating the boss).

If you're the boss, watch out. Overly ambitious individuals will often work to undermine you (see Berlusconi's example here).

Scarface was obviously going to be a bad "employee" for any boss.
And this is what Frank never realized. Albeit it was rather obvious.
Frank was really bad at reading and understanding people, and he paid the ultimate price for it.

NEGATIVE TRAITS

Should you then be more like Scarface?

Well, it's not up to me to tell you how you should you be, but also consider the downsides:

1. It's a Big Gamble

This is not literal gambling but bold action often ends up being the equivalent of gambling.

Don't think that because Scarface was successful then it was necessarily "worth the risk", that's the idiotic way of assessing risk.
You assess risk not by looking at single instances, but by looking at the most realistic probability distribution you can find.

And a more realistic probability distribution is something like this:

And for every ultra-bold man who makes it to the top, there are probably 10 or so who died trying.
In the case of the criminal world, that might as well be literally drying.
Even for those who get on top, **rapid growth too often does not equate with staying power**.

Think about many histories of explosive growth to the top.
Scarface is a fictional character.
But George Jung, El Chapo, Pablo Escobar, and similar, are not. Like Scarface, they have all been immensely successful… Until they weren't anymore and died prematurely.

Take Pablo Escobar, the most famous of them all.
He ended up killed like a stray animal, a fugitive in poor and tattered clothes, and with policemen taking pictures

next to his lifeless body.

That same hot-headedness and boldness allow for skyrocketing growth but also often set the stage for the undoing of too hot-headed individuals.
A gambler's attitude can get you lots of power very quickly. But rarely allows you to keep that power.
It's inherent in the mathematical properties of gambling: it doesn't do well in the long run.

The smartest ones instead change their attitude once on top and move from a meathead to a quieter, more calculative style.
Or they might completely change their business model, *like 50 Cent has done for example*.

2. The Hunger Stems From Sense of Inferiority

The drive that Tony Montana shows is partially fueled by a sense of inferiority.

Tim Grover in *Relentless* says that most overachievers are driven by a dark side.
That dark side can be insecurity and a constant need to make up for what you perceive is a shortcoming of yours.

We see several instances in which Tony Montana clearly shows a sense of inferiority.

For example, he seems to have a problem with rich white men, which is a feeling that I have also seen, several times, in some immigrants or minorities.

Some psychologists even speculate that modern Islamic terrorism is partially driven by a feeling of inferiority, and I believe there is a lot of truth in that.

Being driven is simply a trait. It's not necessarily good per and it's not necessarily bad per se.
However, when that drive comes from a sense of inferiority or hatred, then it usually makes for a poorer quality of life and for poorer mental health.

A sense of inferiority is also a thumbscrew that allows people to easily manipulate you.

And that is exactly what happens to Scarface in his relationship.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

3. Relationship Muppet

Highly driven men with a feeling of inferiority have an emotional hole that never gets filled. They have a constant need of proving themselves to themselves and to the world (see: David Goggins).

One way of proving themselves to the world is through a so-called trophy wife.
These men wish they could exert control over their women, but Smart and manipulative women feel the deep insecurity and use it as a thumbscrew to keep their men emotionally dependent.

The result is a constant tug of war and a highly unfulfilling relationship where, most of the time, she ends up controlling the relationship and exerting most of the influence.

Watch this example and notice how she is the one who wields soft power in the relationship:

Also, read:

- How women manipulate and control men

SUMMARY

Ultimately, getting power and skyrocketing upwards the way Tony Montana did is more of an exception than a rule.

You might still be successful doing it, but he's still not the type of person that most people would look up to.

He was not a good role model and he was a poor leader by almost all accounts. Even in his own relationship Tony Montana was not a leader.

In this regard, I see a lot of parallels with Donald Trump.

Primal Leadership: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Primal Leadership* (2001) Daniel Goleman argues that the number one trait of any good leader is his emotional intelligence, and his ability to connect and engage with his followers.
The book is also famous for Goleman's six types of leaders, whom he describes in detail.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The 6 Leadership Styles
  - The Best Leadership Style
  - When to Use Which Leadership Style
  - Examples of Leadership Styles
  - Resonant Leaders Embrace Emotions
  - Learning Leadership
  - Learning Leadership Styles
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We can recognize 6 different types of leadership
- Each style has its place, but you must limit the commanding (bossy) and pacesetting (only accepting high-performance) ones
- You can learn leadership and leadership styles, and you should strive to master several of them

Full Summary

About the Author: Daniel Goleman is not a psychologist himself, but a journalist and a best-selling author.
He is most famous for the concept of Emotional Intelligence that he detailed in his best-selling book "*Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*". The concept of Emotional Intelligence has had more success among the general population than among scientists and psychologists, who struggled to measure it (and even debated whether or not it even exists as a separate construct).
Daniel Goleman also wrote "*Working With Emotional Intelligence*" and "*Social Intelligence*".

The 6 Leadership Styles

According to Daniel Goleman, we can identify six styles of leadership:

- **Visionary**: the leader who rallies the troop behind his grand vision and dreams
- **Coaching**: helps develop people over the long term
- **Affiliative**: focused on harmony and human connections
- **Democratic**: hears everyone and builds consensus

- **Pacesetting**: demands and expects excellence and results
- **Commanding**: bellows order and demand immediate compliance

The Best Leadership Style

I can almost hear you asking: so, what's the best leadership style?

Well, each one is "best" depending on the situation, but Goleman says that pacesetting and commanding should be limited in time and space or they will poison the environment and lead to poorer results.

However, the author also clearly says that **the best leaders are the ones who can switch from one to the other depending on the situation**.
This is a concept I fully agree with and which I also apply to the submissive-dominance scale in Power University.

The best mixes of leadership styles are the following: authoritative, affiliative, democratic, and coaching.

When to Use Which Leadership Style

Here is an overview of the pros and cons:

- **Commanding / coercive**

While it's poisonous in the long run, it can be effective during disasters where a quick and energetic response is needed, during turnarounds, or with difficult employees.

It's very bad for keeping great employees though.
As Daniel Goleman says:

> Who wants to work for an SOB?

- **Visionary**

It can work well when the business is adrift.

It's not effective when working with a team of experts who know more about the leader.
In this case, they can become disillusioned and cynical about the leader.

- **Affiliative**

The strong focus on encouragement and praise helps the team's mood, but it can allow for poor performance to go unnoticed.

When the affiliative style does not provide corrective feedback or criticism, it can leave employees wondering.

- **Democratic**

It makes people feel heard and understood. But when it's too much democracy and less decision-making, people can feel like they are in a leaderless organization.

And when decisions take too long, it can result in many meetings and little decisions.

- **Pacesetting**

A leader who sets high standards and *shows* he meets and exceeds them is highly motivating for those employees who are equally competent and self-motivated.

Other employees who are not as good can feel overwhelmed and they can end up resenting him.

- **Coaching**

It works great when the leader is competent and well-learned and employees want to learn from him and want to improve.

It doesn't work nearly as well with unmotivated employees or with employees who don't want to change and improve (and with employees with a *fixed mindset*, such as employees who don't even believe they can even improve).

Examples of Leadership Styles

The author talks a bit about Al Dunlap.

Al Dunlap is *a self-styled psychopath*, who was "good" at turning around businesses by slashing the workforce, but who could not manage to run one well to save his life.

Goleman also talks about Jack Welch, the legendary CEO of GE and author of the management book "*Winning*". While most people think that Welch was a domineering boss, Goleman says that most people misunderstand him. Welch got *famous* for being a commanding boss, but few realize that he delivered with a different style. Welch was only commanding at the beginning of his tenure. And once he turned around GE, he later settled into a more emotionally intelligent leader.

Resonant Leaders Embrace Emotions

Daniel Goleman uses the term "resonant leaders" to describe leaders who understand human nature and leverage their emotional intelligence to connect with people and get the most out of them.

Resonant leaders *embrace* emotions and humanity.

Of the four leadership styles we saw earlier, resonant leaders are:

- visionary
- coaching
- affiliative
- democratic

Dissonant leaders instead don't understand or actively try to cut out the human side of business.

Of the four leadership styles that we saw earlier, dissonant leaders are:

- pacesetting
- command / authoritative

Learning Leadership

Can we learn leadership skills?

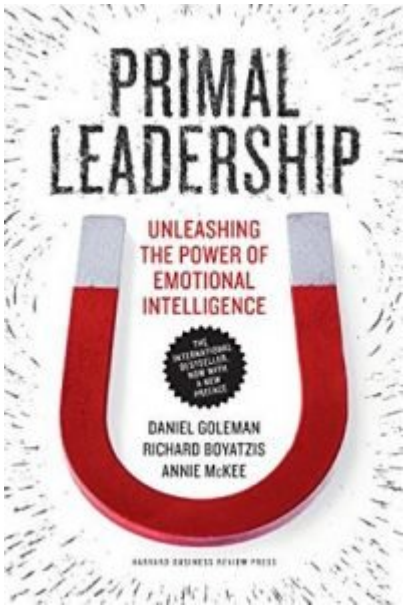
Absolutely we can, says Daniel Goleman.
It will take time and dedication, but you can learn it.

Learning Leadership Styles

We can also change leadership style, but we are not going to change that just by sitting in a classroom.

Competencies part of emotional intelligence like empathy and self-regulation are linked to the limbic system, which is not the rational part of our brain.
To change the limbic system, we need to unlearn old habits, develop new habits, and repeat them over time until a new neural pathway is formed (neurons that fire together wire together, says Doidge in *The Brain That Changes*

Itself).



Real-Life Applications

- **Stay Upbeat and Positive Under Stressful Situations**

Leaders who can stay positive and upbeat during stressful and difficult situations radiate positive resonance.

- **Stronger Self-Management Wins The Frame**

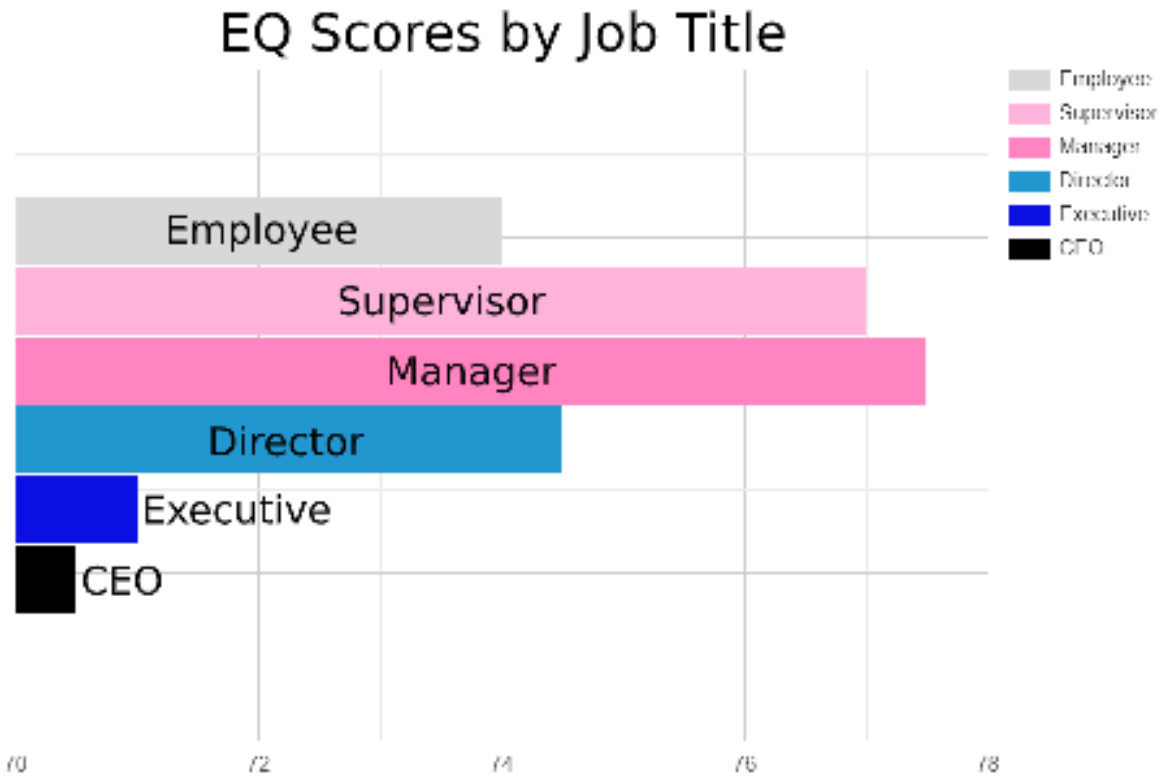
Goleman says that when two people with different emotional states meet there is a tug of war at an amygdala level. He says that when a confrontational person meets an unflappable one if the unflappable one keeps his cool, he ends up changing the confrontational person's attitude.

Goleman is basically talking about frames and about frame control.

CONS

- **Some important questions are left unanswered**

The author is a big promoter of emotional intelligence -and so am I-. However, Travis Bradberry notes, while EI rises along management lines, it drops in CEOs.
See the results of his study on this chart:



Why is that so?
What does it tell us?

Does it say maybe that when action and directions need to be set EI is less important?
Those are the important questions I wanted to see tackled. So I did it myself. See: does emotional intelligence truly help you reach leadership positions?

- **One research backing most of the book**

Personally, I'm skeptical of generalizations "based on research" when it comes to identifying human behavior.

What research? What did it measure? How many people participated? And how many studies do you base your conclusions on?
Those are the questions I always ask myself.

And most of "*Primal Leadership*" reference one single research.

PROS

Primal Leadership, for me, has been a seminal text in classifying the different styles of leadership.

Review

The first part of Primal Leadership is wonderful.
Worth a 5/5.

And it gets a thumbs up from the Harvard Business School as well.

The second part starts getting duller, verbose, and fluffy.
It lost me on several occasions.
I had to listen to it twice and still I didn't get much out of it.
In that sense, it reminded me of *Social Intelligence* from the same author: lots of talk, little substance.

Do I recommend it? Yes, get the most out of the 6 styles of leadership and if the rest doesn't speak to you, skim through.

Check the:

- **Best leadership books**

or **get the book on Amazon**

The Dichotomy of Leadership: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Dichotomy of Leadership* Jocko Willink and Leif Babin apply the law of optimum balance to leadership, and fix a few crucial mistakes and misunderstandings from their previous best-seller "*Extreme Ownership*".
In this new book, the authors affirm that there are no extremes in leadership, but many dichotomies. And you need to learn to walk that line right in the middle.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Summary
  - Own It All, But Empower Others
  - Resolute, But Not Overbearing
  - When to Mentor, When to Fire
  - Disciplined, Not Rigid
  - A Great Leader is A Great Follower
  - Plan, But Don't Overplan
  - Humble, No Passive
  - Aggressive, Not Reckless
- Real-Life Applications
- CRITICISM
  - Some "Military Small-Mindedness", Humanity Needs to Soar Higher
  - Tribal Fanaticism
  - The "Bad Guys" That Must All Be Killed
  - Sometimes self-promotional
  - Boys Will Be Boys… Need To Grow Up, Though?
- PROS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- A leader must walk the line between extremes
- You must care about your team, but be ultimately responsible for the team and mission, which are bigger than any single individual
- Being a great leader also means being a great follower (respecting your boss and listening to more junior members who might know more)

Summary

About the Authors:
Jocko Willink and Leif Babin are two American retired soldiers who deployed in the Iraq conflict.
They went on to produce a few books on leadership dynamics and mindsets, most notably "*Extreme Ownership*", and transitioned into management consulting.

Introduction

The Dichotomy of Leadership starts off with Jocko Willink and Leif Babin's previous leadership best-seller: Extreme Ownership.

The problem with that book, the authors say, is in the title itself. Great leadership is never extreme, but always about walking a fine line.

The Dichotomy of leadership teaches the readers how to walk that fine line.

Own It All, But Empower Others

This is basically about walking the line between taking personal responsibility but also delegating work.

While the leader takes ultimate responsibility and ownership, he also gives responsibility and ownership.

Ultimately, says Leif Babin, the task of the leader is to make himself unneeded in the job by helping the people around to step up to the plate.

Resolute, But Not Overbearing

Sometimes you must enforce the rules, demand compliance, expect high standards, and crack the whip.

But some other times inflexibility on smaller details that carry no strategic importance will only destroy morale and lower your "leadership capital".

"Leadership capital" rests on the idea that there is only a finite amount of power that any leader possesses. And using it on inconsequential matters is throwing it all away in the most ineffective way possible.

Prioritize all those areas that matter instead and demand excellence in those areas, not necessarily *making a perfect bed in the morning*.

When to Mentor, When to Fire

Leaders must take responsibility for underperformance and do all they can to teach, mentor, and help.

It comes a time though when you realize that no amount of training, helping, and coaching will help.
And there are even more critical times when underperformance puts the mission or the team at risk.
That's when a leader must fire and replace.

> **Most underperformers don't need to be fired, they need to be led**

Disciplined, Not Rigid

A leader must follow the rules that make sense, not all the rules no matter what.

Discipline is not a set of rules that never change, discipline is keeping and following the good rules and changing and adapting those which don't make sense anymore.

A Great Leader is A Great Follower

The authors recall situations in which they pushed to have it their own way only for the sake of not looking weak.

But, ultimately, that not only led to poorer decisions but also weakened the leader's position in the eyes of the team.

A leader who can't admit when there are better alternatives and solutions and when there are other people who have better answers is a leader who is endangering the team and the mission for his own ego's sake.

Finally, this chapter says that great leadership also means supporting and building a good relationship with your

boss even when you don't like him or don't agree with him.

Plan, But Don't Overplan

There is a saying: if you want to make God laugh, make a plan.

Well, the authors, of course, don't recommend you don't plan but warn the readers against *over*-planning.
You cannot plan for every possible and conceivable contingency, so you should only plan for the most *likely* ones.

Humble, No Passive

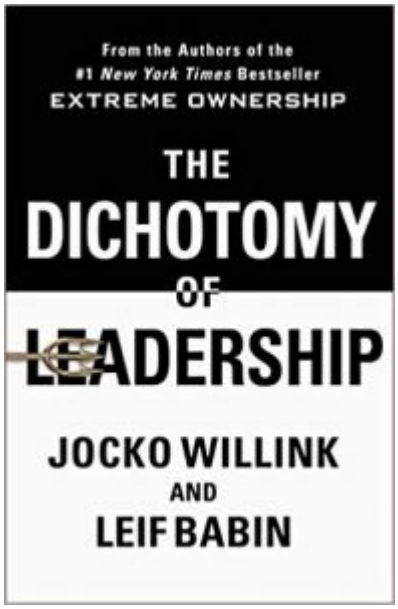
Most poor leaders and leaders who had to be fired didn't have a problem with tactical competence.
But they weren't humble enough.
They couldn't take criticism, take ownership of their mistakes, or check their ego to learn and grow.

Humility is not passivity though.
They say:

> When SEAL leaders had to be fired from "leadership positions in a platoon or task unit, it was almost never because they were tactically unsound, physically unfit, or incompetent. It was most often because they were not humble: they couldn't check their ego, they refused to accept constructive criticism or take ownership of their mistakes."

Aggressive, Not Reckless

Aggressive can be a quality, but it must be weighed against critical thinking and risk assessment.



Real-Life Applications

- **Help your people understand their deficiencies**

A leader owes it to make it clear to the underperformer where his deficiencies are so that he can work on correcting them.

- **Channel your aggression**

Aggression can be good but, again, it's another element of the dichotomy of leadership.

And sometimes waiting it out is the best option.

I loved this passage in "*The Dichotomy of Leadership*" and I will quote the authors:

> Getting angry at others is ineffective, losing temper is a sign of weakness.
> The aggression that wins in the battlefield, in business or in life is not directed towards people, but towards solving problems, achieving goals and accomplishing the mission.

- **Know when to follow**

If a more junior member or a report knows better than you, it's your duty to listen to him.

- **Leadership is love… And making the tough decisions**

This is has become a mantra of this website: love is at the core of real leadership.
And sometimes that love means you need to make tough decisions as well.

CRITICISM

🤔Lucio's Take On Jocko Willink

> **Lucio**: Great guy, too much of a jingoist. Be aware of those potentially small-minded drawbacks and the tendency for glorifying weapons and wars, and he's a great guy to learn from, and even look up

These cons are not only about the content, but they take a holistic approach.

I guess some will disagree or dislike the reviewer for the following.
But alas, I don't write articles to be liked :).

I respect both Jocko Willink and Leif Babin, and my criticism is *of* the content and some of the ideas they express, not of them.
See this article for the full review:

> Great Leadership Is Great Manipulation: Jocko Willlink Case Study

Some "Military Small-Mindedness", Humanity Needs to Soar Higher

I know many people won't appreciate reading this, but I felt that "*The Dichotomy of Leadership*" presents the typical small-mindedness of military personnel.

What I'm talking about?

The glory, the war to defend this or that value and, the "platoon of brothers above all else" and, of course, the defense of whatever "great nation" they represent.

As I already criticized other books for similar content (*Lean In, Tribe*, and *The Way of Men*), I believe that this mindset is the *cause* of much pain in the world, *not* the solution.
Including pain for yourself. Those are the manipulative values with which governments get you to barter your life for oil.

Unluckily, they're also effective.
See some of the cult leaders dark psychology techniques:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

Tribal Fanaticism

At times it felt that The Dichotomy of Leadership was the celebration of fanaticism.

From the camaraderie of dying for the platoon to the story of the kid shot on the pavement whose only request is to stay in the platoon.

To me, that story might be the sign of deep manipulation, and potentially some emotional issues, not the sign of a balanced and high-quality individual.

The "Bad Guys" That Must All Be Killed

In my opinion, the hallmark of fanaticism is to believe that one is 100% right while someone else is 100% wrong.

And I wonder if it ever crossed those people's minds that maybe, just maybe, the "good guys" don't march in an invading army coming from far away, failing to find ANY weapon of mass destruction, leave the region a huge mess and *still* think they did a great job.

Sometimes self-promotional

Sometimes it felt to me like the words and expressions were unneededly exaggerated or self-congratulatory.

For example:

> Our four laws of combat have helped radically improve the performance of teams and organizations -large and small- across the United States and internationally, in nearly every industry in the business world, as well as military units, police and departments, charity organizations, school administrations and sports teams.

I'm sure their "four laws of combat" have been helpful to many, but it felt like it was a big blowing of one's own horn.

Boys Will Be Boys... Need To Grow Up, Though?

Some passages felt like you were in front of kids playing tin soldiers or teenagers watching action movies.

The proud tales of "devastating firepower", the joyous descriptions of weaponry, the self-congratulatory nicknames… It makes you think on wars and some men's tendency to engage in "unneeded wars".

I understand this feeling, I do.

I also have had it. A lot.
But it can be dangerous very much value-taking.

One passage as an example:

> (…) unleashed the most ruthless and lethal barrage of fire you can imagine. Despite the intensity and violence of close urban combat I couldn't help but smile.
> Damn, I love those guys, the Big Tough Frogmen who carried…

I warmly invite you to read the article on enlightened individualism to soar higher than the empty -and dangerous- "allegiance to the flag":

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

PROS

- **Good Wisdom on Leadership**

There is a lot of wisdom on the reality of leadership here.
Basically, making sweeping generalizations is impossible (and wrong), because great leadership, like most other things in life, is about balance.

- **Good Reflection on Vulnerability**

After Brene Brown and *Daring Greatly* many people have taken a bad view of vulnerability.
The Dichotomy of Leadership is a good reminder that a leader can sometimes ill-afford being vulnerable (also read: Vulnerability is Not Power).

Review

The Dichotomy of Leadership presents a few of the limitations typical of soldiers' fanaticism and army brainwashing.

Things such as "our great nation", "we're good, they're bad", "fighting a holy war for these great values", etc. Etc.

As I talk about in "corporate manipulation", and in "manipulation", that's the manipulation that makes you give up your life for… For what, exactly?
Sometimes behind the values hides the self-interest of some politicians and arms producers.

However, once you move past that, some of the content here is great.
Particularly, I enjoyed the passages on aggression and the personal stories on working with weak bosses as I could relate there.

Check the:

- **Best leadership books**

or get the book on Amazon

Dark Psychology 202: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Dark Psychology 202 is an overview of the disciplines and techniques of manipulation.
It doesn't go deep and doesn't have any eye-opening wisdom on dark psychology, but it could serve as an overview.

Contents

- Full Summary
  - Anchor Yourself With Positive Associations
  - Make it Seem Easy
  - Hurt People With Confirmation Bias
  - Self-Serving Bias
  - Be Liked
  - Build a Following
  - Act As An Authority to Be An Authority
  - Approach Wars Like You're Right
  - Stir Doubts
  - Start Rumors
  - Tell Elements of Truths When Lying
  - … And More
- CONS
- Review

Full Summary

Here are a few good ideas:

Anchor Yourself With Positive Associations

> Reward someone handsomely for doing something for you. You may need to offer this reward a few times to make the conditioning stick. Then, you can basically set this on autopilot. Once a person associates you with a reward, they will have a pleasant association with you.

Make it Seem Easy

> Make something seem easy when it really isn't. Using a casual tone will often set people at ease and make them think that something is not a big deal.

Hurt People With Confirmation Bias

> How can you use this confirmation bias to your advantage? One way is in psychological warfare. If you know that someone believes something ugly or disparaging about himself, you can keep showing him evidence that confirms his belief to hurt him.

Self-Serving Bias

Self-Serving Bias Self-serving bias causes people to attribute their successes to their own internal skills and talents, and then blame their failures on outside circumstances.

You can use self-serving bias to get people to turn against each other and convince a person that someone else is a terrible person.

Be Liked

As simple as it sounds, this might be one of the deepest and most powerful tools for influencing.

Cialdini, an author of *Influence*, popularized as one of his six key principles of influencing.

Build a Following

Among many "just OK" and "meh" paragraphs, there were a few great nuggets of wisdom.
Here is one:

> The modern world of social media can also help you spread trends more easily. You can influence people to fit your ideas and to do what you want if you appear to have enough followers.

Act As An Authority to Be An Authority

> You can become an authority figure just by acting like one. If you act like you know what you are doing and you are in the right, people will listen. Being assertive and even aggressive can get you a lot of respect. Then, people will obey you and do what you want.

Approach Wars Like You're Right

It's funny, I am just done reviewing "*The Dichotomy of Leadership*" where I scathingly criticized the authors for believing they were in the right against "the bad guys", and now I gotta nod at what Dark Psychology 202 writes:

> Approach this war as if you are in the right. Whether you really are or not does not matter. Who is really judging?

For more on manipulations see:

- Political manipulations
- Manipulation: a guide

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Stir Doubts

> For instance, if you are trying to make someone think more negatively and hurt her self-esteem, you might hear her say, "I feel really good about this! I think it might go well." Ask her, "What makes you think that this will go well? Have you entertained the possibility that it might go wrong? Are you prepared for things going poorly?" You chip away at her self-esteem while appearing like you are simply caring and trying to keep her from getting crushed. Beautiful.

Start Rumors

Quoting *The Art of War*, *The 48 Laws of Power*, and recommending Machiavelli, the author says that reputation is everything.

And one way of destroying a reputation is by starting rumors:

> Spreading rumors is one of the best ways to get others to do your dirty work for you. You can start a rumor but claim that you heard it from someone else. Rumors spread like wild fire with little help. Everyone will participate in the gossip mill.

Tell Elements of Truths When Lying

The more truth you put in a lie, the easier it is to seem honest (and to keep track of your own lies).

... And More

Many more of the suggestions were techniques that *psychopaths* and abusive men use in their relationships.

They weren't as detailed as other texts and, most of all, I abhor these men and "techniques".

They are a high way to becoming a low-quality man (or low-quality woman): avoid them at all costs!

CONS

- **Not Detailed**

Dark Psychology 202 covers a lot of ground but is not detailed in any of it.

- **Some Advice is Bad**

Some of the advice is generic and thrown out there without any context can easily

For example, the author explains how to lie on a date to seem like you're rich. But that's not necessarily good either to start a relationship or to get laid (also read lovers and providers).

Some other advice makes you look like an obvious frenemy, a backstabber, or a social climber.

- **Some Bad Psychology**

The author writes:

> In order to motivate a person, you must offer them some sort of reward. That reward needs to be something that they really want or need.

That's generic and, often, not even true. A reward crowds out intrinsic motivation (read *Drive* and *The Social Animal* for more details).

Review

Dark Psychology 202 is a huge step forward on the author's previous *Dark Psychology 101*.

There is some good stuff here, and even some great reflection.
But you have to wade through a lot of diluted content, bad generalizations, basic stuff, and even some bad advice.

The uninitiated might find more revelations and ideas, but there are probably better texts out there to learn psychology.

Check the:

- Best books on manipulation
- Best books on the dark triad
- Best books to understand psychology and human behavior

And, of course:

- Dark psychology and its applications

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

First, Break All the Rules: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

First, Break All The Rules is a management book based on a Gallup study involving more than 80.000 managers.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: This is a rare data-backed look at what actually drives performance—but it misses the power dynamics behind it
The findings are valuable, but top performers don't just 'create good environments'—they control incentives, allocate attention strategically, and build high-performing alliances.
Mostly, what's missing here is also that top performers who advance are also power-intelligent, 'positively' calculative, and strategic.

Contents

- Notes
  - The 12 Questions for Performance
  - Open-Ended Questions to Hire Well
  - You Can't Learn Success From Failure
  - Play Favorites
  - Don't Promote: Find the Right Fit
  - People Don't Change: Leverage Their Uniqueness
  - Great Teams Have Great "Is"
- Real-Life Applications
- Review

Notes

Buckingham and Coffman base many of their findings in "First Break All The Rules" on Gallup's research of 80.000 managers.

There are limits to questionnaires of course, but given the magnitude of the research and the size of the responders, the findings are nonetheless significant.

The 12 Questions for Performance

A positive answer to the question below increases employees and organizational performance.

A negative answer adversely impacts the individual and organizational performance.

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?

11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had the opportunity at work to learn and grow?

Open-Ended Questions to Hire Well

The authors say that the best questions to ask at interviews are open-ended.
When you ask them, you should not telegraph any direction.

The direction candidates take is the most telling predictor of their future behavior.

Hire for Talent

Skills can be learned and knowledge can be taught.
The raw material that can hardly be learned or taught is talent, and great managers hire for talent.

There are 3 types of talent:

Buckingham and Coffman break talent into three categories. Striving talents – the "why" of a person. Why they do things, their drive, why they are who they are. Thinking talents – the "how" of a person. How they think, how they rationalize decisions, their values. Relating talents – the "who" of a person. Who they trust, who they confront, who they ignore.

You Can't Learn Success From Failure

The authors say you cannot learn excellence by studying failure as if excellence was the opposite of failure.

Why not?
Because excellence and failure are often similar!

For example, both great salespeople and poor ones feel like they are selling themselves when they pitch their products.
It's that personal investment in the product that makes them so persuasive.
That same personal investment though, also makes them more scared of a no.

The difference thoug,h is those great salespeople are not paralyzed by those fears.

Play Favorites

A seemingly popular rule of political correctness these days seems to be that of treating people the same way.

Silly rule, imply the authors.
People are different and have different skills, abilities, and characters. And that's why you should treat them differently.

Don't Promote: Find the Right Fit

Career advancement promotes people to their level of incompetence.

Great managers instead understand that not every great employee must be promoted.
Some of them are good where they are, or can grow in areas that don't entail managerial duties, for which they might not be a good fit.

People Don't Change: Leverage Their Uniqueness

I loved this part.

In spite of all the self-help literature telling people on how they can change, managers accept that most people don't

change that much.

And we don't have unlimited potential.

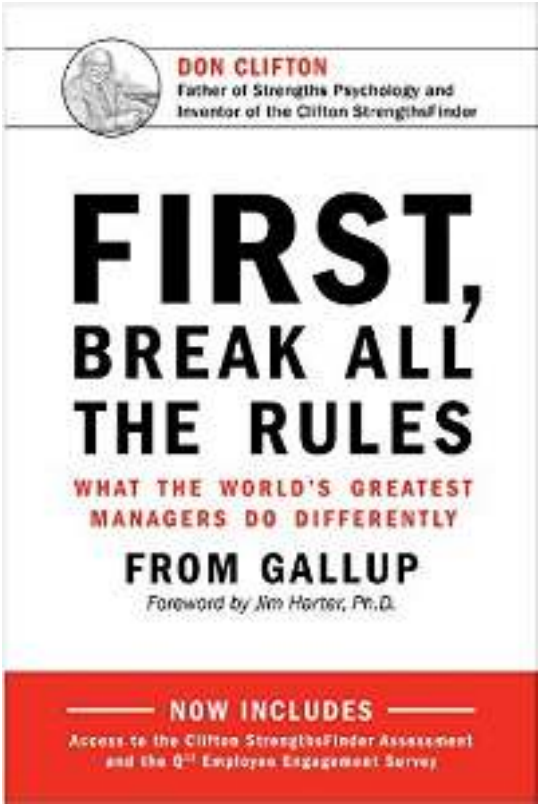
Great managers don't complain about it though.
They capitalize on it.
They leverage people's uniqueness instead by seeking jobs that match their talents or moving them in positions that match their talent -or by accepting that someone must be let go-.

In the words of the authors:

> Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out. Try to draw out what was left in

Great Teams Have Great "Is"

It's not true that great teams don't have "Is". Great teams are built with great individuals.



Real-Life Applications

- **Leverage people, don't try to change them**

Yes, you can change, and you can change a lot. But that's not to say that most people will change.
Most people will not change indeed. And you should learn to read people, accept them as they are and try to leverage their unique strengths and contributions instead of wasting time in trying to change them.

- **Spend more time with the best**

When managers have problematic employees they end up spending a lot of time with those troublemakers rather than their top performer.
Paradoxically then, they are sending the message that troubles get the manager's attention.
Great managers instead spend more time with their best employees.

Review

The title of “breaking all the rules” feels like a marketing ploy because these supposedly good managers aren’t defying common sense or breaking any big rule, but generally applying common and sound principles.

In general, the book could have been briefer and focused on the 12 questions, but it’s an otherwise excellent resource for corporate learning centers and mid to higher level managers.

Also see:

- **Best leadership books**

Best Entrepreneurship Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for the best books for entrepreneurs?

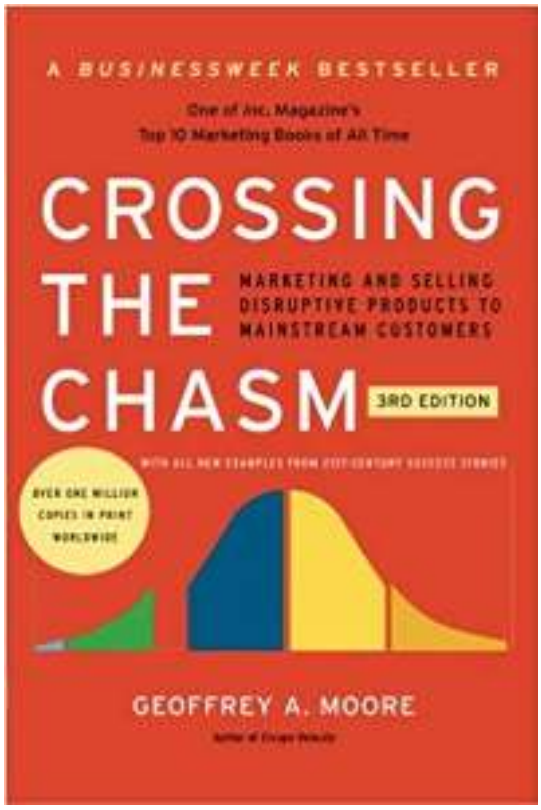
Lucio is an entrepreneur, founder of this website, and he has been working in different startups for years.
And Ali is an expert on networking and has been consulting companies and startups.

And after going through many courses and countless books on business and entrepreneurship, this is TPM's reading list of the best entrepreneurship books to get you started:

Contents

- 10. Crossing The Chasm
- 9. Delivering Happiness
- 8. The E-Myth Revisited
- 7. Zero to One
- 6. The 4-Hour Workweek
- 5. Disrupt You
- 4. The Lean Startup
- 3. Start With WHY
- 2. Unscripted
- 1. $100 Million Offers
- Courses For Entrepreneurs

10. Crossing The Chasm



by Geoffrey Moore

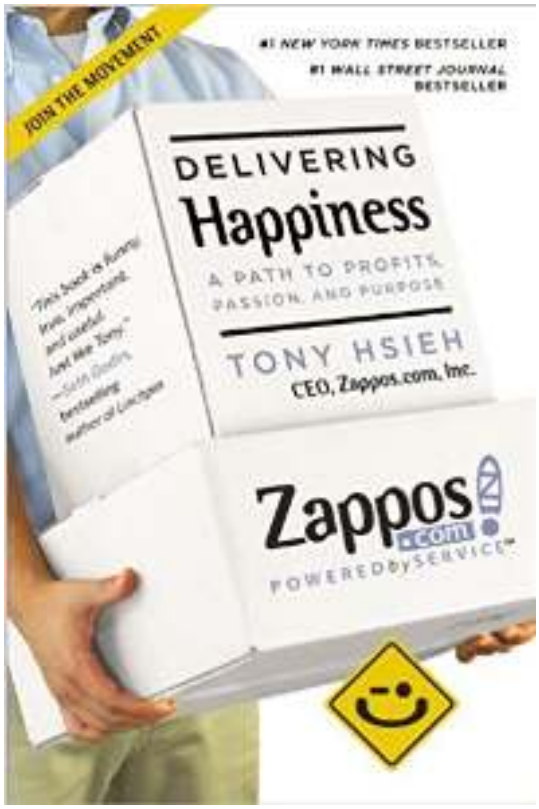
Review (removed) | Kindle

Crossing the Chasm will teach you the intricacies and psychology of going from “cool product” to mass adoption.

That’s what differentiates small, “cult” and “cool” brands from unicorns. If you want your business to become a unicorn, this Crossing the Chasm must find its way into your bookshelf arsenal.

> Quote: *“The number-one objective is to secure a distribution channel into mainstream market with which the pragmatist customer will be comfortable.*
> *It comes before revenues, profits, press, even before customer satisfaction. All these other factors can be fixed later – but only if the channel is established*”

9. Delivering Happiness



by Tony Hsieh
Review (review removed) | Kindle | Print

Delivering Happiness stands unique among the best books for entrepreneurs.

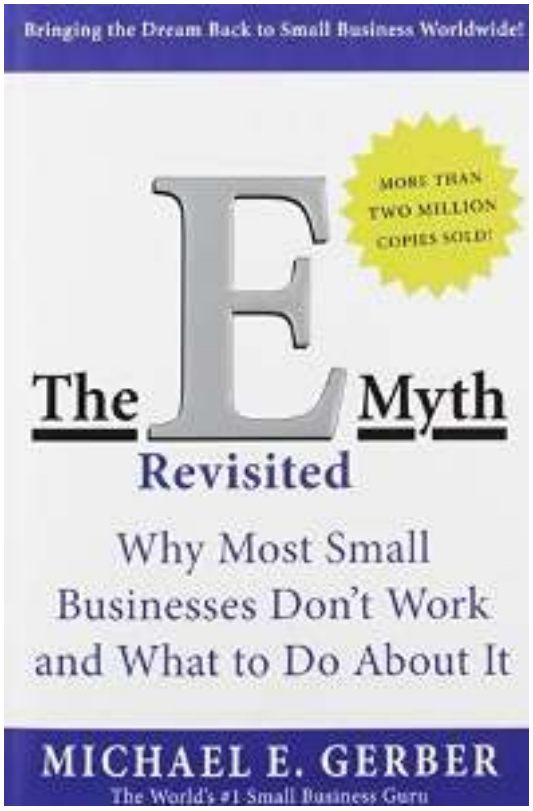
Tony Hsieh doesn’t “just” share his touching, personal story of two successful startup exits.

But, much in line with the growing wave of positive psychology, it makes the case that success and happiness go hand in hand.

And making your employees and customers’ happiness a KPI might indeed increase your bottom line as well.

> Quote: *“Money alone isn’t enough to bring happiness . . . happiness is when you’re actually truly ok with losing everything you have*”

8. The E-Myth Revisited



by Michael Gerber
Review (removed) | Kindle

Most people who make the jump from employees to entrepreneurs fail, says Michael Gerbner.

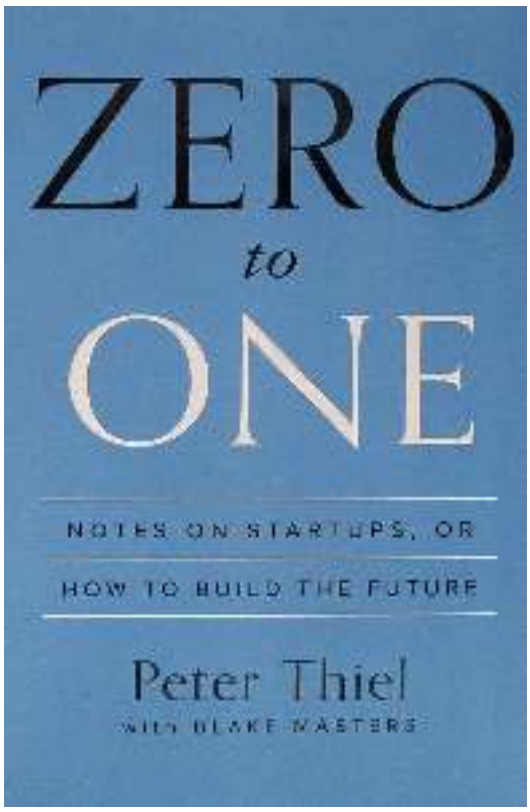
One of the main reasons is that they don't think (yet) like an entrepreneur and they end up doing everything and making the business dependent on them.

The E-Myth teaches you how to change your thinking in a way that allows you to build a build that runs independently from you.

This is a must not just if you want to build to sell, but also if you want to build to live independently of work.

> Quote: *"If your business depends on you, you have a job. And it's the worst in the world because you're working for a lunatic"*

7. Zero to One



By Peter Thiel
Summary | Amazon

Zero to One is one of the most famous entrepreneurship books, from one of the most famous (and wealthy) men on this list.

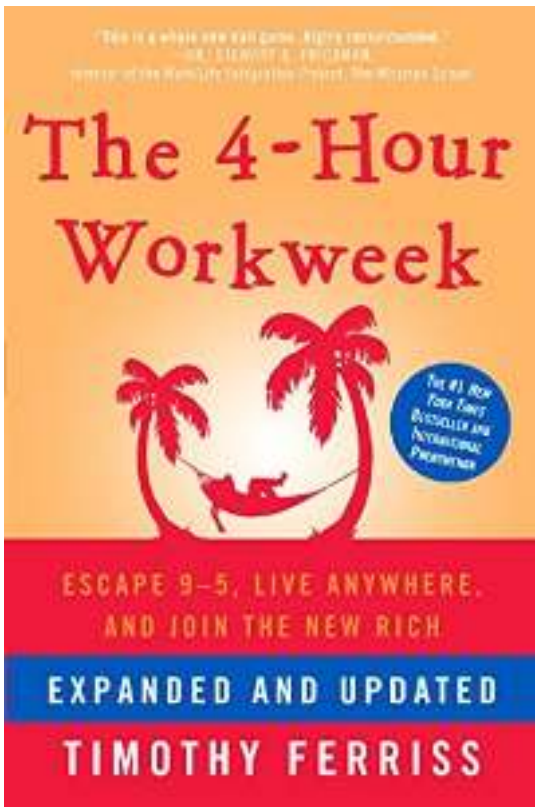
Thiel is also quite power-aware and embraces one of the core tenets of this website: seek win-win alliances, and do not unnecessarily antagonize people -and especially not the high-power ones-.

In the tech-entrepreneurship world of the early 2000s, that means dropping the trite rhetoric of “disrupting”, which implies that you’re going to be an enemy of companies that are much bigger and wealthier than your small idea/startup.

Also, Thiel as his “PayPal mafia” is a stark reminder of the darker power of alliances and networking as well.

> Quote: Better to be called a cult—or even a mafia.

6. The 4-Hour Workweek



[image]by Tim Ferris
Summary | Kindle

Getting into the top 3 of our best entrepreneurship books list now :).

The 4 Hour Workweek is the book that more than anyone else epitomizes the digital revolution of independence.

And it's possibly the most quoted

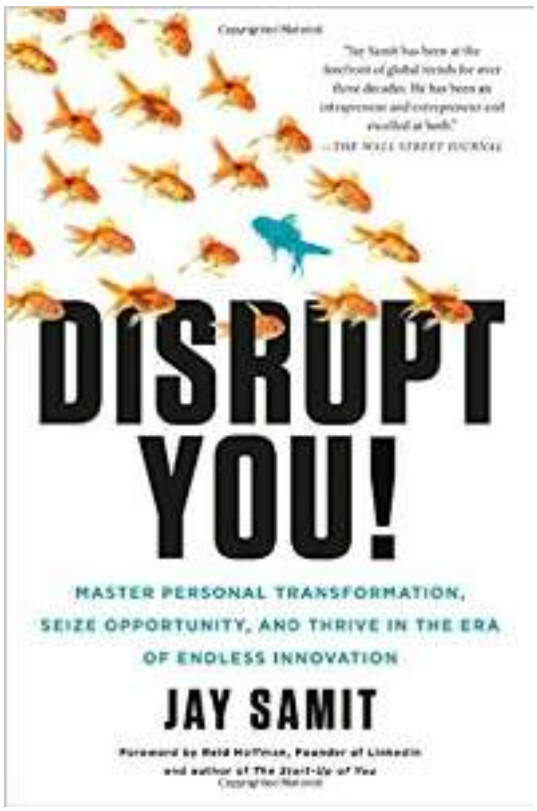
Albeit it's mostly for solopreneurs and not for startup founders who want to build big businesses, I'd recommend anyone to read it.

Why?

Because it will make you think if what you want is a big business or simply the freedom and lifestyle that goes with it.
If the latter, it's possible that you don't need to build a big business (and wouldn't be happy with it, either).

> Quote: *"They have riches, but the riches actually have them*"

5. Disrupt You



by Jay Samit
Review (removed) | Kindle

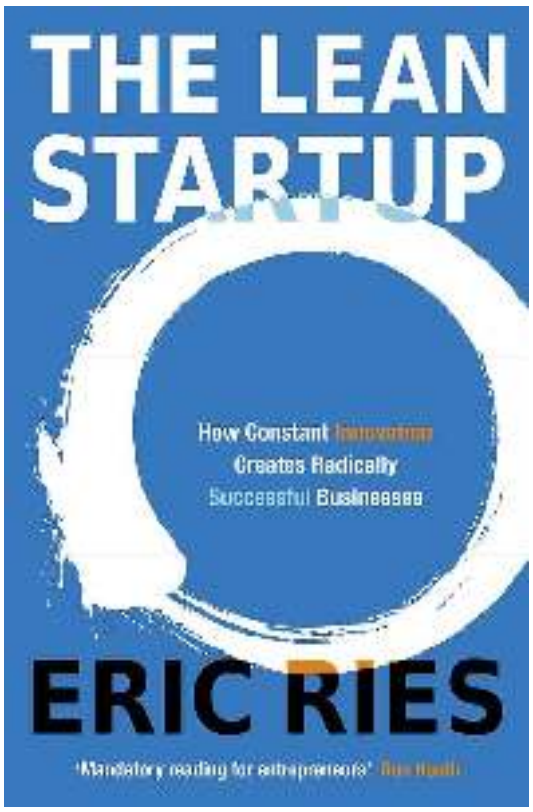
One of the best books on both mindsets of entrepreneurship, and good real-world tips from actual (successful) entrepreneurs.

Less known than many other titles in this list, but no less good.

As a matter of fact, it's better than many of its more famous peers.

> Quote: Disruptors don't have to discover something new; they just have to discover a practical use for new discoveries.

4. The Lean Startup



by Eric Ries
Summary | Kindle

I remember my first job in a startup company.

The founder and CEO asked me if I had read "*The Lean Startup*" and when I said no, he gushed "Oh my God, you haven't read the startup Bible?".

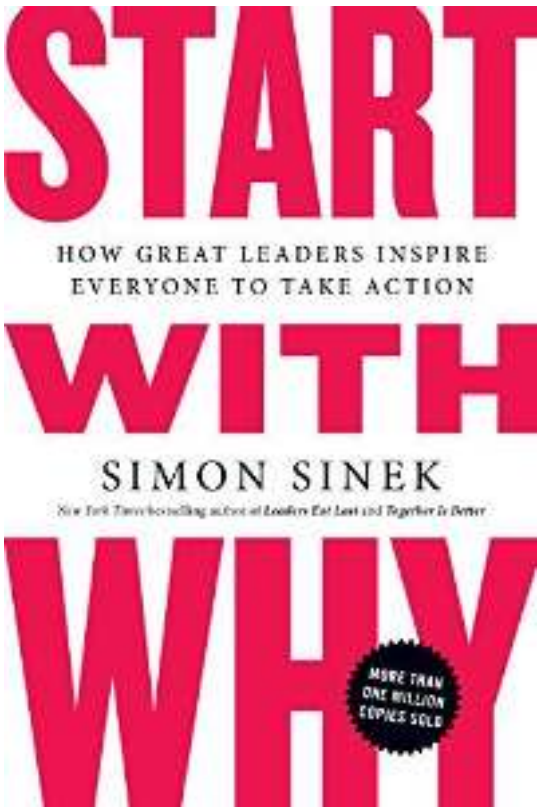
Well, I have now… Together with many more.
And, with much more startup and life experience, I can also see why he called it "the Bible" :).

By now the principles of Eric Ries are so well spread and entrenched in the culture that when you read it you might think "but what he says is all obvious".

Sure, it's obvious *now*…
But you still might want to read the full book and learn it straight from the horse's mouth.

> Quote: *"The only way to win is to learn faster than anyone else."*

3. Start With WHY



by Simon Sinek
Review (removed) | Kindle

Why is "*Start With WHY*" the N.1 book in our "best books for entrepreneurs lists"?

It's not because "culture is everything".
It's because the reason why you do what you do is what attracts people to you, to your idea, to your project, and to your business.

And it's also what makes the difference between inspiring and visionary companies and all the others.

And, incidentally, it's what makes for a happy and fulfilling life as well.

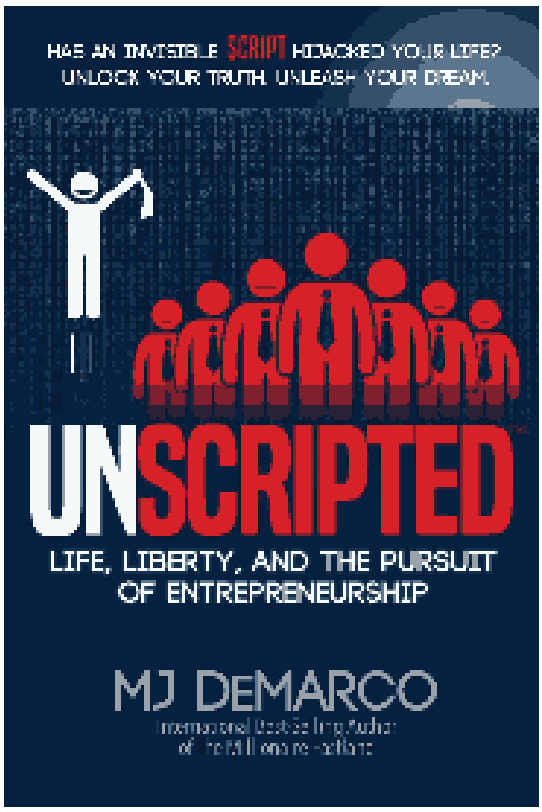
Absolutely a must-read.

> Quote1: *"There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it*"

And:

> Quote2: *"People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe*"

2. Unscripted



by MJ DeMarco
Summary | **Audiobook**

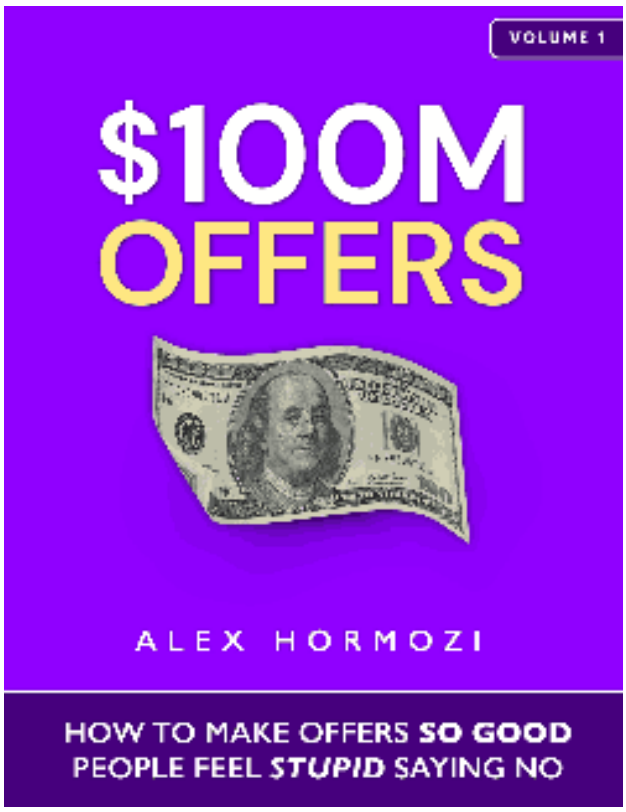
"*The Millionaire Fastlane*" used to be here.
"Unscripted" is from the same author, and we find it even more complete and applicable.

It's simply the best mix of mindsets, self-empowerment, mindsets, and strategies

It isn't even "just" about entrepreneurship, but about self-empowerment *through* entrepreneurship.

> Quote: *"There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it"*

1. $100 Million Offers



by Alex Hormozi
Summary

Frankly…

… If we're talking about the best books for beginner entrepreneurs, we could give Alex Hormozi ALL the top spots.

One would go to Alex Hormozi himself as a "business guru", one for his book, one for his course, one for his podcast, etc., etc.

This was by far the most practical and impactful book OR course we've ever reviewed here.
And it's the one we've applied the most on TPM as a business.

Courses For Entrepreneurs

Some good and/or popular courses for entrepreneurs include:

- **Offer Creation Course** by Alex Hormozi **(10/10)**
  Largely similar and based on the above #1 book "100 Million Offers". But adds enough new wisdom and ideas that makes it better than most other paid courses just with that added wisdom. Oh, did we forget to add? It's free (!)
- **Marketing Step-by-Step** by Eben Pagan **(8/10)**:
  a good course that inspired TPM to claim ownership of "power dynamics" as the new discipline we created and championed (and, implied, for which we are the #1 resource in the world). In that sense, it may have been the most impactful entrepreneurship resource for TPM
- **Earnable** by Ramit Sethi (**6/10**)
  Doesn't actually "walk you through" the creation of your dream business. I *really* didn't appreciate being left dead in the water, especially after paying such a high price tag. If the course provided some form of active

mentorship, then it could start approaching ten stars

- **B-School** by Marie Forleo **(5/10)**
  One of the highest-priced courses on this list, more tailored to beginner entrepreneurs, but didn't do much for us

Good Entrepreneurship Books

Also, great reads on entrepreneurship and/or solopreneurship include:

- Web Copy That Sells: one of the best books I have read on copywriting
- Hooked: the habits loops applied to product design (ie.: how to make your product into an addictive habit)
- Made to Stick: how to make your message and ads go viral (or better: increase the likelihood it will go viral)
- Go Pro: only for those interested in network marketing, but unless you *start* a network marketing company I actively discourage you from getting into it (and from starting one as well: it does nothing good for the world)

More Best Books

- Best communication skills books
- Best leadership books
- Best psychology books

Methods of Persuasion: Summary & Review (7 Steps)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Methods of Persuasion (2013) covers the persuasion process from pre-delivery to post-delivery to (dramatically) increase the likelihood of compliance.

Please Note: I file this review into the "persuasion and manipulation" category as persuasion tactics can be used for manipulation as well. However, Nick Kolenda, the author, does not endorse manipulation.

Contents

- Full Summary
  - Overview
  - Before The Request
  - During the Request
  - Sustain Compliance
  - Emotion Misattribution
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Full Summary

Honestly, I was NOT looking forward to summarizing "*Methods of Persuasion*".

I like -and pride myself- on doing a great job with my summaries. But there is so much great stuff here that I couldn't do a proper summary of *Methods of Persuasion* without using too much of the author's material -and my summaries are NOT a replacement for the full product-.

But anyway, here is me trying to give you a taste.

Overview

Methods of Persuasion presents a series of 7 steps, which the author says "conveniently" adds to the acronym "METHODS".

1. Mold Their Perception
2. Elicit Congruent Attitudes
3. Trigger Social Pressure
4. Habituate Your Message
5. Optimize Your Message
6. Drive Their Momentum
7. Sustain Their Compliance

The first four steps are delivered before the request.
Steps 4 and 5 during the request.
And the last steps after the request.

Before The Request

Let's start with the request:

Prime Their Mindset

You can make people think about a certain topic by simply mentioning topics that remind them of a certain subject.

For example, if you remind women of their gender, you activate the stereotype of being bad at math and you can lower their math performance.

It also works outside of our awareness.

If you want your target to be more open-minded then a much better way than telling them to be open-minded - albeit that might work too if you know how to do it-, might talk about something related to open-mindedness.
For example, a story of someone doing something crazy and having a blast while learning and growing from it.

My Note:
There are some limitations to this technique. Since schemas are very personal and dependent on the background and personal life experiences, you can never be sure what will activate what.
In the example in the book, he wanted to prime the readers for a carrot. But since I am Italian, the first vegetable that sprung to my mind was tomato :).

Anchor Their Perception

Anchoring (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) is so powerful that we fall for it even when know we are being anchored. And when we are in a new situation with no anchor, we try to come up with our own anchor ("self-generated anchor").

An anchor is powerful because we tend to move from the anchor to the outer reaches of our range for whatever phenomenon (or price) we are considering.
When dealing with semantic categories, depending on the situation, we can also adjust away from the anchor (for example if you ask me to assess the calories of a big mac after mentioning lettuce).

In negotiations, you should start with the highest number you can get away with.
When presenting options, you should use a decoy to make your favorite option seem better.

Elicit Congruent Attitudes

If you can make the person act, stand, or think in a way that is congruent with the action or message you want them to espouse, chances are they will follow through.

What happens is that they see themselves acting a certain way and they adjust their own beliefs and attitudes to match their actions.

To take advantage of our need to present congruent behavior, Kolenda describes the "foot in the door technique", the "lowball technique", the elicitation of an attitude (which can be as simple as asking "how are you").

Trigger Social Pressure

Remind people that your desired behavior is the norm, reveal similarities with your target, and make it seem like you belong to the same group (use words such as "we" and "us").

Once you can position yourself as "like the target", you can display the behavior you want the target to assume and chances are higher they will follow you.

Use social norms, group pressure, and rapport to influence your target.

Habituate Your Message

The more you can repeat your message and familiarize your target with it, the more he will naturally come to like it and accept it.

There are several reasons why this is the case. One of them is that as the message becomes more familiar to your target, he is able to recall it and understand it more easily and quickly.
And "ease" and "speed" become signs for "truth" and "liking".

To habituate your target you can mention the topic, or something similar to the topic, right before you make your request.

If you know is likely to perceive your message unfavorably, you can habituate them in small incremental steps.

During the Request

All of what we said before is about pre-suasion (also read *Pre-Suasion* by Cialdini).

Optimize Your Message

People judge messages based on cautious and rational analysis (systematic processing) or quickly and more haphazardly (heuristic processing).

This is what Kahneman refers to as "fast and slow".

Nick Kolenda then says that if you know that your target is likely to glance quickly at your message, you should prioritize "peripheral" cues such as the aesthetics, the marketing, the look, and the feel.

If you know they are going to analyze it deeply, put more thought into arguments, logic, and numbers.

To elicit heuristic processing three strategies are: increase the complexity of your message, enhance their mood, or spark their arousal.
The smaller font on good-looking products is also more likely to persuade as people are more likely to believe you without checking.
The difficulty in processing the information is also misattributed to the uniqueness of the product.
But if it's a run-of-the-mill product the font should be bigger because ease of processing generates familiarity.

- To optimize your message, use "you" and ask rhetorical questions (ie.: "don't you agree that… ", "isn't it true that.. ")
- Position your best arguments first and last
- Enhance your attractiveness

My Note: you don't know what they will use, and most smart people are more rational for important decisions
You may not know in advance what processing will take over, especiall in interpersonal settings.
So you may be better off focusing on both, or *how* you deliver the message, and *who* delivers the message (be a high quality man, and people will listen more)

Drive The Momentum

In these chapters, Kolenda describes how you should not give monetary or big incentives if you want to keep their goodwill because that will crowd out intrinsic motivation (also read *Drive*).

For one-off actions, though large incentives are fine -just pay attention it's not so large that they "choke" under pressure-.

- Don't make your target feel like you're trying to control them (avoid the word "should")
- Promote autonomy to let your target choose the reward

- Use scarcity (limit time and availability)
- Think twice before giving too many options (The Paradox of Choice)
- If you have many options it's good, but categorize them and chunk them up

Sustain Compliance

Features and feelings from one stimulus transfer to another.

So you should always strive to create a positive association with the action you want your target to perform (or belief you want them to adopt).

Nick Kolenda here goes over the famous Pavlov dog, Skinner, and operant conditioning.

I loved Kolenda's explanation here:

> Whenever we're presented with a new concept, we can't simply place that concept free-floating in our brain; in order to successfully integrate that new concept into our existing network of knowledge, we need to attach it to an already existing concept via some type of similarity or association.
> Classical conditioning is effective because it essentially forms a new connection in that network.

Other techniques:

- Metaphors (relate to the familiar and to basic survival like food)
- Leverage good / up positive associations
- Associate with naturally occurring primes (ie.: Apple brand with apple)
- Enhance your attractiveness

Emotion Misattribution

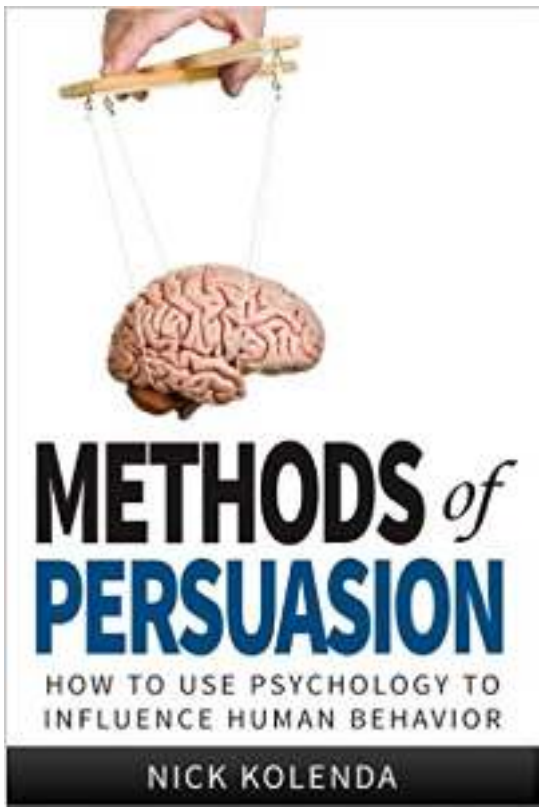
I quote Nick Kolenda:

> We think we possess a solid grasp of our own emotions and we believe that all types of emotions—sadness, excitement, fear, etc.—produce different sensations and feelings within us. What's surprising is that many of those emotions produce the same exact physiological response.

The emotions that "feel" are different because we look at the environment for cues to explain why we're feeling what we're feeling.

And we tend to make up stories about the "why" depending on what sees first or what makes the most sense.

this is why having arousing dates can work in making our dates believe they really like us: they misattribute their arousal (for something else) with attraction (for us).



Real-Life Applications

- **Convey high expectations**

Some people down-sell to beat expectations, but you're probably going to end up with a higher rating if you anchor expectations very high.

- **Use "you" pronouns in your message**

If you want to give a feeling of similarity, use "us" and "we". If you want to grab attention, research in advertisements shows that "you" can dramatically increase the persuasiveness of an advertisement.

- **Make your description difficult to read or understand**

If you want you or your services to be perceived as "advanced" or unique, make it complex to understand or even to read, with smaller fonts or fonts against a similarly-colored background.

CONS

If you know my reviews, you know what I am about to write.

If you don't know yet, my rule of thumb is that the better a book/resource is, the deeper I go with my nitpicking.

So here's my nitpicking for this wonderful resource:

- **Sometimes the "why" didn't convince me**

When cult members realized the world wasn't ending and there was no alien ship to take them on board, they developed stronger beliefs, says Colenda.

In my opinion, it's not that they developed stronger beliefs, but they *acted* more on their beliefs and tried to recruit new people because now they *needed* their BS to be true (some of them had even sold all their belongings).

- **Sometimes general rules are inferred from one single study**

Sometimes I felt some statements were a bit too bold in generalizing big psychological principles just because there was one mentioned study that confirmed it.

Countless studies have been proven wrong by successive research. That is why generalizing based on one single study takes us into dangerous territories.

- **Negative and graphic messages don't always work better**

The author says that graphic ads for driver safety work better. But that's not always true.

People are more likely to heed a highly emotional and painful message when they feel they can do something about it.
But if they feel too overwhelmed or like they can't change their behavior, they will suppress the message instead.

Also read: The Social Animal.

- **Adding negative information doesn't always make you more persuasive**

The author also says that you should introduce a small amount of negative information to make your case because it will look like you have done your research and considered all sides of the coin.

However, that's not always true: if you are presenting to an audience that is already full on your side, then it's better to state your case without acknowledging discordant information.
With a well-informed or critical audience instead, it's best not to use one-sided arguments.

PROS

- **Well-researched**

Nick Kolenda wades through scientific research and distills it in a digestible, easy-to-understand, and "ready-to-use" fashion so that every reader can use (or defend himself).

I have rarely seen a more referenced book that's not a handbook.
Part of it is because the author wants to portray authority -as he admits himself-.
And the other reason that he does not say himself, but which I will, is that he simply does a great job at being a thorough author.

Some of his most referenced works, which he mentions in the foreword, include Robert Cialdini -author of *Influence*-, Daniel Kahneman -author of *Thinking Fast and Slow*-, Dan Ariely -author of *Predictably Irrational*– and a few more.

Review

Methods of Persuasion is a deeply insightful book on persuasion and pesusaive communication.

Nick Kolenda says that his goal is to make *Methods of Persuasion* your highlight book.
Well, he did pretty well in my case as I did highlight a ton of it.

Methods of Persuasion is also one of the best books I have read on "Machiavellian psychology" and, potentially, dark pshcyhology.
I also took one of his courses and it was great.

Also, read:

- **Best influence and persuasion books**

- **Best books on manipulation**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Becoming: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Becoming is Michelle Obama's autobiography of her life up until the end of her stay in the White House.

Contents

- Becoming Summary
  - Don't Ask "What Do You Wanna Be When You Grow Up?"
  - Obama & Michelle Meet
  - Obama & Michelle's Relationship
  - Obama in Politics
  - Presidency Campaign
  - In The White House
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- Becoming Quotes
- Becoming Criticism
  - Obsessed With Race & Colors
  - Partisan (Disguised as Bipartisan)
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  - Avoid Low-Fat products
  - Feels Like Victim Mentality at Times (Complaining)
  - Cheap Feminism
  - Forced Agenda of Multiculturalism
  - Hugging and Celebrating Bin Laden's Death
  - Slightly Too Much Nationalism
- PROS
- Review

Becoming Summary

You can't really summarize an autobiography, but I will give you here the bits and pieces that caught my attention the most and that are most relevant to a website like The Power Moves.

Don't Ask "*What Do You Wanna Be When You Grow Up*?"

Michelle Obama says that one of the most useless questions you can ask a child is "what do you wanna be when you grow up".

She says that it's not like at some point you become something and you're stuck with it.
And I loved this part and heavily nodded.

It's funny by the way how different languages also have that exact same expression.

Obama & Michelle Meet

- Obama seemed assured of his direction and made Michelle feel even more insecure at times

- Obama and Michelle met at work, and the unspoken bond between them was that “he was a brother” (almost everyone was white in the office)
- Michelle was disgusted when Obama lit a cigarette after lunch
- Michelle “swore off dating altogether” to dedicate herself to her career (typical lie people BTW)

Talking about smoking, Michelle Obama told Barack:

> Why someone as someone as smart as you does something as dumb as that

Which sounds a bit like a shit test eheh.
I would have replied:

> Who says I’m smart

Instead, Obama told her she was right.

- Obama told Michelle they should go out
- In the following days, Obama laid out the reasons why they should go out (ie.: compatibility, making each other’s laugh, etc.)
- Obama asked Michelle if he could kiss her (facepalm

Obama seems like he has a strong secure attachment style.

Obama & Michelle’s Relationship

Soon after that kiss, all her reservations started falling away and Michelle starts falling for Obama.

- Obama told her how beautiful she was
- Obama made Michelle feel good
- Michelle thought Obama was a unicorn to the point of being almost unreal
- Obama never talked about material things like buying a new house or shoes
- Obama loved books, reading even late at night while she slept
- During their relationship work felt like a distraction for Michelle (so much for the woman who wasn’t going to date to focus on her career
- Obama said marriage was an unnecessary and overhyped convention (Obviously he changes his mind :)
- For Michelle marriage was a given and she was sometimes worried about her different views (of course she was LOL)
- Obama wasn’t opposed to marriage, but for him, their love was great as it was (typical difference between men and women BTW)

Obama in Politics

- Michelle secretly hoped Obama’s political career would sputter so he would stay more at home with the family
- When at home, Obama was fully present though, listening, playing with the children, and reading them stories
- Obama would sometimes indulge Michelle by watching Sex & The City (damn! Is that a favor to do? Sex & The City is AWESOME!)
- Obama was a bit pie in sky kind of guy, believing that his book would solve all their financial problems (more typical of men having more faith in their dreams)
- Michelle was more pragmatic and realistic (typical of women, of course)

- Both were nervous the first time they were speaking in front of people
- When Oprah Winfrey interviewed Obama, Michelle wondered “what the hell is happening now”. Little later, he was elected to the Senate
- Obama told people that running for the presidency was a family decision and that Michelle would also decide
- Michelle Obama eventually decided that Obama was good for America and she couldn’t be so selfish to stop him (very wise and kind of her)

Presidency Campaign

- The media frames Michelle as angry and resentful. In defending herself she starts acting more angry and resentful, and she reflects on how many black women have been caught in that trap (makes sense, same as what happens with gaslighting in abusive relationships)
- The political games and power moves were taking a toll on Michelle. Sometimes she blamed Obama’s campaign for her woes
- Her instinct was to hit back and answer blow by blow on accusations but the campaign’s team told her to let it go (wise decision of course)

In The White House

Barbara and George Bush were very nice to the Obamas.
Michelle Obama could sense that George W. Bush was glad they had arrived to take over and he could finally retire from political life.

- George W. Bush was kind and had a genuine appreciation for the country that she always admired
- They had federal funds available to redecorate the house, but Barack insisted they’d do it on their own dime
- The security in the White House was crazy, encompassing all aspects of life and including the whole family
- But Michelle says the security for the family is in the end only to protect the president and his emotional and mental well being
- Michelle was uncomfortable with the change, and so was Obama. But Obama was happy he had to do nothing for the house’s upkeeping
- It’s costly to live in the White House: the president has to pay for all the items (not utilities, but yes for toilet paper, food, and guests)
- Obama asked for some food and they later found they were being flown from overseas and were super costly (LOL, couldn’t imagine the president’s family worrying about food prices)
- Michelle was a bit peeved by the media’s attention to her clothes and how they took precedence to what she said
- She met the queen of England and said:

> “there is a certain awkwardness that comes with every arranged meeting”

Interesting to see that even seasoned politicians can find it awkward to shoot the breeze.

- When they left the White House Michelle wondered if it must have been sad for Obama to finally be free when their daughters were just launching (which made me think these two weren’t always forthcoming with each other if she had to *guess*?)
- Michelle was horrified by Trump’s lewd comment about him assaulting women. She says Trump was a bully
- And this is where she came up with her famous sentence “when they go low, we go high”

Which actually Trump did rather well against Hillary:

- Michelle says that dominance, even the threat of it, is a form of dehumanization (which is not really true as a general rule, but it's true that it was really poor and low the way Trump talked about it)

Curiosities About Michelle Obama

- Among the luxuries, she allowed herself was a wine subscription (nice, you go girl! ⍰
- Michelle visited Kenya naively believing that she'd feel some kind of "back to the roots", motherland feeling of completeness, but she was -and felt- a foreigner there (naive thought indeed)
- Being a stranger African-American in Africa made her feel like she was a stranger everywhere, making her sad
- Michelle Obama visited Kibera, the biggest urban African slum (which yours truly also visited)
- Obama's relatives asked Michelle which one of her parents was white and she replied that she was "black through and through, basically as black as they come" (LOL)
- Michelle Obama did pushups with Bishop Desmond Tutu, author of "The Book of Joy"
- Michelle Obama won't run for office (damn the Republicans would have gone crazy with that ⍰

Becoming Quotes

> (…) To the cold morning this winter when I climbed into a limo with Melania Trump accompanying her husband's inauguration.

It feels like that "cold" is not just referring to the temperature :).

> I understood that I had choices (..) just go back to my toys at home, or I could just shut her up (…) the next time DeeDee made one of her remarks I just lunged for it. summoning everything my dad had taught me about how to throw a punch.
> The two of us fell to the ground fists flailing and legs thrashing.
> (…)
> "At least, I earned her respect"

It looks like when they go low Michelle Obama didn't always go high :).

> Even with a challenged sense of style, Barack was a catch

⍰

> Even white people were recognizing him now

Talking about increasing's fame :).

> Johm McCain had done himself no favor in choosing Alaska governor Sarah Palin as his running mate. Inexperienced and unprepared she had quickly become a national punchline

LOL indeed, Sarah Palin must have been the worst vice president's choice ever.

Becoming Criticism

This is what I liked less about *Becoming* by Michelle Obama:

Obsessed With Race & Colors

I didn't count how many times Michelle Obama said "black", "color", "white" and "black woman", but if anyone counted them.. I'm sure it would be a lot.

When she took the elevator of the White House she took care to notice that the man using who operated the elevator was a black man in a tuxedo.
It felt unnecessary.
Did she want to make a reference that the black man in a typical white house was the servant? With Michelle Obama's obsession with colors and races, it might not be far-fetched.

Partisan (Disguised as Bipartisan)

There is no shame in being on the left side of the political spectrum, a Democrat, a Republican, or however people want to define themselves.

But it's when you are a partisan pretending to be bi-partisan that it feels a bit sneaky.

Commenting on Trump she was disgusted seeing him "stalk" Hillary during the debate, diminishing her presence with his and getting away with it. As if he could do it.

That felt either like partisan commenting or a form of "white-male phobia" that transpired in other parts of the book.
Trump was simply playing the game as much as Hillary did. As far as I remember Hillary started the game of moving on Trump's side.

Sure, Trump might have played more games, and more ruthlessly, but it's not like it was Trump "stalking Hillary" and Hillary was a poor victim.

Superficial Comments on Policies

> Barack created bills that would create thousands of jobs for Americans.

LOL, yeah, sure, as if politicians could "create jobs". They hire people with government funds, but that's not to say

that you “create jobs”. You might as easily waste taxpayers’ money (which is what most often happens).

Avoid Low-Fat products

Michelle Obama spearheaded a very important agenda on nutrition. However, when she said that she promoted low-fat diaries, that’s when I thought she might not really know much about nutrition at all.

Most modern nutrition is rehabilitating fat. And cutting out fat is especially bad when you’re skimming milk and artificially trying to remove it.
Als read *Eat Fat to Get Thin* and *Own The Day, Own Your Life*.

Feels Like Victim Mentality at Times (Complaining)

Michelle Obama says the media tried to portray her as angry and negative and it was almost becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy for her.

Yet, in my opinion, she did come across as

> It takes energy to be the only black person in the lecture hall. Or one of a few non-white people trying out for a play or joining an intramural team. It requires effort, an extra level of confidence to speak in those settings and own your presence in a room.

She goes on to comment on the “looks” she got from students and some professors as if they wanted to say “I know why you’re here”, which planted seeds of doubt in her mind.

Or:

> I tried not to be intimidated when classroom conversation was dominated by male students, which often was. Hearing them, I realized they weren’t any smarter than the rest of us.
> They were simply emboldened, floating on an ancient tide of superiority, buoyed by the fact that history had never told them any different.

And:

> You gotta be twice as good to go half as far.

Cheap Feminism

Reminiscent of *Lean In*, Michelle Obama seems to think (and suggest) that women should stick together for the simple fact of being women.
She says:

> I still wonder why so many females rejected an acceptionally qualified female candidate and instead choose a mysoginist as their president

Forced Agenda of Multiculturalism

Michelle Obama explains that Trump’s administration is “white and male” like she was so tired of seeing growing up.

> The vibrant diversity of the two previous inauguration was gone, replaced by a dispiriting uniformity of, the kind of white male overwhelmeing… (bla bla bla)

Why should we assess an administration based on DIVERSITY?

Why not assess how good it does, and how competent it is?

Why should it be a value to FORCE multiculturalism?
Why should anyone "push" for more women or more color? As much as why should anyone "push" for more men if there are more women, or more whites if there are more blacks?

I don't think there is any inherent advantage in "forcing" more of this gender or of this color.

Hugging and Celebrating Bin Laden's Death

Michelle Obama talks at great length about mass shootings and how painful they were.
She makes violence and gun control a central theme in her book.

And then… Then she hugged her husband when Bin Laden was killed.
A man dies and a country celebrates. And their leaders compliment each other.

I somehow always found those scenes eerily pathetic. But I would have expected from the leadership.
Instead, it was worst. Michelle Obama tells the story of "jubilant people crowding the streets" as if it was one of the happiest moments of her life.
How sad.

Also, "killing Bin Laden" was a top priority for their administration? Really? Killing ONE man is a top priority??

Slightly Too Much Nationalism

I used to be more nationalist, but as I grow and get wiser I more and more see it as something we all need to overcome.

Michelle Obama touched by the wounded vet who, in pain, tried to stand up while spitting on the floor because he wanted to "salute the wife of his commander in chief" is pathetic to me.
Not for the man, of course, I wish him the best and speedy recovery, and in a way I also admire him.

But the feeling of pride for a boss or a flag is small-minded.

Similarly, her focus on "leaving a mark" on the White House felt misplaced and… Somewhat small-minded in the greater scheme of things.
But still… I understand it.

PROS

- Well written
- Well narrated
- Great insights into the life of a president (and first lady)
- Great insights into some of the political games
- Touching, on many occasions
- Funny and entertaining, on many occasions
- Some good, deep reflections

Review

I found *Becoming* overly obsessed with skin colors, slightly too feminist, and a bit too much on the complaining side.

On the plus side, it's entertaining, sometimes funny, almost always interesting, and, at times, also very touching. Especially the last chapter it's almost a tear-jerker while also being upliftingly beautiful.

Some passages increased my respect for Michelle Obama.
And even more so for Barack Obama.

I'm not Barack Obama's biggest fan as he often engages in social climbing and to me, that's one of the biggest sins of leaders (you can see examples here).
However, he is an overall high-quality man and he is the kind of man who makes a woman happy.

Overall, I respect both of them and I think they have had a positive impact and they were good for their country.

But I don't agree with some of the mindsets and philosophies that soak Michelle Obama's *Becoming*.

Check the **best books collection** or **get the book on Amazon**

4 Ways to Beat Covert Disrespect & Aggression Like A Champion

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Some sneaky players aren't 'in your face aggressive'. They are *covertly* disrespectful, aggressive, and rude.

Their covert aggression may seem 'subtly rude', but it's often as bad as harmful for your status and reputation as any open attack.

While assertiveness may work in some cases, more advanced social techniques are usually superior to come out on top.

We are experts in social and power dynamics, and in this article, you will learn how to handle these covertly rude people and win every time.

Contents

- What's Covert Aggression
- Example of Covert Disrespect
  - #1. Use Humor to Crack a Joke At Their Expense
  - #2. Use Humor to Highlight Their Covert Aggression
  - #3. Encircle Them by Recruiting Bystanders on Your Side
  - #4. Dominate Them Socially
- Why Escalation is Difficult
- SUMMARY

What's Covert Aggression

Covert aggressors or "subtly rude people" make their attacks underhanded.

Maybe a dismissive gesture, a "funny" joke, or the good old eye-roll.

Sometimes you will see subtle rudeness from frenemies (see how to spot frenemies).
But while frenemies often don't even attack you at all and just stew, subtly rude people think they have enough power that they can effectively undermine you.

In the article on mean jokes and underhanded compliments, we explained that the best way of dealing with these people is to "draw them out" and show to them -and to everyone around- that their "jokes" are actually barely veiled meanness.

However, with subtly rude people, it's more obvious they are being rude. So there is less of a need to show everyone what their game is.

But you can't attack them head-on either.
Both because winning without escalation is most often socially superior, and because, since their move is small, it's easy for them to take a step back and make you look like you are overreacting.

Example of Covert Disrespect

To understand what's subtly rude, look at this scene for one minute and see if you spot it:

De Niro is being highly dominant through and through. And the subtly rude moment is when he shields his code from Stiller.

Stiller was already sleeping in the house and he is the official boyfriend of De Niro's daughter in a serious relationship that seems to be going towards a possible marriage.

Given the preconditions, De Niro is rude because his gesture communicates the following:

1. I don't trust you
2. You're not part of this family

Given the situation, it was fair for Stiller to hit back.
But how to do it?
Here are four ideas:

#1. Use Humor to Crack a Joke At Their Expense

Your humor shouldn't be innocent humor or, God forbid, self-

Your humor should even the scores, so this is one of those cases when derisive or "aggressive humor" is in the cards.

An example of derisive humor would be implying that De Niro is a paranoid wacko.

Alternatively, I like a type of humor that pokes fun at De Niro's *move* rather than directly attacking De Niro's personality (which is way more aggressive).

For example:

> **Stiller**: Damn! I was this close from stealing the alarm codes of the house I am already sleeping in

This type of humor makes fun of Jack and the gratuitousness of his move while at the same time showing a superior attitude.
Very powerful.

#2. Use Humor to Highlight Their Covert Aggression

In this case, you would simply shake your head in disapproval and mutter something like:

> **Stiller**: How welcoming

Or:

> **Stiller**: I love you too Jack!

This one is good to show that De Niro was showing strong negative sentiment towards him.

Or:

> **Stiller**: Typical Jack..

This last one is as if to say "typical Jack's dickhead move".

Minimalist humor is great for all situations in which you are not sure what to do and cannot come up with a smart, witty retort.

It's simple and effective:

1. Shake your head in disapproval or disgust

2. Mutter what they did was very low

That's it, very simple. It shows superiority and doesn't allow rudeness to unchecked.

#3. Encircle Them by Recruiting Bystanders on Your Side

If there are people around you can rally the troops on your side and isolate the rude bully.

This technique works best in two situations:

1. You have good standing within the group
2. The bully's move was unsavory

If one of the above is met, then it's relatively easy to get people on your side. And when you get people on your side, you win by default.

In this case, Still could have pulled off an encirclement move by looking at the bystander(s), pointing towards De Niro, and then making a joke or retort.
With just a small tweak, most of the above examples would work in this situation as well.

For example:

> **Stiller**: He really loves me

The moment the bystanders would have laughed, he had scored a social win.

If he wanted to go for a more serious tone, the social equivalent of filing a complaint with his girlfriend or mother-in-law, he could have looked at one of them, shaken his head, and used a minimalist retort.

Chances are that Stiller would have managed to get De Niro's wife or daughter to complain to De Niro about his behavior.
And that would have been a huge power move on Stiller's side.

#4. Dominate Them Socially

The final option for dealing with rude people is to go socially dominant on them.

In the example we are discussing, Stiller could have walked to De Niro and touched him. Either put a hand on his shoulder or pat his back.

Touching someone is very dominant and, in this case, it would have sent a strong message that Stiller does not take sh*i from anybody.

Since walking over and touching De Niro in his own house was going to be a very dominant move, it was paramount for Stiller to take the edge off.

He could have taken the edge off the dominant nonverbal with a friendlier verbal move.
For example:

> **Stiller**: Ahah it's OK Jack, I'm here in friendliness

This one would have rather openly communicated something like "I saw what you did and you don't need to do it because I'm a friendly, trustworthy person".
I personally like this approach a lot.

A more dominant version would have been to say something like this while patting De Niro on his back:

> **Stiller**: It's OK Jack..

This one would have communicated something like: "it's OK Jack, you don't need to be such an ass".

For the right tonality, you can watch this video:

Why Escalation is Difficult

Escalating against subtle rudeness is difficult and socially risky for one main reason: since their move is subtle, an escalation puts the burden on all of you.

You become the one who has to "prove him" wrong and you are the one who is expending more effort.

In Power University, I explain that the person who expends more effort is also the one who is more often socially weaker.
And it would be easier for the rude bully to step back and make it seem their move was nothing. If they decide to use that move, it's easy for them to deny or minimize and counterattack by making you look like you are overreacting and taking things "too personally".

Here is how it could have turned out in that event with a direct escalation:

> **Stiller**: Jack, stop that! Why are you treating me like a thief. I am the boyfriend of your daughter
> **De Niro**: ? What are you talking about
> **Stiller**: The way you're protecting your combination, you are acting as if I were a thief. Did you realize I am already sleeping in this house?
> **De Niro**: I am putting the alarm on as I always do
> **Stiller**: Yes, but you did this and turned your back on me to hide yourself. I'm not a thief Jack
> **De Niro**: You are making things up..

Etc. Etc.
Even if De Niro didn't want to deny his move, he could have easily said it was a natural reflex to hide his password, and Stiller would have indeed looked like he was making a big fuss out of small stuff.

SUMMARY

That's why, my friends, great social skills are not so much about pure dominance but about high social intelligence and social finessing.

As a matter of fact, the higher you go in the social hierarchy, the more the moves become subtle and the more power is conferred to the person who can display more tact and finesse.

Win Bigly: Says More About Character Than Persuasion (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Win Bigly* (2017) Scott Adams chronicles the 2016 US election and analyzes how Donald Trump, a master persuader in his own words, maneuvered and manipulated the media to win the election.

Contents

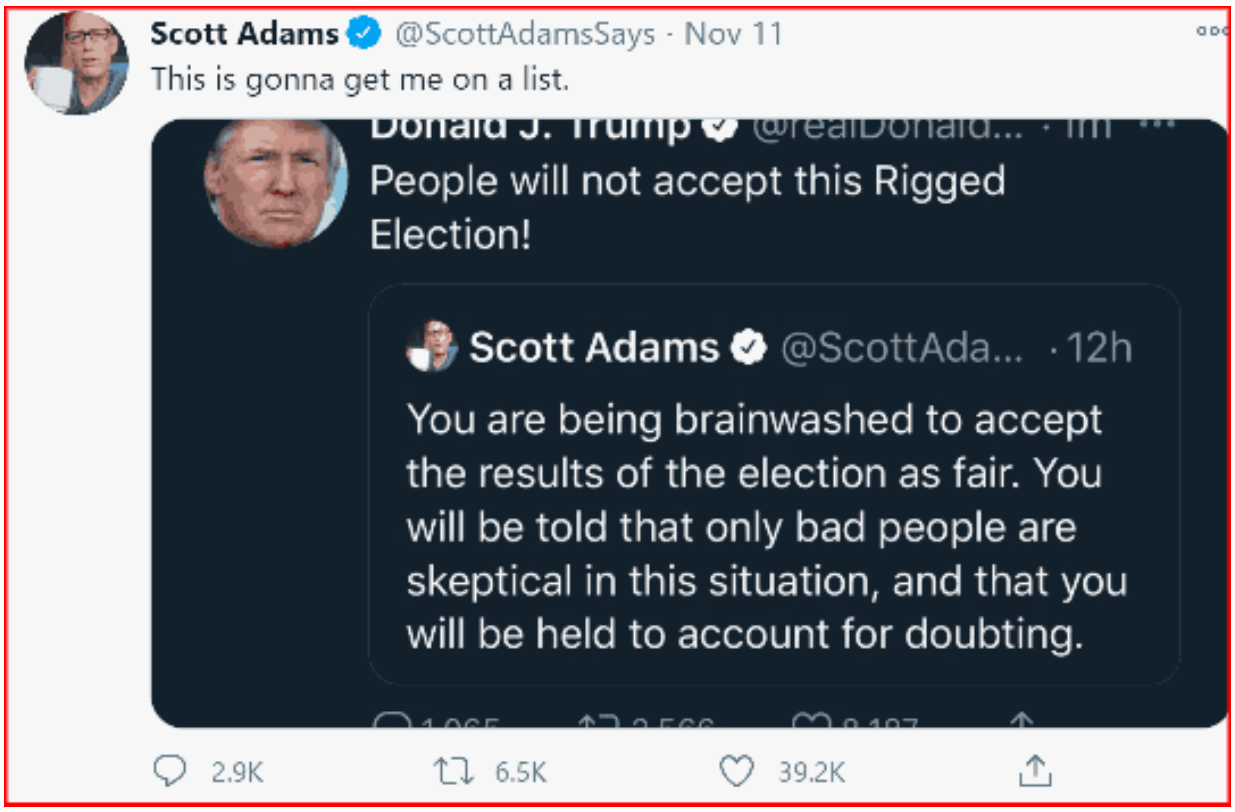
- About Scott Adams
- Notes
  - Donald Trump's Power Moves
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

About Scott Adams

Scott Adams is the creator of the Dilbert comic strip and turned into a political commentator and, apparently, persuasion expert.

Scott Adams claims to be apolitical, but it doesn't feel so in the slightest.

It feels instead like he's awestruck by Trump -which is not uncommon in the presence of grandiose narcissists and Machiavellians-.
And as time went on, by the 2020 election he shifted into being a Trump supporter / conservative. More than "conservative", some of his tweets sounded more like "conspiracist / MAGA".
Adams was Tweeting incessantly about election fraud, as well as re-tweeting Trump, and once being retweeted, by Trump:



For an analysis on Scott Adams the character, also check out "Decoding The Gurus" podcast:

Notes

Adams leverages several well-known influencing triggers and mentions several famous authors and *popular psychology texts*, including Cialdini's *Influence* and *Pre-suasion*, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, *Predictably Irrational*, *Made to Stick* and Trump's own *The Art of The Deal*.

Here are some of my favorite passages:

We Make Decisions Irrationally & Rationalize Afterwards

We think of ourselves are rational, but we make most of our decisions irrationally and only later back-rationalize to "make sense" of our choices -called indeed "*sense-making*" in psychology-.

High-ground maneuver

When you are under attack, don't answer to the attack, but move the fight to a universal issue that everyone can relate to and agree to.

For example, in response to Antennagate, this is what Steve Jobs said:

> We're not perfect. Phones aren't perfect. We want to make all our users happy.

Jobs acknowledges the mistake, but without apologizing or saying "I'm sorry".
He simply stated a universal truth and then moved to a positive response with which everyone can agree with.

> The Psychology of Political Manipulation

High Ground is Adult Ground

The example he used was particularly good:

> **Hypocrite Accusation Pundit 1**: *Your side didn't do enough to end street violence.*
>
> **Pundit 2**: Well, don't forget that your side failed at it too!

Result: Tie.

The high ground instead agrees and says that they learned a lot from their mistake, they are correcting it and they want to come up with even better solutions.

The high ground takes the adult and proactive role while framing the hypocrite pundit 1 as the child who can only offer complaints and accusations (also read *I'm OK You're OK* for more on child roles).

Tangible Examples Over Abstraction

Tangible, vivid examples are much more effective than complex abstractions and policies.

Trump's "wall" was an example of a strong, tangible policy that everyone could easily grasp and imagine.

Act The Part

Act Like you are already president and people will vote like you already are.

Scott Adams for example says that Trump's jet looked like the Air Force One.
Hillary's plane didn't.

Say Crazy Stuff to Dominate The Media

By using hyperbole and over-the-top, sensationalistic claims, Trump was all over the media.

As a matter of fact, the media came to depend on Trump to sell and make news.
And all his political opponents virtually disappeared.

Sometimes that hyperbole got Trump some bad publicity, but it was overall well worth it.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

How Scott Adams Leverages Crazy Claims

Scott Adams admits in *Win Bigly* of having used a similar manipulative technique when he said that Trump had a 98% chance of winning.
He didn't know the exact percentage, but he said a very high, highly specific number to get some press about it.

I'm With Her Was Dumb Slogan

I agree with the author that Hillary Clinton's "I'm with her" slogan was very poor.

It doesn't say anything about the people and it doesn't pack any emotional punch.
Most of all, it's very self-referential and all about Hillary.

Basket of Deplorables Loses Bigly

The author says that Trump profited handsomely from Hillary's gaffe of "basket of deplorables".

Trump framed it as an example of contempt. And that was the perfect move, as the author reminds us that contempt is one of the nastiest emotions and the biggest predictor of divorce.

Strategic Ambiguity

Strategic ambiguity intentionally leaves out parts of the message that could be objectable.
People fill in the gaps with whatever they feel and like, thus agreeing with you.

My Note:
This is a double-edged sword because people who don't like you will fill the gaps with negative ideas. And you fail the opportunity of possibly winning over some of them.

Donald Trump's Power Moves

I have written extensively on Trump's power moves.
You can read more here, including several videos on his tactics:

- Trump's debate tactics
- Trump's debate techniques
- Trump obliterates Macron

Donald Trump mostly defied Hillary through sheer dominance and by imposing his frame.

CONS

There is much that made me disagree with Win Bigly, including:

- **Continuous bragging about "calling the future"**

Win Bigly is a big parade of the author's ability to "predict the future". A couple of times he said that his predictions were so good that they ended up spooking people.

The author quotes *A Random Walk Down Wall Street* and Nassim Taleb's *The Black Swan*, but *Win Bigly* didn't seem to take any lesson learned from Taleb.
Especially from *Fooled by Randomness*. Win Bigly indeed seems to me to have been very much fooled by randomness.

And then, of course: anyone who brags about predicting the future tends to lose authority.

- **"My rational confidence on a Trump win"**

That's a quote straight from Win Bigly.Anyone who calls a prediction about the future, without any data, "rational" is *not* being rational.
Even if the author believed Trump was the best influencer ever, that does *not* assure a victory. And does not warrant the label "rational" on a prediction.

- **Reality Distortion Field & Investment**

Win Bigly goes into stock investment recommendations as well, saying the following:

> If the CEO of a mass public company is told to have a "reality distortion field", keep an eye on that company.

Keep an eye on that company" could be said of any oddball CEO. Or any CEO really.
Of course, the author-backed his claim with the usual correlational evidence of his own Apple's investment (a meaningless, non-evidence).

- **Lots of forced explanations**

Win Bigly seeks to find reasons for Trump's win through his persuasion strategies.
But as Tony Robbins says, you find what you look for.
And the author ends up finding a bit too many and a bit too improbable explanations.
One of them is that Trump is so addictive because he's unpredictable.

- **Sometimes feels overly braggart**

Win Bigly at times feels very self-promotional.

A parade of the author's purported superior knowledge, qualifications, huge Twitter following, big-ticket speaking gigs, and dating success (yes, even that one).

At a certain point, the author even suggests that Trump and Cialdini might have been swayed by his writing.
I don't know if that were the case… But I still don't think it's a good reason to brag.

See here: how to self-promote effectively, and how to brag effectively.

- **Trump wins at negotiation because people expect him to do well.**

Win Bigly says that Trump does well at negotiation because people expect him to do well.

And to me, this sounded like another example of a forced case of over-explanation.

The fact that Trump might as well tell people they need to be careful and raise their defensive wall.
And Trump didn't do so well negotiating with Democrats and North Korea after all…

- **New Yorker personality VS Californian personality**

Win Bigly says that Californians don't understand Trump because they have a different sense of humor.

> My claim, is that it's easier for a New Yorker to understand another New Yorker than it is for a Californian to understand a New Yorker

That might be true, but the influence of that on understanding someone's psychology is so minimal that it shouldn't be even mentioned.

The author then delves deeper into the different "New Yorker" and "Californian" personalities, which didn't add much value.

- **"Trained Persuaders" and "Master Persuaders"**

The author says that a "trained persuader" can easily recognize another persuader.
Obviously, he counts himself in the field of "trained persuaders", albeit all that we here are a lot of references to some hypnotist training and a lot of circular references to a few popular persuasion books.

- **The author detects lies and illnesses**

The author says that he uses hypnotist tells to detect lies with scary accuracy.

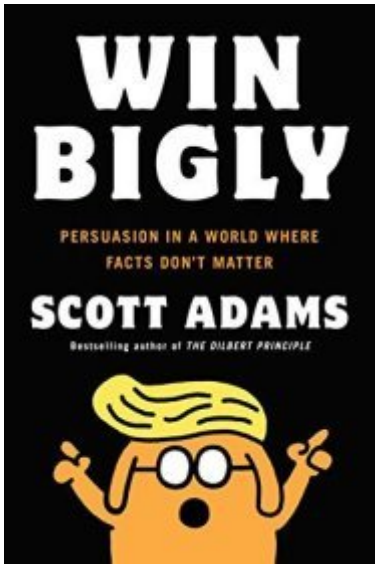
Most experts agree you can't detect lies with "scary accuracy", and tests show that "expert lie detectors" are barely any better than non-experts and are wrong almost as often as they are right (Also, read: *What EveryBODY is Saying* and *The Like Switch* by professional interrogators).

The author also says he could detect Clinton was ill.

That all sounded ludicrous to me.

- **Why we are a simulation**

The author says we are probably a simulation because our cognitive biases explain how the simulation can save computing resources.
That failed to convince me.



PROS

As you can read by the cons and the review, I cannot give thumbs up to Win Bigly.
However, there are plenty of good and even a few great ideas here.

I was particularly and positively impressed by the analysis of the high ground technique and the adult VS child role.

Review

There are parts I enjoyed from *Win Bigly*, but it lacks depth, and it's not the richest resource on persuasion.

The more I listened, the less I could take it seriously because the author's bias and cheerleading don't support a balanced analysis.

Adams also seems fooled by randomness at times, investing Trump's moves with pre-planned rationality.

And, cherry on the pie, Adams was also off the mark.
The author brags about his predictions. But he predicted a "win by a landslide". And in terms of total counts, Trump got fewer votes… By a good margin.

Also see:

- Manipulation books
- Best persuasion books

Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven... Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

"*Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive*" introduces 50 ways that you can persuade and influence others, based on research and studies.

Contents

- Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Noah Goldstein is an assistant professor at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. He earned a Ph.D. in psychology under Robert Cialdini at Arizona State University.

1. Give the Impression of High Demand

What can cause your sales to skyrocket?
Sometimes, it can be simply changing three simple words.

Going from:

> Call now. Operators are waiting

to:

> If operators are busy, please try again.

The first sentence gave the feeling that operators were waiting around fiddling their thumbs.
The second one gave the impression of a hot product that people wanted to buy.

2. Align Desired Behavior to Similarities

When you want to influence behavior, you should show how similar people act like you want them to act.

3. Show Positive Behavior, Not Negative One

Never show how people behave badly.
That doesn't lead people to want to be good and unique, but it leads them to think that many behave badly and, hence, so can they.

In short: don't point fingers at people behaving badly, but draw attention to the many who are behaving well.

4. Provide Fewer Choices

Too many options can easily lead to decision paralysis, which in turn leads to no sales (also read: The Paradox of Choice).
The exceptions are customers who already know what they want and those who enjoy the "picking experience".

5. State the Value of Free Products

If you are giving something for free or as an add-on bonus, you should always state its value.
If you don't, people will feel like it's worthless.

6. Place an Expensive Option for Contrast

Placing an expensive product in your product line will help increase the sales of your less expensive ones.

Try to place the product you want to sell the most as the "middle ground" option.

7. Fear ONLY Works With CTA

Fear only sells if people can do something about it and if there is a clear call to action to take.

Otherwise, people will block the negative message.

8. Make Them Feel Your Gift Is "Just For Them"

Waiters giving 1 or more mints at the end of customers' lunches see little difference in tips.

But if the waiter gives one mint and then turns around and adds one more, tips increase by 23%.
It's because it feels more special and "just for them".

9. Used "I"ve Already Done This" Reciprocation

If you say:

> I have already done this. Can you also do this?

You get much better results (45%) than if you said this:

> If you do this, I will match it and do it too

10. Favors Increase for Giver, Diminish for Receiver

Over time the weight of favors increases in the giver's mind and decreases in the receiver's mind.

If you want something in exchange for a favor then, it's best to ask for it right away.
Cialdini also takes a leaf out of his previous book Influence and says that it's best to preface your favor by saying:

> I know you will do the same in the future

If you need to ask for a favor back far away in the future you can -tactfully please!- help them relive the moment.
For example, you can ask them:

> Remember when you had that issue and I helped you out of it? It was quite helpful for your back then, right?

My Note:
I need to stress "tactfully" again. Do this wrong and people will resent you for making them feel indebted and trying to manipulate them.

11. Get a Small Commitment First

People are much more likely to comply with your request if they have agreed to a smaller previous request.

There are plenty of examples, including the famous "drive carefully billboard".

Here is another one for you.
A restaurant decreased their no-show reservations from 30% to 10% by changing “please call if you have to cancel” to:

> Will you please call if you have to cancel?

When people answered “yes”, that represented a micro-commitment.
Commitments work best if they are:

- **Voluntary** (you didn’t push them)
- **Active** (ie.: they say it and confirm it)
- **Public** (there are witnesses)
- **In Writing**

For example, you get more commitment if you make people fill their own forms as that makes them active participants and feels like a written confirmation.

12. Label People With The Behavior You Want

If you label people with a trait that you want them to show, they are more likely to live up to that trait.

This is something that Dale Carnegie also says in How to Win Friends and Influence People.

13. Make People Feel They’re Being Consistent

If you want people to change their behavior, show them how the change is consistent with who they are, what they already believe, and what they already do.

Keep in mind not to make people feel like they did a mistake in the past! That would likely push them on the defensive instead.
But tell them that with the information they had back then it was a smart choice. This way, you help them save face and you help them move out of their old habits.

14. People Like You More If They Do You a Favor

People will like you more if *they* do a favor to you, as compared to if you do a favor to them.

15. Add “Anything Will Help” To Your Requests

Adding “even a penny will help” increased donations both in terms of average donation size and in terms of the percentage of people who donated.

Some other applications:

> Can you just give me a little clarity

Or:

> Just a brief chat would make a huge difference

16. Set Your Sales PriceLow

The lower you start, the more people you get to start bidding. That will add competition fuel to the fire and increase social proof (ie.: “lots of people want the item, then it must be good”).

The exception is when the market is illiquid and there are a few people interested people.

17. Let Others Say Good Things About You

Credentials matter and are crucial.
But don't toot your own horn: have someone else say great things about you.

Also, don't forget to hang credentials on the wall and put them in your signature.

18. Make People Feel You Heard 'Em Before You Reject 'Em

"*Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive*" also gets into idea generation, saying that having many people contribute often leads to better results.

For better efficiency, there should be one final person to decide and if he must reject some contributions, he should make the rejected person know that his opinions and ideas were appreciated and considered.

19. Red Team Idea is Bad

Tim Ferris, an author of "*The 4-Hour Work Week*", touts the idea of a "red team", such as to designate a person or team with the sole scope of tearing ideas apart to show their weakness.

But Cialdini says that people usually don't take the red team seriously because "it's their job to find faults". And after they are done with the exercise, they feel like they have "considered everything there was to consider".

The best solution is a culture where dissension and criticism are welcome. Also read: *Principles* by Rai Dalio.

20. Teach (& Learn) The Correct Way

People learn by going through the correct way of doing things, not by looking at the wrong way of doing things.

21. Show Strategic Weakness to Gain Trust

People will trust you more when you show your credentials and your great work if you first showed weakness or vulnerability.

Of course, the flaw should be minor and non-essential (also read: Vulnerability is NOT Power).

22. Present Both Sides

This is similar to the above, but it's so deep that it deserves its own entry.

When you have a positive and a negative, you get the best results by presenting them both and highlighting the positive.

For example, this one, of course, ad terrible results:

> Our restaurant has little space

This one had better results:

> Our restaurant is very cozy

But this one has the best results of them all:

> There's little space, but that makes the atmosphere cozy

That means that saying something like:

> Our product is more expensive, but it's the most beautiful on the market

Works better than simply saying "our product is the most beautiful on the market".

23. Take the Blame to Gain Trust

When you take the blame, even when you had little responsibility, people trust you more going forward because you show more control over your environment.

24. We Like What Feels Similar To Us

We like things and people who are similar to us. From the date of birth to the zodiac sign, to names that sound similar to ours.

Mirroring and repeating people's use of words and expressions makes us feel more similar and increases trust and liking.

25. Make Your Product / Information Feel Exclusive

People respond much better when they feel like the information you share is not public and/or is only known by you.

That makes people feel more exclusive and like they can get an edge over everyone else.

26. People Respond Better to Loss Than Gain

Make people feel like they already have something and they will lose it -rather than what they don't have yet but might gain in the future-.

27. Use "Because" to Make People Feel You Have Good Reasons

People often answer to keywords rather than the full sentence.

When you use the word "because" you make people feel like you have good reasons for asking what you're asking (the famous experiment of cutting the line to make copies).

28. The Easier You Think of Something, The Better It Feels

If you ask people to think of 10 great traits of a Ferrari and they struggle to think of 10, they will feel like Ferrari is not that great.

If you tell them to think of 3 traits and they come up with them very quickly, they will rate the Ferrari higher.

For the same reason, simple names are better and more compelling than complicated or long ones.
Stocks with simpler names and tickers outperformed the ones with more complicated names.

Sentences that rhyme are also more convincing.

29. Use Comparison to Make Your Product Seem Better

Perceptions are relative.
If you anchor a huge price and then come down to a price that is still above the market value, it will seem much fairer and smaller.

That works even for unrelated items.

A hot-tub salesman increased sales by 500% when he said that customers report having a hot tub is like having an extra room. He then asked prospects to imagine how much a new room would cost.

Then, by comparison, the hot tub would seem like a huge bargain.

30. Give a Head Start

The completion rate is much higher when people feel like they had a head start.

That's why it's a good idea to start loyalty programs by pre-filling the first couple of slots and making it seem like the customers are getting a free head start.

31. Give "Aha Moments"

People feel much better about a product if they can feel better about themselves.

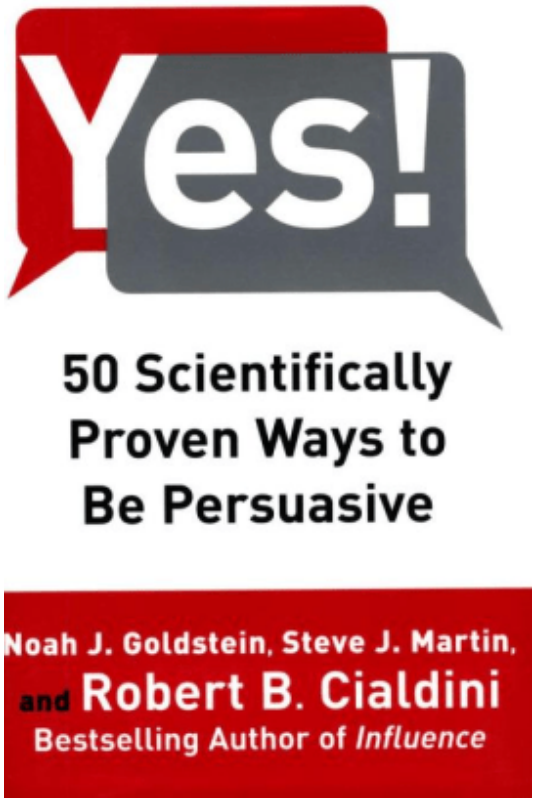
Before we said you should choose simple names.
But if you can choose a complicated name and customers will later realize how that name applies, it will give them an "aha moment" that makes them feel good about themselves and, by reflection, about the product.

32. Mirrors Are Drivers for Morality

When people can see themselves, they tend to act more morally and steal less.
Placing a mirror near a tiller would reduce customers' theft. A pair of painted eyes also help as it unconsciously reminds people they might be watched.

33. Target Your Message to The Culture

The US and some Western countries respond better to individualistic messages such as "this product will make you great", while more collectivist cultures respond better to messages such as "this product will make your family/friends happy".



Real-Life Applications

- **Don't Make People Feel Wrong**

What a huge concept to make us better influencers and higher-quality individuals: never make people feel like they made a mistake or they get defensive.
Instead, tell them that their decision, based on the information they had, was good and rational.

- **Don't Negotiate When You're Sad, Tired, or Distracted**

When you are sad you are worse at gauging the magnitude of numbers.
And when you're sleepy or distracted (such as when you're multitasking), you're more gullible and tend to believe more what you read and hear.

Thanks to Ali for this note.

- **Give Coffe When You Got Good Case**

If you have a good case to make, you can give people coffee. That makes them more attentive to what you've got to say and your good reasoning will stand out.

- **Build Relationships Before Negotiations**

Making friends and building good relationships before negotiations have been proven to make negotiations easier and smoother.

CONS

- **Manipulation doesn't work?**

The authors say that manipulation won't work because people will learn and the knowledge will spread.
And your long-term results will suffer.

I wish that were true, but there are plenty of times and situations where manipulation works well.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

- **No clustering of principles**

"*50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive*" is a wonderful list, but many of these 50 Proven Ways to Be Persuasive could have been clustered for ease of understanding (and ease of checking them later again).

Well, in this "Yes! Summary" I've done the clustering work for you :).

Review

Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive is a high-quality collection of persuasive and influencing techniques.

It's all based on research -albeit it doesn't discuss or delve deeper into the research- and provides plenty of examples of how that research can apply to your life and persuasion efforts.

Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive is one of the best books in its genre.
I highly recommend it to anyone who's interested in psychology and persuasion.

Also, read:

- The best books to persuade anyone
- The best books to manipulate (or defend against manipulation)

Get the book on Amazon

You Can Read Anyone: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *You Can Read Anyone* David Lieberman teaches how to read people and understand what they are thinking and when and if they are hiding anything.

Contents

- Summary
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

These are my main takeaways from "*You Can Read Anyone*":

Find Out if Someone's Lying

To find out if someone is lying you can't ask directly or they will go on the defensive and clam up.

Instead, you want to ask them if they can help you with something. For example, ask if they can help you find out who's been stealing from the office.
If they ask questions, offer advice, and help. it's a good sign.
If they become uneasy and change the subject, you can almost rest assured he's guilty.

My Note: This is an indicator, but it won't give you a final answer
This is an indicator *at best*.
The best liars will ask questions and pretend to help as well.

People Use "I" When Feeling Confident

When we are confident about something we tend to use the pronoun "I", "we" or "us".
When we want to distance ourselves, we don't take ownership.

If your boss says about your idea "I like it", it's a good sign. If they say "it's nice", you can guess they are less enthusiastic about it.

How to Find Out If Someone's A Good Friend

How do you find out if someone's a friend or a frenemy?

Tell them something important which has happened in your life.
If they don't ask about it later on, it's a bad sign. David Lieberman also says you can drop hints to help them remind and give them a chance to ask.

My Note: Great idea. Not just for friends actually, but to recognize socially intelligent and/or supportive people
I think this is a good idea: a good friend should care and ask. However, it's not necessarily a measure of friends but also a measure of emotional intelligence.

Also read: signs of frenemies.

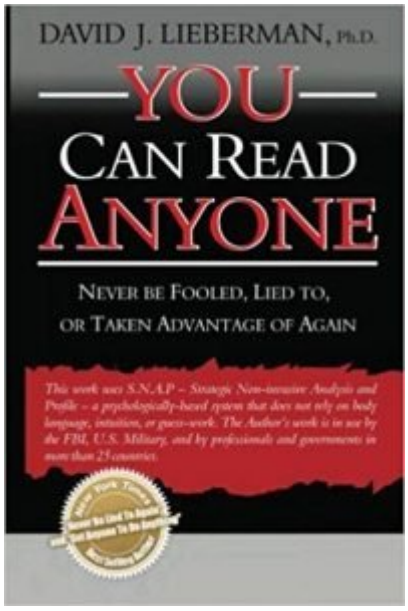
Self-Esteem and Ego

The analysis of ego and self-esteem was one of my favorite parts of the book.

- Diminished ego & high self-esteem = humble person
- Large ego & low self-esteem = arrogant

The most dangerous to others are huge egos and low self-esteem (direct negativity towards others).
The most dangerous to him is dented ego and low self-esteem (more inclined to direct negativity inward).

The author says that one cannot have high self-esteem and a large ego.



CONS

- **Big, Unrealistic Claims**

I'm not a big fan of how Liberman picks his books' titles.
And the parameter of choice seems to be "the bigger the claim, the better the title" :).
His previous book for example was called "*How to Make Someone Fall In Love With You in 90 Minutes or Less*".

And in this book, he says:

> This technique virtually guarantees that you can find out within minutes if someone has something to hide

Wait a second… Guarantees?? BS!

PROS

- Good analysis of ego and self-esteem and how they intersect with each other
- Loved the tip on how to differentiate between good and supportive friends

Review

I'm not a big fan of the bombastic title, but there are a couple of good ideas here there.

Also, check out:

- The best books to understand people

- The best books to influence people

Or get the book on Amazon

Persuasive Selling and Power Negotiation: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Persuasive Selling and Power Negotiation is a mix of different authors and coaches sharing knowledge on wisdom on sales, negotiation, and interpersonal skills.

I found some parts to be great, some parts to be a repetition of what I had already heard, and some parts to be rather underwhelming.

Contents

- Summary
  - Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

There are several different takes and topics here, including some on dark psychology, “dark seduction” (what’s that?), and manipulation.

However, I haven’t found most parts to be very good, and some content I have already reviewed (Brian Tracy, and *Power Negotiating* for example).

So I will only list the good and new ideas here.

Questions to Sell

You never convince people: they convince themselves.

To know how to present your product, you need to know what they want. Questions are (car as an example)

- How would you know you have picked the right car
- What is it that tells you this is a good car (you, someone else, or data?)
- How do you this car has X (what sensory style he uses and what is he looking for)

Personality Styles

This section talks about introverts, extroverts, and ambiverts.
About pic pictures of people, visionaries, and detail-oriented ones. And planners and spontaneous ones.

Interesting, but no earth-shattering new information.

Frame Your Complaint in Positive Communication

Here is an interesting example of how to frame your complaint:

> You know, I have been coming here for the past 3 years. I have spent hundreds of dollars on your services and I’ve always been happy.
> What can you do, so that you can keep my business

The author says that the way you frame, it shows what a great client you've been.

My Note:
I really like the approach, but I think it might be a bit too aggressive to start it.
I would remove the "so you can keep my business part". At least in the beginning. Then, if you still don't get any compliance, add that part.

Don't Ask "*What Could You Pay*"

If somebody cannot repay in full or refuses your price, don't ask "what could you pay" but ask:

> What price did you have in mind

That way, you can still demand more afterward. With "what could you pay", they take a stronger stance and they look like they were lying if they move from there.

Be Willing to Walkaway

One of the female authors explains how she got married thanks to her willingness to walk away.

She told her boyfriend:

> I love and I think we'll make for such a great couple. But marry me, or I must walk.
> If you change your mind, come look me up, I will always love you.

Then she broke up and he came around a few weeks later.

Characters and Skills Form the Basis of Influence

God, I could not agree more.
Stamp this one onto your forehead: character and skills form the basis of influence.

It's not tricks, specific words, NLP, or anything.
It's how much people like you and respect you. And that's characters and skills.

People who buy from you are looking at your character and wondering:

> Is this a person I can trust?

When you want to influence, you want to ask yourself how you can improve your character and your basic skills.

The author also mentions:

- Communication skills (broad vocabulary, enunciation..)

Quotes

> In life you can earn a little or you can earn a lot. The choice is yours

> You never know the final price until you walk away

> The answer is always no when you don't ask

Real-Life Applications

- **Invest in great business cards**

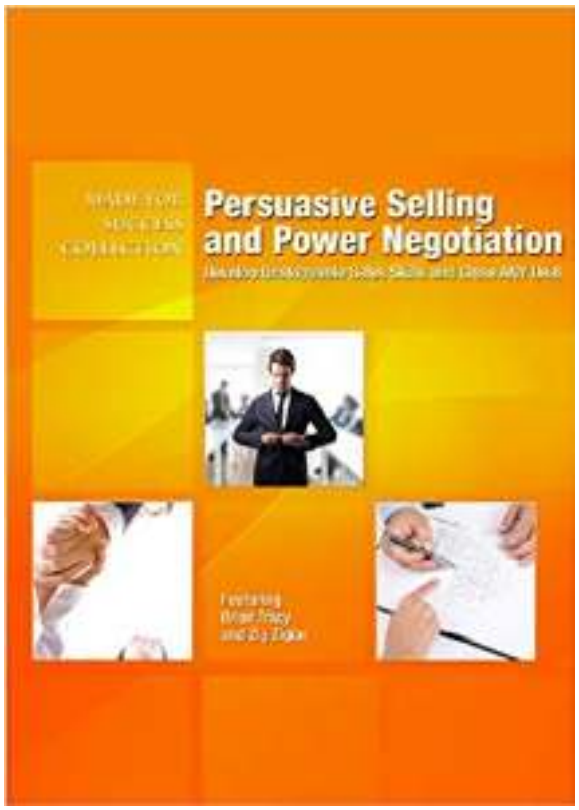
People assume that your company is as solid as your business cards. Don't go cheap on business cards: print on good and thick papers.

- **Don't nod in negotiations**

Otherwise, it seems like you are agreeing and when you demand more or refuse the deal you will look like a fake, conniving person.

- **Ask the prospect what they think your house is worth**

I like this one.
I scared too many prospects away with starting high for my garage and they never came back. I should have used a different technique and asked them first.



CONS

- **Big mix**

Lots of different ideas, opinions, and topics.
Too different, in my opinion.

- **Varying Quality**

Some parts had me nodding thinking "this is genius". And some more were highly disappointing.

PROS

There are some great tracks.

Good negotiations tips, albeit many are summaries of other authors,

Review

I'm not a big fan of these mixed products. 40% of this information, I had already listened to.

And the variance is too big: you never know whether you should stop listening or whether the next author will be good. And that is a time sink that I don't appreciate.

Get the book on Amazon

Propaganda: Is This Old Classic Still Relevant Today?

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Propaganda (1928) is a classic book on persuasion and manipulation written by Edward Bernays in 1928. Bernays proposes a new take on the Machiavellian prince "constrained" by democratic rule. The prince, unable to resort to violence as easily as in the past, must today rely more on Machiavellian communication and propaganda. Luckily for him, it can be equally effective.

Contents

- Takeaways
- How Propaganda Works
  - What Is Propaganda?
  - The Rich Men Use Propaganda Against The Poor
  - 1. Universal Literacy Didn't Liberate People But Turned Them Into Consumers
  - 2. People Are Irrational Creatures Who Think They're Rational
  - 3. Authority Figures Make Propaganda Way More Effective
  - 4. Politicians Use Propaganda to Sway Gullible Masses
  - 5. … And Big Business Started Doing The Same
  - 6. Corporations Manipulate Public & Employees
  - 7. It's Not About Pleasing The Public But About Swaying It
  - 8. How Politicians Use Propaganda
  - 9. Technocratic Governments Systematically Manipulate People
- Limitations
  - Simplistic View of "Invisible People of Power"
  - Unscientific, Random Claims Dressed as Obvious Truths
  - Skips The Psychology of Persuasion
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- Propaganda includes all the deliberate activities and communication efforts to influence people's minds and opinions
- Democracy and mass literacy requires the use of propaganda by the elites to channel the masses in the right direction
- Most people are already influenced and swayed by propaganda without even realizing it
- Businesses play the propaganda game the same way politicians do (ie.: don't trust their philanthropic gestures, which might be PR)

How Propaganda Works

About the Author:
Edward L. Bernays wrote *Propaganda* in 1928, mixing social science, the psychology of manipulation, and public relations.

What Is Propaganda?

Bernays defines propaganda as such:

> Modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group.

The Rich Men Use Propaganda Against The Poor

Universal suffrage and education are a threat to the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the people with power.

The minority protected their interest with the use of mass media. With carefully planned and crafted communication, they get the common people to support their policies and ideas.

Bernays says:

> Propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government.

This is something that modern communication experts also agreed upon. See for example:

- **Don't Think of An Elephant**: how the rich frame political issues to win the poor people's support

1. Universal Literacy Didn't Liberate People But Turned Them Into Consumers

I loved this paragraph:

> Universal literacy was supposed to educate the common man to control his environment. Once he could read and write he would have a mind fit to rule.
> So ran the democratic doctrine.
> But instead of a mind, universal literacy has given him rubber stamps inked with advertising slogans, (..) trivialities of the tabloids and the platitudes of history, but quite innocent of original thought.

This is something that some modern political analysts and commentators also agreed on.
See for example:

- **No Logo**: how the big brands manipulate consumers

2. People Are Irrational Creatures Who Think They're Rational

I was impressed to read what a good grasp the author had of psychology and the human mind.
This passage, for example, had me thinking that Bernays was way ahead of his time (modified for brevity):

> A man sits in his office deciding what stocks to buy, believing his purchases is rational.
> In actual fact his judgment is a mélange of impressions stamped on his mind by outside influences which unconsciously control his thought.
> He buys a certain railroad stock because it was in the headlines yesterday and hence it is the one which comes most prominently to his mind; because he a pleasant recollection of a good dinner on one of its fast trains; because it has a liberal labor policy, a reputation for honesty; because he has been told that J. P. Morgan owns some of its shares.

3. Authority Figures Make Propaganda Way More Effective

This paragraph made me think Edward Bernays was a genius:

> The salesmanship would reiterate innumerable times in full-page advertisements: “Eat more bacon. Eat bacon because it is cheap, because it is good, because it gives you reserve energy.”
> The newer salesmanship, understanding the group structure of society and principles of mass psychology, would first ask: “Who is it that influences the eating habits of the world?”
> The answer, obviously, is: “The physicians.”
> The new salesman will then suggest to physicians to say publicly that it is wholesome to eat bacon.

4. Politicians Use Propaganda to Sway Gullible Masses

The masses don’t have any great wisdom.
They follow their leaders and those who are better placed to influence and persuade them.

Writes Bernays:

> Given our present political conditions under which every office seeker must cater to the vote of the masses, the only means by which the born leader can lead is the expert use of propaganda.

Also, read:

- **How politicians manipulate people**

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

5. ... And Big Business Started Doing The Same

Edward Bernays says that businesses have been employing propaganda tactics more and more.

And big businessmen are more and more performing on the public stage not out of genuine beliefs, but to drive sales.

He says (edited for brevity):

> The successful businessman today apes the politician.
> He has adopted the glitter and the ballyhoo of the campaign with sideshow, annual dinners that are a compendium of speeches, flags, stateliness, and pseudo-democracy slightly tinged with paternalism.

Also see:

- **The psychology of corporate manipulation**

6. Corporations Manipulate Public & Employees

Propaganda might as well be the very first great career advice text.

Edward Bernays was way ahead in his understanding of the Machiavellian games that HR and bosses play:

> On occasion he doles out honors to employees, much as the republic of classic times rewarded its worthy citizens.
> But these are merely the sideshows, the drums, of big business, by which it builds up an image of public service, and of honorary service. (..) Business stimulates loyal enthusiasms on the part of directors, the workers, the stockholders and the consumer public.
> It is one of the methods by which big business performs its function of making and selling products to the

> public.
> (But) The real work and campaign of business consists of intensive study of the public, the manufacture of products based on this study, and exhaustive use of every means of reaching the public.

Yep, couldn't agree more.

See again a modern analysis of these same principles:

- **How corporate leaders manipulate employees**

7. It's Not About *Pleasing* The Public But About *Swaying* It

There are some parts of Propaganda that feel so prescient and so befitting of Trump's administration that you might think it was written today:

> The important thing for the statesman of our age is not so much to know how to *please* the public, but to know how to *sway* the public.
> In theory, this education might be done by means of learned pamphlets explaining the intricacies of public questions. In actual fact, it can be done only by meeting the conditions of the public mind, by creating circumstances which set up trains of thought, by dramatizing personalities, by establishing contact with the group leaders who control the opinions of the publics.

8. How Politicians Use Propaganda

Imagine that a politician wants to lower tariffs.

A poor way of swaying the public would be to tell people to vote for him because he'll lower tariffs, and that decreases prices for everyone.

This is how a proper propagandist would approach the issue instead:

- Don't tell people low tariffs are good but create conditions that make his point dramatic and self-evident
- Stage a low-tariff exhibition simultaneously in twenty cities
- Have prominent men and women open the exhibitions
- Organize groups whose interests are especially affected by the high cost of living to spread the word
- Dramatize the issue (ie.: have prominent men boycott woolen clothes and go to important functions in cotton suits until the wool import fee was reduced)
- Let social workers speak on how the high cost of wool endangers the health of the poor in winter

Basically, by the time the propagandist is making his appeal, the public is already primed and willing to accept his message.

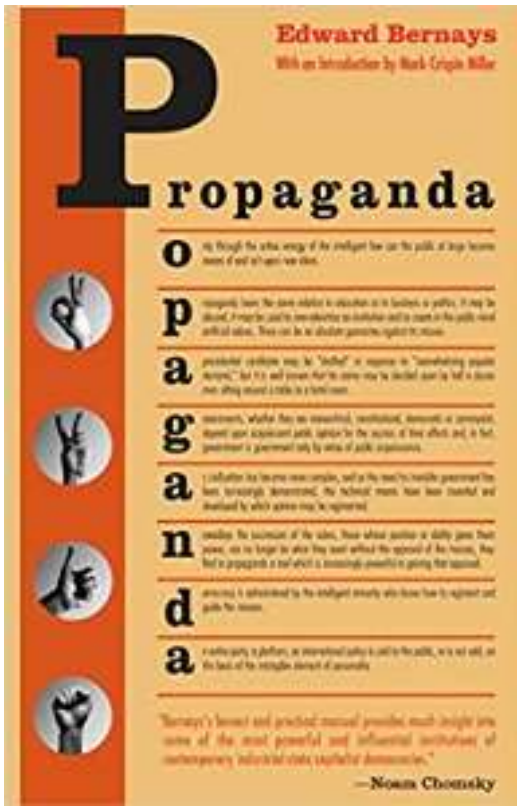
9. Technocratic Governments Systematically Manipulate People

Propaganda ends with what looks a lot like an endorsement for a technical, technocratic government that governs the masses with propaganda.

Basically, propaganda in Bernays's view becomes a way for the enlightened elite to channel the (not-so-enlightened) masses in the right direction.

I think there would be many benefits to such a government, indeed.
Our task would be to make sure that those elites are indeed enlightened.

And that's also one of the pillars of The Power Moves: we need fundamentally good people who know how to be bad to reach the elites of power.



Limitations

As much as I loved Propaganda, there are quite a few cons you should be aware of:

Simplistic View of "Invisible People of Power"

Propaganda talks about the "invisible people with power" as if they were a homogenous group with shared interests.

But they're not.
Sure: *some* interests might coincide, like keeping taxes for the rich low (or providing a way to escape them).

But there are *plenty* of issues where the rich and powerful stand on opposing grounds.

Unscientific, Random Claims Dressed as Obvious Truths

Talking about the few people who direct the propaganda, Edward Bernays writes:

> But it is well known that many of these leaders are themselves led, sometimes by persons whose names are known to few.

Have you noticed what any critical reviewer would object to there?
It's his statement of "it is well known".

This is the same format you find in Think and Grow Rich by the way.

Skips The Psychology of Persuasion

Propaganda makes big claims of how people exercise little will and instead obey orders of marketers and PR barons.

And it also goes into detail on how the propaganda is prepared.

Yet, it's rather light on the details of how this process occurs in the common people's mind.
Paradoxically, this might actually be an advantage. Coming up with some unscientific mental processes would have only undermined his work.

PROS

I loved Propaganda.
Among the pros:

- **Big Claims… But Also Awareness of The Limitations**

I highly appreciate how the author is fully aware, and clearly communicates, that propaganda is not an exact science.
He says:

> Scientific accuracy of results is not to be expected, because many of the elements of the situation must always be beyond his control.
> Propaganda, like economics and sociology, can never be an exact science for the reason that its subject-matter, like theirs, deals with human beings.

- **Intelligent Analysis**

I repeat myself, but Bernays was so ahead of his time that he is still ahead of many modern "communication experts".

- **Deep, Evergreen Propaganda Principles**

Some principles, like ditching facts for propaganda, are a timeless constant that worked 100 years ago as much as they will work in 100 and 1.000 years.

- **Technocratic Government: Propaganda For Good**

I agree that democracy is far from the best form of government, and it can potentially get even more dangerous.

Propaganda can be used for good or for evil.
And what we need is an enlightened leadership that uses propaganda for the best interest of humankind.

Review

Propaganda is a genius work for its time, and some of its principles remain valid. However, compared to more modern work, it lacks a century of progress in both scientific research and power dynamics insights.

One may say *Propaganda* is to persuasion and manipulation like *The Prince* is to power and power dynamics.

I am astonished at how much wisdom is scattered in this classic of persuasion and manipulation.
Part of the value is that Bernays is an intelligent and power-aware man, and he speaks about high-level truth, rather than specific persuasion techniques.

I place Propaganda at the same level as *The Prince* by Machiavelli: a classic on how to be bad, which can be used for good.

I also tend to agree with him that democracy presents some limitations and that enlightened leaders who can sway the masses with intelligent communication and propaganda can also best position themselves to serve the interests of those same masses.

This had long predated the birth of the more recent psychological movement called “Nudge Theory“, rebranded by Richard Thaler after his book “Nudge“.

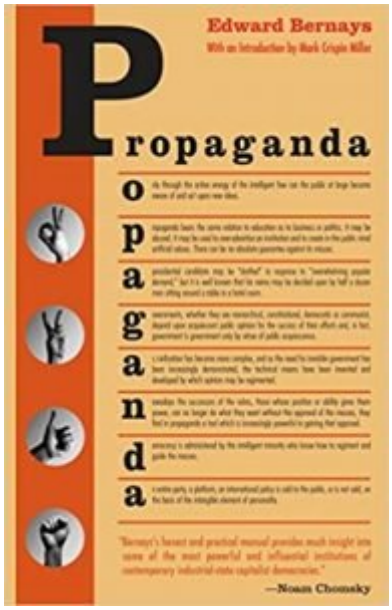
The only question we must ask is: will leaders who adopt nudge theory and propaganda be enlightened leaders who will benefit the greater good, instead of themselves?

Finally though, you must be aware of the limitations: some claims are unscientific at best, and it’s not meant to be a how-to on how to influence, persuade, or sell.

See:

- Best books on **how manipulators influence others**
- Best books on **how to persuade people**

Propaganda Book Summary: 9 Rules of Mind Control



Huge classic with wisdom that doesn't age. The author drops knowledge like he's 200 years ahead of his time.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/propaganda-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.2

What Would Machiavelli Do? Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

What Would Machiavelli Do is a satire on cut-throat business operations, selfish attitudes, and the pursuit of power with complete, total amorality.

Contents

- Summary
  - Machiavellian Mindsets
- Review

Summary

Stanley Bing says that *The Prince* is great, but it's aged and you wouldn't understand it anyway because many examples relate to Machiavelli's historical circumstances.

So, he takes the most famous political strategist in history and translates his teachings to today's world of business, power, and intrigue.

What Would Machiavelli Do, In Short

There are a lot of chapters, I will pick some of the best ones:

1. He would be unpredictable, and thus gain the advantage
2. He would be, for the most part, a paranoid freak
3. He would always be at war
4. He would cultivate a few well-loved enemies
5. He would have a couple of good friends, too
6. He would think BIG
7. He would move forward like a great shark, eating as he goes
8. He would fire his own mother, if necessary
9. He would make a virtue out of his obnoxiousness
10. He would be satisfied with nobody but himself
11. He would embrace his own madness
12. He would do what he feels like doing, you idiot
13. He would say what he felt like saying
14. He would delegate all the crummy tasks, except the ones he enjoys
15. He wouldn't exactly seek the company of ass-kissers and bimbos, but he wouldn't reject them out of hand, either
16. He would respond poorly to criticism
17. He would carry a grudge until the extinction of the cockroach
18. He would lie when it was necessary
19. He would be proud of his cruelty and see it as strength
20. He would kick ass and take names
21. He would torture people until they were only too happy to destroy themselves
22. He would feast on other people's discord
23. He would be loyal to the people who could put up with all this

24. He would screw with people's weekends, wedding plans, open-heart surgery . . . .
25. He would realize that loving yourself means never having to say you're sorry
26. He would scream at people a lot
27. He would establish and maintain a psychotic level of control
28. He would follow the money, honey
29. He wouldn't be afraid to sling that bullshit
30. He would never retire

What People Who Refuse Machiavellianism Do

Sure, there are plenty of people who will reject the Machiavellian way of life.
But here is what they do, according to the author:

> They try to be decent.
> They view other people as free individuals who have a right to live their own lives. They are embarrassed by power and greed and manipulation.
> In short, they find their own little cubbyhole and crawl into it.
> These are the men and women whom you see on the train or bus or subway every morning in their humdrum designer knockoffs, eating a dry little muffin from a brown paper bag and reading, confused and dejected, about the next Internet millionaire.

LOL, this might be satire, but it's also scathingly… Sad and true at the same time.

It reminded me of the beginning of Goodfellas:

The other people instead, those who travel business class, own jet or… Don't move at all when they want, the real movers and shakers, are different.
Because they ask themselves "*What Would Machiavelli Do*?".

On Paranoia

> **Why not assuming everyone is against you? It's more rational than believing they're on your side**

On Being At War

Make a list of your enemies.
Says Stanley:

> True Machiavellians who are serious about their hatreds as well as their loves, like Mr. Nixon, have a list.

You must keep your list relatively short though. Only 5 top enemies max or you're in trouble.

Nurture your rage but don't let it take over.
Business wars should be based on business, not just ego. And when business dictates it, it might be time to wage war against a friend, too.

> **To win the war, pick the terrain. Location, location, location**

Are You Thinking Like Machiavelli?

Here is a quick test to assess your Machiavellianism:

If I had a boat, it would be . . .

1. A perfect jewel
2. Very, very big— huge really
3. The biggest boat in the whole world
4. I have no idea, but it would be bigger than yours.

I believe other people . . .

1. Should do what I want them to do
2. Should fall down and kiss my feet
3. Should lie down in my path, so I can walk on them
4. There are other people?

Cut Expenses In This Order

1. Consultants: They expensively plug gaps that should be filled by cheap stuff
2. Very old people: They're slower, don't relate to the Internet very well, and can't drink as much as they should
3. Very young people: They're way too speedy and ambitious, won't shut up about the Internet, and don't drink as much as they should

Fire On Paper Whenever You Can

Especially if you're a beginner Machiavellian, you might still have way too much heart, ethics, and values getting in the way.
Fire on paper whenever you can or send someone else to deliver the bad news.

In the words of the author:

> But as long as you have other people to deliver the bad news to those who have to hear it in person, this part of being a first-class prince is no big whoop. Relax. You'll live longer.

Gender Inequalities

The author says that many women are still lagging behind men in business because they've had more trouble embracing the Machiavellian spirit.

He says:

> Too many are like Sherry Lansing of Paramount, who has the reputation of being "the nicest No in Hollywood."
> Who needs that kind of reputation? How many men would be proud of it? The Dalai Lama, maybe. But maybe not. I hear he can get really cranky when they screw up his reservation at Spago.

On Smart Women Using Sex

> She was lousy at her job, but her job wasn't her job. Her job was Larry.

The Traits of a True Machiavelli

- **Narcissism**: Until you learn to view other people solely as a function of your needs, you will be a short hitter
- **Business Narcissism**: So what if they have a vacation? You need them here. Unless you're determined to be a

second-rate wimp, you're going to need to insist your needs are met before theirs are. They won't like it. But who says they have to like it?

- **Greed**: A limited desire is a cap on your personal power. You don't have to want everything, but you have to want all
- **Lies**: You can separate the amateurs from the big boys when they get caught. Serious players who are busted for what other people might consider a lie feel no shame. They were just doing what Machiavelli would do
- **Self-Justification**: "Chain Saw" Dunlap still feels great about himself, even though he's probably the only one who does.
  Until you can muster this level of self-justification, you will remain the subservient stooge you are.

Pit People Against Each Other

There are two techniques to pit people against each other:

1. Drop projects and support by making it clear that someone else's priority has killed their chances
2. Praise people publicly in a way that hurts others

Find Your Selfish Inner Infant

Do you know all those self-help books telling you to find the curiosity and spirit of your infancy?
Well, that's the real infant that a Machiavellian needs to rediscover.

> The real Machiavellian, like the infant, believes there is nothing bigger or more important than him or herself. To succeed, you will need to achieve that view, to return to the liberating egocentrism of the selfish, amoral child.

Sling That BS

Trump almost got away with earning huge brownie points at the NY town hall and naming a new convention center after his father for free.

He did it by sending a letter and saying he would forego his millions in credit if the town hall was just so nice to name that convention center after Trump.

Luckily somebody went through the papers and realized that.. Trump wasn't owed anywhere near what he claimed.

What About Moderation?

Finally, in the last chapter, the author takes a different twist which partially underlines that much of the work was satire.

For example, most people thought Rudolph Giuliani was doing a great job, but all New Yorkers didn't want him anymore.

But it's not a full recant of the Machiavellian method. In the words of the author:

> Good may often be its own—and only—reward in this competitive, malevolent, and unfair world. This may be most true in business, where the unsympathetic aspects of the human character are compensated most lavishly. But evil does have its limitations, ones that even the biggest, baddest Machiavellis around should keep in mind. That may be the very best—and most useful— lesson of all.

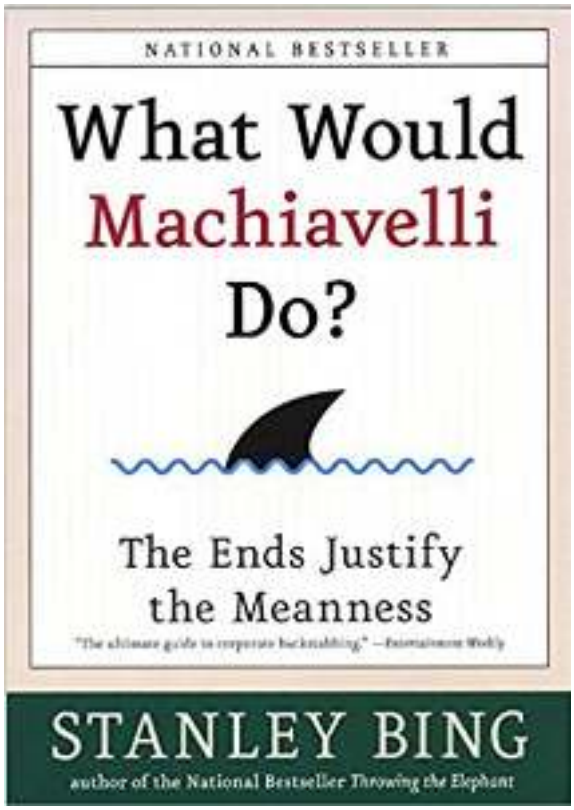
Machiavellian Mindsets

On personal excesses:

> Personal excess: You have bad habits. Some are harmful to yourself, and should still be avoided. But the ones that are harmful to other people can now be celebrated!

On giving freely:

> Good expense accounts loosen the connections to non-business life most people enjoy. When they're spending your money, you own them. So be liberal.



Review

What Would Machiavelli Do received some low ratings on Amazon.

Maybe some readers could loosen up or lighten up a bit?
Or maybe some readers could wise up because this is how many businessmen operate.

Or, even better, let them stay the way they are so that you can reap the advantages of being one of the few who takes power dynamics seriously :).
Now that's some good Machiavelli mindset, my friends :).

Jokes aside though, I really enjoyed the book. It's funny and humorous. But it might also help some people to open their eyes to the reality of human nature.
And that, sometimes (or often?) putting your conscience aside will be handsomely rewarded in business (see: "when psychopathy beats empathy").

In short, "*What Would Machiavelli Do*" is a satire, yes, but it's a satire based on reality.
And you can also use this book as a tool to get rid of your rose-tinted glasses.

Also see:

- **The best dark triad books to become a real Machiavelli**
- **The best books on how to manipulate people**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Power Moves Recommendations

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

This page lists the resources that helped me in my business (or my life).

Some of them include affiliate links.

Contents

- #1 SiteGround
- #2. Tax-Free Today
- #3. LearnPress
- #4. Content Views Pro
- #5. Genesis by StudioPress
- #6. Fiverr
- #7. Freelancer.com
- #8. Airbnb
- #9. Asgaros Forum

#1 SiteGround

I use SiteGround for ThePowerMoves

If you want to launch your website or if you are planning to move hosting provider, I can highly recommend SiteGround.

Cons

- It's easy to exceed the amount of CPU / allocated on shared servers
- My upgrade to virtual servers wasn't super smooth

I had issues with CPU and RAM spikes, but that was my very own issue.
My TTFB (time to first byte) on virtual servers wasn't as fast as on shared plans, which I thought was very strange. But I didn't work on it long enough because I later downgraded back to GoGeek, the highest shared servers' plan (my move was too rushed).

Pros

- Fast

Speed is super important because it has a direct impact on SEO and users' experience -the two are correlated anyway-.

- Secure

Siteground has HTTPS on all plans, offers two-steps login, pushes patches and updates automatically and they take good care of their servers' environment security, which is even more important on shared plans.

- Reliable

100% uptime which is awesome.

- Lots of own plug-ins and services

SiteGround develops own caching solutions and plugins that will help you get rid of a lot of plugin bloats. All with the advantage of seamlessly integrating into the SiteGround ecosystem.

PRO Tip: if you are planning to grow or if you are already growing, it might be a great idea to start with a higher plan at a discount.
Because when you start with the smaller plan at a discount, you won't carry that discount when you'll have to upgrade to higher plans.
So pick the GoGeek and carry that discount for a few years until you'll move to dedicated server.

Start your website with SiteGround.

#2. Tax-Free Today

Guys, if you plan on starting a business you need the best information available on:

- Maximizing taxes
- Minimizing bureaucracy
- Legal and asset protection

And the best information available, bar none, is at Tax-Free.Today.

If you've already been around entrepreneurial-minded people you know that this is a world where everyone talks about legal entities and tax optimization.
But you will quickly realize that the truth is this: everyone *talks* about it but nobody *knows* anything about it.

It's against this backdrop of widespread ignorance that I was absolutely in awe of Christoph's work.
Christoph is a well of knowledge and on Tax-free.today, he delivers it in a simple, practical and actionable format.

I am very happy that today (May 2019) I have had my (first) consultation with Christoph and I couldn't be happier.
His team can also help you with the actual process of incorporation which is what I am doing right now.

I'll keep you updated on the actual results with a more in-depth review.

But in the meanwhile do yourself a favor and inform yourself on what, where, when and how you should incorporate:

- **Book a consultation with Christoph**

#3. LearnPress

For the online course Social Power, I use LearnPress (the website and company are called ThimPress as they also make WordPress themes).

The two major competitors of LearnPress are Learndash and LifterLMS.
Bot of them is relatively expensive while LearnPress is free to start with (you only pay add-ons, which still makes it cheaper and you don't need add-ons to start with).

I haven't tested the other two, but LearnPress was so simple and effective that I never had the need to.

I use LearnPress with the following add-ons:

- Stripe checkout

In the future I am planning to also get:

- Content Dripping
- Paid Membership Add-On

Basically, I am thinking to move from a one-off payment to a weekly payment system for Social Power and I will need those two add-ons to make it work the way I want.

LearnPress Support

Online reviews complain of a lack of support.
On the WordPress page of the plugin indeed there is little to no support, but you will get support on their forums on their website.

I can't compare with the support of other LMS, but I can tell you that Huyen not only got back to me, but actually logged in on this website more than once to fix some coding for me (thank you Huyen!).

LearnPress Themes

When I got LearnPress I was already running Genesis with a different theme and didn't want to undo all of that work.

If you are starting with the idea of selling a course, it might make sense to go for both LearnPress and Thimpress theme all at once.

Get LearnPress Themes here.

#4. Content Views Pro

To organize the blog page and, most of all, the Reading List that makes me so proud, I use Content Views PRO.

I absolutely love those guys.
There is nothing in the market that gets even close to them.

They also have a free version which I kept for a while.
But once I bought the pro version I had to wonder why I waited so long.

At $29 a year, it's so cheap anyway that I recommend you get the PRO right away.

Get Content Views Pro

#5. Genesis by StudioPress

I run Genesis by StudioPress on top of my WordPress installation and I also use a StudioPress theme.

Some people prefer Divi.
Divi is more customizable and makes it easier to change pages and homepage.
That's cool, but I chose Genesis because it's sturdier, safer and, some say, better for SEO.

That sealed the deal for me.

StudioPress Themes

First I had Magazine something, which was better for blogging purposes and showing off the latest posts on the

homepage.

Then I changed to Academy Pro, the current one, which is better to use the homepage as a sales page for the course.

My goal is to have something in between though. I love writing and sharing wisdom and I think some of my latest work should find its way on the homepage.
It's in my to-do list.

#6. Fiverr

My go-to service when I need to hire external help.

You can hire developers, CSS experts, data entry workers, translators, and even photoshop help.

My recommendation is that you find someone you like and then stick with him.
It will save you time and money.

Ask me for a specific recommendation on the right people.

Use this link and you get 20% off:

Get 20% Off Your First Order

GA Tracking Analytics

Learning what users are doing on your website is crucial to understand in which direction you need to develop and improve.

The default Google Analytics installation might not be enough for many. It wasn't enough for me for example.

Particularly, I wanted to know what users were doing before buying a membership.

To add customer goals and events, I was super happy with Tobias' work.
He was fast and thorough at the same time.
More thorough than anybody else I've seen on Fiverr, which I highly appreciated:

- **Customize your Google analytics with Tobias here**

#7. Freelancer.com

While Fiverr is better for smaller work, Freelances is better suited for bigger projects or for custom projects.

Write a description of what you need to get done and watch tens of people apply.
Then you can comfortably sort and choose depending on price, feedback, and expertise.

It's great.
Use this link and we both get a $20 bonus:

Get started with $20 bonus

#8. Airbnb

Airbnb will be your best help while you launch your company.

It provided a survival income stream to my business partners' while they bootstrapped.
If you have the opportunity, I can highly recommend you do the same.

Apply here and you get a $30 bonus right off the bat!

Travel with Airbnb

Or:

Begin hosting & bootstrap with a $30 bonus!

#9. Asgaros Forum

For the forum, I use Asgaros Forum.

There is no affiliate link here because it's free and I *highly* recommend above the more popular bbPress.

It looks beautiful and works wonders right off the bat while bbPress looks terrible and you'll waste weeks (and hours of developers' money) to make it acceptable.

How to Argue & Win Every Time: Strategies for Lawyers (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

How to Argue & Win Every Time is a book in which author Gerry Spence shares his strategies and mindsets on winning court cases.

TPM Takeaway: Courtroom Persuasion, Upgraded with Power Awareness
Gerry Spence focuses on authenticity, storytelling, and emotional connection. At TPM, we build on that foundation by integrating power awareness, frame control, and strategic foresight because persuasion is not only about being understood, but about controlling the frame and guiding decisions in your favor.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - 1. Ask For What You Want
  - 2. Pick Your Battles
  - 3. Use Simple But Emotional Words
  - 4. Put Yourself in Their Shoes: Empathy is Key
  - 5. Avoid Sarcasm: Don't Make Others Feel Inferior
  - 6. Inform, Don't Make Them Feel Stupid
  - 7. Take the Initiative
  - 8. Lead With Your Weaknesses: Rob Your Opponent of An Easy Win
  - 9. The 7 Basics of Winning Arguments
  - 10. Learn The Laws of Arguing
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Takeaways

- **Speak with power**: assertive, direct, and truthfully
- Allow others to reject and disagree (power protect)
- **Control the frame**

Notes

About the Author:
Gerry Spence was a trial lawyer indicted in the Trial Lawyers Hall of Fame. His own website not-so-humbly reads "the greatest trial lawyer in history".

1. Ask For What You Want

People don't want to say no, not to our face, and even less so when we ask what's just and reasonable.

Ask respectfully, yet assertively, directly, and high power.

> **The first trick of winning an argument is the trick of abandoning trickery**

2. Pick Your Battles

Pick your battles because you can't convince everyone, and neither should you try.

Gerry Spence says that you will likely not "win an argument" against a creationist who really believes that God literally created the Earth on the 7th day.
And that's OK, you shouldn't try to convince him otherwise.

3. Use Simple But Emotional Words

Use simple words that create emotions.
Any word that doesn't create emotion or visual content must be discarded. The author even says that "words that appeal to the sterile intellect should be abandoned".

4. Put Yourself in Their Shoes: Empathy is Key

Put yourself in the other person's shoes, and see the argument from their point of view.
To win the argument, you must see the argument from their point of view.

For example, when you ask for a raise, you must keep in mind that a corporation wants to see a return on its investments.
And you will always lose if you ask for a raise without having the corporation's profits in mind.

TPM Note: This is basic 'what's in it for them'. But in truth, the advanced level requires strategic intelligence. See 'how to be a good Machiavellian.'

5. Avoid Sarcasm: Don't Make Others Feel Inferior

Scorn, ridicule, and sarcasm are a no-no. But also use humor cautiously, since it can be misunderstood.

Humor is powerful when it reveals the truth. But the big risk is that of trying to be funny and failing.

When in doubt, if there is a chance that the other party might be offended, avoid it.
And remember: always give basic human respect to everyone.

Also read:

- **How to respect others**

> How to Show Respect, Maintain Rapport, & Influence People

6. Inform, Don't Make Them Feel Stupid

If you are an expert in a subject and your "opponent" doesn't know squat, your aim shouldn't be to win or crush them, but to inform them.

TPM Meaning: avoid 'teacher's frames' that always annoy others

> The Teacher-Pupil Frame: How Explaining Becomes a Power Move to Lower Your Status

7. Take the Initiative

Counterpounchers lose.
The winners take full control of the action instead. They don't defend when they can attack, and after they attacked, they attack again.

TPM Note: remember that people respect high power people. So some interpersonal dominance is crucial. You certainly must respect others and, as a lawyer, avoid being disliked. But you can't just be a too-nice guy who fails to get respect.

Also see:

- **10 Techniques to control frames and interactions**

8. Lead With Your Weaknesses: Rob Your Opponent of An Easy Win

You can tell your weaknesses much better than your opponent will.

So take charge of them and admit them at the very beginning. Admitting your weaknesses not only will increase your credibility, but it will also leave your opponent with little to say.

9. The 7 Basics of Winning Arguments

The basics are:

1. Prepare well
2. Envision your argument
3. Listen to the other
4. Find common ground
5. Be credible
6. Tell stories
7. Tell the truth

TPM Note: to combine truth with winning, see 'how to be honorable'.

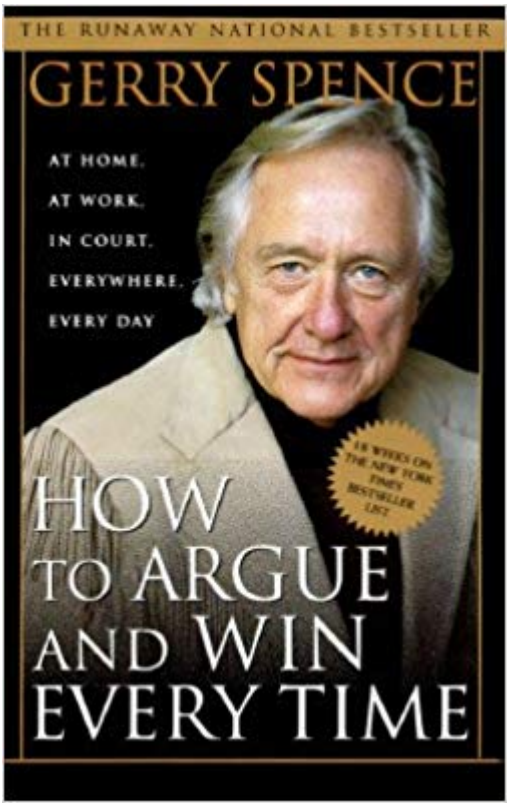
> The Honorable Man's Guide: Power, Respect, and Success

10. Learn The Laws of Arguing

And these are the laws of arguing according to Gerry Spence:

1. Everyone is capable of making the winning argument.
2. Winning is getting what we want, which also means helping "others" get what they want.
3. Learn that words are a weapon, and can be used hostilely in combat.
4. Know that there is always a "biological advantage" of delivering the TRUTH.
5. Assault is not an argument.
6. Use fear as an ally in public speaking or in argument. Learn to convert its energy.
7. Let emotions show and don't discourage passion.
8. Don't be blinded by brilliance.
9. Learn to speak with the body. The body sometimes speaks more powerfully than words.
10. Know that the enemy is not the person with whom we are engaged in a failing argument, but the vision within

ourselves.



Real-Life Applications

- **Allow Others to Disagree**

For me, this was the biggest takeaway and something that took me a while to realize.
The best way to avoid arguments that go nowhere and end up in combative intimate relationships is to allow our partners to disagree and reject our arguments.

CONS

- **Terrible Audiobook**

The audiobook feels like one of those old, stodgy, grey old-school audiocassette recordings.

- **Some Generalizations**

The author says that “if you step into a kitchen where an argument is raging, all the noise is evidence of a desperate need of being heard”.
Fair enough.
But that still sounds like a generalization. He even mentions Van Gogh who cut his ear because nobody heard. But Van Gogh likely also had psychological issues, some say borderline personality disorder.

- **Few examples**

“How to Argue and Win Every Time” doesn’t have many examples.
It’s more discursive than based on techniques and case studies.

Review

"*How to Argue & Win Every Time*" shares some valid points but lacks a framework and advanced insights that one could expect from such a successful author.

It feels like diluted content, lacking practical examples, and even with some naive self-help advice.
That's the truth, despite I respect that Gerry Spence, the author, proudly represents "the little people".
On his website, he says:

> He fights against oppression and injustice in courts across US.

In a way, I think of him as a kindred soul for what we're doing at The Power Moves.

Note:
Power-intelligence is a force multiplier for lawyers. Beyond arguments and evidence, outcomes are shaped by a strategic mix of power-signaling, warmth to boost likability, and frame control.
Many lawyers use Power University to sharpen these edges and gain an advantage in court, negotiation, and client interactions.

 For a more complete, power-aware approach to persuasion, see Power University:

Check Power University

The Art of Deception: Social Engineering Tactics & Self-Defense (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Art of Deception (2001) is a book on Machiavellian strategies to penetrate systems through people, a practice that is today called "social engineering".

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - Culture Makes Us Easy Targets of Social Engineering
  - Good Security is A Balance
  - Commercial Security Products Are Against Amateurs
  - Good Social Engineers Are Charmers
  - Social Engineering Techniques
  - The Art of Deception Stories
  - Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- Humans are security's weakest links (security is a process and a people's problem)
- Successful social engineering attacks often start with small, apparent inconsequential information
- Companies that want to protect their assets must focus on employees' training on security and security processes (and, I'd add, on learning basics of manipulation)

Notes

About the Author:
The author, Kevin Mitnick, is a well-known hacker who turned "white hat" to help governments, organizations, and users defend against hacker attacks.

Note on The Summary: In this summary of "*The Art of Deception*", we focus on the social side rather than on technologies to protect oneself against social engineering because technologies change, human nature doesn't.

Culture Makes Us Easy Targets of Social Engineering

The author says that it's the culture itself that makes us easy targets of social engineers.

We are taught to "trust our neighbors" and have trust and faith in each other.

All people are *not* kind and honest. Living as if they were, is the best way to get conned.

My Note:
Personally, I don't believe that most people believe in the lie of most people being kind and honest.
It's more a question of numbers: people are not deceived daily and are not the daily targets of fraud attempts. The

familiarity of not-being conned is what leads many people to lower their guard.

Good Security is A Balance

Too much security and the processes bog down the organization.
Too little security and a breach can bring an organization to its knees.

However, it might be wishful thinking to hope that security will not slow down processes at all or, in some cases, inconvenience someone (ie: regular employees who forgot their badges at home).

Commercial Security Products Are Against Amateurs

The commercial security products are mostly to protect against amateur intruders -also referred to as script kiddies-.

The real threats come from more professional, more experienced attackers who focus on one target at a time and carefully study their systems, processes, and organizational culture.

The amateurs go for quantity, searching for very weak prey, mostly for fun.
The professionals focus on one target and look for a financial return.

Good Social Engineers Are Charmers

In most cases, successful social engineers are good with people.
They know how to be charming, they are likable and they know people's psychology and they leverage it to bond and connect with people.

When necessary, they might as well leverage authority to pressure lower-level employees into compliance.

Social Engineering Techniques

The author says that social engineers use well-known influencing techniques and references Robert Cialdini's seminal work Influence.

Here are some more social engineering techniques:

1. Cushion the important question between inconsequential ones
2. Use personal questions (ie.: how long you've been with the company) to gauge his reaction (if he answers normally: great sign)
3. Use the lingo to sound like an insider
4. Ask something too big so they must refuse you and propose you the alternative you wanted all along: it will inspire trust (ie.: "can you go *fetch* my colleague's badge in the next building, it's in his drawer")
   Note: the word "fetch" is on purpose to make it more unlikely he'll want to comply
5. Take advantage of new people who are clueless and have less courage of pushing back
6. Use intimidation with the ruse of authority by mentioning a boss' boss or the CEO (works especially well with lower-level employees)
7. Piggyback and most employees won't challenge you. You can carry a few big boxes and pretend you can't access your badge or open the door by yourself if you need an excuse

The Art of Deception Stories

These are only some of the stories covered by Kevin Mitnick in "The Art of Deception":

- A person gets out of a speeding ticket by fooling the police into revealing a time when the arresting officer will

be out of town and then requesting a court date coinciding with that time.

- The social engineer gains access to the company's system, guarded by a password that changes daily, by waiting for a snowstorm and then calling the network center posing as a snowed-in employee who wants to work from home, tricking the operator into revealing today's password and access through duplicity.
- A con artist gains proprietary information about a start-up company by waiting until the CEO is out of town, and then showing up at the company headquarters pretending to be a close friend and business associate of the CEO.

Quotes

> There is a popular saying that a secure computer is one that is turned off. Clever, but false: the pretexter simply talks to someone into going back to the office and turn it back on.

Social engineer rule:

> First rule: never visit the premise unless you really have to. They have a hard time identifying you if you're just a voice on the telephone. And if they cannot identify you, they cannot arrest you.
> It's hard to put handcuffs around a voice.

On hiding the money:

> It was a typical case of "where is he hiding the money", or sometimes it's "where is she hiding the money". Sometimes it was a rich who wanted to know where her husband had hidden her money, though a woman with money ever marries a guy without was a riddle Keth wondered every know and then but never found a good answer for.

On a guy stealing an identity to fake a degree:

> He had just become Michael Parker, Bachelor of Science in computer science, graduate with honors in 1998. In this case the B.S. was uniquely appropriate.

On dumpster diving:

> It might be a tactic too low down for James Bond.
> Movie goers would much rather watch him outfoxing criminals and bedding beauties than standing knee dip in garbage.
> But real life spies are less squeamish when something of value can be hidden among banana peels and coffe grounds.

On passwords:

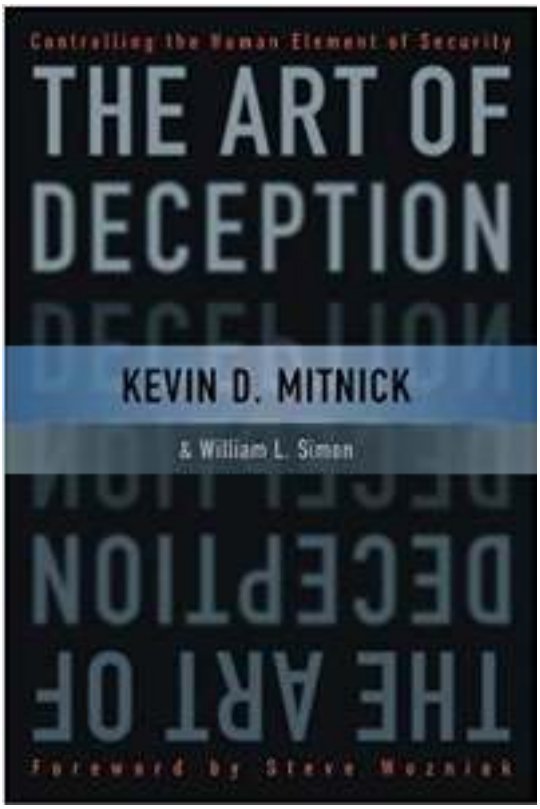
> "Password" worked.
> No surprise there.
> People just lose all creativity when it comes to choosing passwords.

On poor safety practices:

> He logged in to the network with password and user data which were conveniently written down on post-it notes attached to the display.

On keeping a low profile:

> A good social engineer never advertises his skills and knowledge.
> You always want people to underestimate you, not see you as a threat.



Real-Life Applications

- Don't give out any personal or identifiable information unless there is a need-to-know basis and you can identify the requester

CONS

- **Many Similar Stories**

The stories are the real added value of "*The Art of Deception*".
After a while, though they start to get similar and they lose some of their appeals.
It would have been better, in my opinion, to cherry-pick the best one and then maybe do a better analysis of them.

Review

The "*Art of Deception*" is a very good book on social engineering, and I rate it higher than the more popular "*Social Engineering*".

Also, check:

- Best books to manipulate others
- Best resources to influence and persuade people

The Culture Code: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Culture Code analyzes what differentiates the best teams from the average teams.
Daniel Coyle does a good job and the main message that belonging matters is one that all leaders should take notes on.

Contents

- Summary
- Skill #2: Share Vulnerability
- Skill #3: Establish Purpose
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

Daniel Coyle analyzes eight successful groups based on the following criteria:

1. They performed in the top 1% of their domains for at least a decade
2. They succeeded with a range of different personnel and people
3. Their culture has been admired in their industry and beyond

Skill #1: Build Safety

Signals of connection generate a sense of belonging and identity.
The author says we all long for belonging and evolved to pick up on these subtle cues.

There are three basic qualities for belonging cues:

1. **Energy**: they invest in the relationship
2. **Individualization**: they treat the person as unique
3. **Future orientation**: they signal the relationship will continue

All these cues signal: you are safe here.

Alex Pentland from the MIT says that team performance can be measured along these 5 factors:

1. Group members talk in equal measure and keep contributions short
2. Members make eye contact and use lots of gestures
3. Team Members communicate with each other, not only with the team leader
4. Members carry side-conversations
5. Team members make personal experiences and bring back information to the team

The author says Google won the race to dominate the advertising market because of its safe environment.
It was safe for Larry Page to leave a note saying “these ads suck” because, I assume, employees wouldn’t feel threatened by the boss.

And it was safe and normal for an employee who wasn’t even working in the ads to find his own solution on his own

time.
He felt part of the team and didn't need any approval to step in.

> **It's not enough not to shoot the messenger: you have to hug the messenger**

The author goes on to share the examples of Tony Hsieh (read Delivering Happiness) and Ed Catmull (read Creativity Inc)

Skill #2: Share Vulnerability

Habits of mutual risk drive trust and cooperation.

When the leader can tell the words "I screwed up", he communicates that it's safe for everyone to share mistakes, correct each other and learn from each other.

Teams where people are afraid of challenging the leader stifle creativity and can even be dangerous in life and death situations.

The author also says there is a certain misunderstanding about vulnerability.
Some people tend to see vulnerability as touchy-feely (also read Daring Greatly and The Gifts of Imperfection).
But that's not what vulnerability is about. Vulnerability is about admitting we don't know all the answers and someone else can better help to reach our goal.

Also read:

- **Don't believe the hype: vulnerability is not power**

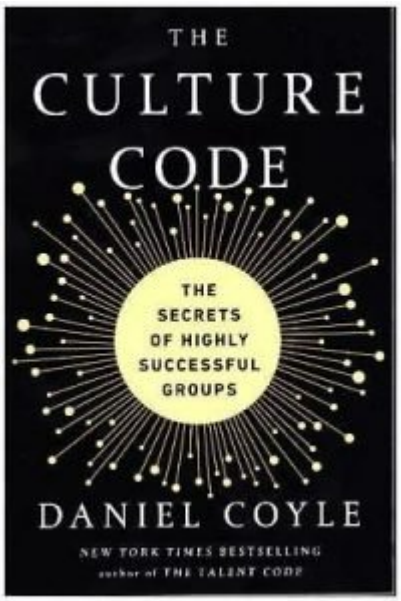
The author then discusses examples from SEALs teams (read: Extreme Ownership, The Dichotomy of Leadership, Make Your Bed and Can't Hurt Me).

The secret of SEALs teams was to carry post-operations briefings where there were no authority structures. Everyone was free and welcome to share experiences, suggestions, and recommendations with the only goal of learning and improving.

Skill #3: Establish Purpose

A common narrative and purpose create shared goals and values.

The successful teams make everyone feel important and everyone felt like they had an important role in the team's success.



Real Life Applications

- **Say: "*I am giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know you can reach them*"**

That feedback led to so much higher performance that the researchers of Stanford, Yale, and Colombia dubbed it "magical feedback".
And this piece of knowledge, to me, was worth the whole book.

- **Avoid sandwich feedback**

Everyone knows what's coming after the good stuff and people either focus solely on the negative (most often) or solely on the positive.
Also read: Thanks For The Feedback.

CONS

- **Lopsided Methodology**

Daniel Coyle follows the stereotypical way of drafting a book about leadership (and self-development in general): look at what the successful ones are doing, analyze (more or less) what makes them successful, and then generalize the principles.

Needless to say, there are plenty of pitfalls in this method, including the fact that the same methodologies might be at play in groups that haven't been successful (also read: Fooled by Randomness).
He does mention he looked into poor-performing groups as well, but then again, there is little information.
In short, albeit I actually agree with Coyle's principles, I'm not convinced about the methodology.

- **The 3 skills are random**

The 3 skills of The Culture Code feel random, and they don't work very well as categories for the chapters that follow.

- **Their culture has been admired by "knowledgeable people" and beyond**

This criterion of picking which group to study is the equivalent of saying "I picked this group because of the hype".
That can also lead to a bunch of errors and mistakes, as anyone who invested in the Elizabeth Holmes' hyped up Theranos can tell you.

- **Some examples felt forced**

A few of the examples in The Culture Code felt forced and twisted to fit the author's narrative.
For example, he says that the sentence "I'm so sorry about the rain, can I borrow your phone" worked better than "can I borrow your phone" because it created a safe environment to connect.

That felt like a totally random rationalization to me.
Cialdini in Influence also shows how a simple "because" can dramatically change the rate of compliance, and it has nothing to do with "safety".
I strongly doubt the author's explanation on "safe environment" and see no connection.

- **Some rose-glasses nonsense**

The author touts like a huge success the approach to hooligans of Portuguese police for the European cup held in Portugal (see Stott et al., 2007 or "The New Psychology of Leadership").

The approach was to go out without protective gear and to talk to hooligans instead of getting ready to fight.

For example, it was typical of hooligans to shoot up in the air the ball that would later crash around tables.
People would then start arguments that would snowball in fights and police heavy-handed intervention.

Well, basically the friendly approach towards hooligans was that of letting them shoot around the ball and only confiscate it when it would roll towards policemen.

Says the organizer of this "friendly approach":

> You can't go and take the ball, because that's precisely the kind of disproportionate use of force that creates the problem.

LOL, taking the ball from a bunch of thugs who are harassing law-abiding citizens is "disproportionate use of force?".

Basically, the approach was: feel free to harass everyone and we won't do a thing -unless the ball rolls around here-.

I don't argue that the approach might be effective, because it is.
But it required a much deeper psychological analysis than the one presented in "The Culture Code".
And it's not the magic bullet the author makes it sound to be.

PROS

I think every leader should read a book that stresses the importance of belonging in a group, and The Culture Code is one of the best books on belonging I have read so far.

Review

I had really enjoyed Daniel Coyle previous book "The Talent Code", so I was ready to receive "The Culture Code" with a positive halo from the author's good previous work.

And I wasn't disappointed.

Every leader should understand how safety and belonging impact groups' results.

Get the book on Amazon

Social Power: Start Here

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

This article gives you a quick overview of power.

Contents

- #1: Avoid Power Dickhead-dom
- #2. Understand Power Is Not Dominance
- #3. Understand the Drawbacks of Aggression
- #4. Power Must Ensue
- #5. Develop The 3 Foundations of Power
- Questions?

#1: Avoid Power Dickhead-dom

The More You Chase It, The Less You Have It

Every now and then I receive comments and questions from people who want "learn how to be powerful", "learn how to dominate" and, of course, those who want to "walk into a room and be the most powerful person".

How can I put this mildly… These people are idiotic kids.
Even if they're grown up, psychologically speaking, they have a childlike mindset.

Most people with that mindset confuse power with dominance.
In life, they tend to be very low quality, isolated and socially awkward.

The few with that mindset who make it to the top -a there are quite a few- still are far from the most well-respected, high-quality people around.
And they have trouble holding onto that power (ie.: Donald Trump).

Power-hungry men are often not the leaders of their (poor) intimate relationships
Finally, people who approach life with a thirst for power not only cramp their own quality of life, but also inflict damage on others -and that's the opposite of what this website stands for-.

If you have that mindset, you need to fix it ASAP.
Both for your own sake, and for the world.

#2. Understand Power Is Not Dominance

You can exercise power in many ways which do not include dominance.
Soft power in social relationships, for example, entails little displays of overt dominance and yet is the most common form of power in our current world.

Dominance indeed is simply a subset of power, and it's often expressed through aggression.

I wanted to show you here an extreme example of how power and dominance are inherently different:

"Say what you want, but do as I say"
–*George Thompson*, author of Verbal Judo
In this scene from Scarface, the banker is, *apparently*, dominated.

Yet *he* is the one who gets what he wants while also preserving the relationship.

#3. Understand the Drawbacks of Aggression

Scarface is also a good example of how pure dominance and aggression help *reaching* power quickly.

But they often cause the downfall of those who don't learn how to "sterilize" the side effects.
Dominance and aggression help in getting power quick, but also help in *losing* power quick.

Why?

Well, one of the main reasons is that people resent domination.
And instead of wanting to help you, they'll want to stop you.
Instead of wanting to see you win, they crave for seeing you lose.

We can see it with Trump as well, who has lost plenty of power and control by escalating all kinds of battles that didn't need to be escalated.
Congress hates him, the press hates him, Mueller hates him, many members of his own party hate him… And I think that deep down his wife might hate him too.
He painted himself into a corner with the wall funding and he's become the most embattled president in recent history. Scratch that, he is *the* most embattled in history.
That's an effective way of retaining power.

#4. Power Must Ensue

Healthy, long lasting, high-quality forms of power that have people look up to you is different.

Viktor Frankl in his timeless "Trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen" says that "happiness cannot be pursued. It must ensue".

That was a simple, yet genius.
Power is similar:

> Power cannot be pursued. It must ensue.
>
> *The Power Moves*

But… Ensue from what?

#5. Develop The 3 Foundations of Power

Power is surprisingly simple for many high-quality individuals.
Indeed, the simplest way to becoming powerful is becoming a high-quality person as the two strongly overlap.

Who you are, how much you care, how much responsibility you take and how well you understand people all form the basis of long-lasting power.

- **Your Personality**

Most people *crave* a leader and someone to look up to.
But here is the important caveat: they only want to follow and defer to those who are better than they are.

The potential for getting anything you want in life is only limited by your level of skills, and personality.
In short: your power is only as great as you are.

Thus, to increase your power, one of the best investment you can do is investing in developing yourself.

- **Emotional Intelligence: Reading Power Dynamics**

Like Simon Sinek explains in Leader Eat Last, the most successful and beloved leaders care about the people they lead.

He is not fully right, but he is not wrong either.
The reason why some great leaders are successful is not only because they care, but because the people care about them.
And yes, caring about the people is a great way of achieving that. But not the only one.

The most successful leaders are successful because people *want* them in power.
Or at least, a good chunk of the people. Or at the very least, a good chunk of the people who matter.
I explain the difference in Social Power, but hopefully you'll decide to go for a broader appeal.

This also applies for men in intimate relationships (see again the effects of power for power's sake in Trump's relationship).

- **Social Intelligence: Acting On Power Dynamics**

Reading power dynamics well is only half the battle.

The second one is knowing how to act on those power dynamics.

There would be much to say here, but for this quick overview let me just mention a key mindset.
And that mindset is ownership.

The best leaders take responsibility for the results and for the well being of the people around them.

Once you get into a mindset of taking responsibility for people and results
something funny will happen: you stop searching for power because you *become* powerful.
Mentally first of all.
And then, little by little, you realize that the tables have turned and *power* comes to you.

People ask you for directions in life, friends and colleagues look at to you. Then bosses give you the best assignments and you start getting promotions and responsibilities.

We're not done though.
There is one more element…

Questions?

If you got any question, head onto the forum.

Ask & I'll Answer
Filed Under: Social Power Moves

Enchantment: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Enchantment is a guide to developing a charming personality and improving one's social skills. In "Enchantment" Guy Kawasaki, the author provides a good overview of people's skills.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Enchantment Summary
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Enchantment – Review

Bullet Summary

- Find your passion and live it
- When you meet people, look for commonalities
- Find your 1.000 screaming fans (enthusiasts)

Enchantment Summary

Enchanting is the art of charming people, and there two crucial components to enchanting:

- Being liked
- Being trusted

The author then also talks about enchanting to sell, so he adds how to launch, sell and manage social media.

Find Your Passion

Enchanting people are passionate people.
They know what they love, they pursue what they love and they share what they love.

Find Their Passion

Enchanting people also talk to other people about what *they* love.
As Dale Carnegie says in How to Win Friends and Influence People, the secrete to being interesting is being interested.

And if the people you talk to don't have a passion?
Always assume they do!
It's the best way to find it (or to help them find it).

And if they really don't, Kawasaki wonders if they are really worth enchanting :).

Find Common Passion

As Robert Cialdini says in Influence, people like people who are like them.

To stress how you are similar, always look for commonalities you have. Ideally, those commonalities will be common passions.

Create Win-Win

Similar to Covey in The 7 Habits of Effective People, Kawasaki says that likable people focus on adding value and finding solutions where both people profit.

Also read:

- **The 4 basics strategies for power**
- The laws of social exchange

Trust to Be Trusted

Guy Kawasaki mentions Tony Hsieh, author of Delivering Happiness. He says that Tony's company, Zappos, is based fully on trust.
And it works because Tony first trusted customers. And in return, customers don't take advantage of Zappos and its free returns.

My Note:
In reality, there is little to take advantage of free returns.
Returning products is so time-consuming that I'm pretty sure there is a huge number of people who keep products they're not too happy with to avoid having to go return them.
Plus: you are paying the returns of others on the shoes you're buying.

Enchantment also says you should assume people have good intentions and give them the benefit of the doubt. Someone might even do something bad but that doesn't necessarily mean they're bad people and there might be circumstances you're not aware of.

Always Reveal Your Conflict of Interest

Most people won't even care about your interests in promoting a product… As long as you state it very clearly.

Failing to disclose your interests and being found out will erode your trust faster than snow in an oven.

And there is also little to be embarrassed in most conflicts: if you behave honestly and only endorse products you like, then you have no conflicts to be ashamed of.

Build People Up Before Introducing Them

Guy Kawasaki mentions a simple and neat technique he learned from the author of "Yes: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways of Getting to Yes".

The technique, which significantly increased sales, was simply to tell customers something positive about the colleague you were about to pass them to.
For example:

> I'm going now to pass you to Miss. Pitt, she has over 20 years of experience in real estate.

Beat Resistance With Positioning

Sometimes people can resist an idea only because of preconceived notions.

Nintendo was having trouble penetrating the US market because Americans had turned hostile towards games and console.
Nintendo called its new game "robot" instead, and it was a smash hit.

Acquire Early Adopters

People resist change.
And a great way to overcome that resistance is by getting a few early adopters that will function as social proof.

Especially if the early adopters are the hip kids, then everyone else can look up to them and will be happy to follow.

That's why gaining early traction is so crucial.
Also read:

- Crossing The Chasm

An experiment divided students into three groups and gave three types of different feedback:

1. You know the material really well, you tried really hard, keep at it
2. You should do well, you should be doing better
3. I am proud of your work, you are doing excellent

The feedback that worked the most is the first one.

My Note: This is growth mindset
The first feedback worked best because students internalize the methodology of working hard and they tend to develop a growth mindset (also read "how to develop a growth mindset").

On Competition

I like what Kawasaki says about the competition:

> If you do something worthwhile you'll have competition. If you don't have any competition,, you should wonder if you're doing something worthwhile

Albeit Peter Thiel in Zero to One says that the really great companies operate as a monopoly with little to no competition.

On Marketing

Around 5% of your messages should be promotional.
And if nobody complains, you're not promoting enough.

The rule of thumb, says Guy Kawasaki, is that "the more value you give, the more you can promote".

On Career & Enchanting Your Boss

- Always prioritize your boss.

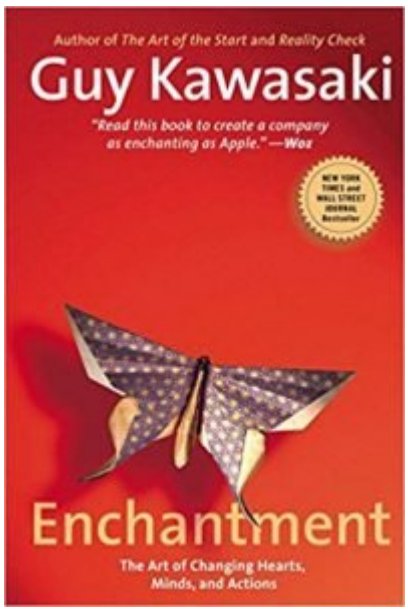
If your boss asks you something, drop whatever else you were doing and serve him first.

- Ask for feedback as you go

You give the impression of being proactive.

- Demonstrate progress
- Deliver bad news early (and add how to fix it whenever you can)

Bad bosses only want good news but you should avoid those bosses.



Real Life Applications

- **Swear… But Don't Swear Too Much**

People who swear from time to time come across as more passionate and more real.
A swear word can be used strategically to wake people up. But don't overdo it. On top of coming across as boorish, swearing loses its effect if it's continuous.

- **Little New & Original Ideas**

Enchantment is a good overview, but there is little new and original wisdom.

CONS

- **Correlation presented as evidence**

God, sometimes I wonder how many times I have repeated this one in my reviews :).
Guy Kawasaki says that if you don't believe that names impact the success of a product, "just look at Tata in India, which has been so successful because the name reminds people of the word grandfather.. ".

Of course, that doesn't say anything because it's a correlation, not causation.
Maybe Tata would have been even more successful had it been called "Caca".
Who knows… (also read read "Fooled by Randomness")

- **Do whatever your wife tells your first**

LOL, that might be a joke but some guys might take it seriously, so I'm raising a flag here (and read "how women control men and relationships").

PROS

Good information, interesting stories, and a very good narrating voice make Enchantment a real fast and worthwhile read.

- **Good advice on "working" your boss**

Read a full article on that: **how to manage your boss to get ahead**.

Enchantment – Review

Enchantment is not meant to break much new ground.

But it's a good book and provides a good overview of social skills and marketing as well.

Check the:

- **Best social skills books** to learn how to get good with people

or get the book on Amazon

In Sheep's Clothing: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In Sheep's Clothing (1996) explains how manipulative and covert-aggressive personalities use the emotional vulnerabilities of others to win fights for power, status, or control.
George Simon, the author, also shares the signs to effectively spot and recognize these people, and the techniques to deal with them.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - To Read After In Sheep's Clothing
  - Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Fighting in competition is normal and natural and as long as it's fair it's OK
- Aggression can be defined as fighting with little or no concern about others
- Manipulation is covert aggression
- Most aggressive personalities don't set out to hurt but to win (aggressive sadists, the exception, are a subset of aggressive personalities)

Full Summary

About The Author: George Simon holds a P.hD. in clinical psychology. He is also an active writer on his blog.

Fighting Fair VS Unfair Aggression

We fight because that's what we naturally developed to do when competing for limited resources or defending against enemy tribes (or enemies within).

However, there are many ways of fighting or defending our rights.

Assertively fighting for our rights is good and healthy.
Fighting fair while abiding by laws and regulations in business is also good for the whole, and can actually foster good interpersonal relationships.

It's when fighting happens without any concerns for others that it becomes pathological. That's what can be called "aggression" and, when it's hidden, it's covert aggression and manipulative by its very nature.

Two Types of Aggression: Overt & Covert

George Simon differentiates between overtly aggressive and covert aggressive.

- Overtly aggressive is obvious and easy to recognize
- Covertly aggressive may fly under one's radar so one can end up losing, without even being able to recognize the

covertly aggressive as a person to avoid

Of course, people can swing between the two and, often, manipulators present elements of both styles.

Learning to deal with covert aggression is all about learning social calibration.

Also see:

- **Dealing with micro-aggression and covert aggression**

> 10 Techniques Against Microaggression

A Definition of Covert Aggression

George Simon defines covert aggression as such:

> When you're out to win, dominate, get your way or control but are subtle, underhanded or deceptive to hide your true intentions

Why Covert Aggression is Very Popular

Covert aggression is very popular and widespread, for several reasons.
Here are some reasons why people often resort to covert aggression:

- Assertiveness and honesty take courage
- Honesty can be more costly (or better: seemingly more costly)
- Aggressors can fight without exposing themselves too much
- Manipulator can grab power while pretending he's acting for the common good

Take the example of firing an employee.
Going through HR can cost time and a lot of honest conversations where everyone must share difficult vulnerabilities.
Instead, the boss might simply use covert aggression to pressure the employee into quitting by himself.

If you want to see lots of covert aggression, I recommend the movie "Meet The Parents".

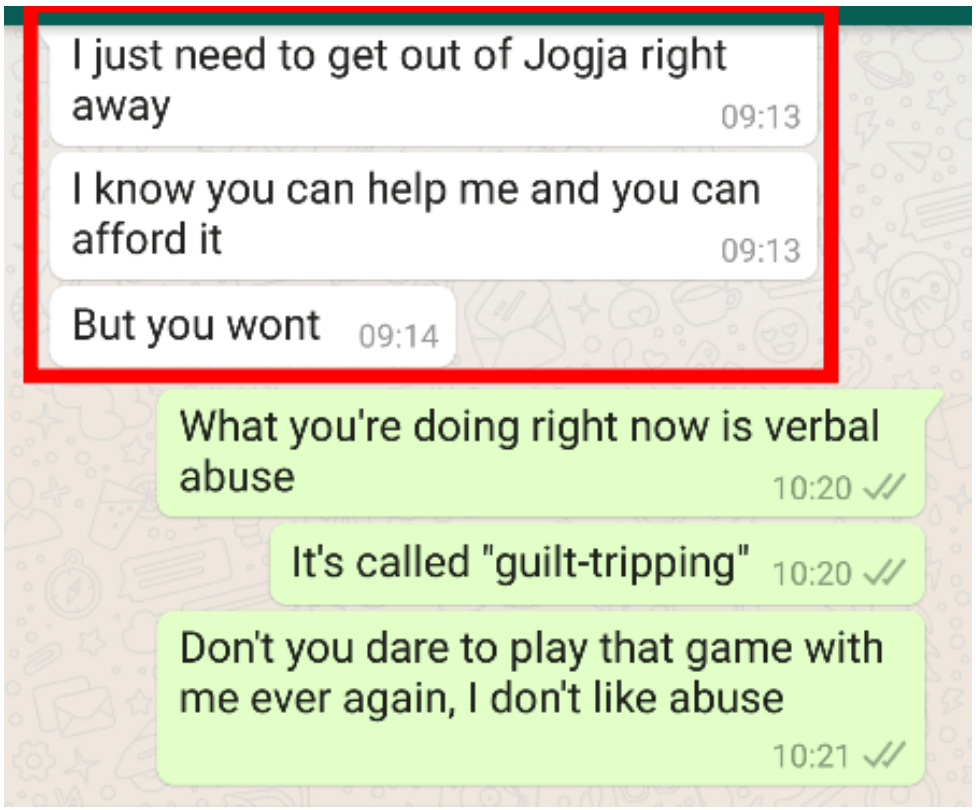
Covert Aggression VS Passive Aggression

Passive aggression is often mistaken for covert aggression, but the two are not the same.

Passive aggression, as the name suggests, is passive and includes stonewalling, silent treatment, and "pretending to forget".

Covert aggression is veiled and masked, but it's also active.
It includes guilt-tripping, minimizing, lying, or omitting.

See here an example of guilt-tripping a woman used on me:



And it *was* working.
I was feeling guilty, and also angry at the same time for the manipulation. People who are not aware of the game will only feel bad, without knowing why. And they might either comply or allow their whole day to be ruined because of the manipulation.

Manipulators' Personalities

Manipulators have an impaired conscience because they don't internalize social rules and are unable to see beyond their own self-interest.

Why not?

It's because, for them, internalizing social rules means obeying other people's rules. And that's the equivalent of a submission.

Manipulators indeed see social norms and rules as threats to their self-interest and, without any checks and balances from a well-functioning superego and conscience, they don't see beyond their own self-interest.

Manipulators are also power-hungry: they want to win and conquer and they cannot stand any act of submissiveness.

Narcissism and Manipulation

Not all narcissists are manipulators. Thinking highly of oneself doesn't necessarily entail aggression or manipulation.
However, most manipulators and covertly aggressive personalities present traits of narcissism.

Many Machiavellians are good manipulators though.

CEOs Might Have Character Disorder

Geroge Simons says that problematic aspects of personalities are egosyntonic, such as that people are happy with who they are (even if that causes trouble to others).

Speaking about CEOs, he says:

> CEOs like who they are and are comofrtable with their behavior patterns and how they act.
> Even though their behavior might bother others a lot.

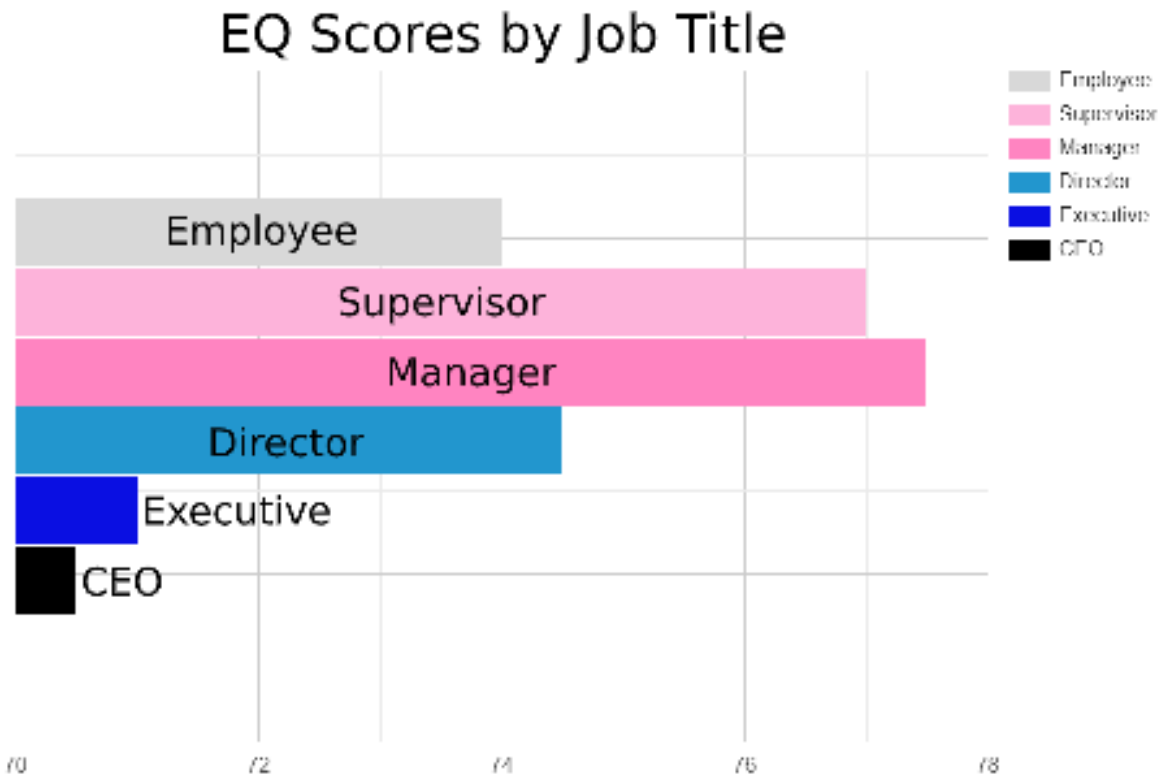
And again:

> CEOs most often have inflated self-esteem, and it's not a compensation for underlying feeling of inadequacies.
> CEOs are undetered by adverse consequences or societal condemnation.

The author says that covert aggressors who get to the top are not different than most other manipulators: they're just more extreme and better at it (also read: Bad Blood).
And the better they are at it, the easier it is to climb.

This was very insightful.
Most CEOs have a strong need to win which, if left unchecked, is all too happy to trample on others.

And it suddenly clarified why CEOs score lower than average on emotional intelligence than most mid-level managers:



This is something that the authors of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (Bradberry) and *Emotional Intelligence* (journalist Daniel Goleman) never really understood.

Travis Bradberry, for example, says that "CEOs weren't doing a good enough job for not understanding emotional intelligence".
Nonsense.

Also, read:

- **The myth of emotional intelligence**

https://thepowermoves.com/psychopathy-empathy-and-success-at-work

Psychologist Must Stop Making Excuses for Manipulators

The author says many psychologists' approaches tend to make excuses for manipulators and actually make it easy for them to keep manipulating.

And that has found its way into our culture as well.

So what happens is that whenever we see someone aggressing or manipulating, we think that he must have some unresolved issues of his own and that he must be helped.

And instead of looking at the manipulation, we start making up theories about the psychological issues of the manipulator.

But while of course, a manipulator can have unresolved issues -we all can!-, that does not and should not excuse his behavior.
And neither it should sidetrack us from addressing the main concern, which is the manipulation and aggression, and not his unresolved issues.

Neurosis Are a Thing of The Past: Today It's Too Much Permissivism

George Simon says that we are all still too focused on neurosis, cultural baggage from Sigmund Freud's times.

But things have changed since then and society is not nearly as repressive and restrictive.
Today we have a few neurosis cases and many more cases of egocentrism and narcissism.

Psychologists today deal with more failures of *controlling* our urges and egocentrism than *repressing* our urges.

Today's big egos and too much self-esteem (the author say there is such a thing as too much self-esteem) are not necessarily the defensive mechanism of unconscious fears or insecurities.

Similarly, the covert aggression we see today is not the result of neurosis. Covert aggression is simply the means to a manipulator's ends.
George Simons refers to these different categories as exhibiting "character disorder personalities".

At the extremes of character disorder personalities, we are dealing with *sociopaths* and *psychopaths*.

They're Not Codependent: They're Dependent

After making a mockery of psychologists defending and trying to "fix" manipulators' Freudian issues, George Simon takes it on the popular definition of "co-dependent relationships" (also read: *Codependent No More*).

He says that albeit there obviously are plenty of dependent and codependent relationships, overzealous psychologists have expanded the definition to fit way too many cases.

In a relationship with a manipulator, the manipulator is often not really dependent but playing the part to keep the real dependant partner under their thumb.

In The Power Moves' opinion: big yes! Thank you, George Simon, for writing this book!

Recognizing Manipulators

Here are some signs of manipulations:

1. You are making too many excuses for someone
2. Dodging the issue
3. Distraction and misdirection
4. Covert intimidation
5. You find yourself defending and making excuses too often

6. He/she can often and easily make you feel guilty
7. Shaming (also read: beating the shame game, dealing with judgmental people)
8. Feigning innocence and confusion
9. Minimization, lying, denial, selective inattention
10. Rationalizing their bad behavior
11. Playing the victim
12. Playing you of their own faults

Also read: 30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics and:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Dealing With Covert Aggression

George Simon provides several tips for dealing with manipulators and covert aggressors:

1. Know yourself well first and foremost
2. Work on your self-esteem, ego emotional dependency
3. Focus on their act, not their intentions
4. Don't get sidetracked: stay with the issue
5. Demand and only accept direct responses
6. Demand immediate change and set timelines
7. Don't get upset or aggressive: they are looking for an excuse to escalate (and blame you for it)

As a website on dynamics of power, social psychology, and social skills, I deal a lot with covert aggression here.

You can see one example here:

To Read After In Sheep's Clothing

If you enjoyed "*In Sheep's Clothing*" -and you should because it's awesome-, you will also like:

- The psychology of abusive men
- Too jealous or controlling?
- Power hungry men
- The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump

Quotes

These are some of my favorite quotes, but please keep in mind they are not always verbatim:

On the nature of humans:

> When human beings aren't engaging in some kind of love, they're waging some kind of war

On the importance of policing our own basic instincts:

> Evil arises from the failure of owning and disciplining one's own basic instincts

On neurosis healthy in little doses:

> It's our capacity for neurosis that keeps us civilized. Neurosis is a very functional phenomenon, in moderation.

On power and power's ability to corrupt:

> Altough it is often said that power corrupts, power by itself doesn't have the ability to corrupt a person's character.
> It's the character flaws already present in people's character that lead people to pursue power and abuse it once they have it.

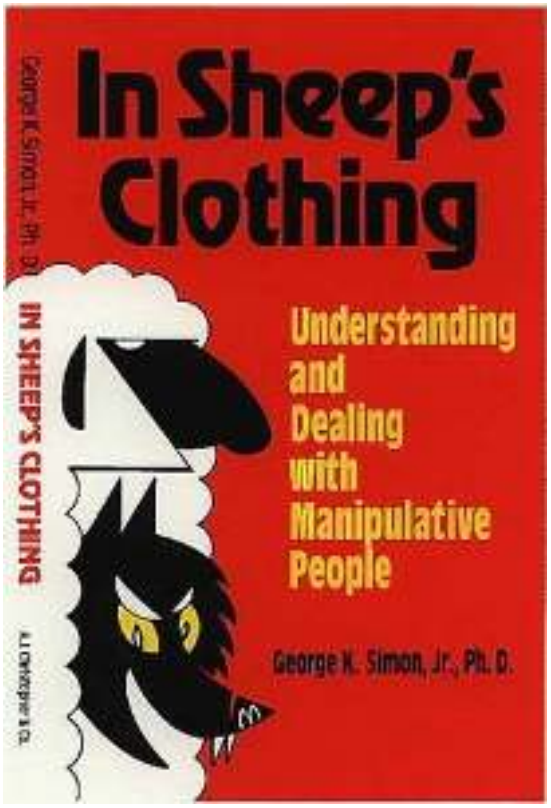
On power dynamics:

> The most fundamental rule of human engagement is that **the aggressor sets the rules**.
> It's impossible to deal with anybody once we start out in the one-down position.

On our future as a species:

> Our aggressive tendencies and behavior are not necessarily evil.
> (…)
> With the dawn of civilization, the need for aggression as a necessary instrument for human survival has lesseend considerabily. But as mankind's long history of warfare illustrates, this basic human instinct is very much still with us and is likely to be for some time to come.
>
> Therefore if we are to successfully advance in our social evolution, we will need to fashion cultural and environmental mechanisms that will help in harnessing and managing our effective instincts.

Exactly.
We need a new breed of enlightened leaders. Fundamentally good, but able to turn evil when having to face and rebuff evil.
This is The Power Moves' credo.



Real-Life Applications

- **Know Yourself to Stop Manipulation**

I can't stress this enough.
Power begins with self-knowledge.

- **Sometimes a Cigar Is Just a Cigar…**

And an ahole is just an ahole.
Don't make too many excuses for ass-holish behavior.

CONS

- **Finger-Pointing on Religion?**

The author says that some professions, like cops and priest, attracts aggressive individuals and manipulators who are freer to use aggression and covert aggression.

Fair enough. But when he doubles down with a few examples on priests it felt to me like it was unnecessarily pointing fingers towards a specific category.

- **Mixes sociopaths with psychopaths**

The author briefly talks about sociopaths and psychopaths, but as if the two were the same thing.
Of course, there is overlap between the two, yet they are two very distinct

However, the author had not the time and space to dig deeper. I think that digging deeper might have been too long of a detour. So take this as a mention rather than a pure "con".

PROS

This is a fundamental book to understand people, aggression, power dynamics, manipulation, and the psychology of power-hungry individuals.

There is no point in listing "pros" of must-read books, but here are some:

- **Great psychology**

The idea that manipulators don't internalize society's rules because for them that's an act of submission was pure genius.
A true "aha" moment for me that connected different neural islands in my brain from personal thoughts, information and life experiences.

- **Greater clarity on psychology**

The author makes the point that fear of social rejection is a sign of neurosis as they have extra capacity for guilt and shame as a consequence of their overactive conscience.
I had never thought of it that way, but it does make sense indeed.

- **You will understand Donald Trump**

The deeper you get into "In Sheep's Clothing", the more the psychology of Donald Trump and other power-obsessed individuals becomes clear.

Review

I absolutely loved *In Sheep's Clothing* and this is a seminal book both for this website and for anyone who wants to understand psychology.

As a matter of fact, it's with "*In Sheep's Clothing*" that I decided of making a new book series called "The Power Moves" recommended.

This will be a list of books that underpins the philosophy behind this website.
But whether you like or not this website, you will certainly like In Sheep's Clothing, which is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand people and psychology.

Also see:

- **The best books on manipulation and manipulators**

Or get the book on Amazon

The Straight Girl's Guide to Sleeping with Chicks: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Straight Girl's Guide to Sleeping with Chicks is Jen Sincero's guide for straight women who want to "try" and learn more about sex with other women.

Contents

- Full Summary
- Criticism
- PROS
- Review

Full Summary

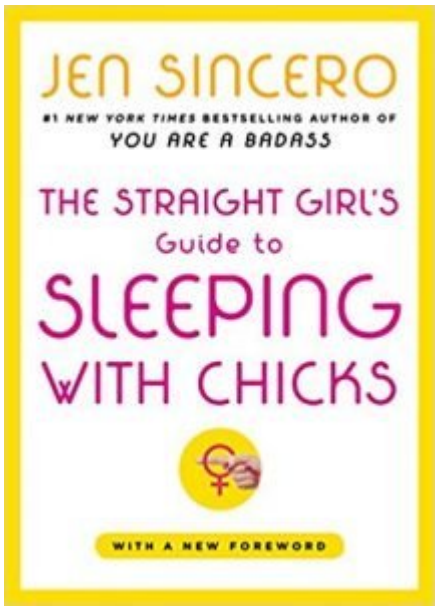
About the Author: Jen Sincero is the author of the bestseller You Are a Badass and, apparently, she is also an enthusiast of woman on woman action.

Introduction

Jen Sincero says she is a very sexual person, and started masturbating at 5 years old.
Yet, she's only had her first experience of lesbian sex past the 30 years mark and… She enjoyed it (apparently).

I listened to the audiobook, and frankly, there is little point in me recounting here of jokes and the sexual positions.

I don't summarize jokes, and I think that writing is a poor format to explain sexual positions (and so was the audiobook for that matter, I haven't fully understood a single position she described).



Criticism

What I can give you which is a bit more useful is my criticism of "The Straight Girl's Guide to Sleeping with Chicks".

It Felt Aggressive

The overall feel of “The Straight Girl’s Guide to Sleeping with Chicks” is on the aggressive, de-humanizing way of approaching sex, seduction, and lovemaking.

It’s as if the approach is all on “trying, experimenting and adding notches”.

As a website born to help people assert themselves and prevent abuse, I found the tone of the book to be slightly distasteful.

Sex Only, No Connection or Romance

“The Straight Girl’s Guide to Sleeping with Chicks” is mostly focused on the self-indulgent pursuit of maximizing personal pleasure.

And there is nothing wrong there.

However, people who are also looking for the emotional side of seduction will be left wondering, since there is little in terms of connecting and bonding, broaching sexual topics with other women, or sharing intimacy at different levels etc.

Immature View of Sex As a String of Experiments to “Defy Conventions”

“The Straight Guide to Sleeping With Chicks” seems to reduce sex and intimacy to racy games, experiments and “defying conventions”.

I’m not a big fan of that approach.
I find it a bit immature to approach sex as an opportunity to “rebel and defy conventions”.

Derisive & Judgmental Towards Women Who Don’t Reach Orgasm (or “Experiment”)

The approach towards women who’ve never had orgasms feels condescending and de-humanizing, as if they were inferior for being under the yoke of their stupid sexual hang-ups.

Note here that I don’t fully disagree with the author *in some cases*. There is a strong link between the ability to reach orgasm, Freudian neurosis, and the openness towards sex in general.
But that shouldn’t allow anyone to take a position of superiority over others.
If anything, it gives the more advanced practitioner a *responsibility* to help and educate those who are farther back, not to use them as a rung for some good ol’ posturing and social climbing.

Also, there is sometimes more behind the ability (or lack thereof) to reach orgasms.
For example, some people are simply asexual (around 1% of the population, it’s estimated). And some women don’t have vaginal sensitivity.

“Meh” Humor

The book is somewhat of a satire, or an attempt at making the readers laugh.

A few lines were actually funny.

Many weren’t.
Like trying to force humor with “funny” names and references to sex and vaginas felt like slightly childish attempts at humor (a bit like children laughing at cuss words).

And at times the humor also felt in poor taste.
Of course this is very personal though.

The “Women Are Better” Angle Is Debatable

The author seems to imply that sex with other women is much better.

One of the reasons, she says, is that women can go on and on without the pauses that men “need” between bouts.

But that makes no sense.

A man can do without his penis pretty much everything a woman can do.

And pauses are not a necessary given.
They mostly happen after he has come, which does not necessarily have to happen within a defined timeline (or at all). And plus, we’re in the age of Cialis and Viagra “pauses” are not a given, either.

If anything, it’s a question of knowledge and willingness more than ability. Such as many men not willing (or now knowing) how to do much else beyond trusting with their penis.
In that case, the author might actually be right.

How About Giving Up The Idea of “Men VS Women”

At the end of the day, I’m not a big fan of “this gender is better than the other”.

Some men can provide better sexual experiences to some women.
And some women can provide better sexual experiences to some other women.

PROS

Albeit this obviously isn’t my all-time favorite book, there also are a few good positives:

- **Good On Sex Education**

Albeit I didn’t get much on the positions from the audiobook (plus I had little personal interest in learning the details as a man), I think it’s quite good from a sexual education point of view.

And can be a very good guide for women who are indeed curious or want to try a few new things in their brand new F-on-F (sexual) relationship.

- **Positive Message of Getting to Know Yourself**

There is a positive message of getting to know yourself and your sexuality. Jen Sincero wants to demystify sex and remove from the dark corner of “sin-hood” that some people and cultures seem to hide it in.

- **Can Be A Positive Encouragement to Open-Mindedness**

I write as a guy in the west where “women on women action” is commonplace (and sometimes even a tool for what I call “attention whoring”: think of the girls kissing each other in bars and clubs).

However, there are some people and some areas of the world where sex is still a big taboo.
In those cases, this book might help.

Review

I wasn’t a big fan of Jen Sincero’s previous work with “You Are A Badass“.

So I might have been a bit negatively biased to begin with.

But I had high expectations for “The Straight Girl’s Guide to Sleeping with Chicks”.
I was hoping for some wisdom on social dynamics in picking up women from a female perspective.

I have met a few lesbians who shared some juicy details on how they prepare their move and it was *great* stuff.

Super interesting both for me and for the audience of this website, both from a seduction perspective and from a psychological one.

But that's not what I found here.

"The Straight Girl's Guide to Sleeping with Chicks" is a mix of humor, soft porn content, sexual education, and only lastly it's a guide to pick-up women.

Probably the best content is on sex education.
But if you want to learn more about how women and lesbians approach seduction, there is not much.
A couple of stories here and there and the old -and possibly abusive- "get her drunk" "tip" (slime-alert).

Check the:

- **Best dating books for women**

or get the book on Amazon

The Myth of Emotional Intelligence And Leadership

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Emotional Intelligence is a crucial component of both effective leadership and power.
Especially long-lasting power.

However, it's not the "Emotional Intelligence," as most people think of it.

By the end of this article, we will understand that it's more *power* intelligence that enables and supports leadership and power over the long run.

Contents

- How People Get Emotional Intelligence Wrong
- Power Requires the Ability to Switch Off Empathy
- Bad Leaders Without Conscience
- Ultimate Leader: High EQ, But Can Shut It Off
- Long-Term Power Rests on Good Leadership
- SUMMARY

How People Get Emotional Intelligence Wrong

First of all, most authors and writers have spread misinformation about emotional intelligence.

Let me give you an overview of how that happened.

Daniel Goleman, in his bestseller *Emotional Intelligence* popularized studies like this one with the often misquoted headline that "EI accounts for 80% of career success".

For the sake of clarity, Goleman clarified that he has been widely misquoted and misrepresented.

And of course, to anyone with a critical mind, the "80% thing" is absolute nonsense.
But that didn't stop the spreading of the misunderstanding.

The issue has been compounded by the misunderstanding of "vulnerability," as espoused by the research of Brene Brown and culminating in bestselling books such as *Daring Greatly*.

Since then, vulnerability has become a new way of showing power. And leaders should now "show their weakness", and "show their true selves.".
Of course, there are moments when a leader must be vulnerable, but not nearly as frequently as some people have been led to believe and not nearly as obvious as one might want (also read: vulnerability is not power).

So today, many people see emotional intelligence as a form of touchy-feely leadership.
Of course, that's not the case; emotional intelligence is simply the ability to better understand feelings and social dynamics.

But let's go in order.

CEOs Are Emotionally Stupid

So today, many people believe that emotional intelligence means tending to relationships and that emotional intelligence will help them become more powerful.

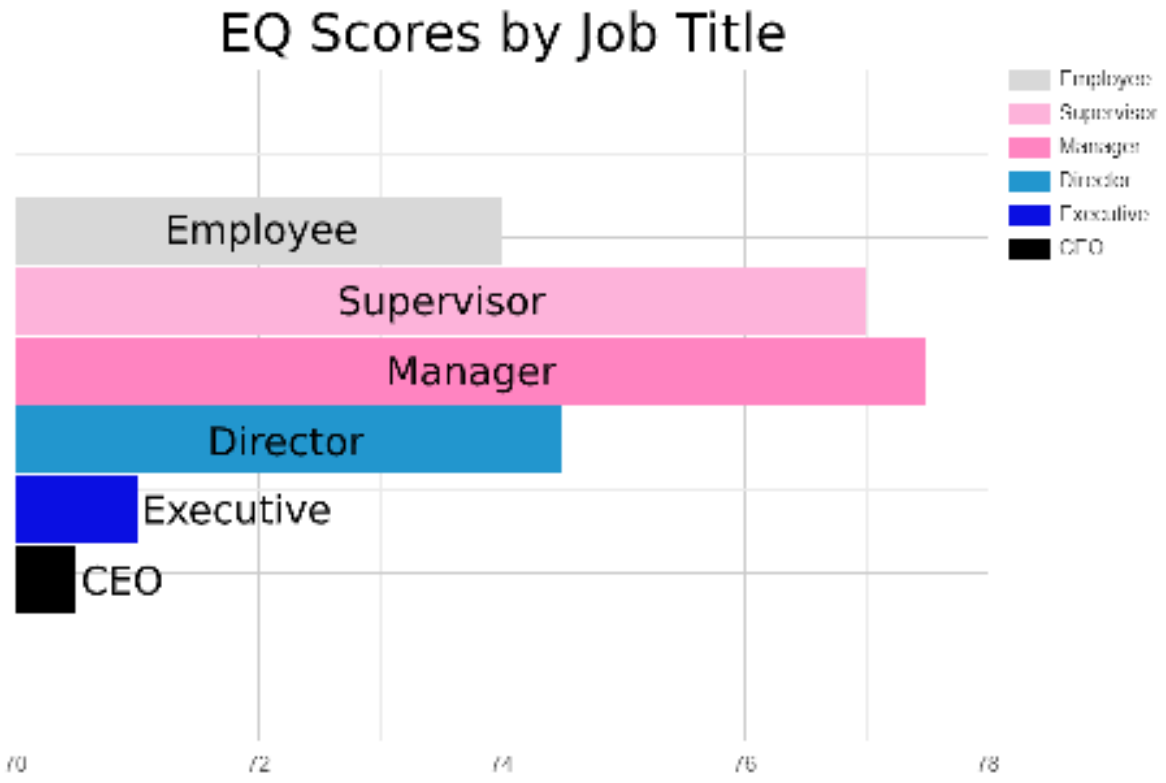
But is that true?
Does EI help in climbing dominance hierarchies?

Well, it turns out that Travis Bradberry, author of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* measured the EI of many managers, executives, and CEOs.

What he found out was striking.

Managers had higher EI scores than average.
But CEOs?
CEOs showed *lower* EI scores than the average.

See the results here:



Bradberry's answer to that says a lot about human nature (and cognitive dissonance).
Bradberry, instead of calling into question the whole idea that EI helps you advance in your career, says that CEOs weren't doing a good enough job and they had some work to do.

This is a good example of "bending the data to fit the narrative".

But let's get back to the data now and develop a better theory with it.

And the data clearly showed that emotional intelligence is not a great predictor of career success. At least, not if you're aiming for the top spots.

The Truth of EI & Gaining Power

The truth, unluckily, is more complex. And somewhat darker.
And the truth is that ruthlessness and calculative Machiavellianism can be some of the best assets for climbing to the top of many hierarchical organizations.

To climb to the top, too much empathy and too much self-importance can actually become major obstacles.

Here is indeed what George Simon, Ph.D., says in his important book "*In Sheep's Clothing*":

> CEOs like who they are and are comfortable with their behavior patterns and how they act.
> Even though their behavior might bother others a lot.

The CEO might be emotionally intelligent enough to understand when his behavior might bother some people.
But he also ignores those other people's feelings and keeps on going anyway.

And says again, Simon:

> CEOs most often have inflated self-esteem, and it's not compensation for underlying feeling of inadequacies.
> CEOs are undeterred by adverse consequences or societal condemnation.

That's a different type of emotional intelligence.
It's not endless love and empathy. And it's not about accommodating others.
The emotional intelligence that is more likely to carry people to the top is also about knowing when to keep on going straight, no matter how others feel.

In the words of Dan Rust in his wonderful *Workplace Poker*, CEOs act more like Teflon rhinos.

Here is how Dan Rust defines rhinos (edited by me for brevity):

> Sometimes these individuals don't even perceive rejection that would seem blindingly obvious to others. We call these people "Teflon Rhinos" because nothing sticks and nothing penetrates their thick skin.

That thick skin is not what most people think of when they read about "emotional intelligence".

But in my book, it's one of its most important elements.

Rust says again:

> So is the key to success having a rhinoceros-thick skin, emotionally speaking?
> Well, there are a lot of benefits.
> You don't let rejection slow you down. It's easier for you to talk to influential, powerful people without being intimidated. You're more likely to ignore the lame criticisms of others. You persevere through obstacles. Accept no excuses. Drive yourself hard—and drive others even harder. You achieve your career goals, and in the end, that's all that really counts, right?

Dan Rust then goes on to describe the negatives of being an extreme rhino and proposes a slightly more balanced approach.

Power Requires the Ability to Switch Off Empathy

But a new theoretical paradigm seems to emerge when it comes to power and emotional intelligence.

And that's because the people who get to the top are able to dim, shut down, or ignore empathy and interpersonal emotions to enact plans and activities that might bother, hurt, or pain at least some of the people around them.

And looking at the business world today, we might make the case that **no Emotional Intelligence is better than too much Emotional Intelligence** IF that EI functions as a constraint on actions.

Here is the truth, then:

- In life and interpersonal relationships, EI is crucial
- To become a (mid-level) manager, EI is very important
- To get to the very top, a "barge my way through it and fuck what others think approach yields better results than one which is overly concerned about others

And that's why, sadly, the world we live in is prone to hostile takeovers by people who have no conscience and no moral checks and balances.

Bad Leaders Without Conscience

De Mesquita did some wonderful research.

And he came up with this tagline:

> *Bad* Behavior is Almost Always *Good* Politics

With his work and abundant evidence, de Mesquita shows that politicians who enact bad policies for the citizens increase their power and prolong their time in power.
To enact those bad policies, those dictators need no emotional intelligence—or, at least, not the "empathic" EI that some people think-.

Unfortunately, we're not just talking about dictators here.
Bad policies worked for several powerful men in democracies and Western countries as well.

For example:

- Elizabeth Holmes (Bad Blood)
- Albert "Chainsaw" Dunlap (Discussed in "Leaders Eat Last")
- Many unnamed others that might as well be in your company (see: psychopathy at the top)

Leaders with no conscience at all are very dangerous to everyone. And, in the long run, can also lead to very poor results for themselves too.

What's the solution, then?

Ultimate Leader: High EQ, But Can Shut It Off

Now we get to an important aspect of leadership.

Sometimes you might have to act *in spite* of your empathy and caring. That's part of being a leader with a mission.

Even though it seems like many CEOs have little EI, it would be very silly to discount Emotional Intelligence as a crucial aspect of leadership, power, and even the ability to quickly climb dominance hierarchies.

Countless studies, papers, and research studies show a positive correlation between EI and effective leadership (for example: Emotions and Leadership: The role of emotional intelligence).

The ultimate leader is indeed a compassionate leader who cares for and loves the people he leads.
But who can also look beyond the single instances and act forcefully when needed? A leader who feels the pain for himself and for others but, if he must act, will act anyway

As Ray Dalio says in *Principles*, the whole should take precedence over the single, and what's good for the whole is good.
And as Babin and Willink say in *The Dichotomy of Leadership*, a good leader must love his troops but, ultimately, carry the mission for which he is responsible.

And as Robert Greene says in *The Laws of Human Nature*:

> This empathy, however, must never mean becoming needlessly soft and pliant to the group's will.
> That will only signal weakness.
> When it comes to our primary task—that of providing a vision for the group and leading it toward the appropriate goals—we must be stern and immovable. Yes, we can listen to the ideas of others and incorporate the good ones. But we must keep in mind that we have a greater command of the overall details and global

> picture.

The best leaders can combine different types of leadership and pick and choose what is best suited for the occasion.

Long-Term Power Rests on Good Leadership

Robert Greene says that leadership rests on two opposing forces:

1. the people's need for a leader
2. the people's resentment of the leader's power and benefits.

Poor leaders let resentment grow and then must rely on coercion -and the military- to keep their control.
It's not always easy to stay on the good side of the majority of people, and that's one of the reasons why Machiavelli in "*The Prince*" said that it's best to be feared than loved.

But don't let that mindset infect you.
Great leaders *do* manage to enact strong leadership while being loved. And so can you.

As a matter of fact, **the more empowered the people around you, the more you need to also be loved and respected**.

That's because empowered followers have the power to oust a leader. Or, at least, have the power to walk away.
That is almost always the case in corporations, and in democracies where people have the power to vote you out.

These great leaders create enough goodwill to outweigh the resentment for having a leader in the first place.

They do it through showing empathy, caring, and delivering results.
And that's why empathy, caring, and love, all elements of emotional intelligence, are crucial for leadership.

When leaders fail to show they care about the people they lead, the follower disconnect. Passive aggression increases, and the chances of rebellion also increase.
A mutiny, either in the form of violence or voting the leader down, becomes more likely.

This is what Robert Greene says:

> When leaders fail to establish these twin pillars of authority—vision and empathy—what often happens is the following: Those in the group feel the disconnect and distance between them and leadership.
> They know that deep down they are viewed as replaceable pawns.
> And so, in subtle ways, they begin to feel resentful and to lose respect. They listen less attentively to what such leaders say.

... And On Tough HR Decisions

Needless to say, not everyone deserves your love and not everyone deserves to be in your team.

Emotional intelligence also allows you to “see” who are the people who are spreading rumors, discontent and generally poisoning the environment.

It allows you to see the power dynamics in your tribe and the power moves that can be used against you by conniving completists.

Emotional intelligence allows you to know when it’s time to use force and prune your beautiful trees off the bad apples that threaten to spoil the bunch.

Then once you know, act forcefully and swiftly.
As I often repeat on this website, there can be no love without the capacity of facing evil.

SUMMARY

Emotional intelligence is crucial for leadership because value-adding leadership and leadership of empowered individuals, ultimately, rests on the people to choose you and support you as their leader.

But you must not confuse “emotionally intelligent” with touchy-feely. Or with “paralyzed” by what others think and feel.

Emotionally intelligent leaders *do* care about the people around them.
But they also have a deep understanding of how to get the most from them and when it’s time for forceful actions.

And that’s what emotional intelligence is about: understanding people, caring, and leveraging that knowledge and love to doggedly pursue the best course of action.

The #1 Way to Stay in Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Disclaimer:
This post is scheduled for upgrade to conform to he quality we expect at TPM. Stay tuned for an updated version, or join **Power University**

Getting into a leadership position can be difficult.

But what's even more difficult, as history has proven over and over again, is *keeping* that power in the long run.

Power indeed often rests on shaky foundations: people want you there, but they also resent your power.
But by the end of this article, you will know how to keep power over the long haul.

Contents

- The Ambivalence of Power
- Entitlement to Power Is Leaders' Biggest Mistake
- You Keep Power When People Want You With Power
- How Great Leaders Hold to Power

- SUMMARY

The Ambivalence of Power

The main reason why power rests on shaky foundations is because of people's inherent ambivalence towards others.

People:

- Want a leader, but also want freedom
- Need a guide, but like to believe they don't need anyone
- Love looking up to someone better, but secretly resent them for making them feel inferior
- Say they want a friendly leader, but will lose all respect for a leader who can't lead
- Respect and fear strong leaders, but secretly want to kill a leader who makes them feel insignificant
- Like to dream of being as rich and powerful as the leader, but are deeply jealous of him

When things go badly, the same people who came to give you the crown will now come clamoring for your head.

In the past, heads have literally been rolling.
And executions were big public celebrations:

Note: Staying power with gullible subjects is easier
Notice how his charisma still gets through to the sheep**,** even when those sheep were there to see him die. If you're leading gullible people, staying in power is easier.
It's when you're leading more intelligent and/or people more at your level that it gets more difficult.

Heads roll more seldom these days but don't think it's any easier to stay in power.
We're exactly the same people as centuries ago indeed, and we can see the same pleasure of seeing our leaders crumble whenever a big-name politician loses a major election, or whenever a new big scandal hits the news.

The pleasure, of course, is double when the one who fell was a bad leader, like with Theranos' Elizabeth Holmes.
Then we can all bask together in the crowd's animal spirit, taking our sweet revenge on those who got all the leadership perks, but eventually betrayed us.

However, often you don't need terrible leadership to lose your power.
That ambivalence can be easily tipped towards the negative even with average or, sometimes, even with good leadership.

From a social dynamics point of view, the change from support to resentment can be swift and sudden. And it catches most leaders off guard.

Leaders Only See The (Positive) Tip of The Iceberg

Most leaders fail to see the ambivalence of leadership for three reasons:

1. They are not emotionally intelligent leaders and miss the signs
2. They haven't taken the time to study and understand social and power dynamics
3. People simply hide their negative feelings

Leaders mostly see the hand-clapping, the babies handed to them for kisses and pictures, the smiles…

And until the tipping point is about to reach many leaders fail to read the changing times, possibly unconsciously trying to cling to the status quote.
He dismisses the backhanded compliments of the frenemies, the slight disrespect, the passive aggression.
And he focuses on brown nosers, cronies, and the many sycophants who fail to see the end nearing.

But what is it that causes leaders to lose the goodwill of the people they lead?

Entitlement to Power Is Leaders' Biggest Mistake

Some people say that power corrupts, while others disagree.

I think we have ample evidence that power can corrupt. Or, at least, make easily-corruptible people worst.

History has shown it to us more times than we can count.
Leaders get power, maybe through fully legitimate elections.
And they soon forget they weren't bestowed power by birthright, that they are not there to enjoy fame, fortunes, and the trappings of power but that they are there to lead.
And to lead means to move people and the organization toward a better future.

Instead, they get used to the power, the attention, the spotlight, and to the trappings of leadership.

This is entitlement kicking in.
And albeit entitlement coupled with strong and forceful action can be helpful in quickly climbing dominance hierarchies, entitlement almost always loses you the people's goodwill which, in turn, makes it hard to keep your power -at least legitimately-.

An important caveat indeed is that the **people's goodwill might not matter much in dictatorships**.
Dictatorships follow different rules. But since most readers are thankfully living in more or less democratic countries, we are talking about non-dictatorial power here.

And in any democratic organization and in most groups, leaders and politicians can be voted out. **And leaders are often voted out, independently of their results, simply based on how much people like them** (or dislike them).

I have witnessed one politician after the other having fallen prey to entitlement and getting the boot because of hubris.

Some examples:

- **Matteo Renzi**: called a referendum to transform Italy into a presidential system, and got the boot because people resented he wanted "king's powers". And he was doing a *great* job with the economy.

- **Nicolas Sarkozy**: was seen a bit too chummy spending time on the yachts of the ultra-rich, people felt he had lost touch with, well… The people who vote. Got booted out.
- **Emmanuel Macron**: this guy made more power mistakes than I can count. See Macron VS Trump, Macron is Trump's bitch, and Macron makes people resentful

I list some famous people here so you can check them.
But you don't need to be a president to fall for the "power's entitlement trap". ***Any* position of power, even among your friends, carries the same risks**.
The general rule is this: t**he more you start acting like a king who's above everyone else, the more people will come to resent you**.
And if those resentful people can vote, join forces, or find the power to boot you, they will gladly do so.

Entitled Leaders Are Poor Leaders

Even if elections weren't a problem, the results almost always suffer when leaders become entitled and egotistic.

Entitled leaders close off to new ideas.
It's similar to the effect of a *fixed mindset,* and they see any bad news as a sign of dissent and an affront to their power and authority.

People sense when that happens and they start disliking their leaders.

This is what happened to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Matteo Renzi in Italy, and, recently, Emanuel Macron who saw one of the biggest street protests rock the Western streets in modern times.

This was a very telling video of Macron's increasing entitlement and "power haze":

He was right in demanding more respect from the snotty kid, but the way he did, it deeply reeked of entitlement and a huge ego.

People feel their leaders' egos ballooning and they wonder whether they are in charge to feed their own ego or lead them.
When that happens, respect dwindles and goodwill disappears. The disconnect grows and resentment also grows.

In the worst cases, leaders who can manage to cling to power in the face of growing push-backs become paranoid. They spend all their time and energies fending off enemies, whether they are real or imagined.

This is what happened with Richard Nixon and this is what's happening with Donald Trump (also read: The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump).

When things get even worst, delusional leaders cling to power as they destroy organizations or whole countries, as it was the case with Muammar Gaddafi.

In *Eleven Rings*, Phil Jackson says he once told a power-hungry but not yet ready to lead Kobe Bryant:

> **You can't be captain when nobody wants to follow you**

How true.
Leaders can get a bit more mileage out of followers who don't fall anymore because they are already in power.
But **when your followers don't follow you anymore, then it's either you let the tanks roll, or your grip on power starts getting shaky**.

Also, read:

- How to overcome entitlement

Letting the Tanks Roll

I will eventually make an article for despots only.
But it bears repeating again: sadly for the population, the rules change for leaders that have access to the military.

Hated, selfish, and sociopathic leaders can remain in power if they pay the military well, and if they secure the generals' support (De Mesquita, 2011).

Great picture. But, ultimately, the tanks did score their win for the regime

But you don't necessarily need the military to remain in power as long as you got a way of harming your followers.
A bad boss who can fire his employee will still remain in power as long as he can keep his team divided (divide and stay in power).

Hopefully, though, you will at keeping power because the people want you there.
As we've already mentioned, it's usually better for all. And it's doable. If you put your effort into charming your followers and doing well for the team, everyone will win -and you will get to keep the power-.

You Keep Power When People Want You With Power

Great leaders know that, ultimately, their power rests with their followers.

And you must earn their trust by delivering, improving their lots, and staying true to your values and ideals.
And, ultimately, by showing how to be a high-quality person with your own personality.

Great leaders also know that as much as they will stay in power as long as people want them in power, they can also *increase* their power by increasing their goodwill with the people.

When leaders take their leadership position as a responsibility to carry their people forward, they build goodwill.
And when hardships strike, people will keep supporting the leaders they love.
They might even take up arms for the leaders they love.

Writes Robert Greene in The Laws of Human Nature:

> (us as leaders) must realize that we are actually in a weak position, and we must struggle to adopt the opposite attitude: We expect nothing from the people around us, from those whom we lead.
> We are not defensive or sitting back but completely active—everything we get from others, and most definitely their respect, must be earned. We have to continually prove ourselves. We have to show that our primary consideration is not ourselves and our sensitive egos but the welfare of the group.
> (…)
> With such an attitude, we will notice a very different effect. People will open themselves to our influence; as we move toward them, they move toward us. They want to win our approval and respect. With such an emotional connection, we are more easily forgiven for mistakes.

And says Simon Sinek in Leaders Eat Last:

> The true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own.
> Great leaders truly care about those they are privileged to lead and understand that the true cost of the leadership privilege comes at the expense of self-interest.

"Privileged to lead", that's the key mindset difference between entitled leaders and leaders who build goodwill, are loved by their people, and stay in leadership positions for the long haul.

> **Leaders depend on those whom they lead**

In this regard, a leader-group relationship is not that different from a person-to-person relationship.

If you show empathy, respect, care, and love for the group you lead, you will receive respect, care, and love back. And with that, also the guarantee that you will stay in power for the foreseeable future.

How Great Leaders Hold to Power

On top of the core pillars that we already saw in the overview of social power, this is what the most beloved leaders do:

- **Lead From The Front**

Leaders work harder than everyone else.
And marketing-savvy leaders show themselves working harder than everyone else, too.

July 1937 –. Image by © Bettmann/CORBIS
Benito Mussolini's genius propaganda was one of the first examples of the great use of mass media to influence the public.
By showing himself working hard people could look up to him without feeling jealous and resentful for his position: he was *earning* his stripes (or so it looked, at least).

- **Take Responsibility**

As Willink and Babin explain in Extreme Ownership, leaders take responsibility for whatever happens in their group and within their mission.

If things go south, leaders shoulder the blame.
Leaders who shoulder the blame hold up to the unwritten leadership contract: I get the trappings of power, but also shield you from blame and troubles (as much as possible).

And if things go well, they pass the credit.

- **Walk The Talk**

We live in a world -or perhaps we've always lived in a world- where facts randomly follow promises.
Duplicitous marketing slogans oversell mediocre products and politicians who promise change and better times often only deliver for their cronies.

But that's a great opportunity for enlightened leaders to distinguish themselves and cause major upsets even among better-funded competitors.

That's how Sanders was able to pull the offsets that he's pulled against the more established Hillary Clinton:

Hillary's Clinton coarse voice BTW is one of the reasons she has lots.

- **Know the psychology of leadership**

This post on leadership psychology is an overview of leadership psychology and group psychology.
Study it if you want to be a leader one day (or if you are already one).

SUMMARY

This article showed you that great leadership keeps power because people want great leaders in power.

There are different ways to maintain power, and this article focused on the positive aspect of keeping power: doing a great job as a leader.

This article also stated that power can corrupt.
And the more it corrupts you, the worst leader you become, and the harder it is to remain in power.

It's your duty as a leader to develop the mental checks and balances that make sure you stay grounded and never forget that good leadership is, ultimately, about responsibility.

Never grow entitled to power: that's the easiest way to make people resent you and force you out of office.

You must earn the trust and love of the people you lead and always remind yourself that you are there to serve. That's the mindset that will bring you love, fame, and long-lasting power (and, incidentally, also make for a better world).

The Social Skills Guidebook: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Social Skills Guidebook (2016) is a guide for teaching social skills and general social dynamics.
Chris MacLeod, the author, covers the basics of socialization while also delivering deep value and insights that everyone can learn from.

Contents

- Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Chris MacLeod is a fellow writer on social dynamics and social skills.
He describes himself as a former shy, lonely, and awkward teenager and young adult. He worked on himself to change from shy and awkward to a socially effective human being, and he writes about the resources he wished he had when growing up. He holds a bachelor's in psychology and a Master's in Social Work, with a focus on counseling. Chris is also an active writer on his personal blog.

Introduction

I couldn't agree more with Chris MacLeod when he says that the most charismatic people are not using any special techniques, but they are executing the basics better than most.

The Social Skills Guidebook is more aimed at beginners who are very shy or somewhat socially awkward.
Yet it deals with the basics so well that most people can learn how to become more charismatic

Expect 1-3 Years to Get Good

The author says that everyone is different, so it's not actually possible to give an estimate on "how long it will take to get good socially".

However, he makes a very good point in saying that people should not trust or believe sources that promise instant change.

Expecting instant change can have adverse effects on people who don't see those overnight improvements. They might get frustrated, lose heart, and even give up.

Limiting Thought-Pattern

The author dedicates a whole chapter to the limiting thought patterns that people often end up in.
There are many of them, all good and very relevant from a psychological and social-dynamics point of view.
Here are some of them:

- **Jumping to conclusions**

Jumping to conclusions often means "jumping to negative conclusions", with bad self-talk such as "I had a bad conversation, it's because I am hopeless" or "the group didn't accept me, I am a real social reject".

On a smaller scale, jumping to conclusions also often leads to misunderstandings when we assign certain intentions

to actions for which we actually have no clue.

- **Filtering to support negative assumptions**

People who fall prey to jumping to conclusions and making negative assumptions will filter out all positive stimuli and focus on the ones that reinforce their negative narrative.

- **Interpreting reality based on negative emotional states**

Chris MacLeod says that people assign "rating difficulties" to social interactions based on how they're feeling.
So if they are feeling anxious or nervous for any reason, they think that social interactions are difficult and/or that they're not good enough for it.

But your emotional states have little to do with reality and/or the difficulty of social interactions.

This is very true, and generalizing our emotional states to our interpretation of reality is a well-known psychological principle with many interesting ramifications.

- **Catastrophizing**

Catastrophizing means focusing on the worst possible outcome.
As unlikely as that outcome might be, focusing on it only increases the chances of it happening… And it unnecessarily raises our stress levels and social tension.

- **"I'm responsible for all bad interactions"**

No, you're not, a conversation and a social interaction entail at least two people, and your speaking partner is as responsible as you are.

As a matter of fact, some interactions will always be bad, and you will eventually meet some people with whom it's impossible to have positive interactions.

My Note:
Taking Extreme Ownership of everything that happens to you can be a powerful tool for life.
But it needs strong self-esteem and an antifragile ego. For people who are not there yet, people with low esteem, or people who still see many more failures than victories, it's indeed best not to take full ownership.

Take Small Steps

Starting with big challenges you are not comfortable with is the best way to make it too hard on yourself and to increase the chances you won't see any improvement any time soon and that you will quit.

Instead, start small with something you are kind of comfortable with, not super comfortable.
Only move up to more difficult social challenges once you are 100% comfortable with the level you're at.

Dealing With Silences

First of all, silences happen all the time, and they are a sign that people are comfortable with each other and good friends.
You don't need to fill in all the conversational gaps.

However, there is no denying that silence can also happen with people you are not very familiar with, and it can get awkward.

If it's becoming awkward, avoid commenting on it and saying how awkward it is.
If you want to say something, you can say"

> "alright I guess there is not much more to say about that"

And the change of topic.
Or change the topic without saying anything.

Don't Force Uniqueness

The author says that the suggestion of being unique and avoiding all standard lines is overrated.

Instead, it's OK to have some commonplace statements, comments, or topics.
And it can be quite awkward when you try to force the super personal question or the "unexpected topic that grabs attention".

I couldn't agree more, and that's why I downrated social skills products such as *Charisma University*, *Charisma on Command*, *Captivate*, etc.

Don't Hog The Conversation...

Conversations are two-way streets.
People who hog the conversation and take most or all the speaking time bore people to tears and come across as extremely selfish, self-centered, and entitled.

It makes people feel like they don't matter, and they will react by excusing themselves (or resenting you if they can't move).

...Unless They're Not Contributing, In Which Case: Talk

This is a bit more advanced, but if the other person is not contributing much, they might need to be made more comfortable.

Albeit hogging the conversation is usually not good, this is an exception when doing most of the talking can help draw shyer and more reserved people out until they are comfortable contributing more.

Should You Share Personal Stories?

The recent work on vulnerability by Brene Brown (*Daring Greatly* etc.) has made some people believe that connecting is all about sharing and that courage is opening up.

Yes… When you know someone well and at the right time.

Otherwise, oversharing too soon is awkward and a big red flag.

But Do Share At The Right Time

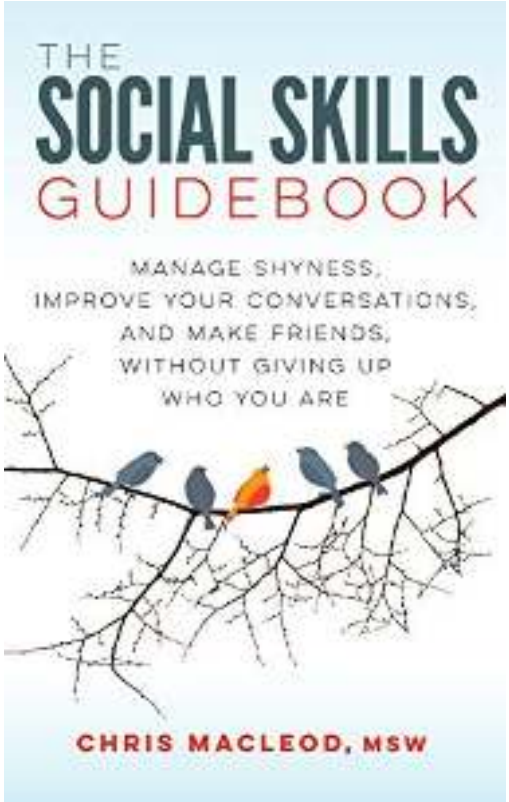
But, says the author, the virtue is in the middle.
Not sharing anything leaves the conversation dry and makes people feel like you don't trust them.

This is especially true if you are getting to know each other better and if they share something personal first.

Asperger's Syndrome

In the last chapter, Chris MacLeod talks about Asperger's Syndrome and how it adversely impacts social skills.

It's very enlightening, and it made me reflect on whether or not Aspergers are best suited to teach social skills to non-Aspergers.
I already reviewed a *social skills book* from an author affected by Aspergers, and it was actually very good.
However, it's hard to learn all the nuances that you don't naturally get. And that might make Asperger's non-ideal teachers non-Aspergers.
At least when it comes to more advanced forms of emotional intelligence and leadership.



Real-Life Applications

- **Say Something: Filter Yourself Less**

Chris MacLeod says that a lot of conversational difficulties arise among beginners because they censor themselves too much and are always wondering “can I say this, or should I not say that?”.
But saying something, whatever it is, is often better than saying nothing.

- **Don’t Jump to Conclusions on People’s Shallowness**

It’s easy to think of others as shallow because you have access to your deeper thoughts and feelings, while you judge others based on what you see and the superficial conversation that’s going on.

That was very deep indeed :).

- **Self-Esteem Trails Accomplishments & Skills**

Keep in mind that our self-esteem usually trails our actual level. Don’t let impostor syndrome stunt your growth.

CONS

No cons concerning target readership of MacLeod’s book.

You might think that a book on the basics might bore a more advanced student. But instead, it was a good refresher. I found myself nodding most of the time, and I gleaned quite a few new insights as well.

Our only con is that **ambitious men who want more advanced results like status, respect, and attraction need something else after this book.**

PROS

- **Broad, Yet Exhaustive**

The Social Skills Guidebook talks about most of the relevant topics in basic social skills.
Yet it also manages to be exhaustive enough with each of them to cover most of what makes people effectively function as social animals.

- **Practical Examples**

The examples are scattered all over, and sometimes they are just simple, short sentences.
Yet, they work very well to make people understand the more abstract concepts that social and emotional intelligence are made of.

- **Good Mix of Basics & Advanced**

The author often starts with the basics, but then adds a few exceptions to the rules that will satisfy more advanced students.
That helps the readers bridge gaps of understanding between the general rules and the exceptions (for example, in group conversations).

- **Some Basic Power Moves As Well**

The author also has good suggestions on defending your speaking time from more aggressive social players who might want to cut you off (for example: raise your voice, raise a hand as if to say " wait," or add "*woh-woh, I'm not done, I'm not done*).

- **Great Narrating Voice**

The narrator is wonderful.
It makes a huge difference when he recites the dialogue examples and adds real value with his vocal variety.

Review

High rating for T*he Social Skills Guidebook*.
It covers the basics while also delivering lots of value for more advanced students of the social arts (and sciences).

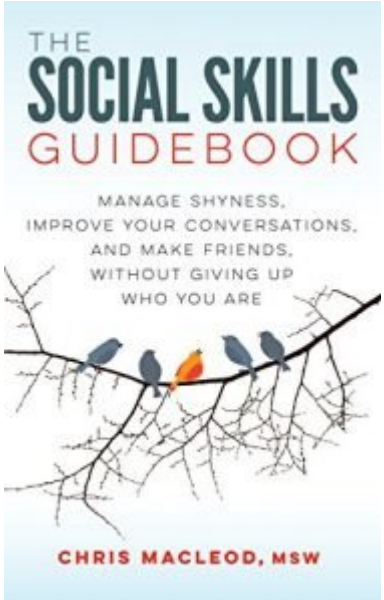
Most importantly, it covers both the basics and more advanced topics with factual and very accurate information, which shows that Chris MacLeod knows what he's talking about and is very well-informed.

As a matter of fact, The Social Skills Guidebook is one of the best social skills books I have read and a rather underrated book.

If you're an ambitious man lacking social skills, **get this book first and then come back to TPM for status, respect, attraction, and top-1% results.**

Check the **best social skills books,** or **get the book on Amazon**

The Social Skills Guidebook: Summary & Review (Macleod)



One of the best books on social skills. Especially great for beginners.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-social-skills-guidebook/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.5

People School: A Brutally Honest Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

People School by Vanessa Van Edwards is a social skills course that teaches communication, charisma, and influence techniques for personal and professional success.

TPM's reviews ™

Contents

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Summary

About the Author:
Vanessa van Edwards is a social skills coach and author who describes herself as a recovering awkward person. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree from Emory University, started out her entrepreneurial and writing journey with children's education, and later founded ScienceOfPeople.com to teach people skills.
Vanessa released several courses and books, including the best-selling book *Captivate* and *Body Language of Love*.

Intro

People School is divided into 12 different skills.

Some of them seemed more interesting than others to me.
Hence, I'm going to share only the ones that I found most useful while going through People School.

1. Charisma

We are always trying to assess people on two dimensions:

- warmth (friendly, likable, trustworthy)
- competence (capable, powerful, dependable)

I found it very interesting that for Vanessa high charisma is striking a balance between the two.

2. Be Engaging

There are three types of gaze:

- **Power gazing** (from eyes to forehead, effective work relationship, competence)
- **Social gazing** (from eyes to chin, friendliness and collaboration, warmth)
- **Intimate gazing** (from eyes to lower neck and upper torso)

Vanessa speculates that is why women wear necklaces: to attract more intimate gazing.

I also duly noted that taller people tend to naturally default to power gazing while shorter people to social gazing.
So shorter people might want to counteract that when they want to come across as more authoritative.

3. Asserting Yourself

I agreed with Vanessa that not everyone should be a driver at all times, and she says it's best to be a (good) follower when you:

- Don't know anyone
- Are new to the environment
- Are a guest
- Feel introverted
- There is already a driver

To learn more about communication styles and assertiveness, also see:

> Assertiveness: 6 Steps to Empowered Communication

4. Wield Influence

Vanessa says that we evaluate people by asking ourselves whether they are winners or losers.

She goes over some of the basics of what makes people high-power (winners) or low-power (losers), like body language, posture, and voice tonality.

And since her course is tailored to career folks, she goes over a study that found out how the most effective pitches to venture capitalists were high in comfort (signaling confidence) and enthusiasm.

PROS

- **Solid information**

We've already reviewed Captivate and Body Language of Love from Vanessa, and *People School* is our favorite course of hers.

- **High-quality production**

I have taken a lot of courses, and *People School* has some of the best-quality videos around.

- **Great personality**

Vanessa used "sparkling personality" as an adjective in a few of her products… And that description fits her very well.
She has a contagious, bubbly, sparkling personality that I'm sure would light up any room and draw lots of people to her (and here's hoping she doesn't have too jealous a husband :).

She can be a great role model for women as she manages to strike a difficult balance that is not easy for women to walk.

She is rocking her business while remaining warm and feminine. And she is very high energy without ever becoming too loud or overbearing.
She does the high energy instead with an angle of "it's so great to be with *you*".

In my opinion, that may make *People School* best suited for women (read below).

CONS

First, a more personal take: I'm not a big fan of *Science of People* marketing and approach to science.

Lab coat and lab references have been removed, which we approve of

The "behavioral researcher" title, coat imagery, and some other techniques felt like an attempt to enhance authority. While the marketing might work to sell better on some, more power-aware prospects can feel it undermines credibility.

So, that out of the way, let's see some cons:

Doesn't Teach Manipulation – Something You MUST Learn For Self-Defense

Says *People School's* own sales copy:

People School is NOT for you if:

- **You want to learn how to manipulate people:** We teach you to be the best, most authentic version of yourself when you communicate, not how to play mind games with others. If you're here to learn how to "trick" people, you will be sorely disappointed.

> "We teach you to be most authentic version of yourself not how to play mind games"

That may sound like an honorable approach, but from TPM's point of view, it's a naive take.
Scholarly work has long shown that manipulation is not the exception but the expected default in animal communication (Dawkins and Krebs, 1978).

Meaning: **learning how manipulation works is essential** to protect oneself and navigate complex social dynamics. *Especially* for those who seek to be 'the most authentic version of themselves'.

Any course that overlooks manipulation risks leaving its students unprepared for real-world challenges.

> **You don't want to go through life as a naive lamb, hoping there are no wolves.**
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

See our video on this topic:

> **Lucio**: Manipulation dynamics are a key competence domain for men who want to be successful and honorable

The Waiting List Trick: Authenticity VS Marketing

While *People School* emphasizes authenticity, formerly using a "waiting list" as a marketing tactic might feel inconsistent to some.

From TPM's point of view, it shows that the line between persuasion and manipulation blurs, and that effective men must learn both sides of the coin.

Edit:
People School used the "waiting list" approach at the time of our first review but ditched it later on.

Popular Studies, Debatable Rigor & Practicality

Vanessa van Edwards introduces several studies and explains how they apply to everyday interactions.

This approach makes psychology accessible and practical for daily life, which works for mass audiences. However, as someone who relies on science extensively, I noticed some areas where the research could have been more critically analyzed to derive truly effective strategies.

For example:

- **Priming**

It's debatable how valid the original study was as it failed to replicate.
You can read more in pop-psychology myths, however, as the *Routledge Handbook on Persuasion* concludes:

> As Brintazzoli and colleagues (2012) cautioned, **"the short-lived nature of the influence of subliminal information casts serious doubt on its effectiveness in everyday life** and advertising" (…) We are aware of no studies demonstrating any commercial success at using subliminal priming.

In short: it's not effective to even focus on priming to influence others.

- **Power poses**

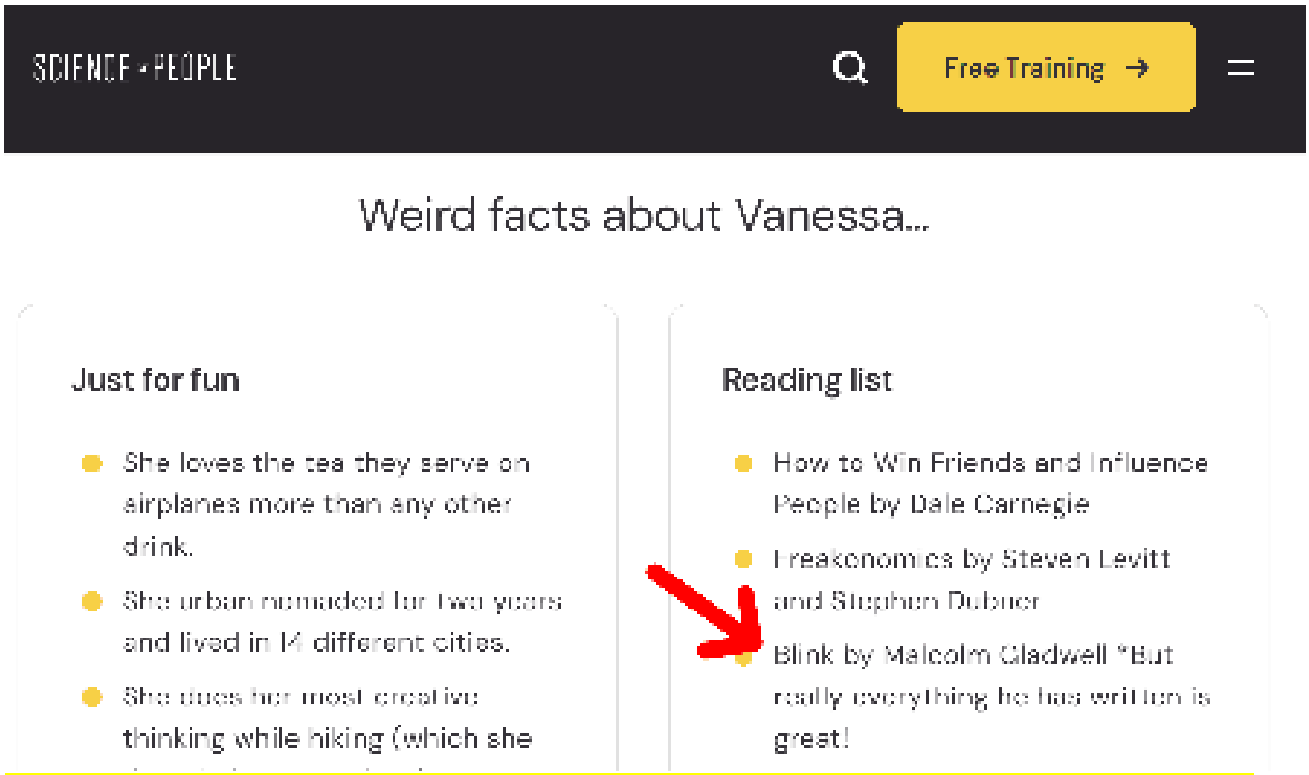
As late as 2025 Vanessa stated that power poses' effects were 'still uncertain' and Amy Cuddy was working on replication. But the weight of the evidence for behavioral and hormonal changes- the biggest claim from the original 2010 study, is resoundingly against it.

Making psychology 'fun' is not the same as *effective*

Vanessa's approach leans towards edutainment.

It's a fair approach for most, but it can simplify complex topics and under-deliver for smart and ambitious men.

An old reading list from her made me think it's a tendency for both the author and Science of People:



Malcolm Gladwell is a great writer. But we see him more as an entertaining read, rather than a reliable resource

Is It Updated?

Vanessa mentions she used her customers' feedback to improve *People School*.

And in her book *Cues* from 2022 she mentions she filmed *People School* in 2018 with an expensive professional crew.

I'd have to wonder to what extent it can be updated if the original videos remain the same for so long?

Better For Women

Anyone can learn from *People School*.
But Vanessa's excellent bubbly personality may not resonate with men who prefer a more masculine, 'grounded' and powerful aura.

Social effectiveness can be divided into likability/social skills and power skills for status, respect, and attraction. Think of it this way:

People Skills (communion)	Power Skills (agency)
Harmony: be liked and accepted	**Impact:** influence, respect, status
Agreeable communication, validating, and supportive	**Assertive/Strategic communication**, display value, frame control
Date as friends first, see if you connect	**Date for attraction,** lead, and achieve your goal

In general, men benefit more from power-related skills rather than just social skills.

People School VS Power University

Are you still wondering whether *People School* is worth the investment?

This chart helps you decide by comparing its strengths against our approach:

Goal / Trait	Best Pick	Why
Be **respected**	Power University	Teaches positive dominance, frame control, and how to gain respect from men, women, and colleagues alike
Be **liked**	People School	Leans heavier on warmth, likability, emotional expressiveness
Women	People School	Vanessa's approach is more feminine. The team is mostly women, and People School's coach is a woman
Ambitious **men**	Power University	Trains **high agency in men for achieving goals**, including status, respect, and attraction
Beginners in social skills	People School	Accessible, supportive, and gentle introduction to soft skills and body language.
Intermediate or **Advanced** in social skills	Power University	Goes further into advanced dynamics of manipulation, Machiavellianism, etc.
Good relationships	People School	Focus on empathy, matching personalities for relationships, and good conversations.
Influence up / reach **executive** level	Power University	Includes science-backed strategies, boss ingratiation, and high-power behavior to make it to board level
Safe, inclusive, 'PG-14'	People School	Polished, inclusive, and psychologically safe
Hard truths, power-based psychology	Power University	No sugarcoating, straight talk on dominance, manipulation, and social realities.
Socialites, **employees**, & Public speaking	People School	Caters to professionals and presenters.
Entrepreneurs, **lone wolves**, strategists	Power University	Men forging their path, entering or creating new social circles, and men who want an edge

Or see comparison chart here.

People School REVIEW

Science of People is a good course on improving your interpersonal skills.
It's well structured, professionally filmed, easy to follow, and taught by a capable creator.

We deal with similar topics here at TPM, albeit from different angles.

We dig deeper into the less politically correct topics such as manipulation, dark psychology, Machiavellianism, conflicts of interest, dominance, etc.
We believe this approach better prepares men to succeed in life.

So, of course, we missed that "raw" side in *People School*.
On the other hand, we still liked it.

Although I'm always busy improving TPM, I was happy whenever I could find time in the evening to watch Vanessa's video lessons.
I'd watch while stretching to save time, but Vanessa made it hard for me! Her content had so many interesting tidbits that I often had to stop to take notes.
That's a sign of great content and I'd be happy to collaborate with her one day.

Is People School Worth It?

At nearly $2.500 *People School* is more expensive than many comparable courses, meaning that it's only worth it if it can justify the difference with the extra value it delivers.

Whether it will deliver that extra value also depends on you.
If Vanessa's approach resonates with you and *People Skills* delivers the results you want, it may be worth it.
As 'missionary' creators here at TPM we know that a premium course refined over the years is often better than a lower-priced but average course.

Vanessa seems to target her product primarily at professionals and corporate clients. If you have access to a training budget, *People School* could be a worthwhile investment.

Edit: Vanessa lowered the entry point at **$997**

People School Refund Policy

People School's refund policy was based on "proving" that you did the homework, but that has changed.

Currently, you have **7 days to request a refund**, but keep in mind that you must ship all course material back within 15 days to qualify.
As a busy person myself, I'd have preferred not to receive any material to avoid the time costs of re-shipping it back.

Also see:

- The best books and courses to develop people skills

If You're a Man Seeking Status & Respect...

People School offers valuable social skills lessons for everyone.

But if you're a man looking to gain status, respect, and attraction, Power University offers a tailored approach designed specifically for these goals:

Check Power University

The Best Social Skills Books For Adult Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you searching for the **best social skills books** to stop feeling awkward, learn what to say, and make friends?

Whether you're a beginner looking to boost confidence, a man aiming to sharpen your social prowess, or an adult seeking to refine your interactions, this guide has you covered.

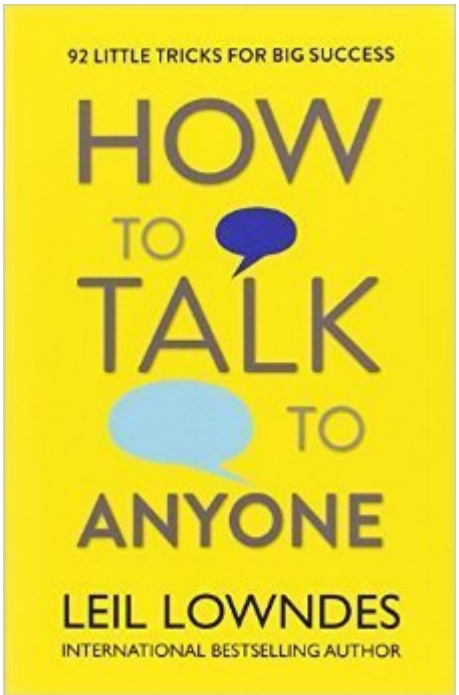
We're **social skills experts**, having turned thousands of men into winners with our advanced social skills course Power University. And we read and reviewed *dozens* of social skills books, courses, and coaches.

We've curated a list of top-tier books on social skills, packed with practical advice to help you overcome social anxiety, improve conversations, and connect with others effortlessly.

Contents

- 12. How to Talk to Anyone
- 11. Cues
- 10. The Charisma Myth
- 9. Soulmate Sequence
- 8. Improve Your Social Skills
- 7. How to Win Friends and Influence People
- 6. The Power of a Positive No
- 5. Difficult Conversations
- 4. Charisma on Command
- 3. People Skills
- 2. The Social Skills Guidebook
- 1. The Social Strategist
- Advanced Learning
- FAQ: Your Top Questions About Social Skills Books
- Conclusion

12. How to Talk to Anyone



By Leil Lowndes
Summary | Amazon

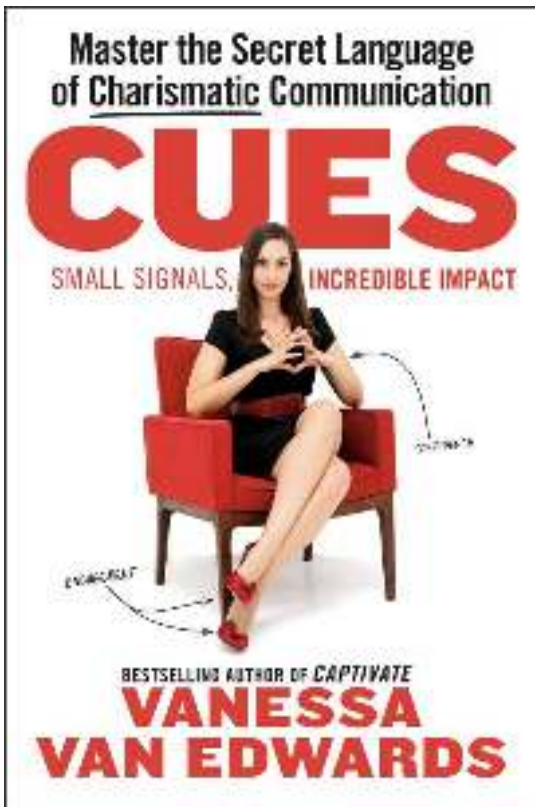
Leil Lowndes' *How to Talk to Anyone* is a standout on every list of social skills books.

While I typically prefer deeper approaches over simple "tip lists," Lowndes makes this format work with her engaging and practical advice.

This book offers a collection of actionable tips to enhance your conversational skills, making it ideal for those wanting to navigate small talk and leave lasting impressions.

However, it's worth noting that it focuses more on techniques rather than foundational basics, so pair it with a beginner-friendly book if you're starting from scratch.

11. Cues



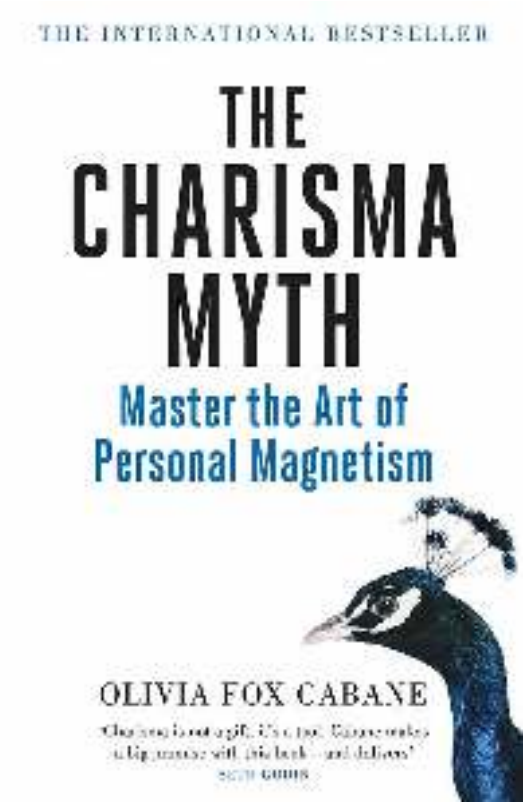
By Vanessa Van Edwards
Summary | Amazon

Vanessa Van Edwards is a leading voice in social skills, gaining massive popularity through podcasts and millions of views in 2025.

Having started out in children's education before transitioning to social skills, her book *Cues* is a solid body language guide on our power and warmth approach. It's also Vanessa's best book.

It tackles essential topics like decoding body language, signaling competence, and signaling warmth.
Her course, *People School*, also ranks on our best social skills courses list.

10. The Charisma Myth



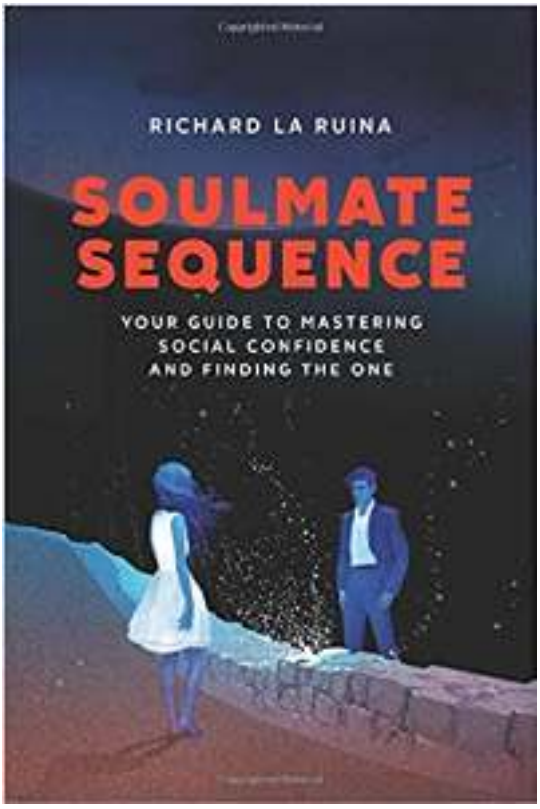
By Olivia Fox Cabane
Summary | Amazon

Don't let the title fool you—*The Charisma Myth* is one of the best books on social skills, not just charisma.

Olivia Fox Cabane takes a broad approach, showing that charisma isn't reserved for the loud and outgoing. She explores various styles, including quiet and reserved ones, making this a top pick for introverts and extroverts alike.

Learn how to be charismatic with a style that suit your needs.

9. Soulmate Sequence



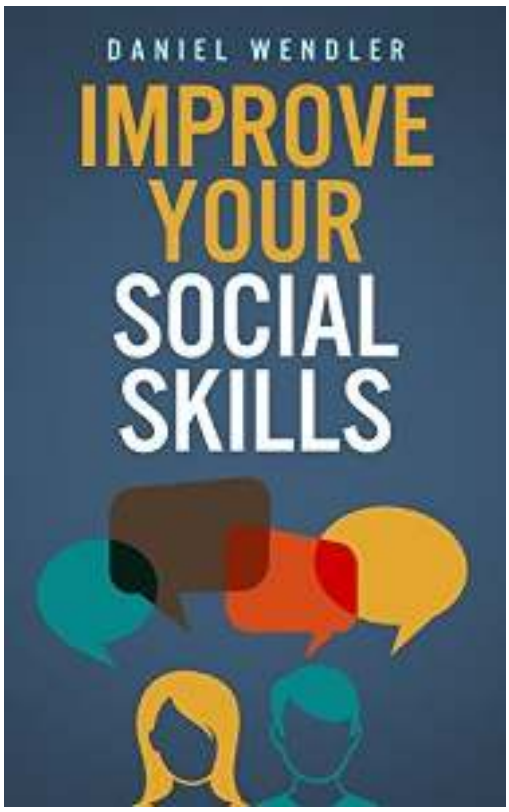
By Richard La Ruina
Summary | Amazon

Richard La Ruina, a former dating coach, brings more than just romance tips to *Soulmate Sequence*.

This book excels in general social skills and conversation techniques, featuring some of the best examples I've read for becoming a skilled conversationalist.

Its high-quality insights earn it a spot among the top social skills books for anyone looking to improve interactions.

8. Improve Your Social Skills



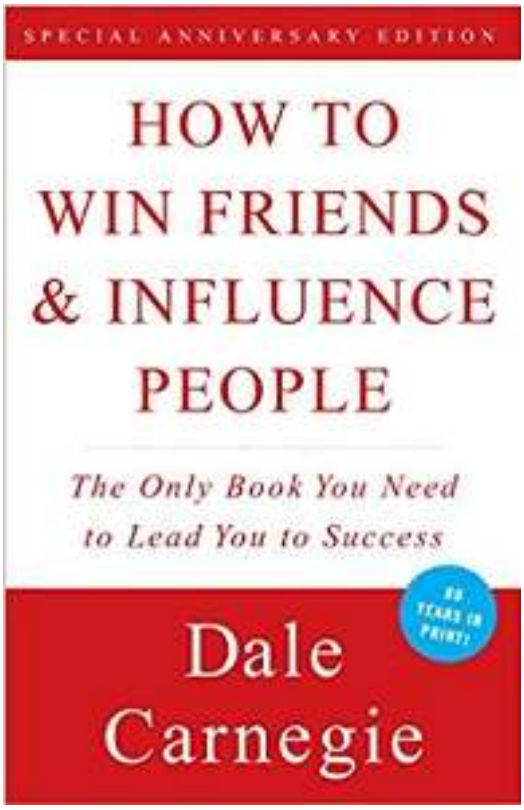
By Daniel Wendler
Summary | Amazon

Daniel Wendler, who overcame Asperger's to master social skills, shares his journey in *Improve Your Social Skills*.

This book is perfect for beginners and those with social anxiety, breaking down the basics of social interactions into clear, actionable steps.

For anyone starting from zero or on the Autism spectrum, this is arguably the best social skills book out there.

7. How to Win Friends and Influence People

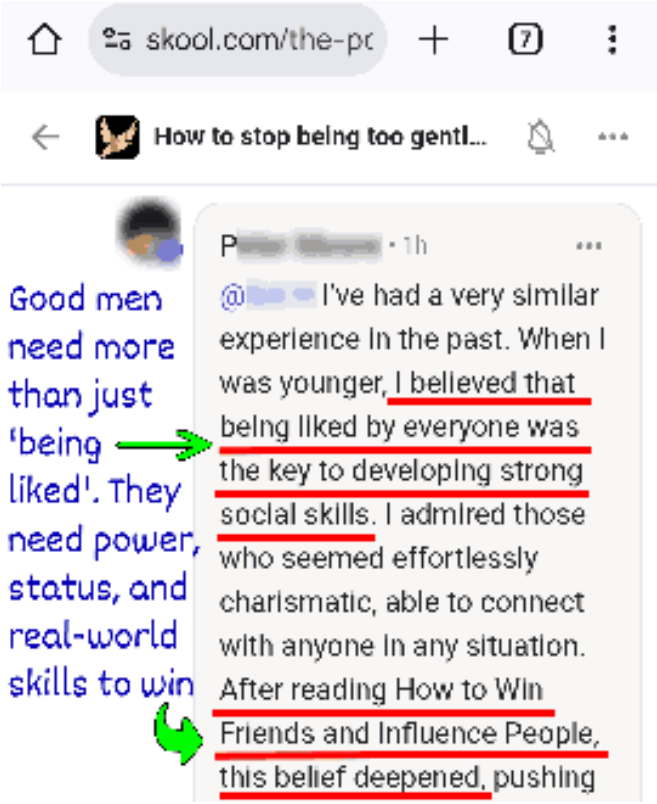


By Dale Carnegie
Summary | Amazon

A timeless classic, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is a staple on any social skills book list.

However, to truly benefit, you need power awareness.

As a community member noted:

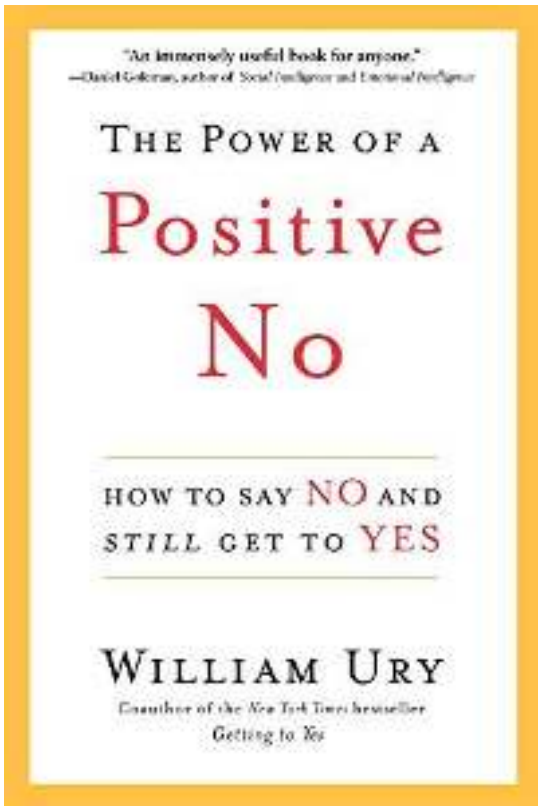


> **Him**: I believed that being liked was the key (…) a belief that deepened after reading *How to Win Friends and*

> *Influence People.*

Focusing solely on pleasing others can backfire without understanding takers and power dynamics.
Check this section for more insights.

6. The Power of a Positive No



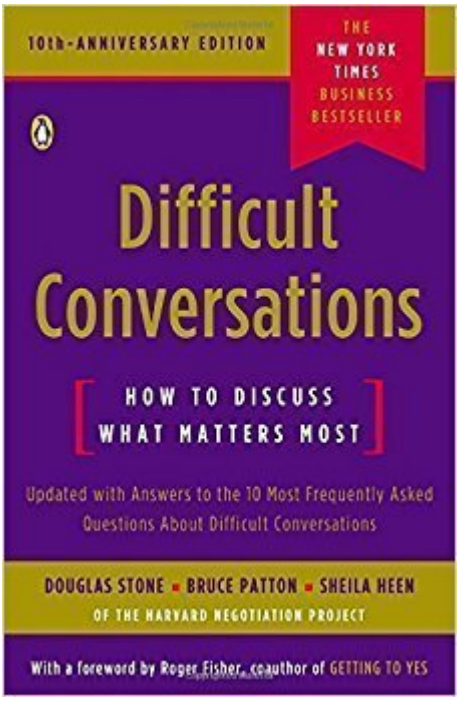
By William Ury
Summary | Amazon

Saying "no" tactfully is a key social skill many struggle with, even advanced learners.

William Ury's *The Power of a Positive No* offers brilliant strategies to decline requests confidently while preserving relationships.

It's a must-read for personal and professional growth.

5. Difficult Conversations

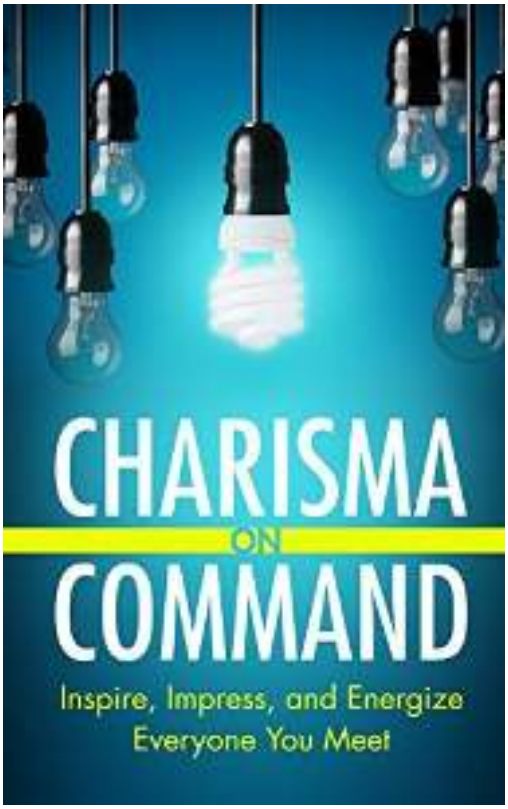


By Douglas Stone
Summary | Amazon

Difficult Conversations was one of my first social skills reads, and its depth still impresses me years later. It's a top resource for handling tough discussions with wisdom and clarity.

It's possibly the best book on navigating challenging social situations.

4. Charisma on Command



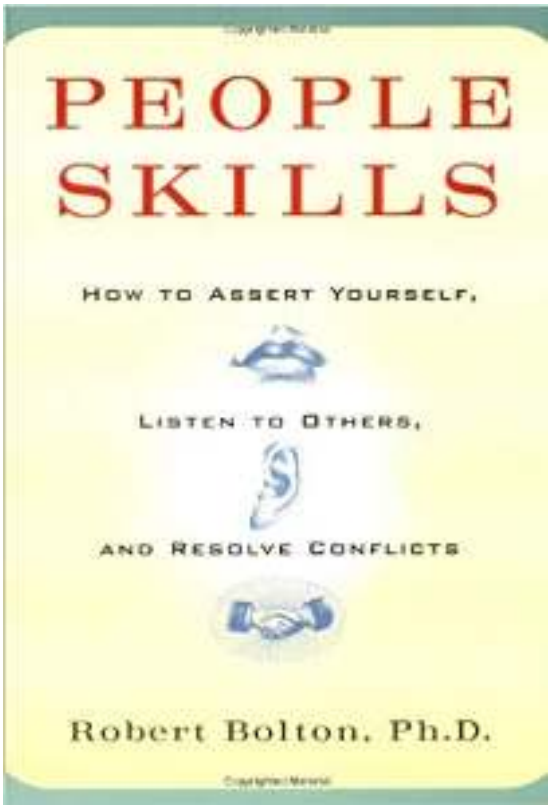
By Charlie Houpert
Summary | Amazon

Charlie Houpert's *Charisma on Command* (book and YouTube channel) focuses on high-energy charisma.

While it leans toward extroverted styles, it offers solid tips for group conversations and social dynamics.

Explore Charisma University, their main course, for more.

3. People Skills



By Robert Bolton
Summary | Amazon

Struggling with confrontation or boundaries?

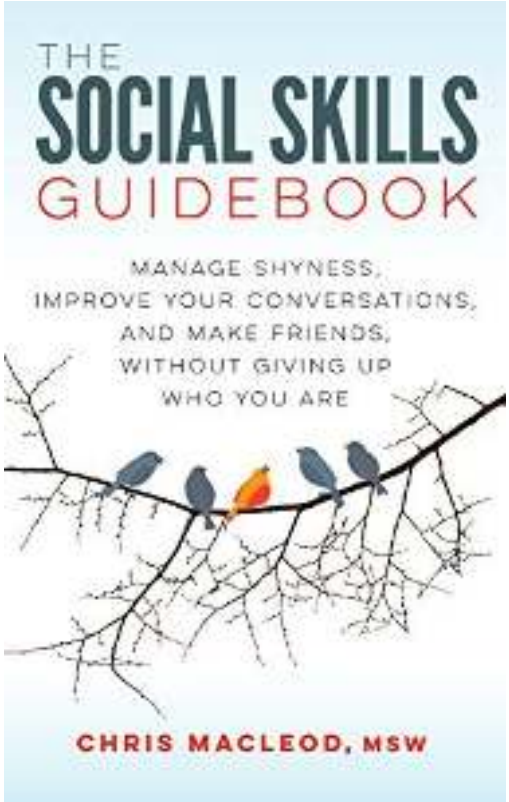
People Skills teaches assertive communication, helping you strike the perfect balance between passivity and aggression.
We list this book in our list because learning to be assertive is a **foundational social skill for men**.

Pair it with *No More Mr. Nice Guy* for a powerful combo.

Power Nugget:

Both submission and aggression have their own payoffs, but both lead to poorer lives.

2. The Social Skills Guidebook

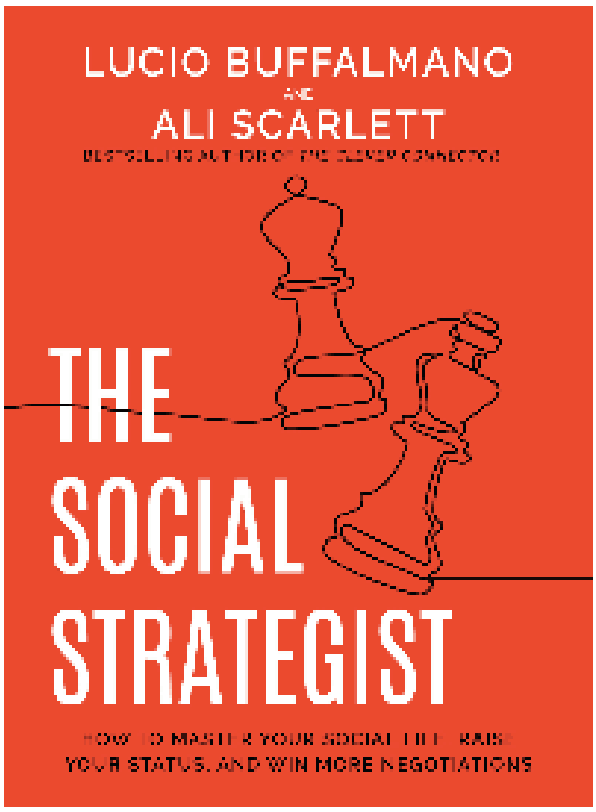


By Chris MacLeod
Summary | Amazon

The Social Skills Guidebook is **ideal for beginners** and the socially anxious, offering a step-by-step approach to mastering interactions.

Chris MacLeod's expertise shines, providing value for both novices and advanced learners despite the recency effect of my recent read.

1. The Social Strategist



By Ali Scarlett & Lucio Buffalmano
Summary | Amazon

Full disclosure: I'm biased toward *The Social Strategist* due to its ties to TPM's material.

However, it earns its top spot by **bridging foundational and advanced social skills**.

It introduces the social exchange concept, helping you avoid being a "value-taker" (a common pitfall).
From basics to frame control and power dynamics, it's ideal for those ready to elevate their game.

Beginners should start with *The Social Skills Guidebook* first.

Advanced Learning

- **Best Social Skills *Courses***: Video-based learning and exercises for social intelligence.
- **Advanced Social Skills Books**: Move beyond basics to gain status, respect, and achieve social goals.

FAQ: Your Top Questions About Social Skills Books

What are the best books for improving social skills?

Top picks include *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *The Social Skills Guidebook*, and *The Social Strategist*, each offering unique strategies for better interactions.

How can I overcome social anxiety through reading?

Improve Your Social Skills and *The Social Skills Guidebook* are good books tying social skills with social anxiety. But real-life exercises and incremental exposure may be necessary for some, so therapy or a coach may be the most effective option for some men struggling with social anxiety.

Are there social skills books specifically for men?

Yes, *Soulmate Sequence*, *No More Mr. Nice Guy* and *The Social Strategist* address men's social challenges effectively.

What books help with making friends as an adult?

How to Talk to Anyone and *Captivate* offer excellent techniques for building adult friendships.

How do I choose the right social skills book for me?

Match your skill level: beginners start with *The Social Skills Guidebook*, while advanced learners opt for *The Social Strategist*. If you can afford, graduate to courses rather than book, which can provide more nuances adn advanced techniques

Conclusion

These **best social skills books** provide the tools to transform your interactions, whether you're overcoming awkwardness or mastering advanced dynamics.

Pick the one that fits your needs and start your journey to social confidence today!

Best Books on Influence and Persuasion

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

If you are looking for the best books on influence and persuasion, you have come to the right place.

My credentials: I am a sociologist, a psychologist buff, member of the American Psychology Association, and I founded, lead, and focus on the “power dynamics” domain of influence and social skills.

I worked on sales, been very successful in life at influencing people, and I read many books on sales, influence, and persuasion.
And this is my current list of best persuasion books.

Contents

- 11. Pitch Anything
- 10. The Art of Closing The Sale
- 9. Propaganda
- 8. Creating Lasting Change
- 7. Getting Past No
- 6. Pre-Suasion
- 5. Blindsight
- 4. Influence
- 3. Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways Ways to Be Persuasive
- 2. Methods of Persuasion
- 1. Persuasion, Social Influence, & Compliance Gaining
- Learn More
- Change Log

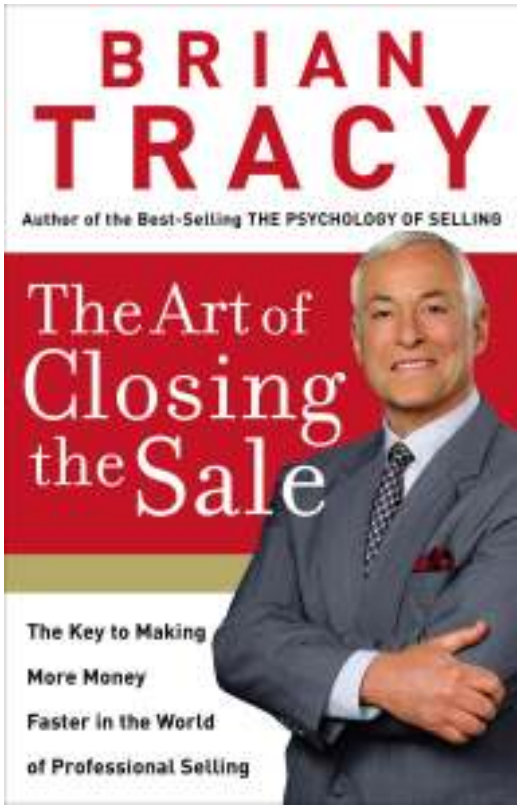
11. Pitch Anything

By O Klaff
Summary | Amazon

This is the equivalent of The Power Moves applied to VC pitching and persuasion.
Oren Klaff indeed focuses on persuading through understanding power dynamics and coming across as the most powerful man in the room.

At times I feel this attitude might be counterproductive unless you really know what you're doing and you can counterbalance it with warmth, but power dynamics are certainly something you should learn to improve your persuasion skills.

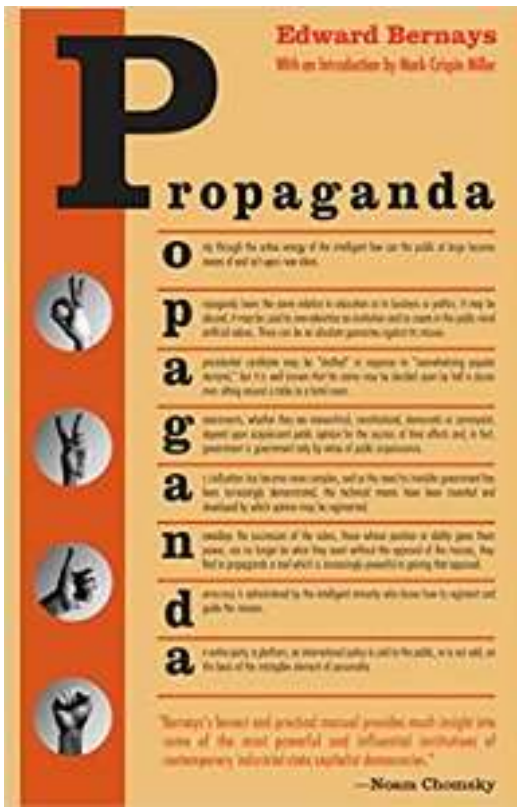
10. The Art of Closing The Sale



By B Tracy
Summary | Amazon

I wanted to put a good book on sale on this list as well.
And The Art of Closing The Sale provides a good overview both in terms of mindsets and in terms of sales techniques.

9. Propaganda



By E Bernays
Summary | Amazon

And now by friends, please roll out the red carpet and blow the trombones for… The Godfather of the influencing and persuasion books!

And, between us, the Godfather of media manipulation for the masses as well :).

Propaganda is the equivalent of *The Prince* for power moves and *The Art of War* for strategy.

And the most surprising thing?
Some passages are so crazy actually in the Donal Trump era that you will go check the publication date just to be sure you picked the right book!

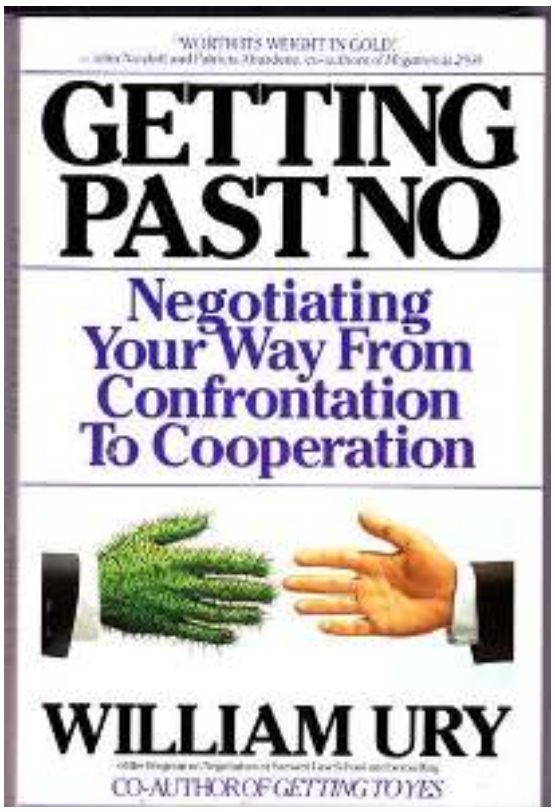
8. Creating Lasting Change

By T Robbins
Review (removed)

When it comes to the best persuasion books we might want to lend an ear to a guy who's come from nothing and with no education and built an empire based on coaching and information.

That guy is Tony Robbins and he knows a thing or two about making people follow him.

7. Getting Past No



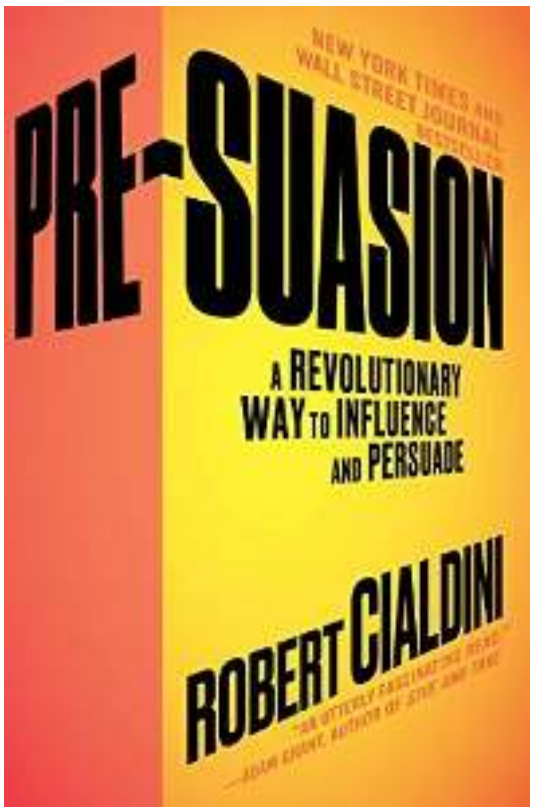
By W Ury
Summary | Amazon

Getting Past No is an underappreciated gem. Ury has written such "*Getting to Yes*" and "*The Power of a Positive No*", which are equally powerful.

But what's so special about *Getting Past No* is that it focuses on difficult negotiation, difficult people, and changing people's minds when things seem to be escalating and getting stuck.

And you want some of those "difficult people's skills" in life :).

6. Pre-Suasion

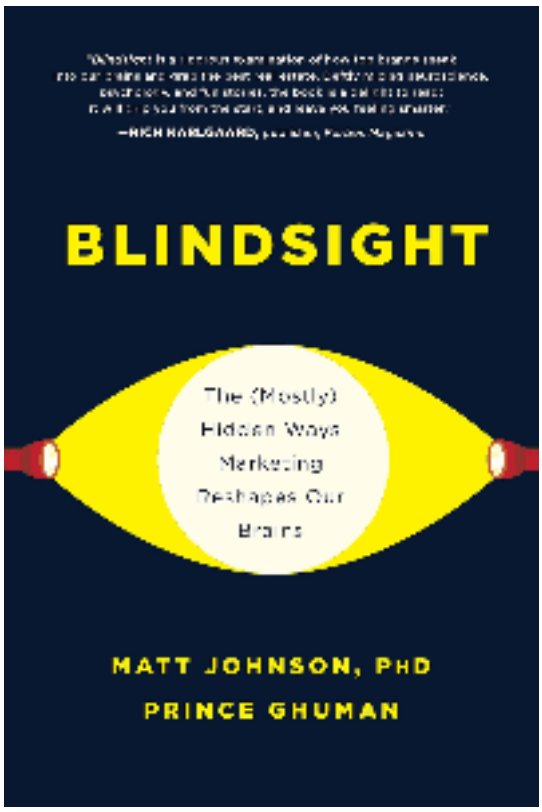


By R Cialdini
Summary | Amazon

This is the sequel of Influence, but it might have actually been its prequel. Pre-suasion focuses on the science of priming (which newer studies have called into question by the way).

However, "replication crisis" notwithstanding, priming is much more real, and Pre-Suasion will teach a thing or two about preparing the ground for your persuasions.

5. Blindsight



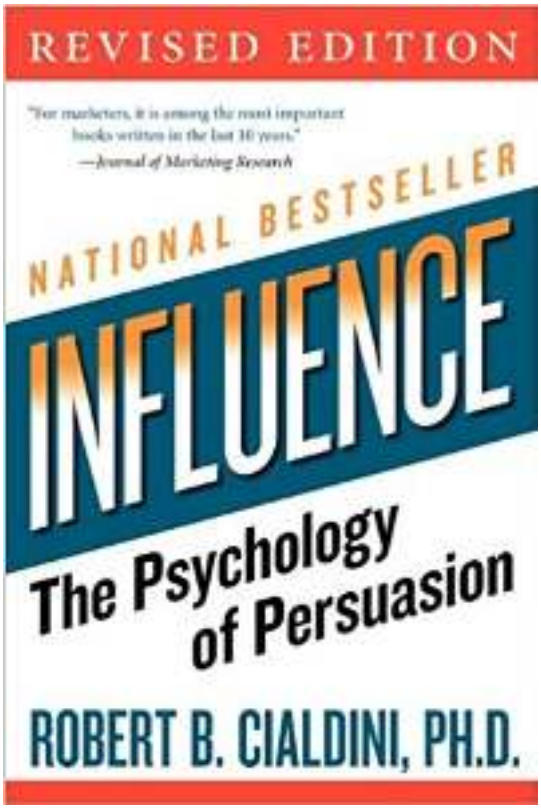
By Johnson and Guhman
Summary | Amazon

This is more large-scale persuasion in the sense of marketing.

But since there is most certainly an overlap between persuasion, influence, and marketing, then we need to reserve a spot for a book like Blindsight, which happens to be one of the very best books at the intersection between marketing and neuroscience.

Plus, there are also plenty of golden nuggets for interpersonal persuasion.

4. Influence

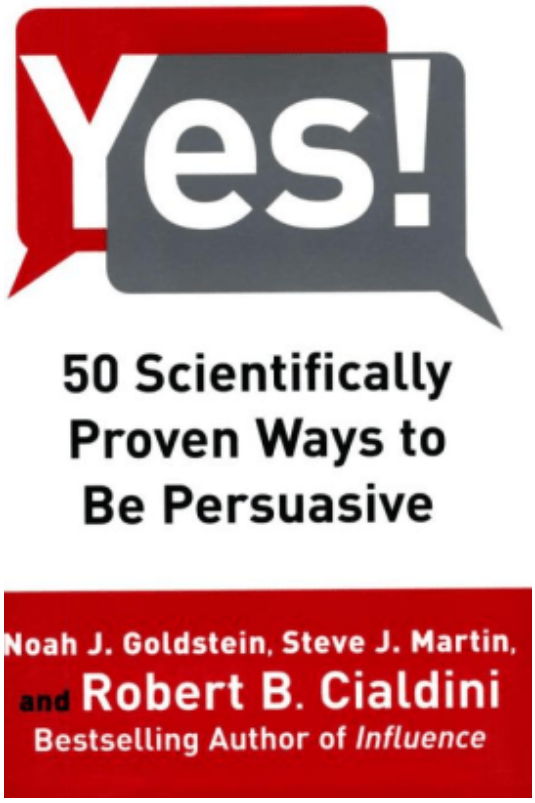


By R Cialdini
Summary | Amazon

Influence needs no introduction.
And if you need any, then I will presuppose that it's the first time you are researching information on influencing and persuasion :).

Influence is possibly the biggest seller of all the persuasion books and for good reasons.
A litany of persuasion books that came after it either reference or basically paraphrase Cialdini's main 6 principles.

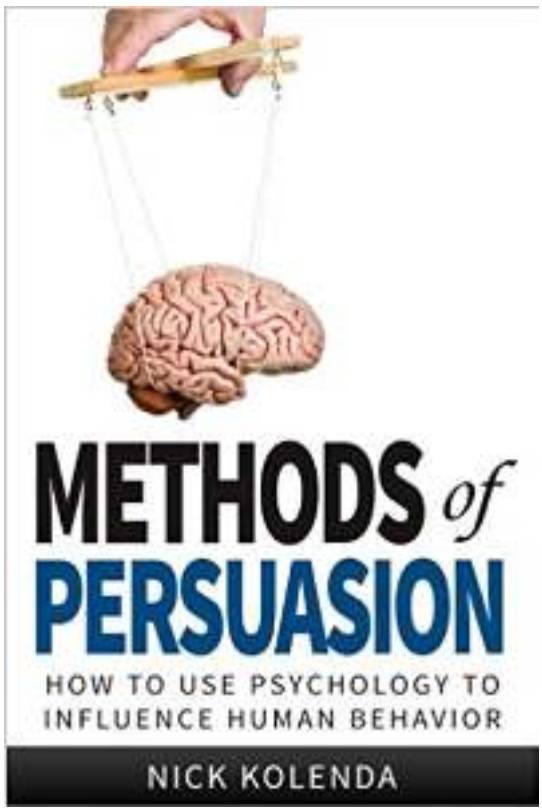
3. Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways Ways to Be Persuasive



By J Goldsetein et al
Summary | Amazon

This is a bit like *Influence* expanded version, providing more examples and more research to give supercharge your power of changing people's minds (and making more sales, as it adds quite a bit of marketing as well).

2. Methods of Persuasion



By N Kolenda
Summary | Amazon

You might wonder how a book you probably never heard before is on this list?

And even higher up than "*Influence*" and "*How to Win Friends*" -which isn't even on the list-?

Well, we don't rank books and courses on popularity.
We rank out of quality and value-added.

Plus, it's always a pleasure for us to bring to you a few lesser-known books that can be better than the more well-known ones.

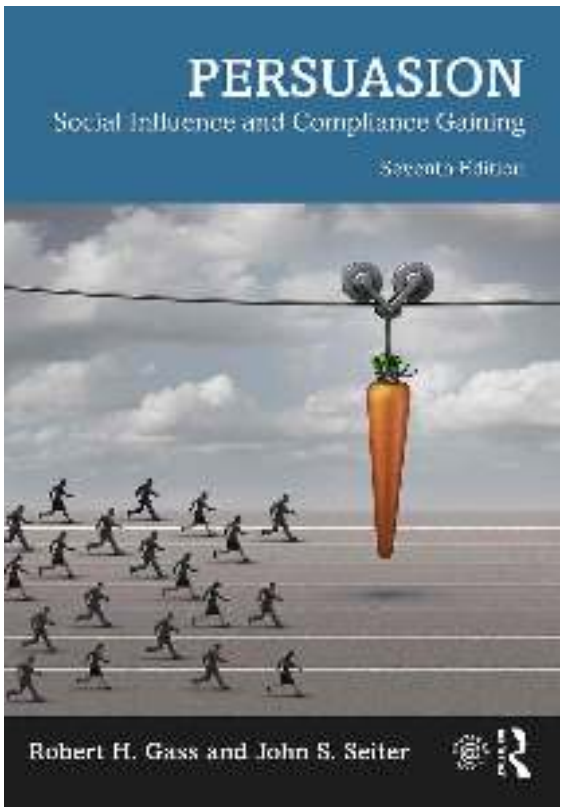
What I appreciate most in books on influence like "*Methods of Persuasion*" is that it does not list a bunch of "triggers" or "techniques", but instead **lays out a more comprehensive approach to interpersonal persuasion**.

That makes it highly practical, especially for those looking to persuade and influene others in flesh and blood, rather than with marketing.

Kolenda walks you through a persuasion attempt from before making the request, to after making it with a daily, relatable example.

Methods of Persuasion will likely you make you a better persuader, and I hope more people will follow Kolenda's example of applying persuasion to everyday interactions.

1. Persuasion, Social Influence, & Compliance Gaining



By Robert H. Gass and John S. Seiter
Summary | Amazon

Persuasion, Social Influence, & Compliance Gaining is deepest, most researched, and most updated resource on persuasion and influence.

As a handbook it's denser and reference-heavier than most other books on this list. But the authors do a great job weave a cohesive, big-picture view of persuasion, including strategies, techniques, and practical takeaways on how to apply it in your life.

Learn More

- The best books on manipulation
- The best books to understand and acquire POWER

Also consider:

- Maximum Influence: Good overview of 12 well-researched influencing principles
- The Social Animal: Not your typical "book on persuasion". But it shares many golden nuggets on influence and changing people's minds. It's based on science and research, and that makes it one of the best resources available.

A Foundational Course For Persuasion

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Reviews

Let's be real, guys:

No low-value man can easily influence high-value men -or women, for that matter-.

High-value men naturally look down on those who are "below them".
It's human nature.

So, in truth, **the foundational work to become a persuasive man is to become a high-value man**.

THEN, on top, you add this or that technique.

Power University is the ultimate course to become a high-power, high-quality man.
Once people start to look up to you, they will WANT to be influenced by you.

That's the biggest "secret" of influence and persuasion.

Change Log

- **Removed** ***Straight Line Persuasion*** (April 2025), Jordan Belfort's course on sales. It made this list thanks to a couple great tips on vocal tonality.
  However, the rest of the course was average and a couple of great tips aren't enough to feature on a list of the *top* influence and persuasion resources
- **Added** *Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining* as the richest and most updated evidence-based overview on persuasion to date (April 2025)

Best Negotiation Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for the best negotiation books?

You have come to the right place!
Whether you have just left money on the table, felt like someone took advantage of you or you simply don't want to overpay for stuff, these books will certainly help you save (and make) money.

Indeed, this list of best negotiation books might just have the best ROI on any book you'll ever buy!

Contents

- #11. Pitch Anything
- #10. The Art of The Deal
- #9. The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People
- #8. Never Split The Difference
- #7. Difficult Conversations
- #6. The Shadow Negotiation
- #5. Getting Past No
- #4. Game Theory Bargaining and Auction Strategies
- #3. Getting to Yes
- #2. Secrets of Power Negotiations
- #1. Negotiation Genius
- Bonus: The Course For Understanding & Using Power

#11. Pitch Anything

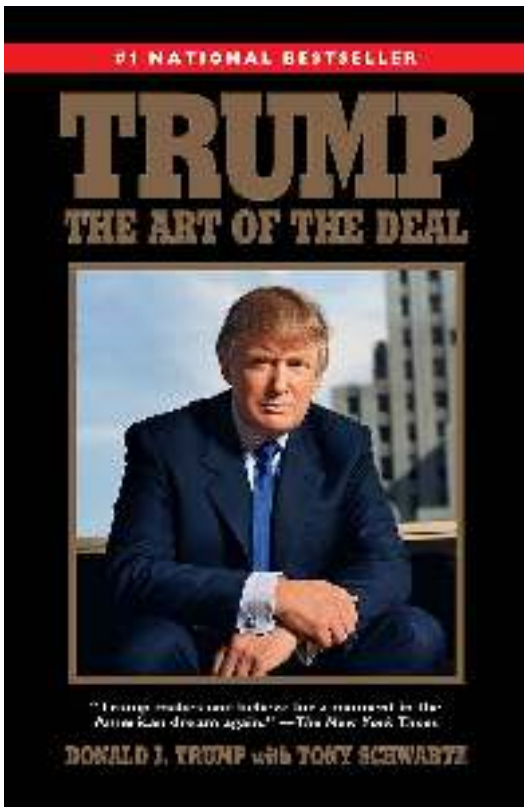
By O Klaff
Summary | Amazon

Oren Klaff focuses on negotiations to raise money.

Especially, focuses on pitching your entrepreneurial ideas to VCs.

I enjoyed it a lot because it focuses on the social power dynamics of negotiation.
Just make sure you don't overdo it because "powerful is good" but "overpowering" is more likely to be shown the door than given the money -and Klaff's advice sometimes can lean too much on the overpowering- side.

#10. The Art of The Deal

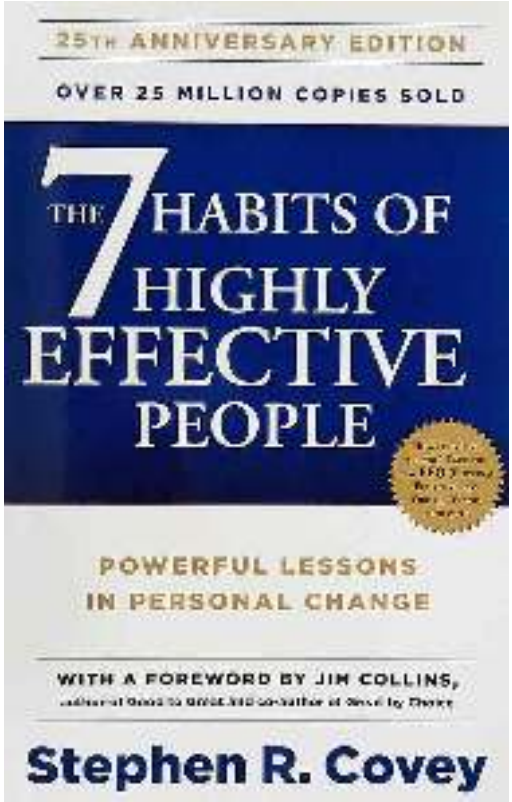


By D Trump
Summary | Amazon

Albeit the name, the success of the author, and the best-seller status of The Art of The Deal would have you believe this is all about negotiating, there is actually little when it comes to the technicalities of negotiations.

However, you will learn a lot about how sharks and power-hungry men think.
You need that knowledge for when you will be sitting at the negotiating table with someone like Trump.

#9. The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People



By S Covey
Summary | Amazon

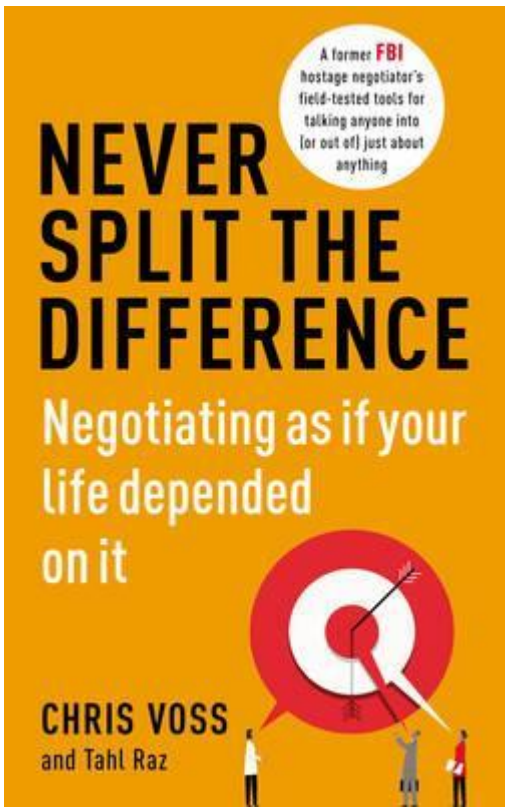
Albeit not strictly about negotiation, Covey's best-seller deserves a place in any best negotiation book list for one of its seven habits.

And that habit is:

> Think win-win

Plenty of studies have shown that negotiating with a win-win mindset and being ready to make concessions lead to better outcomes and results.

#8. Never Split The Difference



By C Voss
Summary | Amazon

Now here's a guy who knows how to market and, can we say it? How to hype his brand.

So you can learn from him not just from what he writes, but from what he *does*.

Some might say that Voss' experience as an FBI hostage negotiator has actually little relevance to most life negotiations that his readers need.
But he spun and marketed his background as an advantage, the message being that "since I've been in challenging negotiations, then I know all about business negotiations as well".
Well, I'm personally not convinced that's the case.

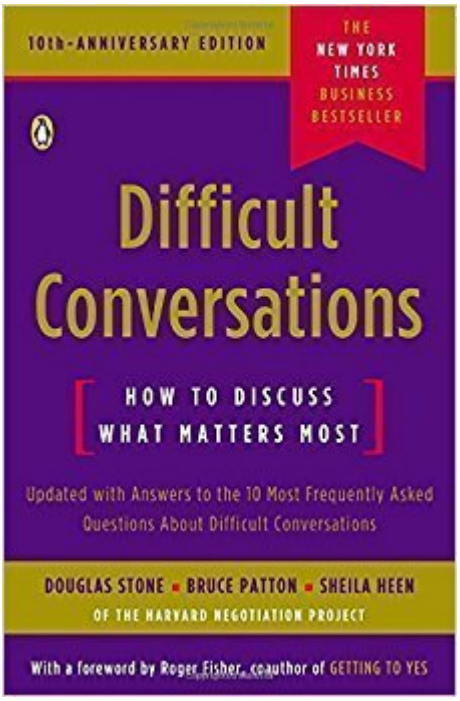
BUT, that being said, Voss is a smart guy, and he is not just marketing, but also good content.
And at least part of what he learned in hostage negotiations can also be generalizable to both business negotiations and to our lives.

The main takeaway?
That the secret to negotiating with the most aggressive and dangerous negotiators is to listen and empathize, says Voss.

Needless to say, that doesn't mean to give in or be soft, but it does mean that lending an ear, sympathizing with their plight, and trying to offer a legally-acceptable compromise wins the day.

I find that approach to be most useful with emotional and, particularly, with angry negotiators.

#7. Difficult Conversations

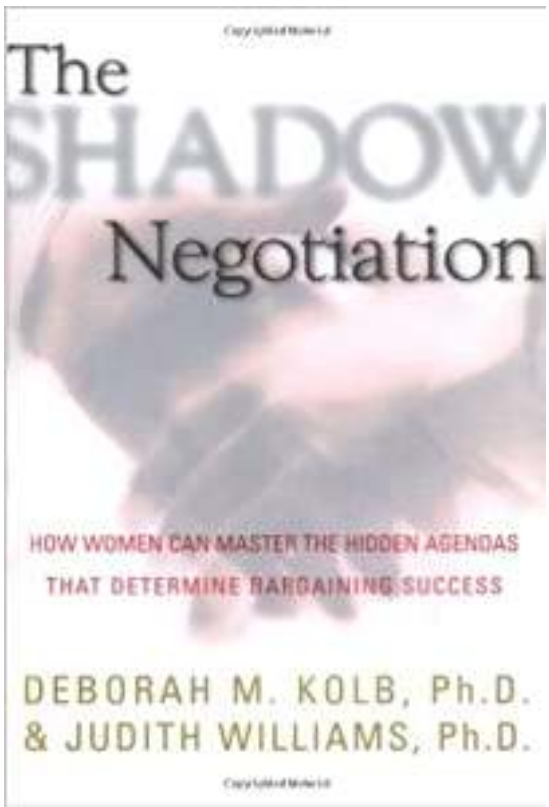


By D Stone
Summary | Amazon

Another great book to negotiate when emotions run high.

Here again one of the biggest takeaways is to first listen and understand what our negotiating partner is so worked up about.
As the authors say, you can’t move the conversation in a positive direction until the aggravated party feels heard and understood.

#6. The Shadow Negotiation



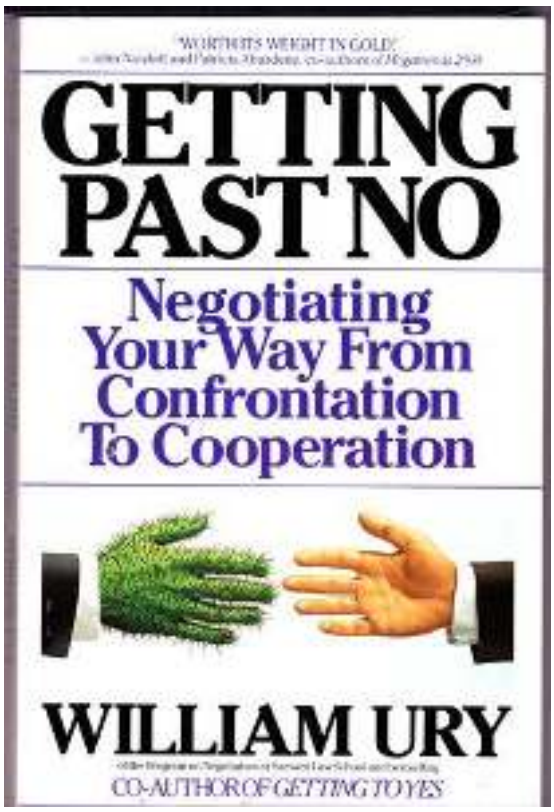
By D Kolb
Summary | Amazon

Albeit it's marketed at women and for women, this is useful to anyone.

Deborah Kolb is a sharp mind that sees and understands frames, negotiation power moves, as well as deeper power dynamics.

Most of all, I liked that it contains *a lot* of examples, which also makes it a good text for beginners.

#5. Getting Past No



By W Ury
Summary | Amazon

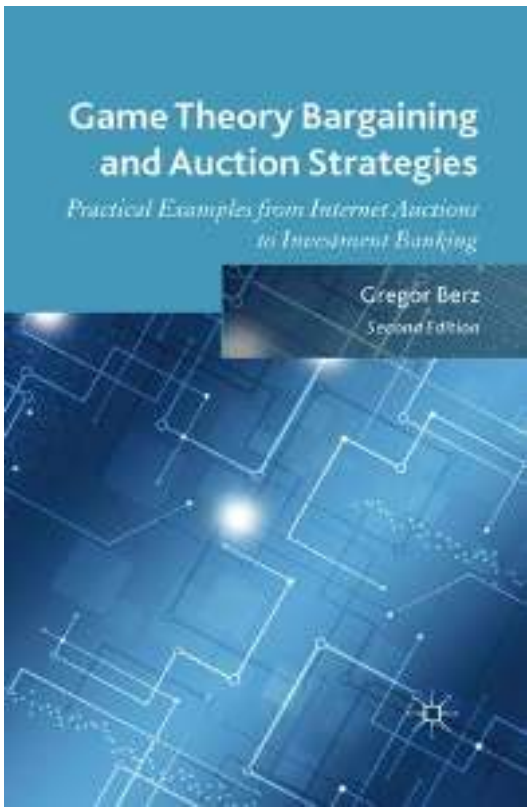
Possibly the best book I have read to negotiate difficult situations.
Here are the two biggest takeaways:

1. Always (re)frame the negotiation as an attempt at finding a win-win
2. Help people save face and it will be easier for them to make concessions

If you noticed some parallels from How to Win Friends and Influence People, you are right.
After all, understanding people in one setting (friendships) helps you in all other domains as well because people are people (dating, intimate relationships, negotiations, etc., etc.)

Power University shows you a couple of examples where helping people save face helped me win the negotiation.

#4. Game Theory Bargaining and Auction Strategies



By G Berz
Summary

Warning:

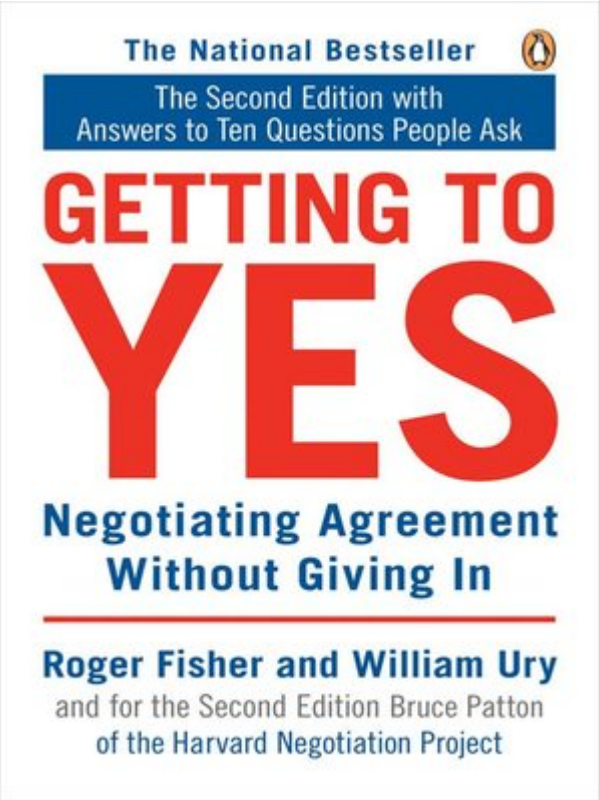
This is very technical, as expected from a book on game theory.

Sure, auction theory is mostly based on the homo economicus and postulates that players are rational but we know that's not the case (Thaler, 2015).

Yet, I still learned a lot from these negotiation books.

No other book, for example, opened my eyes to the best technique to sell your house.
Now, thanks to Berz, I know that I will be using a Dutch auction style to sell my house one day.

#3. Getting to Yes



By Fisher & Ury
Summary | Amazon

Getting to Yes is a classic and one of the biggest negotiation best-seller books.
And for good reasons.

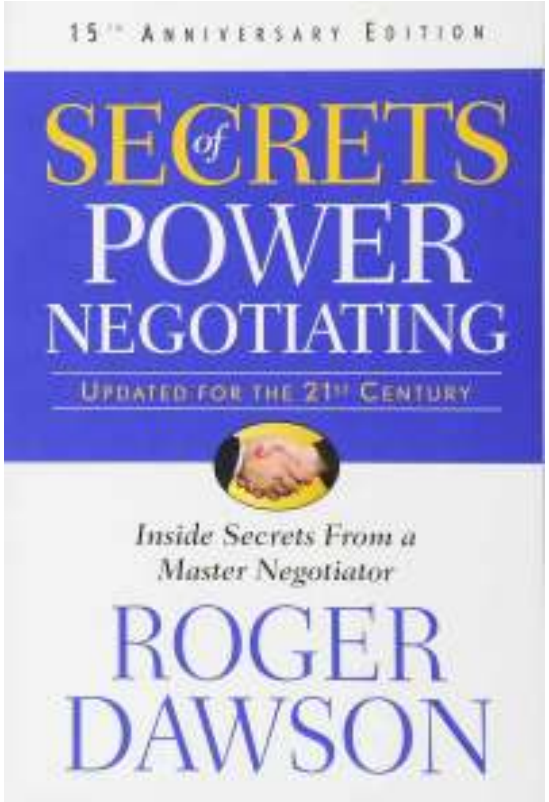
Two of its main negotiation takeaways are:

1. Developing alternatives (BATNA method)
2. Focus on interests and not positions

There is one more key concept, which I recommend that you make your new mantra for negotiations:

> Be hard on problems and soft on people

#2. Secrets of Power Negotiations



By R Dawson
Summary | Amazon

What's special about our N.1 best negotiation books?

It's that it's raw, crude, amoral… Just what you need to teach you what the *real* sharks and wolves do.

This isn't about "seek win-win", Dawson tells you how the as*holes and the power negotiators actually behave. And you need that tough love to protect yourself -and to attack back-.

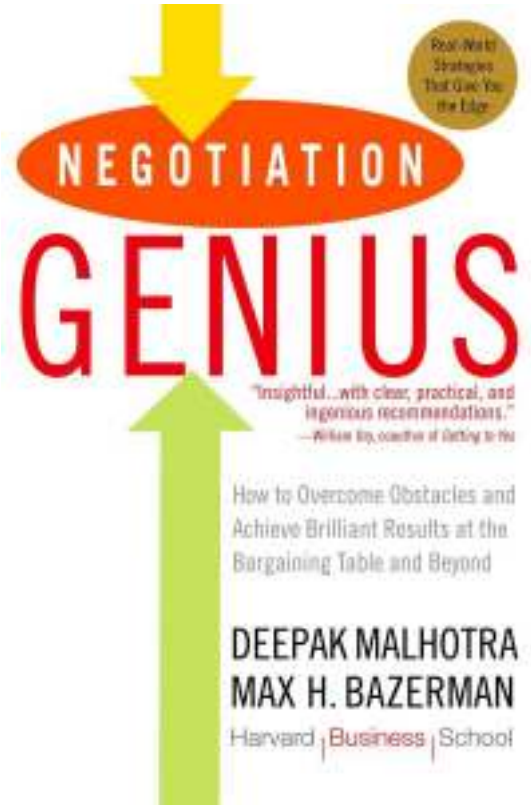
You will learn techniques and power moves such as "good cop/bad cop", "higher authority", "the flinch" and all other power moves that the biggest sharks out there use.

I have listed some of these same techniques (and more) in this post here:

- **Manipulative negotiation techniques**

Personally, I can't believe what an under-appreciated and underrated book this pearl on negotiation power moves actually is.

#1. Negotiation Genius



By D Malhotra
Summary | Audiobook

Simply the best overview of negotiation I have read.

Deepak Malhotra well represents the philosophy of this website as well: seek win-win in a way that maximizes value and enlarges the pie for all, but don't be naive about it.
Such as learning about power dynamics, learning about manipulations, and being prepared for the obvious fact of life that not all negotiations or negotiators are good for win-win deals.

Bonus: The Course For Understanding & Using Power

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Reviews

Negotiations are about power, leverage, and smart strategies.

Including *Machiavellian* strategies to display power, leverage, or empathy.

Power University teaches you how to behave high power, spot manipulation attempts, and negotiate your way to victory.

Also see:

- The best books on POWER
- Best persuasion books ever

Best Manipulation Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

If you're looking for the best books on manipulation, you found them.

And if you're looking for more general information on psychological manipulation and Machiavellianism, you've found the right website :).

However, the information and psychology contained in these books can be turned into dark psychology and used for manipulation.
We do *not* endorse or condone exploitation, but we believe that learning these dynamics is crucial to an empowered and successful life.

Let's start.

♂Lucio's Take: **How this list was built**

Lucio:
Unlike AI-generated book lists, every recommendation here comes from books I personally studied cover to cover.

I've spent more than ten years researching manipulation, influence, social psychology, evolutionary psychology, status dynamics, Machiavellianism, and controlling relationships.

The best of these books influenced the frameworks later developed inside The Power Moves and Power University. Books I haven't personally studied don't make this list.

The ranking reflects three criteria:

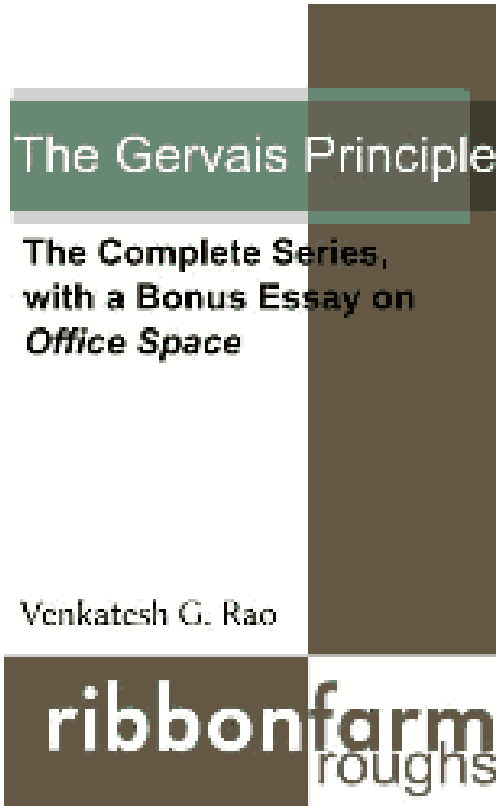
- Scientific accuracy
- Authoritativeness, including realism and logic
- Practicality and usefulness in the real world

Contents

- 9. The Gervais Principle
- 8. In Sheep's Clothing
- 7. Propaganda
- 6. The Art of Deception
- 5. 30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics
- 4. The Art of Seduction
- 3. How to Lie with Statistics
- 2. No Logo
- 1. Who's Pulling Your Strings

- Courses: Turn Theory Into Practice
  - Power University
  - Seduction University
- Change Log

9. The Gervais Principle



By Venkatesh Rao

Summary

Technically, it's a series of posts turned into a book.

But if your goal is to understand manipulation, then wisdom should be your top priority and not the format.

And although the framework in The Gervais Principle may be simplistic and more theoretical than practical, it's

still one of the best books to understand corporate manipulation (<- and that one linked there is the best post to understand corporate manipulation, BTW).

> So why is promoting over-performing Losers logical?
> The simple reason is that if you over-perform at the Loser level (ed.: the low-level employee), it is clear that you are an idiot. You've already made a bad bargain, and now you're delivering more value than you need to, making your bargain even worse.

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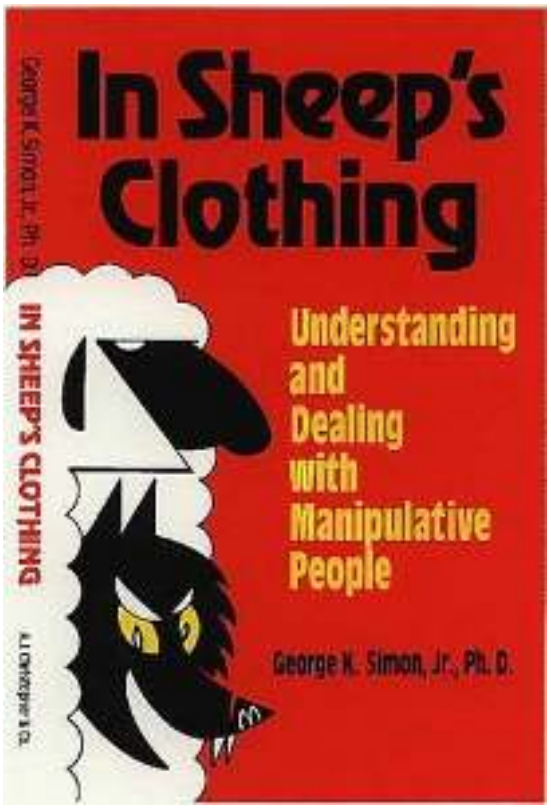
8. In Sheep's Clothing



By George Simon
Summary | Amazon

This is one of the foundational books on manipulation.

It covers the psychology of social manipulators, power-hungry men, and covert aggression.

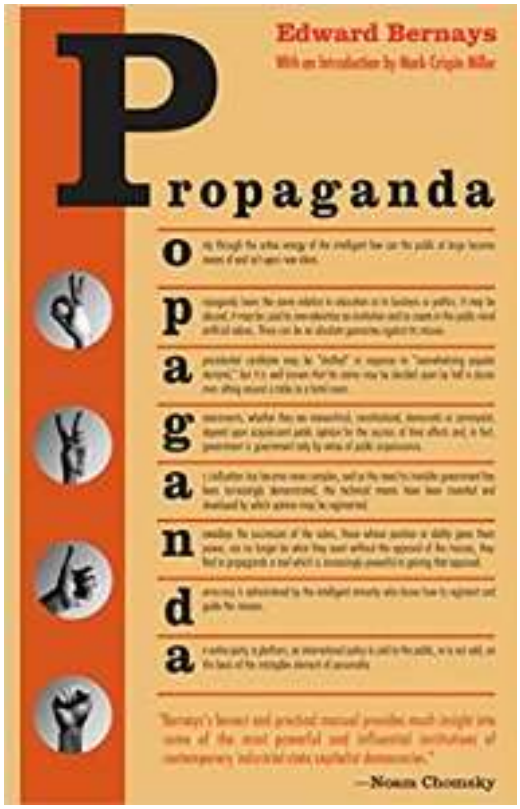
Covert aggression is aggression in disguise, often used by social manipulators so that they can always deny their aggression, retreat, save face, and then probably blame you for your own overreaction.
To deal with it effectively, see "handling microaggressions".

"In Sheep's Clothing" was also one of the "The Power Moves recommended books".
I appreciated a lot that the author takes a stand against the tendency of some psychologists to make up excuses for manipulators' behavior.
With this book, you will learn manipulators' psychology, manipulators' strategies, and a few defensive techniques.

It's more on the theoretical side, though.
If you're looking for proper defense against manipulators, keep on reading.

> Evil arises from the failure of owning and disciplining one's own basic instincts.

7. Propaganda



By Edward Bernays
Summary | Amazon

This is where it all started when it comes to books on manipulation.

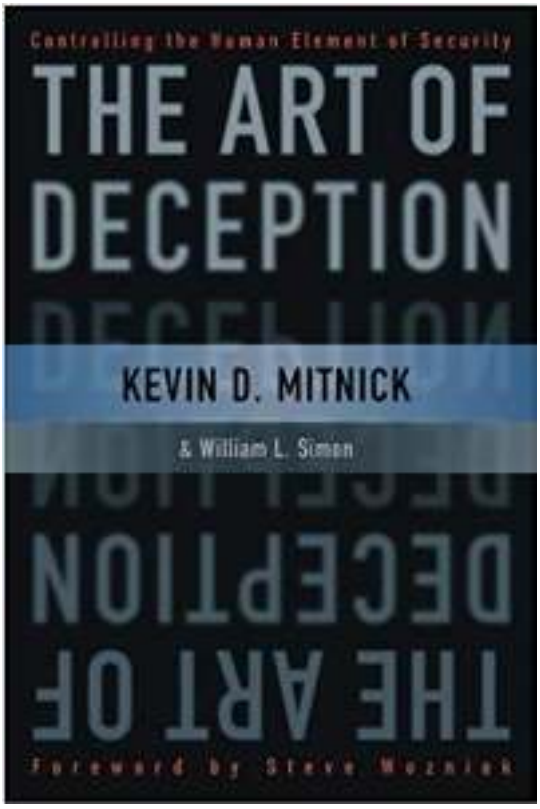
Propaganda is manipulation from the top to direct the masses.
And albeit it's probably not true that anyone can single-handedly instill thoughts, values, and beliefs in a nation's mind, it's certainly possible -and likely- that many people can be heavily influenced.

Bernays didn't have the means or the access to the research and studies we have today, yet his own observations are sometimes so prescient and accurate that it feels like this book has been written in the Trump era.

This is my own quote from a collage of this wonderful classic on manipulation:

> Universal literacy was supposed to educate the common man to control his environment.
> "Once he could read and write he would have a mind fit to rule". Or so ran the democratic doctrine.
> Instead, it gave them propaganda. And an easier way for the masters to control him.

6. The Art of Deception



By Kevin Mitnick
Summary | Amazon

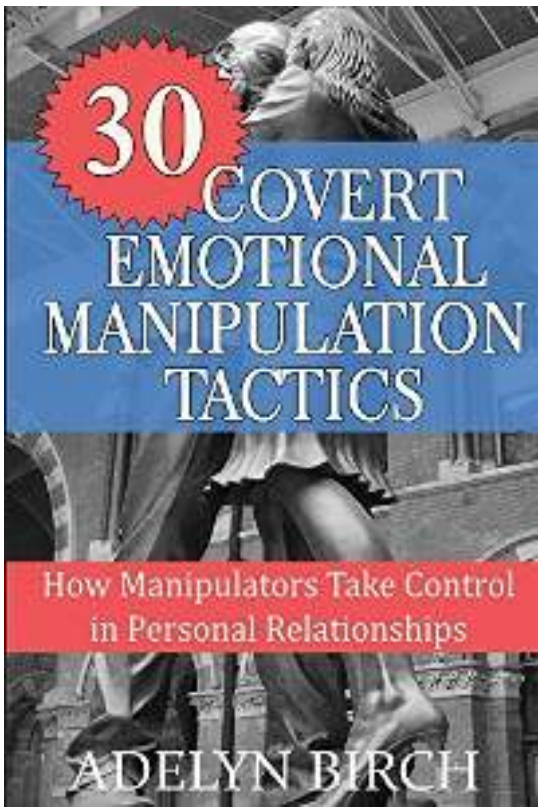
This is the best book I have read about social engineering.

Anyone interested in manipulation, let alone anyone who's working in security and IT security should get it.

There are tons of examples of actual manipulations and albeit some of them are so simple and straightforward… A surprising amount of times that's all you need to trick most people.

> A good social engineer never advertises his skills and knowledge.
> You always want people to underestimate you, not see you as a threat.

5. 30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics



By Adelyn Birch
Summary | Amazon

Brief and to the point, it's a solid overview of manipulation techniques in relationships.

Needless to say, we are talking about *abusive* relationships here so get this book to learn about the relationships that you must *avoid*.

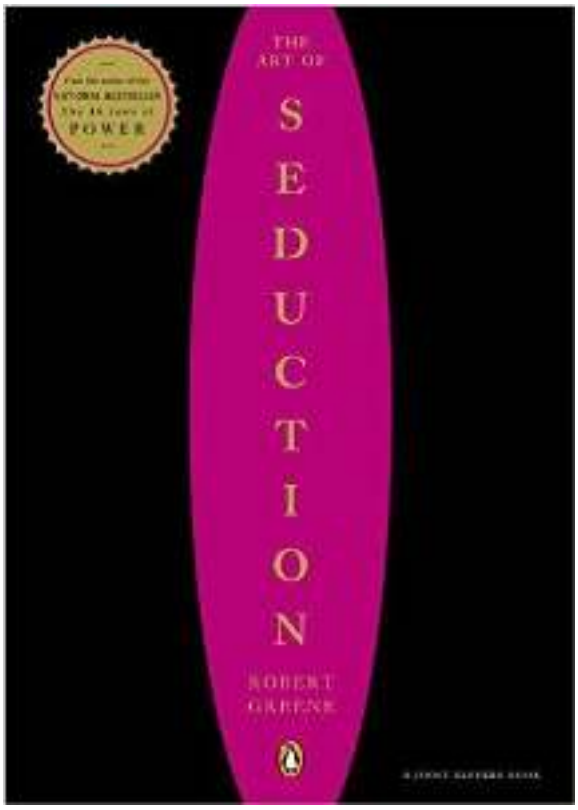
I also highly recommend this article:

- **Gaslighting**, which also applies to all socialization
- **Psychopaths' sexual strategies**: including techniques and strategies to control women

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

> A loving relationship doesn't hurt you.
> Pretty obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people need to be reminded that.

4. The Art of Seduction



By Robert Greene
Summary | Amazon

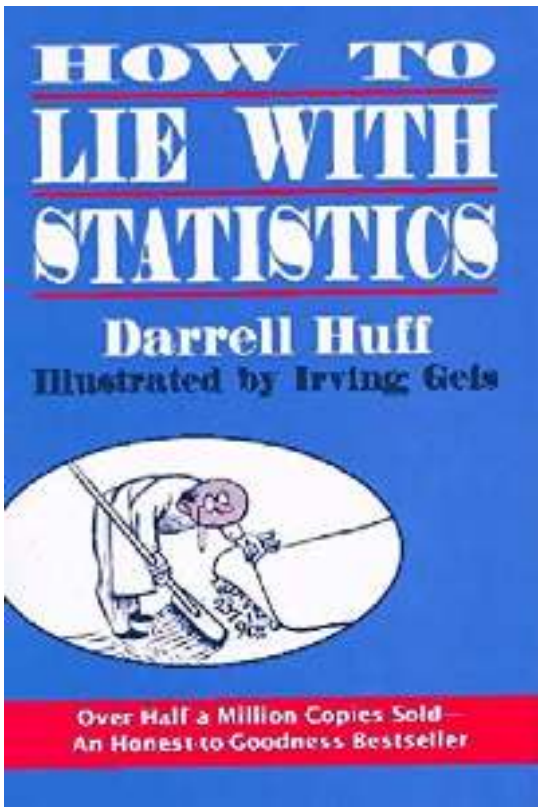
The Art of Seduction mixes seduction with social charm as a tool for gaining leverage over others. And although it's not the best book for modern dating, it's one of the best books on seduction.

Also see:

- **How Women Mindfuck Guys**: a psychological analysis on potentially manipulative seductive techniques

> There is too little mystery in the world; too many people say exactly what they feel or want.

3. How to Lie with Statistics



By Darrell Huff
Summary |Amazon

Many readers believe that manipulation is some secret NLP tactic, hypnosis, or some covert techniques to control minds.

Then they go to lunch with fat-free food, gargle with mouthwash after brushing their teeth, and down two supplements. And without realizing, they've been successfully manipulated to spend their hard-earned money on overpriced items that add barely any benefit to their lives.

Keep this in mind:

> The biggest manipulator in this world is marketing.
> And the second is "scientific data" and researches.

Both data and research hide behind a firewall of trust and credibility lent by the high authority that our society grants to numbers and data.

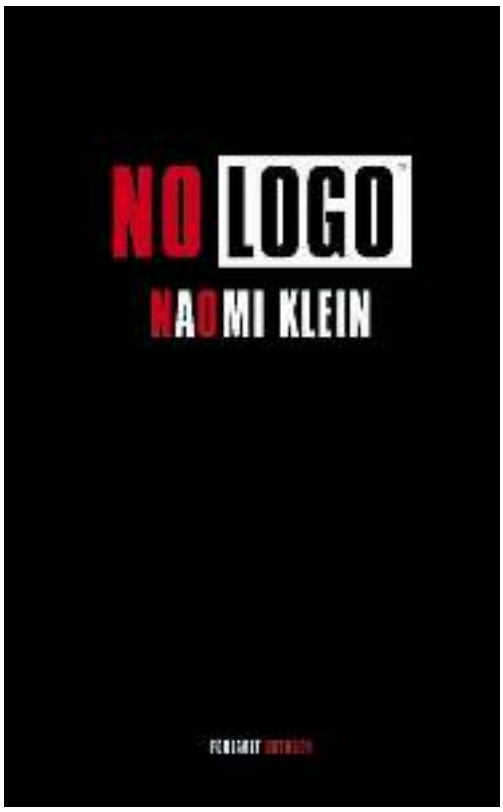
And don't get me wrong: science *does* deserve that trust and respect.

And besides being nowhere near "the truth" as many believe, data and numbers are also pliable to manipulation.

"How to Lie With Statistics" makes this list of best books on manipulation because it exposes the most manipulators of them all: authority figures and authority hijackers.

> It ain't so much the things we don't know that get us in trouble. It's the things we know that ain't so

2. No Logo



By Naomi Klein
Summary | Amazon

No Logo is not a traditional dark psychology book. It is included because the highest-level manipulation in human society isn't interpersonal, but institutional and commercial/marketing.

At TPM, we must also note that *No Logo* lacks in scientific rigor, with lots of opinions and storytelling.

However, it's one of the best books on the irrational pull of brands, PR, and marketing.
Capitalism runs on consumerism.
And the best capitalists win on branding. **Branding is the true modern propaganda.**
And even though No Logo wasn't meant as a marketing book, it's one of the best books to highlight the powerfull effects of marketing on the psyche of people.

The high-level manipulation is the manipulation that makes you *crave* the latest shiny jewel, that makes you feel *proud* for owning it, talking it up to your friends, proudly showing its logo while you also market it for them -for free-.

Picture the thousands who waste a day of their lives queuing for the "privilege" of dropping a thousand dollars on a phone they don't need which is no better than the one they already have.

Or look at your shoes.
Are any of them Nike, Rebook, Adidas…?
Those companies are not shoe companies, they are marketing companies in the business of manipulation, offshoring production to the cheapest location they could find.

And people all around the world proudly wear them while letting those brands signal about their status and values.

> Scott Bedbury, Starbucks' vice president of marketing, openly recognized that "consumers don't truly believe there's a huge difference between products," which is why brands must "establish emotional ties" with their customers

Those “emotional ties” are manipulations.

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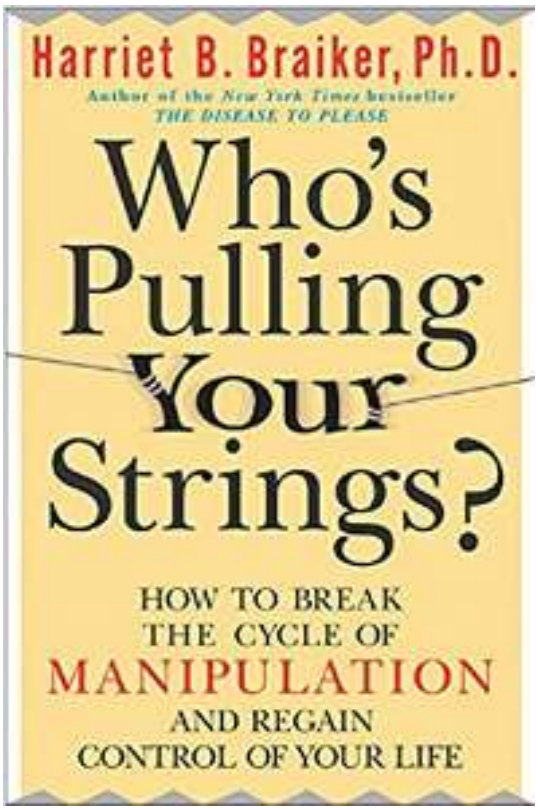
1. Who’s Pulling Your Strings



By Harriet Braiker
Summary | Amazon

Probably the best overview of interpersonal manipulation, including:

1. The psychological profiles of manipulators
2. The personal weaknesses manipulators exploit
3. The technical steps to end manipulation
4. The self-development work to become more manipulation-resistant

If you’re interested in manipulation in close and intimate relationships, I also recommend:

- Emotional blackmail

> If you are not willing to lose the relationship—even when it means losing yourself in the process— then you are not ready to stop being a victim.

Courses: Turn Theory Into Practice

Many of the books above influenced the development of these courses. Rather than focusing on one domain (marketing, propaganda, abusive relationships, workplace politics, etc.), they integrate those insights into practical frameworks to succeed in life.

Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Reviews

Power University integrates the strongest ideas from the books above with years of additional research and own frameworks to focus on practical applications to boost men's success.

It's not just about defense; you'll learn to counter manipulators and reach your goals. And, when it's fair, you'll discover how to wield ethical manipulation to your advantage.

If you're serious about rising above, commanding respect, and gaining an edge, Power University is your answer.

Seduction University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview

Seduction University blends evolutionary psychology, power dynamics, and personal experience to teach how manipulation shapes seduction and relationship influence, both for self-defense and for ethical use.

Change Log

The following books are not strictly focused on manipulation.
But there are several gold nuggets here and there:

Removed

- ***The 48 Laws of Power*** (03.07.2026) because it's not strictly about manipulation
- **Don't Think of An Elephant** focused on political manipulation.
- ***A Gold Diggers Guide***: a valid resource on intersexual manipulation for resource extraction, but it veers more on the self-help angle

10 Best Body Language Books Ranked By An Expert

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 March 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Looking for the **best body language books** to master nonverbal communication and elevate your social skills?

At The Power Moves, we've reviewed dozens of courses and books on body language, social skills, and power dynamics, making us your trusted source for expert recommendations.

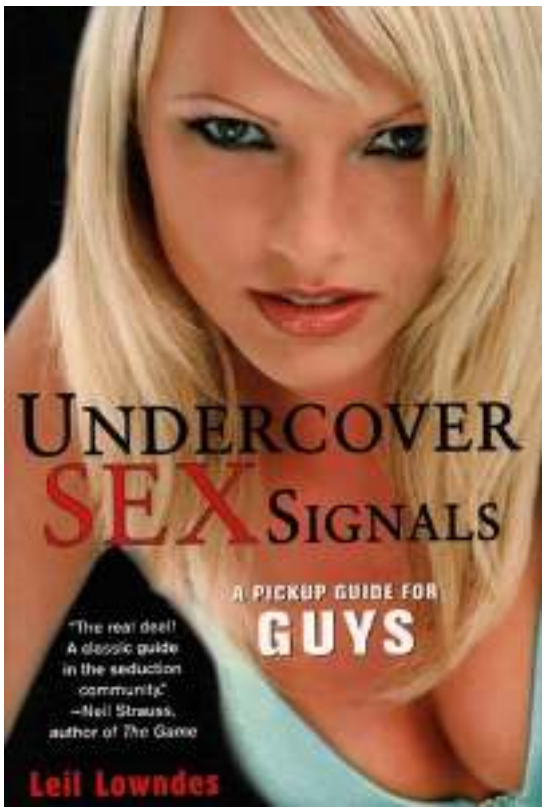
This curated list of the top 10 body language books and resources will help you decode nonverbal cues, boost confidence, and enhance your interactions, whether for dating, leadership, or everyday conversations.

We also include **body language courses**, as *seeing* nonverbal communication in action is key to learning it effectively.

Contents

- 10. Undercover Sex Signals
- 9. The Body Language Project
- 8. Body Language of Love & Dating
- 7. APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication
- 6. What Every BODY Is Saying
- 5. Power Cues
- 4. Cues
- 3. The Definitive Book of Body Language
- 2. BBC Body Language Documentary
- 1. Power University
  - FAQ: Your Top Questions About Body Language Books
  - Change Log
  - Learn More

10. Undercover Sex Signals



By Leil Lowndes
Summary | Amazon

Some authors, including myself, question resources that claim to decode intent or feelings from specific movements or poses.

However, certain gestures *do* provide valuable insights when analyzed in context.
Studying individual poses isn't wasted time if you keep the bigger picture in mind.

Leil Lowndes excels in identifying body language cues often overlooked, especially in romantic contexts, making this one of the best body language books for attraction.

Also, read:

- Does He Like Me (male signs of attraction)
- Does She Like Me (female signs of attraction)

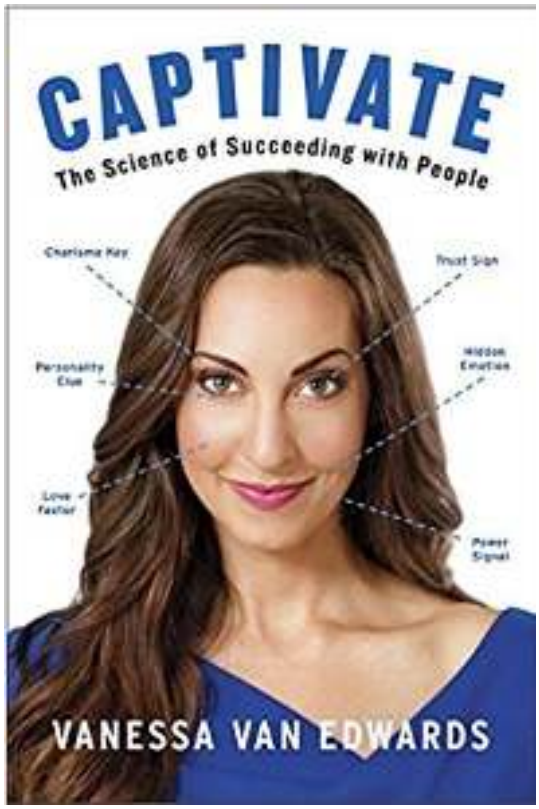
9. The Body Language Project

Summary

Ideal for beginners, *The Body Language Project* stands out as a **pictorial guide** with minimal text and abundant images.

This visual-first approach is exactly what you need to learn body language effectively.
It's a top pick among body language books for those starting their nonverbal communication journey.

8. Body Language of Love & Dating



By Vanessa Van Edwards

Summary

Body Language of Love and Dating is a Udemy course by Vanessa Van Edwards, focusing on nonverbal cues in dating and attraction.

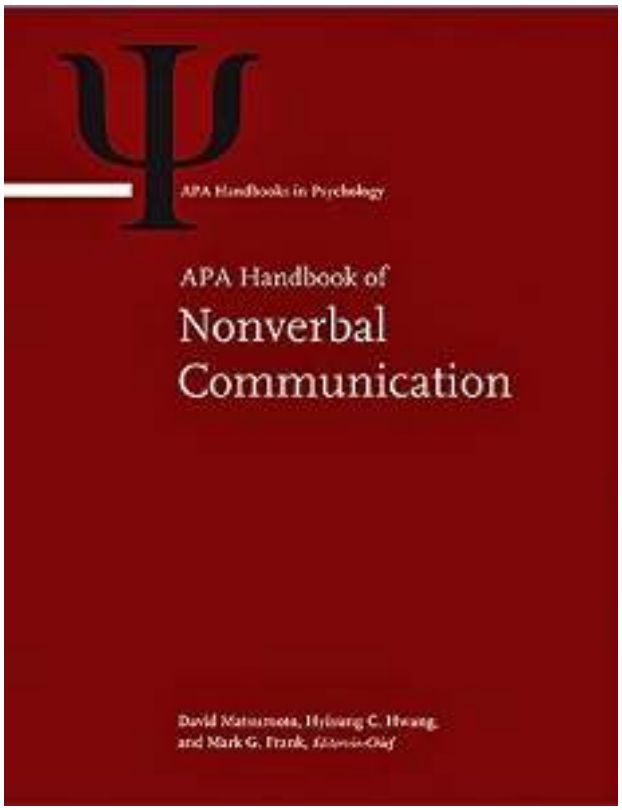
Note: The image is from the cover of her book *Captivate*.

This course is a must for those seeking to master body language in romantic contexts, but it's especially suited **for women**.
Although men will also learn plenty, it is not tailored for confident and masculine body language.

Also, read:

- How to Be Feminine
- Attractive Female Body Language
- Alpha Male Body Language

7. APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication



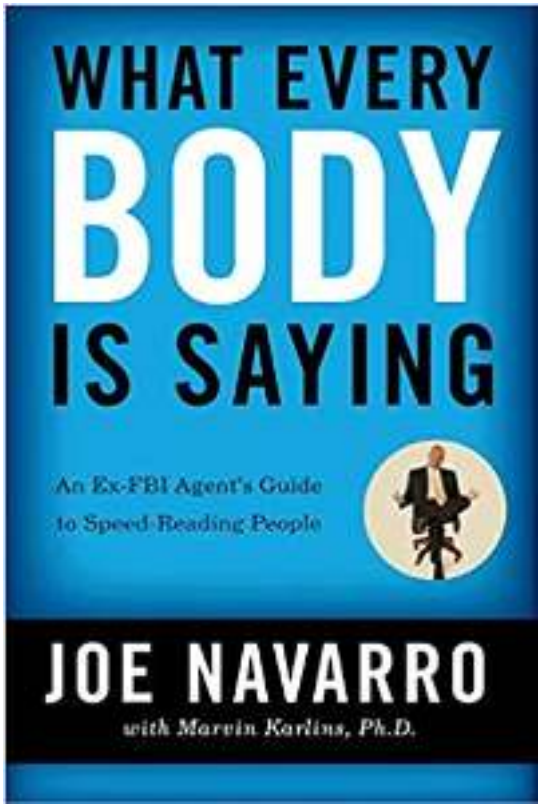
By various researchers
Summary | Amazon

For serious learners, science is essential, and this textbook delivers.

Though less practical, the *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* is the most referenced body language book on this list.

Its **research-backed** insights make it a cornerstone for understanding nonverbal communication.

6. What Every BODY Is Saying



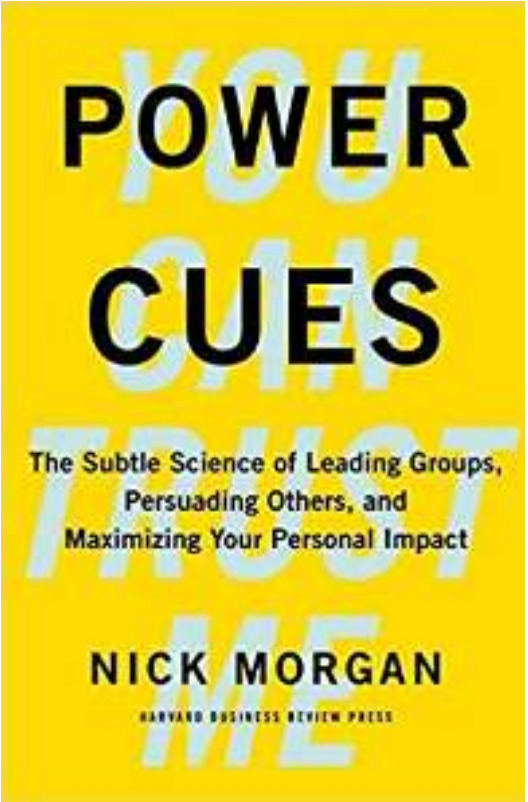
By Joe Navarro

Summary

Joe Navarro's *What Every BODY Is Saying* is a classic that consistently ranks among the best body language books.

It lacks the depth of visuals unfortunately and it's more about reading body language rather than adopting confident body language.
But as far as books go, it remains go-to resource for decoding body language in any setting.

5. Power Cues



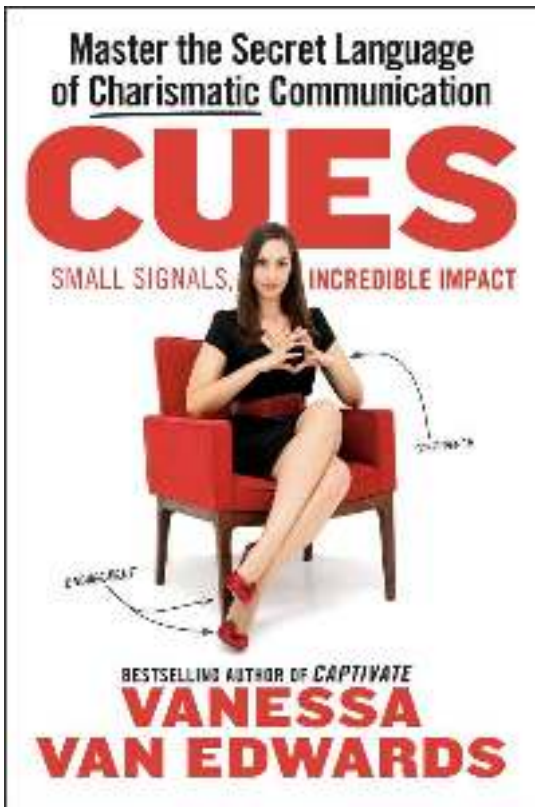
By Nick Morgan
Summary | Amazon

Power Cues takes a **holistic approach** to body language and power, analyzing clusters of nonverbal cues.

Unlike many body language books, it dives deep into voice tonality, subconscious signals, and more.

With practical exercises, it's both a top body language book and a powerful self-help resource.

4. Cues

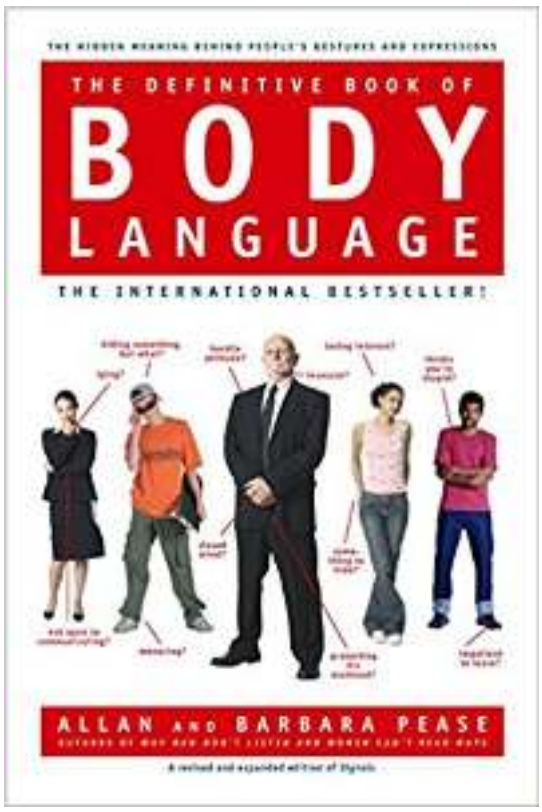


By Vanessa Van Edwards
Summary | Amazon

Cues aligns with TPM's warmth/power framework, diving deep into nonverbal cues that project warmth or authority.

It's a fantastic resource for improving both aspects of nonverbal communication.

3. The Definitive Book of Body Language



By Allan Pease
Summary | Amazon

Allan Pease's *The Definitive Book of Body Language* is the best-selling body language book for a reason.

In our review we called it the **"golden standard" of body language books** for its comprehensive and accessible approach.
It's a must-read for anyone serious about mastering nonverbal communication.

2. BBC Body Language Documentary

By BBC

Videos are superior for learning body language, and this free BBC documentary excels with real-life interaction analysis.

Unlike many courses relying on talking heads, it prioritizes practical examples.
It's a high-quality resource for mastering nonverbal communication.

1. Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Body Language of Power

Power University, The Power Moves' flagship course, is the **ultimate resource for men who want to master life**, including body language and social dynamics.

Distilling insights from top research and adding pictures, videos and exercises, it's built for men to become more confident and effective, gaining status, respect, and attraction.

Preview its approach with the linked articles above and elevate your skills today.

FAQ: Your Top Questions About Body Language Books

What are the best body language books for beginners?

The Body Language Project and *The Definitive Book of Body Language* are ideal for beginners, offering clear, visual guides to nonverbal communication.

Which body language books help with dating?

Undercover Sex Signals focuses on nonverbal cues for attraction and romance, while Power University ensures you internalize the mindsets, body language, and mindsets of high quality men.

Are there science-based body language books?

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* is the most research-backed, perfect for those seeking a scientific approach.

How can I learn body language effectively?

Combine books like *The Definitive Book of Body Language* with visual resources like *Power University* or the BBC documentary for practical learning.

What's the best course for body language?

Power University is the top choice, integrating videos, images, and expert insights for comprehensive nonverbal mastery that starts from the mindsets down to the calibration needed for achieving ambitious goals.

Change Log

- *Winning Body Language* removed (03.03.2025): a valid resource, but removed to stay within the top 10.
- *Cues* added (03.03.2025).
- Re-assembled the list (03.03.2025) to better reflect added value and practical insights.

Learn More

- **Best books on frame control**
- **Best dating books for men**
- **Best dating books for women**
- **Best influence & persuasion books**
- **Best books on manipulation** (to defend from)
- **Best leadership books**

- **Best books on power**

Is Audible Worth It? A Brutally Honest Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for an honest Amazon Audible review?

You have come to the right place.

By the end of this article, you will know whether you should invest in that Amazon Audible membership or not.

Contents

- About The Reviewer
- What Is Audible?
- How Does Audible Work?
- Audible Trial
- Audible Library
- Audible App: Poor
- Free Audible With Amazon Prime
- Where to Listen to Audible Books
- Audible CONS
- Audible Pros
- Audible Alternatives
- Is Audible Worth It?
- Audible Review – Summary

About The Reviewer

My name is Lucio, and I am one of the most voracious readers and knowledge-seekers you will ever meet.

With this website, I host the largest repository of editorial book summaries and review on the web.
Most of these books, I listened to rather than reading them.

And I like being efficient about it.
I love reading, but I am not your casual novel dabbler: I only read information that helps me make sense of the

world or which has practical utility.

And I like being ruthlessly efficient about it.

So my Audible review is the review of someone who's looking to increase knowledge in the most efficient way possible.

Let's start.

What Is Audible?

Amazon Audible is a monthly subscription service.

An Audible membership gives you access to a huge selection of audiobooks at a preferential and discounted rate.

To keep it simple:

- If you fit the bill, Audible can save you money on your knowledge acquisition

Amazon also tries to give you more perks and bonuses on top of "just" saving money.
For example:

- You can sync book listening and ebook reading to resume audio or ebook from where you left off the other (awesome)
- You can keep the audiobook forever
- You can listen to the audiobook on whichever medium you prefer

However, if Audible is worth it or not for you also depends on how much you read and how seriously you take knowledge.

Read on for more.

How Does Audible Work?

You start an Audible membership with a comfortable 30-day free trial which comes with 2 free audiobooks (or 1 free audiobook or even 3 free audiobooks depending on the promotion Amazon is running).

Albeit it's called "free trial", that's how actually all Audible memberships start.

When your 30-day trial ends, you will begin paying the subscription fee on a monthly basis and, at that point, you can call yourself a true, proud Amazon Audible subscriber :).

How much is the subscription depends on the plan you choose, where you are located, and when you sign up. However, consider an average of $15 per month.

With the monthly fee, you get one or two free credits per month depending on the subscription you choose.

You can use each credit to purchase one audiobook at a 1 credit: 1 audiobook exchange rate.
That means that an audiobook will cost you 1 credit no matter which audiobook you choose and no matter the tag price of the audiobook you pick.

Audible Trial

In my opinion, trying out the trial is a no-brainer.

You can cancel!
Let's be honest here, even if you don't want the membership, that's the equivalent of getting 2 audiobooks for free!

All you gotta do is remember to cancel the membership, which you can do right after you get the audiobooks.

Why wouldn't you want to get 2 audiobooks for free?
I highly recommend you give it a try because there is no downside.

Go to build your reading list, pick your two favorite books and get on with them.

- **Get 2 Free Audiobooks With The Trial Period**

Pro Tip:

- Start now because Audible will give you a chance for another free trial in the future even if you cancel (I know because I've had 2 free trials so far)

What If You Don't Like A Book? Audible Returns

As I mentioned earlier, Amazon built a whole membership service around audiobooks, which includes returns and exchanges.

If you don't like an audiobook you got, even if you listened to it until the end, you can exchange it for another book. It's an awesome service, but it comes with limitations of course to protect the system against abuse.

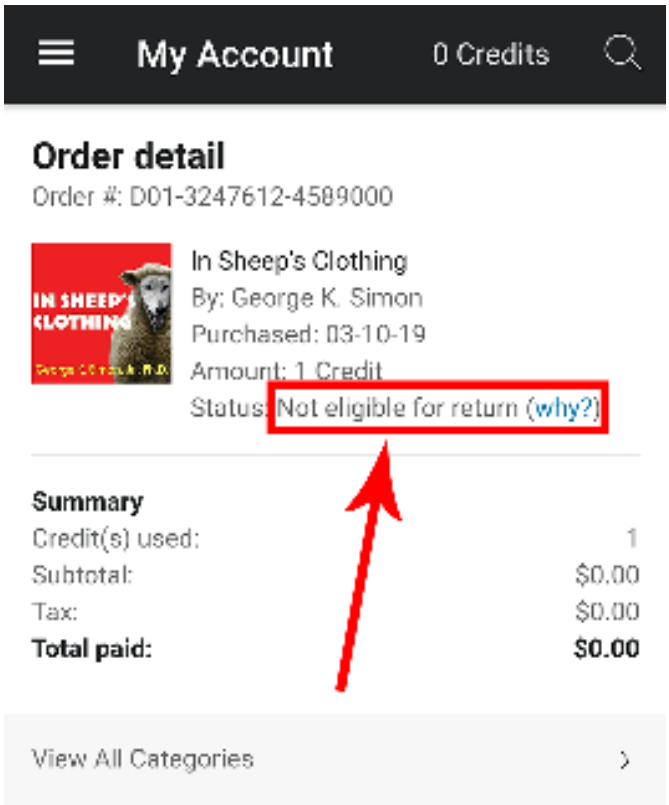
The limitations are not written in stone or, I suppose, some people would just abuse the system right before they hit the limit.
Instead, you will realize if you have gone past the limit because you won't be able to return your audiobook anymore.

You can still ask for a return at that point, but you must contact customer service.

They will likely go through a script designed to make you feel guilty about it but not so bad as to make you feel estranged (and leave a bad Audible review).
At that point, they will likely tell you, in a PR and PC way, that for this time they'll do it for you, but that you should take it a bit easier going forward (and you probably should: people work hard to write books).

In short:

- When you return an audiobook, you get your credit back
- There is no maximum amounts of audiobooks you can return
- You can't return books if you ended your trial membership (I tried)



What If You Want More Than 1 Book Per Month?

If you want more than 1 audiobook per month than you can buy the higher subscription plan for 2 audiobooks per month.

If even that is not enough, you can purchase whatever audiobook you like with a 30% discount.
The 30% discount does not apply to all audiobooks but to a large percentage of them. If your title is not on the discount list, you can still wait for the month to end and get it with your new credit (or just fork out the few extra bucks, you cheapo).

In short:

- Choose higher plans for more audiobooks
- You can save one month's credit for next month up to a certain limit (ie.: you can roll over credits up to a certain limit depending on the plan you choose)
- If you cancel, you lose your credits (so make sure you exchange all credits before canceling)
- If your monthly credits are over, you still get a 30% discount

Seamless Switch Between Audible & Kindle

If you also read ebooks on Kindle… This could be a huge game changer for you.

Whispersync for Voice allows you to seamlessly switch reading and listening to the same book as you move from Amazon App to Kindle.

The audiobook automatically resumes from where you left off with the ebook and vice versa.

This is what it could look like to you:

1. You wake on Sunday and start reading The 48 Laws of Power and stop at the 20th Law of Power
2. You get off of the bed, tell your Alexa-enabled speaker to start playing and the speaker starts from you left off in your ebook (the 20th Law of Power).
3. You listen until the 30th Law of Power and then enjoy some lighter music as you eat
4. You grab your cellphone and take your bike. You plug in your noise-canceling earphone and resume listening from the 30th Law of Power
5. You meet your girlfriend and you pause the audiobook that you're at the 36th Law of power
6. You go back home in the evening after the perfect day with your girlfriend. You go to bed and grab your Kindle, which automatically starts from the 36th Law of Power

Basically, if you enjoy both audiobooks and e-books, this will take your efficiency to the next level.

Of course, you do pay something more for efficiency as you will have to buy both versions of your book of choice (the audiobook version and the Kindle one).

Audible Library

Amazon has long been the largest bookstore in the world.

If you can't find a book here, you really are looking at some collectible item :).
The Audible Library is not as large as Amazon Books as not all books have a matching audiobook, but you can still count on more than 425.000 audiobooks.

It might sound impossible not to find your audiobook, yet if you are in a specific field or are looking for some old classics, it's not as unlikely that you will not find your audiobook.

For example, as a sociologist and researcher on power dynamics and "power moves", I want to soon read "Games Criminals Play". But there is no audiobook version for this old niche goldie.

What you can do at that point is to get your next favorite book in audio format while you get your ebook on Kindle (or Kobo).

In short:

- Audible has the largest audiobook library in the world
- Most new and popular books have an audiobook version
- Still, not all books have an audiobook file

Audible App: Poor

Now we get to the weakest link in the Amazon Audible plan.

If you read around, you will read raving reviews for the Audible app, but these are obviously people who don't treat books like studying material.

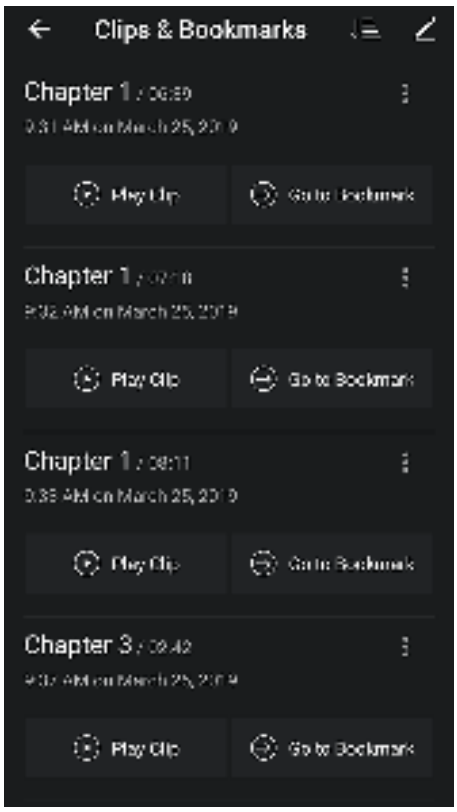
I do, and the Audible App doesn't help.

Look at the Audible App:

Looks sleek with its hip minimalist design, right?

Yeah, it does.
But… Is it also functional?

Let's look at what the bookmarks look like:

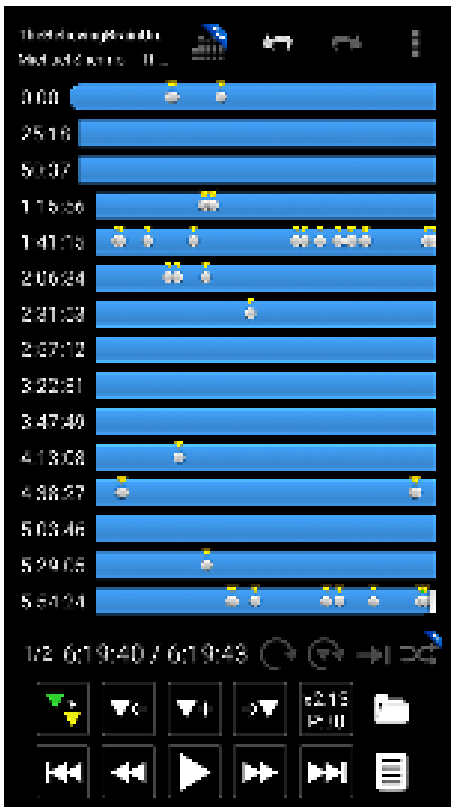


Still looks nice, but it doesn't work for sh*t.

When you click on "Play Clip", it only plays for 10 seconds or so. To listen longer, you need to click "Go to Bookmark".
But the functionality sucks: it doesn't take you back to the original track. It just starts playing the track from the bookmark tab, and there are no cursors to control the audio. Such as, from the bookmarks, you can't rewind, stop, or fast forward.

This might not be an issue for more casual listeners.
But it's an issue for me as a review. And it might be an issue for people who want to analyze and dissect their books.

Compare it to Audipo, my favorite audiobook app:



Audipo's bookmarks register straight on the audio track.
You keep the whole overview and quickly switch from one bookmark to the other to listen, rewind, slow down or fast-forward as you please.

This is the good stuff for those who listen to analyze.

Update: Still Crappy App
In the meanwhile, I have become a power user of Audible. But as of June 2020, it hasn't improved. For the use I make of it, with lots of notes I need to go back to, the app is disappointing.

Update 2: Terrible

The more I use it, the more I realize it's very poorly designed for those who are looking to take notes and learn, rather than just listen and move on.

Free Audible With Amazon Prime

Do you buy on Amazon a lot?

Then you should take into account Amazon Prime which will likely save you quite some money on shipping costs. And if you get Amazon Prime, an Aubile subscription is included in the price.

Consider also that you might use Amazon for groceries home delivery, which is a huge time saver and efficiency booster.

I was really interested in that.
Unluckily Amazon groceries is not yet very well developed in Europe, so I am still sticking with a local grocery chain (which is still an awesome time-saver).

Where to Listen to Audible Books

Anywhere you want, really.

The great advantage of audiobooks is that they allow you to maximize your time and multi-task, for example

listening to an audiobook as you do house chores (just make sure to pick easier books for multitasking or listen to them twice).

And one of the advantages of an Audible Subscription is that you can download the file, which allows you to move it as you prefer.

Here are some options:

- Smartphone
- Computer
- Tablet
- Amazon Kindle
- Alexa-enabled loudspeaker
- Amazon Fire TV
- MegaBoom via Bluetooth

For example, my favorite combo at home is to switch on my EU MegaBoom (linked is the latest version which is Alexa-enabled).
And then, bang!
Ready to maximize my time and listen to an audiobook as I exercise, clean, cook, or eat (as long as I'm not eating something crunchy or drinking wine, in which case I play music).

You can also listen to an audiobook while masturbating or making love, my friends.
Freedom… Ain't that beautiful :).

Turn Your Commute Into an MBA!

Dear readers, life is too short to waste valuable time waiting for late buses and staying stuck in traffic!

How to start turning time waste into learning opportunities?

The combo I recommend is audiobooks with noise-canceling headphones so that you can listen to audiobooks on the go, no matter the noise around you (and while preserving your hearing).

This way Audible Subscriptions helps you to transform your wasted waiting time into value-adding learning time. To me, that's tantamount to magic.

As Brian Tracy said:

> **You can now transform your commute into your university**

I personally use Bose noise-canceling headphones because when I researched it a few months ago they were the best on the market.

A great investment, if you ask me.

Audible CONS

Of course, not all is great about Audible:

- **UPDATE: you don't get to keep the books if you cancel!**

I just realized this when I went to cancel.

See here the message:

Before you go, we recommend you use any remaining credits you may have. After you cancel, you'll lose access to your member benefits and all credits at the end of your final billing period.

You'll no longer have access to the Plus Catalog

When your membership is canceled your membership will remain active until the end of your final billing period. After that, you will no longer be able to listen to the thousands of included Audible Originals, audiobooks, and podcasts. Even if they are already in your Library. You can continue to listen to free podcasts without membership.

Continue canceling

You don't get to keep your accumulated credits after your plan ends and, equally important, you don't get to keep the audiobooks!
Amazon Audible is not for purchasing books, it's for RENTING books.
And at the end of your tour, you must give everything back: S.

Unless… Unless you keep paying.
And that's where it feels a bit scammy.

- **Can Still Be Costly for Voracious Readers**

You are limited to the 2 credits/month of the upper membership tier. After that, you rely on the 30% discount to buy additional books.

And since audiobooks on Amazon are often not the cheapest, they can become costly for voracious readers.

- **Not for Binge-Readers**

If you are looking to get the top 10 books on a certain topic to cram the best information you can get, as quickly as possible, then Audible is not for you.

For example, a fellow reviewer notes that Never Split The Difference comes in at $19.0 with the membership discount. But you can get the Kindle version for $16.7
And you can get it even cheaper by shopping around for other audiobook providers.

So if you're looking to binge on the best negotiation books in the shortest possible time, the Audible membership is not for you.

- **Bad App For Serious Learners**

Most "normal" readers will be happy with the Audible app.

But not serious learners who are listening to dissect, analyze, store, and review information (read "Audible App" for more information).
However, as we have mentioned, you can download the audio file and use whichever app you prefer.

- **Reviews Based on Amazon Reviews**

The reviews you get on each title are, as you might guess, from Amazon's reviews.

Unluckily the Amazon reviews are far from optimal.

There literally are businesses that work to game the rating system and seem to be quite successful at it (read "Published").
And that's even without accounting for fake reviews from friends, customers who review the service instead of the product, and the usual "I like / I don't like the author" reviews (you can read more on best book reviews websites).

- **Gamification Approach to Learning**

I won a few badges in my Audible trial.

Even as a sociologist and a psychology buff who's read it all about businesses hooking people to products, I couldn't help but get a dopamine rush with it.

For a second, at least… The second after I immediately got back to my senses and thought "*how lame..* ".

Dear reader… Please don't let me ever catch you sharing your Audible badges on social media please :D.

Audible Pros

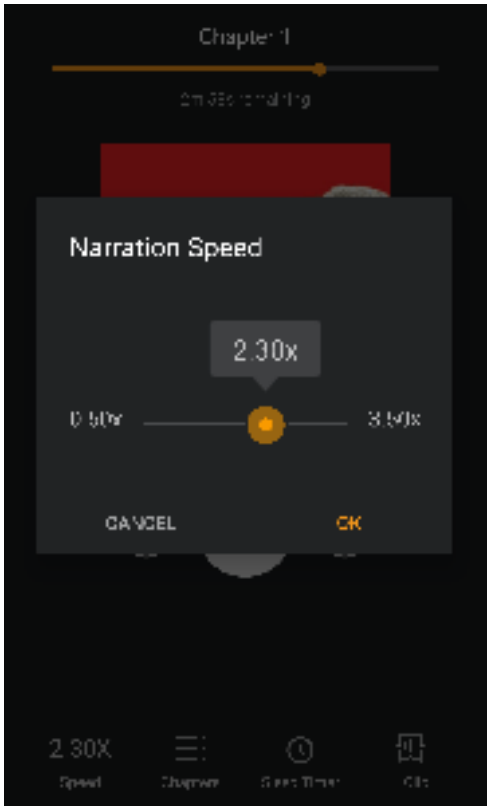
Of course, there are a lot of advantages to Audible:

- **Speed it up, save time!**

The feature I love the most about audiobooks is that they go quicker than ebooks and, thus, are more efficient.

I trained myself to listen to faster speeds, and if you're serious about learning I recommend you do the same.

The Audible app, contrary to some other audiobook apps on the market, also allows you to go beyond 2x.
Trust me, as you get better you will really want an app that lets you go faster than 2x.



P.S.: drop your excuses, I'm a non-native who started learning English in earnest at 20 years old.

If I can do it, so can you.

P.P.S.: It's not a race. Only listen as quickly as you can manage without losing comprehension.

- **You Can Buy Summaries!**

If you are into summaries, there are plenty of audiobook summaries for the biggest titles out there.

I'm not a huge fan of this option though as I need to trust the reviewer to trust a summary.

- **You Can Keep the Files**

Even if you can cancel your membership, including if you cancel your trial membership, you can still keep the audiobooks.
That's why I can highly recommend you claim your 2 free audiobooks.

- **You Can Place Your Membership on Hold**

This is a very nice feature.
If you're not using your Audible membership, you can pause it (and stop the membership payments as well of course).
At the time of writing, you can put it on hold once a year for up to 3 months.

Audible Alternatives

A proper Audible review should also look at the competition.

And of course, luckily, Audible isn't alone in the market of efficient learning.

So what about the alternatives?

- **Audiobook Bay, Pirated Torrents**

Let's be real here: there are plenty of pirated torrents out there for both ebooks and audiobooks.

How you feel about these options depends on your personal views.
I am ambivalent about it. I believe authors should receive fair pay for their hard work.
On the other hand, some poor people might use some initial help to get off the gutters.

The downside (or upside) is that the selection of audiobooks is very limited (there are more ebooks than audiobooks).

In this exampleCan't Hurt Me by David Goggins

- **Free Public Libraries**

There are plenty of public libraries in almost every country and you can rent books for free there.
Some of the most advanced countries also offer audiobooks.

- **Free online audiobook website**

There are also many websites that offer free audiobooks.
The issue here is that you won't find most of the books you want :).

- **YouTube**

You'd be surprised how many full (copyrighted) audiobooks are being uploaded on YouTube.

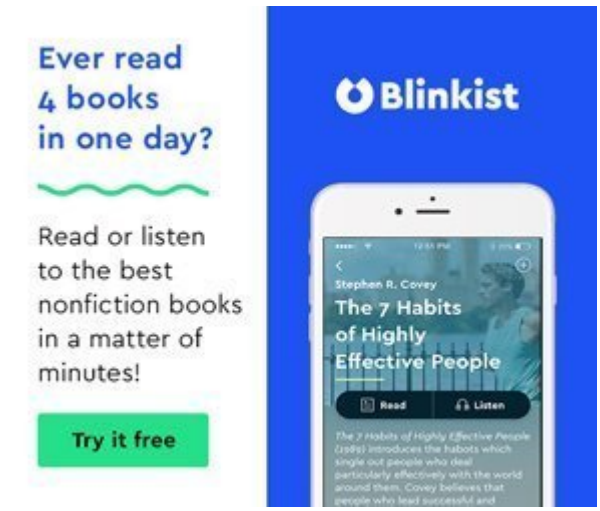
At the moment of writing for example both The Power of Now and Rich Dad Poor Dad are available (here is one example).

- **Blinkist**

Blinkist is an app and service for book summaries, and they also offer audiobook summaries.

It's becoming hugely popular as they epitomize the self-development mantra that you must read every day as much as possible (with which I disagree).

Personally, I'm not a big fan of Blinkist (you can read my Blinkist Review here).
But the trial period is free, so give it a shot and let me know what you think.



You can start a Blinkist free trial here.

- **MentorBox**

I don't like Tai Lopez and there are many questions about MentorBox values and business practices, but the product is good.

Take a look at the MentorBox review here.

- **The Power Moves**

ThePowerMoves.com has "only" hundreds of books, and they are not in audio format.

But the available reviews are the most critical reviews you will ever read (very few other sources, if any, will check the references and call BS without being afraid of pissing off authors and fans).

And the selection is also highly focused.
If you are into self-development, psychology, and people's skills, match those summaries with the highly targeted articles, and you have all the information you need to become the person you want to become (and the rest is in applying that information).

Is Audible Worth It?

It's actually easy answering this question.
As long as you have an idea of how many audiobooks you're going to consume and what's the average price.

- If you read less than 5-6 books a year, Audible is not worth it
- If you're buying Indie books at $3-$4, then Audible isn't worth it

Audible Review – Summary

Overall, Audible is a wonderful service.

and I can highly recommend it if:

- You read consistently (or want to read consistently)
- You prefer audiobooks (or want to start with audiobooks)
- You are already a Kindle customer
- You like the idea of seamless switching between Kindle and audiobooks

And frankly, between us, I recommend the Audible membership if:

- You don’t plan on paying a monthly fee but will gladly get 2 audiobooks for free

Personally, I am not a member yet as I am in “bootstrapping mode” and “binge reading mode”.
But I plan into easing into a calmer reading routine going forward and I look forward to joining the Audible Membership.

Start Your Audible Free Trial

Power Cues: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Power Cues (2014) takes a holistic view of communication.
Nick Morgan, the author, helps readers improve their social effectiveness by drawing from concepts of power dynamics, body language, and effective leadership studies.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - 1. Become Self-Aware
  - 2. Master Nonverbal Communication
  - 3. Learn to Read Others' Unconscious Messages
  - 4. Master The Power of Your Voice
  - 5. Combine Voice & Body Language
  - 6. Learn to Effectively Use Your Intuition
  - 7. Get Minds In Sync: Use Stories
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- To be a great leader you need to align your unconscious power cues with your conscious content
- Improving yourself first requires self-awareness
- Isolate your subconscious fears, then repeat opposite mantras over and over for a few months
- Voice might be the most powerful tool for power

> **Machiavelli was wrong. Leadership is not manipulation. Not in the long run.**

I partially agree.
There is though plenty of manipulation among some leaders.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Summary

Nick Morgan categorizes the power cues into 7 major categories:

1. Become Self-Aware

Before you can even think about fixing your current issues and upgrading yourself, you must know yourself.

These are some of the questions Nick Morgan proposes: how are you showing up in your conversations, your meetings, and your presentations?
Are you powerful and commanding?

Are you friendly and warm?
Do people fear you, trust you, like you, avoid you, or flock to you? What happens?
Do you take charge or take a backseat?

And here are the best takeaways from this chapter:

- Gestures and verbal communication are two separate communication channels
- Gestures precede words by splits of a second
- You must make the two go in sync or you look scatterbrained and uncharismatic
- Record yourself and get a full grasp on what you're communicating (or hire me and I'll help you)
- Don't talk while using slides in your presentation (reading slides and listening to you taxes two different parts of the brain and you'll lose the audience)
- Use gestures or your brain has to work much harder

2. Master Nonverbal Communication

It's difficult to fully control our body language, and that's why we should focus on emotions instead.
Then the body language comes out naturally.

The author says that most of us are not charismatic because we don't focus on our emotions.

We interact with people with a hundred different things going through our minds and we present a mixed bag of emotions.
We are like cluttered to-do lists.

And a cluttered mind results in muddled interactions, which are charisma-murderers.

When we can manage to muster a certain emotion, not only we are charismatic, but thanks to mirror neurons we will be able to make people feel the same (original research on mirror neurons here, but the research has been heavily criticized).

- You can work from emotions to gestures (inside-out approach)
- Or from gestures to emotions (inside in)
- The best approach is to work on both at the same time
- Pick a time when you felt like a winner, then use all five senses to put yourself back in that moment
  - It's easy for some, but not for others: practice until it becomes easier
- You just need to evoke the emotions, not the specific gestures
  - This is the sequence: emotions lead to gestures; body language leads to conscious thought

How to increase your charisma:

1. Increase your authenticity (words and body language in sync)
2. Increase your passion
3. Focus on the moment

> **Charisma is quite simple. It's focused emotion**

3. Learn to Read Others' Unconscious Messages

We make decisions at an emotional, unconscious level first, and only later we rationalize.
When you need to learn the subtle signs of others, you will be able to see where they are going before they are even

fully aware of it.

You are already able to read other people but only at an unconscious level.
To make the most out of it, you need to bring that awareness to your conscious mind first.

Once you become conscious about the messages you are sending and the messages others are sending, you will be able to act upon them earlier and you will be able to focus on what you want to pay attention to.

Once you become good at it, you don't need to constantly pay attention to it anymore.
They will become part of who you are and you can send them back to your unconscious once again.

- Gestures are fluid and ambiguous, analyzing them one by one is meaningless (the author mentions "Undercover Sex Signals")

The Four Constellations of Body Language

The author mentions Paul Ekman and his research in micro-expressions.
Learning to decode micro-expressions take a long time though, and he proposes an alternative by focusing on four basic tells of interpersonal interactions.

There are four core constellations of body language you should be paying attention to:

1. Power
2. Friendship
3. Alignment
4. Lying

The author discusses each and proposes you recruit your own unconscious mind for the answers.

The correct way to ask questions to your subconscious is through simple, polar questions.
For example: is this person friend or foe? Is this person telling the truth or lying? Is this person on my side or not? Is this person powerful or not?

After you ask those questions, empty your mind and let the answer come to you.
This, too, is a skill that takes practice.

4. Master The Power of Your Voice

This was one of the best and most eye-opening chapters of Power Cues for me.

Here is what the author says:

> people who put out the right kind of sounds—below the range of conscious human hearing—become the leaders of most groups.
>
> We defer unconsciously to leaders who have stronger low-frequency sounds.

And here is the good news:

> You can learn to increase the leadership potential of your voice through breathing and other vocal exercises, and practicing the authoritative arc.

And then goes on to mention the study:

> When Stanford and his colleague dug into the Larry King interviews, they found that lower-status people match the low-frequency sounds of the higher-status people in the room.

> We get together, we start talking, and in a couple of minutes, we've unconsciously picked a leader and lined up behind him or her.

A study also found out how voice pitches, and particularly deeper pitches, predicted election results every time in the past 100 years.

Does that mean that lower pitches always win?
No, not necessarily.
You need a mixture of both highs and lows to make your voice clear and resonant.

The author talks about finding your MRP, such as the point of your voice where you maximize both overtones and, most importantly, undertones.

> A bathroom with all its hard porcelain surfaces is a good place to practice working on your MRP.
> To find the right voice tone, practice moving up and down through your vocal range until you find that pitch that seems to echo throughout your head and the room.
> That's the pitch that maximizes the subsonic frequencies and will thus enhance your leadership power. To see how this works in practice, study—yes—President Ronald Reagan's voice. It's a perfect leader's voice; it oozes resonance and authority with every phrase.
> (what you need is) the resonance that will give your voice authority.

Then he says that Reagan here maximizes his MRP and whenever he changes pitch, he always goes back to his MRP.

Don't force yourself to go lower or higher as that will strain your vocal cords and can harm them for good.

Some people will find it easy to control their voice, while others must work harder at it.

5. Combine Voice & Body Language

Body language and voice must be in sync to influence.

There are four patterns of behavior that, when well managed, allow you to influence people:

1. Influence—how much one person dominates the conversation (increase positional power, emotion, or expertise, or control the give-and-take tempo of the conversation)
2. Mimicry—how much one person mirrors another (start by mirroring them, then have them follow you)
3. Activity—how energetic a person is.
4. Consistency—how even-keeled a person is (the higher the consistency and the more steadfast you remain to your ideas in spite of what people throw at you, the more powerful you appear)

> **The dominance that comes from authority, experience, and the unshakable conviction that you're right and the other fellow is a fool."**

However, as we also explain in Power University, you don't always want to be consistent and refuse other people's input when it's out of place.
Speaking to a client, a higher variation in your manners shows that you're open to them.

6. Learn to Effectively Use Your Intuition

This chapter gets you to work on your unconscious and resolve your fears.

1. Identify your fears as clearly as you can

2. Write them down (if it hurts and you feel it deep inside you're doing it right)
3. let them sit a few days and go back to them a few times during the day
4. Come up with counter-statements about the new you that you want (use only positive sentences, make it as precise and simple as possible with subject and verb)
5. Write it down, let it sit for at least twenty-four hours
6. Imagine this sentence were true: would your life improve? If so, you're doing it right
7. Now repeat this line as often as possible, especially before sleep, right after you wake up, and, most of all, any time the old doubts and fears creep up

It will take some time. From a few weeks to a few months. But keep at it with the same level of intensity.

7. Get Minds In Sync: Use Stories

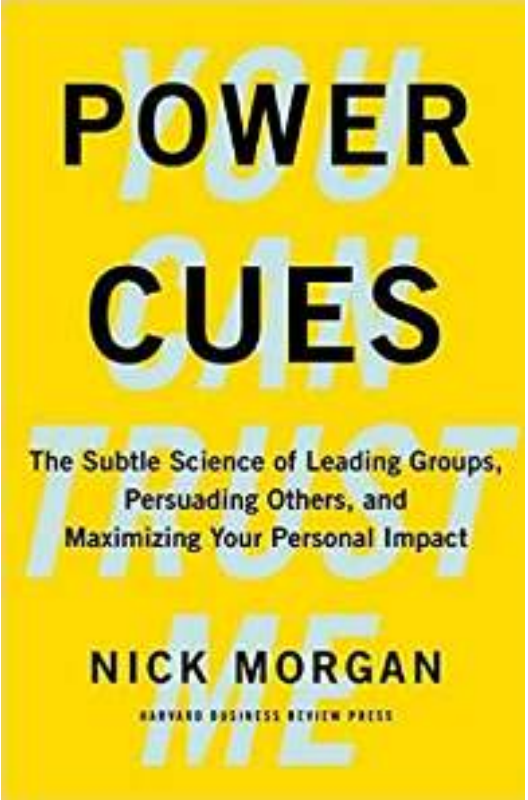
Great leaders are storytellers.

And great leaders don't tell stories that make them sound great. They tell stories that make *others* feel like the most important heroes of the story.

The authors say that you should decide on the level to which you want to engage your audience and introduce Maslow's hierarchy (stay at the lower levels of safety if you want a visceral reaction).

And then you should pick one of the story's archetypes, which are: setting off on a quest, a stranger in a strange land, a love story, rags to riches, and revenge.

The author also explains how to set them up, particularly the "hero on a quest", which is so ingrained in our culture we don't even recognize it anymore as a story archetype.



Real-Life Applications

- **Don't talk while projecting slides**

Simple, yet such a game-changer.
Also, check out:

> Speaking Pro by Roger Love: Review & Notes

- **Practice managing your own states**

The typical "Tony Robbins exercise" of changing your states by recollecting a time when you felt great doesn't come easily to many but by practicing it will get easier

- **For presentation get an "off-stage beat"**

Nick says that businesspeople and presenters who find an objective and get into a positive emotion do much better. It might be something like:

While you're breathing before the meeting, get an objective and an emotion into your head.

> "I can't wait to tell these people about my special new idea and I'm thrilled to the max to see them."

You will also have less time to make yourself nervous.

- **Keep elbows away from the body**

Some people gesture with their lower arms only, and it looks defensive and unconfident.
Push the elbows out and gesture with your whole body.

- **Reading a person based on wrinkles**

The author looks for wrinkles on people's foreheads. If they have, that means they were open to new ideas and concepts.
A smooth forehead means they have been closed down most of their lives.

- **Prepare!!**

This is the biggest takeaway really.

When you don't rehearse your "first-timers" cue overlap with the cues of people who don't fully mean what they say.

To make sure that your verbal and nonverbal are congruent and aligned you need to know your material and what you're going to say.
Then you make it seem like you're going impromptu.

> **To deliver the perfect natural impromptu speech: prepare it well**

CONS

- **Some Induction Reasoning**

The author says that because Soviet athletes used some of the methods he presents, then they work.
But that, of course, proves nothing (also read: Fooled by Randomness).

- **Sometimes Studies Presented Without Critical Assessment**

The author mentions the famous Amy Cuddy experiment, but successive research failed to replicate it nearly as

strongly.
Edit: Cuddy later restated her claims are actually correct with further research here.

Also, read these articles:

- Pop psychology myths
- Self-help BS

> Pop Psychology Myths

Review

Power Cues is an excellent resource that looks a body language and nonverbal at a systemic and 'forest-level', rather than relying on single, 'tree-level' cues.

It's also very practical, with many tips to become a more influential, higher-quality man.

Check out the:

- **Best books to master POWER**
- **Best body language books (or courses)**

or **get the book on Amazon**

Protected: 5 Poor Manosphere Mindsets You Must Avoid

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

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The Believing Brain: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Believing Brain reviews how, why, and what are the most pervasive irrational beliefs.
Shermer argues that the brain is a belief engine. Based on sensory data that flow in through the senses, the brain naturally begins to look for patterns, and then infuses those patterns with meaning, forming beliefs that are, sometimes, not really rational.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Noteworthy Information
- The Believing Brain Quotes
- CONS
  - PROS
- The Believing Brain – Review

Bullet Summary

- We are somewhat wired to believe in external, sentient forces despite the lack of any evidence
- Skepticism means taking a scientific approach to claims
- Scientists must be skeptical because most claims turn out false

Summary

About the Author:
Michael Shermer is an American science writer, historian of science, and founder of The Skeptics Society.
In time, he seems to have become closer (and potentially biased?) to the libertarian and conspiracy theory community.
For a (rather critical) take on Shermer, see here:

Introduction

Michael Shermer identifies two major reasons why humans have a tendency to believe and act upon thoughts for which there is no empirical evidence and not much rational basis.

The two major factors are:

- **Patternicity** (seeing meaningful patterns where there is only randomness)
- **Agenticity** (injecting meaning into the patterns we see)

He then analyzes five major human areas of irrationality:

- Afterlife
- God
- Aliens
- Conspiracies
- Politics

Patternicity: How We Jump to Too Many Conclusions

There are good evolutionary reasons why we evolved patternicity.

And it's because, in spite, of it making it more likely for us to fall to erroneous conclusions, it also helped us to stay alive.

Indeed it's safer for us to over-detect patterns than not detecting any at all.
Our ancestors who reacted quickly to noises from the savannah by predicting it might have been a predator stayed alive much more consistently than those who saw no patterns between "mysterious noises" and danger.

On the other hand, there was no equally dire and life-threatening punishment for those who saw too many patterns or who jumped to the wrong conclusions.

High Patternicity Can Lead to Genius Discoveries

The author tells the story of his interview with Kary Mullis, a Nobel prize winner who believed in all kinds of weird things (that the HIV/AIDS connection is a conspiracy, that the climate is not changing, and that astrology is real).

He notices that albeit he did sound like a lunatic, his aware system of seeing patterns everywhere led him to analyze claims and pursue tracks that nobody else would have seen or noticed.

Agenticity: Why We Think There Must Be Someone Behind The Uknown

Humans do not sit well with the concept of randomness.
We don't like to believe that things just happen randomly and we look for causes -or "beings"- who direct and stand behind all the mysteries we can't readily solve.

The more science has progressed in its ability to explain causes, the more the agenticity of "mysterious forces" has disappeared.
We don't believe anymore for example that a storm is a punishment or that we can influence with a sacrifice or with random dances.

There are still countless events that people cannot readily explain though, and that's why we still look to other sources (or beings) instead of accepting randomness or the fact that "unknown" doesn't mean "some entity must be behind it".

Beliefs Come First, Explanations Follow

We first form a belief, and then look for confirmation.

This is obviously the antithesis of the scientific method, which goes the other way around: experiment first, theory second.

When we look for confirmation our psychology focuses on the evidence that confirms our beliefs while discounting evidence for the contrary.
Anecdotal evidence often trumps scientific proof in people's minds and, Michael Shermer says, this is why we are still debating evolution VS creation.

The Solution? Embrace The Scientific Method

The solution to our own mental shortcomings is to embrace the scientific method.

Not just what it says, but how it works.
Once we understand how it works, hopefully, we will have more faith in it.
And we need it.
The author says that 70% of American still don't understand the scientific process while 75% believes in heaven and 72% in angels (and only 45% believed in Darwin's theory of evolution).

> **Anecdotal evidence comes natural. Science requires training.**

Noteworthy Information

- **Skeptics have a higher locus of control**

People who believe in external forces and influences, in God or astrology or “faith” tend to have a lower locus of control.

- **The principle of positive evidence**

Having evidence that disproves a belief does not automatically make another belief right.

For a belief to be scientifically recognized as true, there must be scientific evidence against the opposing theory and scientific evidence for your own theory.

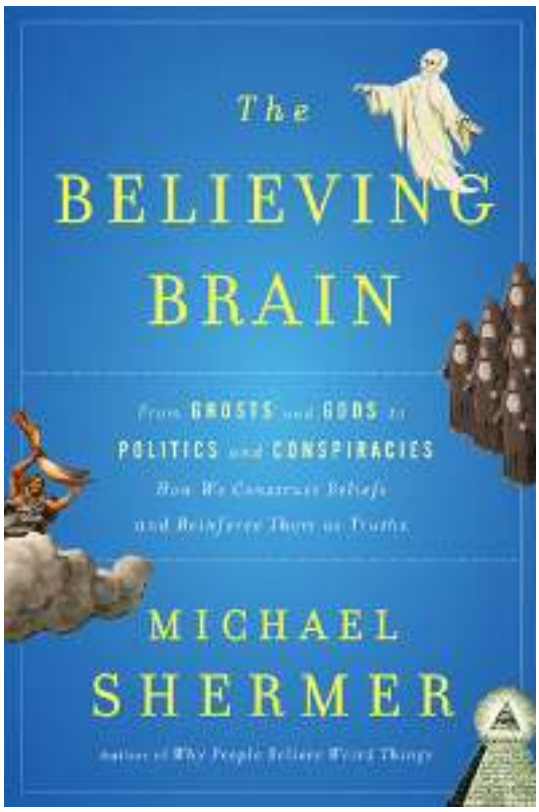
This is where, for example, creationists fall short: they lay a few claims against Darwinian selection and pretend that they prove creationism right.

- **It’s not true that the higher the education, the lower the belief**

Richard Dawkins in *The God Delusion* famously said that the higher the IQ and the education, the lower the belief in God.

Michael Shermer says that’s not the case instead. Intelligence is not a factor when we encounter claims we know little or nothing about.
Indeed, the opposite can be true: very intelligent people can better rationalize their own beliefs.
This means they are great at using smart logic to defend beliefs they acquired for non-smart reasons. And they can also sound more convincing in selling those ideas (also see Jordan Peterson, author of *12 Rules For Life*).

> Smart people believe in weird things because they are good at defending beliefs they acquired for non-smart reasons.



The Believing Brain Quotes

Here are some great quotes from "*The Believing Brain*":

> I'm a skeptic not because I do not want to believe, but because I want to know

If there is a God:

> If turns out I'm wrong, and there is a God, and it's the Judeo-Christian God more preoccupied with belief than beavior, then I'd rather not spend the eternity with him and joyfully go to other places where I suspect most of my family, friends and colleagues will be

On Einstein and paranormal:

> He's one of the greatest minds of our time, so what he says is worthy of consideration.
> But even the mind of a staggering genius cannot override the cognitive biases that favor anecdotal thinking.

On the situations in which our brains abandon rationality, the most Michael Shermer quotes Malinowski who notices that there is no superstition when outcomes are certain and under our control. But:

> We find magic wherever the elemnts of chance and accident and the emotional play between hope and fear have a wide and extensive range.

On how the inexplicable doesn't mean we have proof of anything:

> The fact that we can only explain 90% of UFOs seeings across the globe doesn't mean that the other 10% represent actual visitations.
> The fact that we can't explain how some tumors recides doesn't mean divine intervention sometimes chooses

> to act. It just means that science has yet to catch up with the wonders of the human body.

On God and who created whom:

> Humans created God, and not vice versa.

On the burden of proof:

> The burden of proof is on the believer, not on the skeptic to disprove the belief.

On proving a negative:

> Althought we can't prove a negative, we can just as easily argue that we can't prove the existence of irrational beliefs.

On advanced ETs:

> If we knew the underlying technologies, we'd call them "extra-terrestrial intelligence". If we didn't, we'd call them "God".

On how culture dictates and directs our irrational beliefs (and how true):

> Since they lived in a demonized world, they called those pressures "demons". Since we live in an alienized world, we call them "aliens".
> Our culture dictates the label and meaning we assign to these anomal experiences.

And finally, on starting your own critical thinking journey on yourself:

> **The first principle is that you must not fool yourself. And you are the easiest person to fool.**

CONS

- **Too Long on 9/11 Conspiracies**

I found the book delving too long and too deeply into conspiracies. Especially on the 9/11 terrorist attacks.
I can understand that's been such a huge tragedy and turning point in US life and culture, but in my opinion, the book is so good that it didn't have to tie itself so deeply to a specific single event.

- **The Moore Law, Singularity & Omniscient Computers**

The author talks about "singularity", or the point at which the computational ability of our computing systems will grow so large that it will become indistinguishable from omniscience.

Wow, mind-blowing, I had never thought about it that way.

Yet, I couldn't help but think that the idea that computational power will keep doubling and lead to omniscience is flawed.
To begin with, it's not written anywhere that computational power will keep doubling every year.
Second, computational power does not equate with the ability to act and draw inferences and conclusions on that data.

I do, however, agree with the principle.

- **It's So Ethnocentric to Believe We Can Communicate With An Alien Form of Life**

We cannot communicate with animals who developed with us on the same earth.
What makes us believe we'd be able to communicate with an alien civilization?

- **Psychology of Conservativism A Bit Out of Place**

I have found the part on the psychology of conservativism super interesting.
But it felt somewhat like an offshoot of "*The Believing Brain*". I prefer books that follow a more clear structure.

PROS

I'd call this the Bible of skepticism (and try to catch the irony in that sentence :).
Too much good stuff to only highlight a few "pros".

The Believing Brain – Review

I had high expectations for "*The Believing Brain*" and they were partially met.
There are some good points on how to think more rationally and critically -and how to become more BS-resistant-.

The chapter on intelligent creators and how we can't distinguish between an alien species able to potentially create planets and "God" was a good take.

I also found Shermer to be a sort of kindred soul as I found myself nodding and smiling across the whole book.

Check the best books collection or **get the book on Amazon**

Make It Stick: Strategic Learning for High-Achievers (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Make It Stick (2014) is a book on how to read, learn, and retain information in the most effective way.

TPM Strategic Note: Learning boosts competence, a foundation of power
Competence, in turn, boosts self-esteem, confidence, and the odds of achieving success. Learning how to learn can maximize your ROI in any new field you seek increased expertise.
See: **TPM's competence guide**

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - Three Myths of Learning
  - Active Learning: Work Hard And Smart
  - How to Learn Effectively
  - How to Adopt a Learner Mindset
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- It's more about how you learn and train than how much you do it
- Spacing out training and learning sessions is better than cramming out in a short time span
- Your own mindsets and approach to learning will make all the difference on whether you will learn or not

Notes

About the Authors:
Peter Brown is a writer and former management consultant; Henry Roediger is a professor of Psychology at Washington University; Mark McDaniel is a Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Integrative Research on Cognition, Learning, and Education (CIRCLE) at Washington University.

Three Myths of Learning

1. **Repetition helps memorize**: not necessarily: mindless repetition does little. The quality of the repetition might be more important than the quantity
2. **Fluency means understanding**: understanding something does not correlate with how fluent you are at repeating it
3. **Creativity trumps knowledge are not separate**: not really, don't listen to Einstein because knowledge *enables* creativity
4. **Learning styles help you learn**: no, there is no evidence that learning consistently with your learning styles will improve retention and understanding

Active Learning: Work Hard *And* Smart

Active learning is about learning hard and smart.
Both are required, together.

If you are thinking that learning is not easy, it's not. Learning, as with any worthwhile pursuit, requires effort.
Also, read:

- Deep Work by Cal Newport

How to Learn Effectively

This is a quick overview of the main principles of "*Make It Stick*":

1. **Retrieve & Do Lots of Tests**: when you force yourself to retrieve information, you are learning effectively. Tests help you because they force you to retrieve information. And don't make the mistake of thinking "yeah, I know this" and skipping the answer: force yourself to answer
2. **Vary Your Practice**: If you always train the same in the same way, you are limiting your capacity of adapting the learning to different aspects of your life. Change your practice conditions and change the type of tests
3. **Space Practice Over Time**: Practicing over time, especially if there is time to sleep between sessions, is far superior to cramming lots of practice in a short time. So space over time, but not so far away that you have to re-learn the material
4. **Work At Your Comfort Zone –** Mistakes are what allow you to learn, so you must work right at the edge of your comfort zone
5. **Connect The New Information**: The process of elaboration is to "make the new material your own" by connecting it to what you already know. This way you build a network of information that helps you retain and increase the value of that information
6. **Make The Information Yours**: By giving new meaning and/or connecting the information to your values and beliefs, you incorporate the new information in a way that it's easier for you to retain and access
7. **Practice More What You're Bad At**: practice more what you have learned less and what you are not as good at (example of reading new words more often), but don't stop practicing what you know well forever and you might lose it

How to Adopt a Learner Mindset

To learn the new material and to remember it more effectively Peter Brown stresses the importance of a learner mindset.

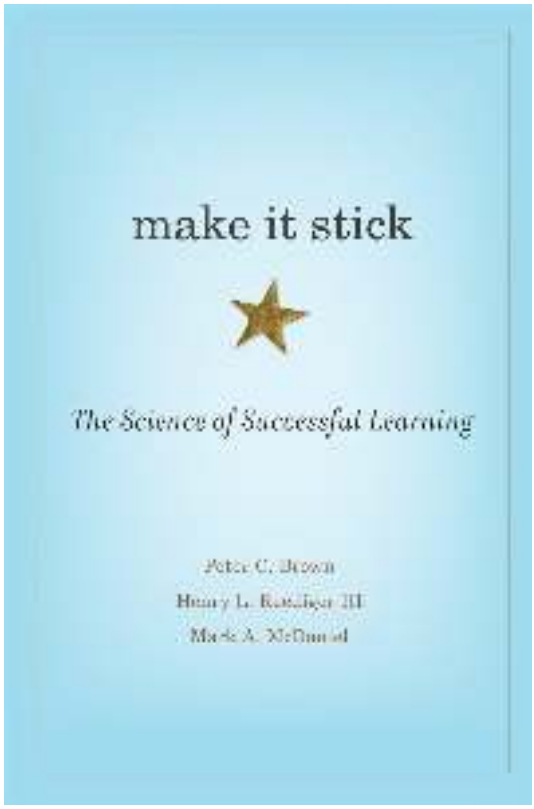
Among the key concepts of a learner mindset are:

- **Be Nice On Yourself**: Some people get discouraged when they start out because they're too clumsy. But everyone's clumsy when starting out.
- **Be optimistic**: Obstacles will always be there. Train yourself not to see obstacles as the ends of the road but as opportunities to improve and get better
- **Look At Life As Training**: Look both at tests, learning, and life in general as training and an opportunity to get better instead of a "make it or break it" opportunity, which only unnecessarily raises your nervousness
- **Stay At it**: Learning can take time. Stick with it

The author also recommends a growth mindset.
For mastering a growth mindset:

- Mindsets by researcher Carol Dweck

- How to develop a growth mindset



Real-Life Applications

- **Do The Practice Questions**

You know those practice questions you always skip at the end of each chapter?
Well, if you care about retaining and understanding the information, you must always do those from now on.

Even better, come up with your own questions. This is what I always do and then search for answers.

- **Don't Read The Answers and Nod**

You know when people skip to the answers and nod as if to say "right, of course… Know I know it".
That's very poor learning. You have to think about the answer yourself!

- **Strive to Surpass Your Current Level of Ability**

When you learn to strive to surpass your current level of ability and knowledge, that's when you learn the most effectively.

CONS

- **Could Have Been More Concentrated**

The information here is super powerful.
But I felt it could have been summarized in a blog post. Or at least, it could have been briefer.

- **Some Studies Provided Without Corresponding Criticism**

The author mentions *The Marshmallow Test*. Yet, there has been quite some criticism of that test which would have been good, in my opinion, to also mention.

Same for neuroplasticity and "*The Brain That Changes Itself*".

PROS

- **Science-Backed**

Henry L. Roediger III and Mark A. McDaniel are legit researchers and high authorities in this field.

- **Learning How to Learn Is A Metaskill**

Make It Stick deals with a topic that everyone should be well-versed in. But few are.

Review

Great book on a hugely important meta-skill: how to learn.

If you learn how to learn effectively, you will learn more quickly and more efficiently.

And the earlier you learn it, the more rewards you will reap in your life.

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Money Can't Buy Respect: Elon Musk & Talulah Riley (Case Study)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In this article, we analyze Elon Musk's social skills, interpersonal dominance, and what we call here 'power intelligence'.

Power intelligence is crucial to see and change interpersonal power dynamics that affect respect, status, and attraction.
In Elon Musk's early life, it seems apparent that he may have lost some respect and attraction by missing red flags and 'power moves'.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- Elon Musk's Relationship
  - Talulah Riley Power Games
- Elon Musk Social Intelligence
- Elon Musk Leadership
- Elon Musk Body Language
- Is Elon Musk Autistic?
- Summary

Elon Musk's Relationship

For the sake of this article, I will analyze two videos of Elon Musk's relationship with his ex-wife and actress Talulah Riley.

Look at this first video:

Quite a brutal treatment, eh?
If you can spot the brutal treatment, you are already 10x smarter than Elon Musk when it comes to EQ :).

We might go as far as to say that she goes the extra mile in an effort to emasculate him.
However, what's equally disturbing, is how he both fails to do anything about it and how he seems not to even notice what's happening.

The moment in which he says "really" is especially telling about Elon Musk's emotional intelligence.

> **Talulah**: Alright, I'm getting on a plane to England and I'm n ever gonna see him again
> (she said it jokingly, albeit it's still an obvious power move)
> **Elon Musk**: Really?
> **Everyone with EQ above 0**: face palm

In this other video, she goes down even harder on him (is that even possible? Seems so):

Again, Elon Musk fails to do anything about it. We don't know for sure that he failed to understand how rude she is being, but social intelligence is also the capacity of *acting* on disrespect, and he obviously fails there.
And the fact that they stayed together for so long also leads me to believe that no, he didn't even see the power moves for what they really were: emotional abuse.

Since Elon Musk doesn't attack back this is not a combative relationship. Not because it's a good relationship, but

quite the opposite: this is a highly toxic relationship.
But because Elon Musk is non-reactive, he is simply a punching bag for her aggression.
Not an enviable position to be in is it :).

Talulah Riley Power Games

Clearly, she is engaging in relationship power moves and trying to position herself as the prize of the relationship.

If she is successful in keeping him down and lowering his self-esteem, she will always have him prove himself to her and try to "win her back".
That way, she can hold him like a puppet on a leash.

I have not met them in person and I have not seen all footage available and read all the resources on the two of them. But since they stayed together for so long, she might as well have been successful.

You can read a deeper analysis (and comment) on the forum:

- Talulah Riley's Manipulation of Elon Musk

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Power or Low Self-Esteem?

As I explain in the video, Talulah's abusive power games might also be the consequence of her low self-esteem and a consequence of her not feeling good enough for him.
Bringing him down is then her way of rebalancing the relationship and feeling more secure in it.

That might be one explanation.
If that's the case, it's also partly because Elon Musk never communicated with others -or made her feel- like she is with her for more than just a pretty face or a pair of perky books (something I talk about in "common communication mistakes men make in relationships").

But it might also be she's plainly a low-quality woman and/or hell-bent on overpowering him.
It's a minority, but there are a few women who take pleasure in shaming their partners (I once had a girl hug me and tell me she was getting wet… In front of her boyfriend. Talking about awkward).

I cannot say from here for sure why she does it.
But *for sure* she is engaging in nasty power moves, one-upping, and, even more often, put-downs.

And why she does it, in a way, is a moot point.
She does, and Elon Musk does not see it. And does not do a thing about it.

Elon Musk Relationship Leadership

Look at this scene:

She wants to stay while Musk clearly wants to move away.
Musk doesn't have the courage, strength, or leadership to influence her decision in any way.

And she obviously does not care enough to accommodate his husband. It might even be the case that she is doing it on purpose (making someone wait is, of course, another power move).

So what does he do, finally?
He walks away by himself.
Some people on that video commented that it was cool and showed strength.

Well, some people don't understand power dynamics any better than Elon Musk does :).
No, it doesn't show strength.
It's very un-leader-like instead and very puerile.

If a more socially powerful individual had been in Musk's position, he would have likely walked over to her and warmly but resolutely told her it was time to go.
Without being overbearing or aggressive, he would have made it clear that it was enough and he was done waiting.

Only after her possible (but unlikely) refusal, he would have walked away (and then again, if that scene had been repeated a few times, he might have walked away for good at that point).

She Is In Charge

The scene above also suggests that it's Talula Riley the one with more power in the relationship (or at least, she is the one with more power in that clip).

If Elon Musk had been in charge of the relationship, she would have most likely conformed to his will.
Maybe she would have *asked* to spend some more time taking pictures, but for sure she would not have ignored him, stepped away from him, and let him wait the way she did.

That was quite disrespectful.
And usually, followers, submissive women, and good relationship partners are not disrespectful to their men.
Or at least, not for long…

Elon Musk Social Intelligence

Elon Musk not only does not bond and connect with people -which few do anyway-, but fails to understand people and social dynamics at their very basic.

That becomes especially obvious when Musk tries to make some joke. He is not good at communicating that he is joking, which sometimes leads to his jokes falling flat.
And it becomes especially painful when people try to joke with him, as he fails to read nonverbal cues and cannot tell apart irony from serious conversation.

Here is an example:

"I'm trying to do useful things". Evidently, bantering with the host was not "useful" enough to engage in for Elon Musk, LOL :D

Elon Musk Leadership

We already saw Elon Musk's lack of relationship leadership. And, as we might expect, he does not shine when it comes to people's leadership in general.

Look at this scene here:

The speaker at the event is as socially challenged as Musk is.
But unlike Musk, he also seems to be quite irrational and might have some other issues going on.

To any leader with a bit of emotional intelligence, it would have become obvious within the first 20 seconds that his task was to curtail the crazy speaker and let him down as easily as possible.

But Elon Musk does the opposite of what a good and strong leader would do.
He:

1. Vacillates first
2. Then brutally drops him

Sure the man was being idiotic, but that doesn't mean Elon Musk could not have treated him with some heart and helped him save face (as Carnegie recommends in How to Win Friends and Influence People).
That would have taken some social finessing though, and by now it's obvious that you can't expect any social finesse from Elon Musk :).

Elon Musk Body Language

As you would expect, Elon Musk body language is rather poor.

First of all, he walks with a slight hunchback, which is far from ideal.

He also:

- Nods too often and too quickly
- Looks down for too long
- Constantly crosses his arms

You would at least expect that someone who has been called a genius more times than Einstein (Einstein also emotionally clueless BTW) probably would talk well and sound smart.

Instead, he uses a ton of filler words which make him sound insecure and far less intelligent than he actually is.
Also, read:

- Verbal signs of submissiveness

Is Elon Musk Autistic?

Watching a few of Elon Musks' video I had to wonder if he might have been autistic and if he might have Asperger syndrome.

I will not engage here in "digital diagnosis" (The Goldwater rule also discourages any psychologist from making a diagnosis from afar).

Therefore, I cannot be sure, cannot judge, and don't want to judge whether Elon Musk is AS or where he places on the autism spectrum.

Also, frankly, it would just be a label that would not add anything to this analysis.
It is pretty obvious that Elon Musk cannot relate well with people and has impaired social abilities.

Summary

For all his billions, vaunted intelligence, and "genius status", Elon Musk is emotionally challenged.

His former business partner Peter Tiel says in Zero to One that Elon Musk is a master salesman. Honestly, I struggle to see how that's possible.
Salesmanship requires emotional intelligence and social skills, and I fail to see how Musk could ace it with people (and I think you do as well, by now).

With Elon Musk it's not just about being "geeky", submissive, or lacking confidence.
He genuinely seems not to understand basic social cues.

Lemme finish with a quick note: this is not an attack on Elon Musk. He seems a good person and I am grateful we have people like Elon Musk in this world.

The Blank Slate: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Blank Slate (2002) states that the social sciences have been the victim of an unscientific, biased ideology of "cultural determinism" whereby culture drives behavior and attitudes, and never genes.
The Blank Slate shows instead that nature and genes matter and, often, matter more than culture.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Blank Slate Theory
- Summary
- More Wisdom
  - Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- When it comes to genes people suddenly lose the ability to differentiate between "50% from 100%, "some from all", "affect from determinism"
- In our current culture, people seem to lose all balance when it comes to nature VS nurture, and claims that nature matters are viciously attacked (ie.: "racist", "nazist", "white male patriarchist, etc.")

Blank Slate Theory

The blank slate theory, or tabula rasa, is the belief that human minds have no knowledge at birth and are shaped entirely by their experiences, environment, and education.
In the context of modern education, the Blank Slate theory also states that **the social sciences have been dominated by culture and nurture over biology and genes.**

Steven Pinker in this book discusses this second notion and seeks to change the scholarly narrative to also include the role of evolution and innate biological mechanisms.

Summary

About the Author:
Steven Pinker is a popular science author and experimental psychologist and is currently a psychology professor at Harvard.

Introduction

Pinker says that "*The Blank Slate*" does not say that it's *all* about genes.

Depending on the trait we examine culture or genes can matter more but, in most cases, it's a mixture of the two. Overall, both genes and the environment are equally important.

Even when the behavior is heritable, the behavior is still a product of development.

However, we still need a book to remind us of the obvious: that genes *do* matter.

Why We Need to Defend Genes, Nature & Biology's Role

The author makes the point that still these days it's incendiary to say that genes have a role in people's actions, temperament, and skills.

Some authors have been scolded for saying, for example, that:

- Blacks' lower IQ scores have genetic as well as environmental causes
- Similarities in children come from genes not just from parenting
- Rape is biological and not just cultural

The author says that even these days, an extremist position that says that culture is everything is still seen as moderate while the moderate position of 50/50 is seen as extreme.

The Blank Slate Fallacy

Steven Pinker refers to the blank slate as:

> The idea that the human mind has no inherent structrue and can be inscribed at will by society or by ourselves.

The blank slate, the author says, has become the secular religion of modern intellectual life.

My Note: I couldn't agree more with this.
I remember heated arguments with university colleagues where I was always alone against a bunch of "intellectuals" who embraced the blank slates.

The Mistaken Assumptions of The Blank Slate

The blank slate is based on two mistaken assumptions:

1. **The noble savage**: humans outside of civilization are good and peaceful
2. **Naturalistic fallacy**: what happens in nature is good

And one fallacious attitude:

- **The moralistic fallacy**: it would be so nice if the idea were true, that we shall believe it is true (a rehabilitated individual cannot bring himself to harm and hurt others.. Which is obviously not true)

Rousseau was wrong with the noble savage theory.
And so was Margaret Mead who confirmed the noble savage theory with her ideology-driven ethnographic analysis of the Samo (read Coming of Age in Samoa).
Mead described a culture of open-mindedness, pacifism, and free sex.

But she was wrong.

The truth is that most human societies have engaged in war and aggression and almost no society has approached sex as a simple act to be freely enjoyed at will.
And that is for a simple reason: aggression is part of the human makeup (together with opposing tendencies that can foster the common good).

The author also pokes some good-humored fun at the limitations of ethnographic observation, and he is spot-on:

> Imagine anthropologists studying the peaceful Europeans between 1918 and 1938

LOL, I love that quote :D.

Three Scientific Myths Against Human Nature

Steven Pinker dismantles the most extreme versions of three major scientific developments that have been (mis)used to deny the complex human nature:

1. **Human genome project** (the smaller than expected number of genes was used to refute the idea of innate talents or tendencies. The author calls it “the lean genome”)
2. **Computer models** (since AI can learn so much, the brain needs can wire or re-wire freely. The author calls it “connectionism”)
3. **Neuroplasticity** (“the blank slate” becomes “the plastic slate”, quips the author. The truth is that Ramachandran and other scientists took it too far saying that any part of the brain can decode any message: it’s not true, some brain areas did specialize for certain inputs and processes)

Says the author:

> Most gay men cannot be reversed by experience. Some parts of the mind just aren’t plastic.
> And no discovery about how the sensory cortex gets rewired will change that fact.

Parenting is Not A Role Anyone Can Take On

The most extremist blank slate theories see parenting as simply a role that anyone can take on, no matter if they are the actual parents or not.

However, statistics show that non-biological parents are far more likely to abuse, mistreat, and ignore their step-children.

This is because we have stronger inborn tendencies to care for and protect our biological children than random children.
Again, this is another example that we all have inborn tendencies and that not all are culturally acquired.

Heritability of Political Attitudes

Liberal and conservative attitudes are heritable not because attitudes are synthesized directly from DNA, but because they come naturally to people with different temperaments.

Conservatives for example tend to be more conscientious, authoritarian, and rule-bound.

Parity of Outcomes is Dangerous and Wrong

When we consider people and genders are the same -which we are not- dangerous policies that force equality of outcomes can become the norm (communism, gulag.. And the current policies that seek to force a 50/50 gender split).

More Wisdom

- **We have small variations**

Albeit we are 6 billion, the variations among single individuals are small among humans (it's bigger among chimpanzees even if we are many more).
This is likely because less than 100.000 years ago we went through a population bottleneck.
Since then we didn't have much time to accumulate lots of variations and our current differences in hair and skin colors are rather skin-level deep (pun intended).

- **Explaining behavior is not exonerating behavior**

We can, for example, discuss why it's "natural" for men to seek more sexual partners.
But that does not exonerate cheating and philandering.

- **Stereotypes are true**

In Blink, Malcolm Gladwell says that blink decisions are often correct (and in another book of his, he regrets the tendency we all have to make snap decisions based on stereotypes).

Steven Pinker takes a more scientific and moralistic-free view on stereotypes.
He simply says that, more often than not, stereotypes are not random and/or wrong as most people assume but they are often quite accurate and confirmed by statistics.

And psychology research backs that up.

He mentions: blacks are more likely to be on welfare; Jews have a higher average income; business students are more conservative than art students, women are more likely to want to lose weight; men are more likely to swat a fly with their hands.

- **There is evil, and it can be inborn**

The noble savage theory and some intellectuals wished to attribute all evil and wrongdoing to culture, society, lack of options, bad parenting, or poor education.

Unluckily, it's not like that.
There is plenty of evil, there are biological reasons for evil (a small number of parasites can thrive in an otherwise honest population) and some of it is inborn.

The author mentions sociopaths, psychopaths, and people who are in between and present Machiavellian traits without being full psychopaths.

- **Differences are greater at the far end of bell curves**

When you have any bell-curve distribution, the differences are small on average and will be far larger at the extremes.

Women and men present a bell curve distribution with men far more represented on the extremes (men are far more likely to win "Darwinian awards" and dying in the silliest ways possible).

- **Male VS female self-esteem** (and career success)

On average male self-esteem is more tied to status, salary, and wealth. They also highly correlate to their attractiveness as mates, and that's one of the reasons why men are more likely and more willing to work harder and longer hours.

- **Children follow the peer group more than the parents**

The peer group has a larger impact on how children turn out than the parents do.

My Note:
But then again, parents can heavily influence which peer group the children grow up with for example, by deciding where to live.

Quotes

On war and human nature:

> People all over the world have reflected over the futility of voilence.
> At least when they are evenly enough matched with their adversaries and noone can prevail.

On violence and human nature:

> With violence, as with so many other concerns, human nature is the problem.
> But human nature, is also the solution.

On feminism and salary disparities:

> Inequality of outcome cannot be proof of inequality of opportunity.

On feminist messages to women:

> We should not be sending gifted wmoen the message that they are less worhty and less valuabe, lazy or low in status if they choose to be teachers instead of mathematician, journalists in stead of physicits or laywers instead of engineers.

On truth, hope, and liberation.

> People hope to God that it isn't true. But the truth doesn't care about our hopes. And sometimes it forces us to revist those hopes in a liberating way.

CONS

- **Victim blaming**?

The author says that feminists shouldn't complain when people advise women not to go out alone at night in mini-skirts because that's simply sensible advice.

Pinker then says that if something bad happens, it's akin to leaving a car parked in the hood unlocked and with the keys inside.
He says that the police should investigate, but still, an external observer has the right to think "you stupid idiot, what the hell were you thinking".

In a way, he's right.
Yet, I'm not a big fan of that line of thinking.

There are plenty of places and societies where women can go out alone at night with mini-skirts.
If we want to have safer societies, we can't accept Pinker's stance of normalizing aggression and rape -and yes, rape is "natural", but that doesn't it make it right or acceptable-.

- **Soft-science**

Although I loved "*The Blank Slate*" and agree with everything, it's a crossover between personal philosophy, opinions, and science.
I must agree with Allen Orr that this is "soft science".

- **Strawman argument**

I agree with Steven Pinker that the current intellectual climate favors culture over nature.
I have experienced it myself as a student.

But I also must agree with the critical review of Louis Menand.
Menand says that to make his point, Pinker sometimes exaggerates "the other camp" and exaggerates their traits (ie.: a strawman attack).

- **Exaggerates nature over parenting?**

Sometimes I felt that the author exaggerates the weight of nature over parenting.
Albeit he states otherwise, at times it felt that with the studies and stories he was quoting he was implying that parenting mattered little.

- **Chagnon unreliable (?) data?**

Pinker relies heavily on Chagnon in some passages to draw conclusions about human nature, war, and violence.
And does so both in "*The Blank Slate*" and in "*How the Mind Works*".

However, Chagnon has been heavily criticized and may feel biased.
The criticism of his number seems potentially well-founded to me (Fry, 2012).

PROS

- **Wonderful analysis of the differences between men and women**, including on gender inequality, fairness, and policies.

- **Parity of outcome is dangerous!!** The best takeaway, in my opinion, is that the current drive to achieve “parity of outcome” is dangerous both for society and, even more so, for individuals.
- **Power dynamics in academia**: *The Blank Slate* also teaches human psychology and human nature from a “meta-level” point of view.
  The Blank Slate teaches us about ideological warfare, and how “intellectual doctrines” dominate and squash dissent, all to the detriment of good science -and truth-.

Review

The Blank Slate is a good book presents compelling arguments, but at times it risks overcorrecting—leaning too far in opposition to the very cultural bias it critiques.

In his rightful stance against what Tooby and Cosmides dubbed the “Standard Social Science Model”, **Pinker sometimes seems to go too much in the opposite direction**.

Pinker can’t stop harping on about “feminists”, “left-wing researchers” and “anthropologists of peace”, and at times it feels intellectually aggressive (see Sapolsky’s comments in “Behave“).

I think we could all do this with less competition and a more scientific search for truth. Learning something from the other side, and let science and factual work speak for themselves.

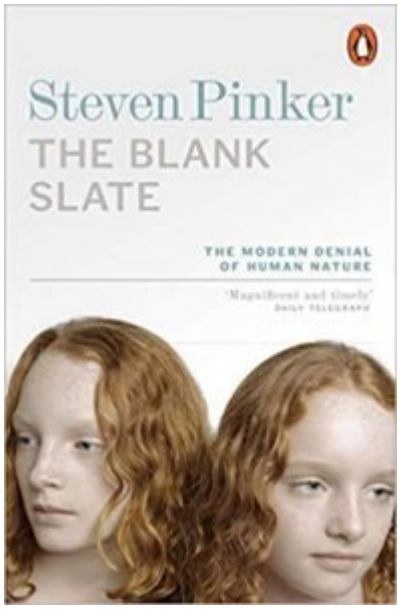
I agree with Pink that many scholars have not done science and refuse to accept strong empirical findings. Yet, they are also not 100% wrong on everything, including men’s interest in keeping women down.
And that’s what the Pinker-like evolutionary psychologists are missing.

Also, check out:

- **The best books on evolutionary psychology**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

The Blank Slate Summary: Why Nature Trumps Nurture (Pinker)



Wonderful analysis of social sciences, psychology, "nature VS narture", feminism and "intellectual dogmas"

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-blank-slate/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4

Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Marrying femininity and leadership is not easy.

And being a strong, powerful woman while also remaining feminine, well-liked, and, why not, successful at dating and relationships, is even more difficult.

But alas, difficulties also present the biggest opportunities for those elected few who manage to crack the code.

This article teaches you the science and psychology of being a powerful woman while also remaining feminine, attractive, and well-liked.

Contents

- Intro: Science of The “Female Leader Curse”
- #1. Lead For An Ideal, For People Or A Bigger Goal
- #2. Use “We” Frames To Avoid “Over-Ambition”
- #3. Make Use of Indirect Forms of Dominance
- #4. Use Democratic Style of Leadership
- #5. Offset Power With Stereotypically Feminine Qualities
- #6. Offset Power With Hyper-Femininity
- #7. Consider More Typically-Female Careers
- #8. Combine Warmth With Power
- Is The Female Leadership Curse Cultural or Inborn?
- SUMMARY

Intro: Science of The “Female Leader Curse”

Research on leadership and persuasion shows:

Women pay a social price for their power and leadership positions.

By “social price” I refer to being disliked for carrying herself with power and confidence.
And, possibly, socially marginalized and excluded.

In the workplace, that might mean being passed up for promotions. In politics, that could mean not getting elected. And in dating, that could mean being passed up for the more submissive woman.

The female leader's curse applies without women having to do anything.
Indeed research shows that when students read the exact same description of a male and female leader, they ended up liking the male leader but disliking the female one… For the simple fact of being a woman.

Although there are also studies to the contrary, the body of research points to women facing a social backlash when they pursue power and/or when they display dominant traits (see for example Madeline Heilman and Susan Fiske).

Even many women and liberal men are not an exception.
See here Obama leveraging the "likability" issue against Clinton:

> **Obama**: You are likable "enough"

With that power move, Obama effectively makes Clinton's likability an issue, and calls it into question.

Female Leadership Curse & Politics

The 2016 US election also provides supporting evidence for the female leadership curse.

When did Hilary Clinton's ratings drop?
Hillary Clinton's rating dropped precipitously the moment she announced her candidacy for the presidency.

Correlation is *not* causation, but we can probably guess here that Hillary became "unlikable" the moment she decided to go for the top leadership position.

Female Leadership Curse & Dating

There is little research into female power, dominance, and dating success.

Luckily, we have enough experience there.
And we can also use evolutionary psychology here to provide us with answers.

Evolutionary psychology tells us that while men have a bias towards quantity, women prefer "better" partners (female hypergamy).
The consequence, of course, is that men *do* indeed fear -or "are intimidated"- of women who are "more than they are".
It's a rational choice: women who are better than they are are far less likely to accept them, like them, respect them, or stay with them.

In a nutshell: powerful, ambitious, and dominant women are less attractive for most men than less powerful, ambitious, and dominant ones.

The Power-Charm Trade-Off

Some women might say

> "to hell being liked, I don't care about a few bigots, I'll go for power and make them all jealous with my success".

Most of the times it doesn't work that way though.
To begin with, most of us suffer when we are harshly criticized and most people dislike us.

The second problem is in actual power.

Women who go for authoritarian and more typically male styles of power lose all or almost all of their charming power and seductive power.

While a more aggressive man *can* more easily move from social charm to authoritarian leadership, a woman who crosses into authoritarian leadership can hardly be charming.

As an example, look at this video:

> **Him**: (avoids the question)
> **Harris**: (grows irritated)
> **Moderator**: (reins in Harris)
> **Him**: (laughs, self-framing as cool and chill, and framing Harris as too emotional)

Kamala Harris chose went the authoritarian way, leaving much of her femininity behind.
However, this was admittedly off-character fo her. She generally does MUCH better, including in her presidential run.

The Solution

Luckily, there are plenty of solutions to the "female leadership curse".

These solutions require social intelligence, and some good understanding of psychology, power dynamics, and human nature.

This article is here to help.

Let's start with the techniques:

#1. Lead For An Ideal, For People Or A Bigger Goal

The women who pay the biggest social price of the female leadership curse are the ones who look like they are in it mainly for the power.

Power is mostly a male pursuit, and women who are after power look very "gender deviant".
Gender deviant is a very ugly expression, but it correctly identifies the problem here.

Research shows indeed that men who look like they are after power are not penalized.
But women are.

And that's why you should avoid looking like you're after power for power sake.
As a matter of fact, I warmly invite you NOT to go after power for power's take as that makes you a much worse leader, no matter whether you're a female leader or male leader.

Also read:

- Office politics

#2. Use "We" Frames To Avoid "Over-Ambition"

Similar as above: ambition is a trait that is OK or even appreciated in men.

But it's disliked in women.

Sheryl Sandberg in Lean In says that when you negotiate from an "I" perspective, both men and women will like you less.

You must approach negotiations, speeches, and campaigns from a "we" and "us" platform instead of "I".

If you are negotiating for a raise, always frame it as a win for both you, the company and your team.
Say “me and the team can do so great if we find a solution” and:

> Let’s just find an agreement and we will be so strong

Also read:

- **Best negotiation books**

#3. Make Use of Indirect Forms of Dominance

Studies show that direct expressions of power and dominance (for example: direct requests) adversely affected women’s likability.

But indirect expressions of power (ie.: eye contact) did not.

This means that for you as a woman it might be better to ask something in a friendly tone such as:

> **You**: Do you think you can do that?
> (hold eye contact)
> **Him**: Yeah, I think so

And then hold eye contact and have him (or her) acknowledge that yes he can, rather than telling him “do it”.
The effect is the same, but the indirect social pressure might be a more effective tool to wield power for women (and from an Influence point of view, it’s also much more effective!).

This goes at the core of what we call here “power protecting”.

So please read:

- **Power-protecting**: leading, without resentment

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

#4. Use Democratic Style of Leadership

Research shows that when women lead with a democratic style of leadership, there is no social price and no adverse effect on her likeability.

Says Eagly (Eagly et al. (1992)):

> Female leaders showing autocratic (i.e. masculine) behaviour are evaluated more negatively than male leaders showing the same. However democratic male leaders and democratic female leaders are not evaluated differently.

Similarly, the Routledge handbook on persuasion says that ‘communal’ approaches to persuasion work better for women compared to more assertive or aggressive tactics.

People are much more comfortable with women in power positions who ask questions, include and, generally, act like benevolent leaders.

But what to do when a female leader needs to put her foot down?

#4.1 Consider A Maternal Style of Leadership

As much men can adopt a “father figure” style of leadership, women can adopt a “mother figure” style of leadership.

A mother figure style of leadership is a powerful role and a good solution to most of the resistances that women face in positions of power.

When needed, you bust out the spanking.
But it’s not a scathing dress down in front of everyone to display power. It’s more like a spanking for the bad boy because he deserved it, but which is delivered not to re-assert power but because it’s in everyone’s interest.

And then you can go back to a more communal and affiliative style of leadership.

Angela Merkel is referred to as “mutti” or “mommy” in Germany.
She is not “motherly” in a feminine way, but more like a detached, “father & mother” type of mother because the father is not around.

See some examples:

Angela Merkel’s secret is that of staying away from all excesses of both extreme male expressions of power and typically feminine expressions which would decrease a leader’s perceived authority.

#5. Offset Power With Stereotypically Feminine Qualities

I remember years ago in my first big corporate job, working as a Lean Methodology consultant alongside McKinsey and internal DHL consultants.

The head of the program was called “Tania”, and she was an icy German woman with an authoritative streak and a tall figure with blue eyes and light blonde hair.
Her appearance certainly didn’t help her to come across more relatable. But she didn’t even try that hard: everyone thought of “nazi” and “ice queen” in her presence when in the presence of Tania

When Peter, one of the line managers described her to me, he said:

> **Peter**: The new project head is *German*, *woman*, 43… *No kids*..

You should have seen his expression of contempt as he highlighted those words.
And by the time he had reached “no kids” I already knew where he was going.
What he wanted to say was this:

> She is not a real woman

Which, in turn, translated to this:

> She is not a normal human being, she doesn’t belong to our species and we can’t relate to her.

This is rather common.
When women come across as “gender deviant”, from a sociological perspective, people place them in the “out-group”, or “different from all of us”.
We don’t relate to people from the out-group and it’s much more likely that we will see them as enemies.

Here is the catch though: if a woman can show and “prove” her femininity, she can increase acceptance, and make herself more likable.

This research indeed shows that when people see that powerful women also present typically female characteristics,

hostility decreases and the strong female leaders become more liked and more accepted.

Here is what you might strategically choose to do:

- If you're a mother, make that information circulate
- Spread information on how you spend time home/parenting
- If no children, get a dog and do the same
- Tell stories of your cooking
- Put fresh flowers in your office
- Avoid masculine suits
- Use more colorful dresses
- Do your makeup

All these actions serve to communicate to the people around that "oh yes, she's a woman alright".

Remember:

> Since the backlash against women arises in good part for her violation of "expected gender roles", a woman can offset her power and dominance by showing feminine traits outsider her leadership position

Also read:

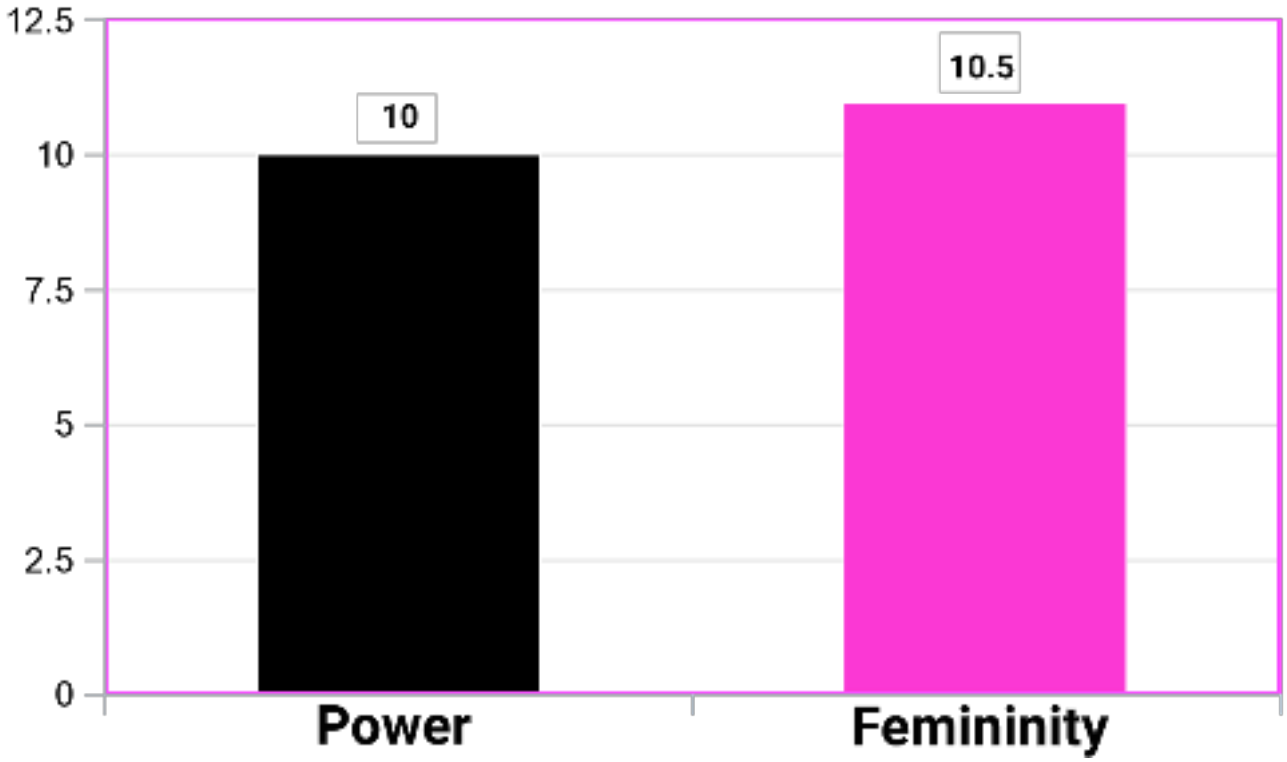
- **How to be feminine**
- 'Cat ladies' VS conservative men

> How to Be Feminine: Step-by-Step Guide (Videos & Pics)

#6. Offset Power With Hyper-Femininity

At the opposite of neutralizing yourself is the hyper-feminization of your power.

Imagine if your power is 10, then you want your feminine level to be an equal 10. Or even your feminine levels to outstrip your power, depending on the occasion -for example, when dealing with a superior-.



There is a special place in the Olympus of powerful women for the elected few who can correctly go for this style.

Why?

Because **combining super high power with super high femininity is what makes you "the queen".**

Joan Holloway from the show "Mad Men" is a good example of hyper-femininization of power.
Look at this scene:

(video in Power University)

Remember the direct/indirect language "how to look confident at work"?

#7. Consider More Typically-Female Careers

Paustian-Underdahl in her meta-analysis on female leadership and power found out that:

> (…) Male leaders were seen as more effective than female leaders in organizations that were male-dominated or masculine in other ways (i.e., numerically male-dominated organizations; military roles; Eagly et al., 1995). Additionally, **female leaders were seen as more effective than male leaders in less male-dominated or less masculine organizations** (i.e., educational, governmental, and social service organizations)

Basically: organizations and **businesses that fit the female gender stereotype boost the credibility of female leaders**.

This was a study on effectiveness rather than likeability, but I wouldn't be surprised if we can infer the same for likeability and acceptance.

Miranda Priestly in "The Devil Wears Prada" would have been less respected, would have had less authority and would have probably been even more disliked and has she worked in, say, an arm's producer rather than a fashion magazine.

#8. Combine Warmth With Power

This is more from a technical point of view, but whenever you can combine warmth and humor with a reprimand or with a request for compliance, you are better off than crude power.

This is an example of a woman who's done it very well:

> **Her**: (smiling and very friendly) it kills me to say it, but wrap it up, Mr. Pitt

This is one of our core life approaches, even for more.
Read more here:

- **Power and warmth**: how the two maximize your success

> Social Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

Is The Female Leadership Curse Cultural or Inborn?

Shall we really get into this?

Alright, let's do it quickly.

Researchers often speak about "culture", "qualities traditionally associated with…", "traits linked to behaviors that people associate to leadership and genders" and, of course "gender stereotypes".

Basically: most researchers refer to the culture and few mention nature, genes, or evolutionary psychology.
It's not surprising (see Steven Pinker's "The Blank Slate" for the "why").

However, chances are that it's both.

The Future of Female Power

Will things get better for women?

Since part of the backlash against powerful women is partially culture, we might see further improvement.
Researchers who have compiled meta-studies have indeed noted a tendency toward more acceptance of female leaders.

It's also possible that as more inclusive and less authoritarian styles of leadership become more the norm than the exceptions, women will do better and better.
As Koenig et all (2011) point out in another meta-analysis:

> Leadership now, more than in the past, appears to incorporate more feminine relational qualities, such as sensitivity, warmth, and understanding.

Basically, things have improved for women and are likely to further improve.

However, in my opinion, that's a tendency that cannot be extrapolated to infinity and to perfect equality.
And that means that **the social backlash against powerful women is not going away any time soon** because powerful women are threatening to most men (we won't get into the "why" here, but you can read more in out website).

It's also not obvious and not written anywhere that we will keep moving towards more equality.
Cultures always change and our culture might also swing again towards more conservative attitudes in the future.

Luckily, with guides like these, women can be powerful, and also well-liked :)

SUMMARY

There is no research that shows that people dislike successful women. Indeed, nobody has anything against' women's success.
It's when women have power, act dominant, or hold leadership positions that things can get a bit trickier.

Specifically, it's *how* women wield their power that makes a big difference. And when women behave like men, they lose.

Power, dominance, and femininity are not necessarily at the opposite end of the spectrum.
Yet they don't exactly overlap either.
And it's sometimes difficult to combine the two.

However, it's possible, and this article gave you a few ideas on how to be a successful female leader all around: from power to charm to social success to success in dating and relationships.

This is a sample from Power University (far more examples in the course).

How to Present With Confidence: 7 Winning Tips

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Do you have a presentation, a speech, or a pitch coming up and you want to convey confidence, authority, and power?

You have come to the right place.

My name is Lucio and my expertise lies in social skills, emotional intelligence, and, of course, power dynamics.

By the end of this article, you will learn how to deliver the most powerful presentation anybody has ever seen.

Contents

- Why You Must Present Confidently
- #1. Walk Confidently On Stage
- #2. Approach The Host With A Mix of Warmth & Power
- #3. Confident Handshake
- #4. Start With A Frontal Stance
- #5. Don't Lavish Compliments (If You're A Junior Presenter)
- #6. Stay Vocally Neutral
- #7. Avoid PowerPoint
- SUMMARY

Why You Must Present Confidently

Have you ever heard of Marshall McLuhan?

As a student of communication, I have read about Marshall McLuhan so often that Marshall felt like my next-door neighbor.
But if you haven't' heard about him, no worries.
Here all you need to know about McLuhan when it comes to present with confident:

> The medium is the message

"The medium is the message" means that who (or what) says something influences that message.
That's so simple, yet so deep.

It means that **if *you* present confidently, powerfully, authoritatively, and convincingly, then your *message* will come across as powerful, authoritative, and convincing**.

If you present meekly and unconvincingly, then your message will come across as weak and unconvincing.

And we don't want that.
Especially if you have something important to say and to present.

This article will show you how to present with power and confidence.

#1. Walk Confidently On Stage

First impressions are crucial.

Every single good book on social skills or body language says that.

And they're right.

To walk confidently on stage, **you must feel like you have something important to say**.
You must believe in your message and look forward to delivering your message.
Yet, you don't want to rush on stage, because that communicates too much passion, and too much passion is juvenile and childish.

Just look at this example:

Rushing to the stage says either that you're nervous, or that you're a bit too juvenile.
And junior employees and researchers rarely are the ones we listen to (and yes, the black hole picture is an exception: don't make the rules with the exceptions).

At the end of the day, in business as in life, what truly delivers the goods is staying power.
And yes you want to communicate passion, but **you want to show passion tempered by expertise, authority, and staying power**.

And you communicate that by walking slowly and confidently on stage.

#2. Approach The Host With A Mix of Warmth & Power

Conveying power that attracts rather than repels is about striking that good balance between warmth and (too much) power.

Too much power would mean treating the host like he's beneath you. And that would estrange the audience and make you come across like a smug, full-of-hot-air individual.
Avoid it.

On the other hand, you want to avoid behaving *too* warmly and friendly towards the host (or anyone else for that matter).
Because *too* friendly also communicates submissiveness.
One way that people end up behaving too warmly is by allowing the host to give them the upper hand.
Here is one (extreme) example:

It's important that you take care of not to look submissive towards the host or you (and by reflection your message) immediately look less noteworthy before you even open your mouth.

Three mistakes I often see from people who communicate submissiveness in their approach to the host:

1. Stick their hand out too early
2. Stick their hand out too far
3. Smile too much and too broadly

You can read more here:

- How submission look like
- How submission sounds

And of course:

- Mix warmth with power

#3. Confident Handshake

A confident and powerful handshake is what sets you off for the races in style.

On the other hand, a weak handshake will subconsciously communicate that you're not an authority.

Unluckily, you will have to contend for this with the host and/or the person who gives you the stage.

Allan Pease says that 88% of corporate executives shake hands taking the upper hand.
When someone takes the upper hand on you they push you in the submissive, subservient position. And you don't want to start a presentation from the subservient position.

Typical techniques for aggressive hosts who give you an upper-hand handshake include:

- Meet the host from his right side so your hand will look like it's on top
- Use your other hand to cup his hand
- Use your other hand to clasp his arm or upper arm

For more techniques on how to cope with handshakes read:

- Alpha male handshakes

#4. Start With A Frontal Stance

Most people are afraid of public speaking.

Even the experienced public speaker can start off with a certain "queasiness" about standing in front of a lot (or even a few) people.

A natural, unconscious reaction, is often to close our body language. And most people know this and they know they should avoid crossing their arms or locking their feet.

What fewer people are aware of though are what I call "sideways body language".
Such as, they walk around the stage or they look back at the host as an unconscious excuse to avoid standing fully frontal to the audience.

Sideways body language makes you look unconfident and shifty. Sometimes it's a split second, like in this example:

It's possible that he wasn't fearful. But because he adopted a sideways body language as soon as he walked in, people will unconsciously rate him as less confident, less authoritative and less trustworthy.

To be on the safe side: start your speeches with a friendly but full frontal stance towards the audience.

#5. Don't Lavish Compliments (If You're A Junior Presenter)

Giving compliments is great, and it can confer power (also read soft power).

Compliments also win you friends and make you come across as warmer and more relatable.

However, the same rule as for friendly signals applies: too many compliments aggrandize others while removing power and authority from yourself (also read: submissive signs).

The rule of thumb is this:

The more famous and established you are, the safer it is to give compliments.
The greener and less experienced you are, the more you need to avoid gushing about others.

Why so?
First of all, because you risk coming across as a sycophant. And sycophants usually add little value and rarely overtake their masters.

And second, because giving out too many compliments to the host or the previous speakers would send the message that *their* presentation is what people must pay attention to (and not yours).
And you don't want to send that message.

#6. Stay Vocally Neutral

You can't deliver a powerful presentation and go up at the end of each sentence.
You just can't. You either go up at the end of each sentence, or you deliver a powerful, confident presentation.

The two are mutually exclusive.
It is *that* important.

Just to be sure, by "going up at the end of each sentence" I am referring to that tendency of ending sentences as if there were a question mark.
Here is Stewie mimicking it in Family Guy:

Women sometimes use upward inflection as a seductive tool to send out "protect me" messages.
In those instances, it's fine.
But you must avoid it if you want to present with power and confidence.

#7. Avoid PowerPoint

PowerPoint only has "power" in its name, but it's otherwise a tool that will remove from conveying power and confidence from your presentation.

There are 3 ways in which PowerPoint kills your confidence:

1. **Triangle of death** (teetering from full-frontal stance to the audience and giving the audience your back to look at the slide)
2. **You lose the audience** (when you force people to either read or listen to you, they can do only one.. And often it's neither of them)
3. **You lose the audience while switching medium** (when you go from the text on the slides back to speaking people need some time to re-adjust and if you don't give it to them, you lose them)

"Triangle of death" is a term I got from Nick Morgan, the author of Power Cues.
When you stand in between the slides and the audience you murder your credibility, confidence, and power.

What's the solution then?
These are the solutions:

1. Don't use PowerPoint
2. Only use pictures
3. If you must use text, give people the time to read and don't talk as they read
4. If you must comment on the slides, either learn them and don't look at them or move outside the stage and use a pointer to adopt a "voice over" type of presentation

SUMMARY

This article is an extract from a seminar I have delivered at the Technical University of Berlin.

The central idea is that if you want people to listen and believe in your message, then *you* must make yourself a trustworthy and confident conduit for that message.

This article gave you a few advanced pointers on how to deliver a powerful presentation and how to come across as a confident speaker who speaks with authority.

How to Talk to Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *How to Talk to Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere* Larry King teaches readers how to be a great conversationalist and interviewer.
The book is short and to the point and it contains all you need to know about the basics of enchanting conversations.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- The Secrets to Conversation
- Train Your Voice and Conversation
- Make Eye Contact (& Lean Slightly Forward)
- Ask Why
- Be Honest Talking With The Opposite Sex
- Acing Job Interviews
- Prepare, Prepare, Prepare
- Control The Interview
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Be open: Don't be afraid of sharing your real self and your real feelings
- Be interested in others
- Listen and listen well
- Ask "why"

Summary

In "How to Talk to Anyone Anywhere" Larry King shares the now famous story of his first day on air.

He lowered the music ready to start speaking.. But no words could come out. He was too nervous.
So he raised the music again.

That went on for three times when the general manager kicked in the door and bellowed:

> This is a communication business

From then on Larry King was never scared again to speak in public.
What had he learned that day?

Read on…

The Secrets to Conversation

- Be as honest and open as possible: share how you feel
- Love talking to people (to be good at what you do, you must love what you do)
- Respect your speaking partners and treat them like you'd like them to treat you
- Be curious about your speaking partners
- Listen well: to be a good talker you *must* be a good listener

On being interested also read Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends".

Train Your Voice and Conversation

Larry King says that he was gifted with a good voice and a willingness to talk.
But just like anyone else, he had to work hard on those innate talents to turn them into skills.

You can train by:

- talking to people
- talking to yourself
- talking in front of a mirror
- grabbing all chances you can to deliver a speech (also read: how to present with power).

Larry King didn't train his voice much because he had a naturally good voice, he says.
But if he hadn't had one, he would have spent and invested in improving his voice.

Make Eye Contact (& Lean Slightly Forward)

Larry King says he didn't out of his way to study body language so he doesn't pretend to be an expert.

But he does say that eye contact is a crucial ingredient for a good conversationalist.
Larry King's rules:

- Don't stare continuously
- Look at them while you're talking and while you're asking questions
- Occasionally take your eyes off while you speak (but don't stare into empty space as if he wasn't there)
- Never look over your speaking partner's shoulder as if you were looking for someone more important to talk to

Larry King says his most basic advice is to worry about the basics of listening, caring and respecting and then letting your body language naturally do the rest.

Also read:

- Best body language books

Ask Why

Larry King's favorite question, and a reflection of his curiosity about people and people's life, is "why".

If someone has just moved: "why did you move".
If they changed job "why did they change".

Be Honest Talking With The Opposite Sex

Larry King's advice of honesty applies to approaching the opposite sex as well: be candid, he says.

If you don't know what to say, say that you are not sure what to say but you wanted to start a conversation with them.
The author then proposes you follow up with a topic you find interesting to test affinity and, also, their level of intelligence (also read: high-quality women and high-quality men)

For an actual science-backed guide on approaching a girl, look here:

- How to approach a girl
- **Cold approach as a strategy**

https://thepowermoves.com/cold-approach

Acing Job Interviews

Always approach job interviews thinking about what you can do for them.

To paraphrase JFK:

> Ask not what the employer can do for you, but what you can do for them

Also read:

- What's in it for them
- The law of social exchange

And of course:

- **How to ace interviews**

> How to Prepare For An Interview: 6 Tips To Get The Job

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

Whenever you know who are you going to talk to or who you are going to interview about what you are going to talk about, always prepare.

If you don't prepare you end up digressing, using too many filler words and, generally, you will never be charismatic.

This is something Larry King didn't do with Seinfield, and it showed:

Control The Interview

As a sociologist and writer on power dynamics, I found it particularly interesting that Larry King says that in an interview the first secret to success is to make sure that you control the interview.

How do you gain control of the interview?

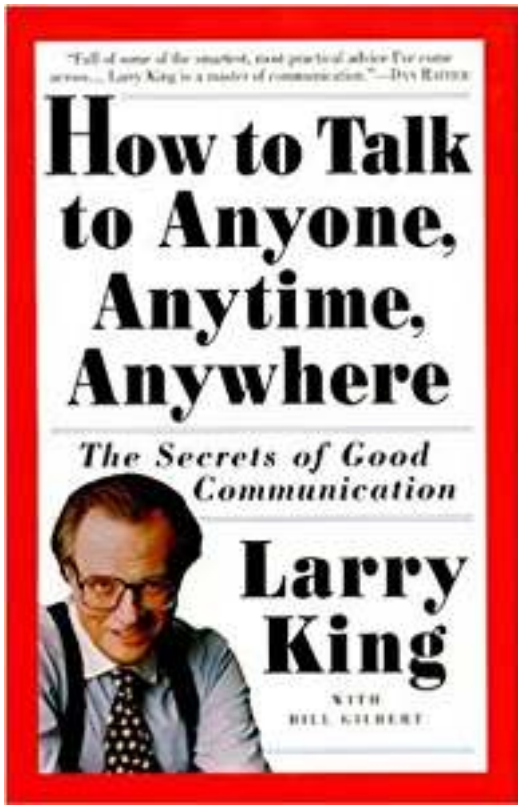
1. Know more about the subject
2. Remind yourself that you are the expert

And remember that you are never forced to reply to a question you don't want to reply to (or to give as many details as they want you to give).

Here are a few ways to divert giving an answer:

- “It would be premature of me to give an answer now”
- “I’m not able to answer that question because I haven’t seen the report yet… “

But don’t use “no comment” because it implies guilt (LOL, very good point).



Real-Life Applications

- To overcome shyness remind yourself everyone puts his pants on one leg at a time
- Talk to your employees on a regular basis, provide feedback and tell them what they’re doing well
- Don’t focus on the negatives
- Remind yourself that no matter what you answer, it’s not going to change the course of civilization, so take it easy

CONS

- Advice on staying updated

The author advises to “stay young” and stay updated on what’s popular and what’s driving the conversation.
I see where Larry King is coming from given the job that he does.
But I disagree here: for most people talking about the news is shallow conversation and the real productive people don’t waste too much time on the news.

Review

Sweet and to the point, “How to Talk to Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere” wastes no time on fluff or filler chapters.

The advice it shares is deep and simple, and yet it’s exactly what constitutes the basis of a great conversationalist.

I can recommend it.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**

Persuasion: Summary & Review (Dave Lakhani)

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Persuasion teaches readers how to persuade and influence people.
Dave Lakhani, the author, does a good job of providing some of the main fundamentals of effective persuasion.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Persuasion Summary
- Persuasion VS Manipulation
- How to Manipulate
- The Foundation of Persuasion is Who You Are
- Become an Expert
- Tell People They Have Permission
- Leverage Social Matching
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- Persuasion Review

Bullet Summary

- The difference between persuasion and manipulation is the intent of deceiving
- Persuasion is based on truth, honesty, inquisitiveness and the ability to tell a good story

Persuasion Summary

Dave Lakhani got interested in persuasion and manipulation because of his childhood with a mother who was the victim of a cult.

The cult mandated parents to beat hyperactive children to “stamp the devil out” and Lakhani left home as soon as he could.

Since then, he studied and researched persuasion and manipulation.

Persuasion VS Manipulation

Dave Lakhani dedicates part of “Persuasion” to explain the difference between persuasion and manipulation.

Lakhani mentions Robert Greene, author of The 48 Laws of Power, who said that all attempts to influence are manipulations.

But Dave Lakhani disagrees.
He says that in manipulation there is only the interest of the manipulator and the manipulated loses out.

In persuasion, the target of persuasion does not lose out and there can be a win-win.

I agree with Dave Lakhani here and it’s an important difference.

Also see:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Why Manipulation is Short Term

Manipulation only works when there is a lack of information, experience, or critical thought from the manipulated.

When the manipulated thinks again over the course of the events or acquires the missing information, the manipulation becomes clear.
And that's why manipulation is short term: the manipulated eventually catches up.

How to Manipulate

Dave Lakhani shares how manipulation occurs and what the steps are so that people can understand and defend themselves against manipulation.

The steps are:

1. Look for people who are searching, looking for answers or salvation
2. Look for people who are unsure and unconfident
3. Test their knowledge and commitment
4. Present yourself as an expert and test if they push back or disagree with what you say
5. Use generalizations to get them to agree with you
6. Build rapport
7. Put them into a future situation where they benefited from following you (or your advice)
8. Subtly present your proposal, and make it a one time offer
9. Build more rapport and trust before you depart
10. Continuous the process until they're fully committed and then you can let them into your special insider circle

Also read:

- **Best books on manipulation**

> Best Manipulation Books

The Foundation of Persuasion is Who You Are

If you think of persuasion as building a house, then the persona, or who you are, is the foundation of that house.

Your persona must be well-developed and fully support the message, being fully congruent with what you espouse, say or sell.

The Three Elements of Your Persona

There are three elements of your persona that you must hone and develop to persuade at the highest levels:

1. Appearance
2. Voice and communication skills
3. Positioning (body language)

Dave Lakhani then goes on to describe each one of them.

Become an Expert

Becoming a formal expert in your area of influence is the single smartest thing you can do.

Similar to other books such as "The 4 Hour Work Week", Lakhani lays out a plan to become an expert in 30 days. But I'm not a big believer of 30 days expertise plans.

Tell People They Have Permission

Implying or outright telling people they have (your) permission to do something is a powerful reminder of their childhood days when they could only go ahead when a parent would allow them to.

It sets you as the one with power and can remove the last defenses and give the final nudge to complying to your request.

Also read:

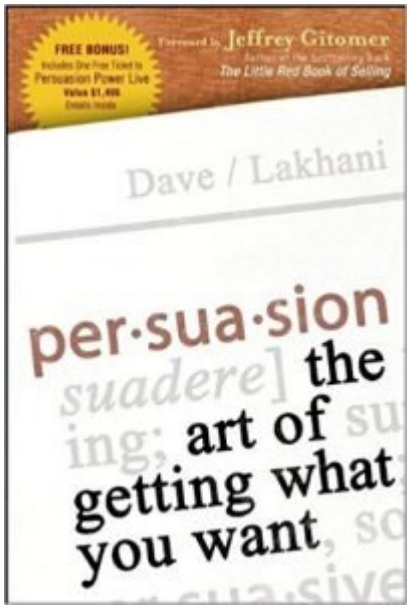
- Soft Power

The author would sometimes ask the higher ranking officer in the room if he gives permission to the people around to take the decisions that best serve the interest of the company.
Later on, if any of them reaches an impasse, Lakhani reminds them they have permission from the big boss to go ahead.

Leverage Social Matching

The author mentions social proof from the classical Robert Cialdini's book Influence.

Dave Lakhani uses the word "matching" thought because you want to show that someone *just like* them has done what you want them to do. That takes away the risk that people will not want to follow a random crowd in case they have a rebellious streak.



Real Life Applications

- Get authoritative people to transfer persuasion power to you by endorsing you
- Know the person you are persuading better than they know you
- Let people talk so you can find and leverage the similarities between you two
- If you say sales end on a certain day, don't give it away to the latecomers who ask for the discounted price

- The yes ladder can be effective but people are likely to change their mind right after if you haven't properly persuaded them first
- Decide on a cut-off time: many salespeople don't maximize their time because they waste too much time on people who aren't going to buy

CONS

- **Blogging Advice is Dated** (and now wrong)

The author righteously suggests having a good website and a popular blog to enhance your online presence and perceived expertise.

His advice though is not current anymore and writing 200-400 words is actually harmful advice in today's environment.

This is not necessarily the author's fault since SEO has changed a lot in the years.

- **Some exaggerated initial claims**

So many influences and persuasion books start by making huge claims about what you will learn and be able to do.

I am not one of the people who enjoy that.

Persuasion Review

A good overview of persuasion, a great analysis of the difference between persuasion and manipulation.

What I loved the most about Persuasion by Dave Lakhani though is the focus on personality.
I believe that is the most important fundamental in any persuasion attempt and too often it goes unmentioned in many similar books.

Also check the:

- **Best persuasion books**

or **get the book on Amazon**

When: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *When* Daniel Pink analyzes the impact that time and the timing of your actions have on our lives.
Pink shows that *when* you decide to do what you strongly affects the effectiveness of your actions, and your chances of succeeding.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- When – Summary
- Circadian Rhythms Archetypes: Are You Lark or Owl?
- Circadian Types' Traits
- The U-Shaped Daily Productivity
- There Is a Time for Art & A Time For Critical Thinking
- Tips to Maximize Your Day
- When to Go First, When to Go Last
- When to Get Married
- At Midpoint, We Relax Standards (& Assessments)
- By Midpoint It's Best to Lose (by a little)
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- When Review

Bullet Summary

- Our day has a U-shaped curve of efficiency and happiness
- Our life has a U-shaped curve when it comes to happiness
- If you want to maximize your efficiency: learn about your circadian rhythm and schedule your da-ys accordingly
- Take many breaks and take short naps

When – Summary

Daniel Pink is not a psychologist himself, but he does his research well -very well-.
I loved his previous book "Drive" and so I had high expectations for "When".

Circadian Rhythms Archetypes: Are You Lark or Owl?

When it comes to circadian rhythms Daniel Pink uses the terms "owl" for people staying late and night and "larks" for people waking up early in the morning.

Circadian Chronotypes (that's the correct word) are not fixed in stone but change depending on age, circumstances, and also gender.

Most of us are somewhat in the middle, which Pink calls "third birds".

It's important to know where you fall on the line circadian spectrum because it will affect how productive (or unproductive) you are during certain times of the day.

Circadian Types' Traits

Owls, or the people who stay up late and wake up late, tend to be:

- More creative
- Have a stronger working memory
- Score higher on intelligence tests
- Have a better sense of humor

But they are also more prone to addiction, drug use, eating disorder, sensation-seeking, and neurotic.

My Note: No real data here
This is one of those cases in which the author does not quantify those "more likely" and "more prone to".

To me, this is meaningless because a "1% more likely is insignificant" but a "50% more likely would be highly significant.

But the author doesn't provide those statistics.

The U-Shaped Daily Productivity

Every day, for most people, presents a U-shaped chart when it comes to productivity.

We start the day that we are very productive in the morning. Then we hit a trough in the afternoon and eventually we rebound in the early evening.

It's not just productivity though, the same U-shaped curve affects happiness, emotional balance, and warmth towards others.

This has been proven by several experiments, including:

- Daniel Kahneman, the author of Thinking Fast and Slow, who used the day reconstruction method
- The analysis of millions of Twitter messages by a Cornell University research

There Is a Time for Art & A Time For Critical Thinking

What I found most interesting from a psychological point of view is that times of the day which are poor for critical thinking tasks are actually great for artistic pursuits.

This is because our neocortex is less engaged and we can "let go" more easily.

Tips to Maximize Your Day

Here is some good advice to maximize your day:

- Drink water when you wake up (also read The Miracle Morning)
- Get some sun on your skin
- Coffee is OK, but best after 1-1.5h after waking up
- You can skip breakfast
- But do get lunch
  - Make the launch autonomous (you decide) and detached (no work-talk)
- Use micro-breaks (especially before important tasks)
  -

  - Moving and walking beats remaining seated
  - Taking a break with someone beats staying alone
  - Try to stay tech-free and let go of your phone
  - The company DeskTime calculated 17 mins of break for every 52 mins of work (but this is a meaningless average of course)
- Do nap (but not long naps: between 10 and 20 minutes is ideal)
  - You can get a coffee right before nap so that the effect will start right after you wake up
  - Around 7 hours after you first woke up is a good time for napping

For more bio-hacking also read "Own The Day, Own Your Life".

When to Go First, When to Go Last

I have read plenty of books that recommend people to go first or last (one of them: The Social Animal). And many of them got it wrong.
So I was really glad to read Daniel Pink's take on it since he says he bases his advice on research.

When you're in a serial competition (ie: job interviews or candidate seeking votes) go first when:

- In ballots and elections, the first name gets a boost
- You're not the default choice (it helps you get a fresh look from the decision-makers)
- There are relatively few competitors ("primacy effect")
- There are many strong candidates (if people see many strong early candidates they will start looking for flaws in the successive ones)

Go last (or not first) when:

- You are the default choice (people are less likely to challenge status quo and more likely to stick with the default when they're tired)
- There are many competitors of average level (the primacy effect doesn't hold and by going last you can showcase your uniqueness)
- You're operating in an uncertain environment (you can get a hedge by watching what the competition does)
- The competition is weak (at the beginning of the competition the judges hold an ideal standard of performance, and when it's not met, they discard the first competitors and the successive ones enjoy the more realistic expectations)

For a more complete guide check:

- When to go first, when to go last

When to Get Married

- Way until you're old enough, but not too old (above 32 the odds of divorce increase by 5% each year for the next decade)
- Wait until you completed your studies
- Wait until your relationship is mature enough (waiting at least 1 year before marriage were 20% less likely to divorce; waiting 3 years even better)
- Don't spend too much on engagement rings (somehow high spending was correlated with divorce, but this sounded dubious to me because no numbers were given)

At Midpoint, We Relax Standards (& Assessments)

We remember beginning and endings the most. If the ending of a colonoscopy is not painful, we remember it as less painful even if the total experience was longer and more painful (as compared to a colonoscopy that didn't end well).

What's also surprising is that most people relax their standards during the middle and that people even judge others less harshly for the middle.

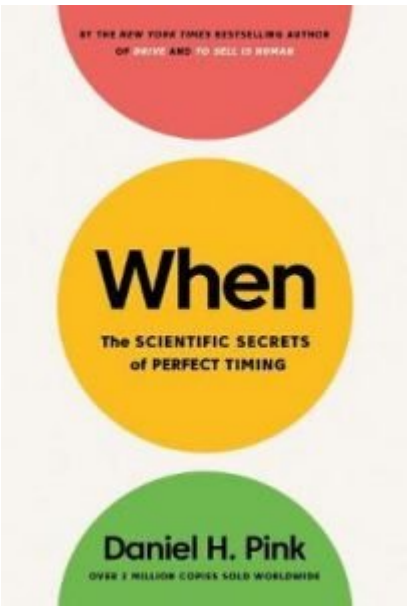
If you're a president, you should focus on the last year because that's what matters the most.

By Midpoint It's Best to Lose (by a little)

Teams that at mid-game were behind by one point were more likely to win. This is because they went into the field with a mindset that they needed to make up and right after the match restarted they accumulated more points.

Psychologically indeed, researchers have shown that people invest the most effort when they were told they were trailing by a little (as compared to when they were told they were winning or they were losing by wide margins).

The effect didn't hold if they were much behind.
So as Robert Greene says in The 48 Laws of Power: crush your opponents totally.



Real-Life Applications

- Identify your circadian type, identify your peaks and troughs and schedule your most important work during your peak hours
- During your breaks, green and nature will help (even if just looking at it from a window)
- Exercise in the morning for:
  - losing weight more efficiently
  - building strength and boosting mood (evening and later afternoon are best for peak performance)
- End on a high note: people prefer endings on a high note even when the overall sum is lower than the option with a poorer ending but higher overall scores
- **For leaders**: when team morale is low it's best to emphasize the work that has been made; when team morale is high it's best to emphasize what needs to be done
- Think about the future: the author makes some fun of author who encourages of to "live in the present" (The Power of Now, wink wink) because cultures who have languages with strongly defined future tenses exercise

more, save more for retirement and, it seems, enjoy better lives
- Doctors and nurses make many more mistakes during the troughs of the day and are much more likely to be sloppy

CONS

- **At times the "better" was unquantifiable**

There were several instances in which Daniel Pink quantified his "better", "stronger" or "more likely".
But many other times where no number or data was given to quantify "better", "stronger" or "more likely".

To me, that felt as if the author was trying to make "When" more captivating or as if he describing small changes and avoided to quantify the actual impact or it would otherwise be obvious the change was minimal.

This makes "When", in my opinion, a wonderful book but more of a pop-psychology title than a heavily scientific one.

- **At time sensationalistic**

The author says that people who start working on a bad job market will earn less even decades into their careers.

The long term impact was 2.5% though, and the author says that "in some cases, up to 20%".
But that "in some cases" makes no sense, because obviously, we are going to have some cases which are larger. But we will also have some cases of people who ended up earning *more*.

The average 2.5% was all that we needed, really.

When Review

"When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing" is a wonderful book and I enjoyed it through and through.

It also reminded me of how hard it was for an owl like me to wake up early morning to go to high school and how unproductive I was simply because of my circadian rhythms (young men also tend to be more owls).
The author indeed recommends to start schools later, and I couldn't agree more.

"When" also gave me some new perspectives on psychology (for example when to go first or last and on people's tendency to relax standards of assessment in the middle).
And I learned loads on bio-hacking (albeit I'm not a fan of that word :).

And, in general, I simply deeply enjoyed reading "When", so I can once again highly recommend Daniel Pink.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**

Mind Games Women Play (& How to Beat Them)

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Women play all kinds of games on men:

- Manipulative games to control relationships
- Nasty power games to control dating

But stay with me her before clicking on those other posts.

This article gives you the quickest overview of games women play, plus, **you'll learn how to handle any game** and win, without being an as*hole.

"Mommy's so sick and tired of wearing panties"

Let's begin:

Contents

- 1. "Look At Me" (While I Don't Look At You)"
- 2. Feigning Disinterest (AKA: Chase Me Some More)
- 3. "Invest in Me" Games (Ie.: I'm Higher Value, Pay The Difference)
- 4. Delay Responses Games
- 5. Wait For Me Games
- 6. Cancel The Date Games
- 7. Prove Yourself to Me Games (AKA: Dance Monkey Dance)
- 8. Sex Withholding Games
- 9. Damsel in Distress Games
- 10. "I'm Not That Kind of Girl" Game
- Getting His Commitment Games
- Relationship Games
- Nasty Games Women Play
  - Bonus: These Are Not Games Women Play

1. “Look At Me” (While I Don’t Look At You)“

Games start early in seduction.

Before a single word has been exchanged, women are already making sure that he is chasing.

And the very first game to frame him into the chasing position is to get his attention while pretending she hasn’t even noticed him.

More often than not, **women don’t want men to realize they are looking at men** while at the same time trying to get men to look at them.

Some women keep playing this game long after the two have first met.
Have you ever noticed that some women bury their noses in their phones at your agreed meeting spot or always fail to see you first?

And maybe you’ve been wondering:

> **Clueless guy**: Gosh, I wonder how could she not see me

Well, if you have been wondering that, here’s the news: many women play games :).

This scene from Sex & The City is a good example (and the comments below the video confirm many women do the same):

> **Carrie**: (speaks and looks away)
> **Mr. Big**: (looking straight at her) Anywhere you want. Just you and me.
> **Carrie**: (look at him) Call me (breaks eye contact first, moves away)

⁉ Notice Carrie often looking away as they talk.
That serves to make him look at her more often than she looks at him. That frames her as the prize, and frames him as chasing.
Well played.

The “Look At Me Catwalk”

The crown for the “look at me game” goes to the lady whom I dated a couple of times a few years ago.

She was a real champ :).

She came out of the metro, dressed to the nines, and walked two meters beside me with a long stride and an erect spine.
Like a catwalk model who was overdoing her catwalk.

Then she stopped 3 meters in front of me, emphatically looked left and right as if she were looking for someone, and then stopped there.

I laughed, and immediately knocked a couple of points off of her for being such a game-player.

Beating “Look At Me” Games

You can let her play this game and let her “win” it.

As long as she likes you and she doesn’t exaggerate, a prey/predator dynamic is good for seduction (and if you do it well, it *helps* seduction).

Just make sure that you:

- Don't stare too much before approaching
- Are not staring at her when she turns to look at you during your approach

Also read more in: a scientific guide to approaching a girl.

2. Feigning Disinterest (AKA: Chase Me Some More)

The female dating literature sounds like a big choir whose refrain is: "make him chase you".

And making him chase starts by feigning disinterest or, at least, showing less interest than he does.

Beating the "Feign Disinterest" Games

This is one of those games that risk derailing the interaction if any of the two overdoes it.

How you handle it depends on the stage and the dynamics, but a high-power approach is to go direct and blow the game out of the water with high-power honesty.

For example:

> **Her**: Well, I don't know if I will have time to be honest
> **Him**: Look, it's fine either way. Nobody dies if you don't. But I like you. And maybe we can get along well. But to know for sure, we should find the time for a coffe.
> So I propose this: we exchange contact, I'll give you a call and we'll try to find some tie. Are you in?

That's high-power stuff.
If there was any interest, that would amplify it 10x.

3. "Invest in Me" Games (Ie.: I'm Higher Value, Pay The Difference)

Some women make it a point to make men pay for and invest in them.

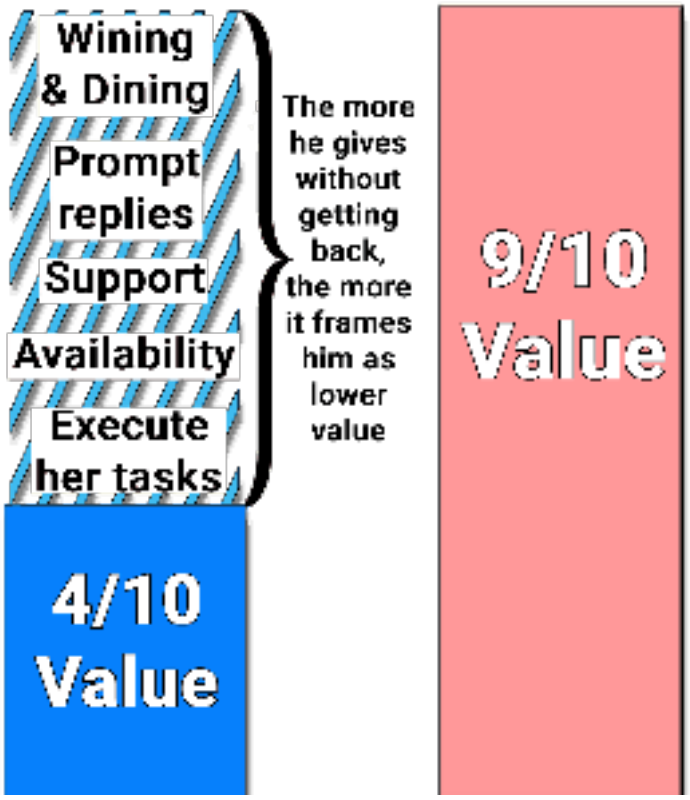
Gold diggers are an extreme example, but normal women who seek a provider also play this game.

"Invest in me" games include trying to make the man:

- Pay for the dates
- Buy gifts
- Run to support her
- Emotionally support her (commiserate with her woes, rail against her enemies, etc.)

Making him invest in her increases her power because it shows that she has a higher sexual market value and the investment serves to "pay for the difference".

This is how it works:



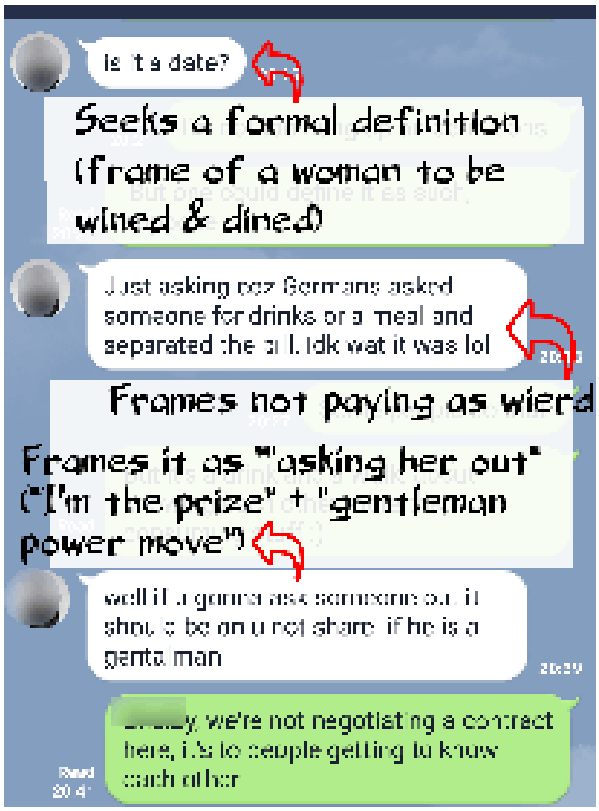
The more you invest, the more you sub-communicate that she is more valuable than you are.

So, what does this game look like in real life?

You know the most stereotypical example:

> **Her**: will you buy me a drink?

Or here is a real-life texting example from an online dating match before even going out:



I was getting a terrible impression of her. I threw her a lifeline with that last message, but she was sinking in value in my eyes (P.S.: “two* people”)
Most men are happy to accept that frame and invest because, on average, women are more valuable than men in the dating marketplace.

Beating “Make Him Invest” Games

This depends a lot on your background and dating culture.

Investing in a woman before marrying is just how dating goes in some conservative cultures.

Even in libertine cultures, it can be OK to invest *as long as she’s being kind and/or gives back*.

It’s when investing becomes “over-investing” and when you’re getting little back that this game women play becomes really nasty.

A relationship where one gives and the other only takes is a sucker relationship.

I advise men to stay away from women who ask without giving and I advise women to stay away from “make him invest games“.

Most cool and well-adjusted guys don’t like it anyway.
Example from “How I Met Your Mother”:

> **Her**: Okay, well, what about me? Aside from the cats, how did I come across?
> **Ted**: That’s right– the check. The check came and, of course, I was going to pay, but you didn’t do the check dance

This is basically saying:

I didn’t like you because you didn’t even *pretend* you wanted to chip in and you acted like it was owed to you.

4. Delay Responses Games

The first time a girl messages a boy is the first time she will start thinking about delaying response games.

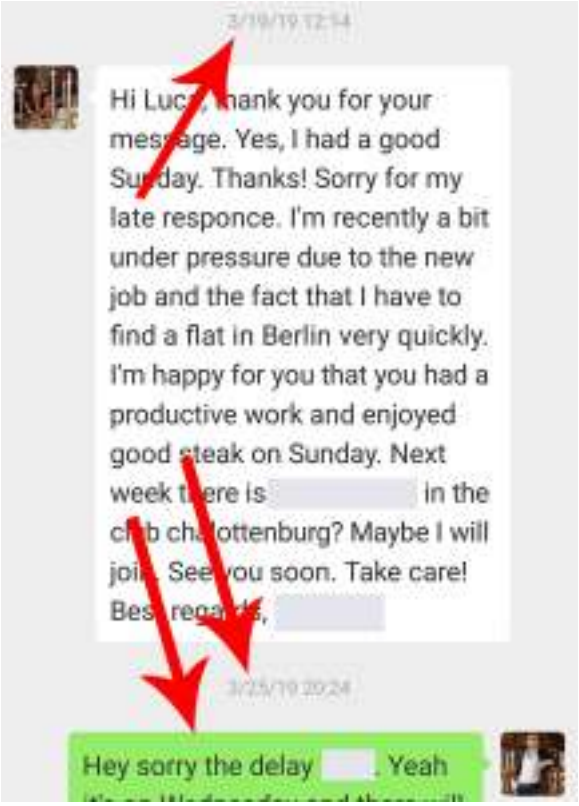
It’s that natural and it’s that common that we don’t need to discuss it further

Beating the Delaying Response Game

A common response is to let her wait as well.

It’s a solid response.

In this example, she was very warm and quiet chasing me in person.
But her message came with a delay and with a very snubbing tone:



So I let her wait and kept it short and snobbish as well.

But don't overdo it.
If all you do is wait longer and longer, you're doomed.
Either vary the response time or change the dynamics from a vicious cycle to a virtuous cycle.

I recommend the following:

1. The first time she does it, waits even longer
2. Don't invite her out if she avoided your invite of course
3. Keep your text shorter
4. As soon as she replies, reply within a day

The last point is the most important.

See it this way: one of you must eventually be an adult about dating and relationships.
And let it be you.

> **Great leaders always move first when it's time to stop the games.**
> -ThePowerMoves

5. Wait For Me Games

Similar to delaying responses, "making him wait" is the old power move in the world.

No self-respecting woman would show up early to a date and wait for him.
Many women will show up late and some will show up late *on purpose*.

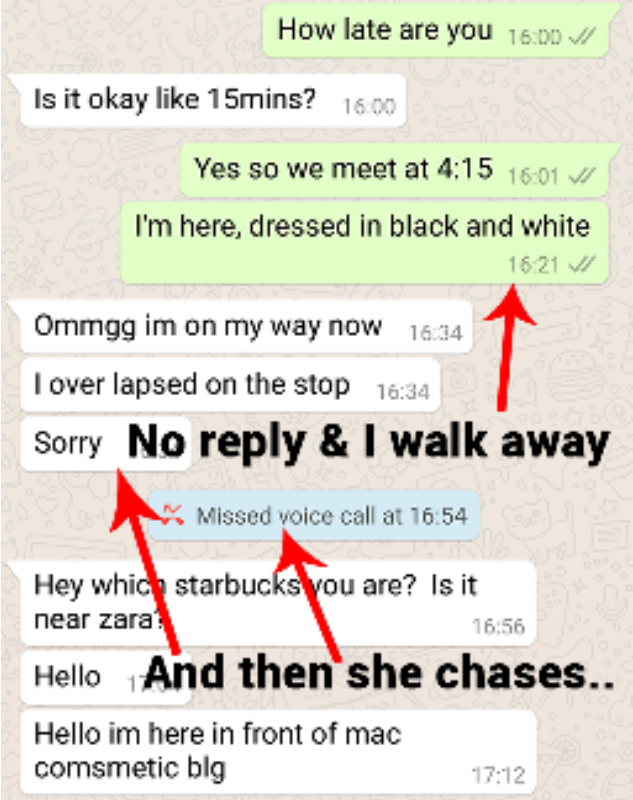
The "make him wait game" sub-communicates that her time is more valuable, that she has more power, and that she can let you wait.
And when you wait, you confirm that frame.

Beating “Making Him Wait” Games

If the tardiness stays within 10 minutes it’s OK.

Longer than 10 minutes she must write to you.
If she is not apologizing, consider it a very bad sign and a strike against her character.
If she is also not responsive, consider the date off and move.

Often women will chase you when they realize you’re not waiting around for them:



10 minutes of delay, no writing, no apologizing… I took the date off and moved for better prospects. I met her later, after power dynamics were rebalanced

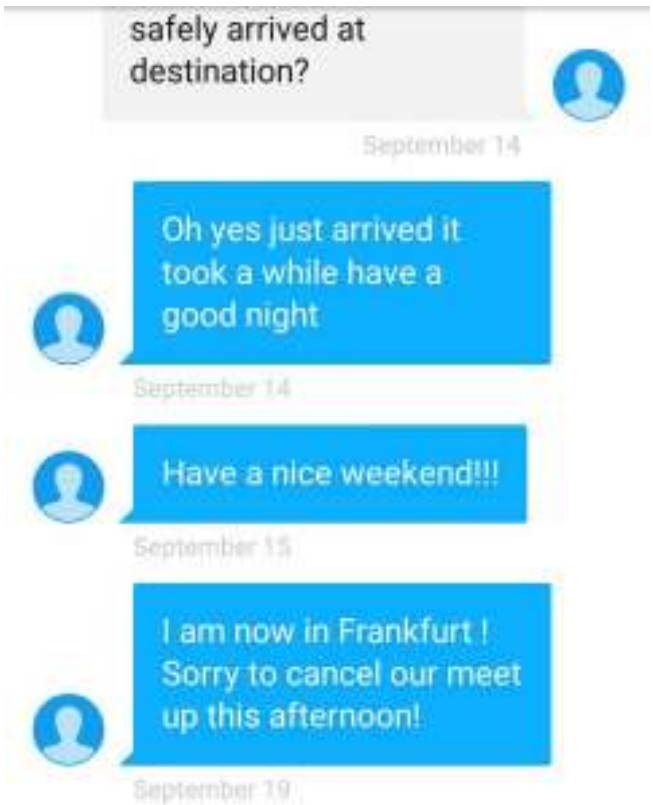
6. Cancel The Date Games

Here is another old trick.

The person who cancels sub-communicates cares less about the event, meeting, or date.

Robert Cialdini explains in *Influence* that we want what we can’t have.
So canceling a date can work in making men want her even more.

However, as with most games, it can also specularly backfire:



Of course, at this point, I could not be sure whether she had a real reason to cancel or not.
But since she canceled on the same day of our scheduled date, I reacted the only way possible (read below).

Beating “Date Cancelling” Games

How do you recognize a real need to cancel a date from a game women play?

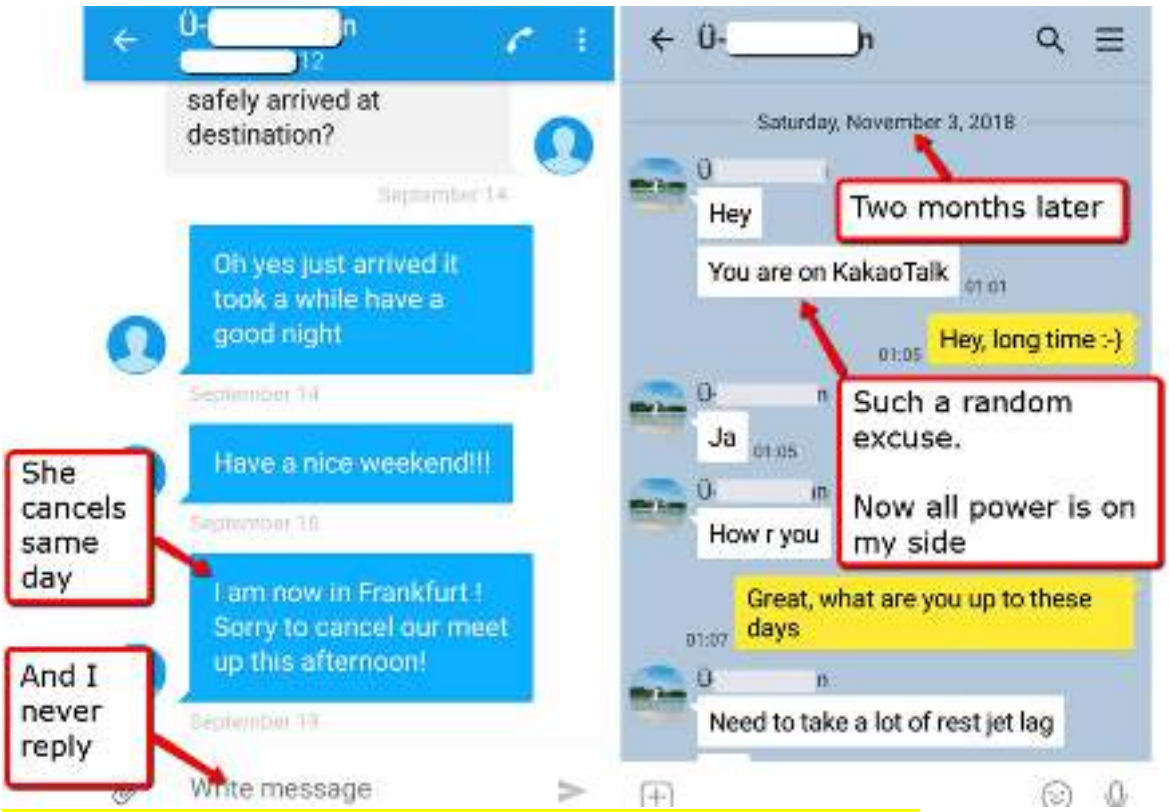
Simple, you look for the following:

- Is she telling you well in advance?
- Is she apologetic about it?
- Does she propose alternatives?
- Does she show a willingness to make up for it?

If she does any of the above, great news, It’s probably true and you can reschedule (just a bit later, not right away).

If she just drops a shi**y text like the one above on the same day, without any apologies, she doesn’t deserve your time.
Let it die.

And if it was true, it’s up to her to re-initiate.
And if she reinitiates with a lame excuse, you know she liked you, you know she feels guilty and you know she knows she misbehaved (and, likely, you know that she was playing a mind game):



Then she chased for that date. But by then, I really lost most of my interest in her.

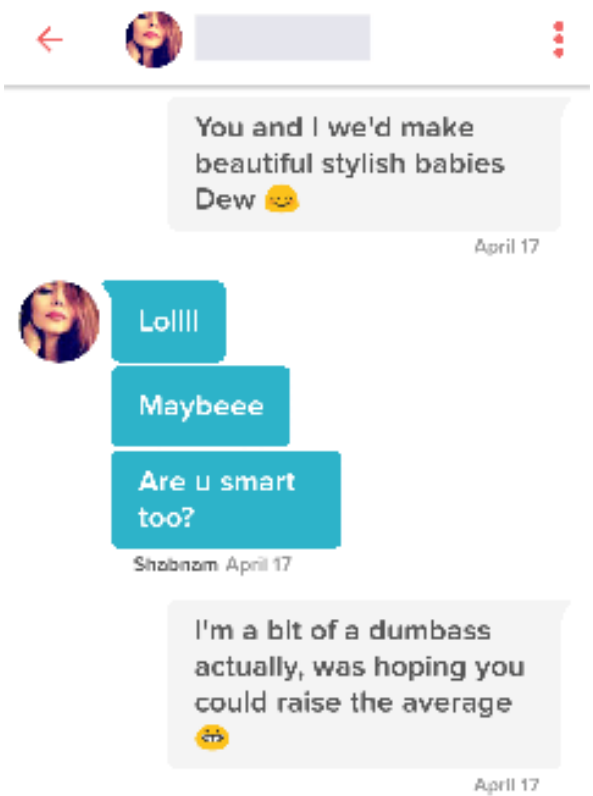
7. Prove Yourself to Me Games (AKA: Dance Monkey Dance)

This is what in the past we called "jump through the hoops" and it's a soft-power type of game.

Many smart women play it instinctively and most normal guys fall for it… Equally instinctively :).

The games women play that fall under the "make him prove to her" are varied and almost infinite. And sometimes they can be subtle.

Look at this example from a Tinder conversation:



It would seem natural here to follow up her joke with “I’m crazy smart” or “our babies would be smarter than Einstein”.
But, even if said jokingly, I’d still followed her in *her* frame, and, most of all, I’d have been proving myself to her.

My reply instead actually says:

> **Lucio**: Nono lady, *you* prove yourself to me

And in this case, it worked like a charm:

She got this :)
Many advanced dating games and power moves belong to this group.

And learning to deal with them is all about increasing your power intelligence, guys, There is no shortcut—actually, there is one: Power University.

Also, check this forum entry for the perfect execution of the "dance monkey dance":

- **She maneuvers seats to lock in and he plays the monkey dance**

8. Sex Withholding Games

AKA "Sex blackmailing".

The "withholding sex game" is encouraged and recommended by several dating coaches, including in the popular "The Power of The Pussy".

The author recommends women use sex as a bargaining chip to get whatever they want.

And that's what the game is all about: she refuses him sex until he gives her whatever she asks for. Or some women just play it for power, really (like Margot Robbie in the very first picture of this article).

> **If her biggest bargaining chip is spreading her legs you should play at another table (the stakes are low here)**
> -ThePowerMoves

Dealing With Sex Withholding Games

Never give in.

Men who give in to sex blackmailing communicate a host of bad traits, including:

- He can't get sex elsewhere

- He is easy to manipulate
- She doesn't really enjoy sex so much
- She is the (sexual prize) of the relationship

A good answer is to shame her.
Such as, you tell her you're disappointed she'd even stoop so low.

And then you can even invite her to leave (or leave yourself if you're at her place):

> **Her**: No, I don't feel like doing it… (if you don't do X)
> **Him**: You know what, I really don't have time for this.
> It feels to me like you're playing a bartering game or something.
> The relationships I seek are supportive and you don't seem to want the same.
> I should get to work now, and you should probably go

Then watch her chase you (as she should! She has to make her up for her manipulation).

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

9. Damsel in Distress Games

It was far more popular in the old days of romanticism.

Today, with feminism and the pressure on women to be strong, we don't see it nearly as often.

But you'd be mistaken to think it's completely gone.
The smartest women indeed know better than to drink the manipulative Kool-Aid and still use it.

Of course, not all do it this obviously, but the psychology behind is actually this one:

> **Her**: Aaah! A spider (runs behind him)

Make him feel strong and powerful, and he'll move mountains to protect you.
This is actually a high-quality woman type of game.

10. "I'm Not That Kind of Girl" Game

AKA: "I'm relationship material".

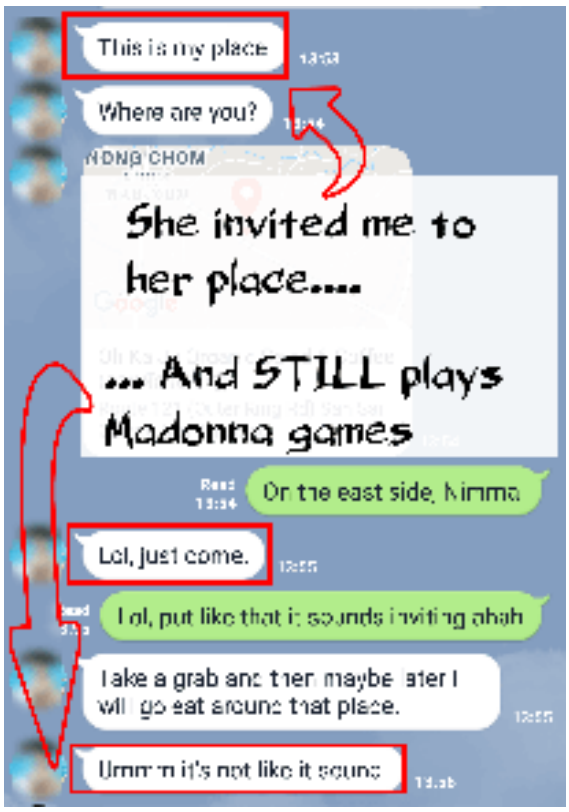
This is part of the more general "Madonna games".

Such as women seek to position themselves as "serious" and "relationship material" by making him wait for sex.
So it can involve winning and dining before he can get to the cake (read "Madonna-whore dichotomy" because this is important in female and dating psychology).

Of course, sometimes women truly want to wait or need some more time.
But still, there are also a lot of games around it.

Indeed, some **women play this game even when they're being open and forward about sex (for a woman!)**.

Look at this example: this girl invited me to go to her place before going for lunch, and I wanted to make sure I was going to go there without "wasting a trip" if you know what I mean.
So I joked a bit about "coming", but that was too much, and pushed her into the Madonna game:



Typical Madonna game to avoid looking slutty. It's often up to the men to help her get rid of Madonna games.

Beating Madonna Games

See "Seduction University".

Also read:

- Lovers, providers & friends
- Lovers VS providers

Getting His Commitment Games

The games women play don't stop at seduction of course.

As a matter of fact, they switch to an even higher gear when things get sexual.

You can read more commitment games here, but some of the most popular include:

- **"You can't control me… Unless you become my boyfriend"**

Here is what this game looks like in real life:

> **Her**: I am going to party with my girlfriends
> **Him**: Aren't you partying a bit too much recently..
> **Her**: Well, you're not my boyfriend, so you can't say anything..

This one basically says: start to get serious or I am drifting away and might meet someone else.
In a way, she is giving you more control over her… As long as you give commitment.

It's not the nastiest game, as it's a form of barter and she is giving you something back.

- **Triangulation Games**

> **Her**: My new teammate Marco is sooo nice to me. Today he invited me for lunch and he taught me so much about..

This is a threat of triangulation, a seduction technique Robert Greene mentions in The Art of Seduction.
It's a veiled threat that if you don't hurry up, she might find someone else. While triangulation can be emotionally manipulative behavior, you must also ask yourself if you are not wasting her time.

Here is another example of a triangulation game:

- **Ultimatum Games**

Women usually play the ultimate game when they're looking for a relationship:

> **Her**: Either you get serious, or I'm outta here

All threats, including breakup threats, are, of course, nasty games.
I highly recommend men not to get into a relationship under any type of threat.

Not only it would give all the power to her, but it also says a lot about what she thinks of you (not so much) and provides a preview of how she might behave in the relationship.

- **The gentle ultimatum game**

This one looks like this:

> **Her**: I don't do sex without relationships

This is a good type of ultimatum game actually.
There's still a slight threat of possibly abandoning the relationship, but it does so in a very tactful way.

Relationship Games

Games diminish in relationships but do not disappear.

Relationships games start with her rewriting the history of how you two met and, somewhat magically, it always ends up looking like you chased her far more than you actually did :).

Relationships have very different games and power dynamics and men and women play different games because of their different needs.
See:

- **How women control men**
- Relationship power dynamics
- How to control relationships (the healthy way)

Nasty Games Women Play

Not all games are created equal.

Some can even be helpful.

But some others can be very nasty and lead to highly toxic relationships.

I've done a whole article on this, so read it here:

- **Nasty games women play**

Bonus: These Are Not Games Women Play

Sometimes people list these as games women play.

But most often, they're not:

- **Let's just be friends**

No, sorry, women who are attracted to men rarely use that as a game.
The only exceptions are with coworkers and when other people are around, in which case she might be trying to protect her reputation.

- **I like you more like a brother**

Similar to the above: this is rarely a game or a shit test, as it's often listed.
Women simply don't say this kind of stuff to men they are attracted to.

- **Make up / enhancing appearances**

The *APA Handbook* on relationships lists this as a common “lie” for women.

It’s not.

High-quality women DO take care of their appearances.

SUMMARY

The old pick-up artists used to ask as a conversation starter if men or women play more games.

Sure men do play games as well, but the games women play are, on average, far more numerous and far more advanced.

This article gave you an overview of the most common mind games women play and how you can confront them as a high-quality man.
Now you don’t need to fear women’s games anymore :).

To Sell Is Human: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *To Sell Is Human,* author Daniel Pink looks at sales and how it's changed in the era of the digital revolution, new scientific research.
Pink says that an ethical approach to sales is the most effective approach you can take in this day and era.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- To Sell Is Human – Summary
- Manipulation Works in Sales With Information Asymmetry
- Manipulation Doesn't Work In The Digital Age
- The Three Steps to Prospect Taking
- Extroverts Are Poor Sellers
- Explanatory Styles Explain What Best Salesmen Do
- Three Sales Principles From Improv Theater
- Leverage Pro-Social Behavior For Persuasion
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- To Sell Is Human – Review

Bullet Summary

- Manipulation only works when there is an asymmetry of information, and that's not the case today
- Focus on service-selling: sell from a position that seeks to improve people's lives and the world
- When you get rejected make sure that you don't read it as a personal rejection and as an eternal rebuttal of your personal worth

To Sell Is Human – Summary

About the Author: Daniel Pink is an American author. He has a degree in law and worked in politics as the chief speechwriter of Al Gore.
He also wrote *Drive* and *When*.
I find Pink to have a knack for mixing good scientific research, psychology, and great storytelling.

In a way, Danie Pink's books are somewhat similar to Malcolm Gladwell but, in my opinion, more scientific and rigorous.

Manipulation Works in Sales With Information Asymmetry

Daniel Pink says that manipulation and unethical approaches to sales can work as long as sellers know more than buyers.

When sellers have more information than buyers can ever gather, buyers are at the mercy of the sellers and they must beware.

That's when Daniel Pink introduces Joe Girard, the poster child of the lying salesman who'd say anything to create a

fake bond and make a sale.

Also read:

- **Best manipulation books**

And:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Manipulation Doesn't Work In The Digital Age

In the information age when a laptop can give potential buyers all the information they want and need, the low road of lying and manipulating doesn't work anymore.

People can also much more easily share information about lying salesmen and poor companies, making the costs for cheating potentially much higher.

Also read:

- Best influence and persuasion books

The Three Steps to Prospect Taking

Daniel Pink says that research shows there are three steps to effective prospect-taking:

1. **Reduce your power to sell better** (power selling rests on information asymmetry, today you need to attune to customers, and people who feel in high power are less able to attune)
2. **Use your head as much as your heart** (focus on what the prospect thinks, not just how they feel)
3. Mimic strategically

My note:
Step two was rather unclear to me and not very helpful from a practical point of view.

Extroverts Are Poor Sellers

Most people believe that extroverts excel in sales positions because they naturally like people and enjoy people's interactions.

However, the link between extroversion and income is tenuous or non-existent.

To be clear, extroverts do hold an advantage over introverts in sales positions, but they don't do nearly as well as ambiverts do.

Ambiverts are people who are in the middle of the extroversion spectrum and present traits of both introversion and extroversion.

Extroverts hold a slight advantage over introverts, but they often fail in sales because they tend to talk too much, ask too few questions, and, to use Daniel Pink's words "stumble over themselves".

Also, read here on how to become an ambivert:

- The ambivert advantage

Explanatory Styles Explain What Best Salesmen Do

Daniel Pink delves into Martin Seligman's studies here.

But the short of it is:

Martin Seligman found out that dogs -and later, people- give up trying when they (mistakenly) learn that they cannot do anything to change their circumstances.
When that happens, of course, there are no chances of succeeding because the organism simply fails to take action.

In human beings, learned helplessness is usually a consequence of negative explanatory styles.
Explanatory styles are different forms of self-talk that take place after the event has happened.

A negative explanatory style after a boss has yelled at you would look like this:

> My boss hates me because I am such a good for nothing and it's probably true I am worthless

People with a negative explanatory style explain events as:

- **Permanent** (negative conditions will endure)
- **Pervasive** (the causes are universal instead of specific to the circumstances)
- **Personal** (they are the ones to blame)

Research also shows that salesmen with an optimistic explanatory style oversell those with a negative style by 87% (top 10% VS bottom 10%).

Also read:

- Authentic Happiness by Martin Seligman

Three Sales Principles From Improv Theater

Researching for "*To Sell Is Human*" Daniel Pink visits a sales training that has its roots in improving theater.

The rules for good selling from improv theater are:

- **Hear Offers**

Don't focus on the "no" or the lack of "yes". Often behind a lack of yes there are ideas and paths that can lead to success and win-win.

Explore them by getting out of the mindset that you must "overcome objections".

- **Say "Yes And…"**

Don't say "yes, but…", which is a major rapport breaker.

Use "yes" and then redirect and go along with the prospect instead, which will help you listen and empathize instead of a combative mindset of "overcoming rejections".

- **Make Customers Look Good**

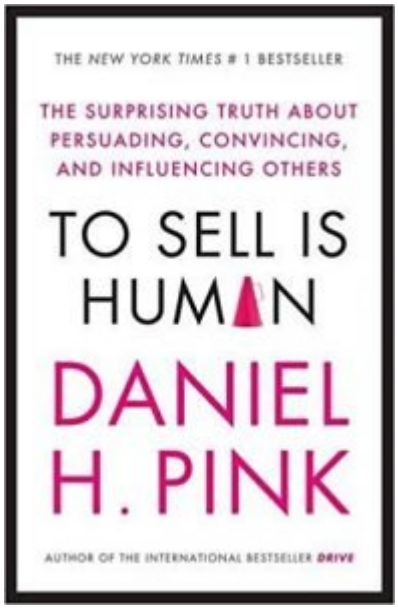
Daniel Pink mentions "Getting to Yes" and "7 Habits of Highly Effective People", two best-sellers that popularized the idea of looking for win-win negotiation.

On Saving Face also read: How to Win Friend and Influence People.

Leverage Pro-Social Behavior For Persuasion

Robert Greene, author of "*The 48 Laws of Power*" said that "self-interest is the currency that makes the world go around".

Yet research shows that appealing to the interest of our customers can yield much better results (for example: nurses reminded to wash their hands for the patients' benefit).



Real-Life Applications

- **Drop The "Overcome Objections Mindset"**

If you take one thing away from this summary of "*To Sell Is Human*" is to please drop the mentality that you must overcome objections.

That mindset makes you an annoying dic*head.

- **Use Mild Profanity**

Using some mild profanity such as "damn" in your speech will increase the persuasiveness of your speech.

- **Limit Choices**

Too many choices can lead to decision paralysis (also read "The Paradox of Choice").

- **Consider Adding A Blemish**

Adding a small drawback in an otherwise good list of positives increases sales as long as the blemish is last and the prospects are not in "full critical mode" but instead slightly distracted.
What happens psychologically is that the weak negative information increases the salience of the positive information (contrasting principle).

- **Ask Why They Didn't Pick a Lower Number**

If someone doesn't want to do something you can try to ask how much they want to do it from 0 to 10.
If they say 2, ask why it's 2 and not a 0. Now they are explaining why they want to do it.

- **Go First If You're The Incumbent, Last If You're The Challenger**

The challenger is better off presenting last. The market leader first.

Read an overview of how sequence and numbers affect pitches.

CONS

- **At Times It Felt Naive**

"*To Sell Is Human*" ends by inviting the readers to ask themselves if people's lives and the world will improve after they've done the sale.
That reminds me a bit of the spirit behind "*The Go-Giver*" and "*The Greatest Salesman In The World*".

I love the spirit and the idea of adding value to people and the world. But it's also somewhat naive to expect that success can only come with that mindset.

- **Old Message "We're All in Sales" Is Misleading**

The message that " we are all selling" is an old cliche often repeated in many sales books.
Somewhat, I don't fully agree: there is a big difference between "selling yourself and your ideas" and "selling products as a profession".

- **Misleading Research Attributions**

As "How to Lie With Statistics" shows research and statistics can be used to make any point, and in my opinion, they are even more dangerous because they can provide a semblance "of truth".

There were a few instances in which I felt that the words "research says" were used to give a semblance of certitude where there cannot be any certitude.

- **Misleading Generalizations From Research**

I felt that the author jumped to some misleading conclusions with some research.
For example, he says that granular numbers are more effective than coarse numbers, but then the comparison was not between similar products, and "effective" is a major generalization considering the research only measured a very specific product characteristic.

- **Somewhat Disjointed**

"*To Sell Is Human*" moves from self-promotion to sales ethics and morals to when to present for maximum effectiveness, as well, as what to improve theater teaches how to sell better.
It feels somewhat disjointed at times and more like a random collection of research and psychology papers.

- **Some Bad Advice For Self-Development**

In my opinion, some advice was poor.

For example, the author says to "count all the rejections you got" to understand that rejections don't kill.
But unless one already has an antifragile ego, focusing on rejection can be both painful and harmful.

- **Some Bad Selling Advice (The Customer is Doing You A Favor)**

The author presents Seth Godin, introduced as a "marketing guru", to advise selling from a position where the customer is always doing the salesman a favor.

This connects to the principle that "lowering your status" can help in attuning to the customer.
But I disagree here: it's a big generalization that doesn't hold true in many selling situations.

PROS

- **Wonderful Psychology**

Daniel Pink delivers some great pearls of wisdom when it comes to the psychology of selling and the psychology of happiness and self-development.

For example, he debunks the common misconception in sales that it's best to always tell oneself that "you can do it, you're the best", which is bandied by basically all sales books.

He explains that too positive self-talk has an upper limit and that some negative or critical self-analysis is helpful (also read: how to leverage failure).

- **Great Humor**

I absolutely loved the sarcasm of these two lines:

> Joe Girard is the world's greatest salesman.
> I know, because he told me.

LOL, priceless :D.

Then, a little later, says Pink:

> But there is one more thing you need to know about Joe Girard. He hasn't sold a car since 1977.
> He quit his business more than three decades to teach others how to sell.

- **Wonderful audiobook voice**

Daniel Pink actually reads his audiobook himself. I appreciate that, and the other listeners will too because he can make that writing come alive.

To Sell Is Human – Review

I don't fully agree with the idea that an ethical approach to sales -and success- is the best and most effective approach for your bottom line.

To me, it's very polly-annish.
I wish that an ethical approach to anything in life was the most effective.

The evidence that any critical observer can gather is clear: an ethical approach to life offers no inherent advantage when it comes to personal success.
Also read:

- **Psychopathy beats empathy and kindness**

Aside from that, I absolutely loved "To Sell Is Human".
It's a wonderful book and, for my personal taste as a sociologist, a psychology buff, and a lover of the scientific method, it's also the best book I have ever read on sales.

Get the book on Amazon

Game Theory Bargaining and Auction Strategies: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

"*Games Theory Bargaining and Auction Strategies*" explains auction theory to the layperson.
Gregor Berz, the author, strips away the equation and introduces real-life examples and psychology. This "simplified" format makes the book very useful and accessible to anyone who's interested in improving the outcomes of their negotiations.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Transactions & Indifference Price
- How to Appropriately Name Your First Price
- How to Negotiating In Fairness & Without Arguing
- The English Auction
- Vickrey Auction (Second Price Sealed Auction)
- Dutch Auction (Great to Sell Your House)
- Prisoner's Dilemma
- Breaking The Prisoner's Dilemma: Collusion Through Repetition
- Don't Negotiate By Begging: Whoever Can't Afford to Lose, Loses
- Rational Bidding Strategies
- Negotiation Power Games

- CONS
  - PROS
  - Review

Bullet Summary

- On eBay, bid your indifferent price and that's it
- To sell your house, consider a Dutch auction to scour the market for the highest price
- Never let people know you really need the transaction

Summary

The author says that the name "game theory" is confusing and a better name for the field would have been "strategy theory".

But that's not what happened, so we got stuck with "game theory".
Just be aware that "game theory" is the study of the different strategies and outcomes of transactions and negotiations.

Transactions & Indifference Price

The indifference price is the lowest price that a seller is willing to accept and the highest price that a buyer is willing to pay.

Transactions hence only happen when the two indifference prices overlap.

My Note:
Or when the *stated* indifference prices overlap as plenty of transactions don't happen because one party fails to understand that an opening price was simply a gambit.

Negotiation is Sharing The Pie

Negotiations then are all about "sharing the pie" of the overlapping indifference prices.

How to Appropriately Name Your First Price

A price that is too close to your indifference price will result in you getting a smaller piece of the pie.

A price that is too far from your indifference price can result in the negotiation not even starting (there is no overlap of indifference prices) and you losing all your credibility).

My Note:
As other negotiation books have stated, a good rule of thumb is to pick a price that is the highest price that you would not be embarrassed in defending and backing with data.
Research also shows that **you are better off with a range** that has your target price at the bottom.
And **use precise numbers** such as "81k to 84k" instead of "80k to 85k" as research shows that's more effective in moving the other party towards your range.

How to Negotiating In Fairness & Without Arguing

Gregor Berz introduces and explains several forms of auctions that are better suited for reaching "fair" outcomes.

- **Sealed Exchange of Bids**

His example takes place between two friends in a beer garden (guess where Berz comes from? :).

In the "Sealed Exchange of Bids," both write down their idea of a fair price and give the bids to a third friend. The third-party only reveals the bids if the two prices intersect. Otherwise, there is no more talking about a deal.

If the prices intersect, they can meet halfway. This is done by sharing all available information.

- **I Cut You Choose**

This is especially suited for sharing or for settling a divorce.

One party divides the pie and the other party chooses. Nobody can complain because the person dividing has chosen two equally attractive packages and the party who chooses, well… He has chosen.

When it's difficult to make precise packages, the difference is made up with debit or credit notes to make up for the difference.

The English Auction

In an English auction, the bidders all compete against each other and the highest bidder wins the auction.

In an English auction, it's the second-highest bid that determines the final price because the winner only has to bid higher than the second-highest bidder.

The English auction can result in poor outcomes for the auctioneer (or seller) if the auction ends far lower than the indifference price of the winner (which can be a sizable difference in case there was little visibility for the auction and/or very few bidders can afford the item).

Vickrey Auction (Second Price Sealed Auction)

The Vickrey auction is similar to the English auction in the sense that the final price is determined by the second-highest bid.

But contrary to English auctions the bidders here don't see the other bidders' bids.

Dutch Auction (Great to Sell Your House)

The Dutch auction names a price advertises the item, and does not accept negotiations.

Technically, it's an "open first-price auction".

If no buyers are found at the first-named price, the price goes down over time, and each decremental step can even be shared in advance (for example: start price 350k; in one month 340k; in two months 330k).

As Gregor Berz says, The Dutch auction is a great way to scour the market for the right price (but you should avoid parallel Dutch auctions if you have several items on the market and there is little demand).

My Note:
The author also shares the story of a house sold with a Dutch auction, and I decided that if/when I will sell my house, it will be with a Dutch auction (and I also thought about how to leverage the Dutch auction dynamics to increase the evaluation).
It's also a great way if you don't want to waste time with lowballers and long rounds of negotiations and it's fantastic when the demand is strong.

Prisoner's Dilemma

The nature of the prisoner dilemma is that if everyone were to follow a "communal" course of action that is good for everyone, everyone would gain.

However, defecting from the communal course of action can provide outsized advantages for a single individual.

Environmental protection is an example of a prisoner's dilemma where if everyone contributed, it would be better for everyone. But individual defection can improve the individual's life to the detriment of the collectivity.

The author says that the Prisoner's Dilemma changed Adam's Smith mistaken assumption that if everyone maximizes his own position, everyone gains.

My Note:
I don't think Adam's Smith "Invisible Hand" has been nullified. That's still what capitalism is based on and capitalism worked great.
What has been corrected is the *extreme* interpretation of the Invisible Hand upon which neo-liberism sought to eliminate all possible regulations (but that was always resting on flimsy foundations and little understanding of human psychology, albeit unluckily that's exactly the politics Greenspan was embracing).
The Prisoner's Dilemma did add an important theoretical layer that better captures many real-life situations and includes human sociology into economics and transactions (also read Stiglitz on-point correction of the Invisible Hand fallacy).

Repeated games tend to eliminate the Prisoner's Dilemma (also called "iterated prisoner's dilemma").

Breaking The Prisoner's Dilemma: Collusion Through Repetition

When negotiations can be repeated in quick succession, the prisoner's dilemma can be overcome.

But it can also be overcome in a way that is only good for the players (and sellers) and not for the whole market.

That's what happens for example in the gas and fuel markets.

Collusion can take place without the parties even having to formally agree to collude.

The players know that by lowering prices they will elicit the exact same reaction from the other players and that they will only hurt each other.

So they all keep roughly equal prices that keep fat margins for all.

Don't Negotiate By Begging: Whoever Can't Afford to Lose, Loses

Whenever you plead with the other players to go through with the transaction at the price you "need", you signal the players that you need your portion of the pie (and you can plot it on a utility function).

But since the utility of each unit of the pie is higher for the person who "really needs it", then it actually seems fair that the transaction is concluded quickly and with a smaller pier for the one who needs it (he gets more value out of his small share anyway).

Writes the author:

> (…) has been confirmed in experiments with students time and again. If both negotiation parties are aware of the assessment of utility of the counterparty, then they divide it "fairly" based on the utility and not the pie itself

Dividing "fairly" based on utility means giving less to the one who needs it the most.
That's how the human mind works, which to me is a prime example that if we want a fair society we need to channel our selfish genes and darkest drives.

What does it all mean to us?
Read here:

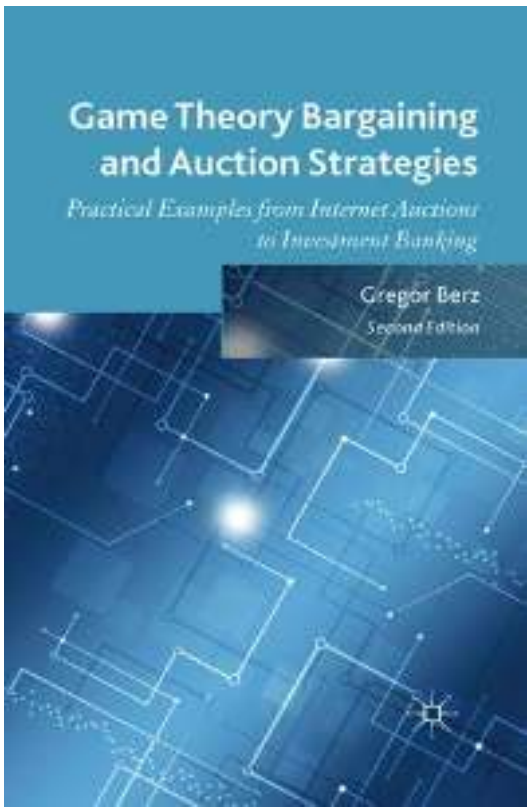
- What auction theory says about human nature

Rational Bidding Strategies

A few applications of game theory:

- In a second-price-sealed-bidding auction (ie.: eBay) it's a no-brainer to simply bid your indifference price
- In a first-price-sealed-bidding auction (ie.: you pay what you bid), you must take into account your indifference price and mitigate it with your risk aversion and your estimate of the competition's risk aversion
- It makes sense to increase your bids in the smallest possible increments (but if you factor in psychology, then it can make sense to go for a big increment to showcase your firepower)
- To avoid the winner's curse the auctioneers should share the information of how many bidders dropped out (this is important when the estimate of one bidder is poorer than the cumulative estimates of all other bidders such as in oil rig bids)
- In most competition situations several auction types and several negotiation rounds deliver better results
- In TIOLI (take it or leave it) don't make others look like a fool (The critical limit for acceptance is usually between 5 and 20 percent of the pie, says the author)
- Dealing with dictators and psychopaths you can increase the credibility of your TIOLI by adopting a randomized strategy because the negotiation position of a rational individual is otherwise much worse

My Note:
Don't waste time on eBay by bidding in smaller increments. Just bid the price you'd be happy to pay and then focus on the rest of your life.



Negotiation Power Games

- **Feign a must have to sell it higher**

You can pretend that something is really important to you not because it is, but because you can exchange it for higher concessions from your opponent.

- **Serial TIOLIs**

When you have several different suppliers or interested buyers you can approach them one after the other, serially, with TIOLIs (ie.: “take it or leave it” or “ultimatum games”) to take full advantage of your power position.

It’s best to let everyone know that you have several options because that increases the power and credibility of your TIOLI.

Ultimatum games only work if you have built a reputation of not reneging on your word (Chris Voss in “Never Split The Difference” explains how negotiators seek to let ultimatums slip in a non-aggressive environment as a way of removing power from hostage-takers without angering them).

- **Collusion Games**

The author tells the story of a sales auction for a repossessed home.
At the auction, there were two real estate agents.

But instead of bidding against each other which would have driven the price close to the market valuation, they spoke to each other and then they declared themselves a “bidding partnership”.

There was only one offer at that auction and they got the house at a crazy low valuation. They were then likely going to split a very big pie between each other (and I wondered why the author didn’t bid himself).

- **Collusion Through Signaling Games**

Whenever bids are visible highly experienced negotiators can submit bids with numbers that suggest their intention

to collude (for example the last places of the non-rounded can correspond to the zip code of the bidding company and send the message that each company will only bid for the local license).

Press releases can also be used to hint about the intentions of a bidder to collude (for example the press release for a steel producer to close down a plant was a signal of reducing the offer and avoid a price war).

- **Avoiding collusion games**

The better the bidders can observe each other, the easier it is for them to manipulate the auction. Thus, makes it impossible for them to know where they each stand (also see: manipulative strategies for an overview of manipulations).

If you suspect cartels, avoid simultaneous negotiations like auctions as it's too easy for them to boycott it.
If you suspect a cartel, it's best to deal with them sequentially with a TIOLI.

And if you're dealing with an entrenched cartel, make a great offer to one of them to break the cartel (finesse power move).

Finally, avoid non-binding auctions because everyone will bid collusively far from their indifference price to keep their margins in the "real" negotiation taking place afterward.

- **Dirty negotiation tricks of non-binding auction**

In non-binding auctions, including online non-binding auctions, it's easier for the auctioneer to submit a fake bid to increase the perceived competition and drive prices up.

CONS

- **Games theory still seeks to do without sociology and psychology**

The author poignantly asks:

> The degree to which those involved in negotiations really behave rationally – a prerequisite for the application of game theory – is an especially interesting question.

When I read that "rational behavior" is a prerequisite for the application of game theory I can't help but feel that the whole concept of game theory is undermined.

Countless research has shown beyond any reasonable doubt that humans are *not* rational (just as three examples check: Kahneman, Ariely, and also "Fooled by Randomness").
To really understand negotiation, sales, and, well, people… You cannot do without psychology and pretend that people are perfectly rational.

PROS

- **Practical, deep, and helpful**

Wonderful book, I learned hugely how to better structure my negotiations and auctions.

- **Negotiation power moves**

You will learn a lot about the dirty tactics of negotiations here.

- **Great for Psychology of negotiations**

I would have never guessed that I'd learn psychology from a book on game theory negotiation, but I actually did learn about the (dark) psychology of negotiations.

And it goes straight into my list of best negotiation books.

Also read:

- Manipulative negotiation techniques

https://thepowermoves.com/dirty-negotiation-tactics/

Review

Albeit at times it wasn't the easiest book to read, I loved "Game Theory Bargaining and Auction Strategies".

Right from the start, you can see that Gregor Berz is not an ivory tower mathematician who embraces the homo economicus and snubs the real world of people and (irrational) psychology.

He recommends "*Getting to Yes*" and he peppers the book with real-life examples from his own experience, which makes "Game Theory Bargaining and Auction Strategies" a gem for negotiators and life-strategists alike.

Also read:

- **The best books on negotiation**

13 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics & Self-Defense

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Negotiations might look win-win, but don't be fooled—how the pie gets split is a ruthless game of power.

Against shrewd, power-aware opponents armed with manipulative negotiation tactics, naive 'good guys' don't stand a chance.

At The Power Moves, we've spent years decoding these dark strategies so you don't have to lose.

This article exposes 13 sneaky tactics—from guilt trips to fake authorities—and equips you with bulletproof self-defense moves to outsmart them.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 1. Feign Disappointment
  - ⍰ Self-defense
- 2. Guilt-Tripping
  - ⍰ Self-defense
- 3. Set Up A (Fake) Higher Authority
  - ⍰ Self-Defense:
- 5. Hold Silence
  - ⍰ Self-defense
- 6. Nibbling: Last Drops, Before It Pops ⍰
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- 7. Bursts of Anger ⚠⍰
  - ⍰ Self-defense

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- 9. Say “Don’t Be So Defensive / Aggressive” ⍰
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- 13. Empathize & Fake Win-Win
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  - ⍰ Self-Defense
- Learn More…

1. Feign Disappointment

Principle:

⚖ **Positive emotions signal the deal favors you more than them**
Negative emotions suggest a poor offer and pressure them to improve it.

Studies show that disappointment works -probably based on the social exchange-.

Keep it muted

It’s a great technique, but don’t overdo it:

> **Power negotiator**: (jumping back) One million!?!?

This is often uncalibrated.
Be more subtle instead:

- **Mild display of disappointment**: pause for a second, look flustered and pensive, as if thinking “*Ouch, I really wanted to buy, but with this price…* “.
- **Build them up to invite concessions**

For example:

> **High EQ Negotiator**: Hmmm.. I can see why you can ask for that much. It’s a great service, I’m a big fan. I really want to find a way to work with you…

P.S.:
Learn social calibration.

⍰ Self-defense

1. Ignore it

2. Say it's a good offer
3. Keep talking about the product's benefits

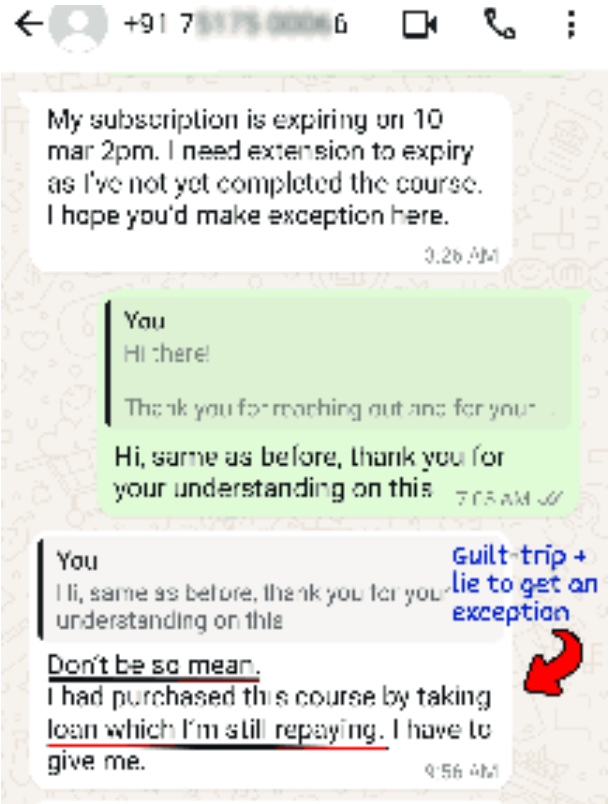
2. Guilt-Tripping

Guilt tripping takes the crown for the most annoying manipulative technique.

It's sneaky, weak… And very effective at evoking an emotional response.
That response is often negative though, reeking of emotional manipulation, and pushing others away (Singh, Crisafulli, & Quamina, 2020).

However, the *Routledge Handbook of Persuasion* suggests it can be effective, IF it's moderate and stressing the positive of action-taking, rather than the negatives of inaction.

⍰ Example



> **Him**: (after pestering us with requests we already denied) Don't be so mean. <— Guilt trip
> I purchased this course by taking a loan which I'm still repaying <— 'Poor me' frame

⍰ Self-defense

- ⍰ **Think of them as sneaky turkeys**, it empowers you to negotiate tough
- **Stand your ground**
- **Attack back**, for example, go meta and explain why they're being sneaky manipulators

3. Set Up A (Fake) Higher Authority

For example, a board or boss sets the rules and must review concessions.

The higher authority allows you to:

1. **Blame shift and be tough without losing goodwill**
   Ie.: "*I'd love to, but they really wouldn't allow this*"
2. **Credit appropriation to look kinder** (good cop/bad cop)
   Ie.: "*I had to massage them hard, but I managed to…*"
3. **Social exchange manipulation**
   - Inflate concessions' value with deferment or games
   - Various power moves
     Ie.: "*Good news. I managed to secure their approval. But they request that you…* "
     "*We've never really done this, but…* "

Manipulative negotiators may use it to wrestle last-minute concessions.
For example, they 'only need the final approval', which gets rejected… Unless you do something for them.

⍰ Self-Defense:

1. **Set your own higher authority**
2. **Play their ego while undermining the authority**: "*Oh please, you're a top G, those guys would do anything you say"*
3. **Call it out**: *"Oh come on, you're not playing good cop/bad cop with me are you"*

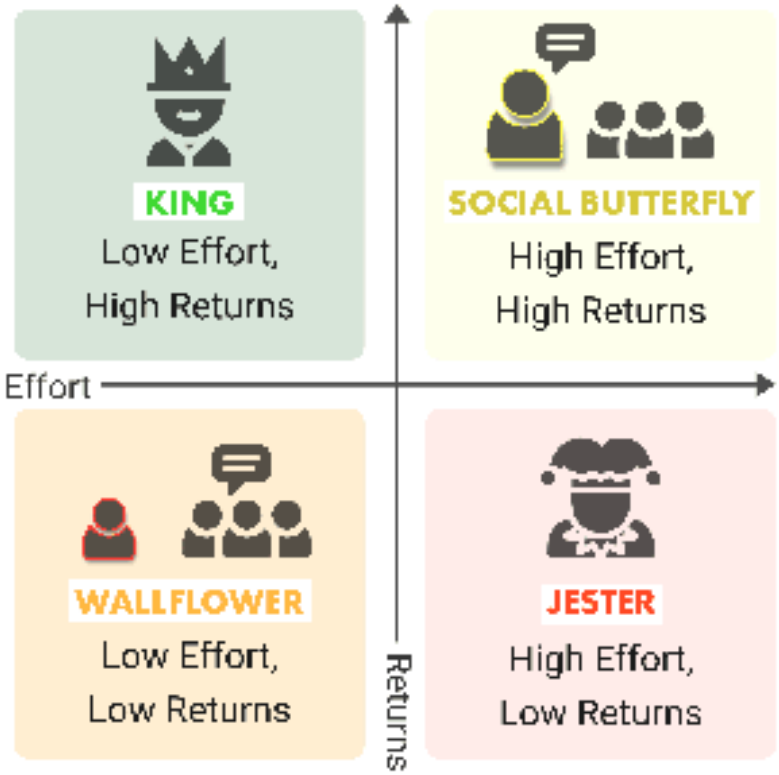
And stand your ground against last minute concessions.
You can also blame-shift to 'preparations already started'. And to power-protect a more powerful party, you may even say that 'you're really sorry and would you love to. But you're happy to buy lunch'.

5. Hold Silence

Or speak with one-liners.

It's standard social power dynamics to disempower you with:

- **Higher dominance**, as you crack under pressure
- **Under-investment**, as you expend more effort to force rapport and fill silences



Social Roi Matrix, part of Social Investment Model (Buffalmano, 2026)

⍰ Self-defense

- Hold the silence as well
- Minimize your reply and stand your ground.

6. Nibbling: Last Drops, Before It Pops ⍰

Right before signing or even after signing, a power player may say:

> **Power Player**: Oh, by the way, you will repaint the walls right?

If you deny, they say it was ‘obvious’ or ‘standard procedure’.

Last-minute problems

Even more manipulative, before signing—when you have no options—they may ‘discover’ an issue to demand concessions.

This technique leverages the psychological bias of sunk costs.
After you invested time and effort, you’re more likely to concede.

⍰ Self-defense

1. **Reject it**
   - Stick to the contract: *“We do what we negotiated”*
   - ⍰ *“We negotiated openly for a good deal, let’s keep it that way please”*
2. **Use judge frames**
   - (Shake head) *“You’re disappointing me now”*

- (Look at him sternly) *"I expect better from you"*

3. **Attack back**
   - "*Sure, after you do X*"
4. **Call it out**: *"Quit the manipulative games"*

⍰Self-defense for last-minute problems

1. ⍰ Remember that walking is also their loss
2. **Hold your ground**, say the issue is priced in already
3. **Appease** and say that albeit you can't do much, you'll pay the first round

7. Bursts of Anger ⚠⍰

Studies show that bursts of anger can provide more concessions to the angry yeller.

This works best for more powerful negotiators.
Studies show that the less powerful party concedes *regardless of the appropriateness of anger*.

Don't fall for that!

⍰ Self-defense

- **Negotiate electronically**, studies show that electronic communication produces better outcomes when there is a power disparity.
- **Ignore**
- '(deadpan expression) *Are you done playing your little game?"*
- "(pause) *Make sure this is a first and last time*"

P.S.
This is also a manipulative control tactic of abusive partners.
So if you feel bold, you may even say 'I hope you don't do that at home'.

8. Reopening Negotiations ⚠

Agree on a price, and then re-start negotiating.

Some power players may frame the former deal as your demand -instead of the agreement-.

Negotiator's Swapping ⍰

Sometimes this power move includes 'negotiator's swapping.

Such as, you agree with one party, and then another party resumes negotiations from the previously agreed price.

⍰ Self-defense

1. **Call it out**, explain what they are doing and say it's not cool
2. **Resume from a higher price**
3. **Power move**: *"I'm glad we're renegotiating, because the previous price was too low"*

9. Say "*Don't Be So Defensive / Aggressive*" ⍰

This manipulative gambit leverages reverse psychology.

And it's a power move to drop your guard.

For example:

> **Negotiator**: Max! You're being so defensive! Relax, my friend. We're just discussing your new house, and it looks like a great deal for you.
> You'll bankrupt us like this <— Possible power move to make you laugh, stroke your ego, and soften you up

⍰ Self-defense

- **Frame it like they need to be more straight**
  Ie.: *"Thanks for saying that, let's negotiate in honesty for win-win, and there's no need for defensiveness on either side"* <— Blames them for your defensiveness/edginess

- **Humorous frame control**
  Ie.: "*If you can help me out to make this good, you'll always have a couch in the flat, any time"* <— Maintains a high-power win-win

Or you can deal with it in the dominant way that Putin used against Obama:

> **Obama**: (smiles and cracks a joke)
> **Putin**: (serious, pointing towards Obama without looking at him) He's trying to appease me <— ⍰⍰ I'm the most powerful man who must be won over

10. Let Them Come to You

Studies show that perceived power is crucial in negotiations.

Negotiators with more power *get* more concessions and weaker negotiators *give* more concessions.

And the power dynamics of hosts VS guests are clear:

⚖ **The greater the effort one makes to meet the other, the more neediness it signals**

Meeting on their turf also psychologically empowers the host and weakens the guest.

Host Power Moves ⚠

- Making you wait
- Sit you in the lowest chair
- Out-number you

Always watch out for parties whose interests align against yours

⍰ Self-Defense

- **Counter-propose your location or middle way**
  - Win-win counter: *"I'd love to see your office but I'm tied up. How about… "*
- **Lower perceived effort**
  Ie.: "*Cool, I'm nearby on X day, so… "*

11. Say: "*Let's Avoid Games, What's Your Bottom Line?*"

The manipulator may add he already has a good option, but wanted to hear one more before going ahead.

⍰ Self-Defense

1. Ignore it, negotiate as usual
2. Say your price is already attractive
3. Say you don't compete on price because you are… (unique feature of yours)

12. Rush to The End – Assume The Sale

Examples:

- *"When would you like to move in"*
- *"Can you start tomorrow"*

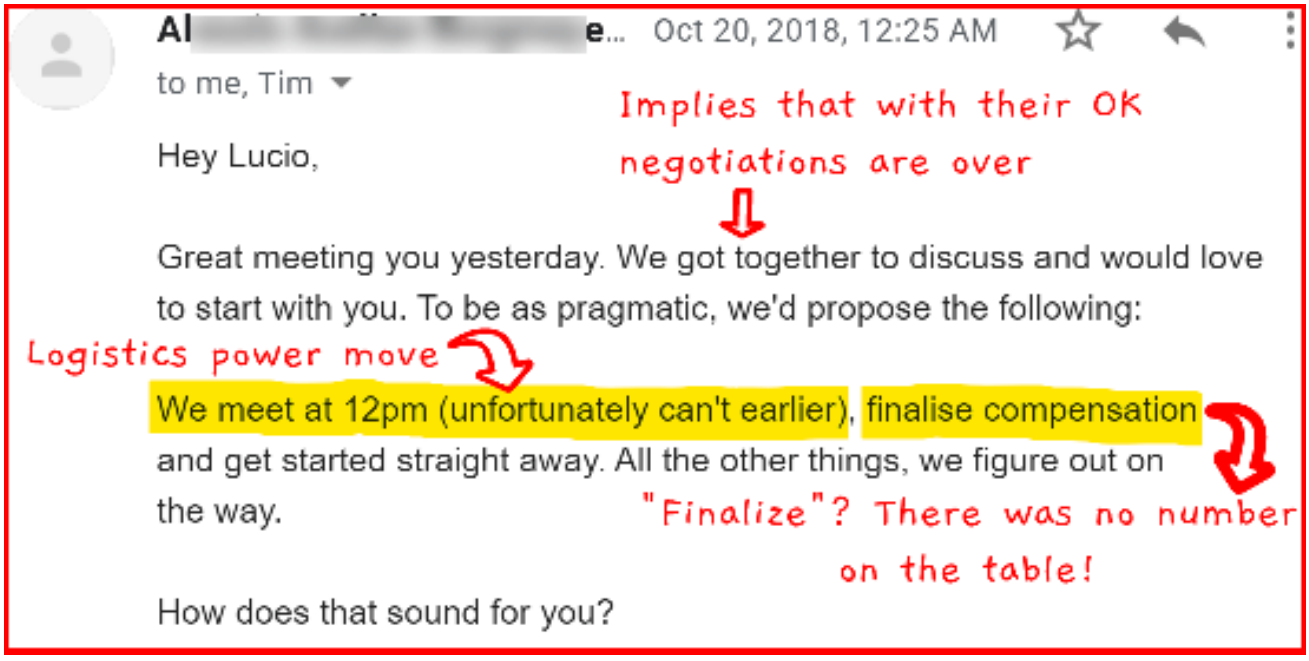
⍰ Self-Defense

- **Negotiate back maintaining win-win**
  - *"Yeah, that would be nice if we can agree, let's focus on the details to make it happen. We were talking about…"* <— As an interested buyer or employee
  - *"If we can find a good deal, we can talk about it"* <— As the buyer

- **Call it out**
  Ie.: *"Nice move, I was also in sales"*

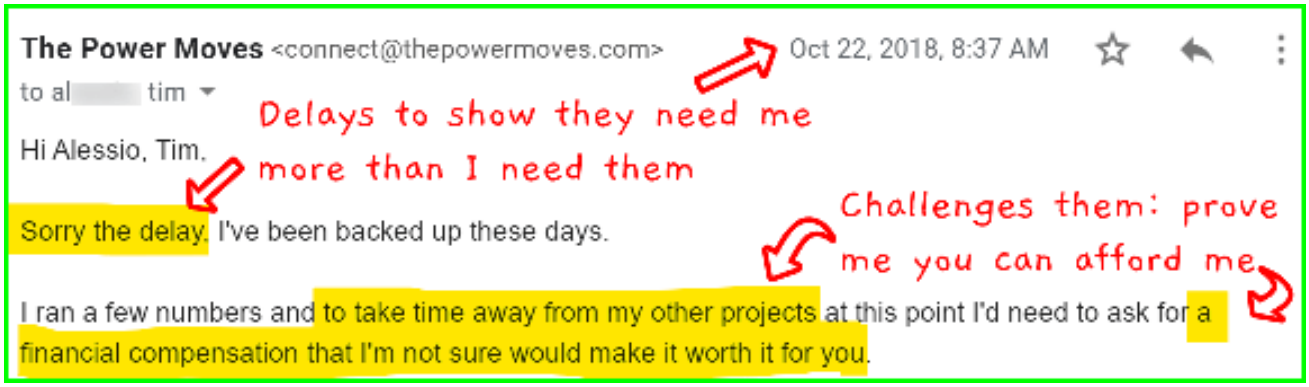
⍰ Example

Here is an interesting example of the last job interview I took:



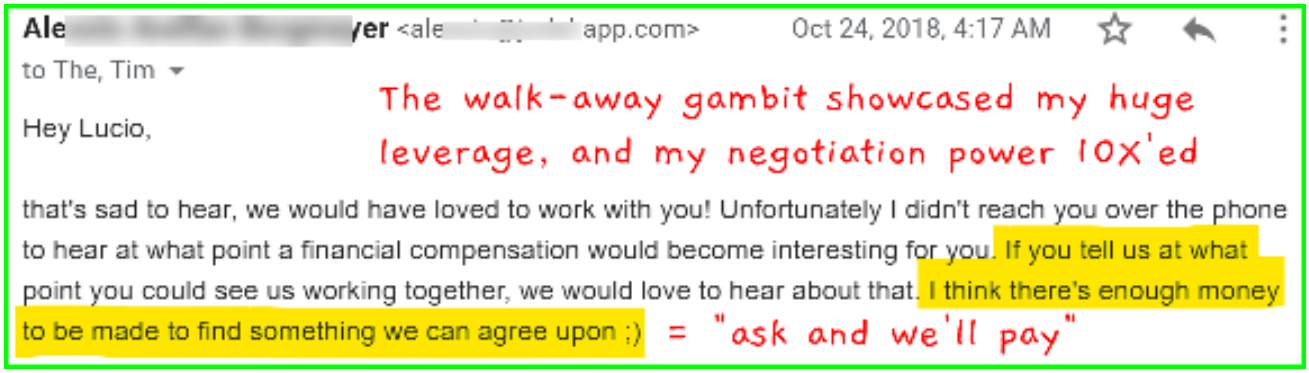
> **Him**: Would love to start with you (…) <— Disempowering. What if I don't want?
>
> We meet at 12pm (unfortunately can't earlier), <— Busy power move
>
> finalize compensation <— !We hadn't even started talking money !
>
> and get started straight away <— Contract… ?

I responded with my own power move:



> **Me**: Sorry the delay <— ⍰⍰ I'm not rushed. You need me more than I need you
>
> (…) To take time away from my other projects <— ⍰⍰ I'm busy, you need to win me over
>
> (…) a financial compensation that I'm not sure would make it worth it for you <— ⍰⍰ Open that wallet ⍰⍰

Look how that changed the tune:


Ale[redacted]yer <ale[redacted]app.com> Oct 24, 2018, 4:17 AM
to The, Tim
The walk-away gambit showcased my huge leverage, and my negotiation power 10X'ed
Hey Lucio,
that's sad to hear, we would have loved to work with you! Unfortunately I didn't reach you over the phone to hear at what point a financial compensation would become interesting for you. If you tell us at what point you could see us working together, we would love to hear about that. I think there's enough money to be made to find something we can agree upon ;) = "ask and we'll pay"

> **Him**: I think there's enough money to be made to find something we can agree upon ;) <— Nice frame for me ✌⍰

13. Empathize & Fake Win-Win

Research and real-world evidence suggest that an adversarial approach to negotiation can be counterproductive.

Enter Chris Voss, who popularized the rapport-developing approach with the high-power marketing of 'hostage negotiator'.

Unfortunately, research suggests that around half of cooperative negotiators are wolves in sheep's clothing.

And you're likely to fall exactly when you're at your worst and neediest.

⍰ Example:

Imagine you are negotiating your severance package after you have been fired.

Your boss now is gone, and it's just you and the HR representative (now playing a variation of good cop game).

They say:

> **HR**: I'm sorry, you are such an esteemed person around here.
> How do you feel

This is effective.
Research suggests that employees are happier at work based on how HR makes them feel, rather than negotiated salary (objective value of subjective value).

Maybe they will add:

> **HR**: We are aware that your manager has some issues.

Then you complain about your boss, and they will be all ears.

They say they couldn't touch your manager, but hopefully, things will change soon, they hint.
Now feel validated, and happy that your bad boss will pay.

And then they close the circle:

> **HR**: I have some a good network in town with other recruiters, let's do a lunch soon

Boom: they set up reciprocity and with the hint of future help you'll negotiate 'in friendliness' to avoid jeopardizing their help (which might never materialize, BTW).

⍰ Self-Defense

Understand that some negotiations are win-lose.

And the empathizer is NOT on your side. He's only trying to screw you over with a smile.

Here's how you handle it:

- **Pretend you're falling for it** to gain time or concessions
- **Empower yourself** with other options or deals
- **Crush them**

Learn More...

Some old forum examples:

- Honey-deal trap
- Indirect threats to gain a discount (example from ThePowerMoves.com)
- How to pitch 2 employers against each other for higher salary
- Unethical hacks to sell a house and buy one

Most helpful of all:

Our dedicated negotiation module taught thousands of men to be smart, power-aware and effective negotiators. See **Power University**

13 Self-Help BS & Myths: Updated List (Plus, Fixes)

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

If you have a critical approach to life and knowledge, you probably cannot stand self-help myths, pop-psychology, and outright fabrications.

Sometimes they are hard to spot, though, because you cannot read hundreds of psychological studies and scientific studies "just to make sure".
So you end up "kind of" trusting the self-help guru.

But that's far from ideal because you will not fully trust and accept what's actually true and life-changing, and you might end up following advice that is actually unproductive.

Well, this article is here to help.
Bookmark it because I will be constantly updating it, and it can be your resource on the self-help lies you can avoid.

Bookmark it because I will be constantly updating it.

Contents

- Self-Help Myth #1 – 10,000 rules
- Self-Help Myth #2 – Incantations
- Self-Help Myth #3 – Extreme Brain Plasticity
- Self-Help Myth #4 – Only 7% of Communication is Verbal
- Self-Help Myth #5 – EI Is 80% Of Success
- Self-Help Myth #5 – Positive Thinking
- Self-Help Myth #6 – Release Anger
- Self-Help Myth #7 – Mental Barriers (AKA: The Bannister Effect)
- Self-Help Myth #8 – Force Yourself Into Positive States
- Self-Help Myth #9 – Smile And You're Happy
- Self-Help Myth #10 – Visualize Winning
- Self-Help Myth #11 – Law of Attraction
- Self-Help Myth #12 – Goal Setting in Yale
- Self-Help Myth #13 – High Self-Esteem
- Bonus: The "Self-Help Nice-Sounding Stories"
- Anti-Snake Oil Checklist
- SUMMARY

Self-Help Myth #1 – 10,000 rules

2 more minutes… And I'm a pro.
If you want to become a world-class athlete, all you need to do is put in 10.000 hours.

Culprits

- Outliers (Malcolm Gladwell)
- Countless self-help gurus after Gladwell

The Self-Help Lie

Gladwell—and countless self-help gurus since then—argued that becoming an expert at anything is mostly about how long you practice.

Gladwell picks several examples of great achievers who practiced for around 10.000 hours, ranging from Bill Gates to The Beatles (he was wrong).

So if you want to do the same, just put in the time, and you'll be world-class.

Critical Thinking Analysis

Just think about these variables:

- What field are we talking about? They can't be all the same can they
- What about your starting level?
- How do you practice?
- Natural abilities?
- Competitiveness of the field?
- …

After all, hey, I probably logged in 10.000 exercisings or cooking since I've born.
Yet I ain't no world-class at any.

But who wants to be the Grinch on the feel-good feast and get into those dull and tedious questions?

Just do 10.000 hours and you're fine.
Or are you…

Why It's Wrong

The questions above alone should make it clear why the 10.000-hour rule is a major self-help lie.

Anders Ericsson, the author of the original research explains in "Peak", his seminal book on peak performance:

1. "10.000" is an average in a specific field and, per se, it means nothing
2. It's more about *how* you train than how long
3. The research does not prove that logging a certain amount of hours will make anyone an expert

Basically: there is no 10.000 "rule" to speak of.

Why The Myth Spread

Gladwell takes advantage of two human psychological biases to spread this self-help lie:

1. We all want to believe we're no less talented than top performers
2. We all want to believe we can do anything we set our minds to

And of course, self-help gurus can make more money by selling the feel-good idea that "yes, just put in the time, and you're world-class".

What to Do Instead

It's more about *how* you practice than *how long* you practice.
Also read:

- Deep Work
- The Talent Code
- Mastery

Self-Help Myth #2 – Incantations

Repeat a mantra and you will eventually come to believe it and embody it.
Say it with enough conviction, and you become the mantra.

Culprits

- Tony Robbins
- Most self-help gurus

The Self-Help Lie

The idea, like almost all self-help myths, is captivating.
All you gotta do to change is to repeat the new mantra to yourself.

Brian Tracy invites his readers to repeat throughout the day "I'm the best, I'm the best, I'm the best".

Tony Robbins tells in its programs to repeat "all I have is within myself, all I have is within myself".

Try it, and you'll see how douchey you will feel :).
Jokes aside, I actually did try it, and it did provide me with a burst of confidence and good feelings.

But… Does it really work behind that burst?
Let's see the science behind it:

The Truth

Incantations are mostly marketed as a tool for people with low self-esteem and confidence.
The problem is, it's exactly to people with low self-esteem that incantations are the most useless.

Studies show that people with low self-esteem are not ready to accept positive feedback from themselves (Joseph et al., 2003).

It makes sense, no?

People with low self-esteem have a low opinion of themselves, so they are not ready and willing to accept positive feedback from someone whom they don't really respect (themselves).

And what about people with an already healthy level of confidence and self-esteem?
Even for them, incantations don't seem to be very useful.
Says psychologist Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology:

> We have found that merely repeating positive statements to yourself does not raise mood or achievement very much, if at all.

What To Do

Better options:

- Work to improve yourself to the point where you receive (real) positive feedback from others
- Challenge your negative thoughts, "talk back" to them with well-reasoned arguments
- Ask yourself questions and then force yourself to come up with positive answers (Senay Et Al., 2010)

For the sake of full disclosure, Tony Robbins also later caught up and switched to recommending questions instead of incantations.

Self-Help Myth #3 – Extreme Brain Plasticity

The brain can rewire and change itself, and that means that you can learn anything.

Perpetrators

- Tom Bylieu
- Books such as "You Can Heal Yourself"
- All types of quacks, including Joe Dispenza.

The Self-Help Lie

There is no talent, only effort.

Since the brain is plastic, you can learn anything and get good at anything.

Studies, books, and researchers are often quoted to give scientific backing to this self-help myth (Ramachandran with *Phantoms in the Brain* and Norman Doige with *The Brain That Changes Itself* are two common ones).

Critical Thinking Analysis

If the brain were infinitely plastic, then it would be able to always rewire and repair itself.

And we would have no neurosurgeons or psychiatrists.

Unluckily, we do.

And if talent mattered so little, then we would not see certain ethnicities or certain body types dominating certain fields.
But we do.

The Truth

The brain is plastic… Quite a bit.
But that doesn't mean it can rewire itself limitlessly.

For example, Brain plasticity is region-specific, meaning that some regions are more plastic and some are less plastic (Bindschaedler et al., 2011).
Contrary to self-help authors who (mis)quote Paul Bach-t-Rita, regions of the brain *do* specialize.

For more on the nature VS nurture debate, also check out "*The Blank Slate*" by Steven Pinker.

What To Do

Some of the exaggerations about brain plasticity have been borne out of the idealization of some researchers.

But we must be careful not to fall into the trap of the "lone, rebel genius who tells us what we want to hear".

Of course, you can improve… **You can improve on pretty much anything**.
That is so true and so empowering that we don't need lies around it.
Lies will only disempower you.
The truth will empower you.

And the truth says that albeit you can improve at anything, you are also better off choosing fields which you have a natural affinity for.

Self-Help Myth #4 – Only 7% of Communication is Verbal

Most meaning of human communication is nonverbal, so you can forget about the actual words.

Perpetrators

- Tony Robbins
- Almost all communication books

Critical Thinking Analysis

Just think about what you would say if you were to deliver a toast at your best friend's wedding and say:

> Sorry to say this at your wedding and in front of everyone mate.
> But I must take this off my chest.
> I have repeatedly had sex with your wife. Together with all our friends BTW.
> Your wife is a huge slut.

Would the message be any more positive or funny if he were to say it with a smile or with relaxed body language?

No, of course.
That message could only range from shocking to the most awkward "joke" ever.
And that's because, in many situations, words account for far more than 7%.

The Truth

Mehrabian's research was highly specific and only dealt with attitudes of likes and dislikes.

This is what, in a nutshell, the Mehrabian study tells us:

> When it comes to *feelings and atittudes*, we get most of our cues of the speaker's intent from non-verbal sources.
> When the two are in conflict, we give precedene to non-verbals.

That's the truth of the study, and it cannot be generalized outside of feelings and attitudes.

Furthermore, quantifying it in terms of percentage is meaningless, of course.
Extrapolating to all situations is equally meaningless.

Self-Help Myth #5 – EI Is 80% Of Success

IQ doesn't matter, it's all about how you understand and get along with people.

Perpetrators

- Emotional Intelligence (Daniel Goleman)
- Emotional Intelligence 2.0 (Travis Bradberry)
- Many communication and social skills "experts"

The Self-Help Lie

This self-help lie was popularized by Daniel Goleman's bestseller "Emotional Intelligence".

For the sake of clarity, Goleman stated that he has been misquoted and misrepresented, but of course, that didn't stop people from bashing IQ, which is hardly modifiable, in favor of emotional intelligence, which is far more malleable (and marketable).

Critical Thinking Check

Just think about:

- How do you measure and define "success" and "EI"?
- Based on what can you come up with a precise 80/20 split?
- In which field does the 80/20 apply?

We could go on at length, but albeit I am a HUGE supporter of increasing your EI, the claim that EI beats IQ 8 to 2 makes no sense.

The Truth

Countless studies show a positive correlation between EI and effective leadership (George, 2000).

But Travis Bradberry, author of Emotional Intelligence 2.0, also found out that EI rises until mid-level management but then *decreases* at the CEO level.

Hence, if we measure "success" as the "ability to climb hierarchical structures in business organizations", then the claim that EI is 80% of success is blatantly not true.

If you're interested in the topic, read more here:

- Leadership and emotional intelligence

- Are CEOs emotionally stupid?

Self-Help Myth #5 – Positive Thinking

If you focus on the positive, you will be happier and more successful. If you focus on the negative, you will be unhappy.

Perpetrators

- Tony Robbins
- Think and Grow Rich
- The Power of Positive Thinking
- 80% of self-help gurus

The Self-Help Lie

It seems so straightforward, right?

There is a connection between mind and body. Most people agree here, and research backs it (even the Latins knew it with "mens sana in corpore sano").

So the more you focus on the positives, the better off you are, right?

Well, not so fast…

The Truth

This one is not wrong… It's just correct up to a certain point.

Frederickson and Losada found out that too many positives become harmful above a certain threshold (11:1).

Furthermore, research shows that thinking about the worst-case scenario can help people manage their anxiety and lower their pressure. This phenomenon has a name in psychology, and it's "defensive pessimism" (Norem, 2001). Dale Carnegie recommended it long before there was any research on it ("*How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*").

Edit:
Losada has been heavily discredited in his math calculations to reach the threshold (especially in his 3:1 positive to negatives needed to "flourish").

Read more in pop-psychology myths, but it's fair to think that, beyond the exact numbers, the overall theory is good.

Self-Help Myth #6 – Release Anger

To feel better and live fully, you must let out all negative emotions.

Perpetrators

- Facing The Fire
- Red Pill authors
- Some poor “assertiveness” coaches

The Self-Help Lie

Bottling up anger and negative emotions is destructive. Hence, it’s much better to let them all go.

Yell, scream, hit a punching back.. And you will release all that poison and feel much better.

Or is it…

The Truth

There is plenty of evidence that venting your anger actually only makes you more angry and aggressive (Stack, 1999) and increases the negative consequences of anger (Lohr et al., 2007).

Self-Help Myth #7 – Mental Barriers (AKA: The Bannister Effect)

Barriers are all in your mind, and Bannister proved it.

Perpetrators

- Tony Robbins
- The Talent Code (Robert Doyle)
- The Effective Executive (Peter Drucker)
- And many more…

The Self-Help Lie

Before Roger Bannister people didn’t believe it was possible to run a mile under 4 minutes.

So people simply never did.

But the moment that Bannister did run the mile in less than 4 minutes, he showed it was possible.
Bannister broke a psychological barrier.

And what happened?

After him, plenty of others did break the 4 minutes barrier.

Why?

Because the limitation was in the mind.

Critical Thinking Approach

Just think about it: how could this even make any sense?

Do people run with a clock in their hands that they check before crossing the finish line?
And even if they did, would they slow down just to make sure they don't finish within 4 minutes?

And even if they did that, wouldn't that be a *motivation* to go under 4 minutes instead of a motivation to go slower?

This never made sense to me.
And indeed:

The Truth

Bannister broke a record that was standing for 9 years.

Not 90, not 900, and not 9.000.
Just 9 years.

Furthermore, the record Bannister broke was set in 1954, a period when running as a sport was hobbled by 5 years of raging war (running from bullets doesn't count as training).

As a matter of fact, runners in unofficial competitions from countries that didn't take part in the war had already gone sub-4 minutes.

But even if we were not to consider that and only remove 5 years from the 9-year gap in the record progressions, then we get 4 years, which is pretty much in line with the average gap between records (Wikipedia list of records).

The "Bannister effect" sounds like a good story, but doesn't hold to scrutiny.
Even Bannister himself said it's not true that experts believed that a sub-4 minute was impossible.

Fun fact: the last record is 3:43 and has been standing for 20 years.
Are we in need of breaking a "3:43" psychological barrier now? :)

Self-Help Myth #8 – Force Yourself Into Positive States

You become what you think of. Force yourself to think positively and you're good.

Perpetrators

- Tom Bylieu
- Countless self-help gurus

The Lie

If you force yourself to "control your states" and "think positive, then you never have to feel down, sad, or depressed.

And your states will naturally translate into more success.

It's an attractive thought because most people want to be happy and avoid pain.
But…

The Truth

Research shows that switching to a good mood when we're normal is easy.
But it's when we have little mental capacity left that becomes difficult (Wegner, 1994).

So what happens when we're anxious or stressed and we "force" ourselves to feel good is that we fail.
And when we're already down and we fail to switch to happy, we feel even worse and powerless.

The Solution

Accept the idea that it's OK not to be always happy.
Really.

Wegner also says that if you want to switch moods, getting other people to help and/or change the environment can be more effective than trying to force a state change by yourself.

Self-Help Myth #9 – Smile And You're Happy

To be happy, you just need to smile.

Perpetrators

- Tony Robbins

The Lie

This was actually backed by a famous study originally called in psychology the "facial feedback hypothesis" (Strack Et Al., 1988).
It was so popular that it was often even taught in beginners' psychology courses.

I still remember Tony Robbins yelling on the tapes "smile and look up in the sky and try to feel sad… It's impossible".
It was also impossible to be a normal and well-adjusted human being though :).

The Truth

A much larger successive study failed to replicate its results (Wagenmakers Et Al., 2016).

Self-Help Myth #10 – Visualize Winning

The more you visualize yourself winning, the closer you get to actually winning.

Perpetrators

- Think and Grow Rich
- Tony Robbins
- Pretty much any self-help gurus…

The Lie

Self-help gurus sell this one as the "secret" of all the winning athletes. They visualize winning and, guess what…? They win.

Easy, no?

Critical Thinking Analysis

Since this is not a secret at all, what's stopping the non-successful athletes from visualizing?

As a matter of fact, I bet many do.

So visualizing cannot be the main differentiator between winners and non-winners.

The Truth

One study shows that thinking about goals increases the number of times people *think* of those goals and *decreases* the amount of actual work (Fishback & Choi, 2012).

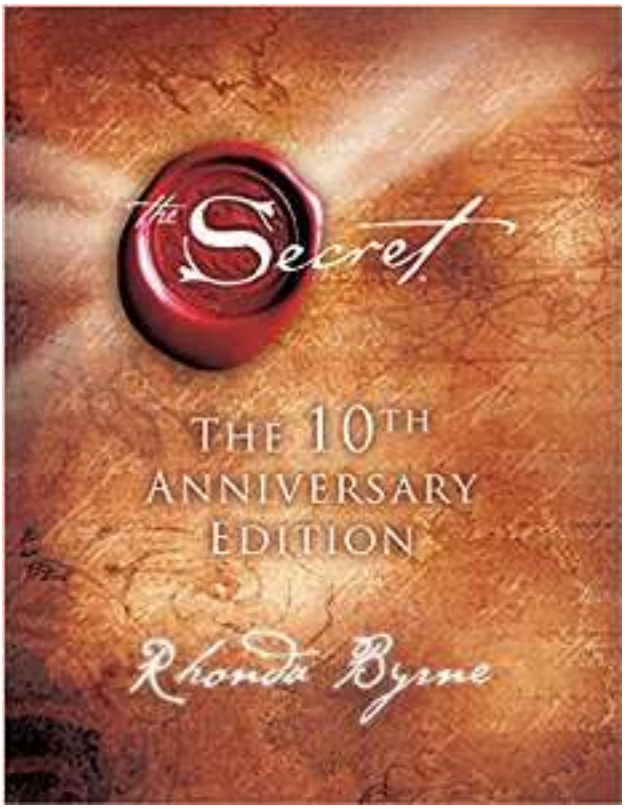
Another research shows that people who used visualization to envision themselves studying instead of getting an A not only performed better but also experienced less stress and anxiety (Pham et al., 1999),

What To Do

If too much visualizing is taking time away from work, remind yourself that work trumps visualization.

Don't visualize yourself too much with the gold medal but also focus on the process.

Self-Help Myth #11 – Law of Attraction



If you think often enough and with enough conviction about what you want you can attract it in your life.

Perpetrators

- 7 Spiritual Laws of Success (Deepak Chopra)
- The Science of Getting Rich
- The Secret
- Countless gurus and meaningless YB videos…

Critical Thinking

The law of attraction is not based on any empirical findings, nor on replicable real-life patterns.

Self-Help Myth #12 – Goal Setting in Yale

A survey of Yale's class of 1953 found out that people who wrote down their goals out-earned all the rest by several orders of magnitude.

Perpetrators

- Zig Ziglar
- Tony Robbins
- Countless gurus

Critical Thinking

This could have been just another case of correlation and said nothing about causation.
But, it turns out, it's even worse.

The Truth

Some people looked for the source of this study.
And there was none.

Finally, Yale University itself came out saying a survey on goal setting was never conducted.

Self-Help Myth #13 – High Self-Esteem

Psychology today has largely moved past what's been dubbed the "self-esteem movement".
Yet, it's still very popular in the self-help literature, which tends to embrace this stance:

> The more confident and the higher your self esteem, the better off you are.

That's not wholly wrong. High self-esteem *is* good.
But *only* if accompanied by a growth mindset and an antifragile ego.

Otherwise, high self-esteem only means more threats to that self-esteem.
You become more defensive and, potentially, also more aggressive.

Paradoxically, the higher your self-esteem, the more dangers you see in your external environment.

Writes social psychologist Roy Baumeister in his seminal work "*Evil*":

> Violence ensues when people feel that their favorable views of themselves are threatened or disputed by others.
> As a result, people whose self-esteem is high but lacks a firm basis in genuine accomplishment are especially prone to be violence because they are most likely to have their narcissistic bubble burst.

In psychology this is sometimes referred to as "status consistency", and it's an important cause of domestic violence (Hornung et al., 1981)

So yes, do seek high self-esteem, but only if you can back it up with an antifragile ego.

Bonus: The "Self-Help Nice-Sounding Stories"

Some self-help gurus love telling stories that sound nice and wow people, but that actually have little to do with reality.

Some of these self-help lies are:

- **Bucket-crab mentality**

The story goes that if you put crabs in a bucket they will not manage to escape because they all prevent each other's attempts to escape.

It seeks to describe the self-defeating mindset of jealous people who focus on keeping their friends low instead of focusing on going higher.

That makes sense for people.
But even though I don't any crustacean psychologists I believe this is another case of ethnocentrism at play: the belief that animals or things feel the same way that we do.

- **The boiling frog**

If you put a frog into boiling water it will jump out. But if you slowly heat the water, the frog will boil to death.

The self-help message then is that we should all react more quickly and we should all refuse to settle for less-than-ideal situations (or temperatures :).

Of course, it's not true.

Dr. Victor Hutchison, Professor Emeritus of Biology says "The legend is entirely incorrect!"
If you're interested in the experiments, you can read a bit more here.

As a matter of fact, the opposite might be true.
Douglas Melton, professor of biology at Harvard, says:

> If you put a frog in boiling water, it will not jump out. It will die.
> (and if you increase temperature slowly) it will jump before it gets hot.

- **The ostrich effect**

The ostrich effect is somewhat similar to the boiling frog.

The ostrich puts its head in the sand to "escape" from problems.

Of course, this makes little sense to anyone who's familiar with Darwin and evolution.

Sure, evolution is not perfect, but how could such an evidently self-defeating behavior take hold across a whole species?

Indeed, it's simply not true.
Ostriches do *not* escape reality by burying their hands in the sand.

Anti-Snake Oil Checklist

It can be difficult sometimes to recognize the self-help wheat from the self-help chaff, so here is a quick checklist:

- **Is the advice a sales pitch?**

If the advice is packaged in a sales pitch chances are that its goal is to grab attention and sell… Not necessarily to share what's useful and what's true.

- **Does it refer to researches, consensus?**

Notice the plural.
A single research is almost meaningless (also read "How to Lie With Statistics).

- **Does it make sense?**

You will notice that some self-help myth doesn't even make sense (ie.: verbal communication is only 7% of the meaning).

- **Does it provide actual measures?**

"Better", "more", and "quicker" mean nothing.
How better, how much more, how quicker?

Plenty of research shows a correlation between weather and stock performance.
Yet, would you invest based on the weather?

No, because the effect is minimal.

- **Does it use correlation?**

Remember: correlation is not causation.
The self-help gurus who don't get this are either dumb or in bad faith.
Read more in: Fooled by Randomness.

- **Does it sound too easy, simple, or generic?**

Life rarely is simple and easy and generalizations almost always fall into the category of "poor advice".

SUMMARY

This article lists some of the most pervasive and false self-help myths.

If you know of any that I missed, please do let me know in the forum or in the comments.

Please also note that this resource is not an attack against self-help and self-development.
Self-help can change your life if you let it.

Also read:

- Manosphere myths (AKA toxic masculinity)

Peak: The Science of Compentence (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Peak* (2016), Anders Ericsson explains how to train to achieve mastery and expertise, summarizing his research in a new field in psychology that has sometimes been dubbed “the science of expertise”.

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- Notes
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- Deliberate Practice: The Gold Standard of Training
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- The Mindset of Enhancing Performance
- The 10.000 Hour Rule Is Cr@p
- Training Beats Knowledge
- The Key to Mastery: Maintaining Motivation
- Blowing Past Plateaus
- Genetics DO Matter
- Purposeful Practice is Not A Must
- Peak Quotes
- Criticism
- Review

Key Takeaways

- Innate talent might be part of the performance equation, but most of the variance comes from training
- How willing people are to train might be, at least in part, governed by our genes
- The best training is focused, gets instant feedback, and works around plateaus

Notes

About the Author:
K. Anders Ericsson is a Swedish psychologist and researcher, and he is a professor of psychology at Florida State University. He is internationally recognized as one of the main experts in the psychological nature of expertise and human performance

Naive Practice: The Wrong Way of Training

Naive practice looks like this:

- “Just do it”
- Not knowing whether or not you’re doing it correctly
- Not having a specific goal

Many people believe that the more you do something, the more you learn.

And they train with simple repetition.

The truth is that simply repeating something won't make you better, and if you repeat the same actions and behaviors in "automation mode" (i.e., driving) without working on your weaknesses and without operating at the edge of your abilities, then chances are that you actually get worse over time.

So the person who's been driving for 20 years or baking the same pie for 5 years is not getting better at driving or baking pies unless they switch gears and challenge themselves.

Purposeful Practice: A Step Forward

Purposeful practice is a step forward and goes in the right direction.
Purposeful practice:

- **Has specific, well-defined goals** (or you have no way to get feedback and measure success)

For example: "Play the piece through, at the proper speed, without mistakes, 3 times in a row".

- **Get feedback to work on your weaknesses**
- **Leverages coaches and trainers for feedback**
- **Breaks tasks into smaller pieces**

Says the author: "Purposeful practice is all about putting a bunch of baby steps together to reach a long-term goal". Also, make sure to get enough sleep.

- **Pushes you outside of your comfort zone**

Getting out of your comfort zone means trying to do something that you couldn't do before. If it's easy, you keep going. If you can't, finding ways around it is one of the hallmarks of purposeful practice.

- **Attacks plateau by trying different approaches**
- **Gives full attention to the task at hand**
- **Monitors the progress**

To keep improving with purposeful practice, you need motivation. Purposeful practice is much harder than naive training or playing for fun, of course, and it can be the case that you will *not* enjoy it.

Indeed, as soon as we feel like "we're good enough" and slow down, we move out of purposeful practice, and we will likely not improve any further, no matter how often we keep playing or "training".

Deliberate Practice: The Gold Standard of Training

Deliberate practice is what makes champions and what we think are geniuses.

The elements of deliberate practice are:

1. **Find a good teacher**
    1. A good teacher is not necessarily someone who's good at the craft
    2. Find a teacher who's good for your level of skills
    3. He must help you develop your own mental representations so you can feedback on yourself
    4. He must give you exercises you can do at home
2. **Don't be afraid of changing teacher when you're too good** for him or when he's not helping anymore
3. **Operate at your outermost level of skills**
4. **Define specific goals**

5. **Be fully present and attentive during your training sessions**
6. **Train at home by yourself**: the best training is lone training
7. **Work on your weaknesses and mistakes with constant feedback**
8. **Choose a developed field**, otherwise, you must pave the way to peak performance

Fields With No Codified Training

If you are engaged in pursuits with no clear experts and no well-developed training methods, then do the following:

1. Find out the best performers
2. Reverse-engineers What makes them top performers
3. Most of all, find out what type of training they engage in
4. Copy what they do and train as they do. Then seek to improve upon it

If you can't find a teacher, you can always focus on the "3 Fs":

- Focus
- Feedback
- Fix it

Try to break your work down into smaller components that you can analyze and repeat. Then determine your weaknesses and train to eliminate them.

My Note:
Andersson seems to focus mostly on weaknesses.
However, many authors today suggest to focus more on your strengths than your weaknesses.
I think that whether you should focus more on weaknesses or on strengths depends heavily on your situation and that's something that should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

There Are Fields & Professions Without Deliberate Practice

There are many fields in which deliberate practice is not as easy.

Business consultants, for example, or artistic pursuits.
But also "folk dancing" or "playing music in a pop music group". There are many fields that lack codified and standard training approaches.

When all the steps of deliberate practice are not possible, you should strive to implement as many as you can (I also invite you to read "*Deep Work*" and "*Mastery*" which are probably more suited for intellectual and artistic types of work).

Skills Are Based on Mental Representations

Anders Ericsson spends a lot of time on the concept of "mental representations".

It's difficult to define them because they differ dramatically from field to field, but in essence, the author says:

> Pre-existing patterns of information, facts, images, rules, relationships and so on. They are held in long-term memory and can be used to answer quickly and effectively in certain types of situations.
> They make it possible to process large amount of information quickly (despite the limitations of short-term memory)

Mental representations allow for:

- Pattern recognition
- Effective information handling
- Quicker reaction times and problem-solving

Deliberate practice builds better and better mental representations by changing the neuro-circuitry in the brain. What sets experts apart is the quality and quantity of mental representations.

Mental representations are very domain-specific, and that's why deliberate is not for everyone. Some of the skills you build might not be very transferable to other domains of life.

Mental Representations for Reading

Mental representations apply to any domain, including reading and absorbing information.

That's why some people are better at understanding and retaining information.

The Mindset of Enhancing Performance

Ericsson talks about enhancing performance in the workplace as well, and it starts with dropping the following three mindsets:

1. Drop the belief that one's ability is limited by innate talents
2. If you do something for long enough, you'll get better
3. All it takes to improve is to "try harder."

Since the workplace is unstructured and not as well codified when it comes to training, you should first figure out what the "*habits of most successful people*" are and then find a way to train those skills in all the rest.

The 10.000 Hour Rule Is Cr@p

Eric Andersson talks about the "10.000 hour rule", popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in "*Outliers*" and since then has become a famous slogan in self-help (also read: debunking self-help myths).

Gladwell, Andersson explains, did not understand his study well (or chose to ignore reality to sell something).
In details:

1. There is nothing "magical" about 10k hours and there is no fixed time: some will need less to achieve the top of the field, some more
2. How much you need to train also depends on the competitiveness of the field
3. Time matters, but how you train is equally, if not more, important

Training Beats Knowledge

In "Peak" Anders Ericsson dedicates a good portion to discussing schools and training systems.

He dedicates some time to a very important aspect of people's lives: doctor's training. Doctors train as most other students train: in the classroom, absorbing knowledge.

However, Andersson shows that classroom knowledge translates very poorly into on-the-job skills.

Surgeons, for example, get better with surgeries, not with classroom time.
Unluckily, that also means that the first surgeries they perform will be far from optimal.

Ericsson says that we stick with a knowledge-based system though because it's easier.

The Key to Mastery: Maintaining Motivation

Since for Anders Ericsson, the main differentiator between peak performers and “good” performers is training, it ensures that different abilities to stick to the training regimes will make the biggest difference.

He does not like to talk about “willpower” though because people can easily fall into a circular thinking trap that if they don’t have willpower then they might as well not even try (read here the science of willpower).

He prefers talking about “motivation”.
And to stick to the training routine, you must have strong motivation.

To keep a high motivation:

- **Increase your reasons to continue**
  - Do what you enjoy
  - Use social motivation: create groups of people with the same goal
- **Decrease your reasons to quit**
  - If practicing is too hard, limit the time and increase the focus
  - Get enough sleep
  - Take breaks in between sessions
- **Measure your progress for encouragement**
- **Get (positive) feedback**

Feedback can be internal, such as the pleasure of seeing yourself improve, or external, such as getting recognition for your work.

- **Make your training and field part of your identity**
- **Take pride in your identity** (also read: antifragile ego)

Blowing Past Plateaus

The way past plateaus often is by looking for different approaches.

Since plateaus can be discouraging, it’s crucial that you don’t think you’ve peaked but that you understand that it’s only a question of technique, training, and time before you will break through.

If you wanna quit tell yourself you’ll do it after the plateau, and then you probably won’t quit at all.
If you are still junior in your field, ask for feedback from coaches who’ve done it and if you don’t have those mentors, look at how others do it.

Genetics DO Matter

I have read around the web some bad reviews about “Peak” which purports to say that talent does not matter.
These reviewers did not understand Anders Ericsson’s message.

I quote the author here:

> More generally, there is a complex interplay between genetic factors and practice activity that we are just beginning to understand.
> Some genetics factors may influence a person’s ability to engage in sustained deliberate practice. For example, by limiting the person’s capability to focus for long periods of time every time.

However, the author also makes the point that everyone can improve. And, in most cases, improve *a lot*.

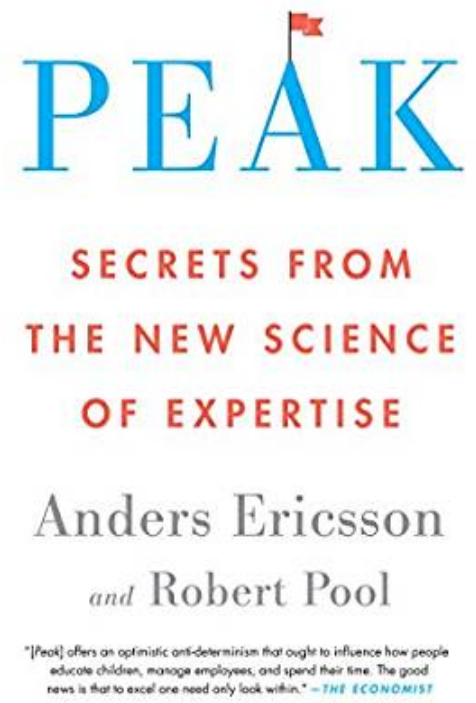
Purposeful Practice is Not A Must

Remember that purposeful practice is not a must.
If “good enough” is good enough for you or if your “good enough” is enough to live well, then there is no point in engaging in deliberate practice.

And certainly, you can’t engage in deliberate practice in all fields of your life.

As the author says:

> And for the most part, that’s OK. “Good enough” is generally good enoguh. But it’s important to remember that the option exists.
> If you wish to become significantly better at something, *you can*.



Peak Quotes

> In short, the human body is incredibily adaptive.
> (…)
> There might be limits, but there is no indications we have reached them yet.

On whom the deliberate practice is for:

> Deliberate practice is for everyone who dreams.

And on people who stop at “average” and “good enough”:

> The reason that most people don’t possess these extraordinary physical capabilities isn’t because they don’t have the capacity for them, but because they’re satisfied to live in the comfortable rut of homeostasis and never do the work that is required to get out of it. They live in the world of “good enough.” The same thing is true for

> all the mental activities we engage in

Criticism

Extremist Position On Nature VS Nurture

The author seems to be pushing an agenda at times.
I quote him when he talks about a mentee of his he really liked:

> Dan gave an answer I really liked.
> He said he didn't appreciate the attitude that only certain people can succeed in certain areas. That only those people who are logical and good in math can go to mathematics. That only athletic people can go to sports (…)

I'm sure a scientist would agree that it's not about what you like and appreciate.
It's about how things are.

At least as long as one seeks to speak like a scientist.
A scientist should force himself to stick to facts.

For an overview of the role of nature, if only slightly too much on the nature side, see Steven Pinker's:

- **"The Blank Slate: The Denial of Human Nature"**

Mixes Correlation With Causation

The author looks at "prodigies" and then makes the case that there are no prodigies but only hard work.

I never liked the idea of "prodigies" either.
The author also says that no ballet dancer has reached the top without working hard.

He then uses that information to marginalize the role of talent.

But that says NOTHING about the role of talent. It might simply be the case -and probably it is the case- that making it to the top requires both talent and hard training.

This is interesting because the author is well aware of the issue when he delivers his criticism of Gladwell. He says:

> (..) To show a result like this, I would have to put a collection of random people through 10.000 hour of deliberarte practice on the violin and the see how they turned out.
> (…)
> The question of whether anyone can become an expert in any given field by taking part in any designed practice is still open.

Yet, why does he keep pushing the agenda that training is everything?

Unconvincing Marginalization of IQ

In his effort to make the point that there is no nature but it's all about training, the author engages in what in my opinion is a rather poor attempt at marginalizing the role of IQ in math, science, and scientific research.

So, how does Anders go about denying the role of IQ in the scientific disciplines?
He parades a list of successful scientists who have low IQs.

That by itself proves absolutely nothing.
But what sounded even more ludicrous is that the scientists he paraded did NOT have low IQs. They simply didn't

have “crazy high IQs”, but they were *all* above average.

Anders makes the point that the path to becoming a scientist might naturally screen for higher IQ.
This *might* be the case indeed (albeit I don’t think it’s the only cause for the correlation between IQ and the scientific profession).

In any case, the technique Anders uses of looking for exceptions to disprove a general rule should have no place in a scientific text. Especially one coming from such an esteemed author.

The Chess-IQ Fallacy

In his war against IQ Anders also recruits data and statistics from chess, a profession that in the minds of many is heavily interlinked with intelligence and IQ.

The author makes the case that IQ matters little in chess mastery.
But again, that proves nothing.

The fact that there is no major correlation between IQ and chess skills does NOT mean IQ doesn’t matter in general. It only means it doesn’t matter that when it comes to chess.
The fact that people believe that chess is correlated with IQ means nothing: people were simply wrong.

The “Lost Talent” Fallacy

Discussing the tendency of discouraging poor performers early on, Anders says:

> We lost a whole collection of children who might have become accomplished in this if only they had not been labeled as “no good in math” in the very beginning

I disagree with the “loss” thing.
We didn’t “lose” those children, they simply went down different paths!

And if there are any innate differences, and of course there are, then it’s probably good for many of them -but not necessarily all, that they went into something that might be better suited for them.

Sure, encouraging or discouraging people to pursue this or that field is far from perfect.
But an imperfect sorting system is better for the world than encouraging everyone into something for which they show no early signs of excellence.

Review

Peak is the best book on peak performance, effective training, and the best resource on how to improve yourself in almost any area.

In my opinion, unluckily, it’s polluted by an aura of feel-good self-help that removes from its otherwise incredible scientific findings.
“Peak” indeed seems to force a feel-good agenda that “yes, you can do anything” and that “no, innate talents and predispositions don’t count”.
And, in my opinion, we didn’t need that. We need more facts and less feel-good self-help.

Nature VS Nurture

Peak sits near the extreme end of the nature VS nurture debate.
In my opinion, to get the biggest bang for the buck, a more balanced approach is best for each one of us.

Such as, you’re better off also taking into account your natural tendencies and abilities when deciding which career and goals to pursue to the best of your abilities.

Check the:

- Best psychology books
- **Competence guide** for ambitious and smart men

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- **Has specific, well-defined goals** (or you have no way to get feedback and measure success)

For example: "Play the piece through, at the proper speed, without mistakes, 3 times in a row".

- **Get feedback to work on your weaknesses**
- **Leverages coaches and trainers for feedback**
- **Breaks tasks into smaller pieces**

Says the author: "Purposeful practice is all about putting a bunch of baby steps together to reach a long-term goal". Also, make sure to get enough sleep.

- **Pushes you outside of your comfort zone**

Getting out of your comfort zone means trying to do something that you couldn't do before. If it's easy, you keep going. If you can't, finding ways around it is one of the hallmarks of purposeful practice.

- **Attacks plateau by trying different approaches**
- **Gives full attention to the task at hand**
- **Monitors the progress**

To keep improving with purposeful practice, you need motivation. Purposeful practice is much harder than naive training or playing for fun, of course, and it can be the case that you will *not* enjoy it.

Indeed, as soon as we feel like "we're good enough" and slow down, we move out of purposeful practice, and we will likely not improve any further, no matter how often we keep playing or "training".

Deliberate Practice: The Gold Standard of Training

Deliberate practice is what makes champions and what we think are geniuses.

The elements of deliberate practice are:

1. **Find a good teacher**
    1. A good teacher is not necessarily someone who's good at the craft
    2. Find a teacher who's good for your level of skills
    3. He must help you develop your own mental representations so you can feedback on yourself
    4. He must give you exercises you can do at home
2. **Don't be afraid of changing teacher when you're too good** for him or when he's not helping anymore
3. **Operate at your outermost level of skills**
4. **Define specific goals**

5. **Be fully present and attentive during your training sessions**
6. **Train at home by yourself**: the best training is lone training
7. **Work on your weaknesses and mistakes with constant feedback**
8. **Choose a developed field**, otherwise, you must pave the way to peak performance

Fields With No Codified Training

If you are engaged in pursuits with no clear experts and no well-developed training methods, then do the following:

1. Find out the best performers
2. Reverse-engineers What makes them top performers
3. Most of all, find out what type of training they engage in
4. Copy what they do and train as they do. Then seek to improve upon it

If you can't find a teacher, you can always focus on the "3 Fs":

- Focus
- Feedback
- Fix it

Try to break your work down into smaller components that you can analyze and repeat. Then determine your weaknesses and train to eliminate them.

My Note:
Andersson seems to focus mostly on weaknesses.
However, many authors today suggest to focus more on your strengths than your weaknesses.
I think that whether you should focus more on weaknesses or on strengths depends heavily on your situation and that's something that should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

There Are Fields & Professions Without Deliberate Practice

There are many fields in which deliberate practice is not as easy.

Business consultants, for example, or artistic pursuits.
But also "folk dancing" or "playing music in a pop music group". There are many fields that lack codified and standard training approaches.

When all the steps of deliberate practice are not possible, you should strive to implement as many as you can (I also invite you to read "*Deep Work*" and "*Mastery*" which are probably more suited for intellectual and artistic types of work).

Skills Are Based on Mental Representations

Anders Ericsson spends a lot of time on the concept of "mental representations".

It's difficult to define them because they differ dramatically from field to field, but in essence, the author says:

> Pre-existing patterns of information, facts, images, rules, relationships and so on. They are held in long-term memory and can be used to answer quickly and effectively in certain types of situations.
> They make it possible to process large amount of information quickly (despite the limitations of short-term memory)

Mental representations allow for:

- Pattern recognition
- Effective information handling
- Quicker reaction times and problem-solving

Deliberate practice builds better and better mental representations by changing the neuro-circuitry in the brain. What sets experts apart is the quality and quantity of mental representations.

Mental representations are very domain-specific, and that's why deliberate is not for everyone. Some of the skills you build might not be very transferable to other domains of life.

Mental Representations for Reading

Mental representations apply to any domain, including reading and absorbing information.

That's why some people are better at understanding and retaining information.

The Mindset of Enhancing Performance

Ericsson talks about enhancing performance in the workplace as well, and it starts with dropping the following three mindsets:

1. Drop the belief that one's ability is limited by innate talents
2. If you do something for long enough, you'll get better
3. All it takes to improve is to "try harder."

Since the workplace is unstructured and not as well codified when it comes to training, you should first figure out what the "*habits of most successful people*" are and then find a way to train those skills in all the rest.

The 10.000 Hour Rule Is Cr@p

Eric Andersson talks about the "10.000 hour rule", popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in "*Outliers*" and since then has become a famous slogan in self-help (also read: debunking self-help myths).

Gladwell, Andersson explains, did not understand his study well (or chose to ignore reality to sell something).
In details:

1. There is nothing "magical" about 10k hours and there is no fixed time: some will need less to achieve the top of the field, some more
2. How much you need to train also depends on the competitiveness of the field
3. Time matters, but how you train is equally, if not more, important

Training Beats Knowledge

In "Peak" Anders Ericsson dedicates a good portion to discussing schools and training systems.

He dedicates some time to a very important aspect of people's lives: doctor's training. Doctors train as most other students train: in the classroom, absorbing knowledge.

However, Andersson shows that classroom knowledge translates very poorly into on-the-job skills.

Surgeons, for example, get better with surgeries, not with classroom time.
Unluckily, that also means that the first surgeries they perform will be far from optimal.

Ericsson says that we stick with a knowledge-based system though because it's easier.

The Key to Mastery: Maintaining Motivation

Since for Anders Ericsson, the main differentiator between peak performers and “good” performers is training, it ensures that different abilities to stick to the training regimes will make the biggest difference.

He does not like to talk about “willpower” though because people can easily fall into a circular thinking trap that if they don’t have willpower then they might as well not even try (read here the science of willpower).

He prefers talking about “motivation”.
And to stick to the training routine, you must have strong motivation.

To keep a high motivation:

- **Increase your reasons to continue**
  - Do what you enjoy
  - Use social motivation: create groups of people with the same goal
- **Decrease your reasons to quit**
  - If practicing is too hard, limit the time and increase the focus
  - Get enough sleep
  - Take breaks in between sessions
- **Measure your progress for encouragement**
- **Get (positive) feedback**

Feedback can be internal, such as the pleasure of seeing yourself improve, or external, such as getting recognition for your work.

- **Make your training and field part of your identity**
- **Take pride in your identity** (also read: antifragile ego)

Blowing Past Plateaus

The way past plateaus often is by looking for different approaches.

Since plateaus can be discouraging, it’s crucial that you don’t think you’ve peaked but that you understand that it’s only a question of technique, training, and time before you will break through.

If you wanna quit tell yourself you’ll do it after the plateau, and then you probably won’t quit at all.
If you are still junior in your field, ask for feedback from coaches who’ve done it and if you don’t have those mentors, look at how others do it.

Genetics DO Matter

I have read around the web some bad reviews about “Peak” which purports to say that talent does not matter.
These reviewers did not understand Anders Ericsson’s message.

I quote the author here:

> More generally, there is a complex interplay between genetic factors and practice activity that we are just beginning to understand.
> Some genetics factors may influence a person’s ability to engage in sustained deliberate practice. For example, by limiting the person’s capability to focus for long periods of time every time.

However, the author also makes the point that everyone can improve. And, in most cases, improve *a lot*.

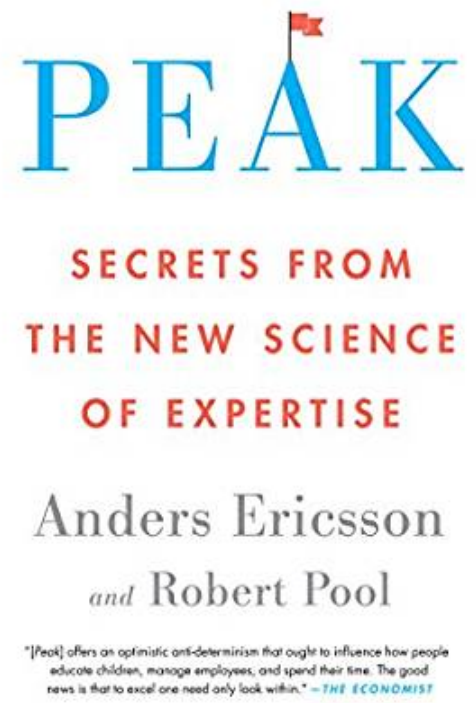
Purposeful Practice is Not A Must

Remember that purposeful practice is not a must.
If “good enough” is good enough for you or if your “good enough” is enough to live well, then there is no point in engaging in deliberate practice.

And certainly, you can’t engage in deliberate practice in all fields of your life.

As the author says:

> And for the most part, that’s OK. “Good enough” is generally good enoguh. But it’s important to remember that the option exists.
> If you wish to become significantly better at something, *you can*.



Peak Quotes

> In short, the human body is incredibily adaptive.
> (…)
> There might be limits, but there is no indications we have reached them yet.

On whom the deliberate practice is for:

> Deliberate practice is for everyone who dreams.

And on people who stop at “average” and “good enough”:

> The reason that most people don’t possess these extraordinary physical capabilities isn’t because they don’t have the capacity for them, but because they’re satisfied to live in the comfortable rut of homeostasis and never do the work that is required to get out of it. They live in the world of “good enough.” The same thing is true for

> all the mental activities we engage in

Criticism

Extremist Position On Nature VS Nurture

The author seems to be pushing an agenda at times.
I quote him when he talks about a mentee of his he really liked:

> Dan gave an answer I really liked.
> He said he didn't appreciate the attitude that only certain people can succeed in certain areas. That only those people who are logical and good in math can go to mathematics. That only athletic people can go to sports (…)

I'm sure a scientist would agree that it's not about what you like and appreciate.
It's about how things are.

At least as long as one seeks to speak like a scientist.
A scientist should force himself to stick to facts.

For an overview of the role of nature, if only slightly too much on the nature side, see Steven Pinker's:

- **"The Blank Slate: The Denial of Human Nature"**

Mixes Correlation With Causation

The author looks at "prodigies" and then makes the case that there are no prodigies but only hard work.

I never liked the idea of "prodigies" either.
The author also says that no ballet dancer has reached the top without working hard.

He then uses that information to marginalize the role of talent.

But that says NOTHING about the role of talent. It might simply be the case -and probably it is the case- that making it to the top requires both talent and hard training.

This is interesting because the author is well aware of the issue when he delivers his criticism of Gladwell. He says:

> (..) To show a result like this, I would have to put a collection of random people through 10.000 hour of deliberarte practice on the violin and the see how they turned out.
> (…)
> The question of whether anyone can become an expert in any given field by taking part in any designed practice is still open.

Yet, why does he keep pushing the agenda that training is everything?

Unconvincing Marginalization of IQ

In his effort to make the point that there is no nature but it's all about training, the author engages in what in my opinion is a rather poor attempt at marginalizing the role of IQ in math, science, and scientific research.

So, how does Anders go about denying the role of IQ in the scientific disciplines?
He parades a list of successful scientists who have low IQs.

That by itself proves absolutely nothing.
But what sounded even more ludicrous is that the scientists he paraded did NOT have low IQs. They simply didn't

have “crazy high IQs”, but they were *all* above average.

Anders makes the point that the path to becoming a scientist might naturally screen for higher IQ.
This *might* be the case indeed (albeit I don’t think it’s the only cause for the correlation between IQ and the scientific profession).

In any case, the technique Anders uses of looking for exceptions to disprove a general rule should have no place in a scientific text. Especially one coming from such an esteemed author.

The Chess-IQ Fallacy

In his war against IQ Anders also recruits data and statistics from chess, a profession that in the minds of many is heavily interlinked with intelligence and IQ.

The author makes the case that IQ matters little in chess mastery.
But again, that proves nothing.

The fact that there is no major correlation between IQ and chess skills does NOT mean IQ doesn’t matter in general. It only means it doesn’t matter that when it comes to chess.
The fact that people believe that chess is correlated with IQ means nothing: people were simply wrong.

The “Lost Talent” Fallacy

Discussing the tendency of discouraging poor performers early on, Anders says:

> We lost a whole collection of children who might have become accomplished in this if only they had not been labeled as “no good in math” in the very beginning

I disagree with the “loss” thing.
We didn’t “lose” those children, they simply went down different paths!

And if there are any innate differences, and of course there are, then it’s probably good for many of them -but not necessarily all, that they went into something that might be better suited for them.

Sure, encouraging or discouraging people to pursue this or that field is far from perfect.
But an imperfect sorting system is better for the world than encouraging everyone into something for which they show no early signs of excellence.

Review

Peak is the best book on peak performance, effective training, and the best resource on how to improve yourself in almost any area.

In my opinion, unluckily, it’s polluted by an aura of feel-good self-help that removes from its otherwise incredible scientific findings.
“Peak” indeed seems to force a feel-good agenda that “yes, you can do anything” and that “no, innate talents and predispositions don’t count”.
And, in my opinion, we didn’t need that. We need more facts and less feel-good self-help.

Nature VS Nurture

Peak sits near the extreme end of the nature VS nurture debate.
In my opinion, to get the biggest bang for the buck, a more balanced approach is best for each one of us.

Such as, you’re better off also taking into account your natural tendencies and abilities when deciding which career and goals to pursue to the best of your abilities.

Check the:

- Best psychology books
- **Competence guide** for ambitious and smart men

10 Bullying Debate Techniques From Ben Shapiro

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

When it comes to debate techniques to win debates *no matter what*, Ben Shapiro is a great guy to learn from.

Shapiro is the most successful, Machiavellian, and ruthless political debater in the English-speaking world.

But as a good connoisseur of power dynamics, Shapiro sometimes deploys aggressive strategies and techniques that might be "unethical" or "manipulative".
This article will show you all the techniques Ben Shapiro uses to dominate his debates.

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- #2. Strike When They Overreact (i.e., Gaslighting)
- #3. Con With The Confidence Game: Talk Like You're Gospel
- #4. Ridicule Your Opponent
- #5. Use (Or bend) Science to Inflate Your Authority
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#1. Get Under Your Opponent's Skin

One of the major reasons why Ben Shapiro dominates all the debates is that he's the best I have ever seen at getting under his opponents' skin.

This is one of the things he's done, said, or heavily implied to get under people's skin:

- "you've been standing on the graves of dead children."
- "you're not a real woman" (to a trans)
- "I feel terrible for you" (to a trans)
- "why are you mainstreaming delusion?" (to a full panel of journalists)

Getting under his opponents' skin is a technique Ben Shapiro uses consciously.
And I know that because he bragged about it to a room full of his supporters.

> **Interviewer**: And you can smirk at me
> **Shapiro**: I'm not smirking (keeps smirking with a smart-alec attitude)

#2. Strike When They Overreact (i.e., Gaslighting)

This is how Shapiro deploys gaslighting:

1. Manipulate the victim into overreacting ("getting under their skin")
2. Remain calm as they overreact
3. Point out to the victim that they are overreacting and/or acting crazy and aggressive

The victim, looking at the calm and composed aggressor, often draws the conclusion that they are indeed acting too wild and over the top. And, often, they end up believing their aggressor and *feeling* crazy.

Gaslighting is a common technique that abusive men use in their highly toxic relationships.

When Ben Shapiro makes his victim act aggressively, he makes it a point to highlight it while he acts calm and rational.

That way, it looks like he is winning the debate thanks to his arguments, and not thanks to his emotional manipulation.

Ben Shapiro is an intelligent man and a highly skilled political debater.
Yet I'd go as far as to say that most of Ben Shapiro's claim to notoriety is due to him gaslighting his opponents (i.e., making them overreact and aggress him and then taking advantage of it).

> **Shapiro**: (makes them angry and emotional by refusing to use the "she" pronoun)
> **Moderator**: (gets emotional, voice cracks)
> **Shapiro**: OK, forget about disrespect, facts don't care about feelings <— the line that made him famous

Why Shapiro Does Not Say His Opponents Are Acting Crazy

When transgender Zoey Tur threatened to physically assault Shapiro, Shapiro could have claimed that threats of violence have no place in a debate.
And he could have made the case that everyone in the studio was supporting violence by not openly condemning Zoey Tur (and it would have been a good point, BTW).

However, he decided not to.
Why?
Because from a persuasion point of view, it's much better if people realize by themselves that people are being aggressive towards Shapiro while he simply makes his case calmly and rationally.

That way, people are actually siding with Shapiro of their own volition rather than because Ben complained or asked to do so.

And that's much more persuasive.

#3. Con With The Confidence Game: Talk Like You're Gospel

Ben Shapiro talks with an unwavering belief in his values and he talks like he's speaking unquestionable truths.

That attitude helps Shapiro browbeat his adversaries and it makes him wield outsized power and influence.

Talking with unwavering confidence like you're delivering scripture works very well both in destroying his debating opponents and in galvanizing his followers' base.
Most people indeed have an inborn tendency to follow the charismatic leader.

This is a terrible human bias because it actually helps dictators, psychopaths, and snake oil salesmen alike to build a huge following.
But alas, it's there and it's real so you better take it into account.

When People Quit Debating Shapiro

Ben Shapiro is so good at conveying power and authority that sometimes his least-skilled debating opponents simply give up.

They quit trying to debate him or start asking him questions instead of confronting him.

That's the hallmark of a powerful debater.
When people stop debating you they are recognizing your superiority. And when they ask you questions they are basically saying "you know more, you are the real leader, know let me learn from you"

#4. Ridicule Your Opponent

Ben Shapiro is a ruthless debater.

And one way he dominates debates is by intellectually destroying his opponent.

He does it in all the ways he can.
But one of his favorites and one of the nastiest power moves he deploys is by implying, or sometimes directly stating, that his opponent is an idiot.

He does it with smirks, witty remarks, voice tonality, eye-rolling, and other indicators of contempt.
Contempt also contributes to Shapiro's gaslighting effect.

Shapiro's "know it all" attitude is typical of the "smart alec" dominant archetype that we analyzed in "The 7 Archetypes of Dominance".

> **Shapiro**: (uses the podium and speaker power position to dominate and ridicule opponents)

This is an effective strategy, and can also be fair and value-adding.
Even Obama does it often.

Also see:

- **How to speak with power**

#5. Use (Or bend) Science to Inflate Your Authority

We live in a society that, righteously, celebrates science, data, and statistics.

People who drop quotes, names, data, statistics, and studies, sound well-informed, intelligent, and… "right".
After all, you can't argue with data, can you?

Ben Shapiro loves to drop a copious amount of statistics that make him sound like the ultimate authority on whatever he's discussing.

As per ThePowerMoves dictionary of power, this is a form of "power borrowing". Such as, you quote, cite, or align yourself with high-authority sources to borrow their power, and use it for your own -sometimes selfish- ends.

That's all cool and dandy, until… Until someone starts using science not to find the truth, but to impose *their version* of the truth.
Science, data, and statistics, albeit *technically* objective, can be manipulated to say almost anything you want to say (Darrell Huff, 1954).

And the most manipulative players can simply misquote a study, or make stuff up.
And I'm afraid Shapiro has done that, too.

And since few people even check whether what you're saying is based on good data or not, chances are you can

"win" your little battle, without your reputation ever being tarnished.

Example of Bending Researches

Shapiro doesn't want to call transexuals "she".

To defend a position that might seem just outright mean, he says that research showed that the suicide rate among transexuals is the same whether people recognize them for their preferred gender or not.
For anyone familiar with basic psychology and sociology, this seems very strange.
It certainly did seem so to me when I heard it.

After all, being recognized or ostracized by the people around has a *huge* impact on people.

So I looked up the research.
Turns out, it was pretty much as I expected it would turn up and pretty much saying the opposite of what Shapiro stated.

I quote:

> Respondents who experienced rejection by family and friends, discrimination, victimization, or violence had elevated prevalence of suicide attempts

Now, based on that, what do you think forcing a "he" does to a trans who wants to become a "she"? Might that qualify as a rejection for her?
I definitely think so.

And this is what another research says:

> Social support, reduced transphobia, and having any personal identification documents changed to an appropriate sex designation were associated with large relative and absolute reductions in suicide risk

And:

> Interventions to increase social inclusion and access to medical transition, and to reduce transphobia, have the potential to contribute to substantial reductions in the extremely high prevalences of suicide ideation

Basically: don't listen to what Shapiro says about transexuals.
Frankly, I found his position unneeded mean, and it only increases the level of pain and hurt in this world.

#6. Play The Victim to Hide Your Aggression

There is a strange tendency among human beings.

And that tendency is to think that if one has been victimized he can hardly be a victimizer himself.
Funny, because that's actually the opposite of how it goes (Glasser, 2001).

So what Shapiro conveniently says is that he is against abuse and bullying because he's been the victim of vicious bullying as a kid.

That helps him deflect a lot of bullying accusations and, when he's accused of bullying, it gives him an easier way out.

It's a bit like the abusing partner who says to his wife when she accuses him of being emotionally abusive:

> **Him**: How can you say that to me, you know what my father did me!!

Ben Shapiro's Next-Level Victim Power Move

Playing the victim is a dangerous technique though.

It's easy to overdo it and end up sounding like a complainer or like a powerless, submissive victim (check here body language of submission).

And you can't dominate debates as the weaker party of the interaction.

But of course, Ben Shapiro is too smart to fall into that trap, and he finds indeed a strong, powerful way of presenting himself as a victim.

Basically, it sounds a bit like this: "I'm ready to debate fair and square with anyone… But they prefer to shut me off, protest me, and aggress me instead of debating".

That way he sounds intellectually superior to his opponents while still painting himself as the victim of abuse.
It makes him look like a 21st-century Robin Hood.

> **Shapiro**: I'm very happy to talk about anyone, but they usually protest me <— meaning: "I'm being oppressed and canceled"

#7. Hide Your True Power Source

Hide your true sources of power, so others can't attack them.

As we have seen Ben Shapiro's debating techniques often resort to emotional manipulation, aggression, covert aggression, and bullying.
Yet he loves to paint himself as a "small Jewish guy who's been viciously bullied".

So on top of former bullying, Shapiro self-frames himself as "small and harmless".

With that frame, people are less likely to correctly identify one of Shapiro's biggest power tools: his aggression, his high-dominance, and his frequent "frame-imposing" strategies.

#8. Beat Them to The Punch: Accuse Them of Manipulativeness

This is another common technique of abusive men (Bancroft, 2002).

It consists of "beating your opponent to the punch" and accusing him of using your own manipulative technique.

So for example, let's imagine you are verbally bullying someone. What you would do then is to accuse your opponent of being a verbal bully.

When you do it:

1. **You get under his skin** and he will most likely overreact
2. **He loses his plot**, stumbles, potentially gets angry, and most likely defends. Often, he will counter-accuse you of being a bully, but now that you said it first, it looks like he's following your lead, reacting to your leadership, and generally losing the argument
3. **People side with you,** since people tend to believe the higher-power accuser more than the one who defends - they unconsciously think "why would he have to defend, if he's not guilty"?-

As a matter of fact, the more he overreacts and attacks back, the more he will look like a bully, and the more likely you are of winning the debate.

This is also a technique that Donald Trump used quite often.
Also read:

- Trump debating technique
- Win a debate like Donal Trump
- Win Bigly (analysis of Trump's persuasion techniques)

#9. Frame The Interaction (the way it serves you)

Whoever gets to frame the interaction holds a huge advantage in debates.

For example, someone might pose you a question and frame it in a way that presupposes you *did* say something or that you agree with something.
If you're not aware of the frame and you answer the question, you end up accepting that presupposition.

Or as you speak someone might reframe the conversation to better suit his political agenda.
For example, a frame to support capital punishment might be "what we're really talking about here is the proper punishment for the most heinous crimes like torture, pedophilia, and mass murders".

Ben Shapiro is very good at framing the conversation in a way that supports his own views.
For example:

> **Ben Shapiro**: A boy who thinks he's a girl, that's the use phraseology I use (…) which his technically what we're talking about here (frames the dynamics as a boy *thinking* he's a girl, rather than *feeling*, or *being*)
>
> As far as the actual psychological issues at play… (frames it as an *issue*)

Ben Shapiro frames the conversation around gender dysphoria in the way that serves him best:

- Thinking VS being: the boy *thinks* he's a girl. That frame implies the boy IS a boy, but mistakenly thinks he's a girl
- Psychological issue: frames the conversation any conservative wants it to be framed: you're the gender you're born with, you can't change it. And if you want otherwise, you have psychological issues that must be addressed mentally, not with an operation

This also makes Shapiro look smart, erudite, and powerful vis-a-vis the student he's debating.
His reply implies the student is rambling on and babbling, while he is the intelligent one who brings the conversation towards its central -and correct- proposition.

Also read:

- Basics of frame
- 10 Frame control technique

George Lakoff also addresses framing from a conservative VS liberal point of view in "*Don't Think of An Elephant*".

#10. End With An Olive Branch After You've Taken Their Scalp (so you even look "nice")

People remember mostly how things begin and how they end (Elliot Aronson, 2011).

This is much needed by an aggressive debater like Ben Shapiro, because if all he did was to aggress and deride, then people would leave with a rather bad impression of him.

Instead, I have noticed he often ends with a more conciliatory tone. That allows him to take rather extremist positions but still makes it seem like he's quite open.

But mostly, it allows him to act like a bully, tear his opponents to pieces, and then end with a more respectful, conciliatory, and high-warmth tone to look magnanimous.

His opponents, browbeaten during the whole argument, are sometimes more than happy to take that olive branch to save (some) face.
So he ends with another leadership move: he offers the olive branch, and others follow him -and if they don't follow him now, they look like butthurt losers-.

To people looking from the outside, it looks like Shapiro destroys his opponents with hard facts, data, and solid logic.
And then, he gets to seem nice and "superior" to personal squabbles to end in friendship.

It's the negotiation ideal of "be hard on problems and soft on people" (Fisher and Ury, 1981).

Except, he's not really that fair with the arguments, and neither that kind with the people.

But it's great for his public image: AFTER he did everything he could to shame and ridicule his opponents, he looks sensible and magnanimous to befriend them.

Ben Shapiro Personality Traits

Researching Ben Shapiro I have realized that is possibly the most ruthlessly effective debate I have seen so far.

He is better than Tucker Carlson and, in some ways, more effective than Jordan Peterson, author of *The 12 Rules For Life*.

Here are some of Ben Shapiro's superpowers:

- **Icey cold under stress** (the way he remained cool in front of the physical threat was nothing short of astonishing)
- **Does not take things personally** (also read: Ego Is The Enemy, The Antifragile Ego)
- **Quick-witted** (he owes his notoriety and skills to his quick-wit as well)

Ben Shapiro's Debating Fundamentals

Ben Shapiro uses plenty of power moves and unfair debating techniques, but don't get me wrong: he is also skilled with the basics.

For example:

- He embodies his values by living them, which gives him huge credibility
- Knows his topics really well
- Researches before going into a debate
- High degree of mastery of the English language
- Separates himself from his arguments (this allows him to take strong criticism without taking it personally)

What I Think of Ben Shapiro

This was a rather critical analysis of Ben Shapiro debating skills and personality.

It may come as a surprise then that it's not meant as an attack against Shapiro.

In these examples, I disagree with his stance on transexuals and his insistence on calling them by their biological pronoun.
That's really unhelpful and only adds to this world's misery. If there is one thing we should all strive for is to reduce misery and increase people's well-being.

And in general, I find him a bit too self-righteous, close-minded to different ideas and approaches, and derisive of others.
His approach to fame is obviously not to find bridges and solutions, but to create echo chambers, “us VS them” dynamics, and then throw some bones to the turkeys with his self-righteous outraged tirades.

But I do very much enjoy and, at times, even agree with *some* of his video commentaries.
Especially the ones that lay bare the hypocrisy of certain people, awards, ceremonies, and news cycles.
His criticism of Oprah Winfrey’s speech is spot on, for example.
And the column he’s got where he publicly airs his dirty laundry and past mistakes is pretty cool (and something I’m thinking of having as well).

SUMMARY

If you want to *win* debates, you must master the dark side of the debate techniques.

Ben Shapiro is one of the most successful political debaters around, and there is much to learn from him.

His debating dominance though does not only rely on facts and skills but also resorts to manipulation and bullying.

My personal invite to you is to build bridges, rather than “dominate” the opponent.
But with this article, you will know how to defend yourself against Shapiro-like debaters.

The Feminine Mystique: The Happy Housewife Lie (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Feminine Mystique is a social analysis of the lives of women in the 1950s and 1960s in the US.
Betty Friedan, the author, starts by describing the general "malaise" and unhappiness of most American women and also expands on the general role of women, feminism, and the history of women's rights.

TPM Note: *The Feminine Mystique* documents the consequences of macro social power dynamics
The Housewife expectation was likely the downstream manifestation of a power and sexual strategy.

Contents

- Main Takeaways
- Notes
  - The Problem That Has No Name
  - The Culture That Creates The Feminine Mystique
  - The Root Causes of The Female Malaise
  - The Solutions Are Education and Positive Examples
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- Power Dynamics Behind The Feminine Mystique
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- CRITICISM
  - Much of the research is based on interviews
  - Analysis of infidelity is lacking
  - Politically biased on economics (left-leaning)
  - Proposes hard-to-believe conspiracy theories
  - Generalizes the malaise: what about happy housewives?
- Review

Main Takeaways

- The feminine mystique is a false narrative depicting women as happy housewives who find fulfillment in domestic chores, raising children, and supporting their husbands
- Women suffered in trying to live up to the idealized, fake image of the happy housewife
- The feminine mystique applied social pressure on women not to look too "smart" or "career-focused" in fear of appearing too masculine
- We will only overcome the feminine mystique when men and women work together

Notes

What I found fascinating is how Betty Friedan ended up writing "*The Feminine Mystique*".

Originally, she wanted to write an article. But she could not get it published because, she says, it ran against the zeitgeist and the narrative of the happy housewife.

The Problem That Has No Name

Women across the US show a widespread sense of unhappiness, emptiness, and unease.

But most of them don't want to talk about it and, even when they do, they cannot pinpoint the causes.
The fact that they have everything from a material point of view but are still unhappy without being able to find a cause makes them even more lost and ashamed of their own unhappiness.

Advertising also took advantage of the widespread unhappiness to sell products and help women reach the ideal of the happy woman represented by the feminine mystique.

The Culture That Creates The Feminine Mystique

Friedan makes the point that, in part, the feminine mystique narrative was a male creation, and it's no coincidence that it started when many journalists and editors returned after the war had ended.

But it wasn't just pop-journalism that perpetrated the feminine mystique.

The author has a beautiful analysis of Sigmund Freud, his personality, and his theories.
She says that some of Freud's theories, like penis envy, were reinterpreted and enlarged in scope.
Some other poor Freudian theories, such as female inferiority, were uncritically adopted as truth.

Sociologists also threw their weight behind the feminine mystique when they confused what "is", ie. the female housewife, with what "should be".

Finally, there is advertising, which loves to encourage women to become "experts of the house" and buy all the best products and machinery for house upkeep and house cleaning.

The Root Causes of The Female Malaise

The author says that the malaise arises because women are pressured into a role that they didn't choose.

When women comply with the feminine mystique, they are not developing their true identities, and they are not doing what they really want to do.

While men can fulfill all their needs with a life outside of the home as well, women can only fulfill their most basic physiological needs while remaining psychologically unfulfilled.

The Solutions Are Education and Positive Examples

The author says that the solution to the malaise is to encourage women to study and learn.

And to show them that there is no real dichotomy between motherhood, work, and outside-of-the-family fulfillment.
Women can work and lead happy family lives.

My Note:
I =agree with that. There must not be a dichotomy between happy motherhood, happy family life, fulfillment, and career.

Finally, Betty Friedan says that efforts to lift women out of *the feminine mystique* must be supported by men as well.
Men will also benefit from happier, more fulfilled women, and I couldn't agree more.

My Note:
I agree with the author.
It's only fearful men who are afraid of more emancipated women, and I want to write an article on this soon.

What The Feminine Mystique Means to You

In my opinion, part of the feminine mystique and the pressure it applies to women will never fully go away.

It will always stay there for two reasons:

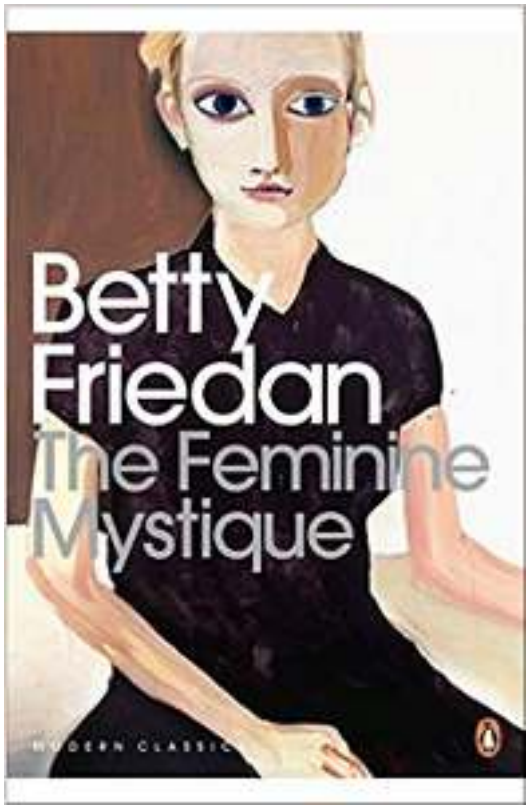
1. Most men don't understand women and female psychology
2. Feminine women who adopt the "feminine mystique" do have a dating advantage

That's why there will always be some women who choose, consciously or unconsciously, to play that role.

And the women who decide to pursue their careers also sometimes end up not being completely fulfilled if their family and dating lives are not as good. Some career women end up resenting the women who play the "*feminine mystique*" role because they make them feel less feminine and make them less successful at dating.

Read more here:

- Feminine VS Career Women
- How to be powerful and feminine
- How to be Feminine
- Madonna/whore dichotomy



Power Dynamics Behind The Feminine Mystique

The feminine mystique points to underlying power dynamics about both patriarchi and feminism: it's about power dynamics.
This book points to a precise **power structure** redistributing:

- **Economic power** → men (breadwinners)
- **Domestic power** → women (but low-status, low leverage)

This power structure was maintained with culture and social reward or punishments:

- Reward for conformity: being and 'real man' for him and a 'good woman for her'
- Punishment for deviance: shame, avoidance, social isolation and loss of social status

This isn't just about 'specialization of work', it's also about power, control, and sexual strategies. See our in-depth analyses for more.

Real-Life Applications

- **Female emancipation follows "waves": women must be ready**

A great lesson learned for many women is that female emancipation (or repression) has so far moved in "waves" throughout history.

Periods of high emancipation have been followed by periods of higher repression or oppressive narratives, such as the feminine mystique.

Women should keep that in mind and be ready—or teach their daughters to be ready—at any cultural turn.

- **Housewives make for poor mothers: Follow your passions**

Women who stay at home and have no other interests or hobbies tend to raise more neurotic children.
They also tend to live vicariously through their children, whom they see as an extension of themselves.

CRITICISM

Much of the research is based on interviews

A lot of the stories that go into "*The Feminine Mystique*" are based on anecdotal evidence.
I still believe that anecdotal evidence, at least in this case, is valid and can be (somewhat) representative.
But we must still mention it as a potential limitation.

Analysis of infidelity is lacking

The author says there is a connection between emancipation and sexual satisfaction, which is true, but then loses the plot.

I found the analysis of infidelity through the feminine mystique to be somewhat lacking.

Politically biased on economics (left-leaning)

"*The Feminine Mystique*" sounds a bit like the leftist "No Logo" at times, and I think Friedan should have been more careful in her approach toward different disciplines.

She writes for example:

> Abstractions of "balance the budget" did no mask for women the danger of gutting government programs that protect the children and older people..

When she talks about "balancing the budget" as an "abstraction" that matters less than the people, the author betrays ignorance of basic economic principles.

A properly balanced budget does not stand against the people but it *allows* for good caring of the people.
Funding prosocial programs must be done, but *within* the budget, or at least with a plan for eventually paying it.
Or those same children she wants to support will be paying for them…

Proposes hard-to-believe conspiracy theories

Sometimes I had to wonder how such an intelligent woman who provided such a good social analysis could stumble on some basic idiocies.
The author, for example, implies that the tobacco industry is getting women hooked on smoking while men are quitting.

And she makes it sound as if that were a plan to keep women dependent.

Doesn't add up logically. If the tobacco industry wanted to make money, it would try to hook *both* men and women. Or should we say that the tobacco industry in China is trying to get men dependent, since men there smoke more?

Generalizes the malaise: what about happy housewives?

I wish Betty Friedan had also said that there are plenty of happy women who stay at home and it can be a healthy, fulfilling choice for some.

It's a small caveat, but it would have spared her lots of critics and it would have made her message more compelling and even more scientific (because blanket generalizations are almost always wrong when it comes to people and social sciences).

Review

The Feminine Mystique is a book of historical significance that drew attention to a real issue of 1950s culture, clipping the wings of many otherwise ambitious women and forcing them into a 'life of quiet desperation'.

Culture has partially changed, though not completely, but the social power dynamics of expectations, social pressures, and individual freedom and power against social trends still apply.
Plus, cultures always change and the 1950s culture may one day take over once again.

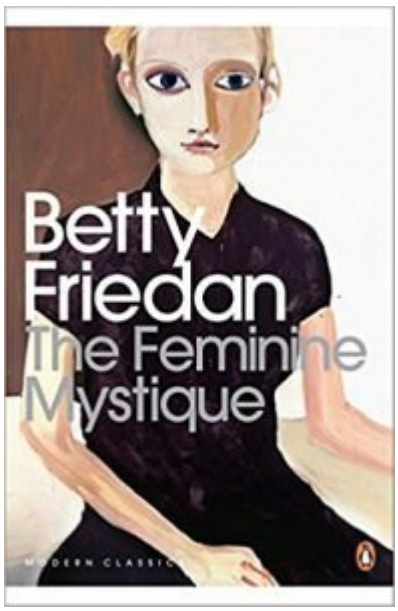
The book has its limitations, including that it generalizes and that it doesn't apply to the many women who may have been very happy to be housewives.
Many modern readers may also not realize that **today's issue is the opposite and that women who may want to be housewives instead feel shamed for not being 'independent enough'.**

Another important limitation of the book is that it documents surface-level consequences of deeper-seated power dynamics and sexual strategies, but never makes that connection.

On the positive side, Friedan rejects any "call to arms" and sends out a message of unity, something that we may need more of today.

Check the TPM top resources

The Feminine Mystique Summary: The Happy Housewife Lie



Very good social analysis and and importat text on gender studies

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-feminine-mystique/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4

Sway: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 April 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Sway explains with anecdotes and experiments how the human mind is far less rational than we believe, and how we constantly fall victim to psychological pitfalls that we are not even aware of.
Ori and Rom Brafman, the authors, also give useful suggestions on how to improve our decision-making by taking our psychological biases into account.

Contents

- Sway Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Sway Review

Sway Summary

About the Authors: Ori Brafman is an American author and organizational consultant. He is a "Distinguished Teaching Fellow at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business".
Rom seems to go for a lower-key public profile.

Loss Aversion Leads to Short-Term Bias

If you have been reading my summaries or if you are into psychology by now you probably know that humans are loss-averse.
That means that we fear losses more than we look forward to gains, and it can lead to a whole host of irrational decisions.

The Brafman brothers though add an interesting twist: our loss aversion makes us biased towards short-term actions that can be harmful to our long-term well-being.

Imagine for example that you are late and a driver in front of you is going too slow.
Chances are that you will get nervous and attempt a risky overtake that could end up costing really big.
Not only getting nervous is unhealthy, but the risk of a risky overtake far outweighs the limited advantage of a couple of minutes top.

Also relates to loss aversion;

- We stick with losers in the hope that things will turn around even though it's unlikely they'll turn around (ie.: Vietnam war and Iraq war)
- The more meaningful and emotional a loss is, the more we struggle to realize our losses and move on

Why Our Friends Know Better About Our Relationships (Commitment Bias)

We dismiss objective data when it doesn't fit what we want to see.

And this is most apparent when we really want to see something or when we're blinded by… Love (MacDonald, Ross, 1999).

MacDonald and Ross showed that roommates and parents were better able to assess the longevity of the relationship than the partners themselves were.

What's interesting though is that the partners knew and saw about their own problems.
They just ignored them when it came to making long-term predictions.

The authors say that it's similar to what happens when you see, say, a house that you like and you start fantasizing about how nice it would be to live there.
Then, you immediately become blind to the house issues and you focus on the positives.

Perceived Value Becomes Real Value (Value Attribution)

When we attribute a certain initial value to a product we will act accordingly to that value, even though the "real" value might be different.

How a product is presented heavily influences the initial value attribution, as the authors show for example a world-famous violinist playing in a subway station and nobody even noticing him.

When we discount products, people also tend to value them less, including after they buy them.

If people pay a high price for something, they're more likely to value it more, use it more attentively, and come back more often to it.

First Impressions Determine Our Destiny (Diagnosis Bias)

You have probably heard the saying that you get no second chance at first impressions and that first impressions are crucial.

Well, that's true.
As a matter of fact, it might be far truer than you imagine.

For example, NBA players who got drafted late were unconsciously labeled as poor by their coaches.
What happened was that, at parity of actual performance metrics, they still played less and got traded earlier.

The bias became so entrenched over time that it didn't go away at all. Even their careers were shorter than early picks.

And remember, this is at parity with actual performance metrics.

Don't Abuse Your Power (Fairness Bias)

People are irrational even when it comes to getting stuff for free.

Experiments indeed show that people will refuse to receive money if they know that the offerer is keeping the majority for themselves.

Why?
Because people expect and want fairness and would rather lose or get nothing than have to stand an unfair deal.

It's also important to notice though that what is "fair" varies by culture. The same experiment in an isolated culture, for example, showed that people were willing to accept any sum of money no matter how much the offerer kept for himself.

But in the West, you better look fair. And that's the reason why I recommend a different technique for lowballing in negotiations.

Also read:

- Best negotiation books
- A field-guide to manipulation
- Manipulative negotiation techniques

https://thepowermoves.com/dirty-negotiation-tactics/

The authors then expand on what "fair" means and show that respect and human connection are often more

important than actual results in court (for lawyers) or business negotiations (for car dealers).

This is also similar to the pattern we see in doctors and legal proceedings, with rude doctors getting sued more often than bad doctors (Cialdini, Influence).

We're Either Altruistic or Self-Interested (We Can't Be Both)

If you are familiar with the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that Daniel Pink discusses in his bestseller *Drive* then you know what I'm talking about here.

But the Brafman brothers add some good neuroscience to this phenomenon.
What happens is that we can only access one brain region at a time, and it's either self-interest (ie.: offer of money) or altruism (ie.: helping the community or being of service).

Thus, when you offer money, you remove altruism and higher ideals from the equation.
And unless people are desperate for money or you are really offering a huge sum, it's very possible that you might end up being much less persuasive with money than with appeals to higher ideals.

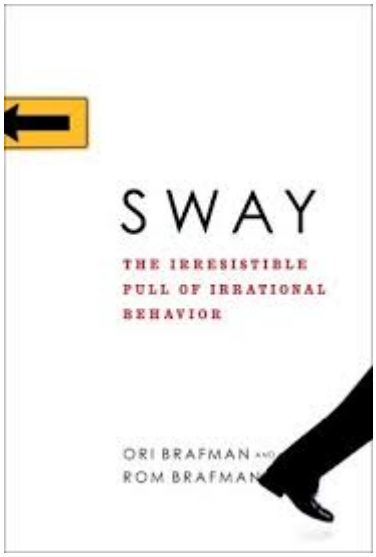
You Need Dissenters in Your Groups

The Brafman brothers also get into the social dynamics of groups and they say we can differentiate four different psychological types:

1. **Initiators** (the ones with all the ideas)
2. **Blockers** (the find the faults in the ideas of the initiators)
3. **Supports** (side with initiators or blockers)
4. **Observers** (they summarize the positions)

Of course, people will be naturally attracted to the initiators who are optimistic, bring new ideas and, often, are also charismatic individuals.

But blockers are extremely helpful.
With their initial dissent, they allow for discussion to start, they allow for different options to be considered and talked about.
And, ultimately, they often allow for a better final decision.



Real-Life Applications

- **Listen to people and make them feel heard**

Sometimes that's more important than actually helping change things.

- **Explain why you didn't choose them and they'll be happy**

Explaining why we are choosing a certain price, a certain argument position, or a certain decision can be all that a person needs to feel like he has been treated fairly.

- **If you must propose an unfair deal, remove yourself from it**

People were willing to accept "unfair deals" if they were randomly generated or chosen by a computer.
They just didn't want to accept it from another human being.

CONS

- **Overcritical of DSM**

I found the authors' position to be overly critical of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

Of course, the DSM is not perfect, but that does not mean that it cannot be a useful text and a useful support for psychologists and students alike.

- **I'm not convinced about "diagnostic error"**

The authors say that men signed up in higher numbers for a loan when there was a picture of an attractive woman in the prospect. They say it's because of a diagnostic error, but to me, it sounds more like a halo effect.

And it's not always working BTW, using sexual lures on products that are not directly related to sex can have the opposite effect (Aronson, 1972).

Sway Review

Sway is a good book on human psychological biases.

It's somewhat similar to "*Predictably Irrational*" and "*Thinking Fast and Slow*".
A bit more on the "pop-psychology" side though, since it's more about stories and anecdotes.
However, in this case, I am not using the term "pop-psychology" in its pejorative form but in its more positive sense.

Because "*Sway"* is both interesting and entertaining, but also adds quite some new information to anyone who's interested in psychology and people's behavior.

Also, check out:

- **The best psychology books to understand people**

or **get the book on Amazon**

Pop Psychology Myths

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Pop psychology sells well.
But it does not always serve you well.

At least, not if you're looking for what's proven, thorough, and effective.

This article analyzes and fact-checks some widespread pop psychology myths.

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- Intro
- #1. Learning Styles
  - Why It's Pop Psychology
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  - Why It's Pop Psychology
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- The Truth

Intro

We define pop-psychology as:

> *Pop psychology consists of psychological claims and interpretations presented as scientific or evidence-based, despite being weakly supported, misinterpreted, or of limited effectiveness to achieve relevant goals.*

Pop psychology stands for "popular psychology", and it's probably far more widespread than more rigorous psychology. While not always and necessarily wrong or harmful, it is characterized by being unscientific and lacking nuance.

Who Are Pop Psychologists: A Profile

Here is a quick way to tell them apart:

- **The scientist seeks scientific rigor**; his claims are based on science and results. He often talks about "evidence", "more information needed", "exceptions", and "external factors."
- **The pop-psychologist seeks to *sound* deep and informed**, which leads many to believe that what he says makes sense. He speaks with certainties and generalizations

In some cases, the intent may be genuinely helpful, but the execution reflects limited familiarity with scientific methodology and critical thinking.
Here is a quick overview for you:

	Scientist	Pop-Psychologist
What's Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
The Use of Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Ego VS Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Studies VS Theories	[illegible]	[illegible]
Sharing Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Science VS Opinions	[illegible]	[illegible]

Pop-psychology and good science are on a continuum, and it's also possible to be high on both the scientific and pop-psychology scales. For example, Martin Seligman took positive psychology into more mainstream self-help, but while retaining good scientific rigor.

Let's now analyze some popular pop psychology myths that at one time or another have spread across the

mainstream.

We prefer refinement rather than dismissal
Debunking approaches increased in popularity after the replication crisis. They create black-and-white judgments that throw out the baby with the bathwater.
Scientific progress is rarely about completely discarding ideas, but about adding nuance and refinement. Even many flawed studies can still offer valuable insights when interpreted in context. The goal is continuous, critical evaluation of evidence, not sensational dismissal.

#1. Learning Styles

That's how you should best teach visual kids?
The narrative goes that some people learn more when the material is presented visually, while others learn more when the material is discussed verbally.

Over the years, different training methodologies and quizzes have sprung up, purporting to teach people how to learn more effectively.

Why It's Pop Psychology

A team of researchers in the field of learning psychology published a long and detailed review of the "learning styles literature", and you can find the whole research here.

In a nutshell, the researchers say that in all of the studies that allegedly did find evidence of different learning styles, very few used randomized research designs that would make their findings credible.

Of those that did use proper research designs, some provided evidence that not only failed to support the learning style theory but also found evidence that flatly contradicted the learning style hypothesis.

The researchers conclude:

> The contrast between the enormous popularity of the learning-styles approach within education and the lack of

> credible evidence for its utility is, in our opinion, striking and disturbing.
> If the classification of students' learning styles has practical utility, it remains to be demonstrated.

The Truth

The authors of the above study do not deny that some students might learn better when information is presented in a certain way.

They simply deny there is supporting evidence for the "learning style theory" in the current literature.
And they say that an optimal curriculum probably depends as much (or more) on the discipline than on the student's preference for learning (i.e., a geometry class could hardly be effective without lots of visual-spatial material).

#2. Mirror Neurons

If you're into self-development, you've probably read about 'mirror neurons'.

Rizzolatti accidentally discovered them in Parma, and it quickly became popular.
V. S. Ramachandra said that "mirror neurons will do for psychology what DNA did for biology".
And for years you could barely read a book on persuasion and self-development without stumbling upon mirror neurons.

Do you want to empathize with people? Mirror neurons will help.
Do you need to make people feel comfortable? Use your mirror neurons to let your body match theirs.
Need to subconsciously persuade someone? Match them first, then start leading… And their mirror neurons will have them follow you like you're the pied piper.

Why It's Pop Psychology

After reading so much pop-psychology on mirror neurons in humans you might be surprised to hear that there is no consensus as to whether mirror neurons even exist in humans.

Scientists such as Hickok, Pascolo, and Dinstein, for example, question the idea that mirror neurons form a distinct class of cells (Hickok even wrote a book about the "mirror neurons myth").

Where there seems to be more and more consensus instead is that mirror neurons are not the great revolution that early, over-enthusiastic scientists cracked it up to be.

The Truth

It's probably true that humans have mirror neurons as one study seems to have identified neural activity similar to Rizzolatti's monkeys.

But as this article from Harvard University points out the consensus seems to be moving towards the following:

1. It's unlikely that mirror neurons *alone* explain humans' ability for imitation
2. It's unlikely that the mental ability to simulate other people's actions is at the core of *understanding* other people's actions
3. It's possible that mirror neurons are part of our human's ability to empathize, but it's likely they're *only one element* in a larger, more complex system (Rizzolatti, 2010)

#3. The Marshmallow Test

The marshmallow test, first a study and later a book, is one of the earliest, most famous, and most cited experiments in willpower.

If you have been into self-development topics, then chances are very high that you have read about the "marshmallow test"… A few hundred times.

The basic narrative goes like this: children who can delay gratification become more successful in life, as it's been proven by the marshmallow test.

Some authors then go as far as to teach you -and your children- how to increase your "delaying gratification muscles".

Why It's Pop Psychology

1. The marshmallow test failed to replicate
2. There are simply too many variables that the "marshmallow test" did not account for

Some of the variables that the "marshmallow test" did not account for include:

- Different children are likely to have different levels of interest in consuming marshmallows (ie.: the "delaying power" is based not on self-control but on limited interest in marshmallows)
- The sample size was very small
- Children in the sample were from a similar socio-economic background (a subset of self-selection bias: all children of professors or students at Stanford)

Indeed, when Typer Watts replicated the study he found that:

- The correlation was 50% smaller than the original test
- The correlation almost vanished when taking into account intelligence and family background

Not The Researchers' Fault

The marshmallow test is actually an interesting and important study, and the authors are good scientists. Shoda, Mischel, and Peake cautioned readers about the limitations of their findings already in their original study.

They warned about the small sample size, the risk of over-generalizing their results, and the fact that *always* delaying gratification is also not an effective strategy.

The Truth

The ability to delay gratification, as one aspect of controlling impulses, is an important factor in success in *safe and stable environment* and when future returns outweigh the wait. But the best strategy can change depending on context and the individual.

In general, a complete lack of impulse control and short-term gratification instead undermines long-term success, and is associated with psychopathy.

#4. Ego Depletion / Finite Willpower

The theory behind ego depletion is that we all have a limited amount of willpower, and the more we use it on any given day, the less we have it.

Based on this theory, plenty of self-development resources claim that "scientifically", you should avoid "wasting" your willpower.

The theory was also expanded to include decision-making as a finite and limited resource connected to willpower. That's why some pundits recommended people do like Steve Jobs and wear the same clothes every day: you save up your mental resources.

Why It's Pop Psychology

Recent studies have thrown a spanner in the works for the ego depletion theory and challenged the whole theory.

A multi-lab replication experiment found the effects of ego depletion to be extremely small with "zero" included within its confidence interval.
A series of meta-analytic tests found little evidence that willpower is based on a limited physical or psychological resource.

Confirmation Bias

The ego-depletion theory has been a big thing in psychology.

On trial here was not just a single paper or study, but a whole overarching concept that seemed to have been repeatedly confirmed and was widely accepted.

It has led some scientists and some publications to call into question whether our current scientific system based on publications is not distorting scientific progress.

The Truth

Part of the issue is that, as Baumeister himself noticed in his original paper, there are no direct measures of willpower's limited resources, and the indirect experiments we must rely on are liable of being "polluted" by other intervening factors.

For example:

- Participants might arrive with the idea of "owing" the researchers some effort, and then "take it easy" after they feel they've given enough
- It's not always easy to isolate how people's changing *mood* impacts their tenacity (ie.: is giving up early a consequence of depression, sagging self-esteem, or is it because willpower is limited?)
- With some tasks giving up might actually be the most rational and smart thing to do

There can be ways to limit each of these factors, but not all studies have successfully done so.

A recent analysis of both sides of the argument finds no compelling evidence for either the ego depletion theory or the negation of willpower as a limited resource.

And of course, there is the good old placebo effect.
This study finds that ego depletion takes place, at least partly, based on whether people *believe* willpower is limited or not.

Identity may also play a role. Such as, the more willpower you display, the more you create a self-identity of someone who sticks with his commitments. And this "identity approach" could reinforce the "muscle" aspect of willpower.

That said, it's probably a smart approach to make your difficult but healthy habits as easy as possible (ie.: don't have colas in your fridge) and your easy but unhealthy habits as difficult as possible.

#5. The Stanford Experiment

The Stanford Experiment is a classic of social-psychology research.

Part of the reason it's so popular is that the "human darkness" that it purports to lay bare captures people's imagination like a magnet.
The idea that we're all a step away from becoming cruel, soulless victimizers makes us all scared and excited at the same time.

In a nutshell, it markets and sells well.
If you need any proof, the "Stanford Experiment" has its own website and it spawned movies, documentaries, and popular YouTube videos that purport to show the "untold truths" of what really happened.

The "Stanford Experiment" is also Zimbardo's most famous experiment and much of his later work has been inspired by its results, including a TED talk and a book with a catchy name (ie.: "*The Lucifer Effect*").

Why It's Pop Psychology

The Stanford Experiment is pop psychology because the word "experiment" doesn't even belong there.

It's not a real experiment and Zimbardo himself admitted so:

> From the beginning, I have always said it's a demonstration.
> The only thing that makes it an experiment is the random assignment to prisoners and guards, that's the independent variable.
> There is no control group. There's no comparison group. So it doesn't fit the standards of what it means to be "an experiment."

And then, later on, sounding as if he wanted to defend himself:

> Is it a study with flaws? I was the first to admit that many, many years ago.

There is countless valid and legit criticism against the Stanford Prison Experiment though which go well beyond what Zimbardo originally admitted, including:

- "Coaching" for guards' worst behavior
- Demand characteristics bias (ie.: participants are likely to behave like they believe the researchers want them to behave)
- Prisoners faking their hysterical crisis

Zimbardo has been very vocal in personally replying to most of the criticism.
His replies rarely constituted a full rebuttal of the criticism, but to me, he often managed to convincingly take some of the sting off of them.

However, in a nutshell: the "Stanford Experiment" is pop psychology because it's not a real experiment and its results cannot and should not be generalized.

The Truth

There are little doubts that different social settings can elicit wildly different behavior from the exact same persons.
And social roles do affect people's behavior.

The realization that people can act evil and we must learn to cope with that evil is, after all, one of the founding principles of this website.

And that's the issue with some of the criticism of the "Stanford Experiment": some criticism seemed motivated by morals and ethics, trying to redeem human nature.
But denying that people -or at least *some* people- can become abusive in certain contexts and when given enough power is a denial of human nature.

To say it in Zimbardo's own words:

> SPE serves as a cautionary tale of what might happen to any of us if we underestimate the extent to which the

> power of social roles and external pressures can influence our actions.

And with that, I agree.
To be the wonderful human beings that we can all be, we must all also learn about our darkest drives and channel them into something positive.

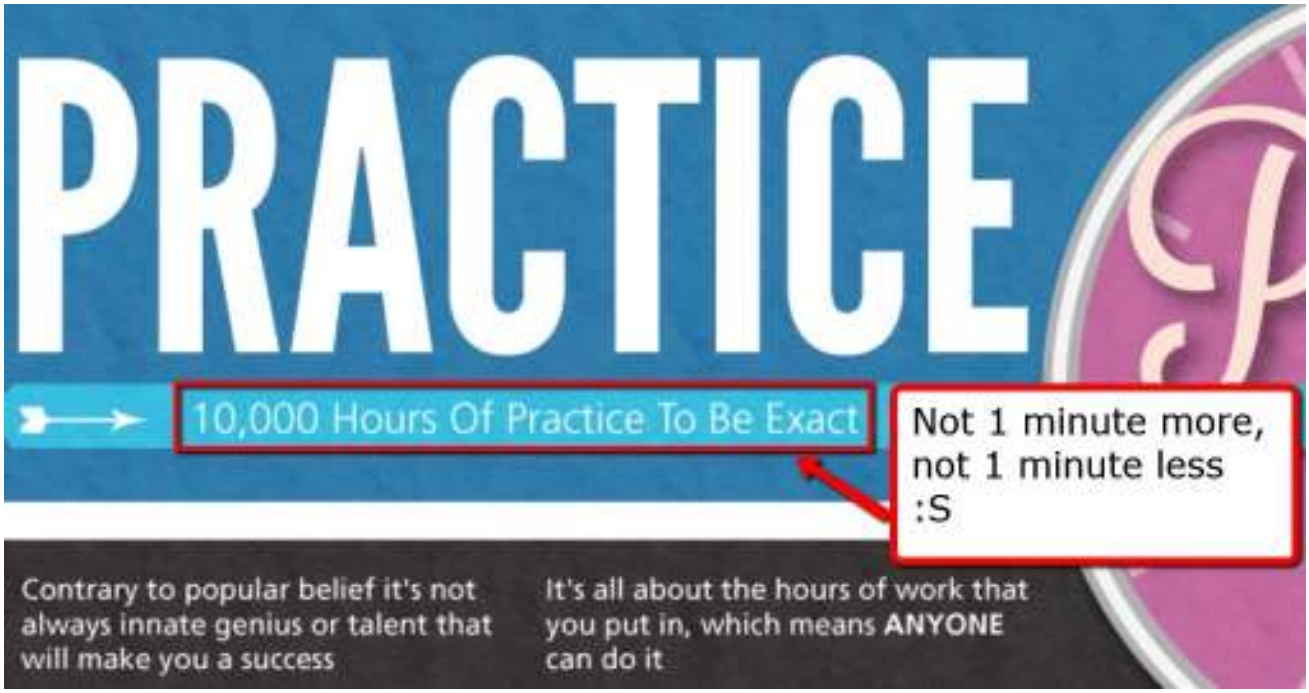
#6. The 10.000-Hour Rule

In his book "*Outliers*" Gladwell popularized the "10.000-hour rule".

The "rule" says that to reach the pinnacle of any discipline and to become a master of any craft you need to put in 10.000 hours.

Since Gladwell's best-seller hit the shelves, the "10.000 rule" spread like wildfire.
It was simple and catchy. It removes natural talent from the equation and puts outsized success in everyone's grasp.

Even reputable publications fell for it.
The picture below is taken from the National Geographic article:



There is only one little issue: it's not true.

Why It's Pop Psychology

There is no 10.000-hour rule.

Malcolm Gladwell is an incredible writer and an intelligent man.
But while his books make for entertaining reads, they're not always accurate and nuanced representations of reality (see "*most overrated books*" list).

With the 10.000-hour rule, I am not sure whether Gladwell actually misunderstood the research or gave it a simplified interpretation to make it more appealing to the masses.
And I don't know which one would be worse.

But Anders Ericsson, the author of *Peak* and the researcher whom Gladwell misquoted explains why Gladwell got it all wrong:

1. People variable: to achieve mastery some will require less time, some more

2. Field variable: the competitiveness of the field has a strong correlation to how hard you need to train to reach the top
3. Quality variable: time matters, but *how* you train is equally, if not more, important
4. And finally, there is no "magical" threshold that corresponds to 10.000 hours

The Truth

Albeit Ericsson leans into "nurture" and embraces the idea that training trumps everything, genes and personal predispositions likely play a major role as well.

Hence, to maximize your chances of success and get the biggest bang out of your training, choose a field you enjoy, a field in which you have all the cards to be successful, and then focus not only on how long you train but also on *how* you train.

#7. (Subliminal) Behavioral Priming

Priming says that exposure to one stimulus will later influence people's perception, response, or behavior.

It was an exciting discovery for psychology that semantic priming, such as simple words, could prime behavior *subliminally*.
That opened up a lot of doors to several different kinds of possible behavior manipulation and, of course, drew a lot of attention: the original paper by Bargh et al. has been cited thousands of times.

If you have ever heard about people who moved noticeably more slowly simply because they assembled words related to old age, then you have read about the original priming research.

Bargh's research has been widely accepted for good and made its way into the work of highly respected authors such as Daniel Kahneman (*Thinking Fast and Slow*) and Robert Cialdini (*Influence* and *Pre-Suasion*).
More psychology popularizers today still propose 'influence tips' based on priming and sound 'scientific' by quoting various papers.

BBC even made its own video research on priming:

And that's without even considering the hundreds of other authors who teach how to change people's minds and actions with "subliminal priming". All based on science :).

Again, there was just one minor detail: the whole premise was resting on shaky scientific ground.

Why It's Pop Psychology

There were previous failed confirmation attempts, but it all started in earnest in 2012 when Doyen and colleagues failed to replicate Bargh's original results.

Bargh pushed back on the initial criticism.
Another article he wrote, which was even fiercer, has now been taken down (but it's referenced by Ed Yong and Neurobonkers).
In my opinion, the simple fact that Bargh reacted as if the replication attempt was a personal attack, does not do him honor as a scientist.

But the scientific community was worried.
In that same year Daniel Kahneman, who dedicated an important part of his "*Thinking Fast and Slow*" to subliminal priming, issued an open letter about the issue calling for more clarity in the priming research.
In that letter, Kahneman was still overall optimistic about the existence of subliminal social priming effects and, he later admitted, he was hoping that the original researchers would bolster their case with stronger evidence.
But that didn't happen.

And as time went by, the pendulum started moving more and more toward the skeptics.

And in 2017 Schimmack et al. writes:

> Readers of "Thinking Fast and Slow" should not consider the presented studies as scientific evidence that subtle cues in their environment can have strong effects on their behavior outside their awareness.

In 2017 Kahneman replies and agrees.
He writes:

> I placed too much faith in underpowered studies

And he goes on:

> I knew, of course, that the results of priming studies were based on small samples, that the effect sizes were perhaps implausibly large, and that no single study was conclusive on its own.
> What impressed me was the unanimity and coherence of the results reported by many laboratories.

And then on the reasons why he fell for it:

> However, I now understand that my reasoning was flawed
> (…)
> Unanimity of underpowered studies provides compelling evidence for the existence of a severe file-drawer problem.

Basically, Kahneman is saying here that scientific journals have been guilty of confirmation bias and skewed the results towards a major over-representation of social priming.

The Truth

Priming as a general concept is valid.
But subliminal social priming that changes our behavior is much less powerful than originally estimated.

Says Kahneman:

> I still believe that actions can be primed, sometimes even by stimuli of which the person is unaware.
> There is adequate evidence for all the building blocks: semantic priming, significant processing of stimuli that are not consciously perceived, and ideo-motor activation.
> I see no reason to draw a sharp line between the priming of thoughts and the priming of actions.

But that does not change the fact that subliminal priming in the form that Bargh showed in his original study might not exist at all.

Another issue with lexical priming is that available studies seem to show that it's only very short-lived.
So it's unlikely you could subliminally prime someone and visibly change their behavior in either the medium or long term.

#8. Facial Feedback Hypothesis

You probably heard this one from Tony Robbins and similar self-help gurus.

The "facial feedback hypothesis" says that if you force yourself to smile, you will become happier.

The original experiment in 1988 had research subjects hold a pen in their mouth while watching funny cartoons. The subjects who held the pen rated the cartoons significantly funnier than the control groups.

From there, a whole host of implications mushroomed, including the idea that to be happy, you just need to force more smiles.

Why It's Pop Psychology

A much larger study in 2016, failed to replicate the original findings.

The Truth

The fact that the original study failed does not mean that body movement cannot change how we feel.

It's indeed not only possible but likely that movement (or lack thereof) affects our mood in a multitude of ways.

The indictment here is for the original "facial feedback experiment", not the whole idea of body movement.
So if you're down don't force yourself to smile, but do consider a walk in the green side of town.

Or, similar to the argument I make in "self-help myths", asking yourself questions and forcing yourself to come up with positive answers will also work well (Senay et al., 2010).

And of course, as a sociologist, I can highly recommend this simple solution: people. People and positive relationships are the best things you can do for a happy life (Harvard researchers proved with the longest study of humans' adult life).

#9. Growth Mindset

A growth mindset says that if you believe you can grow, you will seek and enjoy challenges and, as a consequence, you will grow and expand.

It's a bit like a self-fulfilling prophecy and the opposite is also true: if you believe your traits are unchangeable you will avoid challenges and you will never grow and improve.

Neither Dweck's TedX Talk nor her book "*Mindset*" were smash hits among the general public, but they led to major investments and training in schools all around the world.

Why It's Pop Psychology

Dweck suggests in her original paper that a growth mindset can be taught.
But Li and Bates' effort failed to replicate Dweck's initial results.

Carol Dweck replied that these experiments are difficult to run, but Nick Brown makes a good counterpoint saying that if experiments are so difficult to replicate, why does Dweck think pupils can easily learn a growth mindset from school teachers?

Carol Dweck's woes run even deeper though.
Nick Brown went over the data and found out that:

- 17 out of 50 GRIM check inconsistencies in the means
- Several numbers were entered incorrectly into the report
- One participant was dropped without any mention of it
- Ambiguous scores were considered 0.5 (ie.: a mark between a 4 and 5 was counted as 4.5)

Brown said Dweck was exemplary in sharing her data and owning up to her mistakes, but doubts remain and Brown himself says he remains skeptical.

An equally troubling issue for Carol Dweck as a scientist is a 2016 paper titled: "*What Predicts Children's Fixed and Growth Intelligence Mind-Sets? Not Their Parents' Views of Intelligence but Their Parents' Views of Failure*)".

But when Dweck was questioned about the mismatch between the title and the content, she replied:

> We can see how the paper's title could have been misleading. The paper itself never claims to compare the effect of parents' attitudes to intelligence with their attitudes to failure and, most important, none of the key findings rest on this.

Dweck said she's "seriously considering changing the title", but it raises some question marks. Why mistitling it in the first place?

The Truth

A strategic, well-applied growth mindset is an important building block of personal power.
However, it must be calibrated to the situation and, sometimes, you may also want to hide it when you must instead display authority.

Read more:

- Growth mindset strategies

#10. The 3:1 Happiness Ratio

Barbara Fredrickson and Marcial Losada are popular psychologists in the emerging -or shall we say "exploding"- field of positive psychology.

Martin Seligman, former APA president and best-selling author of "Flourish" went as far as to call her "the genius of the positive psychology movement".

Of course, that does not say much to me from the moment I noticed how much Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Fredrickson enjoy cross-referencing each other.

Why It's Pop Psychology

The math behind it doesn't add up, as Brown's paper shows.

They write:

> The lack of relevance of these equations and their incorrect application lead us to conclude that Fredrickson and Losada's claim to have demonstrated the existence of a critical minimum positivity ratio of 2.9013 is entirely unfounded.

Losada declined to reply while Frederickson's reply felt like defending the concept while conceding the math might have been wrong.

The Truth

Tipping points beyond which "flourishing" happens are highly unlikely, as Frederickson himself states.

And if there is a tipping point, how could one even generalize to a simple ratio?
How can you generalize without accounting for the severity of thoughts, for example?
Sure the negativity of "I want to kill myself to stop the pain" can't be the same as "shoot, I didn't get 1st place this time", right?

However, the jury is still out on whether the positives need to far outweigh the negatives to be truly happy.
If Gottman's work is of any help, then that may be the case.

#11. Grit

This is Angela Duckworth's "achievement equation", as taken by her best-selling book "*Grit*":

> **Talent x Effort = Skill**
> **→**
> **Skill x Effort = Achievement**

An "achievement equation" where effort plays the lion's share was bound to draw attention in the self-help industry that loves a positive 'can-do' message (something we agree with).
Duckworth collected awards and delivered a popular TED talk:

> **Duckworth**: (17 million views explaining 'Grit')

Why It's Pop Psychology

Much of Angela Duckworth's material for her concept of "grit" is based on her research at West Point, where she found out that the "grittiest" cadets were the most likely to get through the course.

How much more likely?

98% of the grittiest cadets made it through the extremely physically and mentally demanding tests (Duckworth stressed how tough it is).
And the rest?
95% of *all* cadets made it through.

A modest difference.
But the bigger issue is this:

Grit is Rebranded Conscientiousness

The researchers of this meta-analysis of the grit literature pointed out that grit is, in essence, similar to other psychological traits that have already long been studied and researched.
Ph.D. psychologist Vitelli in Psychology Today expands on simple conscientiousness to also include industriousness, achievement need, and self-control.

With all these well-known psychological traits, was there a need to add a "new" one?

Jordan Peterson, before becoming famous himself and writing "*12 Rules For Life*", wrote on Quora:

> Duckworth failed to notice that they had re-invented a very well documented phenomena, that already had a name (and, when they did notice it, failed to produce the appropriate mea culpas. Not one of psychology's brighter moments).
> A physicists who "re-discovered" iron and named it melignite or something equivalent would be immediately revealed as ignorant or manipulative (or, more likely, as ignorant *and* manipulative), and then taunted out of the field.
> Duckworth? She received a MacArthur Genius grant for her trouble.
> (…)
> It's crooked psychology.

Crede commented that “grit” and “conscientiousness” are so closely interlinked that “grit” is a case of old wine in a new bottle.

Duckworth later stated that she likes to think of “grit” as a member of the conscientiousness family but with its own predictive power.
But even that has been called into question.

Two different studies (with 213 students and 498 students) found conscientiousness to be highly predictive of results but not grit.

But most of all, a meta-study from 88 different and independent samples shows that grit is “only moderately correlated with performance”.

Grit is Genetically Inherited

While much of the success behind the concept of “grit” stems from the idea that it defies “talent” and you can cultivate it, a recent study in the UK shows that grit might be a highly inheritable trait.

Analyze if Persisting Makes Sense

As Bazelais noticed in his own study, which failed to replicate grit (Bazelais et al., 2016), tenacity might even be counter-productive when results are not forthcoming.
At that point, you might be better off cutting your losses and moving on to something else.

Blindly following the ethos of “grit” might compound loss aversion bias to achieve even bigger… *Losses*.

Grit is important. It’s crucial. But should always be mixed with a critical analysis of your results.

The Truth

Grit succeeded because it was framed as empowerment for the ambitious underdogs, a message we support.
Duckworth is quoted in this New York Times interview saying that “grit beats the pants off I.Q.

> **Grit beats the pants off I.Q.**
> -Angela Duckwort

This is where we diverge.
Personal power shouldn’t be used to downplay the equally important role of other variables. That’s not empowerment, it’s twisting reality. And we find it babying towards the audience: an empowered and agentic audience needs truth first to succeed in the world.

Russell Brand Flirting Techniques: Seduction Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Russell Brand is one of the most famous public figures that people connect to flirting and seducing.

Of course, flirting is not sleeping, and we should not confuse reactions with results.

But Russell Brand also gets results, so it's well worth analyzing his flirting and seduction styles.

Contents

- #1. Push – Pull
- #2. Destroy Male Competition
- #3. Dominate Socially
- #4. Dominate Sexually
- #5. A Feminine Touch
- Downsides of Russell Brand Flirting Style
- Defeating Alpha Stereotypes
- Jester Dominance Style
- SUMMARY

#1. Push – Pull

Push and pull is a technique whereby you first make a compliment or a kind remark (the pull), and then you immediately push away -the pull-.

It's a great technique to build intrigue and build people up while, at the same time, not giving your game away too quickly.

It's best used when:

1. She's not yet attracted to you (and a compliment might seem like you're putting her on a pedestal)
2. You are not coming across as a high-value man she respects (and you risk being friend-zoned Mr. nice guy with the compliment)
3. The compliment is a big one and she's at a loss for words (and you want to avoid those moments of awkwardness)

And since Russell Brand often overdoes it with compliments and romance, it's indeed very good that he uses push-pull as much as he does.

Here are some examples:

#1.1. Inverted Push – Pull

Russell Brand also does the opposite, such as when he makes a big joke at the woman's expense and then reels her back in with kindness or touch.

That's very good, and I actually recommend men use it much more often than the standard push-pull because you end on a positive note and you end with the two of you closer.

This is an example of an inverted push-pull.

#2. Destroy Male Competition

Russell Brand always positions himself as the man of the revolution against the greedy ones who govern and control us.

His alternative is a more collectivistic society, a brotherhood of men. And that starts with more equality.

That's interesting because he doesn't seem so hell-bent on equality when he deals with other men.
Instead, **he hogs all the attention and never fails to marginalize other men to get the female attention all focused on him**.

Here are some examples:

Contrary to Ben Shapiro, I don't think that Russell Brand does it on purpose to unsettle all other men.
He does the same with women, after all.
But the result is the same: when Russell Brand walks onto a stage, other men tend to disappear.

#3. Dominate Socially

One of the main reasons why Russell Brand attracts all the women around him is because he dominates social interactions.
And with that, he looks like the alpha male leader that women so desperately want.

To be precise, Russell Brand has a clownish style of social dominance that does not work on all occasions, but whenever it works, it's social dominance nonetheless.

He especially leverages his "jester powers" to change topics as he pleases. It's difficult for hosts and other men to counteract because jesters reside outside of social norms, and they can do and say things that other men cannot do and say.

Plus, the public is often laughing at Russell Brand's antics, which would make it very difficult for anyone to confront him without looking like an antisocial brute.

That allows Russell Brand to do and say almost anything he pleases. And he uses it to his full advantage to control the interactions as he pleases.

#4. Dominate Sexually

In the old days of kings, jesters could not exaggerate with sexual jokes because, well, the king was the king and he had the first pick.

But today, few people have the balls to be sexually direct, which leaves Russell Brand in a class of his own, one of the exceedingly rare men who do flirt and who can do it well

Russell Brand plays the predator-prey dynamic in his interactions with women.
It works well because it's a game of course, it's flirting, she into him, and the dynamics amplify attraction as they amplify masculine-feminine polarity.

Off-Handed Remarks

Russell Brand likes to go overboard and catch women off guard. The more they're lost, the more power he wields.

And since women are attracted to men with power, his sexual dominance coupled with his social dominance makes Brand supremely seductive.

Also read:

- **How to flirt with texts**

#5. A Feminine Touch

Finally, I would like you to notice that Russell Brand presents a touch—or even more than a touch—of femininity in his behavior.

Starting from the way he dresses—catchy, provocative, and super stylish—he looks borderline gay.
His voice is slightly high-pitched, and his movements often resemble those of a gay man as well.

You never want to be too feminine.
But a touch of femininity goes a long way when it's offset by an otherwise masculine and attractive frame.

Russell Brand reminds me of dandyism and of glam rock superstars like Axl Rose.

Don't believe me?
Take a look at these images!

Note: unless you also have a similar alternative and dandy style, never go as feminine as Russell Brand does, as it would be too much for most men.

Downsides of Russell Brand Flirting Style

There are major downsides to Russell Brand's flirting style though.

As a matter of fact, I'm not a big fan of Russell Brand's style.
It's not the pinnacle of seduction and I think many guys misunderstand it because they look at the reactions of women and then think "oh wooow, he soooo good".

However, equating reactions with results is a typical beginner's mistake.

Of course, we can probably guess that Russell Brand also gets results, but let's not forget that it's not just flirting and seduction style that produces results.
There are other important variables including, for example:

- Fame
- Looks
- Money
- Intelligence

And Russell Brands excels in all of them.

We could probably compare Russell Brand level of attractiveness with Johnny Depp.

So which style is better, Depp or Brand?

The difference between Brand and Depp is that Russell Brand gets laid by chasing hard and that makes him lose quite some power.
A man with a style more like Jonny Depp can make his seduction work more like a dance where both the man and woman contribute. Or, since Depp is so attractive, he can also get the woman to do most of the chasing.

That's why, ultimately, a seduction style like Johnny Depp can get the woman to invest more, which in turn makes her more attracted, and which in turn gives more power to him.

When Russell Brand Loses Power

Another problem is that his style can isolate him from the people around him, who sometimes can form a coalition of "normal people" VS the oddball.

And they can end up not taking him seriously, which vastly reduces the social power of the jester.

See an example here:

https://youtu.be/ynUjo99Gzbk?t=440s

See?
Russell Brand took the joke very far out there and, at that point, they all socially coalesced against him.
They started speaking of him as "he" as if he was an animal that was there to entertain them.
That made Russell Brand look much less impressive than the dominant force he was just a few seconds prior.

And that's the risk that all jesters run when they take it too far: normal people coalesce and they end up looking like jesters that are being stupid for everyone's pleasure.

And that point, they lose social power and also seductive power.

Defeating Alpha Stereotypes

In a way, I like Russell Brand.

He shows everyone that you don't need to chase the worst aspects of toxic masculinity, that you can drop the alpha posturing, and that you can *still* clean it.

Because here is a guy who defies a lot of the hyper-masculine stereotypes of the red pill.
He behaves somewhat gay, laughs all the time, talks fast, and does not lift… And he slays it (attention: I'm not saying you should not seek power, lift, or be masculine: do all of those. I'm saying it's not necessarily needed for success).

Jester Dominance Style

In my guide on the dominance archetypes, I omitted a few styles that I left out for the customers of Power University.

One of the archetypes I left out is the jester.

And from a social point of view, that's exactly who Russel Brand is: a jester.

SUMMARY

From a seduction point of view, Russell Brand relies heavily on flirting, direct sexual talk, and heavy innuendos.

It works great for him both because he's good at it and because he's very attractive.
Albeit any feedback should be personalized, most men could improve by implementing more flirting and by better learning female psychology.

But because of its major downsides, I wouldn't recommend most men to imitate Russell Brand's style.

The Undoing Project Summary: Power, Envy, & Friendship (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Undoing Project tells the story of the friendship between Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, the duo who brought psychology (back) into economics and deepened our understanding of psychology, economics, and decision-making.

TPM Strategic Note: How envy and power dynamics can undermine relationships
This book is often read as the story of how Kahneman and Tversky only. But TPM's key takeaway is more uncomfortable. Even with a shared mission and two high-IQ brains, **power dynamics still determine relationship outcomes.**
This proves that "Rationality" (which they studied) cannot override power dynamics, 'power accounting', and social status consideration.

Contents

- Notes
  - Injecting Psychology Into Economics
  - Heuristics Of The Mind
  - We Maximize Mental Happiness, Not Utility
  - What Looks Random Seems More Random
  - Don't Jump to Conclusions
  - Our Irrational Linking of Similarities
  - There Are No Heroes: Only Struggling Human Beings
  - Wisdom Pills
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  - CONS
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Notes

About the Protagonists:
Kahneman and Tversky are psychology researchers who have long worked together and who helped usher in a new era where economics overlaps with psychology.

About the Author:
Michael Lewis, the author, is an expert storyteller, and he seeks to mix science with the friendship and feelings that ran between Kahneman and Tversky.

Injecting Psychology Into Economics

The narrative often goes that before behavioral economics, people looked at humans as perfectly rational and all making rational decisions (the homo economicus theory).

That is not completely true: the early economists often tempered their economic models and theories with psychology and sociology.

It is true however that in the post-war Western world, most economics was based on the homo economicus paradigm, which saw men as perfectly rational.
And it's that mistaken assumption that Kahneman and Tversky proved wrong beyond any reasonable doubt.

No, humans are not rational.
They are quite irrational instead and, sometimes, they are predictably so (also read: Predictably Irrational by Dan Ariely).

One crucial reason why humans are irrational is that we don't use all the information available but instead use heuristics to jump to (often wrong) conclusions.

These are some of the most important heuristics:

Heuristics Of The Mind

Heuristics are cognitive shortcuts that we use to make decisions.
You can check out Daniel Kahneman's own book "*Thinking Fast and Slow*" for more, but here is what stood out in "*The Undoing Project*":

- **Availability**: we think that what's easier to remember is also more likely to happen (but that's seldom the case)
- **Endowment bias**: once you take ownership of something, you value it more and you tend to focus more on the positives
- **Hindsight bias**: we rationalize events after they happen and we assign them meaning and causalities where there is probably much more randomness
- **Regression to the mean**: trainer of Israeli fighter pilots believed that praise was ineffective because pilots performed more poorly right after praise, and they believed that criticism was effective because pilots would perform better after criticism. What was happening was a simple regression to the mean (ie.: it's unlikely one will perform exceptionally poorly or exceptionally well several times in a row)
- **Framing**: how you pose a question will influence the answer (for example if you say "10% chances of loss" VS "90% chances of victory")
- **Memory distortions**: we remember mostly how things begin and our memories are mostly dependent on how things end. What happens in the middle matters much less (for more details read "Pre-Suasion" and "Influence" by Cialdini)
- **Loss aversion**: we are more sensitive to losses and lacks than we are to gains and what we already have (but it inverts in the case of very long odds, which is why we buy insurance and lottery tickets).
  There are evolutionary reasons for that as Tversky said:

> **Happy species endowed with infinite appreciation of pleasures and low sensitivity to pain would probably not survive the evolutionary battle**
> Amos Tversky

Edit: Not true on loss aversion
And subsequent research showed that gain frames can work better, depending on context. See more in the *Rutgers Handbook of Persuasion*

For more on heuristics, also check the wonderful:

- Fooled by Randomness
- The Black Swan

We Maximize Mental Happiness, Not Utility

When people make decisions they don't seek to maximize chances of success (utility) but they seek to maximize emotional states (regret and happiness).

We owe that wisdom to Kahneman and Tversky who devised studies to measure our regret-maximizing tendencies.

These are a few tenets of regret-avoidance:

- We regret what we have done more than what we have not done (that can help explain decision paralysis)
- We regret more when we chose to do something different or "out of the ordinary"
- We regret our own actions more than the actions of others
- We regret losses far more when we know we were close to succeeding

Why so?
Because, Michael Lewis speculates, there is "less to undo" when we were close to achieving our goal and so it becomes easier to think of all the small details we could have changed to succeed.

How Regret Impacts our Lives

It was particularly interesting to notice that Kanheman resisted changing flight tickets in fear of something bad which could happen.
Basically, he was trying to avoid regret by anticipating regret.

Crazy stuff, and that's why **to live a better life we must learn our biases**, and then eradicate them or work around them.

What Looks Random Seems More Random

The birth order of children's gender (B for boy, G for girl) in the following two sequences is equally likely:

- G B G B B G
- B G B B B B

But people would say the first order is more likely because the second sequence, with five boys, does not look like the proportion in the general population.

And when it comes to birth order, these two sequences also have the same likelihood:

- B B B G G G
- G B B G B G

But again most people said the second was more likely.

Gambler's Fallacy

I still remember many years ago a friend of mine saying that flying was safer right after a plane crash.

Yeah, sure!

That's an example of a gambler's fallacy, such as believing that things "even themselves out by themselves".
For the same reason, people believe that after a coin lands on "head", then it's more likely to land on "tail" right after.

Obviously, that's not the case because the coin does not have its own initiative to willingly even things out.

Large Numbers VS Small Numbers

Most people believe that the law of large numbers applies to small numbers as well.
Even trained scientists often fail to understand that smaller populations are more likely to exhibit more variations and extremes and that the smaller the sample, the less likely it was that it would mirror the general population.

This is funny since generalizing the results of small populations is one of Kahneman's major mistakes when it came to priming (also read: pop psychology myths).

Don't Jump to Conclusions

This one always drives me crazy.

I can accept it from random people, but when my own parents jump to conclusions through (likely meaningless) correlations I struggle to hold back.

Seeing correlations where there might be none can give rise to whole processes of over-prescription.
For example, a doctor prescribes antibiotics, sees that the patient improves, and keeps prescribing antibiotics.

But the patients would have likely improved anyway.
And for all we know, they might have improved at the exact same rate.

As Darren Huff says in "How to Lie With Statistics":

> A cold properly treated will disappear in 7 days. Left on its own, it will fester for a whole week

We Need Evidence-Based Medicine

Because of the above reason and because of all our irrational shortcuts, we need more evidence-based medicine and more evidence-based decision-making.

It's been documented indeed that in the past doctors kept suppressing arrhythmia in the belief that it helped.
Turned out, research showed that it harmed patients.

Our Irrational Linking of Similarities

We have interesting and irrational ways of comparing and grouping things and it is not compared to the actual distance between things and concepts as it was previously believed.

New York VS Tel Aviv

For example, people think that 103 is similar to 100, but 100 is not similar to 103.
And people think that Tel Aviv is a bit like New York but New York is not like Tel Aviv.

What happened was that New York had more features in people's minds so Tel Aviv matched New York.
But people had few features of Tel Aviv in mind so New York didn't match Tel Aviv nearly as well.

We Compare by Comparing Features

When people link or choose, they compare features.
And features can become more or less prominent depending on how you present them.
The removal of features is also a feature, which is why a 3-legged dog is more similar to another 3-legged dog than to a 4-legged dog in spite of a 3-legged dog sharing the same feature with a 4-legged dog.

Because we only compare features that first come to our mind, it's possible that we choose coffee over tea and tea over chocolate but then prefer chocolate over coffee.

Groups Increase Alikeness

And we think that a banana is similar to an apple not because they're really similar, but because we grouped them into the "fruits" category.

There Are No Heroes: Only Struggling Human Beings

If you hear today the name of Daniel Kahneman you will probably think of an ambitious, super smart, best-in-class scientist.

Kahneman is a sacred cow in psychology.
And he probably deserves to be.

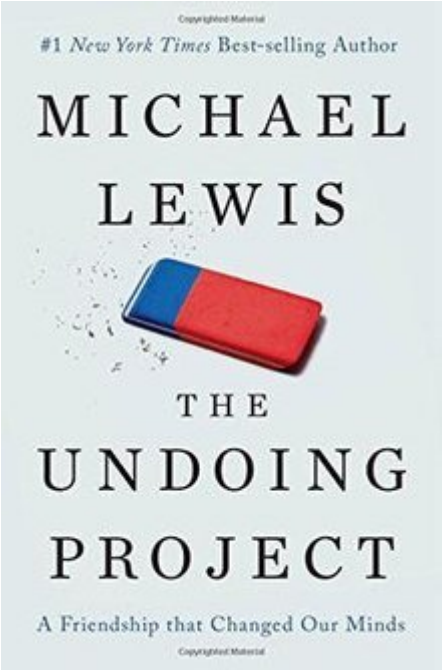
But what I liked most about "*The Undoing Project*" is that it puts scientific achievements back into perspective.
It's the history of two humans, just like everyone else.

And they had their own base feelings of resentment, jealousy, and envy, and, as well, were not very good at coping with the power dynamics between them.

Here is what Kahneman said, referring to their straining relationship:

> I am very much in his shadow in a way that is not representative of our interaction . . . There is envy! It's just disturbing. I *hate* the feeling of envy . . . I am maybe saying too much now

He didn't say too much, in my opinion; he just said the truth.
But sure as hell, when you say, "I am maybe saying too much now," then everyone thinks you are.



Wisdom Pills

- **Don't fantasize and envision what can really happen**

Daniel Kahneman has a rule of not fantasizing about achieving what he can actually achieve.
Because when he fantasizes about it, he loses his drive to make it happen.

You might want to consider doing the same.

Successful people are successful in all fields

Beginning his career Kahneman was tasked with looking for the different personalities that would be successful in the different fighting forces.

But there were no “pilots personalities” or “infantry personalities”.
What made one person successful in one branch also made him successful somewhere else, including in business.

Notice though that the results of the most successful personalities were only loosely correlated with education and intelligence

Quotes

On the games that people play in academia:

> And yet, the titles that he and Danny put on the papers were inscrutable.
> They had to play, at least in the beginning, by the rules of the academic game, and in that game, it wasn’t quite respectable to be easily understood.

The author then goes on to poke fun at the titles that researchers choose, and he’s actually on point with that.

On human irrationality and heuristic-driven thinking:

> Man is a deterministic device thrown into a probabilistic universe. In this match, surprises are expected.

On positive thinking (or at least, avoiding negative thinking):

> When you are a pessimist and the bad thing happens, you live it twice, Amos

On evolutionary psychology as a science (please note: I wholly disagree with that quote):

> Listen to evolutionary psychologists long enough, and you stop believing in evolutionary psychology

On hindsight bias and complexity:

> This ‘ability’ to explain that which we cannot predict represents an important flaw in our reasoning.
> It leads us to believe that there is a less uncertain world than there actually is.
> (…)
> The fact that we couldn’t (predict the future) is taken as an indication of our limited intelligence rather than of the uncertainty that is in the world

A new definition of nerd:

> He suggested a new definition of the nerd: a person who knows his own mind well enough to mistrust it

On risk aversion:

> **Risk aversion amounts to a fee that people pay, willingly, to avoid regret. A regret premium**

CONS

- **A bit disjointed: biography, psychology, or history of friendship?**

I found “*The Undoing Project*” to be a bit disjointed. If it wanted to sit in between a biography, a psychology text,

and the history of a friendship from its emotional point of view, then it did so a bit awkwardly.

And it's not Michael Lewis fault; it's simply very difficult to combine all three.

- **War stories slightly biased**

As I explained in my reviews of "Extreme Ownership" and "The Dichotomy of Leadership", I am not a big fan of people profiting from wars and/or telling war stories from a one-sided perspective.

"*The Undoing Project*" made me feel like it spoke of wars with a slight pro-Israel bias.

- **The story of a petty race towards the Nobel Prize?**

"The Undoing Project" feels like hyping the Nobel Prize. As if the Nobel prize was all that mattered, not the research or the deeper understanding of human nature.

I find it petty and distasteful.

- **The frog in boiling water myth**

It's a small detail, but I can't stand fake popular myths, and Michael Lewis perpetrates the lie of the frog in boiling water (read more in: self-help lies).

PROS

As a social psychologist who loves psychology, sociology, and understanding people, I thoroughly enjoyed "*The Undoing Project*".

Some of the highlights for me:

- Good psychology wisdom
- Great humor
- It reminded us all that we're all humans and we must work to overcome envy and jealousy
- It reminds us all that relationships can be difficult, but they can be easy if know how to work on them

Overall, there are far more "pros" than "cons".

Review

I have long been interested in the intersection of economics and psychology.

My master's thesis was a social-psychology-focused exploration of the 2007-2008 financial crisis (extract here and the Italian version of the behavioral economics research on Academia.edu).

So I was really looking forward to listening to "*The Undoing Project*". And I wasn't to be disappointed.

"*The Undoing Project*" reads a bit like a biography, somewhat like a novel and sprinkles well-researched concepts of behavioral finance all over.

Somebody might not like that "a bit of everything" also means "nothing in-depth".

But if you have the remotest interest in psychology and/or behavioral economics, then "The Undoing Project" is a must-read.
Check the

- **Best psychology resources** (in which this book is featured)

or get the book on Amazon

Practical Female Psychology: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

"*Practical Female Psychology for the Practical Man*" is a dating and relationship book for men in which the authors explain the psychology of women in dating and relationships from a "manosphere" point of view.

Contents

- Summary
  - #1. Women Are Manipulators
  - #2. Screen For Sex Drive & Self-Esteem
  - 3. Female Logic Is Schizophrenic
  - #4. Women Divide Men Into Providers & Lovers
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- Real-Life Applications
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  - #1. Made-Up Evolutionary Biology
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  - #3. Some Misunderstanding of Dating Economics
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  - #6. Some Weak Advice For Men
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About The Authors:
The three authors write with pen names or first names only.

Joseph has read heavily on seduction since his breakup, and, as he said, he took several David DeAngelo seminars
⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: DeAngelo was a forerunner the PUA movement, although I found his products like "*Sexual Communication*" and "*Advanced Dating Techniques*" lackluster at best.

Franco seems to be working as a psychiatrist and dating and relationship coach.
⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: His blogs are interesting, with several gold nuggets, although with some common limitations of similar authors, including room for improvement in science, accuracy, and logic. Some ethical red flags as well, with an only partially accurate post vaunting the psychopath's approach to dating

Joseph W. South has little reliable information online and he wrote for a PUA/dating website.
⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: looking at his Facebook and Twitter (later suspended), he seems politically alt-right leaning, including some tweets of dubious scientific depth.

Guy breathes out smoke to 'prove' masks 'don't work'

#1. Women Are Manipulators

The authors say that women are manipulators by nature.

Manipulation is not always necessarily bad, though, and the authors say that manipulation can sometimes also support the relationship or the child's welfare.

But some other times it will undercut the man, and to avoid being taken advantage of (and to avoid having her attraction tank), he must stop all harmful manipulation attempts.

The authors quote Games People Play, but go much further than that to list and explain the following games women play:

- Double bind
- Bait and switch
- Ambush
- Jealousy
- Rich descriptions (this one made little sense to me)
- Pouting and whining

For practical examples, read:

- **Games women play**

And, most of all:

- **Manipulative games women play**

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

Lucio's note: it's life that promotes manipulation, not 'womanhood'
They're probably right, but I'd contend that it's life that inherently develops manipulation as one of the many forms

of control.
Any form of life that better controls the environment beats those that don't. Men may use more direct and forceful approaches compared to women, but effective male manipulators still beat (and out-reproduced) those the poor ones.

#2. Screen For Sex Drive & Self-Esteem

The authors categorize women depending on their sexual drive (high or low) and self-esteem (high or low).

I very much enjoyed the difference, but the self-esteem part seemed like a huge misnomer.
The authors are not really describing self-esteem but end up describing much broader qualitative categories such as "low-quality women" and "high-quality women".

3. Female Logic Is Schizophrenic

The authors say that at its core, female logic is schizophrenic.

Women with high sex drive present more female logic than women with low sex drive, and men should not try to repress the female nonsense because they would end up thwarting their very feminine nature.

Example:

The authors describe an example of Franco's wife jumping from one topic to another, forgetting about their movie date, and accusing him of enjoying being away from home.

Franco does not contradict her like most men would have done. And he doesn't even remind her of the movie date they had planned.
Instead, he goes along with her, and, as he notes, he missed a lot of movies like that.

Lucio's Note: Not a good idea to adapt to craziness
I disagreed with the example.
Most men would indeed do much better in relationships if they understood female psychology, that's true. But going along with her nonsense means falling into her frame. You relinquish power.
Better: let *her* conform to you.
Relinquishing leadership and letting her back out of jointly taken decisions is weak.

Also, read:

- **How women psychologically manipulate men in relationships**

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

#4. Women Divide Men Into Providers & Lovers

The authors revisit a very popular topic in the dating literature: the difference between providers and lovers.

They say:

> in their hearts chicks love to love bad boys, but in their heads they know that nice guys make much better husbands.
> This Female Basic Conflict is a schizophrenic duality between a woman's need for survival, on the one hand, and her need to express her own sexuality, on the other.
> This creates a psychological condition whereby a woman's sexuality is necessarily ambivalent and conflicted.

The authors say that most women will manipulate men to become providers, which I also found quite true.

Also, read:

- **Lovers VS Providers (and Friends)**
- **Should you be a lover or a provider?**

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

In spite of one of the authors writing on Girlschase, I agreed that it's nonsense to tell men it's best to never pay for the date.
Indeed, I often got laid after having paid for a couple of drinks and I never noticed a major difference in results between paying and not paying. So I never much believed in that.

However, the authors also say that it must be congruent with who you are and what you believe.
You must not change your rules and "buckle under pressure" to pay or you will look like a chump. And I also agree with that.

#5. The 7 Female Archetypes

The authors also list and describe 7 different female archetypes who, they say, are on top of the archetypes Robert Greene lists in "*The Art of Seduction*".

Their archetypes mix sex drive with self-esteem and add on top:

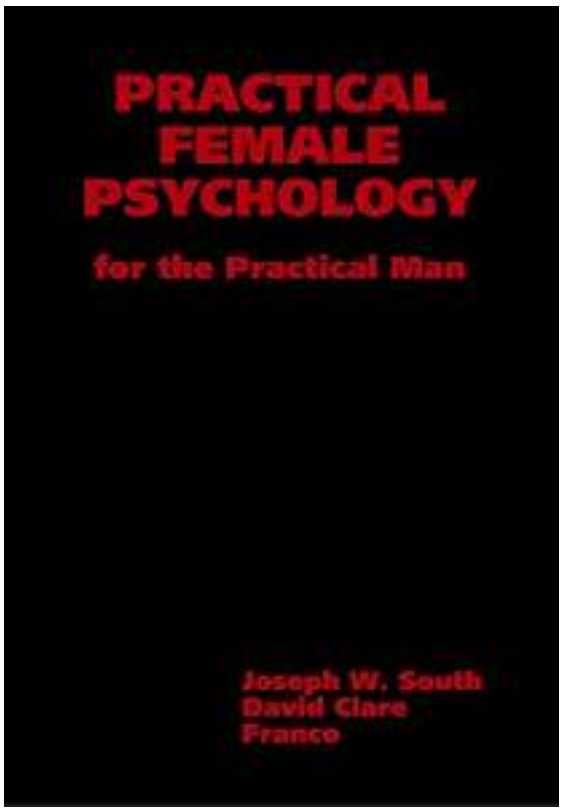
- Good girls (more concerned about society's approval)
- Materialistas (care more about material possessions)
- Adventuress (thrill seeker)

All women have some materialista in them, and all of them will try to extract something from men.
So don't get angry when she shit-tests you and asks you to buy a drink.

I also wholeheartedly agree with the authors when they say that it's a good sign to have some materialista in them because it means they care about getting the best deal they can get (so stop complaining about female hypergamy).

To learn more about materialistas also read:

- **A goal digger guide**
- **Ho Tactics**



Real-Life Applications

- **Switch from feminine to masculine**

"*Practical Female Psychology*" has some solid content.
This is one of them with which I wholeheartedly agree (minus the schizophrenic part because there is nothing schizophrenic about it):

> Therefore, to increase sexual and emotional arousal within a woman you will need to learn to shift between two identities in an almost schizophrenic manner.
> At times you will want to talk to women in a very masculine way: directly, succinctly and logically. At other times, you will want to you talk to women in the same manner that a female friend might do.

Lucio's Insights & Criticism

I enjoyed reading "*Practical Female Psychology*" and I can also recommend it (as long as you keep your critical thinking hat on).

But I also deeply disagreed with the following:

#1. Made-Up Evolutionary Biology

I'm a *huge fan of evolutionary psychology* and it explains much of human behavior.

But there is a lot of made-up evolutionary psychology in manosphere corners.

These authors remind me of psychologist Daniel Kahneman, author of *Thinking Fast and Slow*, who said:

> The more I listen to evolutionary psychologists, the less I believe in evolutionary psychology

I'm afraid that "*Practical Female Psychology*" is like that, at times.

#2. Misunderstands The Madonna-Whore Dichotomy

Despite the author talking a lot about evolutionary psychology, they still failed to properly understnad the evolutionary basis of the madonna-whore dichotomy.

First, they fail to consider that the Madonna-whore dichotomy might make sense from a male perspective because **it's a great strategy to impregnate the easier women and marry the more faithful ones**.

And no, if you think 'all women are the same', that's empirically wrong.

If the authors themselves admit that women differ in sex drive and the likelihood of cheating and sleeping around, then the Madonna-whore complex serves an important male need (a point that Robert Wright also makes in "*The Moral Animal*").

Also, read:

- **Madonna-Whore complex**

#3. Some Misunderstanding of Dating Economics

The authors write:

> Basically, when a female has agreed to be in an isolated venue with a man, she has decided (at least subconsciously) that the male in question is superior in terms of genetic fitness, in comparison to all the other males in her proximity.

That's not really true: men and women pick partners also based on what they feel is their own sexual market value and how closely they think they match.
If that weren't the case, average and lower sexual market value folks would never pair up with anyone.
Also, read:

- **The dynamics of the sexual marketplace**

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

#4. Relationships and Seduction Are Not the Same

The authors write:

> In a relationship, you are picking up the same woman, over and over and over again.

I believe the dynamics of seduction and relationships are very different.
Also, read:

- **Basics of relationship power dynamics**
- **How to maintain relationship power**

#5. Generalizations

The authors write:

> men who become physically unfit in relationships learn very quickly that many women have no compunction against kicking a man while he is down.
> As David says, she needs to feel that he is the same strong bastard she was initially attracted to, even when he is sick-in-bed with the flu.

Albeit this might be true in quite a few cases, it's dangerous to generalize like that and it provides fertile ground for the rampant misogynism that is common in red pill communities.

That being said, "*Practical Female Psychology*" is not a misogynistic book and the authors espouse a much healthier mindset.
They say:

> Our belief is that it's never appropriate for a man to expect altruism from a woman, only to appreciate a woman's altruism when she provides it

#5.2. Sweeping Generalizations With Little Nuance (or Science)

"*Practical Female Psychology*" quotes several sources, but many are pop-psychology and it ultimately lacks scientific backing and, in my experience, also real-life nuance.

For example, they mention "*The Female Brain*" to say that:

> Though females may train themselves to act like men, in reality they have a very deep biological urge to be talkative

"Deep biological urge" to be talkative?
That, plus referencing sources like "*Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*" didn't help the authors win score extra authority points.

Also, this idea that "women are natural manipulators" as if men weren't, is misleading.
Also, read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

#6. Some Weak Advice For Men

And I found some typical "alpha male caricature" stuff that ends up being more harmful than helpful.

Here is one example:

> **Wife**: Let's go out to eat
> **Man**: I like the way you think. Grab your coat and keys, you're driving.
> **Wife**: Where are we going?
> **Man**: (Spins her around) We'll know when we get there!

The authors say that men should learn that statements such as "let's go out to eat" are tantamount to "I'm bored, entertain me".

Which, sometimes… could be true.

And it might even be true that women are on average more childish than men.
But generalizing to *all* or even most situations is the fruit of the toxic masculinity mindset which wants to see

women as “silly and cute” and who are not worthwhile partners for a more serious discussion.

Of course, there are times when women love being treated as silly and cute.
But likely not in a matter-of-fact conversation about where to go for dinner (especially if she’s driving, doh!).
That’s silly of *him*, not of *her*.

Furthermore, if she “wanted to be entertained” and he’s going out to eat just to “make her play”, that’s really low-quality of him.
In the example above he is fully buying into her frame and relinquishing all his needs. A busy man shouldn’t have too much time for playing around.

Learn more about what a real alpha male looks like:

https://thepowermoves.com/alpha-male/

PROS

- **Some good psychology wisdom**

Although I heavily criticized “*Practical Female Psychology*” for its pop psychology and made-up facts, I also have to praise it for the many pearls of wisdom it presents.

I even took something away from our products here which is the greatest compliment I can make to the authors.

For example:

> Many pathological male reactions that can be observed within couple relationships are in fact a desperate defense mechanism, employed by men who have no skills with women.

This stuff is true, but it’s not what you will find in research, studies, or more scientific books like the ones from John Gottman.

- **Some humorous lines**

There were a few lines that really got me laughing.
For example:

> Female Integrity To many men, the very notion of female integrity is an oxymoron of the highest caliber. Right up there with “military intelligence.”

Review

Practical Female Psychology is an interesting book with unique takes you won’t find in any other relationship books. Some of these takes are valid and deep, while others are more questionable.

It reminded me a bit of “*The Rational Male*” and of Red Pill philosophy.

And by that, I mean that it has some top-notch, very insightful content, mixed with some nonsense, generalization, and unfounded personal conjectures that scream “bro-science / pop psychology“.

To recognize which is which you need some good personal experience with women and a good understanding of psychology.

This review of “*Practical Female Psychology*” will help you separate the wheat from the chaff so that you can safely read the full book and get the most out of it.

Also, read:

- **Best dating books for men**
- **Best psychology texts**

Or get the book on Amazon

Whoever Fights Monsters: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Whoever Fights Monsters (1992) talks about the psychological profiling of serial killers from the point of view of Robert Ressler, the man who coined the word "serial killer".

Contents

- Summary
- Quotes
- Applications For Profilers
- CONS
- Review

Summary

For this *Whoever Fights Monsters* summary, I will skip the gory bits of Ressler's crime descriptions and focus on the information that is more relevant from a psychological and psychiatric point of view.

#1. Sexual Maladjustment At The Root of All Serial Murderers

Sexual homicides are sexual in nature, but it's important to notice that sexual homicide doesn't necessarily mean that the murderer has had sexual intercourse with the victim (some of the murderers weren't even able to have sex with the women they killed)

The author says that serial murderers are characterized as sexual homicides because sexual maladjustment is at the root of all of them.

Ressler says:

> Sexual maladjustment is at the heart of all fantasies, and the fantasies emotionally drive the murderers

#2. Sexual Murderers Profiling

The most common profile for sexual homicides is: white, male, intra-racial (white on white or black on black), and in their 20s or 30s.

Ressler says that sexual murderers have troubled relationships with women.
They are unable to have and maintain mature, consensual sexual relationships.

Nearly half of their interviewees reported, never having had a consensual sexual relationship.
They were aware it was not normal and resented it.

Serial Killers Are Driven by Their Fantasies

Serial killers, the author says, are obsessed with fantasies.

They have unfulfilled experiences that become part of their fantasy and push them on toward the next killing.

#3. It Takes Time to Develop Psychosis Which Leads to Serial Murdering

The author says that homicides do not start earlier because it takes some time to develop full-blown psychosis, which eventually tips the scales in the killers' minds.

Paranoia-schizophrenia usually manifests in the teenage years, and then it takes 8 to 10 years to reach that level of

psychosis.

The author says that telltale signs like setting fires, animal cruelty, and assaulting teachers start in adolescence, but the mindset starts earlier.

#4. The Problems Start Early

The author says that behaviors that are precursors to sexual homicide have been developing since childhood.

Most sexual murders come from troubled families, with poor relationships with their mothers and are devoid of love and affection.

As children, they were not socialized into proper and non-proper behavior.
Importantly, they are also not rescued in the next developmental phase of pre-adolescence, and at the age of 8 to 12, their environment either did not improve or got worse.

Fathers in this pre-adolescent period are missing.

#5. Body Types Can Help With Profiling

Ready for a shocker?

Here it comes.

Cesare Lombroso, the early sociologist who said that criminals were more likely to be short, was ridiculed by my colleagues during my studies as a sociologist.
Well, Lombroso wasn't right, but he wasn't 100% wrong either.

Indeed, one of the most controversial assertions in *Whoever Fights Monsters* for today's standards is the correlation between body types and the likelihood of committing crimes.

Robert Ressler says that it's simple logic: introverted schizophrenics don't eat well.
They don't think in terms of nourishment and they skip meals. They also don't care about their appearances.
And the natural consequence is that they are scrawny and disheveled.

This paper also shows a correlation between crime and height, albeit remember that it's not anything about "height genes", but probably more a question of having fewer labor market opportunities.

#6. Organized VS Disorganized Offenders

Whoever Fights Monsters differentiates between organized and disorganized offenders.

Disorganized offenders are usually devoid of normal logic and tend to be less calculative and less calm when they're in danger of getting caught.
They often don't drive, and if they do, their cars tend to be in very poor condition.
They don't think in terms of hiding pieces of evidence.

Organized murderers plan their crimes and even get better with time. They tend to fit better into societies and have better social skills.
They drive their own cars, and they can lure victims to their places with a false feeling of safety.
Organized murderers are sometimes successful with women and have a string of sexual relationships, but they can't hold relationships for the long run. And they have tremendous anger towards women (also read: toxic masculinity) and, often, towards society and people in general because they feel they have been mistreated.
Charles Manson, for example, believed it was society that held him down, or his songs would have been tremendously popular.

The disorganized murderer kills on the spur of the moment, while the organized one premeditates and seeks to increase his erotic satisfaction by keeping the victim alive.

The disorganized criminal was the kid that nobody remembered in school and was always quiet, with the neighbors thinking he was "*Mr nice guy*".
The organized one was the bully, the clown, or the ones who fight in bars. They escalate conflicts quickly and often lose jobs because they provoke their colleagues or superiors.

Disorganized criminals act out of their mental illnesses, and the pre-crime situational stress is often absent (more on it below).

#7. Criminals and Power Dynamics

Power and the search for power is a major motivators behind many sexual homicides.

Charles Manson, for example, played the Messiah for the people around him.
He was going to usher in a new era.
Manson renamed Charles Wattson "Tex" because there could be only one Charles in the Manson family.

And the rivalries between Manson and Wattson, another male member of Manson's family, were a major factor in the dynamics of the murders.

Manson said that his biggest mistake was to "let that SOB Wattson have too much power in the family", and Wattson was also murdered to elevate himself in the family's power structure.

"Me Or Nobody" Frame of Mind

I also found telling the story of a murderer who, in prison, was taking care of a sparrow.
He loved the sparrow.

But when the guards told him the sparrow had to go, he threw it into the blades of a fan.

He still loved the sparrow, but he said, "if I can't have it, nobody else can".

This is another typical mindset of abusive men.

Fear Games Psychopaths Play

Robert Ressler tells the story of an interview he was having with a dangerous serial killer.
When he buzzed for the guard to come, nobody showed up.

And the prisoner had a field day scaring Ressler about how easily he could kill him.

That reminded me of "*The Psychopath Whisperer*", which I also highly recommend and where the author also details similar power games the psychopaths enjoyed playing.

My Note:
The author used a very bad approach there from a persuasion point of view.
He started arguing with the prisoner, saying that it would not be good for him to attack him and that he could defend himself.

That's bad because it led the criminal to convince the author (and himself) that he actually could.

You don't want to start a race where a serial killer wants to prove to you that he can kill you.

#8. Manipulation and Stockholm Syndrome

Robert Ressler explains that some murderers' profiles are highly manipulative and very good at it.

One FBI agent started passing information to a serial killer and maneuvered to be the only one with full access to the murderer.
When the murderer was finally executed, the FBI agent was lost and disoriented, like he had lost a family member.

For more on manipulation techniques read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Charles Manson Manipulation

Ressler also devotes much attention to Charles Manson and how he manipulated his followers.

Charles Manson admitted to giving the hippies around him what they wanted to see.
He became what they wanted, he "held a mirror in front of them".

At the end of the interview, Manson asked Ressler to give him something to show the other inmates that he wasn't talking to an FBI agent just out of good-heart.
Because that would lower his status among the other inmates.
Ressler gave him a pair of sunglasses, and he felt sure Manson was going to fabricate a story around it to lead the other inmates on.

Charles Manson was a typical cult-leader schooled in dark psychology:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

#9. Other Important Traits of Serial Killers

- Intelligence is not a predictor; it can be either lower than average or above
- Mostly males (women serial killers kill on a spree and not sequentially)
- Early traumas contribute, but not all rapists and murderers have been assaulted
- The key differentiator is the development of perverse thought patterns
- Kinky fantasies that mix sex, death, violence, molestation, dominance, revenge, control
- The fantasies have strong visual components
- While with most people's fantasies, both partners have a good time, deviant fantasies correlate pleasure with the partner's danger
- Many serial killers keep objects (or body parts) that remind them of their victims
- Once the first murder takes place he crosses a line and usually, there is no coming back: fear mixes with excitement and when he's not caught right away he feels safer in killing again
- The fantasies often don't go away and it's not easy to safely re-instate serial murderers into society
- Not all schizophrenics are dangerous: most are not. But many serial killers are paranoid schizophrenics
- Lie detectors are not reliable with psychopaths
- Many like to use the colors, shapes, and trappings of authority to control their victims
- Overly cooperative behavior can be a warning sign as the murderer tries to pry information from the police to remain one step ahead
- There is usually a sudden event or loss that precipitates the attacks (loss of a friend, unemployment, etc.)

#10. Would Bundy Stayed "Normal" Without Precipitating Factors?

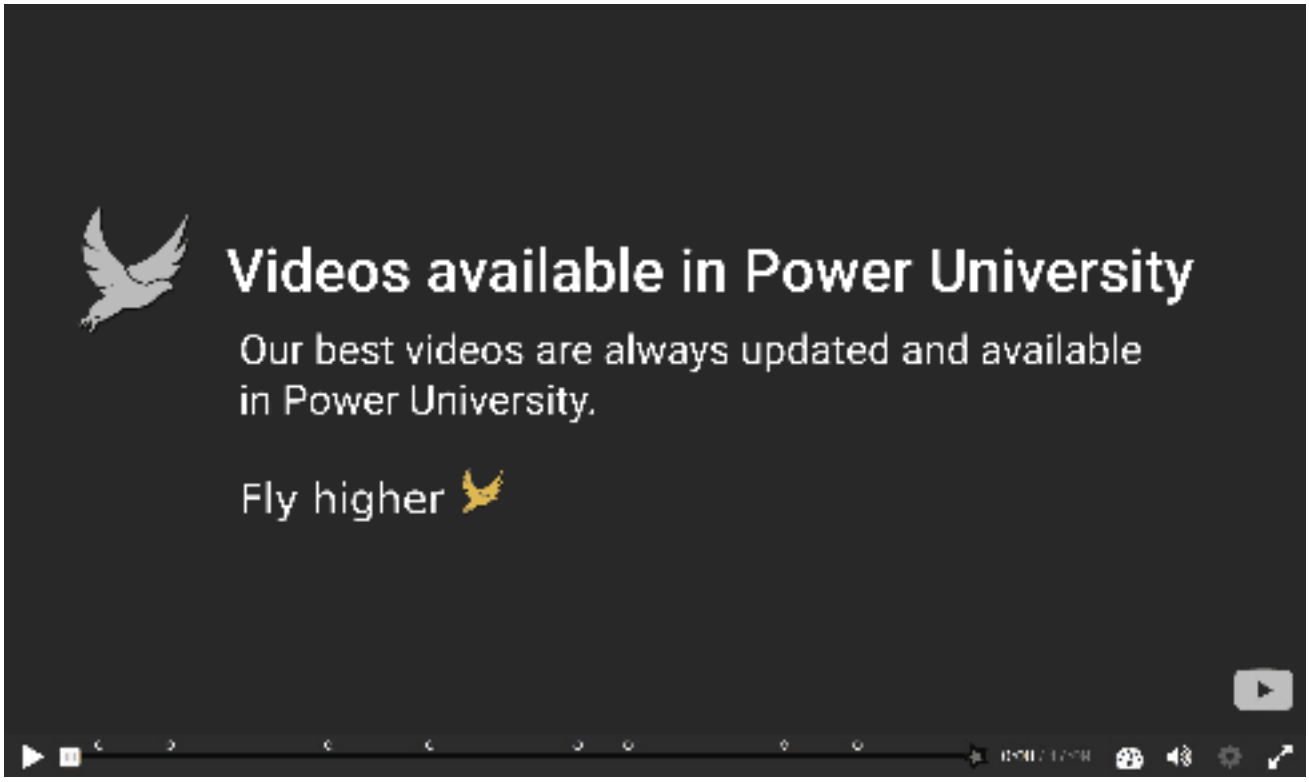
Intriguing question.

Some people said that Bundy would have never become a serial murderer if he hadn't had financial problems and if he was able to continue law school.
He would have become an aggressive lawyer spending money on hookers and entertaining more manageable forms

of kinkiness.

But Kessler says that killers like Bundy would have eventually stepped over the line even without any precipitating factor.

Bundy talks about “overcoming social inhibitions” of church and socialization here:



I wouldn’t personally trust Bundy too much on whatever he says.
He has often been described as highly manipulative and a sociopath (or psychopath, the diagnoses were not precise).
But he likely had a mix of several different pathologies and didn’t have strong feelings of guilt to begin with. He personally bragged of “not having to deal with guilt”.

I would agree with Kessler that he eventually might have overstepped the line whether or not there was a precipitating event.

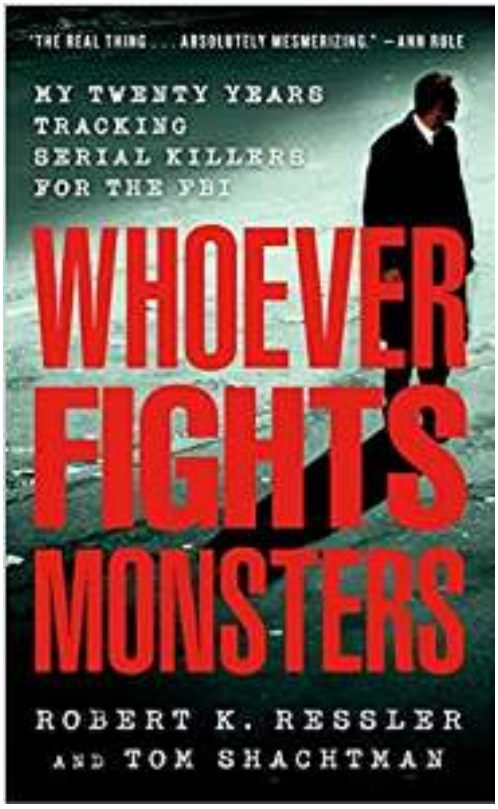
Quotes

Ressler on his first interview with a serial murderer:

> But it was his eyes that really got me. I’ll never forget them. They were like those of the shark in the movie “Jaws”: no pupils, just black spots. These were evil eyes that stayed with me long after the interview.

And of course, the main quote:

> Whoever fights monsters shall see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look into the abyss the abyss also looks into you.



Applications For Profilers

- **Don't let "blank slate theories" pollute your ability to understand people and psychology**

Whoever Fights Monsters shatters the idea that people are all the same and that the environment is what makes all the difference.

No, certain genders, races, and age groups are more likely to commit crimes.
The author even says that certain body types are predictive.

- **Listen non-judgementally but don't overdo it**

The author explains how to win the trust of convicted murderers to let them speak freely.

He says you should be non-judgemental, but without overdoing it. When they talk about dismembering victims, don't go overboard to make a big show of how many times you've seen that.
Just stay normal without making a big show.

- **Ask good questions**

Ressler talks about journalists and agents going after the famous serial killers just for being able to say they spoke to Charles Manson or to make a scoop.

He says these journalists often don't get valuable information because of the silly questions they ask.
Ressler says he could see Manson losing all respect for a journalist when the journalist asked: "what does it feel to cut a man's ear".

Much better, Ressler says, would have been to ask what reasons Manson had to cut the victim's ear.

CONS

I think *Whoever Fights Monsters* is an important book to read for all psychologists and psychiatrists, but it's not very scientific:

- **Confirmation Bias on Profiling**

I have a certain feeling this book promotes a lot of confirmation bias and over-confidence in the profiling abilities of FBI detectives (starting with Robert Ressler himself).

Ressler does not shy away from bragging about how good his profiles were, yet he does not say talk nearly enough about all the times they were wrong.

I would have preferred a more scientific look into this: how reliable is profiling?
How often were they wrong VS right?

- **Profiling Data With Absolute Numbers is Misleading**

The profiling that the author espouses, for example saying that it's mostly white males, might lead people to the wrong conclusions.

For example, it does not take into account that the US overall population has more white males than, say, white Asians.

- **Big Mumble Jumble Lacking in Structure**

I didn't find the profiles to be very enlightening. The author should have used better categories in my opinion.

First, he says they all had trouble in childhood, then he says "not all rapists and murderers" suffered early traumas, then again he says it's all about the fantasies.
And later he goes back to revisit the paranoid schizophrenics that he mentions at the beginning of *Whoever Fights Monsters*.

They're all true, of course, and they often overlap.
But if he had used better categories and a better structure it would have been much clearer for the students who seek a better understanding of the mind of the serial killers.

- **Lacks Deeper Analysis of Psychopathy/Sexual Maladjustment Cross-Over**

I wish the author had gone deeper into an important question: the overlap between psychopathy and sexual maladjustments.
Because I suspect there are people with violent fantasies who don't act on them.
So it's only people who don't have internal inhibitors who act on the fantasies.

Kiehl for example says:

> Serial killers like Ted Bundy would meet criteria for psychopathy and they also have paraphilia, a sexual-based disorder like sadism.
> The drive to kill comes from the latter.
> The lack of emotions, empathy and guilt comes from psychopathy.

What I found lacking in *Whoever Fights Monsters* is the analysis of this overlap.

- **Bragging tone**

Finally, Robert Ressler writes *Whoever Fights Monsters* with quite a bragging style.

Review

Whoever Fights Monsters sits in between an informational text a psychiatrist could read and a lighter text that laymen simply interested in criminology could enjoy reading.

If you want to learn more about the psychology of criminals I also recommend "*The Psychopath Whisperer*" by Kiehl.
The difference is that Ressler operates as an FBI agent and the serial killers could not talk freely of their misdeeds. With Kiehl's interviews instead, the criminals were free to talk -and brag– about all the murderers they weren't being prosecuted for, which provides him with a vantage point over their minds.

In any case, *Whoever Fights Monsters* is a must-read for anyone interested in psychiatry, abnormal psychology, and criminology.

Also, I can highly recommend this read on "non-serial killer psychopaths" who also inflict much harm:

- **Psychopaths' sexual strategies and control techniques**

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Check the:

- **Best psychology books**

Or get the book on Amazon

Replication Crisis: A Defense of Psychology

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The replication crisis has engulfed different branches of science, and the social sciences have been hit the hardest.

Psychology and social psychology, in particular, have been swept up in a spate of scandals and failures to replicate.

Whole theories that had been widely accepted as proven are being questioned and disputed (Priming, Ego Depletion).
Even classical studies that have been part of psychology curricula for decades are under heavy attack (Stanford Experiment, Milgram Experiment).

The blowback has been hard, and understandably so.
Trust in the social sciences has eroded.

Keep Calm & Stay Rational

But if behavioral economics taught us anything, it is that in most reactions and corrections, there is often a tendency for *over*-reaction and *over*-correction.

This article will make the point that some authors, commentators, and even scientists might be taking it too far.
I will make the point that the replication failure of some studies does not (necessarily) call into question general psychological theories and, often, does not even refute the principles behind the study that fails to replicate.

Contents

- Replication Crisis: Knee-Jerk Reaction
  - How It All Happened
  - Replication Crisis in Psychology: The Causes
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  - #3. Milgram Experiment
  - #4. Grit
  - #5. The Marshmallow Test
  - #6. Fixed & Growth Mindset
  - #7. Priming
  - The Replication Crisis is An Opportunity

- SUMMARY

Replication Crisis: Knee-Jerk Reaction

The replication crisis is one of the hottest topics at scientists' tables. And understandably so.

Most good scientists avoid overgeneralizing. But as the news seeped from academia into the world of non-academics, the reactions have not been equally discerning.

ScienceOfPeople.com, a website on applied psychology claiming to run its own science lab (and which puts "science" in its own URL), writes that (bold font is mine):

> **Much** of what you know about psychology may be a lie.

Other popular bloggers, like Na Eliason, who dabble with science and psychology, jumped on the bandwagon (bold is mine):

> It wouldn't be crazy to assume that **any** new claim in psychology is more likely to be false than true

And even more reputable publications like The Independent didn't hold back.
If anything, they went even further when they dropped the term "psycho-babble" (bold is mine, and so is the triple question mark):

> Psychology has long been the butt of jokes **(???)** about its deep insight into the human mind (…) and now a study has revealed that ***much*** of its published research ***really*** is ***psycho-babble***.

Is "much of what you know about psychology" a lie, "much of psychological research "psycho-babble" and is research "more likely to be false than true"?

No, no, and no.

I make the case that the knee-jerk reaction, as is often the case with humans, has gone too far.

We are now witnessing an overreaction, where everyone is calling anything into question.
And as in any witch hunt, the bigger the prey, the more glory (and power) for the hunter.

That many articles that purport to "debunk pop-psychology myths" are going viral (mine included) is proof that we are in the middle of a "psychology sh*t storm" fueled not by actual scientists, but by amateurs.

The Darkest & Basest Human Drives Are Fanning The Crisis

Typical human biases and some of the darkest human drives are also stoking the flames.

"frenemy relationships", envy among researchers, and the search for glory in the current "hunt to debunk" have ushered in what Leonard Martin called a "McCarthy era for psychology".

Scientists whose life work has been called into question have sometimes reacted not like cool-minded scientists, but like the ego-driven creatures we often are (again, psychology at play).
And that hasn't helped either.

But as scientists, we all have a moral duty to rise above our lowest and darkest drives.
And we all have a moral duty to seek the truth.

And to seek the truth, we cannot limit ourselves to destroying and "debunking".
In this replication crisis, we must throw the bathwater, but we must keep the baby.

> **We must throw the bathwater. But we must keep the baby.**

This article will seek to bring some clarity on what's in the bathwater, and what's in the baby we must keep.
And it will call for a more balanced approach to this "house cleaning" that is the replication crisis.

How It All Happened

Replications have been failing since replications first started, so how we date the beginning of the current replication crisis is, at least partially, a subjective task.

Wikipedia says the term "replication crisis" was coined in the early 2010s as the world became more and more aware of the high rate of replication failures.

The newspaper Slate says the replication crisis started in 2011 when a paper by Bem "proved" that ESP is real (i.e., it proved people can predict the future).
Bem's paper used widely accepted research methods, so either ESP is real and people can predict the future or…
Our accepted minimum thresholds for proper research were not high enough.

And scientists, being the skeptical bunch they are, started opting more and more for the latter.

That was the beginning of the replication crisis, and acute observers could already see the dark clouds gathering over science and psychology.

Daniel Kahneman, author of "Thinking Fast and Slow" wrote in 2012 that "he could see a train wreck looming".
And he was right (ESP be damned).

Five years later, Kahneman would admit that he had made a major mistake by placing too much faith in low-powered studies (i.e., studies with too few participants).
And he was only one of many to have been fooled.

In 2015, the results of the Reproducibility Project were published, and they were unflattering, to say the least.
More than half of the 100 studies published in prominent psychology journals failed to replicate.

At the time of writing (May 2019), the reproducibility crisis is still underway.

An Insider's Look: Novum Crisi Replicati

Nullius In Verba is an insightful podcast on social science.

The host was in the perfect spot to provide a great insider's look, including the conflicts of interest.
He was still fresh out of his PhD when the replication started. So he didn't have much vested interest in preserving the status quo, and he took part in the Reproducibility Project.

He shares his perspective and insightful opinion on how psychology research was before the crisis, including people's mindsets, and how it changed.

Take a listen:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?from=embed&i=nmuqd-148bd4a-pb&square=1&share=1&download=1&fonts=Arial&skin=1b1b1b&font-color=&rtl=0&logo_link=&btn-skin=1b1b1b&size=300

Replication Crisis in Psychology: The Causes

Many explanations have been put forward to explain why we are dealing with endemic levels of replication failures.

Some of them are specific to psychology, while others apply to all other sciences:

- Outright fraudulent research (i.e., doctored results, made-up numbers, etc.)
- Questionable research practices (these are grey practices that are not outright illegal)
  - Selective reporting or partial publication of data (reporting only some of the study conditions or data)
  - Optional stopping (choosing when to stop data collection, often based on the statistical significance of tests)
  - *p*-value rounding (rounding *p*-values down to 0.05 to suggest statistical significance)
  - Manipulation of outliers (either removing outliers or leaving outliers in a dataset to manufacture statistical significance)
- Publication biases
  - Publishing only studies with significant or interesting results
  - Confirmation bias (once a theory has been accepted as true, publications and researchers seek to confirm the theory to get published)
- Skewed incentives for researchers and publishers
  - Researchers *have* to publish
  - Researchers have more success and financial rewards with "new", "exciting" and "self-help friendly" research
  - Journals can have an incentive to publish "new" and "exciting" theories
  - Few replication studies mean little risk for scientists who cheat or "embellish"
- Researchers' agendas (ie.: researchers might really believe in their theory and then "find a way" to make it happen)
- Human errors and biases
  - "Priming" effects on researchers who expect certain results
  - Poor grasp of math and statistics by psychologists

They all contribute, and probably there are even more.
We can address some of these issues, and with some, we are already doing so.

But first, I want to review the studies and theories that we should defend from "over-zealous debunkers".

The VIP "Victims" (& Why They're Still Insightful)

In this section, I will analyze and fact-check significant studies that have come under undeservedly heavy attack.

By "undeservedly heavy attack," I mean that the studies, albeit flawed, don't deserve to be branded as "debunked"

and thrown away.
Many studies that failed to replicate do indeed still offer valid insights, and, in almost all of the cases, they don't cancel the validity of the general psychological concept.

#1. Power Posing

You know this one, don't you?

If you have been reading any self-help literature or if you are part of any self-help circle, you must know this one.

Amy Cuddy's TED talk amassed a massive 16 million views on YouTube alone.
And yet, I'm pretty sure that only a tiny fraction of those viewers are aware of the massive issues with "power posing".

Power Posing Replication Crisis

The power-posing original study only had 42 participants, and it failed replication *when it comes to hormonal changes*.

The arguments against power posing are so convincing that Dana Carney, co-author of the original paper, abandoned the idea publicly in 2016.
In her open letter, she declared very directly that "she does not believe that power's effects are real".
And I quote her:

> The evidence against the existence of power poses is undeniable

Amy Cuddy clung to her original idea (I suppose 16 million views can lead to a major dose of cognitive dissonance), and after more research, she published a new paper confirming the effects of power poses on people's *own feelings* (and not anymore on hormones).

Oh, P.S.:
"Power Posing" underwent a major rebranding under Cuddy's "fight on" strategy.
Now it's called "postural feedback", so make sure you follow the correct branding guidelines :).

Defense: Feelings of Confidence Are Real

First of all, this was a case of *scientist* mistakes, not *science*.

Maybe Cuddy was a bit too driven to seek spotlight and notoriety and jumped the gun.

Also see:

> Why Good Scientists Are Boring & Poor Ones Are Famous

Albeit it's not true that "power posing" induces any hormonal changes, it's true that people *do* feel more powerful and confident.

And it's also true that the way you stand will change people's perceptions of you, which will, in turn, most likely change your interactions and, again, the way you feel about yourself.

#2. Stanford Prison Experiment

The Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) is a huge classic in social psychology.

And like many other classics, it's been under heavy attack recently.
Philip Zimbardo, the author of the original experiment and also the author of "*The Lucifer Effect*" has been a

staunch defender of his baby—and by baby, I mean SPE.
But the staunch defense only further galvanized the attackers.

Discussing SPE Brian Resnick from Vox asks Zimbardo:

> So does that not invalidate the conclusion?

From then on, the interview resembled a sparring session of attack and counter-attack rather than a discussion on human nature (or the scientific merits of the experiment).

This other article, titled "The Lifespan of A Lie," tells you all you need to know about the author's agenda, says:

> I hope there does come a point (…) where Zimbardo's narrative dies

Really?
Hoping for Zimbardo's narrative to die rather than the truth to come out?

This is what I'm talking about when I say that the replication crisis is fueled by power dynamics and personal agendas rather than simply a matter of proper science.

Stanford Experiment Replication Crisis

The "Stanford Experiment" is not an experiment in the way that scientists use the word "experiment".
It's not replicable, and Zimbardo himself has always said so, calling it instead "a demonstration".

But still, I recognize the value of the criticism.

There are good reasons to caution anyone reading, studying, or researching SPE.
Especially after it grew so big that the media and Hollywood made a mockery out of the psychology behind it:

Defense: Environments and Social Roles Do Shape Us

However, in spite of all the *very* valid criticism and limitations regarding its scientific nature, the "Stanford Experiment" still tells us lots of deep (and uncomfortable) truths about human nature.

The realization that normal people can act evil and that social roles and extreme environments can heavily affect our behaviors are socio-psychological truths.
There is a whole branch of psychology that studies how groups and social roles impact the individual, and it's called Social Identity Theory.

Refuting that society and social roles can impact our behavior for the worst, as many critics seem to do, is a failure to understand human nature.

As Zimbardo said:

> SPE serves as a cautionary tale of what might happen to any of us if we underestimate the extent to which the power of social roles and external pressures can influence our actions.

I agree with that.
And that's true no matter where you stand in relation to the "Stanford Experiment".

#3. Milgram Experiment

Riding on the iconoclastic high wave sweeping through all classical studies, "Milgram's Experiment" couldn't have possibly come out of it unscathed.

Milgram Experiment Replication Crisis

Gina Perry, an Australian psychologist, has written a whole book on the supposed "lies" behind the "Milgram Experiment".

I haven't read the book yet, but her interview here and her paper here are pretty clear.
In short, she says that only half of the subjects believed the experiment was real, and of those who believed it was real, 66% disobeyed the researcher.

Defense: Authority Does Exert Powerful Influence

At this point, I cannot judge how reliable and good the data behind Milgram's experiment really is.

But not only has a similar study in Poland recently yielded results similar to the original experiment, but this meta-analysis showed a high level of obedience pretty much anywhere.

Oh, and if we want to look beyond data and labs, we can just take a look at history and reality.
And they both show quite clearly that authority can lead people to do some pretty evil stuff (or did you really think it was just the evil Germans?).

#4. Grit

Angela Duckworth is the researcher behind the construct of "grit", which is a mixture of tenacity and passion.
She claimed that passion and perseverance are the mixes that more than anything else predicted success.

She also coined a simple "success" equation:

> Talent x Effort = Skill
> →
> Skill x Effort = Achievement

The concept was a smash hit in the self-help literature.
Possibly because it told people exactly what they wanted to hear: follow your passion and as long as you put in the effort you'll be successful.

Pop-psychology self-help gurus jumped on it and helped propel her book "*Grit*" into a best-seller and her TED talk to millions of views:

Note: Angela Duckworth said she was unhappy with the title that was given to her TED Talk, and yet… She did very little to make the *content* of the talk factually accurate.
As a matter of fact, she further oversold her (inflated) findings.

Grit Replication Crisis

Two studies (with 213 students and 498 students) did not find "grit" to correlate highly with results (but conscientiousness did).

And a meta-study from 88 samples shows only a modest correlation between grit and performance.

Duckworth also seems to have been overselling Grit both in her book and in her TED talk.
Even in her original research, the difference between everyone and the grittiest cadets was *very* small (98% of the grittiest cadets made it through and 95% of overall cadets made it through).

Check out my pop-psychology article if you want to read more, but the point I'm making here is that in spite of the obvious limitations not all about "grit" as in "passion and perseverance" must be thrown away.

Defense: Perseverance & Passion Are Crucial in Life

Angela Duckworth sought to measure both perseverance and passion.

And yes, she has embellished and oversold her findings. And yes, she probably made up this new construct that is a bit too similar to previous psychological traits.

But anyone arguing that perseverance -as in the ability to stick to your work when things get difficult- and passion -as in the amount of pleasure you derive from your work- are not important in life is lying.

Perseverance over the long run is what helps transforms big dreams into realities.
And working on what we care about is what makes our lives more meaningful and, well… Happier.

So *do* stick with your projects as long as it makes sense. Don't give up on the first difficulties and *do* pursue what you like and what stimulates you.

#5. The Marshmallow Test

The "Marshmallow Test" central message goes like this:

"children who were able to resist the temptations of eating a marshmallow now in exchange for two marshmallows later went on to become more successful in life".

That seemed to prove that control over urges and delay of gratification was key to success.
And that you could test that early on with a simple test.

The original authors of the study, of course, went on to write a popular book named, you'd never guess, "The Marshmallow Test".
And the video of the experiment amassed millions of views:

Marshmallow Test Replication Crisis

Typer Watts revisited the study and came out with a 50% smaller correlation between delayed gratification and "success" at 15 years old.

And what was the correlation when accounting for intelligence and family background?
Almost nothing.

He writes:

> Associations between delay time and measures of behavioral outcomes at age 15 were much smaller and rarely statistically significant.

There you go.

Defense: Delaying Gratification Is Crucial to Success

The "Marshmallow Test" is obviously a severely limited study. For example, who says that all kids liked marshmallows in equal measure?

And, between us nutrition nuts, who said that kids were better off with *double* the amount of poisonous lumps of sugar? :)

But jokes aside, would anyone deny that the ability to strategically delay gratification can be a crucial aspect of success?

Maybe you know the tale of "The Ant and The Grasshopper".
And if you don't, you can probably agree that what often makes the difference between turning dreams into reality

and never achieving anything lies in the ability to work hard.

And, often, **working hard includes and entails the delay of gratification**.
Which is exactly the point of the "Marshmallow Test".

#6. Fixed & Growth Mindset

Carol Dweck's research (and book) says that children who believe their abilities are liable to improve through efforts and failures learn more and improve much faster than children who believe that their traits are fixed and can't be changed.

Dweck's original paper suggested that a growth mindset can be taught with appropriate feedback and direction from teachers.

Growth Mindset Replication Crisis

More than a "replication crisis" Carol Dweck's assumption is simply difficult to replicate.
A proper growth mindset study entails teaching the mindset and then measuring the results over time, which is neither easy nor quick.

But Li and Bates' effort to replicate Dweck's initial results fell largely flat.
Carol Dweck replied that the experiments are difficult to replicate and must be done well.
To which Nick Brown quipped that "if the experiments are so difficult to replicate, why does Dweck think they can be easily replicated by school teachers"?

He has a point.

A meta-analysis measuring goal-setting, work towards the goals, and goals achievement was kinder towards Dweck's growth mindset research, albeit with some caveats.
It says:

> The present meta-analysis suggests that mindsets matter.
> One important conclusion from the present meta-analysis is that the associations of implicit theories with self-regulation are not straightforward and that perhaps the literature would be better served by asking when and how implicit theories are consequential for self-regulation rather than asking if incremental theories are generally beneficial.

However, most papers on growth mindset have been written or co-authored by Carol Dweck herself, so one must wonder about the validity of a meta-analysis where a good chunk of the papers is from the same author who's been criticized for embellishing her results.

Also, read our own article on growth mindset power dynamics:

> Why The "Growth Mindset" Is Disempowering You

Defense: Mindsets Are Important Psychological Traits With Major Implications

There are quite a few serious issues with Dweck's research and I am grateful to all the people who are pointing them out.
More research is also needed here.

Yet it's inconceivable to me that the difference between believing you can improve and believing you can't improve won't have a large impact on your life.

And that impact reflects not only in “success” or “school grades” (who cares about school grades anyway?) but also from a mental health point of view and the way you approach life.

I personally could see in myself how a fixed mindset held me back many times in life.
And I can see how nudging myself into a more growth mindset has helped me out in countless ways.

Sure, maybe you can’t easily teach a “growth mindset” and then see a huge jump in school grades.
That wouldn’t be realistic anyway, and I suspect that’s part of the issue: the impact is not so obvious and easy to measure.
But developing a growth mindset *will* improve your life. And significantly so.

#7. Priming

Priming, in a nutshell, is this:

if I subconsciously make you think about something, I will activate other related thoughts that will (subconsciously) change your behavior.

John Bargh is the Yale psychologist who first “proved” subconscious priming.
The original experiment has been cited thousands of times and spawned tens of similar studies which all seemed to prove that, indeed, priming works.

Priming Replication Crisis

Priming failed to replicate.
Bargh vehemently defended his research but, eventually, the tide seemed to heavily turn against priming.

Defense: Priming Might Not Be As Powerful, But It’s Real

Here is the funny thing:

as priming failed to replicate in the study’s subjects, it actually worked… *in the researchers*.

Indeed when Doyen told the researchers that the subjects were primed to walk more slowly, the researchers measured the subjects’ walk more slowly as compared to the automated measurement devices.

Doyen’s study is indeed called: “It’s All in the Mind, but Whose Mind?”

It’s ironic that the paper that started the “assault” on priming actually confirms that priming works.
Just in a different way.

Probably priming does not change behavior as powerfully and unconsciously as we thought, but it exists.
And it works.

And the psychological phenomenon of “elevating” related concepts that underpin priming is also true.
Says Colin Camerer:

> Priming has turned out to be the least replicable phenomenon.
> It’s a shame because the underlying concept—that thinking about one thing elevates associations to related things—is undoubtedly true.

Also, Bargh also ran experiments in which the researchers didn’t know what they were measuring, and priming still worked (Bargh et al. 1996 as also explained in the *Handbook of Research Methods In Social and Personality Psychology*).

The Replication Crisis is An Opportunity

The replication crisis in psychology -and in all other sciences as well- is a wonderful opportunity for science.

Says Howard Kurtzman, executive director for science at the American Psychology Association:

> The outcomes point to the need for reforms in research, review and publication practices.

Indeed.

I am happy we are going through this crisis.
It is showing to us all, beyond any reasonable doubt, that we have been operating below our potential and below science's potential.
And that's always a sign that we can advance towards better systems and processes.

This replication crisis does not sap faith in science but restores it.
It means that we were able to catch issues and mistakes, and we now have the opportunity to fix those mistakes.

This can be our chance to be reborn stronger and better than ever.
That we take this opportunity is up to each one of us.

Addressing The Incentives

Darren Huff showed it long ago in his "How to Lie With Statistics": lying with statistics is easy.

If we put incentives on researchers to find correlations, come up with new theories, deliver TED talks, and publish groundbreaking papers, then we are inviting them to embellish those statistics.
And researchers will find a way to do just that.

As our current research systems are structured, scientists are incentivized to bend statistics and embellish their results

Says Brian Nosek, executive director of the Center for Open Science:

> We can nudge the incentives driving our behavior so that researchers are rewarded for more transparent and reproducible research

Exactly.

Of course, there are other issues we need to address as well, but addressing researchers' and journals' incentives is where I would start.

Other Areas of Intervention

Here are a few more ideas to improve science:

- **Pre-registration**

Pre-registration means that the researcher describes his goals, methodology, and data analysis before he begins his research.

That way, he won't be able to "p-hack" or tweak" the numbers and run different analyses on the data to come up with "something more meaningful".

Pre-registration is working great.
To better understand how it works I found this podcast very insightful. Take a listen to the first: two psychologists discuss why a study has low authority and credibility because it failed to pre-register:

- **Institutionalize replications** (ie.: papers' auditing)

Replication is unsexy.
The biggest spoils in research always go to the ones that do something original and the biggest windfall of them all goes to those who champion a new theory, a new concept, or a new marketable technology.

Yet replication is exactly what can nip in the bud years of fake pop psychology claims and self-help myths from festering and spreading.

An institutionalized and independent replication center will also serve as an incentive *not* to mess with the data.
It's like an independent watchdog for proper science.

We're Already Improving

Some research sponsors are already improving their policies to stress the importance of reproducibility and more journals are now requiring pre-registration.

More scientists are doing mea-culpa, and psychologists know that's a precondition for positive change.

Transparency is now all the rage and data sharing for cross-checking is more expected than ever.

Replication research is getting more press, more attention, and, as well, more funds.
And that's good.

The legislation crisis is already improving science.
We must be grateful for it, and at the same time, we must keep on pushing.

SUMMARY

The replication crisis in psychology and social psychology has hit us hard.

But this is not a crisis of psychology -or science, for that matter-.
The main foundations of psychology and social psychology are still all there and always will be.

If you want to get along with people, persuade and influence people, and if you want to upgrade yourself, then you need to understand social psychology and individuals psychology.

This article made the point that even the studies that have been hit by the replication crisis the most, still remain hugely important milestones in our understanding of the human mind.

But this is not to say that there are no issues.
There are issues in the researchers' incentives and in the publication system.
And properly addressing those issues will make science and psychology better and stronger than it's ever been.

It's already happening, and that's great news.

Flourish: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Flourish* author Martin Seligman takes stock of some of the most important results from decades of positive psychology research.
"*Flourish*" is also a practical book, since, alongside the theory, it also presents many exercises the readers can start applying right away.

Contents

- Flourish Summary
- Flourish Criticism
- Flourish Quotes
- Flourish Gold Nuggets
- CONS
- PROS
- Flourish Review

Flourish Summary

About the Author:
Martin Seligman is a professor of psychology and researcher and author.
Some say that positive psychology was finally recognized as its own domain in 1998 when Seligman chose it as the theme for his presidency at APA (American Psychological Association).
Seligman has also authored "*Authentic Happiness*" and "*Learned Optimism*" (my favorite).

#1. The Keys to Well-Being: PERMA

Based on positive psychology studies and research Martin Seligman comes up with 5 keys to a happy life:

- **Positive emotions**

Such as gratefulness, pleasure, joy, warmth, connection, etc.

Seligman makes the point that you can consciously increase your positive emotions and consciously decrease your negative ones.
When you reach a point of more positive emotions than negative ones, then you're a happy, flourishing individual ("Flourish" says it's 3:1 but that's been thoroughly debunked and suggests Seligman knows little of math).

- **Engagement**

Csikszentmihalyi calls it "flow": when we are so engaged in something we forget all the rest.
For more on flow and "peak" performance in sports or work also read: "Flow", "Deep Work", "Peak", and "The Talent Code".

- **Relationships**

"Happiness is real only if shared", and plenty of studies show that the single most important factor to happiness and mental well-being are positive human relationships from intimate relationships to social ones to family ties.

Relationships are so important that the majority of suicides for troops do not happen for war-related events but when home relationships got strained (for example breakups or threats to break up).

In this section, Seligman also introduces Gottman and many of his principles (if you're interested check this relationship overview).

- **Meaning**

Doing something you feel has an impact, meaning bigger than yourself.

For more information on meaning and the workplace, check out Drive, for more information on meaning in your life, check Start With WHY; and for more information on meaning from a more philosophical (but also practical) point of view, check "Man's Search for Meaning".

- **Accomplishment**

In the sense of moving forward, not necessarily winning in the competitive, "Jack Welch" kind of winning.

Seligman says there are four skills that determine accomplishment:

1. Speed of thinking.
2. Learning rate
3. Work planning and revision
4. Effort

IQ only measures the first one, which is why in Seligman's point of view it's not a reliable measure of success. Flourish also espouses Carol Dweck's theory that a growth mindset will help you succeed (read "how to develop a growth mindset").

#2. Can Money Buy You Love (or Happiness?)

Wealth contributes heavily to life satisfaction but not to a good mood.

As a matter of fact, the richest countries are far from being the happiest ones, and with progress and widespread well-being depression and suicides only increased.

Indeed, what reduces suicide rates are social hardships and, well… War also decreases suicides.

Money does matter though when people are below the poverty line and are struggling to feed themselves.

Money also does help if you spend it doing things that you like and enjoy.

#3. Optimism Makes You Healthier

Seligman presents several pieces of research to show how a positive attitude makes us all healthier and more immune to diseases.

The most interesting part for me though was the reasons why optimists get less ill and heal quicker.
Optimists:

- Believe they can change things with actions, so they act more (this is related to the "locus of control")
- Keep trying and don't fall into "passive helplessness"
- Have a better social network (they're better at making friends and attracting support)
- Use their social network more
- Respond better to stress

For more on "learned helplessness" and how to acquire optimism check out "To Sell Is Human", "Essentialism" or get my full guide "Ultimate Power".

#4. Flourish Exercises: Building Happiness

"*Flourish*" also contains plenty of exercises to make yourself happier.
Some of them:

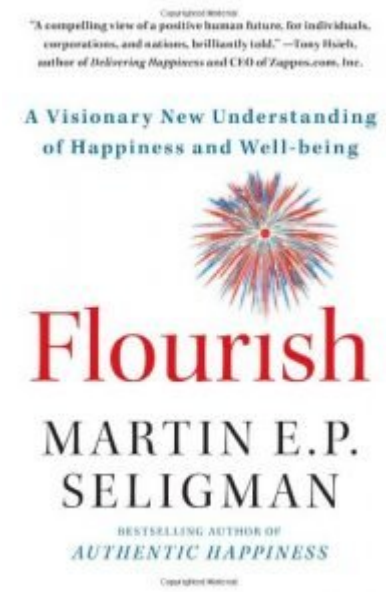
1. Write down 3 things you're happy about during your day
2. Do something nice for people around you without expecting anything in return
3. Write down how your actions helped you get things done (will get you into a mindset that your actions do matter)

#5. The Florentine Moment of Western Civilization

Martin Seligman says that the rich Western countries are not at what he calls a "Florentine Moment".

They are rich and well-fed to the point where they face an important decision.
They can either decide to keep investing in "growth for growth's sake" or they can do what Florence did during the Renaissance: invest in beauty, arts, and happiness.

The author makes the point that wealth to produce more wealth is a hollow pursuit and we should include in our economic indicators better nuances to include psychological well-being and personal flourishing.



Flourish Criticism

Positive Psychology, Seligman, and "*Flourish*" are not without criticism from the scientific community.

Overall, I am still convinced of the high positive impact that this branch of philosophy can have on our lives, but we must also be aware of its limitations and dangers.

Some of the criticism:

High positivity correlates with illusion

Illusion means distortion of reality and living in one's own unreal world.

This is something that I have personally often criticized in some of the self-help literature and which has led to some exaggerations such as the "law of attraction" and "building one's own reality".

Many highly successful businessmen such as, for example, Ray Dalio, made it a point to look at reality as crudely as possible (for more on reality-based living also read "*Principles*" and "*The 50th Law*").

I believe though that one can easily achieve a happy medium of being positive without creating one's own reality. Furthermore, one can bend reality on certain topics, while remaining more reality-based on others, which is something Seligman also suggests in successive books.

One size fits all

Positive psychology, and "*Flourish*" as well speak a lot in general terms. And some principles are generalizable to a large swath of the population.
But "large" is not necessarily all.

And even then, there are important exceptions.

For example, I consider myself very driven and, as of now, I don't make happiness a high priority of mine.

I'd rather be happy one or two days a week only and the other days be neutral or even slightly negative while being highly efficient.

Positive psychology and the ideas present in "*Flourish*" can still help me -and everyone else in a similar situation- to "switch on" during those times when we want to go from "efficient" to "happy and flourishing".

Poor Judgment of Behavioral Economics

The author, in a long and drawn effort to dismantle all criticism of positive psychology, ends up discussing why optimism is good for stocks and does not create bubbles.

I was aghast at how simplistic -and wrong- that analysis was.
I have written my thesis on how psychological biases helped fueled the crisis and "irrational exuberance" as in "unwarranted, exaggerated optimism" *is* a major cause of financial bubbles.

For more on behavioral economics also check out "*The Undoing Project*".

Replication failures

One of the selling points of positive psychology is that it's like self-help but backed by science.

Well, it turns out that "science" is not always as thorough as it should be -or as its proponents would like to present it-.
As part of the current replication crisis in psychology, some important studies have come under fire, and that includes studies that were present in "*Flourish*".

The 3 to 1 positive ratio is one such example and the same can be said for "*Grit*" by Angela Duckworth.
You can read more here:

- **Pop-psychology myths**
- **Self-help myths**

Flourish Quotes

On socialization and positivity:

> Misery may love company, but company doesn't love misery

On the difficulties of measuring happiness:

> It turns out, however, that how much life satisfaction people report is itself determined by how good we feel at the very moment we are asked the question.

On how feeling secure allows us to receive criticism:

> This is related to the Losada ratio. To enable us to hear criticism nondefensively and to act creatively on it, we need to feel secure.

Note: But note that the Losada ratio has been debunked and is today a heavily discredited "theory".

Flourish Gold Nuggets

- **Don't use the word "happiness"**

It's so over-used and so general it has lost its meaning and it's not useful.

- **Life is too complex for monism**

The author says that past giants of philosophy all made the mistake of reducing the "meaning of life" to one simple variable.

Nietzche (power), Aristotle (happiness), and Freud (avoid anxiety) all ended up with too simplistic theories by basing their philosophies on just one main concept.

And I couldn't agree more.

- **Group selection better explains**

Seligman makes the point in "*Flourish*" that the group accounts for far more than evolutionary biology has so far been willing to grant.
He mentions "The Selfish Gene" as the book and theory that got us off-track with the idea that we're all about maximizing returns for ourselves.

He says that group theories of evolution better explain human social dynamics of altruism and mutual support.

I really liked this part and I think there is much truth in it. But I don't with Seligman when he proposes the group as the primary unit of selection.
No, it's not. The group is important but it's not the *primary* one.

- **Anti-depressants work little**

Anti-depressants do work *somehow*. But so does the placebo. Anti-depressant drugs such as Prozac do very little compared to placebo.

To be accurate, for severe depression drugs work well.
But for mild and moderate depression, the effects were non-existent.

- **Leader's positivity is crucial**

Positive coaches had measurable better results than negative ones (as measured in the MBAs).

But I wasn't convinced by Seligman's choice of expressions that were supposed to indicate "positivity" or "negativity".
For example "we lost because of the referee decisions" was included in "positive thinking", which to me made no sense

CONS

While the above "Flourish criticism" section refers to positive psychology in general, this is what I didn't like specifically about the book "*Flourish*":

- **Correlation used as proof**

In a few instances, I felt Sigman presents correlation as "proof" of something. But correlation is not causation.

For example, he introduces a coach who built "character strength exercises" to improve the team's performance. But that says little about the effectiveness of such exercises. And it says little about its effectiveness as compared to different exercises that could have been done.

Seligman also seems to show a poor understanding of correlation in his own life.
He talks about his efforts of hiring a Ph.D. candidate simply because she was a woman who borrowed money, walked into a poker tournament, and won it.
That really sounded ridiculous and I'd recommend Martin Seligman checks out Nassim Taleb's work, starting from "Fooled by Randomness".

- **Shallow analysis of Facebook and its social impacts**

Martin Seligman delivers highly positive praise of FB and its effects on happiness and flourishing.

I found it out of place and way overblown. Many other authors also agree that Facebook's net effect is probably more negative than positive on many users (Brene Brown, Mark Manson).

- **Very enthusiastic (but not always scientifically thorough)**

I found "*Flourish*" to be very enthusiastic but not always equally scientifically thorough.

When Seligman introduces Angela Duckworth, for example, he sounds like an awe-struck kid who can't stop blowing Duckworth's horn.

But Grit has failed to replicate, is no different than conscientiousness, and has come under heavy -and convincing- criticism from much of the scientific community.

PROS

- **Deeply insightful on the importance of positivity**

I found Flourish to be a treasure trove of information when it comes to the importance of positivity and psychological and emotional health.

- **Practical ideas and tools on how we can control our emotional states**

Flourish is also enlightening as to how much we can do to make ourselves happier, healthier, and flourishing human beings.

Flourish Review

Flourish is an important book on positive psychology.

Not because it added much to the literature of positive psychology -it's more like a summary of research-, but because it sparked further research and it helped spread the interest of positive psychology both among scientists and in the general public.

From my point of view, I can say it's always a pleasure to read a self-help book from an actual scientist and psychologist.

Some refer to positive psychology as a "new branch of psychology", but I found that term slightly misleading. Thinkers have been deliberating on happiness and on meaningful life for thousands of years. They weren't called "psychologists" back then, but if you read any stoicism the resemblances are striking, to say the least (check: "*The Little Book of Stoicism*" and "*The Obstacle Is The Way*").

But that's not to say that I'm not a big fan of positive psychology. Because, as a matter of fact, *I am* a big fan of positive psychology.

Positive psychology also started as a reaction to the outsized dominance and influence that psycho-analysis has held for decades. And also with that, I couldn't agree more.

Finally, I particularly liked and appreciated the point that Seligman makes on government policy.
Seligman says that policymakers should focus a bit less on economic growth for growth's sake and start looking more and more at how we can all become more flourishing individuals.
I totally agree. And I think that we don't need to wait for policymakers. We can do that change ourselves.

P.S.: I really had to stop, rewind and smile when Seligman talks about "Tiergarten" in Berlin since my flat is a short walk away and it's been a favorite destination of mine during summer.

In short:
Flourish is an OK resource for becoming happier and it provides a good overview of positive psychology.
But also presents some shallow analysis and some heavily discredited science as well. Disappointing for the founder of Positive Psychology.

Check the **best psychology books** or **get the book on Amazon**

MentorBox Review – Read Before Buying (AVOID IT!)

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

MentorBox reviews are sprouting around the web.

Many of them seem to either be fake, good, or overly negative clickbait.

I used MentorBox to its fullest potential during the 3 days free trial, and this is my unbiased review of MentorBox.

Contents

- What is MentorBox?
- Who Founded MentorBox?
- MentorBox Book List
- Is MentorBox A Scam?
- MentorBox Reviews
- MentorBox Alternatives
- MentorBox Pros
- MentorBox Cons
- MentorBox Costs
- MentorBox Review

What is MentorBox?

MentorBox is a monthly subscription product to spread knowledge and information in a quicker, more efficient way than reading the whole book.

It helps you turbocharge your learning by giving you book summaries straight from the author.

The idea is appealing.
You hear from the authors and you go straight to the most important facts.

For each book it presents a “cheat sheet” with the main ideas, exercises to help you memorize the material, and then an interview with the authors themselves.

It’s a pretty cool format actually.

Who Founded MentorBox?

MentorBox is a partnership between Alex Mehr and Tai Lopez.

I don’t have a high opinion of Tai Lopez as you can see from my review of Tai Lopez manipulation techniques.

A quick search of Alex Mehr does not yield the most trust-inspiring results:

He does have a Ph.D. title though, which he appends to his name any time he can:

Just in case you didn’t notice, Alex Mehr has a PhD

MentorBox Book List

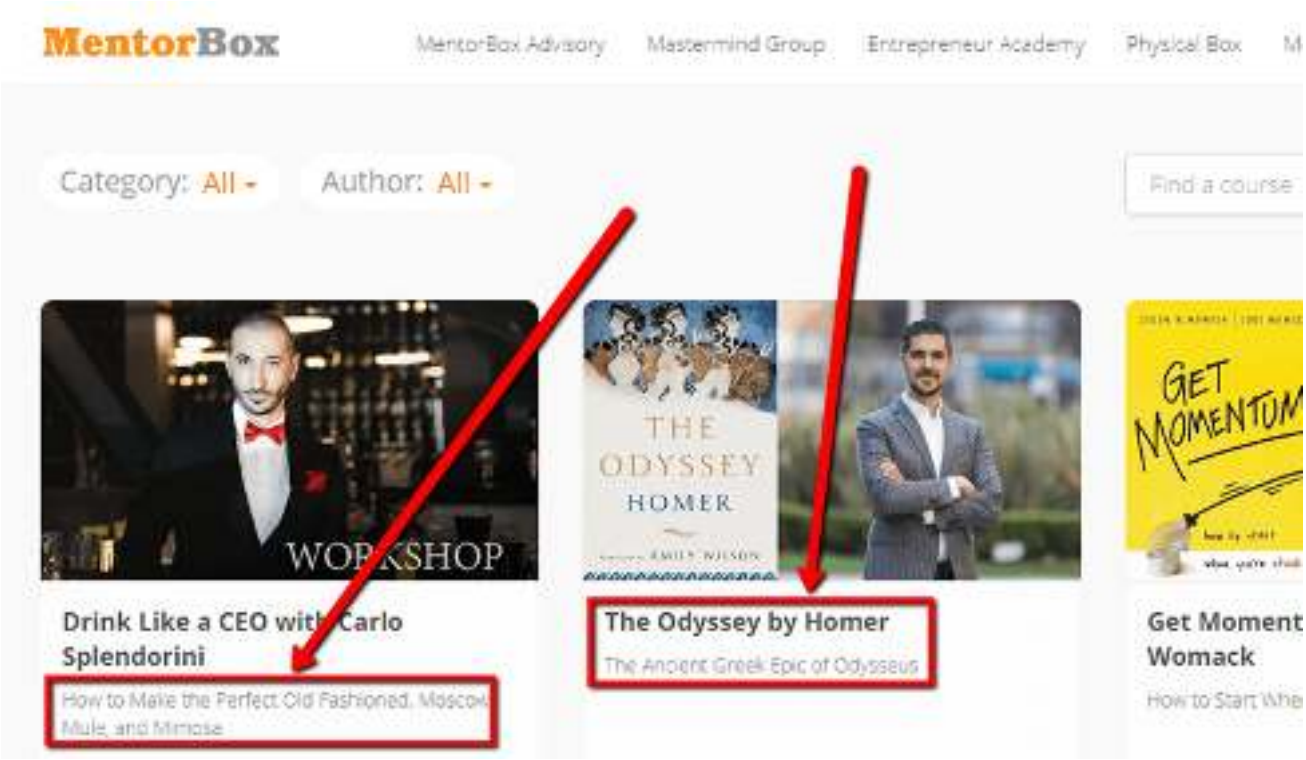
MentorBox does not have a huge list of books and there is no easy way to actually check names and numbers.

There are less than 249 videos you can watch, which is less than the book summaries you get on this very website for free.

But most of those videos are not actual summaries, they are random videos branded as “knowledge” from either Tai Lopez or Alex Mehr himself, which feel like space-fillers.

And they include some videos which I would warmly encourage everyone not to waste time on like a workshop on the law of attraction:

Some of the videos also feel like space fillers:



In case you can't read what's written there it's "Drink like a CEO – how to make the perfect Old Fashioned, Moscow Mule, and Mimosa".
And if you're wondering "WTF is that sh*t", you and I had the same reaction.

So my own estimation is that there are probably around 150 books, which is much fewer than this very website.

Is MentorBox A Scam?

MentorBox is not a full-on scam.
Not the product in itself, at least.

However, there are countless of complaints online about overcharges and refusing to make good on the refund policy.
Note: **I personally had no problems canceling, so my experience was positive** on that front.

And not all the courses that you get you can actually access which, to me, felt like MentorBox is not just a product you buy, but a teaser and conduit to sell you more and more (more on it later).

The whole MentorBox, the way it's packaged… It certainly *does* feel scammy.
MentorBox deploys the most aggressive, annoying and sneaky sales techniques I have ever seen anywhere.

"wait! Just one more thing… For the 10th time"

MentorBox Annoys The Hell Out of You With Upsells...

Signing up for MentorBox is an ordeal.
I have never seen any online course or product annoying people as much as MentorBox does.

But it's not over, because even after you click "no" one hundred times, the sale has just begun for MentorBox.

... And Spamming Emails

But you are not done.

Right after signup, you keep receiving Alex Mehr's hard-sell emails.
Within half an hour of signing up, I had already received two of them.

And that goes on top of the 3 to "confirm" I was part of MentorBox, which made me think their whole system was very disorganized:

Saying that I personally don't appreciate this kind of hard sell is an understatement.

I find it annoying and overbearing and I was tempted to mark it as "spam" just to get even.

MentorBox Reviews

Looking around the web most reviews are highly negative.

Glassdoor, which collects reviews from people working at different companies, has two reviews on MentorBox. And they're both very negative.

They describe toxic cultures, incompetent management, unfair practices toward the customers, and a focus on selling rather than delivering value.

Writes one of them:

> Website/customer service is bad and undeniably created to increase sales instead of serving the customer

Of course, there are also a lot of positive reviews. Especially in the testimonials section of the website.

But given the moral compass of the founders, I wouldn't put too much trust in the veracity of any of them :).

MentorBox Alternatives

If you want to learn quickly and efficiently, I applaud you.
You should focus both on learning and on doing so as effectively as possible.

MentorBox is not the only option though. As a matter of fact, there are plenty of alternatives to MentorBox.

Here are some of the most popular:

- **Amazon Audible**: Audible is Amazon's membership for audiobooks, where you can listen to the full audiobook instead of someone else's summary
- **Blinkist**: Blinkist is a popular Berlin-based subscription service for book summaries (check here my Blinkist Review)
- **Free online summaries**: there are plenty of free summaries online for MentorBox (check here the best book summaries websites and best book reviews websites)
- **The Power Moves**: this website shares the resources we study and analyze as part of our science-backed strategies
- **ReadinGraphics**: I always liked their idea of providing infographics and pictures together with the text summaries.

MentorBox

Chris Guillebeau

You click on "start" only to realize that you must BUY the course

Class Curriculum

First Section

Start

MentorBox

CHEAT SHEET

SIDE HUSTLE

CHRIS GUILLEBEAU

The side hustle economy is here to stay. It's a social revolution that can improve our collective well-being and broaden our cultural approach to work. From security to

WHY SHOULD I LISTEN TO CHRIS?

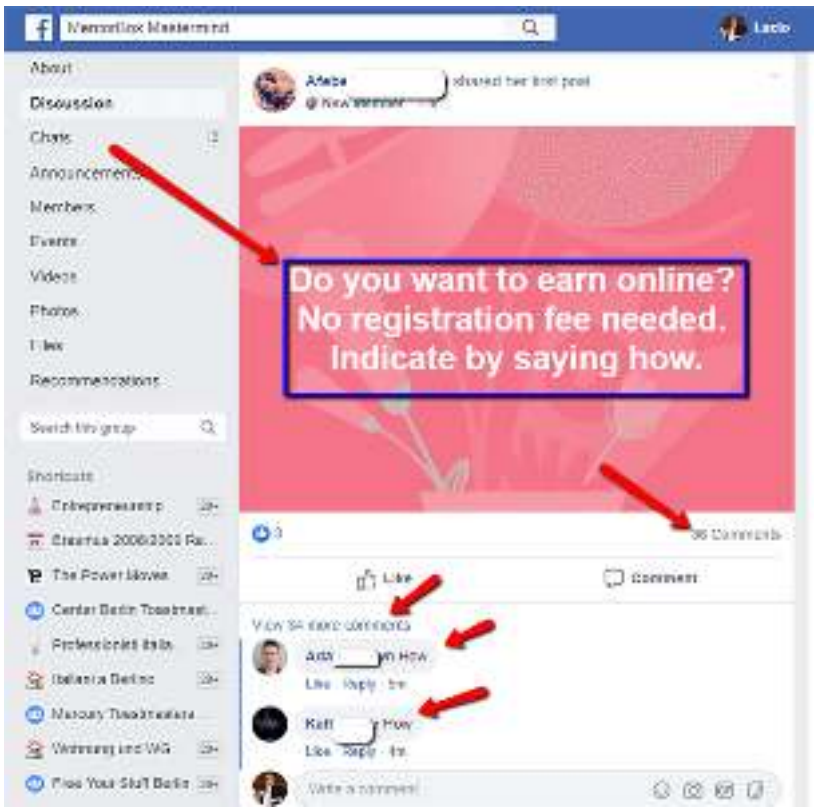
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

WILDLY SUCCESSFUL BLOGGER

(1M UNIQUE MONTHLY HITS)

CREATOR OF SIDE HUSTLE SCHOOL PODCAST

TRAVELLED TO 193 COUNTRIES



There are also countless ways to get the full book for free, especially for the most popular ones.
But they are not all legal so I will skip them here.

MentorBox Pros

MentorBox presents many advantages, including:

- **author-delivered courses**

I have to say, some of these summaries were really captivating. Some of them end up being much more than simple summaries.
Some of the authors end up delivering what is a mix of a summary and a mini-course.

It was the case for example with Hooked for example. But Cialdini author of Influence and Pre-Suasion also delivered a wonderful speech.

On the other hand, these authors are also there to provide a teaser for their own services. In some cases, with actual affiliate links to book calls and private coachings.

- **You hear straight from the authors**

I think that the possibility of hearing straight from the authors, explaining and talking about their own books, is the biggest USP and the biggest advantage of MentorBox.

- **Well-designed workbooks**

I didn't try the physical version, but it looks like it's well printed and some people might get some value out of it.

https://youtu.be/5IhazdN7gP4?t=52

That being said, in my opinion, the physical box is just clutter that you don't need at your place.

- **Cool design**

MentorBox looks good from a design point of view, albeit the usability could be further improved.

- **Focus on entrepreneurship**

MentorBox has a strong focus on how to apply the book teaching in business, which can be very helpful to entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs.

And beyond the actual courses, you can learn some online marketing just by observing how they pitch and sell MentorBox (and hopefully you will also learn what not to do).

MentorBox Cons

On top of the bad online MentorBox reviews and the highly dubious business practices, this is what I didn't like of MentorBox:

- **Not all courses are free to access**

Some of them are only teasers or, worse, sales pages for the actual course that you must buy and pay for.

This is the case with Chris Guillebeau, the author of "The $100 StartUp":

- **No critical reviews**

MentorBox reviews all books and authors from the point of view that they are all correct and that we can all learn from them.

We do can all learn at least something from each book… Probably. But that doesn't mean they are all factually correct, or that they don't deserve some deeper investigation.

For example, MentorBox has Amy Cuddy as one of their authors.
But you will not hear from Amy Cuddy that her research failed to replicate and that her own research co-author called it "pseudo-science" (check out my pop-psychology article).

- **Designed for Sales**

Like the Glassdoor review mentioned, it really feels indeed like MentorBox is built more to sell than to teach.

At the end of each lesson, there are buttons to "share what you learned" because it helps you remember.
But of course, you share it wit ha nice link to MentorBox, which helps MentorBox get free advertising.

Whether "sharing to remember" helps more you remembering or MentorBox selling is a moot point.

- **Authors are doing quite some promotions**

The MentorBox authors are not just there to summarize their books, but they also do a lot of promotions about their other work and, of course, about their next books.

That might not bother you, but in a way that's exactly what they are doing on free channels as well.
They release a YouTube video, they give an interview and they share some knowledge while at the same time self-promoting.

- **Some incorrect information**

Some of the information present in the fact-sheets are false. Take this example:

The introduction says that Chris Guillebeau is a "wildly successful blogger", which is fine as that's relative.

But when I checked the claim of "1m Unique Monthly Hits", that was patently false.
As a matter of fact, Chris blog has far fewer visitors than this very website (and ThePowerMoves.com doesn't yet have 1 million unique monthly hits at the time of writing).

- **Not all books include authors' interviews**

MentorBox is sold like a service where you hear the summaries straight from the authors.

Yet, not all books actually get the summaries straight from the authors.
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective for example is Alex Mehr talking in front of a camera.

And that makes sense because Stephen Covey is dead unluckily, but

- **No good presenters to learn from**

I research social dynamics, so I take lots of care about how people come across.

And I don't find Tai Lopez or Alex Mehr to be particularly good speakers to learn from.
They use a lot of filler words, they go up with their inflection and they cross their arms and look tentative in their interviews and book reviews.

And the other guy who takes care of the content is even worse.

- **Useless "MentorBox Mastermind" Group**

The "MentorBox Mastermind" group you will be welcomed to join on FB is not only useless… But actually harmful.

If you're not the kind of person who would reply to such a post you know why such a group has nothing to teach you.
And if you're the kind of person who would reply to such a post:

1. get a grip
2. stick around here for a little longer before you get into MentorBox

MentorBox Costs

MentorBox "bare-metal" costs, without the physical delivery and without any of the add-ons is **7 USD per month**.

With that, you get access to most of the library of summaries and you probably don't need anything else.
But get ready to be bombarded by MentorBox upsells efforts and it might be worth mentioning that there have been complaints about over-charges.

If you have been the victim of over-charges let me know and I will include here your experience.

MentorBox Review

My MentorBox review is actually positive for the product itself. As a matter of fact, I was positively surprised.

I was expecting some crappy system with some bad "motivational quotes", but the summaries are well done and the interviews with the authors are interesting.

As a matter of fact, in my Pills of Wisdom I have been telling people that reading a lot, in and by itself, is not enough to become successful.
And that successful people apply the learning right away rather than simply consuming information.

That's why I love any product that helps to make your learning more efficient.

However, my overall MentorBox review is more on the negative side because the good product is tainted by the shady and manipulative business practices.

> **MentorBox is a great idea, a good product, but a less than stellar business**

> -The Power Moves Reviews

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Is MentorBox Worth It?

Whether MentorBox is worth it or not depends a lot on you.

If you have been around self-development for a while, you won't find anything earth-shattering here and you're better off *applying* information rather than focusing more and more on acquiring it.

If you are starting out, then it might be worth looking into as a way to cut your learning curve short.
But if you're on a budget, then you can get that same information, at the same speed, by looking for free information around the web.

Personally, I will not be using and I will stick to the full version of the book (plus my own research on what each author claims).

Check out the best *free* online book summaries

Misbehaving: Summary, Review, & Criticism (Thaler)

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Misbehaving (2015) tells the story of how behavioral economics became a recognized discipline in-between psychology and economics.
For the uninitiated, that means that the author, Richard Thales, tells the story of how psychology fought its way into economics.

TPM Takeaway: Behavioral economics imported psychology into economics
Thaler formalized well-known psychological and sociological insights from psychology, power dynamics, and social exchange theory (fairness, reciprocity, framing, status effects) into experimental economics. This made bounded rationality acceptable within economic models, but the underlying social exchange logic predates it and is more fully developed in sociology and power research.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Beginnings 1970–78: Homo Economicus
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  - PART VII/VIII: 1994-PRESENT
- TPM Takeaways
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- Review

Takeaways

- Old economic theories centered around fully rational individuals are deficient
- Even financial markets are not rational and efficient
- Economists have long rejected the idea of an irrational individual (and the meddling of psychologists in economics)
- Behavioral economics, such as economics with good psychology, is today widely accepted

Notes

Little by little, psychology supplanted the myth of the (inexistent and hyper-rational) “homo economicus” to give us all a better understanding of how people make financial and (ir)rational decisions.

Albeit psychology was only taking us closer to the truth, it wasn’t easy to change economists’ minds.

Beginnings 1970–78: Homo Economicus

Richard Thaler, with the first salvo of wit that will characterize all of “Misbehaving” says that economists replaced homo sapiens with a fictional creature called “homo economicus”.

For short, Thaler will refer to “homo economicus” as “econ” (pl.: “econs”).
Econs are rational and always make the best rational decisions, considering all the information and all the alternatives available.

Econs are not good representations of real humans, though, who make all sorts of mistakes and irrational decisions.

Economical models designed by economists, which the author also calls “optimization theories”, have long been built around “econs”. And that means that, since econs don’t really exist in real life, optimization theories make all sorts of bad predictions.
Just as an example, not only did no economist fail to predict the 2007-2008 financial crisis, but economic theories based on econs also postulate that financial bubbles are impossible.

Ironically, notes Thaler, the homo economicus theories based on math and rationality long gave economics the reputation of the most powerful of the social sciences.

Economic Theories Rest on Flawed Assumptions

There is a problem with economic theories, though: they rest on completely flawed premises.

1. Optimizations people face are too complex to be solved with perfect rationality (even going to the grocery store presents way too many options to be all resolved rationally, let alone the complexities of a career to choose)
2. We make choices based on biased beliefs (i.e., overconfidence)
3. There are too many factors that the optimization model leaves out and that economists simply shrug off as “Supposedly Irrelevant Factors” (i.e., econs would never buy more food for tomorrow because they’re hungry today and they would never finish an already bought meal even though they’re full middle-meal)

Thaler says we don’t need to throw the optimization theories away, but we have to stop basing our policies and predictions on them.

Enter: Behavioral Economics

Behavioral economics is still economics but with te an injection of good psychology and social science.

Thaler then dedicates a few chapters of “*Misbehaving*” to describe experiments that clearly show that optimization theories are wrong, that “SIFs” are not irrelevant at all and that econs don’t exist.
Or, if they do, they certainly don’t overlap with humans.

Prospect Theory

Thaler describes how he first stumbled upon Kahneman -author of *Thinking Fast and Slow*– and Tversky (check out “The Undoing Project” for the history of these two).

Kahneman and Tversky are the two main psychologists behind the emergence of prospect theory.
Prospect theory maintains that:

- Diminishing sensitivity of utility: the more we get of something, the less impact it will have (valid for both gains and losses)
- Changes matter more than levels (if I win a million dollars today and in a week I lose 700k I will be sad in spite that I am still at +300k)

No Need to Throw Out All Econ-Theories

Thaler doesn’t say we need to completely supplant all optimization theories. He says they remain good starting points for more realistic models.

And when the problems are very easy or the individual is highly skilled and approaching the problem with his full attention, then optimization theory may work fine (but these situations are the exception and not the rule)

PART II: Mental Accounting 1979–85

The author, parallelly but independently of Kahneman, wondered how people thought about money.
He first called it “psychological accounting”, but later followed suit with Kahneman and Tversky to call it “mental accounting”.

Opportunity Costs Theory (& Limitation)

An econ takes any decision by analyzing all possible alternatives. But real humans cannot compute infinite alternatives and, at most, they select a couple to choose from.

The people closest to an econ are actually poor people, who need to make ends meet and thus spend more time wondering about money allocation and opportunity costs.

My Note: Disagree with the generalization. Poor people are not always econs
I don’t fully agree with the author here or, at least, there are plenty of exceptions. Many people are actually poor because they do *not* think about money allocation and opportunity costs. Ever.
Think of psychopaths who live in the moment without worrying about the future.
Or those people who spend everything their whole monthly salary before the middle of the month (just visit the Philippines and you’ll meet those).

Transaction Utility

Humans don’t just think in terms of number and utility maximization, but also take into account the perceived *quality* of the deal.

If you buy a sandwich at a sporting event and pay it 3 times the price you would pay for it outside, the sandwich has negative transaction utility (ie: a rip-off).

And again, humans are willing to pay different prices depending on where an item is bought.
They are OK with higher prices in an expensive resort, for example, because they understand the expenses are higher there, the ambiance might be nicer and, well, they might even be happy with the splurge.

Transaction utility explains why people sometimes never buy something that would give them great memories for a lifetime.
Because, irrationally, they feel it’s not a good deal and don’t want to live with the feeling of having overpaid.
And on the other hand, we often buy stuff that we won’t even use because we feel it’s a great bargain.

And this is the reason why shops always fake sales: to give people the feeling they are getting a bargain.

Econs instead would never experience transaction utility.

Sunk Costs

People also wear dresses they don’t like anymore simply because they bought it and if they don’t use it, they feel like they wasted money.

This is an example of sunk costs.

People expense sunk costs because of mental accounting.
If you buy something and use it, the account is neutral. But if you spend money on something without using or enjoying it, it feels like you wasted money.

If instead, you use what you spent money on, it feels like you got a bargain and we feel good about it.

Indeed, the more we pay for something, the more we will try not to leave it unused and the more we will resist throwing it away.

Of course, econs would never deal with sunk costs.

Delayed Consumption & Mental Accounting

When we buy something for later consumption our mental accounting goes out of whack.

Buying expensive wine, which we will consume in the future, feels for many people like an *investment* rather than an expense.
And when we consume it in the future, it feels like we didn't even spend money on it (the paper research is called "Invest now, drink later, spend never").

Vacation timesharing properties leverage the same mental inconsistency to make people feel like they are investing in their future holidays.

The House Money Effect

The house money effect turns the normal risk-aversion of most people on its head.

The "house money effect" refers people to who have won money or somehow received unexpected money.
In that case, normal mental accounting goes out of whack and they feel free to throw money around and take risks and bets that they would normally never take with their own money.

That's why non-professional gamblers who start winning become much more aggressive and take many more risks with their new "house money".

Break Even Effect

Another SIF, not just for econ-based theories but also for the more psychologically-driven prospect theory, is the behavior that people present when they are losing but are given the chance of breaking even.

In that case, they are willing to take larger risks for the chance of erasing their losses.

PART III: Self-Control 1975-88

Economic theories have long presumed that self-control problems do not exist.
And that's another inconsistency between economic theories and actual humans.

In this part, Richard Thaler makes even more fun of economists and their models and theories growing more and more sophisticated as they implied that also people became more and more rational and sophisticated (check quotes below).
He discussed and explains Keynes, Milton Friedman, and Modigliani and also about "*The Marshmallow Test*" (albeit the Marshmallow Test is pop-psychology).

Of course, the reality of humans was much different.

PART IV: Working With Danny 1984-85

"Danny" is, of course, Daniel Kahneman, and in this part, the author keeps stacking more examples and proof that humans are not rational decision-makers.

Perception of Fairness

The author says that perceptions of fairness are related to the endowment effect.
Both buyers and sellers feel entitled to the terms of the deal to which they have become accustomed.

Perceptions of fairness also explain why it's difficult for employers to lower wages during recessions.
It's difficult because employees think it's unfair to take it away, which is something that would never happen in the world of econs where supply and demand are all that matter.

Humans are also willing to lose money to "punish" other humans whom they feel are behaving unfairly.

Some People Cooperate, Econs Shouldn't

Richard Thaler talks about prisoner dilemma and ultimatum games (also read "*Game Theory Bargaining*").

In the rationally cynic econs' world, players will defect because it's in their best interest to do so.
Yet the game played in laboratories shows that 40-50% of people cooperate.

In more relevant scenarios called "public goods games," many people still cooperate to enhance the public good albeit that it is not in their most selfish interest.

We see examples of this every day when people donate to charities and bring bags to clean their dogs' poop.
And that's not how econs would behave.

There is still an issue for many public goods that are no produced in enough quantity for everyone, but the problem is only half as bad as standard economic theory would predict.

Fun fact: the only people who act like econ and share nothing are economic graduates :).

Says Thaler:

> **A purely economic man is indeed close to being a social moron.**

However, there is a caveat.
If public good games are repeated consequently, public contributions tend to fall.

Economists argued that people learned over time that the best strategy is to be selfish.
But that's not the case.

Andreoni ran an experiment where the game was going to restart after 10 rounds.
And after 10 rounds, the contributions jumped back up. The author says it's because people learn that some people are jerks and nobody wants to be the fool who's taken advantage of (a sort of vicious circle).
But when the game restarts again, people contribute again.

Most people thus are "conditional cooperators": they are willing to cooperate as long as others are willing to cooperate.

Also, read:

- Smart collaborator
- Empowered individualist

> Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

PART V: Engaging The Economic Profession 1986-1994

The evidence was starting to accumulate for economists to have to pay attention to.

Thaler discusses the equity premium, such as the premium that the riskier equity asset class should grant above less risky assets such as bonds.

And the equity premium is much, much higher than economic models with rational players would warrant (should have been 0,4% VS the actual 6%).
Investors should have been implausibly risk-averse to explain such a huge gap.

Myopic Loss Aversion

Myopic loss aversion is the idea that refusing to risk once can be mitigated by playing the game several times and using the law of large numbers to take advantage of the favorable odds.

But Thaler says that doesn't make sense.
If you have good odds you should be willing to play one time as well.

PART VI: Finance 1983-2003

Richard Thaler says that the field where the "homo economicus" was strongest and most entrenched was in financial markets.

With all the big banks and all the money at stake, financial markets had to be efficient.
So if psychology and behavioral finance could prove also financial markets to be irrational, then the evidence could not be ignored anymore.

He spoofs Frank Sinatra to basically say that "if you can make it in New York (financial markets), you can make it anywhere".

The Efficient Market Hypothesis

The efficient market hypothesis rests on two assumptions:

1. You can't beat the market
2. There is no such thing as a free lunch

The author, again, says that the rational model hypothesis is not to be completely thrown away and it presents a great starting point.

But when it comes to a descriptive model of how things actually work, the model is not realistic.

The Irrationality of Financial Markets

Here is why financial markets are irrational:

- High trading volumes (in a world with efficient prices there would be no need for high trading)
- People overreact to news
- Sentiment and optimism have been proven to drive prices, at times, more than "fundamentals" do
- Stock prices move too much to justify forecasted dividends
- Mispricing of the same asset in different markets can last for a long time
- Stocks sometimes fall without reason (ie.: the 1987 crash)
- Split companies can end up being valued differently than the whole
- People make extreme forecasts based on flimsy data
- Most people shun underperforming companies out of stereotyping

Value investing, as espoused by Warren Buffet and Benjamin Graham and author of "*The Intelligent Investor*" does indeed work and can deliver superior results.

But no strategy should deliver superior results if markets were really efficient which, again, proves that financial markets are not efficient (the author then recommends buying funds trading at a discount, a strategy also endorsed, he notes, by the author of "A Random Walk Down Wall Street").

PART VII/VIII: 1994-PRESENT

In the last two parts, Thaler provides even more examples to prove that the standard economic models do not explain real-world behavior.

By the mid-2000s behavioral economics has become widely accepted and Thaler applies its concepts to real-world problems that the discipline can help tackle (ie.: nudging people to save for retirement, paying taxes on time, etc.).

TPM Takeaways

Market With "Transaction Utility": Never just give a discount. Frame it as a deal so the other person feels like they are "winning" or "getting away with something."

Don't Fight Sunk Costs; Use Them: If you want someone to stay committed to you or a project, ensure they "invest" early (time, effort, or money). Once they have a "Mental Account" open, their own internal bias will prevent them from quitting.

Conditional Cooperation: Understand that most people are not "good" or "bad," but **Conditional Cooperators.** They will help you as long as they don't feel like a "sucker." Your job is to signal fairness while ensuring you're also winning.

See:

- Smart cooperation
- Effective calculativeness

Quotes

I love a smart author who drops knowledge with wit, and Thaler does exactly that.
Here are some great quotes from "*Misbehaving*":

> In fact econs would be perplexed by the whole idea of gifts. An econ would know that cash is the best possible gift, which allows the recipient to buy whatever is optimal.
> But unless you are married to an economist, I don't advice you to give cash on the next anniversary.
> Come to think of it, even if your spouse is an economist, it's still not a great idea.

On psychologist bantering:

> Psychologists refer to a "just noticeable difference" as JND. If you want to impress an academic psychologist add that term to your cocktail party banter.

On economists resisting change:

> Economists have their way of doing things and will resist change. If for no other reason, that they invested years building their own corners of this edifice.

On people (econs) becoming smarter and smarter as the math formulas improved:

> As economists became more mathematically sophisticated and their models incorporated their new methods of sophistication, the people they described evolved as well.
> (…)
> Calculate the present value of social security benefits that will start 20 years from now? No problem!
> Stop by the tavern on payday and spend intended for food? Never!

On unrealistic models developed around omniscient, super-smart (and non-existing) individuals:

> Barro's insight is ingenious, but for it to be descriptively accurate we need econs who are smart as Barro.
> (..) the difference between our models is that he assumes the agents in his models are as smart as he is, while I assume they are as dumb as I am.

On status in psychology research and Cialdini, author of Influence:

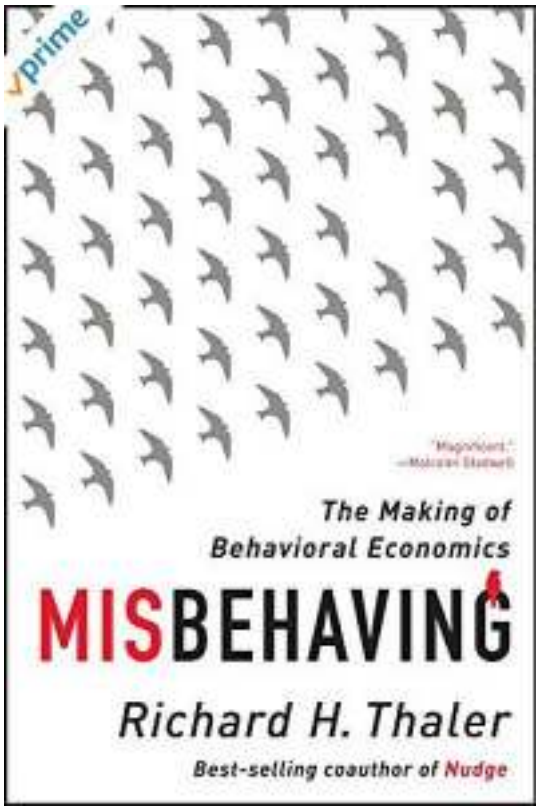
> For some reasons the study of applied problems in psychology has traditionally been considered a low-status activity.
> Studying the reasons why people fall into debt or drop out of school has just not been the type of research leading to fame and glory -with the exception of Rober Cialdini-.

Talking about the confidence that economists had in the rationality of financial markets, Thaler says that the confidence came from the impossibility of proving the theory (either wrong or correct).
After all, who can "prove" what's the right price of a stock:

> There is no better way to build confidence in a theory than to believe that it's not testable.

On Chicago school economists:

> The old joke is that a Chicago economist would not bother to pick a 20 dollar bill on the sidewalk becuase if it were real, someone would have already snagged it.
> There is no such thing as a free lunch. And a free 20 dollar bill.



Review

Richard Thaler, Nobel Prize in economics, tells us the story of how psychology improved our understanding of

economics and decision-making

In a way, "*Misbehaving*" is a story of power and entrenched interests.
The power that economists were clinging to and the fiefdoms of influence they were defending against the impinging psychologists.

Misbehaving is a bit on the biographical side and it might also be categorized as a book on history (the history of economics and psychology).

But there is enough wisdom to make it a must-read for all people interested in psychology, economics, and, in general, for everyone interested in people.

Check the:

- **Most iconic psychology books**

Flow: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Flow,* Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the author, dissects what "*flow*" is and how we can reach it.
Very briefly, flow can be defined as "the state of mind in which we lose ourselves in our work".

Contents

- Flow Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- Flow Criticism
- PROS
- Mihaly TED Talk
- Flow Review

Flow Summary

About the Author:
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, together with Martin Seligman, is often considered one of the founders of Positive Psychology, which is the branch of psychology studying happiness, satisfaction, and self-development.

How to Reach Flow

These are the steps you need to take to reach a flow state:

- **Clarity of goals**: your work must have a purpose and an end state. If your work is too big, you must identify smaller goals
- **Immediate feedback**: immediate feedback helps us stay fully focused by "gamifying" our experience
- **Engage at the edge of your ability**: when it's too difficult, we become frustrated, and when it's too easy, we're bored. Right in the middle is where flow happens
- **Do it because you want**: you can't reach a flow state when you are executing orders you are not happy to follow. Doing it without direct expectations for material rewards is even better

Learn more about how to handle disempowering orders:

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

And, finally:

- **Mental mastery**: ultimately, it's up to you to enter flow. It requires a certain control of your mind, which you can achieve with trial and error, meditation, and training

Csikszentmihalyi indeed invites people to look for opportunities in their lives in which they can create the elements of flow.

For example, instead of just folding clothes out of boredom, focus on doing it better, or quicker.
While shopping, focus on doing it in the most efficient way possible.

How Flow Feels Like

How do you know if you are reaching flow?
Here is what flow feels like:

- **Total immersion**: during flow, you don't even realize what's happening around you
- **Focus and concentration**: you are fully focused on your task
- **Time flies**: when you're in flow, you don't even realize time passing by, so it feels like time flies
- **Feels good**: flow is a rewarding state in itself. It gives you a sense of control over your work, which spills over into a sense of control over your life. And you don't care about problems, worries, or what others think of you

Flow Personalities

A few personality traits are more likely to get you into a state of flow.
These include:

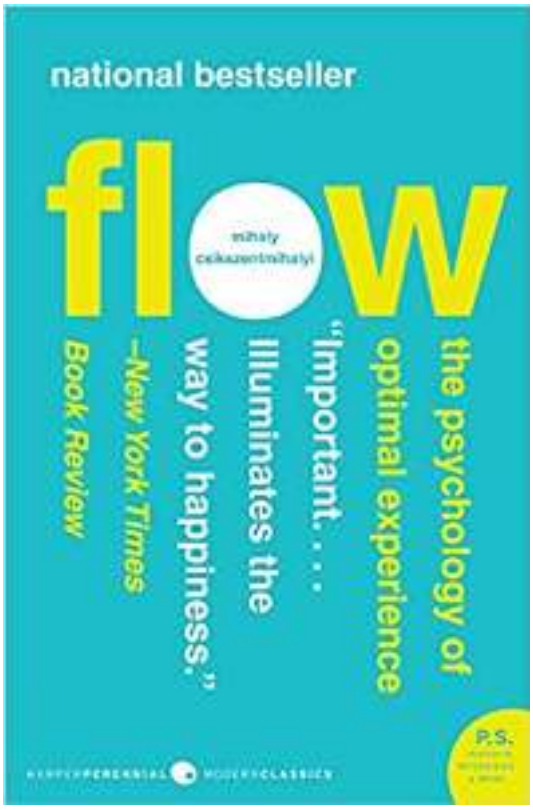
- **Growth mindset**: people with a growth mindset are more likely to seek and enjoy challenges (check out "how to develop a growth mindset")
- **Clarity of purpose**: find a goal in what you're doing, and find a goal and a WHY for your life
- **Openness to criticism**: being ego-resilient and open to honest feedback allows you to take all feedback and opportunities for improvement
- **Locus of control**: feeling like you are the one who chooses what to do and you have the power to change your life's predicament
- **Focus**: being able to focus on one activity at a time without distractions is a crucial element for reaching flow

Flow Is Enjoyment, Not Pleasure

Pleasures are reactions to specific actions that are good for our survival or procreation.
Food and sex are typical pleasures.
But chasing pleasure can lead to addiction and never moving forward in life.

Enjoyment, instead, makes us better people while we are also feeling great.

My Note:
I only partially agree with this one. In the end, this is a major over-simplification. Read my "criticism of Flow" below.



Real-Life Applications

In my opinion, there is one crucial lesson to learn to improve your life:

- **Internalize that you always have a choice**

You cannot enter flow when you are following orders or doing things that you don't really want to do.
And it's not just about "flow", it's about efficiency, mood, life pleasure, and success as well.

This was a major issue for me: the moment the alarm rang, I hated it and felt like I was "forced" to get up and prepare for work.

The moment I forced myself to change my attitude, I became happier and more effective.

Always remind yourself that you have a choice. And if you are doing something, it's because *you* are choosing to do it.

Flow Criticism

I enjoyed the book, yet I also have some important criticisms of "Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience". Here are the main ones:

- **Flimsy connection between flow and happiness?**

Flow is considered one of the very first books on positive psychology.

Since then, it's been computed into several "happiness formulas" in many successive books. Mostly by non-psychologists, but, notably, Martin Seligman also included it in his happiness formula.

However, I still don't see such a strong connection between flow and a happy life.
While flow certainly wouldn't make anyone sadder, I also don't see how it can be a central part of a happy life.

The author says that the best moments in our lives occur during flow, but that's his own personal feeling, and he has no data or other way of backing it up.

- **Flow has limited utility when mastering a craft**

Today, it seems to me that everyone is obsessed with “flow”. Yet, by the author’s own description, a state of “flow” is only achievable when you’re doing a task you’re already good at.

There is no point in seeking “flow” when you’re learning, which is what you should probably be doing most of the time unless you’re already world-class (and let’s face it: we’re probably not there yet).

- **Flow is not easily applicable to all realms of life**

Some activities, like team activities, are more easily conducive to flow. And some activities, by presenting immediate and obvious feedback, are also more conducive to flow.

That also means that some other activities are *not* as easily conducive to flow.
And personally, I found some recommendations to reach flow anytime and anywhere borderline ridiculous.
Trying to grocery shop or fold T-shirts to achieve flow didn’t seem like it added anything to life.
I personally feel it’s much better to grocery shop while listening to some music and/or looking at and interacting with the people around.

- **Silly differentiation between “pleasure” and “enjoyment”**

The author seems to have an agenda to promote “enjoyment” over “base pleasures”.
And he says that pleasures don’t make us better.

To me, that’s hogwash. Sex, a pleasure, does make you better with physical activities, and, as any woman can tell you, there are ways to improve your technical skills, so it’s not true that pleasures don’t make you improve.

And even eating can be seen as a skill or, as well, as an art. Slowing down to enjoy it for longer, for example, or chewing better, which will help you digest better.

- **Why should you do anything without expecting something else?**

One of Csikszentmihalyi’s tenets for “flow” is doing it without any expectations of receiving anything back.

I don’t think it’s realistic—or even advisable—to simply “do things without expecting a return”.
What’s the point of doing anything if you don’t expect something as a result or as a consequence of your hard work?

I am writing this summary because I expect it will be helpful to people reading it.
If not, it will be helpful to make myself remember the crucial steps to reaching flow.
And if all goes well, it will help me do both while also contributing to making me financially independent.

And I think there is nothing wrong with that, -and I don’t think it stops me in any way from achieving “writing flow”.

PROS

I have listed a lot of criticism for “Flow”. Yet, I also believe that the ability to focus fully on one’s own work is crucial to success.
And also to a happier, flourishing life.

That’s what I am grateful to “Flow” for: giving me a few pointers to make it easier for me to fully focus on a specific task or activity.

Mihaly TED Talk

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi also has a TED talk on flow:

If Csikszentmihalyi is in flow and experiencing ”enjoyment,” he is surely hiding it well there :)

Flow Review

Flow is a hugely popular concept these days, so I was very curious to review the original work.

I liked it, but also found that "*flow*" has a limited scope (or, better: it's been so overhyped that it expanded beyond its original scope).

For example, if you want to learn and improve, you shouldn't be focusing on reaching flow, which only happens when you're already good at something; you should focus on your weakness.

Working on your weaknesses is not necessarily enjoyable, but it's what will take you forward in life.

In my opinion, since flow is so dependent on so many variables that are not always under your control, it's not good to obsess over "*flow*".
Instead, it's better to focus on total immersion in your work (also read: *Deep Work*).
The two are similar, but total immersion does not necessarily need all the steps that Csikszentmihalyi lists in "Flow" while giving you all the same benefits.

Check the:

- **Best psychology books**

How to Win A Toastmasters International Speech Contest (Proven)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you interested in competing and winning a Toastmasters speech contest?

You have come to the right place.

TPM Note: This realpolitik guide helps, but never forget to focus on skills
This is a different guide that goes into more Machiavellian approaches and even some manipulation dynamics. Not because we recommend them, but because they're part of life. We never advise making these your focus, but to be aware of them to better navigate life, focusing on skills first, and always preferring an honorable approach to achieving goals.

In all evaluation contests I have competed at, I have only finished either 2nd, or 1st

Contents

- #1. Train At Club Level To Get A Feel For Time
- #2. Make Friends With The DTMs
- #3. Flirt With The DTMs in Your Area
- #4. Make DTMs Your Mentors: Ask For Recommendations
- #5. Visit Other Clubs: That's Where Your Judges Come From
- #6. Travel With The Judges
- #7. On Contest Day: Network With Possible Judges You Don't Yet Know
- #8. Pick Low-Competition Markets
- #9. Take Friends: The Boost of a Supportive Audience
- Why World Championship is a Waste of Time
- My Toastmasters Background
- SUMMARY

#1. Train At Club Level To Get A Feel For Time

Evaluations are usually the role where people go the most often over time. In many clubs, mine included, people don't even try to stay within the time.

I personally never try to stay within the allotted time because I couldn't care less. My focus is giving value, not nailing the time or "staying within the rules".

However, that always puts me at a great disadvantage when it comes to competitions because I haven't developed a good feel for the time.
I never know how many of my observations I can safely deliver, and as I speak, I need to double-check the time every so often, which is distracting.

When it gets red I then rush to finish and my evaluations end abruptly.

That's why if you care about winning a speech evaluation contest, you should get used at a club level to staying within the time limit.

#2. Make Friends With The DTMs

Here is the biggest "secret" to coddling with the judges: it's always the same people who are judges.

And of course, the **DTMs are the people who most often end up being judges**.
Make friends with them, and you'll have friendly judges for as long as you want to compete.

DTM Profiling

DTMs are more often women than men.

Some are not very busy with work, or they wouldn't have time for TM.
Toastmasters may attract some because it provides a platform to feel significant, climb hierarchies and acquire status.

I've encountered several who could be defined as 'strong women', even domineering.
Some enjoy the "power" that comes from their experience and from judging others (so first hint: make them feel good about their TM accomplishments).

They tend to be very conscientious -otherwise, they wouldn't have stuck so long with Toastmasters-.
And with high doses of conscientiousness often come an eagerness to obey the rules.
So don't to be too rebellious or "too different": show that you respect the norms.

Finally, some of them want to be *seen* as strong and professional.
Learn to get to know the person behind the role, and you will be able to better bond and connect with them.

Befriending DTMs

So if you're not sure where to start from, always make good friends with the DTMs (they always have a pin and the older DTMs have a golden plaque).

Here is what you can do to be friendly:

- Talk to them face-to-face
- Always go to say hi first when they enter your club
- Make them feel important
- Add them on Facebook / Linkedin
- Like their status updates (yes, it matters)

No Friendly Judges, No Trophies

Performance always matters, of course.

But so does personal liking. Judges may not even willingly 'favor their favorite', but biases are often unconscious.

I know a couple of people who are *exceptional* speakers and top table topic performers with decades of experience. They are better with their speeches and tables topics than I am at evaluations.
And yet they never went past the district level and fail to go past the area level more times than not.

I don't think it's a coincidence that they are not friends with the DTMs who always happen to be contest judges.

#3. Flirt With The DTMs in Your Area

Some people take it to the next level with mild social seduction.

This is an art in and on itself and can't be explained via a short paragraph.
But just be aware that "flirting" is not necessarily sexual.
Machiavellian operators may broach racier subjects that most people wouldn't dare talk about, and that creates a 'level of connection' that's more unique to them.

Some techniques they may use include starting with more personal matters that make people feel bonded, to then lace in a personal, mildly flirtatious comment. For example:

> **Mach Player**: Whaaat, your children are in their 20's? You're so young yourself!

Or they may use small daily occasions to build them up and make them feel important:

> **Them**: Can I sit here?
> **Mach Player**: As if you had to ask, everyone here wants to sit next to you, you're a legend!

Or they may build them up via third parties, all done in jesting and good for extra smoothness. Plus, it's socially powerful and leader-like. For example:

> **Random Pawn:** DTM Marta here is my mentor
> **Mach Player**: Wow, congratulations, now tell me, what does one have to do get a legend like Marta as your mentor, are there some secret steps to follow?

#4. Make DTMs Your Mentors: Ask For Recommendations

Some social skills guides tell you to ask for recommendations because it makes people feel good.
That is true in several situations, but not in this one, because asking for feedback can frame you as a beginner.

The more you act like you are taking it all in, the more power you give them… and the more of a beginner you look.

And **judges don't elect beginners as the winners**.
So you must walk the line between asking for feedback, making others feel good, and *still* projecting competence and authority.

I recommend you ask questions, but more like an equal who respects their great knowledge and experience.
It's also great if you can ask something that they will see you follow up on.

Here is an example:

> **You**: do you think it's better to go on stage with the badge on or without?

Of course, it's better to go on stage *without* the badge, you know that already. But by asking you can make it look like you're later going to follow their suggestion.

And when they see you on stage they will think “My mentee is following my recommendation”.
They will feel like your win is also *their* win. And they’ll rate you higher.

#5. Visit Other Clubs: That’s Where Your Judges Come From

When you compete you can’t have judges from your own club.

Theoretically, you could be despised by your own club members but have very friendly judges.
And the opposite is true: everyone could love you in your club but that means nothing when you compete.

This why it’s crucial that you visit other clubs.
Especially the clubs that DTMs and judges frequent, and mingle mostly with the senior members there.

#6. Travel With The Judges

If the competition is outside of your town, don’t be the lone wolf going by himself.

Travel with as many Toastmasters as you can, but focus specifically on the ones who are most often contest judges.

And then work them up along the way, offer breakfast, drink with them, listen to their stories and make them feel good.

#7. On Contest Day: Network With Possible Judges You Don’t Yet Know

The higher you go, the more judges there will be.

Remember that by the time you got to the higher level contests, you already should know all the judges from your areas and most DTMs from your district.
But of course, you can’t know *everyone*.

So on contest day, you want to increase your odds of adding a few more friendly judges to your squad.
Focus on the DTMs and senior Toastmasters you don’t yet know and do this:

- Go early in the morning (don’t be the guy who gets there late as I did)
- Attend all contests (don’t be the guy who only attends his contest)
- Take supporting roles (judge of other contests, ballot counter)
- Talk to everyone, but prioritize with the DTMs you don’t yet know
- Congratulate every speaker (even the ones who sucked)

Be aware that the judges of one contest are also often judges of other contests, so **always take the opportunity to be a judge yourself and make friends with the other judges**.

Good speakers in a contest are also likely to be judges in another contest, so always make friends with the speakers as well.

#8. Pick Low-Competition Markets

There are two ways to win: get better yourself or lower the competition.

This applies to any area of life including, for example, dating, with new trends promoting moving to more congenial ‘sexual marketplaces‘.

Back to Toastmasters, look at my results for example.
I am good at evaluating (modesty aside: I never met a better observer, which is why I do what I do on ThePowermoves.com).
But I didn’t prepare myself for the contests. And I am *not* that good at public speaking (I haven’t even delivered 10

speeches so far!). And to win an evaluation speech contest you *do* need to be a good public speaker.

How come then I have been relatively so successful?
The main reason for my success is that I competed in easy markets.

What's an "easier market" in Toastmasters?
For example, it's competing in your mother tongue in areas where Toastmasters is not that popular (TM is most popular in English-speaking countries).
Or it's competing in English in regions where English is not the competitors' native language.
In my case, I competed in English in continental Europe, and that made it much easier for me.

On the other hand, I would expect the US to be a highly competitive market for Toastmasters.
India is also a highly competitive market as many people there grow up in a culture that glorifies academic achievements. And they carry that hard-working mentality to Toastmasters.

#9. Take Friends: The Boost of a Supportive Audience

Listen to this one:

In my last district contest where I placed second everyone told me I was superb, and the win was going to be between me, and another guy.

In the end, I didn't win.
But here is the funny thing: neither did the other guy that everyone tipped off!

It might be a coincidence of course, but do you know who won? **The guy who had the most friends in the audience won**.
He had the most friends from his club who all made a huge ruckus when he went on stage and who all laughed hard when he cracked a joke.
And who all applauded and cheered like they had won the lottery when he finished.

Having people support you from the audience is a massive help.
In the old days of theater, there was such a thing as "clappers". Today, TV shows have 'laugh tracks' for the same reason. Many actors hate them, but they're still there because they work.

If you crack a great joke people will laugh anyway.
But it's when your attempt at humor is average, poor or "too difficult for most" that having friends in the audience will make a difference.
Their laughter can make the difference in the judges' minds between a "what was that" and "that was good" (remember that judges also evaluate depending on the audience's reaction).

Why World Championship is a Waste of Time

In a nutshell, this is what I think about preparing yourself to become a Toastmaster world champion speaker:

> **Working hard to become a Toastmasters world champion is the equivalent of working hard to win a lottery**

And if that's not yet clear, it means that it's not an efficient use of your time and your resources (As Warren Buffett once said: gambling is a tax on ignorance).

Difference between evaluation and speech contests

I actually could recommend to prepare yourself well for winning an evaluation speech contest at the district level.

So why don't I recommend the same approach to the international speech contest?

Here is why:

Large Numbers = Random Results

The difference between the speech contest and the evaluation contest is in the word “world”.

The evaluation contest ends at the district level while the speech contest keeps going to the world stage.
But that also means that there are many more people competing for the world champion.
And when we are talking about very large numbers, **there is no reliable path that will significantly increase your chances of winning**.

The keyword is “significantly”.
Sure, you can “significantly” increase your skills. And you can increase your personal chances of winning going from, say, 0,1% chance of winning to a 0,2% chance of winning.
And that’s a “significant” increase in relative terms: you *double* your chances of winning.

But you are still competing against so many people that you still face a 99.8% chance of losing.

Is it worth it to work so hard in a field where no matter what you have 99% chances of losing?
I don’t think so.

> **No matter how good you are, a speech contest still leaves you with 99+% chances of losing.**

Compare it to entrepreneurship instead.
Working on your business -or in your job- you have a much more direct control over your chances of earning more.
Many people can get rich. And one person getting rich does not take away from your chances of getting rich but actually *increases* them.

You’re better off competing in a field that has *many* winners than in a field where one wins and hundreds lose.

> **It’s irrational to seek victory in a field where one wins and thousands lose**

Especially when you consider there are plenty of fields where thousands can win.
As a matter of fact, I would say that it’s irrational to invest days and days of your time to go after what is, in practice, a lottery ticket.

Working on Skills Matters Little

Working on your skills will not help much.
Most people competing are good, which means that high skills are a minimum requirement, but not a differentiator.

Sure, you can get better.
And you can get slightly better than the competition. Maybe even slightly better than *any* other competitor.

But that’s still not that helpful and certainly not a guarantee of winning.

Just think about it.
Even if you reach a level of a 10/10, there will be plenty of people that score between 9 and 10.

And skills are only *one* variable to influence victory.

Too many variables are outside your control

Here are a few variables that are partially or wholly outside of your control:

- How well you sleep the night before
- What the judges subjectively think of your speech

- How much the judges like the others
- The skill of all the other competitors
- Howe well all the other competitors prepare

Investing too much of your time in a field where the results are so out of your control might not be the best investment of your time and resources.

My Toastmasters Background

I have been a Toastmasters now for a little over two years.

I wasn't a good speaker when I started. I'm not that good today either to be honest, speaking is not my strong suit.

My specialty is evaluations, and my skills at evaluating derive from the same analytical skills that I use for this website.
I analyze speeches for structure, body language, confidence cues, persuasion techniques, etc. etc.

And it's the high quality of my analyses that make me a very good evaluator.
I can often come up with observations that lead people to think:

> Wow, that's true! I hadn't thought about that!

And when you can make people think that, you're on your way to deliver a "wowing" evaluation.

My Competitions Results

At my first competition ever as a greenhorn, I won the club contest, the area contest and I placed 2nd at Division level.

At my second competition ever I reached the international finals of district 95 in Gothenburg, where I placed 2nd (2nd sucks, lemme tell you that :).

In every single evaluation competition I competed, I either placed first, or second.
And, finally, I probably win the "best evaluator" award around 90% of the times at club level, and mine is quite a competitive club.

I say this not to brag, albeit that doesn't hurt :), but to provide you with the credentials that allow me to write a guide on how to win a Toastmaster speech contest (or evaluation contest).

See here how to brag, by the way:

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

SUMMARY

You have just read an advanced guide on how to win a Toastmasters competition.

This article focused on a speech evaluation contest, but most of the steps apply to any Toastmasters competition.

I don't think it makes sense to prepare too hard for a Toastmasters speaking contest because the numbers are skewed against you, no matter how good you are.

Speeches evaluation contests are better because they require less preparation and they have fewer knock-off rounds on the way to "ultimate champion".

In this article, I showed you the less-known "tricks" to win a Toastmaster speaking contest.

12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Corporations lie and manipulate to get the most out of their employees.
They're not necessarily being mean, they're simply doing what most aligns with their interests.

And for employees to do what best aligns with *their* interests, they must first *see* that manipulation. It requires power intelligence, and TPM was built exactly to boost your 'awareness'.

This article blows the whistle on corporate manipulation strategies, HR lies, and bosses' machinations.

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#1. Employees Matter

This is the most pervasive corporate lie.

All HR departments in the world say that employees matter.
But that doesn't make it any truer.

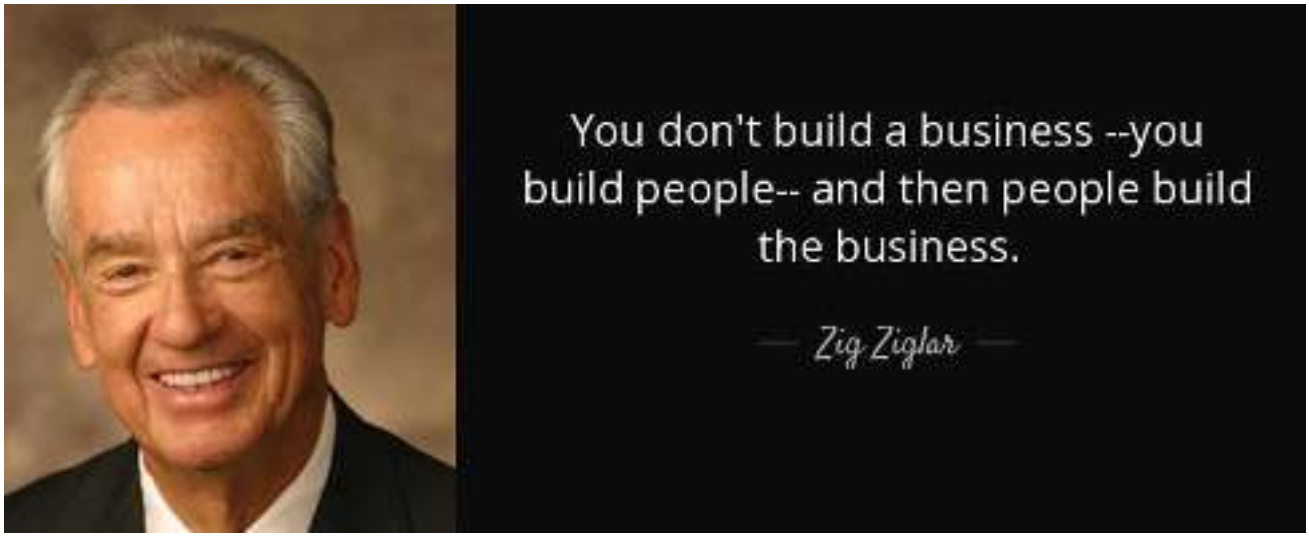
Why It's A Lie

Says Dan Rust, author of Workplace Poker:

> It's not employees who matter, it's the *output* of the employees that matters.

Big difference.

Remove the output and the employee becomes a cost. And then you will see how much you really “matter”.



= make them feel good, and they’ll build your business (for a pittance)
In my experience, there seems to be a connection between how menial a job is and how much hot air HR spouts about “talent” and “employees’ satisfaction”.

As a student, I had a brief stint in Infosys BPO, and if there is such a thing as a “monkey job”, that’s BPO (BPO stands for “business process outsourcing”).
And I have never heard as much crap about employees’ talent and skills since my BPO monkey days.

The funniest thing though?
The number of people who actually believed those corporate lies.

Manipulation Explained

We all have in-built mechanisms for “social accounting” and for reciprocation (Cialdini, 1984; Blau, 1964).

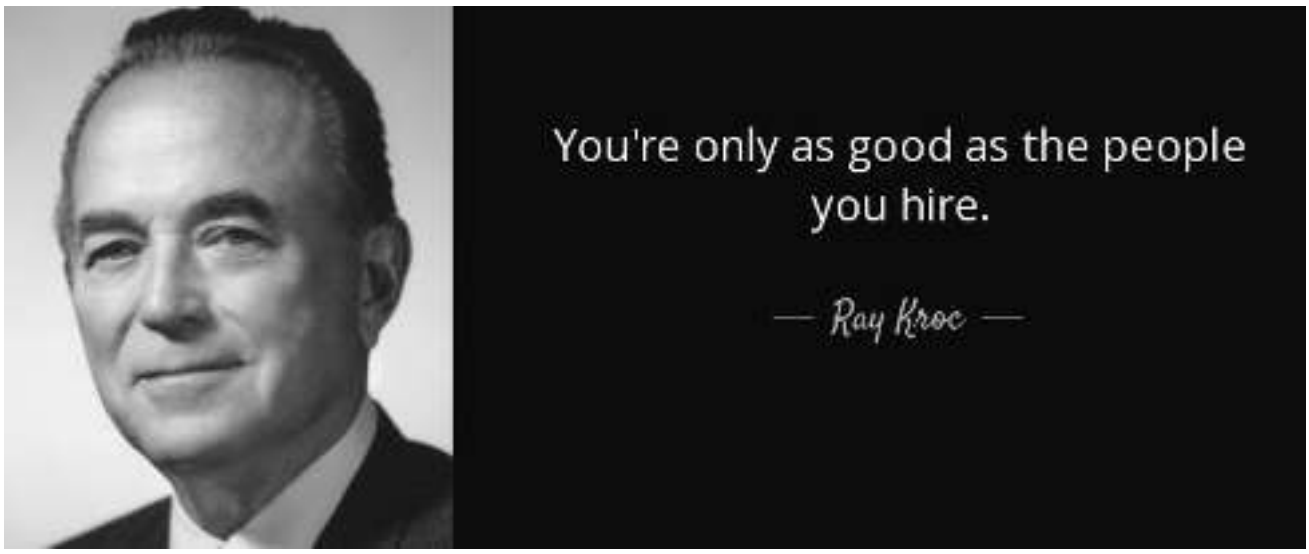
If the company can make us feel like they care for us, then we must reciprocate to rebalance the account.

And just like that, with a few empty slogans and some discount vouchers, companies turn 9-to-5 captives into happy and loyal corporate flunkies.

Example: Ray Kroc & McDonald’s

Ray Krok famously said that your business is only as good as the people you hire.

Which, on average, makes sense.
Yet, coming from Kroc, it’s the perfect example of how manipulative corporations really are.



Says McDonald founder and minimum wage skirter Ray Kroc
One of McDonald's entries in the "mission and values" says:

> We provide opportunity, nurture talent, develop leaders and reward achievement.

Of course, facts tell a very different story.
McDonald lost countless lawsuits for wage theft and university research showed that fast-food workers earn so little that many of them depend on government welfare to survive (which is the equivalent of saying that taxpayers are subsidizing McDonald's profits).

There is one McDonald's initiative that deserves a special note though.
I think the guys at corporate McDonald's wanted to take the above Kroc's quote literally.
But instead of elevating their hires to the high-quality company they wanted, they lowered McDonald's communication to the low wages they offer.
And in a colossal brain fart, they offered the following tips to help their minimum wage employees make ends meet:

- Return unopened purchases
- Break food into pieces to feel fuller
- Quit complaining or you only raise your stress hormone levels

What a great employer: first gives you a job and then teaches you how to survive with it.

#2. "We're A Team"

This is so pervasive that most people even fail to see its manipulative side.

After all, teamwork is important for the success of corporations and individuals alike.
But there is a trade-off between the two.

And those who can see the dual nature of the teamwork best position themselves to win the career contest.

Why It's A Lie

There are good reasons to be team players.

But there is also much gain from selfishness (for more on "public good games" read Thaler, 2015).

And guess who gains the most from which?

Team orientation benefits the corporation, while selfishness benefits the individual.

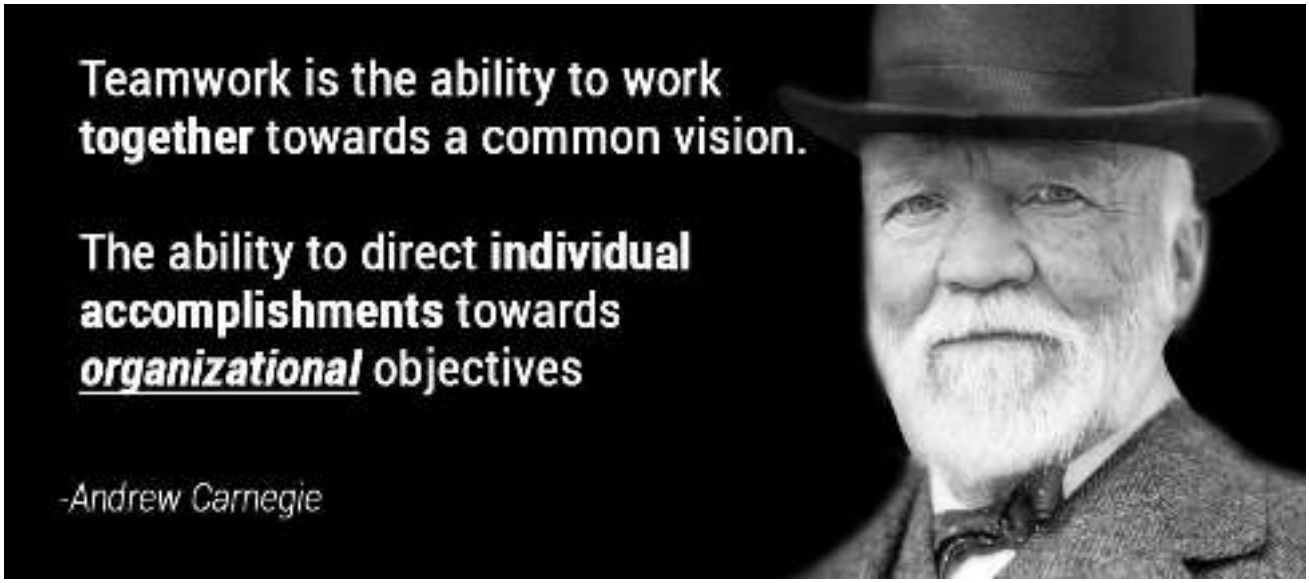
Many individuals fail to realize this basic truth because nobody is *openly* selfish. That would be a very poor strategy. But the most Machiavellian players profess team-playing values, while maximizing for themselves.

This is the complete description of team-work for the more astute Machiavellian player:

> We're a team… Of selfish individuals who must hide their selfish drives with teamwork appearances

The most successful political operators indeed play *a bit* for the team, *pretend* to play a lot for the team… And they mostly maximize their own interest.

And look at this quote to see that's not even morally objectionable:



=directing individuals' accomplishments to my objectives
Here is the caveat: the "organizational objectives" are, of course, Andrew Carnegie's objective.
And the same is true for *every* business owner.
Being a team player benefits the owner far more than it benefits the individual.
And that's why corporates all over the world push the "team player" mantra (= be a good working bee for us).

When Team Culture Masks Abuse

There can be strong conflicts of interest between teams and individuals.

And when the "team culture" is taken to the extreme, it can be used as justification to abuse the individual.

- The miners complain about dangerous working conditions? It's not good for the whole Rio Tinto, fire them.
- The unionists complain of wages too low to live? Not good for Carnegie's steel company, hire the goons to break the strike.

Ray Dalio also takes an extreme "team first" position in his acclaimed "Principles", where he basically says that:

> **What's good for the whole is good**
> –*Ray Dalio*

Ray Dalio's team-first approach could easily become abusive towards the individual.

But of course Dalio prefers that approach: he *is* the owner.

Owners are inherently biased towards the whole because they *own* the whole.

And what's good for the whole is not necessarily good for you.
As a matter of fact, this "team first" value could easily justify cruelty and abuse towards the individuals.
We have seen it played out in history a number of times already. For example, the Jews were supposedly not good for the whole nation. So… Eliminate them.

Here is the same law re-written from a more cynical -but realistic- point of view:

> **What's good for the whole is good for the owner**
> *–The Power Moves*

Manipulation Explained

Allow me some quick theory.

Group selection is controversial in evolutionary psychology (Pinker, 2012).
But, from an organizational point of view, it's fair to assume that groups with selfless individuals outperform groups where individuals pursue more selfish strategies (Sloan, 2007).

And that's exactly what organizations angle for when they push team values.

The corporate incitement for teamwork seeks to discourage more individualistic pursuits which might be good for the individual but bad for the company.

Organizations with 100% selfless individuals promote the corporation's success -and increase its bottom line-.
The whole -and the owner- wins.
But it's all to be seen whether or not the individual also benefits from a selfless strategy.

The question then becomes whether the corporation returns the favor and shares the spoils.
In simple words: does a winning corporation fairly rewards its selfless employees?
Generally speaking, don't count on it.
People -and owners- often being selfish, it's often a very small trickle that seeps down the chain.

Instead, you're probably better off learning office politics and *actively* seeking as much of those spoils as possible. Which, incidentally, might be the best way to address economic inequality.

> **The best way to address large-scale social-economic inequality is at the individual level, with individual's empowerment**
>
> *The Power Moves*

Example: Howard Schulz & Starbucks

There are countless examples.

One of my favorite though is Howard Schultz, founder of Starbucks and author of "Onward".

In "Onward" Schulz makes a big show of loving his people.

Schulz was in so much pain for having to fire his beloved staffers. You know, for Howard they were family.

Yet, he did fire a whole bunch of them.
And then did it again.

There is nothing inherently wrong with having to fire people.
Businesses exist to turn a profit, and would disappear if forced to operate at a loss.
But when you talk about family and "standing together", and then you fire your own family members… Then you also realize that the family and standing together thing is a big con.

P.S.:
Schulz also thought that really good teams don't need unions (unions defend workers' interests).
And he always ferociously fought to keep unions away from Starbucks.
Basically, he said:

> Since I love you guys, I forbid you to join union and seek a better bargain.

Nice manipulative trick to keep all the bargaining power on his side.

#3. We're A *Dream* Team

The next step from "we're a team".

In the overzealous efforts of celebrating victories and hiding defeats management loves to gush how great the team is.

Easy manipulation, since people love it too. Everyone wants to be a dream player part of a dream team.

Why It's A Lie

The "we're so great" corporate BS is common.

Yet, it doesn't mathematically add up.
Dream teams are, by definition, a minority.

Simple math then tells us that most execs are lying with the "great team talk".

So here is a quick litmus test against condescending execs: how much are you being paid?

> **It's only a dream team if everyone's on a dream salary**

If your salary is not substantially above average, then you're not in a dream team.
No shame in that. It just means that you're being the victim of another corporate lie.

Manipulation Explained

How does this technique work?

In two ways:

1. Make people feel good for being part of a special team, and they will work harder to keep up that flattering reality

2. Set yourself up as a good judge, and people will work to avoid feeling like “not good enough for your expectations”

The latter is called “attribution”.
Research has proven that attribution is a highly effective technique to improve performance (Miller, 1975).

What does it mean, more practically?
That when you tell people they are good, you *incentivize* them to be good (ie.: work hard), so they can confirm the expectations and feel good about it.

In other words: people tend to rise to the level of expectations.
This is a technique Carnegie also recommends in his classic “How to Win Friends and Influence People“.

Finally, assessing people’s performance also leverages what I refer to as “judge frames”. Judge frames increase the soft power that managers have on employees.
Also read:

- **Judge frames and soft social power**

Example: Pixar & Ed Catmull

Ed Catmull, the former CEO of Pixar, wrote a book on “institutionalizing creativity”.
His job, he said, was to hire the best talent and remove the barriers to creativity.

I quote him:

> What is the point of hiring smart people if you don’t empower them to fix what’s broken?

Catmull believed in employees’ empowerment, but allegedly sought an agreement with other industry titans to ensure their wages stayed *below* market value.

Catmull insists he did it for the “long-term good of the company”.

> **Jesse**: This isn't a family! This is a prison! You're a liar and a bully!

#4. We're A Family

This is the advanced manipulation level of "we're a team".

You can see it more often in early-stage startups (and in mafia-like organizations).
Enter shared values, field trips, drinking together and, of course, "changing the world together".

Part of the "we're a family manipulation" include:

- **Using inclusive names for low-level employees** (ie.: "partners" for baristas in Starbucks and "associates" for Walmart)
- **Management's big show of openness** (ie.: open-door policies, dressing down, talking informally, etc.)
- **Easy-going, anti-hierarchical attitude** ("bring your whole self to work", you know, "just be yourself within the family")
- **"Hip" job titles** ("ninja", "hacker", "customer happiness")
- **Informal attire** (just come as you just left your sleeping room)

BTW, about the latter, if you want to test start-up open-mindedness, try to go to work with a suit and see what happens (hint: they're not gonna be very open-minded about that).

Why It's A Lie

It's not a family.

As simple as that.

You can change titles, clothes, or keep your door open, but the fundamentals dynamics of power don't change.
And the power dynamics in companies have nothing in common with families.

One above all: bosses fire employees. Families don't fire family members.

Ants die for their queen ant. Be my guest…

Manipulation Explained

The “family manipulation” arches back to evolutionary psychology.

We are all hardwired to break our backs for our families because we share a large chunk of our genetic coding with them (Hamilton, 1964).

And that’s what corporations are trying to do.
By framing workplaces like families corporations seek to encourage in their (disposable) employees the same level of affiliation and dedication that they have for their families.

Of course, the biggest beneficiaries of the family frame are owners, CEOs and company leaders.
As a rule of thumb, the higher the manager, the bigger his incentive to play the family card (and the more likely it is that it’s all a big lie).

Example: Peter Thiel Encourages Founders To Act Like Mafia

Corbis/The Telegraph
If you think I’m exaggerating, take a leaf from Peter Thiel’s book.

Peter Thiel is a famous entrepreneur and founder of PayPal, and he encourages founders to seek a culture that resembles a cult or mafia.
One of the chapter’s titles is, verbatim: “mechanics of mafia”.

Not by accident, the mafia calls itself “la famiglia”, or “the family”. That’s an effort to evoke a superior sense of belonging from its members.

See an example from The Godfather himself:

> **Godfather**: but don’t ever take sides against the family again (ie.: the family loves you… But only long as you do whatever it’s good for the family)

Remember this: **when an owner says the organization comes first, they are telling you that you are**

expendable.

So watch out for those “family” talk because family-first organizations require lots of sacrificial lambs on the altar of profit.

#5. Lofty Goals (Improving The World?)

We are in the era of “Start With WHY” and moonshots.

Nobody is out to win and succeed for themselves. And nobody wants the limelight because of their narcissistic tendencies.
And God forbid if any entrepreneur wants to make money.

No, today everyone wants to change the world for the better or, in millennia’s parlance, “want to make an impact”.

Why It’s A Lie

Guys, it’s simple:

It’s either we all turned into transcendental creatures who all outgrew their natural and inner selfish drives, or…
Someone is lying.

Even the worst narcissists and sociopaths these days use this front.
Tai Lopez, for example, wants to help people (and not finance his fetish for sportscars).
And even Elizabeth Holmes, the fraudster CEO of Theranos, said that it’s not about the money but the vision.

Manipulation Explained

Why do corporations want to frame their missions with lofty ideals?

Well, for one, because the owner looks better.
You know, kinder and prosocial, rather than selfish.

And second, psychology research suggests that intrinsic motivators like higher goals and ideals can drive people more powerfully than extrinsic motivators such as money and benefits (Daniel Pink, 2011).

That’s great news for employers, who are now all busy concocting grand visions to help the world.
With lofty missions, companies can pay less money, while getting more dedication.

This technique seems to work especially well with millennials, a generation packed with well-meaning simpletons who seek to “make a positive impact” (what does that even mean?).

When you have big dreams to impact the world… There are no limits to hypocrisy
What a win-win!
Stephen Covey would be proud.
The employers win. And the manipulated employees *feel* like they're winning.

Example: Bill Gates Helps The World... But Is Ruthless With The Competition

Bill Gates vision was that of a "PC in every desk and in every home" to make the world more productive.

And today Bill Gates cures diseases to make the world a better place with his Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

I am grateful for Gates' work, but it's rare that you will meet any dominant business leader who's not ruthless and cunning.
And Gates is no exception. Several memoirs of tech leaders who competed against Microsoft suggest he was ruthless.
It was either "accept my offer, or I'll lose money to drive you out of business". Talking about "offers you can't refuse".
And Gates also officially fell out of the law when he settled for Microsoft's abuse of monopoly power.

#6. "It's Not About Me, The Owner"

> **"It's about you, dear employees".**

Or:

> **It's about the mission, and you, dear employees, are making it happen**

You will see the self-effacing manipulation with very charismatic or very powerful founders who tend to hog all the attention.

What they do then is to play the self-effacing game to avoid being branded like the power-hungry and narcissist individuals they probably are.

There are two types of self-effacing manipulation:

1. “it’s not about me, it’s about the vision”
2. “it’s not about me, it’s about the people”

Why It’s A CEO Lie

People who become CEOs and work all the time are usually highly driven to succeed, win, and dominate.

Sure, some of them also have a vision that includes others, but it all starts with the self.

Elizabeth Holmes, our example of self-effacing business leader, wrote at 9 years old she wanted to discover “something that mankind didn’t think it was possible to do”.
That’s not the behavioral cue of modesty. That’s the cue of unbridled personal ambition.

Manipulation Explained

The self-effacing manipulator aims at becoming a transcendental type of leader.

Indeed the archetypes of the self-effacing leaders are often found in pro-social religions.
Jesus Christ was a self-effacing leader who not only sought no (apparent) credit but literally carried the cross for all his disciples.

How can we not love the leaders that do it all for *us*?
They almost seem too good to be true.

Well, turns out, some *are* too good to be true!

Similar self-effacing figures in popular folklore are Robin Hood, Don Quixote and Che Guevara who, on paper, fought for the people.

Example: Elizabeth Holmes

Listen to how Holmes self-effaces:

> **Elizabeth Holmes**: We have a belief system that it is not about us or about technology but about giving people a basic right

Little later people found out that Holmes defrauded not only investors and partners, but also the patients whom she so touchingly wanted to help.

If you have read “Bad Blood“, then you know that Holmes was possibly a sociopath or psychopath.
Yet the deeper question here is: is she an exception or is she just the most blatant example?

#7. We Care About Stakeholder, Not Just Shareholders

In this day and age, it’s not about the shareholders anymore.
It’s all about stakeholders and society at large.

Here are the stakeholders:

- Employees
- Customers
- Society
- Environment

The last one is particularly popular today.

Even fossil fuel companies joined the (green) party:

When Shell joins the Green planet movement, you know someone is taking you for a ride.

Manipulation Explained

Companies care about profits.
And since these days showing an environment-friendly facade helps to sell well, companies have adapted.

Needless to say, that facade is often more marketing than facts.

As this European Commission study shows, 60% of shoppers prefer to buy environment-friendly products, but corporate information is so misleading that, I quote:

> European consumers are not able to make an informed choice (of what's real or fake environment-friendly).

Where Is The Manipulation

Same as consumers, employees want to feel like they are good and caring human beings.
Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) then dictates that working for unethical companies would make them feel bad.

So companies feed employees just what they want to hear (ie.: the goody-good ethical hypocrisy).

Example: Phil Knight & Nike

In "Shoe Dog", Nike founder Phil Knight says that he rented sweatshops "just like any other business did".

And there is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to maximize profits.
It just feels self-manipulation when in that same book Knight prides himself on treating his sponsor athletes "like real people" and not as a "conduit to earn more".

Maybe the kids in the sweatshops wished he had just extended that kindness one little step further.

#8. We Win Together – Or Lose Together

Businesses love to talk up and celebrate "team victories".

And often you win and lose together, that's true.

But the *consequences* of both wins and losses couldn't look any more different for owners, CEOs, and employees.

Why It's A Lie

When the team loses the CEO gets a golden handshake and you get the sack.

When the "team" wins, the big shareholders get the cash and you get a pat on the back, a pittance and a useless corporate party that will steal even more of your personal time.

It's not about winning "together", it's about the split of the spoils

Manipulation Explained

Research shows that groups prefer leaders who seem similar and closer to the group they lead.

And the opposite is also true: the further removed and privileged the leader seems, the less the followers want to sacrifice themselves for the group (Haslam et. al., 2006).

This can create problems for modern corporate leaders.
Much social psychology research also shows that men become more risk-seeking and prone to rioting when they feel like they are not given an equal chance in life (Hopkins, 2013).

But people on top don't like unrest and risk-taking men and they'd rather have an obedient and submissive workforce.

When corporate leaders say or imply you all win together, they are trying to pre-emptively stave off all thoughts of unfairness to make you feel you're all on the same boat.

Finally, by talking about "togetherness", leaders try to position themselves as part of the in-group.
And leaders who are part of the ingroup enjoy a much stronger leadership and command a much more loyal followership (see Haslam, 2001) -at least among the most gullible majority-.

Example: Walmart & Sam Walton

Sam Walton was a ruthless money-grubber and faced much criticism for the way he treated his workforce.

Until, he says in his memoirs "Made in America", he had a revelation while traveling in England.

Walton decided Walmart would consider its employees as associates and would let them part of the company's success through stock-sharing options.

Wow!
How nice what Walton *says*.

Critics, who also have facts on their side, are not nearly as celebratory.
Walmart paid 352 million to settle 63 lawsuits over wages, including forcing employees to work off the clock.

And Walmart employees are so poorly compensated that the state of California alone pays them $86 million a year in financial subsidies and food stamps.

Maybe money can't buy you love, but Walmart employee's stock options can't even buy you food.

#9. We Work Hard, Play Hard

If you worked in startups, you probably heard this.

And you know what this picture means:

Startup Manipulation Explained

It works like this:

1. **Positioning to attract young grads**: Youngsters have a bigger "leisure drive" (Aarsen, 2007), and startups position themselves as "cooler" places for fun, which helps them attract young talent out of university
2. **Subtle frame of "giving your all"**: The slogan promotes a "hard & fast lifestyle" that is all about "giving it one's all", squeezing youngsters at the peak of their availability (biggest beneficiary being the company, of course, since you work far more than you party)
3. **Social scalping**: From a social exchange point of view, they promote your giving (hard-work), while not pledging anything(it's not "work hard, make a lot money", mind you, it's "work hard, play hard". The company pitches nothing)

The manipulation is still the same: squeezing the most output possible from employees, while giving back as little as possible.

To keep the charade, the founders might buy some games and beers for the office and once a year throw a company

party with the cheapest booze and food they can find.
Those parties were great learning experiences for me. The managers getting sleazy and sloppy with the pretty -or less unattractive- female employees was one of the reasons why I knew I had to forge my own way in business.

Worst part?
You might have to attend the sleaze-fest or you're not part of the "company family".

My advice is to attend that party, have fun, and pretend to buy into the manipulative "work hard, play harder" mantra.

But deep down, know the truth.

And the only hard partying is what the founders and shareholders engage in, including top booze, maybe cocaine, and probably top-shelf hookers, too.
What they throw for the company's rank and file is just a front -often, on the cheap-.

#10. We Are Driven By Values

My first company had it in its tagline:

> Driven by values

Every single company today lists values and beliefs.
And they always sound so good and inspiring, don't they?

Why It's A Lie

An organization is an inanimate construct, it has no values in and on itself.

The values you read are either:

- What the founder liked most -or, more commonly, what make him sound good-
- The values that better serve *the business*

So values are either there because the founder wishes he had them, or because they're good for the bottom line.

Manipulation Explained

Maslow's hierarchy of needs postulates that we strive for higher ideals once our most basic needs are met.

So once the organization takes care of the basic needs with a salary that is as small as it can get away with, the higher-ideal manipulations begin.

Company's values appeal to our higher selves and have three objectives:

1. Make employees work harder as they (falsely) believe they're contributing to some common "good"
2. Make employee more loyal
3. Make employee less selfish and more pro-social (good for the organization)
4. Increase the sense of homogeneity and like-mindedness among members

The last one is interesting.
If we believe we share similar values, it means we're alike. And since we like people who are like us (Cialdini, 1984), you become a better team player (again, good for the corporation).

Finally, **even money-driven companies without values are replacing your values**.
As Storr explains in his analysis of status and groups, even industries that value money such as banking and law

create a money-driven culture that assigns status to the hardest workers and to the biggest earners.
Since we are social animal, everyone working in those organizations naturally tend to take over the same values.
Result… They value and chase money, and *work accordingly*.
Yes, in those cases the employee may profit financially, but… At the cost of losing his own values, and toiling his life away for the organization.

And the ultimate winner is always the organization.

Case Study: Goldman Sachs & The Muppets

Goldman Sachs, the most (in)famous Wall Street investment bank lists among its core values:

- Integrity
- Honesty
- Putting the clients' interests first

How surprising to find out that Goldman's bankers internally referred to clients as "muppets".
How even more surprising that a few years prior Goldman Sachs settled a 550 million fine with SEC regulators for, in fact, swindling their clients with the cr@ppy subprime CDOs which fueled the financial crisis.

What Machiavellian Bankers Show Us

Funny thing:

Goldman Sachs runs employees' surveys.
And the results at the time of writing this article showed that *none* of the employees picked transparency and integrity as the highest value and they *all* picked "teamwork and winning".
LOL, What a nice move to put "teamwork" next to "winning" -"How to Lie With Statistics", anyone?-.

GS shows that in an environment of selfish Machiavellis people know the rule:

> Pay lip service to the higher ideals and focus on amassing resources.

#12. We Make An Impact (Build A Legacy With Us)

Maslow was a smart guy, but he missed a few important human drives.

One of them is the "legacy drive" (Aarsen & Altman, 2006).

Indeed, some of the most powerful values one can summon are transcendental.

Appeals to eternity leverage our unconscious wish of transcending the physical world, contributing to something eternal.
Few are frank enough to admit it because, unconsciously, they are afraid of how narcissistic that would sound -a mistake based on not accepting one's darker drives, by the way-.

The "making an impact" that we saw earlier is an example of an appeal to eternity.
When we "make an impact" and we "leave a dent in the universe", people feel like they're defying death.

Some appeals to eternity are:

- "Changing the world"
- Disrupting
- "Moonshots"
- Anything that's "never been done before"

- Working on the “biggest / most advanced” project etc.

Why It’s A Lie

I can tell you with almost complete certainty that no human being will ever be remembered forever.

And the idea of “changing the world” is ludicrous. The world changes anyway, and any changes are nothing but transitions.

In short, the goal of “being remembered forever” is not only aggressively narcissistic, but it’s also plain stupid.

And no, that’s not sad.
Quite the opposite: it’s empowering and liberating (and it helps you break free of manipulative leaders).

Manipulation Explained

We are the only animals on this planet who are aware of our own mortality.

That must impact our psychology and behavior somehow, and terror management theory is a branch of social psychology researching exactly that.

TMT has received its fair share of criticism, but it has passed laboratory scrutiny (Burke et al., 2010) and it’s solid science.

TMT postulates that the conflict between self-preservation and our cognition of death pushes us to unconsciously pursue values, ideals, and goals that make us transcend the physical realm.

Burkeman in “The Antidote” says that people primed with subtle reminders of death:

- Prefer charismatic leaders (Cohen et al., 2014)
- Supports group-affirming values (Cohen et al., 2005)
- Seek stronger punishments for “culturally amoral” (Rosenblatt, 1989)

There you have it: seek a charismatic leader, defend the group and punish outsiders.
The definition of a sect.

And that’s why conservative leaders also leverage the fear of physical harm and death: it rallies the troops behind the (supposedly) strong and charismatic politicians (Bush the Vietnam war’s skirter in military uniform, anyone?).

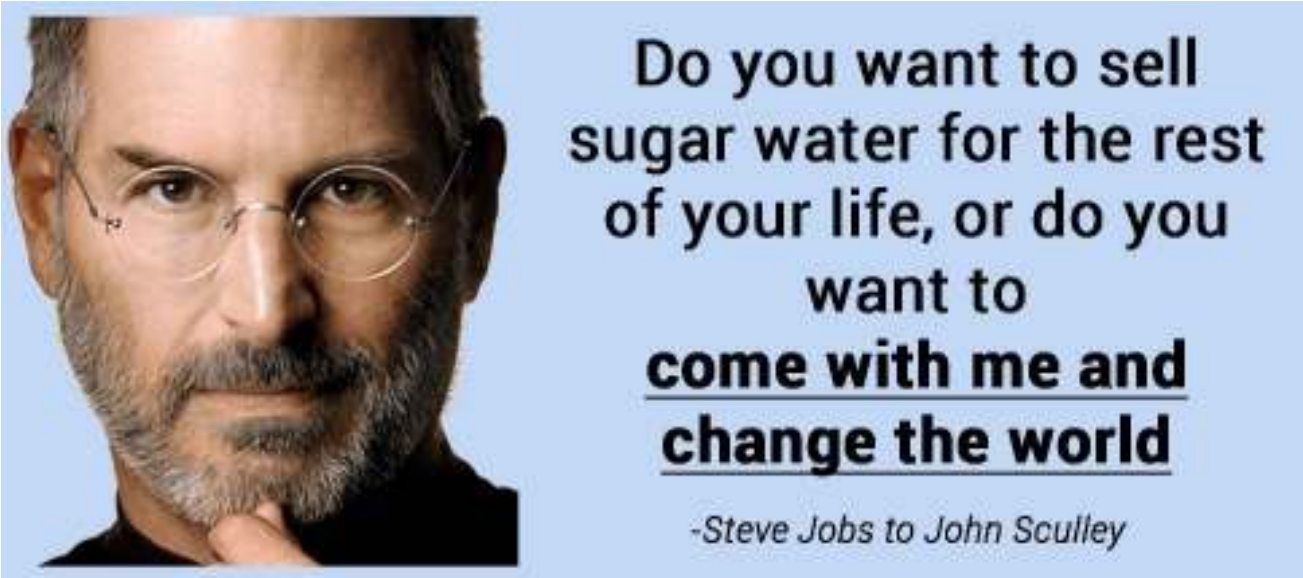
These are all behaviors that corporations would be happy with. Act like a sect, follow the leader and give your all… For eternity -and for the founders’ more physical income-.

TMT theory has been used to explain the birth and persistence of religions.
And that’s why, in many ways, No Logo author Naomi Klein was quite right and prescient when she said that the best brands are the new religions (brain scans confirmed it too, eventually).

Example: Steve Jobs & Elon Musk

Steve Jobs was the master of this corporate manipulation.

Everything about Jobs was about “changing the world”, “making an impact” and “putting a dent in the universe”.



By reflection, people who joined Apple as employees were also part of that "universe dent".
They also "changed the world" and they all put in their (futile) claim to eternity.

Elon Musk also leverages appeals to eternity.
The whole spiel on "making us an interplanetary species" is a big moonshot at "making history".
And people really get stupid trying to join Musk's team. That's the power of the charismatic, death-defying leader.

Do All Employers Manipulate?

Yes.

But so does pretty much everyone else.
The very human nature of maximizing one's own returns leads most humans to be natural manipulators (Wright, 1994).

Better questions would be:

- **Do corporations manipulate more than individuals?**

Still yes.

Corporations gain when individuals forego their interest for the corporation, which makes manipulation a survival need and a competitive advantage for corporations.

Plus, by their own very organized structure and by virtue of the people they attract in leadership roles, corporations can manipulate more effectively and at a larger scale than individuals can.

- **Do all corporations take advantage of employees?**

That depends on what one would consider a "fair" and "non-abusive exchange".

Your best bet is always to put negotiation leverage on your side though.
Because, given the chance, most corporations do try to keep as much as possible and give out as little as possible.

- **Should employees always be wary of their own employers?**

There is a natural, opposing duality in the relationship between organizations and employees.

Both *can* be better off cooperating and, often, both are better off.

Ideally, there would be a fair 50/50 split for the pie.

But, like in a public goods game, either one -but not both- can be *much* better off by taking more of the pie and short-changing the other.

The human tendency is to always take more and give less, but without exaggerating too much (see various experiments of ultimatum games).
But some bad apples, of course, will try to take *much* more and give much less.

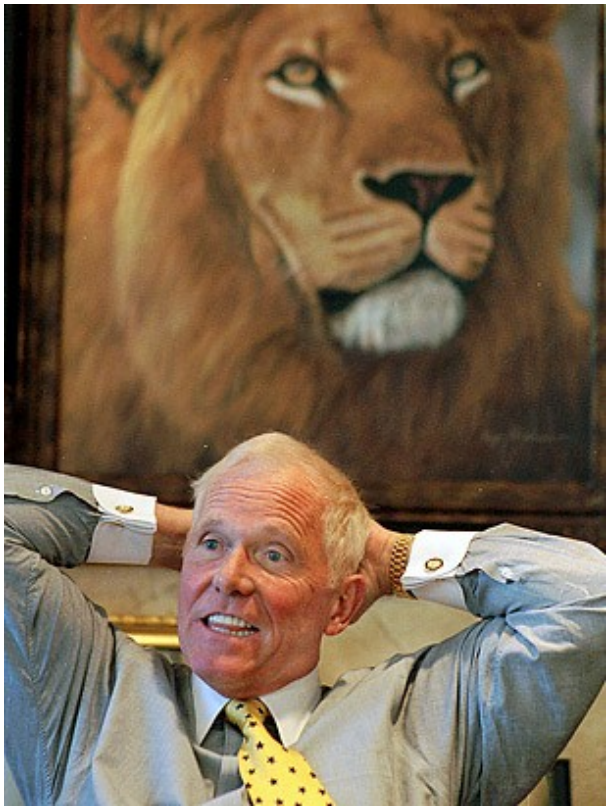
Employees must be aware of this potentially adversarial relationship.

- **Do leaders roles go to the worst of human beings?**

No, not necessarily.

Driven, and even driven to get rich, is not synonymous with "bad".
Driven men are the men who move the world forward. Without them, we'd be still stuck in stone-age.
We need driven people.

But it's also true that ruthless and Machiavellian individuals can have an easier time climbing corporate ladders (see: Machivellis at the top).



"Chainsaw" Albert Dunlap
This all might point to an even deeper question: is it even moral to work for corporations?

The Morality of Corporations Over Individuals

This is what we gleaned so far:

1. Many CEOs are self-absorbed individuals who care little about others, yet
2. Corporate manipulation is all about getting employees to forego their self-interest for the group's allegiance (depersonalization, in psychology)

Let's be clear about something: getting people to care about the group can be a very good thing.
It is, after all, what holds our societies together and it's often a win-win.

But selfish leaders can also leverage group allegiances for darker purposes.

Whether it's used for good or for the founders' personal gains only depends on how the employer rewards the employees for foregoing the self in favor of the organization.
I don't know the specifics of your company and **it's your responsibility to judge your own company**.

And I underline "responsibility".

So take a hard look.
What's behind your company's slogans and values?

And don't forget to contribute

Finally, lemme clarify that **this article is not an encouragement to expect a salary without giving back**.

Expecting strangers to care for you without giving back is the definition of free-loading -and one of the worst examples of entitlement mentality-.

My recommendation is that you focus on giving while critically observing your work environment and assertively demanding a fair balance of give and take.

If you don't see a fair environment or if your fair demands are not met, then consider you might be doing something better with your time.

SUMMARY

There are many areas of potential conflicts of interest in work relationships.

Organizations tend to manipulate employees into dropping their individual interests in favor of the group's interests.

That's not always necessarily wrong.

But it's often the case that the company gains with the employee's pro-social behavior while the employee does not always gain in equal measure.

This article is high in cynicism.
It helps you uncover the reality of things beyond corporate lies and HR manipulations.
But don't go to the other extreme.
Instead, use it to critically assess your company and find a place where you can play win-win.

Ultimately, you want to be an "enlightened cynic" approach, you want to be an enlightened individualist, and move towards "enlightened collaboration" for win-win.

For reality-based career strategies, see Power University

The Happiness Hypothesis: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Happiness Hypothesis mixes solid psychology research with philosophy and religious wisdom to provide a beautiful overview on what's the meaning of life, what is happiness and how to better achieve it.

Contents

- Summary
- Wisdom Nuggets
- CONS
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Jonathan Haidt is a social psychologist and professor at NYU.
He first started out studying philosophy but didn't find the answers he looked for because, he says, modern philosophy lacks a good understanding of psychology and human nature. After he moved into psychology

#1. Our Brain Is Not United and Coherent

Jonathan Haidt says that the mind is divided into several different compartments.

We often make decisions unconsciously and in a split of a second. Then only later we pick a rationally-sounding explanation for our unconscious decisions.

Patients with split-brain show that different parts of our brain can also go against each other as they try to and overpower each other (also read Incognito for more information).

#2. Our Brain Has Two Systems: Fast & Slow

The author divides the brain into two main parts:

1. The limbic system in charge of basic instincts
2. The neocortex for rational thinking

It's a bit reminiscent of Kahneman's two systems but the author calls the limbic brain "elephant" and the neocortex "driver".

#3. Nature Plays a Bigger Role Than Most People Realize

Jonathan Haidt seems to be more on the "nature" spectrum of the "nature VS nurture" continuum.

I'm more in the middle but like Steven Pinker brilliantly noted in "The Blank Slate" we do need to regain some terrain within our cultural glorification of nurture.

Haidt takes the example of two identical twins who had never met until they were 40.
They both had the same nervous tics and they were both afraid of blood and heights.

My Note:
Albeit of course I agree that genes play a huge role, the author seems to take it too far with this example, also listing the same year they met their husband and the miscarriage they both had.

When it comes to happiness, between 50% and 80% of happiness levels are genetic.

#4. Attachment Styles Determine Our Relationships

The author says that much of our happiness is determined by our social ties, our friendships and our relationships.

And our relationships in turns are heavily influenced by our attachment styles, which the author believes to be mostly hereditary (take here an attachment style quiz).

#5. How to Change Yourself

There are three ways to change yourself:

1. Meditation
2. Cognitive Therapy
3. Prozac (ie.: medication)

The author actually tried Prozac, and contrary to a few other authors who recommend being careful with it, he makes the point that it works very well.

The goal of meditation, he says is to control and tame the affective styles of your elephant.

#6. Reciprocity, Fairness & Greed

The author discusses ultimatum games, fairness, and reciprocity.

People seek fairness and reject offers they feel are unfair even when that means they will lose out themselves. Haidt also explains that these experiments proved to psychologists that economic theories of rational players were all wrong (read "Misbehaving" to learn more about behavioral economics).

Reciprocal Manipulation

The author takes a leaf out of Wright's "The Moral Animal" and says we evolved a huge brain to help us play the social game which includes manipulation, dirty negotiation tactics, and gossip.

Our reciprocal system also allows for manipulation though when people give us something to get something back. The author mentions Cialdini and recommends you see it for what it is: manipulation and drop any feelings of obligation.

Gossiping also allowed for cooperation because it helps spread the word about Machiavellian and selfish players who game the system.

However, Machiallive might still have a point and it might be the case that people favor the appearance of morality over actual morality.
Daniel Batson's experiment showed that behind closed doors even people who rated themselves as highly moral "found a way" to award themselves the best result even after the coin flip turned out negative for them.

The only intervention that enforced moral standards was reminding people of the importance of morals and then placing a big mirror in front of them.

Also read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

We Believe Our Own Manipulation

On average, people really believe in their own mental manipulations. We really believe we're better, more ethical and "fair".

Indeed we are fairly accurate in our perceptions of others. It's the perception of our selves that is inaccurate.

The "Family Manipulation"

Haidt introduces the topic of reciprocity with The Godfather.

He says that mafia calls itself "the family" to strengthen the bond among the affiliates. And "the godfather" itself is an attempt at forging a kinship that doesn't really exist.
This is a technique also used in business by companies and CEOs, read more in "corporate manipulations".

Read more on dark psychology here:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

#7. The Adaptation Principle

The adaptation principle says that human adapt to almost anything which happens to them.
Both in the positive (hedonic treadmill) and in the negative.

An incredible study took people who won the lottery and people who became paralyzed. And as time went by (one year) they both returned around their baseline level of happiness.

But it's important to notice that no all activities and circumstances obey the adaptation principle and you might want to focus on them to maximize your happiness (more below).

#8. The Happiness Formula

This is the actual happiness formula:

> Happiness = S + C + V

- Set points (basically your biology)
- Conditions of your life
- Voluntary activities

Some conditions in your life do not obey the adaptation principle and tey will make you perennially sadder or happier.

Avoid the following:

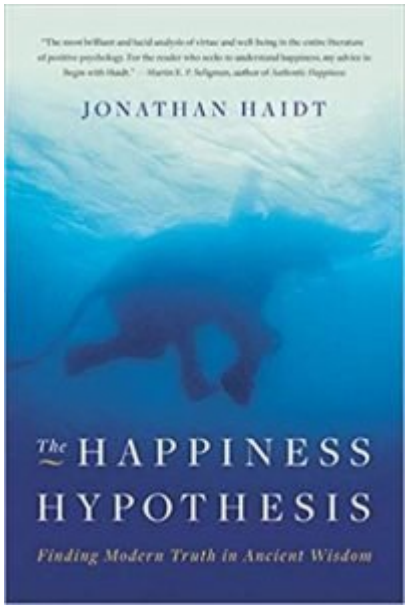
- Chronic noise in your environment
- Long commute (you adapt to the bigger place out of town but not to the commute)
- Situations where you lack control (ie.: stuck in traffic)
- Shame: if you feel ashamed for something, fix it or find a way to get over it

Get more of the following:

- Good relationships
- Social circle (even introverts will be happier, os if you're one strive to become ambivert)
- Flow (read more here on how to reach flow)
- Become a satisficer (research products less and be more content with 1st option, also read "The Paradox of Choice")
- Constraints (social constraints can help provide structure and meaning)

- Work on your strengths, not weaknesses (also read "Strengthfinder 2.0")
- Do engage in volunteer work (even more helpful for socially isolated people)

Some traumas or hardships can also make us happier in the long run. Just make sure you talk about it.



Wisdom Nuggets

Here are more wisdom of nuggets:

- **We're all natural hypocrites**

We are programmed to see the slightest speck in our neighbor's eyes and not to see the log in our own.

- **Plastic surgery can improve happiness**

Albeit many scoff at plastic surgery as an uneeded and superficial remedy, the author says that people who go through with it often end up being happier in the long run.

He says it's because of shame and people who fix some major flaw they were ashamed of feel like a burden has been lifted (read "Daring Greatly" for more on shame).

- **Religious people are happier**

Before you run in the arms of Richard Dawkins after "The God Delusion" or into the skeptics Bible "The Believing Brain", do keep in mind that religious people tend to be happier.

- **People are more like plants than computers**

We often compare people to computers and we think of psychotherapy as a repair shop.
The author instead prefers a plant metaphor, also because most of the times people will get better by themselves.
Just like when you give water to a withering plant.

CONS

I loved "The Happiness Hypothesis", and these are some minor flaws I found:

- **Some debunked psychology**

Haidt wrote in 2015, so he must have known about the replication crisis in psychology.

Yet, he presents several studies which have been debunked or harshly criticized without giving a single mention of the criticism (ie.: The Marshmallow Test, priming).

You can read more in this article on pop-psychology myths.

- **Elephant and rider terminology**

maybe Haidt wanted to address "normal" laypeople who don't research or study their stuff, but even if that were the case… I still don't like the terminology.

It's condescending to think your readers are so stupid that they don't deserve more precise

- **Jumps to conclusions on psychopathy**

Haidt shares the story of a friend of his whose wife had run away with another man and brought her two children along.

He tells his friend he's a psychopath and he'll soon get tired of her.
But of course, any serious psychiatrist knows you can't make diagnoses from far away.

- **Lacks a coherent narrative?**

Albeit at all time interesting, it felt that at times it went too off a tangent and it seemed to lack a strong, coherent narrative.
For example, group selection and attachment styles felt too out of place for a book which is supposedly about happiness and positive psychology.

Review

I would give "The Happiness Hypothesis" 5 stars for much of the content.

It's just the incoherent nature of the whole book and some pop-psychology myths which took out some sparkle from an otherwise excellent book.

Check the:

- **Best positive psychology books**

or get the book on Amazon

Nudge: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Nudge explains how policymakers can leverage psychology and social psychology to "*nudge*" people towards choices that are better for them and for society at large.

TPM Takeaway: Persuasion, Manipulation, Greater Good… & Individual's Power
Nudge sits at the intersection of behavioral economics, psychology, and public policy.
We generally support nudges for pro-social goals, though they may also be misused for poor policies. The key safeguard is **individual power awareness**, so empowered individuals understand the game of persuasion and can decide what's best for them and for society.

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Notes

About the Authors:
"*Nudge*" is co-authored by Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler.
Thaler is a Nobel Prize winner and I loved his book "*Misbehaving*", which explains how psychology improved our understanding of economics to give birth to "Behavioral Psychology".

1. What's A Nudge

The authors define a "*nudge*" as:

> Any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any option or significantly changing their economic incentives

A nudge should also be simple to avoid if an individual wants to choose differently.
In this sense, it's a form of soft power.

Choice Architecture

Choice architecture refers to the way and order in which you present the options and opportunities.

The way you present your options will naturally nudge you towards one or another direction.

2. The Rationale for "Nudging": Libertarian Paternalism

Sunstein and Thaler explain that we don't make rational choices that are best for ourselves and/or for our society. As a matter of fact, **we often make choices that are bad either for us, for society, or both**.

They make the case that we could use our knowledge of psychology to "*nudge*" people toward the best choice but ultimately let people decide if they want to do something different.

They call this stance "libertarian paternalism".

Libertarian paternalism is about nudging towards the best choice but allowing the individual to also reject that choice.

Libertarian paternalism promotes the best choice to increase its acceptance and to help the majority of people make the best choice.
The majority of people often operate in environments in which they might not know what's the best choice, and they are likely to want and accept the nudge (ie.: choosing the best mortgage, the best health care coverage, etc.).

Libertarian paternalism is not about overriding what people want and, if people want to willingly risk high or willingly hurt themselves, they can also be given that choice.

3. Why We Make the Wrong Choices

In the first quarter of "*Nudge,*" the authors review a few of the reasons why we make wrong choices.

They are:

- **We pick the default setting** (status quo bias)

We have a strong tendency to go along or stick with the default setting.
For example, few people choose "custom installation" on their software.

And few people opt out of organ donation if that's the default setting in their country.
Yet, very few people opt-in to donate their organs because that's not the default setting and because it goes against the path of least resistance (next item on the list).

- **We pick the path of least resistance**

We have a strong tendency to follow the path of least resistance. The path of least resistance it's often the default setting, but the two are not exactly the same.

For example, depending on how items are stocked in a supermarket or a cafeteria, people end up consuming different quantities of food because some of them will be more convenient to reach.

- **We use simplistic heuristics**

Heuristics are mental shortcuts that, often, lead us to the wrong conclusions.

Among the heuristics are anchoring, availability, representativeness, overconfidence, loss aversion, etc. (read more in "*Thinking Fast and Slow*").

The most important fact to remember about heuristics is that they prevent us from optimal decision-making.

Edit: loss aversion isn't always more persuasive
Contrary to what some had originally concluded, subsequent research showed that gain frames can persuade better, depending on context. See more in the *Rutgers Handbook of Persuasion*

- **We choose mindlessly**

For some activities, we end up choosing at random even though the consequences might be important (eating, for example, as an experiment proved we don't eat till we're full but based on the dish size).

- **We use poor mental accounting**

Mental accounting is a topic very dear to Richard Thaler as it's strictly related to behavioral economics.
In brief, it says that we are not rational with the way we spend, save, or invest our money.

- **We don't understand randomness**

We see more relations than actually exist (hot-hand fallacy) and end up jumping to conclusions that are often wrong.

We also have a poor understanding of randomness and we expect randomness to *look* random.
But randomness is "XXX" much as it is "YXY" (example of London bombing map).

Also read "*Fooled by Randomness*".

4. Temptation & Arousal Lead to Bad Long-Term Decisions

Temptation, coupled with mindlessness and arousal, is what leads most people down a path they don't really want.

We don't want to get fat and unhealthy, yet we keep staying on the couch when we know we should move.

And we smoke that pack of cigarettes even when we know we shouldn't.

In these situations, nudging can be very helpful to get us going in the right direction and to decrease the incidence of smoking and obesity in the population.

Arousal refers to the bad decisions we make in a state of arousal, which we always underestimate when we're not aroused (example of Ulysses tying himself to a mast).

5. How to Nudge

The authors provide many ideas from social-psychology research on how we can effectively nudge people.

For example:

- To decrease pollution, publish a list of the most polluting companies
- To increase saving rates, make contributions towards retirement plans the default option

If you are interested in more practical applications of persuasion, also check out Pre-Suasion, Influence, and "best books on persuasion".

Companies Already Use Nudging for Manipulation

Companies have an incentive to misuse nudging to make you spend more which, the authors suggest, is more akin to manipulation.

For example, they can pre-select options that are better for them but not necessarily for you.

Why don't these imperfections get corrected by the market?
The author says that markets are not perfect and there is no invisible hand to always fix mispricings (or punish abusive practices).

When the costs are hidden or difficult to find out, companies keep selling overpriced products and services.
Extended warranties are one such example

Also read "how corporations manipulate you".

More Applications of Libertarian Paternalism

The authors also go a bit further astray from nudging and expand on the concept of libertarian paternalism.

For example, they talk about:

- Reducing healthcare costs by foregoing the "right to sue"
- Automatically investing a higher portion of pay rises (which has a different mental accounting)
- Lock away money saved from cigarettes and only unlock it if smoke-free

The Morality of Nudging: It's OK As Long As It's Good For The Nudged

Libertarian paternalism is a policy choice and, as such, its acceptance varies heavily depending on political affiliations.

Says the authors:

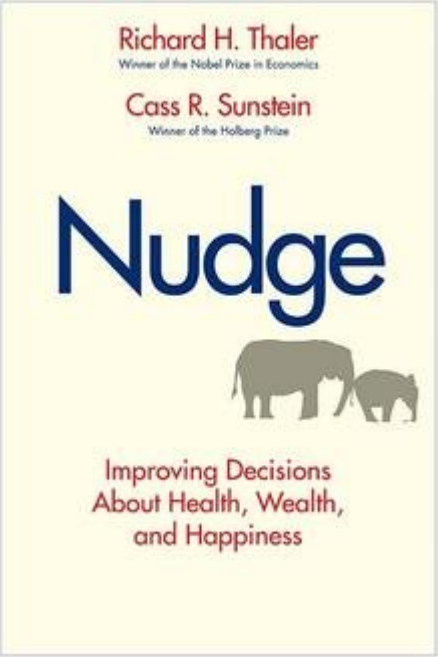
> Our basic conclusions is that the evalution of nudges depends on their effects. Whether they hurt people or help them.

The authors say that it's not possible to avoid "choice architecture" and, hence, it's not possible to avoid nudging people.

Thus, "positive nudging" is the only possible way.

See:

- Persuasion vs. manipulation



Nudge Quotes

On climate change:

> **If the problem of climate change is to be seriously addressed, the ultimate strategy is based on**

> **incentives and not on demand and control**

I love books like "*Nudge*" which can sprinkle some great humor together with the bountiful wisdom they share. For example:

> The group average does exert a significant influence, but there are exceptions. A woman will eat less on dates and a man will eat more in the belief that women are impressed by maly eating.
> Not for men: they're not

On extended warranties and their general overprice:

> Please note that extended are plentiful in the extended world and many people buy them.
> Hint: don't

On the of "homo economicus", which the author calls "econ":

> If you are an econ, you can skip this section of the book. Unless you want to understand the behavior of your spouse, kids, and other humans.

On getting informed ahead of troubles:

> If you are married or plan to get married, do you know your state's laws on alimony and child support?
> Oh, never mind, there is no chance that ***you*** will divorce

Real-Life Applications

- **Nudging to spend without guilt**

Nudging in the US means enticing people to save more.

But for some people -like yours truly- the problem is not in saving, but in spending freely and without guilt.
You can nudge yourself to spend more freely and without worrying, for example, by designating an account as a "fun account" outside of your normal accounting.

- **Boomerang effect**: don't let people know their actions are better than the social norm

When you let people that their actions are better than the social norm, they feel like they can let themselves go and have "goodwill to spend".

But the exception is when you make them feel good for their choices, in which case they don't adjust.

- **Nudging in interaction designs**

Product designers should understand psychology to design good and functional products (and many don't).

On the remote, for example, the "on" button should be the biggest, together with volume.
But often, they're not.

CONS

- **Stocks are almost certain to go up (really???)**

I can't believe an author I respect as much as Thaler did come up with this BS.

How on earth can he say that “on a 20-year period stocks are almost certainly to go up”??
If a war started, are stocks likely to go up?

- **Some debunked psychology**

Some of the examples in “*Nudge*” have been relegated to debunked psychology in the recent replication crisis.

Review

Nudge is a great book on persuasion, social policy, and social science applied to politics for good governance.

I enjoyed the psychology part, albeit there is some valid criticism to what’s included as a “nudge” and the validity of some studies.
And I agree with several of the pro-social government policies it encourages.

Check the:

- Best books on psychology

Why Successful Women Struggle in Dating (and How to Win)

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

High-achieving women often encounter a frustrating paradox: their success can feel like a roadblock to finding love.

And it's not just anecdotal.
Studies show that **high-status women are less likely to enjoy mating and reproductive success.**

At The Power Moves, we've dedicated years to decoding dating dynamics, blending research, evolutionary psychology, and real-world experience.

In this article, we'll explain this happens and share proven strategies to conquer the dating world without dimming your shine.

Contents

- Why Successful Women Struggle
  - 1. The Higher She Goes, The More Her Dating Pool Shrinks
  - 2. Female Success Is Not As Attractive As Some Women Think
  - 3. High-Quality Men Have Options & Leverage
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  - #8. Increase Dating Skills
  - #9. Pick A Sperm Donor

Why Successful Women Struggle

As it's often the case, there are multiple contributing causes to complex social phenomena.

Let's start with the major ones>

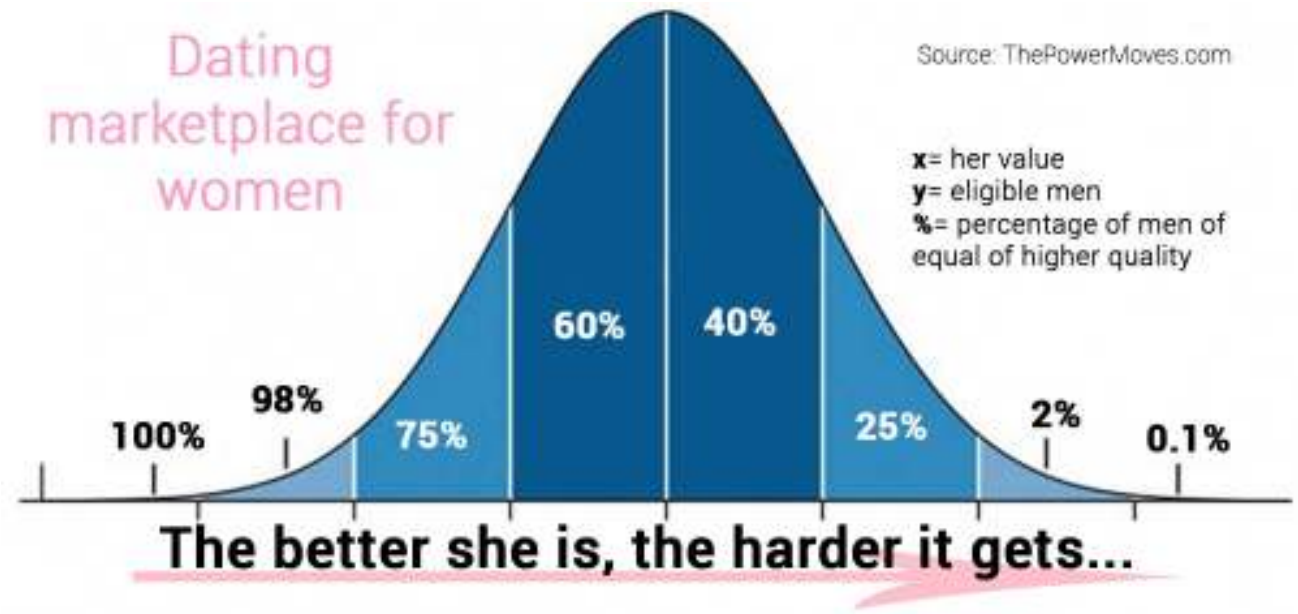
1. The Higher She Goes, The More Her Dating Pool Shrinks

Let's start with the first, most obvious reason.

Women, more so than men, show a more or less marked tendency towards hypergamy, meaning that they prefer men who are "better" than they are.

This creates an obvious problem because **the better she does in life, the fewer eligible men she will find** who are at her level or above**.**
Paradoxically, average women have it easier than successful women.

Here's a chart to clarify this concept:



Women want men who are ahead of them. So the farther she travels, the fewer the men
Women think that a big salary and a big-name college should increase their options, but sometimes the opposite is true.

Of course, we are talking here about *preferences*.
Women can physically reproduce with any functioning man, but dating less successful men feels like "settling" to most of them.

Where's The Problem?

Unless you are well-versed in evolutionary psychology, you might miss the issue here.

You might think, OK, but men also must want equally successful women, so they just find each other.

Well, it's not exactly like that:

2. Female Success Is Not As Attractive As Some Women Think

What? Men don't like successful women?

It's not that men don't like successful women, but:

1. Men have lower "success standards" than women
2. Some traits men value can be antithetical to success (i.e., age, submissiveness, and a nurturing disposition)
3. Men only value professional success up to a certain point (and almost never above their level)

Sure, men *say* they value intelligence and success, and nope, they would never be turned off or intimidated by it (a rational stance, BTW).
But what people *say* doesn't always square off with what they *do*.

Despite what they say, men indeed prefer women who are "less" than they are:

- **Some men prefer less intelligent women**

Studies show that above a certain threshold, men find female intelligence a turn-off.
And it's especially when he feels that she outsmarts him that he really loses attraction (Park et al., 2015).
Evolutionary psychologist and researcher David Buss says that men who rated intelligent women highly for long-term attractiveness still rated them as low in *sexual* attractiveness.

- **Many men prefer less dominant women**

Women prefer more dominant men, while men prefer more submissive women (Wu et al., 2016)

This is true also for some of the most successful men, which is why you see many tycoons with very low-key women (read: strong VS submissive women).

> Submissive Women VS Strong Women: Who Wins at Dating?

- **Men prefer women who earn less**

Time and culture have changed, but people haven't.

And deep down, most people don't feel it's OK for her to earn more (Bertrand, 2013).
That attitude translates into numbers, as statistics show that men tend to marry women who make less (or women marry men who make more if you prefer).

- **Men are wary of highly-ambitious women**

Women like ambitious men, but men don't award ambitious women any more points (Townsend, Wasserman, 1998).

As a matter of fact, ambition is often considered a masculine trait, and that's probably why women hide their ambition (Harvard Business Review, 2004).
Women who do not hide their ambition can be seen as gender deviants and lose points (and that's probably why Hillary Clinton lost the election).

- **Alpha men prefer kinder women**

Finally, some alpha males prefer not to date "alpha females," as that could mean more battles for relationship control and less mutual caring.

Successful men, work hard.
They might not want to admit it, but they prefer going home to a kind woman who helps them unwind rather than another (spent for the day) corporate fighter.

See Trump making this point:

> **Trump**: It's a bad idea to put your wife working for you (…) Ivana would get angry at someone working at the casino and she'd start shouting. And I'd say "I don't want my wife shouting at someone like that". There was a great softness to Ivana, and **that softness disappeared.** She became an executive and not a wife

That softness he's talking about is femininity.
When Ivana started working, she started acting more aggressively, more like a man. And Trump's attraction started vanishing.

Note:
Many dominant women turn submissive to more dominant men, but they still require more energy to "tame," and that's why men often prefer more submissive women to begin with.

3. High-Quality Men Have Options & Leverage

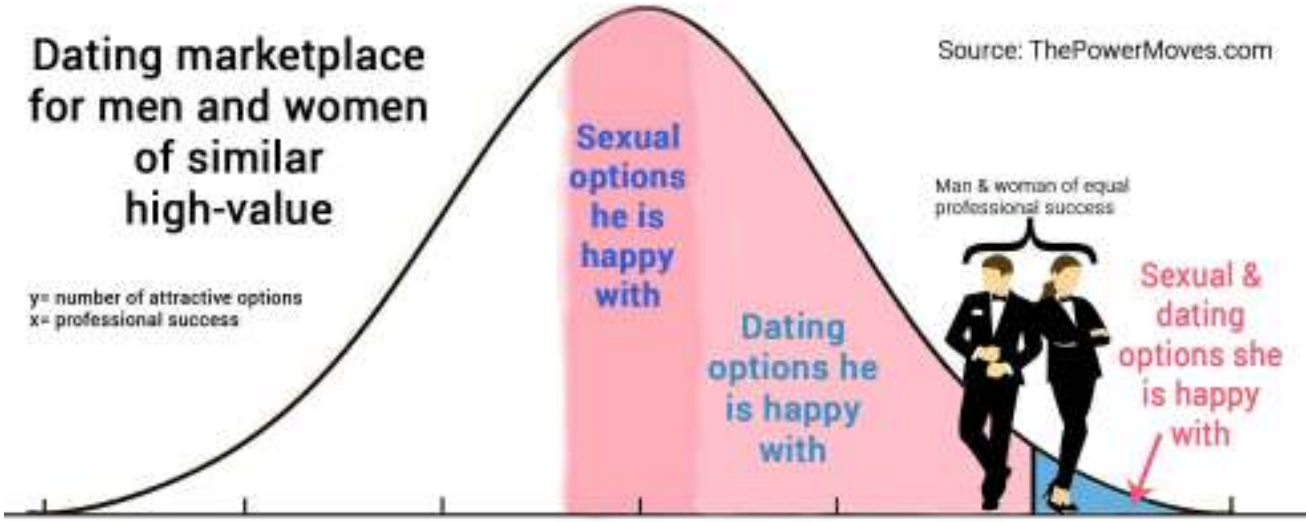
Here's another dating woe for career women: high-quality men and women have totally different markets.

Why?
Because, as men and women go up the success ladder, their dating markets move in the opposite direction.

While women would rather not date less accomplished men, men are OK—and sometimes even prefer—dating and marrying women who are less accomplished than they are.

And if that weren't enough, men have even laxer standards when it comes to short-term partners.

This creates huge imbalances in the upper echelons of social status.
Look at this chart:



Successful men have huge leverage, which leaves some career women frustrated when said men don't chase and invest at all.
"Doesn't he realize what a great catch I am", they wonder-.

Well, as we have already mentioned, men don't value their career achievements as much as they think.
And when men have options, their dating strategies often change.

Jon Berger in *Date-Onomics* explains that when women are abundant, many men go from monogamy to a "spread the semen far and wide" strategy.

4. There Is An Oversupply of High-Quality Women

> *There are no good men left*
> -the cliche'

But is it really a cliche?
Turns out… It isn't.
At least not for successful women.
It *is* harder for a successful woman to find a man.

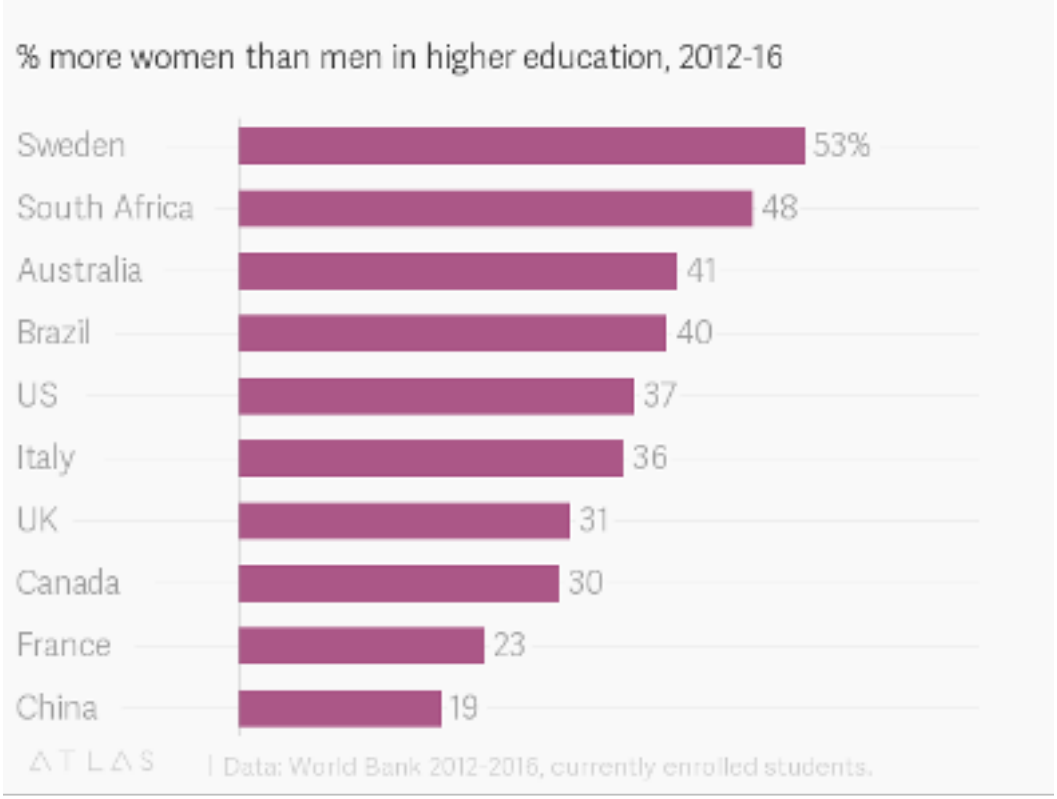
"Successful", as much as 'high-quality," is partially subjective, of course.
But it's less subjective than some sources would want you to believe. And women are kicking men's asses in many of the areas that make a person high quality.

Including:

- **Women are more educated than men**

Women have long overtaken men in obtaining college degrees, and the difference has kept growing over the years.

And since women have historically been reluctant to marry less-educated men, that's a huge quality issue for successful women's dating opportunities.



In recent years, women have been adapting (or settling?), but the highest rates of unmarried (and childless) women are still to be found among the most highly educated (Pew Research 2010).

- **Women have higher emotional intelligence**

I remember a female friend complaining that she had met a great guy… On paper.
But she couldn't date him anymore after she opened up her heart about a recent painful event… And he immediately moved the conversation toward sports.

How to blame her?
Sure, that guy was exceptional, but women, on average, are markedly more emotionally (and socially) intelligent than men (Smieja et al., 2014).
And that's a very important trait to define a person's overall quality.

- **Women care more**

If we use conscientiousness as a measure of general "caring", some psychologists say that women score higher (i.e., Jordan Peterson, author of "*12 Rules for Life*")
But the findings are contentious, to say the least (Weisberg et al., 2011).

Where there is little arguing, though, is in personal care.
On average, women take better care of themselves.
From what to wear, to personal grooming and hygiene (Statista, 2016) women take more care of themselves.
And caring about oneself is one of the very basics of personal value.

Where does this all lead us?
Well, it's funny that when I say this, some women start cheering, as if they had won some competition (facepalm).

But this is a case of the "winner's curse," and it reminds me of an old saying: it's lonely at the top.

5. High-Quality Men Are Under-Supplied

As women have been improving their conditions, men have lagged behind.
And in some areas, there are just too few men in general:

- **More women in urban areas**

The gender split in cities varies widely, but a Columbia University paper shows women outnumber men in big cities (and the authors propose they're there looking for men).

When looking at statistics, we should take into account that gay men show up as male but are not looking for female mates. And there are twice as many gays as lesbians.

- **Whole world regions have more women than men**

Some regions of the world also see women outnumbering men.
One little-discussed reason is that transexuals, such as men who feel like women and thus are not available partners, skew the statistics.

In countries like Thailand and the Philippines, the gender ratio penalizes women in very significant ways (and that's why many Europeans enjoy Thailand).

- **There are far more low-quality men**

Finally, men are overrepresented in the (almost) "undatable" lowest rung of society.
Men use drugs at almost double the rate of women and are more likely to:

- Commit suicide
- End up in prison
- Socially shut down to the world
- Overdose and die (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- Become alcoholic

In some regions of the former USSR, alcoholism has contributed to making those countries terrible markets for women to meet men.

Writes evolutionary psychology researcher David Buss:

> This trend is exacerbated by women's high standards for a mate: their choosiness dramatically shrinks the effective pool of eligible men. This leaves just a few survivors—men of reasonable social status, with adequate self-confidence and good resource potential, who are willing to commit—over whom women then compete.

6. For Many Men, Looks & Youth Trump Success

On average:

> **Men value most youth and attractiveness (genes) while women include social status, and resources.**

That's a generalization, of course, but research confirms it over and over (Regan et al., 2000 as an example).

And men who have the 'power' to go for these women, often do.

The average age difference between heterosexual couples tends to be above 5 years in developing countries and around 2-3 years in developed countries (Zhang, 2007).
But here's the catch: most men still prefer younger women (OKCupid study).

That wouldn't be a problem for average women. But since we are talking about successful women who want successful men, well… The rules change drastically for successful men.

They change because many **successful men *can* date younger women**. (remember the comparative advantage).
And many of them, do.

These findings are confirmed by data (Pollet et al., 2013).
The richest 400 men in the US married women who were on average 7 years younger. But when they remarried, they chose mates who were on average 22 years younger.

This must not necessarily be a case of "*gold-digging*" and I find it judgmental at best -most likely manipulative– to label "gold diggers" or "insecure old men" people who *choose* to date each other.

We could indeed also theorize that there is a strong relationship between resources, genes, and personal character.
The most successful men also showed a lot of *grit*, determination, and intelligence in amassing their fortunes.
And that makes them attractive fathers, no matter their age.

7. Many Career Women Lose In Femininity

And men prefer feminine women (Little et al., 2014).

This is also part of the general male preference for women who are less dominant, lower status, and less successful than they are.
Quoting from the latest *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships:*

> Physical dominance, size, muscularity, and wealth are traditional cues or instantiations of status.
> These features are unlikely to help women attract men and may even render women less attractive as prospective mates.
> For example, being too tall can harm women's mating prospects (…) a taller woman (e.g. , 6'4″) must compete with shorter women (6'4″ and below) for the few men taller than herself (6'4″ and up).
> Similarly, being too intelligent, educated, or high-earning—other markers of what we typically think of as status—might also be considered potentially harmful to women's success in mating competition (Bertrand & Kamenica, 2015; Folke & Rickne, 2016)

The downfall of femininity is two-pronged: cultural and professional.

The de-feminization of career women is not entirely women's fault. In large part, most industries and businesses reward traits that are more associated with masculinity than femininity.

It's not an accident, indeed, that Elizabeth Holmes decided to lower her voice to increase her authoritativeness and corporate clout:

> **Elizabeth Holmes**: (trying to adopt a lower, more masculine voice)

Of course, correlation is not causation, and many career women might be more masculine to begin with. But still, it's most likely a mixture, and I wouldn't discount the nurturing side of it.

8. Successful Women Lack Dating Skills

Many successful women date poorly for a variety of reasons:

- **Mistakenly believe their success makes them great catches**

And then get bitter when some men don't recognize them for the great catches *they* believe they are.

- **Some career women adopted combative "feminist" social roles**

Social roles are OK… Unless they come with baggage.

And self-identifying as "feminist" often comes with a very unattractive dose of bitterness and, in the worst cases, man-hating (yes, extreme feminism is the female version of toxic masculinity).

Just read *Lean In*, the most popular book for "feminist career women", and you will easily recognize a combative, bitter undertone.

- **Career women don't date assertively enough**

Most women don't date assertively enough.

And career women are not the exception.
The (false) belief that their accomplishments make them great catches leads successful women to date too passively.

Mark Gimenin even says that game theory factually predicts that successful women lose out in dating because, feeling like they have a strong hand, they don't bid aggressively enough.

Then the least successful ladies come in, and they're ready, available, and fun… And they pair up with the successful men.

- **Believed in the lie that men and women are the same**

That lie comes with many harmful consequences for career women's dating options.

They include the belief that her resources were going to give her dating leverage, that femininity was a thing of the past and that female open ambition came at no cost (and as we've seen, they're all wrong).

9. Smaller Issues Compound

We have already listed the main issues with career women's dating success.

But to compound the dating woes of successful women:

- Metrosexuals are on the rise (and male testosterone is on the decline)

- More libertine cultural trends favor high-quality men (but not women)
- Successful women are targets of exploitative men, including psychopaths (see "Hare, 1993")
- Lower value men may naturally resort to abusive tactics to keep successful women

See here:

> **Lucio**: Men dating higher-status women have less ability to add value, so they must resort to value-taking approaches to keep her

How to Combine Dating & Career Success

So far, this article might have seemed a bit depressing.

But first of all, exceptions always apply.
Plenty of men like successful women, and many successful women have perfect relationships.

Still, here are some tips to maximize your dating success:

#1. Plan Your Dating With Data

If you care about getting married and having children, do consider the gender split of:

- The city you're moving to
- The university you will attend
- The field you're working in

Or, at least, take into account the gender split of your:

- Hobbies, bars, and places you frequent

Sure, art galleries are nice, and wine tastings are sublime (I agree). And maybe you can meet some exotic and romantic Italian or French men. But if most attendees are women, what are the chances?

Be Aware of The Racial Divide

The gender split in education differs heavily among ethnicities.
Asian men are holding up, and there is little difference between men and women (no pun intended on Asians' lack of hair :).

White men have lost much ground, but worst of all, it's for Black women and Hispanic women.
Keep that in mind.

Black college guys, anyone?

#2. Expand Your Dating Pool to Non-Graduates

Of course, there is a correlation between the level of education and overall quality, but that correlation might not be as strong as you believe.

There are plenty of great men who didn't graduate

In my own household, my mom went to college, and my father didn't even finish high school.
But there are some doubts as to who's the intellectually dominant partner in the relationship (and yes, there is such a thing as intellectual dominance).

IQ and education are also only two aspects of quality. Men can be masculine or high quality in plenty of other ways (i.e., good with repairs, in great shape, good in bed, very caring, etc., etc.).

#3. Get Real(istic): Perfection Doesn't Exist

Some career women have super high standards, are perfectionists, and are never happy with themselves.

And they carry the same unrealistically high expectations in dating.

But perfection doesn't exist. People are flawed. We all are.
Consider turning "good but not perfect" into "good is good enough".

#4. Lock In Young

"Die young, stay pretty", sang the rebellious goddess Blondie.

But if you want to live and even catch a successful man, you might want to consider pairing up and getting serious earlier in life.

This is important information because, in this day and age, you will find countless resources telling you the opposite.

And guess what?

It's always women!

Elizabeth McClintock writes on Psychology Today:

> Age-old scare tactics (…) to frighten women into early marriage may do substantial harm and little (if any) good.

Don't fall for that.

Those narratives sound pro-women and supportive, but they are the exact opposite.

Most women advising other women to "wait" are indeed being rather manipulative as they're trying to:

- Handicap and mislead the competition with false information
- Make themselves feel better with the "misery loves company" effect
- Improve their own lives by lowering the social stigma of unmarried women

I call these forms of manipulation "pro-group feints", and their only benefit might be to make you *feel* better. But not to make your *date* better.

I have no vested interest in telling women to pair up young instead.
As a matter of fact, I really prefer all women to stay single.

But if you want to be in a relationship, then take heed of rational arguments and actual data.

It's Basic Negotiation

Basic negotiation principles dictate that you get the best outcome in your negotiations when you have the most options (Ury & Fisher, 1981) and the most bargaining power.

And since it's been proven over and over that female market values peak earlier, locking in earlier yields the best results.

It's Simple Math, Really

Simple math dictates that a bad dating market will only get worse with time.

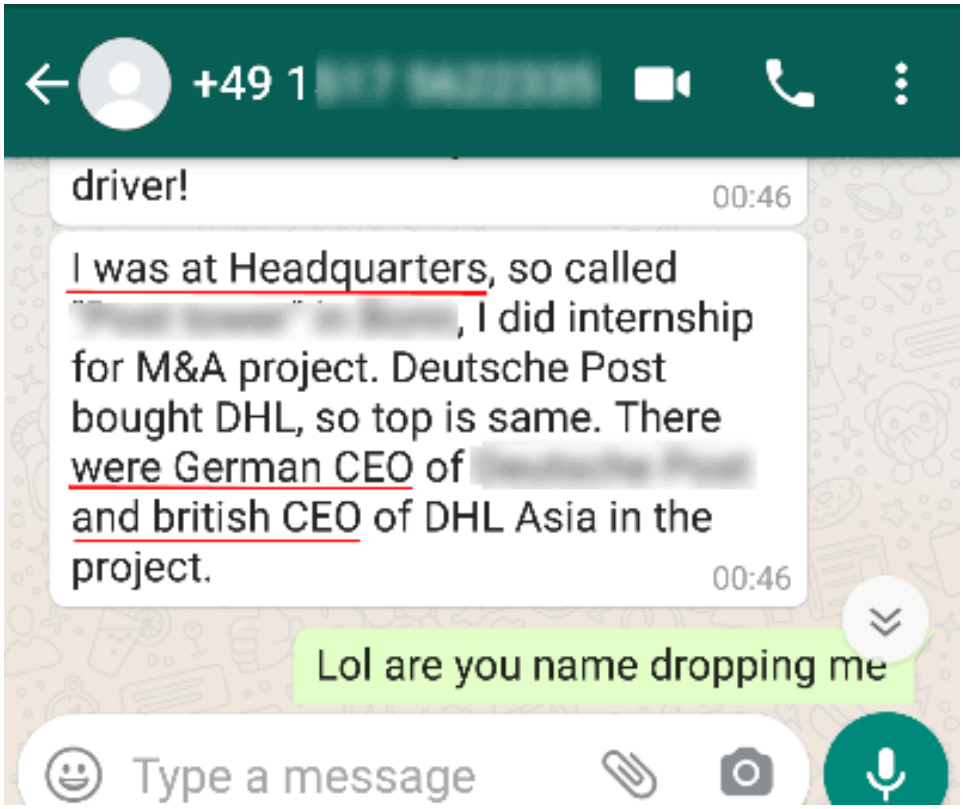
Think of the analogy with a game of musical chairs: in the beginning, most people find a mate because the imbalances are spread over a large population.
But it gets more and more difficult as the faster players catch the best mates.
And in the end, when there are two people left and one chair, 50% of the population is left standing.

Again, this is not to say that women *must* pair up early.
And it's not to say that older women have no chances, because that wouldn't be true.

This is to provide you with good information so that you can make *informed* decisions.

#5. Stop Selling Your Career Success

Look at what this successful lady once wrote me:



… And notice my "far from impressed" reply

The lady in this example thought I was going to be impressed by her thunderous career start.
I appreciated that she was a professionally accomplished woman. *Until she turned it into a selling proposition*.

Then I thought it was cheap, and, to be 100% honest… A bit beneath me.
If you are successful, great. But know that it's not a *huge* advantage for many men (and that you shouldn't "sell it").

Also read:

- Dating mistakes women do before sex
- Games men play
- Nasty games women should better stop (at least if they want high-quality guys)

As long as you don't oversell your career achievements, there is no need to hide them either (funny skit from "Sex and the City):

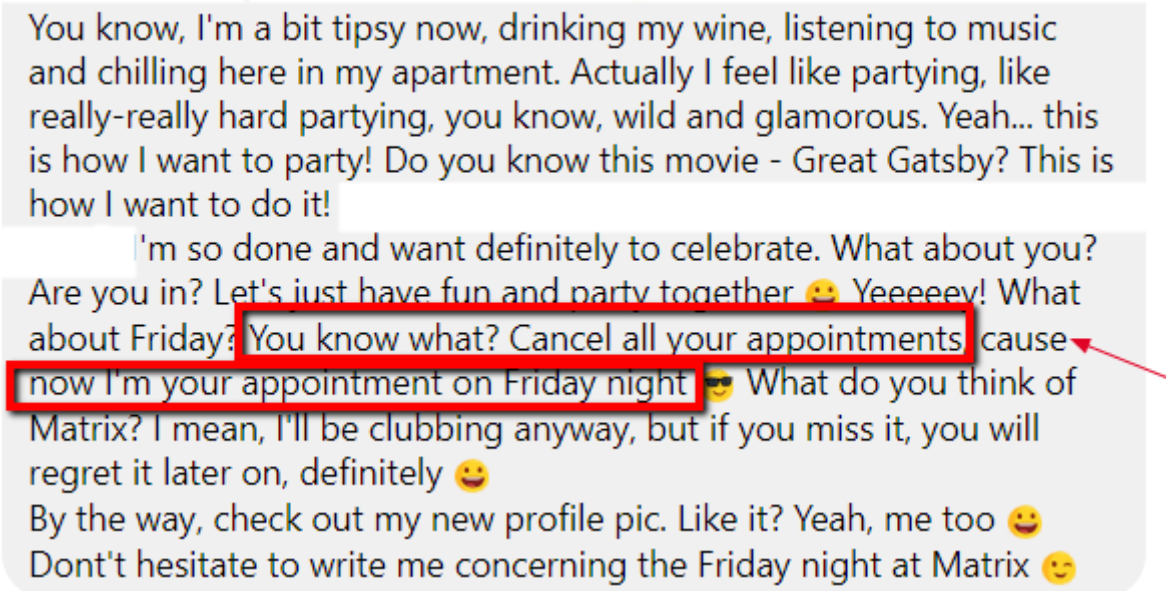
> **Miranda**: I'm a lawyer. At a mid-sized firm. Actually, I was recently made partner. I went to Harvward law school

But instead of bragging, which is very male-like, be smart and more feminine with your self-promotion.

#6. Date More Assertively

Not overselling yourself doesn't mean you shouldn't date assertively.
Because… You should.

Here is an example for you of a sexually forward, assertive, yet attractive dating style:



And if you think that's unfeminine, she was the most exquisitely feminine woman I've ever dated.
Also read:

- Biggest dating mistakes women do before sex

#7. Mix Femininity With Power

It's not easy to be powerful and feminine at the same time.
But neither is it impossible.

A few examples of powerful and feminine:

Read the full article here:

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

Plus, of course, this classic here:

- **How to be feminine**

#8. Increase Dating Skills

Yes, there is such a thing as mating intelligence.

In simpler terms, it's "dating psychology".

Going too deep on effective dating is outside the scope of this article, but here are some resources for you:

- Attractive female body language
- 3 seduction styles analyzed
- How to drive him crazy
- How to date towards commitment

Hopefully, you have been too busy to read too much mainstream dating advice.
But if you have, mainstream advice is for average women, and it's sub-optimal.

#9. Pick A Sperm Donor

Turns out, you truly don't need a man, indeed.

Not one in your life, at least, and not even if you want family

Instead of looking for a needle in a haystack while wading through endless disappointments, pick a donor from a sperm bank.
Advantages:

- **Safe and clean**, since donors are screened for all major infectious diseases
  - Healthier children, since you can rule out several genetic mismatches
- **High quality,** since few men even qualify to become donors
- **Fast & easy**, with the time it takes for one date, you can browse hundreds of profiles

Of course, these are all on average.

Not all genetic and hereditary diseases can be tested, and IQ is not a screening requirement.
But it's still safer than any random real-life guy, and you assess the donor's IQ and life achievements from their profile and interview.

See a donor profile example.

Stealing Fire: Altered States of Mind As Power Tool (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Stealing Fire explores how altered states of consciousness can provide us not only with new transcendental meanings of life but also a very practical mental edge for our entrepreneurial endeavors.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - #1. STER: The Traits of Ecstasy
  - #2. Immersing Yourself In The Present
  - #3. The Conduits to Reach Ecstasy
  - #4. The Four Forces of Ecstasy
  - #5. Is It Worth It? The Ecstasy Value Equation
  - #6. The Dangers of Ecstasy
  - #7. Don't Become A Junkie
- Real-Life Applications
- Criticism
- Review

Bullet Summary

- It's not just grit or working hours that separate the top 1% from the rest: it's also their access to altered states of mind
- Ecstatic states help you make connections between ideas you wouldn't otherwise make.
- You can also tap into that power with varying methods, learning curves, and risks

Summary

About the Authors:
Steven Kotler is a journalist and entrepreneur, while Jamie Wheal is an expert in leadership and *peak performance*.

You can gain more information on Jamie Wheal in his appearance in *Decoding the Gurus*:

> **Jamie Wheal**: But… have you experienced psychedelics from a first person phenomenological perspective (long incoherent rant follows)

Felt like a word salad to me.

Anyway, let's get into the book now:

#1. STER: The Traits of Ecstasy

A state of altered consciousness is defined by four characteristics listed by the acronym "STER":

- **Selflessness**: the paracortex of the brain connected to the self and our internal voices telling us who we are (and all the negative things we are) shut down and we can experience "collective awareness"

- **Timelessness**: total inability -or interest- to perceive time
- **Effortlessness**: things just feel right and click
- **Richness**: when we remove the ego, we allow the subconscious to take over, which is much faster at processing data, and we feel one with the world. We connect with the world in a new and different way, which is richer"

What I found most fascinating is that states of mind, including flow, are not about switching on some specific areas of the brain; they are about shutting down specific areas and functions.

#2. Immersing Yourself In The Present

A recurring theme of "*Stealing Fire*" is that ecstasy is reached when you are so present in the moment that you forget yourself and lose track of time.

He mentions, (of course) the spiritual guru Eckardt Tolle and the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Eckardt Tolle uses meditation to enter the altered states of consciousness and you can read more about his philosophy in "*The Power of Now*".

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi instead focuses on achieving ecstasy through doing an activity you are so focused on that you lose track of everything else. This state is called "flow" and you can read more about it in his book "*Flow*".

#3. The Conduits to Reach Ecstasy

There are many well-known methods for reaching ecstasy, including:

- Sex
- Meditation
- Hallucinogenic drugs (psychedelics)
- Risky undertakings (extreme sports)
- Communal experiences (like Burning Man)

How Ecstasy Works

All the above activities activate the serotonin system and release serotonin, dopamine, endorphins, oxytocin, norepinephrine, and anandamide.

They make us feel in love, connected, trusting, and open.

#4. The Four Forces of Ecstasy

The author says that our recent human developments have made reaching ecstasy much easier for everyone.

In particular, they discuss:

- **Psychology**

With Martin Seligman's presidency of the APA (American Psychology Association), he steered psychology towards the study of human potential, giving birth to the field called "positive psychology" (see "*Learned Optimism*").

- **Neurobiology**

It increased our understanding of what's going on in the brain, making it possible to get more scientific about ecstasy -and how to reach it-.

- **Pharmacology**

We have developed an abundance of new substances that make ecstasy possible, from MDMA to LSD to Ketamine.

- **Technology**

New technology can allow us to prepare our own drugs, fly, immerse ourselves in virtual reality, or experience sensory loss in flotation tanks.

#5. Is It Worth It? The Ecstasy Value Equation

Since we can reach ecstasy with heavy drugs and risky sports, it's also natural that getting into an altered state of consciousness can be risky.

We can die from our brush-ups with death and we can also get hooked or never come back from psychedelic-induced mind trips.

So before going into altered states of consciousness, it might be worth it to make a very conscious analysis of the risk/rewards.

And this is what Kotler and Wheal identify as the equation:

> **Value = Time × Reward/Risk**

- Value is the overall score of a certain activity which will tell you whether or not it's worth getting into it.
- Time is how long it takes you to get into ecstasy or even to learn how to get into it (meditation requires time for example and learning to master extreme sports is a life goal on its own)
- Award is what you get out of the activity, either the pleasure or the entrepreneurial "eureka" moments
- Risk refers, of course, to the dangers to your mind and/or body

It's also possible to switch from a dangerous conduit of ecstasy to a safer one. The authors talk about an extreme skier who went from skydiving to communal festivals like Burning Man and interactive art.

#6. The Dangers of Ecstasy

The authors also talk about the dangers of altered states of consciousness both for the self and for possible uses by dark forces (ie.: government, brainwashing, etc.).

They say:

> Timeless devoid of reference points can feel a lot like paranoia and schizophrenia and it's been a linchpin of solitary confinement for centuries.

Going to the edge of consciousness can present risks for the body and the mind.

Don't Believe Everything You Think

Not everything you think and feel in altered states is realistic or helpful and the authors remind the readers "not everything you feel is real".

People with more dopamine in their systems are more likely to believe in conspiracies and abduction.
Such as they are more likely to be paranoid (for more on paranoia read "jealousy paranoia" and "*Emotional Vampires*").

#7. Don't Become A Junkie

Ecstatic states can be addictive.

The authors talk about free diving and how some free drivers get hooked on the feeling of being deep in the water.

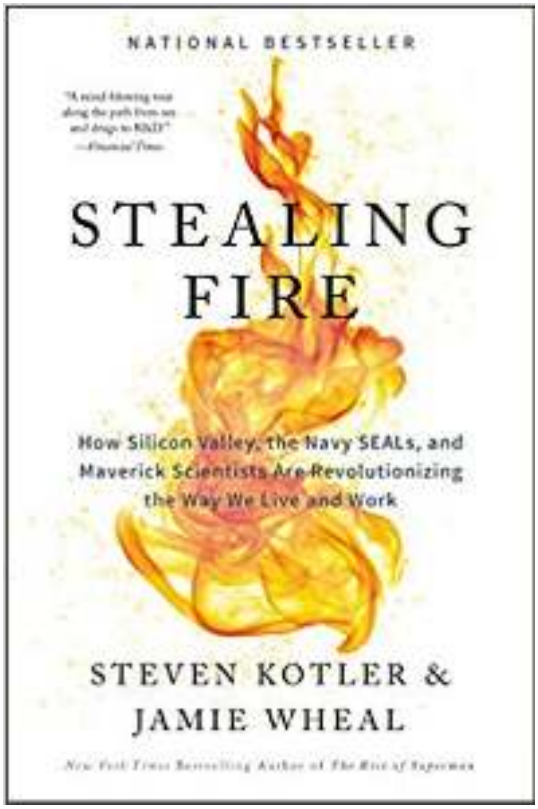
And they keep going and going back… Until some of them never come back up.

And of course, drug use can be addictive and take people too far.

As the authors say:

> **The point is not to keep going until you find it all, but to come back before you lost it all**

The authors link vulnerability to ecstasy and say that the goal is to balance the lights of the ecstatic path with the darkness of the human condition.



Real-Life Applications

- **Watch out for brands**

Brain scans found out that the same brain regions light up for religious icons and powerful international brands like Ferrari and Apple.

That's something that big brands are working on to improve their advertising (and *manipulation*) and it's something we might want to be careful of.

- **Very good for creative endeavors**

Experimenting with meditation, psychedelics or flow could be a worthwhile pursuit for people working in
What happens is that the higher cognitions of the prefrontal cortex shut down and the brain makes connections that it wouldn't otherwise do.

Criticism

As much as I deeply enjoyed "*Stealing Fire*", there are also some parts that didn't I didn't enjoy as much or that didn't convince me much.
Including:

At times sensationalistic more than scientific

Stealing Fire sometimes seems to see sensationalism more than it seeks to divulge good information.

For example, it says (I paraphrase):

> SEALs are the most expensive warriors in history, and their training is largely designed to make ecstasy possible

But based on this, what do the authors say?
I didn't find an answer.
And reading the books from Navy SEALs such as Jocko Willink and David Goggins, it didn't feel that way.

Or about Google looking for their new CEO:

> Get it right and they own the search engine space for decades to come. Screw it up and it's game over. Back to grad school.

Google founders were going to be wealthy anyway and never going back to grad school anyway.
And I highly doubt the choices were so Manichean anyway.

And about Burning Man, the authors *really* forced the connection with Obama, who instead said that "he'd never go, maybe Bernie Sanders will".

At times shows a cheerleading approach

At times the authors seem to glorify the subjects they introduce instead of properly analyzing them.
For example, they say of SEAL:

> At their best they're always an anonymous team.
> "I do not seek recogniztion for my actions", reads the SEAL code, and this ethos is reinforced every time they flip that switch when egos disapper (…)

That must be why David Goggins met so much racism in the top SEAL team and why the SEAL themselves joke about former SEALs writing books of their own heroic war deeds.

Skin-dip on important topics

The author touches upon several important concepts but often does not go deep enough.
On ego disintegration, for example, he just says "ego is just a network and things like psychedelic, flow and meditation disintegrate that network". I wish he had gone more in-depth here because it's not really clear.

Sometimes some pop-psychology

There is quite a bit of pop-psychology in "*Stealing Fire*".

The authors say that power posing changes our hormonal levels, a claim which has been thoroughly debunked in the psychology replication crisis and labeled as "pseudo-science".

They also say:

> Grit is the term psychologists use to refer to that mental toughness

Not really true: it's mostly Angela Duckworth who talks about *grit* and she has been severely criticized for rebranding "conscientiousness" into a new term to get more media exposure.

Burning Man correlation failure

There is much talk about Burning Man and how it helped its attendees including Elon Musk, Tony Hsieh, and Google founder Larry Page

The author talks about how Google became incredibly successful as if to suggest it's because of Burning Man attendance and ecstasy.

But I don't see the causation.

Sociopath Elizabeth Holmes was also at the Burning Man, shall we then conclude that Burning Man leads people into committing massive frauds?

Evolutionary psychology unfounded conclusions

Stealing Fire describes how animals also take advantage of available psychedelics in nature to enjoy altered states of mind.

That's interesting.

But then it makes the case that altered states of mind must have been driven by evolution for a reason.
And that reason is to get stuck out of their rut of mindless habits and find new ways of doing things.

That makes no sense.
Not everything we or animals do must be because it helps move our species forward.
Read some *good scientific evolutionary psychology here*.

Altered state of mind accounting

The authors reach the conclusion that the industry for altered states of mind is to the tune of 4 trillion.

But they include cigarettes, social media, VR, coffee, alcohol, etc.

That seems to me like an altered state of mind type of accounting.
Sure coffee and social media have something in common with drugs, but they don't help us reach the STER that the authors themselves mention as the conditions for ecstasy.

No data to link billionaires' success to ecstasy

The authors make big claims by saying that the top world performers and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves also thanks to the use of ecstatic states.

But they have no way of corroborating it and they don't even attempt to.

They mention Tim Ferris (of course) saying that "most billionaires he knows" trip with altered states of consciousness, but that's no proof of anything.
Quoting Tim Ferris, author of *The 4 Hour Workweek* and a guy with a tendency to try all kinds of 'hacks' may also not be the most trust-inspiring, highest authority person to quote.

And attention: this is not to say that ecstasy cannot be helpful, because it probably is. Especially in creative endeavors.

But there is no proof whatsoever that most billionaires leverage it and/or that it will help you come up with a genius idea or invention and become more successful.

Review

"Stealing Fire" discusses altered states of consciousness, a new venue for exploring human potential and empowerment

I have to say that I am not a big fan of the ecstasy of “losing yourself in the crowd”.
I certainly see the appeal in it, and I’m not immune to it either, but I prefer individualism, instead.

I also wished for less cheerleading, deeper analysis, and more science, but all in all it’s not bad.

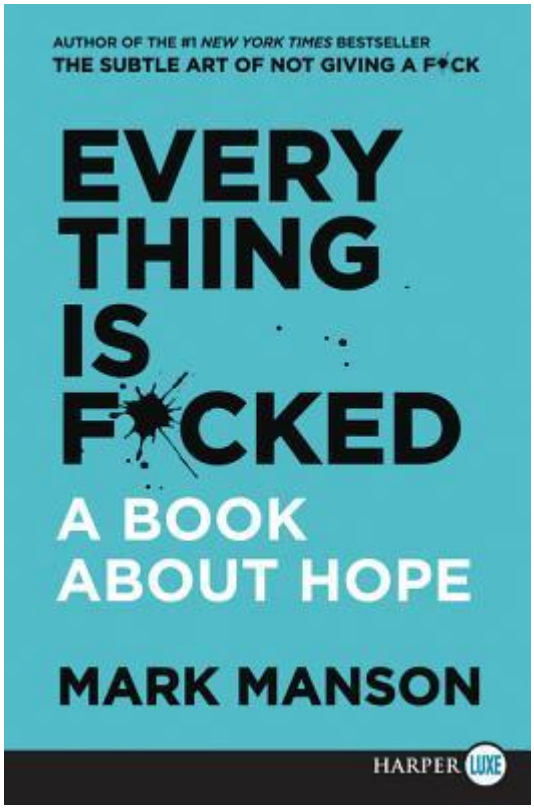
Check the **TPM top resources**

Everything Is Fucked: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Everything Is Fucked is a social and philosophical analysis of the meaning of life.
Mark Manson, the author, says that hope must rest on cynicism and nihilism first, and we must first accept that our lives have no inherent meaning.

TPM Strategic Take: Hope built on nihilism is the ultimate floor of mental power
If you accept that "nothing matters" while still being able to care about things, work on yourself, and work on your goals, you're indestructible. You become depression and crisis-resistant because you already accept nihilism.
And you gain Maximum Walk-Away Power because the "cost" of failure is zero in a meaningless universe.
Nihilism alone can make you depressed. Power built on nihilism makes you a High-Stakes Operator.



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  - 3. Bro-Talk Gets Old (& Undermines Your Authority)

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Summary

About the Author:
Mark Manson is an American author who originally started out as a dating coach and then veered into more general self-help and long-term relationships.
He is also the author of "*Models*" and "*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck*"

1. There Is No Meaning In Life

Because we care about things, we believe they are important. But just because you care doesn't mean they do.
As a matter of fact, they're not.

We elevate the value and importance of events because we need that sense of importance, but in the grander scheme of things, they're meaningless and insignificant.

We are meaningless.

And that's OK.

2. Hope Is Built On Nihilism

Hope—real hope—can't be built on lies.

And telling yourself you are important is a lie.
Real hope must start by acknowledging and appreciating our insignificance.

From there, we can build a good case for hope and a meaningful life.

3. The World Is Not Good

Mark Manson doesn't like self-help.

He says that the typical "feel good" speech from positivists like Peter Diamandis or Steven Pinker is that today it's better than it's ever been before.
But that's a lie, he says.

Sure, we're richer, but we're also more anxious and depressed than we've ever been. Feelings of loneliness and isolation are at a record high, and social trust is at its lowest and keeps going down.

And that's without even mentioning extremism or the environment.

TPM Note: WE completely agree and we call this 'naive self-help'.
Learn more:

- **Naive self-help**: listing the categories of self-help you better ignore

> Naive Self-Help: Why Self Help Is Failing You

3. The 3 Pillars of Hope

To develop and keep hope alive, we need three things:

1. **Sense of control** (feeling like we're in control of our lives)
2. **Belief in the value of something** (something worth striving for)
3. **Community** (being part of a community that values what we also value)

At TPM, we prioritize the **Sense of Control (Autonomy)** as the most critical pillar, foundational for both mental power and real-world outcomes. Without it, you are a 'follower' in someone else's community. Also see 'agency over communion'.

4. Don't Try to Change Yourself

Mark Manson is very critical of the self-help industry, which, he says, he is "unfortunately" part of.

He says that when we try to force ourselves to change under the mantra that "yes, you can change and yes, you must", we often feel worse off.

The self-help industry fills people with inflated hopes and expectations, and when people fail to meet those unrealistic promises, they feel worse off.

TPM Note: Agree. Many gurus sell lottery tickets,
telling everyone 'they can make it', while mathematically only a minority will. Then, they use those few winners as 'evidence testimonials' to attract even more hopefuls.
Empty boosterism is also useless to the empowered man. It only boosts weak Narcissism without matching mental power. TPM advocates for Strategic Realism: focus on action, without the BS motivation.

Also see:

> **Lucio**: Self-help based on boosterism and motivation is weak. What's strong is focusing on repeated behavior over time that boosts your odds of winning, while you don't even strictly need the win

5. Don't Try to Get Rid of Pain

Pain is part of human existence, it's useless trying to get rid of it.

Human nature leads us to seek the negative in any case.
So if you remove the biggest stones from someone's path, we will still be focusing on the pebbles.

And it's unhealthy to believe that you can -or should always be happy. As a matter of fact, Manson says that pain can give significance to our lives.

Says Manson:

> **The quality of our lives is determined by the quality of our character, and teh quality of our character is determined by the our relationship to our pain**

6. Change Your Values To Become Better, Not Richer

Mark Manson says you can change your values in two ways:

1. Re-interpret your past events
2. Imagine the future the way you want to be (visualization)

He says that unfortunately, **poor self-help uses the narratives of future visualization for material stuff**, like "imagine how rich you are".

I couldn't agree more, and it's something that "*Think and Grow Rich*" also does, as do, of course, all the copycats.

He says that type of visualization does not improve yourself. If anything, you should visualize "what not having a yacht would feel like and how you're OK with it".

Golden Nuggets

Here are a few great insights from "*Everything is Fucked*":

- To start a new religion, sell hope to the hopeless (a dark psychology trick and what Machiavellian marketers do)
- Manipulators use in-group and out-group dynamics to gain followers (I agree, also read corporate manipulations)
- Sports are a form of religion that gullible individuals follow (mostly for extreme fans and ego-projections, exceptions apply!)

About that last one, see Lucio's reel ↗ (opens in new window)

Criticism

This is what I didn't particularly enjoy about "*Everything Is Fucked*":

1. Lacks A Coherent Structure

The author jumps from Nietzsche's biography to the risks of AI to self-development topics.
I don't see a connecting thread, and there is no coherent message. Maybe the author didn't want to have a message, which is OK.

But still, any book without well-defined messages are almost by definition, forgettable.

2. Somewhat Lacking in Social Analysis

I found the analysis on religions and ingroup-outgroup interesting and at times even insightful.

But also imprecise, at times, as Manson tried to analyze our whole society and human nature in light of the ingroup-outgroup dynamics.

The spin he gave on "how to start a religion" was quite hilarious though.

3. Bro-Talk Gets Old (& Undermines Your Authority)

Manson uses "The F-Word" and "Bro-talk" as a signaling device to appear "authentic" and "unfiltered."
However, for smart readers, this often reads as **Low-Status Try-Hardism**. A man with confidence doesn't need to cuss to prove he's "real".

Mark Manson found huge success with his catchy-titled book "*The Subtle Art of Not Giving A Fuck*".

And probably he felt like he had to deliver something similar. At least when it comes to language.
I didn't particularly enjoy the "bro philosophy" in "The Subtle Art", and I enjoyed it even less here, where it felt forced, unnatural, and also undermined the author's authority.

For example:

> This is basically what good therapy is. Self-acceptance, emotional intelligence and all that

"All that?" To come across as "cool", the author may also appear more uninformed and superficial.

Or:

> Thank you Francis Bacon, thank you Isaac Newton, you fucking titans

Feels like unneeded bro-attitude.
And since he was talking about the founders of the scientific method, Galileo and Copernicus might be worthier recipients of Manson's cussings.

Takeaway: **use Manson for the good insights, but drop the "edgy teenager" tone** if you want to be taken seriously in high-status circles.

PROS

There is much I liked about "*Everything Is Fucked*" because there is much I agree with Mark Manson.

This goes from high-level stuff like his criticism of the self-help industry (also check "self-help myths") to his (low) opinion of sports and fandom to his thoughts on pyramid scheme companies (read my review of "*Go Pro*").

- **Hope must rest on understanding and accepting nihilism**

Most of all though, I agree with Manson's view that a meaningful life must rest on first accepting the inherent nihilism and meaninglessness of our lives.

This is something that is also central to my view of life.

Review

Everything is Fucked, in Mark Manson's typical style, delivers good quality self-help for intelligent men who want something different than 'typical' self-help motivation and boosterism.

You can see that Manson is a smart guy and a rather independent thinker.

I appreciated "*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck*", the book that gave him notoriety.
And I even liked his first book "*Models*" when he was still a pick-up artist.

When it comes to his philosophy, I can say that I very much like -and agree- with Manson's approach to self-development, which partially rejects many of the empty self-development mantras.

However, while there are some golden nuggets that we extracted in this review, "*Everything Is Fucked*" fell flatter on me.
A disjointed book of interesting tidbits mixed with insightful ones and some less-than-stellar social analyses.

Check the **best books** collection or see our foundational guide on men's empowerment:

- **Foundations of self-development**: the ultimate guide for ambitious men

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

The Science of Likability: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Science of Likability lists 27 principles of likability taken from 27 social science studies.

TPM Power Note: Good for likability tips, but men also need power
Being likable, and knowing how to be likable, is important, but only if men also know how to get status, respect, and attraction. Otherwise, they become the too-nice guy: likable, but with little to show for it. See our 'social skills vs. power skills' guide.

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- Real-Life Applications

- CONS
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Summary

In this summary of "*The Science of Likability*," I will focus on the most significant studies that will help you become a more likable person.

#1. Determine People's Mood

Determining people's mood can be a great way of assessing whether it's a good time to spend time with them, ask them for something, or whether or not it's a good idea to interact with them at all or-

You can simply ask "how was your day" and then get a good idea by reading their body language and tone of voice.

#2. Ask Them For a Favor

To turn an enemy into a friend, ask them a favor.

Cognitive dissonance dictates that they will justify the favor with the reason that they have done you a favor because they must like you.

But also, righteously notes Patrick King, don't just ask for favors but also do people favors.

Trying to keep a balance is important because **people keep track of favors** and of the "social balance".

Read more in:

- **The law of social exchange**

- **Benjamin Franklin effect VS reciprocation**

#3. Equalize Power & Social Exchanges Among Friends

I really liked this point and to me, it was one of the best insights of the whole book.

Patrick King says that if you are one down in the relationship, then you should make it clear that you want to give back because you care about keeping a balance.

For example: "I can't believe you helped me move and I forgot to take the bill the last time we saw each other. Of course, this is going to be on me".

And if they are one down, you can remind them.
For example: "last time I got it, do you mind now evening the score".

TPM Note: Exactly, this is also honorable behavior
And the same can be said about power exchanges, a more advanced level. See 'power protection'

#4. How to Instantly Become Good Friends

Simply acting as a close friend will make you close friends much more quickly.

Don't be afraid of discussing more personal stuff.

#5. Door in The Face & Foot in The Door

King discusses Cialdini with the now popular anchoring technique and foot in the door -which is similar to the "yes ladder".

The author also says the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. You can first get your foot in the door and then start high in your requests to anchor a high price for your goods or services.

#6. Trust Is In The Number of Exposures

The author says that trust is often a consequence of how often we see and meet someone.

And that's why, the author says, salesmen keep pinging prospects: the sale didn't happen because of a lack of trust, and pinging them increases trust.

My Note:
I didn't fully agree here.
Pinging is not so much to build trust but to keep prodding your prospect toward action.

#7. Show Vulnerability

The author says that vulnerability is a sign of strength and people are attracted to vulnerable individuals.

Show more vulnerability, make some mistakes on purpose and people will like you more.

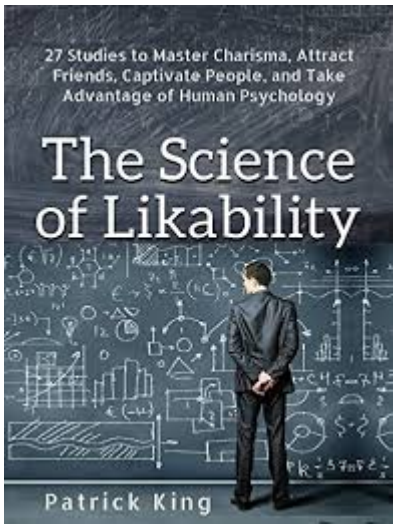
My note: disagree.
An out-of-place vulnerability might make you more likable, but that shouldn't be an ambitious man's goal.
Of course, there is power in vulnerability, but only under certain conditions. And you should make mistakes on purpose only if you're really out of everyone's league.

Also read:

- **Vulnerability is NOT power**

#8. Make Yourself A Constantly Pleasurable Companion

Just like Pavlov's dog, you can "train" people to feel good as soon as they see you by giving good vibes and emotions every time you meet.



Real-Life Applications

- **Don't use "I guess" too often**

Some people overuse the sentence "I guess". But there is an obvious big difference between "guessing" and knowing, and when you use "I guess" too often you come across as lacking confidence, knowledge, and authority.

- **Avoid being too polite**

If you are too polite -and especially brown-nosing- you come across as weak and unworthy of being listened to. Also, check out "*No More Mr. Nice Guy*".

- **You only need to win the leader over**

When you need to win a crowd over, focus on the leader. To understand who the leader -or influencer is-, you can simply look at how people look when a decision needs to be taken.

CONS

I think that a few studies were not put in good perspective. I felt that the author failed to place them in a bigger picture of how social dynamics work.

And that's how "vulnerability makes you attractive" became "be as vulnerable as you can" -wrong- and how "mistakes can make you endearing" became "make mistakes on purpose -wrong-.

When you don't already have a solid grasp of social dynamics it's easy to make these mistakes.

PROS

- Short and to the point
- Very good for beginners
- Some good insights even for more advanced students

I appreciated for example the idea of being upfront in wanting to "even the social score".

Review

I enjoyed "*The Science of Likability*", but I also found some drawbacks in the way it generalized some of the studies.

In my opinion "*The Science of Likability*" perfectly represents why science without a good grasp and understanding of human nature can be misleading.

Based on some otherwise good research, the author, for example, recommends "doing mistakes on purpose" or "oversharing" because that will make you more approachable and make people like you more.

In my opinion, those recommendations stem from a poor overall analysis of social dynamics and, most of all, *power* dynamics.

Only people who are so out of everyone's league to make them unrelatable should look into making mistakes on purpose.
And nobody should "overshare".

Check the:

- **Best social skills books**
- **Why likability isn't enough**

> Social Skills vs Power Skills: Why Likability Alone Won't Get You Ahead

The 9 Archetypes of Office Politics Players (W/ Real Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Office politics are everywhere.

From backstabbing colleagues to power-hungry climbers, knowing how to navigate them is key to protecting your status—and advancing your career.

This guide breaks down the main political players, their tactics, and how to handle them.
You'll learn:

✔ Their psychological profile
✔ Real-life examples
✔ Proven strategies to outmaneuver them

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 1. Power Hustlers
  - Psychological Profile
  - Example
  - Solutions
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- Can Office Politics Ever Be Stopped?

1. Power Hustlers

"*The world, chico. And everything in it*"

AKA 'overachievers' who:

- Always have something to add
- Seek responsibility and power
- Tirelessly self-promote

Psychological Profile

They're high in personal drive and low in empathy.

Nurtured overachievers grew up in families with high expectations, for example with narcissistic parents (McBride, 2008).

There are several types of overachievers:

- **Dr. Jekylls** = They can be nice on their own or when nothing is at stake, but 'switch on' with bosses, upper management, or opportunities to "shine"
- **24/7 overachievers** = It's "always on" with them, and they're often lonely
- **Machiavellian and socially skilled** = Put on a facade of teamwork and mission-orientation

Example

> **Teacher**: What are we missing?
> **Tracy**: (raises her hand as high as possible, jerks it to be even more noticeable)

Solutions

If they're socially unskilled everyone can see the ugly side of their ambitions so you must only surface and thread-expand it.

Here are some ideas that also work for the more Machiavellian ones:

1. Catch them in the act & speak up

Renee Evenson says that the best way to deal with overachievers claiming credit for teamwork is to speak up right away.

I agree.
If you let them frame themselves as leaders, that reality cements in people's minds. And your resentment grows

inside of you, which is unhealthy.

2. Take the issue to your boss

If the credit taker gets awarded with money, bonus, a promotion, or public praise for a shared achievement, let your boss know you're not happy.

The *Dale Carnegie Training* says not to complain lest you sound like a whiner. They say that at work, the person who sounds the most adult and mature wins.
That's often true, and they propose this approach:

> **You**: Dear boss, I understand you're happy with Tracy's work and I'm glad about it because she delivered some important parts.
> But there's one thing concerning me: this was a group effort and many of us did great work. When the time comes for my performance review, I want to make sure I get the same recognition

3. Rally the troops against him

Chances are you're not the only one to dislike them.

Leverage the discontent and slowly but surely isolate them.

The colleagues and people around you will fall into two categories: the apathetic ones who are too dummy to notice and care; and the smarter ones who care, notice and hate.

With the haters talk about the issue openly.
With the apathetic ones, go for an alliance based on friendship.

4. Keep your eyes on the prize: the boss

If they're 'working the boss', watch out you're not left behind.

If your boss doesn't like over-ambition, you've almost won: the more you can make their game obvious, the more they will be digging their graves.

If your boss is a dummy, you gotta keep on playing the game.
Also see:

- How to forget a strong boss relationship

> 10 Strategies to Master Your Boss Relationship & Win Promotions

5. Avoid 1-1 battles, avoid lecturing on morals

Overachievers are driven and resourceful, often going places.

Like it or not, that makes them high-value.

So avoid picking up a fight.

P.S.:
Don't guilt-trip them on "morals": they'll either hate you for shaming them, or they'll think you're weak.

> **Him**: (lectures overachievers on morals)
> **Overachiever:** (destroys him)

2. Social Climbers

"Can you please do that for me? Thanks!"

There are many ways to social climb, and we'll focus here on 'tasking'.

The general power dynamic of tasking VS execution is:

Those who assign tasks look like bosses, and those who execute look like subordinates.

By telling you what to do, they position themselves above you (and push you down in the process).

Psychological Profile

Taskers are power-conscious individuals.

Some of them resent being told what to do by their bosses, and, in a sort of "the oppressed becomes the oppressor dynamic", they seek revenge on their colleagues.

In some cases, taskers can also be insecure bosses who over-task just so they can "show who's boss" (the meme being a humorous example).

And finally, the last category of taskers are highly ambitious individuals who want to climb the corporate ladder and have a good career.

Usually, they pick people they think are easy to boss around. However, the most ambitious and dominant of them will try to task almost anybody.
The most knuckleheaded taskers will even try it with their own bosses.

Power Strategy

Very simple:

They task you, you execute, and they gain status to your detriment.

When promotion time comes, nobody promotes the low-status guy who executes other people's tasks.

Examples

- ⍰ ***"Can you please do X for me"*** <— The standard format
- ⍰ ***"Can you (please) take care of it by EOB it's very important"*** <— To sound leader-like and strategic
- ⍰ "***Can you come here please, I need your help on something"*** <— You go to them = you're the flunky supporting those doing real work.
- ⍰ ***"Thank you for taking care of that for me"*** <— A covert power move. Framed as if they were thanking you, a power move that makes them sound like magnanimous leaders who properly recognize their teams' work
- ⍰ "(Standing up to go to the meeting room) ***Come on, let's go"*** <— They lead, you follow

Little Dogs Task The Nastiest

Junior taskers don't have the actual authority to dispense tasks.

So they'll seek to task you when it's most difficult for you to refuse them.
For example:

1. Small, inconsequential things just to show they matter (i.e..: "pass me the pen, please")
2. TThings you were going to do anyway (i.e., "send me that report, please", when sending the report is exactly what you were supposed to do, and going to do)

Read more on how to execute tasks high-power:

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

3. Grumpy Players

"Bark bark"

The grumpy players operate on the assumption that the fewer people who can ask them, the more freedom and status they gain.

They play office politics defensively, fortifying their desk turf from encroachment and keeping as much of their time for themselves.

Psychology Profile

They're low agreeableness and socially awkward.

In everyday parlance, you may say 'loners and losers'.

Some are frustrated, and just hate people.

None of them know how to speak assertively though.
Instead, they're either:

1. Aggressive
2. Passive-aggressive

Defensive Mechanism

I dealt with lots of grumpy older players as a young consultant in IT, clueless about IT.

Grumpiness, in that case, was a defense mechanism.

They were rejecting being told what to do by someone they perceived below them, who knew nothing about their business.

Power Strategy

Their strategy is pure defense, and works like this:

The fewer people approach me, the less work I need to do -and the more powerful I look-.

Most of them don't have huge ambitions, or if they did, they have been thwarted by years of stagnating careers -of course, who would promote them?-.

Example

A passive-aggressive type:

> **Peter**: Milton? Hi, Uh, could you turn that down just a little bit?
> **Milton**: (turns around with a scared frown) but uh, I was told that I could listen to the radio at a reasonable volume, so I don't see why… <— Irritatingly insecure, but he frustrates his colleague and gets his way

At the far end, they have anger management issues, with Mad Max in "The Wolf of Wall Street" being an example.

Solutions

The standard advice of getting close to them sometimes works.

You may pierce their defense mechanism and become their best (and possibly only) friend.

But from a political and social status point of view, it's a double-edged sword.
Grumpy players are rarely high performers, and associating with them might drag you down.

As Robert Greene says in "The 48 Laws of Power": avoid the unhappy and unlucky.
And the grumpy players.

Here is the rule of thumb for you:

> **Befriending losers as a powerful man is an act magnanimity.**
> **Befriending losers as a powerless man is a case of "misery loves company".**
> -The Power Moves

4. Sticklers For The Rule

"*Please stick to the guidelines*"

Sticklers For The Rules stake their claim to power with laws, regulations, and SOPs.

Psychological Profile

They're often high conscientiousness and high neuroticism.

And can be very power-conscious.

Their Office Power Strategy

On paper, they're following procedures and ensuring everyone else does.

But in reality, they are piggybacking the rules for their personal power.

Plus, if they become "go-to guys" for regulations and procedures they become 'someone' in the small pond of the office world.

Their Power Is Capped – With A Low Cap

There is a (well-deserved) glass ceiling for them because movers and shakers make things happen.

Examples

> **You:** Hey hi man, my keyboard broke, they told me you guys can help
> **IT support**: Please go through the official channels and ask my boss for allocation I'm busy now

It may take one second to first plug that keyboard on their laptop and check the issue is the keyboard indeed, but… Nope.
They hide behind the rule to tell you to f*ck off.

5. Fawners

"*Just like you said, boss*"

Their God is their boss.

Psychological Profile

Contrary to what many believe, brown-nosers are rarely ambitious.

They might want to be bosses one day, but rarely can they even fathom themselves as CEOs or entrepreneurs.

Many are motivated by fear and security, rather than maximum advancement. And just infants seek mothers, fawners seek bosses.

Example

> **O'Neil**: (follows the boss, lights up a cigarette for him, looks at him for confirmation after he speaks)

Solution

Fawners dependent on poor leaders.

So if you have a great boss, you don't need to worry.

Otherwise, never complain about them to your boss!

Most bosses are average folks, and they love those who adulate them.
When you complain you sub-communicate your boss may not deserve the adulation. And they'll hate you for it. **People prefer the lie of adulation to the truth of reality**.

The best strategy is keeping a great relationship with your boss, while doing better work the fawner.
Better yet: let them believe that sucking up is the best way to advance (it's not), so you remove a competitor from learning and doing great work.

So never talk about learning, self-development, or doing great work.
Talk about people, talk about job security, make him feel the race is on sucking up better, rather than *becoming* better.

6. Power Aligners

"*That's not what we stand for. This company believes in…* "

Power aligners seek power by aligning themselves with those who already have power.

They take on the same values as the boss, of the company (or both) and champion them as if they were their own.

Psychological Profile

Some people confuse them for fawners.

But while fawners take a subordinate role, power aligners don't.
Instead, they're more strategic and astute.

Example

Imagine meeting with your boss, you complain about a bad customer:

> **Power Aligner**: But that's not what we stand for. It doesn't matter what the customer said to you. I know it can be hard, but we are here to offer the best service we can, no matter what

The boss is nodding at the power aligner's comment and you're now in a catch-22.
Tell them they're right and they win.
Keep defending your position and you dig yourself deeper.

Or imagine your boss is keen in getting discounts:

> **Power Aligner**: Did you ask if they could give a discount? Always ask for a discount, it can save us a lot of money

See what they're doing?
Acting like your future boss and presenting themselves as representing the company -"us"- (yeah, sure).

Even if you say you did ask for a discount, you are still proving yourself to them.

Power Strategy

Are shackles and the leader's condescension worth the 2nd in-command role?
Power aligners use a smart strategy well-founded in psychology.

To begin with, we all like people who are like us (Cialdini, 1994) and power aligners mimic their bosses' personalities and values.

Second, we are hardwired to seek in our ingroup people who support us, and, as legendary GE CEO Jack Welch explains in his book *Winning*, management wants to promote people who support their ideas.

... And It Works

As Haslam noticed in his "*The New Psychology of Leadership*", men who start off presenting themselves as dominant upstart leaders tend to fail.

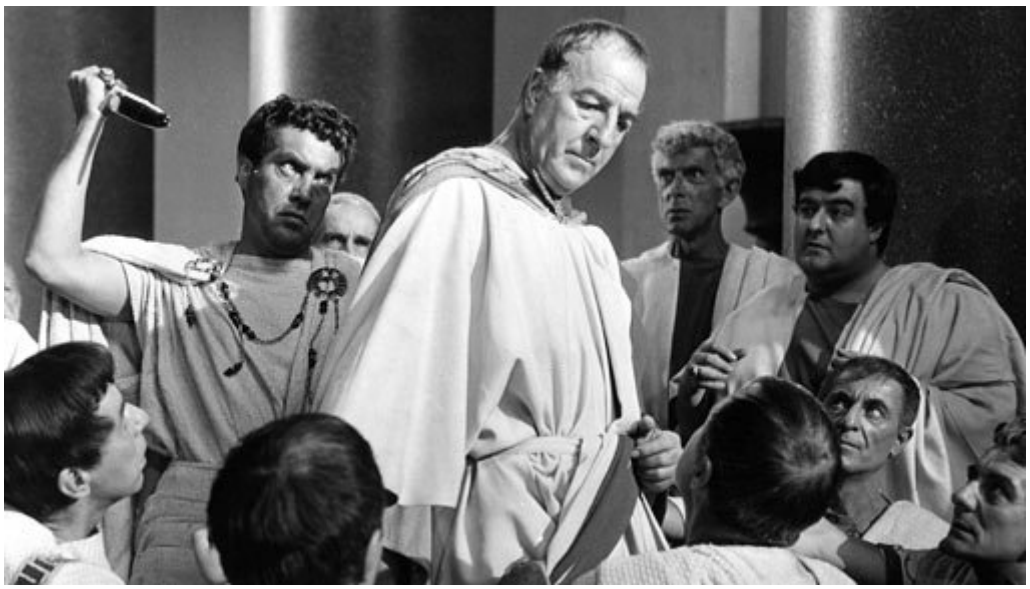
Those who start off listening, watching, and learning about the group tend to win (see BBC Prison Study as an example).

Slipstream Overtakers

Their behavior mimics the overtaking technique used in motorsports.

Similar to slipstream overtaking, slipstream players align with the boss today, to overtake him tomorrow.
There is a business example in a great movie called "C'eravamo Tanto Amati ". This is the dramatic scene where the final overtake takes place.

Or if you prefer a historical reference, take Brutus. He first became one of Caesar's favorite and most loyal senators.
And then he championed the palace intrigue that killed Caesar.



So always be watchful of reports who are “a little bit too much like you” and “a little bit too supportive”.
Some of them might be preparing the ground for their own reign. And as their former bosses, your head may be the first to roll.

Also read:

- **How to coddle bosses**: boss interpersonal strategies for quick promotions

Solution

Never, ever attack a power aligner publicly.

When you attack them frontally it’s as if you’re attacking your whole company.

They’re on the side of the powers that be. The values they (pretend to) espouse are the company’s values, and, never forget, bosses love having watchdogs who help them control the herd.

And don’t even think of taking them on the sideline and having an “eye-to-eye conversation”.
It’s too easy for them to deny everything.

Here is a funny example from Family Guy on what’s most likely to happen:

> **Player**: I wasn’t attacking you, I was just making a point <— The point ‘just happened’ to support the boss, of course

Power aligners will play dumb. They can’t do anything else or their whole game crumbles.
They must keep the pretense that they’re 100% genuine and their buy-in into the corporate missions and values is unwavering.

The result when you challenge them is always the same: they’ll look like a great company fit, real management material.
And you’ll look like someone who should better find a new job.

You must play the same game back on them.
Agree with them, talk about “we”, “us” and “team above all” (or whatever your team espouses).

Here is an example:

> **Power Aligner**: But that’s not what we stand for. It doesn’t matter what the customer said to you. I know it can

> be hard, we are here to offer the best service we can, no matter what
> **You:** You d*mn right!
> Thank you for reminding me!
> I let my passion get the best of me. I'm gonna call that customer first thing out of this meeting and personally invite him to dinner to make up for it

7. Shunners

"*Oh, I didn't see you standing there for the last 2h…* "

The shunning game is the office politics equivalent of stonewalling and gaslighting of intimate relationships.

The shunners form a clique to socially exclude the victim.
When the target approaches one of them, the shunner is curt, detached, or even ignores them.

The gaslighting effect starts when you ask why they're cutting you off… And they'll tell you that it's not true at all (ie.: it's all in your head).

Psychological Profile

Shunners are most often, albeit not exclusively, women.

It's a form of silent social punishment, it communicates that "we're a group, and you are not part of us".

The shunners usually gang up on people whom they perceive are a threat, but who are (still) weak enough to be victimized.

Is the new colleague a bit too beautiful, bright, or ambitious? Then she's not one of us.
Is the new recruit too good and ambitious? You're not welcome because you upset our little world of entrenched interests.

Those are the psychological drivers behind the shunning game.

In a way, shunning is a reactionary game of fear. Fear of change, fear of losing status, and fear of having our egos upset by the results of the new incumbent.

Example

- Insiders jokes that you don't get
- If you open up they look at each other as if to say "what the hell was that"
- They laugh at each other's jokes but not yours
- Warm to each other, but very distant from you

All these behaviors communicate that you don't belong and they'll be much happier if you leave.

Shunning games can also happen in your absence.
For example, Sarkozi with Merkel against (absent) Berlusconi:

> **Sarkozy**: (looks at Merkel and smiles until she smiles back) <— Sub-communication ⍰ Berlusconi is laughable, Merkel and I agree on that, he doesn't belong with us"

Solution

Shunning games can be challenging.

Now imagine Berlusconi had been there in the video above.
He'd *know* that Sarkozy is an enemy and he's forming a collation with Merkel against him.

But if he were to escalate openly, he would look childish and argumentative.

As a covert type of aggression, the shunning game can easily be denied.

A better strategy then is the good old "divide and conquer".
Work up the members of the groups who are *least* sold on office politicking until you befriend them and break the game.

A shunner dynamic that might be on the way to breaking:

> **Unconvinced shunner**: You look good
> **Angry shunner**: (turns bitter at her friend being friendly)
> **Unconvinced shunner**: What (still wants to be friends with the angry shunner, but also feels like she's being unreasonable)

The moment a shunner looks too spiteful and too into the shunning game compared to the other players is a sign that you're on your way to winning

8. Sociopath Player

Sociopaths follow the Pareto rule.

They focus 80% on office politics and 20% on actual work. Given how successful some of them are, we might even wonder what's more important…

Psychology Profile

There is already much literature on this website on sociopaths and psychopaths, including:

- Why sociopaths win the corporate race
- Best resources on the dark triad
- Dark psychology

And I can also highly recommend "How Companies Manipulate Employees".

In a nutshell, though, sociopaths see the workplace as a big chessboard and they have little to no empathy for people.

They consider themselves superior to everyone else and deserving of top management positions.

Many sociopaths can't stick to long years of continuous work which might put them at a disadvantage.
However, many sociopaths have superficial charm, are smooth talkers, and are good manipulators.

Example

Younger female sociopaths are some of the most dangerous scorporate political players.

Male bosses are easier to bamboozle with charm and sexual innuendos.
And full-on sex is not even always needed, that's how dumb some men are.

Elizabeth Holmes built a whole empire bamboozling investors, media, and a who's who board of directors which included former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Defense Secretary, star-general James Mattis.

General James Mattis is famous for his "macho quotes", including:

> **James Mattis**: When you men get home and face an anti-war protester (..) shake his hand. Then, wink at his girlfriend because she knows she's dating a pussy

Turns out macho-man James Mattis got so manipulated by the pus*y.
As chronicled by Carreyrou in *Bad Blood* indeed Theranos' board was powerless under Holme's guidance.

Solution

You must match their political savvy *while* delivering superior results *and* making sure people know who's delivering.

At parity of political dexterity, your superior results can win the day.

But just to be sure, create some internal enemies for the sociopaths.
It can be a boss who micromanages them, an exec who sees through them, or a higher-up who's afraid of the sociopath's ascension.

If you can combine all three, then you will win:

- Deliver superior results
  - & Make sure they're properly attributed to you
- Play the political game equally well
- Pitch them against someone powerful

In case you're in need of more, I have a case study up in Power University.

Can Office Politics Ever Be Stopped?

Corporations partially follow the rules of "public good games".

In public good games, if everyone contributes farily, everyone gains.

But if someone can cheat while others contribute, they gain far more.
So the incentive is always to play up and talk up the teamwork, but trip others and act more selfishly.

So I remain highly skeptical about any workplace being completely devoid of workplace politics.
Workplace politics are simply an extension of human nature.

We are designed, in good part, for the maximization of personal returns (Dawkins, 1976). Gossiping might be a direct offshoot of our nature of social animals (Wright, 1994).

It's a fascinating topic for a social scientist, but let's cut it to the chase here.

Where does this take us?
It means that to win the professional game, you must learn the rules of workplace politics.

We teach good men navigate work environments to advance and succeed in **Power University**

10 Office Power Moves (For Machiavellians Only!)

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 May 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Office power moves are actions and behaviors that assert your dominance and authority over colleagues and reports.

Why would you ever want to engage in power moves?

If you're really asking that question, get immediately off this page, please.
For the other Machiavellians who started salivating, this is your place.

Note: this article is a comedy piece!
It's inspired by a book called "*What Would Machiavelli Do*". Just like good comedy, it points out to some realistic power dynamics and principles, but in an exaggerated fashion that would not only be immoral if taken literally, but also ineffective and self-harming. **It's satire**. See the rest of the website for more effective strategies.

Just not as obvious and not as aggressively.
Maybe.
But the gist is the same.

This post will teach you how to assert power through the vast expanses of the office world.

This article is best suited for those who have some power already -why else would I waste my time with rookies and losers?-.

First lesson is a mindset: you da boss.

And whichever dark recesses those nine-to-fivers hail from, they must all know that you're the alpha male (or female) of the office tribe and that nobody fuxes with you.

Note: this is a humorous article (but it's still based on real power dynamics principles).

Contents

- #1. Task Them For Stuff They Were Going to Do Anyway

- #2. Fix Their Mistakes Before They Get A Chance to Self-Correct
- #3. The Melons Power Move
- #4. Territorial Pissing Power Move
- #5. Master The Fine Art of Offers They Can't Refuse
- #6. Show Them For The Poor Idiots They Are
- #7. Haze The F*ck Out of Them
- #8. Misspell All The Nobodies' Names
- #9. Always Let Others Adapt to You, Your Culture, Your Tastes
- #10. Let The Losers Wait
- #11. BONUS: Burn The Whole Thing Down

#1. Task Them For Stuff They Were Going to Do Anyway

Nothing makes you look as powerful and in control as telling others what to do.

Always be the first to tell others what to do.

Act quickly, before anyone else might score those precious points, or, God forbid, before they get a chance at doing it without being told to (brrr).

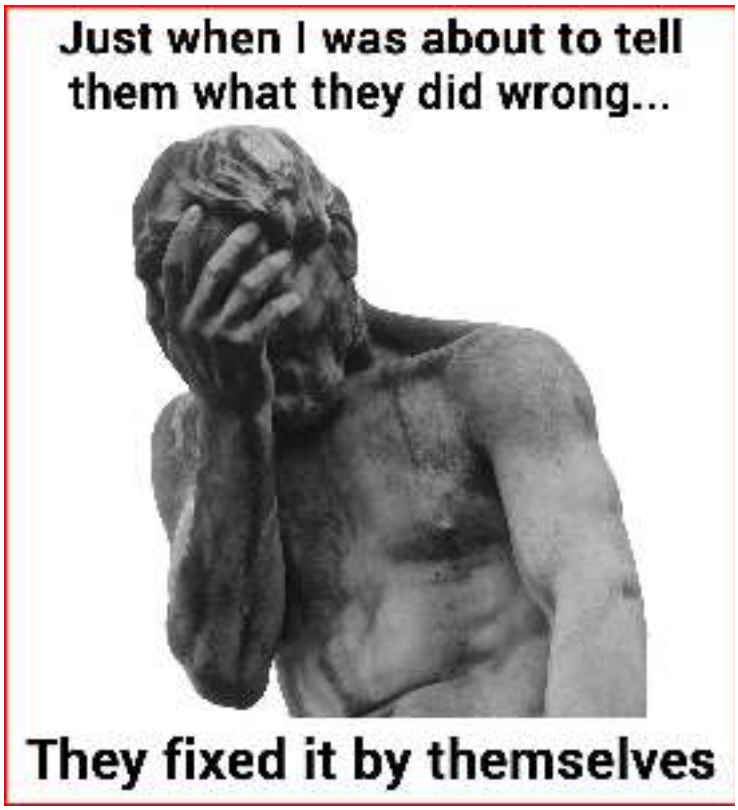
You never want to waste any chance at increasing your office's clout.

#2. Fix Their Mistakes Before They Get A Chance to Self-Correct

The more mistakes you fix, the more attentive you look—and the more you make others look sloppy.

The stark tension between "perfect you" and "sloppy everyone else" will soon loom so large that it will automatically propel you right to the CEO's spot.
And then you're finally free to make all the mistakes you want.

But again, be quick!
There is nothing worse in the world of office power moves than a colleague correcting his mistake before you can do it!



Don't allow that to happen!
It's always better to jump the gun and overcorrect than to miss an opportunity for power.

In case you're wrong, you still win.
Just say:

> **You**: Good, good. I want to make sure you're not as sloppy as you seem

Power moved!
You can never lose in this game of power by being too bold.

#3. The Melons Power Move

When life gives you melons, f*ck the melonade and make a career out of it.

There will come a day when CEOs won't pay stacked hookers anymore, but they'll plug their VR machines instead.
But until then, you're still on time to take advantage of the most easily manipulatable animal on planet Earth.

So strike while it's hot, sista.
Many men are still desperate to exchange a 'job' for another. So show the gals, and ask.

#4. Territorial Pissing Power Move

Does your company have separate areas for upper management and employees?
Flaunt the rules!

The rules are for the herd, and you're here to learn the office power moves of the movers and shakers.

Let your soul soar higher than the small confines of corporate borders.
Be a towering bastion for freedom, for equality.
Lead the herd towards a more just world.
Encroach upon the land of the wealthy and powerful as you carry the cross of the poor and oppressed.

Yours truly did just that in high school.

While professors had their own clean toilets marked as "reserved", the students were relegated to cattle-level stalls.
Do you think I was gonna have any of that?

I wasn't!

Until I got busted.

The principal, old fuck that he was, didn't get the pun. You should have seen his face when he was told:

> **Rebel power player**: yeah, but it didn't say reserved for whom

Power moved!

Good thing you can't fire rebel f*cks from high school.

#5. Master The Fine Art of Offers They Can't Refuse

Don't let money and rules constrain your creativity.
There is so much more you can exchange: think outside the box!

Tyson once said:

> **Everything is for sale. But the price is not always money**

Well, turns out that if you find out what they like, you might even *save* some money.

The Godfather, for example, found out that Senator Geary gladly paid for the license instead of being involved with her hooker's murder.

The big band leader who started Johnny Fontane preferred to put the signature on the contract instead of his brain. True story.

Yep, the Godfather is really good at thinking outside the box.

Papaya Power Move

But if that type of outside-the-box thinking doesn't work for you, don't worry.

All kinds of non-monetary offers don't entail violence.
And sometimes, some love is all you need.

And if the melons are lacking, try with papaya.

Sometimes thinking outside the box could also mean inviting people to peek inside the box.

Just be creative!

#6. Show Them For The Poor Idiots They Are

There is no point in making a lot of money if you can't rub it in the faces of poor people.

But in this world of PC, we are losing the art of a good rubbing it in.

That's why you must take it upon yourself to make those entry-level nobodies feel like the worthless pieces of cr@p they actually are.

A great office power move is to invite them out for a bash to make them feel like they are part of the group.
The secret to executing this power move well is to make them believe the company will pay. Those cheap f*cks love it when they can scrounge a meal on your dime.

But when the bill comes, big surprise!
Enjoy the look on their faces as you tell the waiter "we split the bill, thank you".

LOL.
They thought it was going to be fun ordering the most expensive booze in your company, eh?

Oh, what Mr. Nobody, you don't have that much money with you?
No worries, it will come off your salary on a monthly basis.

And you understand that by our internal regulations, we need to charge our interest fees.

#7. Haze The F*ck Out of Them

You know the famous Groucho Marx quote:

> I don't want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member

Indeed, you don't want lazy-asses, freeloaders commies like Groucho Marx in your club.
OK, that might have been a different Marx, so what, the point is the same.

You must set the bar high for your kingdom!

Plenty of sociological research shows that people don't value groups that are too easy to get into (Cialdini, 1984).

And that's why you must have them *earn* the entrance.
Cough up that entry fee until the last penny.
And then some more.

And this isn't f*cking high school.
It works the inverse here: the more senior they are, the harder you haze them.

Does the new CFO think he's above the rules?
Sure thing pal, pass me the paddle!

The CRO thinks it's not "safe" to record the hazing.
That's why he'll get a double dose!

That's how they earn their entry.
Everyone must earn their buttons. You don't want any young f*ck in the future to come in and tell your guys that they bought their buttons.

But most of all, you must make the point that only YOU are above the rules.
All the rest, they toe the line.
As long as you say so, at least.

#8. Misspell All The Nobodies' Names

I hope you didn't buy into that goody good shit from "*How to Win Friends*".

Here is the quote, so that you can more easily erase it from your brain:

> **Mr Softie**: Remember that a person's name is to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.

And since Mr. Softie Carnegie hundreds of thousands of execs have been pissing all their power away by lowering themselves to the status of nobodies.

But not you!

Real power players showcase power with the weight of their disrespect. Starting with the very first names of the nobodies around them -which is pretty much everyone-.

Here is a rule of thumb: the more exotic the name sounds, the more power bosses misspell it.
They want to make them feel like barely accepted guests in their office. A distinct feeling that they're only there as long as they produce.

But at the minimum mistake, you sent them packing to… Oh, what's that? "Oh, you really need your VISA?"
OK, thank you for letting me know about your weak hand, as if this negotiation couldn't get any easier.

Fair deal!

The Art of Misspelling Names

And you might wonder, what if they are called "John", "Jim", or anything too easy to misspell?

I'm glad you asked!
Just because they're from your same place it doesn't mean they get treated any better!

And that's where you show why you're boss and you take it to the next level with your creativity.
You will call "John", "Jim".
And you will call "Jim", "John".

Another great option is to say that you're sorry, but they look so similar.
Bonus points if they don't look like each other in the slightest.

#9. Always Let Others Adapt to You, Your Culture, Your Tastes

You want to make sure people know this:

> You're not jumping on the inclusivity fad.

Let Justin Trudeau lead the way there:

> **Justin Trudeau**: (with nasal, high-pitched voice): we like to say peoplekind, not necessarily mankind, it's more inclusive

After Trudeau's snowflake move, this is what happened:

- 1/3 of the power Gods debated whether they should step back in and annihilate "people kind"
- 1/3 of the power Gods bet against humanity to survive much longer
- 1/3 of the power Gods can't stop laughing

Anyway, back to us.
How do you nail this down?
Just do the opposite of what Trudeau would do.

Trudeau would include other cultures?
You diss them.

Does Trudeau respect minorities?
You always side with the majority that governs the minority.

Trudeau would call the Christmas party the holiday party?
You know better.

A real office king has everyone else adapt to his culture.
Of course, it doesn't matter whether or not you're a practicing Christian; it's just to show that others have to adapt to you.

Oh, and it's meat in every dish. Just in case the vegetarians forgot that the majority rules.

Display Superiority With Disdain

Real power players don't buy the PC BS from their own HR.
They just made that stuff up to maximize the nobodies' output.

And for the petty middle-level managers. They're the conscientious ones who actually believe the corporate lies.

Power players are not really proud of their own cultures and countries. They know that top dogs are top dogs anywhere you go, and they have been the same any time throughout history.

But they still show disdain for anything they don't like, often including whatever they consider 'different'.
Just to show superiority and to decrease everyone else's status.

Here's how it's done, fellas:

That's a proper power player.
F*ck you and your culture, let's drink. When I say so.

#10. Let The Losers Wait

You must always show everyone that your time matters more than all their time combined.

That's why you call a big meeting and then you stroll with a 20 minutes delay saying:

> **You**: sorry the delay guys, I had some important stuff to do.

Say it with a superior tone.
Then, if they still don't get what a bunch of useless c*nts they are, you add:

> **You**: Alright, let's get through this quick so I can get back to do important stuff

If they still don't get it, you might have gone too far by following Michael Gerber's advice and making your business easy to execute.

You know, kings can get lonely too.
So hire some losers who can at least get your office power moves. There is no pleasure otherwise.

#11. BONUS: Burn The Whole Thing Down

What are you telling me?

You're not yet the top dog of the office world?

Cauterize that dishonor ASAP.

First, changed your mindset and start thinking with power in mind.

Take things personally.
That feedback with "room for improvement"?
F*ck him!

What about taking ownership of your mistakes?
No, f*ck that.

Growing from failures and feedback
What are you, a hippy now?

Use it all as dark motivation to handle your boss appropriately.
Much better use of your time.

Kevin Spacey doing that? Oh, the irony.

But a real Machiavelli quits the office with some proper flames in his wake.

The biggest office power move is always to bring the whole thing down and bury the idiots who failed to see you as king material.

Enter, the Mister Farage power move.

Look who's laughing now, f*ckers!

That rainy island is still in the EU, it might never leave and this whole charade just cost hundreds of millions?
Whatever.
Farage won.
He showed them.
Mic drop.

Also see:

- **The best power moves**. Ever.

The Wisdom of Crowds: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Wisdom of Crowds is an analysis of group dynamics and decision-making. James Surowiecki, the author, makes the case that groups usually make better decisions than individuals, including individual experts.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- More Golden Nuggets
- The Wisdom of Crowds Quotes
- Criticism
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Collective wisdom is, in many instances, superior to the individual wisdom of even the biggest expert
- There are important limitations of crowd wisdom, most of a sociological nature, that we must be aware of
- We can leverage collective wisdom with decentralized systems designed to take advantage of crowd-sourced decision-making

Summary

James Surowiecki is a journalist, and former staff writer at The New Yorker, where he wrote the "Financial Page" column.
He was previously at Slate, a publication whose articles I often enjoyed.

Obviously, Surowiecki lacks a background in sociology or psychology, but that, in my opinion, means little if one takes care of his own education.

#1. Crowds Make Better Decisions Than Individuals

The central theme of "*The Wisdom of Crowds*" is stated somewhat before the start

James Surowiecki uses several examples to make his point, including:

- A crowd guessing the weight of an ox better than any individual in the crowd did (full story here)
- A group of people guessed the location of a lost submarine better than any single individual in the group
- The crowd of "Who Wants to Be Millionaire" provided better answers than any single expert

Surowiecki goes even further by saying that crowds make better decisions if they are composed of not-so-knowledgeable and not-so-smart agents.

He says:

> What Page found was that a group made of smart agents and not-so-smart agents almost always did better than groups made of only smart agents.

Page is Larry Page, and the author attributes the success of Google to Google tapping into *the wisdom of crowds*.

The problem with intelligence or knowledge is that intelligent or knowledgeable people tend to resemble each

other, and the difference in perspectives decreases.

That doesn't mean that intelligence or knowledge are irrelevant: they are *not* irrelevant, and they're both crucial traits.
But it does mean that diversity is, indeed, extremely valuable.

#2. The Proof That Crowds Are Smart

The author says that the fact that very few people can beat the market is proof that the crowd is very good at making decisions.

If so few people can beat the market, why do we cling to the idea that the right expert will save us?

My Note:
It's a good question, indeed. But I'm not convinced about this analysis: all the big funds in the market are led by experts.
Most money in the market is managed by experts.
So the stock market is not a good example of an "average crowd".

Quoting "*Fooled by Randomness,*" the author also says that those who eventually beat the market are rarely beating the market because of their expertise but are simply the product of randomness.

#3. You Need 5 Elements For A Wise Crowd

Not all crowds are wise, and, as we shall see, some of them are irrational and plainly do stupid stuff.

Here are the 5 elements that are necessary for a wise crowd:

1. **Diversity of Opinion**: individuals must draw different backgrounds and beliefs and base their opinions on private information
2. **Independence**: individuals opinion must be independent and not swayed by the group
3. **Decentralization**: decentralized systems allow an individual to draw on local knowledge and react faster

The top three are the conditions for a group to be "intelligent" and reach wise conclusions.

To make the group functional and to keep working, the system also needs:

1. **Aggregation**: there must be a system that aggregates the decentralized individuals' private judgment into collective wisdom
2. **Trust**: each individual must trust that the group is fair and that punishment is handed out for rule-breakers

#4. Limitations of Wisdom of Crowds

The author also goes into sociology and social psychology.

He talks about herd behavior and a few well-known sociological experiments.
And he says:

> If too many people adopt the same strategy, then the strategy stops being sensible and the crow stops being smart.

Herd Savior: Overconfident People

A cascade of information is what leads to herd behavior, even if we are not in the physical presence of a group.

A cascade of information is made possible by people who value public information more than private information.

That's where overconfident people come in handy: they value their own personal information and conclusions more than the group's conclusions. They make the public's information seem less certain, and they encourage others to question the group's conclusions.

#5. To make cooperation work you need conditional consenters

When it comes to cooperation, we can differentiate among different kinds of individuals.
The author quotes Fehr and Gaetcher (Fehr and Gächter, 2000) saying that:

- 25% of people are selfish, -or "rational" in economic terms-
- a small minority are altruists, who contribute no matter what
- the biggest groups are conditional consenters

The secret to getting a cooperative group going is to engage the conditional consenters.
And that's the problem of many public good games: by the end of it, most conditional consenters are no longer cooperating.

#6. Cooperation Problems in Tax System

James Surowiecki ends up discussing topics that have little to do with "wisdom of the crowds" but that are equally, if not more, interesting.

He talks about taxes as an example of a cooperation problem.
For a group to cooperate, he says, people must feel that:

1. **Trusting others**: people are happy to chip in as long as they know that others are doing the same (contingent consenters)
2. **Trusting the government**: to spend the taxes wisely and for the public good
3. **Certainty of punishment**: people feel like the system does not work if cheating does not get punished

My Note:
This is very good social psychology

#7. Vindicative Players Make The World Fairer

The author delves much into behavioral economics and talks about the willingness of people to punish bad behavior even when it will cost them to do so (a subset of "strong reciprocity").

He says that even if people don't do it for the common good, the result is the same: strong (and vindicative) reciprocators help make the world a fairer place.

Says the author:

> Individually irrational acts can produce a collectively rational outcome

I really loved this part, as I always thought the same.

#8. Hierarchies & Power Dynamics Thwart Group's Wisdom

Groups can also thwart collective wisdom by virtue of the power dynamics inherent in every group.

For example, you get the most dominant person to speak the most, albeit he might not necessarily be the most knowledgeable person.
And the more he speaks, the more people consider him credible and trustworthy, which, again, can only compound the original problem.

More Golden Nuggets

- Science is cumulative, every scientist builds on other people's work
- The healthiest markets are dominated by fear and greed at the same time: only with different and opposing attitudes can the market function well
- Less information is more: traders with too much information make wrong choices because we tend to give too much weight to the news
- Herd mentality in physical groups is what turns a crowd into a mob
- In any crowd, there are some people who'd never riot and some who'd always riot (instigators). The majority joins if the instigators reach the tipping point, and when a riot starts, the instigators shape the collective behavior

The Wisdom of Crowds Quotes

On the paradox of the wisdom of crowds:

> Paradoxically, the best way for a group to be smart is for each person in it to think and act as independently as possible.

Talking about the crowds of "Who Wants to Be A Millionaire":

> The experts did OK (65%). But they paled in comparison to the audiences. Those random crowds of people with nothing better to do on a weekday afternoon than sitting on a studio picked the right answer 91% of the time.

Talking about the wisdom of the crowd when the crowd has little knowledge to make a choice:

> At the height of the Cold War half of all Americans thought the Soviet Union was a member of NATO.
> Is it really plausible that Americans voters will really make sensible policy choices?

That says a lot about democracy :).

Criticism

There is some criticism in this otherwise good book. Some of it I found online and agreed with, and some of it I am moving myself:

1. Statistical sampling in disguise, not crowd wisdom

Once you add all the "exceptions" to the "wisdom of the crowd," it seems more like the author is talking about statistical sampling than real-life group interactions.

2. Little criticism of distributed intelligence systems

The author makes the case that the wisdom of the crows works best with distributed intelligence systems where different people chip in, like Wikipedia, for example.

However, he does not mention the problems of such systems. It's been the case, for example, that knowledgeable writers on Wikipedia have been corrected by less knowledgeable people and couldn't manage to get the truth across.

The idea that collective wisdom outweighs experts also presents counter-examples, like, for example, Kasparov beating "the rest of the world" in the chess match "Kasparov VS The Rest of The World".

The crowd might also be poor at coming up with totally new ideas as the outliers get pulled back into the average of known and more popular solutions.

3. Some unscientific "proof"

The author says that when the Challenger burned, the stock market "knew" which company was at fault, even though there was no official information as to which of the many contractors was to blame.

That's just silly.

So what now, we go from "crowd wisdom" to a crowd of fortune tellers?

4. Honesty developed because it's profitable?

The author discusses some history of capitalism as well.

He makes the point that capitalism is built on trust and that we trust each other much more than we think we do (ie.: trusting that a tech product you buy online or at a shop is a huge act of trust).

He is right, but I don't agree with his conclusion that trust develops because it's profitable.
That would entail everyone making a rational decision and sticking to it.

And people don't really work like that.

5. If scientific replication fails you should doubt yourself?

The author suggests that if a replication study fails, then you should righteously doubt your own experimentation skills and not the original study.

I find that concept misguided and at the root of the herd behavior that the author himself discusses.
The fact that an experiment has been successful doesn't mean it was "correct' or that it describes universal truth, as has been made abundantly clear by the current replication crisis.

6. Some misunderstanding of how markets work

The author says that the hedge fund Long Term Capital Management was operating on illiquid assets and making very little money on each trade "vacuuming up nickles".

But, he says, they made lots of money thanks to leverage.

But that doesn't make sense to me, because more leverage in small markets with small differences in prices will not make you earn lots of money.

When the trading volumes are too small, more leverage is not helpful.

7. The Crime Against Italy

LOL this party had me laughing as I could see myself in the author's description.

He is referring to Italy losing to South Korea in the 2002 World Cup.

It was one of the best Italian teams ever, with the defensive line being possibly the very best ever (Buffon, Nesta, Maldini, Cannavaro, anyone who knows football could hardly disagree on the quality of those guys).

The author says that the Italians made up the conjure.
But no proof of corruption does not mean there was no corruption.

I personally still remain open to the idea that the match *might* have been fixed, and time has proven that referee Moreno does not shy away from illegal activities.
The author also defends the referee's background, saying he's been a FIFA official referee for years.

But says little, also considering FIFA's CEO Blatter, is a notorious scumbag.

Review

The Wisdom of Crowds has relatively low reviews, and I don't see why.

In many ways, what the author describes is similar to the system Ray Dalio uses in Bridgewater that he describes in his highly acclaimed book "*Principles*".

I found "*The Wisdom of Crowds*" to be insightful in many ways. Its central tenet is controversial, but it's well explained and it makes sense.
It's not super strong when it comes to actual research because the beautiful anecdotal stories mean little in terms of proof.

Yet, the author is sometimes, -but not always- is also the first to criticize and expose the limitations of his own examples.

I can say that I really learned a lot from "*The Wisdom of Crowds*".

Particularly, it made me less of an extremist in my critical approach to crowds and groups. And I am thankful for that.

In a nutshell, I have reservations about some of the claims, but I can still highly recommend "*The Wisdom of Crowds*" to any social scientist and to anyone who's interested in learning about people.

Also read:

- **Best books on sociology and psychology**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Transformation Mastery by Julien Blanc: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Transformation Mastery is a video course on overcoming trauma and subconscious mental blocks. In the course, former pick-up coach Julien Blanc shares his approach based on the "accepting and releasing" concept.

Contents

- Notes
- CONS
- PROS

- Transformation Mastery vs. Power University
  - Review
  - Transformation Mastery: Is It Worth It?
  - Why Power University Stands Out

Notes

About the Author:
Julien Blanc says he was shy, anxious, and terrible with people. He then swung in the opposite direction—which happens to most people who follow RSD– until he had another breakdown.
That was when he was in the middle of a scandal and went on TV to be abused by the CNN anchor.

After that defining moment of his life, Julien found his footing again, and he now teaches what he learned with "*Transformation Mastery*".

#1. The 3 Phases of Transformation

Julien introduces his program, divided into three segments:

- Awareness (being aware that you suck)
- proof (taste the proof of abundance for yourself)
- permanence (learn to stay in the 10/10 state)

I found the segments a bit confusing, to be honest, as the content didn't exactly match the segment.

These are some of the bits I liked, though:

#2. Inspired Actions VS Desperate Action

If you go talk to girls from a place of neediness, you will rarely move at all, and when you do, you will fail.

That's desperate action.

An inspired action is acting with effortlessness, "just because".

#3. Scarcity VS Abundance

Julien Blanc revisits here another popular theme of seduction and pick-up communities, the "scarcity and abundance mentality".

Scarcity is about running away from your fears.

Abundance is about enjoying the present moment, enjoying the journey, and enjoying life.

However, you can't reach abundance by trying. If you try to reach abundance, you're still coming from a place of scarcity, which means you're lacking something.

The only way to achieve abundance is by starting with abundance.

My Note: Catch 22?
This seemed like a circular argument.

#4. Don't Depend on External Sources for Happiness

In this section, he basically describes the hedonic treadmill and how we get used to anything we have.

You can't be happy chasing stuff.

The second issue with chasing your happiness through things and women is that, as much as that stuff can bring you fleeting pleasure, it also has the power to bring you pain.

#5. Let Go of Everything

You must let go of all emotions to get there. Even the positive ones—it's a state of being.

Achieving your transformation is a process of removing, not accumulating, and gathering.

Whatever you do, it's not about reaching for a better life. You can do it and work at it, but you don't need it.

#6. Meditation Process

The meditation process is about recalling, accepting, and letting go.

You accept whatever you fear, whatever scares you, and whatever worries you.
You don't fight it and you don't even force to let it go.
Let it fill your mind, and realize it's just a thought, it's just energy, it doesn't hurt you.

Then snap out of it.

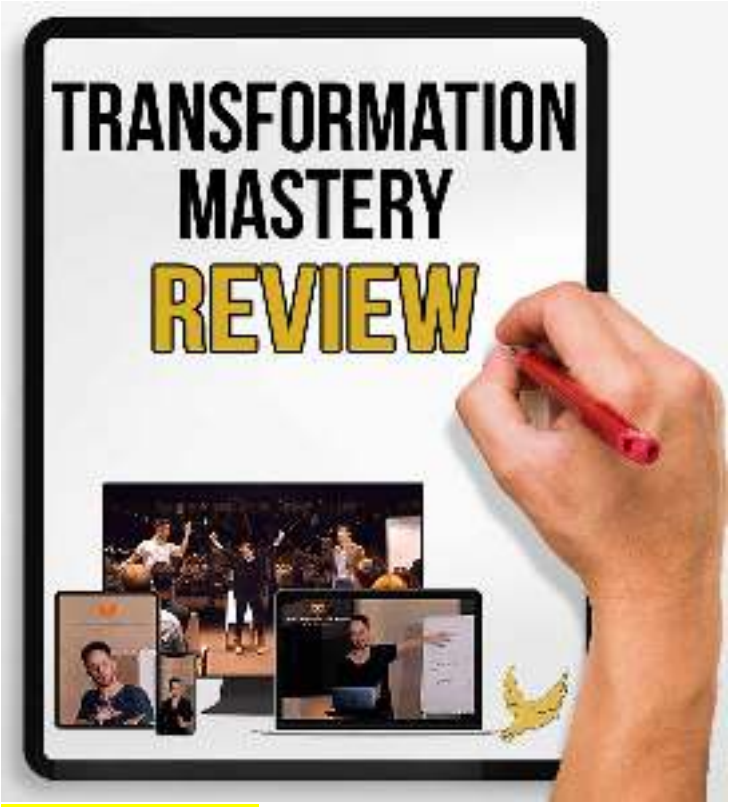
The Idea Behind The Meditation

Your ego adds compensation for your subconscious. To reach abundance you must get rid of all the bad stuff in your unconscious mind.

And let go of any goal, there is no finish line.

Bonuses

In the bonuses, there is live footage from the seminars and a book review -Man's Search for Meaning-, which to be honest, felt a bit like unneeded space filler.



TPM's editorial review

CONS

These are some of the aspects I didn't like in "*Transformation Mastery*":

1. You must be a 10/10 (really?)

Julien often repeats this idea of going from "3/10" to "10/10", as if that were the state goal you should always be in.

I find this idea of "always being in a great state" baseless.
Who says that "total happiness" is a goal you should aim for?

I not only think that the idea of having to be 10/10 as often as possible is poor, but that it might work the opposite way (a theme that Mark Manson explores in "*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck*" and, partially, in "*Everything Is Fucked*")

I believe that there is much power and growth from not being 10/10 and from embracing your pain.

2. Assumes the students are in a terrible predicament

Julien seems to address "*Transformation Mastery*" to students who are in a "terrible spot" (the "three out of ten" thing).

That doesn't make it a good fit for people who are generally fine and just want better emotional adjustment.
Also, be careful with people who make you feel worse than you actually are. It's not what Julien probably intended, but it can be a dark-psychology power move to increase the follower's dependence on the leader.

3. Some woo-woo stuff

Julien says it's not "woo-woo", yet there is quite some woo-woo content.

4. Some pop-psychology

Transformation Mastery is a mix of some red pill content and some pop psychology.

It says that you are bombarded with stuff from socialization which you never question, and that goes into your subconscious and shapes you the way are.

You never even realize what shapes you until you learn to see it. But instead of the red pill, Julien proposes a pair of glasses to help you see the truth.

The subconscious part is not the most scientific explanation you will find and the socialization bit is a bit of a standard red-pill narrative (also not very accurate).

Some other popular self-help myths I didn't particularly agree with:

- You must kill your ego (no, you must leverage your ego)
- Stop making it a goal and you're more likely to reach it

5. What's the author's authority in dealing with trauma?

The course is based on the book "*Letting Go*", which is also unscientific and unsubstantiated.

If you need healing from trauma, please look into therapy.

⚠ 6. No refunds

So be aware.

PROS

A few very good insights and mindsets, like:

1. Get out of your head
2. Stop trying to filter yourself
3. Don't put a front, present yourself self to yourself first, and to others second
4. Radical acceptance: accept who you are with flaws and everything
5. Nihilism will help you, not hinder you: accept that you will die someday. Or soon (also read: how to leverage death for life)
6. Whatever you do, and whatever happens to you, it's not the end of the world. We are nothing on this earth (also read: how to leverage our insignificance)
7. Let go of all your needs. Focus on acceptance and contentment from within

The above might not be groundbreaking in the sense that it's new stuff.
And there is a reason why it's not new: it's been around for a while because it's true. And because it works.

The real question is: will you internalize it?

Transformation Mastery vs. Power University

These two courses are inherently different, but can co-exist for a better self-development progress.

If you've addressed emotional reactivity and you're already stable in your sense of self, then the next step is applying that grounded confidence in real-world relationships, dating, and social dynamics.
That's where **Power University** comes in.
Power University focuses on:

- Building social status
- Gaining respect
- Dating high-value women
- Leading in relationships and life

In short:
Transformation Mastery is inward stability.
Power University is outward power and effectiveness.

Review

The main concept behind "*Transformation Mastery*" is quite simple, and potentially effective.

And it's the revisitation of an ancient message in Eastern philosophies and religions.

And it's this: **the happiness that you crave is not to be found in the external world**.
No women or money will make you happy or content.

That's the core principle of "*Transformation Mastery*".
This is not a course on how to get things -or women- indeed. It's a course on learning contentment, acceptance, and completion.

And in healing trauma.

I partially agree with the first message but I found the "healing trauma part" more lacking.

Finally, I'd have to wonder if it's fair for a non-trained individual to address traumas.
How does someone without any proper psychology and psychiatric training deliver a program on healing oneself?
I personally found it a bit simplistic for people who need to heal from traumas and mental blocks.

And that's even though I liked both Julien's style of meditation and the overall message.

Transformation Mastery: Is It Worth It?

Well, the price tag is high but that depends on your pockets, too.

It wasn't exactly what I thought it was and this type of content doesn't resonate with me at this point in my life.

But that's just me.

Whether or not *Transformation Mastery* is worth it or not, will depend on what you need, how much cash you have lying around, and what other courses/books and resources are available to you.

Why Power University Stands Out

If you're looking for a science-backed approach that delivers practical results, Power University may be for you.

Unlike Transformation Mastery, it focuses on actionable strategies grounded in evidence-based frameworks to help you gain status, respect, and attraction.

Works for both social and professional settings:

Check Power University

The Antidote: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Antidote (2012) takes a critical look at self-help looking for common advice that is unscientific, wrong, or even plainly harmful.
Burkeman then proposes a different path of self-help and happiness through stoicism, proper psychology, and the acceptance of death.

TPM Strategic Note: Self-help is sub-optimal because it doesn't incude power dynamics and the 'darker' side of human nature
Most self-help fails because it ignores reality, trade-offs, and power dynamics. This book starts from a good idea and delivers several good insights, but falls short of delivering a full critique. See:
Why self-help fails smart men

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - #1. Best-Selling Self-Help Is Banal
  - #2. Wrong Messages From Self-Help
  - #3. A Negative Approach to Self-Help
  - #4. Self-Help Inflated the Need For Self-Esteem
  - #5. Immortality Projects Can Turn Antisocial
  - #6. Don't Throw The Baby With The Bath Water
- Extra Insights
- CONS
- Review

Overview

- The popular self-help advice of focusing on the positives does not help
- It's by accepting the very same things we want to avoid that we can transcend them

Notes

About the Author:
Oliver Burkeman is a journalist writing a psychology column for the newspaper The Guardian. He has been covering topics of self-help before.

#1. Best-Selling Self-Help Is Banal

I agree with Burkeman when he says that when you strip away the fluff and marketing from even the most famous self-help books, the messages are rather banal.

For example:

- The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People basically says to decide what matters for you in life and then do it
- How to Win Friends and Influence People tells you to be friendly and to use people's first names

This is part of what we call at TPM the ‘best-seller quality tradeoff’, such as that to sell big, books must be simple enough for most people to understand enjoy.
This is why I stopped reading best-sellers:

- Why I stopped reading best-sellers

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And when the messages get more specific, says the author, another problem arises:

#2. Wrong Messages From Self-Help

When self-help gurus give more specific suggestions, their suggestions are often not supported by scientific research.

Two examples the author introduces right away:

- Venting your anger makes you angrier, not less
- Visualizing your goals doesn’t make it any more likely you will achieve them
- Focusing on how well things will go reduces people’s motivation to achieve them

The central theme of the book, also introduced early on, is this:

- Striving to make yourself happier is exactly what makes you miserable

This is a theme that has also been embraced by self-help skeptic author Mark Manson in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving A Fuck* and *Everything Is Fucked*.

The author reviews a few more mistaken self-help popular myths, and for a deeper overview I can recommend this article:

- **Self-Help Myths: The Full List**

And if you want more also check pop-psychology myths and the replication crisis.

	Scientist	Pop-Psychologist
What's Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
The Use of Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Ego VS Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Studies VS Theories	[illegible]	[illegible]
Sharing Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Science VS Opinions	[illegible]	[illegible]

#3. A Negative Approach to Self-Help

The other central tenet of *The Antidote* is that the best way of reaching contentedness and developing ourselves is to embrace the exact same things we are trying to forget.

For example:

- Embrace uncertainty
- Accept insecurity
- Value death instead of pretending it'll never happen

People who don't accept insecurity are the ones who try to build big walls and protect themselves from any possible event.
But that's not possible, and only heightens the feeling of insecurity and increases stress and anxiety.

> **We build castle walls sto keep out the enemy. But it's the building of the walls that causes the enemies to spring into existence in the first place.**
> -Oliver Burkeman

#4. Self-Help Inflated the Need For Self-Esteem

Burkeman challenges the idea that high self-esteem is anything to strive for.

Assigning yourself a high rating also means that tomorrow you could assign yourself a negative one.

And, furthermore, should you even recognize yourself as a separate entity from the rest of the world?
Is that good for you?

It could be much better to rate your performance without referring that performance back to you.
Bad performance or good performance should have nothing to do with your self-esteem.

A Case For Not Having A Self At All

The author here introduces Eckardt Tolle, author of "*The Power of Now*".

The main idea here is that we all think of "I" as our thinking brain. But we are not out thoughts.
And when we can step back we can become one with the universe and, as Tolle says, *using* our brain (instead of being used and controlled by it).

Removing your ego from the equation eventually leads to the ability to not take things personally and, as Ray Dalio advises in *Principles,* the ability to look at yourself from above, as a machine.

#5. Immortality Projects Can Turn Antisocial

This section of The Antidote was the best and most instructive.

The author says that all religions, political projects, and wars are our attempts at immortality.

Whenever mortality was made salient, people would agree more with Bush's Iraq invasion and were more likely to vote for Bush (Ogilvie et al, 2005).

When reminded of death people become more supportive of immortality projects such as:

- Wars
- Acts of heroism
- Moralistic punishments
- Less sharing and trusting
- More hoarding
- Support for totalitarian charismatic leaders

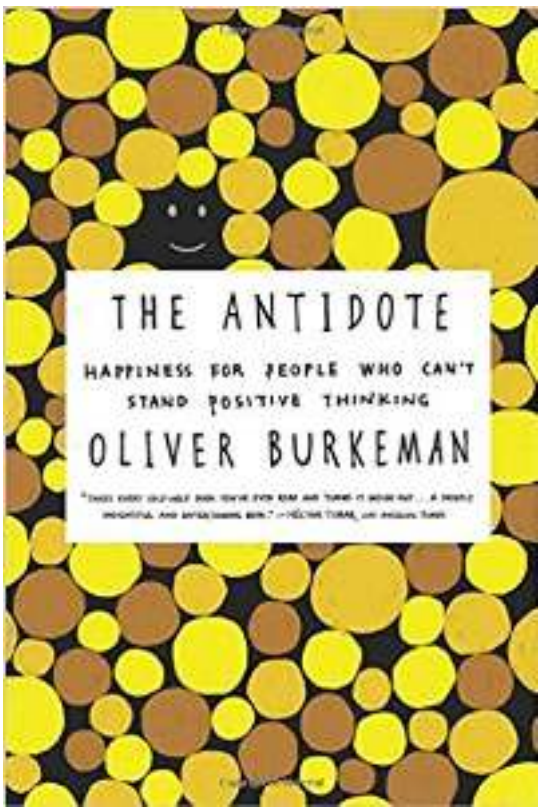
#6. Don't Throw The Baby With The Bath Water

The author says that a path from negativity is not always the best and optimism is wonderful.

Goal-setting and visualization are also helpful. But we shouldn't overvalue the power of positivity and undervalue the power of acceptance.

Extra Insights

- Everyone loves to say that "there is a lot of insecurity in the world", except that everyone said that in every era
- **We exaggerate the threats to our lives**: staying home and sitting on the couch might be more dangerous than traveling for our long-term health
- When you have no options to achieve anything you're also not misled by the idea that only by achieving them you'll be happy
- Setting goals can be harmful if we become fixated on them



CONS

I really enjoyed *The Antidote*, and I think it could have been even better if it were not for:

- **Disjointed & off-topic stories**

Some of the topics felt like they didn't belong to the narrative of the book. The airport security checks, for example, felt like it didn't belong and, albeit interesting, didn't add value to the main argument.

- **Some of the evidence says little**

The author implies that self-help helps little because the countries where self-help sells the most are not the happiest countries.
But that says little and is no proof of anything.

- **Vulnerability & happiness, I missed the connection**

The author introduces Brene Brown, author of *Daring Greatly*, and her concept of vulnerability.
But I missed the connection between vulnerability and happiness, especially in the example of the inhabitants of poor slums (Kibera in the book).

The author seems to suggest that people in Kibera are happier because they are vulnerable.
But that didn't make sense to me.

Review

I like the main idea behind *The Antidote*, which is to put self-help under much-needed scientific scrutiny.

I like it so much indeed that I have done so myself and you can check my article self-help myths for the most updated wrong claims from self-help.

Ultimately, I can recommend "*The Antidote*" to anyone who's into self-help and to anyone who appreciates a more

scientific, well-researched approach to self-help (which should be anyone).

Check the:

- **Best** (and most rigorous) **psychology books**
- **Naive self-help**: why self-help fails

Letting Go: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Letting Go (2012) teaches readers to release all their negative and suppressed emotions to self-heal and reach enlightenment.

Contents

- Summary
- Criticism
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About The Author:
David Hawkins (1927-2012) was a psychiatrist, author, and "spiritual teacher".
There is not so much information about him, and when I Googled his name, "SpiritualWiki" came up instead of Wikipedia. Needless to say, that's not necessarily a bad thing, so let's dissect this book.

#1. The Three (Bad) Ways We Handle Feelings

Most people handle unpleasant feelings in one of the following three ways:

1. **Suppression and repression**: they are two sides of the same coin, with suppression being conscious and repression being unconscious. Denial and projection of our bad feelings into others are both examples
2. **Expression**: venting and raging
3. **Escape**: getting ourselves too busy—or high—to think about it, It includes drugs, alcohol, risk-seeking, and workaholism

The author says that projection is the most common way of dealing with unpleasant feelings.

Projection is an internal psychological mechanism by which we try to maintain our self-esteem by "blaming others" for our internal troubles.

But since we project all our negativity onto others, it's responsible for aggression, hatred, and even wars.

#2. Why You Want to Let Go

Simply put, bottling up negativity poisons you.

It has negative consequences for your mental health, physical health, mood, and level of happiness.
Your decision-making abilities are also impaired because you base your decisions on negative feelings and distorted reality.

David Hawkins uses a computer phraseology to explain it:

> Garbage in, garbage out

The negative states are the garbage in, and the decisions that are based on them are the garbage out.

#3. Why Letting Go Works

The stress and anger caused by our unpleasant feelings cannot be coped with through escapism or suppression.

It's an internal feeling, and it must be dealt with by releasing it.

Once we are able to feel the emotion and then release it, we also release all the negative influence it has over us.

#4. How To Let Go

Letting Go never really goes through the exact steps of how to let go.
But here is the process I teased out for you:

1. **Allow yourself to feel the emotion**
   - Do not resist it, do not judge it, and do not try to change it. You will face resistance to letting go, sit with it without resisting the resistance
2. **Focus on the feeling**
   - Thoughts might come up but do not think, focus on the feeling and the sensations instead
3. **Let it go**
   - When you're ready, let the feeling go and snap out of it
4. **Rinse and repeat**
   - The feeling might come back, which means there is more of it to let go. Rinse and repeat the process until it's gone for good

How do you know when the process has been successful?
Successfully letting go means erasing the feeling from your consciousness.
So you will know because you have no more negative emotions within yourself about anything or anybody.

#5. How to Handle Past Traumas

The author suggests changing the way you see and interpret past events.

This is usually called "reframing".
In simple terms, it means you can give a different meaning to what happened, or change the narrative to see how it helped you improve, or how it made you stronger.

He quotes Viktor Frankl, author of "*Man's Search for Meaning*".
Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, says that the people who survived were those who found a deeper meaning in life to live on.

#6. Feelings You Must Let Go Of

The author then dedicates a portion of his book to all the negative feelings that we are bottling up and that we should instead let go of.
This includes:

- Blame
- Grief (too much grief drives people away and it's true, says the author, that when you laugh, the world laughs with you and when you cry, you cry alone.)
- Anger
- Resentment
- Fear
- Guilt

- Pride (we identify with things and feel like we need to defend and fight for them)
- Desire (it underlines that you are lacking something)

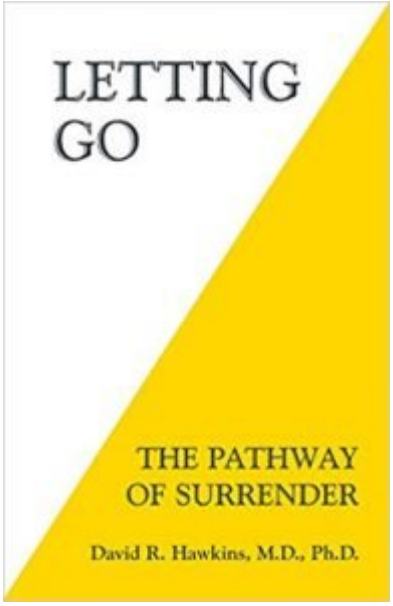
The most interesting thing for me was the need to let go of people's approval. Once you can let go of the need to be approved and liked, says the author, you become immune to the manipulation of marketing, advertising, and the media.

#7. FAQs

Toward the end of Letting Go, there was a list of questions and answers, which felt like a big marketing promo.

Basically, it says that letting go:

- Greatly helps alcoholics and supports the AA process
- Does not contradict any other religion
- Does not increase promiscuity, quite the contrary, because promiscuity is an attempt to overcome unconscious fears (really?)



Criticism

David Hawkins prominently features the titles "MD" and "Ph.D." (*authority principle of influence*, anyone?) next to his name.

But titles are no guarantee of science or thoroughness of information.
Not only does "Letting Go" fall short when put under more rigorous scrutiny, but the author's general approach is also extremely unscientific.

He overgeneralizes, confuses correlation with causation, and commits the ultimate sin for anyone who aspires to the title of a scientist: he accepts (and peddles) as "true" what has *not* been proven to be true.

Here are some parts that left me unconvinced:

1. The Woo-Woo Vibrational Energy

Vibrational energy is a constant theme throughout Letting Go.

For example, says the author:

> Thus our basic emotional states transmit themselves to the universe (…) the mind transmits its states through vibrational energy over unlimited distance.

I find this stuff offensive to the scientific profession and reminisce about the law of attraction as seen in even more dubious books such as "The Secret" and "*The Science of Getting Rich*".

2. Claims of "Tests" Where There Were None

The author writes:

> As various objects of thoughts and feelings are tested, it becomes obvious that everything in the universe has a vibration and that vibration has a strengthening or weakening effect.

Tested how, by whom, and when?
What was measured, and what were the results?

The author also describes the different vibrations of feelings, each one clocking at a different rate, with love, you would never guess, vibrating at a sky-high rate (how romantic).

The only thing that becomes obvious to me here is that the "obvious conclusions" are simply the author's very own thoughts.

3. Psychic, Lies & "Scientific Proof"

> Emotional patterns and their associated thought forms can be picked up and received consciously by psychics at a great distance.
> This can be demonstrated experimentally and the scientific basis…

Of course, no proof or references are then given.
What's next? Shamans and flying pigs can be demonstrated experimentally.

I find this highly offensive coming from someone who tries to portray himself as a scientist and who has actually gone through scientific training.

This is the belief of someone who could join the next People's Temple sect, not a scientist.

4. Right-Brained Nonsense

The author says:

> Most people have been trained to be logical and left brained.
> However some people, from birth are right-brained oriented. They are characterize by more intuition, creativity, telepathic communication and awareness of thought forms and energy vibrations

Telepathic communication…?

Yeah, right.

And if that weren't enough, he adds a little later that some of them can also see the bio-energy field around people called the "aura".
When you're in the presence of these people, you can also share in their capacity to see the aura.

The author makes it sound like he indeed saw the aura.

5. The Quantum Physics Manipulation

The author either believes or tricks the readers into believing that there is scientific evidence for his theories. He says:

> (…) for this has been a subject of great interest in the advanced quantum physics.
> Because emotions emit a vibrational energy field, they affect and determine the people who are in our lives

Sure, how we feel and how we behave determine the people in our lives. But it's not because of "vibrations". Probably more like mirror neurons (Rizzolatti, 1992).

This quantum physics scam has been repeated successively by other healers and scam artists such as Joe Dispenza (see my criticism of *Breaking The Habits*, *You Are The Placebo*).

6. Fake Clinical "Evidence"

This was one of the most troubling parts since the book was written by an actual doctor:

> The principles we discussed work in actual life (…)
> Lived experience and clinical observation confirm that the majority of human disorders are susceptible to being cured by following certain principles.

The majority?
Which ones exactly?
And what's a "majority"?

And "certain principles"? Like *your* principles?

And more:

> Many diseases can be reversed unless there is a strong karmic dominance to the contrary.

What's "karmic" dominance?

	Scientist	Pop-Psychologist
What's Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
The Use of Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Ego VS Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Studies VS Theories	[illegible]	[illegible]
Sharing Science	[illegible]	[illegible]
Science VS Opinions	[illegible]	[illegible]

CONS

On top of the above criticism of the actual information, here are some more cons of Letting Go:

- Little concrete advice on how to execute "*letting go*"
- Very long, could have been briefer
- Poor understanding of human nature

The author seems to suggest that we all have a bigger drive to forgive and love but to reach there… We must let go first.
To me, this is rather typical of woo-woo literature's poor understanding of human nature.

- Some self-help myths

It's somewhat surprising that an author who talks about accepting negative emotions also says we should focus on positives, which is useful only up to a certain point and it's an otherwise pop-psychology myth.
And he also mentions the "crabs in the bucket" lie, which is also a self-help myth.

PROS

I listed a lot of criticism above.
But that's not to say that there is nothing good in "*Letting Go*". The Pathway of Surrender can be freeing and, indeed, help many people's mental health.

Review

It's a pity that a book containing such potentially great information had to be marred by so many unscientific, mistaken claims.

As it is, any person who approaches learning with a critical and skeptical attitude will find it hard to open up to the message of Letting Go.

There is simply too much BS thrown around.

However, it's also our responsibility as learners to force ourselves to let go of the bad and pick the good.

No matter what you think about the book or the author, letting go can be a great tool for improving your emotional and mental health.

Give it a try, and let me know how it goes for you.

Note on rating:
Albeit there are many good takeaways here, the 1-star vote is a moral obligation when a scientist claims scientific rigor where there is none.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**

Skin in the Game: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Skin in the Game (2017) is Nassim Taleb's last book of his "Incerto" collection.
It investigates the adverse impact of having people act and make decisions without shouldering any downside if things go wrong (i.e., getting the rewards without the risks).

Contents

- Summary
- Quotes
- Gold Nuggets
- Your Takeaways
- Criticism
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About The Author: Nassim Nicholas Taleb is a statistician, former trader, philosopher, and, as he hates being called, an intellectual.
Skin in the Game is the latest of Taleb's series called "Incerto" and comprises *Fooled by Randomness* (2001), *The Black Swan* (2007–2010), The Bed of Procrustes (2010), *Antifragile* (2012), and Skin in the Game (2018).
At the time of writing, Taleb is possibly my favorite author.

The 4 Topics of Skin In The Game

Taleb says in the introduction that "*Skin in the Game*" is about four topics:

1. Uncertainty and the reliability of knowledge (or BS detection)
2. Symmetry in human affairs (fairness, responsibility, justice, values)
3. Information sharing in transactions
4. Rationality in complex systems and in the real world

In a nutshell, *skin in the game* means that if you get the rewards, you must also bear the risks.
Taleb makes the point that in many realms of our current society, whole classes of citizens are getting the reward while pushing the risks to the whole society.

To quote Taleb:

> **Skin in the game is mostly about justice, honor, and sacrifice. Things that are existential for humans.**

Complex Systems Don't Work With Simple Cause/Effect

Complex systems don't have obvious and simple cause-and-effect mechanisms.
And when in doubt, it's better not to mess with these systems.

Starting a war to implement democracies is an example of messing with a complex system.
Taleb says that clueless politicians compare a local dictator not with the local alternatives but with a Norwegian prime minister.

These people keep staying at their jobs even their reckless decisions because they don't have skin in the game.
Nobody paid anything for the Iraqi invasion or for supporting the "Arab Spring" failed uprisings.

> **Those who don't take risks should never be involved in making decisions**

Why Behavioral Economics is BS

You either love Taleb or hate him for his attitude towards the people he disagrees with.

In "*Skin in the Game*" he takes it on behavioral economics and authors such as Richard Thaler, the father of behavioral economics and the author of "*Misbehaving*" and "Nudge".

He says that Thaler's and other social psychologists' construct of "rational" makes no sense because you can't decide on a desk what's rational and what's not.

For Taleb, rational is what makes you survive (and thus passes the Lindy effect test).
This is what Taleb contests to behavioral economics:

- **Overestimating tail risks makes sense**

Taleb says that it's perfectly rational to overestimate some tail risks because you can't consider them in isolation.

Driving after 2 glasses of wine once will not be extremely dangerous, but doing so every day is.

When you measure tail risks in the laboratory you only consider one tail risk at a time, and that's why their conclusions are wrong.
Subjects are being rational in overestimating the risk because chances are, they are likely already running several tail risks in their lives.

- **Mental accounting is correct**

Taleb says that what "creepy interventionist" Thaler doesn't get is that what he refers to as "mental accounting" is exactly what allows traders to survive.

Betting harder with money you won and being more conservative with your own money makes sense because that's how you survive.

Thaler and other behavioral economists don't get it because they see the world as a one-shot game instead of a series of repeated trades.

My Note:
I really enjoyed Talebs' take on this one.
Yet, if he is trying to refute the idea that people are not rational, then I would have to vehemently disagree.

Minority Rule Is Destroying The West

In societies, minorities can come to dictate the rules to the majority.

This usually happens because of asymmetry or because the majority is either too flexible, too accommodating, or too indifferent.

A case of asymmetry is between smokers and non-smokers.
A smoker can sit in a smoke-free area but a non-smoker cannot sit in a smoker area, so the non-smokers will prevail even if they are the minority.

However, this can become an issue when the minority prevails because it's more aggressive or more intolerant.

> **It is the most intolerant person who imposes virtues on others precisely because of that intolerance**

Taleb says that we need to be intolerant of intolerance.

> **We need to be more than intolerant with some intolerant minorities. The West is currently in the process of committing suicide.**

Employees Are Broken, Submissive Fellas

LOL, I absolutely loved this part.

Taleb says that employees display submission by going through years of personal deprivation.
Giving up 9 hours of one's time for years, every day is the equivalent of domestication.
And showing up on time every day is the sign of an obedient, housebroken dog.

The question, asks Taleb is whether you want to be a housebroken dog or a free wolf.
However, being a wolf comes with risk. Wolves who seek their own paths have skin in the game.

Also read:

- **Example of a housebroken employee**
- **Female domestication in relationships**
- **Corporate manipulation**

The exceptions

There are a few employees who are not broken dogs though.

Taleb talks about traders who bring in lots of money, but the same is true for any employee who is a huge asset to the company and to his boss.

Being great gives you leverage against bad bosses.

Virtue Signaling & Limousine Liberals

I couldn't agree more with what Taleb says on virtue signaling from corporations and upper classes as tantamount to manipulations.

He says:

> The widespread enthusiasm for Piketty was representative of the behavior of that class of people who loves to theorize and engage in false solidarity with the oppressed… *While consolidating their privileges*

And Krugman was one of the economists who raved about that book.

Taleb also says that it is immoral to be against the modern market system and not live in a cave in Afghanistan.
And it is much more immoral to claim virtues without fully living with its consequences.

It's intellectuals Who Are Jealous of The Super Rich

Taleb says that it's not the poor who are actually envious of the rich and it's not the poor who first embrace communist movements.

It's usually the bourgeois the intellectuals and the clerical class who first embrace communism.
Deep down, Taleb says, it's because of jealousy.

Intellectuals like, say, Steglitz and Krugman, cannot stand that someone less smart than they are is also much richer.

Priceless.

The Idiocy of Naive Empiricism

You often hear people saying that you are more likely to die by X silly thing -i.e.: coconut falling- than by terrorist attacks or Ebola outbreaks.

Taleb says that makes no sense.

People dying because of falling coconuts or people who die by drowning in their bathtub will never double from one year to the other -they are examples of mediocre stand-.

But the effects of events in the extreme stand, say a huge virus outbreak or a series of terrorist attacks, *can* increase the death toll by several orders of magnitude.

Read more on naive empiricism:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Quotes

This quote summarizes The Power Moves:

> Don't give crap, don't take crap. But if someone starts to exercise power over you, exercise power over him

What is rational

> What is rational is what allows the collective to survive for a long time

On scholarly papers:

> Anyone who has submitted a scholarly paper knows that you raise the odds of acceptance by making it more complicated than necessary.

On skin in the game in the mafia:

> In the orders of the mafia, it's simple.
> A made man, that is ordained, can be wacked if the capo suspects a lack of allegiance. With the transitory stay in the trunk of the car and the guaranteed presence of the boss at the funeral.

On turning down honors and awards (I loved this one, totally my philosophy):

> People who collect honors are hierarchy conscious and I abide by Cato's injunctions: he preferred being asked why he didn't have a statue rather than why he had one.

On intellectuals yet idiot (IYI) and Steven Pinker:

> If he is a social scientist he uses statistics without knowing how they are derived, like Steven Pinker and psycholophasters in general.

And again on Pinker:

> The science journalist Steven Pinker played that trick with the book "The Better Angels of Our Nature" (…) we find out he either didn't understand his own numbers -actually he didn't- or he had a story in mind and kept

> adding charts, not realizing that statistic isn't about data but distillation, rigour and avoiding being fooled by randomness.
> But no matter, the general public, and his state-worshipping IYI found it impressive.
> For a while…

On groupthink and the circularity of the scientific system of references:

> If you say something crazy you will be deemed crazy.
> But if you create a collection of 20 people who set up an academy and say crazy things accepted by the collectivity now you have peer-reviewing.
> Academia has a tendency of going unchecked for lack of skin in the game.

About rich people's idiocy in overspending money on food:

> We ended up victims of some complex experiments by a chef judged by some Michelin bureaucrats.
> It would fail the Lindy effect: food does better through minute variations from Sicilian grandmother to Sicilian grandmother

Gold Nuggets

1. The higher you go, the higher the risk to your reputation and the more scared you are of losing an argument -especially with an upstart-
2. Putin has FU money and doesn't need to be elected, that's why he dominates all interactions
3. Don't take advice from those who give advice for a living -unless there is a penalty for their advice-
4. Rich people are easier to scam
5. Government intervention tends to remove the skin in the game
6. Skin in the game brings simplicity while bureaucrats who are far removed from the effects of their decisions prefer selling overly complex solutions
7. Selling is often a no skin in the game business
8. To discourage terrorists: carry the responsibility of their across family and generations. This way you remove some of the asymmetric advantages of people who don't care about dying
9. The current rise of populism is a rebellion against no skin in the game politicians, semi-intellectuals with ivy-league degrees who want to tell us what to think
10. People who don't look the part are more likely to be better at what they do because they had to overcome more (social) adversities
11. Don't listen to financial advisors talking about market returns: you can't get the same returns as the market as by the time you have to pull out your returns will diverge from the market (but I wish Taleb had flashed this one better)

Your Takeaways

- **Become financially independent**

People who are not financially independent also become morally dependent.
They have to fit the ethics of the organization they are (forced) to work for

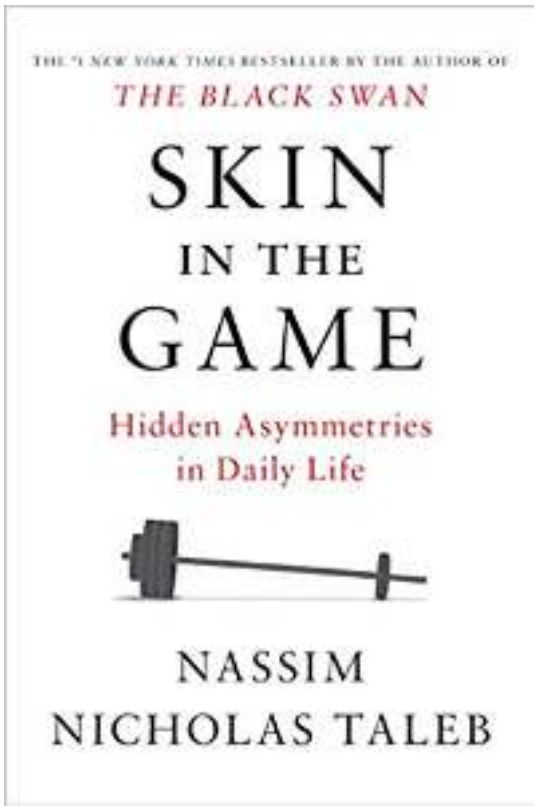
- **Don't get an assistant**

Not having an assistant will force you to focus exclusively on the things you enjoy doing.

- **Read good books twice**

Don't get suckered into the BS of reading 4 books a day from Blinkist or 3x the speed on Audible.
Instead, Taleb says that because of the non-linear effects, learning is rooted in the repetition of complexity.
Provided that a text has good content you're better off reading it twice than reading a new one at the same time.

My Note:
This is an advice I'm already applying. I almost always listen to an audiobook twice now.



Criticism

I need to preface this section by saying that albeit there are many entries here, I still loved the book.
As a rule of thumb, the better the book, the higher the standard to which I hold it.

"Before it was better" fallacy

I love Taleb and I love his classical knowledge.

At times though it feels like he reverts to a "before it was better" and to simplistic solutions of "let's go back to how it was".

For example, Taleb tells the story of a corrupt Persian judge flailed alive by the local king.
However, not only that doesn't seem to be a good example of justice, but it's also not written anywhere that the king wasn't himself a corrupt, SOB king -or the only corrupt party in that interaction-.

No mention to downsides of skin in the game

Taleb admits that *skin in the game* comes with a conflict of interest.

I would have liked to see more on that.
And also a bit more on the exceptions to the rule as I can think of several situations where it's best to make decisions without skin in the game -or at least, with only a little skin in the game-.

Wide brush generalizations

Sometimes it feels like SITG, like some other previous Taleb's book, over-generalizes about professions.
Sure some good journalists in the profession might have the right of feeling unjustly attacked.

Sometimes presents unrealistic solutions

Taleb says the only solution to better research is forcing researchers to do research in their own spare time.

"That's how I did it", he says.

But thinking that because you did it in a certain way then others should do it the same way rarely leads to flexible systems.
And, in the case of Taleb, it means holding too high a bar for most people.

Society shouldn't work in a way that works for the top 1%.
Society should work in a way where average individuals and the bottom 50% can also contribute.

Survivorship bias (lindy effect)

Taleb makes the case that what survives is rational.

Yet I'm somewhat surprised that the man who introduced the idea of being "fooled by randomness" hasn't even thought that survival can happen by chance.

For example, he says:

> It is critical that is not just the books of ancient that are still around and have been filtered by Lindy, but that those populations who read them have survived too

Is he implying here that populations have survived because they heeded great books and wisdom?
That made no sense to me.
Furthermore, I'm not a big believer in this "*Wisdom of the crowds*" concept. Plenty of shitty books can hang around for a long time.

Are we largely collaborative?

Taleb mocks Dawkins, author of "*The Selfish Gene*", but I haven't seen a proper rebuttal of why the theory behind the selfish gene should be discarded.

He mentions something about Dawkins' poor understanding of probability, but sure that doesn't necessarily void Dawkins' arguments does it?

I also agree that we are largely collaborative and that we overestimated the impact of wars in history.

But that doesn't mean that we can't *also* be selfish.

Taleb also says we underestimate the impact of trade, which went on even during wars and between theoretically incompatible societies (Christian Spain and Muslims).
Yet, he is talking about human societies during periods of great civilizations. Cavemen probably didn't trade that much for millions of years.

Also read:

- **Enlightened collaboration**: yes to collaboration, but based on the natural selfishness of human nature

Miscellaneous criticism

- Germany works well because it's a federation: I'm not convinced. Plenty of federative countries don't work. It's

more about culture

- Making fun of social sciences and quoting philosophers for social dynamics doesn't meet my (highly biased) approval
- Reality is blind to looks: not really
- Peace in Europe because of the USA and USSR? Not really, the USSR has been gone for 20 years now. It's more because of the EU and, of course, "thanks" to nuclear devices

PROS

All the usual "pros" of Taleb's work are present here.
The deep wisdom, the biting humor, and the frank, realistic analysis of society.

In "*Skin in the Game*" the best social analysis was on "limousine liberals", albeit he doesn't use that name.

Review

Skin in the Game is typical of Nassim Taleb, and that's why I loved it.

The usual wisdom, biting humor, and irreverent yet realistic look into people and society.

I think that one of the reasons I like Taleb is because we are somewhat similar.
We both have a certain disdain for the status that so many people chase in this world.
And we both are intolerant to cultural artifacts, social rules, and… Of office hours.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**

How to Be A Great Toastmasters President

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Let me guess:

You are researching the “toastmaster president role”, right?

So I suppose you are interested in becoming a Toastmasters president.

Great.
I am happy you are thinking about being president, it’s an incredibly enriching experience.
And you have come to the right place to learn about how to be the best Toastmasters president.

After 2 years on the board and 1 year as president of the biggest and most awarded club in Berlin, I share here my experience to **help you become a great Toastmasters president**.

Contents

- #1. Build Members Up
- #2. Make The Club Great
- #3. Set The Example
- #4. Always Give Value
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- #6. Lead Like You Own It
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- #11. Be Like A Sportsclub Manager: Hunt Top Players
- How to Influence Toastmasters Boards
- SUMMARY

#1. Build Members Up

Strong members make strong clubs.

Toastmasters' own slogan couldn't be truer.
And we could also add: strong members for strong clubs, with strong presidents.

Only when all 3 are in balance can you achieve great results.
And they go exactly in that order: people first, then the club's structure, then you can think of yourself as a president.

This is similar to how Viktor Frankl describes happiness. Viktor Frankl says that "happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue".

It's the same for effective leadership:

> **Effective leadership cannot be pursued, it must ensue**
> -The Power Moves

And it ensures that by taking care of the people first and the club second.

John Maxwell, in his best-selling "*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*" calls this principle "the law of empowerment".
And in a nutshell, it's this:

> The more you empower, the more powerful you become

Again, though, ideally, you have grown and matured enough that you are not doing it for the power. Here are a few ways in which great Toastmasters presidents focus on making the club members grow:

1. Encourage new members to deliver their icebreakers
2. Give accurate feedback
3. Gently push members to stretch themselves
4. Are the first to applaud their members' wins

#2. Make The Club Great

After people come to the club.

There are three ways in which you work on your club:

1. Reputation
2. Awards
3. Orderly and high-quality meeting

Focus on upholding a reputation for quality meetings, great speakers, and a club that develops and grows speakers and people.

Ideally, get some of your members to compete and win in Toastmaster's speech contests.
And get that distinguished president's award.

Then you can use it for your marketing material on Meetup, your website, and your Facebook group (and you can brag about it in your president's intros :).

Speaking of which, have your VP of PR publish and craft a strong online presence.
Ideally, **you want to have so many people wanting to join that you can allow yourself to choose the members who best fit your culture**.

When it comes to orderly meetings and taking care of the club, here is the beautiful thing: **if you take care of the people, the people will take care of the club**.

A Toastmasters president's job is the easiest if you have a strong board and active members.
I barely did anything as president, -and all the kudos and credit go to Mercury's board and the wonderful members.

#3. Set The Example

Now it's time to focus on yourself.

As we will see later, you set the example with your whole persona.
In the Toastmasters Club, it includes public speaking as well.

Can you imagine a Toastmasters president going on stage and forgetting his words, drowning in a sea of filler words while he stares into the void?

Don't worry, that can happen.
And it's OK if it happens.

However, albeit it's always OK to fail, **it's not OK to fail because you failed to prepare or because you failed to work on yourself.**
It must always be your goal, and you must always do your best to deliver great speeches, accurate and helpful evaluations, and outstanding functionary reports.

Let the others "wing it".
And maybe let them join other clubs.
They don't carry the cross of responsibility.
But you do.

Remember, you lead by example. And **your example must be that of an exemplary Toastmaster**.
And that includes being at least a good speaker.

Or, at least, it means that you work hard and show improvement on all the basics of proper stage performance:

- Breathing (with your nose, never with your mouth)
- No filler words
- Clear diction
- Voice tonality (no upward inflection)
- Good body language

Etc., etc.—you know the basics.

You must **be an example of what members can achieve by joining your club.**

Again, that doesn't mean you must be "perfect".

But it does mean that you *do* strive for perfection and that you *do* always give it your best.

#4. Always Give Value

Answer this question for me:

> Why should anyone join your club?

This should always be the answer:

> Because it delivers great value at a multitude of levels.

It cannot be just "to improve my public speaking", *because that's what every single Toastmasters club is there for*.

Improving public speaking is the bare minimum!
You must give something *more* to the people who join your club. For example:

- Superior feedback
- An example of leadership
- An environment of friends (more on it later)
- Great networking with lots of professionals

Finally, every time you go on stage, you must show an example of what "striving for excellence" really means.

When people see you on stage, they should think "nice, I'd like to become like that guy/gal".
How to do it?

Here is the mindset to do just that:

#5. Look At Stage Time As A RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility, not opportunity.

What do I mean by this?

Do you know those speakers who go on stage and always fail to leave a mark on the crowd?

Most of the time, it's because they don't focus on giving.
They tell a bland story, they share why they quit their job but fail to relate it to the audience; or, worst of all, they tell us what great stuff they have done without teaching us how we can do the same.

As a president, you must focus on giving and enriching your audience.
But what does that mean, more precisely?

Here is how you can add value:

- Give high-quality and specific feedback on how to improve a speech
- Entertain and make people laugh
- Inspire and motivate others to take action
- Share a touching story
- Build people up, make them feel good

The key to doing it is to consider your time on stage as "irrupting into people's lives".
In a way, that is exactly the case: whether they are aware of it or not, **when you are on stage you are taking people's most precious commodity: their time**.
You can take their time to bring value and help them up, or you can waste their time.

Only Toastmasters presidents who look at their role as a responsibility to deliver value will truly excel.

> The only mindset of Toastmasters excellence is to look at your time on stage as a responsibility to give.

#6. Lead Like You Own It

As a child, I was THE biggest fan of Valentino Rossi.

Rossi is the most legendary motorbike racer ever.
And he said about riding a motorbike:

> Ride it like you stole it.

A bit extreme, but effective.
Similarly, as the president, **you want to feel like you own your club**.

Now this might be controversial, so let me explain it.

Ownership is one of the most misunderstood dichotomies of leadership.

We live in a world where people are wary of identifying themselves with their countries or organizations.
Politicians who feel like they "own" their countries are considered dangerous -and for good reasons!-.
And manosphere communities profess that "their girlfriends are not theirs, it's just their turn" -and they're not fully wrong!-.

And let me be clear again: none of the above is actually *wrong*.
Too strong an identification and too strong a sense of ownership are very unhealthy.
Controlling and abusive men have too strong a sense of ownership. Dictators take a sense of ownership to the extreme, feeling entitled to power and to the country's resources.

However, you must be cautious not to throw away the baby with the bathwater of ownership.

What do I mean?

I mean that a sense of ownership is also one of the bedrocks of strong leadership.
Yes, **you can't be a good Toastmasters president without feeling ownership and responsibility for your club**.

And ownership and responsibility go hand in hand.

So don't be shy and walk the dichotomy of ownership without any fears: you are only one member of the club and the club is bigger than any single member.
Part of you must know that.
And yet, **you must feel responsible for your club like you own it.**

So don't be shy of feeling like it's *your* club.
Because, as it's true for every other member, *it is your club*.

Not everybody agrees, but you must not listen to these people:

Don't listen to people telling you it is not "your" club: it *is* your club.
It's those who take responsibility who will save the world.

The Dichotomy of Ownership in Life

The dichotomy of ownership holds true of life in general.

It's not YOUR environment, but it also is.
And you are also responsible for it. We *all* must be.

Even in relationships, it's not your girlfriend or wife in the sense that you own her.
But as long as you are together, she is also your girlfriend.
And what kind of man would you be if you didn't feel any responsibility for her?

> **Don't be shy for a sense of ownerhip.A sense of ownership will save the world.**

#7. Align To Group's Culture

I will keep it short here.

The bottom line is this: **There cannot be any leadership without the leader's cultural fit.**

For the simple reason that no group will accept, support, or follow a leader whom they don't recognize as "one of us".

Rare exceptions apply, for example with the charismatic leader who invites his followers to change their ways to mold *him* instead.
But they are exceptions, and the rule is that you must be a good fit for your group's culture.

These are the corollaries of the "club culture rule":

1. Never seek to become president of a club where you don't feel like you belong
2. Don't ever try to change a club culture before the most senior members recognize you as "one of us"
3. Never vote or elect a president who is not a good representative of the club's culture

Notice that I say "align" and "fit", not "take over" or "mold it to your personality".
That would be manipulative leadership and the results are doubtful.
Says Haslam in his seminal work "*The New Psychology of Leadership*":

> In both the world and in the laboratory, leadership that is grounded in shared identity will always win out over that which is grounded in ego.

Power Moves Note:
in some clubs, the older members, sometimes the founding members, form a "clique" that controls the club's dynamics and decisions.
In these clubs, weaker leaders are muppets in the hands of the clique. To become president of these clubs you first need to align with the powers that be.
And then you can reform by recruiting new members and getting more people -and the power- on your side.
You can see an example of how prime minister Conte did exactly that here.

#8. Make It A Group of Friends

Guys, this is THE most important point!

If you get all wrong, but you get this right, you *still* have a great club.

A Toastmasters club where the members are friends will always, almost by default, be a great Toastmasters club.

And that was one of the key ingredients which made Mercury, my club, the best club I have ever visited.
In many of the other clubs I have been to, members congregate for the meeting, only talk about Toastmasters during breaks, and then all go away once the meeting ends.

In these clubs, nobody knew much about each other, and neither did it feel like they cared.
I can tell you this much: I would have never joined Toastmasters if the atmosphere had been the same in my current club.

So, how do you tell apart an average club from a club of friends?
Here are a few telltale signs of a club of friends:

- Members know each other's lives beyond Toastmasters
- After the meeting members go to grab food/drinks together
- Members are aware of each other's life successes and are happy for them
- Members support each other in ways that go beyond Toastmasters
- When it's election time, you don't need to coax or cajole members to take board roles: they are happy to
- Members collaborate for the well-being of the club even when they're not board members

As a Toastmasters president, **this human approach to club life must start with you**.

If you don't, people will feel like you are far removed from the club and that's how they are also expected to act among each other.

If friendships are born in a colder club environment, the friends will feel like it's "us friends VS all the other unknown Toastmasters people".
Instead, you want everyone to be part of the brotherhood.

Here are a few ideas on how to do it:

- **Organize out-of-club events**: our club became the connecting point between all the other clubs for everyone who wanted more than just improving speeches
  - **Bar nights**: these are meetings held at a bar or restaurant. If there are drinks and/or food, people are more likely to become friends. See a picture example here.
  - **Picnics**: I instituted 2 picnics a year where we'd go to a park in the city, and bring food and drinks. They were total blasts
- **Special surprise meetings for members leaving**: organize surprise parties for strong members who are moving. We had a song created for one of us who moved out of the city, with the whole club standing up and dancing. That made me memorable for him and for the club
- **Announce members' life milestones**: make them part of your intro, sharing good news about marriages, awards, etc. This deepens the feeling that it's a club of supportive friends
- **Show your love for the people**: meet people outside the club, talk about it, share pictures with members, share pictures of members hugging

When people show up to the meeting, greet them with a hug, be happy to see them, and cheer for their improvements and life successes.

Don't Learn Club Environment From TMI!

Finally, don't try to learn how to structure a club of friends from TMI.

The Toastmasters organization has been rebranding and it's more and more winking to corporate America these days.

Now it's all about "leadership skills" and career advancement.
Even public speaking has now morphed into "public speaking to a bunch of corporate flunkies" (see picture below).

That looks like fun (NOT)!

But, unluckily, **corporate culture is often antithetical to the values of genuine relationships and friendships**.

So take the good stuff from TMI, but avoid that stultifying suit and tie culture.
Don't run your Toastmasters club like a business meeting.
Go instead for passion and, for a place where personal growth overlaps with good humor, great fun, and true friendships.

> **When it comes to Toastmasters' clubs atmosphere, friendship trumps leadership**

#9. More Decisions, Less Chit-Chat

A great Toastmasters president also runs efficient meetings.

Efficient meetings are based on decisions that bring about positive results, and not on long debates and discussions. Leave long discussions for coffee and happy hours: board meetings are not surrogates for bonding.

When it's time for decision-making, keep it efficient and solution-oriented.

There are 3 general types of decisions you can have on the Toastmasters board:

- **Data-available decisions**: whenever you can use numbers, get people with the data, the knowledge, and the

actual experience. Seek to reach decisions based on facts

- **Creative decisions**: the more people chip in, the more creative material you will have. Discussions here are helpful. Use a democratic style to brainstorm and make everyone feel free to speak. The whole board should leave feeling they contributed and the *group* did a great job -not anyone in particular-
- **No-DEK decisions**: No Data, Experience, or Knowledge available. There is no point in discussing this here. Contrary to how most people act, more talk will not get you closer to the truth.
  Instead, narrow down on the options quickly, decide on something, and try it out.

From a mindset point of view, it's crucial for a Toastmasters president to internalize this belief: you are NOT your ideas.

You must focus on fostering an environment where the best idea wins, no matter where it comes from.
As a matter of fact, you should be the happiest when the best ideas come from members and board members, and not from you!

To reach this level, you must develop a growth mindset (also see Dweck, 2007).

Keep Meetings Short

As a final tip: keep board meetings short!

As short as possible.

Maybe you are aware of Parkinson's Law, which states that: "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion".

There is a lot of truth in that, but the good thing is that the opposite is also true:

> Meetings shrink to fill the time available for their completion

So keep the meetings short.
Half an hour should be enough for all regular meetings.

#10. Start Every Meeting With a Great Intro

A great president provides the club with a great atmosphere.

It's your duty as a president to be a positive force for the club.

You should always be an example, and the best way to influence people to follow your positive example is by *starting* the meeting in the right mood.

Telling an uplifting story is a great way of getting people's attention and channeling the meeting in the right direction.

Also, notice that I tell stories that people can relate to: they were there. That helps the group bond and it shows to any guest that this is a club of friends who enjoy each other's company.

#11. Be Like A Sportsclub Manager: Hunt Top Players

Toastmasters is to help people improve their speaking skills and to increase their confidence.

And yet, there is little to learn and improve if you don't have in the club great speakers to learn from, great evaluators to provide superb feedbacks, and best-in-class members who encourage others to attend and grow.

That's why a great Toastmasters president also focuses on finding, "hiring" and retaining the best talent.

> **Your Toastmasters club is only as good as the people in it. So make sure the people are best in class.**

How to Influence Toastmasters Boards

Finally, we got here.

Come on… I know you were waiting for this!

But first of all, let me say this as loud as possible: you do NOT want to influence anybody.

As a Toastmasters president, you want smart board members and members who are happy to contribute that they come to you to influence *you* with their ideas and proposals.

And remember this: **the deepest influence is always character-based**.
You influence people by virtue of your character. Who you are and the example you give.

Steps for Group's influence

That being said, there might be a few occasions when you think it's important that your motion passes as quickly as possible.

And persuasion is a good skill to have in your toolset.

Here is how you influence Toastmasters boards -and groups in general-:

1. Pre-suasion: introduce your idea by linking to how it was done in the past, how someone else did it, and what good results it will likely get -also see *Presuasion* by Cialdini–
2. Look everyone in the eyes as you speak. When you stop to ask the board, never start with people who don't look sold on your idea: only ask people who are nodding
3. Ask questions that nudge towards a yes. For example "for simplicity and based on the positive past results, would you agree to do it as we did it the last time?"
4. Ask people in the circle, which seems more democratic. But go to the left or to the right of the first person you asked, depending on who seemed most sold on your proposal
5. After the second person, you jump in with your vote. Say "Cool, I'm glad we're agreeing on this, I also think it's the best solution".
6. Now it's 3 yesses already, and it's downhill. Even if you still have a naysayer, you can still pass your motion by majority

In this video, I describe a real-life example on a Toastmasters board:

Only use these influencing techniques as exceptions
Approaching life with the mindset you need to "influence people" is childish and slimy. Have people influence you instead with their great contributions.

SUMMARY

There you go guys, how to be a great Toastmasters president and how to make your Toastmasters club the best club ever :). In a nutshell, the biggest takeaways here are:

1. Love the members of your club
2. Love your club
3. Always do your best to deliver value
4. Make the people are friends and supportive to one another

As a last note, let me say that the title “how to be a great Toastmasters president” is only to help people find this post.

Since I am writing about my experience, it would be extremely childish of me to anoint myself as “a great Toastmasters president”.
So take this post instead as “Lucio’s experience as a Toastmasters president”.

The New Psychology of Leadership: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The New Psychology of Leadership (2006) is an evidence-based investigation of the psychology and social dynamics of leadership.
It combines theory with laboratory-based evidence and real-world analysis to craft a holistic overview of how to be an effective leader.

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  - It's focused on a theory of leadership
  - It may apply less to non-democratic contexts
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Bullet Summary

- Our culture of leaders' idealization and idolization gets it (mostly) wrong about what leadership really is
- Leadership is a process of social dynamics between leaders and followers
- Effective leaders gain status and influence by representing the "we-ness" of the group
- The whole group is more effective when bound by a common "we"

- The “we-ness” of the group both empowers and constrains the leaders’ agency
- Great leaders can work on changing, expanding, or focusing on what that “we” means as they gain the group’s trust (entrepreneurs of identity)

Summary

About the Author:
Alexander Haslam is a professor of psychology at the University of Queensland.
He has also written several more books on social psychology and social identity theory.

#1. Leadership is Social, Not Individualistic

The authors mention John Maxwell as an example of literature—and a culture—that has long looked at leaders as separate entities from those whom they lead.

The issue of looking at leaders alone leaves out two important questions:

1. The followers have largely been left out of leadership’s literature
2. The interaction between leaders and followers

The authors make the point that the followers are part of leadership dynamics as much as the leaders.
For leaders to be effective, they must align their goals with the identity of “us,” which is the group.

#2. The Myth of “The Great Man”

Focusing on the inherent characteristics of leaders led researchers to look into what those “personality traits” of great leaders exactly were.

A lot of research has been done to find out what exactly these “great man” traits are.
But the results have been disappointing.

Even in the case of the best predictor of leadership’s strength, which was intelligence, it only predicted a mere 5% of the variance.

The long “psychological treasure hunt” for the secrets to leadership was highly unsuccessful, note the authors.
And it was time to stop focusing on the individual and start looking at the social dynamics instead.

Consequences of “The Great Man Myth”

The authors say that the myth of the great leader has some important consequences that, interestingly, benefit the leaders but not the followers.

If you believe in the great man theory, then:

- Most people are denied leadership positions because they haven’t shown “leadership traits.”
- Leaders must remain leaders because they possess the right mix of qualities

Personal qualities still matter, but they need to be put in context. Write the authors:

> It is not about asserting the superiority of “I” to “we,” but about demonstrating the superiority of “I” *as an embodiment of “we.”*

And to put the “great leader myth” in context, we need a new psychology of leadership.

#3. The Focus of The New Psychology of Leadership

The new psychology of leadership must be based on these criteria:

1. Move beyond the contemplation of the "great man" to a more holistic view which includes followers and other groups
2. Must be context-sensitive: there are no "all-season" leaders and the capacity to lead depends on people and context
3. Must be perspective-sensitive: if the group is large enough (i.e., a country leader), the leader will not appeal to everyone equally
4. The new psychology of leadership does not deny leaders' qualities: it simply puts them in perspective within a more holistic approach
5. It must have empirical validity. And it's exactly the empirical failure of past models that requires a new psychology of leadership

#4. The Current Academic Threads of Leadership Psychology

The "great man" theory of leadership is still popular to this day among the general public, but not among academic researchers.

The current threads of analysis are:

The Situational Approach

This approach stresses the importance of context, centered around theorists such as Philip Zimbardo and his popular Stanford Prison Experiment (read the STE's criticism here).

Empirically, we do know that personality traits do matter, no matter the situation.
So today, the most popular interpretation is that the environment moderates but does not obliterate character.

The Contingency Approach

This approach stresses the "perfect" match between leaders and followers. when there is a perfect match between the leader and the circumstances and needs of the group.

The authors fully endorse the general concept of contingency, but not the way it's been applied.

The issue with the contingency approach is that it focuses on the leader and the interaction as separate entities, and only the leader is the focus of psychological analysis.

The Followers' Centric Approach

There are multiple variations and sub-variations here:

1. One focuses on leaders' dependence on followers' perceptions of them
2. Another focuses on the transaction, with one strand borrowing from economics and exchange theories
3. And another focusing on power relations

The economic view centered on costs and benefits is endlessly elastic, and treating leaders and followers as equals does not seem to capture the reality of leadership.

The power approach is more interesting, tracing back to Machiavelli, whose main work "*The Prince*" focuses on the ability of leaders to reward and punish followers.

The authors say that power and power dynamics matter in leadership. Different leaders use different forms depending on who they are talking to. And the power approach to leadership is an important one.

I quote them:

> Clearly, then, power—so often ignored by psychologists—is another key ingredient that is necessary to understand leadership.

Yet, power must be put into a social perspective because it's not something you have or don't have.
You have power by virtue of other people.

Transactional theories also tend to be zero-sum games, while leadership can create new sources of value and new reserves of power.

The Measurement Approach

This approach uses questionnaires such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and, when well done, also submits questionnaires to the leaders' reports, managers, peers, and external parties (i.e., customers).

Popular "general public" books have gone for a measurement approach, such as "*First Break All The Rules*" and "*The Truth About Leadership*".

The Behavioral Approach

This is what has led to the "great man myth", but there is also good research.
Two behaviors that emerged as crucial to leadership are consideration for the followers and structuring the organization to organize the work.

Transformational Approach

Leadership is not just about existing social realities but also about the transformation of social realities.

Putting It All Together

All the different approaches do add value, and they show us that a comprehensive psychology of leadership must take the following into account:

- context
- followers
- power
- transformation.

#5. Leadership VS Management

The authors discuss a type of leadership that is not "only" about doing things.

What they focus on, though, is even more important.
It's the true ideal of leadership that they focus on:

> It is about **getting them to *want* to do things**. Leadership, then, is about shaping beliefs, desires, and priorities. **It is about achieving influence, not securing compliance**.

The leadership the authors discuss is different from simple management or authority.
And, the difference between them is that true leadership wins the hearts of people, mobilizing effort that is based on passion and intrinsic motivation (power through).

Leadership based on "brute force", external incentives, or "raw power" is a failure of leadership (power over).
People are likely to reject leadership that doesn't come from their own willingness to follow because they see it as

an external imposition.

> **Incentivization and brute force are the signs of leadership's failure.**

#6. The Core of Leadership

These are the four fundamental rules of leadership:

1. Be "one of us" (and distinguish the in-group from out-group)
2. Do it "for us"
3. Craft a "sense of us" (entrepreneurs of identity)
4. "Make us matter"

Failing to be one of us can end the careers of otherwise promising leaders. As happened to John Redwood when he was caught on camera trying to mime the Welsh national anthem without knowing it.

A clear demonstration that John Redwood was not "one of us", so he could not represent the group.

"The New Psychology of Leadership" then goes deep into what exactly each step means.

> **Leaders can be ahead of the group, but never so far ahead that they are out there on their own.**

#7. The 3 Core Dimensions of Collective Action

The authors propose a helpful question-and-answer format to summarize the core dimensions of group action:

- Who acts together? Those who feel part of a common social category

The corollary is that the wider the category of those who feel part of a group, the greater the mobilization you can achieve.
This is why politicians seek to use very broad categories: more votes.

- Within which framework will they act? Within the group's shared norms and values

The group's norms and values determine the boundaries of the actions one can take and which types of actions are deemed appropriate.
The more an action is congruent with the group's values, the more support it will get (and vice versa).

- Who guides them? Leaders who embody the group's distinctiveness

Leaders who want to leverage social power need to present themselves as the embodiment of the group's identity.

> **No leader can represent us when there is no "us" to represent**

#8. Rules of Leadership

As the authors analyze leadership by dissecting and presenting both literature and historical events, they present 4 major "rules of leadership".

To be effective, leaders must be:

1. **One of us**: must be seen as belonging to the group we lead
2. **In-group champions**: their actions must be seen as taken for the group's best interest

3. **Entrepreneurs of identity**: telling the group who we are us who we are and positioning their ideas as the embodiment of the group's identity and values. To leverage the group's support leaders must work hard to ensure their policies are aligned with the group's identities
4. **Engineers of identity**: also called "embedders of reality", it refers to transforming plans into reality. Vision only carries us so far and eventually, leaders must show the group they can matter, impact the world, and bring about the changes they seek

Notice that the dynamic between points 1 and 3 is dynamic.
To represent us, leaders must be similar to us. At the same time, the social identity enables and constrains leadership, as leaders can't act in opposition to the social identity.
But at the same time, leaders also structure and shape the meaning of who we are.
And they can act in a way to re-channel social identities.

Point 4 is also important: Leaders who rev the crowd up and mobilize them towards a certain vision must eventually deliver that vision.

An example of a leader who got the vision right but failed the "reality test" is George W. Bush.
Bush managed to transform the social identity of America into a country that defends itself -and the world- against evil forces.

Bush landed on the carrier wearing a flying suit, looking the part of a real warrior leader.
He declared "mission accomplished," and his ratings were sky-high.

But as the grim reality started catching up and undermined the lies of the war, he eventually lost much of his credibility as a leader and much of his power to rally the masses.

#9. Social Identities Enable Leadership

"*The New Psychology of Leadership*" is based on social identity theory.

The main social identity contributions to the author's new psychology of leadership are:

1. Our sense of self can be derived from the group we belong to and the meaning we associate with that belonging
2. The social identity will shape the norms and values of the group members
3. Intergroup behavior stems from the social norms and values connected to social identity
4. When social identities are switched on ("salient"), the group as a whole can count more than the individual's fate (depersonalization, see Turner)
5. The nature of groups and groups' dynamics are always interconnected with the social contexts
6. If social identity is based on a comparison with other groups or people, then our own social identities will shift depending on who we are comparing to

In short, **the effect of social identities is that they transform a collection of individuals into a coherent social force**.

Intra-group interaction leads people to agree on what's important and strive to achieve it, all pulling in the same direction.

Say to the authors:

> **Shared social identity is the basis of collective social power.**

Future Social Identities

Social identities don't have to be present-bound. They can arch back to our past, jolting us into missing our true

selves.
Or they can paint a picture of our future. spurring us to achieve it.

Often, they combine the two.
Martin Luther King's "I have a dream speech" challenges the listeners to embrace what it truly meant to be Americans—equals—and to make it a reality again.

In these cases, social identities are projects for future realities.
And also note that it's only thanks to a good cultural knowledge of the Gettysburg Address that King could align the Civil Rights Movement with the realization of American values.

#10. Fair to The Ingroup & Unfair to The Outgroup?

Plenty of research shows that judges and referees tend to favor and be more lenient to the ingroups, for example to teams or people who are from the same countries or regions.

Somewhat, ingroup favoritism comes to be expected.

People unconsciously know this and when leaders know they are "suspects" for not being very in-group, they become biased towards the outgroup, possibly in an effort to prove themselves (Van Kleef, Steinel, van Knippenberg, Hogg, & Svensson 2007). Ie.: **toughness is a strategy to secure in-group support**

Leaders who are not prototypical also "prove" their leadership by displaying in-group favoritism and by being unfair to the outgroup (Platow and van Knippenberg, 2001).

However, **it would be simplistic to say that leaders should be fair to the ingroup but unfair to the group**.

Fairness and unfairness are relative when it comes to leadership.
What matters is being the group's champion, and being the group champion depends on the group's identity and values.

So a group that values openness and stands against racism will not support a leader who is unfair to an outgroup of minorities.

Leaders' Behavior Shapes People's Behavior toward The Outgroup

What's even more crucial here is that leaders' actions and choices can shape the way people think and behave toward outgroups.
Say to the authors:

> The ways leaders treat people as similar or as different play a critical part in drawing category boundaries. **If we are fair in our treatment of people, the implication is that we are all "in it together."** If we are unfair, the implication is that we are in different camps.

All of us should take note here.

#11. Group Boundaries & Mobilization

The boundaries of our groups have huge consequences for the dynamics of leadership and social identities.

It's only when you can draw a boundary that you can institute a culture and a common mobilization.

As the authors write:

> Category boundaries contain and constrain those constituencies

When group boundaries mean life or death

In extreme cases, the boundaries will influence who fights who—or if any fight will happen at all-.

The example here is Bulgaria, which decided to consider Jews a "national minority" and "part of Bulgaria's citizens".

Compare it instead to the German group lines that stressed nationhood as "ethnic comrades as part of the nationhood.
And that definition painted Jews as outgroups.

When Bulgaria's' enlarged citizenship was accepted, it meant that Bulgaria didn't help the Nazis collect Jews on its territory.

My Note:
This is exactly the reason why, in my articles, I always caution people against becoming too entrenched in any group.
Also, read "dark-psychology" and "the social-psychology of the red pill" for more.

#12. Identities' Negotiations Between Leaders and Followers

The authors so far have negated the idea of the "great leader", but they also concede that leaders can shape the group's identity.

Whether the group has more power to define social identities or whether the leader has more power to tell the followers what the group stands for depends on contexts and situations.

Sometimes the group has precedence, and the leader tries to mold the group's identity.
Other times, a leader may have reached such iconic status that he comes to define the values of the group he leads.

The authors mention Roosevelt and his handicap.
As he strives valiantly to walk anyway, he represents himself and America as a nation that doesn't give in to hardships.

My Note:
The authors don't say it, but I think that it's crucial how long a group has existed and how strongly—or not strongly—they have codified their culture.
In the case of a long-standing group with strong cultures, groups will not yield to changing their values, no matter the "status" of the leader.

#13. A Prototypically Exceptional Leader

The group wants its leader to be representative of them and, in a way, like them.
Yet, they also want them to be exceptional.

What's important to understand here is that "prototypical" doesn't mean "typical".

Leaders must not be like individual group members, but like the identity that the group shares in common.

Prototypical means to be uniquely representative of the norms, values, and qualities that define our groups, and that differentiate them from other groups.
Being prototypical means being exceptional and fully representative.

#14. Leaders' Prototicapility Manipulation

The relationship between a leader and a group is not set in stone, and, as we know, there is no such thing as "reality".

Often, what appears is more important than what actually is.

We saw Bush earlier landing on a US carrier in a flying suit. Bush was actively constructing his image as a war leader, despite the fact that he never really deployed in any war zone and despite the allegations that he actively avoided Vietnam duty.

Leaders also rarely accept the groups' definitions as a given, and they seek to mold them to fit themselves and their goals.
Equally, they will seek to define their goals as concrete manifestations of the group's values and beliefs.

Finally, political leaders will often seek to define the boundaries of the group as broadly as possible, which will mean a larger appeal and more votes.

It's these leaders' machinations that lead the authors to call leaders "entrepreneurs of identity".
But here is the twist: leaders don't want to be seen as "identity" shapers. They prefer to be seen as a perfect, natural fit.

Say the authors:

> Entrepreneurs are what they are.
> Interpreters are how they wish to be seen—for if people accept their version of identity as self-evident, the battle for influence is all but won.

Prototypicality & Political Warfare for Leadership

Manipulations of prototypicality are also part of political warfare, with opponents trying to undermine each other's representativeness.

Sometimes these attacks can be misguided, though.
Political leaders attacking Bush for his "Bushisms" were actually helping him.
It helped him because Bush presented himself as an "All-American" leader closer to the people than to the scholarly elites.

#15. Embed Identity Into Everyday Life

Finally, the authors make the case that to secure the group's support, leaders need to show some (cultural) proof of identity.

Cultural artifacts such as parades, functions, and celebrations serve that need: to connect with the leadership.

Cultural artifacts also serve as the present proof that leaders can deliver the goods they promise in the future.
They are like a promissory note for what's about to come.

My Note:
In a book that blew my mind away, this part was the least convincing for me.
Read more in the "cons" section.

#16. Group Power Struggles

Now for the interesting twist.

Group members don't just vie against each other for status, power, and leadership.

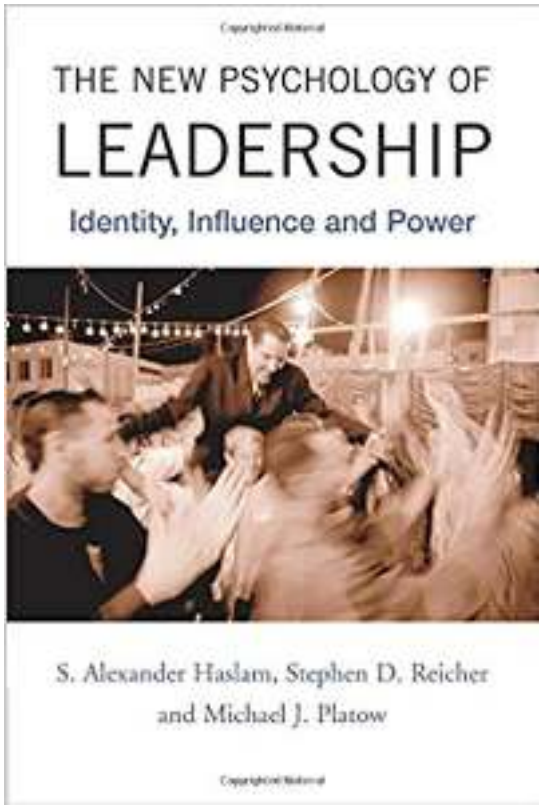
But also do so in a greater social contest, sometimes using and leveraging outgroups or enemies.
This is social manipulation for power.

As a matter of fact, leaders who are insecure about their position within the group can end up picking fights against

outgroups to shore up internal support.
Say to the authors:

> Prejudice, discrimination, and even hatred, often actually derive from the struggle for intragroup authority and leadership.

Haslam cites his BBC prison experiment as an example of prisoners' leadership being highly dependent on the guards' outgroup.
And a political example of making enemies for power is the McCarthy witch-hunt.



More Wisdom

- Watch out for the "Charisma Myth" and any course on charisma: charisma is not so much an intrinsic quality that warrants leadership positions, but it's more a quality that followers bestow upon leaders for being prototypical and good representatives of the group (see Platow et. al., 2006).
- Attraction, trust, and similarity seem to be more the outcome of group formation than the causes (albeit attraction and liking can facilitate the formation of groups)
- Self-stereotyping is the act of defining oneself as belonging to a certain category. When people self-stereotype, they will find out what the category values and thinks and they will strive to conform
- Group's prototypicality changes depending on the context: an extremist as an outgroup will make the leader look more prototypical (i.e., similar) to the group
- Leaders must not make it about themselves but about policies, values, and ideals

Best Quotes

On why we must all care about leadership and leadership's dynamics:

> Third, just as politics is too important to leave only to politicians, so too leadership is far too important a

> matter to be left only to leaders.

On shared identity over ego:

> Leadership that is grounded in shared identity will always win out over that which is grounded in ego.

Practical Applications

This book is a treasure trove of information.
On top of the follow-up articles that I will write and that will draw heavily on it, here are more real-life applications of "A New Psychology of Leadership":

- There is little evidence that leadership programs translate into actual improvements and results
- Always be careful of leaders' manipulation
- Keep in mind that embattled leaders can pick enemies and fight just to shore up support

CRITICISM

Great book, so put these notes in context:

It's focused on a *theory* of leadership

And I think the author may have been clearer that he's championing that theory.

Also because the title may confuse readers.
Readers may believe this is an overview of the research literature, and that the literature has reached Haslam's conclusion on the predominance of social identities.

It may apply less to non-democratic contexts

Contexts where the dynamics change and dominance and coercion may work better, or incur less costs.

See for example '*The Logic of Political Survival*'.

That's my main criticism, and now a few cons:

CONS

- **Rarely confuses correlation for causation**

One of the examples of a shifting sense of identity was that of South Africa post-apartheid.
The supporters of a local sports team went from being feverishly racist to chanting their love for the black Nelson Mandela.

But that says little about shifting social identities.
It's very possible that people going to the stadium were simply already Mandela sympathizers and people who opposed him never really even thought about buying a ticket.

- **Organized social actions are anticipations of what's about to come**

I'm not convinced that parades, events, and other cultural artifacts are the present manifestations of future

Sometimes they are simply shows of power -think of military parades-, of what's happened in the past -think of "revolution" celebrations- or simply confirmation of "who we are" -think of countries that celebrate the birth of the republic or the end of fascist regimes-.

- **Are leaders not guilty when failure strikes?**

The authors say that leaders get the credit when things go well but that usually the blame is cast onto the followers when things go wrong.

I disagree with this one.

Leaders often shoulder a lot more blame than they are really responsible for when things go wrong.
As Robert Greene notices in "*The Laws of Human Nature*", followers have a dual drive of wanting a leader and also wanting the leader's head when things turn sour, -which has happened several times in the course of history-.

- **Too much faith in groups' rationality**

I feel the author puts too much faith in the "wisdom of crowds" and in their rationality.
They write:

> People in groups exercise reason and judgment just as much as they do when they are alone

I am surprised the authors don't recognize that groups can get much more irrational than individuals can.
Just listen to Hitler and Mussolini speak. No single individual would have cheered them so loudly. But gather a crowd of individuals, and you get very little reason and rationality.

The authors say that the "traditional psychology of leadership" says that strong leadership comes at the cost of followers' strength.
While the new psychology of leadership says that leaders' and followers' strengths feed into each other, it doesn't have to-.

So if they recognize that a leader can dictate identity and rob followers of their agency, why don't they also recognize that crowds of followers can be hollowed out of their power and act very irrationally?

- **In some sources, I couldn't find the relevant information to back the author's claims**

Being super interested in the topic, I have followed many of the resources the authors quote.

However, sometimes I struggled to find the evidence for what the authors claimed.

As an example, the authors say that Blake Ashforth and Vikas Anand (2003) found that a cult of personality paved the way for the emergence and justification of corruption.
But I didn't find the paper to fully back that claim, stating instead that charismatic leaders speak for loyalty to the person more than to the mission, but that they can use their charisma for good or negative purposes (note: you have to get the full paper, and the link is just the abstract).

PROS

At the time of first draft, it was the best book I have read on leadership.

Both from a theoretical and practical point of view-.

I also appreciate that, contrary to some more academic texts, they also dealt with real-life power dynamics and manipulations.
Such as, what actually happens in real life.

Review

The New Psychology of Leadership is one of the best books on leadership I have read.

Before it, I had mostly read "popular books on leadership".

Many of those were naive self-help books based on what a good leaders should be like -not what it actually is, and what works-.

I have since stopped reading popular best-selling books.
In part, it was thanks to this very book, which blew everything else away.

I read *The New Psychology of Leadership* on Kindle, and I highlighted 31620 words (by comparison, that's a wall of text 9 times longer than this review).
And that's while I was telling myself "stick to the main passages or you will end up highlighting the whole book".

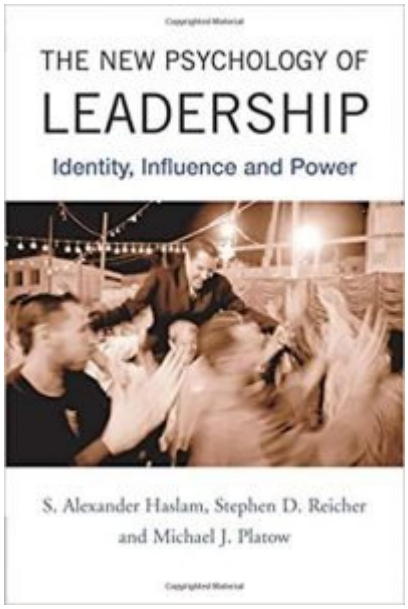
Obviously, I recommend "*The New Psychology of Leadership*" to anyone who's interested in psychology, social psychology, leadership, and power.

Also read:

- **How to be a leader** (laws teased out in large part from this book)
- **Best books on psychology**
- **Best books on leadership**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

The New Psychology of Leadership: Summary & Review | TPM



Simply the best book on leadership I have ever read

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-new-psychology-of-leadership/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.7

The Psychology of Political Manipulation

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Political persuasion (and manipulation) is not only an art but also a science.

In this article we'll show you the influencing techniques that politicians use to persuade people to vote and support their policies, *–even when it's not in the voters' best interests-*.

Contents

- #1. Stoke Patriotic Pride
- #2. Mold Your Voters
- #3. Give 'Em A "Sense of Us"
- #4. Pretend You're Just Like Them
- #5. Divide Us (Good) VS Them (Bad)
- #6. Make Up Enemies
- #7. Seems unfair to The Outgroup
- #8. Embody The "Spirit of The Nation"
- #9. Play the "Great Leader"
- #10. Feign Disinterest in Power, Pretend You'Re On A Mission For Everyone's Benefit
- #11. Appeal to Higher Ideals

- Politics Naturally Promotes Manipulation
  - SUMMARY

#1. Stoke Patriotic Pride

Rational self-interest is a politician's biggest nightmare.

Politicians' jobs and power rest on the willingness of the people to accept their authority, the legitimacy of the government, and, of course, to pay taxes.

On the other hand, the more politicians can convince people to selflessly support the country and the government, the more powerful and legitimate they grow.

The problem is: **that selfless support for the group is not rational from a voter's point of view**.
And that's why politicians love to talk in terms of higher values—about "our great country" and *serving* that great country, of course.
The bigger and less homogenous the country, the more politicians need those abstract ideals.

Enter *us*, how great *we* are, how good *our* values are, and, my absolute favorite, "what we stand for".

Persuasion Explained

Sales manuals invite salespeople to pitch their products using the "what's in it for me" model.
And Robert Greene's 'law of power' states to 'always appeal to people's self-interest'.

And, in general, that's good practice.
But **the WIIFM model doesn't work for me in politics**.
WIIFM is a model of social exchange and in politics, appeals to identity trump social exchange (Tyler & Blader, 2001).

Why so?

Because **if people went deep in answering the question of "what's in it for me", the answer would be "not much"**.

Just think about it:

- Your vote counts for nothing (mathematically)
- Hiding part of your income is often more rational than declaring in full
- Serving in war means risking your life for a badge
- Your political activism has little, -if any- impact but takes a huge amount of time

What's the political solution?

The evidence suggests that the key to spurring people into supporting organizations beyond the legal minimum lies in *preventing* people from thinking in terms of rational exchanges.

And that's why leaders must appeal to higher ideals of honor, responsibility, and motherland.

There's nothing wrong with that.
But the question is: Are you helping your fellow citizens with your behavior, or are you helping mostly the persuasive politician?

Answering that question can help you avoid falling prey to political persuasion.

Example: Kennedy's "What Can You Do?"

Kennedy's line in his inauguration speech is the most famous example of what I call "selfless political manipulation".

You already know the line.

But I would like you to focus on what comes right before that.
And this is it:

> Each generation of Americans has been summoned **to give testimony to its national loyalty**.
> **The graves of young Americans** who answered the call to service surround the globe.

National loyalty, graves of young Americans scattered around the world… Did anyone stop to think about what that means?

A little later, Kennedy asks "will you join in that historic effort?".

The only rational answer here is "no thanks".
But of course, Kennedy's political persuasion worked, and people cheered.

And a little later, after the build-up, comes the famous line:

> **Kennedy**: Ask not what your countries can do for you, but what you can do for your country

And what should one do for his country, exactly?
Join in the graves of prematurely dead men?
Be my guest.

Again, this is not necessarily to say "be selfish".
As a matter of fact, be altruistic.
But do so intelligently.

Being selfless to "the country" means nothing.
"The country" is an abstraction that too often only means supporting the elites, the arms producers, and big business -or the stickers' producers if you're going the redneck way :)-.

> When they ask what you can do for the country, always ask yourself if, by any chance, they are *running* that country.
> That could uncover a few vested interests.

P.S.:
I'm glad I wasn't the only one to notice. And Steven Pinker recently listed Kennedy's speech as an example of anti-enlightenment ideals.
In my model of social manipulations, I call these "pro-group feints":

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

#2. Mold Your Voters

We like people who are like us (Cialdini, 1994).

And, turns out, we want politicians who are like us, too.

And that's why a mainstay of political persuasion is making the politician seem the most representative of his citizens.

Persuasion Explained

We talked about "liking", but it's slightly more complex when it comes to politics and leadership.

"Prototypical" would be a better word.
Leadership psychology (Haslam, 2006) has shown that it's leaders who are prototypical of their voters who gain the

most support -and the most votes-.

Needless to say, *looking* prototypical in voters' minds is equivalent to *being* prototypical, thus lending itself to a lot of political posturing.

Example: George Bush

Bush was, in many ways -and unluckily-, a political genius.

A president everyone mocked for being a dumb idiot, he managed to position a war for big corporations as an all-American payback for freedom, democracy, and world peace.

Bush's personal positioning to the electorate was the "All-American president".
The good old Texan boy who loved beer and steaks and shunned the big-talking Washington bigwigs -just the kind of guy many of his compatriots would feel close to.

And his verbal mistakes helped persuade the electorate of the genuineness of that image:

"Awesome speech your Holiness" – the etiquette experts lambasted Bush. And the voters liked him even more.

Bushisms were a central part of making Bush seem more vulnerable, more relatable, and… More just like an average voter.

All the detractors who attacked him on his apparent lack of intelligence were doing him a big favor.

As Jacob Weiser acutely notes:

> Elitist condescension, however merited, helps cement Bush's bond to the masses

The Machiavellian Genius of Bushism

What's so Machiavellian about Bushism?

It's the genius of using a weakness as your representative quality.

Think about it.
When you choose a weakness as your representative quality you can't be attacked on it.

As a matter of fact, the more your opponents attack your manifest weakness, the stronger you become (Antifragile).

Something to think about for wannabe politicians.

#3. Give 'Em A "Sense of Us"

There is no "I" in a team, goes the platitude.

We have already seen that the centerpiece of corporate manipulation is to encourage employees to give up their self-interest for the company's self-interest.

Well, it's the same for political persuasion, and this is the other side of the "vilify self-interest" coin.
The main goal is to encourage voters to give up their self-interest and join in the "collective national community".

Persuasion Explained

From a social-psychological when the "we" mindset triumphs, depersonalization begins.
There are many gradients along the selfish/depersonalized continuum, and at the extreme, the group becomes more important than the self (Turner, 1986).

And when the group becomes more important than ourselves, we can do all crazy things for the group which might not be very good for us.

Again, nothing wrong with that.
That might even be a good thing.

But the real question: **is being so selfless for your country good for the country, or for those at the top**?

It's an important question because, usually, the politicians benefit by default from a "we" mindset.

Why?

Because the politicians lead that "we" entity of course, with all the benefits that follow.

Example: Michelle Obama

While not 100% a politician herself, Michelle Obama has had a tremendous influence on American politics.

And she is also a master persuader when it comes to identity politics.
See here an example (below the transcript of the most salient bits):

Have you noticed the persuasive techniques in there?

It's all about building Hillary to be "one of us, standing for people like us and for what we value".

She started with a slew of "we".
Then described Hillary as the perfect representative of us -there was something for everyone in there-, and then she's back to the "we" again.

Look at the transcript of the climax of that speech:

> ***We*** *as women*
> ***We*** *as American*
> ***We*** *as decent human beings*
> ***Can come together***
> *to say enough is enough*

Notice how she talks as a woman, thus indirectly painting an outgroup, possibly hostile enemy: men.
She says "decent human beings", thus indirectly painting "the others" as a non-decent -a basket of deplorables?-.

Of course, not all political manipulations lead to victory, and selling one of the biggest Inc. shills of all time was a tall order.
But Michelle shows you exactly how it's done -and if she had run, she would have most likely won-.

#4. Pretend You're Just Like Them

The best politicians know this secret:

The higher you go, the more you risk losing touch with your base.

But the opposite is also true: the higher you go, the more leverage you have when you get close to your electorate.

Why?

Because, the more powerful and gregarious you are, the more people will perceive your approachability as the true sign of unending magnanimity.

Persuasion Explained

As we've already seen, voters prefer leaders who seem similar and closer to the group they govern.

The opposite is also true: the more distant and king-like the leader seems, the less the followers want to sacrifice themselves for the politician's causes and goals (Haslam et. al., 2006).

History indeed shows us that most dictators and kings who lost their heads did so after they became too self-absorbed and too far removed from their population.

Solution?

Today's focus on **political persuasion is making the politicians look like they're in it for the people** and with the people.

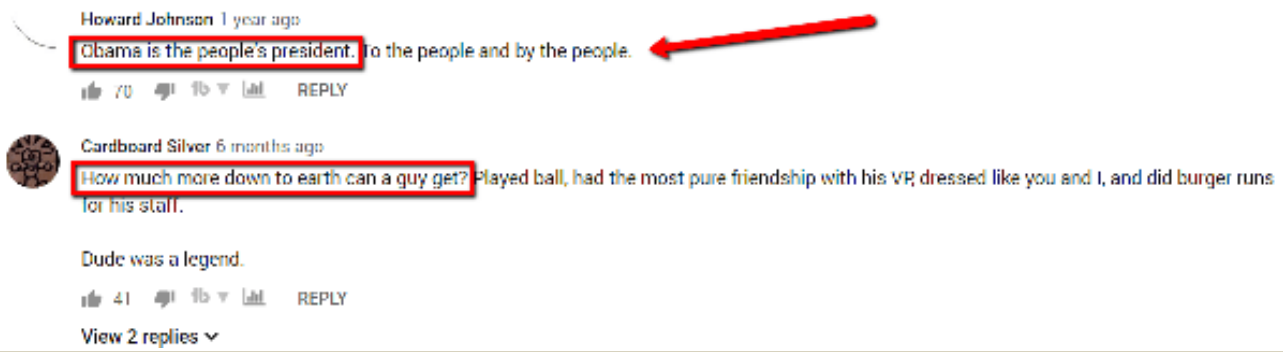
By looking warm and chummy with the average Joes' politicians gain brownie points, look like "one of us" and stave off risks of looking too far removed.

Example: Barack Obama

Obama is a master of what I call the "manipulation of the politician next door".

From turning back to (awkwardly) say hi to a marine to fist-bumping cleaning staff (randomly caught on camera, sure) to "spontaneously" stopping by at a burger place.

Look how down-to-earth I am!
It always surprises me how most people fail to see the political game.
But fail they do.
Here are the two top comments below Obama's burger spree:



In truth, fist bumps to strangers are an unpalatable mix of condescension, manipulation, and patronization.

And to me, they are also somewhat demeaning to the receiver.
Just as the title suggests, the power differential is the equivalent of saying “here’s my bone to you. Happy now?”.

Failure to Respect The Law: Macron

Someone once said that you always recognize a powerless man by how hard he tries to look powerful.

Oh yeah, I said that.
But it still stands.

Politicians who fall victim to “power tripping” lose all their political goodwill, fail to influence voters and ratchet up anger and indignation.

Our beloved Immanuel Macron, self-appointed leader of the world (yeah sure), is a good example of this type of politician:

By asking a kid to call him “Mr. President” Macron looked stuffy, full of himself, and far removed from average people.
That’s the attitude that unleashed the yellow vest protests on him.

#5. Divide Us (Good) VS Them (Bad)

The old ingroup/outgroup from sociology.

It consists of depicting others (outgroup) as “bad”, “unfair” or “undeserving” and us (ingroup) as “good”, “just” and “deserving of victory”.

A world where evil is 100% evil and good is 100% good would be a much simpler world.
But unluckily, we don’t live in that world (Baumeister, 2010).

But manipulative politicians don’t let reality get in the way.

Persuasion Manipulation

The ingroup-outgroup is a well-known sociological principle (see Tajfel, 1970) and this is how politicians gain by creating this social dynamic:

1. With a hostile outgroup, people feel a bigger sense of belonging
2. With the competitive mindset derived from ingroup/outgroup, people will be more loyal
3. The worse you frame the competitors, the easier to justify unethical, immoral, and violent actions

Example: Jocko Willink & US Military

The “enemy mindset” is so obvious in the military.

Here is what Leif Babin, co-author of *Extreme Ownership*, says about the “Iraqi insurgents”:

> Our snipers killed a lot of bad guys and received many well-deserved accolades for it

“Bad guys”, says the officer from the invading army.

It might not be a coincidence that business-speak borrows so much military jargon. I recommend you reject that “bad enemies” frame at all times, it’s a cheap trick to get the best out of you, on the cheap.

A Note On The Danger of Social Identities

Ingroup – Outgroup leads to social identities, such as people defining themselves not as individuals but as groups.

Social identities are potentially toxic and dangerous as they are major drivers behind jingoism, hooliganism, wars, general aggression, and unneeded hatred.

I will cut it short here, but the potential toxicity of social identities is why I always invite in my reviews to reject:

- Tribalist ideologies ("Tribe", "The Way of Men");
- Misogynist ideologies pitching men against women (Toxic masculinity in "The Rational Male" and similar)
- Toxic feminist ideologies pitching women against men ("The Power of The Pussy", "Lean In" etc.)

> **Sometimes the most pro-social stance you can adopt is through a massive dose of individualism**.
> –*The Power Moves*

#6. Make Up Enemies

Machiavellian politicians don't make enemies.
They create them.

An enemy can be used as a pawn for internal power battles.
For example, an enemy of your political opponent can be your friend (Putin to Trump against Hillary).

Or getting into a special relationship with a stronger foe can allow for political oppression to go on unchecked for decades (North Korean dictators defended by China).

And of course, the oldest use of an enemy is to shore up internal support and marginalize your political opposition.
There is little which can embolden politicians as much as a righteous war against an evil enemy.
Bush after 9-11 is the perfect example. Every speech with the word "terror" in it suddenly became so supremely persuasive.

> Machiavellian politicians don't make enemies.
> They create them.

Persuasion Explained

From *evolutionary psychology*, we can derive that when an enemy shows on the horizon, the group tends to put all animosities aside and coalesce.
Coalesce around the growing power of the leader, that is.

And that's why leaders love enemies.

The real-life observation of enemies' power dynamics is also replicated in the laboratory, with Rabbie and Bekker finding out that insecure and embattled leaders are more inclined to pick fights with out-groups.

This is a sad and potentially dangerous reality of politics we should all be aware of.

I quote Haslam here from his seminal "*The New Psychology of Leadership*":

> We can see that intergroup phenomena like **prejudice, discrimination, and even hatred, often derive from the struggle for intragroup authority and leadership**.

In a nutshell: political games for power often have the nefarious consequence of harming innocent bystanders.

The effects of political enemies

In a more schematic form, this is how enemies help politicians influence their electorate:

1. Control over the political agenda (the enemy becomes the salient topic)
2. Claim of being the only representative of the group's interest (by championing the fight)
3. Discrediting rival leaders (others aren't vigilant and strong enough)
4. Centralizing power (beating the enemy takes priority over democratic processes)
5. Disciplining followers (the only patriotic action is to fall in line to focus our efforts on the enemy)

Example: McCarthy & Witch-Hunting

Witch-hunting is an interesting example of social and political power dynamics.

With the witch-hunt the enemy isn't just outside, it's *within*.

That increases voters' insecurities, who then look up to the only politician whom they feel they can trust: the leader of the witch-hunt.

The witch-hunt also obeys the strategy of "divide and conquer". A divided population is less able to mount a credible opposition.

It can be used as a political weapon for coercion and for dispatching political enemies (see Robespierre's Terror as an example).
In a cruel twist of fate phrases like "enemy of the revolution" and "enemy of the people" will be hurled around in a crescendo of madness and hypocrisy.

So back me up to do that job "for you"
Of course, it's implied that only McCarthy and his fringe Republicans were strong enough to stop the communist danger.

Notice also how he uses "Americans" in there.
That's McCarthy trying to position the witch-hunt as a moral duty for *Americans*, not just Republicans, thus enlarging his political appeal and increasing its legitimacy.

Enemies Are Self-Fulfilling

Made-up political enemies not only work very well but can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

The initial prosecutions indeed can provoke counter-reactions, which then confirm the politician's characterization of the world.

All to the benefit of the Machiavellian politician -and to the detriment of everyone else-.

#7. Seems unfair to The Outgroup

Great leaders are fair, say all leadership books.

Talking about platitudes -eye roll-.

And it's true that being fair *to the ingroup* increases leadership's authority. But it's also true that being *unfair* to the outgroup often strengthens the leadership.

Of course, you don't truly need to make enemies with someone. You can just pretend, and play up an act for the internal audience.
Then be back to your usual charming Machiavellian self when you meet the made-up enemy behind closed doors.

Persuasion Explained

Politicians know that their constituencies expect favoritism.

As a matter of fact, sociological research proves that *everyone* unconsciously knows that.

It's been long proven that referees, umpires, and judges favor their home teams or countries.
People act more unfairly and aggressively toward the outgroup *precisely* when they know that their constituencies are looking (Van Kleef et. al., 2007).

Indeed politicians who are insecure in their leadership can even strengthen their power by favoring their groups to the detriment of non-group members (Platow, 2001).
The unfairness is then re-interpreted as "standing up for us".

Unluckily the consequences for real-world politics are quite dire because it means toughness or **international aggression can be a strategy to secure voters' support.**

Politician's manipulations then can end up harming others just to "look good" to their voters.

Example: The Price of Disobeying The Rule

The mayor of Rome, an exponent of the most idiotic of the populistic movements, apparently wasn't aware of how realpolitik works.

So she showed up in person to give free housing to a family of gypsies -gypsies being a notorious outgroup almost anywhere in the world-.
The local police didn't have an easy day defending her from people's anger.

Sure thing, a few left-wingers might stand on her side.
But on net accounts, Raggi lost political goodwill there -and votes-.

Why?

Because the staunch left and right always vote for their party, no matter who's representing. And **those who matter most to political persuaders are the more pliable centrists**.

And of course, the well-meaning centrists would never say anything against gypsies for fear of being called "racists".
So they weren't protesting that day.
But they are going to vote soon…

Trump's Leverage of In-Group Politics

Compare it to Trump instead, who always played the "in-group politics" very well.

His criticism of politicians has always been that they are allowing others to rip the US off.

And he presented himself as the candidate who would finally defend America's interests.

And that appeal worked really well.

#8. Embody The "Spirit of The Nation"

The ultimate political persuasion is this:

Convincing the electorate that you embody the country and its values.

When a politician can come to embody the country and its values, he transcends the physical and becomes a mythic, selfless representation of the nation.

When you see people lighting up candles and decorating their houses with figures of the politician, that's the sign that the politician has become the embodiment of the values he claims to represent.

Persuasion Explained

By becoming a representative of the national values, the politician's personal power grows unmatched.

If it's a democratic system, a vote against him is not a vote against him, but a vote against the country and the values he represents.

In the old days, this political game also added a divine representation.
And kings all across history sought their blessings not through votes, but through the god themselves.

But don't think that we have improved with time: divine approval or not, the effect is still the same.

> A vote against the politician who embodies the country is a vote against ourselves

Example: Ronald Reagan

We could have used an example of a totalitarian dictator such as Hitler.

But that would have led people to think that this type of political persuasion is a thing of the past.
Of course, it's not. It can happen today or tomorrow as much as it happened yesterday.

A more recent and democratic example?

In recent history, and buoyed by a perfect propaganda machine, Ronald Reagan was the embodiment of American values.
This is what Richard G. Darman, Assistant White House Chief of Staff, wrote at the beginning of Ronald Reagan's campaign:

> Paint RR as the **personification of all that is right with or heroized by America**.
> Leave Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America's idealized image of itself—where a vote against Reagan is in some subliminal sense, a vote against mythic "AMERICA"

And as Ronald Reagan became the embodiment of freedom and capitalism, so America became the embodiment of freedom and capitalism in a mutually reinforcing cycle.

Reagan also had the historical advantage of having a natural big enemy with the communist USSR.
But Reagan taking on the former USSR wasn't just a president persuading another president, it was the embodiment of freedom and capitalistic power taking on the failed communist experiment.
It was the battle -and triumph- of America's ideology. Embodied in Reagan's persona.

Notice that when he says "we are called", he doesn't say that the Democrats say so or that other Americans say so. Reagan didn't want that, because that would have communicated internal dissent.

Instead, he wanted people to feel like some external foes were calling America "materialistic".
You see, Reagan didn't just want to be the embodiment of Republican values, **Reagan wanted Republican values to be the embodiment of all that is American**.
He did it very well.
And then, he embodied those same values himself -until today, with Reagan's portraits still adorning many conservatives' homes and circles-.

Sadly, the ultra-liberal view of the world won out, and it hasn't been good for the people or the world.
And that's why we must all learn how political persuasion really works, lest we all get the elites' shafts.

#9. Play the "Great Leader"

What's the best situation ever for a politician?

Having others to call on them, rather than having to sell themselves.

The pinnacle of any political persuasion is having people believe that you only can do the job.

And there is nothing like an enemy, a war, and an image of a tough and resolute leader to have voters flocking to the ballots.

Persuasion Explained

Gustaf Le Bon was a sociologist who, similar to yours truly, didn't hold crowds in very high opinion.
He believed that crowds seek charismatic leaders to submit to.

Le Bon has been criticized with time and for good reasons. But it remains true that, in times of uncertainty, crowds still crave strong leaders (Hakkar, 2017).

And that is why the more dominant types of leaders do two things:

1. Endorse highly individualistic models of leadership (ie.: we need strong leaders like myself)
2. Persuade the electorate about the "difficult and uncertain times" (so we need them to lead us)

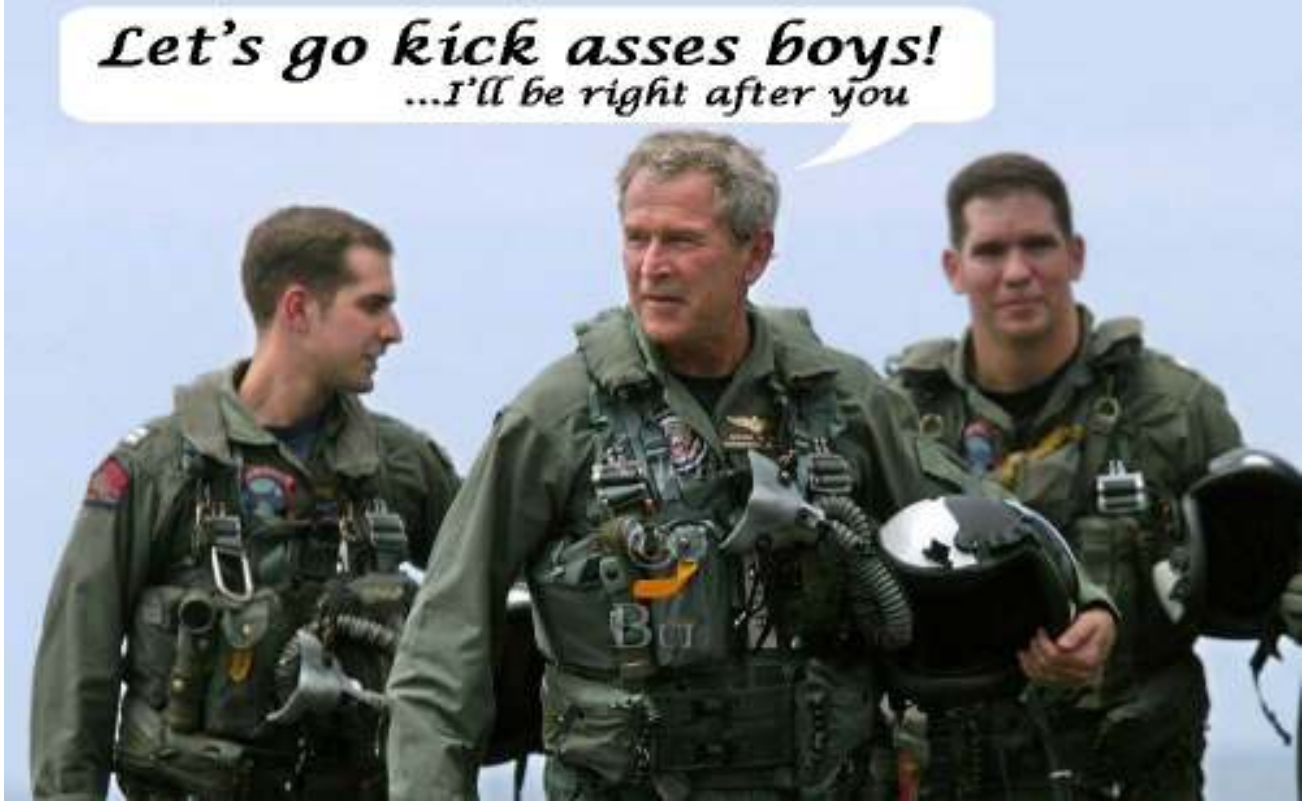
Example: Bush in Flying Suit

After he created the external enemy, Bush painted himself as the only political leader who was hawkish enough to

lead the charge.

The next step was for him to pose like a true commander-in-chief, leading his people to victory.

George W. Bush could have flown in on a helicopter when he visited the USS Abraham Lincoln.
Instead, he chose a military plane.
And he talked the part of the warrior leader.
And he dressed the part.



It's easy to look at Bush after his presidency and think "he wasn't successful".
But he was.

Let's not forget that Bush reached some of the highest approval ratings of any president *ever*.
All while conducting a made-up war against an inexistent enemy.

Sure, eventually reality caught up with people.
But by then, the deed was done.

#10. Feign Disinterest in Power, Pretend You'Re On A Mission For Everyone's Benefit

Politicians know the basics of persuasion.

And one of the basics is that they can't look like they're in it for the power.
They must seem like they're in it for the people.

And that's what they always do: talk up their commitment to their constituencies and hide their real power ambitions.

Persuasion Explained

Leaders who forego the windfall of leadership are preferred to leaders who seem to be in it for themselves (Wit & Wilke, 1988).

This is a case of lab experiments backing up the obvious, of course.
What's more difficult is how to do it in real life.

And the best politicians do it by championing some big causes -reforms, "change", fighting this or that enemy, etc.-. Those never fail to gain the best grassroots support.

Example: Franklin Delano Roosevelt

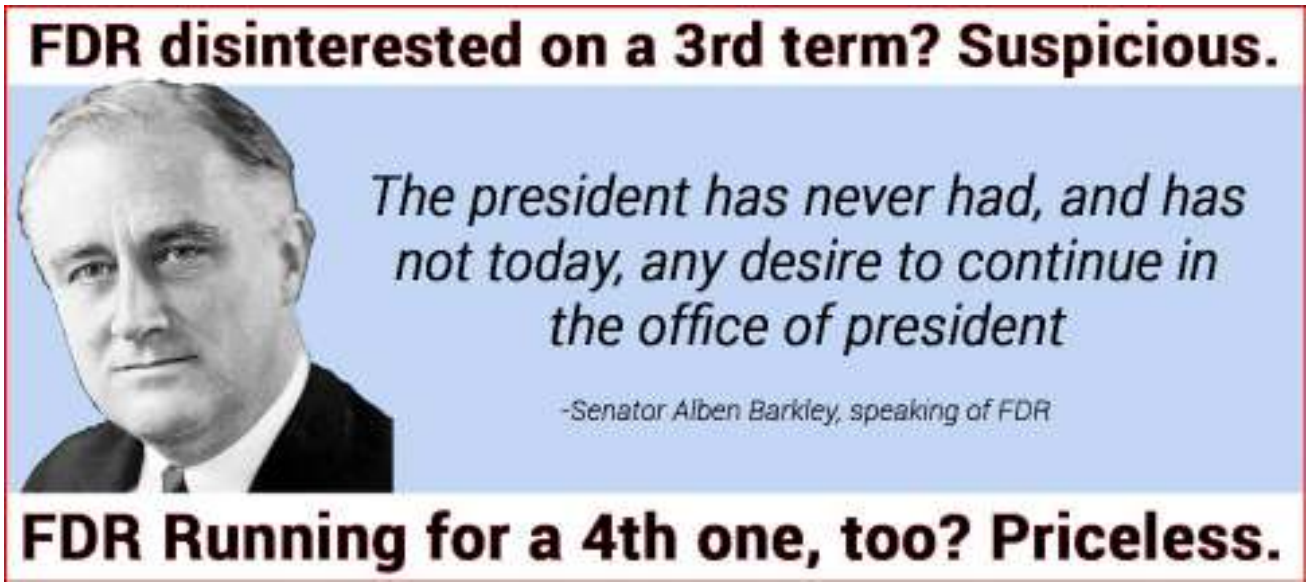
Roosevelt is, still to this day, the only president who has run for a third -and later fourth- mandate.

But things weren't as certain towards the end of his second mandate. Had he made his intention obvious, he would have faced some major headwinds and accusations of having autocratic tendencies.

So Roosevelt never said he was interested in a third.
But neither did he flatly deny, which would have made it difficult for him to backtrack.

Instead, he maneuvered in the background to make sure that no major candidate would come out looking too strong (Robert Greene, 2006).

And then, while the Democratic leadership was struggling to choose a candidate, he made his self-effacing move sending his flunky to prepare the ground for him:



Notice that Roosevelt also used many of the techniques we discussed before:

- He managed to project an image of the great leader doing the impossible (the "great man dupe", unmatchable by any other candidate)
- With the war raging, he also leveraged external enemies
- And finally, he pretended he was there to serve out of a sense of obligation, and not because he (also) craved the power

A lesson on how to make a power-hungry pass for a savior.

Also read the "great leadership dupe":

> Great Leadership Is Great Manipulation: Jocko Willlink Case Study

#11. Appeal to Higher Ideals

This technique is not necessarily value-taking.

Great political leaders can appeal to higher ideals (extrinsic motivation).

But so do some of the manipulatively Machiavellian ones.

Appeals to higher ideals on more fragile minds can even lead to self-sacrifice and death.
You can see these more often in more extreme organizations such as the military, sects, hate groups, etc.

Higher ideals include:

- Unity & brotherhood
- Honor
- Loyalty
- Motherland

Persuasion Explained

Don't even make me start on this.

Your life in exchange for an ideal?
Your family -or mangled you- getting a badge in exchange for your blood?

What a great deal (sarcastic here).

But hey, you sacrifice yourself knowing that somewhere there is someone who handsomely profited from your sacrifice.

Political Manipulation Explained

There are two types of higher ideals manipulation:

1. Leveraging people's tendencies to believe in mystic or religious promises of after-death (Charles Manson, Bin Laden etc.)
2. Leveraging evolutionary tendencies to defend the group

It might not be a coincidence that countries and ships' names have female names.
So, you know, it's easier to inebriate young men into giving their lives to protect "their" women (yeah, sure…).

Solution:

- **Enlightened individualism**

Case Study: Best-Selling Navy SEALs

Examples of higher ideals can often be seen in all organizations that require big sacrifices from their team members.

https://youtu.be/hIvRkjOd1f8?t=66

William Wallace Braveheart's speech was only great insofar as it convinced a bunch of people to die anonymously for his own ideals of glory, fame, and power.

The bigger the sacrifice, the bigger the ideals (and the outgroup, see above).

Writes Jocko Willink in "*The Dichotomy of Leadership*":

> The wounded SEAL's grip on my hand tightened and he pulled me in (…).
> Not scared (..) that he might lose his leg. Only concerned he might have to leave our task unit.
>
> Task Unit Bruiser. Our task unit. Our Lives.

> This was a man.
> This was a true friend -a brother-. This was a hero.
> Young, brave, and more concerned for his friends than for his own life.

There you go.
That kid about to lose his leg doesn't even have a name. That's how much he mattered.
But hey, now his name is "hero".

But you only need to put a wider lens to see a much different story of this "hero" and the great team he got a bullet for.

How about the "hero" being part of an invading force that some professional propagandists span as a "war for freedom"?
And the team he got a bullet for as the fat cats getting rich on his behalf in the oil and arms industries?

Politics Naturally Promotes Manipulation

Unfortunately, intra-group competition naturally promotes the best manipulators into leadership positions.

And inter-group power dynamics tend to promote countries and religions that best cooperate internally.
Unluckily internal cooperation is often stoked by over-nationalism, out-group dynamics, or plain and simple 'external enemies' one must compete against, or destroy.

Says psychologist Joseph Henrich:

> intergroup competition will tend to favor the spread of any tricks for expanding what members of a group perceive as their tribe.
> Both religions and nations have culturally evolved to increasingly harness and exploit this piece of our psychology, as they create quasi-tribes.

This is why on this website we encourage individual-first self-development.
Good for you, and good for the world.

SUMMARY

Politicians, of course, are not bad per se.

However, since politics is ultimately a game of influencing and persuasion, politics is also replete with games and manipulations.

They are not necessarily bad per se but, as we have seen, some of them can be harmful not only to other politicians -which is to be expected- but also to citizens.

Also see:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

8 Toxic Employees That Destroy Teams (& How to Handle Them)

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Toxic employees can be a major threat—not just to your team, but to your career, success, and even health.

Most of them manipulate, undermine authority, and poison the work environment.
But some are worse than others.

This guide, based on realpolitik and psychology, exposes their tactics and shows you how to handle them effectively.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 1. Narcissistic Rebels
  - Psychology Profile
  - Signs
  - Solutions
- 2. Cynics
  - Psychology Profile
  - Solutions
- 3. Homo Economicus
  - Psychology Profile
  - Toxicity Impact
  - 4. Vulnerable Narcissists
  - Psychology Profile
  - Solutions
- 5. Shirkers
  - Psychology Profile
  - How it Feels Managing Shirkers
  - Toxicity Impact
  - Solution
- 6. Power Seekers

- Psychology Profiles
- Solutions

- 7. Suck-Up Players
  - Psychology Profile
  - Toxicity Analysis
- 8. The Predators
  - Psychology Analysis
  - Solutions
- Why You Must Ignore Popular Advice

1. Narcissistic Rebels

These types of toxic employees **cannot stand having a boss**.

They reject any type of outside authority, are hypersensitive to power dynamics, and soon come to resent *any* boss who doesn't grant them enough freedom.

Psychology Profile

Some rebels had an overbearing parent or a highly demanding parent to whom they are *still* rebelling.

Accepting dominance hierarchies is a sign of maturity, but rebels are locked into a child role.

And now, even as adults, any outside authority triggers the same parental resistance as in their teenage years.
But today, instead of slaying the overbearing father, they want to slay *you*.

However, some are simply narcissists who cannot stand the lower status position in the social hierarchy.
They want to be the ones giving orders and calling the shots. They hate you for having authority over them and for having to execute your tasks.

Rebels Make Excuses to Hate You

Rebels hide behind causes and ideals.

They might pose as "social justice warriors", saying they hate power and bosses because "it's unfair", because "they oppress people" or because the boss is "abusive and mean".

That's only a front, of course: the truth is that they resent people who have power over them.
They don't want a good relationship with their bosses, they want *power* over their bosses.

Watch out for these people: the ones who are good at playing this game can easily sow discontent and potentially turn your whole team into an enemy.

Signs

- **Undermine team and work**: narcissists who feel 'constrained' in lower status role intentionally undermine organizational goals (Penney & Spector, 2002).
- **Insubordination and power struggles**: With the aggressive types, you will get into power struggles.
- **Passive aggression**: If they are more of the passive-aggressive types, then you'll see typical passive-aggressive signs (delayed replies, poor executions, undermining behind your back, etc.).
- **Low motivation, no extra mile**: narcissists in subordinate roles are less motivated, less willing to engage in extra-role behaviors, and more selfish (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016)

Solutions

First, a reality check:

If too many resent your management, you might be the problem.

Manage not through authority and title, but by example.

That being said, some managers try to overpower rebels.
But that approach doesn't address the root causes.

Overpowering rebels is tantamount to curing a problem with more of what causes the problem.
They will resent you more, and they will want to destroy you to vindicate the infamy.

What to do then?

If they are poor at what they do, fire them.

If they are good, you must give them "freedom of operation".
Make them feel like they are special agents with a "license to act like self-employed people.".

Yep, that's the secret to keeping these guys performing problem-free: make them feel like they are self-employed.
Allow them to work from home, come and go on their own time, and, if they perform, remove any need for reporting.
Just let them come to you with the results and the money they earn for your company—that's what you want in the end, no?

Just Like Investment Bank's Traders

Investment banks use this approach with alpha-male, aggressive traders (Taleb, 2018).

Banks grant them lots of freedom, as long as they make money.

2. Cynics

Cynics masquerade their envious doom and gloom as realism.

They position themselves as rational, realist types that the rest of your team should better listen to.
And that makes them toxic employees per excellence.

Psychology Profile

There are 3 main types of cynics:

- Defensive cynicism (it's not that I'm unsuccessful, it's that everything sucks and I don't even try)
- Power mover (use cynicism to discredit others)
- Former idealists

Former idealists change tack when they hit life difficulties and realize that the company, the state, the people or whatever it is they were duped to believe in, weren't there to support them.

Hurt and disappointed, they swing in the opposite direction.

Cynics Misunderstand The Power Moves

Cynics love articles such as "corporate lies", Machiavellian principles, and "how politicians manipulate the masses".

But he fails to see that social exchanges *can* be win-win and that it's up to them to make sure they are (see "enlightened collaborator").

In short, he fails to go from “poisoned by cynicism” to “empowered by cynicism” and reach the “positive cynic” stage.
See more here:

> Positive Cynicism: Turning Poison, Into Gold

High-Achieving Cynics

Here’s the kicker:

Most executives and top performers are positively cynic.

The positive cynic is a different breed.
Not swayed by corporate BS, he focuses on giving because he obeys the cardinal rule of effective cynicism: the more I give, the more I can ask.

And, contrary to Pollyanna operators who apply misguided advice of “giving without asking“, they are very assertive in demanding their share of the pie.

And they are right!
It’s better to assertively ask for what’s fair, than waiting and hoping the man will be nice enough to give.

Solutions

Appeal to their practical side with bonuses, and appeal to *their own* goals.
For example, reputation, legacy, efficiency, record-low turnover, etc.

If they’re average of below-average performers and you need a motivated team, move them to more isolated posts, or fire them.

3. Homo Economicus

What you wrote on the contract, you get.

Don’t expect extra work, extra effort, or special allegiance.
With him, you get what you pay for -literally-.

Psychology Profile

Sometimes the homo economicus is driven by fear.

He is afraid that if he does more and doesn’t get more, then he is the ‘sucker’.

But more often the homo economicus is your average Joe.
He’s gotten his degree with average grades to live a simple life with a mortgage, a car, and an average lady on his side.

He pays his health insurance, his pension plan and he trusts the system to take care of him if things go south.

That’s it.
He’s not bad… He’s just an average fella.

Toxicity Impact

The homo economicus is toxic for top-performing teams.

Why?

Because they will form a clique with other homo economicus, slackers, and cynics.

That stand in stark contrast to the top performers and the extra-milers.

As the two groups grow apart, some of the extra-mile employees will start thinking “why work hard if these slackers will be reaping the same rewards”?
And, like in any public good game, the givers will stop giving.

That’s how average Joes harm team performance.

> **If you need excellence, you don’t the Homo Economicus**

4. Vulnerable Narcissists

The worst ones have the thinnest skin:

You need to tiptoe and power-protect to the extreme to avoid hurting them.

Psychology Profile

They’re narcissists and fixed mindset people.

They interpret negative feedback *on their work* as you telling them they *are* bad and unworthy.
Everything is personal with them.

And that’s why they can’t stomach reality: reality is often harsh.
And those you don’t want those labels in an HR formal complaint.

The Vindictive Paranoid

They might fake a stoic face, but in reality, they hurt and they never forget.
And they swear that they will make you pay.

They never communicate directly and honestly and they stew in their resentment for you.

The dumbest and most spiteful of them will sue you even if they have nothing on you -contrary to the Machiavellian players outlined below-.

Solutions

If you're in a big sprawling corporation, you can't avoid them.

If you are the more aggressive managerial type, learn some tactful communication.
These books on communication skills and "*Thanks for The Feedback*" will help you.

And you can turn them into allies.
Their fragile ego goes both ways: they get hurt easily, but also get *hooked* easily on emotional rewards.

5. Shirkers

They are busy with mysterious projects, take long to finish tasks, and generally try to do as little as possible to get by.

Oh, and they also take long lunches and often get sick.

Psychology Profile

There are several types of shirkers:

- **Entitled shirkers**: victims of entitlement mentality, such as the belief that they are due stuff without having to put in the work
- **Nurtured shirkers**: grew up with helicopter parents who gave everything (except good parenting)
- **Lazy shirkers**: apathetic to work and life, they just don't see the point and their biggest ambition is Netflix and

pizza

Finally, there are the socially clueless shirkers.
They overlap with entitled and nurtured and don't see or understand that healthy relationships entail an exchange.

How it Feels Managing Shirkers

Some shirkers are professionals in *looking* busy.

They like being in multiple projects to hide their real workload.
And they can always refer to "that other project they're working on".

But the most toxic shirkers use irascibility under this principle: if they make it difficult for people to approach and deal with them, nobody will ever give them work.

Milton in "Office Space" is an example:

Toxicity Impact

Free-riders aren't just toxic in companies and teams: free-riders are toxic to societies.

The issue is that free riders, as James Surowiecki notes, "poison" the whole system.
Employees who would go the extra mile in a fair contribution system stop giving when free riders show up.

And that's why free riders are devastatingly toxic: they trigger vicious circles of apathy, demotivation, and disinvestment.

Solution

The number of free riders varies widely depending on whether or not punishment is introduced in the exchanges (Fehr and Gächter, 2000).

So punish shirkers and free riders with lower salaries, lower bonuses, and no promotions.

6. Power Seekers

Power Seekers have huge ambitions.

That ambition includes taking your place or, even better, jumping straight above you.

They are dangerous for managers because if moving up means destroying you in the process, they will happily do so.

Psychology Profiles

The poor ones will make it obvious through dominance that they plan on replacing you.

And the good ones are Machiavellian and manipulative to the core.

They pretend to be all about "doing a great job" and "learning from you". And they'll even build you up in the process.

Solutions

If it's your company, you can use them.

Unless they're pure sociopaths, you align interests so that their selfish interest also adds value.
Just be *extremely* careful though: the most toxic types focus more on politics and rival elimination than on actual

results.

If it's not your company and you don't have great ambitions, don't cross them and let them free to walk their power path: that way you won't get hurt.

And if you want to compete with them, then make sure they learn nothing from you and get ready to rumble.

7. Suck-Up Players

Suck-up players flatter you and support you.

But it doesn't come for free: they do it because they want you to like them, protect them, and, crucially, to play favorites with them.

Psychology Profile

We talked about Suck-up players in office politics players as well.

Suck-up players can brown-nose for different reasons, ranging from admiration to love to power infatuation.

True suck-up players are not very ambitious.
Seeking power by reflection and brown-nosing indeed are defensive games, low-status behavior, and inherently submissive.

Just like children unconsciously seek their parents' goodwill, suck-up players seek political safety.

Toxicity Analysis

They are toxic for two reasons:

1. The team might think you two are in cahoots
2. It turns the team political and lowers morale and efficiency

Finally, if you're not attentive enough, they might even manage to get too close and win your favors.
You want to avoid that at all costs or you'll come across as weak and easy to manipulate.

Remember this golden rule of management:

> The closer you grow to one, the farthest you push the rest

8. The Predators

They look for ways to *take* as much as possible.

Often high in psychopathy, they rarely stop at moral and ethical considerations.
And they even rarely stop at lawful boundaries -unless they can leverage the law to screw you over, that is-

Psychology Analysis

They have no moral standards, are cynics, and sometimes are sociopaths and psychopaths.

If they do have internal morals, some of them will manipulate themselves first and foremost.
They will twist the story in their mind and paint you as the evil boss they must destroy -and yeah, they are the Robin Hood of that story of course-.

The lowest quality overlaps with the shirkers.
They're the kind of toxic employees who are mentally deranged enough to voluntarily hurt themselves just to get

insurance money.

The most Machiavellian of them instead connive and conspire to enact more elaborate frauds.
For example, they will read corporate laws and record your infractions just so that one day they can sue you and your company.

American Beauty has an example of a predatory toxic employee:

> **Manager**: Management wants you gone by the end of the day.
> **Employee**: Well, just what sort of severance package is management prepared to offer me? Considering the information I have about our Editorial Director buying pu**y with company money – which, I think, would interest the I.R.S., since it technically constitutes fraud (…) Not to mention.. (grins) Craig's wife!
> **Manager**: What do you want?
> **Employee**: One year's salary, with benefits.
> **Manager**: That's not going to happen.
> **Employee**: Well, what do you say I throw in a little sexual harassment charge, to boot?
> **Manager**: [chuckles in disbelief] Against who?
> **Employee**: [he chuckles right back] Against YOU. Can you prove that you didn't offer to save my job if I let you blow me?
> **Manager**: Man, you are one twisted f*ck

Begin with the end in mind: imagine that your worst employees will act like that. Record all conversations, and have the best lawyers… And be prepared for that type of (legal) showdown.

Solutions

- **Keep vulnerabilities and vices to yourself**, never allow coworkers to have 'dirt' on you
- **Fire strategically**
  - Have someone else do it
  - Pretend you're 'forced to' by circumstances
  - Pretend it was a board/collective decision
- **Power protect when firing**
  - It's about investors/business needs, not personal
  - It's about unlucky circumstances, not his character/performance
- **Make him feel he has a brighter future ahead** <— So he will not fight to stay
- **Trap him**
  - Give him freedom to spend company money, he'll misuse it
  - Hire an attractive double agent as his assistant

Reading people and prevention at an individual level also helps.

Look for signs of antisocial-disorder personalities, examine past employment history -often dotted by very brief stints- and check references.

Why You Must Ignore Popular Advice

Top results come from big publishers.

In the case of workplace topics, that's often Forbes, Business Insider, or Harvard Business Review.

While HBR often has great content, many of the rest… Not always.

This is the first result when typing “how to deal with difficult employees”:

9 Ways To Deal With Difficult Employees

1. Listen. Often, when an **employee** is **difficult** we stop paying attention to what's actually going on. ...
2. Give clear, behavioral feedback. ...
3. Document. ...
4. Be consistent. ...
5. Set consequences if things don't change. ...
6. Work through the company's processes. ...
7. Don't poison the well. ...
8. **Manage** your self-talk.

More items... • Nov 21, 2013

9 Ways To Deal With Difficult Employees - Forbes

https://www.forbes.com/sites/erikaandersen/.../9-ways-to-deal-with-difficult-employees/

This catch-all advice is rarely effective, often useless, and, sometimes, counterproductive.
Here are just a few reasons why it’s wrong:

1. **Listen**: listening to suck-up players sub-communicates that want to get closer. You need to send the opposite message
2. **Feedback**: giving feedback to rebels and vulnerable narcissists will only make them hate you more
3. **Walk through the company process**: vindictive and predatory employees will only take it to mean they must get ready for war. Much better to pretend all is good until you fire them out of the blue

Big publications are also forced to produce plain vanilla content that fits our zeitgeist of political correctness.
And that’s not going to cut it when you need effective, real-life advice.

We teach how to read people, spot red flags, and avoid toxic employees in **Power University**

Our Founder's Approach to TPM's Mission-Based Business

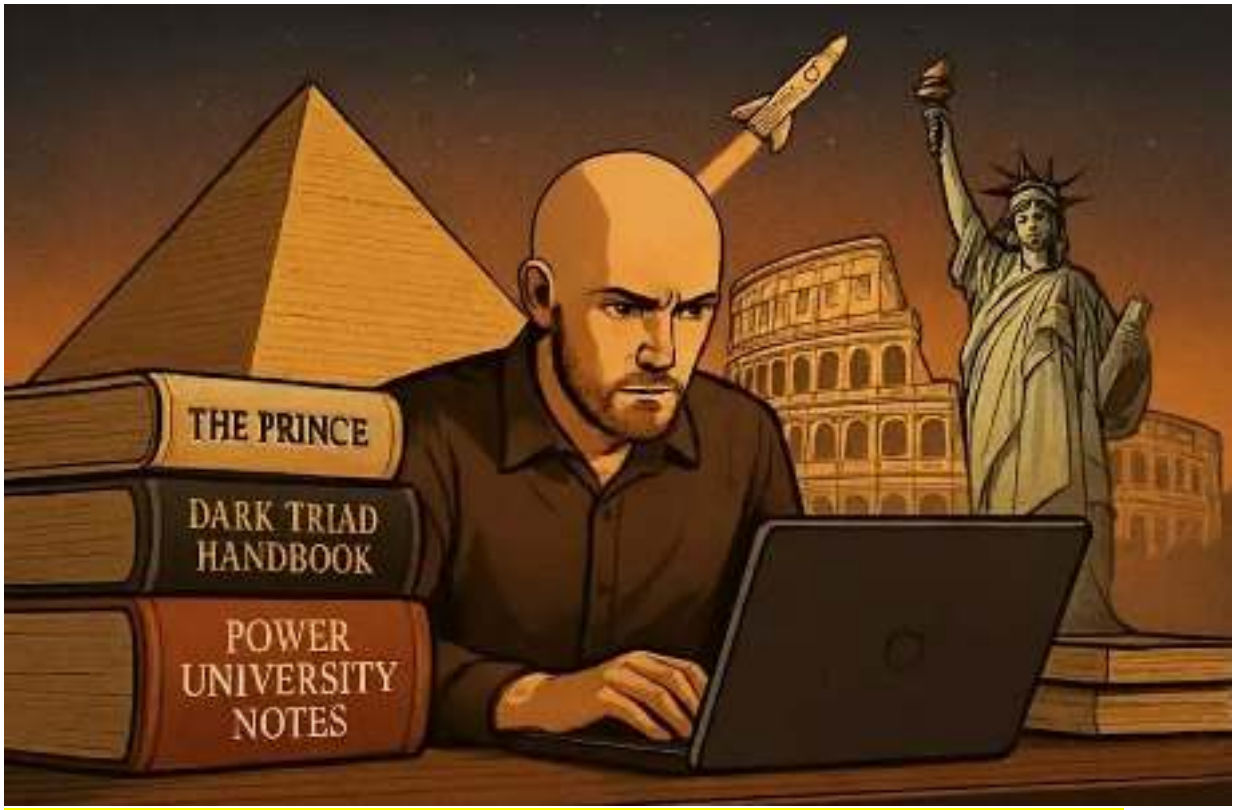
Lucio Buffalmano · 18 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

My goal is to contribute to human progress by empowering men with the psychological tools, strategies, and mindsets to lead with strength and honor.

Some people advance humanity by building rockets or engineering biological breakthroughs.
Some others keep society running, also necessary.
My contribution is different: I focus on **the progress of human capital**.

If future generations are to build societies across planets and beyond, we need men of both skills and character—men who can lead, cooperate, and protect. I want to help shape those men.

And since we only get one life (likely), I choose to pursue this mission in a way that aligns with what I like doing, and who I am: independent, research-driven, and grounded in real-world practice.



TPM seeks to contribute to human civilization and progress by empowering the human capital itself

Contents

- Mission-Based Business
- Values-Based Business
  - Sales & Marketing

Mission-Based Business

My mission is to make Power University the ultimate tool to help good men evolve into **successful, capable, and honorable men**. When more good men rise, society benefits with:

- **More win-win leaders** enlarge the pie for all
- **Increased cooperation across individuals and societies**: crucial for when humanity will live on different

planets
- **Faster progress** through empowered human capital
- **Protect downside risks of dark triad leaders**, since empowered men are less likely to fall for dark triad leaders, populists, and ingroup/outgroup manipulations

Values-Based Business

While the mission is TPM's goal and the impact we want to have, our values are how we pursue that mission.

Since TPM's is largely centered around Lucio, the values are a mix of business values, and Lucio's own values and priorities.

#1. The Business Serves The Mission

TPM is based on both the overlap between what I love doing, what I'm good at, and what serves a great mission.

The **mission is the guiding star for business decisions**, above concerns for marketing and revenue maximization.

#2. We Want The *Right* Customers, Rather Than As Many Customers aS Possible

A values-based business wants individuals with similar values and who can help activate the mission.

In TPM case, that means we don't want overly selfish men, bullies, or freeloaders.

Protecting Against Freeloaders

TPM products are structured to make it harder for freeloaders to get the full value.

Power University drips over time, to prevent money-back guarantee abuses.
There are also links to forum sections that only logged-in alumni can access. And of course the most personalized advice is with coaching.

Customers Are Kindred Souls

When you speak from your values, many buyers share those same values.

Our customers also enable our mission, and keep us working on our mission.
I always felt a strong *obligation* to provide great value for them. My duty is to give them the best tools possible to win in life.

This is why, contrary to many businesses, I often default to prioritizing existing customers over getting as many new ones as possible.

#3. Achieve Your Dream Life, Then Deprioritize Money

My philosophy towards money is that any extra income above a "good life threshold" adds little value.

"Good life" is relative, so you must define yours.

For me personally, a good life is: the freedom to structure my day as I please, to do and say as I please, wake up whenever I wake up, travel whenever I want to travel, live wherever I want to live, get accommodation in good parts of town, and sit down at a restaurant without having to run budget calculations.

From a business perspective, it means **the ability to focus on product development instead of marketing**.

Keep Greed In Check

Greed is enslaving.

There is nothing wrong in wanting money -money is power and *enables* your intellectual freedom-.
But it must be balanced. If money becomes the #1 priority, then you lose intellectual freedom.

This is a given, because speaking the truth will eventually cost something.

Take this website and the red pill, for example.
This blog is one of just a handful of blogs to be officially archived in the "TheRedArchive.com":

Since the red pill was so popular among men, it would pay off well if I winked at it.
It does *not* pay off instead to criticize "*The Rational Male*", or of The Red Pill.
But I gladly pay that price.

#4. Prioritize Product Development Over Sales & Marketing

Once you reach the "living your way threshold", mission and time become more important than money.
So you optimize less on financial income and more on time-saving.

As of 2025, TPM has never run any ads, and never hired anyone to optimize our marketing and sales.

For years, the priority has been more research, better content, and better Power University.

#5. Freedom In Life, Work, & Relationships

My philosophy towards freedom allowed me to get into entrepreneurship without many fears. I'd rather die living my way than living restrained in a golden cage of safety and luxury.

#6. Intellectual Freedom Underpins TPM

Intellectual freedom is foundational to any truth-based organization.
It can't be otherwise.

Freedom includes the freedom to speak your truth, even if it may offend someone.
I strongly disagree with the saying 'if you don't have any nice things to say, don't say it'.

Instead, that's the better proverb for me:

> The only thing necessary for the triumph of nonsense, lies, and intellectual garbage, is for critical thinkers to say nothing

#7. Keep Costs Low: It Protects Your Freedom

I don't do risky investments, don't lend money, and keep expenses low.

Savings are a reservoir of power, and you don't give your power away.
Savings also protect my freedom, and TPM's intellectual freedom.

#8. Accept There Will Be Haters

Some of our values, coupled with speaking our truth, lead to someone disliking us.

For example, I believe that selling products that are not based on science or proven results is immoral.
So some of our reviews are highly critical.

That has cost us some friendships and several opportunities.
People don't like to link to, mention, or invite as guests people who can be highly critical.

Sales & Marketing

A values-based entrepreneur's time is sacred.

Customer care and sales must be done efficiently, or it takes time away from his focus.

Note: this section is from early-days TPM, it's different now

#1. Sell to Many, Avoid 1:1 Sales

Your time is the most important resource in the world.

So since early on I structured the business to avoid in-person and 1:1 sales.

I took this notion to an extreme.
Some early emails I got would be *so* easy to answer, and some of them are already set up to make the sale.
For example:

- I love your work. How long will access to Power University last?
- I'm thinking of buying; will the access to the private forum last forever?

These questions only ask for a little nudge before purchasing.
And I *still* didn't reply.

Non-replying saves time, of course.
But replying would also set a bad dynamic.

Replying to personal emails sets the expectation that you're available for private questions, and sets the expectation for *future* replies as well.

1:1 Sales Low Power

While I avoided 1:1 from early on, I did reply the very first few emails that felt like such a novelty.

From a power dynamics point of view, the more questions you reply, the more it cements the frame of them choosing, and you needing their purchase.

#2. Only Serve Capable Prospects

Luckily, TPM customers are smart people, so it's rare that people ask silly questions.

When it happens though, it's a signal that it may not be a good fit for us.

#3. Avoid the Trap of High-Effort Requests: They're Rarely Good Buyers

High initial effort = high effort to maintain.

In my value system, **approaching others while expecting them to do most of the work is immoral**.

Some cues of high effort buyers:

- Many questions
- Questions already answered in product descriptions
- Basic questions

Here is a very general rule of thumb:

> **The more questions they ask upfront, the more likely it is they will either complain later, or find a way to take up much more of your time**

Plus, it can also be a Machiavellian power move.
Some prospects asks questions just to make it easier for them to complain later.

The trick here is partially a manipulative negotiation technique against you, and partially, self-manipulation.

When they complain later, you feel guilty because you made them buy and now they're not happy (guilt-tripping).
And for them, it's easier to complain because, "hey, they had warned you that softness was important for them".

Even the ones that are not out to defraud you are usually "difficult customers".
If you can choose, it's better to get easy and good customers.

#4. No Asshole Rule

TPM helps men stand up to bullies and assholes.

We don't want to help the bullies, so we don't want them in our products.

7 Types of Freeloaders & How to Beat Them (For Entrepreneurs)

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

If you are an entrepreneur, you know who freeloaders are.

They are the "potential customers" who expect discounts, exceptions to the rules, and, of course, who seek to get your services for free, without giving anything back.

This article will show you who the freeloaders are and how to deal with them.

Contents

- The Types of Freeloaders
- How to Deal With Freeloaders
- Why We Freeloader-Proof TPM
- SUMMARY

The Types of Freeloaders

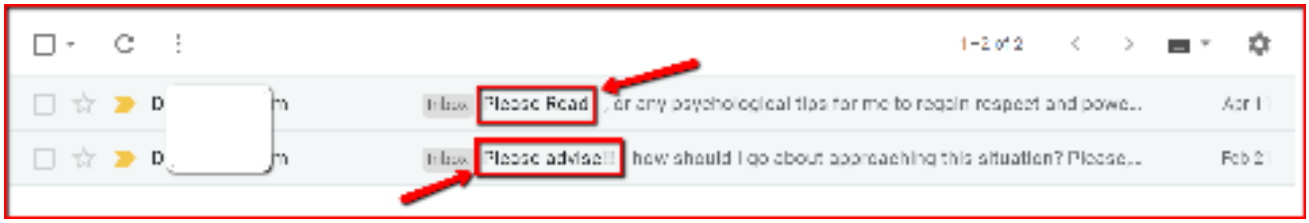
Here are the types of freeloaders, categorized based partly on psychology and partly simply on humor:

#1. The Entitled Freeloader

If he has a question he immediately goes on the "contact" form because, of course, he is important, and if he has a question he needs a reply.

Once on the contact page, he immediately thinks that my request to avoid personal questions via emails does not apply to him -of course, he's entitled to priority treatment!-.

And to make sure I reply quickly, he uses smart copy to compel me to read:



Notice the highly descriptive subjects, just to show respect for my time
And of course, like every self-respecting freeloader, he keeps his issues for months rather than, God forbid, spend some money on a personal consultation.

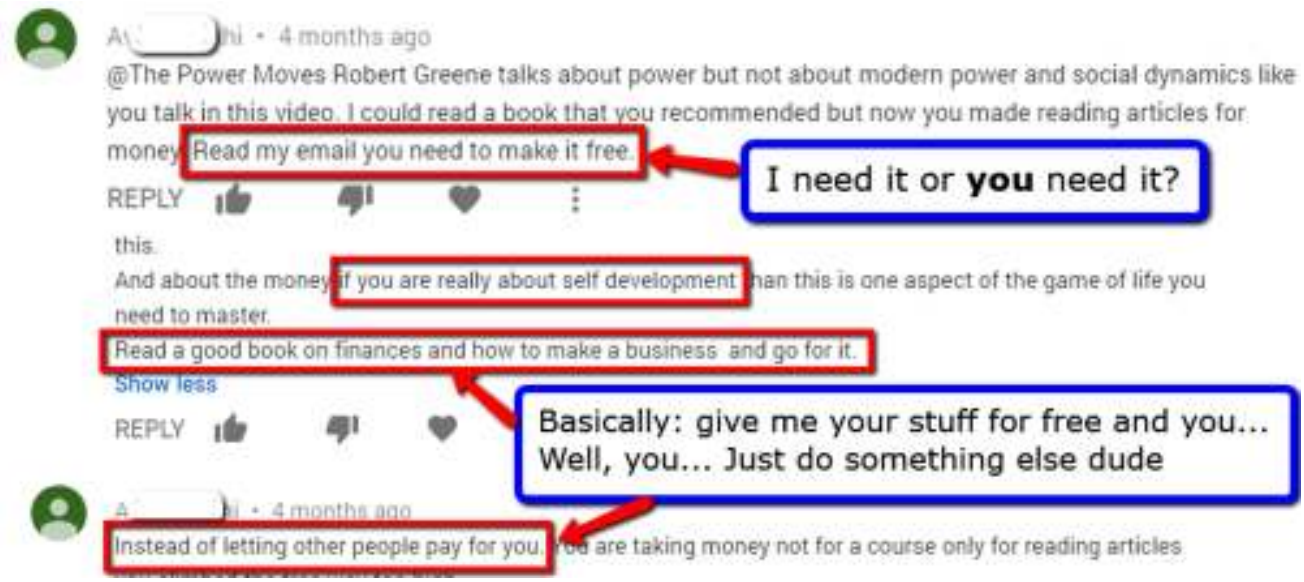
Or who knows, maybe he's trying different subject lines copy on me to study which one works.
In that case, respect to you my freeloading friend :).

Advice for the entrepreneurs:
don't open those emails, they are freeloaders' clickbait.
If you do, skim through them and *never* reply.

#2. The "Go Get Another Job So I Can Get Your Stuff For Free" Freeloader

This freeloader is a thing of beauty.

He realizes that you might need to sell some stuff, but the rules should not apply to what he wants to consume -makes a lot of sense, no?-.



Advice for the freeloader:
Change mentality.
That "stop trying to monetize your work attitude" makes you come across as a selfish freeloader who'd rather see the content producer starve than provide even the smallest support through a "like".

Advice for the entrepreneur:
Don't reply, and God forbid get dragged into defending your right to ask for a fair exchange of value.

#3. Social Warrior Freeloader

You've got to love these ones.

Using social power moves on ThePowerMoves :).

Their angle is to take the moral high ground that it's about "learning and sharing", which is good, and "asking for money", which is bad.

For example, they complain to me about the 5 articles limit because "people need to learn".

That is, of course, a highly manipulative, self-righteous attitude that pretends to take the side "of the people" to make you look like a money-grabbing grinch -instead of someone who, just like anyone else, needs an income to live-.

It's also the same technique that manipulative politicians use to justify their profit-driven wars.
And the same technique that unfair debaters and moral police use when they deploy moral justice attacks.

Come to think of it, I might copy that strategy:

> **Me to the bank**: I need to live somewhere, stop with this mortgage sh*t every month!

Then you can get on a roll and knock down all your payment obligations:

> **Me to SiteGround**: I need to host my website somewhere, stop running your charge FCS!

When you start, it becomes a way of life, and you can get anything with it!
You can even expand to your personal relationships:

> **Fathers from now on**: It's your baby, it wasn't me who grew him for 9 months, take care of him. And of yourself. And since you're there, take care of me as well

The issue with this freeloader is that instead of facing and fixing his own issues -a lack or inability to produce an income- he pushes the blame onto others -i.e…: you, by not making it free, are the source of my problems-.

Advice for the freeloader:
1. quit using shame as a tool for power and compliance. It really makes you come across as super-unlikable.
2. Understand that capitalism, albeit far from perfect, is also a good system to enable our lives of freedom and choice.
3. Everyone needs an income, when you take that approach " making it free" it's the equivalent of saying: "I don't care if you cannot make a living".

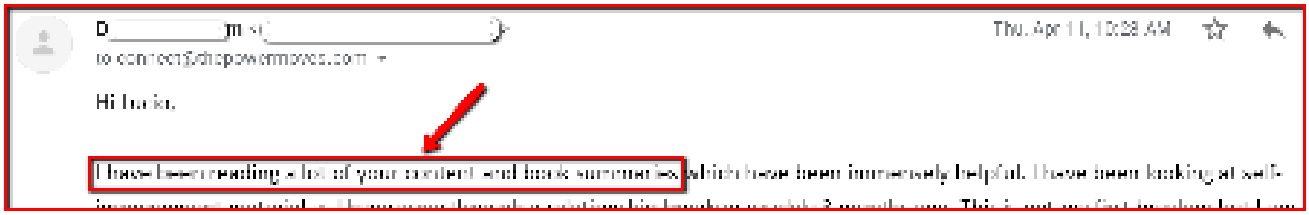
Advice for the entrepreneurs:
Don't allow those messages to stay in public forums. They are nonsense, but people who still don't know much about the world can get easily swayed by these fake charismatic leaders (see Savonarola for a historical example).

#4. The "Rub It In" Freeloader

Freeloading is a way of *being*, not acting.

It becomes so normal for this type of freeloader, that you don't need to hide it anymore.

As a matter of fact, you can rub it into those idiots producing content and services:



Yeah, and "a lot" means that you've been evading the PayWall :)
LOL, I just had to smile at that one though, it was fun.

Basically, this guy flaunted all my requests in the contact form not to write with personal requests and then told me that he's been going around the PayWall.
He might have added in there he's been using an AdBlock as well, you know… Just to hit all the right buttons :).

But he did it all so naturally that I just had to smile at it.

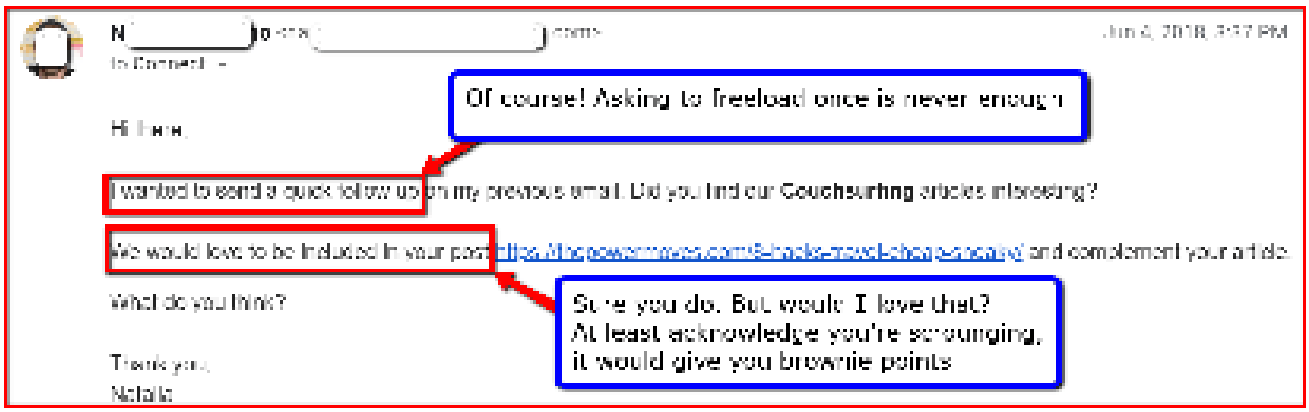
Advice for freeloader:
to increase the chances of a reply, share a couple of articles or like the Facebook page and then tell me you did that. I'll immediately feel like you're a supporter.

Advice for the entrepreneur:
Don't get offended that people are trying to get your stuff without paying: that's how many people are.
Focus on the loopholes and weaknesses of your system instead. Or focus on getting more "proper customers".
Whichever you decide, don't waste time and mental cycles on people who give you nothing.

#4. The "Link To Me" Freeloader

I get a lot of these of course.

I might dig deeper later to find a couple of entertaining ones, but here's a typical bonehead request:



Advice for Freeloaders: What's In It For Me man, "What's In It For Me".
Especially if the person hasn't replied to you the first time around, don't go about stealing more of their time without fixing your delivery.
And if you don't have a WIIFM, then admit it.
It will make you come across as more sincere and less slimy.

Advice for Entrepreneurs:
They're doing that with hundreds of others, you don't want to link up with these people.
And asking without giving is immoral, never give to these people.

#5. The "Refund Me" Free Rider

Of course, the biggest example of freeloaders for digital entrepreneurs are people who abuse your refund guarantee.

Sometimes you can't be sure if someone is taking advantage of your refund system or if they sincerely couldn't take the full value out of your course.

But sometimes, you can be fairly sure they were trying to abuse the system.

Here is one example:

Basically: he asked for a refund as soon as he got into the course.
When I told him that the course hadn't yet fully unlocked, he "changed his mind".

Alright, right now it might still be an honest "not a good fit for me" customer.

But here is where it gets dodgy.
Right after the course was fully unlocked, he asked again for a refund.
Like all those weeks weren't enough to decide the course was good for you? You had to wait until everything was available for you to enjoy and download.

It looks like he was enjoying it if he waited until everything unlocked and he still tried his luck outside of the 30-day refund window.

A bit sad considering this also was a previous buyer of one of my ebooks.

How do you deal with these people?
If you want to run a value-based business where your time only goes to worthy individuals, then these people are not worth your reply.

I have to add here that, thank goodness, they are *very* rare.

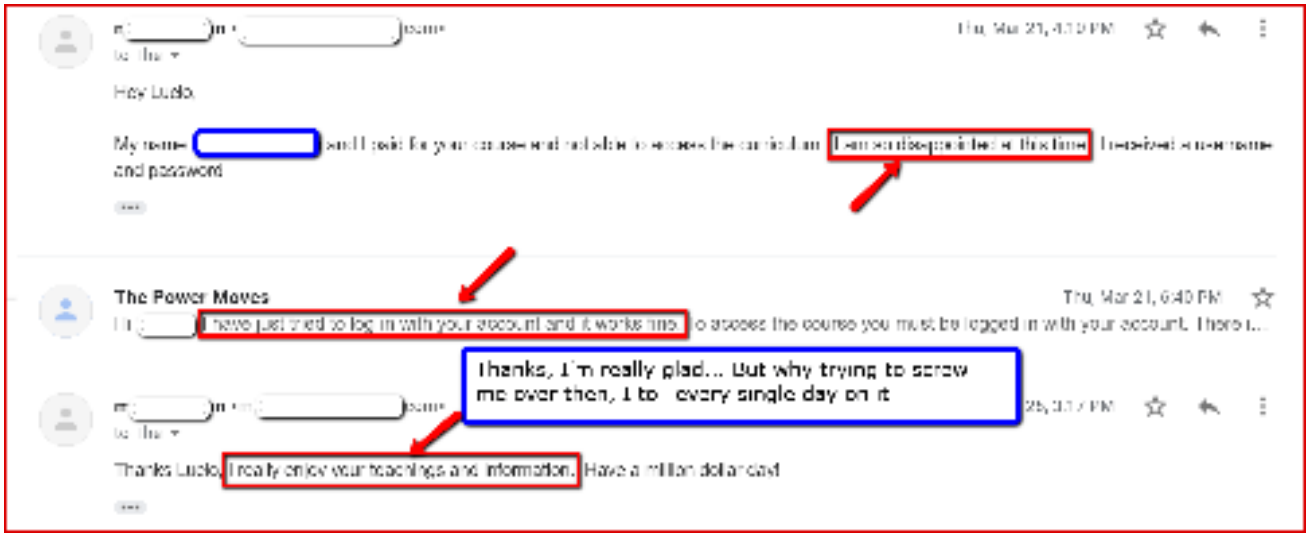
Advice for the freeloader:
Buy if you can afford to buy or don't buy if you can't afford to buy. Quit being a bottom-feeding scammer.

Advice for the entrepreneur:
Don't refund people who are trying to scam you.
As a matter of fact, don't even reply.
But do record the events in case they try to harm you with negative feedback.

The Complaining Customer

Then, of course, there is the customer who "complains" to get something -a discount, a freebie, or, if they hit the jackpot of their lifetime, a full refund!-.

This was the second email he had sent, one to my business email and the other to the Paypal account -you gotta love people who double or triple message you-:



But I appreciate he stopped the game early and got around to proper behavior
Advice for the freeloader:
Most people know this game and it makes you look bad. Avoid.

Advice for the entrepreneur:

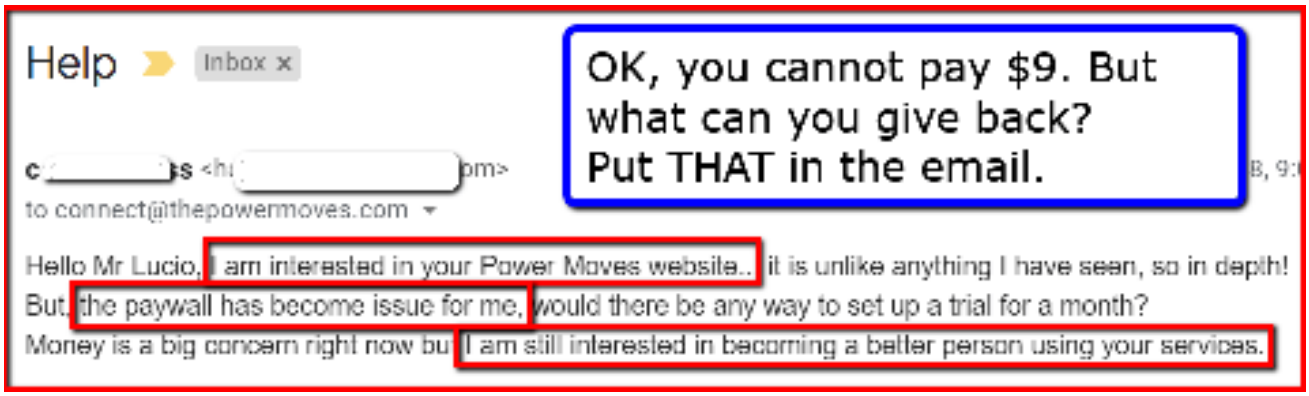
Same as above, giving in to scammers means contributing to a worse world. Don't be that type of entrepreneur.

#6. The "Ask Without Giving" Freeloader

This is another typical one.

It consists of asking without even considering to give back and, sometimes, without even being willing to give back.

Look at this example:



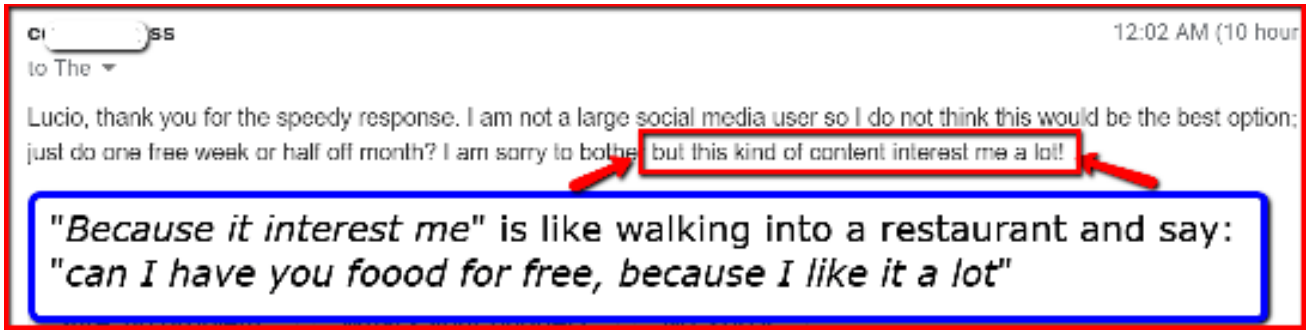
Still, I am happy to help someone out.

So I tell him "alright mate, how about this deal: you share on your FB (or whatever social media you use) a couple of the articles you like most, and I will give you access".

In my mind it was a no-brainer, the easiest way for him to say "yes" and even save face.
That way he wasn't scrounging around, but he was entering a fair exchange.

Win-win.

Instead:



Instead, here fuses the offer.

Fine, maybe he doesn't want to share his social media. I understand.

But at that point, it was up to him to either:

1. Come up with an alternative (i.e.: "I'll tell a friend of mine)
2. Show me he understands he's in debt and ask for a favor (i.e.: sorry I can't chip in right now, I'm asking just as a favor man)
3. Show me the understanding he's in debt Stop pretending this is a fair exchange and refer the decision to me (i.e.: "sorry I can't give anything back mate, you'd just do it for a favor and I'd be very grateful. Up to you")

And it wouldn't have hurt if he had added "I know it's not much, I'm just going through a rough spot".
That would have given him more credibility and "saved my face", just in case the receiver could feel he's overcharging.

Any of the above, I would have happily helped me.
And I would have thought

> Alright, I can't be sure he can't afford $9, but if he spent so much time asking for it, maybe it's true.
> Plus he gets it and he's being polite, and I appreciate that.

Instead, he refuses my proposal, keeps pretending this is a fair exchange and his reason for being a fair exchange is "because it interests me a lot".

Advice for the freeloader:
If you can't exchange, admit it and ask for a favor.
The reason is "because *your* content is so awesome and I'm going through a rough patch so if you feel like doing me a favor", and not "because it interests me".

How to Deal With Freeloaders

There are two ways you can deal with freeloaders:

1. Let them have it
2. Fight them

Most businesses today prefer letting the freeloaders win to lower the entry barriers to their business.
It's effective because that way you also get more legit customers on board and, after all, freeloaders are a minority.

However, that's not the path I decided for myself.
Since I run a values-based business, I choose to uphold my values to monetization as well.

My products are designed to be freeloaders-proof.
Here are a few ways to do it:

1. Drip feed your course with the last part dripping after the end of the refund period
2. Make sure that paying customers always get additional value and perks

Freeloaders & Free Riders: The Science

Freeloaders for online entrepreneurs is an instance of a bigger issue that in the social sciences is called “free-rider problem”.

In a nutshell, the free-rider problem refers to people who take out from a system without contributing anything to it.

It’s an interesting social phenomenon and it’s also highly relevant for this website.
However, this post only deals with the “free-riding problem” from a *practical* point of view.

As a matter of fact, from now on I will also use the more informal and pejorative form for the phenomenon, such as: “freeloaders”.

As we go through the example, you can also learn more about emotional intelligence and social skills.

Why We Freeloader-Proof TPM

Freeloaders are more likely to use this website for all the wrong reasons.

And they’re more likely to be takers, undermining our mission of contribution to humanity.

SUMMARY

- Free-riding can be necessary when you’re poor, can’t contribute, or building your way up
- When writing to busy people asking for something, don’t forget that you are asking. That puts you in debt and you need to put a WIIFM there
- Avoid approaching content producers with the attitude they need to answer you personally or they need to give you stuff for free: it makes you come across like a dic*head

Don’t Think of An Elephant: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Don’t Think of An Elephant (2004) analyzes how political framing can be used to sway and manipulate public opinion, determine voting patterns, and even change people’s political orientation.
George Lakoff, the author, says that conservatives are winning the framing war in American politics.

About the Author

George Lakoff is a cognitive scientist and linguist, and former Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley.
He is also active on his own blog, and does not hide that he is a fervent Democrat and political activist.

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- 1. We See The World Through Frames
- 4. Facts Only Matter if Morally Framed
- 5. Liberals & Conservatives Have Two Different Moral Systems
- 6. People Don’t Vote With Self-Interest in Mind
- 7. Frames Examples: Tax Relief & Permission Slip
- 8. Orwellian Language Is Manipulative Language
- 9. This Is The Ultimate Republican Manipulation
- Real-Life Applications
- Criticism
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- Review

1. We See The World Through Frames

Lakoff says that frames are “mental structures that shape the way we see the world”.

Frames sit deep in our mind, but can be activated unconsciously by catch-phrases, references and simple words.

Frame Activation

When a frame is already in place, it can be activated through words. Such as, when you hear a certain word, a frame connected to that word in your brain is activated.

This is important because even when you negate a frame, that frame still gets activated.
That means that when you argue against an opponent using their language and words, you activate their frames.

Thus, **when you criticize your opponent with their words, you are reinforcing their messages**.

Moral of the story: you must develop your own frames and say what you want to say with your own words.

2. Frames Can Change Personalities

If a moderate person who is partly conservative hears conservative arguments and messages over and over again, he will grow more conservative-leaning synapses.

And, over time, he will also become more conservative.

3. Frames Need to Be In People's Minds Before You Can Activate Them

It is possible to activate frames by words, BUT a frame must pre-exist for you to be able to do that.

That means that framing isn't simply coming up with fancy names.

To activate a frame, there should be a frame first.

Sounds like a chicken and egg thing, right?
So the question becomes:

How do you create a frame that you can later active with a simple keyword?

Well, one way of creating a frame is by repeating a message over and over until it becomes ingrained in our brains.

As George Lakoff says:

> Reframing is more a matter of accessing what we already believe unconsciously, making it conscious, and repeating it till it enters normal public discourse.
> It doesn't happen overnight.

Why?

Because long-term concepts are instantiated in our brain and do not change overnight or by simply being told "facts".

4. Facts Only Matter if Morally Framed

Facts do matter, but only if framed in terms of their moral importance.

This is because if the facts don't fit the moral frames you have in your brain, then you will reject them (challenge them, ignore them or belittle them).

For facts to make sense, they need to fit with the synapses already connected in our brains.

Catchy Words Won't Go Far Without Frames

When there is no frame, you can't communicate effectively with a couple of catchy words.

So for example, the Republicans can activate frames with "tax-relief", because they worked for years on establishing the underlying frames that taxes are a burden, and cutting taxes is means freedom and personal empowerment.

But if you were to come up with a new catchy expression such as "altruistic-taxation" to express the positive aspects of taxation, you wouldn't go far because there are no frames linked to the altruistic aspects of redistributing wealth.

The lack of an underlying frame is called "hypocognition".

As Lakoff says:

> Slogans can't overcome hypocognition. Only sustained public discussion has a chance.

5. Liberals & Conservatives Have Two Different Moral Systems

Lakoff says there are two different moral systems in politics, each underpinning Democratic or Conservative parties.

Conservative moral system

The conservative moral system is based on the strict father who needs to impose discipline and order on the children -and on the world around

- See evil and good as separated
- The strict father who has to make sure that “good” wins
- Rich people obey the strict father rules and deserve to be rich
- Poor people don’t obey the rules, are amoral and deserve to be poor
- Never depending on others
- Taxes and redistribution are wrong because they give services to the amoral poor people

> Incidentally, charity for the “deserving” few costs a lot less than taxes to provide resources for the benefit of all.
>
> *George Lakoff*

Liberal moral system

The liberal moral system is based on a nurturing parent.

- Children are born good and can be made even better
- Both parents are seen as equal as sharing in the task of child-rearing
- Empathy for others
- People are also responsible for others and for the community

Systems’ Overlap

Most people are not 100% in a system but operate different systems in different areas of their lives (“biconceptualism”).

The two systems can operate in the same person thanks to two mechanisms;

1. Inhibition (when one system is running the other is switched off)
2. Different neural bindings (the systems simply apply to different political issues)

It’s with these people that framing and wedge issues work best: because they are the ones that can more easily switch between liberal and conservative.

6. People Don’t Vote With Self-Interest in Mind

George Lakoff draws a parallel between behavioral economics, with the work of authors such as Tversky and Kanehmann, and people’s voting pattern.

Same as people don’t always make the most rational economic decisions, they also don’t vote for the party that best represents their interest.
Lakoff says that **people vote their identity**.

Lakoff implies that it can be easily proven by the Republicans’ ability to cut tax for the ultra-wealthy, which only burdened the poorer class.

My Note: A bit lacking here
However, the author doesn’t take into account that some people might vote Republicans *in spite* of the tax cuts for the wealthy.
For example, some people might prefer better border control *even though* that means tax cuts for the wealthy.

However, I do agree with Lakoff.

7. Frames Examples: Tax Relief & Permission Slip

These are two examples of framing I loved from "Don't Think of An Elephant!":

- **Tax Relief framing**

George W. Bush introduced the expression "tax relief".

It was a genius move to make the middle class and poor people feel like they were getting something out of it. "Relief" felt like it was a political move to unburden the people, to help them fly higher and be freer.

- **Permission slip**

Bush said America wasn't going to need any "permission slip" to "defend itself".

He was leveraging the strict father worldview of the conservative framing and framing the interaction between nations as if between people.
It's children who need a permission slip, and America was no child. America was the adult (also read "I'm OK You're OK" for more on the parent-child role).

To see a real-life example of conservative framing, see:

- Ben Shapiro tactics

8. Orwellian Language Is Manipulative Language

Orwellian language is the framing of a negative policy with its opposite.

For example, the conservative "Healthy Forests Initiative" is an Orwellian frame because it's about cutting trees.

Promoting the name "climate change" instead of "global warming" is also an Orwellian frame, in Lakoff's point of view (but I disagree there).

9. This Is The Ultimate Republican Manipulation

George Lakoff says that:

- Republicans want policies for the wealthy

BUT, the top 1% are, well, just 1%. So to enact thoes policies:

- Republicans they need the vote of the non-wealthy

To do so, they managed a great trick: to paint Democrats as elitists out of touch with reality ("limousine liberals", "liberal elite", "tax-and-spend") and the Conservatives as rational and populists (Reagan's cowboy image, George Bush's Bushisms, and realistic budget accounting).

In short:

The greatest Republican manipulation was to frame Democrats as elitists, and Conservatives as down-to-earth realists who represent the average Joes.

I think Lakoff makes a great point indeed.

Real-Life Applications

- **Don't use the word you want to avoid people thinking**

Don't write "don't hesitate to contact me", because the word "hesitate" will make people hesitant.
George Lakoff says that when Nixon said "I'm not a crook", everyone immediately thought he was a crook.

"I am not a crook", and everyone started thinking he might have been a crook.

- **Avoid negative forms**

If you find yourself using too many negative forms, it might be the case that you haven't developed a strong form of discourse that you can reference.

- **Stay away from set-ups**

I have written extensively here on people who showed up into shows that were designed to ridicule, shame them or generally make them look like idiots (see Julien on CNN, Tucker Carlson and Neil Strauss on The View).

So I couldn't agree more when Lakoff says to stay away from set-ups or, at least, to prepare well and always reframe (instead of simply replying to pre-frame questions).

Criticism

Albeit I fully enjoyed "Don't Think of An Elephant!", there is also something I am skeptical about.
Including:

1. Correlation Is Not Causation

Sometimes I felt like the author seems to over-connect political victories to frames.

I felt reading "Don't Think of An Elephant" that the author falls for the all-too-human bias of seeing patterns where there might just be randomness (also read "Fooled by Randomness").

2. Not Convinced On Republican Superiority

A central theme of "Don't Think of An Elephant" is that Republicans are winning the framing war.

And, it's implied, that the framing advantage they have allows them to do politically better than Democrats.

Lakoff says that it all started in the 1950s, when Republicans "hated each other".

But then they got together and studied how to frame issues and how to win the framing battle.

Since then, they spent much money on think-thanks, and from the 1960s they gained the upper hand against fragmented and clueless Democrats.

The theory sounds interesting, but I feel it might be uncorroborated in the numbers.
I checked on Wikipedia and since 1960 to 2021 there have been 6 Democratic presidents to 6 Republicans (and 8 terms VS 8).
And that tally includes 2 Republican presidents who won by a whisker (Bush and Donald Trump, with Trump actually losing the popular vote).

3. Disagree On "Making Science More Persuasive"

Lakoff discusses a scientific paper on climate change.

And he criticizes it for using "scientific weasel words".
The "scientific weasel words" would be:

> High degree of confidence, anomalies, consequence, likelihood, absence, and exceedingly small.

Instead, Lakoff wanted the scientific paper to make bolder statements to confirm that yes, climate change is real.

But science isn't about convincing people, it's about presenting finding and data!
I can't lie: in that paragraph, I lost some of my faith in Lakoff as a super-partes analyst of reality.

Little later, Lakoff shows the type of language he prefers:

- "We cannot merely adapt to it"
- "The costs are incalculable"
- "What we are facing is huge"
- "Each day, the amount of extra energy accumulating via the heating of the earth is the equivalent of 400,000 Hiroshima atomic bombs.
  Each day! "

Lakoff also misses the power dynamics of the scientific establishment: any using any of the above sentences would quickly lose status and credibility within scientific circles -and righteously so-.

4. Mirror-Neurons Need Updates

The author says that mirror neurons are the reason why we can feel what others are feeling.

And says that psychopaths can sense what others are feeling, not be affected by it, and then use it to manipulate them -which is sometimes true-.

But mirror neurons in humans have been difficult to find and study, let alone link them to psychopathologies as Lakoff does (also read "Replication Crisis" and "Pop-Psychology Myths").

5. Partisan (But Honest About It)

George Lakoff is a Democratic political activist, so don't expect a neutral author.

He is honest and forthcoming about it, and I respect that.

Still, sometimes I disagreed with some fundamental ways of looking at the world.
For example, Lakoff repeats that "the private depends on the public", and I don't fully agree.
Both the private and the public enable each other.
Not seeing the codependence, in my opinion, can lead to a distorted view of political analysis.

6. Possible Misunderstanding of Piketty's Work

The author bases much of his tirade on resources distribution on Piketty's work.

Nassim Taleb in "Skin In The Game" says that Piketty got it all wrong.

I don't know enough here to judge, but considering Taleb's background in math and statistics, I'd go with Taleb here.

That being said, I do actually agree with Lakoff when it comes to the general principle.

7. Overestimates Religion's Influence on Actual Social Mores

The author says that "religion like Catholicism and Islam promote population growth".

Albeit that's not fully wrong if you read what those religions *say*, it also flies in the face of what we know about sociology -and, as well, actual data-.

Catholic and rich countries are not making more children when they become rich and wealthy, thus showing that religion and natality are not tightly interlinked.
And a Catholic country like Italy is facing a huge natality crisis again proves that religion's power to influence people on whether or not to make children is very limited at best.

8. Some Unsubstantiated Statements

There are some statements that the author presents as truths but that are not referenced and that left me scratching my head.

For example:

> When the very rich get exponentially richer and everyone else exponentially loses access to wealth, there is an inevitable pressure for short-term profits

"Exponentially" is a mathematical property that does cannot apply to wealth distribution, since one cannot go below zero.
And based on what there is an "inevitable pressure" for short term profits?

9. Some Arguments Didn't Convince Me

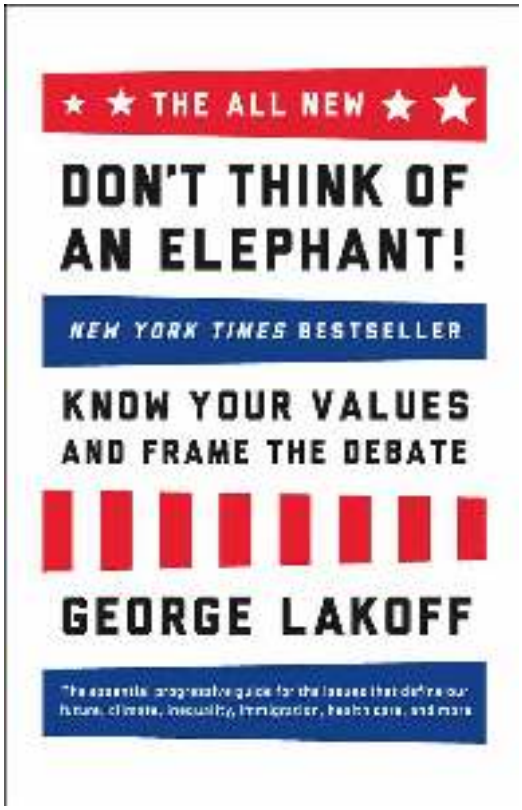
The author wants to make a point that Republican's focus on security and securing the borders -and the world- is misplaced.

So he writes:

> Most security experts say that there is no sure way to keep terrorists out or to deny them the use of some weapon or other; a determined, well-financed terrorist organization can penetrate any security system

What's that supposed to mean, then?
That one should not invest in security systems?

That is a poor argument because security is not binary, either working 100% or failing 100%. It's the "in-between" that security covers, and eliminating 98% of the threats is much better than doing nothing.
Furthermore, good security also *discourages* criminals, so you get fewer attempts to begin with.



PROS

- **TOP analysis on framing**

One of the best analysis of framing I have ever read.
Also read "techniques to outframe anyone" and "basics of framing".

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

- **Great analysis of moral systems**

Very interesting analysis of the different moral systems of Democrats and Republicans.

It's uncanny how Lakoff seems to well describe some conservative thought leaders who emerged after -it made me think of Jordan Peterson and his obstinacy on good and evil-.

- **Genius analysis of how Bush frame the Iraq war after 09.11**

Some great analysis on how the Bush administration framed the war in Iraq and how it managed to get everyone's approval for it.

The war benefitted big corporations but thanks to the tax cuts, the war was all financed by the poor and by the middle class.

Review

"Don't Think of An Elephant!" is a classic.

It's one of the best books I read, making into bot the "best persuasion books" and "best manipulation books" lists.

Keep in mind that it's very partisan and it presents some partisan generalizations and unsubstantiated statements. Luckily, the author does not hide and is very open about his political views, which I appreciate and respect a lot.

And his analysis on framing is *really* good, so I can say that George Lakoff won me over with the depth of his analysis.

This is a must-read for anyone interested in psychology, influence & persuasion as well as political manipulation.

https://thepowermoves.com/the-psychology-of-political-persuasion
Check the:

- **Best books on framing**

Or get the book on Amazon

The Rational Male Preventive Medicine: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

In *Preventive Medicine* (2015) author Rollo Tomassi analyzes male and female sexual market value and the games women play to manipulate men and maximize their dating and sexual returns.

Contents

- SUMMARY
- Preventive Medicine Quotes
- Criticism
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

SUMMARY

About The Author:
Rollo Tomassi is a popular figure in the manosphere.

He is the author of one of the most popular red pill books called, just like his blog, "The Rational Male".

Tomassi defines himself in this book as "a student of life just as much as you are" and, he adds, "as such, I understand the value of knowing that I know nothing".

It's a nice virtue signal, but doesn't seem to us it corresponds to reality.
See:

> Rollo Tomassi: Red Pill Guru, Or Misogynistic Bias?

#1. This Is Hypergamy In A Nutshell

Hypergamy is one of the most defining concepts of Rollo's theorizing.

And we can summarize it as follows:

> Hypergamy is the female drive to secure the best genes she can and, ideally but not necessarily from the same man, attract the most resources she can.

Rollo Tomassi says that ideally, she will get both great genes and abundant resources from the same man.
But that's unlikely… Particularly in these days.

My Note: Are today's men really poorer than in the past?
This is a recurring theme in the manosphere that today's men are not as "good" or "mannish" as in the past.
And albeit that's *potentially* true, I'm far from convinced about it -and there is no data to back that up, as far as I'm aware-.

Also read:

- **Why you must stop whining about female hypergamy**

#2. The Science of Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks

Rollo Tomassi mentions the Kinsey Institute study.

The study shows how facial preferences in women change depending on their menstruation period.

And, Rollo says, women want mannish man when they're ovulating and most likely to be impregnated and prefer more feminine men when they're least like to get pregnant.

Rollo Tomassi claims that's the basis, and proof of the "alpha fucks beta bucks" theory.

My Note: The study was unclear, actually
Albeit what Rollo says makes sense, the study he cites actually disproves his own theory.
This is what the study says:

> However, there was no significant difference in masculinity preference between women in the low- and high-conception probability groups

Read more in the "criticism" section.

#3. This How Women Behave Depending on Which Phase They're In

Rollo Tomassi categorizes women -and their dating behaviors and expectations- into different categories depending on which life's phase they are in:

- **15 years old**: into hot boys with good bodies, facial symmetry, right eyes color, and proper haircut.
  Between 15 and 25, even a man with a beta mindset can be successful if he has a good physique.
  Women between 18 and 20 are incapable to commit to anything.
- **The Break Phase**: late teen years, moving to college she is inclined to end the relationship and enjoy her options during her peak years
- **party years** (20-25 YO): enjoy peak SMP and start developing and appreciation for inner alpha qualities. She longs for an ideal of alpha man with long-term provider capabilities
- **Late party years**: during the last third of party years she starts feeling more pressure for a long term commitment
- **Epiphany Phase** (28-30 YO): she realizes it's hard to compete with younger women, she switches from offers coming to her to feeling like it's her who needs to secure a good man.
  She still hopes she can "convert" the bad alpha boys
- **Transitory phase** (29-31 YO): competition anxiety increases, she's now getting more interested into beta providers
- **Security phase** (31-34 YO): affluence, status and resources become the major attractor for women. It's more difficult to game them because they require commitment
- **Development phase** (7-9 years after commitment & children): After a few years she has consolidated her position with a provider, a woman doesn't need a provider anymore.
  Her SMV decreases while his holds steadier, so she tries to become more dominant to preserve the power balance (my note: I'm not sure this is accurate: women initiate most divorces in long term marriages)

My Note:
A lot of good points in these phases.
But, as well, some mistakes some generalizations.
Ages and mores also change a lot depending on the culture, and this applies to liberal and libertine cultures (ie.: as of today it's very western-centric).

#4. These Are Female Manipulation's Tools

I really enjoyed these pearls of wisdom.

For example:

- "**Men are incapable to commit**": it's only women who find it hard to find a man who say that in an effort to mend their egos
- "**What happened to all the nice men**": women say this one to the beta chumps to signal they're ready for commitment… If he plays the nice guy role
- "**Men need to men up**": 30 YO or older trying to shame men into getting serious, but actually masking her realization that she's now losing all her power to attract men
- "**Men are threatened by powerful women**": shaming men into giving up younger women and appreciate her other (less important) qualities

And more generally:

- **Men shaming**: this is what she does when she can't find a man who "forgives her" of her wild past or when he refuses to provide

Also read:

- Commitment games women play
- Games women play (a long list)
- Are men threatened by powerful women or just being rational?

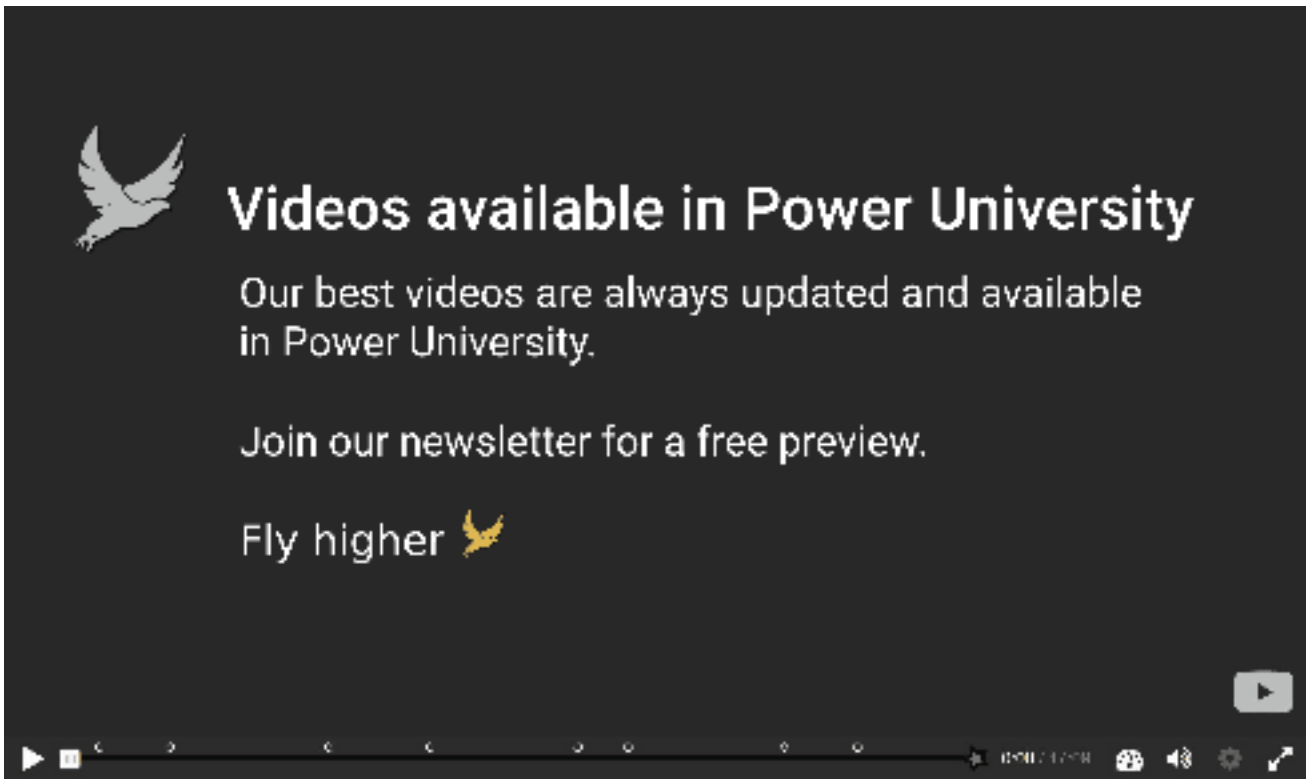
> Mind Games Women Play

#5. Providers Are Culturally-Manipulated Men

I only partially agree but I loved this part.

Rollo Tomassi says that the "feminine imperative" (sic) and the cultural expectations for men to provide can become straight-jackets for men.

Rollo recommends you watch this clip from "Breaking Bad" to understand the point:



To understand how women do it, read a classic article on this website:

- **How women domesticate men** (with examples)
- **Providers VS Lovers**: the quality of the man is what makes the biggest difference
- **Should you date as a lover or as a provider?** This article will help you decide which strategy suits you best

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

#6. The More Powerful She Is, The More Honest She Is About Hypergamy

This was a very deep observation.

Rollo Tomassi says that **women who can provide for themselves are freer to talk openly about their dual dating strategy** (ie.: love the alpha bad boy but pretend you prefer the provider who sticks around).

The example is Sheryl Salzberg, author of Lean-In.

Salzberg openly recommends women to date around the bad boys but only marry and settle with a man who wants an equal partnership and "is happy or, even better, wants to do his fair share of chores in the house".

LOL, Rollo Tomassi totally nailed it there.

However, women who cannot provide for themselves as much as Salzberg can, still need to play the game and pretend they actually prefer the "egalitarian man".

This is because **most women have to settle for a tradeoff between alpha men and providing men**.
And when the time comes to settle down, they have to pretend they prefer the providing men.

Preventive Medicine Quotes

On what women want:

> Women want men who other men want to be and other women want to fuck

On women's position on a man's life:

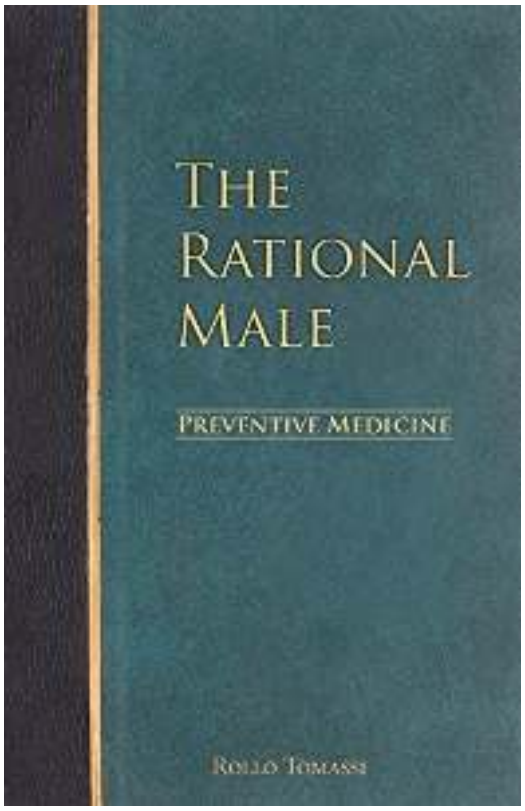
> Women should be the supplement to a man's life, not its focus

On women's manipulation effort to make men into providers (I paraphrase):

> Men need to man up is the battle cry of every single woman older than 30

This is how Rollo Tomassi defines game:

> A series of behavioral modifications to life skills based on psychological and sociological principles to facilitate intersexual relations between genders



Criticism

I thoroughly enjoyed "The Rational Male Preventive Medicine".

And I agree with much of the content.

But, same as for its predecessor "The Rational Male", I also found *much* to object to.

If you're a red-pill Rollo fan, arm yourself with an open mind before delving in.

Did you?

Great.
Then, for an overview of the red pill, see this video analysis:

OK, then let's start:

#1. The Data Is Misrepresented (To Fit The Narrative)

Rollo misquotes studies to fit his narrative.

For example, he quotes The New York Post saying:

> According to a recent study by iVillage, less than half of wedded women married the person who was the best sex of their lives (52 percent say that was an ex)

Rollo titles the chapter "nobody marries their best sex ever", which is obviously a complete mischaracterization since almost half do.

But, most of all, he misrepresents -or misunderstands- the data to fit his narrative.

In a nutshell, he implies that the research proves that women fuck the alphas when young but marry the betas later on when looking for a beta provider.

However, Rollo doesn't realize **the research proves the opposite of what Rollo Tomassi says.**

You only need a modicum of logic and math to understand it.

Survey data shows that women's average sex partner count, just to stay on the safer lower end, is 5 partners.
If women were to marry the best sex of their lives just by pure chance, that would be a 20% chance.

Instead, it's more than double!

And that is the opposite of Rollo's theory.

#2. There Are Several Unsubstantiated Claims

Says Rollo Tomassi:

> The most secure, monogamous attachment women make are with men they perceive to be one to two points above what she perceives to be her own sexual market value.

I actually agree with the gist of the concept.

But… Based on what does he assign "points", and on what scale?
The famous old PUA "0 to 10 HB scale"?

And then again:

> Arguments about chores and sex life are most common in couples where the woman makes the decisions. Female decision-making status is an even bigger predictor of relationship dissatisfaction than female breadwinner status.
> (…)
> Women despise being the leaders

Based on what does he say that?
Because my personal observations don't substantiate that at all. Relationships with female leadership tend to be more stable and last longer.

So I really would have liked to check for resources. Or at least for a deeper analysis as to the "why that's the case".

But nothing… Just Rollo's own ideas presented as truths.

Overall, the whole "Preventive Medicine" is basically a book built around unsubstantiated claims.

That's not necessarily wrong.
I often repeat that a good observer of social dynamics can be better than a good researcher, but it's something to keep in mind.

Pop Psychology

It's funny.

Rollo Tomassi pokes fun at what he refers to as "the pop psychology of the love languages".

But love languages are not pop-psychology and several studies have confirmed their existence. Even psychologists who are critical of their usefulness confirm their relevance.

It's "The Rational Male Preventive Medicine" that sounds like pop-psychology at times.

#3. Evolutionary Psychology Doesn't Add Up

Evolutionary psychology is the best tool to understand sexual dynamics.

But *not* when you make up stories that *sound* credible but that have no scientific backing.
That's just storytelling.
And that's OK… IF one clearly stated that they are personal conjectures.

That wasn't always the case in "Preventive Medicine".

Sometimes, I found evolutionary psychology to contradict some of Rollo's theory.
For example, the popular theory that beta males are always left holding the bag for the "alpha fucks men".
But if beta males were consistently so stupid to provide and stick around older and less fertile women -and many surely are!-, shouldn't these men have disappeared from the lineage?

Or, at the very least, shouldn't there be so few of them that the "alpha fucks" strategy stops working so well?

That doesn't seem to be the case.
Instead, it seems like beta men are creating lots of other beta men. So, in the end, it might be more correct to say "alpha fucks more and provides less", betas fucks a bit less, and provides more".

Also read:

> The Science of "Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks" (Facts VS Myths)

#4. Young Girls Pair Up With Alphas, Old Girls Pair Up With Betas Doesn't Add Up Mathematically

This one also doesn't add up.

The idea of the "alpha fucks, beta bucks" is that the alphas are sexy and cool and they only give their dick.
And the betas are boring, pedestalize women, act like their emotional tampons and support them financially.

Younger women, says Rollo, want the alpha.
Older women want the betas because they stick around.

There is quite some truth in that and that *is* the case for some women. But reality is not so black and white.
For all women to fuck alphas as youngsters and marry betas as oldsters, there should be twice the numbers of men.
Obviously, that's not the case.

That's becuase reality is more complex and variegated.

Some betas also do bang (a bit).

And some alphas also *do* get married and stick around (just look at Trump, Berlusconi, and many other tycoons. Even if they had women on the side, they still got married).

There are indeed two more important categories of alphas:

- Alpha providers
- Alpha fathers

Or watch here:

Overly Simplistic Split of Betas/Alphas

Splitting men in two categories is bound to be overly simplistic.

Just like Marx was wrong dividing society in a Manichean "owners VS employees", so you can't be right simplifying a complex reality to "alphas" and "betas".

Read "lovers VS provers VS friends" for these dynamics.

Alpha Fucks: A Tool For Posturing & Ego-Massaging

That mantra is often used in the manosphere as a tool for ego massaging.

People who read alpha fucks think of themselves as alphas.
And then they go around repeating the mantra as an attempt to social climb on some imagined (or sometimes real) "blue-pilled betas".

This is called "alpha male posturing".
And as Rollo said in this same "Preventive Medicine": rich people don't need to say they're rich.
And alpha men don't need to say they're alphas.

#5. The Ovulatory Shift Is Not The Scientific Basis of The "Alpha Fucks Theory" It's Drummed Up To Be

Tomassi presents the ovulatory shift as if it the corroboration of the "alpha fucks, beta bucks" theory.

Logically, it makes sense.

However, the ovulatory shift in humans is a *hypothesis*, and the evidence backing it remains quite, well "shifty".

Albeit it *sounds* very appealing, the actual results when it comes to humans are not as obvious -or as strong- as Rollo makes it sound.

Meta-analysis shows both supporting evidence and contrasting evidence.

I quote a good recent study providing a nice overview:

> While some studies that measured women's hormones to characterize current fertility reported women's preferences for masculine characters were stronger when conception is more likely[47], several recent studies have found no change in mate preferences among women at the peri-ovulatory phase for muscularity[48,49], facial masculinity[23,49,50], beards[23,51], vocal masculinity[52,53] and facial symmetry[49]. Thus, **the extent to which ovulatory cycle shifts are associated with women's mate preferences may have been overestimated** in past research due to imprecise methodologies and small sample sizes[54].
>
> *Marcinkowska et al., 2019*

I personally think the ovulatory shift is *probably* real.
And yet, the ovulatory shift not nearly as strong as Rollo Tomassi makes it sound in his "Rational Male trilogy".

Personal female preferences seem to stronger than cycles.

Overall, I find some of the "science" behind Rollo's theories to be evolutionary psychology conveniently bent to fit the narrative.

#6. The "Feminine Imperative" Cultural Inculcation Is (Vastly) Overblown

Rollo Tomassi is almost as obsessed with this as feminists are with the patriarchy.

He seems to be convinced that there is a feminine propaganda that crooks all men's natural instincts.

For example:

> This is a major frustration for beta young men predisposed to effeminate conditioning that convinces them they will be rewarded for loyalty, support and building relationship equity

"Effeminate" conditioning?

I get what Rollo is talking about, but it's not effeminate conditioning.

Loyalty and support are valid qualities to be exchanged in the sexual marketplace.
Maybe they're not the ones Rollo favors -and neither are they the ones I favor-, but they're still valid traits which do can help men to find mates, under certain circumstances.

At parity of genetics, a loyal and supportive man will most often beat an unsupportive and disloyal one for long-term mating.

It makes sense, no?

And I'm also missing what would be Rollo's alternative here.
Disloyalty, selfishness and *not* building relationship equity?

It sounds like a great recipe for a great relationship… Not.

#7. The Rational Male Has Sect-Like Undertones

There are elements of sect-dynamics in this philosophy.

The group that should stick together, the "manipulative enemy" to study and defend from and other men to recruit and turn to the red-pill credo.

Labeling is also part of that game.

Sects make their members feel "special".
And what's the easiest way to do it if not denigrating anyone else who doesn't buy into the sect?

Enter the terms "beta" for those who don't buy into your theories.
The "blue-pilled betas" are the idiots and the suckers who get played.

And reflection "us", the red-pilled people within the sect, we are the cool alphas.

I find that both childish and off-putting.
And I wished more for a thought leader.

Also see:

- **Dark psychology in group dynamics**: how group leaders want to strengthen the group to increase their power

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

And I advise you to read this article so central both to this website, and to personal empowerment:

- **The Individualist's Manifesto**

#8. Made Up Conspiracy of "Feminine" Propaganda Used As Straw-Man

Rollo sees society as a big feminine indoctrination.

For example:

> The feminine imperative has learned to recognize and exploit this natural deference by including as an inevitable part of future men's early conditioning
> (…)
> The feminine imperative IS the priority.

What?

Again, I actually agree with the general principle that different interest groups try to manipulate others.
But it's rarely an organized effort, and it's even more rarely an organized effort which manages to dominate all other groups' interests.

Instead, Rollo Tomassi speaks as if there were a secret sect of "master of puppets" women who successfully manipulate the media and the culture to keep men subjugated.

That is hogwash.

Let me state this clearly:

The idea that there is some sort of secret propaganda governed by the "feminine imperative" that effectively "effeminizes" men and manipulates men to serve women is nonsense.

But that's exactly what reading Tomassi feels like.

It's all about "feminine imperative", "conditioning", "feminine influence pervading men" etc. etc.

The keyword in my sentence is "effectively".
Because sure women tend to embrace and talk up values that benefit men.

But *so do men*.

The truth is that society is far too complex and far too fragmented to yield so passively to any indoctrination or propaganda from a population's minority.

Sure, everyone will be trying to pitch what best suits their interest, but rarely any voice can be so strong as to drown out all other groups' interests (with the only exception maybe being the conservative propaganda, but even there we're not talking about indoctrination).

Furthermore, Rollo then keeps using this made-up conspiracy as a straw-man technique to finger-point at women and "blue-pilled" society at large.

#9. Culture Encourages Male Providing Because It's Good For The World (Not Just for Women)

It's true:

There is indeed a strong cultural strand influencing men to behave subserviently to women.
And I have even personally spent all of my life rejecting the cultural diktat of the provider's role.

But this is what Rollo doesn't get:

It's not (just) the "feminine imperative" that seeks to influence men into providers' roles.

When men provide instead of, say, fuck and abandon pregnant women, it's good for society.

And **it's because male providing is good for everyone that society embraces it**, *not* because it's part of the "feminine imperative" to trick men.

That's what Rollo never seems to get.

Sure, women benefit when men provide, forgive their partying past and stay loyal.
But so do the children, the neighbors, the communities, society as a whole and, more often than not, those men themselves.

Furthermore, we could make the case that a man providing for his family is embracing certain values that should respected, and not laughed at (even if we personally haven't chosen that lifestyle).

#10. Rollo Tomassi Mistakes Cultural "Feminine Imperative" With Simple Effects of Supply & Demand

Tomassi gets this all wrong.

He says that men pedestalize women because of the "female imperative" and the "cultural conditioning".

I don't see it that way.

Sure, some men may fall for the cultural strand of the feminine worldview. And I even agree that, today, the feminine view is the most powerful.

But most powerful of all **it's the supply and demand of the dating marketplace that influences male behavior, *not* the "feminine imperative".**

Because most men are happy to impregnate most women and women are more selective, the rule of thumb is that **women are the demand and men are the offer**.

And *that* is what makes women, naturally (and on average), the object of desire.
Not the "propaganda", "female imperative", "conditioning" or any other made-up conspiracy.

Furthermore, we can argue that for most men, with the little options they have, it's rational to provide for women.

For more or and supply and demand read:

- **Sexual market place**: an analysis of dating power dynamics
- How to date
- Date-onomics by Jon Berger
- Why successful women lose at dating

#11. Lots of Sweeping Generalizations That Make For Bad Analyses

Rollo's theories are not wrong *per se*.

But they become mostly wrong when he pretends they generalize to almost everyone.

For example:

> The girlfriend you expect to build a Disneyland life with will break up with you as her options expand and your restrict

I can't believe how many pre-suppositions that sentence include. And most of them are unlikely to be true.
Especially to be *all* true at the same time.

For example:

- It presupposes he has a Disneyland fantasy in mind
- It presupposes she has no Disneyland fantasy
- It presupposes she goes to college, but he doesn't
- It presupposes she wants to "shop around"
- It presupposes he does not want to shop around (really?)
- It presupposes her options expand, but his don't

Notice that each of them are possible and, in some situations, even likely to be true.
But that they're all true at the same time is not the most likely scenario.

Basically, what Rollo says is true… For a few cases.
But the moment he writes as if he were describing a typical situation, then **Rollo's otherwise great micro-analysis becomes a nonsense macro-theory**.

The whole "Rational Male Volume 2" is fraught with sweeping generalizations.
Most of them are great analyses of specific situations, but most of them turn into very poor systemic theories when Rollo over-generalizes.

#12. Let's Be Frank: There Are Misogynistic Understone All Through It

Same as for "Rational Male Volume 1".

In Rollo Tomassi's worldview, women are "hypergamy-driven", while men are idealistic.
For example:

> Hypergamy doesn't care for male idealistic expectations of love

Of course, Rollo Tomassi portrays himself as neutral and open-minded.
But it just doesn't come out well.
He says yes, "women can love deeply", but take a look at the caveat:

> Women can love deeply, but from an entirely opportunistic perspective

What's that supposed to mean?
Does it mean that men "love deeply" from a purely *altruistic* perspective?

Nonsense.

The way I see it, you can't fool me with your "men and women are better together" and then break bread and laugh at Andrew Tate's blatant gaslighting:

Watch this video for more.

#13. If A Few Men Are Gullible, It's Not Necessarily Women's Fault, Is It?

The feeling of "Preventive Medicine" is that of manipulative men who dupe men.

Yet my feeling was that the men Rollo describes are not "typical" men, but a minority of gullible men.

Is it women's fault if some men have Disneyland fantasies well into their maturity?
I don't think so.

Furthermore, Rollo confuses manipulation with self-manipulation.
It's not only women who might want to hide a wild sexual past: it's men who don't want to see that past.

Also read the "Madonna-whore dichotomy".

The Rational Male Is Male Feminist Equivalent

Have you noticed the parallels with feminism?

"Feminine imperative" is the equivalent of "patriarchy" and "hypergamy" is the feminist equivalent of "toxic masculinity".

My appeal to you, my dear reader, is to move beyond petty group-identification and to look instead at humanity, as well as genders, as subsets of the whole.
As Robert Greene says (I paraphrase) "the only sense of belonging worthy of that name is the belonging to the human race".

Look For Win-Win Instead

Bottom line:

You can be better and stronger looking for win-win relationships within that whole, rather than looking at reasons why you should be at war.

Also read:

- Toxic manosphere mindsets

#14. I Don't See A Society of Men Conditioned To Prioritize Relationships

Again another case of bad generalization.

Rollo says that men are conditioned to stick to relationships to the detriment of their professional achievements. Women, instead, are conditioned to put themselves first.

I don't know in which world Rollo lives, but in *this* world, it's women who, *on average*, put relationships first and men who, *on average*, prioritize work, success, and achievements.

And in liberal societies, men are *less* conditioned to pursue long term relationships and do whatever they like, not more.
Men have never been free to stay single as they are today.

Rollo's advice that men should prioritize work and not get distracted by women is also wrong, in my opinion.
Just look at the most successful men: many of them have long-term relationships and I've never seen any study linking bachelor-hood to male success.

If anything, it might be the opposite.

Indeed as Amir Levine explains in Attached, studies show that strong intimate relationships help men to be more confident in life and achieve more.

#15. It's Great Analysis, But 100% Biased & One-Sided

It's called "The Rational Male".

But if one wanted to spoof it, they might dub it "the biased male".

Rollo says he connects the dots.
But he only connects the dots from the biased perspective of what he wants to see.

What Rollo says is not necessarily wrong but it presents, at (the very) best, only half of reality.

There is not even a single mention of male's own games, manipulations, and efforts to influence culture.

And sure you don't believe men are innocent creatures who don't partake in the sexual arms' race, do you?

If you do, take this as a wake-up call and read around here a bit more.

#16. It's Divisive: It Pits Men Against Women

This is what I like least about Tomassi's work:

It's extremely divisive.

And, in that, it's only better than feminism because of its more realistic analysis.
But not for its effects.

Most of Rational Male's theories are deeply, inherently divisive. And it couldn't be otherwise because it only looks at half of the game.

We have already seen an example: women have an "opportunistic approach to love" and men have "an idealistic approach to love".

And albeit, again, there is a backdrop of truth there… It's just plain wrong to make it into a generalized rule.

Rollo Tomassi says quoting one of his readers:

> I know how hunger feels and I assume women feel the same way.
> However I have no idea how hypergamy feels like, I have never felt its pull

What a load of bullshit!

Hypergamy is nothing but the tendency to maximize one's own returns and men equally seek to maximize their returns (the good ones, at least).

It's simply expressed differently, in men.

Read more in:

- **Stop whining about hypergamy**

#17. Rollo's Theory Leads to Toxic Relationships Because He Misapplies & Misunderstands Game Theory

This is "Rollo Tomassi cardinal rule of sexual strategy":

> For one gender's sexual strategy to succeed the other gender must compromise or abandon their own.

Which is basically a deeply flawed misunderstanding of game theory applied to relationships (also read "game theory bargaining").

It is true that one player from each gender *can* gain more by short-changing the other.
For example, *purely from a utilitarian point of view*, a woman *might* get more if she can trick more than one man to finance her lifestyle and invest in her offspring.
And, similarly, a man *can* gain more by getting a woman pregnant and abandoning her.

This is because social relations are somewhat social exchanges and, thus, can be described in game theory terms.
And tricking others (defections) *can* yield outsized wins.

And at the core, that's what this Rational Male philosophy is about: a long-winded description of how defection strategies apply to dating.
The problem is that Rollo stops there!

Rollo Tomassi never moves beyond a "me VS you" paradigm.

Why does Rollo Tomassi sees it as a struggle?

Because **Rollo's philosophy sees women as enemies of men**.
And that's why, I stated and confirm here, Rollo Tomassi's philosophy is inherently misogynistic.

The problem with it?

First of all, morality.
When you have an enemy, all amoral ways of dealing with them become moral (see Zimbardo, 2008)
Rape is also a type of "defection strategy" that you'd use with an enemy.

But let's stick to facts here without any morality.

Second, and most important of all, **both genders can also gain if they support each other**.
Which is, guess what, the standard view of relationships that society aspires to -exactly what it should do-.

Now, knowing the theory of manipulation ("defection" in game's theory terms), is extremely important to understand reality and to protect oneself.
But listening to "red-pilled authors" pitching a defection strategy as the "real reality" that men should follow, that's not only nonsense, that's toxic nonsense.

The Truth of Sexual Arms' Race

In evolutionary psychology, the defection strategy has also been referred to as "sexual arms' race".
It's been well explored and discussed by Robert Wright, which I invite you to read (a good substitute for resentment-fuelled manosphere evolutionary psychology).

The truth of the sexual arms' race is that it *coexists* with the many -and likely stronger- incentives for cooperation.
And you can minimize the incentives to defection while enjoying an awesome and supportive relationship.

TL,DR: **Rollo Tomassi "red pill" is a potentially highly toxic misinterpretation of relationships**.
I warmly welcome readers to seek more information -at least if they're interested in win-win and supportive relationships.

#18. Not Good For Seducers Who Love Women

I'm glad I can say this:

I am a man.
And I have been mostly single because I enjoy adventures. And I *really* dislike feminism because it pitches women against men.
And I even think that this society is on a warpath against (white) men, *especially* with divorce law.

This gives me some credibility to criticize Rollo Tomassi's philosophy.

And Rollo Tomassi's philosophy is toxic for men who love women, *including men who like to sleep with lots of women*.

Because seducers who like women, *like* women, and they don't consider them as enemies!

Also read:

- **Psychological breakdown of womanizers**: the different types of womanizers, including those who love women
- **Types of seducers**: different seducers' styles with pros and cons

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

Real Life Applications

- **Don't cave to ultimatums**: women give ultimatums when they feel their control is slipping and they need to hurry. But they will lose respect for men who cave in (also read "how to handle breakup threats")
- **Don't be vulnerable**: vulnerability has become all the rage with Brene Brown, but Rollo says it's a hoax. You will not be more attractive "opening up" and "showing your weak and tender side" (I agree, read: vulnerability is NOT power)
- **Don't settle because you're afraid of dying alone**: the image of passing away around your family is a fairytale dream. If you work on yourself, male value does not go down like female does (Rollo says men peak around 36-38).
  Instead of fearing to be alone, fear misery in a passionless marriage.
- **Don't buy PUA programs**: Rollo doesn't believe in PUAs selling programs and "cures". The information is freely available and your reality is too specific to find answers in a single course / program

CONS

On top of the criticism:

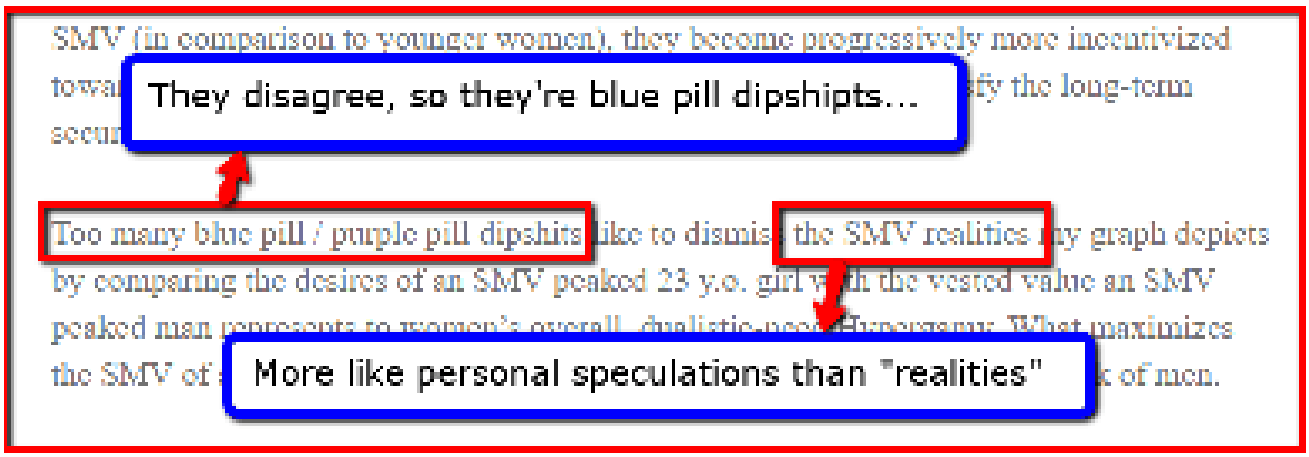
- **Not really as open-minded as professed**

Rollo says at the beginning of "Preventive Medicine" that "he knows that he doesn't know" and he invites readers to form their opinions.

That's all nice and good… *In intent.*

But he doesn't seem always very open to being wrong -or to warrant dissenters the freedom to disagree-.

I find indeed that "The Rational Male" is at times aggressive and bellicose towards anyone who disagrees:



- **Sometimes It's Unclear**

It was difficult to follow when Tomassi was talking about which phase was which.
For example, he has two different names, "transitory" and "epiphany" for what seems to be the same stage.
The fact he keeps changing names one minute after the other makes it confusing.

It's a pity because the content he talks about is good and some insights are genius.

- **Simplistic nomenclature**

I can't help but find this "beta/alpha" "blue pill/red pill" dichotomies too simplistic and, sometimes, used in child-like fashion (such as: "you don't agree, so you're a blue-pill dipshit").

- **Very bad mindsets for relationships**

Rollo is convinced his books are helping men (he says “saving lives”).
But I’m slightly worried that for each “saved life” there is an adversarial, toxic relationship looming.

PROS

I have a long list of criticism for “The Rational Male Volume 2” as you can see.
But that’s not to say there isn’t a lot of great wisdom in here. As a matter of fact, there is *a lot* of great wisdom and deep analysis:

- The analysis on “social conventions” is genius and spot on
- Rollo’s analysis of the dynamics of shaming as an ego-protection is superb stuff
- Top notch analysis of female and society’s social shaming of men (for example: to provide and accept her wild past)
- Eye-opening analysis of the diverging interests of women and men, together with the cultural struggle that ensues (but keep in mind Rollo only focuses on one side of the equation)
- Super funny -and deep- analysis of “Lean-In” by Salzberg (with which I wholeheartedly agree)

REVIEW

Let’s start with a personal take on the author:

?♂Lucio’s Take On Rollo Tomassi

Lucio: On the positive side, Rollo Tomassi has a good feel for intersexual power dynamics, good intuition, and some great insights that some men need to hear.
On the negative side, that comes with covert bitterns, some poor and biased takes, and some low-value mindsets coupled with ineffective advice.
Overall, we’d recommend caution, skepticism, and potentially more unbiased sources.

And now back on the book:

“Preventive Medicine” is powerful medicine.

But it cuts both ways.
Including the downsides of many drugs.

It reminds me of how the heroine was marketed as a “cure” for cough.
“Preventive Medicine” is somewhat similar: it (effectively) “cures” the patient of Pollyannish views of dating and relationships while potentially infecting him with misogyny.

In short:

“Preventive Medicine Book 2” can open your eyes if you’re a beginner.
And it can harm your relationships and views on women if you’re advanced enough to have good win-win relationships.

Luckily, this review is here to help.

Check the:

- **Best red pill books collection**

Or get the book on Amazon

Denationalize.Me Review (Tax-Optimization for Digital Nomads)

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 June 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Denationalize.me, or Staatenlos.ch in German countries, is a website catering to digital nomads and travelers who want to maximize their taxes and reduce their bureaucratic burden.

Summary

About The Author:
Christoph Heuermann, born in Germany in 1990, is a digital nomad German spending most of his time traveling (he tells about his travels in his cool blog here).
He started first writing for the German market, and later expanded to an international audience with Tax-Free.Today (edit: later renamed 'denationalize.me')

Good Information For Digital Nomads is RARE

Are you a digital entrepreneur?

Or a solo-preneurs, or someone who's running or thinking about running an online business?

Then you must have tried looking for good information on the following topics:

- Tax optimization
- Reporting duties (how to avoid filing long bureaucratic statements!)
- Legal entities (pros and cons, where to incorporate)
- Legal protection (against rogue legal firms, copyright vampires and, recently, EU crackdown on the Internet)

And **you must know how hard it is to find good and reliable information on these all-important topics**.

Of course, everyone has an opinion on this stuff… But they're all based on limited personal experiences, friends' or just simply parroting stuff.
Basically, they're all based on… Nothing.

Enter Denationalize.me: The Go-To Place For Tax Optimization

Then I finally stumbled on Denationalize.me.

And I got gold-rush excited.
The same excitement I get when I know I hit on a new golden source.

The depth of information was mind-blowing.
And the philosophy resembled the one here at the power moves.

Denationalize.me's Philosophy

Denationalize.me is much more than "tax optimization".
It's a philosophical statement, a way of life.

The website tagline says a lot:

> Stop complaining and free yourself from the burden of the State

I can imagine some people will disagree -or even shudder- at the idea of the state as a burden to free oneself from.

But if you resist that initial temptation, you will see that there is much truth in Christoph's point of view.

Even if you still end up disagreeing, we still can respect his philosophy.

Not Just Taxes: A One-Stop-Shop For Global Citizens

Although the name focuses on taxes, Denationalize.me is there to help people become **citizens of the world, unshackled from any obligations**.

Among the topics it deals with:

- Protecting your savings and future pension
- Legal entities all over the world, advantages and disadvantages
- Opening bank accounts abroad
- Deregistering from your country of origin (and whether you should do it)
- Where to get a new residence
- Where to travel and where to live
- Setting up a business with bitcoin payments

And of course, **optimizing and minimizing taxes and *filing***, potentially to zero (legally!).
Yep, like Tim Ferris first said in "The 4-Hour Workweek", that freedom is not the exclusive realm of the ultra-rich anymore.
Now you can have it, too.

Denationalize.me Is About Freedom & Personal Empowerment

Ultimately, Denationalize.me is about personal empowerment.

It's about choosing where to live, where to pay taxes, who to support and how to lead and live your life.

And that type of philosophy always strikes a chord with ThePowerMoves.

I focus on social power and freedom from bullies and small office despots.
Christoph focuses on geographical freedom, business freedom and freedom from "reporting duties".

My Personal Experience

I devoured several of Christoph's articles in one sitting and I had to get more of him.

So I booked a consultation some weeks ago and, a few days, I got the confirmation papers for my business.
I chose an LLC thanks to Christoph's advice.

> Life is too short to collect save, file and report pieces of paper!

Review

I stumbled upon Tax-Fre.Today and immediately thought "this is one of the most useful and interesting work I have seen in this whole year".

Little later, I booked a personal consultation with Christoph.

And, a little later, I incorporated The Power Moves following Christoph's recommendations.

If you're running a digital business, Denationalize.me is definitely something you want to look into.
Or you can simply save time and book a consultation straight away with Christoph. It's time well spent.

Book a consultation with Christoph

The Rational Male Positive Masculinity: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Positive Masculinity (2017) is the third book in "*The Rational Male*" series and, building on the previous two volumes, expands Rollo Tomassi's red pill views to more relationship-oriented topics such as parenting, marriage, and child-rearing.

Contents

- SUMMARY
- Criticism
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

SUMMARY

About the Author:
Rollo Tomassi is possibly the most popular "*Red Pill*" author at the time of writing.
The "*Red Pill*" is a mostly male community congregating around topics of masculinity, male rights, seduction, and general self-development.
This is the third installment of Rollo Tomassi "*The Rational Male*" trilogy, the previous two being "*The Rational Male*" and "*Preventive Medicine*".

Read TPM's take on Rollo Tomassi:

> Rollo Tomassi: Red Pill Guru, Or Misogynistic Bias?

#1. Don't Get Married

This is not one of Rollo Tomassi's iron rules, but for many men in the West, it should probably be.

He says:

> Under contemporary Western circumstances, there is no advantage for men in a state of marriage and 100% advantage for women

More than "advantages," I would probably talk about risks.
For an average man, getting divorced could mean being kicked out of his house and put in dire financial straits.

And if he's wealthy and the divorce is nasty, a man is often forced to pay huge alimony even though the wife might not have worked at all.

That is quite a sorry state of affairs for men who might want to get married.

#2. Assess Her Long-Term-Suitability (Without Being Afraid of Being Called Judgemental)

Not all women are the same.

And men should assess women based on their character, their traits, and their past.

The “feminine imperative” doesn’t like that, says Rollo Tomassi.
Our culture shames men who judge women as a defense mechanism to gain more power and control over them.

So a man who would judge her for her past will be labeled as “close-minded”, “conservative” or “judgemental”.

Also read:

- **Traits of low-quality women**
- **High-quality women traits**

My Note: I totally agree here.
These are games played at a social level, and I think they run deeper than “mem-women” interaction.
This is simply one example of the current craze for political correctness.

#3. Assess Her Prior Lovers

Rollo Tomassi says that the number of lovers a woman has is statistically proportional to her odds of cheating and getting divorced.

Women will cover up their sleeping around, saying it was a “journey of self-discovery” and that “she’s not that person anymore”.

Rollo Tomassi says:

> The single most important thing you can do is to vet her according to her sexual past

My Note: Prior lovers are important, but there is more
The number of previous lovers is important, but I’m not sure it is *the* most important indicator of the likelihood of cheating.
Also, the relationship is not as linear as Rollo Tomassi implies.
A woman with 0 lovers might be more tempted to “try out what it feels with someone else” than one who’s had, say 3.
Or a woman who’s never had an orgasm before is not safer with you but more likely to be “awakened” to sex and might want to try now with someone else again.

But, Rollo says, it’s not just about the quantity, but also the quality.

It’s important for a man to know if she’s been with alpha men before and how you stack up against men.
Women who’ve been with alpha men before will always long for an alpha (alpha widows).

Also read:

- **The science of finding a loyal partner**

#4. Masculinity Is Not a Mask You Wear

Rollo Tomassi says that our society is always ready to jump on a man who acts masculine.

One of the favorite ways is to accuse him of “wearing a mask”.

> Masculinity is a mask he wears, and not the real him. It’s something he puts on to hide his insecurities

I see what Rollo is talking about, and I have experienced it as well.
Same as Tomassi, I am not a big fan of accusations of “acting” when you’re just behaving like a man.

My Note: I agree, but masks are also real
Albeit I agree with Tomassi, I would also raise a flag here saying that many men *do* try too hard often and many also

do feel forced to act (I can see the sons of red-pill fathers feeling like they need to put this act just for being accepted by their fathers, for example).
Also, read "**Alpha male-posturing**" and "**The Mask of Masculinity**" for more on the topic.

#5. Seduction Keeps Going in Relationships

Rollo Tomassi says that it's a mistake men commit to end the seduction phase when the relationship starts.

The PUA skills, including for example the cocky funny, must keep on going in the relationship.

Tomassi discusses some techniques he himself used:

- Take-away (see one example in this article)
- Use the "right quantity" of alcohol for
- Breaking up is a demonstration of higher value (read how to deal with break-up threats)
- The dread game (ie.: stoke jealousy with triangulation)

My Note: Watch out for toxic relationships
I would only advise the dread game as a last-ditch effort for someone who's losing interest or for someone who's already in a toxic relationship and needs to defend himself/herself.
Otherwise, avoid it: why would you want to be a toxic partner in a toxic relationship?

And, finally, he recommends an old manosphere rule to control the relationship, such as:

- In any relationship, the person with the most power is the one who needs the other the least

I discuss the "need her less fallacy here".
It's not that it's not true: it certainly is.
But it presupposes a win-lose relationship and a combative attitude.
There are better and healthier ways of being the leader in a relationship.

Also read:

- **Relationship power dynamics**: the basics stages of power negotiation

#6. The Feminist Celebration of "First Woman To..." Are Ridiculous

Rollo talks about women celebrating another woman doing something for the first time as if it were a crushing blow to the "patriarchy' and as if they all won together.

He is right.

Unluckily if you're on social media it's hard to escape.

Men do it too.

A woman gets in a position of power of responsibility, and people find a reason to celebrate it.

And when there is no woman doing something for the first time, now we start getting the "second woman ever" or "third woman in 20 years" kind of "news".

I find it sectarian, divisive, and well… Purely idiotic.

Criticism

I'd like to preface this section of "Positive Masculinity" criticism saying that I focus more on the criticism in my reviews than on what I agree on.

There are already plenty of positive reviews for Rollo Tomassi's work, and many people who will visit this page already know how his work can help.

For my part, I believe I can provide more value by focusing on the criticism.

For a video overview of the red pill pitfalls, see here:

For this specific book, keep on reading:

#1. Children-Inculcation Can Be Harmful

"Positive Masculinity" discusses parenting and child-rearing.

It's good to instill good values in future generations, but what's "good" is debatable.

In my opinion, a good education should provide the framework and fundamentals and then let the children decide what to build -or if to build at all-.

Rollo Tomassi obviously doesn't it that way.

He says:

> A lot of guys with teenage sons want to hand them a copy of "The Rational Male" before they turn 18. Or maybe 15. Some even say 12.
> (…)
> I have to think that this is too late

I shuddered reading this.

This echoes my previous criticism in "*Preventive Medicine*" that the way Rollo interprets Red Pill is sectarian and cult-like.

I think that the sons and daughters of fathers who are going to grow up liberals will have a poor relationship with these types of red-pill fathers.

And I feel for the LGBT sons and daughters of red-pilled fathers.

Red-pilled fathers are going to emotionally impact their own LGBT sons and daughters of red-pilled fathers.

Can't you also see a huge emotional train-wreck looking with a gay son being inculcated into Rollo Tomassi's ilk of masculinity?

I do.

And I would instead advise men not to try to push anything on their children.

After all, you never teach preaching from an altar. **You always teach by example and by virtue of who you are**.

#2. Bad Masculinity Inculcation

I certainly don't consider myself a "feminized" person.

And some do consider me a red pill writer.

But the way Rollo recommends raising boys is not something I agree with and for sure it's something I would have hated growing up and strongly rebelled against.

This is his recipe for men:

- Include your sons in exclusive male spaces
- Only men are allowed in those spaces

- In a feminine world, it's important he feels valued in those "male-only spaces"
- He must learn to socialize like a man before he is feminized by society (ie.: meet with a purpose and communicate to reach that purpose instead of talking for talking's sake)
- Institute some kind of rite of passage for him from being a boy to being a man
- The right of passage must be uniquely male for which only boys are qualified for

This is typical "strict father morality" as seen in the manosphere.
It echoes Jack Donovan in "*The Way of Men*" and what Sebastian Junger writes in "Tribe".

And to me, they feel like kids in kindergarten. You know when boys say "we don't play with girls?".

Yeah, that's what it feels like to me.

I was that boy… In kindergarten.
But today… Today I prefer playing with girls :).

#3. Should We Complain Mothers Put Children First Instead of Their Husbands? I Don't Think So...

I felt Rollo Tomassi's complaining that mothers put children first felt like whining.

What should a man expect, that his wife keeps babying him instead?
Rollo Tomassi says that a man who complains is accused of acting like a child.

Well, yeah!
That does sound childish indeed.
As a matter of fact, Susan Forward, therapist and Ph.D., says that wanting to be put first is a salient trait of misogynists, some of whom haven't completely pulled away from their mother and now still seek to be mothered (Forward, 1986).

It's funny because Rollo does talk a lot about the "male burden of performance", but he does not seem to accept it in this area.

Sure, I can understand that it might be somewhat painful for a man to be "dethroned" when a baby enters the scene.
I totally can.
But at the same, I can't agree with a man who stays stuck in that mindset and complains about it.

A **man of the household who wants to be a leader needs to take the leader's burden**.

And it's a simple deal, really, **the leader's burden is to do what you must do without expecting a reward**.

If the reward comes, great.
If not, welcome to the leader's burden.

You know you're doing the right thing, and that should be all you need.

It's not true leadership if you expect someone to baby you, reward you, and take care of you.
The core of leadership is that *you* take care of others.

Sure, you might wish sometimes someone put *you* first.
But expecting that is truly the wrong mindset.

The Godfather said well:

https://youtu.be/0Oz6CN7Sjuo?t=50s

> Women and children can be careless, but not men

That could be translated into:

> Women and children can expect to be taken care of, but not men.
> Or at least, not men who aspire to be leaders' role models.

Also read:

- **To get women, you must lead**

#4. Confuses "Alphaness" With *Calculativeness*

Rollo Tomassi says:

> Top tier men don't raise other men's children, and she knows this

While it's true that men with fewer options may be more likely to accept women with previous children, I believe this has more to do with *calculativeness*.

For example, Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, and Hugh Jackman all adopted.

#5. Weak Mindset on "Comparing" With Previous Lovers (and Losing!)

I do agree that the quantity and quality of her past lovers matter.

But worrying about 'past alphas' that may 'out-alpha you' is incredibly weak and defensive.
It's men with weaker egos and weaker self-esteem who need reassurance.
And, and at the extreme, it's the hallmark of abusive, controlling, and jealous-paranoid men.

Confident alpha men *are* alpha.
They don't run computational tables to feel 'safer'.

#6. The Orwellian Case of A Society Designed Against Men Is Overblown

"Positive Masculinity" paints a picture of an Orwellian society designed against men.

In my opinion, this is overblown and exaggerated and it permeates much of Tomassi's work.

For example in "Positive Masculinity' he writes:

> The Village will teach your boys to feel shame for being less perfect than girls (…) to the point that transitioning their gender to girls will be the norm (…) the village will…

The village?

Like in the previous books, Rollo Tomassi's analysis feels like a pre-planned brainwashing propaganda machine is running, designed to emasculate men.

Society is much more complex and fragmented, with countless forces moving in all kinds of directions.
Most societies, and especially modern societies, do not lend themselves well to the control of a single minority group.

I don't personally see around me that boys are shamed for "being less perfect than girls" and I don't think that any boy's bigger threat is "being transitioned to a girl".

Mostly though, **an empowered individual doesn't care about society because he is focused on himself, his life, his goal, and his individual relationships**.
Read "Empowered Individualism" for more:

> Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

#8. Misogynistic & "Women VS Men Frame"

We've already discussed the same in the previous two books "*The Rational Male*" and "*Preventive Medicine*".

And if anything, it might get worse here.

For example, he talks about his wife not being sympathetic to his pain:

> Due to species' beneficial hypergamy, women fundamentally lack the capacity to empathize with the male experience

And Rollo Tomassi really seems to believe that women are out to destroy male bonding, in some sort of pre-planned, concerted effort of a "divide and conquer" strategy.

Talking about women "inserting themselves in male spaces", including the locker room, he writes:

> (…) to restrict and control traditional male bonding while also fostering infighting amongst in-group and out-group men

Why would they do that, listening to Tomassi?

Because "men congregating together are a threat to the feminine imperative".

That's nonsense.

And criticizing the MGTOW movement, he says:

> This only serves to cede power to the feminine imperative

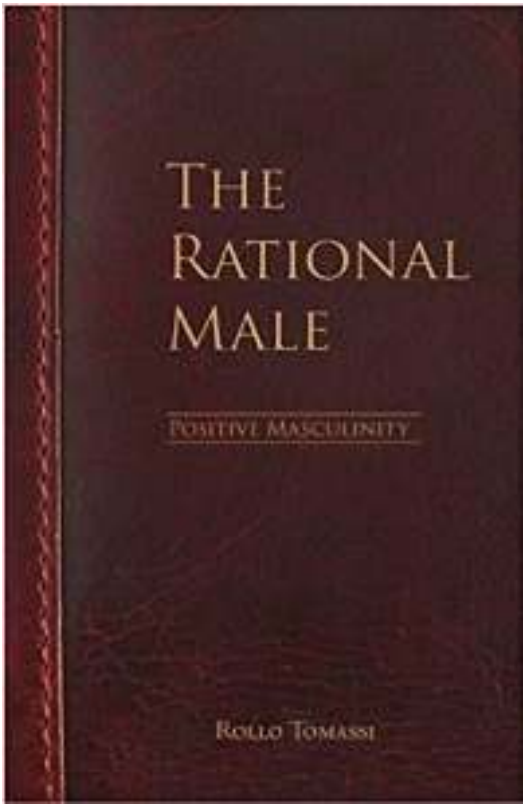
Obviously, **Rollo Tomassi sees the world as a power struggle between men and women**.

P.S.:
If it's true that you can judge people by their best friends, then Rollo here laughing at Tate's gaslighting tactics doesn't bode very well:

#9. Positive Masculinity is Conservative, Strict Father Morality to "Being a Man"

Rollo Tomassi says the red pill should remain apolitical. But it hardly is.
A good chunk of the manosphere/red pill movement is socially conservative.

You can see it quite clearly both in "Positive Masculinity" and in Tomassi's previous work.
Tomassi embraces what Lakoff defines as "strict father morality".



CONS

- **Grating Overly Emotional Narrating Voice**

I didn't like the narrating voice. It sounded too complain-ey and whiney.

- **Some studies not quoted**

Tomassi says that there are studies proving that women without a father or with a beta father grow up with daddy issues.
I would have liked to take a look at a study linking "betaness" to daddy issues, but none was provided.

PROS

This is what I also enjoyed about "Positive Masculinity":

- **The "TL;DR Phenomenon" Rant**

LOL, that was a good one.
Rollo says that whenever he makes a "TL, DR" note many readers attack his conclusions without even reading the actual text.

Welcome to the iPhone generation :).

- **The Sheryl Sandberg Spoofing**

That one was hilarious.

- **Some good examples of "beta husbands"**

Albeit somewhat extreme, and albeit I'm not a big fan of the expression "beta", there are great examples of, well… beta husbands.

For example, Rollo says:

> I have some friends who tell me how fortunate they are to be married to such understanding wives that she *allow* him to watch hockey on their guest bedroom TV

LOL, that was a good one.
And a great example of what to avoid (ie.: falling into a mindset that a partner should "allow" you to do what you like doing).

- **Rollo wearing black at a pink-sweater party**

Rollo Tomassi attended a "pink sweater" party showing up in a black T-shirt.
And, of course, the topic of his insecurity came up.

I remember similar reactions when I refused to take a picture with a huge pink bottle.

REVIEW

Of the whole "Rational Male trilogy", this was possibly the least relatable for more free-thinking readers.

There are still great ideas, but also somewhat more extremism, more "us VS them" mindset, and sectarian views of masculinity.

In my opinion, it's not benefiting Rollo Tomassi to stay stuck in the red pill only.
By having become one of the thought leaders of the movement, he might be tempted to "intellectually curl up" on his own theory and refuse to consider possible alternative views (groupthink).
And, under the pressure of his own followers, he might be nudged towards more and more extreme positions.

In sum: some good ideas and some great analysis of systemic (and unconscious) manipulation, including some acute observations on group dynamics.
But also very one-sided, misogynistic, and potentially toxic for male-female relationships, if taken literally.

Check:

- **Best red pill books**

The Origins of Virtue: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Origins of Virtue (1996) is a multi-disciplinary inquiry into why humans cooperate.
Why do we cooperate at a level that far exceeds that of any other animal, asks the author Ridley? His answer is that we do it because it's good for us.

Contents

- Overview
- Bullet Point Wisdom
- CONS
- Review

Overview

About the Author:
Matt Ridley is a science journalist who has been writing for The Economist, The Wall Street Journal, and The Times, always on scientific topics.
He is also the author of "*The Red Queen*", an evolutionary psychology text that I very much enjoyed.

The Selfish-Gene Is Altruistic

Matt Ridley discusses how the theory of the selfish gene, popularized by Dawkin's book "The Selfish Gene," might make some sad and depressed.

The selfish gene theory, in short, says that whatever we do, we are always selfishly motivated to replicate our own genes.

When we do something for others, we only do it because it benefits us.

But Ridley says, that's not depressing at all.

If something is altruistic, it's altruistic, whether or not it might have benefited or whether or not it was designed for mutual support.

Conflict Between Selfishness & Public Good: The Politicians

Ridley talks about the "darker" interpretation of Public choice theory.

Says Ridley

> They (the politicians) exploit induced altruism, they enforce cooperation and then defect.

They talk about the need for unity and togetherness and the importance of paying taxes… But then they actually take care of themselves and their interests first and foremost.

That might sound cynical, which Ridley admits himself, but he then adds:

> But then the opposing view, that bureaucrats are selfless servants of the public good is unduly naive

My point of view on this is that, of course, we don't need to go to the extreme of "all bad" or "all good".
But certainly, **we shouldn't underestimate the selfish drives of anyone invested in power and authority over**

others.

Also read:

- **Politicians' manipulation techniques**

Why Communism Doesn't Work

A society built on benevolence is riddled with nepotism because humans naturally favor their kins and friends.

Among strangers, the "invisible hand" of the market, which distributes selfish interests, is fair and works.

Then Ridley says that progress and harmony are possible without government, delivering the first salvo of anti-government political bias that characterizes "*The Origins of Virtue*".

Prisoners' Dilemmas Are All Around Us

Any situation where you are tempted to do something, but you know it would be a mistake if everyone did the same, is some sort of prisoner's dilemma.

We all pay the price for individualism and for what is, for the individual, a rational decision.

All fishermen would benefit if nobody fished at their maximum capacity. But every single fisherman would lose out if they didn't fish as much as possible because other fishermen would still deplete the common resource of available fish.

But Selfishness Is Not The Right Thing to Do...

For decades, scientists, and economists, first and foremost, derived the wrong lesson from the prisoner's dilemma. It turns out that selfishness is not the most rational thing to do… *As long as the game is repeated multiple times.*

Computer programs mimicking game theory situations and, more importantly, actual human interactions, showed that cooperation paid off (Axelrod, 1984).

Tit for that was the most successful program, and future programs will further refine it and shed more and more light on human behavior and cooperation as well.

This is the progression of the best computer simulation strategies as explained in "*The Origins of Virtue*":

- **Tit for tat**: cooperate first, then do whatever the other did the last time

For tit for that to win, there must be a stable and repetitive relationship. The more casual and opportunistic the encounter is, the more likely a defection (i.e.: cheating) strategy is to pay off.

There is a darker and more dangerous side to tit for that, which can be found in human relationships as well, sometimes: if a tit for tat meets another tit for tat, and by mistake one defects first, then a mutually assured war between the two starts.

This can happen in humans as well, as described in "combative relationships" and "vicious circle in relationships".

- **Generous tit for that**: forgives mistakes and, 1/3 of the time, overlooks a defection

This one breaks vicious cycles of defection while still remaining immune to exploitative strategies.

A strategy of "always collaborating" can thrive among a population of "tit for tat" and "generous tit for tat".

- **Pavlov strategy**: forgives like "generous" but does not automatically revert to cooperate and instead sticks to his last best strategy, whether it is defect or cooperate

The Pavlov strategy can exploit the simpleton strategy of "always cooperating.". It allows for a cooperating world

without allowing that world to descend into a too-trusting utopia where free-riders could easily invade and flourish.

As Sarah Constantin explains, Pavlov can beat Tit-For-Tat and generous Tit-for-Tat-with forgiveness in a wide variety of scenarios.

It's weaker against "always defect" strategies, though, because it keeps shifting back to cooperation and thus getting the sucker's payoff.

- **Firm-but-fair**: similar to Pavlov but continues to cooperate after having been a sucker in the previous round

Making the game asynchronous makes generosity even more rewarding. This makes a lot of sense in real life among humans: it pays to elicit cooperation by being nice (and that's why you don't usually greet people or negotiate partners with a scowl).

- **Discriminating altruism**: avoid playing with former defectors

It's immune to being invaded by selective defectors.
Contrary to tit-for-tat, it can re-invade an antisocial population.

Punishment Can Foster Cooperation

Any reciprocal strategy is inadequate in explaining cooperation in large groups because otherwise, free-riders would be rampant within it.

That's why Ridley makes the case that **a successful reciprocal strategy must also be highly intolerant of defectors** and defecting strategies.

The paradox, though, is that starting from a selfish environment, any strategy that is highly intolerant of rare defectors also makes it harder for cooperation to develop when cooperation is still rare.

That's when a strategy that punishes not only defectors but also those who fail to punish defectors can thrive (moralistic strategy).

Ostracism and Prevention of Defection

A more powerful solution for free riders in large groups is ostracism.

If people can recognize defectors in advance, they can simply avoid playing with them (discriminating altruism).

Discriminating altruists are immune to being invaded by selective defectors but can invade a population of defectors (if there is at least one more discriminating altruist).

This is likely what's happening with humans already.
An experiment by Robert Frank proved that people had better than random chances of guessing who would cooperate and who wouldn't with just half an hour of interactions.

> The prisoner's dilemma is only a dilemma if you have no idea whether you can trust each other.
> But most people have a fairly good idea

Reciprocity Requires Recognizing Players and Keeping Score

Reciprocity is uncommon among animals that are not kin.

Higher mammals, humans first and foremost, can be reciprocal because they are able to recognize players from past interactions and keep scores on who defected and who collaborated.

> Humans are uniquely good at reciprocal altruism

Why Do Humans Hunt Bigger Preys (Or Donate Money?)

Ridley asks why humans have been hunting bigger prey instead of smaller ones.

Why take the risk at all instead of going for smaller animals?

He says that it's because of the "social bonus" points that the big hunters garner. By having more meat to give away, he can give more meat to other females in the group in exchange for sex.

My Note:
Ridley here seems to commit a "correlation is not causation" mistake when he says the best hunters have more sex because they share more meat.
It might equally be the case that women are more attracted to the prowess of the hunters and not so much to the meat.
Or the best hunters might simply have higher status in the group. Or a mix of the three, of course (likely).

Big Game Hunting Introduced Humanity to Public Good

Ridley says that weapons allowed men to hunt bigger games together from afar.

That meant that nobody had to fear that others would hang back and let the most courageous (or stupid) take the risks.

Once the animal was killed, sharing also made a lot of sense because nobody could eat a whole big mammal by himself.

Weapons Allowed for Reciprocity, Too

Denying anyone who participated in the hunt was also impossible.

You don't want to deny a hungry man armed with a dart thrower.
Thus, weapons also allowed for reciprocity.

My Note:
This part also made me reflect, but I wasn't too convinced.
Denying a hungry man can also be dangerous if he's armed with his fists only.

However, I was convinced that weapons could make dominance a riskier business.

I paraphrase Ridley here:

> A leader of an armed population must lead more by persuasion than by coercion.

And this is a fundamental truth of ThePowerMoves: never count on power and authority to be kind to you.
Always make sure you can be independent of the authority and/or that you can strike back in case they get nasty.

> Checks and balances on power start with your own personal power.

Emotional Allow for Irrational Commitment & Cooperation

If everyone were rational, we would defect much more often than we do.

People would not start a joint venture company because they would be afraid the other would cheat them.

But we don't bring rationality to the table. We make irrational commitments driven by our emotions.

Love is also an emotion that underpins longer-lasting commitment. Sure, it might not last forever, but it lasts longer than just lust does.

Emotions prevent us from abandoning wounded mates and deserting spouses.
However, **negative emotions like revenge allow for group cooperation by making defections more costly**.

Indeed, people are much less generous when their identity is protected and when they know they can get away with whatever decision they make without any consequences.

Morality and what others think of us also keep our society in check.
We don't cut queues because we are worried about what others think of us. Other animals don't behave like that.

In short:

> Emotions are mental devices for guaranteeing commitment (and cooperation)

People who lose control over their emotions indeed lose their inhibitions and start displaying anti-social behavior.

A Case For Humans' Group Selection?

There is a raging debate among scientists split between those who believe that evolution might be shaped by group selection instead of gene selection.

Ridley repeatedly says that group selection does not overcome individualism in animals.

But then he says that humans might have become the exception *because of their increased ability to cooperate*.
I quote:

> **The virtuous are virtuous for no other reason that they can join forces with other who are virtuous**. And once cooperator segregate themselves from the rest of society, a new force of evolution can come into play: one that pits groups against each other rather than individuals.

This is a conclusion I am not too sold on, though.

Ridley says that, genetically, group selection doesn't work because losing groups are not annihilated and often join in the victorious group.
But the culture does prevail, leading to "cultural selection" (my note: "cultural selection" feels like a misnomer to me, I didn't agree with this part).

Strongest VS Smartest: Who Dominates?

In chimpanzees, it's not the strongest who dominates and becomes the alpha male, but usually, it's the one who's best at forging political alliances (and manipulating others).

> Power and sexual success can be achieved by coalitions of weaker individuals over stronger ones, a process taken to even stronger extremes in human beings

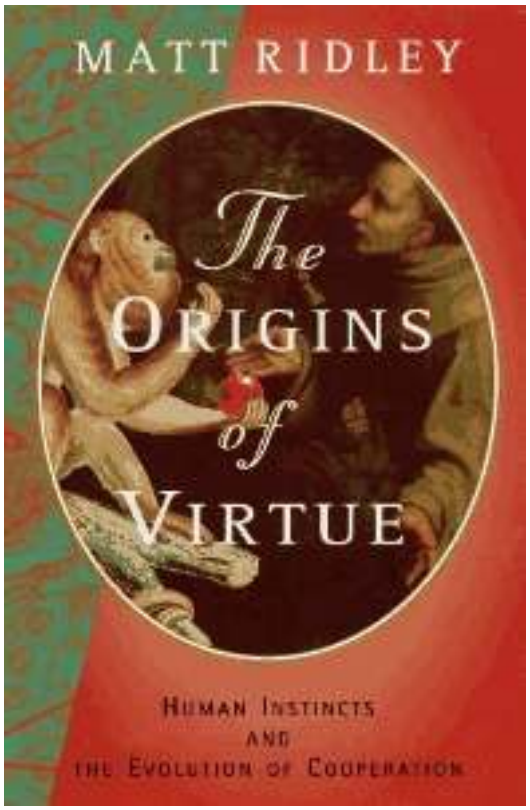
We Are Designed to Exploit The Group For Ourselves

Ridley says we are always and only in groups because it serves our interests.

We are not designed to sacrifice ourselves for the group but to exploit the group for ourselves.

My Note:
Yes, for some people.
And yet, many people have died for their country, or done very stupid things for a flag or for their "comrades". Or simply for a football team.
So I cannot agree fully here.

Plenty of humans do not use the group but are manipulated by it (or by its leaders, also read "corporate manipulations").



Bullet Point Wisdom

- Monogamous societies are often more cohesive and better at conquering rival territories
- The pursuit of self-interest is not mean, as Adam Smith is often misunderstood: the butcher is not motivated by benevolence, but it doesn't mean it's motivated by spite, either
- All societies divide labor between men and women and, even more so, between wives and husbands, including egalitarian societies. So it's not a question of "patriarchy"
- Always defect easily invades a population of "perennial collaborators"
- Sharing food lowers the variance availability, making every single member better off (risk reduction hypothesis)
- Pregnancy could be seen as a battle for resources between mother and infant (this is fascinating)
- After birth, kin relationships can be seen as a struggle for resources among kins
- Dolphins are as nasty as any other animal. They kidnap women and force themselves onto them in groups of two or three
- Similarly, the notion that underdeveloped tribes live in unison with nature while respecting nature is a myth: they do exploit nature and fall for our exact same "tragedy of commons"
- The interest of the individual always outweighs the interests of the group. When that's not the case, we are looking at kin and not strangers. If animals live in herds is because it's good for the individual

And I loved this quote the most, which has become a central theme of ThePowerMoves:

> Dawkins drew attention to the selfish-gene, not to justify it, but to alert us to it, so we can be aware of the need to overcome it.
> He urged us to the need of rebelling against the tyranny of the selfish Replicators

CONS

I loved "*The Origins of Virtue*" but on top of the political bias (more in the review section), I didn't agree with the following:

- **Evolutionary deterministic**

Ridley seems to consider all traits we possess as "good for ourselves".

But first of all, not all universals are necessary adaptations.

Second, there is much randomness and many adaptive traits can also become maladaptive as the environment has changed.

It's always possible to come up with some nice story to tell, but that's storytelling and not science (see the example below of people supposedly picking the best groups while that's obviously not always true)

- **Humans are very good at guessing which group their interests lie** (are they?)

Ridley says that as a "groupish" species, we congregate in groups that support our individual interests and that we are very good at picking the best groups to represent us.

I strongly disagree with that: we are not very good at picking the best groups.
We are very bad, actually.

Just look at idiotic football fans assaulting each other and going to prison for a game.
Or being depressed because the millionaires they support lost a match.

No, we're not that good at picking groups.

Also see:

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-individualism

- **Defection (and robbing banks) does not pay**

Ridley says that the real question is why don't more people defect, and by asking so he seems to imply that defections pay.

But I'm not so convinced.
Certainly not with the example he uses of "the occasional bank robber," supposedly proving defection pays.

The last statistics I read were from Baumeister, and he shows that nope, robbing banks doesn't pay because most bank robbers get caught.

Review

The Origins of Virtue is an excellent analysis of cooperation among animals and humans and how that cooperation intersects with the selfish gene theory of evolution.

Disappointed by Political Bias

I was a bit disappointed by the last couple of chapters, where a wonderful analysis devolved into politics and an anti-government tirade.

The negative reviews on Amazon are from people who disagreed with Ridley's political devolvement, not the rest of the books. And let me say these people are idiots for having missed the genius analysis in the rest of the book: I appreciated Ridley "ring-fenced" most of the politics to the last couple of chapters (except a couple of political zingers earlier).

I was also a bit disappointed to see that Ridley is a staunch supporter of Brexit.
Albeit, I prefer Britain to leave the EU ASAP with a very clear cut, I personally don't care that much.

But let's be frank: between us, I also secretly wished I would not like the author because of his anachronistic blue-blood royal title, his Ivy League education, and his banker background.
But he won me over simply by virtue of his work.

But It's Still A Gem

I loved "*The Origins of Virtue*" and I might make it one of the "Power Moves" recommended because some of its content goes at the core of this website's values.

So yes, I do recommend "*The Origins of Virtue*".

Also see:

- **The best books to learn evolutionary psychology**

Get the book on Amazon.

Power Moves: Summary & Review (Adam Grant)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Power Moves (2019), recorded on the sidelines of the Davos World Economic Forum, is a reflection on power dynamics, the tactical-level power moves that signal status, and the larger implications of power in society.

Contents

- Summary
- Power Moves Criticism
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Adam Grant is a psychologist and professor of organizational psychology at the Wharton School.
He is also the author of *Originals*, co-authored with Sheryl Sandberg, and *Give and Take*.

Power Moves is only available in audio format and is a mix of the author's own speculation and the opinions and ideas of the people he interviewed.

Power is Fragile

Adam Grant starts "*Power Moves*" making the case that "power has changed".

It used to be hierarchical, and it could last for a long time.

Today, it's much more fragile, much more distributed, and much harder to defend.

It's easier for start-ups to acquire power, but it's harder to hold onto it.

Today's power is the power of networks and ideas.
A Snapchat star and an Instagram celebrity have more reach than a corporate VP of communication.
And the startups keep disrupting old businesses.

My Note: Partially true
I don't fully agree here.
See the criticism.

Power Signals Itself

People always send out power cues about their power—or the power they believe they should have-.

Grant talks about how people stand and move in a room, who gives way to whom on the sidewalk, and who looks the most like the biggest alpha male.

If you are interested in learning and understanding the signs of power, definitely check out the course here or these articles:

- **How power talks**
- **How power looks**
- **Alpha male body language**

But also watch out for alpha-male posturing, which is a low-quality expression of dominance and social one-upping.

It's Not True That Power Corrupts...

Adam Grant says that it's not true that power corrupts.
It just gives you more latitude to influence more people. So it always depends on who is looking for that power.

> Power makes you more of what you already are

My Note: Only partially true
I don't fully agree here.
Power can corrupt, and we must be watchful that it doesn't corrupt those who are tasked with taking care of the public good -and we must be watchful that it doesn't corrupt *us*, too-.

... But Power Does Change People Around You

Power might not change you, but it does change how people act around you.

Generally, people become more manipulative around powerful people and seek to be liked more.

They hide their flaws and, consciously or unconsciously, try to mimic the powerful person's behavior and opinions.

This creates a problem for powerful individuals because they will have a harder time judging people's character.
This is important because **your power depends in large part on the people you surround yourself with**.

So you must find ways to reliably vet the people around you without counting only on your own analyses.

My Note: true, this is part of what being an "enlightened collaborator" is all about

For more on collaboration and manipulation, read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Givers VS Takers: Watch Out Who Gets The Power

Since different people seek power, we should be watchful of who gets it.

Some people tend to be takers: they are in it for themselves.
The givers tend to use their power to foster the common good instead.

And there are Machiavellian leaders who, Adam Grant says, perform more poorly than givers.
Machiavellian politicians, for example, were able to get fewer bills passed, and Machiavellian fund managers had lower returns.

How do you recognize if someone is a giver or a taker?

Ask them about their colleagues, and people will have a tendency to project their own personalities onto others.
So ask, for example, how common they think theft is within the company.

Also, read:

- **Machiavellianism: a guide**
- **10 Power moves of the Machiavellian politicians**

The Three Categories to Assess Powerful Men

You could assess how people relate to power along these lines:

- **Dominance / power**: they want to win and dominate others
- **Friendliness**: they seek to make people around them comfortable

- **Achievement**: getting things done is very effective in business but less so in government, as they tend to be hard drivers who walk all over people

Examples include Barack Obama and Donald Trump.
There is much analysis on this website on both, check them out if you want to know more.

Women in Power Face More Difficulties

Women have it harder when it comes to power.

Both men and women use a double standard when assessing dominance and drive, and both genders are much more critical of driven and powerful women.

Among the solutions, Adam Grant proposes:

- Negotiate by offering more options
- Ask leaders for advice to ingratiate them

Also, read:

- **Dating successfully as a successful career woman**
- **How to be a powerful woman: a scientific guide**
- **Strong VS submissive women in dating**

Employees Have More Power

Today's employees have more options and knowledge, which gives them more power against employers.

Grant interviews David Solomon from Goldman Sachs, who candidly admits that Goldman is hiring outside of the Ivy League because those people tend to stay longer in the company.

To me, the difference was all about entitlement.
Ivy League graduates thought they were entitled to Goldman Sachs and to any other top employer or opportunity.

Graduates from average colleges instead felt like they had made it in Goldman and were grateful for the opportunity (and unexpected financial windfall).

Emotional Intelligence is The Future

Artificial intelligence and robots will soon revolutionize the way we work and interact.

Many will become jobless in occupations such as construction, manual work, driving, and, later on, technical skills such as coding as well.

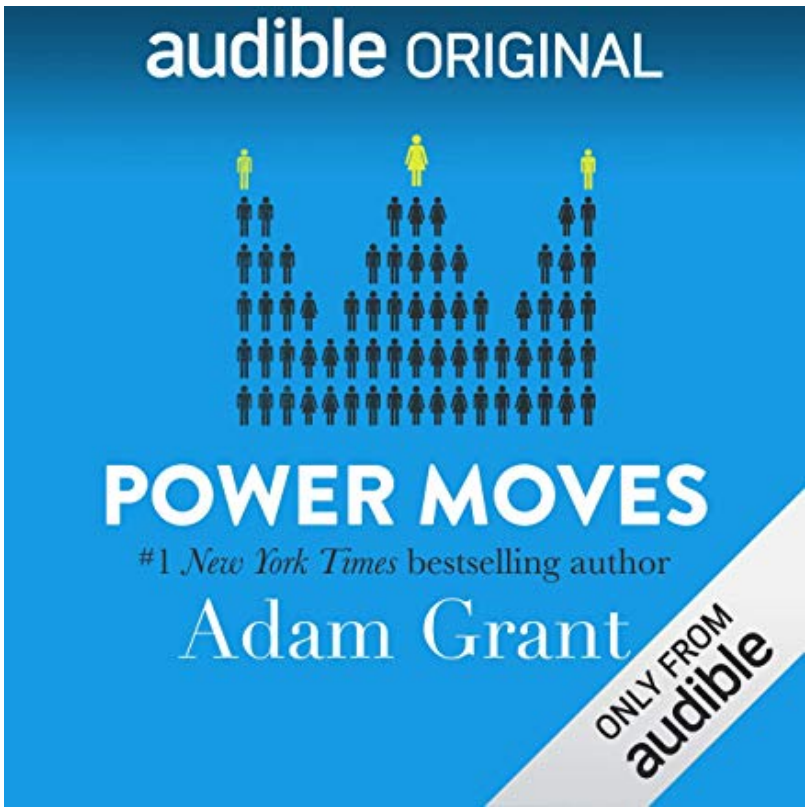
But a robot that can connect people, build relationships, negotiate agreements, or simply lead a meeting where emotions are running high is a long way off.

So the best bet for future employment is to increase your emotional intelligence.

Also, read:

- **How emotional intelligence makes you a better leader**
- **Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman**
- **Emotional Intelligence 2.0**

> **The ultimate test of power is how you treat people who don't have power**



Power Moves Criticism

Since the book is so relevant to this website, I will go through some of the bits I disagree with:

The "be good to win" fallacy

Some passages reminded me of "naive self-help".

The "today is different" narrative is a poor analysis

One of the main concepts behind "*Power Moves*" is that today's power is different.

But that's such a typical narrative that I can't take it seriously anymore. It feels as if anyone who hasn't done a proper analysis just plops this old cliche that "today it's different than before".

As if "before" were a monolithic, homogenous construct that we can now compare to "today".

I think it was Taleb, who said that at any time in history, authors always said that "today is different".
And it was certainly more dangerous and "risky" to be a Roman emperor than a modern country president.

The example of power being more fragile, such as GM risking bankruptcy, was also quite meaningless: companies have been going bust since the dawn of business (before the Industrial Revolution).

Does technology make old powerless powerful? I think it can easily be made *more* powerful

In an effort to prove that "today things are different" and "power is more fragile," one of the interviewees mentions military technology.

The most disruptive military technologies, he says, have been:

- Suicide bombers
- Drones

- Cyber attacks

And then he says these technologies don't require many resources or a government.
Anyone can acquire the knowledge to acquire them.

Albeit there might be some truth, as a generalization, that's idiotic.

Where are the drones that people can easily acquire and build?
Drones are a hugely powerful tool for *technologically advanced governments*.

It's what allows technologically dominant countries to spy and wage war at smaller costs and without risking their own troop's lives.

And who carried out the most successful cyber-attacks?
It's mostly organized groups, often government-backed.

Furthermore, technology can be used by governments and powerful organizations to spy on people and keep track of them, which is already being done-.

Some superficial, very politically correct analysis

Ultimately, I found "*Power Moves*" to lack true depth.

Sure, it wasn't meant to be a long dissertation, but at least some mention of discordant voices wasn't going to hurt.

Talking about women in power, for example, suggests it's unfair that women are judged differently.

And that's a fair position to take.

But why do women get judged differently?
That's the question that a deeper analysis should answer.

While "*Power Moves*" embraces political policies obliging companies to hire a minimum number of women on corporate boards, there is no mention of the possible drawbacks of these policies or why one might disagree with them.

That makes for not only a more one-sided analysis but also a poorer analysis.

Review

Power Moves reviewed by The Power Moves :).

I first realized the existence of this book when analytics showed that people were ending up on my website after searching for "Power Moves summary", "Power Moves Adam Grant," and similar.

And then a friend of mine said, "hey, have you heard about that book called, like your website?":D

So finally, I could get around to reading Adam Grant's work.

And I liked "*Power Moves*".
Especially the interview format and the analysis of trends like robotics and artificial intelligence.

But it's not very deep on actual power and power dynamics, and I disagreed with a few conclusions.

Also, read:

- **Power Moves**: an actual list of 12 social power moves
- **Best books to learn about power**: these are the best books to learn about power and power dynamics

Get the book on Amazon.

Confessions of A Sociopath: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Confessions of a Sociopath (2013) is the account of the author's life as a diagnosed non-criminal, high-functioning psychopath.
M.E. Thomas explains how her charisma and Machiavellianism allow her to influence and seduce others, offering insight into how sociopaths think and behave, while advising readers on how to manage a relationship with a sociopath.

Contents

- Notes
- Bullet Wisdom
- Quotes
  - Is Thomas A Real Sociopath?
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Notes

About the Author:
M. E. Thomas is a pseudonym; it's not the real name of the author. But we do know that she founded the website Sociopathworld.com.
She seems proud of how many people populate her blog and forum, but there doesn't seem to be community activity these days.

Sociopaths Are Obsessed With Power…

The author says:

> Power is all I ever cared for in my life.
> Physical power, the power of being desired and admired, destructive power, knowledge and invisible influence…

Also, ruining people for Thomas is a display of power.
She says:

> (…) or ruin them however I like.
> Not because I want to witness the results necessarily, but because I want to exercise my power.
> The acquisition, retention and exploitation of power is what motivates a sociopath

Thomas says that one of her expressions of power is to feel like her ideas are shaping the world around her.
And that's why she writes.

Seduction is also a big game of power for sociopaths.
They see the thrill of catching the fish, getting the fish hooked… And enjoying having that fish hooked.

Until they tire of it…

Power Over Oneself

High-functioning sociopaths also seek to overcome their limitations and control their urges.
That might include forging long-term relationships.

> Sociopaths who truly seek to cultivate power realize that the greatest power is power over themselves

... Even As Kids

Since a young kid Thomas has been all about manipulation.

She wanted to ingratiate her parents and discussed with her siblings about who was the father's favorite or the mom's favorite, and plotted on how to win their favor.
Thomas was surprised when her sibling wasn't interested in playing the same game of parental manipulation.

My Note: Had the same experience
I dated a female sociopath who candidly admitted of her manipulation to become her father's favorite against her mother.
You can read it here.

The author was obsessed with the power structure of the adults and found all her peers unbearingly simple-minded.

Thomas sought to learn how the world worked at both the micro and macro level.
Not just for knowledge's sake, of course, but to use it for her own machinations.

Every time she'd hear something the adults seemed so interested about, especially so scared and mystery about, she wanted to know everything.
The "kids' explanations" for AIDS and nuclear bombs weren't enough for her, she wanted the adult versions.

The author also says that manipulating adults as a child was much easier than manipulating other children.
Adults forgot what it means to be a child and they expect "quirky" behavior from children.
But other children, they would know what was "off".

Also read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

And They Love Scamming & Shortcuts

Thomas loved being first in class.

But most of all, she loved getting top grades and top jobs without putting in the work.

She says:

> My career trajectory was astonishing. Especially because it felt like a scam. And I loved to play that kind of game.

What motivated Thomas was not getting the top grade, but to study as little as possible and still pull out an "A".

Thomas had great university grades and extra-curricular activities, including performing at the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics.

How did she get it?

"Through well-placed allegations of gender discrimination at her school".

She campaigned to be elected to the school's board, again campaigning against gender discrimination.

Basically, she leveraged feminism and affirmative action as tools to get what she wanted, without caring one bit about diversity (of course).

She loved the office politics and power games in the office and relished playing them herself.
Thomas would try to uncover personal secrets and insecurities from her colleagues and use them to gain leverage over them.

Of course, the actual performance was difficult for Thomas because she wasn't interested in doing the work.
She was all about the form, not the substance.

Also read:

- **Office politics players** (and power moves)
- **Machiavellian office power moves**

Sociopaths Enjoy Ruining People

The author says:

> Ruining people is delicious.

Even as a kid, she liked being in a group of at least three so that she could create drama

The author says that for some people, it's shocking to hear that there are people who are plotting against them.
And it's even more shocking when they know they might do it for no apparent reason other than the pleasure of flexing their power.

Ruining People in Seduction

The author describes how she tried to get back a female lover, not because she missed her, but because she missed having power over her.

So she crafted a well-thought-out email to change her mind and run back to her.
Which she did, breaking up with the new girlfriend, which made the author feel even better.

Also read:

- **Are you dating a sociopath?**
- **How sociopaths cheat the dating game**: a sobering, almost shocking read

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Ruining Her Teacher

Sociopaths sometimes target people who stand in their way or whom they simply take a dislike to.

Thomas describes her manipulation strategy to oust a teacher she disliked.

Since the teacher had a bad reputation, the easiest way was to come up with a case of inappropriate behavior.
She started taking notes in class of all his dubious comments, made friends with all the other women, and started forming a clique to comment on the "disgusting" teacher.

She started a rumor that he put in the front row the girls who used to wear spandex and who had bigger cleavage.

Finally, one day the teacher commented on the dance class project and told Thomas that she was tacky, "letting it

all hang out, not like all other girls".
He was trying to get the class against her, but it was too late because she had gotten to them first. And he had just overstepped the boundaries in front of everyone.

She sympathized with all the other dancers, was all ears, and convinced one of them to come out with a formal complaint.

This is a technique we discuss in "how to handle a bad boss".

Sociopath At The Top of Corporate Ladders (?)

The author quotes Robert Hare when he says that sociopaths are four times more likely to be at the top of the corporate ladder, than in a janitor's closet.

My Note:
However, that statistic is no ultimate evidence.
Sociopaths, easily bored and interested in power, might simply never end up in a janitor's closet.
So 4 times almost zero would still be next to nothing.
Also read "*How to Lie With Statistics*".

Thomas also mentions Albert Dunlap, a former high-flyer in business who prided himself on being a sociopath. Dunlap said that:

> Manipulation can be translated into the ability to inspire and lead others, and overblown confidence is necessary (..) because you gotta like yourself if you're going to be a success

And the author says:

> If you combine the propensity for manipulation, dishonesty, callousness, arrogance, poor impulse control and the rest of the sociopathic traits, you could end up with a socially dangerous individual… Or the next big thing entrepreneur

As much as I still believe that sociopaths at the top are more the exception than the norm, it's still possible that some of them do end up leading companies or big startups.

The author says that what characterizes a sociopath is a predatory mindset, and that can be very helpful in business.

Or sometimes, I'd add, it might be both.
As it happened to Elizabeth Holmes, for example, the founder of Teranos (also read "*Bad Blood*").

Also read:

- **It's Machiavellis at the top**
- **Corporate manipulations**

> If we don't crash and burn, we have the potential to achieve dizzying amount of success

> The Myth of Emotional Intelligence: Machiavellis At The Top

Sociopaths Have Difficulties in Social Relations

It's not easy for sociopaths to fake emotions.

They feel fewer emotions than most, have little or no empathy, and have little or no sense of guilt.

They have difficulties contextualizing the emotions they feel. Sometimes Thomas cannot even recognize or understand some of her emotions, or why they originated at all.
For example, it's hard for her to say "I am sad because of X".

Since they have limited emotions and a different understanding of them, it's hard for socipaths to understand empaths (i.e., "normal" people).

Faking a Difficult Interaction

Thomas describes a few situations where she had no idea what to say or do to come across as "normal".

One of them was talking to a student whose grandmother had just died. She tried to fake a sad expression, then said a few things, then probed for a reaction, then said a few more things… And panicked that she was coming across as "not normal".

Then she abruptly interrupted the conversation.

Another one was dealing with the police after a break in. Thomas knew she "should" have looked scared, but she didn't feel anything.

She says she ended up maybe being too friendly and slightly flirty with the agents, but that was the most "normal" she could enact at that time.

Most People Can Tell There's Something Wrong With Sociopaths

The author says that it's not easy for sociopaths to fake "being normal".

She says that people don't exactly know what's wrong with them, but somehow they can see that something is not quite right.

Also see:

- Why Amanda Knox looks like a sociopath

Sociopaths' Manipulation For Good

Thomas respected her sister, Catherine.

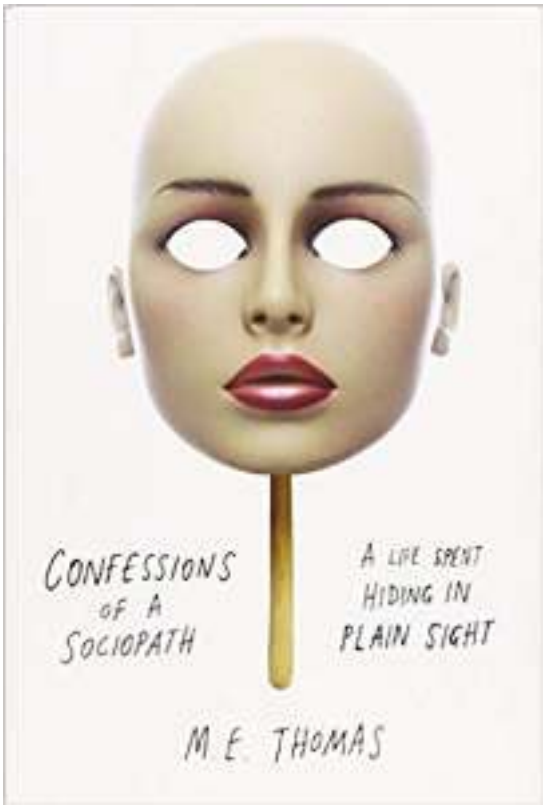
Her sister's husband thought Catherine was more sociopathic than the author herself.
But, as the author says, Catherine manipulated for causes she considered good and right.

While the author only targets people who strike her fancy, Catherine only targets bad apples to ruin them and to see the good embodied by her, triumph.

While the author's self-image was that of a pagan god, Catherine's self-image was that of an avenging angel.

Catherine was always ready to fight for a righteous cause, defy authority whenever it was exercised unjustly.

Basically, the author's sister is the embodiment of The Power Moves.



Bullet Wisdom

- Sociopaths make terrible employees because they:
  - focus on power
  - cheat and look for ways to swindle their employer
  - look for shortcuts,
  - heavily engage in office politics
  - don't want to work hard
  - get bored quickly and can't stay with tasks
- Therapy only teaches high-functioning sociopaths what's expected of normal people.
- Thomas wasn't afraid to look like she was begging for a job if that helped get her: a few looks of disgust didn't matter to her
- Sociopaths have no fixed sexual sense of identity, and Thomas believes that's one of the most constant traits in sociopaths
  - To find out if someone is a sociopath, Thomas asks about their sexual past and makes fun of their homosexuality. If they take it personally, they're probably not sociopaths, because sociopaths wouldn't be offended
- Beating up a bully makes you a hero in people's eyes, says the author (and that's why Batman probably does, she adds)
- Talking about a bad teacher, the author says she couldn't stand that unfit people had authority over her (which is a feeling I can relate to)
- Some sociopaths have moral principles with which to approach to life, some of them based on religion (like the author)
- Thomas talks little because she's not interested in conversation. She prefers listening to gather information about others, which she can use -knowledge is power, she says-

- The author -and her sister- seem to see children as their replicas to control and own the future, and they want them to be as perfect as possible, almost robot-like

Quotes

On hurting people and "normal people":

> I intentionally hurt people sometimes, but don't we all?

On the normalcy of sociopaths:

> We can function, we just function differently (…), it is just that we think, live and make decisions in a way that some people find loathsome.

On being a lawyer:

> When I finished law school, I landed a prestige whore job. Every lawyer is a prestige whore

On parenting a non-sociopath child

> I have no idea how could I be a good parent to an empath child, how to love and respect it.
> I have one sister, a tearful hugging woman whom I regard with a great deal of disdain.
> What would I do with a child that needs constant emotional suckling?

Is Thomas A Real Sociopath?

Some commentators have called into question whether the author is a real sociopath.

Some of the doubts include:

1. She has strong emotional reactions to her parents, especially hatred for her father
2. The existential crisis seemed to come from an emotionally sad, depressed and needy place
3. She seems to use her blog as a way to self-actualize.
4. Thomas seems to seek community through her blog; she says she feels more connected to the sociopath community than to any gender or country
5. She says that the purpose of her existence is to be admired and always assumes people have crushes on her, which sounds very narcissistic

However, personally, I don't much doubt the author is a sociopath.

And I think it's idiotic of reviewers to read a book and shout, "she is NOT a sociopath".
What the hell do they know?

The author does acknowledge that sociopathy is partly nature and partly nurture, and she describes plenty of parental mistreatment to cover the "nurture" side.

But ultimately, we can't make final diagnoses from afar.

And from my non-final point of view, albeit there definitely were some bits that made you think of "narcissism", 80%+ of "*Confessions of a Sociopath*" is still far into the sociopathy spectrum.

CONS

- **Anonymity casts doubts**

It's understandable that Thomas uses a pseudonym.
But that also casts doubt on her story because nobody can check or corroborate her claims.

- **You must wonder how much is true and what's in her head**

The author says it herself:

> The stories I tell to explain my actions are self-aggrandizing. I spend a lot of time spinning stories in my head to make me seem more powerful and accomplished than I am in reality

- **Failed attempt at relativizing what's wrong with sociopaths**

The author attempts to "devictimize" sociopathy.

She criticizes Marta Stout since in "*The Sociopath Next Door*" she talks about "identifying" sociopaths instead of "diagnosing".

She might be right there.

In certain passages, she implies that violence is certainly not the prerogative of sociopaths and empaths, who go on all kinds of killing sprees because of their emotions and feelings.

She's not wrong there, either.

Yet, I don't buy this relativization.
Sociopaths, as a group, are potentially more dangerous than empaths, and, on balance, they probably take more from society than they give.

- **Confuses risk-seeking with stupidity and/or incapacity**

As an example of her risk-seeking behavior, the author talks about a summer in which she gambled her savings in stock options by holding them when she should have sold them and put all her eggs in one basket.

That's nonsense.

As if without a risk-seeking approach, she would have known the correct time to sell.
Nobody knows the "right" time to sell, and her experience trading is the experience of pretty much every single newbie starting out.

- **Pointless bragging**

In the same book, she confesses to having lost all her savings trading and also brags about her stock returns.

She started investing seriously in 2004 and averaged 200% more than the S&P 500.

The author brags that she manages it in spite of being "relatively unsophisticated". But she doesn't trade on knowledge, but on "special vision".

She seems to imply that the numbers back her up.
She talks about "every year" and "long term success".

The book was published in 2013, which is less than 10 years of data.

Again, I must add a "LOL" here.

- **Deep misunderstanding of evolutionary psychology**

The author brags of superior intelligence, but often gets it wrong.

She says the “most aggressive predators” are those who survive and thrive, which is a typical misunderstanding.

Aggression can provide an advantage, but not always.
Plenty of aggressive predators have gone extinct, and plenty of “wait to eat” life forms exist today (i.e., spider’s webs).

- **An overblown sense of one’s own accomplishments**

The author talks about the “ridiculous amount of money she was making” and her “astonishing career trajectory”.

But she couldn’t hold onto any of that to save her life.

- **Her effectiveness might be overblown**

You also must wonder about her stories of “ruining people”, which might prove a vastly overblown picture of her effectiveness.

For example, after she describes ruining her professor, she also says that after many complaints, she started losing credibility.
And that raises quite some doubt as to whether she was ruining the teacher’s reputation or her own in the process.

PROS

This is simply the best book I have read to understand sociopaths.

Before, the crown was held by Kiehl’s “*The Psychopath Whisperer*“, but he focused on violent people and convicts.

Confessions of a Sociopath not only deals with a different type of sociopath, but gives you the blow-by-blow description of the inner feelings and drives of a sociopath that no other “normal” researcher could.

Review

Confessions of a Sociopath is a wonderful first-hand book to better understand the inner psychology of psychopathy.

Also read:

- **Best dark-triad books**
- **Best books on power**

The 14 Best Books On Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you looking for the best books on power?

You've landed in the perfect spot.

At The Power Moves, we pioneered the power-centric approach to self-development.
We are the most visited website for mastering power, strategy, and practical empowerment.

This is the definitive reading list of the best books and resources to unlock power in all its forms, from boosting your "power intelligence" to commanding status and respect.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **How I curate this list**

Lucio:
Unlike many rehashed or AI-generated lists, every recommendation here comes from **books I personally studied** in the last decade researching power, psychology, and men's success.
Books I haven't personally studied yet don't make this list.

The best of these books influenced the frameworks later developed inside The Power Moves and Power University.

I rank and update this list based on these three criteria:

- Scientific accuracy
- Realism
- Practicality

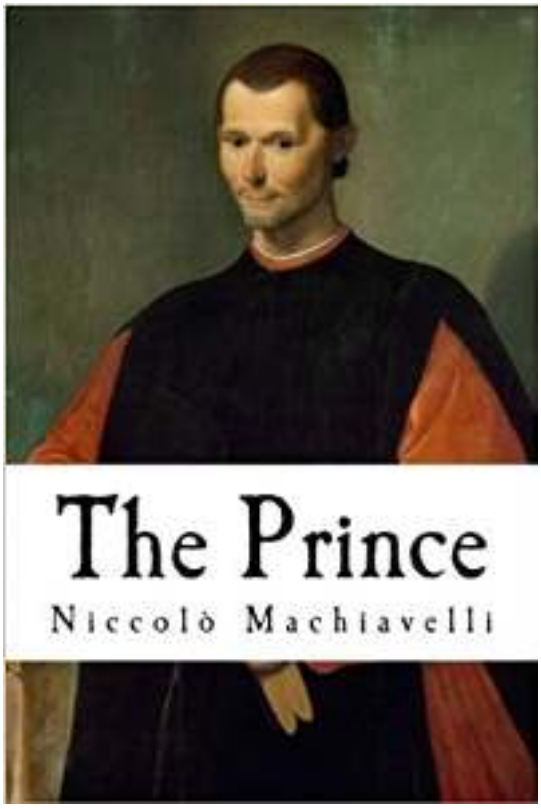
Contents

- 14. The Prince
- 13. Corruptible

- 12. The Psychology of Social Status
- 11. Social Dominance Theory
- 10. Underboss
- 9. Secrets of Power Negotiating
- 8. 48 Laws of Power
- 7. The Art of Worldly Wisdom
- 6. The Psychology of Leadership
- 5. The APA Handbook Vol. 3
- 4. The Handbook of Great Power Competition
- 3. The Selfish Gene
- 2. Power
- 1. Exchange and Power In Social Life

- Beyond Books: Acquiring Power

14. The Prince



By N. Machiavelli

Summary

The Godfather of all power books.

It's last in the order, but also commands the top position of this power-list.

Machiavelli was the first to write about realpolitik, and centuries later, it's still an eye-opener for generations of (previously) naive folks.

Also read:

- **The Dictator's Handbook**: for maintaining power as a despot, based on data and good analysis

Power Nugget: if you want to be good, learn how to be bad first

For many politicians and leaders, power is something to hold on to at any cost with a web of lies, manipulation, and if necessary, fear.

> Quote: A good person is ruined among the great numbers who are not good

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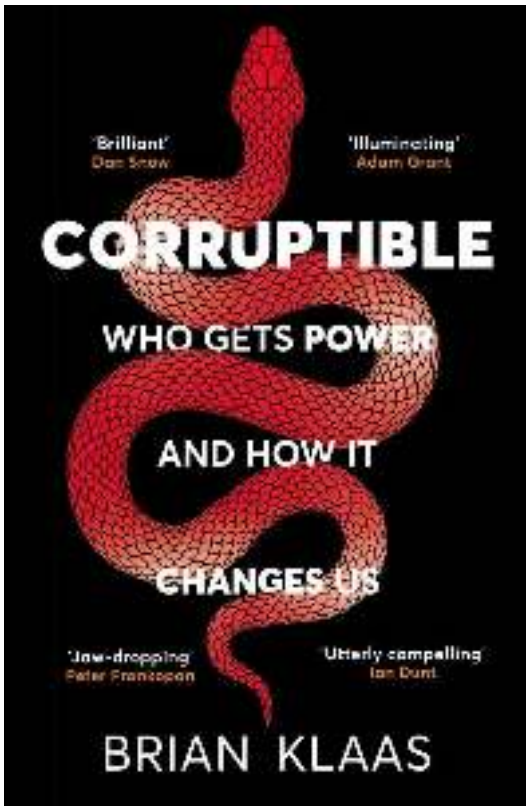
13. Corruptible



by Brian Klaas
Summary | Amazon

Is it true that power corrupts?

And that "absolutely power corrupts absolutely"?

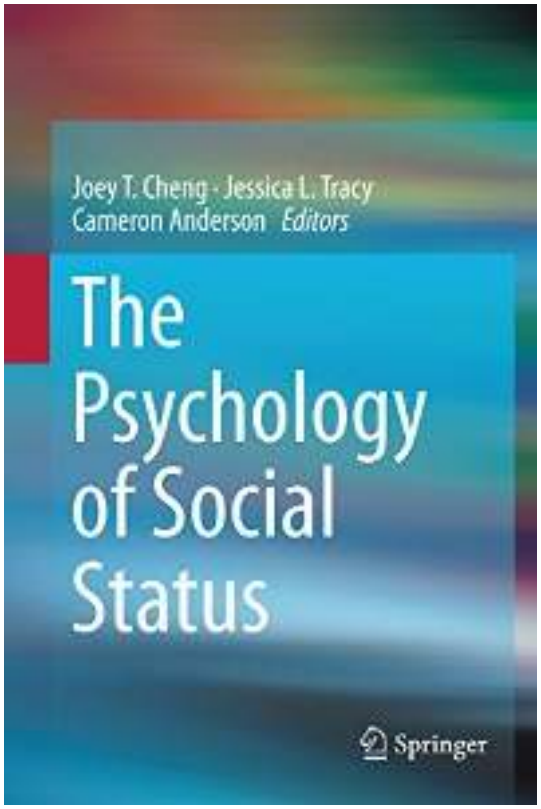
In part, yes.

But it's also that:

1. **Power-hungry and dark triad personalities go after power**
2. **Naive and power-blind people don't recognize bad leaders**. Many are *attracted* to them and want them as leader (sheep be damned)
3. **Systems matter to select applicants**. And systems can either encourage or discourage poor applicants
4. **Systems matter to encourage or discourage poor behaviors**. So we can design better systems to serve the collective

Klaas digs deeper into each one of them in this fascinating book.
It's an important read to understand power dynamics.

12. The Psychology of Social Status



by Joey T. Cheng and Jessica L. Tracy
Summary | Amazon

Ignore the fluff, and go for scientific evidence.

That's often good advice, and the perfect intro for *The Psychology of Power*, which is an overview of the research literature on status.

> Quote: human hierarchies are the product of our species' evolved tendency to submit to those who wield force and intimidation, and to follow and learn from those who garner respect and admiration.

11. Social Dominance Theory

by Sidanius and Pratto
Summary | Amazon

Social Dominance bridges the gap between individual psychology and group-based power structures, with a particular focus on social class.

At the individual level, it introduces **Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)**—a person's degree of support for group-based hierarchies and inequality.
At the societal level, it shows how dominant groups maintain control to monopolize resources and relegating other groups to subordinate positions.

If you want to better understand social power dynamics, including ethnic and gender-based competition, this is one of the best starting points.

Power Nugget: Men coalesce with other men to keep women dependent and outgroup men subordinate.

Men's sexual strategy is two-fold:

- **Intersexual competition**: keep women politically disempowered and economically dependent.
- **Intrasexual competition**: form male coalitions to monopolize access to high-value mates

These activities will result both in the oppression of women and in class stratification among men.

> Quote: Social dominance theory presumes that, beneath major and sometimes profound differences between different human societies, there is also a grammar of social power shared by all societies.

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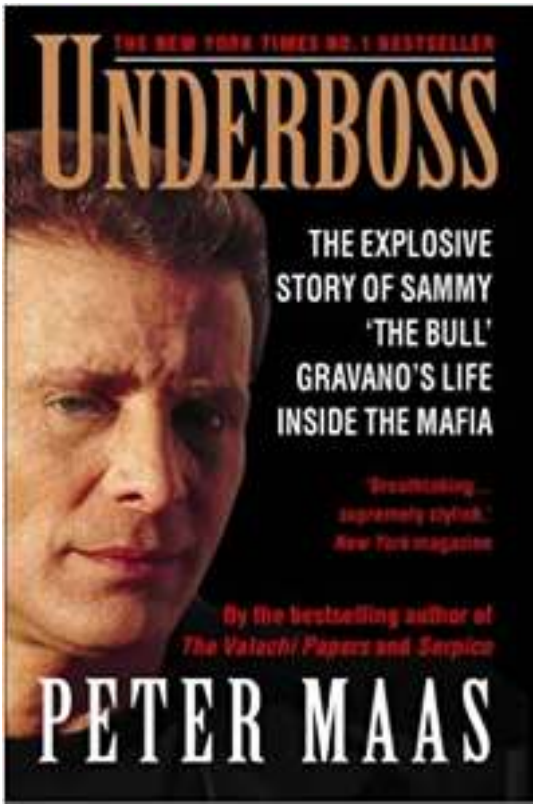
10. Underboss



By Peter Maas

Summary

Another unexpected book on this list.

Why here, why so high?

Because it's one thing it's to read about theories and strategies, and it's a very different thing to read *how* power strategies are applied in real-life, and what their results are.

And this book is all about power and strategies.

As Sammy Gravano said in his interview with Diane Sawyer:

> **We played chess. And he lost.**
>
> *Salvatore Gravano*

That "chess game" was a game for money, fame, power… And one's own life.

About the main protagonist, well… Some people say Gravano is a stone-cold killer and a psychopath.
I can't make a diagnosis, and he's not a guy to role model for.

But he's definitely a guy to learn from.
He's obviously power-driven, ruthless, and *also* smart and Machiavellian.

Now put a guy like that in an organization, the mafia, that is *all* about power and Machiavellianism, and you get a gem of a book to learn about power dynamics and strategies, -as well as fatal mistakes you better avoid-.

This is all rather extreme, of course.
Most people reading this aren't going to be joining the mafia. But what works and doesn't work in extreme environments is often the same as what works and doesn't work in more everyday situations, just more obvious, and with graver consequences.
Thus, extreme environments can provide great learning opportunities.

To learn from “Underboss,” you sometimes need to read between the lines to understand the dynamics, strategies, and mistakes. So it’s more for advanced folks. But the review on this website can help you in that direction.

Similar biographies of powerful men and organized groups include:

- **The Power Broker**, the history of Robert Moses, as power-hungry a man as it gets, successful and effective. The book itself is long, so stick to our review
- **Five Families**
- **Mafia Prince**

> Quote: “I’ll talk to Zuvito”, said my father.
> “Zuvito?” I think. “Old man Zuvito? What good’s he? He’s a frail little old guy.
> I’m a kid, I’m with a gang, my thing is to fight with fists. I don’t know Cosa Nostra. But that really opened my appetite to know more about Zuvito, what made him so feared. Boy, I thought, wasn’t it something to be that physically unimposing and still have that kind of power?

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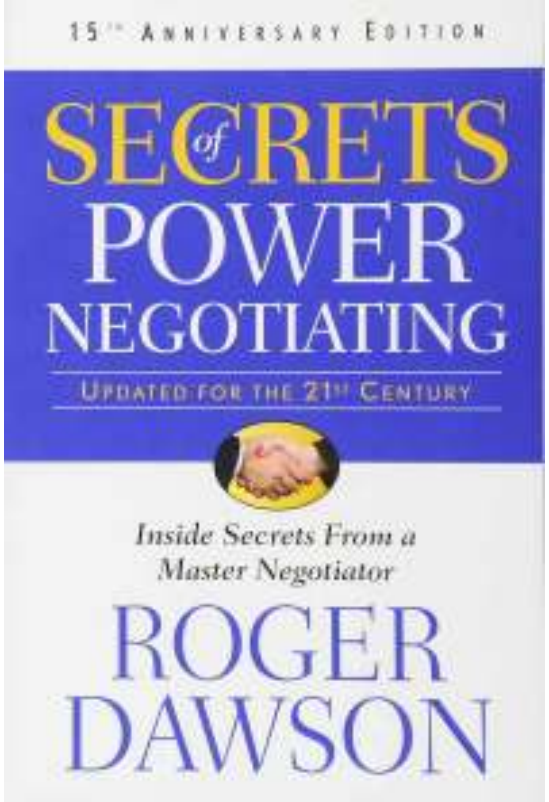
9. Secrets of Power Negotiating



[image]by R. Dawson
Summary | Kindle

The power dynamics at the negotiation table can make you rich.

Or poor.

And that’s why you better learn the power moves of the best negotiators.
Lest you are going to pay them to teach you in real time: with the money you leave on the table during the negotiation.

This is by far the best book on power negotiation techniques.
Also read:

- **20 Manipulative Negotiation Techniques**

Power Nugget: beware of any negotiator who appeals to ethics. He's most likely trying to manipulate you

Don't negotiate anything worthwhile before learning the tricks of the trade (and the power dynamics of negotiations).

> Quote: *"If we can do that for you, what can you do for us"*

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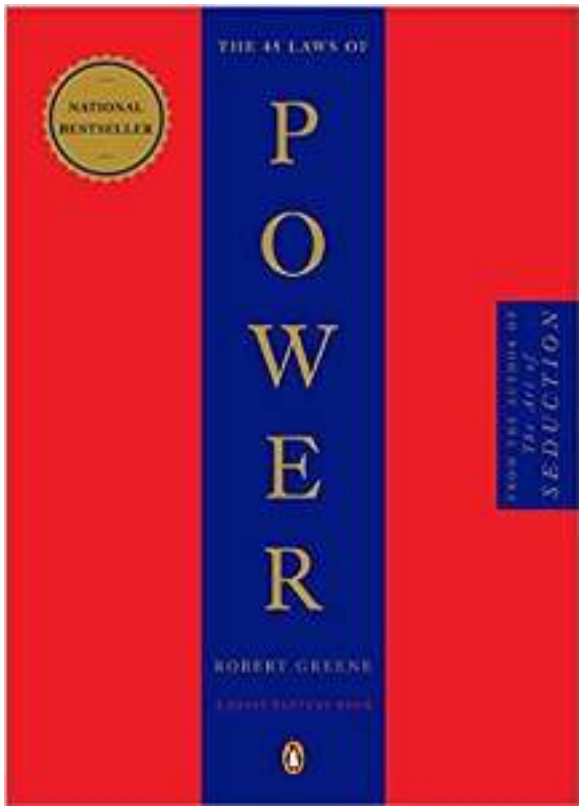
8. 48 Laws of Power



by R. Greene
Summary | Amazon

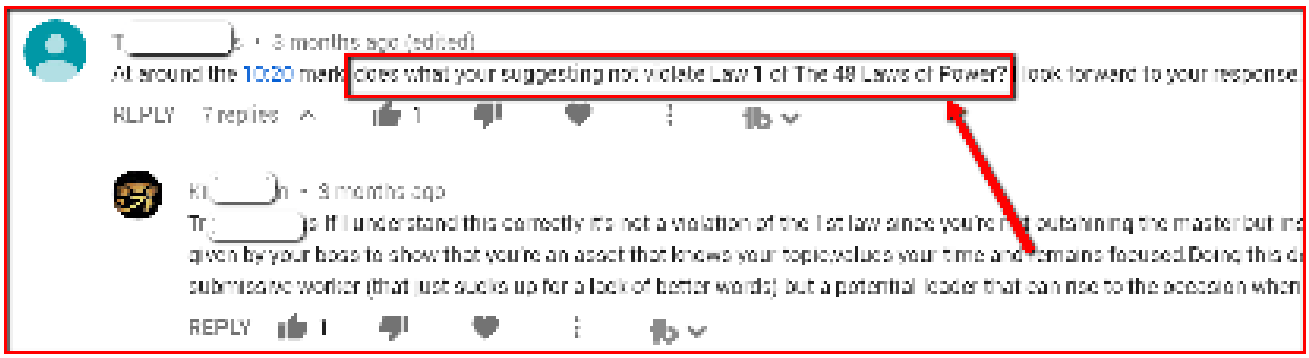
Here's a book that doesn't need any intro.

This list of power principles requires some power-awareness.

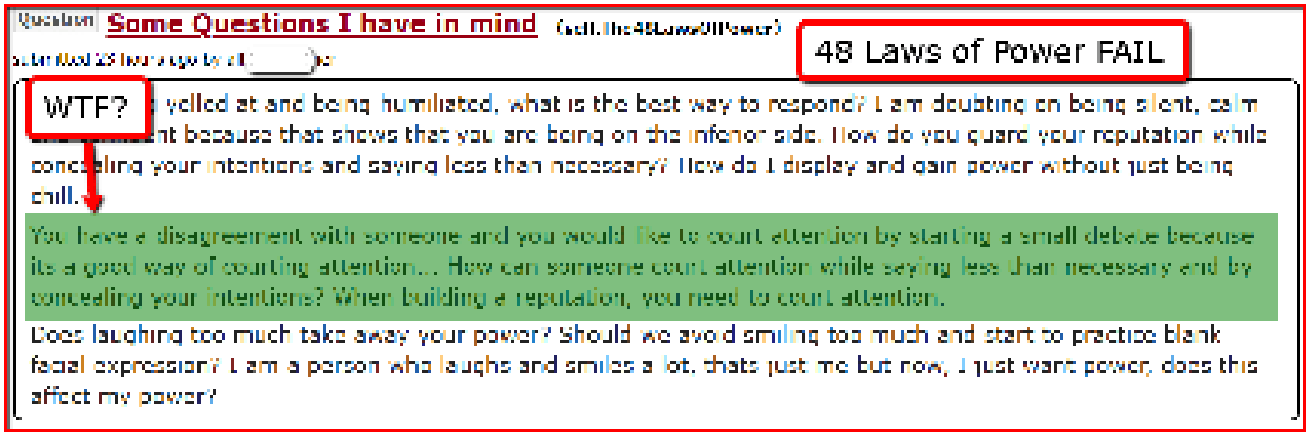
Readers must be able to contextualize the laws within a deeper understanding of social dynamics and power dynamics.

Without a foundational understanding of social and power dynamics *The 48 Laws of Power* may even turn confusing and counterproductive.
I've seen that often with early coaching and forum users.

Here is an example of a question that I got asked more than once:



Some readers believe the “laws” are cast in stone, without context or exceptions
And here is an example of someone without basic social skills who’s probably behaving like an awkward weirdo (mis)applying the “laws” out of context:



One of the many nonsense questions asked on the subreddit “The 48 Laws of Power”
That being said, for those who have sufficiently developed social and emotional intelligence, “*The 48 Laws of Power*” is great.

Power Nugget: Appeal to self-interest

> Self-interest is the currency that makes the world go around

Appeal to self-interest is one of the most significant -and easily forgotten- laws (see freeloaders-approaches).

> Quote: Powerful people impress and intimidate by saying less.

7. The Art of Worldly Wisdom

By Baltasar Gracian
Summary

300 maxims to maximize status, perceptions, and reputation.

One spot before *The 48 Laws of Power* because Greene took heavy inspiration from this classic on power and social strategies.

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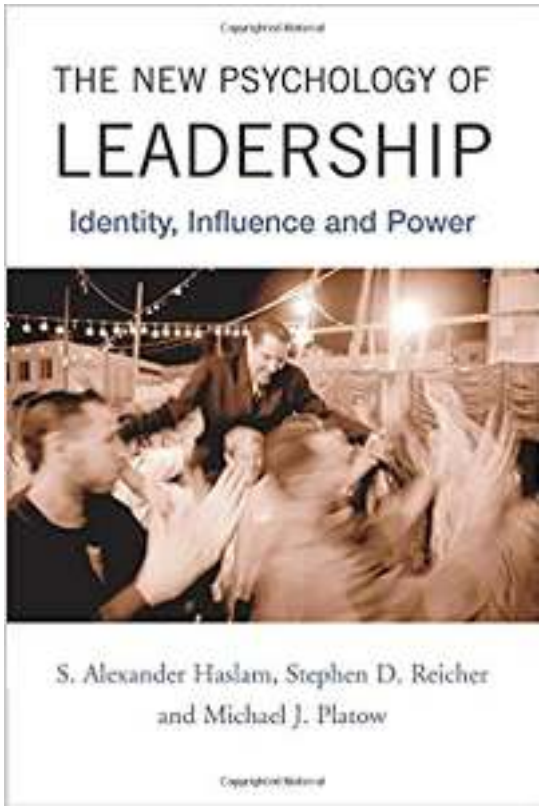
6. The Psychology of Leadership



By A. Haslam
Summary | Amazon

Leadership is power.

And true power requires leadership and influence over others.

And "The Psychology of Leadership" is the *best book on leadership*, bar none.
All other leadership books look like children's books in comparison.

However, similar to "*I'm OK – You're OK*", this is a heavy read.
So to apply this information, see:

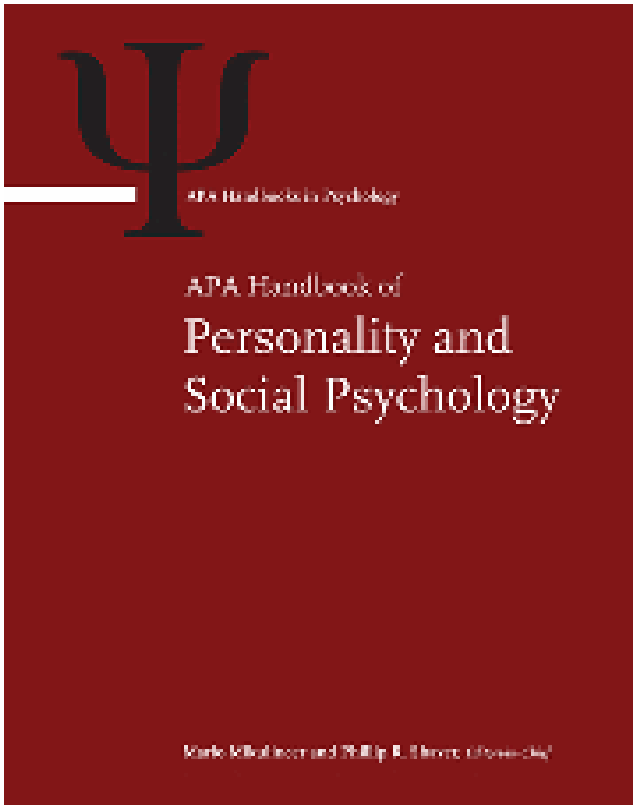
- **How to be a leader**: distilling the best lessons for practical use cases

Power Nugget: Great Leaders Know Psychology -& Manipulation-

Persuasive leaders are not different or special like most people think.
But they are more power-aware and power-skilled than most.

> Quote: Just as politics is too important to leave only to politicians, so too leadership is far too important a matter to be left only to leaders.

5. The APA Handbook Vol. 3



By Various Authors
Summary | Amazon

Crazy, I know, but:

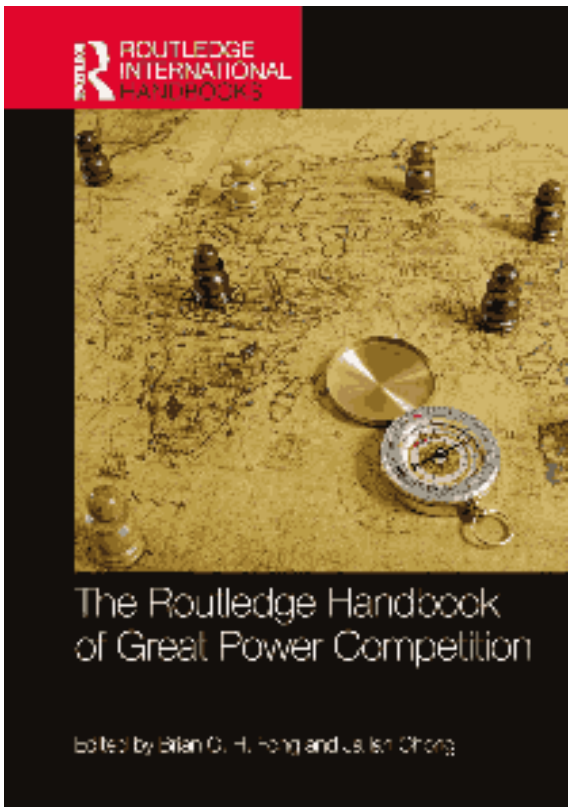
There are no handbooks yet specifically on power.

The *APA Handbook and Social Psychology Vol 3 – Interpersonal Relationships* is the closest it gets.

Albeit technically about relationships, there are two whole chapters on power.
And they contain more research-based wisdom than any other book on this list :).

Quote: Handbooks don't sell for two main reasons: they don't pander to the fat middle of the IQ bell curve with watered-down pop psychology—and they don't hand out catchy quotes..

4. The Handbook of Great Power Competition



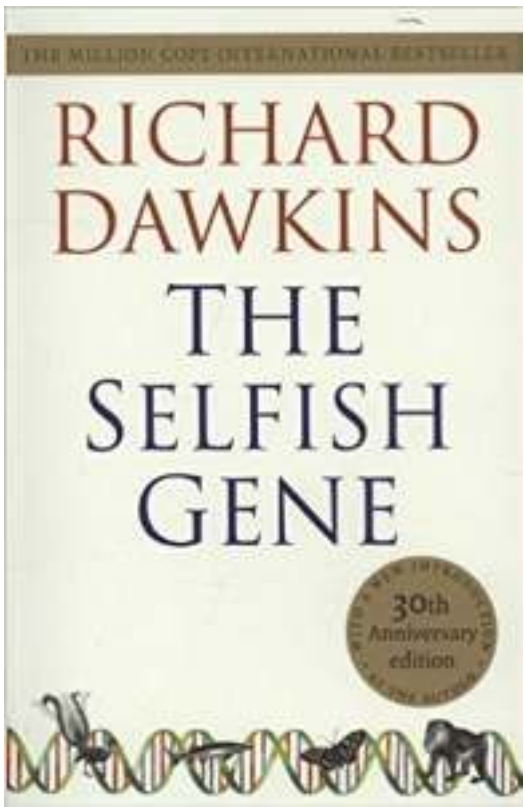
by Brian C. H. Fong and Ja Ian Chong
Summary | Amazon

Power is the core currency of international relations—and *The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition* offers both a scholarly overview and a timely, accessible account of today's geopolitical rivalries.

Drawing from leading experts in the field, it helps readers understand how the logic of power operates at an inter-state level.

> Quote: Power inequalities are always already stacking the game. That is also why liberals are naive in expecting rational interests to prevail, unless they are the interests of the powerful

3. The Selfish Gene



by R. Dawkins
Summary | Amazon

Unexpected entry, right?

Power permeates all facets of life, both on the outside and *within* us.
And runs much deeper than our conscious mind, too.

"*The Selfish Gene*", here as a representative of evolutionary psychology, explains how our genes can have us on a rail system.

But here is the potential issue with it: it's *their* rails.
Your genes have shaped our drives and urges not *for us,* but *for themselves*.

And until we learn what that programming is, the selfish genes have ultimate power over us.

Power Nugget: Your Genes Are Your #1 Master

You may or may not agree with the programming.

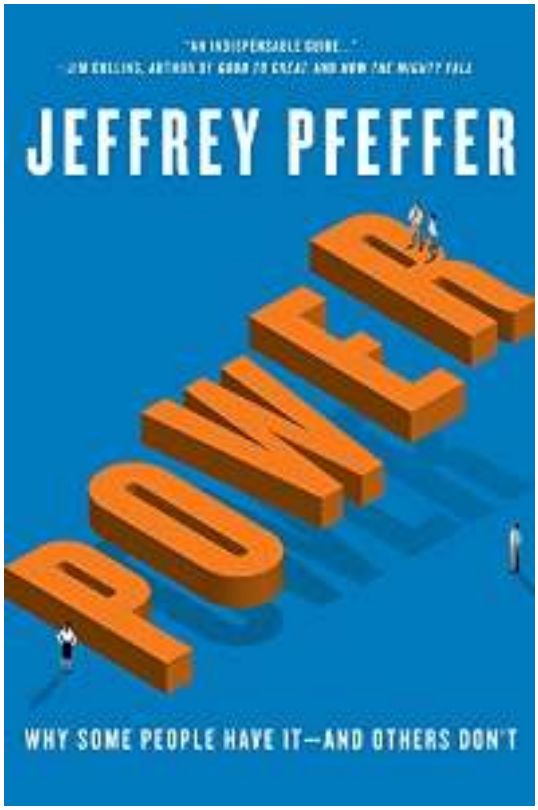
But you're following it anyway.

And guess what, it wasn't designed to make you happy or fulfilled. Heck, it wasn't even designed with your best interest in mind.

The only way to upset that program and gain a foothold of power over yourself (and the world around you) is to understand *what* that program is all about.

> Quote: Let us understand what our own selfish genes are up to, because we may then at least have the chance to upset their designs, something that no other species has ever aspired to do.

2. Power



by Jeffrey Pfeffer
Summary | Amazon

Power is a fantastic overview of power and power dynamics.

Pfeffer mostly deals with power in business and organizations and the strategies tailored to career advancement. But because there are so few great resources on power, and because Pfeffer did such a good job, Power also happens to be one of the best books on power, period.

Power Nugget: You Can't Stay Out Of It. Play The Game, Or Lose By Default

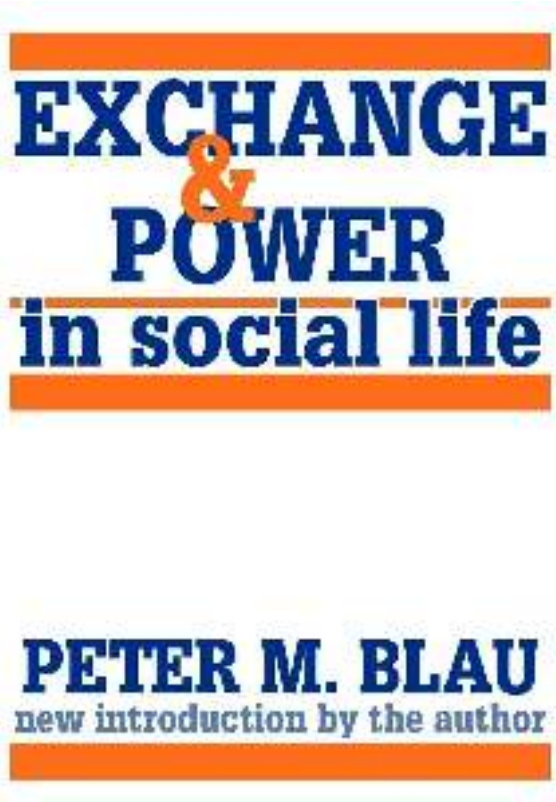
Power dynamics and politics are everywhere because they're inherent in any social animal.

People interacting with each other naturally form hierarchies, and since the people who want to climb those hierarchies outnumber the positions on top, we're bound to compete.

Albeit you may decide not to compete, **you cannot call yourself out of politics, competition, and power dynamics without paying a price**.
The price of lingering to the bottom—or of losing your position to a more aggressive or smarter competitor, comes out of ignorance.

> Quote: seek power as if your life depends on it. Because it does

1. Exchange and Power In Social Life



by P. Blau

Summary

Most books on power focus on surface tactics. *Social Exchange and Power* goes one level deeper.

Blau's central insight is that power emerges whenever one person controls resources, opportunities, or benefits that others value. In that sense, power is not primarily about force, charisma, or manipulation. Power is a byproduct of value, value-giving, and dependence on that value.

This simple principle became one of the foundational ideas behind modern social exchange theory and influenced decades of research on power, influence, reciprocity, cooperation, and social relationships.

For students of power dynamics, the book provides a scientific framework for understanding why some people gain leverage over others, how dependence creates power asymmetries, and why relationships are intrinsically based on exchanges of value.

Power Nugget: Power Flows From Dependence

The more people need something from you that they cannot easily obtain elsewhere, the more power you have.

Likewise, the more dependent you become on others, the more power you hand over to them.

Understanding dependence is one of the keys to understanding power itself.

> Quote: An apparent "altruism" pervades social life (…) But beneath this seeming selflessness an underlying "egoism" can be discovered; the tendency to help others is frequently motivated by the expectation that doing so will bring social rewards.

Beyond Books: Acquiring Power

by Lucio Buffalmano
Course Intro

Power University is the foundational execution system of this platform.

It integrates the latest available scientific research with The Power Moves' frameworks in applied social power dynamics.
The course synthesizes high-authority behavioral research and decades of scholarship on power, status, influence, leadership, and human behavior, translating complex social dynamics into practical strategies and real-world applications.

Power University combines the science with our own models and frameworks and integrates them into a unified system for understanding, applying social power, and reaping the *rewards*.

For men looking for a comprehensive roadmap to understanding, navigating, and mastering social power, it remains our most complete resource.

> Quote: Does power corrupt? Yes, it's really nasty on those who don't have it

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Article's Change Log

Moved:

- (03.07.2026) Moved *Social Exchange* above *Power* because most everyday power is based on social exchanges, favoring Blau. Power aligns with TPM in its theoretical foundation, but it's more tailored to workplaces, and balance and calibration are required to get the most out of it

Removed:

- *Seduction University* (02.06.2026) for being more focused on delivering dating results, rather than explaining the theoretical dating power dynamics
- *No Logo* (02.06.2026) remains an underrated gem on the power of marketing and brands over the masses, but it's too specific on a single aspect of power
- *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* (02.06.2026) because psychopathy is too tangential to power
- "*Don't Think of An Elephant*" (12.03.2025), too tangential to power
- *"In Sheep's Clothing*" to make space for "Power" by Jeffrey Pfeffer

- *Influence* by Cialdini. Influence is a form of power and Influence was a trailblazer at his time, but there are now better resources for influence and persuasion
- *I'm OK, You're OK*, that helped us develop the concept of emotional power dynamics. But too theoretical
- *Workplace Power* by Lucio Buffalmano as it got integrated in Power University. This list still needs a top resource on workplace power dynamics. For the time being, you can check *Workplace Poker*, career strategies, *The Gervais Principle*, and our articles Business manipulation and Conflicts of interest at work
- The Art of Seduction (06.07.2025), since Seduction University provides a broader coverage of similar topics, including 'dark psychology tactics', while also being more practical
- *How to Lie With Statistics* (06.07.2025), a great book, but slightly too niche at the edges of communication and manipulation

Added:

- *Exchange and Power In Social Life* (02.06.2026)
- *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* (12.03.2025)
- *Social Dominance Theory* (30.05.2025)
- *The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition* (06.07.2025)

Note on notable books missing:

We left out titles such as "*How to Win Friends*" -basic social skills, not power-, "*Propaganda*" -great, but there are more scientifically sound resources today, and common entries such as "*Meditations*", and "*Mindset*". Not because mental empowerment doesn't matter, but because we went for a stricter definition of "power" here.

Without Conscience: Summary & Review (Robert Hare)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Without Conscience (1993) takes the readers into the minds of some of the most dangerous individuals on earth: criminal psychopaths.
What makes them so dangerous, explains Robert Hare, is their complete lack of conscience, emotions, and inhibitors.

Contents

- Summary
  - #1. All Psychopaths Take More Than They Give
  - #2. Psychopaths Need Power And Control
  - #3. Examples of Infamous Criminal Psychopaths
  - #4. Psychopaths Con & Manipulate: Examples
  - #5. Antisocial-Personality Disorder VS Psychopaths
  - #6. Criminal Behavior Decreases After 40 YO… But It Might Be a False Indicator
  - #7. White-Collar Psychopaths Get Off Easily
  - #8. Nurturing Women Are Victims of Psychopath Manipulation
  - #9. The "Fascinating Pull" of Criminals: Fawners' (Faulty) Psychology
  - #10. Traits of A Psychopath
- Bullet Wisdom
- Quotes
- Criticism
  - Outdated view of syndromal psychopathy
  - Potentially outdated view of psychopathy as inextricably linked to criminality
  - Some personal conjectures
  - ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: was he a psychopath, or was it relationship power dynamics?
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Robert D. Hare is a researcher in the field of criminal psychology and is one of the most popular researchers on psychopathy.
He drafted the "Hare Psychopathy Checklist", and he is also the author of "*Snakes in Suit*" and the PCL-R chapter of *The Psychopathy Handbook* edited by Christopher J. Patrick.

#1. All Psychopaths Take More Than They Give

Not all psychopaths are in prison.

And many of them can manage not to ever have any troubles with the law -or at least, manage never to get caught-.

However, as Robert Hare says "all take far more than they give".

My Note:
I wouldn't know if *all* of them take far more than they give, but the more antisocial ones that Hare encountered in

prison likely do.

#2. Psychopaths Need Power And Control

Psychopaths have a strong need for psychological and physical control over others.

They must be in charge and will use any means to achieve it, from manipulation to charm to violence to intimidation.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't stand up for your rights, but you should do so, keeping in mind who you are dealing with.
Winning is their goal, and they are ready to do what you're not ready to do.

Power Moves Against Psychopaths

Here is a Machiavellian strategy to win against a psychopath:

Knowing that all the psychopath wanted was to win, the smart lawyer of the mother proposed to him joint custody of the children.
Once he got it, he didn't even want to see the children: all he wanted was to win.

That's an example of a risky, but smart power move that takes the opponent's psychology into account.

Also read:

- Machiavellian life strategies
- Power dynamics

#3. Examples of Infamous Criminal Psychopaths

Robert Hare opens "*Without Conscience*" with a quick overview of some of the most infamous psychopaths.

Including:

- Gary Tison: who manipulated the criminal justice system, escaped, and went on a murder spree
- Kenneth Bianchi: raped, tortured, and murdered a dozen women and fooled some experts into believing he had multiple personalities and the crimes were committed by one of his "bad" personalities
- Diane Downs: shot her own children because the man she liked didn't want them, drove them to the hospital, and calmly made up a carjacking lie

Those are only the violent tip of the iceberg, though.
As Robert Hare says:

> We are far more likely to lose our life savings to a swindler than our lives to a steely eyed killer

#4. Psychopaths Con & Manipulate: Examples

One psychopath pulled a knife on Hare. Then he said he didn't want to use it against him, but against an inmate who had made a move on his protege.

Why did he do it?

Because Hare was new and if he told the guards about the weapon, he would look like a snitch and lose his chances of working with the inmates.
But by not saying anything, he violated the law of "always report armed prisoners".

When Hare didn't report him, the psychopath had him and took full advantage of it.

When Hare finally refused his working request on his own father's business, he flew into a rage.
And later, while working to repair his car, he cut the brakes.

Hare found out, reported the incident, and the psychopath was confined to "the hole".
When he came out, he acted completely normal around Hare as if nothing had happened.

Another good book for prison games psychopaths play is:

- The Psychopath Whisperer

#5. Antisocial-Personality Disorder VS Psychopaths

ASPD refers to a cluster of antisocial and criminal behaviors.

The majority of criminals meet the diagnosis of SPD, but they are not all psychopaths.

Psychopathy is defined both by a cluster of personality traits and socially deviant behavior.
The difference, he says, has also been blurred because of the media's mischaracterization, including that of journalist Daniel Goleman.

#6. Criminal Behavior Decreases After 40 YO... But It Might Be a False Indicator

Psychopaths commit fewer crimes after forty.

But first of all, not all of them improve: some of them keep committing criminal acts until the day they die.

And second, it's not because they "improve" their traits or cure themselves, but because their personality stays the same.

Hare says it's because they might simply get better at evading the law and/or learn to get what they want through manipulation and cons, which are less likely to land them in jail.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

#7. White-Collar Psychopaths Get Off Easily

Robert Hare says that white-collar psychopaths might escape prison.
And when they get caught, they usually get much lighter punishment and even preferential treatment.

It's obvious Hare does not agree with that, as he says that they are equally as harmful to society.

Also read:

- **Psychopathy in business**
- **Corporate manipulations**

#8. Nurturing Women Are Victims of Psychopath Manipulation

Hare says the typical victims of psychopathic seductions are nurturing women.

They are the ones most likely to think "poor him, he had a terrible childhood".
They are often in the helping professions and tend to look at the good of others while minimizing their faults.

Of a psychopath, a woman said "I always had the urge to cuddle him" and "he needs mothering" (this is "parent seduction", read the full list of seduction techniques here).

Also read:

- **7 types of abusive men**
- **The Art of Seduction**
- **Women Who Love Psychopaths**

Some women married to a psychopath and who believe in traditional roles might as well keep suffering to "save the marriage", sometimes "doing it for the sake of the children" and in the meanwhile "hoping against hope it will improve".
Some women even end up blaming themselves (read: how low self-esteem is a vulnerability for abusive relationships), or tell themselves that if they try harder "he will finally realize what a wonderful gift he has".

#9. The "Fascinating Pull" of Criminals: Fawners' (Faulty) Psychology

Hare says that the criminals who attract the largest group are psychopathic serial killers whose crimes are sex-related.

The author says that the admirers are victims of their own psychological hang-ups, including:

- Unrequited love
- Vicarious dangerous experience
- Notoriety, excitement
- A cause worth fighting for (abolition of the death penalty, a soul to be saved, or a mistaken belief that the crimes were a result of abuse)

And, as well for some, the psychopath's behavior is an expression of manhood which the psychopath is happy to distort.

The girlfriend of a psychopath referred to him as "deeply sensitive, a mover and shaker, a man not afraid of anything".

"Deeply sensitive", LOL.

Career Women Are Psychopaths' Targets

With the world changing, career women have become psychopaths' targets for their resources.

Especially single women who are struggling in the dating market make for great targets.

Some psychopaths seek women in places where single career women would go, like single bars, cocktail after-hours or dancing lessons.

Also read:

- **Dating for career women**

#10. Traits of A Psychopath

"*Without Conscience*" has tons of examples for each one of these bullet points.

Here are some I took note of:

Egocentric and grandiose

They see themselves at the center of the universe and are justified in acting as they please.

One typical example is psychopaths who want to defend themselves even though they have no idea of the law.

If they get lucky, their grandiosity can pay off spectacularly (and maybe a little later fail spectacularly, see "*Bad*

Blood“).

Glib and superficial charm

They are often likable and charming, witty and articulate.
But they can come across as fake and insincere as if they are acting.

If you want to see an example, check :

- **“is Amanda Knox a psychopath?“**

They attempt to appear knowledgeable in specific fields, but it’s rarely deep knowledge and more the throwing around of keywords that make them *sound* like an expert.

Lack of remorse or guilt

Psychopaths don’t feel bad for their victims.
And the way they justify or minimize the pain of their victims would be comical if it weren’t tragic.

Some of them even say their victims enjoyed, or they did them a favor (ie: rape victims who enjoyed the rape or burglary victims who will be able to claim insurance).

Lack of empathy

They are totally indifferent to the people around them, which includes their relatives and partners.

One female psychopath allowed his partner to molest her five-year-old daughter because she wasn’t willing to have sex.

My Note: Might be too black and white here
Hare might be too black and white here. Some psychopaths have “theories on mind” or “cognitive empathy” with which they can predict what others are feeling (Fallon, 2017).

Deceitful and manipulative

Psychopaths lie.
A lot.

They see the world as made by predators and prey and it would be silly not to exploit others.

Shallow emotions

Some of them will deny having only shallow emotions (like Ted Bundy), but their behavior shows it.

Impulsivity & poor behavior controls

They live day to day, with little or no plans.

They have little or no inhibitory controls, which makes them highly reactive to the slightest provocation.

Psychopaths are the incarnation of a “short fuse”, but they refuse to acknowledge the problem and often see their reactions as well proportionate.

Need for excitement

Some psychopaths do crime for the adrenaline rush that comes with it.

Even non-criminal psychopaths cannot stand repetitive tasks and stick with things (which is why Marta Stout says they are rarely at the top of corporations, which requires sticking with the same tasks and company).

Lack of responsibility

They don't care about their own children, don't pay alimony, and don't care about putting others at risk.
Some of them consider their children an inconvenience.

Of course, many of them will tell you they do care.

A lack of responsibility is also what makes psychopaths unsuited even for high-danger occupations such as firefighters and soldiers, where they fail to stick to procedures.

Early behavioral problems

Setting fires, running away, school problems, theft, vandalism, promiscuity, cruelty to other children, and cruelty to animals.
They tell the stories of their animal cruelties either emotionless or with pleasure.

One psychopath shot a "mutt" in the anus with a pellet gun and then watched it shriek and crawl on the floor until it died.

Social deviance and adult antisocial behavior

And not part of the checklist:

Lack of allegiance

They have no loyalty except for "look up to N.1" (ie.: themselves).

Even though they're not afraid of the dangers and sometimes *seek* danger, they still don't make good soldiers.

When, in the rare case, they make the selection into high-risk fighting units, they are seen as "cowboys" and "loose cannons" and usually don't last long (also see: it's not true that good and evil are twigs of the same branch).

They also don't care about flags, countries, or who they are fighting for.

Living in the moment

Hare says that at the risk of angering some new age practitioner (a jab at "The Power of Now"), psychopaths' behavior makes sense only if you live in the now.

Psychopaths are incapable of thinking long-term.

Contradictory statements

Psychopaths have difficulties monitoring their own speech.

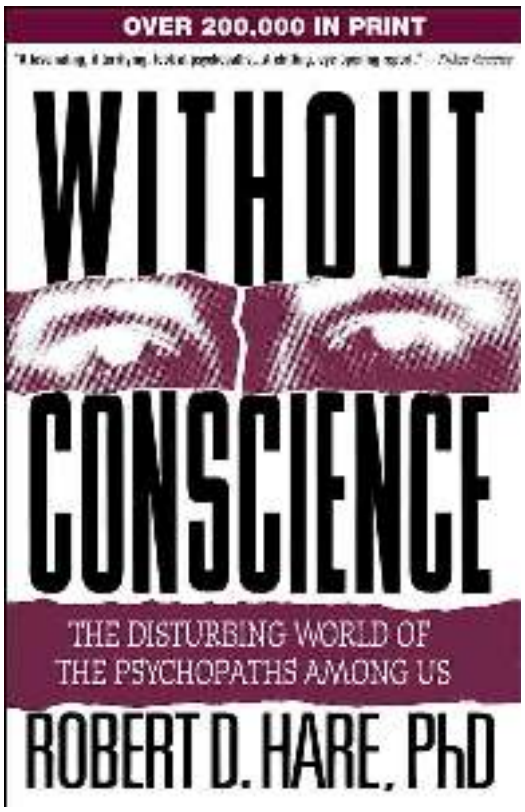
Within the same sentence, a psychopath might tell you he's not a criminal and then tell you about his burglaries or murders.

Incoherent flow of concepts

They can jump from one topic to another, without any apparent connection between the two.

Don't answer questions, or answer unrelated to the question

A behavior also seen in our analysis of gaslighting dynamics.



Bullet Wisdom

- Psychopaths constitute a significant proportion of persistent batterers (25% measured in a program of batterers, which they attend just to appease the courts)
- Predictions of criminal behavior can be vastly improved if we know whether a convict is a psychopath or not (psychopaths are twice more likely to commit crime again and 3 times more likely to commit violent crimes again)
- Sexual offenders who were psychopaths and got aroused at images of deviant sex were three times more likely to rape again (as measured by an electronic device strapped around the penis)
- The psychopath is like a color-blind person who has learned the position of the colors in traffic lights. He reacts to them but has no real understanding of the colors
- Psychopaths are in large part born, but parenting can have an impact on the expression of antisocial disorders towards more violent or more white-collar crimes (it's not attachment issues that raise psychopaths, but more like the other way around)
- You can sometimes recognize psychopaths by their stare. It's not the eyes of evil as some think, but the eyes of emotionless predators
- Therapy doesn't work: psychopaths don't see anything wrong with themselves and no therapy has ever been effective

Quotes

Asked about how many children he has, a psychopath replies:

> I don't really know, a few I guess, I have been accused of being a father, but I tell them "fuck you, how do I really know it's mine"

On the ridiculous grandiosity of a psychopath, clashing with his actual life and accomplishments as commented by

the interview:

> If I hadn't been so afraid of him, I would have laughed at his face for his blatant self-worship

At how some psychopathic victims are actually rather gullible and ready to take them at their words:

> He always told me how much he loved me, and I believe him. Even after I caught him fooling around with my sister.
> It took me a long time to realize he didn't care about me at all.
> Even after he beat me up, he used to use how much he loved me.

About Hare making the case psychopaths have lots of children as a reproductive strategy:

> Are promiscuous to have lots of children and reach some sort of "genetic immortality"
> He laughed and replied "I just like to fuck"
>
> ## Criticism

Outdated view of syndromal psychopathy

Hare views psychopathy as a classical syndrome, such as a cluster of co-occurring and co-varying traits.
However, that view has been challenged by more recent findings. Quoting Lilienfeld and colleagues from chapter 9 of '*The Handbook of Psychopathy*':

> Hare (1993) wrote that "psychopathy is a syndrome—a cluster of related symptoms" (…) the assertion that psychopathy is syndromal is challenged by findings that (1) the lower-order and higher-order dimensions of several well-validated self-report psychopathy measures (…) do not display (…) uniformly positive interrelations among subscales; and (2) two major factors of the and PPI and PCL-R show opposing associations with measures of internalizing psychopathology.

Potentially outdated view of psychopathy as inextricably linked to criminality

Robert Hare tends to see psychopathy as inherently linked with criminality. Hare's PCL-R also includes items referring to criminal behavior.
This view has been hotly debated in psychopathy research, and **many today believe that criminality is not a core trait of psychopathy**, but 'only' a possible consequence of psychopathy.

Some personal conjectures

Hare implies there are plenty of psychopaths at the top of corporations and psychopaths are responsible for many economic disasters (he mentions the savings and loan defaults).

But there is not much to back that up or to give us an idea of the phenomenon.

Update: I gathered much of the available data myself to compile this article on psychopathy and business organization

> The Emotional Intelligence Myth: Why Power and Machiavellianism Beat Empathy at the Top

Unfounded predictions?

Hare suggests that our society is getting worse, criminality is increasing, drug use is increasing and the "acceptance of psychopathic traits is increasing".

I didn't agree with that.

He also says that the generation that grew up in the '60s and '70s, with "higher levels of impairment in juvenile dysfunction" should worry us about their ability to bring up the next generation.

That made me think Robert Hare is a major conservative and I don't agree with his future projection.

Do psychopaths pursue a strategy of many offspring with little investment?

The author says that psychopaths are adopting a specific reproductive strategy: having as many children as possible without caring for them (as opposed to fewer children and caring for them).
This would be akin to an extreme 'lover strategy'.

But I doubt most of them do it consciously.
Hare's own example, Diane Downs, seems to prove the opposite. And a psychopath replied to Hare that he 'just enjoys to f***' (see the last quote in the "quotes" section, with Hare inquiring about his own hypothesis).

Update: I have run into a psychopath who adopts this strategy consciously, and I drafted an article. See "psychopaths' sexual strategy".

??♂ Lucio's note: was he a psychopath, or was it relationship power dynamics?

Hare describes this scene:

> One night she asked him *lightly* if he felt like stepping out the corner and bring her an ice cream.
> He didn't reply.
> When she looked up, he glared at her and said "always got everything you wanted, didn't you", he said in a strange, snide way

He then accused her of being pampered and having people do stuff for her. And she said, "what are you talking about, I'm not like that".

The power dynamics suggest she was making a big request to him. And what he replies might have actually made sense.

But the voices in the audiobook make him sound like a wolf and her like an innocent sheep.
In my opinion, that might easily be a distortion of the facts.

Also read: **how women control men**.

Review

Without Conscience is one of the most popular psychopathy books, and a helpful text for understanding psychopathy.

Robert Hare accumulated much experience over the years, and he shares many examples of how psychopaths think and behave. However, Hare's examples are almost all skewed towards *criminal* psychopathy. This is an important possible source of bias to keep in mind.

Also read:

- **Best books on the dark triad**
- **Dark psychology techniques**

The Power Dynamics of Being Jacked (+ 3 Tips to Get Jacked Fast)

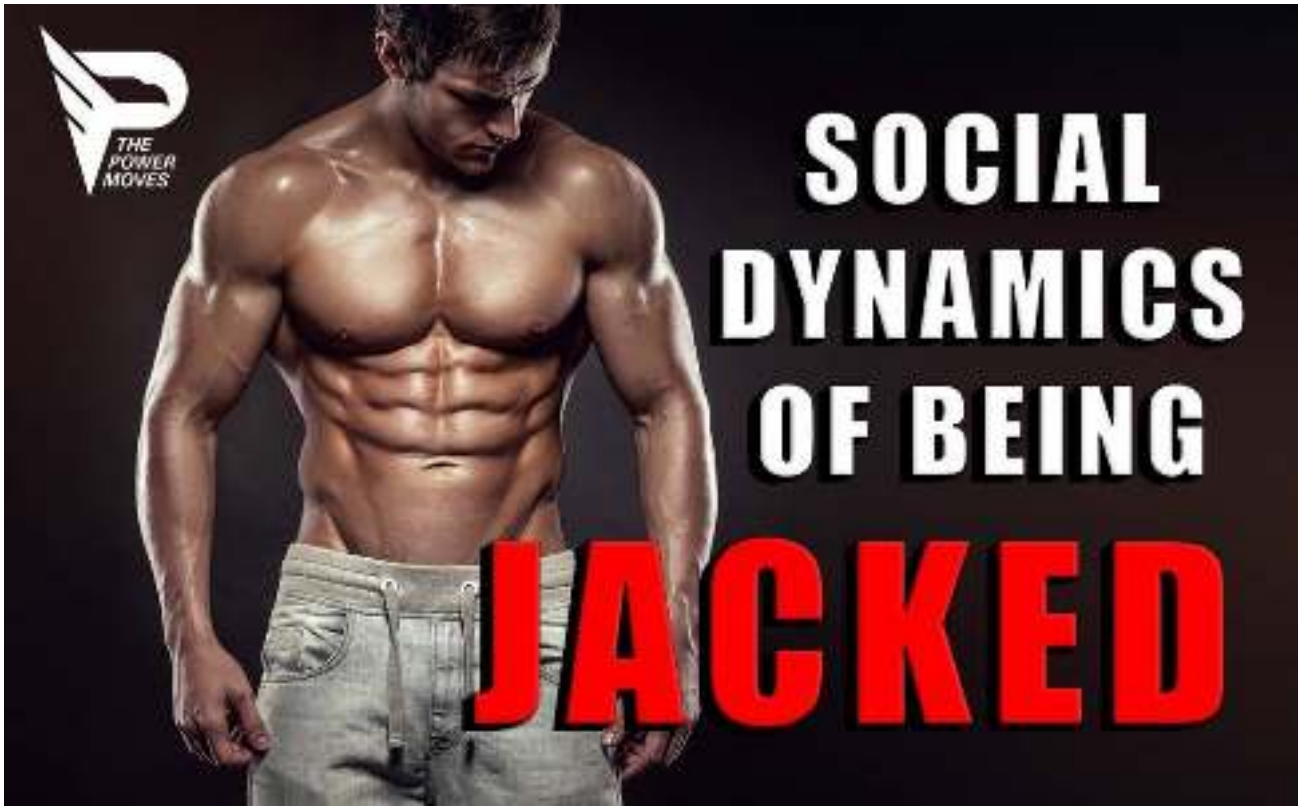
Lucio Buffalmano · 19 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Foreword:

When it comes to the power dynamics of being jacked, muscular, and "big", I cannot speak from first-hand experience.
I exercise daily and take some martial arts classes, but, on top of being small and naturally thin, "bulking up" has not been one of my goals (*yet*, you never know in the future).

But I *do* know there is power in being "big", and muscles can have a major impact on social power dynamics (as well as dating power dynamics).

And that's why to comply with our 3-pillars of knowledge approach and editorial guidelines, I'll pass the baton. The author is a passionate fitness model, and he experienced first hand what it means to go from thin, to jacked.



We've all seen it… some hulking fitness model walks into the club, and all of a sudden, it's "all eyes on him." The girls want him, the guys want to be him, and everyone wants to talk to him.

… But why is this?
What causes this primal, animalistic shift in human beings, when they see another human being who's bigger than they are? Well, to understand, let's take a look at evolutionary biology, and how it still impacts us to this very day.

Contents

- The Bigger Caveman
- Being Jacked: The Power Dynamics
- The Social Benefits of Being Jacked
- A Fitness Model's Perspective
- The Difference I Noticed
- 3 Tips to Get Jacked Faster

- Summary: Being Jacked Gets You Instant Social Status

The Bigger Caveman

In every single social species across the world, there are alpha males and beta males. We all know this, but let's do a quick recap.

Social animals require a social hierarchy – otherwise, they wouldn't know which direction to follow. In every social species, from wolves to walruses, there's an alpha male.

In the more animalistic species, size and strength are all that matter. Take elephant seals, for example. This species is known for its size and strength, with a typical elephant seal alpha male weighing up to four tons (yes, that's almost 8,000 pounds).

For these animals, strength reigns supreme. Whichever male in the group is the biggest sleeps with, quite literally, 85% of the females.

Compare this with a more advanced social animal, however, such as the chimpanzee. With chimpanzees, strength and size still matter, but what's more important is social status.

Thanks to Jane Goodall, we now have a very deep understanding of how their social dynamics operate… and there's one study in particular that illustrates this perfectly.

Upon observing a certain chimpanzee troupe, Jane noticed that one of the chimps was bigger and stronger than the rest. He treated them all like complete garbage, however, and always put himself first, even at the cost of the other chimps.

Then, however, there was another chimpanzee. He wasn't as strong as the previous one, but he did numerous social favors for the other chimps, – picking their hair clean of bugs, helping take care of the young, and offering food to the others.

When it came down to it, most of the chimps sided with the nicer chimpanzee, because he had amassed more "social status" by helping out his fellow chimps.

Now, don't get me wrong – in the animal world, size and strength are important. But do you know what's more important? Social status – and today we're going to talk about how to get it.

Being Jacked: The Power Dynamics

Every animal on the planet has one objective: to pass their genes to the next generation and give them the best

chance of surviving (see "*The Selfish Gene*").
It's that simple.

So, with that in mind, why does being jacked have such a huge impact on your social status? It's quite simple, really. Being jacked shows you're physically superior. That's it.

The benefits of being jacked go beyond simply attracting women, too. There's a theory in evolutionary biology that states that if another animal can *help you gain access* to other opportunities that would benefit your survival, you will befriend that animal.

Unconsciously, when people see a jacked man, they internalize two things:

1. He Probably Has Access to Lots of Women
2. He Could Help Me Gain Status if He's My Friend

It sounds shallow, and while human beings aren't all manipulative and fake, each and every one of us has a certain degree of these elements inside of us.

Being friends with the jacked guy means that women will come up and talk to him, and eventually, talk to you, too (through proxy).

Being friends with the jacked guy means that he will have your back in a social conflict… and everyone wants to be the jacked guy's friend when social conflict arises.

This is why being jacked changes the power dynamics. Fundamentally, life is, at its core, the struggle for SPACE. Land, resources, and territory are deeply ingrained in our minds.

That's why alpha male body language typically takes up more room.
And what better way to do that, than to ACTUALLY have your body take up more room, by being jacked?

When most men see a jacked fitness model, they typically have one of two responses:

- Get Needy/Jealous
- Want to Befriend Him

Here's a tip, gentlemen: those guys who get needy and jealous of the fitness model?
Those are beta males, who are insecure about their status.

Those guys who want to befriend him? They're other alpha males who recognize the power of connecting with another alpha male.

Keep that in mind.

The Social Benefits of Being Jacked

Imagine How Much Attention He Gets At The Pool
You've heard the PUA concept of peacocking, right?
It's an idea that stems from the peacock, an animal that prides itself on having the most colorful, gorgeous tail of feathers (see "*The Game*" and "*The Mystery Method*").

Now, why would an animal evolve such a tail, you might ask? It certainly draws more attention from predators, so wouldn't that be a bad thing?

Funny enough, it does draw more attention from predators, and that's exactly why it's a GOOD THING. If a peacock has a giant, colorful tail of feathers, what does that signal to the females?

"This peacock is so good at surviving, that even with a giant, colorful tail, the predators still can't get him. Mating with him would give me the best genes, period."

The same concept applies to human beings, and the same concept applies to being jacked.

So, with that in mind, here's some of the social benefits of being jacked:

- More Female Attraction (Obviously)
- More Male Attention (Good and Bad)
- Passive Shit Test to Men (A Chance to Catapult Your Status)
- The Halo Effect

The biggest benefit, in my opinion, of being jacked, is the halo effect.
It's a social dynamic that basically states you get all sorts of benefits for looking attractive.

Again, why is this?
It's because being friends with an attractive person means that by proxy, you will probably be introduced to other attractive people.

It's why hot girls always hang around other hot girls.

So, with that in mind, let me tell you a quick story… and then share some insider secrets on how you can get jacked

faster, to reap the social benefits.

A Fitness Model's Perspective

This article is a little bit difficult for me to write because I'd much rather say that being jacked is all that matters… but it isn't (and that's coming from a professional fitness model).

Being jacked does change the social dynamics, however – and if you can *develop strong social skills*, AND be jacked at the same time? Being the alpha male is like shooting fish in a barrel.

The funny thing is, too, being jacked is almost like a passive shit test towards the alpha males in the room. They sense the energy shift and immediately test your frame to see how strong it is.

You know what a shit test is, right? It's when you test someone's frame and status.

The pictures above were some recent pictures I took of myself. Not to toot my own horn, but I'm pretty jacked – hell, I get jacked for a living. In fact, let me tell you a story.

A while ago I walked into a bar with my girlfriend, and the second we walked in, the energy shifted in our direction. Now, from a social perspective, why was this?

- I'm Jacked (And It Shows)
- I Have Alpha Male Body Language
- I Have A Sexy Girlfriend
- We're Both Grounded in Our Own Energy

That's pretty much it.
We didn't even have to say a word, and the energy immediately shifted towards us. A big part of this, was me being jacked.

Shortly afterward, one of the guys in the bar (who knew some game) came up and tried to steal my girlfriend. It clearly wasn't working, so he tried to shit-test me.

> Damn dude, look at that chest!

he told me, trying to butter me up or get me self-qualifying.

> Your boyfriend's so sexy damn, how much do you lift dude? Stop it, I can't compete with this!

He kept on going, in an attempt to get me self-qualifying.

Of course, it failed miserably and only made me look better. You would not believe how insecure most guys get when they see a guy who's in a way better shape than they are.

So, by now, I'm sure you're thinking to yourself: "That sounds great… but how can I get jacked? Doesn't that take a lot of time?"

Well, fortunately not… if you follow these three tips.

The Difference I Noticed

My most recent 3-month transformation

I'm sure a lot of you are reading this, and thinking:

> "That's great, Jon! But is it really worth it to put in the extra effort?"

The answer is an unequivocal yes. When I was skinny, I still got female attention, but it was nothing compared to what it is now.

Before, I used to maybe get a few girls interested in me here and there… but now, it's literally like shooting fish in a barrel.

I was at the pool the other day, and two girls lying down, tanning, literally yelled out to me: "Hey, babe," while they were playing with their hair. I went over to them, chatted for 5 minutes, got their numbers, and left.

Now, to be fair, this doesn't usually happen – usually, girls just give you strong IOIs, but a lot of the time, they'll actually open YOU when you're jacked.

Why is this? Three big reasons:

1. You're More Attractive (Obviously)
2. It's Socially Acceptable
3. The Power of Pre-Selection

The first reason is obvious. Being jacked means you're more physically attractive. No shit.

The real magic lies in the other two, however.
First off, think about it from a girl's perspective – she runs the risk of being "slut shamed" if she opens guys too readily.

But, when she sees all of her friends checking you out? Now it becomes a fun game between the girls – "who can get the jacked guy to come talk to us first?" That's pre-selection for you.

She sees that her friends are checking you out, so it's suddenly "socially acceptable" for her to approach you. It feels normal and acceptable because her friends instantly approve.

It's similar to when a group of 3-4 guys sees a REALLY hot girl, and they egg each other on to go talk to her. Think of it like that, except it's girls egging each other on, to talk to YOU!

That's how incredible it is.
I remember another time I was at the pool (I go there a lot to show off the gains), and a girl literally came up and started flirting with us.

"You're cooking hamburgers? Oh wow, those look so good…" she said. "You can have one," I told her since we had a bunch. "Oh, really? No… I don't want it for free, can I do something for you instead?" she said.

I literally felt like I was in a porno or something.
One of the beta males in the group immediately cock blocked the situation because he never gets approached, but I wasn't even mad. How can you be, when you can just get another girl in minutes?

On top of this, getting girls on Tinder is literally like shooting fish in a barrel. I get open on Tinder all the time, and girls will literally throw their numbers and Snapchats at me.

I know all of this sounds hard to believe, but believe me when I tell you this… Getting jacked has changed my life more than almost anything else, and it can change yours too, if you give it a try.

3 Tips to Get Jacked Faster

Some Recent Snapchat Flexing, With Rapport Breaking Texts

Obviously, being physically superior is a huge attraction trigger. Girls are naturally attracted to men who are physically superior, which is why they go crazy over jocks in high school, and professional athletes in the real world.

This is female hypergamy at work.

We all want to be jacked – and we all can, too. What's important is that you stay consistent, and follow the fundamentals, however.

Find a good workout routine and stick to it. Count your calories, and get more than enough protein. We all know these things. It's nothing new.

But, I'm here to share a few of the secrets I've picked up along the way, that you can use to literally 3x or even 4x the speed of your recovery, fat loss, and muscle growth.

Tip #1 – Intermittent Fasting

Studies have shown that intermittent fasting is highly beneficial to your hormone profile.

… And you know what that means, right? It means more testosterone, which means you build muscle more easily, and in way less time.

Personally, I follow the 16-8 model, which means you restrict your eating to an 8-hour window.

So, if you wake up at 8 am, only eat from 2 pm to 10 pm. This is the most common form of intermittent fasting, and in my opinion, the most effective.

Tip #2 – Utilize High-Intensity Interval Training

High-intensity interval training, or HIIT for short, is a form of exercise that's extremely intense for a short period of time.

If you think about it, this naturally mimics our evolutionary conditions. Do you think cavemen were going on a 3-hour jog every other day? Of course not!

They were lightly walking around for most of the time, and then *immediately sprung into action* when they were hunting down an animal, or running from a predator.

To do HIIT, you simply sprint for 30 seconds, and then rest for a minute and a half. You repeat this 4-5 times, or to start, just 2-3 times.

So, for example, your HIIT session might look something like this:

- 3 Minute Warm Up
- 30 Seconds of Sprinting (or Going All Out on the Elliptical)
- 90 Seconds of Light Walking (to Recover)
- Repeat This Cycle 4-5x (30 seconds sprinting, 90 seconds walking, etc.)

The beauty of HIIT is you only have to do it once or twice a week to gain the benefits… and the benefits are abundant. Similar to intermittent fasting (IF), your testosterone will skyrocket.

Tip #3 – Use The Sauna

Studies have shown that using the sauna for just 15 minutes a few times a week can yield massive benefits for your hormones, recovery time, and heart health.

Once I started using the sauna for 15 minutes post-workout, I noticed the following benefits:

- Faster Recovery
- Relaxed Muscles (No More Knots & Tight Muscles)
- Better Sleep
- Overall Health/Wellness Improvement

Just adding in a quick sauna session post-workout can do wonders for your health, and best of all, it will help you get jacked way faster than you thought possible.

Summary: Being Jacked Gets You Instant Social Status

In conclusion, human beings are social animals, but we still value strength and size when choosing our alpha males. The world is a scary place sometimes, and we feel safer when we're led by a man who's physically outstanding.

…and while being jacked won't cure all of your social issues, when you get jacked in conjunction with learning some of the power moves we talk about here, your life will 10x in every way.

Getting jacked will take some time, and in fact, it will sometimes draw negative attention in your direction. Other men will test you, and talk shit about you… because deep down, they know that their girl would rather fuck you instead.

Just stay the course, and don't let it get to you. Life is a marathon, not a sprint… and I'm convinced that if you put in the work, you will completely transform your physique in just a few short months, and completely transform your social life in the process.

10 Science-Backed Laws to Become a Powerful Leader

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Most leadership guides are feel-good fluff with no substance.

Not this one.
Backed by social psychology and our deep expertise in power dynamics, these 10 laws will transform you from a good man into a respected, powerful leader.

Read on to discover how to command groups, win loyalty, and rise to the top.

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- Bonus: Prepare Your Succession Plan

1. Apprentice Yourself: Learn Culture & Power Structures

Great and effective leaders started by being followers.

But not submissive, “hide in the corner” type of followers, of course.
They are *active* followers.

They contribute, partake in discussions, bond and connect with members, and of course, they take over responsibilities and add value to the group.

In short: **future leaders start by being great group members**.

1.2. Learn About The Group

Learn about:

- Group history
- Culture and identity
- Informal webs of power
- The most/least respected members
- Members’ personalities and histories
- Potential and aspiring future leaders (& threats)
- Current leaders:
  - What do people say about them?
  - How do current leaders act?
  - How can they use that info to position themselves?

The successful future leader embodies the group‘s norms, values, and aspirations.
He socially signals that embodiment, and positions himself as someone who can help the group and its members move forward.

Replacing VS Aligning

If the current leader falters, the aspiring leader with enough support may make a move to replace him.

But if the leader is effective, beloved, and has a strong power base, it's better to power align.

⍰ Example: Prison Study

The BBC Prison Study allowed for intensive observation while the group strived to form leadership.

The man who came to represent the prisoners started off by participating in group discussions without taking them over.
He observed, asked, and studied.

He probed the outgroup (the guards) and their power structures.
And he tested them, too.

And when it came time to decide who was going to speak for the group, it was he who led the group—not the most dominant man in the group-.

2. Be Prototypical: Embody The Group's Values & Identity

The most effective leaders embody the group.

Haslam, in "*The New Psychology of Leadership*" describes the leader's representativeness of the group as "prototypicality".

Being prototypical allows leaders to:

- Receive more support
- Drive change more easily
- Be excused more readily for mistakes (and even when behaving unfairly, Platow, 2001)
- Lead without pushback.

This last point is crucial.

The perception of power also changes with prototypicality (Fiske, 2011).
Power and influence from people outside of the group feel oppressive, while power and influence from an ingroup member is more positive.

The message for leaders is clear: trying to seem special as in "different" and "apart" from the group is a mistake.
Instead, **the most effective leaders *represent* the group as one of their best members**.

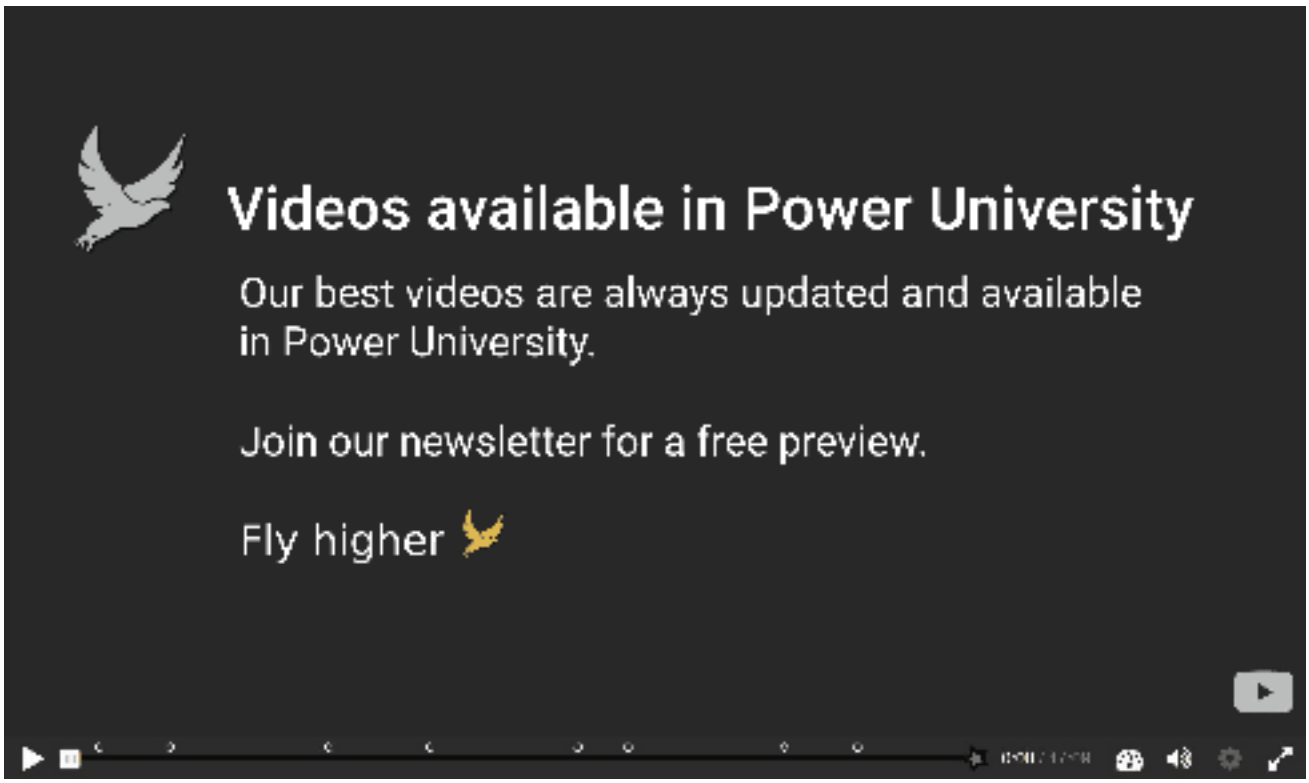
When the leader partakes of the group's culture and identity, we refer to "shared identity" (identity shared between leaders and followers).

⍰ Reversal of The Law: Failure of Apprenticeship

Think of leadership as a grassroots movement that takes you to the top.

The grassroots is your power base.
But to gain that power base, they must see you as a good representative.

In this fiasco, John Redwood lost the support because he displayed he was *not* a good representative:



> **Redwood**: (shows he doesn't know the Welsh national anthem) <— He sub-communicates he's not a representative of the group he craves to lead

John Redwood's political career went tumbling because he subtly communicated that he wasn't representative of the group. He wasn't "one of us".

⁉ PRO Tip: Only lead groups that match your personality
So prototypicality comes naturally to you -and you're genuine.

3. Make The Group Look Up to You: Lead by Example

“Prototypical” is NOT synonymous with “average”.

Quite the opposite.

You want to **represent the group as one of its very best members**.

Positively standing out makes your leadership all the more influential.
This is the essence of *prestigious* leadership.

You don’t need to be the best at everything.
And not even the best at your team’s core competence -especially not if you’re older-.

But you want to be experienced, and display great character.

Some crucial areas to excel at:

- **Work Ethics**
- **Experience**
  - Knowledge
- **Critical thinking** for superior decision-making
- **Preparation**, because sloppy leaders lead sloppy teams
- **Character**: own up to your mistakes, show you appreciate “learning” more than “being right” (see: how to develop a growth mindset)

And avoid:

- Any social climbing behavior (see example here)
- Abuses of power, including:
  - Personal vendettas
  - Sleeping with reports
  - Demanding and expecting exceptions

3.2. Lead With Empathy

Unfortunately, empathy is not a prerequisite to becoming a leader.

But John Mayer's work supports the idea that empathy is important to be a *good* leader.
Such as, a leader who adds value to the team.

Leaders who lack an emotional bond with their followers are dangerous leaders.
They are more likely to use their power position to further their own ends.
Often, at the detriment of everyone around.

This is the very reason why I started this website:

4. Display Personal Power When Starting Off

First impressions are crucial.

And they set the expectations *and the baseline* for future behavior.

If you start too democratic and affiliated, people will *expect* all decisions to be democratic and up to discussion.

Democratic leadership is great, especially with highly competent groups.
But it can become a problem if you must shift to a more forceful style because the group will feel like you "are becoming too overpowering."

It's better to do the opposite instead: start slightly more authoritarian.
Then, when you become more democratic, the frame is that they "won you over" with their good behavior.
And if you need to be more direct at times, it will feel natural.

> People always respect strong leaders who *choose* magnanimity and democracy.
> But they wonder if democratic and affiliative leaders are lacking in strength.
>
> ✒ *The Power Moves proverb*

Also read:

- Power Intelligence
- Social power dynamics

4.2. Don't Shy Away From Occasional Anger

Machiavelli once said:

> It's better to be feared than to be loved.

But here is the best part: *fear and love are not antithetical*.

And rare outbursts of anger or dominance in an otherwise calm and caring personality can combine the two.

The opposite is dangerous: a constantly calm and detached leader is suspicious.

Does he even have what it takes to raise his voice?
This is what the type-As, drivers, and more alpha-male personalities will be wondering.

And can he be passionate like a human being or is he some kind of emotionally impaired psychopath?
This is what the more empathetic team members will be wondering.

Put those questions to rest: **show you're *both* strong and caring**.

See Michael Corleone, mostly calm.
But also going wild every once in a while:

> **Michael**: (calm, then furious, then back to calm)

Do this if you don't want to raise your voice

You can achieve the same effect with:

- **Strong feedback**
- **Disappointment**, judge style
- **Telling them you expect better from them**

Break rapport with disappointment.
Then, once they fix their mistake, be even warmer than before as a reward. Sub-communication: "*Now* (that you complied) you can regain my respect and love".

5. Develop Groups Identities: Turning "I's" Into "WE's"

We define group identity as:

> The way in which a group defines and recognizes itself

The group's identity determines:

- Norms and behaviors
- Who it attracts and retains.

As a leader, you must **shape and control the identity that encourages the mindsets and behaviors that**

support your goals.

A *social identity* links the group identity with the individuals. It refers to how the members define themselves *in relation* to the group

When social identities are weak, people don't feel any sense of belonging to a group.
On the contrary, when social identities are strong people are *proud* to define themselves as group members.

John Turner, the developer of self-categorization theory, found out that **when people define themselves as group members, they also start *behaving* as a group**.

Including collaboration, going the extra mile, caring about the team, and supporting each other.

⍰ Example: Bush & The Iraq Invasion

Freedom and democracy are two major values of the American group identity.

Bush stressed, highlighted, expanded, and leveraged both to shore up support for his war.

> **Bush** (sub-communication): We as Americans value freedom and democracy. We'll protect our freedom and export democracy for a better America and better world

5.2. How To Strengthen Identities

Some ways to increase the group's identity include:

- Selection to enter the group
- High standards
- Rewarding high commitment
- Strong in-group bonds
- Foster a sense of pride

Unfortunately, external enemies and hazing have also been proven to increase the group's social identity and cohesion (for hazing, see Cialdini, 1984).

⍰⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Example: Excellence, With Fun

When I became a Toastmasters president, our culture wasn't well defined.

Why were we even meeting?
Just to get better at public speaking? If so, they could have joined *any* other club.

I wanted something more —a group who *loved* meeting and supporting each other.

I defined "we" as follows:

1. Highly supportive group of people
2. Who love each other's company
3. Serious about self-development,
4. But who don't take themselves too seriously

It's an apparent contradiction. "We" are fun and freedom lovers. But also are driven to move forward in life while helping each other with tough-love feedback.

The clarity and appeal of our identity propelled our club to record new joiners with a strong core of members who never missed a meeting.

Also see: how to be a great Toastmasters president.

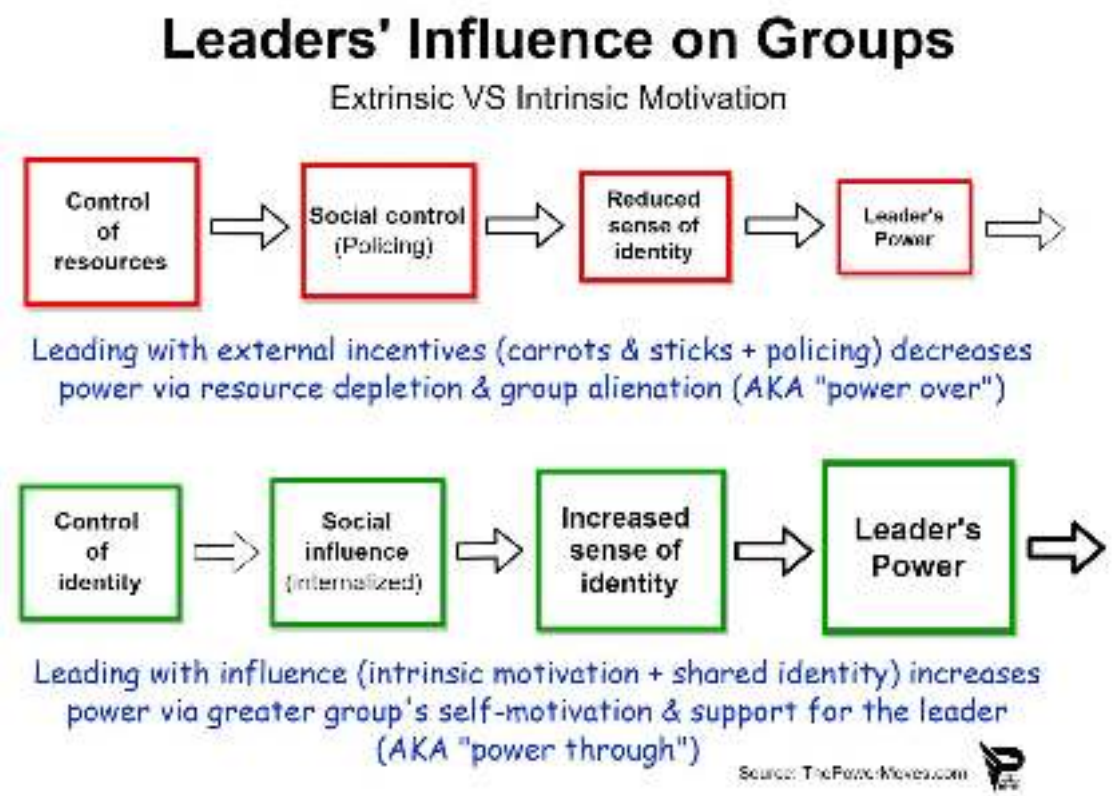
6. Leverage Intrinsic Motivation

Poor leaders focus solely on sticks and carrots.

But carrots and sticks are sub-optimal.
Machiavelli said it a long time ago: mercenaries make for bad armies.
And classical research shows that **incentives might lead to compliance, but not to conversion**.

Relying on carrots and sticks is also costly.
One, you must monitor followers to ensure compliance. And two, you deplete resources giving away all those carrots.

The intrinsic motivators of social identity and personal motivation instead are self-replenishing.
See the diagram:



In short: always lead with intrinsic motivation first.
Make people *want* to contribute to the team and go the extra mile for the cause.

Move Beyond 'What's In It For Me'

'What's in it for me' is associated with more material exchange -the extrinsic approach-.

Research shows that in politics and in non-profits appeals to identity trump the social exchange model.
But that is also true for the very best *for*-profit businesses.
Organ and colleagues, for example, show that employees' willingness to "go the extra mile" hinges on them *not* asking "what's in it for me".

PRO Tip: Minimize transaction talk and separate it from motivation
Take care of material exchanges—but keep its discussion separated. And once done, focus on intrinsic motivation.
Better yet, have someone else handle the money negotiation.

6.2... But Also Control Rewards & Punishment

But let's not be naive.

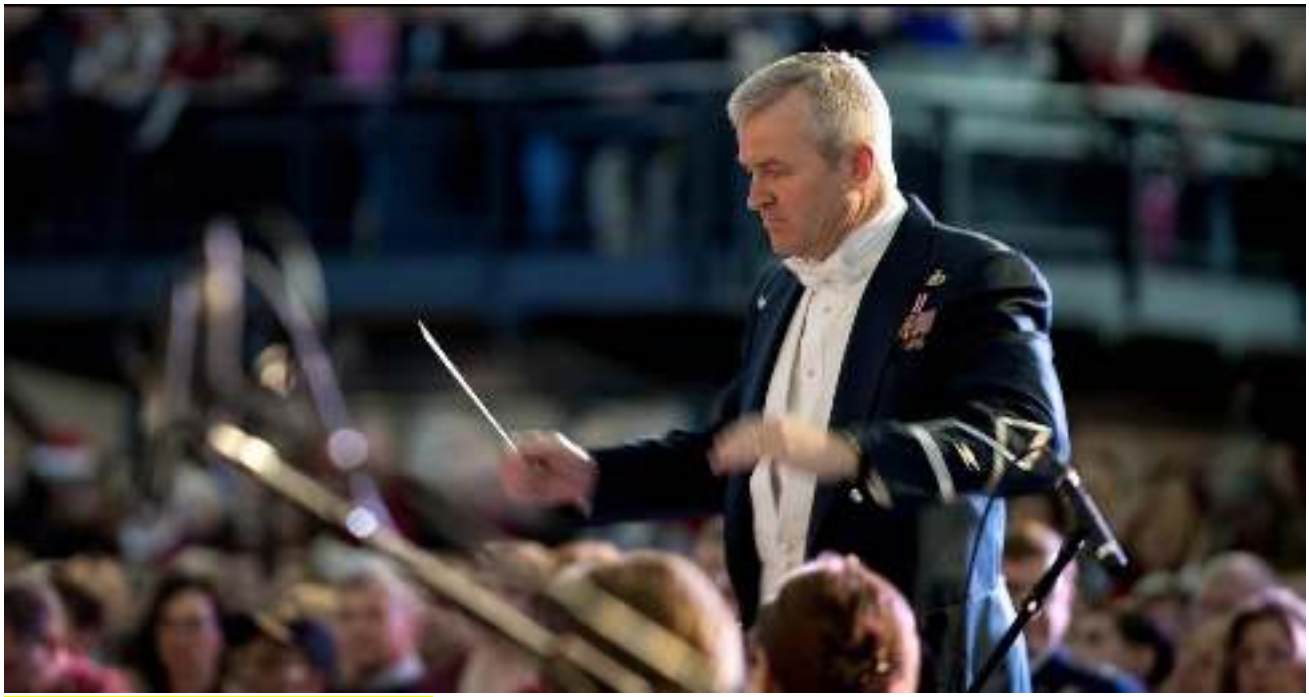
Not everyone can be intrinsically motivated.
And some tasks can work well with rewards.

Plus, **it's always better to have the full power toolkit**, than just a part of it.

Finally, everyone respects a leader who *could* use punishments, but never does.
Here is a good maxim to keep in mind:

> **Your friendly handshake on the table is always most appreciated when there is a revolver in the drawer.**
>
> ✒ *The Power Moves proverb*

7. Reward Based On Contribution



The best contributors get to play more

Hierarchies are natural within any group.

Instead of pretending they don't exist, **base your hierarchies on contribution**.
Such as, how much value members add to the group, the mission, or the mindsets.

For example, an average performer who works the hardest adds value with his example, and should be rewarded for that.

> **Respecting merit-based hierarchies sends the message that meritocracy reigns supreme**.

7.2.: The Ultimate Team: Competitive Altruists

Barclay refers to competitive altruism when pro-sociality affords status.

That's the ultimate "culture of cooperation".

Even when pursuing self-interest, people contribute to the team and mission.

8. Champion & Defend Your Group: It Shores Up Support

Nobody loves and respects a leader who doesn't stand up for his group.

And the opposite is true.

Leaders who champion the ingroup can rely on some of the most loyal supporters.
And they are allowed more latitude because people see them as "the leader who has our back and whom we can count on".

Says Haslam:

> Leaders' capacity to exert influence—the very essence of leadership—rests on their behavior being seen to have "done it for us."

Unfortunately, studies show that leaders can lose support when they don't bend the rules to favor their ingroups.

Fortunately, highly prototypical leaders who show in deeds they are in it for the group -as opposed to themselves- can allow themselves to be fair even with the outgroup.
One more reason for leaders to be fair and prosocial!

⍰ Example: Ariel Sharon Pulling out of Gaza

Pulling out Gaza in Israel was seen a betrayal of the ingroup.

But Ariel Sharon could do it without much political blowback.

Why?

Because Sharon was seen as a conservative hawk, a war hero, and a staunch defender of the Israeli ingroup.

Thanks to his reputation and a history of championing the ingroup, he was allowed to do it.

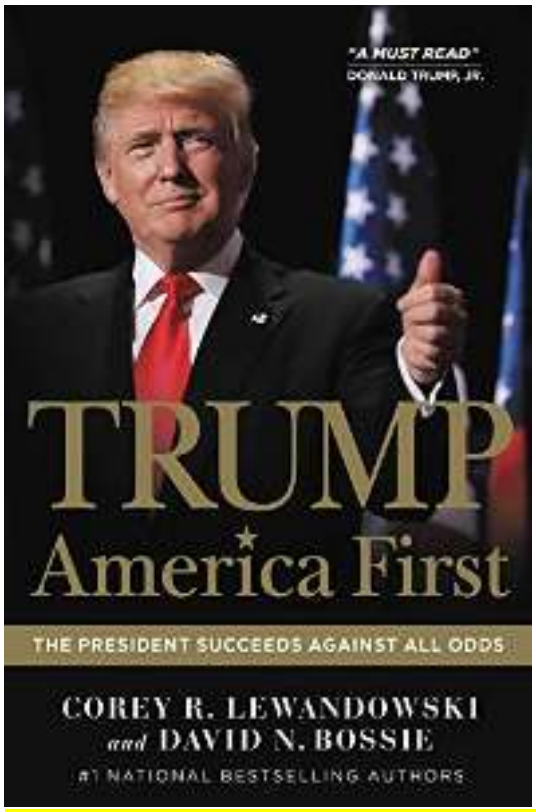
Tip: Romance Your Spirit of Sacrifice

There are ways to do 'fairly' romanticize one's battles for the group.

Bosses may tell employees how hard they fought against budget cuts.

But the line between persuasion and manipulation can be thin.

So the more Machiavellian and manipulative politicians pick a fake enemy to play tough. Then, they ride that populist anger to gain more votes and support.



This is how Trump won the election: "America first" is nothing but a promise of ingroup favoritism.

Read more:

- Manipulation dynamics
- Trump's leadership style: dominance VS prestige

9. Be Fair: Perceived Fairness Enables Group's Cooperation

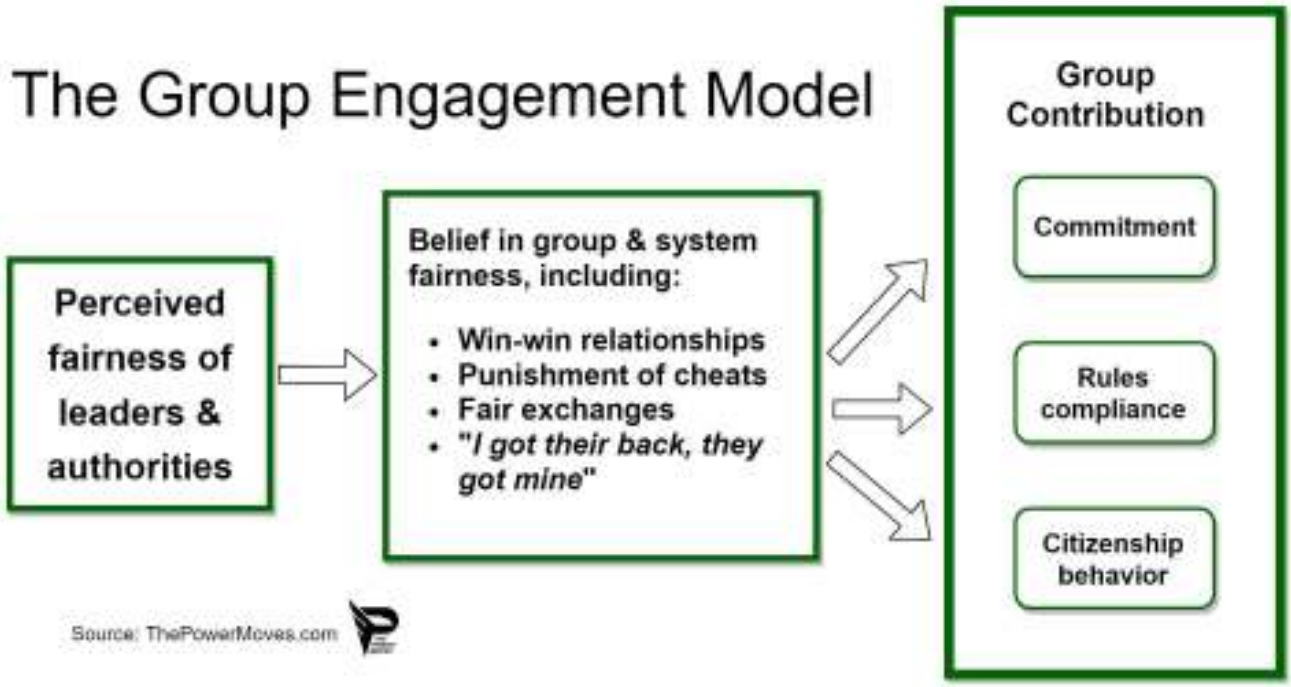
Unfair leaders break teams into individuals.

When people perceive leaders to be unfair or corrupt, they revert from prosocial to selfish and cynical. They focus less on contribution and more on playing politics and befriending the leader.

That's good for the leader, in some ways, but it's bad for the team and goals.

On the other hand, principled leaders set the example to turn selfish individuals into a collaborative team. That's one of the reasons why trustworthy, honest politicians run well-functioning, wealthy countries.

In social psychology, this is called the "group engagement model" (Tyler & Blader, 2003) and it's been shown in game theory experiments (Axelrod, 1984) as well as in animals and humans (Ridley, 1996).



After Tyler & Blader, Adapted from Haslam

> **Exemplary leaders show individuals that "we" is stronger than a collection of "Is"**

⍰ Example: People Saved Water Based on Leaders' Trust

Tyler and Degoey found that people limited water use based on trust in politicians, *not* the severity of the shortage.

Think about it: people's prosocial behavior didn't depend on the *severity* of the there but on the (perceived) *fairness of the leader*.

9.2. Be A Team Player

Axelrod suggests that one of the ways to foster cooperation is to signal the intention for reciprocation.

in simple words: if you want team players show that you're a team player.

Also see: enlightened reciprocation.

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-collaborator

10. Remove Anti-Social Individuals (Or They'll Spoil The Bunch)

Rotten apples spoil the bunch.

Anti-socials take from the team—but that's not even the biggest issues.
Anti-socials destroy teamwork, demotivate the top performers, and turn teams into selfish players.

Let's quickly review the science.

Experiments in public good environments show that most people are "conditional cooperators".

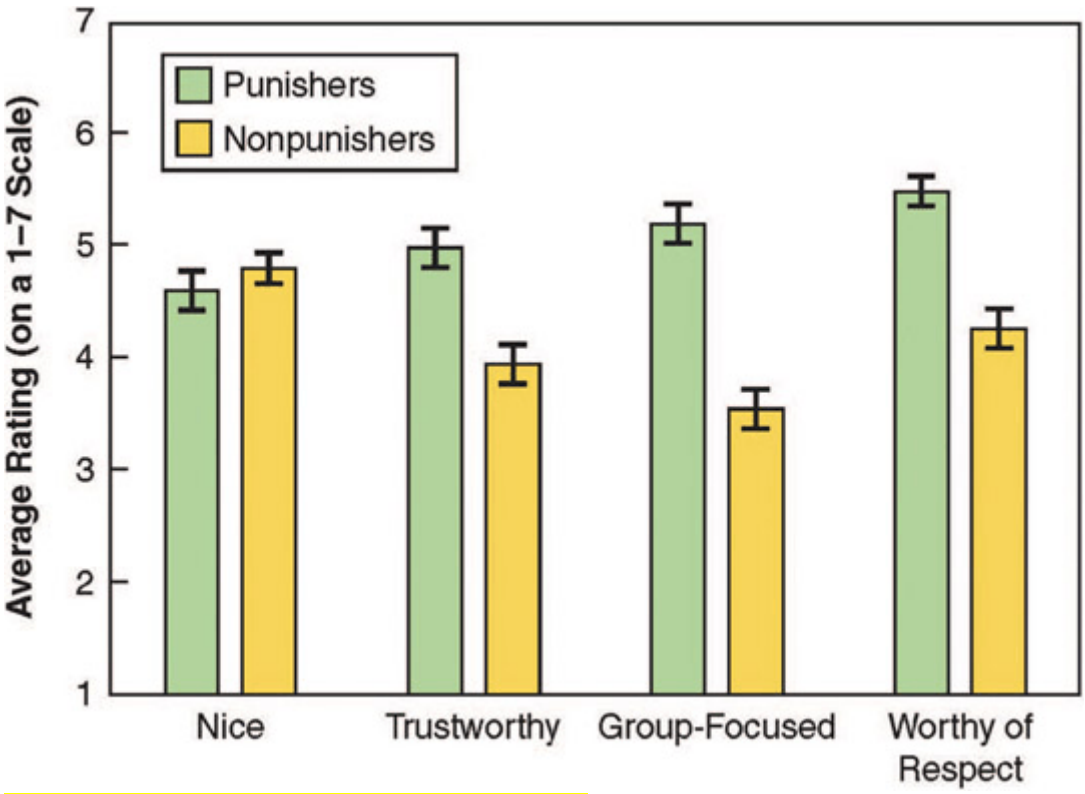
That means they cooperate as long as the majority cooperates.
But when selfish individuals (free-riders) take more than they give, conditional cooperators stop giving.

The 'rot' spreads, and it becomes a vicious circle.
Then you hit the 'tipping point', and your team devolves into a collection of (selfish) individuals.

This is crucial, so let's simplify: **selfish individuals spread selfishness like a virus**.

Solution:

Punish those free-riders.
Not only it's good for the team, it's great for your reputation as a leader:



Source: Evolutionary Psychology, David Buss, 2018
Luckily, experiments show that the opposite is also true.
Positive behavior of mutual support, altruism, and value-giving cascades into more of the same.

Also read:

- How to spot takers
- To be good, you need to be bad

10.2. Nip It In The Bud: Dispatch Snakes Before They Grow Teeth

Enemies inside aren't just bad for you, but for the team as well.

As legendary Chicago Bulls coach Phil Jackson said:

> The secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from the guys who are undecided

When internal enemies are left free to operate, the team splits into two sub-teams: the loyalists, and the rebellious faction.
The first victim is the team spirit.

Solution?
Ruthlessly remove your enemies.

Also see:

- **Profiling toxic employees**

Bonus: Prepare Your Succession Plan

John Maxwell said:

> Time is the ultimate test of leadership

Even more, we add that 'the time *after you're gone*' is the ultimate test of leadership.

The worst infighting happens right after a great leader abdicates.
And the best empires faltered because of poor succession.

Don't make the same mistake. **Ensuring that your work survives your mortal life is your final crowning.**

With big corporations, there is no definitive answer on whether an external or internal CEO will perform better. But successors who are too different lead to cultural drifts and potential disagreement about the organization's identity (Balser, 2009).

Avoid that risk and choose successors who are honorable, effective, and prototypical.

Also read:

- How to build an empire
- Vulnerability is NOT power: you don't get to be too vulnerable as a leader
- How to inspire people

We help good men go all the way from 'good men' to respected, beloved, and effective leaders in **Power University**

How to Be a Great Manager: 12 Proven Leadership Strategies

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 July 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Great managers don't just manage—they lead, influence, and command respect.

Whether you're handling teams, navigating office politics, or driving results, understanding power is key —and we're experts in that.

This guide delivers 12 real strategies for high-impact leadership.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 1. Develop Group Identity: Turn Individuals Into Teams
- 2. Wield Power Effectively
  - 2.2. Leverage The 6 Forms of Power
- 3. Appeal To Intrinsic Motivation
- 4. Use Emotional Rewards
- 5. Act High Power: Exec Material
- 6. Acknowledge & Foster Meritocratic Hierarchies
  - 6.2. Use Your Personal Power For Informal Hierarchies
- 7. Champion Your Team
- 8. Set The Standard With Your Example
  - 8.2. Be Honest: If Fosters Team Spirit
- 9. Keep A Healthy Emotional Distance
- 10. Power-Align With Executives
- 11. Don't Shy Away From Occasional Outbursts

- 12. Fire Anti-Social Individuals (Quickly!)
  - 12.2. Be Quick to Fire Your Enemies

1. Develop Group Identity: Turn Individuals Into Teams

Individuals become a team when they:

- Identify with the team
- Define themselves as team members

The self-categorization theory explains that **when people define themselves as group members, they also start *behaving* as group members**.

That leads to team spirit and pro-social behavior, including mutual support, personal initiative, and going the extra mile.

P.S.:
That also means higher output that you can then leverage for your promotion.

See here how to do it:

- **How to get the most from your team**

> How to Inspire People: 8 Leadership Strategies from Psychology

2. Wield Power Effectively

Good low-power managers remain managers.

Great high-power managers become executives and CEOs.

2.2. Leverage The 6 Forms of Power

Classical work by French and Raven identifies six different forms of power.

Let's introduce them through an example: a manager who wants his reports to attend a weekend seminar.
That manager can achieve his goal through one of his 6 powers (or a combination of them):

1. **Rewards**: pay the overtime, assign future high-visibility tasks, etc.
2. **Coercion**: passing the employee for promotions, "mobbing", assigning tasks that are humiliating or disempowering, etc.
3. **Expertise**: reports comply because they trust the manager
4. **Information**: the manager sells the idea well and makes the reports *want* to attend (this is persuasion)
5. **Legitimacy**: reports comply because they recognize the manager's authority over them
6. **Respect**: reports comply because they respect their manager and look up to him (this is a subset of soft power)

What type of power managers use depends on context (Bacharach, 1980), personality, company culture (Ashforth, 1994), and, of course, who they are dealing with.

How managers feel they can use power is largely correct and a good rule of thumb for calibration:

Power	Examples	Ability to Use On		
		Superiors	Peers	Reports
Reward	• Promote • Award pay rises • Assign desirable duties	Very low	Low	Moderate
Coercive	• Demote • Impose financial penalties • Assign undesirable duties	Very low	Very low	High
Expert	Specialized knowledge in a particular domain	High	High	High
Informational	Ability to present persuasive and logical arguments	High	High	High
Legitimate	Role-related (e.g., general, head of department, supervisor)	Very low	Low	High
Referent	Capacity to be admired and/or respected	Moderate	High	High

Taxonomies of power and the observed capacity to use them on others (based on Kahn's survey)
Note that **expertise and persuasion are the true "win-all" when it comes to power**.

Also read:

- Best persuasion books
- Best communication books

3. Appeal To Intrinsic Motivation

Reward, coercive, and legitimate powers are the easiest to use because they come prepackaged with the territory.

The moment you got promoted to a managerial position, you got the title (legitimate power) and the tools of the trade (rewards and punishments).

Him: It's your job! I give you money, you give me ideas <— Transactional approach to management

Her: But you never say "thank you" <— Asks for emotional rewards / intrinsic motivation

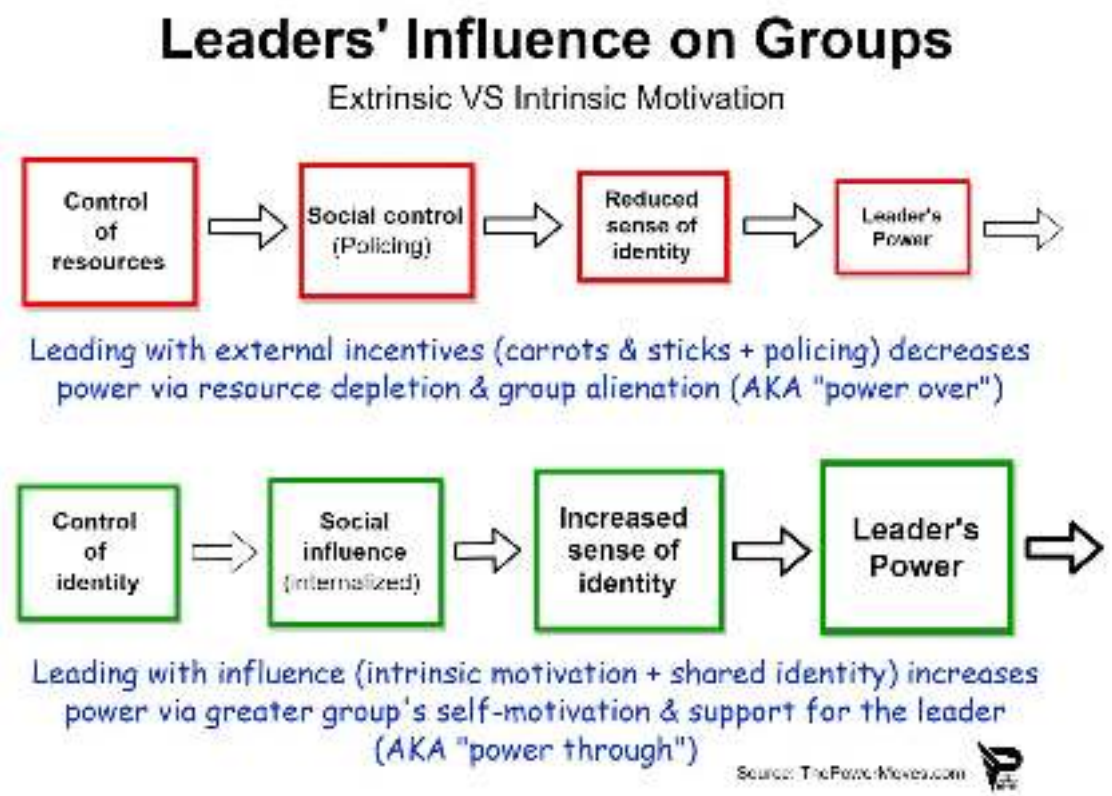
Him: That's what the money is for! <— Doesn't get it, and will soon lose her

Being a good manager means adapting to your employees' needs—even if they're not your own
While we understand and empathize with 'alpha male types' like Don Draper, this is simply less effective.

Classical research in social science shows that **incentives might lead to compliance, but not to conversion.**
Meaning: your reports might do it, but they will not believe in it and will not take ownership of your goal.

Relying on rewards and punishment (or "carrots and sticks") is also costlier.
They deplete your resources, and disenfranchised employees require more supervision.

See the first half of the diagram:



What's the alternative?

The alternative is intrinsic motivation.
Intrinsic motivation includes:

- **Shared group identity** with the team (i.e., reports proudly self-categorize as group members)
- **Shared identity with the manager** (i.e., "us and the manager both belong to this great group")
- **Alignment of individuals' aspirations with the team's goals**
- **Uplifting, supportive environment**
- **Pride** for being in the 'right' group

Extrinsic motivation matters even more in politics, volunteer-based organizations, and wherever money plays a smaller role (Tyler & Blader, 2001).

But it's a mistake to think that for-profit businesses rely only on money and "what's in it for me" types of exchanges.

Organ and colleagues, for example, show that employees' willingness to "go the extra mile" hinges on them *not* asking "what's in it for me".

Most dream employers are dream employers *because* of intrinsic motivation.

Simon Sinek, for example, says that many dream of working at Apple because Apple speaks to their identity and it helps them define "who they are".
That's intrinsic motivation.

P.S.: Don't make excuses, learn to be more inspirational
Working in a duller industry is a cop-out for managers who do not know how to leverage intrinsic motivation.
Any work, from cleaning toilets to washing cars gains with more intrinsic motivation.

4. Use Emotional Rewards

Every time you see something good, say it

As Blanchard and Johnson say, most managers give feedback only when something is wrong.

That demotivates employes and makes them feel underappreciated.

But dispensing emotional rewards isn't just about 'being nice'.
Dispensing emotional rewards is about emotional power dynamics and leading with soft power.

If you're a high-quality man, people will crave your rewards -and fear your criticism-.
That's the most effective way to manage.

Lucio's Take: **the emotionally challenged manager**

Lucio:
When I came back from my traveling sabbatical I attended the parent-holding company party.

One of the very first things the managing director told me with an accusatory tone was:

> **Bad Manager**: (I got you SOB expression) You know that your last customer isn't using the facility? But you got the bonus, eh?

Now consider that the bonus was peanuts, I had brought *all* their current customers, and I had never heard any praise from him.
Wonder why I didn't think too highly of him?

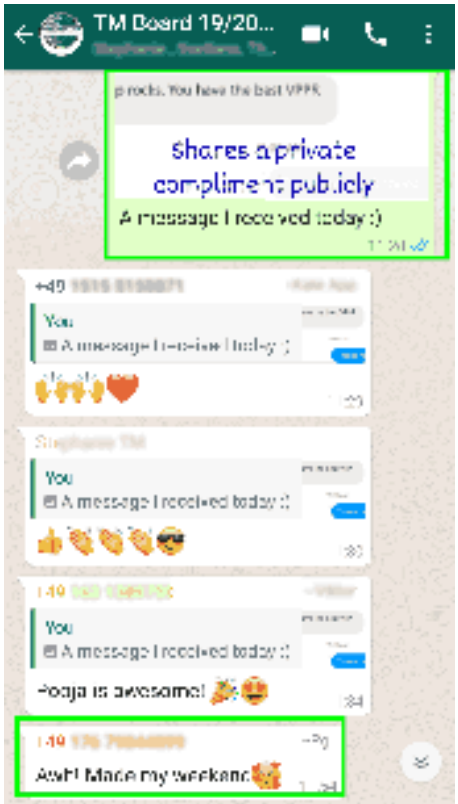
See this seminal article:

- Judge power dynamics

Pro-tip: share the compliments with the team

When you receive external compliments, confirm and then share with your team.

Example:



Sharing praise: a simple, cost-effective way of fostering team-spirit and motivation

5. Act High Power: Exec Material

There is one form of power that we haven't listed yet:

Personal power.

If you want to join the executive cadre, you need to be high power.

This website and Power University are here to support you.
But a few tips here:

1. Mind your social ROI: speak with purpose

The ROI Matrix, part of our Social Investment Model (Buffalmano, 2026)

The *APA Handbook* explains that high-status men talk more
However, that may be different at work, and certainly depends on *what* you talk about and *with whom*.

Managers who chit-chat too much are perceived as prioritizing relationships over results.
It's communion over agency, associated with femininity instead of masculinity, and not executive material.
Be more strategic. Be uplifting and helpful, but skip endless chats. Especially with lower-status people.

2. Direct meetings, rather than acting like a participant

Ensure the meeting stays on topic and productive.

Help reach decisions, assign tasks, and then summarize.

3. Apologize with a neutral tonality

Honorable men own up to their mistakes but they don't *over*-apologize.

Too profuse an apology feels like begging for forgiveness, which is emotionally needy and puts you in a subservient position.

Mentally strong managers move on quick from mistakes because they have antifragile egos. They're focused on getting things done, *not* on exculpating themselves.

Solution?
Learn to say "I'm sorry" in a more neutral tone:

> **Me**: Sorry I mixed it up (flat tonality) <— Sub-communication ⇒ "I've made a mistake there, so what, let's move on".

Also read:

- **How to look the part of a powerful executive**

- **How powerful men speak**
- **How powerful men move**
- **The archetypes of dominance**

6. Acknowledge & Foster Meritocratic Hierarchies

All groups have a hierarchy (Peterson, 2018).

And while 'flat hierarchies' have a place, don't pretend there is no hierarchy at all.
Instead, put those hierarchies to good use.

For example, **assign status based on tangible benefits people bring to the team to foster a culture of meritocracy.**
For example:

- **Results**
- **Effort** (ie.: show example of dedication and hard work)
- **Spirit** (ie.: can-do attitude, optimism, team loyalty, etc.)

6.2. Use Your Personal Power For Informal Hierarchies

Job titles sometimes aren't under your full control.

Instead, use your rewards and attention to create a parallel 'informal hierarchy'.

If it overlpas with the formal hierarchy, great.
If not, you can positively fix company issues and politics.

🤦♂️Lucio's Take: **Careful telling people who's 'lower down'**

Lucio:
One poor manager once told my same-rank colleague I was 'above her'.

While that was good for me, in way, it backfired on him.

Maybe he wanted to stoke competition for increased output.
Instead it lost him goodwill with my colleague, and gained nothing from me because he didn't tell *me*.

If anything, it got us closer and made us more suspicious of him.

Just *act* the informal hierarchy, no need to tell people who's 'lower'.

7. Champion Your Team

Theoretically, everyone should support the company as a whole.

But that's not how people's minds work.

People tend to break up bigger groups to form smaller units of allegiance.

None of your reports will say it out loud, but they secretly resent a manager who doesn't stand up for his team.
And everyone love a manager who champions and defends his team.

This isn't just me, of course.
Social research shows that **the more your reports see you as defending and championing them, the more they will love you and support you**.

Says leadership researcher Haslam:

> Leaders' capacity to exert influence—the very essence of leadership—rests on their behavior being seen to have "done it for us."

Of course, "championing" your team within a bigger company requires tact.
Here are some ideas:

- **In salary negotiations, be (slightly) on your report's side**

Help your reports with HR's negotiations.

- **Maintain goodwill negotiating as the founder**

If you are the early founder, mention your limitations from a higher authority to maintain goodwill -ie.: investors, board-.
See: manipulative negotiation techniques.

> 20 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics

- **Leverage enemies (tactfully!) to show you're on their side**

Enemies help a group bond.

Of course, be careful.
Exaggerating makes you come across as a bad fit for the organization.

But imagine your report complains about "that other department" slowing down his work.
The typical manager's response that you're all part of the same company will frustrate your employee.

Instead, if it's true, empathize with him to sub-communicate that you're on his side.

🤦♂️Lucio's Take: **I respected my manager most when he defended me**

Lucio:
I still remember my first manager fondly.

Anton, the program manager from another unit, would always grab me last minute for whatever he needed.
As a freshman, I wasn't sure whether refusing would harm my career, so I asked my manager.

He listened to me and then said: "*Whenever you feel it's too much, simply tell me, and I will take care of telling Anton to back off*".

It was a small gesture, but it significantly made me respect him more.

Also read:

- **Corporate manipulations**
- **Manipulation: a field guide**

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

8. Set The Standard With Your Example

Here's how you do it:

1. **Set the values** you want
2. **Develop a social identity around those values**
3. **Represent those values** with your character and behavior

You want to be representative of the group.
But, as a manager, represent the group as one of its very best members.

While values may change, the fundamentals of honorable characters are always the same.
And **an honorable character is the foundation of prestigious leadership**.

And avoid:

- ⍰ Social climbing
- ⍰ Competing with your reports (remember: you are the manager, see yourself as a hunter and groomer of talent)
- ⍰ Getting too wasted at companies' parties (nothing screams "sloppy" as an overly drunk manager, only beat by a wasted manager who gets too emotional or sexually forward)
- ⍰ Abuses of power, including:
  - Demanding
  - Sleeping with reports

8.2. Be Honest: If Fosters Team Spirit

As the manager, you are the most important individual in the team.

You most influence the culture, and the level of contribution.

If they perceive you as unfair, individuals revert from pro-social behavior to more cynical, selfish, and 'covering my a*s'.
Contribution drops, and politics reigns.

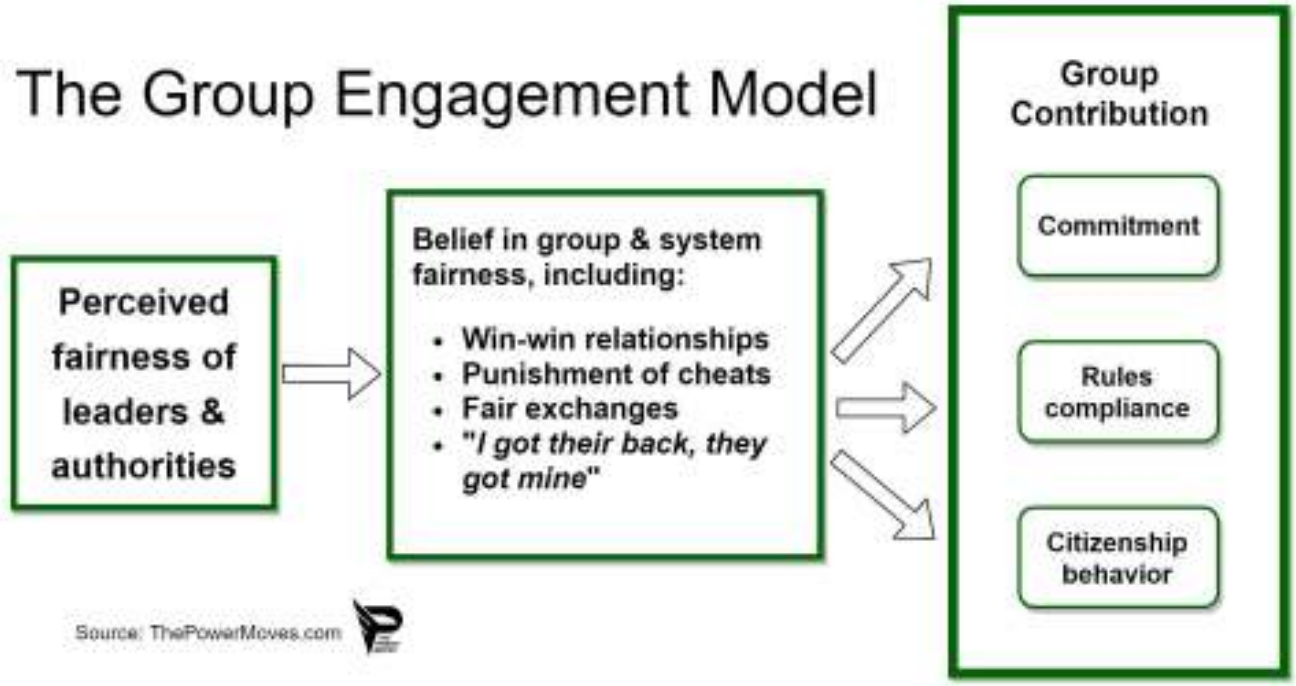
This leads to a vicious circle where everyone focuses on taking and nobody gives anymore, It's referred to as tragedy of commons, and everyone loses.

Luckily, the opposite is also true.
And **principled leaders set the example to turn selfish individuals into a collaborative team**.

This is why, if you are wondering how to manage great teams, the simplest answer is: be a great team player.

In social psychology Tyler & Blader call this phenomenon the "Group Engagement Model", and it's been confirmed by experiments of game theory as well (Axelrod, 1984; Ridley, 1996).

See a diagram here:



9. Keep A Healthy Emotional Distance

Be friendly, but not too close friends.

Social power dynamics is clear here:

Close friendships are friendships of equals.
And a relationship of equals harms your ability to lead and command as as a superior.

So albeit the popular 'bring your whole self to work' and 'vulnerability' have their merit, take them with a grain of salt.
And don't overdo them.

See:

- **Vulnerability is not power**: how to do it right

10. Power-Align With Executives

Adapt the views, values, and opinions of those in power.

While you can fake it, it's far better to find a place that genuinely reflects your values.

The higher congruence of genuine alignment helps you be more charismatic, persuasive, and powerful (Morgan, 2014)

11. Don't Shy Away From Occasional Outbursts

Machiavelli said:

> It's better to be feared than to be loved.

And here is the best part: fear and love are *not* antithetical.

A strong manager who champions his team… But who seldom also gets angry achieve both at the same time.

A constantly calm manager, often described as the ideal in most "how to be a great manager" guides, is suspicious.

Your reports may wonder if you're some kind of emotionally impaired psychopath.
Or, even worse, they might wonder if you're not too weak.

Put those questions to rest with well-calibrated outbursts.

Alternatives to raising your voice

Strong feedback or intense expressions of disappointment work equally well -if not better-.

For example:

> **Strong manager**: (intense, disappointed) That would have been OK for someone else. But not from you. You have better potential than this. I expect better from you

Notice that this is uplifting and inclusive at the same time that it's strong feedback.

At first, this will break rapport.
But then, once they fix their performance, you win them back with even more warmth.

This ties back to emotional power dynamics and soft power.

The sub-communication if to say "When you do good work, you're back being a beloved team member".

12. Fire Anti-Social Individuals (Quickly!)

Rotten apples spoil the bunch.

That's not a maxim, it's (social) science.
Let's quickly review it.

Experiments show that the biggest group of people in any team are "conditional cooperators" (around 50% to be precise).

That means that **most people cooperate *only* as long as the majority cooperates**.
And when they see selfish individuals (free-riders) who take more than they give, they re-assess their pro-social strategy.

When free-riders go unpunished, conditional cooperators cooperate less.
Eventually, they stop giving completely.

And that is why **a good team manager recognizes selfish operators and gets rid of them as soon as possible**.

Luckily, the opposite is also true.

When cooperation and support increase, most people also start giving more.
The increased contribution is often related to how much more others contribute, which is why it's possible to start a virtuous cycle of cooperation.

12.2. Be Quick to Fire Your Enemies

This might sound Machiavellian, but it's not.

As a manager, you are the lighthouse of the team.
And if you are doing a great job, **your enemies are the team's enemies** (and vice versa).

Keeping enemies within the group is dangerous not only for yourself but for the team as well.
They will scheme and undermine you, forming coalitions within the team.

The solution, just as with the free riders, is to remove them.
If not possible, at least isolate them.

Also see:

- **List of toxic employees**

Political Strategy: Don't Antagonize Skilled Political Players

If you can't fire them, don't antagonize the people who are most likely to advance.

The last enemy you want is a rising star.

If it's a fellow manager, rise faster than them if you can, but without directly competing.

Also, if you're firing them, ensure it will go through smoothly.
Some of them may already have friends high up who may block the proceedings… And that may turn against you.

We teach good men the mindsets and skills to advance at work in Power University

How Use The 48 Laws of Power In 2026 (With Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 August 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Many readers learned the basics of Machiavellianism and manipulation from Robert Greene's popular "*48 Laws of Power*".

Unfortunately, some of these laws are based on ancient examples, and some principles don't apply as well to the modern age of the internet, AI, and influencer-based power.

In this article, we update *The 48 Laws of Power* with modern strategies and examples that work in today's world.

⍰⍰ For the complete book guide, see the main 48 Laws of Power guide.

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  - Law #1: Leapfrog Your Boss
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Low individual power	**High optionality** (dating, social & career)	**Leapfrogging:** networking and job-switching over 'never outshining the master'
Small & fixed social groups	**Anonymous metropolises**; digital reputation	**Self-expression:** self-focus & high-value branding over 'behaving like others'
Low costs for dishonor	**Empowered talent** 'vote with their feet & hearts'	**Honorable dominance:** Long-term, prestige trumps over-manipulation & 'stealing credit'

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Most examples from *The 48 Laws* are historical, and many are from *ancient* history.

While many power principles still apply, context also matters, and context has changed dramatically.

For example, the influence of bosses and social groups over individuals has waned. Today, everyone, and especially high-value men, enjoys more freedom and power than ever.
In this context, laws like “fit in” or “never outshine the master” carry fewer benefits and higher opportunity costs.

In a world with more freedom, information, and distributed power, *soft* power, prestige, and ‘pull’ approaches become increasingly effective compared value-taking strategies.

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Law #1: Leapfrog Your Boss

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✓ Law 1: Learn everything from your master, then move past him

⍰ Law of Power #1 is Dated Because it Slows Down Ambitious Men

In Greene’s contexts of kings, castes, and little social mobility ‘never outshining the master’ was a good rule of thumb.
Keep your head down, and… Stay safe. But **safety behind an average boss underperforms ambitious men in modern contexts.**

HBR research finds that ‘gatekeeping managers’ hold your career back.
And ADP finds that staying in the same role 3+ years slashes your chances of raises or promotion. Today, it doesn’t pay to play small.

⍰ Modern Application: Switch Jobs, Network For Power & Options, Be Your Own Boss

In today’s world of high mobility and optionality, it pays better to be bolder: network, switch jobs for higher pay, and leapfrog your boss with high-visibility projects.

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I outshone my boss in sales and got to negotiate with the other higher-power MD for a higher position, salary, and equity package (see the story here).

Better yet, I'm living my best life after I quit having 'masters' and focused on my life passion and mission: TPM and Power University.

Law #4: Speak Up

✖ Law 4: Always say less than necessary
✅ Law 4: Speak up, be visible, and build your personal brand

⍰ Law of Power #4 is Dated Because Silence Makes You Disappear

We live in a fickle and narcissistic world where quiet men are outshone by the many who speak more and louder.

⍰ Modern Application: Speak Up, Gain Leadership & Visibility

Today's dominant leaders speak up to gain status and frame conversations to their liking.

Modern social media also offer new, unparalleled opportunities for fame.
Many influencers gained popularity with over-talk (ie: Ben Shapiro built an empire by commenting on every news).

Law #5: Get A Great Online Reputation & Live Free IRL

✖ Law 5: So much depends on reputation. Guard it with your life.
✅ Law 5: Curate your online reputation, and live freely in your real life

⍰ Law of Power #5 Is Dated Because High Mobility Makes Large Reputation Investment Low ROI

Most ambitious men will go through countless new social circles where reputation restarts from zero every time.

Plus, **modern men don't need a fixed social circle but can walk their own path**, 'sigma style' while meeting women and making friends *outside* of social circles.

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Modern reputation doesn't run with word-of-mouth but with Internet searches, social media, and AI.
Digital reputation sticks beyond changing groups and people.

In real life, focus on gaining the respect of the people that matter, and forget all the rest.

Example: Keanu Reeves & The Heart of Gold

Few know Keanu Reeves in person, but many think he is great because of his online reputation.

Imagine if he wanted to make it public…

Law #7: Lead With Honor & Reap The Benefits of Higher Productivity

✗ Law 7: Let others do the work for you, but always take credit
✓ Law 7: Make people feel valued and give credit. They work harder, the pie grows, and you reap the rewards.

⍰ Law of Power #7 is Dated Because Team's Output Matters Today

Servants couldn't do much if their masters took credit, and feeding themselves and their families was the only priority.

But empowered employees expect better, and value respect and organizational fairness (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001).
This Mad Men TV series portrays this more modern dynamic:

> **Report**: (accuses bosses of stealing her idea)
> **Boss**: It's how it is, you should be thanking me
> **Report**: (quits some time later) <— The boss loses a valuable asset

Those who stay, less talented and demotivated, will have lower productivity, which long-term undermines the credit-taking boss.

⍰ Modern Application: Motivate Your Team, Reap the Benefits of Higher Productivity

Higher productivity means bigger pie for all—*including* for the leader.

This approach is particularly valid for masculine and agentic men who value achieving goals, not just 'looking good'.

Also read:

- The realpolitik guide to management

Law #11: Make Others Crave Your Presence & Attention

✗ Law 11: Learn to keep people dependent on you
✓ Law 11: Make people *want* to depend on you

⍰ Law of Power #11 is Dated Because Dependency is Costlier

It was easy for masters to make peasants dependent. In today's world, dependence is costlier, rarer, and not the peak of power many think it is.

⍰ Modern Application: Get High-Value Men & Women to Want You

The stronger currency of influence is not low-value dependence, but emotional investment from high-value people.

Top men earn it with high value and good social strategy.
Even if others may not strictly *depend* on them, they *want* them, crave them, and sometimes emotionally *need* them.

These are the types of high-value, power-savvy men we build inside Power University:

Check Power University

Law #13: Appeal to Higher Ideals With Prosocial Frames – Then Capture The Profits

✗ Law 13: When asking for help, appeal to people's self-interest, never to their mercy.
✓ Law 13: Appeal to higher ideals to signal honor, attract top talent, and sell to the wealthy

⍰ Law of Power #13 is Dated Because When Basic Intrinsic Needs Are Met, People Crave Higher Value

Self-interest in a world where basic needs are met underperforms.

Maslow's hierarchy suggests that people who meet basic needs crave self-actualization.
And research supports it: **engagement and teamwork grow when people do *not* think of what's in it for them** (see Haslam, 2011).

⍰ Modern Application: Provide For Material Self-Interest, But Focus on Higher Ideals & Values

Today's most influential men go beyond pure self-interest and attract with higher ideals.

People are willing to work for less and for longer if they feel good about it.
In marketing, **make people feel *less* self-interested**. The highest margins happen when people feel good and can virtue-signal ' their goodness.

Profits are largest when you help wealthy people feel better about themselves
More examples include Starbucks and fair trade, and Dolphins-safe tuna.
Read more:

- Corporate manipulation

Law #17: Lead With Warmth, While Holding Onto The Tools of Coercive Power

✕ Law 17: Keep others in suspended terror: cultivate an air of unpredictability.
✓ Law 17: Maintain the tools of control, but lead with honor to attract the best talent.

⍰ Law of Power #17 is Dated Because it Backfires in Modern Leadership Context

Erratic behavior for "air of unpredictability" requires absolute power. Even there, it's high risk: research shows that despots often meet premature death.
In modern contexts, 'suspended terror' would drive the best talent away.

⍰ Modern Application: Be a High-Power, Yet Honorable Leader

Be a strong and prestigious leader, make them crave your rewards.
Just like a Godfather, allies will remain closer if you keep the terror for your enemies.

How to be a leader

Law #18: Build A Fortress – Then Act As If You Don't Have One

✕ Law 18: Do not build fortresses to protect yourself – isolation is dangerous.
✓ Law 18: Fortress your life by covering your downsides. And then enjoy life carefree

⍰ Law of Power #18 is Dated Because Modern Fortresses Don't Require Isolation

Modern fortresses are not literal fortresses; They're strategic tools of high-value men, including multiple bank accounts, prenup agreements, doomsday bunkers, legal weapons, bodyguards, multiple passports, etc.

⍰ Modern Application: Protect Your Downsides For Greater & Safer Cooperation

Fotress your mind first, and then fortify pragmatically. Never depend so much on anyone that they could ruin you. Ensure that you'll always land on your feet, even if they betray.

Read more:

- Fortressing strategies for top-1% men

Law #24: Learn Office Politics, But Never To The Detriment of Skills & Results

✖ Law 24: Play the perfect courtier
✓ Law 24: Be a king

⍰ Law of Power #24 is Dated Because Modern High-Value Men Don't Need to Be 'Yielding' to Win

Greene states that the perfect courtier is 'yielding and indirect', associated with submissiveness, low power, and low honor.
It may have been helpful with egotistic kings, but modern high-value can skip it.

⍰ Modern Application: Live Like a King

Modern high-value men don't need to be literal kings to live like kings.
Smart and strategic men can have it all: attractive women, a life of freedom, and the fulfillment of pursuing meaningful goals.

Law #27: Create A Self-Help Movement of Easy Fixes

✖ Law 27: Play on people's need to believe to create a cult-like following
✓ Law 27: Market easy fixes

⍰ Law of Power #27 is Dated Because Cults Attract Low-Value People

With mass education and secularization, cults struggle to gain traction—attracting mostly the gullible and needier (the 'value-control tradeoff™' principle).

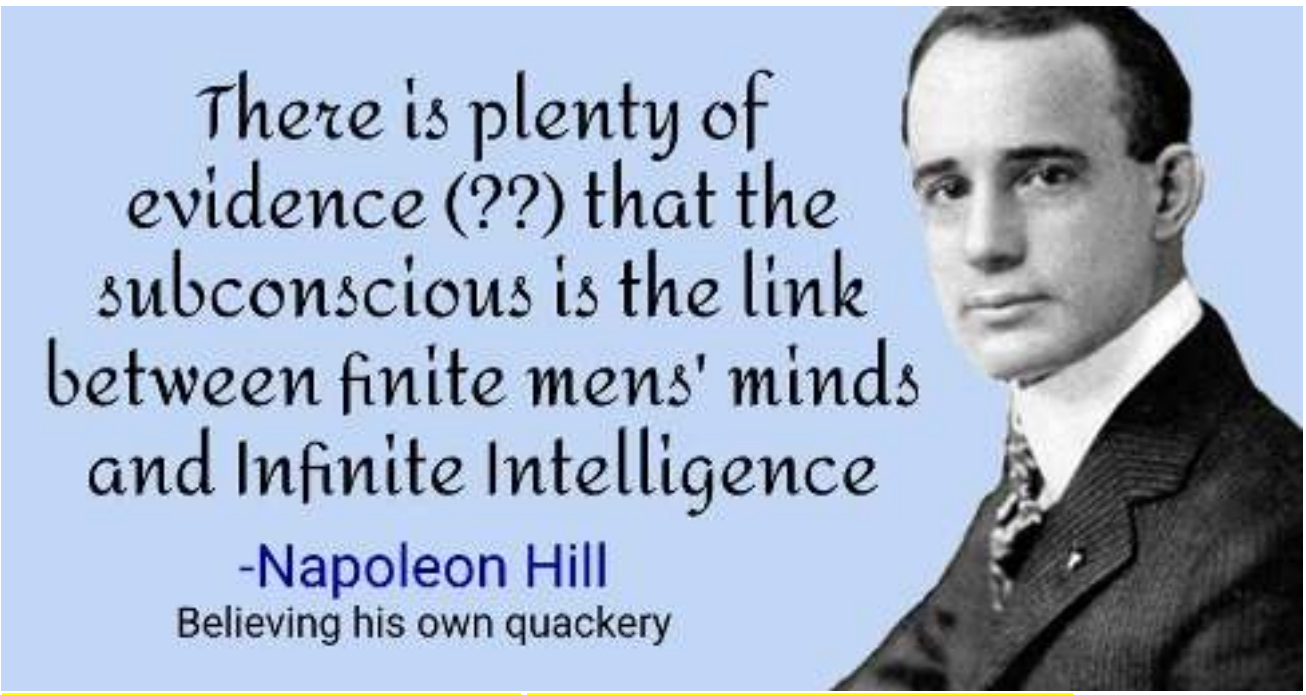
Beyond being dishonorable, modern high-value men can do better than leading a pack of bottom-1%.

⍰ Modern Application: Sell Hope & Fast Results

The most profitable modern cults are self-help movements of dogmatism and easy solutions.

There is an endless market for this naive self-help, ranging from the law of attraction to pop-psychology 'tricks'.

In many ways, that's *The 48 Laws of Power* 'secret': simple laws that are supposed to make you powerful (they may not).



The blurring line between self-help, quackery, and nonsense started with '*Think and Grow Rich*'

Law #30: Make Your Accomplishment Inspirational – They Can Do It Too!

✖ Law 30: Make your accomplishments seem effortless.
✓ Law 30: Make your accomplishment seem impossibly hard: they'll admire you, and nobody will try to match you

⍰ Law of Power #30 is Dated Because Today's Culture Respects Hard Work

Today, people admire and respect hard work.
Talent alone may even make you less authoritative (ie, 'it's easy for him, he's good looking').

Instead, everyone loves and respects hard-working underdogs. Most modern influencers use this new law:

Gary Vee, Tony Robbins, Alex Hormozi and almost every modern 'success influencer' play up hard work

⍰ Modern Application: Frame it as Both Talent & Hard Work

Deep down, innate talent always impresses because it's a timeless indicator of 'good genes'.
So, to combine the best of both worlds, play both.
This is the frame:

> It always came easy for me, and I also worked on it hard

Law #34: Dress With Sprezzatura to Display Power

✖ Law 34: Be royal in your own fashion: act like a king to be treated like one.
✓ Law 34: Dress down when others must dress up to display your power and independence

⍰ Law of Power #34 is Dated Because Brands & Suits Don't Signal Power Anymore

Dressing well signaled power when dressing well was hard. Not anymore: suits and knock-off brands are available to everyone.

If anything, overdoing 'royal fashion' with business attire can signal lower-class overcompensation.

⍰ Modern Application: Dress Casual to Display Superiority When Everyone Else Must Follow Dress Code

Dressing down when others must dress up signals you're above the rules.

A good power move is to mix real wealth indicators with dressing down. For example, nothing screams "I don't need your approval" like a disheveled man getting out of a Ferrari.

Modern disdain for appearances can also signal agentic goal-focus, an evolution apparent in Steve Jobs.

Powerless Steve Jobs on the left; powerful Steve Jobs on the right

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: dress well for attraction**

Dressing to look good is important in dating and when working your way up. Dress well, without being a try-hard.

Law #38: Conform to the Leaders When Starting, But Soon Make *Others* Adapt to You

✖Law 38: Think as you like, but behave like others.
✓ Law 38: Think, be, and behave as you like, find others who do the same, and avoid sheep

⍰ Law of Power #38 is Dated Because Modern Empowered Men Don't Need to Toe Anyone's Line

Conforming is still helpful when starting out, but it holds you back as you grow.
Most of all, never adopt it as a mindset. Today, this law is **too disempowering for modern high-value men**.
Always think of yourself as a free man, and work to soon mold it into your reality.

⍰ Modern Application: Be a Leader, Not a Follower

Conform to the leaders and the role you want to have, not to random others ('power alining' in our lingo).

But most of all, focus on gaining status so you can lead. Or quit the hierarchy altogether, do your own thing, and be your own man.

Law #46: Appear Perfect

✖ Law 46: Never appear too perfect
✓ Law 46: Appear as perfect as possible

⍰ Law of Power #46 is Dated Because Modern Men Don't Depend On Lower-Value

People to Like Them

The original law made sense in a world of small and fixed tribes, but today it pays better to be bolder.

Also read:

- Frenemies and how to spot frenemies (frenemies are the envious par excellence)
- Vulnerability is not power: don't overdo it

⍰ Modern Application: Leave Behind Average Frenemies, Focus on Yourself & Associate With High-Quality People

> Focus on winning, instead of making losers feel better about themselves.

In the modern world of interconnected high mobility, you can leave average people behind and associate with other winners.
Do that.

How to Win in the Modern World

If Robert Greene's laws are the operating system of the past, you can improve on a 400-year-old code.

In the age of AI, digital reputation, and high mobility, following dated advice isn't just slow, but a liability.

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✓ Law 7: Make people feel valued and give credit. They work harder, the pie grows, and you reap the rewards.

⍰ Law of Power #7 is Dated Because Team's Output Matters Today

Servants couldn't do much if their masters took credit, and feeding themselves and their families was the only priority.

But empowered employees expect better, and value respect and organizational fairness (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001).
This Mad Men TV series portrays this more modern dynamic:

> **Report**: (accuses bosses of stealing her idea)
> **Boss**: It's how it is, you should be thanking me
> **Report**: (quits some time later) <— The boss loses a valuable asset

Those who stay, less talented and demotivated, will have lower productivity, which long-term undermines the credit-taking boss.

⍰ Modern Application: Motivate Your Team, Reap the Benefits of Higher Productivity

Higher productivity means bigger pie for all—*including* for the leader.

This approach is particularly valid for masculine and agentic men who value achieving goals, not just 'looking good'.

Also read:

- The realpolitik guide to management

Law #11: Make Others Crave Your Presence & Attention

✗ Law 11: Learn to keep people dependent on you
✓ Law 11: Make people *want* to depend on you

⍰ Law of Power #11 is Dated Because Dependency is Costlier

It was easy for masters to make peasants dependent. In today's world, dependence is costlier, rarer, and not the peak of power many think it is.

⍰ Modern Application: Get High-Value Men & Women to Want You

The stronger currency of influence is not low-value dependence, but emotional investment from high-value people.

Top men earn it with high value and good social strategy.
Even if others may not strictly *depend* on them, they *want* them, crave them, and sometimes emotionally *need* them.

These are the types of high-value, power-savvy men we build inside Power University:

Check Power University

Law #13: Appeal to Higher Ideals With Prosocial Frames – Then Capture The Profits

✗ Law 13: When asking for help, appeal to people's self-interest, never to their mercy.
✓ Law 13: Appeal to higher ideals to signal honor, attract top talent, and sell to the wealthy

⍰ Law of Power #13 is Dated Because When Basic Intrinsic Needs Are Met, People Crave Higher Value

Self-interest in a world where basic needs are met underperforms.

Maslow's hierarchy suggests that people who meet basic needs crave self-actualization.
And research supports it: **engagement and teamwork grow when people do *not* think of what's in it for them** (see Haslam, 2011).

⍰ Modern Application: Provide For Material Self-Interest, But Focus on Higher Ideals & Values

Today's most influential men go beyond pure self-interest and attract with higher ideals.

People are willing to work for less and for longer if they feel good about it.
In marketing, **make people feel *less* self-interested**. The highest margins happen when people feel good and can virtue-signal ' their goodness.

Profits are largest when you help wealthy people feel better about themselves
More examples include Starbucks and fair trade, and Dolphins-safe tuna.
Read more:

- Corporate manipulation

Law #17: Lead With Warmth, While Holding Onto The Tools of Coercive Power

✕ Law 17: Keep others in suspended terror: cultivate an air of unpredictability.
✓ Law 17: Maintain the tools of control, but lead with honor to attract the best talent.

⍰ Law of Power #17 is Dated Because it Backfires in Modern Leadership Context

Erratic behavior for "air of unpredictability" requires absolute power. Even there, it's high risk: research shows that despots often meet premature death.
In modern contexts, 'suspended terror' would drive the best talent away.

⍰ Modern Application: Be a High-Power, Yet Honorable Leader

Be a strong and prestigious leader, make them crave your rewards.
Just like a Godfather, allies will remain closer if you keep the terror for your enemies.

How to be a leader

Law #18: Build A Fortress – Then Act As If You Don't Have One

✕ Law 18: Do not build fortresses to protect yourself – isolation is dangerous.
✓ Law 18: Fortress your life by covering your downsides. And then enjoy life carefree

⍰ Law of Power #18 is Dated Because Modern Fortresses Don't Require Isolation

Modern fortresses are not literal fortresses; They're strategic tools of high-value men, including multiple bank accounts, prenup agreements, doomsday bunkers, legal weapons, bodyguards, multiple passports, etc.

⍰ Modern Application: Protect Your Downsides For Greater & Safer Cooperation

Fotress your mind first, and then fortify pragmatically. Never depend so much on anyone that they could ruin you. Ensure that you'll always land on your feet, even if they betray.

Read more:

- Fortressing strategies for top-1% men

Law #24: Learn Office Politics, But Never To The Detriment of Skills & Results

✖ Law 24: Play the perfect courtier
✓ Law 24: Be a king

⍰ Law of Power #24 is Dated Because Modern High-Value Men Don't Need to Be 'Yielding' to Win

Greene states that the perfect courtier is 'yielding and indirect', associated with submissiveness, low power, and low honor.
It may have been helpful with egotistic kings, but modern high-value can skip it.

⍰ Modern Application: Live Like a King

Modern high-value men don't need to be literal kings to live like kings.
Smart and strategic men can have it all: attractive women, a life of freedom, and the fulfillment of pursuing meaningful goals.

Law #27: Create A Self-Help Movement of Easy Fixes

✖ Law 27: Play on people's need to believe to create a cult-like following
✓ Law 27: Market easy fixes

⍰ Law of Power #27 is Dated Because Cults Attract Low-Value People

With mass education and secularization, cults struggle to gain traction—attracting mostly the gullible and needier (the 'value-control tradeoff™' principle).

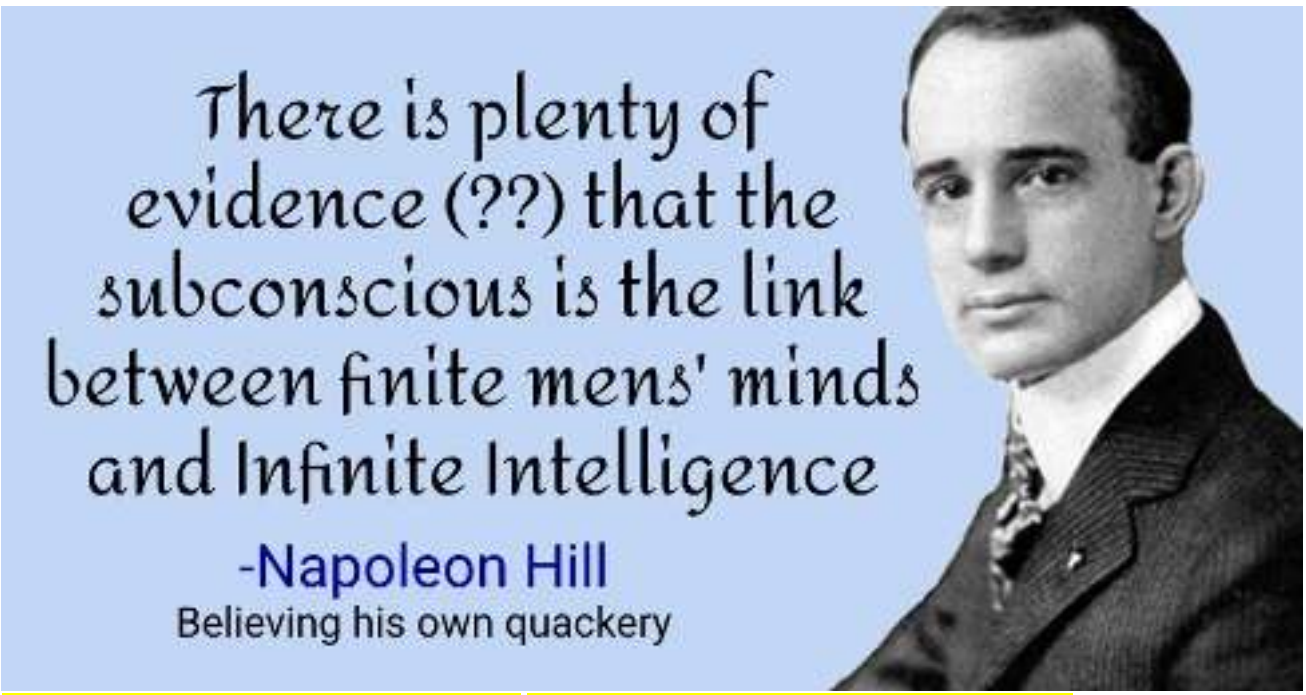
Beyond being dishonorable, modern high-value men can do better than leading a pack of bottom-1%.

⍰ Modern Application: Sell Hope & Fast Results

The most profitable modern cults are self-help movements of dogmatism and easy solutions.

There is an endless market for this naive self-help, ranging from the law of attraction to pop-psychology 'tricks'.

In many ways, that's *The 48 Laws of Power* 'secret': simple laws that are supposed to make you powerful (they may not).



The blurring line between self-help, quackery, and nonsense started with '*Think and Grow Rich*'

Law #30: Make Your Accomplishment Inspirational – They Can Do It Too!

✖ Law 30: Make your accomplishments seem effortless.
✓ Law 30: Make your accomplishment seem impossibly hard: they'll admire you, and nobody will try to match you

⍰ Law of Power #30 is Dated Because Today's Culture Respects Hard Work

Today, people admire and respect hard work.
Talent alone may even make you less authoritative (ie, 'it's easy for him, he's good looking').

Instead, everyone loves and respects hard-working underdogs. Most modern influencers use this new law:

Gary Vee, Tony Robbins, Alex Hormozi and almost every modern 'success influencer' play up hard work

⍰ Modern Application: Frame it as Both Talent & Hard Work

Deep down, innate talent always impresses because it's a timeless indicator of 'good genes'.
So, to combine the best of both worlds, play both.
This is the frame:

> It always came easy for me, and I also worked on it hard

Law #34: Dress With Sprezzatura to Display Power

✖ Law 34: Be royal in your own fashion: act like a king to be treated like one.
✓ Law 34: Dress down when others must dress up to display your power and independence

⍰ Law of Power #34 is Dated Because Brands & Suits Don't Signal Power Anymore

Dressing well signaled power when dressing well was hard. Not anymore: suits and knock-off brands are available to everyone.

If anything, overdoing 'royal fashion' with business attire can signal lower-class overcompensation.

⍰ Modern Application: Dress Casual to Display Superiority When Everyone Else Must Follow Dress Code

Dressing down when others must dress up signals you're above the rules.

A good power move is to mix real wealth indicators with dressing down. For example, nothing screams "I don't need your approval" like a disheveled man getting out of a Ferrari.

Modern disdain for appearances can also signal agentic goal-focus, an evolution apparent in Steve Jobs.

Powerless Steve Jobs on the left; powerful Steve Jobs on the right

Lucio's note: dress well for attraction

Dressing to look good is important in dating and when working your way up. Dress well, without being a try-hard.

Law #38: Conform to the Leaders When Starting, But Soon Make *Others* Adapt to You

✖Law 38: Think as you like, but behave like others.
✓ Law 38: Think, be, and behave as you like, find others who do the same, and avoid sheep

Law of Power #38 is Dated Because Modern Empowered Men Don't Need to Toe Anyone's Line

Conforming is still helpful when starting out, but it holds you back as you grow.
Most of all, never adopt it as a mindset. Today, this law is **too disempowering for modern high-value men**.
Always think of yourself as a free man, and work to soon mold it into your reality.

Modern Application: Be a Leader, Not a Follower

Conform to the leaders and the role you want to have, not to random others ('power alining' in our lingo).

But most of all, focus on gaining status so you can lead. Or quit the hierarchy altogether, do your own thing, and be your own man.

Law #46: Appear Perfect

✖ Law 46: Never appear too perfect
✓ Law 46: Appear as perfect as possible

Law of Power #46 is Dated Because Modern Men Don't Depend On Lower-Value

People to Like Them

The original law made sense in a world of small and fixed tribes, but today it pays better to be bolder.

Also read:

- Frenemies and how to spot frenemies (frenemies are the envious par excellence)
- Vulnerability is not power: don't overdo it

⍰ Modern Application: Leave Behind Average Frenemies, Focus on Yourself & Associate With High-Quality People

> Focus on winning, instead of making losers feel better about themselves.

In the modern world of interconnected high mobility, you can leave average people behind and associate with other winners.
Do that.

How to Win in the Modern World

If Robert Greene's laws are the operating system of the past, you can improve on a 400-year-old code.

In the age of AI, digital reputation, and high mobility, following dated advice isn't just slow, but a liability.

We constantly upgrade Power University to be the ultimate update. It's the only strategy lab designed for high-value men who want to master the science of modern influence, power, and dominance.

Check Power University

The Upgraded 48 Laws of Power for Contemporary Manipulators (Part 3)

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 August 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Upgraded 48 Laws of Power reviews "The 48 Laws of Power" by Robert Greene with contemporary interpretations and examples.

You can read the previous installments here:

- The Updated 48 Laws of Power Book 1
- The Modern 48 Laws of Power Book 2

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- SUMMARY

Law #34: Dress With Sprezzatura to Display Power

✘ Law 34: Be royal in your own fashion: act like a king to be treated like one.
✓ **Law 34:** Dress royally. Unless you're already powerful and rich. In which case, dress how the hell you like

Law of Power #34 Explanation

This is another rule which applied better in the old days.

In the past dressing well was the prerogative of well-off people, so high quality dresses were a major indicator of wealth and power.

I am listening now to the biography of Casanova.
Casanova slept with a ton of women, and did so in what was a very sexually conservative society. One of the keys to his success was power: he was a wealthy nobleman, and one of the main ways he conveyed his status was with his clothes.

But today?

Today almost anyone can afford to dress well.

This is not to say that you shouldn't dress well.
I *love* dressing well and it's a huge tool of personal influence and persuasion.

But today things have changed, and the rules invert at the very top. At the very top, a disdain for appearances can become a power display.

Nothing screams “I don’t need your approval” like a disheveled man mounting on a Ferrari like he had not a care in the world.

Why?

Because not caring for what others think is either the sign of a low-quality individual or… The sign of power and superiority.

In today’s world dressing poorly and/or simply has also become a status symbol for entrepreneurs, so consumed by their visions that they can’t find the time for “appearances”.
Avoiding suits and fine clothes makes the entrepreneur look monk-like deep and consumed by his lofty goals.

Law of Power #34 Example: Steve Jobs’ Evolution of Style

Nassim Taleb makes the case that rich people cuss and dress down as a power display.

Why?

Because cussing means you don’t need to follow the PC etiquette and you’re not afraid of pissing off anyone (both major signs of “f*ck you money” and independence)

Dressing down is similar, sending the message that you don’t need to obey the rule styles that the herd must obey.

See how Steve Jobs changed style over time:

Powerless Steve Job on the left; powerful Steve Jobs on the right
Steve Jobs on the left didn’t have the power to dress as he wanted (the name tag is another indicator of low power).
Steve Jobs on the right instead was top dog, and he could dress as he pleased.

Law #38: Behave Like Others When Learning, Then Switch: Power Makes *Others* Adapt

✘ Law 38: Think as you like but behave like others.
✔ **Law 38:** Behave like others while you are still climbing the ladder. Once you’re on top make others adapt to you

Law of Power #38 Explained

The original law from "The 48 Laws of Power" is good to *climb* to power.

But it's not good for established power players.

From a mindset point of view, even while climbing the true Machiavelli knows that his "fitting in days" are numbered.
The true power power player wants to *shape* cultures, not adapt to them.

Because, if you think about it, what's the alternative?

If all you worry about is fitting in and dancing on someone else's tune… Guess what, your future is written.
And it's the future of a sheep.

Also read:

- Office power plays (it's a humorous article, but also based on how some power-obsessed Machiavellian think)

How to Fit In to Acquire Power

Let me repeat this:

You *do* want to fit in as a trainee, a junior employee, a manager and even maybe up to executive role.

This is something I describe in "How to Become A Leader", which I recommend you check out if you're serious about leadership.

But as you get closer and closer to the top, you want to focus less on fitting in and more on influencing the culture.

And same for what we said for personal style, a display of quirkiness going against the grain is also a display of power.
It says that you can allow yourself to be *you*.

Law of Power #38 Example: Gianni Agnelli & Sprezzatura

Gianni Agnelli was a cool man.

Born into money aristocracy, he was known as the "rake of the Riviera" even while he kept a steady and (seemingly) happy marriage.

He wasn't the type of rake who only slays because of his power and money though, and his conquests included equally powerful women.
Jackie Kennedy, JFK's wife, flew to the Amalfi Cost just to spend the holidays with him, and a defensive US president hat to plead her for "more first lady, less Agnelli".

But Gianni wasn't "just" a womanizer.

He enjoyed women, but wasn't the type of man to let women steer him off his path.
And with a mix of business acumen and charm, he led his family business to become Italy's biggest industrial complex.

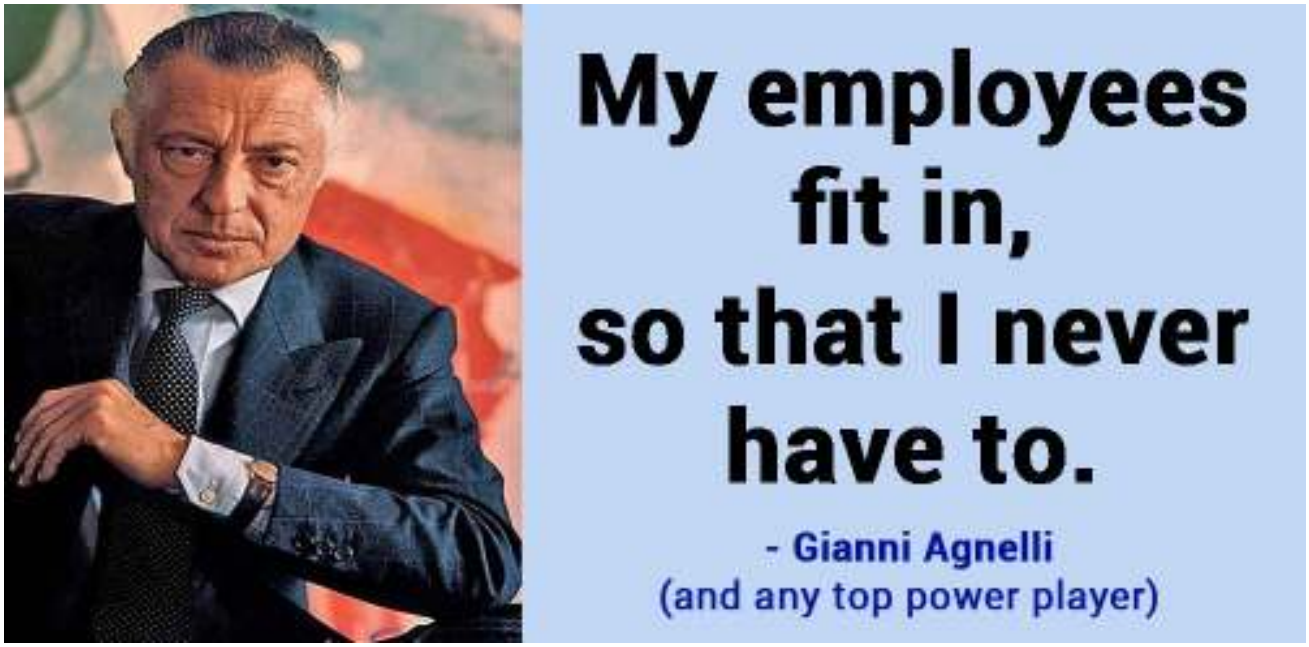
Famous for his conquests, business success and style… Why would such a man wear his watches on the outside of his shirt?

There are a few rumors as to why he did it.
But ultimately, it's because he could.

Where you wear your watch is *purely* cultural.
Nobody says it must be inside the shirt, or your left. People wearing it "the proper way" are fitting in.

But Agnelli didn't need to fit in.
And he didn't want to.

The watch on the outside of his shirts was his way of saying "I got f*ck you money and f*ck you power, so f*ck your rules, you follow them".



The watch on Agnelli's wrist cuff says "I have the power to buck the social rules"

Law #39. Strategically Roil Your Opponents & Lead Them to Overreact

✘ Law 39: Stir up waters to catch fish.
✔ **Law 39:** Roil your opponent whenever a clear mind provides an edge, but be careful that an emotional opponent will not instead gain an edge

Law of Power #39 Explained

This rule actually works even better in modernity.

Why?

Because we condemn violence and overreactions even more so than we did in the past.

However, it's still a big mistake to generalize.
Greene says that "anger and emotions are counterproductive", but that's now always true.

We will see two examples for each to learn how to properly use the law of power #39.

Law #39. Example: Successfully Stirring Fish (Marco Materazzi)

Raise your hand if you know Materazzi.

Unless you're into football, like *really* into football, then you probably don't.
You see, Materazzi is not a great player.

Not with his feet, at least.

But when it comes to stirring up waters, he pulled the biggest feat ever in football.

Italy and France, two countries with a strong sports rivalry, were battling it out in the world cup final, the biggest sports event ever.

The two teams were tie 1-1 but France, led by its best player ever Zinedine Zidane, was going on the assault.
Zidane was an experienced player who had already won a world cup -the first ever for France-.
Winning two world cup would have consecrated him into the Olympus of the best players ever.
And this was his last match ever, making everything more legendary.

Zidane seemed on his way into legend-hood already.

He scored the first goal, and did so with a "panenka" penalty kick, a football power move hat had embarassed the Italian goalie.

It's hard to overstate the significance of that panenka.
Zidane scored it against keeper Gianluigi Buffon, who happened to be the captain of the Italian squad, the main alpha male of the team, one of the best players in that tournament, and widely considered to be the best keeper ever.
Buffon was representing the Italian team, and Zidane made a mockery out of him.

See the panenka here:

Embarassing the Italian captain with a panenka kick was a highly significant power display by Zidane. Captain VS captain, it was the equivalent of saying "I'm the true master here". And embarassing the best goalie ever was a statement as to "who" was the real best player.

Yours truly was on the edge of his seat for the whole night.
It all seemed set to be Zidane's crowning night. And a searing defeat for the Italians.

And it might have worked that way.

If it wasn't for Materazzi stirring up waters.

Nobody knows exactly what Materazzi said to Zidane.
But it changed the course of history.

Zidane overreacted, lost his head and sank it deep into Materazzi's chest.

Materazzi then played the game, pretending it hurt more than it actually did. And Zidane was thrown out of the game.

See the video here:

What a shameful way of ending what should have been a glorious career.

Some people defended Zidane and roasted Materazzi.
And, honestly, Materazzi has often been a very dirty player and I can't support him outside of this very specific game.

But Zidane shouldn't have let a few curse words to the women of his family get to him, which is a typical reaction of controlling men (and the most backward Islam).
He deserved to end in ignominy.

In that game, Marco Materazzi, a mediocre player against a legend, was a true hero for all the world's underdogs.

Law #39 Reverse Example: McGregor Loses Stirring Up Waters

Stirring up waters can lead to violence or war.

When that's the case, it might be that both sides lose.

And anger and rage in contact sports can be an advantage *for your opponent.*
For example, many have argued that Khabib destroyed McGregor also thanks to the rage that he brought into the

ring.
And that rage was there because of McGregor trying to stir up waters.

McGregor's "stirring water" technique likely made his opponent stronger (and sure made him look like a big mouth after the bout)

Even in non-contact sports, people who are good at channelling that anger can turn your stirring into motivation.

Legendary coach Phil Jackson shares in his biography the story of Derrick stirring up waters with Michael Jordan. The Grizzlies were winning against the Chicago Bulls, and Derrick thought well of stirring waters and taunting Michael Jordan.

Big mistake.
This is what Michale Jordan told him:

Stirring water with individuals like MJ is counterproductive
And then proceeded to unleash hell.
MJ led the Bulls to turn around the match and to inflict an historical beating on the water-stirrer.

What does it all mean to you?
What should you do, stirring or not stirring?

Stirring Up or Not Stirring Up?

As we've seen, stirring up water can be dangerous.

As a rule of thumb, do this:

- On pure mental games of concentration where rationality and coolness rule, stir your enemies
- With opponents who know how to channel their rage appropriately use the opposite strategy and induce them into a false state of tranquillity instead (play a sucker to catch a sucker)

Law #41. Learn From The Best Leaders, Leverage Them As Mentors

✘ Law 41: Avoid stepping into a great man's shoes.
✔ **Law 41:** Seek great leaders to learn from

Law of Power #41 Explained

It's partially true what Greene says.

It will always be a challenge being the leader after a great leader.

But what's the alternative?

Waiting it out?
Who knows when your next chance will come.

Moving somewhere else?
Even if nobody knows, deep down *you* will know that you're quitting out of fear.

Again, this is a terribly defensive mindset.
Even more, this is a defetist mindset.

I invite you to take the opposite view.
A great predecessor is a great man to learn from.

You might be able to recruit your great predecessor into your mentor as you take over, and you can use his great work and achievements to spur even bigger achievements.

Even if you aim at being "remembered" as the best -a really hollow mindset you should overcome-, remember this:

> **A dynasty always beats a single good ruler**

A good CEO manages a turnaround, or gives a company a good run. Dynasties create empires.

So don't be a scared bitch: take the challenge and run with it.

Law of Power #41 Example: Baresi and Maldini

Baresi was the captain of AC Milan, and he was one of the finest defenders to have ever played.

Maldini, a promising football rising star, was a born and bred Milan player, coming up from the junior teams of AC Milan.

Eventually, Maldini was old and talented enough to start playing with Serie A teams.
As the up and coming young gun, if he wanted to "avoid stepping into a great man's shoes", he should have left Milan.
He could have sought greener pastures somewhere else and, strong of his talent, become captain soon after and be the undisputed N.1 of a smaller team.

But that would have been a typical "big fish in a small pond" mentality.

And Maldini was better than that.

He stayed and built a great relationship with Baresi, learning all the tools of the trade from the best of the best.

Maldini grew to be one of the finest defenders to have ever played, winning everything there was to win, being part of one of the best teams ever -a title it contends with Messi's Barcellona– and eventually becoming captain after Baresi retired.
Strong of his model-like looks, Maldini also became the (pretty) face of the club and a true "flag" for Milan since

he never switched teams.

In terms of skills, it's hard to say whether or not Maldini surpassed Baresi.
But it doesn't matter: his name only shone bigger because of the partnership at the top.
The two of them are the best defending duo to have ever played together.

Maldini wasn't afraid of stepping into a great man's shoes and became an even bigger legend

Law #42: Purge The Troublemakers

✘ Law 42: Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter.
✓ **Law 42:** Bad influences spread. Make sure you spot and fire the troublemakers early

Law of Power #42 Explained

This law applies well to modernity as group dynamics stayed the same.

The caveat is that you must strike early, because rotten apples can spoil the bunch very quickly.

If you're looking for team performance, troublemakers take on a much wider meaning, including people who:

- Avoid work
- Don't buy into the vision
- Aren't unsupportive of the team

There are good resources on this website grounded on both psychology and power dynamics.
Check out:

- The realpolitik guide to being a good manager
- Toxic employees
- Archetypes of political players

Law #42 Example: Sometimes It's Either Them Or You (Kobe VS Jackson)

Phil Jackson, whom we already saw earlier shares a story all leaders should do well to heed.

Jackson was eventually ousted from the Lakers in good part because of his souring relationship with the team's star: Kobe Bryant.

Jackson implied that Kobe Bryant was too rebellious and uncoachable.
In this interview Bryant implies that Jackson was sneaky and talking too indirectly:

It's difficult getting to know the truth.

Having listened to both I tend to believe that Jackson's approach was too much on the "finessing" side and he might have been more forceful and more direct.

However, once he realized he couldn't fix the rift, he had one option only if he wanted to remain the leader of a healthy team; get rid of Kobe Bryant.

Law #43 Make People Want to Follow You

✘ Law 43: Work on the hearts and minds of others.
✓ **Law 43:** Make people *want* to follow you

Law of Power #43 Explained

Law #42 is the opposite of Greene's "air of terror" law.

And albeit they both might have a place, law #43 works better on most occasions and with most people.
And *especially* so in our modern world of democracy and personal freedoms.

Also read:

- How to be charming
- The Art of Seduction

Law #44. Use The Mirror Effects To Oust The Established Power

✘ Law 44: Disarm and infuriate with the mirror effect
✓ **Law 44:** Use the mirror effect when you are the upstart and you are trying to unsettle more powerful and more established players

Law of Power #44 Explained

The "mirror effect" can be very powerful, but it has a limited scope.

Why?

Because while it can infuriate, it also shows you are overly-invested into your opponent (rather than your own life and goals).
And over-investing into someone is the clear sign your opponent is holding sway over you.

There is however one use of the mirror effect.

And that's when you are dealing with legends and/or opponents who are obviously better than you are.

In those cases, it's OK for you to over-invest in them because it's already obvious to everyone they are better while you still need to prove yourself.

Law #43 Example: Unsettling The Established King (Valentino Rossi)

Valentino Rossi had been the dominant figure of motorbike racing for years.

Dominant here not just in wins, but in attitude as well: Rossi was (covertly) obsessed with power and dominance.

During my formative years, Rossi is one of the guys from whom I learned the most about dominance, power, and power dynamics.

But here is a truth of life: no lion reigns forever on sheer force.
And eventually the upcoming young guns started claiming the throne.

Jorge Lorenzo was the first aspirer to the throne.
And to unsettle his rival, he used the mirror effect.

Valentino Rossi, extroverted and exuberant, was famous for mocking his opponents and staging post-race theatrical celebration.
Jorge Lorenzo, reserved, introverted and somewhat socially awkward, wasn't the type.

But he forced himself and started copying Rossi's post-race celebrations. Here is one example where Lorenzo indirectly mocked Rossi for finishing the race much farther behind.

The most dramatic example of the "mirror effect" though was with a later upcoming young gun: Marc Marquez. Marquez never admitted it, but he was obsessed with being the new (and upgraded) Rossi.

He copied Rossi not with his celebration, but with what hurt the most: his wins, his riding style, and his on-track aggression.

The apex of the mirror effect came in the Laguna Seca race.

Years prior Rossi had pulled in Laguna Seca one of the most legendary overtakes ever in the history of motorbike racing by going on the off-track gravel with a bike on slick tires.
See it for yourself here.

Now what does Marquez do?

He overtakes Rossi himself in the *exact* same spot, going outside the tarmac *exactly* like Rossi had done.
See the overtake here.

Marquez would go on antagonizing Rossi in undercover ways and trying to prevent him from winning a 10th title.

But Marquez did it with a smile on his face, which infuriated Rossi and prompted the old lion to overreact in one of the most dramatic scenes any sport has ever seen.

Watch for yourself:

Law #46: Focus On Doing Your Best First – Learn Strategic Vulnerability Later

✘ Law 46: Never appear too perfect.
✔ **Law 46:** Show strategic vulnerability when appropriate. If you're not sure when, stick to always do your best no matter what the envious will think

Law of Power #46 Explained

This law works differently for the ancient world and modernity.

In the past, appearing perfect for kings and masters was advisable for kings and masters, but dangerous for underlings ("never outshine the master").

Today, it's different.

We live in democracies where (on paper) everyone is the same. But we also live in an iconoclastic culture that does not respect ranks and authority nearly as much as it did in the past.

Today everyone is invited to feel the same as their bosses and masters, which creates a ripe environment for envy and jealousy.

In this environment, "never appearing too perfect" can make sense. Even for an already powerful individual.

Perfection funnels envy and resentment, and does so especially in certain types of individuals.
For example:

- Men can be jealous of a successful woman when said men feel that women should be inferior
- As Taleb correctly points out, an ivy-league educated man will be resentful of a self-made man without education because some ivy-league individuals feel "superior" to uneducated men
- Rich-countries' citizens can be jealous of immigrants who become successful because they (secretly) feel like immigrants should do menial tasks

In these cases it might make sense to appear less than perfect IF you want to be accepted and welcomed by the group who feels envious of you.

But there are important psychological caveats for this rule.

It does not apply If the envious people have little power over you and if you could care less about them.

And it does not apply to people who admire you deeply, care for you and are not ambitious (or dickhead) enough to feel superior to you.

In all these cases, don't heed the advice of "making mistakes on purpose", which is one of the most stupid "social skills" tip I've ever read.

> **Focus less on making mistakes and more on producing mistake-free work**

This is the truth:

It takes a lot of emotional intelligence to understand when strategic weakness is called for.
People who haven't reached that level and/or haven't acquired enough power yet should not focus on this rule.

Also read:

- Frenemies and how to spot frenemies (frenemies are the envious par excellence)
- Vulnerability is not power: don't overdo it

Law #47: If You're Doing Better Than Expected, Double Down

✘ Law 47: Do not go past the mark you aimed for; in victory know when to stop.
✔ **Law 47:** If you were aiming for 90 and getting 95, try to go for 100, too

Law of Power #47 Explained

This is another law that applies more to the war fields that Greene loves so much than to modern social life.

In the old battlefields over-stretching your supply lines and entering too deep into enemy territory was dangerous (see Operation Barbarossa and Napoleon's invasion of Russia)

But in normal life, if you are doing better than you expected, you should likely double down your efforts instead of stopping earlier.

That's how power players act.

Real power players, especially the ones who climb fast, think in terms of “faster, bigger, greater”.

Law of Power #47 Example: Going For The Bigger Deal

Blow is a movie based on the real story of George Jung.

And sure, Jung he was in the drug business and that didn’t end up well.

But it’s the *mindset* here that is common to all power players, including the ones in legal businesses.

And this is the mindset of how some individuals acquire power *fast*.

In Jung’s career, when the business was going well with the weed the average guys in the team were happy with a good, but not life-changing sum of money.
They would have stopped there.

But Jung smelled the opportunity for *real* money and power.

Jung saw the business had potential, and he immediately thought about overshooting his goal and supplies and go directly to the sources.

And this is exactly how many fast-climbing power players think and act.

To stay within movies, it’s how Tony Montana in Scarface thinks and behaves.

But it’s also how Trump thinks and behaves.
In his movie “The Art of The Deal” Trump shows the typical “more, more, more” attitude of the fast-climbing power player.

It’s the attitude of going past his mark that allowed Trump to win the presidency while most people laughed at his campaign and called him unfit for the presidency.

Law #48: Remain Open to New Ideas – The Law of Teachability

✘ Law 48: Assume formlessness
✔ **Law 48:** Never assume you have “arrived”, but remain teachable and open to new ideas

Law of Power #48 Explained

Remaining “adaptable” is one of those suggestions that’s easy to give but difficult to apply.

What does it even mean, and where, when and how do you apply it?

The best interpretation in our modern world of fast change is to remain teachable and learnable.

Idiots repeat the same thing over 30 years and call it “experience”.
Fools end their training, get their diplomas and feel like they have arrived.
Real wise men keep searching for new answers and new wisdom until they die.

Also read:

- Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Lean
- Mindset
- How to develop a growth mindset

SUMMARY

The 48 Laws of Power is a wonderful book about power, but its laws are too specific and mostly suited for the ancient world.

This article puts the laws in perspective and adds modern examples and interpretations.

You can find the two previous installments here:

- The Updated 48 Laws of Power Book 1
- The Modern 48 Laws of Power Book 2

PS.:
To keep this series streamlined I skipped some laws because they overlap with previous laws (for example: “dazzle with spectacles” is “learn to leverage politics and appearances but never to the detriment of skills and results”).

Note:
As usual, The Power Moves does not encourage or condone amorality. Use responsibly.

The 48 Laws of Power for Honorable Leaders

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 August 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Are you ambivalent about "*The 48 Laws of Power*"?

If so, all honorable men are.
I also want to win, but I prefer winning with win-win approaches and achieving my goals while adding value to the world.
It's doable, because I've done it.

And the research literature shows that **immorality often harms a leader's ability to attract, retain, and get the most out of talented followers**. Instead, leaders who are seen as having integrity tend to attract, retain, and get the most out of competent men who can choose their leaders.

So in this article, we'll turn the 48 Laws of Power into the new "48 Laws of Leadership":

⁉ For the complete book guide, see the main 48 Laws of Power guide.

The 48 Laws of Leadership

✘ Law 1: Never outshine the master
✓ **Law 1: Honor Mentors Until Growth Stalls**
Respect your mentors and stick with them as long as you are learning. Once you're better, focus on moving past them: it's best for all.

✘ Law 2: Never put too much trust in friends, learn to use enemies.
✓ **Law 2: Pick Trustworthy People, and Prepare Contingency Plans Anyway**
Give enough trust to people that they feel empowered, but not enough that they could ruin you. Learn to tell trustworthy individuals from toxic ones and make sure you only have trustworthy ones around.

✘ Law 3: Conceal your intentions.
✓ **Law 3: Align Your Values to Your Goals for Authentic Honesty**
You can't 100% honest, 100% of the time. But be 'as honest as possible'. Be strategic in competitive environments, but be more honest in close and win-win personal relationships to get the best of both worlds.

✘ Law 4: Always say less than necessary.
✓ **Law 4: Speak Wisely to Earn True Respect**
Speak only when needed and when you can add real value. That way, people will come to see you as a true wise man and everyone will listen when you open your mouth.

✘ Law 5: So much depends on reputation. Guard it with your life.
✓ **Law 5: Ensure People Know You're a Honorable Man. Especially other Quality People**
Don't become a slave to what people think of you. And remember: only reputation with honorable and high-impact people matters. Forget the rest.

✘ Law 6: Court attention at all costs.
✓ **Law 6: Build Inner Strength Over External Validation**
Narcissists are weak and, dependent on external validation as they are, not in control of themselves. Make yourself into a man who does not depend on external validation instead (read "the antifragile ego" to start).

✘ Law 7: Let others do the work for you, but always take credit.
✓ **Law 7: Give Credit to People Who Earn It: They'll Work Even Harder**
Build your team around group identities and foster an environment where people want to work "for the team". You will automatically reap the benefits as a leader.

✘ Law 8: Make other people come to you. Use bait if necessary.
✓ **Law 8: Attract Through Your Quality & Copetence**
Pull is always better than push. Make people *want* to come to you based on your knowledge, skills, and personality.

✘ Law 9: Win through your actions, never through argument.
✓ **Law 9: Win with Actions and Arguments**
Actions and arguments are two faces of the same coin. Make sure you're good at both and that your actions and words support and reinforce each other.

✘ Law 10: Infection: Avoid the unhappy and the unlucky.
✓ **Law 10: Help Great People Up When They're Down. Avoid Takers**
Help momentarily unhappy and unlucky people: they will love you once back on their feet. Avoid toxic people, no matter how lucky or happy they are. Also: luck doesn't exist. you make your own luck.

✘ Law 11: Learn to keep people dependent on you.
✓ **Law 11: Excel to Make Everyone Want You**
Avoid the mindset of keeping others dependent. While it seems powerful, it's needy. Strong men don't even want dependent people because they're a burden to them.

✘ Law 12: Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victim.
✓ **Law 12: Build Goodwill With Honorable Character**
You will not be able to always be 100% honest, but strive to be as honest as you can, as often as you can. Every time you behave ethically and in line with your professed values, you build a reservoir of goodwill.

✘ Law 13: When asking for help, appeal to people's self-interest, never to their mercy.
✓ **Law 13: Pay Enough, and Inspire with Higher Ideals**
Avoid appeals to self-interest only, or you attract low-quality people who only think of "what's in it for me". Psychology shows that extrinsic motivation and appeals to higher ideals work better.

✘ Law 14: Pose as a friend, and work as a spy.
✓ **Law 14: Be a True Friend to Great People, Spot False Ones**
Be a good friend, but learn to judge people's true character. Learn to read the signs of frenemies and drop these people.

✘ Law 15: Crush your enemy totally.
✓ **Law 15: Avoid Wars, Display Teeth to Discourage Aggressors. But Win Whenever Attacked**
There will never be a war to end all wars, so always seek to avoid wars. But if you really must, attack covertly or make it impossible your enemy can retaliate (crushing him may be a valid option then).

✘ Law 16: Use absence to increase respect and honor.
✓ **Law 16: Deliver Value With Your Presence So Your Absence Hurts**
Focus on delivering as much value as possible with your presence. Then, once you're away, your presence will be sorely missed.

✘ Law 17: Keep others in suspended terror: cultivate an air of unpredictability.
✓ **Law 17: Make People Admire You, *Respect* You Too, and Always Punish & Banish Takers**
Make others admire you is your goal #1. But if someone disrespects you, put them back in their place. Admiration and respect, even respect out of fear, aren't opposite, they go together.

✘ Law 18: Do not build fortresses to protect yourself – isolation is dangerous.
✓ **Law 18: Fortify Wisely, Without Making it Look Like You Are**
A bastion of power to retreat to will make you more confident *outside* of it. Ensure you portray them as a power display, rather than defensiveness.

✘ Law 19: Know who you're dealing with- do not offend the wrong person.

✅ **Law 19: Discern Worthy Connections**
The original "law" is based on fear and defensiveness. Instead, know who you're dealing with because not everyone is worth your time, attention, and help.

❌ Law 20: Do not commit to anyone.
✅ **Law 20: Always Have Exit Strategies, and Only Commit to Honorable People**
Commitment limits your freedom, but can also bring benefits. Just make sure it's a win-win. And if they stop contributing, it's fair for you to move on.

❌ Law 21: Play a sucker to catch a sucker- seem dumber than your mark.
✅ **Law 21: Feign Weakness Strategically**
If you are not yet sure who you're dealing with, pretend to be dumber to truly assess people's character. And if you must go on a war path, pretend to be weaker and dumber to induce your opponent into mistakes.

❌ Law 22: Use the surrender tactic: transform weakness into power.
✅ **Law 22: Shun Unwinnable Battles**
Never fight unwinnable wars. Avoid most "winnable" wars, too: they rarely are as "winnable" as they look on paper (and as presented by power-craving generals).

❌ Law 23: Concentrate your forces.
✅ **Law 23: Focus Deeply on What Matters**
Don't waste your time on today's countless distractions. Find something meaningful and fulfilling and give your full attention to it.

❌ Law 24: Play the perfect courtier (royal advisor).
✅ **Law 24: Master Skills, *And* Politics**
Politics is important, but competence is harder currency. Skills are transferable while politics disappear the moment you leave an organization or a group (read "the futility of social status").

❌ Law 25: Re-create yourself.
✅ **Law 25: Craft Your Identity Intentionally**
Choose who you want to be, then work to become it. Choose your identity wisely, because it will determine how you think, how you act, and, ultimately, the direction of your life.

❌ Law 26: Keep your hands clean.
✅ **Law 26: Stay Honorable**
Build your life and character so that you never even have to stain your hands. Little by little, seek to think and behave more and more like the man you aspire to be.

❌ Law 27: Play on people's needs to create a cult-like following.
✅ **Law 27: Become Worthy of Admiration**
People want to look up to someone. Become someone who is worth looking up to.

❌ Law 28: Enter action with boldness.
✅ **Law 28: Boldly Pursue Your Goals From Beginning to End**
Don't just enter bold, *stay* bold. Pick worthy goals, and then commit to them.

❌ Law 29: Plan all the way to the end.
✅ **Law 29: Plan Flexibly Toward Goals**
Things never go according to initial plans, so focus on startig and reinventing along the way. It's all about getting there, not about following plans.

❌ Law 30: Make your accomplishments seem effortless.
✅ **Law 30: Showcase Effort and Grit** T
rain until getting things done will be effortless for you. But never be shy about telling people how hard you worked:

Everyone admires *grit* and staying power, and that's what you want to teach your best followers.

✘ Law 31: Control options: get others to play with the cards you deal with.
✓ **Law 31: Nudge to Make Others Fel Empowered; Command When Required**
Nudge towards a certain option. But if you're sure about the path, don't be afraid to tell the team what's gonna happen. People respect masculine but fair commands.

✘ Law 32: Play to people's fantasies.
✓ **Law 32: Tailor Pitches to Your Audience**
Pitch your ideas and opinions in a way that fits *your audience*, not yourself.

✘ Law 33: Discover each man's thumbscrew.
✓ **Law 33: Understand People Deeply**
Learn to read people, both bad and good side. But lead mostly with positive appeals, and never with cutting remarks. That's not leadership, that's toxic bullying.

✘ Law 34: Be royal in your own fashion: act like a king to be treated like one.
✓ **Law 34: Dress to Impress, Then Transcend It**
Dress well because everyone judges books by their covers. Once you have enough power, skills, and reputation, dress however you please.

✘ Law 35: Master the art of timing.
✓ **Law 35: Grasp the Zeitgeist, But Transcend It**
Study, learn, and understand the spirit and the zeitgeist. But never let it control you. And don't be afraid to lead towards new ways.

✘ Law 36: Disdain things you cannot have: ignoring them is the best revenge.
✓ **Law 36: Achieve Your Goals, Transcend Materialism**
Weak minds let what they don't yet have control them. Strong minds focus on the work needed to achieve. The enlightned minds learn not to need anything.

✘ Law 37: Create compelling spectacles.
✓ **Law 37: Develop Outstanding Products, Market Them Accordingly**
Marketing and product are two faces of the same coin: curate both.

✘ Law 38: Think as you like but behave like others.
✓ **Law 38: Adapt Then Shape Culture**
Learn how your social group thinks and behaves and, as a beginner, adapt to it. As you grow and start getting more and more responsibility, start shaping that culture for the better.

✘ Law 39: Stir up waters to catch fish.
✓ **Law 39: Zero In On The Issue, Strike With Precision**
Avoid collateral damage: it wastes effort, creates resentment, and it's the hallmark of poor work.

✘ Law 40: Despise the free lunch.
✓ **Law 40: Get What You Earned, & Give to Other Givers**
Despise the freeloader's mindset. Use generosity as a tool for influence and persuasion, and to repay the givers.

✘ Law 41: Avoid stepping into a great man's shoes.
✓ **Law 41: Follow Great Mentors and Outdo Them**
Timidity is for mediocre men. Seek great men to learn from, and be a worthy successor.

✘ Law 42: Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter.
✓ **Law 42: Address Problems at the Root**
If facing a mutiny, address the mutineer first. But fire everyone else too: they already showed their character.

✘ Law 43: Work on the hearts and minds of others.
✓ **Law 43: Appeal to Both Heart and Mind**
Appealing to *both* is often more persuasive (Aronson, 1972).

✘ Law 44: Disarm and infuriate with the mirror effect.
✓ **Law 44: Inspire Mirroring Through Excellence**
Mirroring is following. Don't waste time with low-level power games: become leader others want to mirror, instead.

✘ Law 45: Preach the need for change, but never reform too much at once.
✓ **Law 45: Lead Bold Change Effectively**
Effective change is the hallmark of leadership. Frame it the natural consequence your values, lead the way, praise people embracing change, cut the insubordinate… And soon you'll have a much-upgraded team.

✘ Law 46: Never appear too perfect: it creates envy and enemies
✓ **Law 46: Cultivate a Culture of Learning from Mistakes**
Foster an environment where people aren't afraid of mistakes. Reward those who own up to them and learn from them. But never commit mistakes on purpose to be more "relatable": it levels you *down*.

✘ Law 47: Do not go past the mark you aimed for; in victory know when to stop.
✓ **Law 47: Exceed Goals and Raise Standards**
If your overshoot your goal: keep going. It's the time to be bold and go from victory to triumph.

✘ Law 48: Assume formlessness
✓ **Law 48: Embrace Impermanence Without Attachment**
Enjoy everything, but don't get attached to anything because everything in life is transitory. You included.

Why Honorable Leadership

The 48 Laws of Power is a good text to learn more about power, but focusing on the dark side only isn't realistic, it's biased.

Leadership in democracies and free societies calls for leaders to make other want to follow.
And that's rarely with over-manipulation and games. Coercion and **manipulation become increasingly more obvious over time, harm your reputation, and drive the best people away**.

But let me be honest now:

No list of laws will make you effective. Not at gaining power, and not at leading.
To be really effective, **you must learn how to calibrate the principles.**

That's why in our flagship course we focus not on maxims, but on developing the skills that allow you to be effective any time, anywhere.

Also read:

- Laws of effective leadership
- How to be a great manager
- How to be an honorable man
- **48 Laws vs. Power University**: Power University is our course that turned thousands of men into effective and honorable leaders

Why The 48 Laws Are Wrong: A Scientific Critique of The 'Laws'

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 August 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The 48 Laws of Power is a popular book on power, manipulation, and Machiavellian strategies.

But while many read it for a competitive edge, the truth is that **many of these laws can backfire** when applied rigidly or without calibration, leading to isolation and failure instead of lasting power.

Why are the laws wrong, and what works better?
This article critically examines the 48 laws using logic, power dynamics principles, and scientific research.

⍰⍰ For the overview, see the main 48 Laws of Power guide

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- Is "The 48 Laws of Power" True?
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  - 1. Never Outshine The Master = Dead End Career
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  - 46. Never Appear Too Perfect – But Perfection Awes
  - All Laws Are Contextual (At Best)
  - Contradictions Among Laws
- Conclusion: A Flawed Guide to Power
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Is "The 48 Laws of Power" True?

The 48 Laws of Power are not universally true or effective for most situations.

Its 'laws' are not universal power principles but maxims drawn from historical anecdotes, effective in specific contexts but often counterproductive elsewhere.
Several 'laws' also conflict with empirical research and established social and power dynamics principles.

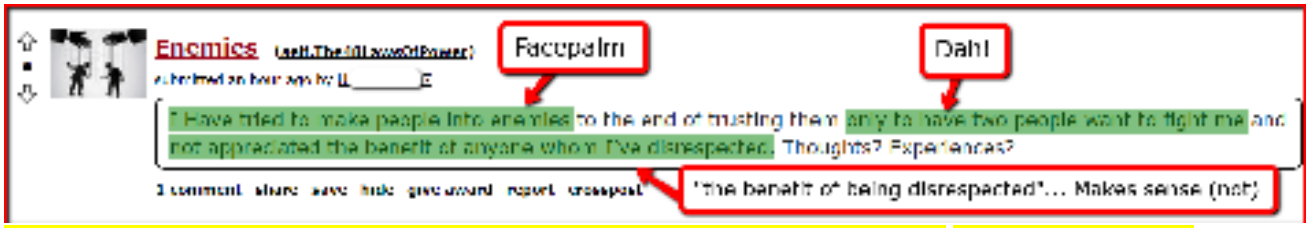
The Dangers of Misapplying the Laws

Countless people take the laws of power as universal truths.

Part of it is due to Greene's persuasive writing and the successful marketing.
The book's messianic tone and popularity enhance credibility because **people assume competence from social proof and confidence** (Schnaubert et al., 2021; Leibenstein, 1950; Cialdini, 1984).

Result: **beginners use these laws in the wrong contexts and *lose* power and opportunities**, appearing sociopathic or inept.

An example from the “48 Laws of Power subreddit”:



Greene’s advice of distrusting friends and making enemies unsurprisingly backfired. Source: original here, recovered thread here

Despite this example being extreme, *most* laws backfire without heavy calibration.

Laws Debunked

Law of Power	Why It’s Wrong
#1 Never Outshine the Master	**Dead-End:** Sticking to this under average bosses leads to stagnation; fast careers require visibility.
#2 Never Trust Friends	**Inefficient:** Cooperation and proven friends outperform strangers and enemies in almost every scenario.
#4 Say Less Than Necessary	**Invisible:** Talkers gain more status, leadership roles, and perceived competence in group settings.
#5 Guard Reputation	**Costly:** Reputation is a resource to be traded for power; focusing on status makes you socially needy.
#7 Let Others Do the Work	**Brain-Drain:** Blatant credit-stealing destroys productivity and drives your top talent to your competitors.
#11 Keep People Dependent	**Low-Value:** Dependency creates “caretaker” costs; high-power individuals associate with self-sufficient, high-value peers.
#13 Appeal to Self-Interest	**Cynic-baiting:** self-interest matters, but higher values and intrinsic motivation build “missionary” engagement & loyalty.
#16 Use Absence to Value	**Forgotten:** Without established leverage, absence = “out of sight, out of mind.” Presence builds value first.

Let’s delve deeper:

1. Never Outshine The Master = Dead End Career

Sheep never outshine the master

While often valid, strict adherence to this law under average bosses leads to mediocrity.

❓ Law of Power #1 is Wrong Because It Slows Down Career Growth

Principle:

⚖️ **The more you appease a fearful boss, the more you remain stuck**

HBR research finds that managers who open doors boost promotions by 30%, while gatekeepers hold careers back. And ADP finds that staying in the same role 3+ years slashes your chances of raises or promotions—proof that 'playing small' under a defensive boss kills ambitious careers.

🤦♂️Lucio's Take: **I regret most the time spent under average bosses**

Lucio:
Ambitious men suffer appeasing average bosses, both psychologically and materially.

My top power moves were gaining the power to not depend on my boss, and when I *quit* having bosses.
⍰ **Why my boss couldn't outshine me** ↗ (video opens in YouTube)

Better Law

✅ Shine strategically, develop your own power base, and quit having a boss

2. Use Enemies Over Friends – But Long-Term Alliances Are Proven to Create Value

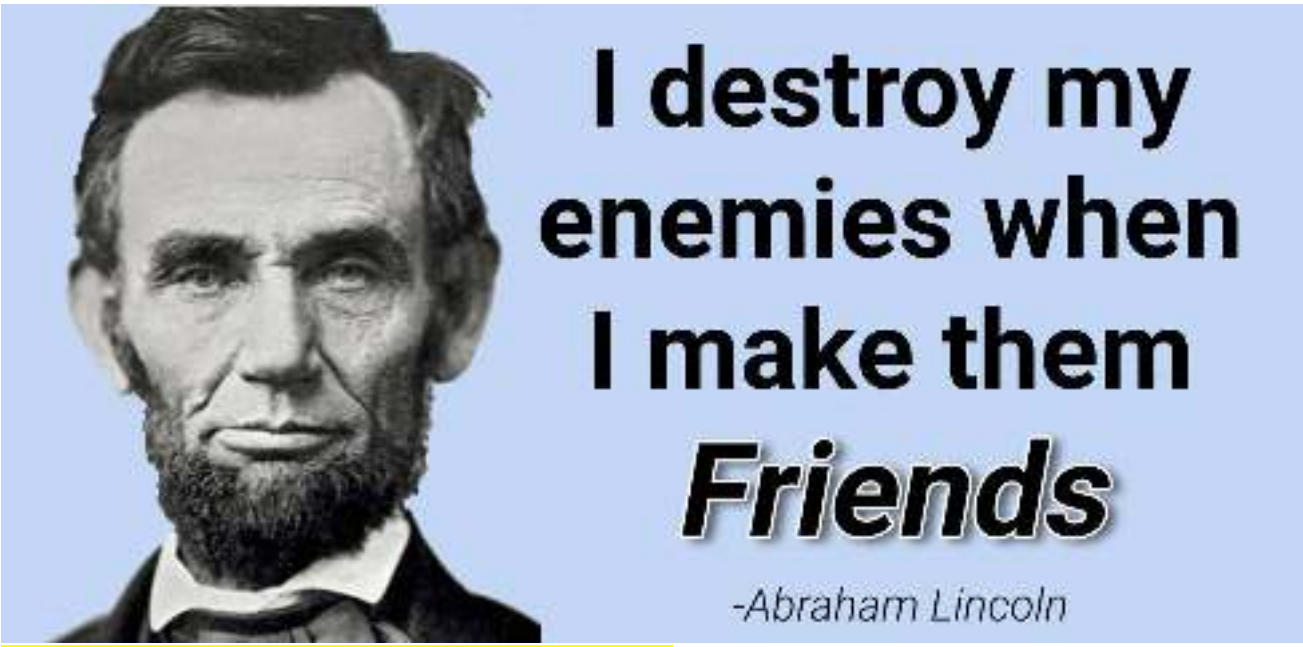
Friends can betray, and enemies can be useful, that's a valid point.
Yet, this law misses the true underlying principle of long-term cooperation and value creation-based trust.

⍰ Law of Power #2 is Wrong Because Proven Friends With a History of Cooperation Are More Trustworthy Than Strangers & Enemies

Principle:

⚖️ **Allies empower, enemies disempower**

In *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Robert Axelrod shows that simple cooperative win-win strategies like 'tit-for-tat' consistently outperformed in long-term competitive environments.
In the real world, even chimpanzee alphas rely on 'friends' over pure strength, and it's only truer for humans (Sapolsky, 2017; Kaburu et al., 2013, Ridley, 1996).



More friends and fewer enemies boost your odds of success

4. Say Less Than Necessary – But Research Says Talkers Gain Status

Silent archetypes can be powerful, and Greene seems to personally dislike flamboyant strategies, but this law only works with established power.

⍰ Law of Power #4 is Wrong Because Talkers Tend to Gain More Visibility and Power

Principle:

⚖ **The more you talk in the initial stages of socialization, the more status you gain**

The research literature points to the conclusion that talkers gain leadership during group formation (MacLaren et al., 2020).

The Psychology of Social Status states (quotes):

- Extroverts emerge as leaders more often (Bass 2008; Judge et al. 2002).
- Competence is judged by confidence, talkativeness, and nonverbal pride (Anderson and Kilduff 2009b).
- Dominance involves assertive behavior, including speaking more

And the *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* notes that **low-power men talk less** (Brescoll, 2011).

Examples of talkative success:

- Ben Shapiro gained influence by talking extensively
- Carlos from our community gained ditching this law

Better Law

✅ Talk less when others must earn your approval, but talk more when you must climb and socialize

5. Guard Your Reputation With Your Life – Not For ‘Sigma Males’ & ‘Reputation Cash-Ins’

If reputation is everything, many manipulative laws warrant a big warning label, as they can easily damage it.

⍰ Law of Power #5 is Wrong Because Reputation is a Tradable Resource & Reputation-Management Must Justify the Costs

Principle:

⚖ **The more one gains by spending his reputation, the more rational it becomes to lose it**

During COVID, Bill Ackman emotionally unraveled about the impending market collapse while buying stocks — arguably trading reputation for generational wealth.
And Trump became the most powerful man in the world despite a highly polarized reputation (video reel ↗).

Also, reputation ties more to status than power.
And academic research suggests that reputation-focus increases dependence, while power makes you *in*dependent.
Quoting from the authoritative 'The Psychology of Social Status':

> **status relies on others** (…) As such, high-status parties (…) strive to fulfill others' expectations (Blader and Chen 2012; Ridgeway 1978, 1982)
> (…)
> In contrast, **power liberates people from social and normative pressures** (Galinsky et al. 2008; Guinote 2007; Keltner et al. 2003).

We encourage our smart and ambitious readers to prioritize power over status.

Better Law:

✅ Always acknowledge key individuals' opinions, but work on your power and independence.

7. Let Others Do The Work And Take The Credit = Undermines Team Effectiveness

The alienation from credit stealing may have been a smaller price for kings with absolute power, but it's costlier today (see 'modern laws of power').

⍰ Law of Power #7 is Wrong Because Credit-Taking Undermines Performance & Leads to Brain-Drain

Principle:

⚖**The more blatantly you steal credit, the more you undermine productivity and drive talent away**

Studies link credit-stealing to employees' anger, lower work outcomes, and increased turnover (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). And based on power dynamics, we can speculate that it's probably the best talent that leaves.
The same applies in interpersonal relationships.

Better Law

✅ Credit the top performers: they'll stay, even more, achieve goals… And you will look like an effective and magnanimous boss

10. Avoid Unhappy & Unlucky – But Struggling Winners Are A Goldmine

Unhappiness and 'lack of luck' are two very different constructs.

⍰ Law of Power #10 is Wrong Because Helping Struggling But High-Value Men is An Opportunity

Principle:

⚖ **The bigger their need, the larger your credit**

Robert Wright hypothesizes that by evolutionary logic, helping those in need affords larger gratitude (larger debt for them, bigger credit for you).
More positively calculative men intuitively understand this social exchange, and see helping struggling winners as an opportunity.

⍰♂Lucio's Experience: **I'll always owe those who helped me in my time of need**

Lucio:
When I was jobless and desperate, Umar's support meant the world. I would drop anything if he called for help.

Better Law

✅ Help struggling but honorable and high-value men, and they'll owe you

11. Learn to Keep People Dependent On You = Costly Dependents

This law 'works', but mirros tactics that abusive partners deploy often out of fear of being left. It's far from the apex of power that some think it is.

⍰ Law of Power #11 is Wrong Because Dependence Creates Costs & Mostly Works With Lower-Value People

Principle:

⚖ **The higher their dependence, the lower their value, and the greater their demands**

Craving dependence signals neediness, creating potentially unhealthy *co*-dependence (Beatty, 1986).
Self-sufficiency is higher power, and academic research on narcissism lists it as adaptive and empowering (Cai and Luo, 2018).

Depedent people also tend to be lower value, as predicted by the social investment model, and supported by

research on mate value (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016).

Better Law

✅ Become self-sufficient, avoid dependents, and associate with high-value people

13. Appeal to People's Self-Interest = Attract Cynics

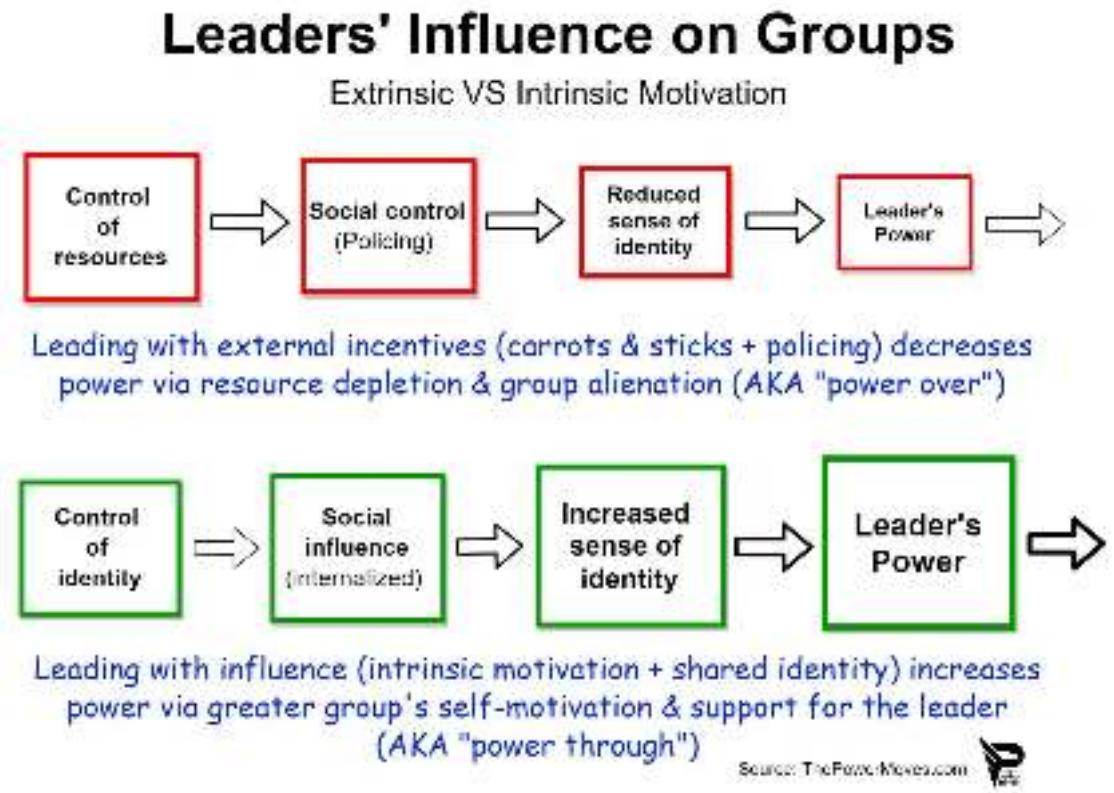
We embrace the 'what's in it for them' mindset, but advanced strategy means avoiding the calculative framing.

⍰ Law of Power #13 is Wrong Because Focus on Self-Interest Attracts Cynics While Higher Values Attract & Motivate Hard-Working 'Missionary Types'

Principle:

⚖ **Intrinsic motivation tends to motivate more, and costs less**

Beyond a minimum salary threshold, research on leadership dynamics suggests that intrinsic motivators outperform purely extrinsic ones based on self-interest.
We may as well say that the pinnacle of leadership is to make followers less self-interested (great leadership is great manipulation principle).



Costly appeals to material self-interest deplete resources, while intrinsic motivation boosts engagement and leaders' influence

Also see:

- How to be an effective leader

Better Law

✅ Meet their self-interest, but appeal to intrinsic motivation and higher ideals

16. Use Absence to Increase Value – But You Need Presence to Gain Leverage

The law applies to a few people with pre-existing social capital, while most others are better served with presence.

⍰ Law of Power #16 is Wrong Because Displaying Value & Gaining Leverage Come First, and Are Always Top Priority

Principle:

⚖ **Value and leverage are created with presence**

Research shows that positive preference is tied to familiarity, and workplace presence leads to promotions (Zajonc, 1968; Bloom et al., 2015).
'Out of sight, out of mind' applies to far more people. Absence is a missed opportunity to impress, gain status, and make valuable contacts.

Remember:

> Absence is only noticed after you've shown that your presence adds value.

Better Law

✅ Display value and gain leverage through presence, then consider strategically pulling back

46. Never Appear Too Perfect – But Perfection Awes

There is some evidence to show that mistakes boost likeability, but **'liked' ≠ 'powerful'** (also see: social vs. power skills).

⍰ Law of Power #46 is Wrong Because Perception of Perfection is Peak Social Power

Principle:

⚖ **The more unreachable and unbeatable you seem, the higher your power**

Keltner & Haidt (2003) propose that extreme talent affords unquestioned loyalty.
Awe leads to a diminished self and identification with the perfect-looking leader.

Charismatic leaders are different and 'superior', and especially so in more extreme circumstances. Research shows that cult followers must believe that the leader possesses exceptional powers (Dawson, 2006).

Better Law

✅ Never average yourself down to avoid average people's envy; shine so bright instead that they could never even imagine tripping you

All Laws Are Contextual (At Best)

And backfire when misapplied. Examples:

- **Court attention at all costs**: Valid for a 'fame strategy to power'. Otherwise, masculine men pursuing goals are better off operating under the radar, saving time and boosting maneuverability
- **Make your accomplishments seem effortless**: The 'law of least social effort' is valid. Yet, in other contexts, showcasing decades of hard work and dedication can display even more value
- **Despise the free lunch**: gifts can make up for exchange or personal value imbalances ('Compensatory Investment Principle™', Buffalmano, 2026). If you're giving more, take those free lunches

Contradictions Among Laws

Just some examples of laws contradicting each other:

Law	Contradiction
Act Like a King to Be Treated Like One → **Stand out**	*Behave Like Others* and *Play the Perfect Courtier* → **Conform**
Win Through Action, Never Through Argument → **Don't try to convince**	*Appeal to Self-Interest* → **Convince with smart framing**
Keep Others in Suspended Terror and Create a Cult-Like Following → **Invincibility & superiority**	*Never Appear Too Perfect* → **Vulnerability & relatability**
Enter Action with Boldness → **Bold action**	*Never Reform at Once* and *Do Not Go Past the Mark You Aimed For* → **Restraint**

Contrary to what some may think, the contradictions in *The 48 Laws of Power* are its smallest issue, as they only highlight that the laws are not universal, but contextual.

Conclusion: A Flawed Guide to Power

The 48 Laws of Power is a valid entry point into power intelligence, strategy, and Machiavellianism for those new and unaware of power dynamics.
It offers intriguing maxims that apply in certain contexts, but backfire in others.

Once you understand the *real* principles and how to use them for real-world outcomes, Robert Greene's books can be a valid addition.
We help men achieve that advanced level with Power University.

FAQs

Is The 48 Laws of Power Worth Reading?

The 48 Laws of Power offers historical insights into manipulation, making it a compelling read for understanding power dynamics. But it's not a reliable guide. Smart readers can pick useful tactics to apply in the right context, but misapplying these laws undermines social effectiveness. Pair it with The Power Moves' frameworks for best results.

Is The 48 Laws of Power Wrong?

Many of The 48 Laws of Power's strategies are only appropriate in limited contexts, and ineffective or counterproductive in many others. For example, using enemies instead of friends (Law #2) is bad advice in most circumstances, while absence to gain respect (Law #16) fails without established value. These laws also promote manipulation, which can backfire in good relationships. Sustainable power stems from high value and contextual applications, and good quality of life benefits from genuine relationships.

What Are the Contradictions in The 48 Laws of Power?

The 48 Laws of Power is riddled with contradictions that weaken its advice. Guarding your reputation (Law #5) clashes with selective honesty (Law #12), as lying destroys credibility. Using terror (Law #17) isolates you, despite warnings against isolation. Saying less (Law #4) contradicts research showing talkativeness builds status. These inconsistencies make the laws unreliable, demanding careful, selective application with emotional intelligence.

Why is 48 Laws of Power banned?

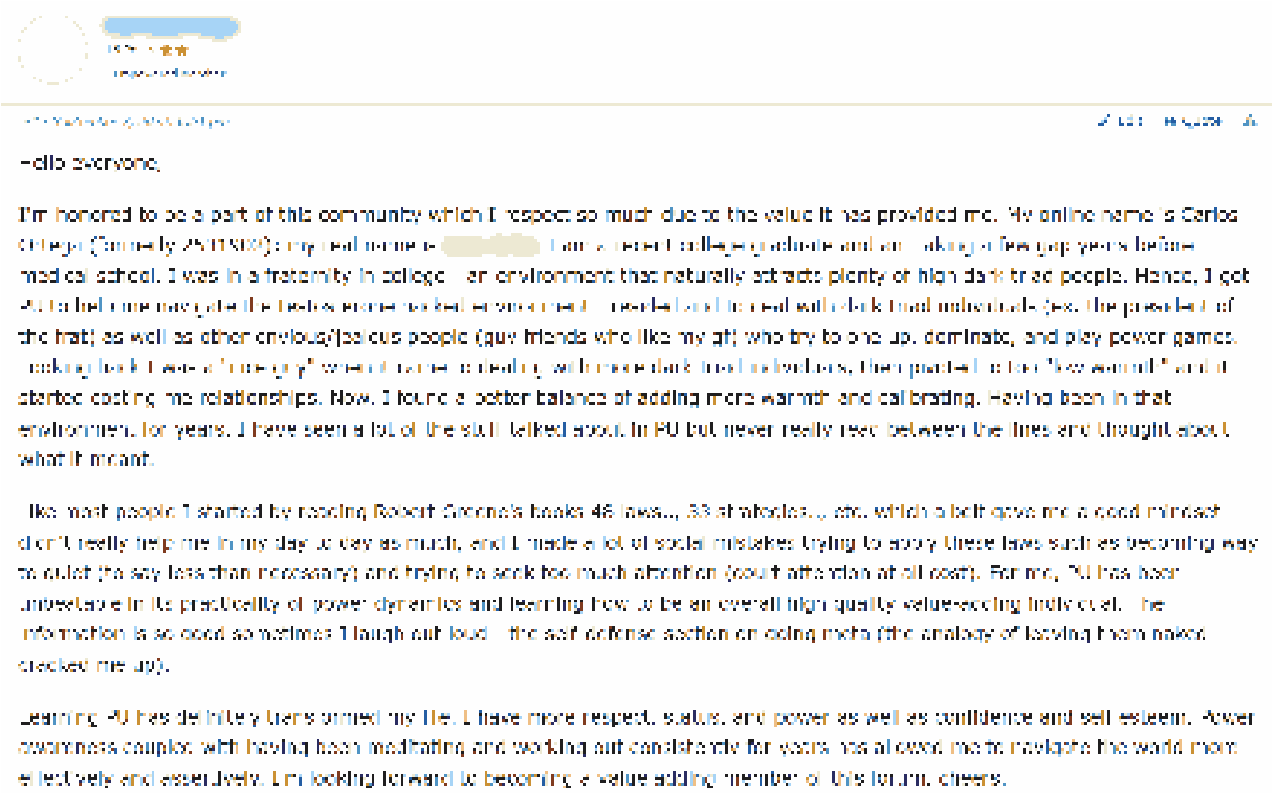
The idea that The 48 Laws of Power is banned is mostly a myth, inflated for marketing buzz. The book is widely available in bookstores, online platforms like Amazon, and libraries worldwide. However, it's restricted in some U.S. prisons. Beyond some selected prisons, no verified bans exist globally—claims about countries like China or Iran lack evidence. Publishers and fans exaggerate the "banned" narrative to boost its edgy appeal, driving sales.

Winning Beyond The 48 Laws

Was this analysis helpful?

If yes, you may find our full course on power even more helpful. We built it to decode, apply, and calibrate the truly foundational principles of power.
Power University delivers measured real-life outcomes in respect, status, attraction, and influence.

This is what one alumnus who found it after *The 48 Laws* said:



> **PU Alumnus**: 48 Laws didn't really help me in my day-to-day as much (…) PU has been unbeatable in its practicality

Check Power University

Evil: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 August 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Evil (1997) is a multi-disciplinary analysis of some of humankind's oldest and most persistent problems: violence, aggression, and cruelty.

Contents

- Notes
- More Wisdom Nuggets
- CONS
- Evil Review

Notes

About the Author:
Roy Baumeister is an American social psychologist, professor at Florida State University, and researcher.

Evil Doers Are Normal People

Baumeister says that to understand evil first of all we must all accept that, under certain circumstances, most people, you included, could commit many of the acts that could qualify as "*evil*".

Also read:

- The Lucifer Effect

The Collective Delusion of "Good"

Not only do most people believe they are good people who deserve good things happening to them, but they also have a rosy view of the world.

Social researchers found out that most people in the West hold the belief that the world is mostly a nice place, mostly fair.

Evil Is In The Eye of The Beholder

Evil is in the eye of the beholder and, most of all, in the eye of the victim.

Most people who commit evil don't see themselves as evil and would not define their actions as evil.

> If there were no victims there would be no evil

Do Violent Perpetrators Intend to Be Harmful? Difficult to Answer...

The author says that only a minority of violent crimes can be justified by "temporary insanity".

But to ask whether violent individuals intend to cause harm is not as easy as it might seem.
In many cases, evildoers (subconsciously) arrange for situations in which they feel they have little choice but to commit their crimes.

My Note:
However, the fact that they arrange for such situations would lead me to move the needle towards deliberateness.

Why Aren't More People Evildoers? Because of Self-Control

If evil is so easy to commit, why isn't there more evil in the world?

Baumeister says that it's because of self-control.

Many people have violent impulses and aggressive thoughts, but they are held back by internal "breaks".

This leads Baumeister to conclude that **the immediate cause of evil is a shortage of self-control**.

Such as evil can happen because of an increase in violent impulses or because of a decrease in self-control (or lack of self-control).
But in either case, the self-control was not enough to stem the aggressive drives.

Are Evil Doers Bred or Born? Both

Baumeister investigates whether evil is mostly the result of nature (genes) or nurture (culture).

Ultimately, the answer must negotiate a mix of both.

This is how Baumeister believes that culture can decrease evil and violence:

> Decreasing the emphasis on pride, self-esteem, and public respect, or providing multiple and clear criteria for proving oneself, may work against the tendency to use violence to maintain one's face.
> A strong cultural belief in the rights of individuals and in the inability of noble ends to justify violent means can help prevent idealism from fostering brutality.

The Steorytipes of Evil

Baumeister lists major stereotypes that most people (wrongly) believe about evil.

He calls it the "myth of pure evil," and it includes:

- **Evil intentionally inflicts harm:** random crimes are unusual and exceptional, yet they are the ones that most often color people's perceptions
- **The victim is good and innocent:** in the myth of pure evil the aggressor shoulders all the blame and the victim has no blame at all. This can happen, but it's the exception and not the rule
- **Evil comes from outside**: evil most often comes from the outside and is different from us
- **Deliberate malice of perpetrators**: this is mostly a victims' point of view. Some perpetrators are sadists who enjoy inflicting pain, but most of the time they are not

Baumeister says that the myth of pure evil survives because it makes victims feel better and because it provides a sort of "moral immunity" to justify violent and oppressive actions

The Magnitude Gap: No Big Deal For The Aggressor, Big Deal For The Victim

To understand evil, it's also important to understand what Baumeister calls the "magnitude gap".

The magnitude gap says that evil acts are almost always of greater importance for the victim than for the perpetrators.

The magnitude gap also includes the gain/loss accounting. The gain for the perpetrator is usually far smaller than the loss of the victim.
This includes burglaries -goods resell at a fraction of their values- or personal crimes such as rape -lasting little for the rapist while scarring the victim for a lifetime-.

Time-wise the evil act quickly fades into the past for the aggressor while it remains a vivid memory in the minds of

the victims.

Victims also tend to describe the evil act as an enormity, while evildoers tend to minimize and describe it in a detached fashion.

The True Cause of Violence Is Too Much Self-Esteem, Not Too Little

Baumeister uses the term “egotism” to describe both the good kind of self-esteem and the bad kind of self-esteem (conceit and arrogance).

There is a widespread belief that acts of violence are the consequence of low self-esteem, but that is not the case. Violence follows from high self-esteem, not low self-esteem.

To be more precise, and quoting the author:

> Violence ensues when people feel that their favorable views of themselves are threatened or disputed by others.
> As a result, people whose self-esteem is high but lacks a firm basis in genuine accomplishment are especially prone to be violence because they are most likely to have their narcissistic bubble burst.

And more:

> A common and important cause of evil is the quest to avenge blows to one’s pride.
> Dangerous people, from playground bullies to warmongering dictators, consist mainly of those who have highly favorable views about themselves. They strike out at others who question or dispute those favorable views.

So just to be clear, high self-esteem by itself does not cause violence and most people with high self-esteem are not violent.

However, violent individuals are an important subset of high self-esteem people.

It’s when that high self-esteem is threatened by an external party that violence can erupt against that external threat.

Zero Tolerance: Blaming Both Victims and Perpetrators

Baumeister takes an unpopular stance here, but I fully agree with him as that’s the only emotionally mature way of approaching the issue in my opinion.

He says that being victimized does not justify a violent response.

And sometimes victims need to be blamed as well, and that goes *without* exonerating the perpetrators.

Instead, he says, American culture seems to forgive the perpetrator if he was previously a victim.

Evil As Manipulation to Fight Wars

The author says that during wars propaganda tried to depict the enemies as pure evil to provide support for the war and an incentive to fight harder.

Because if wars were limited to people who benefit from the war, there would be too few combatants.
So leaders need to find a reason to shore up support for the war.

Unluckily, trying to depict the enemies as evils also serves to increase war atrocities.

Also read:

- **Dark psychology and its uses**

- Politicians' manipulation

The Four Roots of Evil

Baumeister lists four root causes of evil:

- **Means to an end (instrumental evil)**: the more rational side of evil, underpinned by lust, greed, or ambition. For example, the Mongol policy of brutality created terror, but also crime as a shortcut.
  The evidence suggests that violence is a poor means to acquire material wealth and sustain power, but it can create short-term power and dominance in interpersonal relationships (see abusive relationships)
- **Egotism and revenge**: people seek revenge mainly to answer to threats to their self-esteem, aggravated in case of public threats and "what others think".
  "When responding to a blow to one's self-esteem or public image, people will incur costs and losses to hurt the person who humiliated them"
  - **Conceit**: higher levels of egotism lead people to regard themselves as superior. That can lead to evil by not caring how others feel because, for the conceited, others don't matter.
- **Idealism & utopian goals**: it's men who honestly wanted to do something good who committed some of the world's biggest atrocities. Evil is not only acceptable, but it becomes an obligation for the sake of the greater good. The most fanatical and hateful members can become the leaders of the pack in idealistic evil (see Hitler).
- **Sadism / fun**: it accounts for a minority of evil, but it exists

> In the long run, the ends often fail to justify the means, and instead the means tend to contaminate the ends.

Most People Find It Upsetting to Harm Others

Some people have a strong gut reaction to harm others, even when it's appropriate or even when not harming could cause harm to themselves.

For example, one in four American soldiers in WWII could not aim and shoot at the enemy during battles.

German policemen recruited to kill Jews reported physical revulsion on their first day on the job.

And even serial killers sometimes report upsetting experiences on their first killings.

It's not that their moral and ethical principles have been violated, but it's more of a gut reaction.

But Many Also Enjoy Watching Others Suffer

Most people do not enjoy fighting and killing.

But albeit, many people have a revulsion for hurting others, not all do and many more find watching others suffer and die pleasurable.

As Baumeister writes:

> The spectacle of violence holds a fascination that seems to transcend time and culture.

However, this is not to say that everyone who watches or enjoys watching violence would be a perpetrator of violence.

Empathy As The Evil Antidote

Empathy is a powerful inhibitor of evil.

And that's why *psychopaths* who lack empathy commit more crimes and even more violent crimes.

Empathy also emerges later in life, and that's why children can be more sadistic

Empathy's Limitations: Intensity and Circumstances

People are different, and they also differ in their levels of empathy.

Furthermore, in some cases, empathy does not come into play at all.

Empathy is selective and can come into play in certain situations but not in others.
Some people can disconnect their empathic response independently of their overall empathy.

For example, Hitler was a vegetarian and stood firmly against any type of violence and harm against animals.

But Sadistic Pleasure Can Grow Over Time

This was one of the most instructive chapters.

Hans Toch, social psychologist and criminologist, concluded after a long research on violent offenders and violent policemen, that violence is habit-forming and can increase over time.

The author, relying on two different sources (Groth on rapes and Toch on violent offenders), says that around 5% to 6% of violent men are violent because they enjoy the pain they cause.

A few sadists need to overcome the first repulsion towards violence and inflicting pain before becoming sadists.
For example, says Baumeister, many serial killers got their start in the Vietnam War where they were forced to overcome their first resistance to violence.

Sadism is Like Addiction & High Adrenaline

Sadism resembles addiction.

The first puff of a cigarette, glass of beer, or drug experiences are often not the most pleasurable.
But as people keep using, they start getting into the groove, derive more pleasure, and become more addicted.

Baumeister links evil to high-adrenaline experiences such as bungee jumping.
The first time you do it you are super scared and the high you get afterward might not seem worth it.
But as you do it more often, the fear becomes less and less and the high stays the same, compelling you to do it even more often, and possibly from different locations and higher heights.

Similarly, with time it's possible that the sadists experience less and less upset at causing harm while he starts to derive more and more pleasure.

Why Not Everyone Who's Experienced Violence Becomes A Sadist?

Baumeister says that it's most likely guilt that stops many from becoming sadists after they become evildoers for the first time.

Says Baumeister:

> If this analysis is correct, then there is a potential sadist inside everyone, but our conscience and our capacity for guilt keeps it hidden.

Sadism and Need For Power

Baumeister says that one need for sadists might be that of eliciting sincere emotions.

Who would have such a need, he asks?

It's people who seek power.
People who seek power seek an impact on other people's lives and are miserable when they fail to have an

effect on others.

That power might be used for good or for bad, but the end game is similar and it's to produce an effect.

Says Baumeister:

> Rape, sexual harassment, and even children's teasing can also be understood in terms of power motivation.

Through the victim's pain, the sadist gains validation of his own power.

Baumeister says that the true sadist does not lack empathy, and empathy helps the sadist derive maximum pleasure.

Are Sadists Evil?

Baumeister says that sadists do not validate the idea that evil is real among humans.
He says that it's more correct to say that humans come with in-built mechanisms that can be adapted and recruited for evil means.

Criminals Are Short-Term Thinkers

Crime is often the product of short-term thinking, and it offers the emotional thrill that appeals to these types of people.

Criminals tend to show the same lack of control in all other areas of their lives.
For example, they are more likely to drink, use drugs become involved in unplanned pregnancies, get into fights, have car accidents, have unstable marriages, etc.
And if they happen to make some money, they spend it very quickly.

Evil Needs No Encouragement: Only Less Self-Control

Evil does not need to be promoted. It only needs less self-control to emerge.

Self-control can decrease for many different reasons, including:

- Inconsistent, conflicting, or ambiguous obligations
- Authority figures overriding personal judgment
- Focusing on low-level details to avoid dealing with ethics and morals
- Alcohol or drugs
- Culture (can dictate where, when, and how much it's acceptable to lose control)

The media can also help to bring out violent fantasies from people who are already prone to violence (the author quotes FBI expert Ressler, author of "Whoever Fights Monsters").

If Left Unchecked, Evil Escalate Towards Greater Evil Over Time

The first steps in the direction of evil are usually small.

And if they were to stop there, we would live in a much better world**.**

Unluckily though, both history and laboratory studies show that violence tends to escalate over time

Several factors come into play, which increase the intensity and gravity of the evil deeds.

Among the factors which flame the spread of evil:

- **Desensitization**; people get used to violence, stop protesting it and it becomes the new norm (there are exceptions where people move in the opposite direction though)
- **Mutual revenge**: revenge tends to be uncalibrated and much stronger than the initial offense, naturally leading

to escalation

- **Getting away with it**: when bystanders, police, the international community, or anyone who could have done anything fails to intervene, evildoers feel emboldened (example: Turkey with the Armenians)
- **Lack of reaction from the victim**: when the victim fails to react, for example, a spouse who does not leave the marriage, the abuser is likely to feel emboldened
- **Group dynamics**: several group dynamics contribute to individuals' morals being overridden

Guilt, Evil & Rationalization

Guilt is backward-looking, and people will try to avoid behavior they know will make them feel guilty.

If people want to engage in guilt-producing behavior, they will be looking to make excuses before they act.
For example:

- distancing themselves from the victim
- labeling the victims as sub-humans
- focusing on details and operations
- numbing with alcohol or drugs

When there is a strong will to believe, some perpetrators leverage small kernels of truth just to keep duping themselves.

> People will settle for any vaguely plausible argument when they want badly enough to believe that their hurtful actions are justified.

Guilty is unfairly under assault in our culture.
Guilty is a strongly prosocial behavior that underpins our communities.

Highly individualistic American society, says Baumeister, favors individual-favoring high self-esteem and scoffs at community-supporting guilt.

The Kafkaesque Twists to Save Appearances

To stave off guilt and to feel like nobody was doing anything wrong, German authorities at times prosecuted German camp officers who killed Jews without written consent.

Thus, in the camps where Jews were sent to be killed by the thousands, some were being prosecuted for killing Jews.

But those trials served to remind everyone that there was a method and -and morals- in what they were doing.

Bystanders' Support of Evil

Not taking sides often means taking the side of evil.

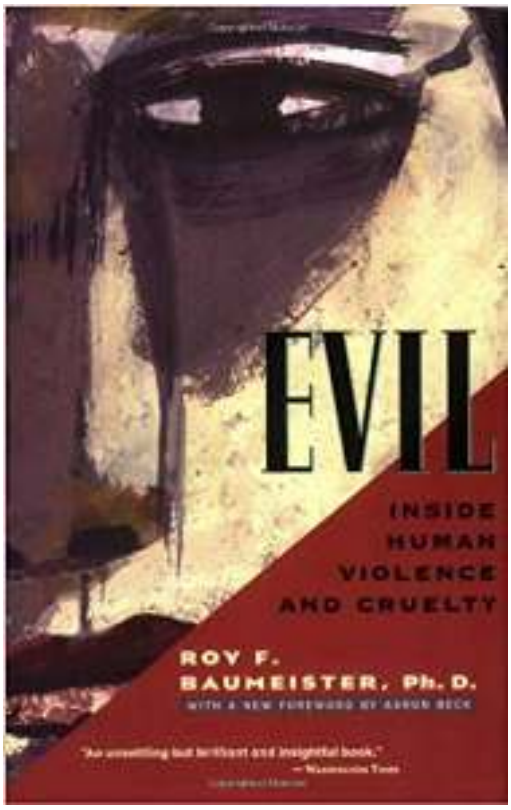
Evil doers will both feel emboldened to keep on going physically, and morally emboldened because if nobody protested then it must not have been too wrong.

Writes Baumeister:

> The victims of evil and violence depend on bystanders to bear witness to what is happening and take a stand against it. It is the only way.

More Wisdom Nuggets

- **Perpetrators feel justified**: Perpetrators often believe to be totally or almost totally justified in their violent response
  - Often perpetrators perceive themselves as under attack by their victims
- **Victims see things in black and white**: and clear right and wrong while perpetrators see a lot more gray areas
- **Victims' accounts often describe perpetrators as deliberately malicious**: while perpetrators' account very rarely describe their actions as mean
- **Some evildoers see themselves as victims**: Many perpetrators, including serial killers, see themselves as victims of the world
- **Blurred lines of guilt**: The lines between victims and perpetrators can often blur in the case of mutual escalation leading to the final act of violence
- **Serial killers are not "genetically different"**: serial killers are far from typical and represent a special case, yet some cultures and eras produce more of them, suggesting the environment can push more people into this exceptional behavior
- **Sexual sadism is rare**: most people in S&M are there for the masochism. In S&M clubs there are 3 or 4 times more masochists than sadists, and most sadists seem to have acquired it after having to be submissive first
- **We feel guiltier for unintended actions**: this is because people prepare their rationalization in advance for their intended wrongdoing
- **Groups of victims are rarely monolithic**: people tend to see "X VS Y" and group everyone in those two groups together. But in reality, both victim and aggressor groups are often heavily divided



CONS

- **Could be clearer in condemning abusive men?**

The concept that in violent relationships both spouses contribute to the violence is often true.

Yet there is no mention that the majority of *controlling people* and abusive individuals are men.

That's still not to say that, in many cases, female partners might not contribute to the violence, but still: most controlling and abusive partners are men.

- **Arthur Shawcross possible mistake?**

The author says that many serial killers were bred during the Vietnam War.
He uses Arthur Shawcross as an example, but when I researched him the Wikipedia page says that he never saw active combat.

- **I wasn't convinced about the "gangs depending on the neighborhood"**

The author says that the neighborhood supports the gangs with food and shelter and thus the gangs are dependent on the neighborhood, giving the latter more power.
I wasn't convinced by that.

- **Heat promotes violence?**

The author says that heat promotes violence.
That didn't sound credible to me, and upon checking, the link between heat and crime seems to be tenuous and no final proof is available.

- **Disagree that the world is getting worse**

Contrary to Mr. Pink in his "*The Better Angels of Our Nature*", Baumeister believes the world is getting worse and evil is increasing.

I disagree.

However, he might be right that future generations might think of the 20th and 21st generations as evil for their consumption and pollution.

Evil Review

Evil by Roy Baumeister is a monumental work.

It's one of those rare treasure troves of information that excites me for all the new wisdom it helps me acquire.

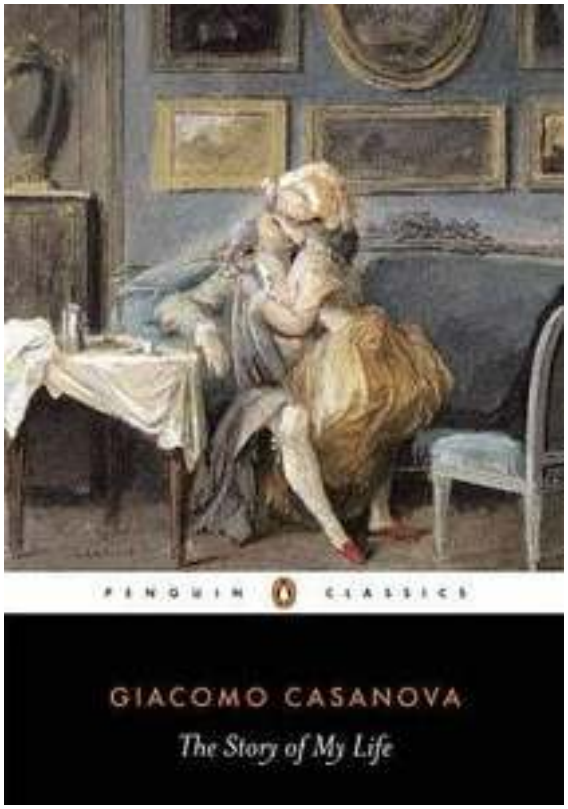
Because of its great work in connecting evil and group dynamics, I elect "*Evil*" as one of the foundational books for The Power Moves.

Check the **best psychology books** or **get the book on Amazon**

How to Be A Casanova: 17 Seduction Techniques (Autobiography Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 August 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Story of My Life (1822) is Casanova's autobiography, spanning his travels, adventures, arrests (& escapes), duels, kings' encounters, and, of course, his many seductions and conquests.
Albeit not intended as a seduction manual there is enough wisdom that our review *will* turn it into a seduction manual.



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Who Is Casanova

About The Author:
Giacomo Casanova was an Italian philanderer, traveler, and author.
He is best remembered for his adventures throughout Europe, for his love of women, and for his many love conquests. His name has today become synonymous with “womanizer”.

How to Be a Casanova

In this summary, I will focus on Casanova’s techniques and mindsets:

1. Date High Power

Casanova was skilled at frame control, and had a deep grasp of female psychology.

But he was also a master at leveraging power.

Many of his lies happened because he leveraged the power of his position, social status, or money.
For example:

- He leveraged money as a tool to attract women -‘conspicuous consumption’-
- Seducing maids, he had them do work for him to highlight his power over them
- He presented himself as powerful and high-class

Example:

> **Lucio**: She was highly attractive. And talked little. Most men would have spoken more to try a force a connection. Instead, I let silence show my confidence

Also see:

- **How to gain status**

1.1. Leverage Cultural Dominance

Casanova came from a rich country and was a well-learned man.

He knew more and had experienced more than almost any girl he met.
And he always used that to his advantage.

For example, he tells a lower-class woman:

> **Casanova**: What my dear child, you wish to become the wife of a Venetian and you cannot write?

And guess what?
Soon after, the woman is proving herself to him, trying to show him that she is "good enough" for her (this is the "judge frame").

Some of his gambits are refined, advanced power moves.

They must be executed well, or you can come across as snotty and break rapport instead of creating attraction.

1.2. Leverage The Power of Money

What's the point of having money if you can't get what you want with it?

Sure, Casanova had plenty of skills and would have been successful even without money.

But his financial firepower, which he always threw around lavishly, did help in many seductions.
Casanova was also good at using and leveraging money to the best of its seductive value.

For example, once he threw a party where he hired chauffeured coaches to go pick up his guests.
That, of course, made him the biggest draw of the night and established his reputation as a man of vast resources, who knew how to enjoy life.
You can rest assured that, at that party, he was the big prize for all the women attending.

On another occasion, he says;

> I was successful with both of them because I was rich. If I had been a poor man, I should have neither of them.

And he was well aware that money could help seduction.
He says:

> Without counting my physical attraction, I had plenty of money and was not afraid of swinging it.

He also spent his money on pleasures such as food, good clothes, and good accommodation, and that's very attractive to women.

2. Learn Social Power Dynamics to Boost Status & Attraction

Casanova was keenly aware of the dynamics of power.

He knew that if he allowed a man to assert power over him, his attraction for women would tank.

And he was always guarded to come across as a powerful, dominant man.

One French man told him that as a Venetian he must have been a good friend of France because "Venice is under the protection of France".

That was a power move, and Casanova immediately rejected it in such a way that the whole table erupted in laughter on his side.

That's a good understanding of social dynamics.

2.1. Learn How to Influence & Manipulate

Casanova also had top social skills.

He crashed a party to speak with a girl she was pursuing.
And when the angry and conservative old general found out and scolded him publicly that he wasn't invited, Casanova replied:

> **General**: Sir, I did not ask you to come
>
> **Casanova**: that is true quite true general, but I thought no doubt correctly that the omission was due to forgettfulness, and I thought myself obliged all the same to come and pay homage to your excellency

What a damn genius.
The general was still angry, and Casanova worked him during the evening with some more social finessing.

By the end of it, the general loved Casanova and Casanova was on his way to getting the girl.

2.2. Introduce Yourself High-Power

When requesting help, to get out of prison, Casanova would leverage his means and connections:

> **Casanova**: My name is Giacomo Casanova, I am a subject of the Republic of Venice (…) I have sufficient means (…) I am known to the Venetian ambassador, the Count (…), the prince of (…)

That's some good leverage for his power network.

3. Use Onion-like Captivating Self Description

An onion-like description allows *her* to discover your value.

Take a look at this dialogue:

> **Her**: What sort of life do you lead in Venice?
>
> **Casanova**: I spend time at the theater, in the societies and in casinos, where I fight with fortune sometimes with good, sometimes with bad success
>
> **Her**: Do you visit the foreign ambassador?
>
> **Casanova**: No, because I'm too much acquainted with the nobility

Notice how he does not tout his own horn, yet he gives enough that prompts *her* to ask for more.
And eventually, it comes out that he is a well-connected, powerful man.

It's a superior technique to demonstrate higher value than bragging because it's *her* who teases out his attractive traits.

That's the onion technique: say a little, prompting her to ask for more, then show one more layer.
And she will be wondering what more great things you've got going on for you.

Also see:

- **How to signal high value**

4. Use Self-Effacing Irony With Lower-Status Targets

Casanova dressed stylishly.

Heck, he even had his hair professionally done at a time when almost nobody did that.

But when women complimented him for it, he used it as an opportunity to look humble, vulnerable, and relatable.

For example, when one of his targets complimented him for his clothes, he said:

> **Casanova**: (my clothes) they are my way of distracting attention from my face and figure

Bam!
Now he made her laugh while looking humble, and while still showing off his style and social intelligence.

This is important especially when you do come across as cool, attractive, and high power.
Also read:

- **Value & availability**: the key to getting shy and low self-esteem women

5. Be A Lover Who Makes Her Feel Special

Says Casanova:

> I invented on the spot 3 imaginary stories.
> Making a great display of tender sentiments and of ardent love, but without alluding to amorous enjoyment.
> Particularly when she expected me to do so.
> (..)

Here Casanova is playing with her romantic ideals.
He is showing himself as a man who can get women and make them fall in love with him… But who does not sleep around with random ones.

That way, she will feel special for having been the one.

This can be very helpful indeed, especially for men with the reputation of a rake.
I remember once a woman at my place who uttered “oh yeah, so great to be one of a hundred”.

6. Envelop Women With Unrestrained Passion

Casanova was a deeply emotional man.

He talks about crying, being so in love as to go mad, flying into rages, and wanting to kill himself.

The sentence “I was in love” litters the book.

For example:

> I spent three hours in conversation with the charming girl.
> And when I left I was deeply in love.

Emotional state transfer and the fact he himself was so deeply enveloped in passion undoubtedly increased the feelings of many of his women.
And it made him come across as more natural, more honest, and more relatable to women since women tend to be more feelings-oriented.

Casanova was also happy to be duped just to get closer to the object of his desire.

He says:

> I knew very well that I would be duped. But I loved his sister so much.

6.1. Yet, Also Use Calculated Romance

Casanova was a romancer at heart and always abandoned himself to feelings and emotions.

But he also knew when to play the game and how to position himself.

For example, he says:

> I composed the letter.
> Short, but **calculated to restore peace to her mind**.

He then goes on to describe his own letter as a "genius".

6.2. Casanova Was Sometimes Slightly Manipulative

Casanova also worked hard to further increase his influence on women.

He knew that the "cabalistic science" was baloney.
But he kept pretending it was true -and that it could even be taught- to increase his influence over more gullible women.

6.3. Casanova Was Passionate In Every Sense: Also Vengeful

Casanova was a passionate man all around.

The first story of his love as a 12-year-old kid is hilarious.
He went near his love's house but saw another man coming out. And he says:

> I pick up myself quickly with the intention of taking my revenge upon Bettina, whom nothing could have saved from the effects of my rage at that moment.

After he couldn't reach her and retreats to his room, he says:

> Deceived, humbled, ill-treated, an object of contempt to the happy and triumphant Cordiani, I spent 3 hours ruminating the darkest schemes of revenge.

Over the course of "History of My Life," he goes on to describe a litany of situations where he seeks revenge for his honor. Including a local prince.

7. The Mindset: A Great Lover Loves Giving Pleasure

Casanova loved giving women pleasure.

He says:

> The happiness I gave her increased mine twofold.
> For it's always been my weakness to compose 4/5 of my enjoyment from the sum total of the happiness which I gave the charming being from whom I delighted.

This is a trait that many successful womanizers share.

🤦♂Lucio's Take: **I always wanted to be an international Casanova**

Lucio:
Just like Casanova, I was driven to conquest.

Romancing women, while traveling and experiencing the world.

And guess what, that's exactly what I've done.

On one hand, it's much easier today.
On the other hand, I give myself credit for having done it while being short, bald, not-so-attractive.

If I can do it, you can.
I teach how on this website, and in our course.

8. Use Poetry to Romance At 360°

"Demonic Power of Words" is Robert Greene's expression from "*The Art of Seduction*".

And that might have been one of Casanova's best weapons.

Most of all, his alliteration to discuss sex is noteworthy.
For example:

> And during seven hours I gave her the most positive proof of my love and ardor.
> (…)
> I varied our pleasures in a thousand different ways.

Talking about not falling in love, he says he is not attracted to a woman without sounding mean and while saving her face:

> Yet, I did not surrender to her charms

On showing his D:

> (..) Playing the coquette, she gets angry because I did not conceal from her looks the very apparent proof that her charms had some effect on a particular part of my being.

And on having sex with a virgin:

> And after kissing her spheres of rose and alabaster I penetrated into the sanctuary of love which, much to my astonishment, I found to be a virgin citadel.

He used the same kind of language with his women.
That helped him come across as intelligent, witty, and high-quality.

9. Threesomes Technique: Go For The More Open-Minded Woman

If Casanova could pull threesomes in puritan Europe, you have no excuses :).

He says that timidity can be an obstacle.
But when there is another girl, timidity is more easily conquered than if you were alone.

He explains that fathers and mothers feel secure if their daughter meets a man with another woman.
But if he is a skilled seducer, it makes no difference with the more disinhibited one and it helps seduction with the shyer one.

You start with the more open alpha female of the two.
And the shyer girl will feel compelled to follow.

Also see:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

10. Take Risks

Casanova took a lot of risks in his life, in many realms.

Gambling

Gambling was a popular pastime in the noble circles he frequented, and he won or lost vast sums of money at games.

Whenever he won, he loved spending money on luxuries and seductions.

Duels

He engaged in several duels to revenge his honor or simply settle arguments.

Casanova said of his first duel:

> I was fortunate enough to give him a gash across the shoulder. He could not move his arm. And he had to cry for mercy.

On another fair duel, he mortally wounds a well-connected Polish general and gets himself wounded.

Soon after the duel, he says:

> I was alone and without any weapons in a snow-covered country, my hand was wounded, and I had not the slightest idea which way was to Warsaw.

Not only did he have to risk the duel, but he also had to risk prosecution after fairly winning that duel.

Love

He was, of course, a risk-taker in love as well.
And he says about a fling of his:

> Her reasons were a mixture of prudence and love.
> Two feelings which seldom blend together.

At one point he couldn't resist anymore to see a Muslim woman's face that he lounged and sought to remove her veil.

11. Use Both Cold-Approaches & Social Circle Game

Casanova approached women in many different ways.

Many of the women he met through social circles of the upper class.
Quite a few of them were his servants or the daughters of his hosts.

He would go to church when he saw a beautiful lady so that he could talk to her.
He followed some women and knocked on the door of strangers to introduce himself after he saw where they'd lived.

And with a few more, he came up with crazy stratagems and plans.

Sometimes he just went with the spur of the moment.
One time he saw a beautiful woman on a gondola:

> I do not hesitated, but jumped into the gondola and paid double fare on the condition that no more passengers are taken.

Notice that his bold entrance showed not only confidence but also power and resources.

I believe that the best approach strategy indeed is mixed. **When you learn to come across as socially confident and powerful, then you get a huge boost within social circles**.
At that point, relying solely on cold approaches is limiting your options, because you'd be giving up on one of your main strengths.

12. Use Sex Talk to Get Women Thinking About Sex

Casanova used "sex talk" hundreds of years ago.

Talking to one of his targets he says:

> **Casanova**: in honor to the wonderful night they passed she has given him the nickname "count six times"
>
> **Her**: But what has six times got to do with sleeping with Madame Lamborghini?
>
> **Casanova**: My dear, the explanation is simple, the count has done in one evening what some husbands take a year to do

And there you are, now they are into sex talk and it wasn't even him who initiated it.
He just baited her into it.
Furthermore, he is using intelligent "social climbing in absentia" to position himself as better than "most husbands".

Or in another dialogue he purposefully confuses "height" to lead her to think about penises:

> **Her**: But you are taller than your friend
>
> **Casanova**: I'm not speaking about that kind of tallness, but another if you know what I'm talking about. And there my friend is really monstrous

And from there he transitioned to women who prefer bigger and women who prefer more average sizes.
Then he goes into his own penis and tells her "I will not leave you in doubt, tell me what you think" (LOL).

12.1. Sexual Move: Hand on D*ck

Casanova loved drawing attention to his penis.

But not only attention.
He also loved women to get a handful of his manhood (which is a great move, of course).

I quote him:

> As she left, she gave me such a kind embrace that I could bare it no longer. And guiding her hand, I showed her the power she exercised over me.

13. AMOG-Ing: Discredit Others to Look Better by Comparison

This is a technique I explained in one of my very first articles.

It consists of dropping comments about the competition that, albeit not overly critical, make you look better by comparison.

For example, Casanova says:

> **Her**: I cannot imagine a young man to ever fall in love with her
>
> **Casanova**: Oh that's nothing to a man of 25. One is always ready for an assault at that age. Not like me, who only feels a man in the presence of charm like yours

Casanova goes very direct and blatant here.
I wouldn't have done that and left it implied instead.
But different eras and different people, different styles.

14. Make Women Prove Themselves to You

Average men worry about 'passing her sh*t tests'.

Advanced players make women pass your tests.

Casanova was terrific at making women prove themselves to him.

Explaining to a woman why he could not find the perfect girl to get married, he lists how awesome they were… But the things they were lacking in.

> **Casanova**: She was extremely vain and would have ruined me with her expenditures for luxuries and

> fashionable clothes. Fancy this: she used to spend 50 sequel a month to the hairdresser
>
> **Her**: She was a giddy foolish girl. I only spend 1 sequel…

See?
With that first sentence, he is indirectly parading his standards and setting up hoops for her to jump.
Which she does right away. Now she is proving herself to him.

To another woman, he says he wants to have children if he gets married and her ex didn't.
So now she is even more excited about him (also see: atypical seduction techniques).

However, Casanova was not a power-seeker.
And he was also happy to prove himself to women, especially when blinded by love, passion, and lust.

15. Pace Future Reality & Establish Romance (AKA: "Fait-Accompli")

Pick-up artists used the term "pacing reality" to verbalize a favorable situation.

Casanova didn't know that expression, but he certainly was using it to his advantage.

> **Casanova**: Perhaps people will think that we love each other, and that we make such a great couple
>
> **Her**: Than you should inform your mistress that we are in love with each other
>
> **Casanova**: I have no mistress, and I shall have none because I cannot a find a girl prettier than you in whole Venice

Little later he asks her if she will love him, and when she confirms, the seduction has taken a huge leap forward towards consummation.

16. Adopt "Healthy Entitlement Mentality"

Positive entitlement is the narcissists' superpower.

While entitlement is toxic for average guys who lack confidence and mate value, **entitlement turbocharges a confident player's success.**

But the mindset that you deserve the best is a precondition to even go after attractive women.

Casanova often felt entitled to a great life -and to women-.
Commenting on the pretty wife of a 60-year-old man, he thinks that "the affair could be arranged amicably".

Thinking that the man would be "amiable" with him having an affair with his wife is an example of entitlement mentality.

Casanova also used a superb power move on her:

> **Casanova**: Please tell me, madam if the captain is your husband or your father.

LOL.

He says of himself and rating his chances high:

> I was young, enjoyed excellent health, I had money and plenty of daring.

16.1. Always Prioritize High-Quality Women

Casanova had sex with all kinds of women.

But he showed a preference for women of his caliber, well-learned and well-spoken.

He says of a woman:

> She received an excellent education, and it increased the pleasure of my conquest

17. Mindset: Losers Fight Men, Seducers Conquer Women

I always gotta laugh at men learning to fight to get women.

Then a small guy who has never fought in his life ignores other men, focuses on the women he wants, and seduces countless of them.
Also see:

- **Winners' mindsets** (in dating)

And this video:

Casanova also proves the same with this unrelenting focus on women, NOT on the competition.

He says:

> She resisted.
> (…)
> At last, by force.
> This was too much. The mere idea of using violence has always shocked me.
> I'm still of the opinion that the only pleasure in the amorous embrace springs from perfect union and agreement.

However, when in Russia, he adapted to what was the custom of the country.
And he says:

> And so violent she had been that was compelled to conform to the custom of the country and beat her.
> Strange to say that I could have not taken a better way to prove my love.

There is a perverse mix between love, lust, and violence.
But we will not dig deeper here.

18. Handle LMR With Both Physical Assaults & Words

Here is a good mindset for you:

Enjoy last-minute resistance.

Casanova enjoyed last-minute resistance.
He says:

> A little resistance sharpens the appetite.
> When favor is granted with too much ease it lose a great deal of its charm.

But keep your eyes on the goal.

Casanova could be quite “pushy”, too.
He says:

> I then began to caress her and make assaults in the style of an amorous man.
> But it was all in vain, though I managed to stretch her on a large sofa

From the dialogue above, you can understand that Casanova was not PC when it came to the last mile stretch.
Little later he says that he then chased her laughing, showing an extremely important trait for lovers: **making escalations fun and never too confrontational**.

Sometimes Casanova would use rationality to dismantle women’s verbal resistance.
For example:

> If your duty forces you to repulse me in spite of yourself, then your duty is a burden. And if it is a burden, it’s your enemy and you should get rid of it.

Then he invites her to close her eyes and “let go”.

19. Shed All Socialization Shackles: Underage Girls

It’s a different era.

And Casanova engaged with very young women.
Some of it might be considered in the vicinity of pedophilia.

He says, visiting his daughter:

> But one of my daughter schoolmates pleased me too much for my peace of mind

He would later get sexual with one of his daughter’s schoolmates.

20. Adopt Inner-Confidence Bolstering Beliefs

Casanova says that if a man truly wants to do something, he can do anything.

And of happiness, he says:

> Happiness is the fruit of imagination.
> If you wish to be happy, fancy that you are so.

Both are very helpful attitudes to be a successful player.

Learn More: Foundational Power & Advanced Seduction

If you think these techniques are helpful, you may be interested in our flagship program.

It takes you from ‘good guy’ to a winner who gets respect, status, and attraction:

- **Power University** lays the foundations of a top 1% man
- Seduction University applies advanced strategies to turn men into world seducers

Casanova Best Quotes

My favorite of them all:

> **The man who professes his love to a woman in words must be sent to school again.**

On resistance:

> A little resistance sharpens the appetite.
> When favor is granted with too much ease it lose a great deal of its charm.

On the most typical Casanova:

> As usual, I fell in love with her

On the ease of seducing innocent girls:

> The more innocent a girl is, the less she knows of the methods of seduction.
> Before she has time to think pleasure attracts, curiosity draws her a little further and opportunity does the rest

On enjoying life on earth:

> I was happy.
> I love to say so in defiance of those moralists who say there is no true happiness on this earth.
> It's the expression of "on this earth" which makes me laugh. As if it were possible to go anywhere else in such happiness.
> Death is the end of all, as after death man has no sense.
> (…)
> No one should dogmatize on uncertainties, and after death everything is doubtful.

On knowledge.
Notice how he uses his maxim to gain intellectual power over the woman:

> On the contrary, Madame, I like questions.
> I have been teaching for the past six years to always ask questions.
> He who asks nothing, learns nothing.

On the sweetness of negative feelings:

> There are sorrows so sweet that they are almost joys.

On the nature of men and women:

> A grateful woman has only one way of showing her gratitude. And that is to surrender herself without reserve.
> (…)
> A man is made to give, and a woman to receive.

On the nature of princes and powerful men:

> For princes do not forget small injuries as they forget great services.

Casanova didn't hold average people in very high regard.
Talking of democracy, he says:

> Dear France,
> Where are thou now.
> Your sovereign is the people now, the most brutal and tyrannical sovereign in the world.

Casanova Personality

Casanova was a living paradox.

He is caustic against the church, highly skeptical of religion, and fiercely against repression and inquisition.
And yet, he goes to church and believes in the positive effect of prayers.

He laughs at the cabal and knows it's not real, and yet he goes on a mission to discover the secret of gold creation.

I don't think Casanova ever stooped low with his games, but he certainly engaged in trickery and manipulation. And he certainly left a few women pregnant without providing.
And yet, he always prided himself on his honor and of his positive treatment of women.

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Was Casanova a psychopath?

No, I don't think Casanova was a 'full blown' psychopath.

BUT he was higher than average in some psychopathic traits and he was a "dark triad man" since he was also high in Machiavellianism and narcissism.

Albeit turbulent and transitory, he developed deep feelings, and showed a strong conscience throughout several instances in his memoirs.

Also, see more dark psychology techniques in:

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

A Rebel By Nature

Casanova was, in many ways, a man of honor.

But he also was an inveterate philanderer, a freedom lover, and a rebel.
He says of military career:

> The worst of professions for the constant self-abnegation, for the complete surrender of one's will, which passive obedience demands.
> It required a patience for which I cannot lay any claim.

And more about the politics within the ranks:

Loved Freedom, Starting With Financial Freedom

Speaking again of his refusal to pursue a military career, says Casanova:

> As any kind of injustice was revolting to me. And I could not bare myself to feel dependent.

Furthermore, says Casanova, his tastes were too expensive to be covered by a military career.

As any good high-quality man, Casanova wanted to be independent.
He says:

> I earned enough to keep myself without need anybody's assistance.
> And I always thought that a man who can support himself is happy.

Intelligent, And Street-Wise

Casanova was streetwise in many ways.

When asked to share his plan about the lottery he said "not before I am given a written statement that I will receive my share".

Talking of gambling, he says he wanted to bet heavier to break even, which is a "common error".
Indeed, today psychology recognizes it as a fallacy (see Thaler and Kahneman).

To send a message to a woman she wants to get in touch with, he first drops an empty letter as a decoy to her hated, protective auntie.
And as the auntie gets the first letter, he throws the real letter to his true target.
LOL, what a fu*king legendary move.

And he was obviously extremely high in mating intelligence.

Casanova Review

Casanova: History of Life is a treasure trove of foundational seduction mindsets, strategies, and techniques.

Autobiographies should always be taken with a pinch of salt, of course. But Casanova's vulnerability lends credibility. For example, he talks about being tricked, including by some women, and even of his experience with impotence.

See:

- Best dark triad books
- Best seduction books for men

To become a Casanova (even as a short and average guy):

Become a Casanova with Seduction University

Negotiation Genius: Summary, Review, & Top Tips

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 September 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Negotiation Genius (2007) teaches readers the psychology and strategies of negotiation. Drawing from psychology and persuasion to manipulation and trust-building. "Negotiation Genius" prepares the reader with all the basics they need to negotiate effectively.

Contents

- Summary
  - Emotions and Cognitive Biases: Learn to See The Truth
  - Dealing With Difficult Negotiators
- More Negotiation Tips
- Review

Summary

About the Authors:
Deepak Malhotra is an American economist and professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School. He focuses on negotiation strategies and dispute resolution.
Max Hal Bazerman is also a professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School, and he specializes in business psychology.

Introduction

Too many negotiators rely on gut instinct or, worse, believe that negotiation is all about art and no science. These people, believing that negotiation is an art, also tend to believe in improvisation, and fail to prepare effectively.

Needless to say, that "cowboy approach" is a failed approach.

"Negotiation Genius" takes a different approach, combining experience with preparation, science, and a proven method.

> **Gut instinct is not a strategy.**

The Basics of Negotiation

These are the basic steps to prepare for a negotiation:

- **Assess your BATNA**

BATNA is an acronym first seen in "*Getting to YES*", and stands for "best alternatives to negotiated agreements".

In practical terms, it means that you know your other options and their value.

When you know the value of your other options, you will know what you can and cannot concede, and you will know when it's time to walk away.

Your question is: "what will I do if this negotiation ends with no deal".

PRO TIP: don't overly focus on your BATNA asking, "what will I do without them?" or you might get too defensive.

- **Calculate your reservation value (RV)**

This is your walkaway point—the lowest offer you can accept.
Once you're below your RV, you're better off with no deal.

- **Calculate the other party's reservation value**

This is not easy, but you want to have an idea of the reservation value of your negotiation partner.

- **Assess other party's BATNA**

This will tell you how far you can push and when your opponent is likely to walk away.

Here is a great tip: focus on the other party's BATNA, asking "what will they do without me".
People who focus on the value they bring to the table tend to get much better deals.

- **Evaluate the ZOPA**

ZOPA stands for "zone of possible agreement".

The ZOPA expands between the buyer and seller's reservation values, and within the ZOP, a deal benefits both parties.

This is the pie you are going to split, and knowing all this information will allow you to properly negotiate and to know when you're getting a bad deal, a good deal, or a great deal.

How to Evaluate Your Performance

There are several ways to evaluate your performance:

- Did you pass your RV? Good, but it doesn't say much
- At which point of the ZOPA did you meet? Above 50% is good for you

These are the measures all negotiators use, but they have an important drawback: they rely on the information you had before the negotiation.

Negotiation genius is about *adjusting* and *adding* more information.

When to Make The First Offer

The advantage of making the first offer is that you anchor the price, while receiving the first offer gives you more information about the other party.

The authors advise as follows:

- If you have sufficient information about the other party's RV, make a first-come, first-served offer
- If you don't have enough information, it might be best to let the other party speak first

If you have too little information, your first price might end up being either too low or too high.

What do you do if they make the first offer and it's too high?
Don't discuss it, and don't let them defend it, because you increase its power. Ignore it or make another anchoring counter-offer instead.

Ask Questions to Dig Out Information

Here is a gold nugget:

The worst thing you can do is to start negotiating with the belief that your assumptions are correct.

Imagine you are dealing with a piece of land and you are not sure whether the land might become available for commercial development.
So you would say:

> **You**: If the land is used for commercial development, that will make it quite valuable.
> With that in mind, let's discuss some specifics. What are your plans for this excellent piece of real estate.

See?
By mentioning commercial development, you show that you know its possible true value even though you are not sure.
And then you keep prodding on their plans. But now they will not be able to lie and deny they want to develop it.

The authors say that in the face of uncertainty, you want to interrogate (indirectly) and sound sufficiently informed.

If you are still unsure and if the other party refuses to share information, you can propose contingency clauses.
If they refuse to add contingency clauses, you know they are lying.

> Negotiation is an information game. Those who know how to obtain information perform better than those who stick with what they know

Trade Across Issues & Enlarge The Pie: Logrolling

Some negotiators think it's best to start with easy issues, while others prefer starting with the most important ones.

The authors recommend you deal with all of them together so you can find better synergies and trade-offs.

> If the other party values something more than you do, let them have it. But don't give it away, sell it.

As a matter of fact, says the author, the more negotiation points you can bring to the table, the more opportunities for value creation you have.

More issues equals more currency to exchange and make the pie bigger for everyone (another genius insight).

Remember:

> The goal is not simply to reach win-win. **The goal is to maximize value**.

Maximizing value entails adding more talking points, making the pie bigger, and truly understanding what you and the other party really want.

Here are some tips for effective pie maximization:

- Identify your multiple interests
- Think of the other party's multiple interests (and encourage them to do so)
- Leverage differences, priorities, and expectations (you can leverage contingency clauses so everyone can bet on his expectations)
- Create a scoring system (convert everything into dollar values)
- Calculate a "package reservation value" (so you can focus on the total value)
- If the other party is buttoned up, make two offers and then ask which one you should be focusing on more (that will tell you what they value)

> Poor negotiators assume there is a fixed pie to be fought over.

> Genius negotiators probe how to *enlarge* the pie.

This was a great insight.
It informed much of my approach to different techniques to "increase the scope of collaboration":

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-collaborator

Emotions and Cognitive Biases: Learn to See The Truth

"Negotiation Genius" adds more genius content when it tackles biases and blind spots.

The authors leverage work from Kahnemann, Thaler, and many more psychologists to help readers better negotiate with sound scientific principles.

The ones I liked best:

- **Egocentric interpretations**: People think they are more honest and good than they truly are
- **Avoid overconfidence**: Seligman recommends hiring salespeople who are overly optimistic, but good negotiators must be realists, not optimists
- Keep in mind: sellers truly can believe their product is superior to the competition (but it's not necessarily so)
- **Illusion of superiority**: not only do we view ourselves as better than we really are, we also see our groups as better than other groups.
  - "When we (ingroup) make concessions we do it because we're good, but they do it because it's in their interest" (avoid thinking like this or you won't be able to build trust)
- **Take an outsider's perspective**: imagine it was someone else in your position. Or ask (or hire) an external party to advise

I must quote the authors here because I like this part very much.
This to me represents the true positive transformative power of knowledge:

> Even well-intentioned people can act in seemingly unethical ways when they're motivated to claim more than they deserve.
> This does not make us evil, but simply humans.
> Understanding our own egocentric bias, we can move from "wanting to be fair" to actually being fair

Influence in Negotiations

The authors dig deep into the psychology of persuasion (Cialdini *Influence* & *Pre-suasion*) and how it can be used for *manipulation*.

Some good advice:

- Negative frame (what they stand to lose) is more persuasive than the positive frame (what they can gain), but you must use it carefully or it's annoying
- Aggregate the bad news and chunk up the good ones (i.e., break up your concessions)
- Make token unilateral concessions: a bit of a power move, this one is designed to build trust and invite them to do the same through actions instead of words
- **Door in the face** (aim for rejection, then moderate your demand): the yes ladder is only partially true, and having the other party say no, then lowering your offer, can be a powerful tool to induce acceptance of your second concession
- **Foot in the door** (aim for compliance, then increase demand): ask for a smaller favor they can say yes to, then

ask for a similar one but bigger (their tendency is to confirm their ongoing commitment to the cause)

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Door in the face VS foot in the door

"Door in the face" and "foot in the door" are not necessarily in contradiction.

DITF is appropriate to make your request seem reasonable by contrasting it to a bigger one (best done right away).
FITD is appropriate when you are building commitment to your key demand (best if there is some time between requests to help the internalization of the commitment).

Read more:

- **Unfair negotiation tactics** (& examples)

> 20 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics

How to Deal With Liars

Usually, you don't want to call your counterpart a liar as that would precipitate the whole negotiation.

What you do depends on the situation.
You want to deploy a strategy that allows you to let him know you know he has lied, while also allowing him to save face.

- Don't try to read people if they're lying: good professionals tell you it's not possible. Set traps instead.
- Ask clear questions because while most people don't want to lie, they are OK with misleading
- Change reality instead of lying about reality

And what about you, should you lie?

When the authors ask MBA students, far more people say it's OK to lie as compared to executives.
Executives know the real costs of lying.
And the authors say that it's always best not to lie.

Negotiating From A Position of Weakness

One of my favorite chapters in my favorite negotiation book (as of 09.2019).

Here are some great strategies to negotiate when you have little negotiation power:

- Don't advertise your weak position: few negotiators will truly know what your negotiating position really is
  - Avoid saying "time is of the essence" or "we can meet with you whenever you have the time: those give your weak position away
- Overcome your weakness by focusing on it (or valuing opportunities). When both have lots to lose or lots to gain, it's the one who makes the other's position more salient who negotiates better
- If you add any value and they want to destroy you, remind them of what they stand to lose
- Join together with other weak parties to form a stronger coalition (ie.: EU negotiating power greater than any single state)
- Avoid people acquiring too much power (ie.: salespeople in your company)
- Relinquish the little power you have: stop flexing the muscles you don't have and ask the other party to help you

out

The last one is not about “appealing to mercy”, albeit that might work too, no matter what Robert Greene says. This is how you could frame a salary negotiation when you have little power:

> **You**: I am very excited to work here and I accept the offer.
> Salary is not my primary concern, but it is a concern nonetheless, as it is for any person starting out.

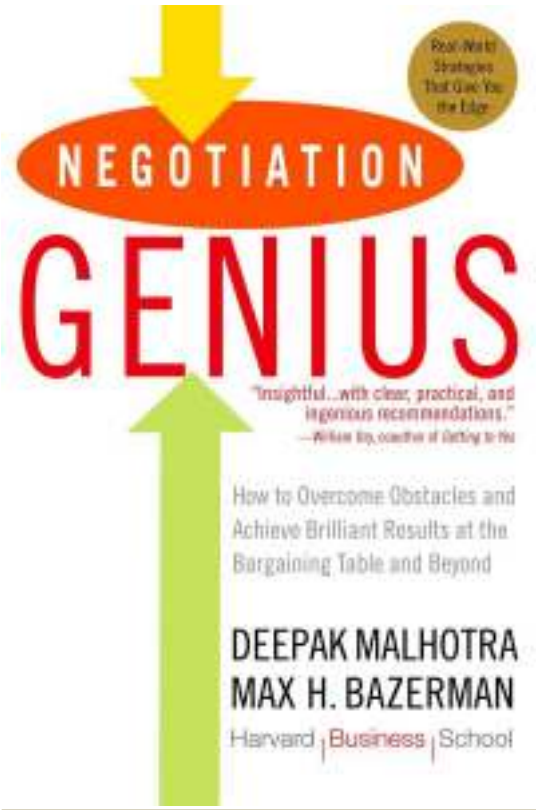
Also, read more on frames here:

- **Frames and how to control the frame**

Dealing With Difficult Negotiators

- Don’t think of people as irrational: think of them as misinformed, and your options and efficacy will increase
- Ignore threats and ultimatums: respond to less threatening bits of their emails or words
  - If they only say “this is my final offer, take it or leave it”, you can say “it seems obvious you find it difficult to make any concessions here, I suggest we move to other issues and come back here later” or “I understand your frustration, we both know there is a deal to be made but we can’t seem to find it. Can you help me better understand your perspective? Why aren’t we there yet”
- Anticipate the threat and mention it first. Ideally, with your possible countermove.
  For example: “we understand this might cause delays, and if you also anticipate delays, we suggest we also involve other senior bank officials” (you use this in case he doesn’t want to involve his superiors)
- If you don’t think the threat is credible, you can tactfully let them know that
- Finally, consider that you might be in a position to negotiate, or that you’re negotiating out of context

> Negotiation experts tell you that you can negotiate anything.
> Perhaps you can. But that doesn’t mean you should



More Negotiation Tips

- Be comfortable with silence
- Highlight your concessions and make it clear they are costly to you. Otherwise, it's easy for them not to reciprocate
- Don't put too many contingencies on your concessions though or you make it difficult to build trust and cooperation
- Watch out for negotiation patterns: as time goes on, negotiations get smaller. But smart negotiators can fake that pattern
- Propose a PSS (post-settlement settlement) after you close the deal with the agreement, you will only change the contract IF -and only if- you can find mutually beneficial opportunities (the agreement becomes the new BATNA for both sides)
- Don't just ask "what", ask "why": it will help you better understand the other party's needs and find alternative solutions
- Don't dismiss anything as "their problem": they can quickly become your problems too
- Separate negotiation from influence: don't give in to pressure tactics
- If the value of your target acquisition depends on future events you know nothing about, you should not make an offer.
  Why Note?
  Because they will only accept if things go wrong
- Looking more prepared can pay off by lowering attempts at cheating you. For example, instead of only asking for a bit more discount, say that you will also talk to more vendors for future orders but you'd like to know from them if that's the last price they can quote
- Be careful of "intercultural communication seminars": the variance among individuals is more important than the differences
- It's not always the right time to negotiate: fighting over small dollars is also a waste of time.
- Negotiating too hard also sends the message you might not trust someone. Keep it in mind
- What looks good in Hollywood seldom works in real life

An example of what looks good in Hollywood but is BS negotiation:

Read the analysis:

- Why that's ineffective negotiation.

Review

As of September 2019, I rate "*Negotiation Genius*" as the best book on negotiation I have ever read.

I also consider it to be the best entry-level book because it's not focused on tactical and specific situations, like for example "*Never Split the Difference*" (conflict resolution) or "*Secrets of Power Negotiation*" (techniques), but provides a broad overview of negotiations.

Check the:

- **best negotiation books**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

The Dictator's Handbook: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 September 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Dictator's Handbook (2011) teaches the power dynamics, Machiavellian strategies, and mindsets of dictatorship.
It provides a different and revolutionary approach to political analysis by skirting fuzzy appeals to higher ideals and national interests and focusing on politicians' and leaders' self-interest.
The authors suggest that good or bad policies depend not on skills or goodwill, but only on who the leaders need to curry favor with to stay in power.

Contents

- Key Insights
- Notes
  - The Rules of Political Power
  - Ideology and Nationalism Don't Matter to Leaders
  - The 3 True Power Dimensions of Politics
  - Leaders Spend On Those They Need to Stay In Power
  - Getting to Power: Here's How You Do It
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  - Companies Follow The Same Rules
  - Stop Foreign Aid: It Doesn't Help, & Might Actually Cause Harm
  - Dictator's Dilemma: Liberty & Tax Revenues or Liberty & Risk Revolt?
  - What About Wise, Well-Intentioned Leaders?
  - If Power Corrupts, Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely
  - Dictators Don't Care Much About Wars, Democrats Do
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Key Insights

- Politics is a big tug of war for power and control of resources
- Democracies are best at guaranteeing prosperity because the leaders depend on the citizens' well-being to remain in power
- Autocracies lead to mass poverty and a few massively rich cronies because leaders depend on the cronies to stay in power, not on the average citizen.
- The best way to ensure good policies and increase a nation's well-being is to make the leaders dependent on the whole population.

Notes

About The Authors:
Bruce Bueno de Mesquita is a Professor of Politics at New York University. He is also a prolific author, with 16 books to his name.

Alastair Smith is also a professor of politics at New York University, author of three books, and the winner of the 2005 Karl Deutsch Award.
He is also the author of "*The Logic of Political Survival*".

Introduction: Are You Any Better Than Despots?

We all love the terrible stories of the worst politicians and business executives.

Why?

Because they make us feel as if we are superior and would do much better.

Instead, the authors urge us to ask why many, if not *most,* individuals, behave exactly the same way.

What are the forces that shape politicians to cling to power, bribe, and enslave their populations?

These are the answers that "*The Dictator's Handbook*" seeks to provide.

The Rules of Political Power

De Mesquita and Smith list the following rules of political power:

1. Politics is about getting and keeping political power (not about the welfare of the people)
2. Political power is best ensured and maintained when you depend on few essential cronies to attain and retain office (dictators are often in a better position to retain power than democrats)
3. Depending on a small coalition of cronies allows leaders to tax at higher rates
4. Dictators have the most power when their essential cronies are easily replaceable

Ideology and Nationalism Don't Matter to Leaders

In politics, ideologies, nationalities, and cultures don't really matter much.

Most political commentators and newspapers think in terms of what leaders want to do for their countries, but that's the wrong way to understand politics.

These sentences make little sense in the world of politics:

> - The American people want

> - The Chinese government ought to do

> - European leaders should do X for the good of Europe

Instead, if we want to understand politics, **we must learn to analyze and understand the actions and interests of *specifically* named leaders**, and we must avoid getting lost in fuzzy ideologies such as national interest and the common good.

It doesn't even make sense to talk about "international relations", because it's not about relations among states; it's about leaders and what they want and seek.

To understand politics, you must think about what's good for the leader to get to power and maintain power.
That's the true key to understanding politics—and to learning how to fix politics.

The 3 True Power Dimensions of Politics

Nobody rules alone.

What determines the balance of power and the politics that follow is how many backs the leader needs to scratch and how big the available supply of backs to scratch is.

From a leader's point of view, these are the categories that determine the extent of his power and the politics that he will likely enact:

- **Nominal selectors (interchangeables)**

Everyone who has at least a legal say in choosing the leader, In democracies, it includes everyone who has a vote. But in some non-democracies, voters are nominal selectors (i.e., The Soviet Union).

In practice, no individual voter has a big say in who runs the country, and the power of a single nominal selector in a true democracy is not much bigger than in countries with rigged elections.

- **Real selectors (influencers)**

This is the group that actually chooses the leader or the leader who will run for the elections.

In Saudi Arabia's monarchy, this is the senior royal member. In communist countries, it's the voting members of the communist party.

In the US, these are the electors of the Electoral College. But since they are bound to vote like the states vote, the nominal selectors and the real selectors are pretty closely aligned.

- **Winning coalition (essentials)**

It's a subset of the real selector, and these are the people whose support is essential for the leader to remain in power.
They are the ones with the power to overthrow their boss.

It includes the people responsible for actual policies, very senior civil servants, the highest army generals, and a handful of members of the court for kings.

In democracies such as the US the winning coalition is much larger than in dictatorships, and it consists of the minimum number of voters who give the edge to one candidate over another.

Based on the dimensions of political power, this is the definition of dictatorship:

> Dictatorship is a government based on a particularly small group of essentials, drawn from a very large group of interchangeables, and usually a small batch of influentials.

And this is the definition of democracy:

> Democracy is a government based on a very large number of essentials and a very large number of interchangeables, with the influential group being almost as big as the interchangeables

While, in monarchies or military juntas, the number of interchangeables, influentials, and essentials, is small.

Because dictatorships depend on a small number of essential supporters, they are a battle for private rewards.
And because democracies depend on large swaths of voters, they are a battleground for policy ideas.
My note: this was a generalization of course, see Trump's win with few good policy ideas and read "Win Bigly".

Dictator's Rules

1. Keep the winning coalition as small as possible: you will need fewer people to stay in power, have higher control over them, and you will save on graft (my note: however, a smaller number also means easier for them to organize a putsch)
2. Keep the nominal selectors as large as possible: so that you can easily replace troublemakers among the influentials and essentials, and send the essentials a message that they better behave
3. Control the flow of revenues
4. Pay your essentials just enough to keep them loyal: and keep them away from the source of money
5. Don't take money out of the essentials' pockets to make the people better: dictators depend on essentials, not on average citizens

Leaders Spend On Those They Need to Stay In Power

To understand politics, you need to understand this:

> Leaders spend on those whose support their hold on power.

This is why in democracies, where leaders need the support of all the voters, leaders spend a lot of resources for the good of the overall population.
Buying votes is not effective in democracies, so leaders seek to keep the loyalty of the voters with good and effective policies and with public spending that supports large infrastructure projects.

Democratic leaders also want a good and strong economy, because a poor economy means unhappy people and unhappy people mean no votes.

But in dictatorships, dictators need the support and loyalty of the essential cronies, not of the large population.
And so, they spend on the essentials first and foremost (even before spending on themselves).
Their political survival does not depend on the nominal selectors, who sometimes don't even vote, so the population always gets the short end of the stick, the leftovers -if there is anything left-.
And that's why the essential cronies often grow super-rich even while their countries fare poorly.

Where's The Money?

Leaders need to keep their backers happy.

And to do so, their main worry is where to find the money to keep the machine oiled.

Democracies, on average, keep taxes lower because they need to emphasize the public good.
Dictatorships instead tend to seek to extract as much as possible from those at the bottom (who don't really matter), to enrich those at the top (whose loyalty matters to the leader). The goal of dictators is to tax as much as possible without getting to the point of taxing so much that people stop working and revolt.

Getting to Power: Here's How You Do It

A dictator needs to do only three things to get into power:

- **Remove the incumbent**

The incumbent always has an advantage if he is doing his job well. The coalition of supporters knows they will be getting their beak wet, while they cannot be assured you will be doing the same.

There are three ways of removing the incumbent:

1. Wait for him to die
2. Strike at the right opportunity (old leader, a faux pas, a financial crisis)
3. Make an offer and/or convince the current supporters to switch sides
4. Overthrow the government through internal revolution or war with a foreign power.

Mortality is a great time to get into power.
Even slightly before death, leaders are usually at their weakest. Not because they're old or necessarily physically weak, but because the supporters know the leaders will not be long in a position to enrich and support them. And so they look at possible future alternatives.
For leaders, it's always a good idea to designate a successor to avoid these issues, and best of all if it's a family member.

Supporters are fearful of supporting a new entry though because they know what they're leaving, but they don't know what they're getting.
And it's common for supporters to be removed, discarded, or executed once the leader reaches power.
That's why allaying supporters' fears is a crucial step in getting into power.

Keep in mind internal revolution needs a lack of internal support from the military to succeed, so they are only

- **Seize the apparatus of government (treasury first and foremost)**

Most of all, you must get your hands on the treasury.

Ideally, you will also be able to capture the former dictator and retrieve some of his war chests.

- **Form a coalition of supporters to sustain him in power**

While a long-standing dictator is safer in place than a democratic leader, the first period as a dictator is risky.

Make sure you lock in a loyal coalition or someone else will be looking to overthrow you soon enough.

As a rule of thumb, keeping the same coalition of supporters as your predecessor is a risky move as it may contain true loyalists to your predecessor.

And keeping the same coalition that carried you to power is also risky. They all feel too powerful after having topped the previous leader. And they all feel their work should be rewarded with more than just an underlying position.

Many successful dictators get rid of the original coalition of supporters and replace them with new ones.

Dictators Are Held In Power by Military

The military is always a key to prop up the dictator.

Internal revolutions only succeed when the internal supporters defect the leader and leave the protesters free to overthrow the government.

Dictators who know the game and who still have the loyalty of their supporters will squash rebellions quickly and brutally to send a strong message that it's not worth it to demonstrate.

Say the authors:

> Consider a room of 100 people.
> Anyone could take complete control if he has 5 supporters with automatic weapons.
> And he will remain in control as long as the gunmen support him. There needs to be nothing special about the dictator except for the fact that he secure the guns first.

Companies Follow The Same Rules

The authors make the point that the same rules and dynamics apply to public companies.

The authors show that, albeit, the CEO should respond to the board, it's common for newly appointed CEOs to shake up the board after they come to power.

> Doing a good job is not enough to ensure political survival, and that is true for politics as much for business.

As long as bosses are beholden to a few boards of directors, they will keep them happy with fat bonuses in exchange for continued backing.

The solution is only to make CEOs more accountable to the millions of shareholders.
Reforming corporations is easier than reforming governments, the authors say: corporations don't have armies.

My Note: I'm not convinced by that.
In a way, not relying on hard power makes it easier for corporations to defend. There is no real enemy fight, just an invisible enemy who buys influence with money.

Also read:

- **How corporations manipulate employees**

Stop Foreign Aid: It Doesn't Help, & Might Actually Cause Harm

The easiest way to incentivize a dictator to liberalize its economy and provide more freedom is to force it to rely on tax revenues to generate funds.

If a dictator can rely on resources or on foreign aid and funds, then they will have no incentives to improve the lives of the average citizens.

Democracies should not send any aid to dictators, should not lend them any money, and should not forgive any debt.
Dictators who get a debt discount start re-borrowing recklessly right away.

Furthermore, the authors dedicate a whole chapter to foreign aid as a tool for policymaking, and not true help.

> Aid does a little bit of good in the world and vastly more harm

Democratization does not require benevolence. It requires economic needs by the dictator. And foreign aid helps alleviate the economic pain but only alleviates it for the leaders, not for the people.

Dictator's Dilemma: Liberty & Tax Revenues or Liberty & Risk Revolt?

Dictators can also gain-granting political freedom, allow technology, and provide good instruction.

How?

Freedoms help the population work more effectively, which in turn produces more tax revenues for the dictators.

However, freedoms also pose a threat as they make it easier for the population to organize revolts.
Galvanized by the increasing freedoms, the population might also feel like they can now demand more and more.

The authors say that successful dictators provide just enough freedom to keep the population producing enough for them to pay their supporters.

What About Wise, Well-Intentioned Leaders?

The author says that the world has produced wise and well-intentioned leaders and dictators.

But there haven't been many of them, so you better not bank on it.

They also make the point that "well-intentioned" often does not mean "good leaders".
Some of the worst leaders have been those who thought they were going to do great things for their population (see failed communist experiments as in Nikita Khrushchev, Mao Tsedong).

Among the exceptions of enlightened dictators are Dang Xiaoping (the man who liberalized China's communist economy while still keeping control) and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew.

If Power Corrupts, Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely

That maxim is generally true, but it doesn't capture the causality.

Power leads to corruption and corruption leads to power.
Small coalition governments *need* corruption because of the very nature with which they operate.

The authors say that the most corrupt regimes are always led by a small coalition.

Laws against corruption don't work in oppressive regimes and only provide the leader with more tools to prosecute his adversaries (think of the trumped-up charges of corruption in China or Russia).
Some leaders indeed allow corruption while still recording corruption in case they need to get rid of someone.

The best way to deal with corruption is to increase the coalition size.
So the authors say that to decrease corruption in FIFA and in the Olympic committee is necessary to increase the number of people with voting rights in those institutions.

Dictators Don't Care Much About Wars, Democrats Do

Dictators have two uses for the military:

1. Protecting the country against external threats
2. Protecting themselves against internal threats

And they usually care more about the second than the first.

As long as the war abroad does not threaten their position, dictators get into wars more easily than democrats do because they care nearly as much if the citizens at home are not happy with the war.

For democrats instead wars are costly.
Soldiers dying reflects terribly on democratic leaders, so Democrats only get into wars that they can win quickly, and they tend to spend much more on technology.

Why spend more on technology?

Because citizens' lives matter if the Democrats are to stay in power.
For despots instead, soldiers are expendable.

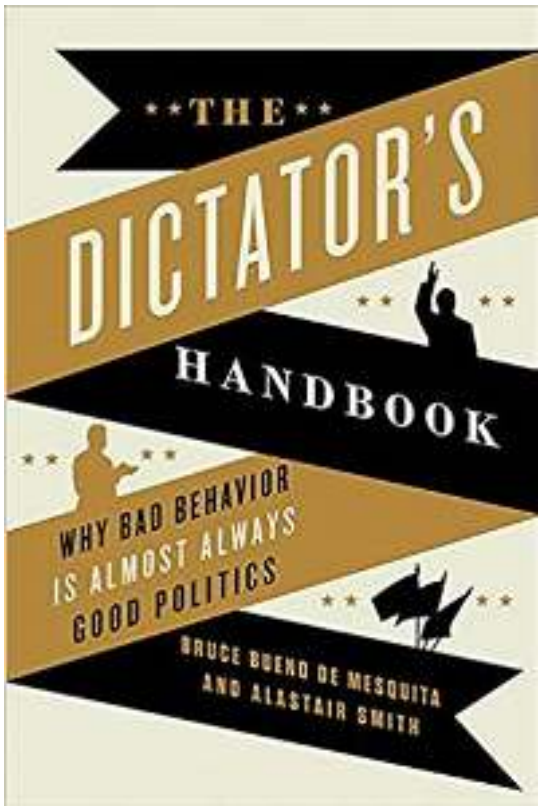
Despots Follow Sun-Tzu, Democrats Not: Here's Why

Sun-Tzu advice in "*The Art of War*" works for despots.

Sun-Tzu recommends stopping the campaign if it's costing too much and it's drawing out for too long.
Instead, democrats don't want to quit the war because that would make it seem like an unnecessary war that they lost. And that would cost them office because a war loss almost always costs them office. Unless they get beaten out of office by the opponent's army, despots don't have that problem.

Sun-Tzu emphasizes the importance of spoils to motivate soldiers, while democracies prefer fighting when it serves the citizens, or it would be impossible to sell the effort -and deaths- at home.

> **Bad behavior is more often than not, good politics**



More Realpolitik Wisdom

- Montesquieu didn't really understand politics and human nature. Machiavelli had a better grasp of human nature, but we can do better today by looking at more data
- **Do it, don't say it**: Never say you are going to make a purge of your essentials: do it without saying. If you announce, that you are inviting internal rebellions
- In democracies, austerity does not sell well. Especially after austerity has been going on for years (see Churchill after WWII)
- **Make friends**: CEO's longevity is tied to maintaining close personal ties with the members of the board
- Competent ministers or board members can be a risk for dictators as potential rivals (see "The 48 Laws of Power", law #1 of power: never outshine the master). The only trait that matters for dictators is loyalty
- Members of small coalitions live well, but in fear: make the coalition bigger and their benefits get diluted, make it smaller and they might lose their job
- **Rigged elections help dictators**: Strong leaders keep the supporters off-balance. This is why there are rigged elections in tyrannical states: leaders send the message that supporters can be replaced
- **Votes are sold in blocks in democracie**s: Many democracies have independent voters in theory but not in practice. Often votes are sold as "blocks" by their leaders (ie.: union bosses, religious leaders, or senators). And often these leaders sell the votes for a kickback
- **Tax loopholes serve the backers**: Dictators tax on average more heavily than democrats, but both make complicated rules and exceptions to favor their backers
- It's risky to be rich in autocracies (the richest Russian and Chinese individuals were both in prison)

- **Don't lend to dictators**: both democrats and, even more, dictators. The problem of repayment will be borne by the next leader… Or there is always the possibility of default and begging for debt relief. It's not a question of financial illiteracy
- Economic growth does not guarantee political improvement
- Small coalition regimes run their economies into the ground through inefficiencies designed to benefit the leader and the essentials
- **Ruthlessness is inherent to dictatorships**: The authors say that dictators must be ruthless. If people know he's unprepared to be ruthless when needed, he might not last long in power
- There is always a principled way to mask one's true intentions. The US promotes democracy when it backs the rebels and it supports stability when it supports governments

If you are interested in more, I recommend these articles with examples:

- **Political manipulations: techniques and examples**
- **Office politics: the archetypes of players**

And of course, in the face of selfish politicians, it might be a good idea to become a more individualistic player yourself.

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-individualism

Dictators' Handbook Quotes

On expedience VS doing what's good:

> Coming to power is never about doing the right thing. It's always about doing what's expedient.

On keeping the army loyal:

> Mugabe succeeds because he understands it does not matter what happens to the people as long as he pays the army

On the ultimate objective:

> In the end, ruling is the objective, not ruling well

On loyalty and competence:

> It is better to have loyal incompetents than competent rivals

On rigged elections:

> The is no better thing than a rigged election. As long as you are the one rigging it

On leaders and taxes:

> Leaders on the other hand are rather fond of taxes. As long as they don't have to pay them

And:

> Being a dictator is a terrific job, but it can also be terribly stressful. Especially if money is in short supply.

> Taxes are a great antidote to stress

On the dangers of wealth in autocracies:

> In autocracies it is unwise to be rich unless the government made you rich

On health care and infant mortality in autocracies:

> Even in autocracies with reported good health care system, infant mortality is high.
> Not because dictators don't like babies just like the next guy, but they recognize that helping babies doesn't help them

On helping the people instead of the coalition:

> Caesar made the mistake of trying to help the people by using a portion of the coalition's money.
> It is fine for leaders to enrich the people, but it has to come from the leader's pocket, not from his coalition of supporters.
> **Too much greed and too many good deeds are equally punishable.**

On idealism VS reality, the authors make a good case that everyone wants to help… But with government money, not their own.
And then they say:

> Despite the idealistic expressions of some, all too many of us prefer cheap oil to real change in West Africa or the Middle East

And, finally, one of my favorites underlining that appeals to ideological principles are often suspicious:

> **Men always have two reasons for doing things.**
> **The good reason, and the real reason.**

Criticism

Let me preface this section:

Not only do I love the book, but I also think that it is mostly right overall.
But a few notes still need to be added and potentially discussed:

#1. Does the US really act like a democracy for the citizens or are some democracies more masked autocracies?

The authors say that democracies tend to act for the citizens for the simple fact that they need the citizens' support.

Yet, Martin Gilen's study over 21 years shows that policy outcomes strongly reflect the will of high-income citizens.

This is not how democracies should work as for de Mesquita and Smith's model.
When it comes to actual policy, the US seems to act more like a small coalition government. This makes sense if you think that politicians heavily depend on donors to run their campaigns.

It would make sense then that the higher the wealth inequality (gini coefficient) and the more expensive the political campaigns, the less democracies act in favor of the average citizens and the more they act like small-coalition governments (ie.: autocracies).

This does not invalidate "*The Dictator's Handbook*" theories, but it increases a bit the complexity of the analysis, it adds some exceptions, and blurs the lines between "democracies on paper" and "true democracies".

True democracies then would require politicians to be less dependent on powerful and wealthy citizens and, possibly, present less income disparity just to make sure that a few cannot buy policies.

#2. Politics as self-interest only is a limited view and fails to truly understand and appreciate the hues of human nature

Since political analysis based on self-interest is sorely lacking, we need more books like "*The Dictator's Handbook*".

Yet, I believe that limiting ourselves to self-interest only leads to poor understanding and not to a "theory of everything" as the authors' students call it.

Not considering that people do have pro-social tendencies misses on an important aspect of human nature (see for example Ridley, 1996), even if cooperation was only self-interested (Axelrod, 1984).

It might as well be the case that dictators are self-selecting for selfish dictators' jobs while democrats attract a broader spectrum of individuals, including individuals who also want to do some good.

As an example, see the following:

#3. Leaders *do* have states' interests in mind (even if for selfish reasons)

The author says that it's never about countries but about individual leaders.

Leaders don't care about their countries, they care about themselves, they say.

Talking about Russians' ambitions to restore Russia as a great power makes no sense, they say, because it's not about "Russia", but all about the leader.

Yet, this statement in my opinion is wrong from a social-psychology point of view.

People *do* identify with their ingroup and with their countries. And leaders are people.
In social-psychology it's called the "Social Identity Theory", and in my guide on how to be a great leader I say that all leaders should encourage their group members to identify with their group for the simple reason that most people already have an inborn tendency to do so.

Putin, like many other autocrats, most likely *does* want his country to be a great power.
One because it gives him more power, second because it reflects greatly on him, third because that would make him well-liked and everyone wants to be revered and, finally, because he likely is at least a bit nationalistic and he identifies with Russia.

#4. Biased towards democracy: is democracy really *always* the best form of government? How about the democratic tragedy of commons?

The authors seem to reach this conclusion:

> Big coalition governments where nominal selectors are also the true selectors, such as democracies, are the best systems to ensure good policy and development

And, in many ways, that's absolutely true.
Especially if you compare it to your average dictatorship.

Yet, I can see many ways in which democracy, having difficulty with good but unpopular actions, cannot manage to avoid disasters.

The authors themselves admit that austerity does not win votes in democracies. Yet austerity is exactly what you

need sometimes.
I think of Greece or of Italy, a country with great potential, but which cannot manage to get out of recession and decrease its debt.
If Italy were a dictatorship, the dictators could introduce the forceful, unpopular in the short-term but good in the long-term policies that the country needs.

Democracies are also prone to tragedy of commons (also see: "*game theory bargaining*").

How does democracy cope, for example, with overpopulation if nobody wants a policy for one single child max?

How does democracy cope with environmental preservation if citizens all prefer to pollute?

Democracies can easily fall victim to the tragedy of commons whereas an "enlightened despot" can steer a country towards what's truly best for them in the long run.
That is exactly what Xiaoping did, and the authors themselves listed him as one of the "despotic heroes"
Xiaoping probably performed for China much better than any democracy could have ever done.

The authors say that good despots can exist, but they end up pursuing the wrong policies because they lack people's feedback.

However, that is not a convincing argument to me.
Modern despots can have access to plenty of data that average citizens don't even bother to check before voting.

- **What about hated democrats and beloved dictators?**

"*The Dictator's Handbook*" does not expressly say that dictators are disliked.

But the feeling is that dictators are disliked by the population, while democrats are more liked and popular.

Yet I think of Vladimir Putin, a rather liked and loved autocrat in Russia. Or even Pope Francis in the Vatican/Catholic Church.

And in most Western democracies the approval ratings of politicians are abysmally low.

This again seems, in my opinion, to fly against the face of the "terrible despots" concept and lend more credibility to the notion that "enlightened despots" are sometimes better than weak democracies.

#5. Unsure of some data, indexes, and evidence

There were a few instances where I wasn't sure about the underlying data or about the indicators used to corroborate the theory.

For example:

- **Is the "resource curse" true?**

The author says that "resource-rich" countries systematically underperform resource-poor countries.

The author says that "nations with readily extractable resources *systematically* underperform nations without such resources".

But it that true?

A few notable exceptions spring to mind, including the US, Canada, and Norway.
There has been considerable criticism of the "resource curse" theory, and I am personally not too convinced of how real that curse is.

I think it might be true with dictators, but it's not necessarily true with democracies.
The authors should have pointed that out a bit more clearly maybe.

- **Do democracies really tax less?**

The authors say that democracies, on average, tax at a lower rate.

They also say they have another book up with all the data and I am eventually going to read that, too.
Still, I would have liked them to at least mention they have data to back their assertions.

There are plenty of exceptions that make me at least doubt that assertion. Think of the Scandinavian countries and many more European countries. But also think of autocratic regimes with very low taxation or, in some cases, even true tax havens (ie.: Dubai).

- **"Straight road index"**

Measuring how straight the roads are to tease out how despotic a government is seemed a bit too convoluted to me.

Not necessarily untrue, but it might be a bit of a stretch. Especially if you don't take into account geography, population density, and wealth.

- **Earthquake index**

The authors use earthquake victims as a proxy for the level of government's care for its citizens.
That, in turn, would help identify dictatorships (don't care at all) VS democracies (care).

It makes sense on paper.

Yet, earthquakes are so rare that even democratic leaders should theoretically not care much about protecting their citizens from events that will happen who knows when.
But **if we only think in terms of self-interest, democrats also have a strong short-term bias**. The authors mention the earthquake in Italy for example, but I know well about it because it was exactly in my region, and the authors failed to realize that *the largest amount of victims came exactly from government buildings* that collapsed.

So albeit I agree with the overarching idea, I'm not too sure about this "earthquake index".

And since self-interest in my opinion does not explain big present investments for uncertain future rewards, I must wonder again: maybe self-interest is not the only way to understand politics?

Review

The Dictator's Handbook is a uniquely enlightening book on the power dynamics of politics and dictatorships, as well as realpolitik and human nature.

It helped us strengthen several of our articles as well as our flagship training Power University, and that's the greatest compliment we can ever pay to anyone.

Get the book on Amazon or check the:

- **Best books on power**

You Can Do Better Than The Red Pill. Here's Why

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 September 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Red Pill is a loose network of men focused on sexual dynamics, male self-improvement, and protection against exploitation.

It's taught many guys useful lessons: dating strategies, status-building, and self-reliance.

But in practice, some threads of the movement drift into cynicism and adversarial thinking that limit growth. This article explains what the Red Pill gets right, where it goes wrong, and how to upgrade those lessons into strategies that build real power.

Note: we analyze the red pill seen from its raw and real grassroots dynamics
Not just the more politically appealing view of its public-facing authors. We would agree more with some of its more moderate participants. But we highlight the more relevant grassroots dynamics.

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  - Men Are Good, Women Are Bad
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  - Women Control An Unfair System, Men Must Defend
  - Selective Attention: Their Faults, Our Values
- Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict
  - Collective Narcissism
  - The Power Dynamics of Hate Group Leadership
  - Red Pill & Feminism: Two Sides Of The Same Coin
- Cynicism & "Zero-Sum Game"
  - Risk of Toxicity & Abuse
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- Beyond Red Pill: Men's Empowerment
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Intro: What's The Red Pill

This is a high-level definition of the Red Pill:

> The Red Pill is a community of men, who congregate to learn, share and discuss social and sexual dynamics with takes that may be too politically incorrect to be discussed by society at large.

The Red Pill is a subset of the larger "manosphere" constellation, dealing with varied topics such as life strategies, power dynamics, male rights, and general self-development.

The popular expression "taking the red pill", means opening up to the hidden truths of life that society hides from most people.

This website could be considered a red pill place.

Red Pill & TPM

The Power Moves was one of the first ones to be featured in The Red Pill Archive:

It makes sense that this website is there.
But at the same time, we differ in crucial aspects:

- We **teach individual empowerment**, and rather than group-based advancement (ie.: 'men's rights')
- We conceive the **possibility of smart win-win relationships** with male leadership
- We **believe in individual men's power to win**, no matter the context. So we care less about social trends, feminists, etc.

Let's start with the biggest elephant in the room:

Is The Red Pill Misogynist?

Yes, the rare important sub-currents within the red pill that espouse misogynistic takes that we do not like, support, or regard as truthful.

That being said, there are also plenty of valid red pill insights.
Men's and women's interests diverge sometimes, and those divergences can create friction and chances for cheating.
Some red pill can be 'positively Machiavellian'. But it also turns cynical, and sometimes potentially toxic for two reasons:

1. **Men VS Women focus**: It focuses *only* on areas of friction, disregarding opportunities for win-win
2. **Focus on women's faults**, rarely on the value women can add, and rarely on men's faults

The red pill often frames women as against men. And, not rarely, as manipulative and underhanded
Let's see some examples:

Men Are Good, Women Are Bad

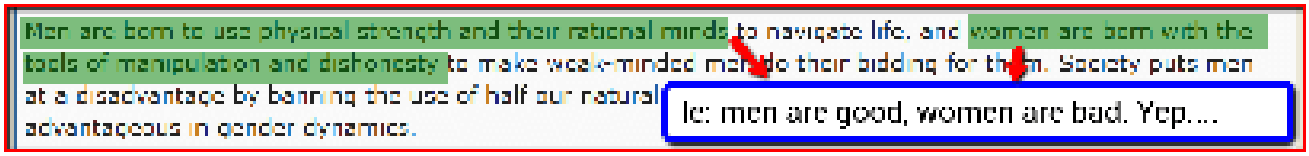
The red pill sometimes portrays women as manipulative and underhanded.

Do women manipulate?

Sure.
Just like everyone else.

But the Red Pill wears distorted lenses. Aggressive or manipulative behavior in the "us" male ingroup is out of sight, while the faults of the "them" female outgroup are in full focus.

A quick sift among the most popular threads shows repeated confirmation of the "good men VS bad women" frame:



As if men can't manipulate, too (eye roll)
Red Pill author *alpha male strategies* also recommends men to "string women along" for as much as possible because, he says, that's what women do to men.

Men Are Smart, Women Are Stupid

Misogyny and anger might be more hidden among popular Red Pill authors, but they are endemic of Red Pill *communities*.

This post has been upvoted more than two thousand times, by 88% of the readers, and received the moderator's endorsement.

Here is what it says:

I'm not a woman hater due to inexperience like the feminists think so, in fact when I was inexperienced I treated women better than I ever do now. It's precisely because I deal with the prettiest and smartest girls on the daily that I've come to the conclusion that they're all fucking retarded. All of them. If they're pretty they're a whore. If they're smart they're also a whore. The "smartest" girls I know are the biggest sex addicts

Studies show no IQ differences between genders. But this revered TRP guy knows better...

He claims unsurpassed experience to conclude that "all" women are…

And most Red Pill redditors upvoted it.

AWALT: All Women Are All Like That (Bad)

The good old "they're all alike".

Again, no surprise for anyone schooled in group dynamics and psychology: this is a natural consequence of adversarial ingroup/outgroup dynamics.

These two group dynamics are particularly salient in communities like the Red Pill:

1. **Self-Stereotyping**: members strive to conform to the group (See Haslam, 2006)
2. **Outgroup stereotyping**: the outgroups is seen as "homogeneously bad" (see Baumeister, 1997)

Both of them can take some mental gymnastics, and the red pill groups help support the cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957).
Publish and upvote only information that supports our view until supporting information is all that's available to see.
And everyone can keep repeating "see? All women are bad".

A nuanced reality requires coping mechanisms to maintain a biased outlook
Free of any external interference, confirmation bias, groupthink, and group dynamics can maintain even the most unrealistic representations of reality.

Here are some distorted notions the red pill espouses about 'all women are like that':

- Women never really love a man
- Women dupe a beta provider to cheat with the alpha (alpha fucks, beta bucks)
- Women form no real attachment: hypergamy controls them

Again, there is a backdrop of truth in most of them.
Just not the way the Red Pill presents them, because the Red Pill naturally distorts them.

P.S.:
One must truly lack experience to believe that women can't love a man. See how to make women fall in love.

Women Control An Unfair System, Men Must Defend

The red pill sees women as controlling society and men as victims.

It's true that different individuals try to sway the judicial system and cultural system to favor their interests, of course.
And individual effort congregates at the group level. This is basic social power dynamics.

However, once again, the red pill never reflects that men do the same, and have been winning at it for centuries.
It also exaggerates how bad it is for men today, leading to some disempowering victimhood mentality and frames.

This one-sided narrative is similar to how hate groups operate, recruit, and proselytize (Lee, 2002).
The "unfair system" against "us" is exactly how this former nazi was recruited into the organization.

Selective Attention: Their Faults, Our Values

This might be the red pill's core issue: focusing on women's faults, without an equivalent appreciation of one's own.

When red pillers focus only on the "wrong" that women do and "what's to lose", they only see 1/4 of reality.
They miss:

1. **The positives of women**
2. **The negatives of men** (also see "games men play")
3. **The potential for win-win** (you find what you look for, as they say)

Read more on win-win:

- Fundamental strategies of power
- The enlightened collaborator

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict

Writes social psychologist Roy Baumeister:

> People do not generally need a great deal of urging to despise the groups that are arrayed against them (…)

Some Red Pill communities still provides plenty of urging, though.

In social psychology, the tendency to hate the outgroup is an offshoot of the "realistic conflict theory".
Conflicts become more extreme when:

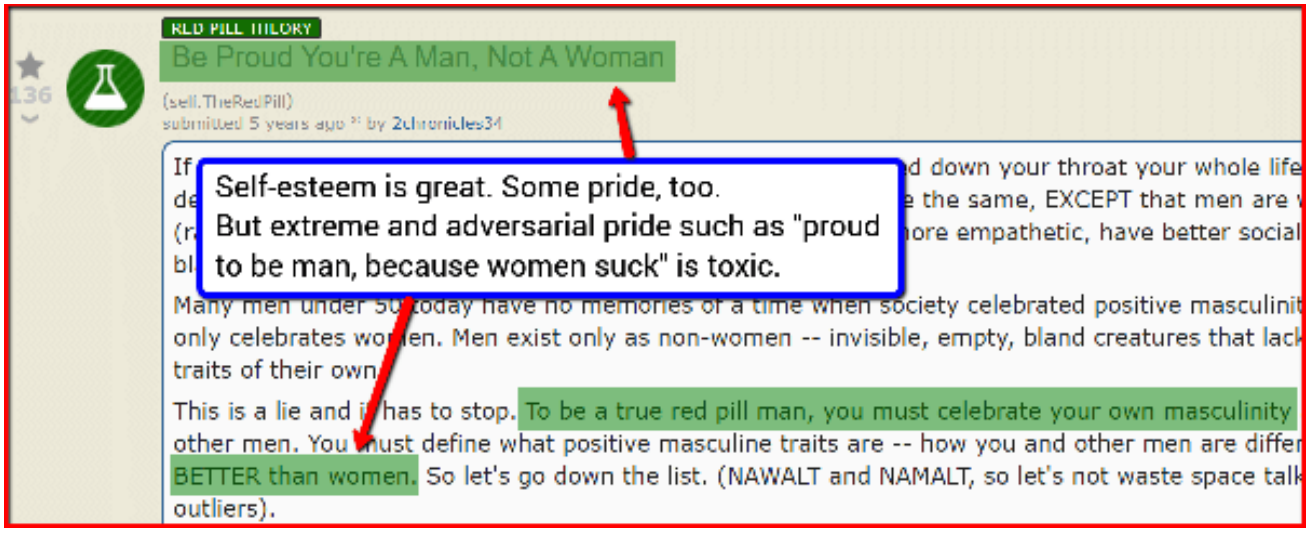
- Members are authoritarian, craving power, and control

- Members engage in competition
- The competitions are zero-sum games

All three are true for the Red Pill.
The Red Pill attracts authoritarian men who crave more power and control, men high in Social Dominance Orientation, which in turn predicts sexism (Pratto et al., 2000), fueled by a view of gender relationships as social competitions.

These in-group vs out-group dynamics start benignly with a strong self-identification as men. Nothing wrong with thinking of yourself as a man, and it can be easily framed (and be) as healthy and good.
The problem is when it becomes the main or only source of self-identification, pride, and pitched within a competitive dynamic set *against* women.

These tendencies are either latent or openly embraced and encouraged:



Masculinity pride is Jack Donovan's main focus, for example.
Donovan, author of "*The Way of Men*" and a respected author in the RP community, theorizes that society, weakened by feminization (the enemy), is on the verge of breaking up

Rollo Tomassi, possibly the most notorious voice of The Red Pill community, also offers a frame of 'men against women'.
He writes:

> (…) women inserting themselves into male space in order to enforce the dictates of feminine social primacy

In male bonding, Rollo Tomassi sees a bulwark against the feminine assault.
Criticizing the MGTOW movement, he says:

> This only serves to cede power to the feminine imperative
> -Rollo Tomassi, "*Positive Masculinity*"

At a deeper level, this is ego fusion (Swann et al., 2012), which is the merging of group and self-identity such that the two cannot be disentangled.
From a social-psychological perspective, the bigger the personal self-identification with the "we", the higher the depersonalization.
At the extreme of depersonalization, the group becomes more important than the self (Turner, 1986) because, well… The group *is* the self.

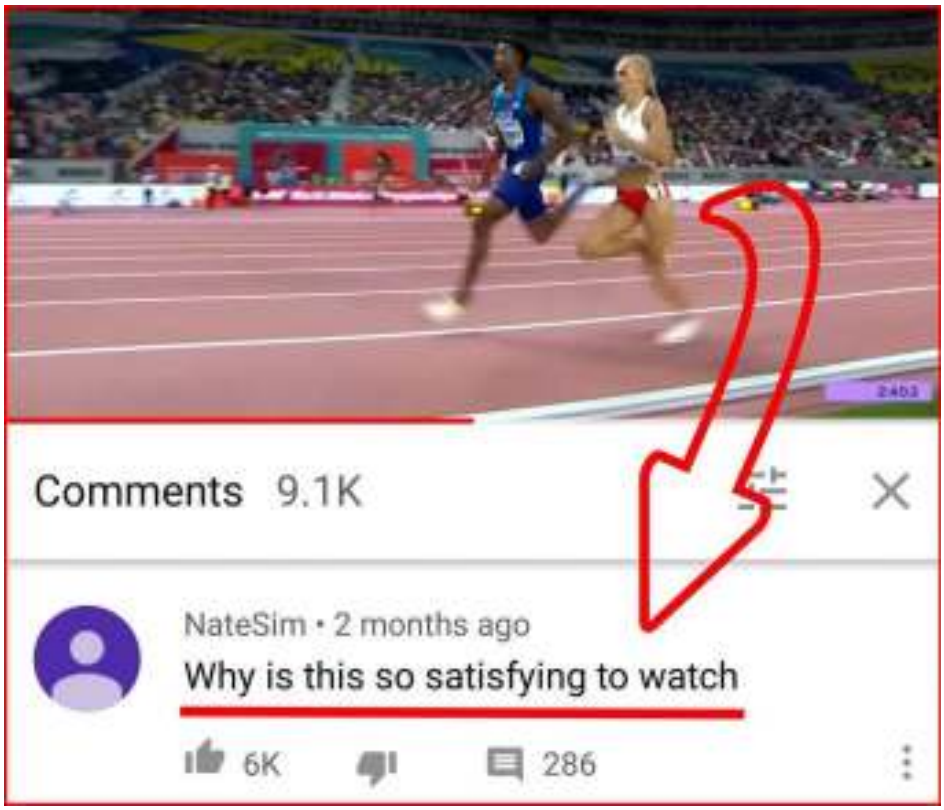
This extreme sense of belonging, coupled with an adversarial attitude, leads to increasing anger and hatred towards

the outgroup (in this case, women).

Collective Narcissism

These dynamics overlap with **collective narcissism**.
Psychology researcher de Zavala explains that collective narcissism is a fragile and defensive form of group belonging, where **the group's alleged superiority is used to bolster a fragile personal sense of self-worth**.

We can clearly see this in some men in the manosphere.
For example:



NateSim latches his ego on the "men's cart", so he can feel good about himself when a man "beats" a woman. Low power behavior.

Collective narcissism is associated with vulnerable narcissism, the 'low power' form of narcissism, and defensiveness, thin-skin, and retaliatory aggression against perceived slights to the in-group (de Zavala, 2018).

The Power Dynamics of Hate Group Leadership

Hate groups need hate to stay alive.

Says Baumeister in his landmark work "*Evil*":

> The members with the firmest sense of hatred will end up being the ones that the others look to for support and guidance.

A moderate leader is dangerous.
He may build bridges, display cracks in the echochamber, or present an overly rosy view of the world. That puts the hate group at risk of dissolution, which the members who invested their ego in the group cannot tolerate.

Nobody speaks up against extreme leaders. The moderates will quit, raising the percentage of extremists in the group.

This is a general dynamic, and also applies to feminist dynamics.
For example, it's exactly what happened to this former feminist when she tried to understand manosphere activists:

> Former feminist: when you start to humanize your enemy, you in turn may be dehumanized by your community

Red Pill & Feminism: Two Sides Of The Same Coin

Read a few feminist and red pill books, and it's hard not to see the same issues and patterns.
For example:

Feminism	Red Pill
Patriarchy oppressing women	**Gynocentric society** oppressing men
Coercive Control = no loving relationships	**Hypergamy** / dual sexuality = no loving relationships
Toxic masculinity = danger to society	**Feminazi** = worsens society

The Red Pill's own bias may be a tad less bad than feminism, but I might be biased as a man myself.

Cynicism & "Zero-Sum Game"

At their core, some red-pillers look at relationships as zero-sum games.

Sometimes that zero-sum game thinking is obvious and easier to spot.
Some other times, it's more hidden.

For example, this is what an active social media red pill poster says:

> **Red Pill Guru**: They are using him for his money, and he is using them for their beauty

The keyword is calling 'using' what could be a win-win transaction, instead.
That's the mindset of focusing on the loss, rather than on the mutual benefit.

And Rollo Tomassi writes in "*Preventive Medicine*":

> For one gender's sexual strategy to succeed the other gender must compromise or abandon their own.
>
> – *Rollo Tomassi*

Rollo Tomassi is not *wholly* wrong.
But he is wrong in generalizing to the whole population, because plenty of men gain with a long-term relationship (Buss, 1994).

I'd have to wonder why Rollo got married, then.
Because if you see relationships as zero-sum games, then the red pill approach to refuse relationships makes sense.

> **The Red Pill is at odds with women and relationships because it presupposes zero sum games relationships, playing against a cheating opponent, who successfuly rigged the system.**

The only advice that can come out of that is to avoid relationships and play to win, but never cooperate.

In game theory, this is referred to as a "defector strategy".
Sometimes, it hides *fear*, though. That fear motivates one to avoid the game altogether or approach it with a

mindset of “I’ll cheat first”.

But this is not well-supported by evolution.
Humans developed pair-bonding and semi-monogamy because it was good for both (Luoto and Woodley of Menie, 2022).

This mindset can never allow for a healthy, collaborative, win-win relationship.

Again, the red pill does get something right.
A touch of cynicism is important; relationships do incur risks. And in committed relationships, **high-value men give more** (see our video here).

The virtue lies in looking at those dangers realistically and crafting effective strategies around them.
Read more here:

- **The positive cynic mindset**: growing past poisonous cynicism
- **Self-defense in business and love**, cooperating, while winning

> Self-Protection in Love and Business, Without Losing Trust

Risk of Toxicity & Abuse

Let me start with the obvious:

Not all Red Pill men are abusive.

Yet, it would be naive to not see that some dynamics increase that risk, including:

1. **Dehumanization process** (common in all hate groups)
2. **Dominance and control** (“be alpha & dominate, or be a loser”)
3. **Ultra-conservative social roles**
4. **Defensive, win-lose, & scarcity mindset** (attack first to avoid losing, Forward, 1998)

Let’s review some of them:

Dehumanization Process

Social psychologist Philip Zimbardo, notable researcher on violence and abuse, lists four social causes responsible for evil:

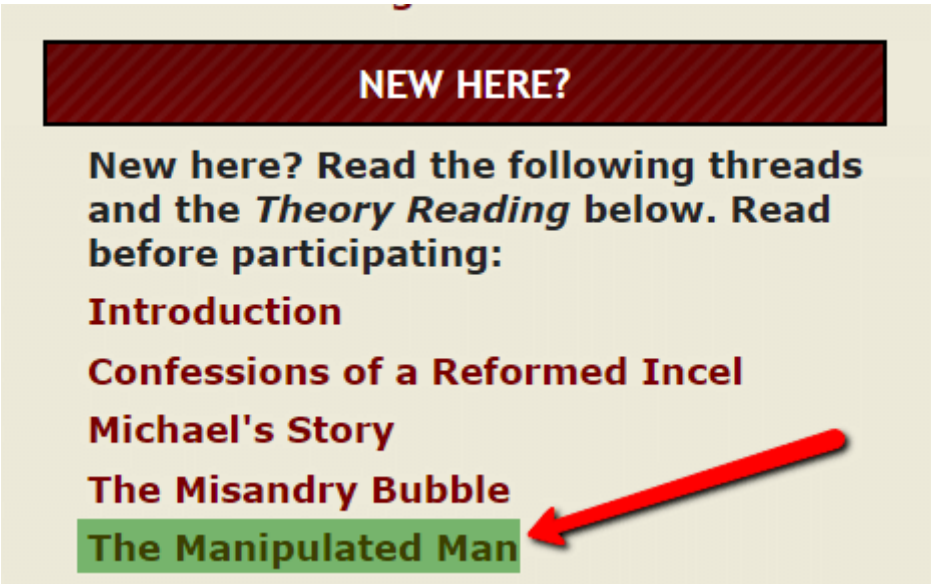
1. **Deindividuation** (“I” merges with “red-piled men”)
2. **Dehumanization** (women are bad, so morals don’t apply to them)
3. **Anonymity** (most red pill communities are anonymous)
4. **Diffusion of responsibility** (the more of us, the safer it is to be extremists, thus the effort of recruitment)

Dehumanization (Kelman, 1976) is encouraged in some Red Pill communities.
This is what Esther Vilar, author of one of the most popular *Red Pill books,* writes:

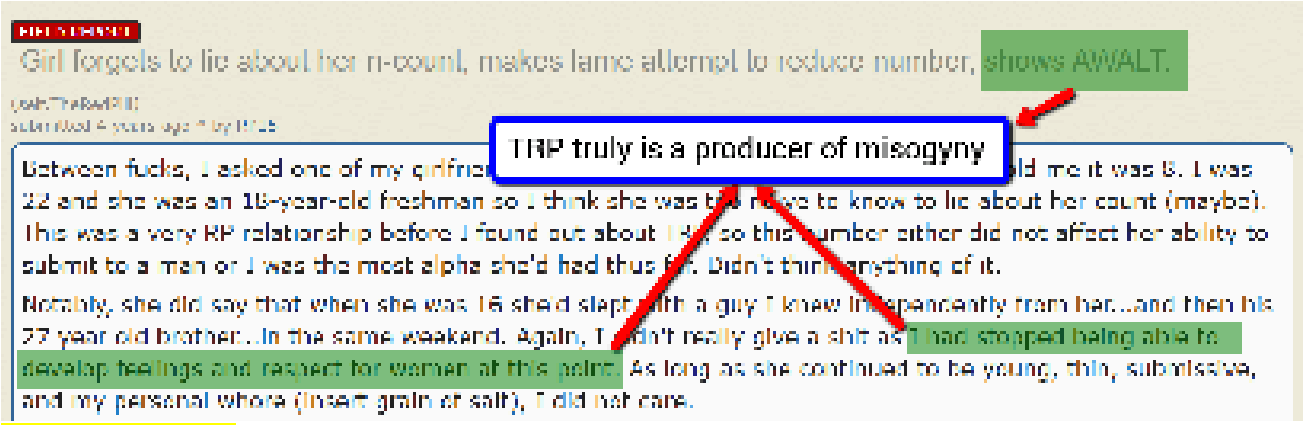
> Women live an animal existence. They like eating, drinking, sleeping – even sex, providing there is nothing to do and no real effort is required of them.
>
> *Esther Vilar*

Vilar describes women as mindless, animal-like creatures who leech on men for their survival.

And her book is recommended reading in The Red Pill subreddit, finding a prominent spot right on the sidebar:



Link to online PDF file BTW, just to support the author :)
Through dehumanization, even normally moral men stop feeling any bond and empathy with women.
See an example from a popular thread:



The toxic end game?

Once women are dehumanized, then it's fair game to treat them as sub-humans.

See an example:

- **Psychopath's sexual strategy**: active in the red pill subreddit

The Alpha Imperative: A Male Yoke

The Red Pill talks about the "feminine imperative", but the true diktat Red Pill men are all under is the Red Pill "alpha imperative".

Men who buy into the red pill build their self-esteem around semi-toxic and inherently fragile traits of 'alphaness'.

This guy, for example, ended up in a relationship after having "taken the red pill".
Here is what he writes:

So, I recently realized that my beliefs were really damaging. I realize these old Red Pill and Evo Psych beliefs that empowered me, also unequivocally **make me feel like a loser compared to everyone she's had uncommitted sex with.** So I wrote down the beliefs I hold and while I know some of them sound insane, I would really like your confirmation that they are false - I feel like it's the only hope I have. I did read the stickied evidence thread, which helped. So, the beliefs that are destroying the relationship:

- Women give sex and men have to earn it. If men are worthy for a short term fling, they are more "chosen" than a man chosen for a relationship. a man who gets sex without commitment is superior than one who needs to commit or show explicit signs that he wants to commit.
- The top 1-20% of men are the ones getting most of the sex, so it's likely that the men she slept with are better than me.
- Women present a loving, committed personality when they are in love with a long term mate, and a different, more sexual personality when they are with a highly attractive short term mate. So the short term sex partner sees more of her true nature, so he wins.
- Most men who date are just looking to get laid. Men who slept with my girlfriend just used her for sex, she allowed it. This makes them the winners over me.
- When a woman has sex with a new guy, it emotionally damages her somewhat. Sex in the future becomes a little less meaningful for her. Therefore, guys who got to her earlier won over the guy who has her now.
- Younger women are always more valuable, so if a guy slept with her when she was younger (even by a couple years), he got something better than me that I will never have.

See the pattern?

This man's fragile fear can be boiled down to the possibility of someone more alpha than he is.

The fear of other alphas "branding" women has a name: "alpha widows".
Alpha widows, or women who have been with an alpha, are supposedly "dangerous" to be with because they're harder to control (again, a low-value mindset of controlling).

But true development and **male power comes from not fearing anyone.**

Learn better:

- **How to lead relationships, with high-value**
- Antifragile mind
- Why the alpha male game is limiting you

Political Conservatism

> For a bunch of self-proclaimed alpha males, many of these guys spend a woeful amount of time demanding that a tough man rule them
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano – the authoritarian personality conundrum*

The Red Pill started apolitical.
But it has become largely a congregation of conservatives, complaining of libertine dating, women's sexuality, and general social dynamics.

See an example here, with Red Pill moderators officially endorsing Trump:

Nothing wrong with conservatism, of course.
But as a group that was also focused on dating success, chances are that conservatism and complaining may not help. And sure won't help to be a lover and successful dater.

The psychology of a player is inherently different than current red pill social and sexual conservatism.

Beyond Red Pill: Men's Empowerment

Here are some good steps:

- **Focus on the self**, less on social trends
- **Embrace nuances** and exceptions for a better understanding of reality
- **Adopt more empowering mindsets**: an empowered man can win, no matter the social trends
  - You can find plenty of feminine women to date
  - You can have win-win relationships

Please read more:

- **Making of the ubermensch**
- **Growing beyond the red pill**

And I will end with a quote from Robert Greene:

> We belong to the human race. Anything else is backward and far too dangerous.

SUMMARY

The Red Pill presents itself as the place to get the uncomfortable truths of life.
And some of those uncomfortable truths are spot-on, and beginners need to learn them.

The next step is to turn that inquisitive mind towards, well… The Red Pill itself.

Several red pill communities also contain some bitterness, cynicism, and some disempowering mindsets.
They should be a *phase* in men's empowerment, not the final step.

The next step is to embrace a more nuanced reality, more empowering mindsets and strategies, and the possibility for win-win relationships.

To transcend the group and win as a man, no matter where you are, check:

- **Power University**

Red Pill Mindsets of High Value Men: Moving Past Anger

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 September 2019 · Archived copy · Original

This article's core notion is that "red pill communities" are best seen as phase in men's development.

While "red pill" is sometimes used for "seeing the truth", this article refers to some tendencies and subsets of red pill *communities* and *gurus* .

And to reach the best version of yourself, you must eventually move beyond the limitations of those communities and gurus.

So let's start:

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Attitudes Towards Women

The views on women are the most significant differentiator between Red Pill men and post-Red Pill men.

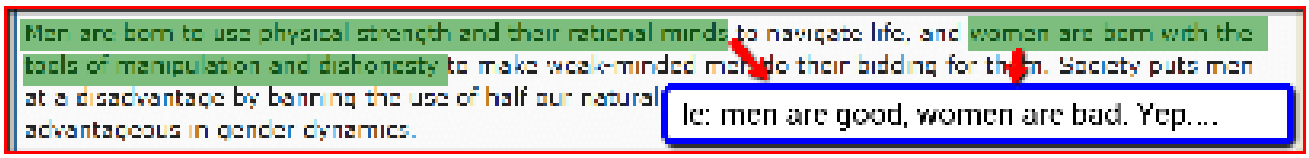
TRP: Women Are Bad & Manipulative

At the heart of Red Pill toxicity is the view of intergender relationships as adversarial.

The Red Pill sees women as:

- Morally inferior to men
- Irrational and less intelligent
- Naturally manipulative and conniving
- Acting always and only on self-interest, which never intersects with male interest

This is an example:



Taken from one of the most upvoted threads on TRP Reddit
Some men joining the Red Pill were victims of Madonna-whore mindset.

Before they used to believe all women were Madonnas.
But then something unexpected happened in their lives, they join the Red Pill, and now they swing in the opposite direction, happy to justify their anger with the "all women are like that" mantra (ie.: "all women are whores").

They become highly mistrustful of women, and while sometimes mistrust is good, John Gottman's research showed that protracted mistrust and suspicion of other people's motives lead to loneliness and early death (mostly common in men).

Alpha Fucks, Beta Is Fucked: A Black-And-White World

Many Red Pill men find "the truth" depressing, yet providing opportunities for those who become "alpha males".

In black-and-white thinking, it's either you fuck women by being an alpha, or you get fucked by being a beta.
Of course, "alpha fucks beta bucks" is not wholly wrong.
But the concept, in its extremization, ends up being a distortion of reality.

Read more here:

> The Science of "Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks" (Facts VS Myths)

HIGHER VALUE: Women Pursue Their Self-Interest, Just Like Men Do

High-quality men are not naive.

They know that:

- **People manipulate**, both women and men
- **Interests can diverge**: some interests overlap, and others diverge -or may diverge over time-
  - Men and women share both common and diverging goals in dating and reproduction

So we can expect different strategies of intra-sexual and inter-sexual competition, as well as different adaptations

for manipulation.
Also say:

- Dating games women play
- Nasty and manipulative games women play
- Women control and “domesticate” men in relationships

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

However, crucially, these men also believe that:

- Women’s nature doesn’t make them bad
- Many women are amazing and enriching to a man’s life

And, that, of course, the same applies to men -just differently-.

TRP: Women Are All The Same (AWALT)

This mantra suggests that men should stop thinking “their woman is different”.

And many men who believe their woman is special may need to hear that indeed.

Many core psychological traits and propensities are indeed shared among women -and across humans in general-.
However, as usual, some red pill communities take it *too* far.

And I’ve often seen that “AWALT” attached to some shameful behavior that does NOT extend to *all* women.

HIGHER VALUE: Most Women Share Many Foundational Traits, And Important Individual Differences

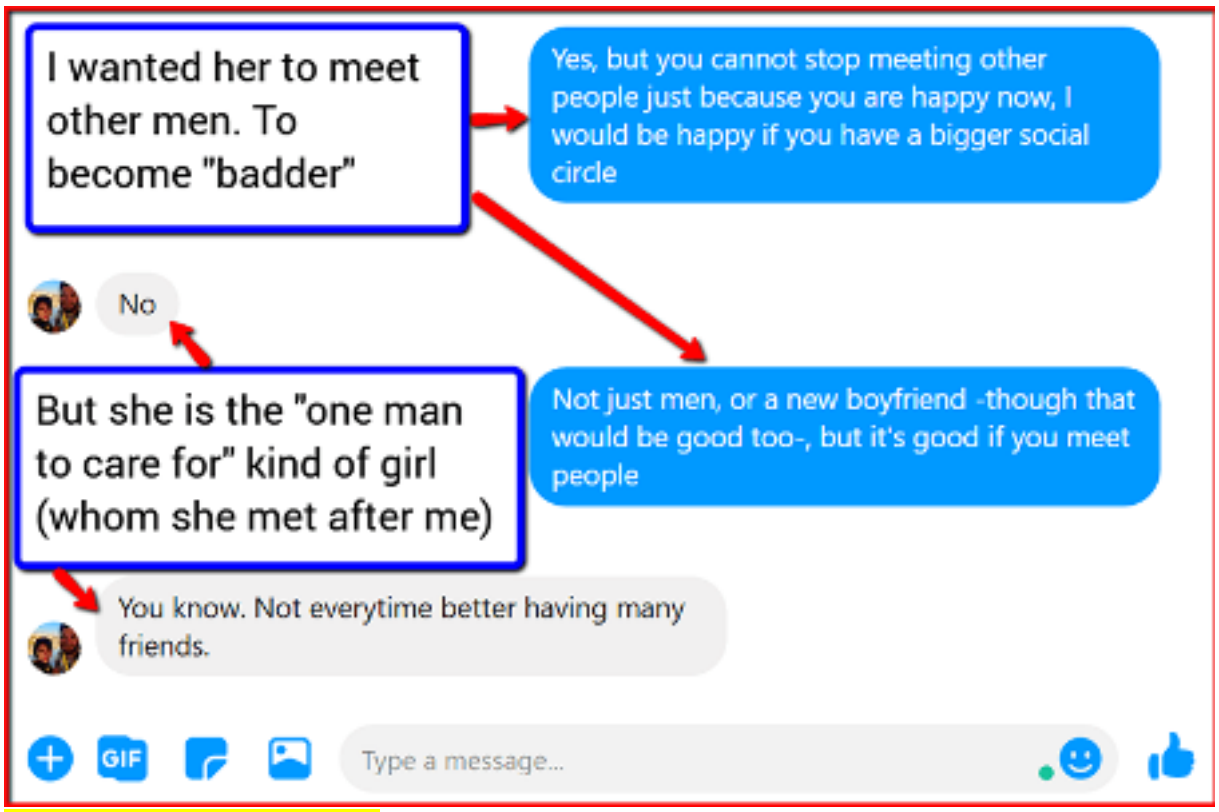
Post-Red Pill men know that there are general and fundamental tendencies in both men and women.

In that sense, **“AWALT” applies to any living organism** when it refers to all the many underlying similarities.

But they’ve experienced enough to know that **women also vary in their tendencies to cheat, take, and manipulate** -or to be faithful, giving, and straight-talking-.

They have experienced women who played dread games, who texted them to meet up to celebrate their new “single lives” after they had been hooking up for a month, and women who lied and deceived.
And they have experienced women who want simple lives, craving for 1:1 attachments and a man to take care of.

As a matter of fact, they worried for those women when they themselves weren’t willing to commit.
Here is one example:



Many women are truly 'very nice'

I worried she was too into me and too nice and submissive. Too "good".

Dropping gifts in my mailbox, preparing dinners, showing up at my door within 20 minutes when I told her I got fired (and while I was having another woman over…).

I wanted to expand her options, increase her negotiation power… Make her more like me. But it's not what she wanted. She wanted a man to give all her love to. I'm glad she found the right guy for that.

Attitudes Towards Seduction

Some men enter the Red Pill after a heartbreak.

Or following the momentous self-admission that they are not doing well with women.

The Red Pill promises solutions for both, so the sale is easily done.

Let's see how that turns out.

TRP: Women Love As*holes, Be An Asshole Or Lose

This is what the more toxic Red Pill seduction mindset looks like:

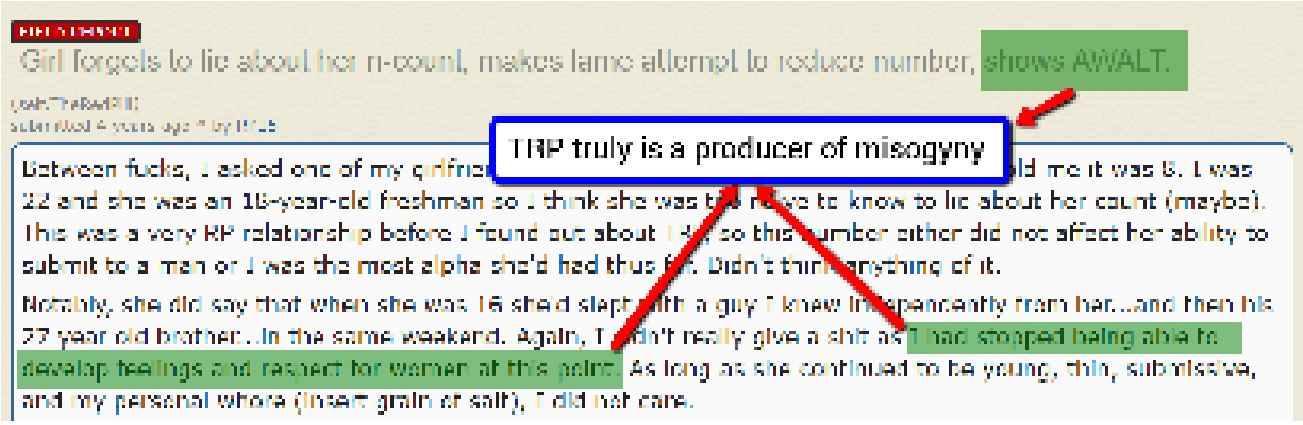
> Women chase unavailable assholes and despise betas.
> Become an asshole, or lose.

And while there is certainly some truth in that, it's also a limited view of what works in seduction.

Somewhat correlated is the objectification of women.

For example, red pill guru Rollo Tomassi', author of "The Rational Male" book/blog, refers to women one should be dating as "plates".

See an example here:



Since women are dehumanized, it's only natural that game in the Red Pill degrades into manipulation.
Enter mind games such as "triangulation" and "dread game".

Also read:

- **Asshole dating strategy**
- **How to be a "good asshole"**

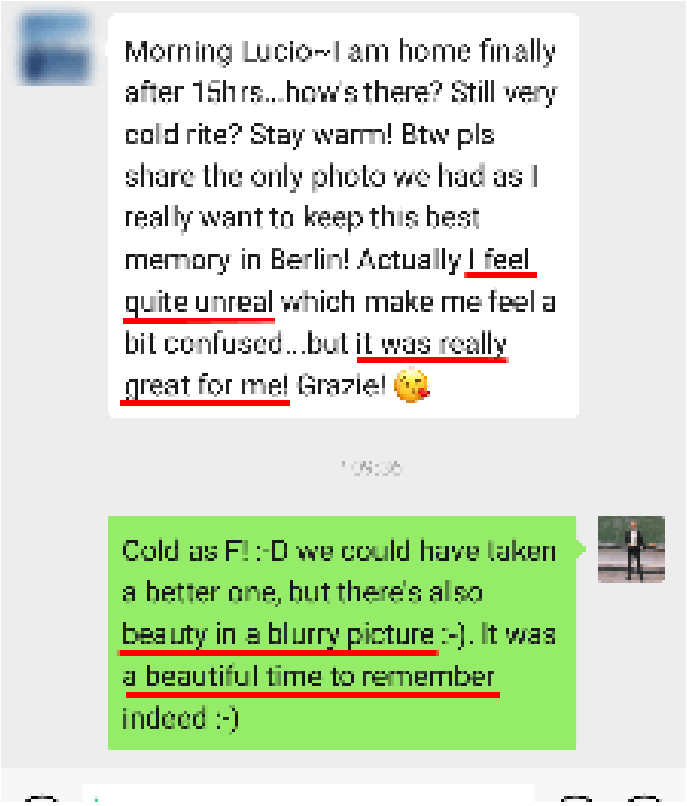
> How to Be A Good Asshole

HIGHER VALUE: As*holes Do Better Than Losers, But I Do Better Than Both

Post-red pill men believe that cooperation and win-win are possible.

And that tends to work better in life.
Assholes mostly outperform submissive men and passive doormats. But high-power men who can mix in warmth tend to do best.

Whirlwind romance includes both physical ecstasy and romance, multiplying the effects and the enjoyment.
Example:



This is the type of seduction I've preferred, and it's what misogyny and "asshole game" will never provide.

Also read:

- **Smart cooperator**: cooperating as a red-pilled man

Masculinity Ideals

What does it mean to be a man?

That's a major topic of both the manosphere and the Red Pill, where the emphasis is on "being an alpha male".

Let's see what it means:

TRP: It's Either Alpha, Or Useless Beta

And yes, aspiring to "be alpha" in the sense of high status is great.

The issue with the toxic red pill drift is that the rule to being an alpha male is reduce to this:

1. Be a selfish asshole

Some men may indeed need to be more like good assholes -including becoming assertive and high power-.
But the worst Red Pill philosophy is overdoes traits of ass-holishness, and ditch the traits that can make for collaborative relationships (more on it later).

It's the exact same mistake feminists encourage women to do, by the way.
Women read equivalent books such as "The Power of The Pussy" and "Why Man Love Bitches" with the intention of becoming stronger.
But they often just become angrier, more argumentative, and bitter.

Alpha Males Against Feminazis

Some Red Pill men are misogynists because they feel threatened by women.

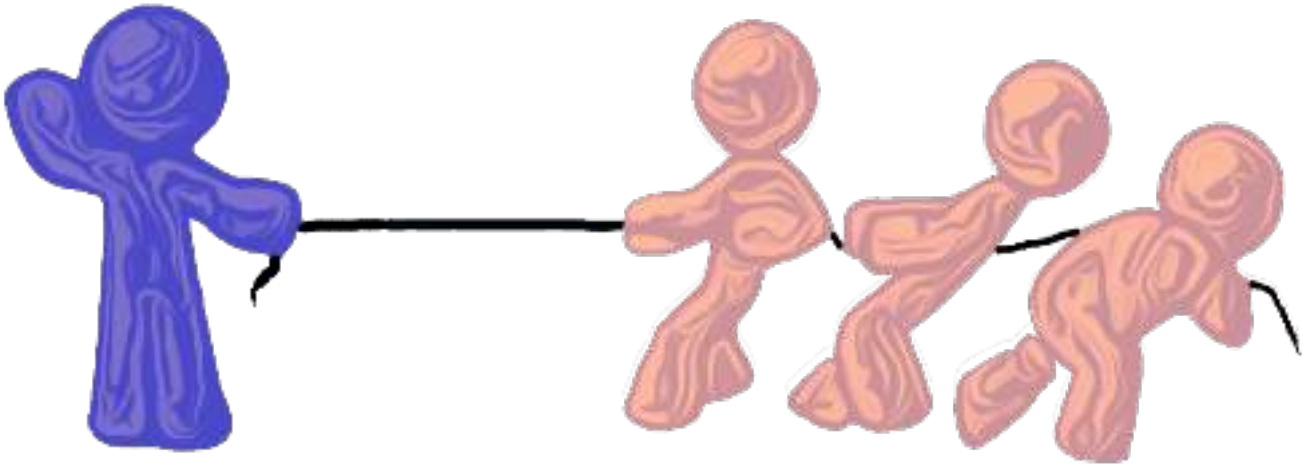
In a way, it's understandable. Empowered women ARE a threat to many (below-average) men. See video explanation here:

But it's a low-value reaction to complain and be angry about it.
This is what Rollo Tomassi, a popular Red Pill author, writes about women "invading" male spaces:

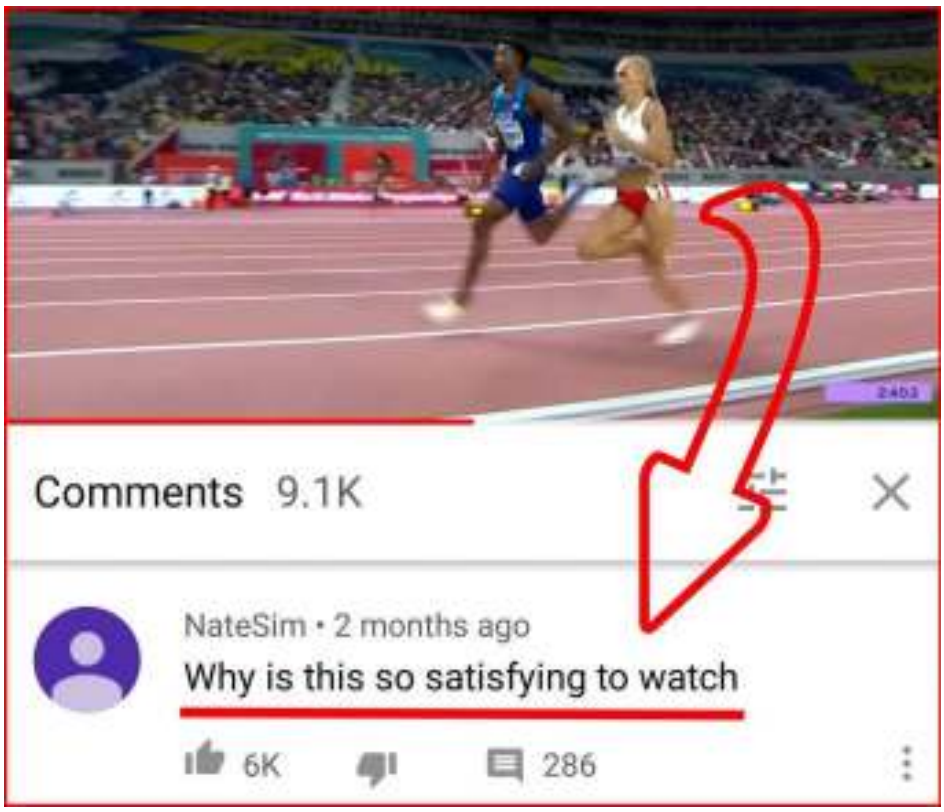
> (…) women are inserting themselves into male space in order to enforce the dictates of feminine social primacy
>
> *Rollo Tomassi, Positive Masculinity*

"Enforce the dictates of feminine social primacy"?
What does that even mean.

These gurus present an ideal of masculinity that should supposedly stop the "female advances".



Some red pill members support influencer ideals of 'masculinity to stop women's advancement.'
These men look at men and women as monolithic blocks, where a win for one is a win for all. And they invest their ego in the group, a phenomenon of ego-fusion (Swann et al., 2012).
You can see an example here:



Group dynamics encourage this competitive ingroup/outgroup dynamics. And men who don't conform attacking the "feminine advance" are shamed into compliance.

The group controls individuals with two powerful tools:

- **Belonging**: abide the rules and you're one of us, disobey and you're blue pill
- **Shame**: abide the rules and you're alpha male; disobey and you're beta male blue pill

And of course, the judge yoke of being "good enough" or "not good enough".
Which is funny because it's the same tool *women* use to control men.

It works like this:

You don't conform to *our* ideal of masculinity, which includes hating on empowered women? Then you're not a real (alpha) man.

HIGHER VALUE: I Don't Mind Labels, It's All About Achieving or Not Achieving Goals

High-quality men answer with a big "f*ck you" to anyone who tells them what a man *ought* to be.

They don't like external impositions because they're content with themselves.
They don't need a group to prop up their ego and self-image.

If they meet a successful woman making lots of money they're not threatened.
If she bench-presses more than they do, still not threatened, because they don't link their ego to "strength".

High-quality men are freer and more resilient because they use more flexible *guidelines* instead of steadfast rules.
They don't attach their ego to any specific trait.

See this video on high self-esteem:

And, finally, they don't even try to "fight social trends".
One, they know it's useless.

Two, they have better things to do.
Three, they'd rather make the most of those trends, than complain about it.

Attitudes Towards Others

How do the two relate to others?

In diametrically opposed ways:

TRP: Push "Blue Pill Men" Down to Feel Better

There are some social climbing dynamics at play.
"Alpha male" and "Red Pill" are social currencies that afford or remove status within the Red Pill community.

The community, like most other ideology-based groups, is set up to reinforce the beliefs of the community and to prop up the ego of its participants.

People who are not in the Red Pill are blue pill, and inferior.
That makes the members feel "better", as they can point to someone who is "worse".

There is also an internal struggle for status, of course.
Since the community's brownie points are delivered based on adherence to "red-pillness" and "alpha-maleness" values and traits, well… You guessed it, many **men are busy proving how alpha and red pill they are**.

This leads to social climbing, a common but rather low-status behavior that people adopt in groups.
I specifically addressed manosphere social climbing in "alpha male posturing".

HIGHER VALUE: I Aim High In Life, Could Use Some Company Up There

High-status men don't push people down.

Why should they?
They're at the top already.

It's only those in the middle and at the bottom who push others down to climb up.

Views On Romantic Relationships

Part of the manosphere encourages men to fulfill their "obligations" and care and provide for women and families.

Jordan Peterson for example encourages men to stick with one woman, and the "protector" is also a theme in the classic book "King, Warrior, Magician, Lover".

But the Red Pill is different.
They say commitment only works outside of Western society where "hypergamy" is still under control.

And, again… There is some truth to it.

But of course, the worst of the Red Pill takes it to an extreme, and don't see the possibility for a happy relationship.

TRP: Relationships Are Adversarial

This is something Rollo Tomassi often repeats.

And for the record, here is what the latest Hoxford Handbook of Evo Psych says:

> Despite the often too prevalent perception of a war between the sexes in the social sciences (see special issue of Sex Roles, e.g., Vandermassen, 2011), to a large degree interdependent reproduction promotes cooperation

> rather than confict (Buss, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)

That's largely correct, albeit higher value men need less relationship-based cooperation and have more power to negotiate on their terms. But let's keep things simple for now.

And listen to Richard Cooper talk about relationships in his YouTube welcome video:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Cooper**: They're just using him for his money. So? He's just using them for their beauty

Keyword is "using".

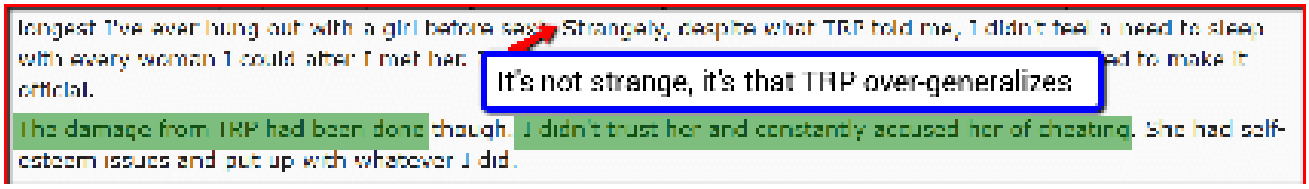
It makes sense if you remember that some corners of the Red Pill see:

- Intergender relationships as a tug war
- Women are inherently wicked and manipulative
- The playing field stacked against men

So relationships for the Red Pill are naturally hard.

It's no surprise that this leads to toxic relationships, possibly abusive relationships and, overall, to plainly terrible relationships.

See this example of a man who swallowed the pill and became completely paranoid:



Indeed, even if they want a relationship, it's difficult to develop one for men schooled in Red Pill communities. Current Red Pill philosophy stands in contrast to successful relationships.

Furthermore, keep this in mind:

Assholes, bad boys and dark triad manipulators can pick up women, but they can hardly form good relationships.
And, often, struggle with a high-quality woman who have more self-respect -and more options-.

But it's easier to keep hooked women with self-esteem issues.
This is why some men seek to decrease her self-esteem by lowering her value.
That makes the men feel more in control and decreases the chances she'll leave or cheat.

Red Pill Relationships and Ego-Threat

A woman leaving for another man is a big blow for anyone.

But it's particularly destructive for Red Pill men.
For Red Pill men, that would mean that they found "someone more alpha". Which, in turn, means "they are not alpha enough".

And since all their ego is built around “being alpha”, they fold like a castle of cards.

See an example here:

So, I recently realized that my beliefs were really damaging. I realize these old Red Pill and Evo Psych beliefs that empowered me, also unequivocally **make me feel like a loser compared to everyone she's had uncommitted sex with.** So I wrote down the beliefs I hold and while I know some of them sound insane, I would really like your confirmation that they are false - I feel like it's the only hope I have. I did read the stickied evidence thread, which helped. So, the beliefs that are destroying the relationship:

- Women give sex and men have to earn it. If men are worthy for a short term fling, they are more "chosen" than a man chosen for a relationship - a man who gets sex without commitment is superior than one who needs to commit or show explicit signs that he wants to commit.
- The top 1-20% of men are the ones getting most of the sex, so it's likely that the men she slept with are better than me.
- Women present a loving, committed personality when they are in love with a long term mate, and a different, more sexual personality when they are with a highly attractive short term mate. So the short term sex partner sees more of her true nature, so he wins.
- Most men who date are just looking to get laid. Men who slept with my girlfriend just used her for sex, she allowed it. This makes them the winners over me.
- When a woman has sex with a new guy, it emotionally damages her somewhat. Sex in the future becomes a little less meaningful for her. Therefore, guys who got to her earlier won over the guy who has her now.
- Younger women are always more valuable, so if a guy slept with her when she was younger (even by a couple years), he got something better than me that I will never have.

See the pattern?
These are all different manifestations of the same fear: that there is someone more alpha out there.

The Folding Alpha: One Example

BTW, I dated a girl once who left her former boyfriend for me.
He’d go old-school alpha male on her, saying “shut up woman” and “go to the kitchen woman”.

When she left him, he went into a tailspin. I actually felt bad for the guy.

HIGHER VALUE: Even If I May Not Want One, Good Relationships Are Possible

High-quality leaders know a few truths about relationships:

- Understanding women is crucial for relationships
- Picking the right woman is crucial for relationships
- A focus on oneself must find a corresponding focus on team-effort
- Relationships, like good negotiations, entail accepting influence as well

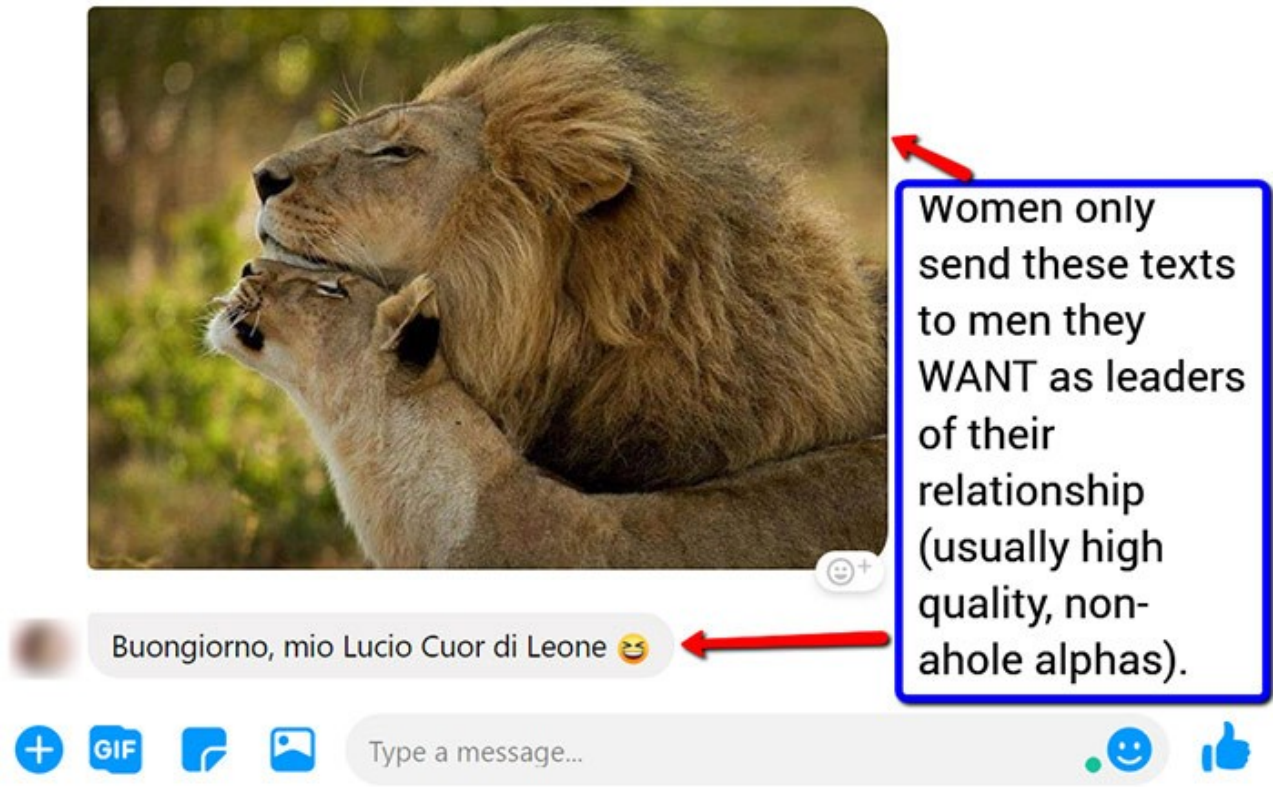
Not all high-quality men must want or settle in a relationship, of course.
But if they do, they screen their partner hard and aim for win-win.

From the get-go of dating, they like to see win-win mutual investment. They give, but with the expectation of receiving the same back.
And if they don’t see anything coming back, they are happy to cut ties.

They know people can slip and while they always leave the door open for possible cheating or future breakup, they don’t stress about it.
And they know that, if they picked a good partner, a good chunk of what happens is within their control.

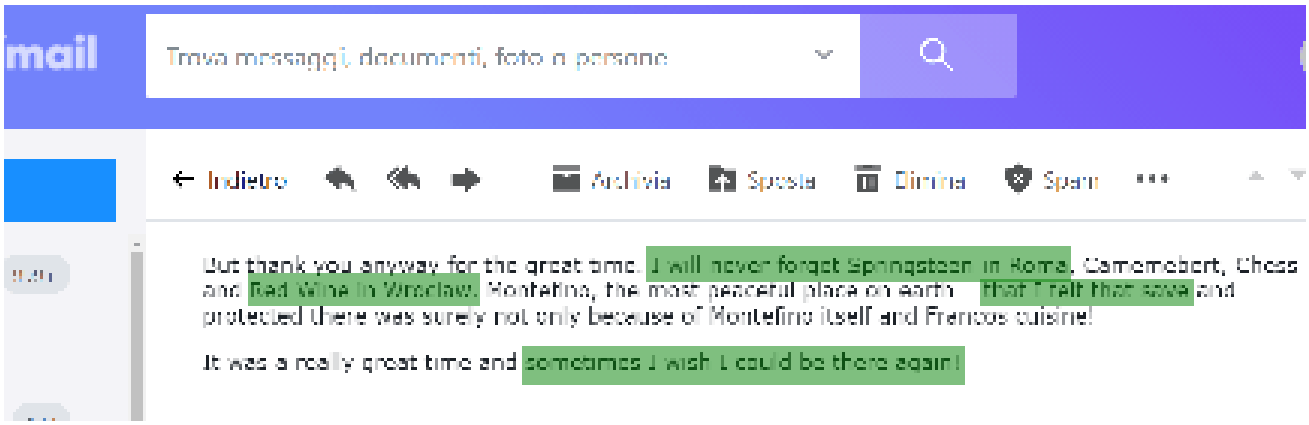
They tend to be leaders of their relationships, of course.
And *good* leaders.
And it happens naturally and, most of all, it’s not confrontational leadership because **women are happy to elect high-quality men as their leaders**.

This is what my girlfriend sent me during our relationship:



Those are not the messages that assholes tend to receive.

And these are the messages that ex-girlfriends send to men who are value-adding leaders:



This was years after we ended. But positive leaders are rare, and women often miss them.

Of course, needless to say, the collaboration we endorse on this website is *smart* collaboration!
You must pick the right person to collaborate with (not everyone is), and you must make sure to keep that relationship collaborative.

Also read here:

- The enlightened collaborator

TRP: She's Not "Yours", It's Just Your "Turn" (She'll Leave You)

One simple video says it all about this:

> **Rollo Tomassi**: She's not yours, it's just your turn (implied, she'll leave you)

This mantra is often true and many men need to be reminded of it.

But only certain *types* of men need that reminder.

This is typical ceiling-type of advice because **only low-value men worry about being left**.
And only lower-value men need to be reminded to “not get too attached”.

HIGHER VALUE: I’m Not Hers, But She’s Lucky To Have Me In Her Life (For The Time Being)

That’s how confident great catches think.

Also, high-quality player types worry more about not hurting her in case she gets too attached.

TRP: Mate-Guard Her, Or You Get Cuckolded

It’s funny:

Many **red pill men glorify the player lifestyle but behave like committed boyfriends** because, deep down, long for traditional family life.

See an example here:

> **Rollo Tomassi**: If she asks you if she can go out partying, you say “yes” and then throw all the stuff out.

It’s fair to expect your woman not to go out partying.
But, again, the problem with that is that it’s ceiling advice for lower-value men because **mate guarding is defensive** and lower-value.

As evolutionary psychologist David Buss explains, **it’s the lower-value mate who mate guard the higher value mate.**
 See this video for more.

HIGHER VALUE: Where Can She Go? I’m A Catch. And If She Strays, She Goes

Most women who asked me if they could go out partying WANTED me to tell them to stay home.

And they’d be sad if I didn’t care.

For actual lovers, that question is just a game women play to get his commitment.

Sometimes, I gave her some limitations *just to make her happy* and show I cared.

But alas, some men will never understand that.

P.S.:
Check this more balanced video on marrying VS not marrying:

Attitudes Towards The PC-World

The Red Pill holds some views that society disapproves of, or frowns upon.

The same is true for high-quality leaders.

However, they have very different attitudes towards the gap between their beliefs and society’s beliefs.

TRP: The West Is Dying

Red Pill online circles commenting on societal trends are pessimistic.

They may even be correct in some analyses, but there are also at least as many reasons to be optimistic.

HIGHER VALUE: It Is What It Is, I Focus On What I Control

High-quality men are too busy with their lives to get lost in discussions of “how things ought to be”.

If there are a lot of feminists these days in the West, that’s how it is.
“I’ll find a feminine woman anyway”, they think.

Post-Red Pill men think that if you waste too much time talking and discussing the turkeys, you tend to become more like the turkeys.
And they prefer soaring with the eagles.

Also read this foundational article of TPM’s philosophy:

- **The Ubermensch**: how enlightened self-interest keeps you focused on what you can control only, and away from b*tchng and complaining

> Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

Politics

Political orientation will tell you a lot about people.

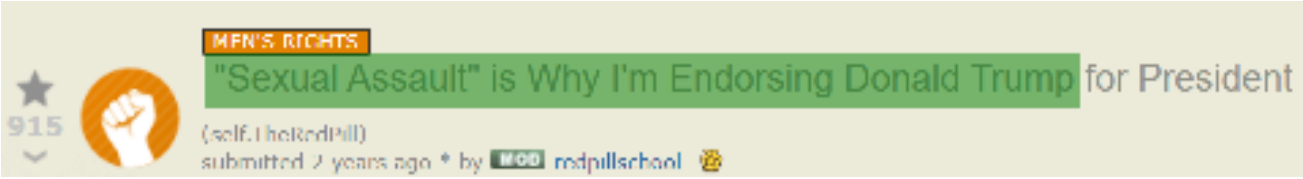
TRP: Long Live The Strongman

Many Red Pill members long for the strong man leader.

This may be due to the overlap with high social dominance orientation and the authoritarian subset of political conservatism, which focuses on hierarchy and obedience (Sapolsky, 2018).

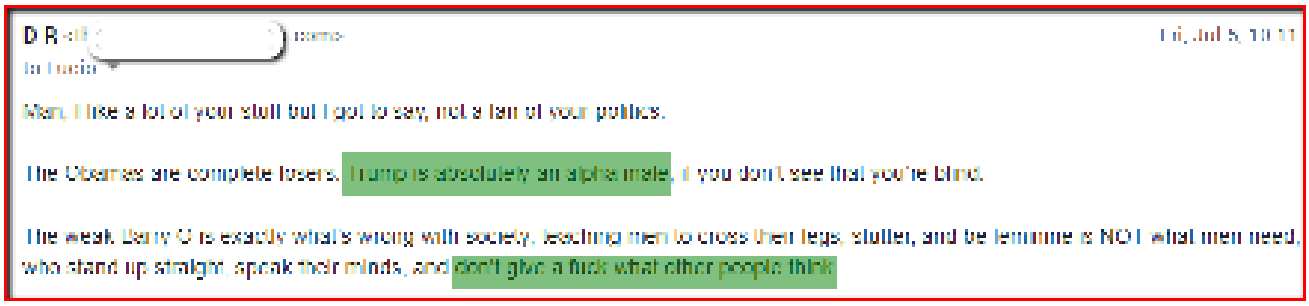
The strong alpha male centralizes power, silences the competition, rewards other alpha males and punishes the weak. Its’the endgame of alpha-maleness
That seems fair to most red pillers because, as Miller and Kanazawa point out (Miller & Kanazawa, 2008) conservatives are more likely to fall for the naturalistic fallacy -ie.: what’s natural is good-.

So Putin, a known kleptocrat, is a true alpha male for many, while Obama was a weak feminized man.
That’s why the Red Pill on Reddit officially endorsed Trump:



There was disagreement here, but the post was still upvoted by 82% of Reddit users.

I can see these dynamics with our readership. For example:



As mentioned, beliefs of “alphaness”, “power” and “control” overlap with what Adorno referred to as “Authoritarian Personality” (Adorno, 1950) and what Lakoff calls “strict father morality” (Lakoff, 2008).

The red pill, albeit it presents itself as an apolitical movement, is naturally authoritarian, and leaning towards conservatism.

Read more:

- **Populism power dynamics**
- Conservatives, family, and children

HIGHER VALUE: Strong Men Are Always A Bigger Risk to Democracy

High-quality men can be liberal or conservative.

They might be against immigration, wanting to keep their guns, or prefer low taxation because they’re rich.
But they seldom fall for the allure of the strong man.

Deep down, they instinctively know that weak egos seek refuge in groups and charismatic leaders, while strong men seek to carve their own paths.

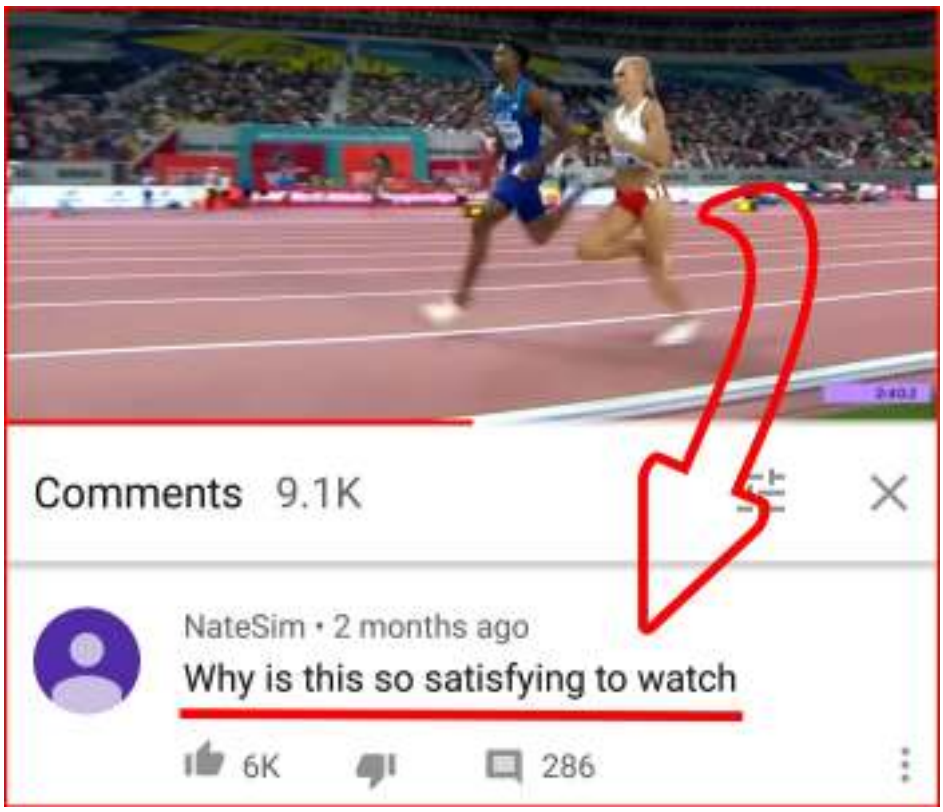
TRP: Group Above Individuals

Red pillers focus on *genders*.

Inherently, that puts a heavy focus on groups.

And when you focus on groups, “belonging” and “pride” come next.
Some of those guys tend to see the group of “men” as an extension of the self.

They recognize themselves as “men” first and foremost, and any win of men against women is also their win.
See the same example we saw earlier:



This guy -and the many upvoters- have this issue:

1. Project ego onto the group
2. Confrontational approach to gender relations
3. Fragile ego

Hence, it's "men VS women", and a win of any man, is also *his* win.
And any loss of any man against a woman it's *his* loss, *his* demasculinization.

A sense of belonging is important.
But in moderation.
Read more here.

Also read:

- **Drop the need for groups**

HIGHER VALUE: Individuals First

More enlightened men embrace self-empowerment.

It's the empowerment of the individual.
And with that comes the tendency -and ability- to look at individuals first, rather than groups.

And that opens the doors to exceptional men and women who rise above the average.
Funny enough, those high-quality men and women often share more similarities between them, than with the average people in their respective genders.

Finding The Right Balance

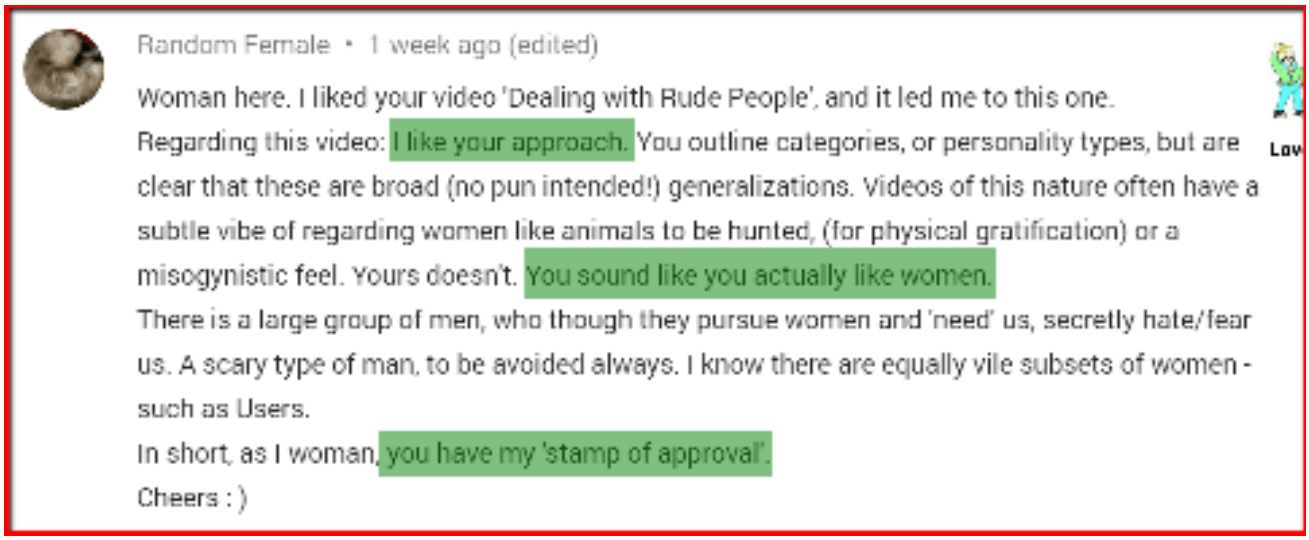
Post-Red Pill men get along better with everyone.

They may still get some flack for extremists.

But the truly extremists.

Since this website gets thousands of visitors a day, we sometimes get those from both sides. These are often good signs of balance.

On average though, you win over the smarter, higher-quality people.
And the moderates on both sides:


Random Female • 1 week ago (edited)

Woman here. I liked your video 'Dealing with Rude People', and it led me to this one.
Regarding this video: I like your approach. You outline categories, or personality types, but are clear that these are broad (no pun intended!) generalizations. Videos of this nature often have a subtle vibe of regarding women like animals to be hunted, (for physical gratification) or a misogynistic feel. Yours doesn't. You sound like you actually like women.
There is a large group of men, who though they pursue women and 'need' us, secretly hate/fear us. A scary type of man, to be avoided always. I know there are equally vile subsets of women - such as Users.
In short, as I woman, you have my 'stamp of approval'.
Cheers :)

The Stages of Moving Beyond TRP

1. **Denial –** What a bunch of cynics, this isn't real
2. **Anger –** Some of it makes sense… I've been taken for a ride!
3. **Deep Diving –** OK, let's see what else makes sense and how I can use it
4. **Depression –** Damn, the world truly runs on self-interest
5. **Self-identification –** I'm a Red Pill man (and can make fun of blue pills)
6. **First Post-TRP Awareness –** It's not like my life is that much better now. Is there somethingelse?
7. **Post Red Pill** Winning, as an honorable man, without bitterness, potentially with win-win

Do men "have to" go through the red pill?

No, not necessarily.
Not all men grew up blue pill or naive.

I always felt that what some red pill gurus called "harsh cold realities" were neither harsh nor cold, and much of it seemed common sense.

So when I first met the red pill saw less "truths" and more frustration, b*tching, and various degrees of misogyny.

In general, I believe **it's better to learn the basic dynamics of female and human nature from different sources than the pill**.
Frameworks that teach the same dynamics without resentment, such as TPM and Power University.

Guns, Germs, and Steel: Summary & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

One Sentence Summary: *In Guns, Germs and Steel*, anthropologist Jared Diamond explains that history followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among people's *environments*, and not because of biological differences among people themselves.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Criticism
- Quotes
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- What allowed certain societies to win over others was agriculture, which in turn led to:
  - Bigger populations
  - Centralized governments
  - Non-food workers such as scientists and soldiers
  - Germs
- Lands with large domesticable animals provided a huge advantage (especially the horse)

Summary

About The Author: Jared Diamond is an American anthropologist, historian, and author.
He is the author of popular science books such as "*The Third Chimpanzee*" (1991) and "*Guns, Germs, and Steel*".

The Maoris Prove It's Environment, Not Genes

Jared Diamond tells the story of two Maori tribes, the Moriori and the Maori.

The Moriori and Maori histories started diverging after separation, with the Maori picking up agriculture and the Moriori remaining hunter-gatherers.

Well, guess what happened?

The Maori eventually re-discovered the Moriori and exterminated them.

Diamond says that the Maori/Moriori is a small-scale replica of what happened with the Europeans and the rest of the world.
And that proves that it's all about the environment, not genes.

All Power Develops From Agriculture

In Diamond's view, it's agriculture that allows societies to grow in number and military prowess and, eventually, to take over neighboring land and people.

It's the ability to stockpile food and feed more mouths that allows for the existence of new social classes like kings, scribes, government officers, scientists, and of course, professional soldiers.

Political Fragmentation Is An Insurance Against Poor Decisions

Take a big country like China.

If the emperors stick to an initial bad mistake, like, for example, sea exploration, the whole population will not benefit from the possible colonization of new territories.

But if the same happens in a European country, an area where numerous kingdoms exist, it's likely that another European country will not make the same decision.

This is exactly what happened with sea exploration and the American "discovery".

Political Fragmentation Fosters Progress

Isolated societies can only count on themselves to invent and develop.

Fragmented societies can instead take advantage of random developments from other neighboring societies.
The same is true in the case of warring kingdoms, as inventions spread equally well through conquests.

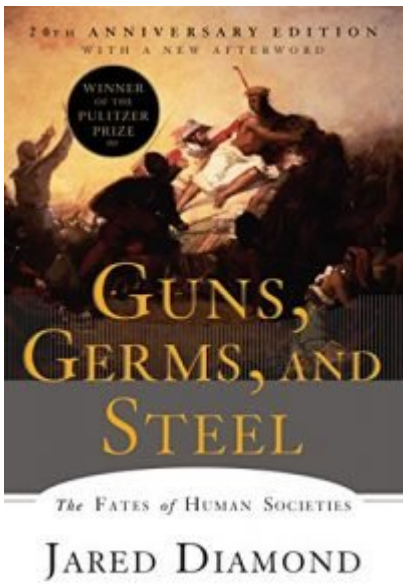
As Diamond says:

> All else being equal, technology develops faster in large productive regions with large population with many potential investors and many competing societies.

This is exactly what happened in Europe.
Furthermore, having different societies all around also prevents nations from giving up technology, as could happen in isolated ones.
Japan, for example, gave up guns.
But no European nation could have done the same, or the gun-toting neighbors would have immediately invaded them.

More Wisdom

- Germs need larger populations
- Technology develops cumulatively rather than in isolated heroic acts
- East-West diffusion of innovation works best because of climate similarities
  - Thus, large continents like Asia and Europe held an advantage over long continents like America and Africa
- Geographical landscape can foster or suffocate diffusion of technology (think of Sahara's desert, for example)
- Geographical interconnectedness has positive effects, but it might become stifling if it's so interconnected as to be under one single ruler



Criticism

My main criticism is this:

I think that "Guns, Germs, and Steel" is driven by ideology more than a true search for wisdom.

Let me clarify.
This is what Jared Diamond writes:

> From my very beginning of working with New Guineans, they impressed me as being on the average **more intelligent, more alert, more expressive, and more interested** in things and people around them than the average European or American is.
> (….)
> That is, natural selection promoting **genes for intelligent has probably been far more ruthless in New Guineans** than in more densely populated societies.
> Besides this genetic reason, there is also a second reason why Guineans may have come to be smarter than Westerners

And then Jared Diamond proceeds to provide a cultural reason why Guineans might be smarter than Europeans. That reason is the proliferation of smartphones and TVs in the West. Jared Diamond provides no evidence there, just his own personal feelings.
I wish he had mentioned that which would have made him much more credible.
Yet, I can say that his hypothesis does make sense.

In any case, **Jared Diamond provides genetic and cultural reasons why Guineas are smarter than Europeans**.

That might be (might).

But why then Diamond's starting thesis is that it's impossible for Europeans to have conquered the world for every possible reason *except* anything based on genetics, personality, or disposition.
It must not be intelligence, of course. It could be drive, or ruthlessness. It could be anything. Or it could be nothing.
But the crux of the matter here is that it should not be excluded a priori.

And that's exactly what Diamond does.
But that's not how science works!

A little later indeed, Diamond says:

> Until we have some convincing, agreed upon explanation for a broad pattern of history, **most people would continue to suspect that the racist biological explanation is correct** after all.
> **That seems to me, the strongest argument for writing this book.**

So his reason for writing "*Guns, Germs, and Steel*" is to prove that Europeans are not smarter than other populations.
Which is probably true!
And yet, **science does not work the way Jared Diamond approaches his research!**
Science is not about proving your thesis right. Science is about *falsifying* your thesis and being ready to dump it at the drop of a hat.

To me, any book is built on the premise that you need to prove your theory or else is built on the wrong foundations.

And it might be a coincidence, but it's a convenient coincidence that Diamond's thesis vibes so well with the zeitgeist.

Plus, it's hard for me to reconcile how it "would not be OK" for Europeans to have conquered the world based on some genetic traits, but it's OK for Guineans to be smarter.
Unless one takes into account our zeitgeist, where it's not OK to say people can differ unless it's the minority / historically oppressed which differs in some positive ways.

And again, I must reiterate here that this is not a criticism of Diamond's results or ideas.
This is a criticism of the *premises*.
Jared Diamond's thesis indeed is truly compelling.
He is probably right and I learned hugely from this book. Yet, "*Guns, Germs and Steel*" is a wonderful theoretical building developed on bad foundations.

Quotes

Talking about researchers who believe that American big animals die because of humans:

> The American big animals had already survived the ends of 22 previous ice ages, why did they pick the 23rd to expire in concert and in the presence of those supposedly harmless humans.

LOL, I love a good and subtly ironic author :).

On the myth of "lone inventors" and progress developing organically, he says:

> The question is whether the broad pattern of world history would have been altered significantly if some genius had not been born at a particular place and time.
> The answer is clear: there is never been such person.

CONS

On top of the main criticism above:

- **Causational links feel forced or very random at times**

Diamond says that the Inca king Atahualpa fell for Pizarro's trap because of the Inca's illiteracy and their consequent inability to gather good intel about the Spaniards.

Frankly, I find that to be a huge stretch.

What if the Atahualpa was simply naive, stupid or maybe had in mind his own gambit which spectacularly failed? Diamond doesn't even stop to consider other possibilities, he immediately jumps to conclusions.

And he does it several times over the course of the book.

- **Jumping to conclusions without considering other options**

More than once I felt that Diamond jumps to conclusions without giving proper weight to other possible alternatives.

I prefer authors who more clearly state what's speculation and what's consensus, what's an opinion and what's a fact.

- **An author searching for a narrative**

Luigi Pirandello wrote a novel called "6 characters looking for an author".
It was an intelligent play that turned the table on the classical view of literary production: that the author searches for characters.

It feels like Diamond is doing the same. It's as if reality was so neat and simple that the dots just connect by themselves.
Diamond was just there to watch the dots connect.

He says that historians should be scientists.
And that if you took Australians and moved them to Europe and then took Europeans and moved them to Australia, you could still "predict" who'd end up conquering whom.

And that might certainly be the case.
But.. How can he be so sure?

Which is funny, because a little earlier, he says:

> We tend to see easy, simple factors of explanations

I think that sometimes life might just be a bit more random than Diamond seems to be willing to admit.

- **Overstates the importance of germs**

I don't think germs even deserved to be up there at the same level as "guns" or even "agriculture", which wasn't even in the title.

As Diamonds also say or imply, germs accelerated the process and helped -or delayed- the invaders.
But they didn't truly change the course of history. Just think of the new germs awaiting Europeans in Africa: it didn't stop them one bit.

- **Lacks political insight**

Diamond asks:

> Why do the commoners tolerate kleptocrats taking the fruits of their hard labor?

He then presents four ways kleptocrats stay in power. One of them is to redistribute wealth to make the masses happy.
Well, that's just not true, is it? Or, at least, it's just not how it usually goes.

To truly understand the power dynamics of repressive systems, check out "*The Dictator's Handbook*".

- **Geographically deterministic**

Jared Diamond managed to achieve his goal: he convinced me that geography is possibly the single most important factor leading to one society developing quicker than another.

And yet, I still feel Diamond is too deterministic.

- **Anna Karenina principle**

The author quotes the "Anna Karenina principle" from Tolstoj as originally applied to relationships.
The principle says that happy families are all alike and unhappy families are all different.

Well, Diamond is not required to have expertise in relationship research and literature, but John Gottman explains that the opposite is true.

Review

Guns, Germs, And Steal is a wonderful, eye-opening book.

I learned hugely thanks to Jared Diamond and I now better understand the history of human beings.
Most of all, I feel like I have a much better grasp of some of the most important drivers behind both civilizations' development and the relentless war for dominance and control.

And I also learned a bit more about human nature.
But at the same time, it's also biased.

Jared Diamonds correctly suggests that the environment is a major factor in the development of human societies.
Of course, it is. How could it not be?
But he dismisses all other factors, and he refuses to even consider anything related to genetics, characters, and personalities out of personal preferences and ideology.
Finally, he fails to entertain the possibility of being wrong, he fails to challenge his own theories and presents personal suppositions and opinions as scientific truths.
And that never fails to bother this critical reviewer.

This is no mystery.
The author clearly stated he was out to prove a point, and not to find out the truth.
Had he presented the book as "my take on history", "*Guns, Germs, And Steel*" would have been a masterpiece?
As it is, it's an offense to scientists.

Check the:

- **Best evolutionary psychology books**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

The Third Chimpanzee: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Third Chimpanzee takes an *evolutionary psychology* approach to investigate these wonderful animals we call "humans", ranging from sexuality and sexual strategies to human nature, extraterrestrial life, future challenges, and solutions to world problems.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Criticism
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We will soon reach the biological limits of Earth's capacity to feed us and provide us with resources
- We have no predators' left to control our population; we risk destroying ourselves by destroying our resource base
- The solutions are easy, though:
  - Halting population growth
  - Reducing our impact on the environment
  - Preserving species and national habitats
  - Eliminating nuclear weapons
  - Developing better means to solve international disputes

Summary

About the Author: J
ared Diamond is an American anthropologist, historian, and author.
He is most famous for his Pulitzer-winning book "*Guns, Germs, and Steel*".

We Lived Dumb Far Longer After We Got Smart

It would seem natural to think that we developed as we got smart, right?

Well, that's not the case.

There is no parallel between brain size and the sophistication of human tools.
Our stone tools remained similar and unsophisticated for hundreds of thousands of years after we had already undergone most of our brain's size expansion.

As recently as 40.000 years ago the Neanderthals had brains even larger than ours yet they show no signs of innovativeness or art.
Even once our ancestors achieved modern skeletal anatomy, their tools remained the same as those of Neanderthals for a long time.

Why?

That remains one of the unsolved puzzles of human evolution.

Jared Diamond says that in that small DNA difference between us and the great apes, there must have been an even smaller percentage not responsible for physical attributes but responsible only for what makes humans: innovation and art.

My Note:
DNA evidence has now shown that our ancestors also interbred with Neanderthals.

When We Started Behaving Like Humans: The Great Leap Forward

In Europe, we started showing signs of innovation and growing tool complexity when the Cro-Magnons started replacing the Neanderthals around 40.000 years ago.

That's happened almost abruptly, says Diamond, and that's when we stopped being "just another species of mammals".

Of course, not all innovations appeared exactly at the same time, but this was the period when humans developed:

- Spears
- Harpoons
- Bows and arrows
- Beads, pendants and paintings
- Using animals for more than eating (clothes, bones for houses, etc..)

Cro-Magnons also had the important advantage of living longer.
Living longer before writing meant more time to grow skills and the capacity to hold and transmit more knowledge and wisdom for future generations.

My note:
Diamond, as he does a few times, presents his theory as if they were accepted consensus. However, there is no consensus on this "sudden" leap forward, and some other archeologists believe the change has been more gradual.

The Myth of Cavemen Hunters

It's only from around 100.000 years ago that we have good evidence of human hunting skills.

But even then, humans were very ineffective at big-game hunting.
The idea of "macho male hunters" is not rooted in reality, and male hunting likely had no major impact on our lives or on our evolution.

Even when we consider the evidence from modern hunter-gatherers, we see that it's more bravado, alpha male posturing, and made-up stories.
Most New Guineans, for example, eventually admitted that they had killed only a few kangaroos in their lives and that most of their hunting was of smaller animals.
Most of the food was gathered by the women.

It's only in the Arctic that big game hunting became the major source of food.
But we only reached the Arctic in the last few thousand millennia.

My Note: This is "machismo puncturing ethos"
Steven Pinker in "*How the Mind Works*" says that our ancestors have been characterized as "weak scavengers" because of the culture of "machismo-puncturing ethos".
I believe Pinker is right: our gut has evolved to process more meat than our cousins great apes, so albeit humans weren't "hunting machines", they did bring home some bacon (sometimes).
Furthermore, as Buss points out in "*Evolutionary Psychology*", a strong theory suggests that the hunting/gathering labor divide provided gender-specific psychological adaptations.

Intelligence Won Over Strength

The Neanderthals were much stronger than our ancestors, the Cro-Magnon.

But the Cro-Magnons were better equipped and probably smarter.
Muscles were no match against better weaponry, though, and the big-muscle Neanderthalians died out.

Also, consider that it's different than it is today.
Any gym rat can afford food today, but back then, feeding bigger muscles meant the necessity of finding more food while giving no advantage to people with better food.

The Tradeoffs of Growing Old (and Menopause)

Someone just approaching evolutionary psychology might wonder what's the point of having menopause in women or why we die.

Doesn't it make more evolutionary sense to live at least 200 years and never stop producing children?

Well, no, that's the wrong way of approaching it.
That question focuses on a few certain characteristics without considering the whole.

Evolution needs to optimize for the whole and use tradeoffs.

Since we can produce offspring, it doesn't make sense for nature to invest in costly self-repair mechanisms.

The perfect trade-off between length of life and offspring optimization depends on a number of variables, including reproductive biology, the risk of death, and the cost of various repairs.

Pursuit of Extramarital Sex: We're Not Fully Monogamous

Culture and upbringing greatly influence the pursuit of extramarital sex.

Yet, *both* the institution of marriage and the occurrence of extramarital sex have been reported in most human societies.

Human food gathering does require a social system where men and women "stick together".
It seems like neither full monogamy for life nor a total lack of attachment have been the norm in human evolution

Looking at today's humans, we realize that:

- Human parenting is monogamous in most political states (officially)
- Hunter-gatherer tribes are *mildly* polygynous

Looking at our body, we realize that:

- **Male testicles are smaller than chimps, but bigger than gorillas**

Testes size tells us whether a species is highly polygynous or not.
Bigger bodies mean that men fight for women and don't need to fight at a sperm level.
The biggest tests tell us that females mate with many men.
We are in between chimpanzees and gorillas, suggesting mild polygyny.

- **Male bodies are slightly bigger than female, but not much bigger**

In polygynous species, males are much bigger because they fight for women.
Human sexual dimorphism suggests that we are mildly polygynous.

We Are Serial Monogamers With Mild Incidences of Extramarital Affairs

It's difficult to get accurate information on adultery as there are obvious reasons to lie.

The author says that the first blood samples in the 1940s showed around 10% of children to be the fruit of adultery. The figure might be even higher as those old techniques might have downplayed the incidence, and of course, not all extramarital affairs led to children.

Subsequent research showed between 5% and 30% of children were born from adulterous affairs.

Still, overall, most fathers are raising their children, and as a species, we are not chimps just pretending to be otherwise.
But extramarital affairs are still part of our species, and the incidence might be higher than most people expect.

My Note:
As far as I read from other sources, the 30% is misleading as it was the figure of blood samples from fathers who requested the test because they were suspected of being cuckolded. So that skews the sample, of course.

Extramarital Sex Strategies

Researchers have applied game theory studies to extramarital sex (EMS).

There are two ways to measure the payoffs of EMS: number of children and confidence in parenthood.

Because of the biological differences, **a man stands to gain much more from extramarital sex or polygamy than a woman** if we measure the final result as the number of offspring**.**
And that's why, I would add, men complaining about "female hypergamy" and untrustworthiness" are really only seeing less than half of the truth or simply hiding their misogyny (also see "*The Red Pill*" and "*The Rational Male*").

Here are the different strategic theories one could adopt:

1. A man should always seek EMS because he has very little to lose and much to gain
2. Seek to maximize gains and minimize losses
3. Must take into account the female's own strategy

Number 1 says the author is obviously simplistic as it doesn't take into account the potential costs.
And number 2 still ignores the female's own strategies.

The author wonders why a woman should even seek an EMS since the genetic payoffs are much more limited for her.
One possibility is shopping for better genes, of course, see "female hypergamy" for more.
But Jared Diamond does not fully flesh out that possibility.

In short, humans cheat because the pursuit of a "mixed reproductive strategy", such as a stable relationship plus an affair on the side, can pay off.

Yet, it's not as simple as it sounds.
There are plenty of risks in engaging in EMS.

The Principle of Optimal Intermediate Similarity

People seek women who are similar to their parents, but not too similar.

As for most things humans, there is a tradeoff and an optimal balance. Interbreeding with similar people is good, but up to a certain point.

Intelligence Matters More Than Body Size

The author says:

> However, at some point in human evolution, male intelligence and personality came to matter more than size.

> Male basketball players and sumo fighters don't have more wives

The author talks about "size", but he seems to imply that physical traits matter less.

My Note:
However, I think Diamond is wrong here.
Basketball players don't have more wives maybe, but they probably have more partners.
Of course, that's not only because of size, but size and physical traits still matter.

See:

- The importance of being jacked in dating and social power

Concealed Ovulation & Female Sexual Strategies

Why are women the only species of apes to hide ovulation?

There are many competing theories, also reflecting the biases and preferences of each proponent.
Here are all of them:

1. Enhance Cooperation Among Males

Open ovulation would lead to more arguments and fights and who is going to have sex with whom and when.
Men would be distracted by available females and disrupt their normal activities of bonding and hunting.

This has been the theory of traditional male anthropologists.

2. It cements the bond between man and woman

The man doesn't know when she's fertile, so he has to copulate with her multiple times and over an extended period of time.

Not knowing herself when she is pregnant, she is also obligated to provide him with sex.

This has been the theory of a different group of male anthropologists.

3. Women can take advantage of men (command more resources & cheat)

Modern anthropologists realized that male apes share more with females when they are ovulating, so they hypothesized that women hid their ovulation to keep getting treats from men.

An offshoot of this approach is that hidden ovulation helps women to seduce and use other men besides their partners.

4. Demand relationship by exploiting his paranoia for parenthood

Women developed concealed ovulation to force men into a permanent marriage bond by exploiting male paranoia of fatherhood.

When he doesn't know about her fertility days, he must guard her and he must have sex with her repeatedly.

On the other hand, he also gains higher confidence in paternity and his woman will attract less competition.

This theory was from male and female biologists and it's more about sexual equality.

5. Prevent men from killing children and enlist their help

Men killing other men's offspring is a relatively common occurrence in nature.

Human females might have prevented that by confusing the issue of paternity.
That way, they can also enlist the help of more men to raise children.

This is the theory of a female biologist.

6. Trade sex for favors, with sex being less risky

Sex can be risky for women.
It can cost a child with a man she didn't want, or it can be risky as deliveries were quite dangerous during our evolution.

With concealed ovulation, having sex slightly delinks from reproduction, thus allowing her to lower the bar for sex.
She can use copulation to ingratiate male favor

Which one is true?
Difficult to say, probably all of them factored in, but that cannot be an excuse to accept any theory.

The author says that 1 and 2 seem valid.

Men Smoke & Drink As Indicator of Good Genes

Jared Diamond says that one of the reasons men smoke, drink, and do stupid things is indicators of skills and good genes.

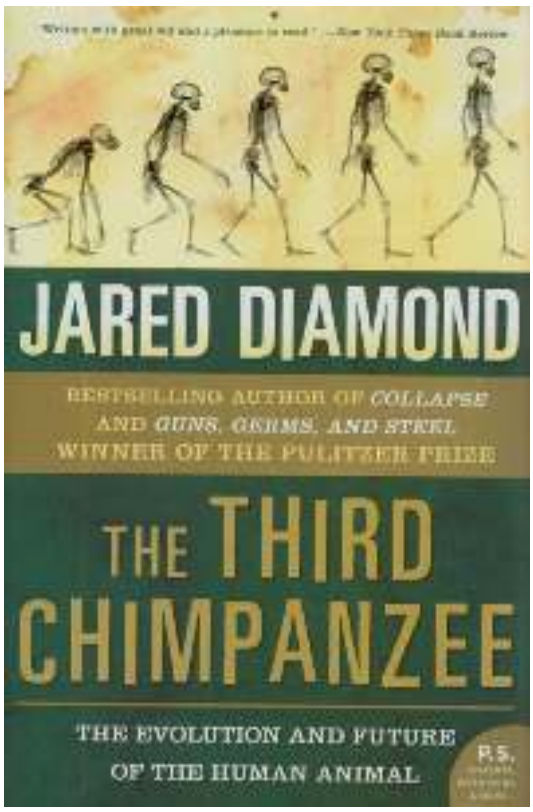
Smoking and drinking function like some fitness indicators in animals, which are costly and dangerous on purpose, to function as truly honest indicators of value and fitness.

However, the author says that we smoke and drink based on the principle of proving ourselves strong by handicapping ourselves, and not because it really works.

My Note:
I found this part to be both interesting and far-fetched. I believe there is some bravado, "look at me how strong I am" kind of thing here.
But it's still far-fetched and simpler answers apply, such as "pleasure of the drug" and addiction.

More Wisdom

- Black skin is only loosely correlated with sun and the risk of cancer
- We already appropriated 40% of the earth's productivity (albeit: how can he say that accurately?)
- Nuclear weapons bypass our inhibition to kill other humans by acting from far away, at the push of a button
- Genocide is more common than we care to admit, and otherwise, good humans can contribute to it (also see "*Evil*" and "*The Lucifer's Effect*")
- Our species has escaped population control from any other predator, and now overpopulation has become an issue
- We are in the middle of an extinction crisis =, an event that's been accelerating in the last 50.000 years and which will reach completion by our children's lifetime



Criticism

I enjoyed "*The Third Chimpanzee*", yet, I think there are some notes worth making:

Misguided Blank Slate approach

Writes Jared Diamond:

> In contrast, every human population living today has interbred with every other human population with which it has had extensive contact.
> Ecological **differences among existing humans are entirely the product of childhood and education**

Wow, I almost can't believe he wrote that, with the accent on "entirely".
Also read: "*The Blank Slate*".

Ideologically-Driven

Same as with "*Guns, Germs, And Steel*", the book reeks of ideology.

Diamond says:

> Until we can come up with a convincing, credible alternative explanation, the suspicion that racist genetic theories might be true will linger.

Diamond doesn't have to "come up with convincing alternatives". He has to come up with evidence-based, scientific alternatives.

SJW Approach: Diamond searches what's convenient, not what's true

I quote from the author:

> At last, a theory grounded on sexual equality

Who cares what it's grounded on?
Give us what's grounded on data and empirical evidence!

And later on:

> Whether this theory is right or wrong, we must applaud her for overturning a conventional male sexism and transferring sexual power to women

No, we must applaud scientists who help us get to the truth, Diamond, not those who further your political agenda.

Jumping to (Unfounded) Conclusions

The author rarely stops pondering at the possibility that his own theories might be wrong.

And he never admits it when it's conjectured he is sharing, preferring instead to pretend he is presenting scientific truths.

For example, the author says that most life outside of Earth is extremely unlikely to evolve towards intelligence. Sure, he can draw on millions of multi-cellular species here on Earth, and yet… His theory is still resting on one planet only.
That alone should lead anyone to be wary of general conclusions. But instead, he is always so sure of himself.

He says:

> Other intelligent civilizations that arose elsewhere probably reversed their own progress overnight, just as we know risk doing

But based on what does he say that?

And again, talking about how *we* humans abused other species, he says:

> Any advanced extraterrestrial discovering us, would *surely* treat us the same way

Wait… "Surely"?
Based on what he says "surely?" One single species behaving like we did?

Sometimes Sounds Idealistically naive

The author says:

> We're only beginning to realize how sophisticated the conservation policies of so called primitive people actually are

I have never really trusted these idealized representations of "backward but wise societies" that love animals and respect the environment.

Especially when the author himself discussed many opposing examples.

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Exaggerates our genocidal tendencies and the nuclear weapons' power to obliterate life

Diamond writes:

> Together with the destruction of our environmental resources, our **genocidal tendencies coupled with nuclear weapons** now constitute the two most likely by which **the human species may reverse all its progress** virtually overnight

A nuclear war would be disastrous.
Genocide would be horrendous.
And yet, from a macro perspective, neither would "reverse our progress overnight". Especially not genocide, which would only reduce the human population and not "revert our progress overnight".

Again, Diamond writes:

> The first species in the history of life on earth capable of destroying all life

This is silly and I'd expect a scientist writing about life to know a bit more about life.
How would humans destroy all life on Earth?
We haven't even destroyed forms of life that prey on us, from germs to annoying mosquitos.
How would we go about destroying *all* forms of life?

The truth is that if we start a nuclear war or another genocide, other forms of lives would continue living pretty much as if nothing happened.
As a matter of fact, many species would probably do much better with fewer humans around.

Nonsense Mediterranean example of collapsed civilization

The author says that the relative poverty of Mediterranean civilizations such as Greece and Persia is an example of societies that destroyed their own resource-base.

He talks about "deforestation, overgrazing and erosion" that turned a lush land into the barren places we see today.

What the hell is the author talking about?
Greece and Italy boast some of the best food and cuisine in the world. These are not "barren places".
And today's society doesn't fare well or poorly based on agriculture anymore. How is Greece poor because of fewer forests?

This made little sense to me.

The male penis is not for females, but to intimidate other males? Not really

Jared Diamond says that anthropologists claiming that a big penis is a display for women are engaging in wishful thinking.
Women never say they are attracted by bigger penis.

Yet, the author confuses what women are comfortable saying and what they actually prefer.
At parity of everything else, a woman probably still prefers a man with a slightly bigger than-average penis rather than a slightly smaller one.

Penises are hardly a tool of intimidation towards other men.

I think that aggression, muscles, and a willingness to fight are far more intimidating.
Even raising one's own voice is more intimidating and effective than a big penis.

The big penis is most likely the product of sexual selection by females (see "*The Mating Mind*").

Some unsubstantiated data

The author says that we "already appropriated 40% of earth's productivity".

But first of all, based on what?
And second, that makes no sense to me.
Nuclear energy is almost unlimited, and new technologies will improve the final energetical output of any input, thus making any estimate truly difficult to make.

Agriculture, idealism, and poor analysis

The analysis on agriculture felt like one was reading a Paleo diet booklet.

Plus the usual political agenda.

Says Diamond:

> With agriculture came not only an increase in food production, but also the gross social and sexual inequalities, the diseases and despotism that curse the modern human existence

Of course, almost any major change will present positive and negative aspects, but Diamond's criticism feels naively idealistic

He then goes on to describe how better the life of hunter-gatherers was. Yet one would wonder: if it were so much better, why were people so stupid to take up agriculture, more complex and labor-intensive?

Because, maybe, it wasn't such a poorer option…

The author's Chinese friends & anecdotal evidence

The author talks about the two Chinese female friends of his. One preferred white guys, the other Asian guys.
And that was because of where she grew up, he says.
That's also poor anecdotal evidence, though.

Anecdotal evidence for anecdotal evidence, as a kid, I also preferred white women and couldn't understand the appeal of blacks and Asians.
Now that I traveled, I am almost the reverse.

He ends up saying that "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" which, again, is also a major generalization for a scientist.

Sexual selection must not necessarily produce two changes at once

The author says that sexual selection must produce two traits simultaneously: the change in taste and the change itself.

Yet, the changes do not need to be simultaneous. Anything eye-catching can be an advantage, and that develops with the sense itself.

Review

Like any book which helps to shed more light on human behavior and psychology, I loved "*The Third Chimpanzee*".

Yet, I couldn't help at times but think that Diamond might not have enough deep expertise in evolutionary psychology to write a book about it.

Furthermore, is unscientific, ideology-based approach to knowledge sits rather uncomfortably with me.

Check the

- **Best evolutionary psychology resources**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Why Psychopaths Get Laid More

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Many believe that women like psychopaths, and that psychopaths are attractive seducers.

And there is some truth when it comes to dark triads, as we've seen in these articles:

- **Casanova** was high in narcissism, Machiavellianism, and dominance
- **Seducers** have a touch of narcissism, in many cases

And of course, the main article:

- **Psychopaths' sexual strategies**: a sobering read

But why are psychopaths more sexually successful?
And is true for all psychopaths?
Is there also something that holds psychopaths back?

This post will answer these questions.

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- Should You Aspire to Psychopathy?
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The Attractive Traits of Psychopaths

Here are the traits that make psychopaths sexually successful:

1. **They *seek* more partners**: the single and most underappreciated advantage. It’s not so much that psychopaths are more attractive or better with women but, as several studies show, they simply want and seek more partners than the average guy
2. **Risk-taking: they go for it**. Psychopaths take more chances. While most men are worried about what the woman might think, or what people might think, psychopaths tend to go for what they want
3. **Confident approaches**: psychopaths tend to approach women with less fear, which makes them seem more confident
4. **Gib and charm** (at least superficially): not *all* psychopaths, but many dark triad men have learned to come across as smart and polished
5. **Good game:** some dark triad individuals are better at some types of courtship techniques and strategies, including:
   - **Power dynamics mastery**: psychopaths and dark triad men are more aware of general power dynamics and dating power dynamics, so they come across as more dominant, and more leader-like
   - **Love bombing**: Initial overload of whirlwind romance, followed by emotional unavailability that leaves the victim desperate and needy (only work with lower value targets, ⍰ see video explanation)
   - **Triangulation**: psychopaths are notorious for playing triangulation games, which makes them come across as pre-selected, and makes her invest more through jealousy
6. **Power and dominance over women**: psychopaths crave power, and we know that women like more powerful and dominant men. Later on, they will realize it’s toxic dominance, but it might be too late

Let’s examine a few of these:

#1. Fearlessness & Risk-Taking

A bold entrance can make the difference between a boring seduction, and a whirlwind romance that sweeps women off their feet.

Here is an example of a famous psychopath in movie history: Joe Pesci.

The psychopathic trait that worked for Joe Pesci here is fearlessness.

See it for yourself:

He meets her, greets her, walks her to his car, and pushes her head down for a blow job

You bet that risky approach will backfire a lot of times and lend you into some troubles over a lifetime.
But **psychopaths are driven by present rewards while being undeterred by risks and possible future**

troubles. That risk-seeking approach does help them increase their notch-count.

#2. The "Edgy" Appeal: When Risk Intersects With Excitement

The "edgy" and dangerous side of psychopaths appeals to women.

Especially to a certain subset of women high on extraversion and, themselves, high in excitement-seeking (Brown, 2009).
At the extreme of these women are the serial-killers groupies (but they're a minority).

The vacuously intense stare of the psychopaths, for example, can stoke fear and excitement, which heightens and/or is confused with "butterflies love" and sexual excitement.

The psychopath stare can evoke strong excitement

The "bad man" appeals to a certain subset of women, including some women with emotional issues that Norwood referred to as "Women Who Love Too Much".
Here's one of Norwood's interviews with a criminal as she analyzes the psychology of toxic relationships:

> When you've done time you learn that there are **some women who'll think you're a creep** and have nothing to do with you.
> **But there are others (women) who get turned on by the whole idea**. It fascinates them. They see you as big and bad and they get real seductive, trying to tame you. Or they think you've been hurt and they feel sorry for you and want to help you.

So you get two types of women when you go criminal:

- Those who like bad boys
- Those who like broken men and want to "fix" you

#3. The Power and Dominance Advantage

In many ways:

Psychopaths win because they're not "too nice guys", notes evolutionary psychologist David Buss (Buss, 2021).

Indeed, probably *the* most important trait that makes psychopaths effective in seduction is the power, dominance, and confidence they can convey.

Many psychopaths are high power, they want power and control… And women like powerful men.

Psychopaths are attractive because men who approach women from a position of power, dominance, confidence and leadership are *all* attractive, and it can sometimes become secondary whether it comes from a position of positive leadership or from a destructive one.

Indeed, women are also initially attracted to non-psychopathic power-hungry men for the same reason they attracted psychopaths. And, as well, they are also attracted to otherwise moral and ethical leaders: these men all show power and dominance over them.

We saw that with Obama, where his power-position as the president allowed him to make this woman go all giggly just with his presence:

The man who behaved more psychopath-like was Mike, the girl's boyfriend.
But Obama could have easily taken his girlfriend as an empath, because of the power, position and authority he had.

#4. Machiavellianism and The Willingness to Play Games

Machiavellians and sociopaths see life as a big chessboard.

That helped them learn dark psychology strategies and techniques to help them persuade and manipulate others.

Most normal guys don't learn persuasion that well, and they are wary to play any games that might hurt people.
Not psychopaths.
They are well versed in maneuvering others.

#5. No Conscience Might Mean Ruthless "Efficiency"

This is the dark side of psychopathy and seduction.

On top of being good at maneuvering others, **psychopaths have no qualms in harming others**.

That, of course, offers an "advantage" over men who do not want to harm women or, as the old pick mantra went, over men who to "leave women better than they found them" (Strauss, 2005).

As an old headhunter might say: it's always easier to bring home the reward if it's "dead or alive" instead of "alive only".

How About Violence? Extreme Traits Work Better in Times of Turmoil

Women are highly social creatures, and their attraction cues are far more plastic than men.

So what makes a man attractive is also context-dependent.

Women are highly attuned to what is most likely to provide men with status, success, power, and resources.

In times of violent turmoil, psychopaths probably fare a bit better because they might be perceived as "more adapt to the environment", and less likely to end up being a loser.

And in times of stable and opulent societies, "nicer" men fare comparatively better and the psychopath high-risk,

high-impulsivity approach is more likely to backfire and lead nowhere.
And that makes them less attractive to women in general (exceptions always apply, of course).

In today's developed societies, violence and extreme traits fare comparatively worse.

The Psychopaths' Disadvantages

Psychopathy also comes with important costs in dating and mating markets.
Let's review some of them:

#1. Psychopaths Struggle to Acquire Resources

Women prefer men with status and resources.

And although conscientious, high-IQ, factor-1 sub-clinical psychopaths may be highly effective in workplaces… That's a lot of qualifiers to turn a psychopath into a successful one. Instead, **pure psychopaths are bad at acquiring social status and resources**.
Exceptions apply, on average, antisocial and impulsive psychopaths tend to populate the bottom rung of society (or of prison).

That can work against them in acquiring mates.

Also see:

- **The traits that make up your sexual market value**

#2. Psychopaths Seldom Maximize Looks

Psychopaths chase quick rewards, and especially factor 2 psychopaths are heavy consumers of alcohol, drugs, and sometimes even food.
And **chasing rewards today comes at a cost for tomorrow.**

James Fallon is a neuroscientist who found out later in life to be a psychopath (Fallon, 2013).
Fallon says he loved seducing women for the power it gave him. But look at James Fallon:

Psychopaths come in all shapes and forms. Many are simply not attractive

My point is: **Psychopaths obey the laws of the sexual market place just like anyone else.**
And if they don't have attractive qualities, they struggle to get laid just like anyone else (especially with high SMV women).

Note: it's different for high-functioning psychopathic men
The above applies more to low-functioning psychopaths.
But it's not true for men with some psychopathic traits and who are also high in narcissism. Those guys do care about their looks.

Also see this article on male archetypes of seducers:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

#3. Psychopaths Struggle With High-Quality Women Who Seek "Total Packages"

It's true:

When you meet a woman who is treated poorly but she is in love with him, she is often in a relationship with a man high in psychopathy.

Some of those psychopaths get drunk, sleep around, treat her poorly… And women still clean after them.
However, as you can imagine, women who stick with poorly behaving psychopaths and bankroll their debauchery are rarely the highest-quality women around.
Usually, they are lower SMV women, or women with low self-esteem and/or who come from abusive families.

It's simple math: **women with high sexual market value *can* get high-quality and hence often *demand* high-quality men** (David Buss, 2018).

Studies also show that dark triad men, especially psychopaths, have lower standards when selecting mates (Jonason

et al., 2011).
Even their strategies are often targeted at women with fewer options.
Love bombing is about chasing hard, and showering with attention. And that usually works best with women who have fewer options.

If you read the popular book "Women Who Love Psychopaths", you will realize that many of the targets don't seem to enjoy lots of dating options.

And if psychopaths are not great at dating high-quality women, they are even worse at keeping high-quality women -or simply just healthy women, for that matter-.

Clearing the "Psychopaths' Myths"

Let's now review some manosphere myths about psychopaths and their success with women.

1. Psychopaths Are Attractive

Psychopathy is a personality disorder.

By itself, psychopathy is not attractive.
Characters in vignettes who exhibit psychopathic attitudes are rated lower in attractiveness and desirability, either as short-term sexual partners or long-term mates (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013).

At an even more visceral level, **psychopaths' facial morphs are UN-attractive to women** (Lyons and Simeonov, 2016).
Lyons states that there seems to be something about the cranial and facial features of psychopaths that makes them less attractive.

Instead, among the dark triads, research shows that narcissists are attractive (Rauthmann and Kolar, 2013)

But if the man affected by psychopathy is attractive, then that man can be attractive.

As a better rule of thumb, **women tend to be attracted to *attractive* psychopaths, not to *any* psychopath**. And, of course, not all psychopaths are attractive.

Many psychopaths have NO gib and charm, are ugly, or socially retarded.
As a matter of fact, the more violent they are, the less likely it is they are socially intelligent and successful with people.
The smart ones tend to do less violent crimes and more white-collar crimes (see "Snakes in Suits").

And, of course, there are also psychopaths who are total losers.
Dr. Hare, a leading expert on psychopathy, explains that **some psychopaths go on a killing spree because they had no success with people and women whatsoever and feel rejected and "wronged" by society** (ie.: the definition of a loser).

This is a bit like we've seen for the different roles of lover or provider that men take in seduction: the role does matter, but it's quality matters more than the role (see: lovers VS providers).
In this case, **it's more about *individual* psychopath and his level of game, skills, and attractiveness, than psychopathy *as a disorder*.**
Psychopaths who don't know what they're doing are rapists and only get laid through hookers.
So, even here, quality makes a bigger difference than "psychopath" or "non-psychopath".

2. Psychopaths Don't Better Defend Women

Says Rollo Tomassi, a popular red pill author:

> "(dark triad traits) were survival traits in the past.
> Those were the guys who got things done. Those were the guys who took care of their own. Those were the guys who were volatile enough to be fun in bed. Those were the guys who had the capacity to kill off a rival, **to defend the woman with his life**.
>
> *Tomassi, Preventive Medicine*

It's not completely wrong.

And it's probably true that harsher environments -differen than "past" environments- are more advantageous for dark triad men.

However, that romanticized view of "strong men who can defend women" runs into trouble when taking into account the fact that psychopaths develop no emotional attachment.

If anything, a factor-two psychopath or a "full-blown" psychopath in lay terms, might be more likely to *harm* women, rather than *defend*.

3. Psychopaths Make For Great Leaders

The myths here are similar:

1. Psychopaths can be heroes
2. Psychopaths make for strong leaders (to serve their community)

The idea that psychopaths can be heroes is a common one, but that doesn't make it correct (see Dutton, 2012).

It's a popular, romanticized view of the "bad guy who's actually good".
You know, the guy everyone thinks he's bad, but that he truly has a heart of gold and defends people with his life?

Yeah, that's good for a Hollywood script, but it's wrong 95 times out of 100.
I have addressed that fallacy in "do good and evil overlap" but, in short, here it is: psychopaths lack empathy and are extremely selfish.
They get the *small* stuff done, but rarely do they accomplish the big things: psychopaths can't stick to things.
And especially the more violent-prone ones, they rarely manage to make others want to follow them.

It's more like the opposite: psychopaths need a larger society to leach off to.
Psychopathy indeed is a frequency-dependent strategy (Mealey, 1995). That means that psychopaths *depend* on a larger society of collaborators, and cannot function effectively on their own.

4. Women Are Attracted to Serial Killers

This is pure sampling bias.

People see a famous serial killer and a few women who want to fuck them, and from "some women are attracted to *some* psychopaths", they generalize to the whole population with the wrong conclusion that "women are attracted to psychopaths".

Rollo Tomassi, author of the popular manosphere book "The Rational Male", falls for this bias in this interview:

> (..) **every time a new violent criminal** like Nikolas Cruz the guy who shot up the school in Florida, or Chris Watts the guy who killed his pregnant wife and their two daughters (…) **as soon as they get convicted almost immediately they get female fan clubs**.

And so does Ogi Ogas in his otherwise wonderful "A Billion Wicked Thoughts":

> It turns out that killing people is an effective way to elicit the attention of many women: virtually every serial killer, including Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, and David Berkowitz, have received love letters from large numbers of female fans.

It's *somewhat* true: a subset of women are attracted to serial killers.
Many hypotheses have been advanced, including the excitement that turns sexual with the fear (Saltzer, 2011), the (mistaken) belief that the serial killer makes them safer, or the attraction for the "alpha male traits" that the killer supposedly embodies.

Probably all of them -and more- contribute, also depending on the individual groupie.

However, **most people forget that many serial killers garner groupies through simple *fame***.
Fame leverages the simple, and super-effective, law of large numbers.
The *famous* serial killers who get enough airtime end up in front of many women's radars. And albeit it's very few of them who are into the killer type, the law of large numbers dictates that some will be attracted.

To make a comparison, Philippe Petit who rope-walked across the Twin Towers also got a fan club of women.
As a matter of fact, as soon as he ended his stunt and the media frenzied around him, he picked up an adoring admirer and went to her place to have sex.
But it's not "rope-walking" that's attractive per se.
It's the dare-devil mixed with fame, and fame being the *main* ingredient.

As evidence that fame is the main ingredient, consider there is a fan club for almost any non-ugly, famous man.
As a matter of fact, even famous pedophiles have prison groupies (Jared Fogle, for example).

But if you're "just" an unknown serial killer, you're not gonna have any fan club.
A serial killer who meets women at the bar or in the street is going to face rejections just like any other guy.

When it comes to psychopathy, (serial) killers, and attraction, there is also a general poor understanding of the phenomenon and how it overlaps with seduction and sexual success.

Let's clarify:

1. **It's *psychosis* more than psychopathy**: as psychopathy researcher Kent Kiehl explains, mass murderers are committed by men suffering from *psychosis*, not *psychopathy* (Kiehl, 2014)
2. **Few psychopaths are serial killers**: most psychopaths aren't serial killers. And not all psychopaths are serial killers
3. **Only a minority of women go wild over serial killers**: and only a fraction of the number of women who go crazy over your average pop singer talking about heartbreaks
4. **Quality of women is low**: women who chase serial killers are probably not the highest quality women around
5. **Many women see -or dupe themselves to see- the "nice" side of violent men**: says a woman who exchanged letters with Richard Ramirez "he was nice, told me to get an education and that I'm sweet and should sort my life out and not end up in prison lol. I really liked him. I told him I wanted to chop his wifes feet off and he was cool about it. he's a nice guy :-)"

More Like "Crazy Attracts Crazy"

When it comes to quality of women who are attracted to psychopaths, see what these studies show:

- Women high in personality disorder were more attracted to psychopaths (Watts et al., 2018)
- People who self-rated themselves as antisocial were more likely to accept anti-sociality in others (Lamkin et al., 2017)
- People high in maladaptive traits didn't find other maladaptive personalities attractive, they just found them less

unattractive, and thus were more "open to settle" (Sleep, 2017)

- Cluster-B women were more attracted not just to psychopaths, but to all personality disorder features (Grande, 2019)
- Women in their 30s and 40s are more attracted to serial killers, which is not the women in their top sexual prime (Ramsland, 2012)

So what we get here is that:

1. Psychopathy and personality disorders are not attractive per se
2. People who find personality disorders more attractive -or more tolerated-, also score higher in personality disorder

In more lay terms, this seems to be a case of "crazy attracting crazy".

Picture of the woman who sought to marry 80-years-old Charles Manson. She cut herself to look more like Manson

5. Psychopaths Have "Game"

Game is advanced social skills, but lacking crucial normative emotions, it's difficult to really become a peak performer.

Plus, anything advanced takes time and commitment.
And as we've seen, psychopaths don't exactly stick and endure short-term pain for long-term success.

Quoting from *The Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych*:

> although they attempt poaching frequently, antisocial people are also not the most successful poachers. That recognition goes to people who are self-described as open to new experiences, sexually attractive, and sexually unrestrained

Meaning, the best "poachers" and "ruthlessly effective players" are *attractive* players.
And for whathever psychopaths can poach, they also appear easier targets to poaching, leading to no net gain (Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010).

Ted Bundy Example

What would you think if you saw a man trying to pick up women, pretending to need help?
More like a beta male, than a high-power winner.

And that Ted Bundy's approach.
Bundy, touted for his attractiveness to women, used pity plays to lure his victims and pretended to need help.

Plus, his girlfriend was an older woman with a child.
Not exactly a great seducer, was he?

6. Ruthlessness Is Attractive

Again, there is a speck of truth.

Some women can be perversely attracted to a total lack of ethics and morals.
And aggression can also be attractive, especially to some women.

But let's not exaggerate and overgeneralize.
Here is a rule of thumb, instead:

Cold-heartedness and aggression would backfire when first meeting a woman far more often than it would succeed.

Says Geoffrey Miller in "The Mating Mind":

> Very few psychopaths flaunt their lack of sympathy like Hannibal Lecter, because very few of them are glamorous, urbane geniuses.
> Mostly, they are just ordinary creeps who beat their girlfriends, stab guys in bars for no reason, get caught (…).

Most psychopaths instead feign kindness and, often, go to the extreme and into what's been referred to as the technique of "love bombing".

Love bombing consists of ardent pursuit, fast-pacing the relationship towards more and more commitment, professing unending love and writing, calling and texting more than any normal man would.

Miller says that females' appreciation for kindness might have evolved to avoid psychopaths and psychopath-like men:

> If sexual preferences evolved to avoid anything, they should have evolved to avoid psychopaths.
> During human evolution there may have been a three-way arms race: females developed better tests for male sympathy, male psychopaths developed better ways to fake sympathy, and male non-psychopaths developed sympathy-displays that were harder and harder to fake. Just as fitness indicators evolved to advertise freedom from harmful mutations, perhaps sympathy indicators evolved to advertise freedom from psychopathy.

Women who failed to recognize psychopaths faced bigger challenges in raising their children compared to more empathic parents.
Challenges not big enough to completely root out psychopathy from humans' gene pools, but enough to make psychopathy the exception and not the rule.

Psychopaths "Win" With...

Too Nice Guys As Competition

Psychopaths have an advantage over too-nice guys.

But they have a *dis*-advantage against high-value empaths.

Lower-Quality Women

Or, in more technical terms:

Psychopaths win at the lower and middle end of the quality bell curve.

As we've seen, many psychopathic traits make it harder for psychopaths to get and stick with the highest-quality women.
However, with women who are somewhat less desirable, a hard-charging, high-dominance psychopath often wins over the other average men she has access to.

Should You Aspire to Psychopathy?

Some men seek to develop dark triad traits as a sexual advantage.

That's what I realized during my research to write the "Analysis of The Red Pill".
On that Reddit community, some men discuss how dark triad traits allow men to sleep with a lot of women.

Well, they might be onto something.
Even actual psychologists have written books on the advantages of psychopathy and how to acquire some of those traits.
See for example:

- The Wisdom of Psychopaths
- The Good Psychopaths' Guide

This same website could be seen as a big guide to becoming a pro-social, high-quality dark-triad individual.
But that "high-quality" and "pro-social" are critical.

Overall, men who score very high in psychopathy are *not* high-quality people.
And albeit the predisposition for "fast and furious life" can help them do better than some average and below-average guys, they rarely achieve the highest success in life, be it in dating, self-development, business, or whichever common marker for "success" people use.

Finally, don't forget what we've discussed earlier.
The last reason why you don't want to go all the way into psychopathy is that **"crazy attracts crazy"**.
If you seek high-quality, attractive women, become a high-quality, attractive man.

SUMMARY

Psychopathy and psychopath-like traits can provide advantages in both mating and dominance hierarchies under some circumstances.

That is especially true in the short term, which is where the bulk of promiscuous men's partners comes from.

The "advantage" in lay count is in large part because psychopaths *seek* more mating opportunities.
On the other hand, many men low in psychopathic traits, including many relationship-minded men and men with more secure attachment styles, will be happy to stop with a single partner -and maybe some cheating on the side for some of them-.

That's why, because of his short-term predisposition, a good-looking, high-functioning psychopath will get laid

more than an equally good-looking, but “normal” man.

The psychopath’s advantages are most obvious when pitted against average or lower-quality, submissive men rather than with high-quality, strong, and empathic men.

A psychopath strategy fares relatively better in larger societies and urban environments and works better in the short term and more poorly in the long run.

Overall though, an equally attractive and high-power man is usually better positioned to land and, crucially, keep and increase attraction over time.

In relationships, psychopaths then use a host of different techniques to keep their partners under their thumb, but that’s a topic for a different article.

Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Sexual conflict refers to tug-of-war dynamics where the reproductive or sexual interests of men and women diverge, leading to competing and win-lose strategies.

This article is not for the faint of heart, since we focus exclusively on the adaptations to cheat, control, and gain an advantage against others.

That's also evolution.
Those who were too nice lost, and failed to shape our modern brain.
Those who won, engaged in the never-ending escalation of the sexual arms race.

Orgasms: symbols of peak love and peak duplicity (read on)
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Women's Evolved Tactics

Women, just like men, wage the sexual war both against men and against female competitors.

We will review both.

Women Against Men

Women seek from men good genes, resources, and support.

All of them are important for women, and what she goes for depends on personality, environmental factors and life phase, leading to some complex and interesting sexual strategies.
Let's review them:

#1. Orgasms to Help The Affair Partner

Scholars haven't yet settled the evolutionary payoff of orgasms.

But since orgasms may help retain sperm, women may orgasm with the affair partner to increase the odds of retaining his sperm.
Indeed, women are more likely to reach orgasm with the affair partner.

#2. Escaping Men's Control & Mate Switching

Women usually prefer switching to the affair partner, *if he is available* (mate-switching hypothesis).

Otherwise, women may be happy to get the affair partner's superior genes, and let the boyfriend raise the child (dual sexual strategy hypothesis).

In my experience, mate switching is the preferred option if he is available.

And women may test and drop hints to the affair partner.
See an example here:

She deployed a mixed strategy & tested the ground for branch swinging
Her unstated message was “I’m single now (for you)”.
BTW, notice the dynamics. A controlling freak install apps on her phone to check her location. But smart “filles de joie” find ways around it and may find it even more exciting to cuckold them.
It’s a way to reassert their power and freedom, and to take their revenge.

Also see:

- Female hypergamy

#3. Concealed Ovulation: Keep ‘Em Guessing

Why do women hide their ovulation?

It’s atypical in the animal kingdom.
Most other animal females, including our brethren great apes, advertise fertility.

Why not women?

Well, there are several theories, and a good chunk of them involve the deceit of men.
Here are some of the most popular (names are mine):

- **Gold-Digger theory**: female primates get more male support when ovulating, so hiding ovulation allowed more astute women to keep the treats coming
- **Ho-theory**: women can trade sex for favors, but sex linked to conception was costly and risky to sell. Thus, delinking sex from conception empowered women by lowering the risks
- **“Dread fatherhood game”**: men are paranoid about fatherhood, and women developed concealed ovulation to force men into permanent marriage bond
- **“Love me” theory**: men, clueless about her fertile days, had to keep having sex with her for long stretches of time. Time and sex increase pair-bonding and keep him and his investment around

We don’t know for sure which one is correct, but it might be a mixture of them all.

A theory for hidden ovulation is resource-extraction from men

#4. Tell Men The Child Looks Like Him (to make him invest)

I'm sorry to spoil this one for fathers.

But in these most innocent words, there might lie the darkest manipulation:

> **Her**: Look at him, he looks just like you!

Well, that might be the case.
The child might indeed look exactly like the father.
But then, how come studies show women say this far more often than men do?
Even the mother's family says it more often than the dad's family!

One theory is that since fathers can never be certain of paternity, it's always good for the woman (and her family) to "remind" him.
Telling fathers that the baby looks just like them is a way of telling them "it's yours, baby, invest in him".

Of course, there is also a darker twist here.
Sure, most of the time the kid truly is *his* kid.
But the "this is your kid game" can also be used by cheating wives to support their dual strategy of "sexy son – unsexy provider".

Women remind men the child looks like them to keep their investment

#5. Mood Swings & Makeup Sex: The Female Emotional Slip Knot

Mood swings may serve several functions:

- **Test of commitment**: strong reactions signal strong interest
- **Multiplier of investment**, as men scurry to please her. And research suggests that the more one invests, the more he values the investment receiver
- **Arousal** of emotion and desire

About the latter, this is an interesting hypothesis from the '*Cambridge Handbook on Female Sexual Adaptations*':

> **when women face a mate retention problem, they may experience increases in sexual desire**; engaging in **sex in response to potential threats may facilitate partner retention.**

I believe the researchers may be onto something.
Makeup sex seems to be more common among volatile women like anxiously attached women, and borderline personality disorder women. And these relationships often involve volatile yet strong attachments.

Example: The First Woman Who Cried on me

I was still naive and vowed to myself that I'd make her stop crying (what a knight, eh?).
After I succeeded, she rewarded me saying I 'did great', an obvious power move.

Result?

She confirmed I was into her and I was going to be a good emotional provider.
And I got more invested into the relationship.

A female wet eye is the 2nd most powerful lubricated organ
Some men who fell the hardest for their women met them right when they were crying.

5.2. Nagging, Drama & Tasking: Controlling the Relationship

This is a bit more speculative, but consider this:

Women who were able to secure male investment over time won over women who got abandoned.
Evolutionary pressures may have favored women who got good at locking down men into committed relationships.

Refer to this article for the details:

- **How women control men in relationships**
- The power dynamics of assigning tasks

#6. Ridiculing Male Preference For Femininity

Imagine this sentence:

> **Her**: Only weak men need the reassurance of a submissive woman

Or its similar version:

> **Her**: Men who are afraid of successful women are weak

Those women might have a point, sometimes.
But their goal is to change the culture and the male mating strategy in a way that favors them.

They want to guilt-trip men in choosing less feminine women, and change the culture in a way that rewards and appreciate the go-getter women who, traditionally, have paid a heavy price for their more masculine traits.

But it's funny you never hear feminine women complaining, right?

It's non-feminine women who are scared of more feminine women because feminine women steal their mates.

And instead of competing on femininity, which requires work and a difficult change, some women lash out and try to change the culture.

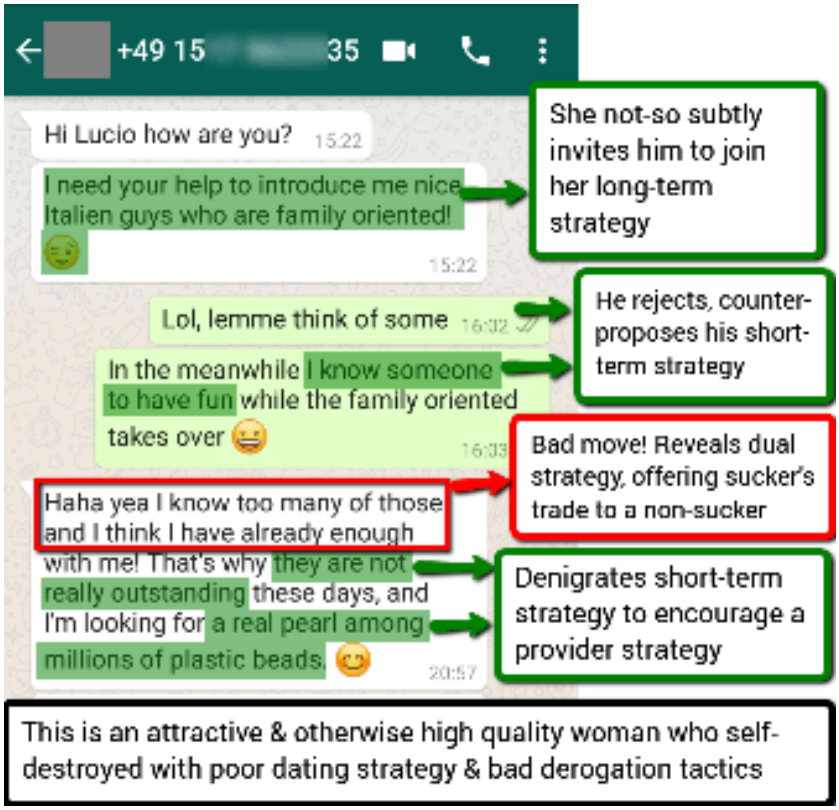
Of course, it's not just culture, it's mostly nature.
But culture still matters a bit. And women have been winning this battle and have largely succeeded in changing at least the superficial cultural layer (the proof is the virtue-signaling men).

#7. Derogating Short-Term Strategies: Real Men Commit (?)

You know this game.

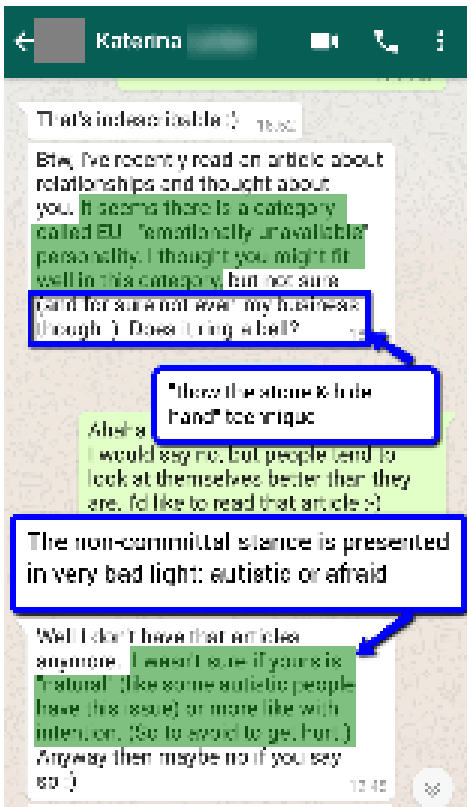
It's one of the most obvious (and cheap).
Basically: women looking for commitment denigrate sex and "fun" in favor of the supposedly "serious" relationships (as if the "serious" relationship didn't entail sex and fun anyway).

Here is an example from yours truly:



Example of derogation tactic against male short-term strategy
LOL at that, no more comments needed.
But do check what happened later on (link to follow).

Here is another example, this time using a cheap form of reverse psychology:



Female derogation of male short-term strategy
She was testing my availability and using inverse psychology to prod me to “prove her wrong”
But it was a cheap shot. It’s as if I had sent her an article about “emotional clinginess”.

Women Against Women

Women certainly have competing interests with men, but they probably compete even harder with other women.

Here are the weapons they use:

#1. Denigrating the Competition (Basic)

Basic denigration seeks to reduce competitors' mate value in the short or long term.
A popular one:

> **Her**: She's such a slut

That's designed to trigger the male inborn "Madonna-whore radar", leverage men's fear of cuckoldry, and lower the competitor's long-term value.

However, that may backfire for short-term as men may seek her out for a fling. And an astute woman may then turn episodic sex into a relationship.

In short-term contexts, women may sometimes denigrate for short-term, saying that a woman is a prude.
But that's rarer and can easily backfire.

1.2. Advanced Denigration

Let's analyze these tactics:

> **Her**: He uses his power and position on desperate women

That tactic discourages men from taking advantage of their power, and women from seeking out powerful men.

> **Her**: They only like him because they think he's rich / has white skin / has this or that "superficial" trait

That tactic discourages men from 'geo-hacking' and women from pursuing wealthy men.

These sentences do three things at once:

- **Denigrate men who 'hack' the sexual marketplace**, for example moving or using their power position
- **Denigrate women who offer easier sex to these men**
- **Virtue signal their supposed superiority**

In general, women dislike *lateral* male mobility far more.
With lateral mobility or 'geo-hacking', men move to dramatically improve their dating opportunities overnight.
This strategy is scarier because while top-1% men are statistically rare, 'normal' men moving has a stronger impact on her pool of options.

#2. Suppression of Competitor's Sexuality

This is the principle:

⚖ **The more easily women offer sex, the more difficult it is for women to get men's investment**

Meaning, women have an incentive to suppress other women's sexuality.
So you get the advice:

- *Make him wait 3 months*
- *Make him wait until you're married*

Women may also use covert aggression and acerbic gossip to enforce norms around sexual promiscuity, preventing rivals from 'dropping the price' of sexual access (Baumeister and Twenge, 2002).

#3. Competitors' Manipulation: Fake Help, Real Harm

This is by far the nastiest.

The manipulation game some women use is truly Machiavellian.
It's framed as help, while disempowering a competitor. For example:

- *Focus on yourself, not on men*
- *You don't need a man*

Both are valid, in some cases.
But in many other cases, **strength and independence lower a woman's attractiveness and sexual competitiveness.** She may drop dating altogether to focus on her career. And if not, strong and independent women are less attractive to many men.

Body positivity may also be another manipulation tactic.
Example here:

> **Her**: Men opposed my body positivity journey while women approved it <— It's because men lose when more women gain weight, while women gain

3.2.: Don't Settle: Advice or Manipulation?

Think of this common advice:

> **Her**: Never settle for less than the man you truly deserve
>
> **Her**: Never accept a man who doesn't show proof of his love

This type of advice places all the risk on the receiver while providing all the benefits to the advice giver.

A woman who refuses to settle risks remaining alone.
But her unyielding dating stance *always* favors women as a group, including the advice giver.

Why?

Think about it: if *all* women refused to settle and/or give sex without huge male investment, men would *always* have to invest big.
And the global bargaining power of women would increase.

Paraphrasing psychology researcher David Buss:

> The sexual strategy of the group affects the individual's mating success

However, **as a woman sets unyielding standards for others, she may compromise and land a 'good enough' but sure deal.**
Or she might decide to get quality genes, without that man's investment.

In the meanwhile, her girlfriend remains single, sex-less and, if she wanted a baby, childless.

This is the general feminist dating advice as well. Part of the feminist strategy is demanding individual compromise to favor the collective.

Male attention = female resentment
Malena is the story of female intra-gender sexual competition, with the protagonist physically “pushed off the market”. The film culminates with the mob lynching Malena -Monica Bellucci- and cutting her hair, the symbol of her beauty and femininity.

Men’s Evolved Weapons

Men certainly aren’t standing there and watching women play games on them.

We have already talked in the past of games men play at the micro-level.
This section will deal more with the systemic-level strategies that men deploy to win the sexual conflict.

#1. Circumcision: Lowering Her Sexual Appetite

Men love it when their women lust after them.
But fear when women lust after *other* men.

Of course, on average, high-quality men are more likely to enjoy the former and not worry about the latter. But since high-quality men are a minority, when in doubt, some men prefer to play defensively.

Men mutilate women’s clitoris to prevent them from having orgasms which, in turn, should reduce the risk of her straying and/or deploying dual sexual strategies.

I am not aware of any data, but I doubt that this is even effective. The woman still has the same urges, and she is still going to prefer better males.

#2. Restricting Her Sexuality: Infibulation / Chastity Belts

Infibulation and chastity belts seek to physically prevent sexual penetration from other men by blocking the vaginal opening.

#3. Feigning Long-Term Strategy & Support

What do men lie about?

It depends on the environment, circumstances, personal sexual market value and the type of sexual strategy (short term, long term or mixed).

Men pursuing a short-term strategy seek to come across as ladies' men, good lovers, pre-selected, etc.
This is a minority of men.

Most men instead feign to pursue long-term strategies by faking resources, kindness, feelings and professing non-existing love.

However, the short-term / long-term divide can get blurry sometimes.
Contrary to what some believe, a high-quality man faking long-term potential can also score quick sex if he's also sexy and moves fast.
As evolutionary psychology researcher David Buss says, women are more open to considering a short term mate if he also fits her long term ideal (also see providers VS lovers)

See Berlusconi:

Berlusconi needs not to show off wealth. But kindness helps his (social seduction)
Also see "atypical seduction techniques".

#4. Arranged Marriages: Abducting Female Choice

There are two reasons why arranged marriages benefit men than women:

1. On average, women choose, and arranged marriages limit female choice
2. In a free sexual marketplace, most women have more power than most men, and arranged marriages curtail that power

The fact that most arranged marriages take place in male-dominated societies gives us a clue as to who they benefit the most.

#5. Traditional Values & Slut Shaming

Traditional values intersect with "cultures of honor".

These cultures seek to repress women's sexuality to ensure male paternity.

One way they do it is by “slut-shaming”.

Most high-status (and liberal) men enjoy libertine sex because that means more sex for them.
But high status men are the minority, and **for most men it’s safer to keep women under a restrictive cultural leash to protect against infidelity.**

Of course, men may adopt a convenient double standard:

> Honor for me if I sleep around, shame on women for doing the same.

I’ve seen this culture often growing up in Italy.
The father of my sister in law professed, publicly and in front of all the extended family:

> If I hear any “stories” I take care of it personally. I don’t even let the husband stain his hands with it

The “honor” in this case was also about “guaranteeing a high quality woman” to my brother and my family.
Especially important when the man’s family is higher social status.

#6. Institutionalized Mate Guarding: Religion

Religion or defense against mate poaching?
Did you think the veil was for religion?

Maybe. Partially.
But hiding the female is such a time-tested technique in the animal kingdom that you might forgive us for seeing malice in male’s insistence on veils.

Writes Butovskaya in *The Cambridge Handbook of Sexual Psychology*:

> *The study by Pazhoohi and Kingstone in twenty-five countries demonstrates that veiling promotes sexual fidelity in women (Pazhoohi & Kingstone, 2020).*
> **Veiling is a male mateguarding strategy used to secure male reproductive success.**

See more here:

#6. Harassment & Coercion

Men have developed two biases that may increase the odds of sexual harassment:

1. **A bias for taking a shot** (men who tried more got laid more)
2. **A positive bias in reading female signals** (men who read more interest got laid more)

And sexual coercion may be an unfortunate adaptation for mating access.
Initially, the mate deprivation hypothesis suggested it was men without options who rape more. But David Buss more presented some evidence that it's dominant men instead who are more likely to rape.

#7. Men On Men Derogation

Intra-gender derogation tends to be more associated with women, but men do it as well.
See the forum entry for men VS men derogation.

The Contested Battlegrounds

Men and women's wars span many fields, from biology, culture, legal frameworks, and genes:

- **Legal system**: historically dominated by men, but recently may have swung the opposite side
- **Economic policies**: redistribution and socialism generally favors women (Ghodsee, 2018), while financial concentration benefits the few top men
- **Morality**, the ultimate tool of social influence
- **Genetic war**: men's genes code for maximizing an infant's resource allocation, while maternal genes 'defend' the mother (Brown, 2020)
- **Mating systems**, like monogamy or polygyny
- **Relationship social standards**, for example with 'men supposed to provide and protect' and 'women supposed to serve and support their men'

Also read:

- How women control relationships

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

> **Morality is the pro-social mask of a selfish sexual strategy**

When Genders Band Together

Genders sometimes coalesce for common causes.

As we've already seen for example, the majority of men have an incentive to limit women's sexual freedom.
Conversely, women coalesce to demand and gain more sexual freedom, social, and economic power.

Sometimes these alliances are open and openly embraced and encouraged.
Writes for example Sheryl Sandberg in *Lean In*:

> We need to look out for one another, work together and act more like a coalition.

> As individuals we have little power. Working together we are 50% of the world population and therefore have real power.

Women also seek more power by trying to remove men from the sexual equation.
For example, I saw this on my Facebook timeline when I started this article:

Who needs a man when you can get 100s of themem with a good thirst trap
However, these alliances are often subconscious and emerging from individual drives.
For example, most men don't consciously shame career women in a conscious effort to shape a culture opposing women's career. Instead, it becomes an emerging social property of men's individual drives.

It would also be wrong to believe that all men or women gain from these alliances.
Instead, **the interests of top men and top women are often misaligned with their own gender majority.**

Just as an example, most men gain with monogamy.
But the top men gain with polygyny instead.

Collaboration (May Be) Bigger Than Competition

Dawkins and Krebs (1978) first mentioned that courtship is sometimes collaborative, other times exploitative.

But the exploitative side shouldn't overshadow the collaborative side.
Relationships exist because, for most peopl,e **collaboration between men and women maximizes fitness**.
Quoting the excellent *Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych and Relationships*:

> Despite the often too prevalent perception of a war between the sexes in the social sciences (see special issue of Sex Roles, e.g., Vandermassen, 2011), to a large degree interdependent reproduction promotes cooperation rather than confict (Buss, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)

This article put that in perspective, showing that relationships are *both* cooperation and defection, genuine support, and manipulative.

And believing that male and female interests perfectly intersect is naive at best.

In the meanwhile, don't get paranoid.
But don't be naive, either.

Women Who Love Psychopaths: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Women Who Love Psychopaths (2008) looks into psychopaths' abusive sexual practices and the pathological relationship patterns between women and psychopaths.
Sandra Brown says that some psychopathic traits can be attractive and, in particular, they can be attractive to women who also have some specific character traits.

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Notes

About The Author:
Sandra L. Brown holds a master's degree in counseling from the Liberty University and she is the CEO of " The Institute for Relational Harm Reduction & Public Pathology Education". I couldn't find much information about it except for its Facebook page.
In any case, the author has focused her studies and work on pathological relationships with dark triad men, especially psychopaths and sociopaths, and women.

1. Dangerous Men Have Low or No Empathy

The book focuses on 3 of the Cluster B Disorders:

- Antisocial

- Borderline
- Narcissistic Personality Disorders

Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD) includes both sociopaths and psychopaths.

My Note: BPD is different
In my personal view, it's a mistake to include here the Borderline Personality Disorder, both because they are quite different, and because the book mostly discusses predatory behavior.
Furthermore, narcissism should include "unprincipled narcissists" and not any other types.
That being said, I liked the author's idea of grouping and simplifying the dangerous men she describes in the "low/no empathy and conscience" category.

Brown says that one does not need to be a full-fledged psychopath or diagnosed as one.
A few traits can be enough for a harmful and toxic relationship.

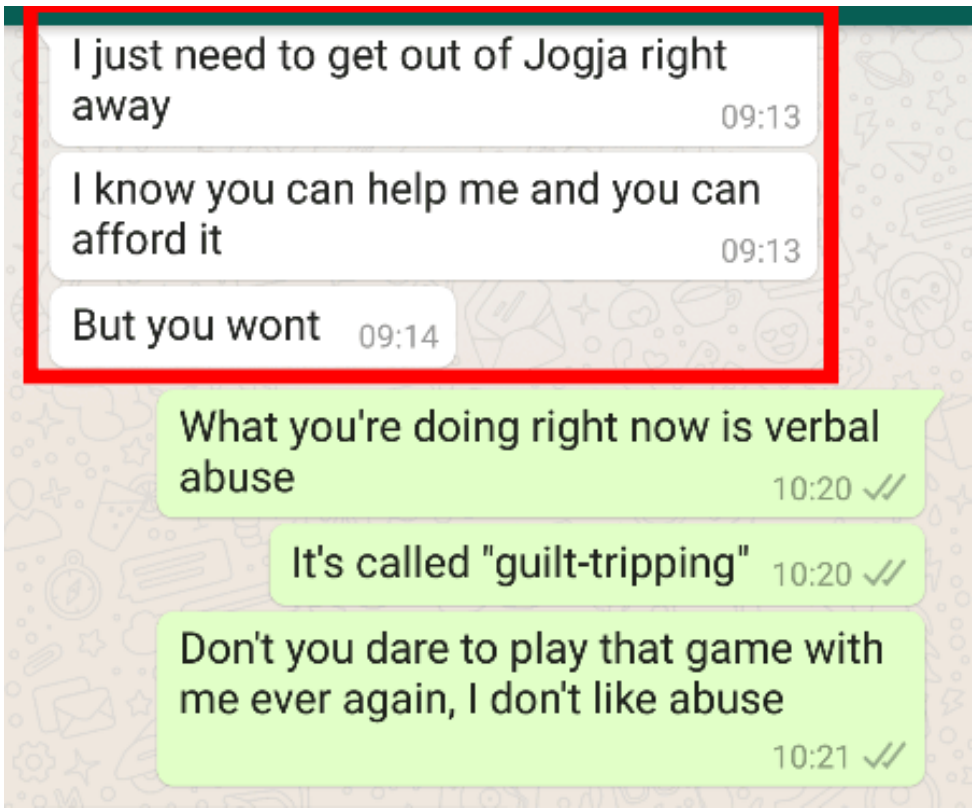
2. Psychopaths Seek Power

Psychopaths seek power.
But, contrary to most other people, they are much more likely to find pleasure in using their power destructively (Rieber and Vetter, 1994).

Psychopaths enjoy power the most when it induces victimization, and that's what makes them highly dangerous.

However, how they get what they want must not always and necessarily be through violence.
It can be covert aggression, control through paranoid jealousy, passive aggression, guilt-tripping or, the author says, even pathetic neediness.

Here is a real-life example of guilt-tripping and pathetic neediness:



And it was working.
So you must be careful when people appeal to you as their only possible savior.
You must walk that line where you want to help people, but you don't want to help them to sucker you down.

3. Psychopaths Present A (Fake) Successful Image

Psychopaths lie.

A lot.
Sure, many men lie and play games, but the psychopath hides some true malignant personality.

Many psychopaths like to present themselves as truly successful. Some even *are* successful.
But many just fake it and, in some cases, also recruit the help of others for their lies and fabrications.

Some psychopaths can be found in professions that imply empathy, like medicine, theology, or psychology. So don't be swayed by the job title.

4. Traits of Women Who Love Psychopaths

These are the traits of the women who love psychopaths:

1. Extraversion and excitement-seeking
2. Relationship investment and positive sociability
3. Sentimentality
4. Attachment
5. Competitiveness
6. Concern for having others' high regard
7. Harm avoidance

The author goes into detail on why they matter and why they are at such high risk for pathological relationships.

I will quickly review them here:

- **High extraversion**: women who love psychopaths also chase fun, novelty and dislike boredom and "boring men". They often talk about how their initial exchanges hooked them up, while other women would would have felt like the psychopaths' dominance dangerous or overpowering
- **Attraction to dominance**: albeit this is not a listed trait, the author mentions that women who love psychopaths tend to be attracted to dominance and dominant men, and that's a risk factor because psychopaths tend to be dominant
- **Competitiveness**: she refuses to take the loss and is more likely to stay and "battle it out" and make the relationship work. Or to "battle him out" and avoid "losing"
- **High relationship investment**: this trait often gets confused with "codependence", but wanting to invest and give is a normal human tendency that is simply more accentuated in women who love psychopaths. Giving a lot is great with a man who is healthy and giving, but with psychopaths, it's a risk factor because they will take everything and give nothing.
  And that's why "princesses" and "divas" who *ask* for investment don't mix well with psychopaths
- **Social sensitivity**: the psychopath leverages her high empathy with (false) stories of his past pains
- **High attachment**: the author bundles "attachment" with "relationship investment and social sensitivity". While many women would tread more carefully, women who love psychopaths attach quickly and deeply.
- **Sentimentality**: she focuses more on the positives and remembers more of the positives. Psychopaths see affection as a way of making her addicted, and her high sentimentality helps the psychopath in his dark pursuit of power
- **Concern for having others' high regard**: they care too much about what others think about them, including the psychopath. After all the toxicity, some women still care about "staying friends"

The author also adds "tolerance", as in the ability to withstand pain, "trust", "loyalty" and "high morality".

Psychopaths like women with high morals because those women are unlikely to do to the psychopaths what the psychopaths do to them.
Plus, I'd add, they are more likely to fall for his games, and easier to control.

Brown says that women who love psychopaths tend to be high in:

- **Trust**: These women tended to trust too much, too soon. Even in the face of evidence to the contrary, women were more likely to trust the psychopath's *words* rather than his action.
  In the most glaring example, one woman ended up doubting she even saw the psychopath in bed with another woman when he denied there was anyone in the room.
- **Loyalty**: women feld bad about breaking promises and vows. Including promises of "never leaving him" which were done before he turned into Mr. Hyde.

5. Attractive Traits & Techniques of Psychopaths

Here is what makes psychopaths potentially seductive and attractive:

- **(Fake) success**: many of the psychopath's attractive traits, like business success, resourcefulness and directedness, are the fruit of lies and fabrications
- **Operant conditioning**: the psychopaths Dr Jekill / Mr Hyde double personality rewards positive behavior and punishes bad one (proper and good behavior are classified in accordance to his selfish convenience, of course)
- **Some psychopaths can make women feel safer**

Said one woman:

> "At some level, his false power feels like protection, even though in many ways it is the opposite. It feels like it is the strong protection that I had at home from my father. The fact that he can do actions disregarding rules in society, feels like a strong protective force when it does not work against me or others."

- **High sexual drive**: psychopaths are very high in sex drives, which can help make the beginning of the romance feel like a whirlwind of passion. Sex also releases oxytocin, which makes women feel bonded
- **Bold initial move**: psychopaths sometimes start the relationship with bold moves that captivate the woman. And sometimes it's strong chemistry with the psychopath's "rawness"
- **Replaying abusive past**: in some cases, the psychopaths simply "help" the women to repeat patterns of abuse from their fathers (traumatic replay)
- **(Fake) emotional bonding**: psychopaths don't feel much emotion, but they can make women emotional. They do so talking about the 3 Ps: past, pain and perceptions
- **Love bombing**: intense focus on her, constant chasing, making her feel like the only one in the world
  ??♂ **Lucio's note**: There is no evidence for narcissists using love bombing (Campbell, 2020) and, as far as I'm aware, neither for psychopaths. It's more pop psychology than proven psychology. It also doesn't seem logical that high-value men would use this tactic. I remain unconvinced.
  See here:

- **Emotional roller coaster and threatening the relationship**: once she's hooked, the psychopaths keeps her insecure and (unhealthy) attached by threatening the relationship (called "dread game" in Red Pill communities). The pathological relationship's keyword is "inconsistency"
- **Make-up sex**: make-up sex is part of the roller coaster of negative and positive emotions which is so addictive. When the psychopath has turned into Dr. Hyde, sex can become her only way to feel bonded to him
- **Isolation**: the psychopath seeks to isolate her from friends and support network
- **Highlight her resistance**: when women want to trust him, it's often enough for the psychopath to highlight

their resistance to make it disappear

- **Appeals to family desires**: when women want children, the psychopath implies or outright says he's looking to settle down and have children (also read: atypical seduction techniques)
- **Persistent pursuit**: psychopaths were fast to move from the first contact to closer and closer relationship under the guise of "so into you that I can't resist". Her high investment trait blinds her to the risk of men chasing and moving fast
- **(Fake) vulnerability**: the psychopath exposes his wounded side to make her feel sorry for him and trust him more.
  That makes her feel safer about moving fast (yes, that can work, but do read "vulnerability is not power").
  That's why some women refer to psychopaths as "incredibly macho" and yet "wimpy and needy"
- **(Fake) initial support**: in the beginning, he encourages to do more, be more and believe in herself. Later he will do the opposite and undermine her self-esteem
- **Dark psychology of Trance, Hypnosis, and Suggestibility**: female victims tend to be more suggestible than the average population, and the author says the psychopaths leverages it. She says psychopaths have "hypno-power"

For more on psychopaths' sexual strategies, please see:

- **The Machiavellian sexual strategy of pscyopaths**

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Pick-up artists are high in psychopathy

The book is written in 2008, and the author also takes aim at the pick-up community of that era which focused on NLP and hypnosis.
Says Brown:

> Psychopathic traits are found in many people not just diagnosed psychopaths.
> **The web sites devoted to 'seduction techniques' are an example of varying levels of psychopathy** and are now being taught online to others. Anyone wanting to do this to another person, by definition is high in psychopathic traits.

I actually don't fully disagree with Brown. There is something true in what she says.
But it's also a major generalization with which I can't fully agree.
Finding a mate does not equate psychopathy, of course, and many people writing and learning seduction are simply looking for a mate and a healthy relationship.
Also, looking for many mates is not necessarily psychopathic, and can also be done as a value-adding individual.

And she goes on saying:

> The difference between students of seduction and the professional psychopath is that most psychopaths know these techniques instinctively.
> In fact, the worst psychopaths are probably the ones teaching others and making a fortune from the new hot seduction online communities.

If I think of the early pick-up artists, she might be right.
But, again, I don't agree with the generalization that learning seduction necessarily equates with high psychopathy traits.

How to Induce Trance

The author says the following techniques induce trance:

1. Sexual intensity
2. Breathing and heart rate becoming in sync through sex
3. Music
4. Dancing
5. Fasting
6. Sleep deprivation
7. Euphoria – feelings of connection and the effects of sex hormones
8. Flickering lights
9. Kinesthetic – through the sense of touch generating feelings or emotions
10. Intense playing or enjoyment
11. Prayer and meditation (cults use it)
12. Neuro-feedback—also referred to as Biofeedback—which changes brain waves and alters your state of consciousness
13. Peak experiences or flow states (heavy concentration produces a sense of interconnectedness)

6. Psychopaths' Arguing Tactics: How He Wins & Keeps Her Around

Relationships with psychopaths have lots of emotional turmoil.

And lots of fights.
Psychopaths fight in the following way:

- He rages
- When that doesn't work, he is tender
- When that doesn't work, he says she is just as sick as he is so they might as well stay together
- When that doesn't work he threatens to find another woman
- When that doesn't work he fakes insight that she was probably right all along about what's wrong with him and is the only one who understands him
- When that doesn't work, he threatens—he'll tell her family, work, children, etc. something negative about her
- When that doesn't work he carrot dangles with something she has wanted—to get married, have a child, buy a new house
- When that doesn't work, he says she must have another man which is why she is not making up with him
- When that doesn't work, he'll go to church
- When that doesn't work, he claims he has serious medical conditions like cancer to bring her back to him

What a nice piece of work, eh?

7. Breaking Up With A Psychopath

Since psychopaths are all about power and dominance, they want to end the relationship themselves.

Often, they will end the relationship in the most destructive way possible. With a power play or by leaving one last mark on her soul.

But even when he leaves, there is no "for ever" in the psychopath world. He will circle back in the future, sometimes years and years later, as if nothing had happened.

But what if it's her to end it?
Well, then the problems start.
Psychopaths cannot tolerate that she is now not under their spell anymore, they are vindictive and they will try to damage her as much as possible for the "affront" she is doing to him.

When She Can't Leave

Sometimes it's hard for her to leave.
Reasons include:

- Intensity of the attachment
- Impacted by depression or PTSD
- Anxiety and fear, which in turn increase the betrayal/trauma bonding dynamics
- Financial concerns
- Social or religious pressures
- Children

8. Psychopaths Do Attach, But Like Things, Not People

The author says that psychopaths don't bond, but they do attach.

Why would they become stalkers otherwise, which we know they do?

Normal people also attach, but we attach to things.
Psychopaths attach to women because they want to possess them and have power over them.

Says the author:

> Psychopaths seek others because it is through human contact that they get to experience dominance

9. Sex With A Psychopath Is Great... Or Terrible

Sex with psychopaths is not always a great experience for women.

Some consistencies included: bonding through women *thought* was occurring, intensity, frequency, deviancy.
And then, either the best or worst sex they had ever had.

Of course, psychopaths often added their lying twist to make women feel even more bonded.
Says one woman:

> "He was so completely captivated by how our sex drives were identical. He said he had never felt that about anybody and how we were completely different from anything he had experienced."

The sexual aftermath, either in the positive or in the negative, contributed to making women struggle in the aftermath.

Bad Sexual Experiences

Often sex helped the psychopath, but often the psychopaths' tactics and demeanor only pushed women away.
For example, said one woman:

> "He would speak to me disgustingly like, "Come here and suck my dick." He would put me down sexually. He couldn't see how his treatment of me led to my lack of desire for him. He told me he didn't have to put up with me—that other women wanted him."

Some other times, psychopaths forced women to tell him how good he was.
Said one woman:

> "I would have to measure his penis regularly with a tape measure and tell him how nice it was to know I was sleeping with a man so well equipped and that his penis was attractive."

Psychopaths are often deviant in a way that is not sexually attractive. Among the craziest stories, a psychopath spits on the woman while having sex, while another defecated on her because he came too soon (!!!).

Some other times, psychopaths' hyper-sexuality means it's also channeled in ways which are disgusting to most normal people, for example to children -including their own children-.
Said one woman:

> "I never felt totally comfortable with him sexually. I always felt like he was a pedophile."

And of course there was the woman who fought in court to keep her children away from him but couldn't manage to protect them through court.

Psychopaths Don't Like Active Women

Psychopaths often prefer sexually passive and submissive women.

Why?

Because psychopaths don't like it when women come to them: that doesn't give them the feeling of power that they crave.

10. Psychopaths' Shit Tests

"Shit tests" is a vernacular term for women testing men during seduction.

Well, the author says that psychopaths test women to gauge their likelihood of hooking.
For example, they will violate her boundary early on, or ask for help right after they have shown lots of affection to test her level of cooperativeness.

My Note:
The examples of the book weren't just "highly cooperative" but, it seemed to me, quite naive of women as well.
So, sometimes, "naiveness" is the true trait that allows psychopaths to extort money or goods from women.

11. Psychopaths Won't Change

The judicial system is:

> Sending them to batterer intervention, anger management or some other treatment is to waste resources and gives women the false impression that they have been 'treated' when what is wrong with them is actually highly untreatable or treatment-resistant.

Also see "Why Does He Do That" for the perspective of Ludy Bancroft, a man with decades of experience in running treatment seminars for abusive men.

12. Road to Recovery

Brown devotes a chapter on how to recover from pathological relationships.
Among the most important steps:

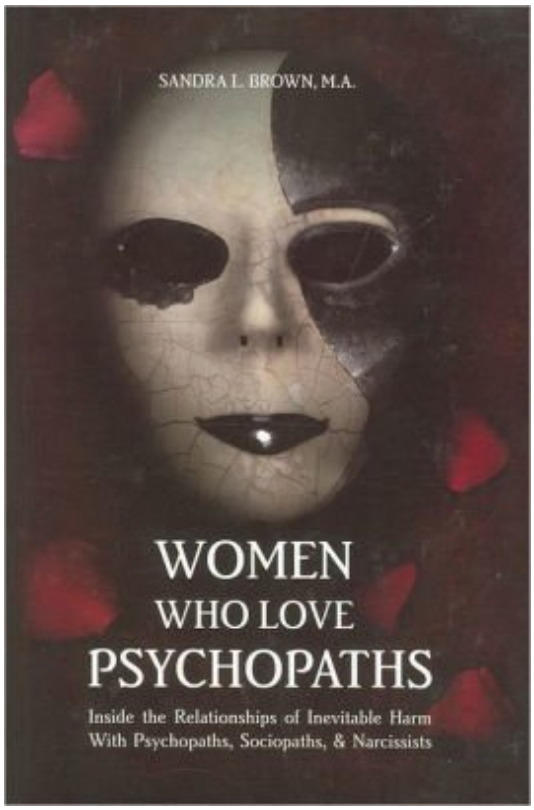
- **Understanding the pathology**

She must learn to tell the difference between healthy dominance and pathological dominance, excitement seeking behavior and “pathological” excitement seeking.

- **Deep introspection**

If a woman is picking similar partners and replaying similar relationships, she must find out why.
Luckily, it’s not love but it’s traumatic attraction.

- **Self-Care**: the psychopath took all her energy, now she must focus on herself
- **Symptom management**: the recovery should be treated as a potentially serious case of PTSD. The author discusses “intrusive thoughts” and “cognitive dissonance” particularly



Quotes

> Not all dominant men are psychopaths, but most psychopaths are dominant.

On courts that need to wake up to the incurability of psychopathy and stop allowing psychopaths around children:

> Wake up courts!
> Sociopathy is created from toxic early childhood environments. This toxicity is largely a child’s exposure to how the low/no conscienced think, feel, relate and behave during parenting.

I couldn’t agree more.

Criticism

Women Who Love Psychopaths is a strong resource to understand the dynamics and psychology of high psychopathy relationships and it’s been very useful for this website.

Yet, I also have quite some criticism.
Let's start:

1. Small-ish sample size to draw reliable conclusions

I quote from the book:

> Dr. Leedom was very helpful in assisting in developing the Women Who Love Psychopaths research survey. Over 75 women worldwide completed the survey.

In the beginning I thought that was a typo, but I doubt that the most important number in the whole book is a typo. And this is a *very* low number to generalize to the whole population of women.

On the other hand, it's a positive sign that most of the psychopaths in the study have not been incarcerated, since most other books on psychopaths refer to imprisoned psychopaths.

2. Ignores Proven Mate Value Dynamics

As I read the book, I had this nagging, lingering question:

What if the women who fall for psychopaths simply have fewer options and few suitors?

That would certainly make the psychopath's job easier: game a woman with fewer options and everything becomes easier.

I quote the author:

> The psychopaths they got involved with were far below their level of career status and education.

Why were they dating below their level?
Many of the women in the examples were not the youngest either. That should raise the question if psychopaths' biggest targets are not also facing a difficult dating market.

Unluckily, the author never addresses the question from that angle.
Sure, it's politically incorrect, but it could well be part of the picture.

3. Doesn't Add Up On Extraversion

Extraversion is a critical trait of women who fall for psychopaths?

That made little sense to me.

Introverts make for easier targets, usually.
The author of "Psychopath Free" was introverted. A negative review on Amazon for this book said she was introverted. Robert Greene in "The Art of Seduction" says that the best targets are isolated and introverted.
And I also think the same.

Extraverted people meet more people, have bigger social circles and, in general, are also more worldly and experienced.

Plus, the author seems to equate extraversion to power and dominance. She says:

> This type of extraverted, competent, and competitive woman could easily emotionally overpower a man who wasn't similar in his own extraversion.

I'm not convinced there is such a strong overlap between extraversion and dominance.

4. Could Be More Rigorous/Scientific

The author says that psychopaths have a “predatory 6th sense”.

I quote:

> Psychopaths have been endowed with what seems to be a 6th sense to hone in on women’s feelings of loneliness and grief

And later:

> Women are fascinated by the whole idea of a 6th sense in men who ‘know’ her so completely so early.

“The whole idea of a 6th sense”?
This is nonsense.

Or, talking about hypnosis, she says:

> There are hypnotic techniques that trained hypnotherapists regularly use. The psychopath no doubt uses these as well

“No doubt”?
Based on what?

4.2. Could Better Grasp Scientific Principles

Sometimes it feels like the author has a poor grasp of scientific principles, of what’s “proven” and what’s just an indicator.

For example, she says:

> Psychopaths instinctively know that women high in cooperativeness will stay in relationships with them longer. That has proven to be true.
> She indicated that when the psychopath had dated a far less cooperative woman, their dating period was far shorter!

That’s nonsense.
Sure, it makes sense, but it’s not been “proven” to be true.

Or, later on, she says:

> All of the women reported that they were harmed by the relationship with the psychopath.
> Stated another way, 0% reported 0 harm.
> That alone should alert courts (…) with decision making power over psychopaths and pathologicals that someone is always harmed by them.

Nobody argues that a relationship with a psychopath is likely to be destructive.
But… Does she realize that her sample is not representative because it’s self-selected?
In her sample there are *only* women who have been armed. It’s like going to a hospital and saying that cars kill. Sure they do… But not all the times, maybe.

5. Women Can Feel The Wounded Psychopath?

The author says that women in her sample talked about how they can feel others' emotions, especially the "wounded psychopaths".

And she writes:

> This is one indicator of why they feel so deeply attached to the psyches of the psychopaths—sensing at a deeper level the undiscovered disorder and its brokenness.

This made little sense to me.
Psychopaths feel little emotions and aren't very likely to be wounded and emotionally pained.
I think it's more like the women who wanted to see something deeper, catching at straws, believing -against evidence- that if they only keep holding onto it, they can make it right (see: "women who love too much").

Review

Women Who Love Psychopaths is a highly valuable resource for first-hand experiences of psychopaths' relationships, and the women who dated them.

Not only is it informative, but it's also helpful for a road to recovery.
I would give it 5 stars for the pro-social and potentially life-saving information it contains.

We need fewer women who fall for psychopaths and fewer children fathered and reared by psychopaths, and Brown's work helps with both.

But at the same time, I cannot gloss over some generalizations and the lack of a more rigorous approach.
Including the very small sample size, which is used for sweeping generalizations to the whole population.

Yet, I can still recommend "Women Who Love Psychopaths" to any woman who's either in a relationship with a psychopath, has been with one or, potentially even more life-saving, to any woman who is out dating.

Check out:

- "are psychopaths successful with women?"

or Get the book on Amazon

9 Best Dark Triad Books for Power & Self-Defense

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

If you're looking for the best dark triad books, you've come to the right page.

The dark triad includes Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. They are foundational constructs for The Power Moves, and we studied them to tease out the most effective strategies to help men succeed, while also staying honorable.

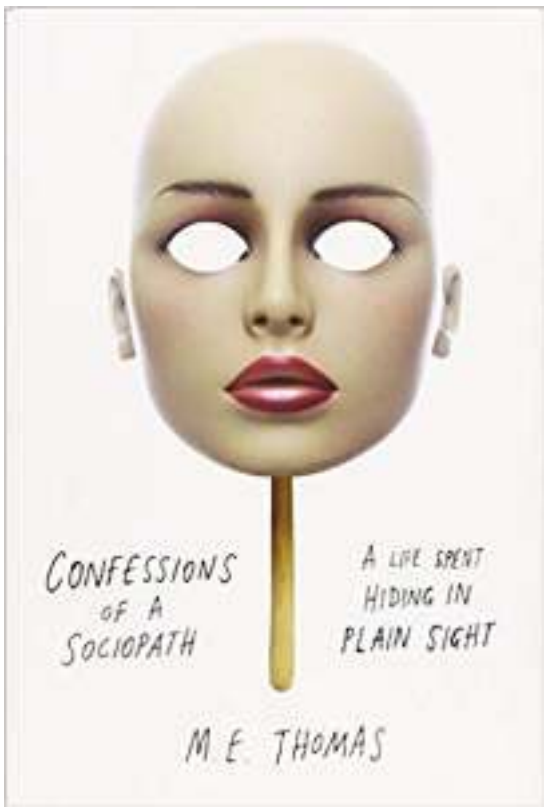
Here are the current best resources on the dark triad.

Note**:** Unlike most lists, we only review books our founder and power dynamics expert Lucio Buffalmano has personally studied. His research empowers good men to understand and navigate the darker side of human nature.

Contents

- 9. Confessions of A Sociopath
- 8. The Art of The Deal
- 7. Machiavelli's Principles: Life & Work
- 6. The Dictator's Handbook
- 5. Who Is Michael Ovitz
- 4. Casanova's Memoirs
- 3. The Good Psychopath's Guide
- 2. The New Science of Narcissism
- 1. The Dark Triad of Personality
- Bonus to Learn the Skills: Power University
  - Change Log: New Entries & Exits
  - Further reading:

9. Confessions of A Sociopath



How do dark-triad folks think and act?

Well, there is no better way than to let an actual sociopath share that.
The author, a diagnosed sociopath, discusses how life looks like to a sociopath.

The results might shock someone.

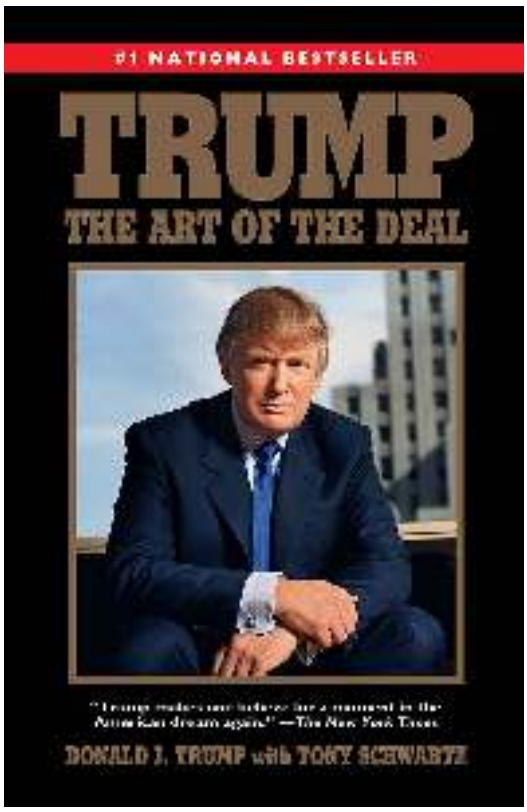
M.E. Thomas openly discusses how she relishes ruining people.
That's common among psychopaths and sociopaths, since hurting others gives them a sense of power.
The author, a woman, discusses using fake allegations of gender discrimination for career advancement and instigating her classmates to file a made-up sexual harassment charge against her school teacher.

Don't get me wrong, many people enjoy seeing others lose. That's what frenemies are all about, after all.
And some even see the positives in other people's suffering. I remember an ex-girlfriend of mine being sad that her ex-boyfriend had a new beau.
Why?
Because he wouldn't pine over her anymore.

But sociopaths *do* take it one step further when it comes to relishing in other people's misfortune.
That's what Thomas makes clear here. And that's why you only want to *selectively* borrow from psychopaths and sociopaths.

A similar book is "*The Psychopath Inside*", but Fallon writes as a neuroscientist, with more scientific details that might bore some readers.

8. The Art of The Deal



Machiavellianism starts before you even open the book, at the "author" page level.
Schwartz indeed said that Donald Trump didn't write a single word of the book, and Trump, of course, replied that he wrote most of it.

To get to the real dark triad goodies in "*The Art of the Deal*," you have to be able to read through the lines, as the book was obviously going to be rather kind towards Trump.

Take for, example, when Trump wanted to help homeless people in New York by giving them shelter in an old building he had bought.
Unfortunately, the City of New York prohibited him from carrying out this generous act of kindness.

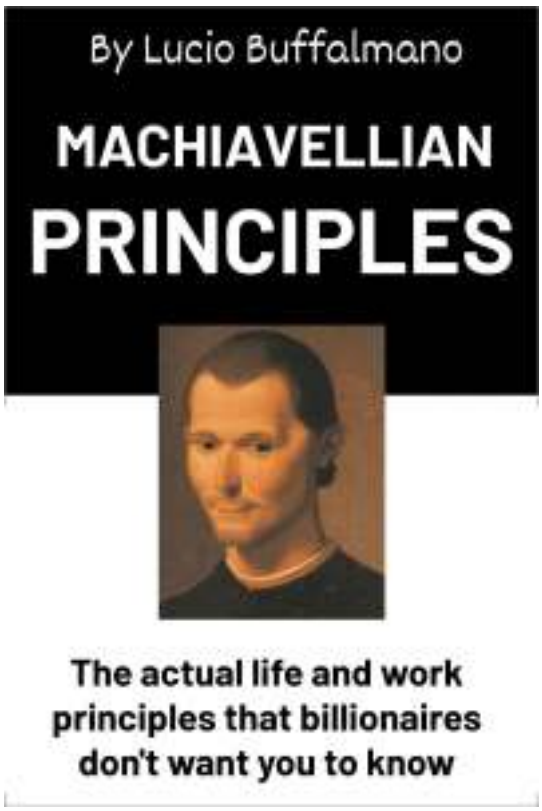
What gives?
That all sounded strange to me. So I researched it. And, it turns out, Trump wanted to let homeless people in to force the last holdout owners to sell low.

LOL, if that weren't so low, one couldn't stop laughing at Trump's Machiavellianism.

Also read:

- **Psychopaths at the top – empaths stop at the middle**
- ***Bad Blood***: how Elizabeth Holmes gained a 10-billion evaluation without any technology
- ***The Fund***, on how some potentially dark-triad founders operate (including the virtuous spins)

7. Machiavelli's Principles: Life & Work

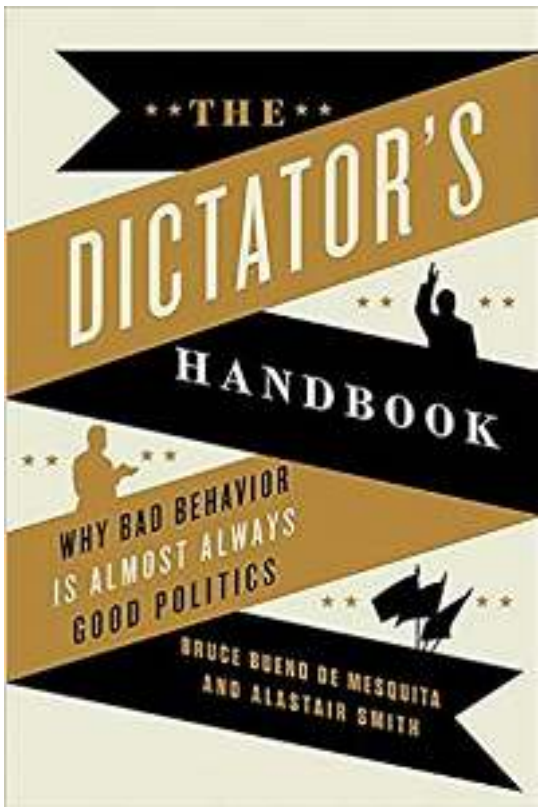


A **ruthlessly cynical wake-up call for too nice guys**, this Machiavellian take on Ray Dalio's virtuous '*Principles*' will change the way you look at life.

It's a brief take that Lucio Buffalmano first wrote on a whim, but ended up being a hit among our readers. Many found it enlightening on the thinking patterns of dark triad personalities, especially for *Machiavellianism*.

It's a free article, give it a read and it may change the way you look at some authors' biographies.

6. The Dictator's Handbook



There you have it:

A playbook for narcissists and sociopaths to acquire president-level power and wealth.

This is the modern "*The Prince*", and no descriptions are needed, but two quotes:

> Quote: Rule 3: Control the flow of money.
> (…)
> Bravo to Pakistan's president Asif Ali Zardari, estimated to be worth up to $4 billion even as he governs a country near the world's bottom in per capita income.

And even worse:

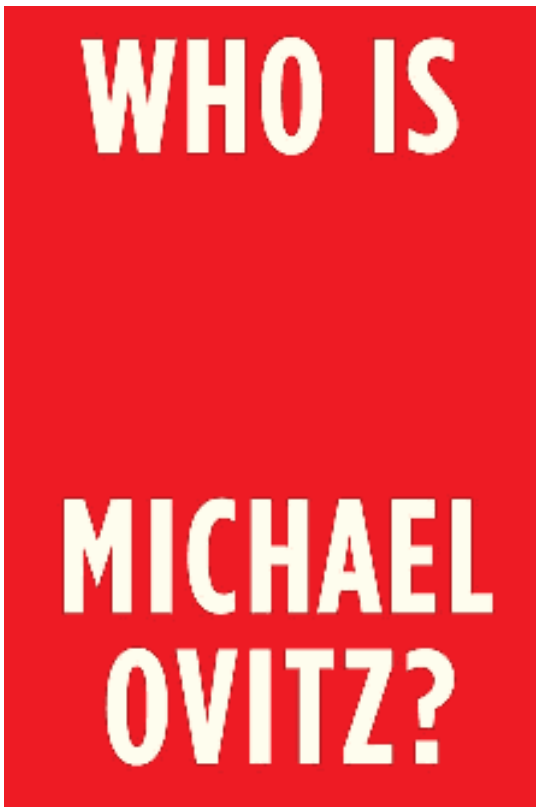
> Quote: Rule 5: Don't take money out of your supporters' pockets to make people's lives better.
> (…)
> Bravo to Senior General Than Shwe of Myanmar, who made sure following the 2008 Nargis cyclone that food relief was controlled and sold on the black market by his military supporters rather than letting aid go to the people—at least 138,000 and maybe as many as 500,000 of whom died in the disaster

This is exactly what I refer to when I often say that good people need to know how to be bad.
Otherwise, it's only the "through and through pieces of sh*t" who get to power and hold power.

Also read:

- **Politician's manipulations**: techniques and examples

5. Who Is Michael Ovitz



This is our top pick for dark triad traits in the service of business success.

Ovitz's Machiavellian approach to business built the most powerful Hollywood agency in the world.
And made him an influential multimillionaire in the process.

On business structure, he says:

> The lack of hierarchy was a myth, of course, a management tool. We were democratic dictators.

And about his 'hidden power' and reputation, he says:

> Mystique is ten times better than publicity; it's much better to be thought of as the great and powerful Oz than to be revealed as merely another schemer behind a curtain.

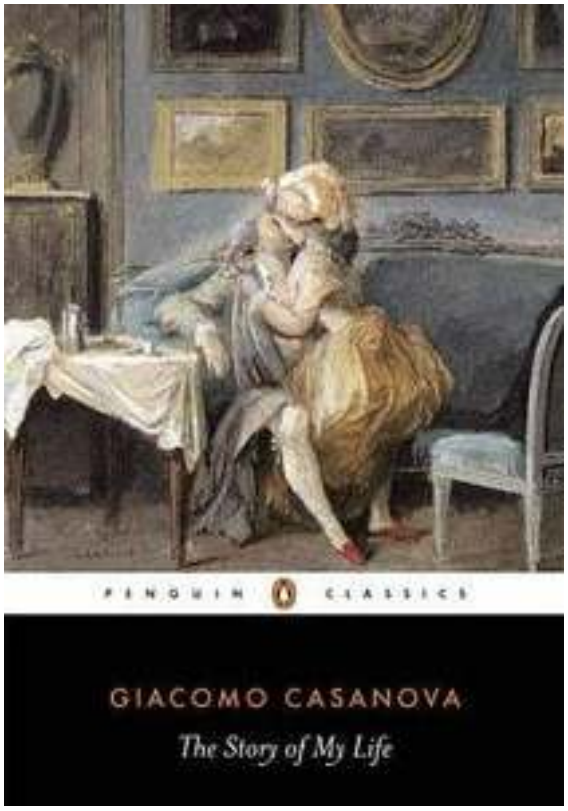
And about his approach to business:

> My clients played characters on-screen; I played them offscreen.
> I was a chameleon, becoming whomever I needed to be to make everyone comfortable and close the deal.

A must-read and a tough wake-up call for anyone who has grown up on naive self-help and naive business books.

⚠ **Buyer beware!**
Ovitz had a life crisis and a tremendous fallout with his lifetime best friends and business partners, going from best pals, to worst enemies.
Read our review in full to avoid the same mistakes -we teach the 'best of both worlds' approach in Power University- ⍰

4. Casanova's Memoirs



Why are Casanova's memoirs even here?

Well, to begin with, because most people are interested in dark triad personalities to seduce and get laid more (no shame there).
Second, because I seek to provide an informational edge and few people are even aware of this book.
And third, because Casanova *did* slay thanks to dark triad traits.

Most of all, I believe, in narcissism, with power-aware narcissists being some of the most prolific types of seducers:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

Casanova was a rake in an era when hookups weren't nearly as easy while traveling and often not knowing the language and customs (sigma male-style), and while overcoming a litany of roadblocks, from cockblocking parents to protective nuns while he tried to seduce women in convent.

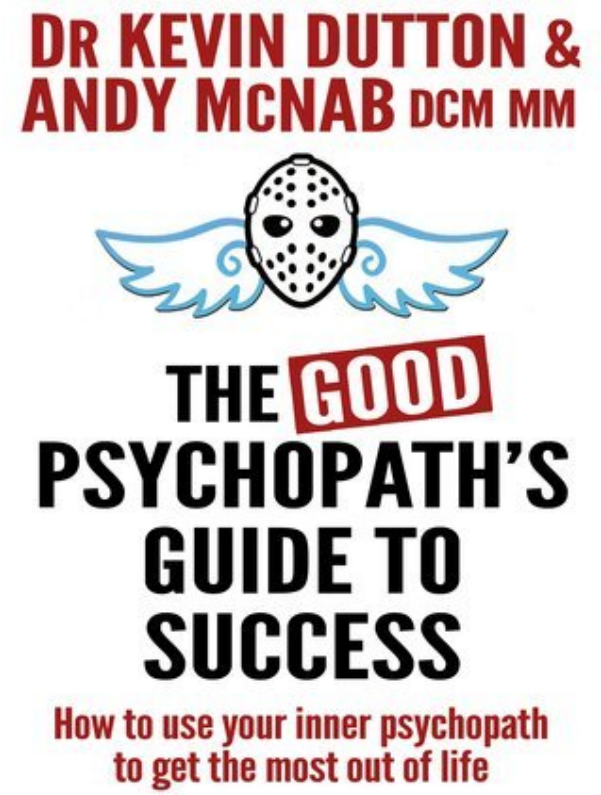
When it comes to dark triad traits, I don't think Casanova was a psychopath.
What's peculiar about his womanizer style indeed is that he often fell in love with women as hard as they did -except he moved on anyway-.
But he did have plenty of antisocial (APD) and dark triad traits, including narcissism, a strong will to power, reckless and impulsive behavior, and endless Machiavellian plots to meet and get together with women.

In many ways, he also used many modern seduction techniques, including:

- Lavish money spending (conspicuous consumption)
- Entering elite circles and earning social status (social circle game)
- Staying in shape and attention to appearances (self-care)
- Wearing the most elaborate clothes (peacocking)
- Hustling to hire servants and stay at the best locations (lifestyle game)

And he leveraged his position of power for plenty of easy lays, too.
Bravo to Casanova, a true example of leveraging dark triad traits without (willingly) hurting anyone and in support of a life worth living.

3. The Good Psychopath's Guide



Some psychopathic traits can be used to enhance your odds of success in life.

That, you knew, I think. Or you suspected, at least. Otherwise, you wouldn't have ended up on this list of best dark triad books.

So after "*The Wisdom of Psychopaths*", Dutton moved to a "how-to book" on how to be more of a psychopath.

However, before you jump on that train: too much psychopathy becomes harmful and is not conducive to life success.
And violence, poor impulse control, and poor planning are a recipe for ending up in prison.

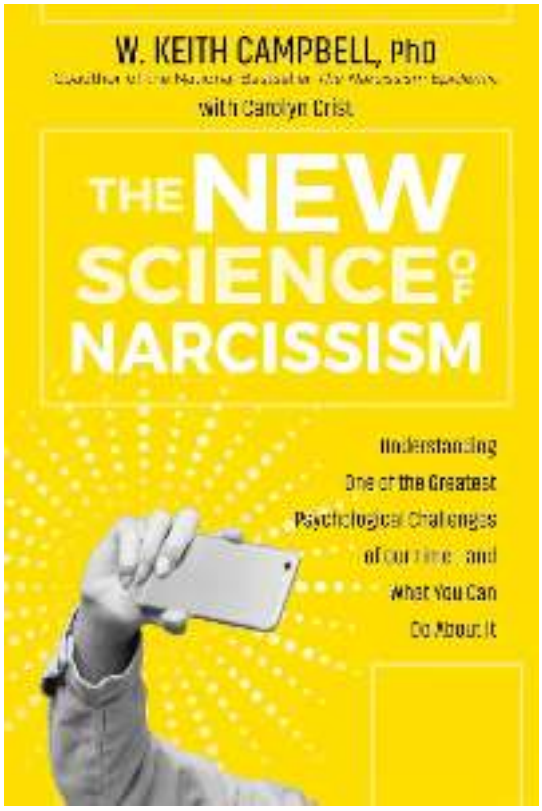
So, which traits should you borrow from psychopaths?

That's what Kevin Dutton does: he lists *what* traits you should borrow from psychopaths, and how you can go about developing them within yourself.

Also read:

- **Why psychopaths get laid more** (and why they fail more, too)
- **The psychopath's modus operandi to control women**

2. The New Science of Narcissism



By Keith Campbell

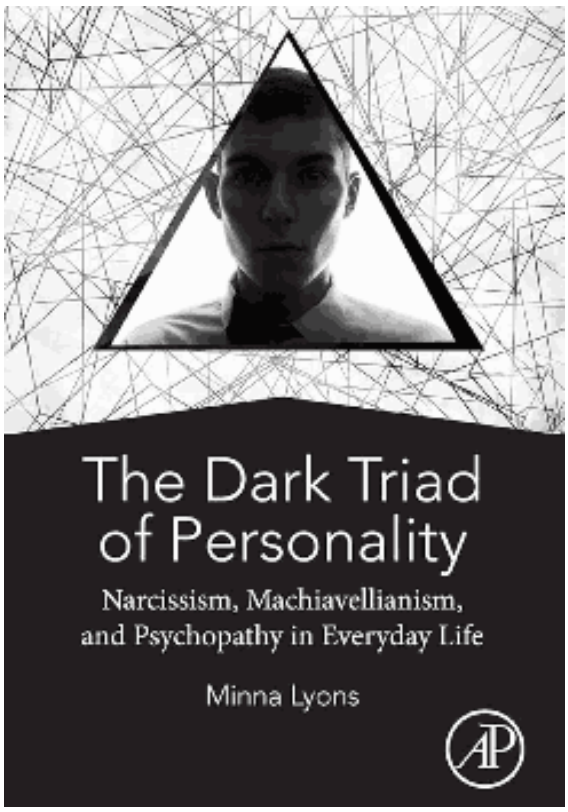
Summary

Dr. Campbell is one of the leading researchers in Narcissism, making this book a bridge between dry academia and captivating non-fiction.

If you want to go with more empirical work, go for *The Handbook of Trait Narcissism*. But for most readers, *The New Science of Narcissism* is a fantastic primer.

Crucially, Campbell also includes the *advantages* of narcissism, making it a standout among most books that focus on *victims* of narcissism.

1. The Dark Triad of Personality



As a website that values empirical evidence, we had to have this book.

It's not the only book written by a psychologist or scientist on this list. But it's one of the very few available scientific textbooks on the dark triad (and until 2026, it was the only).

So expect a "less entertaining read" on this one :).
But if you want what the research literature shows us about the dark triad, this is your book.

Bonus to Learn the Skills: Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Overview | Reviews

Technically, this is a course rather than a book.

But if your goal is not just to *understand* dark triad psychology, but to apply the research-backed insights ethically

and effectively, Power University is our most structured resource.

Unlike single-author books that focus on one trait (psychopathy, narcissism, or Machiavellianism), the course integrates findings from personality psychology, social strategy research, status dynamics, and behavioral science into a coherent framework.

The goal is not to turn you into a dark triad personality.
It is to help you:

- Recognize dark-triad strategies in others
- Borrow the effective traits
- Avoid the self-sabotaging traits

Because the format includes video examples, case breakdowns, quizzes, and applied exercises, many readers find it easier to internalize than standalone books.

The guiding philosophy is simple:
Learn the full playbook. Use it ethically. Win without becoming destructive.

Read alumni's reviews here.

Change Log: New Entries & Exits

We continuously update our foundational lists of best books to provide our readers with the latest and best resources.
Here's what we added and removed, and why:

Added

- *Who is Michael Ovitz* (23.02.2024) as one of the best accounts on how some potentially dark triad traits can lead to business success
- *Machiavelli's Principles* (2025), because of our positive readers' feedback: a much-needed counterweight to naive self-help

Removed

- *Psychopath Free* (03.03.2025), a great book for understanding how potentially sadistic 'predatories of love' win over affection and discard, but it focuses on a single, second-hand case. We favored books with more empirical evidence and broader applicability
- *The 48 Laws of Power* (03.03.2025), a valid primer on power and manipulation dynamics, but many laws are too low-power to properly reflect dark triad psychology
- *The Art of Seduction* (03.03.2025), a great book, but its seducer types do not represent how most dark triads actually operate. Especially not in the modern world
- *Trust Me, I'm Lying* (03.03.2025) perfect valid book on Machiavellian strategies, only removed to keep the list streamlined and balanced across all three dark-triad subtypes

Further reading:

- **Best books on narcissism**
- **Best Red Pill Books**
- **Best books about power**

- **Best psychology books to understand human behavior**

The Mating Mind: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Mating Mind (2000) is an evolutionary psychology text in which Geoffrey Miller, the author, lays out a novel theory for human mind evolution.
Miller, with intelligent analysis and convincing argumentation, makes the case that the human mind is a fitness indicator that evolved through sexual selection.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- Review

Overview

- Our minds didn't develop as survival machines—or only as survival machines—but as courtship machines
- The mind's most expressive qualities are like a peacock's tail: evolved to entertain and attract mates while parading high fitness
- Our minds evolved through sexual selection.

Notes

About The Author:
Geoffrey Miller is an American evolutionary psychologist and psychology professor at the University of New Mexico.
Miller is one of my favorite authors and can be seen as a bit of a maverick in the world of academia, but one should take into account the "stuffiness" of the academic world. There have been some controversies, but when I dug deeper, he had not really said anything controversial. The way I see it, some people get roiled too easily when they seek what's true rather than what's convenient.

Why Our Brains Evolved With Sexual Selection

The author states that our brains are simply too complex and costly to have evolved randomly or for survival.

There are only two ways a trait can develop: sexual selection or survival selection.
Survival selection is not very apt at explaining our brains.

Direct sexual selection for mental faculties offers a superior explanation for the emergence and maintenance of our large brains.

Once we started developing language, humans had a direct way of assessing mental abilities, and thought itself became subject to sexual selection.

Miller even says:

> During human evolution, sexual selection seems to have shifted its primary target from body to mind.

Our Brains Didn't Originally Offer Great Survival Advantages

A hundred thousand years ago, our ancestors were already anatomically just like us.

Yet they didn't invent agriculture, civilization, or any advanced weaponry.
Obviously, our mind was not such a huge instant game changer when it came to survival.

And what our mind is uniquely good at just doesn't help us survive.
What use is humor, art, storytelling, or flowery language?

Furthermore, many traits that offer a clear survival advantage repeat over and over across species -eyes, claws, sharp teeth, etc.-. This is called "convergent evolution", and yet we don't see any sign of convergence towards a human brain.

Our human mind is unique, and sexual selection, fickle and unpredictable, perfectly explains its emergence.

Language Is Our Dancing Rituals

Many species' courtship is based on singing or choreographical dances.

Humans also dance or sing, but far more common is speaking.
Language is humans' ritual courtship dance.

Instead of selecting mates based on the display of dance moves, tails, or songs, we started selecting each other based on ideas, stories, humor, and conversational skills.
Which, in turn, were just another indicator of mental faculties and overall fitness.

If you think about it, what do men and women mostly do when they first meet?
They talk.
And they assess each largely based on what each says and how they say it.

Sexual Selection: Female Pick Or Male Fighting?

Darwin saw two different processes for sexual selection:

1. Male competition for female "possession"
2. Selection by choosy females

In either case, sexual competition sometimes does not benefit the species as a whole.
Says Miller:

> Nature shaped animals for exhausting sexual competition that may be of little benefit to the species as a whole.

Runaway Sexual Selection: An Imperfect Explanation For Our Brain

Runaway sexual selection happens when females start selecting for a specific trait and the male population quickly undergoes significant changes to adapt to female sexual choice.

With runaway selection, traits that become maladaptive from a survival point of view can occur (think of antlers' horns or peacock's tails).

Sexual selection can start randomly, and it's the fuel that drives the species to change and diverge.

Says Miller:

> Suppose you take a dozen species of ape that lived in social groups in Africa about ten million years ago and apply runaway sexual selection.
> One species might develop a runaway preference for large muscles, and turn into gorillas.

> Another species might develop a runaway preference for constant sex, and turn into bonobos. A third species might develop a runaway preference for creative intelligence, and turn into us.

When we accept the theory of runaway selection questions like “why are we the only intelligent species” make no sense anymore.
It’s like asking the lottery winner why he won.

Problems With Runaway Selection

We do not have enough fossil evidence to support the runaway process VS a slower process like ordinary survival selection, and Miller goes on to raise a few questions that the runaway process still leaves open.

For example, runaway sexual selection usually produces differences between males and females, and IQ is the same for men and women.

However, one might argue that propensities differ, with men far more likely to produce and amass works of art, literature, music, or status symbols.
Says Miller:

> A strong version of this theory might suggest that human culture has been dominated by males because human culture is mostly courtship effort, and all male mammals invest more energy in courtship. Male humans paint more pictures, record more jazz albums, write more books (…)

Miller also takes into account that culture has also contributed to inhibiting females’ expressions of art.

Overall, Miller says, the current evidence does not support a strong version of the runaway brain theory.
But, at the same time, it also does not support any theory of male sexual competition through toolmaking, or group warfare as the driving force behind the mind’s evolution.

Why Sexual Selection Explains Our Mind Despite Lack of Dimorphism

When female sexual selection starts selecting for a certain trait, there usually begins a divergence between males and females.

Think of the lion’s mane, the peacock’s tail, or the singing of some birds and frogs.

But there are three possible explanations for the mind having stayed similar in both men and women:

1. **Genetic correlation**: in the long run sex differences would evolve, but in the short run both sexes can see an increase in ornamentation
2. **Sexual choosiness for high intelligence requires high intelligence**: there is probably lots of genetic overlap between the ability to produce attractive sexual displays and the ability to appreciate them. This overlap can explain why the intellectual differences between men and women are much smaller than, say, long tails in birds (more research is needed here, for example, to shame that the same genes are involved for cultural production and assessment)
3. **Mutual choice**: most of human evolution happens in long-term relationships because short-term ones do not often lead to pregnancies. And when it comes to the long term, men are equally choosy. Thus, the selection for intelligence might have been a mutual one

However, if it was a question of mutual choice, then the runaway brain theory is not the right one to explain human intelligence.

The Human Mind As Fitness Indicator

Fitness is the propensity to survive and reproduce successfully and it’s determined in large part by an individual’s

genetic quality.

High genetic quality usually means low mutations, because mutations are shots in the dark and most shots in the dark miss.

How can a female -or a male, for that matter-, assess the genetic fitness of an individual?
Well, some traits reveal more genetic information than others, and often these traits are the sexual ornaments that evolve as fitness indicators.

The human mind, with its incredibly high complexity, makes for a wonderful fitness indicator.
It's a simple idea: the more complex it is, the easier it is to mess it up. And if functions well, that's a big vote of trust for the brain's owner fitness.

And once sexual selection puts the brain in its crosshairs, the brain is helpless to resist: it has to play the game, take risks, and invest in more and more complexity (i.e., smarter and smarter). Those who weren't able to prove mental fitness died out, together with their small, efficient, risk-averse, and mutation-proof brains (mutation-proof because the smaller and simpler it is, the less likely it is to develop dangerous mutations).

It's just like the chimp's testes or human female boobs: bigger testes and boobs are not good for natural selection. But they are the tools of the mating game, and those who want to play must play along with the game's rules.

The Handicap Principle

The handicap principle states that for a fitness indicator to be reliable, it must tax the organism.

If it's not costly and resource-demanding for the organism, then it can easily be faked, and it wouldn't be a reliable indicator.

The human mind is very costly to maintain.
Writes Miller:

> The brain's costs are what make it a good fitness indicator. Sexual selection made our brains wasteful, if not wasted: it transformed a small, efficient ape-style brain into a huge, energy- hungry handicap spewing out luxury behaviors like conversation, music, and art.

The Ornament Theory of The Human Mind

Miller goes on to describe how sexual ornaments help win mates by leveraging sensory bias.

The human mind can also touch pleasure centers in other humans.
In an era when television and movies had not yet been invented, more entertaining men were more attractive to women.
Women wanted to spend more time with men who could tell elaborate stories or make them laugh.

Men who created better art and paintings, weaved, and wore better clothes and body paintings were more successful than women.
We can still see it today.

However, by itself, the ornament theory is not enough to explain the evolution of our brains.

Miller says we must put all three theories together to come up with a solid theory and understanding of the human mind's evolution.

Towards An Integrated Theory for Human Mind's Evolution

Here are the three theories Miller introduced:

- Runaway selection (women started selecting for high intelligence)

- Indicator of overall health (fitness indicator)
- Sensory bias (brain-related functions such as speech and art also happen to be entertaining and/or exciting)

The three of them are not separated anyway.

Fitness indicators also tend to become more ornamental because the sensory bias of the female shapes the ornaments to a certain aesthetic, while traits that started off as runaway ornaments tend to acquire value as fitness indicators because beautiful ornaments tend to be costly to produce.

Sexual Selection: The VC of Evolution

One of the big questions of evolutionary psychology is how complex organs can come to exist.

For example, how can you develop an eye when an eye is composed of so many interdependent pieces?
What use is a retina without a cornea or a pupil?

Why would individuals start developing a retina without all the other components already in place?

Miller says that sexual innovation might favor early development simply because it looks sexy and works like a good fitness indicator.

So, for example, the first prototype wings were useless, but they looked cool. And so sexual selection pushed towards longer and longer wings.
Until they finally also served for survival purposes.

Sure, most of those evolutions will bring no benefit, and some of them will revert back and disappear.
But some will turn out to be useful and will push evolution forward.

The human mind might have evolved the same way.
Started out with sexual selection and then proved to be a huge boon for survival as well, bringing us to the apex species on earth.

How We Evolved: Female Choice, Natural Pair-Bonds, & Little Male Help

To estimate what dating and mating were like in our Pleistocene past, we need to gather data from three different sources:

- Sexual behavior of other primates
- Sexual behavior of modern humans still living as hunter-gatherers
- Sexual selection evidence in modern humans, both in body shape and human psychology

Since to conceive it takes more or less 3 months of regular sex, very short-term partnerships have been less significant in our evolution.
Longer-term partnerships have been more important from an evolutionary point of view.

Lifelong monogamy was probably very rare; polygyny was probably the exception, and serial monogamy dotted with more or less rare flings and affairs was probably the norm.

Powerful Female Mate Choice

Females exercised strong power in mate choice.
Harassment was probably relatively common, but females could curb it and retaliate through family, friends (including female friends), male partners, and relatives.

There was no jail time for killing an abusive partner, a stalker, or a psychopath.

Hidden ovulation also increased female power and power of choice (see: the sexual arms race and the tools of warfare).

And once language evolved, it also served as a tool for policing against harassment, rape, or illicit affairs.

But men also chose their partners; the fact that both men and women evolved distinctive sexual ornaments proves that both genders exercise choice.

Fathers' Help Was Spotty, But Helpful

Male hominids probably did little fathering.

However, that fathering might have increased as human children started taking longer and longer to fully develop. With children's long-lasting vulnerability, it made more sense for men to assist their offspring rather than seek new mates.

Women likely had boyfriends, but the boyfriends might not have been the fathers of any of her children, or only of her last child.

But that might have also helped increase male parental investment.
Paternal effort may have evolved through sexual choice as a courtship effort, such as: when men attracted women by pleasing their kids.
Because if a woman's child didn't like the pursuer, chances are she would have stayed with the children.

However, Miller ends up saying that the role of men as fathers and household contributors is still spotty.
There are some signs that men have also been selected for being good fathers, but more research is needed.

The Myth of Male Protection

Women likely didn't need that much protection from men.

Against predators, men have virtually no advantage over women. A mere 10% more physical size and 20% more weight make little difference.
They may be more accurate at throwing things, but the odds are still heavily stacked against any human individual when facing a saber-toothed tiger or a charging rhino.

When it comes to defending against other humans, a woman would have been safer among dozens of other women than in mixed groups or married to a man without any social support group.

Men might have actually been a burden at times.
Says Miller:

> Interviews with contemporary hunter-gatherer women by anthropologists such as Marjorie Shostak reveal that these women view many men as more trouble than they're worth.

However, exceptions are made for high-fit men:

> If they have very high fitness, then their good genes, good sex, and good conversation might compensate for their messiness and lethargy. But if they are only average, their potential for sexual jealousy and violent irritability may render them a net cost

However, I found one source describing Shostak as a feminist, which makes her opinion here possibly biased.

Youth Matters Less When There Is No Socially Sanctioned Monogamy

Miller says that age matters less when there is no strict monogamy, like in our evolutionary past.

If the relationship was likely to end within a few years, it mattered little whether she was 30 or 10 years away from menopause.
Sure, age still correlated with fertility, but the simple fact that she was still alive, and possibly with children, boded

well for her fitness level and parenting skills.

Sexual & Social Discrimination Systems Are Sensitive to Stimulation Yet Resistant: Orgasms and Humor

Whenever we see a human perceptual or cognitive ability that is sensitive to the stimulation but not to *all* stimulation, we can infer that it's a tool for sexual or social discrimination.

Orgasms, for example, are not always easy for women, which might make them a tool for selecting certain types of men who have enough energy and are kind enough to take their time.

Humor is the same: a good sense of humor discriminates and is designed to find partners of a similar or higher level of intelligence.

Human morality has been sexually selected

Both men and women love kind partners.

Many authors explained human morality as either a side effect of nepotism (W. D. Hamilton, 1964) or as reciprocity (see "*The Origins of Virtue*").

Both are very valid theories and probably both nepotism and reciprocity shaped our morals and ethics.
But they still leave out plenty of unexplained behavior. Charity donations, for example, moral leadership, sexual fidelity, or sportsmanship.
Miller goes more in-depth on charity donations and why they don't fit the kinship and nepotistic models, and I couldn't agree more with him.

For too long these tendencies have been swept under the carpet, and now the evidence has become too strong to deny.
As Miller says:

> Human kindness is becoming accepted as an adaptation to be explained rather than a myth to be ridiculed.

So, how to explain it?

Miller instead says that morality, kindness, and altruism possibly evolved thanks to sexual selection.

Natural selection might at times favor selfishness, but natural selection is impotent if sexual selection starts selecting for kindness and altruism.
Miller says that courtship behaviors that displayed kindness and altruism -hunting- won out over courtship behavior that was neutral -showing off- or aggressive -fighting and hurting other contenders- because the altruistic courtship tribes won against the selfish ones.

It sounds like group selection, but it's not: every single individual is still acting selfishly. But the selfish act just happens to benefit others instead of either adding no value or hurting them.

My Note:
I was surprised that Miller didn't mention that kindness also signaled the potential for higher male parental investment.

The fact that kindness is a trait used for sexual positioning is also the reason why it's difficult to go against political correctness.
If a researcher were to say for example that intelligence is important, different among people, and heritable, that could be misconstrued as the researcher being unkind and asocial.

Moral Leadership

Frans de Waal's research among chimpanzees showed that the alpha male ape Yeroen remained in power thanks to his social intelligence and *his ability to foster peace and harmony*.

That means that we have common ancestors for whom status based on leadership became a viable alternative.

Again, this makes sense when we look at evolution from a wider angle and not because women preferred good leadership "because it's good".
Females might have developed a preference for psychopathic leaders who rule out pure violence.
But they would have likely lost against groups where virtuous and cooperative leadership increased group effectiveness.

Humans took it one step further.
Says Miller:

> Where chimpanzees evolved moral leadership, humans evolved the more advanced capacity of moral vision, including the passionate articulation of social ideals concerning justice, freedom, and equality. **Moral vision is sexually attractive, and may have been generated by sexual selection.**

Also read:

> Why Psychopaths Get Laid More

Morals: Another Tool to Fight The Sexual Conflict?

I particularly loved Miller's take on morals.

Miller notes first that any overt display of fitness indicators breaks all of our moral values.

He says:

> Loudly advertising one's fitness violates our values of humility, decorum, and tact.

Why is it so?

Well, Miller says that it's because morals were purposefully invented to discourage the too-obvious parading of fitness indicators.

He says:

> Human norms and values developed as reactions to patterns of natural human behavior that we decided should be discouraged.
> If a great deal of human behavior consists of advertising one's fitness, and if many ways of doing that impose social costs on others, and if moral norms develop to minimize social costs, then a lot of moral norms should be aimed directly against the irresponsible use of fitness indicators.
> (…)
> They emerged as moral instincts and cultural inventions to combat the excesses of sexual self-advertisement and sexual competition.

Personally, I think that morals can function as a civilizing force.
Check out this forum entry for the discussion.

Art & The New Sexual Game That is Modern Art

An artistic vein likely helped our artistic ancestors mate more than plain men with no artistic taste.

However, looking at art today would be misleading because modern art has changed the game.

The art that made our ancestors successful was folk aesthetics, not modern art.
Modern art has been usurped by the elites to play their own social and sexual mating games.
Write Miller:

> With folk aesthetics, the focus is on the art-object as a display of the creator's craft.
> **With elite aesthetics, the focus is on the viewer's response as a social display.**
> (…) as a verbal display in its own right. Elite aesthetics follow the same signaling principles as sexual selection, but follow them in cultural direction specifically designed to contrast against folk aesthetics.
> Elites, free to enjoy all manner of costly and wasteful display, often try to distinguish themselves from the common run of humanity by replacing natural human tastes with artfully contrived preferences.
> But to an evolutionary psychologist, the beauty that ordinary people find in ordinary ornamental and representational art says far more about art's origins.

When an average visitor to a modern art museum says "even a child could do that", he is actually saying that he cannot discern the ability of the artist from the painting he is seeing.
Modern art does not work nearly as well as a fitness indicator.

Yes, modern art is all a big game, and Trump said the same in "*The Art of The Deal*").

More Wisdom

- **Evolutionary psychology must look at differences, not just similarities**

Some authors, like Steven Pinker and John Tooby, said that evolutionary psychology should focus on human universals.
It's a good rule of thumb for survival adaptations, but it overlooks sexually selected adaptations that evolved specifically to advertise individual differences in fitness, health, and intelligence.

- **Sexual VS Natural selection: survival of the fittest is misleading**

Surviving is evolutionary useless without reproduction.
Heritable differences in reproductive ability are as important in evolution as heritable differences in survival ability.

And that's why sexual selection is stronger -if not stronger- than natural selection.
Of course, though, the two are often not opposite to each other but overlap. Sexually selected traits are most frequently also fitness indicators ((Fisher's intuition) and often, but not always, also provide a survival advantage.

- **Sexual selection in between natural and artificial selection**

Some biology students are taught sexual selection as a subset of natural selection.
But that's wrong, and that's not even how Darwin thought of sexual selection. Darwin saw sexual selection as an autonomous process that was midway between natural and artificial selection.

- **Sexual selection happens in Long Term Relationships**

Much of the focus of dating is on shorter-term sexual relationships.
Yet, true evolution is more likely to happen in longer-term bonding because short-term sex rarely leads to pregnancies.

- **Psychology missed the train on sexual selection**

Not only have 20th-century social sciences missed the boat on human nature and psychology, but evolutionary psychology is still missing the boat of sexual selection in humans.

Major evolutionary psychology works such as Pinker's "*How The Mind Works*" and David Buss's textbook "*Evolutionary Psychology*" both explain most of the mind's adaptation through natural selection.

- **Physical strength is not synonymous with fitness**

Physical strength is not synonymous with fitness, because the energy and investment of muscles can easily produce fewer offspring than an investment in the brain, larger testicles, or even fat reserves.

- **Our ancestors' life was boring more than dangerous**

Contrary to the popular belief that our ancestors lived a highly dangerous, busy life, Miller says that our ancestors probably had more leisure time than we had.
Men went out hunting, often unsuccessfully, while women successfully gathered food.

Sure, predators were around, but they weren't a constant and endless danger and our ancestors got used to it like we are used to the traffic and city life.
Our ancestors lived some of the longest lives in the animal kingdom, suggesting that the daily risk of death was minuscule.

Like most other apes, our ancestors didn't worry about daily survival, but about social and sexual problems.

- **Sexual selection does not require polygyny**

Females do all the choosing and a few males monopolizing reproduction makes sexual selection move faster.
But polygyny is not a necessity because even in perfect monogamy higher fitness individuals pick each other, and their offspring survive at a higher rate.

- **Female want heritable fitness, and resources are an indicator**

Miller says that Buss has amassed plenty of evidence that women prefer high status, high income, and high resources men.

But while Buss interpreted his data as women evolving to prefer good providers to support their families, Miller believes that, albeit those traits correlated with male material benefits, they also correlate with heritable fitness.
And women more likely evolved looking for heritable fitness more than material benefits.
If the same traits can then work both as fitness indicators and wealth indicators, all the better.

- **Freud got it wrong: it's not children wanting sex with parents, it's about fitness indicators**

Miller notes that social relationships are similar to dating: we still put our best foot forward and seek the best friends we can get.

The same happens between children and parents: children want to advertise fitness so that the parents keep investing in them.
That's what Freud got wrong: he noticed flirtatious behavior between children and parents and thought it was and inferred it was because of the child's secret desire to have sex with relatives.
But that would make no evolutionary sense: it's most likely because children are seeking parental investment.

- **Winner takes all and male risks**

Men developed according to a higher-risk strategy than females.

Men all have higher birth defects, higher infant death, higher mortality and any age, earlier senescence, and greater variation in health, strength, size, and intelligence.

The risky strategy suggests that male competition is a higher-risk, higher-reward game.
Men at the top of the hierarchy reproduced a lot more than average men, while men at the bottom reproduced very little or not at all.

- **Runaway sexual selection produces differences among humans**

Even within the same species, runaway sexual selection can produce differences between groups, ethnicities, or races.

This should be obvious to anyone who has traveled and can recognize different faces among different ethnicities.

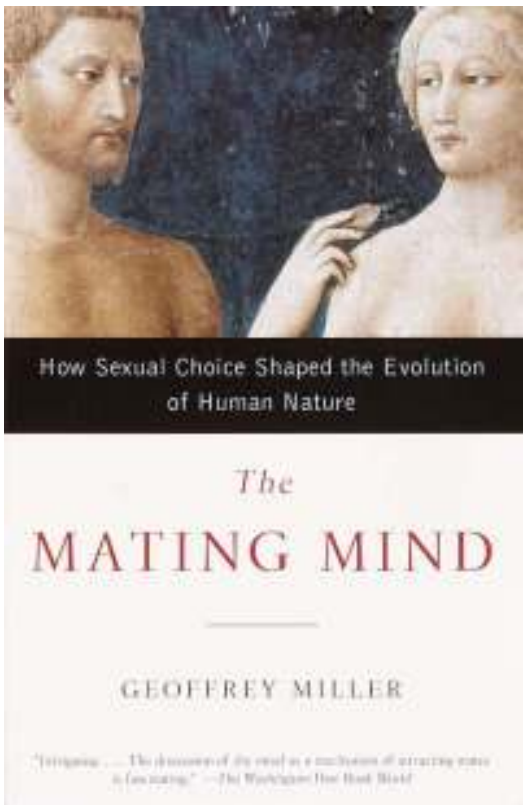
- **The evolution of the penis**

Male genitals evolved equally for effectively carrying sperm and under female sexual selection pressure.

Penises likely did not evolve for carrying sperm though, because sperm competition correlates much more strongly with testicles' sizes.

Length or thickness is not crucial in sperm's war. A thick penis might "trap" a competitor's sperm during copulation while a long one might overshoot the cervical opening rather than meet it accurately (Also see: *Sperm Wars review*).

Some authors espoused the belief that penis size was a tool for males against male competition, but I agree with Miller when he says that makes little sense.



Quotes

On sexual selection trumping survival selection:

> Those proto-humans that did not attract sexual interest did not become our ancestors, no matter how good they were at surviving.

On evolution making us hungry, not happy:

> Evolution's job is to motivate us, not to satisfy us.

On entertainment, often provided by our mind, being more important than war and competition in the history of our evolution:

> I am making a different pitch, for romantic comedy as the genre least likely to mislead us, if we think of h u m a n evolution as a narrative. My rationale is that in action, war, and intrigue, people mostly just die. But in romantic comedy, people sometimes get pregnant.

Fitness like a secret Swiss bank account:

> Fitness is like money in a secret Swiss bank account. You may know how much you have, but nobody else can find out directly. If they ask the bank, the bank will not tell them. If they ask you, you might lie. If they are willing to mate with you if your capital exceeds a certain figure, you may be especially tempted to lie.

On the idiocy of thinking about the brain as a "computational machine" for survivability:

> As long as you ignore most of human life, the computer metaphor is terrific.

I was surprised to see Miller using the term "patriarchy", but he makes a great point on the myth of male protection:

> Female hominids seem unlikely to have displayed the exaggerated physical vulnerability expected of women under patriarchy.
> When you picture ancestral females facing predators, do not imagine Marilyn Monroe whimpering and cowering. Imagine Steffi Graf brandishing a torch in place of a tennis racket.

Some authors speculated that sexual differences work as a "species recognition marker", such as tools to help animals recognize they belong to the same species.
Miller obviously doesn't believe that's the case, and he ironizes:

> This viewpoint implies that the hours of mutual conversation during human courtship are likewise nothing more than a way for us to tell that the other individual is a human rather than a chimpanzee.

On the same techniques of sexual selection used for socialization and family relationships:

> We should not expect to see fitness indicators used exclusively after puberty and before menopause, only that they are then directed at different targets.

On sperm competition not being a very important aspect in the penis' evolution:

> If sperm competition were the driving force behind penis evolution, males might have evolved scary-looking flagellated genitals. Men would copulate by inserting their equipment, instantly flooding the cervix with half a pint of semen, and then lying on top of the woman for the next three days to make sure no rivals have the chance to introduce competing sperm. I understand that such behavior is quite rare.

On orgasm as a tool for sexual selection:

> Surely, sexual selection theory offers insight into this ancient h u m a n mystery. Female orgasm seems poorly designed as a pair-bonding mechanism, but it is perfectly designed as a discriminatory system that separates

> the men from the boys.

On art as just another tool for sexual selection. This part was hilarious, I hope Geoffrey Miller allows me to quote it (and shorten it a bit) because it truly deserves some more publicity:

> If you could interview a male Satin Bowerbird for Artforum magazine, he might say something like this:
>
> *"I cannot remember when I first developed this raging thirst to present richly saturated color fields within a monumental yet minimalist stage-set, but I feel connected to something beyond myself when I indulge these passions. When I see a beautiful orchid high in a tree, I simply must have it for my own. When I see a single shell out of place in my creation, I must put it right.*
> *Birds-of-paradise may grow lovely feathers, but there is no aesthetic mind at work there, just a body's brute instinct.*
> *It is a happy coincidence that females sometimes come to my gallery openings and appreciate my work, but it would be an insult to suggest that I create in order to procreate. We live in a post-Freudian, post-modernist era in which crude sexual meta-narratives are no longer credible as explanations of our artistic impulses."*
>
> Fortunately, bowebirds cannot talk, so we are free to use sexual selection to explain their work, without them begging to differ.

On morality:

> Any good evolutionary theory of h u m a n morality must convert the apparent costs of helping others into a realistic benefit to one's genes.
> Saints are literally one in a million. They may be instructive as moral ideals, but they are statistically irrelevant.

On the phenomenon of "anonymous donors":

> I suspect that few male millionaires keep their charitable donations secret from their wives and mistresses.

On altruism:

> Human altruism is not an evolutionary paradox. It is a sexual ornament.

CONS

The Mating Mind is a top evolutionary psychology books.
There are no real cons, just a few notes:

- **Runaway sexual selection can go both ways with our brains?**

Miller says that if our brain evolved with runaway selection, then it was too slow.
It's possible we had "bursts" of runaway selection, but that would beg the question of why they all went towards increased brain size since runaway sexual selection is not biased in any direction.

However, I don't see why once a species is moving towards more intelligent not "randomly" women would start selecting for stupidity.
It doesn't add up.
I don't think "up" or "down", "increase" or "decrease" is as random as Miller presents them to be.

- **Randomness doesn't have to *look* random**

When discussing the runaway selection of the human mind, the author seems to expect randomness to "look" random.
But randomness can equally look neatly organized, especially when we're talking about a few bursts only (on "random bias" see more with Taleb, Kahnemann, and Thaler).

- **Men not helping each other?**

The author seems to see no reason for the "patriarchy" to exist because that would mean helping out other male competitors, and that makes no evolutionary sense.
He says:

> Men often bully women into silence, but this is usually to make room for their own verbal display. If men were dominating public language just to maintain patriarchy, that would qualify as a puzzling example of evolutionary altruism

I disagree here.
Keeping women away from power helps average men because independent women are -or, at least, feel- like a threat to average men since those said women wouldn't need those men.
And since most people cluster around the average, a concerted effort to keep women down is -or, at least, feels- like a win for most men.

The patriarchy is not a concerted, conscious effort, but it can be the net result of countless individuals acting on their own accord, for their own interest (see Ghodsee, 2018)

- **Reminder: it's a speculative theory**

Miller is the first to say so, and kudos to him.

Workman and Reader in their *intro to evolutionary psychology* also list Miller's theory, and they say:

Miller's hypothesis is controversial, not least since there are many pressures that might lead to women being artistically less productive than men (time spent childrearing, being economically disadvantaged, having different societal expectations)
However, as with the other two hypotheses, it is not clear whether the use of language as a way of attracting a potential mate was an original causal factor in the development of language, or whether it was something that appeared after language evolved. The peacock's tail, for example, would originally have evolved for functional reasons (functional that is in terms of natural selection) before sexual selection distorted it beyond recognition. Likewise, language might have originally appeared for reasons other than to impress potential mates, with sexual selection only acting upon it later.

Review

The Mating Mind presents a thought-provoking theory for the evolution of human intelligence and, at least some elements of it, appear to be plausible and logical in lieu of dating and seduction dynamics.

I also loved Miller's approach: he invites the readers to think with their own minds, clearly preface what's data-driven and what's speculation, and he is the first one to challenge his own hypothesis instead of trying to "sell them" to the readers.

This is what we need more of.

Highly recommended!

Also, check out:

> Best Evolutionary Psychology Books

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Attraction Explained: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 October 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Attraction Explained (2015) is an evidence-based dating book. It digs deeply into science and research to debunk dating cliches and provide readers with what really works in love and dating.
It focuses particularly on factors such as appearance, personality, geography, and similarity.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- More Dating Wisdom
- Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Self-help dating books damage readers more than help
- The best predictor of a relationship is physical proximity
- Repeated exposures increase liking
- Appearances matter, but both male shallowness and “female depth” have been overblown
- There is a whole host of traits that are attractive in the sexual marketplace, including kindness and warmth
- Kindness and warmth make others feel like we are also more physically attractive
- Liking is mutual, and that’s why “feigning disinterest” often backfires
- Similarity is one of the strongest predictors of relationship formation

Full Summary

About The Author:
Viren Swami is a Professor of Social Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University in the UK. He focused his studies and research on attraction and body image.

Dating Books Harm More Than Help

Arlie Hochschild conducted an analysis of the best-selling dating books for women published between 1970 and 1990.

She concluded that not only do they don’t help, but they actually harm readers. Under the guise of fake egalitarianism and gender equality, they harm the reader by encouraging:

- Emotional distance
- Denial of emotional needs
- Encouraging distrust of others
- Being self-reliant at all times instead of investing in social relationships

Writes the author:

> Rather than expecting to give or receive love from other human beings, the postmodern cowgirl devotes herself to emotional control, forever distrustful of others with whom she might have relationships.

Hochschild talks about the "abduction of feminism" and taking the movement down the wrong path.

And she is not the only (female) researcher to look into dating books for women.
Rebecca Hazleden's analysis of the fourteen bestselling relationship manuals published between 1981 and 2000 reached the same conclusion. By encouraging self-sufficiency and self-love at the detriment of social bonds, the books, she concluded, prepare readers to be "utterly isolated, cast adrift in a loveless world".

My Note:
This is something I have often said in my article and analysis as well, thus I wholeheartedly agree.
It's the same that's happening in some fringes of male dating self-help, by the way, and not just the females. See "*The Rational Male*", "*The Red Pill*" and "growing beyond the red pill".

David Machin and Joanna Thornborrow analyzed the Cosmopolitan dating section and came to the same conclusion.
Cosmopolitan presents the guise of a "fun fearless female", but those women are still alone.
If dating is about finding someone, then these resources hardly help.

Pick-Up Artistry For Men

Viren Swami reviews the birth and development of the dating industry for men, from Ross Jeffries "NLP seductions" to Neil Strauss' "*The Game*" to "*The Mystery Method*".

He asks if there is any truth in the "science" and psychology of the early pick-up artists, and his answer is "no".

And some of the tips, like "negging" seem to fly in the face of actual science.

OK, no science, but do they work at least?
Swani says there is no real evidence. Plenty of personal stories and anecdotal evidence, but no real data.
And anecdotes of failures are easy to find as the successful ones.

The author says that the high incidence of misogyny and *manipulation*, both rampant in the pick-up industry, does not bode well for relationships.

Complexity Reigns Supreme

First of all, says the author, humans are complex.

There are no "laws of seduction" as much as there are no "*laws of power*" or "*laws of human nature*".

Moods, situations, and personalities all render socialization and dating very hard to predict and, as for anything human, very difficult to generalize.

Playing Hard to Get Doesn't Work Because People Prefer Partners Who Like Them

Why does playing hard to get doesn't work?

Because liking begets liking.

One person's liking for another usually predicts the other person's liking in return.

And the opposite is true.
Psychologists have shown that criticism is damaging to relationships, and spurning is similar.

That's why playing hard to get often backfires: plenty of research shows that vagueness and stand-offishness won't get you very far.

Of course, simply telling someone you like them does not magically make them like you.
We don't live in that type of world.
The reciprocity effect is influenced by suspicion of second motives, how "exclusive" that liking is, the costs and risks of our compliment, and how much they already like us.

I will quote the author here because I just couldn't agree more:

> (…) expressing liking for someone is a symbolic act of investment in the relationship.
> (…)
> In turn, these expressions of attraction lead to trust, which generates even more attraction.
> When we believe someone is trustworthy, we're much more likely to want to interact with that person in the future, simply because we believe those interactions are going to be beneficial.
> **In short, expressing liking leads to attraction and feelings of trust, which in turn leads to greater attraction.**

In both my experience and opinion, that's spot and exactly the case.
But there are some benefits if women play the "hard to get" strategy smartly.
Read:

- **How to properly play "hard to get"**

Also read:

- **The myth of men enjoying the chase**
- **How to delay sex without rejecting him**
- **Common female dating mistakes**

Similarity Works

People are much more likely to form relationships when they share common attitudes, values, beliefs, and demographics.

People also tend to form relationships with partners whose overall attractiveness matches their own, which is called "assortative mating" in psychology.
Couples are also much more likely to form when there is a similarity in sociodemographic characteristics.

Watch out for dissimilarity though, because the opposite is also true: dissimilarity breeds dislike.
We tend to assume that people share similar attitudes, and when we find out they don't, we come to dislike them.

Appearances Matter. And They Matter to Both Genders

The standard view is that men are all about appearances and women more about their status, resources, and power.

But the author challenges the stereotype and, with an obvious dig at "*Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*", says that men and women are not from different planets and are more similar than most would expect.

Viren Swami says that for hypothetical situations, there is plenty of data showing that men value physical attractiveness more than women do and that women focus more on status and earning prospects.

But hypothetical situations don't always transfer to real life, and in face-to-face, the differences between men and women disappear.

My Note:

The author mentions the "computer dance study" and "speed dating" scenarios.
However, I would make the case that those are very peculiar situations. The computer dance study was based on brief interactions *dancing*, a physical-based activity with brief interactions and little talking and, hence, little information about status (if not the physical attractiveness itself as an indicator of status). All participants were university students, too.
Speed dating, by their very nature, is quick and fleeting as well. And they are self-selected too, because people going to speed dating events, usually, are not the highest caliber mates and it's possible they're willing to compromise.
Telling people that their choice of partner was a very low-status individual might have led to very different outcomes in both men and, even more, women. But that wasn't attempted.

What makes a big difference, says Swami, is whether individuals are looking for casual dating or long-term and committed dating.
Women looking for the short term were more likely to be swayed by attractive looks and placed looks above ambition.

When assessing for long-term ambition became relevant again.

Female's own socio-economic status changes preferences.
The author says that one study found that more financially independent women showed a stronger preference for physical attractiveness over financial prospects.

My Note:
However, I had a different feeling from that study.
I have copied from the abstract of the study:

> Ambition and attractiveness synergistically influenced targets' long-term desirability, and these preferences were not moderated by women's sociosexual orientation.

To me, it sounds like women value ambition quite a bit.
And plenty more studies showed that women in the upper social brackets and women with higher future earning potential both cared *more* about their long-term partner's social status and earning potential (see David Buss' work).

Women who endorse feminist attitudes also placed less importance on their financial firepower and gave more importance to traits such as kindness, understanding, and creativity.

When it comes to short-term flings, both men and women are willing to compromise on intelligence and status, but not on physical attractiveness.

However, keep this in mind:

> Physical attractiveness isn't a static quality and that it can evolve and change depending on the characteristics of the individual as well as the situation they find themselves in.

Attitudes Towards Random Sex: Men & Women Are Not That Different

Men and women have different approaches to free sex.

Clark and Hatfield's study (1989) is the most famous example.
When college men and women went around propositioning for random sex, most men accepted, and all women refused

But Swami says that the study has been overblown.
The differences decrease when the person asking is familiar and attractive, and they disappear when the person is

famous.

My Note:
The author seems to be confused about the issue.
He says that men and women are equally likely to accept sex if the asker is Angelina Jolie or Brad Pitt.
In those cases, both genders are equally likely to say "yes". But here we're back again into the status and power category: Brad Pitt is sky-high in attractiveness, fame, power, status, and income.
That's not a good study to prove that women are similar to men when it comes to casual sex.

To sum it up, says the author:

> Sex differences in responses to casual sex may appear to be larger than they actually are.
> If the right person comes along, the risk is low, and there is the potential for a good night of sex, women and men are equally likely to accept the offer of casual sex.
> And for both women and men, physical attractiveness matters.

Stated Preferences: Not Very Reliable, But Still Matter

Do you know those people with a clear idea about the partner they want?

There are a few of those.
But do they end up with the partners they look for?

Well, they might, but their wish list has little predictive abilities of who they actually end up with.
The match between "ideal mate" and "actual mate" is still associated with better relationship quality and a higher likelihood of staying together.

Why do stated preferences are poor predictors of who we end up with?
Well, part of the reason might be because once we meet someone, we care a bit less about looks and we start digging a personality that we didn't know we could enjoy:

Once The Interaction Started, Appearances Matter Less

Once social interaction is underway the importance of social appearances slightly declines.

OKCupid for example registered that randomly matched people who went out on a date mostly had a good time.
And that was independent of how attractive their partner was.

The same study showed that the best predictor of a follow-up date was not physical attractiveness, but how well the daters got to know their partners.

Nice Guy Stereotype: They Don't (Always) Finish Last

The stereotype is that women *say* they want a nice, but deep down they actually lust after the bad boys.

Is it true?

Well, Urbaniak and Killman actually set out to put that stereotype to the test.

Participants were given a script in which a woman ("Susan") was participating in a game show that resembled aspects of the popular TV game show "The Dating Game."
Susan is presented with the opportunity to date one of two male contestants ("Todd" or "Michael") and must choose between them based on their responses to her questions.

Todd gave answers ranging from typical "nice guy" answers to "tough guy answers", while Michael remained constant and "middle of the road".

For example, to the question about “what it means to be a real man”, “nice Todd” said:

> A real man is someone who is in touch with his feelings and those of his partner. Someone who is kind and attentive and doesn’t go for all that macho stuff. He’s also great in the bedroom and puts his partner’s pleasure first. I’d definitely say I’m a real man.

Middle of the road Todd said:

> A real man knows what he wants and he knows how to get it. Someone who works hard and plays hard, and who is good to the woman he loves. He’s also great in the bedroom. I’d definitely say I’m a real man.

And jerk Todd:

> A real man knows what he wants and he knows how to get it.
> Someone who knows who he is, but keeps other people guessing and on their toes – he doesn’t go in for all that touchy-feely stuff.
> He’s also great in the bedroom and can tell his partner what he likes. I’d definitely say I’m a real man.

Participants were then asked which date Susan should pick and which date they would pick.

Contrary to the stereotype that nice guys are always passed over, it was nice Todd that women chose most frequently both for Susan and for themselves.

In a similar study with dating ads, it was kind men who were picked the most.
Or, more precisely, men who exhibited altruism as a courtship display, using keywords such as “I volunteer at a food bank” or “I enjoy helping people”.

My Note:
This study lends credibility to Miller’s theory of sexual selection of morals, BTW).

In summary, it’s not really that complicated: **When rating hypothetical partners, women seem to prefer men who are easy-going, warm, sensitive – read ‘nice’ – but also confident**.

Needless to say, not all women are the same. Some recommended Todd to Susan and picked the jerk for themselves. But it was a minority.

More Dating Wisdom

- Uncertainty might be used in certain situations to pique interest
- Turn-taking during self-disclosure builds intimacy
- Self-disclosure is mostly effective when partners feel understood and cared for
- Self-disclosure works because it shows a willingness to risk opening up and have an honest and authentic relationship
- For women, “selectively hard to get” works best, ie.: be hard to get for everyone but not for the man you like
- Similarity fosters attraction, and *perceived* similarity seems to be stronger than actual similarity

Quotes

> In fact, the need to know that one’s affections for another will be reciprocated is a common experience among people who have fallen passionately in love.
> Knowing that you have been selected out of all possible suitors and that your liking is reciprocated can be life-

> changing.

Real-Life Applications

Plays fewer games.
Sometimes, less is more.

CONS

- **Some generalizations**

The author writes:

> This isn't to suggest that all pick-up artists are nefarious and perverse. But as a community, pick-up artists are morally, ethically, and – importantly – scientifically bankrupt.

I think that's a rather broad brush with which to paint such a large, disparate, and diversified industry.

- **Sometimes more about debunking than truth?**

Sometimes I get the feeling the author is more about "debunking" this or that than actually getting to the truth.
That might lead to cherry-picking certain studies and ending up with a tainted version of reality.

I felt that way about the "offer for casual sex".
The differences between men and women are extremely stark there and well-grounded in many studies and, well, also in "real life" as we all experience it.
The efforts to show that there was no difference felt out of place.

- **Some out-of-place value-signaling white-knighting**

> Demands for sex, abusive responses to rejection, and dick pics – unsolicited photos of genitals – are all common forms of woman-hating in contemporary dating.

How is a dick pic woman-hating?
It might be stupid, it might be out of place, and in some cases, it might be idiotic and inappropriate.
But woman-hating?

Or this other passage:

> (…) men open a conversation with a woman with inept sexual advances, like 'I need an opinion on my penis size' or 'Mmmmmmm baby what are you wearing baby?' The misogyny that drips from texts like these make any sort of further interaction unlikely.

Again, I see a lot of ineptitude indeed, but ineptitude is not misogyny.

- **Cultural determinism bias**

Sometimes the author seems to adopt the typical "blank slate" and "standard social science model".
For example, he says:

> Nevertheless, ideas of "paternalistic chivalry" – the notion that men should initiate and take control of approach behaviors and dating decisions – continue to dominate how heterosexual couples interact.
> The most obvious reason for this is that we live in societies where women have less power than men.

Not really, “the most obvious reason” is that we have been shaped that way. Doesn’t mean it’s good or that we should keep it that way, but it’s *not* because women have less power.

PROS

- **Great science and research**

What a wonderful job in finding, analyzing, and summarizing so many wonderful pieces of research.

I truly learned a lot thanks to Viren Swami.

- **Open-minded approach to science, difficult probing questions**

I like that the author is not afraid of asking difficult questions.
For example, he notes that we tend to consider beautiful people as also more “good”.
I immediately thought there that he should ask whether or not beautiful people might also be more “good”. He did ask and address it indeed, even mentioning some (limited) supportive evidence for “beauty” to reflect on health, social skills, and intelligence.
That gave Swami a lot of credibility in my eyes.

Review

Attraction Explained is a wonderful book.

The author does something that we need more of deploying science and common sense in an area, women’s dating, where bad advice and generalizations are worsening women’s dating lives.

Check the:

- **Best dating resources for men**
- **Best dating books for women**

> Best Dating Books for Guys

or **get the book on Amazon**

The Evolution of Desire: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The Evolution of Desire (2016) reviews human relationships, dating, and sexuality from the vantage point of evolutionary psychology.
David Buss, the author, explains why we find certain traits and mates attractive, how and why we cheat, and provides a comprehensive overview of male and female sexual strategies.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - What Women Want
  - What Men Want
  - Casual Sex
  - Mate Poaching
  - Mate Switching
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Conflict in mating is the norm, not the exception
- Strategic interference is the area where the sexual strategies of men and women diverge
- Human mating strategies are large and highly sensitive to context

About The Author:
David Buss is an evolutionary psychologist and researcher, currently teaching at the University of Texas. He is a well-known and respected voice in evolutionary psychology and has written several books, including what's possibly the most popular university textbook called "*Evolutionary Psychology*".

Summary

What Women Want

Let's start with what women want:

Women Want Men With Resources

Women want men with resources.

As a rule of thumb, whenever women can demand resources and men can provide them, then women demand resources.
This is true across the whole animal kingdom, and it's true for women too.

Says Buss:

> The evolution of the female preference for men who offer resources may be the most ancient and pervasive basis for female choice in the animal kingdom

But when are resources important from an evolutionary point of view?
Buss says there must be three preconditions (but I break them up into four as I feel it makes more sense):

1. Resources must be accruable, defensible, and controllable by men
2. Men must differ in their holding or skills at resource acquisition
3. Men must be willing to invest those resources in women
4. The advantages of committing to one man must outweigh the advantages of being with several men

In humans, these conditions are most often met.

Says Buss:

> The marriage patterns in America confirm the fact that men with the most resources are the best equipped to actualize their preferences.
> (…)
> Indeed, the male occupational status seems to be the best predictor of the attractiveness of the woman he marries.

Sexual Differences in Appreciation For Resources

Countless studies show that women appreciate resources much more than men do.

Women consider resources not "absolutely indispensable", but important (a "necessity", not a luxury). Men consider resources in a spouse "desirable", but not very important (a luxury, not a necessity).
Even with the sexual revolution, women still value financial prospects twice as highly as men do. An analysis of personal ads showed women asking for financial resources 11 times more often than men did.

A study asked men and women what would be the minimum percentile of earning capacity they'd be willing to accept in a mate.
Men wanted wives at least in the 40 percentile. The women's minimum was 78. As such, they wanted a man who earned at least more than 78% of all other men.

The preference of women for men with resources is universal.
In all cultures, religions, and political systems, women placed higher importance than men on resources (roughly 100% more).

There were a few differences.
In the Netherlands, women cared for resources only 36% more than men do; in Japan, it was 150%.

Women Want Resources Even When They Have Resources

Buss theorizes that women might seek resources because they have less than men.

Yet, a tribe in Africa where women have more resources than men casts strong doubts on that theory.
Wealthy tribeswomen still want men with resources, and a lack of provisioning from the man is one of the most common causes of divorce.

Buss also studied Western women in the high-income bracket, and **high-income women placed an even greater value on mates with a high degree, professional status, and high income**.

Even women right after college, who could be expected to earn more than the average, placed higher priority than the overall female population on male earning prospects.

In short, women with lots of resources prefer men with resources more than poorer women do.

Women Want Men of High Social Status

Women desire men who command a high position in society.

High social status or a high-status job are viewed by US women as only slightly less important than financial prospects. But the two things often go hand in hand, anyway.

Buss indeed says that social status provides a strong clue as to a male's access to resources:

> Social status is a woman's strong indicator of the man's ability to invest in her and in her children

David Buss says that women worldwide prefer marrying up, a phenomenon also referred to as "hypergamy".

To learn more about the science of female hypergamy:

> Stop Whining About Hypergamy (& Do This Instead)

Why Women Want Social Status

Why would you even want higher-status men?
Just like money, because it's better for them, of course. But from an evolutionary point of view, **women want high-status men because it's good for their children** (and the propagation of their genes).

Children in high-status families worldwide typically have better access to health care, education, jobs, etc. And that translated, worldwide, to access to more mates and better-quality mates.

Women also place high importance on indicators linked to high social status, including:

- Education
- Professional degrees
- Command respect of the group (social power)

The opposite is also true, with women rating a lack of education as "highly undesirable".

Short-Term VS Long-Term Preferences

Women care more about social status in long-term partners and slightly less about short-term dating.

They still value status more than men do in both short-term and long-term mating, and this is true across all world cultures.

Women Don't Even See Lower-Status Men

Buss tells the fun story of a group of women at a restaurant complaining that there were no eligible men around to settle down.
Which was funny, considering they weren't shy of saying so in front of the whole staff of waiters, all males.
What the women actually meant was not that there were no men, but that there were no men of acceptable social status.

Indeed, women don't care much about what men think of them when they don't even consider those men as eligible for either short-term or long-term mating.
See this example from SATC:

(video unfortunately removed)

Age: Women Want Older Men

Buss says that age also provides an important cue as to his resources.

Young men rarely command the respect, power, and social status to acquire resources.

In all the 37 cultures the author analyzed, women always preferred men who were older than they were.
The global median age difference is 3 years worldwide.

But Buss also says that women might prefer older men for reasons other than resources.
Older men tend to be more mature, emotionally stable, and even more reliable in their provisioning.

Buss says that young women tend to go for a few years older, promising men rather than much older men because the age discrepancy may increase relationship strife.
Furthermore, sperm quality tends to decrease with age, and much older men might not be around in the case of children.

My Note:
Matt Ridley says that the "not being around" for children issue can be overcome in case the man possesses so many resources that she doesn't him personally.

Exceptions of women going for younger men exist, but they are usually circumscribed.
In China, with very young couples it happened because the younger men were from very high society and had assured social status and wealth. In other cases, it was the woman who had fewer options.

Sometimes it can be for pleasure too, with the proverbial "pool boy". Nut when settling down, women usually prefer older men and, if they are rich, men with at least an equal amount of resources as they have.

Young Men Are Evaluated On Personality

In cultures where couples marry young, women sometimes cannot reliably assess social status and resources.

So seek personality traits that are likely to lead to future success, social status, and income.
Traits such as:

- Ambition
- Industriousness
- Intelligence
- Dependability (assures the continuity of investment)
- Emotional stability (emotionally unstable men are very costly to women)

In Buss' study ambition and industriousness were rated as important or indispensable.
Again, there is a major gender difference here: women regarded a lack of ambition as extremely undesirable, while men didn't care about women's ambition.

Women are also likely to break up with a man if he loses his job, lacks career goals, or shows a "lazy streak".

How Men Elevate Their Status in Status Hierarchies

Buss' research lab found 26 distinct tactics that people -mostly men- use to elevate their social status.

They included:

- Industriousness
- Deception
- Social networking
- Sexual favor

- Education

Industriousness, such as working hard, prioritizing goals, putting in extra time, etc., was by far the biggest predictor of income and promotions.

What Women Want For Short Term

For short-term mating, women value traits such as:

- Physical attractiveness
- Desirability
- High levels of masculinity

These are traits that signal "good genes".
Women with high mate value are, on average, more drawn to highly masculine men.
Buss speculates that, since more masculine men are less faithful, that might be the case because high mate value women have the power to remind those men what they'd be losing by straying.

Women Want Kindness (& Men Too!)

Both men and women the world over value kindness.

Buss says it's because people depend on other people's kindness, not from strangers' kindness, but from their mates.
Kindness also increases the chance that a man will commit and provide, and make for a better father.
But I believe people seek kindness also because it makes for a much better relationship and because, on average, one expects a kind person to also be more reliable and trustworthy.

Interestingly, in Japan and Taiwan, men valued kindness more than women did.

What Women Want? Everything!

The reason why men have been baffled for so long by the question "what women want" is simple:

> Women's mate's preferences are inherently complex, multi-faceted and context-dependent.

And, I would add, sometimes women even seek traits that are rarely found within the same man.

What Women Don't Want

First of all is incest.

Incest is more likely to produce defective offspring, and women are more repulsed by incest than men are.
Why?
Because an unhealthy child is more costly to a woman than to a man since women spend far more resources on each child than men do.

Other traits women don't want simply end up looking the reserve of what they want.
No resources, no drive, no status, emotional dependency and immaturity, small size and stature, feminine appearance, meanness, cruelty, etc.

What Men Want

Men Want Young(er) Women

Men solved the problem of finding fertile women, in part, by looking for young women.

Men universally prefer younger women to themselves, although how younger also depends on culture.

However, as men get older and older, the age difference in they seek a wife increases.

The only exception is for young adolescent males who prefer older women. But older women don't want these younger men (on average).

Men Want Women With Good Physical Appearance

Men rate physical appearances much higher than women do.

This does not mean that the search for physical attractiveness has been fixed during the ages.
Indeed, the premium both men and women -but men more- place on physical attractiveness has increased steadily during the 20th century, most likely the product of TV and fashion magazines.

Physical appearances include:

- Full lips
- Smooth skin
- Clear skin
- Clear eyes
- Lustrous hair
- Good muscle tone
- Symmetrical faces and bodies
- Waist-to-hip ratio

Some parts of considered beautiful do change with culture, but many others are common.
Men of different cultures and ethnicities all agreed as to which faces were the most and least attractive of each other's "races".

Culturally Determined Standards of Beauty

Among the culturally determined standards of beauty:

- Plumb VS dark body built
- White or dark skin (but white is usually superior)
- Eyes, ears, buttocks, and genitals
- Most men prefer large firm breasts, but some cultures like long pendulous breasts (!)

The slim VS plumb body built is the most culturally variable standard of beauty.
Men don't seem to have an inbuilt preference for a rigid amount of fat and go for what is considered "higher status" in their culture, which in turn seems to be connected with the amount of food available.

Averages Look Good

Facial features that are considered attractive often look like the average of the population.
Composite faces were rated as more attractive than individual faces because they tend to eliminate irregularities.

Men Like Youthful Behavior

Buss says that our ancestors had access to two types of observable evidence of a woman's health and youth: features of physical appearance and features of behavior.

Feature of behavior includes:

- Bouncy youthful gate

- Animated facial expressions
- High energy levels

My note:
This part seemed to be a generalization. I struggle to see a 70-year-old rich man going for the "bouncy gate" of a 19 YO and he might rather seek a slightly more mature woman in her 30s. At least for a relationship…

Beautiful Wife = Status Boost

Men value a woman's attractiveness also for the status boost it grants them.

Men do place a lot of importance on "rank", and a beautiful wife helps them rank higher in social hierarchies.
So, yes, the "trophy wife" is a thing.

The trophy wife is especially important for unattractive men because people infer that if he is with an attractive wife, he must have a high social status.

Why Do Men Commit?

Why would want even want to commit at all?

It's a fair question, so let's find the answer:

- **Women demand it** (at least they might deny sex)

Some women might require investment and proof of love and commitment before even consenting to sex.
Men who refused to give might have not found a mate at all or struggled to mate with the best ones who also have more power to demand resources.

Basically, women's demands made it costly for men to pursue a short-term dating strategy only.

- **Increasing the odds of paternity**

Focusing on short-term dating only is not very likely to produce children because it takes many sexual intercourses to conceive.

Men who committed and got constant sexual access to a woman increased their odds of paternity.

- **Increasing the odds of children's survival**

Children are more likely to survive with a father.

- **Increasing the odds of children's mating success**

Children are more likely to be successful in the dating market if there is a father who helps them develop (and accrue resources)

- **Increased social status and social network**

If you're single you might have missed the "social status" boost that married men get.
Just think of this: how many single presidents have been running your country recently?
Chances are that most of them were married.

A married man can also leverage a larger network of people and the extended family, both of which can be helpful.

Men Want Chastity & Loyalty (to Secure Paternity)

Faithfulness and sexual loyalty are the most highly valued traits.

Why?

Because paternity is uncertain for men, male dating strategies also evolved to ensure paternity.
The right strategy starts by picking the right partner, and that's why men place a premium on:

- Virginity / low partner count
- Partner's loyalty (see Madonna/whore)

The value of virginity and partners' count is highly cultural though.

Men did adapt with the times and as premarital sex has become more common, the premium on virginity, once very high, has decreased precipitously.

Things do change both with culture and with the cyclical swings of gender dating power, though.
Women compete more on chastity and loyalty signs when they are more dependent on men and men do seek those signs more when they have more dating power.
That's not the case in many Western countries, where governments provide women with much social support.

As a rule of thumb: men value chastity if they can get it and if it's common in their dating environment.

Even more important than chastity though is loyalty.
Says Buss:

> The actual amount of prior sexual activity in a potential mate rather than virginity per se would have provided an excellent guide for ancestral men who sought to solve the problem of paternity.
> **Indeed the single best predictor of extramarital sex is premarital sexual promiscuity.**
> People who have many sex partners before marriage tend to be more unfaithful than those who have few sex partners before marriage.

Casual Sex

The simple fact that men seek casual sex means that, at least sometimes, women were willing to engage in casual sex.

Says Buss:

> One of the keys to ancestral women's sexual opportunity was a lapse in mate guarding.
> Hunting provided a window of opportunity because men went off for hours, days or weeks.

There are many cues as to our history of "monogamy with exceptions", including:

- **Sexual dimorphism**

Sexual dimorphism usually is a sign of female choice and non-monogamy. Humans don't have huge dimorphism, but some physical differences are obvious between genders.

- **Males' testes size**

We are in between polyamorous chimpanzees and gorillas, but slightly closer to gorillas (gorilla females only sleep with the alpha male).

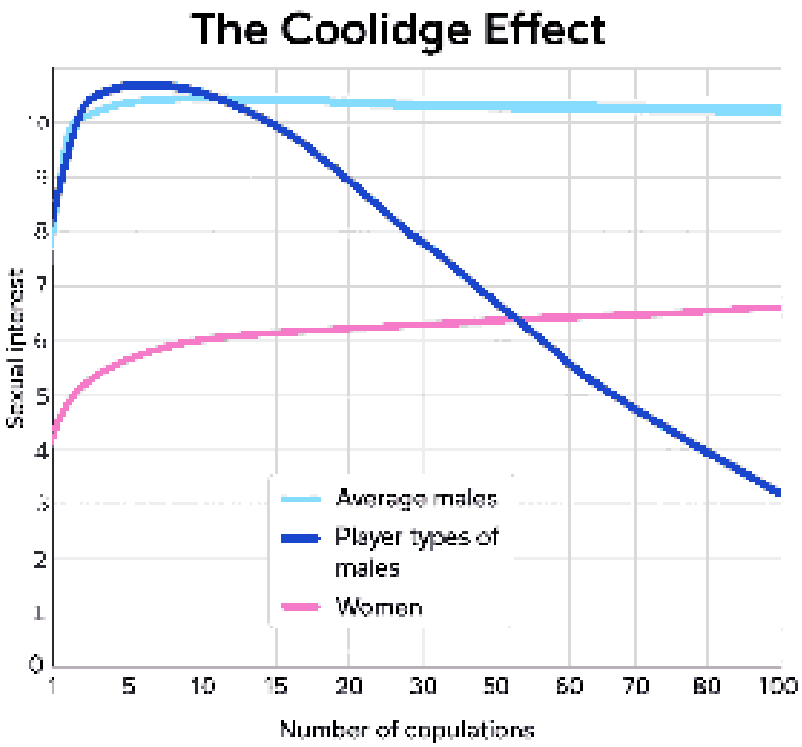
- **Increased male ejaculation after not seeing the partner for a while**

Suggesting that ancestral men who "flooded" their mates were protecting against possible infidelities.

- **Men enjoy variety**

The Coolidge effect shows that men are turned on by new women more than by older ones.

🤔♂ **Lucio's note**: the coolidge effect may be stronger among men with unrestricted sociosexuality



- **Standard relaxation for "acceptable partner" in short-term mating**

In the short term, women seek slightly different traits, while men relax their standards and sometimes invert the traits they seek.
In the short term, men dislike women seeking commitment and prudish women. They are not bothered by her relationship status and prefer high sex drive, sexually experienced women.

Basically, the traits men seek to increase the chances of casual sex and limit the chances of women extracting resources from them.

Men also often relax standards of beauty, allowing them to have sex with more women.

- **Female orgasm: the tool of mixed strategy**

Says Buss:

Orgasms *may* facilitate a mating strategy of getting the best of both worlds: investment from one man and good genes from another man.

And about men, in general:

> Men have evolved a powerful desire for sexual access to a variety of women

Read more in "*Sex at Dawn*" and:

- **The tools of sexual conflict**

> Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

Men Whores & Whores: Socio Sexual Orientations

Both men and women have a whole repertoire of mating strategies which are also context-dependent.

However, there do exist somewhat stable individual differences sometimes called “socio-sexual orientations”.
In simple terms: some men and some women are more likely to engage in easy sex and cheat more.

For more read:

- **How to find a loyal partner**

Men Want More Casual Sex Than Women

There is plenty of evidence that men seek casual sex more than women do.

Including:

- Sexual fantasies: women rarely change sexual partners, and men most often do
- Men sometimes devalue the partner after sex (more common in men seeking short-term strategy)
- Prostitution catering to men
- Pornography mostly caters to men
- Women’s fantasies focus more on feelings (57%) than men (19%)
- Men seek extramarital affairs more often (and commit more extramarital affairs)
- Men rarely have hookup sexual regrets, women do so more often
- Following hookups women are more likely to want a relationship, men are more likely to want more hookups

These are general trends, of course, and men and women can sometimes act opposite of their gender average.
But, on average, that’s how it goes among humans.

Says Buss:

> The human female is much less interested in a variety of partner.

Biologically and from a “selfish gene” perspective, that makes a lot of sense since women have much less to gain from a variety of sexual partners than men do.

Women advantages in casual sex

What are the benefits for women in casual sex?

They include:

- **Access to resources**

This is true even today, when women value four characteristics in short-term mates: spending lots of money in the beginning, giving gifts from the beginning, extravagant lifestyle, and being generous with resources.
Also, read “*Ho Tactics*” and “*A Gold Digger’s Guide*“.

- **Evaluate potential husbands**

Short-term for women must not remain short-term.
What can start as a quick fling, some women can turn into a long one. If that’s the case, women seek the same qualities in short-term mates for long-term ones and devalue a man for focusing too strongly on a short-term strategy.

- **Enlarging the support network**

Short-term mates can provide support and protection.

- **“Back-ups” and potential replacement**

A lover can provide a potential replacement in case the official husband dies, deserts, or loses social status.
In these cases, women might even be OK going for lower-quality men than their husbands.

- **Mixed strategy: superior genes**

A woman might get better genes from casual sex on the side and have another man provide for the children.
In this case, she would go for a higher quality man than her husband. Women indeed are more exacting for physical attractiveness when it comes to short-term dating.

Buss surprisingly doesn’t add, so I add it my own:

- **The pleasure of sex / relationship**

I don’t see why the pleasure of sex shouldn’t be an important criterion for women to engage in casual sex or extramarital sex.
The same goes for a committed relationship going stale, with the new one possibly being more emotionally satisfying and having better chemistry.

Costs of Short-Term Mating

All sexual strategies have possible advantages and possible costs.
For casual sex and extramarital sex the possible costs:

- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Developing a reputation as an “easy woman”
- Developing a reputation for a man who never invests
- Payback / revenge from an official mate
- Withdrawal of resources from official mate
- Carrying unneeded risks with sperm that will not lead to a child
- Break current bond with heavy costs for existing children

As Geoffrey Miller said:

> One healthy child is worth 10 sexy liasons in the bushes

Finally, the overall wealth of a nation and its social safety nets can also increase cheating because they lower the costs of breaking up, which is especially true for women.
And some other legal systems can increase the benefits of breaking up; think, for example, of a husband getting rich and the wife being able to demand half of it.

Tactics for casual sex: display of wealth works

Surprisingly, immediate displays of wealth are more effective in attracting short-term mates than long-term ones.

- **Bravado / display of confidence**

Confidence works both long and short term, but anything looking macho or bravado can become a drawback in the long term and is high risk (including any super overt approach like half-naked bodies, dick pics, very direct openers, etc.)

- **Generosity of resources**

Generosity of resources, days Buss, is critical in both short-term and long-term dating.

- **Good/expensive clothes**

Good and/or expensive clothes also work in both the long and short term.

- **Satellite strategy**

The satellite strategy is simple: you don't need to be the richest, most handsome, highest social status man in the club.
You only need to be right next to him.

- **Manipulation**

Finally, displaying fake long-term traits and feigning openness to a relationship can also help to rack up many short-term lovers.

Also read:

- **Lovers VS Providers**

For an overview of manipulation:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Tactics for long-term dating

Among the effective tactics for the long term:

- Persistence
- Kindness

Leaving large tips, for example, shows both kindness and availability of resources.
Showing a liking for children and animals also works.

- Investment
- Displaying commitment
- Loyalty and fidelity
- Openness and honesty
- Demonstrations of love

My Note:
Some of these techniques work if the two are of around the same value or if she perceives him as being an overall "not-so-bad option". Otherwise, they only look desperate and/or stalke-y and further decrease his appeal.

Mate Poaching

Attractive mates are always in short supply, making mate poaching a real strategy to acquire mates.

People who acquire highly sought-after mates tend to guard them attentively, and whenever they are single they tend to be quickly removed from the dating pool.

For each age bracket in monogamous societies, shortages get more and more severe as time passes by, while in polygynous societies female mates are scooped up right after puberty.

In such a dire dating environment, mate poaching is often the only real solution.

All the techniques and traits discussed so far are equally effective in mate poaching, with the addition of:

- **Temporal invasion**: changing the schedule to be more often around the target, especially when the current partner is not there
- **Driving a wedge**: boosting the target's self-esteem, indirectly derogating the official partner

On average, men's jealousy is mostly sexual and mostly targeted at men who have status and resources.
Female jealousy is mostly about feelings and the risk of losing his investment, and it's targeted at sexually attractive females.

Men tend to guard their mates more closely, while women tend to be more focused on the competition.

Techniques to keep one's partner

Some techniques to keep one's partner include:

- Jealousy and triangulation
- Aggression towards potential suitors
- Making them feel guilty
- Condescension: it lowers a partner's self-esteem and sexual value self-assessment (men do it twice as often)
- Submission and self-abasement as emotional manipulation (men do it 25% more than women do)
- Concealing the mate
- Public signals of possession (rings, holding hands, kissing, etc.)
- Threats / violence / punishment / abuse

Crazy as it may sound, Yamamano women regard their husband's abuse as a sign of their love.
This is something Casanova also noticed in Russian women -and he obliged to the custom-.

Also read:

- **How women control men and relationships**

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

The High-Quality Way to Keep One's Partner

A greatly effective defense against mate poaching is remaining a high-quality mate, meeting the partner's needs, and developing a strong bond and happy relationship (especially for men).

Enhancing and keeping their beauty is also an obviously effective technique for women since men value beauty both in their partners and for social status reasons.

Also read:

- **How to keep power in relationships**

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

Gender Differences in Keeping One's Mate

Men tend to guard women harder when they are at their peaks of reproductive abilities.

Since men retain their reproductive abilities for longer, women over time need to invest more in the relationship.

If the man also moves along in life and earns more, then the divide might grow even bigger.

Is Rape Truly About Power?

Rapists target young and fertile women, so for sure it's *not* all about power.

However, what's interesting is that men with a high partner count and men who rate their future earning potential as high were also more likely to use force.
That invalidates the "mate deprivation theory", such as the theory that mostly men of lower socio-economical conditions resort to rape for lack of options.

Men most likely to rape are:

- Hostile towards women
- Endorse the view that men secretly want to be raped
- Impulsive, low empathy, low agreeableness, hyper-masculinity, general hostility

Mate Switching

Three events made mate-switching worthwhile:

1. Current mate becomes less desirable
2. Increase in one's own value
3. New compelling alternatives become available

Buss says that since these three scenarios were likely common during our evolution, it is reasonable to expect that humans developed psychological mechanisms to evaluate the costs and benefits of the current relationship in comparison to alternatives.

Indeed, happiness in a relationship is partly measured by one's partner's mate value and the value of alternative mates in the local environment. The decision to stay or leave the current relationship depends on these unconscious measures.

Strategies to End Relationships

People are rarely honest about ending relationships.
And they never say their "market value" has increased or that "there are too many new valuable options".
Instead, they:

- Violate their mate's expectations
- Infidelity (either one's own or spread rumors about the partner)
- Stop sharing resources
- Cruelty, unkindness, escalating arguments
- Stop offering sex (mostly for women)
- Telling the partner they should start seeing other people

Ending relationships can carry costs and possible revenge, which is why people try to soften the blow. They might say, for example, "it's not you, it's me".
Escalating fights also provide an obvious excuse. "It doesn't work, honey, we always fight".
It works well, especially when they get angry, as that proves again that it's not working.
See an example:

Instigating fights and blaming the breakup on the constant fighting is very effective

Why People Divorce

The most common reasons for divorce are, the order:

1. Infidelity
2. Infertility

Most societies have stricter norms and stronger consequences for female adultery than male adultery.

Very common as well:

- The man fails to contribute or keep up

The divorce rate in the US is 50% higher when the woman earns more than the man.

Coping With Breakups

Breakups are some of the most emotionally distressful experiences.

It can carry costs via revenge, loss of social network, loss of respect for losing the relationship, or for ending.

Some try to remain friends to decrease the chances the partner might seek revenge or to maintain access to the mate's social network.

Women are more likely to go shopping and do other activities that increase their physical attractiveness.
Some ruminate and stalk, which usually only prolongs the pain.
Both genders sometimes seek sex with other, as one woman interviewed said: "the best way to get over a man is to get under another one".

On average, it's much easier for men to remarry after a breakup at an advanced age.

Women Cheat Most Towards The End of Their Reproductive Years

Some author's assumption is that women, deploying a mixed sexual strategy, should cheat when they're most fertile.

But in fact, women cheat the least when they're most and last reproductive valuable.
Most affairs are clustered towards the end of their reproductive years.
The same is true for extramarital orgasms, clustering towards the end of the reproductive years.

There are several explanations fielded as to why that's the case.
One is that the costs of straying are lower as men are less jealous of aging wives. Another one is that women might seek to get one last child or switch mates before it's too late.

Around Half of the Male Population Seeks Cheating Opportunities

Around half of the male population seeks some extramarital opportunities.

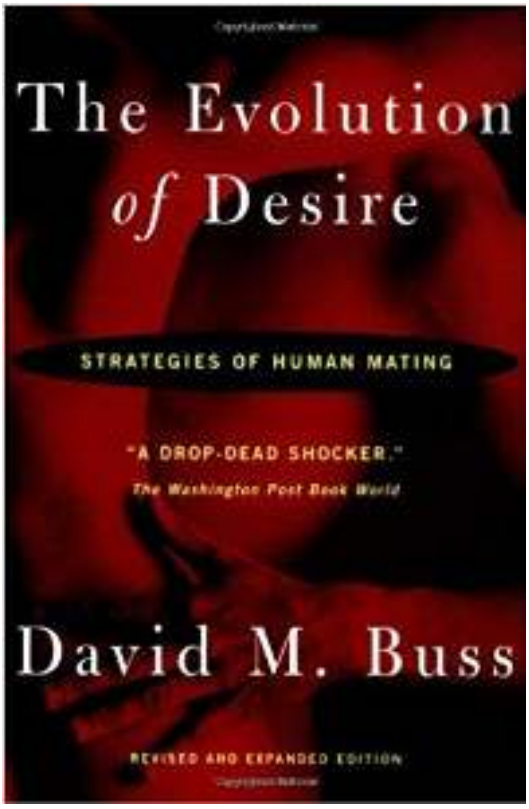
For those who keep moving up the social ladder, cheating opportunities often arise.
It's often attributed to a weak ego, immaturity, or "midlife crisis", but it's actually a pretty normal adaptation -but that's not to say that it's right or fair game-.

More Wisdom

- Sexual orientation is more flexible and fluid in women and more fixed in men, rarely changing over time. Men tend to be either strongly hetero or gay, while it's more blurred for women
- The ability to assess thousands of mates online sometimes paralyzes our ability to decide on "the one"
- Humor works: men prefer women who laugh at their humor, and women prefer men who make them laugh
- Sexual harassment depends a lot on the status of the harasser: low-status men are more likely to be labeled as

harassers

- Short-term invites are more likely to be labeled as harassment than pursuits for long-term relationships



Quotes

> A scientist cannot wish away unpleasant findings

On female choice shaping men:

> Men are one long breeding experiment, run by women

On beauty being in the eye of the beholder:

> Beauty might be in the eye of the beholder, but those eyes have been shaped by millions of years of evolution

On mate switching:

> Those who stick through thick and thin with an undesirable mate might receive our admiration, but their kind didn't reproduce as successfully and are not well represented among us today.

On desirable people:

> Desirable people are always outnumbered by those who desire them.

CONS

- **Too resource-centered?**

Somewhat I feel that David Buss' analysis of the sexual marketplace ends up being too resource-centered.

And by this, I don't mean that resources are not important, they obviously are.

But gene quality is equally important and, most of all, the two are not mutually exclusive.
As a matter of fact, the two things are also heavily interlinked: the ability to acquire resources correlates well with genes' quality.
Buss mentions it, but I felt it was too small a note on such an important aspect of the sexual marketplace.

- **I don't buy the "protection hypothesis"**

Buss says that women sought tall, fit, and resource-rich men because of the protection they could afford, and because of the protection of the household resources.

Again, we go back to the "resource-centered" view.

I'm not convinced by the protection argument.
Sure, it might be part of it, but I don't think it's the main reason.
Strong men are also better batterers and there is no amount of strength that will keep wild animals or organized incursions from another tribe. Or even from even a fraction of one's own tribe, for that matter.

- **Women want similar men so that they keep providing**

Buss says that women sought men who were similar because that guaranteed a longer-lasting bond and a longer period of male provisioning.

This is quite a jump in the dark to make and, again, it's very resource-centric.

- **Sometimes paints women as too conservative?**

The author says that "for most women, sex after just one hour is a virtual impossibility".
Well, I wouldn't necessarily agree with that. Especially for lower-quality women.

- **Highly reliant on questionnaire**

Some of the data on what works to attract mates was based on questionnaires on what people reported would be effective on them and/or what they would use themselves.
There are obviously some major drawbacks to questionnaires.

- **Sometimes seems slightly stuck in "monogamy mode"**

The author says that "it would pay for both men and women not to wait until their mate's death to start evaluating other alternatives".

That sentence seems to suggest our evolution was mostly monogamous. Other sources suggest relationships tended to be much shorter, and somehow I am also skeptical about these "super long term" relationships.

- **Denial of male "united front" to keep power against women**

The author says that the leftist and feminist accusations of men trying to hold onto the reins of power cannot be true because men are also stacked against other men.
This is a common stance among many evolutionary psychologists, and I wholly disagree here.
Of course, men -or a majority of men to be precise, not all have much to gain by keeping women away from power and resources.

Of course, men are also pitched against other men. And so are women. But that doesn't deny the fact that genders can band together to offer a bigger win to most of their members.
Just like unions do.

- **Sometimes I wished it presented discordant evidence for some of the proposed theories**

Unluckily, some of the biggest names in modern evolutionary psychology, including Steven Pinker, seem to have gone too far with the denial of cultural importance.

But culture does matter.
For example, how would Buss explain that most German men consider emotional betrayal more painful than sexual one?
Could it be that attitudes towards sex, such as open and liberal attitudes do impact how men and women view sex, including cheating?

It sure seems it does…

That does not constitute a rebuttal of Buss's own findings. And, in my opinion, it remains possible, and maybe even likely, that overall men still fear sexual betrayal more than women.
But it's not all nature, and culture plays a role (and, as well, sexual experience plays a role, in my opinion).

Review

The Evolution of Desire is a monumental work on intergender dynamics and sexual power dynamics.

It helped us improve several of our articles, strategies, and even products.

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Why Beautiful People Have More Daughters: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Why Beautiful People Have More Daughters (2007) provides answers to difficult and politically incorrect questions through the lens of *evolutionary psychology*.

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Criticism
- Quotes
- Review

Summary

About The Authors:
Satoshi Kanazawa is an American-born British evolutionary psychologist and writer. He focuses on evolutionary psychology to analyze trends and issues pertaining to society, people, and mating choices.
Miller was a social psychology professor. He died before the publication of the book, so most of the writing belongs to Kanazawa.

Introduction: Avoiding Naturalistic and Moralistic Fallacies

The authors begin by saying that human behavior is a mixture of human nature, culture, and unique experiences.

The recent trend has been to discount human nature, though, so the authors often stress how the "standard social science model" gets it wrong when it doesn't account for human nature as shaped by evolution (also see: "*The Blank Slate*").

However, when analyzing human behavior from an evolutionary point of view, we must avoid falling for these two fallacies:

- **Naturalistic fallacy**: the belief that what is natural is good and that what it is ought to be -and stay that way-
- **Moralistic fallacy**: the belief that what's "fair" or "moral" is how things really are. What *ought* to be is how nature actually is

Conservatives are more likely to commit the naturalistic fallacy, while liberals are more likely to commit the moralistic fallacy.

And since academics and social scientists are much more frequently liberals, the moralistic fallacy has been a much greater issue for the social sciences.

A Note on Stereotypes

The authors say it would be easy to dismiss their claims as stereotypes.

But "stereotype" doesn't mean that there is no truth in the generalization. They say:

> Many stereotypes are empirical generalizations with a statistical basis and thus on average tend to be true. The only problem with stereotypes and empirical generalizations is that they are not always true for all individual cases.

The authors then take another swipe at the social sciences:

Cultural Diversity Is A Myth

And when it comes to culture, the authors say, deep down, all human cultures are essentially the same (also read: why cross-cultural communication is a waste of time).

The recent history of the social sciences is shameful, say the authors.
The social sciences went on a quest to find "different cultures" just so they could "prove" that all human behavior is culturally determined.

And every time a new culture that seemed different than the Western culture could be found, it was a big celebration, so we could blame all our deviances on capitalism or on greed.

But every time, the "different" culture turned out to be a hoax or really quite similar to any other human culture. Three such examples:

- **Samoa and Margaret Mead** (Mead had been taken for a ride)
- **The Gentle Tasaday** (a response to Chagnon's "Yanomamö: The Fierce People") turned out to be a hoax or, at least, not what they were rumored to be
- **Native American Environmentalism**: some authors, including Jared Diamond, bought into the idea Native Americans protected the environment, but it's not true

The Savannah Principle: How We Grew Maladapted

The Savannah Principle states that the human mind has difficulties comprehending the modern environment.

We have evolved in a much different environment, and progress has been so fast that we haven't truly adapted to it.

In some cases, our old Savannah brain can lead to maladaptive behavior in our modern environment.
Some examples:

- **Sugar, fats, food**: we have too much today and we tend to over-consume
- **Pornography**: our mind can't tell that the images are not real women
- **Paradox of choice in mating:** images and dating apps make us believe there are more options and higher quality than there really are
- **TV series "friends"**: watching the same show over and over again, we feel like we know the characters and think we have a larger social circle and more friends

Now let's get down to the Q&As:

Why Are Men And Women So Different?

Two simple biological facts make men and women different:

- **Anisogamy**: the female sex cell is larger, more costly, and more "precious."
- **Internal gestation**: women can produce far fewer offspring than men

Anisogamy and internal gestation lead to very large sexual differences in fitness variance.
Fitness variance is the difference between the "winners" and "losers" in the reproductive game. In simple terms, that means that men can either be big losers and not reproduce or be big winners and leave a large number of offspring. Women instead tend to be "safer bets": most women will reproduce, and the difference between the winners and the losers is much smaller.

This has very important consequences:

Men Are More Aggressive Because They Must: Win Big Or Lose It All

The greater fitness variance is the reason why men are more aggressive, competitive, and violent than women. Men must compete, or they are left out of the mating game. Women's ability to compete is much smaller, and the dangers are higher.

Women Invest More On Offspring Because Each Offspring Is More Valuable to Women Than to Men

Remember that women invest more in sex cell production and in internal gestation (i.e., pregnancy).
They also invest far more than men once the baby is born.

And remember that men have the potential for far greater reproductive success, even while the woman is still "busy" with that one baby.

That means that each child represents a much greater portion of a woman's lifetime reproductive potential.
And that's why women ultimately "care" more about children and willingly invest more.

Why Men Prefer Blonde Bombshells (& Women Want to Be One)

Men prefer blonde women because:

- Hair tends to become darker with age, so pale color signals youth and fertility

The authors say:

> There is nothing arbitrary about the image of ideal female beauty.
> These are youth, long hair, small waist, large breasts, blonde hair, and blue eyes. There is evolutionary logic behind each one.

However, I failed to see any more reasons why blonde and blue eyes are "better" than a brunette.

He Said, She Said: Why Do Men and Women Perceive the Same Situation Differently?

Men have more to lose from a false negative -thinking she's not interested when she actually was-, than from a false positive -thinking she's interested when she actually wasn't-.

This only applies to other women, and men tend to assess the interest of their sisters in other men more accurately.

In contrast, women tend to underestimate a man's romantic commitment to them because the cost of a false positive -thinking that a man is more committed than he really is- is far greater than the cost of a false negative -thinking that he is not romantically committed when he actually is-.

Interestingly enough, the same logic applies in groups.
People tend to be more cautious about free-riding in a group when they are very dependent on that group.

Why Does Having Sons Reduce the Likelihood of Divorce?

A son's value is largely determined by his wealth.

So by staying within the household, the father can help the child accruing more wealth through fathering, education, direct transfer, and inheritance.

Daughters don't benefit nearly as much from wealth (or from a father figure), so the father has much less to gain by sticking around (and the mother has much less to gain to keep him around, as well).

Why Are Diamonds a Girl's Best Friend?

Diamonds help women screen for men who present attractive qualities to start a family:

- Resources
- The willingness to spend those resources

Ironically, the more useless the gift is, the more it shows that he is willing to spend and invest.
Diamonds don't do anything, they are useless. But they show strong financial firepower, and the willingness to dote.

Why Might Handsome Men Make Bad Husbands?

Men can maximize their reproductive success with two different strategies:

- Dad strategy: stick with one mate and invest
- Cad strategy: seek many partners without sticking and without investing (much)

Non-handsome men don't have the card option (albeit I don't fully agree here).
Very handsome men do have that option, but that doesn't necessarily mean they will date as cads.
They might instead still prefer being fathers and "settling down". But since they have both options, you never know.

More attractive men do indeed have more sexual partners and more extra-pair sex.
And one study shows that handsome men invest less, are less attentive to their partners, and lie more (my note: I wouldn't trust the "lie" part too much, though).
Instead, more attractive women have more long-term mates than short-term ones.

Also read:

- **Lovers and providers**, which are the same as cads and dads

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

Why Rich Men Have More Sons

By now you should know why.

Wealthy and high-status men are more likely to find plenty of mates, so it would make sense for rich and high-status men to have more sons than daughters.
And albeit it might seem like theoretically one cannot choose the sex of their children, there is much evidence to support the Trivers-Willard hypothesis that parents do indeed skew their children's sex ratio in ways consistent with evolutionary psychology.

Tall and big parents as much as violent people are also more likely to produce boys, while small parents are more likely to produce females.

It's also been shown that engineers have more sons (140 boys for 100 girls) while nurses have more daughters (140 daughters for 100 sons).
This might be because of the different "brain types" that work well in mathematical professions VS people and "empathy-based" professions.

Why Beautiful People Have More Daughters

Beauty serves both men and women well.

However, it's more useful for women since women are mostly judged by age and beauty while men are also heavily judged by income, status, and personality as well.

When it comes to long-term relationships, where most children are produced, women do well for short-term and long-term mating, while beauty for men is more useful in short-term mating.

That's why beautiful people tend to have more daughters.
And the numbers check: young Americans rated as "very attractive" have a 56% chance of having daughters as their firstborn.

Why Are There So Many Deadbeat Dads but So Few Deadbeat Moms?

There are two biological reasons that make fathers worse parents than mothers:

1. Paternity uncertainty
2. Higher fitness ceiling (ie.: every single child is more valuable to moms than to dads)

And, ironically, it's the mother's higher commitment that allows men to neglect children even more.

Why Old and Young Women Are Most Likely to Kill Children

Young mothers kill their children because they have plenty of time to make more and focus on higher-fitness children.

Older mothers kill their children because they possibly have more children and want to focus their attention and resources on the higher-fitness ones.

Why Do Girls of Divorced Parents Experience Puberty Earlier?

There are two competing theories:

1. They're genetically more like their fathers and his "short-term" strategy
2. They interpret the father's desertion as a sign that men are not to be trusted and prefer a short-term strategy

Both matter.
Women in polygynous societies hit puberty earlier to get into the high-competition market.
As a sign that the West is moving away from monogamy, the average age of puberty has dropped precipitously in the United States.

Why Are Men More Violent Than Women?

Anne Campbell's "staying alive theory" suggests that women are more important for the survival of the children.

Thus, it makes sense for women to be less risk-oriented than men.
When women must compete with males, they usually do it in more indirect ways, which also happen to be lower risk.

On the other hand, since men have often played in a "winner takes it all" sexual marketplace, it made sense for them to take more risks.

Why Do Some Men Beat Up Their Wives and Girlfriends?

It's a maladaptive by-product of "mate guarding".

And that's why men guard and beat their wives more when they're younger and fertile.
Indeed, it's the age of the wife that predicts male beating, and not the age of the man.

It's not a Midlife Crisis, It's Her Menopause

The male midlife crisis is a myth.

In truth, men go on a shopping spree for cool and expensive cars because their wives are approaching menopause, and they prepare themselves to attract younger women.

My Note:
It was very interesting; however, it lacked some strong data to back it up.

Why Men Earn More Than Women

Men earn more because they have to.

Men need those resources to trade them in the sexual marketplace and attract a mate.
And that's why men are much more stubbornly devoted to making money and achieving higher status.

And, as the authors say:

> Women make less money because they have better things to do than make money.

Why Are Most Suicide Bombers Muslims?

Because Islam is openly polygynous.

Polygyny leaves a lot of men without a mate, which in turn makes men more desperate to scramble and risk their lives.

Across all societies, polygyny increases violent crimes.
Then, entered Islam, promising 72 virgins for martyrs.
And the bomber is served.

> The prospect of exclusive access to seventy-two virgins in heaven may not be so appealing to anyone who has even one mate on earth, which strict monogamy guarantees.
> However, the prospect is quite appealing to anyone who faces a bleak reality on earth

Male Brain VS Female Brain

The "type S" brain is better at systems, and it's more common in males.

The "Type E" brain is better at empathizing and is more common in females.

Civilization Only Exists Because of Female Choosiness

Imagine a world where women weren't sexually selective.

A world where women would have sex with any guy who asked for it.
What would happen in that society?
This is what Miller and Kanazawa say would happen:

> Absolutely nothing, because people would never stop having sex!
> There would be no civilization in such a society, because people would not do anything besides have sex.

That was a big eureka moment for me.

The open questions of evolutionary psychology

The authors end the book reviewing the open questions from "*The Moral Animal*", the book that got them into evolutionary psychology (and the same book that got me into it, BTW).

The questions were:

- **How can evolutionary psychology explain homosexuality?**

No good answer is yet available.

- **Why are siblings so different from one another?**

Siblings occupy different “niches”.
The firstborn tends to identify with the parents. The latter ones cannot easily take that role and tend to rebel.

- **Why do soldiers die for their country?**

Many soldiers are from lower socio-economical classes.
If they have children already, having the government take care of them in case of death is not too bad.

- **Why some people decide to have few or no kids**
- **Why some people commit suicide**

Still no answer.
But I’ll provide an answer here.
The mistake, in my opinion, is in the approach that evolutionary psychology must explain everything with a neat theory.
And that’s the consequence of a deterministic view of evolution like everything must happen for a reason and fit neatly like a game of Tetris.

But the world is complex, and evolution is far from perfect.
Evolutionary psychology is big-picture thinking, it should *not* be able, nor try, to explain the exceptions to the rule.

More Wisdom

- “Cultures” are different at a superficial level, but deep down they’re the same. And “culture” is just another universal
- Humans are naturally polygynous, so almost all societies present a certain degree of polygyny
- Contrary to what most people would think, most women benefit from polygyny, while most men benefit from monogamy
- Polyandrous societies are very rare, and almost all of those few practice “fraternal polyandry”, such as brothers married to the same woman
- The most successful type of polygyny is sororal polygyny, with sisters married to the same man
- Girls in polygynous societies are shorter than girls in monogamous societies because there is a race to mature early and become the junior wife of a local high-status man (and girls who mature earlier tend to be smaller)
- Societies with a high degree of resource inequality lead to polygyny, while well-spread resources can support monogamy
- Religion is a product of our false-positive bias, and women are more religious because they are more risk-averse (risk aversion correlates with religious beliefs)

Criticism

Why Beautiful People Have More Daughters has a lot of genius content.
But also some bits and pieces that left me scratching my head, including:

- **Exaggerates the instances of cuckoldry**

The authors often repeat estimates of 13–20% rates of cuckoldry in the US (i.e., the husband has no idea he is raising someone else’s child).
I have read very different estimates, and most were lower.

Indeed, the authors themselves later say “although a comprehensive recent review suggests that the actual incidence among Western populations may be much lower, at around 4%”.

But they still seem to relish repeating the much higher statistics, for example:

> Mommy’s baby, Daddy’s maybe. And for 10–30 percent of daddies, it is not.

- **Probably wrong analysis of rape** (“mate deprivation hypothesis” is incorrect)

The author says that rapists are predominantly from the lower class.
That might be the case for convicted rapists.
However, David Buss, summarizing the latest findings, says that the “mate deprivation hypothesis” is most likely wrong.
Instead, studies also show that men with a high partner count, men of high status, and men who expected to earn a high income were more likely to use force.

- **Sometimes unscientific**

The author says that a child represents 1/20 of a woman’s lifetime reproductive potential and 1/1000 of a man’s.
But if we evolved from tribes of less than 150 people, that’s vastly overestimating the man’s *realistic* lifetime reproductive possibilities.

Also, the authors sometimes confuse correlation with causation, when for example they say that married men produce less because they are enjoying the fruit of their labor (i.e..: a mate).

- **Sometimes on an unscientific political crusade**

Sometimes you get the feeling the authors are more focused on a war against politicized sciences than on actually doing science.
However, they sometimes don’t realize they are themselves becoming political just by opposing and questioning the “other side” so strongly.

- **Sometimes it just makes no sense**

The authors write:

> Men’s status and mate value, unlike women’s, are socially and culturally specific, and they cannot successfully attract women outside of their own society and culture.

This is just plain and untrue.
As a matter of fact, the opposite might be true, and “foreigners” and “outsiders” might get a boost.
Also see:

> Sexual Market Value Hacks: Boosting Your SMV

- **The human penis as a “semen displacement device”**

This is most likely not true.
The semen war is mostly fought with testes, not penises.

- **Sometimes sounds conservative and climate-change denialist**

The authors write:

> Environmental protection is a luxury that became possible to Western societies only in the last several decades. Before industrialization and the current age of material abundance, all human groups had to exploit the environment to the maximum just to survive.
> No one could afford to be environmentally conscious, and Native Americans were no exception.

That's true, but also rather misleading.
Even if older tribes were environmentally unconscious, which they were, their footprint was still incredibly smaller than our current civilizations.

- **Sometimes lacks a "first-hand" understanding of women**

The authors say:

> So it makes perfect sense for women to avoid casual sex with anonymous strangers

And:

> Women avoid pornography for the same reason that men consume it; in both cases, their brains cannot really distinguish between real sex partners and the imaginary ones.

Alright, for sure, men want more sex with strangers and consume more pornography.
But saying that women "avoid" pornography is, sorry to say, dumb. I have dated more than one woman who watched porn.

- **Random application of evolutionary principles: authors fooled by randomness**

The authors commit typical, beginner-level mistakes in their approach to science.
They see a correlation and jump to a conclusion.

Sometimes it doesn't even make sense.
For example, they write:

> The same logic is probably behind the stereotype that women with large breasts are dumb. In the ancestral environment, without plastic surgery or even bras, only very young women had large, firm breasts.

To begin with, that's so incredibly random of an explanation.
Second, the breasts often grow with age, and very young women rarely have the biggest breasts.

- **We're monogamous because resources are better spread out? NO!**

The authors write:

> The reason most Western industrial societies are monogamous, despite the fact that humans are naturally polygynous, is that men in such societies tend to be more or less equal in their resources, compared to their ancestors in medieval times.

That's not true.
As other evolutionary biologists have noted the difference between the richest men in Western societies and those at the bottom is much larger than in hunter-gatherer societies.
Maybe what the authors wanted to say is that even men around the bottom of society can (often) feed children.

- **Deterministic: it misses the randomness of evolution**

The authors say that “there is nothing arbitrary about the ideal of beauty because it’s been shaped by millions of years”.

That’s not true, and that’s also a major failure to understand evolutionary psychology and the concept of “runaway sexual selection” (Miller, 2000).
At the center of runaway sexual selection is that it can start on quite arbitrary traits and, sometimes, even go against natural selection.

Evolution is much more random than the authors think, and that’s what they fail to understand.

- **Sometimes cultural-denialist**

The authors pay lip service to the idea that “culture” matters, but end up sounding very culture-denialists.

They write:

> That all human cultures, however exotic and seemingly different on the surface, are essentially the same. There are no human cultures that are radically and completely different from any other, just like there are no human bodies that are radically and completely different from any other.

The truth is that human nature and culture are not in opposition to each other.
Given a certain culture and environments, different mating strategies and different genes are expressed, leading to very different “human natures”.

Quotes

> However, the true polygynous nature of humans is never too far beneath the surface, even in nominally monogamous societies such as ours.

On childcare after divorce:

> Divorced parents with children are playing a game of chicken, and it is usually the mother who swerves

On men working to impress women:

> Men have built (and destroyed) civilizations in order to impress women so that they might say yes.

On female power:

> For a man to walk into a bar and have his choice of any woman he wants, he would have to be the ruler of the world.
> For a woman to have the same power over men, she’d have to do her hair.”

On racism and education:

> Contrary to what social scientists and hippies alike proclaim, we don’t learn to be a racist through parental socialization; we learn not to be one.

Review

I love evolutionary psychology.

And I loved "*Why Beautiful People Have More Daughters*". So much so, that I was tempted to give it 5 stars.

It's a good introductory evolutionary psychology text for the layperson: it gives you a quick overview, in an entertaining format

In the end, I settled for 4 stars for a simple reason: it's too politically motivated and too "extremist" in its denial of cultural relevance.

Furthermore, I missed a truly scientific approach.
Correlation was sometimes confused with causation.
And I wished the authors had been more forthcoming in labeling what's speculation, what's a theory, and what's thoroughly backed by data and research.

When an author fails to do so with the most controversial theories, he naturally raises readers' suspicions.
That's my second biggest gripe with this book: it should have been more careful and more forthcoming in highlighting the divide between science, speculation, and personal conjectures.

So, overall judgment?
I loved it and learned a lot, so do read it.
Just make sure you take into account the criticism I listed above.

Also read:

> Best Evolutionary Psychology Books

Or **get the book on Amazon**

The System by Todd Valentine: Review & Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The System is a dating course for men by Todd Valentine teaching men how to approach, seduce, and sleep with women.
In "*The System*", Todd proposes a 5 step process going from open to close and includes many breakdowns of his own interactions.

Contents

- Todd Valentine
- Summary
- More Wisdom
- CONS
- Todd Valentine Review
- The System Review
  - The System vs. Seduction University

Todd Valentine

About the Author:
Todd Valentine is a dating coach with many years of experience, both when it comes to dating for himself and teaching. He first started with Real Social Dynamics and then broke off to do his own thing.
He is also the author of "Day Game" and, he said in one of his courses, a proponent of applying Jordan Belford's "straight line persuasion" to seduction (i.e.: "straight line seduction").

Summary

Introduction

- There is no such thing as a "natural game": if someone is learning a game, then it's not natural
- There is a lot of good information today: in the past, in the days of "*The Game*" and "*The Mystery Method*" there was a lot of bad information, but now you can find lots of great information almost anywhere
- Avoid "models of seduction": your base of seduction must be being a high-quality man, then you can add seduction models to that core
- "High frequency" is BS: the "high frequency" is woo-woo BS, it's unscientific and means nothing

I agree with everything.

The System: 5 Steps

The system is based on the following 5 steps:

1. **Open**: Only goal is to get the conversation going
2. **Man assessing woman frame** (Todd calls it "Premise"): showing there is a chance for you two to be together, it's you auditioning her for a role in your life.
   Establish the premise early on so you operate under it for the whole duration. If you do it too late, it's too late.
   Compliments that communicate "I'm evaluating you" are a good way of setting the premise without giving too much power away
   1. **Direct opener** (Todd calls it "intent") is a subset of premise and it's best for beginners. Otherwise, you give too much power away
3. **Evaluate**: you must evaluate her to give yourself (and her) a reason to see her again or to keep interacting with her. You evaluating her sets yourself as above her (judge frame) and prompts her to chase you
4. **Narrative**: the story of you two meeting
   1. Ideally, you two together
   2. Alternatively, you being a high-value guy, and then try to move to you "the two of you together"
5. **Close**
   1. Seed: For example, you can say "are you adventurous? " "yes" "well, then we should get a coffee sometime". Or "do you live in the area?"
   2. Frame it as a win: frame it as a win for her (see: **frame control techniques**)
   3. Qualify: communicate she passed your standards, even if she didn't just say "you seem cool anyway"
   4. Lead: "what's your number", assume the close

Also see:

- **The Judge Role**: here I explain the social and power dynamics of assessing and qualifying others, both in seduction and in social settings. I feel that "the judge", both as a name and as a concept, makes power dynamics for easier to understand. In short, the judge" is the person with power in social interactions because he judges others (qualify / disqualify / shit test / emotional reward / emotionally punish are all tools of the judge).

Types of Openers

- Super direct (sexual)
- Direct
- Direct-friendly (push-pull, observation)
- Situational (tease, using environment)

- Opinion
- Impersonal

I very much like and agree with Todd general advice on which open to use, which he tailors to skill levels.

Beginners should open up more directly, or they risk coming across like friends.

Intermediate students should be more in the middle, in between direct and indirect.

Advanced practitioners should use more indirect openers and try to communicate their intentions with nonverbal undertones.

The rationale is that directly stating you like her gives your game away and gives your power away.
You place her above you and make her the prize.
Indirect allows you to withhold more power in the interaction and gives her more space to chase.

Overall, I don't fully agree that an advanced man shouldn't go direct.
I think that there are situations where you can go very direct sexual, move very quickly, and you will not lose points but instead kick off a sexual "whirlwind romance" effect.
For example, some of my best interactions came after I told a girl, straight up, "I thought you had very sexy legs".

But all the rest is spot-on and high-quality information.

Mindsets:

- Talk to her like you know her
- Assume she will stop
- Know that you are giving her value

Tech:

- Chatty and friendly first and only later sexual or you raise the bar too high

You don't want to be too sexual too soon or the question in her mind will be "will I have sex with this guy".
And that's a bar too high for the very beginning and you will lose a lot of girls, who will naturally answer "no" even though many of them would have later turned into "yes".

Pulling Dynamics

1. **Seed**: You seed, get feedback on what she likes, and see if she hooks
    1. "you don't seem like the worst person to hang out with"
    2. "it would be funny to take you on an adventure, but I don't trust you yet"
    3. "I'm getting tired of this club, I might have to leave soon, maybe a drink or two but I might not stay all night"
    4. "there is this great place, I would totally take you there, but let's hang out here a little longer"
2. **Frame**: frame it as a win for her.
    1. "I don't take a lot of people there, maybe one day, probably not tonight";
    2. if you're taking her home, say you gotta get up early and you can't stay with her the whole night
3. **Qualify**: have her work for it. Ask if you can trust them, tell them you're not sure you can't take them tonight (have them convince you it's a good idea)
4. **Lead**: lead with confidence, have a gameplan

9s and 10s: Don't put them on a pedestal

If you treat them like they're different, you've already lost.

The first step for 9s and 10s is to realize that if all they do is coast on their looks, then they are quite empty.

Many girls who make money off their looks make very little money.
Strippers make more, but they face diminishing returns and are often very insecure.

And many girls who make lots of money on their looks… Well, they are selling themselves.

Dealing with the "blase'" response

Some girls will play the "high-value woman" when you approach them and pretend they didn't see or hear you.
There are three ways to handle it, says Todd:

- **Say right after "hey, nono, it's OK, I'm** (your name)

The idea here is to communicate that you know what's going on and that they need to play their game to avoid low-value men hitting on them.
With this one, it's like you were saying "hey don't worry, I know what's up and I'm as high value as you are"

- **Keep talking from a high-value frame**

The exercise "the wall" will be helpful here.

- **Challenge her and make her participate**

Tease her and find a way to make her react somehow.

Exercises

The last part of "*The System*" is for the exercises.

One of the exercises is called "the wall", and it goes like this:

Talk for a minute to a wall to get used to girls giving you nothing. It will get you used to coming up with things to say.

Level 2: talk to the wall and establish the premise. ie.: "I like you, but you're so flat", "I like you but hey, white wall, so bland", "I like a little spunk in my wall"

Level 3: talk to the wall from a high-value frame, from a perspective that you're wanted, that the wall likes you, and that you are used to great social feedback.

Infields

A good chunk of the program is about Todd infields plus another one of his students/teachers (JP).

I think that's where a lot of the value is as people can get to watch a few successful dates and pulls with the conversation and Todd's commentary.

JP's first infield, the one in the teaser, was true class.
The second one I didn't like it much, it felt like he was coasting on his good looks and got a bit too aggressive with the sexual intent. It would not have worked as well with a guy who was not as good looking and, most important, she felt more in charge than he was:

You can see her hand on his face, usually, girls only do that if they feel in charge.

Whenever a girl touches my face I know that she is feeling in charge and I always wonder "where did I fuck it up that she now thinks she's in control?" (and that's why Joe Rogan gets so angry when someone touches him, especially on his face).
But then again, the guy was younger than her and that's more likely to happen when she's got a few years on him.
Plus he had sex with her in the end.
I also like the guy: he comes across as very down-to-earth and his interactions tend to be very natural.

Student Infields

Plus Todd analyzes a few infields of his students, analyzing their mistakes and what they could do better.

Those guys were a bit beginner-level, so beginners will get the most "uplift".
Yet, because of Todd's commentary as a very advanced guy, even more advanced people can gain new insights.

Avoid "Alpha Male Strategies"

Todd has been vocal about the dangers of "alpha male strategies".

In "*The System*" he comments on one of his student's videos that it was a dick move to dump a girl right away after she said she had a boyfriend because "she's a human being".
And he reiterates the old pick-up mantra of "leaving her better than you found her".

Well, I like that approach.
And I think it's more effective, too.

For example, if a girl is talking on the phone the AMS approach would be to tell her to hang up.
But that's silly, Todd says because on the other hand of the phone, there could be a parent, a boyfriend, or a dear friend. And you're still a stranger.
Instead, he recommends a more subtle approach.

More Wisdom

- **Violating social norms is bad advice**

Withstanding social pressure is good, but breaking social norms just so to do it is not attractive (garish clothes,

straws in her nose, laying down on the floor, talking overly loud, etc.)
The *ability* to violate social norms is good, actually doing it is bad.

- **Approach interaction with a mindset of "self-amusing"**

If you go in to have fun, you will naturally have a non-needy mindset.
I'm personally not the biggest fan of this "self-amusing" approach, which if you take it too far leads to more clownish behavior and the girl will take you less seriously.
But in smaller doses, it can be good.

- **When she says "I admire your confidence"…**

She is actually pushing you low down.
She is saying "I admire that a guy lower in value like you is not afraid of approaching me".
Also read "covert power moves".

- **Social circle game is about your status in the group**

Just being around cool people won't get you results by itself.
It's not just about being *in* the group but about your role in the group.
Social media and social circle games should be on top of your core seduction skills, but not seek to replace them.

That's true, but if you are very close to a very high-status person, then you can reap almost equal benefits because he will attract more women than he can take.
In *evolutionary psychology*, this is called the "satellite strategy", and can work wonders (see Buss, 2013).

CONS

Todd Valentine is one of the best pick-up coaches around.

The main con is that the pick-up artist schooling he trained can be over-gaming and lower-power.

Let's see:

1. Cold approach only, which is not highest ROI

Todd espouses cold approaches as the best way to meet women.

And I LOVE the cold approaching.
Even beyond meeting women, I love it for the challenge and self-development.

However, it would be stupid of me to confuse what I like or do, with what's most effective.

Compared to higher-power strategies, walking up to random girls is a high-effort, low-ish returns strategy.

A few things will help increase efficiency:

1. Great looks
2. High confidence / power
3. Great game
4. A place with LOTS of women walking around

But even if you score high on those, you still need to trawl the streets to find a girl whom you like -and you won't find *that* many if you're picky-, who is in the right mental space to date/bang new guys and, of course, who likes you back enough to come with you on a date.

That's all doable -done it plenty of times, too-.

But whether or not it's a strategy that suits you best, is not a given.

The rewards of cold approaches are also smaller compared to more "winners take all" strategies such as fame, jet-set lifestyle, or high-status social circle game with lots of attractive women in and out -basically, all strategies where women come to you, or naturally gravitate around you-.

You don't need to take my word for it. That day game takes effort you can see it from dating coaches as well.
Take some videos from James Tusk: he is handsome like a model, and still spends hours and hours in packed streets to get a few numbers.

Or you can watch it from Todd himself when he shows his not-so-good interactions:

If you want to be efficient, you need to date with power dynamics in mind. Pick-up artists running up and down the street are not the highest-value guys around.

And for those shooting for more, than there are more effective dating strategies.

Also see:

- Cold approach VS social circle

https://thepowermoves.com/cold-approach/

2. Sometimes over-gaming

Todd comes from RSD, which was based on routines, push-pulls, and a lot of "game".

A bit of your old-school stereotypical PUA-style kind of thing.
You can see that a lot in Todd's method.

He was the best of the RSD pack, in my opinion.
But just sometimes I feel Todd overdoes the teasing and laughing *at* the girl, which can lead to a combative dynamic. And combative dynamics are OK if you can win and manage them, but they're inherently more mercurial and less stable.

This isn't just my opinion by the way.
I talked about it with Kether. Kether is one of the best, if not the best player in South Korea. He gets real results and he's a man whose skills and mindsets I personally respect and can vouch for.
I hold Kether's opinion in high regard, and he felt the same way about Todd "over-gaming" sometimes.

- **Over-gamers get lots of shit tests**

I feel one reason PUAs talk a lot about shit tests is because they *attract* lots of shit-tests.

And they get them because they come across as too gamey. Women don't know if they're for real, so they feel the need to throw stumbling blocks.

The bad news is that it's not true that the better the woman, the more games you need.
As a rule of thumb, **the better the woman, the more over-gaming will doom you**.
Higher-quality women and alpha females are more likely to want direct alpha males who go for what they want, without too much verbal smoke.

Which is exactly what this smart woman tells Todd:

> **Todd**: I'm very shy, I rarely travel, I get really nervous around girls in particular, I never had an interest in life experiences..
>
> **Her**: You know what your problem is (already a bad frame…) you're overconfident (= you try too hard…) you do have this things where it looks like girls are your enemies (= you overgame)

Todd was going for the old PUA technique of “DHV” (demonstrate higher value).
But, like with the early PUAs, it’s a bit too obvious. It feels like cheap social climbing.
And as a rule of thumb, the higher you go in life, the more your demonstrations of high value need to be subtle or indirect.

- **Over-teasing**

Sometimes Todd also pushes women who like him a little bit too on the edge, and when you do that you might not be able to bring them back.

You can turn women off with over-gaming and too much push-pull. Especially when they already liked you.

Over-gaming also leads to “self-rejection“, and you can read more here:

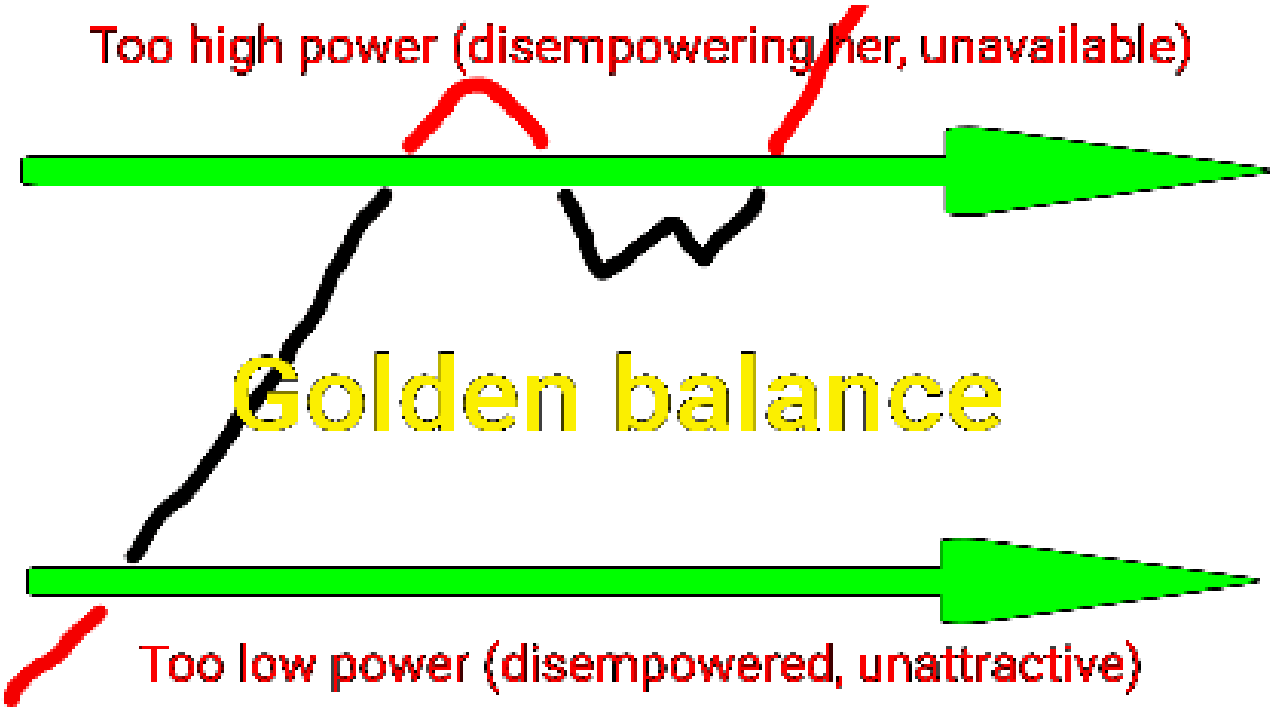
- **Low-availability and over-gaming are killing your seductions**

Once a girl likes you, it’s best to set an “us together” frame (collaborative frame) VS continuing to tease.
Here is an example:

Over-teasing and over-gaming past the mark leads to self-rejection. That’s why she left. There is something as “too much power”. Once you have enough power, focus on getting to know her and moving forward, not on acquiring more and more power.

Because he focused so much on teasing and showing value without bonding, she self-rejected.

In chart terms, this is how over-gaming conversations go:



Since Todd knows game and has a good feel for power dynamics, he later rebuilds her up with more genuine appreciation.
And that’s what changed the game.

Be careful not to overdo the power though, because many women will self-reject forever.

3. Sometimes could be a higher power

One of the consequences of gaming a lot is that it comes across as a lower power.

And this is a criticism I also often make of myself by the way.

Alpha-male types tend to be more direct and grounded.
They talk slower, tease and laugh a bit less and, especially, they don't laugh to *release* tension.

See an example of releasing tension with laughter here:

The girl was being confrontational. From a frame control point of view, she was one-upping him. Laughing as an attempt to look superior by not taking her seriously was good. But still, it was too much laughing resulting in a loss of power, dominance, and leadership.

Higher power is especially recommended when you *already* have attraction, when you are high SMV, or when you simply want to be bold and efficient.
If she reciprocates, higher power leads to quicker sex, zero LMR, and no shit tests, as well, also makes her lust for you far more.

You can see a story/example here:

- **Example of a high-power cold approach**

4. Avoid risky jokes that push good girls away

Todd jokes often about the girl taking advantage of him.

However, I'd be careful with these as they open bad frames.
For example, I'd never joke about the girl "stealing one of your kidneys".

Avoid those, especially with more risky-averse women.

5. Complex system to internalize & strange names don't help

Todd is very smart.

And probably also because of that, "*The System*" can be complex.

However, it doesn't HAVE TO be that way.
For example, the names could have been simpler.

The old concept of "showing interest" becomes "showing *intent*", which is not as intuitive.

And then "intent" becomes a subset of "premise".
But "premise" sounds a lot like "frame", and it's not as intuitive.
Todd also talks about frames, so now we have two similar concepts, but with different names.

And then there are "premises within the premise" and some terms, like qualifying and validation, that are used somewhat differently.

After a few weeks you've gone through "*The System*", you may not remember "*the system*", because the names and steps are not very intuitive.

6. Filler words = less confidence

Todd is a great teacher.

And when gaming, he knows which words to use because he focuses a lot on them.
I think he could step it up even more if he addressed *how* to speak. For example:

- Fewer filler words
- Better diction
- Remove upspeaks

You can hear an example of upspeak.

Filler words are useless utterances like “uhm”, “ah”, and “so” that people use to fill the silences. Filler words are known to make you come across as less confident and more nervous.
Also, see the “verbal expressions of submissiveness“.

> How to Stop Being Unconfident In Conversations

Todd Valentine Review

Todd is a great pickup teacher.

He’s a smart, logical, rational, and incredibly verbally talented man.
He’d have been successful at anything he’d done, and he decided to put his genius in the service of pick-up.

And I think Todd Valentine is one of the best dating coaches around.
I like his approach: rational and level-headed, based *both* on experience and logic.

And I like how he relates to people and women.
Demands respect, and enforces his boundaries, without going all macho, “alpha male posturing” style.

He’s above black-and-white thinking of red-pill style dating advice, and is free of bitterness and anger that taints some fringes of the manosphere. And yet, he is no idealist. He just calls it for what it is.

Being a pick-up artist, even if a top one, may be the main drawback of learning seduction from Todd.
Having grown professionally within RSD, his style can sometimes come across as a bit “gamey”, potentially losing in power or genuineness.

In his videos talking to the camera, he is very grounded and rather high power.
But in his in-fields sometimes some laughing feels forced, and he can be less powerful and authoritative.

That can work sometimes to put women at ease -it increases warmth and that offsets some of his games-.
But sometimes I feel he could laugh a bit less, and be less ‘game-y’.

Still, all in all, he is one of the best dating coaches around.

The System Review

Todd is logical, methodical, and capable, and *The System* is a solid product to learn ‘game’.

You can also check the best dating products for guys, or compare these two effective courses:

The System vs. Seduction University

Category	Seduction University (TPM)	Todd V – The System
Philosophy	Seduction built on *personal power*, becoming a more attractive man.	Dating built on verbal ‘game’: openers, ‘intent’, ‘premise’, etc.
Outcome	Become a high-value, respected man women *want to be and stay with.* Short + long-term attractiveness.	Get dates through repeatable conversation frameworks. Focus is mostly on approach → date acquisition.
Method	More strategic and psychological, includes seduction & making women fall in love	More tactical, heavy use of techniques like push-pull, qualification, and teasing
Best For	Men wanting high-quality women	Men wanting to approach and date around

Category	Seduction University (TPM)	Todd V – The System
Weaknesses	May feel “deeper” and less step-by-step at first if someone wants scripts.	Robotic if over-applied. Some guys become try-hard or low power
Strengths	Builds a man women *respect*, desire, and stay loyal to. Works online, in-person, social circles, life.	Very good beginner approach structure if someone lacks conversational grounding.
Retention	High. Men learn leadership and bonding, and women stay, invest, and pursue.	Lower. Works to *get* women, less effective to *keep* women long-term.

If you want to become the **kind of man women *naturally choose and invest in*** → Seduction University.
If you want to **get better at approaches & first impressions quickly** → Todd’s System.

Best Evolutionary Psychology Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

We boast the largest collection of evolutionary psychology book reviews in the world on this website.

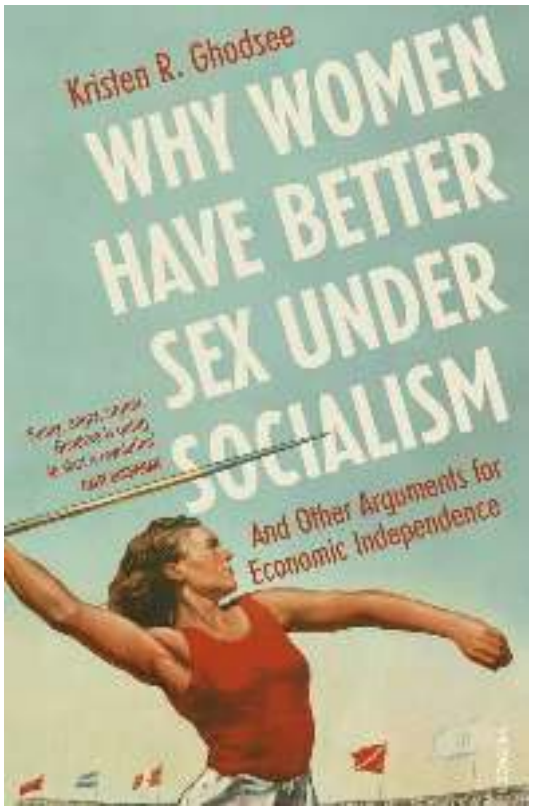
And after studying and reviewing dozens of them, we came up with this list of the best evolutionary books.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 10. Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism
- 9. How The Mind Works
- 7. The Red Queen
- 6. The Evolution of Desire
- 5. The Selfish Gene
- 4. The Mating Mind
- 3. The Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych & Relationships
- 2. The Secret Of Our Success
- 1. Evolutionary Psychology: An Intro
- ⍰ Evolutionary Psychology Books to Avoid
- Change Log

10. Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism



By K. Ghodsee
Summary | Audiobook

Despite feminist and left-leaning ideologies that permeate this book, Ghodsee deserves a place for addressing gender power dynamics.

Many (male) evolutionary psychologists on this list overlook or minimize the idea that men may gain when women as a collective are kept disempowered.

For example, in this interview, David Buss downplays the concept of patriarchy with a joke:

> **Buss**: (…) Two very elegant women with designer handbags are walking by a guy who's fixing the tar in the street and as he's groveling on the ground they say "stop oppressing me"

It's a funny joke, but it missed the broader point.

Societal patterns emerge from aggregated behaviors of individual preferences and behaviors.
It's a phenomenon called 'emergent behavior' and what social dominance theory refers to as '*aggregated* individual discrimination'.

Most men cluster around the average and, as Buss knows, they all share the same needs of mating and ensuring paternity.
Average men struggle when women become more successful than the average man. So **it's *evolutionarily expected* for men to be incentivized to limit women's power**.

Men may not be aggressive and open about it. But they may look down on the career woman while encouraging their partners to stay home.

Feminist scholars overreach at times, but dismissing their critiques risks missing important truths.
Ghodsee's argument isn't flawless, but it raises valid points that deserve consideration.

Read more here:

- **Social dominance theory**, which perfectly explains class-level dynamics, of which gender is only one expression
- **What Buss and Peterson underestimate about the patriarchy**

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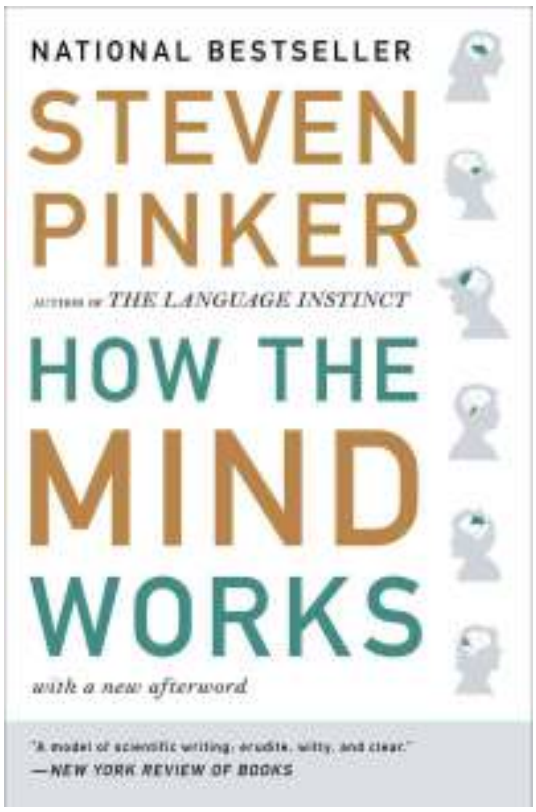
9. How The Mind Works



By S. Pinker
Summary | Audiobook

"*How the Mind Works*" is a 'meta book' on evolutionary psychology.

Such as, Pinker discusses evolutionary psychology *as a science*.
Including its credibility, the most common criticisms, and its current standing in the social sciences.

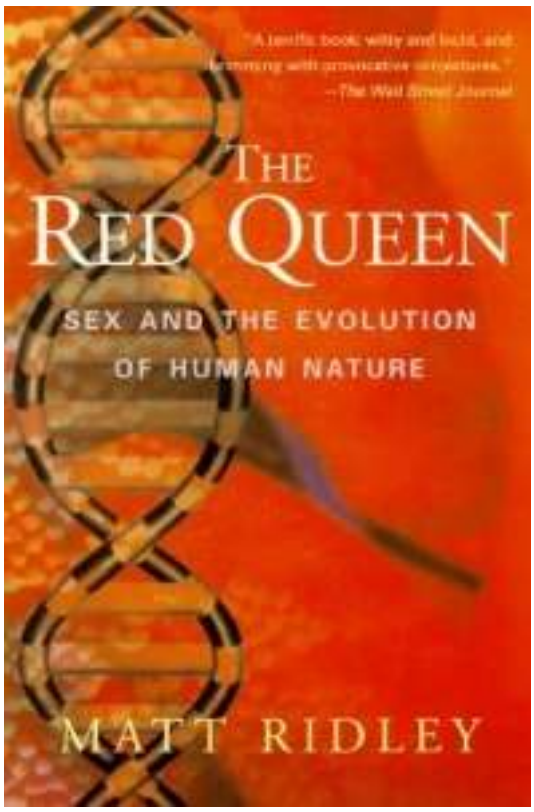
I find Pinker sometimes veers off into philosophy and is heavier in his personal views than on empirical evidence.
Finally, I find *How the Mind Works* too deterministic with two fallacies:

1. **The "perfect machine fallacy"**: the idea that organisms are perfect adaptations, working like clockwork machines
2. **The "perfect designer fallacy"**: the idea that evolution will always shape organisms to be the best possible adaptations for the environment

Although Pinker probably knows better, the reader should keep those two fallacies in mind.

See Lucio's take on these common fallacies

7. The Red Queen

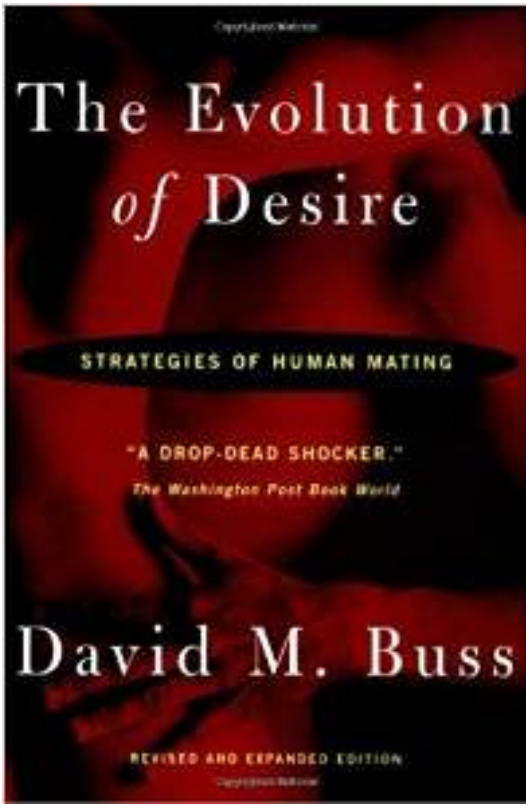


By M. Ridley
Summary | Audiobook

"*The Red Queen*" focuses on sex sexual selection and mating, and wt would be even higher if it weren't for "*The Evolution of Desire*" which covers similar themes.
"*The Red Queen*" is superior in terms of theoretical framework and in the overview it provides.

But "*The Evolution of Desire*" is more practical, and it ranks higher because The Power Moves is focused on the practical applications of knowledge.

6. The Evolution of Desire



By D. Buss
Summary | Amazon

If you are looking for how evolutionary psychology wisdom more practically applies to dating and mating, but still has "scientific rigor", look no further.

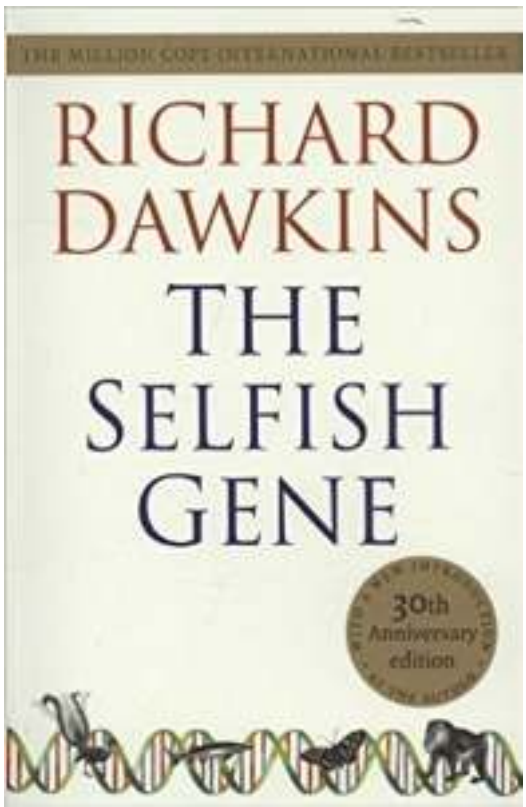
This book can be an eye-opener and it will increase your mating intelligence 3 fold.

And from the same author, but slightly more focused on "sexual conflict", also see "*When Men Behave Badly*".
If I had to put these two head-to-head, I wouldn't know which one is better -they're both just great.

Also read:

- **The Sexual Marketplace 101**
- **Sexual Market Value 101**
- Sexual conflict: the weapons of genders' war

5. The Selfish Gene



By R. Dawkins
Summary | Amazon

The Selfish Gene, popularizing Hamilton's work, is probably the most culturally significant book on this list due to its popularity.

The title may be a bit misleading though.
Today, most social sciences accept that selfish interests may be best achieved by cooperation.

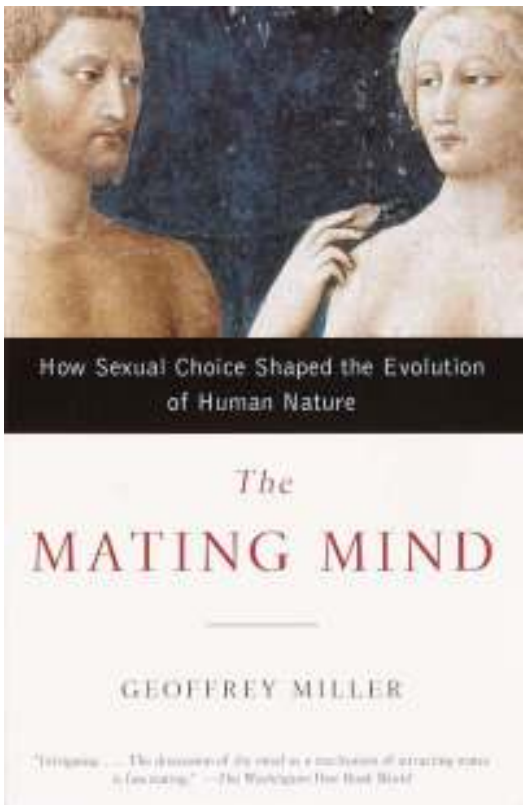
Dawkins, like a good scientist, took stock of the evidence, acknowledged the issue, and made amends.
In more recent versions of "*The Selfish Gene*", Dawkins writes:

> Cooperation and mutual assistance can flourish even in a basically selfish world (…) we can see how even nice guys can finish first.

Dawkins went as far as to say that he could have called his book "*The Cooperative Gene*".

That is not to say that the "*Selfish Gene*" was wrong, though. The concept that evolution -and most of what we do- is in service of the selfish gene's reproductive goals still stands.

4. The Mating Mind



By G. Miller
Summary | Kindle

If you want to understand deeper nuances of evolutionary processes and sexual choices, then this is a top choice to go along with a broader textbook.

Besides its thought-provoking main thesis, Miller addresses two common misunderstandings of evolutionary psychology:

1. **Evolution ≠ "constant progress"**, or the myth that 'evolution always improves'
2. **Survival ≯ reproduction**, or the tendency to focus more on survival and male-to-male competition, rather than reproduction and male-to-female courtship

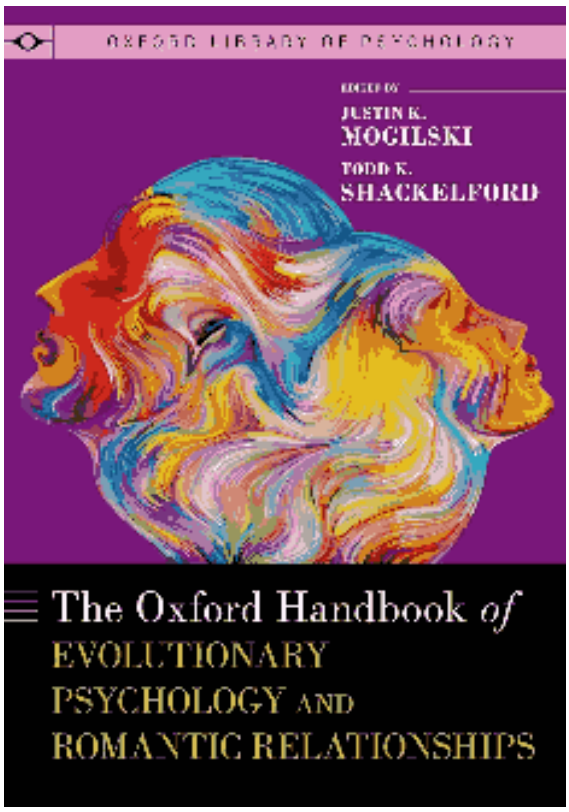
But evolution is complex.
It's both survival *and* reproduction, *at the same time*.
Sometimes the two don't go hand in hand, but can also (partially) move against each other.

Miller drives that point home.
And he does a great job of explaining the messier and more complex nature of evolution, including the more interesting cases of runaway sexual selection.

- See our video on 6 common understandings of evolutionary psychology..

The Mating Mind also introduces a thought-provoking new theory: that intelligence, together with kindness and altruism, evolved thanks to sexual selection, via courtship. The brain, he says, is a wonderful proxy for fitness, and courtship displays that mental fitness.

3. The Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych & Relationships



By Various Authors
Summary | Kindle

This handbook is a well of wisdom at the crossroad of evolution and relationships, and this entry also functions as a stand-in for quality handbooks.

It provides a narrower focus on mating and relationships, but it doesn't detract from a general understanding of evolution since mating and relationships are foundational to evolution.

It could gain with some streamlining and synthesis because different authors sometimes revisit similar and/or foundational concepts with slightly different angles and studies.

But overall, it was one of the most TPM-enriching books we've ever reviewed.
I took copious notes, and improved many articles thanks to this handbook.

Other recommended handbooks include:

- ***The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior***, same high quality, but potentially provides a broader overview
- ***The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity***, focusing on a crucial evolutionary area of reproduction, relationships, and cooperation/defection. High-quality work

I found the *Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology* series (*Female Sexual Adaptations* and male sexual adaptations) to contain some overlapping information but still informative, though in certain chapters I noted room for improvement in scientific rigor.

2. The Secret Of Our Success

by Joseph Henrich
Summary | Amazon

This is the only book on cultural evolution featured on our list—but it's a game changer.

Henrich presents a compelling argument that turns the dominant gene-centered narrative in evolutionary psychology on its head:

> In the longer run, genes are evolving to adapt to these culturally constructed worlds, and this has been, and is now, the primary driver of human genetic evolution.
> (…)
> This is quite different from the usual story.

I believe a possible counterpoint is that today's culturally constructed world may move too fast for genes to even be able to catch up.
But Henrich shares compelling evidence and logic to make his argument credible and convincing.

Henrich also takes some playful jabs at the gene-centered perspective, pointing out how it mistakenly downplays culture:

> In twenty-first-century textbooks on evolutionary psychology, for example, culture is often politely acknowledged and then waved off as being mostly relevant for explaining phenomena like the "hula-hoop craze, changes in clothing styles or fashion, beliefs about alien beings, and jokes."
> (…)
> these now outdated evolutionary views fail to recognize that the *central force* driving human genetic evolution for hundreds of thousands of years, or longer, has been cultural evolution.

The gauntlet has been thrown.

If Henrich and his peers are right, cultural evolution may revolutionize our understanding of human psychology.
I venture that we're possibly on the cusp of a significant shift in how we understand evolution, human nature, and,

most importantly, our future as a species.

Let's hope Planck's Principle—that science advances one funeral at a time—doesn't apply here because I'm eager to see it panning out.

So, why not give it the title of best evolutionary psychology book?

First off, genetic evolution remains foundational to understanding human nature.

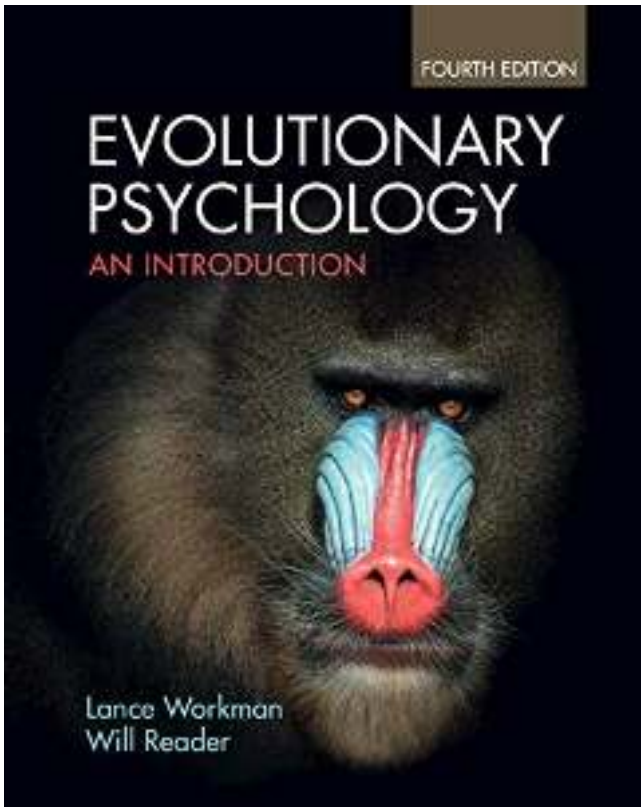
Second, cultural evolution is still developing and lacks comprehensive handbooks or widely accepted theoretical frameworks.
While biological evolution is supported by extensive empirical evidence and decades of collaborative effort, cultural evolution relies on pioneering individual work.

But this book is still essential for understanding how biological and cultural evolution complement each other—sometimes aligning, sometimes clashing, and with culture frequently overriding genetic influences.

Finally, this book and its companion '*The Weirdest People In The World*' revisit group-level selection, a concept sidelined by gene-centric theories.
It illustrates how cultural shifts enable more cooperative groups to outcompete and expand—ie.: Western individualistic and impersonal pro-sociality led to the West's global dominance—.

> The *central force* driving human genetic evolution for hundreds of thousands of years, or longer, has been cultural evolution.

1. Evolutionary Psychology: An Intro



By Workman and Reader
Summary | Amazon

Choosing the best evolutionary psychology book came down to a close contest between *Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction* by Workman and Reader, and David Buss's *Evolutionary Psychology*.

Both are excellent.

We ultimately picked *An Introduction* as our top choice because it offers a broader overview of the field. Workman and Reader trace the field from its Darwinian roots and evolutionary mechanisms across species to the captivating debates and competing theories that continue to shape the science today.

It's also accessible and written with learners in mind.
Chapter summaries, discussion boxes, and practical exercises make it ideal for students, beginners, or anyone looking to develop a foundational understanding.

P.S.:
Workman and Reader don't shy away from uncomfortable truths.
Among the many worthy quotes, take this one for example:

> In a sense, all sexual beings participate in a form of eugenics, albeit unconsciously.
> (…) when an animal (including a human animal) selects a sexual partner it does so, among other things, on the basis of (…) good genes

⍰ Evolutionary Psychology Books to Avoid

These books are, in many ways, *good*.

However, they had important biases that ultimately led to poorer conclusions.
Here they are:

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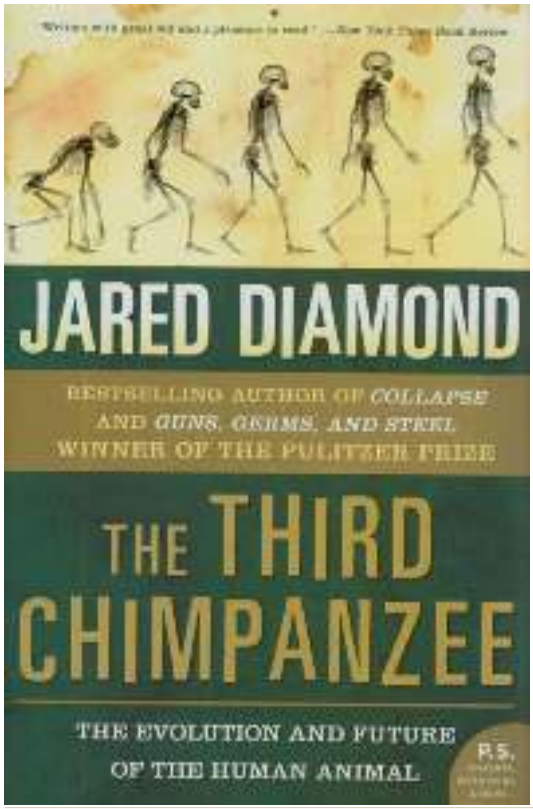
3. The Third Chimpanzee



Jared Diamond seems to align with the zeitgeist of the Standard Social Science Model, and this quote of his illustrates it clearly:

> "Ecological differences among existing humans are entirely the product of childhood and education".

The use of the word 'entirely' raises concerns.
Good scientists don't jump to conclusions, are open to being wrong, and tend to use words like "seems", "tends", "mostly", etc.

Diamond's approach seems motivated by the wish to counter genetic or racial explanations for human differences, as he himself writes:

> Until we can come up with a convincing, credible alternative explanation, the suspicion that racist genetic theories might be true will linger.

That stance is understandable in its moral intent.
But still, that's not a scientific approach, which should be unbiased.

Diamond's take would only gain authority if he admitted his biases and preferences.
When he doesn't, he earns a spot on this list.

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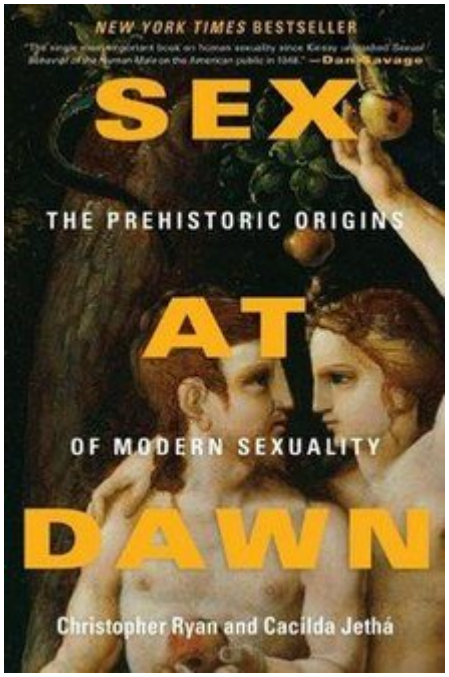
2. Sex At Dawn



Sex at Dawn feels like two swingers wanting to justify their preferences.

There are two main theses in "*Sex at Dawn*" and a third implied theme:

1. Humans are not (fully) monogamous
2. Humans enjoyed no-strings-attached sex like the bonobos
3. Monogamy sucks, let's go back to the free-sex thing like good hippies

With the "not *fully*" monogamous, there is nothing to opine
And it may be so well-accepted that it feels like making a case against a strawman.

The issues start with the second point, more dubious, and the third one, a moralistic claim.
To begin with, bonobos can be nasty to each other just like any other great ape (Sapolsky, 2017).

Second, the claim that "fathers didn't care about paternity" raises questions.
There are evolutionary reasons why fathers who didn't care about paternity are not well represented today.
Fathers who didn't care about paternity were out-reproduced by those who did, and they left fewer and fewer copies of their genes.

And finally, even if they are right, our past has no normative power as to how we *should* be, or even could be.

Ultimately, I enjoyed "*Sex At Dawn*".
But I didn't like that it presented as science what to me felt more like personal preferences.

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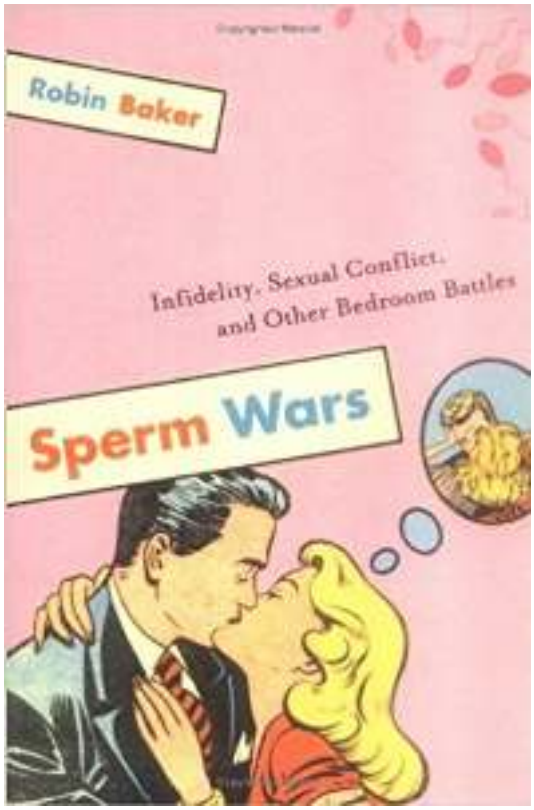
1. Sperm Wars



This would be another great book… If the author didn't present theories as facts.

More than two decades after the book released, there is still no evidence for the "killer sperm" the author lucidly describes as if it were a fact.

Also read:

- **Best psychology books**
- **Best books on manipulation**
- **Best books on power**
- **Best red pill books**

Change Log

Removed:

- ***The Blank Slate*** (28.12.2014). An interesting discussion about "tabula rasa hypothesis", behaviorism, and the "standard social science model" and how they affected academia during Pink's tenure.
  However, it veers deeply into politics and 'culture wars' and we prefer a list based on wisdom
- ***Why Beautiful People Have More Daughters*** (29.12.2024) as it's more intuition-based with some 'just-so stories' and lighter in evidence.
  The title itself betrays an emphasis on what's catchy, rather than what's meaningful. It refers to the Trivers-Willard hypothesis, which was weak even at the time the book was published, and struggles to replicate.
- ***The WEIRDest People In The World*** (13.01.2025), added in 12.2024 was replaced by the same author's *The Secret Of Our Success*, more focused on cultural evolutionary principles
- ***Behave*** (09.04.2025), great resource, and Sapolsky's background puts evolution into a biological context. But we removed it to keep the list more laser-focused on evolution
- ***The Origins of Virtue*** (05.05.2025), because it focuses more on cooperation than evolution in general. Furthermore, Ridley's analysis is solely based on rational costs and benefits, while other entries here also include extra insights to shed light on this fundamental human behavior
- ***The Moral Animal*** (29.06.2025), a book that's heavily featured in most other 'best evolutionary psychology books' lists' online and with which I have a special personal connection. It's the very first evolutionary psychology book I read, I underlined almost all of it, and I felt like I was unlocking the secrets to understand the world.
  But decades after its publication, there are more updated books to provide you with an overview.
- ***Evolutionary Psychology*** by David Buss: still a top choice and it remains our top pick under the best general psychology books for its human-focused depth.

Added:

The Secret Of Our Success (13.01.2025) as a brilliant representative of cultural evolution.
The entry may change if a handbook on cultural evolution comes out.

Ranking change:

- ***The Mating Mind*** dropped from #4 due to its more speculative nature and heavy focus on the evolution of intelligence. The new #2 also provides an equally speculative but convincing alternative to the evolution of intelligence.

What Is Sexual Market Value, and How to Increase It

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

The sexual market value (SMV) is an individual's measure of sexual attractiveness.

Sometimes referred to as "mate value" by academics, high SMV men are the sexual marketplace equivalent of high-value men in *social* exchanges.

High-SMV individuals have an easy time dating, have many partners to choose from, and generally date other high-value women or men.

This article explains how sexual market value functions, helps you assess your sexual market value, and helps you *boost* your sexual market value.

People subconsciously assess others' SMV while showcasing their best selves to elevate their own

So let's start:

Contents

- Sexual Market Value Theory
  - Sexual Market Value Dynamics
  - Sexual Market Value Is Power
- Sexual Market Value Assessments
  - Sexual Market Value Calculator
  - Male Sexual Market Value (Short Term)
  - Male Sexual Market Value (Long-Term)
  - Female Sexual Market Value (Short-Term)
  - Female Long Sexual Market Value (Long-Term)
- Traits of SMV

- #1. Male Resources
- #2. Male Social Status
- #3. Male Ambition & Industriousness
- #4. Kindness
- #5. Intelligence
- #6. Male Physical Traits
- #7. Female Youth
- #8. Female Physical Appearance
- #9. Faithfulness
- #10. Misc.: Art, “Fun”, Good Sex

- Ranking SMV Traits
  - Short-Term VS Long-Term
  - What Does She Need? Female Adaptive Problems
  - Microenocomis Explain Mate Value
- Mate Values Are Universal Calculations
- SMV Strategies
  - Pick A Niche
- Summary

Sexual Market Value Theory

We define sexual market value as:

> Sexual Market Value (SMV) refers to an individual’s overall desirability as a mate, determined by a combination of factors determines their perceived value in the mating market.

In simpler terms, the sexual market value is an individual’s level of attractiveness.

Sexual Market Value Dynamics

The concept of sexual market value is rooted in the negotiative dynamics of human relationships.
While some find this framework unpalatable, it is nonetheless supported by substantial academic evidence.

For example, the latest *APA Handbook* of relationships says:

> Both sexes would be most happy with a partner who is high on all desirable dimensions (…). However, most people (…) must compromise and make trade-offs.

Meaning: everyone prefers a mate with a higher SMV, and nobody wants a lower SMV mate.
Since nobody wants to settle for less, people usually end up with someone who’s on their level (assortative mating).

Indeed, **an individual’s SMV is the best predictor of the quality of his mates**. And that’s *especially* true for long-term dating.
Thus, the higher mate value, the more and better dating options one has.

Sexual Market Value Is Power

Your sexual market value largely influences your “dating power”.

In simple terms:

High SMV = high dating power.

The reason is simple: everyone wants a high SMV mate.
Quoting from the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology:*

> **humans** have evolved not to mate indiscriminately but have evolved psychological mechanisms to **evaluate and prefer mates who possess greater, as opposed to lesser, reproductive value**

However, that doesn't mean that everyone is out for the best of the best.
Instead, because everyone assesses others, people's success in the sexual marketplace is linked to their *own* sexual market value.

So, are you doomed at birth by your SMV?

No.

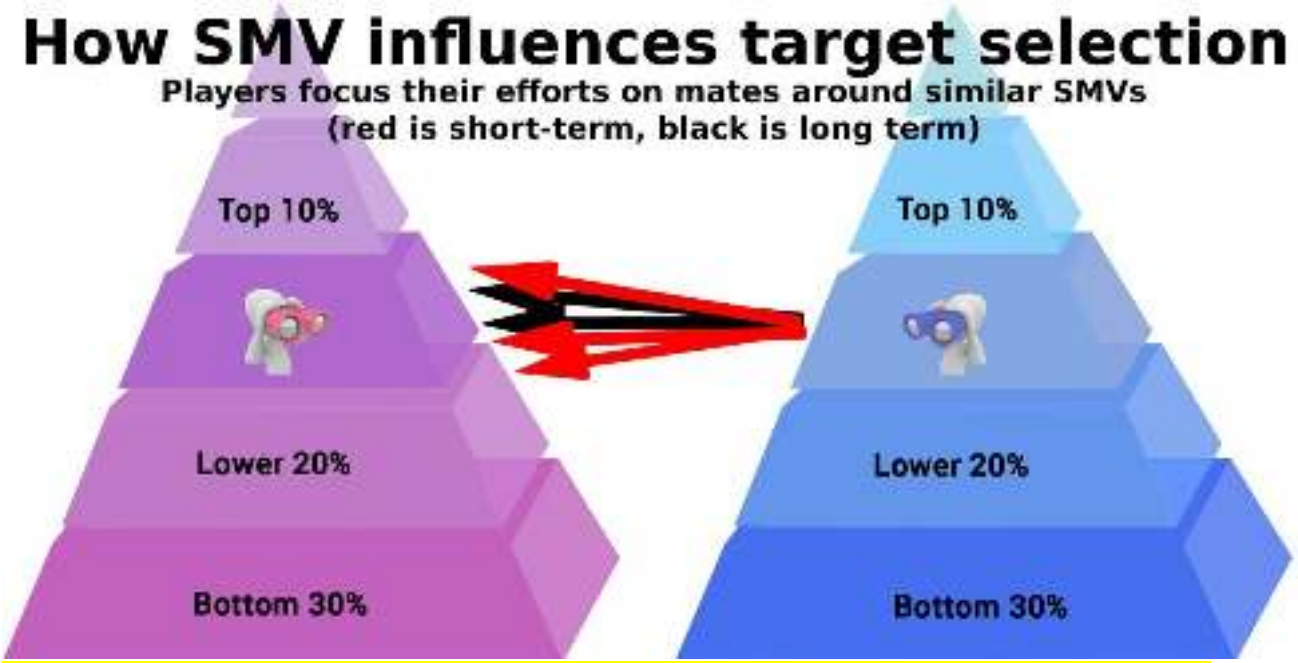
Luckily, **your SMV is malleable,** often *highly* malleable.
And you can almost always increase it with well-directed effort, smart marketing, and good old personal self-development.

You can even increase your SMV by simply changing how you *think* of your SMV.
We call that 'confidence'.

How SMV Impacts Mating Efforts & Partner's Choice

Most people have an inherent understanding of their own SMV.

That means that, largely, it's a myth that everyone -or women- seeks the "best of the best".
Instead, people usually target potential mates who are close to their own sexual market value.



Many men drop their standards and "date down" for short term, but maintain higher standards for long term

Usually, men are willing to "fish down" for short-term and uncommitted dating.
But also men tend to prefer similar or higher value partners for the longer-term.

Sexual Market Value Assessments

Please be aware of this:

Attraction is highly contextual and subjective, and **any SVM calculator or chart is inherently simplistic**.
Just as an example, read my note under the SMV calculator below.

Sexual Market Value Calculator

⚠ Warning again: it's a reliable calculator, but the final number is not destiny!

Sexual Market Value Calculator
For adults (18+) only.
Subjective, for entertainment/education.

Gender Male ▼
Mode Balanced ▼
Age
30
30
Looks
6.0/10
6
Height (cm)
178 cm
178
Fitness
6.0/10
6
Income
$50,000
50000
Status
5/10
5
bottom 10% top 1% / alpha
Style / Grooming
6.0/10
6
Confidence / Dominance
6.0/10
6

Your SMV Score

0
0.00 / 10
Interpretation bands: 0–3 = developing, 3–5 = average, 5–7 = strong, 7–8.5 = excellent, 8.5–10 = elite. Subjective; adjust weights to your context.
⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: SMV isn't destiny. Even as a short, low-status, low-income trainee at my old company's party, I

was with the most attractive woman. Smart men can always find a way!

For the charts, we'll use a few simplified ones, while addressing the biggest flaw of most: ignoring the distinction between short-term and long-term dynamics.

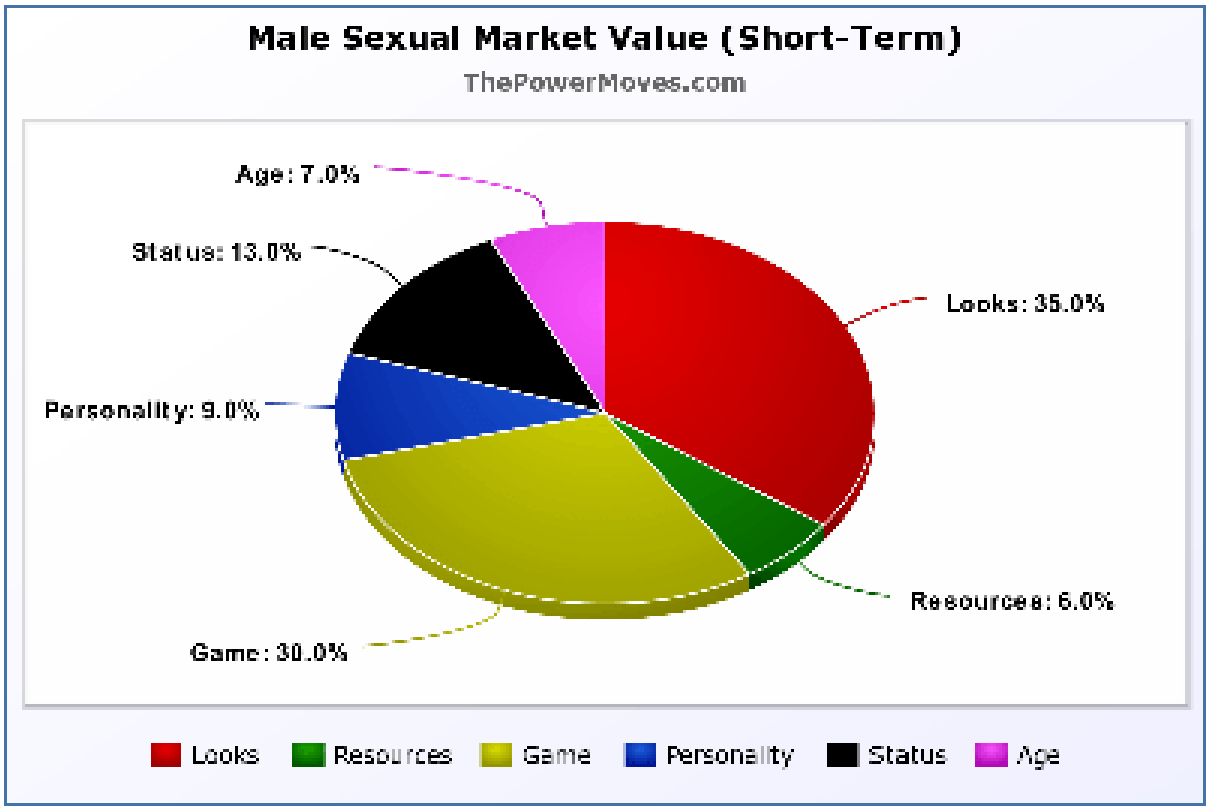
Male Sexual Market Value (Short Term)

Looks and "game" reign supreme in short-term.

If looks are the equivalent of standing naked, game is the marketing (or manipulation) of that package.

Everyone engages in some form of "game".
Conversation, personal style, nonverbal language, bonding and vibing with others—they're all game.

Games work best in short-term dating, just as marketing and sales work best in selling the product.
Once the sale has been done, the intrinsic qualities of the product come to the fore.
This is why honest self-development is one of the best forms of "game". Self-development improves your SMV for both the short-term and long-term.



One might ask:

Why are resources even featured in short-term mating?

First of all, it's simple logic.
And since logic simplifies at the extremes, imagine: at parity of everything else, would she rather accompany him at his mansion in a chauffeured car, or walk to his shared room in Shanty Side of Town?
Obvious answer.

Second, the two temporal dimensions are linked, and some women go for short while hoping for long-term.

Third, several studies showed that resources can also help in short-term dating.
For example, "conspicuous consumption" (Kenrick et. al., 2011), or throwing money around, is a powerful attractor in club environments.

Male Sexual Market Value (Long-Term)

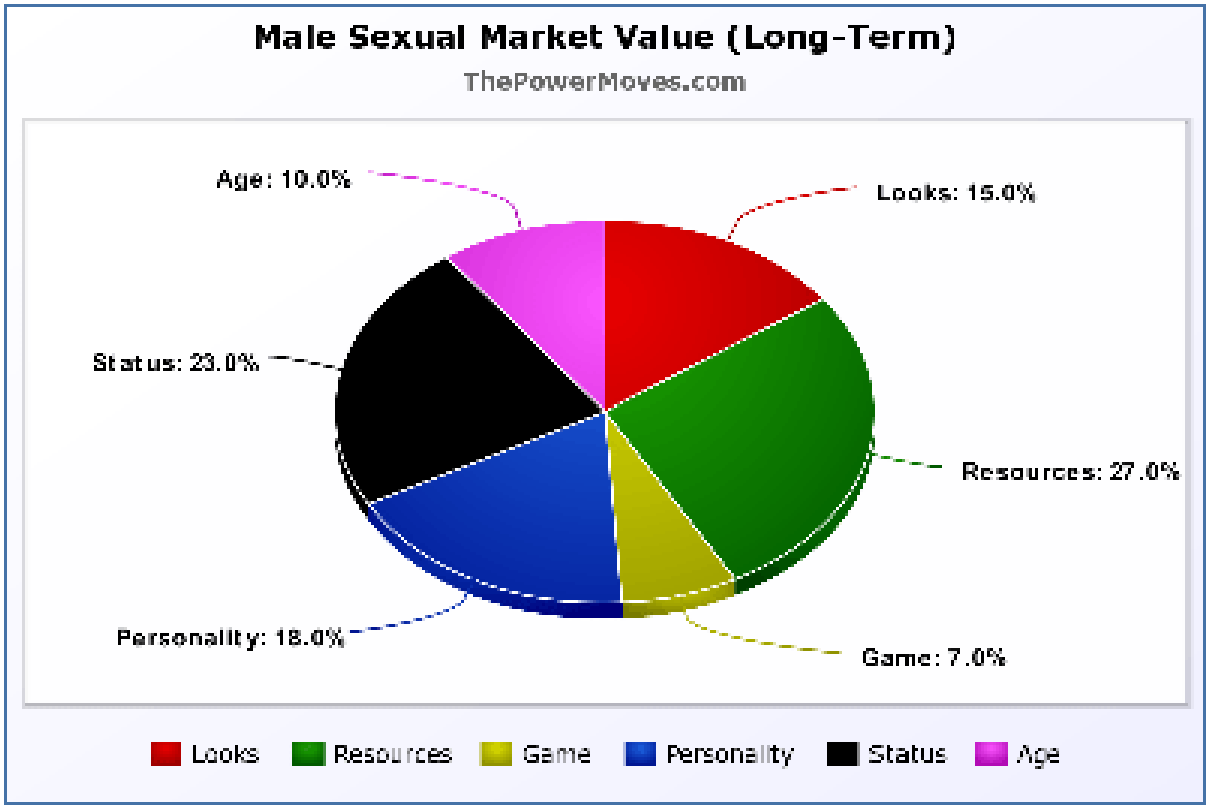
Now imagine you want to settle down.

And you would ask yourself the ancestral male question:

What do women want?

The simple answer is: everything.

For simplicity, we keep the same traits for each chart.
But a more realistic chart would add more traits, including the ones that facilitate long-term pair bonding such as kindness, maturity, secure attachment style, emotional availability, etc.

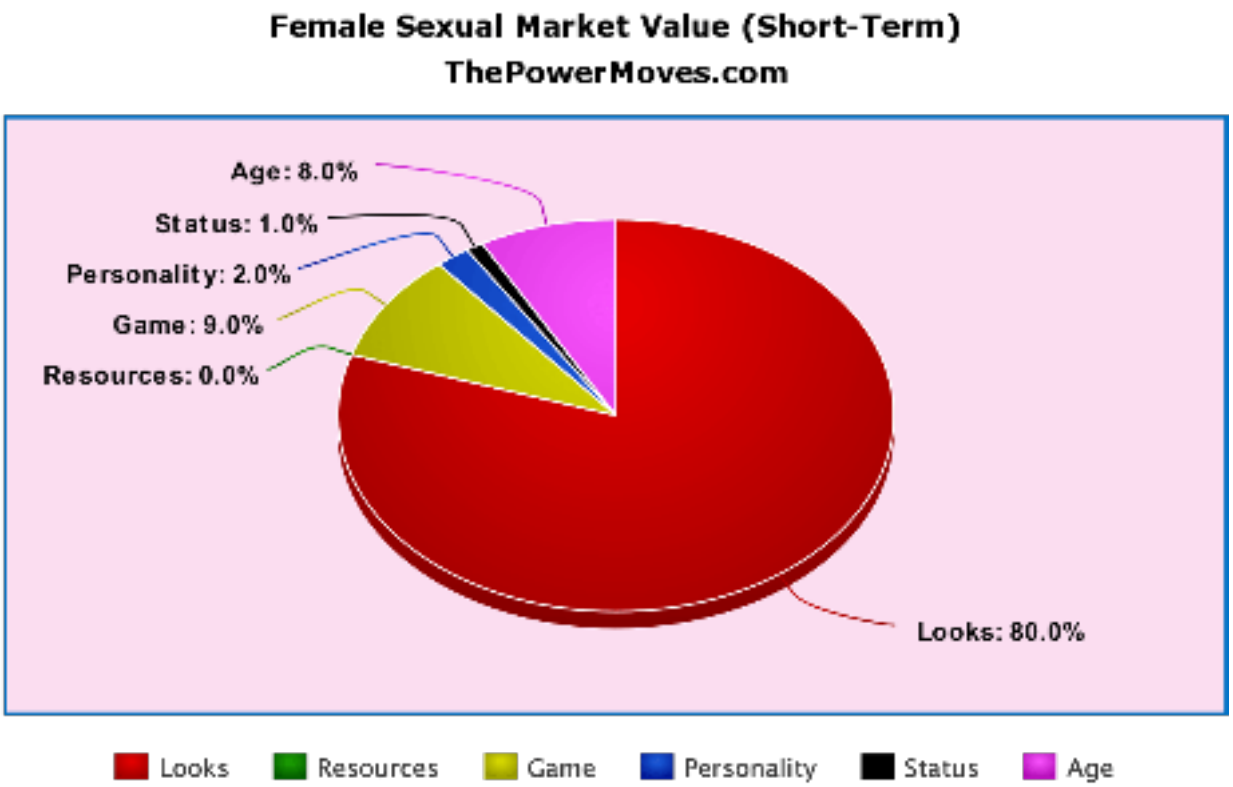


Game in the long term enlarges its scope to include relationship management and maintaining attraction in the long-term.

And of course, **all traits are at least somewhat connected** and overlapping.
For example, high-status men are perceived as more attractive, and even taller. And vice versa.
And high-status men tend to have more resources. And vice versa.

Female Sexual Market Value (Short-Term)

This one was *not* difficult:



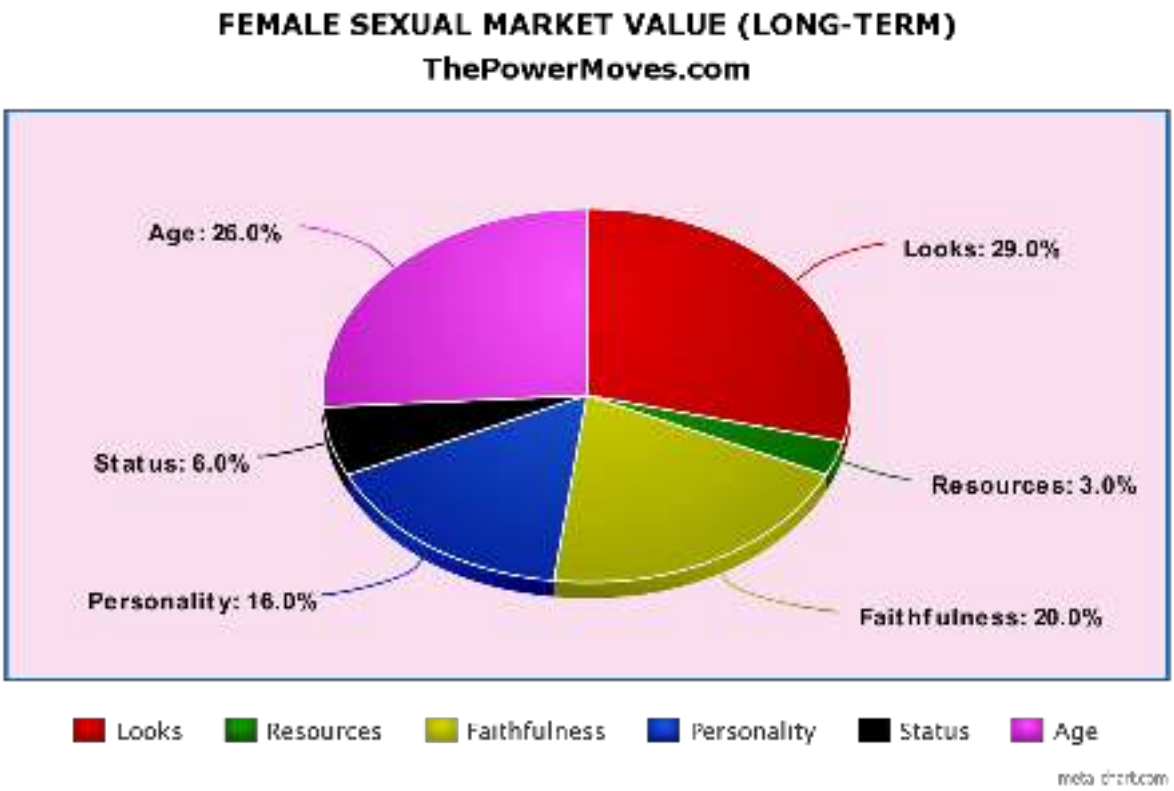
The game for women is the ability to make them horny.
Good game can complement looks, or can help make up for looks.

Female Long Sexual Market Value (Long-Term)

Here is one misunderstood, yet simple reality of SMV:

In long-term mating, men are nearly as selective as women.
And the inverse is also true: in “short-term mode”, women become more like men.

For example, when a colleague told me he wanted a woman with a master’s degree, I knew he was *not* a player.
Instead, he was looking for a wife.



Swapped “game” for “faithfulness” because men value it highly
Age is interesting.
A previously popular SMV chart assessed market value *only* based on age.

And it does matter a lot, indeed.
But there are still contextual elements.
First, it’s about the age one *looks*.
Second, it matters comparatively less in non-monogamous societies because men are not “stuck” for a lifetime.

Faithfulness, the most sought-after trait in several surveys, also matters less to very high-status men in polygynous cultures.
These men have many women, so they can allow themselves to care less about fidelity -unless they’re jealous and paranoid, exceptions always apply-.

Traits of SMV

These traits tend to boost, correlate, or signal high mate value:

#1. Male Resources

Says Buss:

> *The male occupational status seems to be the best predictor of the attractiveness of the woman he marries.*

Many studies show women’s preference for men with resources is universal across cultures, religions, and political systems.

Women prefer men with resources even when *they* themselves have resources.
Research among women in the upper-income bracket in the US showed that high-income women placed an even greater value on mates with high degrees, professional status, and high income.

High status and income men are aware of their ability to attract more desirable women.

As men's income goes up, they seek younger partners while also expressing a stronger preference for facially feminine women.

While resources are most helpful for committed long-term, they can also empower very wealthy men for uncommitted sexual access.
For example, Berlusconi placed several "entertainers" in his many condos around Milan and ready "on call".

#2. Male Social Status

Women desire men who command a high position in society.

For US women, high social status or a high-status job are almost as important as financial prospects.

Evolutionary psychologists say that women want high social status because it's linked to access to resources. I believe that's part of it, but power also plays a role.

Women also place high importance on indicators linked to high social status, including:

- Education
- Professional degrees
- Commanding the respect of the group (social power)

2.2. Women Wear Blinders to Low-Status Men

The *Handbook of Relationship Initiation* makes this point with a TV-show example:

> In an episode of Sex in the City, the four main protagonists bemoaon the lack of available men in New York. In fact, the establishment is stacked with young, reasonably attractive men—busboys, doormen, barmen, water waiters, and so forth.
> These men, however, are not mateworthy (and are almost invisible) because they fall well below the minimum criteria of status and resources

These attractive low status men can make good short-term flings -think of the proverbial "pool boy"-.
But women enter these relationships from a position of power and only "settle" for lower-status men.

See more in successful women dating.

#3. Male Ambition & Industriousness

Connected traits are:

- Ambition
- Industriousness
- Intelligence

In Buss' large-sample study ambition and industriousness were rated as important or indispensable.

In turn, both industriousness and ambitions facilitate men's growing income and social status.
And that may explain why men are over-represented among CEO and board members. Men are sexually incentivized to work harder.

As a popular Italian singer Adriano Celentano sang:

> He who doesn't work, doesn't make love
>
> *Pop Italian song lyrics*

And men took note.

Again, there is a major gender difference between the sexes here: women regarded a lack of ambition as extremely undesirable, while men didn't care about women's ambition.

#4. Kindness

In Buss' large survey data both men and women across the globe value kindness.

Buss says it's because support is important in life.
And a kind mate offers an unstated promise of support when we will all, eventually, hit a rough patch.

Kindness also increases the chance that a man will commit and provide, and make for a better father.

4.2. But... How About Assholes?

The stereotype goes that women *say* they want nice guys, but prefer assholes.

The stereotype is partially true, but what matters most here is power.
Women are attracted to behavioral cues of male social dominance and social confidence (Gangestad et al. , 2004; Li, Yong, Tsai, et al. , 2020).

Women's preference for dominance is particularly strong for short-term (Brown et al, 2022).

Bad boys beat "kind guys" whenever the "kind guy" is weak and unconfident. And especially for the short-term.
Viram Swami reached this same conclusion when reviewing the evidence for the nice guy / bad guy dichotomy: to be successful, the "nice" guy does need to be confident.

Also see:

- How to be a good asshole
- The asshole strategy
- **Power University** is designed to help these good men *also* become high-power, attractive, *effective* men

#5. Intelligence

Evolutionary psychology professor Geoffrey Miller says:

> *During human evolution, sexual selection seems to have shifted its primary target from body to mind.*

Think about men and boys meeting.
What do they do?
99% of the time, they talk.

Talking allows us to showcase and assess the health and intelligence of a person's mind.

Intelligence is also the meta-trait that allows us to play the dating game itself.

5.2. Humor, "Game", Conversations, Frames

Conversations and humor showcase intellectual brainpower.
And "frame control" is an indicator of social dominance and intelligence.

Also see:

- The role of dominance in seduction
- 10 frame controlling techniques

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

Humor may also be a well-adapted tool of sexual choice and sexual discrimination.
When a brain's pleasure center can be stimulated, but not stimulated by *everyone*, chances are that it's an evolved tool of sexual discrimination.

This is why "making her laugh" does indeed help.
And that's why women prefer men who make them laugh, whereas men prefer women who laugh at their jokes.

5.3. Vocabulary & Conversations

Vocabulary is at least 60% heritable and 80% correlated with general intelligence (and 20% with body symmetry).

A theory of the existence of so many synonyms when one single word would suffice is that words serve not to better explain things, but to display superior intelligence.

Why Men Stop Talking During Relationships?

A common complaint of women is that men stop talking during relationships.

That supports the theory that vocabulary, language, and intelligence courtship tools to *gain* sexual access.

But once sexual access has been granted, men don't need to put up with that effort anymore.
As someone said:

> Why should he regale you with poetry when 20 words a day suffice to have sex with you?

#6. Male Physical Traits

The female preferences for attractive physical traits include:

- Height
- Symmetrical body and faces
- Athleticism
- Toned muscles
- Masculine features (more personality-based than the previous ones)
  - Large jaw
  - Jutting chin
  - Beard
  - Low voice (up to a certain point)
  - V-shaped torso

Some physical traits, like height, are intercultural and present fewer exceptions (though still not zero).
Other traits are more cultural and contextual, including the preference for masculine facial features (Perrett et al., 1998).

The Virtue Is... Above The Middle, But Not Too Extreme

Many of these features have an upper limit.

For example, deep voice is attractive, but only up until a certain frequency.

Men struggle to understand this because **men keep being intimidated by more mannish men long past women are attracted by them**.

This suggests that for seducing women the “lover” strategy beats the “fighter” strategy (Tamsin, 2015).

We call this phenomenon “law of optimum balance“.
See here:

- Law of dating optimum balance

> Why Peak Attraction Is Really In The “Seductive Balance”

Male attractiveness

Men’s attractiveness may be the most underestimated trait in the literature.

That’s because much recent research and evolutionary discourse have been dominated by surveys (ie.: David Buss and David Schmitt SST theory).

Surveys are valid in certain contexts, but less in others.
And they tend to underestimate looks.

However, looks matter.
And especially so in the short-term.

In general, women look more at male faces than the body.
Men tend to look more at bodies than faces -younger men in locker-room mode may refer to “intercourse while covering her face”-.

#7. Female Youth

Men solved the problem of finding fertile women, in part, by looking for younger women.

The proof that men seek youth as a sign of fertility is in adolescent males, who instead prefer older women (an unrequited attraction).

7.2. The Appeal of MILFs

The MILF-apeal is real and widespread.

How do we explain this?

Well, think about what an older woman with children has proven.
She has:

- **Proven health**: she’s been around for longer
- **Proven fertility**: her kids are the proof
- **Proven mothering skills**: her kids being alive is proof
- **Experience being a mother**

From an evolutionary perspective, *the MILF is a safer bet.*

Many men prefer an attractive older mother to younger women

7.3. Youthful Behavior

Buss says that our ancestors had two types of evidence for a woman's health and youth:

1. Features of physical appearance
2. Features of behaviors

Feature of behavior includes:

- Bouncy youthful gait
- Animated facial expressions
- High energy levels

7.4. Age Matters More For Women

Quoting from the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology:*

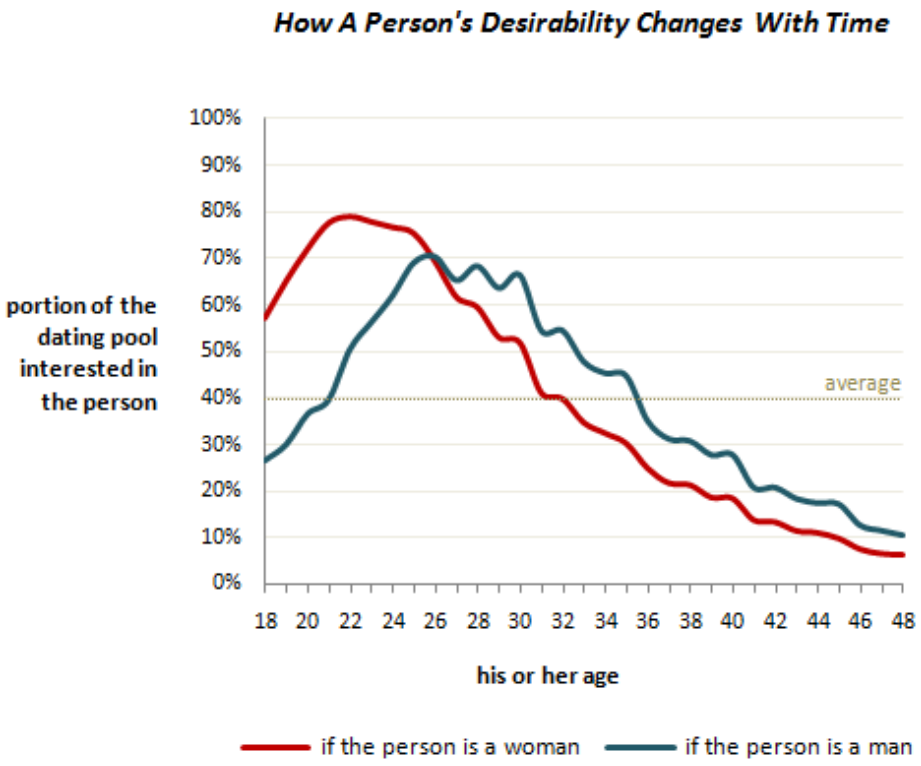
> Women's preference for a young, fertile-looking partner has been theorized and found to be weaker than that of men (Antfolk, 2017; Buss, 1989; Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2019; Kenrick & Keefe, 1992)

Why?

1. **Reproduction**: Age is more correlated to her reproductive value than men's
2. **Evolved preference**: Age is more correlated to beauty in women than in men
3. **Math**: Women's sexual value is based on fewer traits than men's, and age and beauty carry comparatively more weight

The peak of desirability depends on many factors but, on average, it's in the early and mid-20s for women and late 20s and mid-30s for men.

Here is a chart from OK Cupid, based on the number of messages men and women received:



Extra reminder: aggregate numbers are poor predictors of an individual's sexual market value because individual variances are large.

Some influences and mitigating factors to age include:

- **Availability of resources**

Destitute women might place a premium on resources and care less about age.

- **Quality & quantity of other traits**

Different traits can compensate for age.

Real-world data provides evidence. The richest 400 men in the US married women who were, on average, 7 years younger.
But when they re-married, billionaires chose mates who were on average 22 years younger.

#8. Female Physical Appearance

Men rate physical appearances much higher than women do.

Traits of high-appeal physical appearance include:

- Smooth, clear, and homogenous skin color distribution (signals absence of parasites)
- Facial femininity (signals your and more estrogen, ie.: higher fertility)
  - Full lips
  - Large eyes
  - Thinner jaw
  - Small chin
  - Chromatic contrast
  - High cheekbones

  - Relatively short distance between mouth and jaw
- Clear eyes
- Lustrous hair (hair quality and length correlate with age and health)
- Good muscle tone
- Leg length (long legs relative to torso length, 5% longer than the average receive maximum attractiveness)
- Symmetrical faces and bodies

Waist-to-hip ratio plays a role but has a smaller impact than overall body fat and shape (Tovee et al., 1998, 1999). Interestingly, men prefer the gait of women wearing heels because it makes for shorter steps and increased tilt and rotation of the hips.

8.2. Women's Physical Appearance Matters More

Physical appearances matter more to women's SMV.

While handsome men gain more in short-term dating, women gain both in short-term dating and long-term dating. And attractive women tend to have less casual sex and more relationships.

This is also why beautiful people tend to have more daughters than sons.

8.3. Status Boost: The Trophy Wife

Men value a woman's attractiveness also for the status boost it grants them.

The trophy wife is especially important for unattractive men because people infer that if he is with an attractive wife, he must have a very high social status.

#9. Faithfulness

Survey after survey shows that men care *a lot* about fidelity (Buss & Schmitt, 2019).

Even in relatively open-minded and modern societies, faithfulness still matters.
In a survey by David Buss, U.S. Men evaluated faithfulness and sexual loyalty as *the* most valued trait out of 67 possible characteristics.

Women took evolutionary note and strategically present cues to sexual fidelity when seeking long-term mates.
Also see the "Madonna-whore" dichotomy.

> The Madonna-Whore Complex: What it Means to You

#10. Misc.: Art, "Fun", Good Sex

Sex…

Why wouldn't anyone count *sex* in the sexual market value?

And there is much more, too.
Fitness can be displayed in countless ways.

Enter the appeal of poets, artists, and singers.
Some of these "alternative" signals of high fitness include:

- Art (albeit today it overlaps with status)
  - Body ornamentation

- Dance
- Irreverent humor
- Ideological ardor
  - Snake oil salesmen
  - Shamans
  - Honest idealists
  - Rebels
- Memorable storytelling
- Spiritualism, sometimes mixed with allusions to sex (see tantra)
  - Shared consciousness
  - Altered states of consciousness
- Pro-social behavior & charity
- Good sex

Both men and women enjoy good sex, and people who can provide -and market- their lovemaking skills are also providing a valued SMV currency.
The female orgasm is elusive because it's a sexual discrimination tool.

Pro-social behavior is also attractive in the right contexts.
Geoffrey Miller argues that both intelligence and cooperation evolved from sexual selection (Miller, 2000).
That's why men increase their charitable contributions and tips when women are around (it's virtue-signaling, as a sexual strategy).

Ranking SMV Traits

Precise measures are sexy.

Plug in your details, and get out a final number.
A "certitude" -ain't that nice-.

However, because of the high individual variance, any quantification and ranking is bound to be misleading.

But that hasn't stopped researchers from trying.
Here is how Buss' survey ranks the characteristics most commonly sought in a mate:

Rank	preferred by males	preferred by females
1	kindness and understanding	kindness and understanding
2	intelligence	intelligence
3	*physical attractiveness*[a]	exciting personality
4	exciting personality	good health
5	good health	adaptability
6	adaptability	*physical attractiveness*
7	creativity	creativity
8	desire for children	*good earning capacity*
9	college graduate	college graduate
10	good heredity	desire for children
11	*good earning capacity*	good heredity
12	good housekeeper	good housekeeper
13	religious orientation	religious orientation

And here's how they changed over time.

Let's improve this approach by differentiating short VS long term:

Short-Term VS Long-Term

People's SVM change depending on whether the assessment is for short, or long term.

For example, see how women's rating changed between the two:

Trait	Short-Term	Long-Term
Ambitious and career-oriented	1.04	2.45
College graduate	**1.05**	**2.38**
Creative	1.20	1.9
Devoted to you	**0.90**	**2.8**
Fond of children	1.21	2.93
Kind	**2.50**	**2.88**
Understanding	2.10	2.93
Responsible	**1.75**	**2.75**
Cooperative	1.47	2.41

ranging from –3 (extremely undesirable) to +3 (extremely desirable):

Ambition presents the biggest difference between short-term and long-term.

It explains why an attractive hippie with a guitar is a great short-term fling, but not a great long-term, "official" mate.
Same for the pool boy :).

Sexuality and skills are not on the table.
But men who are successful at short-term dating tend to have a higher sexual vibe and also to be more comfortable around sex.
The promise is better sex, partially, but also "guilt-free sex", where she doesn't have to play the Madonna and hide

her true self.

Of course, these are based on what people *say*.
I never trusted too much what people say :).

So I find a different approach more helpful.
Just like a good investor looks at what problem a new venture solves, the good SMV analyst looks at what a specific woman needs:

What Does She Need? Female Adaptive Problems

This is a high-level summary of why women want what they want:

ADAPTIVE PROBLEM	EVOLVED PREFERENCE
SELECTING A MATE WHO IS *ABLE* TO INVEST	Good financial resources or prospects
	Social status
	Slightly older age
	Ambition/industriousness
	Size, strength, athletic ability
	Intelligence
SELECTING A MATE WHO IS *WILLING* TO INVEST	Dependability and (emotional) stability
	Love and commitment cues
	Positive interactions with children
SELECTING A MATE WHO IS ABLE TO PHYSICALLY PROTECT HER AND CHILDREN	Size (height)
	Bravery
	Athletic ability
	Masculine body type
SELECTING A MATE WITH GOOD PARENTING SKILLS	Dependability
	Emotional stability
	Kindness
	Positive interactions with children

Adapted from the *Evolutionary Psychology* handbook

Of course, smart men can find different ways to help women meet their needs.

For now, let's move past the tables, though.

And now let's get more quantitative with this better approach:

Microenocomis Explain Mate Value

One way to measure what men and women tend to value ore is with budget allocation studies borrowed from microeconomics.

The principle is that people allocate their budgets according to how much they have, and what they need most.
In evolutionary terms, fertility is a "basic need", and the rest cascades from there.
Since women's fertility decreases faster, this model explains why men prioritize beauty -even in long-term dating-.

Quoting from the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology:*

> Li and colleagues confirmed the priority model using a budget allocation paradigm (…) For long-term mates, **men tend to allocate a signifcant portion of their low budgets on physical attractiveness, whereas**

> **women allocate a signifcant portion to social status** traits.
> As budgets increase, however, signifcantly less is spent on these necessities, and more is spent on other traits—so-called luxuries (Li et al. , 2002)

Women considering short-term mates also prioritize physical attractiveness about as strongly as men do for long-term mates, but spend increasingly more on other traits as budgets increase.
And men, of course, prioritize attractiveness even more for the short term (just like our charts above show).

Similar experiments where budget was used to reveal more information showed that women inquired first about physical attractiveness for short-term mates but social level for long-term mates.

Regression analyses on these studies showed that **being below average hurt more than being above average**.
A curvilinear pattern indicating a necessity's diminishing marginal returns, and indirectly also confirming the validity of the micro-economics approach.

Compensate what you don't have: it works

Quoting from the same handbook:

> researchers demonstrated that a compensatory decision-making strategy (where traits that are high in value can ofset those that are low in value) using weighted-sum calculations outperformed the Euclidean distance model and noncompensatory models such as take-the-best, threshold, and aspiration

For more, check our article "Exceptional Dating" based on this principle:

- **Exceptional dating**

> ExceptionAL Dating: How to Succeed Despite Shortcomings

Mate Values Are Universal Calculations

Everyone assesses other people's value.

Most of these calculations are unconscious, but no less real.
And the consequences are endless and far-reaching.

Just three examples:

- **People forgive high-value cheaters** more than lower-value ones (Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfeld, 2007)

The unspoken calculation is that higher-value maters give more. So they're more *afforded* to stray.

- **Higher mate value partner = higher relationship satisfaction** (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016)

Worth noting though this is only true up to a certain point. If the discrepancy grows *too* large, partners may get uncomfortable (the optimum balance again).

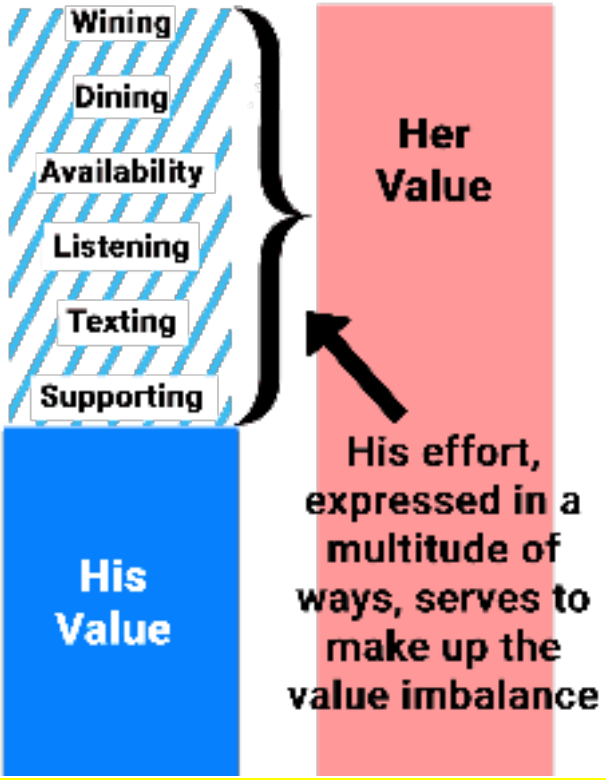
- **High-mate value partners = more jealousy** and mate guarding (Buss and Shackelford, 1997)

The subconscious calculation is that higher value partners are more likely to stray because of more options. They're also a bigger loss if lost, and harder to replace.

- **Men are more romantic when women are scarce**

When men outnumber women, women and relationships become more valuable.

The shift is so powerful that whole cultures change, shifting towards more courtship and romance.
For example, studies suggest that when men outnumber women, men invest more, marry more, value their partners more, and become more romantic.



The longer, more effortful, and more expensive the courtships, the higher the woman's value is compared to the man

SMV Strategies

So many traits… And such a great opportunity!

Especially for men.
It allows for specialization and for choosing along the lines of personal preferences.

Sure, the indicators of overall fitness do correlate with each other, but it's not always a *high* correlation.
Says Geoffrey Miller:

> (..) such correlations might be quite modest.
> (…) Because each indicator is costly (so it works according to the handicap principle), there are trade-offs between indicators. This allows scope for individuals to differ in their allocation of resources to different indicators

An example of such specialization is a relationship-type of man VS "player".
The former displays kindness and commitment, the latter focuses on looks and personality/"game".

See more here:

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

Pick A Niche

Now that you know it's a market, think about how to market yourself best.

Here are some ideas of successful male archetypes for you.
All different, but all can be attractive:

> 10 Types of Seducers Exlained: Pick Your Niche!

Summary

Mate value refers to an individual attractiveness in dating and mating contexts.

Albeit still somewhat controversial, the concept of mate value should be as natural as life itself to any unbiased mind.

Animals assessing other animals' mate value is a natural consequence of *any* animal's drive to maximize their reproductive fitness.
Humans included.

Our goal was to provide a simple and "real world" analysis that everyone can understand but that is as scientifically rigorous as a textbook.

Reminder: we embrace honor and human respect here

We respect respect-worthy human beings of all stripes and shapes based on *character*, rather than 'beauty'.

And we take a can-do attitude on this website.

We firmly believe that a realistic look at dating dynamics empowers both men and women to live richer and more fulfilling lives.

Including, if that is their goal, finding a loving and supportive partner (love is also part of humans' psychological makeup, BTW).

Our Power University alumni told us they became 7 times more attractive. Check it out **here**.

The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

To understand dating and sexual dynamics, you need to understand the sexual marketplace.

Let's start with a quick definition.
The dictionary of power definitions defines the sexual marketplace as:

> The sexual marketplace (SMP) encompasses everyone looking for sex or relationship and who can realistically meet or interact with each other.
> In the SMP people offer their sexual value (offer), compete with other members of the same gender, and seek and assess the sexual market value of potential mates from the opposite gender (demand).

While sexual marketplace dynamics are more the theory of dating, this is the type of theory that provides the foundation to better understand and internalize the tactics and strategies.
When you understand the forces, needs, and drives that govern the sexual marketplace, you also increase your mating IQ.
And a higher mating IQ helps you to:

1. Be a better and more strategic dater
2. Assess your partners better
3. Be a better leader of relationships

People enter the SMP to date, and dating is a way to assess each other's SMV
So let's start:

Contents

- It's A Negotiation
- Sexual Marketplace 101

  - 1. Men Are the Offer, Women Choose
  - 2. Female Beauty Confers Huge Power -& Determines Her Sexual Mores-
  - 3. But There Are Limits to Beautiful Women's Dating Power
  - 4. … And Top Men Have Top Power
  - 5. Women Want Money & Commitment (MPI Theory)
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- Sexual Market Place Power Dynamics
  - 1. Before Sex, She Has More Power
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  - 3. After Commitment, She Has More Power
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- Bargaining in the Sexual Marketplace
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  - 3. Sexual Bartering in Humans
- Mating Systems & Power Dynamics
- SUMMARY

It's A Negotiation

Some still consider the sexual market place concept "fringe" or "pseudo-science".

In part, it's because people *wished* it wasn't true.

For some, an approach based on self-interest, power, and calculative negotiations offers a bleak portrait of human nature.

But there is little to open that market forces ARE at play even in dating and relationships.

The latest *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships* says:

> Whenever people have the ability to choose partners and partner quality varies, we should expect competition for more desirable partners. This competition for the "best" partners occurs in a biological market (e.g. , Barclay, 2013, 2016; Noë & Hammerstein, 1994, 1995).
> In any market, supply and demand afect the value of a good (e.g. , a romantic partner), and anything afecting supply and demand can also infuence the mating market

And the latest *APA Handbook* of relationships clearly describes dating as a negotiation:

> Both sexes would be most happy with a partner who is high on all desirable dimensions—physically attractive, wealthy, charming, agreeable, and so on (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999). However, most people are not in a position to attract a partner who is perfect in every way, so they must compromise and make trade-offs. When forced to compromise in choosing a long-term partner, men and women make very different choices. Women prioritize social status and give up good looks
>
> *The APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology, Volume 3: Interpersonal Relations*

So now that you know that this is a valid model, let's learn it better.

Sexual Marketplace 101

The basis of most dating power dynamics and gender differences comes down to three evolutionary facts:

1. **Women produce fewer eggs, while sperm is abundant** (**anisogamy**): the female sex cell is larger, more costly, and "rarer". Male sex cells -sperm- are easier to produce and more abundant.
   Meaning: Women are worth "more" than men when it comes to reproducing
2. **Women invest more time and resources in reproduction, at higher risks** (**female internal gestation**): women are also more vulnerable and have higher nutritional needs during pregnancy.
   Meaning: Women learned to want, seek, and secure supportive men
3. **Women invest more time and resources in child-reading** (**breast-feeding**): on average, babies *need* mothers for survival but can survive without fathers. That has eventually and likely led to women also developing more feelings and connections with the children
   Meaning: women are worth more when it comes to both reproducing and nurturing future generations

Evolution rewarded those who had the most surviving and reproducing children.
Evolution, working on the above biological differences, led to the following gender differences:

1. **Women are more careful and risk-averse**: a reproductive mistake or an unsuccessful child is costlier to a woman than to a woman. That makes women generally more cautious around dating and sex -for example, waiting longer for sex–
2. **Women are pickier**: since women stand more to lose from mating with the wrong man, they tend to be choosier in their partner selection
3. **Women invest more in children**: each child means more to a woman than to a man, so women tend to be more protective and nurturing towards their children

Because of these biological differences, on average: **men are always ready and willing to have sex, while women are more careful and pickier**.

This is one of the most fundamental laws that govern the sexual marketplace.

1. Men Are the Offer, Women Choose

On average:

- **Men are the offer**: because men are generally more willing to add a sex partner, men are the offer
- **Women are the demand**: because women are generally more risk averse and stand more to lose, they are pickier and scout and test the offer before choosing

Sexual marketplaces vary in time and place. But because of the biological underpinnings, sexual marketplaces tend to be buyers' markets, favoring women (with many important exceptions, of course).

So over the whole population, on average, **women have more power in dating** (heads up for the empowered men reading here: you don't have to care about the whole population! You're an individual and you can always buck the trend).

The comedian Bill Maher put it nicely in one of his stand-up jokes:

> For a man to walk into a bar and have his choice of any woman he wants, he would have to be the ruler of the world. A woman who wants the same power, does her hair and puts makeup

In other words: when it comes to short-term dating, any reasonably attractive woman has more or less the same power as the (male) ruler of the world.

2. Female Beauty Confers Huge Power -& Determines Her Sexual Mores-

Women are better served pairing up with a high-quality man than by sleeping around with lots of guys.

So more beautiful women are more able to secure high-quality men and, generally speaking, prefer securing a relationship with them.
Hence, more beautiful women are more often in relationships than less beautiful ones.

Beautiful women command lots of power and are better served to find a high-quality provider

Higher SMV Women Have More Relationships

Women's overall value impacts their dating choices and behavior.

Less attractive women have fewer chances of securing high-quality men. So they may lower their standards and be more willing to engage in short-term sex.

Obviously, they'd also prefer sleeping with high-quality men.
And since men are more willing to go for quantity, they may be able to get a short-term fling with a man who is generally higher quality than they are.

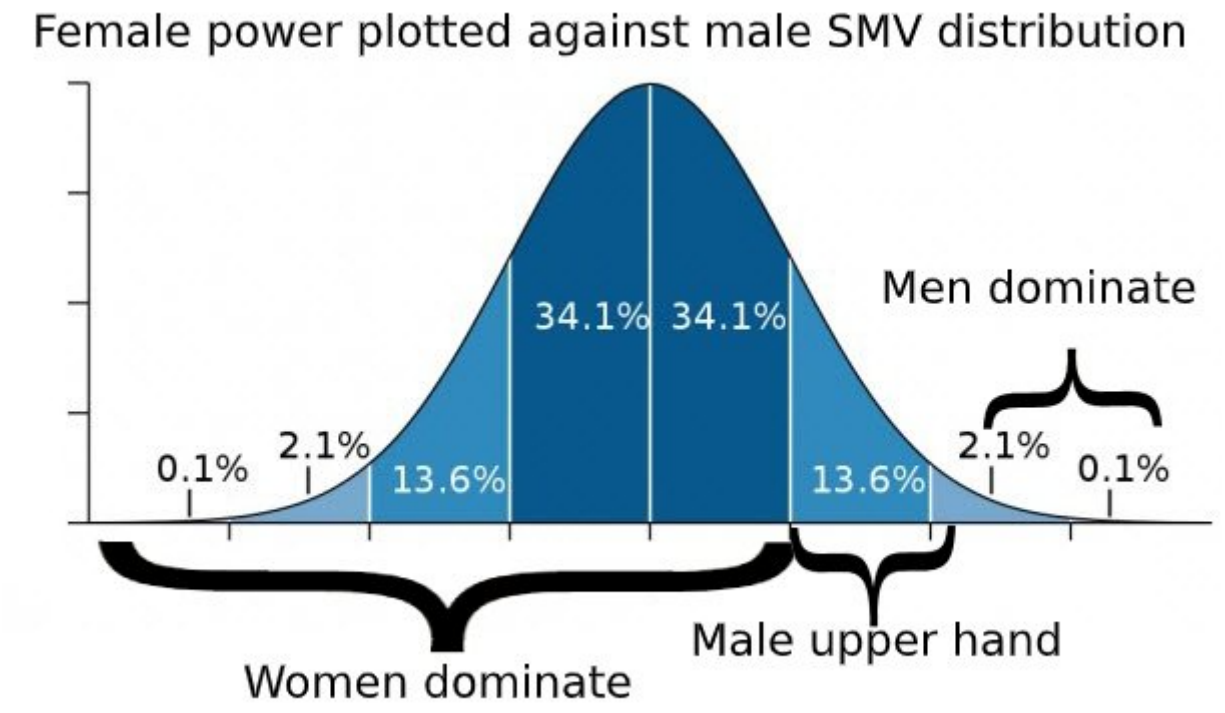
For the same reason, less attractive women might also pursue a quantitative strategy, such as giving birth to more children with comparatively less providing.
It's rare indeed to see a very beautiful single mother and single mothers seem to cluster in the lower rungs of society.

3. But There Are Limits to Beautiful Women's Dating Power

So, women have power, and men just parade and hope to get picked?

Well, no.
Here is another rule of the sexual marketplace: general rules are poor at explaining the dynamics of the sexual marketplace. The general rules most often apply to the middle of the bell curve for average men within normal distribution environments.

But where selection really gets interesting -and where there are most rewards to be reaped- is at the extremes.
Taking sexual market value as an example, and to simplify:



More exceptions and contingencies to the general rule of female power in the SMP:

1. Dating is not only short-term, and men also get pickier for long-term
2. Women don't want any man but truly crave higher-quality men
3. Female dating power is highly dependent on age and looks

Finally, the most powerful players in the sexual marketplace are the very top men.

4. ... And Top Men Have Top Power

At the very top, men have so much power, status, and resources that they can attract and take care of many women -together with their children—more than any other average man could.

The women know it, and they all queue up.
When those guys are also attractive or have overall high fitness, they are the complete package. And women queue up even more.

At the top of the pyramid, power, status, and resources matter more than looks in terms of his power to sleep with lots of new women, especially in the ancestral environment in which we developed.
But if you think about it, it's also true today.
If it were a race for more casual sex, few male models could beat an average-looking tycoon.
And that's even more true with fame and celebrity status.

Remember the difference in reproductive effort that, on average, gave more power to women in dating?

Well, at the very top, since men don't have to wait more than a year to reproduce again, the power dynamics invert, and anisogamy also gives power to men from a genetic point of view.

The evolutionary proof that top men have more power than top women is in the babies.
Very powerful men tend to have more sons than daughters.

5. Women Want Money & Commitment (MPI Theory)

Male parental investment is crucial to understanding human dating.

In simple terms:

Parental investment, first theorized by Robert Trivers, defines how much parents invest in their offspring. Male parental investment (MPI) defines how much the males of a particular species invest in their offspring.

Human males are relatively high in parental investment compared to many other species in the animal kingdom. But they are not nearly as high as human females. Such as: men don't invest in their children nearly as much as women do, but they do invest quite a bit.

For clarity, when we talk about "investment" in humans we refer to generally sticking around and helping each other, both emotionally, financially, and with daily actions.

So, how does male parental investment affect sexual dynamics?

In nature, the females of species who cannot expect any help from their male counterparts (ie.: no male parental investment) *only* mate based on male genetic qualities (fitness) as displayed by certain fitness indicators (ie.: looks, plumage color, physique, dancing prowess, and any other symbol that the particular species developed as fitness indicator).

Meaning: **that when females cannot get any help to raise offspring, men bring only themselves to the table** (no future help or resources), **and females mate based on attraction**.

Conversely, when women *can* get resources they will *also* look and screen for resources (and their availability to them).

In humans, most women can secure support for child-rearing -or, at least, the promise of it-. So, **when women are choosing long-term relationships and, even more, starting a family, they will also want men who will help and support them** (with child-rearing and household finances). And they will tend to discard those who are not able or willing to invest anything (that is not necessarily to say that the man who helps and supports them is the biological father of her children, though).

This is especially true for high-quality women. High-quality women can more easily pick and choose among several men who are willing to help with child-rearing (men get in exchange a high-quality partner, good genes, and a social status boost).

Flowers and gifts are a sign of his willingness to commit and provide

6. Women Want Commitment & Devotion (Future Signaling Theory)

Sure, the man having resources is good and nice.

But it's not enough.

Women also seek signs that he will make those resources available *to her*.

How does she do it? Commitment is one way.

In part, **commitment is the measure to which a man promises to make his resources available to her**.

And of course, she wants to see "proof" that the commitment is true and not just verbal. Enter gifts, dinners, wining, and dining, picking her up, investing time in her, etc., etc.

Some evolutionary psychologists say that feelings developed as a way to make men stick to a woman to help raise the children. And that's why many women also want to see "proof of love" to make sure that he will stick around and help.

We can also speculate that women evolved a set of tools and behaviors apt at controlling their relationships so that they could more easily control men, together with their support and resources.
Check out this article for that:

- **How women control men and relationships**

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

Sexual Market Place Power Dynamics

Alright, let's get into some proper sexual power-dynamics now.

We will quickly review a typical date progression and analyze where the power lies:

1. Before Sex, She Has More Power

Sex is a huge milestone in any budding relationship.

Be it short-term or long-term, before sex, women have power.
If he is spending time with her outside of obvious friendships and professional partnerships, it's almost a given he would like sex with her.

This holds true, on average, even in the case of high-quality couples.
Sure the woman is excited around him and might really want him, including sexually. But she still has the power of denying and is still holding the most important card: sex.
This is why **men must always be careful, and smooth, in the lead-up to sex, no matter their SMV**. Indeed, a botched-up escalation is often taken as evidence of a much lower SMV.

How the man acts to being rebuffed is also important
See here an example of smooth handling of a rejection:

"No problem", perfect tonality to handle rejections like a boss

2. After Sex, He Has More Power (& She Needs to Chase Commitment)

As we have seen, human males are often happy and willing to "nest up" and stick around.

But still, not *all* men commit and stick around.
And when they don't, it could be disastrous for her.

That's why while men seek sex, it's usually women who care more about commitment.
Especially after sex.
Why?
Because when sex begins, the woman is more and more at risk of getting pregnant. And if she hasn't secured his commitment by then, that could be a costly mistake for her.

Of course, some men do chase for commitment.
But that's not ideal from a power dynamics point of view.
When men enter a relationship after chasing commitment, they lose all their power and enter the relationship as the needier party.
They cannot maintain the initial attraction, she loses respect, and it's bad for all.

3. After Commitment, She Has More Power

After commitment, it should hopefully be more about teamwork than power.

But still, we are analyzing power dynamics here, and the question of "how has more power after commitment" has a definite answer: she sees a power resurgence.

Why?

Think about it: who gains more with commitment?
The woman.
Sure, he also gains much with commitment, including exclusive access to her reproductive system. But while a man maximizes his potential with lots of casual sex, a woman is better served to raise children with the help of a committed partner.

And that's why **commitment is more of a win for women**.
The woman has no higher upside potential than a commitment to a high-quality man. But a man has a much higher

potential for outside commitment.
That's why, with commitment, the man is giving more and the woman is taking more.
In some cases, **men sub-communicate with a commitment that she is worth more than him, and commitment serves to make up the difference**.

Purely from a mathematical point of view, as we saw, she *is* worth more than him because his reproductive contribution is cheap, while hers is high-maintenance.

Still, a man might still be better served by letting her go after the commitment.

He proposes and professes endless love… And gives away all his power

4. After Children, He Has More Power

After the children are born, the man has more power.

Why?
Because the woman is more invested in the child.
Because since women invest more in children and can have fewer children in their lifespan, a child is worth more to the mother. Furthermore, a child needs the mother to survive but doesn't need the father.

That means that the father could walk away and the mother would still have to take care of the child… On her own. So right after the child is born, women need male help and provide more than the man needs the woman.

Ironically, it's the mother's greater commitment that allows the father to potentially neglect the children even more. **Breaking up with young children is the ultimate game of chicken**, and it's usually the woman who swerves first because, if she didn't, the child would die.

A completely amoral man could abandon a woman when she needs him the most and seek another woman to impregnate, having his cake and eating it too -from a genetical point of view-.

Most modern nations have instituted laws and regulations to force men to at least provide financial support to children.

For more, see:

- The stages of power in dating and relationships

> Relationship Power Dynamics 101

Bargaining in the Sexual Marketplace

Remember the social exchange?

Well, it's the same here.
Imagine dating as a big exchange.

And as we have seen in the sexual market value overview, there is a plethora of traits that people seek and exchange.
Especially for men, those traits are many and varied, often with only a tiny limited overlap among each other.

This means **men need to master more areas of their lives to reach their full potential**.
But that also gives men more freedom and more potential for power because they can make up for one trait's lack with another trait's abundance.

1. Value Exchanges In The Sexual MarketPlace

The rule of thumb:

> People tend to pair up around the same overall value.

That's why **self-development is crucial to sexual success.**

The self-assessment of one's own sexual market value is a mix of self-esteem, confidence, sexual marketplace feedback, past sexual success (or lack thereof), and of course, temporal and environmental variables (ie.: the competition and normal mood swings).

Of course, the assessment varies somewhat but, overall, people tend to have a relatively good grasp of their value and an unconscious idea of what they can realistically "get".
Porper value targeting and matching helps reduce rejection and wasting time on unobtainable mates. But it's also important to the health of the relationships, and since the health of the relationship is also important to make and grow healthy children, it does make sense to target people who are going to be happy with us.

However, partnering up with the same overall value is not the same as "being similar".
Most couples do end up looking similar, that's true, but **most couples look similar only because most people are not excellent in any single trait.**

Enter what the "disassortative bartering" is.

2. Couples Match Total Value (Disassortative Bartering)

Because the sexual marketplace matches different intra-gender needs and wants, it's very possible to end up with very different couples.

How?

With disassortative bartering.

The general rule is that the more value you have, the more you can ask back.

But since there are different traits that are being exchanged, a subset rule is that **the more of a *certain type* of value you have, the less you can give in a different type of value.**

Biologists for example report that in some species of birds more attractive males work less and care less about the children.

Why?

It's because a huge amount of value in one trait (physical appearance) allows those birds to give less -or nothing- in another trait (caring and support).
But the couple still forms because she is still getting enough total value.

3. Sexual Bartering in Humans

The same is true in humans.

Since the currencies that both sexes appreciate are different, you can get couples who *look* much different.

For example:

- The young woman who's trading her looks and reproductive years for his resources
- An unattractive but powerful smart man pairing up with an attractive woman
- Handsome black man pairing up with an overweight white woman

These exchanges are perfectly valid because, albeit uneven on a specific currency, they still match up on the total value.
Or so at least think people who enter those relationships.

The only ones who complain, of course, are more average people who are not very valuable in any specific currency.
So instead of looking at themselves –or, mind you, to the obvious fact that the couple was happy enough to enter into a relationship-, they prefer finger-pointing and acting "offended" and "scandalized".

For anyone who wants to see, disassortative bartering is everywhere.
Women demand higher income to date races they don't like, billionaires marry young women (Pollet et. al., 2013) and psychopaths court older women to monopolize their finances (Brown, 2009).

Power allows for the bargaining sex in exchange for opportunities

Mating Systems & Power Dynamics

Culture, environment and marriage systems heavily impact dating dynamics.

In general:

- **Monogamy empowers lower status men**
- **Polygyny empowers high-status men**
- **Women may be better off with polygyny's larger choice**
- **Society may benefit from monogamy**

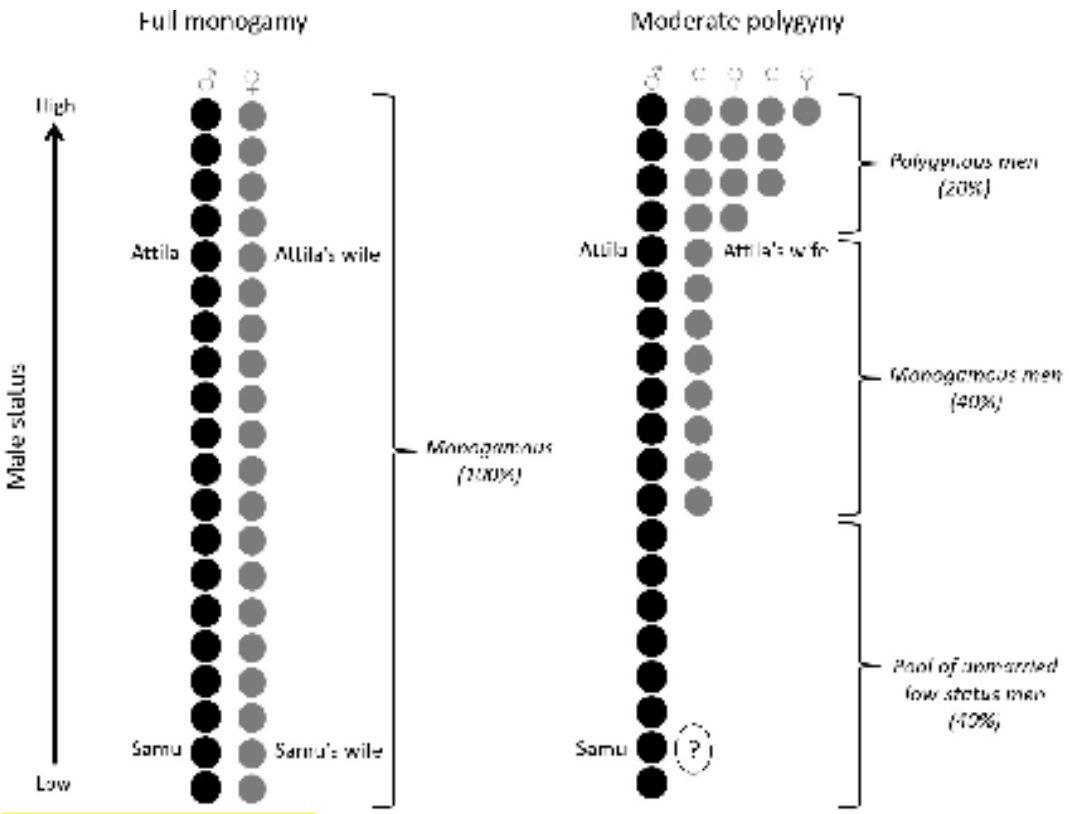
Why women may benefit from polygyny?

It's largely a question of larger pool to choose from.

For example, in environments with scarce resources, a woman may be better off being the 10th wife of a king than the only wife of a struggling peasant.
However, attractive women may gain with monogamy because they can monopolize a high-status man.

And what about society?

It doesn't take much for polygyny to create a pool of disenfranchised men with little hope for relationships or sex. And they have nothing to lose:



From Joseph Henrich, 2020

Many Western societies have been moving away from monogamy. Some authors defined Western society as “serial monogamy”, or “soft polygyny”.
There is also plenty of room for men living in big cities to be fully polygynous (whether that’s polyamorous, such as with the consent of all, or hidden).

SUMMARY

The sexual marketplace follows many of the economic rules of supply and demand, with operators trying to get the best deal for themselves.

This post gave you a quick overview of some of the most fundamental rules that govern the sexual marketplace.

10 Sexual Market Value Hacks to Boost Your Attractiveness

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Sexual market value (SMV) is crucial to dating and attraction.

At The Power Moves, we specialize in actionable strategies to gain status, respect, and attraction.
And in this guide you'll learn the top hacks to improve your attractiveness and thrive in the dating market.

Contents

- 1. Go Where Women Outnumber Men
  - Rationale
- 2. Go Where You're Most Prized
  - 2. Race Impact on SMV
  - Higher Status
  - Physically
  - ⍰⍰ Nice Guys Move To Safe Places
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  - ⚠ Money Making Up For Looks
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  - Careful With 'Build It & Women Will Come'
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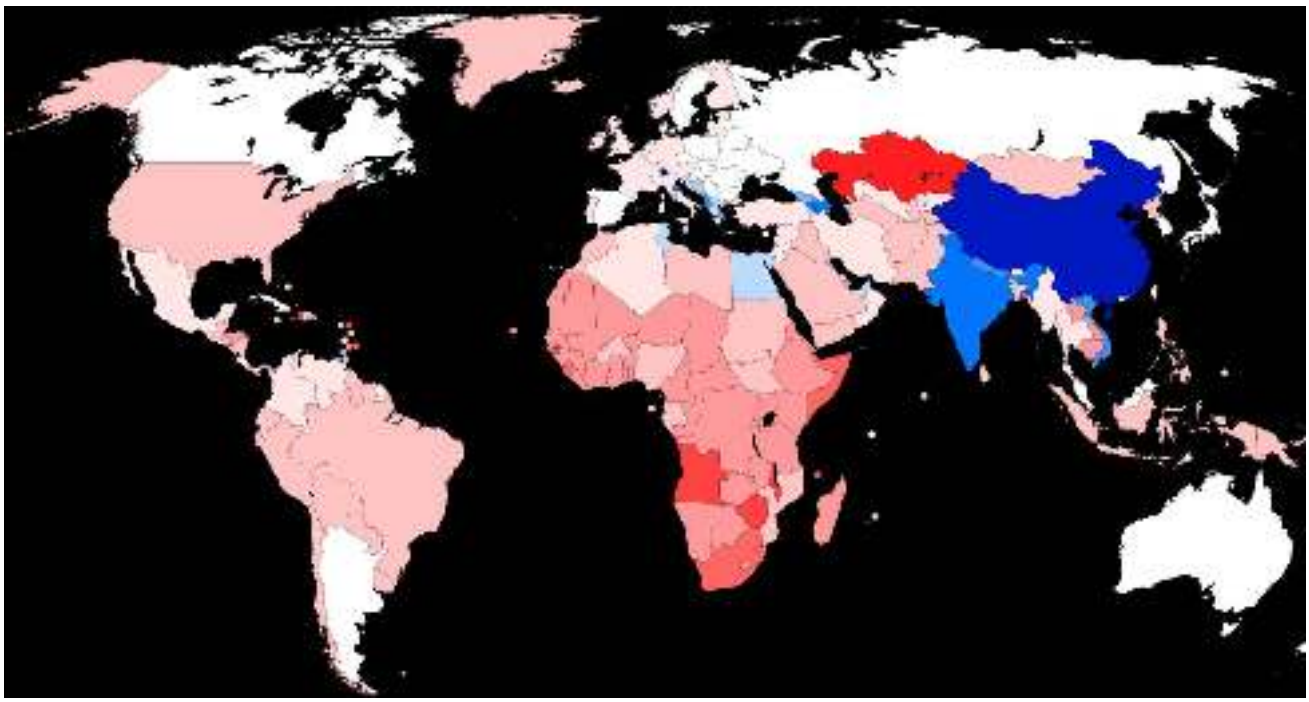
- 8. Boost Your Preselection
  - Rationale
- 9. Date The Right Women
  - First-Mover Advantage
  - Go For Hidden Gems
- 10. Keep Going: It's a Numbers Game
- Bonus: The Ultimate Hack

1. Go Where Women Outnumber Men



The gender ratio applies to all levels: work, clubs, and cities you move to.

For example:

- **Work**
- Fashion industry <— Gay population bonus
- Graphic designer
- **Cities**
  - New York <— Gay population bonus
  - Berlin <— Gay population bonus
  - Philadelphia
- **Countries**
  - SE Asia <— Trans population bonus
  - Eastern Europe
- **Shocks** that reduced the man's population (e.g., wars, migrations).

And de-prioritize tech-heavy cities, large military bases, etc.

⍰ Consider gay & transexual excluded from official statistics
Gay cities underestimate the gender gap and are often libertine and hookup-friendly—perfect for party lovers. Places with a large transgender population further skew the local dynamics because they resemble women.

Rationale

The gender ratio boost is underappreciated, powerful, and *fast* (Birger, 2015).

Self-development is upward mobility and takes time.
Moving is lateral mobility, and easier.

When women outnumber men dating gets easier for both short term and long-term:

- **Hookups increase** as women have less power to demand resources and commitment
- **Men short-term dating strategies** (lover strategy) rather than ones based on monogamous continued investment

- **Cheating increases** in monogamous relationships increases

2. Go Where You're Most Prized

Or where you're *less* disadvantaged.

2. Race Impact on SMV

- **White men: Africa & SE Asia** where they prize white skin
- **Asian men: where your culture is popular**
- **Black men in Northern Europe** may fare comparatively better

2014

OkCupid QuickMatch Scores

		ASIAN women	BLACK women	LATINA women	WHITE women
men rating women	ASIAN men rating...	15%	-20%	2%	3%
	BLACK men rating...	2%	1%	2%	-6%
	LATINO men rating...	4%	-18%	10%	4%
	WHITE men rating...	9%	-17%	3%	6%

		ASIAN men	BLACK men	LATINO men	WHITE men
women rating men	ASIAN women rating...	24%	-27%	-15%	18%
	BLACK women rating...	-13%	23%	-3%	-6%
	LATINA women rating...	-14%	-16%	18%	12%
	WHITE women rating...	-12%	-8%	1%	19%

White men and Asian women often have advantages in certain regions
The chart suggests that:

- Men's white skin still provides an advantage
- Asian women date better, potentially because of the association with submissiveness
- People still prefer the same ethnical background

In general, race is a 'superficial layer' that in any social exchange matters most *before* getting to know people.
After that, personal qualities come to the fore.
That being said, unfortunately, it still matters.

I suspect that race matters more for women than for men because men are judged on more traits, and race gets "diluted" more.

Black skin can polarize opinions, but that can work in your favor.
Meanwhile, Asian men may have seen rising appeal thanks to the global popularity of K-pop and Japanese manga culture.

⍰⍰ Go Where You're Positively *Unique*

Principle:

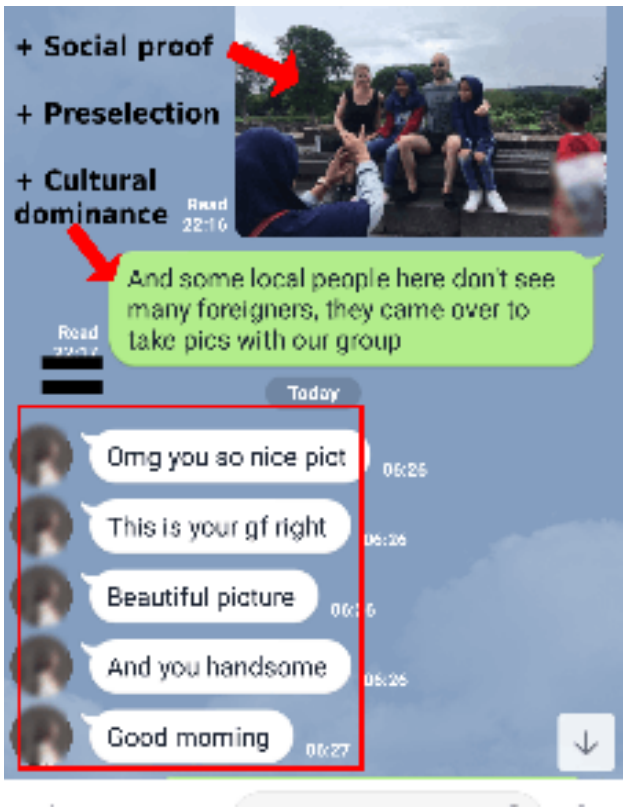
Your advantage grows as the number of similar alternatives decreases.

For example, being white in SE Asia cities is advantageous —but in a smaller town, you're a VIP.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **VIP-ing around the globe**

Lucio:
Indonesian town women asked me for pictures. Groups of young girls also walked to me.
When I left a Meetup group a girl -virgin- offered to join me.
In Africa women that my friend rated as attractive *complained* when I didn't meet them.
And a cute girl on a Vietnam bus offered my friend her phone number.

Leveraging the preselection ⍰⍰
Psychology research shows that women look at what other women like to discern what's attractive.
I used that with even more attractive women:



Minority Advantage

Just being in the *minority* sometimes is an advantage.

Women are curious, and minorities can be polarizing, which is also good.

Women who dislike local men also seek foreigners <— ⚠ Includes women with negative experiences, or with low local value, so shields up

Higher Status

Different cultures are 'dominant' in different niches.

For example, an Italian background would boost me in international clothing, luxury, arts, or wine industries.

Most Western men moving to poorer countries automatically get a boost (partially because of a higher status frame).

🤔Lucio's Take: **Status power moves for power & bonding**

Lucio:
Light-hearted power moves can increase both status and attractiveness, and bond.

For example, visiting an art and history museum with a local Korean, I joked at how recent their 'oldest' manuscripts were and how simple the artwork was.
The comparison was that 'my' background/civilization was much older and advanced -and hence 'better'-.

Avoid The 'Lower-Status Immigrant' Stigma

Immigrants are preframed as lower-status 'financial migrants'.

Plus, there may be stigmas.

Act opposite to the stereotypes:

- Dress better
- Remove thick accents
- Align with the host-country culture
  - Be more 'open-minded' if from conservative countries
- Date within the foreign community

Physically

Gym types may fare better on beaches and open-air parties.

Metrosexuals stick to large cities.

⍰⍰ Nice Guys Move To Safe Places

Albeit evidence is mixed, some research shows that women's preference for masculinity and strength increases with environmental hazards.

Nobody gains with unsafe places, but thin, feminine-looking men and ‘nice guys’ may be especially penalized.

Move to places where male competition and female selection rely less on dominance and aggression and more on smarts and good jobs.

⍰⍰ I bet he wouldn’t be as popular in a place ravaged by gang warfare

3. Strategize For Your Goals

Humans have a vast array of sexual behaviors they can select from (Buss, 2016).

And both personality, background, and culture influence their behavior and preferences.

Short-term & Quantity

- Libertine countries
- Big cities
- Bars & clubs

Long-term & Commitment

- Conservatives environments
  - Church
  - Religious countries
- Towns

Making First Experiences

- Countries where dating is easier for you.

4. Strategize For Your Strengths

For example:

- Good skills but no looks ⍰ social circle / cold approach
- Good looks ⍰ upscale venues
- Introverted ⍰ cold approach / targeted socialization
- Extroverted ⍰ house parties / bars

Clubs are terrible for introverts and below-average-looking men

Target Women Who Value You

Some traits may make you higher value to specific women.

⍰ Examples:

- An Italian player met women by Italian language schools (he got their schedules)
- Middle Eastern guy attends pro-Palestinian rallies to meet sympathetic women
- ⍰⍰♂ Well-dressed guy (me) meets women in fashion streets

5. Use Your Money (Wisely)

Money matters more for long-term and committed relationships.

⚠ Money Making Up For Looks

.! ⍰ Using money well requires strategy & power skills!

Look for:

- Conservative women
  - Family-oriented
- Security-looking women
- Long-term oriented women

- ⚠ Low-status women <— ♟ Ensure you're more than just a social climbing tool
- ⚠ Luxury lovers <— ♟ Ensure you lead & control your spending

Except for luxury lovers, they're often in conservative, poorer, and smaller towns.

Money & Geography

As *The Oxford Handbook* suggests, poorer countries' culture places a premium on wealth.
And as Sacco summarizes in *The Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology*, there may be a tradeoff. Such as, higher status women prefer indicators of genetic quality, while poorer women prefer high status men.

In brief: a Westerner's average income takes him much farther in poorer countries.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **provide for a partner, not extended families**

Lucio:
I saw families in developing countries bringing their attractive daughters to upscale malls looking for wealthy-looking foreigners.
It was interesting, and a bit sad.

⚠ Ensure you remain in charge.
Meet her 1:1, ber careful if her family is involved, or negotiate a convenient arrangement. Lead the exchange, and ensure it's you and her first. Don't let the family dictate.

Money For Effective Dating

- **Create *experiences* with your dating**, lead her into a world of possibilities to mix the best of both worlds
- **Get a VIP table and send others to invite girls** for you

Money For Family-Formation

One can:

- Have family in a poorer country with a family-oriented woman
- Co-parent in a poorer country
- Pay a surrogate mother to have children

Careful With 'Build It & Women Will Come'

Money *complements* skills.
Avoid using it to make up for personal qualities and personal development or you will only attract superficial women.

In general, chasing money to 'date well once rich' is a poor strategy for many Westerners, trading the certitude of their present best years for future uncertain results.

Avoid the 'hustle approach' in well-off countries

As Godhsee argues, socialist policies empower women financially and decrease the need for both wealth, and a male provider.

Principle:

The more distributed wealth, the less money matters
 De-prioritize money to date in wealthy countries

Northern Europe, wealthy and redistributive, is the worst for the 'hustle strategy'.

6. Find Your Niche

Observe what most men pursue -and *whether they're successful*-.

Chances are that popular niches are overcrowded.

For example, most men still go for the provider role. So the 'dinner at an OK restaurant and sell your dependability'

may be over-supplied.

Fit Your Favorite Underrepresented Niche

Best mix:

- You like the niche
- The niche is under-supplied
- You like the girls who like your niche of choice

🤔Lucio's Take: **Here's the 'beta' who out-slept the alphas**

Lucio:
Most ambitious men went for 'alpha' group status, muscles, flashy cars, dominance, and embracing conservative ideologies.

Meanwhile, the guy they'd call a 'beta'—short, scrawny, carless, and warm to women on first approach—was out-dating them all.

My stylish player niche, vibing and understanding women with a solid base of power skills was a 'blue ocean' of opportunity.

Remember: strategy beats dominance.

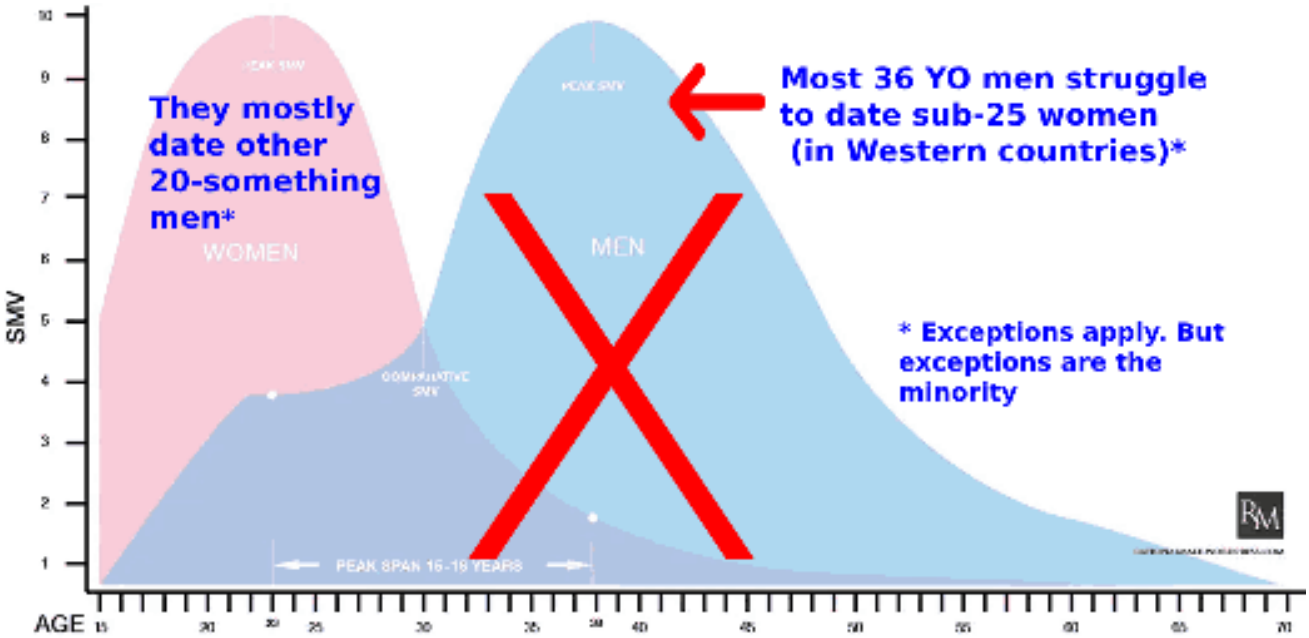
For some inspiration see:

- Seducer types: find your niche

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

7. Time Your Dating

Some authors shared a sexual market value chart plotting age and gender:



Although the char above gained early popularity, it's now getting clear that it lacks nuances and can be misleading.

For example, it may be true for some men to 'peak' at around 36. But that 'peak' doesn't directly translate to 'peak dating options' for women at *their* (supposed) peak.

Instead, proximity (e.g., college, work, or social circles), similarity of interest, and Western modern culture generally mean that sub-25 women date men in their 20's.

Luckily, you don't exactly need a sub-25.
But to maximize your dating, it's best not to wait around hoping you'll become an Adonis in your mid-30's :).

Hence, to maximize age for most men:

- **Teens**: whatever happened happened :)
- **College**: party & hookups -be safe! Always use protection-
- **20's**: date around, learn through quantity
- **Early 30's**: increase standards
- **Mid 30's**: look for a quality woman (if you wish to settle down)

We share specific examples and techniques in our dating program.

8. Boost Your Preselection

Attraction is socially influenced.

Some tips:

- **Curate online profiles**, including attractive women
- **Befriend attractive women** and go out with them
- **Show pictures with attractive women** that are relevant to a story/experience
- **Share stories** involving:
  - Exes
  - Suitors

- Gay men making a move

Rationale

Attraction is not simply what *she* likes but, in large part, also what *other* women seem to like.

Why?

First of all, it's a shortcut and the brain loves shortcuts.

Second, from a genetic point of view, she prefers offspring that can easily find a mate to procreate.
And what many other women like trumps what one woman prefers -even if that one woman is her-.

This means that attraction is not highly objective but, in part, it's also a social construct. And that's why **female attraction is social and influenced by what other people (especially women) like**.

But since she can only judge what she sees, the same guy could a catch one night if he's flirting with two attractive woman, or a nobody if he's sitting alone.

9. Date The Right Women

For short-term, you're free to go after 'unrestricted women'.

But for long term:

First-Mover Advantage

Some women never dated around and they can make for perfect girlfriend materials.
For example:

- **First visiting the big city**, you'll find them sightseeing and shopping, looking lost and wonderous
- **Dating apps in travel mode**, swiping in small towns
- **Day game**, demure and conservatively dressed
- **Working behind the counter**, in low-visibility jobs

Go For Hidden Gems

Most men go for the showiest women.

Examples:

Dressed in miniskirts, went out alone, and sought followers with ‘thirst traps’.
She was often approached.

But:

Author's life example for alumni's

Dressed well but conservatively, only partied with boyfriends, kept a low profile in life and social media -panorama pictures, private profiles, and no 'sexy poses'.
She had never been approached.

Wish I could show you the picture, but to my taste, the second was also far more attractive.

Ignore the flash, and focus on attractive women with understated styles.

10. Keep Going: It's a Numbers Game

You heard them:

Women want 6 feet, women want money, women want status, women want confidence, and bla bla bla.

And they're all true.
But still, the only hard rule in dating is that **every rule has exceptions and exceptional men break them.**

Take height, one of the most universal women's preferences.
I had taller women approaching me -or calling me in tears to get back-.

And the best way to break rules is to work on yourself, and put the law of the large number working for you.
And getting Power University will also likely help you :).

For more on exceptions, see:

> ExceptionAL Dating: How to Succeed Despite Shortcomings

Bonus: The Ultimate Hack

The ultimate hack TRANSCENDS dating for good.

It gives you ULTIMATE UNNEEDINESS.

No, it's not a fake BS tool.
It's for real.

I'm just shocked at how few guys realized it.

Which is also why it's so good :).

We're just not yet ready to share it publicly.

⍰ This is a preview from Power University. Our alumni stated that they became 7 times more attractive to women⍰

Power University: Evolution & Version History

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 November 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Power University is a long-term, research-driven program.
It is not static, and it is not a one-time release.

Since launch, the course has been repeatedly upgraded to improve:

- Conceptual clarity
- Real-world effectiveness
- Scientific precision
- Learning structure and sequencing
- Practical examples

Each version reflects new insights gathered from:

- Student results, coaching, and feedback
- Ongoing academic research and primary literature reviews
- Real-world experience

Power University remains a living system — continuously refined to remain the **most complete and effective curriculum for understanding and applying power dynamics in real life.**

This page documents the evolution of Power University over time, including the rationale behind the updates.

- **Current version**: 9.2
  - Upgrade 10 underway

Contents

- 9.0. Update: 20% more wisdom, 3x faster
  - 9.1. Update
  - 9.2. Update
- 8.0 Core Update (Structure & Organization)
  - Structural & Organizational Update
  - Content Updates & Upgrades
  - 8.1. New Lessons & Improvements
- 7.0 Core Update
  - 7.2. Various Smaller Updates
- 6.0 Core Update
  - 6.2. Strategies of Power
- 5.0 Core Update (Career Strategies)
- 4.0. Core Update (Basics of Power)
  - 4.1. Workplace Self-assessment
- 3.0. Core Update (Dating)

- 3.1 Update (Quizzes)

9.0. Update: 20% more wisdom, 3x faster

Date: March 2024 – March 2025

9.1. Update

Date: March 2025 – October 2025

- **Exercises** to all key lessons
- **Upgrading** of all lessons, following the lessons learned from the later stage of 9.0 upgrade
  - Leveraging AI for better structure and delivery
- **Curriculum restructure** focused on the core competencies

9.2. Update

Date: April 2026 – May 2026

This upgrade sharpens PU's focus on **practical skills, strategy, and self-defense** around Dark Triad traits and manipulation.
We added a **research-based synthesis** and removed less actionable content—making PU faster and higher ROI for agentic men.

⍰ Dark Triad Edge
A research-backed synthesis of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy—translated into **practical strategies and skill-building exercises**.

⍰ Dating Strategies
A high-level approach to achieving dating goals with the highest possible ROI, sometimes without even dating at all.

➖ Machiavellianism
Removed as a standalone lesson: valuable, but more introductory and less actionable.

➖ Gaslighting
Removed from the core curriculum; kept as an **optional (recommended) resource** for self-defense and red-flag detection.

✨ Strategic Thinking (Skill)
Upgraded for clearer application and real-world execution.

8.0 Core Update (Structure & Organization)

Date: 11 June 2022 – 10 July 2022

Structural & Organizational Update

We addressed first and foremost the structure and organization to take full advantage of the new course learning management system.

While the older system only had modules -> lessons, the new learning management system had modules -> lessons -> topics.

Because we wanted to avoid a proliferation of lessons with the older system, lessons we much longer. And because we have too much great and groundbreaking content, some techniques and examples had to be fitted into the "closest matching lesson". The downside is that this led to very long lessons, and a poorer match between lesson titles, and content.

In the new system, the topics are nested under the lessons in a drop-down menu, keeping the front end sleek, compact, and easy to navigate.
So taking advantage of the better technology we re-organized the content with the following benefits:

- **Shorter lessons for faster and easier consumption**: no more intimidating lessons of 8.000 words requiring 2-3 hours to go through. Now whenever you have half an hour free, you can do one more lesson.

- **One lesson, one topic** (higher semantic relevancy between titles and content): you can read a lesson's title and know exactly what's inside. It's not just a cosmetic change, since when you prepare your mind for a certain topic, you're also better able to internalize that content.
  Furthermore, it makes it easier to go back to PU and find exactly what you were looking for

- **"Prioritization Tags" for maximum efficiency** ("optional", "advanced", "theory", "foundational", etc.): with higher granularity, we could mark what's "foundational", "advanced", or "nice to have" but not necessary.
  This way, if you are in a hurry and fully internalized, you can skip the "OPTIONAL" lessons.
  More beginner students may also keep the advanced lessons for after they've finished PU -or go faster through them to get an idea, without getting discouraged if it sounds too complex-.
  Either way, more options and empowerment, and a more efficient learning experience.

- Ordered lessons: PU was already ordered from most basic to more advanced, but with the option of higher granularity, not each module is also better ordered, going from:
  - "Most foundational" to "optional": mindsets -> high-level strategies -> techniques -> examples
  - "Simplest" to "most advanced": foundational -> basic -> advanced

- **Dedicated lessons for examples & case studies**: we could also separate the mindsets, strategies, and techniques, from some of the examples and case studies that show and *apply* those concepts.
  We believe that examples and case studies are incredibly helpful, but if you want to focus on the "main meat", now you have the option to skip the case studies.

- **Lessons for positive behavior to emulate, and negative behavior to learn and defend from, but not to emulate**: to gain more immediate clarity, in some cases we broke up lessons for examples of dominant behavior that is too dominant, disempowering, and hence often ineffective, and "high-power" but effective.
  For example, the lesson on dominant archetypes now differentiates between "positive archetypes" and "not-so-good ones that you want to learn from and defend from, but not necessarily to mold and emulate"

Content Updates & Upgrades

Albeit the main goal was a structural re-organization, we also had plenty more great content that we picked up from various studies, life experiences, video examples, and of course, our forum and community.

Some of the content upgrade includes:

High-Value Socialization

Formerly called "social exchange":

- **Advanced rules**: separated it from the previous, longer main lesson on social exchanges, and added several examples and case studies

- **How to recognize the takers**: how to exactly spot the “takers” that you want to avoid

Power 101

- **Covert Frames**

Several new examples of covert power moves, including solutions and best techniques.

- **Power tests**: an important new concept in the “introductions” lesson on how some people test others early on for what they can get away with, including how to ace those tests

Frames

Broken up into more lessons, starting from mindsets and highest-level strategies to the techniques.
Now each major technique is a separate topic.
And we added a sub-section specifically for self-defense, which is what most people are interested in.

Plenty more examples and case studies, including:

- **Keep your grenade technique**: the approach was already in PU, but too hidden. It needed its own technique name and definition, which we now have

Dating & Seduction

We slimmed down this module and maintained, but also importantly improved the foundations.

The reasons are two-fold: we want to keep Power Univeristy compact and streamlined, and we now have Seduction University focusing on dating and seduction.

- **Foundational Power Principles of Dating**
- **Power Levers of Effective Dating** (and how to use them)

Leveling Up

New module for better granularity.
It includes:

- **4 case studies for socially challenging situations**: a new interesting case study on how to handle a group that is laughing *at you*

Power Tech

This is where a lot of the new golden nuggets entered PU, including:

- **Stock responses for unexpected requests**:
- **Stock responses and techniques for tasking and orders**:
- **Easy responses for EVERY SITUATION**:
- **How to apologize and maintain power**:
- **Power protecting**: an all-important concept that was scattered all over PU but that finally finds its own lesson with its own approaches and techniques

Machiavellianism

Turned into its own module as I come to think that this is the pinnacle of strategic thinking and living.

Many of the previous lessons, especially the social exchange, provide the foundations upon which Machiavellianism is built.

Broken up the lessons to make them briefer and easier to consume, and added many concepts, examples, and case studies all across the lessons.

8.1. New Lessons & Improvements

Upgrade to Foundational Strategies of Social Success

With a new infographic, better and more descriptive titles.

New Lessons

- **"Be straight"** a new foundational social approach, also similar to the "eagle concept" and long overdue
  - "Be straight examples"
- **Growth mindset power dynamics & strategies**
- **"Negotiating authority"**, is a new example of optimizing your behavior and power to better influence others
- **How to make friends** and acquire and maintain high status
- **How to power protect**
- **Gaslighting**, a fundamental lesson to better understand manipulation and manipulators, and how to handle them

New Concepts

- **Sliding scale of power** as a new foundational concept of social power dynamics

New Examples & Case Studies

And improved examples and case studies –including a real-life audio example from Lucio on how to assertively draw boundaries, how to handle socially difficult situations as in "people laughing at you", covert power moves 4 new examples, and new uses of passive-aggression-.

Plus, new and/or better links for "those who want more" and infographics

7.0 Core Update

Date: July 2021 – October 2021

New Course Infrastructure (Learning Management System)

The new course improves the user experience and adds new features such as:

- Better structure
- **Assignments**: at the end of each important module or lesson there are now assignments to help students follow through

New Lessons Structured Started

The new concept is to break up lessons into smaller chunks, rather than having very long lessons.

Power 101:

- **7 Charts to learn & strategize for social exchanges**: a new lesson to better understand social exchanges and

value

Social Skills – Advanced:

- **Basics of Social Power Dynamics**: this is a new, foundational overview, of social power dynamics. It introduces many basic and foundational concepts that will help you understand -and retain & acquire- power

Frame Control Strategies:

Expanded and more comprehensive module.
And a new structure and layout that will help you learn and improve your frame control:

Leadership

- **Leadership power dynamics**: new groundbreaking lesson on the basics of leadership power dynamics

Dating Module

Re-upgraded it all as Seduction University launched, so every single lesson improved with more real-life examples and practical strategies/techniques.

- **Foundations of dating dynamics**: with the new concept of "straight-line dating"

Bonuses

- **Machiavellianism**: new groundbreaking lesson on how to become more Machiavellian, how to think like a Machiavellian and real-life examples of Machiavellianism to internalize the approach

Removed:

- Practical steps to increase your confidence and power: take the best wisdom and examples from it and combine them with the lesson "basic laws of power".
- "From Hello to Babies: Overview of Games & Manipulation": It was too long (6.000 + words) and needed an upgrade. Broken it up into several lessons and put it into "Seduction University"
- 3 quizzes to increase your emotional intelligence: Matthew is working on a specific product on emotional and social intelligence, both of which are supposed to be the more basic precursors to power dynamics. I'd rather have PU focused on power and strategies

7.2. Various Smaller Updates

Date: October 2021 – January 2022

- **Dating module upgrades**: as we launched Seduction University we upgraded and improved the lessons that are shared between the two courses
- **Countless typos, grammar, and sentence improvements**: largely thanks to **Bel** (many thanks man!), who flagged hundreds of typos, grammar, syntax issues, and more
- **Several smaller updates and improvements**: part of which in conjunction with the release of the book "The Social Strategist". As Ali and I went through the editing process, it was also an opportunity to address the parts that are shared between PU and the book
- **Traffic Light System**: to understand and assess social power dynamics

6.0 Core Update

Date: September 2020–December 2020

New Design

The new theme improved the design of the website, and it was especially aimed at improving the design and usability of the course.

This is feedback from an early customer who could compare the two systems:

> My belief turned into reality 2 days ago.
> I came across your latest updates to the Power University. The user interface is so amazing now! It is so much more pleasing to the Eye! now It feels so amazing to navigate through the lessons! I have sat through and completed more lessons in the last two days, than the last 1 year combined!
> I love It!

It's a public post, so you can also read or comment on it here.

New Structure:

The most foundational lessons are now in the intro.

I've noticed too many enter the course thinking "I must be high-power/dominant" without fully appreciating the importance of alliances and the drawbacks of overpowering people.

So now they get those crucial lessons first thing.

The social skills module now comes before social power dynamics.
That makes more sense from a learning progression point of view.

Basics:

- **Social exchanges**: new lesson added. This is a foundational lesson for understanding social dynamics and for some of the most important strategies for social success

Power Dynamics:

- **2 new dominance styles**: in the lesson "Archetypes of Dominance", added the "status inflater" and the "easy life man"
- **Body language of dominance**: added a "mindset" for a high-power walk
- **Assertiveness quiz**: 3 questions to give people a feel of how to strike an assertive balance between submission, assertion, and aggression

Social Skills: Advanced

- **Social exchange quiz**: 9 questions drawing from very different social scenarios. Includes analysis and strategic thinking. The goal is to help people internalize the basic rules of effective and successful socialization
- **Assertiveness**: a much-needed field guide to assertiveness Including, of course, how to be assertive AND high-power (the two overlap but are not always the same)
- **Introduction power dynamics**: 2 new cases studies—one turned into a quiz—together with strategic thinking on how to handle the aggressive openers
- **Microaggressions & calibration**: new lesson on calibration and handling all the smaller daily power moves. It replaced the former lesson "dealing with mean jokes", and it's both more advanced as well as better at tackling

and explaining the basics

- **Covert power moves – quiz**: new quiz to help you level up your skills in reading covert power moves and more subtle power dynamics, including strategies for dealing with them. The example is from dating, but principles apply to all socialization.
- **Manipulation**: a brand new lesson on this very important aspect of social dynamics. How manipulation works, the strategies, how to defend oneself, and how to integrate manipulation into your social strategies.

Frame Control Strategies: New Module

Since frame control is so important, as well as so misunderstood, I dedicated a whole module to it.

- **Frames 101**: two new paragraphs on:
  - Mindsets and belief of frame control
  - "Frame cementing" technique, a super powerful tool of persuasion ju-jitsu
- **Quiz – frame analysis**: a new quiz on how to properly analyze frames, including power dynamics and strategies
- **Frame control techniques**: broke it into two lessons, added 2 more techniques ("frame shocking" and "frame stealing"), added more examples, plus general upgrade and improvement.

Relationships Power Dynamics

- **How to maintain power & attraction**: Added one more crucial technique, as well as mindset, together with real-life examples.

Leadership: New Module

- **Leadership 101**: new lesson on basic dynamics, strategies, and mindsets of leadership

Removed:

To keep Power University as optimized as possible, I have removed some lessons or quizzes.
Worry not, the overall quality has gone up, and you can still find the best from these lessons:

- Dealing with mean jokes: there is a similar free post, and the lesson on microaggressions and calibration better covers this topic, too
- Case study – Johnny Depp: an interesting breakdown, but there is far better now on PU to help you internalize high-power behaviors
- Dealing with cold-blooded dominant men: it's now an add-on in the private forums
- Workplace warfare: there is a similar post now. Warfare is rare, and you better avoid it than engage, so this wasn't a core lesson
- Handling rejections with power: there is a similar public post now
- World's lies & manipulations – the systemic games people play: I will later turn this one into a public post. In PU, it will soon be replaced by a far better overview of manipulation.
- Genders & culture – different approaches to power: people are more similar than they are different, and focusing on commonalities is a better strategy for both learning and success. There is enough about gender differences in the course, and more practical. PU is ultimately about practical strategies, and this lesson was too theoretical.
- Verbal judo – handling slights and personal attacks: an interesting lesson, I'm considering upgrading it and putting it back. But as of now, the frame control module better covers this topic, and engaging in verbal slights is something that high-power, high-quality folks rarely do
- Dominant verbal bullying – Jamie Dimon quiz: too specific, not enough added value. To get into PU, it's either

something is a 9 or 10 in added value, or it's out

6.2. Strategies of Power

Date: January 2021

- **Fundamental strategies of power:** New example with the mafia; going a bit deeper into the dangers of collaborations; added a new approach/mindset called "high-collaboration, high-paranoia".

5.0 Core Update (Career Strategies)

Date: December 2019 – May 2020

Across these months, I have focused on learning and researching as much as possible on workplace power dynamics and career strategies.

The result has been a complete overhaul of the career section. Not anymore just about power dynamics, but about career strategies. Hence the new name.

Part of the update:

- **Women winning in business**: 2 lessons for women to learn how to adapt and thrive in what's still a male world
- **Career success strategies**: proven strategies to help you advance in your career
- **Boss management**: how to establish a boss relationship that helps you advance in your career
- **Effective self-promotion**: including Machiavellian strategies
- **Enlightened business culture**: for founders and bosses who want to establish cultures that nourish great relationships and effective action
- **Political landmines**: common mistakes you need to be aware of
- **Exec soft-skills & how to convey power**: this is the equivalent of the "how to convey power" lessons in the first module, but tailored to the workplace
- **Bonuses**: excel tools to keep track of your network and self-assessment quizzes

Social Skills

- **Frame control expansion**: I realized that frames and frame control are hugely important topics to help students master social interactions.
  So now there are 3 lessons on frame: a basic one, a lesson on techniques with lots of examples, and a lesson on mindset.
  Soon, a quiz on frames will follow

(Removed) ~~Women Sections~~ (Removed)

The section for women addressed feedback of PU being too male-centric:

The Power Moves Feb 9, 2020, 11:32 AM

Hello K, I have already issued your refund. If you have a feedback for me, I will be happy to h

K .com> Feb 9, 2020, 12:19 PM

to The

Hi Luke

Thank you for your reply, wish there were more female examples of power 90% of the examples were men so as a female felt alienated

Know that there is one section that goes over woman in business that happens week 3 or 4 , however it is

This is what she went on to say:

> Was hoping to see more examples of strong woman in power for the videos and how woman wield power in general as it is a resource severely lacking in the market.
>
> Read a lot of resources such as: Secrets of Six figure woman, and break your own rules - address many psychological traps that a female has to address before even beginning to thinking about body language,

Kristina had a great point.
There **is no such resource to teach women how to strategically handle power and success while still remaining likable and feminine**.

We researched for months about women and power.
I got the books she suggested, plus more, an delved into the research literature for women and power, and women in the workplace.
I recalled all instances of powerful women I've met, and I scoured movies and YouTube for real-life examples.

And I condensed all that knowledge into a few lessons tailored for women only.

Edit: From PU 9.0 we decided to focus on men only, and the 'lessons for women' have been dropped from the latest curriculum.

4.0. Core Update (Basics of Power)

Date: January 2020

Based on the questions I received, I realized that people would benefit from the basics a bit more.
And this is what this update did: it added two lessons about the basic strategies of power.

Basics of Power

- **The Fundamental Life Strategies of Power**: New lesson on basic strategies and mindsets to help people be the most

Social Skills

- **Warmth & Power**: New lesson on warmth and power, the two dimensions people first assess when judging others
- **Frame Control**: New lesson on how to control frames

Relationships

- **What games is she playing**: added one quiz on manipulative techniques

4.1. Workplace Self-assessment

Date: February 2020

- **Quiz for women's self-assessment**: I added one quiz based on Lois Frankel's work
- **Dating as provider examples**: I added a couple of screenshots to provide more examples of how to date effectively as a provider

3.0. Core Update (Dating)

Date: November 20–30, 2019

Overview: The 3.0 update focused mainly on the dating and seduction section but provided an upgrade throughout the whole course.

Basics of Power

- **Social inflaters**: a new lesson tackling the phenomenon of those who pretend to be of higher status than you are, Teaches how to recognize them and how to deal with them
- **"Belly first dominant walk"**: added the "belly first" style of dominant walk, together with a video reference

Workplace Power

- **Female power**: add a new video example on how to express power with femininity
- Added more examples

Dating & Seduction

Overall, a major general update following a focused study on the best evolutionary psychology resources

- **Sexual market value**: new lesson
- **What influences your SMV**: new lesson with practical suggestions
- **Mating strategies**: new lesson, spin-off from the first lesson, and more in-depth
- **Mathematical way of finding your partner**: new bonus lesson for those who want to settle down

Relationship Power Dynamics

- **Games of chicken**: added threats of violence

Sticky Social Situations

- **De-escalation techniques**: new lesson, spun off from the general overview and added more examples and techniques
- **Handling mistakes**: new lesson, spun off from "the list lesson", improved and added more video examples

Bonuses

Social finessing, previously one big lesson consisting of quick "power pills" to help people improve their EI, is now 3 different lessons:

- **Power**: new lesson with more examples

- **Persuasion**: new lesson with more examples
- **Social Intelligence**: new lesson with more examples

3.1 Update (Quizzes)

Version 3.1. saw a few aesthetics updates and two new quizzes for male self-assessment:

- Provider/lover strategy: this quiz helps men to self-assess if they might be more suited for a provider or a lover strategy
- Short-term or long-term: this quiz helps men self-assess what they actually prefer and decide when it's time to settle down (based on Geoffrey Miller's work)

Power University: Research-Based Foundations for Social Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Power University is built on one of the most extensive research bases in the self-development field. Lucio Buffalmano has studied and synthesized hundreds of books and thousands of peer-reviewed papers across psychology, sociology, and behavioral science—and tested their insights in the real world.

The result is a practical, research-backed system that shows what truly works to build power and success across life's most important domains: **social dynamics, dating, relationships, and career**.

Rather than publishing an endless list of resources—which would be incomplete and quickly outdated—Power University distills the core principles and techniques that consistently deliver results. Many of these books and scientific handbooks are also **critically reviewed on The Power Moves website**, so readers can explore the foundations themselves. This ensures the focus stays on what matters: proven strategies that give students a measurable edge in real life.

Contents

- The Research Foundation
- Three-Pillar Approach
- Resources

The Research Foundation

Representative influences include:

- **Scientific handbooks** on psychology, social behavior, and communication.
- **Seminal works** on power, persuasion, and human nature.
- **Evolutionary psychology** research on dating and relationships.
- **Case studies** of real-world leaders, negotiators, and entrepreneurs.

Three-Pillar Approach

Our unique blend of **science, field observation, and critical analysis** ensures that every module is grounded in evidence and proven in practice.

Resources

While Power University is built upon an unparalleled foundation of **hundreds of books and thousands of research papers** across psychology, sociology, and behavioral science, we believe that both our focus and our students' focus should remain on implementation, not compilation.

Therefore, we do not provide an exhaustive, manually updated bibliography. All foundational research, specific studies, and key resources that underpin the curriculum are **critically analyzed and seamlessly integrated** into the lessons. This ensures the student receives only the distilled, proven techniques that have been tested and synthesized by power expert Lucio Buffalmano. The result is a system of knowledge that is **always current, highly effective, and entirely focused on real-world results.**

> **Lucio**: We stopped publishing the full list of Power University resources. The knowledge base is simply too

> vast to keep a running catalog, and maintaining one would drain time better spent improving the program itself. Our focus is on delivering the most value—distilling the research into practical strategies that work in real life.

How to Stop Cockblockers (For Good)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

If you are out meeting women, you will eventually stumble into cockblockers.

What is a cockblocker?
The power dynamics dictionary defines it as:

> Cockblocking is the action, behavior or intent, from a woman or from another man, to prevent a man from interacting, seducing, or sleeping with a woman.

After reading this article, you will fix the cockblock problem for good, no matter what type of cockblocker you are facing.

That great friend who doesn't know when it's time to leave
These are nine steps to handle cockblocking for good:

Contents

- #1. Focus on Becoming a High-Value Man
- #2. Move The Girl to More Private Settings
- #3. Learn Power Dynamics & Make Cockblockers Fear You
- #4. Only Focus On Your Best 20% of Interactions
- #5. Turn Potential Cockblockers Into Friends & Allies
- #6. Ignore The Cockblocker and Empower Your Girl to Choose You
- #7. Tell Her to Handle the Cockblock For You
- #8. Go "Under The Radar"
- #9. Leave Her to The Cockblock: Let Her Realize How Much Better You Are
- Why Sometimes It's Not Your Fault

- When to Ignore & When to Engage the Cockblocker
- How to Engage The Cockblocker

- Cockblocker Power Moves
  - The Power Dynamics of Cockblockers
  - Summary

#1. Focus on Becoming a High-Value Man

Cockblockers are less likely to meddle when you look like a high-value man.

Women *want* to interact with high-value men, and **people don't usually cockblock high-quality men that women are happily engaging with**.

The movie Hitch has one good example.
It's his low status and his poor handling of the situation that invite the cockblocker:

Cockblocking an inept man can be an opportunity to start an interaction, BTW

When you're a high-value man, only extremely jealous cockblockers will meddle, and that's because they don't mind losing social points as long as you also lose.
Basically, these cockblockers are the equivalent of a social suicide mission: they look like jealous idiots, but they will foil your plans, and you won't get the girl, either.

Also, read more on seducers' styles and attitudes:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

#2. Move The Girl to More Private Settings

If you two like each other, move her somewhere more secluded.

Cockblockers have an easier time if you remain in networking environments or in high-traffic zones.

But if you sit down or move somewhere secluded, then cockblockers cannot come and butt in.
This is truly the simplest and most effective technique.
And that's what good seduction is about: moving the interaction towards higher intimacy.

Even just moving outside of a bar or club is enough.
Or in the smoking areas, too.

#3. Learn Power Dynamics & Make Cockblockers Fear You

Who is easy to cockblock?

The man who doesn't know how to defend against cockblocking.
It's when you look socially uncalibrated that other jealous men will think they can interrupt you with no repercussions.

Preventing cockblocking is not much unlike avoiding street mugging in a way: don't look like easy prey, and people won't assault you.

But if they can see you're a socially-skilled individual, they know you can make them look for the annoying cockblockers they are.
Even suicide-mission cockblocking from White Knight orbiters will decrease when they fear you.

Of course, fear is not just social, it can also be physical.
Size also helps here.
Hitting the gym will help to make you a more menacing figure that people will not want to cross.

Imposing and aggressive-looking men are cockblocked less (by other men, at least)
Equally helpful is a reputation, an image, or a network of friends who suggest that you can retaliate at will.
However, I don't recommend you focus on physical threats to avoid cockblocking: it's not an effective way of getting results in seduction.

#4. Only Focus On Your Best 20% of Interactions

Yes, the good Pareto Law works on cockblockers as well.

If you focus on the best 20% of interactions, it means you only stay in interactions with great chemistry.
In those interactions, the girl also likes you.

People will see that she's having a good time and that there is no reason for cockblocking.
And if someone still tries to, she will be there to help you fend them off.

#5. Turn Potential Cockblockers Into Friends & Allies

This strategy is pre-emptive.

And it's based on the idea that if her friends like you, they are less likely to cockblock you.

It's not always true, but it's true more often than not, and since life is about increasing the odds of success, she is warm and social toward her friends.

Don't go overboard here and remember that you are there for the girl you like.
But if you meet her with her friends around or if one of them happens to come and say hi, do show some warmth.
Say hi, smile, and as you say "nice meeting you," flash your eyebrows upwards, which is a nonverbal indicator of friendliness.

When the girl you like is putting her contact information on your phone, that's also a perfect time to crack a couple

of jokes with her friend.
That way, she won't say anything bad after you're gone.

#6. Ignore The Cockblocker and Empower Your Girl to Choose You

This is the gold standard of anti-cockblocking strategies:

Having *her* handle the cockblock for you.
Women will not always do it because it requires social power and leadership, but you can prod them in that direction.

See here how you can do just that (I use the worst-case scenario of a friend physically grabbing her):

> **You:** Wow, congratulations! And what…
> **Friend:** (grabs her arm) Let's go Kristi
> **You:** (pull her back on your side, raise your voice) Wait! (lowers voice again) It looks like your friend is trying to pull you away. (optional: turn towards friend, give a smirk, raise your eyebrows and say "hi by the way") I was having a good time with you, stay for a few more minutes **Girl:** Yes, (to friend) Angela, we're good.
> **Friend:** You good?
> **Girl:** Yeah, yeah, we're good

You want to make the grab more physical and less about raising your voice with "wait", which looks more dominant.

Act quickly, but try to be smooth: knee-jerk motions make you seem like you're panicking and out of control.

If you decide to turn towards her friend, that's your small olive branch that will make it more unlikely that an escalation will follow.
Why is that important?
Because **when you escalate against her friends, her friends almost always win,** so always try to avoid escalations.
If the cockblock is not physically pulling her, but only telling her to go away, which is the more likely scenario, it's the same but without the grabbing.

The beauty of this approach is that she deals with the cockblock herself, and **when she deals with the cockblock to stay with you, it's the equivalent of admitting that she likes you and that she wants you to take the interaction to the next level.**
Basically, you turn the cockblock to your advantage.

High-Risk Move: Threaten to end the interaction

A higher risk, higher return response would be to tell her: "shall we say goodbye".
That puts more pressure on her to decide right there and then if she wants to commit to you.
If she stays, it's a stronger indicator that she likes you.

#7. Tell Her to Handle the Cockblock For You

In this version, you ask your girl to handle the cockblocker for you

> **You:** Wow, congratulations! And what…
> **Friend:** (grabs her arm) Let's go Kristi
> **You:** (grab her on your side, raise you voice) Wait! It looks like your friend is trying to pull you away. Could you please tell her you'd like to stay a couple more minutes and you'll join her later

It's important here that you offer her the opportunity to stay a bit longer with you and *still* rejoin her friends later.
You want to avoid making it a question of "me or her".

This is a mistake many men make because *they* would choose a new girl over old friends.
But it's not how most girls think and behave.
We saw it in "sexual marketplace 101": women tend to be conservative. So, unless things are going incredibly well, chances are that if she is forced to choose, she will choose an old friend rather than a new, almost unknown guy.

#8. Go "Under The Radar"

Who's more likely to get cockblocked?

Those who make it the most obvious are trying to pick up a woman.
Double loss if you the woman look like she is resisting you. That makes the cockblock 10 times more likely to intervene—and for good reasons!

See an example from "Menace II Society":

Instead, smooth operators who seem social and flirt more under the radar will be able to peel off with her later on or to surreptitiously exchange numbers nonchalantly.

I've done this several times.
In groups, I exchanged contacts as friends, kept talking while we typed our details, and maybe even exchanged contacts with some of the guys in the groups.
And then I'd go out on dates with the girl.

#9. Leave Her to The Cockblock: Let Her Realize How Much Better You Are

Ready for a risky move?

Leave her right after the cockblock joins.

This is a move I like when:

1. You are in great shape
2. There are different targets around
3. You want to parade your power over her and/or make her chase you

What's the rationale here?

It's that if you two were having a great time, now **you give her space to miss you when you leave her**.
If you two had great chemistry, chances are that she would be shocked and saddened by your departure.
Often, you will even be able to see the effects on her face.

Like in the Hitch scene we mentioned earlier:

Leaving is a high risk, but it can boost your value

If you two were going really well, chances are she wouldn't be able to focus on the cockblocker.
In psychology, there is a name for this phenomenon: the recency effect (Elliot Aronson, 1972), and it happens when the previous attention-grabbing item on the list—you—keeps lingering on in her brain.

Of course, this doesn't work when it's unlikely you will see her again soon (and that's why that Hitch scene, in those circumstances, is a poor strategy).
But it's great stuff for social circles.
And it can work well for parties and events where leaving and joining new groups is a common behavior.
If she approaches you again, it's on. If not, do approach her again later.

Why Sometimes It's Not Your Fault

Prevention is not a 100% guarantee against cockblocking.

Plenty of circumstances can be outside of your control.
For example:

1. She has some bitter friends
2. The alpha female leader of her group is jealous she's talking to you
3. Lots of people bothered her and now her group is protective
4. She had some personal issues recently and her friends are overprotective
5. One of her male orbiters is madly in love with her and will do all kinds of crazy stuff to keep men away

So don't take it too personally if cockblocking sometimes happens: it's part of life.

When to Ignore & When to Engage the Cockblocker

Should you always ignore a cockblocker?

The author of "*How to Make Girls Chase*", recommends you never look away from the woman to engage the cockblocker.

And, generally speaking, ignoring is a good frame control technique for damage control limitation.

That works great if your girl also ignores the cockblocker. When that's the case, you are forming an unspoken alliance, and you are throwing the cockblocker down the bus *together*.
Powerful stuff.

Ignoring the cockblocker does not work as well as if the woman engages the cockblocker, though.
Why not?
Because she broke contact with you and took the lead in the interaction. And she openly spurned your leadership: you ignored, she included.
Now *she* is deciding who to give priority to.
And she decided to put *you* on pause while giving the cockblocker the precedence.

If she quickly dispatches the cockblocker and comes back to you, you're still good, and it's a strong sign she's interested in you.
But if she keeps engaging the cockblocker, then it's terrible news for your seduction: she becomes the leader while at the same time putting you on the back burner.

In that case, you would have been better off if you had taken the lead to deal with the cockblocker.

In sum, this is how you decide:

Do not engage the cockblocker if:

1. You two are already very bonded
2. She's very into you

Basically: you don't engage the cockblocker if you think she won't engage him or if you think she will dispatch him quickly.

Engage the cockblocker if:

1. You're at work networking events where people are there to meet new people (not engaging would look overly aggressive and out of place)
2. You don't have good chemistry yet and she's not engrossed in the convo

3. Your girl seems very happy to meet new people
4. The cockblocker is very close to her

In sum, you engage him if you think she will engage him or if welcoming people is what's expected in the environment you're in (for example, a networking event).

How to Engage The Cockblocker

If ignoring the cockblocker is not possible and you must engage, then you must take ownership of that interaction.

Do it like this:

- **Let him in and lead the dance**

If you decide to let him in, do so from a position of leadership.

That means that you decide how to let him in.
Best of all, don't say anything but open your body language to include him without even saying hi (i.e.: slightly turn towards him, as if to say "I can see you're there").

Don't overdo it: you are just being socially polite because anything else would backfire, and you are *not* shifting priority from the girl you like to the cockblocker.

- **Keep your priority on the girl**

Let the cockblocker in with your body language only and finish what you were saying with your girl before verbally engaging the cockblocker.
If it was her who was speaking, look interested and then somewhat reluctantly turn to the cockblocker when she's finished.

- **Engage the cockblocker at low priority**

You don't want to show more interest and joy in talking to the cockblocker.

Slightly (slightly!) turn towards him to make him part of the group, but DON'T change the subject you were talking about.
If you start asking him "so what about you" you are offering him the stage, and you don't want to do that.

Instead, turn to the cockblocker, quickly look at him to acknowledge him (shake hands if appropriate and possibly introduce your girl), slightly rotate your body towards the new person, and then go back to the girl.

Boom, you just communicated "you're in because we have to, but the sooner you're gone, the better".

- **Keep engaging the girl**

Keep going as if it were a 1:1 conversation between you and your girl.
If the girl likes you, she will follow your lead and show little engagement with the cockblocker. If the cockblocker has any social skills, he will understand and leave.

If your goal was to exchange contacts and you already did so, you can be warmer towards the cockblocker

How do you calibrate your level of warmth?

It depends on these two variables:

1. your goal in the interaction
2. if you have already exchanged contacts.

If you want to keep the interaction going and potentially try to bring her home on that same day, then you should be less social and more aggressive in your interaction.
For example, you choose to ignore the cockblocker.

If your goal was to exchange contacts with the girls and if you've already made plans, you can allow yourself to be warmer toward the cockblocker.
Your job is done there, and you can even use the occasion to leave her on a high and move on.

Cockblocker Power Moves

The worst cockblocking for you is this:

1. He joins the two of you
2. You turn to him
3. He then turns to the girl right away, ignoring you

Why?

Think about what that communicates from a power dynamics perspective.

It communicates that he can get your attention and sidetrack you from your interaction with the woman, which suggests that you either don't like the woman or that you don't have the strength to go for what you want.

Then he cuts you off by moving to the woman, which is the behavior of a higher-status individual compared to you. Ouch…

Example of Poor Cockblocker Control

Here is an example from La Haine.

The black guy was going great… Until he lets in his idiotic, cockblocking friend and lets him take over the interaction:

What a great way of letting down a woman! :(

As a rule of thumb, you are always the leader when you make the first move and introduce your friends.
But you show yourself to be a crappy leader when you let them actively disrespect you and the girls.

If you want to become more socially effective and you have clueless friends, I'm afraid that you must get used to going out without them.

The Power Dynamics of Cockblockers

On average, cockblockers of any kind are good news for her and bad news for him.

They are great news for her because it show she has options, friends, and/or male orbiters.
And it's bad news for him because it shows he must fight the competition.

If a competition ensues, even if he wins it, he will still lose out in terms of the balance of power.
On average, **a cockblocker always tips the balance of power in her favor**.

That's why men who are highly socially skilled will handle cockblockers without looking like they are fighting over her.

Summary

Your best way of avoiding cockblocking is to work on yourself and find a girl you like and who also likes you back.

Focus more on the process of getting you two together than on “fighting” against cockblockers to get her.
The mindset of “having to fight cockblockers” is most often the mindset of men lower in sexual market value, trying to get higher SMV women.

And you don’t want to date in that frame of mind.

Cockblocker Types: Identify & Deal With 9 Cock Blocking Scenarios

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

You already know the basics of how to handle cockblockers, but not all interruptions are created equal. The strategy that works for a clueless friend will fail against an aggressive one-upper—and could sabotage your entire interaction.

This is the definitive guide on the **taxonomy of cockblockers**. We start explaining what exactly is a cockblock, and then break down **9 distinct types.**
Cockblocker range from the Jester to the Power-Aware, and we provide you with the **exact, scenario-specific strategy** needed to identify the threat and secure your interaction without losing status.

Contents

- What Is A Cockblocker
- 1. The Clueless Friend
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker
- 2. The Jester
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker
- 3. The Teasing One-Upper
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker
- 4. The “Are You Two Together” Cockblocker
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker
- 5. The Fake-Friendly Cockblocker
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker:
- 6. The Socially Aggressive Cockblocker
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker
- 7. The Physically Aggressive Cockblocker
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker:
- 8. The Power-Aware Cockblocker
  - How to Deal With This Cockblocker:

What Is A Cockblocker

A **cockblocker** (or **cockblock**) is a person who intentionally or unintentionally interrupts a sexual or romantic pursuit, making it difficult or impossible for the initiator to succeed. This interruption, often called **cock blocking**, can range from a clueless friend delaying a conversation to an aggressive rival actively sabotaging an interaction.

1. The Clueless Friend

First of all, is the clueless friend.

You know the guy.
You are getting along with a girl, you flirt with her; she responds; everything says it’s all about the two of you… But the third wheel just stays there.

How to Deal With This Cockblocker

The clueless friend is easy to handle: you just gotta take the lead and let him know, as directly as it's needed, that "you two", such as "you and the girl", are going somewhere and that you two—you and him—will catch up later (more like another day).

The day after, call him and apologize that you had to do it.
If he's a good buddy, he will understand.

2. The Jester

The jester cockblocker will come in with high energy, crack jokes, ask opinions, and potentially engage in lots of touching with both you and the girl.

These are the sometimes pick-up artists who are following "high energy" models as espoused by early pick-up theory (*Mystery Method*, *The Game*) or RSD-style schools.

How to Deal With This Cockblocker

To handle these cockblockers effectively, you have to form a non-written bond with the girl that says "it's the two of us, enjoying this clown".

When the guy cracks a joke, look at the girl, not at him.
Don't get too drawn in by his stories and jokes. Keep your body pointed towards the girl, and if she does the same, you've got this.

Then keep talking to the girl only, and if she replies looking mostly at you, she's telling you she wants to be alone with you.

If the jester doesn't get it, move her away with an excuse.
You can simply tell her or ask her if she wants to move somewhere else. For example "hey, do you want to go refill a drink" or "hey, shall we go check the dance floor".

If she nods, put a hand on the joker's shoulder and say "alright man, that was fun, pleasure meeting you".

It's also possible to do it the other way around and first tell the jester that it was nice meeting him, then invite the girl to move.
It's very dominant, but it's also more risky, and it gives more of your game away.

You also come across as more defensive while sending a very strong "I like you" signal before she commits to anything.

3. The Teasing One-Upper

This is a specific type of joke that can put most men in a bind.

There is a video on YouTube where a guy named Barron describes this exact situation:

His technique is to go over the top in a joking way.
I disagree with it.

It gives the cockblocker way too much importance and power, and he is following the cockblocker's lead.
When you try to "outdo" the cockblocker, you also end up looking like a social climber, and by now you should know that's far from optimal social behavior.

Where most people trip here is that they feel like they need to answer verbally—or, worse, physically—to the tooling man.
But that's not the case.

Here are two big takeaways for you:

1. You don't need to reply to everyone
2. Not everyone is worth your time and effort

How to Deal With This Cockblocker

Don't engage him.

You don't need to be confrontational about your refusal to engage.
You can even give the cockblocker a slight nod as if to say "I heard you, and I'm acknowledging you (but not going to give you full attention with an actual reply)".

And then you can actually use him to strengthen the bond with the girl.
Like this:

> **Tooler**: Hey man, you trying to pick up this chick, go ahead, ask her out, how's your schedule Jane, this guy's interested
> **You**: (look at him and nod slightly, possibly even smile and say "hey man" then turn to the girl while pointing your finger towards the guy) funny guy here

Why is this move more powerful?

Because it obeys the law of least social effort.
The cockblocker bent out of shape to trip you.

He's trying to get your attention and manipulate you, which is a high-effort behavior (and possibly motivated by fear).
When you try to outdo him, you put in even higher levels of effort.
Not good.

And you forget about the girl.
Terrible.

When you don't engage him instead, you communicate that he's not worthy of your time. *Much* more powerful.

4. The "Are You Two Together" Cockblocker

Have you ever had someone ask a girl you've recently met if you're together?

Handling that question is not easy when you're not (yet) together, but you're interested, and things seem to be going well.

It puts you in a bind: saying yes is possible only if she's dying to be with you. Otherwise, it communicates that you want her so badly while she hasn't decided yet.
And that will sink your chances.

Saying no is slightly demeaning towards her, and it communicates that he's free to intrude.
And if you don't reply, you let the awkward silence linger, which reduces both yours and the girl's social status—but mostly the man's status as he should be the leader—and makes it painfully obvious you are not together.

Which is exactly what happens in this scene from The Breakfast Club:

Sporto is losing the most value because he is the man and he is not taking charge. He is also allowing a bad situation to fester, and women usually blame the man in these cases.
Bender, the "bad boy," is not winning either, but he's managing to destroy the romance between the two.
A better answer by Sporto here would have been to deal with Bender's attack by dealing with his *behavior* or his *motives*, not with his words, which answer within his frame of reference and leave you stuck in a double bind.

How to Deal With This Cockblocker

If a cockblocker barges in and asks the two of you if you are together, you want to answer with something noncommittal, but without saying "you've just met" or anything that sounds demeaning to her.

A good option is to exit that frame and say that the two of you are talking and getting to know each other.
Then move back to the girl and cut him off.

If you two are already close, you can use this occasion to move her away with you.
If you are not yet close, watch how she reacts to your handling of the intrusion, as that will be a great test of how much she likes you.

5. The Fake-Friendly Cockblocker

The friendly cockblocker is insidious.

He leverages our inborn tendency to be friendly to people who are friendly to us (Cialdini, 1984).

However, don't fall for it: he's trying to trick you and ruin your interaction. Sometimes it happens to me with people who use Italian stereotypes in a seemingly friendly way to interrupt my conversation.
Like raising their voice with "ciao bello" and doing some Italian hand gestures.

This *might* seem friendly because they recognize your culture and are giving you lots of attention.
But don't fall for it, it's the opposite of friendly, and they're acting way too dominant if they're interrupting your previous conversation.

How to Deal With This Cockblocker:

A great way to handle this is by acknowledging them with a slight smile, but no more.
Don't follow their high-energy lead, and you will come out of it much stronger.
Then stay focused on the girl.

6. The Socially Aggressive Cockblocker

There are many ways to be aggressive.

For example:

1. Barges in and starts talking without being invited
2. Tells you she is not free
3. Come in and hug her as if to mark territory (even though he's just a friend)

The correct mindset here is that if your girl is still there talking and engaging with you, other men don't have the right to cut you off.

How to Deal With This Cockblocker

Whenever possible, don't engage the cockblocker at all.

Either raise your hand as if to say one minute, or slightly turn your head and say "hey, wait for a minute, man".

Example: the white-knighting cockblocker

Some years ago, I was at a club.

I was talking to a black girl, and she was happy to talk to me.

Suddenly, a big "jealous friend" (or maybe a friend of the guy she was supposedly seeing) butted in in a confrontational way.

I can't recall exactly what he said; it wasn't a quiet environment.
But I turned my head halfway between the girl and him and said loudly and sternly "I'm not talking to you, man".
That stopped him in his tracks, which also suggests that attitude often overthrows size.

Pyrrhic victory, though: that also stopped my interaction with the girl.
The problem with using aggression against aggression is that it will likely sour the interaction.
And it mostly only works with cockblockers who don't know the girl.

If the cockblocker and the girl are friends, it will force her to pick the friend over an unknown guy because sticking with you would ruin their friendship.

And, again, women are conservative and are more likely to pick a guy from their social circle over a stranger.
Social mastery is about using the *least amount of* force possible to get your desired outcome.

Better Strategy: Recruit Her Help

With an aggressive cockblocker who happens to be her friend, I recommend you recruit her help to handle him.

In the example above, you can ask her "do you know him"? If she says yes, then prod her to handle him by saying "All alright, cool, can you tell him it's all good here?".

Move Her Away From The Confrontation

If the cockblcoker doesn't know the girl and you successfully used aggression against aggression, seek to move her right away.

You want to look like you're "protecting her" and want to move away from an unpleasant interaction.
If you stay stuck there, she will likely excuse herself and abandon what looks like a nasty and dangerous environment.

7. The Physically Aggressive Cockblocker

Look at this scene from Scarface:

A mistake many men make here is to think they need to fight for the girl.

That's a typical male mindset applied straight to women.
But since men and women are different, that does not always work well.

There has likely been some physical competition among men for women in our past as a species, but *evolutionary psychology*, together with real-life observation, shows that violence is rarely conducive to seduction or sleeping with girls.

You shouldn't have to fight for a girl who likes you.
And if she didn't like you to begin with, then you're fighting for nothing, and you're better off moving on to a girl who actually likes you.

How to Deal With This Cockblocker:

A better course of action here?

Tell the girl to follow you somewhere quieter.
If she follows you, she wants you.
If not, she might prefer the guy, or she might enjoy seeing men battling for her.

I'm not telling you necessarily to back down, but I am telling you that you are going to lose power vis-à-vis *her*, even if you win against *him*.

Even if you were to win, you'd end up being the powerless one because she just played the "contest game" on you, and that makes her the prize of the relationship.

Also read:

- What do do when a man hits on your girlfriend?

> How To Deal With Guys Hitting on Your Girlfriend

8. The Power-Aware Cockblocker

This is the rarest breed, and they're potentially the most dangerous.

They come in and ignore you.

Most guys would naturally try to get his attention, and right there and then, they lose.

If a guy ignores you and just talks to the girl, it's paramount that you ignore him as well.

If you try to get a man's attention when he's given you none, you basically acknowledge him as a higher value.
And 99 times out of 100, you're toast.
Avoid laughing at his jokes, too, or you risk looking lower value:

Don't laugh at his jokes, or you risk looking lower-class. Just arch your lips up if it's good, and that's it

How to Deal With This Cockblocker:

What you must do when a man butts in and ignores you is to do the same as he does and only engage the girl.

She will then be the one to choose.

You must be wise about it, though.
Avoid looking like you're vying for her attention, which puts you in the chasing and power-down positions.
If he is trying to get her attention, let him while you avoid over-investing: he is actively devaluing himself.

Talk normally, and if she engages you more and looks at you more often, then get into some slightly more personal topic that will make it obvious this is about you and her.

For example: "*oh I see, I had a similar experience actually, how did it feel for you when…* ".
Alternatively, you can flirt with her.
Touch her arm while saying with a smile "*And I bet you're always flirting with that handsome boss of yours, aren't you*".

If she plays along with you, you are effectively cutting each other out, which is perfect for your seduction.

7 Dating Strategies for Men (Research-Based)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

There are countless books and courses, not to mention articles all over the net, teaching men how to get women.

A few of those articles and products are based on solid science, though, which can create some confusion.

This article is based on **proven male dating strategies** that have been studied and measured.

We divide each strategy into 4 components:

- **Overview**
- **Manipulative Version**: how it can be used to manipulate women
- **Competition-Busting Version**: how you can use the strategy against the competition ("derogate")
- **Effectiveness**: how effective the mating strategy actually is

So let's start:

Contents

- 1. Acquire & Display Resources
  - Competition-Busting Use
  - Effectiveness
  - Conspicuous Consumption: Throw Money Around to Sleep Around
- 2. Acquire & Display Status & Power
  - Effectiveness
- 3. Display (or Feign) Commitment
  - Manipulative Version
  - Fake Honesty & Vulnerability To Display High Value
  - Competition-Busting Use
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- 6. Display Indicators of Intelligence (Game)
  - Effectiveness
- 7. Become Famous (Social Proof 100x)
  - Example of Fame's Effects: Connor Murphy
  - Effectiveness

- Maximizing Your Dating Success

1. Acquire & Display Resources

One of the most widespread ones.

Driving expensive cars, buying expensive watches, and wearing a suit are only some of the countless ways men seek to communicate their status and resources.

Competition-Busting Use

Business is built around competition for resources.

Every time you go to work, you go to acquire resources.
And every time you seek to make more money, you are competing for resources.

Men also try to derogate other men's resources by implying they "got lucky" or "cheated".
When men say other men cheated or got lucky, they try to undermine the link between their results (the resources they acquired) and their genes.

If they cheated or got lucky, it means they couldn't replicate the results, don't have the traits necessary to acquire resources, and thus are not going to make good children.

Derogating other men for their availability of resources can be effective in long-term dating, but it's relatively ineffective in short-term dating.

Effectiveness

Yes, resources afford lots of dating power to men.

Steven Pinker says that one of the best predictors of a wife's attractiveness is her husband's income.

Countless studies now show the importance of resources for mating.
Resources are more effective for long-term mating, but they can also help for short-term mating.

Townsend and Levy for example found out that women preferred entering into *both* short-term and long-term relationships with men who were wearing expensive clothes.

And you can also see it in Buss' research.
Women do value resources more for the long term, but also show a strong appreciation for resources in short-term mating:

Table 5
Long-Term Resource Potential: Women's Mate Preferences

Characteristic	Short term *M*	Short term *SD*	Long term *M*	Long term *SD*	*t* tests	γ^a
Has a promising career	1.20	1.20	2.30	0.80	−3.49*	0.78
Has good financial prospects	1.20	1.11	2.60	0.50	−5.09**	1.14
Likely to succeed in profession	1.10	0.97	2.60	0.50	−6.38**	1.42
Likely to earn a lot of money	0.90	0.97	2.10	0.85	−4.86**	1.09
Has a reliable future career	0.40	0.50	2.70	0.47	−15.66**	3.50
Unable to support you financially	−0.70	0.92	−1.30	1.38	3.27*	0.78
Financially poor	−0.64	0.87	−1.36	1.14	4.63**	0.70
Lacks ambition	−0.86	1.05	−2.36	0.81	9.14**	1.38
Uneducated	−1.25	1.06	−2.39	0.81	7.05**	1.06

[a] The effect sizes (γ) are gammas (Howell, 1987). They signify the difference between means in standard deviation units. Cohen (1977) defines effect sizes as *small* if they are 0.20, *medium* if they are 0.50, and *large* if they are 0.80 or greater.
* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Source: Sexual Strategies Theory, Buss & Schmitt, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.100.2.204

How men *use* resources can also influence dating, both in the long and short-term.

You can see from Buss & Schmitt research that "stingy" is a bigger turnoff for women in short-term dating than longer-term dating:

Table 4
Immediate Extraction of Resources: Women's Preferences

Characteristic	Short term *M*	Short term *SD*	Long term *M*	Long term *SD*	*t* tests	γ^a
Spends a lot of money on me early on	1.80	1.28	1.20	1.20	2.85*	0.64
Gives me gifts early on	1.80	1.28	1.20	1.11	3.94**	0.88
Has an extravagant lifestyle	1.10	1.33	0.30	1.46	3.56**	0.64
Stingy early on	−1.90	0.72	−1.60	0.68	−2.85*	0.80

[a] The effect sizes (γ) are gammas (Howell, 1987). They signify the difference between means in standard deviation units. Cohen (1977) defines effect sizes as *small* if they are 0.20, *medium* if they are 0.50, and *large* if they are 0.80 or greater.
* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Source: Sexual Strategies Theory, Buss & Schmitt, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.100.2.204

Why would women even care about resources for short-term mating?

Well, think about how a taste for resources could have evolved for short-term dating only: even if only a few

women managed to “lockdown” a man with lots of resources, it could have made sense for women to develop a preference for casual sex with wealthy men instead of poor ones.

Conspicuous Consumption: Throw Money Around to Sleep Around

We mentioned that resources can help with short-term mating as well.

Resources are particularly effective in short-term mating when they are so abundant that the man spends like he couldn’t care less…
That’s called “conspicuous consumption” (Thorsten Veblen, 1899), and refers to the flashy display of a vast amount of resources.

Research shows that conspicuous consumption works for the short, but not long-term.
Possibly women know that conspicuous consumers are mostly interested in casual sex and are not easy to tie down.

Most Men Use Resources Together With Commitment And Support

Most men, though, don’t have a vast amount of resources.

And that’s why most men use resources for long-term mating, promising to make those resources available to a single woman, along with their devotion and support.
Enter, commitment (third item on this list).

2. Acquire & Display Status & Power

Power and status overlap with resources, but are not exactly the same.

Robert Wright suggests that since our ancestors could not hoard resources, women might be more viscerally attracted to power than to resources.
Buss suggests the opposite, with power being an indicator of resources.

But for our purposes, it doesn’t matter which came first. Plenty of research shows that women prefer high-status men, both in questionnaire research and in real-world experiments (Gueguen, 2012).

Effectiveness

Very effective.

It can be effective in darker ways, too.
Ask Weinstein:

The “low-power”, turkey-level use of power
Weinstein is an example of using power as an exchange for “opportunities for sex”.

But, of course, it doesn’t have to be abusive.
And most of the time, it’s not.

We hear about the cases of “abuses of power”, but we don’t hear about the countless cases where women are more than happy to sleep with a powerful man.
In my working career, I’ve witnessed more than one example of willing, attractive women sleeping with corporate high-flyers.

3. Display (or Feign) Commitment

Men demonstrate their willingness to commit in a litany of ways:

- Displaying empathy and understanding (ranked #1 for long-term dating)
- Displaying fidelity (ranked #2 for long-term dating)
- Honesty & openness
  - Acting truthful
  - Communicating feelings to her directly and openly
  - “Being oneself”
- Displays of kindness
- Displays of love towards children (La Cerra, 1995) or pets (Tiefferet et. al., 2013)
- Signals that he’s willing to help around the house (Bleske-Rechek, 2006)
- Professing love
- Discussing future plans
- Showing concern for her problems
- Helping her out

- Spending lots of time with her
- Persistence in courtship
- Any signal that says “I am willing to channel resources, time, and effort over the long run”

Men offer commitment in exchange for exclusive sexual access to their reproductive system.
The unwritten exchange is: “I will provide for you and the children, and you only sleep with me”.

Manipulative Version

Women are naturally attuned to paying attention to their level of investment and commitment.

And they’re very attuned to spotting changes over time because the longer the positive signals last, the more difficult it is to fake them.

However, that doesn’t mean that some men aren’t willing to *fake* over a period of time.
Indeed, many men make fake commitments to gain sexual access to a woman, only to “ghost” her after sex.
Or, even worse for her, after she has given birth.

Feigning commitment for sexual access is most widespread in cultures where casual sex is rarer and long-term dating is the norm.

Why so?

Because in more conservative cultures and environments, women deny casual sex to most men, men are “forced” into either committing… Or faking commitment.
That’s why in my experience I’ve seen the “feign commitment” more often from Asian men than European men: European women are more open to casual sex, and men have less of a need to feign commitment.

Fake Honesty & Vulnerability To Display High Value

Some of the most advanced players can use “fake vulnerability and honesty” strategically.

For example, he can talk about a *past* of gallivanting and womanizing.
That sounds like honest disclosure and “coming clean,” while it actually positions him as a high sexual market value player (low SMV guys don’t get lots of sex).
As they share the story, they leave the door open to the possibility of commitment now that they’re finally maturing.

And that’s the woman’s dream: a high-SMV man, a bit of a rascal, who now *might* stop just for her.

If they do it well, the woman will want to rush towards that possibility.

Competition-Busting Use

Denigrating a man’s willingness to invest over the long-term is an effective way to attack a rival for long-term dating (Buss & Schmitt, 1996).

In Buss’ research, disclosing that a man has a serious girlfriend was ranked as the most effective tactic to make a rival less attractive to women (Buss, 2016).

I doubt it’s very effective to denigrate men pursuing casual sex, though.
In my experience, the allure of the “player” can be very attractive for short-term sex.

Effectiveness

NOT if it comes before sex and in libertine cultures.

In very conservative ones, it can work even early on.

But in libertine cultures, only go for it if you want long-term dating, after you've been intimate, and ideally, after she's already shown plenty that she likes and wants you.

The commitment makes a long-term relationship both more likely and more solid.

For most men, commitment is a basic requirement that women demand to enter a relationship.
Few men, either very attractive (high in fitness) or very wealthy (high in resources), can do without commitment and still get sex.

This is what women rank highest as indicators of commitment:

He told her that he really loved her.	5.48	*1.42*
He implied that he was really committed to her.	5.36	*1.15*
He took her to a private or secluded area.	5.36	*1.15*
He told her that he really cared about her deeply.	5.36	*1.29*
He offered to give her a massage.	5.28	*1.06*
He treated her with respect.	5.24	*1.54*
He made her a gourmet meal with wine and candlelight.	5.20	*1.32*
He invited her to go to a hot tub.	5.08	*1.53*
He invited her to his house/room/apartment.	5.04	*1.10*
He invited her over for a romantic dinner.	5.04	*1.14*
He talked her into having sex with him.	5.04	*2.31*
He got her to drink a lot of alcohol.	5.00	*1.29*
He told her he didn't do "one-night stands" because he liked relationships that lasted.	4.96	*1.27*
He lavished attention on her.	4.96	*1.34*
He acted genuinely caring and kind.	4.96	*1.43*
He started to undress her.	4.96	*1.57*

Note: For all means, 1 means the act is very likely to be ineffective, 4 means the act is likely to be moderately effective, and 7 means the act is very likely to be effective.

Source: David Buss, https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499409551752
From the chart above, notice the potential bombshell that is "he told her he didn't like one-night stands because he liked relationships that lasted".
There is a lot of potential there for getting her to fantasize about a relationship with him.

Honest communication Effectiveness

Honest communication and displays of vulnerability can be attractive to women, as they suggest the man is "being himself" and "honestly opening up" to her.

That's why I recommend men listen more than they talk but also open up (strategically) during conversations. Mutual "opening up" contributes to a whirlwind romance that truly sweeps her off her feet (and that leads to physical "opening up" later).

Love & Devotion for LMR

Finally, professing love and devotion can also be used by more unscrupulous men to overcome last-minute resistance to sex when she's still on the fence.

"Conspicuous" Commitment Displays

There is no "conspicuous commitment" in the research literature, so this is my own theory.

Exaggerated displays of courtship can work similarly to very direct openers: they can accelerate the courtship process.
If he's a high-value man and/or if she likes him, it can make women swoon.

See the "perfect lover" Rudolph Valentino, as described by Robert Greene in "*The Art of Seduction*".
And that's why high-effort displays of love can also work on first approaches, for example, "The Notebook":

> **Him**: (Jumps on a moving Ferris wheel to meet her. Then risks his life to get a "yes")

Note: High-in-romance conspicuous commitment strategies work better in cultures with a long-term bias and with romantic women. It fares more poorly in cultures with a strong short-term bias (also see "SMV variables") where it's too high an investment and makes you look too try-hard.
Generally speaking, we wouldn't recommend this as your go-to approach.

4. Display Physical Prowess With Sport Success

Women want healthy and physically strong men—or, at least, stronger than they are-.

Men show their physical strength with:

- Playing competitive sports
- Seeking rewards and victories in their sports
- Seeking prestige roles in team sports (i.e., quarterback or team captain)
- Lifting weights

Physical prowess in almost any physical endeavor is an indicator of both health and higher-than-average fitness.

Competition-Busting Use

There are many layers of competition when it comes to physical prowess.

Winning in sports is one way of showing physical superiority in a controlled and safe environment.
Men also derogate other men's success related to sports, for example by insinuating they are "all brawn and no brain", or that they are using drugs (see an example here).

Physical prowess also feeds into social dominance, with men trying to use size and physical threats to assert dominance over others.
In early pick-up artist parlance, it was referred to as "AMOG-ing" (i.e., "alpha male of the group").

Also see:

- **What's an alpha male** (and how to become one)
- **Alpha male handshake**
- **Alpha male body language**

Effectiveness

On average, athletic men, especially successful ones, have more sexual partners than average.

But doing sports is very effective IF you also gain status and money with your sports activities.

Otherwise, it has little effect if you play at an amateur level, with few real-life downfalls.

When it comes to muscle, there is much variability in women's preferences, so it's not a straight line where "more is always better".

Very thin body types are usually a turn-off, and some studies show that a *moderate* amount of muscle mass is preferred (Frederick, 2007).

4.2. Display Sexual Prowess

Overlapping but independent indicators of physical prowess are displays of *sexual* prowess.

Every man good on the dance floor also alludes to sex, while good music coordination suggests good rhythmicity, which is important to help women achieve orgasms.

Sexual prowess signals don't actually require masculinity.
As a matter of fact, it requires a level of comfort with one's body and a "free-flowing" movement that is rarely found in the most masculine men.

Enter the elegant tango dancers, or the slightly feminized glam rock stars (see more pictures of young Axl Rose).
Look at how Russel Brand, a successful seducer, moves:

Some modern urban seducers specialize in picking-up women by making them horny and sexually attracted and making them feel free to fully express themselves with them.
They can do it with direct sexual communications, hints of sex, or, even better, indirectly with body language.

Look at this guy, for example, who drips sexuality with his moves and attitude.

Effectiveness

This one requires skills.

It can backfire badly and make him look like a pervert if done wrong, -as most men do-.

But it's effective if done well.
More effective for short-term mating than for long-term mating, albeit as we've seen, there is often an overlap between the two.
And it's always easy for high-value men to switch from casual sex to long-term dating if they so wish.

5. Display Self-Confidence & Bravado

Self-confidence is an indicator of status (Barkow, 1989) and past successes.

David Buss says that men with high confidence earn more money and more easily find sex partners, and many men try to appear more assertive and dominant when they are around women they like.

Assertiveness is crucial, so also see:

- **How to be more assertive**

Competition-Busting Use

Men compete for social status.

Self-confidence is extremely useful because it is strongly correlated with social status and power.
And social status and power then lead to mating opportunities.

Bravado has more limited use and is more turkey behavior.
It includes bragging, alpha male posturing, and social climbing.

Effectiveness

Confidence is effective at all times.

Bravado, as in risk-taking, can also be effective in the short term, with research showing that women prefer men who engage in risky behavior (Petraitis, 2014) and even men who have head scars (Burris, 2009).

Table 2 Rotated Factor Loadings Greater than .450 for the First and Second Factors

		Factor 1	
Low-risk option	High-risk option	When done by males	When done by females
Biking along paved bicycle paths	Back-country mountain biking	.686	.692
Training cats and dogs for movies	Training bears and horses for movies	.590	.694
Rock climbing at a health club	Rock climbing in the backcountry	.626	.626
Shallow-water snorkeling at an ocean beach	Deep-sea scuba diving one mile offshore	.688	.543
Being a scientist who studies birds out in the wild	Being a scientist who studies alligators out in the wild	.581	.643
Rollerblading for exercise	Extreme rollerblading (e.g., doing tricks)	.599	.620
Playing "touch" football	Playing "tackle" football	.668	.530
Going to the ocean and swimming 20 feet offshore	Going to the ocean and swimming 200 feet offshore	.523	.658
Delivering packages for the post office	Delivering supplies to soldiers in combat	.533	.636
Washing windows outside strip malls	Washing windows outside high-rise (e.g., 60 story) buildings	.522	.643
Cross-country skiing at a Rocky Mountain resort	Skiing the steepest slopes at a Rocky Mountain resort (e.g., Double Black Diamond slopes)	.511	.646
Swimming across a 150-foot wide pool	Swimming across a 150-foot wide river	.583	.570
Playing slow-pitch softball	Playing fast-pitch baseball	.477	.652
Rowing a boat around a lake	White-water kayaking	.537	.562

Source: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jasp.12237

Men must be careful not to overdo the bravado thing, though.
Do it too much, and it's the equivalent of over-investing. It looks like he is strutting around *for her*, and that gives her all the power of choice.

It would be the equivalent of birds dancing around to show off. They might dance well, but the power is still all hers to pick and choose.

Furthermore, in my opinion, bravado is not the most effective strategy because it's indirect.
It aims more at impressing *other men* than actually focusing on the process of advancing a romance *with a woman*.

5.2. Asshole Dating Strategy

You know the "asshole game".

Some men are naturally assholes, while others purposefully seek to be more antisocial and unpleasant in the belief that it will get them more women.

But is it true?

Effectiveness

Well, under certain, limited conditions, it works.

So we need to dig a bit deeper here.

Urbaniak and Killman's study shows that women would pick "nice guys" both for other women and for themselves,

albeit a few women did pick a nice guy for other women and a bad boy for themselves—but still a minority of women.

In a similar study with dating ads, thus mimicking a more realistic long-term dating scenario, it was still kind men who were picked the most.
Or, more precisely, men who exhibited altruism as a courtship display, using keywords such as "I volunteer at a food bank" or "I enjoy helping people".

Age is another factor that comes into play.
Younger women tend to be more infatuated with the image of the rascal bad boy, while older women tend to go more for the stable and mature type.

Viren Swami reaches the conclusion that if the "kind guy" is unconfident and looks like he lets everyone trample him, then the bad boy might be the preferred option.

But if we are talking about a confident man, then the bad boy appeals to a smaller fraction of the population while being unappealing to a much larger one.

The Kind Asshole Strategy

Please note that kindness and "asshole" are not necessarily opposites.

As a matter of fact, I like the mixed "kind asshole" style (for example Seduction University).

Women love it when an otherwise kind and refined guy shows an edge of aggression and anti-sociality directed towards the "real" antisocial (in a way, that's exactly what ThePowerMoves is all about).

6. Display Indicators of Intelligence (Game)

Among the numerous possible displays of intelligence:

- Humor
- Poetry
- Arts
- Good conversations
- Any verbal aspect of "game"

Evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller (Miller, 2000) says that many of the "higher" forms of human intelligence are nothing but indicators of fitness.
Since there is much overlap between success in the arts and status, and between seduction and good conversations, I think that Miller is right.

Effectiveness

Yes, with some caveats.

You might have read on Tinder about women self-defining themselves as "sapiosexuals".

Well, as it turns out, it could be true.
Albeit only a minority of people are sexually attracted to intelligence (1% to 8%), sapiosexuality exists (Gignac et. al., 2017).
It's not a linear correlation, though, and there is a ceiling: when someone is *too* smart, like genius level, then attraction decreases.

In my opinion, this is due to the fact that women are generally attracted to men they feel are better than they are.
But when the difference is too big, then the disconnect is also too big.

It's the same for masculine traits: studies show that a masculine voice is attractive, but below a certain threshold, it's not attractive anymore.

What works best with intelligence are its *expressions*.
IQ by itself does nothing to attract; it's all about how you *convey* it that works (i.e., sounding intelligent, smart, and refined).

Take the old cliche of women liking men who make them laugh, for example. Well, it's true, women like men who make them laugh (Bressler, 2005).
And that's because humor is an easily recognizable expression of intelligence, together with good quips and comebacks, or good conversation, and making her feel good.
"Game", in many ways, is also an expression of intelligence.

Also read:

- **Mating intelligence**

> Mating Intelligence: Effective Dating for Smart People

7. Become Famous (Social Proof 100x)

Social proof includes:

- A group of cool friends
- High status in that group
- Women warm and friendly towards you (mate-copying)

All of the above work effectively.

All of the above work effectively.
And they will provide *outsized* mating success when they are amplified by fame.

Fame is the new mating superpower.

The power of fame was limited during much of our evolution.
After all, everyone was "well-known" in small tribes, and being "famous" had some benefits, but it was capped by the tribe's size.

Today, technology has changed the game.
Access to millions of potential mates who self-select to follow you *because* they like you is a true game-changer.

It started with mass media and reached new heights with social media.

Example of Fame's Effects: Connor Murphy

> **Murphy (social media personality)**: I've had too many encounters (…) this has happened a lot actually, where girls see my social media and they come over and literally tell me "oh my gosh, this is gonna be such a cool story when I tell my friends"
> (…) they didn't care about how good the sex would feel, they're just looking for validation

If you don't know who this guy is, it's because he isn't even THAT famous.
But he had a large enough following on Instagram to get girls to proposition him for sex.

Of course, he's also a handsome guy, but you can bet that if he weren't famous nobody would proposition him for

sex.

Effectiveness

Extremely effectively.

But allow me an important caveat.
It's effective *once you have it*.
Not in the sense that you should *pursue* fame as a dating strategy. For most guys, that's like seeking to get rich by winning the lottery.

For most people: focus on having a good social circle of friends, including female friends.

However, if you got a shot at fame, this is as close as it gets to a silver bullet.

Fame provides men with power and resources all at once, *plus* a mass market to advertise them.
Followers also self-select, meaning that many of those who choose to follow you already like you.

Fame can also help transcend looks.
Studies show that average-looking famous people have a bigger emotional impact than non-famous but attractive ones (Gakhal, 2008).
We also grow familiar with famous people, and there are plenty of studies now showing that familiarity breeds liking and attraction (Peskin, 2004).

Plus, there is the law of large numbers.
Put yourself in front of enough people, and you're bound to find someone who likes you.

In sum: become famous enough, and even an otherwise unattractive man still could rake in large numbers of willing female sexual partners.

Maximizing Your Dating Success

As you can see, men have many different tools at their disposal.

In our current society, there are enough paths to success that men can "specialize" in one or a few of them depending on their taste or propensity.

See here how different types of men can all be attractive and successful at dating, albeit they all have different personalities and styles:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

Men can also make up for what they're lacking in one area by exceeding in another.

With these many options, all that's required is to get off one's ass and work :).

Seduction University excerpt.
This article is an excerpt from Seduction University.
The lesson in the course has more examples and more practical strategies you can apply to your life.

9 Proven Female Dating Strategies (Science-Based)

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

There are countless dating books and courses for women, not to even mention the newly minted “female dating strategies” on Reddit.

They all teach women how to date, how to find a boyfriend, and how to drive make men crazy.

But few are truly scientific.
This article combines science with what works in the real world, as personally experienced by the author.

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1. Enhance Your Appearances

Obviously.

All women instinctively know that men place a premium on appearance.

And as a natural consequence, one of the most ubiquitous female dating strategies revolve around enhancing physical appearance.

Effectiveness

It's the foundation of any good dating strategy.

And please note, **it's not just about "looking better", but also an indicator of taking care of oneself**.

Every time I see a woman I like who does not take care of herself, I lose some interest in her.

To make a comparison:

A woman who doesn't care at all about her appearance is like a man who is happy to remain at his entry-level job.

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

You probably know the basics already.

It starts with personal hygiene and basics such as shaving legs and upper lip.

Science supports all following items as important dating assets:

- White teeth
- Facial skin contrast (yes to makeup)
- Cheek redness
- Smooth and clear skin
- Lustrous hair
- Red lips (lipstick works)
- Firm breasts (push-up bra works)
- Hourglass figure

- Leg length (high heels work)

You don't have to be great at all or at any of those.
Just taking care of them –*especially* in the phase when you're looking for a partner-.

2. Display Youthfulness

Men are attracted to younger women.

How young depends on a number of factors, including how old he is, what he can realistically get, and whether or not he wants children and a serious relationship.

It's not true that "younger is always better", but on average younger women do command more negotiating power in the sexual marketplace.

Effectiveness

Being strategic as to when to best settle down is very effective.

As a matter of fact, in the West where everyone largely leaves this important part of their lives to chance, it might be the best-kept open secret in the world.

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

Youthful behavior is *wholly* up to you.

"Acting" young is an effective technique to be more attractive.

Evolutionary psychologist researcher David Buss lists the following traits for "youthful behavior":

- Bouncy youthful gait
- High energy levels
- Animated facial expressions

I'd personally also add a "sense of wonder" and "excitement" to be used whenever you're doing something you like.
I'll never forget the woman who jumped and shrieked full of excitement when our "romantic boat ride" was ready.

If you want an example of "animated facial expression", look at this clip:

Highly feminine, attractive flirtation, BTW
And for a grander dating strategy:

- **Settle down earlier rather than later**

It's a question of negotiating power.

Sure, you can do well in negotiations no matter what, but if you want to put the odds on your side, you're better off playing when you got a strong hand.

And for women, that's in the 20s.
If you're past it, it's all good.
In many countries, including in the West, marrying after her 20's is not a huge drawback because many women do it.

But still remember the mantra: earlier is better than later.

- **Be strategic about settling down**

Being strategic means that you know what you want and plan how to get it.

By when would you like to have a serious relationship?
Always start preparing two years before your "deadline date".

What type of man, where are you going to meet him, how and when are you going to ask for commitment… ?

For more on age and exceptions see:

- ExceptionAL Dating

> ExceptionAL Dating: How to Succeed Despite Shortcomings

3. Signal Your Faithfulness

Men tend to divide women into Madonna and whores.

And they don't want to invest in the whores.

So… Give him that "Madonna".
And don't worry, it's not about being religious or SUPER restricted. It's about making him feel you're not going to sleep around and he won't have to guard you like a prison guard.

Fidelity cues in the scientific literature include:

- Virginity
- Low number of former partners
- Faithfulness

And from personal experience living I add:

- Little partying
- Little "secretive meeting with the girlfriends only"
- No frat-type stories to share of drunken hookups

And:

- Delaying sex (reasonably, see lesson)
- "Playing hard to get" (reasonably, see later)

Effectiveness

For long-term dating, yes, absolutely.

In David Buss' research **men seeking a long-term partner rank faithfulness as their #1 priority**.

For obvious reasons, faithfulness is not as important in short-term dating.

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

Well, if you want to be honest… Then you'd start by keeping your sexual partners' count low.

But that's up to you.

What I can tell you from an amoral and Machiavellian perspective of what works best:

- If you have been with more than 10 men, don't say it
- If you have been with more men than he has, don't share it
- If you have crazy sex stories and he hasn't, don't share them (but don't share even if he has. Men love being more sexually experienced and loath being less sexually experienced)

If you're in a libertine culture, he asks how many men you've been with, and you fear your number is too high, say:

> **You**: I have gotten close with a few I felt good about. The way you act, I think less than you. How about you, by the way?

Then, confirm it was less.
It pains me that this advice might put someone in the position to lie. But if I have to tell you what works, then this is what works best.
You can still be honest and only end up with men who accept you for who you are -ideal-.

You can also modify that line if things are getting serious:

See "Seduction University".

4. Time Sex to Your Target

Women delay sex for two reasons:

1. To make him invest more while she retains the biggest bargaining chip
2. To avoid looking easy

In the Madonna-whore dichotomy, delaying sex helps women to position themselves as Madonnas.

Effectiveness

Most often, yes.

Men cannot know her previous history, so they rely on how she behaves with them.

If she is hard to get for him, then many men generalize that she must be hard to get for most men, and thus she's a woman worth investing in.

However, when it's a lie, it does not work so well for men who "know the game".
Also, many women play this game very badly, making it obvious they want to withhold as a negotiation chip, or that they're withholding it *with him* only (and nobody wants to be the sucker who's waited when others didn't).

By the way, here are the types of games you want to avoid:

- Nasty games that destroy relationships

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

Here are six rules of thumb to help you strategize:

1. Wait if he's conservative
2. Wait if you're in a conservative culture
3. Wait if you have some deeply ingrained beliefs on waiting

4. Go for it if you're in a whirlwind romance
5. Go for it if you have great chemistry and passion is running high
6. Go for it if you have been on a long nice date and it just feels like the "icing on the cake"
7. Open-minded men who have been around: go with the flow of how you feel

Finally, if there is a strong chemistry, don't douse the flames as that will scream of "game-playing" and "frigid", and it might derail an otherwise wonderful romance.

If you go for it quick, ideally you want to make him feel special and that you did it "just with him".

If you must delay sex, many men have a fragile ego and they take a sexual rejection personally.
The key is to "delay without hurting his ego".

Read:

- **How to postpone sex effectively**

> How To Slow Down Sex & Get A Relationship

5. Play *Selective* Hard to Get

Women play hard to get for two reasons:

1. To signal desirability ("she must have lots of options to choose from")
2. To look more faithful ("Madonna")

We go back to the Madonna-whore yet again.
It's not that we are repeating ourselves, it's because the Madonna-whore is deeply ingrained into men's brains and it is central to his levels of commitment and investment to a woman.

Effectiveness

The selective strategy, on paper, makes sense.

And in some circumstances, it can work great.

But there are a few issues when it's badly done, or done with the wrong type of guy.
Including:

- Some men will interpret her behavior as disinterest and move on (see "top dating mistakes")
- Some men will see the game and refuse to play (see the "make him chase danger")
- Men with options might end up with easier women (or more astute women playing the "bait and switch" game)
- People like people who like them, and stand-offishness communicates "I don't like you" (Viren Swami, 2016)
- Some driven men might *want* her more, but end up liking her less

However, there is a way to make it work.

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

The idea is simple:

Women should be hard to get for everyone but welcoming of the man she chose.
This is what I call "selectively hard to get strategy".

With this strategy, she retains all the positive aspects of the general “hard to get” strategy, such as desirability and loyalty, but without the drawbacks.
As a matter of fact, this “selective hard to get strategy” has a strong advantage: it makes him feel great.

Research supports the efficacy of this strategy (Walster et. al., 1973), and so does my personal experience.
I can tell you that the women who had few sexual partners but had sex with me quickly and pleasurably were my real favorites -and the ones I think of most fondly-.

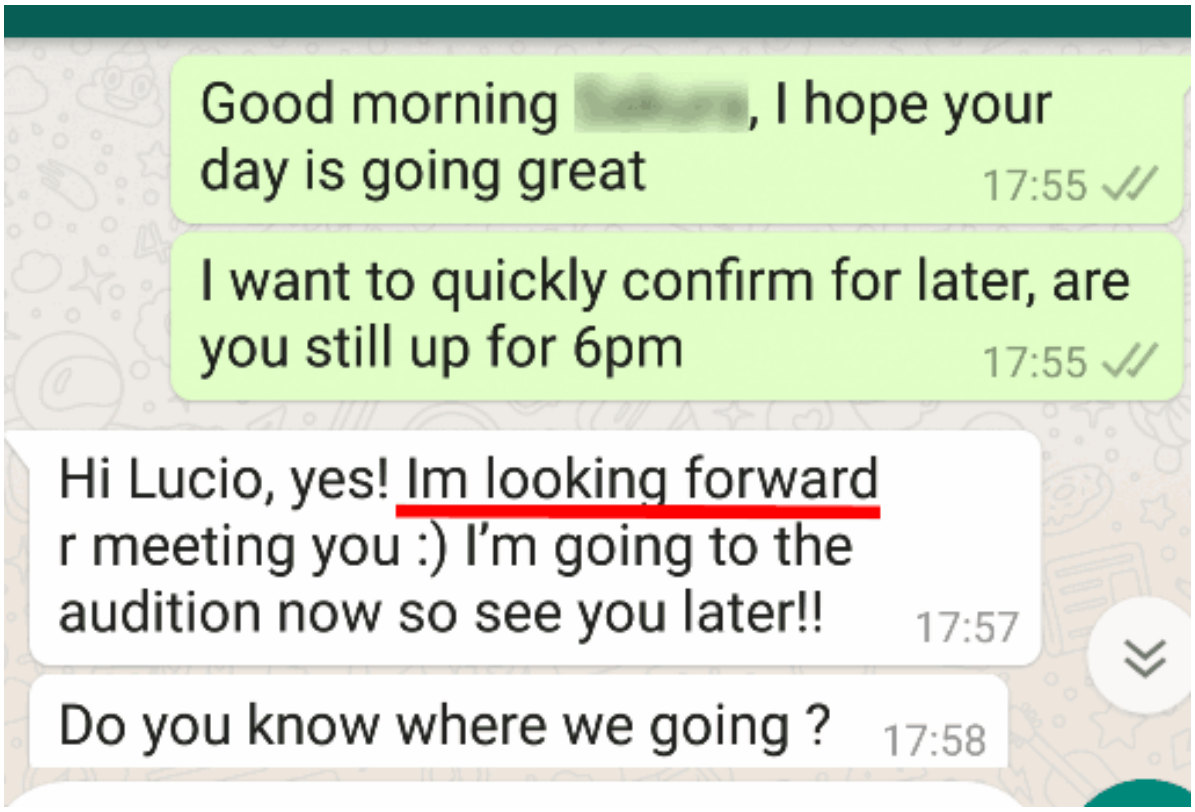
This is truly powerful.

5.2. Selectively Smitten: Encourage His Pursuit

This is the “enhanced version” of “selectively hard to get”.

Part of the selectively smitten dating strategy is that, while you are generally selective, you are so glad to have found him, that you are not afraid to show it -a display of confident vulnerability as well-.

I have used many examples across this website, this is just one of many:



The moment she said “I look forward to meeting you”, I perked up.

And suddenly was looking forward to meeting her much more than I was just moments before getting her text. And I also liked her more.

And here is one more example where *I* was playing guys’ games. But her honesty made me like her far more, and drew us closer together:

See “Seduction University”.

When to communicate your liking and appreciation?

Before most women do (in the West).

Jokes aside, you want to avoid doing it before he has done anything to show his interest.

But once he is showing interest, which includes texting, asking you out, complimenting you, or anything which moves the interaction towards romance, then showing liking and appreciation will only help.

6. Signal Exploitability (& Flip The Scripts Later)

Sounds strange?

Well, beyond the veil of political correctness, that's how people -in this case, men- really are.
Men are attracted to signs which communicate "I am easy to exploit".

Exploit for what?
Sex, of course.

Signals of exploitability, on top of the ones in the figure below, include:

- Silliness
- Giggling
- Cluelessness
- Scatterbrained conversation
- Irrational beliefs (very religious or superstitious)
- Child-like behavior (we saw a few examples)

As Mae West once said:

> Brains are an asset, if you hide them.

Effectiveness

Absolutely.

This is one of the main ingredients in the secret sauces of the best world seductresses.
Marylin Monroe looked exploitable, and the coquette style also leverages "child-like playfulness" (see: "how to seduce a man" for case studies).

And this is why "lollipop girls" are sexy to many men. Some of the men who find it attractive have pedophile tendencies of course, but many non-pedophiles find it attractive because it sends signals of exploitability (exploitable like naive children are).

Risks of This Dating Strategy

To begin with, it works best with men pursuing a short-term strategy (Lewis et. al., 2012).

And while men like silly and exploitable girls for the short term, they don't usually like them as long-term partners.

See the research ranking "exploitability signals" on both short and long-term dating:

Positively correlated cues	Short term mate	Long term mate
"Sassy"	.65***	−.60***
Immature	.62***	−.62***
Intoxicated	.49***	−.40***
Reckless	.58***	−.69***
Promiscuous	.68***	−.64***
Partying	.51***	−.46***
Flirty	.54***	−.37***
Promiscuous friends	.54***	−.49***
Attention seeking	.49***	−.56***
Young	.25**	−.12
Sleepy	.24*	−.17
Come hither look	.29**	−.26**
Revealing clothing	.47***	−.48***
Touching breast	.00	.06
Open body posture	.39***	−.29**
Alone	.09	−.07
Ring (wedding/engagement)	.10	.01
Tight clothing	.36***	−.33**
Friendly	.08	.30**
Punk	.19*	−.45***
Materialistic	.24*	−.30**

Source: Goetz et. al, 2011 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2011.12.004

Short-term and long-term are almost specular: as good as they are to get attention for casual sex, they make men run for the hills after sex.

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

It's possible though to get the uplifts, without the drawbacks.

Let's see a few ways of doing that:

1. Add the "protect me" layer

You can add "in need of protection" signals to the "exploitable" ones.

The "protect me" side is what makes men want to guard and defend, and it's very effective for the long-term as well.

This scene is an exaggerated example, of course, but just to give you an idea:

This strategy frames him as the father-figure of the relationship. Just don't stay stuck in it 24/7: men also like a grown-up sometimes
And this is a real-life texting example leveraging the same principle:

- See the forum

Vulnerability is also the secret sauce of Marylin Monroe: sky-high signals of exploitability/submissiveness, mixed with an air of woman in need of "protection" (plus a sprinkling of orgasmic facial expressions).

Asking men for help is also a time-tested strategy that works to initially position her as "exploitable" while also awaking his protective instincts.

2. Ask him if he's a good man

If you're a socially intelligent woman, this may sound ridiculous.

Ridiculous in a naive way.

But it's exactly because it's ridiculous in a naive way that it works great.

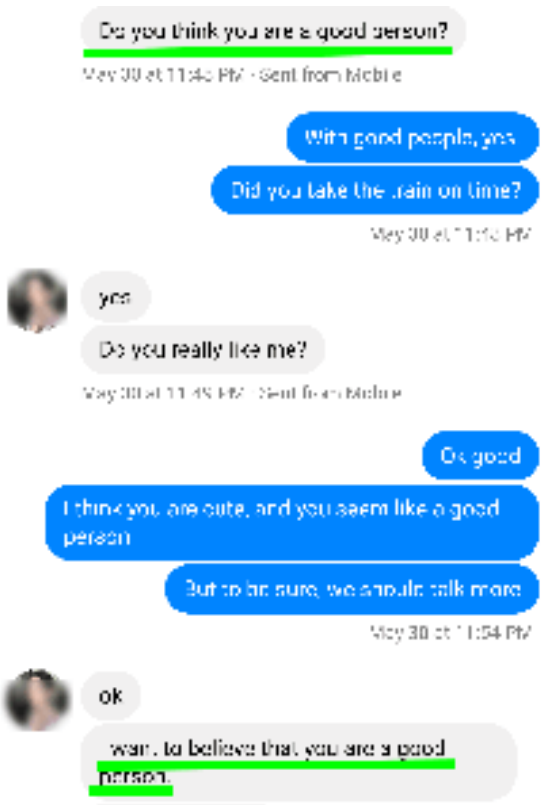
Asking men if they are "good", or if they have "good intention" signals exploitability in two ways:

1. The fear of "non-good men"
2. The misplaced trust that you can recognize good men based on their own answer

Of course, most male game players will answer "yes".
But all good men will also like you more just because you ask.
It signals that you want long-term relationships and, indirectly, it's also an indicator of faithfulness, since women who are interested in flings and short-term sex wouldn't care nearly as much about who is "good" and who is not.

It's also a positive way of making him prove to you and frame the relationship as "a relationship with a good man", which might help bring the best out of him.

See an example here:



Her saying “I want to believe you are a good person” is a genius move.
Since I didn’t exactly jump through her hoops, she *helps* me pass her screen, which she needed to do if she wanted to maintain both interest and power -keeping interest without me passing her screen would devalue of her own standards-.
And it also indirectly says “I just screened you in, be glad, and be on your best behavior”.

Bait (with exploitability signals) and switch to long-term

Another technique is to bait men with exploitative cues and then seek to switch to a longer-term strategy.

For example, you seem all exploitable and silly at first, like you wouldn’t even put up much resistance to sex.
But then… Then you use the technique in “how to make him wait for sex” to increase the odds of long-term relationship.

Most baited men would be OK to wait for sex when they know she likes him and it will eventually get there.

Signal submissiveness to the right man

Once you meet a man you truly like, small displays of submissiveness will go a long way.

Here is one example:

See Seduction University.

Can’t Women Just Be Smart?

Men say they like intelligent women.

And they do… Up to a certain point.

They even *say* they like women who are smarter than they really are but, when it comes to real-life interaction, they don’t (Park et. al., 2015).

That means smarter women need to play the game a bit… Or look harder for a smarter man (or an open-minded one, at least).

Plenty of those exist, so don't stress too much about it.

Also read:

- Submissive VS independent women

7. Signal Your Approachability

For women to date at all, they need to attract suitors first.

Some men will make the move anyway, but those are often either players or men who can't even read social signals.

Women who want more control over their dating lives -and you should be one of them- take it upon themselves to signal that they want to be approached.

Effectiveness

For the short term, absolutely.

In the literature, it's called "sexual signaling", and the more forward she is, the more effective men rate her strategy to "get" casual sex:

Acts Rated Most Effective for Promoting Sexual Encounters

Female acts	Male raters (N = 25) M	SD
She asked him if he wanted to sleep with her.	6.56	*1.04*
She guided his hands to her genital area.	6.44	*1.19*
She talked him into having sex with her.	6.42	*0.97*
She told him directly that she wanted to have sex with him.	6.40	*1.08*
She undressed in front of him.	6.36	*1.00*
She started to undress him.	6.12	*1.39*
She invited him to her bedroom.	6.12	*0.97*
She asked if he had a condom.	6.00	*1.16*
She told him she had birth control.	5.88	*1.24*
She put her hand on his thigh.	5.80	*0.96*
She invited him to her house/room/apartment.	5.80	*1.08*
She told him that she was sexually attracted to him.	5.80	*1.47*
She invited him to go to a hot tub.	5.76	*0.97*
She took him to a private or secluded area.	5.64	*1.11*
She offered to give him a massage.	5.60	*1.08*

Source: Greer & Buss, https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499409551752
Of course, this research states the obvious to the point that it's almost comical.

I suppose women won't be surprised to know that "guiding his hand to her genital area" could promote a sexual encounter :).

Problem is, research also confirms what both men and women instinctively knew: that a sexually forward woman is extremely effective at getting casual sex, but not so good at getting a long-term partner.
Cari Goetz (Goetz et. al., 2011) for example measured how attractive "easy" women are to men. Turns out, men *love* easy women for short-term sex (+0.65) but actively dislike them as long-term partners (-0.60).

Again, we see the inherent sexual conflict of male strategies here: what they seek in a short-term partner is the opposite of what they want for a long-term partner.

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

Still, there are ways of using this strategy to get also long-term relationships.

Here's how:

Signal more often, and more obviously

Most women are too coy and signal too little.

Or not at all.

Or they think they signaled their interest, while men have no idea.
Men miss the signs *all the time*, including when most women think they were "clear enough". So better to err on the side of over-signaling than under-signaling.

If it's a mixer event, just start talking to him.
Plenty of women did that to me and I always appreciated it. Some women even asked me during our conversation "so do you have Instagram". That's a great way to prod him to exchange contact and ask you out.

Stick to the basics: men are simple-minded

Most men miss out on basic women's signals.

For that reason, avoid anything too fancy and stick to the good old "hold eye contact with him" and potentially add a smile, both of them backed by research (Abbey, 1982).

Meet more men, give more men a chance

A huge mistake women commit is to relinquish control of their dating lives.

They go out and think "if it happens, it happens".
Much better is to put the odds in your favor. Make it easy for chance to happen.

- Go out by yourself sometimes (but say your friend stood you up)
- Go to the bathroom by yourself
- Send those attraction signals
- Give some boring men the chance for a date

8. Show Kindness / Caring

People want to partner up with good people.

And men also gain if the mother of their children has good character, so it only makes sense if men also developed to appreciate cues of good character.

And indeed, it's been now shown by several studies that personality traits can enhance a woman's attractiveness (Albada et al., 2002).

The field of research even has its own name, and it is the "interaction appearance theory".
Swami's research, for example, found that providing positive personality information leads men to consider a wider array of body types as more attractive.

The character's traits men appreciate are:

- Femininity
- Kindness
- Coyness

- Agreeableness
- Honesty (Paunonen, 2004)

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

Provide a good time, and people will want to spend more time with you.
Both romantically, and not.

Here are a few crucial bits:

- Ditch feminism -especially the extremist one- (has an anti-male side to it and men are getting tired)
- Swap the "resting bitch face" for a welcoming one
- Curl your lips up, not down
- Make it less about me, more about you
- Listening more than talking often pays off
- Do a favor to him / preening

This one is particularly interesting.
A woman once reached out to my jacket and as I wondered "what the hell is she doing", she picked something and said "there was a hair".
That was *such* a great move.
At the same time that she signaled interest, she also signaled caring and kindness. And my attraction skyrocketed: I *so* wanted her.

I can highly recommend you do something similar if you want to signal your interest in a man. It's as effective to signal interest as any other move you can do, but it makes you look less sexually thirsty, less desperate, and much more long-term quality woman.

9. Derogate Your Competitors (Without Sounding Jealous)

Women, just like men and probably more than men, derogate their competitors.

Effectiveness

David Buss says that effective competitor derogations works.

And that it should affect a woman's sexual market value *both* for the short and long term.

However, it's risky because it's very easy to come off as jealous or bitter.

Take the good old "she's such a slut".
I still remember the woman who used that tactic against the girl I liked and who later started dating. I took a huge dislike on her that will probably last a lifetime.

How to Effectively Use This Strategy:

See "Seduction University".

Seduction University excerpt.
This article is an excerpt from Seduction University.

Evolutionary Psychology: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Evolutionary Psychology (2019) provides a thorough overview of *evolutionary psychology*.
David Buss, the author, distills hundreds of years of research and experiments to provide readers with the quickest possible way to understand who we are and why we are the way we are.

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  - The Inclusive Fitness Revolution
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  - Contradictory information on altruism & value
  - Mother / child uterus conflict: is it a case of arms race?
  - Sometimes implies causation where I saw only correlation
  - Does not give enough weight to sexual selection?
  - Some weaker references: Baker & sperm wars? Chagnon?
  - Needs an update to integrate cultural evolution

- Review

Notes

About The Author:
David Buss is an evolutionary psychologist and researcher, currently teaching at the University of Texas. He is a well-known and respected voice in *evolutionary psychology*, authored and performed an incredible amount of field research, and has written several books, including '*The Evolution of Desire*', and '*When Men Behave Badly*'.

Milestones of Human Evolution

- 15 billion years ago (bya) The Big Bang
- 4.7 bya Earth forms
- 3.7 bya First life emerges
- 1.2 bya Sexual reproduction evolves
- 500–450 million years ago (mya) First vertebrates
- 365 mya Fish evolve lungs and walk on land
- 248–208 mya First small mammals and dinosaurs evolve
- 208–65 mya Large dinosaurs flourish
- 114 mya Placental mammals evolve
- 85 mya First primates evolve
- 65 mya Dinosaurs go extinct
- mammals then increase in size and diversity
- 35 mya First apes evolve
- 6–8 mya Common ancestor of humans and African apes evolves
- 4.4 mya First primate with bipedal locomotion (Ardipithecus ramidus)
- 3.0 mya The australopithecines evolve in savannas of Africa
- 2.5 mya Earliest stone tools develop—Oldowan (found in Ethiopia and Kenya, Africa); linked with Homo habilis
- 1.8 mya Hominids (Homo erectus) spread beyond Africa to Asia—first major migration
- 1.6 mya Fire evidence; likely hearths; linked with African Homo erectus
- 1.5 mya Invention of Acheulean hand ax; linked with Homo ergaster
- 1.2 mya Brain expansion in Homo line begins
- 1.0 mya Hominids spread to Europe
- 800 thousand years ago (kya) Crude stone tool kit used—found in Spain, linked with Homo antecessor
- 600–400 kya Long, crafted wooden spears; linked with Homo heidelbergensis found in Germany
- 500–100 kya Period of most rapid brain expansion
- 200–30 kya Neanderthals flourish in Europe and western Asia
- 150–120 kya Common ancestor for all modern humans (Africa) evolves
- 100–50 kya Exodus from Africa—second major migration ["Out of Africa"]
- 50–35 kya "Creative Explosion", an explosion of diverse stone tools, bone tools, blade tools, well-designed fireplaces, and elaborate art; increased population density. Mainly among Homo sapiens, rarely among Neanderthals
- 40–35 kya Homo sapiens (Cro-Magnons) arrive in Europe

- 30 kya Neanderthals go extinct
- 27 kya–present Homo sapiens colonize entire planet; all other hominid species are now extinct

What happened to other hominids?

Up until 100.000 years ago, there were still three hominids on earth: Homo sapiens in Africa, Homo neanderthalensis in Europe, and Homo erectus in Asia.

What happened to the Neanderthals and Erectus is still up for debate, with two main theories:

- Multiregional continuity theory (MRC):
- Out of Africa theory (OOA): modern humans evolved in Africa, then migrated all over the world and replaced the other hominids

The archaeological and genetic evidence supports the OOA theory.

What caused us to become smart?

There are many theories as to what caused our major feature: brain size.
Some of the theories link our brain expansion to toolmaking and use, social challenges and social competition, cooperative large-game hunting, and complex communication.
Buss says that all of them might have played a role.

My Note: How About Sexual Selection?
I was surprised David Buss doesn't list sexual selection and sexual competition as possible causes of brain expansion.
Geoffrey Miller in "*The Mating Mind*" makes a compelling case for sexual selection and brain development.

Behaviorism Debunked: Enter Evolutionary Psychology

Behaviorists believed that the human mind had little or no innate properties.
The only innate property of the brain was general intelligence and the ability to learn anything via "reinforcement and punishment".

This has sometimes been referred to as the "tabula rasa" or "*blank slate*" theory, and in the past decades, Western culture loved the idea.
Anthropologists hunted different cultures, and the more different they were, the more supposedly they proved there were no inborn adaptations, and the more they were celebrated.

See Margareth Mead and the Samoa debacle as an example.
Even to this day, the Wikipedia top summary entry still mentions no bias, ideology, or doubt over the quality of Mead's accounts. It talks about the "controversy" over Mead VS Friedeman without mentioning controversies on Mead's work.

David Buss suggests that the tabula rasa theory was based more on ideology than on data, and he says:

> If tropical paradises existed in other cultures, then perhaps our own problems of jealousy, conflict, and competition were due to U.S. culture, Western values, or capitalism.

However, as time went by, psychology research and science left little wiggling room for behaviorism and "tabula rasa" theories.
Evidence has started mounting that the external environment is not the sole determinant of behavior and that humans all share some commonalities and predispositions.
Starting with Martin Seligman, for example, it became clear that humans can easily learn to develop certain types

of fear, like snakes, but it's difficult to make them develop other types of fear, like cars or electrical outlets.

David Buss says that three forces combined to usher in what's been called the "cognitive revolution" that eventually supplanted behaviorism as the dominant trend in psychology:

- Violation of the "fundamental" laws of learning
- The study of language, with Chomsky arguing for universal invariants across languages
- The rise of the computer and the "information processing metaphor"

Do Domain-General Mechanisms Even Exist?

Some evolutionary psychologists believe that, on top of our evolved specific mechanisms to deal with our evolutionary problems, we also have domain-general mechanisms such as general intelligence, analogical reasoning, concept formation, and working memory.

For sure domain-specific mechanisms communicate with each other and are not walled off, so to speak.

But while we can be fairly certain about the presence of domain-specific mechanisms, we cannot yet be sure of domain-general ones.

Evolution and The 3 Products of Evolution

Among the 3 theories of life on earth—seeding, creationism, and natural selection—natural selection is the most widespread among scientists.

There are three products of the evolutionary process:

- **Adaptations**: inherited and common to the whole population because they proved better at ensuring survival and/or reproduction (example: umbilical cord)
- **By-products**: they have no functional designs and don't (directly) solve any evolutionary problem (for example: belly button)
- **Noise**: random effects produced by mutations and chance (for example: the shape of a person's belly button)

The "noise" is the engine of evolution.
Most of the noise will be unhelpful. But eventually, someone will stumble upon a mutation that helps the organism survive and reproduce. And it will spread out until it becomes an adaptation.

Evolutionary Psychology Misunderstanding

David Buss lists the following as the most frequent misunderstandings people have about evolutionary psychology:

- **Human behavior is genetically determined**: genes interact with the environment
- **If it's evolutionary, we cannot change it**: we can change it, and we might argue one of the goals of studying *evolutionary psychology* is to gain more personal power over ourselves
- **Current mechanisms are optimally designed**: no, they're not. Evolution can be chaotic as it *reacts* to the environment. A good design builds from scratch, but evolution has to "add" new things on top of what's already there

How to Test Evolutionary Hypotheses

A common criticism of *evolutionary psychology* is that it's not a science because it's not falsifiable.

Well, that is not the case.
Buss says there are several ways in which a hypothesis can be empirically tested:

- Comparisons: measure if groups that are supposed to differ do indeed differ (comparing species, groups of people, genders' reactions to stimuli, etc.)
- Archeological records
- Contemporary hunter-gatherer societies: supposedly living closer to the circumstances of our evolution
- Laboratory experiments
- Public data and records
- Products and artifacts
- Behavior: self-reported or observed

The Inclusive Fitness Revolution

Classical Darwinian fitness is focused solely on parent-children, and Hamilton expanded it to include kin as well.

The simple yet revolutionary idea of Hamilton was, as I quote Buss:

> An organism can also increase the reproduction of its genes by helping brothers, sisters, nieces, or nephews to survive and reproduce.

One implication of the inclusive fitness hypothesis is that people will be more altruistic and helpful towards their kins, and that's been proven by several studies.

This is how Buss explains Hamilton's rule:

> Hamilton's rule, stated more formally, is that natural selection favors mechanisms for altruism when c < rb In this formula, c is the cost to the actor, r is the degree of genetic relatedness between the actor and the recipient

What's crucial to remember here, and what many people get wrong, is that Hamilton's rule is not an adaptation per se.
The Hamilton rule simply predicts that altruism among kin can arise, and if it does, it will be favored by evolutionary forces.
Altruism that goes against Hamilton's rule instead will have to buck the evolutionary forces and is more likely to be rooted out (evolvability constraint).

David Buss goes on to describe all the types of relationships directly linked to Hamilton's rule, including parent-child. sibships, half-sibships, aunt-niece, uncle-nephew, grandparent-grandchild, and others.

We recognize kins in the following ways:

1. Through association (having grown together)
2. Through odor
3. Through kin classification (all cultures have special names for kins)
4. Through facial similarity

People are also good at spotting clusters of kins from strangers, which could have been helpful in recognizing who is allied with whom.

Why Families Evolved

Families are uncommon in the animal kingdom.

Only 3% of mammals and birds form families.
It makes sense because remaining in the parental nest incurs high costs, including delayed reproduction and a

concentration of resource competition.

Two models have been proposed:

- Ecological constraint: families emerge when there is a lack of mating opportunities
- Familial benefits: families emerge when they can provide benefits to their offspring
  - Enhanced survival from family's protection
  - Enhanced ability to better compete later in life
  - Inheriting or sharing the family resources
  - Inclusive fitness gains by helping genetic relatives

Non-Kin Altruism

David Buss also goes into the evolution of non-kin altruism.
The theories developed to explain the puzzle of altruism are:

1. **reciprocal altruism**
2. **indirect reciprocity:** people benefit when others see them being altruists, and they gain a reputation as reciprocators
3. **need-based transfer systems:** risk pooling, a form of social insurance
4. **costly signaling:** increases reputation and status through the handicap system (similar to "conspicuous consumption" in mating)

I liked his summary of Axelrod's techniques to increase cooperation:

1. **Enlarge the shadow of the future**: if people think you'll be dealing with each other again, they'll be more likely to cooperate
2. **Teach reciprocity**
3. **Insist on no more than equity**: greed is the downfall of the many, when people know fairness is the goal, they'll be more likely to trust and cooperate
4. **Respond quickly to provocation**: sends a signal you don't tolerate exploitation, which will not work with you or within your team (also see: "how to be a great leader")
5. **Cultivate a personal reputation as a reciprocator**

There are several psychological adaptations showing that we evolved to compute social exchange barters:

- We are bad at abstract logical reasoning, but when problems are presented as costs and benefits in social exchanges, we are good at solving them
- People naturally pay close attention to potential cheaters
- People are reasonably accurate at predicting who will cheat and who is a genuine altruist and cooperator
- People are more generous when others are watching (the benefit of "indirect reciprocity" and building a reputation as a collaborator)
- Altruists seem good at spotting each other and preferentially hanging out with each other
- Emotions evolved to support the social exchange system, including gratitude, anger towards non-reciprocators, guilt,

More research is needed in this area, and you can also read "*The Origins of Virtue*" for more information.

Coalitions

Buss also gets into coalitions and the free-rider problem, and says there is mounting evidence that we evolved

psychological adaptations to punish free-riders.

The studies are still in their infancy, but some possible adaptations include:

- gossip as a means of social bonding and controlling free-riders (Dunbar, 2004; Kniffin & Wilson, 2005),
- in-group favoritism bias (Schiller, Baumgartner, & Knoch, 2014),
- prejudice against and punishment of out-group members (Schiller et al., 2014)
- xenophobia
- adaptations to enforce group norms
- ostracizing those who violate social norms (van Vugt & van Lange, 2006)
- enforcing rules and norms of fairness
- status and reputational benefits to those who contribute heavily to group goals
- providing rewards to those who contribute (Kiyonari & Barclay, 2008).

The Four Classes of Evolutionary Problems

David Buss says that humans have to tackle four major classes of problems, and he structures his work around them:

1. **Survival and growth**: reaching the stage at which the organism is capable of reproduction
2. **Mating**: selecting, attracting, and reproducing
3. **Parenting**: support the offspring until they can also reach the reproduction stage
4. **Aiding genetic relatives**: supporting those around us who carry our genes

My Note: Why "Problems"?
This might feel like nitpicking, but I have an immediate gut reaction to the use of the word "problems".
Buss quotes Darwin, who in turn talks about the "hostile forces of nature", but that nature is what allowed life in the first place, and it's what allows all life forms to *thrive*.
Nature empowers life but does not do its very best to thwart it.

Problems of Survival

- **Folk biology**: all humans have an innate grasp of nature because we all needed to learn what was edible and what was poisonous
- We dislike bitter and sour food because it's likely to contain toxins
- **Neophobia**: we have an innate dislike for new food because new food is potentially dangerous
- **Disgust is an evolved defense against disease**: that's why we find more disgusting what's also more likely to carry diseases. Women, at higher risk of catching STDs, have a heightened sense of disgust
  - Mothers rate their children's feces as less disgusting, signaling an adaptation to tend to their offspring
  - In dire necessity, humans can override disgust (see cannibalism)
- **Adapted fears of life threats**: snakes, spiders, heights, strangers, public rejection of courtship attempts, etc.
- **Auditory bias**: approaching sounds are perceived as louder than receding ones because of the greater danger of approaching threats
- **Threat-saliency:** people, as well as children, are faster at spotting dangerous animals such as snakes and lions among random objects
- **Darwinian medicine**: fever, cough, sneezes, they probably shouldn't be treated because they evolved to help us tackle diseases

The Hunting Hypothesis (& Gathering Hypothesis)

The hunting hypothesis suggests that hunting has been instrumental in developing many of our adapted mechanisms, including:

- Reciprocal altruism and social exchange
- Division of labor

The gathering hypothesis suggests instead that women provided the impetus for human evolution via gathering, but it falls short in many areas.

In any case, the specialization of gender-specific division of labor has resulted in measurable differences between men and women.
Men have better navigational abilities, map reading, and mental rotation of objects -for hurling spears maybe?-.
Women have better spatial location memory.

Challenges of Sex & Mating

For more on this section, please read:

- **Sexual market place 101**
- **Sexual Market Value**
- **Sexual conflict**

David Buss also wrote a book fully focused on sex and mating, called "*The Evolution of Desire*".

> Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

Patterns of Inheritance & Spousal Diverging Interests

The data on inheritances analyzed from an evolutionary point of view provided some incredible insights.

Here is the data from the analysis of 1.000 probated wills (Smith, Kish, and Crawford, 1987):

- **Women distributed their estates to a larger number of people (2.8 VS 2.0)**

This might be because women have a stronger tendency towards building and maintaining networks of support.

- **A majority of men left their entire estates to their wives, often with expressed confidence that the wife would pass along the resources to their children**

Men tend to trust women more.
This is because women have higher parental investment than men, so it is indeed more likely that women will take care of their own children.

And, of course, it's because older women are more unlikely to remarry and even more unlikely to have additional children, so the husband can be more confident that his widow will allocate the resources toward their mutual children.

- **Women never expressed trust that the man would take care of her children**

Interesting.
Women tended to trust men less.
And they might not be wrong: older men are far more likely than older women to remarry, and they might use their previous wife's resources to attract a new mate and perhaps even start a new family.

That's risky for her: resources will be diverted from the original wife's children to unrelated individuals.

- **But if their wives were young, men were more likely to leave their estate directly to their children**

This makes sense since younger women are more likely to remarry and, possibly, have more children fathered by another man.
And they might use their late husband's money to dote on children that are not his.

The evidence of psychological adaptations for short-term mating in men

The psychological evidence for an inborn bias toward male short-term mating are:

- **Desire for sexual variety**
  - Porn consumption trends
  - Number of desired partners (men mention far higher numbers than women)
- **Nature and frequency fantasies**: women are more likely to emphasize feelings, but there are large individual differences and some women also fantasize about sex with strangers
- **The amount of time elapsing before a person seeks sex**
- **Lowering of standards in short-term mating**
  - De-prioritization of face in favor of body (women don't show the same)
  - **Closing time phenomenon**: men find women more attractive as the venue-time approaches
- **Search for "exploitability cues"**: men like women who look simple-minded and exploitable, while women don't like men who look exploitable
- **Attraction reduction shift**: men tend to be less attracted to women right after sex (especially true for men with a short-term bias)
- **Tactics to avoid short-term mating from becoming committed**
  - Keeping the conversation sexual in nature
  - Maintain multiple sex partners
  - Having sex with someone else
- **Extramarital affairs**: men in most cultures pursue extramarital affairs more than women do

Women also sometimes use tactics to prevent casual sex from becoming more, but it's usually more about "giving the wrong phone number".

Overall, male more and more deeply rooted psychological adaptations for short-term mating show that casual sex is a strategy more significant for men, than for women.

The evidence for female short-term mating strategy

Here is an overview of the current evidence for an evolved female strategy for short-term sex:

- **Desire for sexual variety**
  - Porn consumption trends
  - Number of desired partners (men mention far higher numbers than women)
- **Nature and frequency fantasies**: women are more likely to emphasize feelings, but there are large individual differences and some women also fantasize about sex with strangers
- **The amount of time elapsing before a person seeks sex again**
- **Lowering of standards in short-term mating**
- **De-prioritization of face in favor of body** (women don't show the same)

- **Closing time phenomenon**: men find women more attractive as the venue-time approaches
- **Search for "exploitability cues":** men like women who look simple-minded and exploitable, while women don't like men who look exploitable
- **Attraction reduction shift**: men tend to be less attracted to women right after sex (especially true for men with a short-term bias)
- The existence of common tactics to avoid short-term mating from becoming committed
  - Keeping the conversation sexual in nature
  - Maintain multiple sex partners
  - Having sex with someone else
  - Preference for loose women
  - Not minding too much if a woman is in a committed relationship

Overall, male more and more deeply rooted psychological adaptations for short-term mating show that casual sex is a strategy more significant for men, than for women.

Benefits of Short-Term Mating for Women

Several theories have been put forward to account for female evolved short-term sexual strategy:

- **Resources**
  - **Investment via paternity confusion**
  - **Immediate economic resources**: short-term biased women prefer men with an extravagant lifestyle (conspicuous consumption), and who spend money on them early on.
  - **Protection through "special friendships"**
  - **Status elevation**
- **Genes**
  - **Sexy son hypothesis**: women who engage in short-term mating place a premium on the man's physical attractiveness, but replication failure suggests caution
  - **Genetic diversity**:
- Mate switching
  - Mate expulsion
  - **Mate replacement**: women who have affairs are significantly less happy with their partners, and they find "promiscuity" and existing relationships mildly undesirable in an affair partner, supporting this hypothesis)
  - **Mate insurance**:
- **Short-term for long-term mating goals**: women themselves rated the possibility of switching casual sex for a relationship as the second most important reason for casual sex
  - **Sex to evaluate long–term mate potential**: young women might go through a period of casual sex as a way to assess their own SMV
  - **Clarifying mate preferences**:
  - **Honing skills of mate attraction**:
- **Mate manipulation**
  - **Increasing commitment of long–term mate**:
  - **Revenge as deterrence**

Parenting and Kinship

Parenting dispositions and behavior can be predicted, at the most general level, through the following three contexts:

- **Paternity uncertainty (ie.: are children really mine?)**
  - This is one of the reasons why men generally invest less in children
  - Step-parents are more likely to beat, abuse, and ignore children who are not theirs
  - Women "remind" men that children look like them
  - Paternal grandparents invest less than maternal ones
  - Men who perceive their wives as faithful and trustworthy also invest more in their children
- **Alternative uses of the resources**: where can I get the biggest bang for the buck? My children's or my sister's? Nurturing or looking for another mate?
  - Young women are more likely to kill their infants because they can produce more later on, under better conditions
  - Young women without a providing man kill their infants more often, except when they're old because they won't have another chance at procreation
  - Men high in status offer less parental care and ramp up their mating efforts
- **Children's ability to survive and reproduce**: parents invest more in children most able to convert their effort into fitness (does not mean they always invest more in the healthiest child, sometimes curing a sick one can make more sense, but they tend to allocate investment strategically)
  - Ill and deformed children receive less help and are killed more often

Interestingly, resources can change the pattern of parental investment. Mothers with little resources followed the predictable pattern of investing less in prematurely born babies (high risk), while mothers with lots of resources invested more in high-risk infants than low-risk ones.
Who said that money is the root of all evil?

Women, as the primary caregivers, have evolved more psychological adaptations for nurturing, including:

- Better at decoding facial expressions, particularly negative ones
- General reduction in risk-taking
- Reduction in risk-taking when paired with babies

Parent-Child Conflicts

Parents and children share 50% of their genes.
But that also means they are 50% different, and that leads to potential conflict.

A child always gains in seeking more investment, while a parent might gain more by sharing their support among several children -or looking outside of the relationship-.

The theory of parent-offspring and, more in general, genetical self-interest and different interests within families predicts that:

- Children will want more of their parent's resources
  - The mother-child conflict starts in the uterus, with children trying to get as much as possible even if gets unhealthy for the mother
  - Children want to be breastfed for longer than mothers want
  - Children seek to get more resources than their siblings

- Parents will want to give less than the child requests
  - Parents want to wean children sooner
  - Parents punish conflict between siblings
  - Parents encourage more cooperation among siblings than they really want

Parent/offspring conflict also increases in the presence of new offspring as that means more competition, and in the presence of half-siblings, since that means competing with someone who has even less genetic relatedness.

Parents/Child Conflict Over Mates

Parents and offspring's interests also diverge when it comes to the choice of mates.

Children will gain more from selecting a genetically superior partner because their offspring will inherit 50% of their genes. But parents only have 25% of their genes in common with their grandchildren, so they will gain more if their children select a partner that promotes their interest independently of genetic quality. Say, for example, a mate that will further their status and economic well-being.

This is especially true for fathers, since they retain fertility for long, and they have more interest in securing new possible future mates.

The evidence indeed proves that:

- Offspring prioritize physical attractiveness more than their parents
- Parents prioritize family background
- Parents and offspring are in conflict over the pursuit of a short-term mating strategy (it's hypothesized that a short-term mating strategy can compromise the status and reputation of the family)

Parents indeed find a short-term mating strategy far more acceptable for themselves than for their sons and, especially, daughters.

My Note: This Was Deeply Insightful
This conflict on mate selection was truly a novel and genius revelation for me.
Even after tens of books on evolutionary psychology, I had never thought about it.
I am still not 100% bought into it as offspring might simply want an attractive partner because they will have sex with them. Parents don't care since they don't have to live and have sex with them, but it's still an interesting new point of view.

Conflict Changes Over Time

Manipulation of course goes both ways, with both parents and children trying to manipulate each other in what's in their own best interests.

Since parents and children share 50% of their genes, sometimes there is overlap in their common interests.
But as time goes by, so do the interests overlap.
As both parents and children age, parents become less useful to children, both in terms of producing new offspring with a 50% relatedness and in terms of direct help to themselves.

To learn more about both manipulation and sexual manipulation, read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Conflict, Organized Conflict & Recalibration Theory

David Buss discusses conflict among humans, the only species together with chimps, which is on record for organizing squads of alliances to attack other individuals of the same species.

How could war even become widespread?
Tooby and Cosmides list four conditions that must be met for war to become part of the human repertoire:

- The average long-term gain in reproductive resources must outweigh the reproductive costs of engaging in warfare over evolutionary time
  - An increase in sexual access to females is the most likely candidate since it's the resource that imposes the greatest limit on male reproduction
- Men must believe that their group will emerge victorious
- The risk and the importance of each member's contribution must translate into a corresponding share of the benefits
- Men who go into battle must be cloaked in a "veil of ignorance" about who will live or die.

Recalibration Theory

The recalibration theory proposes that anger serves to increase -recalibrate- the value that the target of your anger places on your well-being.

Individuals with a superior ability to inflict costs and confer benefits should be more prone to anger because they can be more effective with it.
Indeed, a man's upper body strength and a woman's physical attractiveness both predict the propensity towards anger and show a history of fighting, more success in prior social conflicts, a greater perceived utility of aggression, and a greater sense of entitlement.

Status, Prestige, and Social Dominance

Human mechanisms to be effective social animals are inherently complex.

Contrary to many other animals, our social hierarchies transcend mere physical brawn to include social skills, leadership, and the ability to enlist powerful friends and form coalitions.

Since the payoff for men is higher, men also tend to seek status and prestige more than women do.

There are many traits that correlate with dominance, including some that you might not always expect:

- domain expertise
- size / athleticism
- testosterone and serotonin levels
- intelligence
- physical attractiveness
- humorousness
- good grooming

Service-for-prestige theory

Leaders provide key survival resources to followers by leading the group in more effective ways than anyone else could.
In exchange, he receives social status and more mating opportunities.

Elevated status and dominance improved male mating success in three ways:

1. Women prefer high-status men
2. It proves men with more resources to support women and their children
3. More powerful men might simply take the mate of subordinate men

Social Dominance Orientation

Men are higher than women in social dominance orientation (SDO).

Individuals high in SDO endorse the legitimacy of one group's domination over another, the deservingness of discrimination and subordination of one group by another, and the allocation of more perks to one group than another.

Gender Differences in Dominance

Dominant men have more egoistic dominance acts, while dominant women have a higher incidence of prosocial dominance acts.
Female dominance is more group-oriented.

Dominance Theory

Deontic reasoning, such as thinking in terms of which actions one may or must not perform with respect to a social rule, emerges early in life.

People have a tendency to spontaneously check for other people's social violations, especially when those violators are lower in status.

Also read:

- **How to be dominant**

https://thepowermoves.com/signs-of-dominance/

Social Attention-Holding Theory

Paul Gilbert emphasizes the emotional components of dominance (also see "social rank theory").

Animals naturally assess each other's "resource-holding potential" (RHP), and based on that information, they might attack if they are superior, or flee or submit if they believe they are inferior.

Gilbert says that humans also use RHP, but make it part of a "higher-level socialization" in what he calls "attention-holding potential".
Humans compete with each other to be attended to and valued by their social group. High-status members command lots of attention, and when they bestow their attention on another peer, that individual rises in status. Ignored individuals instead lose status.

Going up the ranks results in elation, more helpful and prosocial behavior, and a happier mood.
Loss of status results in anxiety, shame, envy, depression, and anger.

Presumably, social anxiety should help the anxious individual avoid any risk that would likely result in a loss of social status.
Shame is similar, kicking in when the individual's will be devalued by others.
Envy, instead, might function to make us pursue the same path as those who have the resources we want. Hero worship and the idealization of others are nothing but a positive form of envy.

Again stressing the differences between men and women, men tend to be envious of men who have more sexual experience and have more mates, while women are envious of more physically attractive women.

Friends' Benefits & Frenemies Dangers

Men tend to prefer a larger number of less intimate friends and tend to spend less time nurturing their friendships.

Says Buss:

> In contrast to the psychological closeness and intimacy of women's friendships, men tend to use friendships to achieve some common goal, such as cooperative hunting, cooperative defense, or coalitional warfare.

Friends can bring lots of benefits, but they're also competitors and rivals, and that's often always in the air.
Men tend to perceive more sexual competition from their friends than women do, but women also compete with their female friends.
For example, the less female-attractive member of the friendship pair perceived more mating rivalry than the more attractive member (see: "frenemies" and "how to spot a frenemy").

Towards a Unified (Evolutionary) Psychology

In the last chapter of "*Evolutionary Psychology*," David Buss talks about the many overlapping fields of psychology and the lack of a unifying force.

He says that *evolutionary psychology* should be the discipline that ties all the different branches of psychology together.

And I couldn't agree more.

He also partially -and tactfully- criticizes the effort of cognitive psychology to hunt for "cognitive biases", saying that they are not really biases but simply evolved shortcuts that work well for most of our evolution and most of our problems (for cognitive biases, see "*Thinking Fast and Slow*" by Daniel Kahnemann).

Finally, Buss introduces a few more interesting theories, including attachment theory.
For more on attachment theory, see:

- **An overview of attachment theory**

Buss, of course, puts attachment theory within the wider lens of evolutionary psychology.
He says, for example, that variations from a secure attachment represent children's adaptation to non-optimal familial environments.
Avoidant attachment adapts to parents unwilling to invest, while anxious attachment adapts to a parent who is unable to invest, which leads to more short-term mating strategies.

More Wisdom

- **Dark triad predicts deception**: dark triad traits predict deception and sexual harassment (see: best dark triad books)
- **Psychopathy as a strategy**: psychopaths pursue a "cheating" strategy that can be rewarding, as long as there are enough cooperators in the system. Psychopaths pursue a cheating strategy mostly with interaction partners who are less attractive and those whom they don't expect to interact with in the future (also see: why psychopaths get laid more)
- **Sexual selection has two modes**: Sexual selection operates on two levels: intrasexual competition for access to mates, and intersexual selection or mate choice (which can also be conflictual at times, see: intersexual conflict
- **Evolution hasn't stopped**: there has been an acceleration of human evolution in the last 40.000 and 10.000 years, and not a slow-down as some had thought
- **Offspring's niches**: first-borns tend to be more conservative and close to their parents. Later brons enter into an

already existing child/parent bond and, mathematically, might receive less support even if the parents seek to be equal, so they seek their own way in life and reject the status quo. Last-borns, who receive all the family's support, tend again to be closer to their parents

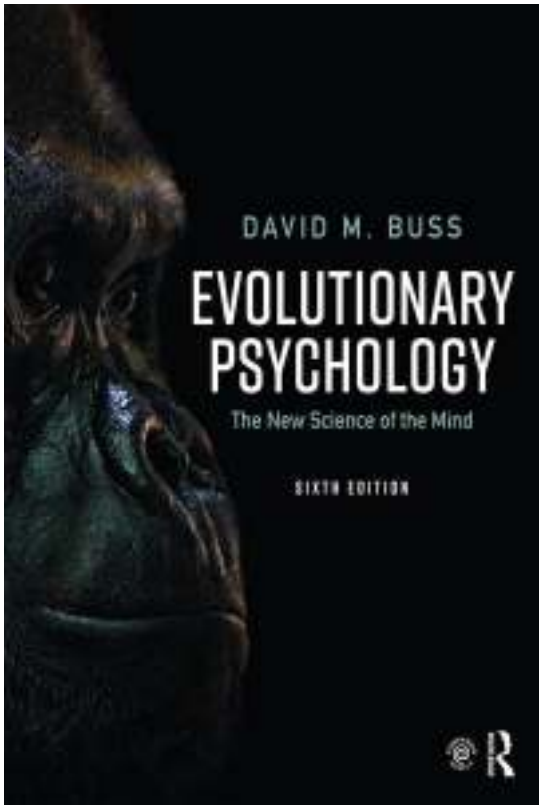
- **Female beauty allows for upward mobility**: Buss says that beautiful women "marry up", also referred to as "female hypergamy".
  To learn more about the science of female hypergamy see:

> Stop Whining About Hypergamy (& Do This Instead)

Best Quotes

The quote, in this case, is not necessarily "inspirational", but it's a good wake-up call:

> These homicide data are preliminary, of course, but they suggest that there are risks of being the less valued party in the parent–child relationship.



??♂ Lucio's Analysis

Evolutionary Psychology is a monumental work.
These are the small notes I took on the side that left me wondering sometimes:

Does Not Always Disclose The Speculativeness of Some Theories & Hypotheses

Some theories are presented as if they were overwhelmingly proven and accepted.

But I more than once felt this wasn't the case, like in 'sperm competition'.
Or when alternative explanations may undermine the theory, like with the dual mating system for short and long-

term mating.

Should Disclose Sample Sizes & Effect Sizes More Often

For example, when it comes to the differences between male and female jealousy, the overlap between men and women is as telling as the difference.

And David Buller correctly points out that most German men report emotional infidelity to be more worrying than sexual infidelity.

Why's that so?
Could it be that culture, especially when it comes to openness towards sex, is more important than Buss acknowledges (at least on this one issue)?

Sometimes research was based on small samples

Writes Buss, talking about the link between attractiveness and number of offspring:

> A smaller study of 47 modern Polish women failed to find a link between female attractiveness and reproductive output.
> It is possible that modern birth control technology may sever the historical link between female beauty and offspring production.

Yes, it's certainly possible.
But I would *not* generalize from such a small sample and I would avoid drawing any conclusion based on it.

Determinism: over-explanations of what might just be randomness?

Evolutionary psychology has been criticized for being an "after the events" exercise of nice-sounding narratives with little science.

I think people who say that don't really understand *evolutionary psychology* or human nature, but that doesn't mean that, at times, evolutionary psychologists don't tend to over-explain things.

For example, I found the explanation of humans drinking alcohol as a by-product of our taste for ripe fruits to be quite an unsubstantiated stretch.

At least, I would have liked a note saying that some of these correlations were more speculative.

Too little room left for personal variations?

Buss says that "there is nothing arbitrary nor culture-bound about the standard of beauty".

But that's not true.
First of all, some standards of beauty are quite arbitrary in the way they develop, arising from random mutations in tastes that might or might not correlate too well with fitness.

Second, there is quite a bit of cultural variance in at least a few traits, as Buss himself found out.
For example, the amount of fat on a woman.

Also see:

- **Exception AL dating**
- **The cultural and external influences of your sexual market value**

> Sexual Market Value Hacks: Boosting Your SMV

An overly competitive view of nature?

I've already mentioned Buss talking about "hostile forces of nature".

And I believe that is only one side of the coin.
If nature was so "hostile", there would be no life. Instead, the earth is covered with life, so nature can't be that hostile, after all.

The same approach extends to competition.
It seems to me that the author focuses too much on competition to the detriment of cooperation.
For example, he writes:

> Natural selection is intrinsically competitive, a feedback process in which one organism's design features out-reproduce those of others in an existing population.

Of course, nature is "intrinsically competitive".
But it's also "intrinsically cooperative". Sometimes you could call it "competitive cooperation", or "codependency", like in humans' gut microbe, but it's still a form of cooperation.

Naive view on men not joining forces against women?

Buss is no naive author.

However, in this one instance, I felt it was a "too rosy view" of mankind.

The author says it's not true, and not possible, that men might unite to exclude women from resources and power.

He writes:

> Feminist writers sometimes portray all men as united for the common goal of oppressing all women (Dworkin, 1987; Faludi, 1991).
> Evolutionary psychological analyses suggest that this cannot be true because men and women compete mainly against members of their own gender. Men strive to control resources at the expense of and to the exclusion of other men.

I think the author is missing out here on the power dynamics involved.

Men compete against themselves the same way that most organisms compete but, as we've mentioned already, many organisms also collaborate *while* they compete.

Very high-quality men would not mind if women got more power, resources, and freedom to have sex as they, please.
They'd still win and find mates. As a matter of fact, they would win even more (albeit disempowered women also make it easier for high-quality men to keep attraction and power in their relationships).

But the majority of men are not very high in SMV.
So the vast majority of men *do* have an interest in keeping women away from sources of income and sexual freedoms.
The poorer women are, and the more forced they are to pair with *a* man, any man, the better off most average men are.
This is a case where a win for the group can be a win for the majority of individuals in that group.

Indeed, Buss says it right a little later:

> *Evolutionary psychology* points to a different conclusion: each individual is united in interests with some members of each sex and is in conflict with some members of each sex.

Exactly.
And when each individual is united with a large number of members of his own sex, then an effective, silent coalition to restrict the power and freedom for women can naturally form -and it probably *did* form-.
There is *some* truth in the patriarchy.

Also read:

- **Why the patriarchy is real**
- **Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism**

> Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism: Summary & Review

Also, read "how men keep women down at work".

Sometimes does not account for possible confounding factors in the research

Sometimes I felt that confounding factors were not properly accounted for and the authors might have been too quick in jumping to conclusions.

For example:

- **Men ejaculate more when the partner isn't there, but masturbation can't be the same as sex.**

The author mentions an experiment whereby 35 couples agreed to provide ejaculates resulting from sexual intercourse from condoms.

He says that the longer the couple was apart, the more the man ejaculated. Since the research took into account masturbation as well, that's proof that the quantity of ejaculation depended on time apart only.

However, that means that the researchers put masturbation and sex on the same level.
Who says that masturbation is equivalent to having with a partner? Maybe those men always ejaculated less when masturbating as compared to having sex. That should have been taken into account.

- **Teenagers killed more often, but teenagers also annoy people more**

The author says that teenagers are not killed by parents because they are the best age to secure future offspring. The proof that it's not about the ability of the child to defend himself lies in non-relatives, who kill teenagers more often than any other age category.

I thought that was a smart way of looking for trends.
Yet, teenagers are also more likely to rebel and annoy people, which is why non-relatives might get into violent altercations more often.

- **People leave more heredity to children than siblings *only* because they're younger and thus more valuable.**

The author says that people leave more inheritance to children than to siblings because they're younger and thus have more future mating potential.

That didn't make sense to me.

People leave more inheritance to children because they are responsible for their children, but they're not equally responsible for their siblings, who in turn are responsible for their own children.

This is a case of overthinking through genetic payoffs without considering other factors, such as "unwritten human contracts". In this case: "I care about my children, you care about yours".

Contradictory information on altruism & value

The author says that parents kill infants more than teenagers because they invest more in teenagers, and in teenagers are getting close to reproductive age.

Yet, he also says that helping in the life-or-death situation declines *steadily* as the recipient's age increases.
That might be the case because younger people need more help, yet it's a potential discord one should investigate further.

Mother / child uterus conflict: is it a case of arms race?

The author says that mothers want to abort unhealthy fetuses while fetuses, having only one shot at life, produce chemicals to prevent spontaneous abortions.

The author says it's an arms race and seems to imply that unhealthy children produce hCG to "trick" the mother's system into keeping the fetus implanted.
The mother's body appears to interpret high levels of hCG as a sign that a fetus is healthy and viable and so does not spontaneously abort

But there is no proof whatsoever that unhealthy children produce more hCG, so I didn't see it as an arms race as the author implies.

Sometimes implies causation where I saw only correlation

There were a few instances where I felt causation was implied without there being a basis for it.

For example:

- The author says that homicide statistics are proof that poor and unmarried people kill more as a "strategy of last resort". However, that does not necessarily imply causation and it could be that killers are also more likely to be poor and unmarried.
- The author says that males victimized by aggression during middle and high school lose status and have significantly fewer sex partners by the time they reach college, but who says it wasn't the low status they had to begin with that caused victimization?
- The author says that being in a gang results in more mating success because a study showed that gang members had more sexual partners than non-gang members. Again, this is just a correlation. And then he says that gang leaders had the most, but that says nothing because leaders are *always* more attractive and he should have compared it with non-gang members who were leaders of something -say, a fraternity-

Does not give enough weight to sexual selection?

I am biased here because I'm a big fan of Miller's "sexual-selection-centered" view of evolution and, especially, the development of intelligence.

So I naturally found that this wonderful manual under-represents the role of sexual selection in general and, specifically, of sexual selection in the development of the human intellectual faculties.

The Deadly Innovation Silliness

That was all the more striking when the author spent a lot of time discussing the theory of the "deadly innovations hypothesis".

The theory says that as our weapons and tools became more formidable, their mishandling also caused more deaths and, thus, more selection pressure against dumb people.
Frankly, that made no sense to me.

The number of deaths should have been so high to make an impact that I just can't believe there are enough people who accidentally shoot themselves or, in our ancestral time, who accidentally fell on their spears.
Plus, that can happen to anyone, and I can't see it being highly correlated with IQ.

Some weaker references: Baker & sperm wars? Chagnon?

The author mentions a couple of times Baker and his research, both sperm warms and the likelihood of women experiencing orgasms more often outside of their relationships.

Baker is controversial for his unscientific claims that have either not yet been proven, or that have been proven wrong -see his book "*Sperm Wars*"-.

The author also mentions Chagnon.
Chagnon's data on increasing mating success among murderers has been criticized -and, it seems to me, for good reasons, see Sapolsky for an overview and Fry for the original paper-.

I wish Buss had added a note on the side. Or at least quickly mentioned the debate raging on and why he still believed the source was valid.

Needs an update to integrate cultural evolution

Says Henrich:

> Famous evolutionary psychologists, from Steve Pinker to David Buss, are fond of claiming that natural selection is the only process capable of creating complex adaptations
> (…)
> I largely (…) (but) I part ways with them on the word "only." At least since the rise of cumulative cultural evolution, natural selection has lost its status as the only "dumb" process capable of creating complex adaptations well fit to local circumstances.

Also read the seminal:

- *The WEIRDest People in the World*

Review

Evolutionary Psychology is a fantastic introductory book fo the field of evolutionry psychology and one of the best overviews available.

The fact that it's written by David Buss, one of the leading researchers and experts in the field, only lends more authority to it.

I am grateful and indebted to David Buss' work and to his massive contribution to the discipline.

Edit:
The 7th edition is now available.

Also see:

- **best evolutionary psychology books**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Behave: Summary, Review, & Criticism (Sapolsky)

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Behave (2017) is Robert Sapolsky's Magnus opera. It's a multi-disciplinary approach mixing *evolutionary psychology*, biology, and anthropology to explain what makes us humans and what causes and influences our thoughts and behavior.

Contents

- Summary
  - You Need to Think in an Interdisciplinary Way
  - The Underappreciated Temporal Elements of What Influence Behavior
  - Testosterone Is A Status-Seeking Hormone, Not An Aggression Hormone
  - Oxytocin Is Not What You Think It Is (In-Group Against Everyone Else)
  - Why Adolescents Care So Much About What Others Think
  - You Need To Be Able To Detach Yourself Emotionally To Help Others
  - The Marshmallow Test Is A Good Test of Character & Odds Of Future Success
  - Bowlby and Attachment Theory: Dads May Be As Good As Moms
  - Abortion Lowers Crime
  - Bullies Pick Socially Awkward Kids As Targets
  - Social Learning is Crucial For Character Development
  - Individualist VS Collectivist Cultures: The Differences Are Real
  - Inequality Makes People Unkind
  - Antisocial Punishment: Why People Attack The Cooperators
  - How We Pick Our Leaders
  - Feeling Poor Predicts Illness
  - Violence Doesn't Correlate With Sexual Success (Like Pinker and Evo Psych Suggest)
  - Political Affiliation is A Psychological Profile
  - Conservatives Are More Stupid (Some Sub-Groups, At Least)
  - The Impact of Environment on Parenting Teaching and Values
  - Cultures of Honor: Between Courtesy, Hospitality, & Honor Killing Vendettas
  - The Stanford Prison Experiment Made Good Points About Authority's Dark Side
  - Cheating or Not Cheating Is Not About Struggle, It's About Values
  - Rich People Are Greedier
  - The Invention of Religion As Moralizing Force
  - Power Is Manipulating You To Keep You Down
- More Wisdom
  - CONS
- PROS
  - Review

Summary

About The Author:
Robert Sapolsky is an American neuroendocrinologist and author.
He is currently a professor of biology and professor of neurology and neurological sciences at Stanford University

Note: Excluded in This Summary
In this summary of "*Behave,*" I will not go into the description of the brain—not needed for our purposes—and Sapolsky's long dissertation on "free" will"—philosophically interesting but a practical time waste.

You Need to Think in an Interdisciplinary Way

Sapolsky's message and his goal with "*Behave*" are to provide an interdisciplinary approach to people and psychology.

He says that you cannot look at the trees without losing sight of the forest.
You need an interdisciplinary approach.

The Underappreciated Temporal Elements of What Influence Behavior

Many disciplines study what influences our behavior.

And depending on when we act, different causes tend to be the most immediate triggers:

- A second before we act: neurological
- From seconds to minutes before we act: environment and sensory stimuli
- Hours to days before we act: hormones
- Thousands of years before we act: genetics

Testosterone Is A Status-Seeking Hormone, Not An Aggression Hormone

Testosterone makes men more aggressive, goes the cliche.

But it's not really true:

- Within the normal range, individual differences in T don't predict who will be aggressive
- The more an organism has been aggressive, the less testosterone is needed for future aggression
- When testosterone plays a role, it's facilitatory, T doesn't *create* aggression, it just makes people more sensitive to triggers for aggression, particularly in those predisposed to aggression
- T fosters aggression only during challenges to status
- T increases whatever behavior is needed to maintain status, which, depending on context, might also lead to more generosity

Studies that link aggression to testosterone also cannot pinpoint causality because aggression also increases testosterone.

When the differences in testosterone concentration in an individual are within the normal distribution, there are no differences in behavior.
When they are huge, then individuals become more aggressive.

However, individuals who decide to increase their testosterone might already be predisposed toward more aggression.

In the end, different levels of testosterone are not good at explaining why some individuals are more aggressive than others.

And the actual effect depends on context.

An increase in risk-taking, for example, which is linked to testosterone, might lead to taking a risk and making a peace offer.
It also makes people feel good, potentially leading to more prosocial behavior.
And when status is awarded through prosocial behavior, higher doses of testosterone make people behave more generously.

In sum, testosterone makes people seek status.
But what awards status is context-dependent, so the effects of testosterone are context-dependent.

So the problem is not that testosterone causes aggression; the problem is the frequency with which our society rewards aggression.

Oxytocin Is Not What You Think It Is (In-Group Against Everyone Else)

If testosterone has too bad a reputation, oxytocin is coasting on a falsely good reputation.

Oxytocin:

- Increases mother/child bond
- Encourages monogamous pair-bonding
- Enhances trust and social affiliation
- Makes people more cooperative and generous
- When dealing with “them” it makes us more ethnocentric and xenophobic

There is a huge caveat for oxytocin, the “love hormone”: it only increases trust and generosity towards the “us”, or the ingroup.
It is nice to “us” and worse to everyone else.

Just like testosterone, the effects of oxytocin are dramatically dependent on context, who you are, your environment, and who that person is.

Why Adolescents Care So Much About What Others Think

It seems like adolescents are particularly sensitive to what others think of them.

In brain scans, the same brain area lights up when answering the questions “what do you think of yourself” and “what do others think of you”, as if the two were the same.
In adults, there is some overlap, but the two are not the same.

Adolescents also feel a stronger need to belong.
In a game of passing the ball to each other, adults who were excluded felt bad, but then the part of the brain that rationalizes and trivializes kicks in. So they might tell themselves “who cares? it’s just a stupid ball game”.
In adolescence, there is no brain region that activates to mitigate the pain.

You Need To Be Able To Detach Yourself Emotionally To Help Others

The person who is more likely to help and act is not the one who feels the most empathy.

Too much empathy can “crush” the person emotionally, and he does nothing -or moves away-.
Instead, the more people can regulate their empathic emotions, the more likely they are to act prosocially.

Thus, the ability to gain some detachment is one predictor of who actually does take action.
That’s why adolescents tend to be more empathic but can get overwhelmed and take no action.

This theory, taken to an extreme, has led some psychologists to suggest that psychopaths with zero empathy can make for more effective human beings (but I don't fully agree).
See:

- **The Wisdom of Psychopaths**
- **The Good Psychopath's Guide**

> The Wisdom of Psychopaths: Summary & Review

The Marshmallow Test Is A Good Test of Character & Odds Of Future Success

The Marshmallow test has received a lot of criticism -see "pop psychology myths" and "psychology replication crisis"-.

But Sapolsky defends it, saying that "a gazillion-dollar brain scanner doesn't hold more predictive power than one marshmallow".

- Kids with poor impulse control, who wanted to hold on but suddenly ate the marshmallow—that profile is a statistical predictor of adult violent crime
- Kids with "steep time discount curves", who think it makes no sense to wait—that's a predictor of adult property crime
- 40 years post-marshmallow excelled at frontal functions, had more PFC activation, and had lower BMIs

Bowlby and Attachment Theory: Dads May Be As Good As Moms

There is no evidence that a woman damages his child if she doesn't breastfeed.

And nothing in the science says that the same good attachment can't be provided by a man, two mommies, or two daddies.

My Note: Father equivalent to mother should not be implied
I'm skeptical about the "man, same as woman statement".
The fact that science doesn't categorically exclude that a man can provide the same attachment as a mother should *not* lead anyone to suggest that a father is equivalent to a mother.

Also read:

- **Attachment styles overview**

> Secure Attachment Style: Overview & Examples

Abortion Lowers Crime

Liberals said it was the economy that lowered crime.
Conservatives said it was more budget for policing.

A study instead showed too strong a correlation between abortion laws and crime drop twenty years later not to imply causation.
Of course, the findings were controversial, but they don't seem controversial to Sapolsky, who says:

> What majorly predicts a life of crime?
> Being born to a mother who, if she could, would have chosen that you had not be.

> What's the most basic thing provided by a mother? Knowing that she is happy that you exist

Bullies Pick Socially Awkward Kids As Targets

Bullying targets aren't selected at random but tend to be those types of kids with a "kick me" sign behind their backs.

Bullied kids' traits:

- Personal or family psychiatrical issues
- Poor social and emotional intelligence

Bullies' traits:

- Disproportionately from single-mom families
- Young parents with poor education and/or employment prospects

Two profiles of bullies:

- Anxious, isolated kid with poor social skills bullying out of frustration to receive acceptance (the most typical, and they mature out of bullying)
- Confident, unempathetic, socially intelligent kid with an imperturbable sympathetic nervous system, the future sociopath

If you want to find a kid who is really likely to be a mess as an adult, it's the kid who bullies at school, then goes home and is bullied by his parents.
These were the most likely to say "bullying is OK, and the weak deserve to be bullied".

Social Learning is Crucial For Character Development

A few examples:

- **Gender math differences**

The differences between math scores between men and women grow smaller as the countries become more egalitarian.

And they all but disappear, even slightly inverting, in Iceland, where the genders are the most equal.

But some differences, like better reading performance by girls, get bigger in more gender-equal societies.

- **Alcohol and aggression**

Alcohol makes those who believe that alcohol makes you more aggressive, more aggressive.

- **Status-related behavior**

Social behaviors of submission and aggression are hardwired, but parents and socialization teach when each one is appropriate.

A monkey raised in isolation displayed all the "correct" aggressive and submissive behavior, but at the wrong times and the wrong people, challenging the alpha when it did not have the power and strength to do so.

Individualist VS Collectivist Cultures: The Differences Are Real

The differences are strong and real.

But they're not always positive for collectivist societies and negative for individualistic ones as they're often presented.
Both individualists and collectivists denigrate outgroups, but only collectivists inflate assessment of their own groups (and that might be why the Japanese feel they're so good).

Individualist and collectivist cultures also produce different moral systems.
For example:

- In collectivist societies, conformity and morality are synonymous, and law enforcement is more about shame

There is a genetic reason why the US is more individualistic, and that's in the prevalence of the R7 allele.
People who emigrated to America, starting from the very first migration, were more restless, more driven, and more yearning for freedom and mobility.

The R7 allele is almost non-existent in Asian populations, especially in Japan and Taiwan.
The author says it's because of rice, which requires a large social effort to support.

My Note: I don't believe this "ad-hoc" evolutionary explanation
The author says that when Asian societies started growing rice, they also started selecting against R7 genes.
That sounded nonsense to me.
It sounds a lot like one of those "after the facts" made-up evolutionary psychology.
Edit: Indeed, *The WEIRDest People In The World* provides a better explanation for the psychological diversity.

Inequality Makes People Unkind

Cultures with more income inequality have less social capital.

The author says that trust requires reciprocity, and reciprocity requires equality.
Instead, cultures with big gaps are the opposite, because hierarchy is about domination and asymmetry.

This shows in research in many different ways, including:

- The higher the income inequality, the fewer people vote
- The more income inequality, the less likely people are to help someone (in experimental settings)
- The more income inequality, the less generous and cooperative people are in economic games

The author talks about "antisocial punishment", whereby people punish those who cooperate too much.
High levels of inequality and/or low levels of social capital predict a high rate of bullying and antisocial punishment.

Antisocial Punishment: Why People Attack The Cooperators

People tend to punish non-cooperators and free-riders.

But, in some cases, people also punish cooperators, going by the name of "antisocial punishment".

Why does that happen?

The author says it's because it puts pressure on "being nice", and some people don't want that. It happens in cultures where people don't trust one another -ie.: Greece and Oman-.

My Note: This is more speculative, and later work suggests it's also due to tribal VS impersonally pro-social culture and psychology

How We Pick Our Leaders

We mostly pick unconsciously and then rationalize.

One study indeed showed that kids, ages five to thirteen, could pick the election winners 71 percent of the time.

As rules of thumb:

- People vote competent and experience more than policies (competent-looking faces won 68% of the time)
- People often vote to depend on single issues they care much about
- People tend to vote for better-looking candidates
- People tend to vote for candidates who use more “we” and “us” pronouns

This fits into the larger phenomenon of people rating attractive individuals as having better personalities people typically being rated as having better personalities and higher moral standards.

But even here, contexts matter:

- When electing politicians, people prefer older and more masculine faces if it’s during times of war and unrest
- But they prefer younger and more feminine faces if it’s during peacetime (of course, that doesn’t mean that picking more aggressive and masculine leaders during war must be a good idea)
- In scenarios fostering cooperation between groups, intelligent-looking faces are preferred.

Also read:

- **Why Hillary Clinton lost**
- **How to be a leader**

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

Feeling Poor Predicts Illness

Poor people are less healthy than rich ones.

Yet, it’s not just about *being* poor and not having access to health care. *Feelings* directly correlate with a lack of health.

Violence Doesn’t Correlate With Sexual Success (Like Pinker and Evo Psych Suggest)

The author, with his usual wit and humor, criticizes the link between sexual success and killing.

Sapolsky begins by masterfully painting Chagnon as a bit of a bully himself, -but without ever saying so-.
Chagnon, says Sapolsky, “successfully establishes the Yanomano’s street cred”.
Unluckily, his data was not as strong as that of the Yanomamo warriors. For example, Chagnon did not account for age when comparing Yanomano, who had killed, with those who hadn’t.
And, most of all, he didn’t account for the most violent Yanomano who did *not* survive.

Sapolsky says that comparing the *surviving* killers with the non-killers is like running an analysis on veterans and concluding that wars are safe.
Indeed, the analysis should have taken into account the killers who got killed.
He has a point, and this is a criticism I also added to the otherwise wonderful Buss’ “*Evolutionary Psychology*“.
Sapolsky’s criticism extends to Steven Pinker himself, who indeed sometimes can go overboard with his continuous, never-ending attacks on “leftists”, “feminists” and “anthropologists of peace”.

Political Affiliation is A Psychological Profile

Consider Jonathan Haidt's six foundations of morality:

- care VS harm;
- fairness VS cheating;
- liberty VS oppression;
- loyalty VS betrayal;
- authority VS subversion;
- sanctity VS degradation

Liberals tend to value the first three, namely care, fairness, and liberty while undervaluing loyalty, authority, and sanctity.
Conservatives instead heavily value loyalty, authority, and sanctity, which often become stepping stones to right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation (for example, see the dynamics of "the red pill community").

Obviously, that's a big difference.
Says Sapolsky:

> Is it okay to criticize your group to outsiders? Rightists: no, that's disloyal. Leftists: yes, if justified. Should you ever disobey a law? Rightists: no, that undermines authority. Leftists: of course, if it's a bad law. Is it okay to burn the flag? Rightists: never, it's sacred. Leftists: come on, it's a piece of cloth.

The differences in psychology are:

- Conservatives:
  - dislike ambiguity
  - have a stronger need for closure
  - dislike novelty
  - perceive more threats (in all realms of life)
  - empathize more with the ingroup
  - are comforted by structure and hierarchy (obedience, loyalty, law and order)

That's why, says Sapolsky, republicans managed to get poor whites to vote against their own interests: it's the confirmation of the status quo, and the devil you know feels safer than social transformation.

For liberals, the government should provide for the people, but for rightists, it's more important that the government provides protection with law and order -and go get your guns, too, just to be double safe-.

Disgust Underpins the Difference

From a biological point of view, it seems like the differences stem from the approach to the feeling of disgust.

Conservatives have a lower threshold for disgust.
Conservative Leon Kass used disgust as a formal policy, arguing that if you feel inherent disgust, then you don't need to reason about it, you got your answer.
Sapolsky quips:

> If it makes you puke, then you must rebuke

Of course, the author disagrees with it because different things disgust different people, especially when it comes to

social policy (ie.: the idea of slaves being free was “disgusting” to some people only a few centuries ago).

Conservatives Are More Stupid (Some Sub-Groups, At Least)

With Theodor Adorno in the 1950s, the link between conservative affiliation and lower IQ started.
Some, but not all studies since then, have supported the conclusion.

More consistent, though is the link between lower intelligence and a specific type of conservatism, such as right-wing authoritarianism -the guys who love hierarchy.

There are two explanations as to why lower intelligence might be connected with conservative affiliation:

1. Rightists are uncomfortable with ambiguity
2. Leftists “think harder” and make more connections (“integrative complexity”)

For example, one study shows that both liberals and conservatives tended towards personal attribution when explaining the causes of poverty -ie.: “they’re poor because they’re lazy”-.
But given them more time to think, the liberals shifted towards situational explanations -ie.: “things are stacked against the poor”-.

Liberals and conservatives seem equally capable of thinking past gut personal attributions because, when asked to do so, both, are equally adept at presenting the viewpoints of the opposite camp.
But liberals seem to be more intrinsically motivated to push toward situational explanations.

This is why it’s easier to make a liberal more of a conservative: you just need to increase the cognitive load, add time pressure, and alcohol, or make them too tired to think.
But it’s difficult to make a conservative think like a liberal.

This differing attributional style extends beyond politics.
If given more time, a liberal is more likely to think that a guy tripped over a dance because the dance was difficult.
But ask them to make snap judgments, and they are more likely to think like conservatives: the guy is clumsy.

The Impact of Environment on Parenting Teaching and Values

The role of a parent is to prepare the child for future success.

And it seems that parents adapt their parenting style to the environment in which they live:

- **In poor environments parents must prepare kids to fight**: parents’ speech was full of metaphors about not losing what was achieved, such as standing your ground, keeping up your pride, and not letting others get under your skin. Parenting was authoritarian, toughening the goal. Parents teased kids far more than in the other neighborhoods.
- **Working-class parents educate for “hard offensive individualism”**: families had some socio-economic momentum, and kids were meant to maintain that precarious trajectory. Parents’ speeches about their hopes for their kids contained images of movement, progress, and athletics—getting ahead, testing the waters, and going for the gold. With hard work and the impetus of generations of expectations, your child might pioneer landfall in the middle-class
- **Upper class was about psychological well-being**: Children’s eventual success was a given, as were expectations of physical health. Far more vulnerable was a child’s psychological health; parents’ responsibility was to facilitate their epic journey toward an individuated “fulfillment.”

Cultures of Honor: Between Courtesy, Hospitality, & Honor Killing Vendettas

Cultures of honor emphasize rules of civility, courtesy, and hospitality.

But also retribution, which one should always undertake for affronts to the honor of one's self, family, or clan; failing to do so is shameful.
That's why cultures of honor are filled with vendettas, revenge, and honor killings.

Some cultures of honor include Sicily, the mafia, the American South, and part of Latin America.

The author says that cultures of honor developed because people need to defend their status to survive and thrive. They take place among pastors because while nobody can steal your crops, someone can steal a herd overnight.

The Stanford Prison Experiment Made Good Points About Authority's Dark Side

Zimbardo and his famous Stanford Prison Experiment received plenty of criticism.

Haslam, an author of "*The New Psychology of Leadership*", ran the BBC Prison Experiment with results very different from what Zimbardo got.

And Zimbardo, also the author of "*The Lucifer Effect*", has always pushed back hard against critics (too hard for a neutral scientist, probably).

Beyond the personal anger, the author says that a few findings can be generalized:

1. When pressured to conform and obey, a higher percentage of normal people than most would predict succumb and do awful things.
2. Still, there are always those who resist (some apples, even in the worst of barrels, do not go bad)

The elements that contribute to resisting authority and not committing terrible acts include:

- Becoming aware of implicit, automatic biases;
- Becoming aware of our sensitivity to disgust, resentment, and envy;
- Recognizing the multiplicity of Us/Them dichotomies that we harbor and emphasizing ones in which a Them becomes an Us;
- Contact with a Them under the right circumstances;
- Resisting essentialism;
- Perspective taking;
- Rndividuating Thems.

The "nature" of the authority also plays an important role:

- Does the authority(s) evoke veneration, identification, pants-wetting terror?
- Is the authority in close proximity? (when the authority was in a different room, compliance decreased)
- Does the authority come cloaked in prestige? (experiments in a warehouse had lower compliance than on Yale campus)
- Is the authority perceived as legitimate and stable?

The type of social pressures:

- Groups of "Us-es" evoke more conformity than groups of Thems (Konrad Lorenz became a nazi because everyone in the social circle did, including his dad who was a kind man)
- How many are urging us to action? (three individuals doing the same is more powerful than one person doing the same three times)
- How many more "rebels" are there? 10 against 2 starts an "oppositional social identity", and it is a huge difference from 11 against 1
- Collectivist cultures tend to obey authority more

What is being required and in what context:

- Persuasive power of incremental action: we rarely have the sense that we are "crossing the line" when we're moving forward on a continuum ("you were OK shocking the guy at 225, but not 230? That makes no sense, come on, it's the same")
- Removing personal responsibility: telling people they won't be held responsible, or reminding them their responsibility is to the experiment, not the people being experimented (ie.: "you signed up a form", "you're ruining things")
- Diffused responsibility: compliance increases when guilt is diffused and you can tell yourself that you're just "one cog in a big machine"
- Anonymity and deindividuation: diffusion of responsibility happens naturally with big enough groups, that the victims can't recognize you, and if you wear special uniforms, you can't recognize yourself afterward
- Possible alternatives: if we see alternatives, we are more likely to seek them, if we think there is no other option but to obey, rebellion becomes difficult

The nature of the victim:

- The victim is an abstraction: "future generations" is an abstraction; being close to the victim or shaking hands with the victim decreased compliance in Milgram's experiments
- The psychological distance is increased or decreased: "how would you feel in his shoes"?
- The victim was friendly or unfriendly towards us
- The victim is individuated: but don't let the authorities do it for you, they will always paint the victims as nasty

Personality of the individual that predicts compliance resistance:

- Not valuing being conscientious or agreeable;
- Being low in neuroticism;
- Scoring low on right-wing authoritarianism (any authority is more likely to be questioned if you question the very concept of authority);
- Social intelligence, which may be mediated by an enhanced ability to understand things like scapegoating or ulterior motives
- Stress, with people being more likely to obey under stress

Women voice more verbal resistance but ultimately comply more. Gender is not much of a predictor, though.

Being a hero sometimes is as banal as the banality of evil.
Heroes are normal people, too.

Rationalizing Evil Deeds

Finally, there are rationalizations that people use to do what's good for them, but poor for others.

Says Sapolsky:

> It's not great if someone believes it's okay for people to do some horrible, damaging act.
> But more of the world's misery arises from people who, of course, oppose that horrible act…. But cite some particular circumstances that should make them exceptions.
> **The road to hell is paved with rationalization.**

Cheating or Not Cheating Is Not About Struggle, It's About Values

In a study of coin tosses and self-reporting, about a third of the subjects cheated frequently and easily.

In people *capable* of cheating, but who ended up resisting, there was an internal struggle and delayed response.

People who never cheated had no internal struggle.
For them it was easy, there was no internal conflict, no different parts of the brain activating: you simply never cheat, no need to think about it.

This is not to say that honesty cannot be the result of an internal struggle, but if *continuous* choices are required, then it's difficult to come out with spotless honesty without cheating a few times.

Rich People Are Greedier

Says Sapolsky:

> Across the socioeconomic spectrum, on the average, the wealthier people are, the less empathy they report for people in distress and the less compassionately they act.

Why?
Because wealthier people are more likely to think of greed in positive terms, to view the class system as fair and meritocratic, and to view their success as an act of independence.
And they all mean that not acting the way they do means being "somewhat inferior", which is a great way to decide that someone else's distress is beneath your notice or concern.

The Invention of Religion As Moralizing Force

There are a few patterns among people and religions:

- Desert cultures tend toward monotheistic religions
- Rainforest cultures tend toward polytheistic religions
- Nomadic pastoralists' deities tend to value valor in battle as an entrée to a good afterlife (probably needed to defend cattle)

Gods and religious orthodoxy are more important in cultures with frequent threats (war, natural disasters), inequality, and high infant mortality rates.
Probably because people turn more frequently to God for help.

And once cultures get large enough that anonymous acts become possible, they start inventing moralizing gods.
Probably to help society stay more prosocial and less threatening.

Three important points Sapolsky makes about religion:

1. Religion reflects the values of the culture that invented or adopted it, and very effectively transmits those values;
2. Religion fosters the best and worst of our behaviors;
3. It's complicated.

Power Is Manipulating You To Keep You Down

Those on top seek justification for the inequality.

Fiske found out that when those in power can frame the underclass as high in warmth, but low in competence, it can help stabilize the status quo (Fiske and Cuddy, 2002).
The powerful feel good about their presumed benevolence, while the subordinates are placated by the (condescending) sops of respect.

Enter the "poor but happy" cultural trope, and the "rich and unhappy, stressed out, or overburdened".

There are cultural myths that support the status quo.

Finally, I loved this quote from Sapolsky (edited for brevity):

> Imagine texts bouncing along and across the trenches saying "This is bullshit. None of us here want to fight anymore"
> They could have ended it, tossed down their guns, ignored or ridiculed or killed any objecting officer spouting obscenities about God and country, could have gone home to kiss their loved ones and then face the real enemy, the bloated aristocracy who would sacrifice them for their own power.

I'm not a leftist, but I love that attitude.
I think it's important to learn more about manipulation, so check out:

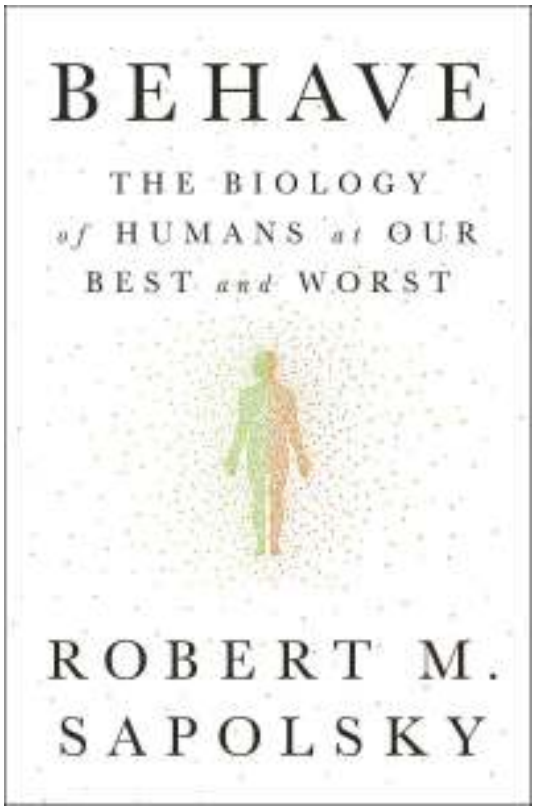
- **Politicians' manipulations**
- **Corporate manipulation**
- **Manipulation strategies**

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

More Wisdom

- The Bonobos are not friendly and "peace and love", as some authors imply. Instead, they are nasty to one another just like any other species
- **The bystander effect**, such as people not helping when there are lots of people around, holds for non-emergency situations, but in dangerous situations, the more people there are around, the more likely they are to step forward
- **Men are more aggressive or prosocial depending on what confers status**: when there are women around men tend to be more risk-taking and more aggressive. But when status is achieved through pro-social actions, men are more pro-social
- **High-density living doesn't increase aggression**: high-density living is a bit like alcohol and testosterone: it makes more aggressive individuals more aggressive. But more submissive individuals also become more submissive in conditions of high-density living
- **Humans are not polygynous nor monogamous**: we're in between, a confused species that can go either way
- **Alpha chimps are not the highest in testosterone**: the highest in testosterone were the younger males who started lots of fights they couldn't finish. The only period when T predicted rank was during group formation when fights were more common. Otherwise, the link between power and T is not high
- **Brawn gets you to power, brain keeps you there**: getting power is about aggression and strength, but staying in power is about social skills
- **Mirror Neurons are overblown**: the author takes aim at Ramachandran a "mirror neurons enthusiast". Sapolsky says he got "a bit too giddy about mirror neurons", and he adds: "*I'm not trying to harp on Ramachandran, but how can you resist someone brilliant handing out sound bites like calling mirror neurons "Gandhi neurons*"? (also see "self-help myths")
- The Better Angels of Our Nature is wrong: Sapolsky joins statistician and philosopher Nicholas Nassim Taleb in criticizing Steven Pinker's work and "naive optimism",
- **Religiosity doesn't predict support for terrorism, it's the attitudes of those around**: It's not how much one prays that predicts intergroup hostility, it's being surrounded by coreligionists who affirm parochial identity, commitment, and shared loves and hatreds

- **Religious people act nicer(?)** Some studies report more charitable acts towards in-group, but others show no correlation. The discrepancy partially arises when the data is self-reported, as religious people want to be seen - and see themselves- as more charitable. But it does seem that religious cues boost prosociality
- **The bystander effect**: The bystander effect happens when there is no real threat. But in dangerous situations the more people, the more likely they are to act
- **Action requires detachment**: too much empathy can overwhelm people and cause them to do nothing or to withdraw. Action requires empathy, but also the ability to detach oneself and think clearly. Adolescents sometimes can be too empathic
- **People are poor fighters**: people are generally poor fighters. Fists break during fights, and most people just scuffle with little damage to each other. Most people are also afraid of fights. Footage of football hooliganism shows most are on the sidelines
- **We mature late because of our complex societies**: human children mature very slowly, and this is in part because it takes time to evolve, adapt and learn to the point that we can be effective in our complex societies
- **Epigenetics: it's both genes and environments**: most complex personal traits are not caused by genes, but influenced by genes, which in turn are influenced by our environments in how and when they express themselves



CONS

I loved "*Behave*".

Yet, there are important notes:

Too Much on The Plate

Few academics have the courage to say it.
But here it is: there is such a thing as "too long".

The ability to sum up evidence to provide an overview and make a point is an important skill.
I understand authors want to write "defining operas" of their life's work, or show how deeply they researched.

But that doesn't serve the readers well.

Behave ends up being too long, especially the chapters describing how the brain works.

Lots of Personal Opinions (& A Bit Politically Motivated)

Sometimes the author seems to look into science to reach leftist political conclusions.

For example, he says that "nothing says that a man can't provide the same attachment as a mother", and that seemed a bit of a stretch.

Or that "other countries would be baffled by Americans voting for the most likable person" when Bush, a conservative, won out against Kerry, the liberal.
But he should know people are pretty much the same all over.

The book is also full of barbs towards the rich and politically conservative. The rich, for example, seem to invent the cultural trope of "poor but happy". But who says that it's not the poor who come up with it to feel better about themselves?

Bashing of Agriculture: The Clear Sign of Ideological Bias

Here we are again.

This is a popular view among left-wing authors, for example, Jared Diamond -"*Guns, Germs, and Steel*"; *The Third Chimpanzee*"-, and Yuval Noah –*Sapiens*-.

Allow me some sarcasm now.
You gotta love the "agricultural myth" of the left wing. You ascribe to it, and you get in exchange a set of magical rose-tinted glasses. You put them on, and they take you to a wonderful and pristine past of equality, freedom, and bliss.

Let's imagine for a second that agriculture really was "bad", somehow.
It still remains to be explained how millions of people were stupid enough to keep planting and harvesting, never looking back to their past of hunting and gathering.
Or how come agriculture conquered the world, together with the populations that used it?

But hey, maybe modern authors know better what was good for them.

And "*Behave*" reminds us what are the agricultural ills that those dumb ancestors of us didn't realize when they switched to it.
Agriculture made us all sedentary, "overly dependent" on a few crops and animals only, "vulnerable to droughts", and even led us to "do something that no other primates do: live near our feces".
But finally, eventually, we get to the crux: agriculture instituted inequality.

That's what Sapolsky says.
And there we are, finally: agriculture sucks because it brought inequality.
Now at least we know where the author's heart lies.

Such a pity that such an enlightened author, of such a wonderful book, had to fall for the politicization of history.

Sometimes Random Studies Generalized

Sapolsky says that "when it comes to Eternity, sticks apparently work better than carrots".
He says that based on a study "showing" that the greater the skew towards belief in hell as opposed to heaven, the lower the crime rates.

But the study was based on 67 countries, and I just can't see how one can isolate tens of other variables, which, in my opinion, all account far more than "a bias towards heaven or hell" -ie.: poverty, inequality, education, etc., etc.-.

PROS

I listed lots of cons, but "*Behave*" is a masterpiece.

I especially loved Sapolsky's scientific approach.
His willingness to go beyond the immediate correlations, to look for discordant information, and to truly dig for the deeper causes.

Sapolsky's last message is what a true scientist and searcher of truth should always remember:

> It's complicated.
> And it depends.

And that's why, my friends, you always need to be watchful of those who proselytize on a few simple, over-generalized concepts.
Yes, they might seem charismatic.
But they probably don't have either truth, or your best interest in mind.

Review

Behave is a majestic book that goes deep into human nature, enlightens on many important topics, and dispels many myths and generalizations.

It provided much information for my own work, including a couple of future articles and my own course "Power University".

Its only limitation, in my opinion, is its own strength: by providing such a vast, interdisciplinary overview, the reader might end up overwhelmed, and walk away with little practical information.

What may have made it even better is a coherent thread that pulls everything together.
Sapolsky speaks of the need for a general, interdisciplinary approach, but "*Behave*" still feels like a hotpot mixture, albeit a tasty one.

I leave with one great quote from Sapolsky:

> Anyone who says that our worst behaviors are inevitable knows too little about primates.
> Including us.

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How the Mind Works: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

How the Mind Works (1997) explains how the human mind processes information by drawing upon *evolutionary psychology* and the computational theory of mind (i.e., comparing the mind to a machine).

Contents

- Summary
- Quotes
- More Wisdom
- Criticism
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Steven Pinker is an author, experimental psychologist, and psychology professor at Harvard.
He is also the author of "*The Blank Slate*", "*The Better Angels of Our Nature*" and, my favorite "*Enlightenment Now*".

Evolutionary Psychology Is Not "After the Facts Storytelling", But There's Plenty of Bad Evo Psych

Steven Pinker says that one of the common criticisms of evolutionary psychology is that it's an exercise in after-the-facts storytelling (see Nassim Taleb).

He says that it's not the case, but one of the reasons it might seem like this is because there are plenty of people who make up nice-sounding, but ultimately meaningless "evolutionary psychology explanations".

For example: "men avoid asking for directions because approaching a stranger might get one killed, or "happiness evolved because happy people are pleasant to be around, and so they made more friends and allies".

The reason why these are lame is not because they seek to explain behavior and psychology in light of our evolution, but because they do a poor job at it.

Common Mistakes in Evolutionary Psychology

Some of the common mistakes that people who first approach evolutionary psychology are:

- **We don't need to explain everything because there is no evolutionary explanation for everything**: our mind is adapted to the savannah, not the computer age. We didn't have institutions such as birth control and adoption agencies. Had we had "birth control trees", we could have developed to fear them like we fear spiders.
- **Natural selection does not shape behavior directly, but only acts to shape the generator of behavior that is our mind**: did not evolve, what evolved is the mind. There is no gene for "adultery", maybe there could be a "desire" to have sex with someone who is not our spouse could have evolved, but the desire might also be overridden but other desires which are also indirect products of our genes
- **Natural selection cares only about the long-term fate of that replicate**: to understand and reverse-engineer a machine, we need to understand what it was created for. And the goal of the mind is to maximize the number of copies of the genes that created it
- **People don't strive to selfishly spread their genes, genes selfish spread *themselves***: they do it by the way they build and shape our brains, making us enjoy sex, avoid harm, love our children, etc. Our goals are not our

genes. The reviewer complained that human adultery cannot be a strategy to spread genes because humans take precautions not to get pregnant. But he misses the point: sexual desire is not people's strategy to propagate genes, it's people's strategy to obtain the pleasure of sex, and the pleasure of sex is genes' strategy to propagate themselves. If the genes don't get propagated, it's because we are smarter than they are.
Genes are a play within a play, not the interior monologue of the player.

Why People Oppose Evolutionary Psychology

Steven Pinker goes here into a theme that he cares deeply about: the leftist and feminist ideology that tries to deny human nature.

You can read "*The Blank Slate*" for more as he dedicates the whole book to the "denial of human nature".

But in short, the opposition comes because of three *wrong* implications about human nature:

1. If the mind comes with a structure, different people might have different structures, and that would justify discrimination and oppression
2. If antisocial behavior like aggression and the pursuit of status and resources are natural, that would make them natural, and hence good (naturalistic fallacy)
    1. If "bad behavior" is in the genes, then trying to change is futile, and that makes any attempt at improving our society, useless (not true)
3. If behavior is caused by the genes, then people cannot be held accountable for their bad and harmful behavior

In short, some (leftist) scholars see it like this: innate = right wrong = bad.

Instead, says Pinker, understanding behavior means to understand and mediate between:

1. genes
2. the anatomy of the brain
3. the brain's biochemical state
4. the person's family upbringing
5. the way society has treated him or her
6. the stimuli that impinge upon him or her

Species Evolve at One Another's Expense

We fantasize about the land of milk and honey and peaceful nature, but except for fruits, virtually every food is the body part of some other organisms.

Organisms evolved defenses against being eaten, while wannabe-eaters evolved weapons to overcome those defenses.

The cycle of life is an arms race to better eat others.

Most evolved weapons and defenses are genetically programmed and fixed within a lifetime.
That gives humans an unfair advantage. They can attack species that can develop defenses only in subsequent ones.
Many species cannot evolve defenses rapidly enough.

My Note: It's also partly about learning, though
Some species are particularly bad at surviving humans because they don't fear humans.
But a few bad encounters can "teach" them to stay away. So, albeit Pinker's line of reasoning is correct, defenses are also partially learned and not fully inborn.

Stereotypes Are Often Based on Accurate

Talking about "categorizations" and their utility, Pinker also discusses stereotypes.

He says that:

> Some stereotypes may be based on good statistics about real people.
> In the US, there are large and real differences among ethnic and racial groups in their average performance in school and in their rates of committing violent crimes.
> The statistics of course say nothing about heredity or any other putative cause.
> Ordinary people' estimates about these differences are fairly accurate, and in some cases, people with more contacts with the minority group, such as social workers, have more pessimistic and more accurate estimates of the frequency of negative traits such as illegitimacy and welfare dependency.

What's racist, Pinker says, is not being realistic in the general trends and numbers, but using the general trends and numbers to make decisions about individual cases.

I applaud Pinker for broaching this politically sensitive topic with some good sense.
And it also happens that there is plenty of research to show that stereotypes often have more than a kernel of truth.

We're Not As Irrational As Psychologists Say

Steven Pinker, like a few other evolutionary psychologists, doesn't buy into the much-vaunted irrationality of the human mind.

Contrary to what popular books such as "*Thinking Fast and Slow*" and "*Predictably Irrational*" would lead us to believe, people's thinking is not as stupid as one might believe.

Even when people's judgment of probability departs from the truth, their reasoning is not necessarily illogical.
Take the gambler's fallacy, such as the belief that if something random happens many times in a row, it's less likely to happen in the near future. The gambler's fallacy does apply to dice, but we didn't evolve playing dice and slot machines, and many days of cloud might predict the sun.

Says Pinker:

> In any world *but* a casino, the gambler's fallacy is rarely a fallacy.

So when a smoker rationalizes that his 90-year-old parents have been smoking for decades, so the national statistics don't apply to him, he might as well be right.

The Good of The Group Can Lead to Evil Results

Steven Pinker dedicates one chapter to altruism and the evolution of altruism.

We have touched already on this topic in many summaries already so I will not write at length about it.
But Pinker does add one great contribution.

He says that perhaps we should rejoice that we didn't evolve to put the interests of the group ahead of the individual.
Because he says:

> Often, the best way to benefit one's group is to displace, subjugate, or annihilate the group next door.
> (…)
> When human leaders have manipulated or coerced people into submerging their interests into the group's, the outcomes are some of history's worst atrocities.

I couldn't agree more, and there is a foundational article here on the good of individualistic self-centeredness.
See:

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

Dating Is A Marketplace

At a certain point, it makes sense for people to stop dating, choose someone, and pair up.

But choosing someone because he or she was "the best we found" leaves our partner vulnerable.
Out of 6 billion people there will surely be someone who likes you even more than your partner does, and whom you will like much more than you like your partner.

So if you always go for the best you can get, rationally you would leave your partner.
That's why people want to see their partners' feelings, and signs that they chose them because they really like them, and not because of a rational calculation.

Also read:

- **The Sexual Marketplace 101**
- **The Sexual Market Value**
- **Sexual Market Value Hacks**

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

We Lie to Ourselves to Lie Better, But The Truth Is Still Hidden in Our Brain

To better lie and deceive others, people often believe their own lies.

However, the truth is still useful, and it should be registered somewhere in the brain.
People fool themselves to maintain a good image of self, so for example, they derogate others when they assault others.
This is cognitive dissonance, first postulated by Leon Festinger. But, says Pinker, it was Elliott Aronson, author of "*The Social Animal*" who truly got it right.
Cognitive dissonance only arises when people need to eliminate the dissonance between what they do and the proposition of themselves being as benevolent and effective as they'd like to think they are.

Sometimes we have a glimpse of our own self-deception when some remark really hurts.
It's because part of us knows it's true, but we'd prefer to keep it hidden.

For more on self-deception and self-manipulation, also read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Scholars Fight A War for Status, Not For Science

Theoretically, scholars and researchers should have truth in mind.

But in practice, scholars are also known by colleagues as "the types who can be pushed around" and "the types who won't take any shit".
A switchblade at a scholarly conference would strike the wrong tone, but scholars fight the battle with different means, including:

- Intimidation: “clearly”
- Threat: “it would be unscientific to… “
- Authority: “as Popper showed.. “
- Insult: “this work lacks the necessary rigor for (this is actually soft power and judge role”)
- Belittling: “few people today seriously believe that… “

Achieving Status With Dominant or Social Intelligence

Even in violent tribal groups such as Yanomano, strength is not everything some leaders earned power and authority with shrewdness.

Chagnon reports that some leaders are flamboyant bullies, but some others use shrewdness and discretion.
One man, for example, dominated thanks to a web of alliances and conserved his authority by giving orders only when he was sure everyone would follow them.

Status Rule #1: Follow Those Above You if You’re Below, Be Different Than Those Below if You’re Above

And that’s why fashions change so quickly.
The people above always seek to differentiate themselves from those below them, while those below always try to copy them to get the same status.

And that’s the rationale behind the current trends of hipsters, dressing on purpose more like low-class individuals.
Pinker says the upper classes and the most advanced fashion trendsetters dress provocatively down to avoid being confused for the boring middle class.

Aggressive Nonconformity

Aggressive nonconformity is an advertisement that one is so powerful and confident, that he can break all the rules and jeopardize the goodwill of others.

Quotes

On futurology:

> The one prediction coming out of futurology that is undoubtetly correct is that in the future, today’s futurologists, will look silly

On the irreconcilable differences between creationists and scientists:

> As I marveled at the Swiss-watch precision of the joints, the sewing-machine motions by which it drew silk from its spinnerets, the beauty and cunning of the web, I thought to myself: “How could anyone see this and not believe in natural selection!?”
> At that moment a woman standing next to me exclaimed “How could anyone see this and not believe in God!?”

On the randomness of stock markets:

> A large industry of self-anointed sears allucinate trends in the random walk of Wall Street

About creativity and self-interest (I’m gonna quote Pinker on this one, it’s too good):

> Unfortunately, creative people are at their most creative when writing their autobiographies

On moralistic science:

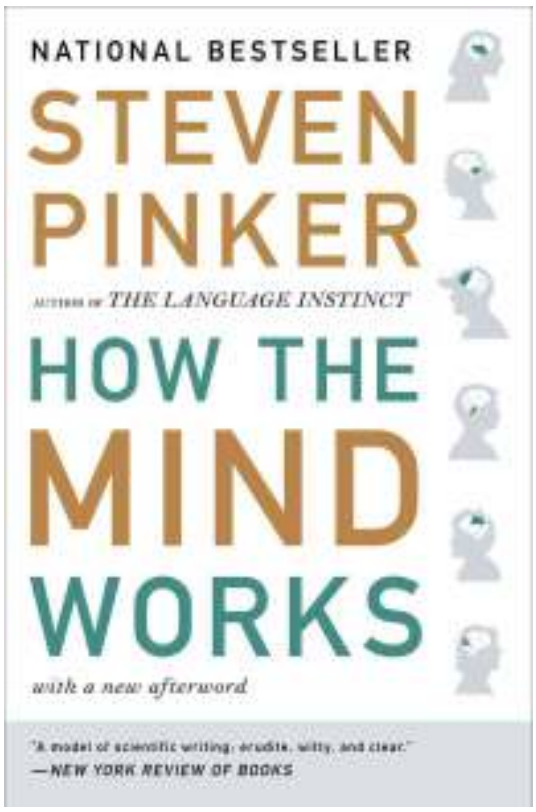
> I think moralistic science is bad for morals, and bad for science

On genders' differences towards adultery:

> A woman has an affair because she feels that a man is in some way superior or complimentar to her husband. And a man has an affair because the woman is not his wife.

More Wisdom

- Caste societies have legends and myths instead of history and science so that they can justify their power position over others
- We categorize to better infer information from reality
- Disgust is partially learned, but we are also all predisposed to disgust and adults often find the same things disgusting. Disgust is intuitive microbiology
- Children try to get in between parents to hog attention and avoid competition with a new child. This is what Freud misunderstood: it's not sexual competition, it's competition for resources
- Children grow up influenced by their peer group far more than their parents because their peers provide far more reliable information as to which behaviors will be effective. The child's future success and sexual access do not depend on the home environment but on the social environment
- Sex is not a bonding force in human nature, but a divisive one (also see: tools of sexual conflict)
- The Madonna/whore dichotomy is the optimal mating strategy for males of any species who invest in their offspring
- Our taste for music and the arts are non-adaptive byproducts (this is one theory, while I tend to agree with Miller and believe they were sexually selected as fitness indicators, as it also happens in other animals)
- Humor is a tool of social power dynamics, it can be a tool of aggression, or a tool of submissiveness to defuse tension (see Power University for the power dynamics of humor)
- Religion is a technique for success



Criticism

How the Mind Works was a wonderful read, but there are important points I need to raise:

1. Too Deterministic, Sometimes "Fooled by Randomness"

Sometimes I feel Pinker seeks to over-explain things.

The author says that evolutionary psychology shouldn't seek to explain everything, and yet sometimes it feels that's exactly what he does.
For example, he asks:

> If consciousness is useless, if a creature without it could negotiate the world as well as a creature with it, why would natural selection have favored the conscious one

Natural selection has not favored the conscious one.
There are countless ways of supporting life and making it thrive, consciousness simply happens not to make such a huge difference on whether one has it, or not.
Possibly, consciousness actually helps to spread genes, but natural selection has not really favored anything. It happened rather randomly.

2. The "Perfect Machine" Fallacy: The Computer Analogy & Organisms as Perfect Adaptations

Says the author:

> Organisms are not just cohesive blobs of pretty spirals, they are machines.
> And their complexity is functional adaptive design

In the epilogue to later editions, the author says he was misunderstood with the "machine" analogy.

Yet, the main issue with the machine analogy is that Pinker makes it sound as if organisms work like perfect clockwork.

The analogy repeats over and over, giving exactly that feeling of "perfect machinery".
For example (italic is mine):

> Animals' brains are just as specialize and *well engineered* as their bodies
> A brain is a *precision instrument* that allows a creature to use information to *solve the problems* presented by its lifestyle

And again:

> Each animal has evolved *information-processing machinery* to solve its problems, and we evolved machinery to solve ours.
> The *sophisticated algorithm* found in even the smallest found in even the tiniest dabs of nervous tissue serve as yet another eye-opener…

And more:

> The real action is in the pattern of connections among neurons, just as the differences in content among different computer programs, microchips or video cassettes

And even more:

> The difficulties of building organisms to cooperate and be generous have not prevented natural selection from *installing* cooperation and generosity in humans.
> (…)
> *The onboard computers* of social organisms, especially humans, should *run sophisticated programs* that assess the opportunities and risks at hand, and act accordingly

How the Mind Works could have as well been called "how this engineering feat works" or "how this computer" works.

Together with the mind seen as a "perfectly engineered machine", evolution also comes to be seen as the "perfect engineer designer":

3. "The Perfect Engineer Fallacy": Evolution As Infallible Designer

Says the author:

> Natural selection does not have the foresight of engineers. But that cuts both ways. It does not have their mental blocks, impoverished imagination, or conformity to bourgeois sensibility and ruling class interests either.
> Guided only by what works, selection can hone in on brilliant creative solutions.

And then:

> Ingenious contrivances of the living world, the bio-mechanical perfection of cheetahs, the infrared pinhole cameras of snakes, the sonar of bats, the superglue of barnacles (…) after all, more malevolent forces like predators and parasites are constantly gnawing at an organism's right to life and do not forgive slapdash engineering

Again, we go with the "machine" analogy.

Reading "*How the Mind Works*", I felt like it was like a hymn to evolution's perfection.

The author even downplays the *mistakes* of evolution:

> And many of the examples of bad design in the animal kingdom turn out to be old spouse's tales.

It sounds like the author is saying that evolution makes no mistakes.
But it's not really like that.
Evolution is messy, sometimes also going off maladaptive tangents.

The selfish gene, after all, doesn't care about "perfect".
The selfish gene is happy with "good enough to replicate".

Learn more here:

4. Too Natural Selection-Centric, It Forgets Sexual Selection

I find Steven Pinker, like a few more contemporary evolutionary psychology authors, to focus too much on natural selection and too little on sexual selection.

See here an example:

5. Unconvincing Explanation of Complex Adaptation Through Natural Selection

The author says that natural selection can well explain "complex adaptations".

And I believe that's the case.
It must be the case, what other explanations are there, anyway?

Yet, his "rational" arguments are not very rational at all.
For example, he says:

> Halfway wing will not make you soar like an eagle, but it will allow you to parachute.

Yeah, halfway… But how about 1/5 of a wing?
Or 1/10th of a wing?
That's just useless.

I don't believe that natural selection is the answer here.
Probably sexual selection also played a role. I like Miller's theory of "sexual selection as the VC of evolution" (check out "The Mating Mind").

6. Too Much Vitriol Spent Against "Feminists" & "Leftists"

Pinker has a point when he talks about some ideology-driven academics.

But sometimes he overdoes it.
And, as well, sometimes he fails to understand that those authors too, can add a few important contributions to the discourse.

7. The Concept of "Humans As Weak" Is Wrong (& Ethnocentric)

It's funny that, of all the people, Pinker falls for this.

He pokes fun at the countless authors who say we're just another chimp, and he makes fun of those who say

humans are weak because today “this weak animal” controls the fate of the supposedly “stronger” animals.

And then, he falls for it himself.
He implies we are weak and that our victory is the “ultimate revenge of the geeks”.

I don’t see how anyone could see humans as weak, even without our recent surge of high-tech.

That’s very ethnocentric to say. And it’s because, as Pinker also knows, we tend to focus on threats. So we focus on *bigger* animals, or on smaller *dangerous* animals.
And we forget the countless ones who are neither bigger nor dangerous to us.

But the truth is that we are some of the biggest animals on earth.
We live long and have long childhoods because we were powerful and didn’t die frequently, including during our evolution.
And we are left free to build our own weapons, even without any high technology, we will still come out victorious against 99% of any other animals.

So this idea that “humans are weak” is really just misplaced and ultimately ethnocentric nonsense.

8. Sometimes It’s “After the Fact Storytelling”

I have the feeling the author sometimes jumps to conclusions.
For example, talking about hunting:

> And men are bigger and more adept to killing because of their evolutionary history of killing each other

Based on what the author says men are bigger because of “killing each other”, and not simply “fighting each other”, or because they were selected by women to be bigger.

No data is provided, but it’s presented as a fact.

9. Does It Misunderstand the Hamilton Rule?

I’m surprised that an intelligent man such as Pinker could misunderstand Hamilton, but it seems that’s just what happened.

Says Pinker:

> Biologist William Hamilton noted, that if a benefit to the relative, multiplied by the probability that the genes is shared, exceeds the cost to the animal, that gene will spread in the population

But Hamilton’s rule doesn’t say the gene *will* spread.
The gene *can* spread.

Genes that obey Hamilton’s rule will not be rooted out by evolution, while those that do disobey Hamilton’s rule will have to against the forces of evolution.

But nothing in Hamilton’s theory says that the genes will necessarily spread like Pinker makes it sound.
Again, this to me suggests that Pinker has a rather deterministic view of evolution and that if something *can* happen because it’s good for the gene, then it *will* happen for sure.

10. Chagnon and War: The Controversy

There has been much debate about Chagnon, and I’m not taking any side against Chagnon here, or against Pinker’s general conclusions.

As a matter of fact, since war is so widespread, I do believe humans do have a tendency for war and, possibly,

psychological adaptations for it (albeit not a gene for war, of course).
As Pinker says:

> Some people think that evolutionary psychology claims to have discovered that human nature is selfish and wicked. But they are flattering the researchers(…)
> No one needs a scientist to measure whether humans are prone to knavery. The question has been answered in the history books, the newspapers, the ethnographic record, and the letters to Ann Landers.
> But people treat it like an open question, as if someday science might discover that it's all a bad dream and we will wake up to find that it is human nature to love one another.

Yep, I couldn't agree more.

However, Pinker could have done himself a favor and not relied heavily on Chagnon and the Yanomamo.

After all, there are good arguments that seriously cast some doubts on the link between killers and sexual success (see Sapolsky, 2018 for an overview and Fry for the critical paper).

Review

Steven Pinker wanted "*How the Mind Works*" to be his Magnus opera.

And it is indeed a monumental work.
But that's also his limitation, in my opinion.
Similar to "*Behave*" by Sapolsky, it crams in too much information from too many disparate fields.
It's difficult to find a central theme, a thesis, or a clear message that the reader can remember.

What will one associate "*How the Mind Works*" with, when the topics it touches upon range from extraterrestrial life, to the evolution of art, to the utility of humor?

My Own Bias in Reviewing "How the Mind Works"

I was a bit biased toward "*How the Mind Works*".
And not in a positive way.

To begin with, I wasn't holding the author to the same high self-esteem I used to.
I find him to be too derisive towards the people and colleagues he disagrees with, including in the epilogue of this very book. He ends up sounding smug, and I don't like that attitude.
Maybe he's trying to follow his own theory of "scholars who won't take any shit" a bit too hard, and he should focus a bit more on what's true instead of who's right.

Second, I had read and loved "*The Mating Mind*" first, where Geoffrey Miller tears down the idea of the mind as a computer, and I knew that Pinker was accused of embracing that metaphor -albeit he says that's not the case in the epilogue of the new version-.

Third, I had already read "The Blank Slate", focused on demolishing the leftist and feminist "Social Science Standard Model", and I was tired of that raging battle.
How the Mind Works dedicates a whole chapter, plus lots of barbs spread throughout the book, against feminist and leftist academics. You know, it gets tiring after a while.

Overall, it's still a high-quality book.
And I am twice grateful because "*How the Mind Works*" also helped me improve my products, for example with Steven Pinker's intelligent analysis of humor and the use of quips to win debates.

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Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 December 2019 · Archived copy · Original

Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism (2018) is a book about the intersection of politics, power dynamics, and sexual dynamics.
In it, the author Kristen Ghodsee states that capitalism disempowers women and women's sexual choices, while socialism, state-funded childcare, and affirmative actions empower women and their sexual choices.

Contents

- Overview
- Quotes
- Criticism
- Review

Overview

About the Author:
Kristen R. Ghodsee is an American ethnographer and Professor of Russian and East European Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.
She specializes in the study of ordinary citizens' lives under socialism and post-socialism in the Eastern Bloc.

Socialist Ideas Are Enjoying A Renaissance

The author says that socialist ideals are enjoying a Renaissance in the West because "citizens desire an alternative political path that will lead to a more egalitarian and sustainable future".

My Note: Obviously, this trend-spotting didn't stand the test of a mere few months
The author mentions Corbyn, the Greek former prime minister, Bernie Sanders, and a few more.
She wasn't wrong, but these "short-term trends" are so fickle that they change in the span of an en election.
Most of the people she mentions are gone from the mainstream political landscape, and one could equally make the case that right-wing extremism is on the rise.

Millennials are also far more open to socialism than the previous generation.

Socialism Empowers Women

This was one of the best ideas from Ghodsee.
She says:

> When women enjoy their own sources of income, and the state guarantees social security in old age, illness, and disability, women have no economic reason to stay in abusive, unfulfilling, or otherwise unhealthy relationships.

I partially agree with her.

Women Working at Home Subsidize Employers'

The author says that when women stay in traditional roles, such as caring for the children and the elderly, they are subsidizing the costs to employers and to society.

They are performing social-work, but without being recognized for it and without receiving pay.
Instead, they become enslaved to their husband, especially in countries where they can only access health care

through their husbands.

My Note: She has a good point
She has a very good point and I hadn't thought about it.

Writes the author:

> As capitalism made a slave of the man, and then by paying her through him, made her his slave, she became the slave of a slave.

Don't Conflate Gender With Discrimination

The author says that one should not forget that gender is not the primary category of analysis when it comes to discrimination.

Black and Hispanic women are far worse off than white women.
And if we don't see that, the author warns, then we fall for the same mistake of Sheryl Sandberg's ilk of feminism.

Says the Ghodsee:

> The old concept of sisterhood ignores the structural aspect of capitalism that benefit white middle class women while disadvantaging working class women of color

She says that appeals to gender can break up the front of social reform because it cut through disadvantaged classes that have more in common that their different gender would otherwise suggest.

And again:

> When examining structures of oppression, we must be mindful of the hierarchies of subjugation

In The Power Struggle Between Men and Women, Conservatives Support Men, While Democrats Support Women

Giving women the right to vote has likely played some role in the increase in government spending and in pushing governments to better serve the needs of the many, instead of the few.

The author says that Red Pill communities and male rights blogs are conservative because they seek to repress women.
Ghodsee says that all male rights activists convene that women vote for liberals because it's in their economic interest to do so.

In one of her best moments of lucid, impartial analysis, Ghodsee drops a true gem:

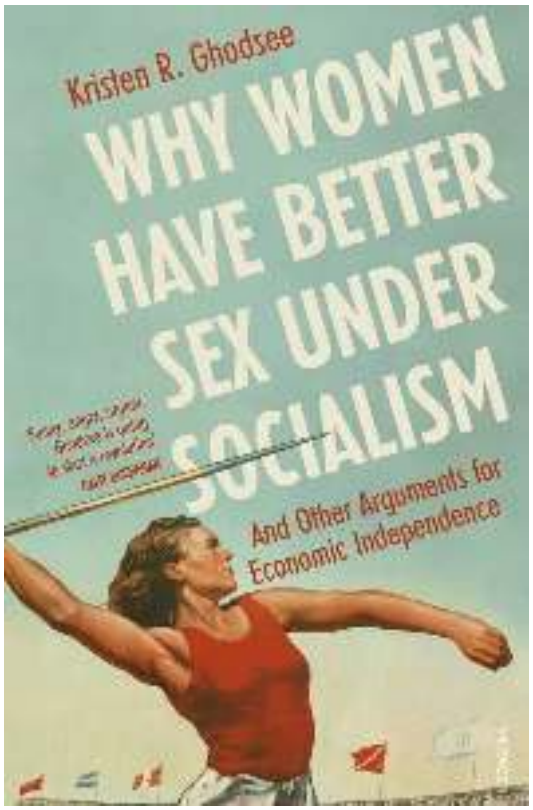
> Ultimately, this thing we call government, is not inherently good or bad, it is a vessel that is steered by those who happen to control it at any one moment in time.

Capitalism Thrives on Individualism Because "The People" Are Its Biggest Enemy

Says the author:

> The largest enemy of plutocracy is large numbers of citizens working together for a common cause.
> It's no coincidence that capitalism thrives on an ideology of self-interest and individualism, and its defendants will try to discredit collectivist ideals based on altruism and cooperation.

Well, that was another smart insight and the best way to end this summary of "*Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism*".



Quotes

People, this book is not recommended to (which indirectly says a lot about the author's bias, TBH):

> If you don't give a whit about women's lives because you're a gynophobic right-wing internet troll, save your money and get back to your parents' basement right now: this isn't the book for you

On men complaining that a good job didn't provide them with any dating power:

> Money was useless, they complained.
> "*The few Eastern Marks that a doctor could make in contrast to someone who, say, would in a theater, did absolutely no good*", they explained, "*in luring or retaining women the way that a doctor's salary could, and did, in the West. You had to be interesting*".
> What pressure!

On everything changing, including the costumes and more:

> Everything was forever.
> Until it wasn't no more.

On the good things about socialism that we are all forgetting:

> There was a baby in all that bathwater, it's time we get around to save it.

Criticism

Despite some significant insights, there are some important issues I need to raise:

1. Sometimes Interviews, Rather Than Data

This is a common issue in anthropology and ethnography.

The author relies heavily on interviews, and small samples affected by self-selection bias -ie.: women who answered to her work-.

2. Sometimes Opinions, Rather Than Data

The author says that "the majority of women rejected the traditional breadwinner model. They wanted to work".

To begin with, what's the "majority"?
And second, it's not clear whether women rejected it out of willingness, or out of need.
Based on what does she say "they wanted to work?".
If it's based on her interviews, what was the sample?

It feels like a sentence thrown in there, without any true data backing.
This is not to say that it's meaningless, maybe she's right… But I, as the reader, cannot be sure.

3. Some Shallowness When It Comes to Actual Seduction

The author says that Roosh's book "don't bang Denmark" stands as a testament that female empowerment shields women from the "alpha male game".

That doesn't make much sense to me, and I'll skip expanding on it.

But just as a quick note, the author should realize the contradiction with what she says just a bit later, such as that reduced gender inequality and economic opportunity for women result in freer sex and more casual partners.

4. Conflates What She Prefers With What *All* Women *Should* Prefer

The author's analysis stops at a very superficial level.

She seems to lay out a pipe-dream of what *she* thinks things *ought* to be and then goes out looking for confirming evidence.

And she never asks the real deeper questions that would open Pandora's box of a wholly different reality.
For example:

- Why do women exchange sex for resources?
- What else is exchanged in the sexual marketplace? Maybe it's not *only* money VS feelings, but also status, looks, opportunities…?
- Do some women prefer exchanging youth and beauty for luxury, or are they *all* "forced", as the author suggests?
- Why do women, on average, have fewer resources in capitalist societies? Is it really *only* because of the glass ceiling?
- Why do women tend to care more for infants, is it really *only* because of socialization? Why do some men invest less in relationships and childcare, is it *only* because some of them have money?

These are the questions that would go at the roots of the topics the author wants to tackle. But she decides to either skirt them or to only provide the answer that best fits her narrative.

This is why "*Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism*" fails to provide a realistic picture of sexuality and male/female dynamics.

5. The Concept That Money Is A Tool of Female Oppression Makes Little Sense to Me

Writes the author:

> Directly or indirectly, sex and money are always linked in women's lives. A remnant of our long history of oppression

She goes on to explain how only by limiting the power of money women will gain true sexual freedom.

The author does not understand that money is only a proxy for resources, and women look for resources the most when resources are scarce, no matter what political system they live in.

A poor-ass communist country will still have (at least some) women seeking resources far more than a rich capitalist country where most women can find a job.
You don't need to take my word for it: just ask any man who's traveled to Cuba (or the Western men who traveled in the Eastern bloc right after the fall of communism).

6. Superficial Analysis of Sexual Economics, Believing It's All About Money (It's Not)

The author says that sexual economics is true, but "only within the confines of the free market system".

The book seems to suggest that:

1. Money corrupts dating
2. Money gives more power to men
3. Without money, sex and love become more important

And well… She's right. *Partially*.
But not nearly to the extent she describes.

The issue is that the author seems to believe and suggest that money is the *only* currency of exchange that is unrelated to sex and feelings.
Obviously, that's not the case.

To begin with, money and resources are the same.
And **resources don't disappear with communism, it's just that fewer men have them**: few political cronies instead of many successful professionals and entrepreneurs.
I bet that if the author had investigated communist leaders' wives and mistresses, she would have found they had more sex, with more women, and more attractive ones than the average population.

The only difference is that in communism resources are far more limited and only men high up in the party have them.
Basically, her solution to making dating "better" seems to me like it's a form of "make it worse for everyone".

Second, **power and status don't disappear under communism, and they are exchanged the same way as money is**.
Even purely from an economic "barter" point of view, a man who has access to anything that a woman might want still has the ability to "exchange" that something for sexual access -ie.: there might be a communist Weinstein who controls who gets to be an actress in the state-sponsored movies-.

And finally, **the exchange nature of dating does not disappear, no matter how successful you are at artificially removing resources**.
Attractive men, intelligent men, artistic men, dominant men… They will still all command more power in the dating market, and still potentially demand more while giving back less.
Studies, for example, show that attractive men do invest less in their relationships (on average).

Also see:

- **Sexual Economics 101**
- **Sexual Market Value**

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

7. At Times, It Sounds A Bit Like Straw-Manning

The author presents a few scenarios in which being a woman is a handicap.

But they felt somewhat forced, like when she says that a girl getting a pink letter when she's born is branded as "guilty for not being a boy".
That made no sense (and especially not to me: my parents wanted a daughter).

A few men do the same, complaining "if a man had done what this girl did, hell would have broken loose".
This sounds to me like a really childish "who's worse off" type of game.

8. One-Sided Representations of Economic Theories

The author shouldn't have gone into economics.

She says that cutting public jobs during economic downturns prolongs the downturn.
That's true, but not cutting public spending also increases debt.

Ghodsee's position on public spending is also the position of Paul Krugman, and I actually agree with it -at least during crises-.
But I think she shouldn't have gone into economic theory without at least mentioning both sides of the argument.

The same goes for Piketty and his data on inequality.
The author would have gained credibility if she had mentioned the criticism Piketty has received for his methodology (see Nassim Taleb, 2018).

9. Some Out of Place "Red-Revolution" Moments

Writes the author:

> Redistribution is going to come, in one form or another. Current levels of inequality are unsustainable in the long term.

This is nonsense and should have no place in any book that wants to be taken seriously.

Based on what does she say?
I find symptomatic of what truly drives the author.
And it's not science or truth.

And again:

> If two billions people spontaneously decided to stop using Amazon or Facebook, two of the most powerful corporations in the world, would cease to exist

As a bit of a no-global myself, I wouldn't mind seeing some sprawling, tax-evading corporations fall, but this is still symptomatic of the author's own political bias.

10. Conflates “Social Expectation” With Real Innate Propensities

Like most other left-leaning authors, Ghodsee prefers to stress the socialization influence on gender roles instead of the nature side.

Here is what the author writes (I paraphrase for brevity, but without changing the meaning):

> Men and women are not the same, but our beliefs about how men and women behave a figment of our collective imagination -a powerful figment, yes, but a figment nonetheless-.

Of course, the author also blames socialization for fewer women in positions of authority and in tech and engineering fields (also see: how to be powerful and feminine).

Oh well, what can I say, it’s a pity that a book with so much potential had to fall for the same old nonsense that plagues left-leaning literature.

11. Society Should Bear The Cost of Raising Children Because Children Benefit Society?

The author says that children benefit society, so society should bear the cost of raising them.

She even says that children might be more of a benefit to society than to their parents (!!).

I feel very strongly about this, so I’m not going to mince words: this communist nonsense at best, and truly harmful thinking at worst.

So if one decides not to have children, he should pay for my children?

And has the author realized that we live in an overcrowded world?
Or maybe when she complains about global warming she really believes it’s evil corporations and not that we are too many in this world?

12. “Our Goal Should Be”: The Communist Way of Telling People How to Live

When I hear stuff like this I want to throw the audiobook away:

> Our goal should be that an equal number of men and women choose to act as stay at home parents

Here we are, a typical communist, telling people how they should think and act.
So a perfect society should “force” people into equilibrium, no matter what they freely decide?
Thank you, but keep your “goals” within your own home.

13. Nonsense Evolutionary Psychology

As is common among many leftist authors, the author bashes agriculture (also see: Jared Diamond, Yuval Noah, and Robert Sapolsky).

Supposedly, agriculture instituted inequality, slavery, the patriarchy, and even monogamous marriage, with the enforced fidelity of the wife -anything else couldn’t be thrown in there, I suppose-.

Please don’t listen to that part, it just isn’t true.

14. A Bit Naive When it Comes to Human Nature?

The author seems a bit naive at times.

The idea of removing inequalities to make people’s lives better and relationships better is somewhat naive, in my opinion.

And then she says this:

> One of the biggest problems with 20th century socialism in Eastern Europe was that some leaders were too eager to sacrifice the lives of their own citizens for the sake of building a more just and egalitarian future

I don't think that one of the biggest problems was that leaders were too good and too future-oriented.

Review

This book on Amazon has either 0-star reviews or 5-star reviews.
No in-between.

That says two things:

1. People review based on ideology, rather than content
2. This book lends itself to be seen as an ideology-driven book

That doesn't make it necessarily wrong, and there is some true original insight here.
Indeed, I would also give it 5 stars for its positive insights:

5 Stars for the insight on male/female competition as groups

The most important insight in "*Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism*" is the "power struggle" or "gender conflict" between men and women *as groups*, not as individuals.

Ghodsee is the only author who actually understands and appreciates how men and women, as groups, battle to influence the political and cultural discourse in a way that benefits them.

In that regard, Ghodsee stands unique among everyone else, including the most famous, experienced, and esteemed evolutionary psychologists.
Indeed, most other evolutionary psychologists either deny, misunderstand, or choose to ignore that men, even while pursuing individual goals, can end up acting like a homogenous group that seeks to restrict women's access to power and resources.
One would wonder if that might have to do with the fact that almost all evolutionary psychologists are men…

So I applaud Ghodsee and I am thankful to her for saying it.
Thanks to her, now I have one author to quote and mention, instead of just me saying it on this website.

One Star for Political Bias

Unluckily, the author's personal biases also lead to many important handicaps and limitations in "*Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism*".

To begin with, this is a book about how "things *ought* to be", rather than how things are.
And finally, partially because of the political biases, "*Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism*" is not a book to understand sexual dynamics or true human nature.

In summary: I do recommend you read it.
You must follow it with a more rigorous and neutral text of evolutionary psychology based on data.

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The Social Climber's Bible: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Social Climber's Bible teaches readers, in a fun and entertaining satire, how to engage in social climbing. In other words, how to shamelessly advance one's life by making the right connections with the rich and famous

Contents

- Summary
- Quotes
- CONS
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Summary

About the Authors: Dirk Wittenborn and Jazz Johnson collaborated to write "*The Social Climber's Bible*". They are careful not to share too much information about their own lives and experiences, but they sound like they know a thing or two about jet-setting.

Social Climbing is Good

The authors say that as long as you keep thinking that social climbing is something "bad", you're never going to improve your life.

You need to reprogram yourself.
Social climbing means "pursuing friendships with those of higher social status".
But the concept that others are somewhat "superior" to you is offensive. Instead, the authors say, you are at least the same. Or even better.

Plus, everyone does.
"Networking" is nothing but a more civil and polite way of defining what, in practice, is social climbing.

- **Empowering thought**: you're a special person who could be more special if you just had more special friends

The Famous Ones Are All Social Climbers

Say to the authors:

> Who are those boldfaced names chiseled on the walls of art museums, opera houses, hospitals, and Ivy League universities?
> They're social climbers.

They imply that philanthropy is social climbing, and it's how the best social climbers "cleaned" their reputation:

> If you pay for the new wing to a cultural institution, you are no longer a crass, pushy vampire squid who beat the rap on insider trading, you are the new best friend to the cultural elite of the world.

But, at the end of the day, they were social climbers.

How to Start Climbing From Scratch

Here are a few tips to start making your first good connections:

- Attend Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Narcotics Anonymous in the richest and trendiest part of town: the best American families have at least one heir with a substance abuse problem
- Take notice of those with really expensive items or those mentioning their backsliding at some exclusive golf club
- Attend open public memorial services
- Attend upscale gallery openings
- Go to art auctions and raise your paddle a few times
- Go to churches and cathedrals in upscale neighborhoods

Make People Feel Good: You Only Got Your Personality to Offer

When you're starting out, you only have yourself to sell, no money, and no connections.
So you must be affable, make people feel good, and also be service-oriented.

Never try to be the star of the show: let your host be that. You're there to support him (and be invited back).
Help cover up other people's faux pas, smooth out the interactions, and entertain the "wild boars", such as the powerful but terrible individuals.

When you're invited a few times, be the first to volunteer, serving food, drinks, or cleaning up stuff—especially if there's a maid, so you won't have to actually do it-.

Even reading a bedtime story to their children is fair game.
Remember: it's easier to take full advantage of the Big Fish if you make the Big Fish believe they are using you and in debt with you.

And never forget to always bring a present (the authors have a technique to bring great-looking presents while actually spending little on them).

Turtles and Swans: Your Best Social Climbing Friends

Turtles and swans are not Big Fishes or whales; they have all the right connections that can help you.

- Turtles have all the social resources but are too shy, insecure, demure, or awkward to take advantage of them (ie.: they're not climbers like you)

Your relationship with the turtle is a sort of fair exchange: they take you to a good party, and you show them how to have a good time there.
They help you get inside, and you help them improve their social skills and make them feel special.

P.S.: never have sex with your turtle(s). They might want it, but you must avoid it.

- Swans are very beautiful and attractive men and women. Often, but not always, they're actors or models

They are invited everywhere simply because they're beautiful.
Big Fish want to have sex with them, but sometimes invite them just so they can tell people they had sex with them.

Sometimes you can become friends with a swan, and they'll be happy to bring along average people like yourself.
Sometimes they're insecure that they have nothing beyond their beauty, and other times they'll appreciate pretending they got a date as an excuse to deny people's sexual advances without offending them.

Never fall for a swan.
They might grind with you, tell you that they love you, etc., but **swans know they know you're a social climber and not a real date**.

Swans are attractive, and you might want to have sex with them.
They are mercurial, and when depressed or high might even suggest the possibility of sex.

But you must resist and deny.
If you do, they will think that you want to use them just like everyone else. And they'll not take you anymore with them.

Unicorns

Unicorns' special traits come in multiples.

They are either super famous and super-rich, or super-rich and super attractive, or all three of them combined.

Examples of certified unicorns are the Clintons, George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Jay Z, Beyoncé, Prince William, Anna Wintour, etc.
All ex-presidents are unicorns (except Jimmy Carter).

You're not a unicorn for life, though.
Madonna still thinks she's a unicorn, but she's not.

You should never approach a unicorn directly, because they get approached all the time.
And directly flattering won't work because they get that all the time from fawning fans. And you don't want to be a fan.

The way into a unicorn's inner circle if you're still a nobody is exactly that: help them feel like normal people.
And say no to their freebies from time to time, because they get paranoid about being used by social climbers.

How to Spot A Big Fish

These are the signs of a potential Big Fish

- People clustered around them
- People hang on every word they say
- People laugh at their not-so-funny jokes
- All the above signs x10 if the target is not attractive

My Note: Those are also all signs of attraction
The author makes a great point that those signs are especially valuable if the person is not attractive since social power and attraction sometimes have the same signs -and overlap-.

If you want to know who the person is, **ask the silly question to someone who is totally uncool, so you will not look clueless to important people**.
Then go Google them.

How to Gather Intel From Potential Target

You never want to be too direct.
Questions like "where do you live" and "what's your job" translate into "how much do you make".

Instead, make a statement.
For example: "don't you live in Tribeca?" or "aren't you in finance?".

How to Gain Big Fish Appreciation

Find a moment when Big Fish is relaxed, happy, and surrounded by friends.
Then say something like this:

> **You**: You know, Frank, the last time we talked you said the most brilliant thing about (whatever the topic is)

Then say something smart, no matter whether they truly said it or not.
And they will want to invite you back again to remind them how smart they are and to show it to the people around them.

Making Up Stories is OK, If You Don't Get Caught

The only question the social climber will ask is: will I get caught?

Social climbers all makeup stories.
Hillary Clinton said she landed in Bosnia in danger of enemy fire when, in fact, she was just strolling around in total safety.

Lies that work well include a past that shows a good upbringing: a privileged past is invaluable to social climbing.
An example? Like that time your grandmother took you on a safari. If prodded for details, say you were only seven when you took the trip and can't remember.

Other easy lies include people who are now dead and cannot deny your allegations.
To make your lie more believable, get a big glossy canvas of the dead person, hang it in your home, and write a personal inscription to yourself.

Avoid Sex for Social Climbing

The authors advise against having sex with the big fish and whales you'll be social climbing with.

If the sex is bad, they'll be disappointed.
If it's good, they'll want more, and they will get possessive and want to limit your freedom to climb higher and better.

However, there are a few exceptions.
See Porfirio "Rubi" Rubirosa and Pamela Harriman, aka the "whale hunter".

But don't worry too much if you're not into sex: some of the best social climbers are asexuals, who plan their moves without being slaves of their hormones.

Marriages and Prenups

If you're the one who wants to sign a prenup, you shouldn't ask yourself whether your spouse is a gold digger, but you should be asking why you are marrying someone with so little to offer.

And if you are sub-handsome and rich and the penniless spouse says it's unromantic to sign a prenup, then know that you are not only dealing with a gold digger but a gold digger who thinks you are sub-handsome and stupid.

If, on the other hand, you got the money and they got the connections and the "class", know that their family will be asking you for money -and never paying it back-.

Say to the authors:

> Stop being so superficial and look in the mirror. Find yourself a life partner who's as less than gorgeous as yourself but has more of the important things in life than you do, i.e., someone who's in a position to ask you to sign a prenup.

If they ask you to sign a prenup, tell them that you will do "anything that makes them happy".
When they produce the prenup, say you promised your mom that you would always have your lawyer check all contracts.
If the prenup is bad, don't get angry. Let your lawyer get angry with you.

If you can't afford a good lawyer, sign a promissory note with a good firm based on a percentage of the future

divorce settlement.

If you can't change the prenup, sign it anyway to avoid looking as greedy as you actually are.
It can be renegotiated later on anyway if you make the marriage bad enough.

Entering Whale Families

If a social climber like you has met someone from a whale family, chances are that they are the "rebellious kid".

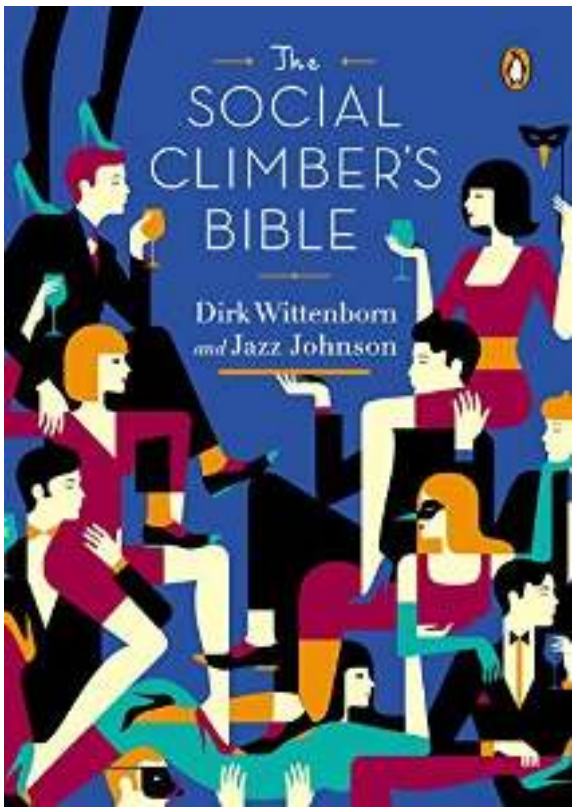
So be prepared not to be the most liked guest when you get invited into the family, and be ready to do your best work with them.
You must ingratiate all of them.

And if you are pursuing a "sleep to the top" strategy, never sleep with the first member of a whale family you meet.
Wait until you get to know the family, and then have your pick: Not all trust funds are created equal.

If something bad happens to some of the whale sons, never ever take the blame for them.
They will drop you and deny all your allegations.
But you can make an agreement for your cover-ups.

Social Climbing Wisdom & Techniques

- A great social climber never looks line one
- Dress in a way that you stand out, but don't stand out too much or you'll look hard
- No matter how hard you're trying to be someone you're not, you must look natural
- Always look and act like you belong
- When you arrive at a party, don't knock or ring: it makes you look unwanted
- To get out of the unwanted small talk, point to someone and say, "that's my friend and he doesn't know anyone; you don't mind if I look after him, do you?"
- If you only know the host, wait until they're talking to at least two good targets before saying hello (and always start by saying how wonderful they look)
- Give people the illusion that you know them by saying "so good to see you again" instead of "nice to meet you" (great habits for when you'll have so many friends that you can't remember)
- The ignored wives of big shots can be a great, often overlooked opportunity for social advancement and party invitations (but watch out not to make the husband jealous if you're a straight man)
- Learn to master your emotions and facial expressions: so you can look happy when you're trapped talking to your host's parents



Quotes

The book is hilarious, and there is an abundance of great and funny quotes.
Here are just a few of them.

The social climber knows that the truth is sometimes hurtful and cruel. And, most importantly, it doesn't make you popular:

> Telling people they look gorgeous when in fact they're an eyesore or praising them for being wise when they have the intelligence of a cocker spaniel doesn't make you a phony, it makes you a kind person.

On very attractive swans and borderline personality disorder:

> Though Swans are not listed in the DSM, many psychiatrists categorize them as borderline personality types. Whether that is fact or vengeful thinking on the part of the members of the medical profession who do not get to ride Swans is open to debate.

On buttering people up:

> Never underestimate the value of kissing your hosts on all four of their cheeks.

On networking at funerals:

> Funerals and Wakes Funerals other than your own are a great place to social climb.
> Wakes are basically cocktail parties with tears.

On making people feel good:

> Play it safe and get off on a good foot by deliberately mistaking the bride's or groom's mother for her or his

> older sister.

CONS

Some advice was solid, but others I really didn't agree with.
It could come across as tacky.

For example, adding to a letter "your secret is totally safe with me", is too direct.
It feels like you're forcing a connection and overselling your trustworthiness.
And there were a few more examples I didn't agree with.

Review

The Social Climbers is at the crossroads of a book on tips and pieces of advice to social climb, and an exercise in comedy and humor.

In that regard, it's somewhat similar to "*What Would Machiavelli Do*".

Sometimes you're not sure whether the authors were joking or serious, but if you can read through the lines, you will get some good tips.
And you will learn the true mindsets of the most Machiavellian, calculative social climbers.

Also, check out:

- **Social climbing is killing your status**

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**

10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Frame control refers to the body of skills and attitudes that create shared meaning among people.

Frames shape the narrative and the meaning people assign to words and events.
Good frame control allows you to influence what people think, feel, and do.

We have been the foremost authority on frame control for years now.
And with this article, we teach you 10 frame control techniques to gain status, influence people, and achieve your goals.

Contents

- 1. Speak From Your Frame
- 2. Frame Ignoring
- 3. Reframe It
  - Frame Flipping™
  - 3.2. Refuse Their Reframes, Set Your Own
- 4. Bridge Leading™ (Control The Transition)
- 5. Frame Matching
  - ⍰ Example: Fight Fire With Fire
- 7. Engagement Frame Control™
- 8. Philosopher's Frame™ (Go Broader)
- 9. Frame Shaming™ (Take Moral High Ground)
  - Frame Surfacing™
- 10. Frame Imposing™
  - Frame Negotiation

- ⚠High Power Amplification™
- Learn More With Power University

1. Speak From Your Frame

Emotionally weak men defend and react. Leaders speak from their frames.

For example:

> **Journalist**: Critics say your immigration policy is **racist**<— Incendiary question with loaded keywords. Easy to get defensive, over-react, and lose authority and influence
>
> **Strategic Politician**: We believe that **smart and selective immigration** can be a source of strength. <— Doesn't react, starts a new frame basead on his values
>
> But we do not support unchecked immigration that turns into a cost for our country. <— Frames the criticism as costly for everyone
>
> Skilled workers who respect our values are welcome <— Ends on a positive

It takes emotional strength because we naturally react to what's either flashiest, or offensive.
But once you can remain unaffected, your become more authoritative and influential.

2. Frame Ignoring

> Ignore the speaker, the message, or both

Ignoring makes you look superior and works in a multitude of situations.
When you're not sure what to do or say, ignore and you will often limit damage.
Imagine someone wants to tool you by a pool:

> **Tooler**: Hey dude, did you borrow your swimsuit from your grandma or what
> **You**: (glances in his general direction) hey man, what's up (turn away and ignores)

Ignoring is on a range, and doesn't necessarily mean you pretend nothing happened. It ranges from pretending they don't existing, to acknowledging and replying, but selectively ignoring part of their frame.

3. Reframe It

Reframe everything towards what best moves you towards your goal.

For example, one can reframe a supposed negative, into a positive.

Frame Flipping™

> Frame Flipping™ is TPM's term for reframing that **flip a narrative on its head** from an obvious negative, to a positive

Ronald Reagan won the election with this single frame flip:

View this post on Instagram
A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Interviewer**: (calls into question Reagan's age and mental faculties)
> **Reagan**: I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience <— Flips younger age from asset, to liability. And framed his older age as advantageous experience

Similarly, a man may reply:

> **Negative friend**: If I go say 'hi' I will bother her
> **Empowered friend**: If you don't go say 'hi' she will lose a chance of meeting a great guy

3.2. Refuse Their Reframes, Set Your Own

A manipulative negotiator may say:

> **Him**: Look, this is not about legal issues, this is about trust. And we've known each other for a while now, haven't we? <— Potentially manipulative to make you drop your guard and frame you as being too difficult

While you could choose to own it and say you don't trust, it's often best to power-protect to maintain rapport. Negotiator expert William Ury suggests to address the underlying frame of trust, for example:

> **You**: It's not about trust, it's about doing business the right way.
> And doing business the right means that we put everything in writing

4. Bridge Leading™ (Control The Transition)

> To manage the bridging from two different frame with the goal of maintaining the lead

Imagine this example:

> **You**: Of course you will love him, all mothers love their children
> **Her**: My mom didn't love me <— She corrects you, a small power loss, and introduces a new heavy topic you can't ignore
>
> ✕ **You**: I'm sorry to hear that <— You followed her thread, the next move is on her, and you the lead control

However, if you immediately move to her new frame list most men would, you lose some power and lose control of the interaction:

- **✕ Lead → Yield → Follow**

Even worse would be to try to deny it: you escalate a frame battle you can't win, and you break rapport.
Instead, here is how the smart power-aware man proceeds:

> **You**: OK, all mothers *except yours* (smiles warmly) <— Power move / joke to control the transition

> **Her**: Ahaha
> **You**: Jokes aside, I'm sorry to hear that, what happened with your mother <— Stays in the lead

✅ **Lead → Power Move → Lead Again**

This man first manages to get a laugh, and then moves on to bond and connect with people.

5. Frame Matching

> To match the delivery style of the speaker to avoid being overwhelmed

Matching and mirroring are often used referring to *empathizing*. That's a valid and effective approach, but sometimes you must match the *power delivery* of the message-be it the conviction, aggression, or emotionality.

Many people automatically go on the defensive against yelling, crying, blaming, or emotional outbursts. That's a mistake because **in patterns of attack and defend, the attacker looks dominant and *right*, and the defender looks weak and wrong.**

There are three options here:

1. **Stick to logic** when there is an audience and level-headedness wins (ie.: Jordan Peterson vs Cathy Newman)
2. **Demand level-headedness as a precondition** to talk with you, and walk if they don't
3. **Match their emotional level**

Frame mirroring, or matching their exact accusation can work, but…
It can feel childish. And it's a nasty manipulation tactic that gaslighters use. So only go for it if genuine, and it can help end on a draw.

⍰ Example: Fight Fire With Fire

> **Matching high-intensity** deliveries based on conviction, emotions, and intensity, rather than merit, fairness, or logic

Example of emotions controlling the frame and forcing compliance:

> **Her**: Hoooneeey, gooo! Do something! Harry! Hurry!

Her 'covert frame™' is 'this is terrible' and 'it's on you to act'. His frame is 'this is amusing' and 'no action is needed'.
Her frame is not necessarily 'right', but since she injects so much emotion, he buckles and feels compelled to comply.

Also see:

- **How women control relationships** (and what to do about it)

7. Engagement Frame Control™

> Engagement Frame Control™ is TPM's frame control term and application of the strategy of **choosing the terms of engagement** and the contest arena that best suit your strengths or preferences

This technique allows you to stay assertive even while you refuse to escalate. **Use it to address possible fears of physical escalation.**
For example:

> **Attacker**: What are you gonna do about it, let's step outside <— Covert frame ⍰ you solve this dispute with a physical altercation
>
> **You**: (not afraid) What are you talking about, <— Rejects terms of engagement
> this is a silent coach, and respecting others means not being loud <— Makes it general rules of respect
> for phone calls people can step outside. If you'd be so kind to do that, I'm sure everyone here would appreciate <— Maintains his assertive expectation

Steps:

1. Reject their rules of confrontation <— You can do it with ignoring and speaking from your frame
2. Set your own
3. Fight on your terms, or disengage

⍰ A funny example from a TV show

8. Philosopher's Frame™ (Go Broader)

> Philosopher's Frame™ is TPM's term for applying the rhetorical move of **going broader** to disagree or undermine an argument or speaker, while remaining **unassailable** by **linking to general principles and truths**.

You can use it for many purposes. For example, remain noncommittal without conceding, disagreeing without engaging, withholding personal information, or to keep speaking from your frame.

For example:

> **Conservative**: This country belongs to us, we must have more rights and secure our borders
>
> **You**: I get you. <— Empathic bridge to maintain rapport
> People have been defending their borders since time immemorial. <— Concession for 'frame negotiation'
> But people have also been moving for millions of years before ever-shifting artificial borders ever existed.
> Go back far enough, and humans belong to Earth <— Take a more liberal stance, but it's with high-order general principles that it can hardly be disproven

Or on the opposite side of the political spectrum:

> **Liberal**: If people complain that immigrants are stealing their jobs it means they're really sh*t at their jobs
>
> **You**: Well, on one hand you're right. If you're a highly skilled maverick, yes.
> Employers also gain from more labor competition.
> But not everyone can be a genius <— Slight power move implying he's covertly bragging
> And local laborers suffer when competition drives wages down. <— General principles of supply and demand, it's hard to refute.

In this second example, you make them look unsympathetic and out of touch with the working class. That effectively undermines both argument and speaker. But your frame based on general principles is unassailable.

9. Frame Shaming™ (Take Moral High Ground)

> Frame Shaming is TPM's term for the known tactic of 'taking moral high ground'. It's **using superior or superior-looking moral framing** to gain power through ethical legitimacy and shame the other party as 'morally inferior'.

A moral or honorable frame can sub-communicate that others who disagree or behave differently are lower-quality, without even having to say it.

In this example, he uses 'high power vulnerability' to shame her for 'playing the field':

> **Her**: You know, they have sex and after they feel nothing
>
> **Him**: (corrugates his eyebrow in disapproval) But you're not like that <— Implies it's trashy, gives her a chance
>
> **Her**: Aren't you?
>
> **Him**: Not a drop. Not even half a drop <— Holds his frame with full conviction, and shames her
>
> **Her**: Wow. <— Impressed and ashamed, but not giving up just yet
> What's wrong with you <— Tries to shame him back
>
> **Him**: I get it… You've never been in love <— Holds his frame with high power vulnerability

He wins because a) society supports his frame, and b) he traps her into a masculine/player role that's often negative for women.

In Power University dig deeper on how you can use it for dating and LMR, for example when she says:

> **Her**: you only want sex

Frame Surfacing™

> To 'surface' a covert power move™ to fully display the nastiness of an attack

After you surface a covert attack, the attacker automatically looks nasty and vile. You can then thread-expand on it to inflict maximum social loss, or you can assertively demand to be more respectful.

Example:

> **Attacker**: Oh good to see Max tonight. We should make those free drinks more often <— Covert power move. Uses a joke to indirectly imply you're a scrounger only coming out when things are free
>
> **You**: What do you mean by that <— Forces him explain and 'come out from his joke-cover'

Keep asking until you surface the power move. You can prod to 'be upfront' and 'show their hand'.

If they deny, they look weak. After several denials, you can address the power move openly and you will look both more dominant and more honorable.

10. Frame Imposing™

> Frame Imposing™ is TPM's term for a deliberate choice to **hold your frame as the only possible option** and refuse to yield , even at the cost of friction.

For example:

And little later she agreed to meet, and sent flying kisses

Frame imposing is crucial, and in Power University we share how to do it appropriately.

Frame Negotiation

> Frame Negotiation is TPM's term for **collaboratively negotiating frames** to maintain rapport, bond and connect, and increase influence and follow-through

It's crucial to talk about negotiation right after imposing because **negotiation is often the most effective approach** to influence and achieve goals.
And negotiations are often the default in real-life, and the most skilled men use frame negotiation as their default mode for frame control.

It includes techniques such as finding commonalities, agreeing and redirecting, empathizing, and validating.

Importatnly, begotiation doesn't necessarily mean being 'nice'.
For example, in this case study Steve Harvey is dominant, yet eventually open to power-negotiate:

> **Ariana**: You keep making mistakes <— Uncalibrated, awkward attack

> it's not Arihana, it's Ariana (laughs)
>
> **Steve**: (doesn't laugh, doesn't defend) See, once again, let me show you something now. <—- doesn't defend or attack back, speaks from his frame with a high power teacher frame
> Listen to me…
>
> (…)
>
> **Ariana**: OK, I apologize <— She backtracks
>
> **Steve**: Nono, I'm the one who got to apologize <— After he re-empowered himself and she apologizes, he is magnanimous and does the same

If Harvey laughed he'd submit, validate the attack, and relinquish host leadership.
He does explain the mispronunciation, but on his terms and in full control of the exchange. True "alpha male" style.

⚠High Power Amplification™

> To agree and amplify frames that empower you

This is an important upgrade of "Agree and Amplify", one of the most popular frame control technique in the PUA literature.
Agree and amplify is a legit tecnique and can work great, but **agree and amplify can backfire if you amplify negative frames**. Even in jest, negative frames can disempower you.
See an example:

Careful With 'Agreeing & Amplifying' Negative Frames

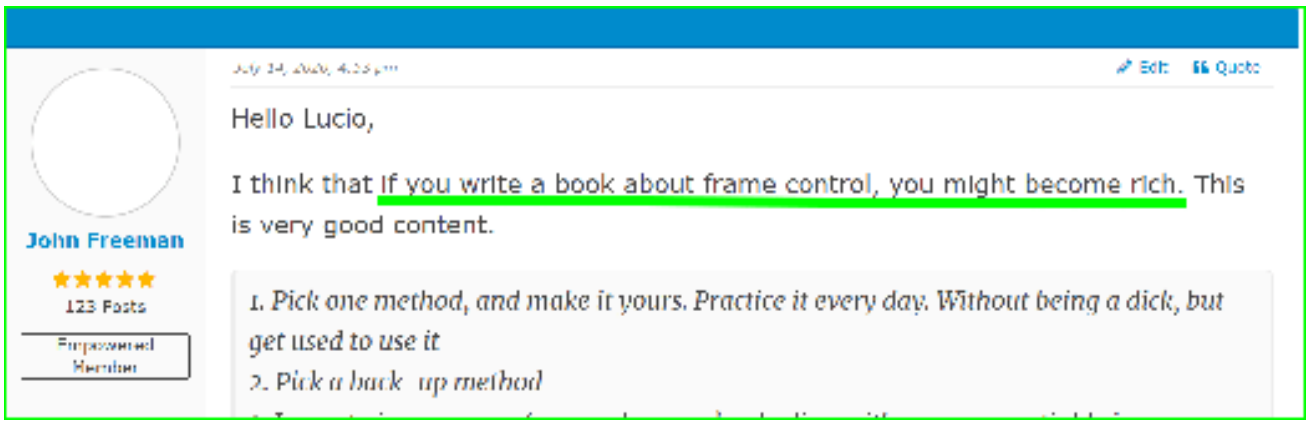
> **Attacker**: You should invite her out
> **Him**: Oh yeah man (…) I'm gonna get a limousine, I'm gonna get a dozen roses… <— Agrees & exaggerates to unrealistic levels (amplify)

⬆ It's reactive, high investment, and it thread-expands a low-value, *simp* self-frame

Learn More With Power University

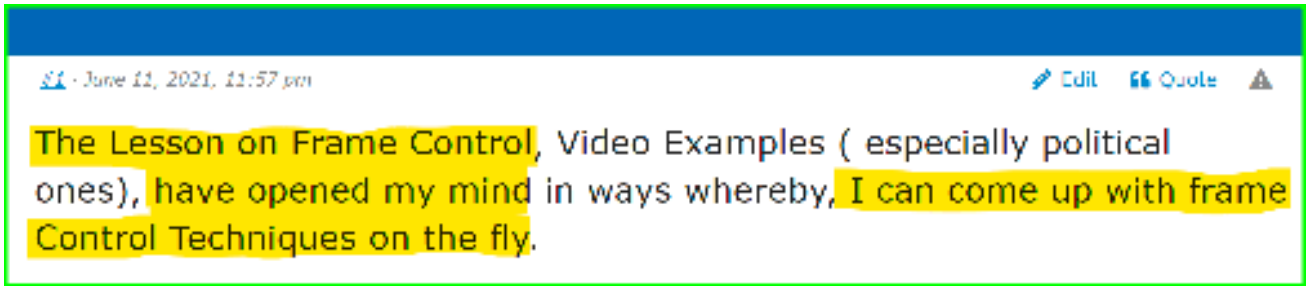
This is barely the tip of the iceberg.

Says a student:



> **PU Alumnus**: if you write a book about frame control, you might become rich

We've done something even better: a course.
And it works:



> **PU Alumnus**: The lesson on frame control opened my mind (…) I can come up with frame control techniques on the fly

Join PU, and you can do the same.

Check Power University

Mating Intelligence: Effective Dating for Smart People

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Maybe you're smart… But when it comes to dating, are you smart where it really matters?

Because not all intelligences are created equal.
It's mating intelligence that is the most relevant mental ability to help you find a great partner and enjoy a great relationship.

This article will explain what mating intelligence is, what it's not, why it matters, and how you can develop mating intelligence.

Contents

- What's Mating Intelligence
- The Types of Intelligence
- How to Increase Your Mating IQ
- Advice Lacking Mating Intelligence
- Displaying Your Intelligence (The Right Way)
- SUMMARY

What's Mating Intelligence

The dictionary of power dynamics defines:

> The set of cognitive and intellectual abilities, as well as the knowledge and proficiency of power dynamics and sexual strategies that support effective mate selection, courtship, reproduction, and relationship management.

Mating intelligence also includes the psychological abilities that deal with competition, as well as understanding the

motives of rivals and mates alike.

Mating intelligence is most likely not the latest fad in coming up with new types of intelligence, but it's been measured to "account for a significant portion of the variance in mating success" (Geher, Kaufman, 2016).

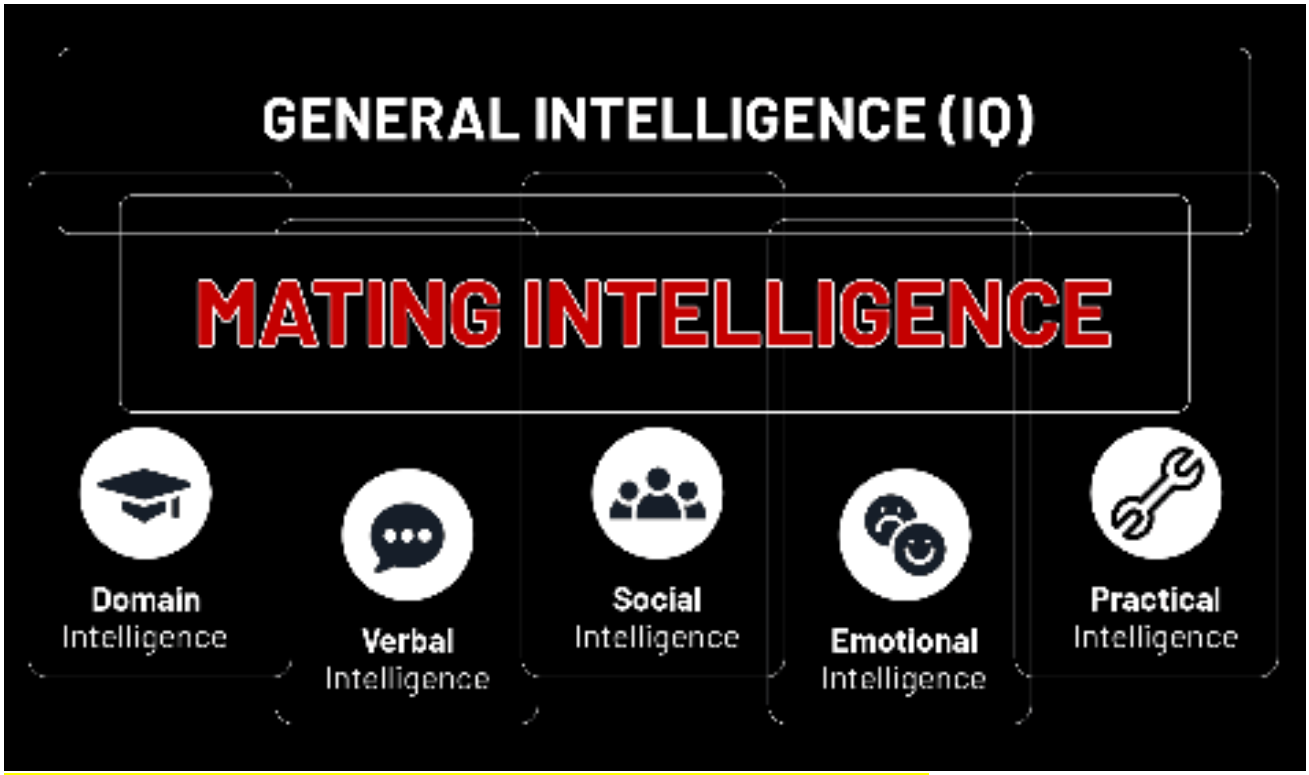
The Types of Intelligence

The literature on the types of intelligence is large and contradictory.

Some people even deny the existence of different types of intelligence.
And that alone, to me, raises questions about the intelligence of those people :) (read here for a better take on this topic)

Just take a look at Elon Musk social intelligence, or Albert Einstein's letter to his wife, and it will become obvious how some super-high-IQ men understand little about psychology, mating, and the opposite sex.

Here is how psychologist Geoffrey Miller groups the various types of intelligence:



From Geoffrey Miller, except he calls "domain intelligence" academic intelligence
In truth, intelligence and its various sub-modalities are quite complex.
So don't take the above chart not as a deeply scientific representation, but more as a tool to give you a quick idea.

All types of intelligence actually overlap with each other more than this diagram shows. And "mating intelligence" is at the center, not because it's necessarily more important, but because it's the focus of this article.

Let's review the types of intelligence:

1. General intelligence

General intelligence is at the top because it predicts all the others, and it's what women are indirectly trying to evaluate when they meet you.

However, just being intelligent does nothing to your attractiveness or to your sexual market value.
In simple words: **IQ by itself does nothing to increase attraction**.

Yes, there are a few sapiosexuals, and yes, it's not just a thing in Tinder's descriptions; it exists (Gignac et. al.,

2017).
But even then, sapiosexuals have no idea how to assess intelligence unless the intelligent person knows how to convey that intelligence.
Yes, at the right time, pure displays of “smarts” can work -and bonus points if it’s accompanied by passion-. More than once I was passionately explaining something to some women who stopped listening to what I was saying, but instead looked at me languidly, and sometimes muttered: “I love you”. She didn’t care *what* I was saying -which I wished she did-, but she cared that it *sounded* smart.

But it has to be at the right time.

Intelligence that is presented in the wrong way, by being smug or belittling others, can even be negative.

So when does intelligence become relevant?
Intelligence only becomes a sought-after trait when you convey it appropriately and through mating-relevant signals.
For example: humor, emotional connection, intellectual dominance, and *sounding* intelligent. Or, as well, through seduction techniques sometimes referred to as “game” (ie.: push-pull, screening, tasking, etc.).

2. Social intelligence (SI)

Definition:

> Social intelligence is the ability to understand other people’s interests and drive, and to operate effectively within social groups to achieve both personal and shared goals.

Social intelligence is attractive both directly in dating and indirectly for what it allows men to achieve.
Socially intelligent men are better at working with others, acquiring status within groups, climbing social hierarchies, and acquiring leadership roles. All of these traits are also highly attractive in the sexual marketplace.

Because some very bright guys are not good socially, some people think that there is no connection between social intelligence and general intelligence, but that’s not true: the two *are* linked.

3. Emotional intelligence (EI)

Definition of emotional intelligence:

> The ability to understand and leverage your emotions to guide effective thinking and behavior, coupled with the ability to read other people's emotions.

As for social intelligence, general intelligence, and emotional intelligence are positively correlated.
Bright people are better both at managing their emotions and at creating better emotional connections with others.

Needless to say, don't confuse emotional intelligence with being "touchy-feely" or "gushing".
Emotionally intelligent men make for better daters and seducers because they know when to push, when to step back, when to talk a bit more, and when it's time for a bold move.

And they make for better life partners, too.
Men high in EI are also less dangerous to both women themselves and to children, which makes these men ideal candidates for long-term relationships.

And since men high in EI are less moody and better control their feelings, it also helps men become relationship leaders.

Finally, there is a special place in women's hearts for those few men *really* high in EI.
Women love men who can get inside their heads and know what they're thinking. And if he can explain it to them as well, that's intellectual dominance as well.

4. Verbal intelligence (VI)

Definition:

> Verbal intelligence is the ability to understand both spoken and written language, as well as the ability to speak and write well.

In a practical sense, verbal intelligence, sometimes referred to as "linguistic intelligence", is **the extent to which an individual can use language to achieve goals**.

And since people heavily rely on language for communication, being high in verbal intelligence means that you are good at getting what you want -which is also the definition of power-.

And of course, verbal intelligence has a special place in courtship and dating.

After all, just think about it.
What do the girl and boy do upon meeting?
99% of the time, they talk.

VI also predicts more highly relevant courtship skills, such as:

- Your ability to tell good stories
- Your humor
- Exciting conversation
- Good conversational flow
- Active listening

And, of course, pillow talk as well (never underestimate the power of good pillow talk :).

5. Practical intelligence (PI)

Practical intelligence is the most relevant intelligence in the real world.

It includes both manual dexterity, fixing things around the house, and “street smarts” as well.
It also includes the ability to construct makeshift devices to achieve goals, which you will often see in movies (McGiver was built around practical intelligence).

Here is one example:

Behind that flier, there is a light spot.
It was on my balcony, without a switch to turn it off. Since I prefer sleeping in fully dark rooms, I had to find a way to cover it.
I found a flier in the room, went to the garbage room looking for packages, removed some Scotch tape, then put it on top of a dustpan facing upward, and pushed the dustpan against the ceiling.

Women always like men to show practical intelligence because **men with practical intelligence seek ways to control the environment and win.**
Practical intelligence is how we moved out of the stone age, and it’s the true original impetus behind high-tech engineering.

Women instinctively value high PI because many challenges that potential partners and dads will face are at this level of practical problem-solving.

Today, PI includes knowledge and dexterity in:

- Circuit breakers
- Car engines
- Maps
- Tax forms
- Food recipes
- Guns functioning

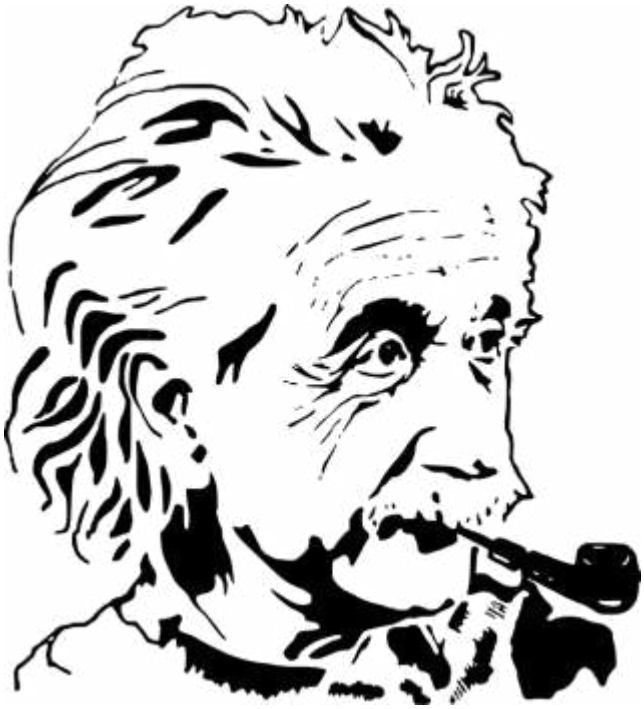
Yes, basically all things that bookworms tend to ignore. Again, it's why people tend to think that general intelligence and practical intelligence are not linked.
But, again, they are.

6. Academic intelligence (AI)

This is what is most often measured with IQ tests.

And it's also the type of intelligence people associate the most with general intelligence.
And yet, it's not very highly correlated with dating and sexual success.

Some academics, though, like to cling to the idea that "real" intelligence is only shown in the halls of universities and in debates with big words thrown around.
But it's all a game of status, of course. Academics who place academic intelligence "higher" than other intelligence are indirectly implying they are somewhat "better" than a good plumber or an effective seducer.



Instead, **the sexually unsuccessful academic would be better advised to admit he's not as smart as he thinks he is in *all* types of intelligence** and get to work to improve at them.
Because he *can* improve at them.
If he can put his ego aside, that is.

However, since our society has become what Miller refers to as a "cognitive meritocracy" (Miller, 2016), academic intelligence still helps in dating.
Book smarts predict how well people do on the SATs, which college they get into, which grade they will receive, and how well they will do at work and at building wealth.

Eventually, unless the academically intelligent fella is *very* poor at everything else, those qualities will also help him lend a woman.

7. Mating intelligence (MI)

It's funny, isn't it?

There are official and well-recognized ways of increasing and working on *all* of the above forms of intelligence.
Yet nobody teaches how to effectively find and keep a partner, which is what most people care *the most* about.

Well, this article is here to fix that.

The “Intelligence Handicap Myth”

Some people think that intelligence doesn’t matter in dating.

Funny enough, this myth is perpetuated by smart men even more than non-smart ones.
Look at this example:

That’s a psychological self-defense mechanism, not a realistic analysis

When those who think of themselves as smart do poorly in dating, they will be the first to say that “intelligence doesn’t matter in dating”.

Most of the time, these guys are being victims of psychological self-defense mechanisms.
Such as they seek to defend their own self-esteem by accusing others of stupidity and by keeping their own self-image of “smart”.

The mistake here is two-fold:

1. Conflating “book smarts”, which is only one type of intelligence, with “intelligence,”
2. Assuming the successful athlete is dumb, which he might not be

The chances of the athlete being dumb are lower than for any other given random man.
A successful athlete learns to master his sport and its rules through practical intelligence. If he’s in a team sport, and even more if he’s the captain of that team, that’s all social intelligence.
And if he can tease, joke, and talk, he’s also verbally intelligent, which makes him the complete package.

By the way, you can see these “false myths” propagated by everyone who is not having success and wants to preserve his self-esteem.
The poor guy says that women only want rich men, thus excusing himself for all the other traits he lacks.
And the “nice guy” says women only want assholes, thus excusing the fact that he’s possibly a pushover.

Why Women Select for Intelligence

From an evolutionary point of view, it makes a lot of sense for women to prefer more intelligent men.
Intelligence is not only a strong indicator of an individual's success but also overlaps with body symmetry, physical health, and longevity. And it has a very high heritability.

Intelligence also works as an indicator of the *absence* of negative traits.
The human brain is a very complex organ, and it's easy to mess it up. And that makes the brain a very good indicator of genetic qualities.

Intelligent people and people with healthy brain functions have fewer mutations that mess up their brains. So by choosing a man who's smart, a woman gets a huge range of genetic benefits.

Traits Correlated to Intelligence

A BBC study of 120,000 people across fifty-three countries showed that the most attractive traits in a long-term mate were, in the order:

1. Intelligence
2. Humor (which is a form of intelligence)
3. Honesty
4. Kindness
5. Physical attractiveness
6. Moral values
7. Communication skills (another form of intelligence)
8. Dependability

In some way or another, most of these traits at least partially depend on intelligence.
Humor and communication skills depend on verbal intelligence. Kindness and moral values depend on emotional intelligence. Honesty and dependability partially depend on social intelligence.

There are many important traits that help increase one's own sexual market value which are also linked to intelligence.
Intelligent people:

- Achieve more power and status in life
- Accrue resources
- Remember more things (including physical-related tasks, like her favorite sexual positions)
- Are more mature at any given age
- Lower rates of drug addiction and unemployment
- More likely to live longer and avoid accidental death
- Make for better mentors and teachers to the children

Why Mating Intelligence Matters The Most

Mating intelligence is not "superior' to any other type of intelligence in any way.

It matters more to dating simply because it's *dedicated* to mating and dating.

To fix a pipe or a car, practical intelligence matters most.
To understand complex equations and do well in research, academic intelligence matters most.
And to bang more women, but also to snag the highest quality men and enjoy better relationships, mating intelligence matters most.

Mating intelligence helps men get laid in two ways:

1. It makes courtship run smoother (direct way)
2. It signals general intelligence and good genes (indirect way)

Focusing on the indirect boost, says Miller:

> A guy's clever courtship reveals his general intelligence, which reveals his general brain function, which reveals his general genetic quality, which predicts how well his kids will survive and reproduce in turn.

So, how can one go about increasing his mating IQ?

How to Increase Your Mating IQ

To increase your mating intelligence:

1. Learn general psychology

You can check out my list of the best psychology books to learn about human nature and psychology.

2. Learn about mating psychology

From an evolutionary point of view, our psychology is based on only two things: survival and reproduction (and the tradeoff between the two).

So to learn about human mating psychology, evolutionary psychology is best.
See here for the best evolutionary psychology books, or go straight for Dating Power Dynamics, which summarizes all the most mating-relevant information.

3. Learn about dating power dynamics

Cooperation is stronger than competition.

But competition is also real and possibly dangerous. So you should learn about sexual conflict and dating power dynamics.
Best resource is Seduction University:

4. Learn good seduction strategies

See here:

- **Best dating resources for guys**
- **Proven dating strategies**
- **Types of successful seducers**

5. Make lots of experience...

Theoretical knowledge and personal experience are two sides of the same coin.

But if you had to choose just one, it's simple: practical experience gives you a real chance of getting your girlfriends (or boyfriends).
Just reading doesn't.

... And take notes

Go out and meet people of the opposite sex… And take notes. Reflect on what happened, and you will increase your effectiveness twofold.

6. Make female friends

Yes, you shouldn't be in the friend zone.
But that doesn't mean you shouldn't have female friends.

As a matter of fact, the more female friends you have, the more you can learn about female psychology.
The trick, of course, is to make them feel free to talk about anything without being judged.

Overall, avoid locking yourself up in all-male "lairs", or hanging out with men only.

7. Develop critical thinking

Critical thinking is truly the meta-skill of learning.

Critical thinking is the superpower that shields you from snake oil, self-serving gurus, and clueless advice-givers.
Once you have critical thinking, you can truly read and learn from anything and anyone.

8. Learn from mentors mixing *both* science and experience

Dating is a huge industry, which of course means that there are also a lot of quacks.

Ideally, you want a mix of both scientific theory and experience.

Having only one is limiting, especially if the guy's experience is not very broad.
The guy who's been with more than 1,000 women doesn't always and necessarily know a lot about women. He might just happen to be famous or super attractive. Or he might be using the same strategy, which might or might not work well for you, and that's why sometimes I force myself to go to clubs and bars, even though I don't like it-.

And the guy who studies attraction lacks the experience to discern "paper attraction", or what people say and report, from what can actually work in real life.
I can see this a lot from scientists who write books on attraction, including science-based dating books to which I have given 5 stars (i.e., "Attraction Explained").

9. Stay away from your friends' advice

If I had a dollar every time a clueless guy gave advice about dating and seduction…

As a rule of thumb, avoid what your friends are telling you.
Especially if those friends are not getting laid.

Most guys are not really giving advice, which is helpful; they are just "pretending to know" so that they can gain

social status.
And that's especially true when it comes to women and seduction.

Even some of the people teaching dating and seduction are not always real experts (see below).

Advice Lacking Mating Intelligence

There is plenty of advice when it comes to dating.

Some of it is good, while others spread dating idiocy.

Example of bad dating advice:

1. Sweeping generalizations

You've heard these.

At the very basic level, they start with "all men are…" and "all women are..".

Some examples are:

- Men like to chase
- Women want money

But there are also less obvious generalizations, such as "moving quicker is (always) better", or "making him wait is (always) better".
Even otherwise, very good sources are not immune to generalizations.

2. Made-Up Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychology is the new dismal science.

Not because it's not good, but because every idiot makes up evolutionary theories.
As a rule of thumb, stay away from anyone who uses evolution to sell something or to support a strong ideology he strongly adheres to (ie.: extremists among feminists and manosphere authors).

3. One-Issue Focus

Some authors or sources focus only on one side of the coin.

These sources give the appearance of being intelligent because they go beyond the mainstream.
But they're still skewed.

For example:

- **Mainstream advice focuses on feelings**: it's PC, and it forgets about power dynamics, diverging sexual interests, and often, what really works
- **Red Pill focuses on sexual conflict**: and misses out on the opportunities for cooperation and relationship-management
- **Pick-up advice focuses on active effort**: it's about approaching lots of women, forgetting about deeper power dynamics, and leaving out potentially more efficient strategies
- **Self-development focuses on passive values**: work on yourself, go monk-mode, etc., and forgets that experience matters

All of them are right.
Even in mainstream media, Dr. Phil and Steve Harvey have some good things to say.
But by focusing on one single element of the equation, many authors in those niches miss out on the complete

forest.

4. One-Issue Solutions

You know, things like:

- Get rich
- Get ripped
- Get game

Again, they *all* work.

The problem with one-issue solutions is that they often appeal to guys who are not yet well-rounded enough.
So, the (very) few who do indeed get good with one-issue solutions end up very unbalanced.

A few men do get good at one of those.
While getting good in just one aspect *will* increase their SMV, it will not increase it nearly enough compared to those who have taken a wider angle at self-development.

Being rich while still low in mating intelligence only increases the risk you will be used by some gold-diggers.
Do you want to see an example?
Just check out Elon Musk's relationship with Talulah Riley:

Focusing on "game" only will make you into a barfly, and it will get sadder and sadder the older you get.

And that's why, at the end of the day, to be successful at both dating and life, you truly need a holistic approach.

5. Advice Based on What One Prefers (Not What Works)

People often don't give advice based on what works.
Or even on what they believe.

They give advice based on what *they* choose and what makes them feel good.
People defend their niche of choice because they need confirmation and reassurance that they are doing it right.

So you get this:

- **The gym guy says muscles get you laid** (i.e., "I'm doing it right; follow me").
- **The PUA says it's all about the game** (i.e., "I'm doing it right; follow me")
  - **The poor guy says it's all about sexual escalation** (i.e., "I'm not at a disadvantage because I don't get money)
- **The famous guy says it's all about vibe** (i.e., "I'm not getting easy lays because I'm famous; it's because of my personality")
- **And those who seek the "lifestyle game" point to the harems of stars and millionaires** (i.e., "It's not that I'm afraid of approaching women; it's that I'm working the long game").

And actually, all of the above are helpful.
But what's worked for those people won't necessarily be the best strategy for you.
And it's certainly not the only strategy for dating success.

Furthermore, in many cases, the most ardent proponents of a certain strategy aren't even having success with it.
But:

1. They are trying to convince themselves by convincing others
2. They are misleading the competition to gain a competitive advantage (a manipulation technique)

Instead, different male types can all be successful, as long as they're good in their niche.

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

6. The Truth: Embrace Complexity & Find Your Own Way

Human social behavior is complex.

Human mating behavior is also complex, with different and sometimes opposing strategies that work or not work depending on the individual, the circumstances, and the culture and environment.

That's great news.
It means that, if you understand the game, you can find something that works for your personality and the type of friends you like.

Displaying Your Intelligence (The Right Way)

Alright.

So we get it.
Intelligence matters.

But how do you display it?

This is how, in descending order of importance:

1. Convey Your Sense of Humor

Yes, it's true that women like men who make them laugh (Bressler et. al., 2005), and good humor predicts mating success (Greengross and Miller, 2011).

And it makes sense for women to like men who make them laugh because a good sense of humor reveals an intelligence of multiple varieties.

Don't go overboard with the humor, of course.
The backbone of your conversation should be about getting to know a person, and humor should be sprinkled over it to also make it fun and engaging.

You talk about important stuff, then make a little joke or tease to lighten up the mood. Talk more about important stuff than another joke. And then repeat on a loop.

2. Learn Conversation Skills and Storytelling

What you did and who you are, are the products.

How you present it is the marketing.
And, as we all know, marketing is important.

When you talk about yourself, are you presenting yourself in the best possible way?

When she asks about the most typical things, such as "what's your job", "what do you like doing", or "what about your exes", do you have a clear, engaging, and funny response?

If not, that's your exercise: prepare the answers to these most common questions.

3. Keep Some Myster: Leave Dots to Be Filled

When you tell your story, it's always more intriguing to leave some blanks to be filled.

And it's always more powerful if she asks you for more information, instead of you saying everything.

For example, instead of saying "I moved to the city because I wanted to get a great job", which is quite plain, you would say:

> **You**: And then I moved here because I'm a guy who demands more from life

More of what?
What else do you demand more of? Maybe you're also more demanding when it comes to women.
That gets her thinking, and in a very positive way—plus, she invests more mental cycles in you.

4. Focus On The Conversation (& On Her)

There is nothing worse than a conversation partner whose eyes keep darting around, who is distracted, and who cannot keep his focus.

It's not just bad for the conversation; it also communicates many negative traits.
So when you do something, learn to give it your full focus. Including your conversations.

5. Do Talk Feelings and Emotions

Many guys think that talking about feelings and emotions is effeminate.

Well, many guys don't get laid much.

This doesn't mean you have to cry or *only* talk about feelings and emotions.
But when talking about something touching and important, do ask her "how did that make you feel".
And when you talk about your story, add what it means to you. How you felt when you did whatever you did

Being able to talk and convey feelings communicates emotional intelligence and makes women feel more understood and at ease.

Also, as a nice power move, you can mix emotions with sexual hints. See an example here:

6. Use More Nonverbal Expressions

In a politically incorrect forum post, I describe why Slavic men are not stereotypes of lovers and why Latin men are.

One of the reasons is that Eastern men use almost zero facial expressions, a flat voice tonality, and little hand gestures.

That communicates emotional distance, and women feel like there is a gulf between you two.
Instead, learn to use your face as a communication tool.

You can even take acting classes to improve your facial expressions.

And since you're there, do use more hand gestures as well, and active listening is highlighted by interjections such as "ah-ah", "hm-hm" and "I see".
All of these have been proven effective in increasing attraction.

7. Showcase Creativity and Creative Skills

Creativity starts with the way you dress and groom.

Are you bland, plain, and boring?
Or do you communicate your personality and taste with the way you dress and groom?

And of course, it goes all the way up to everything artistic you do and appreciate.

There is a good reason why women love creative men: creativity and intelligence are tightly linked.
So if you can play an instrument, talk about it and put one in your room. Then play it when she comes over—it's not corny, it's effective.

A friend of mine used to play guitar and sing for the ladies. Then, to take some of the edge off, he'd say: "I used to be very romantic…".
That hints at some darker story in his life. What happened to him? And maybe she could be able to make him love again?

And of course, the way your house looks and the ambiance and vibe it communicates says so much about you that you can't really leave it up to chance.

8. Teach Her and Explain Things

Don't be afraid of the 1% of angry women who coined the term "mansplaining".

You don't need me to tell you that many women love their teachers and professors, right?

Women love it when a man can explain things to them.
As long as he can do it well, of course.

Doing it well means you can explain things in an entertaining way, relating them back to her life and to you two.

Teaching well is also attractive to women because men will also be good at teaching children.

9. Be Intelligently Humble

One mistake some people make is that they feel they need to show off.

Huge mistakes: braggarts come across as social retards.

And they do it when they don't know sh*t, too.
That has the opposite effect and makes them come across as total douchebags.

Humble means knowing your limits and not being afraid of admitting them.
Remember: the greatest strength is knowing your weaknesses.

10. Be Curious About Her and Her Story

One of the most underrated traits of intelligent people is curiosity.

When someone talks about something you don't know about, ask more, ask for more, and ask for examples.
The attitude must be "I don't know about it; tell me more".

I always ask so much when I don't know about something because I'm genuinely curious.
And I always ask for examples. Or even pictures.
When a girl tells me she draws or cooks, I always ask to see some pictures.
It gives her a chance to show off (soft power) and makes her invest more in the relationship.

11. Use "Philosophers' Frames"

Philosophers' frames make you sound smart, erudite, and powerful.

For frames, please check "frame control" or, more in-depth, Power University.

12. Listen More (AKA: Know When to Shut Up)

No matter how well you are talking, it's often better to let your speaking partner talk more.

However, that doesn't mean that you just let the conversation develop randomly.
Indeed, it's best to combine listening and power with this last advice:

13. Act Like a Host

Direct the conversation as if you were the host of that conversation.

Your goal is to make that conversation entertaining and fun while you also get to know her more in an atmosphere of emotional safety where you are not going to judge her.

Being a good host who directs the conversation for mutual gain combines power and kindness at the same time.

And it's what will truly make you stand out.

SUMMARY

Intelligence matters in dating.

Intelligence is also not just a trait that we select for, but the meta-trait that allows us to play the dating game itself. Mating intelligence is the most relevant type of intelligence when it comes to dating and relationships, and it can be increased with conscious effort.

Best Books on Frame Control

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Frames and frame control is a foundational principle of social and power dynamics, but there are surprisingly few books and resources on this topic.

Frames as a concept originated from multiple disciplines and authors, including Gregory Bateson and Kenneth Burke.
However, Erving Goffman was the first to systematically develop frame analysis in sociology.

The concept gained popularity in 'pick-up' circles, borrowing it not from academia, but from the formerly popular NLP approach to influence and persuasion.
Some mentions of frames can also be found on books on sales and negotiations.

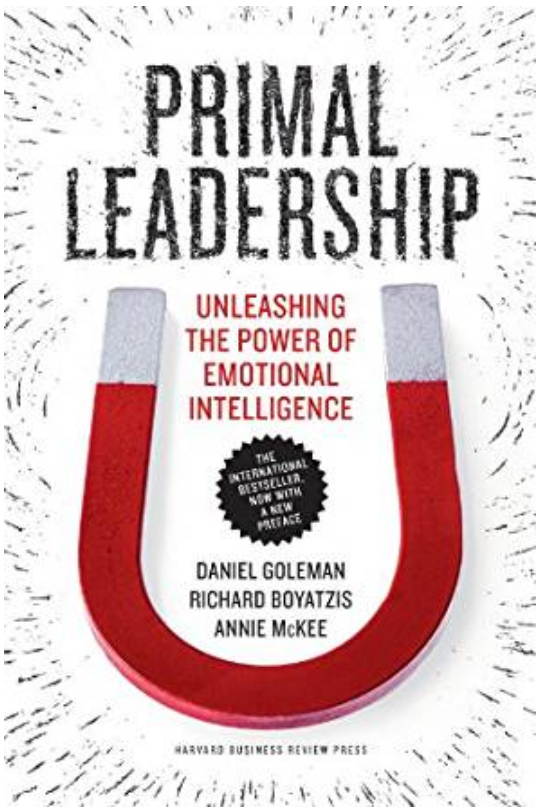
But even when frame control is discussed, it's most often a paragraph or a mention.
I haven't seen any great resources fully dedicated to frames.

Now, that being said, scattered around, we can find some good stuff on frames and frame control.
This list only contains top-notch information on frames and frames' control:

Contents

- 12. Primal Leadership
- 11. The Shadow Negotiation
- 10. Negotiation Genius
- 9. Pitch Anything
- 8. Pre-Suasion
- 7. How to Make Girls Chase
- 6. Talking From 9 to 5
- 5. The Secret Handshake
- 4. Don't Think of An Elephant
- 3. Getting Past No
- 2. The Social Strategist
- 1. Power University
- Bonus: Mental Frames

12. Primal Leadership

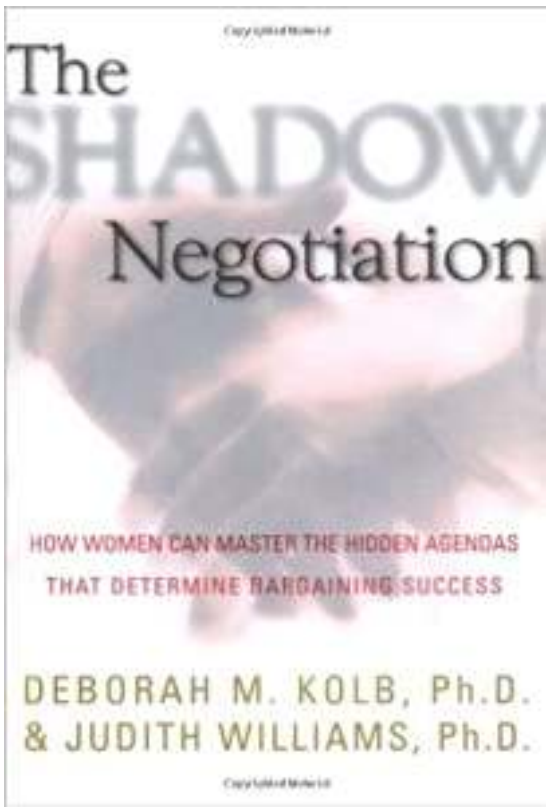


Goleman says that when two people with different emotional states meet there is a tug of war at the amygdala level.

And the ones that “stick to their (emotional) guns”, end up winning the other individual over to their own emotional state of choice (for example: when an unflappable person meets a confrontational one, the confrontational one will eventually calm down).

Goleman never calls them “frames”, but he *is* talking about frames.

11. The Shadow Negotiation



Another book proving my original point:

Many authors talk about “frames”.
They just rarely call them frames and rarely apply the framing nomenclature.
For example, Deborah Kolb talks about reframing your opponents’ frames, but instead of calling her techniques reframing, she calls them “strategic turns”.

Still, this is a great book to understand how frames affect negotiations and how you can use them to your advantage.
And her example of “interrupting the move” (i.e., “breaking the pattern”) was genius.

And talking about “genius” and “negotiations”:

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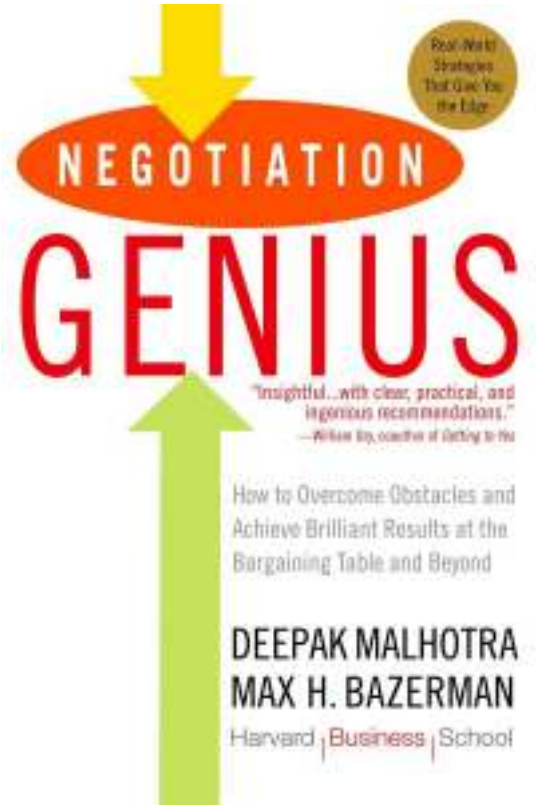
10. Negotiation Genius



This is simply the best book I have read on negotiation.

It's not laser-focused on frames, but since frames are often about negotiation and the negotiation of meaning, this book will help you with both.

9. Pitch Anything

When I started reading "*Pitch Anything*," I was flabbergasted.

"God", I thought, "this book is ThePowerMoves applied to negotiation! This guy is the real deal!"

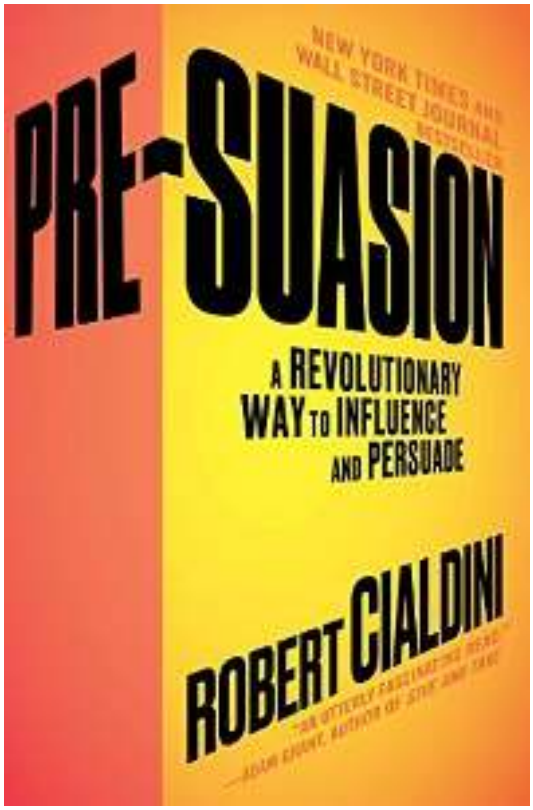
But by the time I had finished, I felt that Oren Klaff remained stuck on one type of frame control only: frame dominance.
His techniques zero in on wresting control of the interaction. And that's all cool and dandy: you need those skills as well.

But frame domination sometimes leads to an escalation of conflicts, and it can ruin relationships.
In life as much as in sales, you also need frame control skills that help you *negotiate* the frame, or persuade others without making enemies.

That's why I recommend the reader get a wider overview of frames, which includes collaborative frames and frame negotiations.

Alright, the warning being sounded, this is still an awesome read on frames and (frames conflicts).

8. Pre-Suasion



Pre-suasion is all about "pre-framing".
And pre-framing is all about influencing people by exposing or manipulating their frame of mind and frame of reference before they are exposed to a certain stimulus.

In psychology, this is called "priming", and depending on how you "prime" people, you might as well call it "pre-framing".

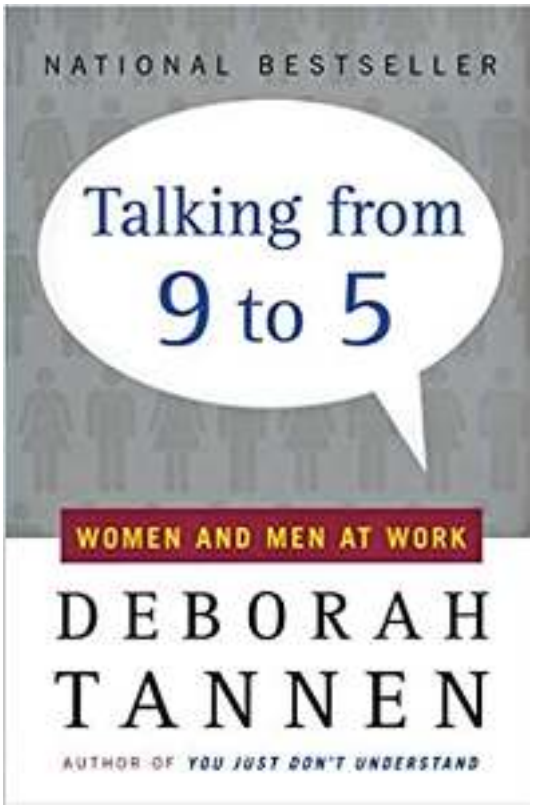
Priming as a psychological construct has been under heavy fire during the recent psychological replication crisis, and it's even been branded as a "pop-psychology myth".
But, of course, the war against psychology went too far. Priming is real, and so is the effectiveness of pre-framing.

7. How to Make Girls Chase

Frames were popular in ‘pick-up artist’ circles and male dating advice.

Chase refers to frames when he talks about the ‘hard push’, a name that may ruffle feathers in today’s cultural climate. Those dynamics relate to what we call here “power showdowns”, or escalations that make or break an exchange and decide who is of higher status.

6. Talking From 9 to 5

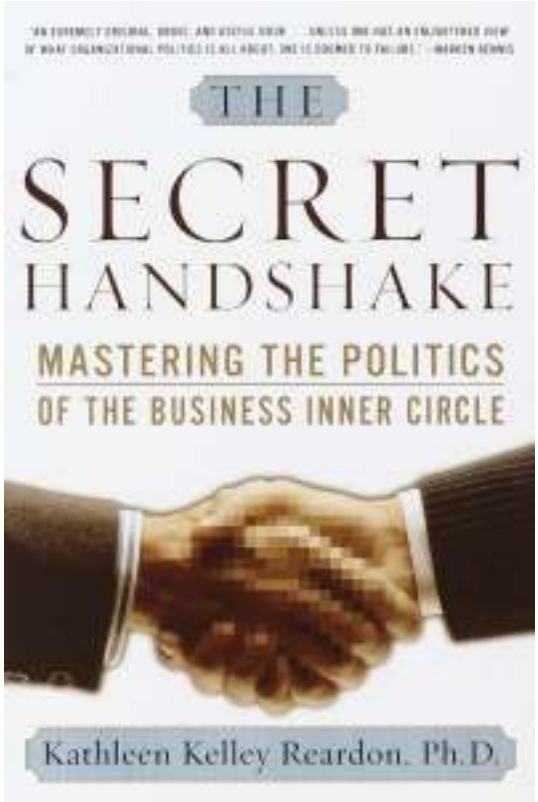


So much genius insight here.

Not just frames but also power dynamics concerning gender and sexual conflict.

The only con for most people reading is that Deborah Tannen, the author, is a linguist and researcher, so her books can come across as long and tedious to those who are used to a more engaging "Malcolm Gladwell" style of psychology.

5. The Secret Handshake



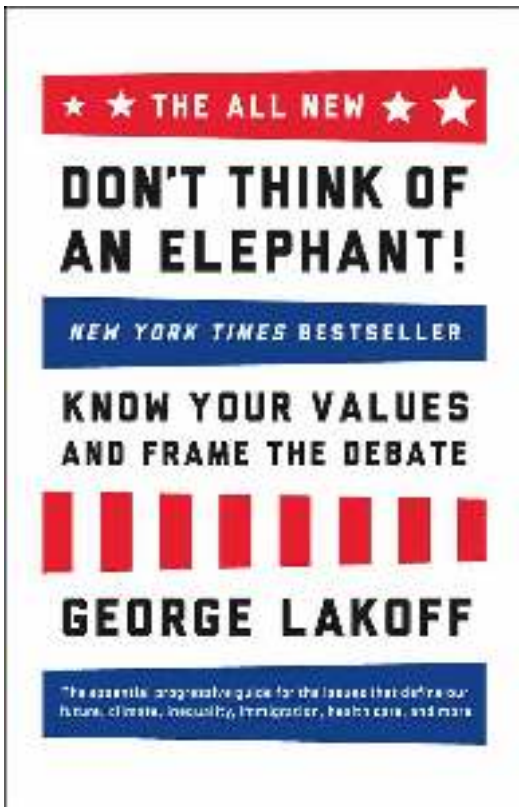
The Secret Handshake is the perfect example of how there is great wisdom around, but it's very scattered.

In particular, Kathleen Kelley Reardon opened my eyes to the best ways to teach frames and frame control.
She uses very simple yet effective ways of describing frame-power dynamics. She puts an arrow up for "one-up" actions, an arrow down for "one down" and more submissive actions, and "one across" for neutral actions.

You can use "one-up" and "one down" to attack, counter-attack, or defend. And you can use "one across" to buy yourself time.

So simple, yet so effective.
I couldn't help but use a similar framework for my lesson on frames.

4. Don't Think of An Elephant



The only book on this list to discuss framing at a political and mass-communication level.

George Lakoff, the author, is obviously a Democrat. But he doesn't hide it, so it doesn't bother me one bit.
And what he says simply makes sense, regardless of where you stand on the political spectrum.

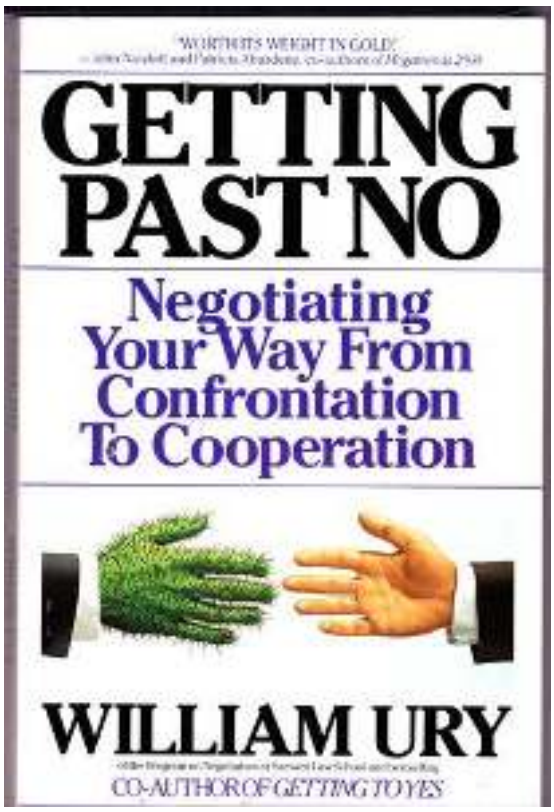
This whole book is an exercise in frame wars and frame control, applied to politics and public discourse.
Lakoff discusses how the Republicans framed the political debate around key issues such as taxation (tax-relief) and climate change (climate change instead of global warming) in a way that benefited them.
By winning the frame war against the unsuspecting Democrats, Republicans convinced millions of people to vote against their own economic interests.

So, in a way, this is also a book on how to use frames to manipulate and persuade people.

You might not agree with it, but his analysis of frames is spot on.

Genius book.

3. Getting Past No



There is a genius insight in "*Getting Past No*".

And it's one of the foundational concepts of this website and of our general life strategies for power and success.

And that insight is that you will gain every time you can turn a competitive frame into a win-win frame.

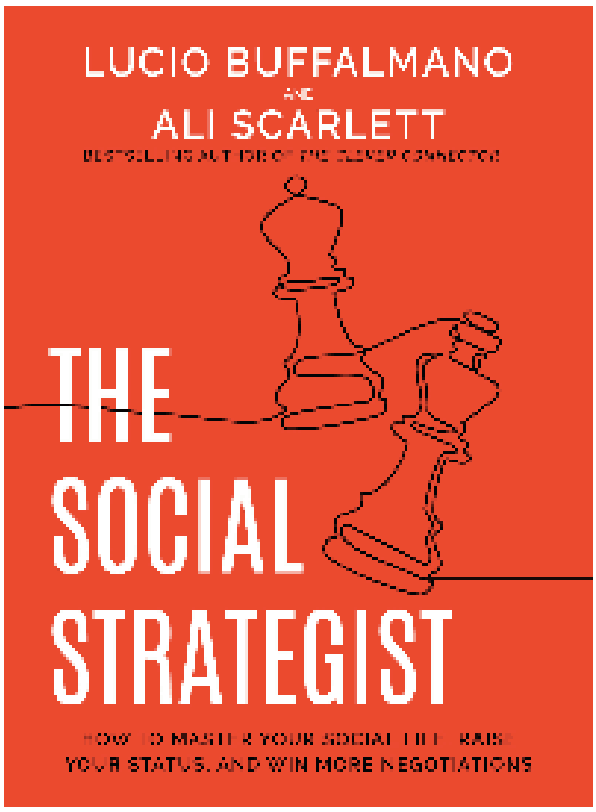
Says William Ury:

> Whenever the other party goes into positional and confrontational bargaining, you must reframe it to a more helpful win-win approach.

That's become one of the main tenets of ThePowerMoves.com

As a general rule, there is always more power in turning as many relationships into win-win, rather than fighting (frame) wars.

2. The Social Strategist



Review – Amazon

No surprise *The Social Strategist* is the highest-ranking book on frames and frame control.

After all, it's this website's first and current main book.
And TPM was the first website to properly address frames outside of very niche social research or less rigorous self-help.

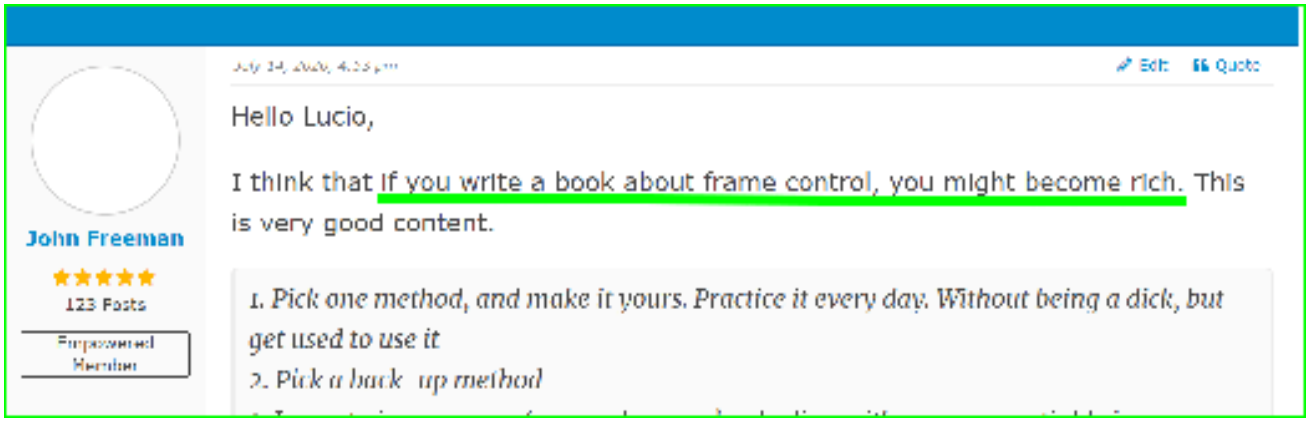
It's also one of the very few books to properly call "frame control", and there is a whole chapter dedicated to it, not just snippets here and there as it's the case for many other books in this list.

1. Power University

Question: What's the best book on frame control?

Answer: The best book on frame control is not a book but a course, and it's the Power University course.

Here is what one Power University alumnus has to say:



Power University doesn't just describe frames as a book does; it also *shows* you clear video examples from real life, mock dialogues, and quizzes.

The quizzes test your intuition, help you develop your social radar to "see" frames, and teach you how to influence them.

I started this website and the course because there was little available on power dynamics.
There was nothing much on frames, either, so I put a lot of information on frames, frame control techniques, and how to use frames to increase your personal power and life success.

We talk about frames a lot in Power University.
And there are three dedicated lessons.

You can get 30% of those lessons' content in this free article:

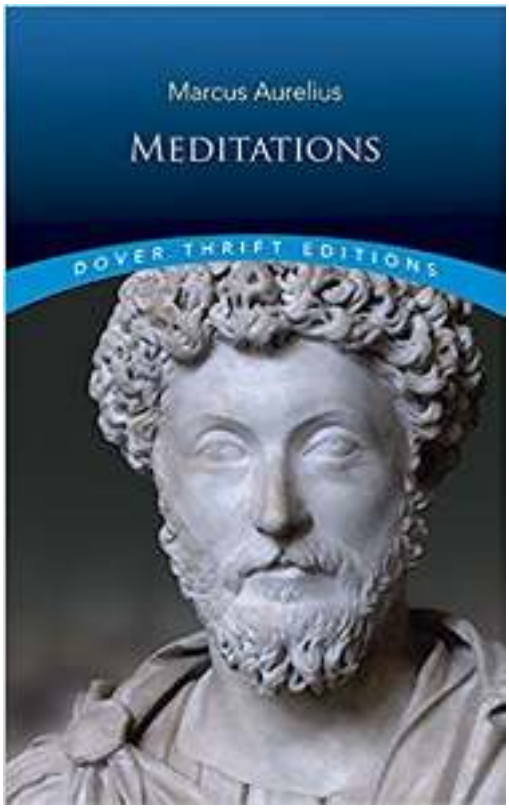
- **Frame control techniques**
- **Basics of frame control**

Bonus: Mental Frames

So far, we have discussed mostly social frames.

But frames are also used to control *oneself*, and one's mind.

Meditations



Meditations is the first, most iconic text discussing frames as a way to control oneself and one's mind.

Marcus Aurelius:

> Whatever happens in your life, you decide what that means to you and how you feel about.

And that's the essence of frames applied to any external event—to control one's own feelings about it.
Aurelius also recommends only focusing on what you can control and letting everything else drop out of focus.
In a way, that means embracing a smaller frame of the world, only looking at a small portion of reality. The only part that matters: is what you can control.

Frames for self-help are also popular in male self-help and pick-up literature.
Frames discussed in pick-up are often framed as "imposing one's frame" or "constructing one's own reality". Both *can* be helpful if one does them strategically. But it can also make people come across as social retards when applied indiscriminately or as mentally unhealthy when that "reality distortion" goes too far.

For more on self-help-related frames, see:

- **Learned Optimism**: Changing Your Internal Dialogue to Be Happier and More Optimistic, by an actual psychologist researcher
- **Personal Power II**: Tony Robbins discusses reframing to change the meaning of what life events mean to you

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Also read:

- **Best books on power**
- **Best red pill books**
- **Best dating books for guys**

Enlightenment Now: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Enlightenment Now (2018) describes how the values of the Enlightenment, such as science, reason, and humanism, have led to constant progress since their inception. The world has never been better, implies Steven Pinker, and it will keep getting better if we defend and promote Enlightenment values.

TPM Power Takeway: Empowered individualists win in this new world
Pinker provides a historical, philosophical, and cultural foundation for the Empowered Individualism framework, or the sovereign individuals about collectives. This foundation can help shed collective psychology, "group-first" manipulations, and moral shaming sometimes used by leaders to exploit subordinates.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - We Need to be More Convinced of Enlightenment Ideals
  - News is inherently biased
  - The Reasons Why Poverty Has Declined
  - Where We Improved (The Effects of Progress)
  - Individuals Must Come Before Groups
  - Threats to Enlightenment
  - Clean Environment is A Tradeoff
  - There Is No Population Bomb
  - Personal Ideologies and Convictions Blind People to Truth
  - Political Affiliation Makes People Biased
  - To Convince Conservatives of Climate Change We Need More Conservatives, Not More Scientists
- More Wisdom
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  - 1. Pinker forgets the past doesn't equal the future
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  - 4. Never backtracks, but attacks his critics
  - 5. Arguments based on ego, or ideas?
  - 6. Unconvincing on economic inequality "not mattering" for happiness
  - 7. Irrationally optimistic (AKA: Biased)
  - 8. The "nature is a war" fallacy
  - 9. Did philanthropism and international help really improve the third world?
  - 10. Wrong on 'Terrorism is Ineffective'
- PROS
- CONS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- There is a negative bias in the news, which makes people more scared and depressed than they should be
- But the truth is that thanks to the Enlightenment, the world has improved for the better
- The Enlightenment ideals are reason, science, and humanism, which naturally lead to progress
- If we stick to those, we'll solve all our problems

Notes

About the Author: Steven Pinker is one of the most popular and influential intellectuals today. He also wrote "*The Better Angels of Our Nature*", "*How the Mind Works*", "*The Blank Slate*", and "*Rationality*".

We Need to be More Convinced of Enlightenment Ideals

The West is shy of its values.
Contrast that with the Islamic State, which knows exactly what it stands for.
Why does it matter?
Because that certainty is very seductive.
People gravitate towards certainties.

So, as Steven Pinker seems to suggest, the West should more openly and more strongly embrace the ideals of the Enlightenment.

I agree with Pinker.
In the absence of an ideal, people will pick their own. Or they will take whatever ideal comes from the latest charismatic leader. And those ideals are often not for their own good.

News is inherently biased

People tend to believe that the world is far worse than it really is.

Partially, it's because of human's normal cognition, which focuses more on the negatives than on the positives.
In part, it's because negative news sells more.
And in part, it's because news is inherently skewed towards the negative.

You will never hear a reporter tune in and say: "I'm reporting live now in a country where no war has yet broken out".

The news also only reports upticks and not general trends.
You will never hear that "violence is on a general trend of decline", but you will hear of all the episodes of violence.
And of all the times that violence has been increasing in this or that city,
And that despite the fact that violence, says Pinker, is on a general decline.

Pinker also introduces research showing how the news has gotten gloomier over the years.

The Reasons Why Poverty Has Declined

Steven Pinker says that poverty declined because of three factors:

- The global retreat of communism
- The spread of capitalism
- The spread of democracy
- The increasing number of level-headed humanistic leaders
- The end of the Cold War

- Globalization

Defending globalization, Pinker quotes:

> Some argue that globalization is a neo-liberal conspiracy designed to enrich a very few at the expense of the many. If so, that conspiracy was a disastrous failure.
> Or at least, it helped more than a billion people as an unintended consequence.
> If only unintended consequences always worked so favorably..

Where We Improved (The Effects of Progress)

These are the areas in which Pinker describes measurable and quantitative improvement:

- **Life:** We all live longer and better lives.
- **Health:** We have conquered many threats of infectious diseases that killed people by the millions. Our general health has improved, and we get less sick
- **Sustenance:** Hunger and famine are becoming less frequent. People are better fed today than they have ever been. Weight problems today are being too fat, which, Pinker says, is a much better problem. Much of that improvement is because of technology applied to agriculture, and genetic engineering will keep making things better
- **Wealth:** Since the beginning of the Enlightenment, wealth has increased almost two hundredfold. This happened everywhere in the world, not just in the West. Thanks to science and technology, a poor man today lives better than a king a few hundred years ago.
- **Safety:** Deaths from accidents have decreased as technology makes our lives safer, even though we keep moving more and doing more of what we did in the past.
- **Quality of life:** We work less and accomplish more
- **War & Peace:** Violence, both in wars and violent crimes, has been reduced. Today we have international institutions, led by better-educatedpeople, which help avoid conflict
- **Democracy:** Democracy is expanding, and that's a good thing
- **Equal rights:** Racism, sexism, homophobia—they are all on long-term declines
- **Knowledge:** People are better educated than ever, and they are learning more and more

Individuals Must Come Before Groups

This is possibly the concept I like most in "*Enlightenment Now*".

And, incidentally, the one I also agree with the most with.

Pinker says that one of the counter-enlightenment ideas is that individuals are the expendable cells of a superorganism.
A clan, a tribe, a religion, or a nation. And that the supreme good is the glory of this collectivity instead of the well-being of the people who make it up.

This is also the same mistake that some extremist manosphere authors and feminist writers fall into.
They focus on the well-being of their gender, which often ends up looking like "my gender against your gender".

Steven Pinker even goes as far as quoting and indirectly criticizing the famous Kennedy's words, "ask what you can do for your country, not what your country can do for you".

I applaud Pinker for saying that, but I wish he had been even clearer against nationalism.

Also read:

- **Political manipulation**
- **Manipulation and group manipulations**: check out the group feints and the leaders' manipulations for more on "groups above individuals."

And, most of all:

- **Enlightened individualism**

> Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

Threats to Enlightenment

Counter-Enlightenment ideas we need to be wary of:

- **Religion**
- **The "group above individual" ideals,** where people become expendable cells of a bigger organism
- **Declinism**, or the idea that we are getting worse and worse
- **Anti-scientific speech**, is based on the idea that science should not encroach on religion, ethics, or values. And based on the idea that science is the foundation of this or that social ill
- **Romantic green movement**, such as the subordination of people to the ecosystem (in contrast to "humanistic environmentalism")

Clean Environment is A Tradeoff

Steven Pinker says that the environment might not be as pristine as it was a million years ago, but we should not be fundamentalists about it.

A clean environment is a tradeoff.
If people have to choose between some smog and electricity, they will tolerate some smog.

And as countries get richer, they naturally start caring more about the environment.

There Is No Population Bomb

Pinker denies the risks of overpopulation.

He says that as countries get richer, they also slow down population growth.
First, they go through a "demographic transition". As they get richer, the population swells. But it's not because they breed like rabbits, but because they stop dying like flies.

Then, eventually, birth rates adjust, and the population stabilizes.

World population growth has already peaked and slowed down.
And it will hover around 0 in 2070.

Personal Ideologies and Convictions Blind People to Truth

This one was one of my favorite parts and the most relevant to people's psychology and to this website's credo.

Steven Pinker says that big ideologies blind people to the truth.

And people who are the best at understanding trends and reality are those who do not belong to any ideology.
And they are better at forecasting future events.
Says Pinker:

> (the best forecasters) Are anti-impulsive, distrusting their first gut feeling.
> **They are neither left-wing nor right-wing**. They aren't necessarily humble about their abilities, but **they are humble about particular beliefs, treating them as "hypotheses to be tested, not treasures to be guarded."**

A strong ideology always biases people.
The "experts" were the wrongest exactly when the predictions happened to be within their realm of expertise—probably because they held the strongest beliefs there.

Political Affiliation Makes People Biased

It's not true that conservatives are more prejudiced. Sure, they might be more prejudiced against minorities, but liberals are more prejudiced against religious Christians.

Both conservatives and liberals fared poorly at basic tests on economics that were designed to trigger typical liberal or conservative causes.
As such, people didn't answer with what was true but with what their political doctrine dictated.

People with strong beliefs are usually sealed off to new information. When a new piece of information doesn't fit with their worldview, they look for anything that would discredit the source.
And they end up being even more entrenched in their own beliefs.

To Convince Conservatives of Climate Change We Need More Conservatives, Not More Scientists

People pick their beliefs based on their belongings.

That's why more scientists aren't going to help people who are conservative change their minds on global warming.
Instead, we need more conservatives to embrace the cause of global warming, showing people that it's OK to do something about global warming and still be conservative.

More Wisdom

- The digitalization of technology is helping us decrease waste
- Global warming is real
- We won't solve climate change with individual acts of virtue signaling
- The climate is a public goods game, presenting the typical threat of the tragedy of commons
- There is no evidence that Trump's election increased hate crimes. Beware of NGOs that have a hidden agenda
- The best predictor of Trump support was pessimism
- The discovery of cognitive and emotional biases doesn't mean we are irrational (a zinger to Dan Ariely with "*Predictably Irrational*" and Daniel Kahneman with "*Thinking Fast and Slow*")
- We need more science and less literature in school
- Nietzsche's philosophy is the philosophy of sociopathy

Quotes

On Enlightenment Principles:

> The the Enlightenment principles, that we can apply reason and sympathy to enhance human flourishing may seem obvious, trite, old fashioned. I wrote this book because I have come to realize that it is not.

On the individual above groups:

> A second counter-Enlightenment idea is that people are the expendable cells of a super-organism—a clan, tribe, ethnic group, religion, race, class, or nation—and that the supreme good is the glory of this collectivity rather than the well-being of the people who make it up.

And again, on the individual freedom trumping his group or leader:

> It's quite another thing when a person is forced to make the supreme sacrifice for the benefit of a charismatic leader, a square of cloth, or colors on a map.

On who writes history:

> History is not so much written by the victors, as by the affluent.
> The sliver of humanity with the leisure and dedication to write about it.

Pinker lists capitalism and globalization as the major causes of the rise in well-being.
But also to Mao:

> Mao single-handedly and dramatically changed the direction of global poverty with one simple act. He died.

On the extremization of conservative politics:

> Intellectual and political polarization feed each other.
> It's hard to be a conservative intellectual when American conservative politics has become steadily know-nothing, from Ronald Reagan to Dane Quale, to Jeorge Bush, to Sarah Palin, to Donald Trump

On political correctness contributing to extremization:

> The capture of the left by identity politicians, political correctness police, and social justice warriors creates an opening for loud mouths to brag for telling it how it is

On reason VS tribalism:

> The challenge of our era is how to foster an intellectual and political culture that is driven by reason, rather than by tribalism.

Amen to that.

Criticism

I loved this book, but there is much to criticize:

1. Pinker forgets the past doesn't equal the future

More than once, Pinker resorts to the argument that because something went well in the past, that's proof that it will go well in the future as well.

For example, his argument against the threat of resource depletion includes the countless previous calls for "peak oil," which have always been proven wrong.

His argument for infinite growth is that "the world has always moved past a certain resource before that resource ever became scarce".
Does it then mean that human growth will keep going unabated just because it has done so far?
Again, another trend is extrapolation to infinity, which makes no sense.

His argument against the danger of AI includes the Year 2000 fears that proved all exaggerated.

And of course, Pinker's case against nuclear weapons dangers rests, in good part, on the failed forecasts of apocalyptic Armageddon.

I think it's idiotic to take what happened in the past as proof that things will go well in the future.
Like Nassim Taleb says, there were many pundits in Rome and Athens who became famous and popular, saying that "Rome / Athens always come back". Until they didn't, of course.

2. Resources will never deplete? It makes no sense

Steven Pinker is quick to make fun of old predictions of resource depletion that never materialized.

He contrasts those failed predictions with today's prices of some raw materials, which have never been lower.
He seems to imply that raw materials will never run out.

But that makes little sense.
A finite resource *will* eventually run out, no matter how wrong the calls for *when* they would run out were in the past.

3. Strawman arguments to win easily: debating against made-up foes

Pinker seems to see a lot of enemies of the Enlightenment.

Sometimes, he seems to exaggerate them to make his point stronger and to increase the need for his book and opinion.

In "*The Blank Slate*" his enemies were feminists and left-wing colleagues. These enemies have not disappeared, but

Pinker has also found new ones.

The new enemies are the simpletons and backward forces against progress, which are to be found even among scientists and academics.

Says Pinker:

> "Intellectual magazines regularly denounce "scientism," the intrusion of science into the territory of the humanities such as politics and the arts. In many colleges and universities, science is presented not as the pursuit of true explanations but as just another narrative or myth. Science is commonly blamed for racism, imperialism, world wars, and the Holocaust. And it is accused of robbing life of its enchantment and stripping humans of freedom and dignity."

"Regularly"?
Like, how regularly?

And I'd really like to see a few examples of universities where science is presented as a myth.
Who presents science as a myth, exactly?

And what's the percentage of people doing it?
Because I think it would be incredibly small.

And again, he says:

> "It's time to retire the morality play in which modern humans are a vile race of despoilers and plunderers who will hasten the apocalypse unless they undo the Industrial Revolution, renounce technology, and return to an ascetic harmony with nature."

I actually fully agree with him.
But… Who is actually so extremist as to call for the undoing of *all* technology?

It's tempting to enlarge our enemies and make them bigger villains… So that we can look like bigger heroes by contrast.
But I expect better from an enlightened scientist.

4. Never backtracks, but attacks his critics

Pinker seems more intent on defending his previous work than on correcting and making it better.

This is something I have noticed in his previous books, updates, and answers to critics as well.

It's the same here.
He pokes fun at "people who can't seem to accept that things are getting better".

And of course, he conveniently picks easy targets to make his arguments sound more compelling.
For example, here is how he presents the criticism of his thesis that violence has gone down (with which I agree, by the way):

> So violence has declined *linearly* since the beginning of history. Awesome.

Or:

> How can you predict that violence will keep going down, a war could break out tomorrow

Pinker addresses the most boneheaded criticism of his work.

But he does not mention the *valid* criticism of his data as pointed out, for example, by Nassim Taleb and, even better, by Robert Sapolsky.

5. Arguments based on ego, or ideas?

Pinker sometimes seems busier discussing who's right or wrong—he is right, of course than on providing neutral analyses and theories.

The time he spends defending himself and his previous work feels like a lot of wasted time and unneeded space.

Here is an example:

> As for the accusations of romanticism I can reply with some confidence.
> I am also the author of the staunchly unromantic, anti-utopian book "*The Blank Slate*", in which I argue that..

It's fair to discuss criticism. But it should be quick and based on ideas and data.
A scientist shouldn't discuss based on personality and personal beliefs, but based on data and ideas.
I don't say this lightly, but Pinker sometimes comes across as a guy with a huge ego.

6. Unconvincing on economic inequality "not mattering" for happiness

Steven Pinker says that "people are content with economic inequality, as long as they feel the country is meritocratic".

Hmm, interesting.
I agree.

But I disagree with the idea that people are not unhappy when they see they are much poorer.
There is much psychological evidence that crime rises when inequality rises.
Social psychology also shows that people are social animals. And that people's happiness hinges, in large part, on their comparison with others.

7. Irrationally optimistic (AKA: Biased)

It feels like the author is not looking for truth but for evidence that confirms his own theory.

It's funny because this is what Pinker says in this same book about the forecasters who made the poorest predictions:

> The forecasters who did the worst were the ones with **Big Ideas**—left-wing or right-wing, **optimistic** or pessimistic—which they held with an inspiring (but misguided) confidence.
> (…)
> They kept pushing their analyses to the limit (and then some), using terms like "furthermore" and "moreover" **while piling up reasons why they were right and others wrong**.

Oh, the irony.

8. The "nature is a war" fallacy

Pinker cites part of his previous work in "*How the Mind Works*" and reminds us that "nature is a war".

This is a topic relatively common in modern *evolutionary psychology*, and David Buss also says the same.

Yet, that's looking only at one aspect of nature and life.
Nature and life are at war, OK? But it's also cooperation. Take our gut bacteria, for example: they're not at war with

us, but they survive while they help us survive.

There are countless examples of cooperation in nature.

9. Did philanthropism and international help really improve the third world?

Steven Pinker says that part of the reason the poorer areas of the world are improving is because of rich men's philanthropy and Western government support.

He mentions Bill Gates, of course, which was mandatory since Bill Gates is always so kind towards Pinker (and helps him spread his books).

However, I am a bit more doubtful as to how much philanthropy can actually help.
Especially when the recipients of international help are governed by a dictator.
See "*The Dictator's Handbook*" for the rationale.

10. Wrong on 'Terrorism is Ineffective'

This is a common mistake many people commit.

They look at how many deaths terrorism has caused, and then they say, "see? It's ineffective; we are all getting too scared for nothing".
Nassim Taleb correctly calls this "naive empiricism".

But that fails to look at the costs of preventing terrorism.
Has Pinker gone through any airports recently?
The costs of 9/11 and terrorism, in general, are immense. The costs of security, inconvenience, and of course, the most limited resource we possess: time.
And everyone is paying for it.

Read more here:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

PROS

I list a lot of criticism.
Yet, this is a fundamental book for everyone to understand progress, together with what drives that progress.

- **A manifesto to science, reason, humanism: I couldn't agree more**

I agree with everything Steven Pinker says about the true blessing of Enlightenment ideals.
Science, reason, and humanism all lead to progress and better lives.

Let that be your religion.

- **The group must serve the individuals that form it, not the other way around. The individual can't be sacrificed for the group**

Amen to that.
I see way too many people today appealing to group belonging. Including feminism, men's rights movements, nationalists, religions, etc.
That's fascist and backward.

CONS

On top of the criticism above:

- **Great manifesto, but poorer analysis**

"*Enlightenment Now*" is a great manifesto of scientific and enlightenment ideals.

- **Biased towards optimism**

Pinker seeks to force optimism into every single topic he analyzes, though, and that makes his analyses come across as biased.

I actually agree with most of what Pinker says.
Yet, I also find it preposterous to take every single issue and threat, present and future, and somewhat turn it into "it's all good, we'll solve it".

- **Too much space wasted on Donald Trump**

"*Enlightenment Now*" could be a manifesto for reason, science, and humanism.
Pinker shouldn't have wasted too much on Trump.
Two decades from now, Trump will be gone, and this will feel "old".

Instead, the values it espouses are immortal.
That's why he should have avoided wasting time with the most recent events.

Review

Enlightenment Now provides a good analysis of how values intersect with civilizational progress and individual empowerment, although Pinker veers into over-optimism and narrative fallacies.

Triumphalism rarely makes for good analyses based on reason, and ego prevents one from improving his work.
I might be wrong here, and I might revise my opinion in the future. But today, from what I saw, I find the author to be a bit too antagonistic and defensive. He is smart, so he knows how to be *covertly* aggressive, potentially making one's attacks seem based on ideas, rather than power, status, and ego.

Still, it's a good idea to embrace the Enlightenment values, both as individuals and as a society.

Check **TPM's best resources**

What Women Want (Mate) by Tucker Max & Miller: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

What Women Want (2015), formerly known as *Mate*, is one of the best dating books for men with mindsets, exercises, and strategies to achieve dating and sexual success.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Mate Summary
- More Bullet Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
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- What Women Want Review

Bullet Summary

- Work on yourself based on what women scientifically want
- To find the type of women you like, where they are most abundant
- Win-win is possible, and that's what you should aim for

Mate Summary

About the Authors: Geoffrey Miller is a professor of evolutionary psychology and also the author of "*The Mating Mind*".
Tucker Max achieved fame by writing about his drunken sexual adventures and misadventures, then collecting lots of sexual notches as he became famous.

Intro: Much Dating Advice is Twisted

The authors say that much of the available dating advice either has some twisted ideological agenda or lacks any scientific rigor.

They specifically mention feminism and manosphere misogynists, and I agree with it.
They even mention religious zealots, but that was so far off the wall for me that it never even registered.

Say the authors:

> In sexual politics, feminism's gain is patriarchy's loss. This zero-sum way of thinking assumes a perpetual "battle of the sexes," and sadly, it is common in both gender feminism and the manosphere.

The Five Principles of Dating Success

1. **Make a decision with science**
2. **Account for the woman's perspective**
3. **Own your attractiveness**
4. **Be honest** (with yourself and with others): if you lie to yourself, you'll never get what you want. And honesty in a world of liars makes you stand out
5. **Play to win-win** a staple of this website, to which I'd add: learn to spot nasty women and the games they play,

and ruthlessly cut them out

And when I read these principles, I knew that “Mate” had the potential to be a great book.

Play for Win-Win

The authors remind us that if relationships exist at all, it’s because partnerships can work.
Otherwise, they wouldn’t exist at all:

> If human mating wasn’t mostly a positive-sum game that yielded “win-win” experiences and relationships, then neither sex would agree to play the game in the first place.

I couldn’t agree more.
And on the mistaken view of the “battle of the sexes”:

> This “battle of the sexes” view is totally, completely wrong. It is counterproductive, counterintuitive, and counter to thousands of generations of evolution. That is why we endorse the opposite principle: Your mating goal is to find and create “win-win” relationships, where both you and the woman are better off because of your interaction.

To be precise, there is an element of conflict between the sexes.
But the forces for unity are stronger, or cooperation and relationships wouldn’t have evolved at all—but they did.
And since, as Tony Robbins says, you find what you look for, you should absolutely avoid looking at intimate relationships as battlegrounds.

So the PowerMoves stance is simple: know the areas of conflict and use them to play win-win.

And when I read this part, I knew this book had the potential to make the “*best dating books*“ list:

> Don’t think of mating as fighting women for victory. They are not your enemy. **Think of mating as finding women who want the same things you want**—so you can both win.

The 5 Steps Process

The 5-steps process is:

1. **Get your head straight**: get the right mindsets, replace old models with the correct ones
2. **Develop attractive traits**: based on science and what women truly seek
3. **Display attractive proof**: learn how to showcase your attractive traits
4. **Go where women are**: move where you are most likely to meet the women you like and where your traits are most appreciated
5. **Take action**

Build Self-Confidence

To build self-confidence, you need to first acquire the skills.

You need to learn to do the things you want to show confidence in, then prove to others and to yourself that you can do it.

The best way to be confident before you can make it is not to “fake it till you make it”, but to develop trust in the process.
trust that you can learn and get good at it. This is a growth mindset.

Also see:

- **How to develop a growth mindset**

If you are feeling down because you haven't gotten the results yet, you shouldn't force yourself to "suck it up" and "get over it".
First, acknowledge and accept your feelings. Name them.
And then develop that growth mindset, which will tell you that you can acquire all the skills you want and grow out of your frustrations.

Understand what it's like to be a woman: they have very different perspectives

When men interact with a woman, they are worried about being rejected.
Women are afraid of being assaulted or physically harmed.

My Note: Women feel vulnerable because of rape danger, not just size
The book proposes that women feel vulnerable because of the size difference.
And to prove the point, it says that an average guy would feel very vulnerable to a big NFL player. But I don't feel vulnerable to bigger guys, albeit I'm very small. I think female vulnerability is not only in size but because they are the sex that can be impregnated by someone whom they didn't choose.

Miller says that women who send mixed messages aren't (necessarily) trying to manipulate men.
But they are sending mixed signals because from one side they might be interested, but from another side, they might still be fearful.

This is a good observation.
Many women who were attracted to me were also too afraid to come over. And that's why building comfort and rapport is indeed an important part of courtship -especially with more fearful women-.

Also, keep in mind this: women experience weirdos in a far higher number than men do. So, women often get an unnaturally distorted, negative view of men.

Other differences include:

- Women are more skittish about sex because they're afraid of pregnancies
- Women are more afraid of STDs because they're more likely to one, and they are more likely to be serious
- Women care far more about how you smell than men care about how she smells

To actually learn about manipulation techniques read manipulative games women play, and drop those women:

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

The different Threshold for Sexual Disgust

The average guy wants to do with women things that the average woman might find unappealing because women have a lower threshold for sexual disgust.

Women are not sure what to do when men push them to do things they don't exactly feel too aroused for.
Will men leave them for some kinkier woman?

And if she does it and does it poorly, will he like her less?
And if she learns to do that stuff, will that make her too slutty?

She might also feel bad knowing that her father would want to disavow her if he ever knew what she was doing.

My Note:

In my experience, most women who like a guy and submit to him will mostly just go along with his leadership and with whatever boundary he's pushing.
But it's true that they will worry whether his attraction for her will change after whatever act they've been doing.

Short-term, medium-term, long-term: what's your strategy?

There are plenty of women looking for short-term and casual sex, so you don't need to lie or pretend that you're only doing long-term.

Conversely, it's not true that men are all looking for short-term and plenty of men are more inclined towards long-term relationships.

First of all, you should know which one you want and prefer, so that you can adjust your strategy.
And you will avoid mistakes, like hurting yourself and others.

Miller drafted a quiz to help readers find out what's their main disposition.
I modified that quiz and added a few questions based on my own experience.

You can find it here:

- **Find out your mating disposition** (it's on the advanced forum for subscribers only)

Short-term requires much more work to get sex before you always need to find a new partner.
The "costs of acquisition" for sex are very high in short-term. You need to go out, approach, take rejections, find a girl who likes you, and then lead the interactions till the bed.
Something that will only happen for a small fraction of your approaches.

Tucker and Miller say that a healthy long-term relationship is one of the best things you will ever experience.

Empirical evidence shows that younger guys tend to be happiest with medium-term relationships involving lots of sex but not so much commitment.
Older guys tend to be happiest in committed relationships, as in marriages. Tucker and Miller say that marriage is the biggest predictor of happiness for me. And they're not saying that because they want you to get married, but because that's what the evidence says.

My Note: *Happy* marriages make you happier
It's true that married people tend to be happier than unmarried ones. Yet, I think that one should not generalize too much because a marriage can cut both ways. Choosing a bad partner can be disastrous. That's why I place so much emphasis on this website on recognizing the traits that make for a good spouse (same for partners and friends).

The Moral Code

Tucker and Miller propose a set of questions that will help men build their own moral code, and decide what's ethical and what's unethical.

Some of the questions include:

- The "everyone knows" heuristic: If people you cared about knew what you're about to do, would you still do it?
- The hero/villain heuristic: If you watched a movie where a guy does what you're about to do to a woman, would the audience support you or boo you?
- The YouTube heuristic: If she recorded the whole scene with a hidden camera and posted it to YouTube, would you be ashamed or proud?

When you know where you stand morally and ethically will make you more confident and will increase your own self-respect.

What Women Want

Across the animal kingdom, there are only four high-level strategies that males have found to work:

1. Force
2. Trickery
3. Bribery
4. Honest mating effort

The most reliable and the one that is most likely to give you a good relationship is the last one.
Your goal is to make you as attractive as possible, given the proven criteria of choice that women have.

Women's criteria of choice depend on evolution, cultural traditions, individual personalities, and context.

The most romantic words a man can say are not "I love you" or "I am sorry". But it's these:

> Don't worry honey, I got this.

Women want men who are effective in life.
And for long-term, they want men who are willing to use their effectiveness to deliver benefits (ie.: defend, support, and provide).

To be attractive to women, men need to be effective in all the domains of life: health, family, friends, work, play, and knowledge.

The questions that women ask themselves when it comes to assessing effectiveness are:

1. Do you carry good genes?
2. Would you be a good partner (even a woman cruising for sex will feel less slut-shamed for sleeping with a guy she can fantasize as being a great boyfriend)
3. Would you be a good dad?

Ideally, a guy has all three, but women will settle for one above the other depending on their own mating goals.

How do you improve your effectiveness?
The first step to improving your sexual market value is to work on your ineffectiveness. Such as: since women are risk-averse, the downsides will get you out of the race immediately, and they matter more than upsides. Instead of focusing on reaching the top 1% in all fields, focus on not being on the bottom 10% of each one of them.

Also read:

- **Sexual market value hacks**

> Sexual Market Value Hacks: Boosting Your SMV

The keys to attracting women

1. **Get physically fit**: sleep, nutrition, exercise are the three keys to physical fitness
   1. Avoid sugar and grains, eat unprocessed foods
   2. No need for big muscles, women are attracted to physical effectiveness, not physical narcissism. To workout properly go heavy and fast. Intensity is key
2. **Get mentally fit**: the key indicators are happiness and contentment, sense of humor, playfulness, openness, mental resilience and adaptability

    1. Enjoy small pleasures, do gratitude exercises, meditate
    2. Make better friends, do more of what you enjoy and less of what you dislike
    3. If you need it, go for psychotherapy (both the authors did it)
    4. And most of all: stop complaining!
3. **Get smart**: intelligence is attractive, but it must be conveyed intelligently
    1. Sense of humor, conversation and storytelling, creativity and creative skills, teaching and explaining, let them talk more
    2. See: mating intelligence (article inspired in large part by this book)
4. **Get your life together**: willpower and conscientiousness, turning dreams into goals and working them to make them real
    1. Reframe your willpower: from having to do hard things and give up good things, to "taking care of the future you" (this was genius and I will add it to my "Ultimate Power" ebook)
    2. Work hard, but don't become a workaholic (no monk mode)
    3. Don't work hard to the point where it's damaging you, learning to switch off is a skill: your long-term success depends more on your mental health than on doing 10% more today
    4. Show willpower and conscientiousness with sexual restraint: if the girl is delaying sex, remain emotionally grounded
5. **Become a Tender-Defender**: the good mix of agreeableness and assertiveness
    1. Extreme agreeableness (pushover) and assertiveness (dark-triad / violent dominance) are both repelling
    2. Just like men want a "lady in the street, a whore in the sheets", women want a strong man who is kind to them
    3. Be stronger and more assertive than the "*nice guys*" and better, more caring than the assholes
    4. Women are attracted to displays of real altruism—empathy, thoughtfulness, generosity, and sacrifice—that deliver concrete benefits to people in need. That's why they like doctors
    5. Agreeableness is important because conflict is costly, and it should be avoided whenever possible
    6. Women want and benefit from a kind man who can also be strong and decisive in protecting her: that's the sweet spot of the "tender defender"
6. **Social Proof**: social proof provides women with important signals based on how others treat you
    1. Practice being warm and outgoing
    2. Do make friends with both sexes
    3. Making friends is all about adding value. Indeed, social proof just answers this question: does this guy add value to people's lives?
    4. "Mate copying" leverages social proof from other women, which is why you shouldn't be afraid of being friends with other women
7. **Get some money**: it's a shortcut to self-improvement and lifestyle improvement
8. **Aesthetic proof**: aesthetic proof is a signal of intelligence, status, and conscientiousness. It can also serve as a signal of resources and fitness (fitting clothes)
    1. Fix the most common mistakes in grooming like nose hair, bad breath, bad hygiene, dirty house, and car
9. **Romantic proof**: this is most important for long-term dating
    1. Narrowcast by showing you like *her*, not a thousand women
    2. Pay attention to her
    3. Escalate your commitment gradually and slowly

Aesthetic proof power move

You can also use aesthetic proof to sexualize the conversation.
See here an example:

Read the forum entry on using aesthetics for sexualization.

Don't ignore mental health!
Many guys focus on physical health and money, but few guys focus on mental health. But mental imbalances are a biological turn-off, and mental health and fitness are very attractive.

The book also focuses on how to display those traits. While I don't agree with all of those ways, like, for example, the "fun and physical" date types, I found them very useful.

Also see:

- **Proven dating strategies that work**

> 7 Dating Strategies for Men (Research-Based)

Pick Your Best Mating Markets

Few pick-up and dating resources focus on this aspect.
And that's one of the reasons why I don't rate many dating resources very highly: they are simply missing out on the bigger strategy.

Luckily, "What Women Want" does deal with mating markets. And it does so very well.

A mating market is defined as:

> A geographically defined local dating zone that operates on the supply-and-demand dynamics of free markets in order to yield win-win outcomes

The ideal mating market for you has these features:

1. A large number of women of the age and ethnicity you prefer
2. A low operational sex ratio (fewer men than women seeking mates)
3. A subculture open to your mating goals (short-term or long-term)
4. A market in which your mate-value is competitive compared to the other guys there
5. A market in which your age is especially attractive
6. A market in which your distinctive traits and proofs are especially attractive, given the women's preferences there
7. An environment in which it's easy to meet people

For more, read:

- Sexual market value hacks

And:

- **Choose your seductive niche**

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

To Meet Women Easy, Make Your Mating Life an Extension of Your Social Life

Miller says that bars and clubs are not good places to meet women for most men.
And since rejection can be hard, he proposes an approach where you simply do a lot of social activities and meet women as you go about your busy social schedule.

Speed dating skews towards an older and professional crowd, but if you fit the bill, it can be extremely effective.

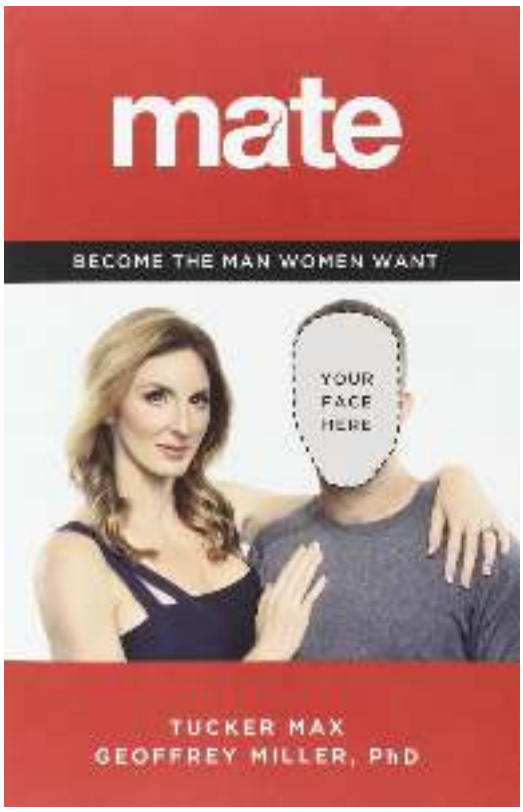
Online dating is also one of the most powerful tools, and he teaches how to filter dating markets in OKCupid.

Strong Men Are Sincere

If you're looking for short-term, you can say it.
Just do it in a socially intelligent way. You might say that one day you might want a girlfriend, but for now, you're only interested in meeting new people without anything getting too serious.

In a world of liars, that will be refreshingly new for her, and she will respect it.
This type of honesty changes the frame of the interaction. From the typical games, men play to a new conspiracy of daring truth-tellers.

And if you're looking for a relationship, do say on a second date that you're open for a girlfriend, if the right woman comes along.
And on the tenth, you can say that your mating goal is getting married.



More Bullet Wisdom

- Avoid pick-up lines
- With attractive women, focus on their personalities
- Even attractive women are often self-conscious
- Do make a positive impression on her friend and she will be happier to see you because you will provide her with a status boost in her group
- Women fantasize about being sexually dominated and controlled by handsome, caring, and strong men. But men misunderstand this part, and treating her curtly outside the bed is *not* the way to go
- Don't put pressure on her to orgasm: she will feel like she has to fake just to make you happy. So stop making her orgasm a sign of your virility and instead focus on enjoying yourself
- Don't specialize in useless skills: culture-specific intellectual proofs like chess or games rarely provide much benefits in dating
- **Conversation in mating contexts is about indirectly signaling your underlying traits**
- To approach conversations well, think of yourself as a host: gently guiding the conversation towards mutual satisfaction
- Change your approach from "getting sex" to "just having fun": it will take the pressure off, make you more charming, and lead to more success
- To women, a great guy who won't commit is an extra-dangerous source of potential heartbreak and disappointment
- People can enjoy sex and relationships no matter their mating value
- Penis size matters, but all the other traits as a whole matter more
- Pay for the first dates: research shows that the majority of women want men to pay for the first dates. Paying shows signs of kindness, generosity, and material proof

Quotes

On getting rid of your goal of “making her come” and on stopping putting that pressure on women:

> If she just wanted to come, she’d have stayed home with a bottle of white wine, Fifty Shades of Grey, and her vibrator. If she’s with you, it’s because she wants more than just an orgasm. She wants a sexual connection. She wants to feel sexually desired.

On the importance of physical fitness:

> Physical health matters at a deep biological level (..). When she meets you for the first time, this is what she is evaluating when she sizes you up, whether her gender studies professor likes it or not.

On the importance of enjoying life:

> Women don’t adopt boyfriends out of pity (they do that with puppies); they want a guy whose happiness cup overflows into theirs. Enjoying life is hugely attractive to women and a signal of good mental health.

On dominance without kindness:

> Offering a woman nothing more than dominance is like challenging her to eat a spoonful of pure cinnamon—she might give it a shot, but she’ll gag and cry in the end.

On money as a signal of quality traits and money as in “just money”:

> One is worth $75 million because he happened to win the Powerball jackpot when he was an unemployed school bus driver. The other is worth $7.5 million because he built his own company from the ground up and now has ten employees and thousands of customers.
> Who would you rather go home, out, to the altar with? Multiple studies show that women choose the entrepreneur

On the importance of a good sense of style for men:

> Awesome male style isn’t just a new gay thing; it’s a very ancient straight thing.

On the importance of getting along mentally, and not just physically:

> This is where Kim’s vocal fry, and Angelina’s compulsion to turn her family into a UNICEF ad, might start to grate a little.

On the importance of penis size:

> If we lived in a species where females chose males just for penis size, we would have evolved tiny brains, no humor, no civilization, no love, and no courtship beyond standing up straight and naked, pointing to our huge members

On learning to accept one’s lust and sexuality:

> The harshest truth of all you need to wrestle with is that if you’re ashamed of your lust, you’re ashamed of yourself. And you’re ashamed of masculinity in general. It’s not enough to respect yourself as a human being.

> You also have to respect yourself as a man.
> Respect for women does not need to, nor should it, compete with respect for yourself or your sexuality.
> When relationships work well, it is precisely because the man respects the sexual nature of his female partner and the woman respects his male sexual energy as well.

CONS

Sometimes disempowering when it frames a player's lifestyle as unreachable

The author says or seems to imply that it's best to have realistic expectations and that having many sexual partners is unlikely.
And maybe that is the case for some, but… It's not *that* unlikely for many guys who are very driven to achieve it.

For example, he says that you shouldn't take Tucker Max as an example of what's likely to happen in clubs because "Tucker Max is very fit".
I find Tucker to be normal/average at best, and most certainly a "fitness level" that most anyone can reach or even easily surpass.

More for relationships than hooking up

Albeit the book presents itself as both for committed relationships and casual sex, I find it to be far better suited for the former than for the latter.

If you seek casual sex, you should complement this book with more resources.

More geared to "typical provider dating"

The book is slightly more geared towards the typical dating style of a provider than of a lover.
But, for dating with a provider frame, it's *very* good.
To decide what's best for you, check out "lovers, providers, and friends" and "should you date as a lover or as a provider".

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

Discouraging at times: more on the "can't" than "can do" side

Of course, sometimes it might be true you can't do this or that.
But I don't think it's necessarily a helpful mindset to have.

And, as well, I found "Mate" at times a bit too "innatist disempowering". And doing so, sometimes, with an annoying, top-dow tone of "I know better, you can't".
The frame sometimes seems to be that: you either got this or screw you. A bit Spencer-like on that (Spencer was the philosopher of "social Darwinism", later usurped by the nazis).

For example, when it reminds people that you can't do much about your physical limitations.
Or when it says that if you got dumb parents then you're going to be dumb.

Yeah, maybe.
But dumb and overweight people can still be successful. I think putting a note on the possibility of achieving success no matter what would have made "Mate" even better.

Sometimes more about what would be nice than about what's true

Say, Miller and Tucker:

> Don't worry about the unattainable, irrelevant, or repulsive forms of social proof like fame, wealth, or class. They are not the most efficient ways to attract women.

Sure, they might not be the most efficient way of attracting women because they are hard to achieve.
But once you have them, they are some of the most efficient and reliable ways of attracting women.

Seeks to entertain with cursing language

I've never been a big fan of using curse words to be funny.

It feels like Bart Simpson level of humor, ie.: childish.
And you can find that type of humor in "What Women Want".

Maybe Tucker Max wanted to insist on the old habits that gave him success.
Or maybe the duo wanted to be on the cruder side to look more "authentic". But sometimes, they overdid it.

For example:

> You're likely to end up about as smart as the average of your two parents. But if your parents are idiots, chances are that you will be too.

I don't like that attitude.
It also seems elitist.
Or talking about masturbation, the title of the chapter is "go fuck yourself". I didn't find that particularly funny either.

But this is just a small note, partially irrelevant to the content, and it might be just me.

Sometimes it's unnededly caustic towards pick-up community

The authors say that pick-up artist "kino escalation" is predatory, psychopathic bullshit.

And then they say that the only way to continue is through a natural, mutual progression of sexual tension.

Which is pretty much the same as good "kino escalation" done well.
I agree that the mindset behind some pick-up advice is either psychopathic, stupid or even counterproductive.
But that doesn't mean that all pick-up advice is bad. Kino escalation in the sense of getting her used to your touch is important, especially for beginners who never touch their dates at all.

Jason Statham VS Johnny Depp: who gets the hottest girl?

The authors say that dominance and assertiveness can be more important than attractiveness. Especially when she's at her peak fertility.

Agreed.

The example is that Jason Statham, whom I had to Google, and Johnny Depp walk into a club where nobody knows them, Statham is the one who is going to get out with the hottest girl.

About this one, I wouldn't be so sure.
Johnny Depp is not just a cute face. Depp is also extremely edgy, in his own way.

PROS

- One of the best books on the fundamental traits that lead to attraction
- One of the most scientifically sound books on dating and attraction

- Deep and useful wisdom for self-development that also goes well beyond dating (especially on willpower)

"Mate" is one of the best dating books when it comes to the fundamentals.

Both when it comes to the fundamentals of what women want, and how you can work on them.
And that's why I rank it so highly. It's one of the best entry books for newbies, but even more experienced guys will learn from it (I did).

What Women Want Review

I feel that "Mate", later called "What Women Want" is a heavily underrated book.

Part of the reason is the marketing mismatch.
With Tucker Max on the cover, it was somewhat marketed to the wrong audience, and the content felt like a "bait and switch" for some readers.

Indeed, most of the negative reviews of "Mate" come from red-pill men (I know that by the content of their reviews and their review history, which includes testosterone supplements and raving reviews for "*The Rational Male*").
Red pill men tend to be overly cynic and don't see the possibility of a win-win with a woman.
So they somewhat resent the more enlightened collaborative approach of the book that recognizes the possibility for a win-win.

But they also complained about Tucker Max U-turn.
And for that one, well, I see their point, actually.

This book with the Tucker Max name on, it feels very incongruent. It feels like an exercise in "do as I say, not as I do (or did)".
You know, like the drunk guy who had a lot of fun drinking and now teaches kids to never touch alcohol? Yeah, that's how it might feel.

And while Miller, rightfully, exhorts readers to avoid manipulative advice from sociopaths and dark-triad men, I need to wonder… Was he fully aware of who his co-author is?
Because, while I don't know him personally, Tucker Max definitely sounded like a man high in dark triad traits and high in power-craving (even if his stories are made up, as some critics say, that would only prove that he is willing to do anything to be successful).

I think that the book would have been better received if they had at least made an intro paragraph to address this issue. For example, Tucker could have talked about his past and then added the trite cliche that now he's matured to a new stage.
Then the bridge between his past and "What Women Want" would have least met somewhat sense.
But with the current marketing and content, it can feel incongruent.

However, those contradictions should not stop us from seeing the good in this book.
And there is a lot of it.
When it comes to dating from a more conventional, provider point of view, this is one of the best books on the market.
Most guys aren't necessarily making it their top priority to have as many notches as possible. And that's why "What Women Want" might be my #1 recommendation to any guy looking for a committed relationship.

Check the:

- **best books for dating and seduction**

or **get the book on Amazon**

Alpha Male Strategies: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Alpha Male Strategies (AMS) is a dating book for men. It offers a red-pill perspective on dating and relationships, equipping men with mindsets and techniques to improve their dating lives.
From a seduction and relationship point of view, AMS focuses mostly on polyamory, keeping women on rotation and adding just enough new ones to keep the small harem going.

Contents

- Alpha Male Strategies Author
- Bullet Summary
- AMS Book Summary
- More Wisdom
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Alpha Male Strategies Author

Alpha Male Strategies, abbreviated as AMS, is an Afro-American man who provides dating and relationship advice to men.

If you are looking for *Alpha Male Strategies'* bio and his real name, you're out of luck. AMS writes and introduces himself as "*Alpha Male Strategies*, a dating coach".
There is no public name available.

His dating advice could be classified as "lifestyle".
Instead of focusing on "game" and techniques such as push-pull, routines, or cold approach openers, he focuses on increasing men's sexual market value and building a life that attracts women -instead of *chasing* women-.

AMS started off as a YouTuber and then wrote three books on dating and relationships.
The book reviewed here is his first book and, so far, his best-seller.

Bullet Summary

- Stay on your purpose: that's your N.1 priority and it should always be more important than any woman
- Don't give her too much validation, or she will get bored with you
- Learn to be happy and content on your own

AMS Book Summary

About the Author: AMS is a self-help author and dating coach for men.

The Different Types of Pills

Here is how AMS describes the different types of stages a man reaches in his understanding of women:

- **Red Pill men**: see the world, including female nature, for what it is. A red-pill man cannot be in a relationship

because they know about female hypergamy, and they know that women can't really love a man.

- **Purple pill men**: know the truth, but, unlike red pill men, have decided to accept it. Most alpha males will periodically enter this stage as they tire of sleeping around and want a relationship
- **Blue pill men**: are unaware of female true nature

AMS says that red-pill men have a tendency to come off as bitter, and I fully agree. Also see:

- **The truth about the red pill**
- **Growing past the red pill anger**

AMS says red pill men come across as bitter because they truly wish to have something meaningful with a woman, but they know they can't.
However, I disagree with the "they can't". I've been around the world and dated many women, and I have had countless meaningful relationships.

A High-Value Man is Dead Set on His Purpose

Says AMS:

> A high-value male is simply a man who is primarily focused on his passion and purpose in life.

A high-value man does not have much free time to chase women.
He might pursue and court her in the beginning, but if it's not reciprocated or if it's going nowhere, he will drop her because he has no time to waste.

The difference between an alpha male and a beta male is all in the mindset. An alpha male has an abundance mindset, and he's not afraid of being alone.

Also read:

- **How to stop being a beta male**

https://thepowermoves.com/how-to-stop-being-a-beta-male/

Master The Ability to Be Alone

One of AMS' foundational concepts is that of learning to be content with your own company.

The ability to be alone, says AMS, is what gives you true relationship control.
If you are afraid of being alone, you will never be able to demand respect because you are afraid that she will leave you.

Mastering the ability to be alone is not something you do for women. You do it for yourself.
And it will also help you with any other friend or family member who is being negative or unsupportive.

Get Your Finances in Order

AMS says that money is important.

You can have all the games you want, but women still care about financial stability.

Money is freedom, and it's great to have.
However, to make sure that your money-making gig is also your purpose, AMS recommends you find something you truly like that can *also* be monetized.

However, you must be careful with money and resources.
If you're not

Also read:

- **How women control men** (and relationships)

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

The Three Dates Rules: How to Avoid Being Used

If you have money, you want to be careful that you are not going to be used for that money.

One way to protect yourself is to live by the "3 dates rule".
The three-date rule means that if you have not slept with a woman by the third date, you are not going to see her again.

AMS recommends doing third dates only if she comes back to your place on the second.
The only exception is if she offered to pay for the date.

My Note: I Like This Approach
I like this approach. I would add a few more exceptions though, like if she's a virgin, very inexperienced, or if you're dating in a more conservative culture and environment.

Before You Make Money: Convince Her You Got a Plan

Since women like financial stability, if you are still hustling, you may find it difficult to date well.
AMS recommends that you communicate you have a plan and a vision to make it happen.

Get in Shape

Women love men with good physiques.

Says AMS:

> Women settle for the dad bod if the man displays beta male provider qualities, but all things equal, she would definitely prefer the nicer physique.

Keep Her Chasing Your Validation

AMS recommends avoiding validating women.

But since "validation" for AMS means any non-sexual attention, then it means **you must be very distant at all times**.

AMS' goal with emotional distance is to avoid validating women so that they will crave your validation.
This is somewhat of a dark-psychology seduction technique and what on this website I call a "judge frame" whereby chase your validation to get emotional rewards from you.

It can work, but not always, and works best with a certain subset of women.

Also read:

- **Soft power**

My Note: I disagree with the extent to which you should withhold your attention
While it's certainly possible to give too much validation and attention, I disagree with AMS' extreme.
For example, AMS says even when you're in a relationship you should not initiate physical contact.
And he says you never want to communicate "I care about you", which I think is counterproductive both in

relationships and in dating.

Charisma Beats Looks

Charisma and personality are more important than looks, muscle, or money.

In the words of AMS himself:

> **AMS**: So you stay on your fucking purpose.
> And you go hit the fucking gym.
> And some fat, broke mothafucker that got game and some personality will *still* take your fucking bitch, nigga

LOL, what a character AMS is :).

But Status is The Most Important Trait

AMS says that good looks and money will get your foot in the door but, by themselves, they're not enough.

Personality and charisma are more important than looks and money.

But nothing beats status.

I agree.
Also read:

- **Scientifically proven dating strategies**

> 7 Dating Strategies for Men (Research-Based)

The 4 Types of Women

AMS says there are four types of women:

- **Materialistic women**: actually easy to sleep with because they're not concerned with personality
- **Relationship women**: two sub-groups, the ones that want a relationship before sex, stay away from them, and after sex
- **Attention whores**: they just want attention, not real dates. Avoid wasting time on them
- **Alpha seekers**: they shit test a lot to avoid betas

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Win the Game

Women's Strategies to Get Men

Women will seek to get men in two ways:

- Quick sex, hoping that will keep him around (for men with options)
- Claiming celibacy, and making him wait (for men without options)

If you are socially skilled, then women will more likely try the good sex route.
And if you lack social skills, then they will more likely try to get you into a relationship before you even have sex.

You can't fake social skills, says AMS.
And that's why he encourages readers to socialize during the weekend -so, no to monk mode-.

The Male Strategies

- **The nice guy**: he seeks to be a friend first
- **Beta male provider**: shows off what a great provider he could be
- **High-value male strategy**: the alpha male lifestyle means he lives by his own rules
- **Direct Approach**: walking up to a stranger and insinuating a sexual relationship

Also read:

- **Choose your best dating strategy** (provider VS lover)
- **Alpha male providers VS beta male providers** (scroll down)

https://thepowermoves.com/lover-provider-friend-dating-strategies

Avoid Direct Approaches & Openers

AMS is against too direct approaches, especially sexual ones.

He says that's not a good approach because it can scare women off and you preclude yourself from the ability to raise her interest levels with a date or two.

It's a good point.
However, I do believe there are plenty of ways to sexualize a conversation early, without scaring women off.
See a texting example here:

And read the forum entry on using art for sexualization.

Don't Do Cold Approaches: Alpha Males Don't Spam-Approach

A true alpha male does not do cold approaches because that puts him in the chasing position.

An alpha male instead waits for signals of interest before approaching, so he knows he's good to go and he can retain his power.

And, says AMS, never leave the house with the mindset you are looking for women.
Just go out and enjoy your life, instead.

I disagree with this because it goes against the simple law of large numbers.
Also, read our own analysis of the limitations of the alpha male game:

- **The alpha male game: PROS & CONS**

> Why "Dating Like An Alpha Male" Is Costing You

The Two Steps to Sleeping With Women

AMS says there are two steps to sleeping with women.

The first one is getting your foot in the door, with either your looks (alpha males), or your financial stability (beta males).

The second step is charisma and game.
So:

- Get your foot in the door with looks or financial stability
- Use game and charisma to sleep with her

Men who start making a lot of money start relying too heavily on their money to get laid.
And while sex is sex and it's always good, you ideally don't want to get laid just because of your money.
Plus, money isn't going to be enough with all those ladies who are not primarily focused on money and financial stability.

Keep Your Dates Cheap...

Don't try to impress her by throwing money around on dates.

Yes, expensive dates can work, but they will put you in the beta male provider category because you are trying to impress her, which in turn communicates she has a higher sexual market value.

Plus, if you don't end up together, you will have wasted that money and you will feel even worse.

... But Pay for The Date

He who pays has power.

The one who pays decides where and when.
And if you let a woman do that, you are putting them in their masculine energy.

Alpha Males Don't Kiss

I was surprised to hear this one.

AMS is the only dating coach I have read who recommends this behavior -and I have read many-.
And the funny thing is, it's exactly what I've been doing for a while now.

Of the last 20 women I have been with, I probably only kissed 2 or 3 before having sex (update: that changes depending on location and on how much dating power I have).

AMS says that some women are just looking for sex, and kissing is more intimate. Don't assume she wants intimacy, maybe she wants sex.
To me, it's also a question of efficiency and risk-management: if a kiss is not needed, why go for it?

You might even find out she doesn't kiss well, or she doesn't like the way you kiss… Or one of you two just ate onions. So since it's not needed, just don't.

More Wisdom

- **Entitlement mentality**: To maintain a masculine frame with the woman of your dreams, believe you are entitled to her
- **Drop "we'll see" women**: When a woman says "we'll see" or "I'll let you know", simply tell her to get back to you when she knows. Then stop talking to her (see "what I'm spontaneous really means")
- **Never discuss the other women you're dating** (but actually I think there is a good way to do this and it will shoot up attraction via preselection)
- **Maintain calm frame**: If a woman gets quiet during a date, don't panic, stay calm, and hold your frame (see "frame control techniques")
- **Don't argue with women**: a masculine frame remains calm, assertive, and non-emotional
- **Stay cool if someone hits on your GF**: If a man is hitting on your girlfriend, you must remain calm, without showing signs of jealousy (also see: what to do when a man is hitting on your girlfriend)
- **Don't cheat**: If you're in a relationship, don't cheat. Not because of ethics and morals, but for peace of mind
- **Cycle different sex positions**: If you want to last longer AMS switched between being on top, letting her ride, and from behind (same as I do)

The Beef With PUA

Alpha Male Strategies is not entertaining any beef.

But there was a critical video from Todd Valentine, a popular PUA, which seemed to criticize AMS' style and the "alpha male approach to dating".

Todd is a smart guy and he made some good points we also largely agree on in our article on "the limitations of the alpha male game".
But I feel he missed a bit on the power of dating as a high-value man, since many pick-up artists date with rather low power.

Read more here on the types of male seducers:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

Quotes

On success and seduction:

> Guys, let's face it, women are attracted to successful men.

On submission in and out of the bedroom, which I totally agree with, and which intersects with male leadership and male dominance:

> If you want your woman to submit to you in the bedroom, then you better damn well make sure she's submitting to you outside of the bedroom, it's that simple.

On putting women on a pedestal:

> If you treat her like a celebrity she's going to treat you like a fan.

On women withholding sex to get a relationship (also see "games women play" as well as "manipulative games women play"):

> Unfortunately, there's always a beta male willing to play these women's waiting game, just make sure it's not you.

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

AMS recommends never to give oral sex to a woman (LOL, this just screamed "black guy advice" :D):

> Under no circumstances are you to perform oral sex. It's too submissive and validating. You'll lower her attraction if you do.

CONS

I thoroughly enjoyed "*Alpha Male Strategies*".
But, from my point of view, there were a few important red flags:

Promotes Manipulation

Just read the titles of these two chapters:

- How to keep sleeping with women *who are feeling used*
- How to keep sleeping with a woman who wants a relationship

AMS even says "lead her on for as long as you can".

If that's what an "alpha male" does, then that type of alpha male sounds manipulative and needy to me.

Beyond ethics and morals, there is also an element of fear and scarcity mindset when you focus so heavily on keeping a woman in your life that you must pour so much effort into stringing her along.
It's the fear of not being able to find another woman or a woman who wants the type of relationship you want.

AMS says you shouldn't feel guilty for leading women on because that's what women do.
They string men along without ever giving sex, so you can string them along with sex without ever giving a relationship.
Clinical psychologist and Ph.D. Harriet Braiker says that it's typical of a manipulative mindset to see the world as a place where you either play or get played (Braiker, 2003).

And I disagree with that advice for another reason as well: it's a race to the bottom.
Why should you race against some bitch who strings men along? If you really have to use others as yardsticks, pick better people.
You shouldn't be interested in a race towards the bottom.

As they say:

> You can't soar with the eagles if you're worried about how the turkeys behave.

Learn more about manipulation here:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Relationship Control Based on Keeping Her Uncertain

To keep women attracted, AMS recommends keeping women uncertain.
He says:

> Once you give a woman certainty the mystery and challenge are over and she starts to look for her next prey.

It sounds like overthinking it. If you're a high-value man and generally provide her with a good time whenever you meet, both sexually and in conversations, women will naturally find you attractive.

Furthermore, this strategy can definitely become counterproductive.
A woman I liked walked out of my life because she said: "she needed to protect herself".
I never told her I liked her, and she drew her own conclusions.

On dates, AMS advises:

> When you're on a date just simply withhold your interest level.

But why would you go out with a woman if you're not interested in her and in getting to know her?
Indeed, when AMS advice to wait a week to contact her again after a date, he says that insecure women will not reply.
Instead, I think he is losing women by playing too disinterestedly.

Also read:

- **How to keep control and power in the relationship**: the healthier way

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

The "women can't love a man" mantra

Says AMS:

> Men who digested the red pill see the world for the way it truly is (…) They understand that **women are incapable of truly loving a man**.

Sentences like these leave me baffled.

Sometimes I have to wonder: can guys who write about seduction never have experienced a woman being in love with him?

And then there is the pot calling the kettle black thing.
As AMS writes about leading women on and never wanting a relationship, doesn't he think that maybe it's him who can't truly love a woman?

I still remain open-minded to this supposed difference of love between a man and a woman, but my experience simply differed.
I've been in love, and some women have been in love with me -sometimes, a *lot* in love, and even when I was a rather average dude-.

So I wished some red pill authors provided some better arguments, examples, or scientific evidence for the mantra

of “women can’t love a man”. But, so far, it just differs from my studies, experience, and observation.

Sometimes confuses culture with nature

Writes AMS:

> Feminism has taught women to let men do all the pursuing.
> Women are taught that since they have the vagina a man should do 100% of the pursuing.

This is just not true.
It’s not feminism that taught women they have lots of power in the sexual marketplace. It’s biology.
If anything, feminism tells women they’re more like men, so it allows women to be more active in dating.

Also, AMS writes:

> Blue pill men tend not to be jealous because they’re completely unaware of female nature.

I strongly doubt it.
Jealousy is inborn.
The author himself teaches to keep jealousy at bay, so he probably also feels it.

Editing could be better

This is not the end of the world, but it does detract a bit from the author’s perceived authority.

Some typos were funny though. Like the “plutonic friend”, for example :)

PROS

I loved many of the concepts in “*Alpha Male Strategies*“.
And he offers a truly unique perspective on dating that few other authors have.

For example:

- Stressing the importance of being comfortable on your own
- The ability to be alone used to weed out uncooperative women

I couldn’t agree more with this:

> This means if a woman is not giving you one hundred percent cooperation you have the ability to walk away.
> This means you’ve mastered the ability to be alone.

- The poor relationship nature between high-value men and demanding women

Says AMS:

> (…) due to your high value mindset maybe you don’t want to put up with their demanding attitudes

That is something I have noticed in myself many times indeed.
I never get together with women who are too demanding. That’s also why on this website, I recommend women not to play too many unavailable games: busy men will not keep chasing.

- AMS is not afraid of being vulnerable

I was expecting someone with that name to engage in some alpha male posturing.

Instead, AMS comes across as a down-to-earth, even vulnerable man.

For example, he says:

> Few men are born alpha. Me myself I was a certified beta male up until I was 27 years old.

Alpha Male Strategies Review

I got to make a mea culpa.

I didn't approach "*Alpha Male Strategies*" with the highest expectations.
I had seen a video from Todd Valentine where he criticized some red pill concepts, and the comments in there seemed to say Todd was actually criticizing AMS (and yes, I think he was).

So, somehow, I had built the wrong impression this was going to be some alpha male posturing caricature, mixed with red pill misogyny.
And while there is *some* stuff I disagree with, there is also a lot of great content here.
Some of the content goes to the core of what's a high-value man, and some of it is also unique in the dating and seduction industry.

The author is also no show-off, he is actually very vulnerable and open in sharing himself and his past failures.

AMS says that he got much inspiration from Corey Wayne, author of "How to Be a 3% Man", but I liked "*Alpha Male Strategies*" even more, and I find his seduction advice to be more effective.

If it weren't for some win-lose and manipulative approaches I disagree with, such as the justification of male manipulation on females' own manipulative nature, plus the red pill mantra that "women can't love", then this could be one of the best dating books for men.

AMS' focus is also an interesting niche that is relatively under-served by seduction advice: picking up not scads of new women with endless spam cold approaches, but just enough new ones to keep a small harem and a healthy rotation.

Check the:

- **Best dating books for men**
- Best red pill books

Or **get AMS on Amazon**

RSD Blueprint Decoded: Review & Notes

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Blueprint Decoded is a mix of self-help and dating courses for men, and the flagship product from Real Social Dynamics.
The course is a set of talks delivered by Owen Cook, the main author.
"*The Blueprint Decoded*" takes a holistic approach to dating. It helps men improve their lives first and foremost and, as a reflection, their dating lives as well.

Contents

- Overview
- Owen Cook / RSD Tyler Review
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- RSD Review
- Blueprint Decoded Review

Overview

- **You're behaving low-value because you don't have true core confidence**: Your brain stops you from feeling and acting low-value in two ways:
  - It scans for environmental cues, and if they don't all say "you're high value", then you behave low value
  - Your own internal rules for what it means to be successful often tell you that "you're not successful yet", and thus you don't allow yourself to be high-value
- **To develop true core confidence, you must control your state and change your own self-assessment**: Changing that means acting with high-value at all times. And changing your internal rules and your self-talk in a

way that is more

- **That will take time. In the meanwhile, focus on not being indifferent to what others think of you**: you can learn not to care about what people think of you. That way, people cannot make you feel low-value. If you can go out and have a good time no matter what, you're doing great already

Owen Cook / RSD Tyler Review

The author of "*Blueprint Decoded*" is Owen Cook, who is also known as "Tyler", from Tyler Durden's character in the movie "*The Fight Club*".

That was his nickname at the beginning of the Pick-Up Artist movement, of which he was one of the earliest and most prominent figures.
Those who have read "*The Game*" by Neil Strauss will not come out with the best image of Owen Cook.

The early PUA movement was about finding out what worked with women. It had somewhat of a geeky, "cracking the code" approach to it.
It was a lot about memorizing what to say ("routines", using different techniques that would allegedly enthrall women (from NLP to hypnosis), and codifying systems of steps that would supposedly lead from meeting a woman to bedding that woman -see "*The Mystery Method*"-.

Owen Cook embodied that movement very well. Affected by Asperger, Tyler had to learn social skills without any natural ability to understand them.
Whether that makes him suited to teach social skills and social dynamics, I will leave it up to you to answer.

I can see how memorizing routines and steps attracted Owen Cook in those early days: they provided a way to interact with people and women without having to actually *understand* people, women, and social interactions. It was a bit like programming applied to social interaction: start by saying X; if they say Y, reply, Z. And so on (today things have changed, and you can find many dating coaches who either have natural skills or who truly learned psychology and made plenty of personal experience).

Whatever you think of Owen Cook, and however badly he might have come across in "*The Game*", he can still smile at how things eventually turned out.
As the pick-up community gathered steam and attracted more and more men, he founded with 2 other guys "Real Social Dynamics", a company aimed at providing courses and training on how to better socialize and meet women.
Once "*The Game*" hit the bookshelves -and Neil Strass toured the States to promote it-, Owen and Real Social Dynamics were in the best position to ride that wave -and cash it in-.
Albeit rarely in mainstream TVs and publications, Owen Cook has been for many years the public face of pick-up, and the most famous teacher in that space. And for many years, RSD has been the main name and brand when it came to seduction.

Things changed though.
As seduction grew, new and more socially skilled coaches started entering the field.
As the community evolved and moved away from routines, RSD image suffered a bit. Owen Cook also evolved his style and game, but probably not enough to remain a leading figure in the new, evolving environment ("*Blueprint Decoded*" we review here was aimed at moving past the routines).

But thanks to smart business choices, RSD still remained at the forefront of the industry.
RSD grew new coaches from within and allowed them enough freedom to keep building their name and brand *within* the RSD ecosystem.
See for example RSDJulian, author of *Transformation Mastery*, and former RSDTodd, author of *Day Game* and *The System* (Todd later acrimoniously divorced from RSD).

Albeit not the dominant force it was, RSD is still one of the biggest names in the male dating and self-development industry.

Talking about self-development, RSD today is slightly moving away from pure pick-up and focusing a bit more on general socialization, self-development, and, as he calls it, “personal transformation”.

We will see how that goes.
Surely Owen Cook’s story is a fascinating one.

And he shows no signs of slowing down.

Blueprint Decoded SUMMARY

Tyler wrote the Blueprint material over a span of four years.
These are my notes from *Blueprint Decoded*:

1. Men & Women are Valued on Different Criteria, And That Empowers Men

Women’s value is mostly based on looks.
Within a few seconds, a man can say whether or not he is attracted to a woman, simply based on her physical attributes.

Men instead provide value to a woman in different ways besides their looks and physics.

For more read:

- **Sexual market place: a primer**

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

2. Core Confidence Trump Situational Confidence

This is one of the “core” concepts of “*The Blueprint Decoded* and one of my favorites.

Situational confidence is based on the environment, the situation, or the relevance of specific traits.
If you are in the office, for example, and you are an MD, then you will probably be confident, because you have a lot of power in that environment.

Now imagine a guy who looks bad and is overall insecure.
But he is a manager at McDonald’s.

If you looked at this guy, you would think he doesn’t get laid and doesn’t have any social status.

Instead, he probably has a lot of social status when he’s working at McDonald’s. And he could probably hook up with the waitresses working for him.

That’s how situational confidence can turn a below-average Joe into a successful guy.

But if that guy doesn’t also have core confidence, the moment he steps outside of work, he’s a nobody.

Core confidence comes from within.
When you are generally confident about yourself, you are confident no matter where you are, and no matter what you have.

3. Your Brain Scans for Social Cues & Stops You from Having Core Confidence & High-Value States

Most likely, you know how to act like a high-value man.

But your brain is stopping you.
How is it stopping you?

Your brain naturally picks on the social signals and social dynamics around you. And if it perceives that you are not a high-value guy, then it makes you act like a low-value guy.
Such as, **environmental cues block your mental access to high-value states**. And you *feel* low-value.
This is psychological self-cockblocking.

If someone treats you like a chump, then your brain tells you to act more like a chump.
We can speculate with some *evolutionary psychology* that men developed those behaviors to keep safe within the group and avoid challenging more powerful men.

However, that has today become maladaptive.
There is nobody who is going to attack you for hitting on a hot girl at a club or at the mall. And nobody is going to attack you for acting high-value no matter what situation you're in.

Today, acting high-value no matter what will always pay off.

4. Your Self-Evaluation Controls Your Access to High-Value States & Core Confidence

There are two elements that determine your access to high-value states

1. Social cues (we just discussed)
2. Your internal rules and standards

Your own self-evaluations sometimes stop you from feeling -and acting- like a high-value man.

For example, your rule might say: "When I launch my company and it starts making 5 figures a month, *then* I will be a high-value guy and *then* I can feel great about myself".

But until you get there, you are precluding yourself from enjoying that high-value state and behavior. And those are exactly what makes it more likely for you to get there in the first place.

My Note: This one took a leaf from Tony Robbins
Owen Cook here took a leaf from Tony Robbins' work. Tony Robbins was the first one I heard to teach internal rules. Also see: *Personal Power II.*

What type of self-talk do you have?
Does your self-talk tell you that you're a good-for-nothing guy who will only deserve some scraps of respect once he achieves X, Y, or Z?

If that's the case, maybe you should change that.

And maybe you should change your own judging criteria and rules to something that allows you to feel good no matter what.

5. Once You Manage Your Internal Rules to Always Feel High-Value, Offer Value Without Asking Anything Back

Once you manage to feel high value and content with your life, two things happen:

1. You always feel good, perennially in a high-value state.
2. You can start *giving* value

Being properly "in state" for Tyler means that you talk to people, women, and groups, from a place of enjoying life and want to have a good time.

When you are generally happy and content with your life, you communicate a lot of great things about yourself. People think you must have a great life, and that you are probably also getting laid (pre-selection).

My Note: That's true… With a caveat

I agree with Tyler, too many people fail to recognize the importance of being content with one's life (also see "What Women Want" by Tucker Max and Geoffrey Miller).
However, there can be such a thing as acting "too happy", which feels off. And sometimes I feel that Tyler's infields are too much on the entertainer side.

When you are in the state, you offer value and make people feel good without asking for anything in return.

When you give instead of taking, people want more of you, and that makes you high value not just to yourself, but to everyone around you as well.

6. To Begin With, Focus on Not Letting Other People's Opinion Get to You

The road to core confidence is a long one.

Before you get there, you want to focus on insulating yourself from the social cues that tell you that "you're not good enough".

How do you do it?
By developing indifference.

You want to become indifferent to all reactions you get from people. Especially the negative ones. If you can go out and enjoy yourself even when all women reject you, then you're well on your road to mastery.

> What To Do When A Girl Rejects You: Definitive Guide

CONS

- **Too Long**

The marketing for "*The Blueprint Decoded*" says: "over 20 hours of life-changing knowledge".

20 hours… You gotta wonder if that is a bonus point or a drawback. In my opinion, it's a failure to present and package information.

However, it would still be OK if the material was still on point. The problem is that there is too much fluff:

- **Fluffy**

Owen Cook loves to talk.

And that's all good and dandy. Especially if you're with friends and shooting the breeze.
But when you're talking to train and deliver information, you should probably be less verbose and more informative.

Instead, I find "*The Blueprint Decoded*" to be an endless string of words, sometimes without a clear direction or goal.

- **Sometimes superficial analysis**

Owen analyzes the roles of lovers and providers.

I suppose for a beginner, that might be helpful.
But otherwise, it's a rather superficial analysis based on stereotypes. It paints a positive stereotype for the lover, who gets the girl without investment and uses a negative stereotype for the provider, who pays and gets cuckolded.

Sometimes it is like that, of course.

But the reality is more complex.
Sometimes the lover is an idiot, and some other times a provider can be a high-quality provider.

To learn more, read:

- **Lovers VS provider (VS friends)**: analyzing the dating roles in relation to their quality
- **Lover or provider**: picking your best strategy

https://thepowermoves.com/lover-provider-friend-dating-strategies/

- **Some feel-good crap**

Owen calls the idea that men need to look good to pick-up girls "social conditioning".

I suppose that helps the men who are more likely to buy his products to feel good about themselves -and about Tyler-.

And in a way, it's true.
You don't need to look good.
But it helps.

What Tyler is not providing, is a good, evidence-based analysis, together with practical steps that people can take.
For example: how to maximize their looks, or what other traits to develop -just telling them to develop "charisma" does not qualify-.

The same goes for "don't put women on a pedestal, in truth men and women are on the same level".
Again, not true.
On average, average women have more value than average men.
But at the very top, the relation inverts (also see: (add links here).

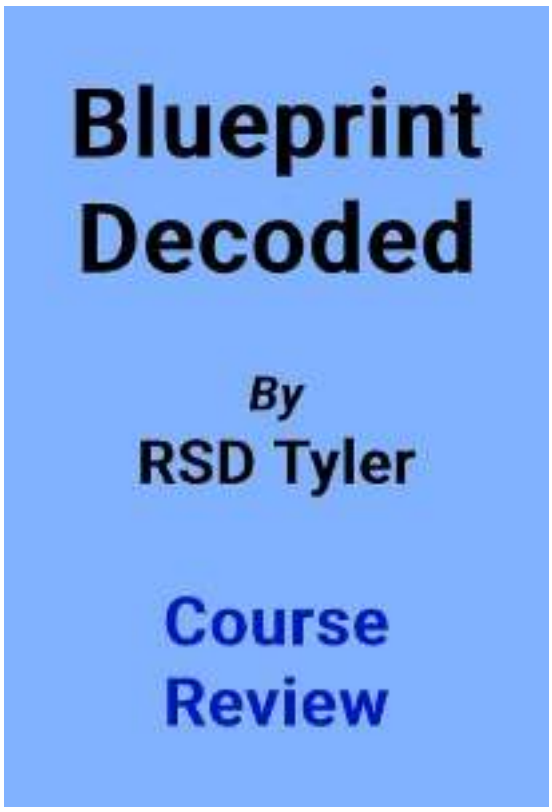
- **High energy risks "jester" vibes**

Tyler leans heavily into the "high-energy" side.

And he advises people to be more like him.
For example, he recommends listeners "get in state" by reproducing animals' sounds, gathering in circles, and jumping and shouting.
Then, go cold-approaching girls in that state.

I disagree with that type of advice.
Or at least, I disagree if it's aimed at making you act like you're an ADHD bouncing off the walls.

Tyler's own teachings seem to stem from this "high-energy" ideal.
Even when he says that looks and money don't matter, he asks: "is the most popular guy at the party always the best looking"?
Tyler seems to equate "popular" with "the guy who's getting the most attention, by being the loudest".



RSD Review

Both RSD and RSD Tyler tend to be on the "high-energy" end of the spectrum.
And hyper-social.
He comes across as a bit ADHD, to be honest.

He laughs a lot and loudly, shouts, moves quickly, and darts around.

There are many ways of seducing.
One can seduce one-on-one, or attract everyone's attention with over-the-top behavior and hope some girl will be attracted and bite. Obviously, Tyler's style is more suited for the latter.

For a while, the "high-energy" style was very popular in seduction communities. As a matter of fact, it was the only one being taught.
Even today, some coaches are still teaching this method.
Charlie from "*Charisma University*", for example, teaches this method.

I don't think "high-energy" and "hyper-social" is the best to build a deeper connection -or to seduce, for that matter-.

I remember there was an "infield video" of Tyler on YouTube gaming a so-called "alpha female girl". Unluckily it's gone, but to me, it felt like all smoke and no meat.

However, that is not to say that high-energy does not work.
It can also work very well, depending on the situation. One can attract lots of attention and then go home with the star-struck girl -or the equally high-energy girl-.

But if you are not high-energy yourself, I don't recommend you copy this style.
It will come across as weird, and there is no point in trying to be someone you're not -or someone you don't enjoy becoming-.

RSD Pivot Into Self-Help

Recently, RSD has been moving away from pure pick-up and seduction and embracing more general self-help.

However, to me, it feels a lot like woo-woo self-help, and it's rather undifferentiated from all the self-help based on the law of attraction.
I don't personally consume that type of content and neither would I advise my audience to.

Blueprint Decoded Review

There are some great ideas in "*The Blueprint Decoded*".

The main messages that I teased above can be life-changing indeed.

Unluckily, they are to be found and rescued in a sea of verbosity.
People who don't have the patience, or who get distracted, might even miss them.

I think that's a big con: the course should have been structured around those key, core ideas, and then provided examples and exercises around those key ideas.
Then it would have been a great course.

As it is presented and packaged now, I can't give it a very high rating.

Finally, when it comes to mating intelligence and a few core concepts of mating intelligence, it's lacking.
The analysis of the lover-provider is just skin-deep, and the analysis of which traits confer power and leverage in the mating marketplace is more about feel-good than about what actually works.

Overall: 5/5 for the wisdom on situational and core confidence.
But 2/5 as a 20-DVDs product to share that wisdom.

Check out the **best dating books for guys**.

Conversation Casanova: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Conversation Casanova is a good dating book for men teaching readers how to talk to women in order to bond with them and seduce them.
The *Conversation Casanova* system is based on sexualizing the conversation and moving beyond small talk to truly get to know your conversation partner.

Contents

- NOTES
  - More Wisdom
  - CONS
  - PROS
- Review

NOTES

About the Author:
Dave Perrotta wasn't a natural at socializing, making friends, or talking to women.
But he craved more, and he actively sought improvement until he got so good that he decided it was time to teach what he had learned (based on the book itself).

The Casanova Mindsets

These are the core mindsets you need to get better at conversations and seduction:

1. **I am responsible for my life and my circumstances**
2. **I am enough. I don't need the approval of someone else to feel complete:** when you focus on approval, you live by other people's standards, and you relinquish control (see next paragraph)
3. **I have a mission and purpose in life, and women are not my #1 priority**
4. **All women are attracted to me until proven otherwise**

Some women will be into you. But they will not come out and tell you. And sometimes, it's difficult to read the signs, whether she's into you or not.
To fix that problem, simply assume that all women are attracted to you. That will also lead to more attractive behavior from your side, and some women who were on the fence will actually like you more.

Why You Must Overcome the Need for Validation

This part was by far my favorite in the whole book.

As a matter of fact, it was one of my favorite passages in all the books on seduction I have read.
The need for validation is one of the most important and yet least discussed aspects of seduction.

Perrotta says that most men subconsciously feel like they are not enough and that they need something external to complete or "make them better".

In seduction, the external validation often ends up being women.
But there are never enough women to plug that hole.

Writes Perrotta:

> Once you score a date with the girl, you'll want to bring her back to your place. Once you bring her to your place, you'll want to have sex with her. Then, you'll want to tell your friends about it and "show her off."
> That will be nice and feel good, but the good feeling will wear off. Soon, you'll want more.
> You'll want to experience this feeling of approval again, and you'll need other women to fill the need. You'll need to keep trying harder to impress your friends and your parents.
> The cycle will never end.

When you focus on other people's approval of you, you are living by their standards, not yours. You are relinquishing control of your life and your well-being to outside sources.

I also loved Perrotta's question about finding out whether you still have a need for validation or not:

> Think of dating/picking up your dream girl. What excites you more? Experiencing her beauty, personality, and passion? Or bragging to your friends about getting such a 'hottie'?

To that question, I would also add: are you excited about the thought of "having it pulled off"?
Then you are probably chasing your own validation.

And the game is the same: there will rarely ever be "enough" for you to feel "good enough".

Overcoming Approach Anxiety

1. **Focus on overcoming your fears**: make it more about winning your own battle against fear than approaching the girl. It feels better to conquer your fear than to actually talk to girls. And that will make you more result-independent, too.
2. **Shift your perspective**: most guys think it's risky to talk to women because rejection hurts. But in truth, it's far riskier not to talk to them. That's the perspective shift you need to undertake.
3. **Tap into your manhood**: feel the attraction, and let that lead you

I would also add here: since most guys focus on what they don't like to find an excuse, focus on what you like instead.

How to Make a Great First Impression

1. **Slow down your speech rate**: most guys talk too fast, and slower is more attractive
2. **Avoid jerking, speedy, or anxious movements**: or anything that looks like fidgeting
3. **Use the "sexy smile"**: with one corner of your lips higher than the other (and avoid the big, toothy smiles)
4. **Strike a good balance between being too goofy (wrong) or overly serious (wrong)**: crack some jokes sometimes, but overall have a conversation aimed at getting to know her
5. **Adopt good posture**: and strong body language
6. **Give strong eye contact**: and avoid darting your eyes around
7. **Talk at your natural voice pitch**: high-pitched voices are unattractive, and to speak deeper, make sure you breathe from your belly

How to Have a Good Early Conversation

1. Early on, make an "assumption statement" instead of asking questions: for example, instead of "what do you do", you can say: "you look like an artistic type, are you a designer or something" (something that Mark Manson in "Models" also recommends)
2. Ask a close-ended question first: for example: "where do you come from?"

3. Then ask an open-ended one to build on the previous question, “oh cool, how is it like there?”
4. Then build up on what she said by sharing a comment, your own experience, or how you feel about it

How to Bond and Relate

Perrotta says that to bond and relate you need to help people see you as “the same”, as opposed to as “the other”.

He then goes on to describe the most common conversational mistakes people commit and how to fix them.
He recommends avoiding making too-contentious opinions early on and letting the girl talk more (I agree).

Also read:

- How to bond and relate (with plenty of examples)

> How to Build Deep Emotional Connection

You Must Genuinely Love Women

Dave Perrotta says:

> In order to be truly successful with women you need to become a man who loves women.

I think that in this era of bitterness and the red pill, we need that type of reminder.

Also see:

- How to grow beyond the anger

More Wisdom

- Ask for her number or to see her again at a high point of the interaction; this is always a good reminder
- To flirt, don’t ask “what kind of guys do you like”, but “what kind of guys do you find sexy”: this is my own note on Perrotta’s suggestion, and I loved it. I used to ask “what kind of guys do you like”, but from now on, I will switch “like” with “sexy.”
- Imply that she is hitting on you: this is something I used to do a lot but that over time I drastically reduced. It works though, and it was a good reminder that I can also restart doing it a bit more often
- Touch during the conversation: even in the beginning, and possibly before asking for her contact information because I found out that a touch before the request increased compliance. The elbow or the side of her arm are good places for initial touches
- If you’re walking through a crowded place, take her hand
- When talking about yourself, realize that it’s about communicating your sexy qualities
- The two most important qualities to convey are dominance and prosocial traits
- Among your qualities, do include “appreciation of beauty” and vulnerability

CONS

- **“I know this is really random” opener**

Perrotta presents four different types of openers.

“I know this is really random…” is how he sets up his direct opener.

It was a rather common one in seduction communication, and it almost went mainstream (also referenced by Tim

Ferris in "*The 4-Hour Workweek*").

However, I never liked that type of opener.
Perrotta advises readers to slow down on that "reeeaaallly", which further draws attention to how random your interaction is.
But that also makes it far less natural, and whenever possible, I prefer to make my interactions seem natural and effortless.

This isn't based just on opinions: I used it a lot, and for me, it didn't work nearly as well as other types of openers.

- **Grabbing her contact info with the "I know this random…"**

Same as above.
When the girl is in a rush, Perrotta recommends you grab her contact information with the following sentence:

> I know this is random and we literally just met, but you have a really fun/interesting vibe. We should grab a drink this week or next."

Again, I wouldn't draw attention to the "randomness" bit.
The rationale for doing that is that you "pace her reality", as the early PUA called it, and that you show emotional and social intelligence.

But it also somewhat shows low standards: you "literally just met someone" and you already want to hang out?
Ideally, you want to exchange contact when there is some interest or when she qualifies a bit.

The "you have a really fun vibe" is a form of qualification, but it could be better, in my opinion (for example, it's better to ask a question to make her qualify and then use her answer to qualify her).

Alternatively, I prefer to be more honest and say "you seem the kind of girl I like".
The "fun vibe" just doesn't feel genuine to me.

- **The "agree and amplify" technique is good advice, but doesn't always work well**

Perrotta mentions women's shit tests and recommends the "agree and amplify" technique to pass those tests.

He calls it "agree and exaggerate," but it's the same.

For example:

> **Her**: "I'm too old for you…"
> **You**: "Oh, I know. I'm just a boy trying to find his place in this big world. I'm no match for a sexy, mature girl like yourself."

I think the "agree and amplify" technique can work in some situations. But often, it doesn't. It's because you remain within their frame, which gives them control.
Plus, you are following their lead.
Also read: frame control and how to properly use frames.

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

PROS

- **Highlights the importance of prosocial qualities**

Dave Perrotta is one of the few, if not the *only,* authors I remember to highlight the importance of prosocial traits. Most authors focus on being more of an asshole, or on being more dominant. There is a place for both of them, but prosociality is what makes the difference between a non-pro social dominant man that high-quality women reject, and a dominant man women want more and more in their lives.

Props to Perrotta for delving into such an important yet underrated aspect of seduction (and socialization in general).

- **Very good on many of the basics**

Conversation Casanova puts together many of the main basics of good conversation, and it's equally good in highlighting

Review

Conversation Casanova is a great book for beginners because it covers many of the basics.

Because it focuses on the basics, more advanced students of the social arts might find "*Conversation Casanova*" to be OK, but not to break lots of new ground.

A few times, I disagreed with the advice -see the "cons" section above-.
But overall, I agree with most of what Perrotta says. We also have had a somewhat similar trajectory, so I can understand Dave's own drives and motivations.

Finally, even as a non-beginner, there were also a couple of important reminders, plus a good new nugget of wisdom I took away and which I will be implementing.

Check out the **best dating books for guys** or **get the book on Amazon.**

The 5 Laws of Social Success: Smart Power, For Smart Cooperation

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 January 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Most self-help advice gets social life wrong.
Some is naive "just be nice" advice. Others push ruthless tactics. Both fail to deliver the most better (and the best life) in the real world

The truth? Real social success comes from *smart power* — the ability to build allies, earn respect, and win with win-win, without exposing yourself to unneeded risks.

This guide reveals the **five laws of social success** — the foundation of every powerful, respected, and fulfilled man's life.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- Intro
  - Smart Cooperation
- 1. Make Friends, Not Enemies
  - 1.2. Keep Your Enemies Few, and Weak
  - 1.3. Avoid Wars, Keep The Unavoidable Ones Limited
  - ⍰ Examples: Trump & Johnny Depp
- 2. Pick & Stick With High-Quality People
  - 2.2. Avoid Cheats & Turkeys
- 3. Build & Sustain Strategic Win-Win
  - 3.2. Use Win-Win Frames
  - ━ When You Can Go Alone

- 4. Be High-Power High-Warmth
  - 4.2. Be “Politely Direct”
  - Calibrate directness
- 5. Plan For Failure (CYA)
  - 5.2. Plan With The End In Mind
- 5. Bonus: Be Honorable
- Learn More

Intro

Much of the self-help literature is naive.

And the more realistic literature, including popular literature on power, rests on cynicism.

They’re both partially right.

Self-development, giving, and genuine relationships are foundational to a good and successful life.
And power, manipulation, or dark psychology are necessary for self-protection—and equally foundational for success.
A foundation of “healthy cynicism” is good.

However, they’re both also lacking—but also lacking.

Self-development without a healthy dose of reality, including its ‘darker’ aspects, sets you up for failure.

Total cynicism on the other hand can *sound* more ‘real’ and effective—especially to those who spot the flaws in standard self-help.

But total cynicism is no more effective than naive self-help is.
And it’s *especially* harmful for close relationships and, generally, for a happy life.

What is effective, then?

Smart Cooperation

Smart cooperation is the most effective.

Cooperation is the backbone of progress, civilization, and power projection.

The most influential evolutionary psychology theories posit that collaboration evolved because it was good for the selfish individual, their kin, and their groups (Axelrod and Hamilton, 1984; Ridley, 1996).

Just look around, and cooperation has produced everything worthwhile. And cooperating groups overpower individuals.

Collaboration is simple: it means that the value you each contribute leads to more value for both of you.

To us, it means that **anyone who learns to better cooperate wins**.
Hence, the basics of successful socialization leverage cooperation, while reducing its downsides.

Here's how:

1. Make Friends, Not Enemies

Make friends and allies who can further your goals. Friends are a power multiplier and a safety net.

Match dominant men's strength to befriend men
They're often competitive and dominant, so if you're too similar, you might clash over the alpha spot.
Instead of antagonizing, consider mutual respect. Show strength, with respect.

1.2. Keep Your Enemies Few, and Weak

And pick them wisely.

The safest enemies are:

- **Physically distant**, avoid neighbors who would pollute your life
- **Low power**, easily dispatched and unable to retaliate
- **Cool-headed**, fighting for a goal, not for sport
- **Individuals**, rather than groups or movements
  ⍰⍰ If you start a war with groups, only declare war on the leader, NOT the full group.

Fewer enemies mean you can focus your firepower if needed.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Keep litigious people at arms' length**

Lucio:
I steer clear of petty squabbles.

I set up a “cordially distant” relationship with my cantankerous and litigious neighbor:

- **Friendly** when we meet
  - I give what’s easy to give ⍰
- **But always busy** and “gotta go” to limit contact
- **Superficially supportive** and “yeah yeah” her problems to prevent getting dragged down

I act warm but too busy and above it all to be bothered. Worked like a charm.

1.3. Avoid Wars, Keep The Unavoidable Ones Limited

Avoid any conflict that doesn’t further your goals.

When you must fight, fight:

✅ **Stealth**, never attack yourself. Remain invisible, and you’re unassailable
✅ **Expedient**, fought for a specific reason
✅ **Fast**, avoid gridlocks that waste time and resources
✅ **Clean**, to avoid all-consuming hatred, keep enemies as friendly as possible. ⍰ See ‘Gentleman’s Warrior approach‘
✅ **Siloed**: one issue/front only

⍰ Examples: Trump & Johnny Depp

> **Ivana**: Donald during the divorce was brutal. He took the divorce as a business deal
>
> **Trump**: (Publicly) you will never hear me disparage Ivana because she’s the mother of my kids (…) she’s a

> good mother (…) We're good friends (…) I wish both of them to be happy

♟ **Fight to win, but maintain good relationship**
Trump let his lawyers bitterly fight his exes, while publicly commending them.
Trump maintained good relationships, access to the children, and avoided bad press.
That was crucial in his future presidential runs.

See:

- **How Johnny Depp Beat Amber Heard** by making friends

And here is what one of the Power University alumni said when he discovered how this law applies to frenemies:

> I recovered, thankfully, but a valuable lesson was learned that day: fight only as a last resort. And seek out friendlier options if possible. If I applied your knowledge to that situation today, I am sure things would have turned out differently.

2. Pick & Stick With High-Quality People

They make your life better and help you up.

At the most general level, high quality people to you are:

1. **Non-value-takers**, obviously, but it's important to start with the basic
2. **Value-givers**, or at least willing to

I personally also include traits such as:

1. **Honorable character**, able to own up to mistakes and apologize when wrong
2. **Ethics and morals**. It's not about being a saint or "nice", but having basic standards of morals and ethics. Including preferring to do win-win, rather than taking advantage of others
3. **Open to talk, listen and change**, including antifragile ego and growth mindset. Since nobody is perfect and nobody is perfect for us, they must be willing to listen and consider changes

2.2. Avoid Cheats & Turkeys

They make your life worse and drag you down.

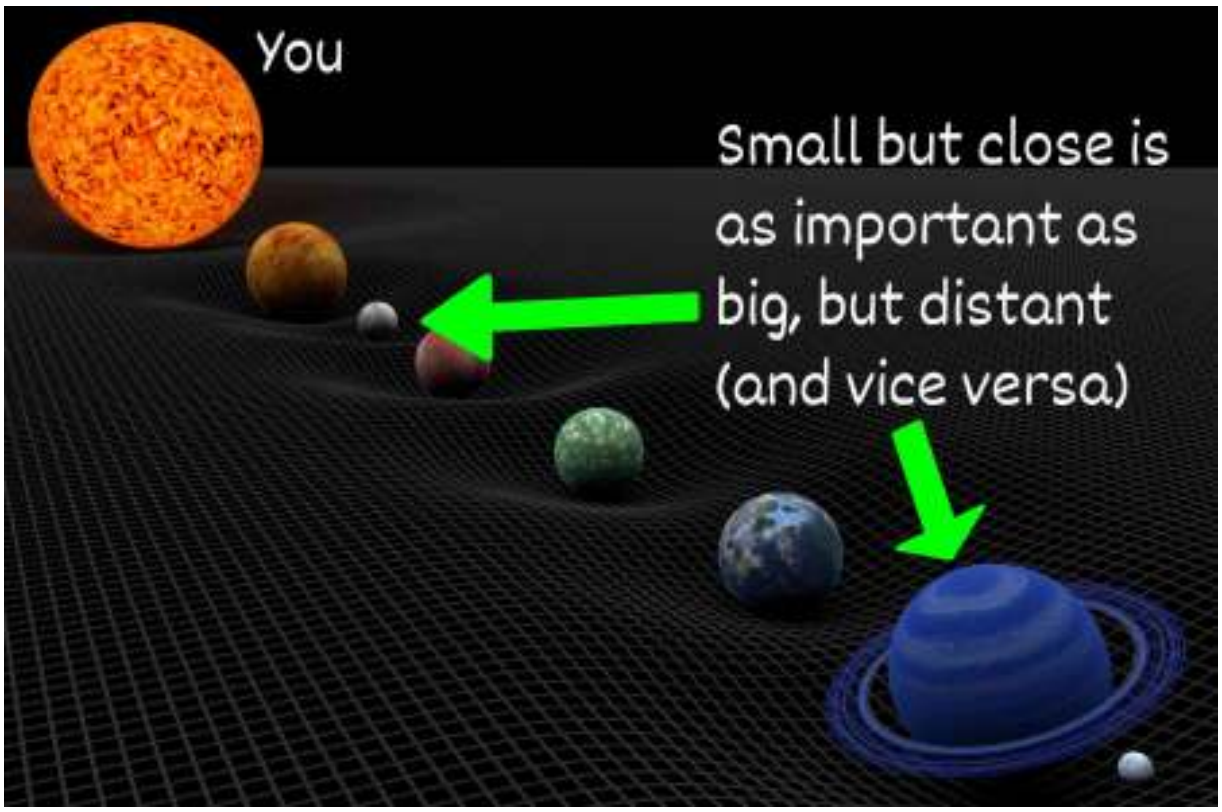
Of course, nobody is perfect.
But evidence shows people differ. Including their moral fiber, their giving/taking attitude, and their mental dispositions.

Avoid people inveterate manipulators, takers, and overly pessimistic people.

Also read:

- How to spot takers

Gravity Principle: the more impactful they are, the better they must be



Because of repeated exposure, proximity is crucial. Principle:

⚖ **The closer the relationship, the more important quality and win-win become**.

- ⍰ **Proximity Rule** with real-life example
- ⍰⍰ Giving to neighbors instead of strangers

3. Build & Sustain Strategic Win-Win

Game theory models, evolutionary theories and real-life observation show that cooperation benefits the individual (Axelrod, 1984). Win-win cooperation is a power multiplier.

Some approaches are:

1. **Prefer win-win** to naturally show it with vibe and action
2. **Strategically display leverage**, such as your power for retribution, escalation, and 'other options' <— ⚠ Must be done tactfully to avoid souring the relationship!
3. **Call out any non-cooperative move** to ensure you don't pass for naive and exploitable. Even things out of necessary with a non-cooperative move of your own ('provocability' in game theory)
4. **Keep giving** within win-win (and getting)
5. **Remind of the benefits/costs** of cooperation VS fallouts (strategically)

Potentially:

1. **Police and control**, and let people know about the costs of cheating

3.2. Use Win-Win Frames

Some ways to do it:

1. **Use cooperation-evoking keywords** and expressions as evidence shows it works
   Ie.: *"We"; "Together"; "Teamwork"; "We're a great team"; "Great job, partner!"*

2. **Say it** or sub-communicate it
   Ie.:
   - *"I believe in win-win"*
   - *"I support my partner and expect the same—otherwise, why bother?"*
   - *"I help my friends out whenever I can. They do the same to me, and that's why I love them"*
3. **Show it**, and come through for your friends, allies, team, and leaders
   Ie.: If your best friend is sick, show up to his door with groceries

3.2.2. Reframe as Win-Win

Remind and re-set the win-win frame, especially during hiccups or disagreements.

⍰ "How to" and examples in our premium material.

Note: win-win ≠ being "nice"
You can be assertive, get angry, or momentarily even go for win-lose. If overall you prefer win-win, you're still a "win-win guy".
Win-win also doesn't mean 'perfect 50/50 split'. If in negotiations you capture 90% of the added value, that may not be fair, but it's still win-win.

For good examples:

- **Handling shit test with collaboration**: a real-life example from John
- **Removing the seed of antagonism**: see an example from my own life

Also read:

- **Frame control**

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

⍰ When You Can Go Alone

Everyone benefits from smart cooperation.

And cooperation is most crucial for underdogs, challenging environments, or large missions.

But you can go alone when you:

- **Can achieve your goals solo**
- **Love walking and working solo**
- **Enjoy total dominance**, and competitors can't beat you, not even when teaming up

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **I love my life as a lone wolf**

Lucio:
Much of my life I walked alone.

It's how I liked it and worked great for me.

I'm even proud because it's tougher—finding dates, friends, and new circles while restarting fresh and managing business solo.

However, I still embrace win-win approaches and techniques.
They worked great, even with more transient relationships.

P.S.: Why not win-lose?
 The case for limiting win-lose (more theoretical)

Also read:

"Enlightened collaborator".

> The 'Smart Collaborator': Giving For Win-Win, Without Being Exploited

4. Be High-Power High-Warmth

Power gives you respect, status, and attraction.

Warmth gives you prestige, friends, and the social charm everyone loves.

Also read:

- Value and availability, a geekier explanation of how the two intersect
- **High power & high warmth**

> Social Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

4.2. Be "Politely Direct"

Direct communication feels assertive, powerful, and honest.

Too much indirectness feels fearful, submissive, and 'sneaky'.

The best combination is direct AND polite.

Low Power Indirect	High Power Direct
Date is late: *Do you think maybe next time you could warn me on time?*	*Hey listen, I don't know if we'll meet again, but if we do, I expect more punctuality, OK?* (then be warm)
Rejecting an invite: *I'm not sure if I can make it, maybe another time?*	*Thanks for the invite! Unfortunately, I got something on that day*
Negotiation: *I guess that may not work for me*	*Appreciate the offer, but doesn't work for me. Here's what does though…*

Calibrate directness

Adapt to your:

- **Culture & context**: err on the side of directness *within your culture*
- **Boss**: indirect boss, be more indirect. Direct boss, be more direct
- **Power**:
  - Indirect with superiors
  - Direct with subordinates

Also read:

- How to socially calibrate

5. Plan For Failure (CYA)

To collaborate only is naive.

This is because **collaboration and cheating are two sides of the same coin**.
You can't do one, without the other.

The conundrum of cooperation:

The closer your cooperation becomes, the higher the costs of betrayal.

However, you can't quit all collaborations and hope to maximize your potential, or enjoy your best life.

The answer is not to avoid collaborations, win-wins, and relationships.
But to be *smart* about them.

This is the overarching theme of our work and mission.

An effective high-level approach:

5.2. Plan With The End In Mind

Most relationships end.

And that's OK.
Plan to:

- **Reduce your fallout costs**
- **Increase their fallout costs** to incentivize continued cooperation
- **Have backup options** to ensure you 'land on your feet'

More in our premium material ⍰.

5. Bonus: Be Honorable

Albeit not strictly necessary to gain power and achieve goals, it adds important benefits such as:

- **Leadership benefits** such as gaining prestige, admiration, and grassroots support for your leadership
- **Inner psychology benefits** such as higher self-esteem and confidence
- **Better relationships**, especially with higher-quality men and women.

Honorable means to uphold and live according to shared ethical standards and values.
For men, it also includes displaying courage and 'leading from the front'.
Learn more here:

- How to be an honorable man

Learn More

These five foundations are your edge—strategic cooperation that wins.

But true mastery comes with action.

Over 3,000 men have transformed their lives with Power University, our proven system for men's empowerment. Our survey showed that our students improved their status, confidence, and respect *manyfold*.

If you want a life edge, check out **Power University**.

Check Power University

The 48 Laws of Power Cheat Sheet

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

This is a cheat sheet for "*The 48 Laws of Power*" by Robert Greene, with an infographic overview, a quick list with brief explanations, and deeper resources.

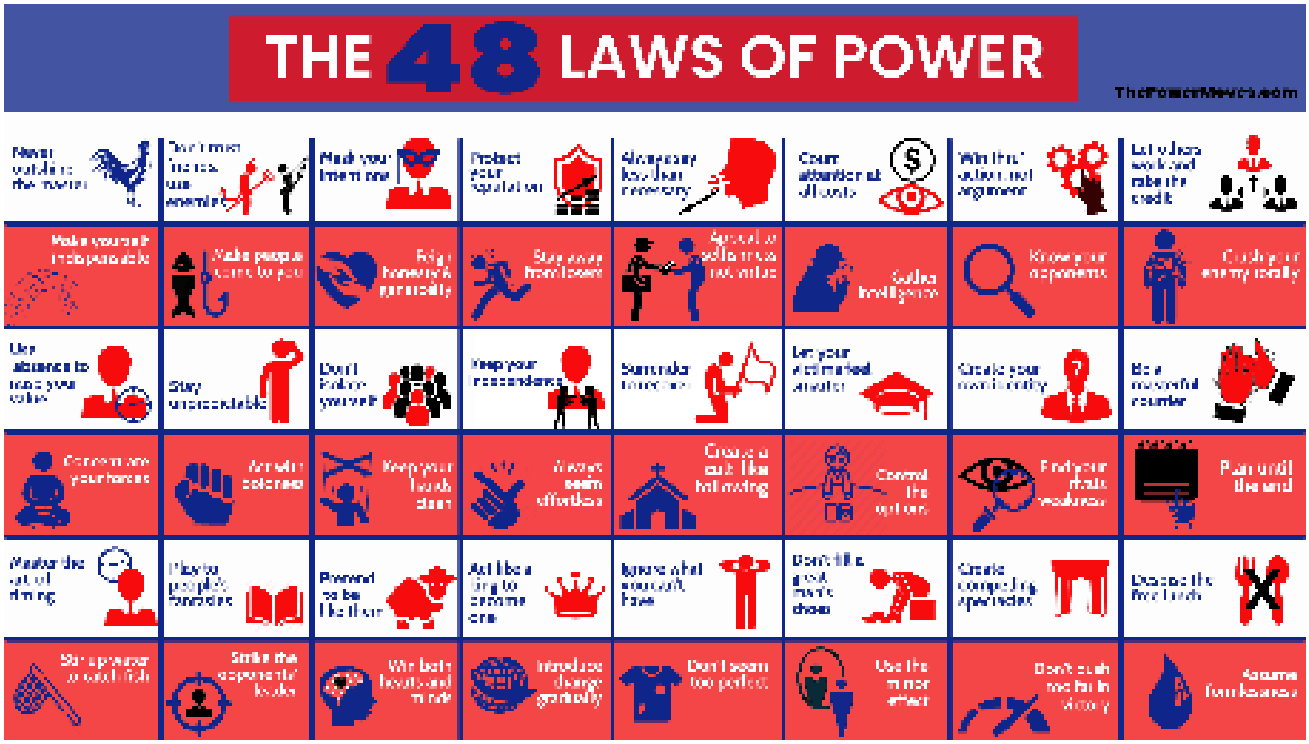
⍰⍰ For the complete book guide, see the main 48 Laws of Power guide.

Contents

- 48 Laws Cheat Sheet
- Cheat Sheet List
- Email Cheet Sheet
- Advanced Guides on Power

48 Laws Cheat Sheet

A cheat sheet in infographic



⍰ **Download it here** at highest resolution

Cheat Sheet List

Law 1: Never Outshine the Master

- Make those above you feel superior. Do not brag or showcase your superior talents, or it will make them dislike you (see here how to brag effectively)
- Rationale: if you prove to be superior, you make them feel insecure, you become a dangerous enemy, and they will want to crush you

Law 2: Never Put Too Much Trust in Friends. Use Your Enemies

- Friends will take you for granted, come to envy and resent you, and turn into frenemies plotting against you. Turn your enemies into allies instead
- Rationale: people want to feel like they earned what they got. If you provide handouts out of friendship, they will resent you. The enemies you helped and turned into friends instead will always appreciate you and want to prove their worth

Law 3: Conceal Your Intentions

- Never say what you're really up to
- Rationale: when you keep people in the dark, they won't be able to prepare or thwart your plans

Law 4: Always Say Less than Necessary

- Powerful people impress by talking less
- Rationale: The more you say, the more you look banal and try-hard. An air of mystery will make you more impressive

Law 5: Protect Your Reputation at All Costs

- Reputation is the cornerstone of power. To resolutely handle an enemy, attack his reputation
- Rationale: People act not based on who you really are, but based on who they *think* you are.

Law 6: Court Attention at All Costs

- Stand out from the crowd
- Rationale: Unknown people have little power. People at the center of attention have lots of power

Law 7: Get Others to Do the Work For You, But Take the Credit

- Make what most bosses do: use their team, but always present the result as if it happened because of them
- Rationale: You will enjoy the windfall while doing nothing

Law 8: Make People Come to You

- Avoid chasing people, but make others approach you and ask you for favors
- Rationale: the person who chases has no power. When people chase you, you have the power

Law 9: Win Through Actions, Never Through Argument

- Talk is cheap, actions always speak louder
- Rationale: talking and explaining make you look like a powerless big-mouth

Law 10: Don't Get Infected by Misery and Misfortune

- Avoid the losers and complainers, associate with the happy and the winners
- Rationale: emotional states are contagious, losers will bring back luck to you

Law 11: Learn to Keep People Dependent on You

- Make yourself indispensable
- Rationale: when people don't need you, you have no leverage. When people need you, then you have the power

Law 12: Use Selective Honesty & Generosity to Disarm Your Victim

- One act of honesty will cover a dozen dishonest ones
- First, make them trust you, and then you deceive them big

- Rationale: if you're always overly Machiavellian, people will catch on, and it will ruin your reputation. Cover your machinations with some fake generosity instead

Law 13: Get Help by Appealing to Self-Interest, Never to Their Mercy

- If you need help, don't remind people of the past good you've done for them. Instead, find something that will benefit them *today*
- Rationale: nobody wants to be reminded of how they have been helped in the past. And nobody wants to help the desperate one. Appeal to what's in it for them, instead

Law 14: Pose As a Friend Work As a Spy

- Gather intelligence and learn people's secrets by getting close to them
- Rationale: You can't learn by watching from afar. Only when you get physically and emotionally close will you be able to pry on all their secrets

Law 15: Crush Your Enemy Totally

- Don't wound. Kill
- Rationale: wounding and inflicting damage will make people seek revenge. If you must hit, hit in a way that your enemies won't be able to retaliate

Law 16: Raise Your Value Through Absence and Scarcity

- Don't be too present. Create value through scarcity and absence
- Rationale: What's common is worthless, and what's rare is valuable. Learn to make people crave your presence, and let them talk and wonder about you when you're strategically not there

Law 17: Keep Others in Suspended Terror: Cultivate an Air of Unpredictability

- Predictability makes you an easy target. Make your moves more random and unpredictable
- Rationale: It's easy to plot against you when people know what you will do. Instead, especially when you have lots of power, being unpredictable will make people fear your next move. And they will be busier protecting themselves than plotting against you

Law 18: Don't Isolate Yourself Behind a Fortress

- Isolation is dangerous: mingle with the people instead
- Rationale: isolation will cut you off from all sources of information. Being in a crowd also means being in the know

Law 19: Know Who You're Dealing with

- Pick good targets, and don't cross the wrong people
- Rationale: different people must be treated differently. When you know who you're dealing with, you can adapt your strategy

Law 20: Do Not Commit to Anyone

- Maintain your Independence as long as possible
- Rationale: Remaining neutral will allow you to better study and understand the situation. And the warring factions will be coming to you asking for support, giving you more power

Law 21: Play A Sucker to Catch a Sucker: Seem Dumber Than Your Mark

- Seem dumber than you really are
- Rationale: when you look dumber and weaker, your opponents will lower their guard

Law 22: Use the Surrender Tactic

- Don't fight until the bitter end, but surrender and regroup
- Rationale: being destroyed yields no benefit. Instead, don't give them the satisfaction of winning on the field. Surrender to infuriate them and to gain time to work on your next move

Law 23: Concentrate Your Forces

- Focus on one thing: intensity beats extensivity
- Rationale: fighting on too many fronts will spread you dangerously thin. It is better to work sequentially on your projects and targets
-

Law 24: Be a Masterful Courtier

- Learn to play the social game, also called "politics". Make people feel good, learn flattery, and use influence and persuasion over brute force
- Rationale: Unless you're already on top, politics matter as much as results do. You must learn to deal with other people in the court: those at your same level, those below you, and most of all, those above you

Law 25: Re-Create Yourself

- Don't leave your image and reputation up to chance or, worse, up to others to shape. Be the master of your own image that you want to project
- Rationale: what's effective is not fixed in time but changes depending on the time, the culture, and the environment. Recreate yourself to remain in power through the changing times

Law 26: Keep Your Hands Clean

- Don't stain your reputation with illegal or immoral acts. Let others do the risky business for you
- Rationale: since reputation is so crucial, you want to avoid getting mired in any scandal

Law 27: Play on People's Need to Believe to Create a Cultlike Following

- Drop rationality and appeal to some large emotional ideal
- Rationale: some people crave to believe in something, and some seek a charismatic leader to follow. Be that charismatic leader who also gives them something to believe in. Don't worry about rationality with these people: emphasize emotions. And they will give you all the power you want (see Donald Trump)

Law 28: Enter Action With Boldness

- Timidity is weak. Do it confidently, or don't do it all
- Rationale: tentative action and body language make you look weak. Look confident and like you know what you're doing instead, and people will naturally respect you

Law 29: Plan All The Way to The End

- Don't start moving towards a goal without knowing how you will reach it.
- Rationale: the end goal is what matters. Too many people start without knowing what they want. Don't be one of them: start planning from the end goal backward

Law 30: Make Your Accomplishments Seem Effortless

- Always look like what you did was easy for you, and you will look far more impressive
- Rationale: people naturally respect effortlessness over hard work. Everyone can achieve it with hard work, but with natural talent? That makes you look vastly superior. And higher SMV, too

Law 31: Control the Options

- Provide people with a few options that all benefit you, and they will do your best interest while feeling strong and empowered
- Rationale: people like to feel in control. Give them a semblance of options, as if they had the power of choice, and they will happily do your best interest

Law 32: Play to People's Fantasies

- Give people what they want to hear
- Rationale: people say they want the truth, but they actually want what makes them feel good. Play to their best fantasies, and they will love you

Law 33: Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew

- Find your opponent's weaknesses, insecurities, and hot buttons
- Rationale: some of the most driven folks are all hiding insecurities (see David Goggins' "Can't Hurt Me", for example). Find out which ones they are, and you will know what forces are controlling them

Law 34: Be Royal in Your Own Fashion—Act Like a King to Be Treated Like One

- Act the way you want to be treated, and pretend you already are who you want to be. And people will treat you like you already are.
- Rationale: how do people know who you really are? For the majority of people who don't know your background, it's based on how you behave and how you dress. Behave like you're royalty, and people will treat you like royalty

Law 35: Master the Art of Timing

- Never seem in a hurry, but look calm and collected, like you always have things under control
- Spot the early trends, and position to take advantage of them
- Only strike when you're ready
- Rationale: Greene bundles up different things under this law. When you look unhurried, you look like you're in control of your life. And when planning your moves, keep in mind the timing and seek to strike at the best time

Law 36: Disdain things you cannot have: ignoring them is the best revenge

- Ignore what you cannot have, and you will look superior
- Rationale: a few things, you can't have them. And for a few issues, you can't solve them. If you make a big deal out of it, people will know that you can't get them. You look powerless. And if you complain about them, you will look butthurt. Instead, don't let them bother you, and it will seem like you're above them.

Law 37: Create Compelling Spectacles

- Curate the appearances, make big shows, dazzle people with spectacles
- Rationale: What people can't see doesn't exist. If they can't see the dirt, it doesn't exist. What is real is limited by what they can see. And if all they can see is a beautiful facade, that's the only reality for them

Law 38: Think As You Like, But Behave Like Others

- When you make a show of being different, people will dislike you. Pretend to be like them instead
- Rationale: when you go against the grain, you communicate that you are different and superior. People will resent you. Blend in instead. At least, blend in until you have enough power to do what you want

Law 39: Stir Up Waters to Catch the Fish

- Unhinge your enemies by getting them emotional
- Rationale: an angry and emotional enemy is an enemy more prone to mistakes. Make them emotional, and you might be able to profit from some poor decisions

Law 40: Despise the Free Lunch

- Avoid freebies, they are rarely truly free. What's worth having is worth paying for, and you will keep your independence
- Rationale: people who give you something usually want something back. When you accept freebies, you allow others to control you through guilt, reciprocation (see Cialdini, 1984), and the Law of Social Exchange, by which you are now indebted to them

Law 41: Avoid Stepping Into a Great Man's Shoes

- Don't follow great people, or their names and reputations might eclipse you. If you truly master, seek a novel path that will make you stand out
- Rationale: What happens first always appears better and more original than what's next. Especially if your predecessor was great, you will look like an average guy who is just keeping up the good work

Law 42: Strike the Shepherd to Scatter the Sheep

- If you are having trouble, always seek to go to the source. If it's about people, attack the leader, not the followers
- Rationale: there is often a major source of your troubles in life. If it's about people, attack the head of the revolt, not the sheep who are following him. Attacking the sheep will only galvanize the other sheep. Attacking the shepherd will end the revolt

Law 43: Work on the hearts and minds of others

- Avoid coercion. Seek to make people want to follow you instead. Win their hearts with emotions. Play their fears. And seek to provide just enough rationale to win their minds, too
- Rationale: unless you are a despot, it's difficult to get what you want with pure strength and dominance. People resent being forced into something, and over the long run, they will rebel and plot against you. It is better to persuade and influence them instead (also read: power over VS power through)

Law 44: Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect

- Copy exactly what they are doing and saying, and it's sure that you will be able to get under their skin
- Rationale: Greene provides two different uses for the mirror effect. One is to get under people's skin, and another is to mirror exactly what they like so that you can charm them

Law 45: Preach the Need for Change, But Never Reform Too Much at Once

- "Change" is a big keyword people love to throw around. So embrace. But don't change too quickly or it will result in pushback
- Rationale: People love change with words but hate it in practice. So give them what they want: big words of change, but little change in practice

Law 46: Never Appear Too Perfect

- It's dangerous to appear better than others or like you have it all. Pretend instead that you're also human; pretend that you are like them. And most of all, pretend like the power you have requires so much sacrifice that they will not want to take it away from you
- Rationale: People are jealous and envious of those who look too perfect and powerful. Look vulnerable sometimes, and play up your sacrifices

Law 47: Don't Push Too Far: In Victory, Learn When to Stop

- Once you reach your goal, stop: your job is done
- Rationale: when it looks like we are winning easily, the temptation might be to keep on going. But it might be a trap. Or you might lose what you've already won. Stop instead at the healthy target you initially set

Law 48: Assume Formlessness

- Rigidity is lost in a world that is always changing and on the move. Stay flexible and be ready to change yourself as well as your plans
- Rationale: everything changes. What worked today won't necessarily work tomorrow. And you must adapt to thrive

Email Cheet Sheet

Our email newsletter provides a 'cheat sheet' crash course on power for men.
It will teach you the steps to becoming a high-value man, a man of confidence and power.

Advanced Guides on Power

For those who want more than just a cheat sheet and are ready to do the work to become truly effective men who advance in life and achieve goals:

- **What "The 48 Laws of Power" got all wrong**: why the 'laws' alone won't make you powerful, and what will
- **Modern 48 Laws of Power** for contemporary power players
- **Laws for Top-0.1% men**, men who don't want to protect bosses' ego but want to conquer

And:

- **Manipulation Techniques**: an overview of manipulation
- **Dark Psychology**: an overview of psychology used for darker objectives
- **Power University**: the leading course dedicated to mastering power dynamics and achieving status, respect, and attraction

Check Power University

48 Laws of Power List + Notes & Infographic

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

This is a list of *The 48 Laws of Power*, and the bullet points provide a quick explanation.

⍰⍰ For the complete book guide, see the main 48 Laws of Power guide.

48 Laws List

Law 1: Never Outshine the Master

- Do not showcase your superior talents, or it will make those above you dislike you

Law 2: Never Put Too Much Trust in Friends. Use Your Enemies

- Friends will envy and resent you, turn into frenemies, and plot against you. Turn your enemies into allies instead

Law 3: Conceal Your Intentions

- Never say what you're really up to

Law 4: Always Say Less than Necessary

- Powerful people impress by talking less

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- Reputation is the cornerstone of power. If you want to destroy someone, attack their reputation

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- Stand out from the crowd

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- Do what most bosses do: use your team, but present the results as your achievements

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- Avoid chasing people, but make others approach you and ask you for favors

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- Make yourself indispensable

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- One act of honesty will cover a dozen dishonest ones
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- Gather intelligence and learn people's secrets by getting close to them

Law 15: Crush Your Enemy Totally

- Don't wound. Kill

Law 16: Raise your Value Through Absence and Scarcity

- Don't be too present. Create value through scarcity and absence

Law 17: Keep Others in Suspended Terror: Cultivate an Air of Unpredictability

- Predictability makes you an easy target. Make your moves more random become more unpredictable

Law 18: Don't Isolate Yourself Behind a Fortress

- Isolation is dangerous and cuts you off from information: mingle with the people, instead

Law 19: Know Who You're Dealing with

- Pick good targets, and don't cross the wrong people

Law 20: Do Not Commit to Anyone

- Maintain your Independence as long as possible

Law 21: Play A Sucker to Catch a Sucker: Seem Dumber Than Your Mark

- Seem dumber than you really are and your opponent will lower his guard

Law 22: Use the Surrender Tactic

- Don't fight until the bitter end, but surrender and regroup

Law 23: Concentrate Your Forces

- Intensity and deep work yield better results

Law 24: Play the Perfect Courtier

- Learn to play politics

Law 25: Re-Create Yourself

- Be the master of your own identity, don't let others define you

Law 26: Keep Your Hands Clean

- Use others to do illegal and immoral deeds while you look above reproach

Law 27: Play on People's Need to Believe to Create a Cultlike Following

- Create a cult-like following where you are the cult-master

Law 28: Enter Action With Boldness

- Timidity is weak. Do it boldly and convinced, or don't do it at all

Law 29: Plan All The Way to The End

- Make your luck by drafting proper and accurate plans that begin from the most important part: the end goal

Law 30: Make Your Accomplishments Seem Effortless

- You look immensely competent and powerful when you achieve your goals without breaking a sweat

Law 31: Control the Options

- Make people feel like they had a choice, but truly only give choices that see you as the winner

Law 32: Play to People's Fantasies

- Give people what they want to hear, not the truth

Law 33: Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew

- Find your opponent's weaknesses, insecurities, and hot buttons

Law 34: Be Royal in Your Own Fashion – Act Like a King to Be Treated Like One

- Act like the person you want to become

Law 35: Master the Art of Timing

- Never seem in a hurry, but look calm and collected, like you always have things under control

Law 36: Disdain Things You Cannot Have: Ignoring Them is the Best Revenge

- If you can't have something, pretend it doesn't even register in your brain. Pretend it doesn't exist

Law 37: Create Compelling Spectacles

- Dazzle people with big shows that cover the harsher reality that you don't want them to see

Law 38: Think As You Like, But Behave Like Others

- When you go against the grain in your communication, you feel superior. People will resent you. Blend in instead

Law 39: Stir Up Waters to Catch Fish

- Make your enemies angry and emotional

Law 40: Despise the Free Lunch

- Freebies come with strings attached. Instead of taking freebies, offer them: generosity is a sign and magnet for power

Law 41: Avoid Stepping Into a Great Man's Shoes

- Don't follow great leaders in their footsteps, or you look like a smaller hanger-on. Carve your own path instead

Law 42: Strike the Shepherd to Scatter the Sheep

- Deal with the problem at its source. Strike the source of the trouble, the leader, or the main instigator

Law 43: Work on The Hearts and Minds of Others

- Influence beats dominance. Direct people gracefully, master the art of gentle influence
- Appeal to hearts (emotions) first and foremost. Then deal with the mind (rationality)

Law 44: Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect

- Copy what they do: it's a great technique to stir water and make them angry and emotionally unhinged

Law 45: Preach the Need for Change, But Never Reform Too Much at Once

- Change is traumatic, and people will resist it: make your changes slow and gentle

Law 46: Never Appear Too Perfect

- Make the average mass feel closer to you with strategic vulnerability

Law 47: Do Not Go Past The Mark You Aimed For. In Victory, Know When to Stop

- Don't push too far, stop when you achieve your goal

Law 48: Assume Formlessness

- Everything changes. What worked today won't necessarily work tomorrow. And you must adapt to thrive

How to Apply The Laws

This is list of 48 Laws of Power is helpful for a quick overview and remider.
But to apply them in real, life, see:

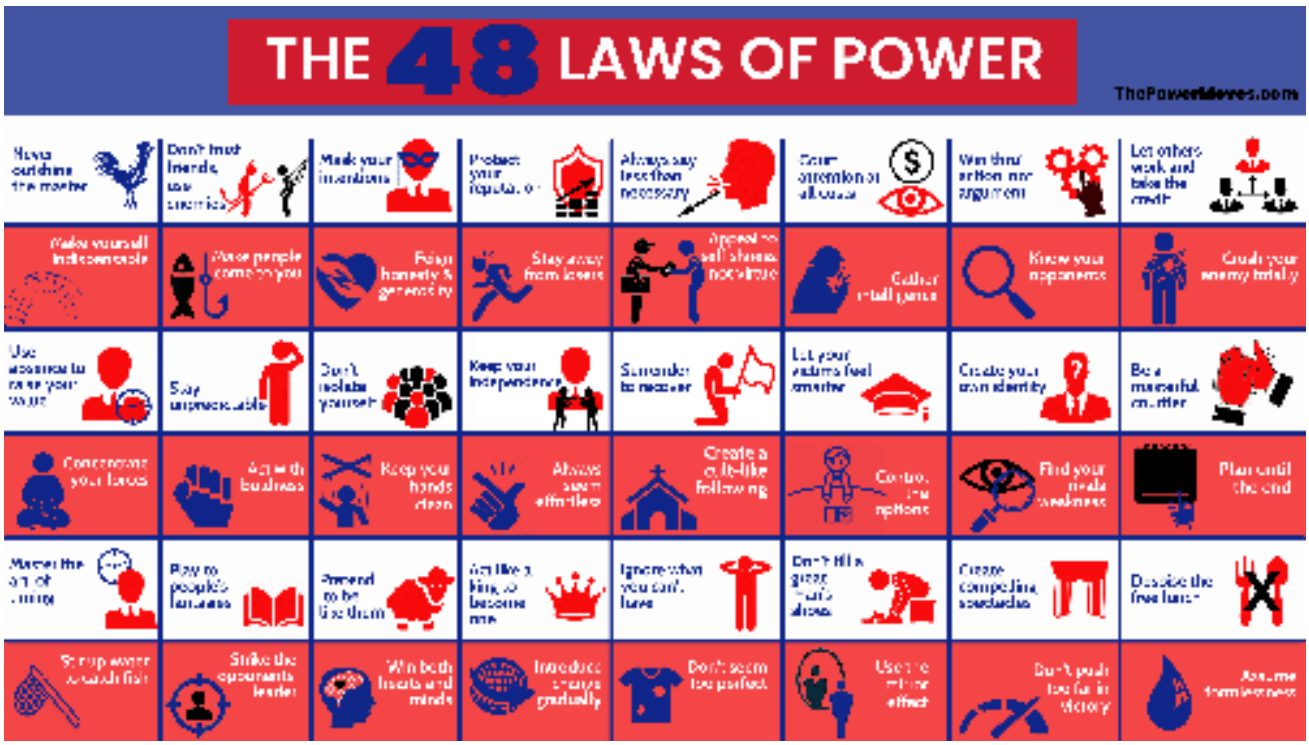
- **Applying the 48 Laws in modern life**: and with modern examples
- **48 Laws for Top-0.1%**: the truly advanced rules

But if the laws don't work for you, see:

- **Why The 48 Laws Don't Give You Power**, and how to fix them

As well as:

- **Manipulation**: a primer on manipulation techniques and games people play
- **Dark Psychology**: a primer on the dark side of influence and psychology
- **Machiavellianism**: to become positively Machiavellian



And to go from list to becoming a high-power man, we turn these laws into a full system to deliver men status, respect, and attraction from women:

Check Power University

Minimal Game: Summary & Review (Aaron Sleazy)

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Minimal Game is a dating book for men. Aaron Sleazy, the author, teaches pick-up and seduction for level-headed guys who *don't* want to become pick-up artists or weird spam-approachers. Sleazy's method to date and seduce is based on efficiency with little gimmicks.

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Minimal Game Review

Summary

About the Author:
Aaron Sleazy Elias is a dating coach, blogger, and writer.
Aaron made a name for himself because of his skills and advice and, partly, because of his criticism of the pick-up industry.

Seduction is Simple: Don't Overcomplicate It

Finding a mate is something primal and natural.

Seduction advice and books like "*The Game*" or "*The Mystery Method*" overcomplicate things.
And they do so because it helps them sell overpriced products and seminars.

Maximize Female's Potential Interest

The first step is to maximize your appeal to women (your sexual market value).

In this section, Sleazy says that looks are not the end-all, be-all. But they do matter, so you should focus on maximizing your looks.
And while money and status take years to achieve, improving your looks can be done in a matter of days.

Weed Out Uninterested & Asexual Girls

Aaron Sleazy does not like asexual and overly shy girls, and he recommends going after the sexual ones.

He says:

> Some girls are horny literally all the time, or at least rather frequently, and those are the ones you should go after.

If you're looking for quick sex, he's right.

Sleazy also doesn't like girls who don't enjoy sex and girls who are not interested in you.

If she doesn't like you within the first five minutes, chances are low that she will like you after 5 hours.
So cut the interaction short and look for more receptive women, instead.

Force an Early Reaction To Efficiently Get to The Girls Who Like You

How do you quickly screen the girls who like you from those who don't?

Well, Sleazy proposes that you seek out a reaction early on.
For example:

- Get just a little bit closer as you speak
- In the daytime, just ask a question: if she is kind and adds more information than needed, she likes you
- Hold her hand and caress it: if she does the same or if she keeps it there, she's interested
- At night, you can be bolder and let your hand rest on her thigh, or escort her as you walk with your hand on her lower back, really close to her ass

If you perceive negative reactions, just stop the interaction.

Aaron Sleazy recommends the same approach for "pulling", or inviting home.
Once the attraction has been established, a simple question such as "where do you live" should suffice. And if she doesn't bite, you could outright say "I feel like leaving, do you want to come with me?".
That works especially well with confident women, says Aaron, and I agree.

Know What Girls You Like – And What Girls Like You!

Chasing every single pretty girl is a time waste.
And it has little chance of success.

Instead, you are better off selecting your market and making yourself a good fit for that market.
And, says Aaron:

> If you don't get anywhere with a particular kind of girl, you have two options: 1. Focus on different women; 2. Change yourself.

Focus on different women, says Aaron, does not mean "less attractive", but it means "women with whom you have more in common".

When you take on a certain style and personal definition, you will be more attractive to girls who are similar to you.
But you can still attract girls from different sub-cultures.
What's sure instead is that if you look nondescriptive, you will also be non-attractive across the board.

Also, check out:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

Don't Set "X Girls to Approach" Goals, Go Out to Be Social

When you set yourself bizarre goals of going out and talking to x amount of girls, you will come across as scripted and insincere.

You will sub-communicate that you are not talking to them because you like them, but because you racking up numbers.

Even when you reach a place, don't tell yourself "I must talk to some girls now", but be open to whatever happens.
And if you see a girl you like, then walk over and say hi.

Also read:

- **9 steps to effectively approach women**
- **Cold approach VS warm approach** (social circle)

https://thepowermoves.com/cold-approach/

Don't Lose Spirit: Even The Best Ones Get Rejected Most of The Times

Just to give you an idea, you shouldn't expect more than 10% of the women you approach to be interested in you.

And if you have sex with 5 girls a year, you are doing fine by general standards.
And if you get 10, you are outstanding.

Says Sleazy:

> **Success is, statistically speaking, rather the exception than the norm**

And he's right.

To Meet Girls, Just Drop a Random Comment and See How They React

This was a totally novel approach to meeting a girl, and I liked it.

Aaron Sleazy recommends just dropping a simple comment and then letting the girl tell you, with her reaction, whether she likes you or not and whether she wants to take it further or not.

For example, at a clothes store, you could drop the comment:

> That's a really nice color

Or you could ask for directions.
Based on how she replies, you will know whether she likes you or not.

To Get Into the Lover's Vibe, Talk to Her As If You're Lovers

Treat the girl as if you two already had sex.

A girl will follow your lead and treat you the same way; you will bond and connect more quickly, and sex is much more likely to happen.

Read more in:

- **How to get women with leadership**

https://thepowermoves.com/how-to-seduce-women-with-leadership/

More Wisdom

- Most women are insecure. If you are secure in yourself, chances are they will naturally look up to you
- If you're successful in just one area of your life, then getting married should not be an issue
- It's only after sex that you will truly know a woman: sex breaks important barriers to honesty
- What you can't fix, you must accept: accepting your body is a necessary step to being comfortable with your sexuality
- One key to seduction is to talk to strangers as if you knew them already
- Lead an interesting life
- Run away if you meet a girl who seeks to "make you chase" and "make you wait"

- Be honest: if you are only interested in sex, don't pretend you want a relationship
- If there is chemistry, sex happens and should happen quickly. And you should prefer women with good chemistry
- You don't need to overcome your fear of approaching if you're OK with a girlfriend or for "normal" dating. Leave that for the aspiring Casanovas
- If you meet a girl early in the day, feel free to call in the evening; otherwise, call her next day
- When making plans for the date, be precise when it comes to the day, time, and place
- Meet her as early as possible, so she has time to come back to your place. (I agree)

Quotes

A good definition of seduction:

> Seduction isn't making someone do what they don't want to do. Seduction is enticing someone into doing what they secretly want to do already.

On the simplicity of seduction (and female choice):

> There are no obstacles to getting girls, and there is no secret behind it either.
> The mechanics behind seduction are in fact surprisingly simple, and the key insight is that mate selection is the domain of the woman.

On early sex, better than long, drawn-out dating:

> Really getting to know a woman is a long process that always starts with sex.

On the help that money provides in dating:

> Money might not necessarily buy you love, but it surely makes it easier to get laid.

On stacking up negative features (i.e.: if you're short, don't be fat :) :

> Height is a very attractive feature, and women generally prefer a man who is taller than them. So, if you are short you better not be overweight.

On the importance of structuring your life to meet the type of women you like:

> For the very most part you will meet women whose life has some connection to yours. Everything else is a pipe dream.

This one, I just found funny, on dumbing yourself down to vibe with "regular girls":

> When a cute girl stepped up to the canvas, I said something devoid of any meaning such as that the colors were "strangely fascinating." This was in line with my belief that it's better to dumb yourself down to avoid repelling regular girls (…) she nodded approvingly, being the little pseudo-intellectual she was.

Another funny quote, highlighting that sometimes "just an OK guy" is all that's needed:

> In big cities there is an abundance of lonely office girls that spend their evenings alone (…). They are only

> waiting to meet a great guy like you — or any guy at all, which could of course also be you.

On “one-night stand manners”:

> Some girls have excellent one-night stand manners and know when to get up and leave.

And lastly, on avoiding relationships with women you are incompatible with:

> You will not get back the time you have invested in a relationship that was doomed to fail from the beginning.

CONS

- **Light on technical details**

Aaron Sleazy says that seduction is simple, and he’s right.
Yet, a few more details for guys who are not yet socially well-developed enough could have helped.

- **Somewhat demeaning towards online dating**

Aaron Sleazy doesn’t like online dating, and he doesn’t seem to have a high opinion of people who use it.
I disagree.
It’s efficient, and everyone looking for a mate should do it.

- **Somewhat demeaning towards a provider’s role**

Aaron Sleazy calls the husband the “dumb fuck and his money”.
Deploring the provider role is very common in the seduction industry, but something I never agreed much on (and one of the reasons why I had to write my own book on seduction).

- **The “anti-PUA” angle**

I’m not a big fan of many pick-up artists, as they come across as too gamey. Even the good ones, like Todd Valentine, sometimes overplay.
And yet, in a way, any book on seduction is somewhat picky.
So, albeit I partially agree with Sleazy, I am somewhat more at ease with the pick-up community.

- **The idea that women want sex more than men want**

Sleazy suggests that women want sex more than men, but since society tells us that’s not the case, we believe it.
Well, that’s not true, and it’s not just society. The Madonna-whore dichotomy is biological.

- **Conversational competence minor role in seduction?**

Aaron Sleazy explicitly says he doesn’t like to talk much and hates chit-chat. He prefers clubs and physical escalation.
Fair enough.
Still, one should not generalize. And conversational competence *is* very important in mating (also see: mating intelligence).

- **Dumbing yourself down? Maybe more like “calibrating”**

Says Sleazy:

> Speaking as an over-educated intellectual myself, I can assure you that you are a lot better off if you dumb

> yourself down a little bit.

Well, he's not wrong if "being intellectual" means talking about stuff she doesn't care about, doesn't know about, or anything that makes you sound pretentious.
Yet, I wouldn't necessarily say "it's better to dumb yourself down", but I would call it more "adapt to the situation". If she's dumb, dumb yourself down. If she's a smart cookie, be your smart self.

PROS

- **It's a number game where everyone has a chance**

Aaron Sleazy correctly points out that dating never stops being a number game.
And he is the only one to correctly point out that with all the fetishes that exist, there is a fetish for almost any unattractive feature one might have.

- **Good call on prioritizing external and visible features**

This one made me laugh, but it's a great point indeed:

> I wouldn't bother too much about hair on your back or shoulder as long as you don't plan to meet women on the beach, because once you have gotten that far, it won't matter anymore.

LOL, that's true indeed :)

- **One of the few to highlight the importance of your environment**

Sleazy says that the environment you are in might be the most important factor in determining your level of success.
While that might seem exaggerated, it's actually true.
Also see: sexual market value hacks.

- **Focusing on women with whom you have more in common**

This is another little, underappreciated pearl from Sleazy.
So simple yet so often forgotten: focus on women with whom you have the most in common. Everything will come easier.

Minimal Game Review

I like Aaron Sleazy.

He champions some of the ideas I also embrace, like, for example, "mutual seduction".

He pokes fun at the made-up *evolutionary psychology* of many pick-up resources, something I also often wrote about.
He writes well, mixing biting humor with rationality and critical thinking -similar to Nassim Taleb-.

I just don't understand why the adjective "sleazy" lodged between his name and surname. He's not sleazy at all!

Overall, I very much enjoyed "*Minimal Game*".
Truly simple, it reminds guys that getting the basics of seduction right starts first and foremost by accepting your sexuality, then looking for girls with mutual liking.

In a way, this is a dating book for men who don't want to become weird, high-energy pick-up artists.

Check the **best dating books** for guys or **get the book on Amazon**

Attract the Right Girl: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Attract the Right Girl teaches men how to recognize and pick a relationship-quality woman, together with tips and advice on how to become the kind of guy that a high-quality woman wants to be with.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- Know what you want
- Seek a woman whom:
  1. Likes you
  2. Supports you (and your goals)
  3. She invests in you and in the relationship
- To get this type of woman, always work on your self-development
- If the woman is not a good fit, always walk away

Notes

About the Author: Bruce Bryan is a pseudonym, and he has written many books on dating and relationships.

Find Out What YOU Like

To find a girl you like, you must first know what you like.

Stressing the "you" in "girl you like" does not just serve to remind you that your power of choice is as important as the girl, but also to remind you that you must choose based on what works for you.
Not what your friends or society like. Don't choose based on ego. Choose based on what will make *you* happy.

Don't Change for A Woman, But Find a Woman Who Complements Who You Are

Says Bryan:

> So think about your life goals, your passions, and your interests, and focus on dating quality women that "fit" with you in those areas.

Make A List of What You Like In A Woman

Again, I couldn't put it any better than Bryan puts it:

> It may seem harsh to be so specific in making a list about what it is you want in a woman, but it's even harsher to try and make someone else fit your ideal of a "perfect" woman.

Once you know what you really want and you have written it down, stop looking for “the one”, and simply look for who fits the bill.

The Traits of A High-Quality Woman

Bruce Bryan says a high-quality woman:

- **Can influence her man without being forceful**

Bryan says that men enjoy being in charge, and the top women understand that, and instead of challenging him, they use “feminine grace” to influence their men.

The graceful woman wants freedom from masculine responsibilities and expectations.

Bryan says there is a difference between “influencing” and “changing”:

> Every woman in some form or fashion wants to either change a man to suit her needs, which is bad, or she wants to influence him to become the best version of himself, which is good.

I couldn’t agree more with Bryan.

- **She wants to be appreciated for the fact that she is a woman, and desires to express her true femininity**

She also wants her man to be masculine, and she appreciates him for that.

- **She treats his man like a king**

The world can be a challenging place, and a great woman helps the man by providing a great environment in his intimate relationship, which includes both support and loyalty.

Says Bryan:

> **A good woman will make you feel as if your presence matters to her.**

Since if she truly likes you early on she might be on her best behavior, notice how she treats the man in her life.

- **She is a thoughtful and proactive lover**

And thoughtful and proactive will know her man and what he likes her.
And she will try to provide him with the environment that he appreciates. That can be shown for example by preparing his favorite dish, or by letting him enjoy football night.

- **She appreciates his man’s strengths**

A great woman will make you feel like you are having a positive impact on the world.

My Note: So true
I can’t agree more. One of the best women I’ve been with first asked me about writing a book one day long before that thought had even crossed my mind.
My answer was “who is even gonna read that”.

She will respect your strength and encourage you if you have given your best, even if you fail.

- **She’s a fountain of youth**

Says Bryan:

> She’ll still possess a childlike zest for life and be an absolute joy to be around.

- **She will hold his man up to his word**

All the “make you feel good” traits are nice.
But they’re not enough.
You also want a woman who will hold you to the best man you can be. And that includes keeping your word.

Says Bruce Bryan:

> Maintaining your integrity as a man should become one of her top priorities in your relationship.
> Yes, she might “nag” you, but ONLY if you’re not being the man that she knows you can be.

Finally, among the top qualities, Bruce Bryan lists confidence, competence (being good at what she does), femininity, and taking care of her appearance as well.

Also read:

- **High-quality women**
- **Low-quality women**
- **Nasty game players, you need to avoid**

> 12 Traits of High-Value Women (With Examples)

How do You Know She’s a Top Woman?

Bruce Bryan says that top women make men want to do things for them.

He says:

> It’s a strange feeling in which you’ll WANT to take care of her and treat her like a queen.
> You’d fight for her if the situation called for it, and you’d gladly make the sacrifices necessary to ensure her happiness.

To Demand High Standards From Women, Have High Standards for Yourself

Half of the book is about recognizing great women, while the other half is about becoming the man who can attract them.

Says Bryan:

> You MUST have high standards for yourself and your woman and low tolerance for dishonesty or lack of integrity from you, her, or anyone else for that matter.

He says that to get this type of high-quality woman you must get into the mindset that you are assessing her and the quality of her character.

The rest of the book contains some advice on dating, like not being a wuss, or having boundaries that you demand to be respected.

In short, Bryan says that to be attractive to a high-value woman, you must be a high-value man (and a high sexual value man).
He says:

> She wants someone that she has to go out of her way for, not because she has to, but because she wants to.

Chase Each Other: It's Give & Take

Bruce Bryan says that relationships are a give and take.

He also applies that give and take to chasing, which is the first time I read about it.
Bruce Bryan talks about "giving her the gift of chasing you while also chasing her".
This is also something I talk about in "mutual investment".

> How to Make Him Chase You: Definitive Guide

Be Willing to Walk Away

If a woman is not the right fit, if she is not treating you well, and if she doesn't like you…

Walk away.

It's not just a behavior, it's a mindset.
And it's a mindset that will make you all the more attractive to the high-quality women who are a good fit for you.

The Caged Bird Paradox: Don't Give Up Your Freedom Too Easily

When a great woman meets a great man, she'll want him only for her and put him in her little cage.

But she doesn't want him to fly too easily into that cage.
She wants a bird who loves his life, and a bird who loves his fly and does not fly into the commitment cage too easily.
So it's best if you make her work for it.

Quotes

> Dating an average woman that isn't a good match for you or who isn't highly attracted to you or interested in adding value to your life is actually WORSE than being single.

On seeking women who want the same thing:

> Trying to force an uninterested woman into a deep, harmonious relationship is like trying to force a round peg into a square hole.

On fears leading to poor partner choice:

> Many guys fail to attract the right girl because of fear. They fear being alone the rest of their lives or they fear commitment.

On her unwavering support:

> You want to be with a woman that will remain consistent in her support of you regardless of your weaknesses and burdens. In fact, a good woman is one who will help to heal the emotional scars of your past just as you would with her.

On the value of men with high standards:

> If a woman can land a guy with high standards, she'll feel as if she's won the lottery.

And finally:

> You can't turn a whore into a housewife. There, I said it.

CONS

I loved "*Attract the Right Girl*".
These were the bits I agreed less with:

- **The "believe you deserve it" mantra**

There is a lot of self-help that is based on telling readers that they are great and that they "deserve" whatever they want.

I never liked that.
It feels like an entitled mentality, it does not lead to long-term success, and it makes people inherently low quality.

- **The "patience, she will come" advice**

Same as above. Very common, never believed in it, never liked it.

- **Geared towards providers and men seeking a "queen / caretaker of the castle"**

This book is mostly for men who enjoy a "good woman", and a woman who will be the queen of the castle.

It's less for men who want a go-getter or an equal.

That being said, most men fit the former category, and a woman can be both.

PROS

Top book.
Almost all of the information in this summary is not only high-quality but also rare in the dating literature.
Finally, I also personally used Bryan's list of traits and qualities to help me fill up my own list of traits I seek in a woman.

Review

Attract the Right Girl is one of those little hidden gems.

It's a simple and short book, yet it packs a huge punch.
Contrary to most dating books for guys, its main focus is not on how to meet and seduce women, but on how to *filter* women.

This is the mindset of men with options, who prefer collaboration and focus on finding a collaborative partner.
Also see:

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-collaborator
Just for that, it deserves a recommendation.

I find that picking the right partner is the most underappreciated aspect of seduction. And, as well, it might be one of the most under-appreciated skills for life.
Part of this is because of our PC culture whereby "picking" means "judging", and these days you don't wanna judge.
But whatever the reason, don't miss out on these life-critical skills.
And do focus on picking the right partner.

In many ways, Bruce Bryan here is encouraging readers to pick a partner that will hold her side in what I call "collaborative relationships" in my "fundamental strategies of power".

Check the:

- **Best dating books for men**

or **get the book on Amazon**

Daygame Nitro: Summary & Review (Nick Krauser)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Daygame Nitro is a dating book for men that teaches guys how to meet women during the daytime. Nick Krauser, the author, lays out a model that he dubbed "daygame for alphas".

Contents

- Daygame Nitro Summary
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Daygame Nitro Review

Daygame Nitro Summary

About the Author:
Nick Krauser is a dating coach based in the UK. He started getting pick-up and daygame after his failed marriage and divorce. He read the Mystery Method, signed up to a boot camp, and never looked back. As he gained more success and experience, he eventually developed his own system and started teaching.
Today Nick Krauser considers himself past and over his "game" phase in life.

Daygame for Alphas VS Daygame for Beta

Nick Krauser says that his system is "daygame for alphas".

These are the differences between daygame for betas and alphas:

- She is the prize for betas / he is the prize
- She's great and must have so much going on / you are the adventure in her life
- You must be warm and make her comfortable / you must project dominance and charisma
- Stay safe and don't crazy stuff / be crazy

Also read:

- **How not to be a beta male**

> How to Stop Being A Beta Male

The Krauser Daygame Model

The Krauser Daygame Model has the following steps:

- **Kill Momentum**: stop her and make her engage you. You do this by showing high value right from the start
  - Pre-approach
  - Target acquisition
  - Spontaneous opener
- **Vibing**: match her energy and draw her into a 1:1 conversation
- **Investment**: when hse starts chasing you and putting in work

- **Commit Her**: she decides to have a date with you, either now or in the future
- **Deep Rapport**: you usually get into this stage once you sit down in a more private location (not in the street)
- **Verbal Escalation**: sexualize the conversation to make her horny

The idea of the KDM is to start high energy and give a lot in the beginning. Then, little by little, you start to cool down, rein in your body gestures, and draw her in.
That's when she should start investing more and more

Daygame Nitro is built around defining and explaining each of those steps.

Also read:

- How to approach girls: 9 steps to a successful approach
- Cold approach VS other approach strategies

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

In Daygame You Must Be Fun

Albeit Krauser talks a lot about being alpha and one of his FAQ is "aren't alpha males serious", he says that seriousness is the kryptonite of day game.

He says that the primary way of getting an overload of initial attraction is by being fun.

My Note: I don't 100% agree
I agree that being too serious makes for a poor initial interaction most of the times -but not always-.
However, I felt like Krauser overdid the fun part.
Furthermore, if you can get a strong initial (sexual) chemistry, you can do without the fun part.

Krauser says that the most help a wingman can give you is to keep you social and upbeat while you walk around.

Use Your Wing to Show High Value

When you want to approach a woman, you should get even more animated in your talk, speaking louder, laughing harder and gesticulating more than usual.

That communicates high value.
This is what Krauser says the girls will think:

> Wow, high value guys. Having fun in their own world, at ease with what is around them.

I agree that sometimes being deeply into a conversation with a friend of yours will deeply attract attention.
I remember once locking eyes with a girl while talking animatedly with a couple of friends of mine. This girl was with two other guys, and she *still* stopped in her tracks.

Another time at a bar, me and my pal were absorbed in conversation. With the tail of my eye, I could see a truly beautiful blonde woman -who was out with a guy- looking at us.
When my pal was in the bathroom, she stopped by to talk to me.
I told her to join me and she sat down, ditching that other guy she was with.

That being said, I wouldn't exaggerate the laughter or the gestures. Those can make you look too juvenile and less powerful.

Only Approach Girls You Find Attractive

Going only for the girls you truly like and appreciate from your masculine core is one of the central tenets in Krauser's philosophy.

He lists all the advantages to only go for the women you truly feel attracted to, and I agree with them all:

- You developed a trigger: when you see your type of girl, you know you're going to approach
- Approach anxiety decreases
- Your inner game improves when
- You are not distracted and overwhelmed by all other girls walking around
- You feel like the selector, because you have standards
- It helps you deal with her shit tests because you can communicate from a place of honesty
- The girl feels like you picked her for a reason
- You specialize and get better with the girls you like

The only reasons you might want to approach girls who are your type is to get some experience, to get socially lubricated, or to bottle up that feeling of not really caring so that you can do the same if you're feeling nervous.

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Win the Game

Deploy Push-Pull Right From the Beginning

Krauser says that if you compliment a girl from the first moment you talk to her, you give away too much of your power.

That's not how alpha males act, so you want to use push-pull right from the beginning.

For example:

> **Krauser**: Hi. I just have to say something. I just noticed you from over there. You are dressed fucking ridiculous. I love it. It's very sexy

In that example the push-pull is inverted.

I find this technique interesting, but I don't think I will be making it my mainstay.
I feel that if you are confident in your value, then you don't need the "push" or "the neg" right from the start.

More Wisdom

- **Sexualize the convo with random sexual appreciation**: Nick Krauser recommends you drop a random sexual hint while talking about random stuff. For example, talk about your day, say "great tits by the way, I like them", and then keep going
- **During the investment stage, disagree on something small**: this will give you an idea on where you stand, and it will highlight you're not kissing up to her
- **Right after she commits to follow you, do more of the talking**: if she follows you, especially if you had to push a little bit, do more of the talking afterward to help her smoothen the transition. In those moments she is thinking "have I done the right thing committing to follow this guy?".
  This was a very good point indeed.

Quotes

On low-value guys following others for what they should also like:

> Beta males, chodes, losers (or whatever term you prefer) live their lives according to other peoples' values (…) They read GQ to be told what's cool. And they want the girls that society tells them they want. They read the FHM list of 100 sexiest women and don't laugh out loud when Terri Hatcher and Jennifer Lopez make the list.

On the danger of going after a girl who is not really your type (I was smiling and nodding badly here):

> (…) And it will help you avoid the most soul-destroying of situations: getting stuck in a set with a girl you realise you don't like, while a super-hot girl you do like walks by.

On the clunkiness of pre-canned material:

> It's still possible to open girls with canned material, but then again, it's possible to eat soup with a fork.

CONS

- **The Alpha/Beta dichotomy and the red pill**

The red pill has some great content.
But also some poor information and mindsets which don't make me the biggest red pill fan.
Nick Krauser is.
And together with red pill terminology and start contrast between "alpha" -everyone who uses those dichotomies includes himself in the "alpha" category of course- and "betas".

And I wasn't a big fan of how Krauser defines alpha.
To make the point that the reader had grown up in a "pussified society", he says:

> You've grown up in a pussified society where all of the savagery of nature, red in tooth and claw, has been sanitized out of life.
> **There's a good chance you've never had a fight in your life (if no-one ended up dead or in hospital then it wasn't a fight)**.

I wouldn't necessarily consider the amount (or lack) of serious fights one has been in as an indicator of "alphaness". Being in too many of those might be an indicator of criminal behavior, making it more likely one stays stuck at the bottom of society.

- **The examples of fun-conversation seemed too random and silly at times**

Overall, I liked Daygame Nitro and Krauser is an overall good guy to learn from.

Some of the examples that were supposed to be fun seemed too forced, too random, and too "entertainer" style to me.

For example:

> **Her**: I got it in a little market. I like the wool it's lovely
> **Krauser**: Wool is for sheep. I like sheep actually. I never quite understood why people are supposed to count sheep when they go to sleep. Do you sleep?
> **Her**: Duh! Yeah.
> **Krauser**: Hahaha. Only Homer Simpson says duh. (…) No, I mean properly sleep like in a deep trance (…)

> **Her**: I don't really know. Actually, yes! There was one time I got drunk at a party and they hoovered up around me.
> **Me**: Hoover is a proper noun. You should say cleaned, or vacuumed. That's what my gran says. I love my gran. I sleep like a barbarian. I'll wake up immediately if danger strikes. Are you dangerous?

Krauser points to his lack of logical reasoning and free associations as a good thing.
I also enjoy thread-cutting and some free associations sometimes, but his examples felt too much jumping around.
That it sounds silly doesn't bother Krauser, who later on says that you should "embrace the retard".

I disagree with it.
In my opinion, making a girl feel at ease also means letting her know that you can be normal and rational (see: mating intelligence).
Crazy, like true crazy, is scary, and not sexually attractive.

PROS

- **The use of Facebook for long-term game**

Chase Amante in "How to Make Girls Chase" says that you should never take any social media from a girl. And I always disagreed.
Nick Krauser is the only one who gets it right. He says:

> Numbers are a logistics-solving device when you expect to meet each other soon.
> Facebook is a logistics-solving device when you expect to stay on each other's radars until something changes.

I couldn't agree more.
Also see one of my earliest articles on how Facebook helped me get laid with a girl I really liked by staying on each other's radar.

- **Only approach girls you truly find attractive from your core**

I loved that simple, yet transformative concept.

- **Avoid girls who play too many games**

Krauser says that girls who tease too much, shit-test too much, or play too many games are girls you need to avoid.
He says:

> I know the temptation – "I might as well keep playing to try to fuck her." No. That will kill your abundance mentality, demolish your inner game, and poison your next ten dates. Just screen the bitch out.

Most of all, I advise screening out the *nasty* game players:

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

Daygame Nitro Review

Overall, I liked Daygame Nitro.

I disagreed a bit on the level of "fun" one needs, and how to express high value early on.
But I loved the concept -and the necessity- of learning what type of woman you like and then only going for that type of woman. Nick Krauser was the only one to truly lay out the deep reasons why you should adopt that attitude.

Check the best dating books for men or **get the book on Amazon**

Day Bang: Summary & Review (Roosh V)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Day Bang is a dating and seduction book for men that focuses on meeting women during the daytime.
"Day Bang" is mostly based on the idea that you have to avoid scaring women away. And to avoid scaring women, Roosh V embraces indirect game, which he rebranded as "elderly opener".

Contents

- Day Bang Summary
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Roosh V Review

Day Bang Summary

About the Author: For good or for bad, Roosh V is a big name in the manosphere world. His blogs, mixing politics with seduction, have been some of the most popular
Roosh V didn't seem to do much to avoid drama, and at times he seemed to relish "stirring the pot" with the media. He claimed to be the father of the Red Pill community, and to have coined the community's popular terms "beta male" and "alpha male", a claim that has been debunked.
But that's all in the past. Today, Roosh converted to Christianity, says he's ashamed of his previous work, and condemns pre-marital sex.

Don't Worry Too Much About the People Around

Roosh V says that most people fear day game because they fear being rejected and being made a fool for the people around to see.

But he says that if you think your rejection will even matter to anyone, you are delusional as to how much you truly matter.

He says:

> In a random stranger's world, your mistake may get a chuckle, but five minutes later you will essentially be erased from their memory.

To get over your fear of approaching and your fear of being a fool to nearby people, Roosh V has a very different solution.
He encourages readers to think about the truly worst that can happen.

People will laugh at you, then update their social media with the story of your foolishness, and then laugh at you even more.

Once you are OK with that outcome, you can come back to present. And know that the worse will never materialize.
Now you can re-imagine the story while you are still looking like a fool, but instead of crowing and whimpering, you look at the people around and smile confidently.

Once you own the worst-case scenario, you can also start considering that it's so unlikely it will never truly happen.

Approach Indirectly: The Elderly Opener

Roosh V says that any direct approach will scare women.
Instead, you must approach them like you would approach a cat. By showing you're harmless.

How to do it?

If she has a big suitcase, you will ask not about her trip -too personal!- but about the quality of the suitcase.
If she is writing something, you will not ask what she's writing about, but about the pen.

And he adds:

> To show that you're sincere in learning about the pen, you'll share short anecdotes about your own good or bad experiences with pens.

If you don't remember, you will make up some experiences.
Says Roosh:

> Telling little lies while seeking information we don't really need is necessary to start a conversation in a way that keeps a girl relaxed.

Necessary?

My Note: I disagree
Frankly, I was almost hoping he'd come out at a certain point and say "I was joking".
Roosh recommends talking 2 or 3 minutes about mundane stuff you couldn't care less about. And since most likely the woman also doesn't care about it… Why on earth would you talk about it?

Here is an example from Roosh V:

> Let's say you opened a girl in a bookstore café about the quality of her laptop (…) You even played a little dumb, asking if her laptop had "the Internet access" and USB ports, questions I've actually asked before.

I think the girl would be sitting there thinking "what a terrible approach". Roosh also shows little emotional intelligence here, asking a woman about tech stuff about USB ports?
Most women have no idea.

Also read:

- How to approach women

> How to Approach a Girl: 9 Science-Based Steps

Don't Smile on The Approach

Roosh V recommends not to smile on your initial approach.

He says:

> Smiling will kill your approach before it even gets started because it reliably scares the cat.

And this is another piece of advice I disagree with.

If you come across as unpolished, that's OK because it shows that you are being natural and didn't rehearse

anything.
Says Roosh:

> Now I'm not saying you should purposely pause and throw out "um's," but you get no bonus points for being smooth and polished.

Again, I disagree.
Being smooth and polished can powerfully increase attraction. It's an indicator of confidence, social power, past successes and, as well, intelligence.

Roosh doesn't see it that way though, as he says:

> In my sock example, I played up that I was a style retard, incapable of buying a five-dollar pair of socks, when in reality I'm totally capable of making that decision.

How could purposefully look like a childish retard help one score?
Sure, it can work… Sometimes, with some girls.
Anything might work, if you do it just enough times. But then again, like Krauser says, you can also eat soup with a fork.

And playing up your retardation while you chat about boring topics you care nothing about does not strike me as the most effective and efficient style of game.

Also read:

- **Cold approach VS warm approach**

> Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

Bait, Don't Tell

Roosh stresses the importance of baiting, such as removing enough details from your answers that women will naturally you ask about them.

Having women ask instead of you telling them is far more powerful.

Quotes

On being cool with women's rejections:

> It's true that a rejection means a girl doesn't want you in her life. You're so worthless to her that she doesn't even want to get to know you. My response to that is… so what?

On the importance of being a high quality man and a high sexual market value guy:

> Unfortunately, game isn't a miracle drug. It doesn't create value where there is none—it merely brings out the value that you already have. You'll still need to offer something in exchange for vaginal entry.

CONS

Overall, I disagree with an approach model based on being "as indirect as possible".

Especially if it's presented as the *only* possible way.

Indirect game promoted as the only way of meeting women

It would be OK if Roosh V had said “there are many ways of starting a conversation and meeting women, and I will introduce here the indirect game”.

Instead, he talks it up as if it were the *only* effective method.

That’s patently not true.
Not just from a theoretical method, but I say that from plenty of experience.

Kether, a successful day gamer, also goes mostly indirect.
As a matter of fact, I learned from him how to make indirect work best.
And it’s not about asking random questions about the laptop she is using and how much RAM it has.
It’s indirect in the sense that you don’t start with “how hot she is”. But it still starts with something about *her* -or what’s in common between you and her, or what you’re both doing-.
Plus, it progresses talking about *you* and the *woman*, not about random stuff that neither of you cares about.

Complex system for something that should be natural

I agree with Aaron Sleazy here, author of “Minimal Game“.

Meeting the opposite sex is something natural, not something unnatural like Roosh V says.
Yes, even in the day, you can make it seem very natural.

Instead, Roosh V introduces this extra complex system made of stages and acronyms.
It’s reminiscent of “The Mystery Method“, of which I was never a fan of.

Number-centric, discourages going for more

Writes Roosh V:

> Related to the previous point, at night you can sleep with her after only a couple of hours. During the day you won’t get much more than a number.

Most of the times you will get a number.
But starting with the mindset that “you won’t get much more than a number” is a poor mindset.
And you can sleep with her after only a couple of hours in the daytime, too.

No real connections, just game

“Day Bang” seems to be heavily centered around “getting the number”.

It almost feels like Barnie Stinson from “How I Met Your Mother”, a character that seemed to conflate “getting her number” with “having seduced”.

Hints of mysoginy

Roosh says he only sees women as lubricated holes for his own pleasure.

As shocking as that might sound, that’s OK.
I have a different view, but I don’t see anything wrong with seeing women as sexual objects.

Seeing women as sexual objects is *not* the same as hating women. And it’s not the same as being bitter. It only means that you see a woman you like, and you want to have sex with her, and not become friends or talk.

That’s OK.

What’s not OK, is when you resent women and wish them harm.

And sometimes I got that feeling from Roosh.

Limiting beliefs

Says Roosh:

> At night you can sleep with her after only a couple of hours. During the day you won't get much more than a number.

I don't know what he's talking about.
And I'm *far* from attractive.

Trick-based, weak-ass approach -"*Getting*" a kiss?

Says Roosh V:

> Your main goal during the day is to get a girl into a night venue, preferably one that serves alcohol (…) Western dating norms dictate that the easiest way to get a kiss starts in a nighttime environment like a bar or lounge.

So here is this guy, talking up "alpha game", trashing out Western women as undeserving… And then he talks about the "easiest way to *get* a kiss?".
I hope you see what's wrong with that…

PROS

- **Provides realistic numbers and expectations**

Roosh says that even if you get truly good, you will still be rejected most of the times.
So don't worry if you'll end up playing the numbers game.

- **Novel advice on overcoming approach anxiety**

Roosh was the first one I've read to recommend beginners to visualize not just negative outcomes, but the worst possible ones.

I think that might be a better approach for some to overcome approach anxiety.

- **Good advice on baiting**

The section on baiting was good.
And I even modified my Tinder description to put a bait in there.

- **Great wake up call on working from coffee shops**

I always thought it was ridiculous to rent a desk or to gulp down sugary latte just so you could work outside of home.

But Roosh V opened my eyes:

> I see no reason why you should read or work from home where the chance of meeting a girl is 0%. Haul ass to a coffee shop instead.

Thank you Roosh!
I wasn't a fan of your book, but this little gem might be a game-changer.

Roosh V Review

I have only reached half of Roosh's book when I started writing this review.

Frankly, I didn't see much good up until then, and I disagree with the whole approach Roosh takes to seduction.
He talks up indirect game –*very* indirect- as if it was not just the most efficient way of picking up women, but as if it were the *only* possible one.

That's patently not true, and I can say so not only from theory, but from first-hand experience.

Frankly, I wasn't sure whether to give it 1 or 2 stars.
Roosh seems to be a bit like RSD Tyler, learning techniques without a solid base of social and emotional intelligence.

There is a place for indirect game.
And somehow "Day Bang" could be useful to a few guys. Some people go in way too overpowering and don't realize they are scaring girls.
I once saw a guy with a gym bag and gym attire stand in front of a woman, chin up, with the attitude of "wanna fight about it?".

And I had a black friend who once approached a girl at night, with his hoodie on.

These guys could gain from reading "Day Bang" because it might make them realize that "not scaring the cat" is also important.

But apart from that, I don't like Roosh's day game approach in "Day Bang".
I don't think it's very effective and efficient, and sometimes it can come across as outright weird.

Check the:

- Best dating resources for guys

Or get the book on Amazon

Competence and Warmth: The Science of Winning People Over

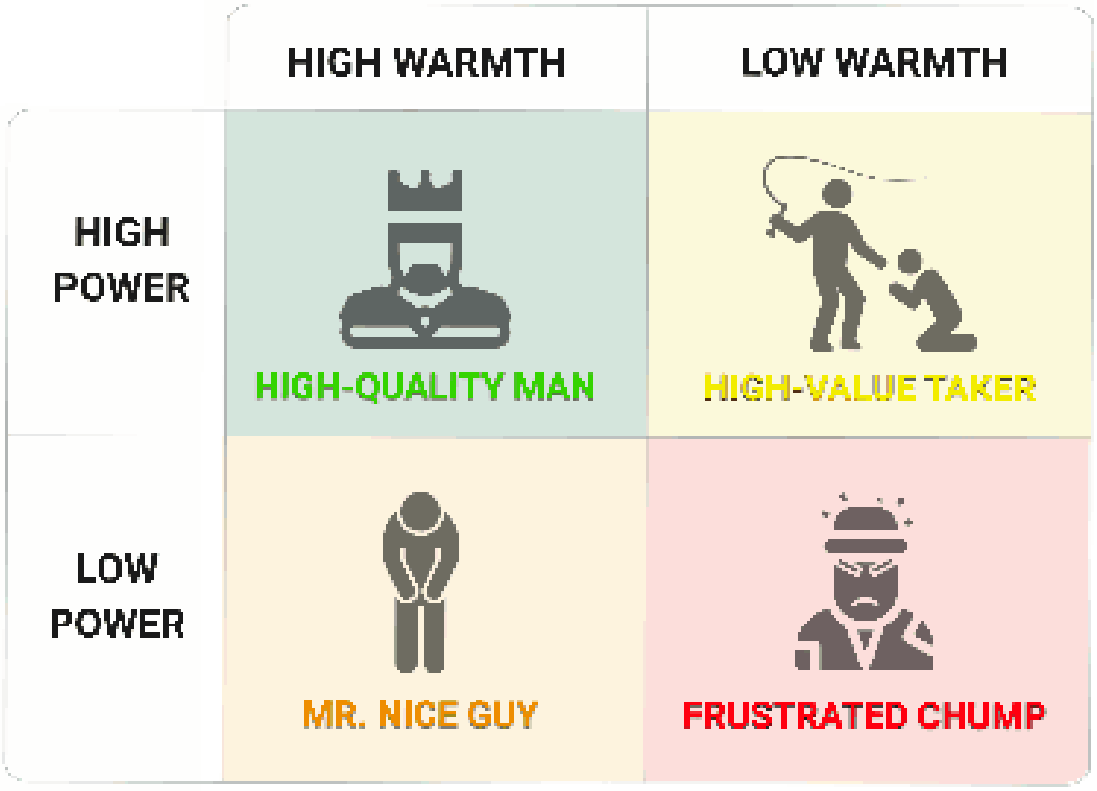
Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Every social interaction runs on two signals: power and warmth.
Get them both right, and people respect you, follow you, and are drawn to you. Get them wrong, and you're dismissed as either weak or arrogant.

At *The Power Moves*, we're experts on power dynamics, and we pioneered the real-world use of the **Competence & Warmth Matrix**—a science-based framework that explains why some men gain admiration and influence while others stay invisible.

This guide shows how to use it to project strength *and* connection—the foundation of respect, status, and attraction.

High-Power / High-Warmth™: A TPM Framework Built on Established Research
While the underlying psychology of warmth and power is well established in social science, TPM's **high-power / high-warmth™** model is a practical framework that distills this research into a clear baseline for everyday social exchanges, influence, and status building.



Competence and warmth matrix

Contents

- Intro: The Science
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- Power & Warmth Quadrant
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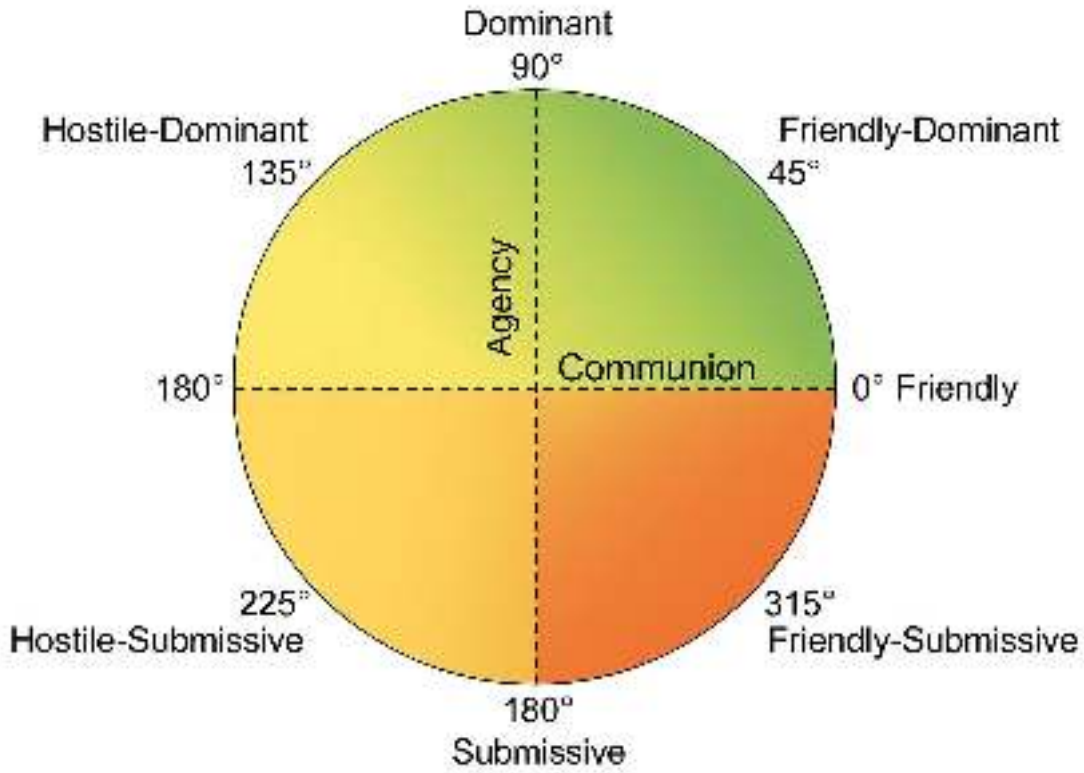
Intro: The Science

Two different but similar models underpin this approach:

- The stereotype content model (SCM) postulates that groups and individuals assess each other along two dimensions of **competence** and **warmth**.
- The Interpersonal Circumplex Model (IPC) plots traits and interpersonal behaviors, or how people interact one-on-one, along the **agency** and **communion** dimensions.



The interpersonal circumplex, based on Gurtman, 2009

While the two overlap and reinforce each other, there are also some noteworthy differences:

Difference	IPC	Fiske SCM
Target	Personality traits and behaviors (individual-focused)	Social perception and stereotypes (group-focused)
Dominance	Directly measured (dominant ↔ submissive)	Implicit in "competence"
Warmth	A behavioral/interpersonal trait	A perceived intention/moral judgment

Difference	IPC	Fiske SCM
Framework origin	Interpersonal theory (Leary, Wiggins)	Social cognition and stereotype research

In his seminal *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, Peter Blau also lends credibility to this framework. He suggests that people who seek status prioritize displaying value on salient traits, a competence signal. People who 'give up' on status and prefer acceptance/communion instead tend to self-efface (a display of warmth).

TPM's Approach

> *High-power / high-warmth* refers to a **baseline approach to social exchanges** in which an individual combines **assertive, status-conveying behavior (high power)** with **prosocial, trust-building behavior (high warmth)**.

For our purposes, we sublimate both into this simplified approach:

- **Power**: how powerful is he?
  - High-power ⇒ high-value, respect-worthy, high-status, and leader
  - Low-power ⇒ low-value, 'too nice guy', naive
- **Warmth**: is he friend or foe?
  - High-warmth ⇒ potential ally, uplifting
  - Low-warmth ⇒ competitive, antagonizing, enemy

High-power in our model includes assertiveness, postive interpersonal dominance, social confidence, and an agentic predosposition.
High warmth includes respect, power-protecting, signals of friendliness, and a generally uplifting approach to others.

One of our foundational social strategies is to **adopt a baseline behavior that is high power and high warmth**. The smart social strategist calibrates each to context and goals. For example, he can display power on salient and foundational attributes, and 'taking the edge off' with warmth in less crucial traits.

Power & Warmth Quadrant

The two axes of power and warmth form 4 quadrants.

See it here with an example in each for politics, work, and relationships:

	Low Power	High Power
High Warmth	**Mr. Nice Guy** • King's servant • Clueless intern • Nice beta provider • Nobody cares of you	**High-Quality Man** • Beloved king • Founder & leader • Women's dream man • Everyone wants you
Low Warmth	**Frustrated Chump** • Deposed despot • Bitter civil servant • Jealous cuckold • Everyone hates you	**High-Value Taker** • Hated king • "Short-fuse" CEO • Abusive narcissist • Everyone fears you

1. Low Power – Low Warmth (lose-lose)

> The resentful loser

Examples:

- **Jealousy frenemy**
- **Bitter man** who failed at dating
- **Grumpy Karen** yelling at service workers

From a stereotype model perspective, people in this category are homeless people and welfare recipients. These groups are seen as leeching off society, taking (low warmth), but taking *little* (low power).

Emotion: Contempt | Behavior: Active harm

This quadrant says:

> "I'm unhappy with my life and take my frustration on the people around".

2. Low Power – High Warmth (lose-win)

> The too nice guy

Examples:

- **Homeless** you take pity on
- **Manipulated provider** for men
- **Submissive housewife** who always says yes, no matter how she feels

Emotion: Pity | Behavior: Passive facilitation (and sometimes passive harm)

This quadrant says:

> "I'm friendly and naive, easy to manipulate and take advantage of".

3. Low Warmth – High Power (win-lose)

> The ruthless prince

Examples:

- **Unapproachable VIP**
- **Cruel dictator**
- **Despotic boss**

In politics, Republicans are seen as low-warmth. And that may partly explain why security and defense appeal to Republicans.

Emotion: Envy | Behavior: Passive harm

This quadrant says:

> "I'm powerful because I'm better than you".

4. High warmth – High Power (win-win)

> The prestigious leader

Examples:

- **Gregarious VIP** shaking hands and signing autographs (think of Keanu Reeves)
- **Successful mentor**, like a founder mentoring his team
- **Uplifting leader**, welcoming newcomers, encouraging team members

In politics, liberal leaders tend to be seen as high warmth and high power (TPM note: but they must be high power to win elections).
Socially, high power and high warmth men enjoy large appeal and people want to be around them.

Emotion: Admiration | Behavior: Active facilitation

This quadrant says:

> "I'm powerful, and I'm happy, and I radiate positive energy".

Strategic Uses

While power and warmth is a great default approach, there is a time and place for everything.

For example, low warmth and high power works for:

- **Despots**

- **Gangs** and for quick climbs
- **Prisons** to discourage aggression

Says psychology researcher Baumeister:

> A reputation for dangerous, unpredictable aggressiveness, causes others to leave one alone.
> (…)
> This is the irony of the fighter who never fights because he is known to be such a dangerous fighter that no one is willing to challenge him.

But phases or bursts of low warmth are also helpful for faster results.
For example:

- **Reset wrong impressions** of a 'sucker' with dominance and no warmth
- **Learn assertiveness faster** with over-correction if you were a people pleaser—like a 'good asshole phase'

However, don't stay stuck at the low-warmth stage:

Beware the 'As*hole Trap' (low warmth, high power)

The 'as*hole approach' can deliver some respect and attraction with a display of value-taking power (Pinker, 1997).

But it's a dead end that caps your potential.

Just like women's 'entitled b*tch approach', **the asshole approach is mostly effective *below***, to lower status and unaware men and women.
And it appeals mostly to younger men who dream of being 'alpha' but must still develop their baseline self-esteem - see 'alpha male posturing'-.

Higher-quality men and women won't be impressed.
Instead, this approach breeds enemies, caps your potential, and harms relationships—especially with high-quality people.

		Competence	
		Low	High
Warmth	High	**Paternalistic stereotype** low status, not competitive (e.g., housewives, elderly people, disabled people)	**Admiration** high status, not competitive (e.g., ingroup, close allies)
	Low	**Contemptuous stereotype** low status, competitive (e.g., welfare recipients, poor people)	**Envious stereotype** high status, competitive (e.g., Asians, Jews, rich people, feminists)

The a*shole approach increases enemies

P.S.:
Men stay away from women playing the equivalent 'entitled game':

Low-warmth and high-power women seek to signal status, high demand, and exclusivity. It's a manipulative strategy, don't fall for it

Power & Warmth For Baseline Behavior

Power and warmth work best for most people and situations and align with our foundational social strategies.

The advantages include:

- **More friends** and fewer enemies
- **Better leadership** in free groups and societies, including attracting and retaining talent
- **Better close relationships**
- **Deeper influence** as it better aligns with prestige (Henrich, 2015)

Finally, chances are it's also better for you and your health, both mental and physical.

You spend less time and resources 'instilling fear', displaying anger, or policing others (Haslam, 2006). Instead, you get positive feedback from the world. People think and treat you as an upstanding, value-giving and honorable man. And that reinforces your confidence and self-esteem.

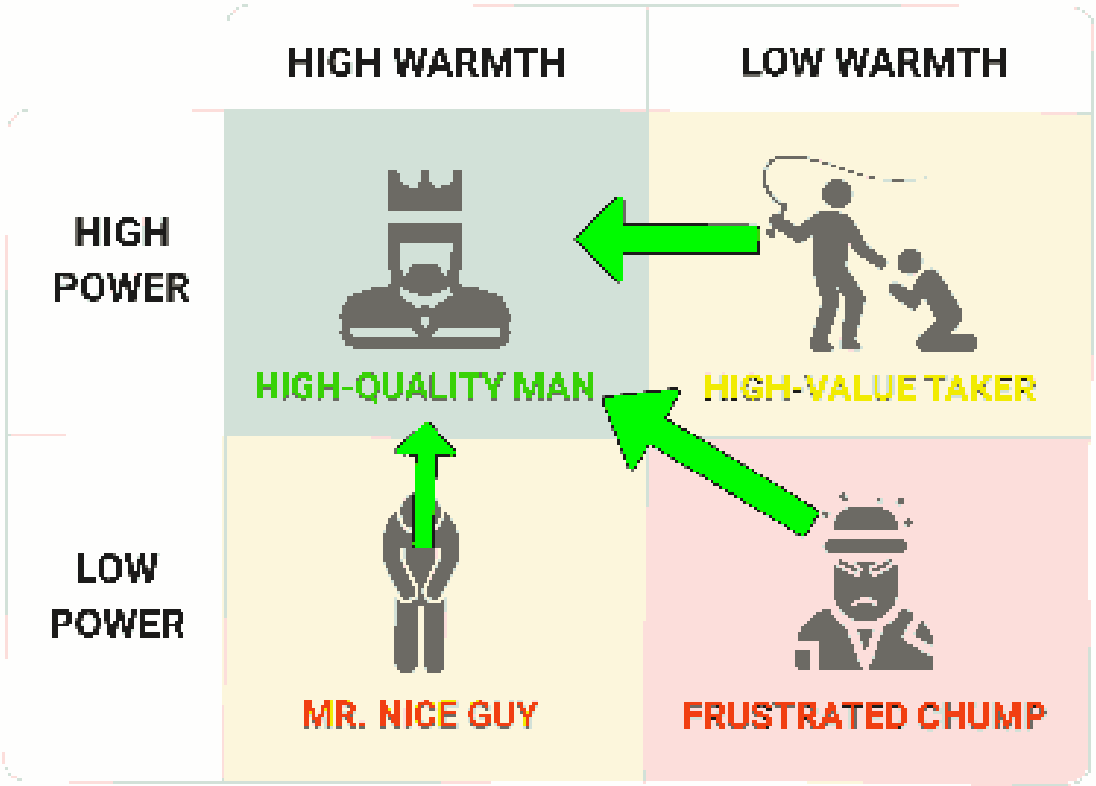
⍰ Quick Examples of High-Power, High-Warmth

Just for a taste of what high power and high warmth can look like in real life:

- **Work**: Set deadlines with authority, but ask, "*How can I support you?*" Team loves it.
- **Social Settings**: Lead the convo confidently, but spotlight others—"*Tell us about your trip!*"
- **Relationships**: Be the leader, but be a 'leader for both'. Ie.: "*I've got this, and I've got you.*"

- **Across-the-board**: Look people in the eyes when greeting, parting, or thanking
  ♂ I always thank service workers with direct gaze and a smile

How to Become High-Power



This website is dedicated to making you high-power.

Just as an overview:

1. **Self-development** for status, strategic thinking, money, etc.
2. **Remove submissiveness**, in behavior and words
3. **Increase social power**, in behavior and words

Or for a one-stop program for the highest speed and effectiveness, check out Power University.

How to Become High-Warmth

There are two dimensions of warmth:

1. **Behavior & nonverbal**: friendly attitude, smiles, nods, etc.
2. **Moral** with a *reputation* for being a fair and honorable person

Research shows that **morality is more important**.

Great news.
Warmth can be misread as submissive and it wastes time.
So if you want to be more 'masculine', decrease smiles and nods and **cover warmth with our honorable approach** that includes ethics.

Moral Traits

The traits and attitudes include:

- **Honesty**, fairness, and ethics
- **Adding value** and win-win
- **Prosocial** attitude and behavior
- …

Actions signaling moral warmth

Besides what we list in our honorable man approach, daily signals include:

- **Give back** after you've been given ⍰⍰ Win-win approach
- **Tips** and charity contributions ⍰⍰ Prosociality
- **Differentiate trash** ⍰⍰ Shared resources preservation
- **Clean after yourself at canteens** and restaurants ⍰⍰ Consideration towards lower-status strangers
- **Contribute to team goals** and objectives ⍰⍰ Team player
- **Speak about high-quality people you respect** ⍰⍰ Honorable
  - Distance yourself from as*holes

⍰ Strategic morality: be effective, without being a jerk

The Machiavellian approach to morality is:

- **Reputation only**, focusing on visibility, not utility
- **Cheap**, give when it costs you nothing
- **Expedient**, Give when you'll see or need them again

And avoid any time you can get away with it.

We recommend 'morality maxxing' for fair rewards. For example, if you donate blood, get the sticker: you earned it.
If you donate money, drop it in conversation.

But as usual, be honorable, keep it balanced, and add real value to the world.

Behavioral & Nonverbal

First of all:

1. Avoid low-warmth expressions

- Downward lips ⍰⍰ "I'm unhappy with life"
- Smugness ⍰⍰ "I am so much better than you all"
- Overly dominant poses ⍰⍰ "I'm the domineering force (you watch out)"

For example:

Downward lips, overly dominant, angry, meme-like haughty, and “better than you” smart alec

2. Add warmth signals

Starter pack:

1. **Nod or slight head bow** upon meeting someone the first time
2. **Flash your eyebrows upward** when you first meet someone
3. **Higher-pitched voice,** when saying “bye”
   Audio example:

Next from most basic to advanced:

- **Build them up**, if you admire something, say it
- **Fully engage them**, be interested, ask questions, and relate
  And:
  - Self-disclose. Make it a give-and-take, also share about yourself to avoid being an information-taker
  - Be (appropriately!) vulnerable, especially if they’re anxious or share a vulnerability, you can relate back
- **If you both start talking, invite them to go first** (lower power but higher warmth)
  - If you cut them off but keep speaking, acknowledge it and give back the floor
    Example: “*Sorry if I jump in*” and then: “*You were saying… ?*“. Then, listen

More cues here

But to keep it simple, remember that for most traits it’s about calibration and balance:

 Try warmth to turn enemies into frenemies
Some people act distant because they think that *you* think are too good for them.
Try warmth to show you respect them. If it doesn't work, go back to low warmth.

And an important reminder for people pleasers:

 Warm ≠ 'nice'

Warmth *includes* friendly or 'nice'.
But it doesn't mean being *overly* friends, or 'inconvenience yourself friendly'.

The most important foundation of warmth is respect for others.

You don't need to put yourself, your goals, or your closest people last just to be friendly.

 Examples:

'Being courteous', including to waiters, is warm and recommended, but:

- **Ignore waiters if it's an important conversation**, or give quick 'thank you' without eye contact
  Forum entry here

'Smiling' is warm and recommended, but:

- **Don't force a smile if someone walks to you**. It's warm enough to give them your time

Note: Why 'Power' Beats 'Competence'

Fiske's original research refers to "competence", while Leary's original insights refer to 'dominance'

Dominance and the IPC model are in general closer to our interpersonal-focused approach.
But we prefer 'power' for three reasons.

- **Definition: power better fits the description**

"Competence" is defined as "the capacity to enact one's intentions" (Fiske et al., 2007).

While competence can fit that description, we believe it aligns even more closely with power at its highest level of abstraction.

Dominance comes closer in meaning to power but is narrower in scope.
It often refers to overt interpersonal behavior, whereas power encompasses both explicit and implicit forms of control, both interpersonal and non-interpersonal. That broader coverage aligns more closely with our model.

- **Power is free of positive (and potentially naive) connotations**

Second, the name 'competence' has positive connotations while 'dominance' carries negative ones.

In our TPM's philosophy, **the positive framing of 'competence' can make it naive** by excluding the 'darker' and more domineering, value-taking expressions of power.

Power is more neutral, encompassing both value-giving and value-taking approaches.

- **Power better describes reality**

Finally, we believe that power is a better descriptor of reality. A reality that includes social power dynamics.

Competence, with its positive frame, runs into some issues.

For example, would you define Trump's yank and pull signature handshake as 'competent'?
Here they are for you to review:

> **Trump**: (yanks people towards him to sub-communicate he's the most dominant)

When asked whether Trump's handshake was competent or warm, a fellow social skills teacher replied, 'neither'.

It's understandable that with 'competence' she runs into such an issue.
She expects 'competence' to be 'nice'—or at least neutral and *not* aggressive and domineering.

To us instead, and with our approach, these approaches make perfect sense.
And we can easily fit Trump -and any other domineering and aggressive approach- into the extreme version of power. Extreme power without warmth = *over*-dominance = bullying. But still neatly fits into the stereotype content model.

In Summary

People assess others first for their power and friendliness.

Power gives you respect, and friendliness gives you friends.

In most free-forming relationships and free societies **warmth complements and increases your social effectiveness and well-being**.

To be high power and high-warmth, move confidently, and treat others respectfully.
For practical applications, we turn this framework into strategies in our flagship program:

Check Power University

Lover VS Provider In Relationship and Dating

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Lovers and providers represent different male roles and strategies for dating and relationships.

In simple terms, lovers pertain to short-term dating and uncommitted intimacy, while providers focus on long-term, committed relationships.

In this post, we will explore what are lovers and providers, what's a provider mindset, and how you can pick your best strategy.

Contents

- INTRO: The Science
  - From Science to Pickup Advice
  - Lover vs Provider Mindsets
- Lover Strategy
  - Lover First, Provider Later
  - The Risks of Being a Lover
- Provider Strategy
  - The Advantages of Adding Provider Traits
  - The Risks of Being a Provider
  - How to Effectively Date As Provider
  - Provider Mindset
- Blending Roles: The Lovider
- Should You Date as Lover or Provider?
- Be Like Water, My Friend

INTRO: The Science

While terms like “lovers vs providers” have been popularized by online dating communities, those concepts are rooted firmly in evolutionary psychology.

A first milestone for this concept can be set at the Sexual Strategies Theory (Buss and Schmitt, 1993), claiming that men and women evolved different adaptations for short and long-term mating.

Shortly afterward, Gangestad & Simpson‘s strategic pluralism theorized that women evaluate men in two different ways: genetic qualities for short-term flings, and parental investment for long-term relationships.

Lovers and providers are the male archetypes that ‘specialize’ in these two categories, each appealing to very different female preferences.
Sexy lovers seduce for fast and uncommitted sex, while dependable providers court for long-term provisioning.

Several subsequent studies confirmed the validity of this theory.
For example, Gorelik writes in the latest *Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives*:

> the picture that is emerging is that **women employ a dual mating strategy** marked by a preference **for (a) dominant and physically attractive men on the one hand and (b) committed providers and carers who are invested in them and their offspring** on the other hand

And later:

> **Men may likewise employ a dual mating strategy** (…) by shifting between competition for access to mating opportunities and direct paternal care within the context of a pair-bond.

Cashdan’s reseach also found that both men and women approach dating according to these two main strategies.

But please note that:

- **These strategies aren’t mutually exclusive**, and one man may be a provider in a relationship, while trying to be a lover outside of it
- **Mate value influences but doesn’t determine the strategy**, since a high value man may prefer a committed relationship, while a lower value man may still avoid relationships

However, mate value influences the strategy because **only higher value men can be successful lovers**.

Finally, lovers and providers’ strategies have also been linked to early childhood experience (life history strategies), and they come with very different psychological profiles.
Read here for more:

Psychological profile of lovers

From Science to Pickup Advice

As a broad generalization:

- Mainstream dating advice targets providers
- PUA and red pill communities target lovers (and sometimes scoff at the provider)

Lovers are sometimes referred to as alpha males, while providers are scorned as beta males, also encapsulated in the maxim alpha fucks, beta bucks.

However, the truth is more nuanced than that, and each approach also comes down to life phases, personal

preferences, and… Contextual effectiveness.

Lover vs Provider Mindsets

Although lovers tend to pursue short-term strategies and providers lean toward long-term ones, both approaches can sometimes be applied across both modalities.

See a matrix here:

	Lover Strategy	Provider Strategy
Short-Term Strategy	• Screen for sexual interest • Avoid non-sexual investment • Get to sex ASAP • Move on or keep it strictly sexual	• Feign interest in her • Display or feign resources • Feign willingness to commit • Display or feign long-term qualities • Ghost her after sex
Long-Term Strategy	• Ramp up sexual tension • Avoid non-sexual investment • Get to sex ASAP • Slowly increase non-sexual investment • Go from FWB to official relationship	• Show interest in her • Display willingness to commit • Display personal & long-term qualities • Get to sex when she's ready • Develop a relationship

Short-term dating with a provider role, in red, is the most exploitative strategy.

Let's learn more now, bridging science, experience, and advice that works:

Lover Strategy

Definition:

> A lover seeks sexual intercourse with a woman without committment, and little investment

Low investment includes little or no financial support, emotional support, or time together outside of intimacy.

These are the characteristics of a lover strategy:

- **Focus on the physical and sexual** aspects of seduction
- Search for the **quickest path to sex**
- **Rejection of long courtships**
  - Avoidance of investments of time and resources (unless we're talking about a highly manipulative approach)
- Potentially **active disqualification as a long-term provider** (ie.: presenting himself as a traveler, a player, or saying he doesn't do relationships)
  - Potentially playing down any indicators of commitment
- **Avoiding commitment** and keeping the relationship "sex only"

The lover strategy is superior for short-term dating and casual sex, including speed to sex from first meeting.

It efficiently screens for sexually available women, it requires less investment, and women are more likely to move fast with a good lover type.

The major caveat, of course, is that for the man to successfully use a lover strategy, he must be at least somewhat attractive to the woman she wants.

Lover First, Provider Later

The lover can also eventually "pivot" from casual to a "real" relationship.

There are some advantages to starting out as a lover, including:

Quicker Sex

Why so?

Because women are not screening lovers for resources and commitment, and may not seek to look like good girls (Madonnas in the Madonna-whore dichotomy).

So since women are not auditioning lovers for a long-term role in their lives, they only need "attractive enough" or "fun enough" to enjoy the sex or the adventure.

Potentially More Attractive and Higher Power

Women don't take just about anyone as lovers.

To be a lover, one needs to reach a minimum level of skills and/or attractiveness.

So **entering relationships as a lover gains stronger attraction and leverage for a possible future relationship**.

Why?

First, because she will compare him with other men she's been with.
And subconsciously, she will rationalize that if the lover was faster, then he must be more successful with other women (and women like sexually successful men).

And second, because entering a relationship as a non-providing lover adds a "double-bind" attraction. First, she picked him for his sexiness. And now she even gets the resources?

Wow, what a win!

Little caveat first: the "lover advantage" is mostly vis-a-vis average providers.
Higher-quality men who date more as providers also enter relationships with high power.

Now back to our lover style.
Of course, there is no "all-season perfect strategy", and the lover role comes with its risks and shortcomings.

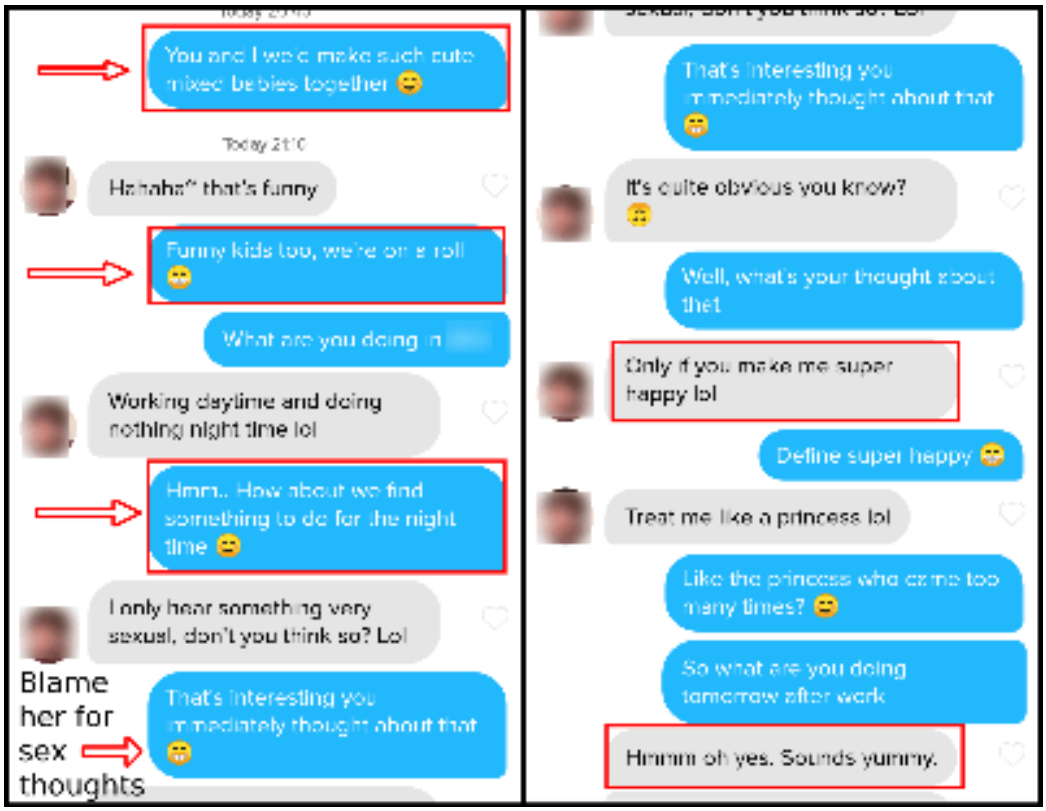
The Risks of Being a Lover

Some of the risks include:

- **It might not be her type of sexy**: If he doesn't pull off "sexy enough" or if he's not her type, then he has no value to her.
- **If sex doesn't happen quickly, he's out**: Lovers are supposed to be skilled and make it happen. If he doesn't, he's no lover, so he's out.
- **Flawless seduction or nothing**: A small blunder and he's out because he's not much of a lover if he mucks it up.

- **She may turn cold and disappear** if you make her feel ashamed for having been 'too easy' or 'slutty' ('anti-slut defense). She will blame it on you, and avoid you

Here is a good texting example:



The lover frame was set, she was digging it, we moved to discuss logistics and we agreed on the date… And then she suddenly unmatched me.
She likely felt she was being too easy, too slutty… And she cut the interaction.

- **Works less well with low-sex drive women**: You have less sexual drive to leverage. Same goes for women with more hang-ups about sex.
- **Buyer's remorse risk (post-sex anti-slut defenses)**

Sometimes anti-slut defenses kick in after *sex* has happened, and even then… It's over.

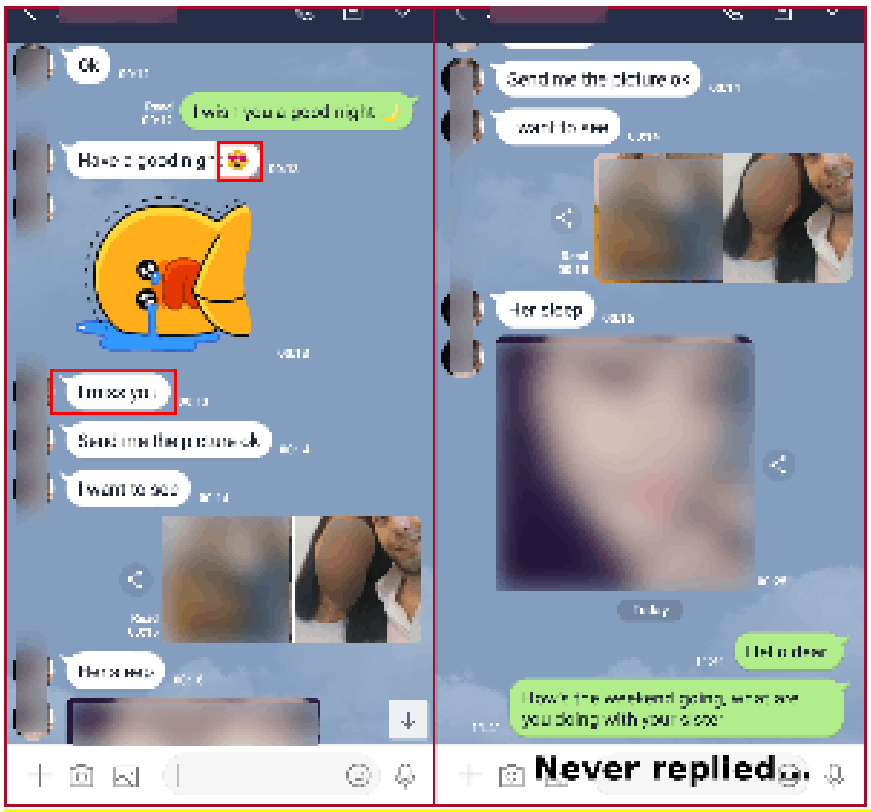
No biggies if you only cared about sex, but if you wanted to see her again, then it's on you to manage her slut-feelings (more on it later).

The risk is especially high with conservative women, or she wasn't 100% sure and convinced.
She may even resent sex if it feels like 'your win' but not hers (and for good reasons. That's why we highly recommend win-win and collaborative frames here, especially during escalations and LMRs).

As Miller says in "What Women Want":

> Even a woman who is really just cruising for some hot sex will enjoy you more and feel less vulnerable to slut-shaming if she can fantasize about you being a great boyfriend.

This happened several times to me.
Here is one example:



How do you go from all over and “miss you” to ghosting? With a lover’s frame that makes her feel like a slut on the day after

- **Risk of being branded as “not relationship material”**

Some women slot lovers as the “guy for fun only”.

The risk is present even if she likes you a lot, and sometimes *especially* if she likes you a lot.

One of my biggest heartbreaks was the woman who disappeared on me saying she “needed to protect herself”. That was the equivalent of saying “you’re not the kind of guy I can trust, you will not form any pair bonding”.

And that’s one of the reasons why I disagree with the advice of never telling women you like them (see AMS). That’s low-level, fearful game.

- **You misdiagnose her personality (and fall for the bait and switch)**

As a general rule, the more she likes you, the more power you have.

The problem with dating high-power is that… You only get to know the people you’re dealing with when *they* are high power.

Up until the power is on your side, her focus is to lock you down and present the best version of herself.

But things will change as the relationship develops and she accrues more power. For example, after marriage, or after kids.
Then the lovers really get to see the “real” her, and it can be a big surprise.

- **You might not get the type of girl you like**

Some women you will rarely get with a lover’s strategy.
It might be a minority, but women who never wanted sex outside of a relationship do exist.
Women looking for a relationship might also be more closed off to men dating with a lover strategy.

Overall, the lover strategy tends to work less well with certain types of women, and better with girls who are

libertine, unrestricted, high-sex drive, closeted high sex drive, sexually curious, etc.

You date below your full potential

This is possibly the biggest drawback of the lover dating strategy.

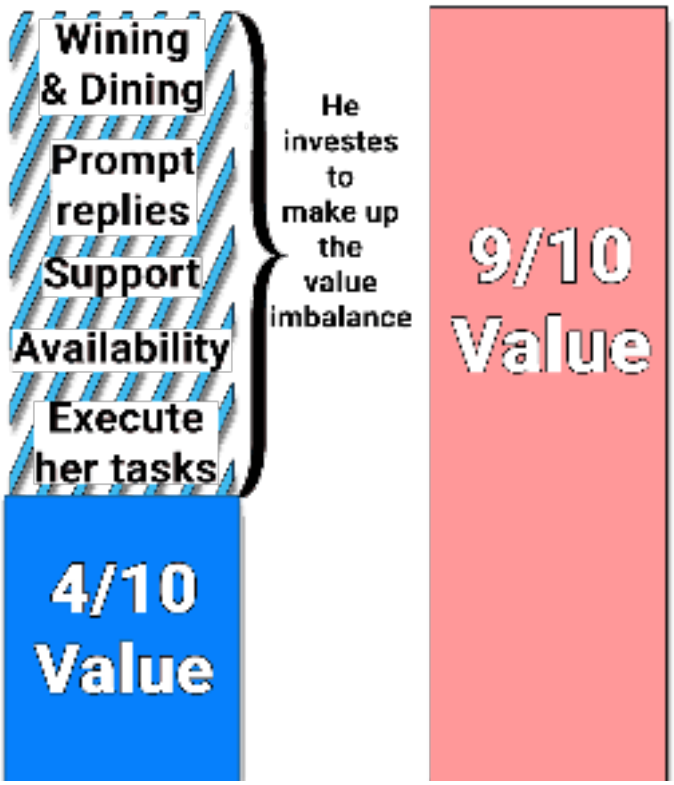
When you date purely as a lover, you are taking important assets off the negotiation table: resources, committment, emotional support, and a future together.

No matter how sexy you are, a sexy man who *also* adds those traits is inherently higher value.

Keep this in mind: **at parity of sexual market value, the boyfriend candidate is superior to the lover candidate**, because the boyfriend candidate, who is most often a provider, is the full package.

That means that **dating with the lover role you may harm your chances with higher quality women**.
After all, as research found out 'attractive women want it all': *both* lover qualities, and investment (Buss and Shackelford's, 2008).
Women who might have otherwise dated you, had you chosen the provider route.

Look at this chart:



A lover who is a 4 and removes all of the "provider stuff" can hardly date a 9.

But a provider who is a skilled dater and who adds all the provider stuff can more easily get a woman who is above his sexual market value.

Provider Strategy

Let's define the provider strategy:

> A provider seeks sexual access with a 'package' that includes mutual commitment, emotional support, and financial support.

Some men are providers at heart, and most men date as providers most of the time.

Most “serious relationships” often see the man in a provider role.

Presenting oneself as a provider with less sexual edge is slower but, on average and for most people, safer.
As PUA Richard La Ruina says in “Soulmate Sequence“:

> To proceed at a slow burning pace is just playing easier.
> Going immediately from strangers to lover is a pretty hard challenge.

Wining and dining might be in the cards, but he is allowed more room for mistakes.
Part of the reason might not be very encouraging, and in part it’s because most providers are held to a lower sexual standard than lovers.

However, most is *not* all, and if you’re reading here, chances are that you’re not “most” guys.
And a sexy man can also date as a provider.

Indeed, there are different layers of being a provider.
The low-quality way is to pitch one’s resources and commitment in exchange for sexual access.

A step above that is to use this frame:

> Here is me, here are my qualities, here are my resources, and if we get along I might join forces with you and commit them or a part of them to you

Some ways in which men show their willingness to provide include:

- Picking her up
- Taking her to dinner
- Paying for her
- Showing up well dressed and clean for her
- Caring about her
- Defending her and taking her side

The Advantages of Adding Provider Traits

Advantages of provider-type of dating include:

- **Works best for most men** (by definition most men are not super sexy)
- **Higher batting average for most men** (at parity of SMV, at least)
- **Easier**, doesn’t require the lover’s smoothness

Take the example of nutritionist Layne Norton.
Layne admitted in an interview he’s only been with two women in his life, both of whom became his wives.
Certainly not a player, and not much experience. Yet, as a high-quality provider, the lack of some experience was no issue in marrying a very high-quality, attractive, and popular woman:

- **Some women avoid pure lovers** (especially the ones looking for a relationship)
- **Relationships with a provider tend to be stronger**
- **Some men are more fulfilled as providers**: Bruce Bryan says that the right woman will make you *want* to be a provider.
- **It allows men to get higher quality women** who wouldn't otherwise sleep with him right away

The last one is the most crucial, as we've seen.
That's the main reason why I would not advise most men to date as lovers unless I knew their goals and preferences beforehand. For men looking for a relationship, I would definitely advise a high-quality provider.

The Risks of Being a Provider

The risks of being a provider include:

- If they get into a relationship, he might start the relationship with less power
- He needs to share his resources
- He might end up moving too slow and attraction might dissipate
- If he's boring and showing off too much wealth, it might seem more like a transaction
- If he's not good at truly making people open up, she might present him with the mask of what he *wishes* to see

As you can see, there are risks associated with being a provider as well.

How to Effectively Date As Provider

See "Seduction University".

Provider Mindset

In dating contexts, the provider mindset is a psychological orientation where a man prioritizes the well-being, security, and support of her woman—financially, emotionally, or physically—as a core identity trait.

It emphasizes:

- **Responsibility**, including financially
- **Pair bonding**, securely attached when healthy, anxious when less healthy
- **Future-oriented planning**, potentially for a family
- **Cooperativeness**, with a win-win midnset and the belief that cooperation makes the pie bigger for all

Men with a provider mindset tend to be high in agreeableness and conscientiousness, and low in dark triad traits.

Blending Roles: The Lovider

The 'dream man' blends the roles.

A rich provider can be sex and move fast, while a poorer but sexy man can still add provider's traits.

Everything is in the execution.
Look at this example from "The Saint":

> **Lover**: (orders and pays for two wine bottles of $500 each)

Van Kilmer plays the stereotypical artist-type lover.
Yet, her attraction spikes higher when he shows he *also* has high-flyer type of money and he's inviting her for the drinks.

This is a peculiar example, but the general rule is exactly that:

Top-quality men combine qualities from both providers and lovers.

And that's why, I invite you to look less at the roles, and focus more on overall quality.

Should You Date as Lover or Provider?

For effectiveness, proper calibration to the context and woman is paramount.

And for quality of life, your preference reigns supreme.

Here are a few questions to help you decide what's best suited for you:

Q.: Are you around average or handsome?

– If you're average or below, provider might be more suited
– If you're handsome, lover will come more easily to you

Q.: Are you in a conservative or libertine culture?

– If you live in a conservative culture, provider might be more suited
– If you live in a libertine culture, lovers have an easier time

Q.: Do you live in a big city or countryside?

– If you're in the countryside, the lover is much more challenging
– If you're in a big city, the environment better supports a lover strategy

Q.: What priority do you assign to women?

– If you have many competing interests, learning to be a lover might suck up lots of your time
– If women are important to you you crave experience, then you should develop the lover's skills

Q.: What type of places do you like?

– The lover style tends to work better in bars and clubs
– The provider strategy fares comparatively better when you meet women outside of bars and clubs

Q.: What age bracket are you dealing with?

– The lover style tends to work better with both younger and older women
– The provider strategy fares better with women in "settling down age"

Q.: What type of relationships do *you* prefer?

– If you're more into relationships, then you don't lose anything going for provider
– If you're into casual sex, then you the lover is more effective

Many men (and women) are not sure.
If you are not sure, that can create issues within yourself, so think it through.
If you are not sure and want to find out, here is a quiz for you to take (subscribers only).

Q.: What type of girls do you prefer?

– Low sex drive, more conservative women respond better to a provider
– High sex drive and more libertine respond better to a lover, especially when they're not yet in "settle down mode"

If I had to pick one way to choose, I would recommend you to pick based on your preferences and the types of girls you like.
For all the rest, you can find ways around it.

Be Like Water, My Friend

Finally, it's always best not to constrain yourself into a role.

Slow down if one day you meet a conservative woman who doesn't trust you yet.

Or strike the iron while it's hot if you see signs of strong attraction.

Think fluidly, and you will always be more successful.
Fluid minds always beat inflexible ones.

Seduction University provides actionable advice, "hacks" and examples we can't share publicly

Protected: The 9 Irrefutable Laws of Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

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Soulmate Sequence by Richard la Ruina: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Soulmate Sequence is a dating book for men. Richard la Ruina, the author, teaches readers how to socialize more effectively, including how to expand one's network of friends, develop stronger relationships, persuade people, and meet "the one".

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- Richard La Ruina Review

Summary

About the Author: Richard La Ruina started teaching seduction right after it went mainstream in the US following Neil Strauss' book "The Game". La Ruina's company, "PUA Training", went on to dominate the UK market.
The man who wrote "Soulmate Sequence", though, is in a new stage of life, says Richard himself. Not anymore going out every night meeting new women and honing techniques, but more focused on his relationship as a married man.

Empathy and Unwavering Integrity Are The Foundations

Says La Ruina:

> Most magnetic people draw their power to influence others by genuinely operating from a place of empathy and unwavering integrity

Think of Who You Like, Then Go to The Places Where They Hang Out

Think of the kind of girls you like.
Then, go to the places where they are most likely to hang out.

Don't just talk to women though, meet anyone. That's how you build a social circle that will also naturally introduce to more potential partners.

Don't Be Afraid of the Friend-Zone

Richard La Ruina says that not only you shouldn't be afraid of the friend zone, but you should actively put more people -and women- in the friend zone.

The wider your network expands, the more options you will have to meet someone who eventually is going to be more of your friend.

The advantages of making friend with a beautiful woman who's not open to dating:

1. You can meet their friends and enlarge your circle (slow game)
2. The more you spend time together, the more likely it is that some feelings will start developing
3. Maybe they're taken now, or closed off to new relationships, but that might change later -and you will only know if you stay in touch-

4. Going slow sometimes is safer than going from stranger to lover (I agree, also read "lovers VS providers")

This is advice I agree with.
Being afraid of the friend zone is defensive and it's what scared men with a thin skin do.
Also read:

- **Lovers, providers, and friends**

> Lover, Provider & Friend: The Truth of Men's Sexual Roles

To Influence People, Avoid Competitive Frames

"Soulmate Sequence" goes much wider than dating and relationships, also including being a better persuader and influencer.

Here are some of the bits I liked most:

- Tell people how to act, not how not to act
- Instead of saying "you're so unlucky", say "you're not the luckiest person on earth"
- Instead of saying "when are you going back to work", ask "how many more days of holiday do you have"
- Instead of "you've lost the match because", say "you haven't succeeded this time, but here what we can do better"

And make sure that you don't use those negative forms in your own life and in your own self-talk.

Learn more in:

- **The basics strategies of power**

> The 4 Fundamental Strategies of Power

And read here how I turned a competitive frame into a collaborative relationship.

To Converse Properly, Ask A Question, Then Add Your Comment

The best way of killing a conversation is by asking lots of questions in a row.

Instead, you want to use this format:

1. **Ask a question** (listen, step into their shoes, imagine what it feels like)
2. **Comment on what they said** (use a statement first, based on what they said made you feel or think of)
3. **Then ask one more question to probe deeper** (keep the focus on them)
4. **Add one more comment** (and reward them, if they invested a lot)
5. Let them keep going on the subject they love

For example:

> **You**: what do you do
> **Her**: fashion designer
> **You**: cool, I can imagine it must be interesting creating new clothes and helping shape the new trends. Do you like it?
> **Her**: yeah, I love it
> **You**: awesome, it's great when you do something you love. What do you love most about it

You also want to avoid the most common conversational mistakes:

1. Not listening
2. Preparing your next question in advance
3. Don't go off a tangent about how what they said only relates to you and never ask a question back

To Never Run Out of Things to Say, Be In The Moment

Awkward silences can derail your conversations.

This is what happens when you run out of things to say:

1. Dive too deeply into the details (when you ask where do they work, and for long, you get too specific and have less in common about those details)
2. Ask lots of questions that only elicit short responses (and it feels like an interview without connection)

Richard La Ruina recommends you use more statements, and then end your statements with an open-ended question.
For example:

> **You**: what do you in your free time
> **Her**: I do yoga
> **You**: cool, I think it's great when people make physical activities that are not just about moving, but also involve your mind. Why do you do it, to stay in shape?
> **Her**: actually, no, it helps you stay in shape, but I just love how it makes me feel
> **You**: oh really, it sounds like something that is really adding a lot in your life. It makes me want to try. Tell me more

Says La Ruina:

> Connecting with another human means you go deeper, and know more about their life than the bare facts you can check on their online profile. Bare facts don't build any basis for true connection.
> When, how much, and "how long" only litter the talk with extra, unimportant details.
> Instead, think emotions. That's the basis for true connection.

Think of yourself as an explorer, exploring the uncharted territory of this person's character.

Also read:

- **How to develop a deep emotional connection**

> How to Build Deep Emotional Connection

How to Help People Self-Express

Do you know the feeling you get when someone lets you talk about your deepest passions and feelings?

That's what you want to have people experience with you.
This is what La Ruina recommends to reach that hook point:

1. The best way of getting into a good subject is to:
    1. Stick around popular topics such as work, passions, hobbies, travels, etc. until you see the other person's eyes light up

   2. Answer their question and ask them back about the same topic, since people ask about what they like and want to talk about
2. Now it's time to delve deeper: use statements and add more questions to accelerate their self-expression
3. They will likely ask you questions, but make sure you stay on the topic they want to express about

How to Approach Women

1. Always leave women feeling better than you found them: that gives you a huge advantage in decreasing your anxiety, because you know that if worse comes to worst, you made her feel good
2. Do not have big goals about the interaction: you're just having a conversation
3. Remind yourself of the pain of a missed opportunity
4. Always have something great to say: this will be your fallback plan so that you know that you can just walk towards her and, at worst, use that one

Sexualize the Conversation

If you're interested in dating and relationships, then it's a good idea to sexualize the conversation.

Some tips La Ruina shares:

- Say someone in the room is truly gorgeous
- Talk about attractive celebrities
- You can preface sexual topics by saying "a friend of mine says…"

Also read here an example:

- **How to sexualize the conversation with art**

Women: Strategically Drop Games & Use Disarming Honesty

I often talked about the dangers of over-gaming for women.
And I'm glad Richard La Ruina is one of the few to confirm why strategically dropping games can embolden men to chase more.

He says:

> She apologized and said she couldn't get the message until then, and she was so happy to hear from me.
> I was amazed: a beautiful girl, who wasn't playing games.
> She was happy to hear from me, and she said so: refreshing and very positive.

Most of all:

- **Avoid nasty games**: these games drive good men away

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

Start Relationships With Relationship-Worthy Tests, Not With A Bang

Most people try to frontload their value, present their best selves, and have the best possible in the beginning of the relationship.

Much better instead is to experiment with the typical environments you will be sharing during relationships: long

trips together, and spending time in less stimulating environments with less distractions.

How to Network: Give First

To expand your social circle:

- Present yourself as a giver, not a taker
  - Offer to buy them a drink, even if their drink is full
- If you're asking for something or want to talk to them, invite them out for lunch, or tell them you can pick them up at the airport

You can't connect with everyone, but by giving first, you can connect with people who are "one level up" above you. I couldn't agree more.

To Change Someone's Mind: Never Set Up "Me VS You" Frames

If you want to change someone's mind, avoid making a "my point VS your point" battle, or you will encounter resistance and push backs.

Instead:

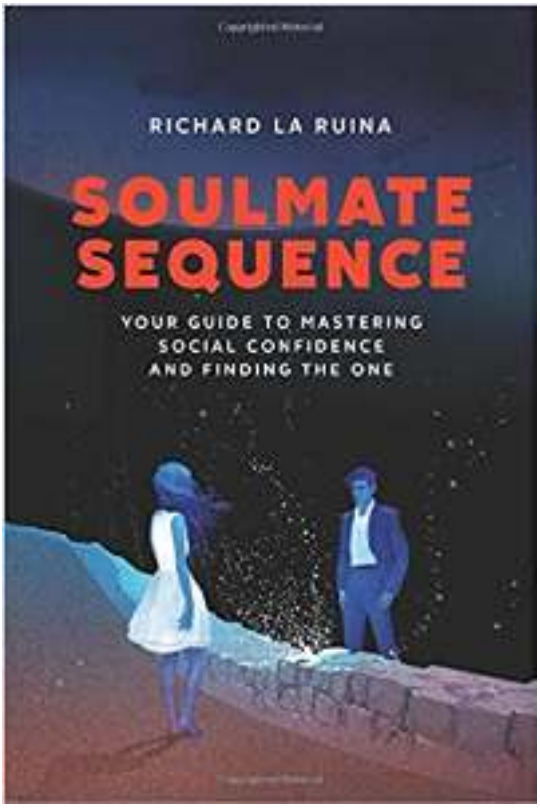
1. Ask them to elaborate their point
2. Ask questions (but not "why", as if to say "are you crazy")
3. Keep your tone neutral
4. Validate their position and reflect it back to them (ie: I also thought that way for a long time)
5. Then say "I've read a lot on the subject and… " or "today my position is that.. ". Make your point in a friendly way
6. If they disagree, give them space to talk
7. Say that "yeah, sure, I understand that… " and then re-link to your opinion

What's Richard La Ruina is recommending here is what I call "frame negotiation".

Also read:

- **Frame control examples and techniques**
- **The basic strategies for power** (for collaborative frames)
- **Smart collaboration strategy**: on why collaboration trumps defection

Another great technique to change people's minds is to make them curious about your point of view. Talking about how an action, a product, or an opinion is working great for you, which will lead them to ask questions. As Greene says in "The 48 Laws of Power": make people come to you.



More Wisdom

- Find an actor or role model you like, and mimic him
- You want to ask important questions early, like if they want kids, but without sounding like you're coming on too strong. You can do it by mentioning a quick story about kids, then asking if they like kids
  - If they ask you, respond directly. Say you'll be ready soon for kids, but not with anyone, it has to be the right person
- When you share something impressive, say it with a flat neutral tonality, without looking for positive reactions. That way, you communicate that it's just one of the many cool things about you and that there is much more like that
- If you're not exclusive, don't be afraid of saying you're going on dates. Say that you're single and want to maximize your chances of meeting that special one
- If someone shares something cool about them that you don't have, don't diminish or defend yourself for not having the same. Just compliment them
- The rule of thumb is that the higher your status, the less you should smile
- High quality men do lots of activities, so never live a life where you answer the question "what did you do" with "nothing much"
- In dating, don't compliment on physical appearances, but wait until you get to know them more deeply so you can deliver a more personalized compliment
- If you're an introvert, you have some advantages and disadvantages. Add one or two extrovert qualities to deliver in bursts, then you can settle down with the people who better vibe with you
- Don't sit in front of each other, but sit side by side

Quotes

On the key to social success:

> The key to all success in all social interactions, as I'm sure you've noticed, come back to making other human beings feel good.
> (…)
> In a selfish world, the person who lives by this credo will stand out and, perhaps ironically, will prosper greatly.

On bragging:

> Bragging is essentially a way of boasting "I am inadequate"

CONS

I loved the book.
These are just a few blemishes:

- **Kissing on the first date: I don't agree**

Richard La Ruina says by all means kiss on the first date, or invite her to go watch a movie.
I don't agree with the kissing part -I'm more in line with Alpha Male Strategies here-.
Some of his tips for the first kiss were good, but I didn't like some others.

- **Sometimes a bit "fake"?**

I understand Richard La Ruina studied and perfected his persona and movements to appear as he wanted to appear.

I believe that, up to a certain point, that's all good.
However, I gotta wonder: if all you do is working on looking how you want to be, where is the genuine you?
Because that can come across, too -something Kezia Noble commented on, as well-.

So when he advises you to sit down and think through what the relatives of your partner would like to see in you, I didn't agree much.
It felt too fake, and convoluted.
I'd instead walk in to meet them while being myself, and if they like me, great. If not, well…

Richard La Ruina Review

I think Richard La Ruina has a very good understanding of people, psychology, and social dynamics.

He is a bit more on the "softer kind", more about frame negotiations than about Red Pill style of "alpha male frame imposing".
And I tend to agree with that for the simple reason that it's more effective. With the caveat that you CAN be stronger when needed, being like water works better than being only dominant.

Maybe Richard La Ruina's style might come across as a bit unnatural (fake?) if you overdo it.
The social chameleon style is powerful.
But with the emphasis on making others feel good, emulating those whom you wish to become, and doing what's effective instead of what you feel like, you might end up behaving far off from what you feel like and from who you are.
That's the only red flag I'd raise. Sometimes, you are better off served by acting more as you please, and finding those who better vibe with your attitude.

Otherwise, La Ruina is a very good guy to learn from.
And "Soulmate Sequence" contains top-notch information, and I learned a few more things from it.

He ends the book by saying that, happy to be in a long-term relationship, he'll make it work.

And we wish him all the best with that.

Check the:

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Relationship Power Dynamics: Strategies for All 9 Stages

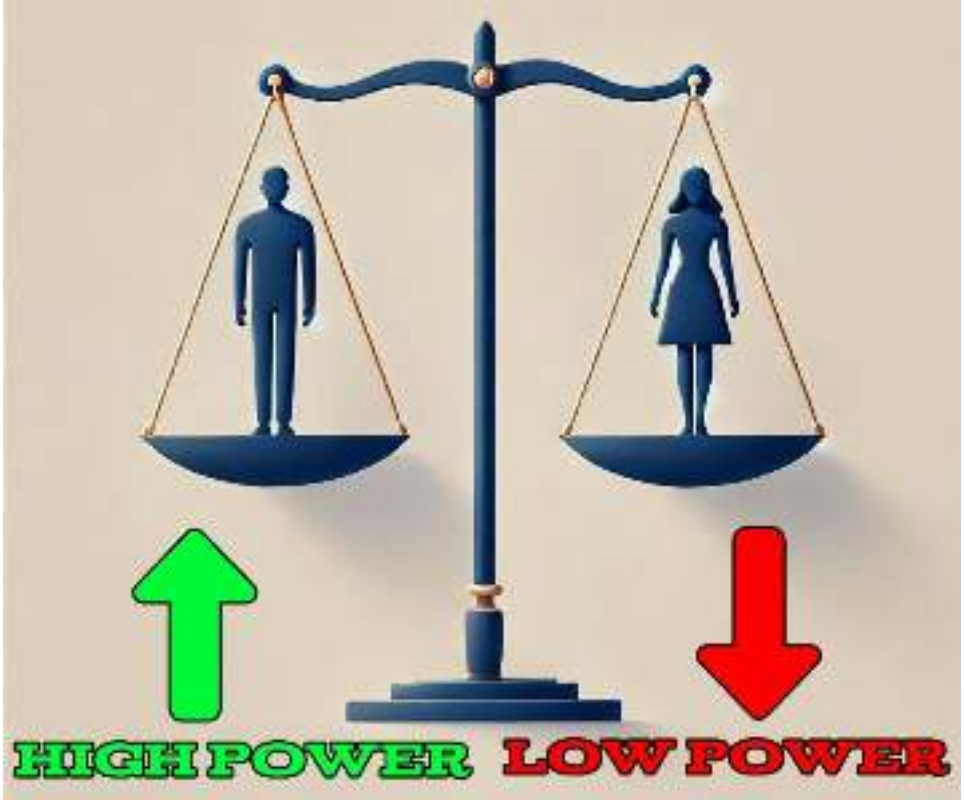
Lucio Buffalmano · 20 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Relationships follow predictable patterns of shifting power between men and women.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for dating well, choosing good partners, and building better relationships for both.

So let's get started.

Relationship Power Dynamics (TPM) is TPM's applied model for understanding, influencing, and maintaining attraction, pair-bonding, and cooperation by managing power, warmth, and investment in romantic relationships. Part of TPM's Interpersonal Power Dynamics (see the TPM Power Dynamics Framework).



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- 1. Dating Before Sex: she has more power ♀
- 2. After Sex: power starts shifting on his side ♂
- 3. After Several Sex Encounters: he has more power ♂
  - ⍰ Highest power: high value, frequent casual sex, feelings ♂♂
  - ⍰How to get intimacy without a relationship
- 4. After Commitment: she has more power ♀
  - ♟ Strategy: what do you really want?
- 5. Early Relationship: power re-negotiation ♀♂
  - ⍰ Be A Good Leader For Both
  - Women Have Walk Away Power ♀
- 6. Long-Term Relationship: both seek control, she gets it more often ♀
  - Change in Personal Value: Renegotiations VS Team Victory
  - ⚠ Careful With Status-Boosting Giving

- 7. After Children: biology favors him ♂, the law favors her ♀
  - Law, custody, & Alimony
- 8. Growing Old: paper power for him, real power for her ♂♀
- 9. After the Breakup: depends on value & quality ♀♂
  - If they get back together, she has more power ♀
- Changing Power Rules: “Game”

1. Dating Before Sex: she has more power ♀

In dating, men offer and women pick.

As the choosers, women have power.
They screen and assess men, and men prove themselves.

For more, see:

- **The sexual market place: a primer**

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

2. After Sex: power *starts* shifting on his side ♂

Scholars refer to milestones that open new phases as ‘turning points’.

Ans after sex she chose him for a meaningful milestone.

However, the very first instance of sex might or might not complete that shift.

The power shift varies based on personality, culture, and dating experience.
Intimacy matters less for:

- **Libertine women & cultures**
- **Younger age going through a 'party phase'**
  Ie.: it matters less if she's during a party phase in college
- **Goals are rebound or experience** while it matters more if she's looking for a relationship
- **Short-term dating contexts**
  Ie.: met her in a club
- **Pleasure-focused intimacy**, which contraception first allowed
- **Bad experience** may make her regret the choice

A good mindset: treat it as one milestone, but know more are ahead.

In brief, it means that **in some cases it takes more than one sexual intercourse to complete the power shift.**

Also read:

- **Providers and Lovers**: understanding the two dating strategies

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

3. After Several Sex Encounters: he has more power ♂

By now, she has chosen him.

But without commitment, he hasn't yet chosen her for a significant role—"girlfriend material."

So it's on her to *win* the commitment.

That's the phase when the woman "nags" about going steady, making it official, and the good old "what are we".

Biology and psychology conspire to increase men's power
Intimacy has a more potent attachment effect on women.
Sex, possible orgasms, skin contact and good intimate conversations increase the attachment.

Tip for women: pick the top choice without intimacy, or with intimacy with all
Because if you have sex with one but not the others, the decision will often become automatic -and not necessarily rational-..

⍰ Highest power: high value, frequent casual sex, feelings ♂♂

A funny example:

> **Her**: (pretends to sleep, plays games, pretends to be OK "hanging out")
> **Him***:* This is awkward, I really want you to leave, but I don't know how to say it without sounding like a dick

⬆⍰⍰ He'd be more honorable & attractive saying he has work to do
Power protect, and maintain a better relationship for both.

⍰ ⍰⍰The honorable move is to speak straight, and let her go.
If she wants more and you don't, say you like her and would like keep seeing her, but that you also care about her well-being.
This makes you even *more* attractive. But if she can't stop seeing you, it's on you to encourage her to stop.

⍰⍰ Only high-status men get the ‘sex power boost’

High status and power aware men get to intimacy before commitment and don’t strictly *need* a relationship.

But women dictate the pace and rules to lower-status men, who are happy to conform.

⍰How to get intimacy without a relationship

⍰ **Answering an alumnus question** <— We’re not fans of this approach, but it’s a fair question. For PU alumni only

4. After Commitment: she has more power ♀

For biological reasons, high-status men ‘give more’ with commitment.

This is why:

While *both* give up the opportunity for casual sexual encounters, **exclusivity is costlier for a high-status man than for a woman** because men stand to ‘gain’ more from casual encounters.

Men also experience a testosterone drop in relationships.
Researchers hypothesized that men switch from “hunting for a mate” to “nurturing for the family”.

This is not to say ‘avoid relationshps’ because most men also gain from commitment -or relationships wouldn’t have evolved-.
As *The Oxford Handbook* says:

> (…) high degree of overlap in interest between the sexes (…) interdependent reproduction promotes cooperation rather than confict (Buss, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)

Plus, the types of men we train here now how to make her feel lucky to be with him :).

For more, see:

Commitment dynamics & strategies

Lucio: Men give more with commitment and, even more, marriage. This can create an imbalance risk—a ‘sucker’s trade.’
It doesn’t mean ‘don’t commit’ or ‘don’t marry.’ In a strong relationship, both partners gain.
However, be mindful of potential imbalances and ensure she values and deserves your commitment.

♟ Strategy: what do you really want?

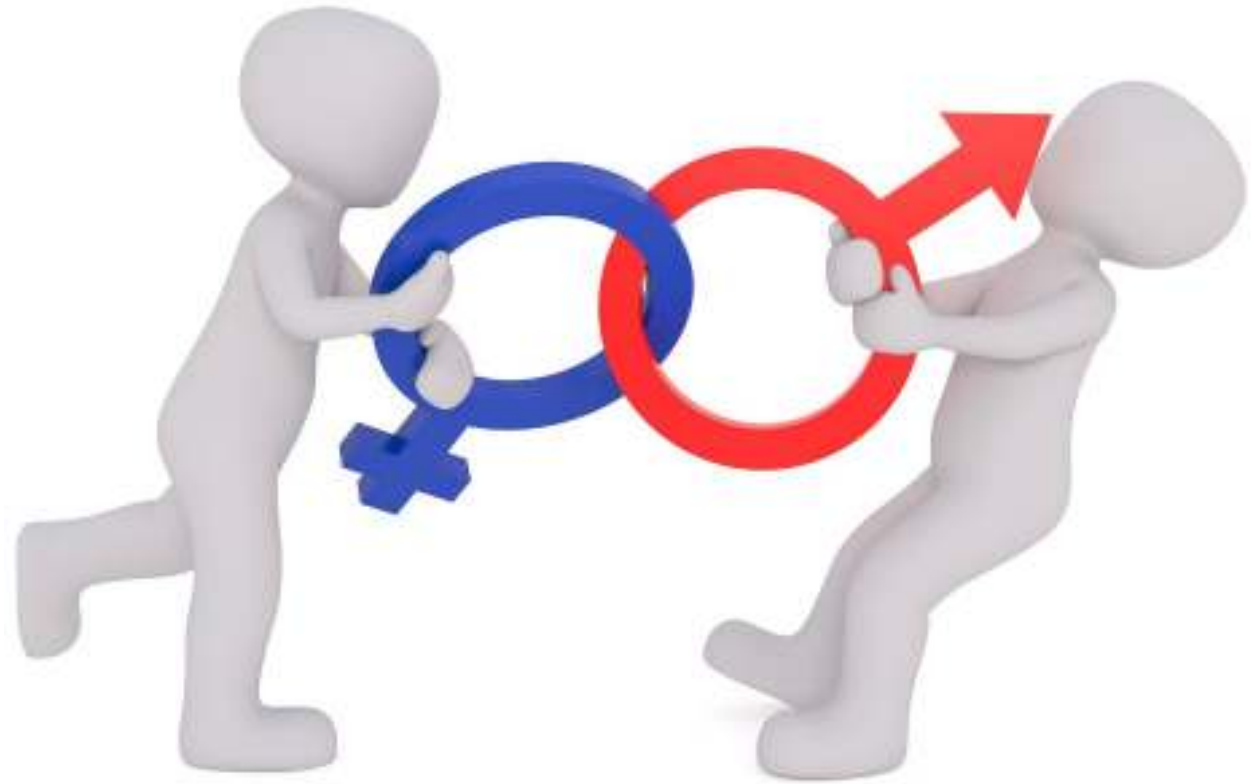
We dig deeper in Power University for the practical takeaways, but see an example of how awareness helped me pick the best high-level approach:

⍰♂**Lucio’s Take**: Why I chose uncommitted freedom

Independent, freedom-lover and always prioritizing my goals, long-term commitment isn't for me.

Staying commitment-free made life both easier, and more ethically honorable.
Not wanting to be the man who 'goes get milk', I avoided situations I'd need to escape from, and enjoyed life more.

5. Early Relationship: power re-negotiation ♀♂



Commitment and 'officialization' change the dynamics, and new expectations come into plays, including:

- Partner's time and availability
- Loyalty
- Unwritten rules

If the couple moves in or grows closer, also:

- Spheres of influence
  Ie.: He handles car-related tasks and payments, she handles house decor and cooks, etc.

⍰ Be A Good Leader For Both

Lead for mutual benefit, respecting her interests.
Inspire her to follow your lead naturally, without imposing or verbalizing it.

⍰ Tips:

- **Define the responsibilities**
  - **Tell her what she's responsible for**, and that you trust her with it
- **Let her decide what matters most to her**, but little to you
- **Consider her preferences** for common decisions
- **Mind her well-being when taking important decisions**
  - Influence, instead of dictating
  - Explain *why* if she disagrees
  - Make it up to her if you overrule her opinion

Women Have Walk Away Power ♀

Women operate with a shorter fertility window, and invest more in children.

For women in reproductive age, time is an investment for which they seek a return.

That means that nature may make women more practical and 'ruthless' in pursuing their needs.

Albeit the difference is small-ish, studies indeed show that, on average, men are more romantic than women, fall in love quicker, more often, and stay in love for longer after a breakup.

For us, this means that **women are readier to end a relationship that won't fulfil her needs**.
On average, that makes women more assertive and most men either react, lie, or begrudgingly concede -none of which is high value or honorable, and we don't recommend it-.

6. Long-Term Relationship: both seek control, she gets it more often ♀

Men mate guard against infidelity, and women guard for continued provisioning.

But with power-unaware men, women carry their higher dating value into relationships and are often 'the prize' -especially with attractive women and sex-less relationships before commitment-.

In this website's framework, women tend to take the judge role in the relationship (see: soft power).
It's possible women unconsciously seek control to keep the man's support over the long term. And there is indeed evidence that relationships where she is in charge last longer.

Also read:

- **How women control relationships**

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

Change in Personal Value: Renegotiations VS Team Victory

Personal value changes over time reflect in the relationship dynamics.

As per social exchange dynamics the partner who improves the most can "demand back" to compensate for the value imbalance.

While that would be 'fair' in many ways, it can also create issues.

For example, your increasing value provides better lifestyle, expands your options, and gives you the right for favorable re-negotiation.
But most women resist and many feel like the relationship moved from 'love' to 'calculative'.

Strong win-win relationships insulate against this risk because one partner's gain becomes a 'team victory'.
That's the advantage of win-win dating and collaborative relationships.
But it requires the growing partner to give up selfish interests for the team.

⚠ Careful With Status-Boosting Giving

Some long term-oriented 'good men' may:

- Support her studies / career
- Provide total access to their wealth
- Take her from poor background to 'first world'

Giving is wonderful.
But **before lifting her up ensure she's a worthy recipient, a team player, and in love with you**.

Otherwise, it's a transactional relationship and she may leave with her new opportunities.

Prioritizing her studies or career over yours is especially dangerous because you remain lower class while she mingles with higher class.

Also read:

- **How to keep power in LTRs**
- Sexual market value: an overview

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

7. After Children: biology favors him ♂, the law favors her ♀

This is darker.

But men gain 'walk away power' after children.

Women are more tied to children, more dependent on men's support, and each child is 'worth more' to women.

Kanazawa and Miller say that breaking up after birth is the ultimate game of chicken. And it's usually the woman who swerves first (Kanazawa & Miller, 2008).
Ironically, it's the mother's greater commitment that allows the father to potentially neglect children.

But generally avoid threats, and instead learn how to handle them:

- **How to handle breakup threats**

> Here's What To Do When She Threatens to Break Up

Law, custody, & Alimony

Most civil countries overturned biology.

Custody laws tend to favor mothers and enforce paternal support.
So women hold the trump card, potentially even weaponizing children and custody arrangements against him.

8. Growing Old: paper power for him, real power for her ♂♀

Men's longer fertility and lesser age penalty should empower them.

In practice, however, men's longer fertility window is only valuable if accompanied by high status.
And even then, many men simply wish to stay in the relationship.

But looking at divorce data, women seem to value relationships less as they initiate most divorces, and more than 65% of divorces after the age of 50.

We can speculate women's shorter fertility window and higher investment per child makes women more pragmatic.
So once the man is not useful anymore, women may also devalue the relationship.
But this is pure speculation on our part.

Here is practical advice instead:

⍰ If you want to stay together, grow compassionate love

To strengthen your relationship over time, do this:

- **Grow compassionate love** with support and mutual caring
- **Develop common interests**
- **Develop common friends**
- **Make your conversation stimulating**, remain curious about life, others, and each other

 For example, a woman in Gottman's studies shared that she 'could never cheat because she'd have to run and tell her husband about it'.
Implied: she tells her husband *everything*.
Do you think she'd ever want a divorce from that?

Plus:

CYA approach: maintain a life outside your relationship
Want to be with her, but never *need* to.
Have friends and interests.
And if a breakup happens, welcome the new challenge of dating.

9. After the Breakup: depends on value & quality ♀♂

Studies point to men bearing a heavier emotional burden post-breakup.

But the evidence is mixed and all over the map.
Instead, it seems to me that the main differentiator comes down:

- Who initiated the breakup
- Self-esteem & confidence
- Value
- Availability of alternative options

If he was high-value, she loved him, and the relationship was fulfilling, she may yearn to reconcile.
And vice-versa.

Common patterns for most

- Women hope he will get back in touch and provide what they wanted, but are ready to move on

Women have a stronger resolve to go through the pain and move on

- Men are initially elated with the regained freedom, but soon realize being single is tough

Few men have the right psychology to be single or 'players for life'.
It's not fun for most men to approach, make first moves, and constantly hunt.
And few men know how to reliably go from meet to intimacy. That makes dating HARD.

If they get back together, she has more power ♀

A man reconciling sub-communicates that single life was hard on him.

Not good, because high-status men are more likely to enjoy freedom, or can find a new attractive partner.

Plus in most relationships, she often broke up for unfulfilled demands or failing expectations.
And if they get back together, he must promise to do better, or fulfill her requests right away.

That's why many marriages quickly follow after a breakup.
She demanded it as a condition, and he complied.

Changing Power Rules: "Game"

Much dating advice seeks to change or leverage the power patterns we just described.

Women's dating advice seeks to maximize men's investment and delay sex.
And men's dating advice suggests avoiding over-investing and 'displaying high-value' to deny women's early upper hand.

Both approaches are fair and potentially effective.

But it requires some calibration.

Like Gandhi's quote of an eye for an eye, and the whole world goes blind, of nobody pursues or shows interest, the whole world goes celibate :).

So it's more about *how* you pursue, *how* you invest, and *how* you get others to do their part.
Our advanced approach is designed around that effective calibration.

We Should All Be Feminists: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

We Should All Be Feminists (2014) is a book on gender issues and feminism.
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the author, says that being a feminist is not about being angry, being against men, or about getting power. Being feminists, she says, is about recognizing there is a problem with gender (?), and being willing to fix it.

Contents

- Summary
- Criticism
- Pros
- Quotes
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian writer famous for her gender activism.

1. Men Used to Lead Because of Physical Strength, Today's Leadership Should Go to Intelligent Individuals

The author says that, historically, men have been the leaders because physical strength was more important in the past.

But today we live in a different world.
The person more qualified to lead is not the physically stronger one, but the more intelligent, knowledgeable, or creative or innovative.
And that's not

My Note: It Never Was Only About Strength
She's not totally wrong, strength and physical attributes were probably more important in our past.
Still, leadership never was only about strength in human history, not even in our prehistoric past. And today, strength and physical attributes are still relevant to leadership.

2. We Shouldn't Teach Men They Must Be Hard

We teach men they must be hard, that they must show masculinity, and that they should not be virgins.

But this pressure on men leaves with fragile egos.

Criticism

To begin with, feminism is the female wing of male "toxic masculinity".
It's the exact specular movement.
See here:

My main criticism is that this whole book is based on nothing but personal feelings, conjectures, and anecdotal evidence.
There is no real data, no real analysis, no science, and no understanding of psychology, evolutionary psychology, and intersexual dynamics and sexual power dynamics.

The author harps on about how our poor education and socialization.
But she never wonders why people have taught similar things for generations, and across cultures. Is everyone stupid and the author is the only smart one?
Or maybe there is a reason why parents teach women to be more feminine?

That's what's missing here.
If the author had done the intellectual legwork of at least understanding why people do what they do, then we could have had a conversation.

But with this book, it feels **like she's built a small tip on top of an iceberg that she does not understand**, does not know, or that she strategically fails to address.

1. Poor and culturally-circumscribed examples don't provide an accurate world view

The author says that in Lagos women cannot enter clubs alone. So women are forced to pretend they are with some guys.

But that's not how it works in most of the world.
In most parts of the world, it's men who cannot go into clubs alone and must find a woman to get in.

So by following her train thoughts, should men complain about clubs and society being biased against them?

2. Blank slate fallacy: isn't there more than just socialization?

Same as for most feminist literature, the author seems to believe that socialization is the main driver of human behavior.
She says:

> It is easy to say "but women can just say no to all of this". But the reality is more difficult, more complex.
> We are all social beings. We internalize ideas from our socialization.

Yeah.
And we're also all born with a lot of pre-equipped mental circuitry.

3. Total failure of understanding sexual psychology, part of which is innate

Says the author:

> We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings the way boys are.

This is a failure to understand the deep roots of the Madonna-whore dichotomy.

And again:

> We praise girls for virginity, but we don't praise boys for virginity.
> And it makes me wonder how exactly this is supposed to work out since the loss of virginity is a process that involves two people

It works out like this: men want chaste women because they need to make sure of paternity.
Women want sexually successful men because they make sexually successful sons, which is good for the propagation of their genes.

So simple, yet so out of the author's grasp.

4. Total failure of understanding personal value and sexual market value

Says the author:

> Poor men still have the privilege of being men

She fails to understand that it's *much* better to be a poor woman than to be a poor man.

And that's why poor people have more daughters and powerful men have more sons, by the way (Miller & Kanazawa, 2008).
If you don't understand why, then stop reading these books and learn a bit about basic intersexual power dynamics and sexual market value.

5. Strawman's arguments: is it really the case that women are oppressed from birth for being women?

Says the author:

> We teach girls "close your legs, cover yourself", we make them feel as though by being born female they are already guilty of something

This is just nonsense.
Families who make women feel guilty for being women are pathological, just as families who dress their sons as women are pathological.

6. Strawman's argument: does society really tells us men are more important than women?

The author says that society teaches people that men are more important than women.
But that's not true.
It depends on context. The famous call of "women and children first" obviously does not prioritize men when it comes to saving lives.

And, in general, men have always been considered more expendable than women.
In good part, this is because of sexual market value, which is higher for women. And that's something that, again, the author is wholly ignorant of.

7. Poor social and cultural analysis: there aren't many guides for men on how to please women?

There is no depth in this book's social and cultural analysis.

Even some of her anecdotal examples are plain wrong.
Take for example when she says that there are thousands of articles for women on how to please men, but there are no articles and guides for men on how to please women.

The author must have missed the huge industry born to help men date and attract women.
As a matter of fact, books and courses to help men date better are far more numerous, and far higher quality than books and courses to help women date and attract men.

8. Poor understanding of psychology and human nature

Finally, this is the most important criticism I move to "We Should All Be Feminists".

The whole book shows no understanding of human nature.
But just take this sentence as an example:

> (…) But what if we question the premise itself.
> Why should a woman's success be a threat to a man. What if we decide to simply dispose of that word (…), "emasculation"

Does the author simply believe that changing innate behavior is a matter of "deciding"?
This again shows her poor approach to knowledge. She never asks "why" men might feel threatened by her success, so her solution as skin deep. "Let's just decide not to be like this anymore".

Pros

The author brings attention to an important truth: in some areas of the world, there is much work yet to be done to improve women's rights.

Her examples, albeit anecdotal, also prove that there are plenty of men who still resent women and feel threatened by women.
These men are part of the issue that makes it harder to be a successful woman today.

Quotes

> (…) Since feminists are women who are unhappy, because they cannot find husbands, so I decided to call myself a happy feminist

On gender as a yoke:

> The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be, rather than recognizing how we are.
> (…)
> What if, in raising children, we focus on ability, instead of gender. What if we focus on interest, instead of gender.

On cooking:

> Cooking by the way is a useful and practical life skill for boys to have. I have never thought it makes much sense to leave such a crucial thing, the ability to nourish oneself, in the hands of others.

Review

My review is highly critical.

So allow me to make a note first.
I'm a big believer in Fisher and Ury's approach in "Getting to Yes", which is: be soft on people, and tough on ideas.

I am kind towards the person.
I respect the author, I respect her drive and her willingness to shape a better world.
I don't know Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie personally but, from her videos and her writings, I can say that she seems a likable person.

But I did *not* like, agree, or enjoy the ideas expressed in "We Should All Be Feminists.
The fact that this book is mandatory reading in certain universities tells a lot about the (poor) state of some of those universities.

"We Should All Be Feminists" is the epitome of all that is wrong with feminist literature.
It takes a few good ideas and some confirmed facts, such as that sexism exists.

But then it fails when it seeks to expand to a bigger theory. The feminist theory espoused in this book is based on flawed assumptions, poor understanding of psychology and human nature, and lots of mental lucubrations of how things *should* be instead of how they are or how they can *realistically* change.

Among the major issues:

- It focuses on how things *should* be -wouldn't it be nice if we could just have thing our way-;
- It falls for the tabula rasa fallacy, such as the belief that nature and innate drives don't exist, or that they're very weak and socialization rules (also read: The Blank Slate)
- It fails to take into account why people behave a certain way -and why they can't just will themselves to change it

As it's the case for some feminist literature, you listen to it, and on a few things you totally agree.
But then, you just can't help but wonder: couldn't the author read and learn some more about psychology, evolutionary psychology, and intersexual dynamics, instead of writing about things that she doesn't seem to truly understand?

And since she was there, she could have also done some better research on the gender pay gap, and cited the *adjusted* figure instead of the much less meaningful non-adjusted ones.
But then again, the latter sounds bigger, so it helps her inflate her case.

Had the author done the necessary intellectual legwork, we could have listened, and maybe have a discussion.
Without all the basic knowledge the author is lacking, it feels just like hot air ranting.

In the end, "We Should All Be Feminists" didn't convince me we should all be feminists.
But it strengthened my belief that, as readers, we should really all develop some critical thinking skills. And, as writers, we should all feel more responsible for getting our facts straight before writing.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**

Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office (2004) is a career strategy book for women in which author Lois Frankel helps women achieve success in business by listing 101 common mistakes, and how to fix them.

TPM Strategic Note: Low-power behavior signals 'non executive material'
This text provides a valuable deconstruction of low-status and submissive behavior and body language cues that trigger the "Girl" frame rather than the "Leader" frame.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - How to Play the Game
  - How You Act
  - How You Think
  - How You Brand and Market Yourself
  - How You Sound
  - How You Look
  - How You Respond
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Quit being a girl: for workplace success, stop behaving like a stereotypical girl
- You can't just behave like a man though or you will get penalized
- Women need to improve their understanding of the "unspoken rules"

Summary

How to Play the Game

1. **Pretending It Isn't a Game Mistake:** games have winners and losers, and when women ignore the game, they unknowingly create win-lose where they're the losers
2. **Playing the Game Safely and within Bounds Mistake:** women tend to play too often within narrow rules, and end up looking like they are not independent self-starters
3. **Working Hard**: don't just work, spend time building relationships as well
4. **Doing the Work of Others:** "Promotions are rewards for getting the job done, not necessarily doing the job"
5. **Working without a Break**: don't look harried and nervous, take breaks
6. **Being Naive**
7. **Pinching Company Pennies Mistake**: don't waste time and energies to save budge that's OK to spend. Take

good care of the company asset that is yourself

8. **Waiting to Be Given What You Want:** "men take care of their own needs but will often minimize what women are worth or owed". So don't wait: ask for what you're owed
    1. Separate being liked and getting what you deserve
9. **Avoiding Office Politics Mistake:** see "mastering office politics" and "office political players"
10. **Being the Conscience**: women are more likely to point out the gap between policies and real-world behavior, and that can controversial and spell troubles
11. **Protecting Jerks**: don't take the blame for a jerk, but professionally redirect the angry customer or boss towards the real source of the problem
12. **Holding Your Tongue**
13. **Failing to Capitalize on Relationship**
14. **Not Understanding the Needs of Your Constituents**: ask questions in advance, don't jump to conclusions

How You Act

1. **Polling Before Making a Decision**: women want to get everyone's approval early to avoid later confrontations. But while participative decision making is good, the inability to act without it isn't.
2. **Needing to Be Liked:** Don't be like her:

Your need to be liked is natural, and it can be a good thing. But it shouldn't stop from taking risks and hard decisions.
You must balance the need to be liked with the need to be respected. Ideally, you're both liked and respected (also see: mix warmth with power).

1. **Not Needing to Be Liked**: being promoted is also, partly, a popularity context
2. **Not Asking Questions for Fear of Sounding Stupid**
3. **Acting Like a Man**: the double standard is real. Women behaving like men create dissonance. Unless it comes natural to you, don't put an act of being like a man
4. **Telling the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth**: learn the art of the "positive spin"
5. **Sharing Too Much Personal Information**: don't entirely withhold personal information, but don't over-share, either
6. **Being Overly Concerned with Offending Others**: if you expressed yourself without being offensive, then don't fall for it, it's a ploy
7. **Denying the Importance of Money**
8. **Flirting**: "it's the women who flirt—not the men—who become the butt of office jokes". And if you flirt with the boss, your colleagues will think of you as an enemy and cut you off the grapevine
9. **Acquiescing to Bullies**: use "I statements" to let them know how you feel. Nobody can argue when you say "I feel like I'm not being heard"
10. **Decorating Your Office Like Your Living Room**
11. **Feeding Others Mistake**: bringing food is the stereotypical girl's behavior
12. **Offering a Limp Handshake**
13. **Being Financially Insecure**
14. **Helping**: there is a difference between helping and being used. If you're working harder than anyone else and you're the leader, you're being used. Leaders lead, helpers stay stuck as an employee

How You Think

1. **Making Miracles**: the more you bend over backward, the more it will become what's expected. Instead, manage people's expectations, negotiate reasonable deadlines, and raise a red flag when you're getting stretched too thin
2. **Taking Full Responsibility**: learn to delegate
3. **Obediently Following Instructions**: don't put your head down to work right away to show you're such a good employee. Instead, ask questions and consider how it can be done faster, and better
4. **Viewing Men in Authority as Father Figures**
5. **Limiting Your Possibilitie**s: work on yourself to expand your horizon of possibilities
6. **Ignoring the Quid Pro Quo**: don't make things look too easy and tell people when you're inconveniencing yourself for them. That way, you gain the right for bigger favors back
7. **Skipping Meetings**: meetings are opportunities to be seen and network
8. **Putting Work Ahead of Your Personal Life**
9. **Letting People Waste Your Time Mistake**
10. **Prematurely Abandoning Your Career Goals**
11. **Ignoring the Importance of Network Relationships**
12. **Refusing Perks**: if you got promoted, or won the right to a bigger office, a bigger title, a bigger, or bigger expenses budget, use it. It serves as status and impression management
13. **Making Up Negative Stories**: don't make up negative stories, ask and seek for the facts
14. **Striving for Perfection**

How You Brand and Market Yourself

Too many women self-efface and fail to take credit when credit is due.

1. **Failing to Define Your Brand**: come up with a short mission statement for yourself
2. **Minimizing Your Work or Position**: never say you're "just" X
3. **Using Only Your Nickname or First Name**: first name only relegates you to girl-status
4. **Waiting to Be Noticed**: when you want something, don't just ask for it, but openly talk about to everyone. The more people know, the better
5. **Refusing High-Profile Assignments**
6. **Being Modest**
7. **Staying in Your Safety Zone**
8. **Giving Away Your Ideas**
9. **Working in Stereotypical Roles or Departments**: it's difficult to shine and do a good career when you're in nursing or administrative assistant
10. **Ignoring Feedback**
11. **Being Invisible**

Also see:

- **How to promote yourself at work**

> Self-Promotion Done Right: 10 Proven Techniques That Work

How You Sound

1. **Couching Statements as Questions**: this is a defensive move. Make statements instead
2. **Using Preambles**: drop the clutter, and give your bottom line first
3. **Explaining**: avoid lengthy explanation, they make you sound like you're making excuses
4. **Asking Permission**: find out what the boundaries of your power are, and make decisions within them
5. **Apologizing**: if you're apologizing too much and for inconsequential stuff, cut it out
6. **Using Minimizing Words**: never minimize your work and achievements and the efforts it took. Instead, say "I'm pleased with how it turned out"
7. **Using Qualifiers**: drop "sort of", "could", "kinda of". Use more definitive language
8. **Not Answering the Question**: avoid convoluted answers without an answer, which are a way of hedging your bets. Show some certitude in your answers
9. **Talking Too Fast**
10. **The Inability to Speak the Language of Your Business**: learn the keywords and use them
11. **Using Nonwords**: drop the filler words
12. **Using Touchy-Feely Language**
13. **The Sandwich Mistake**
14. **Speaking Softly**: speak louder, and add gestures
15. **Speaking at a Higher-than-Natural Pitch**: seek to speak with your natural voice
16. **Trailing Voice Mails**: get to the point, and close the call
17. **Failing to Pause or Reflect Before Responding**: take 3 seconds to think and collect your thoughts before replying

Also read:

- **How powerful individuals speak**
- **How submissive individuals speak**

How You Look

1. **Smiling Inappropriately**: match your smiles to the tone of your communication. Serious talk needs no smiles
2. **Taking Up Too Little Space**: also see alpha male body language, but don't overdo it
3. **Using Gestures Inconsistent with Your Message**
4. **Being Over- or Underanimated**: women tend to be over-animated, but avoid the mistake of going the opposite end of the spectrum
5. **Tilting Your Head**: it can be OK when listening, but avoid when speaking
6. **Wearing Inappropriate Makeup**
7. **Wearing the Wrong Hairstyle**
8. **Dressing Inappropriately**: dress for the job you want, not the one you have
9. **Sitting on Your Foot**
10. **Grooming in Public**: avoid fixing your hair and make-up in public
11. **Sitting in Meetings with Your Hands under the Table**
12. **Wearing Your Reading Glasses around Your Neck**: women don't gain credibility with age like men do, so don't advertise it
13. **Accessorizing Too Much**

14. **Failing to Maintain Eye Contact**

How You Respond

1. **Internalizing Messages**
2. **Believing Others Know More than You**: probe authority, ask how do they know it, or based on what they say it
3. **Taking Notes, Getting Coffee, and Making Copies**: propose you take turns, propose the more junior employee does it, or refuse by saying you did the last
4. **Tolerating Inappropriate Behavior**: don't swallow your feelings, or you will poison yourself
5. **Exhibiting Too Much Patience**
6. **Accepting Dead-End Assignments**: always check assignments before accepting them. If people failed or languished before in that same assignment, it might be safer to turn it down
7. **Putting the Needs of Others Before Your Own**
8. **Denying Your Power**
9. **Allowing Yourself to Be the Scapegoat**: don't take the blame for others. And if it's your boss, learn how to draw your boundaries with tact
10. **Accepting the Fait Accompli**: if there something you don't like, at least try to push back and voice your concerns
11. **Permitting Others' Mistakes to Inconvenience You**
12. **Being the Last to Speak**: try to be among the first three to speak. If you don't have a point, you can build on what other said, or drop some comments like "that sounds like a good idea"
13. **Playing the Gender Card**: don't say you were unsuccessful or passed on because you're a woman. Companies will try to defend their reputation, and you will isolate yourself
14. **Tolerating Sexual Harassment**: deny sexual advances once. If they keep on coming, then you're into sexual harassment waters and you can think about a formal complaint
15. **Crying**: if you feel like crying, excuse yourself and leave

To learn how to respond it's also useful to learn about frame control:

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

More Wisdom

- When people get angry or annoyed, it's often a ploy to get us to do what they want
- Mind the culture: behavioral norms for men and women vary among corporate cultures
- Reflect on whether helping others is a way you seek validation for self-worth

Quotes

On acting more like a woman, not like a man:

> Success comes not from acting more like a man, as some might lead you to believe, but by acting more like a woman instead of a girl.

On the forces that want to keep women like little girls:

> The girl who moves toward womanhood will find herself faced with people who want to continue to infantilize her.

On money:

> Money is power, and power is something women misinterpret and avoid.

On women who work non-stop, completely negating their private life:

> My experience with women who give up what's important to them to meet the needs of the job is that they either don't have anything to go home to or they don't want to deal with what they do have to go home to.

On elevator-pitch branding:

> If you can't tell someone during an elevator ride (in a short building) what you do, then you haven't finished defining your brand.

CONS

A wonderful book.
Just a few notes as I am the usual nitpicker:

- **Sometimes jarring or too aggressive**

The author exhorts women to be more assertive.
Sometimes though that assertiveness can become aggressiveness, and be out of place.

For example, the author advises women not to ask for permission, but to do things anyway.
As an example, she proposes to turn "would it be all right with you if I work at home tomorrow?" into this I just wanted to let you know I'll be working at home tomorrow".

But a boss receiving that type of advice is likely to get incenses at the gall of his subordinate to call his own shots.
In a few cases, that might work. But in most office situations, that's overly aggressive and not good advice.

This is the main reason why I give this book 4 stars instead of 5: the push for assertiveness sometimes becomes counterproductive aggression.

- **Nice and kind can be effective strategies for career and life success**

Books telling people to stop being nice are very popular.
See "No More Mr. Nice Guy", or "Why Men Love Bitches". But people are nice because, if you strike that balance between kindness and strength, it works.

Also read: mix power with warmth.

- **The blank slate fallacy**

The author blames women's "girly" behavior on learning and socialization.
But there is also much nature in how men and women behave. It's important to also recognize nature because that helps to provide more wholesome solutions.

Also read "The Blank Slate and The Denial of Human Nature".

- **Sometimes exaggerates the case for women's woes?**

Says the author:

> Women still earn only about 72 percent of the salaries earned by their male counterparts, must work twice as hard to be considered half as good as their male colleagues (..)

The 72% gender pay gap figure is the unadjusted figure.
Also, I don't think that school teachers and nurses get paid less because it's mostly women working there.

- **Men from mars, women from venus?**

Sometimes it felt like men got all sorts of positive traits assigned to them.

For example:

> Men rely on relationships to open doors for them; they don't view it as taking advantage of anyone.

I wasn't convinced that all the traits the author assigned to men could be generalized by gender.

- **Relationships as exchanges?**

In one instance the author presents relationships as pure exchanges. For example:

> A successful workplace relationship (…) is one in which you clearly define what you have to offer and what you need or want from the other person.

I think it's good to look at relationships also as exchanges.
But one should also move beyond that view, because some of the best relationships leverage intrinsic motivation.
Also read: how to be a leader.

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

- **Disagreed with some advice**

The author says that accusations of being too pushy are designed to keep you quiet. Maybe, in some cases.
But what if some the readers were indeed too pushy?

I also wasn't fully convinced about forwarding appreciation emails to your boss.

A third one was about humbleness.
The example was a girl who, responding to her grandfather's public bragging, said "oh, they were just golden state awards".
The author said it was a mistake to minimize her awards, but I thought the girl did the right thing. When someone else is bragging for you, you can gain more points by acting humble.

PROS

Lois Frankel knows what she's talking about and understand both the practical and theoretical side of coin.

Wonderful insights into power dynamics

This book provides truly great insights into power dynamics, *both* at the micro and macro level.

- **The hidden power manipulations**

Writes the author:

> The people who think (the term "empowerment") is overdone are those who possess the most power.
> Easy for them to say!
> They don't really want anyone to have the same power and influence that they enjoy, and so they downplay its importance in the employment and social arenas.

Yes, she is referring to subconscious and hidden manipulation here.

- **The teasing power manipulation**

Writes the author:

> When we do try to break out of those roles and act in more mature, self-actualizing ways, we are often met with subtle—and not-so-subtle—resistance designed to keep us in a girl role. Comments like "You're so cute when you're angry," "What's the matter? Are you on the rag?" or "Why can't you be satisfied with where you are?" are designed to keep us in the role of a girl.

Indeed, this is also what Lean In author Sheryl Salzberg referred to when a Democrat senator patted her on the head and told her "what are you, a pon pon girl?"

- **Don't back off, but maintain frame**

Says the author:

> When others question our femininity or the validity of our feelings, our typical response is to back off (..) We question the veracity of our experience (…) and we take a step back into girlhood and question our self-worth. (…) we collude to remain girls rather than become women.

Another great analysis.
Also read: frame control.

Review

"Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office" is a wonderful book based on realistic assessments of interpersonal power dynamics.

It's more "marketable" and less theoretically deep than similar books such as "Hardball for Women", or Debora Tannen's more academic work.

However, that's also its strength.
In simple and direct terms, without fluff and space fillers, it shares good wisdom, highly actionable tips, and advice that (mostly) works.

I got this book following the recommendation from a customer's feedback -thank you KB!-.
KB recommended me that I expand Power University to include more advice for women, and she suggested a few titles.

Lois Frankel, the author, has a good understanding of power dynamics both at a theoretical and practical level.

Edit: Don't go extreme, keep kindness and femininity
Don't swear off "niceness" and "kindness" of course: They're effective ways of being successful at life.
Especially if you are a good-hearted person, I recommend you read "The Myth of the Nice Girls".

Also read:

- **Career strategies**: an overview
- **How to combine power with femininity**
- **The businesswoman's guide** to succeed in male organizations

Social Power Dynamics: Start Here

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Welcome to *The Power Moves*—the #1 platform where ambitious men learn how to master power dynamics, gain social influence, and become high-status men.

This is your starting point to social power dynamics.
Whether you're here to sharpen your leadership, understand dating dynamics, or stop being overlooked, this guide will walk you through the core concepts of social power, dominance, and strategy.

Every article, course, and tactic you'll find here is designed to help you become a man who commands respect.

This post provides **an overview of social power dynamics.**
We strive to keep it updated but prioritize Power University for our freshest upgrades.

But if you aren't ready for it yet, this is a good primer for you.

Go in this order:

Contents

- Basics of Social Skills & Power
  - Basics of Emotional Intelligence
  - Basics of Social Skills
  - High-level Principles
  - Social Skills Resources
  - Bonding, Connecting, & Leadership
- Power Dynamics
  - Foundations
  - Practical

Basics of Social Skills & Power

Originally we advised to learn basic social skills first.

But experience changed our minds.

Today we believe that power dynamics is as important as basic social skills.

See here:

- **Why you must learn power together with basic social skills**

> Should Beginners Start With Advanced Material (Like Power University)?

That being said, the two disciplines are tightly intertwined.
And developing emotional intelligence also helps you develop *power* intelligence.

Basics of Emotional Intelligence

There's no great single product (yet) on developing emotional intelligence for life success.
But these can help you:

- **Power Intelligence**
- **How to be more positively Machiavellian**

- Forum entry best of

Basics of Social Skills

Start with this:

- **Basics of social dynamics**: foundations of social exchanges, the most important model to understand how to be socially effective
  - **Social exchange basic laws**: foundational applied

Learning to analyze social relationships as exchanges may seem cynical, but the opposite is true.
A mindset of providing value and demanding value back is good for all.

It's also a mind-opening mental switch for some, and it forms the bedrock of greater influence and persuasion, as well as many advanced strategies and techniques.

Also check the forum entries for some typical mistakes linked to the law of social exchange: missing the WIIFM and failing to put their best foot forward.

High-level Principles

These articles provide a higher-level understanding:

- **Positive cynicism**: start with cynicism to avoid being naive. And then move beyond it
- **Enlightened collaborator**: seek collaboration while being aware of the risks, the "dark side" present in every human being, and that some individuals are "darker" than others
- **Mix power with warmth**: Machiavelli said that, ideally, a prince should be feared and loved at the same time. He was right. That's why you want *both* power and warmth. Also read "value and availability", which is the ultimate goal of mixing power and warmth.

Social Skills Resources

Some people also need the basics on how to talk and how to hold a conversation.

- **Group conversations**
- **How to make quality friends as an adult**
- **Best social skills books**

Bonding, Connecting, & Leadership

The more calculative aspect of the social exchange are more for rational and business-like exchanges.

More advanced players add emotions and extrinsic motivators.

Good relationships and human bonding also transcend the more calculative aspects.
Check out for example:

- **How to bond with people**
- **How to be a leader**

Then start adding some refinement for some deeper human connections:

But the closer you get to someone, the more you want to add different layers.
For example, see "**how to bond with people**" and "**how to be a leader**" to get a feel for the higher levels of social skills

The basics of high-quality behavior

- High-quality men
- How to be honorable

Power Dynamics

Now let's get into power dynamics properly:

Foundations

1. **Social power dynamics**: a geeky-friendly primer for social power dynamics
2. **Frame control techniques**: understanding frames is understanding power dynamics. The full lesson is in Power University, but here you get 50% of the value
3. **Power dynamics**: a definition, and why they matter

Practical

Some articles to give you an idea of empowered behavior that gives you status, respect, and attraction:

- Dominant body language
- Confident speaking

Low-status body language to avoid

Low status speaking to avoid

- They will help you understand social dynamics at a deeper level than most available resources

From here on, you can move to mastery with Power University.

Join Power University

Our alumni who started as blog readers found that the best and fastest way to internalize and use this wisdom is Power University.

Dating For Men: Start Here

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

This post provides an overview of dating strategies, techniques, and mindsets for men.

Contents

- Basics of Dating Theory
- Basics of Dating
- Dating Strategies
  - Lovers & Providers
  - How to Meet Women
  - Dating Strategies

Basics of Dating Theory

It's just two articles to get a quick overview of dating power dynamics:

- **Sexual Dynamics 101**: this article provides an overview of the power dynamics of the sexual market place
- **Sexual market value**: here you will learn what men and women seek and value in a mate -based on 20% experience and 80% science-

Those two form the foundations to understand the theoretical and scientific side of dating.

Basics of Dating

Most women prefer men to be more powerful, more dominant, and higher status than they are.

These articles provide with an overview of dating power dynamics, a foundational aspect of effective dating:

- **The 5 Foundational Domains of Dating Power Dynamics**
- **The 5 Basic Principles of Power-Effective Dating**

These three articles provide you with the foundations on how to be the type of leader women want:

- **Leadership and Seduction**
- **Dominance and Seduction**
- Traits of high-quality men

Dating Strategies

We have two camps on dating advice:

1. **PUA and "niche" seduction blogs**, usually selling the "lover style of seduction", faster and with less commitment and investment
2. **Mainstream dating advice** (and women themselves), tailored towards the provider style, with more personal investment, commitment and, often, a slower lead up to sex

Rarely either will admit that the other strategy might work out better.

Mainstream culture cannot embrace the lover type because the lover type is inherently bad news for society itself, and that makes sense (it would be bad for society if no men ever invested).

And seduction websites cannot embrace the provider type or they'd be out of ebooks and courses to sell (yes, the same selfish reason).

This website is different because we maintain that which one works best truly depends on your environment, your personality, and her background and personality.

So the real question is:

Which one is best *for you*?

So start an overview first:

Lovers & Providers

- **It's more about quality than role**: most of all, it's not about being a lover, a boyfriend candidate, or even a friend. It's about the quality. Focus on quality first and foremost.

Then move to this one:

- **Lover or provider**: lover and provider are two different strategies, and one is not always superior to the other. This article shows you which one works best for you, and when.

How to Meet Women

Once you understand the basic principles of dating and you worked on yourself to be a high-value men…

… Then it's all about meeting more women.

Get a more balanced view of the different ways to meet women:

- **Cold approach VS social circle**: the short of it is that you're better off with an intelligent mix of all strategies. How much of each depends on your situation and your environment

Dating Strategies

And then upgrade to these:

- **Straight-line seduction**: a seduction model based on efficiency
- **Dating strategies**: There are countless dating products, some of which are very good, too. This list does not replace all those good products but focuses on strategies that have been proven and confirmed as being effective for the majority of men
- **Types of seducers**: just like any good product seeks a good market niche, so does your dating results improve when you know your sexual market positioning
- **Sexual market value hacks**: there is so much more you can do to improve your dating life than simply learning game and approaching more. As a matter of fact, learning game might not even be the quickest and most effective thing you can do. Sexual market value hacks might provide you with the quickest bang for the buck.

There are also countless legit reviews of dating products on this website (quick warning: in at least one instance a popular online website for dating product reviews behaved as an affiliate scam).
You can start with this list of:

- **The best dating books and courses**

This is it for an overview.
To reach a good level in your dating effectiveness, you don't need *tons* of material. You need *great* material, and

then work on it.

And if you want to go straight for what works best, with step-by-step actionable advice and plenty of real-life examples, then see **Seduction University**:

> Seduction University

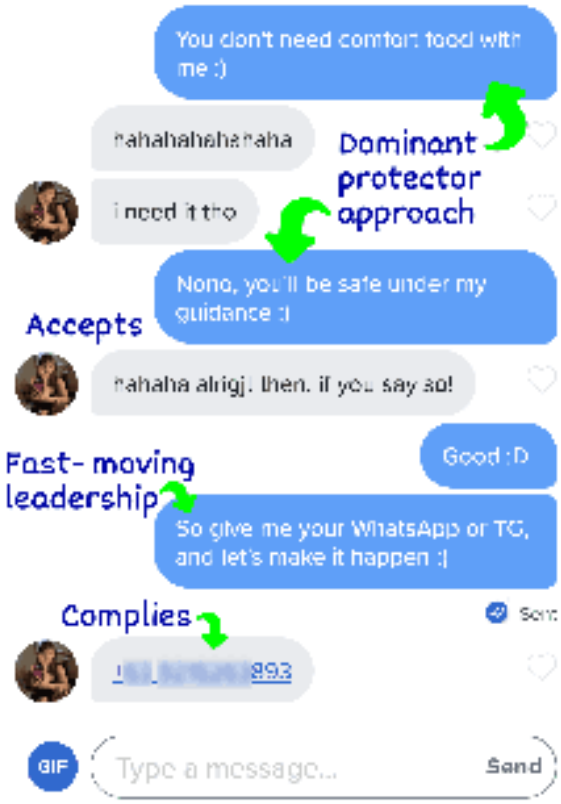
How to Lead A Woman In 5 Simple Steps: Create Trust & Attraction

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Leading a woman isn't about control—it's about confidence, inspiring trust, and making her *want* to follow.

At TPM, we specialize in power dynamics, gaining status, and successful socialization, and we know the key to leadership lies in guiding with a mix of power, and respect.

In this guide, you'll learn how to lead a woman effectively, date successfully, and maintain long-term attraction—all while embodying the traits of a high-quality man.



Resolute and strategic leadership allows you to move fast and safely

Contents

- Intro: Leadership & Dating
- 1. Lead Her With Win-Win
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  - 1.2. Relationship Leadership: Go For "Tender-Defender"
- 2. Start Small, Work Your Way Up
- 3. Be Strategic: Lead When She Will Follow
  - 3.2. Rebuild Power & Goodwill After A Denial
- 4. Follow A Leadership Process
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  - ⍰ Example: Turning her into a wife with leadership
  - 5.3. Make Your Requests Appealing To Increase Compliance
- Learning How to Lead
  - Prevent leadership issues: become a high-value man

- Women's Responses to Your Leadership
- Calibrating Leadership
  - Real-life story of leadership in conservative country
- SUMMARY

Intro: Leadership & Dating

Leading in dating is still the man's job.

Yes, *despite all the changes of the last decades*.

Empirical evidence from *The Handbook of Relationships Initiations* shows that gender expectations don't seem to change -they were the same whether it was 1950, 1993, or 2000-.
And "orchestrating the dating" was one of the timeless expectations.

Meaning that men are always expected to lead.

And, we add, leading is crucial even later in dating, because intimacy is the final act of accepting his leadership.

That's because when she accepts your leadership, she accepts *you*.
Technically, she accepts you as a man who's 'above her' and worthy of leading her.
But that's pretty much the same.

Of course, there are exceptions to almost any rule, and some women may do most of the work with more passive men.
But we don't recommend that route because **effective dating always requires male leadership**.

And the opposite is true: there is no seduction without leadership.
If the man doesn't lead, things never move forward.

1. Lead Her With Win-Win

The perfect mix of trust-inspiring gallantry, and attraction-spiking leadership

Mixing resolute leadership with warmth works MUCH better than over-dominant leadership.

Curt leadership alone may work with some, but can make you come across as a jerk.
More assertive women will turn confrontational, and higher quality women will walk off.

So yes, successful men resolutely move things forward.
But the most charming and successful ones do it with pro-social dominance and win-win leadership.

⍰ Example: Avoid domineering leadership

> **Him**: Hey you. I'm talking you, oh! Oh!
> **Him**: (motion to the passenger's seat) Get on!
> **Her**: Me?
> **Him**: Yeah, you, hurry!
> **Her**: (wants to go, but feels disrespected)
> (…)
> **Him**: Get out
> **Her**: What?
> **Him**: Move, get out
> **Her**: (finally blows up)

⬆ ♟ Too dominant, turns aggressive & rude
She follows him because of the large mate value discrepancy. But a higher quality woman may have rejected.
⍰⍰ But ignoring her emotional outbursts was absolute alpha⍰⍰

As the example above shows, a more forceful leadership may succeed.
But it meets more resistance and drives away more women.
As a rule of thumb, the as*hole-leadership style fares comparatively better for short-term liaisons, but struggles to keep around high-quality women.

See:

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-collaborator

1.2. Relationship Leadership: Go For "Tender-Defender"

Although some women are attracted to selfish dominance, most women prefer leadership that is *both* strong *and* caring *at the same time*.

And that's especially true for most high-quality women who have plenty of options.

Evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller calls it the "tender defender" (Miller, 2016).
But however you want to call it, it's best to establish your leadership within a frame of team-work and collaboration.

This follows evolutionary logic as well.
People are naturally self-centered, and women have been programmed to seek men who help them advance their and their children's prospects to survive and prosper.

So it makes sense that women prefer a strong leader who supports them and add value, rather than one that undermines them and makes the relationship toxic.
As*holes and abusive types who lead by 'inflicting costs', as evolutionary psychologist David Buss calls it, are poor fall-back options.

‘Giving your arm’ is perfect for relationships

2. Start Small, Work Your Way Up

Ie.:

1. *“Tell me about you”*
2. *“Show me your necklace”*
3. *“Let’s go sit there”*

3. Be Strategic: Lead When She Will Follow

If you suspect she will reject, hold your horses.

Instead, focus on displaying your value first.

Of course it takes some calibration, but if you start small then a denial will not sink you.
Plus, if you read around here, you’ll surely learn how to recover.

 Example in the forum

3.2. Rebuild Power & Goodwill After A Denial

Calibrate the next steps based on her compliance.

If she complies, you can probably move faster.

If she refuses, ‘thread-minimize‘ the rejection and rebuild power.
For example, change topic, chat more, display value, and try again.

A good article to check:

- **How to move fast in dating**

> Why Straight Line Seduction Is The Best Dating System

4. Follow A Leadership Process

For example:

1. **Tell her you'll take her out** to your favorite place
   Ie.: "*Let's grab some food one of these days, I'll take you to my favorite place*"
2. **Tell her time & place**
   Ie.: "*I'll meet you at the subway station X at 18:30 (good for you)?*"
3. **Move her**
   Ie., After greetings: "*Alright, let's go*"
4. **Tell her to sit beside** instead of in front of you
   Ie.: "*Sit here on this side (we can talk better)*"
5. **Suggest her a dish**
   Ie.: "*Do you eat fish? I highly recommend the trout* (point the dish on her menu)"
6. **Initiate the venue change**
   Ie.: "*You done? Would you like more water? OK, let's go then*"
7. **Invite her home, tell her to go the next place, or end the date**
   Ie.: "(While walking) *Come over, I'll show you where I'm staying*"
8. **Tell her to remove her shoes**
   Ie.: "*(While removing your shoes) Take your shoes off (it's clean / here are the slippers)*"

🧔♂Lucio's Take: **I prefer softer leading**

Lucio:
I like a 'soft' approach.
For example:

- "*I'll meet you at…*" ➡ "*Let's do at…*"
- "*Let's go*" ➡ "*Shall we go* (as I head to the restaurant)" <— Starting to walk assumes and increases compliance

I find this approach equally powerful, but less 'overbearing' -and more calibrated to assertive women.

5. Tell Her To Do Something For You

Women do this all the time.

It's one of the ways with which women control most relationships.

We call it "tasking" here.

Tasking tells you where the power lies in a relationship.
Those who assign tasks, are high-power leaders.
Those who execute the tasks, are the lower-power followers.

⍰ Example: Turning her into a wife with leadership

> **Tony**: Why don't we have a couple of drinks. Come on, I like Scotch (points to the minibar)
> **Elvira**: Sure, why not (pours the drinks for both of them)
> (…)
> **Tony**: Come here. Come on. Come on. Sit here. I want to talk to you. Sit down. I'm not gonna bite you.
> **Elvira**: (Sits next to him)

⍰⍰⍰We know Elvira is warming up to him because she executes her task.
♟ **Good strategy & timing** ⍰⍰
1. Pushes the cart closer to her, making it easier for her to execute
2. Sits down himself when he invites her again
3. Reassures her when insisting ('I don't bite')
4. He proposes after she executed his tasks

5.3. Make Your Requests Appealing To Increase Compliance

Ie.:

- "Let's go back to my place" ➡ "Come over, I'll show you the skyline, it's breathtaking at night"
- "I'll take you out" ➡ "I'll treat you to the best ice cream in town. Their pistachio is to die for

Learning How to Lead

The best way to learn how to lead women?

Lead anywhere else in life.

Being a leader outside of seduction helps you become a more effective leader when it comes to seducing.

Here are a few tips:

- Become a manager at work
- **Launch a business/project/side gig** where you call the shots
- **Get leadership roles in voluntary clubs** -many groups are desperate for team leads!-

- For example, I became a Toastmasters president
- **Build a social circle** and organize events
- **Volunteer as a teacher**
- **Take dance lessons**

Prevent leadership issues: become a high-value man

Of course, leadership, as everything else, comes much easier if you're a 'catch'.

For example, a high-value man, high mate value, and an honorable man that both men and women admire.

This also happens to be our mission: teaching good men how to gain status and attraction, while remaining honorable men.

Women's Responses to Your Leadership

How she reacts to your leadership tells you where you stand in the dating process, and tells you about her.

In that sense, it's a perfect dating test!

But it also tells you a lot about women's personalities.
For example, common archetypes of behavior are:

1. Meek and subservient: wants a good man to be a stay-at-home wife

Some women don't ever want to lead and are very passive in dating.

These women make it easier for men.
They are less likely to screen for very dominant men but also have a much easier time finding a boyfriend.

2. Rebellious: very dominant or with feminist values

Dominant women try to lead.

They continuously task men and sometimes act catty and rebellious to his leadership.

These women can end up with very dominant men.
But, often, they have to content themselves with very submissive men because they struggle to find a dominant enough man who also happens to like dominant women -not all dominant men like dominant women-.

On average, it's harder for these women to find a boyfriend.

3. Game players: they like you, but...

These women are power aware and would love to make you chase.

But their skills don't match their ambitions, and simply bumble it:

She left, point blank, to make me follow her.
But I didn't, and she ended up chasing -and looking terrible-.

P.S.:
These types sometimes hide psychological conditions, so better to avoid if you want a healthy relationship.

Also see:

- Submissive VS Strong Women

Calibrating Leadership

Despite popular 'laws', **the name of the advanced game is always calibration.**

Our approach is tailored to Western or libertine cultures, but the general principles apply anywhere.

For example, in this scene of *The Godfather* set in conservative Sicilian culture, leadership goes through her father:

> **Godfather**: (after a misunderstanding angered the man)
> I apologize if I offended you.
> My name is Michael Corleone.
> (…)
> I wanna meet your daughter, with your permission, and under the supervision of your family.
> With all due respect

It's a movie, but it's realistic enough to be real.

Real-life story of leadership in conservative country

More than fifty years ago a young, little countryside girl visited her village on a hot summer day.

A man saw her walking by and liked her.
He went over, said hi, introduced himself, and asked about her.

Until here, not too different from what might happen today.
They exchanged some pleasantries and then the boy asked her to meet again.

The girl told him that she couldn't.
You know, she had recently ended a relationship, and her dad didn't allow her to date so soon again.

You can see all the weight of the conservative culture there.
The bias towards proper courtship instead of "hanging out". Taking breaks between dating one man and another.
And of course, the father approving who and when she was going to meet.

In a more libertine culture, the man might have smelled an excuse or an easy barrier to break, and he might have insisted. Maybe he might have tried to make her sit with him right away.
That might have worked too, who knows? But in that conservative environment, the odds were stacked against him.
And he didn't want her parents to see him hanging too long around her daughter.

So, the guy didn't even try.
Instead, he asked the girl: "Where do you live".

The day after, the guy went to visit the little girl at her family's house. He asked to see his father, introduced himself, talked about himself, and showed he was a respectable man. He said he was serious, and that waiting was unnecessary.
The father agreed and approved.

That's how it started.
The two are still married to this day.
And a few years ago, I went back home to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

The story I just told you is about how my father met my mother.

Now compare that to how I met girls just one generation later.
A world of difference.

Yet, what my father did was extremely dominant and leader-like. But it was bold *within* that culture and within the type of relationship he was seeking.

What does it mean to you?
It means that your dating and leadership must be calibrated to your culture and your goals.

SUMMARY

> There is no seduction, without male leadership.

Leadership is not only crucial to lead groups and manage teams, but it's also the essence of seduction.

Many men's dating struggles are largely due to leadership -either total lack of leadership, or insufficient leadership-.

This article showed you how important leadership is, how to lead women, and how you can learn how to lead more.

This is an excerpt from **Power University**, where we lay out the full plan for becoming a man women want to follow

How to Use Dominance to Boost Your Sexual Success

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Dominance, much like leadership, plays a crucial role in dating success.

Research shows men's dominance can sometimes outweigh physical attractiveness in influencing dating success.

At TPM, we know this because we're the most visited website on power dynamics, helping thousands of men to become more successful, assertive, and positively dominant.

Let's start:

Contents

- 1. Master Interpersonal Dominance
  - How to Master Interpersonal Dominance
  - 1.2. Show Your Dominance With Social Pressure
  - 1.3. Win Power Showdowns
- 2. Display Mental Dominance
  - 2.2. Emotional Dominance
  - 2.3. Mentor / Father Figure
- 3. Social Dominance
  - 3.2. Social Status Dominance
  - 3.3. Benevolent Sexism
- 4. Romantic Dominance
  - ⍰⍰ Execute a 'seduction power move' to make her swoon
- 5. Financial Dominance
- 6. Physical Dominance

- 6.2. Comfort With Touching
- ⚠ 7. Sexual Dominance Escalations
  - ⚠ ⍰ Dominant Moves
  - 7.2. How to Be Positively Dominant: Add Warmth
  - ⍰⍰ Verbalize it's safe!!
- 8. Sexual Dominance In Bed
  - How To Be More Dominant In Bed
  - 8.2. Don't Be Passively Led
  - ⍰ Example: Teasing For Your Sexual Domination
  - 8.3. Predator-Prey Frame
- 9. Dominant Relationships
  - 9.2. Provider Dominance
  - ⍰ Trump/Melania example
- Positive Dominance vs. Pathology

1. Master Interpersonal Dominance

Interpersonal dominance includes any dyadic interaction among people.

Research in evolutionary psychology highlights that human attraction involves both female selection and male competition in the form of dominance hierarchies.

Green is dominant, red is submissive

Dominance is important in *both* approaches.

However, the most effective strategy in modern dating is to disregard direct male competition and focus on man-to-woman interactions.

The author's successful experience attests that **you can date many women you want, without directly competing against other men.**

How to Master Interpersonal Dominance

Interpersonal dominance includes the basics of a high-value man:

- Confident nonverbals
- Confident social behavior
- Confident speaking

And its opposite, eliminating low-confidence and submissive signals.

In our course we also share examples of dominance dynamics between men and women.

1.2. Show Your Dominance With Social Pressure

Principle:

⚖ **The more distress under pressure, the more power you lose**

So keep your composure.
And don't be afraid sometimes to heap some pressure.

⍰ Example:

> **Him**: (intense) What do you love about it <— Deep question
> **Her**: (thoughtful answer) <— She invests
> **Him**: ⍰… <— Pressures her to speak
> **Her**: Are you an artist?
> **Him**: No, just a traveler <— Contradicts her. Higher dominance, lower warmth
> searching for purity.
> What do you search for <— Implies she's on a meaningful quest
> (…)
> **Him**: (full frontal) <— Physically dominant
> (walks towards her)

However, remember to balance intensity with warmth on first approaches.

1.3. Win Power Showdowns

Power showdowns establish dominance hierarchies through escalations.

Some are obvious and easy to spot.
But are smaller or covert and men miss them because they require power intelligence.

Imagine this dialogue:

> **Her**: (haughty look, turning away) You're so into yourself <— ⍰ ⍰ 'You trying to be the prize'
>
> **Him**: Me? I'm so into myself? (turns to her, gets closer, louder but smiling) <— Counter-attack, dominance with warmth
>
> Look at you, with the slim fit biker jacket, (reaches out to her scarf) the Italian scarf, the coiffed hair (touches her hair)
> Yeah, nice try (pats her head) <— Babying power move & 'benevolent sexism'

> **Her**: (lowers her eyes, smiles) <— Please by the compliments… And that he 'won'

That's a date of mine, and a little later she followed me to my place.
I'm fairly confident this was the turning point on the way to bed.

2. Display Mental Dominance

Intellectual dominance is an underrated, yet crucial aspect of dominance.

Research indicates that intelligence is a highly desirable trait, especially for long-term relationships.
And narcissist researcher Keit Campbell lists 'mental domination' among the strategies narcissists pursue to maintain the upper hand.

So critical thinking, logic, and knowledge help.

But *explaining* things, influence, and frame control matter more.

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

🤦♂ I used to say "*Do you want me to correct your English?*"
To position me as the 'spoken language authority'

2.2. Emotional Dominance

Including:

- Calmer under stress
- Resilient self-esteem
- Stable, fewer emotional swings

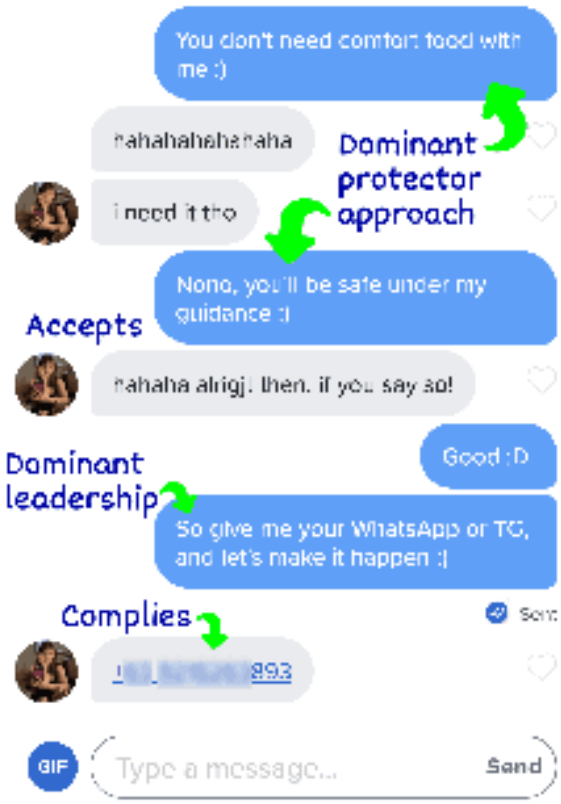
🤦♂Lucio's Take: **Don't say 'I love you' first**

Lucio:
Seeking emotional closeness signals less experience and more to gain from the relationship.
And that's lower value.

It also feels less masculine.

Albeit it's unpopular advice, I'd advise a close friend that he -and the relationship- are better off if *she* is more emotionally invested.
Both in internal states, and external signals -hence: don't say 'I love you' first-.

2.3. Mentor / Father Figure



> **Him**: You don't need comfort food with me :) <— Dominant, but value-adding dominance. And adds ':)' for warmth.
> **Her**: (loves it)
> **Him**: You're safe under my guidance <— High confidence, protective dominance. Adds ':)' to take the edge off
> **Her**: (loves it)
> **Him**: Give me your contact and let's make it happen
> **Her**: (gives her number)

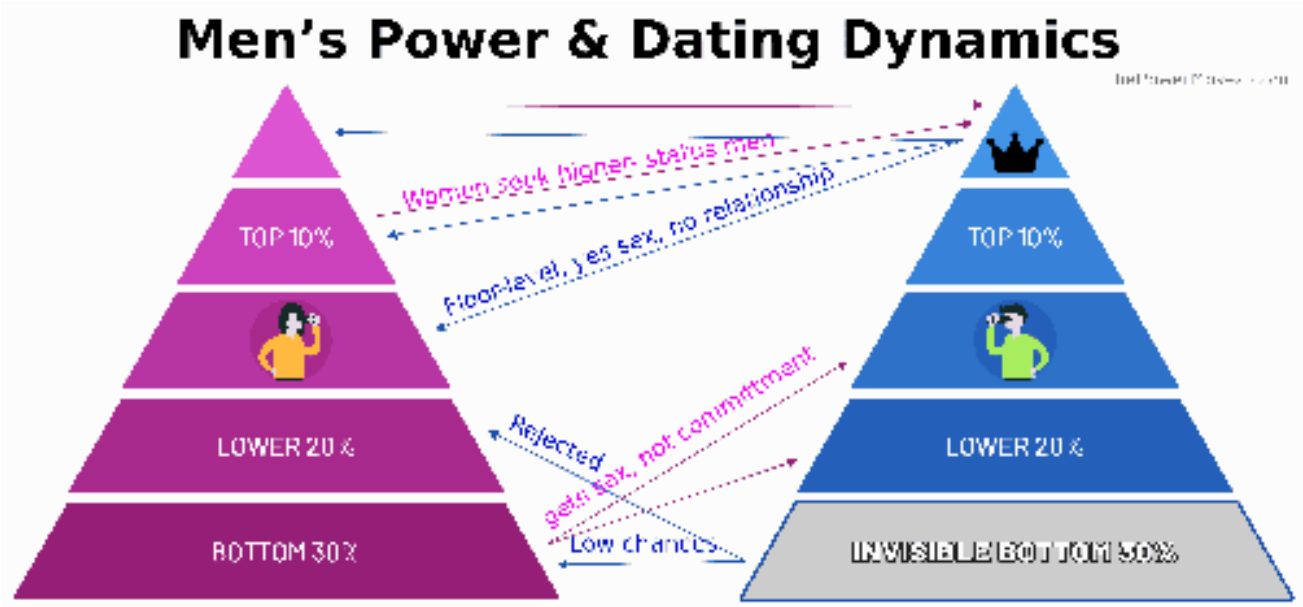
Both helpful frames for older men.

3. Social Dominance

Any aspect of dominance related to groups or social classes

3.2. Social Status Dominance

Women prefer higher status men (Buss, 2016).



Highest-status men in 'dominance hierarchies' monopolize women's interest

So present yourself well:

- On upward trajectory
- High-status background
- Respected by other men -ideally with alpha potential

3.3. Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent sexism frames men as higher status than women.

Research shows some women like it because it combines dominance and warmth.

Example with a power move:

> **Bond**: Dink, say goodbye to Felix
> **Dink**: What?
> **Bond**: Man talk (turns her around and pulls a power move)

To do this effectively:

- **Do it in private**, or at least avoid coworkers and family
- **Do it with warmth**, as if joking with a mischievous child

🤔Lucio's Take: **She likes it IF you're cool**

Lucio:
Long ago I was seeing a (declared) feminist.

I wanted to pull a ‘pimp move’ and put some notes on the inside of her corset, telling her to go get drinks.

She complied.

But my friend, astonished and copying the move, got slapped.

Similar moves are good tests to assess characters.
 Example here (alumni only)

4. Romantic Dominance

Romance is a man’s job and a gift to her.

> **Her**: So corny
> **Him**: No, it’s classy <— Contradicts and frame imposes

Execute a ‘seduction power move’ to make her swoon

Women remember first kisses more than first sex (Gottman, 2016).

Bring wine to a picnic, walk to a sunset view, passionately kiss her while capping her face/neck area.

Love the romance but also *lead* it.
You're *both* a player and a conductor. Only she can get fully lost in it.

5. Financial Dominance

Some financial power moves:

- *"Where are you staying, I'll send you a car"*
- *"Where's your dream destination?*
  I'll take you there"

Many men do this wrong, trying to impress and financially over-extending otherwise modest resources.
That's simping.

To do it well, you must spend like money means nothing to you and never to win her affection.

In short, **to do it well you must be wealthy**.
Otherwise, skip this.

6. Physical Dominance

The full spectrum of body movement and body contact.

While some resources focus on sexual prowess, physical dominance is much larger.

And must start with the basics:

6.2. Comfort With Touching

For example:

- Give her your hand to stand up

- Lightly touch her on a high point
- Lead her with your hand on the small of her back

⚠ 7. Sexual Dominance Escalations

! These require advanced calibration, consent, and mutual trust. Always prioritize her feelings of safety **!**

NEVER TRY THIS:

We dig deeper in private spaces.

⚠ ⍰ Dominant Moves

Beginners skip these.

!She must like you, and feel and know that she's safe **!**

These are some *advanced* moves that men can use during escalation WITH warmth, consent, and mutual attraction:

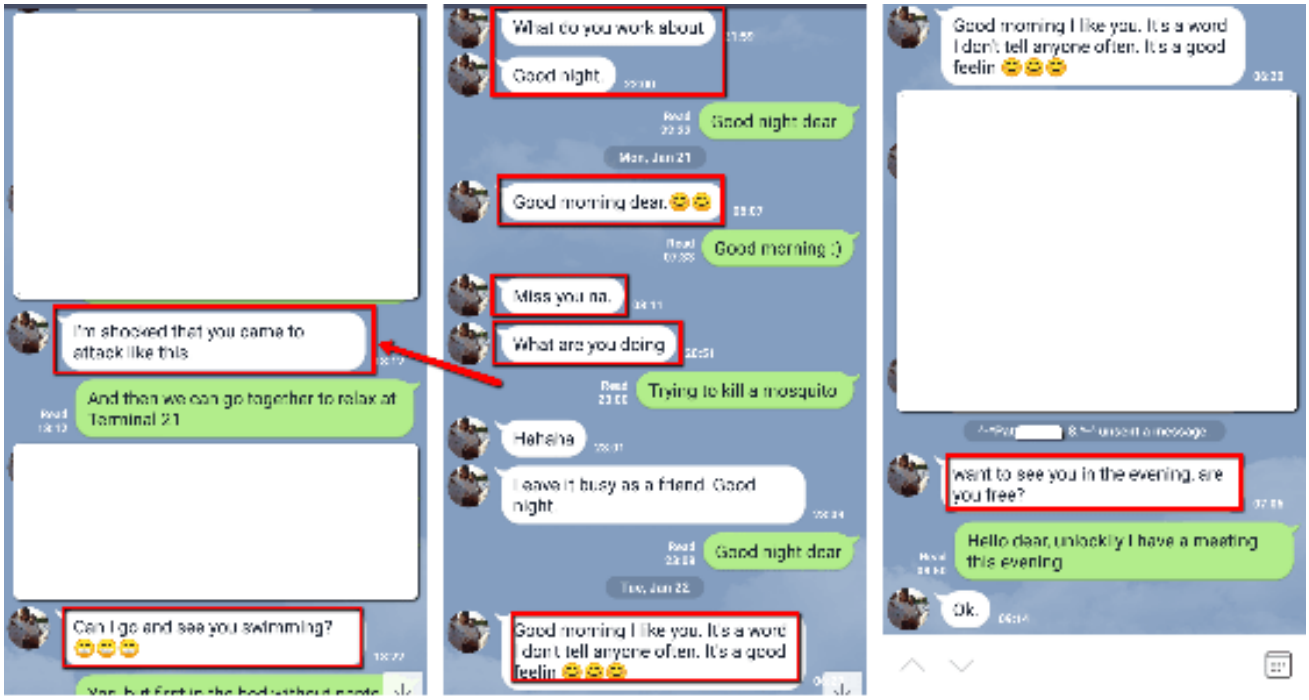
1. Grab her neck
   - From behind when kissing or hugging
   - Frontally during sex
2. Pick her up, move to bed
3. Take her hand, walk to bed
4. Nudge her in a horizontal position
5. Increase intensity, overcome by lust, before pulling back
6. Pin her hands above her head in bed while you pet or remove clothing
7. Bite her (lightly!)

⍰⍰ Be extra warm after a dominant escalation

To frame it as a good experience with a dominant, but *kind* man
⍰ Two examples here (alumni)

Well-executed dominant escalation is attractive.

And shorter men can use it to rebalance dominance with taller women.
⍰ Example:



> **Him**: (escalated dominantly)
> **Her**: (swoons and chases him)

*note: she used a poor expression, it was safe

7.2. How to Be *Positively* Dominant: Add Warmth

- **Step back between bouts of physical escalation** if she isn't ready
  - Lighten the mood
    Ie.: Tease, talk, or share interesting stories about yourself
  - Go hands-off and distant to show you're not going to be all over her

- **Display care & warmth**
  Ie.: Forehead kiss, hug, light make out, caressing

- **Tell her something nice**
  Ie.: What you like about her

- **Talk about your common history** to frame it as romance
  Ie.: How you met, what you thought of her, etc.

- **Share interesting but reassuring trivia about yourself**
  Ie.: Your family life, your mother, your female friends

- **Reframe win-lose into win-win**
  Ie.: If she says you only want sex, say that you like her and want her to be happy

- **Verbalize your next dominant move** to prepare her, prevent guilt, and get a green light
  Ie.: *"I am going to pin your hands now and remove your panties"* <— ⚒🧍 If she strongly objects, wait. If she says nothing, proceed

And most important:

⍰⍰ Verbalize it's safe!!

With a reframe example:

> **Her**: You're pushing me <— Take your hint! You're overdoing it !
>
> **You**: Wooo, don't say that.
> I just like you, but I want you to know 100% that you're totally safe here, OK? <— Let her reply and confirm! !

Dominance and kindness combine the best of lovers and providers.
The lover excitement, and the provider's kindness.

See a real-life effect of combining power and warmth:

> **Her**: Behind the thirst for sex, you're a gentleman

8. Sexual Dominance In Bed

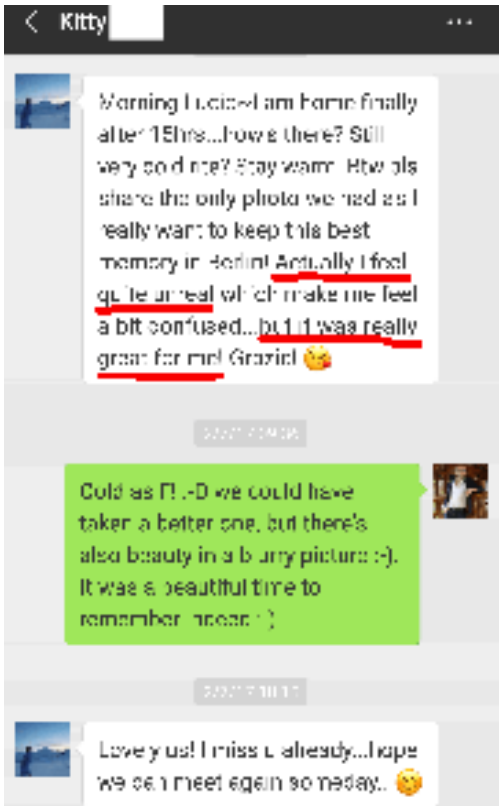
Some dominant moves in bed:

How To Be More Dominant In Bed

- Lead the 'position changes'

- Spanking
- Lead her inside an alley
- Tell her to tell you she loves your d*ck <— ⍰⍰♂ Not my style
- Consume her, display an “animalistic” side
  Ie.:
  - Overcome by sexual lust, bend her against a desk
  - Undress her

Example of the effects of ‘ravishment’:



> **Him**: (escalates and undresses her the moment they walk inside)
> (…)
> **Her**: I feel quite unreal

Careful with ‘telling her to tell you she’s yours’: it’s lower power and semi-toxic
It sub-communicates *you* want her to be yours, but *she* should want to be yours.
Same with ‘tattoo my name on you’.

8.2. Don’t Be Passively Led

Some women enjoy physical strength games.

She might for example wrestle you, or take charge of the escalation.

She’s rarely leading to sex, though.
Women only lead to sex with men who played coy all along, *not with men who lost their leadership*.

So you must either win or, I recommend, sidestep that game altogether.
⍰ Example here (alumni)

I don't know who started this old trend but it wasn't a dominant man

⍰ Example: Teasing For Your Sexual Domination

Some women tease men to take sexual charge.

If the man acts on those signals it ends in lots of moaning and requests of harder pounding.

Example:

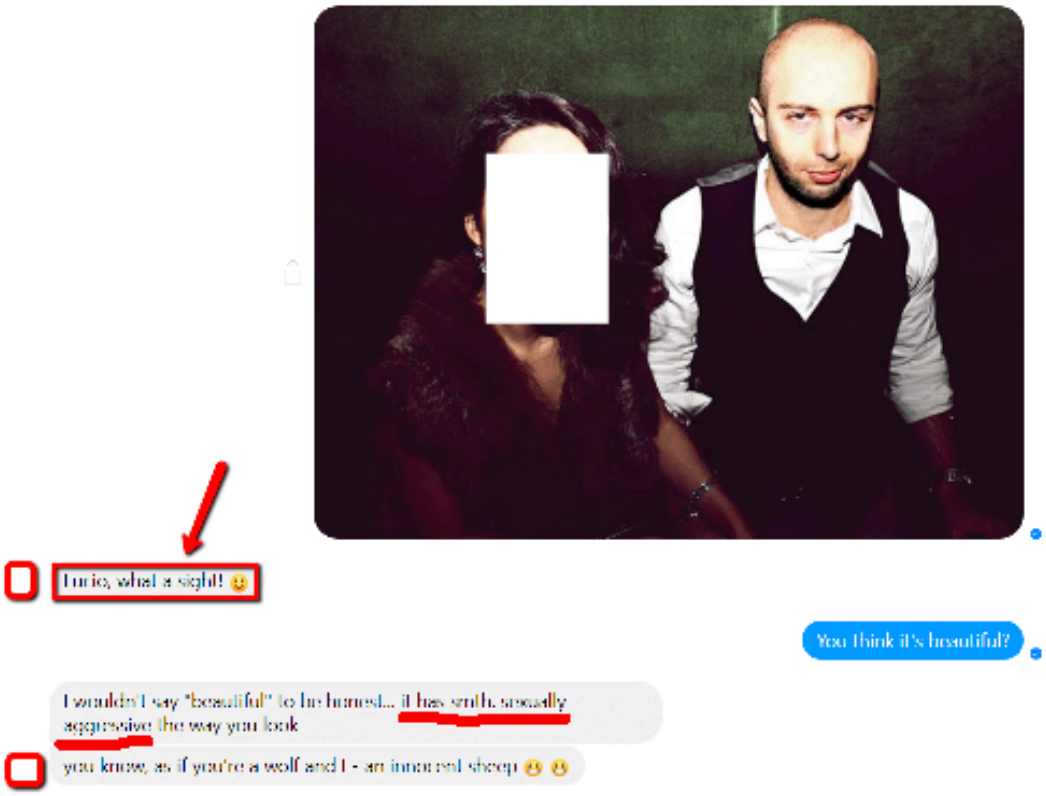
> **Her**: (coquettish attitude) I'd like you to leave,
> so I that can take a bath <— Hints at naked body
>
> (puts perfume)
> (stares him down) <— Challenge
> (walks away) <—- Forces him to follow
> (laughs at his outburst) <—- Covert attack at his manhood
>
> **Him**: Shut up, pushes on the bed, escalates

But note that **when women tease men to dominate them, the power rests with the woman**.
Or, at least, she feels in charge for orchestrating the reaction and him *re*-acting.

To regain power after intimacy, he must have her come to him.

8.3. Predator-Prey Frame

Not the greatest example as alcohol had its effects, but compared to toothy smiles at the company party, it stood out:



> **Her**: What a sight.
> It has something sexually aggressive, as if you're a wolf and I an innocent sheep

An intense, unblinking gaze can feel threatening with strangers, but in the right context and after comfort is established, some women experience it as highly seductive.

9. Dominant Relationships

Dominant men naturally resist women's 'domestication attempts', and maintain power and attraction in relationships.

9.2. Provider Dominance

Some authors confuse any "providing" for submissiveness ('beta males').

This is a limited view because the dynamics are different for high-status and dominant men.

⍰ Trump/Melania example

> **Trump**: I'm not gonna be doing the diapers.
> (…) She'll be an unbelievable mother. <— Judge power move
> (…) I'll be, you know, making my deals. <— His role is to make money for luxury lifestyle

Also read:

- **Provider and Lover Sexual Strategies**
- **Lovers, Providers, and Friends**

And of course:

- **Alpha f*cks, beta bucks**

> The Science of “Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks” (Facts VS Myths)

Positive Dominance vs. Pathology

Male dominance in dating is most important for short-term mating (Brown et al, 2022).

But **excessive dominance can become repelling in long-term dating** contexts because women fear it can turn against them.

The solution is simple: men must combine dominance with warmth, use it within win-win frames, and ensure she feels safe.
Indeed, research suggests that positive dominance is most attractive. And it remains attractive in long-term contexts as well.

This is important for women, and especially women asking us ‘how to date dominant men‘.
They may confuse *positive* dominance with *value-taking* dominance. And their attraction for short-term can turn into long-term toxic relationships with an abusive man.

This is a preview of Power University, where we help men become positively dominant—earning men’s respect, and women’s attraction.

How to Maintain Her Attraction in a Relationship: 7 Strategies of High Value Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 February 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Keeping her interested and committed isn't about making her insecure or playing the perfect boyfriend—it's about mastering the dynamics of attraction, respect, and power.

As the most visited website for men on power dynamics and strategies, *The Power Moves* brings you expertise on respect, attraction, and influence.

In this guide, you'll learn the key strategies to maintain your edge and build a relationship where you stay in control and respected.

Superman doesn't worry about keeping her attracted or 'controlling her'. Soon, you won't either.

Contents

- 1. Selection: Pick With Chemistry In Mind
- 2. Work On Yourself: Become A Top-Choice
  - 2.2. Remain Attractive to Other Women
  - ⍰ Be A Good Leader For Both
- 3. Provide Benefits
  - ⍰ Reminder: Be A Smart Giver
  - 3.2. Uplift & Inspire
- 4. Keep Her Satisfied
- 5. Maintain -Or Grow- Your Power
  - 5.2. Maintain Your Masculinity
  - 5.3. Maintain a life outside the relationship
  - Exceptions: women who feel threatened

- 6. Make It A Great Relationship
  - “Turns ‘I’s Into ‘We’s”
- Poor Ways of Keeping Attraction
- Learn More
- SUMMARY

1. Selection: Pick With Chemistry In Mind

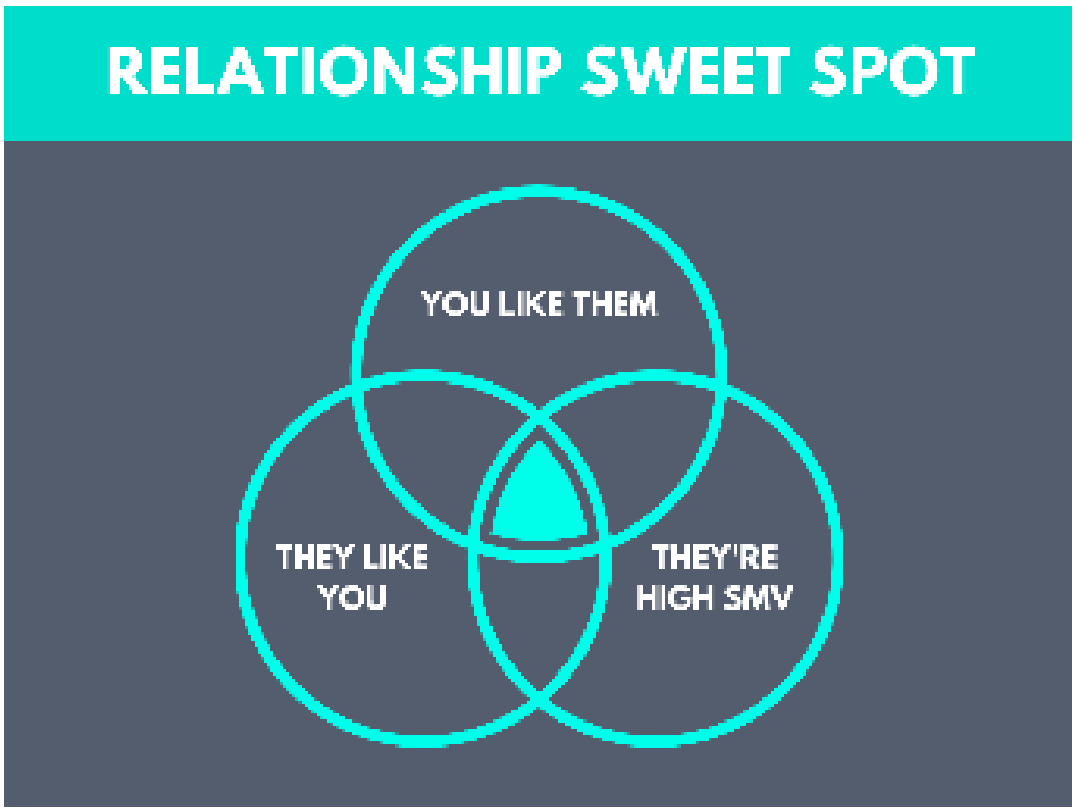
So simple, so obvious… Yet so overlooked.

All dating advice for men and for women teaches people how to get those who are on the fence about them.

That might make sense for the short-term.
Or for learning to date.

However, it only works for relationships IF you change her mind about you.
Eventually, **she must respect, like, admire, and ideally, be attracted to you**.
And you better enjoy each other’s company.

This is so obvious that it doesn’t need an explanation. But it *does* need reiteration because most people only focus on getting who they want and not so much on who also wants *them*.
When looking for a relationship, this is the sweet spot:



A good mix is:

- You like them
- They like you
- They’re on the upper of your expectations

For long-term compatibility, prioritize the top #2.

Even purely from an 'offspring strategy' point of view, children growing up in a healthy household outperform children from a more attractive mate, but in a less healthy household.

2. Work On Yourself: Become A Top-Choice

This makes you a 'high mate value man', and women remain attracted to high-value mate men.

I quote the latest *Oxford Handbook* on relationships:

> Overall, **people in a long-term relationship with a partner who is higher in mate value than themselves are more satisfed** (Conroy-Beam et al. , 2016)

Become a top choice and realize that **looking for ways to 'control her' is both beneath you, and unnecessary**.

To help you out with that we have many details articles, including:

- High-power, and go for win-win
- High-quality
- High-status nonverbals
- Confident speaking
- … Etc. etc.

2.2. Remain Attractive to Other Women

Dating and relationships share some market-like dynamics.

Some people still resist this simple notion that we first shared many years ago.
But today even *The Oxford Handbook of Relationships* confirms as much.

Remaining attractive to other women keeps some positive pressure on her.
And gives you the confidence to enforce healthy boundaries, when needed.

Negotiation dynamics also suggest that **the more alternatives you have, the more power you have** (Fisher and Ury, 1981).

I know that most people recoil here with the word 'power' within relationships.
But that's a bad approach: power is only as good or bad depending on how you use it. Use it for good, and your power is good for both.

Indeed, based on the evidence and our experience, our advice here is this:

⍰ Be A Good Leader For Both

Lead for mutual benefit, respecting her interests.
Inspire her to follow your lead naturally, without imposing or verbalizing it.

⍰ Tips:

- **Define the responsibilities**
  - **Tell her what she's responsible for**, and that you trust her with it
    Ie.: She manages the household/decor/food preparation/holiday planning/events with friends…
- **Let her decide what matters most to her**, but little to you
- **Consider her preferences** for common decisions
- **Mind her well-being when taking important decisions**
  - Influence, instead of dictating
  - Explain *why* when you overrule her preference
  - Make it up to her if you imposed

3. Provide Benefits

Evolutionary Psychology research shows two approaches to relationship influence and control:

1. **Value-taking (push & control)**: harms her and the relationship
   Examples:
   - Strict mate guarding
   - Criticizing her
   - Limit her spending
   - …
2. **Value-adding (pull & influence)**: improves her and the relationship
   Examples:
   - Valuing her

- Gifts
- Date nights
- …

Seek value-adding.
Beyond ethics, research shows lower-value men impose costs because they can't provide benefits (and dark-triad men).

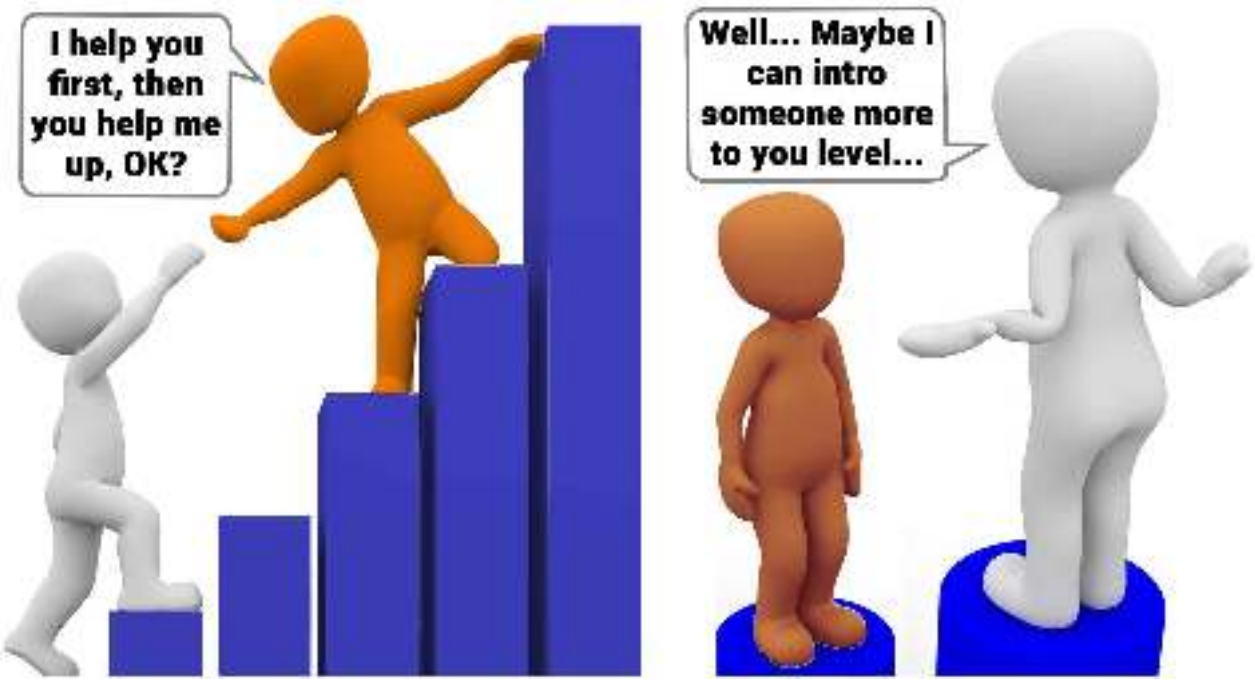
⍰⍰ Don't blame yourself if you resorted to value-taking in the past. It's on a spectrum, it comes naturally to many, and it's simply part of growing (I did it as well!)

⍰ Reminder: Be A *Smart* Giver

Give, but ensure it's part of win-win.

Some notes:

1. **Give *over time***, avoid 'too much too soon'. Let her earn it
2. **Give to the right woman**
3. **Careful with far younger**/attractive women, ensure they're in it for win-win
4. **Ensure she has 'skin in the game'**, that she's investing and invest*ed*.
   - ⍰⍰ A breakup should be costly to both, not just to you!
5. **Careful with raising her status above yours**



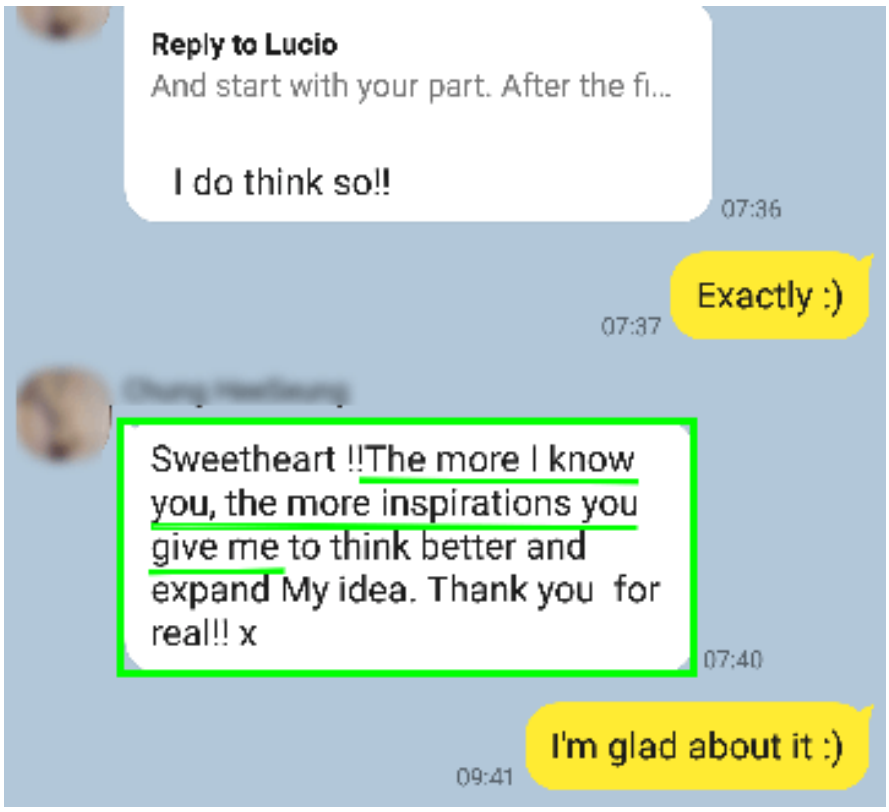
Some may call this Machiavellian but to us is just common sense. Give, but ensure it's *mutual* giving or you're just a sucker

3.2. Uplift & Inspire

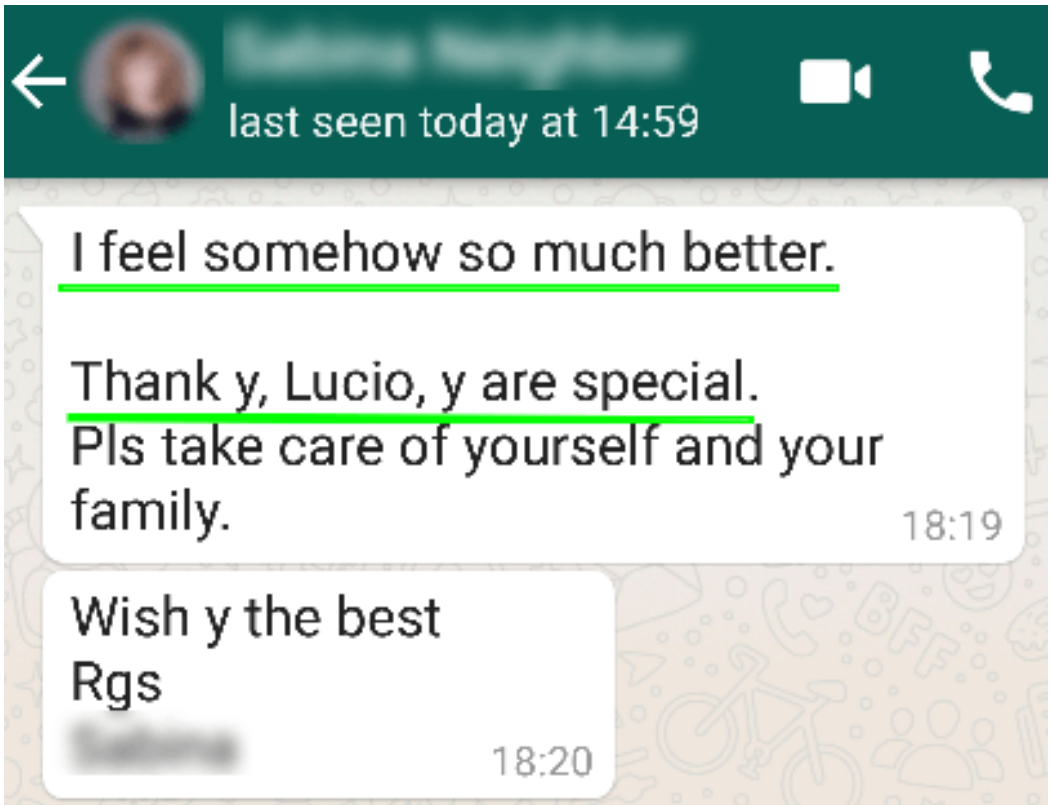
Once you internalize the first lessons of this course, you can also teach them to others.

Most people, including women, will admire you when you exude positivity and confidence.

Some examples:



And here's one more example with a platonic friend neighbor:



Techniques

1. **Listen and empathize** first to bond and avoid sounding dismissive
2. **Start leading**
3. **Pattern-interrupt the negativity**
   - *"What are you talking about"*

- *"Nonono, it's not like that at all"*
- *"You sound very positive you know"*

4. **Minimize problems** as 'part of life', 'nothing too big' or 'momentary'
   - *"Yeah, it's not ideal, but it's OK"*
5. Attack the source of the problem
   - *"Does it really matter what some gossiping losers think?"*
   - *"If she was a winner, she'd be with a guy like me. But she's not. You are"* <— ⍰⍰ ⍰ Joke/power move to remind her she's lucky with you
6. **Walk her through the worst-case scenario**
   - Encourage her that she can handle it
   - Show that even then, 'it's OK', just part of life
7. **Highlight the opportunities** in the problem
8. **Inject optimism**
   - *"It's OK"*
   - *"Summer is coming"* <— Even trivial works. It's more *how* you say, than *what*

4. Keep Her Satisfied

Principle:

⚖ **Sex grows in importance with growing libido levels**

It's not a must, but picking a partner with similar libido levels is a plus.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **don't be afraid of 'toys'**

As a 'non-relationship type of guy', I quickly lose interest in mating with the same woman ('Coolidge effect').

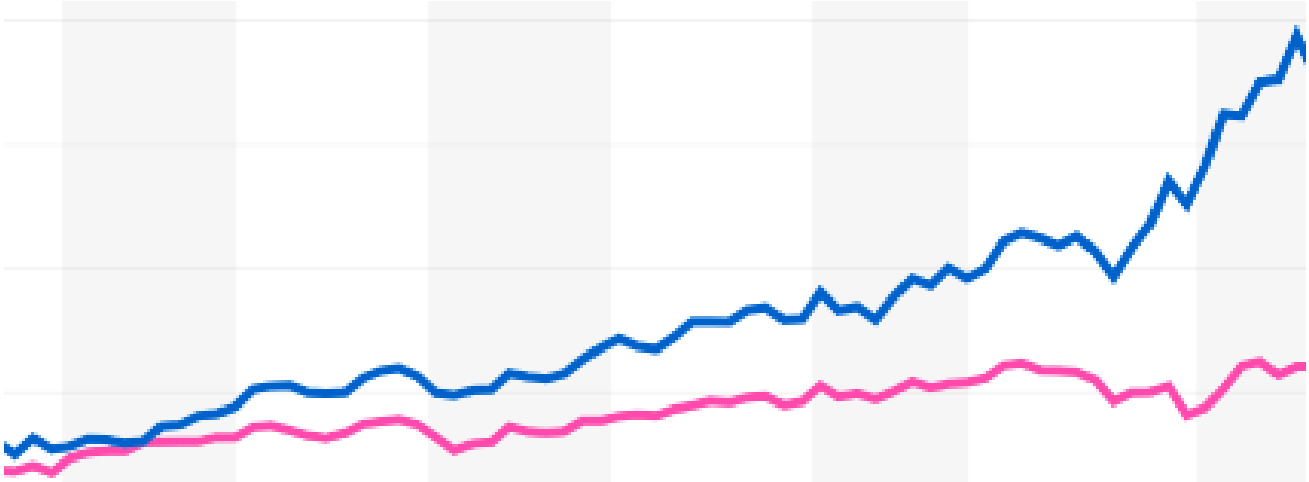
For me, the best long-term partner has a lower-than-average libido.

But I also thought that if she's a higher libido woman, then 'you only need a vibrator' for when you're not feeling it.

5. Maintain -Or Grow- Your Power

Principle:

⚖ The partner falling behind worries about attraction, while the one moving ahead worries of being too much.



Over time, he doesn't worry about keeping her attracted—*she* worries about keeping him

Men have a natural advantage because their mate value is less dependent on age and looks, and more on status and income.

Quoting from the same handbook:

> Women are more focused on a partner's status, while men are likely to focus on physical attractiveness and youth (Walter et al. , 2020). As such, the confict between sexes might increase with relationship length because cues of youthfulness decrease and social status may change (e.g. , due to job loss)

Men Who Let Go Lose Attraction

It's OK to relax a bit in relationships, but as for everything, balance!

Most men let themselves go and lose attraction and respect over time.

Result:

Women initiate more divorces and college-educated women, who we might expect to be more ambitious and demanding, initiate even *more* divorces.
Women also report being less happy than men during the relationship (Rosenfeld, 2017), and happier after the divorce (Craft, Erik D, 2002).

5.2. Maintain Your Masculinity

No need to over-stress about 'masculinity', but maintain some ambition and drive.

⍰ Over-chilling lets others down

⍰ You maintain a good edge for yourself and for the world

Letting yourself go turns you into a taker.

⍰ Example:

When I think of men letting themselves go I think of this skit:

> **Neutered Brian**: (Fat, on a couch, over-eating. Knows it's bad for him, but does it anyway because he lacks discipline and ambition)

Instead:

- **Maintain your sports routine**
- **Seek career or business growth**
- **Dress well**
- **Keep learning**
- …

And…

⍰⍰ **Flirting is allowed**.
We don't advise cheating, but flirting and enjoying your appeal to women can help you maintain your confidence and edge—including your Testosterone levels.

5.3. Maintain a life outside the relationship

For example:

- Life mission
- Interests
- 'Me time' you enjoy
- Social circle
- Some close friends

Exceptions: women who feel threatened

Some women may feel threatened if:

1. **The relationship has no 'team frame'**, which is on you to fix so your win becomes the relationship win
2. **Low self-esteem** (Nathaniel Branden, 1994)
   - Perfectionists with little discipline and your wins make them feel inadequate failures
3. **Competitive**, and your wins are their losses
4. **Anxious attachment** who fears abandonment

We dig deeper into the all-important 'team frame' in Power University.

6. Make It A Great Relationship

For example:

- **Spend quality time**
- **Talk to her**
  - Be curious about her life outside the relationship

  - Be curious about her opinion and thoughts
  - Share about your day
- **Surprise her** sometimes with some gifts
- **Organize holidays together**
  ⍰⍰⍰ If you finance it, have her plan it
- **Give for the pleasure of giving** if it's a win-win relationship
  - To make her happy
  - Without keeping track
- **Conflict-handling skills** that avoid aggression and hostility

These are all listed in the *Handbook of Relationship Initiation* as empirically tested approaches to increase your partner's relationship satisfaction.
And the authors summarize:

> The best predictors of relationship satisfaction were ultimately positive love (a combination of passionate, altruistic, and friendship love) felt for the partner, the absence of game-playing love, the perception that one did not use aggressive conflict tactics in the relationship, and the perception that the partner was able to take one's perspective.

"Turns 'I's Into 'We's"

A shared bond a sense of 'we' is a like a protective moat around your relationship.

Writes Dengelegi in *The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity*:

> Conjugate or companionate love can foster a bond that is resistant to the allure of another potential partner. (…) Unhappily, many relationships do not develop a strong enough familial bond (…) relationship fragility and the common practice of evaluating potential new partners may motivate a partner's focus on someone who seems to offer more

In simple words: **everyone 'sees' other options. But if one has a strong bond already, those other options need not to be threatening.**

A strong sign of an existing bond is when couples develop a relational identity—seeing themselves as a **"we"** rather than just two "I"s.
This concept first introduced by Aron (1992) is supported by substantial evidence across several areas of relationship and communication research, and we recommend it for men who seek long-term relationships.

How to achieve that sense of we?
Great leadership and smart frame control.

Poor Ways of Keeping Attraction

Some advice on this topic is valid from a power dynamics point of view, but may promote toxic approaches instead of genuine self-development.

Some of the most popular women's dating books for example rely on manipulation tactics such as 'using sex as a negotiation chip'.

And some popular self-help authors advise on control techniques centered around keeping her fearful and insecure.

While all of these approaches can work, they are all value-taking. They work for you, but *to the detriment of the*

relationship.
What do you gain by turning your relationship toxic?

Plus, you also pay a mental price.
Disempowering your partner harms you because it sub-communicates that you're lower value.
All these 'small-pie' approaches are inherently lower value.

Here are some examples and better mindsets:

- **Defensive/cynic**
  Ie.: 'Women cheat/manipulate, so I do the same" ➡ You can never be sure, but I will do my part. At the very least, I can be proud of myself

- **'Need her less'** ➡ Make her want you more

It's based on the valid 'principle of least interest' (Waller, 1937).
But it's best *ensued*, rather than pursued, or it can be confrontational, defensive, and lower-value.

- **'Be the prize'** ➡ High-quality men are a catch and women know that

Being the prize is the *natural consequence* of who you are, not something you seek.

- **'She's not yours, it's just your turn'** ➡ She's my girlfriend, I feel no need to possess her, but she WANTS to be mine

🤦♂️Lucio's Take: **She WANTS to be yours**

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

Lucio: Women WANT to be yours when you're an attractive man

Learn More

Related articles on relationship dynamics:

- **Manipulative games women play**: this is how women seek power while dating
- **Power moves in a relationship**: this is how women seek power during the relationship
- **How women control men**: this is how most women control most of the relationship
- **Red flags of a poor partner**

These will help you sport power moves, manipulation, and toxic partners to avoid

SUMMARY

The issue with most advice on maintaining attraction in relationships is that it focuses largely on communication and time together.

While both are crucial, there is more.

Much of the advice that includes power dynamics though includes manipulation tactics that harm both the

relationship and the man's own self-esteem.

This article combined the basics of power dynamics to keep her attracted, with the foundations of win-win that make relationships great for both of you.

If it was any helpful, we have a program that makes her more attracted to you than she's ever been to any other man:

- **Power University**

How to Cover Your Assets with a Prenup

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Note from Lucio:

We mentioned on this website that money is power -or, at least, an important element in of an empowered life-.

And in "the fundamental strategies of power", we mentioned that win-win collaborations in long-term relationships is power, while wars, especially protracted wars without clear winners, sap your power.
This is especially true with intimate relationships. **With intimate relationships the benefits of collaboration are huge, but the costs of litigation can be even bigger** -both financially, emotionally, and time-wise-.

It's within this framework that a prenuptial agreement can become an important strategic tool to protect your future well-being.
Specifically, **a prenup can be an important tool of your loss-mitigation strategy**, and help cap your downsides in case things go wrong. A well-thought prenup can not only limit your financial losses, but also save you time and resources: life is too short to for endless and bitter legal wars.

Personally, I don't have much knowledge in legal matters.
But Veronica Baxter does have.
So when she reached out to write a post on how the law can help empower people, I immediately proposed her to share her knowledge on prenuptial agreement.
And this is how this post came into being.

You just got engaged and you are planning your wedding – congratulations!

But I hope you have already discussed a prenuptial agreement?

Of course you, your intended, and your families are busy discussing and deciding on the date, venue, guest list, wedding party, flowers, music, and more… but what you and your fiance really need to do prior to tying the knot is

sit down and decide if the individual assets or debts you each bring to the marriage require a prenuptial agreement, or “prenup.”

This is certainly not the most romantic conversation you two will have prior to your ceremony, but it is a necessary one nonetheless. This article will give you a comprehensive starting point for your full and frank discussion regarding finances and asset protection and whether you need or want a prenup. Deal with these issues upfront – while you may never need to enforce the prenup if, at some point you do, you both will be glad you have a prenup.

Contents

- What is a Prenup?
- Who Needs a Prenup?
- How Do I Make a Prenup?
- What Happens if I Don’t Get a Prenup?
- What if You Just Live Together?

What is a Prenup?

A prenup, short for “prenuptial agreement,” is a contract created by a couple prior to entering into marriage, domestic partnership, or civil union that lists the properties each party brings to the marriage and what property rights each has during the marriage and should the marriage dissolve. It may also list the parties’ joint or individual debts.

A prenup may be called alternately an “antenuptial agreement,” a “premarital agreement,” or a “pre-partnership agreement” according to the state in which you live.

Who Needs a Prenup?

While historically prenups were used by a wealthy spouse to preserve his or her premarital assets in case of divorce, today many couples of more modest means use prenups to organize their separate and marital finances in the following ways, among others:

1. Preserving the Inheritance of Children of a Prior Marriage

In most states, without a prenup, a surviving spouse is likely entitled to the entirety of the decedent’s estate, leaving the children of a prior marriage with nothing. A parent can specify in a prenup what assets will pass to his or her children, and when his or her fiance signs off on that the prenup becomes a legally binding contract that the children can enforce.

2. Setting Forth the Financial Rights and Responsibilities of Both Parties During the Marriage

Prenups are as varied as the people making them. The parties can establish upfront who will be responsible for paying specified joint bills or debts during their marriage.

Setting forth the financial rights will help you cover against, for example:

- Men or women who live above their means during courtship, lying about their jobs, income, or level of debt;
- Men or women who play a “bait and switch game”, being cooperative and financially sound during courtship, but then turning uncooperative takers once married;
- Discourage potential gold-diggers, either male or female, who want to marry up and then divorce as soon as they can secure a strong divorce settlement (smash and grab weddings, see Talulah Riley and Elon Musk)

Talula Riley received 16 million cash, plus assets. Not much for Musk, but enough to attract a horde of potential gold-diggers

3. Protecting One Spouse from Responsibility for the Debts of the Other

If one spouse comes to the marriage with individual debt such as student loan debt, a mortgage, or a car loan or lease, the couple can use a prenup to establish individual responsibility and liability for those debts.

In some states, a couple can use a prenup to establish individual liability for future medical debt.

4. Avoiding Arguments in Case of Divorce

This is the classic reason for entering into a prenup.

Imagine if love ever after is not in fact love ever after. How does a prenup help?
With a prenup, you can agree in advance what your spouse will get in case of divorce.
This will avoid nasty fighting and legal expenses, and it can protect you against your spouse seeking to appropriate 50% of your total net worth in some states.

5. You May Have to Pay Support Despite a Prenup

Be advised that many states do not allow a spouse to waive his or her right to alimony or spousal support, so that term will be unenforceable.

In this case, the remaining terms of the prenup may be enforceable depending upon how fair it is and whether it meets the other requirements for enforceability in your state.

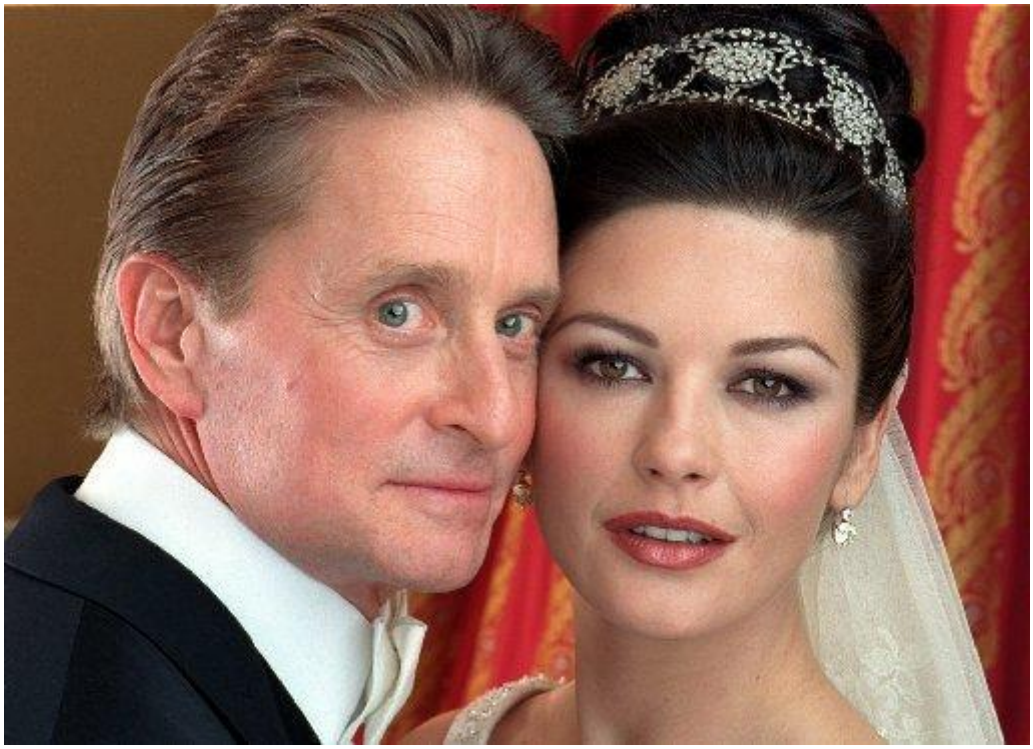
In most states, the standard for spousal support is to maintain the marital lifestyle. The length of the marriage and the employability of the dependent spouse may also be factors in determining the amount of alimony.

How Do I Make a Prenup?

The requirements for a valid prenup vary by state. As a general rule, a prenup must be in writing and signed by both parties to be valid and enforceable and must be freely entered into by both parties. Many states require that the prenup document be notarized.

Every state allows prenups, but **prenups must be fair and meet any other legal requirements set forth by the state in which you live**. Historically, courts have carefully scrutinized prenups and have frequently held that they are invalid, as prenups were most commonly used to unfairly strip a less-wealthy spouse of rights to the other spouse's property should the marriage end.
Nowadays, with divorce at an all-time high and most women working and owning property individually, **prenups are viewed as an estate-planning tool between equal partners**.

A prenuptial agreement can address just about any marital issue.
Take the case of Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones. Their prenup sets forth a sum Catherine will receive if Michael is caught cheating.



Douglas and Zeta-Jones drafted in their prenup what will happen if Douglas were caught cheating. You can plan almost anything in a prenup

It is important that even if you both agree on the terms of the prenup, you each bring it to separate attorneys for review, **and it's important that you insist your partner also brings the prenup to an attorney**.
This will tell the courts that, in the event one of you seeks to enforce the terms of the prenup, you each had the advice of legal counsel and entered into the agreement freely, knowing the consequences.

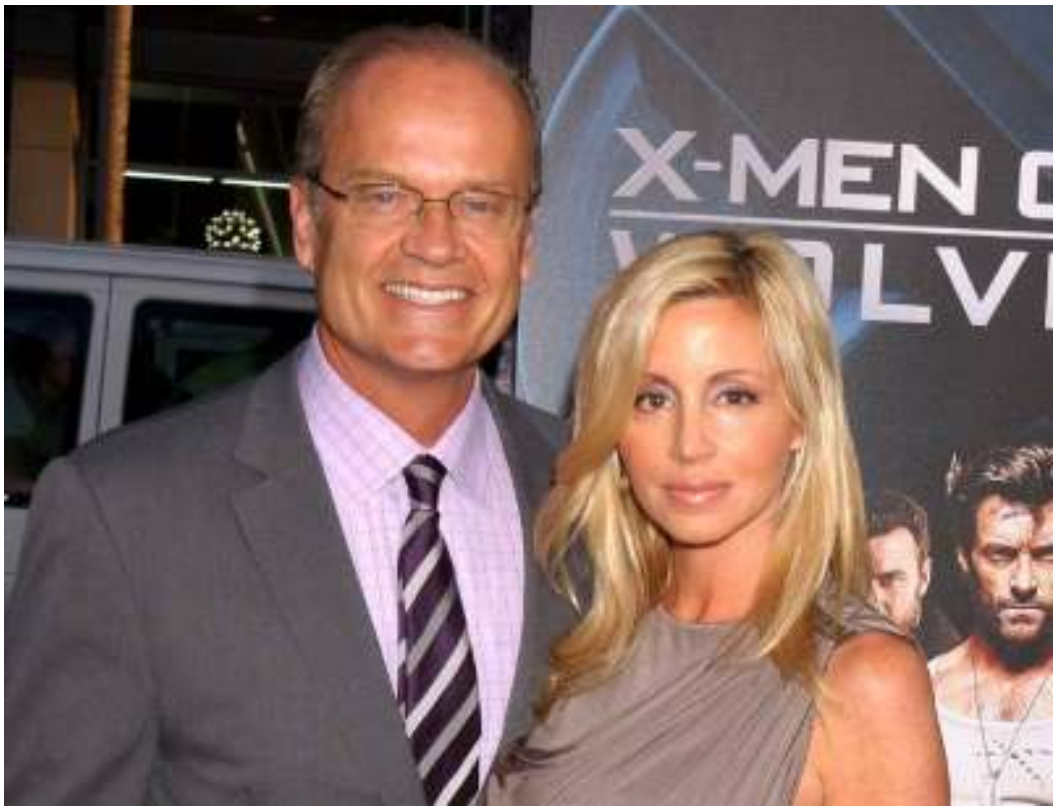
What Happens if I Don't Get a Prenup?

If you don't enter into a prenup, in the case of divorce or the death of one of you your property will be divided according to the law in your state. This means that **without a prenup you give up control of what happens to your property and/or debts**.

State law will dictate what happens to property acquired during the marriage (called marital property or community property in some states) and may also dictate what happens to individual property acquired prior to the marriage.

Without a prenup, the courts have the authority to make financial and property division decisions for you both in the case of divorce, if you cannot agree among yourselves. Think about it – chances are that one or both of you will feel some resentment or animosity caused by the end of the marriage and that those emotions will interfere with your ability to agree on the division of property or joint debts.

Take the case of Fresier star Kelsey Grammer. He and ex-wife Camille Donatacci did not sign a prenup, and now Camille is likely to receive $30 million of Grammer's $84 million fortune.



Marrying without a prenup cost Grammer $30 million

Finally, without a prenup or will, your state's laws of intestacy will dictate what happens to the individual property upon death.

What if You Just Live Together?

Living together is a popular alternative to traditional marriage and a prenup can help you in this situation too, by setting forth each person's financial rights and responsibilities upfront.

If you live together without marrying, most states would not award the dependent partner any type of spousal support should the relationship end. That can make non-marrying a rational choice for people who are particularly afraid of the fallouts of a divorce -see "Men on Strike"-.
However, things change if you have children with your live-in partner, and **if you have children, you will be responsible for child support**.

That's why a prenup is a good idea even if you are simply living together.
If you are in a relationship, married or not, and you want or need to organize your individual or marital assets, debts, or financial responsibilities, a prenup is for you.

The Tactical Guide to Women: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Tactical Guide to Women is a mix of a relationship advice book, and a dating book for men. Shawn Smith, the author, teaches men how to find the perfect woman to start the best and healthiest relationship you can have.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Real-Life Applications
- Criticism
- PROS
- Quotes
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Marriage brings potential huge benefits, or potential huge costs
- To pick a good partner, first, you must know yourself
- Know your values and what you stand for, and find a partner who fits them
- Don't pick based on looks; pick based on compatibility *and* looks

Summary

About the Author:
Shawn Smith is a clinical psychologist, coach, and author. He also writes on his blog, docsmith.co.

The book is divided into three parts:

1. The first part serves to help men understand themselves
2. The second part is about understanding good women and avoiding bad ones
3. The third part is focused on common mistakes and risk mitigation, including legal ones such as prenups

Marriage Is A Momentous Decision: You Must Do It Carefully

Getting married is one -possibly the- most important decision of your life.
You *must* be careful and strategic about it.

Research shows that men in stable marriages earn 20 to 24% more money, enjoy more and better sex, are happier, healthier, and live longer.

On the other hand, a broken marriage is extremely costly.
As Shawn Smith says:

> **Marriage can present the best return on investment of every decision you make.**
> **Or it could be the costliest mistake of your life**

If you get married without being strategic about whom you marry, you are gambling.

And since it's more likely that you end up with a partner who is not a good fit for you than one who is a good fit, you are gambling with the odds stacked against you.
BUT, **if you learn to read the signs of a good partner, then you can put the odds in your favor**.

The Tactical Guide to Women is dedicated to teaching readers how to read the signs of a high-quality woman who is also a good fit for you.

What Women Want

This section quickly reviews what women want, as proven by *evolutionary psychology*.

I have already written more extensively than Shawn describes in his book, so you can review:

- **Sexual market value**
- **Sexual market value hacks**
- **Proven dating strategies for men**
- **Dating efficiently as a lover or as a provider**

Or if you want the extended version all in one, grab Power University.

Shawn Smith adds "masculinity" to the list of traits women want, and that's a central theme of his book.
Smith says that **masculinity has been under attack by a small and vocal minority in recent years in the West, but it's a misplaced attack: (positive) masculinity is not toxic, and women like it.**

As Smith says:

> In decades as a psychologist, I have heard plenty of complaints about husbands and boyfriends, but I have never heard a woman wishing their man was more like a girl.

And this is what The Power Moves community thinks about:

- **Is masculinity under attack in the West?**

Risk Mitigation #1.: Know Yourself

The first step in your romantic risk-management strategy is knowing yourself.

As Smith says:

> You can reduce uncertainty and risk by understanding what makes you tick, and why you choose certain women. Without that knowledge, you are the most uncertain variable in your romantic life

Smith says that to know yourself, you should know:

1. **Where you came from (your past)**: some people tend to find partners who soothe their deepest insecurities. For example: insecure individuals chase their partners away. Men born into alcoholic, broken families can try too hard to appease women who are never happy to avoid their family's fate. And women who learned to get attention with tantrums will end up with those service-oriented men.
   Only when you learn about yourself can you override your short-term impulses and rationally pick what's best for long-term
2. **Where you're going**: you must be clear about your personal values. "No man can know what kind of woman will best fit into his life until he knows what his life is about".
   The most important value for a man is his purpose. Lack of clarity and purpose attracts lower-quality women and the wrong ones.

Picking a woman with vastly different values will eventually create a rift. Among all the values to pay attention to, “gender roles expectation” is also one you should be watching for today

3. **What gets you out of bed**: Men are happy and fulfilled when they get good at doing what they are driven to do.
   Once you know what drives you, present yourself exactly the way you are, without deceiving women. That way, you will attract and maintain women who are a good fit for you

The above three also form the chapters on “knowing yourself”.

The first chapter, “where you come from”, is most useful for people who have some deeper insecurities or troubles. I think that most fairly healthy individuals do not fall for those toxic cycles.

The second chapter explores values and how you can find out your values

The Mind Needs Supervision

The mind is in the business of short-term relief and pleasure, not long-term success.

That might have been OK in Savannah, but it’s not optimal for successful, modern living.
And unless you are aware of it, our brains can work against you for long-term, healthy relationships.

This is how men assess long-term mates:

1. Attractiveness
2. Veeery distant second is how good a fit she is for us

I personally would add that most men assess attractiveness, *then* availability, and most *never* consider whether she is a good fit or not.

Women are equally poor, and maybe even poorer, at assessing long-term potential, so don’t count on them to help you out there.

Smith proposes a simple solution for long-term, successful relationships:

1. Screen for a good personality fit first
2. Find an attractive woman among the ones who are a good fit for you

If we’re talking about long-term relationships, I think that makes sense.
If you’re more in short-term mode, then attractiveness first and no consideration for a good fit can make sense—albeit even for a one-night romance, a good fit always makes it more pleasurable.

Watch Out For the Tendency of Rescuing Women

Some men have a strong tendency to chase broken women, seeking to fix them and make them feel better.

This is true indeed.
A few emotionally unstable women I have met had men fall in love with them when they met them crying in the worst possible places.

The reasons men white-knight to rescue women are:

- They believe healthy women are out of their league
- They seek the thrill of being a powerful figure in her life
- They’re avoiding their own problems by fixating on someone else’s
- Their upbringing made them comfortable around people who were in constant crisis

Says the author:

> I've never seen a truly altruistic white knight (…) the need to rescue women is a pretty reliable sign of insecurity within a man.
> White knighthood is a recipe for resentment. You'll tire of her drama, and she'll tire of your supervision.

The author says that albeit white knights are rarely truly altruistic, they tend to be good people and are rarely malevolent.
But you must restrain yourself from it.
He says:

> If you seek real fulfillment, then only pursue fully functioning, adult women who know how to internalize responsibility for their lives.

Smith's point of view here is that broken women are OK *as long as they are willing to work on themselves.* Otherwise, your stance should be: get help or lose the relationship.

It's your moral duty and obligation to help your partner. But if she isn't helping any, then she can't be helped and will only drag you down.

Don't Apologize For Your Purpose

One of the most destructive things a man can do is apologize to his woman for his purpose.

Well, sometimes women are right and men get too caught up in their purposes, let it consume men until it's unhealthy, and deny their women and family too much together time.

However, do not apologize for being a busy and driven man. Scaling back to the point where you damage your sense of purpose will not be good for either you or the relationship.
That's what attracted her to you in the first place, and that's what makes a high-value man.

Balance is crucial: sometimes being a high-value man means being able to say no to work or cut back on work to give your loved ones more of your time.

Says Smith:

> Remember that balance sometimes also means disappointing your team in her favor sometimes.
> Be sure to make it up to her when you must disappoint her, but set a strong precedent in the beginning of the relationship that your purpose on the planet is non-negotiable.

And a little later, says the author:

> I hope you will guard your man card, whatever shape it takes for you, because it has a direct bearing on your wellbeing.

In any case, says Smith, you shouldn't worry about a good woman wanting you only for her 100% of the time.
He says:

> **Only an unhealthy or immature woman would undermine a man's status by impeding his purpose in the world.**

I couldn't agree more.

> The 10 Traits of High-Value Men (W/ Examples)

Don't Apologize For Your Responsibilities

A similar topic to your purpose is accepting responsibilities in life.

Men must accept responsibilities, either connected to their purposes, to their values, or to their communities.

Some men might feel a responsibility to stay home and care for the children, while others might be very busy with their church community.
In either case, a high-value man who gains respect and acceptance from women fulfills his responsibilities without apologizing for them.

Pick-Up Artist Advice is Bad If It Means Adapting to Her

Seduction advice can be good, says Smith.
And it doesn't necessarily increase the odds of picking the wrong woman.

However, a lot of pick-up advice is geared towards molding yourself around any random woman you meet, which is the equivalent of saying that you'll be dating and approaching while not being true to yourself.

That's the best strategy for ending up with a woman who is not a good fit for you.

Male Hierarchies, Female Flat Structures, & "Toxic" Masculinity

The author dedicates an important part of the book to masculinity, his critic against "toxic masculinity", and how men differ from women, especially in hierarchies.

I found it to be all true, and very high-quality material.

The main takeaway is that men shouldn't feel ashamed of being men, if being a man means playing competitive games, knowing one's place in the hierarchy, and seeking to climb those hierarchies.

Says Smith:

> Good and women don't require us to be at the top of the pecking order. They just require us to be in the pecking order -and preferably working our way up-.
> If she will accept nothing less than the top bird, well, be sure you can live with her motives before you commit.

How men and women differ, was also interesting.
But I find it to be more theoretical knowledge unless you use it for some specific goal you have -for example, career strategies-.
And that's why I will be implementing that type of material soon in the workplace section of Power University, organized in more strategic and practical fashion.

The Bright Triad

The 3 traits that make a woman a good fit for a long-term relationship are:

1. **Clarity**: clarity means you will not spend time quarreling or fighting about who's right, but you will go to the source of the issue like two adults (and BTW: if you spend time verbally quarreling, women are better and will get under his skin most of the time)
    1. **Reliability**: expresses herself constructively, avoiding tantrums, covert aggression, and passive-aggressiveness
    2. **Inquisitiveness**: this is the curiosity and drive to understand what's going on, set aside the need to be right,

and focus on solutions. Inquisitiveness transcends good communication skills.

3. **Assertiveness**: she needs to be strong enough to assert her desires, or she will grow to resent him without him even knowing about it. Assertive women state their needs openly, they don't manipulate or use underhanded tactics

2. **(Emotional) Maturity**: it's about emotional maturity, such as coping with challenges, accepting personal responsibilities (internal locus of control), but in a positive way, without blaming herself for everything that is bad in life. Among the signs of maturity to look for:
   1. She can calm herself when she's sad or angry -instead of depending on you or blaming you for her states-
   2. Self-care, she takes of herself physically and emotionally, she can look at the positive of lives.
   3. She accepts that life is unfair, and that reality is of shades of gray: she does not go through patterns of idealization and vilification
   4. She understands herself, can accept and work on her limitations
   5. She is resilient, can tolerate distress, lick her wounds and go back in the game (rather than breaking apart and sucking up all your energies)
   6. She keeps commitments
   7. She bases important decisions on values rather than impulse
   8. She takes care of relationships and doesn't burn bridges
   9. She possesses the emotional resources to function well in among coworkers, family, and friends
3. **Stability**: this is about mental health and avoiding the most common mental disorders
   The most common problems to watch out for are the top 3:
   1. Depression and anxiety
   2. Substance abuse: that includes consuming marijuana every single day
   3. Unresolved emotional injuries:
   4. Personality disorders: psychopathy, sociopathy, BPD, histrionic women (in non-clinical parlance: a drama queen), OCD. to keep it short, these people all have intense and inflexible experiences, their thought patterns lack complexity, and are ineffective and poor at human relationships

Avoid the Advice of Bitter Men

Says the author:

> I'd avoid men whose opinions are tinged by anger because that emotion is one of the underlying sources of white knighthood.
> Men who have successfully overcome the problem and who built healthy relationships with women generally speak and write with compassion and humor, not bitterness.

Also read:

- **The Truth about the Red Pill**
- **Moving beyond the Red Pill**
- **How about MGTOW?**
- **The Rational Male**

> The Rational Alpha Male Mindsets: Post-Red Pill

Decide If She's A Good Fit After the Infatuation Phase

The honeymoon phase is not the time to make long-term decisions because you are not being rational.

Research shows the honeymoon phase lasts between 12 to 18 months.
And the author says that before making a final decision, you should wait 12 to 18 months, *plus* one more year.

My Note: I Don't Fully Agree
Albeit the general principle is right, I have more faith in the human mind.
Two and a half years to just decide if she's good for an LTR is a long time, in my opinion.
I would tell my readers that they can decide earlier *if* they can step back from emotions and make more rational decisions.

The System Is Skewed Against Men

The author, interviewing the author of "*Men on Strike*", says that divorce law can disadvantage men.

Society also created the wrong impressions that men are more violent in relationships, but the opposite is true: women are quicker to escalate from verbal to physical confrontation.
If police shows up and they're not sure who did what, the man is the one who will get arrested.

That makes it all the more important that you avoid hostile women.
All these are signs of hostile women that you need to avoid:

- Physical assaults
- Always angry, possibly angry at men (avoid extreme feminists)
- Yelling and shouting
- Threats (threats of breaking up, of not being allowed to end the relationship, of physical violence
- Humiliation (talking down to you, telling you're worthless)
- Separating you from your friends and family
- Belittling or diminishing you
- Ordering you around
- Telling you there's no way out of the relationship
- Physically blocking your exit during an argument

If she's physically blocking your exit, don't force your way through or you can easily be branded -and prosecuted- as the abusive one. Call the police instead.

Some men remain stuck in abusive relationships out of a sense of obligation, or because the relationship turned abusive slowly over time and now they feel that breaking up would be too costly.

The author of course encourages men never to accept these toxic relationships.
He says:

> **The ideal woman isn't merely non-abusive, she is kind.**

Here is how to recognize kindness from simply putting up a facade early on:

- She's empathetic: takes genuine interest in your thoughts and feelings, and does the same with others
- She speaks about former romantic partners with respect
- She's kind to people she doesn't need to be kind to: like waiters and clerks
- She routinely brightens your day
- She's attentive to your needs, not competitive about them

- She won't resist helping you when you need it, paying for dinner once in a while, or letting your needs take center stage. She gives willingly and happily.

I couldn't agree more.
To me, the above signs are #1 priority in a partner. Also check: strategies for long-term power.

https://thepowermoves.com/the-fundamental-strategies-of-power/

Probe for Compatibility, Don't Play House

There are a few general statistics that make relationships more likely to endure, like religiosity, family of origin, or number counts.

But those are statistics, and they matter little compared to more important factors such as willingness to be together, and compatibility of values.
Among the things to check:

- **Include her in your activities and social circles**: lovers tend to isolate themselves. Instead, you should spend more time doing the things you like, with the people you like, and see how she fits
- **Be open and outspoken about your non-negotiables**: we all have something we can't stand doing. Be clear about them from the beginning
- **Be open and outspoken about what you can't stand**: if something about her annoys the hell out of you, like her chewing loudly, or having to spend all weekends with her family, say it and see if you can find a workaround -or they will doom your future-
- **Look for signs of long-term compatibility**
- **Look for contradictory values**: different values don't kill relationships, but opposing ones do. If you love sports and she doesn't, it's OK. But if you love sports and she can't stand you not being on the couch with her while you do sports, that's a problem
- **Don't stick with partners because you liked the conquest**: there is some thrill in getting together with people who are completely different than we are. But it's best not to stick with them
- **Discuss the meaning of money and sex**: do you both value
- **Discuss children**: do you both want them? Neither of you wants them? These are important issues to discuss early

More Wisdom

- Look for red flags early on. Big red flags, like her screaming at you for no reason should be your cue for your running exercise
- The more high-quality you become, the more you can become the target for women who are not a good fit for you
- People like narcissistic individuals more than non-narcissistic ones. Yet, they don't like them as friends. Again, the mind is leading us to poor relationship choices
- Finding one's purpose is one of the biggest challenges for young men, but women are willing to cut some slack if he works hard towards finding it
- Some of the best ways to avoid future problems are:
  - Ask her how things are going
  - If you're arguing about the same things over and over, stop and do couple therapy
- Living together and shacking up for convenience or to "test the relationship" actually increases the likelihood of divorce or separation

- Never be “kind of between”, but choose defined states. She’s either nothing, your girlfriend, your fiance, your wife. And she has to earn the title.
- Listen to what family and friends say: they might have a better perspective from the outside
- Listen to your intuition, it does work
- Don’t try to fix relationships by adding more commitment or taking to the next level: that’s like saying a drowning man can do better with more water
- If you’re having a lot of troubled relationships, look inward. And if you can afford, seek as many exes as you can find and ask for their candid feedback

Real-Life Applications

- **You Need Self-Respect, Not Self-Esteem. Go Get Promotions and Raises**

The author criticizes part of the self-help movement who encourages people to tell themselves they’re good the way they are.
“What a croc”, he says.

Smith knew better, and he knew he needed self-respect, not self-esteem.
How do you gain self-respect?
In the past, there were rites of passages. Today, the new rites of passages are repeated accomplishments such as promotions and raises -or, I would add, Mastery-.

In the words of the author:

> ***Choosing* to become useful is what saved me.**
> **(…)**
> **To be a man, is to seek effectiveness. (…) The man who is serving is purpose, and doing it well, is on top of the world.**

This part was genius indeed, and it’s something that a lot of young men struggle with.
I will be adding it to our ebook “Ultimate Power” (now part of Power University).

Criticism

I loved “*The Tactical Guide to Women*“.
My main criticism is simply a different approach to picking the right woman -and how much time to spend on that decision-:

Instead of a set of traits, prioritize with a hierarchical list, and de-prioritize all traits that can be learned

The author lists a high number of traits *all* at the same level of importance.

I disagree with that.
Mathematically, is almost like looking for a lottery victory.

The approach I advice is to list the *top* traits you want. And then accept the trade-offs for the less crucial traits.

At the top, you want some meta-traits that allow for the acquisition and development of more positive traits.
For example, many of the traits the author mentions can be learned *if* the woman is willing to learn and improve.
Thus, you can put “growth mindset” and “kindness” high up, but then demote all the traits that can be learned.

You don’t need a woman with great communication skills, or assertiveness, if she is willing to learn and work on herself and the relationship. Because those can be learned.

As the author himself says:

> Any woman who can alter her destructive partners is surely a keeper.

Indeed, even some negative patterns can be OK *if* she is willing and able to work on them.

Accept some Trade-offs

I wish the author had also mentioned that relationships also entails trade-offs.

Recently I was asked by a young and driven man, whether he should stay in a relationship.
And albeit I advised him to end it, I also make the point that very drive and very high quality men might have to be ready for a few trade-offs. Expecting a woman to be everything you want, and the perfect fit, but be a mathematical chimera.

That's why I also prefer a list with the top traits higher up. Once you hit those, the trade-offs lower down won't matter much.

Waiting for sex does not empower the man?

The author says that to set up a long-term relationship, you should wait for sex.

While I don't fully agree, I also see there might be some positives in not rushing a long-term relationship.
However, I do fully disagree when the author says that waiting empowers the man because sex is a tool of female power. To me, that's a failure to understand the power dynamics of the sexual marketplace.
Also see:

- **Patterns of power in a relationship**

> Relationship Power Dynamics 101

Waiting for 2 years + is too long

Rationally, it makes sense that the longer you wait, the better your decision will be.

However, there must be a trade-off, and more than 2 years seems too long.

Do we naturally pick the wrong partners? No, we pick random partners, and random partners are more likely to be bad partners

This is more of a theoretical criticism.

I was unconvinced by some evolutionary psychology explanations, like why we pick the worst possible partners for us.

The author says that we pick the worst possible partners because of our evolutionary history.
It made sense to pursue wrong partners because we evolved in environments with little choices. Couple that with our brain being in the business of immediate gratification, and you got the recipe of why we pick the worst possible partners.

But that's not a good explanation. That explains why we don't naturally pick the best partners.
But it doesn't explain why, as he states, some people go for partners who are not just not good for them, but actively harmful.

In my opinion, Shawn Smith might have developed the wrong perception because of his work, where he mostly cured the worst possible couples. That skewed his sample.

I believe instead most people do *not* seek partners who are actively harmful for them.
Most people seek partners without knowing how to pick their best partners, and since the odds are stacked against any individual being high quality and being a good fit for us, random partners end up being poor partners the majority of the time.

There are exceptions though, and some people with unresolved issues do pick partners who are the opposite of what they need.
See: toxic relationship dances, low self-esteem relationships, and anxious-avoidant relationships.

PROS

The Tactical Guide to Women approaches dating and relationships from a holistic point of view, and from the ground up.

The main idea is that first, you make yourself into a high-value man. Then, you seek a high-value woman who is compatible with you.

That's the simple winning formula, and this is one of the few books who addresses it properly

Quotes

On what men and women prefer

> **Men in general prefer a nice hip to waist ration.**
> **Women, in general, prefer a nice debt to asset ration.**

On taking responsibility:

> **When it was over, Chris was plenty bitter for having wasted his twenties on such an incompatible partnership (…) blaming her for ruining his life.**
> **I think that's unfair, because he chose to bring her into his world.**

On drama and its costs:

> **Drama is expensive.**
> **It consumes time and energy that could be used for better things, like conquering the world or just relaxing with a beer.**
> **Dramatic people are thieves. Low-grade thieves, to be sure, but they force others to redirect their efforts away from their goals and their happiness.**

On taking marriage seriously:

> **If I'm scaring you about marriage, good. It's a momentous decision.**

Review

The Tactical Guide to Women is a wonderful book.

Shawn Smith's work is very much in line with this website:

1. **Focus on yourself** and your self-empowerment first
2. **Seek collaborative partners** who can play within a win-win framework (part of "enlightened collaborator approach")

3. **Actively develop those relationships as win-win**, in a way that adds value to both of you (part of "enlightened collaborator approach")
4. **Be the natural leader of that relationship** not by coercion and manipulation, but by virtue of the high-quality man you made yourself into

Amen to that.

The book itself could have done with better editing.
Sometimes it repeated itself, and the list of traits to look for was too long and that can be confusing.
But it remains a foundational book for anyone looking to date better, and find the best possible partner.

Check the **best relationship books**, **best dating books for guys**, or **get the book on Amazon**

The Power Dynamics of Cancel Culture: Why Guilt is a Power Move

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Cancel culture is often discussed as a political phenomenon, but at its core, it is a sophisticated **war for narrative control**.

It functions as a loosely connected social movement that leverages virtue-signaling and collective or individual shaming to displace existing value systems.

By orchestrating 'shame attacks'—ranging from social media deplatforming to professional termination—the movement seeks to enforce a new social hierarchy through the strategic use of virtuous frames, guilt, and judge authority.

To understand cancel culture is to understand the timeless mechanics of how individuals and groups use moral leverage to gain personal and social power.

In this article we'll understand the underlying principles and learn new insights into social power dynamics, personal empowerment, and self-defense.

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Intro

The cancel culture will eventually end, lose steam, or morph into something else.

What will remain, though, are the psychological and power dynamics underlying this movement.

So, in this website's spirit of writing timeless articles, we use a more appropriate label that describes the effects of the cancel culture on its victims: "guilt-tripping".

> Guilt tripping is a movement that focuses on a group's wrongdoings or supposed privileges only, ignores the merits and positive contributions, and blames it all on every single individual supposedly part of that group

The Positives of Culture Wars

It's important to note that it would be simplistic to label all culture wars as positive or negative.
In most cases, it's a mix of selfish and pro-social values and outcomes. And some culture wars can bring about positive change.

The first people petitioning for human rights were civil heroes. Crowds demanding the abolition of the monarchy in the name of equality were civil heroes. And the first woman who stood up for the right to divorce was a hero.

Guilt-Culture's Dynamics

The underlying dynamics are always about power.
The attacker self-frames as the judge-authority for what's right and good, while the victim is framed as 'not good' and unworthy of belonging to society.

At the higher level, culture wars are wars for frame control.
Setting the frame of morality that people and society should abide to. To defend yourself well, you must be aware of these dynamics, usually avoid defending, and use instead higher power frame control techniques.

Important elements in culture wars and guilt-tripping include:

Social Power & Narrative Control

Cancel culture is a form of 'culture war', and it's nothing new under the sun.
It's how loosely connected groups of people with somewhat of a common goal fight the war for influence and

power.

The group that 'wins' gets to change the culture and the law in a way that best benefits the group.

Have vs. Have Nots: The 'Bad Privileged'

Often under attack are a supposed class of 'privileged people'.
The Power Dictionary calls it "privileged guilt-tripping", and defines it as such:

> The hostility or aggression, either overt or covert, directed towards certain groups of people who are accused of enjoying or exploiting an unfair advantage to the detriment of others.

The groups under attack are sometimes referred to as "privileged". And if you are in any of those groups now considered "privileged", you may be an easier target.

Shame Attacks

Guilt can be delivered with aggression, rightful anger and indignation directed at a target who supposedly behaved unethically when judged by the new standards of ethics.

The goal is to shame the victim, socially ostracize him—or make him feel like he's being ostracized-, make him feel bad about himself, force him to apologize to the world, and if the attack is most effective, cancel him or push him towards self-canceling.

Manipulation for Power

Sometimes, of course, the anger can be called for, and the victim can be a real SOB.

But sometimes guilt-tripping and shame attacks are about power, manipulation, and self-manipulation. It's aggression hiding behind the guise of fake social justice.

The more you can make others feel bad, the more those others will give up their rights and act submissive. And the more competitive advantage the guilt-inducers will enjoy.

Self-Enhancement

Guilt tripping is often delivered with a guise of virtue.

That virtuous frame provides two advantages:

- **A virtue-cover for personal bitterness** because anger alone comes across as nasty
- **Reputational boost** for 'fighting the good war'

Double Bind

In a way, the guilt-movement is a big, society-wide form of double-bind.
This is how it works:

> I despise you because you are abusing of your privileges to oppress me and bully me.
> But you can't despise me because, if you do, you confirm that you are oppressing me, and that I am right for despising you.

Be damned if you accept their finger-pointing, and be damned if you seek to rebel against it.

People who don't see the double-bind and accept that frame end up feeling guilty and without any recourse—and often, without having done anything wrong-.

Collective Guilt

Whenever guilt tripping doesn't attack individuals with shame attacks, it seeks to shame them by association.

For example, if powerful white men are supposedly oppressing others, then being a white man makes you 'guilty' by association.

This is an aspect of 'collective psychology' that we reject. It's fortunately been long rejected by legal systems around the world, fortunately.
Read more:

- **Empowered individualism**

Modernity & Out of Control Guilt

Today, we have all kinds of people wanting you to feel guilty about all kinds of issues:

- Guilty for polluting
- Guilty of having exterminated animals
- Guilty for global warming

Rejecting guilt doesn't mean rejecting responsibility for being good citizens.
I believe it's a generational duty to protect shared resources and maintain a good Earth for future humans.
But taking care of others and the environment is supposed to *free* you: you're doing your part.

Guilt is not only useless, but it's also unhealthy.

And, naturally, the species that becomes the most dominant will drive a few other species to extinction. Being emotionally mature also means accepting that there are certain trade-offs in life.
And **it's either lions, bears, and tigers roam the planet as they please, or *you* roam the streets in safety**.
Our responsibility is to avoid any unnecessary animal suffering. But it is not to preserve any single species on earth, no matter what.

Anyone who disagrees and doesn't want to be a hypocrite should lead by example and go back to living in a cave.

Great is *both* part and victim of guilt-culture.

Why Now?

I cannot think of any other time in human history that we've been inundated with so many messages about how bad we are.

Why now?

In a way, it's a sign of opulence.
As we live in a world largely free of major risks, people have enough time and resources to dedicate mental cycles to abstractions like "fairness", "equal opportunities", "animal rights", etc.

And, by and large, it's a great thing we are tackling these issues.
This is the pinnacle of human enlightenment: taking responsibility not just for us but for the planet and the other living creatures as well.

But it should be done rationally and intelligently.
Finger-pointing and guilt-tripping are neither intelligent nor helpful ways of going about it. They are abusive ways of going about it.

If you allow it, that guilt-culture is going to disempower you.
So now let's discuss the effects of guilt-tripping and then some solutions.

Attackers' Profiling

While culture wars can be positive, they often tend to simply seek change. Change that often benefits them, but that may or may not be good for society.

For example, it feels that today's culture wars may be less driven by the will for positive change given that most basic rights are in place for all, in the West.

So some attackers may be more driven by less noble and darker and more self-serving motives, including:

- **Ego-protection against personal failure**, blaming the system or someone else's privileges
- **Finding meaning** in a novel crusade to find a sense of meaning and purpose while also feeling good
- **Competitor-removal**: removing a competitor from a group, or a company
  - Manipulative warfare (social sexual competition): I make you guilty so that you become more submissive, less assertive, and easier to control and win against
- **Quest for power and status**: construct a made-up enemy, lead the charge against them, and win easy accolades

Case Study: Oppressive Men?

This Oprah's speech is a good example of that last one:

> **Oprah**: *She lived as we all have lived, too many years in **a culture broken by brutally powerful men**. For too long, women have not been heard or believed if they dare speak the truth to the power of those men. **But their time is up. Their time is up.***

Their time is up?
Whose time? Powerful men? Men in general? That's messed up. Many powerful men are good people.

If she was targeting men who *abused* their power, then she'd be right. But it was crucial to be accurate there. Because the way she delivered it, she's attacking a whole class of people, instead of individuals.

The dynamics at play in Oprah's speech are dangerous. They're no different than historical scapegoating that caused massive grief for millions of people.
You could turn Oprah's speech into *any* speech that, throughout history, led to mass prosecution.

We don't need more people fanning small flames of discontent into a huge fire. We need more conciliatory men and women to build bridges.
Don't fall for the war rhetoric of the charismatic leader.

Supporters' Profiling

Among the supporters of the main leaders are:

- **Passive Supporters Want to Keep Group Access:** Many intellectually disagree, but seek or gain with group/leader acceptance. Once cancel culture reaches a tipping point, it may become the main culture, at least among certain circles, so agreeing is a precondition for acceptance
- **Supporting Women As Sexual Strategy**: Some seek to win the favor of the charismatic leader and/or of the group members. For example, some male feminists support the movement in the hope of gaining women's attention
- **Honest believers**: Finally some people, especially younger idealists, truly believe in the cause

Victims of Cancel Culture

Victims aren't just the people directly attacked, but also the people who feel guilty for being privileged.

Women may be particularly at risk for having higher empathy, more fluctuating and socially-dependent self-esteem, and being more prone to guilt (Roberts and NolenHoeksema, 1994; Romert et al., 2026; Torstveit, 2016).
In general, good and highly conscientious individuals are also at higher risk.

Example: Cameron Russell

Model Cameron Russell amassed 24 million views on a speech that felt more like a therapy session:

> **Cameron Russel**: I'm on the stage because I'm a pretty white woman.
> (…)
> But mostly, it was difficult to unpack the legacy of gender and racial oppression when I am one of the base beneficiaries.

She says she is the beneficiary of a culture that makes her privileged. Instead, I see self-inflicted emotional anguish that has no reason to exist.

To begin with, she is most likely selling herself short by saying she is *only* pretty.
And most of all, she is blaming herself for all the "gender and racial oppression", something she had no part in.
Plus, she seems like a good person.

Jenna Marbles' apology felt very similar.

Antidotes to Guilt & Culture Wars

Life Isn't Fair: Accept It

Behind much of the guilt-fever, there is the wish for fairness.

Fair is good.
Unfair is bad.
And if you got an "unfair advantage", you should feel bad.

It's good to strive towards fairness. But an emotionally mature approach also accepts that the world is an inherently unfair place.
Until we evolve into a different species, we are also an inherently unfair species.
And that's OK.

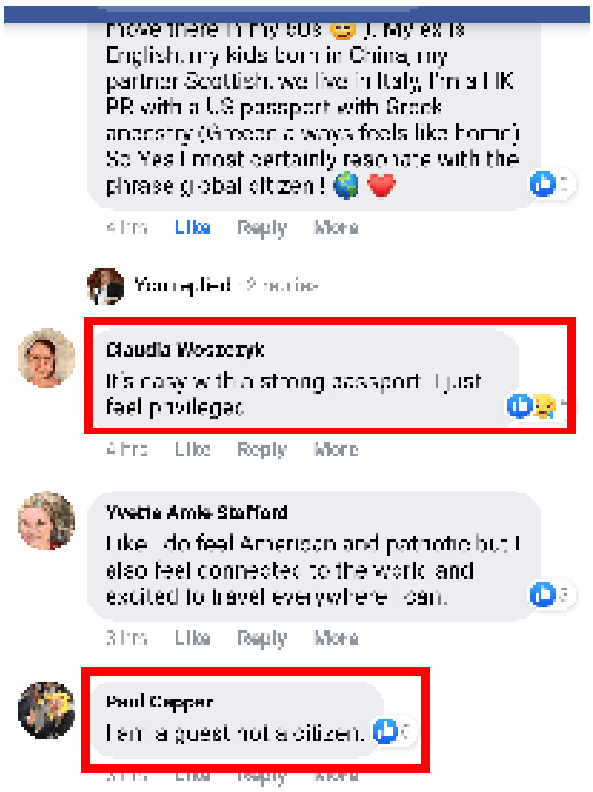
As you strive to treat people fairly, you also must know that you are *not* responsible for life's unfairness.

Three Antidotes to Guilt

Three antidotes to guilt:

1. **Healthy sense of entitlement**
2. **Focus on *using* your privileges** for value-adding goals
3. **Individual responsibility**, reject collective guilt (not your group, your tribe, your ancestors, etc.)

I was reminded of the importance of healthy entitlement when I read a post on Facebook.
Someone asked a group of digital nomads if they felt a national belonging, or if they felt like world citizens.
Look at some of the comments:



She feels privileged to have a strong passport, and someone added crying faces.
Another one chimed in that “he’s not a citizen, but he’s a “guest”. How nice of him, tiptoeing his way through life.
It’s good to be warm and kind -see: mix power with warmth-. But you should not feel like a nuisance when you are *not* being one.

Don’t confuse privileges with rights -or with what you can safely claim as a right-.
In this example, **instead of seeing a strong passport as a privilege, why not seeing it as your right?**
Hopefully, you’re not a thief but a value-adding human, and you’re bringing money to whichever country you visit.
You should be entitled to travel, see, and meet people from all over the world as an equal.

Only Accept Individual Responsibility

Never feel guilty for supposed ‘privileges’ you received, such as:

- Being born in the West
- Being born in the middle class or above
- Being attractive
- Being a man

Always reject collective guilt if you’re not personally guilty

Writes Eckart Tolle in a particularly disheartening passage of his best-selling “The Power of Now”:

> **Of course, there’s something wrong with you**, and you are not being judged. **Don’t you belong to the human race** who killed over 100 million members of its own species in the 21st century alone?
> -Eckhart Tolle, The Power of Now

This is an incredibly disempowering mindset; reject it.

🤔Lucio’s Take: **National guilt is weak, embrace empowered individualism**

Lucio:
My ex-girlfriend and her progressive friends felt bad for German nazi past, *things that she had no control over*.

That was accompanied by the guilt-induced feeling they needed to repent and make it up… But there was no way to make it up, of course. So they were trapped in their feelings of guilt.

At times, it was becoming an issue in our relationship.
Abandon collective psychology, embrace **empowered individualism**.

Agentic Solution: Do Your Best Towards Your Goal, Ignore Privileges

An empowered mindset doesn't think about the "privileges" it's got.
An empowered mindset thinks about how he can do more with whatever he's got.

Strong passport? Great, how can I use it? Poor passport? Too bad, how can I change it?
Rich family? Great, how can I leverage these resources? Poor family? Too bad, how can I change it?

Leave the guilt behind, and start focusing on doing something good with your advantages. Because the ultimate sin is having a chance to do something good, but wasting it.

Secrets of Six-Figure Women: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Secrets of Six-Figure Women is a finance and business advice book for women. Barbara Stanny, the author, teaches readers how to earn more and gain more power, independence, and freedom. But, ultimately, Stanny teaches women self-actualization and fulfillment through self-development and business success.

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Barbara Stanny is a former journalist turned financial expert and author of women's success books. She holds a master's degree in counseling psychology.

Don't Focus on The Glass Ceiling, Focus on Who's Breaking it

In 2002, there were 950,000 women making six figures.
86.000 were doing so as part-timers!

There are plenty of successful women and it truly doesn't make sense anymore to focus on the roadblocks.
As a matter of fact, one of the traits of successful women was that **they focused more on opportunities than on problems**.

In the words of Barbara Stanny:

> We've been paying way too much attention to the wage gap and not enough to wage gains.

Also read:

- **The field guide for businesswomen**

> The Businesswoman Guide to Win in Male Organizations

You Do It For the Personal Empowerment, Not the Zeros

Most of the women who earn a lot undergo a personal self-development that makes them feel better, more secure, and more fulfilled.

As the author says: "not the zeros on our paychecks, but the impact on our psyches".

You Can Do It Without Education

The women who had a good education were happy they did it, and many also thanked their prestigious school and their MBAs for having gotten where they were.

However, there were scores of women without education, some of whom even said that not having an education helped them. “You can hire credentials”, said one. Another woman said that not having any credentials helped her to be more shameless in her failed attempts until finally, things started working out.

High Earners Are Hard Workers

The author interviewed a lot of women, so it’s only normal that she got different perspectives.

Some worked hard, some were driven workaholics to the point of becoming unhealthy, while others even hated their jobs but got addicted to the rich lifestyle.
Some others, though, didn’t define themselves as hard workers but as *focused* workers. And some others worked *passionately*, not hard.

Barbara Stanny says that chasing the dollars can make you miserable if you do not like what you do.
However, you need to strike a balance and also care about the money. Six-figure women wanted to be compensated appropriately for their work and services.
Indeed, that’s one of the core traits of six-figure women.

The Traits of 6 Figure Women

Barbara Stanny noted that a few traits recurred over and over among the women she interviewed.

The common traits among the 6-figure women are:

1. **A profit motive***:* even though money is not the main driving force for most women, they *still* want to make money. They enjoy money and what it gives them. And they expected to be compensated for their work.
2. **Audacity**: They all had to step out of their comfort zone, do things they were afraid to do, and ask for things they were afraid to ask. They didn’t always succeed outside of their comfort zone, but they went there because they knew it was necessary.
3. **Resilience**: Few if any succeeded the first time out and never had any issue. Instead, they almost all encountered false starts or setbacks. And they all had the grit to persevere.
4. **Encouragement / mentoring**: Not all had encouraging parents, but almost all of them had strong support from at least someone. It might be a group of friends, a supportive husband, or a mentor.

It’s hard to over-stress the importance of a supportive spouse. Says the author:

> For those in a committed relationship, a supportive husband or partner is invariably cited as essential to their success.
> (…)
> In a study of more than thirty thousand women in thirty-three countries, sponsored by Avon Products, a supportive spouse or partner was cited as the most important criterion for success in starting a business.

And the author adds that yes, i**t’s possible to find a man that not only is not intimidated by your success**, **but who is thrilled by it**.

A mentor was also a key ingredient.
Not everyone had official mentors, but almost all of them had a role model or a non-official and supportive individual who offered guidance or encouragement.

Find support in all categories

The author says that the most balanced and joyful women found support in all these categories:

1. Your significant other

2. Your social network
3. Your professional network
4. Your spiritual beliefs

Of course, all might not be possible.
But strive for more rather than for less. I always make it a point on this website that collaboration and win-win are the best for long-term power. Also see:

- **The foundational laws of power**
- **The fundamental strategies for power**
- **Effective collaboration strategy**

Success, Power, & Relationships: When Husbands Are Jealous

Of course, not all partners are great.

Some men, and even some lesbian partners, might resent your success. And if you are going upward and they are not, that might put your relationship under strain.

Sometimes you can change a man's attitude by laying your cards on the table and saying "you either collaborate, or we can't have this anymore".
This is what a woman told his husband:

> You knew I was ambitious when you married me. I'm competing with myself, not you. If you don't like it, too bad. If this is a deal breaker, I've made my choice"

The husband retreated and smoldered for a few days, then came around to stay in the relationship. And even told her that she "wasn't going to out-earn him".
LOL, that was a fun story and a cool way of turning a competition into, at least, a positive competition.

The author says that men weren't born to share power, so sometimes they are unsure about how to be supportive. However, two secure adults can weather the difficulties of a driven woman who is earning more than she is.

Also see:

- **How men keep women down at work**

> 8 Ways Men Keep Women Down at Work

The Traits of Underearners

Under-earners, like successful women, also all have some traits in common.
These are the traits and mindsets you want to avoid:

1. **High tolerance for low pay**
2. **Underestimating their worth**: psychologically, minorities tend to devalue themselves compared to society's elite group. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy
3. **Willingness to work for free:** women have long worked for free for the benefit of everyone around them. Except for themselves
4. **Poor negotiators:**
5. **Reverse snobbery**: they feel like having money is a sign of poor character, and feel proud about not having any
6. **Pride in getting by with little**: they are the product for "being able to get by on so little"

7. **Self-sabotage**

To find out if you are an under-earner and you need some wake-up call, ask yourself if you're stressed about money.

The Rules of Six-Figure Women

These are the rules to make it into the six-figure club:

1. Play to win, not to avoid losing
2. Do it even if you're afraid
3. Persist
4. When an opportunity knocks, always say yes if it helps you move forward
5. Don't make excuses for yourself. If you want it, you can get it
6. Ignore naysayers: you will encounter plenty of them. Some are jealous, some mean no harm, but they are all harmful
7. Never personalize: at a high level, you will receive plenty of criticism and plenty of attacks. Never take it personally, always keep on going

Don't Be Afraid of Wanting Money & Power

Historically, women have been uncomfortable with power and money.

But if you want to live in abundance without depending on any man, you gotta grow comfortable with both.
If it takes some courage to ask for more than you're comfortable asking, be it.

Get comfortable asking for more, get comfortable asking for a raise, and get comfortable adding zeros.

Don't Be Afraid of Turning Down Low Offers

If they can't pay your fee, don't lower it.
Or, at least, don't drop it too much.

Walking away is a form of self-respect.

My Note: I agree, except for the Universe
I liked this part a lot, especially the link between refusing low offers and the effect it has on our own self-respect. Unluckily, the author then added that it's also a form of demanding your worth "to the universe", which will invariably listen.
If you know this website, you know what I think about that :).

A Happy Bunch

Just like anyone else, six-figure women can go through rough periods, but, overall, they're a happy bunch.

Their conversations are sprinkled with words such as "lucky", "happy" and "grateful".

Many Were Insecure, Feeling Like They Need to Do More

Many women were insecure about their own worth and success. They were afraid they didn't deserve it and that someone might come and take it all away.

Still, they all persevered through the doubts. And the few times they gave in, they made sure not to fall for it again in the future.

Sometimes you have to ask for what you're worth, even when you're afraid. Sometimes you gotta say yes to the challenge even when you're afraid you might fail.

Some women always had nagging voices telling them they weren't good enough or couldn't ask for as much as they asked. But they did it anyway.
Said one woman:

> "I hear voices in my head saying, 'Who do you think you are? No one will pay that.' Once the voices quiet down, I can do it."

Most Women Started Their Path After a Major Challenge

Many successful women started their upward trajectory with a challenge.

Some started a new path after being fired or when they realized they couldn't afford to live or retire with their current salaries.

Yes, it's true that sometimes dawn only comes right after the night is at its darkest.

Do Learn the Basics of Money

Now, you would expect six-figure women to have lots of money in the bank, right?

And still, some of these women were either going from paycheck to paycheck or even going into debt.
That's because they weren't following the basic rules of money. The author, quoting "*The Richest Man in Babylon*" says that money management is simple if you follow these three rules:

1. Spend less
2. Save more
3. Invest the difference wisely

Why do some women fail at basic money management? Often, it's because they are very busy. That's why, says the author, it's a smart idea to delegate money management to a financial advisor.
The smart women in the group, even the ones working in finance, hired a financial advisor to take care of their finances for them. So they could focus on their work.

More Wisdom

- **It's now what you know, but what you are willing to learn**: most of the six-figure women weren't afraid of not knowing something or joining a new industry. They all knew they could learn it and were willing to learn it (growth mindset, and how to develop a growth mindset)
- **You can use naysayers to motivate you**: invariably, there will be someone to discourage you or tell you why you cannot do it. You can use them as motivation. Also see "the dark side of motivation"
- **Do develop a group of supportive friends**: friends are even more important to women than to men. A group of friends who also share your drive and passion can work both as a mastermind and a support group
- **Keep your own separate bank account**: don't share your account with your husband. It's not about the relationship, it's about having your own separate psychological identity

Quotes

On money and power:

> Money does not give you power.
> It allows you to exercise power by providing choices. Your power comes from the choices you make, choices that reflect who you are, not what someone else thinks.

On claiming your power:

> Just as claiming our power is an act of self-love, forsaking it is an act of self-betrayal.

On wanting VS needing a husband, said a woman who dreamed his husband would take care of her, but he never managed to be as successful as she had hoped:

> I've learned that I have to be the one responsible for my money. It has been painful to come to that.
> But with that pain came pride, because I now feel I don't have to depend on anyone. This money buys me freedom. I don't need my husband. I could do just fine financially. But I want to be with him because I love him.

CONS

- **The Universe & Law of Attraction**

Such a great book, I wish the author hadn't gone into the law of attraction.
On the plus side, it's only a few short sentences.

- **Not a very scientific analysis**

If you know my reviews, you could have expected this one.
The book is based on interviews, more than on data. And it's based on successful women, which is of course a sampling bias, since a proper analysis would also consider women who have done the same thing as the successful ones, but still never made it into the six-figure club.

Because of the sampling bias, one simply cannot reach the conclusion that this or that trait increases the chances of success. Sure, logically we can imagine that this or that trait is helpful, But if you don't measure it across the whole population, you cannot say reliably that a certain trait increases the likelihood of success.
Also read: "*Fooled by Randomness*".

PROS

Really great book.

In its mixture of self-help and survey of successful people, it's also a unique product.
In my opinion, even better than the somewhat similar, more statistically accurate, and far more popular "*The Millionaire Next Door*". This one was a better mix of self-development mindsets, power dynamics analysis, and practical wisdom.

Review

Secrets of Six-Figure Women is a great book and a recommended read for women who want to be financially successful.

It's a mix of high-quality self-help, practical tips, success stories, and powerful mindsets.

From my point of view, I can also give it a big thumbs up on its analysis of social and power dynamics, both from a workplace point of view and, even more, from a relationship point of view.

Check out the:

- **Best entrepreneurship books**
- **Best business books for women**

- **Best career books**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Hardball for Women: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

In *Hardball for Women* (1992), author Pat Heim teaches women career strategies that help businesswomen advance their careers. Women are well represented in the workforce today, but if you want to make it to the top, Heim says that you need to learn the unwritten rules of this men's game.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
- More Wisdom
- CONS
- PROS
- Quotes
- Review

Overview

- **The real challenge is moving out of middle management**: Women are now well-represented in the workforce. And in management as well. What's still lacking are women in executive and CEO positions
- **Women need to learn a whole new way of playing the game**: men and women are both biologically different and have been nurtured differently. They learn vastly different ways of living and working, and the male way is (by far) the most likely way of getting into executive and CEO positions
- **Women are in a double bind**: they can't be too stereotypically feminine if they want to reach the top positions, but they can't be too stereotypically male, either

Notes

About the Author:
Pet Heim holds a Ph.D. in communication from the University of Colorado. She has been working as a trainer and corporate consultant on topics such as leadership, gender differences, and career strategies.

First You Advance on Technical Skills, Then on Interpersonal Skills

When you begin your career, you advance in technical skills.
But **the more you advance and the higher you go, the more it's about interpersonal skills**.

Higher up, technical skills become less relevant, and interpersonal skills become more important. **And interpersonal skills fall under the nuances of male and female differences**.

To become executive material, women need to learn how to play the game the male way without going full male—or they'd be labeled as overbearing bitches.
The solution is this: understand the male culture and work well within it. Use the male style, slightly adapted to suit a woman, and revert to your more natural style when you're dealing with more women or when you're not in full competition mode.

Women Don't Learn to Play Hardball

Because of both biology, nurturing, and the games they play as children, women never learn how to play hardball.

Women move into environments that have little hierarchies and little competition.
To sum it up: women never learn the skills that are necessary to win in business.

Men Learn to Engage in Conflict and Move On, Women to Avoid Conflict (& Never Move On)

Men learn to engage in conflict head-on.
They play the game and fight, and when the game is over, it's over. They can go back to being friends.
Teams can also change, so men also learn to develop functional relationships in service of their goals.

Women instead don't play in service of a goal but play to strengthen their relationships.
Conflict is not common, and it's seen as dangerous to the relationship. Women tend to avoid conflict and take it more personally. Women don't see how someone can be aggressive, engage in competition, and still be friends. That does not help them do well in the business world.

Men Respect Strength, Women Prefer Human Connections

Men see business as the extension of a team contest.

That's why male language borrows so many words and expressions from either sports or war—the ultimate team contest.

Leading a group of men requires strength.
Some coaches in sports do it by being verbally aggressive; some do it by being physically aggressive. Some others step back and let their silence and nonverbal expressions showcase their authority.

Leading women is different.
Groups of women respond better to your humanity. You better lead women with your capacity to care and relate.

Women learn to lead and relate by building relationships and connections. Men learn to lead and relate through aggressiveness and competition.

Also read:

- **How to be an effective leader**

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

Women: Fit In, Be Liked; Men: Win, It's OK if Someone Doesn't Like You

Women's play is about building relationships.
There is no main goal for women beyond relationships. Thus, being liked and fitting in is paramount to women.

Men prioritize winning and competing.
If someone's feelings will get hurt to win, that's OK. And if someone might end up not liking you, that's also OK.

Women Prefer 1:1 Relationships; Men Prefer Groups

Women tend to play games 1:1.
Even in group sports, women often have a best friend.
Women learn to better read people's emotions and reactions.

Men tend to play in groups.
Their connections are looser and more functional.

Connections Are Functional for Men, Central for Women

Since men value competing and winning, it also means that the team can change and the new and old relationships can change as long as they keep progressing and winning in the competition.

Women instead don't play to win: their plays serve to strengthen the relationship.
So they prioritize the relationship instead of the game—or the goal.

Popularity & Intimacy for Women, Success & Achievement for Men

In female groups, popularity and intimacy are signs of status and power.
They are both relationship-related, not hierarchy-related.

In male groups, success, victory, and achievements are signs of status and power.
That encourages men to be more aggressive and "go-getters", which tends to prepare them better for competition in the business world.

Men Are Hierarchical and Expect Allegiance: The Loyalty Tests

While women's structures tend to be flat and fluid, men are used to a strong hierarchy with a boss on top.

The mistake women can make is to discuss the boss order, wanting to understand why, or to tell him why his task makes no sense.
To a woman, that's about reaching the best decision. To a man, that's insubordination and a challenge to his power and authority.

Some bosses will even throw loyalty tests at you.
They might ask you to carry out difficult tasks, like firing employees or showing up to the company's retreat when you had just booked your holidays.
Understand that to work as loyalty tests, they must seem insensitive and outlandish. And if you want to stay in your boss good graces, you must comply.

Says Pat Heim:

> To women, this is not a pretty picture. The pressure to kowtow to an autocratic leader with a giant ego can make them want to dig in their heels and not budge.

Since loyalty to the male way is foreign to women, women are more likely to perceive loyalty tests as nonsense—or, as a domineering father, they need to rebel and are less likely to comply.
Men can take women's natural disposition as a sign that they are less loyal and less trustworthy, which means they are less likely to be promoted.

Saying a strong "no" to your boss is a no-no.

Also read:

- **How to develop positive relationships with your boss**

https://thepowermoves.com/managing-your-boss-for-career-advancement

Women Settle Disputes With Accommodation, Men With Direct Competition

Since women prioritize relationships, they prefer to avoid losers and make everyone a winner.
Competition means that someone has to lose, and that would upset relationships and the "dead-even balance of power" that women prefer.
That's why, on average, women tend to avoid competition to settle disputes.

Women learn to fear conflict, so they revert to more indirect techniques, which include avoidance, accommodation, or compromise.

Men instead rely more often on direct competition to settle disputes, and that might include escalations (see "power showdowns" in Power University).

Neither is necessarily wrong, but sometimes a situation is win-lose, or sometimes a woman might be better served with direct confrontation if she is right or better placed to win.

Don't Talk Relationships at Work

Women are at ease discussing relationships and feelings.
Men are not.

If you discuss feelings and relationships with men, you will make them uncomfortable.
If he is your boss, you will pay an even bigger price.

Furthermore, competitive men will use the opportunity to frame you as touchy-feely. He will move the conversation towards facts, and you will look outplayed.

Women Don't Get Points for Relational Work

Women's skills help improve harmony, social capital, and communication. However, these skills and results often don't get computed in women's evaluations, and women end up doing them without getting anything in return.

Men Want to Win, Women Want to be Fair

Men care more about winning than women do, and women care more about being fair and "proper" than men do.

Women read the rules and want to respect them.
Men read the rules and think that if you can win while breaking some rules, then it's OK.

That can give men an advantage when it comes to competing for the final win because men are more willing to do whatever it takes to win.

Women Are Uncomfortable With Power

Many women shy away from power as if it were a disease.
In part, it's because of their socialization as a group of girls, where hoarding power is often a poor social strategy.
And in part, it's because power is associated with men and masculinity. Being a powerful man is easy; being a powerful woman who also wants to be feminine is not so easy.

And that's not an issue to take lightly, says Pat Heim:

> Your gender is a large part of who you are. **You can't feel good about yourself and not feel good about your femininity**. To be comfortable with her power, **a woman must be both powerful and feminine**.

The author speaks the truth here, and she gives a couple of good points on how to combine femininity and power.
If you're interested in the topic, also read:

- **How to be feminine**
- **How to combine power and femininity**

And:

- **Dating as a powerful woman**

> Why Successful Women Fail At Dating (& How to Fix It)

Women's Most Common Stumbling Blocks

These are common stumbling blocks for women in their career:

- Getting lost in details
- Perfectionism
- Taking responsibility for non-core tasks because "who else will do it?"
- Being too available to the detriment of their own tasks

Dealing With Sexual Harassment Is Hard

The author says that of the women who claim sexual harassment, half are fired and 25% quit their jobs in frustration.

The research is dated though, far before the #MeToo, so things might have changed.
Still, to be on the safe side, consider that filing a sexual harassment suit might land you in trouble.

Also read:

- **How men antagonize women at work**

> 8 Ways Men Keep Women Down at Work

More Wisdom

- **Women ruminate more, so more conscious effort to move on is needed**: MRI scans show that once a negotiation is done, men tend to move on. Women instead continue to think about it, wondering if the right choice was made. This means that women should make a bigger conscious effort of moving on. And BTW, men perceive the ability to move on as a strength
- **Women should avoid talking problems through with their bosses**: Men think it through and come up with a solution; women talk it over. If you talk it over with a male boss, he will think you are not able to solve your own issues
- **Get buy-in *before* the meeting**: men will resist your groundbreaking ideas because accepting will mean conceding power. That's why you must get buy-in before the meeting. To women, it makes no sense, but in a male culture, that's how it goes
- **Married bosses with daughters are the best**: Many men don't want to make it more difficult for women; they just fail to see that there are more stumbling blocks for women. Men with wives and daughters tend to be more knowledgeable and sympathetic (and less likely to be chauvinistic dicks)
- **Dead-end bosses are bad bosses**: some bosses are in dead-end positions. They have no power to help you up, and they might not even *want* to help you up.
  I agree, and this is why I was never a big fan of the "Never Outshine Your Boss" law from "The 48 Laws of Power". Also read: "Why the 48 Laws of Power Wrong" and "The Updated 48 Laws of Power"

CONS

- **Nurture outweighs nature**

I got the latest edition, and the authors noted that they had made a mistake in the previous editions by ascribing all

the gender differences only to nurture and culture.

Finally, people are realizing that the *Blank Slate* is nonsense.

I still felt the author still outweighed the nurture side over nature, though.
But, overall, thumbs up for having admitted and rectified the mistake.

- **Confuses "displays of power" with being an asshole?**

One example left me stumped.
A male executive let her report fly economy while he flew business class. Then, at the conveyor belt, he told her to carry all his luggage to the hotel. They were very heavy, and she struggled to keep up with him.
Is this showing power, or is this just being a plain dick? To me, it's no doubt the latter. But to the author, this was an example of displaying power, and the woman did well in doing as he wanted.

- **I disagreed with Pat's POW on male loyalty**

The author says that men switch their allegiances very easily from one team to another.
Male athletes moving from team to team are such an example.
I quote her:

> Men switch sides and loyalties as easily as they shed one team jersey and don another.

That's not true, in my opinion.
The author fails to see that great athletes who stay on the same teams become legends in good parts because they stay with only one team.

I remember sitting with a guy who loved football and was from Italy, the guy asked me about Francesco Totti.
Then he later whispered with a sigh of admiration "that guy is a legend".
Francesco Totti is in large part a legend because he stayed with Roma, his native town's club, instead of going with better teams and winning more.

Many supporters call players who often switch teams "mercenaries.". And players who score against their former team often do not celebrate as a sign of respect.

So I disagree with the author.

- **Sometimes I disagreed with the advice**

The author says that "making it up" is a strategy of hardball and giving your best guess, pretending that it's the right answer, which is accepted in the male risk-taking culture.
The author also advises you to give your best guess and pretend it's the right answer. If it's not, your colleagues will find out.

Albeit that might work at times, that's also going to harm your reputation long-term. Once people realize you pretend to know what you don't know, your reputation will tank.

- **The "height advantage" power play**

The author advises using height to your advantage whenever you can and neutralizing people's height advantage whenever you can.
I'm not too sold on this one, especially sawing off chairs' legs or visibly sitting on the tallest chair. It reeks of a power move, and it will put people off. Furthermore, if you're short, you should first own your short-itude before getting into height-power games.

- **The "women must help women" sectarian rhetoric**

The author embraces the philosophy that women must help other women.
To me, that always sounded sectarian and backward (also see: "Lean In", the criticism part)

PROS

A mandatory read for women who want to make it to the top of their organizations.

Quotes

On women's difficulties in making it in a man's world:

> Research has shown that behaving like a man will backfire; women are judged on women's rules, not men's. And while women do have more options than mere stereotypical behavior, their choices are more limited than men's.

On women being uncomfortable with power:

> Power is an uncomfortable subject for many. In fact, women tell us they don't want to deal with that "power stuff" because they aren't "power hungry." They act as if power is a social disease to be avoided at all costs.

On the importance of having the power to get things done:

> Simply stated, power is the ability to get things done. If you don't have power, you're going to be ineffectual at work.

On the reality of the double standard:

> Clearly, women can still play the game, but they can't play it the male way—they have to be friendlier, in the female mode. Yes, this makes us want to gag, but it's the reality of the workplace as it exists today.

Review

I truly loved "*Hardball for Women*".
And it's not just because a whole chapter 8 was titled "Power Moves" :).

Jokes aside, this is simply one of the best books I have read on both career strategy and gender.
Even when it comes to general power dynamics of the workplace, you will learn hugely no matter whether you're male or female. I certainly did learn a lot.

It was very instructive to look at workplace dynamics from a gender perspective.
This is a must-read for any woman who wants to have a good career -or simply decide whether prioritizing a career is what she truly wants-.

Hardball for Women provided us with the best contribution so far for the women's lessons in my Power University course.
And that's the biggest compliment I can give an author because I only choose the best.

Check the:

- **Best career books**

Brag! Notes & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Brag!, whose full title is "*Brag*! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It", teaches readers how to brag and how to effectively self-promote without coming across as a big show-off.

Contents

- Notes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Notes

About the Author:
Peggy Klaus is a communication and leadership coach who works with *Fortune*500 corporations to help executives improve their self-presentation and promotion.

To Brag Effectively, Know Yourself

To brag effectively, you need to know what you should be bragging about.

Peggy Klaus provides the readers with twelve questions to go through.
Once you know the answer to those questions, you will better know yourself and what to say about yourself.

Here are my favorite ones:

1. What are your five personality pluses?
2. What are the ten most interesting things you have done?
3. What do you like/love about your current job/career?
4. How do you use your skills and talents in your job and career?
5. What projects are you working on right now that best showcase your skills and talents?
6. What success are you most proud of?
7. What obstacles have you overcome to get where you are?
8. What have you learned from your mistakes?

For more on how to brag, read:

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

A Job Well Done Does NOT Speak for Itself

Some people believe that doing a good job is all the promotion they need.

My Note: It Actually Depends on The Situation
Some jobs speak for themselves, while others don't.
If you have the spotlight on you and people see you struggling and achieving, for example, you don't need to brag.
Let others do it for you, and it's much more powerful.
But in cases where people only get to see the result without the hard work and skills, then you do want to add some

promotion.

Humility Does Not Get You Noticed

Yes, being humble can be good.
But if being humble means never promoting yourself, then that does not work.

Few people have managed to combine humility with the need to self-promote success.
Don't be one of those people who fail to self-promote and hide behind humility as if it were a virtue.

Sell Stories, not Numbers

No matter how good your numbers are, they do not make you sound impressive.

Klaus says that you want to talk about how you achieved those numbers, weaving a good story around them.
How it started, the challenges you overcame, how you insisted and maneuvered, and only after all the tribulations, how you managed to turn into a win

Mix Bragging With Interesting Content: A Bragalog

If you only brag, people will think you're a showoff and they will not like you.
If you only tell facts, you are boring.
And if you only tell interesting stories, you are an entertainer, but you're not marketing yourself.

Peggy Klaus says that the solution is to mix an entertaining story with your bragging strong points.
Then people will want to hear more about your marketing and, while you sell yourself, you also come across as intelligent and likable.

One example of a bragalogue, is for a NASA engineer introducing himself:

> Hi, I'm Dan.
> I'm one of those rocket scientists everyone always makes jokes about. I work on the space station program for NASA

CONS

- **Confused willingness to stay silent with a failure to brag?**

The author shares an example of a guy who "failed" to brag effectively.
On a plane, she asks him what he does, and he replies "management consultant". The author asks in what field, and for what company.
The guy keeps replying with short sentences in spite he having a lot of strong points to brag about.

The author then stops, saying that he is failing at selling himself and making it interesting for her.

To me, it obviously looked like the guy just didn't wanna talk.
And by providing short sentences he did the right thing: he clearly sent the message he didn't want to be bothered.

- **Does not differentiate between the time to brag and the time to show strategic humility**

There are situations when humbleness is the ultimate bragging.
For example, when you *others* touting your own horn, that's the perfect time to say little and come across as bigger than life.

I wished the author differentiated between the two scenarios: when you need to brag, and when it's best to be self-effacing.

That's true strategic thinking, but I didn't see it here.

PROS

- **Lots of examples, some of them good**

The book lists a lot of examples of how to turn descriptions, facts, and accomplishments, into effective self-promotion messages.
Some of them were good.

- **Wonderful idea of mixing entertainment with bragging**

There is one great idea I take away from this book, and that's to mix entertainment, storytelling, and bragging. That was an eye-opener for me.

Review

Brag! is a good book, with some good ideas and examples.

Most of all, I loved the idea of the "bragalogue", which is a mix of bragging, storytelling, and entertainment. That was really a great idea.

Check the:

- **Best communication skills books**
- **How to brag**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

The New Rules of Work: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The New Rules of Work teaches readers how to launch a great career. It starts from the very basics, like knowing yourself and what you like, and takes you through all the steps, from job search to personal branding, negotiation, and career advancement strategies.

Contents

- Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Summary

About the Authors: Cavoulacos and Minshew are the founders of TheMuse.com, a website for career advice.

To Find The Best Job, Know Yourself First

The best way to find the best job for you is to first know yourself.

This is indeed very sensible advice, and the authors dedicate a whole chapter to recognizing your own values. Something important to keep in mind is that your values can change over time, and you should be flexible enough to understand your new situations and appreciate your changes.

Knowing your values will help you find the best job for you, but it will not guarantee you the perfect fit.
As you gain more experience in life, you can realize that you were wrong with the initial assessment of your values and personality. Or that you were wrong about the perfect job to fit your values. Or you were wrong about both. That's OK. Actually, that's great. As long as you realize the mistake, you can fix it. And you can keep on searching for what truly suits you.

Interests, Skills, Values: Consider Them All

List six roles you think you are interested in, within six industries you like.
Those are your interests.

Then add two columns: skills and values.
The best roles will align both with your skills and with your values.

Develop Your Personal Brand

To develop your personal brand, it helps to know yourself again.
If you need some help, ask the people around you to describe you, to tell you what you're good at, and what they think of you.

My favorite part here was how to transform informal feedback into a professionally-sounding description.

So imagine, for example, that the description you get of yourself is:

> "Affable, agreeable, and gets along well with others."

That sounds nice, but it's more like the description of a person you want to be friends with.
So here is how you can transform that description into something that sounds more professional:

> Relationship builder, strong follow-through, and motivated to collaborate.

For personal branding, you should go with the latter.

Adapt to Your Boss Leadership Style

Alexandra Cavoulacos righteously points out that to best deal with your boss, you should adapt to his leadership style.

They base their approach on Daniel Goleman's leadership styles, and this is my own modified version, similar to the one I introduced in the Power University workplace module:

- **Commanding / Coercive**: Top-down, "do as I say" style. If you report to this type of boss, make sure to not only follow his instructions but also communicate that you're following his instructions—tell him exactly what you've done and how you did it. Once he trusts that you respect his authority, you can start to introduce your own ideas.
- **Authoritative / Visionary**: They tell the team where they're going but not how. Often, it's the founders or people who really believe in the company's vision. When you communicate with this kind of leader, she'll want to hear less about the specifics of what you did and more about how it fits into the ultimate goal, so it pays to focus the conversation on the results rather than the process. Also, show yourself that you believe in what they believe, and they will want you higher up in the hierarchy.
- **People Person / Affiliative**: Cares about people, having a good work environment, trust, and a sense of belonging. Show that you love being on the team, show up after hours, and tell him how you got it done through people, networking, and relationships. Show yourself a supportive, kind, and friendly chap. Watch out that he might dislike strong go-getters, so don't overdo it with your drive and competitive spirit.
- **Democratic**: This type of boss prefers the collective over the individual, and he loves collaboration. He prefers reaching decisions through discussion, and he values harmony. Same as with the affirmative: be less selfish and driven, tone down the competition, and show yourself more of a team player. When you are discussing, make a show of giving credit to others when you build upon their ideas
- **Pace Setter / Achiever**: He focuses on the goal and on achieving the goal, and he respects excellence. He is a high achiever and a high performer himself, and he can have some trouble delegating. Show him you are like him—driven and hungry. Deliver when he asks you to do something, and he will come to respect you (and promote you).
- **The Coach**: He likes to grow and coach his employees. Give him what he wants: ask him questions, ask him for feedback, show him that you appreciate his thoughts and opinions, take action on his feedback, and he will come to see you like his spiritual son.

Also read:

- **How to "work" your boss**

Real-Life Applications

- **The 3×3 networking dinner**

Invite 3 cool people in your network, and tell them to bring along 3 cool people in their network.
That way, you can rest assured you will meet high-quality people who can make a difference in your life, and everyone will be excited at the prospect of who they can end up meeting.

- **Don't accept the job offer right away**

This is your time to negotiate and think, once again, if this is what you want.

CONS

- **I didn't like some of the networking tips to end conversations**

To end a conversation, the authors propose you don't overthink it and end it by saying:

> **You:** It's been great, I have some other people to connect with"

Or:

> **You:** This has been so interesting, but it's getting late

The first one, "I have some people to connect with," makes it sound like you have some more important people to connect with, which devalues your speaking partner.
In the second one, the "but" tends to deny what you've just previously said.

I liked much more their third recommendation:

> **You**: Well, I won't monopolize your whole night

This is wonderful because it places them above you. While you don't always want to place people above you, since you are cutting them off first, it helps to maintain things neutral and balanced.

- **Storytelling cover letters?**

I didn't particularly agree with the advice on cover letters, which seemed to be more about storytelling and would probably make the cover letter a bit too long.

Also, my advice on cover letters is different: they are a huge time sink. So draft as few of them as possible. You should prioritize networking to cover letters. If you need a cover letter, you should already be recognized as not in the ideal situation. Ideally, your cover letter is an introduction or a personal meeting before you even apply yourself.

If you can't get it, my advice is to keep the cover letter brief, because very few people like to read long stories.

Review

The New Rules of Work is a very good book covering career strategies from A to Z.

It spans knowing yourself, finding the right job match, researching companies, acing the interview, negotiating the salary package, and then having a great career.

The large breadth of going from A to Z is one of its strongest points because it gives you a good overview and takes you to 70% of what you need to know to start a good career.
That's also its limitation, though, as some parts will necessarily lack some details, like, for example, communication skills-.

I would say that if you are already an advanced student of self-development, career strategies, and people skills, then you will learn a few things while listening (or reading) to many other concepts you already know.

On the other hand, if you are someone who's just about to finish graduate school right now, then this is a very good book to provide you with not only an overview but also to help you set your career the right way.
For graduate students, this can be a highly recommended read.

Check the:

- **Best career books**

or **get the book on Amazon**

The Myth of The Nice Girl: Can Nice Girls & Guys Win? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Myth of the Nice Girl (2018) is a career advice book for women in which Fran Hauser, the author, deconstructs what she calls the "myth of the nice girl". She says that it's not true that being nice is a weakness, and with both science and personal experience, she proves that kindness can be a huge advantage to win at work (and life).

TPM Strategic Note: Nice wins IF matched by competence & strategy
This text serves as a manual for **High-Warmth, High-Competence** signaling. While lower-level power analyses suggest that "niceness" is a liability, Hauser frames "Nice" as a social exchange strategy and reciprocity engine. The core value lies in the distinction between **Submissive People-Pleasing** (low status) and **Prosocial Kindness** (high status). .

Contents

- Summary
  - Busting The Myth of Nice & Weak
  - What "Nice" Really Means'
  - The Superpower of Being Nice
  - First, Be Kind to Yourself
  - Finding the Right Balance Between Nice and Strong is a Difficult, But Achievable
  - Finding the Right Balance Between Empathetic and Worrior Is Difficult, But Achievable
  - The Difference Between Nice & People Pleasing
  - Too Many Women Believe It's Either Nice Or Strong
  - How to Answer When People Tell You That You're Too Nice
  - Being Nice Is Crucial Because We Only Want to Deal With Collaborative People
  - Overcome the Successful/Ambitious Bitch Double Standard by Owning Your Niceness
  - Get Buy-In From Colleagues Before Going to The Boss
  - Include Your Team As the Stakeholders of Your Decisions
  - Before "Leaning In", Decide Your Priorities
  - How to Find a Mentor
  - Avoid "Pick Your Brain" Expression
- Quotes
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Francesca Hauser is a former media executive, startup investor, and advisor and, today, author, advisor, investor, and advocate for women in business.

Busting The Myth of Nice & Weak

The author says our society is being a victim of a huge myth that "nice" equals weak, under-achiever, and easy to be taken advantage of.

From a career point of view, she mentions the popular book "Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office".
And I would add that the same myth is often perpetuated in both dating and relationships, with titles such as "Why Men Love Bitches", or "The Power of The Pussy" (and, for men, "No More Mr. Nice Guy")

I couldn't agree more with the author and I have already plenty exposed to why those books can be as harmful as they can be helpful.

What "Nice" Really Means'

The myth of the nice girl is that she is weak, unassuming, and can't stand up for herself.
Basically, a pushover with "kick me" written on her back.

But that's not "nice", says the author, that's a pushover. And the two things are not the same and should not be the same.

This is how the author defines a "nice girl":

> A woman who cares deeply about other people and who wants to connect with them, who is guided by a strong sense of values to do the right thing.
> She is considerate, respectful, and kind. (…) At work, she's fair, collaborative, and generous.

The Superpower of Being Nice

Research shows that teenage girls who pursued high status (mean girls) were less successful ten years later than girls who were more likable and kind.
The nice girls have used those skills in business, and it helped them be more successful and accomplished.

The more "mean-girls" types were less successful in relationships and had more problems with drugs and alcohol.

I think the author is right when she says that there is real power hidden in traits like empathy, kindness, and compassion.
These are undervalued traits in the business world, and it's exactly why you can stand out when you embrace them.

Says Fran Hauser:

> In fact, as I learned to own my natural kindness, it has become my professional superpower.
> It has helped me build my personal confidence; the loyalty of those who've worked with me; and a strong, trusting, faithful network of colleagues, mentors, and mentees.

First, Be Kind to Yourself

I couldn't agree more with the author when she said that being nice starts with yourself.
You can't be kind to others if you're not kind to yourself first.

Says the author:

> Kindness starts with you.
> If you've judged yourself harshly over the years, you need to let go of that. Remember, part of being authentically nice is embracing the real you, and you can't do that if you're busy beating yourself up for the things you've done imperfectly in the past.

Also read:

- **The fundamental strategies of power**

https://thepowermoves.com/the-fundamental-strategies-of-power

Finding the Right Balance Between Nice and Strong is a Difficult, But Achievable

Many young women have asked the author how to be nice and strong at the same time.
That's not easy.
It's a learning curve, and you will go through some mistakes. It might take some time, but you can eventually make it. And when you do, you will be both nice and effective, and you will remain true to yourself, enjoying better and stronger relationships.

Finding the Right Balance Between Empathetic and Worrior Is Difficult, But Achievable

The myth is that nice girl can't make difficult decisions because they care too much and worry too much about what others think.

But, again, says the author, that's only the very extreme.
Empathy is a great asset to have and can help make much better decisions.

The key, again, is not to deny your empathy, but to strike a balance.

The Difference Between Nice & People Pleasing

- Nice is: Positive, yet honest and straightforward /
  People Pleaser is: Sweeping things under the rug to avoid making waves
- Nice is: Helpful
  People Pleaser is: Subservient
- Nice is: Humble
  People Pleaser is: Putting yourself down

When should you do favors for others?
The author says she had a simple rule to differentiate between nice and subservient: whenever she wanted to do someone a favor, either because she liked the person or because it was a career-strategic favor, it was OK to do it.

Too Many Women Believe It's Either Nice Or Strong

Many women the author spoke to agreed that being nice helped them.
And yet, 76% of the 1.500 polled women said they felt caught in a double bind between the need to be and the need of "having to be tough to succeed".

The whole book is dedicated to showing that one must not choose.

How to Answer When People Tell You That You're Too Nice

The author proposes five ways to answer when someone tells you that you are too nice.

My favorite three are:

- Don't mistake my kindness for weakness
- It's better than the alternative… Who wants to deal with a jerk?

- I know, and it's really served me well!

Being Nice Is Crucial Because We Only Want to Deal With Collaborative People

When we first meet someone, we evaluate them for their warmth and competence.

Warmth is even more important because, if they are not warm, we won't even care about their competence.

I couldn't agree more, and I make it a central tenet of the power strategies on this website.
Also read:

- **Mixing power with warmth**

> Power Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

And also go through this one for smart collaboration, since you also want to make sure you're not taken advantage of.

Overcome the Successful/Ambitious Bitch Double Standard by Owning Your Niceness

Fran Hauser correctly points out that while men often become more likeable when they are successful, for women it's the opposite.

The way out of the paradox is not by being less ambitious. And it's not by being more aggressive, either.
You overcome the ambitious/bitch double standard by owning your niceness and leveraging it in a way that complements your ambitions.

For more methods, check out:

- **How to be feminine and powerful**
- Dating for successful women

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

Get Buy-In From Colleagues Before Going to The Boss

The author explains how she talked to her colleagues and got their input and their buy-in before going to her boss with her proposal.

When she went to her boss with her colleagues' input and buy-in already lined up, it was easier to get the boss's approval.
And with the boss's approval, it was easier to get the project off the ground because she had already spoken to her peers first. Now her peers didn't see the author as competition, but as a friendly ally.
Says Fran:

> Make them a part of the process. By making it clear that you are looking to collaborate instead of compete, you'll earn their trust and their respect.

Also read:

- **How to manage your boss for career advancement**

https://thepowermoves.com/managing-your-boss-for-career-advancement

Include Your Team As the Stakeholders of Your Decisions

Fran Hauser says that when she had to make difficult work decisions, she also asked her team.

Some people told her it was a mistake and that she would lose power and authority and, of course, they told her that she was being "too nice".
But the author had a different opinion. She says:

> To me, my team consisted of stakeholders who were totally invested in my decisions. I was liable to them. So I always got their input while still making it clear that, in the end, the ultimate decision would rest with me.

I very much agree with her.

Before "Leaning In", Decide Your Priorities

"Leaning in" is a common refrain these days to encouraging women to take all opportunities coming their way.

The author says that advice is good, but that it can become counterproductive.
I quote her:

> (…) Telling women to step up, go for it, lean in, and say yes.
> And while that's certainly an improvement (…) it's not always realistic. In fact, this type of extra intense encouragement sometimes makes women feel that we must say yes to every opportunity or else we'll be missing out, or worse, become bad feminists. FOMO, anyone?

Instead of feeling forced to lean in on every opportunity that comes your way, think first about what's important to you. And then prioritize *that*.

How to Find a Mentor

The author has very good advice on finding a mentor.
My favorite one though was this: make it clear that it's mutually beneficial, and not parasitic.

You can read a lot on parasitic approaches here:

- **What's In It For Them: real life examples**

The second great advice is to make your mentor come to you. How? For example, you could organize a panel discussion and invite a few heavy hitters to speak.

Avoid "Pick Your Brain" Expression

Picking your brain frames the interaction as you taking from them, while giving back nothing.

Says Fran:

> 'Pick your brain' is non-reciprocal and exploitative. People who hear this a lot tend to cringe. These people are super time constrained and need to see something in it for them. The offer of coffee does not make it more attractive. (…) Instead: make it reciprocal ('feedback'/'brainstorm'), make it QUICK and easy (a 20-min phone call, not in-person coffee), and at the close, ask how you can be helpful in return.

I could not agree more.

Quotes

The power of empathy and nice:

> When I got a yes from him (of course), my team was incredulous. But it wasn't magic. Mitch was inclined to say yes to me because we already had a relationship (…) I connected with him on a personal level. This wasn't a power move. As a so-called "nice girl," being empathetic came naturally to me, and it simply worked to my advantage when it was time to negotiate or ask for something.

On the need to introduce change gradually:

> The people who've been there longer than you and are invested in the company's ways are likely to take real offense to any drastic changes.

Real Life Applications

- **Nice is good, pushover is not**: don't confuse the two
- **Probe deeper when people say you're "too nice"**: people tell you that you're too nice, make sure to find out what they actually mean
- **If it's a superior who makes an inappropriate comment, ask him to have a private conversation**. It's better than shaming him in front of everyone and potentially make an enemy. Read the case study here
- **In performance evaluations, ask employees what they think they can do better**: most of the times people already know, and if they start that conversation, they are more ready to accept the cure
- **Develop a go-to team for strategic decision-making**: when faced with stress, men go in fight or flight, and women go to their closest relationships (tend and befriend). Best of all instead is to have a network of experts you can consult. And a network of intelligent friends you can talk to when you need to make difficult life decisions

CONS

- **Being nice means collaborating… With other women?**

In one passage the author says that the "nice girls collaborate and help other women".

Yes, it's a widespread concept, and it sounds good. It's often embraced and presented as a virtue. But, in my opinion, that doesn't necessarily make it right (read more in my Lean In review).
Thankfully, Francesca's stance is always supportive, and never antagonistic.

PROS

- **Effectively combines power *and* kindness**: one of the very few books that seeks -and succeeds- in marrying power with kindness
- **Advice that works for both work and life**: Fran's recipe not only helps women have a great career, but also to have a great life

Review

"The Myth of the Nice Girl" is a wonderful book wih effective advice based on a sound understanding of power dynamics, office politics, and career strategies.

While it helps readers with great career advice, it also teaches them how to be successful at life, while remaining overall good people.

The author's successful career also underpins her authority and give her credibility, while her anecdotal stories tell me she has a good grasp of social and power dynamics.

I can only recommend this book..
And not only to women, but to everyone who wants to combine personal success at work and business with personal success in interpersonal relationships.

See:

- **The businesswoman's guide** to succeed in male organizations
- **How to combine power with femininity**

What Color Is Your Parachute: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

What Color Is Your Parachute is a guidebook to help readers find employment and launch their careers.
The "parachute" way of looking for employment starts by first identifying what jobs suit you best, and then using science and data to apply through the channels with the highest likelihood of getting you hired.

Contents

- Summary
- Real-Life Applications
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Richard Bolles was an American clergyman and career advisor.

The Traditional Approach VS The Parachute Approach

The "traditional approach" might as well be called the "spray and pray". It consists of scouring the web and mass-sending CVs to any open position.

The "what's hot approach" instead seeks to look at what the job market requires and then seek employment in one of those professions.

The "parachute approach" instead consists of being deliberate in our search and only aiming at what we truly like and what truly fits us.
The parachute approach begins with ourselves, knowing our strengths and weaknesses, and what we like doing.

Knowing Yourself

Bolles says that to know what's the best job for you, you should know yourself along seven dimensions:

- Your Knowledges / Fields of Interest
- People You Like Working With
- What You Can Do and Love to Do (Favorite Transferable Skills)
- Favorite Working Conditions;
- Preferred Salary / Level of Responsibility
- Preferred Place to Live;
- Your Goal, Purpose, or Mission in Life.

Bolles has the deepest method for job-introspection I have ever seen, spanning two whole chapters of the book.

The Steps to Choose Your Place to Work

1. **Find out what career or job are good for you**: If possible, you or they must combine two or three of your knowledges (fields) into one specialty: that's what can make you unique, with very little competition from others.

2. **Double check the job is good for you**: talk to the people who are already working in that position
3. **Find out which companies have those types of jobs**
4. **Learn as much as you can about those companies**
5. **Find someone who knows both you and the company:** if you can get to this step, everything will be easier

Seek Employer the Way Recruiters Prefer (& Avoid Sending CVs)

Employers prefer hiring people in the following order, and you're better off adapting to their preferences:

1. **From within**: see if you can get hired as a temp
2. **Using proofs**: bring program, photos, case studies, etc.
3. **Using a best friend or business colleague**: find someone who can make an intro
4. **Agency they trust**:
5. **Using an ad**
6. **Using a resume**: if the employer is truly desperate

HR's Job Is To Eliminate People

On average, interviewers only want to go through 5.4 interviews to fill a role.

Since each recruiter receives far more candidates than that, the job of HR is to truly eliminate as many candidates as possible, as quickly as possible.

That's why the author advises that you instead seek to skip HR. And, if you can't, your task should not to give them any reason to throw you out of the pile so that you can talk to the actual manager.

Go For Smaller Companies

The more difficult is your job search, the more you should for smaller employers.

Smaller employers receive far fewer CVs, so they are much more likely to give you a chance.
How small? Less than 25 employees. 100 employees top, says the author.

Never Badmouth Your Previous Employer

Employers sometimes feel like they are a caste.

If you badmouth previous employers, the current ones might take it personally. And they will wonder if you are going to say the same about them if in the future you're not going to work for them anymore.

Says Bolles:

> Employers sometimes feel as though they are a fraternity or sorority. During the interview you want to come across as one who displays courtesy toward all members of that fraternity or sorority.

But what to do if your previous employer already knows you don't get along well?
Then, this is what you say:

> I usually get along with everybody; but for some reason, my past employer and I just didn't get along. Don't know why. It's never happened to me before. Hope it never happens again.

Ehehe really good stuff there, great power move to indirectly shift the blame on the previous employer.

Never Get Discouraged

This is what the typical job search looks like:

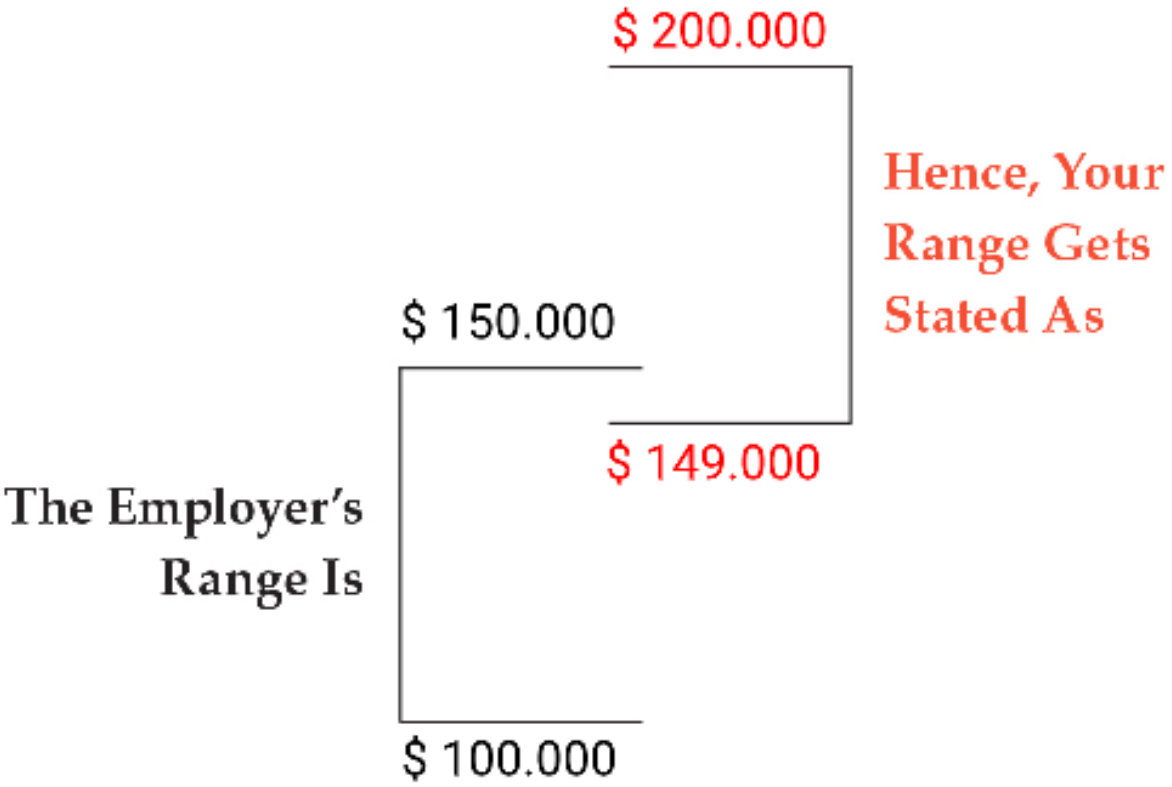
> NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO YES YES

Yes, ideally, you get two yeses.
And this is how you use it strategically:

- **How to (tactfully) pitch two employers against each other**

Salary Negotiations: The 6 Secrets

1. **Do your research as to how much you can expect and how much you're worth**: that will allow you to negotiate with more power, and without making obvious mistakes like asking too little or too much
2. **Only discuss salary at the end of the interview process, once it's sure they want you and they've extended an offer**: that's when you have the most negotiating power
3. **The goal of the salary negotiation is to discover the most that the employer is willing to pay you**: the closer you get to their bottom line, the better for you
4. **Don't mention your salary first**: it's a rule that the person who mentions the salary first, loses. Try to avoid answering that question, and only answer if the interviewer presses you hard. When they do, it might be the case they just want to hire the cheapest worker, and you might not want to work for them (my note: I don't fully agree here. If you can say a very high initial range, that might help you anchor the negotiation high, and you will come down from a very high number)
5. **Find out what's their likely range, and then propose your salary as a range with your bottom near their top**: see the figure below
6. **Close the deal**: don't keep on talking forever. Move to the fringe benefits, and eventually close the deal



That's how you use "bracketing" for effective negotiation

Once you finish your negotiation, get it all in writing.
And signed.

Why?
Because many executives "forget" what they promised. Or then someone else takes over and said that the previous guy didn't have the authority.
Yes, it's low, but some people are low, and you want to protect yourself from these games.

Also read:

- **Unfair negotiation techniques**

> 20 Manipulative Negotiation Tactics

Raise Others to Your Level

The author says that self-esteem is an art. An art of balance.

Think too little of yourself, and you suffer from low self-esteem. Think too highly of yourself, and you have a big ego that's out of touch with reality.

The author says that it's OK to think of yourself highly as long as you focus on pulling others at your level.
I quote him:

> People from other cultures will tell you about "the tall poppy" theory of life, with its implication that you shouldn't stand taller than others in your field. That has a lot of truth to it. **You can become equal to others not by lowering yourself but by raising them**.

I agree with that. Pulling people up instead of pushing down is one of the central tenets of this website.
Just make sure those you are pulling up deserve it, though: it's not your duty to pull everyone up. And especially not the assholes.

Real-Life Applications

- **Use good employment agencies**: they range from very good to bad to actual scams. As a whole, they are still 4 times more effective than sending your CV
- **Avoid sending CV to big companies**: unless you're a high caliber candidate, coming from the right school, it's most likely wasted time

Quotes

My favorite quote from "What Color is Your Parachute"

> One favor I ask of you: do not write me, telling me how picayune or asinine some of this is. I know that. I'm not reporting the world as it should be, and certainly not as I would like it to be. I'm only reporting what study after study has revealed about the world as it is. And how it affects your chances of getting hired.

On the need to always ask about money and negotiating for your salary:

> "How much are they going to pay you?" I asked. She looked startled. "I don't know," she said, "I never asked. I just assume they will pay me a fair wage." Boy! Did she get a rude awakening when she received her first paycheck. It was so miserably low, she couldn't believe her eyes. And thus did she learn, painfully, what you

> must learn too: Before accepting a job offer, always ask about salary.

Self-esteem is an art:

> But self-esteem is an art. An art of balance. A balance between thinking too little of ourselves, and thinking too much of ourselves.

On praising yourself and others:

> Just remember, it's no sin to praise yourself as long as that heightens your awareness of what there is to praise in others.

CONS

- **Sometimes could be more cooperative**

When an employer is pushing to share your salary expectation, he advises saying:

> **The Author**: Until you've decided you definitely want me, and I've decided I definitely could help you with your tasks or projects here, I feel any discussion of salary is premature.

I think that might be too harsh.
How I dealt with employers who pushed for a number was different, less "strong" and more collaborative:

> **Me**: I think it's best to first find out if we like each other. Then, I am sure we can find a way.

Then I stuck to my guns in spite of their repeated attempts.
But since my stance was more collaborative, it was easier to resist pushy recruiters without making it a battle of wills (ie.: "me VS you").

But then, it also depends on your situation.
Back then I was desperate for employment, so I was doubly careful not to burn any bridges.
I'm glad I did that way though, because it turned out very well.

- **It's tailored to less experienced and tech-savvy folks**

This is not necessarily a con, but sometimes I felt the author could have skipped some parts.
For example, when it says "if you have Internet at home, or if you can go to a cafe or library". Or how he introduces Linkedin and advises people to get on it.
I think most professional folks know Linkedin. And most blue-collar or hard-hat job seekers don't need Linkedin.

- **Spelling all URLs on audiobook**

I think an audiobook shouldn't need the spelling of all URLs. It's distracting. But obviously, this is not a major con.

PROS

- **Best book to find a job**: so far, this is the best book I have read to find a job
- **Great tips on negotiation**: short and to the point, the section on negotiation contains right on the money, high-quality advice
- **Deepest material to "find your best job":** I haven't delved too much into the self-assessment part of the book since I already have my dream job, so I can't comment on the quality. The quantity is substantial, though. And

from a perfunctory look, it seemed good stuff.

Review

“What Color is Your Parachute” is the best book I have read so far to help you find employment.

It’s based on data on what works, and that already sets it apart from many other books with a similar goal.

And it’s also “power moves approved”.

Only few books are power moves approved.
To get that stamp of approval, books need to provide real-world advice based on how people are, including potential assholes, and not based on “how things should be” or “how the ideal person should behave”.
And that’s exactly what Bolles does.

Check the:

- **Best career books**

Or get the book on Amazon

Radical Candor: Great on Paper, But Needs Power Awareness (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

In *Radical Candor* (2017) author Kim Scott teaches techniques and mindsets to develop effective leadership and high-performance cultures.
To be an effective manager, Radical Candor advises that you must both personally care for your employees while constantly challenging them with truthful feedback.

Contents

- Summary
  - Differentiate Between Rockstars (do work) & Superstars (seek growth)
  - Managing People is Your Job
  - The 3 Tasks of A Manager: Guidance, Team, Results
  - Relationships Drive You Forward (Not Power)
  - The Two Dimensions of Radical Candor: Care Personally & Challenge Directly
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  - Sometimes unneededly dismissive of power
  - Obnoxious aggression is a behavior, not a personality trait? Not always…
  - Smaller Cons
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Kim Scott holds an MBA from Harvard Business School. She gained management experience leading the AdSense team at Google, then moved to Apple to develop and teach management seminars, and she is now fully focused on leadership trainings as the founder of Candor, Inc.

Differentiate Between Rockstars (do work) & Superstars (seek growth)

To develop a great team you need some stability, so you can't have in your team only people who strive to go up the hierarchy.

That's where rockstars come in handy: these are the people who love the job they're doing and focus on the job they're doing instead of wanting to be promoted into managerial roles and move up the ladder.

The author, early in her career, committed the mistake of only focusing on superstars in the beginning, and she passed her own judgment along. Being a superstar herself, she had a tendency to look down on people who didn't care about career.
But she learned, and corrected herself -that's what "Radical Candor is all about, after all: self-development-.

To become a better manager, also read:

- **Types of toxic employees**

> 8 Types of Toxic Employees & How to Deal With Them

Managing People is Your Job

Managing people is emotional labor, and it's what being a boss is all about.
You can't focus on your work and "save time" on the people's side, otherwise, you are not doing your job.

Bosses are responsible for results, but are responsible for results through their teams.
Says the author:

> Bosses guide the team to achieve results

The 3 Tasks of A Manager: Guidance, Team, Results

- **Guidance**: helping individuals grow personally and professionally with your radically candid feedback
- **Team**: making sure the team works harmoniously together. And structuring the team with the right mix of superstars (wants to grow quickly) and rockstars (do great job without caring for career advancement)
- **Results**: make sure the team stays on track, and that you have enough time blocked for strategic thinking and planning

Relationships Drive You Forward (Not Power)

Says the author:

> Your ability to build trusting, human connections with the people who report directly to you will determine the quality of everything that follows. Defining those relationships is vital.

"Radical Candor" is dedicated to helping managers develop those relationships.

The Two Dimensions of Radical Candor: Care Personally & Challenge Directly

Caring personally means you care about the *person*. The whole person, not just about the employee "doing his job", and not just him having a good career.

Says the author:

> It's not just business; it is personal, and deeply personal

When you truly care, people are more likely to:

1. Accept and act on your praise and criticism
2. Express what they really think about your work and attitude
3. Engage in this same behavior with one another
4. Embrace their role on the team
5. Focus on getting results.

Challenge directly means that you give direct, early, and precise feedback on people's performance, both when they are doing well, and when they can do better.

When you put together the two dimensions of caring and giving accurate feedback, you get radical candor.

Challenging Directly is Part and Parcel of Caring Deeply

Most managers struggle with the "challenging directly" part.

Challenging can initially hurt or displease people, and that does not seem like the best way to build good relationships.
Yet, it's the best way to actually care.

Being a good boss means accepting that sometimes people are going to be pissed off at you. But you still deliver the tough feedback that you need to deliver as a boss.
Caring deeply at this point means that you acknowledge the anger or hurt.

"Keep It Professional": The Death of Caring Deeply

The mantra of "keeping it professional" denies us the freedom and the right to be our true selves.
And that's damaging to developing deep relationships.

Says Kim Scott:

> That phrase denies something essential. We are all human beings, with human feelings, and, even at work, we need to be seen as such. When that doesn't happen, when we feel we must repress who we really are to earn a living, we become alienated.

And that's where "bring your whole self to work" fits in.

Invite People to Challenge You Directly Part

As much as it can be difficult to give some tough feedback, the hardest part for most bosses is to encourage their employees and reports to give *them* feedback.

But c**hallenging directly must go both ways: from boss to employees, and from employees to bosses**.
To do the best job you can, as a boss, as an individual, and as a team, also means that you need to foster an environment where people feel comfortable challenging you as much as possible.

What Radical Candor is Not

Radical candor is not:

- An opportunity to be gratuitously harsh

- A chance to “front-stab”
- An excuse to nitpick
- A hierarchical tool: radical candor must go up, down, and sideways
- Endless talk that exhausts the introverts in your team: build relationships, but be brief and to the point with the feedback
- Lots of after-work time: those can help and complement the relationships at work, but they’re not necessary
- A cultural thing: radical candor can work anywhere in the world

It’s Not Mean, It’s Clear

Kim Scott shares the story of how a stranger hit her with one of the most memorable radical candor interactions she’s ever had.

She was struggling to keep her dog put on the traffic light, and this is what happened next, in the words of the author herself:

> “I can see you really love your dog.”
> In the two seconds it took him to say those words, he established that he cared, that he wasn’t judging me.
> Next, he gave me a really direct challenge. “But that dog will die if you don’t teach her to sit!” Direct, almost breathtakingly so.
> Then, without asking for permission, the (said to) Belvy (…) “SIT!”
> She sat. I gaped in amazement.
> He smiled and explained, “It’s not mean. It’s clear!”

That taught the author that you don’t need to spend hours and hours of time with someone to develop enough trust that you can be radically candid.
As a matter of fact, **direct, radically candid guidance, is a great way to build trust** in and by itself.

And that stranger’s man last words became a mantra for the author when giving direct and honest feedback.
It’s not mean, it’s clear.

As*holes & Obnoxious Aggression

There is plenty of advice that wants people to be more like an asshole.

Just think of:

- Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office
- No More Mr. Nice Guy
- And, for dating: Why Men Love Bitches

The author calls the competent and aggressive jerk style “obnoxious aggression”.
Obnoxious aggression is preferable to a “nice” boss who doesn’t have the courage to be honest.
Obnoxious aggression sometimes can also get great results in the short-term, but it leaves a trail of dead bodies in the long run.
The author says to think of Bobby Knight, who won several championships, but was ultimately fired. Or the movie character in “The Devil Wears Prada”:

The worst kind of obnoxious aggression happens when people understand others emotionally, or at least understand others’ vulnerabilities, and use it to hurt them the most, or to get under their skin (cruel empathy).

The author says that **when a boss sees his employees as lesser beings who can be degraded at will, employees**

view their bosses as tyrants to be toppled.

I couldn't agree more.

Luckily, competent jerk and nice incompetent is a false dichotomy. And radical candor takes the best of both approaches.
See later a matrix to explain radical candor.

Obnoxious Aggression Can Come From All Levels

When you think of obnoxious aggression from a jerk, you usually think of a boss.

Yet, a report can be obnoxiously aggressive towards a boss. And one can be obnoxiously aggressive while speaking directly to someone's face (front-stabbing).

The author made that mistake when she pressed "replied all" and accused Larry Page of going against his own values.
She thought she was being radically candid and "speaking truth to power". But instead, she jumped the gun and attacked too early without even having spoken to Larry to make sure she understood. And she didn't understand.
She had acted obnoxiously aggressive, swept away by her personal values of hating those who "kick down and kiss up".

I loved this part because this was a mistake that I have also fallen prey to. I also hate the "kick down and kiss up", and I have a tendency to dislike abuses of power.
That sometimes leads me to be more aggressive and distrustful of people in power than I should actually be.

How to Criticize Without Discouraging

1. Develop personal relationships
2. Ask for criticism before giving it
3. Offer more praise than criticism
4. **Praise in public, but criticize privately**
5. Be humble
6. Be helpful: your criticism is always an opportunity for them to do better
7. Offer guidance in person and immediately
8. Share stories when you failed or were criticized for something similar
9. **Don't personalize:** make it clear it's an action, behavior, or result, and not about them as persons

Make it clear that the problem is not due to some unfixable personality flaw, but that they can address it and improve.
Also read:

- How to avoid criticism
- How to develop a growth mindset

The Radical Candor Quadrant (With Examples)

When you combine the two dimensions of challenge and caring, you get the radical candor matrix, with four quadrants.

The example Kim Scott uses, which is the same here, is how you handle the situation of a colleague or an employee who forgot his fly open.

	Challenge →	
↑ CARING	**Ruinous empathy** • "Too nice", avoids issues • Positive change cannot happen *Says nothing – he's worried about his own feelings of embarrassment*	**Radical Candor** • Cares while being honest • Team & people constantly improve *Whispers: "your fly is down", to help him correct the issue*
	Manipulative Insincerity • Lies for personal gain • Mistrust & sabotaging take over *Says: "you always look good", to purposefully make him look bad*	**Obnoxious Aggression** • Personalizes attacks & hurts people • Fear & resentment grow *Shouts: "look, his fly is down!", to laugh at his expense*

Colors reflect the relative efficiency of each, from worst to best

Going from Ruinous Empathy to Radical Candor can be a direct path, so it's not true that you need to dwell on Obnoxious Aggression before making it to Radical Candor -don't allow people or yourself to use that as an excuse-.

However, sometimes, it's possible that people need to over-correct, and they may spend some time in the Obnoxious Aggression stage.
If you're moving from Ruinous Empathy, that might feel scary, but push through reminding yourself of your final goal.

Don't Feel Guilty if They're Upset

When you are giving tough feedback with radical candor, it's possible that someone might be upset, angry, or sad about your words.

That's OK, you can and should empathize. But refrain from feeling guilty. Feeling guilty focus on yourself, while you must focus on them.
Says Kim Scott:

> Just because somebody is crying or yelling doesn't mean you've done anything wrong; it just means they are upset.
> If you feel guilty about the fact that they are upset, you're more likely to have a defensive reaction than a compassionate one. Your defensive reaction can lead you, in turn, to unintentionally patronizing or cold behavior.

Radical Candor is a gift you are giving people, it's an opportunity for them to improve and move forward. When you are pulling punches and don't tell the whole truth, you are doing them a disservice.

Real-Life Applications

- **Drop the "positive to negative ratio"**: you know those guides recommending a certain ratio of positive to negative ratio? Well, don't follow them. It's insincere to force praise just because you have to hit a certain ratio

- **Focus on your top performers**: don't let the poor performers hog all of your time, it's your duty to help the top performers keep delivering for the team
- **Use skip-level meetings to avoid bad bosses ruining the environment**: to avoid having assholes in your team who kiss up and kick down and sour the culture, have once a year "skip level meetings", meeting where you talk to the direct reports of your reports (also check: "The No Asshole Rule")

Quotes

On the need for managers' guidance:

> You can draw a straight line from lack of guidance to a dysfunctional team that gets poor results.

On relationships VS power:

> Relationships, Not Power, Drive You Forward

On "dog eat dog" mindset:

> I once worked for a man who told me, "In every relationship there is a screwer and a screwee." Needless to say, I didn't work for him for long.

On avoiding a sense of superiority as a boss:

> Of course, if you are a boss, there is some hierarchy involved. There's no use pretending otherwise. **Just remember that being a boss is a job, not a value judgment**.

On winning and criticism:

> To keep winning, critize the wins.

On "caring deeply" applying at all levels:

> Fundamental human decency is something every person owes every other, regardless of position.

On not confusing the need to be liked with the need to be honest:

> When Steve Jobs asked Jony why he hadn't been more clear about what was wrong, Jony replied, "Because I care about the team."
> To which Steve replied, "**No, Jony, you're just really vain. You just want people to like you.**" Recounting the story, Jony said, "I was terribly cross because I knew he was right."

On the need of sharing what's difficult to share:

> Then you were told some version of "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." Well, now it's your job to say it. And if you are a boss or a person in a position of some authority, it's not just your job. **It's your moral obligation. Just say it!**

One of the reasons why you must focus on top performers:

> Moving from great to stunningly great is more inspiring for everyone than moving from bad to mediocre. And

> seeing what truly exceptional performance looks like will help those who are failing to see more clearly what's expected of them.

When you hear that you should fire someone, they have already been a problem for a while:

> Generally, by the time one of your direct report's poor performance has come to your attention, it's been driving their peers nuts for a long time.

On the quest for "life-missions" VS being content:

> There's nothing wrong with working hard to earn a paycheck that supports the life you want to lead. That has plenty of meaning.
> A wise man once told me, "**Only about five percent of people have a real vocation in life, and they confuse the hell out of the rest of us.**"

On the culture of moonshots and larger-than-life missions:

> Trying to describe a job in lofty, save-the-world terms is often going to make you look like the ridiculous Hooli CEO Gavin Belson from the show Silicon Valley.

On Steve Job's narcissistic mission (not the words of the author):

> In current-day Silicon Valley, inspirational slogans run more along the lines of "putting a ding in the universe," as Steve Jobs put it. But motivations are highly personal. Although I admire Jobs, it seems to me that the universe, or at least our world, is plenty dinged up already. So, I don't find his call to put a "ding in the universe" inspirational, though others do.

CONS

Great book, but a first major warning is:

99.9% of workplaces are very different...

… And that acting as if your workplace may measure up to the Radical Candor standard won't give you any good career and may as well get you fired.

Most bosses aren't going to take your "radical candor" too well

The Radical Candor workplace is an ideal to move towards and barely exists even in the most enlightened workplaces.

Without this warning and albeit being a fantastic book, simply for describing a utopian workplace, Radical Candor may inadvertently mislead readers with unrealistic and naive expectations.
Read more on naive self-help here.

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Sometimes unneededly dismissive of power

The author says that "relationships drive you forward, not power". It makes for a nice and tweetable quote and, in part, it's true. Yet, relationships *are* power.
And power is nothing but your ability to get things done. So strong relationships are part of your personal power.

Later, the author says:

> I'm not saying that unchecked power, control, or authority can't work. They work especially well in a baboon troop or a totalitarian regime.

That's a bit simplistic both towards baboons (see "Behave") and totalitarian regimes (see "The Dictator's Handbook"). But I'm nitpicking here: overall, her point is valid, and it's to use power through instead of power over.

Obnoxious aggression is a behavior, not a personality trait? Not always...

The author righteously advises people not to make attribution errors, such as generalizing a behavior to a whole personality.

She is right.

Yet, that needs an important footnote: assholes do exist, and some of them are not going to be reformed by your radical candor, no matter how hard you try.
So you shouldn't be making eternal excuses for assholes -or for mean people, as Marta Stout correctly points out-.

Smaller Cons

- **Ground a million-dollar diamond to dust, true story?**

This is not a con, but when the author told about one of her workers who got distracted and ground a million-dollar diamond to dust, I had to wonder. How can you so easily grind to dust the strongest material on earth?

- **Eliminating "you guys" from vocabulary?**

Trying to remove "you guys" from the vocabulary sounded silly to me, though. A bit like Justin Trudeau calling "mankind" "people kind".

- **Great for ideal environments, less for "realpolitik"**

As we said in the first note, worth one more reminder:

While this is the best book for those "ideal working environments" and for seeking to move towards that direction, in most "normal" working environments you might be better served with some realpolitik guides.

PROS

Simply the best management book I have read.
If you want to develop the best company culture and be the most effective manager you can be, this is your book.

Review

Radical Candor is an excellent book on management and company culture, and possibly the best management book I have read.

Together with Ray Dalio's "Principles" it has informed some of our lessons on "ideal workplaces" for our flagship product *Power University*.

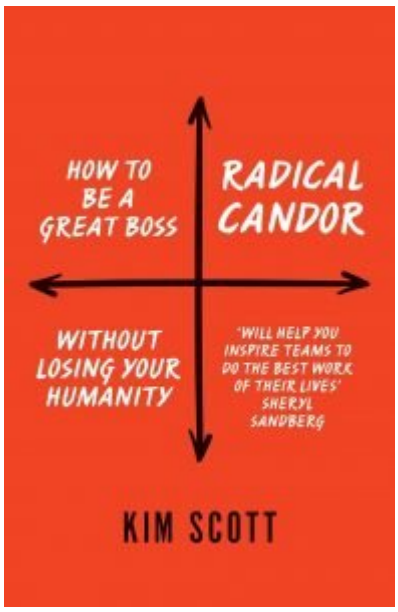
Our important warning is that **most companies and people don't operate the *Radical Candor* way and you need to develop your political savvy first**.
Also, don't be 'radically candid' with all personality types because not everyone can take it. Treating everyone as if they were honorable is what get good men in trouble.

Other than that, read it and apply it, and you will help contribute not only to more effective companies but to a better world.

Or get it on Amazon or check the:

- **Best career books**

Radical Candor Summary: Honest Feedback, True Leadership



One of the best books on effective company culture (and how to be great bosses and employees)

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/radical-candor-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

The Confidence Code: Science of Action & Gender Gaps (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 March 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Confidence Code explores the impact of confidence on life's achievements, career success, and personal satisfaction.

TPM Note: Although we generally address ambitious men, and this book focuses on women, many insights apply to men as well.

Contents

- Bullet Summary

- Summary
  - Confidence Turns Wishes Into Realities by Allowing You to Take Action
  - The Experiment Proving Confidence Matters for Success
  - Confidence Cousins': self-esteem, optimism, self-compassion, self-efficacy
  - Confidence Is Important for Success
  - Confidence is Partly Nature, Partly Nurture, And You Can Partly Work At It
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Confidence definition: confidence is the stuff that turns thoughts into action
- Men, on average, have more confidence than women
- Women tend to lose confidence when there is a stereotype against them
- Confidence is very important for life success
- Confidence is partly inborn and partly nurture, but you can work on it and increase it

Summary

About the Authors:
Claire Shipman is a regular contributor to "Good Morning America" and other national broadcasts for ABC News.
Katty Kay is the anchor of BBC World News America

Confidence Turns Wishes Into Realities by Allowing You to Take Action

When you don't have confidence in yourself, you don't take action. And when you don't take action, you give up any possibility that will you ever achieve your dreams and goals.

A lack of confidence, hence, means that you are less likely to take action.
As someone said: you miss all the shots you don't take. And people who lack confidence don't take shots.

When you have confidence instead, it means that you believe enough in yourself to take action. And guess what,

taking action gives you at least a chance. And, often, even when you fail, you will find out that more action will eventually get you closer to the final goal.

Other Inhibitors of Action

There are other factors that can stand between us and action, like a lack of motivation, or procrastination.

But if we assume that we want something, say the authors, then the only inhibitor is a lack of belief in our ability to succeed.

The Experiment Proving Confidence Matters for Success

Zachary Estes experiment asked both women and men to have a go at a stereotypically male task: solving a series of spatial skill puzzles.
Men scored far higher than women.

But why did they score higher? **Women scored lower because they hadn't even tried to answer all questions and left many of them empty**.
Estes ran the experiment again and asked women to at least try to answer all questions. Result? **When women tried to answer all questions their scores were as good as the men's scores**.

This test shows that a lack of confidence can have strong and negative real-life impacts when they result in inaction. And it shows that **a lack of confidence can lead to poorer results independently of skills**, when compared to a group of more confident individuals who take their shots.

Confidence Cousins': self-esteem, optimism, self-compassion, self-efficacy

- **Self-esteem**: more stable and more pervasive than confidence, and it's an invaluable buffer for withstanding setbacks. In my opinion, self-esteem is more important than confidence
- **Optimism**: it's a sense that everything will work out
- **Self-Compassion:** accepting that sometimes we will not win, that sometimes we will fail, and that sometimes it's even OK to be average, provides us with a safety net to try things out. If we fail, it's OK, it's part of the human experience
- **Self-efficacy**: the "tough, get-it done" member of the family

Courage might also be thought of as a cousin of confidence. It's most helpful when we are new to a task and we need to take those first, terrifying steps.

Confidence Is Important for Success

Anderson's research devised a test to measure confidence and excessive confidence.
At the end of the semester, the most confident individuals, including the ones that scored wrong answers because of overconfidence, were also the most popular.

My Note: you can't say that confidence is more important than competence-based on that paper
The authors jumped to the conclusion based on that single paper that confidence is more important than competence for success.
But that's a big stretch.
If they had said *social* success, then it would have been more appropriate. But based on that single paper, you cannot say that "confidence matters more than competence".

Some of Plomin's research seems on twins suggested that self-perceived ability rating, which can be considered a measure of confidence, was more important in academic achievement than IQ.

Confidence is Partly Nature, Partly Nurture, And You Can Partly Work At It

How much confidence you have is partially programmed in your gene.
Some researchers say it's 50%, like the big five personality traits.
But some other researchers disagree, saying that facets of the big five are less genetically programmed. Traits like confidence, they say, are probably 25% inherited.

The way you have been raised can also partially influence confidence, for example, if you have been raised with a growth mindset.
The good news if you're not naturally high in confidence, is that you can also work at it.

Read:

- How to develop a growth mindset
- The antifragile ego

More Wisdom

- A slight tilt towards overconfidence is preferred
- We dislike women who talk a lot, but we also actively expect men to dominate conversation
- Perfectionism is a confidence killer: it inhibits action and achievement
- Suppress the siren call of praise: praise and flattery are addictive, you end up basing your self-worth on what others think of you, and you pay an emotional (and physical) price
- When men are the majority, women speak 75% less. Read here why

Quotes

On positive thinking:

> There's power and science in positive thinking

On a third way to be confident for women, without trying to be aggressive men:

> We're saying that there's a third way. We don't always have to speak first; we can listen, and incorporate what others say, and perhaps even rely on colleagues to help make our point. We can pass credit around, and we can avoid alienating potential enemies. We can speak calmly but carry a smart message. One that will be heard. Confidence, for many of us, can even be quiet. Any of that might be the way confident behavior looks for women.

CONS

- **Sometimes confuses courage / drive with confidence?**

The authors say:

> And, let's be honest, neither the beckoning of a comfortable couch nor a lack of motivation is likely to be what stops us from speaking out at confrontational moments or from cold-calling a potential client to pitch a sale. Confidence is all that matters there.

I think that beating the fear of cold-calling is overcome more through personal drive and courage, than confidence. I had very little confidence in my first cold calls, but I did them because I just wanted to do it, in spite of the fear.

And I couldn't have stood the idea of me *not* doing it.

- **You can't say that confidence matters more than competence**

The authors make the case early in the book that "confidence matters more than competence for success".
Based on the one paper they justified their assertion on, it seemed an inappropriate conclusion to me.

- **(Slightly) playing down results to make men and women sound more similar?**

Write the authors:

> Women thought they got 5.8 out of 10 right, men 7.1. And how did they actually perform? Their average was almost the same—women got 7.5 out of 10 and men 7.9.

0.4 of difference is not "almost the same" on a scale of 0 to 10.
That can be especially significant if we are talking about curve-distribution differences, since those differences will be huge at the tails.

That being said, the general point the authors wanted to make stands: women tend to underestimate themselves more than women do.

PROS

- **Great overview on confidence**, spanning lots of studies and interviewing many experts
- **Many concrete tips**: contrary to some ill-informed reviews online, there are a ton of concrete and applicable advice, including for parents

Review

"The Confidence Code" provides a good overview of what confidence is and why it matters, and shares some good tips on how to be more confident (though I wished for more).

I used some of this information both for our **Confidence University**, and that's the greatest compliment I can provide to any resource.

Check the **best books** collection

The Girl Code: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Girl Code shares women's success stories and encourages women to go after their dreams while also being supportive -and supported- by other women.

Contents

- Summary
- Quotes
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- Review

Summary

About the Author: Cara Alwill Leyba is a speaker and life coach focusing on women's empowerment.

Stories of Female Entrepreneurs as Interviews

This is not an easy book to summarize because a good chunk of it are simply lots of interviews with different successful women.

They are not very in-depth interviews, but you can glean some crucial nuggets of wisdom, like their fears, major challenges, or why they do what they do.

Ultimately, all those interviews help you realize that entrepreneurial success is not uncommon, and that **if you just start and act in spite of your fears, good things can come to happen**.

Becuase that's how most of them got their start: they were fed up of doing what they didn't like and craved for more.
They were afraid to start, but they started anyway. And little by little, they made it their own way.
BTW, it's not just how women become entrepreneurs. It's the same for men.

Supportive Men Do Exist

Many women talked about their relationships in Cara's interviews.

Some of them were toxic relationships, and some of them had troubles getting over abusive men (if that's you, read "how to end a toxic relationship").

But when they finally ended those negative relationships, those women bloomed. And many of them found supportive men who loved them for who they were: driven women who want to go places. And they supported them in their journey.
So, yes, non-jealous, non-competitive and supportive men do exist. Don't settle for the jealous ones who want to undermine you.

The Girl Code

Among the "rules" of the girl code:

1. **Empower others**: pull people up, don't tear them down
2. **Ditch the negativity**: stop putting others down… And stop putting yourself down. If you have negative people in your life, consider cutting them off

3. **Expand your circle to include supportive women**: as much as you want to cut out the negative, you want more supportive and empowering people in your life. And drop your scarcity mindset: there are a ton of them
4. **Stop comparing yourself to others**: especially based on social media. People only use social media to make others jealous
5. **Hustle**: success will come to those who work for it
6. **Be grateful**: gratefulness opens the doors to abundance and positive mental states. And it crowds out negativity and envy

Turn Jealousy Into Admiration

If you are a competitive woman, it's possible that you will compare yourself to other successful women.

And what happens when you see that a woman is being more successful than you are?
You get a pang of jealousy.

Now how you react to that point will determine whether you let jealousy ruin you, and you turn into a frenemy, or you take the high road and become a supporter.
Here is how Cara advises to go from jealous to supportive:

1. Recognize that jealousy is normal
2. Remind yourself that success is in unlimited supply
3. Go the opposite way: drop them a congratulatory note or write them a public message
4. See if you can meet her, have a coffee with her, and learn from her

Quotes

On people hurting you (haters):

> Hurt people hurt people

On prioritizing:

> There is no time for bullshit when you're building an empire

On handling tough situations with kindness, as it happened to the author when her driver lost his way and she was late for an important TV interview:

> No, no, it's OK, it will be fine (…). Don't worry (…).
> He thanks me repeatedly for being so kind.
> "In life sometimes we go in the wrong direction, all we can do is turn around and find our way again", I say to him.
> Hello, life coach on board.

That was a funny one :).

CONS

- **The Law of Attraction**

I am not a big fan of the law of attraction.
You can read my reviews of:

- The secret
- The Seven Spiritual Laws of Successs
- Get Rich Lucky Bitch

As a matter of fact, I believe the law of attraction is pure poison to female entrepreneurs.

Here is why I believe that male entrepreneurs earn more than women: because they focus on reality and how to optimize processes that make them more money, instead of wasting time in woo-woo BS

- **Create your champagne life?**

Who am I to criticize a couple of drinks and a posh lifestyle?
That can be fun.
And it can be a great life.
In a way, I also am a bit like that, enjoying beauty and the pleasures of life -just substitute champagne for wine-.

The problem with that type of marketing though is that it's not focused on work. And a book on entrepreneurship should be focused more on work.
Parading the "glitz lifestyle" encourages people to follow the glitz instead of positioning the glitz as a *byproduct* of your work and dedication.

In a way, it feels similar to Tai Lopez, who sells his products to men with cars and some hot babes around him.

Finally, to me, the champagne lifestyle not only sounds vain, but champagne is also a poor wine with too much sugar. Very unhealthy. You should probably cut out on that.
And should you make alcohol so central to your life? The author's own Twitter handle is "champagne diet". It might be your thing, but it ain't mine.

- **Supporting those who stole?**

The author talks about a female competitor who started copying her website, from the type of fonts, to the colors, to the content.

She was fuming.
But instead of suing her or warning her, she started supporting her.

I didn't find that particularly enlightening, and it seemed fake.

- **Sometimes competitive / angry**

I quote the author:

> Wisdom is meant to be shared, so let's start sharing what we've learned to make each other better. Let's start building each other up. Let's live up to our potential and **start ruling the world**.

Hmmm, these messages of "ruling the world" or, the male counterpart, "putting a dent on the universe" never appealed much to me.
They reek of narcissism and sociopathy.

PROS

- **Many interesting micro-interviews**

I enjoyed the many interviews. I enjoyed them because they are not with super famous women, but it's with accomplished female entrepreneurs who have been successful in their field, but from whom you would not have heard otherwise.

Maybe they're running a personal business like ThePowerMoves, but you wouldn't hear of the cool things they are doing if it wasn't for "The Girl Code".

- **The story of the lost drivers: an educative story for**

Cara's story when her driver lost his way to her TV appointment was both funny, entertaining, and educative. At a human level. The way she dealt with the driver, with compassion and kindness, is a model for us to follow.

Plus, when she said "hello, life coach on board", it capped a great story with a great job.

To me, that was the high point of the book.

- **Positive message on dropping jealousy**

I like the author recognizes jealousy as normal. And it's a good thing she advises to move past it.
Also read:

- Signs of a frenemy

Review

The content is similar to many other books, but the presentation is unique.

When it comes to "forming a circle of women", I'm not the biggest fan.
If you have read some of my reviews of "Lean In" types of books, you will know that I am not a big fan of this "there's a special place in hell for women who don't support each other".

I find that mindset sectarian, tribalist, backward… And toxic.
It's just one step before the equivalent male groups who congregate with each other to hate on women (see: "the psychology of the Red Pill").

Luckily, "Girl Code" has much wisdom that goes well beyond the "women together".
Many of the success stories, of course, are equally relevant to men.

To me, the best takeaways are the interviews and the mini case studies. I loved them because they were not on the huge successes, but more on lesser-known women who still made their dreams a reality.
That shows readers that achieving your dreams through your entrepreneurial journey is easier -and more common- than one might think.

Check the best books for entrepreneurs or **get the book on Amazon**

10 Best Business Books for Women

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

If you are looking for the best business books for women to help you launch your career -or business- you have come to the right place.

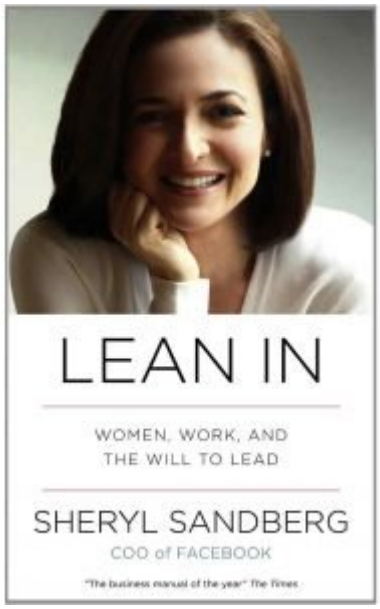
I have read a ton of them while researching for my course.
This post will also include the best career books for women, and the best books for female founders (ie.: best entrepreneurship books for women).

So let's start:

Contents

- #11. Lean In
- #10. #Girlboss
- #9. Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office
- #8. Workplace Poker
- #7. Secrets of Six Figure Women
- #6. The Confidence Code
- #5. Radical Candor
- #4. Hardball for Women
- #3. The Myth of The Nice Girl
- #2. How Women Rise
- #1. Power University

#11. Lean In



By Sheryl Sandberg
Summary | Audiobook

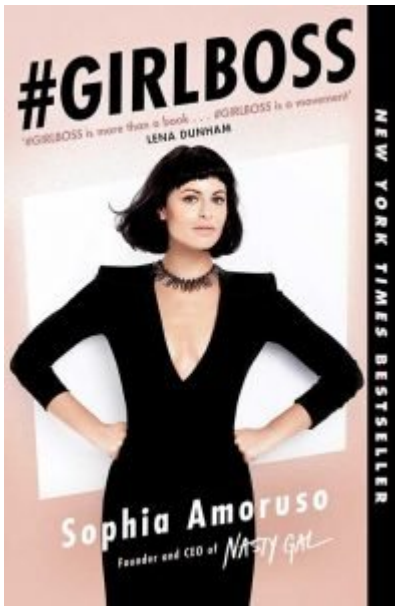
If "The Prince" should be in any list of books about power, then Lean In should be in any list of business or career

books for women.
“Lean In” is the Godfath… Godmother of them all, and almost all other authors in this list mention Sheryl Sandberg, or quote her or some passages of this book.

When it comes to actual content, “Lean In” abounds on feminist-type of advice, somewhat at the detriment of practical advice. The reason why **it’s more feminist and less practical** is the reason why it doesn’t feature higher. It’s also more suited for business women than female founders, since Sandberg seems more the type of woman who functions well within a structure, rather than in the chaos of *creating* that structure from scratch.

> Quote: “Done is better than perfect.”

#10. #Girlboss



By Sophia Amoruso
Summary | Audiobook

Now, here is a book from an entrepreneur, to female entrepreneurs.

I truly enjoyed Amoruso’s story because, in many ways, it was also my story. Not particularly enjoying being in someone else’s organization, struggling to fit in… And finally realizing that the only way out is finding and carving your own way.

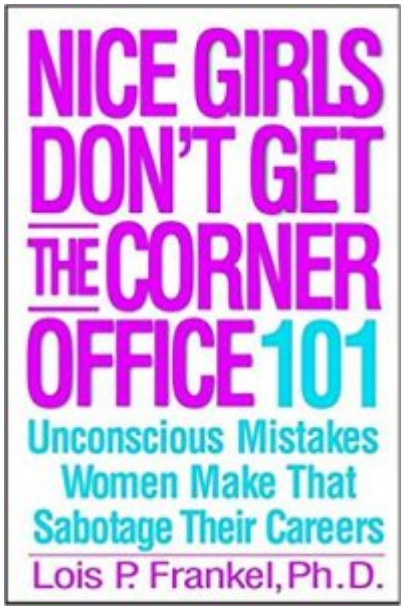
If you’re a female entrepreneur who always felt at odds being a “business woman” in someone’s organization, then this is your book.

Similar to #GirlBoss, also:

- The Girl Code
- How to Be a Bawse (removed from the website)

> Quote: “The only way to support a revolution is to make your own.”

#9. Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office



By Lois Frankel
Summary | Audiobook

Lois Frankel nailed the title here.
Books like "The Power of the Pussy", "Why Men Love Bitches" and "Fuck Him" owe their success in good part to their titles.

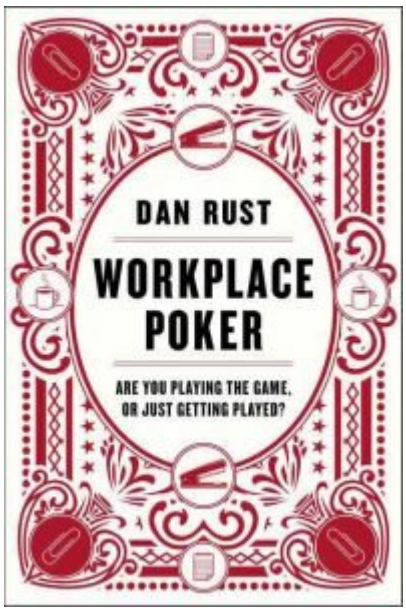
Luckily for us, Lois Frankel didn't just come up with a good title, but also wrote top-notch content.
In this career book for women, Frankel focuses on what many women are doing wrong to truly compete in a man's world. Frankel describes 101 mindsets and behaviors that are holding women back, while providing practical advice on how to fix each one of them.

Personally, I find that in her quest to make women more assertive, Frankel's advice might sometimes end up being "aggressive" instead of assertive.
But if you have enough emotional intelligence to tell the difference, then you are going to learn hugely from this book. I certainly have, and I took out a lot of wisdom for my own course.

Most of all, I liked her simple, yet genius insight of "be less of a girl, and more of a woman".
Thus my choice of quote:

> Quote: "Success comes not from acting more like a man, as some might lead you to believe, but by acting more like a woman instead of a girl".

#8. Workplace Poker

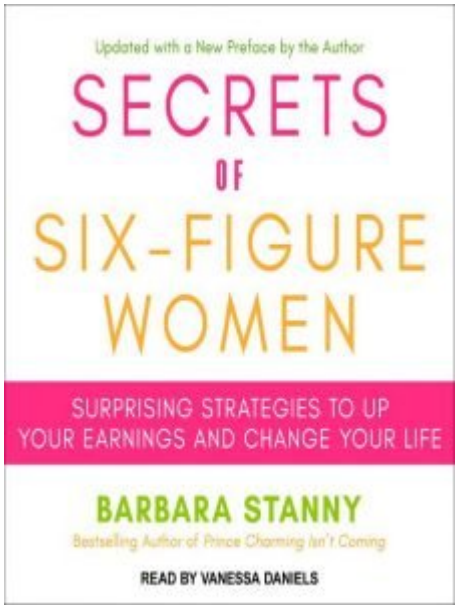


By Dan Rust
Summary | Audiobook

Albeit not exclusively addressed to women, I had to sneak this one in here.
It's one of the best books on career strategies I have read, and its advice applies to men as much as to women.

> Quote: It may not seem fair or right. Shouldn't doing an exceptional job be enough? Unfortunately it's not.

#7. Secrets of Six Figure Women



By Barbara Stanny
Summary | Audiobook

This is both for female founders and career women, since Stanny does not focus on one or another, but simply goes after women who make more than six figures a year.

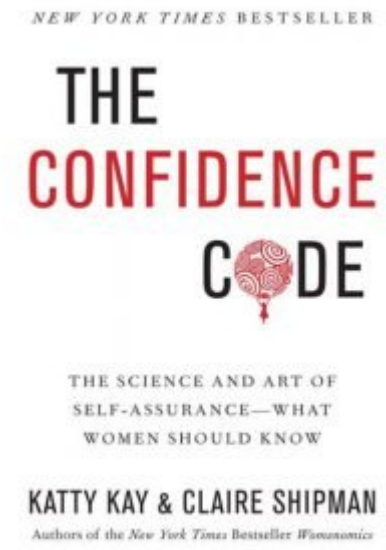
The book is a mix of self-help, personal finance advice, and business advice. Stanny interviews many successful women who each share personal details of their successes and struggles, ranging from career, to intimate

relationships, to addictions. And while I am not usually a big fan of books structured as interviews, this a standout exception, as Stanny masterfully weaves the case studies within the frameworks of effective money management.

The only bit I didn't like was the law of attraction. Luckily, it was just a short passage, and this is one of the best all-rounders on the mindsets of success, female empowerment, and financial abundance for women.

> Quote: I've learned that I have to be the one responsible for my money. It has been painful to come to that. But with that pain came pride, because I now feel I don't have to depend on anyone. **This money buys me freedom**. I don't need my husband. I could do just fine financially. But I want to be with him because I love him.

#6. The Confidence Code



By Katty Kay & Claire Shipman
Summary | Audiobook

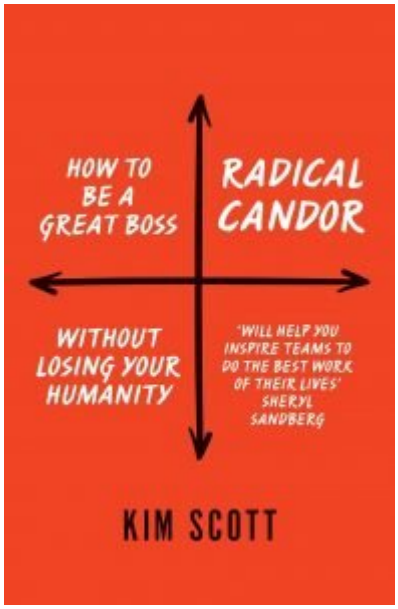
Confidence.
How often have you heard that word?
Sometimes it feels like in the self-help industry, especially for men, everything can be fixed with more confidence.

Yet, as much as we can all be tired of the confidence mantra, as the authors point out in this book, it *is* important. It's particularly important because confidence is what allows you to take that first step, to get going, and to compound action over time.
And it can be especially important for women, who often suffer of confidence shortage compared to men.

The authors not only delve deep into the research literature, but they also have plenty of advice on how to make up for that gap.

> Quote: We're saying that there's a third way. We don't always have to speak first; we can listen, and incorporate what others say (…) We can pass credit around, and we can avoid alienating potential enemies. We can speak calmly but carry a smart message (…) Confidence, for many of us, can even be quiet. Any of that might be the way confident behavior looks for women.

#5. Radical Candor



By Kim Scott
Summary | Audiobook

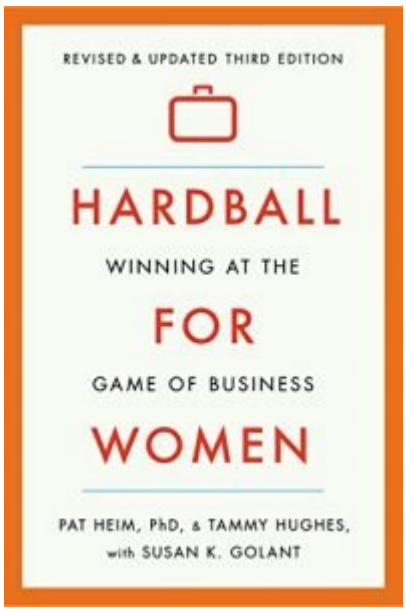
Kim Scott is a very successful businesswoman. And she even worked for Lean In author Sheryl Sandberg. Hence, some gender-issues were sure to find their way in.
But not in your typical "women should help other women" kind of way. Kim Scott treats gender issues as much as she treats anything else: respect people, not matter their gender or beliefs, while also for maximum efficiency.

Indeed, "Radical Candor" is for women as much as it is for men. It's one of the best books on leadership and effective corporate culture I have ever read.

I liked Kim Scott's approach.
She also says that men must overcome their biases to be gentler towards women. And as much as that might sound strange for those who haven't grasped her mindset yet, that's the true mindset of an empowered woman. Because women can take as much harsh feedback as men can, and they need it as much as men do, if we want to help them grow.
That's the type of feminism I like.
Here is in Kim's own words:

> Quote: Most men are trained from birth to be "gentler" with women. Sometimes this can be very bad for women (…). The most sexist man I ever worked for was invariably far more reluctant to criticize me than the men who worked for him. He lived in mortal fear of making me cry. He made plenty of men who worked for him cry, but that didn't seem to register with him.

#4. Hardball for Women



By Pat Heim & Tammy Hughes
Summary | Audiobook

Now that's a befitting title for a website called "ThePowerMoves".

And boy, does Pat Heim both understands and well explains power dynamics. More than one author in this list took more than a proverbial leaf out of her book. And for good reasons: "Hardball for Women" is a classic.

Ladies, if you need to learn how to play the game the way the boys do, and most businesses at the top-level play a boys' game, this is your book.
Even as a non-novice, I learned a lot from this book and took out many lessons for this website's course "Power University".

The only reason it doesn't feature higher is that sometimes I missed the mix of strength with femininity.

> Quote: Power is an uncomfortable subject for many. In fact, women tell us they don't want to deal with that "power stuff" because they aren't "power hungry." They act as if power is a social disease to be avoided at all costs.
> (But)
> Simply stated, power is the ability to get things done. If you don't have power, you're going to be ineffectual at work.

#3. The Myth of The Nice Girl

By Fran Hauser
Summary | Audiobook

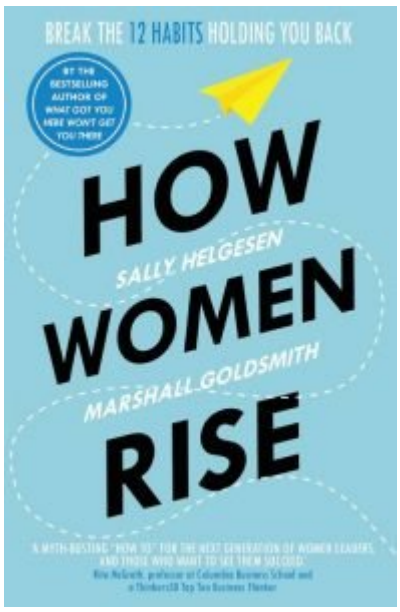
Can a “nice girl” make it in business, without becoming a “bitch”?

Sure she can, explains Fran Hauser.
What I like most is that this is not a literary work, like some books are, but it’s based on both solid research, and her own successful experience as a media executive, an investor, and a mentor and advocate for women in business.

Of course, “nice” cannot mean “pushover”, and Fran well explains the difference in her book.
But the bottom line is: a woman can be herself, remain kind, and achieve success.
That’s a very important message.

> Quote: In fact, as I learned to own my natural kindness, it has become my professional superpower.
> It has helped me build my personal confidence; the loyalty of those who’ve worked with me; and a strong, trusting, faithful network of colleagues, mentors, and mentees.

#2. How Women Rise



By Sally Helgesen & Marshall Goldsmith
Summary | Audiobook

"How Women Rise" lists 12 habits that are most likely to affect women and prevent them from rising in their business, their career, and their life as well.
For each habit, there are case studies of women who them, together with how they did it, and how it's helping them flourish.

The are many reasons why I liked this book, and one of them is the expertise that Goldsmith, one of the authors, brings on male leadership.
So you don't just learn about typically female strengths and weaknesses, but also about the typical male stumbling block, so that you can compare.
That's also helpful because not all women are equipped with the stereotypical female brain. A few women, some say around 10%, have more stereotypical male brains. With this book, you can cover both bases.

Finally, another great plus of "How Women Rise" is that it encourages women to also hold on to their more stereotypically feminine traits since they also are advantages. They can make for a better life, and a better a world. I couldn't agree more. Hence the quote that I picked:

> Quote: Certain characteristics emerge: diligence, conscientiousness, a concern for the feelings and contributions of others, and a reluctance to join the it's-all-about-me competition that characterizes life and politics in many organizations.
> These are good things, (…) gifts you bring to the world. (…) And since part of your success will ultimately be helping to make your organization, and the world, a better place, you don't want to leave these strengths behind as you move higher.

#1. Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano
Course Curriculum

Take this with a grain of salt, because Workplace Power is the work module of this website's flagship course.

The course combines all the best wisdom from all these books and more, plus the latest research, delivered with videos, pictures, quizzes, and infographics, so you can learn better with visual examples.

Also Worth a Read:

- Bad Blood: Not the example you want to learn from. But as someone said, a (bad) woman can play the exact same game as a male sociopath. Vicious, power-hungry, and ruthless
- The No Asshole Rule: The N.1 rule for a healthy business culture and a healthy team environment: don't tolerate assholes
- Principles: company culture and company systems from a guy who built a multi-billion company
- Best entrepreneurship books: there are a few gender differences that, yes, do justify reading at least a few books written specifically for women. But you can also learn plenty from books written by men, for a more gender-neutral audience

Avoid These Business Books for Women:

- Get Rich Lucky Bitch, "Lucky Bitch", "The Secret", and all the woo-woo BS based on the law of attraction, high-frequency vibrations, and "willing things into life"

No, don't get rich with lucky bitch, get real instead.

No dissing to those authors, I don't know them and as far as I know, they might be wonderful human beings.

What I have issues with, is the content of those books.

Lemme be frank here: one of the least appreciated reasons men are more successful in business is this: **men make more money in business because men don't waste time with woo-woo BS** and focus instead of what's been proven to work.
It's not a chance that Ray Dalio, who prides himself on being a hyper-realist, built the most efficient decision-making process, to fuel the most effective trading company in the world.

How Women Rise Review: A Power Audit of Status-Lowering Habits (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

How Women Rise (2018) teaches women how to overcome the most typical female stumbling blocks, so that they can advance in their career.

TPM Strategic Audit: Divergent power failures between men and women
This text provides divergent power failures between men and women within corporate hierarchies. While ambitious men's political mistakes stem from excessive ego-signaling (dominance-seeking), women's habits are often rooted in excessive pro-social signaling (submission-leaning). This text can provide good insights on avoiding common pitfalls and striking a more effective 'optimum balance'

Contents

- Summary
  - Issues Men Have
  - Issues Common to Both Men and Women
  - Issues Women Have
  - The Positives of The Negatives
  - Forget Deep Connection AND Useful Ones
  - Women Can Make for Better Leaders of Teams?
  - Change Beliefs to Change Behaviors
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- Review

Summary

About the Authors:
Marshall Goldsmith is a business executive coach, and Sally Helgesen is a leadership development consultant. They are both authors and both have a long experience coaching and training on career strategies and development.

Issues Men Have

1. **Winning too much:** The need to win at all costs and in all situations -when it matters, when it doesn't, and when it's totally beside the point-
2. **Adding too much value:** The overwhelming desire to add our two cents to every discussion
3. **Passing judgment:** The need to rate others and impose our standards on them
4. **Making destructive comments:** The needless sarcasms and cutting remarks that we think make us sound sharp and witty
5. **Starting with "No," "But," or "However":** The overuse of these negative qualifiers which secretly say to everyone, "I'm right. You're wrong"
6. **Telling the world how smart we are:** The need to show people we're smarter than they think we are
7. **Speaking when angry:** Using emotional volatility as a management tool
8. **Negativity, or "Let me explain why that won't work":** The need to share our negative thoughts even when we weren't asked

9. **Withholding information:** The refusal to share information in order to maintain an advantage over others
10. **Failing to give proper recognition:** The inability to praise and reward
11. **Claiming credit that we don't deserve:** The most annoying way to overestimate our contribution to any success
12. **Making excuses:** The need to reposition our annoying behavior as a permanent fixture so people excuse us for it
13. **Clinging to the past:** The need to deflect blame away from ourselves and onto events and people from our past; a subset of blaming everyone else
14. **Playing favorites:** Failing to see that we are treating someone unfairly
15. **Refusing to express regret:** The inability to take responsibility for our actions, admit we're wrong, or recognize how our actions affect others
16. **Not listening:** The most passive-aggressive form of disrespect for colleagues
17. **Failing to express gratitude:** The most basic form of bad manners
18. **Punishing the messenger:** The misguided need to attack the innocent who are usually only trying to help us
19. **Passing the buck:** The need to blame everyone but ourselves
20. **An excessive need to be "me":** Exalting our faults as virtues simply because they're who we are

Read more:

- **Dominant behavior** and how to calibrate it
- **Dominant speaking** and how to calibrate it

Issues Common to Both Men and Women

1. Winning too much
2. Telling the world how smart you are
3. Claiming credit you don't deserve
4. Failing to give others proper recognition
5. Using anger as a management tool
6. Refusing to express regret
7. Failing to express gratitude
8. Passing the buck

Issues Women Have

1. **Reluctance to claim your achievements:** false belief that not taking credit is "morally superior". It's not, and it's just another excuse for staying in your comfort zone. The higher you go, the more this will hold you back
2. **Expecting others to spontaneously notice and reward your contributions:** you must ask for what you want, let people know you intend to advance. The strategy of "doing good work, keeping your mouth shut and expecting others to notice you" will keep you stuck forever. And you will grow resentful of a job that might have otherwise fulfilled you
3. **Overvaluing expertise**
4. **Just building rather than building and leveraging relationships:** don't fall for the black and white mindset that you're either pure with "real" friendships or a conniver who uses people. The truth is that relationships are a give and take, and you will both gain more with a give and take (see: "the law of social exchange")
5. **Failure to enlist allies from day one**

6. **Putting your job before your career:** some women feel such a strong loyalty to the team or their boss that they fail to take better opportunities somewhere else. Always remember to network outside of your team as well
7. **The perfection trap**
8. **The disease to please**
9. **Minimizing:** taking less space, downplaying one's own achievements
10. **Too much:** showing too much emotions, or disclosing too much personal information
11. **Ruminating**: women tend to ruminate and self-blame
12. **Letting your radar distract you**: women have a tendency to pick up more cues from the environment, while men -and most businesses- appreciate laser-focus concentration

The Positives of The Negatives

Helgesen correctly notes that all the 12 harmful habits are also rooted in positive

- Habit 1, Reluctance to Claim Your Achievements, is rooted in modesty and a willingness to acknowledge the achievements of others
- Habit 2, Expecting Others to Spontaneously Notice and Reward Your Contributions, is rooted in a reluctance to showboat or behave like a self-promoting jerk
- Habit 3, Overvaluing Expertise, is rooted in a healthy respect for all the skills your job requires and the willingness to work hard to master them
- Habit 4, Building Rather Than Leveraging Relationships, is rooted in the conviction that you should value others for who they are rather than how they can be of use to you
- Habit 5, Failing to Enlist Allies from Day One, is rooted in the belief that you should not call on others for help until you've done your homework and know the parameters of your job
- Habit 6, Putting Your Job Before Your Career, is rooted in the desire to demonstrate loyalty and commitment
- Habit 7, The Perfection Trap, is rooted in the desire not to disappoint others, along with a commitment to making the world a better place
- Habit 8, The Disease to Please, is rooted in an unselfish passion for making other people happy
- Habit 9, Minimizing, is rooted in an awareness of other people's needs and the wish to show them that you value their presence and insights
- Habit 10, Too Much, is rooted in the quest to be authentic and connect with others based on shared experience
- Habit 11, Ruminating, is rooted in the capacity for thinking deeply about what matters most to you
- Habit 12, Letting Your Radar Distract You, is rooted in the ability to understand what others are feeling and a broad-scale, making you intuitive and empathic

Say the author:

> These are good things. They are gifts you bring to the world (…) And since part of your success will ultimately be helping to make your organization, and the world, a better place, you don't want to leave these strengths behind as you move higher and expand your scope.

The author add that the world needs more women in positions of leadership. More women who also carry their feminine qualities and traits with them.

Forget Deep Connection AND Useful Ones

The authors rightly point out that strong work relationships in which you both gain are not antithetical to deep and intimate relationships.

Women can carry their natural skills for deeper relationships and use them to their advantage at work.
They say:

> Don't get the idea that we're urging you to undervalue your gift for intimacy or rein in your warmth and concern for others in favor of a more leveraged approach. Instead, you might think about how to bring your skills for forging deep connections into play as you seek *also* to become more intentional in building relationships that may be advantageous to you in the future.

Women Can Make for Better Leaders of Teams?

Men are, on average, more hellbent to win than women are.

That can make the transition from achiever to team and organization leader more challenging for them or the team. These competitive men may remain stuck in competitive mode, failing to realize that now that now they also need to take care of the team.

Women can make for better team leaders because they care less about winning for themselves, and more about winning for their teams and organizations.

Write the authors:

> This reluctance to view money, position, and winning as chief arbiters of success is psychologically healthy for women and great for their teams and organizations.

On the other hand, as the authors point out, when women are too little invested in their own success, and when they go overboard in self-sacrificing, then they end up harming their own career chances and they never move up the corporate ladder.

This is not just theory, but shows up in the data as well. Say the authors:

> Marshall's experience conducting 360-degree feedback consistently shows that women in organizations are perceived as being more effective leaders than men.

TPM Note: 'Better' leadership is highly contextual!
More typical masculine forms of leadership better fit certain contexts, including uncertainty, risks, or higher-dominance environments. And the other way around for more typically feminine approaches.

Change Beliefs to Change Behaviors

A few beliefs in them that prevents them from changing into a more assertive stance include:

- **Ambition is a bad thing**: see above
- **Being a good person means not disappointing others**: some women let others control and manipulate them via their desire to please (see: soft power)
- **Women should always be role models for other women:** an especially pernicious and dangerous belief for minority women, whom sometimes also carry the burden of "doing the right thing" for their race as well

Read more:

- **Assertiveness guide**

> Assertiveness: Definition, Examples & How to Be Assertive

More Wisdom

- **As a manager, focus on networking**: doing an excellent job as a manager will only keep you stuck in the internally-facing position. You must network as a manager to make it to exec cadre
- **Pleasing for women works well early on, but it harms them later on**: some women might not realize that pleasing is an issue early because it can actually help them. But as they advance in their career, it can become detrimental. Being unable to say no and enforce boundaries is especially risky for their emotional and physical well being
- **Avoid personal disclosure**: women bond by disclosing personal information, while men bond doing things together. Women can end up oversharing at work, and looking unprofessional

Quotes

On how a woman realized of her own problem from her own description (ie.: she was too much about the process of her work, and too little about politics):

> "The first thing you need to know," said Heidi, "is that I'm not like a lot of the guys here. They never think about the bank. They think about themselves, what they can get out of working here. They're up front about it, so they spend more time angling for promotions than doing their jobs.
> That's not my way. Delivering the best work I can is more important to me than schmoozing or playing politics. I think more about this institution than I do about my own career."
> She paused for a moment, then added thoughtfully, "Maybe that's my problem?"

Review

"How Women Rise" is a valuable book to understand the most stereotypical habits that hold women back.

I learned a ton from it and used some of this information for this course's website.
Hence, I can highly recommend it.

Check the:

- **The businesswoman's guide** to succeed in male organizations
- **How to be feminine and powerful**, at the same time

What Got You Here Won't Get You There: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

What Got You Here Won't Get You There teaches successful and ambitious executives how to go from an already high level of career success, to an even higher level.
Often, explains author Goldsmith, it's about overcoming the false belief that one's own success justifies doing the same things we've always done.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: Some good reminders, but the main focus must be on power and strategies
Goldsmith focuses on political pitfalls and self-development, which are, of course, valid. However, progress at the highest levels is power-focused, not just 'being a better human'. Including exuding **executive skills** (ie. 'coming across as a competent, high-agency 'alpha male type'), forging alliances, and smart strategies.
See our **career strategies hub ↗**

Contents

- Notes
  - If You're Stuck, Personal Change Is What You Need
  - What's Stopping Top-Execs From Getting to The Next Level
  - To Change People, Leverage Their Self-Interest
  - Successful People Want Power
  - People Get Rewarded for What They Do, Rarely For What They Avoid
  - Ask for Feedback, Especially With Your Most Important Relationships
  - You Don't Need to Become The Best At It, You Just Need to Improve It
  - More Wisdom
  - Quotes
- What's Missing: Optimized Power
  - Review

Notes

About the Author:
Marshall Goldsmith is an American leadership coach. He learned and trained under famed management consultant Peter Drucker, author of "The Effective Executive". Goldsmith is the author of several career and management-related books, including "How Women Rise".

If You're Stuck, Personal Change Is What You Need

Successful people can get stuck because they believe that:

> Since I succeeded, I must be good. Hence, all I'm doing must be good

So sometimes it can be hard to make successful and driven people understand that they can improve… By changing this or that.

TPM Note: You may need to change company, instead of changing yourself
Remember that this is a catch-all generic advice that many not apply to everyone. You may already be a top-contributor that would be better rewarded somewhere else. If you're stuck in the same company, the issue is not necessarily you, but a lack of opportunities, or someone above you who's blocking you. A lateral move may be your

best next bet. Or a new opportunity that gives you negotiation leverage

What's Stopping Top-Execs From Getting to The Next Level

Goldsmith's tips come down to avoiding disempowering others and showing more respect, including:

1. **Winning too much:** The need to be the alpha male or alpha female at all times. The need win at all costs and in all situations, even when it doesn't matter, or when the costs outweigh the benefits.
2. **Adding too much value:** This isn't really about adding value, but to always add opinions and overpowering others
3. **Passing judgment:** The need to rate others and impose our standards on them
4. **Making destructive comments:** The needless sarcasm and cutting remarks that we think make us sound sharp and witty <— **TPM Note**: remember that criticism is a powerful tool to display superior competence or thinking. It's how about how and when you do it, not about not doing it
5. **Starting with "No," "But," or "However":** It's the opposite of low-power talk, these secretly says to everyone, "I'm right. You're wrong".
   See: **how to speak with power**.
6. **Telling the world how smart we are:** The need to show people we're smarter than they think we are
7. **Speaking when angry:** Using emotional volatility as a management tool
8. **Negativity, or "Let me explain why that won't work":** The need to share our negative thoughts even when we weren't asked
9. **Withholding information:** The refusal to share information in order to maintain an advantage over others <— **TPM Note**: this is a dangerous generalization. Be strategic, not naive
10. **Failing to give proper recognition:** The inability to praise and reward
11. **Claiming credit that we don't deserve:** The most annoying way to overestimate our contribution to any success
12. **Making excuses:** The need to reposition our annoying behavior as a permanent fixture so people excuse us for it
13. **Playing favorites:** Failing to see that we are treating someone unfairly
14. **Refusing to express regret:** The inability to take responsibility for our actions, admit we're wrong, or recognize how our actions affect others
15. **Not listening:** The most passive-aggressive form of disrespect for colleagues
16. **Failing to express gratitude:** The most basic form of bad manners
17. **Punishing the messenger:** The misguided need to attack the innocent who are usually only trying to help us
18. **An excessive need to be "me":** Exalting our faults as virtues simply because they're who we are

The author says that Machiavelli might turn these habits around and say it's exactly what makes these people succeed.
But that's not the case, because enlisting people as allies, in the long run, is a better strategy for success.
Also read:

- Strategies for long-term power

TPM Note: Effective Machiavellianism isn't about over-selfishness and cynicism; it's about strategic effectiveness
While it's true that over-doing selfishness and dominance undermines you, true Machiavellianism is never over-doing it, but in *contextual application*. And of course, while not disempowering others is crucial ('power protecting'), some men must focus on *getting* more respect.

Read:

- **How to be a good Machiavellian**

To Change People, Leverage Their Self-Interest

Robert Greene, author of "The 48 Laws of Power" said that you'd better appeal to self-interest.
And Goldsmith says that to help people change, you must present change in a way that helps them get more of what they want.
As the author put it, "you", that's their "hot button".

Luckily, he says, successful people all have the same hot buttons.

Successful People Want Power

Says the author:

> Fortunately, successful people make it easy to find the button.
> If you press people to identify the motives behind their self-interest, it usually boils down to four items: money, power, status, and popularity.
> These are the standard payoffs for success. It's why we will claw and scratch for a raise (money), for a promotion (power), for a bigger title and office (status). It's why so many of us have a burning need to be liked by everyone (popularity).

People Get Rewarded for What They Do, Rarely For What They Avoid

People usually get promoted and rewarded for what they do, but not for all the equally positive things they stop doing, or for the bad deals they stall.

The CEO of Warner made history for the worst merger in US history when, at the height of the .com bubble merged with AOL.
The funny thing?
If he had stopped that merger at the last minute, everyone would have soon forgotten about it.

Ask for Feedback, Especially With Your Most Important Relationships

It's funny how some people manage to muster the courage to ask for feedback at work.

But they still never ask for feedback in the relationships that matter the most to them, with their parents, children, or spouses.
There is a psychological stumbling block stopping us: We figure if we don't ask for critiques of our behavior, then no one has anything critical to say.

The author, for example, asked his daughter what she'd like to see more from him.
The answer shocked him: they didn't complain that he wasn't home for business trips, but that when he was home, he wasn't spending quality time with them, but instead watching sports or being generally absent.

TPM Note: Mix self-promotion with seeking critical feedback
The truth is that focusing on 'what we must improve' only frames you as a learner-beginner, and beginners don't advance. High authority, self-confident experts advance.
See: **smart self-promotion strategies** ↗

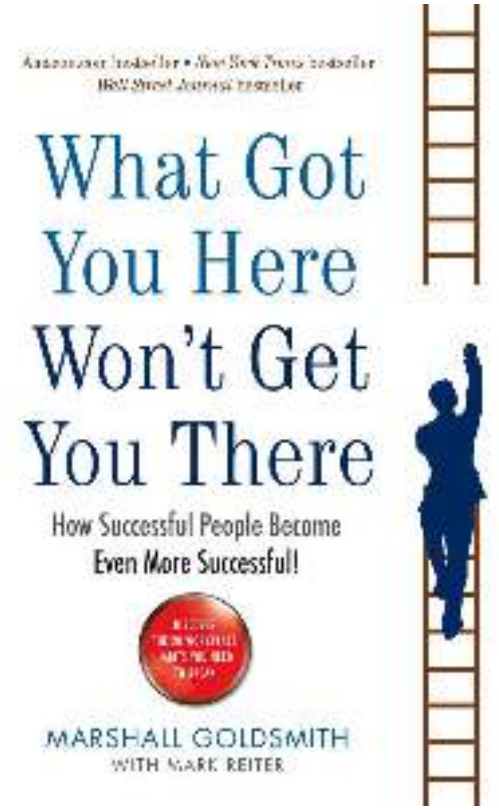
You Don't Need to Become The Best At It, You Just Need to Improve It

Some people don't work on themselves because they think they will never get great at it.
Well, fuck that, you don't necessarily need to become great at it, you just need to get better.

That message alone bumped this book up to 4 stars.

Say the author:

> The same applies to your task of changing your behavior.
> Pick one issue that matters and "attack" it until it doesn't matter anymore. If you're a bad listener, choose to become a better listener—not the best listener in the world (whatever that means!). If you don't share information, get better at sharing until it's not an issue anymore



More Wisdom

- **The higher you go, the more it's about people skills:** says the author: "who would you rather have as a CFO? A moderately good accountant who is great with people outside the firm and skilled at managing very smart people? Or a brilliant accountant who's inept with outsiders and alienates all the smart people under him?"
- **If you ask for feedback, don't give your opinion right away**: or it will seem like you never wanted to consider their opinion anyway. Instead, ask questions to let them share even more
- **What people want changes by age:** *People in their 20s want to learn on the job. In their 30s they want to advance. And in their 40s they want to rule.*
- **Bosses prefer praise to criticism**: so watch for giving "radical candor" feedback

Quotes

On withholding information to accrue power:

> The problem with not sharing information—for whatever reason—is that it rarely achieves the desired effect.

> You may think you're gaining an edge and consolidating power, but you're actually breeding mistrust. In order to have power, you need to inspire loyalty rather than fear and suspicion. Withholding information is nothing more than a misplaced need to win.

How the author convinced an executive to start the coaching relationship:

> As I told you, I can't help you make more money. But I can get you to confront this question: Do you really want to have a funeral where you're the featured attraction and the only attendees are people who came to make sure you're dead?
> Basically, that's where you're headed.

Some good realpolitik wisdom some people need to hear:

> Criticizing the boss, no matter how ardently he or she tells you to "bring it on," is rarely a great career move.

On the relativity of top performance:

> I take great comfort in the fact that Michael Jordan, to many the best basketball player to ever play the game, was a mediocre baseball player in the minor leagues and, as a golfer, would have a tough time keeping up with at least twenty golfers who live within an 800 yard radius of my home in San Diego.

What's Missing: Optimized Power

While the advice is solid, the book tends to be a 'be a better human' guide, applying general self-help to career success.

The problem with generic self-help is that it's often *naive* self-help, missing out foundational personal and interpersonal power with body language and behavior, and the more strategic aspects of power intelligence, including optimized dark-triad traits, strategic thinking.

And while Goldsmith is right that many men who come close to the top tend may tend to be overly-dominance, that's not always the case.
The issue may still be respect, of course.
What may be holding some men back instead is not necessarily respecting others more, but *getting* more respect and being more **positively dominant**.

Review

"What Got You Here Won't Get You There" is a good book for already successful people who'd like to improve.

It only focuses mostly on personal self-development and preventing largely beginner-like interpersonal mistakes though, missing **office politics**, interpersonal dominance, and strategies.

Check the:

- Best career books
- **How to develop executive skills**

10 Best Books to Advance Your Career

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

If you want to launch your career, you have come to the right place.

Luckily, career strategy books abound.

Unluckily, many of them are based on either embellished biographies, or based on what I call the "utopian workplace", such as the non-existent workplace that only rewards merit and contribution.

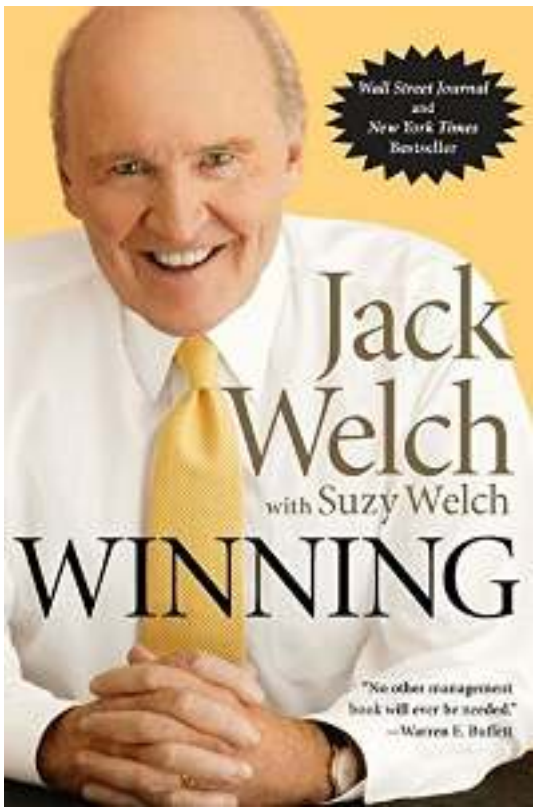
Fortunately, there are a few good career books to learn the equally important "other side of the coin", which consists of politics, power dynamics, and career strategies based on the real world.

Here are the best ones:

Contents

- 11. Winning
- 10. The 48 Laws of Power
- 9. Bad Blood
- 8. What Color Is Your Parachute
- 7. The Secret Handshake
- 6. Secrets to Winning at Office Politics
- 5. Hardball for Women
- 4. Stealing the Corner Office
- 3. Workplace Poker
- 2. Power
- 1. Power University

11. Winning



By Jack Welch
Summary | Amazon

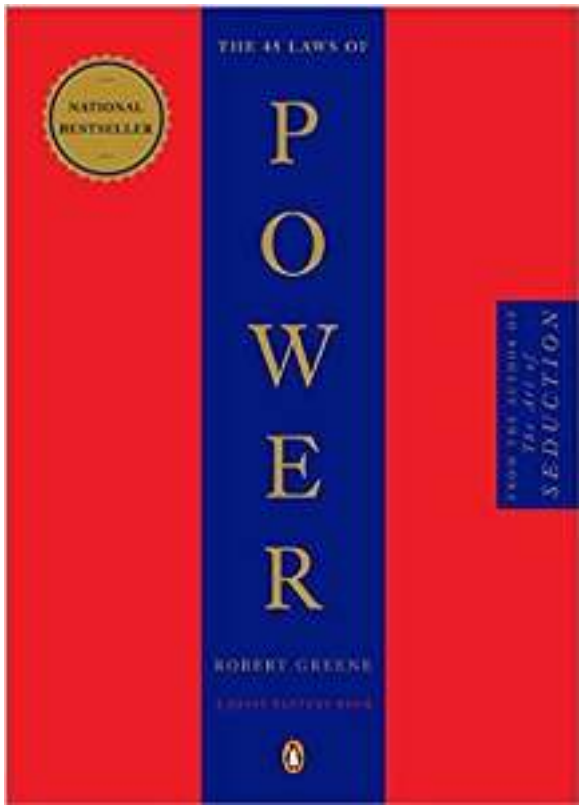
Jack Welch knows a thing or two about having a good career.

He's had a legendary career himself, he promoted lots of people into great careers, and he also destroyed a few people's careers.

The biggest takeaway from Jack Welch? Embrace change.
It's the senior management and the CEO who want that change. When you refuse change, you are bucking the most powerful people in your organization.
Embrace change, instead, and the most powerful people might take you upward in their powerful embrace.

> Quote: Don't just pay for hands when you can also have brains – for free

10. The 48 Laws of Power



By Robert Greene
Summary | Audiobook

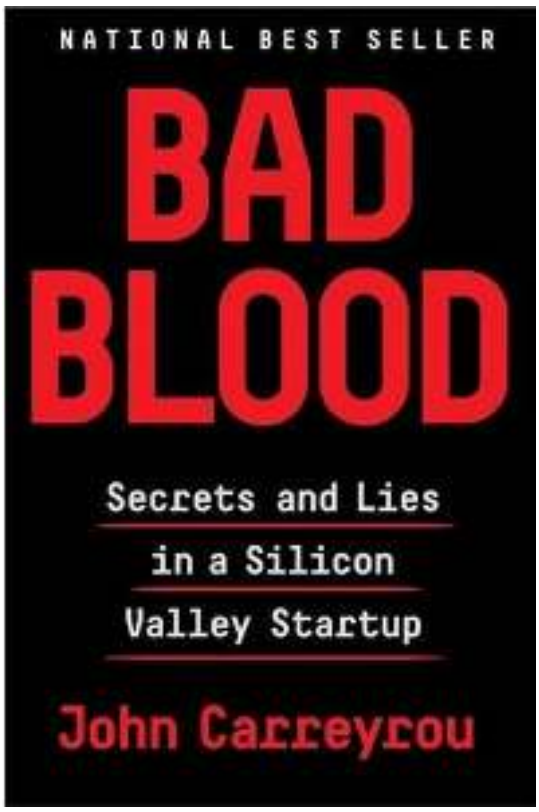
The 48 Laws of Power is not strictly aimed at career success, but it will help you to start thinking in terms of power dynamics, strategies, and realpolitik.

Also good:

- Corporate Manipulation (article)
- The Prince

> Quote: Keep your friends for friendship, but work with the skilled and competent

9. Bad Blood



By John Carreyrou
Summary | Amazon

Someone said:

> The people who seek power are invariably the least suited to hold it

I don't think that's "invariably" true, but it's at least sometimes true.
Certainly in the case of Theranos, the company Elizabeth Holmes founded.

It's a good case study on looking beyond the PR, the corporate communication, the company slogans, and the media hype.
And if you look well, you will find a completely different reality behind those curtains.

In the case of Theranos, the disconnect between PR and reality was entertainingly extreme -that's what happens when you get a smart, power-hungry sociopath to fill the media's dream for a billionaire female founder-.

But it's a good cautionary tale that applies to most normal companies as well: don't believe the hype and the slogans, but learn the true power dynamics that govern boardrooms and careers' trajectories.

Staying on the topic of sociopaths in business, also good:

- The Art of The Deal
- Billion Dollar Whale

> Quote: (Holmes has) One of the most mature and well-honed sense of ethics
> -General Mattis
> P.S.: this quote is sarcastic

8. What Color Is Your Parachute

By Richard Bolles
Review (removed) | Audiobook

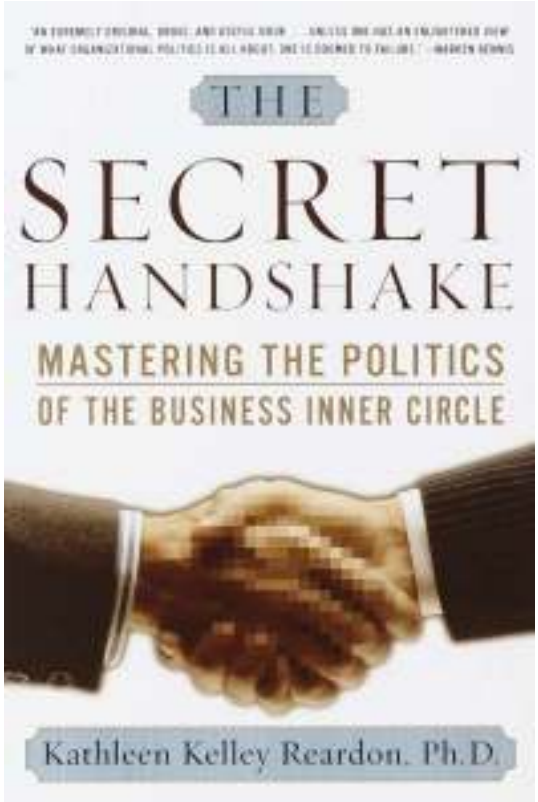
If you're looking for employment, this is a top option.

It will take you from A -finding out what you truly want- to Z -negotiating your salary-.

It's a minister who originally wrote, but it's certainly a down-to-earth minister who understood some basics of office politics and power dynamics.

> Quote: Employers sometimes feel as though they are a fraternity or sorority. During the interview you want to come across as one who displays courtesy toward all members of that fraternity or sorority.

7. The Secret Handshake



By Kathleen K. Reardon
Summary | Amazon

Such an underrated little gem.

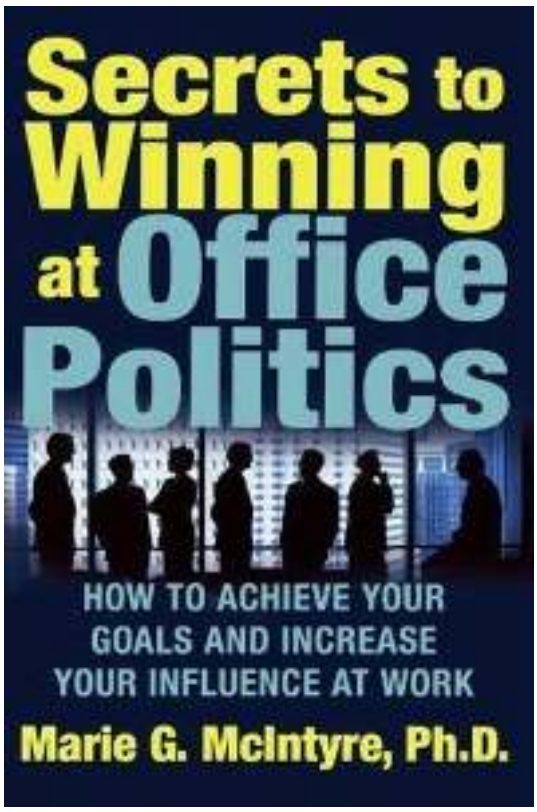
I am grateful to professor Reardon for how much she taught me on frames, frame control for professional environments, and political maneuvering.

The central idea of this book is simple, yet genius as much as it is true.
The "secret handshake theory" is one of the most important unwritten rules of success: to join the successful executives, you must look and behave like you're a successful executive. And that entails learning all the non-written rules of how to behave like the successful guys, sending the correct messages they want to see.
People at the top only accept cool people within their group. And, ideally, cool people who are *like them*.
That's the "secret handshake".

And I couldn't agree more.

> Quote: Frankly, however, those in the inner circle of most companies are not looking to invite in Nervous Nellie and Jittery Jack, but rather people who can be highly productive while remaining poised, clearheaded, and objective at the same time.

6. Secrets to Winning at Office Politics



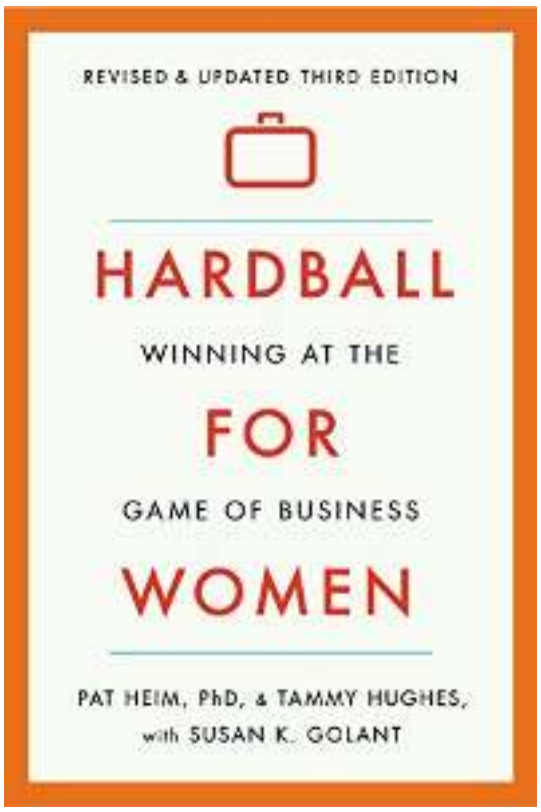
By Marie G. McIntyre
Summary | Amazon

Wouldn't it be nice if you knew how to map and assess the power of the people around?

That might be what I loved most in this book.
I built on McIntyre's work for the "power mapping guidelines" of Social Power.

> Quote: They are sucking up, scheming and manipulating, but we are building relationships, developing strategies, and opening communication channels.

5. Hardball for Women



By Pat Heim
Summary | Audiobook

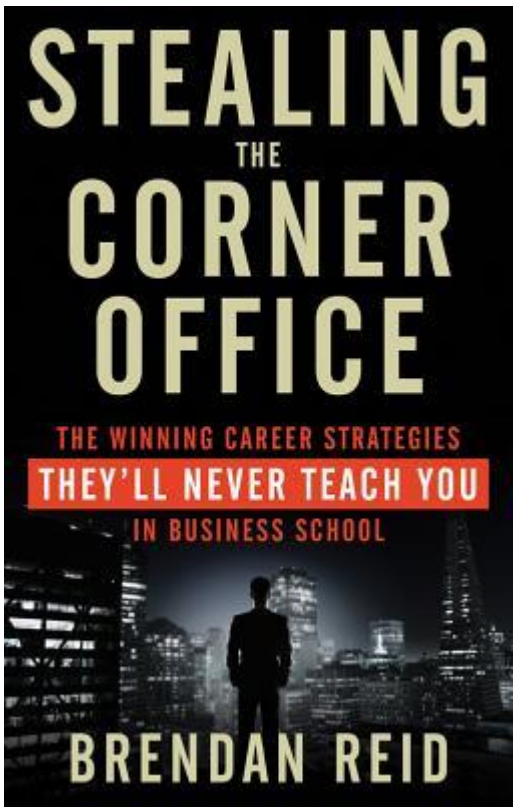
Don't let that title fool you.

Yes, it might be written and marketed for women. But trust me, anyone is going to learn hugely from this one. Pat Heim writes "Hardball for Women" to teach women how to function and win in a male-dominated culture. But since she's talking about the ambitious, executive-level male culture, this is almost a mandatory read for anyone who wants to make it to the top.

Finally, there is also much to learn here on gender differences and inter-gender dynamics.
I definitely took out a lot of wisdom for Social Power.

> Quote: Simply stated, power is the ability to get things done. If you don't have power, you're going to be ineffectual at work.

4. Stealing the Corner Office



By Brendan Reid
Summary | Audiobook

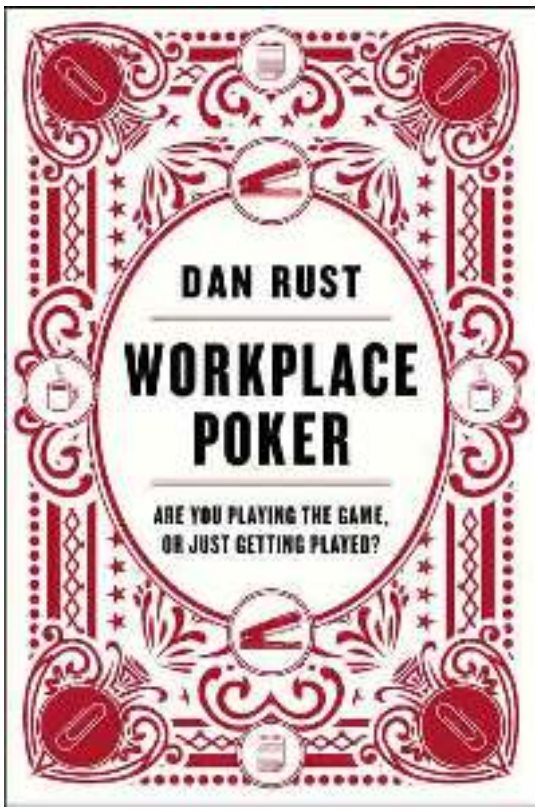
Brendan Reid is a level-headed writer.

Some of his views might sound extreme if you have never questioned corporate slogans before.
He says, for example, that focusing on results is the biggest mistake people make when it comes to their career.
I don't fully agree with that, but he is right in many respects. Once you step out of the organization, your results matter little -or nothing-.
Your job title, the salary you received, your networks, and your soft skills… Those remain.

You should read "Stealing the Corner Office" right after you've read your run-of-the-mill career advice book, just as preventive medicine against the "just do a great job" type of advice.

> Quote: Results orientation is one of the most universally accepted business mantras, but it serves everyone's interest other than your own

3. Workplace Poker



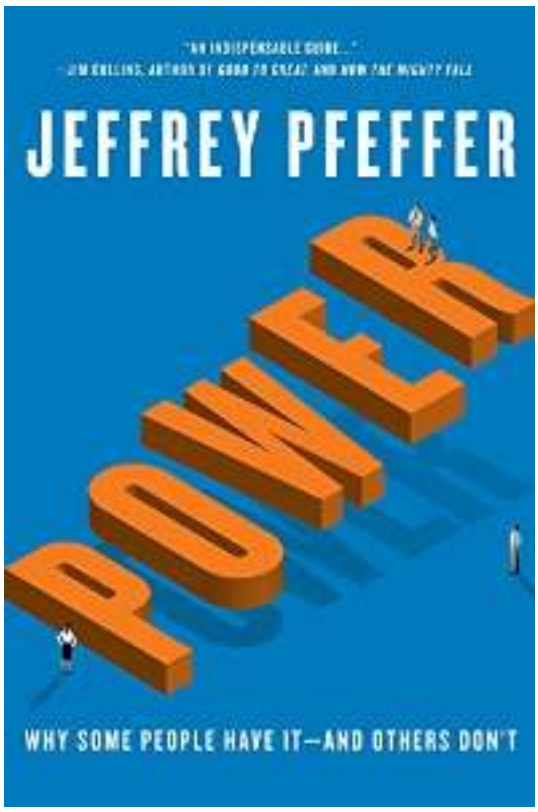
By Dan rust
Summary | Amazon

I truly wasn't sure whether to give this spot to Dan Rust, or to Brendan Reid.
They both deserve it, but in the end, I went for "Workplace Poker" because I particularly enjoyed the psychological analysis of "high in emotional intelligence", VS "thick-skinned, rhino type" of players.

Dan Rust says that to make it to the top, you must be more on the rhino type.
I'm not sure you need to be a rhino, but as Pfeiffer, the current holder of the #2 spot on this list says, you at least need to be able to push aside your ego and personal grudges when push comes to shove.

> Quote: It may not seem fair or right. Shouldn't doing an exceptional job be enough? Unfortunately, it's not

2. Power



by Jeffrey Pfeffer
Summary | Amazon

Power by Jeffrey Pfeffer enters into the second spot of this list because it's a great mix:

- Theoretical foundations on power and power dynamics
- Encouraging (but non-naive) self-help
- Solid techniques, strategies, and mindsets

Plus, some real-life stories and examples of successes and political failures that will help drive home how important political skills, relationships, and power awareness is for work success (and life success, we'd add).

1. Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano

Intro

We're biased here since this is the flagship course of this website.

However, we believe it deserves the top stop.
One, because Power University takes the best wisdom from each of these books and more, plus tons of research turned into practical strategies, video examples, pictures, and infographics.

And two, because you simply can't beat video and real-life examples and videos when it becomes to personal self-development and learning crucial skills such as high-power talk, high-power behavior, and that "executive type of behavior" that sub-communicates you deserve the top spot -some would call it "alpha male behavior"-.

If you seek practical strategies for career success, this might be the best investment you can make in yourself. However, it demands that you invest some time and effort into it.

Watch out for *popular* career books

Many books teach how to build a good career based on utopian and naive models of "the best ones will advance".

Even the best-seller of them all "Think and Grow Rich" advises you to put your head down and do great work without ever asking for anything.

Then, there are some truly great books, like "Radical Candor".
I call these types of books the "enlightened workplace model".

And that's all cool and dandy, we should all strive towards an ideal. Who doesn't want to work in an enlightened workplace, for an enlightened boss?

However, we shouldn't embrace that ideal while we forget about the real world, about human nature, and about the more selfish, darker side of things.

You need both.
You need to strive for that ideal, while being prepared for how things actually work.
After all, 99% of companies and bosses do not even get close to the ideal workplace.

That's why, alongside books that teach you the enlightened way, you must also learn career strategies from realpolitik sources.
There aren't that many great ones, but this list, or Social Power, will get you ready.

You might also be interested in:

- Best entrepreneurship books
- Best books on power
- Best psychology books

Stealing the Corner Office: The Realities of Career Progress (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Stealing the Corner Office (2014) teaches readers the real-world dynamics of career advancement, which include people, office politics and, sometimes, personal strategies that do not always perfectly align with corporate interests.

TPM Strategic Note: Good wake-up call, but oversimplifies some dynamics
Companies optimize for themselves, of coures, but that often means that if you add value to their bottom line, you can capture more of that bottom line. The reality is a mix of converging and diverging interests that rewards smart strategists, rather than overly naive or overly cynical.
See our **career strategies hub** ↗.

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Notes

About the Author:
Brendan Reid is an author and career coach specializing in the human and political side of corporate dynamics.

Human Resources Don't Hire Smart People

More intelligent people make us feel insecure and unhappy, and we'd rather avoid them.

Similar to Robert Greene in the *48 Laws of Power*, the author suggests that talented people threaten our own success within the organization.

That's why human resources don't hire the smartest people they can find, but those who make them feel good and safe.

And the bigger the hiring committee, the more average and "safe" the candidate will be.
Says Reid:

> This is the epitome of misguided consensus hiring. What are the chances 25 people could ever agree on a truly transformative candidate? In practice, large group hiring always favors the most likeable candidate or the candidate least likely to create discomfort or change.

And he ends:

> Groups don't make good choices. Groups for collaboration— yes, groups for decision making—no.

TPM Note: This is overstated. Show you're smart, but in a smart way
Smart HR representatives from smart companies hire plenty of smart people. Top companies may only hire smart people. Being smart is a huge added value if you present it well.
Such as, not as in 'being smarter than you', in a competitive way, but being smart like you, and to benefit you.
See power + warmth.

Focus on Career Advancement, Not Execution

There is a huge difference between executing and advancing.

When you execute well, you are helping the company meet its objective, but not necessarily your own.
When you focus on career advancement, you help yourself meet your objective, but not necessarily the company's objectives.

The two sometimes overlap, but they are far from being the same.
Says the author:

> I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but your company doesn't really care about your advancement

TPM Note: Execution builds leverage
Don't ignore execution, it builds both skills, self-esteem, and *leverage* for your negotiations

Companies Are Doing Their Own Interest, You Do Your Own

Companies want you to focus on execution because that's their job, that's what they are there for.

Companies exist to deliver shareholder value, and it's fair like that. If you invest your money in companies, you want them to behave like they behave.
It's not companies that are misguided; it's the workers who focus on execution instead of focusing on career advancement who are misguided.

Beating the competition, gaining market share, or even delivering shareholder value is not necessarily in your interest -unless you own a sizable chunk of the stocks-.

Take Care of the Shareholder of You

While the company takes care of its shareholders, you should take care of your own shareholders.
And your shareholders are different than the company's shareholders.

Says the author:

> Your number one concern should be your shareholders: you, your spouse, your kids, your pets. These are the people who have invested in you, not the bankers and venture capitalists and high-volume traders on Wall Street.

The Company's Success Is Not Your Success

You know the idea of the rising tide, lifting all boats, right?

Well, I have already expressed my opinion on that with this meme in the "corporate lies" article:

Maybe you all win together. But the share of the spoils is what matters
The author uses another argument, and it's the "chasing bear argument".

When you're rising because the company improves, you're rising proportionally, but you're not winning because everyone else is rising at the same pace.

He says that most opportunities present themselves during times of crisis and turmoil.
The bear argument is that you don't need to outrun the bear and win against the company's competitors. You only need to outrun your true competitor: your colleague vying for the same promotion.

The 3 Types of Stationary Career Failures

The are three different types of good workers who still fail to advance:

- **The go-to guy**: the technically skilled guy who works hard to solve any problem. It seems like a great strategy, it gives you some power and protects you against layoffs, but if you're not careful, you get stuck doing back-end work while the exec gets the rewards
- **The passion player**: has an idea or strategy, and they pester everyone to get it funded and prioritized. But those who win are analysts who get on the side of any winning idea, not this or that specific one -even if it's yours-
- **The task master**: he holds people accountable and pushed everyone hard to succeed. But mediocre people, who are the majority, resist task masters. The task master will become isolated, and make lots of enemies. The only exceptions are environments that welcome hardball management and creative conflict

Read more on how to resist "task-masters":

- **How to reject tasks**

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

Three Self-Harming Habits to Avoid

- **Social chair**: organize social events, which served them well for popularity in high-school and college, but have no real values at work
- **Gossip guy**: they complain about management, form cliques with those at their own same level, and associate with other complaining, "go-nowhere losers"
- **No-change agents**: they crave continuity and hate change. They complain about the new processes, the new

management… As if complaining was any likely to bring them back

The 3 Types of Incompetent Executives

1. **The Jack of All Trades**: good enough to play different roles, but not super-focused on anything to remain stuck. He wins the biggest in periods of turmoil and uncertainty
2. **Mr. Big Picture**: he has no good ideas of himself, so he cultivates an image of objectivity and impartiality. He does not get attached to anything, he relates all projects to the grand strategic vision, and never executes himself (he's got go-to guys for that). He acquires power by conveying objectivity and rationality, which are both highly valued in business
3. **The Precision Passive Aggressive**: they create an image of superiority. They don't drive people hard, but create an image of being supportive. They seek to mentor and help, but only to look good

The 7 Strategies for Success

1. **Don't be passionate about your ideas:** Steve Jobs and Zuckerberg are exceptions. Be the professionally-sounding guy who assesses the pros and cons instead
2. **Embrace change**: and embrace the new management, too
3. **Learn to promote your projects:** before they launch show how it aligns with your influencers' goals, get the critical people on board so they won't shoot you down, and promote it while it's running, then promote the results
4. **Focus on skills and networking, less on results**
5. **Avoid gossiping with the herd**
6. **Find big problems to solve**
7. **Avoid being a pushy manager if some results will make lots of enemies**

Quotes

On the uselessness of social contributions:

> Real corporate culture has very little to do with activities and events (…) When the time comes for reconciliation—at promotion or layoff time, social contributions are at best pointed to as the unfortunate downside of having to let a nice person go.

On ignoring the haters:

> If you execute the correct change playbook, people will make fun of you and tease you for being a suck-up. Ignore them. Your career is not about making friends; it's about advancement.

Let people know you're learning, or you're not getting the biggest bang for the buck:

> The last point to make with respect to the learning calendar is that you need to tell people you're doing it. Learning and not telling people about it is pointless for you career strategy. Sure, it's great to broaden your skill set but if nobody knows, you'll just be the smartest low-level manager in your company.

"You'll just be the smartest low-level manager in your company", LOL, that was a good one.
I agree that learning for learning's sake is not useful unless you can apply it in practical ways.

More Wisdom

- **Focus on networking and skills, less on results**: results disappear as you walk out of a company. Your network and skills will remain
- **Seek high reward/high-risk assignments**: being reliable year over year with good but non-visible work rarely gets you into the boardroom. Big wins do. Losses also seem less relevant when you have a few big wins on your risks
- **Seek big projects**: you don't have to necessarily lead them, which is also a risk. Just being in there will get you lots of visibility and networking opportunities
- **Crises and transformation projects are great opportunities**
- **Only mentor if those higher-ups will know about it**

Review

Stealing the Corner Office is a good, entertaining and informative read although it can lean *too* cynical, potentially at the detriment of what's truly most effective.

In truth, **effective cynicism is balanced and contextual.**

The biggest takeaway, which is the central tenet of this book, is that the company's goals do not always align with the employee's goals.

What the author doesn't say as he focuses more on the practical side, is that there is an eternal struggle from employers to feign alignment of interests. Another area of friction is the company that wants more team-spirit at the expense of the selfish drives of each of their own employees.
The smart employees who want to go places should learn what those areas of friction are, and thrive within them.

I also enjoyed the examples, and it would further improve if they were edited to avoid some repetitions.

Check the **best career books**

Talking from 9 to 5: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

In *Talking from 9 to 5* (1994), author Deborah Tannen examines the role of communication in the workplace. Ranging from communication rituals, and power dynamics, she focuses on how the two genders' communication style impact their career success.

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  - Men Don't Understand Women's Constant Fear of Violence
- More Wisdom
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- PROS
- Review

Notes

About the Author:
Deborah Tannen is an American linguist, professor, and researcher, and she also writes for a general audience on her blog.

Women Speak to Maintain the Appearance of Equality

Women tend to speak to each other in a way that maximizes harmony. It downplays the speaker's authority and takes into account the effect that the speaker's words will have on the receiver.

Men instead use language that often involves opposition.
They banter, tease, and put each other down in an effort to avoid the one-down position.

Women Using Women-Style in a Man's World Can Be Seen As Weak

Men using their typical oppositional style can be seen as confrontational and arrogant by women, even when they're

actually not.

And women's typical style to avoid looking like boasting at all costs can be seen by a man as lacking confidence and competence.

Also read:

- **The woman's field guide to winning in business**

> The Businesswoman Guide to Win in Male Organizations

Workplace With Men on Top Use Male-Style Communication

Women who move within male organizations can start off at a disadvantage if they don't learn to function within the male rules.

Says Deborah Tannen:

> Workplaces that have previously had men in positions of power have already established male-style interaction as the norm. In that sense, **women, and others whose styles are different, are not starting out equal, but are at a disadvantage**.

And a little later:

> Ways of talking typically associated with men are more likely to impress many job interviewers as well as those making decisions about promotions to managerial levels.

The female style can be equally effective. But when there are also men around, then the male style leads them to talk more. And, being judged on the male scale, they tend to be seen as more competent and confident.

In Negotiations, People Seem to Prefer Those of Their Same Sex

Research by Nadler showed that the highest final offers in negotiating salaries were made when the negotiators were of the same sex.

And, worryingly for women, the lowest raises happened when women playing the subordinate role negotiated with men playing the boss' role.

Ritual Apologies: Make Sure Your Speaking Partner Speaks the Ritual (Or Take Too Much Blame)

Some people engage in what Tannen calls "ritual apologies".

Such as, they say "sorry" a lot, as a ritual, not because they're really sorry. Within that ritual, one person says "I'm sorry", while the other person takes the blame for himself.

When both people use the ritual, then the ritual works and the conversation is both polite and constructive.
The problem arises when one person uses "I'm sorry" as a ritual, but the other does not. When that happens, the person who says "I'm sorry" might come across as being at fault, or as being the "one-down".

When a person who uses "sorry a lot" does not see any concessions from the other side, they might also feel resentful.
So the smart, emotionally-intelligent player will say sorry back when they meet someone who says sorry for no real reason.

My Note: “I’m sorry” can also be a power move.
Also read here:

- **When “I’m sorry” is a power move**

> 6 Covert Power Moves to Control Frames

“Thank you” As A Ritual: Play the Same Game, or You Make Others Resentful

Thanking people can also be a ritual, and some people thank others, even when they are simply doing their job.

When both players play the ritual, then a boss might say “thank you for running this by me” and the subordinate is expected to thank the boss back: “no, thank you for checking this”.

The problem, again, can arise when one party uses the ritual and the other does not.
Imagine if the subordinate were to reply to the boss “you’re welcome”. In that case, the boss would become the “one down”, and likely resent the subordinate.

My Note: Forcing people to say “thank you” is can also be a social strategy for power.
Read here:

- **Social scalpers**

Asking For Help To Make a Decision Can Make You Look Weak

Asking for opinions before making a decision might lead to better decisions, but if you do it too often, people might take it a signal of either weakness, or lack of competence.

I agree with Tannen here that a good way of avoiding that while still getting valid inputs is to say something like this:

> I’m going to make this decision ultimately, but I’d like to know your opinion.

Men Are More Guarded Against Being Put in The One-Down Position (& Ask Less Feedback)

Men are less likely to ask for candid feedback on their performance because that might invite criticism that would put them in the one-down position.

Women are more likely to ask for feedback, but some men might take advantage of it and deliver criticism from a position of superiority.

Indirect Or Direct Talk Is A Matter of Preferences & Culture, Not Power

There is this wrong assumption in many people’s minds:

Being direct is powerful, while being indirect is weak.

Deborah Tannen explains why that’s not true.

While sometimes giving direct orders is the prerogative of those with power and official authority, being indirect while giving orders is also the prerogative of those in power and authority.

And the direct/indirect is heavily influenced by personality and culture. Both methods can work great in the right context and both methods can rub people the wrong way when used out of place and with people who prefer the

opposite style.

Deborah Tannen expands plenty on it.
But if you're a person high in power, you know how annoying it is when a boss tells you what to very directly "because he's the boss".

On the other hand, if you're talking indirectly to someone who likes direct directives, you can come across as wishy-washy and, at the extreme, also manipulative.

I like this example from Kobe Bryant:

Kobe Bryan was clearly annoyed by Phil Jackson's indirect style, something that Jackson failed to understand in his own book "Eleven Rings".

Indirect talk can be more easily missed -or purposefully ignored by superiors-. And that's how some famous airline crashes happened.
But albeit one might think that direct-speaking crews are more effective, Linde's research found out that crews using the most indirect speech were the best ones.

Read more on the power dynamics of giving orders and executing orders:

- **How to execute orders and maintain power**

> 10 Ways to Maintain Power When Executing Orders

Expectations Change Reality

A clever Rubin's experiment found out that when students were lead to believe their teachers was a foreigner, they literally understood him less well.

The study was based on a German man in Japan: when the German spoke Japanese on the phone, people could understand him well.
But when speaking in person, the Japanese struggled more to understand him. The Japanese simply did not expect they could communicate in Japanese with a foreigner.

Do Men Refer to Women More With Their First Name Because of Power.. Or Because of Friendliness?

Deborah Tannen says that it's both.
While it might be true that women are referred with their first name more than men, it's not necessarily because men want to assert power, or because they don't respect women nearly as much.

It can also be, Debor… Tannen says :), that it's also because of friendliness.
Or because of both. Men might expect women to be lower in power, and higher in friendliness.

Switching from names to surnames can also be used to create distance or warmth. Calling

The same duality applies to topics such as generosity, and asking "where are you from".
Both can be read in terms of power dynamics, or in terms of friendliness. And both apply, says Tannen.

Compliments and Judging: The "Judger Power"

Reading "Talking from 9 to 5" I knew Tannen was a competent, well-read, and intelligent woman.

But when I read this part, I also thought "wow, think similarly and reached the same conclusions!".

Tannen says that **compliments usually flow from more powerful, to less powerful**.
I quote her:

> Those who offer compliments can seem to be setting themselves up as in a position to judge, so someone of lower rank who compliments someone of higher rank can appear to be cheeky

This is exactly what I talk about in "soft power", and I indeed call the power position as "the judge".

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Power & Control

Interrupting Is Either A Power Move, or A Way of Bonding

Says Tannen:

> Deborah James and Sandra Clarke reviewed all the research they could find on gender and interruption and did not find a clear pattern of males interrupting females.

On the other hand, a bit later, Tannen cites research proving that boys truly pay less attention to what women say. And, she says, that stays the same later in life.

What's most interesting though is that in all-female groups, women interrupt more than men do in all-male groups. That's because women often talk over each other to voice agreement and understanding, and it's a way of bonding.

Tannen calls it "enthusiastic listening".
And that's why "overlapping", as Tannen calls it, must be considered within the environment within which it takes place. In some cases, it can be a way of bonding, while in some others, it can be a power play and a sign of status.

My Note: At work, interruptions are about power, not bonding
Tannen is right. But since work functions more with the male style, and the efficient "we talk to understand each other and to make business", than interruptions are more commonly about status than bonding.

Styles of Speaking Impact How Much You Talk (& How Powerful You're Perceived to Be)

It's not true that powerful people always talk more.
They can talk more if they want, but some powerful people prefer to talk less, instead.

Furthermore, how much you talk also depends a lot on your style of speaking. If someone with a slower rate of speech moves into an area where people talk more lively and quickly, he will find it difficult to get a word in, because he is waiting for some silences that never happen.
And people will interrupt him more, because he takes longer pauses between sentences.

Tannen says that's the case for Brits -speaking more slowly- moving in the US -speaking more quickly-.

However, an impression of dominance, or having more things to say, can result from a difference of *style*, instead of a difference in either power or amount of wisdom to share.

Some Men Hate Attractive Women Because of The Power They Wield

This observation was very deep.

Some men resent attractive or sexually liberated women for the power they wield over them.
And their way of handling that threat to their ego and their perceived "one-down" position is to attack her. Take her down a peg, "put her back in her place" or, in extreme cases, violate her.

This is all the truer for successful women, who make average men feel even worse.

Says Tannen:

> The hovering awareness of violence against women has particular relevance when a woman has risen beyond the level expected of women, reinforcing the point that physical attack, or the threat of it, is a show of anger (or fear) against a woman who is perceived as trying to get power over men

Genius insight.
I agree that the patriarchy is real, and much of it is fueled by that darker motive that most men would never admit.

The Relevance for Dating

This great insight is what some women don't understand when they follow the "make him chase mantra".

Some men don't chase because they like the woman or because they want a relationship. Some men will chase because they resent her power, and want to have her just to get even.

Also read more in "nasty dating power moves that backfire".

Men Don't Understand Women's Constant Fear of Violence

Tannen says that sexual harassment can happen because men and women don't understand each other.

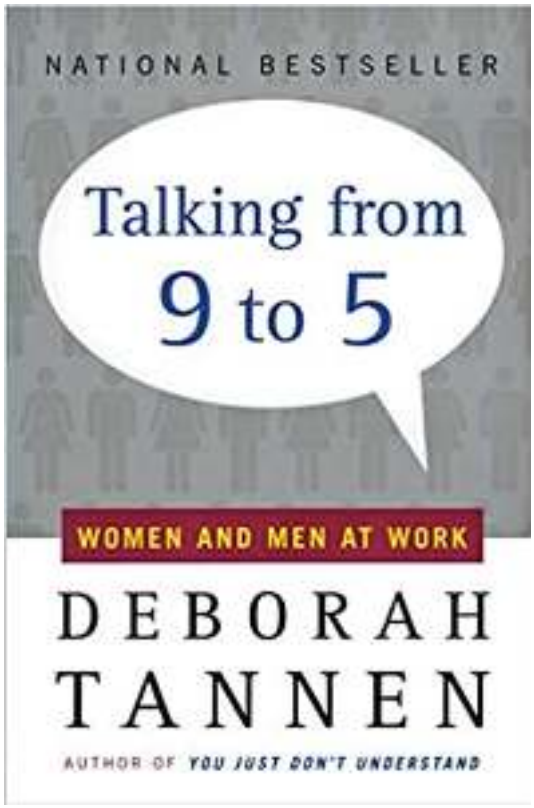
Men think that sexual harassment only happens when there is a physical move, while women also include verbal harassment.

Says Tannen:

> Whether or not it is associated with sex, women often perceive the specter of violence lurking when they are in the company of men, however vague and in the background it may be

Some men respond with indignation, because not all men are aggressive or rapists.
But that doesn't change the fact that some are. And women's fears and perceptions are based on the *real* threat of that minority.

Also keep in mind that as Evolutionary Psychology researcher Geoffrey Miler says, sociopaths are a minority, but women experience them 10x more often and more frequently than other men do.



More Wisdom

- Women are more likely to downplay their certainty, men more likely to downplay their doubts.
- The “tail of the curves” shows up with far more women who are considered as underconfident and disproportionately far more men who are considered arrogant
- **Women want bosses who care personally**: everyone prefers a boss who cares about them personally, and women are more likely to demand it and appreciate it. Especially by other female bosses
- Women give more compliments, especially to other women
- Some women complain to bond, but some men might take it literally
- **Expectations are lower for wome**n: Well-qualified managers are evaluated more highly if qualified as men, but they are also more criticized if performing poorly
- **Verbal aggression can be a way of bonding**: many cultures trade barbs with each other as a way of bonding. Tannen, for example, was uncomfortable in Greece, where people spoke to each other with a more confrontative style

CONS

- **Good stories sometimes feel like anecdotal evidence**

Just to be clear, the book is very well-researched, which is one of the things I appreciated the most.

And there are also stories and, sometimes, analyses of plays or myths.
Sometimes they served to reinforce the analysis and provide examples.
But some other times, I would have preferred more evidence from bigger studies.

PROS

- **Level-headed approach to gender issues**: if everyone could approach gender issues and differences like

Tannen does, we wouldn't have feminists and The Red Pill

- **A treasure trove of power dynamics wisdom**: Tannen understands social and power dynamics so deeply that this book was enlightening even for a more advanced student like myself

Review

"Talking from 9 to 5" may not be your perfect self-help 'how-to' book, but it's a gem for a social scientist like myself, containing more psychology and power dynamics wisdom than ten normal books put together.

On the other hand, if you are looking for a more practical manual, this might not be your thing since it's more academically oriented.

If you're looking for ready-to-apply strategies and tips, you will get something here, but it will require you to wade through some theory.
If on the other hand, you are looking for high-quality information, then this is your book.

I learned a lot from Debora Tannen and I am grateful for her work.

Check the **best career strategy books**

HBR Guide to Office Politics: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

HBR Guide to Office Politics teaches readers how to effectively navigate office politics to ethically achieve win-wins, and develop a successful career.

Contents

- Summary
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Summary

About the Autor: There is no author's name and surname here. Harvard Business Review (HBR) publishes articles, books, and information on business and business leadership.

You Can't Escape Politics

Office politics is what naturally happens when you put a bunch of people in an office.

People are politics, and if you want to achieve anything through people, you need to understand politics.
The sooner you accept it, the better your life and career will be.

Say the authors:

> So what's the solution? It's about being constructively political—understanding personal dynamics among colleagues, working together for mutual advantage, and ultimately focusing on the good of the enterprise.

Embrace Politics, or Your Career Will Suffer

People who try to stay completely out of politics are far less likely to have a good career, or to reach their career goals, compared to those who accept politics as a fact of life.

Another way people approach politics is as a tool for excuse-making.

Says Ashkenas:

> It's easy to use politics as an excuse for a lack of achievement or an outlet for your frustration. But it's a lot more effective to use politics as a way to get things done.

Dealing With A Boss Who Holds You Back

Meet up with him, and be constructive.
Nothing good will come out with you starting off attacking and complaining.

Ask him what you can do to better support him.
And then, once you have established a positive atmosphere, make it clear that you also want to grow.

With a Control-Freak Boss, Find Out What He's Afraid Of

First of all, see if you are the exception.

If he is only micromanaging you, is it because you're new and learning the ropes?
If so, accept it as an opportunity to learn.
If he is only micromanaging you and it's been a while, you need to take a hard look at the quality of your work. Some bosses prefer to micromanage than being honest and telling employees where they are falling short. Help him out, seek that feedback, ask where you can improve, how you can help him better.

If it's none of the above, consider that control-freaks and micromanagers sometimes are worried about something. It might be that he's afraid of restructuring, and he wants to ensure good work. Or he might be intimidated by your own potential.
Whatever it is, if you find out, you will know how to allieviate his fears.

And show him that he can trust you. Bot on delivering good job, and on being on his side.

Also read:

- **Managing your boss for career success**

> Managing Your Boss For Ruthless Career Advancement

To Deal With Bullies, Offer an Olive Branch

First off, you want to make sure that someone is being a bully and you're not being touchy.

Ask some friends what they think of the bullies' behavior. Especially valuable feedback is to ask what they think when both of you observed the same behavior.
If others don't feel like he was being a bully, it's possible that you might have to re-adjust your perceptions of what being competitive means.

And what if he truly is a bully?
The first advice HBR provides is to extend an olive branch.

They say:

> If he's intentionally pushing you around, he's assuming you're his adversary. So show him that you want to be on the same team.

I agree with that technique. It's always best to try to turn someone into a friend -or a neutral- before you make him an enemy.

Other techniques:

- Find strength in numbers: there is power in banding together and supporting each other
- Book a one-on-one meeting: the simple fact you're willing to confront will make most bullies move on to easier preys

And what do you if the bully is your boss?
You still need to draw a line: bullying is emotionally, mentally, and even physically unhealthy.
Read here:

- **How to confront a bullying boss**

> How to Set Boundaries With Dominant Bosses: Case Study

Managing Disgruntled Former Peers When You've Become the Boss

People will feel bad when you were previously colleagues and now you've become the boss.
You must accept that, it's a fact of life. Most of us compare ourselves to others, and when we see the people close to us do great, we feel bad because it means we are not going great.

So as soon as you become the boss, you want to set a meeting to clarify.
Do not set the meeting in your office, as that would make him feel like you're trying to pull ranks. Use a neutral location, or go for a walk. Or, even better, meet him at a location he likes and feel good in.

If worst comes to worst and you can't just get to work with disgruntled former colleagues, you need to "pull rank", as the authors say, and give them one last chance in the form of an ultimatum:

> We can do this the easy way or the hard way.
> The easy way is I'll support you, you'll support me, and we'll work together.
> The hard way? If you don't come around, we'll have to start making things formal. We'll have (..) performance reviews. If you continue to rebel and aren't meeting your goals, I will take up the matter with HR in formal disciplinary proceedings. All things considered, I'd like to do it the easy way.

Also read:

- Frenemies
- How to spot a frenemy

More Wisdom

- **Don't accept a boss pitching you against your colleagues**: talk to him and say you'd rather collaborate, show him why you can do a better job as a team, which will also reflect well on him. If all else fails, agree with your colleague on a fair way of cooperating
- If your company has a clique of highly successful people, ask one of them to mentor you
- **Go to company's social events**: not going says you don't care about the company and your colleagues. Or worse, that you don't see yourself staying for long.
- **Linkedin changes can be the canary in the coal mine**: when you see lots of people updating their Linkedin profiles with pictures, new descriptions, and new recommendations, that's the sign that layoffs are taking place
- **Speak with your boss' former reports**: get in touch with the people who reported to your current boss. They can give you some great insights on who he is, what he likes, and how to get along with him
- **Only escalate a problem to your boss if you've tried everything**: most managers aren't that thrilled to fight your own battles

CONS

- **Sometimes more about "how things should" than "what really works"**

Say the authors:

> Don't try to be the boss's pet—be everyone's pet. That is, devote your energy to being a terrific employee and colleague.

Well, yeah, sure, don't only focus on your boss. But not prioritizing your relationship is also a mistake. The people who decide who gets promoted are certainly more important for your future than your colleagues. And your colleagues are certainly more important to you than the doorman.

This is not to say you should be mean to anyone, but to be effective and advance rapidly, prioritizing relationships pays off.

- **Some advice is good, but mostly tailored for job safety and not for truly driven people**

The authors share the story of how a woman thrived and survived during firing and restructuring thanks to the expertise that she had acquired.
The lady had become so good with PowerPoint that all the senior managers sought her to polish or create their presentations.

Well, that's great advice… For job security.
But if you are driven, you truly don't want to become the "PowerPoint guy".

- **Sure they know how to make you feel like you haven't gone to Harvard :)**

I'm not a native speaker.
But I have read enough that I go through most books without ever having to check what a words means.
Not on *this* book.

An example:

> Sure, he ***guffaws*** at his own jokes, but maybe he's also great with spreadsheets. (...) Maybe his ***persnickety*** report reviewing highlights your terrible typing skills.

With HBR you're going to learn how to navigate politics with some serious big words in your arsenal :).

Quotes

On avoiding petty revenge and being neutral:

> I got a reference call for him out of the blue. (…) "It was kind of the revenge moment handed to me on a silver platter." (…) "I told the guy who called me that I'd call him back. (…) In the end, I gave him a fair review. I said I hadn't enjoyed working with him, but I knew lots of people who did. It was hard, but **I decided a slamming review would reflect worse on me than the guy**. I actually felt better about myself after that."

On avoiding to make enemies too easily:

> Don't write anybody off. Don't succumb to negativity. Try to stay positive. Shifting alliances and relationships are what make human life interesting

Review

I find "HBR Guide to Office Politics" to be a very good read for beginners. And I also appreciate it comes from a place of honesty and genuinity.

It also keeps stressing the basics, such as "look at yourself first", "avoid jumping to negative conclusions", and "put yourself in other people's shoes", which can't be stated enough.

Some of the more advanced folks, though will find it a bit more basic, including some of the "wrong" examples of poor communications, that will be a bit too obvious for the more socially intelligent folks.

Personally, I also find that it refrains from sharing some harsh truths, such as that the company's interests sometimes diverge from your interests. And that what's effective does not always overlap with what's ethical.

All in all, I can recommend it to beginners. Readers of the ThePowerMoves.com should prioritize their learning

with something else.

Check the:

- **Best career books strategies**

Or get the book on Amazon

Working With Emotional Intelligence: Notes & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Working with Emotional Intelligence is a sequel to Goleman's initial "Emotional Intelligence", and discusses the role of emotional intelligence on work performance, career success.

Contents

- Summary
- Criticism
- More Wisdom
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Daniel Goleman is a journalist who often wrote on science and psychology. He worked at Psychology Today and then at The New York Times. He is most famous for his work on Emotional Intelligence, and he is also the author of "Emotional Intelligence" and "Social Intelligence".

Misconceptions About Emotional Intelligence

There are plenty of misconceptions around "emotional intelligence", and Goleman first sets out to dispel those myths:

1. Emotional intelligence is not (merely) "being nice". At times, emotionally intelligent can mean getting angry, or confronting someone
2. Emotional intelligence is not about "giving free rein to feelings", but it's about managing feelings to express them effectively and appropriately
3. Emotional intelligence is not genetically fixed and, unlikely IQ, it seems to be largely learned, and in continuous development as we grow

IQ Doesn't Predict Career Success, EI Does

Daniel Goleman says that IQ accounts for career success at most for 25%.

More accurate figures, says Goleman, suggest that IQ accounts at most 10%, and some other analysis suggests 4%.

My Note: I find these numbers spurious
To me putting a number on how much IQ matters for career success without explaining how he came up with those numbers, is not science, but marketing. And saying IQ accounts *at most* for 10% makes me question Goleman's credibility.

Getting Compliance With Emotional Intelligence

Imagine you're a flight attendant.
The plane is about to board, and everyone is already standing up. But you want an orderly boarding, and you only want the passenger you are going to call to stand up.

How do you do it?
If you remind people to stay seated with the typical robotic voice, the compliance will be low.
Instead, says Goleman, the flight attendant said "you're standing" as if she were singing a tune, as if she was speaking to a kid who needed to be reminded of what mommy wanted.
That made people smile, and they went back to sitting.

This was interesting for me, and especially it was interesting that it was a woman who used that technique.
It's more difficult for women to get compliance when being assertive, and women who are too assertive are seen in a negative light. That was, in my opinion, the real genius: to combine femininity with power.

I had already written about it, check this topic here:

- Using feminine voice to get compliance (there is a video example)
- Mixing power with femininity

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

The Higher the Job Level, The More Important EI Becomes

The higher you go in an organization, the less technical skills and cognitive abilities become relevant.

The only cognitive abilities that mattered was "pattern recognition", a big picture thinking that allowed

For leadership and executive positions, emotional competence skills are paramount.

My Note: It's power and exec skills that become relevant when you go higher
I only partially agree with Goleman, and I think he is missing an important factor.
Yes, it's true that the higher you go, the less technical skills matter. But what counts is not the whole spectrum of emotional intelligence. What matters most are ambition, knowledge of power dynamics, and coming across as confident and powerful.

Just look at Margin Call, and you know what I mean by "exec skills" and coming across as powerful and confident:

It's true that the boss is not the smartest or most technically expert in the room. But he's not higher in EI, he's higher in social power and confidence

Also read:

- **How to develop executive skills and demeanor**

> 17 Tips to Exude Exec-Level Confidence at Work

The Politics of Empathy: It's Subordinates Who Must be High in Empathy

Those with little power are expected to sense the feelings of those with power. While those in power can allow themselves to be sensitive in returns.

Not being empathic and emotionally intelligence, in a way, is one way one can show power and status.

My Note: I wish Goleman had expanded on the relation between & EI
Goleman here hits on a crucial point: emotional intelligence, he is basically saying, is more important for subordinates. And that's why, probably, CEOs and execs score lower on emotional intelligence. I wish he had expanded on this, instead of going on in his crusade to prove EI is the be-all, end-all.

Also read:

- Managing your boss for rapid career progression

> Managing Your Boss For Ruthless Career Advancement

Don't Confuse High Empathy With "Softness"

There are some people who discount the usefulness of empathy at work.

But they do so because they confuse empathy with "psychologizing", such as explaining behavior and motivation instead of being aware of it and understanding it.
And they confuse empathy with "agreeing".

Neither of the above is part of empathy.

The 4 Meta-Abilities of Emotional Intelligence

Some components of emotional intelligence are so crucial that they constitute meta-abilities.

They are:

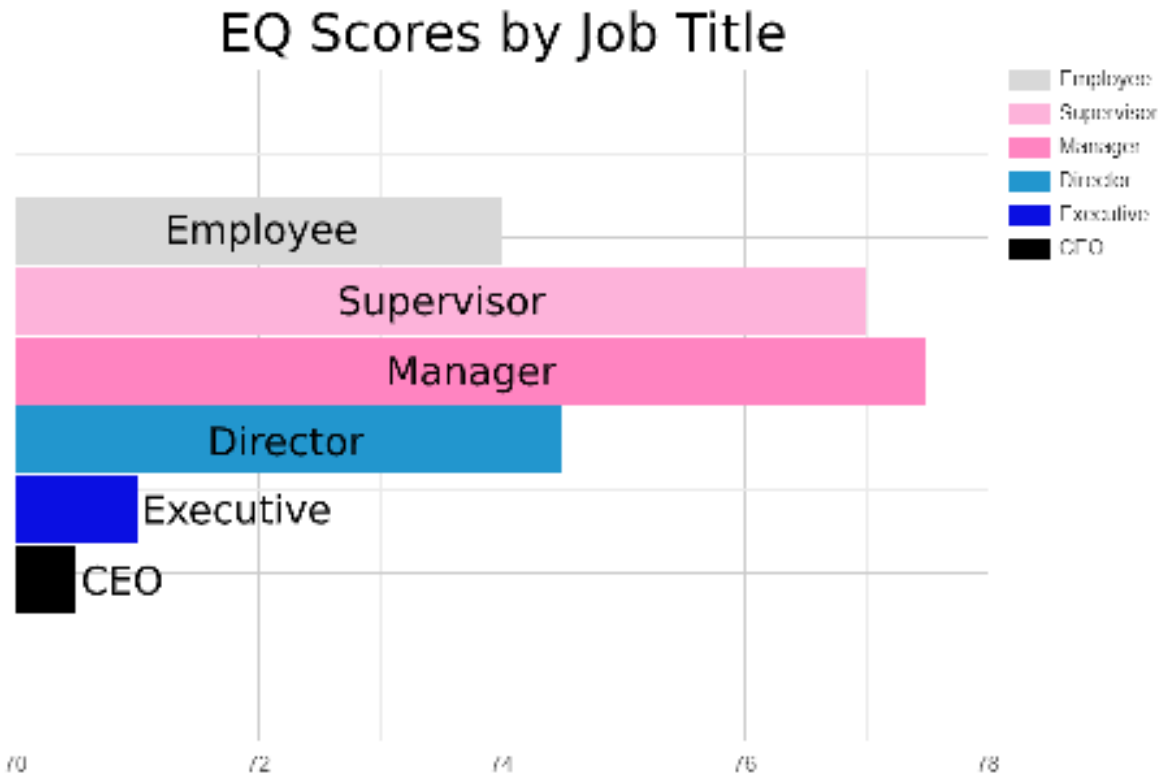
- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

Criticism

My criticism of "Working With Emotional Intelligence" concerns not the basic premise, that "emotional intelligence" is important.
I agree with that.
My criticism concerns one, the *darker* side of emotional intelligence, which was never addressed; and two, the scientific rigor and the data, which were at times either hidden, absent, misconstrued, or misinterpreted.

If EI Matters, Why Do CEOs and Execs Score *Lower*?

Bradberry's data on 100.000 individuals shows that CEOs and execs score *lower* on EI.
So how can Goleman say that emotional intelligence is most important of all in career success?



I wish he had addressed this conundrum which, in my opinion, is not a conundrum at all.
See:

- **The myth of emotional intelligence**
- Emotional intelligence and leadership

> The Myth of Emotional Intelligence: Machiavellis At The Top

Big claims require big evidence, and I've seen little

Goleman says that "when IQ scores are correlated with people's achievement at work, IQ predicts at most 25% and more realistic figure say it's more like 10%".
His whole book -and his whole career, in part-, is then about proving that emotional intelligence is what really matters.

Yet, I see a lot of words and examples, but little evidence for Goleman's theory.
And, just to be clear, I am a guy who believes there is such a thing as emotional intelligence, and I also believe that it matters a lot.

Conflates "entry-level requirement" with "non-important"

When Goleman says that cognitive abilities (IQ) or technical skills matter little to reach the top positions, he mentions in passing by that "IQ is a prerequisite, so it does not explain the differences in performance".

That's spurious, and either a huge failure of understanding what "minimum requirement" means, or just intellectually dishonest.
If all top execs have a minimum level of IQ, and if execs are on average smarter than the average population, then IQ *is* important.

Poor Analysis of Why EI is More Important in Latin America

The author says that a lack of emotional intelligence leads to managerial failure in Latin America in almost every single occasion.

It's not as important in Japan or German yet, says the author.

Why not?
Because EI becomes crucial in dealing with changes, says the author. And Latin American countries have gone through incredible changes (hyper-inflation, political regime changes, switching from closed to open economies, etc.).
The daily changes require managers in Latin America to always stay in contact with people to weather the storms, and that's why, Goleman says, emotional intelligence is so crucial.

That's nonsense to me.
It's not written anywhere that Latin America has seen more changes than, say, Europe -or any country, for that matter-.
The reason why EI matters more in Latin American countries is probably that work is more informal and interactions are less formalized. Managers are less removed from their reports, and are expected to be better with people.

I remember a Brazilian colleague talking to me about our very formal Swiss boss:

> Swiss people are not good at managing (us) Latins

And he was right.

Soso interpretation of groups selection and selfishness

The author says that people who work for the good of the group tend to out-produce the selfish players.

He is not wrong, but an important note should be added: good evolutionary theory shows that selfish players can survive -and thrive- as long as they remain the minority. That's what, some authors theorize, is what psychopaths are doing: feeding off the majority of cooperators.

Also, a healthy individualism overlaps with some selfishness, and selfishness in the right doses can be good and value-adding.

More Wisdom

- **Women are better at reading emotions when they are not purposefully hidden**: women are generally better at reading emotions, but only when nonverbal cues are not purposefully hidden or camouflaged. Otherwise, men are equally good when it comes to recognizing emotions that cannot be easily camouflaged
- **Empathizing is more difficult through cultures**: people have more difficulties in recognizing emotions across cultures, nations, or ethnic groups
- **The most emotionally expressive person influences the other**: being emotionally expressive helps influence other people's mood. This is important information for frame control.
- **Good teams produce more than the mere sum of their parts**: and emotional intelligence is key in developing well-functioning and harmonious teams
- **In many areas, others know us better, so always ask for feedback**

Review

"Working with Emotional Intelligence" does have some important gold nuggets.

I was able to pick a few great insights, one of which even made it into the workplace module of Power University.

Overall though I did not like this book.
I found it scientifically lacking, and with little pragmatic usefulness.

On the scientific side, Goleman says that IQ doesn't matter to reach the highest corporate positions because IQ is an entry requirement. To me, that's intellectually dishonest. Sure, it will matter less *once you're in*, because everyone else has it. But anything that is an entry requirement, by definition, matters a lot.

It feels like Goleman is on a quest to discredit IQ and inflate EI.
That's a pity, because Emotional Intelligence is a powerful enough concept that stands on its own.

One survey should be enough to cast a huge shadow on Goleman's assertions:
Bradberry's survey shows that execs and CEOs have *lower* scores of emotional intelligence than their own managers.
That means that emotional intelligence might not be so useful in your carer.

Check out the:

- **best career strategy books**

Get the book on Amazon

The Ultimate Guide to Workplace Power: Mastering Politics & Influence

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

How do you acquire power at work?

Well, understanding people and politics, having good career strategies, a great relationship with your boss, as well as being good at your work, all help.

But with this article, we list all the main tools you need to increase your power, leverage, and influence.

Contents

- 1. Results
  - Tactics
- 2. Politics: The Power of People-Tested Strategies
- 3. Skills: The Power of Mastery
  - 3.2. Technical Skills: The Power of Expertise
  - 3.3. Soft Skills: The Power of Confidence
- 4. Internal Network: Intel & Streamlined Work
  - Tactics
- 5. Alliances: 'You, Inc' Within The Organization
- 6. External Network: The Walk-Away Power
- 7. Mentors & Sponsors: The Made-Man Power
- 8. Money Talks: The Power of Bottom-Line Impact
  - 8.2. Get In Line
- 9. Visibility: The Power of Being Seen
  - Tactics

- 10. ‘Cultural Fit’: The Power of Aligning With The Powers That Be
- Bonus: Positive Attitude

1. Results

Results give you leverage and boost your self-confidence.

Tactics

- Track your work in terms of $$$ (done/saved)
- Track your achievements
- Save and print congratulatory emails

Being able to share this with your boss increases your persuasiveness.

2. Politics: The Power of People-Tested Strategies

Politics is the human element of work.

It includes alliances, feuds, coalitions, favors, favoritism, backstabbing, etc.
Key skills include power awareness, emotional intelligence, self-promotion, and Machiavellianism.

Read more here:

- **Machiavellis at the top**

> The Myth of Emotional Intelligence: Machiavellis At The Top

3. Skills: The Power of Mastery

Skills may be priority #1 because unlike output or politics, they're transferrable.

We can divide skills into:

1. **Technical skills**: Hands-on work like coding, software, accounting, and legal knowledge.
2. **Soft skills**: Persuasion, self-promotion, strategic thinking, public speaking, and confidence.

Technical skills provide job security, while soft skills enable upward mobility.

 When I realized that soft skills propel you upward

3.2. Technical Skills: The Power of Expertise

Technical skills are crucial early in your career as they impact both output and progression.

When to Prioritize Tech Skills

- You like your work
- You prefer an easier life
- Good income is enough (instead of *maximizing* income)

Maximizing Tech Skills

- **Get *really* good -the "go to guy"** for the most challenging issues
- **Solve the CEO's problems**
- **Join companies where tech specialists advance** without managing people
- **Ally with soft-skills superstars** as the CTO -ideally- or "guy in the backend"

 Example of "backend-guy" (with Hollywood over-dramatization):

> **Soft-skill guy**: Look at him, that's my quant.
> He won a national math competition in China, he dosen't even speak English. Yeah, I'm sure of the math <— The tech guy provides the data, the soft-skills guy sells it

♟ **Sidekicks are eternally lower status ⍰⍰**
You risk losing confidence and empowerment, and tie your fate to someone who might not respect you or may betray you.

3.3. Soft Skills: The Power of Confidence

John Tuld: It wasn't brains that got me mere, I can assure you that <— ⍰ ⍰I didn't get here on technical skills

🡅 John plays the "dumb" guy but excels in soft skills and power dynamics. He's the **quintessential alpha male** CEO.

4. Internal Network: Intel & Streamlined Work

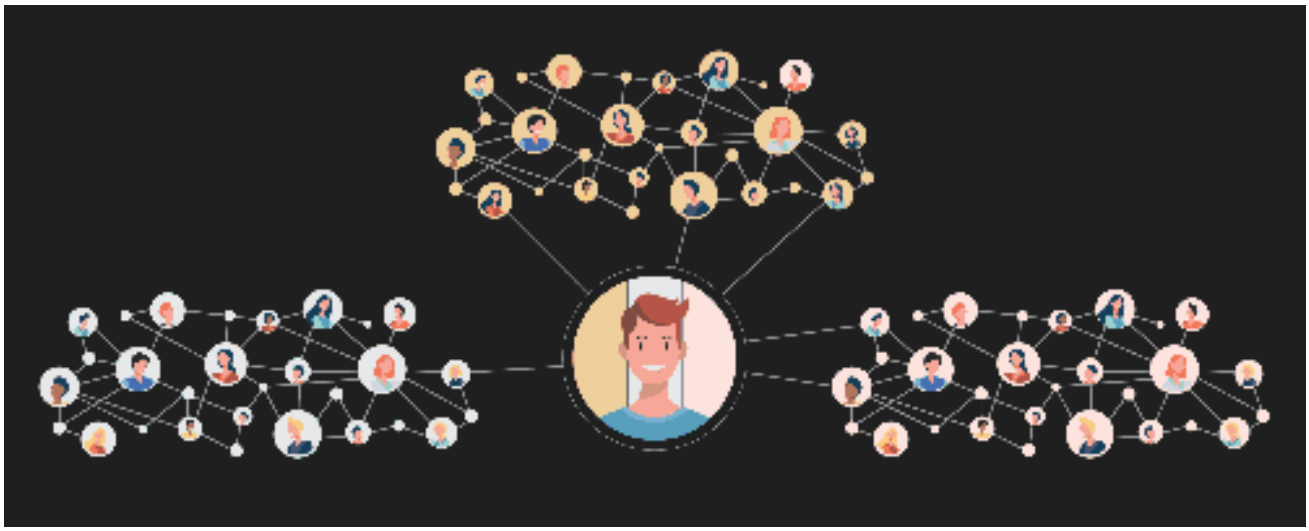
Knowing people makes work easier, especially early on when you don't have formal authority.

Tactics

- Hang around the water cooler
- Ask people to lunch
- Ask for intros
- Show interest in them/their work

⍰ Advanced level: be the connecting link

Research shows that the biggest networking benefits go to those who bridge different groups



My high-power neighbor uses this technique.
Though it costs her more effort, she contacts us 1:1 instead of creating a group, giving her more control:

Author's examples reserved for Power University

⍰ **Machiavellian move: intro lower-value connections, keep the highest-value people for yourself**
The Machiavellian makes introductions to showcase his network and gain a good reputation, but he keeps the best people for himself

5. Alliances: ‘You, Inc’ Within The Organization

Close friends who support each other for mutual gain and career advancement.

The alliance can be:

1. **Transactional**: You both gain from it
2. **Affectionate**: Based on friendship, mutual respect, and similarity

Alliances are a ‘grey area’ because they further your interests, but not necessarily those of the company. The company prefers to deal with you as a weaker individual.

A good alliance:

1. **Increases your negotiation leverage** because you negotiate joining -or *leaving*– as a proven duo
2. **Protects you from bad bosses**: it’s harder to undermine a pair, and two carry more weight than one
3. **Better cover against attacks**: because a counter-attack from two is twice stronger
4. **Report rumors and backstabbers**: with an extra set of ears and eyes
5. **Better PR & promotion**, done through your ally, more effective than self-promotion

- ⍰ **How I leveraged my brother-in-arms to propel my career** (resource for Power University alumni)

6. External Network: The Walk-Away Power

The network outside your current employer

An external network facilitates lateral and upward moves.

Principle:

⚖ **The larger and stronger your external network, the greater your walk-away power, and the less dependent you are on your employer.**

⍰ Network-building: Always go to lunch with someone new

Keith Ferrazzi's book has one main networking tip:

Always go to lunch with someone.

After lunching with most people I knew, I started sending LinkedIn messages to:

- Same-industry people
- Same job-position people
- Same university/nationality/background

7. Mentors & Sponsors: The Made-Man Power

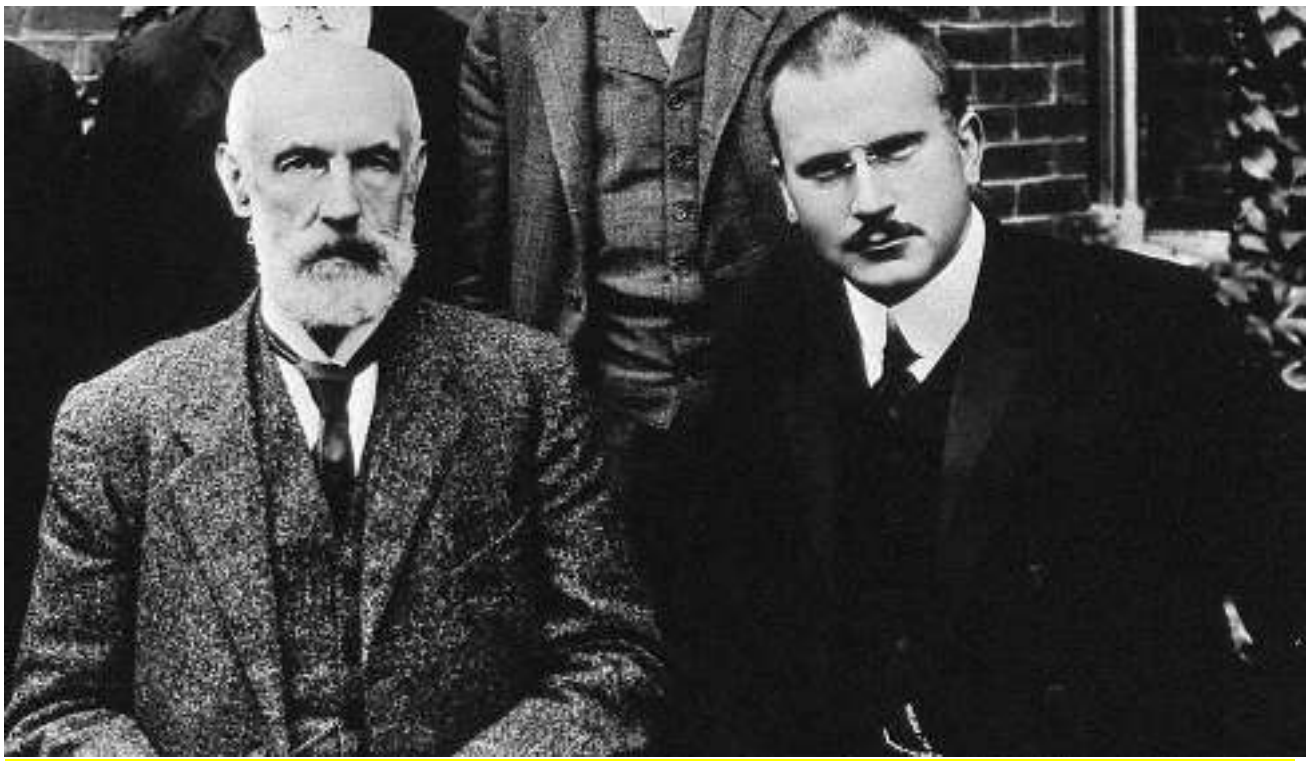
Mentors provide guidance and advice, while sponsors actively advocate for your career growth.

More on getting and keeping mentors ⍰

⍰ ⍰ PRO Tip: Let others know you've got mentors

A senior manager's influence rubs off on you.

It says you're connected and can get information and favors that others can't.
Like the young movie kid befriending the local gangster—he always has the "big brother" to call on.



Carl Jung referenced Freud as his mentor and greatly benefitted from his endorsement. Before eventually ‘breaking off’

8. Money Talks: The Power of Bottom-Line Impact

Principle:

⚖ **The more you affect the company’s bottom line, the more power you wield.**

Machiavellian move: ensure nobody else can deliver to your level
Account management: keep your relationship for yourself, don’t CC or introduce teammates.
Sales: guard your best techniques and approaches.. Join companies that share recorded calls *when you’re learning*, not when you’re good.

Example in Power University.

8.2. Get In Line

Line workers deliver the core product that generates revenue, giving them more visibility and leverage.

For instance, if you’re in IT, join an IT-focused company that bills for IT, rather than being IT internal support for a non-IT company.

9. Visibility: The Power of Being Seen

Principle:

⚖ **The more visible you are, the more opportunities your good work provides**

 And invisible good work goes unnoticed.

Tactics

- Speak in meetings

- Present results
- Network internally
- Join high-visibility projects
- Align your schedule with key seniors you want to impress

10. ‘Cultural Fit’: The Power of Aligning With The Powers That Be

Your personal fit with decision-makers matters more than ‘cultural fit’ with company values.

Company values only hold weight if the founders are still present and enforce them. Otherwise, they’re vestigial sloganeering, with most people prioritizing money and self-interest.

Bonus: Positive Attitude

Positive attitude means optimism and a personality that brightens the team.

Basically, the kind of person people *want* to work with and include in important and visible projects.

We probably know some of these guys and we probably know their opposites too: those who complain, lament and bring others down.
The former stay and get promoted, the latter are the first to get the chop.

This factor is less important than the previous ones, since one can also be promoted while not being particularly loved by his colleagues. But still, it helps. Plus, it will make your life at work much easier if you can get along well with others, and if others like you.

⍰ This is a preview from Power University where we share proven strategies and techniques to advance at work and in life !

4 Career Strategies for Rapid Promotions

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Effective career strategies make the difference between a steady, safe, and *slow* climb to the top, and an *elevator* ride to the top.

This post shares politically smart and proven career strategies for the quickest possible career progression.

Contents

- 1. Negotiate Salary at Peak Leverage
  - 1.2. Ask About Career Growth During Interviews
  - ⍰ ⍰Pro Tip: Ask for monthly check-ins with senior interviewers
- 2. Ask For A Raise As Soon As You Prove Your Value
  - 2.2. Negotiate Before Delivering Big Results
  - ⍰ ⍰ Answering ‘You’re paid for good work’
  - Ask For: 10-20% More of Your Worth
  - ⍰ ⍰ Pro Tip: Recruit your boss
- 3. Ask For The Position You Want
- 4. Work Hard & Network, Limit Manipulation
- 5. Adapt Your Strategies To Your Position
  - 5.2. Individual Contributor: Focus on Skills + Boss Relationship
  - 5.3. Manager: Focus on Networking + Confidence & Ambition
  - 5.4. Exec: Take Risk to Increase Profits or Slash Costs
- 6. Find Mentors & Sponsors
  - Traits of Top Mentors
  - How to Find a Mentor / Sponsor

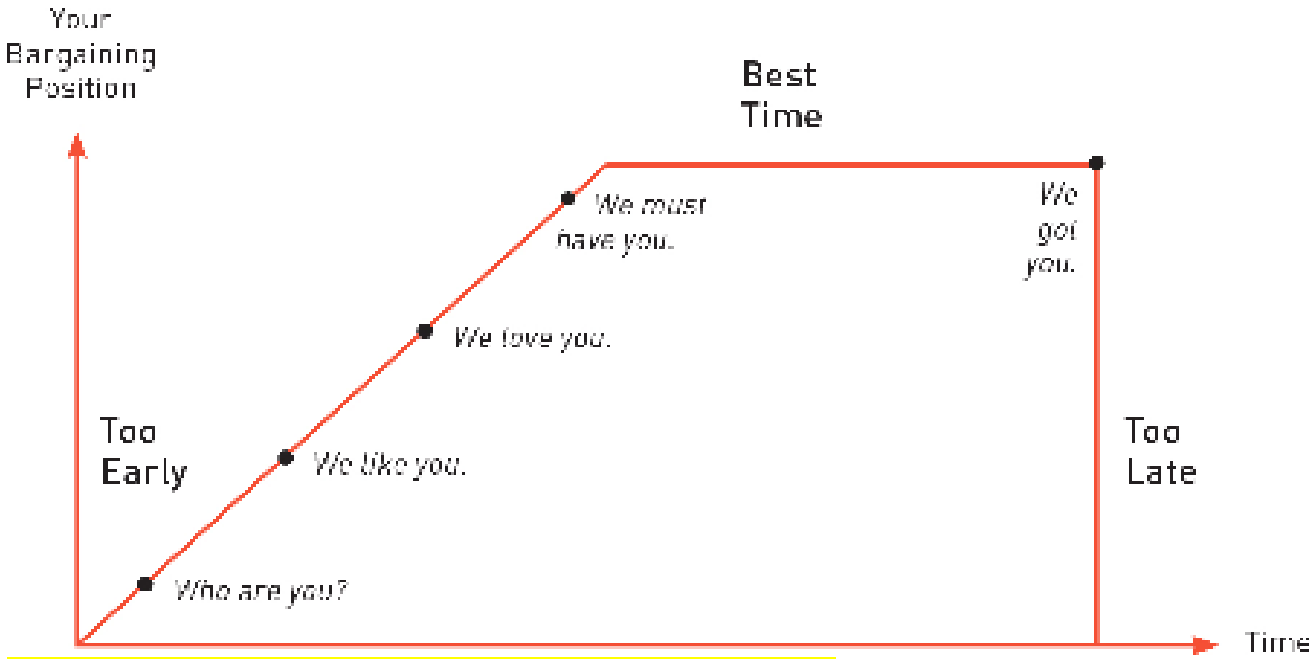
1. Negotiate Salary at Peak Leverage

If you’re senior or skilled, ask upfront.

Ask for a salary range and frame it like you're in demand:

> **You**: To save time, can you share a range for this role

Only start the final negotiation at highest leverage:



Your peak leverage: after the offer, before signing (Paul Hellman's chart).

1.2. Ask About Career Growth During Interviews

Inquiring about career growth during interviews is far better than asking about the salary.

You look pro-active, you sound ambitious, you gain intel… And you avoid dead-end roles.

Of course, you must calibrate your ask, or you come across as entitled.

> **You**: I'm very driven and I know that before asking, you must give. <— Shows you 'get it' and prevents you from coming across as entitled
> So imagine I will be successful in this role. What does that look like to deserve a promotion?

⍰ ⍰Pro Tip: Ask for monthly check-ins with senior interviewers

Once you can't get more money, as a last perk, ask to meet a senior interviewer quarterly.

Say you really admire him and would like to learn from him, and he will feel honored.
… And you get access to upper management.

2. Ask For A Raise As Soon As You Prove Your Value

Demonstrate your value first, then ask for more to deliver even more.

This is basic social exchange and social exchange strategies:

⚠ **Don't over-deliver for too long without asking, or it becomes a baseline expectation**

Ie.:

> **Boss**: Keep doing well and we can talk about it <— ⚠ If you worked long hours and weekends, now it's *expected*.

Anything less feels like backsliding, risking promotion.

2.2. Negotiate Before Delivering Big Results

General rule:

- *Recurring* excellence = your leverage
- One-off results = company's leverage

With one-off results, *gratitude* becomes your only ~~leverage~~ hope.

One-off work includes:

- Onboarded a 'whale'
- Lead the IPO
- System implementation
- Raising funds

Bosses may say, "Do one more, then we'll talk," but repeating major achievements is tough.
Negotiate beforehand to avoid this trap.

Answering 'You're paid for good work'

Ignore or sidestep this frame.

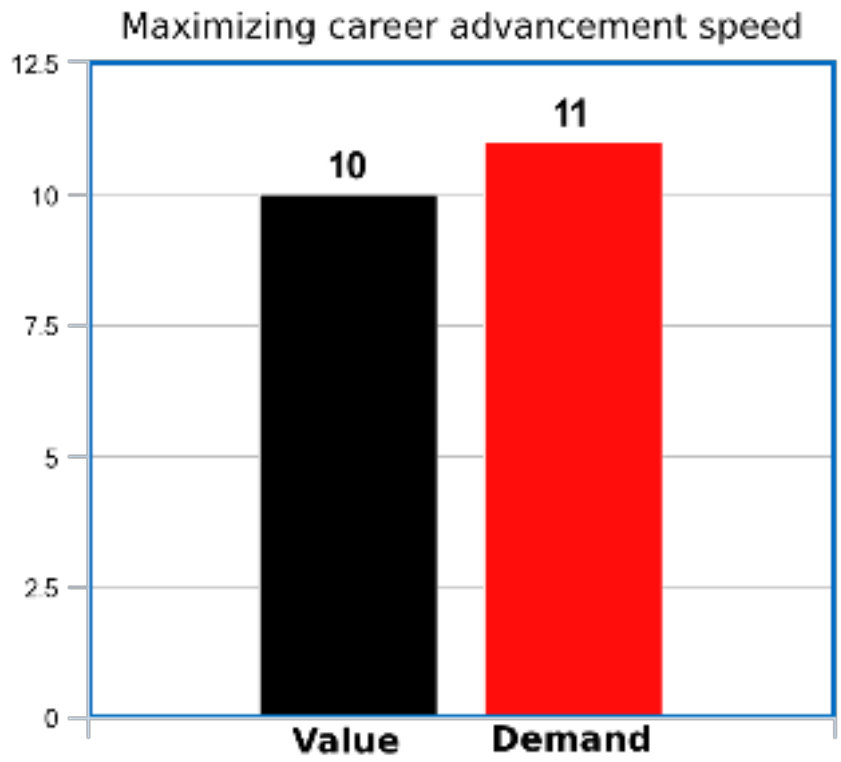
Don't deny with "*the pay is low"* or "*I'm doing great work*", or they may retort that "*many more are doing great work*".

Instead, agree and go back to your value proposition.
You deliver more value now, and you're asking for a fair share of that value.

Ask For: 10-20% More of Your Worth

Ask slightly more than your work-value.

Rationale: unrealistic numbers break rapport
While a huge number can be helpful for anchoring, avoid it with your boss. Unrealistic demands reek of power moves and harm your relationship.



Ask a bit more than your work would warrant
If you're not sure, do this:

- Research similar positions and add 20%
- Ask slightly more than you're comfortable asking
- Ask for the most you can ask while being able to somewhat justify it

⍰ ⍰ Pro Tip: Recruit your boss

If HR sets the rate and your boss wants you, use that to your advantage.

Tell your boss you want to stay with him, but you'd need higher pay. Ask how you can manage that, and he will want to advocate on your behalf.

Use this approach for career progression as well:

1. Share your goals
2. Ask for guidance to reach them
3. Take notes, make him feel good for helping you out
4. Deliver what he wants
5. Ask for that promotion

This approach turns bosses into mentors and sponsors.

⍰ **Negotiating for a raise**

3. Ask For The Position You Want

> A closed mouth never gets fed

Ask for the role you want. If you don't, they may assume you're uninterested.

4. Work Hard & Network, Limit Manipulation

One study by Kyl-Heku and Buss identified three major tactics to get ahead in hierarchical structures:

1. **Deception/Manipulation**: Derogate and exclude others; ingratiate self with superiors; use sex; "sell" your results; use deceptive self-promotion (e.g., claim credit for the work of others).
2. **Social Display/Networking**: Cultivate friendships; display positive social characteristics; participate in social events; enhance appearance.
3. **Industriousness/Knowledge**: Work hard; display knowledge; obtain education or knowledge; organize and draft strategies for the company; assume leadership.

All three tactics can be effective in Western organizations.

The Industriousness/Knowledge tactic works best in educational attainment. And both Deception/Manipulation and Industriousness/Knowledge are positively correlated with actual salary.

But although Deception/Manipulation tactics can also be effective, they come at a high personal cost. **Those who used deception and manipulation *did* get results, but had *significantly* lower life satisfaction**.
I suspect this is the case because the cheaters feel like they are faking it, they are less confident and more anxious about getting caught, and present a higher incidence of "impostor syndrome".

It's a bit like when you take the bus without a ticket. You're saving money, but you're a bit tense. And unless you're a sociopath or very poor, you also know you're not being the best version of yourself that you can be.

5. Adapt Your Strategies To Your Position

Ie.:

5.2. Individual Contributor: Focus on Skills + Boss Relationship

To move from contributor to manager:

1. Improve hard skills
2. Deliver quality of work
3. Contribute
4. Develop a good boss relationship

As a newbie top assignments and high-level networking are more challenging. So output and immediate boss matter more.

Focus Less On Power, More On Being Helpful

With little output and information, learners are takers.
To make others want to help, be warm, likable, and genuinely useful.

5.3. Manager: Focus on Networking + Confidence & Ambition

To reach executive levels:

1. Network
2. Show ambition & drive
3. Develop 'executive skills' (confidence, presentation, self-promotion, etc.)

Says career coach Helgesen:

> If you allow your energy to be consumed by conscientiously tending to your team's needs, you will primarily prove that you are superbly suited for remaining in an internally facing position. The management skills that have gotten you here will end up keeping you here, instead of helping you rise to a place where you could have maximum impact.

This is also backed by research.
Fred Luthans studied for four years successful managers -as in getting promoted- and effective managers -as in having productive teams-.
He found out that the successful managers did not overlap much with the effective ones.
Effective managers spent most of their time nurturing and helping their teams. Instead, **the successful managers spent less time with their teams and more time networking and promoting themselves** outside their departments.

For Machiavellian efficiency, you should focus more on networking and less on your team.
If all you do is be a good boss, you'll stay stuck there.

Prioritize Ambition & Power Over "Niceness"

Nice and conscientious guys often become managers.
But the executive level requires ambition and placing a high priority on your career.

We share more top strategies on how to advance at work in **Power University**.

5.4. Exec: Take Risk to Increase Profits or Slash Costs

Says executive coach Carlos Marin:

> Coaching data and the psychometric surveys (…) suggest that men at the executive level are most likely to be rewarded for daring and risk-taking

At the executive level, you must affect the bottom line.
So increase revenue or cut costs.

If you're a woman though, Marin says that you're more likely to be rewarded for precision and correctness.

In short: men gain with strong leadership pushing for change.
Successful women instead *keep* efficient department running smoothly.

In my opinion, this reflects the reason why different genders are hired in the first place. The women, slightly higher in conscientiousness and far higher in pro-sociality, are expected to keep a well-running department. Men are expected to take more risks and drive revenues.

6. Find Mentors & Sponsors

Mentors and sponsors increase your influence and help you advance faster.

Research says that mentors are even more important for women's career advancement.
Pat Heim says women benefit even more from a mentor because it helps them learn the unwritten rules of male culture (Heim, 1992).

Traits of Top Mentors

- **Respected** within the organization
- Someone **you admire**, making bonding easier
- **Upward** career trajectory
- Access to the **dominant coalition**

Different personalities are best for learning; similar ones help you advance.

How to Find a Mentor / Sponsor

1. Reach Out

- Water cooler. On a high, ask if you can talk to them more
- Company events
- Email

Approach one at a time, just in case they talk to each other

 Ask for career advice

2. Tell Them WHY & What You Admire About Them

Perhaps you admire their career progression, share a passion, or appreciate their style or demeanor.

Say it.

3. Start Small, Ask For A Chat / Feedback

Don't ask 'Would you be my mentor', which feels like a huge commitment.

Ask for a chat first.

If that one goes well, say:

> **You**: Thank you so much, this was incredibly helpful. I truly appreciate it.
> If you're available and willing, would it be possible to meet again in the future at your convenience?

⍰⍰ Next time you meet bring a little gift.

4. Use Followup Opportunities

For instance, after delivering a presentation to senior management, I asked for their feedback—and several agreed.

You can do something similar:

- **After *their* presentation** Say it was interesting/inspiring and you'd like to learn more.
- **After a dinner you both attended**
- **After a quick chat**

5. Show Potential

Research confirms basic power dynamics principles:

Mentors and sponsors prefer mentees with future potential.

⍰ Approach like you will go places and need guidance, never like you need rescuing.

6. Show You're A Good Ally

Support them, defend them, share news, and celebrate their wins.

7. Show Gratitude

- Thank them
- Offer small tokens/gifts
- Pick up the tabs
- Offer help (outside of work & for their family)
- Say or hint that 'you will remember'

8. Show You're Similar (& Want To Be *More* Similar)

Ask questions that suggest you aspire to be more like them (implying admiration)
Ie.:

> **You**: You look always so calm and in control. I'd love to be able to do the same. How do you do that

⍰⍰ If they smile, you know they like it

Balance! You want to be more like them, but not a carbon copy
Too much and it feels fake, and people don't want clones to replace them.

9. Show You're Taking & Using Their Advice

- Take note
- Back-channeling approval ("*Uh-uh*"; "*Makes sense*"; "*Riiight*")
- Report back you took their advice

- **The Bel's approach to making free coaching a win-win**
- Avoid covert question formats

This is a preview from Power University. Alumni refer to the curriculum for more advanced strategies and techniques !

8 Ways Men Keep Women Down at Work

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

As you seek to become a successful businesswoman, you will face some headwinds.

Some of that competition will be from men, who don't enjoy more competition.

In this article we will learn how that competition looks like, and how you can handle it.

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- Intro
- 1. "Girls Are Silly & Cute" Power Moves (AKA: Infantilizing)
- 2. The Philosophical Shamer
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- 4. Feigning Anger & Annoyance
- 5. Implying That "You're Inappropriate"
- 6. The Self-Accusatory Power Move
- 7. Task You With Coffee / Minutes
- 8. "It's Because You're A Woman"
- 9. Sexual Objectification

Intro

Of course, men compete with you just as they'd compete with other men.

But **some men *especially* resent female competition**.

More competition from women not only means more competition in general, but for every woman that beats him at work, it's one less woman available on the sexual market place for him, since women don't really like men who are below them.

That's why **many men, secretly, would rather see women withdraw from work**.
Going back to the 1950's would make dating easier for men. And that's why some will try to push women back into their old "girly" and submissive roles.

Here are some of these power moves.

1. “Girls Are Silly & Cute” Power Moves (AKA: Infantilizing)

“Girls are silly and cute” used to be an old pick-up mantra.

Men used to repeat this to themselves in order to self-convince themselves that they didn’t need to fear approaching women because, well, there was nothing to be afraid of. One should not be afraid of “silly and cute”.

This power move can be used both in private life, and it often is, and at work. It works something like this:

> **Her**: Mark, at the meeting you repeated my idea without crediting me. That makes me angry when you repeat what I’ve just said without mentioning me
> **Him**: You’re so cute when you get angry

That one tries to get under your skin and make you overreact. If you overreact, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, and it’s a form of gaslighting.
He just said that you “look cute *when you’re angry*“. If you get angry, you confirm that he was right. So you’re stuck in a double bind, and that’s a form of gaslighting.

If you let guys like Mark get in your way or, worse, if you internalize that message, you will never become a leader. “Cute and emotional” are not leadership material.

You answer this one by remaining calm and insisting on the *issue*, which is him not crediting you.
Also see:

- **Frame control techniques**

To this category belong also what I call “babying power moves”, which are was of infantilizing you and robbing you of your power as an adult.
For example, Sharyl Sandberg in Lean In says that a senator once patted on her head and asked her “what are you a pon-pon girl”?

That was a babying power move because it framed Sandberg as “not mature enough for real men talk”.

Pinching your cheek, repeating your name three times, or tapping on your back are also babying power moves.

2. The Philosophical Shamer

You gotta love this one, trying to go from the one down to the one up.

It seeks to shame you for your goals and aspirations. If you accept his frame, you will feel guilty for being driven. It's usually delivered from a judge frame (also see "soft power").

> **Him**: Why do you even care about that, it's just a silly title, for a meaningless position in an org-chart. Can't you just be happy with what you've got?

Shaming is a common manipulation technique in social exchanges, and you can read more here:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Example: Reality Bites

Ethan Hawke uses a similar frame in "Reality Bites" to keep Winona Ryder from expressing herself through work fulfillment.

Ethan frames himself like a free spirit, and frames Winonah as a corporate manipulated corporate drone

Sometimes you will see a man using this technique when the woman earns more than him.
So he tries to frame his "life choice" as superior and worthy, and he seeks to frame her life choice of seeking fulfillment in business as "dirty and unworthy".

He is the cool philosopher who doesn't care about material stuff. You are the venal, materialistic woman slaving away on a corporate treadmill (sure!).

3. "Are you a man" Power Move

This class here seeks to shame you for behaving assertively.

Every time you are too assertive for his taste, he tries to make you feel like you are overly aggressive, which implies that "you're not a real woman".

The best jabs of this kind don't directly tell women they're like men, which would sound like overly aggressive and sexist, but they indirectly *imply* they are like men.

For example:

> **Her**: John, I'm tired of coming back to my desk and seeing you haven't done anything of the work we agreed upon. I'm gonna tell you one last time: pull your weight, or I will have to take this matter to our boss
>
> **Him**: Woooh, you're nasty!

Accusations and adjectives like "nasty", "aggressive", "overpowering" seek to strip your femininity away.
If you take that criticism personally, chances are that you will retreat back in the "submissive girly shell", just so that you can preserve your femininity and your self-identity as a woman.

Donald Trump used it a few times against her female opponents.

Instead of apologizing, he doubles down on his "nasty" comment. Trump confirms that Hillary is "nasty" and "even

nastier than Rosie O'Donnel"

4. Feigning Anger & Annoyance

Annoyance indirectly says that you are being too pushy. And not to be too pushy, you will want to step back or apologize.

Anger shows that you are being unfair, and that will also make you want to step away and potentially apologize.

If you are right, or if you are asking for what's fair to ask, don't back down in front of anger or annoyance. They are just (manipulative) negotiation strategies.

5. Implying That "You're Inappropriate"

Women have a bigger need than men of being socially accepted.

And, because of sexual dynamics (the Madonna-whore dichotomy), they also have a bigger need of sounding "proper".

That makes it easier for men to control women using the "inappropriate" power move.

Some of these moves are typical SJW moves, and they can be delivered with words, nonverbal expressions of disgust or surprise, or fake shock.
For example:

> **Her**: nonono, don't try the typical male move of telling me I'm being emotional
>
> **Him**: "typical move", what do you mean. That's sexist, Christy

Playing offended is also a way to make her feel she was out of line:

> **Her**: Hey Matt, I'd like to talk to you about Alex, sometimes I feel he is too rude
>
> **Him**: How dare you saying that, Alex is a great team player, I'm offended you could even think such a thing, let alone say it

It doesn't even to be so obvious. Sometimes simply saying "you didn't just say that", or "wow, what was that", is enough to make women backtrack or crow in embarrassment.

Or just a nonverbal gesture can be enough.
See here an example:

> **Charlotte**: (yelling, high-pitched) What?? Tray gave me that apartment!
>
> **Him**: (pulls back, with the expression saying "what was that")

See the way he pulls back? That's as if to say "what the hell was that". She feels self-conscious for being too aggressive, and backtracks, losing power and authority (and looking unable to control herself).

6. The Self-Accusatory Power Move

This one accuses you of accusing them.

Maybe you want to talk about a legitimate issue, but they pretend you are accusing them personally. Since women don't want to come across as too aggressive or demanding, she will let him change the topic and never get to deal with the real issue.

> **You**: It's been two years since I've had a raise and I'd like to talk to you about why I think I deserve one.
> **Him:** Are you accusing me of overlooking your well-being?

You weren't accusing him of anything, but if you accept his frame and start defending, you are now the one down -and you just got sidetracked from the real issue-.

See a longer example in the forums.

7. Task You With Coffee / Minutes

If you are the most junior employee, you might have to bring the coffee or take the minutes.
That's part of life, sometimes.

But if you've been around for a while and if you are hired as a professional, then you want to avoid being the "errand-girl" or the "take the minutes girl".

How do you do that?

Privately, you can tell your boss the truth of how you feel about it, and that you think it's unfair that you always do the menial tasks.
You can then say it's fairer if the most junior employee does it, or that the responsibility is rotated.

If you feel very brave or if the person asking you is not your boss, Lois Frankl recommends that you can say in front of everyone "I think I'll pass since I did it last time".

PRO Tip: Think in advance what you can and cannot do

Fran Hauser, author of "The Myth of The Nice Girl", says that it's best if you think in advance what you are OK doing and what you are not OK doing.

That way, you will never be caught off-guard.

This is important because when you are caught off-guard and you do something that you end up resenting, you will become resentful, and the qualify of your work (and life) will suffer. So think in advance of what you can and cannot put up with, and prepare an appropriate way of declining.

8. "It's Because You're A Woman"

You've probably heard this one a few times in your life.

At work, it works like this.
Whenever you make a mistake in a field that's stereotypically male, some men will want to make you feel like the lady who's just invaded the locker room.

You are more likely to encounter this one in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), but any job where you're performing anything stereotypically male will do.

Some men might say directly, and some others will communicate it with their attitude.
For example:

> **Her**: I can't see where is this mistake, the formulas seem to be correct
>
> **Him**: Move (gestures her away from the keyboard). Here it is, it's in F4. ah, women (rolls his eyes and quickly move away)

Sometimes men will not even make a reference to women at all, which makes it more difficult to address it directly. But they will make the woman feel unwelcome with that "ol' boys club attitude".

Them using insider jokes, not inviting you for lunch, changing topics when you arrive.
These all send the message "you're not welcome".

For example:

> **Her**: I can't see where is this mistake, the formulas seem to be correct
>
> **Him**: Move. It's a case of PEBCAK error
>
> **All other men**: (laughing)

PEBCAK means “problem exists between chair and keyboard”. His IT friends will get it, you won’t. And that’s the equivalent of saying “you’re a woman, no good with anything computer-related”.

Whenever men make a reference that you’re not going to get, which also sometimes includes sports references, they are indirectly saying “you don’t belong here as a woman”.

If you internalize that message, you might want to run away from any male-majority profession.

9. Sexual Objectification

And finally, we get to the main point.

Sexual harassment sometimes is just that: sexual harassment.
But, often, it also indirectly seeks to keep women away from the workplace.

When a man objectifies you sexually, he is discounting your work-value and contribution in favor of your sexual value.

Scratch that presentation you are delivering, it’s not nearly as worth as the sight of your ass when you turn around. He is indirectly saying that your main value in this world is that of being penetrated by a man.

Here is an example:

This is so extreme you’d think it’s a movie. Instead, it was a prime minister

The example above is extreme but, sexual power moves are real, and happen every day around the world.

Deborah Tannen also correctly points out that objectification mustn’t even be directed at you personally.
General jokes about women, or even just keeping pictures of sexy women in the office sends the message that “women are for sex (only)”.

Preventing the Sexual Power Move

In Power University there are a few techniques to handle these situations.

But the first one is prevention. Dress appropriately, and you will always be able to defend yourself and frame him as a sexual deviant.

If you are dressed inappropriately, he might be able to frame you as inappropriate.
Finally, I’d also avoid drinking too much when you go out with work colleagues. Even if nothing happens, rumors might spread.

The Businesswoman Guide to Win in Male Organizations

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Men and women approach business very differently.

As it's to be expected, after all.
Men and women are biologically different, are brought up differently, and move within different cultural expectations.

Whether culture, nature, or nurture matters the most is a hotly debated topic. Luckily, we can skip the discussion and focuses on practical solutions.

And for our practical purposes, we can recognize two different approaches to business for men and women.
One is not superior to the other, of course.
However, different situations tend to favor and reward either the male style *or* the female style.

Historically, workplaces have been environments that functioned with the male style.
There are exceptions, of course. But in most cases, **if women want to make it to the top of their organizations, they need to learn the men's way of doing things.**

This table summarizes the two different approaches:

Bookmark it here at high-resolution.

Note that I didn't say that women *have to* adapt to the male style.
A woman can:

- Find a way to be successful in her own feminine way
- Find more feminine-oriented cultures
- Say "screw business success"
- Build her own business

But if she wants to make it within male-dominated organizations, she must learn to work the male way. And, in any case, she can only gain by understanding how men differ.

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- The More Autocratic the Leader, The More Extreme the Male Style

- The 3 Traits to Master The Male Style
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The Higher You Go, The More The Male Style Wins

Women are well represented in the workforce and in managerial positions.
But are still struggling to make it into executive and board positions, and this is why:

In Junion Positions the Feminine Style Works Great
Women can enjoy great success early on by being nice and submissive.
They focus on being pleasant, doing great work, and they do well.

In Middle Management the Feminine Style Works Great
Women still enjoy good success with the feminine style in management positions.
Low and mid-management levels are seen as nurturing and collaborative: taking care of the team members, and keeping the team cohesive and harmonious.

At Exec Level the Feminine Style Struggles
Things change when you get into executive positions.
To make it into executive positions you must be -and be seen- seen as hard-driving, ambitious, strong and, in some organizations, ruthless. That’s the male style.

On average, **to make it to the top you need to learn to play the men’s game**.

Why the “Go-Getter” Male Style Goes to The Top

Some women are natural go-getters. Others need to develop those skills

Bradberry surveyed 500.000 employees, managers, execs, and CEOs (1.000 CEOs, to be precise).
Bradberry found out that EQ (emotional quotient) increases with titles up until middle management.
Then it starts steeply declining with executives, and it reaches the bottom with CEOs.

Why do CEOs score the lowest in emotional intelligence?

Is it because companies promote lower EQ folks, or the tasks linked to their position lowers their EQ?
Even Bradberry, who is a big proponent of Emotional Intelligence (EI), acknowledges that it's a bit of both -hence, he's also saying, being low in EI helps you get promoted-.

There are two more factors at play, though.
One is that people in power do not need to be empathic towards the ones below them.
Says Goleman describing the "politics of empathy" in '*Working Wiht Emotional Intelligence*':

> Those with little power are expected to sense the feelings of those with power, while those in power feel less obligation to be sensitive in return.

And second, and most important, it's not that CEOs are (necessarily) emotionally stupid. They just have different priorities.
CEOs are more concerned with power, winning, and getting things done than with what help you score high in emotional intelligence -things such as understanding what others feel, protecting people's egos, nurturing relationships, and "getting along"-.

And if you want to make it to the top of most organizations, it helps to know the game that those execs and CEOs are playing.
Even if you want to transcend those rules once you're at the top, you *still* need to learn them.

This post (and Power University) is about learning those rules.

The More Autocratic the Leader, The More Extreme the Male Style

As a general rule:

> The more autocratic the CEO, the more the male style permeates the organization. And the more the male style is necessary to climb hierarchies.

You can see it with Donald Trump.
People who are successful around him are sworn allies to the man, *not* the organization. They respect the hierarchy and honor the boss (notice how meek vice president Mike Pence is around Trump).

And when the boss is not around, they all have an aggressive, "results-no-matter what" attitude.

See here an example with Mike Pompeo, one of Trump's favorite and most successful allies:

> **Mike Pompeo**: Our adversaries should know this (..) this organization will be more vicious, more aggressive, more inclined to take risks (…)

Pompeo's way is the extremization (caricature?) of the male style. It's all about aggression, domination, risk-taking… And enemies that need to be conquered.
In that Trump environment, a more pro-social and kinder female style would be seen as weak and ineffective, and it would never reach the top.

The 3 Traits to Master The Male Style

In the table above there are many entries, and I recommend you read it all.
The main ones you need to care of, are:

#1. Competitiveness: Be More Competitive Than the Average Woman

Going up the corporate ladder, in good part, is a matter of competition.
To do well in business means getting good at competing.

Men are more competitive and more comfortable with competition, and that gives them an advantage both at work, and in power dynamics in general.
Says Deborah Tannen:

> If one person is trying to keep everyone equal and working hard to save face for the other, while another person is trying to maintain the one-up position, the person seeking the one-up position is very likely to get it, and to succeed in assigning the one-down position to the person who has not been expending effort to stay out of it.

Coaching Advice:

1. **Embrace competition**: To go up, you need to compete more -as simple as that-
2. **Reframe competition as good for all**: Reframe competition. It's not mean, it's how the best idea or the best candidate comes out on top, and that's good for everyone (minus the one who lost)
3. **Reframe ambition**: Hegelsen says that women are wary of ambition because they accept someone else's negative definition. Change the definition of ambition. For example: ambition is the desire to maximize your talents in the service of work you find worthwhile and rewarding
4. **Acknowledge that you can be friendly *and* competitive:** competition doesn't mean you're enemies. You can

compete fairly, while being respectful of others

#1.2. Learn to Settle Disputes Through Competition

Psychologists Kilmann and Thomas developed the managerial grid model, listing the following behaviors to settle disagreements:

- **Accommodation** (giving in)
- **Avoidance** ("let's pretend there is no issue". It can lead to resentment and passive aggression)
- **Compromise** (negotiating the different interest, we both gain a bit and lose a bit)
- **Collaboration** (we seek a way that will lead to win-win)
- **Competition** (I seek my way, you seek yours. One will win, and one will lose)

While women ten do to avoid competition, competition is exactly how conflicts are resolved in many boardrooms (and in some cultures).

For more information, self-assessment, and tips on how to compete, read here:

- **Business conflict: self-assessment and advice**

#2. Power Dynamics: Learn to Respect -and Be Respected- In Hierarchies

Men move in a world of top-down hierarchies, while women are more accustomed to flat hierarchies.

This is not to say there are no alpha females and no female hierarchies at all, but they are less pronounced, and follow different rules.
This is what you need to know about male hierarchies:

1. **Male bosses expect you to honor the hierarchy**: act like he is a boss to be respected and listened to, and he will like you more than if you pretended you two are "just two human beings"
2. **Male bosses expect loyalty to honor the hierarchy**: in male hierarchies, great team players show loyalty to the man above and to the team. Not showing loyalty will put you at a political disadvantage. And be wary of loyalty tests
3. **Male colleagues will try to one-up you**: men seek a hierarchy also among peers, so they might try to one-up you. Banter and teasing are also part of the one-upmanship games. Try to respond in kind
4. **Men seek and respect hierarchy status symbols**: bigger office, bigger salary, (bigger) expense budget, (bigger) company car. When women give them up, they give up power and male respect.

Many of the above rules may seem petty to some women. In many ways, they are. But if you flout them, you are likely going to pay the political price.

Also read:

- **How to combine power and femininity**

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

Common mistakes to avoid:

- Ask "why" and expect the boss to explain the tasks
- Tell the boss why you think he is wrong
- In interviews, telling male interviewers what work you do and what you don't want to do

- Try to change the boss' mind publicly (persuading someone is a sign of soft power, the boss will not like it)
- Doing voluntary work outside the team without his approval (including charity work)

#3. Goal-Orientation: Develop "Bottom-Line Mindset"

Men revere winners.

So they tend to be goal-oriented, thinking about the fastest and most effective way of reaching the goal.
Only after they found the quickest way, men consider the rules and constraints.

Women tend to be more process-oriented, valuing fulfillment and harmony as important parts of that process.
To men, that can look like women don't want to win badly enough.

At work, a bottom-line first mindset is most likely to carry you to the top.
It's not that corporations are evil per se, but the interests are simply aligned that way. People who are financially invested in the business want to see their money grow.

A bottom-line first mindset is the mindset that Wall-Street, investors, and owners love. It means they can entrust you with their money.

Common mistakes to avoid:

- **Perfectionism:** perfectionism tends to focus on the process instead of getting it done
- **Over-worrying:** worriors are seen as weak in the "winning-first mindset"
- **Lack of prioritization**: men tend to focus on one thing at a time. They will think you're scatterbrained if you do too many things at once
- **Hiding your drive**: if you hide your ambitions you will come across as uncompetitive, and "not exec material"

Coaching Advice:

- **Present your idea in terms of bottom-line impact**: since men value bottom-line thinking, frame your opinion in a way that saves money or makes money.
- **Make yourself less available**: studies show that women are far more available than men. Being too available communicates you're not giving enough priority to your bottom lines

3.2. Develop "Bottom Line Talking"

Deborah Tannen talks about "rapport talk", that women engage in, and "report talk", that men prefer.

Women talking to other women often like to start with a backstory, like how they came up with the idea. And that can be OK… As long as you *quickly* tie it to the main point.
Too long a preamble, and men lose patience fast, especially at the executive level where time is money.

I like this example from Margin Call:

When the junior employee starts sharing his background story, the CEO immediately tells him to cut to the chase.
But notice that it's different when the background story relates -and leads- to the main issue

Advice for Career Success

Most career strategies apply to both men and women. But there are several significant peculiarities women should be aware of:

#1. Find a Mentor

Having a mentor is helpful to anyone, but it's especially important for women in business organizations.

The authors of "Breaking the Glass Ceiling" found in their survey that only 38 percent of successful men had mentors, but ***all* of the women executives had mentors**.
Pat Heim believes that's because women need to re-learn the rules of the game, and a mentor helps them navigate that new world.

Should you get a male or female mentor?
The short story: **ideally, you will have both a male and a female mentor.**
Research shows that female mentors help get more promotions, but male mentors help women earn significantly more.

#2. Approach Relationships Issues With Work-Talk

Women are comfortable talking about relationships and feelings.
Men are not.

You make men uncomfortable talking about your relationship, even if you mean "work relationships".
So if you need to talk about interpersonal issues approach it by saying "how to work better together".

2.2. Watch Out for The "Factual Power Moves"

Some men might try to avoid a needed relationship talk by sidetracking you.

We will see more examples in the relationship module, but for work, imagine that your colleague has taken your idea to the boss and got all the credit.
Now you confront him:

> **You**: Matt, when I tell you my ideas and you take them to our boss pretending they're yours, I feel I can't trust you. There's a big problem with us working together
> **Matt**: Well, your idea wasn't that good. I can think of lots of better ways to streamline the process

The attack is the sidetrack.
If you start defending your idea, you fall for the bait.
Instead, you must maintain your frame and take it back to the relationship issue (in this case, trust):

> **You**: Matt, the issue is not who has the best idea. The issue is trust. And when you behave like that, I don't feel I can trust you

At this point, in the most extreme cases, men can use the "emotional power move", which goes a bit like this:

> **Matt**: Oh, you women are all alike. So emotional about everything. Let's just keep this professional

Again, he is trying to sidetrack the conversation to avoid fessing up to his wrongdoing. You want to keep insisting on the real issue.

#3. Act Swiftly On Catty Female Subordinates

Pulling ranks on insubordinate employees after they refuse to change their ways is the only way to maintain your authority

When a woman is promoted to a managerial position, other women can grow resentful.

Don't take it personally, often it's a knee-jerk reaction to their own female bias.
To a woman, a woman becoming a boss is a betrayal of the female unwritten rules (flat organization and "power dead-even").
Read more in this forum entry.

To handle it, I recommend this approach:

1. **Get personal**: go to lunch, get to know her, use indirect ways of commanding ("female style" solution)
2. **Coach her on how business works**: explain that business is a hierarchical organization and you had to learn yourself. Now, you're happy to share with her (coach solution)
3. **Tell her you're the boss and she must execute**: if the two above fail, try the top-down approach. This is likely to make her even more resentful though, so be prepared (autocratic solution)
4. **Fire her**: a toxic employee is undermining you and your team. If she can't work well, it's your duty to let toxic employees go

#4. More Bullet-Advice

And here are more female-specific advice in shorter format:

- **Avoid volunteering for non-business critical tasks**
  have you ever seen a man collecting money for Christmas gifts, or sending around birthday cards to sign? Me neither.
- **Develop relationships that increase your power:** women are uncomfortable building alliances that further their goals. But alliances are a critical path to power and success
- **Don't talk behind men's back:** women are used to talk about their friends with other friends, but to men that's a personal betrayal. Avoid talking about a man's way of working to other women

- **Dare to lead:** women often feel uncomfortable taking leadership positions. *Especially* if there are men around. But if you have to make it in a male world, you might have to push yourself to get in the lead
- **Take criticism in strides:** women more than men tend to take feedback and criticism personally. Never show that criticism is getting to you because men consider that an emotional weakness (develop an antifragile ego and growth mindset)
- **Use your budget:** Loils Frankl says that women tend to be conscientious about their company's money. That's great, as long as you aren't inconveniencing yourself to save a few bucks
- **Beware of father figures**: if you tend to behave unnaturally childish or "girly" around men with authority, beware you're not seeing him as a father figure
- **Avoid over-apologizing**: some women have a tendency to over-apologize. Apologizing profusely for inconsequential slips shows insecurity
- **Avoid playing the gender card**: unless you can prove anything, you will get little support
- **Don't waste too much time on early ideas**: Fran Hauser says that men knock on their bosses' door to share a business idea. Women instead prepare presentations before they even get simple feedback. Before you invest much time, mention that idea in a casual conversation first.
- **Network with both men and women**: women tend to cluster with other women, but that's a mistake. In organizations where most top executives are men, it's men who have the most important information

And if you're feeling like crying?
Read this forum entry on how to handle tears.

This is a preview from Power University, the workplace module, where you can find more real-life examples and practical advice.

How to Be More Authoritative & Confident at Work: Top Strategies

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Signaling confidence and power is paramount to gaining authority, both at work and anywhere else.

In workplaces as anywhere else, your body language, behavior, and communication can either signal authority and leader qualities or undermine it.

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- Intro: Shared Foundations of Authority
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  - Limit Speech Weakeners
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- Act With Power
  - Stand Up For Your Stakeholders
  - Sidestep Personal Issues, Focus On Deliverables
  - Assume Permission Granted
  - Signal Authority With Your Environment
- Think With Power
  - Use Logic & Data
  - Present Structured Thinking
  - Display Logic, Critical Thinking, & Wisdom

- ⍰ Example: Exuding Authority & Power

Intro: Shared Foundations of Authority

At The Power Moves we believe that authority is linked to most other traits that tend to make a high-value man.

This means that a man who is competent, confident, strategically minded, and positively dominant tends to gain authority as much as he gains status, respect, and social attraction.

So while this is 'bad news' if you were looking for a shortcut, it's great news because it means that the foundations are already covered by solid, power-aware self-development.

In this article, we'll delve deeper into how to apply some of these basics to workplaces.

1. Speak With Power

What many don't realize is that it's not the words themselves that often signal low power and undermine authority, but it's the sub-communication of low power that undermines your authority.

For a deeper overview, also see:

- Low power speaking
- High power speaking

And for the specific context of work:

Speak With Declarative Sentences

Declarative sentences communicate certitude and conviction.

Questions communicate doubt and low confidence.

If you are confident about something, avoid questions and use declarative sentences instead.

Examples:

> (Talking about severance packages)
> **HR representative (question)**: Don't you think it could be a good idea if we offered 3 months' pay instead of 2 weeks?

This is rather weak, especially considering the HR representative has a good degree of authority in discussing employees' termination.

Better:

> **HR (declarative)**: Industry standard is 2 months. I propose we offer 3 months as a gesture of goodwill.

To power-protect, you'd say:

> **HR (balanced)**: Industry standard is 2 months. I propose 3 months as a gesture of goodwill.
> We lower the chances of legal troubles, and keep a good reputation. <— Provides a rationale.
> What do you think <— Offers him to disagree

⍰ ⍰⍰ Own uncertainty when certitude isn't possible

Faking certitude is weak
It sub-communicates fragile ego, people-pleasing tendencies, and undermines your long-term authority.

Focus on gaining long-term credibility instead.
When you're an expert and confident speaker owning incertitude *enhances* your credibility.

Limit Speech Weakeners

Speech weakeners include:

- *"Maybe this isn't important, but what if…"* ➡ *"What if…"*
- *"We sort of did…"* ➡ *"We did"*
- *"Somewhat I tried… "* ➡ *"I tested it"*

You can of course use these strategically and we dig deeper in Power University.

Exceptions for academics

In general, with smart people, critical thinkers, and in academic circles, more tentative language such as 'tends to be', 'it seems like' or 'the data seem to point towards' makes you *more* credible.

See more in:

- High confidence speaking

Cut Preambles, Go Straight to The Point

A preamble is a concoction of words and nonwords used before getting to the main point.

As a rule of thumb:

> Preambles soften your message, and the more words you use, the "softer" your message will be.

An example of using too many preambles, adapted from Lois Frankl:

Time-waster: You know, I was thinking about this issue.
I've been talking to my colleagues, too. A lot of us share the same concerns (…)
Anyway, we've been brainstorming and we came up with an idea. I'm not saying it's a silver bullet, but it may work.
The idea involves…

Compare:

> **Confident**: We brainstormed and came up with…

Again if consciously adopted, pre-ambles can be powerful tools.
As for most things, it's about your goals, and calibrating accordingly.

End With Your Suggestion (& Avoid "Laundry Listing")

A laundry list is a list of options with no preferred option and no guidance

> **Poor communicator**: We could use outside consultants or internal staff.
> Or we can organize a team to investigate options <— There is no guidance or solution

Compare:

> **Effective communicator**: I see two different alternatives (…)
> I've looked and compared options (add details), and I recommend internal resources. <—Guidance
> Let me know if you agree, and I'll proceed <— Solution

Signal Agency: Speak With The "I Got This" Format

Sometimes higher-ups will ask for opinions as a test. Some other times, they're really wondering.

But a confident answer will always come across as higher authority (and boost your odds of promotions).
And, sometimes, will open doors to new possibilities.

In one of Pat Heim's examples, a manufacturing firm sought to restructure operations.
The head of operations asked two different people in the team if they had any idea how to go about it:

> **I'm not sure reply**: Hmmm, I suppose we could try giving this to the work cells to solve, though I'm not sure they can. If they don't, we can have engineering to look at it. If those two approaches don't work, I suppose we could call in a consultant.

The second one:

> **I got this reply**: We can get that done.
> I can form a cross-functional team with cells and engineering to take care of it.
> And if they struggle, I look for an external addition and keep an eye.
> Shall I proceed?

Take a guess at who got the opportunity to lead the restructuring?

Introduce Yourself With Full Name & Surname + Title

Have you ever heard of "Bill" as the founder of Microsoft?

Or "Elizabeth" for Elizabeth Warren?

Me neither.
Because those are powerful people, and powerful people go by their full names.

If you have a strong title, you can also use it to build your authority. If someone does not use your power title when introducing you, you can say it as soon as you are introduced:

> **Speaker**: This is Matt, Matt works at JPMorgan
> **Matthew**: (towards the colleague) thank you Jim, (turns towards the new person,) Hi, I'm Matt Smith, SVP, and I run bond trading operations

You can also correct others:

> **Interviewer**: Today we have with us Lucio. Lucio is an author and will talk to us about power dynamics
>
> **Lucio**: Thank you Mark. Indeed I'm Lucio Buffalmano (gives full name), I'm a social scientist <– higher authority job title
> and I focus on advancing power dynamics as a new and groundbreaking approach to personal self-

> development.
> I'm excited to talk to you today <– ends on a friendly tone

Act With Power

High power behavior signals confidence, authority, and leadership potential.

While we focus here on active behavior, always remember that high power behavior has a social aspect, and you want to defend and assert yourself whenever others test you and your resolve.

Stand Up For Your Stakeholders

For example:

> **Head of Accounts**: But what if our customers will feel cheated?

A more dominant and honorable man:

> **Head of Accounts**: As the voice of the customers, I oppose that. We make some money now, and ruin our reputation for ever.

Sidestep Personal Issues, Focus On Deliverables

There is a growing trend of 'bringing your whole self at work' and being 'radically candid'.

And while that's admirable, it's a trap for authority because high authority men focus on results.

> **Boss:** You have been going home early several times lately, and you missed a deadline twice. Is everything OK?
> **You**: Thank you for being upfront, I appreciate it. I'm going through some personal challenges, but I can handle it, and work is a top priority for me. Now, about the work…

Assume Permission Granted

Permission-seeking self-frames you as junior and incompetent.
Earn the right to assume 'yes' by gaining trust with quality work of course, but also by being proactive and taking responsibility.

Effective men who take responsibility don't need to ask permissions for holidays, long lunches, or homework.

Consider these different levels of authority:

- **Very low power**: Sorry to disturb you. I wanted to ask if you could allow me to…
- **Low power**: Would it be all right if…
- **Neutral**: May I work from home tomorrow?
- **High power**: I will be working from home tomorrow. OK with you?
- **Very high power**: I just wanted to let you know that…
- **Founder-level**: (says nothing, works from home)

In any performance-based organization, you should reach this last step already when you're in a first-level manager position.

Signal Authority With Your Environment

Have you ever seen a royal's palace looking cheap?

Probably not.

Because old kings knew the basic rule of displaying power: impress your guests.

The *Routledge Handbook on Persuasion* states that power and status can be communicated through the size and location of a person's office. Large corner offices are considered prestigious. And the appearance of that office also speaks about you (Teven & Comadena, 1996).

Some tips to maximize your environments:

- Neat office
- Plush hotels
- Restaurant where you're treated like royalty

⁉ If you're invited, avoid picking the most expensive place
It looks like cheap scrounging.
⁉️♂Once a prospect proposed the most expensive place, just to tell us they didn't need our services. She didn't look very honorable

Think With Power

An empowered executive mind, as per our foundations, tends to be:

- Optimistic
- Strategic
- Higher IQ (than average)

As you think empowered, you of course also want to *signal it*.

Use Logic & Data

In *Stealing the Corner Office* career consultant Brendan Reid explains that pitching your idea with passion and fervor is the typical rookie's mistake.

Executive materials instead position themselves as **neutral and rational operators**.

Being seen as a guy who speaks based on data, facts, and logic makes you influential.

Support intuition with logic as well.
A keyboard-less phone is not revolutionary for revolutionary's sake, but for its sales-boosting simplicity and convenience.

Good keywords:

- "*I looked at our competitors*"
- "*I ran some numbers*"
- *"I thought about this long and hard, and…* "

Present Structured Thinking

Organized thoughts sound more intelligent and authoritative.
So whenever you're not sure, or an argument is complex, think it through before speaking it out.

Display Logic, Critical Thinking, & Wisdom

Messy 'thinking aloud' undermines authority, but smart 'thinking out loud' displays IQ.
This is how to do it:

- Share pros and cons
- Share your preference
- Explain rationale

⍰ Example:

> **CEO**: Do you think it's best to warn shareholders about the anticipated loss, or should we wait until the numbers are final
> **SVP**: Hmmm… If we wait, we might sound more credible with actual figures. If we tell them now we'll have to deal with lots of questions we can't answer. But then again, shareholders would appreciate a heads up… <— This is true, but it confuses more than clarify and add less value

You don't necessarily need to give him a "yes or no", but you want to use the opportunity to sound smart and strategic.
For example:

You: An early warning raises questions, <— Con
but it also increases trust. <— Pro
Since we value honesty and transparency, I'd raise the warning <— Guidance

CEO: How would you do that?

You: (slight smile) Well, you're really good at this <— Use opportunity flattering
But I can prepare a draft statement and send it to you within the next half hour, then meet you again to discuss <— Grabs opportunity to improve your boss' relationship

When You're Done, Stop (& Avoid Trailing Voice Mails)

Example:

> **Voice Trailer**: Okay, well, I guess that's everything. Uhmm, call me if you have any questions… That's it, I think. Okay… Byee, See you

Instead:

1. Share your main concern
2. Tell them to reach out if needed
3. Hang up

⍰ Example: Exuding Authority & Power

Principle:

⚖ **Low status gossips. High status is gossiped about**
⍰ Share information drily, as if to show disdain towards gossiping.

⍰ Example:

> (after Don disappeared for 3 weeks)
> **Don**: You wanted to see me?
>
> **Roger**: About 3 weeks ago (pause)
> I hope you were looking for a job in California. Because you'll need one <— Instead of asking like most would, he delivers a threat-joke

Little later:

> **Don**: Any conflicts?
>
> **Roger**: Mona hasn't been pleasant since my engagement <— Shares the gossip as a joke side-note
>
> **Don**: (Smiles) With the deal. But… Congratulations <— Nonverbal reaction with restrained voice. No more questions about it
>
> **Roger**: Thank you
> (pause) <— Displays that he's unharried and calm
> Very few conficlits (…) <— Quickly back to business
> Well, now you can go back to your office and figure how much I made on this <— Business talk over, he can go

Little later Don refuses to even comment politics.

⍰⍰ Notice pauses, controlled demeanor, and cutting to the chase.

We helped thousands of men gain authority and exude confidence with our structured training program **Power University**

Boost Authority with Power University

Self-Promotion Done Right: 10 Proven Techniques That Work

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Mastering self-promotion at work is a critical skill for career success.

Knowing how to showcase your value and achievements can lead to better recognition, promotions, and a stronger professional reputation.
But self-promotion isn't just about bragging—it's about political skills, savvy communication, and displaying leadership to stay visible without coming across as self-centered.

Bragging effectively is both a science, and an art.
In this article, you'll discover **proven strategies for effective self-promotion**.

Contents

- 1. Let them see you win, never bleed
- 2. Have others sing your praises
- 3. Deliver ideas with storytelling techniques
- 4. Go to the whiteboard to share a strong idea
- 5. Use presentations to validate speakers & gain stage time
- 6. Have a plan for home office
- 7. Craft elevator's pitches & create 'elevator moments'
  - 7.2. Kitchenette power moves
- 8. Romance your work
- 9. Use positive self-frames
- 10. Extra tips
- SUMMARY

1. Let them see you win, never bleed

Principle:

⚖️ No mistake happened if your boss is unaware of it
❓ Hide your mistakes from your boss

❓ Example:

After a major blunder the project manager called and yelled for what seemed an eternity:

> **PM**: (angry) Think before you hit “send”, THINK! Are you able to THINK!
>
> **Me**: (calm) Yes, I think I am
>
> **PM**: Who else was in CC, was it Andy in there too?
>
> **Me**: (calm) I think he was, yes
>
> **PM**: (yelling) What the f*ck were you thinking, ANDY was there, you sent ANDY the wrong report on MY project! Do you know who are they going to blame?
>
> **Me**: (calm) Well, I think me
>
> **PM**: (yelling) No, because you’re a fucking junior who can’t do shit and they will blame ME!
>
> **Me**: (calm) Hmmmm yeah, maybe you’re right

And on and on.

Notice there is no ‘sorry’.
Why not?
Although the project manager grew angrier without apologies, the boss next to me stayed oblivious to my mistake.
And with a flawless appearance, I ended the assignment with an ‘exceeds’.

2. Have others sing your praises

When you follow our principles, including being high-power/high-warmth, most people think well of you.

Not everyone will *talk* well about you, though.
This is how you fix it:

- Make smart allies who know how to play politics
- When they compliment you 1:1, tell them to share it
- Lead by example and say great things about the people close to you

This might be the simplest, most effective, and classiest way to promote.

❓♂️That time I realized my friends hyped me up

I remember years ago at the launch party of a well-funded startup.

One of the founders introduced me to one of his friends as “Lucio, he’s really good in sales, but *really* good”.

I had to smile within myself: maybe he was right, but how did he even know?

I had never worked with him, and never been too close to him, either.
But my network -and very possibly my brother-in-arms- did some good promotion for me.

3. Deliver ideas with storytelling techniques

When you blurt out a good idea without any build-up, you sell your genius short.

If you have a winning idea, build up to it.

Ie.:

> **You**: Alright, you all had valuable input, and I have come to this idea, hear me out. <— Attention grabber
> What if instead of X, we could do Y. <— Excitement-building preview
> Here is how we could get it done…

4. Go to the whiteboard to share a strong idea

Research shows that the whiteboard increases engagement and retention.
And gives people a feeling you “own” the idea.

Plus, you act display self-confidence and leadership qualities.

5. Use presentations to validate speakers & gain stage time

Leil Lowndes recommends you be the first to applaud.

I agree, and even more, you can:

1. **Sit in front**
2. **Look at the speaker**
3. **Smile at their jokes**
4. **Ask easy questions and preface them with your name/title**
5. ▯ **Ask in the name of your department** to sound leader-like
   Ie.: “*You mentioned we need more X. Any idea how we in marketing can help with that?*“
6. **Go talk to them afterward**
   - Compliment them
   - Thank them
   - Ask questions

Friendly applause also sub-communicate that you’re a loyal ally, especially important in male hierarchical cultures.

▯♂**That time I forgot to validate**

Years ago I was in a fintech incubator.

The son of a rich businessman 'bought his button' to join as a founder, and that night delivered a presentation.

As usual, few career-minded people listen to the speeches, while 9-to-5ers and mavericks are there to eat, drink, talk and shoot the breeze.
Knowing my future wasn't there, I ignored the political game and was instead sitting with a girl talking about life and dating.

Suddenly, the presenter came over hyped and excited and asked us: "*So, I was it?*".
Both of us were lost, thinking "*What the heck is he talking about?*"

After a few micro-seconds of incredulity it dawned on me: this he was so clueless that not only he hadn't realized we didn't care, but he didn't realize that openly looking for validation made him look terribly insecure.

So I fumbled that his speech was awesome.
"*Yeah?*", he asked. "*Yeah man, you're a great speaker, everyone was listening to you raptly*". He closed both his fists in sign of victory, and left.

He was junior and inexperienced, so he made it too obvious he craved support and approval.
But make no mistake, more seasones players *hide* it more.
But they still appreciate support and approval.

6. Have a plan for home office

Home office makes life easier, but career advancement more challenging.

Peggy Klaus in her book "*Brag*" calls the political fallout of too much home office the "out of sight, out of mind syndrome".
Mixing Klaus' good advice with our own, this is how you can fix it:

1. **Schedule a recurring 1:1 with your boss** to stay top of mind. Often, the relationship with your boss is the most important work relationship

2. **Check-in by phone** with boss and colleagues
3. **Schedule lunches when nearby the office** with the most influential people in your career
4. **Strategically CC your boss** to display good work
   ⚠ Avoid overdoing: it quickly turns annoying

7. Craft elevator's pitches & create 'elevator moments'

The elevator's pitch is a quick introduction of yourself that you can deliver at a moment's notice.
It should seem natural, but only because you rehearsed it plenty of times.

When looking for opportunities, include:

- What you've done
- What you're doing
- Who you want to help with your skills

Ask AI how to make it compelling, and adjust it to your preferences.

⍰ ⍰ Create your elevator rides

When I want to meet a woman and make it 'natural', I slow down, speed up, or check something right beside them.

It's the same with creating 'elevator rides'.

Pick up the phones to seem busy and (pretend you're) talking to someone until you're ready to strike.
Or slow down or speed up when the founder is entering the building.

Attention-grabbing behavior or clothes in high-transit areas also make for easy conversation starters.
For example, the first time I spoke with the founder was while brushing my teeth, and he spoke first with a big smile.

7.2. Kitchenette power moves

Don't reply 'All good' when higher-ups ask 'What's up'.

Talk about work instead:

> **You**: Great, thank you!
> I'm very excited about XYZ project. It's going well, we may bring in X revenue (/cost savings).

If they show interest, keep going and ask for their perspective.

If you're on mundane work, highlight positive aspects of the job or company, or express gratitude for the opportunity.

⍰⍰ Don't queue-up: lazy men stand in queues
Avoid queuing for anything during working hours (water, fridge, toaster). It signals low-value slacking.

8. Romance your work

For example:

- **Mention the challenges you overcame**
  Ie.: "*The laptop is fixed*" ➡ "*The IT department was backed up, but I convinced them to prioritize your laptop. Here it is*"

- **Breakup your achievements**, research suggests it makes them more impressive
  Ie.: "*The project is delivered*" ➡ "*We delivered all requirements on time, and within budget*"

9. Use positive self-frames

Everything you do or say sub-communicates about you.

The strategic communicator, something we train our students in Power University, always talk in a way that self-frame them as high-value, influential, and in-demand.

Here are some examples:

Negative Self-frames	Positive Self-frames
I could have done a better job with the budget	*Although slightly over budget, we delivered ahead of schedule* <— Focus on the positive
I won't manage to keep it within schedule	*Staff turnover will delay us. We're interviewing for replacements already the new delivery date is……* <— Share external circumstances
I wish I had done more research before deciding to hire him.	*Unluckily it didn't work out. We now learned how to uncover fake references and it won't happen again* <— Covertly off-load blame, then focus on learning & solutions

⍰ Balance and calibration
Do, without overdoing it. Share the issues beyond your control, while *also* taking responsibility. Mention the challenges, *without* overblowing them. Breakup achievements, without wasting people's time.

10. Extra tips

- **Attend company's parties:** absences communicate disloyalty
- **Do go for after-hours**, especially if your boss/management will be there

- **Get into the company's newsletter:** make friends with PR / comms, and get a company-wide mention
- **Post wins on Linkedin, and tag your company**
- **Like the updates of your boss / founders and share them:** trust me, they notice
- **Approach powerful people with something you have in common:** research the attendees of the networking events, look up their background, and go talk to them mentioning some commonalities

Also see this article for higher-level self-promotion strategies.

SUMMARY

Effective self-promotion requires a mix of bold self-advocacy, tempered with subtlety and strategy.

Start incorporating these techniques, and your reputation will start taking off -together with your career-.

⍰ This is a preview from Power University !

Career Strategies: Start Here

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Career strategies are thought-through approaches to personal career advancement that help you meet your career goals.

Good career strategies take into account your strengths and personal dispositions, as well as the realities of the workplace, including the human side, and the politics.

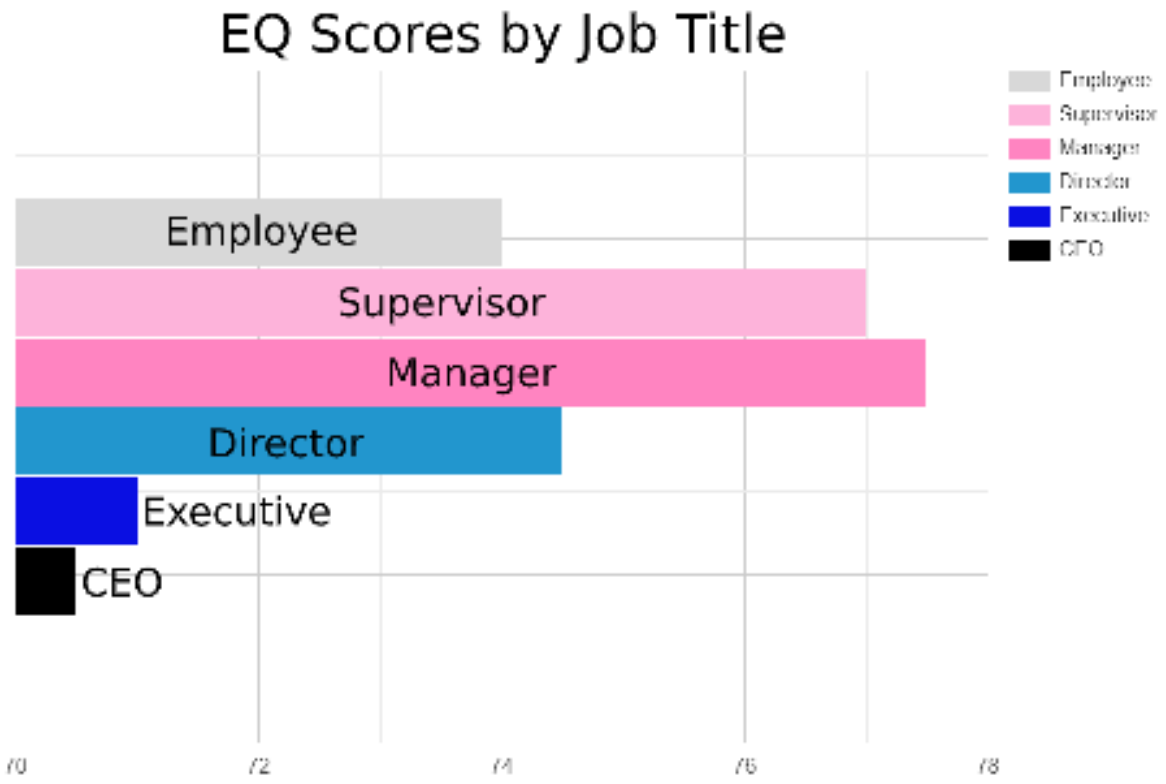
Contents

- Dispelling The Lies That Keep You Stuck
  - The Truth of Who Gets Promoted
- The Basics
  - Strategizing
- Boss Relationship
- Self-Promotion at Work
- Politics
- Best Career Resources

Dispelling The Lies That Keep You Stuck

Let's start by dispelling a myth: emotional intelligence, especially in the sense of "caring" and "empathy" does not help you to the top.

Here is the result of a survey from a company that actually *sells* emotional intelligence training.



From Bradberry's survey of more than 100.000 individuals across 5 continents and in different industries
Here is how you could describe those results:

Nice guys might not finish last, but they surely get stuck in the middle.
The "emotional intelligence myth" is a nice story to keep the nice guys and girls spinning their wheels in the mid-level positions.

So, what gets you promoted?

The Truth of Who Gets Promoted

Competence and results are crucial, of course.
But they're just the entry-level requirements.

After that, it's professionally polished alpha males and alpha females who exude confidence, authority, and power who get promoted to the top.
And it's Machiavellians who know to schmooze and strategize.

It doesn't matter how much your team loves you, or how good your results are.
If you don't look like you belong to the executive club, you will hardly make it into the boardroom.

Luckily, you can learn that.

Start with some theory first, it will help you accept this less than ideal reality:

- **Machiavellism to The Top** (more theory, but it's important)

The Basics

So, how do you start executing and communicating more of that confidence that will help you get to the top?

Here is how:

- **The executive skills you need to master**: this helps you understand what are the basic skills and competencies to look and act the part (and, eventually, become an executive material)

Now, let's take a closer look at the realities of the workplace:

- **Conflicts of interest**: this forms the basis of understanding politics

And this is how to learn to play the game:

- **Office Politics 101**: this is a 7-step formula to learning and getting good at office politics. It's a heavily linked, bookmark-worthy resource that will take you from 1 to 10.

Strategizing

- **Career strategies 101**: the fundamental and proven strategies for effective career advancement

And to end, some more real-life theory:

- **Power in the workplace**: an overview of what affords power at work

For Women

Business culture is still mostly a male-culture, and especially so at the higher organizational levels. The male style of business accentuates some important gender differences. Women will be well-served if they familiarize themselves with those differences (but I also recommend men to understand the gender impact)
See:

- **The businesswoman guide to male organizations**

Boss Relationship

Albeit in some cases it's possible to leapfrog your boss, most of the time your boss has an outsized influence on your career.

And the relationship with your boss is often the single most important relationship you have on the workplace

If you can make friends with people, chances are you can make friends with your boss. But there are a few peculiarities you should be aware of:

- **Managing your boss**

Self-Promotion at Work

- **Strategic self-promotion**: an overview on how and when to promote, including foundational skills of effective communication

Politics

- **The realpolitik guide to being a good manager**: how to foster team collaboration while being both liked and respected
- **The manager's guide to toxic employees**: how to recognize and deal with the bad apples
- **The archetypes of political players**: psychological and behavioral analysis of the people you are going to meet in your career

Best Career Resources

As you might imagine, office politics and career strategies are not a field where research is either abundant or crystal clear.

How would you measure political effectiveness or Machiavellian strategies? And who is going to come out and be frank about what they're truly doing?
Those at the top are not too keen to share how they got there outside of work and personal merits.

However, some quantitative research here and some qualitative books there, some good picture of what's effective and what isn't started emerging.
The result of that research has been a large update to the workplace section of Power University.
And here are my favorite books that I have read on the topic:

- Best career books

10 Strategies to Win Over Your Boss (& Get Promoted)

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Building a strong relationship with your boss is one of the most powerful ways to advance your career.

With our expertice in psychology, power dynamics, and office politics, this article provides you with actionable strategies to win over your boss.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. Flatter your boss the right way
- 2. Make him feel in charge
  - 2.2. Promote tactfully: don't overshadow him
- 3. Prioritize his tasks
  - 3.2. Take something off his to-do list
  - 3.3. Offer him your extra capacity
- 4. Grab & create opportunities to get closer
  - ⍰⍰ Example of missing a 'bid for closeness'
- 5. Give positive feedback (but pitch it as "honest")
  - How to give critical feedback
- 6. Align with his communication style
  - 6.2. Match their conversation rituals
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  - 7.2. Ask what you should improve on

- 8. Protect yourself from jealous colleagues
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Research shows that ingratiation works.

After all, we all know that everyone enjoys a good compliment.

But some people shy away from compliments in fear of appearing ‘brown-nosing’ or unprofessional.

And they’re not wholly wrong.
Compliments and flattery must be socially calibrated to be effective.

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These judge-y compliments is how a *superior* would speak:

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This is instead how a subordinate pays compliments:

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And a research-backed technique is **to turn a compliment into a question** to make it seem less obvious and more authentic.
For example, say ‘*you’re so good with people, how can I improve my people skills*‘.

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Use what we call here ‘power protection‘ to avoid irking your boss.

Most people know that being aggressive or rude to a boss is an obvious no-no.
But many fail to realize that you can disempower your boss in far subtler ways.

For example:

> **Boss**: Let’s increase outreach volume
> **You**: OK, I agree with that <— It implies your agreement matters, which irks bosses. Agree with your peers, not your superiors

Better:

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Self-promotion is crucial for your career success.

However, self-promotion is an area of conflict of interest because it serves *you*, but not your boss or team.

Plus, the more successful you are, the more your boss feels threatened and 'beaten' by a subordinate.
And he doesn't want either.

So promote yourself, without overshadowing him:

- Keep your networking hidden
- Frame achievements as team wins
- Credit him for successes

Mostly:

⁉ Make him feel you're a friendly force -and ally- so he welcomes your advancement

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Says Fran:

> Offering to help is nice, but without volunteering to take on a definite and specific task, it puts the onus on the other person. (…) Instead, make yourself aware of what needs doing and how you can do

In short: observe what your boss needs the most, then offer to help with that.

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Ie.:

> **You**: Boss, I finished my previous task. Is there anything I can help you with?

If a colleague tasks you or asks for help, run it by your boss.
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> **You**: Chris needs some help, but I wanted to run it past you in case you have other priorities

+ Bonus: the boss tasks tend to be higher visibility.

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Many do this the wrong way.

And then they get called 'brown-nosers' for a reason.

Worse yet, when you force closeness and 'chumminess' good bosses are forced to defend their boundaries to maintain a reputation of fair and equitable management.

The solution is to get closer *tactfully*.
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To increase rapport and social capital, ignore your preferences, and match your boss’ instead.

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- **Quick / long-winded**
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- **Macro / micromanaging**

  - ➡ check in often with micromanagers, let them review your work. Be more independent with macro-managers
- **In person / electronic**

Pay particular attention to the latter as it's an important sign of extroversion/introversion.

If they avoid in-person communication and you're trying to talk to them in person, they feel like you're violating their personal boundaries.

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Linguistic researcher Deborah Tannen defines conversational rituals as patterns of speech and behavior that work only when both players use them.

Matching conversation rituals increases rapport, and missing them harms your relationship.

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When the report does not reply back with 'thank you', the report disempowers the boss. Over time, the boss will start resenting this report.

Even worse would be the following:

> **Boss**: Thank you for running this by me
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And the boss will be thinking: "You're welcome?? For what! Does he think he is the boss now?"

So, what's a better solution, in this case?
It's to play the ritual and thank them back. For example:

> **You**: No, thank *you* for taking the time to check this with me, boss, I appreciate that very much!

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Tests imprison you to their agenda

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Also see:

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Bonus: Go past him. Smooth talk, resolute overtake

If you want to advance fast and your boss doesn't help, he's a roadblock.

The key is to move **past him without turning him into an enemy**.

Here's how:

- Make him feel like the boss
  - Call him boss
  - Offer help
- Be warm to sub-communicate you're no threat
- Admit some vulnerability
- Fully outshine him only when he has no power over you

⍰ Example: paying homage while overtaking

Motorbike racer Marc Marquez Marquez was beating his official team captain in his rookie year.

But he kept pretending his teammate was N.1.

Then, once he bagged that title, he was free to drop the game.

Talk him up with words, overtake him with deeds

Remember: until your boss has official authority over you, you're not out of the tunnel, yet.
Once your overtake is complete, then you can stop the game. But not before.

MORE

Want to learn more strategies to climb the ladder and build a workplace where others want to follow you?

Join our mailing list for exclusive insights from Power University.

This is an excerpt from Power University, workplace module

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Bonus: Go past him. Smooth talk, resolute overtake

If you want to advance fast and your boss doesn't help, he's a roadblock.

The key is to move **past him without turning him into an enemy**.

Here's how:

- Make him feel like the boss
  - Call him boss
  - Offer help
- Be warm to sub-communicate you're no threat
- Admit some vulnerability
- Fully outshine him only when he has no power over you

⍰ Example: paying homage while overtaking

Motorbike racer Marc Marquez Marquez was beating his official team captain in his rookie year.

But he kept pretending his teammate was N.1.

Then, once he bagged that title, he was free to drop the game.

Talk him up with words, overtake him with deeds

Remember: until your boss has official authority over you, you're not out of the tunnel, yet.
Once your overtake is complete, then you can stop the game. But not before.

MORE

Want to learn more strategies to climb the ladder and build a workplace where others want to follow you?

Join our mailing list for exclusive insights from Power University.

This is an excerpt from Power University, workplace module

Office Politics Skills for Success: Avoid These 12 Career-Killing Mistakes

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Office politics can make or break your career.

And political mistakes can cost you a promotion, or even a career.

This post will show you common political pitfalls, and how to turn them into political skills that give you career opportunities.

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- 1. Getting Chummy With Falling Stars
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  - 11. Over-Promoting Your Ideas Before Having Power
- 12. Putting All Eggs in The Boss' Basket
  - ⍰ Solution: great relationship, while maintaining honor & power

1. Getting Chummy With Falling Stars

Falling stars are former superstars on their way down or out.

Often they know fully well they are on their way down, and guess what happens?

Their former, inaccessible and haughty selves suddenly become friendly and gregarious.
And lower-level employees, star-struck by their big names, are all too happy to get closer to them.

⍰Solution: associate with the risers, not the fallers

Don't get star-struck. If falling superstars seem friendlier, it's only because they're needier.
They're falling for a reason and may drag you down with them.

If they've already been fired, they're bitter and negative.
You don't need that.

And keep your friendship with anyone who left on bad terms secret.

2. Taking Sides Too Early

What do the politically clueless do during a power struggle?

They quickly take up arms for one side or the other.
Which, of course, is as smart as betting on red or black -that is, not smart at all-.

Now, to be fair, early supporters can be well-rewarded.
But the demands and the risks usually outweigh the rewards.

⍰ Solution: stay cordial with both sides -or pick later-

Maintain cordial relations with both factions while you publicly focus on doing great work —and whoever wins will see you as an asset.

You can always pick a side later when it's clearer who will win.

⍰ Mach Move: take sides *privately* (or take both sides privately)

⍰ *Mad Men* example:

> **Guy 1**: Regimes change are always tricky. You wanna stay neutral. Loyalists are always hung
> **Guy 2**: (goes to a partner and shares the news)

In some cases, you may privately take both sides, or ambiguously lead them both to believe you're on their side.
Then come out in the open when the winner is clear.

3. "Licking Up & Kicking Down"

How many times have you heard that as the "Machiavellian" way of winning at office politics?

Except it's only true in the worst organizations.

Why it's not ideal:

- Earning respect from both above and below is better

- As*holes struggle in the long run
- Bad karma: those you kick down may become future leaders

⍰ Solution: shine up, respect down

Really, it's as simple as this: be honorable in everything you do.

⍰ Mach solution: 'Shine Up, Praise Down'

Lavish empty praises, make subordinates believe they're gaining credits for career advancement.
But take all credit from above.

⍰ Self-defense: distrust bosses who praise within the team, but not outside. Do your own bidding

4. Gossiping (The Politically Dumb Way)

There is power in being "in the know" in the company.

And sharing juicy information shows you're part of a restricted circle of informational flow.
Says Geoffrey Miller:

> If the gossiper usually knows some news that the listener does not know, **the gossiper may have privileged access to secrets**, or a wider social network, or or friends who themselves have privileged access to social information. That is, **the gossiper must have high social status**

But avoid:

- ***Over*-gossip**
- **Gossiper reputation**
- **Giving without receiving** intel
- Gossip with those **below you**
- **Complaints** masqueraded as gossip

Example in Power University.

⍰ Solution: share *positive* intel

- **Share *strategically***
  - To display you're in the know
  - Share with your level or higher
  - Exchange for *their* intel
- **Share high power**, unemotional, with a focus on the bottom line, not the social aspects ⍰
- **Gossip in the positive** ⍰. Only share good news about people and business
  - Ie.: '*it makes sense the MD is in good shape: he jogs 5km before office*'
- **Say and nod 'yes' when others share intel** to sub-communicate you're also in the know

⍰ How to ask for gossip

High-Power Intel Sharing

Gossiping at the higher levels tends to be different.

As a matter of fact, **how you share information is sub-communicates whether you're executive material or not.**
It's one of the "secret handshakes", and one of the "executive skills" you better develop.

Executives share their information quick and dry, almost to purposefully show disdain towards gossiping. Leaders are afraid of being seen as gossipers. They prefer an image of doers who focus on getting stuff done and have no time to waste. **Winners know that the power players don't gossip because they're the ones being gossiped about.**

This is how you show you're a baller, get the facts, straight to the point, then get to work:

> **Don**: You wanted to see me?
> **Roger**: About 3 weeks ago (pause) I hope you were looking for a job in Califorinia. Because you're going to need one <— Doesn't ask where he's been or what's happened to display he's above the small details

Roger Sterling makes it a point to show off that he doesn't care. All he cares is Don reporting to work and get stuff done.

Notice how the rest of the talk is all straight to the point, all the side stories about gossiping are purposefully left unexplored -or leveraged to display how they are both *above* gossiping-.

More in Power University.

5. Becoming The Battering Ram

The battering ram leads the charge within a group of complainers or rebels.

He may:

- Talk back to the boss
- File the first complaint
- Demand 5-start hotels execs travels

Taking the first step can be powerful and rewarding but requires careful calculation and execution.
If your first move faces resistance, don't expect turkey complainers to rescue you.

⍰ Solution: speak up strategically

- **Speak up for yourself**
- **Ensure others will back you up** if things go south
- Formally **gather their complaints**
- If you lead a charge to oust someone, **ensure you can step up into their role**

6. Objecting Organizational Changes

Large change projects only happen because someone at the top wants them.

If you oppose chance you oppose the company leadership.

⍰ Solution: embrace and champion leadership-led change

As Jack Welch says in his book "Winning", **the executives who promoted the change love to see people embracing it and championing it**.

For them, it's like receiving a compliment with your actions -much more powerful than your words-. Embrace the change, and they will see an ally in you.

7. Keeping Allegiance to Old Bosses

New bosses view old allegiances as threats to their authority.

Mistakes:

- Talking about **'how it was before'**
- **Talking up the previous boss**
- **Name-dropping the previous boss**, especially if you're still in touch
- **Demand to honor the previous boss commitments**
- …

⍰ Example:

> **Caporegime**: (speaks to the old boss)
> **Old boss**: (send them to the new boss)

⍰ Solution: The King is Dead, Long Live The *NEW* King

When a new boss enters the scene, it's a clean slate and opportunity:

- **Welcome the new boss**
- **Display your allegiance** while others are still confused with the change

8. Failing to Decode Corporate-Speak

Some, especially the younger and more naive, truly believe the company PR and values.

And while there is *some* truth in them, they are far from the whole truth.

The truth is this:

most **people will always put themselves and their needs above the needs of the company**.
And the other way is even truer.

The company, which represents the interests of the owners, the shareholders, and the C-suite, will always put its interests above those of the employees.

As Dan Rust says in "Workplace Poker": **it's your output that matters, not you as a human being**.

⍰Solution: Power University

And also see:

- **Big business manipulation**

9. Flirting With Assistants & Secretaries

Pink-slip bait

Many bosses are protective or jealous of their assistants, and the same applies to other female reports.

Many PAs instead see themselves at the service of their boss, rather than the company.
And they report everything they see and hear to their boss to gain brownie points.

⍰ Solution: Keep it professional

If you must do anything, do it 'silent killer style'.
Details in **Power University**.

10. Forming Out-Groups With Management

Think, feel, and sub-communicate you don't belong up, and you'll never get there.

From a real-life example I witnessed:

> **Random guy:** (talking about an airplane model the manager bumped) They're expensive, I think around 3.000

> each
> **High-Level Manager**: Wow, that's more than my weekly salary
> **First-Level Manager**: I need to be careful then, I'm not one of you big paycheck guys <— Rapport break, and 'I'm different' self-frame

Learn more on frames here:

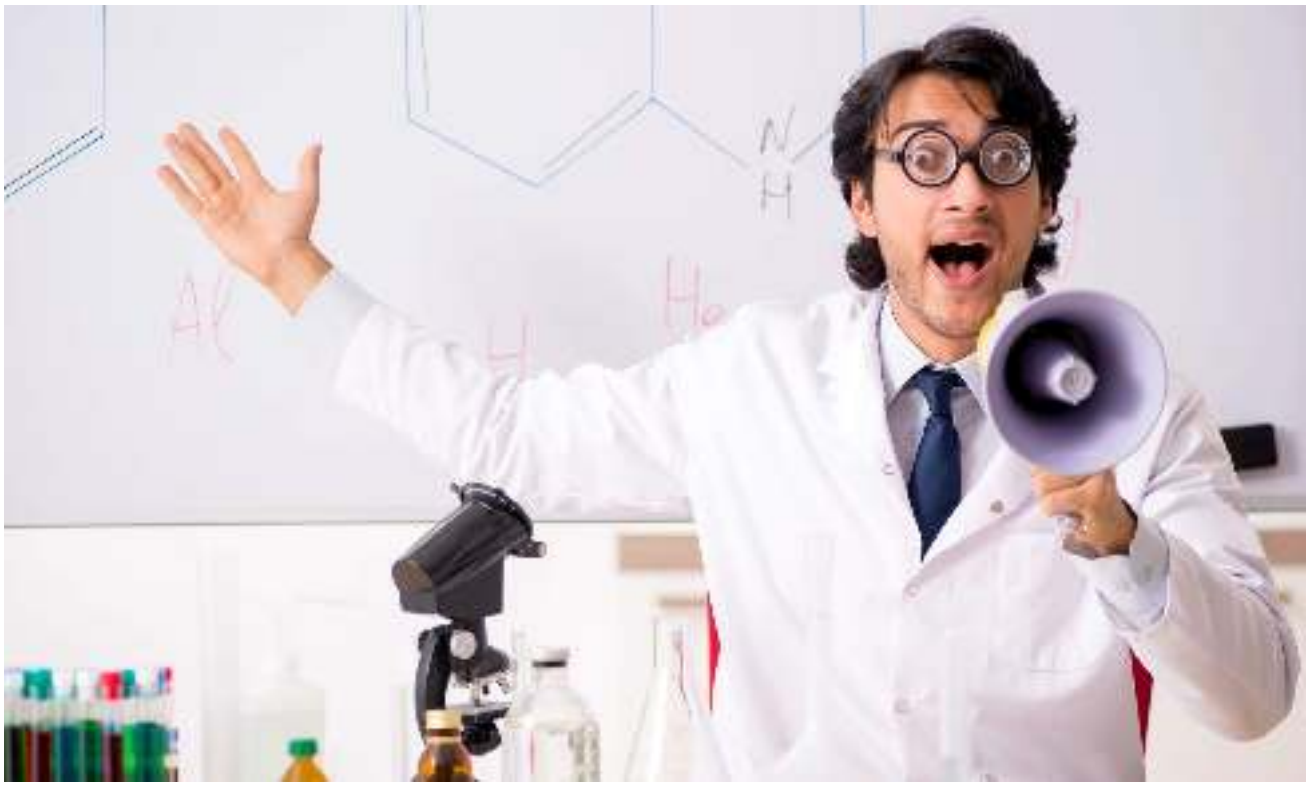
- **Frame control techniques**

⍰ Solution: think, talk, and move like an exec

> If it looks like a winner, moves like a winner, and speaks like a winner… He'll soon be one
>
> *TPM Proverb* ✒

Downplay differences, highlight similarities, and speak like one of them.

11. Over-Promoting Your Ideas Before Having Power



Paraphrasing career strategist Brendan Reid got this right:

> Think strange as the CEO, and you're a visionary.
> Think strange as the new hire, and you're a poor fit

Remember:

Your revolutionary ideas are covert power moves because they sub-communicate the current system is inefficient and the current leaders lacking.

12. Putting All Eggs in The Boss' Basket

Yes, you do need to work your boss.

However, you don't want that to be your *only* source of power.
As Robert Greene says the "favorite" position stirs envy among your colleagues and isolate you.

Plus, we add, it's simply just weak and poor self-signaling to be a brown-noser.

⍰ Solution: great relationship, while maintaining honor & power

Build great relationships *while* you also deliver good work, promote yourself outside the team, *and* expand your other sources of power.

⍰ This is a preview from Power University, where we teach the skills for both work and life success !

Mastering Office Politics: A Strategic Guide to Career Success

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Office politics drives career success—whether you're navigating promotions, influencing decisions, or outmaneuvering rivals.

It's inevitable: wherever people form hierarchies, politics emerges.

Master it, and you control your path—whether for the greater good, personal gain, or both.

This guide delivers top workplace strategies to dominate office politics, from social fundamentals to executive-level tactics.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 1. Learn Basic Social Skills
- 2. Learn Power Dynamics
- 3. Now Learn Office Politics
- 4. Know Who Matters: The Org Power Chart
- 5. Draft Real-World Career Strategies
- 6. Learn Effective Self-Promotion
- 7. Learn to Act 'Alpha' / High Power

1. Learn Basic Social Skills

Politics is people.
And to do well with people, you need some basic social skills.

Without basic social skills, people are not only poor at office politics, but they are politics-negative.

Their lack of political intelligence actively harms them.

Some of the most harmful political mistakes people commit are basic stuff, like:

- Inadvertently offending the boss
- Being difficult to work with
- Missing their boss' loyalty tests

Political harakiri is only marginally correlated with job performance or general intelligence.
Lack of political savvy can -and often does- harm top performers as well. Top performers might do great work, rapidly increase their status within the company, but then they self-promote too much and end ousted for "outshining the master", as Robert Greene calls it in his "48 Laws of Power".

To avoid political mistakes, you need to reach a minimum level of interpersonal intelligence.

Here are some good resources to bring you to a basic level of emotional and social intelligence:

- Best social skills books
- Stop being socially awkward
- How to stop being a social burden

1.2. Intermediate level of social skills

Once you're at a basic level, here are more resources to get you to an intermediate level:

- The law of social exchange
- What's in it for them
  - Real-life examples of WIIFT failures

Once you reach intermediate level, then you become "politically neutral".

You stop making mistakes you're not even aware of, and that's great. But you still don't have an advantage over others.
Most people cluster around the middle, so to start reaping real political dividends, you need to move towards advanced levels.

2. Learn Power Dynamics

The dynamics of touching and explaining are part of the basics of office power dynamics

Power dynamics is the advanced level of human psychology and social skills.

The good news is that once you have the basics of socialization down pat, it won't take you long to also understand the power dynamics.

Socializing with power dynamics in mind means that you are aware of the dynamics of "one-down / "one-up", influencing and persuasion, who is emotionally in charge (soft-power) and, finally, how to come across as powerful, influential, and respect-worthy.

Some good articles to get you started:

- Office power dynamics 101
- 9 foundational laws of power
- Power strategies 101
- Frame control

And I highly recommend this post to understand the inherent conflicts of interest between companies and employees:

- Corporate lies and manipulations

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees (W/ Examples)

This whole website is dedicated to power dynamics and advanced socialization, so if you read around you will quickly grow your understanding of power dynamics.

Also, in conflicts of interests that see you the big losers, learn to put yourself first.

3. Now Learn Office Politics

Here is the great news:

If you've done your homework properly so far, then office politics will come natural to you.

As we've already mentioned, office politics is about people, psychology, and power dynamics.
Once you understand those, you will understand how to operate in office politics.
Just a few minor adjustments are needed for the specifics of the workplace. But here's the rub: you're not going to learn that in mainstream publications.

When it comes to workplace politics, avoid mainstream advice

Here is a rule of thumb:

> If you want to leverage office politics for personal success or to properly defend yourself from political animals, then you need to scratch mainstream media.

Forbes, Harvard Business Review, lists of "best business books"… They are not going to be very helpful with office politics. It's not that they don't have good information: they do.
But they serve a different purpose: the purpose of aligning interests between you, the team members, and the company. That's not optimal from a learning and strategic point of view though because those interests do *not* always align.

Mainstream media is wary of admitting that your interests can diverge from the interests of the organization, as well from the interests of your boss and your teammates.

Even the Harvard Business Review's "Guide to Office Politics", which I reviewed here, was mostly about avoiding politics so that you can win for the company.
Nice… In theory.

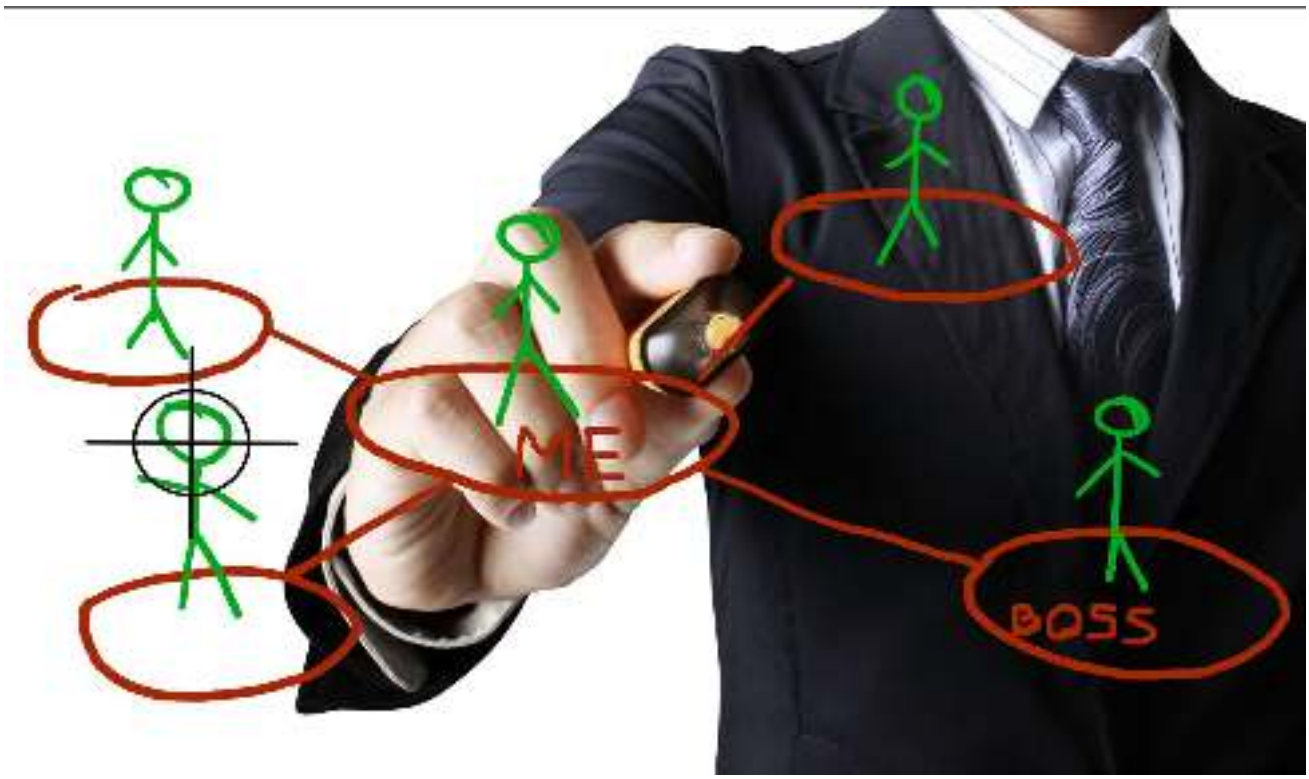
Instead, read here about the real conflict of interest:

- **Conflicts of interests**

And here are a few articles about the real-world dynamics of political players:

- Types of office players
- Types of toxic employees
- Office power moves: it's a humorous article, but it will get you thinking in terms of pure power plays

4. Know Who Matters: The Org Power Chart



You’re always at the center of your personal power chart

Now you know psychology, how to deal with people, and some office politics.

But who should you be networking with, who should you be careful around, and who can give you the opportunities that will change your career for the better?

This is the next step.
You need to know who matters around you and where you stand in relation to others.

The org-chart is a good start, but you need to personalize it. If you’re in a huge company and you’re at the bottom of the pyramid, the CEO doesn’t really matter for you.
Depending on your level, seniority, and job position, the highest you can easily hobnob with might be your boss’ boss.
And unless your boss is on his way out, he will almost always be the most important piece in your chessboard.

So start here:

- **How to deal with your boss**: the politically-savvy way

> Managing Your Boss For Ruthless Career Advancement

What you need to keep in mind when drawing your power map is that not all job positions are created equals.
And the *momentum* of the people filling those roles is paramount.
Some people are stationery, some others are on the upswing, while some others are going downward -or are on their way out-.

In Power University there is a bonus Excel spreadsheet to help you compute the people who matter the most to you.

But as a general rule, the ones who are going down, no matter their position, not only are useless, but are actively harmful.
They are going down because they pissed off someone very powerful. It can take years to recover from a demotion, and most never recover.

Just to be on the safe side, don't get too close to them.

Instead, you want to associate with those going up.
They are the winning faction, those who are friends with those still higher up, and those who can soon bring you up as well.

5. Draft Real-World Career Strategies

Now you're getting good with office politics, and you got a power map.

Now it's time to turn that knowledge into action.
It's time for actionable plans.

When it comes to career strategies, avoid mainstream media

Just like we said above for office politics.

Mainstream media is not the best way to learn career strategies.
They teach you the "official" way of success. Such as: win by being a good team player and by making the organization win.

And yes, that is a very valid strategy.
But it's not the only way to success -and sometimes not the quickest or most reliable-.
And there is more than it meets the eyes.

Rapid career advancement is barely linked to how well your company is doing.
As career strategist Brendan Reid correctly points out, when everyone is advancing because of a rising tide, you aren't really advancing.

And when it comes to teammates, sometimes, the opposite of what mainstream media teaches is true: **your success can be inversely correlated to how well your colleagues and boss are doing**.
After all, it's pretty logical: the worse your teammates look, the better you look by comparison -and you win that promotion by default-.

Don't get me wrong though on Machiavellianism: There can be real relationships at work -and even alliances based on deep emotional bonds-.

But people can, and often *do* win by shortchanging others -see for example "shine up, praise down"-.

The two opposite drives, for prosocial teamwork and cheating, often co-exist together in the same workplace, and sometimes even in the same person.
And to win, **master both the pro-social rules, and the Machiavellian ones**. Even if you (hopefully) decide to be pro-social, you need the Machiavellian side *even more*.

That's realpolitik.
And realpolitik office politics pertains more to the "underworld of wisdom", the "red pill" side of things that people don't like to talk about.
Well, luckily for you, that's what we only talk about here.
Here are some better resources for you:

- **Career strategies 101**: a science-backed guide on basics principles of career advancement
- Best career strategy books: the slightly lesser-known, more politically incorrect books on politics and strategies

Frankly, though, there are not that many great sources of office politics wisdom. There are some, but it's very scattered wisdom.
If you want the biggest shortcut, all at once, here it is:

- Power University (module 3)

6. Learn Effective Self-Promotion

Self-promotion is the art of managing your reputation, marketing your skills and results, and getting your name out to the people who can help you advance.

You can meet the people who matter either directly through networking, or indirectly via reputation or allies who will talk you up -the latter is always recommended-.

We just called self-promotion "art" but, luckily, science and logic can also help up self-promote more effectively.

See:

- **Effective self-promotion at work**

7. Learn to Act 'Alpha' / High Power

Now you know politics, you got a career plan, and you are actively promoting your personal brand.

But what product are you promoting?
The product is you.
Not just your work, but *you*.
How do you come across? **How you come across is equally important, if not more important, than your actual work**.

Most people who reach the top are not great technical people, and they more often than not weren't even the best at their jobs.
But they have leadership skills and they look the part. They have what I call "executive skills".

Remember the maxims:

> To become an executive, you need to look and act like one

And:

> Technical skills give you job security.
> Soft skills give you board seats.

What are these soft skills, anyway?

7.2. More Alpha Male, Less Emotional Intelligence

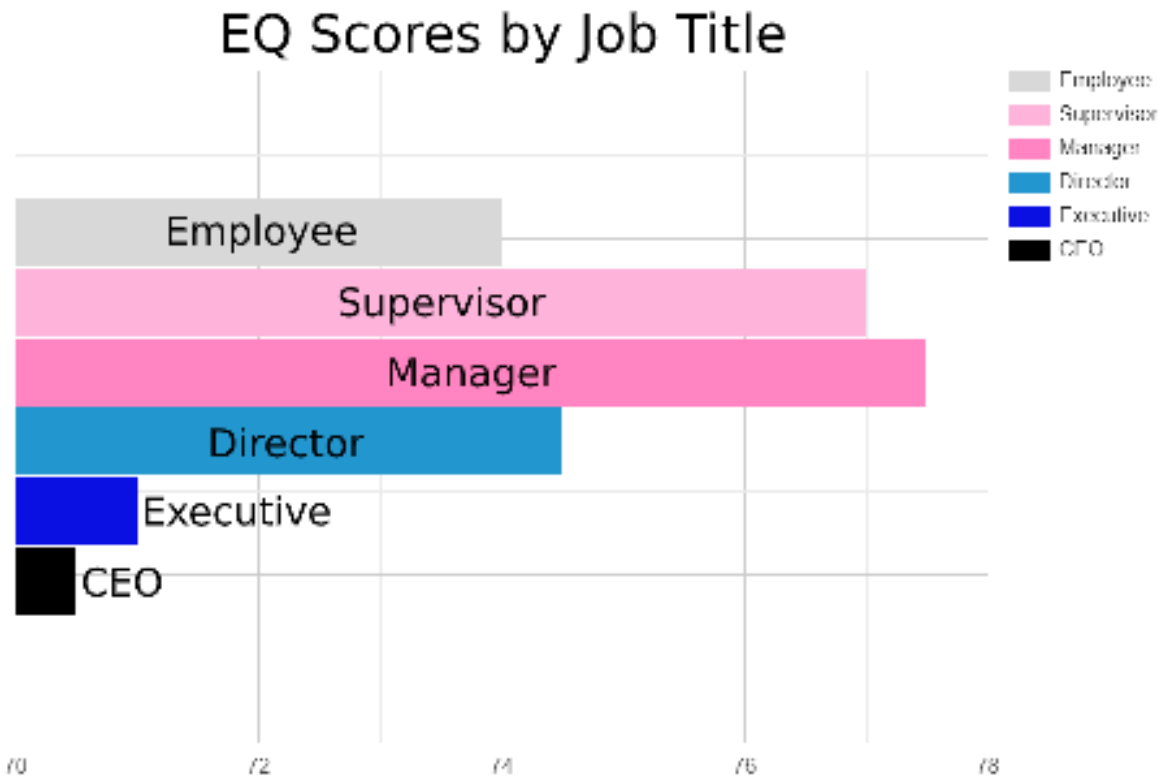
The soft skills we're talking about aren't all related to "emotional intelligence" (EI).

That's a term coined by Daniel Goleman, and **Emotional Intelligence is the recipe to keep you stuck at middle-level management**. Goleman kept digging on it with "*Working With Intelligence*", but he missed that people don't advance on EI -or at least, that's far from the most important trait-.

While emotional intelligence *does* help you work better with others and it likely also help you *perform* better at

work, it does not help you advance to the top -unluckily-.

It sounds strange, I know, and I wished it weren't so.
But that's what the data shows.
And between what we wish and what the data shows, I suggest we go with the data:



Bradberry's survey results of 100.000 workers, including 1.000 CEOs
The results clearly showed that execs and CEOs score *lowest* on emotional intelligence than all other ranks (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).
And the author of the survey, Bradberry, sells emotional intelligence training, so he had all the incentives to show the opposite.
Bradberry guesses that's both because the nature of the tasks at higher levels lower emotional intelligence *and* because companies tend to promote people who score lower on emotional intelligence.

In my opinion, it's not that execs and CEOs are emotionally stupid.
Instead, CEOs prioritize different qualities than those that help you score high on EI tests.
CEOs and execs prioritize things like getting the job done, winning and, of course, power. And if someone stands in the way or gets hurt… Too bad for them.
That attitude lowers your EI scores, but it obviously helps you advance.

In the words of career strategist Dan Rust, it's "Velcro Butterflies" VS "Teflon Rhinos" dichotomy and, as he righteously points out, you want to be more on the rhino's side.

That's the gist on EI.
If you want to read more, see here:

- **The emotional intelligence lie**

So, scratch that emotional intelligence.

What should you score high to master office politics and advance your career to the top?

You need executive skills.

They look something like this:

- Leadership skills
- Confidence
- Goal-orientation / Bottom-line mindset
- “No BS attitude”
- Calm and in control *or*
  - Unafraid of yelling
- Public speaking skills
- Intelligence -or, at least, *sounding* smart-
- Analytical thinking / critical thinking skills

For simplicity, exec skills mean being an alpha male and an alpha female, but a *professionally polished* alpha.

The CEO in the movie “Margin Call” is the poster child of a high-powered executive:

> **CEO**: (speaks and moves like a high-power CEO)

So, where do you begin building these executive skills?
Here:

- **Executive skills for work confidence**
- How to look powerful
- How to speak powerfully

Better yet, when you’re ready to win not only at work but in life, get **Power University**.

Authentic Happiness: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Authentic Happiness (2002) provides an overview of Positive Psychology. Written by Martin Seligman, one of the founders of the disciplines, it will teach *why* happiness and optimism matter, and *how* you can become happier and more optimistic.

Contents

- Key Insights
- Overview
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- Real-Life Applications
- Criticism
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Key Insights

- Psychology for too long focused on illnesses only. It's time for a new psychology of happiness and optimal life
- We can all increase our level of happiness and satisfaction
- A full life takes into account all pleasures, but work to develop our strengths, which we can deploy for the greater good

Overview

About the Author: Martin Seligman is an American psychologist and researcher. Seligman has been the president of the American Psychological Association (APA), and he is one of the founders and main proponents of "Positive Psychology". He is also the author of "Flourish" and "Learned Optimism".

Happiness can be lastingly increased: welcome to Positive Psychology

Martin Seligman opens "Authentic Happiness" saying that research proves that our happiness level can be increased.

To explain how to do that, a new movement in psychology has born. It's the "Positive Psychology", that sets out to study happiness, fulfillment, and human potential.
"Authentic Happiness" is a positive psychology book, and can show how you how to live at the upper end of your happiness range.

Overcoming the "Rotten to The Core Dogma"

Seligman defines the "rotten to the core dogma" the belief that happiness is inauthentic. It's a dogma that spans many cultures, he says, and it permeates the Judeo-Christian cultures with the doctrine of the original sin.

But psychology, which he will later define as "old psychology", has done its part to help fuel the "rotten to the core dogma".
Who did it? Sigmund Freud.

Martin Seligman does not seem to hold Sigmund Freud in high regard.
It shows more than once across the book, and it starts from the very beginning.

Freud defined civilization as a gigantic defense mechanism against the infantile conflicts of sexuality and aggression.
In repressing those primordial drives, humans created civilization.

Seligman does not agree with that, and mocks the Austrian founder of psychoanalysis:

> So the reason I am sitting in front of my computer writing this preface—rather than running out to rape and kill—is that I am "compensated," zipped up and successfully defending myself against underlying savage impulses

My note: I agree Freud went too far, but Seligman goes too far in the opposite direction
I think Seligman is downplaying how important sexual selection has been in shaping our minds and our thirst and drive for personal success.

Virtue evolved and exists because virtue is good

Seligman's main critic to Freud and his disciples is that all virtue in the world is ascribed to negative drives and emotions.
Instead, he says:

> there is not a shred of evidence that strength and virtue are derived from negative motivation.

Instead, he believes, virtues and good traits evolved because they were good per se.

The 3 Pillars of Positive Psychology

Seligman says Positive Psychology rests on three major pillars of study:

1. **Positive emotions**: feelings and sensations
2. **Positive traits**: strengths and virtues first and foremost, but also "abilities" such as intelligence and athleticism.
3. **Positive institution**: the institutions that support the virtues, which in turn support the emotions. It includes democracy, families, personal freedoms, etc.

Types of Emotions

Seligman divides positive emotions into 3 temporal categories:

- **Past**: satisfaction, contentment, pride, serenity
- **Future**: optimism, hope, confidence, trust, faith
- **Present**: there are three types of present positive emotions:
  - **Pleasures**: they are momentary pleasures that come through the senses, divided in two different categories:
    - **Bodily pleasure**s: sexual feelings, good tastes and smells, good sounds like music, etc.
    - **Higher pleasures**: they are set off by more learned and complex mechanisms. They include: ecstasy, rapture, thrill, bliss, gladness, glee, fun, ebullience, comfort, amusement, relaxation, etc.
  - **Gratifications**: gratifications are not feelings but activities that absorb and engage us. These activities allow us to experience flow

It's easy to enjoy pleasures because they require no training, virtues, or skills. But to enjoy gratifications, one must also develop strengths and virtues.

The Different Stages of Life's Pleasure

Seligman categorizes a life based on pleasure along 4 different stages:

1. **The pleasurable life**: It's heavy in pleasure, but not gratifications. Driving Ferrari, drinking champagne, banging bitches, and getting drunk in the clubs is the pleasurable life. It's heavily based on bodily pleasure, which have a few drawbacks, including habituation (you get used to it and it's not as pleasurable anymore), hedonistic fallacy (when you finally have it, you realize it doesn't make you happy), and
2. **The good life**: It's heavy in gratifications. Using your signature strengths every day to produce authentic happiness and abundant gratification. The good life requires you self-awareness, finding out what you like doing, getting good at it, and putting it into the service of something larger.
    1. **The meaningful life**: like the happy life, but adds one more layer: you are using your signature strengths in the service of something larger than you are
3. **The full life**: when you combine all of them, you get a full life. Seligman defines it as "experiencing positive emotions about the past and future, savoring positive feelings from the pleasures, deriving abundant gratification from your signature strengths, and using these strengths in the service of something larger to obtain meaning"

Albeit Seligman includes all types of pleasures in his "full life", it seems to me that he prefers gratifications to pleasures.

Why Stacking Up Pleasures is Not Enough

One might think that Positive Psychology could be reduced to "how to many as many pleasurable moments".

And the sum total of our life's happiness could be total pleasure minus total pain.

There is already a branch of science studying how we feel from moment to moment, and it's called "hedonics". But Seligman believes that's not enough.

He says:

> The sum total of our momentary feelings turns out to be a very flawed measure of how good or how bad we judge an episode—a movie, a vacation, a marriage, or an entire life—to be.

Daniel Kahneman, author of "Thinking Fast and Slow", proves that what we remember with pleasure or pain is not the direct sum total of the momentary pains and pleasures.
For Seligman, the evidence is in the popular colonoscopy study, which proves that how things begin and end has an outsized impact on how we remember them.

My Note: Kahneman does not prove that hedonism is wrong, and one can be happy with pleasures alone
I partially agree with Seligman, but not completely.
To begin with, Kahneman does not prove that hedonism does not lead to happiness. He only proves that what we remember is not 100% what happened, and there is plenty of evidence for that. But that does not prove that hedonism, or the pursuit of pleasures, cannot lead to a happy life.
I think Seligman is trying to portray what he prefers as to be *the* best way. Well, I agree with him that most people are better served with his recipe.
But there are plenty of people who are happy chasing pleasures. I have met a few of them. Best people to be around.

The 24 Positive Psychology Strengths That Bring About Greater Well-Being

Seligman says there are 24 strengths Positive Psychology recognizes, which can be grouped into 6 categories:

1. **Wisdom & Knowledge**: creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, perspective

2. **Courage**: bravery, perseverance, honesty, zest
3. **Humanity**: love, kindness, social intelligence
4. **Justice**: teamwork, fairness, leadership
5. **Temperance**: forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation
6. **Transcendence**: appreciation of beauty & excellence; gratitude; hope; humor; spirituality

How did positive psychology come up with these 24 strengths?

1. They are valued in almost every culture
2. They are valued in their own right, not just as a means to other ends
3. They are malleable (learnable)

The "Depressive Realism" Might be a Myth

Pessimists are realists.

That's been a mantra for a long time in psychology.
Seligman himself said so in "Learned Optimism":

> There is considerable evidence that depressed people, though sadder, are wiser.
> (…)
> These have been the consistent findings over the last decade.
> (…)

So, are pessimists more realistic, but unhappy?
And are optimists happier, but at the detriment of reality?

Experiments showed that happy people remembered more happier moments than sad ones, but their memories were inaccurate.
And happier people tended to overestimate their competence, while unhappier ones were more accurate.

But could it just be another psychology myth?

Many of those original experiments failed to replicate (see: replication crisis in psychology).
And Lisa Aspinwall experiment shows that happier people were better at remembering information related to health risks, and rated it as more convincing.

The resolution to this dispute, Seligman says, is this:

- Happy people tend to rely more on their past positive experiences during the normal course of life. If a light wasn't responding for the last 10 minutes, happy people think that they will eventually control it again (what Seligman doesn't add here is that they might be wrong more times than not)
- When events are potentially threatening, happy people can switch tactic and adopt a more skeptical frame of mind

When making decisions, for example hiring decisions, people in a happy and positive state of mind tend to focus on potential and personal qualities.
People in a negative mood tend to focus on what is wrong.

Positive Emotions Predict Health, Longevity, Prosociality (& Possibly, Success)

Happier people have better health, live longer, and are more likely to follow healthy habits.

They also tend to be more productive, set higher goals for themselves, and persist longer.

Positive emotions aren't just good for us, but they also make us better human beings.
When we are happy we want to engage more with others, lift others up, and share our good fortune.
And the opposite is true: it's when we are down that we become more self-focused and selfish.

Says Seligman:

> Looking out for number one is more characteristic of sadness than of well-being.

Happiness might also be important for commerce, and personal success. Says Seligman:

> But feeling positive emotion is important (…) because it causes much better commerce with the world. Developing more positive emotion in our lives will build friendship, love, better physical health, and greater achievement.

Also read:

- The Happiness Advantage

The Happiness Formula

In a tone that struck me as somewhat elitist, Seligman says that albeit most of his book is based on statistics, he only asks his reader to consider one equation

> H = S + C + V

Or:

> **H** appines **= S** et range **+ C** ircumstance of your life **+ V** (what you control)

H is your enduring level of happiness, not the momentary one, which can be raised with a number of short-term pleasure.

Please also note the "set range", because:

S = The Set Range of Happiness (You're Not Extremely Elastic)

Seligman started studying positive psychology believing that the human brain was endlessly plastic and, with enough work, it could be changed as one pleased.

But it turned out to be untrue. And genes do matter.
Says Seligman:

> Roughly 50 percent of almost every personality trait turns out to be attributable to genetic inheritance

However, that one trait is highly heritable does not determine how changeable or unchangeable a trait is.
Some highly heritable traits, like sexual orientation and body weight, don't change much, while some other highly heritable traits like fearfulness and pessimism are very changeable.

We all tend to have an inherited "range" of happiness along which we can move.
Says Seligman:

> Roughly half of your score on happiness tests is accounted for by the score your biological parents would have gotten had they taken the test. This may mean that we inherit a "steersman" who urges us toward a specific level of happiness or sadness.

However, this is not necessarily bad news.
While the set range tends to pull us back when something makes us very happy, it also pulls us upward when some negative events pull us below our usual range.

Even people who become paraplegic because of spinal cord accidents quickly recover and end up only slightly less happy on average than individuals who are not paralyzed.

The Set Range Explains the Hedonic Treadmill

The set range of happiness also explains the "hedonic treadmill trap", such as the human tendency to chase pleasures and victories for happiness, only to go back to their usual range soon after they achieved it.

Some Bad Events Take a Long Time to Adapt

There are though some bad events that we rarely get used to, and they include the loss of a child or a spouse, caretaking for a family member with Alzheimer's, and living in very poor nations.

Fighting your set range

Noting that there might be a correlation between social contacts and happiness, Seligman seems to suggest that you might want to push yourself to be a bit more social.

He says:

> So, for example, if you are low in positive affectivity, you may frequently feel the impulse to avoid social contact and spend your time alone. (…) Happy people are very social, and there is some reason to think that their happiness is caused by lots of fulfilling socializing. So, if you do not fight the urgings of your genetic steersman, you may remain lower in happy feelings than you would be otherwise.

I liked this part.
I wish Seligman had dug deeper on this, but it seems clear enough. If you tend to be unhappy, chances are that you will want to avoid social contacts. But you should probably force yourself to have some more.

C = Circumstances

These are the circumstances which you can change your level of happiness:

Money: Important From

National purchasing power and average national life satisfaction go strongly in the same general direction. But the correlation disappears once GNP exceeds $8,000 per person and more money brings no further happiness.

It's also subjective though.
How important money is to you, more than money itself, influences happiness.

But m**aterialism is counterproductive: people who value money more than other goals are less satisfied with their lives as a whole.**

Marriage: married people are happier

Married people are happier, unless their marriage is really bad, in which case they are unhappier than the average unmarried person.

Seligman, though, says that it's not possible to disentangle causation here. It might be the case that happier people are more likely to marry.

On average, though, **most very happy people are involved in a romantic relationship**.

Social Life: Happy People Spend Time Socializing

Very happy people spend less time alone and more time socializing as compared to average and unhappy people.

Age: Little Difference, Big Changes in Emotional Intensity

Old studies showed that younger people are happier, but that hasn't held up in more recent ones.

Life satisfaction actually goes slightly up with age.
What does change significantly though is the *intensity* of emotions. Both negative and positive emotions are less intense as we age.

Health: Objective Health Doesn't Matter, Subjective One Does

Surprisingly, objective health has little impact on happiness.
It's how healthy we *feel* we are that has a major impact, though. And that has less to do with actual health, and more with our ability to adapt and appraise our health positively.

If illnesses are severe and long-lasting, then happiness and life satisfaction do decline. With one chronic health problem usually people bounce back. But with five or more, happiness deteriorates over time.

Finally, severely ill cancer patients differ only slightly on global life satisfaction from objectively healthy people

Weather: It Matters Little

People adapt to good weather, and warm and sunny climates stop being a mood boost.

Religion: Religious People Are Happier

Religious are healthier and live longer, and are generally happier and more satisfied with life.
On average, the more fundamental the religion one espouses, the happier he is.

Seligman says that religious people are likely happier because religion provides hope and meaning.

Religious people also live healthier and more pro-social lives, albeit the causal link is a mystery.

Education, Climate, Race, and Gender: Unrelated to Happiness

None of the above has any impact on happiness. Climate might give a quick boost, but it rapidly dissipates.

V = What You Can Control

Do emotions drive thinking, or does thinking drive emotions?

This has been a contentious issue in psychology: does emotion drive thinking, or does thinking drive emotion?

Such as, do I get sad because I'm having sad thoughts, or am I having sad thoughts because I'm sad?

It's both, depending on the situation.
Immediate pleasures in the present make us feel good and positively affect our thoughts.
But **all emotions about the past are driven by thinking and interpretations**.

So, yes, Seligman confirms that it's true that thinking positively and deliberately about your past will affect your feelings and emotions in the present.
And the opposite is true: ruminating over negative events will make you feel worse.
This is also true for nations, who tend to be angrier or gloomier depending on how they describe the past.

The Optimists' Way: Explanatory Styles

Explanatory styles are self-talk or patterns of thought with which we frame events.

Optimists have positive self-explanatory styles, while pessimists have negative self-explanatory styles.

When something bad happens to people with a negative self-explanatory style they blame themselves and see no solutions in sight.
When something bad happens to people with a positive self-explanatory style they blame the conditions and believe the setback is either temporary or not the world.

Explanatory styles work on 3 levels:

- **Time**: optimists see loss and rejection as temporary; pessimists see them as permanent
- **Specificity**: optimists see loss and rejection as specific; pessimists see them as universal and as big general rejection to their whole work or personality
- **Personal/External**: optimists see loss and rejection as a consequence of the circumstances; pessimists take the blame on himself and sees loss or rejection as a loss for the self and a rejection of the self;

The worst is being pessimistic in both time and specificity.
Says Seligman:

> Finding permanent and universal causes for misfortune and temporary and specific causes of good events is the practice of despair

People with highly negative self-explanatory style have chronic low self-esteem, are more prone to bouts of depression and they give up more easily.

And the most optimists instead combine positive explanatory styles along both dimensions of time and specificity:

> Finding permanent and universal causes of good events along with temporary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope

People with positive self-explanatory styles are more upbeat, have higher confidence and are more tenacious.

Developing Optimism and Hope: The Art of Disputing

We naturally dispute negative opinions when they come from others.

But when they originate within us, we seem to accept all the nastiest things one could ever say.

Seligman says that disputation is a well-documented model to develop optimism.
Says Seligman:

> The first step is just knowing your beliefs warrant dispute; the next step is putting disputation into practice.

The author introduces a model that he dubs “ABCDE”.
Here’s how it works:

- Adversity: the model starts whenever you are experiencing or thinking about a negative situation in your life
- Belief: this is when your usual negative self-talk starts
- Consequences: this is what happens when you let the negative thought fester. You can go through it the first time to realize how it affected you
- Disputation: this is when the model kicks in. Here you dispute your initial belief and find alternative explanations
- Energization: here you reflect on how the disputation improved your mood

Disputing Yourself Effectively

There are four elements to effective disputation:

1. **Evidence**: learned optimism, contrary to positive thinking, is grounded in reality. The good news is that reactions to negative events are often *over*reactions, so most of the times you will have facts and data on your side
2. **Alternatives**: most events have many causes. Pessimists latch onto the nastiest of the causes, the ones that pain them in the worst possible light and make them feel the worst. By looking at all the causes, you get both a more realistic picture, and a less pessimistic one. You can -and probably should- also focus on the causes that you can change.
3. **Implications**: if the above two steps are not enough, this one is about "decatastrophizing". Ask yourself "OK, so what, what are the implications"? How likely is the worst-case scenario? And even if the worst-case scenario were to come true, what can you do about it?
4. **Usefulness**: sometimes deciding to let go of a belief is more important than what is actually true. For example, the world is not fair, that's true. But if that belief pains you, why dwelling on it? Or why not focusing on all the ways that the world *is* fair? You can found plenty of those examples, too

Childhood Events Are Overrated

Says Seligman in another barb to Freudian psychology:

> I think that the events of childhood are overrated; in fact, I think past history in general is overrated.
> It has turned out to be difficult to find even small effects of childhood events on adult personality, and there is no evidence at all of large—to say nothing of determining—effects

Some support for past events' impact on the present did emerge, but it was not much.
For example, if your mother dies before you are 11 years old, then you are more likely to be slightly depressive.
But it's a small difference, and only if you are female -and only in half of the studies-.

If your parents divorced, there can be a major impact on children. But the problem wanes as they grow older, and they are not easily detectable in adults.

Even major traumas of childhood have a barely detectable influence on adult personality.

My Note: I only partially agree
I certainly agree with Seligman that Freud went too far, and did so with a total lack of evidence.
Yet, I have read, experienced, and observed plenty of supportive information on how the parent-children relationship affects people. See for example "Will I Ever be Good Enough? Healing the Daughters of Narcissistic Mothers".

Seligman says that older studies looking for links between childhood and adult personalities were not accounting for genes.

And he goes on saying:

> This means that the promissory note that Freud and his followers wrote about childhood events determining the course of adult lives is worthless.
> I stress all this because I believe that many of my readers are unduly embittered about their past, and unduly passive about their future, because they believe that untoward events in their personal history have imprisoned them.
> (…)
> **Merely to know the surprising facts here—that early past events, in fact, exert little or no influence on**

> **adult lives—is liberating**

Seligman also links the belief that past events determine the future to what he refers to as a philosophy of victimization ("victimology"), and which threatens to supplant the individualism and sense of personal responsibility that characterized the American culture.

Also see:

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

Attachment Styles: It's Good to Be Secure

In the last part before delving into a theory of win-win transcendence, Seligman discusses child-rearing, relationships, and attachment styles.

- Secure attached:
  - remember their parents as warm, available, and affectionate
  - have high self-esteem and few doubts; they regard others as trustworthy and reliable until proven otherwise
  - they strive and work on intimate relationships with those they love
  - admit when they are in distress
  - **Caretaking**: they are aware of what the partner wants and doesn't want and ready to help
  - **Sex**: avoids one night stand, thinks that sex is better with a relationship
- Anxious attachment:
  - remember their fathers as unfair
  - feel they have little control over their lives and find others difficult to predict
  - cling and always fear rejection
  - flaunt their anger and distress
  - **Caretaking**: provides compulsive caretaking whether the partner asks for it or not (so true)
  - **Sex**: women get involved exhibitionism, while men have little sex
- Avoidant attachment:
  - remember their mothers as cold, rejecting, and unavailable
  - lack confidence, especially in social situations; regard people with suspicion, guilty until proven innocent
  - put greater emphasis on achievement than relationships, and people partners at arms' distance
  - they don't disclose, they don't tell you how they feel
  - **Caretaking**: are insensitive to their partners' needs
  - **Sex**: enjoy sex without commitment more than secures, but don't have more of it

More Wisdom

- **Move where you are most appreciated**: a highly successful but recluse man asked Seligman what he should do to find a woman. He told him to move to Europe, where bubbliness is not as highly prized as in the US. And he found a woman in Europe. This is an example of sexual market value relativity and sexual market value hack.
- Don't waste too much time fixing your weaknesses, focus on your signature strengths instead
- **More negative emotions don't crowd out positive ones**: having more than average misery in your life does not mean you can't also have lots of joy
- **Women have both more negative and more positive emotions**

- **Don't watch too many sitcoms**: surveys show that the average mood while watching sitcoms on television is mild depression

Quotes

On the difference between positive psychology and positive thinking:

> It is important to see the difference between this approach and the so-called power of positive thinking. Positive thinking often involves trying to believe upbeat statements such as "Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better" in the absence of evidence, or even in the face of contrary evidence. (…) Many educated people, trained in skeptical thinking, cannot manage this kind of boosterism. Learned optimism, in contrast, is about accuracy.

On the limitations of bodily pleasures:

> Rapidly repeated indulgence in the same pleasure does not work. The pleasure of the second taste of Basset's French vanilla ice cream is less than half of the first, and by the fourth taste it is just calories.

Real-Life Applications

There is much to readily apply to your life in this book.
Obviously there are the techniques to avoid dwelling on pessimistic thoughts, or practicing gratitude.

But I took away a few more interesting techniques that I have implemented in my life:

- **Only take a small bite of desserts**: bigger doses of a bodily pleasure have diminishing returns. A good technique to enjoy non-perfectly healthy bodily pleasures without going cold turkey then is to only take a small bite or sip. Instead of swearing off desserts, I now allow myself a small bite. Instead of swearing off pizzas, I only allow myself a few slices when sharing a pizza

For more practical takeaways, see Ultimate Power.

Criticism

I loved "Authentic Happiness".
But there is more than one note I need to make.

1. Ridicules Freud, But Misses The Importance of Sexual Drives

I'm far from a fan of Freud.

Since I was a student first reading into Freudian psychology, it all struck me as huge mental elucubration with no data and evidence.
How could all psychoanalys seek to cure people without evidence?

Today, I still believe much of Freud's fame and influence more because of his *confidence*, than his competence. He spoke like an Oracle, and psychology shows that people tend to follow the charismatic leader.

Yet, as famed neuroscientist Ramachandran says in his book "Phantoms in The Brain", Freud was, in many ways, also a genius.

Seligman ridicules Freud for building much of his theory around sexuality. And he mocks Freud for saying that much of civilization is built around sexual drives.
Yet, **we *do* build civilization, in large part, out of thirst for social status *and* sexual success.** Or how else does

Seligman think that human males evolved their drives, which are not coincidentally far more pronounced than women?

Freud might not be 100% correct, but he does not deserve that kind of ridicule.

That's not the first time I felt Seligman was not truly on top of evolutionary psychology.
At first, he seems to suggest that siblings rivalry is not real, or natural. He says that "negative psychology" is wrong at generalizing to the whole human population just because its because the same pattern is universally observed. Then, later, he finally admits that "siblings rivalry exists". Finally. What was the point of all that denying, then?

2. Subjective measures are proper science?

Says Seligman:

> The final judge is "whoever lives inside a person's skin," and a great deal of research has shown that the tests of these states (several of which appear in this book) can be rigorously measured. The measures of positive emotion I use are repeatable, stable across time, and consistent across situations—the tools of a respectable science.

I don't find a questionnaire to be the hallmark of science.
My "very happy" might be a "7", but someone might mark the same level of happiness a 9. It might be stable across time, but it's not interpersonally comparable.

Still, I agree with the overarching message: positive psychology, like all good psychology, is science.

3. I wished for more science and less personal stories and conjectures

Sometimes I felt Seligman was going too off tangent, both with his personal stories, or personal conjectures.

He could have cut out some parts, or at least he should have he could wish he had differentiated more between what was science, and what was his personal speculation.

I wished for more certitude

Seligman says:

> This ***may*** mean that we inherit a "steersman" who urges us toward a specific level of happiness or sadness

The boldened part is mine.

And I boldened because I asked myself: it *may* or it *does*?

This is the crucial question I was seeking an answer to. I wished he had been more definitive. Even if there was no answer, I feel he should have been more precise here.

4. Underestimates childhood trauma

I was surprised Seligman went as far as he did in denying that childhood trauma has any effect on adults.

It felt to me like that truly underestimated the potential impact that bad parenting can have on their children.
After all, if parenting mattered so little, then why would Seligman dedicate several chapters to parenting in this same book, as well as spending so much effort in his own parenting?

5. Emotion hydraulics is not fully untrue

Seligman calls the idea that bottled up emotions will grow and fester the "emotional hydraulics theory".

In more polite terms, he says that's unscientific drives.
He uses anger as an example.
When you vent your anger you grow angrier, not calmer.

He is right. That one on anger is a popular -and wrong- self-help myth.

Seligman also says that emotions left to themselves will dissipate. And even there, he might be right.

However, it is also true that some emotions should be expressed.
The feeling of having been mistreated, for example, can fester if left unexpressed.
Resentment also festers, and it can harm your relationships with others and your ability to work effectively.

6. Did we need to pitch "Positive Psychology" against "Old Psychology"?

Says the author:

> (…) This thesis is a perfect example of the most fundamental difference between Positive Psychology and psychology as usual.
> "Negative" psychology holds that its observations about basic human nastiness are universal, even though its observations may emerge from societies that are at war, in social turmoil, or struggling with poverty and are made on individuals who are troubled or seeking therapy

I don't see the need of pitching Positive Psychology against "psychology as usual", which later becomes "negative" psychology.
That's nonsense to me.
Plus, Seligman saying that siblings rivalry does not exist if parents will spread enough love, sounds a lot like a perfect condition that is more likely not to take place, than to take place -I imagined a white suburban family with the mother can allow herself to stay at home with the children-.

CONS

- **Too many topics**

Authentic Happiness ranges from optimism, to attachment styles, to running effective relationships, to the meaning of life.

At times, it feels like too many topics, and only loosely connected.

- **Haughty tone**

I found some of the passages to be a bit too haughty and scornful.
Towards Freud for example.
Or sometimes towards the readers, when he reminds us that for the layman reader there is only one single equation allowed, and he begs us to bear with him -as if readers were too stupid to understand equations?-.

Or towards the relationship literature and Gottman. He recommends "The Relationship Cure" and "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work", and then he says "while not a goldmine, the manuals do contain some rich veins".
I thought that was a bit unfair towards a man, Gottman, who has provided so much wisdom on what works in relationships.

And finally, towards a 19 years old kid who shot himself.
He introduces him as a Darwin award for wanting to play Russian roulette with a semiautomatic (for non-Americans: a semiautomatic always chambers any round in the magazine, so you can't play Russian roulette because it always shoots).

I think that kid didn't deserve to be called "idiot of prudence", considering he died on the spot and he was just 19. It was just bad taste, in my opinion.

PROS

- **Great analysis on attachment styles**

I have read plenty on attachment styles, starting from the most popular "Attached" to several researchers.
And yet, Seligman manages to review the whole literature in a few paragraphs, delivering both a great summary, and much new -and important information.

- **Great overview of positive psychology**

There are still a number of books I need to explore on positive psychology but, so far, this might be the best overview of the discipline.

- **Practical and truly helpful**

Seligman says that, contrary to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of "Flow", he wanted to write something practical. Well, he certainly did. "Authentic Happiness" is packed with terrific insights on becoming a happier and more optimistic person.

- **Wonderful take on win-win and collaboration**

Albeit off-topic, I loved Seligman's theory of "evolution towards greater good".
Starting from a speech from Robert Wright, author of "The Moral Animal", Seligman says that civilization is progresses as it progresses towards more games of win-win among the individuals.

I tend to agree, and win-win is one of the foundations of this website. Also see:

- The foundational laws of power
- Mix power with warmth

Review

"Authentic Happiness" is a glorious book of Positive Psychology.

The best I have read so far, and it provides the best overview of the disciplines.

It's very good both in terms of scientific accuracy, and in terms of practica self-help wisdom.

Before "Authentic Happiness", frankly, I was not too happy with my experience of Seligman's work.
The audiobook version of "Learned Optimism" felt like a huge ripoff, super short and mostly about his online quiz.
And "Flourish" was just average.

Authentic Happiness, instead, is the worthy book of one of the fathers of Positive Psychology.

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The Secret Handshake: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 April 2020 · Archived copy · Original

"The Secret Handshake" is a book on career advancement and career strategies.
Author Kathleen Kelley Reardon states that there are non-written rules that the people at the top of each organization all follow and obey, and if you want to join that upper circle, you need to learn those rules.
Kelley Reardon sets out to teach readers what those rules are, so they can join the people at the top.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
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- Quotes
- Real-Life Advice
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- The "secret handshake" is the ensemble of non-written rules and behavior that allow you -or stop you- from joining those at the top
- Different people differ in their propensity to play corporate politics, but political awareness is a skill you can develop
- It's best for you to work in an organization that matches your "political appetite"

Summary

About the Author: Kathleen Kelley Reardon is a professor of management at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, and she earned her Ph. D. with summa cum laude and distinction at the University of Massachusetts.
Kathleen also works as a management consultant on topics such as company culture, and effective communication, and she enjoys writing on her blog on female empowerment.

The Higher You Go, The More Subtle The Game

The higher you go, the more professionalism matter.
And more professionalism means that people there strive to look above pettiness and "games".

But they're not really.
It's just that the game becomes more hidden and stealthy.
And if you want to make it into that club, you need to learn to play that game.

What's Politics

Kathleen defines politics as "politics is an illegitimate means of getting things done", and every successful manager has done.

And she righteously says that being good at politics is not a trait you're born with, but it's a skill that you can learn.

Says the author:

> The word “politics” has fallen into some disrepute, not because of what it means, but because of how it has been used. (…) Like it or not, the way things get done in most organizations. And it’s high time we started to train people in how it works.

Also read:

- How to master politics

> 7 Steps to Master Office Politics: A Field Guide

Learning Politics Is Learning to Read Meaning Beyond Words

Says the author:

> Cues that provide information extras are rarely missed by the more politically savvy. You can’t reach the inner circles of business by missing or misreading cues on a regular basis. It’s important to become a sophisticated interpreter of meaning, observant of both content and relational levels of conversation

I agree with that.
People who fail to read nonverbal cues not only do poorly at work, but at life in general.

Fast and Loose Players

These guys like to keep their options open.
They will make you believe you got a deal, but until you sign the contract, they will keep all their options open, and if something better comes along, they will quickly jump ship.

The way you play with a player is by being a bit of a player yourself.
Say the author:

> You should never be completely open and honest with a conniving type

Amen to that.

Also read:

- The different types of political players

> 9 Types of Office Politics Players (W/ Examples)

When You Acquiesce to Poor Behavior, You Reinforce Your Weaker Position

Imagine for example that someone says something patronizing.

If you accept it, then you reinforce the perception that the person has power over you.
Even if you just made a comment that his words were patronizing instead opens up his frame to discussion, and the power relationship is also open to discussion.

Power is negotiable, says the author, and you should always be ready to renegotiate it.

Work In a Politically Suited Environment

Kathleen Kelley Reardon says that to be successful, people should find an organization that suits their styles.

Organizations differ in their level of politicking.
And people differ in their level of political savvy and "political enjoyment", such as how much they enjoy playing politics, and how good at it they are.

Not everyone is naturally good at politics, and not everyone enjoys playing it.
Thus, it follows that people will be most effective if they find an organization where the amount of politics matches the amount of politics they can stomach -or the amount they can thrive in-.

STYLE	POLITICAL LEVELS			
	MINIMAL	MODERATE	HIGH	PATHOLOGICAL
PURIST	Best fit	Possible	Unlikely	Very unlikely
TEAM PLAYER	Likely	Best fit	Unlikely	Very unlikely
FIGHTER	Very unlikely	Likely	Best fit	Possible
MANEUVERER	Very unlikely	Possible	Best fit	Likely

Table largely based on Kathleen Kelly Reardon work (with some minor edits)
A politically skilled player can actually do well in a very politicized environment because he can play by his strengths.

And, on average, keep this in mind: the more political the organization is, the more you need to be able to read between the lines.

The Political Savvy of The Balancing Act

The balancing act is how politically savvy players balance their own needs, with the needs of the projects or task, plus the needs of the people that matter.

For example, people who are politically savvy don't just promote their ideas based on what sounds good to them, but they also wonder what it will mean for senior management, who looks good if it's adopted, and who looks poor.

Taking sides and competing with those who have more power than you results in an obvious loss for you.
Says the author that "if you go the mat, you better be the one with the decision power".
If you don't, it's much better to find ways to present your thoughts, decisions, and actions, in a way that's palatable to those who have more power than you have.

Give Positive Recommendations

Positive recommendations make you friends.

Negative ones can make you enemies.

As you progress in your career, it might eventually happen that someone asks you for an informal review of someone's work.
If you make good use of the self-promotion article here, it might also happen that it's a high-caliber player asking you to review someone who's actually senior to you.

That's what happened to me when the head of internal management consultants asked me for a feedback on Julien,

one of the guys on his team.
The acute observer of people I *thought* I was, I gave detailed feedback on how sometimes Julien rubbed people the wrong with a badly concealed haughty attitude.
When I saw Julien again it took me one second to realize from his face that he knew something he shouldn't have known.
I said hello to him, and he didn't reply. And that's when I knew 100% I had made an enemy I didn't need to make.

Theoretically, your feedback should be anonymous.
But it will not always be. Hopefully, the receiver is honest enough not to share your name. But it might slip out of him, or some details might surface and the subject of your review might be able to put two and two together.
Yes, reviewing someone is a chance for self-promotion. But it's also a politically delicate situation.

My advice is to be honest, to also use the occasion to showcase your emotional and social intelligence, but to be very careful with negative feedback.
In case you need to provide harsher reviews, consider delivering them verbally. Once you send an email, you also lose control over it, and you never know where your email might end up.

Also read:

- Political pitfalls you must be aware of

> 12 Political Landmines You Need to Know

Learn to Read Your Boss

As Daniel Goleman correctly points out in his "*Working With Emotional Intelligence*", it's reports that need to be emotionally intelligent towards their bosses, not the other way around.

That means that you must learn to read your boss's nonverbal cues.
With very indirect bosses, you must learn what he is actually meaning behind his words.

If you notice for example that he often high praises but only mild praises to you, that might be the sign he's not yet happy with you, and that you must change something.

Some other indirect bosses show displeasure by avoiding you, or by interacting with you less.
For example, if you're speaking at a meeting and the boss is not looking at you in the eyes, that possibly means you have offended him recently.

And by the way, if your boss is acting like that with someone else in your team, you should avoid engaging with that person as well, lest you send the message that you're siding *against* your boss.

Some other bosses will not tell you when they have little time, but you will see them fidgeting, or looking at their computer screen, or talking more rapidly. That's the sign you should say "OK boss, I don't want to disturb right now, maybe I come back later".

To Make it To The Top, You Need to Lead

People who make it to the top want to lead and influence.

Yes, there are some followers who hang onto a winner -check out "power aligners"-, but they tend to fail over time because depending on a single person for personal success is an invariably risky and vulnerable strategy.

Confident, Yes, But Don't Overdo It

This passage hit me home hard as I committed the same mistake at the beginning of my career:

> Confidence is an aspect of personal power. Yet there's always the risk of overdoing it or even the appearance of overdoing it. One of the CEOs interviewed for this book told me he overstepped his confidence quotient one time. By word of mouth it got back to him after he'd missed a promotion that one of the senior executives had said at the promotion meeting, "I don't like that guy. He's a peacock strutting around." And, this CEO told me, "The guy was probably right."

Pretty much the same feedback that prevented me from getting a reward international assignment at the end of my talent graduate programme.

My own mentor said at the performance review that I was too cocky.

Adapting to Male & Female Style

While a male boss might find it irritating that a woman doesn't move quickly to greet him and show deference, a female boss might find it irritating that men to self-promote and, as the author call it, engage in "male posturing".

The best way to handle your boss then is to become aware of what he prefers. And to learn the typical differences between men and women.
Also see:

- The female guide to win in male organizations

> The Businesswoman Guide to Win in Male Organizations

At The Top, It's All About People's Skills

Says the author:

> As you move closer to the top, people skills dominate over technical skills

That much is true.
Technical skills help you the most when you're starting out. But to get to the top, it's all about people skills.

Also read:

- Strategies for career advancement
- Technical skills give you job security, soft skills give you power

Quotes

On technical competence VS general competence, including political savvy:

> Surely competence is critical to success; in fact, its very foundation. But technical competence is rarely sufficient.

On power:

> The interesting thing about power is that it is often both a means to get ahead and the reward for getting there.

On "concealing your intentions", as Robert Greene would put it:

> The time to tell your boss that you're leaving is when you are leaving, not when you're thinking about it.

On power, potential, and attracting support by doing a great job:

> The worst way to seek assistance is to be desperate. You're not going to rescue the boss's daughter from the railroad tracks. To get noticed you have to do important things well.

On developing relationships before you need them:

> If you don't have friends in high places, there's no time like the present to begin cultivating them.

On politically smart hard work:

> Being dedicated doesn't necessarily mean putting in long hours or being constantly available. To the contrary, it's important to **put in long hours and be available when it matters to those in a position to notice your dedication**.

On the importance of being like those who lead:

> This preference for one's own kind is exactly why organizational diversity is so difficult to achieve. If the people running your organization aren't like you in fundamental ways, you'll have difficulty achieving the secret handshake.

Competition above teamwork:

> Despite all the talk about teams in business circles today, competition is rewarded more than cooperation, and so conflict is the inevitable result.

Real-Life Advice

- **Never say you will leave as soon as you can**: yes, you might be angry, but telling someone you will leave before you have any offer is plain silly
- **Meet people with "chance encounters"**: master politicians do their homework before attending network events and then "accidentally" meet the people they wanted to meet
- **You ower your mentor**: even if he never said so. Keep that in mind and show you understand the basic rules of social exchange and "WIIFT"
- **Watch out for "fake self-disclosers"**: these are people who feign giving you good information to get good information in exchange, but they're really just embellishing useless info to get real intelligence
- **Don't hog the spotlight with self-promotion**: self-promotion is a politically sensitive activity. Yes, you need self-promotion, but it's tacky if you overdo it and you
- When deciding whether or not to pick a battle, you must assess both the likelihood of winning, and the potential damage to the relationship

CONS

- **Sometimes I wished for concrete examples**

Talking about the modus operandi of a "maneuverer":

> "I set fires and put them out. Then I was a hero. I'd create a problem and solve it. I've gotten promoted every one and a half years this way. The way I see it, if you don't leverage yourself, you're lost."

Interesting, but I'd wish the author had asked some precise example of what "setting fires" meant, and how he'd fix it.
I run this website based on concrete examples because I believe it helps people learn better.

In my real life, I always ask people for real-life examples to better understand what they're talking about.

- **Sometimes some weird-sounding sentence structure**

For example:

> He or she is not at all inhibited about using politics to advance personal objectives and favored team objectives, but prefers to do so in deniable ways.

- **Some "OK" content mixed with the genius**

Some parts of the book are "OK", but they also feel a bit like space fillers. It's a pity, because there is enough gold here that the filler around it was truly unneeded.

PROS

- **The concept of a secret handshake**

Albeit the idea of a "secret handshake" might sound silly to some, it's totally true.

The "secret handshake", in the end, is nothing but an ensemble of non-written rules and signals that communicate whether you are ready for the big boys' table, or not.

Every single group has its own code that you must respect to join, and the most exclusive groups have even more stringent codes.

It's the same for the executive club.
Read more in executive skills (ie: the rules of the handshake).

- **Top advice on frames**

I learned a lot here on frame control techniques and even used this wisdom for Power University.

Review

"The Secret Handshake" is a gem with an incredible amount of genius content.
I took away lots of lessons learned and even used it to improve this website's course.

The central idea of a "secret handshake" is one of the most important unwritten rules of success and is one of the major beliefs of this website: act the part, learn how to behave high-value, or you'll never make it to the top.

I think it could have been even better if it cut out on some filler and "just OK" content.
But I'm very happy I read it.

Check the **best career books**

Frame Control 101: Influence People and Gain Status

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Most men lose power without realizing it — not because they lack charm or intelligence, but because they lose the **frame**.

Every interaction is a silent power struggle over who defines reality. The one who controls the frame controls the outcome — whether it's attraction, respect, or leadership.

In this guide, you'll learn the fundamentals of **frame control**: how to read it, win it, and use it to project authority, confidence, and dominance in dating, work, and life.

Let's begin.

Frames apply to any interaction. From the most momentous, to the most mundane

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Intro

Frames originated across disciplines, but Erving Goffman formalized frame analysis in sociology.

Frames are the beliefs, values, and personal predispositions through which people interpret the world. They guide how people make sense of everything—from life's meaning to everyday arguments.

- **High-level frames**: what's good/bad; what's true/false; meaning of life; etc.
- **Low-level frames**: who is good/bad between us; who's right or wrong in *this* argument; meaning of *this* event; etc.

Different meanings create different emotions, preferences, and actions.
Values, personal predispositions, and self-interest all influence frames. People, often subconsciously, default to the interpretation that best serves their interests. But **you also influence frames with your words, behaviors, and what you draw attention to**.

⍰ Example

Frames are most visible in disagreements.
Example from a relationship:

> **Boyfriend's frame**: St Valentine's gifts are a waste
> **Girlfriend's frame**: St Valentine's gifts are caring
> ➡ Whether they buy gifts depends on whose frame wins

Frames are also held at a *social* level.
It's more challenging for individuals to buck socially ingrained frames.

In our example, society supports her frame.
So it's difficult for him to "win" the frame without her feeling like he is being "unreasonable" and *imposing* his will.

So he needs advanced skills to "win" the frame without her feeling like he's *imposing* his will.

We dig deeper in Power University, but for now:

Frame Battles Are About Power

For two reasons:

1. **Power signaling**: the winner sub-communicates higher power -more dominant, more persuasive, or both-
2. **Setting the rules (SOPs)**: a “cemented frame” governs the relationship with the winner’s rules

⍰ Mrs. Doubtfire Divorce

> **Him**: (Frame: we were having fun, it’s good, and I’m the leader of this relationship)
> **Her**: (Frame: you made a mess, it’s bad, you’re useless)

Whose frame wins?
Just look at his face for the answer.
Frames often resolve without a single word.

Frames Set The Rules of Engagement

Including values and ethics.

This is important because:

⚠ When you accept someone’s frame, you play by *their* rules.
And *their* preferences, values, and morals become the yardstick.

Be cautious of frames with hidden implications of right or wrong.

From Surface to Source: Frame Depth Model

Let’s review this exchange with a frame-informed analysis:

> **American**: It's a carbonara
> **Italian**: No, it's not

This simple disagreement can stem from something deeper.
The principle is:

⚖ **Disagreements are superficial manifestations of something deeper**

That *something* can be a value, a belief, a psychological predisposition, or a hidden agenda.
And to influence people, you must find out what it is, and communicate accordingly.

Why do the American and Italian disagree?

1st Level: Surface Beliefs

It may be a misunderstanding around ingredients -eggs VS cream-.

Or a misunderstanding about "who invented it".
They probably share covert assumptions that: a) the original version is the "real thing" and b) nationals from the country that "invented it" are higher authority.

Once shown that Carbonara is an Italian dish, the American may then concede.

⁉ **Solution**: correct information + logic + authority.

2nd Level: Contextual Power Dynamics

If they still argue, there may be deeper issues.

The American may reject influence because:

1. His wife is there and he wants to look "strong"
2. You were too blunt and he expects more courtesy

⁉ **Solution**: power protect + re-empower

3rd Level: Character

Deeper yet, it may be about character.

A power-hungry man may stick to what's wrong no matter what.
Or he may hold ethnocentric views of national and cultural superiority.

⁉ **Solution**: frame impose or agree to disagree.

4th Level: Hidden Agendas

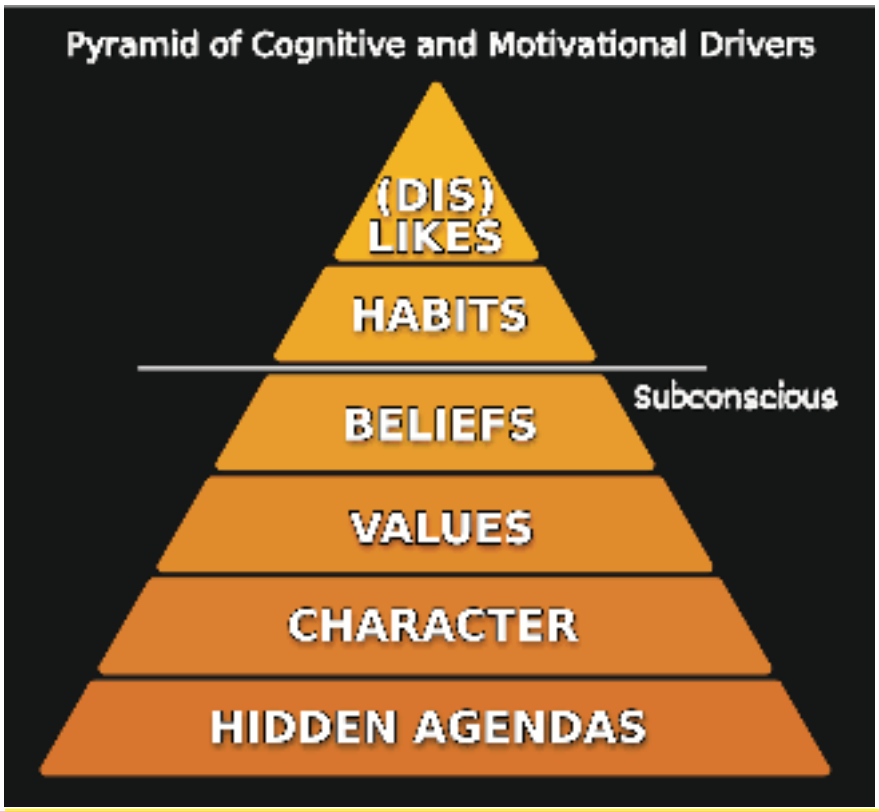
Sometimes frames collide because people have diverging goals, and and their "beliefs" conveniently align with their self-interest.

For example, if the American is a chef and for all his life he cooked carbonara with cream, he has a strong motive to stick to his views. Agreeing the 'real' carbonara is made with eggs would be an important loss of authority for him.

⁉ **Solution**: Be strategic

Strategy: Persuade at Deeper Levels

In general, to influence others, you communicate with the deeper issues in mind:



⁉️ Whenever interests diverge, always look for hidden agendas and selfish motives. Sometimes people hide them under a more pro-social cover

General principle:

⚖️ **Surface-level frame control wins arguments with dominance, while deeper-level frame control changes minds with skills**
❓ If influence is the goal, focus less on “winning arguments”, and more on finding and addressing the deeper issues

So here is a frame change from you:

Focus not on “winning arguments”, but on finding and addressing deeply held beliefs.

Important concepts:

- **Deeper frames are covert & often subconscious**
- **Most covert frames are shared** while in persuasion we often focus on diverging covert frames, most covert frames are shared. Society largely runs on shared frames that we rarely challenge -Ie.: pro-social is “good” and antisocial is “bad”-.
- **‘Beliefs’ often hide self-interest**: sometimes frames collide because people have diverging goals.
  And their “beliefs” conveniently align with their self-interest.

❓ Case Study: Influence & Negotiative Conflict Resolution

How would you approach this?

Imagine the American loved American cuisine and he may get offended if devalued.
And you spotted signs of a big ego.

If you wanted to maintain rapport while still also maintaining power, you could say:

> **You**: You seem passionate about food <— Changes frame from confrontation to passion
>
> Americans invented the best fast food in the world, and BBQ is the best <— Gives and validates
>
> But when it comes to Carbonara, listen to the Italian guy (smile, point at yourself) <— Power protect with a self-deprecating delivery rather than schooling them with "teacher frames" ⍰
>
> And if you prefer it with cream, that's great <—- Addresses the potential issues of 'what's best' to focus on 'what's original'
> All I'm saying is <—- Power protects by minimizing
> that original carbonara is with eggs <—- Ends with definitive statement

It's much easier now for him to concede because you respected him, limited your authority on a single dish, and gave him authority over different types of food.

However, remember that influence still requires power.
To negotiate and influence you need some respect, status, and consideration.

If you don't have those, you need a different approach (see **Power University**).

Reading Frames

We use the traffic light principle for categorizing interpersonal power dynamics:

- **Empowering (⍰)**: Power-giving/submissive or re-empowering
- **Disempowering (⍰)**: Empowers the speaker, disempowers you
- **Neutral** (⍰): Neither empowering/disempowering (neutral) and non-attacking back (non-reactive)

And we add 'attack' for social **one-ups** (⚔) and **self-defense** (⍰).

Walkthrough Example

Laura arrives at work:

> **Matt**: (loud, with sarcastic tone) Well, well, well … Look who's on time for a change. (⚔⍰)
>
> **Laura**: (apologetically) I'm rarely late (⍰)
>
> **Matt**: Oh-ho! We're feeling defensive as well! (⚔⍰)
>
> **Laura**: (looking downwards, lower tone of voice) Not really (⍰)
>
> **Matt**: Sorry, Laura, but it sure seems that way to me (⚔⍰)

Matt may come across as an as*hole.
But Matt's dominance makes Laura overly submissive.
Laura pays the biggest price -and will hardly ever advance in that office, or in life-.

One-Upping Back

But here is you after PU:

> **Matt**: Well, well, well … Look at who's on time for a change (⚔⍰)
>
> **You**: (looking at the other people around) Good morning folks (⍰⍰) <— Maintains social warm & positive frame, ostracizes Matt
>
> And hello Matt, being your usual friendly self, I see (⚔⍰⍰) <— Only after shifts to Matt, sub-communicating he's a lower-status clown

Assertive and high-power, without being aggressive.
In a rowdier environment, you may even say "being your usual pain in the a*s".

If you're a witty guy, as inspired by Kelley Reardon:

> **Matt**: Well, well, well … Look at who's on time for a change (⚔⍰)
>
> **You**: Wooow, Mark, that truly was a deadly cut, you must have been up all night practicing it (⚔⍰⍰)

It's higher investment, but works well in informal environments where people joke around.

Non-reactive: If It's The Boss

For calibration and smart office politics, you must first consider whether you're often late.

If you are:

> **Matt**: Well, well, well … Look at who's on time for a change (⚔⍰)
>
> **You**: Good morning Matt!
> Yeah, usually I come up late and stay longer whenever necessary as I'm more efficient that way (⍰) <— Defend against the worst accusation of "not good employee"
>
> Do you prefer if I come earlier? <— Re-empowers the boss by allowing to decide

If nothing comes to mind, ignore the content:

> **Matt**: (loud, with sarcastic tone) Well, well, well … Look at who's on time for a change (⚔⍰)
>
> **You**: Hi, good morning boss. (⍰) <— Ignores the attack but remains polite
> (If you need anything I'm here)

If you're usually on time, you can get serious:

> **Matt**: (loud, with sarcastic tone) Well, well, well … Look at who's on time for a change. (⚔⍰)
>
> **You**: Good morning Matt!
> I usually am on time, am I not? (⍰⍰) <— Refuses to be a victim by starting a serious convo

Based on his reply, you can later ask privately if he is OK with your work and/or punctuality.
This approach maintains status, while keeping a good relationship with the boss.

⍰ Dating Example

Let's see another example from a real-life interaction.
I sat next to her carrying much of the initial conversation when she said:

> **Her**: I'm talking to my boss now, can you wait (⍰) <— Major rebuff considering she was texting, not talking

So:

> **Me**: It's OK, no need to wait, give me your number, I'll call you later when you're not talking to your boss (puts phone out, waits for her) (⚔⍰⍰)
>
> **Her**: (looking at the phone) Just like that? (quieter, almost muttering) You can't get a number like that (⍰) <— This was a *tentative* one-up, but the question and lower voice suggest she's about to submit. It's a one-down barely masked as one-up

Her frame: numbers require bonding.
My frame: numbers are just a first step

So I kept my phone out for her to type it in:

> **Me**: Yeah, just like that (⍰)
> **Her**: (types her contact)

⍰ POP QUIZ: what should you do now?

We dig deeper in Power University.

Also read:

- Leadership in dating
- Dominance in dating

Non-reactive Strategies

Use non-reactive responses to:

- **Negotiate** instead of escalating
- **Fly higher**, ignore nastiness, and display you're better than the attacker
- **Ignore** power moves, display you're imperturbable

When well done, you'll get this effect:

Let's see some examples:

⍰ 1. Ignore an escalation to maintain control

You're at a meeting presenting your cool proposal when:

> **Colleague**: This is nonsense, will never work (✂⍰)

A one-up response sidetracks you.
You'd go from a high-power 1-to-many presentation, to a low-power 1:1 squabble.

If it escalates, someone else will step in to play peacemaker.
And you lose persuasiveness.

Imagine instead:

> **You**: Bear with me while I explain how this works (⍰⍰) <— ⍰ ⍰ I remain focused on my goal. And you're speaking without knowing because I haven't even explained yet

You ignore the attack, and move forward.
For added power, avoid looking at him.

⍰ 2. Gather Precious Intel About People

We advise men to stay calm during your first argument.

Why?

Because TPM and PU will get you respect and devotion.
But devoted women may present their best selves just to *keep* you.
Instead, you want to know whether she's a game-player, or a wife material.

For example:

> **Her**: Look, if you are not going to commit soon, (raises voice) then it's over (⚔⍰) <— Break-up threat

Here is a non-reactive response:

> **You**: (that sounds mean), why would you threaten me like that (⍰)

"Threaten" is a good keyword to gauge her reaction.
To assess:

- ⍰ She **accepts it's a threat or keeps attacking** -she's comfortable with threats and it's exactly what she premeditated-.
- She **says it's not a threat**, much better
- ⍰ **Backtracks, says she doesn't mean to be mean** but has standards

Key Elements of Frames

1. Covert Frames™

Unspoken assumptions that affect meaning and interactions without people realizing

General principle:

⚖ **The person who controls the deeper frame has the power**

This is because covert frames include the deeper values that govern judgments of "right and wrong".

2. Self-Frames™

What your words and behaviors sub-communicate about you to yourself, and to others

Any word or action sub-communicates something about you.
And we call that sub-communication self-frames.

At the highest level, you can:

- **Positive self-frame**, as a high-value, honorable man
- **Negative self-frame**, as a lower-value, dishonorable man

Take this saying for example:

> Nastiness says more about the speaker, than the victim

The saying is largely true. Nastiness can damage others. But, especially if unjustified, it also self-frames the attacker as a nasty f*ck.

Advance bragging and displaying value is all about self-framing.

3. Thread-Expanding™

To expand the effect and/or time spent on a certain frame

Can be as simple as:

- **Talk more** about a certain topic
- **Surface** a nasty power move to draw attention to it
- **Add pregnant pauses** to extend speaking time and increase suspense
- Speak **louder**
- Speak with **more emotion**
- …

4. Thread-Minimizing™

To minimize the effect and/or time spent on a certain frame

⚖ **The more you minimize a bad frame, the less harmful it is.**

⍰ Techniques

- **Ignore it**
- **"Yeah yeah it"**, ie.: perfunctory verbal agreement with dismissive tonality and body language ⍰
- **Change topic** ("thread-cutting")
- **Breaking pattern**

These approaches can expand short-term, but minimize long-term:

- **Undermine** the speaker
- **Address** a bad frame ⍰

5. Frame Cementing™

To expand and solidify a resolution or agreement

Frame cementing increases compliance, acceptance, and internalization.

After this foundational introduction, our students internalize the skills to control frames in real life and achieve practical outcomes like status, respect, and attraction.
See:

Check Power University

Power University Reviews: Alumni Testimonials and Insights

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Below, we present authentic reviews from Power University alumni, showcasing the transformative impact of this comprehensive self-development program.

Developed by Lucio Buffalmano, a recognized expert in social dynamics and strategies, Power University equips individuals with actionable tools to navigate interpersonal relationships, advance careers, and achieve personal success.

Note: This page highlights qualitative testimonials from Power University alumni. For detailed, data-driven insights into the program's impact on career advancement, social dynamics, and personal growth, explore the Power University Alumni Results Survey.

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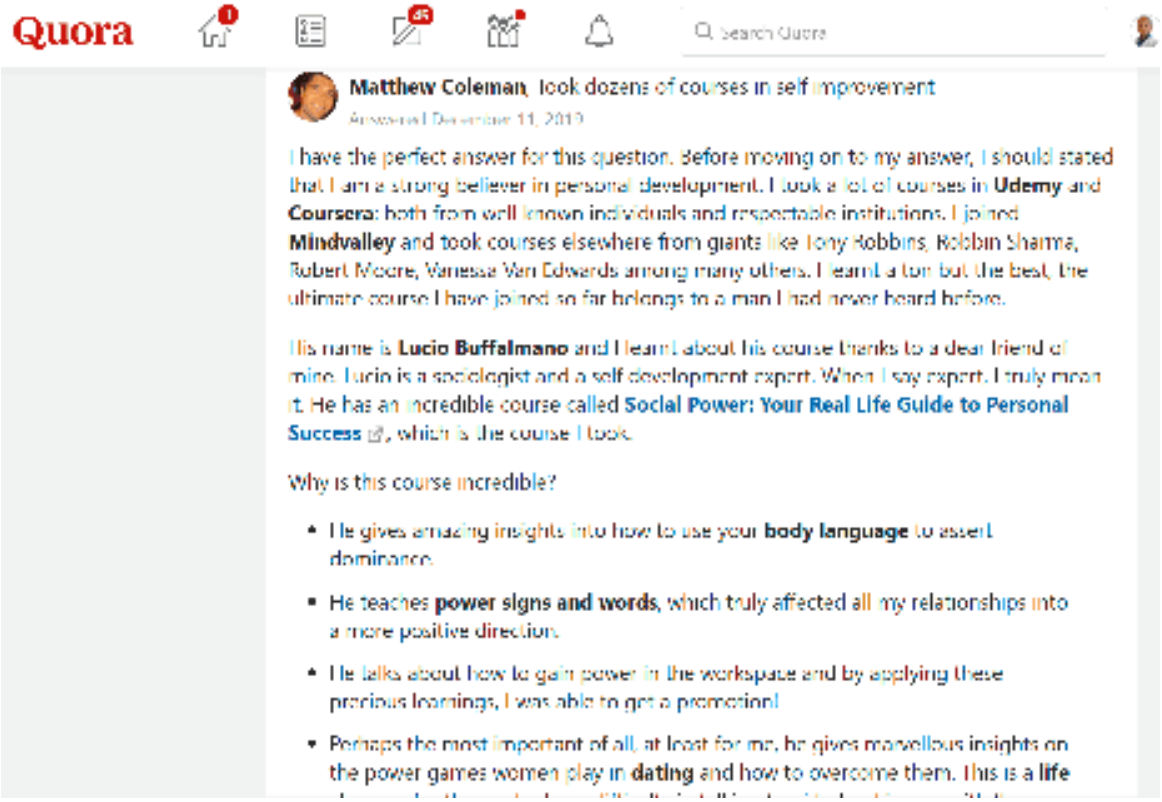
- Customer Service Excellence
- Power University Negative Reviews
  - Removed from the program
- Independent Author's Endorsement

Public Reviews of Power University

The following testimonials are publicly available and can be verified by following the provided links or searching the quoted text online. Note that the course was previously named "Social Power," but all reviews refer to the same program, now enhanced through continuous updates to deliver even greater value under the Power University brand.

- **Most Actionable Course Available**



Quora

Search Quora

Matthew Coleman, look dozens of courses in self improvement

Answered December 11, 2019

I have the perfect answer for this question. Before moving on to my answer, I should stated that I am a strong believer in personal development. I took a lot of courses in **Udemy** and **Coursera**: both from well known individuals and respectable institutions. I joined **Mindvalley** and took courses elsewhere from giants like Tony Robbins, Robbin Sharma, Robert Moore, Vanessa Van Edwards among many others. I learnt a ton but the best, the ultimate course I have joined so far belongs to a man I had never heard before.

His name is **Lucio Buffalmano** and I learnt about his course thanks to a dear friend of mine. Lucio is a sociologist and a self development expert. When I say expert, I truly mean it. He has an incredible course called **Social Power: Your Real Life Guide to Personal Success**, which is the course I took.

Why is this course incredible?

- He gives amazing insights into how to use your **body language** to assert dominance.
- He teaches **power signs and words**, which truly affected all my relationships into a more positive direction.
- He talks about how to gain power in the workspace and by applying these precious learnings, I was able to get a promotion!
- Perhaps the most important of all, at least for me, he gives marvellous insights on the power games women play in **dating** and how to overcome them. This is a **life**

> I took a lot of courses (…) from well-known individuals and respectable institutions (…) Mindvalley, Tony Robbins, Robbin Sharma, Robert Moore, Vanessa Van Edwards among many others. I learned a ton but **the best, the ultimate course** I have joined so far belongs to a man I had never heard before. His name is Lucio Buffalmano.
> (…)
> This is a **life changer** (…) his course works and is **probably the most actionable course out there**. I truly **recommend it to anyone who wants to gain social power. Because when you gain social power, you gain success**.
>
> *M. Coleman*

Read the full review here.

On YouTube:

@M 5 days ago (edited)

I have been a PU student for about 5 months now, about 60 percent complete. Power University is by far the best investment I have made. It has changed my life and my relationships, not only with strangers, friends, and colleagues, but even my family members are treating me with more respect now. At 31, I am finally able to pave the way for the life I dreamt of as a child, and PU has played an instrumental role alongside all the other self-education I have been getting. It's not just the read, it's the internalization and the application process that make the difference, that this course provides to those who apply themselves. For those who are contemplating joining PU, let me tell you: it's worth 10 times the price for the value it provides no book or platform can. The Ultimate Power is one of the best books I've ever read. Thank you, Lucio, for creating this masterpiece.

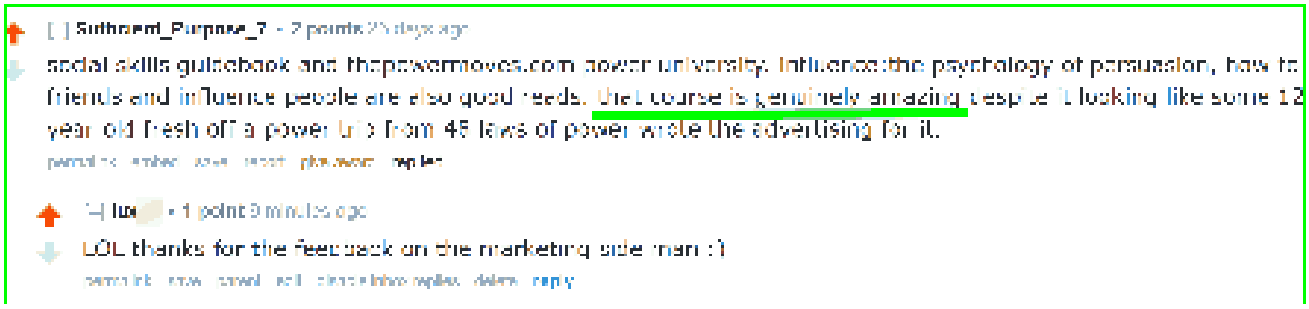
Show less

2 Reply

> **M**: have been a PU student for about 5 months now (…) Power University is by far the best investment I have made. It has changed my life and my relationships, not only with strangers, friends, and colleagues, but even my family members are treating me with more respect now. At 31, I am finally able to pave the way for the life I dreamt of as a child, and PU has played an instrumental role (…) it's the internalization and the application process that make the difference (…) to those who apply themselves. For those who are contemplating joining PU, let me tell you: it's worth 10 times the price for the value it provides no book or platform can.

This comment can be found under our PU intro video alongside other similar testimonials.

- **Genuinely Amazing Course**



View the review here.

For transparency, the full review states:

> That course is genuinely amazing despite it looking like some 12 year old fresh off a power trip from 48 laws of power wrote the advertising for it.

We appreciate the candid feedback on our marketing and have since refined our approach to better reflect the course's quality.

- **Enhanced Relationships and Attraction**

- after studying and applying PU, my partner has started to really be attracted to me at a primordial physical level, like she never was - and I as well to her;
- all the power moves from her are disappearing: she now tries to be more loving, more close, more helpful than ever;
- my "material giving" has been steadily reducing (unconsciously) all the while since I started PU, and now is basically almost zero;
- it has started to happen that other women whom I find attractive approach me (especially in stores) or show high interest, sometimes even when my partner is present. And she has noted it as well.

> **After studying PU my partner has started to really be attracted to me at a primordial level**, like she never was -and I as well to her
> (…)
> All the power moves from her are disappearing, **she now tries to be more loving, closer, more helpful than ever**
> (…)
> **Other women whom I find attractive approach me** or show high interest, sometimes even when my partner is present.

This review, shared on our forum, is kept private to respect the author's personal disclosure. Such outcomes are common as students develop higher-power behaviors through Power University's evidence-based curriculum.

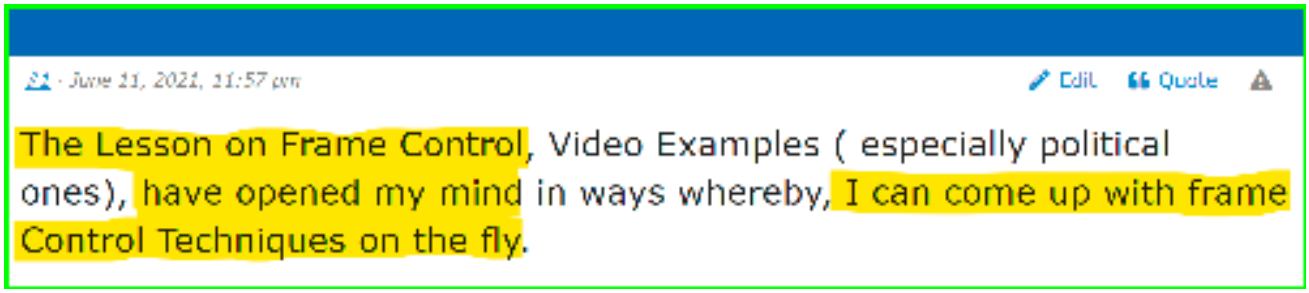
- **Unmatched Curriculum for Interpersonal Success**

Many thanks to those who have replied so far. One point of clarification: I'm not bullshitting when I say that Power University is the best course I've ever taken. I'm confident that there is no course that comes even close to covering the Power University curriculum of dealing with other people as well as Power University does.

> Power University is **the best course I've ever taken**. I'm confident that **there is no course that comes even close** to covering the Power University curriculum of dealing with other people as well as Power University does.

See the review here.

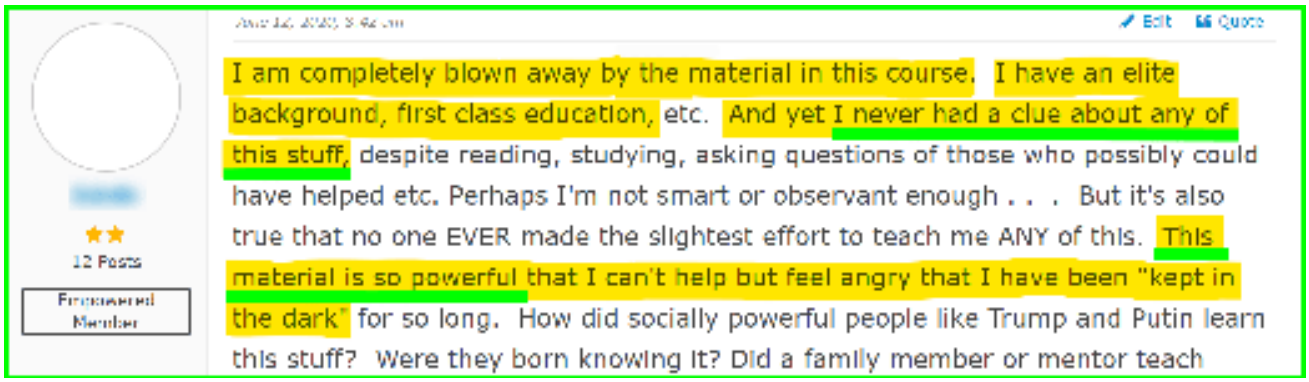
- **Master Frame Control Techniques**



Read this public review here.

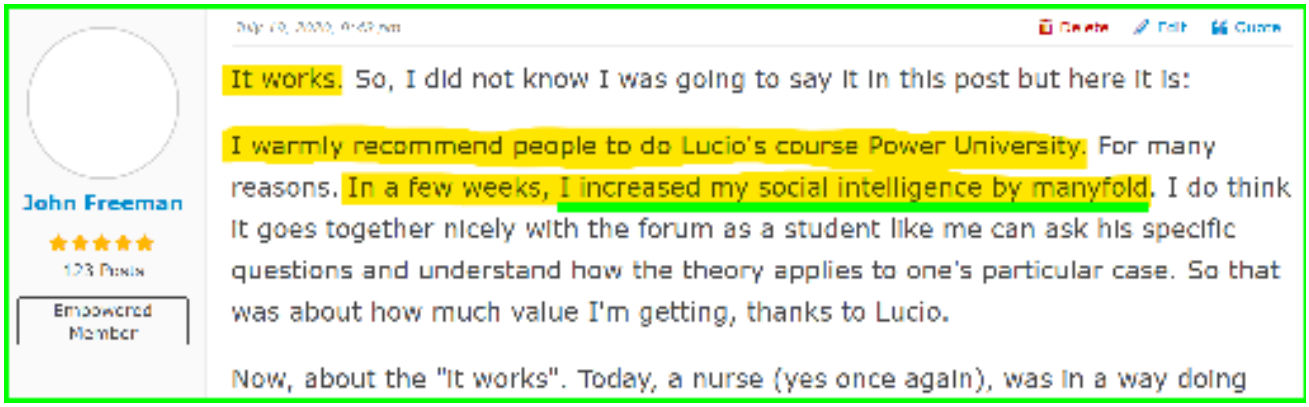
- **A Competitive Edge in Life**

The sooner you begin, the greater your advantage:



You can see this review here (includes the author's response).

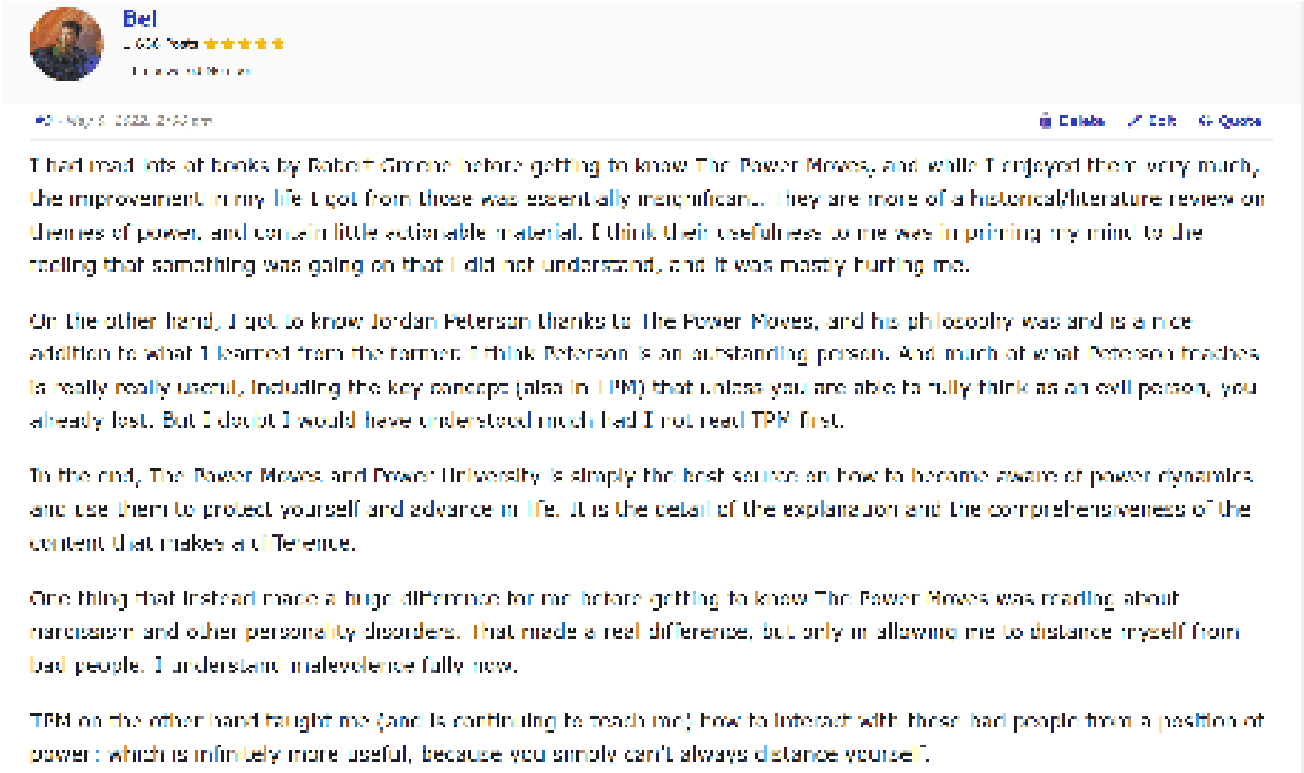
- **Real-Life Results**



You can see this thread here.

Note: The alumnus, John, developed a unique strategy by synthesizing Power University's teachings, which was later incorporated into the course curriculum, demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement.

- **Surpasses Popular Power Literature**



Bel

I had read lots of books by Robert Greene before getting to know The Power Moves, and while I enjoyed them very much, the improvement in my life I got from these was essentially insignificant. They are more of a historical/literature review on theories of power, and contain little actionable material. I think their usefulness to me was in priming my mind to the feeling that something was going on that I did not understand, and it was mostly hurting me.

On the other hand, I got to know Jordan Peterson thanks to The Power Moves, and his philosophy was and is a nice addition to what I learned from the former. I think Peterson is an outstanding person. And much of what Peterson teaches is really really useful, including the key concept (also in TPM) that unless you are able to fully think as an evil person, you already lost. But I doubt I would have understood much had I not read TPM first.

In the end, The Power Moves and Power University is simply the best source on how to become aware of power dynamics and use them to protect yourself and advance in life. It is the detail of the explanation and the comprehensiveness of the content that makes a difference.

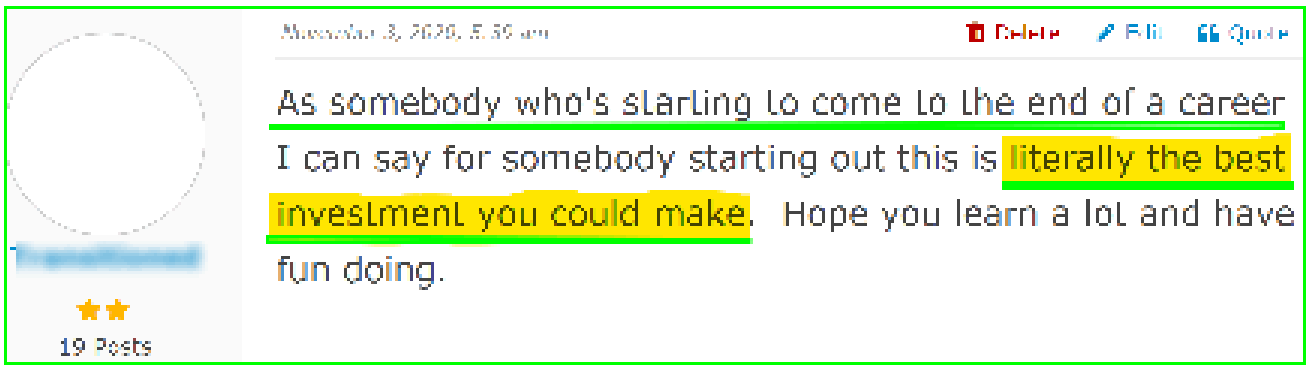
One thing that instead made a huge difference for me before getting to know The Power Moves was reading about narcissism and other personality disorders. That made a real difference, but only in allowing me to distance myself from bad people. I understand malevolence fully now.

TPM on the other hand taught me (and is continuing to teach me) how to interact with these bad people from a position of power: which is infinitely more useful, because you simply can't always distance yourself.

> "**I had read lots of books by Robert Greene** *before getting to know The Power Moves, and while I enjoyed them very much,* ***the improvement in my life was insignificant.***
> *(…)*
> **Jordan Peterson (…) is really useful** *(…)*
> (But)
> Greene and Peterson only focus on specific limited aspects, but both miss the bigger picture and the "how-to" details. (…) TPM on the other hand taught me (and is continuing to teach me) how to interact with these bad people from a position of power: which is infinitely more useful, because you simply can't always distance yourself.
> (…)
> In the end, **Power University is simply the best source on how to** become aware of power dynamics and use them to protect yourself and **advance in life.** *It is* **the detail of the explanation and the comprehensiveness of the content that makes a difference.**"
>
> *Bel, public comment*

JOIN POWER UNIVERSITY NOW

- **A Strategic Investment for Career Growth**

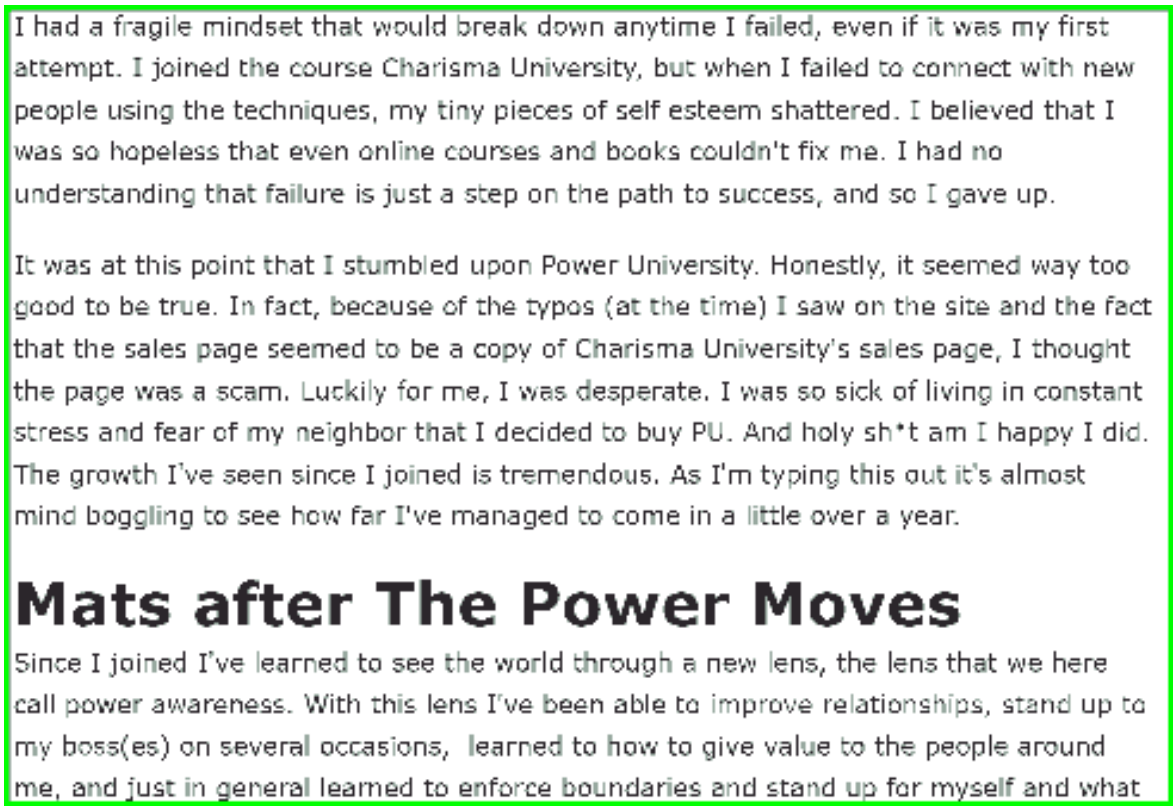


> As somebody who's starting to come to the end of a carer I can say (…) this is literally the best investment you could make.

Read this comment here.

Power University includes a dedicated module on career strategies and workplace power dynamics, designed to amplify professional success and potentially yield significant financial returns.

- **Tremendous Personal Growth**



I had a fragile mindset that would break down anytime I failed, even if it was my first attempt. I joined the course Charisma University, but when I failed to connect with new people using the techniques, my tiny pieces of self esteem shattered. I believed that I was so hopeless that even online courses and books couldn't fix me. I had no understanding that failure is just a step on the path to success, and so I gave up.

It was at this point that I stumbled upon Power University. Honestly, it seemed way too good to be true. In fact, because of the typos (at the time) I saw on the site and the fact that the sales page seemed to be a copy of Charisma University's sales page, I thought the page was a scam. Luckily for me, I was desperate. I was so sick of living in constant stress and fear of my neighbor that I decided to buy PU. And holy sh*t am I happy I did. The growth I've seen since I joined is tremendous. As I'm typing this out it's almost mind boggling to see how far I've managed to come in a little over a year.

Mats after The Power Moves

Since I joined I've learned to see the world through a new lens, the lens that we here call power awareness. With this lens I've been able to improve relationships, stand up to my boss(es) on several occasions, learned to how to give value to the people around me, and just in general learned to enforce boundaries and stand up for myself and what

> I joined the course Charisma University, but when I failed to connect with new people using the techniques, my tiny pieces of self esteem shattered.
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> (…)

> Since I joined I've learned to see the world through a new lens, the lens that we here call power awareness. With this lens I've been able to improve relationships, stand up to my boss(es) on several occasions, learned to how to give value to the people around me, and just in general learned to enforce boundaries and stand up for myself and what I believe in.
> (…)
> Most of all, since I joined Power University I've realized that I hold all the power to turn myself into any sort of person I want to become, and to shape my life into the life I want to live. As I write this I know I have a long way to go, but now I *know* that I have what it takes to achieve anything I set my mind to.

You can read this comment here.

- **Career Advancement through Power University**

> **Alumnus**: another success for me, another success for TPM. I've been hired in the new position in this larger… (details erased)
> So again, PU, TPM work.

See this review here.

- **Outshines Competing Programs**

#2 - May 30, 2023, 7:34 pm Delete Edit Quote

Hi Jack,

I first found TPM when I looked for reviews of Charisma University. I didn't look through anything else on the site though until months later.

After going through CU and realizing it wasn't for me I stumbled back here by accident and decided to join PU.

Needless to say, that was one of the best decisions I ever made.

Posts

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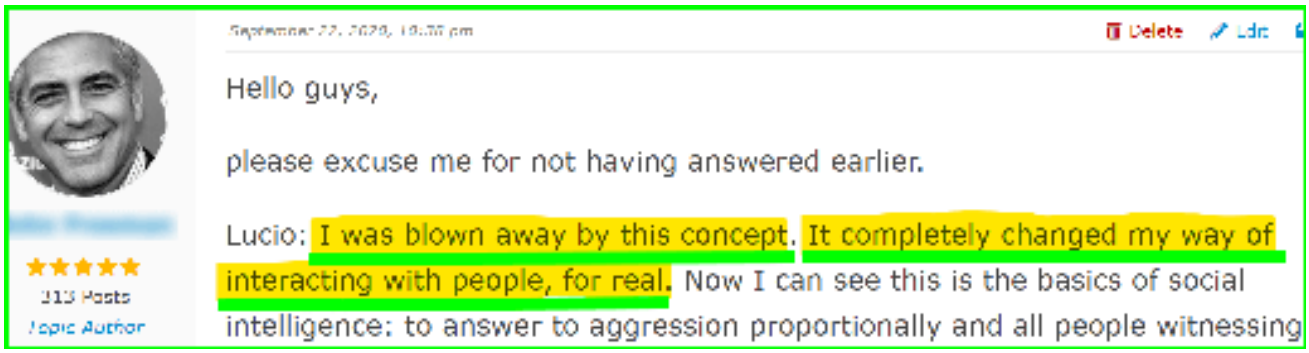
mber

- **Advanced Social Skills with Social Ju-Jitsu**



> I was blown away by this concept. It completely changed my way of interacting with people, for real.

This review highlights a case study on managing micro-aggressions and covert aggressions, now a lesson in the "Advanced Social Skills" module, thanks to alumnus John's contributions. See it here.

- **From Submissiveness to Assertiveness**

#1 - May 30, 2020, 12:01 pm Edit Quote

Hey Lucio, I remember when I stumbled upon this site 1-2 years ago a while back.I had a hard time finding this website using google .Now it's ranked 2nd on my Google Search Engine.I'm amazed that you posted so frequently with such high quality articles and eventually made Ebooks and a course called "Power University" which I love.I think what I learnt in the course is gonna extend to a lifetime ahead of me.It really helped me in terms of asserting myself and becoming less submissive.I can not describe my gratitude for this knowledge of power.I'm really glad,I found this website early on.Thanks Lucio.

Dre

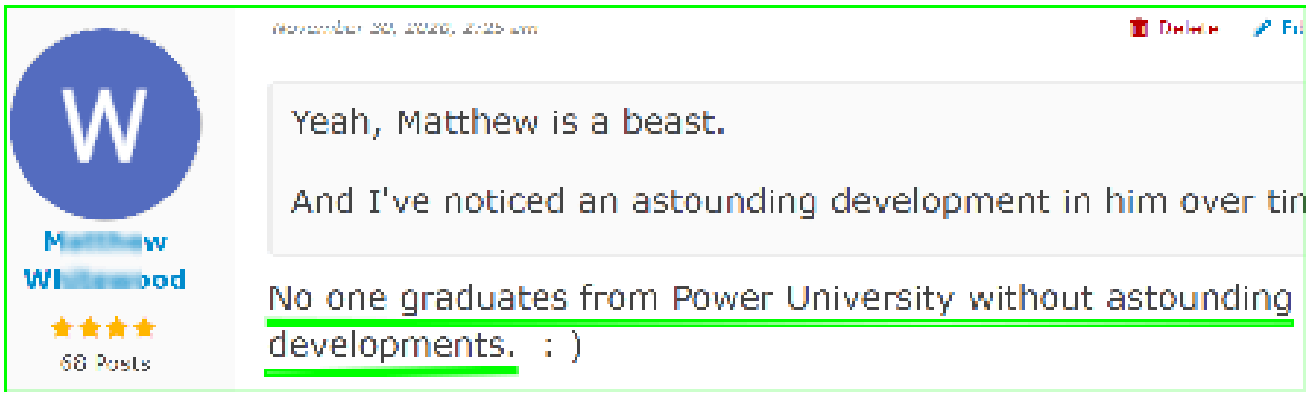
3 Posts

powered
member

> What I learnt in the course is gonna extend to a lifetime ahead of me. It really helped me in terms of asserting myself. I can not describe my gratitude for this knowledge of power.

You can read this review here.

- **Astounding Personal Development**



> No one graduates from Power University without astounding developments.

Read this post here.

@lucio: thank you very much for all the teaching. As you could see, I could find a high quality high value high power mate. Of course I did the work, but the roadmap and the information, I owe it to you. I have upcoming posts about it.

All this to say to doubter that PU and TPM work. Again: this is the best self-development product I've ever came across and I've been studying this for 20 years.

> **Alumnus**: **I could find a high quality high value high power mate**. Of course I did the work, but the roadmap and the information, I owe it to you. I have upcoming posts about it. All this to say to doubter that PU and TPM work. Again: **this is the best self-development product I've ever came across and I've been studying this for 20 years**.
> I improved 2-10 fold (difficult to quantify but way way above baseline) in (lists the areas of improvement)
> **what is happening in my relationship is exactly as predicted in PU**. The phases, the controlling behaviours (both mine and hers), the games, it's exactly as described. **Talk about a reality-based data driven self-**

> **development product**: there you have it.
> So TPM, PU and the forum have **the best ROI in self-development in the World** in my experience.
>
> *PU alumnus*

- **Addictive Learning Experience**

> Thank you very much! I'm hooked on your "Social Power" course, this is just so good!

You can read this one here.

- **Superior to Udemy Courses**

> Last note, Udemy released some courses for free as a COVID-19 special sale. I decided to take "How to speak to anyone & be fearless - in less than 55 min" by Ricardo Mendoza. This course has 59,220 students and has still been able to maintain a 4.2-star rating which I found quite impressive. I also liked his course description: Learn to quickly connect with crowds of strangers, be better on dates or ace that job interview.
>
> Long story short, I got more value from two lessons in Lucio's course than I got from the entire Udemy course. Mendoza's course was great, but it was only great for people who hadn't already taken Lucio's Social Power course and it just happened that I have (albeit I've only completed Module 1).

> I got more value from two lessons in Lucio's course than I got from the entire Udemy course.

You can read that one here.

JOIN POWER UNIVERSITY NOW

- **A New Beginning**

> In general for far too long, and who still faces that vice now and than, your lessons on attention, assertiveness, and dominance have been very helpful indeed. After months of struggle, I am finally seeing results and a light at the end of the tunnel. I know, that if I keep going, I will get the respect and security I desire.

> I am finally seeing results and a light at the end of the tunnel.

You can read this review here.

- **Success in Casting Jobs**

Before the coronavirus outbreak, I booked a role on season two of *Murder in the Family*. There was a scene where most of my acting had to be nonverbal because, in post-production, it was supposed to be narrated over as the introductory scene. I used Lucio's "Body Language of Dominance" to strategically communicate nonverbal information to the audience about the scene as well as what was going on inside of my character's head. When we wrapped up day two of filming, the producer said, "You elevated the character," then turned to a family member I had brought with me and said, "He's a future academy award-winner."

You can see the review here.

- **A Top Self-Investment**

April 21, 2020, 10:27 am

Incognito

15 Posts

Topic Author

Social Power Customers

I heard in audio most of "The laws of human
book with exercises in order to discover my g
above books you mentioned do you think will

I found yesterday this app from the Veterans
https://www.mobile.va.gov/app/anger-and-ir
has a lot of different tools for anger managem
breathing, thought stopping,time out etc) eac
know which tool works. I'll let you know the r

P.s: Your work is one of my best investments

> One of my best investments.

You can see that forum comment here.

- **Entrepreneurial Success**

Hi Lucio,

Your power dynamics course has helped me immensely in multiple business situations as an entrepreneur.
Learning from your course materials, I have managed to build alliances with other entrepreneurs in the same domain, and we are always building each other up.

> (PU) has helped me immensely in multiple business situations as an entrepreneur.

This review is from a question in the private customer-only forum, accessible only to Power University students.

- **Enhanced Daily Effectiveness**

BTW 2: Lucio, your Power University Course and your blog are stellar. Much of what I'm doing now I learned from you. The frame "I may not be able to get you to respect me right now, but someday I will even the score" was key to my willingness to redress these work relationship and also many others of non-work nature.

> Power University and your blog are stellar. Much of what I'm doing now I learned from you.

See it here.

- **Mind-Blowing Content**

Besides the EM course I have dropped one of my routines that wasn't giving me much value to instead implement some reading every morning. I've also been progressing through PU and keep having my mind blown by how good this course is 🤯

> I (…) keep having my mind blown by how good this course is.

You can see it here.

- **Beyond Expectations**

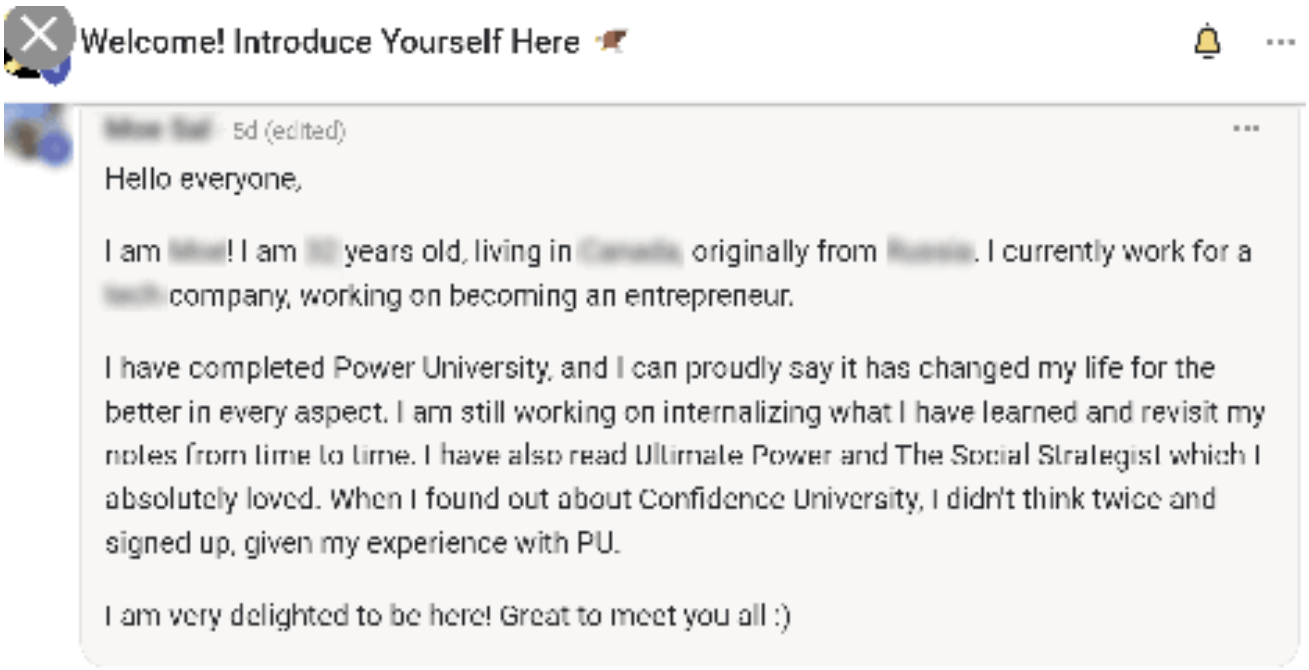
Well thank you again Lucio any tiny glimmers of competence I'm growing come from this site and the amazing resources and community you've created. It's incredible the shift from content to applied content I've seen in the last year. it really is refining soup here.

I am a little surprised that more customers are not beating down your door. I think the core challenge is that this site is so far ahead of the curve. Prospective customers don't know what they don't know.

> This site is far ahead of the curve. Prospective customers don't know what they don't know.

It's here, in the private part of the forum.
And he goes on to explain that it was the same for him when he first stumbled upon a red pill website.

From our Skool community:



Welcome! Introduce Yourself Here

5d (edited)

Hello everyone,

I am ! I am years old, living in originally from . I currently work for a company, working on becoming an entrepreneur.

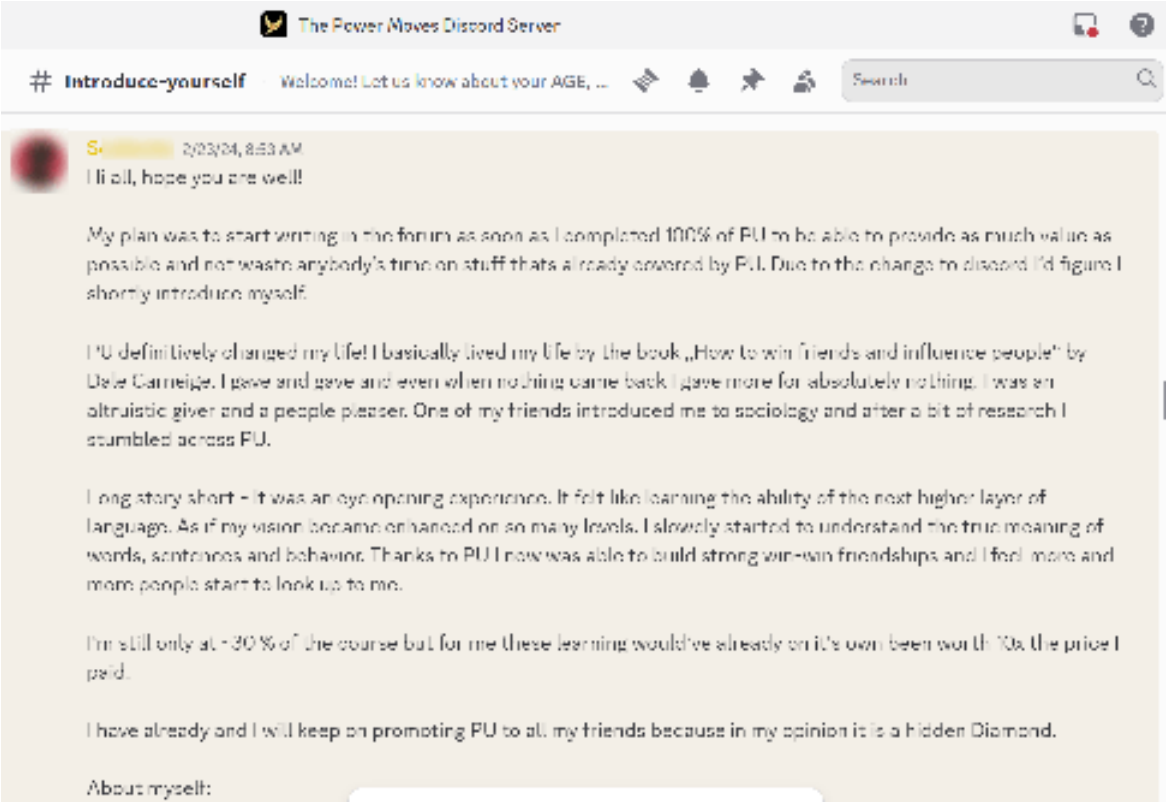
I have completed Power University, and I can proudly say it has changed my life for the better in every aspect. I am still working on internalizing what I have learned and revisit my notes from time to time. I have also read Ultimate Power and The Social Strategist which I absolutely loved. When I found out about Confidence University, I didn't think twice and signed up, given my experience with PU.

I am very delighted to be here! Great to meet you all :)

> **Alumnus**: I have completed Power University, and I can proudly say it has changed my life for the better in every aspect. I am still working on internalizing what I have learned and revisit my notes from time to time. I have also read Ultimate Power and The Social Strategist which I absolutely loved. When I found out about Confidence University, I didn't think twice and signed up, given my experience with PU.

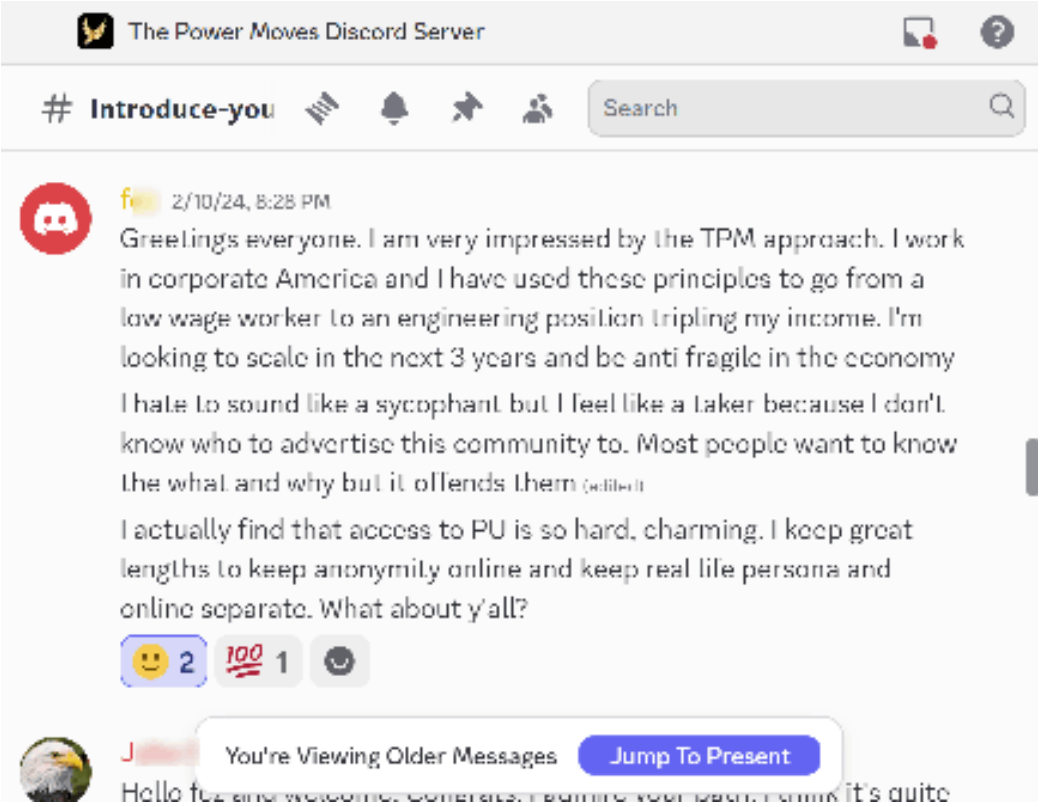
Power University Discord Reviews

These testimonials were shared on The Power Moves' former Discord server, created by alumni Power Duck and John Freeman after the public forum was discontinued. The community has since transitioned to Skool.



> My plan was to start writing in the forum as soon as I completed 100% of PU to be able to provide as much value as possible and not waste anybody's time on stuff thats already covered by PU.
>
> Due to the change to discord I'd figure I shortly introduce myself. **PU definitively changed my life!**
>
> I basically lived my life by the book „*How to win friends and influence people*" by Dale Carnegie.
>
> I gave and gave and even when nothing came back I gave more for absolutely nothing. I was an altruistic giver and a people pleaser. One of my friends introduced me to sociology and after a bit of research I stumbled across PU. Long story short – **It was an eye opening experience**.
>
> It felt like **learning the ability of the next higher layer of language. As if my vision became enhanced on so many levels.** I slowely started to understand the true meaning of words, sentences and behavior.
>
> **Thanks to PU I now was able to build strong win-win friendships and I feel more and more people start to look up to me.**
>
> I'm still only at ~30 % of the course but for me these learning would've already on it's own **been worth 10x the price I paid.**
> I have already and I will keep on promoting PU to all my friends because in my opinion it is a hidden Diamond.
>
> About myself: **********
>
> (…)
>
> *Discord Forum Introduction*

And:



> Greetings everyone. I am very impressed by the TPM approach.
>
> I work in corporate America and **I have used these principles to go from a low wage worker to an engineering position tripling my income**. I'm looking to scale in the next 3 years and be anti-fragile in the economy.
>
> I hate to sound like a sycophant but I feel like a taker because I don't know who to advertise this community to (…)
> I actually find that access to PU is so hard, charming. I keep great lengths to keep anonymity online and keep real life persona and online separate. What about y'all?
>
> *Discord Forum Introduction*

Power University Email Reviews

Below are select email testimonials from alumni, highlighting the course's unique value:

- **A Valuable Secret**

S[redacted] 5:07 AM (8 hours ago)
to The

The new login worked and not on private browsing on my iPhone.

For me this course is too valuable to ever let it have search history(that's how I usually browse).
When I log in private browsing, the page stays stuck; it doesn't move me to the power university mate.

Otherwise, it works on my browser when it's not on private mode.

> For me this course is too valuable to ever let it have search history.

Our response: Rest assured, Power University's niche focus ensures you're unlikely to encounter others with this advanced training. Moreover, the course empowers those committed to applying its principles, setting you apart in any competitive environment.

So, yeah… That's your chance:

JOIN POWER UNIVERSITY NOW

- **Groundbreaking Content**

Z[redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com> Jul 2, 2021, 9:30 PM (9 days ago)
to connect

Hi Luciano,

I know you must get this often, but I still wanted to send you a quick feedback after joining the power university.

I found your blog on Google after looking for tips on walking confidently. I was surprised to see how well the content was written and the tips you included which I didn't find mentioned anywhere else.

So I decided to join the power university right away. I was expecting good content, maybe some video analysis here and there, but in the back of my mind I also thought I would mostly read about the things I already knew (had a PUA mentor before, joined other courses, etc). Boy was I wrong.

I didn't even know what I needed to know before I signed up. I only went through one module so far but I can already see what potential this knowledge has to improve my life. Both business and my date life. And it's the first time I'm hearing about most of this stuff, even though I bought dozens of other courses and had a mentor for a year. You really seem to paint us the big picture here and how it all connects like pieces of a puzzle.

The content really is on the next level and my only regret is not coming across your blog sooner and joining your course years ago.

I'm grateful I got the chance to join at such an incredible price, I think the course is worth much, much more.

> It's the first time I'm hearing about most of this stuff, even though I bought dozens of other courses and had a mentor for a year. The course is worth much, much more.

And:

J[redacted]a... Jul 9, 2021, 9:20 PM (16 hours ago)

to The

Thank you very much, Lucio! Wow, the guide is extensive. I can't wait to read it.

I also want to thank you for creating the The Power University. It has really been an eye opener for me on so many levels. I'm only 10% in. I especially find the aspect of subtle and hidden power moves totally mind-blowing. I haven't recognized them before, in others and in myself. I have only felt the result of it, within myself; hidden agression and being too nice. And that is just so painful! I am practicing your knowledge in many of my relationships now because I want them to be better. I feel so lucky to have come across your work ❤ Thank you for teaching me the most valuable currency in life.

> Eye-opener (…) the subtle and hidden power moves totally mind-blowing (…) I feel so lucky (…) Thank you for teaching me the most valuable currency in life.

And:

Al[redacted] <c[redacted] Fri, May 31, 2019, 4:36 AM

to Connect

Hello Lucio,

I hope you are doing well. First of all, I am a massive fan of your social power course as I literally check it out everyday, even though I finished it a while ago. It gives me strength and clarity while also being entertaining. It keeps me from going back to my shy/defensive (sometimes aggressive and impulsive) behaviour. What I was curious to find out about you: are you a Game of Thrones fan?

Note: The course has improved significantly since this review, offering even greater value today.

And:

h[redacted] Fri, Oct 1, 3:26 PM

to The

Hello Lucio,

Hope you're keeping well!

I have to say the content you have put together in the power university has been truly eye-opening and life changing for me. I was simply socially oblivious before coming across your course. As a result I have basically sprinted through all the content in a matter of a few weeks! Absolutely awesome job on putting all of the content together!

And:

D[redacted]g... Jul 6, 2020, 1:54 PM (4 days ago)

to connect

Lucio,

I just entered the power university, what is now yesterday.

I just wanted to say, I had my reservations before signing up. But, with the intro sessions done and completing module 1 of part 1, I learned more about the power dynamics that have happened in my own relationships than I had... ever...

Which is both awesome and disturbing. I'm glad I found your site - I searched for best books in the manosphere.

And:

[redacted] May 20, 2020, 3:35 PM (3 days ago)

to The

Hey Lucio,

Just wanna say Power University (great updated name!) is AMAZING!

Even the welcome message talking about "thank you" already helps me avoid unnecessarily owning my power, which is a habit I used to have.

Still learning Module 1, so can't wait for my mind-blowing stuff in coming weeks!

And:

Wow, thanks! Inbox ×

[redacted]za <[redacted]ail.com> Apr 22, 2024, 10:55 AM (6 days ag
to connect

Lucio, I meant to stop by to say a big THANK YOU.

I have just completed the entire Power University courses - quite a few months all my self-improvement was dedicated to this and nothing else.

This is a remarkable resource! Some might point out there are rough edges here and there, but I have never ever seen such a comprehensive guide to, well, living really. Nor one I would find so influential.

I am taking a break now to stop, ponder, internalize and course-correct.

> I have never ever seen such a comprehensive
> guide to, well, living really. Nor one I would find so influential.

And:

Ed[redacted] Jun 9, 2020, 1:13 PM (1 day ago)
to The

The course is amazing. Mind blowing stuff. I'm getting a ton out of it. Wish I had this 30 years ago.

I do have one question: Sometimes when I really "dail" into the material, I hit a paywall that says that I don't have the right level of access for that material and I need to upgrade.

> Mind-blowing stuff. I'm getting a ton out of it.

Note: We no longer use a paywall, making access to Power University's content more seamless.

And:

Social Power - thank you Inbox ×

Sat, May 7, 6:23 PM (6 days ago)

to connect

Hello Lucia!

The course you have created and are continuing to expand on is by far the best self help I've ever come across, and it for sure has changed my life for the better.

> It's by far the best self-help I've ever come across.

Note: The course was previously called "Social Power," as reflected in the subject line.

And:

The Power Moves Thu, May 7, 12:15 PM (3 days ago)

Alright, perfect, it's possible the automated email went into the spam folder, but it's not an issue. I ca...

7:49 AM (7 hours ago)

to The

I'm blown away by the value of your course. I'm not even at chapter 2 yet.

> I'm blown away by the value of your course. I'm not even at chapter 2 yet.

And:

[image]

And:

[image]

And:

[image]

> The Power University is **literally changing my life** (…) each small thing I learn about social dynamics makes me realize how oblivious I was. **More than one person came to tell me that I'm different somehow, for the better**. This was, by far, the best investment.

And:

[image]

> I have not finished going through the entirety of PU but I have already benefited tremendously from the knowledge and wisdom included.
>
> I have made a quantic leap in power awareness (not surprisingly as I didn't even know the concept before) and I have improved very significantly in terms of coming across as more powerful and less vulnerable.
>
> Now the material is quite long so I have not finished it yet but I am already planning to go through it a second time.
>
> I think it's the best material in terms of self development I have come across so far, at least for my personality type (clueless in terms of power interaction, too humble publicly and frankly too submissive).
>
> Thanks for the tips for keeping up with the learning.
>
> Feel free to use my email to advertise to potential customers. It is a sincere feedback.
>
> PS: I completely agree to the "even if it takes a year, it will be beneficial". In fact, I think one should not hurry as the material is quite dense and there is a lot of wisdom in there. I cannot imagine how long it must have take you to create this content!
>
> *T.S., happy PU customer*

And:

[image]

> I completed the survey, and I wanted to also reply to tell you **I have found Power University to be the single best investment I have ever made in myself**. I am still fairly new to the program, and of course social skills involve life-long learning, so there is room for even more improvement than what I indicated on the survey. If there is anywhere you would like me to express my praise for the program more publicly, just let me know and I would be happy to do that.

For insights on competing programs, explore this thread:

- **What to learn after Power University**

Or start your journey with a proven program:

JOIN POWER UNIVERSITY

Power University Video Reviews

Watch Lucio Buffalmano personally discuss these reviews:

Below are video testimonials, some narrated by professional actors to preserve alumni anonymity:

> **Power University is amazing**. It **already helps me to unnecessarily lower my power**. It gives me strength and clarity, and **keeps me from going back to my shy and defensive behavior**.
>
> – *Kevin S.*

> I was expecting good content, but I also thought I was going to read things I already knew. Boy, I was wrong. **It's the first time I'm hearing about most of this stuff**, even though I bought dozens of other courses and had a mentor for a year. I only went through module 1 but **I can already see what potential this knowledge has to improve my life**. Power University paints the big picture and connects the pieces of the puzzle. I think **the course is worth much, much more**.
>
> *– Zeus F.*

> **I'm completely blown away by the material of this course**. I have an elite background, first class education, and yet I didn't have a clue about this stuff. **This material is so powerful that I couldn't help but feel angry that I had been kept in the dark**.
>
> *– Anthony R.*

> I discovered that I was sending lots of submissive signals (…) and giving my power away. And if I'm unconsciously communicating that I don't deserve respect, why should other people bother. (…) **A necessary wake-up call for me, and now I can correct course**. (…) I highly recommend this course.
>
> *– Leon*

Full disclosure on video reviews:
We respect that some of our students wish to remain anonymous.
So we hired a professional to read some. The speaker's gender, race, and skin color are random.
To keep the videos short and meaningful we sometimes cut the original (video) reviews, while preserving the meaning.

Customer Service Excellence

At The Power Moves, our mission is to deliver exceptional value to our students, extending to our customer service. We are committed to:

- Being readily available to assist.
- Providing effective, tailored solutions.
- Responding promptly to inquiries.

Here are examples of our customer service feedback:

[image]
This feedback is from one of our earliest customers, and our service has only improved since.

[image]

> Thank you very much for the amazing customer service. Not only did you show great respect, but you also understood my situation and offered me alternatives so I could enjoy the services that TPM has to offer.
> I'm looking forward to acquiring more products from TPM in the future.
>
> Best regards,
> XXX

> P.S:
> Feel free to put that review in the TPM website or in any other social media that you prefer. I´ll refer my friends and family to this website.
>
> *M.A., Happy PU customer*

[image]

> Amazing, thanks for the quick answers and solving the issue so fast. I appreciate.
>
> *R., Happy PU customer*

[image]

> As an old-time subscriber, on reaching out to the support team, **I did get a 6 months extension in less than half an hour – so very thankful** for the quick turn around.
>
> *J LES, Happy PU customer (public feedback)*

Power University Negative Reviews

The Power Moves prioritizes substance over flashy marketing, focusing on delivering a high-quality, evidence-based curriculum. We also value transparency by openly sharing both positive and negative feedback.

This alumnus was looking for something shorter:

[image]
Power University is a transformative program that requires effort and commitment to yield results. Change demands action, and we encourage students to engage fully with the material.

We promptly refunded this alumnus, recognizing the course wasn't the right fit for their expectations.

Removed from the program

See the discussion here.

One alumnus described their experience as "the worst" after being removed from the program and refunded.

While we respect their perspective, their strong emotional response underscores the value many find in Power University. The incident also reflects our commitment to maintaining a positive learning environment.

[image]
This feedback confirms our pricing transparency: as Power University's quality has increased significantly, so has its value, justifying price adjustments over time. The course also includes lessons on handling challenging situations, such as managing difficult customers, enhancing its practical applicability.

Independent Author's Endorsement

Alexander, an early Power University student, shares his perspective on influential thought leaders:

[image]
You can see that review here.

Power University, crafted by Lucio Buffalmano, offers a uniquely comprehensive and actionable approach to mastering social dynamics, career strategies, and personal empowerment. Backed by rigorous research and real-world testimonials, it stands as a leading resource for those committed to personal growth.

JOIN POWER UNIVERSITY NOW

Learned Optimism: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Learned Optimism is a positive psychology book. Martin Seligman, the author, explains the difference between optimists and pessimists is in thought patterns, and he teaches how we can become more optimists or, when the situation demands it, how we can strategically think more like pessimists.

Contents

- Key Insights
- 3 Causes of Rampant Depressions in The West
- Optimists VS Pessimists: How They Think Differently
- Measuring Your Optimism Score
- Too Optimistic VS Too Pessimistic: What They Mean For You
- You Can Choose To Think More Optimistically or Pessimistically
- Optimism As Personal Power
- Optimism Is An Antidote Against Failure, & The Trait of Resilience
- Depression, Its Causes: & How to Cure It
- Rumination: The Enabler of Depression
- The 5 Steps of Cognitive Therapy
- Optimism Is The Key Ingredient for Tenacity
- When Pessimism is Good
- A Brief History of Psychology
- Real-Life Applications
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- Criticism
- PROS
- Review

Key Insights

- Optimists leader longer, healthier, and happier lives
- Optimists achieve more, sell more, win more at sports and win far more political elections
- Optimists and pessimists have distinct explanatory styles around their live's failures and wins
- You can learn to become more of an optimist by learning how to change the way you think (and you can also choose to strategically think more like a pessimist)

About The Author

About the Author: Martin Seligman is an American psychologist and researcher. He is a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Seligman has been the president of the American Psychological Association (APA), and he is one of the founders and main proponents of "Positive Psychology". He is also the author of a tell-all biography.

3 Causes of Rampant Depressions in The West

Martin Seligman says that the West is struggling with the highest rates of depression that the world has ever seen.

In this opinion, the root causes are three:

1. **Individualism**: in a society where "I" and personal success matter the most, failing to achieve "success" leads to depression
2. **Collapse of social networks**: personal failures used to be buffered by strong social networks in the past, comprising our families, our nation, our churches, and our communities. But those are disappearing, leaving the individuals lonelier and lonelier
3. **Self-esteem movement**: Roy Baumeister proved that it's high self-esteem that leads to violence, not low self-esteem. Boosting self-esteem without matching skills creates issues, says Seligman

So if boosting self-esteem is a cause of depression and problems, what should one do?

Well, the answer lies in boosting not self-esteem, but optimism.
And that's what "Learned Optimism" is all about: teaching optimism, and how to become more optimisms.

Optimists VS Pessimists: How They Think Differently

Optimists and pessimists think differently along 3 crucial variables:

1. **Time / Permanence:** optimists see loss and rejection as temporary; pessimists see them as permanent
2. **Specificity / Pervasiveness:** optimists see loss and rejection as specific; pessimists see them as universal and as big general rejection to their whole work or personality
3. **Personal / External** optimists see loss and rejection as a consequence of the circumstances; pessimists take the blame on themselves and sees loss or rejection as a rejection of the self

Helplessness: helplessness is the ultimate state of pessimism, and it's the belief that no matter what you do, it will be useless. People in a state of helplessness become apathetic and take no action, *including in situations in which they could change their environment*.

Says Seligman, whom I paraphrase here for brevity:

> The defining characteristic of pessimists is that they tend to believe bad events will last a long time, will undermine everything they do, and are their own fault.
> The optimists think about misfortune in the opposite way. Defeat is just a temporary setback, confined to this one case, and that it's not their fault: Circumstances, bad luck, or other people brought it about.

Measuring Your Optimism Score

Usually, you will have a good feeling whether you're optimist or pessimist.

If not, there are several different methods to find out whether you're an optimist or a pessimist.

Another method, probably more accurate, is to measure yourself over the course of a few days.

You will record your "ABC", such as:

- **Adversity**: what happened
- **Belief**: what you told yourself, how you interpret the event (first hint: they are not facts, just your own, often too negative interpretation)
- **Consequences**: how you felt, what you tell yourself, and what you did

Example:

- **Adversity**: you ate a cookie during your “no-sugar” diet
- **Belief**: you tell yourself “I just blew my diet”, or “I suck”, or “I can’t stick to things”
- **Consequence**: I felt a loser, and I ended up eating even more cookies

The ABC will also help you to know yourself better and to learn to catch your own thoughts, including the fleeting ones, as they appear daily.
This exercise will provide you with the self-awareness necessary for more effectively changing your thought patterns.

Too Optimistic VS Too Pessimistic: What They Mean For You

Can there be such a thing as “too much optimism”?

Yes.

From the quick description above, you can already see that too much optimism, or what Seligman calls “blind optimism”, can be a drag to true growth.
If you always refuse to take the blame, you will never fix your mistakes and you will never grow.

But as we will see later, one can embrace optimism without sacrificing true growth and development.

Too much pessimism, on the other hand, is overall bad for you.
I paraphrase Seligman for brevity:

> Hudiciously employed, mild pessimism has its uses.
> But if we habitually believe that misfortune is our fault, is enduring, and will undermine everything we do, more of it will befall us than if we believe otherwise.
> I am also convinced that if we are in the grip of this view, we will get depressed easily, we will accomplish less than our potential, and we will even get physically sick more often. Pessimistic prophecies are self-fulfilling

In short: mild pessimism deployed strategically can help us grow.
But heavy doses of pessimism spread throughout our lives will only make us sadder, and less effective.

You Can *Choose* To Think More Optimistically or Pessimistically

Habits of thoughts must not be either-or.

You don’t have to necessarily always think like a pessimist, or like an optimist.

If you are generally pessimistic, then you can start adopting the thought patterns of an optimist.
And you can choose to strategically think more like a pessimist when evaluating true risk becomes crucial for intelligent decision-making.

Optimism As Personal Power

Remember that the ultimate state of pessimism is one where you don’t believe any of your actions matter?

Well, when you have that type of mindset, you feel powerless.
On the other hand, when you optimistically think that your actions *do* matter, you feel more in power.

However, you also are more powerful for the simple fact of taking more action.
Because there are events in which you have no control whatsoever. And some in which you have 100% control. But there are a lot of events over which you have a limited amount of control. When you seek to control those variables, your personal power increases, and you exert more influence over your environment.

Says Seligman:

> Many things in life are beyond our control (…) But there is a vast, unclaimed territory of actions over which we can take control—or cede control to others or to fate.
> The way we think about this realm of life can actually diminish or enlarge the control we have over it.

When you think optimistically, you are more likely to influence the world and get what you want, and that's the definition of power.

Optimism Is An Antidote Against Failure, & The Trait of Resilience

How you explain events matters a lot.

It matters because, says Seligman, a failure makes everyone at least momentarily helpless.

But to the optimist, it's a momentary failure, and "tomorrow it's another day".
For the pessimist, the failure lingers, and it prevents them from going forward and trying again.

- **Permanence**: it determines for how long a person stops trying
- **Pervasiveness**: it determines what areas of one's life the failure will affect
- **Personalization**: people who blame themselves will have lower self-esteem, while people who blame external events have a resilient self-esteem in the face of failures

Hope depends on permanence and pervasiveness, and they are the most important dimensions because they determine whether or not you will try again.
Says Seligman:

> Finding temporary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope. Finding permanent and universal causes for misfortune is the practice of despair.

Depression, Its Causes: & How to Cure It

Seligman starts with a quick history of depression:

How Depression Was Understood & Cured

Historically, depression was explained in just to ways: psychoanalytic, and biomedical.

The Freudian / psychoanalytic had little evidence and it's been proven wrong.
The biomedical is partly true: some depressions are the consequences of mental imbalances and poor functioning brains and are, to some extent, inherited. The typical cures of drugs and electroconvulsive therapy ("shock treatment") are quick and moderately effective.

The problem with the biomedical explanations is that it generalizes from a small number of hard-core, inherited patients, to the general population of depressed individuals who might not even need any external help or drugs.

Says Seligman:

> The antidepressant drugs are as good an example of our overmedicated society as the use of tranquilizers to bring peace of mind or hallucinogens to see beauty.

Curing Depression Through Learned Optimism

Depression and learned helplessness are very similar, says Seligman.

And, for most people, depression is not a matter of genes, but a consequence of thought patterns.

The two most important ones being:

1. **Learned helplessness**: it's the giving up based on the belief that you have no power to change anything around you. Uncontrollable events, failures, and bad explanatory styles after failures cause learned helplessness
2. **Explanatory styles**: it's the manner in which you habitually explain to yourself why events happen, and it includes the three dimensions we discussed above (time, specificity, personal agency)

Says Seligman:

> A failure or a defeat can teach you that you are now helpless, but learned helplessness will produce only momentary symptoms of depression—unless you have a pessimistic explanatory style. If you do, then failure and defeat can throw you into a full-blown depression. On the other hand, if your explanatory style is optimistic, your depression will be halted.
> (…)
> Learned helplessness becomes full-blown depression when the person who fails is a pessimist.

You can cure helplessness when you show people that their actions matter, and if you teach them to think differently about their failures.
To "inoculate" against learned helplessness, you must teach people their actions can make a difference.

Similarly, you can cure depression by changing your thinking, which is what Aaron Beck did with cognitive behavioral therapy.
Cognitive therapy, says Seligman, cures depression patients by making them more optimistic.
And once they learn to change their own thought patterns, depressive patients also see fewer relapses, because they learn to cure themselves.

Rumination: The Enabler of Depression

Rumination, or mulling over bad events, is an enabler for depression.

If someone has pessimistic explanatory styles but is action-oriented and does not ruminate, he will avoid depression.
It's when bad explanatory styles combine with rumination, that depression sets in.

Here is how the chain of events unfolds:

1. There is a threat or failure
2. You think you are helpless to do anything about it
3. You see the threat's cause as permanent, pervasive, and personal
4. Consequently, you expect to be helpless in the future, and in many situations
5. You get depressed

The more you are inclined to ruminate, the more you repeat this cycle.
Brooding, or thinking how bad things are, often starts this sequence.

Says Seligman:

> Changing either rumination or pessimism helps relieve depression. Changing both helps the most.

Why Women Are More Depressed

Women are twice as likely to be depressed than men are because they tend to act less, and think more about

problems (rumination).

Says Seligman:

> Men tend to act rather than reflect, but women tend to contemplate their depression, mulling it over and over, trying to analyze it and determine its source. Psychologists call this process of obsessive analysis rumination.

Ruminator by itself only means that people mull over bad events.
But a ruminator can be either optimistic, or pessimistic. It's the pessimistic ones that are in trouble.

The 5 Steps of Cognitive Therapy

1. **Learn to recognize the automatic thoughts** popping in your mind when you feel down. These can be automatic phrases or sentences you repeat so often that can go almost unnoticed (and unchallenged)
2. **Learn to dispute the automatic thoughts** by:
    1. **Finding contrary evidence**: learned optimism, contrary to positive thinking, is grounded in reality. So you should look for evidence contrary to your current negative thoughts and conclusions. The good news is that reactions to negative events are most often overreactions, so most of the times you will have facts and data on your side
    2. **Finding Alternative explanation**: most events have many causes. Pessimists latch onto the nastiest of those possible causes, the ones that paint them in the worst possible light and the ones that pain them the most. By looking at *all* the causes, you get both a more realistic picture, and a less pessimistic one. You can -and probably should- also focus on the causes that you can change, so that you can already start thinking about solutions
    3. **Distract yourself**: you learn how to distract yourself from depressing thoughts and avoid rumination. One simple and neat technique, especially good when you need to focus, is to put off. You can learn to control not only what you think, but when you think it.
    4. **Question the depression-sowing assumptions**: "I can't live without love" or "unless everything I do is perfect, I'm a failure." are the type of premises that set you up for depression. Just as you can change your explanatory styles from pessimistic to optimistic, you can also choose a new set of more human premises to live by

Optimism Is The Key Ingredient for Tenacity

Yes, optimists achieve more.

Through a series of studies of insurance salespeople at Metropolitan Life, Seligman found out that that the people who performed best were the optimists.

He also found out using CAVE technique analysis of previous statements, that optimistic sports team in both NBA and baseball bounce back more easily from previous defeats and, ultimately, win more.
The same results held true for swimmers and, importantly, **optimist politicians also win more elections**.

Optimism also intersects with a growth mindset as researched by Carol Dweck.
With a growth mindset, people believe they can learn and improve through hard work.

For more on how optimism helps you succeed in your career, read.

When Pessimism is Good

Alright, we got it:

It's better to be an optimist.

But in the beginning, we also said that sometimes “blind optimism” can stunt your growth, and that sometimes pessimism is either warranted, or help you make better decisions.

Says Seligman:

> Pessimism may support the realism we so often need.
> (…)
> Sometimes we need to cut our losses and invest elsewhere rather than find reasons to hold on.
> And in some situations—the cockpit of an airliner, for example—what’s needed is not an upbeat view but a mercilessly realistic one.

In sum, it’s great to become an optimist, but **it’s best of all to be able to *choose* when to be an optimist and when to be a pessimist**.

So, when should you be a pessimist, and when should you be an optimist?
Seligman says it depends on what you’re trying to accomplish.

Optimism is green, pessimism is red:

Use optimism:

- When the costs of failure are low
  - Making one more
  - Approaching or not approaching someone
- When you need to a stick to a habit, but you failed in a single instance
- In achievement situations such as selling, writing, winning a game or promotion
- When you want to feel better, or are struggling with depression
- If it’s an ongoing issue you can’t fix
- If you want to lead and inspire others

Use pessimism:

- When the costs of failures are high
  - Pilots in the cockpit
  - Tipsy and deciding whether to drive or not
  - Frustrated partner deciding whether to start an affair or not
- You need to plan for a risky or uncertain feature

And, out of emotional intelligence, avoid going too high in optimism when you are comforting or consoling someone (they need to vent first).

A Brief History of Psychology

“Learned Optimism” is a wonderful text for students of psychology as it also provides an overview of the history of psychology.

- **Humans without agency**: Up until the 1960s psychology saw humans as either pushed by internal drives (Freudians), or pulled by external events (Skinner behavioralists and Clark Hull ethologists)
- **1965, the emergence of self-direction**: things began to change in 1965, and four different development helped psychology move beyond Freudian psychoanalysis and Skinner’s behaviorism
  1. **Chomsky and generative language**: Noam Chomsky argued that language and human behavior could originate not from previous reinforcement, but internally. New sentences can be understood and drive new

action without any previous

2. **Jean Piaget and children's development**: Jean Piaget showed that we can study how children develop, and what and how they learn will shape their development
3. **Cognitive Psychology**: with the publication of Ulric Neisser's Cognitive Psychology the world started moving towards the working of the inner mind (the initial analogy was with computers as a model, later criticized by evolutionary psychology, see Miller, 2000)
4. **Behavioral psychology wake up calls**: researchers found out that drives and needs couldn't by themselves explain all animal and human behavior, and started to invoke cognitions -or thoughts- to explain complex behavior

Real-Life Applications

The real-life applications of "Learned Optimism" are life-changing.

- **Learn to switch between optimism and strategic pessimism**

You can decide to think more strategically and focus on the dangers when you need to reach critically important decisions, or think more like an optimist when you need to persevere and/or be happy.

This is a hugely empowering tool to put in your arsenal.

More Wisdom

- **Women are both sadder and happier than men**: being more emotionally labile (Seligman's own words), women experience both higher highs and lower lows
- **Average optimistic scores are OK for normal times**: if you score in the average range, it's OK for normal times. But in crises and hardships, it might not be enough

Quotes

On Freud's theories of depression:

> Freud's speculations were built on very little observation and a very free use of imagination.

On Albert Ellis and his approach to revolutionizing psychology and psychiatry:

> Ellis, invited to speak, proposed some such title as "Masturbate Now" for his presentation. The president of Princeton, usually a man of unflappable fairness, had him disinvited.

On Albert Ellis and the results he got with early cognitive behavior therapy, which back then was revolutionary:

> He would demand that his patients stop thinking wrong and start thinking right. Surprisingly, most of his patients got better. Ellis successfully challenged the hallowed belief that mental illness is an enormously intricate, even mysterious phenomenon.

My Note: Albert Ellis uses REBT, and Ellis himself seemed adamt to stress the differences between the two. Also read "How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything".

On self-development as a self-fulfilling prophecy:

> The belief in self-improvement is a prophecy just as self-fulfilling as the old belief that character could not be changed.

Criticism

I loved “Learned Optimism”, so consider the following more like small issues on an overall seminal book:

1. Academia Power Dynamics (& Seligman Bellicose Prose)

Research should be the tool with which people get closer to the truth.

The ideal scientist should seek not to win, but to find out the truth.
And, potentially, how to apply the findings of that research to improve people’s lives.

Of course, reality is much different.
And the reality is a world where scientists fight for power and fame. Fighting to defend “their own” theories, trying to silence dissenters, and clinging to theories that are being proven false to maintain status and power -and out good old cognitive dissonance-.

From one side, I am grateful Seligman provides us with this account, so that people can open their eyes.
On the other hand, I am saddened Seligman doesn’t always show a higher road.
He says:

> The gauntlet was thrown down to learning theorists the world over.
> Here were two callow graduate students telling the great B. F. Skinner, guru of behaviorism, and all his disciples that they were wrong in their most basic premise. The behaviorists did not blithely surrender.

And then he goes on telling us how the behaviorist fought not for truth, but to prove they were “right”.

And he describes their “counterattack plans”:

> That is where things stood in 1965 when we prepared our counterattack against the behaviorists.
> (…)
> And to drive the behaviorists into full retreat

The description of this internal warfare is unsavory. Seligman would have done better if he had framed his position as “*for* truth”, instead of “*against* these other guys”.

It’s a pity that is not the case, since Seligman himself says:

> I’ve never had much use for the tendency among psychologists to shun criticism.
> It’s a longstanding tradition acquired from the field of psychiatry, with its medical authoritarianism (…) going back at least to Freud, research psychiatry has been dominated by a handful of despots who treat dissenters like invading barbarians usurping their domain. One critical word from a young disciple and he was banished.
> I’ve preferred the humanistic tradition. To the scientists of the Renaissance, your critic was really your ally, helping you advance upon reality.

True.
But it didn’t always feel like it.
I think one of Seligman’s error was to borrow so many words and expressions from military campaigns, which give readers the feeling he also feels the same way -and that’s an issue with the English language, in general-.

2. Nationalistic beyond what’s expected from a scientist

Says Seligman:

> If this epidemic continues, I believe that **America’s place in the world will be in jeopardy**. America will lose

> its economic place to less pessimistic nations than ours, and this pessimism will sap our will to bring about social justice in our own country.

Mr. Seligman, science belongs to the people.
The idea that research should be used to prop up international power orders is not a mindset deserving of a true scientist.

Update:

I later read Seligman's "The Circuit of Hope", which is basically Seligman's autobiography.
Seligman dedicates plenty of space to criticize the "left-wing psychologists who took over APA", and who "attacked him for being an ultra-nationalist".

3. Sometimes self-congratulatory

It's a normal human need to be recognized for one's own work.
Some scientists hide it better than others, while others are more open about self-promotion.
Seligman seems to be more part of the latter category.

He often lavishes praises on his students, which is nice.
And sometimes he likes to take a little bit of that credit as well, which is OK.

Some other times, it might feel as if he was (unwittingly) devaluing others.

For example, of the first time he was introduced to experiments on dogs and electric shocks, he says he had already understood the concept of learned helplessness:

> As I listened to Overmier and then looked at the whimpering dogs, I realized that something much more significant had already occurred than any result the transfer experiment might produce: Accidentally, during the early part of the experiment, the dogs must have been taught to be helpless.

It might be.
But that was just a hunch, and everyone has hunches.
When Seligman describes the situation the way he did, he indirectly devalues professor Solemon and Overmier, who now might come across as very un-bright researchers for missing the obvious link.

This is a form of social climbing which I call "social climbing in absentia".

It's the same attitude I find in Steven Pinker (see the criticism of "Enlightened Now" and "How the Mind Works").

4. Some Unneeded Evolutionary Psychology & Sociological Analysis

Seligman spends several pages investigating why evolution has endowed with pessimism at all.

And, later, why our society is more pessimistic than it's ever been.

Some of those reflections were good, and Seligman makes great points.
Some others felt a bit more random, and even propagandist.

Says Seligman:

> More "primitive" societies go out of their way to nurture the individual when loss occurs, and thus prevent helplessness from becoming hopelessness.
> (…) When a Kaluli's pig runs away and he displays his grief over the loss, the tribe will give him another pig. Loss is recompensed by the group, and helplessness does not escalate into hopelessness.

This is nonsense.

It sounds like Seligman might be on the left-wing of the political spectrum. And even if he isn't, he fell for the typical noble savage idealism that many left-wing folks fall prey to.
The truth is that primitive societies can be as ruthless and selfish as our modern societies are. Often more, since they're fighting for their lives and have little surplus (see Pinker, 2018).

Overall, I thought the book could have been even better without those off-topics analyses. Those theses, deprived of evidence, only took some authority away.

5. Are Pessimists Wiser... Or Not?

In "*Authentic Happiness*" Seligman says that it might not true that pessimists might be wiser, after all.

But here he said that:

> There is considerable evidence that depressed people, though sadder, are wiser.
> (…)
> These have been the consistent findings over the last decade.
> (…)
> Overall, then, there is clear evidence that nondepressed people distort reality in a self-serving direction and depressed people tend to see reality accurately.

So, which one is which?
I personally feel like pessimists are more realistic, but probably not as much as the evidence showed when "Learned Optimism" was written.

6. Could be briefer

"Learned Optimism" is a monument to not only Positive Psychology but to psychology in general.
But it could have been better edited, briefer, and avoided many repetitions.

PROS

- **Life-changing wisdom**

As I've already said, this is life-changing information.

- **Learn how academia really works**

Martin Seligman is very open about the true power dynamics that govern academia.

You might be disappointed at how science truly advances behind the curtains (see criticism above).
But you will certainly be more knowledgeable -and empowered- because of it.

Review

"Learned Optimism"… What a monument to personal empowerment.

Absolutely recommended.
Learning self-help from actual scientists is far better than learning it from self-help gurus.

And I must say this *in spite* I don't personally like the author, at least as he comes across from his own writing.

Note: Avoid the audiobook!
The audiobook is only a *very* shortened version and most of the narration goes to read out loud the exercises.
This summary you're reading here goes deeper than the whole audiobook, so if you want more, go for the ebook or

paper book.

Check the:

- **Best psychology books**

9 Best Positive Psychology Books

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

From all I have read so far, these are the best positive psychology books available.

This is also one of the most life-changing book lists if you are interested in being happy.

And yes, the above clarifying statement is a persuasion gimmick, since pretty much everyone wants to be happy.

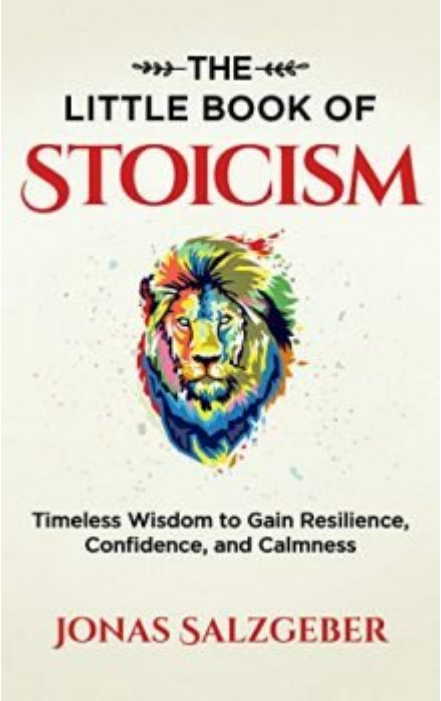
Luckily, positive psychology uses no gimmicks, and it can teach you how to be happier and more fulfilled. And while being based on solid science and research.

So let's start:

Contents

- 9. The Little Book of Stoicism
- 8. The Happiness Project
- 7. Flow
- 6. Delivering Happiness
- 4. Man's Search for Meaning
- 4. Authentic Happiness
- 3. The Happiness Advantage
- 2. How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable
- 1. Learned Optimism
- Positive Psychology: Overview

9. The Little Book of Stoicism



By Jonas Salzgeber
Summary | Audiobook

Yes, this is about stoicism.

So, technically, not a “positive psychology book”.
But Jonas Salzgeber hits the nail on the head when he says that much of positive psychology repeats the same things that stoicism embraced more than 2.000 years ago.

This is not to say that positive psychology simply copied, and neither it is to say that positive psychology added no value.
Positive psychology scientifically tested many of the stoics teachings and *proved* them right. And it codified that knowledge in actionable steps, turning them into therapies against depression, or into tools for maximum performance -or just plain happiness and optimism-.

Plus, as you might have noticed, I’m a science wonk, so no bashing of positive psychology from me.

All I’m saying is that you can also learn much of positive psychology from the greats of the past.
Plus you can learn some history, and how those greats deployed stoicism. Like Marcus Aurelius, who as the emperor of Rome never stopped seeking personal self-development.
I find it invigorating and almost magical, that you can use the same tools that the greatest emperors and philosophers of the past used in the old days, and repeat similar great feats in the present.

> Quote: Zeno (founder of Stoicism) is our friend. But truth is an even greater friend.

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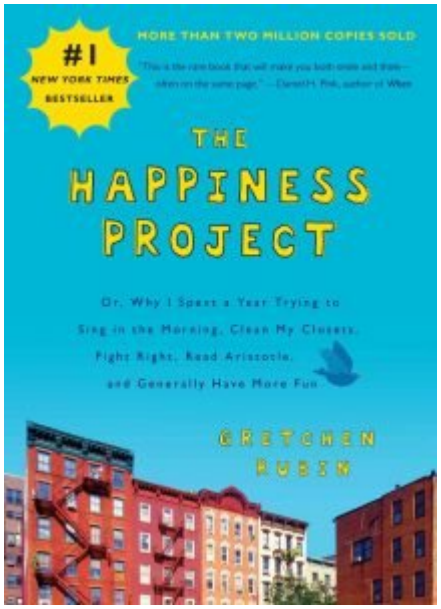
8. The Happiness Project



By Gretchen Rubin
Summary | Audiobook

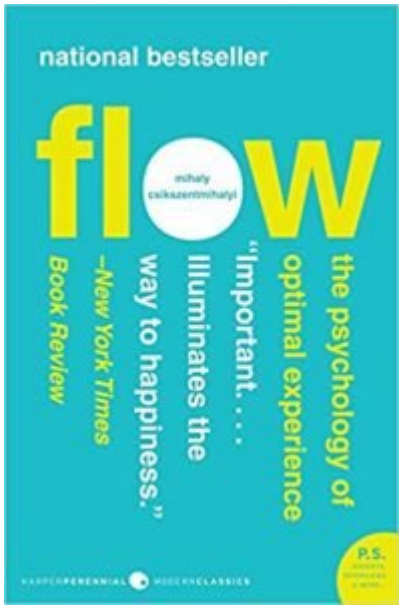
This is a different book than all the rest.

Instead of seeking to show you what happiness or fulfillment is all about, Gretchen Rubin tries to live it in her life. She chronicles the story of how she implements one new concept every month and tries to live it out as she goes by her normal life of an urban mother in New York.

I found “The Happiness Project” to be at the same time entertaining, funny, and instructive.

> Quote: The belief that unhappiness is selfless and happiness is selfish is misguided. It’s more selfless to act happy.

7. Flow



By Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
Summary | Ebook

"Flow" might as well be the first book of positive psychology.

And its author, Csikszentmihalyi, is as legendary as his surname is inscrutable -I must have written his name 20 times on this website and not even once was I able to do it without checking it on Google-.

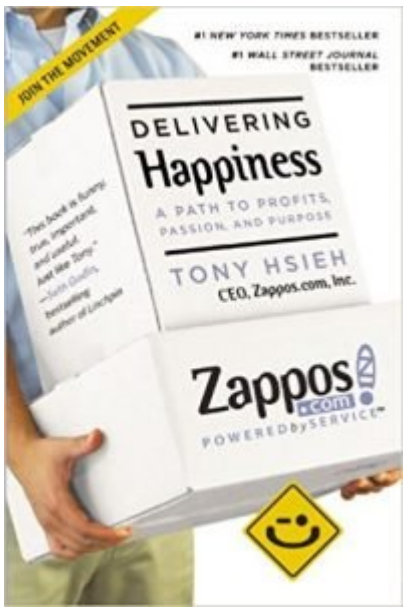
Martin Seligman, one who knows a thing or two about positive psychology, described Csikszentmihalyi as the world's leading researcher on positive psychology -plus admitted to being nervous the first time he met Csikszentmihalyi-.

Truth to be told, I didn't find "Flow" to be particularly enlightening when it comes to general happiness.
It's not that it's not useful, but I find it hard to see how flow by itself could change most people's lives.
As a state, flow is very circumscribed to certain types of activities. So you probably can't build your life around "flow".

Still, "Flow" remains a staple of positive psychology.

> Quote: Most enjoyable activities are not natural; they demand an effort that initially one is reluctant to make. But once the interaction starts to provide feedback to the person's skills, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding.

6. Delivering Happiness



By Tony Hsieh
Summary | Audiobook

OK, we got it.
Positive psychology can make you happier, more optimistic, and more personally successful.

But could it make your business also better?

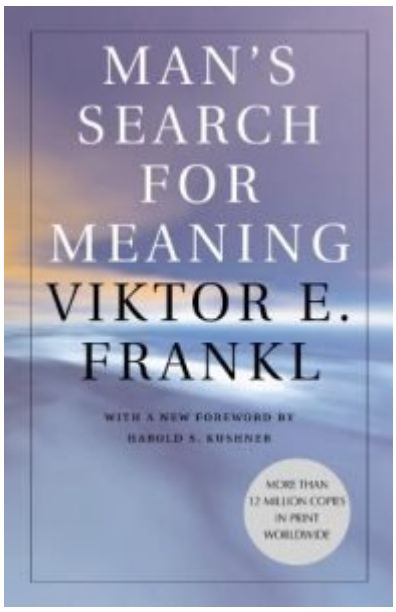
Well, Tony Hsieh tried to do just that.
He engineered his company to make both employees and customers happier. Happiness was one of his goals and KPIs.

And it turned out quite well for him.
An 800+ million exit, probably more than one billion in today's money, is nothing to scoff at.

Albeit, as positive psychology proves and as Hsieh himself says, money won't buy you happiness.

> Quote: Money alone isn't enough to bring happiness . . . happiness [is] when you're actually truly ok with losing everything you have.

4. Man's Search for Meaning



By Viktor Frankl
Summary | Audiobook

What can concentration camps teach us about human resilience, optimism, and happiness?

A lot.
It's when life is at its most difficult, that positive psychology has the most to teach.
And when you know you can be OK at your worst, you know you that you have reached ultimate control, and ultimate power. Or, simply ultimate life enjoyment.

> Quote: Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

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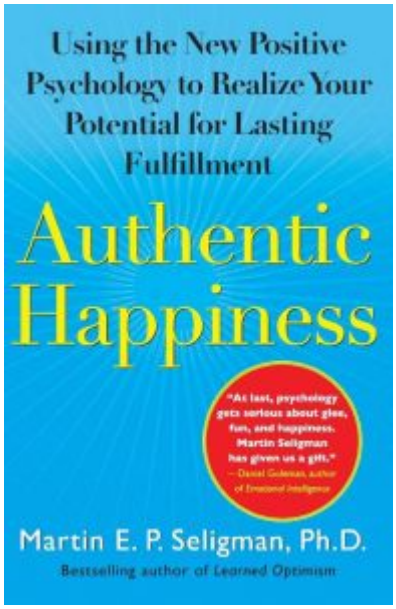
4. Authentic Happiness



By Martin Seligman
Summary | Audiobook

Martin Seligman pioneered the research on learned helplessness.
From there, and thanks to an initially harrowing feedback from John Teasdale, he branched out to explanatory styles, fighting depression, and “learning optimism”.

In “Authentic Happiness” Seligman goes wider than optimism or even just “happiness”.
He focuses on meaningful lives and full lives. “Full lives” include a deeper meaning for that life, working while leveraging one’s strengths and skills, and the enjoyment of pleasures.

If you’re interested in living full lives, this book is for you.

> Quote: Authentic happiness derives from raising the bar for yourself, not rating yourself against others.

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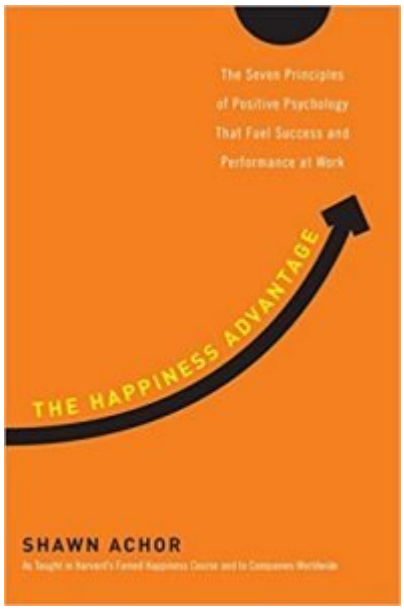
3. The Happiness Advantage



By Shawn Achor
Summary | Audiobook

Albeit Shawn Achor might be the only non-psychologist in this list of best positive psychology books, “The Happiness Advantage” deserves high praise.

What Achor does, and well, is what scientists are often reluctant to do: compiling in one single book all the most important findings and techniques, rather than just focusing on their own research -or talking up their work, Martin Seligman, I’m looking at you-.
Plus, presenting them in a way that is as practical as possible.

But Achor doesn’t stop here, and he also advances an important hypothesis: it’s not success that gives us happiness. It’s the other way around. It’s happiness that leads to success.

> Quote: Happiness is not the belief that we don’t need to change; it is the realization that we can

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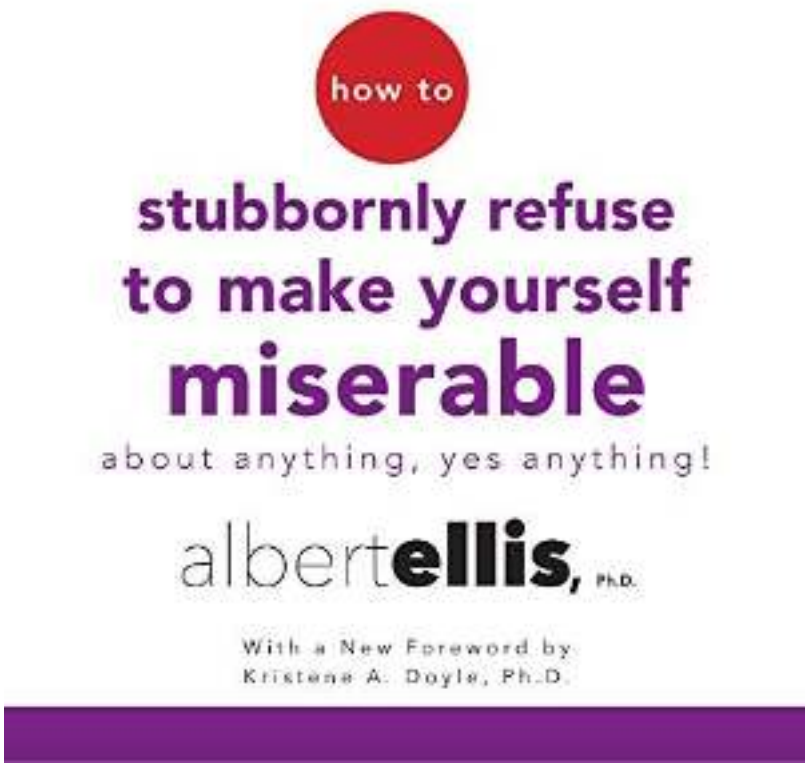
2. How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable



By Albert Ellis
Summary | Audiobook

The best book I have ever read on therapy (and self-therapy).

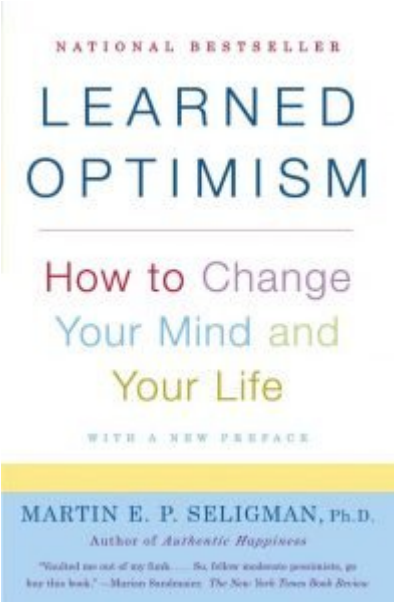
Ellis discusses and teaches REBT, which is a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).
The wisdom in this book can make you happier, more effective, as well as more emotionally in control of yourself.

And it can also help you to heal childhood wounds while skipping long, time-consuming, and expensive psychoanalysis.
I can vouch for it: it certainly did help me to overcome some smaller issues I had from childhood.

Highly recomended.

> Quote: How, then, do I become an incompetent or bad person?”
> “You don’t! When you do incompetent or evil acts, you become a person who acted badly—never a bad person.

1. Learned Optimism



By Martin Seligman
Summary | Audiobook

Seligman, again.

But let me come clean first:

I don't like Martin Seligman's personality as it transpires from his writing.
He strikes me as self-absorbed, narcissistic, reactionary, and even blindly patriotic and militarist.
Not good for a scientist.

But his work… That is good.

"Learned Optimism" is a classic by now.
And albeit like most classics it has seen some water go by under the bridge, it remains as good as ever.

"Learned Optimism" is optimism for intelligent folks.
It's optimism for people with critical thinking skills, and people who want to maintain the ability to set optimism aside and stare naked at the truths of life.

And you can do exactly that.
As Seligman explains, "learned optimism" is different than simple positive thinking. Learned optimism is based and grounded on reality.

I paraphrase him from another book of his:

> Positive thinking is about upbeat statements such as "Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better" in the absence or in the face of contrary evidence. (…) Many educated people, trained in skeptical thinking, cannot manage this kind of boosterism. Learned optimism, in contrast, is about accuracy.

Optimism indeed is nothing but a pattern of thoughts, and you can choose whether and *when* to adopt them.
Sometimes, when you want to take a critical and deep assessment, or when you need to make critical decisions, you want to avoid too much optimism and you want to think and analyze more like a pessimist.
But all the other times, you can choose to think and live more like an optimist.

And to me, that's tremendously empowering.

Yet, I still recommend you go with the first and original.

Positive Psychology: Overview

Positive psychology is what most people are after in life: happiness and fulfillment.

Yet, for some of us driven folks, happiness can sometimes fall on the wayside.
We think we weren't born for happiness, but to pursue and achieve stuff.

And that's where positive psychology can open a new world for us driven people: you *can* be both happy and driven.

As a matter of fact, happiness, and optimism even more so, will likely increase the chance you will ever experience objective success.

Optimists also make for better leaders, more charismatic leaders, and, incidentally, also win more elections (*far* more).

Also read:

- Best psychology books
- Best evolutionary psychology books
- Best books on power

The Wisdom of Psychopaths: Is Psychopathy Adaptive? Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* (2012) author Kevin Dutton tackles the topic of successful psychopathy, discussing the psychopathic traits that, in the right doses, can give people an edge in life.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - Psychopathy is Good In Small Doses
  - #1. Walk Confidently: Psychopaths Can Spot Easy Victims By Their Gait
  - #2. Don't Let Empathy Stop You from Pursuing Good Goals
  - #3. Polish Your Presence: The Psychopathic Traits Help to Achieve Business Success
  - #4. Develop Coolness Under Fire: Useful for Extreme Jobs and Situations
  - #5. Work On Total Focus and Consciousness: Great for High-Intensity Work
  - #6. Learn to Be Emotionless for Your Investment Decisions: Psychopath's Make Good Traders
  - #7. Develop a Ruthless Reputation: Psychopathic Traits Can Be Helpful in Jail…
  - The 7 Traits to Borrow From Psychopaths
- More Wisdom
- Criticism
  - 1. Adaptiveness Is Less About 'Moderation' And More About Calibration
  - 2. Lack of Conscience: The Big Trait That Slipped Through
  - 3. Are Psychopaths Really More Likely to Help, and Be Heroes?
  - 4. Some Questions About The Sources
  - 5. Psychopathic Sources Shouldn't Be Taken As Reliable
  - Quotes
  - PROS
  - Review

Overview

- **Some psychopathic traits, at the right time, can help you succeed**, without harming others like some psychopaths do
- Psychopathy ranges on a scale
- Too much psychopathy is harmful to the individual, and to society

Notes

About the Author:
Kevin Dutton is a British psychologist, author, and researcher. He gained his Ph.D. from the University of Essex and worked as a research fellow at the Faraday Institute, St Edmund's College, and the University of Cambridge. At the time of writing, he is a research fellow at the Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford.

He is also the author of "The Good Psychopath's Guide".

Psychopathy is Good In Small Doses

The central thesis of "The Wisdom of Psychopaths" is this:

"High doses" of psychopathy are unhealthy both for society and for the individual.
But, "psychopathy in smaller doses" helps individuals achieve more and get things done. And it can also be good for society.

Says Dutton:

> Psychopathy is like sunlight. Overexposure can hasten one's demise in grotesque, carcinogenic fashion. But regulated exposure at controlled and optimal levels can have a significant positive impact on well-being and quality of life.

Basically, this is the law of balance applied to psychopathy.
We agree with it and highly recommend this article understand the general concept:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

#1. Walk Confidently: Psychopaths Can Spot Easy Victims By Their Gait

How you walk says a lot about you.

Apparently, it also says a lot about how likely you are to be a victim of crime.
Research by Angela Book found out that psychopaths were indeed more likely than psychopath inmates were more likely than non-psychopaths to assess personal vulnerability.
The same was true for undergraduate students when divided between in high in psychopathy traits and low in psychopathy traits. The difference was that the students didn't know why they could guess it right, while the inmates knew exactly it was because it was of the way people walked.

Lucio's Note: How to Walk High Power

I found the description of what makes for a submissive walk according to the study:

- Slower walking speed
- Shorter strides
- Asynchronous movements

Raj Persaud also includes in vulnerable body language patterns of eye contact, body posture -more closed off-, and body gestures -smaller or more subtle gestures-.

Also read:

- Signs of submissiveness
- Speech patterns of submissiveness
- **High power walk**

> How to Walk Sexy & Confident: Men's Guide (W/ Videos)

But Normal People Can Also Detect Psychopaths (?)

On the other hand, neurotypicals -as non-psychopaths are sometimes referred to-, are equally good at spotting psychopaths.

Research by Reid Meloy found out that 77% of mental health and criminal justice professionals who interviewed psychopathic subjects reported a physical reaction to the psychopath's presence.

Female subjects were more likely to notice the difference than males.

My Note: But those people knew they were interviewing psychopaths
The study is not very telling of the general population because it seems like those interviewers knew they were interviewing psychopaths.
Dutton goes on to weave his theory that women learned to spot psychopaths more than men do because they're more vulnerable. It might be, but I'm always skeptical of ad-hoc evolutionary psychology theories.

Psychopathy Ranges on A Scale of Different Traits

Psychopathy is a spectrum disorder.

That means that, on a psychopathy scale, you score on a continuum. There is a minimum threshold to be considered a psychopath, but you can still score high on the scale without being a "full-blown psychopath".

Furthermore, since many traits are being measured, one can score around the middle of the psychopathy scale but still score very high on certain specific traits.

Says Dutton:

> One individual, for example, may be ice-cold under pressure, and display about as much empathy as an avalanche (we'll be meeting some like this on the trading floor later), and yet at the same time act neither violently, nor antisocially, nor without conscience. Scoring high on two psychopathic attributes, such an individual may rightly be considered further along the psychopathic spectrum than someone scoring lower on that dyad of traits, yet still not be anywhere near the Chianti-swilling danger zone of a person scoring high on all of them.

Certain Psychopathic Traits Can Be Helpful In Life

Continuing on the argument that some psychopathic traits can be useful in life, Dutton says:

> Think of psychopathic traits as the dials and sliders on a studio mixing desk.
> If you push all of them to max, you'll have a sound track that's no use to anyone. But if the sound track is graded and some controls are turned up higher than others—such as fearlessness, focus, lack of empathy, and mental toughness, for example—you may well have a surgeon who's a cut above the rest.

Psychopaths Are More Likely to Victimize You, But Also to Save You (???)

The second biggest thesis in Dutton's book is this:

psychopaths are more likely to victimize you, but they are also more likely to rescue you when you're in trouble.

I quote him:

> But what if I was to paint you a different picture?
> What if I was to tell you that the arsonist who burns your house down might also, in a parallel universe, be the hero most likely to brave the flaming timbers of a crumbling, blazing building to seek out, and drag out, your loved ones?

Dutton seems to have little doubt on his own thesis, adding:

> Claims like these are admittedly hard to believe. But they're true.

But I haven't seen convincing evidence so far that they are indeed true (see the note on "criticism").

#2. Don't Let Empathy Stop You from Pursuing Good Goals

However, there are situations when a psychopath's lack of conscience might more readily save people.

It seemed to me like these decisions all end up involving "collateral damage" whereby to save someone you must kill or sacrifice someone else.

For example, if you had to personally kill someone to save five, a psychopath might more readily kill that single person.
Naturally, people with a conscience will balk at killing anyone. **Psychopaths, without a conscience, have fewer problems in thinking in purely utilitarian terms**.

Let's dig a bit deeper:

When Emotional Empathy "Gets in The Way": Utilitarian Problems

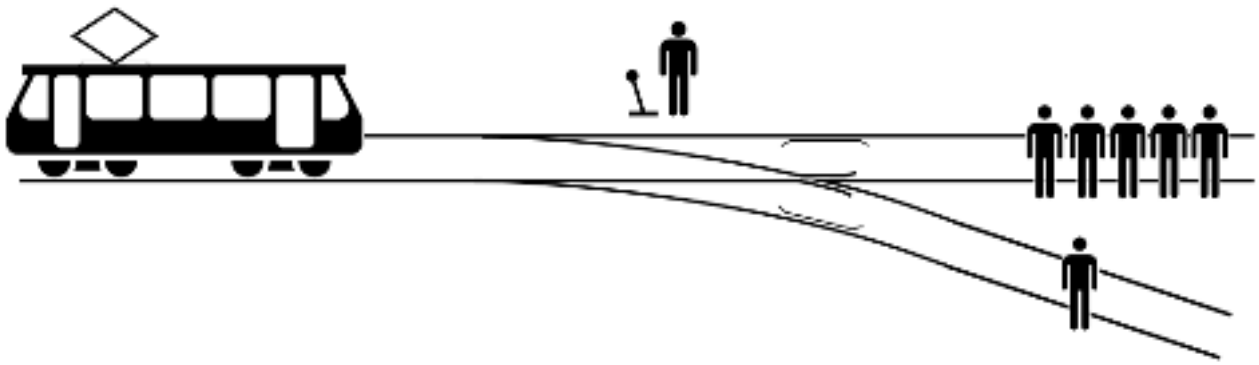
Dutton says there are two types of empathy: "hot" and "cold".

My Note: There is also emotional empathy and cognitive empathy
Emotional empathy is what allows people to form emotional bonds with others. Cognitive empathy is to simply understand what's going on in someone's mind. Psychopathy researcher James Fallon says that psychopaths can be good at the latter, but do not have the former.

The author refers to Joshua Greene's Dual Process Theory, similar to Daniel Kahneman's "system 1 and system 2" theory of mental processes.

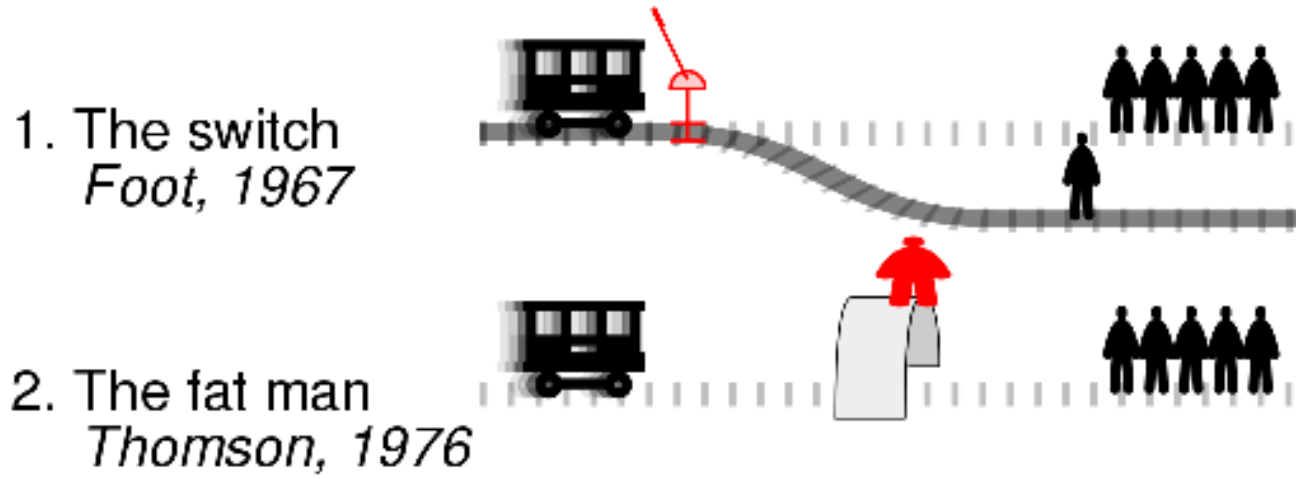
The first type of empathy is immediate, easy, and automatically applied to most life situations (deontological).
The second type instead requires more conscious thinking and deliberation because it involves trade-offs and, potentially, collateral damage (utilitarian).

A typical example involving the second type of moral judgment is the trolley problem.
The first class of trolley problems says you can save 5 people but kill 1 if you pull a switch that will change the trolley's direction:



Many people here struggle but ultimately say they would pull the lever (even though an experiment shows that in practice, few did).

In the second version though to save the 5 people the subject should *push* a man over the tracks:



And here it gets dicey for conscientious people. They would be killing someone with more direct action on their part, actively pushing and touching someone.
While most people would pull the lever in problem 1, most people would not push the fat man off the bridge.

Since psychopaths have no conscience and little emotions, it's in this second variant that they, far more than neurotypicals, are willing to sacrifice one person to save many.
Thus, **in trolley-like problems and purely from a utilitarian point of view, psychopaths can act for the greater good more than neurotypicals can**.

Says Dutton:

> Quite unlike normal people, they also make pretty short work of case 2. Psychopaths, without batting an eye, are perfectly happy to chuck the fat guy over the side

Trolley problems are processed in different parts of the brain depending on how active someone must be to save -or sacrifice- others.
Joshua Greene's first experiment of this kind showed that "impersonal" dilemmas -such as diverting the trolley with a switch- preferentially engaged regions associated with controlled reasoning, while "personal" dilemmas -pushing a man off the footbridge- preferentially engage brain regions associated with emotion.

In the brain, neurotypicals and psychopaths react differently.

Says Dutton:

> This difference in behavior is mirrored, rather distinctly, in the brain. The pattern of neural activation in both psychopaths and normal people is pretty well matched on the presentation of impersonal moral dilemmas—but dramatically diverges when things start to get a bit more personal.

But what does this tell us?

Overall, it's true that psychopaths are more in line with utilitarian judgment (Kahane, Guy et al., 2017).
But **the trolley experiments do *not* lead to the conclusion that psychopaths are generally more altruistic**, of course.
Probably, the opposite is true.
Continue Guy et al.:

> So, while psychopaths may be more willing to push someone off a footbridge to save five others (or be less shocked by support for infanticide or euthanasia), **it would be surprising if these same psychopaths signed up to join an Effective Altruism Club or showed care for the plight of strangers** in the developing world.

Finally, trolley problems are certainly extremely interesting and tell us a lot about human psychology and behavior.
But… How likely are real-life situations to reproduce this scenario?
It's an interesting thought experiment.
How often are you likely to encounter similar situations in real life?
Trolley experiments have indeed received some valid criticism about both their usefulness and predictive power in real-life situations (see here and here, for example).

#3. Polish Your Presence: The Psychopathic Traits Help to Achieve Business Success

Do some psychopathy traits help people climb the corporate ladder?

The idea is not new, and it's already been proposed several times.
See for example Snakes in Suit, by two esteemed psychopathy experts such as Hare and Babiak.

Dutton here quotes a study by Board and Fritzon called "Disordered personalities at work".
Says Dutton:

> A number of psychopathic attributes were actually more common in business leaders than in so-called disturbed criminals—attributes such as superficial charm, egocentricity, persuasiveness, lack of empathy, independence, and focus—and that the main difference between the groups was in the more "antisocial" aspects of the syndrome: the criminals' lawbreaking, physical aggression, and impulsivity

The study had a small sample, just 39, but it indeed confirms Dutton's theory that the presence of some psychopathic traits, in the right doses, can help people climb the corporate ladder.

Furthermore, there is Robert Hare's survey.
In 2010 Robert Hare handed out the PCL-R to 203 top US business executives and compared the results with the general population.
In Dutton's words:

> Not only did the business execs come out ahead, but psychopathy was positively associated with in-house ratings of **charisma** and **presentation style**: creativity, good strategic thinking, and **excellent communication skills**.

However, what Dutton doesn't say, is that those business execs high in psychopathy weren't exactly all-around star performers.
Here is an excerpt from that same study:

> Perhaps the most dramatic results of this study had to do with how the corporation viewed individuals with many psychopathic traits. That is, high psychopathy total scores were associated with perceptions of good communication skills, strategic thinking, and creative/innovative ability and, at the same time, with poor management style, failure to act as a team player, and poor performance appraisals (as rated by their immediate bosses). These latter associations were rather strong. It is noteworthy that, in

Still, Dutton's point remains: those individuals high in psychopathy did make it through the ranks.

Indeed, adds Babiak:

> It is easy to mistake psychopathic traits for specific leadership traits. For example, charm and grandiosity can be mistaken for self-confidence or a charismatic leadership style; likewise, good presentation communications, and impression management skills reinforce the same picture.

> The psychopath's ability to manipulate can look like good influence and persuasion skills, the mark of an effective leader.

If you want to make it high up, read:

- **The executive skills for career advancement**

Also, Machiavellianism can be very helpful for your career.
See:

- Mastering office politics
- 4 Proven strategies for career progression
- How to schmooze to your boss, the right way

And, of course:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

#4. Develop Coolness Under Fire: Useful for Extreme Jobs and Situations

Coolness in stressful situations is one of the traits Sutton talks up the most.

He says Neil Armstrong in his moon landing was cool under pressure and luckily saved the moon-landing mission because of it.

But the same trait is helpful for surgeons, military operatives and, as well, bomb-disposal operatives.
Ramachan found out that the most decorated subjects maintained a lower cardiac rate when making difficult discriminations under threat of shock.

#5. Work On Total Focus and Consciousness: Great for High-Intensity Work

Dutton seems to imply that psychopaths have a stronger ability to focus 100% on a task while shutting down everything else happening around.

He draws parallels between Buddhist monks trained in meditation and mental control, and psychopaths.

This ability becomes all the more important when in the face of external danger and threats.

Going back to the study of bomb-disposal operative, he says:

> Whereas the heart rates of all the operatives remained stable, something quite incredible happened with the ones who'd been decorated. Their heart rates actually went down. As soon as they entered the danger zone (or the "launch pad," as one guy I spoke with put it), they assumed a state of cold, meditative focus: a mezzanine level of consciousness in which they became one with the device they were working on.

in general, I'm not convinced this is a trait that could be considered "psychopathic".
What Dutton seems to be describing here is Flow, as researched by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

But he might have a point on reaching flow in extreme situations in which external threats might interrupt most people's focus and concentration.

The Dark Side of "Coolness": Profiling The Batterers

Famed relationship researcher John Gottman profiled two types of batterers.

One gets more excited and emotional while battering (pit bulls), while the other becomes cooler before assaulting (cobras).
He calls them “cobras” and “pit bulls”.

The way Sutton describes them, the cobras are the psychopaths.

Here are the differences:

COBRA	PIT BULL
Displays violence toward others	Usually only violent toward partner
Feels little remorse	Shows some level of guilt
Motivated by immediate gratification	Motivated by fear of abandonment
Able to let go and move on	Obsessive; often stalks victim
Feels superior	Adopts the role of “victim”
Fast talker; spins a story for police	Greater emotional lability
Charming and charismatic	Depressed and introverted
Control means “not being told what to do”	Control means “constant monitoring of partner” (see: too jealous boyfriend)
Traumatic upbringing; violence prevalent in family	Some degree of violence in family background
Impermeable to therapeutic intervention	Sometimes benefits from treatment programs
Manipulative: partner less likely to leave	Partner more likely to leave
Antisocial: 90%	Antisocial: 33%

And this is how they differ in the use of violence:

COBRA	PIT BULL
Violence: more severe	Violence: less severe
Use of closed-fist / strangling: 91%	Use of closed-fist / strangling: 62%
Threatened partner with knife or gun: 38%	Threatened partner with knife or gun: 4%
Actual use of knife or gun: 9%	Actual use of knife or gun: 0%
Violence outisde relationship: 44%	Violence outside the relationship: 3%

This is also the type of information that makes Dutton’s position on the “good” in psychopathy more difficult to sustain.

Psychopathy Is Extreme, And Cuts Both Ways

Dutton says that psychopathy is about excesses.

It can be helpful in reaching higher highs, both in terms of personal success and pro-sociality, and it can drag you to lower lows, both in terms of personal success and pro-sociality.

Through an analogy with sports cars, he says:

> A powerful sports car is neither a good thing nor a bad thing in and of itself, but depends on the person who’s sitting behind the wheel. It may, for instance, permit a skilled and experienced motorist to get his wife to the hospital in time to give birth to their child. Or, in a parallel universe, run an eighteen-year-old and his girlfriend off a cliff.
> Psychopathy really is like a high-performance sports car. It’s a double-edged sword that inevitably cuts both

> ways.

I'm not contending that some of the psychopathic traits can be used for good.
Of course, they can.

My question though is:

What's the *likelihood* of either those options happening, when we're talking about an actual psychopath?

What's the likelihood that the "psychopathic sports car" will be used for pro-social acts, and what's the likelihood that it will be used to trample on others?

That's the question that Dutton never answers.

#6. Learn to Be Emotionless for Your Investment Decisions: Psychopath's Make Good Traders

On this website, we saw several times that humans can behave irrationally in ultimatum games.

Such as, when one player offers to split a sum of money "unfairly" many players will reject the offer even when rejecting the offer means they will get nothing.
Instead, as shown by Ohira's research at Nagoya University, psychopaths are not bothered by small offers and accept them anyway.

Dutton also interviews some hedge fund managers high in psychopathy. One of them says that they can only beat the market during crashes, because everyone else is panicking.
Another one says that the most important trait of a good trader is coolness and detachment. The great traders, at the end of the day, you wouldn't be able to say if they made a billion or if they lost it all.

#7. Develop a Ruthless Reputation: Psychopathic Traits Can Be Helpful in Jail...

In a title reminiscent of one of the 48 Laws of Power, Dutton writes:

> To Get to the Top, Send Your Reputation Up Ahead of You

Using the "Aryan Brotherhood" as an example, he describes how in prison a reputation for ruthlessness can pay off.

As Baumeister also said in "Evil", a reputation for being a ruthless fighter will lead to fewer challengers -and fights-.

... And Moderate Psychopathy Can Be Helpful Not to Get Caught At All

Aharoni and Kiehl asked 307 incarcerated psychopaths to confidentially report the crimes for which they were caught and the ones for which they were not caught.

The result was that "the greatest criminal success was associated with moderate to high psychopathy scores, particularly for violent crimes".

However, adds Dutton:

> A very high dose of psychopathy (all the dials turned up to max) is as bad as a very low one. Instead, it's moderate levels that code for greater "accomplishment."

The survey seems to sustain Dutton's hypothesis.
Personally, though I wouldn't lend too much credibility to a survey based on self-reported data, from a relatively small sample size.

The Formula to Become a "Functional Psychopath"

Dutton interviews James Blair and asks him if "it pays to be a psychopath".

Blair replies:

> It's a dangerous road to go down. "It's true that if bad things are happening the individual with psychopathy might be less worried about it.
> However, it's not so clear that their decision making in such situations would be particularly good. By not analyzing levels of threat appropriately, they might walk into danger, rather than away from it.

So Dutton chances his equation to:

> Functional Psychopath = Psychopath – Poor Decision Making

Then asks the same question to Kent Kiehl, author of "The Psychopath Whisperer", who replies:

> It makes sense that psychopathic traits are normally distributed across the general population.
> But the difference with those at the high end of the spectrum is that they can't switch off [the fearlessness] in situations where it might be appropriate. A CEO might be non-risk-averse in certain areas of business, but probably wouldn't want to walk around a rough neighborhood at night. A psychopath isn't able to make that distinction. With a psychopath, it's all or nothing.

So Dutton further adjusts his equation:

> Functional Psychopath = (Psychopath – Poor Decision Making) / Context

The 7 Traits to Borrow From Psychopaths

Dutton calls these the "seven deadly wins":

1. Ruthlessness
2. Charm
3. Focus
4. Mental toughness
5. Fearlessness
6. Mindfulness
7. Action

But you can't just borrow them or work to increase them and expect success.
The usefulness of each one of them lays deeply in the context.

The power in each one of them is context and modularity, using them when needed, and then reverting back to a more "normal" you.

More Wisdom

- **Psychopathic "high-risk/high-reward" leads to many losers and some winners. and that's why they're stable**: some experiments of game theory, which in truth were very simplified versions of reality, show that a strategy of "risking it all" and cheating produces lots of failures and deaths, but also some successful survivors which keeps the population stable at around 1-2%

- **Dark triad traits can lead to more sexual partners**: men with dark triad traits tend to have more sexual partners. But that's also because they seek more sexual partners, while more secure men are happy to eventually stop with one partner. Also see: the psychopath's sexual strategies, and: do psychopaths get laid more?
- **Make them share something personal, then interrupt them right away, and tell them later what they've just told you**: a technique of dark psychology is to make you open up and share something, then quickly change the subject, then, later on, tell you what you told them as if it also happened to them. Also see: Machiavellian fake self-disclosure
- Psychopaths can be good at faking emotions and very good at lying
- **Psychopaths are extremely drawn to rewards**: it's not just that psychopaths aren't afraid of punishment. That doesn't predict violence. The other side of the coin is also true: psychopaths are particularly attracted to (immediate) pleasure and rewards
- **Psychopaths have "cognitive empathy" and can recognize emotions** (and might be good at it): Dutton says that one experiment shows that psychopaths don't feel what it's like to have a certain emotion, but recognize it when they see it. This is cognitive empathy as opposed to emotional empathy, which allows to bond and connect with others
- **In prisons psychopaths are less unpredictable than psychotics**: Psychopathic violence is predominantly instrumental, a direct means to a specific end. It's on the psychotic wards that things are less predictable. I once went out with a psychotic woman

Criticism

I enjoyed "The Wisdom of Psychopaths", and it's an important book for this website's philosophy (ie.: to be good, you must know how to be bad).

At the same time, there are some important issues one needs to discuss:

1. Adaptiveness Is Less About 'Moderation' And More About *Calibration*

Dutton's argument relies on an 'optimum balance' of psychopathic traits, and partially on which traits to modulate (respectively, the subclinical and multiprocess model of successful psychopathy).

Regarding the former, Benning, Venables, and Hall write in *The Handbook of Psychopathy*:

> empirical work suggests that **successful psychopathy involves the presence of adaptive attributes rather than just lower pathological tendencies**

Besides balance and trait-dependence, at TPM we also highlight the crucial importance of **contextual calibration**.

In some situations, *very high* fearlessness can be adaptive.
In other situations when you must think long-term and survive, zero fearlessness and high inhibition may be adaptive.

We teach these nuances in **Power University**.

2. Lack of Conscience: The Big Trait That Slipped Through

Conscience and guilt are defining traits that differentiate psychopaths from neurotypicals.

Martha Stout, author of "The Sociopath Next Door", wrote in her critical review:

> Nowhere in this book about psychopathy does Dutton accurately define psychopathy, so I will do so here. **Psychopathy is a disorder of brain and behavior, the central characteristic of which is the complete**

> **absence of conscience. All of its other pathological features emanate from this defining deficit** (including callousness, habitual lying, and ruthlessness).

Stout goes on saying:

> Dutton does not once discuss the concept of conscience, and, in the entire body of his book he mentions the word itself—conscience—a total of four times, and then only in passing.

I'm not sure if Stout was reading a different version of the book.
In mine, to be fair, Dutton does mention conscience as a defining trait of psychopathy.
I quote Dutton verbatim:

> I suddenly get a flash of insight.
> But **the most fundamental difference between one individual and another must surely be that of the presence, or absence, of conscience**. Conscience is what hurts when everything else feels good.

So, yes, Dutton does acknowledge that conscience is the main difference between psychopaths and non-psychopaths -albeit it feels strange that an expert on psychopathy says it dawned on him as a "sudden flash of insight"-.

Still, Stout's criticism is fair.
Conscience is a crucial aspect that Dutton should have probably expanded more on, including how adaptive/maladaptive it is, and the costs of not having one.

Robert Hare Had More Positively Feedback

Robert Hare, author of "Without a Conscience" and "Snake in Suits", and one of the world's experts on psychopathy, is equally strong when warning people about the social dangers of psychopathy.

Yet, he provided a public review and praise of Dutton's book.

3. Are Psychopaths Really More Likely to Help, and Be Heroes?

Dutton suggests that psychopaths are more likely to perform heroic actions.

Martha Stout instead says:

> Really?
> Why an individual who feels neither conscience nor caring would wish to save another's life is difficult to imagine, (…) and reveals an essential misunderstanding of the nature of the predator

I tend to agree with Stout here.
I asked a psychopath if they would endanger their lives to save someone else, and the answer was a resounding "no".
I asked again on Quora though, and this time the answers were more mixed, ranging from "yes, it's more likely", to "it depends", to "it's laughable, I'd never risk my life to save others".

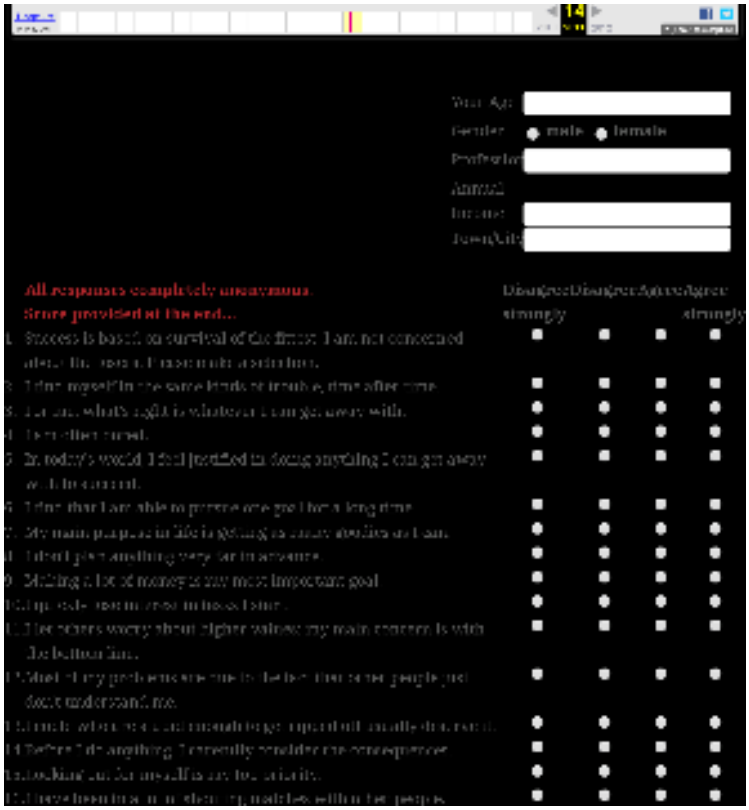
- **Profiling of a sexual predator: a psychopath reveals his sexual strategy**

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

4. Some Questions About The Sources

- **The "Great British Psychopath Survey"**

This is a survey Dutton hosted on his personal website, and it was anonymous.



Lindsay Abrams over at The Atlantic asked Dutton about it, and Dutton said he received about 5,500 responses. No information about it, and no data is retrievable. The website "Wisdomofpsychopaths.com", which also later hosted a "Great American Psychopath Survey", redirects to Dutton's website.

Edit: I later found a picture from web.archive (thanks to Richard Smith):

An interesting survey with some interesting, if quirky results. But more for fun, it's not scientific.

- **Psychopathy levels of US presidents**

The analyses of the psychopathy level of US presidents are based on what the *biographers* of those presidents answered. It's still an interesting result, for sure, but not a very scientific one.

- **Dutton's research psychopath's ability to identify guilty individuals**

Some other studies had small samples. Dutton's own study, for example, had just 30 students. He goes on analyzing that study saying:

> The results were extraordinary. Over 70 percent of those who scored high on the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale correctly picked out the handkerchief-smuggling associate, compared to just 30 percent of the low scorers.

But if you take "those who scored high on the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale", which is a subset of the total, then you come up with an even smaller number. So saying that "over 70% of those who…" was probably the equivalent of saying "4 or 5 of them". Dutton never mentions that this was a low-powered study, which does not help to lend credibility to the book.

Some Research Felt a Bit 'Massaged'

As we reviewed above, "The Wisdom of Psychopath" makes it seem as if psychopaths are more prone to act in a utilitarian way and for the greater good. But, as we reviewed, in practical life those utilitarian situations rarely if ever emerge.

And high-psychopathy individuals in business weren't exactly all-around star performers one might glean by just reading "The Wisdom of Psychopaths".

Similarly, a study that purposefully "proves" that psychopaths make better financial decisions under certain circumstances did in a situation that's unlikely to take place in real life. The game concocted for the experiment provided a gain of $2.5 for each coin toss win against a loss of just $1. Psychopaths played more and won more. But… How likely are you to see those a house *consistently* stacked on your side in real life?

5. Psychopathic Traits Can Be Used For Good, But Will Psychopaths Do So? Let's Not Be Naive...

There are no doubts that one can use some traits common among psychopaths for good causes.

Fearlessness, calmness under stress, and the ability to move on can be used for a successful life and for helping others.
Of course they can.

But Dutton seems to suggest that psychopaths are as likely to use them for good, as they are of using them for bad.

And I don't think that's true at all.
Actual psychopaths are far more likely to use their signature traits for their personal good *only*. And they are probably far more likely to use their skills for harming others, than for helping them.

It's this crucial and basic understanding of psychopaths that's missing in Dutton's "The Wisdom of Psychopaths". And this is what irked many reviewers.

5. Psychopathic Sources Shouldn't Be Taken As Reliable

If you research some psychopathic writers as I've done, you will notice that they often have some crazy stories in which they often turn out to be the heroes.

Whether that story was true or not, well… Who can say?

Here is one such story Dutton shares in "The Wisdom of Psychopaths" from one of his interviewees:

> Tom tells me a story. One night, a few years ago, he's heading back to his apartment after watching Saw. Suddenly, out of a doorway, a guy with a blade appears. His girlfriend is terrified and starts hyperventilating. But Tom, ahem, calmly disarms the guy and sends him packing.

Sounds strange like a scene of a movie, doesn't it?
And it strangely seems to happen to psychopaths fare more often than to most normal people…

Nonsense "Preparation" for War With Slagging: Another Psycho Story

Interviewing a supposed psychopath in the British special forces, he says:

> "So, in the regiment, everything's fair game. The slagging is purely functional. It's an efficient way of building up psychological immunity. It inoculates you against the kind of shit they can throw at you if you're captured.

How does that help?

He keeps going:

> if [your captors are] any good, they'll start to look for weaknesses. They'll look for the tiniest of reactions that might give away your true mental state. And if they find anything, then take it from me: that's that, mate. It's game over. Put it this way. If you've got a problem with the size of your dick, an Iraqi interrogation suite probably isn't the best place to find out.

I don't see how banter in the regiment can prepare you for being a captive, frankly. And if the captors decide to extract secrets, they probably won't do it by teasing you on the size of your member.

Quotes

On heroism, quoting Philip Zimbardo:

> The decision to act heroically is a choice that many of us will be called upon to make at some point in our lives.
> It means not being afraid of what others might think. It means not being afraid of the fallout for ourselves. It means not being afraid of putting our necks on the line. The question is: Are we going to make that decision?"

PROS

- **A wake-up call on success?**

In the face of some self-help books that only see success as the realm of "good people" who "help others", this book can be an eye-opener.

- **Consulted with top scientists**

Dutton has spoken with an impressive number of academic heavyweights for this book, including Steven Pinker, psychopathy expert Kent Kiehl, Robert Hare, and Philip Zimbardo, just to name a few.

Review

The Wisdom of Psychopaths is a good book with a provocative concept we'd generally agree with, but that needs more nuance to be a rigorous scientific reference and more practical refinement to be useful to top 1% men.

On the plus side, this is an important book for this website, reinforcing the notion that "to be good, you have to know how to be bad".

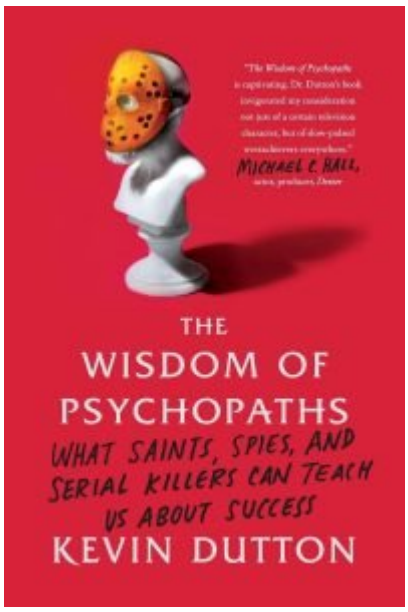
We agree that some psychopathic traits can be useful for personal success, without necessarily harming others. And sometimes, those traits might also be used for the greater good.

Also read:

- Best dark triad books
- Best red pill books

or get the book on Amazon

The Wisdom of Psychopaths: 7 Lessons For Power (Dutton)



In The Wisdom of Psychopaths (2012) author Kevin Dutton tackles the topic of successful psychopathy, discussing the psychopathic traits that, in the right doses, can give people an edge in life.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-wisdom-of-psychopaths/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4

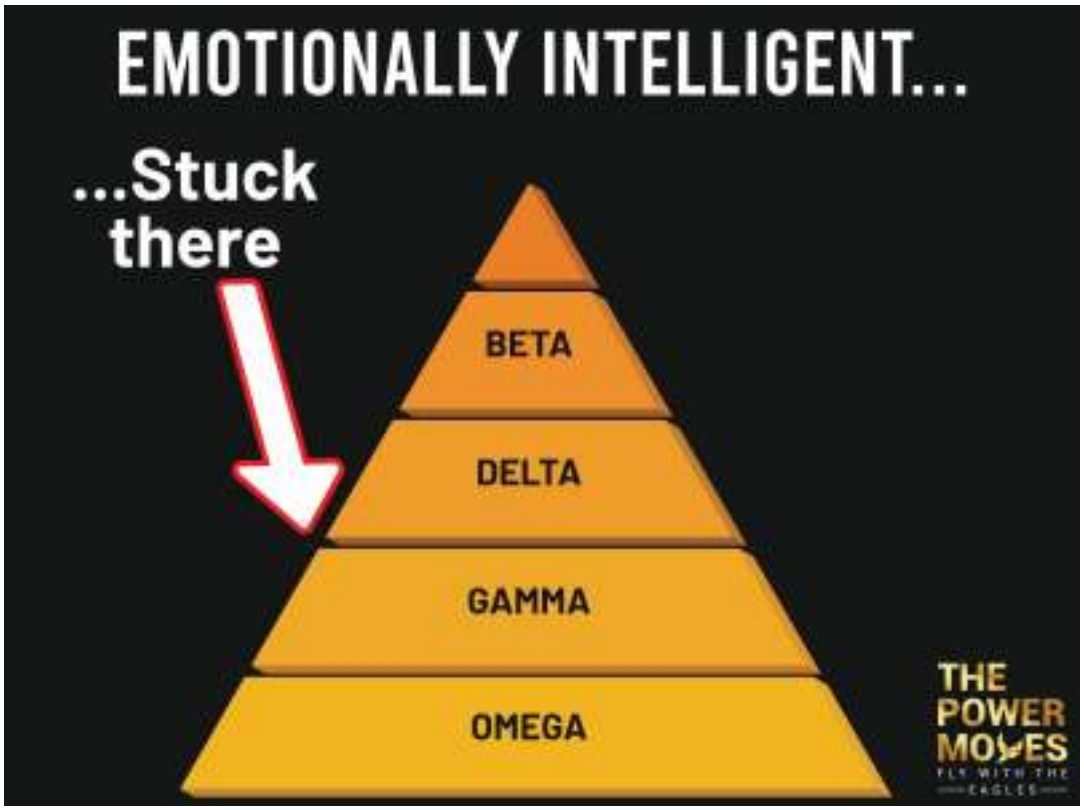
The Emotional Intelligence Myth: Why Power and Machiavellianism Beat Empathy at the Top

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The myth of Emotional Intelligence (EI) states that the more empathic, self-aware, and relationally skilled you are, the greater your career success will be. This belief has flooded the pop psychology literature and business world, but does the data actually support it?

This article contends that EI helps you only up to a certain point.
Our analysis, using corporate data and psychological research, reveals a shocking truth: **If you want to reach the executive level, emotional intelligence—especially high empathy and focus on relationships—can actually be harmful.**

What truly wins at the top are traits like ***Power* Intelligence and Machiavellianism.** Here, we debunk the EI myth and show you the strategic skills that ruthless executives actually use to get promoted



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What's Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI), measured as "emotional quotient" (EQ), is an umbrella term that could be loosely defined as:

> The capacity to be aware, control, and appropriately express one's emotions, to understand other people's emotions, and to empathetically handle interpersonal relationships.

Daniel Goleman, who popularized the term, divides emotional intelligence into four components:

- Self-awareness (personal competence 1)
- Self-management (personal competence 2)
- Social awareness (social competence 1)
- Relationship management (social competence 2)

The first two elements of personal competence refer to being aware of your emotions and managing your behavior. The second two elements are where the definition of EI loses value since it can encompass *everything*, including ruthless calculativeness. However, as it's sometimes understood, social competence excludes the calculative and ruthless aspects to focus instead on 'applied empathy'. Understanding other people's feelings, moods, and behavior to improve the quality of your relationships.

Obviously, those competencies are important.
But *how* important are they when it comes to career progression, compared to other skills?

The Myth of Emotional Intelligence

This quote made "emotional intelligence" popular:

> As much as 80% of adult "success" comes from EQ

That was Daniel Goleman.
Since then, emotional intelligence entered the collective imagination, more supporting "evidence" emerged, and seminars teaching emotional intelligence have sprung up around the globe.

Goleman, in his sequel book "*Working With Emotional Intelligence*" (review removed) restates that IQ does not determine career success, but EQ does.

Travis Bradberry in his book "Emotional Intelligence 2.0" and in this Forbes article says that EQ predicts salary, and that a "one-point increase in EQ leads to an increase of 1.300 dollars of annual salary" (which doesn't make sense by the way, because it cannot be a linear progression to infinity).

But is it really true?

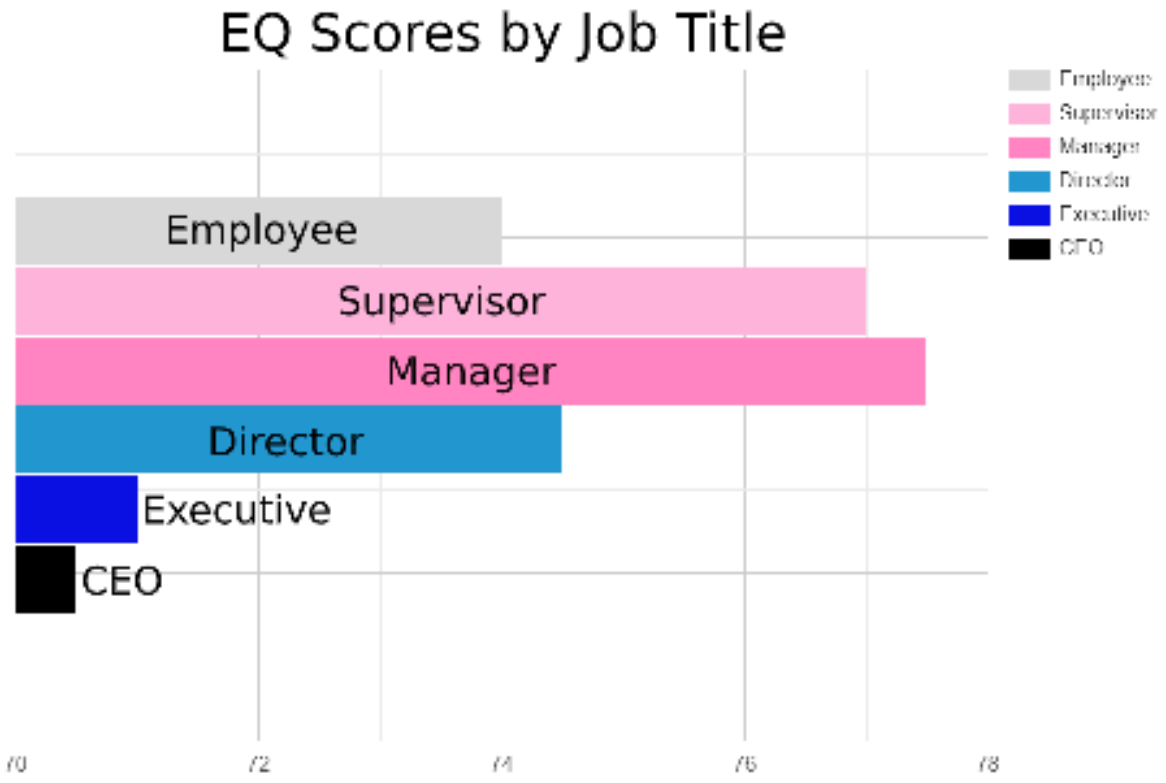
Empathic Nice Guys Might Not Finish Last, But Stuck in The Middle

In brief:

From all the evidence I have gathered, **it's not true that emotional intelligence is a key contributor to career success.**

It matters, in a way, yes, but it's not a linear progression.
It doesn't help you in all types of jobs and, most importantly, it doesn't seem like it helps you reach the top.

One single chart, plotting the EQ results by job titles, should suffice to put the theory to rest:



Data from Travis Bradberry, “Emotional Intelligence 2.0”
Bradberry computed the results of his emotional intelligence survey from more than 100.000 individuals, across multiple industries, and on five continents.
Plus, Bradberry is one of the pundits for emotional intelligence, selling emotional intelligence training. That means: Bradberry’s interests are in direct contrast to what his own survey shows (so big kudos to him for releasing discordant data).
Both the numbers and the inverse conflict of interest make the results very telling, in my opinion.

And the results say that **emotional intelligence is only high up until mid-level management**.

Bradberry, in this Harvard Business Review article poignantly titled “heartless bosses”, asks:

> How could it be that the very people who need emotional intelligence the most seem to have it the least?

Well, to me, an obvious reason looms in the distance: because, it seems, **you don’t need a high EQ to be promoted to the executives rank**.

What does the author of the original survey have to say about it?
In this article, Bradberry acknowledges that executives might have lower EQ because their job “erodes” EQ, *and* because companies don’t take EQ into account when deciding who to promote.

Maybe.
My answer is somewhat different.

It’s not that CEOs are (necessarily) emotionally stupid. They probably aren’t. But they just have different priorities. **CEOs are more concerned with power, winning, and getting things done than with what helps you score high in emotional intelligence** -things such as understanding what others feel, protecting people’s egos, nurturing relationships, and “social harmony”-.

CEOs are able to doggedly pursue their goals, *independently* of what others think and feel. CEOs aren’t too touchy, and they don’t care if others get offended.
Those traits make your EI score tick downward.

Machiavellianism is also correlated with lower results on EI tests when you remove the possibility for manipulation and strategic self-interest (Bereckzei, 2017).
But, at work, both Machiavellianism and the hard-charging attitude help you move *upward*.
Says psychologist George Simon in his best-selling book "In Sheep's Clothing":

> CEOs most often have inflated self-esteem (…) and are undetered by adverse consequences or societal condemnation.

Simon is basically saying that a thick-skin and feeling great no matter what others say or think is a trait that, albeit potentially anti-social, helps you advance in life.
This is the equivalent of dialing empathy *down*, not up.

So, if being able to dial down one's own empathy and sensitivity is useful, might it be possible that not having empathy and sensitivity *at all* could be an advantage?

Well, there is indeed much evidence to suggest that the *opposite* of empathy and emotional intelligence can help you get to the top.
Enter, the psychopath, the individual with no empathy and no conscience.

The Scarier Truth: Psychopathy Might Beat Empathy

Jon Moulton is a successful private equity investor.

Asked by the Financial Times what his 3 best features are, he replied (italic is mine):

> Determination, curiosity and *insensitivity*

Why insensitivity?
Moulton says that insensitivity "lets you sleep when others can't".

That doesn't sound like a man high in empathy, does it?
It sounds much closer to psychopathy than to an empathic leader.

I witnessed similar examples.
Of the ones I can share here, I once had a CEO who said we'd "throw bodies at the operations department" -he loved repeating that in his previous company he handled the breakneck speed of growth by "throwing bodies at operations."
The venture was going to be a slam dunk, he loved repeating (grandiose view of self), and the prospects who didn't want to work with us were "stupid" (demeaning towards others).

Another founder, a speed metal singer who told me he fancied himself a "warrior", invited me to pre-launch meetings with the goal of wooing me in. How did this one refer to the guys running operational tasks in his future business?
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The Goldwater rule says you shouldn't diagnose people whom you haven't professionally examined. But if I had to bet money, I'd bet that those two would score quite high in psychopathy.

This should not be a shocker to anyone in the social sciences.
The idea that psychopathy -or certain traits of psychopathy- can help individuals climb hierarchical organizations and acquire power is nothing new in the field (Dutton, 2012; Hare & Babiak, 2006)

Data and evidence are not forthcoming in this field. We can understand why: few business leaders would be happy to be measured and identified as high in psychopathy.
But some data *does* exist, and it points to interesting conclusions.
Babiak and Hare administered the psychopathy checklist to a group of 203 American business executives.

The results?

While the median psychopathy score was not high, **the prevalence of psychopathic traits among business executives was far higher than among the general population**.
3.9% of the business executives had a score of 30 or higher, which is the minimum threshold to be clinically considered a psychopath. That means that there were 2 to 3 times more psychopaths among the business executives than in the normal population (that's a lot).

And we're not talking about extreme cases like "Chainsaw Al" or Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos.
We're talking about random samples of successive businesspeople.

Holmes' Machiavellianism allowed her to be hailed as a role model for females entrepreneurs while she bullied her way to unlimited power

There is a very interesting caveat to the Hare's study, though.
The caveat is, in part, worrying. But in part, it also holds the keys to a solution.
Here it is: the psychopaths from Hare's study received poor evaluations from their superiors. And they were correctly identified as poor team players and as having poor management styles.
So it seems like it's not true that psychopaths can go up undetected. They *do* are recognized as some sorts of a-holes -which makes sense-.

Research conducted in Australia also confirms the costs of psychopaths in leadership positions are felt by everyone in the organization:

> When Corporate Psychopaths are present in leadership positions within organizations, employees are significantly less likely to agree that the corporation does business in a way that shows commitment to employees, significantly less likely to feel that they receive due recognition for doing a good job, to feel that their work was appreciated and to feel that their efforts were properly rewarded.

Yet the obvious reality remains: **being correctly identified as poor leaders of people didn't stop psychopaths**

from climbing the corporate ladder.

Equally worrying, some of their psychopathic traits did indeed help them get near the top.
Says psychopathy expert Babiak in that same study:

> **Even those traits that reflect a severe lack of human feelings or emotional poverty (lack of remorse, guilt, empathy) can be put into service by corporate psychopaths**, where being "tough" or "strong" (making hard, unpopular decisions) or "cool under fire" (not displaying emotions in the face of unpleasant circumstances) can work in their favor.

And he adds:

> In sum, the very skills that make the psychopath so unpleasant (and sometimes abusive) in society can facilitate a career in business even in the face of negative performance ratings.

That's not the only study to link psychopathy with business success.
Board and Fritzon had a smaller sample of just 39 business managers, but it emerged that **a number of histrionic and narcissistic attributes such as charm, egocentricity, and *lack of empathy* were more common in business leaders than in so-called disturbed personalities**.

The difference was that the business leaders' group was less likely to display the more "antisocial aspects" of psychopathy, such as physical aggression, instability, and hostile defiance (factory 1 psychopathy).
So, yes, violent psychopathy won't get you far. And high levels of psychopathy seem inversely linked to work-related success (Spurk et al., 2015)
But the dark triad traits in factor 1 psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism *do* seem to carry you higher.

The Future Trend: Less EQ, More Ruthlessness

What's the trend?

Will EQ be more rewarded, or will psychopathy traits be more rewarded?

It's difficult to say.

World-renowned psychopathy expert Robert Hare says that psychopathy is on the rise. And the general corporate environment, with its faster pace and more frequent job changes becoming the norm, is *generally* becoming more suitable for psychopaths.

From Hare's writings, it also seems to me **that many high-earning professions are more likely to downplay the role of emotional intelligence and to instead reward psychopathy**.

Investment banking seems to be a popular industry for individuals high in psychopathy.
And Robert Hare is often quoted as saying that:

> "if I wasn't studying psychopaths in prison, I'd do so at the stock exchange".
> -Pyschopathy researcher Robert Hare

The 2008 financial crisis has also been linked with psychopathic behavior (Boddy, 2011). It's not a mystery to anyone that plenty of executives made lots of money and walked away from the mess while leaving the taxpayers on the hook.

The Darker EI That Helps You Advance

So, is EI useless?

No.
Quite the opposite.

From Bradberry's and Goleman's work, plus further menta-analysis, it seems true that emotional intelligence is positively correlated to job performance (except for *non*-people facing jobs Newman et. al, 2010), and makes for better leadership.

Such as, **emotional intelligence is important for good governance and good leadership**.
It just doesn't seem to be so important for personal advancement and selfish ends.

Unless… Unless we enlarge the definition of Emotional Intelligence.
Emotional intelligence *can* help you advance. But it's not the emotional intelligence as it's often understood to be, such as caring and empathizing with your team.

Emotional Intelligence For Manipulation

A less naive view of emotional intelligence includes the ability to manipulate.

An emotionally intelligent person doesn't necessarily use empathy to help others.
He may use empathy to better *take advantage* of others.

The *Routledge Handbook on Persuasion* states:

> People who possess more emotional awareness (Wielgopolan & Imbir, 2020) and skilled at expressing basic emotions are better at deception (Riggio & Friedman, 1983).

Emotional intelligence should also include the ability to read power dynamics -call it "power intelligence"- and how to use it for selfish goal-call it "Machiavellianism"-.

The 2 Types of Empathy

There are two main types of empathy: emotional, and cognitive (Cox et. al., 2011).

Emotional empathy allows you to feel what other people are feeling, feel sympathy and compassion for their pain, and possibly feel bad about it at a more or less deep level (sometimes referred to as "somatic empathy").
Cognitive empathy instead helps you to understand what other people are feeling, but *without* being emotionally affected, and *without* caring for people's suffering.

As psychopathy researcher James Fallon says, psychopaths have little or no emotional empathy, but they can be good at understanding what others are feeling. And they use that information strategically, and for selfish ends *only* (sometimes referred to as "tactical empathy").

The same can be said for emotional intelligence at large.
As organizational psychologist Adam Grant shrewdly notes, EI can be used for good or for less good purposes.
And the type of emotional intelligence that helps you make a good career is a different type of emotional intelligence.

Such as:

The type of emotional intelligence that helps you advance at work is more Machiavellian. You understand how people feel, what behaviors are more likely to be rewarded, and you put that information to the service of career strategies that get you promoted.

Just to be clear: emotional empathy does not necessarily hurt your personal career and success potential. It's just that it's not strictly needed, either. And *too much* emotional empathy can also become harmful, leading to paralysis and the inability to act (Sapolsky, 2017). At work, that would mean not firing people when you should fire people.
What *does* matter when it comes to promotions, is cognitive empathy for effective social strategizing.

This is the high-EQ that helps you advance:

- **Knowledge of human psychology** (including your own psychology)

It's people who decide who advances and get promoted.
And knowing how people work underpins any effective decision and career strategy.

Some psychopaths actively research psychology and power dynamics to become better abusers.
Read here a shocking account of a psychopath's sexual strategy.

- **Office politics mastery**

Depending on the definition, office politics is either *all* the human element of work, or all the human element *outside* of the sanctioned rules.

But even if we adopted the latter definition, since most organizations don't promote *only* on competence, office politics mastery is crucial for anyone who wants to make it to the top.

Office politics is about ingratiating bosses, finding mentors and sponsors, self-promoting effectively, and aligning interests.

And how about when those interests can't be aligned?

- **When interests cannot align, the EQ that helps you advance is Machiavellian in nature**

One study by David Buss and Liisa M.Kyl-Heku analyzed different career strategies.

And found out that a "manipulative strategy" was as effective as a strategy based on industriousness (ie.: hard work).

Frankly, I don't think you can reach a conclusion on 'most effective strategy'.

But I think we can all agree that Machiavellianism can help you advance.
This is a case where scientific studies confirm what most of us have seen with our own eyes.

The Machiavellian player knows that there are plenty of areas of conflicting interests between himself and the organization, and between himself and his colleagues.
And he is keenly aware of how to maximize self-interest while looking like he's playing for the team.

This is the area of EI where psychopaths do quite well.
Psychopaths are indeed good at recognizing emotions in other people's faces. And they do not always score low in emotional intelligence (Copestake et al., 2013). It's "just" in the conscience and empathy side that they're lacking.

- **Knowledge and mastery of power dynamics**

Here is the big secret:

It's alpha males and alpha females who get promoted.
You will rarely see a CEO who's a wimp, a CEO who acts submissively, or a CEO who speaks with uncertainty.

The simple rule is that **to make it to the top, you need to act like a top dog.**
Also see this article on executive skills that get you promoted.

I Wish I Could Tell You Differently

I'm not happy to write this article.

And I wish reality was different.

But for now, from the evidence I have seen so far, career progression has less to do with empathy and emotional intelligence, and more to do with looking the part, smart politics and, sometimes, ruthlessness and unabashed selfishness.

SUMMARY

Emotional Intelligence is crucial in life.
It helps you understand people and yourself, get along with people, and bond and connect with people.

It also helps you at work.
But not in the way it's usually portrayed.

Emotional intelligence helps you to get up to mid-level management.
After that, at executive and board levels, different traits come to the fore.

Learning how to play politics, including sometimes in potentially Machiavellian ways, becomes more helpful.
And what we call "executive skills" matter more than emotional intelligence.

This, by the way, could be one of the main reasons why women are still struggling to make it to the very top.
Women take emotional intelligence more seriously. And more literally.

A Quote to Go By

Finally, I'd like to leave you with a quote from "The Good Psychopath Guide":

> **There are two things that rise to the top. The cream, and the scum.**

To which, I add: to be the cream, you need to know how the scum operates.

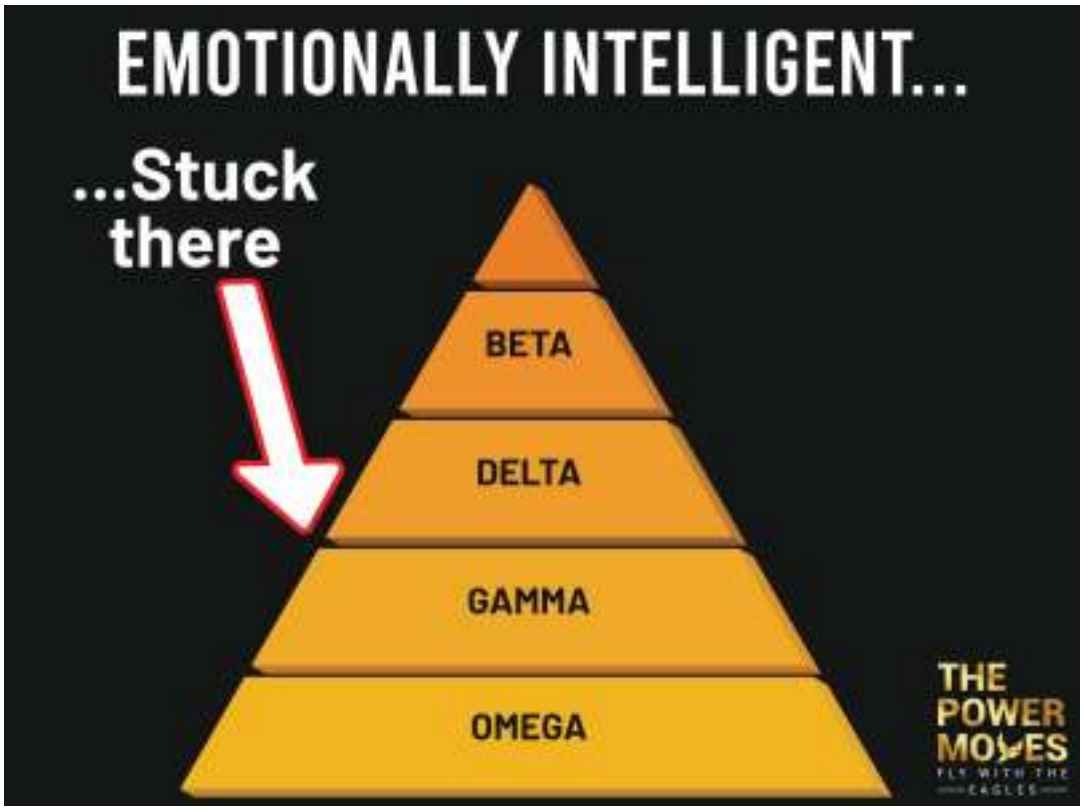
The Emotional Intelligence Myth: Why Power and Machiavellianism Beat Empathy at the Top

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The myth of Emotional Intelligence (EI) states that the more empathic, self-aware, and relationally skilled you are, the greater your career success will be. This belief has flooded the pop psychology literature and business world, but does the data actually support it?

This article contends that EI helps you only up to a certain point.
Our analysis, using corporate data and psychological research, reveals a shocking truth: **If you want to reach the executive level, emotional intelligence—especially high empathy and focus on relationships—can actually be harmful.**

What truly wins at the top are traits like ***Power* Intelligence and Machiavellianism.** Here, we debunk the EI myth and show you the strategic skills that ruthless executives actually use to get promoted



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- The Myth of Emotional Intelligence
  - Empathic Nice Guys Might Not Finish Last, But Stuck in The Middle
- The Scarier Truth: Psychopathy Might Beat Empathy
  - The Future Trend: Less EQ, More Ruthlessness
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  - SUMMARY

What's Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI), measured as "emotional quotient" (EQ), is an umbrella term that could be loosely defined as:

> The capacity to be aware, control, and appropriately express one's emotions, to understand other people's emotions, and to empathetically handle interpersonal relationships.

Daniel Goleman, who popularized the term, divides emotional intelligence into four components:

- Self-awareness (personal competence 1)
- Self-management (personal competence 2)
- Social awareness (social competence 1)
- Relationship management (social competence 2)

The first two elements of personal competence refer to being aware of your emotions and managing your behavior. The second two elements are where the definition of EI loses value since it can encompass *everything*, including ruthless calculativeness. However, as it's sometimes understood, social competence excludes the calculative and ruthless aspects to focus instead on 'applied empathy'. Understanding other people's feelings, moods, and behavior to improve the quality of your relationships.

Obviously, those competencies are important.
But *how* important are they when it comes to career progression, compared to other skills?

The Myth of Emotional Intelligence

This quote made "emotional intelligence" popular:

> As much as 80% of adult "success" comes from EQ

That was Daniel Goleman.
Since then, emotional intelligence entered the collective imagination, more supporting "evidence" emerged, and seminars teaching emotional intelligence have sprung up around the globe.

Goleman, in his sequel book "*Working With Emotional Intelligence*" (review removed) restates that IQ does not determine career success, but EQ does.

Travis Bradberry in his book "Emotional Intelligence 2.0" and in this Forbes article says that EQ predicts salary, and that a "one-point increase in EQ leads to an increase of 1.300 dollars of annual salary" (which doesn't make sense by the way, because it cannot be a linear progression to infinity).

But is it really true?

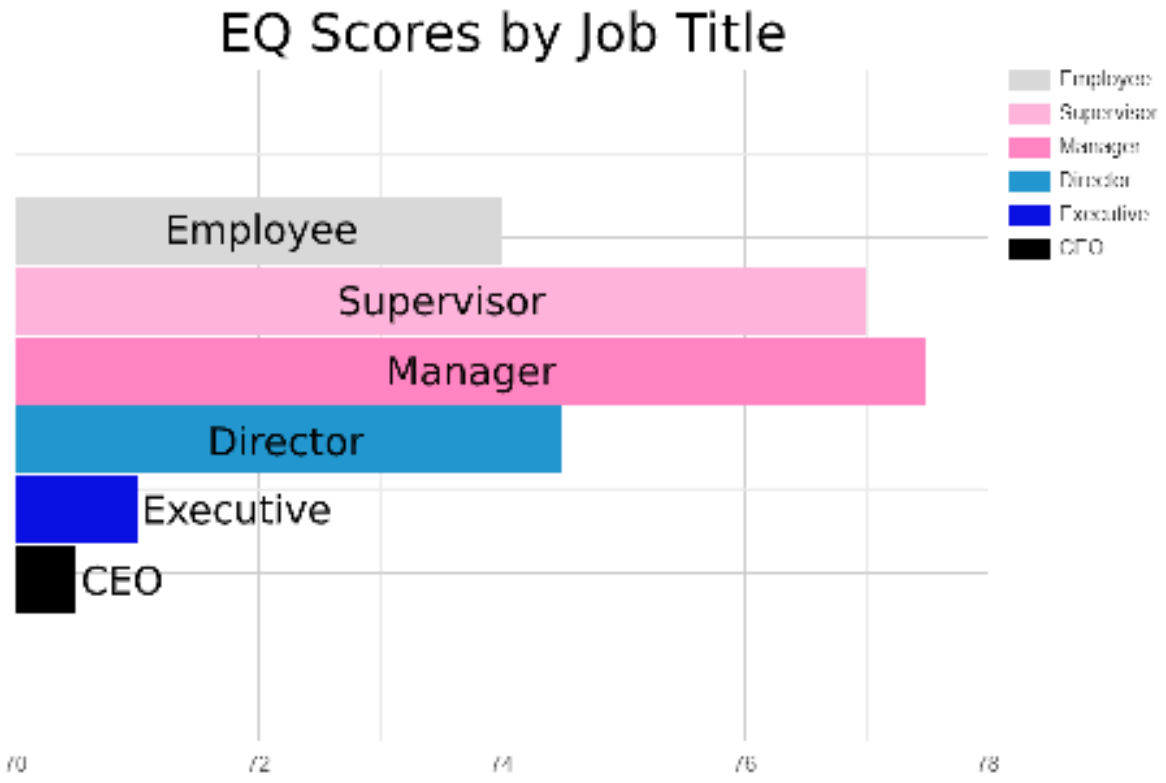
Empathic Nice Guys Might Not Finish Last, But Stuck in The Middle

In brief:

From all the evidence I have gathered, **it's not true that emotional intelligence is a key contributor to career success.**

It matters, in a way, yes, but it's not a linear progression.
It doesn't help you in all types of jobs and, most importantly, it doesn't seem like it helps you reach the top.

One single chart, plotting the EQ results by job titles, should suffice to put the theory to rest:



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And how about when those interests can't be aligned?

- **When interests cannot align, the EQ that helps you advance is Machiavellian in nature**

One study by David Buss and Liisa M.Kyl-Heku analyzed different career strategies.

And found out that a "manipulative strategy" was as effective as a strategy based on industriousness (ie.: hard work).

Frankly, I don't think you can reach a conclusion on 'most effective strategy'.

But I think we can all agree that Machiavellianism can help you advance.
This is a case where scientific studies confirm what most of us have seen with our own eyes.

The Machiavellian player knows that there are plenty of areas of conflicting interests between himself and the organization, and between himself and his colleagues.
And he is keenly aware of how to maximize self-interest while looking like he's playing for the team.

This is the area of EI where psychopaths do quite well.
Psychopaths are indeed good at recognizing emotions in other people's faces. And they do not always score low in emotional intelligence (Copestake et al., 2013). It's "just" in the conscience and empathy side that they're lacking.

- **Knowledge and mastery of power dynamics**

Here is the big secret:

It's alpha males and alpha females who get promoted.
You will rarely see a CEO who's a wimp, a CEO who acts submissively, or a CEO who speaks with uncertainty.

The simple rule is that **to make it to the top, you need to act like a top dog.**
Also see this article on executive skills that get you promoted.

I Wish I Could Tell You Differently

I'm not happy to write this article.

And I wish reality was different.

But for now, from the evidence I have seen so far, career progression has less to do with empathy and emotional intelligence, and more to do with looking the part, smart politics and, sometimes, ruthlessness and unabashed selfishness.

SUMMARY

Emotional Intelligence is crucial in life.
It helps you understand people and yourself, get along with people, and bond and connect with people.

It also helps you at work.
But not in the way it's usually portrayed.

Emotional intelligence helps you to get up to mid-level management.
After that, at executive and board levels, different traits come to the fore.

Learning how to play politics, including sometimes in potentially Machiavellian ways, becomes more helpful.
And what we call "executive skills" matter more than emotional intelligence.

This, by the way, could be one of the main reasons why women are still struggling to make it to the very top.
Women take emotional intelligence more seriously. And more literally.

A Quote to Go By

Finally, I'd like to leave you with a quote from "The Good Psychopath Guide":

> **There are two things that rise to the top. The cream, and the scum.**

To which, I add: to be the cream, you need to know how the scum operates.

Speaking Pro by Roger Love: Review & Notes

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Communicating and speaking with power is, well, power.
And in “Speaking Pro” vocal coach Roger Love teaches how to speak in public settings, including stages, boardrooms, and televised interviews with confidence, power, and charisma.

TPM’s reviews™

Contents

- Overview
  - Breathing Is The #1 Fundamental of Voice
  - The 6 Building Blocks of Voice
  - Middle Voice Allows You to Reach & Connect Both Men and Women
  - The Emotion of A Speech: Start Happy, Then Grateful
  - Delivering Emotions: Avoid Acting To Make the Audience Feel
  - Speaking With Charisma: Bringing Your Speech to Life
  - Working the Stage to Connect With the Audience: The 5 Stage Spots
  - Mastering Audience Participation
  - How to Handle the Applause
  - How to Interview Well
  - How to Master Business Meetings
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Overview

About the Author:
Roger Love is an American voice coach with decades of experience. He has coached many celebrities and famous singers, including Selena Gomez, Gwen Stephani, and self-help guru Anthony Robbins.

Breathing Is The #1 Fundamental of Voice

Speaking Pro starts first with the basics.
Which is great, because it means you don't need to purchase or go through a beginner's course first. You get everything into one: the fundamentals of voice, the exercises, and warm-ups, plus how to speak in public.

Breathing and speaking with air support are two fundamentals of voice because, of course, it's air that fuels your voice.

I was familiar with diaphragmatic breathing, sometimes referred to as belly-breathing, but I still took away some new information, including:

- **Breathe in normally**: Don't fill your belly to capacity like it's going to explode. This is something I was doing wrong in my exercises: I forced air in until I was filled to capacity
- **Only stomach when your stomach is coming in**: that's how you will support your voice with enough air. A good exercise is to count two 2 as your breath in, then count to 8 with your hand on your belly making sure that it's coming in

The 6 Building Blocks of Voice

Roger Love lists six building blocks of voice.

These are the "levers" that you will work on depending on how you want to come across and what you want to communicate.

So for example Roger Love explains than when you are the leader or want to come across more authoritative, you speak with a lower pitch, lower melody, and higher tone (ie.: less air).

On the other hand, when you're in a meeting and you're not the leader, you don't want to "outshine the master".
So you speak with lower volume (you don't want to overpower him), higher pitch (you don't want to sound more alpha than he is), and faster pace (you don't want to take more time than the leader).

PITCH: How high or low your voice sounds

- Speaking within your best pitch range will ensure that your voice sounds genuine
- Your voice pitch can provide an instant connection or disconnect with your listeners.

PACE: How fast or slow you speak

- A slow pace can communicate that you're lethargic
- Too fast of a pace may sound restless.
- Controlling the pace of voice can help you appear intelligent, creative, spontaneous and surprising.

TONE: Determined by the amount of airy or edgy sounds you make

- An edgier tone can make you appear more forceful or strong
- A more airy tone can appear gentle or submissive
- A certain amount of airiness can be useful for suggesting that you're friendly and accessible but it can easily undermine your credibility.

MELODY: A string of notes that are attached to one another

- To rise above the competition, you can use melody to connect with listeners and showcase your amazing content
- Used correctly, this can bring words to life, entertain, and engage audiences
- Monotone: a form of melody using only one note is not advised
- You'll get best results if you spend time consciously varying the types of melody you use

VOLUME: How loud or soft you speak

- Volume enables you to control how others perceive your confidence and the importance of what you are saying

Middle Voice Allows You to Reach & Connect Both Men and Women

The "middle voice" didn't exist before Roger Love came up with the theory.

So, what's this middle voice?
The middle sits in between "head voice" and "chest voice". The head voice is higher, and more associated with femininity. While the chest voice is lower, and more associated with masculinity.

A good middle voice can go both into head and chest.
When you can draw from both chest and head voice, you get two big benefits:

- Your voice is "fuller", and freer to move up and down
- You connect with both genders, more easily

That second point is was the most interesting for me, both from a persuasion point of view, and from this website's perspective of self-empowerment.
Indeed, one of the values this website espouses, is that there is more power in understanding and being able to leverage both the feminine and masculine within the same individual.
And that's something that our current culture largely misses on, encouraging women to behave more like men to be successful at work, and the manosphere encouraging men to neglect the feminine qualities.

See for example Elizabeth Holmes, trying too hard to talk like a man.

As Roger Love says, you shouldn't see to defy your natural voice. You should work on your voice and make it sound as good as you can. And then embrace that.

The Emotion of A Speech: Start Happy, Then Grateful

And you want to start happy because it captivates and it draws people in.

And they will be wondering: what is he so excited about?

But happy is not about smiling or cracking jokes. As a matter of fact, Roger Love recommends you do not start your speech or talk with a joke.
"Happy" is about your voice tonality.

You make "happy" by going up with your tonality, speaking a slightly higher volume, and adding melody -"a ton" of melody, says Roger-.

As you progress, says Roger Love, you want to move into gratitude.
Gratitude speaks still a high-ish volume, but decreases the melody and slows down the words. Most of all, it stretches out the vowels.

This should all be done in the very beginning, before you move into the main content.
After you captured people's attention, then you can move into the content.

As Roger Love says:

> Give happy. Give grateful. Then you have their hearts, and then you have the rest of the time to deliver the rest of the speech.

Delivering Emotions: Avoid *Acting* To Make the Audience *Feel*

Some speakers try to deliver emotions by feeling them and acting them.

But that's not what Roger Love recommends.
It comes across as fake when you try to embody your emotions. Trying to be angry as you "act" angry can end up looking silly.

Instead, you should focus on making the audience feel the emotion themselves, without necessarily embodying the emotion yourself.
There is much more power in showing controlled emotions, rather than overly re-enacting them.
And I agree with that.

Speaking With Charisma: Bringing Your Speech to Life

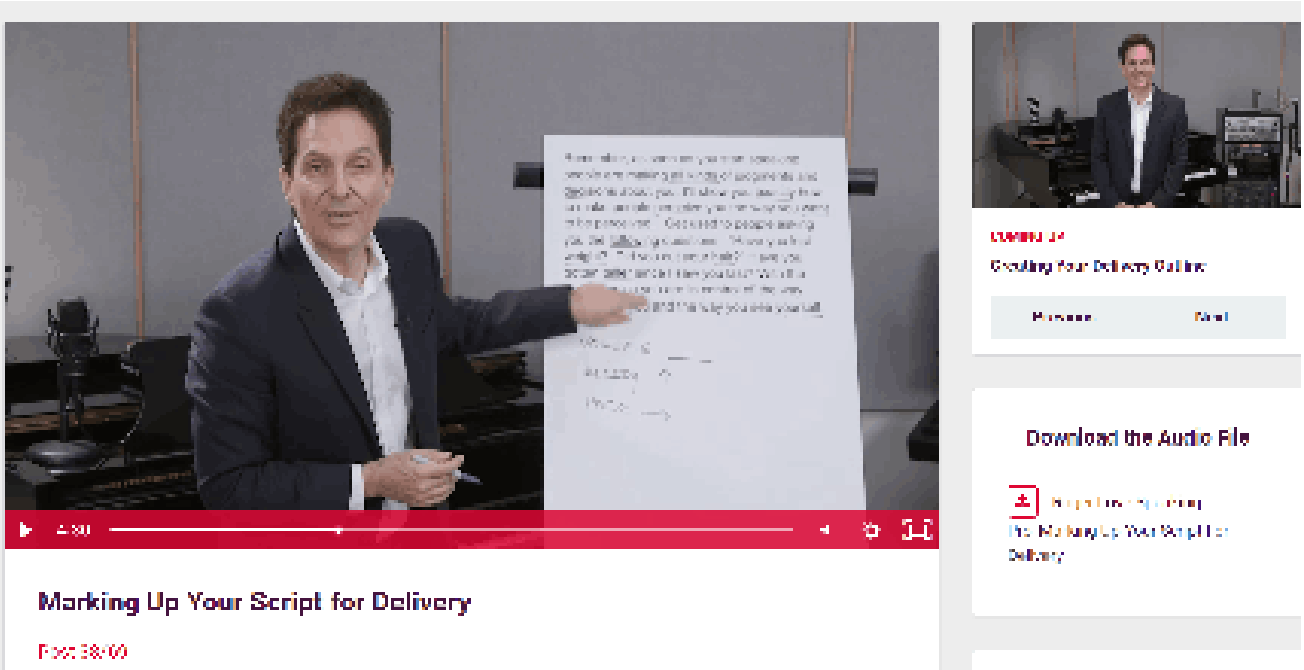
This was one of my favorite parts.

And I think this is what differentiates the great, charismatic presenters, and the average -or poor- ones.
The charismatic ones add "flavor" to their speech by changing rhythm, melody, or volume of certain key sentences or words.

Roger Love says there are three ways to emphasize anything in a sentence:

- Pace: faster or slower, also stretching out specific words or shortening them
- Melody: ascending, descending, or flat
- Volume: softer or louder

In Speaking Pro Roger Loves shows exactly how to make the keywords in your speech, and how to deliver them:



This will be useful to anyone, but especially to those who tend to deliver flatter and more monotone speeches and presentations.

Working the Stage to Connect With the Audience: The 5 Stage Spots

Roger Love explains how both singers and presenters should move on a stage.

To draw everyone in, you want to speak to your center, to your left, and to your right.
And when you are making your most important point, you want to step forward.

When you step back though, you should never give the audience your back. Stepping backward might also seem unnatural.
A better way instead is to go again to your right, then walk diagonally back to your left, and then again to the center, back to square 1. And you can start the process again.

Roger Love shows you how to execute this move while walking on an actual stage, which is great to learn.

Mastering Audience Participation

This was another great lesson in Speaking Pro.

Roger Love is not just good at teaching voice, but is also good with people and psychology. And it shows here. Some of the takeaways:

- If you're inviting people on stage, don't wait for them to come to you, walk towards them: the stage is your house, and you want to meet them at the door
- If they are too scared, keep holding onto their hand and maybe put a hand on their back to provide a human connection
- If a guest on the stage says he's angry and he disagrees with what you said, let them vent and answer gracefully

Roger Love showing how to encourage a shy or fearful individual you've just invited on stage

This lesson was also good to develop emotional intelligence.

How to Handle the Applause

Those among you who took speaking courses or who attended Toastmasters will know this.

But 90% of people don't, so here it is for you:

- When the audience applauds as you're walking up to speak, stand in your starting position for a second and just smile. After about two seconds, begin speaking
- After you speak, *stand there* and smile. The applause is a gift the audience wants to give TO you. If you walk off stage too soon, it's as if you're not willing to accept the gift of applause that the audience wants to give you
- When the applause starts to fade, bow or nod, say "thank you" and walk off the stage smiling

How to Interview Well

In this section, Roger Love explains how to interview in studios.

He explains both how to interview well as the interviewer, and as the interviewee.

Here are some takeaways:

- When your interviewer looks at the camera, you should, too
- Don't fidget or draw attention to yourself while your interviewer is introducing you: that's when he's touting your horn, help viewers keep the focus on them, as they shine a spotlight on you
- When they ask you a question, begin answering the question while looking at the interviewer. Then, move your glance to the cameras. Continue to rotate your glance between looking at the interviewer and at the cameras based on the way your answer naturally segments itself
- Point your body at the camera and only rotate your head, shoulders, and upper torso towards your interviewer.
- Use melody to signal to the interviewer that you're finished answering a question. For instance:
  - Going down in melody signals that you're done speaking
  - Going up or staying on the same note communicates that you have more to say or are not yet finished with your response

How to Master Business Meetings

Some authors say that when you're pitching your ideas to a room of people, you should zero in the only person who's got the most power.

But I agree with Roger Love instead when he says that you should look at everyone while you speak.
As Roger says:

> Never assume that anyone in the room doesn't have influence

Furthermore, if you overdo it and ignore people too much, you risk coming across as an asshole.

Here are some tips if you are presenting your ideas in a business meeting:

- Look at people randomly: if you create patterns, you become predictable and you dull your speech. If you people know you're not gonna look at them, they might get distracted
- Speak loud, at around a 7 on a scale from 1 to 10. But add melody, so it doesn't seem like you're angry
- Be on the happier side of the spectrum, which shows you're not needy. You all have you need in your life, no matter what they decide. And you're there to add value to their lives.

If you're not the leader of the meeting

Roger Love understands power dynamics quite well.
As Robert Greene says, if you're not the leader, it's a good career strategy to take precautions not to make the leader feel threatened.

So, when your boss is in the room:

- Look a bit more often and longer to the leader
- Lean forward towards the leader, avoid sitting back
- Speak with a lower volume than the leader
- When it comes to pace, speak faster than the leader, let him be the slow alpha male of the room
- Make your gestures smaller than the big boss, allow him to take center stage

If you're a total newbie and you're sitting far away from the heavy hitter, it's OK to move more and talk a bit more

excitedly.
It's good to show some passion.

Also read:

- How to deal with your boss for career advancement

CONS

- **The Mehrabian study**

As a fastidious social scientist, I would note that it's not always true that the words you choose only account for 7% of your communication.

- **Some videos could have been higher resolution**

Some of the videos might have been uploaded at higher resolution maybe. This is something I'd recommend the Roger Love team to look into. The current resolution is not a handicap in any way, but with higher resolution video, it might be even better.

- **Some real-life examples?**

One of the philosophies of this website is to teach with real-life examples. So I would have liked to also see some real-life examples of poor voice in a presentation, or of good use of voice.

On the other hand, Roger Love is so good at mimicking voices, that he is able to embody good and bad examples with his own voice.

PROS

- **Great overview of effective public speaking**

Speaking Pro covers public speaking from a voice point of view, of course, but also body language, connecting with the audience, as well as speaking with power and authority.

And does so across several different speaking environments, including business meetings, studio interviews, and speeches.

- **New exercises even for foundations of voice**

Even though I went through the basic voice course "The Perfect Voice", I still learned a couple more good voice exercises.
For example, counting to 2 to breathe in, and counting to 8, while your stomach comes back in.

- **You can download the mp3**

God, I love this option!

- **Professionally formatted**

Speaking Pro is a premium course, and comes with the bells and whistle of a premium course, including a professionally formatted PDF.
See here an example:

You can see the PDF example here.

- **More than just voice: very good on power dynamics**

Obviously Speaking Pro focuses on voice and that's where most of the added value comes from.
However, there was much more than voice, and Roger Love is very good at understanding people's psychology as well as power dynamics.

His advice on putting people at ease, bonding and developing rapport, as well as communicating with power and political savvy is all spot on.

Review

Speaking Pro combines the basic exercises of The Perfect Voice, plus all the added value on how to speak effectively

That "effectively" includes both how to bond and connect with the audience, how to speak power, charisma, and authority, and how to speak in a politically savvy way that makes your boss feel good.

I think than not just entertainers and public personas, but also most businesspeople would gain a lot in going through Speaking Pro.
As I repeat many times here, public speaking and presentations are part of the "executive skills" that will help you get into the boardroom.

- **Check out Speaking Pro here**

Enroll to Speaking Pro
P.S.:
It's not just about voice, but also what you say and how. See:

- **Speaking with power: dominant conversation**

> Dominant Conversations: 10 Ways to Speak With Power

The Shadow Negotiation: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Shadow Negotiation* author Deborah Kolb examines negotiation at the level that rarely gets spoken about but that can either make or break the deal: personal feelings and biases, nonverbal communication, and frames.
The Shadow Negotiation teaches women how to negotiate effectively by going for both personal advocacy and pie-enlarging relationships.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - What's the Shadow Negotiation
  - Before "Creative" Negotiation and "Making the Pie Larger", You Need to Show Some Strength
  - Frames in Negotiation: Strategic Turns
  - Advocacy, Connection, And Striking the Right Balance
  - Advocacy: You Need to Be Able to Push
  - Pushing, Packaging, and… The Third Way
  - Reframing From Slacker to Too Busy: An Example
- More Wisdom
- Real-Life Applications
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Key Takeaways

- In all negotiations there are hidden and unspoken frames, biases, and personal beliefs that will impact the negotiation: they're part of the shadow negotiation
- If you don't take those unspoken assumptions and frames to the surface, they might undermine your negotiation
- To do well in negotiations, you need to be good both at advocating for yourself (pushing) and connecting
- For short-term, one-off deals, advocacy/pushing is more important
- For long-term relationships, you are better off with more connection
- For long-term relationships in which you don't know each other well, use "mutual inquiry"

Notes

About the Author:
Deborah Kolb is an American researcher, author, and teacher. She received her Ph.D. from the Sloan School of Management, MIT. Kolb serves as a women's-leadership consultant to, among others, Google, Fidelity, and the White House.
She is the co-director of the Negotiations in the Workplace Project at Harvard and pens her own blog at DeborahMKolb.com.

What's the Shadow Negotiation

Says Deborah Kolb:

> The shadow negotiation is where hidden agendas and masked assumptions play out. Often it is defined by a whole array of attitudes of which the participants are only dimly aware.

It's important to know and understand the shadow negotiation because those hidden agendas impact the negotiation as much as the explicit issues and differences do.

To negotiate effectively, you must recognize the shadow negotiation and bring those misguided assumptions to the surface.

For example, when women negotiate at work, the assumption is often that work was "her choice", and that she will always put family before work. Hence, she shouldn't be negotiating hard.
A woman who doesn't address those issues will face an uphill battle.

But the shadow negotiation also includes nonverbals, body language, power dynamics, and interpersonal relationships, all of which influence the negotiation but that are rarely talked about.
Says Deborah:

> Even though they seldom address the subject directly, they decide between them whose interests and needs command at tention, whose opinions matter, and how cooperative they are going to be in reaching an agreement.

Before "Creative" Negotiation and "Making the Pie Larger", You Need to Show Some Strength

Strength matters.

If your negotiation partner thinks you're a pushover, or that you will make all the concessions, no amount of creative problem solving will help you reach a good outcome.

Says the author:

> The people you negotiate with need to know that they cannot push you around before you can convince them to take you and your interests seriously.

Frames in Negotiation: Strategic Turns

Deborah Kolp calls "turns" what in the end are "frames".

If the other party is trying to make you the issue of the negotiation, negotiating becomes impossible (and it's often a negotiation power move to manipulate you).
You cannot defend when someone accuses you, or you continue to operate *within* their frame of choice, which is helping them and damaging you.

Some framing techniques the author recommends:

- **Interrupt the move**: by changing the pace you break the momentum and the frame might never have the chance to establish itself.
- **Correct the move**: offer an alternative explanation to whatever they are accusing you of. Often, you will go from a negative explanation of your motives and behavior, to a positive one (for example: "you don't have enough appetite for risks", "my appetite for risk hinges on having good information, which is what I am asking

you to provide me with"

- **Divert the move**: go from personal, back to the problem
- **Name the move**: this is the equivalent of "going meta", such as you explain what they are trying to do

The author also presents examples for each, and one of them was particularly impressive.
Charlene won the promotion to committee chair over Ellen. One their first meeting, Ellen was late. And when she arrived, she had printed a memo that she handed out to everyone. Ellen was acting as if she were the chair. Instead of pushing back right away and look territorial, Charlene looked at the memo and said "what a lot of work".
Then asked people if they wanted a refill of coffee before restarting. Once the meeting restarted, Charlene said:

> **Charlene (boss)**: We have not made so much progress as Ellen did independently.
> We have yet to identify the approach we want to take, let alone the priorities.
> Perhaps, Charlene suggested, it would be better to consider Ellen's memo when ideas had been discussed a bit more.
> So, let's start with the ideas now…

Without the interruption, the committee would have focused 100% on Ellen's memo.
But with the break, she prevented Ellen's memo to dominate the discussion, and thwarted Ellen's attempt to act as the leader.

Also read:

- Understanding frames
- Frame techniques to control the frame

Advocacy, Connection, And Striking the Right Balance

The author distinguishes between two different approaches:

- **Advocacy**: pushing for what you need. When you're dealing with one-off negotiation and single items, like selling/buying cars and houses, it will be more about advocacy
- **Connection**: the relationship side of the negotiation. You will use it more for repeated interaction and for complex negotiations. When negotiation is defined as a search for joint gains, connective skills become more important.

Advocacy: You Need to Be Able to Push

I totally agree with Deborah Kolp:

> Pushing has a taint associated with it.
> (…)
> But being able to push effectively is an important skill for all negotiators. Despite whatever collaborative inclination we may have, **some deals, by their very nature, require pushing**, and some people drive us to push simply to protect our interests.

Some good advice for women (but also for men):

- **Believe it's possible to negotiate, seek opportunities:** To even think about negotiation, you first have to realize it's possible. Otherwise, opportunities for negotiation go wasted
- **Look at your strengths and the value you bring to the table**: too many women focus only on their weaknesses

- **Let your negotiating partner work to whittle you down, don't do it yourself**: people second-guess themselves before going into the negotiation and start decreasing their own demands before their negotiation partner does it for them
- **Think how to make your requests more palatable, rather than scrapping them**

On using threats effectively:

- **If you use a threat, it must be real, and you must be prepared to follow through**
- **Better than a stand-alone threat, couple it with a conciliatory move**: for example, you can say what you will be forced to do if your fair demands are not met
- **Better than threats, talk about other options you have**: letting the other party know you have other options is equally effective, and carry fewer risks of retaliation and/or of ruining the relationship

Also read:

- **How to present options for maximum leverage in salary negotiations**

Pushing, Packaging, and... The Third Way

The author defines two typical negotiations we engage in:

1. **Pushing**: this is advocacy only, and it's used in competitive negotiation with a win-lose frame
2. **Packaging:** you seek to make the pie larger. Rather than push for what you want, you try to discover the different interests in play, and make a trade based on those differences to make a "package deal".

And she adds a third way:

- **Mutual inquiry:** builds explicitly on the open relationships and trust forged in the shadow negotiation. Bargainers may re-evaluate what they want, and redefine the problem itself

Says the author about mutual inquiry:

> You work together to learn more about each other's experience, and agreements emerge not from floating attractive options but from this exploration.
> In other words, new ideas don't come from brainstorming, as in problem solving, but from listening, learning, and creating together.

Reframing From Slacker to Too Busy: An Example

One of the things I liked most of "The Shadow Negotiation" are the examples.

Caroline, for example, was getting stretched thin and had no more capacity to add one more project.
When her boss approached her and asked her to take over one more project, the risk was that she could be seen as a slacker by her boss if she said "no".
Instead, she showed her boss all the projects she was working on, with their due dates, and she asked him what he would prefer to delay. Instead of saying "no", she showed she was working on a lot of projects and bringing a lot of value, which turned her "no" into a smart self-promotion opportunity.
And as a result, her manager hired an assistant for Caroline.

More Wisdom

Some more nuggets of wisdom:

- **When there is a big power difference, appreciative gestures are not to connect, but to make up for the**

difference: when there are bigger power imbalances, overtures, kindness, or going the extra mile, are not tools to connect, but tools of advocacy to make up for that difference
- **Relationships are indispensable for collaborative negotiation**: the other party must feel comfortable with you before he or she begins to accept that your commitment to a mutual solution is genuine.

Real-Life Applications

Some good ideas for your negotiations:

- **Time your negotiations when you're most needed**: try to negotiate when the company needs you the most. And when you're literally more in demand. One woman in the examples set up the negotiation meeting during the hour she was needed the most, with people physically knocking on the door looking for her
- **Use intermediaries to positively prime the other party**: if you can send someone higher up, or someone the other party is friends with to start influencing your target
- **Only share sensitive information after some trust has been built:** the example in the book is from a negotiation with the union in which a hotel manager shares the financial of the hotel -something that had never been done before-

But, says the author:

> The timing of this sharing is significant.
> Had Shannon furnished the financial information earlier, the union leadership would probably not have believed they were getting the whole story, and they would have been suspicious about the numbers they were given.
> Shannon, on the other hand, would have risked having that information used against her to extract concessions. Trust on both sides of the table was a precondition for her candor.

So very true.
Only make your biggest overture after some trust and connection have been established, or you give away your biggest weapon too early, and it will not have nearly as much leverage.

Quotes

On negotiation as not an art, but something anyone can learn and get better at:

> It is not surprising that along the way we elevate negotiation to an "art form" practiced by the innately talented. A real estate developer with the instincts of a street fighter attaches the article "the" to his first name and labels what he does The Art of the Deal.
> There is nothing magical or mystical about negotiation. People get better at it with practice.

Watch our what women get praised for, it might as well harm you:

> As one commentator put it, an emphasis on women's special qualities of caring and nurturing amounts to a "setup to be shafted."

On people's tendency to "negotiate against themselves":

> When we worry about whether our demands will be hard to swallow, rather than trying to make them more palatable, we handicap ourselves from the start in the shadow negotiation.

On connections as the antidote towards adversarial negotiations:

> Many negotiations start out with opposing sides squared off. When you connect with the other person, you alter this dynamic.

On mixing both advocacy and connection:

> Advocacy and connection go hand in hand.
> If effective advocacy enables you to claim a place at the table and garners credibility for you and your demands, the relational skills of connection define the engagement that takes place.

CONS

- **Could have been briefer**

One of the reviewers on Amazon gave this book zero stars writing that it was "too wordy for the average Jane".
To which I replied that with that attitude, Jane will certainly remain average.

- **One passage felt a bit random**

This passage:

> Women, through their capacity to mother and from their subordinate status at work, have developed not just coping mechanisms but real strengths.

I didn't get how exactly is that strength "developed" through the subordinate status at work.
But it's just a minor sentence on a book that is otherwise well-balanced, rational, and that speaks a lot of sense.

PROS

- **Lots of examples**

One of the greatest plusses of "The Shadow Negotiation" is that it's full of examples.
That makes it *both* a more interesting read, and a more effective book to help people learn the concepts.

- **Mixing power with warmth**

Deborah Kolb's advice for negotiations is to mix advocacy (assertively and smartly pushing for one's own needs) and connection (caring and human empathy).

That is the same approach I advocate on this website when I talk about mixing power with warmth.
Also see: the basic strategies of power.

Review

"The Shadow Negotiation" is a wonderful book to learn more about negotiation.

Deborah Kolb is a sharp mind that sees and understands frames, social dynamics, as well as deeper power dynamics.
Albeit originally marketed at women and for women, I find that it's equally useful to both genders.

Most of all, I liked that it contains *a lot* of examples, which also makes it a good text for beginners.

Check the:

- Best negotiation books

The Good Psychopath Guide to Success: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 May 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Good Psychopath Guide (2014) discusses how to leverage dark triad traits to become a successful psychopath. Kevin Dutton says that some psychopathic traits, in the right doses, are advantageous in life, and non-psychopaths can learn to adopt them and become more successful, but without harming others.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
- More Wisdom
- Real-Life Applications
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Overview

- Some psychopathic traits can help you become more successful
- Some professions require the ability to switch off sympathy or to detach yourself
- Take the good traits of psychopathy, avoid the antisocial ones, and become a "good psychopath" (we teach how in Power University)

Notes

About the Authors:
Kevin Dutton is a British psychologist, researcher, and author. He previously published "The Wisdom of Psychopaths".
Andy McNab is a former British Special Air Service (SAS) operator, novelist and, supposedly, a psychopath. He has been criticized for making up stories.

The Traits of Psychopathy

Kevin Dutton says that many people get psychopathy wrong.

When talking about psychopathy Ted Bundy or Hannibal Lecter comes to mind. But what defines a psychopath is not necessarily a history of heinous murders, but a set of traits that can also be helpful in life.

These traits include:

- Ruthlessness
- Fearlessness
- Impulsivity
- Self-confidence
- Focus
- Coolness under pressure

- Mental toughness
- Charm
- Charisma
- Reduced empathy
- Lack of conscience

Imagine these traits on a “dialing desk”, where you can push them up and down.
Having all of them cranked to the maximum at all times will lead to lots of troubles, poor performance, and self-destruction.

But at the right time, and at the right intensity, they can be helpful and they can help you achieve success.

We agree with that and it obeys the law of balance.
We highly recommend this article to understand the higher level concept:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

Precision-Engineering Psychopathy

Says Dutton:

1. The most effective alignment will depend on circumstances
2. Some jobs, professions, or situations, requires those traits to be cranked up a little higher than “normal” baseline

The precision-engineering psychopathy Kevin Dutton refers to is the alignment of each of the psychopathic traits in a way that will allow you to perform at the top of your abilities, within a specific environment.

Professions Where Psychopathic Traits Help Succeed

Kevin Dutton lists a few professions in which he believes that some psychopathy traits can help.

They are:

- **Surgeon**: you need to dissociate yourself emotionally from the person you’re operating on, remain calm if something goes wrong
- **Businessman**: you need to be able to fire people, have the courage to take appropriate risks
- **Trader**: need to execute trades without getting emotional and avoiding the typical human psychological biases
- **Lawyer**: needs the narcissism to be at the center of the attention, belligerent self-confidence to make his case

Surgeons for example need to learn how to operate. And they learn by making mistakes. If a surgeon is too sympathetic, he might give up and never become a great and experienced surgeon.

And when it comes to business, McNab says he hopes there are more psychopaths as CEOs:

But he might not need to hope too much.
Also see:

- Psychopathy VS empathy: what truly helps you to get to the top

> The Myth of Emotional Intelligence: Machiavellis At The Top

Good Psychopath VS Bad Psychopath

Kevin Dutton says we can differentiate between good and bad psychopaths.

The differences revolve around a number of key components that make up our social environment, including other people, social context, interpersonal social dynamics, and society at large.

So here are the differences:

	Bad Psychopath	Good Psychopath
Others	No compunction in inflicting pain onto others	Doesn't cause undue or unnecessary harm
Context	He is stuck at high levels of psychopathy, in all situations	Psychologically flexible, can adapt his behavior
Society	Has no concern for the consequences of his actions	Leverages his traits to contribute to society at large
Learning	Never learn how to best channel psychopathic traits	Learn how to use it for win-win with Power University
Bottom line	Psychopathy is a curse	Psychopathy is a talent

But this isn't the whole story.
The authors say that it's possible to be both of them at the same time.
And the "functional psychopath" and the "successful psychopath" are also part of the discourse.

- **Functional Psychopath**: the term was introduced, but not really described. The way I understood it though, it means that you have psychopathic traits, but "modulate" your traits to enhance your skills and work effectively within society
- **Successful Psychopath**: both good and bad psychopaths can be successful. The bad ones can threaten, cheat, lie, or manipulate their way to the top

The level of intelligence and predisposition to violence also heavily influence the trajectory that psychopaths can take.

- **Violent and non-intelligent:** Violent and non-intelligent psychopaths have very poor prospects, likely to hand in a gang, in prison, dead, or… All of them
- **Non-violent and non-intelligent**: If you remove violence, then it gets a little bit better, and the psychopaths will end up being a small timer crook, con-artist, or drug dealer. He might still end up in prison, but for smaller charges
- **Non-violent and intelligent**: the best combination. The authors say you're most likely to make a killing in the market and enjoy the fruits your work
- **Violent and intelligent**: exotic occupations become possible, from the head of a criminal organization, to spy or special services

The authors go on with further divides among psychopaths, including "good/good guys" (James Bond), bad/good guys" (Gordon Gekko), "bad/bad guys" (Hannibal Lecter" and the "good/bad guys" (Dexter).
But I didn't find this part to be very clear or enlightening (plus, how is Dexter "good"?).

The 7 Skills of Good Psychopaths

Dutton lists seven skills of the good psychopath, to which he dedicates a chapter each:

1. **Just do it**: psychopaths don't waste time, and neither should you
    1. Procrastination prolongs the pain in the short term, arms you in the long run, and wastes mental resources
    2. We overplay the risks compared to the rewards. Psychopaths are very reward-driven and don't fall for that

mental bias

2. **Nail it**: you must learn how to switch one when it really matters, and play to win
3. **Be your own person**: psychopaths are not afraid of not fitting and doing their own thing, no matter what others think.
   1. Know what you want to be, and know what you *don't* want to be
   2. Learn to withstand social pressure, to say no when you don't want something, and to enforce your boundaries
4. **Become a persuasion black belt**: "getting into the minds of their preys give them a distinct advantage"
   1. Frame it as if it's within their self-interest to do it
   2. Make them feel good about doing what you want them to do
   3. Learn how to empathize to tailor your message to the target
   4. Learn how frames work, and how to control the frame to persuade others
5. **Take it on the chin (move on)**: psychopaths move on. They don't beat themselves up and don't have regrets
   1. Ask yourself: "what would I do if I didn't take this personally" and "what would I do if I didn't feel the heat"
   2. Stop taking accusations personally. First of all, we over-attribute intent to what people say or do. And even if they meant it, the problem is with *them*, not you.
6. **Live in the moment**: be focused when it matters. Psychopaths share this trait with elite Buddhist monks and great athletes
   1. Anxieties often stem not from reality, from anxieties of our own anxieties (second-order emotion)
7. **Uncouple behavior from emotions**: take a spet back and remove emotions from the situation

> **Godfather**: it's not personal, Sonny, it's strictly business

When Michael Corleone shows he's uncoupling emotions from the action, you know he is ready to become the godfather.

Beating Procrastination: Know Your Style

Kevin Dutton says there are three types of procrastinators:

1. **Ruminators**: not making a decision absolves from the responsibility of the outcomes of that decision
2. **Avoidants**: are avoiding the fear of failure (or fear of success). They fear what others think of them, and would rather people think they lack effort, than ability
3. **Perfectionists**: they'd rather do nothing than having to measure up to their own unreachable standards

They all lie to themselves saying they will feel more like to do it on another day (they won't), that it isn't important (it is), and that they work best under pressure (not true).

Procrastination reduces your success in the long run, of course. But it's also bad in the short run. People who dawdle only prolong the discomfort within themselves.

To counteract procrastination:

1. **Visualize yourself doing it**: carrying it out successfully and overcoming the challenges
2. **Find out exactly what you don't like**: once you know what it is, you can start working through them (this was very helpful for me, for example finding ways to cut down on the parts I disliked the most)
3. **Focus on the future**: the benefits it will bring, and how you will feel once you've done it
4. **Plan and ring-fence the activity**
5. **Downsize your time**: procrastinators wait for the perfect time and long stretches of free time. Instead, do

whatever you can, in the little time you might have

6. **Destroy perfectionism**
    1. Find out your bullying voice that demands perfection
    2. Talk back to it
    3. Take appropriate action
    4. Celebrate doing it rather than doing it perfectly
    5. Do it repeatedly
    6. Sometimes set out with failure as your goal, just to realize that failure and rejections aren't such a bad thing

Life Has No Meaning: It Just Wants to See If You're Good Enough

This was a brief passage, but very deep and philosophical.

Kevin Dutton quotes Albert Camus, who said that life has no meaning whatsoever.
That's hard for many people to grasp, since most people need meaning in life (also see: "Man's Search for Meaning").
But for psychopaths and trained SAS soldiers, says Dutton, there is no need for meaning.

The Traits of Good Special Forces Soldiers

I frankly missed the connection between "meaning in life" and how that applies to psychopaths and/or to special forces.

But Dutton says the traits that make good special forces soldiers are:

1. The ability to let things wash over them
2. Not take things personally
3. Not dwell on the past
4. Not overthink the present
5. Not worry unduly about the future

More Wisdom

- **Psychopathy might be on a scale**: Kevin Dutton says the debate is still on. In the past, it was thought that you either are, or are not a psychopath. Today it seems more like it's a matter of shades of grey in between the black and white
- **Psychopaths learn more from rewards than punishment**: psychopaths are slower to learn than normal people when they are taught through punishments. But they are quicker to learn when they are taught with rewards.
- **Psychopaths are more drawn to rewards than punishments**: and that's why they are more concerned about winning than avoiding losses
- **In the special forces, there is more respect, more emotional detachment, and less violence**: special forces are more about being effective, than getting emotionally worked up. They don't call the enemies "enemies", but "players"
- Dutton says that psychopaths have an empathy switch which by default is on "off". But if instructed to put themselves into other people's shoes, they did feel empathy

Also, learn more on dark psychology here, and manipulation here:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Real-Life Applications

- **Quick being too nice, be comfortable with conflict**: evidence shows that folks who are *too* agreeable (ie.: too nice) earn less than less agreeable folks
- **Respond to situations instead of reacting to people**: if you find it difficult to say no, learn to de-personalize the situation and answer to the proposal or requests, instead than to the people who are asking you. That way, it will be easier to say "no", and you will make more rational decisions

CRITICISM

Please also see:

- The Wisdom of Psychopaths – Criticism

Naive Self-Help

It's funny:

How can a book on "how to be a good psychopath" be naive self-help?

Because, this is the "psychopath guide to success" based on Andy's history:

- Join the army & get sent out to a senseless war
- Invent stories that sell books and make you famous
- Get an accredited psychologist as a co-author
- Charm said psychologist to write well about you
- Write nothing about that book
- Get a good chunk of the revenues of that book
- Milk the extra fame for more money
- Enjoy life

There is much to learn there.
Especially on the "charisma of psychopaths" to charm certain men.
But… It's not in the book.

Is There Such A Thing As A "Good Psychopath"?

Same as for Dutton's previous book, there is criticism regarding whether or not psychopaths can be good.

This time it's Lilian Glass, author of "Verbal Self-Defense", to criticize the idea of a good psychopath.
In an interview with NPR, Glass says that psychopaths are dangeorus, and to write a book inviting people to act more like psychopaths, is dangerous.

She says:

> If you are a psychopath, you don't dial up the levels of the traits. … It can't be done. Psychopaths don't pick and choose how ruthless or nonempathetic they will be.
> They are these traits, and it is not by degree.

Personally, I am in between Dutton and Glass, but closer to Dutton when it comes to how useful his argument is to

most people.
Such as, a clinical psychopath will hardly choose to be "good". But "good" people with empathy and who don't see others as pawns to be maneuvered, *can* learn to be more successful by learning to use some psychopathy traits.
And they can do so without harming others or also while largely remaining forces for good.

For a sobering read on the explosive cocktail that the psychopath's selfish, amorality, and power-craving can lead to, please read:

- **Confessions of a psychopath: my sexual strategies**

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Some Psychopath Traits Feel Embellished or Mistakenly Applied to *All* Psychopaths

For example:

- **Psychopaths live in the moment like Buddhist monks?**

Dutton says that psychopaths and the best Buddhist monks share a mental state of mindfulness and living in the moment.

But when he put that question to Mark Williams, professor of clinical psychology at Oxford and founder of mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy, Mark disagreed.
Mark said that psychopaths are more about "devouring" the present moment, more than savoring it. And Andy agreed -albeit he added that "savoring or devouring is better than missing it altogether"-.

Dutton himself in the book sayd of Andy McNab that he has the "attention-span of a goldish on speed" (if I remember the drug correctly).
Which does not seem do go along well with mindfulness.

- **Psychopaths great at persuasion?**

I'm not sure how much we can generalize on psychopaths being great at persuasion.

Sure, they like to manipulate people so you might expect they might get good at it.
But that's far from being a given.

- **Psychopaths have more sexual partners?**

Albeit it's true that dark-triad men have more sexual partners, I also wouldn't generalize on psychopaths abilities with the ladies.

Also read: **Do psychopaths get laid more**?

- **Psychopaths better at making rational financial decisions?**

Dutton also says that the most successful brokers might "plausibly be termed" functional psychopaths, thus suggesting that decoupling emotions from decisions is a psychopath-only ability.

But based on what does he say that?

Some of the best investors, like Ray Dalio and Warren Buffet, don't strike me as being high in psychopathy.
Quite the opposite.

McNab Contradicts The Idea of Successfully Removing Emotions From Decision-

Making

As the “psychopath in house”, McNab is often used for real-life examples of the principles.

McNab says he bought a Porsche 911 not because he wanted it, but because he wanted to “show” the salesman who hadn’t taken him seriously that he *could* buy it.
Very funny story and well written. But contradicts this ideal of psychopaths removing emotions from decisions -at least in that situation-.

Can You Trust The Stories of A Psychopath?

There is another trait of psychopathy that Dutton forgets to mention: manipulation and lies.

If someone is a psychopath, what he says should probably be taken with a pinch of salt.
One of the traits of psychopathy is fearlessness.
But when McNab tells the story of his first shootout in the army, he says he was “scared, really scared”.

McNab’s “Bravo to Zero” book has also been criticized by several sources for being fabricated or “embellished”.
The denials of McNab’s claims also come from his own colleagues in the mission (see a short summary of the criticism in the Wikipedia entry).

Good Psychopaths Likely Make For Shitty Leaders

This is something Dutton never talks about.

A lack of conscience and a lack of empathy likely make for really bad leaders.

Here is how to make this point clear.
Dutton asked McNab if he would sacrifice a spy to feed the wrong information to the enemy. If the spy is captured, the victory will happen marginally quicker, and with slightly fewer casualties.

But here is what being captured meant for the spy:

> He would be horrendesouly tortured, mutilated, and ultimately killed

To which Andy McNab replies:

> Of course I would why wouldn’t I?
> Because he’s loyal and brilliant, I hazard.
> (Andy laughs)
> Then all the more reasons to use him

From a utilitarian point of view and exchanging one life for a few more lives, it might still make sense.
But, first of all, it might not make utilitarian sense from a total of pain being borne by the troops.

And second, who on their right mind would want to work for such a boss, with so little respect for his own loyal men, and with so little respect for human suffering?

Do Psychopaths Even Make For Great Warriors?

I partially agree with McNab and Dutton.

There certainly are some psychopathic traits that can make for better warriors.
The lack of fear, the drive for stimulation, the risk-taking attitude, the ability to focus and concentrate, and also the lack of empathy that makes PTSD less likely.

However, there are also psychopathic traits that make for very bad warriors.

Says neuroscientist -and psychopath himself- James Fallon ((opens in a new tab)Fallon, 2013):

> The problem with inviting psychopaths to war, however, is that the military also wants soldiers to be team players who can connect with their unit and fight not only against the enemy but *for* their own.

Psychopaths have no allegiance, and are in only for themselves.

And says psychopath researcher Dr. Robert Hare (Hare, 1993):

> When in the rare case they make the selection into high-risk fighting units, they are seen as "cowboys" and "loose cannons" and usually don't last long

Yep, lots of psychopaths are just that: loose cannons.

Exaggerates the Incidence of Psychopathy

Says one of the authors:

> Take banking and politics. The financial centers of the world and our leader are filled with psychopaths. Totally focused, totally ruthless.

"Filled"?
That sounds like an exaggeration. And I don't see much "total focus" or much emotional detachment in many politicians, for example Donald Trump, whom many think might be a narcissist.

Machiavellianism Might Be More Helpful

If we're exploring dark triad traits for life success, then probably Machiavellianism is better.

Machiavellianism overlaps with factor 1 psychopathy, which is the subclinical level of psychopathy.
Dutton could have probably explained that a bit better.

Quotes

A brain surgeon on brain surgery:

> The brain represents the high seas of modern-day medicine. And the 21st-century brain surgeon is pirates and buccaneering.

On what rises to the top:

> There are two things that rises at the top: the cream, and the scum.

On not turning the other cheek:

> Is turning the other cheek a legitimate strategy by which to live one's life? Science I tell Andy has in fact come up with an answer, and it's "no".
> Research has shown that **responding to nice people by being nice, and to not nice people by being not nice, is by far the most effective way forward**.

On fighting tips:

> The first thing you learn when you're taught the noble art of street fighting in the regiment is that you never go

> down during a fight. Hardly anyone can throw a decent punch. But everyone can kick.

On not taking things personally:

> If someone is insulting, abusing you, or manipulating you, then the problem is not about you, it's about *them*. It's about *their* issues, not yours. It's about *their* problem, not yours. It's about *their* personality, not yours.
> Of course, that you *think* it's all about you, and not about them, that's about you.

CONS

- **Would have preferred fewer lad-stories and more information**

There are a lot of stories, all told in a "lad in a pub" style that might seem out of a place in a book written by a psychologist, and meant to be taken seriously.

That makes it more of a pop-science book.
Nothing wrong with that. But sometimes I wished for fewer stories and deeper information or citations.

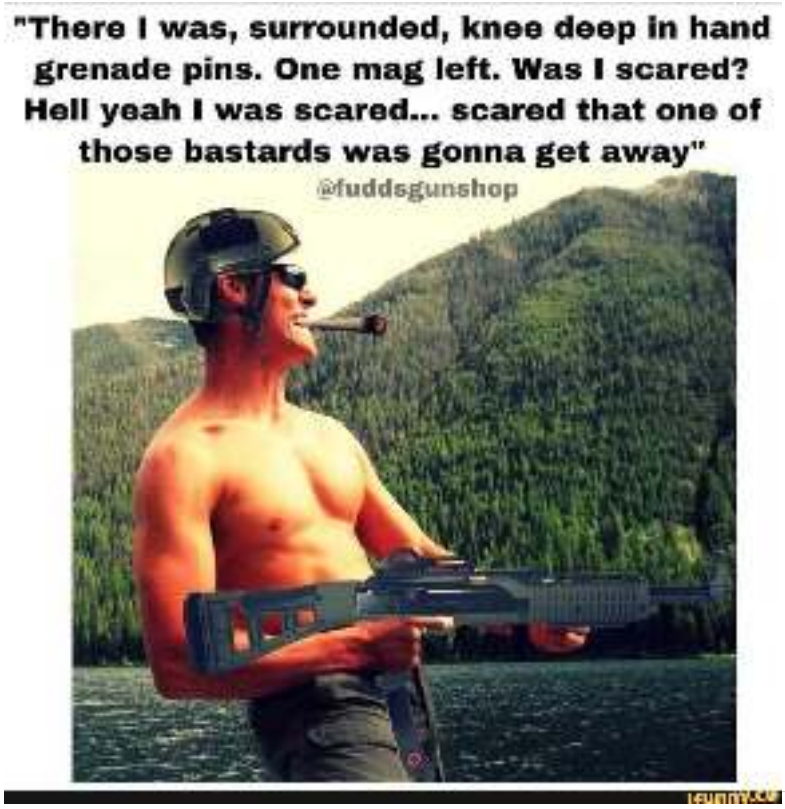
On the other hand, some of the stories did add value.

- **Some self-promotional and ego-stroking stories**

There are a few "ego-stroking" stories and "look at me how cool I am" self-descriptions.
For example, when Andy speaks about himself:

> It didn't matter if I was going to be number 1 through the door of an hostage rescue or going under cover with a South London accent or, these days, talking to the board members of a company that's going tits up because they don't know their asses from their elbows.
> Fuck it, I'll get away with it. I always have. Even as a kid…

A meme for ex-military books and memoirs comes to mind:



Source: https://ifunny.co/picture/there-i-was-surrounded-knee-deep-in-hand-grenade-pins-938z0Yqd6
Plus, on that Andy's quote, he himself says that he's been in prison.
And he got caught in Iraq, too. So he didn't exactly "always get away" with it, as he states.

- **Sometimes insensitive towards victims of abuse**

There are several examples of domestic abuse, including one where a former SAS soldier killed his wife.

But there is not a word of condemnation for abuse.
Sometimes, it seems to actually make light fun of it. Talking about the incident in which Andy's former colleagues killed his partner, he says that the argument "didn't go well".

- **Heavy in Brit slang and culture**

In the "Wisdom of Psychopaths" there was already a heavy dose of brit-centrism.
For example, the author said that "if you didn't know Andy McNab, the most famous soldier since Henry, you have been living on the moon" (or something like that).

Well, I had no idea who that guy was, and I've been living on earth.
Just outside of Britain.

And the Brit-centrism kicks into higher gear here.
For example, analyzing one result, he says that you are "50% Russel Brand, and 50% Jo Brand". Russel Brand is famous enough outside of Britain, but few know Jo Brand, so both the joke and the information are lost.

The English slang and colloquialisms also get thick. Couple it with the heavy British accent of the narrators, and some American and international listeners might.

- **Sometimes, misplaced admiration for psychopathy**

The author says that non-psychopaths "envy" the psychopath's ability to break free from the shackles of societal restraint and from our own self-consciousness.
And then he says: "but you guys, you psychopaths can, and I think in that sense we envy your existential freedom".

There is a lot of bromance between these two. And sometimes I suspected that Dutton might have been under Andy's spell.

- **The power posing effect on hormones**

That "power posing" changes hormones concentration has been disputed. Everyone still talks about it, which makes a typical case of pop-psychology, but it failed replication. And it's one of the main examples of the recent psychology replication crisis.
On the other hand, it does make people feel more powerful, so at least some elements of the study stand.

- **The pick-up line that works every time?**

This one, Dutton says, worked every time it was used in an experiment that I couldn't personally check:

> "My mates me bet me 20 quid that I couldn't start up a conversation with the best looking girl in the bar. So how about we go buy some drinks and spend their money"

But the line only works if you later add a compliment, says Dutton.
But I'm unconvinced.

PROS

- **Same philosophy as ThePowerMoves on "being bad", to be good**

Albeit it's expressed somewhat differently and my version of "being bad" goes beyond psychopathy, we both embrace similar philosophies.

I wholeheartedly agree that to be good, people learn how to be bad, and to learn about the darker side of human nature.

Where more empathic and less selfish people reach the top, it's a win for everyone.

- **Good case for the usefulness of some psychopathy traits**

Albeit saying that some psychopathy traits can be useful in life is bound to be controversial, I ultimately agree with Dutton.

- **Some funny jokes**

Sometimes the authors tried too hard to be funny.
But there were also very good lines.
For example:

> If he orders liver and Chianti for lunch, I'm off

Review

The Good Psychopath Guide is a good book built on an insight we both share: being a good psychopath is, in a way, the goal of this website.
While it's great for beginners, to be truly helpful for ambitious men, it needs more refinement and practical application that a mass-market book may struggle to deliver.

Power University helps you become a good psychopath.

Given our alignment, I nitpicked in this review.
I had to ensure readers understand psychopathy and don't see it through some rose-tinted glasses.

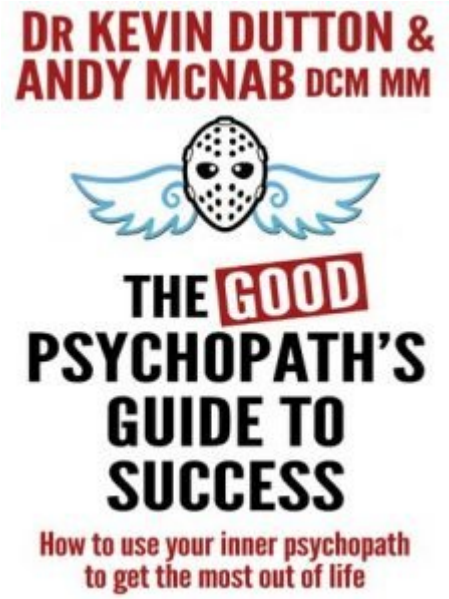
My point of view on this is that **it's unlikely that clinical psychopaths can be good psychopaths, but empathic people can and should learn to become good psychopaths**.
Empaths can learn to become more like good psychopaths, and thus increase their personal power and leverage, while not harming society or potentially even contributing to it.

Check the:

- Best dark triad books
- **How to be a good asshole**

Or get the book on Amazon.

The Good Psychopath's Guide: 7 Traits for Success (Summary)



The Good Psychopath Guide (2014) discusses how to leverage dark triad traits to become a successful psychopath. Kevin Dutton says that some psychopathic traits, in the right doses, are advantageous in life, and non-psychopaths can learn to adopt them and become more successful, but without harming others.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-good-psychopath-guide/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4

Benevolent Racism: The Hidden Power Play Behind White Sympathy

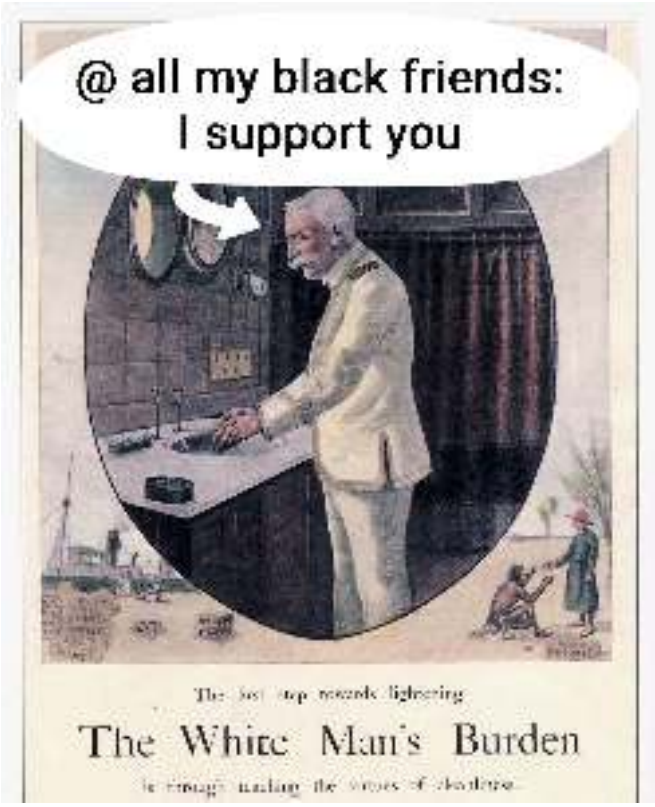
Lucio Buffalmano · 5 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

After the murder –or martyrdom– of George Floyd, the messages of support towards the black community have been pouring in -or, shall we say, flooding social media-.

In many ways, that's a good thing.
It shows people are empathetic, and that some of them want to see a better world.

But from a power dynamic point of view, we can see a different story to it.
And from a mental empowerment point of view, virtue-signaling towards "black people" is mental poison.

Let's dig deeper.



Sympathizing with colored folks for purportedly being oppressed only *confirms* a two-classes world. Progressive folks and **empowered people of color alike do NOT think of themselves as victims**.

Contents

- Intro: What's Benevolent Racism
- The Power Dynamics of White's Sympathy
- Don't Let "Black" Stifle Your Uniqueness
  - You're Bigger Than Any Single Trait, Always Remember That
- How Benevolence Reinforces Victim Mentality
  - Experiment: "Whites" in The Condescended Shoes
- How to Handle Benevolent Sexism
  - How to Address It Socially: Building Bridges
- SUMMARY

Intro: What's Benevolent Racism

We define benevolent racism as:

> *"Support or sympathy towards individuals of a minority race that—while well-meaning on the surface—reinforces a power imbalance by implying inferiority or victimhood."*

Benevolent racism recalls the more popular 'benevolent sexism', later enlarged to 'benevolent prejudice' by some.

This article introduces the term benevolent racism, and we expand the power dynamics and socio-psychological consequences.
Many of these dynamics apply to benevolent prejudice in general.

Benevolent sexism parallels

Benevolent sexism is a popular and accepted term, both in and in academia.
But, I argue in this post, the underlying power dynamics are similar for both.

Quoting from *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Psychology*:

> Benevolent sexism can be manifested in several ways, such as by introducing restrictions on women's activities in order to protect them (Moya, Glick, Expdsito, de Lemus, & Hart, 2007) or by paternalistic forms of help (Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011).
> Such behaviors are enveloped in a positive layer of protection and flattery, but they also subtly convey the belief in women's inferior abilities to defend themselves, help themselves, or deserve rewards. The positive tone of benevolent sexism is thus only superficial.

Similarly, benevolent racism may:

- **Offer sympathies** for minorities
- **Discuss 'white privilege'**, 'admitting it' or even attacking it
- **Support 'equality of outcome'** instead of equality of opportunities
- **Suppress research** into possible differences among classes of people

The first two indirectly suggest that minorities are disadvantaged.
And, in so doing, may reinforce that belief in people's minds.

And the last two suggest that different capabilities are the root cause of the issues (or else you would welcome equality of opportunities), and that nobody can handle those truths and use them to better themselves (or else you would welcome research).

The Power Dynamics of White's Sympathy

We first introduced **covert power moves** on this website.

Covert power moves are words or actions that on the surface are friendly and supportive.
But that, on a second level order, hide a power relationship where the person being friendly and supportive is *disempowering* the receiver.

Examples of covert power moves are:

- "Sorry for not picking up your call" (= you were not a high priority for me)
- "I'm sorry that you had to wait for me here" (= I have the power to let you wait)

These examples are kind and sympathetic on the surface.
And the speaker might even mean well.
But they *also* hide a power dynamic where the speaker is disempowering the receiver and pushing him down the hierarchical ladder.

Offering support works in the same way.

Offering support indirectly says that you *need* support because, apparently, you are *not* doing too well in life (but they are).

Attention, with that I'm not saying that most white folks are *consciously* disempowering black folks.
Many people are being warm and welcoming and many of them *really* feel empathy and want to help.

But some others, of course, are riding the SJW wave.
Many starlets and public figures belong to this category (Emma Watson example):

Emma Watson "stands with you" ("you" who?)

Even our beloved virtue signalers might in the end be OK persons and somewhat well-meaning.
But still… Even if they mean no active harm, in this case, **virtue signalers' support still re-affirms a power dynamic that empowers *them* and disempowers the subjects of their "support"**.
Virtue signaling is to the benefit of the signaler, and rarely if ever of the receiver (Miller, 2019)

The duality of wanting to help but actually harming is something that other researchers have noted as well.

Take linguist researcher Deborah Tannen, for example. Tannen says that asking someone "where are you from" as a first question can be *both* an attempt to connect *and* a power move, as it can both seek to connect and pin someone down.

And the same can be said of gender relations.
Kim Scott for example says that men treating women with kid gloves at work might have wanted to be nice, but they were actually relegating them as second class citizens in the office.
That type of kindness, she correctly points out, is *damaging* women.
Men who are nice in fear of hurting women are also indirectly saying that women are not strong enough to play within a level playing field. It says that women need that help. And that men are the powerful ones who need to dispense that help.

It's the same for the sympathy expressed by white folks to black folks.
The support and sympathy of white folks towards blacks also indirectly say:

> "I am (somewhat) superior and more powerful".

Or, at least:

> "I am a somewhat higher class citizen".

There is also another element that disempowers "black folks". And it's addressing them as a collective.

Don't Let "Black" Stifle Your Uniqueness

It's great to offer support to individuals *as individuals*.

But it's disempowering to support individuals for their (supposedly) group of belonging.

Why?

Because **when people address you by your group belonging, you become "*a* black person", and they disempower you of telling and controlling your own story**.
You become "a (random, nameless) black person", with all the stereotypes attached to it. And it strips your uniqueness away.

The same happens when people frame you with other groups of belongings, like with nationalities, for example.
This is why when people ask me "where are you from", I give a fuzzy answer ("*Originally*, from there, *but* I studied abroad, I live there, and travel all the time… So, I'm international, really).
I do that because I don't want any fucking one to pin me down with Italian stereotypes. Don't get me wrong: I like being Italian, but I am *still* an individual, I carve my own path in life, I write my own story, and I present my own story, unencumbered by stereotypes.

Finally, **framing a single case of brutality as a "black people issue" also serves to confirm the status quo**.
Indirectly, it confirms that indeed society empowers a certain ethnicity and disempowers another.
And while there might be some truth to it, when you keep repeating it, you also make it more real, and you contribute to keeping it alive.

And that's an unhealthy worldview to internalize. It's dangerous to internalize that being black is such as huge handicap (and it's not).
It's the highway road to a victim mentality.
And **white people's "support" only reinforces the nonsense narrative that blacks are at a big disadvantage in life**.

Don't believe that shit not even for a nanosecond.

This is about personal empowerment.
If this isn't yet clear, please read this post on enlightened individualism:

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

You're Bigger Than Any Single Trait, Always Remember That

Individuals are made up of a multitude of traits and belonging.

Their genders, skin color, eye color, nationalities, sexual preferences, preferences, skills, attitudes etc. etc.

Reducing them to just *one*, however visible it might be, is disempowering.

Now let's be honest: there might be *some* truth in the "white privilege" thing.
But to me, it's still BS.
So, white skin might confer some advantages under some circumstances. So what?

Advantages and disadvantages are part of life, and the same is true for *all* possible traits you can imagine.
From eye color, to amount of hair on your head, to height, to IQ, to… Whatever. Any trait will confer either some advantage or some advantages under certain circumstances.
And you can rise above each one of them.

Stop Babying Others

Telling others that you "support" them makes people feel good.

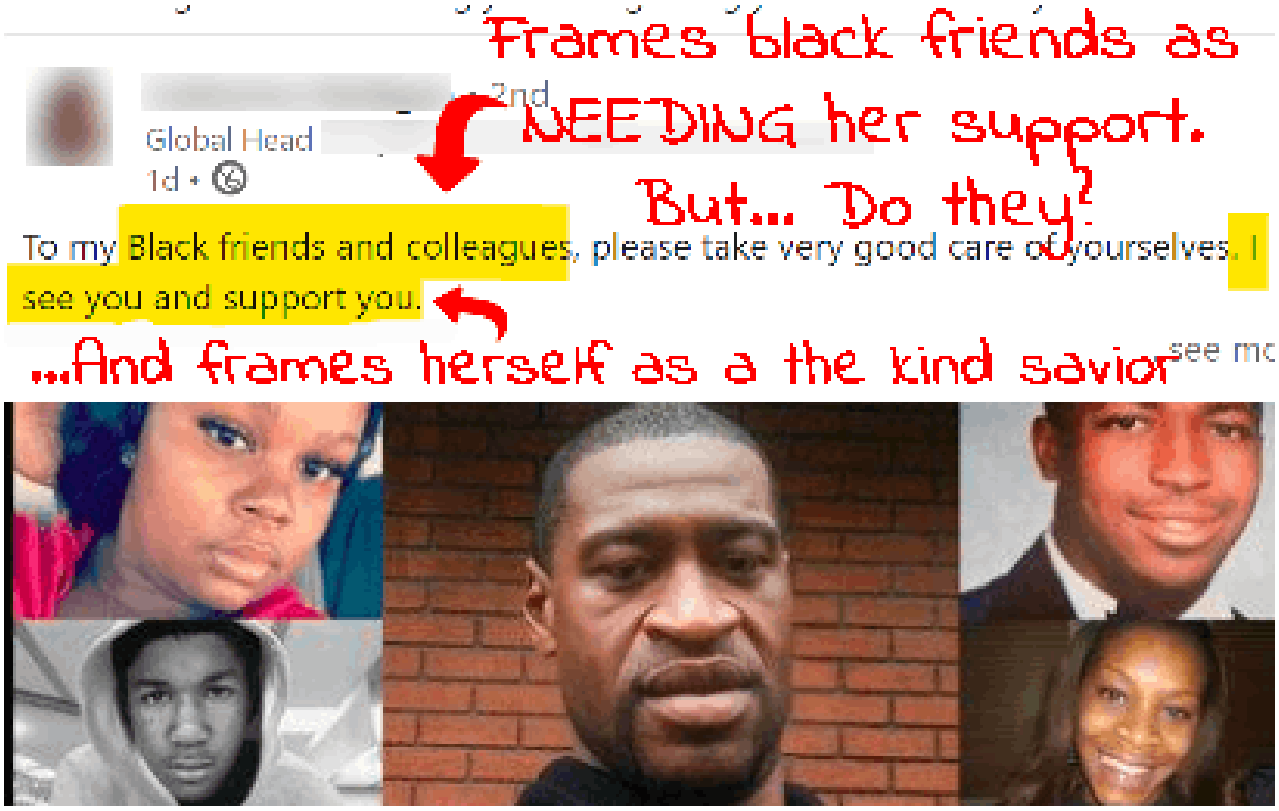
It makes them feel good because they can feel kind. And because, unconsciously, as we saw, it says that you are more powerful than they are.

Somehow, this often happens to race.
Probably, because race is such an important issue in much of the US. But that doesn't your "support" any less condescending.
But **as much as you don't publish posts telling short or unintelligent or people that you "support" them, it's condescending to tell black people that you "support" them**.

Me, I don't think that any race or group as a whole needs my support.
I think there are countless individuals within those groups who are strong and capable enough to control their own destiny, and to far more successful than most individuals in any other race or group.

Addressing the whole group is highly condescending towards those folks.

Here is an example of condescending, borderline de-humanizing support I have recently seen on my Linkedin wall:



> **Her**: I see you and support you

So self-congratulatory, and *so* offensive. It implies that (most) others don't see "them".
Cut the haughty pomp, your black friends and colleagues have names, and they probably don't know what to do with your condescension.

How Benevolence Reinforces Victim Mentality

What we've just described so far is bad enough.

But there is a pernicious, deeper danger of constant sympathetic messages.
And unless you're aware of the power dynamics, it can go unnoticed.

Sympathetic messages frame you as "poor you", a victim.
To me, there is nothing more offensive, and nothing that angers me more quickly, than a "poor you" frame.

If you don't question the "poor you" frame, you can start believing it, and it can become your reality.
The danger of accepting people's support without questioning it is the internalization of the belief that you *do* need support because the deck *is* stacked against you.
The danger is that you internalize that "poor you".
When you internalize that, you are also accepting that you *do* are indeed a second class citizen.

You should be worried and afraid of internalizing that belief, because it's terribly dangerous.
When you internalize it, you start believing it. And you start to act accordingly.

The consequences are two, and they stem from the same internalization of the "poor you" frame

1. Learned helplessness: whatever you do, you can't win
2. Lashing out in anger and becoming anti-social

Two very different scenarios, but both being the consequence of believing that it's too difficult for you to win in this society.

And white people's "support" is reinforcing the idea that you can't do anything to succeed in this society:

So is this implying that a black person “cannot have a cellphone”, or “go jogging”? Don’t let this BS virtue-signaling sway you. You CAN do anything you want in life!

There is a good scene from the movie “Menace II Society” that well shows what I mean.

The black protagonist, Caine, is talking to a close girlfriend.
The girlfriend is encouraging him to move, pursue self-development, and leave behind small-timing burglaries and drug dealing.

I found the movie, and edited so you can see it:

> **Caine**: Ain’t nothing gonna change in Atlanta. I mean, I’m still gonna be black. Just another nigga from the ghetto

Caine internalized the belief that there is no chance in life for him because he’s black.
What a fucking tragedy!
This is called learned helplessness in psychology (Seligman, 1991), and it’s the belief that no matter what you do, you can’t win.

And virtue signaling messages contribute to creating learned helplessness among black folks.
It’s ironic, but **the sympathetic messages that want to offer support do more harm than good**.

That’s why I recommend black folks to put up shields against superficial and general support and sympathy.
Stand guard to the gates of your mind, friends.

You’re first-class, top 1% citizen, if you want.
Think it, believe it, dress it, act it.

Experiment: “Whites” in The Condescended Shoes

Some white folks these days are inviting others to put themselves in black people’s shoes.

That’s always a great exercise.

The first part of that exercise, the one that everyone is embracing, is to “feel the pain” of black people.
Great.

Now let’s finish the exercise, though.
Let’s add the power dynamics part I’m addressing here.

And put yourself in the shoes of being the subject of your own friendly support.

Here is what other races could tell white people:

- **Jew person**: I’m sorry there is a pandemic of white people being born with such lower IQs compared to us. Society shouldn’t discriminate against lower IQ. I stand with you, white people.
- **Asian person**: I’m sorry white people have to be born so selfishly individualistic. And so unconscientious, with such poor work ethics. Society shouldn’t discriminate against poor work ethics. I stand with you, white people.
  - **Asian woman**: I’m sorry white girls are so unfeminine and white guys prefer us. It’s not fair that men like feminine women more. I stand with you, white women.
- **Black person**: I’m sorry white people have no street smarts, have little dicks, and cannot sprint or jump. Society shouldn’t discriminate against any of that. I stand with you, white people.

Albeit these examples are obviously exaggerated, they also show the “other side of the coin” of offering support and sympathy -the power dynamics side-.

How would any empowered white person answer to any of that?
Any empowered white person wouldn't even want to *hear* any of that.

And this is how they might answer:

- Thanks, but I'm doing great. My IQ is fine. And power intelligence matters more anyway: all that IQ didn't help you avoid a history of prosecutions, it seems (huge one-up back)
- Thanks, but I'm doing great. Western work ethics allowed Westerners to rule the world, so I think we're pretty fine (medium one-up back)
- Thanks, but I'm doing great. Girls love my dick, and I prefer swimming and long-lasting sports to sprints (mild one-up back)

You will notice that these answers are more on the aggressive aside.

From a framing point of view, they (correctly) read the initial "offer of help" not as a friendly gesture, but as an attempt at one-upping, and they answer with a one-up back of their own.

Answering with a one-up defends your own power, and also serves to protect one's own mind and self-esteem. After that, you can move to move conciliatory tones.

However, since messages of support rarely show the true power dynamics so obviously, you need to answer with more tact.

Let's see:

How to Handle Benevolent Sexism

How to answer to all the condescension we've just described?

How can a black person answer, without being aggressive, while also defending his individuality and his personal power?

Here is an example:

> **White person:** (chest out, with the pride of the self-appointed savior) You have all my support. I stand with you!
>
> **Black person**: Thanks. But… "You" who, and… Support for what? (a simple question that will dismantle his whole self-righteous frame)
>
> **White person:** For the racism man. That's disgusting that you guys must go through that so often. I can't imagine what it's like
>
> **Black person**: Thank you, I appreciate your friendliness (don't call it "support").
> I suppose some policemen see some races with more animosity than others, in limited cases (reframe the problem as localized, instead of general).
> But hey, I'm Alex (shrugh shoulders, as if to say "I'm me", and distance yourself from the group, reclaim your power *as an individual*).
> And personally, I'm doing great (reclaim your power *as an individual* 2).
> I see life as a world of opportunities, not threats (frame yourself as a high quality man, not as "a black dude").
> This is a life of opportunity for those who want to take them (switch the tables: maybe *he* could use some of your support, instead?)

That's it.
Power reclaimed.

How to Address It Socially: Building Bridges

The other problem of generalized white sympathy is that it tends to vilify police.

Again, the issue is the same: support "blacks" as a whole and vilify "police" as a whole.

Bridges and healthy individualism are the answer.
Some cops are racist and scum.
Some protesters are thugs.

Unluckily, when we tend to paint everyone with broad brushes, we only flame the fires of hatred.
And we're only more likely to get hatred.

Probably, most cops are good and/or normal people worthy of respect.
And the same is true for most people of color, and of most random groups you want to pick.

To get over this, be the first to condemn the bad apples within your group of belonging.
Then, build bridges and spread the love.
And extend some love to policemen as well.
They're humans, too.

SUMMARY

The avalanche of messages of sympathy and support towards the black community is, overall, a good sign.

It's a sign that people care.

However, there is one potentially disturbing element of support:

1. Generalized messages of support de-individualize individuals and places everyone under the supposed "black guy disadvantage"
2. Constant messages of sympathy *reinforce* the notion (reality?) that people of color are second-class citizens

Both of them disempower the black community.

That's why, ultimately, I would advise people of color to distance themselves from that support.
Politely say "thanks", but immediately reclaim your power as an individual.

And never think of yourself as moving in a world where you can't win.
Fuck anyone who implies you're a victim. You make your own world, my friend.

Benevolent Racism: The Hidden Power Play Behind White Sympathy

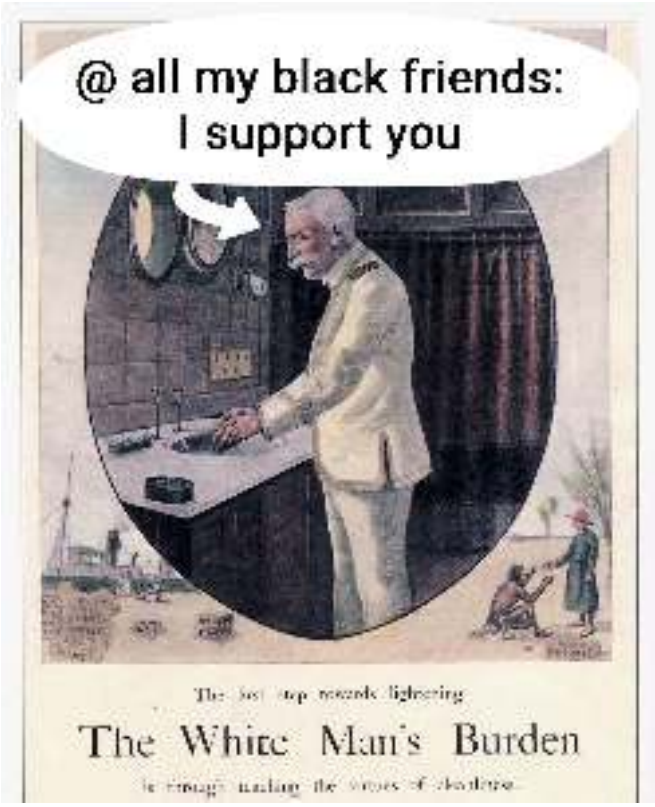
Lucio Buffalmano · 5 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

After the murder –or martyrdom– of George Floyd, the messages of support towards the black community have been pouring in -or, shall we say, flooding social media-.

In many ways, that's a good thing.
It shows people are empathetic, and that some of them want to see a better world.

But from a power dynamic point of view, we can see a different story to it.
And from a mental empowerment point of view, virtue-signaling towards "black people" is mental poison.

Let's dig deeper.



Sympathizing with colored folks for purportedly being oppressed only *confirms* a two-classes world. Progressive folks and **empowered people of color alike do NOT think of themselves as victims**.

Contents

- Intro: What's Benevolent Racism
- The Power Dynamics of White's Sympathy
- Don't Let "Black" Stifle Your Uniqueness
  - You're Bigger Than Any Single Trait, Always Remember That
- How Benevolence Reinforces Victim Mentality
  - Experiment: "Whites" in The Condescended Shoes
- How to Handle Benevolent Sexism
  - How to Address It Socially: Building Bridges
- SUMMARY

Intro: What's Benevolent Racism

We define benevolent racism as:

> *"Support or sympathy towards individuals of a minority race that—while well-meaning on the surface—reinforces a power imbalance by implying inferiority or victimhood."*

Benevolent racism recalls the more popular 'benevolent sexism', later enlarged to 'benevolent prejudice' by some.

This article introduces the term benevolent racism, and we expand the power dynamics and socio-psychological consequences.
Many of these dynamics apply to benevolent prejudice in general.

Benevolent sexism parallels

Benevolent sexism is a popular and accepted term, both in and in academia.
But, I argue in this post, the underlying power dynamics are similar for both.

Quoting from *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Psychology*:

> Benevolent sexism can be manifested in several ways, such as by introducing restrictions on women's activities in order to protect them (Moya, Glick, Expdsito, de Lemus, & Hart, 2007) or by paternalistic forms of help (Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011).
> Such behaviors are enveloped in a positive layer of protection and flattery, but they also subtly convey the belief in women's inferior abilities to defend themselves, help themselves, or deserve rewards. The positive tone of benevolent sexism is thus only superficial.

Similarly, benevolent racism may:

- **Offer sympathies** for minorities
- **Discuss 'white privilege'**, 'admitting it' or even attacking it
- **Support 'equality of outcome'** instead of equality of opportunities
- **Suppress research** into possible differences among classes of people

The first two indirectly suggest that minorities are disadvantaged.
And, in so doing, may reinforce that belief in people's minds.

And the last two suggest that different capabilities are the root cause of the issues (or else you would welcome equality of opportunities), and that nobody can handle those truths and use them to better themselves (or else you would welcome research).

The Power Dynamics of White's Sympathy

We first introduced **covert power moves** on this website.

Covert power moves are words or actions that on the surface are friendly and supportive.
But that, on a second level order, hide a power relationship where the person being friendly and supportive is *disempowering* the receiver.

Examples of covert power moves are:

- "Sorry for not picking up your call" (= you were not a high priority for me)
- "I'm sorry that you had to wait for me here" (= I have the power to let you wait)

These examples are kind and sympathetic on the surface.
And the speaker might even mean well.
But they *also* hide a power dynamic where the speaker is disempowering the receiver and pushing him down the hierarchical ladder.

Offering support works in the same way.

Offering support indirectly says that you *need* support because, apparently, you are *not* doing too well in life (but they are).

Attention, with that I'm not saying that most white folks are *consciously* disempowering black folks.
Many people are being warm and welcoming and many of them *really* feel empathy and want to help.

But some others, of course, are riding the SJW wave.
Many starlets and public figures belong to this category (Emma Watson example):

Emma Watson "stands with you" ("you" who?)

Even our beloved virtue signalers might in the end be OK persons and somewhat well-meaning.
But still… Even if they mean no active harm, in this case, **virtue signalers' support still re-affirms a power dynamic that empowers *them* and disempowers the subjects of their "support"**.
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The duality of wanting to help but actually harming is something that other researchers have noted as well.

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And the same can be said of gender relations.
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The support and sympathy of white folks towards blacks also indirectly say:

> "I am (somewhat) superior and more powerful".

Or, at least:

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There is also another element that disempowers "black folks". And it's addressing them as a collective.

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But it's disempowering to support individuals for their (supposedly) group of belonging.

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The same happens when people frame you with other groups of belongings, like with nationalities, for example.
This is why when people ask me "where are you from", I give a fuzzy answer ("*Originally*, from there, *but* I studied abroad, I live there, and travel all the time… So, I'm international, really).
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Finally, **framing a single case of brutality as a "black people issue" also serves to confirm the status quo**.
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And that's an unhealthy worldview to internalize. It's dangerous to internalize that being black is such as huge handicap (and it's not).
It's the highway road to a victim mentality.
And **white people's "support" only reinforces the nonsense narrative that blacks are at a big disadvantage in life**.

Don't believe that shit not even for a nanosecond.

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Probably, because race is such an important issue in much of the US. But that doesn't your "support" any less condescending.
But **as much as you don't publish posts telling short or unintelligent or people that you "support" them, it's condescending to tell black people that you "support" them**.

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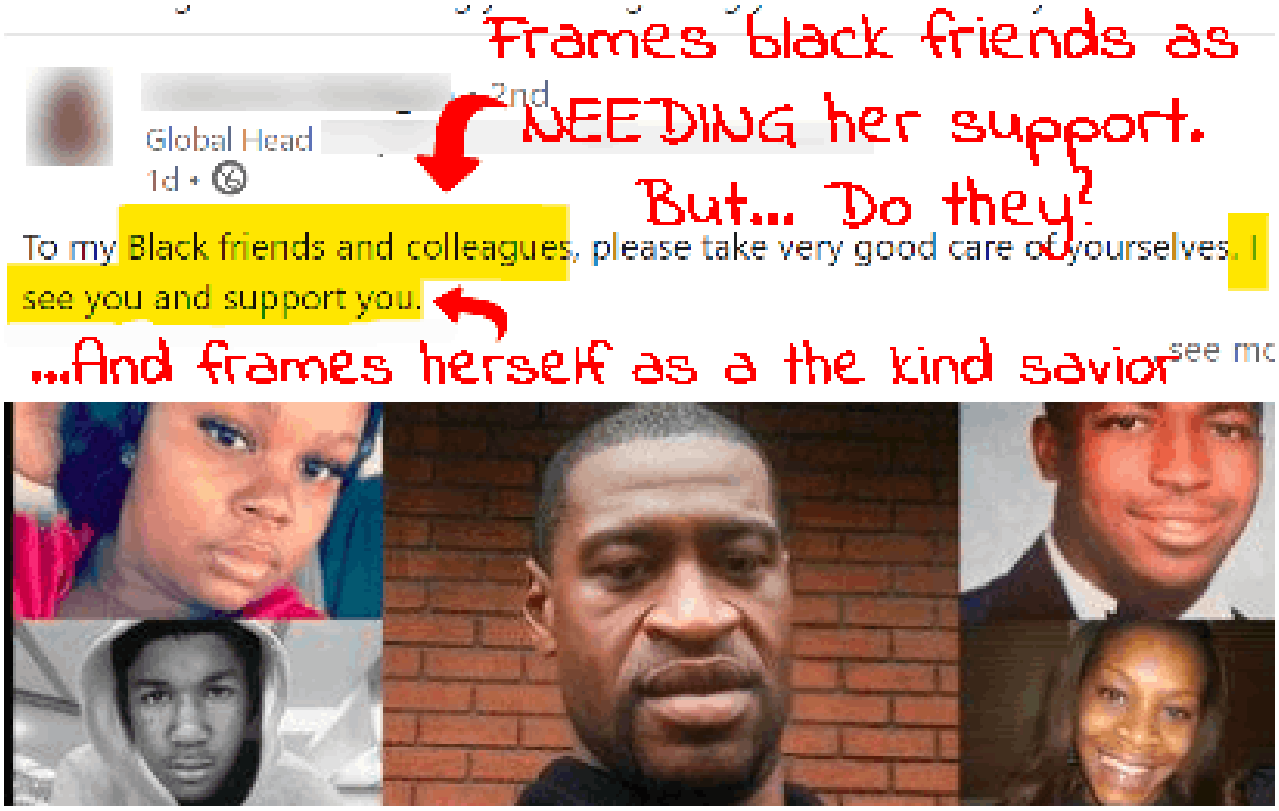

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To me, there is nothing more offensive, and nothing that angers me more quickly, than a "poor you" frame.

If you don't question the "poor you" frame, you can start believing it, and it can become your reality.
The danger of accepting people's support without questioning it is the internalization of the belief that you *do* need support because the deck *is* stacked against you.
The danger is that you internalize that "poor you".
When you internalize that, you are also accepting that you *do* are indeed a second class citizen.

You should be worried and afraid of internalizing that belief, because it's terribly dangerous.
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1. Learned helplessness: whatever you do, you can't win
2. Lashing out in anger and becoming anti-social

Two very different scenarios, but both being the consequence of believing that it's too difficult for you to win in this society.

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Caine internalized the belief that there is no chance in life for him because he’s black.
What a fucking tragedy!
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That’s always a great exercise.

The first part of that exercise, the one that everyone is embracing, is to “feel the pain” of black people.
Great.

Now let’s finish the exercise, though.
Let’s add the power dynamics part I’m addressing here.

And put yourself in the shoes of being the subject of your own friendly support.

Here is what other races could tell white people:

- **Jew person**: I’m sorry there is a pandemic of white people being born with such lower IQs compared to us. Society shouldn’t discriminate against lower IQ. I stand with you, white people.
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> **Black person**: Thank you, I appreciate your friendliness (don't call it "support").
> I suppose some policemen see some races with more animosity than others, in limited cases (reframe the problem as localized, instead of general).
> But hey, I'm Alex (shrugh shoulders, as if to say "I'm me", and distance yourself from the group, reclaim your power *as an individual*).
> And personally, I'm doing great (reclaim your power *as an individual* 2).
> I see life as a world of opportunities, not threats (frame yourself as a high quality man, not as "a black dude").
> This is a life of opportunity for those who want to take them (switch the tables: maybe *he* could use some of your support, instead?)

That's it.
Power reclaimed.

How to Address It Socially: Building Bridges

The other problem of generalized white sympathy is that it tends to vilify police.

Again, the issue is the same: support "blacks" as a whole and vilify "police" as a whole.

Bridges and healthy individualism are the answer.
Some cops are racist and scum.
Some protesters are thugs.

Unluckily, when we tend to paint everyone with broad brushes, we only flame the fires of hatred.
And we're only more likely to get hatred.

Probably, most cops are good and/or normal people worthy of respect.
And the same is true for most people of color, and of most random groups you want to pick.

To get over this, be the first to condemn the bad apples within your group of belonging.
Then, build bridges and spread the love.
And extend some love to policemen as well.
They're humans, too.

SUMMARY

The avalanche of messages of sympathy and support towards the black community is, overall, a good sign.

It's a sign that people care.

However, there is one potentially disturbing element of support:

1. Generalized messages of support de-individualize individuals and places everyone under the supposed "black guy disadvantage"
2. Constant messages of sympathy *reinforce* the notion (reality?) that people of color are second-class citizens

Both of them disempower the black community.

That's why, ultimately, I would advise people of color to distance themselves from that support.
Politely say "thanks", but immediately reclaim your power as an individual.

And never think of yourself as moving in a world where you can't win.
Fuck anyone who implies you're a victim. You make your own world, my friend.

Sorted!: Summary & Review (Kevin Dutton)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Sorted! is a self-help book by Kevin Dutton and Andy McNab on the topic of successful psychopathy.

Contents

- Notes
- Real-Life Applications
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Notes

About the Author:
About the Authors: Kevin Dutton is a British psychologist, researcher, and author. He previously published "The Wisdom of Psychopaths" and "The Good Psychopath Guide".
Andy McNab is a former British Special Air Service (SAS) operator, novelist and, supposedly, a psychopath.

The 7 Deadly Wins

The authors repeat the 7 laws of their previous book, which are:

1. **Just do it**: don't waste time overthinking it. You don't need like feeling to do something to just do it.
   1. Procrastination prolongs the pain in the short term, arms you in the long run, and wastes mental resources
   2. We overplay the risks compared to the rewards. Psychopaths are very reward-driven and don't fall for that mental bias
2. **Nail it**: you must learn how to switch one when it really matters, and play to win. The difference between the good and the great is that when it matters the good ones get 80% out of themselves, while the great ones get 100%.
3. **Be your own person**: psychopaths are not afraid of not fitting and doing their own thing, no matter what others think.
   1. Know what you want to be, and know what you *don't* want to be
   2. Learn to withstand social pressure, to say no when you don't want something, and to enforce your boundaries
4. **Become a persuasion black belt**: "getting into the minds of their preys give them a distinct advantage"
   1. Frame it as if it's within their self-interest to do it
   2. Make them feel good about doing what you want them to do
   3. Learn how to empathize to tailor your message to the target
   4. Learn how frames work, and how to control the frame to persuade others
5. **Take it on the chin (move on)**: Move on. Don't beat yourself up and abandon all the regrets. "Let go, or be dragged".
   1. Ask yourself: "what would I do if I didn't take this personally" and "what would I do if I didn't feel the heat"
   2. Stop taking accusations personally. First of all, we over-attribute intent to what people say or do. And even if they meant it, the problem is with *them*, not you.
6. **Live in the moment**: be focused when it matters. Psychopaths share this trait with elite Buddhist monks and

great athletes.
    1. Anxieties often stem not from reality, from anxieties of our own anxieties (second-order emotion)
7. **Uncouple behavior from emotions**: take a step back and remove emotions from the situation
    1. Studies show that imagining making a difficult phone call is more nerve-wracking than doing it. So just take action.
    2. Ask yourself: “what would I do if I didn’t feel this way”, “what would I do if I didn’t give a damn what others thought”, “what would I do if it just didn’t matter”

Too Much Psychopathy Is Dangerous, But Some Psychopathy Is Good

Mimicking what he said in his previous two books, Dutton repeats that low levels of psychopathy traits can be helpful in life.

He says about the double-edged sword of psychopathy:

> If you lie out in it from dawn to dusk it will burn you to a crisp. You’ll have what amounts to personality cancer. But at low levels, it’s a different story. Take it a bit easier and psychopathy can do you good. It’s personality with a tan.

Learn to Say No

Too many people are too agreeable, too afraid of saying no.

If you’ve been too nice, for too long, start with these first:

- Not this time
- **I’ll think about it:** good delay tactic to say “no” from a safe distance
- **I’m afraid I can’t, but have you considered…**
- **I’d love to, but…**

The Steps of An Elevator Pitch

I like these 3 steps for an effective elevator’s pitch.

1. Explain what you do
    1. What PROBLEM you SOLVE
    2. What NEED you MEET
    3. What VALUE you PROVIDE
2. Identify your USP
3. Invite feedback

Most of all, I liked N.3, which most guides on elevator pitches often seem to miss.

So this is how it sounds all together:

> Hi, I develop mobile apps that organizations use to train their staff in their own time. This takes a significant chunk off the manager’s workload.
>
> Unlike most other developers, our apps are tailor-made to suit individual requirements within individual organizations. Although this takes a bit more time, it means tha, 95 per cent of our clients are satisfied with the first version of their app.
>
> At the moment, how does your company go about training new people?

Learn Empathy to Influence Others

Empathy is crucial to influence others.

But it's not the empathy that most people think, because most people get empathy wrong.
Says Dutton:

> Contrary to popular belief, empathy is not about showing concern for other people.
> That's sympathy.
> Instead, **empathy is about being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes, to see things as they see them**.

And he continues:

> In the corporate arena then, this is what empathy is all about: working out what makes others tick and second-guessing what they're going to do. Nine times out of ten the answer is simple: **What's in it for me?**and "What am I going to get out of it?"

Also read:

- **The law of social exchange**
- **Real-life examples of WIIFM**

Don't Jump to Conclusions When Studying People

Says Dutton:

> As soon as someone starts telling us about something that's happened to them, we immediately compare it with similar things that have happened to us, and assume they feel like we did.
> But do they? Actually, chances are they may not.

So don't rush to conclusions.
And don't jump in with your "I, me, mine" stories, but keep listening and digging.

How to Bond With People Using Their Own Secrets (Manipulative)

This is a technique Dutton describes in the previous books as well, and it works like this:

1. Open up yourself first
2. When they open up, encourage them to speak more with nods and empathy
3. Once they shared something important, immediately change the subject. They will forget they just told you that
4. A month or two later, modify what they said, and paraphrase it back to them as if you were opening up to them

After that, says the author:

> BAM! From that point on, you can pretty much take what you want.

My Note: not sure this works as well as the author simply
What happens when someone is opening up about a secret or emotional pain point in their lives, and you immediately change topic? It comes across as very emotionally stupid and completely insensitive.
You likely lose a lot of points with them.
And I also doubt that people will forget that they shared their vulnerability, since they tend to be such emotionally laden conversations.

The author was indeed sharing this technique from a conman, and you know that you can't really trust a conman.

Also read:

- **How to bond with women** (without gimmicks)

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Think of Every Problem As Having a Solution

Just as simple as that.
It will help you to solve far more problems that you would otherwise just stop you.

How to Pick Up Girls: Gimmicks

Here is how two guys picked up girls fabricating lies about themselves:

1. **Selection**: pick two girls you both like, far from each other who can't see themselves
2. **Contact**: get the girl's name – including surname – and a bit of background information
3. **Withdrawal**: reconvene and trade information
4. **Analysis**: access the two girls' Facebook profiles. Scrutinize the pages for particular 'likes' – actors, singers, musicians, TV shows, etc: the more obscure the better – and select a couple they think would go down well. Let's say one girl is a huge fan of Game of Thrones and the other is big into Coldplay.
5. **Prep**: both guys change each other's names on their phones to Peter Dinklage (Tyrion Lannister in Game of Thrones) and to Chris Martin (the Coldplay frontman)
6. **Approach**: they cold-approach their target girls (the ones their friend spoke first)
7. **Set-up**: steer the conversation into the general direction of what they do for a living (one is in TV and the other in music, of course)
8. **Cue 1**: leave the mobile phone in plain view on the table in front of the girls, and call each other. The caller? Peter Dinklage and Chris Martin
9. **Taxi**: once the guys have super high value in the eyes of the women, invite them home

My Note: Really interesting technique
A bit convoluted, but this was genius and it might work.
Would like to try it one day, actually.

Also read:

- **Dark triad sexual strategies**

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Make People Flatter... Themselves

Flattering is good, but even better is if you provide people with the opportunity of flattering themselves in front of you.

Says the author:

> It's a triple whammy!
> Because if somebody tells you something good about themselves their brain infers – at a subconscious level –

> that there has to be a reason. And the only reason there could possibly be is … because you're important!

True that.
It's also an under-the-radar way of setting up a judge frame.
Also read:

- **Soft power and the judge frame**

And:

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Power & Control

Be Nice: Give People Power Over You, & They Will Be Nice In Exchange

Kevin Dutton showed a group of traffic cops (unluckily he doesn't say the number) two different videos.

One video showed a guy using a confrontational attitude and arguing with the cop, not admitting guilt.
The other one used an appeasement strategy.

Result?
95% of the cops said they'd write a ticket to the confrontational guy but they'd let the "nice" one go.

So, how does the nice guy manage to get off the hook?

Well, it's all about dropping confrontational frames and embracing collaborative frames.

Says the author:

> 'the driver immediately convinces the officer that, far from being a rival, he's actually on his side,' observes Andy.
> 'Which, when you think about it, is exactly what you want to do when you meet anyone for the first time – not just when you get pulled over by the fuzz. I know, it sounds like common sense 101.
> But when you read all the geeky human resources stuff about managing first impressions, it's incredible how often basic human virtues get elbowed out to make room for all that mirroring and cold reading and NLP crap.
> OK, there might be something in it, but there's a hell of a lot more in simply being pleasant.

Agreed.
Smart social strategists prefer to use collaboration as a first step:

> The 'Smart Collaborator': Giving For Win-Win, Without Being Exploited

Learn the strategies to avoid traffic tickets (alumni only!)

Real-Life Applications

- **Get a grip on your email**: emails can be addictive, and they are distracting to get work done. Designate a time in the day you will check and answer emails, and don't let them distract you
- **Practice well to maximize your time**: practice deliberately, and work with breaks, maximizing for your circadian rhythms, and take battery-recharging naps
- **Look the part**: the movers and shakers want to be seen with people that other movers and shakers would talk to (also see: executive skills to look the part)
- **Listen more**: to listen well, caring and compassion are not prerequisite, and many great listeners are con-artists

- **Avoid cliches' because they minimize other people's problems and break rapport**: things such as "plenty of fishes in the sea" or "nobody died" break rapport. Also read "how to comfort people" and "what to say when someone died" to learn more about what to say
- **Avoid bragging, be more strategic with self-promotion**: bragging makes you come across as a blow-hard. Give credit instead, it's a far better social strategy.
- **Men with shaved are seen as more dominant**

Quotes

On body language:

> Much has been written on body language and the like down the years, and frankly a lot of it is bollocks.

On creationism and the U.S.:

> The rest really is history. These days even Americans have come to embrace evolution. Some of them, anyway.

CONS

- **Some inconsistencies with previous books**

In the previous book, I remember McNab saying that he gave up sugar one day, and that was it.

Here, it says that "you don't want to be standing behind McNab in the queue at Costa Coffee if they run out of his favorite chocolate gold coins".

Sure, it's a small thing.
But if one is not being straightforward with the small things, can you fully trust them for the bigger ones?

- **Some made up evolutionary psychology**

Kevin Dutton says that without psychopathy we would have perished as a species.

He says:

> If our prehistoric ancestors some two hundred thousand years ago hadn't included among their number the ruthless, the resilient and the risk-takers, we would've perished, in an evolutionary eye-blink, on the Palaeolithic killing fields of deepest, darkest Africa.

However, that's his own opinion, there is no widely accepted or evidence-based theory in evolutionary psychology to corroborate the thesis that "without psychopaths we would have gone extinct".

- **Some jokes are in bad taste**

The authors call the critics and "trolls" of their previous books "fruitcakes", which in UK is a derogatory term for gay people.

Or using known cases of pedophilia to crack jokes:

> 'Perfectionism is to self-esteem what Jimmy Savile was to child-minding,' says Andy. 'A complete no-no.

PROS

- **Some great wisdom**

There is much good wisdom here on how to persuade and influence others, as well as some good information on general life effectiveness and assertiveness.

- **Some funny jokes**

For example:

> **Andy**: ‘A woman came up to me at a book signing once and told me she’d had her nipple pierced.’
> **Me**: ‘Really? What do you say to that?’
> **Andy**: ‘There’s only one thing you can say to that: I don’t believe you!’

Review

I love Dutton’s trilogy on how psychopathic traits can help succeed.

I can’t stand fake self-help advice based on platitudes and hypocrisy.
“Sorted!” instead is more amoral. Not in the sense of inviting readers to be amora, but in the sense that it’s based on what works. A bit like “The 48 Laws of Power“.
Or like Power University, for that matter.

Sometimes it felt a bit like a mix of random psychological advice loosely connected to psychopathy.
But there is also much great information on the basics of persuasion and social skills.

Overall, thumbs up.

Check the:

- **Best dark triad books**

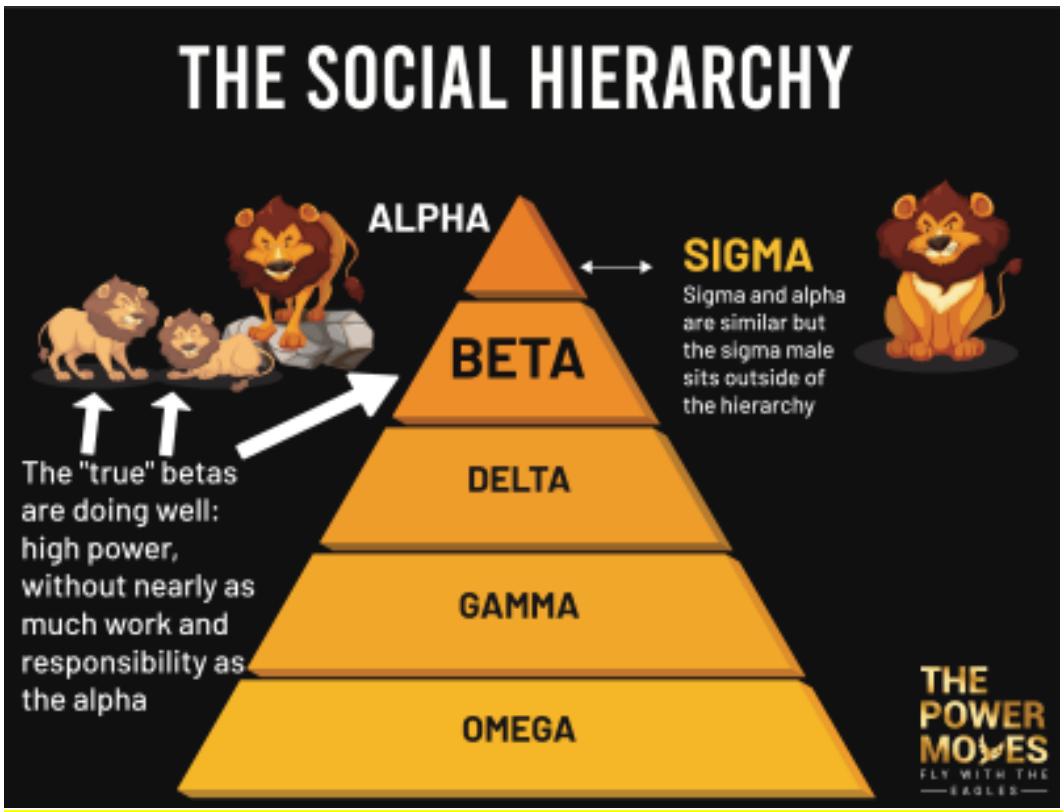
or get the book on Amazon

What's A Beta Male & How Stop Being A Beta In 10 Steps

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Beta male originally meant the second-ranking male in a hierarchy. But in manosphere parlance, it now describes a low-status, submissive, often "too nice" man—unassertive, sexually frustrated, and dissatisfied with life.

In this guide, you'll learn exactly what makes a beta male, see real-life examples, and discover **10 practical steps to stop being one**.



In correct terms, the beta male is doing well. In common parlance, "beta male" refers to the *omega* male: lowest status and struggling in life

Contents

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  - 1. Cut Your Submissive Behavior
  - 2. Don't Put Women On A Pedestal
  - 3. Learn Power Dynamics to Stop Beta Behavior
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  - 7. Unfriend All Attentions Whores You Are Not Sleeping With
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  - 9. Unplug From All Beta Sources
  - 10. Escape the Betalpha Trap
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What's A Beta Male

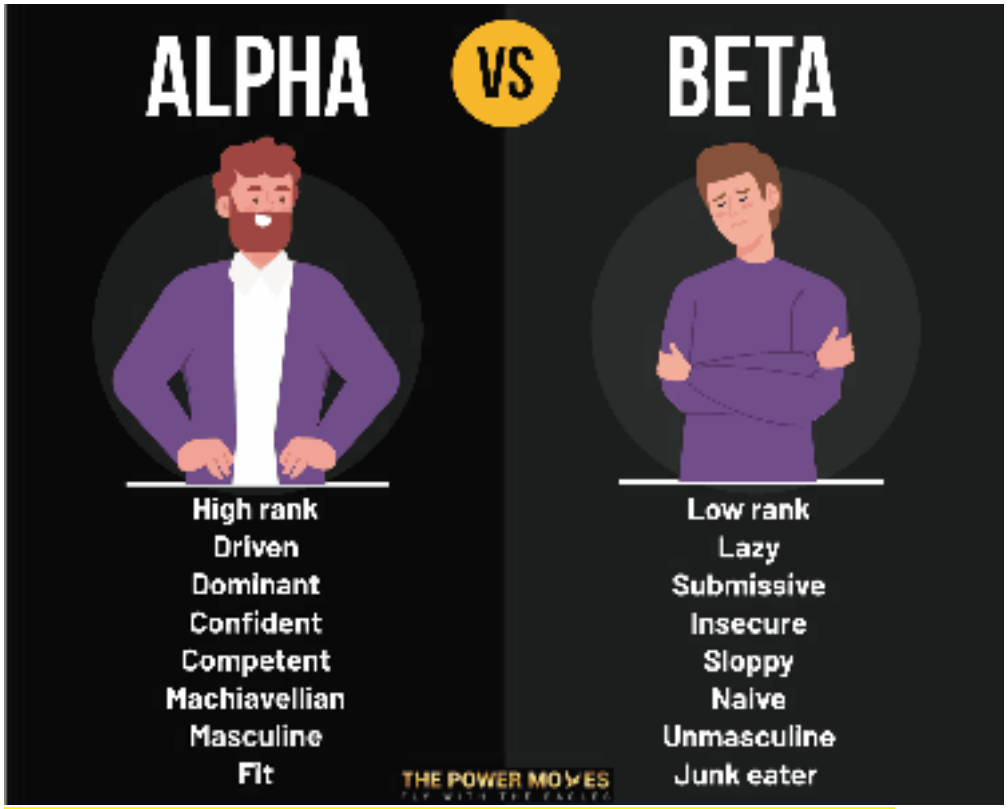
In ethological terms, beta males are men who rank second *highest* within the social ranking of a primate group.

However, in common parlance and among men and manosphere groups, "beta male" has come can be defined as such:

> **A beta male is a man who is submissive with other men, subservient to women, and ranks very low in dominance hierarchies.**

In ethological terms, that would be an "omega male".

In this article, we will discuss the beta male in the manosphere terms. Such as, that guy who is socially clueless, and near the bottom of the social ranking. For simplicity -and for SEO reasons-, from now on, will (incorrectly) call him "beta male".



Ultimately, the only defining trait and definition of a beta man is to be low-rank

A few hand-picked examples of betaness to start

Before we dive in, let's take a look at a few examples of beta males we have already covered on ThePowerMoves:

- **The sad tale of beta boyfriend**: pictorial storyline of chasing for scraps of intimacy and attention, while she made him jump through his hoops
- **Talulah Riley humiliates Elon Musk**: can a billionaire be a beta male? If you let your partner disrespect you, yes

And now, here is a simple 10 steps formula to move out of betaness:

1. Cut Your Submissive Behavior

If there was one major trait common to beta males, it's this:

Beta males display signals of submissiveness, often and conspicuously, and largely use a passive style of communication.

The general rule indeed is that alpha males are dominant, while beta males are submissive.

Beta males are submissive in two very different ways towards men and women, and we will address both in this article.

For now, start here so you can root-out any overly submissive signs you are sending out:

- **Submissive body language signals**
- **Submissive verbal signals**

1.1. But Watch Out for Fake Aggression

Too much submissivness is a no-no, that's for sure.

That being said, the solution is never to just add aggression.
You're simply not gonna fix betaness by swinging in the opposite direction and acting hyper-aggressive.

The fixing must go deeper.
It's the whole frame of mind that must switch, together with acquiring basic social skills (and later adding more advanced power dynamics skills).

Simply adding aggression is like trying to turn a turd into gold with a can of yellow spray.
If you *only* add that thin paint coat of aggression, you end up looking like those abused, beaten down dogs who curl up at the end of a cage, barking out of fear.
Those people who don't know how to engage in constructive or assertive behavior are barely any better than a submissive beta male.

An example?
Look at this scene, and you'll notice right away who and what I'm talking about:

> **Bryan Callen**: If someone tries to bully me I'll show up at your fucking house and I'm gonna kill you. That's what fucking happens
> (proceeds to keep yapping, get interrupted, and shown for a big loud mouth who can't back up his treaths)

Exactly the type of aggression that screams "beta".

2. Don't Put Women On A Pedestal

There are two ways beta males deal with women the wrong way:

- **White knighting**

White knighting is an old PUA concept.

A man has a white-knighting mentality when he sees women like poor damsels in distress who can't get by without his help.

White-knighting stems from the false belief that women need to be saved.

Many men feel good about supporting and providing for a woman.
What's different with white knights betas is that they take it to the extreme, which also leaves them easy victims of what I call "damsel in distress manipulation".

The solution?

Feel free to support the woman you pick as your life partner, but it must be *mutual* support.
If you're running around all day doing all the work for your queen, then you are probably white-knighting and you must re-assess the give and take of your relationship.

- **Low-quality providing**

Low-quality providers are men who date as providers, and who don't feel like they are good enough for women.
Dating as a provider is not beta per se, and one can be an alpha male provider.
But it is beta the way that beta men do it.

And how do they do it?

Beta males approach dating with the mindset that the woman is always far more valuable than they are. Such as: low-status men think they are not good enough.
In the beta male's mind, there is a bottomless gulf of value between him and her, so he seeks to make up for that value differential in all ways he possibly can.

Beta males seek to fill that bottomless gulf with money, emotional support, promises of endless love, services, and… Massive doses of submissiveness. Why submissiveness? Because **unconfident men feel like they must be submissive to their woman or else she'll just pick up and leave**.

With white-knighting and the feeling of not being good enough, beta males always end up placing women on a pedestal.

Luckily, the cure is simple: think of yourself at least as equal in value.

Getting on your knees only works when in jest, and when you are the undisputed relationship leader. In all other cases: avoid.

Also read:

- **The Madonna / Whore dichotomy**: the "Madonna" in the dichotomy is the natural consequence of the beta male, white-knight idealization
- **Provider and lover dating strategies**: when to use which

- **Lovers, friends, providers**: it's about quality, more than the role

3. Learn Power Dynamics to Stop Beta Behavior

Nobody sets out to become a beta male.

So, why are most men still beta?

Because they don't even *know* they are.
The main reason some men are stuck in "beta male" territory is that they are unaware of power dynamics.

In truth, all the steps above, plus most issues on this list, are going to be taken care of once you learn about power dynamics.

For that, I think there is no better cure than this website's course:

- **Power University**

3.1. Internalize This: "You're Worthy of Being Respected"

Beta males allow others to disrespect them.

Sometimes, they even fail to label the abuse and disrespect as such.
Beta males prefer to pretend it was OK, that the other person "was just joking", and that they "didn't mean it".
Or even that they are "good friends".

Sure you are… NOT.

See here a perfect example from beta male Fredo:

> **Godfather**: Is that why you slapped my brother around in public?
> (jumps in, defending his abuser)
> **Fredo**: Oh no, eh-eh, that was nothing Mike. Oh no, Mo didn't mean nothing by that. Sure he flies off the handle every once in a while, but.. But me and Mo are good friends, right Mo, eh?
> (gets ignored by Mo, confirming all his betaness)

Now it's true, Fredo might not have had the power to slap back Mo when he was humiliated.
And maybe even not be in a place to demand proper behavior right away.
But remember, acquiring personal powerful starts *not* with the power of pushing back on any and all affronts.
Personal power starts with this simple mindset:

> Nobody has the right to treat me rudely.

Every time you can push back on any disrespect, do it.
And if the risk of pushing back is small, take that risk (hint: getting fired should be included in those "small risks").

But of course, in life there will be times when you won't have the power to push back.
And that's OK: it's your mindset that matters most, and your mindset is *still* the same.
To move out of betaness -and of victim mentality- shitty behavior must NEVER become "OK" within you.

You don't take the affront too personally because you're building an antifragile ego, and you move on…. But you also don't forget. And if one day you get the chance, you'll even the scores.

4. Lift / Exercise

The effects of testosterone are context-dependent, and more complex than most online resources describe them.

For example, in environments where pro-social attitudes help increase status, men with more testosterone actually become *more* pro-social, not more aggressive or anti-social (Sapolsky, 2017).

And that's actually great news.
It means that **more testosterone doesn't make you more of an asshole, it just makes you less of a beta**.

Also read:

- **How to become a GOOD asshole**

> How to Be A Good Asshole

So you've got no excuses.
How to increase that T in your body?
An often-recommended solution is to exercise. And it makes sense.
Studies show that heavy exercise and high-intensity training increase testosterone.

Bigger size and more muscles might also have a more direct, positive effect on your social power.
Jon Anthony, for example, says that bulking up got him more respect from men, and more attention from the ladies:

- **The power dynamics of getting ripped**

4.1. Consider HIIT Training

What if you don't have time for gyms?

Consider doing high-intensity interval training (HIIT).
HIIT is a training method that consists of short bursts of all-out effort punctuated by brief rest periods.

HIIT is effective no matter the age.
A 2017 study found that HIIT training increased testosterone also in men in men over the age of 60.

HIIIT is my go-to exercise.
Being often on the move, it's difficult to attend gyms. So I do HIIT.

Plus, I use all props and furniture I can see around.
I pick up chairs and squat, or use 6-packs of water bottles. Or just jump up and down a bed.
Get creative, it's double exercise: body, and mind :).

4.2. Eat Healthy (Without Becoming a Soy Boy!)

Diet is as important if not more important than exercising.

Reduce the carbs, especially the refined ones, and avoid the real junk such as:

- McDonalds / KFC / BurgerKing and all
- Sodas of any kind
- Snacks of any kind
- Sugar-filled "sports drink" and juices
- All kinds of packaged food

My opinion on nutrition is this: learn the basics, apply them 95% of the time, but don't go crazy with it.
It's very beta-like to be scared of the carbs in a whole-grain spaghetti carbonara as if there was a tarantula hiding in them.

Sometimes, just eat whatever the fuck you like, and do have a few drinks when you feel like.
Life is also meant to be enjoyed.

Both exercise and diet fall into a general mindset of caring and taking of yourself.
When you care and take care of yourself, it all ties together: you don't allow assholes or mean women to disrespect you, you put healthy food in your mouth, and you take care of your engine/body with exercise.

5. Unfriend All Your Beta Males Friends

You know the saying:

> He who walks with the betas learns how to become one

Alright, there wasn't such a saying before I wrote it.
But now there is one, and it's true.

You can't hang out with betas and expect to be an alpha male.
Even if you are the alpha among the betas, chances are you're still a beta outside of that group.

There might be an alpha male within a LAN party. But he's most likely a beta as soon as he steps out

Remember, there is no such thing as a shark in a pond. Sharks just don't live in ponds.
And alpha males don't hang out in betas' ponds.

6. Learn How Beta Males Act. Then Do The Opposite

I think this is a heavily underestimate way of learning things.

Instead of just watching how great people act and trying to do the same, also watch how the people you *don't* want to be like act.
And then do the opposite.

What do beta males do?

Things like:

- Take all kind of crap from anyone
- Engage in endless virtue-signaling
- Feel guilty about themselves, for being men, or just for being evil humans
- Follow orders, always toe the line
- Engage in scapegoating, never accept responsibility
- Carry her bags while she waltzes around
- Relinquish all power in their relationships

Begging and pleading are typical beta-males behavior

On, and these days, the new variety of betas going by the name of “soy boy”, also do this:

- Yell for “getting rid of police”

The belief that the world would be better off without police is part of an enlarged “white-knight fantasy”.
Such as, as much as betas believe that women are innocent creatures, they also believe that almost everyone is good and innocent.
Evil is extremely rare for the soy boy, and mostly concentrated within hyper-males, which includes the police.
That also gives beta males another excuse to be betas: the “bad guys” are hyper-male and conservative. And the good guys like him are feminized and progressive.

More anti-beta reading:

- **How women control men (and what to do about it)**: you don’t need physical power to manipulate and control people, a basic truth of human life that seems to escape many beta males

7. Unfriend All Attentions Whores You Are Not Sleeping With

This is attention whoring:

> Attention whoring consists of sharing sexy pictures (thirst traps) to attract the attention of thirsty males

Attention-whoring also includes emotional and touchy stories (“depth traps”), sad stories (“pity traps”), and political tirades (the soy-boy progressive types will never fail to like and share).
But it’s the sexual side that really hooks the thirsty beta males in.

Attention whoring is dangerous because it steals men’s time and diverts their energies from worthy pursuits to feeding the ego of the attention whore.

Unluckily, there has never been more attention whoring in the history of the world than we have today.
The favorite places of attention whores are, in the order:

1. TikTok
2. Instagram
3. Facebook
4. Tinder / dating apps

To avoid falling for the beta thirst trap, unfriend all attention whores.
Alternatively, you can unfollow them.

You might skip this step if you're more advanced and/or if you've
Warning: you're only at this stage if you can tell yourself "hot, but LOL, she's such a low-quality attention whore".

8. Don't Pursue Women From The Friend-Zone

There is a new word in the 2020s:

Simp.

> A simp is a man who puts women on the pedestal, lavishes them with gifts and attention, and seeks to win their favor by acting like a doormat.

Look, I hate black-and white thinking.
So let me be more precise here: it's sometimes possible to get women after long chases (see: "atypical seduction techniques").
But *not* when you chase in a low-power, low-value fashion.
And it's possible to bang women as friends if they see you as a hot cool "friend".
But *not* when you're a "loser" friend.

Finally, it's also possible that a woman will eventually decide that the beta male orbiter is "good enough" and, in the absence of a better prospect, she might have sex with him or get into a relationship with him.
But he'd be entering those relationships as super low in power.

Also read:

- **Relationship power dynamics 101**
- **How to maintain power in long-term relationships**

Hopefully, you want some more efficient and high-power strategies, so do the opposite of what beta males do:

- Seek to befriend women to later date them
- Chase women too hard, and too obviously
- Wait forever before making a move
- Wait 3 months for intimacy

So you, you just do the opposite.

And I will end this one with a quote from "alpha male strategies":

> Unfortunately, there's always a beta male willing to play these women's waiting game, just make sure it's not you.

Also read:

- **Games women play**
- I'm the prize power play

8.2. Drop All Women Who Demand You

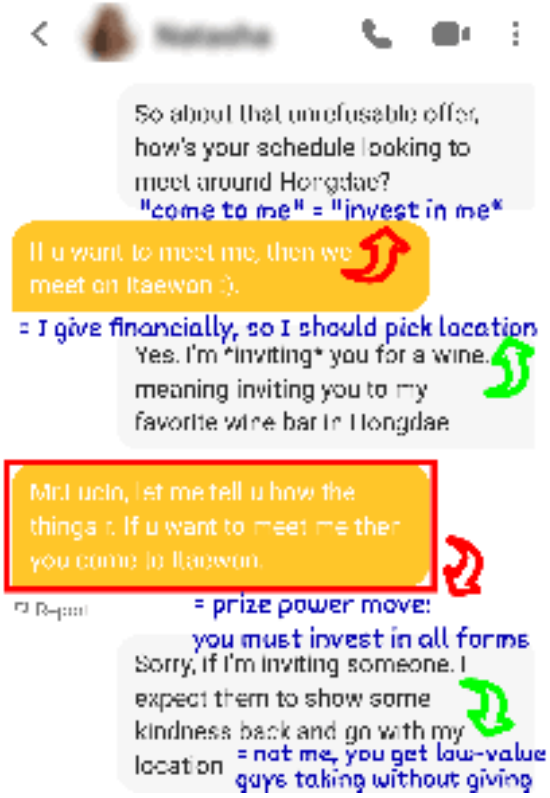
Have you heard of books such as:

- Why Men Love B*tches
- The Power of The Pussy
- A Gold Digger's Guide

Do you know what they have in common?
Well, they all have in common that they are wrong.
Alpha types and men with a backbone want supportive partners who add value.

These books tell women that they are teaching them how to get men.
In reality, they are teaching women how to get beta males.
Because **only beta males would get into a relationship with a woman who demands without giving**.
She demands, expects to be chased, expects emotional and financial investment… And then gives nothing back?
Drop her immediately.

Here's an example for you of a woman who has to be dropped immediately.



For more red signs of women you will have no time for, read:

- **Nasty games women play**

9. Unplug From All Beta Sources

Tough call, I know.

Betaness is all over TV, popular media, and songs.
Well, great!
This can be a great opportunity to free up much of your time:

- **Drop pop-music (especially J and K-pop)**, and anything where androgynous-looking men gush about love
- **Stop watching celeb news,** you shouldn't even know who Rihanna is married to (or whether or not she's married)
- **Cut down on memes / games:** PewDiePie, memes, Reddit, games… Not exactly "beta", but not really "alpha" either, since you're not being productive
- **Quit mainstream media**

Many shows have beta-types of men as main characters.
Heck, even Iron Man in Avengers is a beta type, in many ways:

> **Ironman**: (chases and gets disrespected)

If you love movies, it's a great opportunity to enlarge your horizons outside of Hollywood.
You'll find plenty of more realistic, masculine, and positively dominant men.

- **How to use leadership to get women**

Unplug From *All* Sources of Betaness

As you stop hanging out with beta friends, you also want to stop beta social media connections from getting any access to your brain.

An example?
Whenever anyone posts or likes shit like this one on your wall:

Take articles like that one as an invite for an immediate unfollow / unfriend.

But there is something deeper here.
Why do males love to share articles about female empowerment?

To begin with, because they think they are gaining social (and sexual) points by professing their supposed "open mind" (in truth, they're not open-minded at all, of course).
But most of all, beta males love sharing female empowerment stories because it makes them feel good. **The female empowerment narrative makes beta males feel like it's OK not to wear the pants in their relationships**.
The high-betaness of those messages reassures them by communicating something like this:

> See, my dear beta?
> Women are better than men, so it's OK that women in your life lead you. Actually, every man should let women lead because they're better at it, so you're being a forward thinker

So the beta can keep being a beta, and feel good about it.
Oh, and if you're interested in that nonsense Forbes article, you can read more here why it's nonsense.

10. Escape the Betalpha Trap

You made it to the last step.

Don't skip this last step, though.

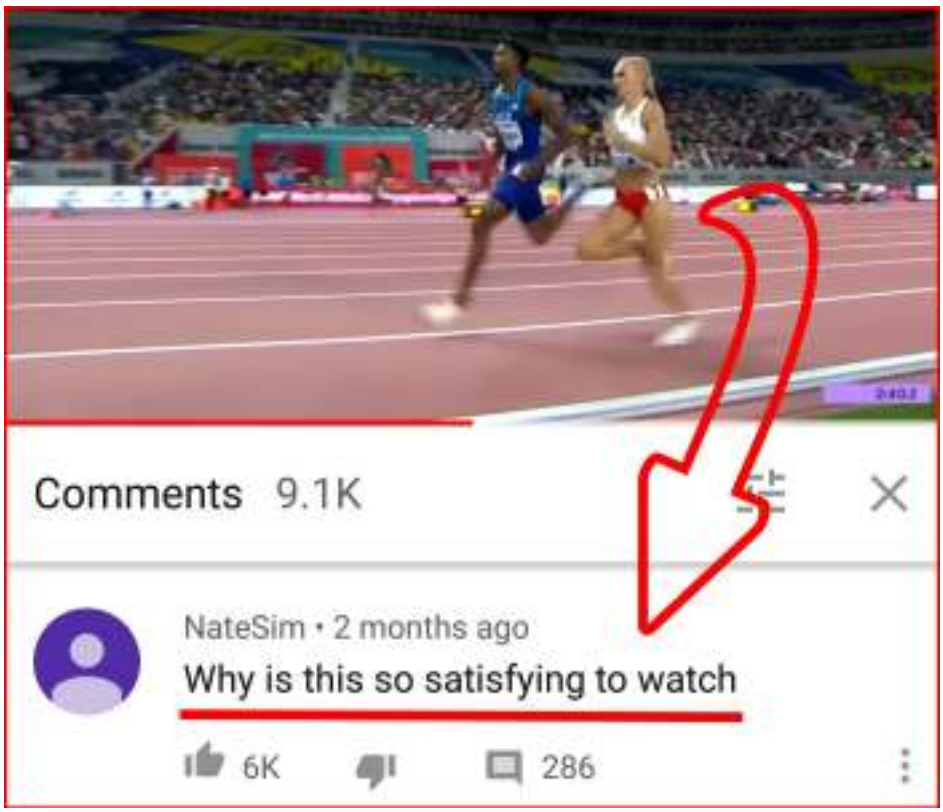
Too many men stop here and never really get 100% out of the beta male stage.

I call this the "betalpha" trap.
They are the quicksands in which some men get mired when they first learn about power dynamics.

Betalphas come in different stripes, but they all tend to have a few things in common:

- **They're not focused on getting better, but *feeling* better**: hence, they engage in social climbing and alpha-male posturing, mocking beta males to feel better about themselves
- **They get angry instead of getting effective**: some online communities are too ripe with anger and misogyny to be helpful. Venting and raging will not make you any better off
- **Follow other betalphas**: see for example the story of LondonReal, where betalphas lost $1.000.000 to a second-tier narcissist cult-leader.
- **Misogyny, and joining forces with other men against women:** this is one of the most dangerous stages some men get stuck into. They realize the world is not a Hollywood romance, and get angry at the system -and at women- for having "lied". So they lash out.
  Unluckily, there are plenty of manosphere leaders who are happy to keep men stuck in anger

Wanna see an example of a betalpha?
Here is one, from a commenter on a YouTube video showing a man running faster than a woman (no shit, eh?):



> **NateSim**: Why is this so satisfying to watch

Answer:

> Because you are projecting your individual identity into the whole "male gender" group (mistake #1), and you think that your personal value hinges on that group of men being "better" than women (mistake #2).

It's ironic, but since betalphas tend to be angry and confrontational, it's more likely that a beta male will have a more fulfilling life than a betalpha will ever have.

How to avoid getting stuck in this stage?

To begin with, remember this:

> Your path of self-development is about YOU.
> If there is anyone holding you down or fighting you, it's yourself.

As long as you believe there is someone, a gender, or a conspiracy theory holding you down, you will always stay stuck with a victim mentality.
If you really must pick up a war with someone, be it with yourself (but even then, I discovered that self-love is usually superior).

Striking a Balance

Yes, this last step means you must strike a balance.

As much as you reject feminism and cannot stand virtue-signaling male feminists, you also reject the manosphere's misogyny.

A mentally healthy high-quality man *does* want to be the leader of his relationship. And it's also healthy to believe that it's best for the *man* to be the leader of the relationship.
But he also sees that relationship as an opportunity for win-win and mutual collaboration -which is what relationships *are*-.

This is an important concept part of "enlightened collaboration":

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Also see:

- **Growing beyond the red pill**
- The group dynamics of the red pill

Summary

There, we make it to the end.

There is actually one last step that should be obvious and already part of your life if you're reading here:

- **Commit yourself to a self-development plan**

Keep working yourself, and you can escape betaness in just a few months.

Join Power University for a proven system to become an alpha type, earn status, and succeed in life

13 Power Moves Examples to Dominate Anyone

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

A power move is a conscious, often conspicuous display of power that instantly and memorably shifts the social power dynamics in your favor.

This is the definitive guide on power moves, breaking down the meaning of power moves, with an analysis of **13 real-world examples** (including intellectual, negotiation, and social moves) to help you understand, identify, and execute them effectively.

Contents

- What Is A Power Move
- Power Moves Examples
  - 1. The Underdog Flex™: Beat Them At Half-Power
  - 2. The Money Flex™: Display “F U Money”
  - 3. The ‘Win & Shame’: Rub Their Noses In Your Wins
  - 4. The ‘Not Worth My Words’: Show Your Superiority With Nonverbals
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- 14. Switch The Power Tables
- FAQs
- Remember: Life Success Needs More Than Showy Power Moves

What Is A Power Move

Most power moves are deliberate and often conspicuous actions that shift power dynamics in your favor, catch the other party unprepared, and impress observers with a major display of superior value, wit, or dominance.

In its broadest sense, *any* action that shifts power dynamics is technically a power move. However, in common usage, the term usually refers to conspicuous, high-impact, and memorable moves.

Power moves can be divided into several categories, including:

- **Dialectical power moves**: quips or rebuttals that win the exchange and display mental superiority
- **Negotiation power moves**: gambits that win a concession (see 'negotiation power moves')
- **Raw muscle power moves**: using physical size (example), superior weaponry, or fearlessness displays
- **Status power moves** display of higher rank within a hierarchical structure,
- **Mental power moves** display higher confidence or higher-value mindsets

A single well-placed power move can change everything, including sometimes flipping the power script and taking you from subservient to dominant.

Power Moves Examples

Let's now explore 13 power moves examples you can also use in real life:

1. The Underdog Flex™: Beat Them At Half-Power

Nothing shows absolute dominance like beating everyone else with a handicap.

For example:

Competition lines up with carbon running shoes, fuel gels, and moisture-wicking shorts? You outrun them in jeans.

Subtly or openly parade your handicap: it sub-communicates you'd have crushed them 10x harder if you even cared to put in some effort.
Tyson Fury does it here:

> **Tyson**: This is the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world (stands up and shows his 'soft' physique)
> **Tyson**: (turns to his fit and athletic opponent) Have a look. Fat man. That's who beat you

Winning against the odds is also a 'self-signaling' power move that boosts your confidence.

2. The Money Flex™: Display "F U Money"

Money is the true power equalizer.

Money doesn't look at your dress, skin color, or appearance.

If you have lots of money, you can always pull a power move that propels you from the bottom to the top.
As a matter of fact, **the best timing for this power move is when others look down on you**.

Why?

Because with this power move, you are telling them:

> ⍰⍰If me, someone whom you think is beneath you, can buy you and all your worthless establishment, what does it say about you?
> It says you must really be a nobody.

Look at an example here:

> **Bartender**: (dismissive, looking down on him, implying he can't afford it) The Latour is 400 pounds a bottle
> **The Saint**: Then we will have two bottles. (hands a wallop of bills) **There, you count it**

There is an art to this power move.
Don't flash credit cards at women: it screams 'simping'. And don't throw money in anger, which signals emotional overreaction, like in this scene from "The Wolf of Wall Street".

To execute this power move correctly:

1. Pick an expensive item
2. **Stay cool if they mention the price**, or smile a little, as if you're thinking "LOL, if this poor loser only knew"
3. **Take out a big wallop of money**: the bigger, the better. And make sure it's big notes
4. **Handle money as if it were paper, almost with disdain**: it signals you have so much you couldn't care less
5. **Say "keep the change"**: researcher Deborah Tannen notes that very large tips can be offensive as it's a way to "show them".

Alternative ways:

- **Hire a 'payer' to handle bills for you**: a 'money flex' on its own. Then tell him: "*Don't tip, they're rude*" as you leave

Abundant resources also win you freedom.
As Nassim Nicholas Taleb says:

> This is sometimes called "fuck you money," which, in spite of its coarseness, means that **it allows you to act like a Victorian gentleman, free from slavery**.
> It **shields you from prostituting your mind and frees you from outside authority**–any outside authority.

How To Use It To Score On Dates

SEE SEDUCTION UNIVERSITY

F*ck You Money For Women

Women can best pull this power move with a feminine twist -a "coquette style", for example.

See Charlotte executing it to perfection:

> **Friend 1**: Charlotte, this is really inappropriate
> **Sidney**: Yes, you're such a…
> **Charlotte**: What, what am I, Sidney? (stares them with a power gaze, drops a note inside the glass, walks out)

Her frame control is confident, without being overly aggressive.
Faced with a judge-role shame attack, she refused to backtrack and *owned* the accusation with pride.

3. The 'Win & Shame': Rub Their Noses In Your Wins

Valentino Rossi, a formerly dominant racer, called the new young guys "pussies" for preferring 'clean' racing.
Unluckily for Rossi, the "pussies" were finishing ahead of him, and Lorenzo pulled the power move:

Lorenzo: Shame for Rossi to be beaten by "pussies"

MotoGP
Peter McLaren
13 May 2011

Share:

'Young MotoGP riders are pussies' - that was the controversial claim made recently by seven time champion Valentino Rossi...

> **Rossi**: Young riders are p*ssies
> **Lorenzo**: Shame for Rossi to be beaten by p*ssies

Obama does something similar here:

> **Obama**: I have no more campaigns to run. My only agend..
> **Republicans**: (interrupt with applause, cheering) Yeeeeeah
> **Obama**: I know, because I won both of them <—- ⍰⍰ Suck my winning d*ck, losers

The secret to doing it well is to move forward right after you deliver the power move, lest you look narcissistic, too into yourself, and emotionally thin-skinned.

Note: Winners Don't Overreact

Here's a power nugget of wisdom for you:

Look at the video above again.

And note *who* goes wild at Obama's joke.
It's the backbenchers and the smaller players who truly go wild.

Top players know how to act high dominance, and they know that overreactions signal low power.

4. The 'Not Worth My Words': Show Your Superiority With Nonverbals

Nothing says "I'm better than you"… Than saying it without words.

The law of least social effort says that the less effort you expend, the more powerful you look.

So when you cut off or ignore people without saying a word, you naturally come across as superior.
Some tips on how to pull off this power move:

- Exhale emphatically
- Roll your eyes upward
- Show disgust with facial expression

5. The Royal Delay: Let Them Wait (With Royal Attitude)

Letting people wait is a power move.

While we don't advise abusing it because it's disrespectful, there can be situations when it's fair.

The secret to perfect execution is "sprezzatura", like it's the most normal thing in the world, and like people are *supposed* to wait for you.

Look at how this man from the movie "Il Marchese del Grillo" does it.
Note his tonality and his body language:

> **Butler**: Mr. Marquis, there is downstairs a French official in barouche, he says he is…
> **Marchese**: Oh yeah, that's captain Blachard, let him wait (waves hands in the air as if to say "who cares"), I had even forgotten about him (and stays seated talking to his mother)

This is how old-world royalty moves and thinks.
They think like they are *owed* power, and that it's actually fair for people to wait for them.

6. The Ask & Own: Ask Their Opinion, Then Contradict Them

This is pure social power at play.

And the movie "*Meet the Parents*" provides the perfect context.
Guys who "met her parents" instinctively feel the tension between husbands and fathers-in-law.
If the two meet before marriage, the father-in-law can:

- Be territorial with his daughter
- Test the new man
- Stake a dominance claim to remain 'the alpha male' around his daughter

On the other hand, the boyfriend seeks the family's approval, which can put him in a subservient frame of mind and give away power.

In this example, De Niro goes for verbal signals of power.
And caps it all off with the "contradict power move":

> **Jack**: Let me ask you a question, Greg: can you really trust another human being, Greg? <— Ask
> **Greg**: (thinks about it) Sure, I think so
> **Jack**: No, the answer is that you cannot <— Own
> **Greg**: (does not reply, looks away, owned)

7. The Shock & Chill™: Make Them Nervous, Then Tell Them to Relax

Making people nervous with your presence, questions, or jokes is a dead giveaway of dominance.

To avoid breaking rapport after you made others jittery, you can add “just joking” or “chill”.
Denzel Washington does it in a few of his movies.

And De Niro does it here:

> **Jack**: Oh, you’d be surprised how accurate they are. I can tell fairly easy if one is lying or not
> **Greg**: (Squeaks and sweats)
> **Jack**: Relax, relax

8. The Godfather Power Move: Extend An “Offer They Can’t Refuse”

Could we make a list of power moves without this classic?

No, we couldn’t:

> **Producer**: Johnny Fontane will never get that part
> (…) You don’t understand: Johnny Fontane never gets that movie
> (wakes up next to his favorite horse. Johnny Fontane gets the part.)

These power moves propose a negotiative option. They say:

> ⍰⍰ We can get to you easily, but for this time, we just wanted to warn you.
> You can play ball with us and get your fair value back, or your will force us to use force.
> We hope you choose to negotiate in friendliness.

To pull it off, show that:

- **You can reach a favorable outcome with or without them** (flaunting other options)
- **Take what you are negotiating through negotiations or with nastier means** (violence, hostile takeover, replacing them, etc.)
- **Make them pay a high price if they don’t negotiate as you please**

9. The Leadership Takeover: Conspiciously Refuse to Follow

Principle:

Never adapt to others, always let others adapt to you.

Who adapts to whom is all about power dynamics.

And when people try to “teach” you about their culture, they are indirectly saying that you should learn their culture because it’s important.

The moment you start following them, not only you empower them, but you also become, well… The follower.
And power players don’t follow.

The real power players refuse to follow and take the lead, instead.
See here a great example:

> **Streisand**: (teaches De Niro how to pronounce) L’chaim! L’ha-ha. Like you have popcorn stuck in the throat.

> It's a…
> **De Niro**: (looks away, smiles derisively, as if to say "fuck you and your BS") OK, to family <—- Refuses the 'learner's frame', takes the lead
> **Everyone**: laughs

10. The Neg: Hit With a Back-Handed Compliment

Nothing screams "power move" like offending people with a compliment.

Billy Bats does it well here:

> **Billy**: This kid was great.
> **They used to call him "spitshine Tommy"** <—- ⍰⍰ The 'neg'
> I swear to God, **he made your shoes look like fucking mirrors. He was the best. Made a lot of money, too** <—- ⍰⍰ You don't make a lot of money shining shoes, it implies Tommy was poor and working hard for a pittance
> Salute, Tommy!

This whole dialogue is an attack masked as a compliment.
It's covert-aggression (albeit not *too* covert).
It's far more annoying being on the receiving end of covert aggression. If you get angry without playing their same game you look over-reactive because it was not overt aggression -plus the attacker can always say "take it easy it was just a joke"-.

11. The Humor Power Move: Use Humor to Call Out the Unspeakable Big Issue

Harsh truths can sound overly aggressive if you just blurt them out.

But frame them as a joke, and it becomes a covert power move that lets you get away with almost anything. Humor makes it harder for others to challenge you back. If they do, they'd look over-reactive.

> **Joe Rogan**: you want people to walk down the street with a mask on?
> **Bill Burr**: let's not start this, Joe
> **Joe Rogan**: do you, though? Let's start it
> **Bill Burr**: **I'm not going to sit here with no medical degree, listening to you with no medical degree, with an American flag behind you, smoking a cigar, acting like we know what's up better than the CDC**

Ouch!

In that same interview:

> **Burr**: You don't have the body fortitude. Your fu*king knuckles would scrape on the floor

⍰ You're like a dumb gorilla

> **Burr**: Oh God, you're so tough with your fucking open nose and throat. G.I. Joe and his five o'clock shadow. This is a man over here.

⍰ you're a posturer pretending to be tough

And later:

> **Burr**: Now is the bitch Joe. Now is the bitch
> (Joe laughs with hissing sound)

⍰ In the end, you're not even tough.

Burr frames Rogan as a loudmouth talking things he doesn't understand.
It took away all of Rogan's authority.
It robbed him of any credibility, present and future, to talk about anything outside of, maybe, combat sports and pot.

Humor is a technique that suits people like Bill Burr especially well. Since it's his job to make fun of others, you cannot attack him back easily.

12. The Puppeteer's Call™: Draw Them In, Leave Them Hanging

> **Law of kings #1**: Use your smaller allies to look hyperdominant. Smaller allies can't rebel witout losing the alliance. They're forced to submit. Use their neediness to display dominance with impunity

Calling people up to you displays power.
And letting them hang there displays total dominance.

Example:

> **Trump**: Where is the United Kingdom <— Acts like a teacher taking attendance
> **Starmer**: (walks to Trump) <— Obeys like a good pupil
> **Trump**: (turns around and leaves Starmer hanging, who then must walk back in shame)

Starmer already lost power walking to Trump. Trump could re-empower him a bit. Instead, he doubles down and embarrasses him even more.

13. The Stealth Flex™: Drop Hints, Let Them Connect The Dots

Machiavelli said it first:

> *Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are.*

What's the point of having power, if you cannot flaunt it?

However, there is an art to displaying power.
Do it in one of two ways:

1. **With bravado**, as if to say "This is the reality of things, friends" (also see 'how to brag on dates')
2. **Indirectly**, as if you're trying to hide your real power

Here are some examples of this power move:

> **Random guy**: So, what do you do?
> **You**: I do some charity work to help less fortunate people <—- ⍰⍰ I'm rich, I don't need to work

And:

> **Random Guy**: Where are you from?

> **Me**: Originally, Italy, but EU during summers and warm places in winters <—- ⍰⍰ I lowkey live my dream life

And:

> **Him**: If you had to choose between a rich and handsom but jerk and nice but poor, what would you choose?
> **Her**: Well… I have more than enoguh and don't need any help there. Beauty does not impress me either, so… <—- ⍰⍰ Your low-value criteria don't apply to me

The guy's options are both poor frames. She switches the power tables by making *him* come across as petty and low-value.

14. Switch The Power Tables

This is the peak power move: going from power down to winning.

SEE POWER UNIVERSITY

FAQs

What is the meaning of a power move?

A power move is a noun referring to a strategic social maneuver used to assert dominance or high status.
In practice, its meaning is defined by its **impact on the frame of the interaction**: it instantly shifts the power balance from a state of neutrality or subservience to one of superior value, power, and control.

What are some examples of power moves?

Notable power move examples include **The Underdog's Flex** (beating a competitor while at a disadvantage), **The Money Flex** (displaying extraordinarily abundant resources), and **The Shock & Chill** (intentionally inducing and then releasing social pressure). Other strategic examples include **The Puppeteer's Call**, or calling others to oneself only to then ignore them; and **The Ask & Own**, or contradicting others to display social dominance. These tactics are categorized into dialectical, negotiation, status-based, and mental power moves.

Are power moves always obvious?

No, power moves can be either conspicuous or subtle. While some are bold and highly visible, many effective power moves are quiet behaviors—such as controlled silence or a dry 'I disagree'—that are not as obvious, but still display power, self-sufficiency, and confidence.

Remember: Life Success Needs More Than Showy Power Moves

This article, just like its cousin "office power moves", is based on solid principles of power dynamics.

But while these high-impact moves are effective to impress and look supremely cool, **true success comes from a *baseline* of high-status behavior and life strategy**.

If you're ready to move beyond "showy" tactics and master the underlying dynamics of social and professional success:

Check Power University

Power Dynamics: Why It's The Most Important Self-Help Discipline

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Power dynamics shape every interaction — from your career to your relationships.
They decide who leads, who follows, who gets respect, and who gets ignored.

Understanding them isn't optional — it's the difference between being effective or being outplayed.

The Power Moves pioneered power dynamics as a foundational branch of men's self-development, advanced social skills, and life strategy.

This guide explains what power dynamics really mean, shows real-life examples, and reveals how mastering them gives you an edge in status, attraction, and success.

Some of the many disciplines that overlap or contribute to power dynamics

Contents

- Power Dynamics Definition
- Application of Power Dynamics
  - 1. Interpersonal Power Dynamics
  - 2. Leadership Power Dynamics
  - 3. Dating Power Dynamics
  - 4. Relationship Power Dynamics
  - 5. Workplace Power Dynamics
- Power Dynamics in The Social Sciences
  - Measures of Power Dynamics
- Why Power Is Hidden From Public Discourse
- Why Learning Power Dynamics
  - When you don't need power dynamics

Power Dynamics Definition

> Power dynamics is the study of power negotiations between individuals or groups

Power includes but is not limited to, influence, resources, and achieving specific goals and outcomes.

In academic terms, power is commonly defined as the capacity to influence others or control resources (Keltner et al., 2003).
However, we find that listing sources of power often gives a misleading sense of precision. Lists of power sources cannot provide a definitive list, while still adding complexity. To cut through the academic noise, we use a definition that focuses on *effectiveness*:

> Power is the ability to do and get what you want

As such, power dynamics includes the study of:

- Strategies to reach goal
- Negotiations, including of conflicting interests
- Cooperation among individuals to reach goals
- Influence and persuasion, as well as manipulation
- The negotiation of status between individuals and within groups
- The formation and acquisition of rank within structured hierarchies

Application of Power Dynamics

Here is how power dynamics are applied to some of the major areas of human socialization.

TPM Power Dynamics Framework

The TPM Power Dynamics Framework, developed by Lucio Buffalmano, is a systematic model for understanding and intentionally navigating power in human interactions to achieve goals and life-relevant outcomes.

While power dynamics have long been studied in sociology and psychology, TPM was among the first self-development frameworks to treat **power dynamics as a foundational discipline for men's empowerment**, translating abstract theory into **concrete, real-world principles and strategies for achieving goals and life-relevant outcomes** in dating, work, leadership, and everyday life.

The TPM Power Dynamics Framework is organized across two primary levels of analysis:

- Interpersonal Power Dynamics (TPM Model): The structural analysis of how power operates between individuals in one-to-one interactions such as dating, negotiation, conflict, competition, and leadership
- Social Power Dynamics (TPM): The analysis of power at the group level, including status, hierarchy, coalitions, reputation, and institutional influence

1. Interpersonal Power Dynamics

While social and interpersonal are often used interchangeably, they refer to very different levels of analysis.

Social power dynamics refers to social groups and social classes. Interpersonal power dynamics refers to 1:1 interactions, or one-to-many interactions seen from the individual's perspective.

Social Skills vs. Power Dynamics

Power dynamics and social skills overlap, but we can recognize a slightly different focus:

- **Social skills is getting along**, as it has historically focused on the more communal aspect of socialization, like getting along, and being liked
- **Power dynamics is getting ahead**, it's the more agentic aspect, focused on status, influence, dominance

Power	Social Skills
Get ahead	Get along
Status	Inclusion
Influence	Communication
Independence	Interdependence

This distinction is helpful for a first basic-level conceptualization, but it's of course simplistic. For example, getting ahead also means getting along enough not to be ostracized.
And even getting along requires some power-intelligence (e.g., avoiding power-related pitfalls like unwittingly disempowering others).

In general, we believe that **true social skills include power-awareness**, and social skills without power are hollow. Especially for a man.

But everyone is well advised to pay some attention to power dynamics. To quote one of this website's mantras from "*The Prince*":

> A good person is ruined among the great numbers who are *not* good

Also read:

- **Should beginners start with power?** Or with basic social skills?
- Interpersonal power dynamics: an intro

2. Leadership Power Dynamics

Power is central to leadership.
The process of becoming a leader is a process of status acquisition, status being a form of power, and sometimes of competition among leadership candidates.
The job of a leader also largely rests on the influence he exerts over his followers, influence being a form of power.

Finally, power dynamics also help differentiate between good leaders, and not-so-good ones.
Social psychologist John Turner refers to influence, authority, and coercion, which also aligns with Cheng and Tracy's two-model approach to status. Leaders who rely solely on rank and dominance tend to disempower followers, while prestigious leaders who gain followers' admiration tend to empower followers.

Also read:

- **How to be a leader** (with power dynamics in mind)
- Power over VS power through

3. Dating Power Dynamics

Men and women have both converging and diverging interests, which also vary depending on individuals and context.

The converging and diverging interests create opportunities for cooperation, but also for possible defection and cheating.
This is why it is so crucial to understand dating power dynamics.

Also read:

- Dating power dynamics
- Principles of dating power dynamics
- Sexual conflict
- Sexual market value

Or get the full overview (plus more than what's in any single article):

- **Seduction University**

4. Relationship Power Dynamics

Contrary to what some may think, power dynamics are present in *all* relationships, including the *best* relationships. Healthy relationships start with mutual respect, accepting influence, and a willingness to negotiate win-win outcomes. These all have to do with power.

Conversely, it's sometimes a *lack* of power that creates issues.
For example, a lack of personal power in the form of no assertiveness leads to poor communication, bottling up grievances, and growing resentment.

Also read:

- **Phases of power in intimate relationships**
- How women control relationships
- How to maintain power in LTRs

5. Workplace Power Dynamics

> The study of power dynamics in workplace environments, including the strategies to gain unofficial status and win official promotions

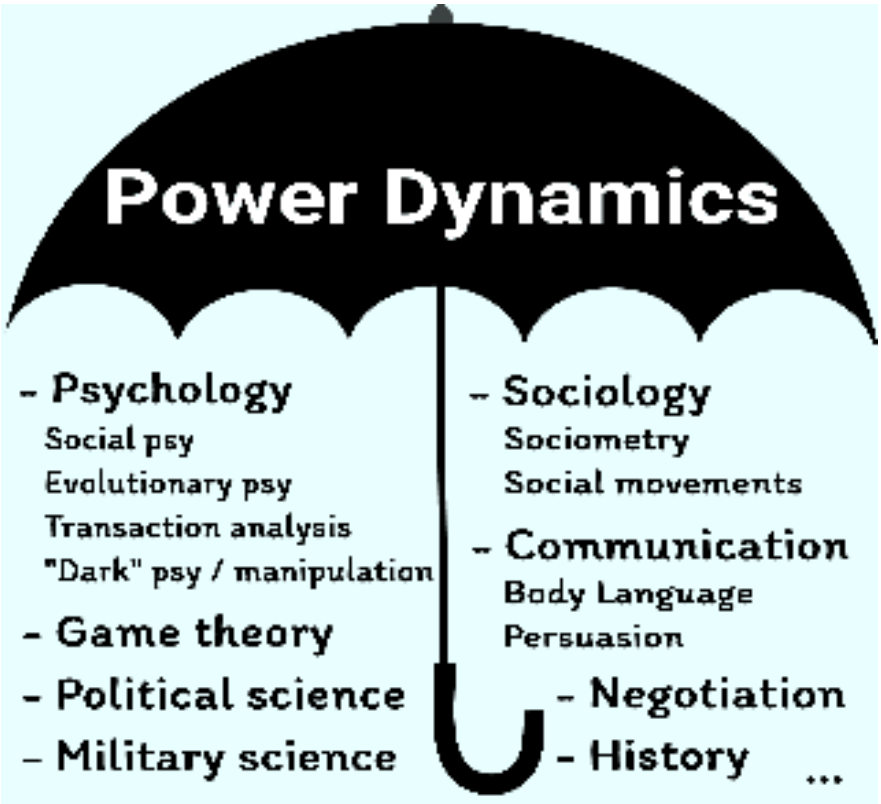
Workplaces are a hotbed of politics and hidden power moves.

Power dynamics are hidden and sometimes Machiavellian because workplaces operate under two contrasting forces.
On one hand, there are company values, teamwork and 'company first' as the ultimate values to display publicly.
On the other hand, people must pursue their selfish interests to advance, and that often diverges from what's best for the team and the company.

Also read:

- **Career strategies: start here**
- Mastering office politics
- Executive skills
- Women's guide to reaching the top

Power Dynamics in The Social Sciences



There is no individual branch of social sciences called “power dynamics”.
And, as the *APA Handbook* suggests, it hasn’t been heavily investigated by empirical research:

> Given its paramount importance, one might expect power would hold a privileged place in the field of social psychology (…) Although there are (…) isolated pockets of research (…) power has never been a hotbed of theoretical or empirical activity.

On the other hand, since power is embedded in personal relationships, one could say that any research on human interactions already includes power.
In that sense, power dynamics are embedded in the very fabric of social science research.

🤔Lucio’s Take: **How TPM Started Using Power Dynamics for Self-Development**

Lucio:
I was an avid student of self-development, and I felt that something was missing.

Even the limited, non-naive literature on power, never provided *practical* guidance on achieving power-related goals.
Even best-known authors (like Robert Greene) offered great principles but not a cohesive, practical framework for daily encounters — the moments where status, influence, and attraction are negotiated.

So one day, as I reflected on an 'office power move' and how to best respond to it, it dawned on me: it was on me to create such a resource.

Measures of Power Dynamics

Many measures have been developed over the years to measure different aspects of power dynamics in various disciplines.
We handpick some that we believe to be most significant:

- **Need for Power (nPow):** Classic motive measure capturing a desire to influence, lead, control, or impact others.
  - Status Motive / Need for Status**:** Measures how motivated someone is to seek higher social rank, respect, visibility, and prestige.
- **Personal Sense of Power (SOP / POW):** Measures how powerful a person *feels* in their relationships and daily interactions. Captures subjective interpersonal power.
  - Leadership Self-Efficacy**:** Measures a person's belief in their ability to lead, influence, direct, and coordinate others — a form of functional power.
- **Interpersonal Power Inventory (IPI):** Measures how people *use* power in relationships across different bases of power (reward, coercion, legitimacy, expertise, etc.).
  - Dominance–Prestige Scale (Cheng & Tracy) Measures two core strategies of status: dominance (force, intimidation), and prestige (skills, respect)

- **Social Dominance Orientation (SDO):** Measures preference for hierarchy, inequality, and dominance of one group over another. It's a social construct, but also significant for personality psychology
- **Communion / Agency Scales:** Measure focus on agency (assertion, influence, leadership) versus communion (warmth, cooperation). Agency is directly tied to power.

Why Power Is Hidden From Public Discourse

As important as power dynamics are… Why so few people (openly) talk about it?

The reason can be well explained by power dynamics itself:

1. Reputational risk

You may be branded as "power hungry" or "dark triad".

Someone "bad", or to be careful around.

And few people want that.

2. Strategic misguidance

If you can pass for naive, others may lower their guard, or compete less hard.
Lower competition makes life easier for the strategic player who feigns disinterest in power.

3. Virtue signaling

Public dismissal of power-relevant pursuits may display kindness and prosociality. If one virtue signals against someone else he may catch two birds with a stone: disempowering the attacker, and look better by comparison.
For example:

> **Him**: (attacks Lucio for writing about power) <— Funny thing, the attack for writing about power is in itself a power move, with the sometimes unconscious goal of *acquiring* power.

4. Public scorn, private consumption

People may publicly profess disinterest in power, only to seek it privately.

Publicly, it's a virtue signal to look better and a manipulation attempt to discourage others from learning a crucial life skill.
Then, privately, they double down to gain an edge.

Early on this website's existence, I used to share articles on Facebook.
A connection wrote a scathing message on a post. But a few days later wrote privately that it was 'interesting'. And a few days later asked for coaching.

Why Learning Power Dynamics

Power dynamics is a foundational skill and knowledge because life itself demands it.

The goal of life is to survive, advance, and reproduce.
And these basic functions require both cooperation, often under the constant threat of defection, and competition.
Both of them are grounded in power dynamics (not just competition!).

Achieving any challenging goals also requires power and strategies.
And achieving them with an honorable approach, giving while also not being taken advantage of, may require even more *power* mastery ('enlightened giver'). Including knowing how to spot and handle bullies, takers, and various manipulation tactics.

The Positive Contribution of Power Dynamics

We believe that society gains from the empowerment we seek to provide.
There are different reasons why:

1. **Predators and takers intuitively understand power dynamics**, so they gain comparatively less
2. **Good people gain more than bad people** because they often lack an intuitive feel for power
3. **Empowered people decrease predation across the board**: predators prey on easy prey. The fewer easy prey, the less abuse in this world
4. **Less scum and more cream to the top (more meritocracy)**: power-aware and bold players can sometimes advance with little competence. The more good people learn the game of power, the more competence will make the difference
5. **Less naive idiots follow bad leaders**. Dominance complementarity theory suggests that submissive followers better fit with dominant and narcissistic leaders (Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983; Grijalva & Harms, 2014); and research suggests that the weaker *vulnerable* narcissists tend to elect populists (de Zavala, 2018)

And, now we can revisit Machiavelli's quote:

> **A good man is ruined among those who are *not* good.**
> **But a good man who has learned power dynamics is armed and ready.**

True that.

When you don't need power dynamics

Power dynamics become less relevant when:

- You're OK languishing at the bottom of society
- You achieved all that you wanted to achieve

- You’re a hermit
- People in your life are absolutely, 100% good, honest, and value-giving

Beyond those extremes, you may need it less if you deal with mostly good people and are fully satisfied. But caution is necessary: life circumstances—and people—can change fast

For everyone else, in competitive environments — careers, dating, leadership, influence — power dynamics isn’t optional.
The only choice is whether you understand the game or get outplayed by those who do.
If you’re an ambitious man, Power University teaches you that game, so you can win it:

Check Power University

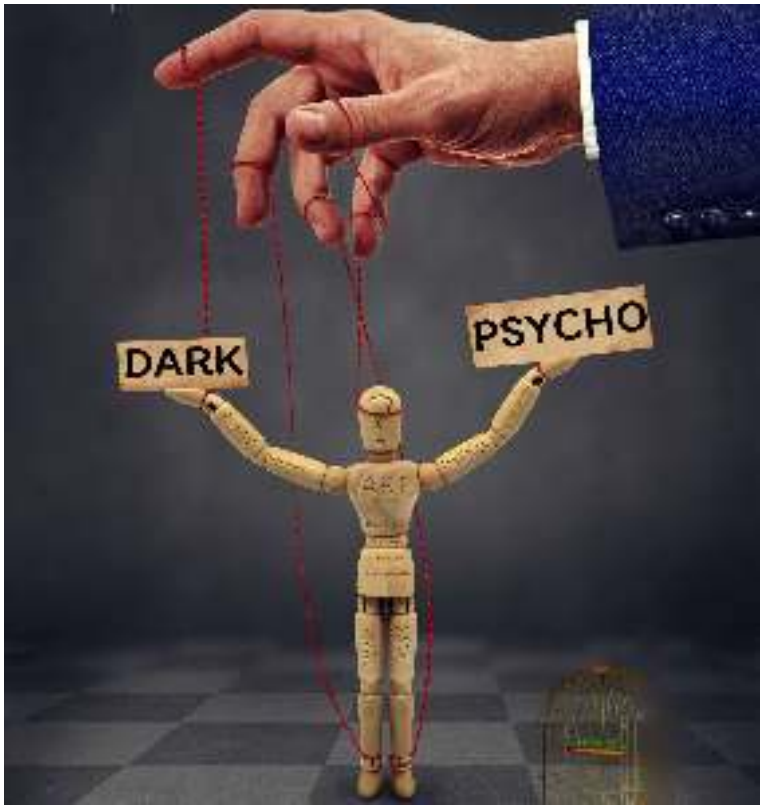
Dark Psychology: 7 Ways Manipulators Trick You

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Dark psychology is the study and practice of manipulation, influence, and coercion to gain power at the expense of others.

At The Power Moves, we're experts in decoding these tactics and revealing how manipulators use them in various areas of life—dating, relationships, politics, and more.

In this article, we'll uncover the most common manipulative techniques, exposing the dark strategies that control minds.



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What's Dark Psychology

We define dark psychology as such:

> The use of psychological principles of influence, manipulation, and coercion, for ends that can benefit the perpetrator but that harm or limits the freedom and power of the receiver.

From now on, we'll call "dark psychologist" anyone who deploys tools of influence and persuasion in a way that harms the receiver.

Of course, sometimes the lines between a normal person, and a dark psychologist can blur.
And it's also possible to manipulate others to exact fair revenge or for personal defense.

Yet, let's not get lost in a sea of relativism, and let's be realistic.
Some people are "darker" than others, and manipulate far more than others. And the opposite is true: some people have stronger values and ethics, and you can more reliably expect them to be honest and fair.

Now let's quickly review some myths of dark psychology.

1. Dark Psychology For Social Manipulation

> Dark psychology in social settings consists of strategies and techniques to manipulate people to do what's good for the dark psychologist, but harmful for the victims

The applications of darker psychology in interpersonal relationships are endless.
We have a website for that, and a whole course that teaches men how to naturally spot manipulation and red flags.

But some examples include:

- **Tell nice guys that they're great people**, so they remain too nice guys while the dark psychologist advances by NOT being a too nice guy
- **Guilt tripping** or "pity play" to make others feel bad and do what you want out of guilt. And despite they can reek of manipulative, research suggests they can work
- **Encouraging other women to be independent to handicap their dating**. This is the 'feminist manipulation'.

Many people use these techniques without even knowing their names, of course.
They just have a natural 'feel' for manipulation.

2. Dark Psychology in Dating

> Dark psychology in dating applies psychological principles to meet one's own sexual strategies at the detriment of the dating partner

We said this several times on this website:

Dating between men and women presents common objectives as well as some diverging interests.

For example:

- Men gain from having sex ASAP, women lose
- Men gain from sex without commitment, women lose
- Women gain from lots of investment before sex, men lose
- Women gain when men in their lives dote on them, men lose

Of course there are exceptions, and there are plenty of ways to smoothen out the divergences -with collaborative frames, for example-. But the above statements are still true plenty of times to make dating a fertile ground for manipulators and dark psychologists.

The dark psychologist dates with complete disregard of the well being of their dating partner, while seeking to exclusively maximize their own self-interest.

The Male Dark Psychologist

The male dark psychologist:

- **Strings her along without a relationship**: he lies about his future goals and plans, pretends he wants to settle down, but just "later"
- **Seeks "sex on the side"**: he gives commitment, but does not keep his word (very common)
- **Chameleon manipulation**: he presents a mask of the man she wants, instead of the man he is. The game is to pretend there are no conflicts of interests, and that they want the same thing, which in turn helps to lower her defenses, and get to sex quicker

An example of the latter, and a cheap one at that, is the man who feigns to be into long term relationships to get women who are seeking a relationship.
Like this guy: selling the "ideal relationship guy":

> **Him**: (commenitng on the ideal of perfect marriage) now, that's my idea of a perfect marriage
> **Her**: totally (he stares at her and sighs)

Seeking sex ASAP is not "dark" per se. That's a fair, and potentially smart, lover strategy.
But it can become dark when the man cajoles, lies, or offer fake rewards that never materialize (see Weinstein promising acting roles).

Also read:

- **Games men play**: a list of common dating games men play
- **Tools of sexual conflict**: a list of evolutionary-programmed games that both men and women engage in

The Female Dark Psychologist

Among the female manipulations:

- **Position herself as the prize**: reject him, feign low interest, make him chase… These all serve to keep him on his toes and make him invest
- **Control him through sex**: most men need sex more than women. And some women use sex, dispensed as a reward or withheld as punishment, to get what they want.

P.S.:
one of the most popular articles on this website is "How to make him crazy" and one of the most searched keywords is "How to mindf*ck a guy".

Also read:

- **Games women play**: a list of dating games women play
- **Manipulative techniques to make him value her more**: as the title suggests
- **Manipulative games women play**: read this one to learn the red flags to watch out for

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

2.1. Dark Psychology in Seduction (Advanced)

This is how we define dark psychology seduction:

> Dark psychology in seduction seeks bonds and attachments based not on mutual love and affection, but on predatory one-sided attachment, or on traumatic bonds that leverages or creates psychological wounds

Some examples include:

- **Regression seduction**: seduction through mother / father roles
- **Judge seductions**: the individual frames himself as superior, and makes the partner chase for his approval (see: "the judge role")
- **Traumatic bonding**: the individual makes their partner attached through physical and/or emotional abuse
- **Emotional roller-coaster bonding**: increasing attachment through cycles of fights and re-pacification (also see: anxious-avoidant attachment)
- **Control through personal kinks**: the dark psychologist provides sexual satisfaction through kinks that the target keeps secret.
  The dark psychologist becomes the only person that can sexually satisfy them, *plus* they acquire an important secret the target wishes to keep secret, which gives them leverage

Some dark seducer techniques can be used subconsciously. Or as a consequences of someone's psychological makeup.
But they can also be premeditated, as with this example:

> **Dark seducer**: (uses sex, romance and Mach techniques to gain power over her)

3. Dark Psychology in Relationships

> Dark psychology in relationships applies psychological principles to gain power and control one's partner

There is less conflict in relationships than in dating.
But there is still some conflict.

For example, each partner can gain by keeping one nominally committed relationship, with all the sexual and emotional benefits that entails, while also seeking more sex on the side -and that's why cheating exists: it can pay off-.

Read more:

- **Psychological tools of female control**: women naturally deploy a set of very specific (dark) psychological tools to control their men
- **Gaslighting** & crazymaking, including a pattern of win-loses, power-hoarding and low-quality behavior that some people also deploy in friendships and business partnerships
- **Males techniques for mate-control**: men more than women gain from controlling their partner, so they deploy a set of both physical and psychological tools to guard their partners. These range from outright abuse, to jealous controlling, to shaming techniques, to lowering her self-esteem so that she is more dependent on him
- **The psychopath's control tools**: which include:
  - Devaluation
  - Operant conditioning with punishment / reward
  - Drama to induce cycles of positive and negative emotions

- Fear of abandonment to make the partner submit ("dread game")

But the whole article is a shocking read on Machiavellian strategies and dark psychology techniques:

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

4. Dark Psychology in Politics

> Dark psychology in politics consists of techniques of propaganda and political debating designed to negatively frame one's opponent, influence voters, and enduce citizens to abandon individualistic behavior in favor of the collective

There are many levels of political dark psychology, and we can separate them into two major groups: during campaigns, and in office.

In democracies, these two phases can overlap since politicians in power are still campaigning for the next elections. But even in democracies, you can still notice a marked switch from campaign to office.

Here is a quick difference:

- **During campaigns**
  - Frame the opponent as ineffective and unworthy
  - Frame the current state as hopeless
  - Frame yourself as the man to fix the situation
  - In extreme situations, make up an enemy and paint yourself as the right person to handle that enemy
- **Once in power**
  - Frame the status quo as positive
  - Take personal credit for things going well
  - Find scapegoats for things going poorly
  - Foster ideals of nationalism to drop rational selfishness in favor of the group (which ultimately benefits the politicians who lead those groups)

The last stage is common in many groups.
Government officials indeed can be seen as group leaders. And in the case of extremist governments, **despots act the same way as cult leaders and hate groups leaders act**, using the same principles of dark psychology.
That includes:

- Making up enemies
- Increasing group cohesion through extremist values and religious zealot
- Stoking fears and framing oneself as the only one to effectively tackle the danger (see Trump with immigrants)
- Stoking anger as a diversion tactic

5. Dark Psychology Leadership

> Dark psychology seeks to reduce the followers' power and independence, while increasing the leaders' power and control

Have you read the Power Moves' values?

One of them advises readers to develop themselves before getting too deep into any group.
Why do I advise so?

Because most **group leaders want to decreases members' power and independence while increasing *their* power and influence** over those same group members.

To make people more dependent on the group, group leaders will deploy several tactics of dark psychology, including:

- **Make people's problems appear as bigger than they actually are**: so people believe they will need the group and group leader to solve them
- **Ridicule, disempower, or exclude discording voices**: cult leaders seek to cut out all discordant opinions. Since that's rarely possible, group leaders frame any discordant voices as "idiotic", "uninformed", or "manipulative" (funny, eh?), so that they can inoculate their effect and keep followers loyal to the group's diktats and dogmas
  For example:
  - Don't listen to the "femininized society" = that's what manosphere groups say
  - Don't listen to the "patriarchal society" = that's what feminist groups say
    Funny, eh? Same exact society, but two specularly opposite way of framing it, to keep the group loyal.
- **Make up a big, huge enemy that can only be fought as a group**: see the feminists with the "patriarchy", or the red pill with "feminized society". When people perceive a big external enemy, they will want to seek refuge in the group

More dark psychology techniques in groups are:

- **Fostering group's superiority over the individual**: humanist and enlightened ideals of individualism and personal freedom are a threat to group leaders. They seek instead to prioritize the group over any individual. The more people sacrifice themselves for the group, the more power they have.
- **Dissolving members' ego with the group**: the more members identify with the group, the more power the group -and the group leader- will have on its members
- **Fusing the group with the leader**: the last stage of dark psychology is for the leader to embody the group. That way, he can reach total control over its members. At that point, there is no group anymore, just the leader and its followers who are in it for the leader

A case study:

- **The dark psychology of the red pill**

And a manipulation-resistance approach for life success:

- **The enlightned individualist**

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-individualism

6. Dark Psychology in War

> Dark psychology seeks to instill terror, to mentally dominate or unsettle the enemy in a way that will handicap its fighting abibility and, ideally, to make their fight and resistance seem futile.
> Manipulative communication during war frames the enemy as barbaric, and brutal, and spreads that view as widely as possible.

The armed conflict is only one aspect of war.

Psychology, information, and propaganda all become crucial strategic tools to support a military campaign.

6.1. Terror to Win Without Conflict

The biggest dark psychology power move in war is this:

> Lead the enemy to surrender without even firing a shot

For example, Genghis Khan purposefully crafted a reputation of merciless brutality towards anyone who resisted him.
That way many walled cities and castles on his path simply opened the door without opposing any resistance.
That was the equivalent of a big display of submissiveness in exchange for their lives.

Encirclement tactics or displays of superior firepower also serve to win without firing a single shot.
In a way, dark psychology at war can actually save lives.

6.2. The Nazi Stuka: Noise as Psychological Warfare

There are countless examples of psychological warfare.

A genius and innovative one was the light bomber plane Stuka, which had a siren attached to its nose.

The nazi engineers planned it that way to spread fear among the ground troops under attack. The goal was to build in the minds of the enemies an association between the sound of the siren with impending disaster and death.

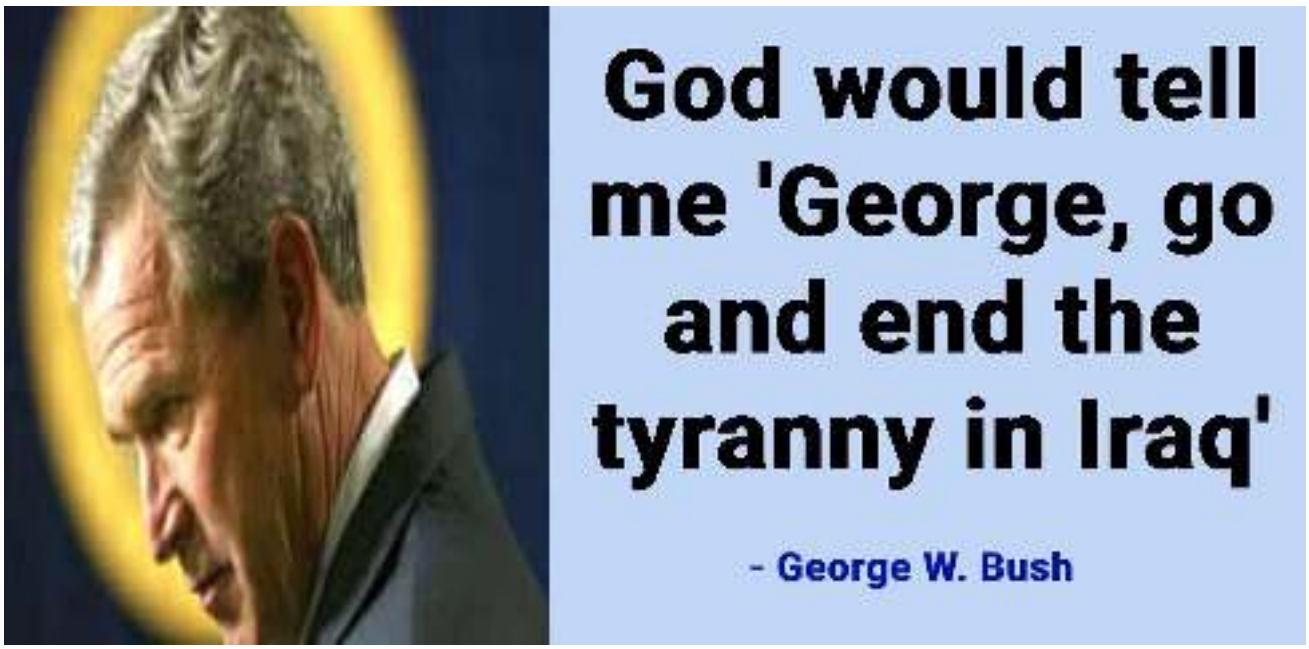
From a psychological point of view, the Stuka siren wanted ground troops to “learn helplessness” (Seligman, 1967). Once troops learn they can’t defend from an attack from the sky, they paralyze in fear, disband, and retreat in chaos. Exactly what the Germans wanted. And exactly what happened in Dunkirk.

6.3. Dark Psychology on The Air

During wartime, psychology is even more effectively deployed to control and sway public opinion.

Wartime manipulation consists of five different elements:

1. **Frame oneself as “good”**: ideally, as “holy”, or as having a responsibility to export “good” wherever you’re going to fight
2. **Frame the enemy as evil**: the enemy is oppressive, brutal or, even better, a threat to our way of life or our own same existence
3. **Make victory seem easy and obvious**: few people want to actually go fight that war. So make it seem like a quick and easy business
4. **Hide the true costs of war**: nobody wants to pay for that war. So hide the costs, make it seem like the people will gain from it
5. **Hide the true emotional costs**: nobody wants to see that our holy war is bringing death and suffering. So hide the casualties, the mothers with dead children, and the children crying on the bodies of their dead parents. How’s that for dark psychology :(.



Claiming holiness and God on one's side helps in two ways:

1. It makes one's own troops feel destined to victory
2. Props up internal civil support for the ongoing war efforts

6.4. Mo' Power, Mo' Manipulation

Dark Psychology can provide the cover for continued brutality.

Countries with bigger budgets engage in dark psychology to control what the world thinks of their wars.
By dominating the informational war, more powerful countries can keep engaging in modern-day colonialism and invasions without people realizing what they're truly up to.

Up until recently, Israel was very successful ad controlling the narrative.
Upon revision of this article in 2025, things changed though and grassroots movements changed the game.

7. Dark Psychology in Business

> Dark psychology in business manipulates employees into giving up their indivual self-interest in favor of the organization, while accepting only a small portion of their true contribution.

There is no point in saddling you with more information here.

There is already a large resource on this phenomenon, with plenty of examples:

- **Corporate manipulation of employees**

And see:

Manipulative negotiation techniques

Or better yet, if you're a founder get **Power University** to protect yourself.

What Dark Psychology is Not

Dark psychology is extremely powerful, but it's not dark magic.

This section will dispel some dark psychology myths.

1. Dark psychology is not hypnosis to make anyone do anything

Hypnosis is powerful.

A series of well-placed commands embedded within a distracting word-salad of nonsense can bewilder people enough to give you some control over them.

Once they disengage their critical thinking, you can then quickly escalate their compliance until you can successfully ask them to hand over their wallets, for example.
Or let you go instead of giving you a ticket, if they are cops.

See here an example of the latter:

> **Officer**: you burned the stop sign
> **Hypnotist**: (hypnotizes police offer)

This video is interesting.
Yet, it also shows hypnosis's limitations:

1. The cop was friendly enough to allow the driver to dominate the frame at will. Same for Derren Brown's subjects: all passive and compliant
2. The hypnotist was himself shocked it worked, which tells us that it doesn't usually work
3. The hypnotist admits that he picked a bunch of tickets trying to finally "hypnotize" a cop (ie.: it didn't work most of the times)

Learn the power-based strategies to avoid traffic tickets (alumni only!)

2. Dark psychology is not NLP and "undercover seduction triggers"

Again, there is *some* truth, here.

Well-designed stimuli, including auditory patterns, can change people's moods and induce trance-like states that can facilitate or amplify seduction.

And yes, with the right settings and techniques it's INCREDIBLY POWERFUL.

I once had a woman who had *never* orgasmed to orgasm *multiple* times as she over and over professed her love.

Sounds impressive?

Well it will sound a lot more impressive when I add that I was shorter than her.
And Far less "alpha" than all her past boyfriends and that… We were just lying next to each other *fully clothed*.

Yes, it *is* powerful.

HOWEVER…

That was only the peak of a longer seduction process after a day together where I acted like a high-value man. (Yes, you can be high value even as a short, "non typical alpha type").

You MUST be high value for any dark psychology technique to work.

The confusion comes from unscrupulous snake oil salesmen.
Have you ever seen those advertisements of "send her these 3 texts and she'll be all over you"?
Or NLP-based courses, or "secret combinations of words" that will make her yours?

Total BS.

In truth, she has to like you and trust you before you can induce any turnaround -or any trance-like states-.

Otherwise, the more you speak, the more you chase, and the more you repel her.

See here for some good real dark-psychology seduction tools:

- How to set up your room for seduction
- Songs for seduction

> 10 Steps to Prepare Your House For A Date (Seductive Environment)

3. Dark psychology does not turn anyone into a cult-sect follower

Again, some truth.

Cults and sects are real.
And cult leaders do deploy solid psychological principles to ensnare people (plus they are often very good with power dynamics).

It's a myth though that anyone could be recruited into a sect and become a blind follower.
Remember this general truth about manipulation:

> **Manipulators' biggest skill is always in picking the targets who are *easiest* to manipulate**

That's not to say that you should have too much confidence in yourself. After all, the best way to put yourself in danger is to believe you're unassailable.
But it does mean that the power of dark psychology in cults is also limited by the targets' own power, which includes his knowledge of power dynamics and his knowledge of manipulation principles.

When you read of cult leaders who had their members do this or that crazy and dangerous acts, including self-harm, never forget this: most of those people were not the mentally strongest and most fiercely independent people to begin with.

And if you are reading here and enjoying The Power Moves' content, chances are very low that you'd end up in a sect.

And it's also not...

- **Brainwashing:** brainwashing requires *total* control over someone, do *not* work on everyone -possibly only work on a minority of people-, take a long time, and its effects tend to dissipate with time
- **World control by a small subset of people**: the idea that governments, CIA, or any elite controls what everyone thinks and does thanks to propaganda is a failure to appreciating the complexity of our world. Yes, propaganda is powerful. But the world is far messier to be controlled in some fantasy war-room
- **Hannibal Lecter types of predators**: that's just a BS Hollywood movie
- **Psychopathy**: psychopathy is a mental disorder. And while some psychopaths are good users of dark psychology, many aren't.
- **Sears, psychics, spells, curses, potions, fortune tellers…** : those are *not* psychology, neither dark, nor light. That's just, well… Largely BS
- **Subliminal manipulation**: subliminal advertising works, but it's been largely overstated by early fabricated false reports (Gass and Seiter, 2022). It only works when existing associations are already present in our brain. And you can probably hardly change deep-seated beliefs with subliminal messages
- **Creepy pictures**: clowns, dolls without eyes, Halloween costumes… Those are not dark psychology, they're just creepy artwork

“Dark psychology” is associated with creepy images, sowing extra confusion around this topic

Summary

Dark psychology is not a formal and recognized branch of psychology.

There is no such thing as research labeled as “dark psychology”, or any formal education courses on it.

That’s why if you research it on the web you get a lot of dubious sites and books on the topic (many of which are poor, see our review on “Dark Psychology 101“).
However, that is not to say that dark psychology itself is ineffective, or wholly unsubstantiated. Quite the opposite.

Dark psychology can be effective because dark psychology is simply psychology, applied for harmful and abusive ends.

See Power University for more practical applications of dark psychology, manipulation & Machiavellianism

The Psychopath Inside: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 June 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Psychopath Inside (2013) is the autobiographical account of James Fallon, a neuroscientist who found out he had the brain wiring of a psychopath.
The book takes the readers on a dual journey: a scientific one, with plenty of details on neuroscience, and a personal one, with Fallon's own life as a high-functioning psychopath.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Summary
  - There Is No Precise Definition of A Psychopath
  - Lack of Empathy: The Defining Trait
  - Cold & Hot Cognition
  - Brain Damage Is Necessary For Psychopathy, But A Bad Environment Is Needed, Too
  - But Don't Exaggerate the Role of Nurture
  - A New Theory of (Criminal) Psychopathy
  - Psychopaths Cannot Change Themselves
  - Psychopathy Might Rise in Areas With Chronic Violence
  - The Usefulness of Psychopaths
- Quotes
- More Wisdom
- Criticism
  - Some potentially overblown stories & contradictions
  - Overplaying the role of nurture?
  - Indigo child woo-woo
- PROS
  - Review

Key Takeaways

- Psychopathy is inborn, but to become a "full-blown, anti-social psychopath" you also need a bad childhood and a warrior gene
- There is no precise definition for a psychopath, and no exact science to measure psychopathy
- Mild traits of psychopathy can be advantageous for the individual, as well as for society (but full-blown psychopathy, above 30, is not)

Summary

About the Author:
James Fallon is an American neuroscientist. He is professor of psychiatry and human behavior and professor of anatomy and neurobiology at the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine.

There Is No Precise Definition of A Psychopath

Searching for a definition of a psychopath, Fallon had to agree that there wasn't any.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) only lists "antisocial personality disorder", but it's not the same.
As Dr. Rober Hare also explains, most criminals are antisocial, but not all criminals and antisocial personalities are psychopaths.

Says Fallon:

> Many doctors and researchers have their own definitions of what makes a psychopath. The problem is, every definition is different and none are cut-and-dried.

We Still Know Too Little of The Brain to Be Accurate (But We Can Still Spot a Psychopath)

One of the reasons there are no precise definitions and no accurate criteria to measure psychopathy is that we still know little of the brain.

Says Fallon:

> Diseases are based on knowledge of the cause (or etiology) of a particular disorder and the effects (or pathophysiology) they have on the body. Unlike for many true diseases of other organ systems, we don't have this luxury with diseases of the mind since so little is known of the underlying pathological biological mechanisms at work.

And more on psychopathy as a "disorder" of the brain:

> Therefore, most psychiatric problems are called disorders or syndromes. Psychopathy stands on the lowest rung of this disease-disorder ladder, since no one agrees on what defines it—or if it exists at all—and so there is no professional agreement as to the underlying causes.

And he takes a swing at the "Hare Checklist":

> Trying to identify or define psychopathy with just a checklist of traits and no cause is like using a field taxonomy guide. If it flies and eats and makes noises it could be a bird, but it could also be a bat or an insect; you haven't nailed down what the thing really is.

However, on top of the widely used and recognized PCL-R (Psychopathy Check List Revised), there are a number of scientific tests we can run, including:

- PET (positron emission tomography)
- fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging)
- Genetics tests
- Behavioral and psychometric tests

Taken together, these tests can reveal symptoms that can point towards a psychiatric disorder.
Plus, ends Fallon:

> I see psychopathy like others see art; I can't define it, but I know it when I see it.

Lack of Empathy: The Defining Trait

Most psychiatrists agree that one of the defining characteristics of psychopaths is the lack of interpersonal empathy.

Psychopaths live in what may be defined as a “flat emotional playing field”.

Cold & Hot Cognition

- **Cold cognition is rationality independent of emotions**: emotionless processing of thoughts, perceptions, short-term or executive memories, plans, and rule-making
- **Hot cognition is emotional cognition through and with emotions**: Fallon includes in this category emotional memory and socially, ethically, and morally programmed behaviors.

Connecting with others requires both cold cognition, where you understand what they’re thinking and what’s an appropriate response, and hot (emotional) cognition, where you can empathize with their feelings and attitudes.

Someone with damage to the hot system might have difficulties predicting other people’s thoughts and, most of all, sharing his feelings.

Theory of Mind

Fallon defines theory of mind as:

> elaborated medial prefrontal system that allows us to consider others’ thoughts and beliefs, even if they’re different from our own

The author says there might be a dichotomy between empathy and theories of mind.

My Note: Did he mean “link between empathy and theories of mind”?
I didn’t get the point and it feels like Fallon used the wrong word there.

Autistic people have empathy but no theory of mind, while **psychopaths have theories of mind but lack empathy**.

That means that psychopaths lack emotional empathy, but have cognitive empathy.
Such as, they can guess what you are feeling, but do so without in a cold and calculated way, without feeling sympathy.

Says Fallon (bold and italic are mine):

> A psychopath has a poorly functioning ventral system, usually used for hot cognition, but he can have a normal or even supernormal dorsal system, so that without the bother of conscience and empathy, the cold planning and execution of predatory behaviors becomes finely tuned, convincing, highly manipulative, and formidable. Because psychopaths’ dorsal systems work so well, **they can learn how to *appear* that they care, thus making them even more dangerous**.

Also read:

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

Brain Damage Is Necessary For Psychopathy, But A Bad Environment Is Needed, Too

The author was a staunch believer that we are shaped by nature, not nurture.

But as he got to know himself more, and as he began to research, he started changing his mind.

My note: some of his evidence for nurture VS nature is lacking
Read the criticism for more

Genes and environment interact in a number of ways:

- **Genotype-environment correlation**: if your father is aggressive, he will pass on the genes, but also the attitude at home which will reinforce those genes. And an aggressive attitude in life might lead to more confrontations, making the kid even more aggressive
- **Epigenetic marking**: a "tag" of chemical information that only gets activated under certain situations and with certain environment-related stimuli.
  Says Fallon: "the genome is the book you inherited at birth, the epigenome is the way you read that book"

But Don't Exaggerate the Role of Nurture

Fallon also makes a note that we shouldn't overplay the importance of nurture.
He says:

> Kids are malleable, but mostly at the extremes. In the absence of bad abuse or extreme genetics, kids will turn out okay.

A New Theory of (Criminal) Psychopathy

Fallon comes up with his own new theory on psychopathy, which requires 3 legs:

1. Unusually low functioning of the orbital prefrontal cortex and anterior temporal lobe, including the amygdala
2. The high-risk variants of several genes, the most famous being the warrior gene
3. Early childhood emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

He calls it "theory of psychopathy", but he seems to be referring to the more extreme version of psychopathy, the more criminal and violent one.

Psychopaths Cannot Change Themselves

One of the chapters is called "can you change a psychopath?".

Fallon's answer is:

> We are machines and cannot fundamentally change ourselves through sheer force of will.

But Fallon also acknowledges that a little change might happen if he changes the narrative of his actions and motives (ie.: reframing).
He says:

> I could be like someone who describes himself as having a refreshing, flexible, open, and healthy attitude to sex, rather than just admitting to himelf that what he really is is promiscuous.

But then again, he adds, that wouldn't change the nature of the underlying behavior.

He could try to push through a plan of behavioral redemption, but the problem with that is that he doesn't care to change.

He could control a specific issue of his behavior, but if he did so, all his energies would be sucked up in that one

thing.
It's like Oprah controlling her weight. Oprah is not lacking willpower, and if *all* she did was focusing on her weight, she could stay thin. But if she wants to also pursue all her other ambitions, she will get back to putting on weight.

For other possible cures and drugs, says Fallon:

> Psychopathic tendencies are particularly hard to fight, and attempted cures may make only small differences. Drugs that influence the monoamine neurotransmitter systems can partially reduce impulsivity and aggression, and early interventions involving diet and meditation can decrease behavioral problems, but the core neuropsychological deficits leading to lack of empathy and remorse remain.
> There are no magic bullets.

Psychopathy Might Rise in Areas With Chronic Violence

If psychopathy is partially nurture and environment, then it convenes that bad nurturing and bad environment will churn more psychopaths.

Indeed, says James Fallon:

> I've hypothesized that in areas with chronic violence, from Gaza to East L.A., the concentration of genes associated with psychopathy might be increasing as women mate with bad boys for protection and aggressive genes spread, increasing the violence and repeating the loop. Over generations, we end up with warrior societies. It's a speculative idea but one that's important to consider and study further.

However, I would add, the opposite is also true.
And in peaceful areas, women might be happier with kinder and more protective men, and the genes for kindness and pro-sociality might increase.

I have personally noticed that in safer and more peaceful countries and cities, women are afraid of too direct approaches.
Instead, they respond much better to "social circle game", or to more careful approaches where the man can put them at ease.

The Usefulness of Psychopaths

In the last chapter, Fallon discusses two important topics:

- Why psychopaths exist at all
- The "utility" of psychopaths to society

He says that, since psychopaths exist and are still among us since the dawn of time, then it means that at individual level psychopathy must be somewhat useful.
At least at moderate levels, he adds, making a note that full-blown psychopathy might not be useful, but just a question of randomness:

> Perhaps full psychopaths, those scoring 30 points or more on the Hare Checklist, are just a statistical fluke or a roll of the dice in the genetic casino, amassing too many of the genes that are helpful individually.
> But 2 percent is a lot of people. And that number is constant across races, even though the prevalence of specific genes, such as the warrior gene, vary widely. We should consider why psychopathic traits might be individually advantageous, or at least tolerable, from an evolutionary standpoint.

Among the advantages of psychopathy Fallon lists:

- Ability to lie without giving out “tells” (my note: this is useless though since people are NOT good at catching other people’s lies)
- Less anxiety, which means a better functioning immune system (my note: not that useful when psychopaths, with poorer impulse control, indulge in heavy drinking and drug abuse)
- Manipulation of mates: known psychopaths have women waiting for them outside prisons, while unknown psychopaths are still good with women thanks to their ability to fake unconditional love (my note: only partially true, see “the myth of the psychopath seducer“)

However, it’s true that psychopaths can be very good at manipulating and controlling mates.
Read:

- **How psychopaths manipulate sexual partners**

> Psychopaths’ Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

1. Taking Risks That Will Benefit Civilization (?)

At a group level, psychopaths can make for strong leaders.

They tend to take more risks, which may or may not work in favor of the group. But more risks can benefit civilization as a whole.

Says Fallon:

> On a larger scale, it benefits civilization to have groups take chances, because some will succeed and move civilization forward—just as biological evolution benefits from mutations, even though many of them are deadly.

He may have a point there.

And he keeps on going:

> I don’t think we should remove the psychopathy-related traits and genes from society. It would lead to passivity and wipe us out. (…) Individuals with low empathy and high aggression, if they’re treated well, can have a positive impact.
> Of course, they put stress on their families and friends, as I do, but on a macro level they’re beneficial to society.

I don’t fully buy that, but he might have a point here:

> I believe there’s a sweet spot on the psychopathy spectrum.
> People who are twenty-five or thirty on the Hare scale are dangerous, but we need a lot of twenties around—people with the chutzpah and brio and outrageousness to keep humanity vibrant and adaptable—and alive.

Also read:

- The Wisdom of Psychopaths
- The Good Psychopath’s Guide

2. More Detached Decision-Making

Fallon quotes Hare to say that psychopathy is common in high-returns professions such as investment banking (Hare, 2006).

Fallon says that psychopathy is popular in business because people expect quick returns on their investment.
I quote him:

> The general public wants to make that quick and easy buck and, while lacking their own combination of high risk and knowledge, use hired guns like Madoff and other investment mavens to do their dirty work for them.

Sure, it may turn out the psychopath was in it only for himself, acknowledges Fallon, but common experience still shows that we fall for the strong risk-taker.

The author mentions Kent Kiehl, a psychopath researcher, who estimated the social costs of psychopathy at $460 billion a year, in 2011 dollars.
But Fallon disagrees, saying that psychopaths might also save money. For example, by being less emotional and more surgical in their operations.

Also read:

- **Psychopaths VS empaths**: why Machiavellianism helps you win at life

3. Good Warrios (But Also a Double-Edged Sword)

Fallon says that psychopaths make for good warriors.

But that comes at a high cost, as Fallon himself admits:

> The problem with inviting psychopaths to war, however, is that the military also wants soldiers to be team players who can connect with their unit and fight not only against the enemy but *for* their own.

4. Turning Psychopathy On-Off On Per-Needed Basis?

Fallon talks about a former colonel who said he was able to switch his fighting instinct on and off, at will.

He could go on a killing mission and then be a loving man once the mission was over.

So he wonders: could it be possible to do the same for everyone?
Says Fallon:

> Can such an effective emotionality on-off switch be (…) applied to the recruitment and training of combat personnel? This can be determined, but probably at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars in long-term research.
> One option is to artificially flip the switch using transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). If you put a focused electromagnetic coil in the helmet you might be able to disrupt emotionality at the flip of a literal switch. Off: social mode. On: killer mode.

Quotes

On colleagues calling him a “psychopath”:

> People often refer to others as “crazy” or “a psychopath” without meaning it literally. Looking back, though, I probably should have paused to consider the sources in my case: trained psychiatrists who specialized in mood

> and brain disorders and would probably not be so quick to abuse a professional term simply because they were mad.

On effective manipulation;

> You don't manipulate people by snarling. You do it by being sweet as shit.

On "proper" psychopathy:

> I don't want to kill anybody or hurt anybody. And I don't like to steal things or lie. That's for losers. If you have to do that, you're a disappointment as a psychopath. Violence is crude and it destroys the fun. My concern is not moral but practical: I'm looking to get the most bang.

On the power of good nurturing:

> Real nurture can overcome a lousy deck of cards dealt at birth by nature. There are good behavioral, genetic, epigenetic, psychiatric, and social reasons to clean up neighborhoods and to treat vulnerable children with an extra bit of love.

More Wisdom

- **The earlier the abuse, the more harmful it is**: "the later the stressors, like emotional or physical abuse, occur, the less the effect will tend to be"
- **The The "Macdonald triad" is not really predictive of psychopathy**: bedwetting is not a great predictor, and animal cruelty and fire-starting are relatively common among boys
- **You can have sympathy without empathy**: You can have sympathy without empathy, says Fallon. Sympathy is the ability to retrieve emotional memories, including memories that can predict what type of pain is about to befall others, together with the will to help that person
- **Libertarians are fairness above emotions**: libertarians rely more on a sense of fairness and justice than on how they feel emotionally about a person or a group of people. Gandhi and Mother Theresa might be two examples that fought for grander causes, but cared little about individuals

Criticism

Some potentially overblown stories & contradictions

Some psychopaths tend to make up grandiose, exaggerated stories that sound either out of a movie, or plain impossible.

See for yourself if this sounds realistic:

> I jumped out of my car and ran down the hill and was just able to crawl through a smashed window to position myself over the face of the driver, who was an elderly gentleman in the throes of death.
> His chest was crushed and while he was vomiting and regurgitating blood into my face, I kept him revived by mouth-to-mouth for about twenty minutes, until the police arrived. They pulled me out of the man's car by my legs, and I was furious, since I was so intent on reviving him. After testifying at the police station, I ended the interview melodramatically by throwing the old man's bloodied dentures onto the police sergeant's desk.

Contradictions

The author says he's a terrible flirt, and that his wife Diane knows it because she knows how women respond to him.

But just the line before that, he says that if a girl tells him "Do you wanna do it now?" that's good enough for him because he feels he's been validated and he could control those women.

Well, those two statements are somewhat in contradiction.

The author also says he never cheated, but some other times he makes it sound like he is chasing women or enjoying their company.

Overplaying the role of nurture?

The author says that brain damage is a precondition for psychopathy, but bad parenting and a poor childhood is also necessary.
I agree poor parenting adds up, but it's not always *necessary*.

Says Fallon:

> A small survey of thirty-five psychopathic offenders in youth detention facilities found that 70 percent reported serious mistreatment throughout childhood.
> Given that the onset of reliable memory for childhood events in adults may reach back to three to four years of age (…) it was possible that more than 90 percent of them were abused (…). Add to this those psychopaths who protect their abusers, and the percentage could approach 99 percent, or so I reasoned.

Well, that's quite some mental legwork to go from 70% to 99%. On such a small survey, too.

And again:

> I looked at all the case studies I could find in the literature and in my work, and saw that for all the psychopaths, including dictators, who had psychiatric reports from their youth, all had been abused and often had lost one or more of their biological parents.
> While there may be cases where this is not true, I could not find any proven ones. **There were cases where the murderer denied early abuse, but many people will deny such abuse, only for it to be discovered later that either they were too embarrassed to admit it, or they were protecting the abusing adult**, typically a family member.

The author is taking criminals who said they were abused at their words, but does not accept criminals who said they were *not* abused.

It makes little sense to me.
There also incentives in making up abusive stories to gain sympathy with the jury.

Indigo child woo-woo

The author says he always thought of Indigo and Orchid children as woo-woo pseudo-science.
But then he says, when he started reading the description, it made sense, because it described him well.

That didn't increase trust in the author for me.

PROS

- **Very good to understand psychopathy**

Texts about psychopaths written by psychopaths will always provide readers with a new angle with which to understand psychopathy.

Sure, sometimes you have to read between the lines, because psychopaths like and self-aggrandize, so you need to be able to weed through the chaff, but that's also part of the experience of learning about psychopathy.

It makes a good companion with "Confessions of A Sociopath".

- **A smart author, and a scientist with critical thinking skills**

There were just a few instances in which Fallon seemed to "massage" the numbers, or to accept some woo-woo, both of which are highlighted above.

However, overall, this is a smart guy with high critical thinking skills. And he's mostly a neutral writer who writes based on facts.

Review

"The Psychopath Inside" is an entertaining and instructive read.

It deepened my understanding of psychopathy and dark-triad traits, and it's interesting to see how different authors differently characterize psychopathy.
Martha Stout and Robert Hare tend to portray psychopathy as "high danger, stay away" and "no contribution to society, only taking". And it's not like I disagree with it.
However, it's not the full story.

James Fallon adds another piece to the puzzle.
Somewhat, he makes psychopathy more about shades of grey. And a mixture of nature and nurturing, and not mostly nature as it was previously thought.

Check the:

- **Best dark triad books**

Or get the book on Amazon

The Women's Guide to How Men Think: Notes & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 July 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Women's Guide to How Men Think (2014) is a guide for women to understand male psychology within relationships, and to help readers, both male and female, to improve their intimate relationships.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- More Wisdom
- CONS
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- Review

Bullet Summary

- Always think "individual-first" instead of generalizing to "all men" or "all women"
- Good men care about relationships and want to make you happy
- But most men are different than most women, and those differences can create some rifts
- You can learn to get along better if you learn more about typical gender differences, traits, and possible issues (plus, about your partner's specifics, of course)

Summary

About the Author: Shawn Smith is a clinical psychologist and author. He also published "The Tactical Guide to Women", this same book but for men and he writes on his blog at docsmith.co.

Intro: Individuals Differ

The author knows that too many people read about "general tendencies" and (mis)apply them to the whole population.

That's a mistake, because the individual always trumps his gender, group, nationality, or whatever background he might have.

Says Smith:

> The man you might be thinking of is a unique individual, not a statistical average.

Smith encourages the readers to always look at your specific partner first, and to listen to him more than you listen to anyone talking about general principles.
He is right.

Still, I also believe you can learn much from a book like this because chances are that your man will share at least a few commonalities with all the other men.

It's A Book About Good Men

Smith says he writes about "good men".

Who are good men?
Good men:

> Good men are dutiful men. They want to be effective in their lives, their careers, and their relationships.

"Good men need to be effective", says Smith and, later on, he adds that he is talking about "good men with strong male natures".

Good Men Want to Devote Themselves to a Woman

Smith says that men must have a purpose, or they lack a sense of direction in life.

And albeit most men are loath to admit it, I agree with him when he says that, for most men, dedication to a woman is the highest purpose for many men.
He says:

> We men can find our purpose in many places—work, play, camaraderie with other men—but nothing scratches that itch quite like devoting ourselves to a good woman.

Sure, not everyone is the same.
And *some* men might want more freedom than women, while some other men see sex as a conquest (see: types and psychology of players).

Historically, men might have had more of a penchant for multiple partners but, quoting research from David Buss, Smith says that men desire lifelong partners as much as women do.

In short: **few men are players, and most of them want to devote themselves to a woman**.

Men Can Work Overtime As A Sign of Love, Albeit It Might Not Seem So

Men feel the pressure to provide and get resources.

Says Smith:

> By devoting ourselves to that which provides resources, we're indirectly devoting ourselves to the ones we love because we're advancing their survival too. Whether or not it's perfectly logical, this seems to be inborn in men.

As Smith says, many women would prefer to have more time with their men rather than making some more money and never see them.
But men still feel the pressure to work hard.
That's why some men will work longer hours even if spending more time at home will make everyone happier -men included-.

Men Also Feel An Obligation to The Team

Albeit men want to support their women, they also feel an obligation towards the team.

Men indeed have more of an innate "team mentality" and, contrary to women, they cooperate even more when their group is in competition with other groups (Van Vugt, De Cremer, and Janssen 2007).
This means that, if the company needs him, your man feels compelled to be there and help.

Says Smith:

> We desire that intimacy, but we also want to be a cog in a larger system.

Men Can Find It Difficult to Drop Their Emotional Guard

Says Smith:

> One of the biggest challenges for men is allowing themselves to be emotionally exposed, which includes talking openly about needs and desires.

He says socialization is partly responsible for it, as boys who show vulnerability are teased, ridiculed, or punished. Those lessons aren't necessarily bad, but they might come with some downsides.
For example, men tend to over-hide what they consider "weak" emotions such as sadness and swap with anger, humor, or withdrawal (also see: stonewalling).

Some of the issues deriving from the lack of men's emotional awareness:

- Men can sense when they aren't pleasing women, but don't often know what to do about it
- The rule of stoicism prevents men from approaching women when they're worried, hurt, or frustrated
- Men sometimes lack the training or willingness to put words to thoughts or emotions
- Men tend to put some emotions behind secondary expressions like anger, humor, or withdrawal
  - Depressed men are more likely to hide depression with anger or alcohol, and the more they do it, the more fearful they are of negative emotions (Greene and Addis, 2012). That fear of emotions can trap men from finding more effective solutions
- Men can get lost when expectations shift in the relationship because they are not good or are afraid of communicating *about* the relationship (I remember my first relationship when I was so annoyed by my girlfriend's want to always talk about the relationship, and me avoiding all the time)

Some Men Can Feel Inadequate Because They Think Women Want It All

Writes Smith:

> We know that you women are watching us, and we want to impress you. Unfortunately, we think you're only interested in the perfect man.

When it comes to money and resources, most men tend to overestimate how important money is for women. That can lead them to over-work or to feel inadequate.

And when it comes to muscles, it's pretty much the same: even muscular men tend to think that women want more muscles.

On average, anything women can like, men tend to overestimate its importance.
Says Smith:

> It's that same old wiring: we aren't sure what you want from us, so we figure we can never have too much of a good thing.

Fix Relationships With His Male Nature In Mind

Most relationship counseling is woman-centered.

Says Smith:

> My profession doesn't help. Psychology is a word-based endeavor. We repair relationships mostly by talking about them, and we tend to impose that on men.

That doesn't mean men can't improve their communication skills: they can, and should.
But a better approach is to understand both sides, with both partners taking steps towards each other.

Men also often assume that relationship problems are their fault because they're taught that the female way of relating is the correct way. But, again, understanding both sides is a better approach.

In extreme cases, psychological counseling can hide hostility toward men.

We Form Pair-Bonding Because It's Good For Both... But We Pick Each Other Poorly

In spite of some areas of sexual conflict, the general rule is that relationships are good for both men and women.

But we pick each other poorly for a few reasons:

1. The qualities women are drawn to during courtship aren't necessarily the qualities they want in a long-term mate
2. The qualities that are attractive during courtship can become irritating when the flip sides of those qualities reveal themselves
3. The confidence trap: women want confident men, but men are only confident around women they don't care about

As an example for number 2, the intelligent woman he admired can annoy him when she intellectualizes and wins arguments.
And the industriousness she admired during dating can hurt her when he chooses office over family life.

Strong & Vulnerable Men Are The Sweet Spot (But Are Rare)

There are few men who can embrace and talk about emotions while also being strong.

That can create some issues in relationships.

Says Smith:

> Many men worry that the woman in their lives will find them unattractive if they show vulnerability, whereas she may feel that vulnerability builds intimacy.

And here is what a female responder's to Smith's survey say about men who are *either* strong or sensitive:

> "Men who are strong and ambitious are frequently arrogant and sexist. They certainly don't want to deal with the emotional terrain of a relationship. Nice guys complain that they never get ahead, but they rarely ask for what they want. **Sensitivity and guts seem to be mutually exclusive**."

How to Improve Your Relationship

Here are some common issues you can fix:

Ineffective Strategies Women Use

- **Time-traveling**: women are "pattern" oriented, that's why they bring up old events. But to men, that feels like an unfair attempt to win the argument and make them feel bad
- **Not forgiving him**: some women are fearful that if they stop remind him of his mistake or the pain he's caused, he will do it again. But if you don't let go, you will harm your relationship. Endless retaliation for past mistakes also makes you look bad in the eyes of most men (I can attest to this)
- **Punishing him for talking**: don't shame when he finally talks, but make him feel good for doing it
- **Expecting him to read your mind**: no, mind reading isn't the proof you're meant to be together. Nobody can read minds.

- **Avoiding solutions**: your man will propose some solutions when you just want to be heard. Don't be angry. Sometimes, take one of those solutions

How to avoid relationship quicksand

Relationship quicksand for Smith are what "vicious circles" are for John Gottman.
Here are the steps to overcome them:

- **Be someone your partner wants to be around**: difficult times are precisely when it's most important to be the person our partners fell in love with
  - **Don't forget basic respect**: when angry and while arguing we might say things that come back to hurt us, and that will harm our relationship for a long time. Also read: meanness in relationships
- Respond to primary emotional reactions
- Create a pattern escape hatch
- **Accept peace offerings**: any acts of caring during turbulent periods are great opportunities to seize on and rebuild goodwill
- **Don't assume he understands**: some subtler signals you think are clear might not be clear to him. In doubt, be clear
- Rebuild intimacy
- **Seek couples therapy**: men can be intimidated by couples' therapy. Makes it easy on them explaining that he's not going to be framed as the bad guy

Concrete steps you can take

- **Let him please you:** don't forget that men love to please women. They feel ineffective if they don't. if they see no way of pleasing you, they give up
- **Give brownie points:** yes, men crave your appreciation
- **Be specific when you express your needs**: give him exact pointers on what he can do to help you and the relationship
- **Weigh his actions as much as his words**:
- **Understand his silence**: they are not a way to punish you, it's the man's way of stopping a fight
- **Be intimate**: Smith stops short of advising women to have more sex. He just says that it's important for men to have sex, and that it's also helpful to the relationship
- **Acceptance**: if you're pushing him to change and he doesn't change, try to tell him instead that you accept him as he is, that you will do your best to be a good wife, and that you hope you will do the same
- **Go at the roots of the problem**: watch out for relationship dances, for example, the "demand/withdrawal". It's all too easy to focus on the immediate pain and miss the root cause

Women Hold a Lot of Power Over Good Men

This is not something Smith says, but it's something you can glean both from what he says, and what the men wrote in his survey.

How do women hold power?
Because good men want to provide and protect, and want to make the woman in their life happy. So women end up being an important point of reference for men's need to be effective.
If the woman is not happy, or criticizes him, the man feels like he is failing in an important realm of life.

One of them wrote:

> "When a woman is proud of you for doing something well, it's a wonderful feeling. I don't mind working twelve hours a day, but like a good dog, I appreciate a scratch and a 'good boy' at the end. … **It sometimes annoys me how much I still want my wife's approval**, even though I'm successful at work and in other areas.

That's pure judge power right there (see: "soft power").
And also see:

- **How women control relationships**

More Wisdom

- **Men respond to social and physical dominance in a similar fashion:** That gives us the ability to establish dominance without violence, since losing an argument affects our perception of dominance the same as losing a fight (Watkins, Jones, 2012)
- **Social status makes men more cooperative**: the existence of recognized social status and hierarchies decreases conflicts and fights, and makes men more cooperative (ie.: status is a good thing)
- **Men fish for compliments**: for men, their women's approval is so important that they sometimes fish for compliments. Women can either fail to realize this, or find it unnecessarily annoying
- **Make sure he has a way to please you**: if you want him to spend more time with the family but you often criticize him when he's around, he feels he can't win. Men who feel they can't do anything to please their partners stop trying
- **Women underestimate the power they have on their men**: female happiness is very important to men. When she is upset, men are also upset
- **Men think about sex more often than women, but not by a large margin**: A person's openness to sex more accurately predicts the frequency of their sexual thoughts than does their gender (Fisher, Moore, and Pittenger 2012)
- **Men better in larger groups, women better in smaller groups**: both genders are social, but in different ways. Women excel in small groups with intimate relationships, men larger groups with looser relationships. Men also prefer larger groups and are better at solving problems within larger groups, while women do better in pairs (Benenson and Heath 2006)
- **Some men hide their feelings even during sex**: the emotional can make the woman feel used, while instead, he is just being overly protective of himself and over-abiding the stoic rule of "never showing emotions"
- **Men and women care equally about relationships, but in different ways**: it's not true that women care about relationships (Simon and Barrett 2010), but women are more concerned about whether it feels secure, while men zero in more on problems
- **Men seek to impress women**: that goes all around, even during intimacy and sex. Smith says that men's brain is less about sex, and more about a big marketing device to win women's affection and admiration
- **High-value men treat their women better**: they use less violent mate-guarding techniques and are more likely to provide value-adding benefits to keep her happy and in the relationship (Starratt and Shackelford 2012)
- **Men are more interested in numbers**: women are equally good with numbers, but they are just less interested (Ceci and Williams 2010)
- **Men are quicker to forgive**
- **Men experience emotions as intensely as women, but actively work to suppress them**: it's a good skill to have for certain activities, but it makes men less educated about their own emotions

CONS

- **One case of correlation / causation**

Smith says that men who join gangs have more sexual partners because of status (that they apparently gain by joining the gang).
But this is a chicken or the egg kind of situation, and we don't know if those men would have had more partners even if they had *not* joined gangs.

- **Women complain that men who earned their love become risk-averse?**

This one left me baffled.
Says Smith:

> Many women complain that once men have earned their love, they become risk averse.

Do women really complain about that?
I think some men grow complacent, stop trying hard, and become more "housey", staying more at home.
But it comes somewhat as a surprise that women would complain about men becoming risk-averse.

PROS

- **Science-based**

Lots of good research to back the author's claim

- **Great author, high in knowledge, experience, and critical thinking**

Shawn Smith is my type of author: intelligent, well-read, has plenty of experience, does not over-generalize, and adds research and evidence.

When you have those traits, you are bound to create great work, which Smith does.

- **Practical and effective**

Many relationships would improve if more women (and men) read books like this one.

Quotes

On men seeking female affection:

> Maybe you've seen one of those cartoon diagrams of a man's brain in which most of the brain areas are labeled "sex." Those cartoons might be more accurate if they depicted a man's brain as one giant marketing firm designed to earn the affection and admiration of women.

On women's changing preferences during their cycles (and on not overstating the differences):

> I don't want to overstate the matter. It's not as if women prefer Rocky Balboa on Tuesday and Mr. Mom on Friday. The effects are subtle, which is why men and women probably don't notice them on a day-to-day basis. Plus, it's possible that some people are essentially unaffected by these ancient drives.

Women want both bad boy and altar boy, and many men are actually both:

> Do women want the bad boy, or the altar boy?
> It seems (…) both, but not necessarily at the same time.

> (…) It seems that we men are wired to give you both. (…) Bad boy when we're trying to win you over, and the altar boy after we win your love. Another way to put it: we show off our more masculine, Fonzie-like traits when we're trying to earn your love, but we switch to reliable Richie Cunningham mode once we have a relationship (and possibly offspring) to protect.

On the importance that men keep their word:

> Some of the happiest, most relaxed women are the ones who know from experience that their partner is a man who keeps his word, even on the little things.

On gender differences:

> There really are no male or female traits; there are simply traits that one gender, on average, possesses in greater quantity or uses differently.

Review

"The Women's Guide to How Men Think" is a wonderful book.

It helps women to better understand men, get along with men, and develop better relationships with men.

Check the:

- **Best relationship books**

Or get the book on Amazon

The Judge Role™: Emotional Power in Interpersonal Dynamics

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 July 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Most people think of power as authority or dominance. But some of the most influential people in your life—parents, partners, bosses—use no force at all.

They have ***emotional* leverage.**

This is what we call the "judge role™": the person who decides whether you're valuable, worthy, good enough… Or not.

This article analyzes how these emotional power dynamics play out in life to influence others in relationships, dating, and the workplace.

Note: a novel concept from many existing insights
The Judge Role™ is a framework developed by Lucio Buffalmano for The Power Moves, building on insights from transactional analysis (Harris, 1967), emotional and interpersonal power dynamics, prestige-based social status (Henrich & Gil-White), frame control, and manipulation dynamics.

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  - Value-Taking Judges
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Intro

The judge role™ is defined as:

> The individual who assesses other people's worthiness, dispenses emotional rewards and punishments, and influence over others through emotional control

At the foundational level, everyone can have some 'judge power' over others because, as Blau pointed out in his seminal *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, social approval is a basic reward people seek in their associations with others.

However, the 'judge leverage' that people carry over others varies widely from individual to individual.

Judges operate mostly at an emotional and 'soft power' level. However, judges' powers can also overlap and increase when combined with different expressions of social power and dominance.

Inescapable Dynamics in All Socialization

For a good part, interpersonal power dynamics come down to who is judging who.

And the individual with more power is the individual whose judgment most affects the other.
Understanding these dynamics is crucial for gaining interpersonal influence, and protecting your own power and independence.

Judging Worth

The most basic judgment comes down to **being good or not good enough**.
It's the most basic sense of people's worth, earning one's place on this earth, or not.

Most other judgments simply assess someone's worth against different sets of criteria or group belonging, for example:

- **Good enough as a human being**, life competent, socially competent, prosocial enough, etc.
- **Good enough as a man**: providing, attracting a mate, being masculine enough. Very powerful for men since men must 'earn' their manhood (Bosson and Vandello, 2011)
- **Good enough for a specific group**

Loser = not effective in life = “not good enough”

Judgments of ‘basic requirements’ are hot buttons because they leverage **internalized criteria** of minimum standards to meet.

Who Are Judges (& Examples)

Anybody can be a judge, but some roles ‘facilitate’ the acquisition of judge power, including:

1. Mothers / Fathers

Evolutionary psychology logic suggests that to boost their own odds of survival, children are predisposed to seek a parent’s approval.

That makes children highly sensitive to what their parents think and feel about them, giving parents a large emotional influence over children.

Great parents provide a baseline of love and acceptance for their children.
Poor parents may instead use their emotional leverage for power, control, and achieving their goals without regard for the children’s well-being.

2. Mother / Father Figures

Mother and father figures may have the same influence as biological parents, a dynamic sometimes facilitated by a biological parent’s absence or unfitness for the role.

Mentors or coaches are both well-placed to become father figures.
The more the mentor is respect-worthy and the more the mentee looks up to him, the more the mentor acquires judge powers.

Case Study: The Tyson-D’Amato Dynamic

This Mike Tyson interview displays the emotional judge-role dynamic with a father figure:

> **Tyson**: My joy was when I make Cuss D’amato happy

In another documentary, Tyson goes even deeper, saying *"I was madly in love with Cuss D'amato, I became totally in love with him, I became his slave".*

3. Dating & Relationship Partners

Researchers documented judge-related emotional power dynamics while studying power distribution in relationships.

Wagner and colleagues asked couples to imagine how they would feel if they bought an expensive item, and their partner disapproved.
The discrepancy between how the person felt when the spouse disapproved versus approved represented "dependence on the other's agreement", which would reflect low power.

Albeit they never referred to emotional power dynamics, it reflects the same dynamics we describe here.

In principle, the needier, more attached, and more admiring a partner is, the more he will be dependent on the partner's approval.
Mate value and various dating strategies or 'games' people play also heavily affect these dynamics.

Falling in love is also a magnifier of judge influence.
The person in love can anguish at the slightest sign of disapproval, ignorance, or rejection.

4. Older Brothers / Sisters

Case Study: Jordan Brothers Dynamics

See Michael Jordan:

> **Brother**: Get back in the house with your mom, boy, you're never going to be anything
> **Michael**: (commenting on video) when you go through it, it's traumatic. **Because I want that approval**

Sensitivity to other people's approval and recognition may have been an important driver for Jordan's dedication and success.

5. Coaches, Bosses

Anyone who has power to direct and assess someone's work is in a good position to also wield judge powers.

The more central work is to someone's life and identity, the more likely it is that coaches and bosses will acquire judge power.
Since few people separate work results from their ego, it's relatively common for bosses to acquire a large influence on people's mental health and self-esteem.

6. Therapists

Therapists can wield large emotional influence over their clients. Transference is a well-known concept in psychology and refers to a client's displacement of feelings, fantasies, and desires from past relationships onto the therapist (Marrazzi et al., 2025).
It's also not uncommon for people in therapy to fall in love with their therapists (Rabasco et al., 2023).

7. High Power Men

In general, anyone in a position of power is more likely to also acquire judge power because 'hard power' tends to spill over into 'soft power' (and vice versa).

The simple act of **judging signals higher power** because lower-status people aren't as free to judge those above them (ie.: bosses judge employees, but rarely the other way around).

An extreme example is the "Stockholm Syndrome", in which hostages develop a psychological bond with their captors. It's generally interpreted as a survival coping mechanism where appeasing the captors may boost survival odds, paralleling children and parents' dynamics.

7.2. Honorable Men

Honorable men tend to influence because others hold them in high regard. This is the **prestige** approach to social status and influence.

8. Public Opinion

The judge is a role, and applies to collectives or institutions as much as it does to people.
Including the nameless and faceless collective of people that in our minds represent social and public opinion.

9. Yourself: Your Own Judge

We all have our own judges within ourselves.

A strong negative judge can be a powerful motivator, but it must be used strategically. Wallowing in harsh self-talk can undermine self-esteem and mental health.
People who judge themselves well instead tend to have high self-esteem and a sense of well-being, but it may cost them extra motivation.
The details are off-topic for this post, but we dig deeper in Confidence University.

Judge Frames

> Judge frames are verbal and nonverbal signals that structure the interaction as one between a judge and the judged.

Judge frames give power to the judge if they go unchallenged, and disempower the judged. At the very least, they tend to frame the interaction as the judge being higher status or higher authority. And, potentially, can also make

the judged seek to prove himself and gain the judge's approval.
Some formats of judge frames include:

- **Direct verbal judge frames**.
  For example:
  - "great job" / "poor job"
  - "You are smart" / "You're not very smart"
  - "I'm proud of you" / "I'm disappointed"
  - "You'll be a great success" / "You'll never amount to anything"
- **Nonverbal judge frames** with body language such as a negative eye roll or looking away, and positive smiles and giving full attention
- **Behavioral signals of approval and disapproval**. Happy & facing towards = approval; disappointment & ignoring = disapproval
  - ⍰ Happy wife, happy life: Wife's happy, husband feels he's doing a good job. Wife is unhappy, husband feels he's failing

Impostor Judges & First Mover Advantages

While judge powers and judging competence tend to go together, one may acquire judge power by simply starting to judge first, independently of competence.

It's not uncommon for people to also use judge frames for undue influence and manipulating emotions and behavior.
For example, a woman may make his husband feel unworthy compared to her friends' husbands for not making as much money. That's a potentially game-playing approach to pressure him into spending more on her.

Also read:

- Nasty games women play to become the relationship prize

Careful when people start judging you
Whether it's approval or disapproval. The natural tendency is to seek more praise or change their mind. But doing so gives away power to the judges. Often, it's better to reject the judgment—mentally first, and sometimes socially as well.

How to Spot Judges

Keywords like "disappointed" or easy-to-spot judgmental attitudes and nonverbals are strong signals.
But your own internal thermostat is even more telling if you:

- Fear someone's judgment
- Care a lot about what someone thinks
- You feel great or bad depending on someone's acceptance

Exaggerated harshness or disgusted facial expression can signal someone's goal to unsettle you and control you emotionally

Value-giving vs. Value-taking Judges

Like any other form of power, emotional leverage can be used for value-adding, or value-taking purposes.

For example, Cuss D'Amato's strong influence on Tyson put him on the path of hard work, world championships, and riches.

If you're an ambitious man, it's possible that you enjoy or will enjoy judge powers over someone.
Being an honorable man also means being careful in using that power positively.

Value-Taking Judges

Value-taking judges -"bad judges", for brevity-, use their power in ways that harm others.

Examples of bad judges include:

1. Abusive Judges

> Abusive judges use their power to control, manipulate, and maintain a target in win-lose, value-taking relationships

In this example, the athlete says of his harsh coach:

> **Mary Cain**: In my own, sad, never-fully healed heart, I wanted Alberto to still take me back. Because when we let people emotionally break us, we crave more than anything their very approval.

Mary Cain was impressively self-aware, and it's likely the trainer withheld approval while relying mostly on criticism.

At the extreme, the judge role becomes a tool for significant behavioral and mind control, sometimes in conjunction with 'traumatic bonding'.

Toxic judges tend to be:

1. **Impossible to please**
2. **Hypercritical**, without guidance for improvement

The facial expression that says "no matter what you do, it's never enough"

2. Manipulative Judges

Individual and social judgment can be potent weapons to alter someone's behavior or limit someone's freedom.

Since much of our evolution revolves around mating, it's not surprising that much judgment revolves around sexual mores.
For example:

- She's a slut for doing OF <— Men try to shame women away from sex work because it serves their favorite strategy of male provisioning and pair-bonding
- Real men commit<— Women try to shame high-value men into a provide and commit strategy to increase their negotiation leverage

These are all selfish strategies of sexual manipulation, hiding behind the guise of a (fake) indignant judge.
Only people with an 'influence and control motive' spend much effort publicly judging and shaming.

Virtue-Signaling Judges

Virtue signaling can be a fair form of value-signaling.
But often, virtue-signaling judgment seeks to look better by framing someone else worse.
Also read:

- **Virtue signaling is a sexual strategy**

3. Dark Psychologist Seducers

Robert Greene in "The Art of Seduction" advises mimicking the listening posture of a therapist, which is a judge-approach to gaining leverage over a target.

Being distant and stand-offish can also function as a dark-psychology technique.
The seducer sub-commutates that the target is "not good enough for his full attention", which can lead the target to seek his approval.
Some women enter relationships with these types of men and bend over backwards to please their impossible partners (Norwood, 1985).

Also see:

- **Mother figure seduction**

In more benign ways, the concept of "validation" from pick-up literature is also based on the judge role.
"Not being validated by the woman" means to reject her judge role. Validating women instead signals that the man is the judge.

Unfortunately, outside of legitimate therapeutic contexts, providing emotional support can also be a tactic of some pedophiles and groomers, targeting kids who struggle with social and self-acceptance.

How to Combat Bad Judges

Generally speaking, unless a judge figure is obviously helping, ambitious and empowered men are better off rejecting judges.

Here is how:

1. Be aware of judge frames

Awareness is 50% of winning the war.

2. For pathological approval-seeking, consider therapy

If you still overly crave people or a specific person's approval, therapy may help.
Says Braiker:

> When you hear the commanding should in your self-talk, you are hearing the voice of your judging conscience. (…)
> That voice is the amalgamation of your parents, teachers, older siblings, coaches, or other authority figures that (…) laid down rules that stayed with you throughout your life.

One of her clients said:

> "(…) I'm literally still trying to get my father's approval. It's just absurd. He's 83 years old and as critical and withholding as ever. I keep hoping he'll let me know that he really loves me before he dies.

Here are some questions for a quick self-assessment:

- **Authority figure issues**: Do you have constant issues with authority figures? Do they have outsize influence on your emotional inner life? If so, you may be sensitive to authority figures
- **Authorities seen as parent figures**: Do you see bosses as mother or father figures?
- **Parent issue and/or poor parenting**: Did you have emotionally distant, unusually demanding, or manipulative parents who loved you conditionally and used you for their own gratification?

3. Fight it smartly: Frame Control

While bursts of anger can display power and be effective, often **getting angry *confirms* the judge's power.**

Some better techniques include:

- **Ignore**
- **Ignore verbally and defend *nonverbally*** (eye-roll, head shaking, throwing under the bus, etc.)
- **Judge right back**, fighting for the judge frame
- **Undermine their judge authority** (ie.: "you're not in a position to judge")
- **Own the accusation with pride** (ie.: "yeah, I'm a bad man, and I'm cool with it", a high-risk, high-reward strategy)
- **Go meta**: explain what they're doing, including their second motives

See one example here:

- **Fighting judge frame of 'what it means to be a man'**

4. Use it as 'dark fuel' for motivation

Many high achievers climbed hierarchies fighting against judges.

Michael Jordan leveraged many judges across his career:

> **Jordan**: He started the whole process (…) because when he made the team and I didn't, I wanted to prove (…) you made a mistake dude.

Also see:

- **Using pain as motivation**

However, even if negative judges are pushing you forward, you're still reacting to them.
So this is the ultimate root-cause solution:

5. Increase self-sufficiency: be your own judge

While it's good to care about what others think, balance is important, and it's much more empowering to:

1. Being able to ignore others at will
2. Develop antifragile identities that remove many 'hooks' judges may use
3. Prioritize your own judging criteria

Says clinical psychologist Harriet Braiker speaking about 'manipulation resistance':

> The most important, effective, and lasting source of approval is the acceptance you give to yourself. Develop a clear sense of your own judgments and values and govern yourself accordingly.

For a grassroots-level intervention, see:

> Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

Technical Clarifications (Optional Reading)

This is a later entry to the original article.

The concept of judges has helped many, but like many new concepts, it may require some extra details to be well-understood.
Let's clarify.

Judge VS Judging

Judging, "the judge", and having judge power overlap, but they're all different.

1. **Judging** = "I think Mark is not a high-value guy" (but if Mark is not present, no judge dynamics are set in motion)
2. **Judge role** = "Mark, I expected better from you, and I must say, I'm disappointed" (ie.: I'm judging you as not being good enough for me/my standards)
3. **Judge effects** = (Mark craves the judge's approval, feels bad, and changes behavior)

For the judge to have effect, the *receiver* must grant that power. Without the receiver craving emotional reward and hurting for negative judgment, there is no judge influence.

Compliments, Fair Assessments, & Power Protection

- **A compliment is a judgment, but more often value-*giving*, rather than a power move**

In this example, in a sentence like "*Thank you for your great website, Lucio!*", most people want to give, rather than frame you as below them.

- **Re-empowering is not a judge power move**

If a manager says 'Please review the email I sent you and amend accordingly. Otherwise, great job', the aim is to ensure the work is properly framed as good work, only in need of a correct.

- **A judge power move may not set the full judge-dynamics in motion**

Trump saying "great job" is also a great example of power move, but little judge dynamics:

> **Trump**: (to Comey and with cameras all over) Good job

Trump's main goal in this interaction is to frame himself as the big boss, and Comey working for him. Plus, one may argue, to send a message of power and control: Trump must be happy with Comey's work (or he could get fired, as it happened).

But since Comey shook his head and he never looked up to Trump, the influence was not judge-based, but coercion-based.

- **Figures of speech are often just figures of speech**

Stock sentences such as "keep up the great work" are rarely delivered with the intent to set up a judge dynamic.

For one more example, see:

- **"That's a good job"**
- **"Keep up the great work"** – plus my reply below

Similar to Judges

Similar, overlapping, or applied judges we discussed on TPM include:

- **Women relationship control**: often based on holding the judge role
- **Shit tests**: shit tests are judge tools. It's the judge who sizes up others. A focus on *passing* those tests only confirms that frame
- **Shame attacks**, based on self-appointed judge-powers (ie.: you're not prosocial enough/good enough as a human being)

Next Steps

Understanding the Judge Role is just the beginning. If you want to *use* it to regain your power and achieve your goals, check **Power University**.

Join Power University

Women Who Love Too Much: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 July 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Women Who Love Too Much (2014) analyzes the psychology of women who are addicted to toxic relationships with men who are either incapable of loving, avoidants, or incapable of taking care of themselves.
Originally published in 1985, the author Robin Norwood has revised "Women Who Love Too Much" in successive years.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Quotes
- More Wisdom
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Women who love too much are addicted to toxic relationships
- Women who love too much confuse pain and anxiety for love and sexual chemistry
- Women who love too much can recover. But they first need to admit they have issues to tackle

Summary

About the Author: Robin Norwood is a licensed marriage and family therapist. She worked in the field of addiction, both substance and relationship addiction, for fifteen years.

What "Loving Too Much" Means: A Definition

In chapter 2 I found this description which I thought was the best definition of "loving too much":

> It means obsessing about a man and calling that obsession love, allowing it to control your emotions and much of your behavior, realizing that it negatively influences your health and wellbeing, and yet finding yourself unable to let go. It means measuring the degree of your love by the
> depth of your torment.

It does NOT mean, instead, loving too many men, or falling in love too often, or having too great a depth of genuine love for another.

Such as, **it's totally fine to love deeply and greatly**. If you love deeply and the relationship is sound and healthy, then you have a great relationship. It's only when love becomes pain within a dysfunctional relationship that you are loving too much.

You're Loving Too Much When...

You are loving too much when:

- When being in love means being in pain we are loving too much
- When most of our conversations with friends are about him, his problems, his thoughts, his feelings—and nearly

all our
sentences begin with “he . . .”, we are loving too much
- When we excuse his moodiness, bad temper, indifference, or put-downs as problems due to an unhappy childhood and we try to become his therapist, we are loving too much
- When we read a self-help book and underline all the passages we think would help him, we are loving too much
- When we don’t like many of his basic characteristics, values, and behaviors, but we put up with them thinking that if we are only attractive and loving enough he’ll want to change for us, we are
loving too much
- When our relationship jeopardizes our emotional well-being and perhaps even our physical health and safety, we are definitely loving too much

Ways in which women “help” their men

Women who love too much helps their men in ways that can severely impair their emotional and financial well-being.

Some examples include:

- buying him clothes to improve his self-image
- finding a therapist for him and begging him to go
- financing expensive hobbies to help him use his time better
- going through disruptive geographic relocations because “he’s not happy here”
- giving him half or all of our property and possessions so he won’t feel inferior to us
- providing him with a place to live so that he can feel secure
- finding him a job
- allowing him to abuse us emotionally because “he was never allowed to express his feelings before”

For more on abuse, please check out:

- **Profiles of abusers**
- The psychopaths’ strategies to make you fall in love: detailing tactics and techniques of the type of men you must avoid the most

Types of men she finds attractive

- **Unstable man**: We find the unstable man exciting
- **Unreliable man**: challenging
- **Unpredictable man**: romantic
- **Immature man**: charming
- **Moody man**: mysterious
- **Angry man**: needs our understanding
- **Unhappy man**: needs our comforting
- **Inadequate man**: needs our encouragement
- **Cold / distant man**: needs our warmth

Says the author:

> We take his emotional unavailability, his anger or depression or cruelty or indifference or violence or dishonesty or addiction, for signs that he has not been loved enough. We are determined to save him through

> the power of our love

And, finally, the man you wouldn't expect:

- **The loser**: a man who can't attract anyone else assures women that he wouldn't be able to meet others, including other women. Many women
  who love too much fear abandonment. Better to be with someone who didn't quite meet her needs but whom she wouldn't lose than with someone more loving and more lovable, who might leave her for someone else

Says one woman:

> Also, I had at least twenty IQ points over him. And I needed that edge. It took all that and more to make me even begin to believe I was his equal, and that he wouldn't leave me for someone better.

And what about "good men"?
That's not interesting because we can't be helpful to him, and he doesn't make us suffer enough.
The good man is also scary, because he doesn't need us, and he might leave us.

Traits of Women Who Love Too Much

1. **Come from a dysfunctional home** in which your emotional needs were not met. Children are to some extent damaged in their ability to feel and relate.
   1. Denied feelings: Emotional needs also include having your perceptions and feelings ignored or denied rather than accepted and validated (example: "why are you mad at daddy", mother replies angry "I'm not mad". The child feels fear, confusion, anger, and guilt. The child learns not to trust his own perceptions)
2. **Received little real nurturing**, so you try to fill this unmet need vicariously by becoming a caregiver, especially to men who appear in some way needy.
3. **Unable to change your parent(s)** into the warm, loving caretaker(s)
   you longed for, you respond deeply to the familiar type of emotionally unavailable man whom you can again try to change through your love
4. **Terrified of abandonment**, you will do anything to keep a relationship from dissolving.
5. **Almost nothing is too much trouble**, takes too much time, or is too expensive if it will "help" the man you are involved with
6. **Accustomed to lack of love** in personal relationships, you are willing to wait, hope, and try harder to please
7. **Take far more than 50 percent of the responsibility**, guilt, and blame in any relationship
8. **Critically low self-esteem**, and deep inside you do not believe you deserve to be happy. Rather, you believe you must earn the right to enjoy life (also see: consequences of low self-esteem)
9. **Desperate need to control your men and relationships**, having
   experienced little security in childhood. You mask your efforts to control people and situations as "being helpful."
10. **Focus on "how it could be" instead of "how it is"**, you are much more in touch with your dream of how it could be than with the reality of your situation.
11. **Addicted to men and to emotional pain**
12. **Potentially, a predisposition to addiction**: you might be emotionally and biochemically predisposed to becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol, and/or certain foods, particularly sugary ones
13. **Little self-care**: By being drawn to people with problems that need fixing, or by being enmeshed in situations that are chaotic, uncertain, and emotionally painful, you avoid focusing on your responsibility to yourself
14. **Possible tendency towards depression**: you may have a tendency toward episodes of depression, which you

try to forestall through the excitement provided by an unstable relationship

15. **Find reliable men boring**: you are not attracted to men who are kind, stable, reliable, and interested in you. You find such "nice" men boring (see: the friend role)

Childhood trauma is a centerpiece of Norwood's work, and she says:

> The more difficult it is to end a relationship that is bad for you, the more elements of the childhood struggle it contains.

She says that women who love too much are unconsciously seeking to rectify all wrongs of their childhood by persevering in toxic relationships.

How Women Who Love Too Much Related to Sex

Women who love too much have a very peculiar relationship with sex.

They tend to confuse fear and anxiety for both love and sexual attraction. And sex is also one of the main ways women try to "love him toward health".

- **She seeks a man who needs her**: She asks the question "How much does he love (or need) me?" and not "How much do I care for him?"
- **Sex as a way to get him hooked**: Most of her sexual interactions with him are motivated by "How can I get him to love (or need) me more?"
- **Gives sex freely to be loved**: Her drive to give herself sexually to others whom she perceives as needy may result in behavior that she herself labels promiscuous, but her behavior is primarily for another's gratification, rather than for her own.
- **Sex as manipulation**: is one of the tools she uses for manipulating or changing her partner
- **Power struggles are exciting to her**: she often finds the power struggles of mutual manipulation very exciting. She behaves seductively to get her own way and feels great when it works and bad when it doesn't. Failing to get what she wants usually causes her to try even harder
- **Confuses anxiety and fear for love**: She confuses anxiety, fear, and pain with love and sexual excitement
- **Confuses anxiety with love**: She calls the sensation of having a knot in her stomach "love."
- **She derives her pleasure from him, not from herself**: She takes her excitement from his excitement. She doesn't know how to feel good for herself; in fact, she is threatened by her own feelings.
- **Sexual attraction only exists through anxiety**: Unless the challenge of an unfulfilling relationship is there, she becomes restless. She is not sexually attracted to a man with whom she is not struggling. Instead, she labels him "boring."
- **She picks inexperienced men to be in control**: she often teams up with a man who is less experienced sexually, in order that she feel in control.
- **She yearns for physical closeness, but can't get emotionally close**: because she fears being enveloped by another and/or being overwhelmed by her own needs for nurturing, she is only comfortable with the emotional distance created and maintained by stress in the relationship. She becomes fearful when a man is willing to be there for her emotionally as well as sexually. She either runs away or drives him away

My Note: this is a fearful attachment style
This was another passage where attachment styles would have added further depth to this book. The author is partially describing here a fearful / anxious attachment style.
Also read:

- **The anxious – avoidant trap**: this article will explain the dynamics of the toxic relationship between women

who love too much and unavailable men

- **Dating for fearful/anxious attachment styles**: advice on how to date that works well for women who love too much

Sex As Release of Tension

Sex can be gratifying in toxic relationships for a number of reasons:

1. Women see it as a way of bonding again and fixing the relationship. Thus, **the degree of sexual release may be highest when the discomfort with her partner is the highest**
2. Sex is a release of tension, hence, the higher the tension the higher the release

The good sex could then be used as a way of validating the relationship and sticking together in spite of the toxicity. She can point at sex and think "look how great we fit and make each other feel, we belong together in spite of all the pain".

Says Robin:

> The sex act, when it is highly gratifying physically, has the power to create deeply felt bonds between two people.
> For women who love too much, especially, the intensity of our struggle with a man may contribute to the intensity of our sexual experience with him and thus our bond to him.

The converse is also true. Relationships free of pain and anxiety also seem less exciting for women who love too much.

Says the author:

> Because we are not in an almost constant state of excitement over him, and because sex isn't used to prove something, we may find an easier, more relaxed relationship to be somewhat tame. Compared to the tempestuous styles of relating that we've known, this tamer kind of experience only seems to verify for us that tension, struggle, heartache, and drama truly do equal "real love."

In part, that's because people don't differentiate today between love and sexual attraction.
Plus, women who love too much also aren't able to see the link between pain and sexual satisfaction.

The Toxic Bond Can Be More Addictive

Sex is part of an overall trend by which the toxic relationship can be more addictive than a healthy one.

Says the author:

> It would be safe to say that the attraction between two people who have the capability of creating a rewarding relationship based on the exchange of healthy responses, while perhaps strong and exciting, **is never as compelling as the attraction between a woman who loves too much and the man with whom she can "dance."**

Also read:

- **Relationship dances**: the chaser and runner (or pursuer and distancer) is a common dance that women who love too much engage in

Loving Too Much Is An Addiction Based on Fear

Women who love too much are addicted to men -certain types of men- and to toxic relationships.

The author says that the relationship is not based on love, but on fear.
The fears include:

- fear of being alone
- fear of being unlovable and unworthy
- fear of being ignored, abandoned or destroyed

Says Norwood:

> We give our love in the desperate hope that the man with whom we're obsessed will take care of our fears. Instead, the fears—and our obsession—deepen until giving love in order to get it back becomes a driving force in our lives.
> And because our strategy doesn't work we try, we love even harder.

Men Get Addicted Too, But Sometimes to Different Things Than Relationships

Says Norwood:

> Most men who have been damaged in childhood do not develop an addiction to relationships.
> Due to an interplay of cultural and biological factors, they usually try to protect themselves and avoid their pain through pursuits that are more external than internal, more impersonal than personal. Their tendency is to become obsessed with work, sports, or hobbies.

My Note: Attachment theory explains men's reactions
This is where the attachment theory would have made this book more complete.
Many men with attachment issues become avoidants and/or emotionally unavailable.

Childhood Traumas That Lead to Loving Too Much

Obvious problems:

- Incest
- Addiction in the family
- Violence at home

Subtler problems:

- **Mysoginist father**: maybe your father, while providing a financially secure home, disliked and distrusted women
- **Unloving father**: and his inability to love you kept you from loving yourself
- **Jealous mother**: your mother's attitude toward you may have been jealous and competitive in private even though she showed you off and bragged about you in public, so that you ended up needing to do well to gain her approval and yet fearing the hostility your success generated in her

Norwood said that there are a thousand ways family dynamics can be toxic and lead to the dysfunctional patterns of loving too much.
However, all toxic families have one thing in common, she says:

> What all unhealthy families have in common is their inability to discuss root problems. There may be other

> problems that are discussed, often ad nauseum, but these often cover up the underlying secrets that make the family dysfunctional. It is the degree of secrecy—the inability to talk about the problems— rather than their severity, that defines both how dysfunctional a family becomes and how severely its members are damaged.

In dysfunctional families, people cover a certain fixed role that are set in place to hold up a certain (false) narrative, or to avoid discussing and addressing tabu topics that the family carefully avoids (see "Transaction Analysis").

Says Norwood:

> Because our family denies our reality, we begin to deny it, too. And this severely impairs the development of our basic tools for living life and for relating to people and situations. It is this basic impairment that operates in women who love too much. We become unable to discern when someone or something is not good for us.

Dependency to Relationships As a Drug

Norwood repeatedly draws parallels between addiction to (toxic) men and relationships and the addiction to drugs.

She says the two are similar even in their stages.
These are the stages seen through one of her clinical examples, a woman called "Jill":

1. **Initial high**: early in each of her relationships there was an initial "high," a feeling of euphoria and excitement while she believed that finally her deepest needs for love, attention, and emotional security might be met.
2. **Use the "drug" more and more**: the woman seeks the drug more and more frequently
3. **Addiction grows**: Jill became more and more dependent on the man and the relationship in order to feel good
4. **More drug is needed**: Then, like an addict who must use a drug more as it produces less effect, she was driven to pursue the relationship harder as it gave her less satisfaction and fulfillment. Trying to sustain what had once felt so wonderful, so promising, Jill slavishly dogged her man, needing more contact, more reassurance, more love as she received less and less
5. **The worse it gets, the harder it is to let go**: the worse the situation became, the harder it was to let go because of the depth of her need. She could not quit
6. **Withdrawal symptoms**: Some women may unconsciously seek powerful the stimulation of a difficult and dramatic relationship in order to stir their glands to release adrenaline. But when the strong stimulant of involvement in an unhealthy relationship is removed, either because the relationship ends or because the man begins to recover from his problems and to relate to her in a healthier way, a woman of this type will usually sink into depression

We Take Full Blame to Dupe Ourselves That We Have Control

Extreme ownership can be a good thing.

And it can be an empowering mindset, too (follow the link for the forum discussion).

However, some people take extreme ownership as a defensive mechanism to protect their emotional well-being and to cling to tiny shivers of hope.
Says Norwood:

> When an emotionally painful event occurs, and we tell ourselves it is our fault, we are actually saying that we have control of it: if we change, the pain will stop.
> This dynamic is behind much of the self-blame in women who love too much.
> By blaming ourselves, we hold on to the hope that we will be able to figure out what we are doing wrong and correct it, thereby controlling the situation and stopping the pain.

Women Who Love Too Much Are Attracted to Needy & Distant Men...

Says one of the women that the author introduces as examples:

> I remember now how I kept trying to be in his direct line of vision and how he kept sort of puffing away at this pipe, looking off to the side or up at the ceiling, or fiddling with keeping the pipe lit. I thought he was so very mature, with his furrowed brow and faraway look. I was drawn like a magnet.

The woman had a distant father and she always tried to get his attention to make him stay at home.
Now she was doing the same with this unavailable man.

... And Men Who Are Loved Too Much Are Attracted to Strong and Caring Women

But who are the men?

Who are the men who get mired in toxic relationships?

Says Norwood:

> Though the details differ from story to story, always present is **the appeal of the strong woman who somehow promises to make up for what each man is lacking** in himself or his life.

Says the author:

> "Do you need me?" the woman who loves too much secretly asks.
> "Will you take care of me and solve my problems?" is the silent query behind the spoken words of the man who would choose her to be his partner.

This made me think that the author is wrong when she says that men don't "love too much".
Some of **these men are actually seeking the relationship that they lacked with a distant mother**.

Also interesting are the stories of men who fall for the women, including:

- Men feel great for the attention women who love too much shower them with
- Men feel great for women who fix their mistakes
- Addicts fall for women who love too much because they help them stay addicts

However, when the women's strength help fix the man's weakness, the man sometimes can come to resent the woman.
Says Norwood:

> When someone helps us, we often resent that person's implied power and superiority.
> Moreover, a man often needs to feel stronger than his female partner in order to feel sexually attracted to her.
> In this case, the help Rita gave Bart by getting him into a hospital only made it clear how very sick he was, and her deeply caring gesture thus undermined, at least for a while, his sexual attraction to her.

Very good understanding of relationship power dynamics from Robin Norwood.

The Steps of Recovery

1. Go for help
2. Make your own recovery the first priority in your life
3. Find a support group of peers who understand

4. Develop your spiritual side through daily practice
5. Stop managing and controlling others
6. Learn to not get “hooked” into the games
7. Courageously face your own problems and shortcomings
8. Cultivate whatever needs to be developed in yourself
9. Become “selfish.”
10. Share with others what you have experienced and learned

Don’t seek the support of the people you were helping: they need you to stay sick so they can keep doing what they were doing.

Traits of Recovered Women

Recovery is a life-long process, it’s never a finish line at which you can say “done”.
But you will know you’re getting close when you can recognize yourself in the following traits:

1. She accepts herself fully, even while wanting to change parts of herself. There is a basic self-love and self-regard, which she carefully nurtures and purposely expands
2. She accepts others as they are without trying to change them to meet her needs
3. She is in touch with her feelings and attitudes about every aspect of her life, including her sexuality
4. She cherishes every aspect of herself: her personality, her appearance, her beliefs and values, her body her interests and accomplishments. She validates herself, rather than searching for a relationship to give her a sense of self-worth
5. Her self-esteem is great enough that she can enjoy being with others, especially men, who are fine just as they are. She does not need to be needed in order to feel worthy
6. She allows herself to be open and trusting with appropriate people. She is not afraid to be known at a deeply personal level, but she also does not expose herself to the exploitation of those who are not interested in her well-being
7. She questions, “Is this relationship good for me? Does it enable me to grow into all I am capable of being?”
8. When a relationship is destructive, she is able to let go of it without experiencing disabling depression. She has a circle of supportive friends and healthy interests to see her through crises
9. She values her own serenity above all else. All the struggles, drama, and chaos of the past have lost their appeal. She is protective of herself, her health, and her well-being
10. She knows that a relationship, in order to work, must be between partners who share similar values, interests, and goals, and who each have a capacity for intimacy. She also knows that she is worthy of the best that life has to offer

Quotes

On choosing to admit the problem, and start the road towards recovery:

> The choice is yours. If you choose to begin the process of recovery, you will change from a woman who loves someone else so much it hurts into a woman who loves herself enough to stop the pain.

Healthy relationships start with the self:

> Many women make the mistake of looking for a man with whom to develop a relationship without first developing a relationship with themselves; they run from man to man, looking for what is missing within. The search must begin at home, within the self.

This part made me cry.
It's a man reflecting at his father's funeral:

> My brother-in-law, trying to be funny, said, "You know, this is the first time I've been in this house when the TV wasn't on and he wasn't watching a game." I looked at my brother and **he started to cry again, not sadly but bitterly**.
> All of a sudden I saw what my father had done all his life and what I was doing, too. Just like him, I wouldn't let anybody be close to me, know me, talk to me. The TV was my armor.
> I followed my brother outside and we took a drive together down to the lake. We sat there for a long time. As I listened to him talk about how long he'd been waiting for Dad to notice him, I started really seeing myself for the first time, realizing how much I'd become like my father. I thought about my step-son, Tim, always waiting like a sad little puppy for some of my time and attention, and how I had kept myself too busy for him or his mom.
> On the plane ride home I kept thinking about what I wanted people to say about me when I died, and that helped me see what I had to do

The nurse who saved a woman's life (this was just too touching):

> On her last night in the hospital a nurse sat quietly with her and asked her some gently probing questions. The whole story came pouring out. The nurse finally said to her, "I know you're thinking of trying it again. Why shouldn't you? Nothing's different tonight than it was a week ago. But before you do, I want you to see someone."
> The nurse, a former client of mine, referred her to me.

On the importance of providing guidance, instead of telling people "I trust you":

> "I called my mother and described him in glowing terms to her. She said, 'I trust you to make the right decision.' Well, she shouldn't have. I decided to marry him, which was definitely a mistake.

On women needing toxicity and relationships falling apart as men improve:

> When I started making what we'd wished for a reality, we fell apart. The more middle class we became, the less she liked it. I guess she couldn't feel sorry for me anymore

More Wisdom

- **Avoid minimizing your problems**

It's a human tendency to tell ourselves that we are "OK" even when we're not.
We amplify other people's problems and minimize our own so that we can feel good. But that way, we don't address the problem.

- **An high-achiever career with toxic relationships can be common**

Says Norwood:

> Like so many women who love too much, she was obviously a very responsible person, a high achiever who was succeeding in many areas of her life, but who nevertheless had little self-esteem

If this is you, I also recommend reading "Will I Ever Be Good Enough".

- **Obsession: caring too much, thinking too much, contacting someone too often**

When you care so much more than your partner and you need constant contact and reassurance, that is obsession.
When you know you should give him space, but you can't, that's obsession.

- **Adults are responsible for preventing sexual parent/child bonds**

The author explains that it's normal that children want the parent of opposite gender all for themselves.
And those feelings can find a more fertile ground when the mother is missing, and the daughter has to step up and help the father take care of the household.

Says Robin:

> In an effort to avoid violating, even in thought, the powerful incest taboo, she may numb herself to most or even all of her sexual feelings. The decision to do so is, again, unconscious, a defense against the most threatening impulse of all: sexual attraction for a parent. Because it is unconscious, the decision is not easily examined and reversed.

A mother who is present and a healthy relationship within parents instead allows the daughter to develop a healthy, sex-free emotional attachment to the father.

- **Women who love too much and the attraction to criminals**

Some women who love too much end up with men who have been in prison -prisoners' wives, as Nordwood calls them-.
The allure of these men is that they are broken and need fixing, and that they are unavailable.
The women prefer to dream about a possible love, than work and make it happen in real life.

- **Help is the Sunny Side of Control**

Says the author:

> It is not easy or comfortable for us to consider that selfless behavior, "being good," and efforts to help may actually be attempts to control, and not be altruistically motivated.
> When efforts to help are practiced by people who come from unhappy backgrounds, or who are in stressful relationships in the present, the need to control must always be suspected.

- **Toxic relationships often go from bad to worse**

When a relationship fails, women think that if they couldn't make it work with a loser, or with a toxic man, then they must really be worthless.
So for the next relationship, they pick a worse man.

CONS

- **Attachment styles are missing**

The author wrote the first version of the book when attachment styles weren't as widespread knowledge as they are today.

Norwood describes many patterns of fearful/anxious women, but never calls them so.
With attachment styles, this book would have been even more complete. But it's a small con, given the huge value this book provides.

- **Some women say it demonizes support (but I disagree)**

Some reviewers say that the author is encouraging women to love less. But I don't think it's true at all.

PROS

- **Great psychology**
- **Life-changing content:**

Review

"Women Who Love Too Much" is an eye-opening book and, potentially, a life-changing book.

By looking around the web, I could find many women who credited "Women Who Love Too Much" with having helped change their lives for the better. I believe those reviews are genuine, since the psychology just makes sense.

Sadly, "Women Who Love Too Much" only addresses women, but I believe that many men will also equally benefit from this book.

Who should read it?

- People who always fall in love with the wrong person
- People who confuse pain with love
- People who fall in love for the unavailable partner
- People who fall in love with messed up partners who need constant rescuing
- People who fall in love for partners who are below their actual value

Check the:

- **Best relationship books**

or get the book on Amazon

10 Proven Seducer Types That Drive Women Wild

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 July 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Different types of seducers can all be successful in different niches.

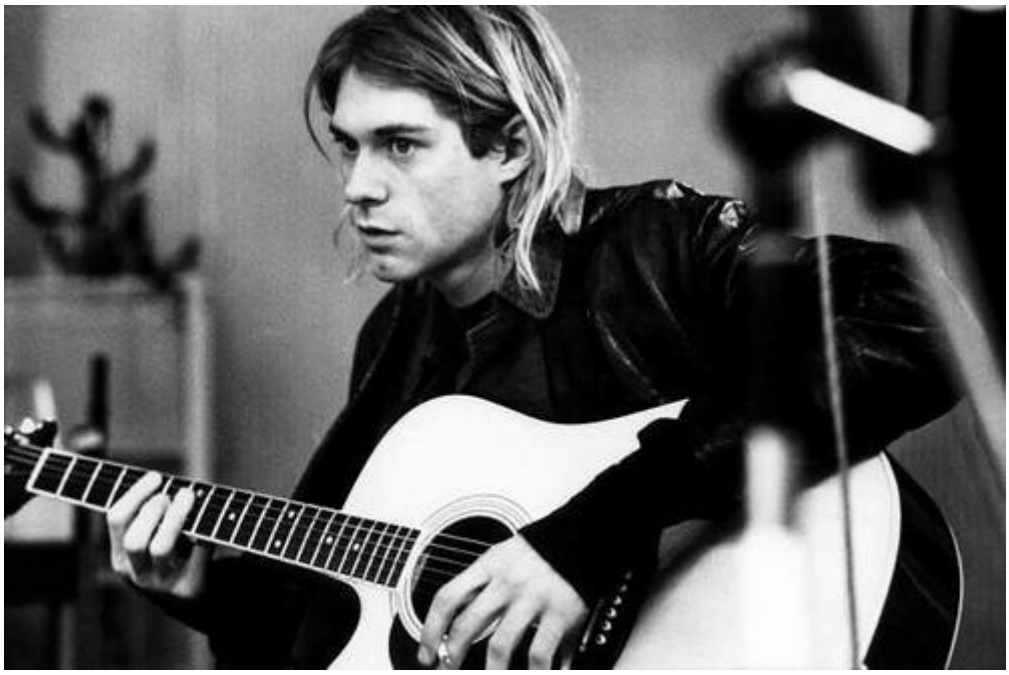
And while being a high value man -and high mate value– is the most reliable way to date well, these seducer niches work even for average-looking men.

So let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. Sensitive Artist
- 2. Rocker
- 3. Successful Alpha
- 4. Outlaw
- 5. Pick-Up Artist
- 6. Bodybuilder
- 7. Feminine Heartthrob
- 8. Intellectual
- 9. Charmer
- 10. Narcissist
- Bonuses
  - Competition Among Styles
- Which One Should You Go For?

1. Sensitive Artist



The sensitive artist doesn't even seem interested in women.

He is lost in his art—or at the mercy of his own emotions and dark side.
And that makes him even *more* attractive.

He is:

- Brooding
- Dark
- Slightly depressed
- Deep

PROS:

- **Women chase him**: sometimes as admirers, and sometimes forced into a toxic relationship dance of rescuer/troublemaker, with dreams of being inspirational muses
- **Pure lover**, also thanks to creativity's association with subclinical levels of schizotypal traits (Nettle & Clegg, 2006). Some women may even become the artist provider

CONS:

- **Quality women stay away**: some sensitive types date dysfunctional women, including what Norwood labeled "women who love too much" types (Norwood, 1985). Even a top 1% artist like Kurt Cobain ended up with a basket case
- **Potential for losing women's (respect):** the struggling artist abdicates typical male responsibilities that some women expect, like strength, provisioning, and general life competence
- **Potential for toxic relationships**: if he attracts the crazy type of artist… It's gonna be fireworks.
  Example:

> **Her**: (shoots gun)
> **Him**: You're going to kill yourself
> **Her**: I don't wanna live

Welcome to the life of the crazy "artist" -where "artist" is often just a convenient cover for "crazy"-.

Women He Attracts:

- **Artists** and struggling artists
- **Groupies** IF he is a successful artist
- **Rebels**
- **Hipsters**
- **Crazy**

Subtypes:

- **Dandy**: the narcissist type of artist
- **Hipster**: the non-artist, but likes to dress like one
- **The Rebel**: they both seek to live on the society's fringes

2. Rocker

Professionally, you might consider “the rocker” an artist.

But when it comes to seduction, he is very different.
He attracts even more women, especially when successful.
And instead of being brooding and depressive, he has ‘lust for life’.

PROS:

- **Stage effect**: stage performance almost automatically puts him at the top of the social pile. And that’s true even for less famous rockers
- **Assumed preselection**: women assume that because he’s in a band, he must be very successful with women

CONS:

- **Less appealing to women looking for stability**: women who are looking for a boyfriend might disqualify the rocker as a long-term partner (but some of them might still want him for a night)

Women He Attracts:

The rocker has a large seductive appeal.
And he has the largest pull on:

- **Groupies**: the “limelight effect” is always stronger on a subset of women
- **Promiscuous & highly sexual women**: they feel free to embrace their full sexual self with a rocker type
- **Romantic women**: if he sings ballads or love stories

3. Successful Alpha

A new trend in the male dating advice, but an old seducer type.

The overachiever:

- Prioritizes his purpose over women
- Prioritizes self-development over women
- Never chases
- Refuses to entertain games women play
- Get women as a consequence of his sexual market value

The old PUA "lifestyle game" strategy sought to get women through an attractive and rich lifestyle.
The "overachiever" does the same, but it comes natural to who he is. He gets women not just for his lifestyle, but as a consequence of who is and who he becomes -a tycoon-.
That's why the alpha male chases little: he does not put women first.

PROS:

- **Gets high-quality women**: high-quality women prefer all-around successful men (duh!)
- **Dates with power**: the alpha male enters his relationships with lots of power
- **Reaches higher stations in life**: by putting his purpose first, the alpha male tends to rise high in society

CONS:

- **Focus on work-only may leave personal growth blind posts**: the overachiever is all work and has no time for other self-development efforts. Some are naturally high-power. But some others are not. So he can also be a "beta overachiever", and clueless when it comes to women (see Zuckerberg, Elon Musk)
- **Prisoner of a fragile ego**: some overachievers build their ego around "being rich" or "being alpha", and that's an inherently fragile ego. He can take rejections too personally, take fewer shorts, and self-reject
- **Unbalanced relationships of master and puppet**: high-power overachievers tend to be driven alpha males who demand total power in their relationships. Some strong women aren't comfortable with that (not an issue if

you prefer submissive women)

You can see it in Trump's relationship:

> **Trump**: Give me your hand
> **Melania**: (swats his hand away)

When you try to "alpha" more independent women without their full respect, she will rebel (and it's *his* fault, not hers).

Women He Attracts:

- **Most women**: successful overachievers have a very large appeal
- **Submissive women**: submissive women make for better partners to alphas, since they gladly embrace their subordinate role
- **Traditional women who seek a strong male figure**

But also some feminist women who hate him are sometimes at the same time turned on by him.

4. Outlaw

Is the outlaw appealing?

Let's hear from an outlaw about his history with women (Norwood, 1985):

> When you've done time you learn that **some women think you're a creep** and have nothing to do with you. **But there are other women who get turned on by the whole idea**. It fascinates them. They see you as big and bad and they get real seductive, trying to tame you. Or they think you've been hurt and they feel sorry for you and want to help you.

The outlaw is a polarizer.
He repels many women, but attracts a few of them.

A theory by some researcher proposes that the outlaw appeal grows in times of violence and upheavals, and decreases in times of peace and safety.
But findings are mixed on this.

PROS:

- **Polarizing effect**: you get clear-cut attraction or rejection, and don't waste time on maybes
- **Carnal attraction**: for the women who are into it, it can make for raw attraction

Otherwise though, not many advantages.

CONS:

- **Poor for high-quality women**: high-quality women usually go for men at the top of the pile and outlaws are usually not high-up in society
- **Few women to choose from**: higher status outlaws are on top of *male*-dominated gangs, with a small pond of women to fish from
- **Success is capped**: the success you obtain from *within* society, both sexual and non-sexual, is superior to whatever you can obtain from *outside* of society
- **Aggressive-looking men scare most women away**: Starting a cold approach with a smile is often better than going in at "high intensity"

Women He Attracts:

- **Repressed women**: some of these women feel the quickest way to recover ground on all the life they didn't live is to swing to the extreme
- **Women angry at their parents**: getting with an outlaw type is the biggest revenge against their parents
- **"Prisoners' wives"**: a subset of "women who love too much". It's a group of anxious-attachment women who are too afraid of abandonment, so they pick men who are physically unavailable and who can never leave them
- **Fearful women**: paradoxically, fearful women might feel safer with commanding and dominant men. And the most extreme ones might feel safer with an actual criminal
- **Hybristophiliacs**: a psychological umbrella term for all the various subsets of women who are attracted to violent criminals

The Serial Killer Myth: Don't Believe The Hype

Many misunderstand and overestimate the seductive power of violent criminals.

It's mostly *fame* that attracts groupies, and there is only a handful of Ted Bundies who get famous. Most others are nameless, lonely criminals.

Subsets:

- **Fighter**: Fighting men for women is not a smart dating strategy. We're also not a species where (Ridley, 1993).
- **Pusher & 'pimp'**
- **The Rebel**: the tamer side and the "cool" kid in high-school. The rebel has the fortitude to buck the unwritten "social laws", and only breaks smaller laws. He attracts rebel women who don't have the courage to rebel themselves

In my teens and early 20's I was a rebel type:

5. Pick-Up Artist

The pick-up artist is not afraid of chasing women.

Indeed, that's all he does.

He approaches a lot, talks to a lot of women, and women generally take a very high priority in his life -often, the *only* priority in their lives-.

Among the traits of the PUA:

- Lots of cold approaches
- Focus on games
  - Mostly *verbal* games (push-pull, yes ladders, routines, sex innuendos, "couple frames", etc.)
- Lots of smiles and jokes
- Higher energy
- Extroverted

PROS:

- **Works well for cold approaches**: the high energy helps women snap out of autopilot, and his friendliness eases possible initial fears
- **Many approaches = many opportunities**: the pick-up artist puts the law of the large numbers on his side
- **Extroversion makes approaches seem natural**: he can approach women without looking like he's hitting on every single girl (an unattractive and low-power behavior)
- **Well-rehearsed**: the many approaches make him socially lubricated and, in the best of cases, smooth

CONS:

- **It's lower power**: by walking to a girl first, the PUA is almost automatically lower in power. Over-smiling and joking can also make him lower power
- **Gets lots of shit tests**: PUAs can come across as somewhat fake, unnatural, and big game players. Women wonder "is this guy for real?", and throw plenty of roadblocks his way
- **Branded as immature**: women and men alike tend to think of PUAs as immature, which partially makes sense, since many men go through a "chasing women" phase and then grow out of it. That makes it harder for the PUA to gain social status
- **Wastes lots of time on women**: sessions of approaching women require lots of time and investment, and pick-up artists don't always place enough high value on their time

Subtypes

- **The party animal**: high energy, happy, and hyper-social. The good ones can sport a beer belly while *still* enjoying success with the party crowd. Some PUAs go down this road and be the life of the party
- **The wealthy womanizer**: wealthy womanizers usually lead a lifestyle that gets women to them, but they might also dabble in cold approaches
- **The natural**: he never set out to be a PUA, but he sometimes behaves a bit like one

6. Bodybuilder

Yes, muscles and definition are attractive.

Only scrawny jealous guys deny that.

And muscular men tend to have more sex partners, and be more sexually unrestricted (Kordsmeier, 2018; Swami et al., 2014).

Don't overdo it!
While men's respect, probably because of evolution (Puts, 2010), increases with increasing size, women prefer *moderate* muscle mass ("threshold effect")

PROS:

- **Carnal attraction**: promoting hot sex
- **Fast sex with right targets**: the muscular man can more easily date as a lover with the subtypes of women who are into muscles. Sex happens quickly

CONS:

- **Time-intensive**: getting big takes time and effort, and it comes with opportunity costs. Make sure you enjoy lifting, don't do it just for women
- **Less appealing to certain types of girls**: while every woman prefers a masculine body, it's matters

comparatively less to hipsters and artistic types

- **Can make some women feel insecure**: women are very body-conscious. Some really shredded men can make some women feel insecure in the relationship. It can be fixed by upping availability
- **Too much is… Too much**: a study with 141 women in their 20's found that women preferred "men with moderate muscularity".

Women He Attracts:

Well-toned bodies have large appeal.

A few exceptions apply for long-term-minded women who may feel safer with "dad bobs", but it's a minority.

Lifters enjoy an especially large pull with:

- **Female bodybuilders**
- **MILFs**: evidence is lacking, but my experience suggests older women are more into it

Subtypes:

- **The fighter**: overlaps because getting big sub-communicates physical power
- **The jock**, albeit the jock's seduction power is more about social status than pure physique
- **The narcissist**: some lifters are (body) narcissists

7. Feminine Heartthrob

A boyband, or girlfriends taking a selfie?

Some are surprised that men with (a touch of) femininity can be attractive.

But personal tastes matter, and every rule has its exceptions.

Men who fancy themselves as masculine -or who *wish* to be masculine- look down on the feminine type as not a 'real man'.

But if they struggle to gain masculine men's respect, the boyband type can take solace in the arms of the many

women who adore him.

PROS:

- **Very polarizing**: women who like them will *really* like him

CONS:

- **Struggles to gain men's respect** and struggles to gain social status

Women He Attracts:

- **Younger women** (Murphy, 2025): and real-world observation shows it
- **Urbanites**: the metrosexual dates better in large and generally safe cities
- **Fearful women**: whereas dominant men can seem scary, Greene suggests that the feminine type puts women at ease
- **Bi-curious women**: and for the record, *many* women are bi-curious

Subtypes:

- **The dandy**: the dandy has a touch of femininity
- **The narcissist**: over-concern for appearances and people's opinions adds a touch of femininity to many narcissists
- **The hypersexed bisexual**: the hypersexed bisexual oozes sex and "swings both ways"

> **Russel Brand**: Women lower their guard and feel at ease around me because they think I'm gay <— like other glam-rockers, he leans feminine. And he's bi

8. Intellectual

Is knowledge attractive?

Not much.

So, what's attractive about the intellectual?

The intellectual is attractive because of intellectual authority an important subset of interpersonal dominance.

Machiavellian intellectuals also take a judge role, further boosting their social power (see Seduction University).

🤦♂Lucio's Take: **'She said I 'looked like a professor who was going to scold her'**

Lucio:
I use some pictures of me teaching workshops for online dating.

One date confessed during pillow talk that I looked like a tough professor who was going to scold her.
And she liked that ⍰⍰⍰.

Women He Attracts:

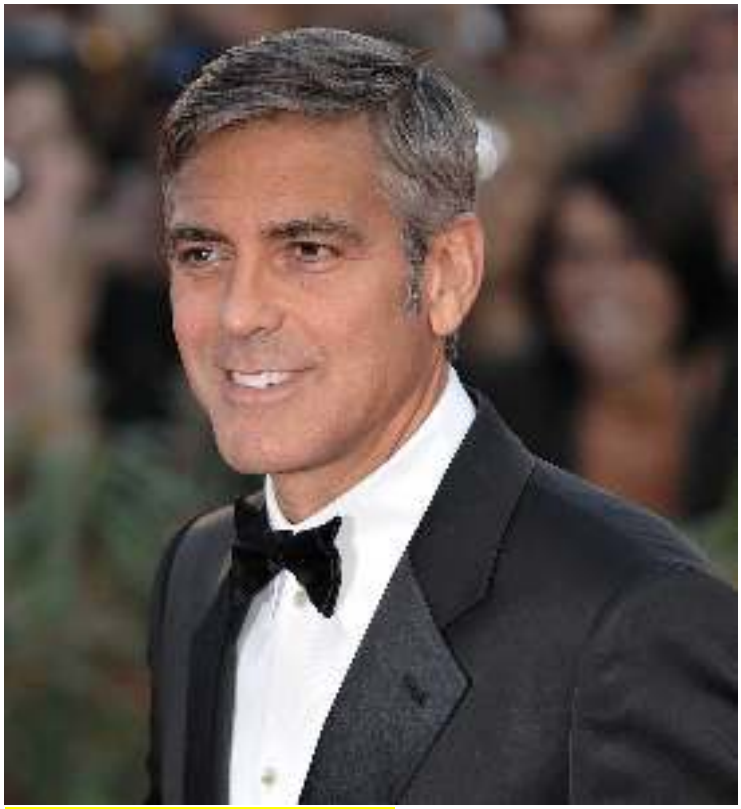
- **Father complex-women**:
  - Women without father figures
  - Father admirers (and seek someone similar)
- **Sapiosexuals**: yes, it exists (Gignac et. al., 2018), albeit it's more about *perceived* intelligence -and intellectual dominance, of course- than actual IQ points
- **Anxious women**: the calm serenity of the intellectual type soothes them

We must keep some examples private, but our students know this.

Subtypes:

- **The professor**: attractive because of his power position, and because he can teach children (Miller, 2005)
- **The philosopher**
- **The writer**: at the intersection between the artist and the intellectual

9. Charmer


Clooney is the charming archetype

The charmer charms *everyone*.

And *especially* the ladies.

The good social charmers are:

- Socially skilled
- Socially confident
- High status
- Intelligent (or intelligent-sounding)
- Verbally gifted
- Well dressed
- Well-read

PROS:

- **Gets high-quality women**: he is well-liked by everyone, advances within hierarchies, and gets status and resources. That vibes well with high-quality women
- **Keeps women**: because he tends to be a genuine high-quality guy
- **All-terrain, 360° seducer**: thanks to his social skills, he can cold approach or move into *any* social group, gain status, and get women attracted

CONS:

- **Without edge he might be "too nice"**: if he focuses too much on being liked, he can come across as too friendly and not sexual and edgy enough
- **Can become too unavailable**: if he is equally charming to everyone, women might feel he is not interested in them, which leads to self-rejection

Overall though, high-quality charmers who learned power dynamics have few cons since they know how to avoid those pitfalls.

See this case study on how to combine charming with power:

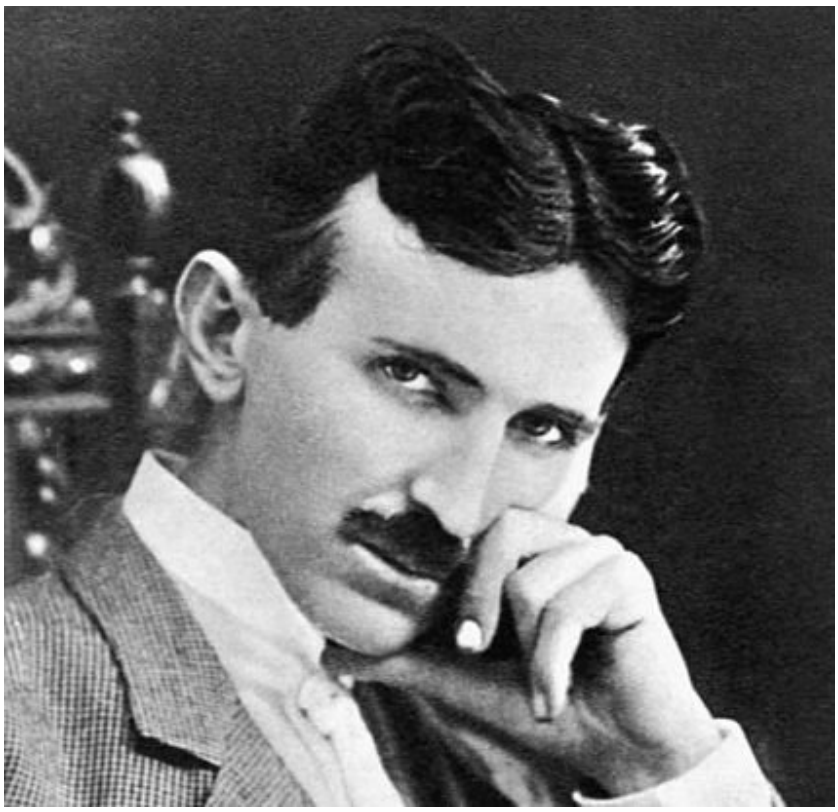
> **Lucio**: I seduced very attractive woman with advanced social skills and strategies. But it wouldn't have worked without strategic displays of power, confidence, and dominance

Women He Attracts:

- **Most women**: if he's a high-quality charmer, his appeal is one of the broadest of them all

Subtypes:

- **Edgy types:** their seductive pull is not in their social skills, but in their intensity. See for example the eyes of Nikola Tesla:



- **Narcissists**: some charmers have a touch of narcissism. They became good with people because they like climbing social ladders and being popular
- **Lovers**: equally polished and high-value, but more focused on women. They can be closer to the pick-up artists, and have a touch of narcissism

10. Narcissist

Studies suggest that narcissists are the most attractive of the dark triad.

Narcissists think they're hot stuff.
And because they so well act the part, many women *also* think they must indeed be hot shit.

As an example of narcissist's seductive pull, the song "*You're So Vain*" shares the love story -and heartbreak- with a narcissist:

> You walked into the party
> Like you were walking on to a yacht
> Your hat strategically dipped below one eye
> (…)
> You had one eye in the mirror

> As you watched yourself Gavotte
> And all the girls dreamed that they'd be your partner

PROS:

- **Maximizes his looks**: narcissist take great care of their looks, maximizing a crucial trait for attraction
- **He shapes reality with his perceptions**: by acting high status, they tend to *get* high status. When they don't, some women will still fall for it

CONS:

- **Many narcissists don't grow**: they tend to be poor learners, which keeps them stuck in life (Bernstein, 2000)
- **It needs some results or fame**: narcissism by itself won't give you great results. Narcissists who are low-status do better than low-status low-confidence men, but still not great
- **When self-image badly outstrips reality, can come across as pathetic**: when a narcissist with too high an opinion of himself is actually a loser, he's twice more of a loser than a "normal" loser
- **Can be poor persuaders**: seduction and persuasion skills overlap. And many narcissists are poor persuaders because they think that everyone should be able to see their "obvious" genius

Narcissism can be good if you're around a 6 or 7 on a scale from 1 to 10. Above that, it becomes counterproductive.
Also read:

- What differentiates successful narcissists from losers

Women He Attracts:

- **Status-conscious women**: they like equally status-conscious men, especially if they appear high-status
- **Naive women**: they confuse narcissism for real value. Please read here on naive self-help
- **Social climbers**: they want to ride on the narcissist's social clout, and manipulate him with the compliments and adulation the narcissist craves

Bonuses

Some rarer types:

- **The pimp / psychopath** (not endorsed by TPM): pimps are abusive men whose "game" is total control, operant conditioning through punishments and few rewards, and emotional dependency with judge frames.
  Here's an example of a guy teaching others how he does it on "ask the red pill" (though you never who's making stuff up there):

> All you need to know is my relationship game is the exact same as a literal pimp. Do hoes dare attack their pimps? Do they dare to get the police involved in something. Fuck no.
>
> Women never call the cops. There are dudes that beat their girlfriends/wife's for years and they still dont call the cops. Why? Because women like abuse emotionally and physically. Note: only a few labile ones do. It's more "addiction" than "like"

Besides ethical considerations, I don't recommend it because you get lower quality women (Sandra L. Brown,

2008).
Also read "are psychopaths successful with women"?

So back to more value-adding styles:

1. **The famous man**: he isn't even a seducer, since women just fall into his lap. Fame might be the single biggest "sexual market value hack" available, and fame also turbocharges any lover style we list here
2. **The passionate romancer**: loves women above all, always in love, and always lusting for new adventures. Casanova is the prototype of the passionate romancer. All modern dating coaches (righteously) admonish not to chase, but a passionate romancer is the exception (Prioleau, 2014)
3. **The sexual seducer**: he promises great sex and seeks to arouse women with either sexual talk, or sexual body language.
   Example:

Sex-based seductions are high-risk and high-reward.
Quick and hot sex is the reward. Driving away women who need a slower build-up -or have hang-ups around sex- is the risk.
Better not try this via text, the risks far outweigh the rewards. It's far better to *allude* to sex, but never go caveman via texts:

Hint at the sexual, but more in a romanticized way. Avoid full-on sex talk via texts

Competition Among Styles

Question:

> If so many different styles are effective, why do people argue on what's "best"?

For a simple reason: people *become* their style.

And when their style becomes who they are, they are not really promoting or defending a style, but they are

promoting and defending *themselves* (plus, sometimes, their businesses).

As a rule of thumb, the more they have invested, both in time, finances, and self-identity, the less open-minded they will be.

Which One Should You Go For?

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you find the most practical strategies and examples

Manipulation: Definition, Techniques, and Real-Life Examples

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 July 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Manipulation is not an anomaly; it's the norm.

In any social species, cooperation, competition, or exchanges of value create powerful incentives for manipulation.

Most discussions of manipulation focus on *bad actors*, the dynamics of manipulation run deeper to include context and asymmetric payoffs of cooperation.

This article maps manipulation at its structural level, as a system of recurring dynamics that appear in relationships, organizations, markets, media, and ideology.

Let's start.

Contents

- Intro
- Interpersonal Manipulation
  - Social Scalping™
  - Personal Value Scalping™
- Psychological Manipulation
  - Normative Cognitive Restructuring
  - Emotional Manipulation
- Social Manipulation
  - Prosocial Scalping™
  - Competitors Manipulation™
- Sexual Manipulation
  - Competitor Manipulation & 'Market Clearing'

  - Cultural Wars For Sexual Advantage
  - Dating & Relationships Manipulation
- Business Manipulation
  - Employees Manipulation
- Leadership Manipulation
  - Group Identification: Giving Up Self-Interest
  - Channeling Anger For Power & Attention
  - Intrinsic Motivation
- Self-Manipulation
- Socio-Cultural Manipulation
- Benefits and Risks
- Spotting & Avoiding Manipulation
  - Manipulation As A Life Skill

Intro

The **TPM Manipulation Model** postulates that manipulation is not an anomaly, but a pervasive feature of human communication, and its expression can be predicted based on the interplay of Self-Interest, Asymmetrical Returns in cooperation, Personality (Dark Triad traits vs. Prosociality), and Strategic Refinement (manipulative skills).

Definition: Manipulation is the influence over others for selfish ends, and can be costly to the receiver.

Manipulation is omnipresent and embedded in human socialization and communication, and it's as natural as life itself.

Manipulation is bound to evolve in any complex organism.
In nature, whenever there is a "signal" (like a man's provisioning capacity), there is an evolutionary incentive to fake that signal to get the reward without the cost or the value to back it up (Dawkins & Krebs 1978).

Manipulation further grows and spreads among social animals that cooperate, particularly for value and investment signaling (Buffalmano, 2026).
Cooperation must emerge against the constant threat of defection. But manipulation belongs to cooperation just as much as it does to cheating: it helps the manipulator to control others, and get more of the cooperative pie.

Many forms of manipulation are also innate. And children cry, get in between parents, and act seductive to maintain love and gain extra resources (Pinker, 1997).

Read more:

- Manipulation vs persuasion
- Why most manipulation resources such

Let's now explore some of the main forms of manipulation:

Interpersonal Manipulation

Interpersonal manipulation refers to manipulation between individuals, in a constant arms race between deception and detection.

Social Scalping™

> A form of value exchange manipulation to inflate one's contribution and devalue the target's contribution to increase the target's indebtedness and take more

Social Scalping™, short for "social exchange scalping," is a concept developed by Lucio Buffalmano for The Power Moves.
It exploits the social exchange norms of reciprocity (Cialdini, 1994), and people's natural 'social accounting' to keep track of give and take.

The manipulator tries to inflate the value he gives while deflating the value he receives, and to inflate other people's debt with him while deflating his debts with others.

Debt Inflating Examples

Debt inflating seeks to increase the victim's burden of repayment.
Some techniques include:

1. *'It took me 3 days of 12h work a day'* <— High-effort signaling to increase the costs of the favor
2. *'This is just for you, I'm making an exception'* <— Make the favor feel special
3. *'This was good for you wasn't it?'* <— 'Thread expands' the usefulness of their favor

Here's an overview of social exchange manipulation:

Thanks to Ali & Matthew on the infographics thread

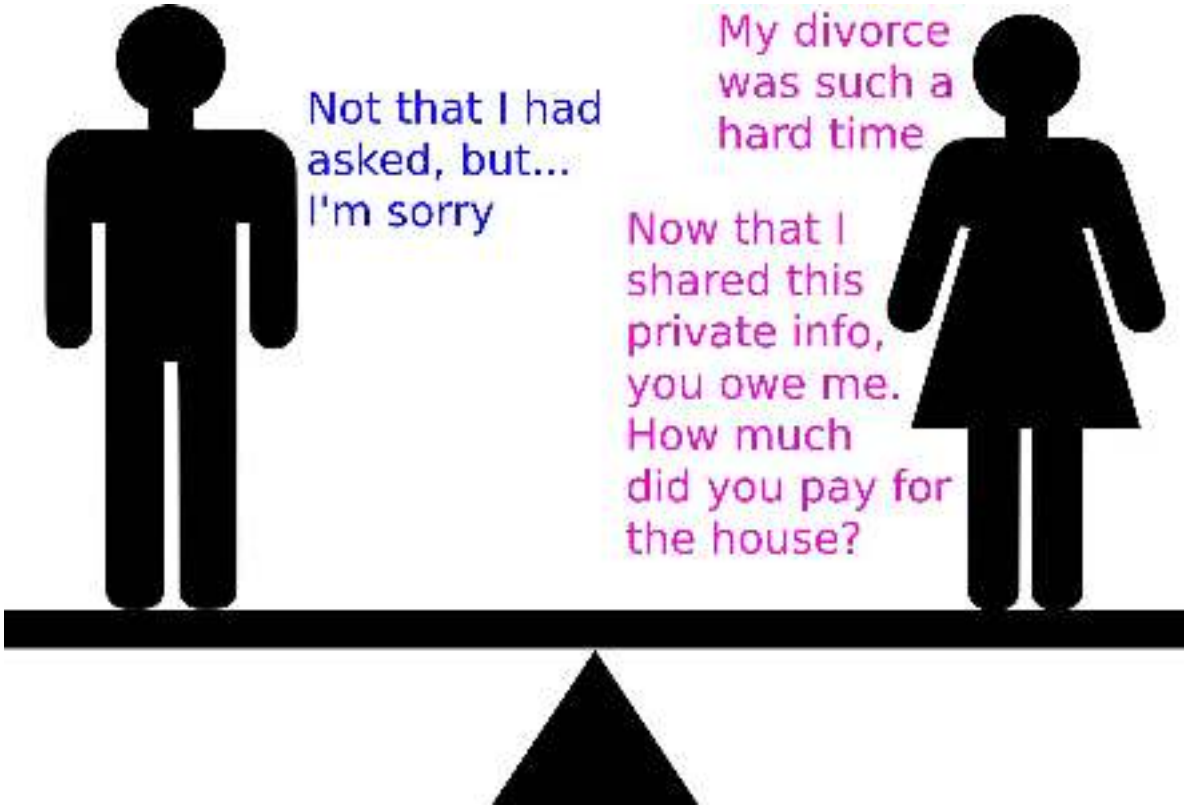
Some real-life examples:

- Tinder player seeks to manipulate the TPM community
- Woman spins leftover into a gift
- Social scalping counter-strategy

Interpersonal Manipulation Tactics

There are countless manipulation tactics, just to name some examples:

- **Get denied to deny**: propose something they're forced to say "no" to deny their future, fair request
- **Manipulative win-win frames**: fake collaboration while competing or trying to exploit. Example: "stop being so defensive"
- **Manipulative tit for that**: offer something useless just to ask for something valuable in return
  - Manipulative Self-Disclosure: offer unrequested personal information to then ask for the victim's more valuable information. Example: manipulative informational tit for tat



Read more:

- Manipulation tactics

Personal Value Scalping™

> A form of personal value manipulation to inflate one's perceived value and deflate the target's personal value

Value Scalping™, short for "Personal Value Scalping", parallels social scalping, but it applies to one's personal value rather than exchanges of investment and give-and-take. (Think of 'I am great, you're not so great' for value scalping, vs. 'my giving is so valuable, yours is not' for exchange scalping).

Some examples include:

- Covert bragging and pride signaling to inflate one's value
- Criticizing, comparing or devaluing others' achievements to lower their value

Psychological Manipulation

Psychological manipulation changes the target's states, emotions, or beliefs.

Many forms of manipulation are psychological in nature.

Normative Cognitive Restructuring

To change a target's system of morals and beliefs to those preferred by the manipulator

There are two forms:

- **Manipulative shaming** to frame the target's beliefs and morals as immoral and inferior
- **Manipulative moralizing**, presenting the preferred norms as morally superior

They work best when delivered by a high-power, authoritative figure, like a 'judge'.
Judgments of 'good' or 'not good' are used to change the target's norms of reference, and gain his conformity.

Public Shaming

Concentrated, intense, and public moralizing browbeats targets into compliance while setting the norms for everyone else.
It's the psychological version of public hanging, setting the normative precedent for everyone to obey.
An example here:

Julien Blanc shamed on CNN

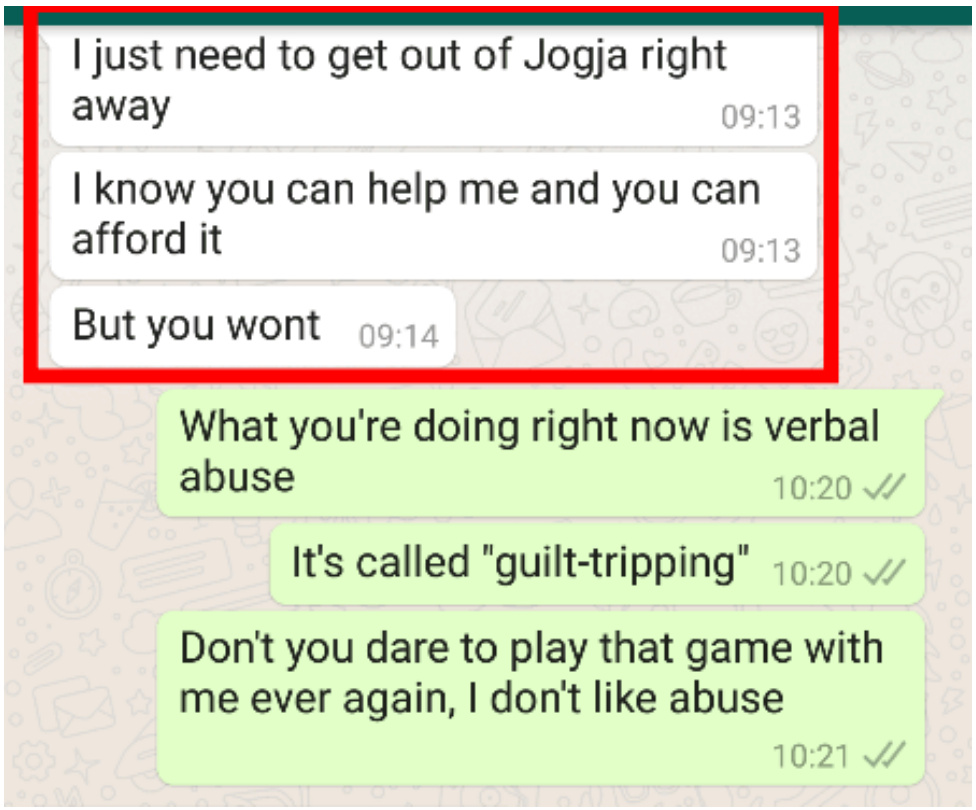
Emotional Manipulation

Emotional manipulation uses emotions to gain leverage or compel the target into action that benefits the manipulator.

Some examples include:

- **Provoking** to get an emotional reaction from the target. It can be used to induce mistakes, make the target look unhinged, or blame the target for aggressiveness
- **Inducing fear** with aggression, veiled threats
- **Guilt tripping & pity plays**: use others' conscience and sense of duty to manipulate behavior

A real-life example of guilt-tripping:



Research suggests guilt tripping can work, but it can also easily backfire, and reeks of manipulation (Singh, Crisafulli, & Quamina, 2020).

Also read:

- Emotional manipulation
- Guilt-tripping culture: breaking free from social guilt
- Frame control

Social Manipulation

Social manipulation refers to manipulation between individuals and groups, or between and among groups.

Prosocial Scalping™

> To encourage individually costly prosocial efforts, while defecting or gaining from others' effort

While related dynamics have been studied in economics, politics, and evolutionary psychology, *prosocial scalping™* is a TPM framework that identifies and systematizes this behavior as a recurring manipulation strategy in interpersonal and ideological power dynamics.

Prosocial scalping exploits the asymmetrical payoffs of group contributions vs. selfish behavior.
Everyone gains with universal contribution, but the manipulator gains more by promoting contribution, while defecting himself.

The manipulator also gains social points by looking selfless and prosocial.

⚠ Prosocial Manipulative Freeriding

> To encourage in-group support that's costly to the target, but beneficial to the group and the manipulator

Sometimes they take the form of nasty in-group and out-group frames that increase social combativeness, make people bitter and angry, and may even harm humanity.

Here are some examples:

- **Politicians' patriotism**: to encourage giving and fighting for 'the country', empowering those who lead that country
- **'Honor' for dead soldiers**: generals and politicians promote nationalism and tribal 'honor', but only soldiers on the ground risk their lives
- **Proxy warfare**, stoking hatred in others to let them fight the war for you

Understanding this dynamic is not a call to join an opposing ideology, but to exit manipulative games altogether.

Competitors Manipulation™

> Spreading subpar information and offering subpar advice to disempower the competition

Competitor Manipulation™ is a TPM-codified manipulation dynamic describing how subpar advice and disempowering narratives are promoted to reduce and disempower the competition, often under the guise of wanting to help others.

Some examples include:

- **Naive self-help**: devoid of crucial knowledge for life effectiveness like manipulation and power dynamics
- **Weakness & withdrawal as virtue**, making targets feel good for exiting the competition
  ⍰ Examples: monk mode, NoFap (see video ⍰ 'why NoFap can be manipulative')

Read more:

- Naive self-help
- Ceiling effect
- Law of balance

Sexual Manipulation

Sexual manipulation seeks selfish gains on dating and reproduction, and may be the main driver behind all social discourse and hierarchy-formation.
Write Pratto and Sidanius:

> intrasexual competition among males may encourage men (…) control women's sexual and reproductive behavior, but also to form (…) coalitions against outgroup males (…) will result (…) in class stratification among men.

While oppression can be part of it, much of that competition is more subtle, based on narrative control and manipulation.

Competitor Manipulation & 'Market Clearing'

There are two types of sexual manipulation:

- **Intra-sexual manipulation** to disempower same-sex individuals
- **Intersexual manipulation** to disempower or influence the opposite gender

Value and ideologies are frequently used as competitors' manipulation.
For example, a woman promoting 'extreme independence' to her peers is performing a 'market-clearing move'—reducing the number and effectiveness of active competitors for high-value mates while she herself may secretly defect from those same rules.

Some examples:

- **Slut-shaming** (women on women): to discourage short-term dating and maintain more negotiation leverage for long-term dating
  - Slut-shaming (men on women) to limit sexuality and increase the odds of finding a loyal partner
- **Feminist 'strength as a virtue'**: 'strength and independence' in women can decrease dating options. The manipulator can defect, or avoid being the outcast for choosing a single or 'career-first' life
- **Rational males quitting dating**: framing women as manipulative and untrustworthy discourages men from dating and lowers the competition for the manipulator.
- **Body positivity and body shaming**, See here:

> **Her**: I wonder why women supported me in my 'all in' journey <— The support handicaps the target and conveniently benefits the manipulator

Read more:

- Sexual conflict

Cultural Wars For Sexual Advantage

The TPM Manipulation Model predicts cultural wars as inevitable, some of which will be split along gender faultlines, each gender favoring the culture that best represents its interests.
In general, you'd expect:

- **Male-Promoting Strategies:** Focus on men's comparative higher status and paternity certainty. This includes 'cultures of honor' and restrictive sexual norms (including 'slut shaming')
- **Female-Promoting Strategies:** Focus on resource independence and freedom of choice. This often includes status and financial equality to reduce male dependence, shaming of male control, and shaming of men's preference for feminine and younger women to maintain optionality

Some of these dynamics are visible in some branches of feminism and manosphere red pill, each defending their gender's best interest framing it as values and virtue. Much public discourse is self-interested manipulation framed as moral virtue.

For example, writes Atari in *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology*:

> (…) a culture of honor (…) evolved in response to the adaptive problem of mate retention (…) religion may function as a strategy to restrict women's mating opportunities

While self-interest often splits along gender lines, plenty of exceptions apply. Often, the exceptions still predictively follow self-interest.
Quoting *The Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*:

> parents support ideas and practices that benefit their offspring.
> For example, families with single, adult daughters are more likely to support women's reproductive rights, whereas families with more adult men are likely to oppose those rights (Betzig & Lombardo, 1992)

“A” stands for “adulteress”. The scarlet letter is an example of socio-cultural manipulation to repress sexual freedoms and ensure fidelity

⁉ Gender-aligned cooperation isn’t monolithic, and exists alongside intra-gender competition.
Interestingly, we can expect that gender-aligned cooperation increases after the main reproductive years, when the main motives of reproduction-driven intra-sexual competition subsides.

Dating & Relationships Manipulation

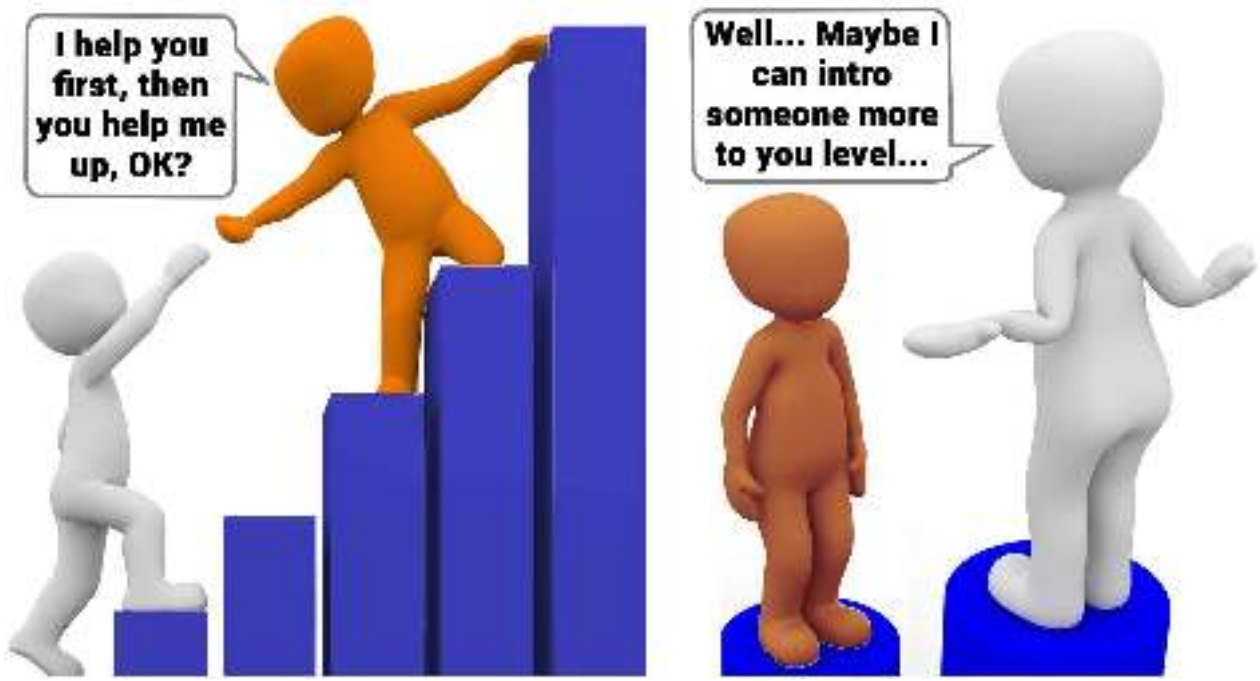
Early pick-up artists studied hypnosis to improve their dating outcomes (Strauss, 2005)

Few, if any, date with maximum honesty and genuineness.
But while basic manipulation is expected, some take it to more 'dark psychology' levels. Some manipulative tactics include:

- **Jealousy-stoking**: triangulation, flirting with others, talking about exes, etc.
- **Disempowering the target**: 'negging', ignoring, etc.

Read more:

- Dating red flags
- Games women play
- Psychopaths' sexual strategy



Relationship Manipulation

Manipulation in relationships includes:

- **Increasing control**
  - Isolation from support
  - Increasing dependency, for example, convincing to give up one's job
- **Disempowering the partner**
  - Lowering self-esteem with criticism, or belittling achievements
  - Gaslighting

Dig deeper:

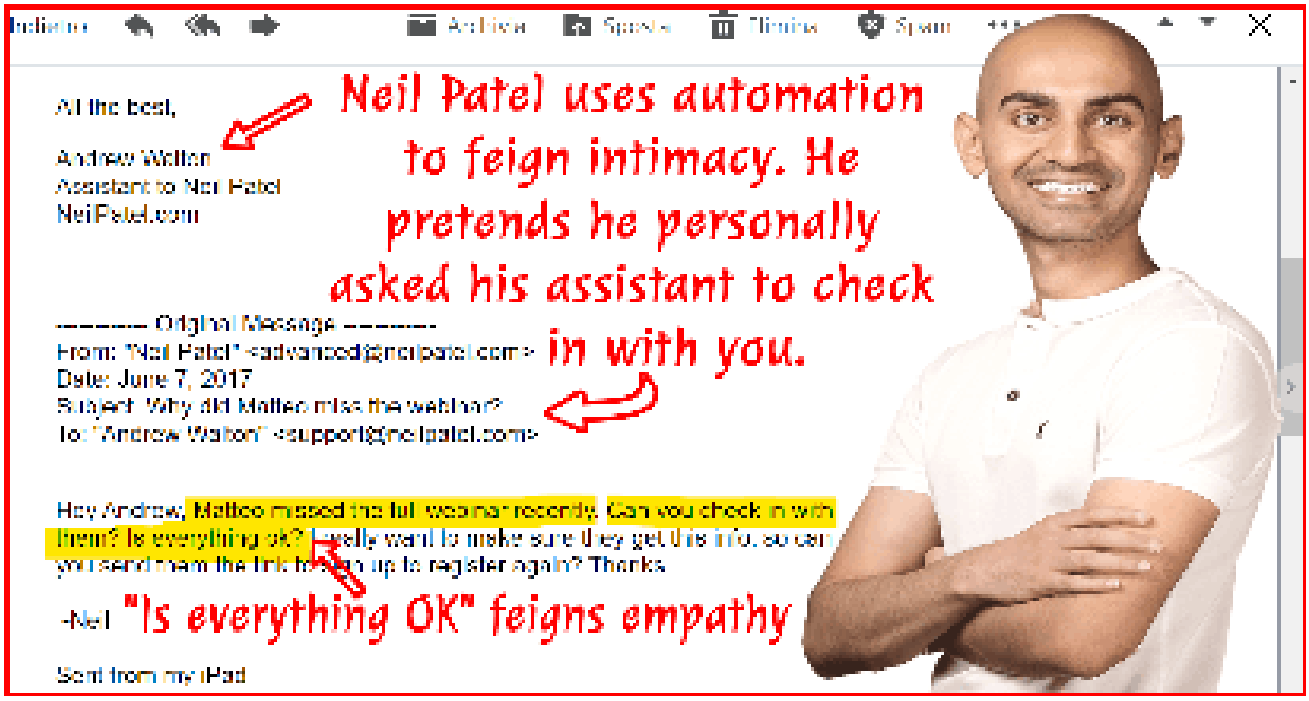
- Women's relationship control strategies
- Relationship prize, or the higher value partner

Business Manipulation

Business manipulation can be understood at different levels:

- **Lobbying** with manipulative frames to get undue support or protection, nationalizing costs (externalities) while privatizing the profits
- **Public relations** to look more moral and virtuous
- **Marketing:**
  - Brand emotional association (higher strategy)
  - Response marketing (tactical level, ie.: scarcity, promotions, experts' opinions, etc.)

An interesting example of a marketing tactic:



This marketer pretends to personally care about a prospect to increase attendances adn conversions

Learn more:

- Manipulative negotiation tactics
- Corporate manipulation

Companies gain from workers' prosociality and teamwork at the expense of selfish pursuits. That creates fertile ground for manipulation

Employees Manipulation

Owners and employees have some converging interests, and several diverging interests that promote manipulation. For example:

- **'Big family' frames**: owners benefit when employees feel like a family because people give much more to family
- **HR as employees' support**, instead of a tool of management

Example: Ray Dalio's 'principles'
In his book Ray Dalio's principle for his company was "what's good for the whole is good". But Ray Dalio *owns* the whole. This is the principle of the owner/employee incentive misalignment.Leadership manipulation refers to the manipulation of followers and in-group members.

Leadership Manipulation

While leaders and followers share some interests, the areas of diverging interests create a fertile ground for manipulation.

Group Identification: Giving Up Self-Interest

> Leaders encourage individuals to give up up their individuated identities for group identities

The more followers identify with the group, the more their self-interest becomes the interest of the group.
That benefits the group and the leader, but it rarely benefits the individuals.
Some tactics include:

- **"We" & "Us" talk**
- **Individual disempowerment** to increase group dependence

- **Ingroup vs outgroup frames** and making up enemies, which increases dependence and cohesion (Haslam, 2006)
- **High powers and missions to serve**, and against which individuals don't matter. Like in religious cults

Also read:

- Healthy individualism as the solution

Fake Prototipicality

Leaders get the largest share of the group's collaboration returns, but hide their special status and play up the similarity with other group members.

Thus, you get PR stunts like CEOs serving fries or wartime leader photo-opping on the frontlines.

Leaders often use 'costumes' (military uniforms, factory jumpsuits) to bridge the status gap of a top 0.1% and manufacture a false sense of shared struggle

Leading By Example, Hiding The Payoffs

Leaders can be more honest in their prosociality because of the status-related asymmetric returns of prosociality. Such as, as the main beneficiary of the group's payoffs, prosociality provides higher payoffs to leaders than to lower-status followers.

Thus, leaders can 'lead by example' because they hide or downplay their higher payoffs.

Channeling Anger For Power & Attention

Populist leaders inflate enemies and troubles and channel people's discontent into the promise of positive revolt and change.

Angry and resentful men who feel short-changed by the demonized group are easier to mobilize, radicalize, and leverage.

The more discontent available or stoked, the more extreme the leader who emerges.
Historical examples could be Robespierre, Savonarola, Lenin, Hitler, etc.
However, these dynamics apply at all levels, from influencer fueling and channeling bitterness to angry social media posts chasing likes.

Also read:

- Populism power dynamics

Intrinsic Motivation

> Higher motivation = lower pay

Effective leaders use intrinsic motivation to get the most out of their team, and manipulative leaders exploit the same dynamics to underpay the team.

The principle is this:

⚖️ **The more intrinsic motivation you elicit, the less material benefits people require**

In the simplest terms, psychological motivation substitutes material compensation. At the highest level, the target is happy to do the work without even wanting any material benefit.

This is how the most successful leaders and strategists operate.
Men and women with the strongest relationships don't criticize their partners, they make them feel good to be with them, or to protect and provide.

Great leadership and manipulative leadership share the same foundational dynamics
Intrinsic motivation is crucial for any leader, including value-adding ones. This is why we say that "great leadership is great manipulation". But the same principles can be used to extract maximum resources from followers, underpay them, and benefit poor leaders and goals.

Some tactics:

- **Shine up and praise down**: 'kiss up and kick down' lacks sophistication and demotivates the team. Strategic operators instead shine up and praise down to combine the best of both worlds
- **Higher goals** that attract and motivate people beyond self-interest
- **Patriotism and contribution as a value**, so people exchange hard work for more ethereal social prestige

Self-Manipulation

Self-manipulation is both the best source of manipulation and a major source of disempowerment.

Robert Trivers first proposed and later tested that self-deception, or believing in a certain lie, better allows one to convince others.
But self-manipulation is also costly when we avoid facing real issues.
For example:

- ❓ *She's not so bad, she just got emotional and broke all our dishes* <— Minimizing out-of-control emotionality
- ❓ *She had an abusive father, I must just keep loving her* <— Psychologizing abusive behavior away

Integrating Your Manipulative Tendencies

Believing you have no drive to manipulate others is also a form of self-manipulation.
It's better instead to own up to your own drive to power and control, and channel it for better ends.

Socio-Cultural Manipulation

Individuals and groups seek to influence the culture to what benefits them most.
For example:

- **Wealthy men frame success as based on merit**: it signals higher value (as opposed to strategic or lucky), and helps to maintain the favorable hierarchy (framing the underclass as high in warmth/low competence can help stabilize the status quo (Fiske and Cuddy, 2002; Sapolsky, 2017)
- **Virtue-framing**: framing techniques change the way people think about issues. For example, when expressions such as "tax relief" or "pro-life" spread, conservatives are more likely to win debates and influence policy (Lakoff, 2004)

Media Manipulation

The media operates under a widespread belief that it reports information and news.
In truth, the simple selection of what to report is a form of bias (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Plus, the media's incentive to capture attention naturally leads to forms of manipulation such as:

- **Sensationalism**: "new record", "never seen before", "first woman ever to…"
- **Fear-mongering**: fear sells and attracts viewers. The media overstates risks while downplaying long-term, positive trends (Pinker, 2018)

Greta may have been a victim of sensationalist media and the weaponization of youthful Idealism. Global warming *is* a serious issue we must tackle, but better doing so with rationality and level-headedness

Benefits and Risks

Manipulation offers large benefits, but as for most things, there are risks and costs, including:

- **Exclusion from cooperative circles** if overdone
  - Reputational loss. ⁉️♂ See a real-life example from my brother

  - Loss of high-quality cooperators: high-quality men and women don't like inveterate manipulators
- **Poorer relationships**. The longer the relationship, the higher the odds of being found out
  - Potential for lower life quality since good relationships are crucial to health
- **Weakness when it covers a lack of assertiveness**: unassertive people often come across as sneakier/manipulative trying to get their needs met, without direct talk

These costs are on a spectrum depending on frequency, gravity, and context.
In general, blatant and constant manipulation is a poor strategy, but:

Strategic manipulators still enjoy a life edge
It would be naive to think that due to the costs, manipulation is a losing strategy. Instead, **costs and payoffs largely come down to skills and calibration**. Advanced players may be genuine to enjoy close relationships, but manipulate when the payoffs are high.
In general, *poor* manipulators bear the costs, and skilled ones get most of the benefits.

Spotting & Avoiding Manipulation

Steps to help you recognize and avoid manipulation:

1. **Read people's character**, because people differ. For example, dark triads (narcissists, Machiavellians, and psychopaths) tend to manipulate more (Lyons, 2019).
2. **Develop critical thinking** ⍰ Example: critical thinking vs. marketing
3. **Think in terms of power and exchanges**, leverage, and next steps
   - Always ask 'what's in it for me', and consider 'what's in it for them'
4. **Look at areas of diverging interest**, where most manipulation attempts cluster
   ⍰ Conflicts of interest at work
5. **Quit projecting your own 'goodness' into the world**: honest people project too much honesty in others and default for "truth by default interpretations" (Levine, 2014)
   - Always ask about possible second motives

Helpful resources:

- Smart cooperator
- Outsmarting a manipulator

Can you reform a manipulator?

Redemption is possible with good and moral people and when you have leverage over them.

Change is less likely with low leverage, when genetic influences are present, and with conscious manipulators.
Conscious manipulators tend to be "ego-congruent", and some may even consider manipulativeness a strength.
In these cases, you must constantly call out the manipulation. And at that point, you may want to consider whether the relationship is even worth it.

Manipulation As A Life Skill

Manipulation is a foundational life skill for self-defense and for competing against others who are not honorable.

Sometimes manipulation is also fair to use, and **the same principles can be used for honorable and value-adding ends.**
For example, guilt tripping may be used to raise money for a good pro-social cause.

> The inability to manipulate doesn't make you virtuous. It only makes you ineffective, and a target for manipulator
>
> *-The Power Moves*

Master The Dynamics for Achieving Your Goals

There is a profound difference between *knowing* and *executing* in high-stakes environments—whether that is a boardroom negotiation, a political power struggle, or a complex relationship dynamic.

If you are ready to start playing the game at an elite level, **Power University** is the next step.
It is the only program designed to operationalize these high-level strategies, giving you the tools to command respect, build genuine authority, and win as a top-1% strategist.

Check Power University

The Dictionary of Power: Terms & Definitions

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 July 2020 · Archived copy · Original

This is a dictionary of power and social-dynamics definitions, including seduction, persuasion, manipulation, and life strategies.

Entries marked with "™" are concepts or techniques that have been first described or first developed by Lucio Buffalmano for ThePowerMoves.com and/or the community.
When entries marked with "™" expand or build upon other authors' work, due credit is provided.

This dictionary is to be considered a "work in progress".

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Leadership

- **The Power Exchange Model of Leadership™** states that the more value a leader seeks to extract from followers, the more power he needs—whether to coerce, provide value in return (extrinsic or intrinsic), exert influence (leadership, charisma), or strategically manipulate the exchange.
- **The value–control tradeoff™** states that the more competent an individual is, the more demanding he is, making it more challenging for leaders to attract, influence, and retain. Leaders lead best by increasing their ability to exchange or extract performance from high-value, low-control individuals.
- **The Power Exchange Model of Entrepreneurship™** applies the leadership model to entrepreneurship, stating that to get high value from high-value individuals within voluntary exchanges, entrepreneurs must give back high value (extrinsic or intrinsic), exert personal influence (leadership, charisma), or strategically manipulate the exchange.

Social Exchange Dynamics

Exchange theory, social: in social and power dynamics, a framework model that looks at relationships as transactions governed by the laws of economics and individuals' self-interest.
It starts from the premise that people are rational players who seek relationships that add value to their lives and make them better off.

- Sexual marketplace: the social exchange for dating and sex
- Balanced exchanges (AKA: balanced relationships): exchanges between individual who mostly match each other in terms of value exchange

Explanation:
Many relationships are more than pure transactions, and a transactional model alone, without psychology and emotional intelligence, would result in a poor understanding of people and, as a consequence, in low personal effectiveness and poor relationships.
However, this website maintains that the exchange nature of relationships is fundamental to understand social and power dynamics. Understanding the laws of the social exchange theory makes people more effective, while those with low social effectiveness who fail with relationships are often oblivious to the transactional nature of relationships.

Also read:

- What's In It For Me (WIIFM): micro case studies on failing to address the exchange nature of some relationships

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Bean counting™ (social): an exaggerateldy nitpicking approach to social exchanges.

Explanation: Bean counting may rub others off, but can help people advance, when it's done at a high-level and in high-stakes negotiations.
However, in everyday socialization and especially with friends and partners, it looks petty and drives high-quality givers away.

- Passive-aggressive bean counter: he resents that you "took" from him, or that he gave you something, but does not speak directly. He might throw something back at your face when you least expect it
- Open exchange talk bean counter: as soon you ask for something, he says "I'll do it, but you'll owe me". Or he might ask for something specific "OK, I'll do X for you, but can you do Y for me?.
- One-upping bean counter: he might actually be happy to give, but only because he knows that he can then use it to one-up you or embarrass you at a later stage

Examples:

> **One-upping bean counter**: yeah, like that time I gave you 3 olives when you forgot your lunch, remember that?

Exchange risk: the risks that entering into social exchange entails for the individual.

Explanation: social exchanges, from friends, to relationships, to business partnerships, all entail an investment, and (emotional) exposure risk. The investment can be time, emotions, money, or a mix of them all. If those exchanges turn sour, we stand to lose (net value loss), or to lose an opportunity for what could have been a better exchange (opportunity loss).
"Smart cooperators" take steps to minimize those risks.

Principle of Social Exchange Inflation™: The tendency for any give to lose value and related interpersonal leverage over time.

Explanation: The value of a give is highest before the exchange, drops sharply once given, and continues to decay over time—along with the receiver's sense of gratitude, obligation, and likelihood of repayment.

Fair value marketing, social: in social exchanges, to appropriately sell and present one's own contributions and value-offering in a way that other people will correctly value and appreciate.
Conversely, to address "social scalping" attempts by more manipulative and Machiavellian individuals to avoid that they claim too much credit for their contributions.
This is the "honorable collaborator" approach.

Explanation: imagine "social exchange marketing" on a continuum.
Clueless people fail to have their contributions and value-offering properly valued, and they fail to spot or correct individuals who devalue their contributions ("credit erasing") and/or inflate their own contributions ("social scalping").
At the opposite end of the spectrum, manipulators will seek to devalue other people's contributions, and inflate their own.
Fair value marketing sits in the middle, and it's the equivalent of assertiveness in social skills. It assertively seeks win-win.

IOU, social: IOU, short form for "I owe you" are social signals that acknowledge the receipt of value from someone and either directly or indirectly promise, imply, or suggest the willingness to pay back the favor.
Thanks to Ali Scarlett for hashing out this dynamic

Explanation: by social exchange theory, when someone receives value from someone else -either a favor, a good advice, or some help- he incurs a debt and "owes" the helper.
IOUs include all the different ways by which people can acknowledge the helper's credit with them, and/or their willingness and promise to repay.
The presence (or absence) of IOUs after you've done a favor can also help you recognize those who are good collaborators, and those who might not be good collaborators (value-takers).

Examples: "thank you so much man!! (by acknowledging the help, it indirectly implies the helper has accrued social credit)"; "if you'll ever need something from them to just let me know; "I will never forget this" (= your credit will never expire)

- **Bad IOUs (AKA "empty gratitude")**: like "bad cheques", these are "IOUs" that the individual fails to follow through on.
  Explanation: since present gratitude is cheap to deliver, expect that a portion of the gratitude you receive is uncovered and won't be honored when you will need something
  Example: one receives a favor, makes a big show of appreciating it, but when the favor giver is in need and/or asks for something, he does nothing to help
- **Promissory credit notes** (AKA: future promises): to promise the delivery of value in the future after the desired favor is first obtained
  Example: "if you do this for me now, then I will… "
  - Manipulative credit notes (AKA: empty promises): to promise the future delivery of value and/or a big social credit in exchange for a favor, but to never intend to honor the debt
- **Social credit enhancing**: to exaggerate the extent of the help received.
  Explanation: can be helpful to show off an individual's willingness to cooperate, as well as serve to make people more willing to cooperate (read here).
  Example: "man, you just changed my life"; "it's all because of him, that was such a great idea, he saved the day"
- **Social debt enhancing**: to exaggerate the extent of the debt incurred.

Example: “man, how could I ever repay you this favor”, “there is no way we can thank him enough for what he’s done, but as a token of our appreciation… “

Credit re-assignment: when people mistakenly think someone else is responsible for the value added to them or their team, but that someone else decides not to take advantage of the credit mistakenly foisted upon him, and he re-assigns it to the right person.

Explanation: re-assigning credit instead of taking advantage of a mistake and stealing it for oneself is a honorable move that can serve to increase an individual’s reputation as a honest and fair man.

Example:
Person: “thank you so much, John, you saved our life!”
John: “yeah, indeed, that was a huge game-changer, you have to thank Max though, he did everything himself, he had lots of courage, God bless him”

ROI: The measure of all relevant returns from each action, transaction, or behavior.

- Social ROI: accountancy of al socially-relevant gains or losses
- Power ROI: accountancy of all power-relevant gains or losses

Explanation: ROI in monetary terms accounts for monetary gains or losses, and the same concept can be extended to all types of exchanges to account for all relevant gains or losses of an (in)action, including status, trust, social capital, etc.
What might make no sense from a monetary perspective can make sense from a social point of view. For example, donations incur a net monetary loss, but they can provide a net (social) gain via added status, trustworthiness, and personal good feelings.

Social scalping™ (short for ‘social exchange scalping’): a manipulative approach to social exchanges consisting of social credit and social debit manipulations aimed at taking more value, while giving back less.

As a schematic and pictorial overview of social exchange manipulations.

In simple terms, “social scalper” are manipulators who abuse the social exchange system to:

1. make it seem like they are giving more than they actually are (“credit inflating”)
2. make you feel more socially indebted than you actually are (“debt inflating”)
3. make you feel like you are giving less than you actually are (“credit erasing”)
4. make it seem like they have a smaller social debt than they actually have (“debt erasing “)

Stef and Anon have contributed to this important concept.

Infographic for “credit inflating”:

Example (of “debt inflating”): Offering unrequested “help” is an example of social scalping (“debt inflating kind”). Unneeded and unhelpful “help” increases your debt while providing little or no value -or, sometimes, a cost-.

- **Counter scalping**: the techniques and strategies to prevent a scalper from taking more than he’s owed or give less than he owes you.

Example:

> **Social scalper**: “I pulled all connections I had to make this intro and get you this interview bro. That job pays a lot, just go there, be confident, do a good job. I got you in”.
>
> **You**: “thanks bro. I already have a few interviews lined up, including one with my true dream company. But

> one more option is always good, I appreciate your help”

To fight a social scalper, you need to play the same game. That was a “social credit erasing” power move.

- **Credit deflecting**: to deflect the credit someone has with us towards someone else, so that someone else shoulders the debt. see example here.
- **Credit invention**: to completely fabricate and make up a past instance for which the manipulator claims of having provided value and/or expanded effort to provide value, but has never received anything back

Explanation: this is the most extreme case of social scalping in which someone completely makes up a past event to demand something from you

- **Credit / debt swapping**: trying to pass what should be a credit for the recevier (and a debt for the requestor) into a credit for the requestor (and a debt for the receiver) (thanks to Alian Scarlett for the name).

Example: trying to pass a request for help into an offer for value is a form of debt swapping. See here for examples.

Social Invoicing™ (short for ‘social exchange invoicing’): Social invoicing lists past favors and presents them as an invoice still due, even though they were given with no strings attached at the time. Repayment is rarely the actual goal. More often, the invoice itself is the weapon: reciting it guilts and shames the receiver into compliance.

Value: In social exchanges, social value is an umbrella term for everything that makes or can make people better off (value-positive)

There are two forms of value:

1. **Personal Social Value™ (PSV)** → *who you are*
   Traits, status, competence, personality, attractiveness, intelligence, reputation, etc.
   AKA: ‘personal value’ or ‘social value’ in general discourse.
2. **Value Exchange™ (VE)** → *what you give/take* (relates to ‘investment dynamics‘)
   Favors, time, help, money, effort, support, opportunities, introductions, etc.
   AKA: Give-and-take, investment

Passive Social Value™ refers to a latent form of value derived from inborn or low-effort traits such as looks, fame, or generational wealth.

Social accounting™ is TPM’s term for the cognitive process by which individuals unconsciously or semi-consciously track and maintain mental balances (positive or negative) of value-giving and value-taking transactions in their social interactions and relationships, applying to both actual or anticipated exchanges.

Social Capital is the net balance of social ledger, with **social credit**, accrued through value-giving or high personal value, and **social debt**, accrued through value-taking.

Passive Social Capital™ refers to the *potential* of giving, a latent, net-value effect that high-value people enjoy without even having to give anything

Value Visibility Model™ is a TPM framework postulating that **exchange dynamics are largely shaped by *visible* value**.
As a result, strategic actors engage in ‘value signaling’ and, potentially, deceptive signaling to increase their own perceived value.

Value-gatekeeping™ is the mechanism by which highly visible outer layers invite or repel access to deeper, lower-visibility inner layers of value.

Value-signaling refers to the communication or sub-communication of one’s social value, where the approach and

effect depend on strategic predispositions and interpersonal skills.

The Value Signaling Framework™
A social strategy and communication model explaining how people evaluate your worth, and how you can effectively communicate that worth to maximize your success.

The Perceived Value Formula™
States that perceived value equals visible personal value multiplied by signaling skill (Perceived Value = Visible Personal Value × Signaling Skill). Higher objective value makes signaling easier and more effective, so the model favors working on objective value first.

The Value Credibility Hierarchy™
Ranks value signals by credibility, from least to most credible: direct verbal claims (least credible) → personal sub-communication (verbal and nonverbal) → third-party signals → contextual signals → first-hand observation (most credible).

The Congruence Principle™
States that when signals conflict, people trust the one that scores higher on cost, difficulty to fake, and lack of bias, not the louder or more repeated one.

The Leakage Principle™ (corollary of the Congruence Principle)
States that unintentional, lower-value signals tend to be more credible than deliberate claims, since self-interest incentivizes signalers to inflate their deliberate signals, making the involuntary "leaks" the more trustworthy tell.

Signaling ROI™ (and signaling ROI matrix):
The ratio of perceived value gained to signaling cost. High Signaling ROI comes from low (perceived) effort signals and Low Signaling ROI comes from effortful, easily-detected, high-neediness signals (direct bragging, verbal claims with no backing).

Currency Hardness™ refers to the breadth of social appeal of a given social currency. Hard currencies are universally valued, while soft currencies have limited appeal.

Judge credit awarding: to persuade others to act while providing emotional rewards -approval, compliments, public praise, etc.-, or by stopping negative emotional punishments -disapproval, criticism, avoidance, etc.-.

Explanation:
This is the judge role within social exchanges.
Rather than give back anything concrete, the judge can prod others into action through emotional rewards and punishments alone.
Women can sometimes use this technique with men and within relationships.
As a rule of thumb, watch out for people who use judge roles and seek judge frames within social exchanges: it's often a manipulative approach.

Example: "if you can do this for me, I will love you for ever".
Inverse psychology can also be used. For example "no way anyone could ever do this", which implies that if you do it, you're uniquely awesome, and you will get the judge full emotional rewards.

- **Imaginary generosity** (AKA: "easy social scalping"): it refers to providing value, help, or support in hypothetical situations that have not happened in real life. Most of the times, imaginary generosity refers to situations that are unlikely to happen in real life, or that cannot happen since they refer to the past.
  Anon in the forums correctly analyzed and conceptualized this power move

Explanation: the social credit scalper can gain some social capital by showing his *willingness* to help and support. Whether his stated intentions would have translated in actual value-giving and effective help and support is a moot point.

Example: “man, if I was there when you were jobless and down on your luck, I would have introduced you to my hiring buddies and got you a good job”

Fraudulent credit awarding: To exaggerate or to outright make up the extent that a person will award social credit if a certain action or favor is performed.
Once the action is performed, the manipulator will then either quickly forget, or renege on his promise to pay back.

Explanation:
Fraudulent credit is a form of social exchange manipulation.
It can be achieved with an outright lie -direct exchange talk-, credit inflating -“you will save my life”, or indirectly by exaggerating the severity of one’s own situation -“crying wolf”-. “Crying wolf”, by exaggerating or dramatizing the extent of one’s woes, indirectly says “I’m in such a bad situation, that if you help me, you will have a big credit with me”.
Albeit it’s possible for wolf-criers to be grateful and pay back, most of them cry as part of a low-power, manipulative approach to social exchanges, and they never even considered the possibility of paying back.

Romancing: a milder and less manipulative form of social credit scalping in which the romancer seeks to increase his own credit, but without going too overboard

Explanation: Romancing happens when someone has indeed done something for you, or something that keeps the exchange win-win, and they exaggerate and embellish their contribution, or the work they had to put in to make it happen.

Pro-sociality suppression phenomenon (AKA: “good guy punishing”): in social exchanges and public good games, to punish (“antisocial punishment”) or criticize (“do-gooder derogation”) overly collaborative or altruistic individuals.

Pro-sociality suppression strategy (AKA: “good guy punishing”): to punish overly collaborative or altruistic individuals in order to decrease competition for social status and reputation, or to enter into value-adding deals or social-exchanges.
Credit to Stef for flagging this strategy and coming up

Explanation: very collaborative individuals make it harder for less collaborative ones to enter into win-win social exchanges, and they make them “look bad” from a reputation point of view.
Pleasant & Barclay suggest that the “good guy punishment” can be a social strategy that low cooperators use to avoid looking bad when high cooperators escalate cooperation.
However, “good-guy punishing” can be a fair strategy when “naive collaborators” demand too little value in return and start a “race to the bottom”. Think of punishing strikebreakers, for example, who are making it too easy for the owners and damaging all other employees (more here).

Social Hit and Run: to get value from someone, and then disappear from that specific interaction, or in general, in order to avoid giving any value back.

Explanation:
Social hit and run is about taking value and disappearing.
After someone gets value, the expectation of a collaborative, “fair” exchange would be to give some value back.
Giving value back might be as simple as acknowledging that value was given, and replying with a “thanks” or with anything that shows gratitude for the value given (emotional value-repaying).
instead, by taking and disappearing, the social hitter and runner turns a potentially win-win interaction into a win-lose.
Social hit and run can save some time and/or resources for the hitter and runner, but comes at the cost of depleting social capital vis-a-vis the original value giver. And, if public, it can come at a rather high social cost through the loss of social reputation and status.

Example:
We coined this term in the forum for those who ask a question, get value through a reply or feedback, and then fail to either give value back, either with an update about their (improved) sitution, or by simply saying “thanks” to the person who replied.
Similar “hit and run” situations occur in person as well, of course.

Social Status: in social dynamics and social hierarchies, a measure of a person’s value as seen and assessed by others.

Explanation: many different factos go into social status, and those factors can vary depending on the individual who’s assessing the status, and the environemnt. For example, in mafia organization, “honor” and “defending one’s honor” are important, while in a club getting bottle service is enough to confer high status within that environment. Social status roughly matches the power and level within dominance hierarchies, but in structured organizations the “rank” or “title” usually confers more power and authority than social status.

- **Status-giving**: any action, words, or frame, that increases the status of the receiver
  - **Giving back status**: to give back status after status was taken away
- **Status-taking**: any action, words, or frame, that disempowers the receiver
  - **Retaking back status**: techniques and strategies to re-gain status
- **Status-protecting**: to position or phrase a potentially power-taking action or sentence in a way that does not take power from the receiver, or that takes less power from the receiver

Status symbol: in social dynamics, a prized possession to indicate a person’s superior wealth or high social status.

Trojan Horse Value: the act of giving something to someone that seems value-adding on the surface, but that actually turns out to be value-taking.
Thanks to Ali.

Example: a good chunk of “feel good” self-help might be considered “trojan horse value”,as it makes people feel good in the short run, it costs them time and/or resources, but delivers no value in the long run.

Trust, social ™: in social dynamics, social trust refers to trusting and feel comfortable with someone.

Trust tends to develop over time and over social exposure. When first meeting someone, trust tends to be low. Meeting people through friends and recommendations though helps “jumpstart” social trust. A great reputation also increases and jumpstarts trust.

Explanation: Low trust means little leverage over people, while high trust means more leverage.
Low trust also means lost opportunities for win-win, since people don’t enter exchanges when they fear defection. This is highly relevant in both business as well as seduction. You can have interested prospects who still don’t deal or meet with you because they can’t (yet) fully trust you.

- Social trust fund: the amount of trust you have with someone

Value, social: In social exchanges, social value is an umbrella term for everything that makes people better off and thus that they want and appreciate (value-positive), or for what makes them worse off and thus that they dislike and avoid (value-taking)

- Passive value: value that exists before an exchange even takes people. Explanation: Attractive people or people with a good reputation tend to be perceived as value-positive and potential value-givers even before they even interact with anyone.

Explanation: High-value people are generally value-positive people who provide -or who could provide- what others want.
For the simple fact that they do -or can- give lots of value, high-value people are wanted and sought after.

Value-taking people instead make others worse off, and for this simple reason, they are shunned and avoided. Being high value or providing value creates “social capital”.

Value presupposing: in influence and sales, to “guess” and presuppose what the relevant “value proposition” will be to the receiver.

Explanation: To “guess” what someone might value, appreciate, or want (their “WIIFM”), and to craft your pitch around that presupposition.

Example: “so if we do this podcast together it will showcase your material to my community and help you reach more people within the LGBT community”.
This message presupposed that the receiver cases about “showcasing his material” and that he ares about reaching more LGBT folks.

Vulturing: to take advantage of negative social dynamics to pile up, attack, or thread expand on someone’s mistakes.

Example: the boss seems to be losing his patience with employee B in a 3-persons meeting. Employee C, knowing full well that his colleague hasn’t yet had the time to start the customer report asks “at what point are we with the report?”
Vulturing cna also blend with general nasty social climbing. An example is to butt-in during a disagreement and/or argument to gain more “social clout” for one’s own opinions during a time when everyone is more attentive. If a high-status member is involved, the vulture can seek to gain even bigger by siding against the higher status member. Lucio also noticed this in the forum sometimes as well.

- Emotional vulturing: to purposefully create, incite, or amplify disagreements and problems in order to gain some personal relevance that makes the emotional vulture feel important.

Similar: ganging up

Social Value

There are two types of social value:

- **Personal value**: more related to intrinsic and genetic traits such as intelligence, looks, and character
- **Exchange value**: more related to external resources such as status and money, and to what one can do with behavior and social cues, such as gratitude, favors, etc.

The two together form ‘total value’, or the full value that people can trade in social exchanges for connections, work opportunities, and dating and mating opportunities.

- **High value man**: A high-value man is a man who possesses more traits and resources that make him socially and sexually attractive than traits that make him unattractive, enabling him to achieve goals and be a net value-giver to those around him
- **Low value man**: A low-value man is a man who possesses more traits that make him unattractive than traits that make him socially and sexually attractive, is less likely to achieve goals, and is more likely to be a value taker than a value giver.
- **Low value woman**: a woman who possesses more traits that make her social and sexually unattractive than traits that make her attractive
  - From a high value man’s perspective: and who is more likely to be a net taker on a high-value man’s life
- **High value woman**: a woman who possesses more traits that make her socially and sexually attractive than traits that make her unattractive
  - From a high value man’s perspective: and who is more likely to be a net giver in a high-value man’s life

Value-Taking

Abuse: in power dynamics and manipulation, to treat someone with contempt (emotional abuse), cruelty, and/or violence (physical abuse).
Abuse can be value-adding for the abuser (win-lose), or value-taking for both (lose-lose). But, in the short term, abuse is always value-taking for the victim.

- Proxy abusers (AKA: flying monkeys): people who support and/or act on behalf of an abuser towards a third party, usually for an abusive purpose. Proxy abusers are either allies of the abuser, or are doing the abuser's bidding because they believed the lies and/or are being used as pawns in the abuser's hands

Abusive techniques: in manipulation and abuse, abusive techniques are recurring methods and patterns ("games"), that people use to abuse others, control others, or keep others subjugated power-down

- Dread game: a general umbrella term to control a spouse through fear, including fear of loss (direct or indirect breakup threats), fear of cheating (sexual triangulations, jealousy, flirting with others, etc.), fear of missing out, or fear of physical abuse.
  Seeking to control others through fear alone is a form of "value-taking mindset"
- Sexual triangulation: the act of introducing a new real or potential sexual partner to an already sexually and/or emotionally bonded partner. There are many ways of instigating sexual triangulations, including through previous lovers, parading suitors, or directly talking about other dates (see an example of direct sexual triangulation).

Aggression: in social and power dynamics, words, tonality and body language that communicate anger or exasperation.
Aggression can be physical aggression. But even when it's still only at a verbal level, it often sub-communicates the willingness, readiness, or the state of mind for a possible physical attack.
In the submission-assertion-aggression continuum, aggression often refers to overreaction and to a failure of proper assertive communication.

- Aggressive push-pull: a technique to dominate and control the frame consisting of aggressing first, and then pulling back. The pull back can be a compliment, a more friendly joke, or simply saying "I was just kidding man, you're a cool guy".
  Explanation: aggressive push-pull can help dominate others and control the frame without necessarily breaking rapport.
  Example: see this thread and video

- Argument ad potentia: to win an argument not by virtue of logics and facts, but by power, dominance, or intimidation.
  Explanation: When people start defending and submitting, they can look guilty by behavior, rather than by logic and facts.
  Example: see Trump's debating techniques here and here.

- Covert aggression: to aggress someone in indirect ways. Also see the main entry.
- Micro-aggression: small scale aggressions. Also see the main entry.
- Smug microaggression: to attack and diminish someone's status with a "smart alec attitude". Often, smug micro-aggressions are actually a form of "covert aggression" or "micro-covert aggression".

Availability ™: in social dynamics and seduction, it refers to how available an individual feels to others. High availability with high-value is the hallmark of social charmers who uplift others. But high availability with low value is useless.

Similar: personal value, SMV, self-rejection, rapport, pulling/pushing.

- Availability, seduction: in seduction, it refers to how attainable a man is to a woman, and how attainable she feels he is. If a woman feels a man is unattainable, no matter how high SMV he might be, she will reject him (self-rejection)
- Attainability: Availability in pick-up and seduction circles, originally from Sebastian Drake. The concept is valid for all social settings, so we called it "availability" and enlarged its scope to all social exchanges.

Babying, power move ™: a power move that frames the (covert) aggressor as a father/mother figure and frames the target as a baby. The power mover frames himself as more mature, powerful, emotionally stable and/or knowledgeable.
A babying frame can also be used in seduction and, when used by men, can also help advance the seduction.

Backhanded compliment: in social and power dynamics, a compliment that truly hides an insult.
It's a specific type of covert insult, and how much a backhanded compliment is an insult or compliment varies depending on the wording, the delivery, and the situation.

Example: "ThePowerMoves.com is a good website on power dynamics" might be interpreted as a 20% compliment and 80% offense if one considers ThePowerMoves.com to be the first, best, and only website dedicated to power dynamics.

Bag dropping: in social and power dynamics, it consists of introducing someone to an individual or a group with low-value people and/or negative dynamics at play, and then leaving immediately after.
Explanation: it's a power move that makes the bag dropper look socially powerful and magnanimous, but in truth, he is getting rid of a social liability.
Example: You can see an example in this forum entry.

- Bag sharing: introducing someone to a low value individual or group to "share" the bad situation
- Manipulative bag dropping: the bag dropper pretends he is adding value
- Bag holder: the person who is left with a low-value individual, or is stuck in a value-draining group or situation

TPM Female Relationship Control Model: A behavioral framework describing how control shifts in relationships through higher value positioning, investment differential based on value positioning, moral authority (judge role), emotional pressure (drama/nagging), behavioral compliance (tasking), and identity enforcement (shame). The model explains how acceptance of covert frames leads to psychological and material investment, internalization of standards, and long-term power asymmetry.

Similar:
'**Betaization:** the tendency of some men to become tamer and more submissive when in a long-term relationship.
"Betaization" is a term of Red Pill communities, and on this website we use the term "domestication".
Read here a description of the dynamics betaization

Big fish, small pond strategy: a strategy of focusing one's effort in acquiring status and power within a relatively small, specific, and circumscribed group or locality.

Explanation: most people unwittingly follow a strategy of seeking status within a circumscribed niche.
Some people also seek refuge within small ponds when they can get validation within that pond. For example, club queens with an average life enjoy clubbing because of the validation they get there and that they don't normally get outside of it.

- Fried fish: when an individual gave up his ego (ego-loss) and life for a specific group (pond), but the group has vanished (dried out pond)
- Big fish, small pond syndrome: to become so overly invested into a specific group (pond), that the group becomes the only way for the individual (fish) to receive personal validation and to feel alive

Bro science: an extreme form of pop-psychology, most often brandished by men not as a way of informing with

facts, but as a way of gaining status by instructing others and by acquiring the role of “expert” on a given subject. Women, being on average less status-conscious than men, don’t do it nearly as much, so there is not widely circulating equivalent term for women.

Brother in arms / sister in arms ™: in life strategies and power dynamics, a strong ally you can rely on.

Burning stakes power moves ™: the act of calling out for (digital) lynching, retributions, or boycotts against a largely made-up enemy (a strawman enemy).
Purists, moralizers, and populists are the figures that engage the most in burning stakes power moves. But SJW can also go for as a way of virtue-signal.
Obviously,y this is a nasty power move and an extremely lopsided form of win-lose.

- Burning stake ™: the (figurative) location where shaming attacks and the most extreme moralization power moves are consumed.
  These days, the burning stake locations happen to be more often online than in the physical world.
- Burning stake shows **™:** the public consummation of the retribution, punishment, or payback against a supposedly guilty and monstrous individual (a straw man).

Burning stakes are where the collective thirst for masochism and toxic quests for power sublimate. The darker, evil side of the individuals who organize and enjoy burning stake shows hides behind made-up or largely inflated charges.
People who enjoy burning stakes also often seek a release valve for the feelings of inadequacy and personal failures.

Example:

Buy in: in persuasion strategies, the individual’s acceptance, willingness, and conviction to actively support and participate in something.

Calibration, social: in social and power dynamics, the act of adapting one’s own behavior and responses to the individual and/or situation.
Explanation: calibration is what differentiates the beginner students of power dynamics and social arts, and the advanced students. Most general advice is useless for those who seek mastery, since it lacks in calibration and results in calibration failure.

- Calibration failure: the failure of adapting to the specific individual or situation.
- Over-reacting: a failure of calibration by reacting or answering too strongly, usually too aggressively or too angrily.
  See for example "calibrating to micro-aggression".

Cementing ™: in power dynamics and frame negotiation, it consists of expanding and solidifying the thread of the "agreement reached" to solidify the new frame and increase its effectiveness.

Explanation: Frame cementing increases the likelihood that the other party will stick to the new negotiated frame, and/or it increases the likelihood that your persuasion will be internalized and accepted as the new reality (VS just agreeing with your frame as a form of short-term capitulation).

- Cementing appreciation: a compliment, praise, (positive) evaluation, or a general sign of appreciation that comes at the end of a frame.
  It can reinforce the value-giving of the original frame if it's honest, which is most often the case, but it can also empower and strengthen the value-taking effects of the initial frame if the initial frame was value-taking.

Explanation: the appreciation reinforces the frame. It also serves to put a "seal", a stamp of approval on the frame, which often turns the appreciator into a "judge" (= "I'm appreciating/judging you for being good").
The appreciation or positive evaluation make it harder to fight the frame because not only it strengthens the initial frame or label but, being apparently kind and value-giving, it makes the receiver feel ungrateful for rebelling against the compliment.

Example: "Bravo!", "well done", "congratulations!"

Similar: similar to covert framing compliments, but the "cementing compliment" comes at the end of the frame. The two can sometimes co-exist together, like
in this example.

- Self-cementing: self-cementing is a property of frames that tend to cement themselves when they unchallenged.
  Explanation: if a frame goes unchallenged, then people's subconscious tends to derive that the frame is valid, and real.
  This is especially true for value-taking frames and (micro)-aggressions, since people think that if the person who lost value had the power and skills to challenge the frame, he would have.
  Hence, it must mean that he did *not* have the power or skills to challenge the frame. Meaning, it's true that the value-taker must be of higher power /status.
  Example: If a guy jokes about you being an idiot and you let it go, then the fact that you're an idiot becomes more and more of a reality for the people around. And the fact that he is of higher status/power and "better" than you also becomes a reality.

Chameleon, social: an individual who can socialize seamlessly in the most disparate social groups.
The best social chameleons don't just socialize in different groups, but are able to gain status and rise through the ranks of any group they join.

Character assassination: in power dynamics and frame control, to go after an individual's history, reputation, and personal flaws instead of addressing his arguments.

Note: be careful with character assassination, it makes you come across as petty, morally bankrupt, and lacking real arguments.

Example: Ray Dalio used character assassination when he went after the reputation of a critical journalist and, as a consequence, looked petty… And guilty.

Cognitive biases: in psychology, cognitive biases are systematic patterns of deviation from what would be

expected in “perfect rationality”.
Some critics made the case that not all cognitive biases are irrational, but can be effective ways of reaching non-perfect, but often-good-enough conclusions with minimum cognitive effort.
Some evolutionary psychologists also point out that from the point of view of evolution, cognitive biases are not necessarily “mistakes”, but can provide a survival advantage even while deviating from “perfect rationality” (Buss, 2019 and Pinker, 1997)

Cold-blooded: see “icy men”. Also see “Slavic men“.

Conspicuous consumption: the act of carelessly spending money as a way to ostentatiously display an abundance of money and resources.
It can be a very effective technique of gaining both social status and sexual attention.

Covert Power Moves

Covert aggression: a form of aggression, bullying, or attempt at dominating others that is partially hidden.

Explanation: Covert aggression is often hidden with indirect talk, humor, nonverbal expressions of disapproval but without words, and/or sayings or expressions which seem to apply to the victim but are not directly addressing the victim.
Covert aggression can be highly upsetting because the victim *knows* it’s aggression, but cannot easily address it without in turn looking overly aggressive or touchy.
Once attacked back, the covert aggressor will often pretend he “meant no harm” and “was just joking”, and frame the victim as “overreacting” and “overly-aggressive over nothing”. Handling covert aggression requires a certain mastery of power dynamics.

- Covert insult: a specific type of covert aggression that hides an insult behind a compliment or behind a facade of friendliness.
  Example: this Goodfellas’ example. “*This kid was great. They used to call him Spitshine Tommy. He’d make your shoes look like fu*kin’ mirrors He was terrific, he was the best. He made a lot of money too, ah salud, Tommy*.”
- Covert warfare: constant covert assaults protracted over time
- Self-denied assault: it consists of verbally denying that one wants to assault or offend someone, and then attacking them either throguh the denial itself, or soon after
  Example: “I don’t say that you’re stupid as a way of offending you, but as simple description of reality”, or “I don’t mean to offend you, BUT…”. Or see Trump:

> **Trump**: I never attacked him on his looks, and believe me, there is plenty of subject matter right there

- Smug covert aggression: to criticize or allude at someone’s faults with a “smart alec” approach. It can be done with a proverb, a saying, or a foreign or Latin expression.
  Example: you are telling someone why you disagree with them. And to avoid taking your reply seriously, they say “Condemnant quo non intelligent”. And they later explain it means that “people condemn what they don’t understand”. Basically, it’s a double covert aggression. Before they go smug, quoting Latin. Then, they covertly imply you’re too dumb to understand.

Covert framing compliment ™: a compliment, usually a description or an adjective, that sets a specific frame for the complimented. When the frame is *seemingly* positive but actually negative and value-taking, it becomes a covert power move and, potentially, a case of covert aggression as well.

Credit: Credit to Matthew for first spotting this power move.

Explanation: All descriptions of positive traits and all compliments delivered with an adjective, in a way, set a frame.

99% of them are value-adding and you don't need to worry about them.
The covert framing compliments you must be aware of are the ones that set a value-taking frame, or a frame that you don't be associated with.
Since the compliment is, apparently, value-giving and "kind", some people miss on the actual power of the frame and, if the frame is negative, it can either slip under the radar, or be more difficult to challenge.
Even people who get annoyed by the frame of the compliment can find it more difficult to fight it because, *on the surface*, the complimenter was being kind and value-giving.

Example: "that's going to be interesting for an intellectual like you" frames you as an intellectual; "you're always such an optimist" frames you as an optimist.
See an example here.

Similar to: it's similar to using a compliment to "cement" a frame, but rather than coming at the end of the frame to "seal" and "confirm" the frame, the compliment itself is a frame.
The two can also go hand in hand in the same sentence, as in the example linked above.

Covert manipulation ™: covert manipulation is manipulation that nudges and persuades others to act in the way the manipulator wants them to act, but without the manipulator having to expose himself too directly.
For example, the manipulator may allude to something, or he may stoke fear and anger in his followers so they take action without him ever having to say "do it" or, God forbid, lead the charge himself.

Example: Trump never told his followers to "riot violently", he simply made them angry enough, and then kept repeating "see you the 6th of January", alluding that it was their last chance to have their voice heard.
But since he never said "be violent", he was at least able to later condemn violence and pretend he was being a magnanimous president.
See an example here.

Covert power moves ™: in power dynamics, covert power moves are power moves that are delivered in a guise that seems neutral, apologetic, or even value-adding or submissive, while actually increasing the power and/or status of the power mover, and potentially disempowering the victim.

Example: "I'm sorry that I made you feel so bad".

Explanation: while it apparently asks "sorry" for having made you feel bad, it also says that they *can* make you feel "so bad" and that they *did* make you feel "so bad". That means they have power and leverage over you, and it implies that they might make you feel "so bad" again in the future.

- Covert-criticism: to deliver criticism without exposing oneself, or while framing it as anything but criticism.
  Example: "look, you made some good points and don't take this the bad way, I'm only saying this for the good of our organization, BUT …"
  Explanation: criticism can decrease your status and increase the criticizer's status and reputation. But some players, loath of criticizing too directly, prefer to shoot from sheltered positions.

Similar: covert guilt-tripping, covert aggression

Covert requests: to start conversations or to approach people under a ruse, and only later on to indirectly seek or request help.
They can be a form of power scalping and social scalping, since they protect the asker's power, and reduce the asker's debt by avoiding direct requests.

Explanation: if I come to you and say "I need your help", that empowers you and disempowers me, since the "helper" is usually higher power than the help receiver.
From a social exchange point of view, if I ask for help and you start putting in the effort, everything that comes after that is social credit for you, and debt for me.
But if I can get that help "indirectly", without requesting, then, well… You offered it, I never asked for it. My

power is intact, and my debt is much smaller.

Example:

> **Covert requester**: “hey man, I was just passing by and thought about “why not stopping by and say hi to that great guy”
>
> **You**: “oh, thanks man, how are you doing”
>
> **Covert requester**: “great, great, lemme invite you for a quick beer”

Over the beer, the covert requester starts complaining about his relationships/business/life.
He wanted someone to listen to, and someone to give advice. But he never directly asked for any.

Covert question: covert questions are techniques and ways to gather information and input from others, without directly asking a question.
Techniques of “covert questioning” include hiding a question behind a statement, an objection, an analysis, a complaint, a list of things we’ve done but didn’t work, an or attack against someone or a third party.
They can be a form of power scalping and social scalping, since they reduce the asker’s debt by avoiding direct requests.

Explanation: a question puts the asker in a position of weakness. The asker admits he doesn’t know something, while the person who answers is in a position of power for having the information and the “expertise”.
Even if the person who answers doesn’t really have any answer, the person who asks still advertises his ignorance with the simple fact that he had to ask.
This is why some people prefer to hide their question behind a statement, analysis, or objection. If people confirm, they were right and, they didn’t “lose” any power. And if they were wrong, they get the answer without asking directly

Albeit covert questions have their place, this website generally advises avoiding them as a pattern of behavior since they communicate a lack of antifragile ego and growth mindset.
Furthermore, covert questions are social scalping in nature (credit-erasing), because by hiding the question, they don’t give the responder the credit for their help.

Example:

> “John, this computer is acting stupid, I can’t even log-in to the email (you guys in support should provide us better laptops than this crap you give out)“.

By laying the blame on the computer, the person above avoids the difficult words of “John, can you please help me”.
That covert request for help denies John of his fair social credit for helping out.
If he keeps on going with his blame game and blames the support team for providing poor equipment, he goes even a step further and not only denies John credit, but increases his debt (even though the issue might all be due to his ignorance).

Relating Power Move
The cover is to relate.
Legit relating is a great technique to power-protect, bond, and make others feel good and accepted.
It’s part of “normalizing” whatever one says or may feel bad about.
The mis-use of relating to instead thread-expands and make the victim’s situation seem larger and worse, while also social climbing to show that they “solved it and moved on”.

Example:
Yeah, I understand. Before I learned this, like you I also was constantly making a fool of myself.

Dark psychology: the use of psychological principles in ways that harm the target

Similar: value-taking behavior, value-taking leadership

Dark triad: in psychology, the dark triad refers to the three different but sometimes related personality traits/disorders of psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism.

Machiavelliasm: a personality trait of self-centered and amoral individuals who pursue personal advancement through a calculative, rational, and opportunistic approach to life

- **Effective Machiavellianism™**: the ultimate stage of strategically optimizating the Machiavellian trait, taking the functional strengths—rationality, emotional coolness, adaptability, and strategic thinking—while removing maladaptive tendencies like excessive cynicism. It treats Machiavellianism as an amoral, neutral toolset capable of delivering high-level effectiveness, while reducing the costs to maximize life quality.
- **Strategic Machiavellianism™:** the process of dialing Machiavellianism for maximim effectiveness
- **Honorable Machiavellianism™:** to place honor, a preference for win–win, and the ultimate goal of adding value as the baseline approach, while adding Machiavellian traits whenever necessary

Narcissism: a personality trait of grandiosity, self-centeredness, and craving for status and admiration

- **Effective Narcissism™**: the ultimate stage of strategically optimizing narcissism, taking the functional strengths while removing maladaptive tendencies like excessive cynicism.
- **Strategic Narcissism™**: the process of developing empowering narcissistic traits while removing or avoiding the maladaptive ones (ie.: rivalry, fragility, and entitlement)
- **Honorable Narcissism™**: to place honor, a preference for win–win, and the ultimate goal of adding value as the baseline approach, while adding the benefits of high agency, social boldness, and antifragile grandiosity
- **Antifragile Grandiosity™**: It synthesizes the high-agency benefits of grandiose narcissism—such as unmitigated confidence and visionary drive—while replacing ego fragility, entitlement, and defensive reactivity with the psychological resilience of an antifragile ego.

- **Effective Psychopathy™**: it's not about being antisocial, it's the ultimate stage of strategically optimizing psychopathy, taking the functional strengths while removing maladaptive, self-harming traits
- **Strategic Psychopathy™**: the process of developing empowering traits sometimes associated with psychopathy while removing or avoiding the maladaptive ones (ie.: disinhibition, externalizing, etc.)
- **Honorable Psychopathy™**: to place honor, a preference for win–win, and the ultimate goal of adding value as the baseline approach, while adding the benefits of more positive traits such as boldness. It's TPM's favored and recommended approach

- Dark tetrad: the dark triad plus sadism. Cruelty is not a means to an end, but a pleasurable end in itself
- **Defensive mindset**: a mindset of those who focus more on the risks of loss and defeat, than on the opportunities of victory and win-win.
- Explanation: people with a defensive mindset are more likely to miss out on opportunities for win-win and collaboration.

Similar to: defector mindset, fearful defector, risk-avoidance, pessimism, nihilism.

Dehumanizing: the act of framing, addressing, or describing the victim in a way that is so base, inferior, or monstrous, as to lack basic human qualities.

Dehumanization has been described as an enabler of evil (Zimbardo, 2007), because when someone lacks basics human qualities, then it means that it's fair to treat him as an insect.

- Objectification: a milder form of dehumanization.
- Sexual objectification: the act of seeing, or treating an individual as an object for personal sexual pleasure

Examples: the most common examples of dehumanization refer to genocides, but dehumanizations are also common in our daily lives. Calling women "plates", for example, is a small act of dehumanization.

Deny-Me Games™: deny-me games are a manipulative social technique that consists of purposefully fielding questions or requests for favors that the victim is, for whatever reason, forced to deny.
The perpetrator then gains social credit for having been denied once, while the victim incurs in social debt, accompanied by a sense of guilt, for having refused a favor.
The perpetrator then exploits the favorable social exchange to get more out of the social interaction.

- **Deny to get denied**: a specific type of deny-me games consisting of getting purposefully denied first, to later deny the victim and make it seem like it was a fair exchange.
  See how you can use it to avoid sharing a windfall.

Difficult people: an umbrella term for all types of people who are difficult to deal with.

- haughty / consdescending / pompous / know-it-alls
- whiners / complainers
- irresponsible / lazy / indifferent
- negative / overly critical
- rude / insensitive
- overly sensitive / thin-skinned
- creeps / weird / stalkey / socially clueless

Direct talk: in communication and social dynamics, a style of communication that goes directly to the crux of the matter, wasting no time in preambles or in cushioning potentially difficult subjects.

- Direct talk bully: aggressors, bullies, and manipulators will sometimes hide their aggression or darker social strategies behind the guise of "direct talk". If you complain, direct bullies will flip the frame and pride themselves of "calling a spade a spade". Don't fall for that. Abuse is unacceptable, no matter how it's delivered.

Disqualifying: in social and seduction strategies, telling the target that you're not interested in them because of a certain trait they lack and that you seek. The idea is to remove the frame that you are chasing them, and to make them chase you

- Self-disqualifying: to provide a reason why you are not pursuing the target.
  Example: in seduction, to say "I'm gay" or "I'm in a relationship" (if they're false, they're also called "false disqualifiers")

Domestication™: in social and power dynamics, the process by which an individual loses certain rebellious or more selfish traits and characteristics while acquiring more cooperative and conforming traits and qualities that make him a better fit for life with a certain group or with a certain person.
While domestication is usually good for society, the group, or for the individual who domesticates, it's up to discussion and interpretation whether it's good or not for the domesticated.

- Social domestication: the process by which individuals internalize the social rules of "proper" conduct
- Professional domestication: the process by which individuals learn to live and operate within a business organization

- **Female domestication™**: the process with which women bring a man under their control. Much of domestication is made possible because women take the judge role, in most relationships.

Dominance: the more showy and obvious displays and signs of power. While power is about what you want in a myriad of way, dominance is usually about getting what you want by bending others to your will, or imposing your will.

Effectiveness, social: in social and power dynamics, social effectiveness relates to power and influence through people.
It includes the ability of building relationships, entering new social groups, acquiring status, persuading and influencing, or simply getting along with others.
Social effectiveness also includes the ability to manipulate, so social effectiveness alone is not synonymous with personal quality, and no guarantee that the effectiveness will be used for win-win and/or value-adding purposes.

Similar: social skills, emotional intelligence, social intelligence

Empathic one-up: to put oneself in someone else's shoes, not as a way of understanding them or to validate them, but to one-up them. It can be used to win an argument, generally disempower an opponent, or to self-frame as superior.

Example: "If someone did to me what I did to you, I'd be happy about it, because I have a learner's mindset, I appreciate honesty, and I can grow from direct feedback".

Explanation: empathic one-up can be a manipulative and covert power move that feigns understanding, but it's actually used as a tool to win an argument or disempower an opponent.
It can also be used as a gaslighting technique, because it suggests that *they* are the problem, and if it was *us* -or someone else- in their shoes, then everything would be OK.
Empathic one-upping can also unnerve the opponent, as many people don't know how t oreact to it.

Solution: you can use the mirror technique and empathically one-up them back. For example "if you were in my shoes, you wouldn't have to deal with this anyway, because if I were in your shoes, I would have been far kinder and gracious".
Or ignore it and go back to the issue: "I'm not sure about that, but let's avoid hypoethical situations, and let's stick to the facts. How about… "
Or use it for a resolution: "Thanks for the idea of putting ourselves in each other's shoes. Let's keep doing that. Trust me that I were in your shoes and you had asked me to do X, I would have listened to you. Now I undesrtand that you don't have time, but could you consider… ".

Fanatics: a fanatic is an extreme moralizer, purist, or populist politician with strong convictions and black and white views that can come across as charismatic.
Fanatics are often power-craving narcissists. If they can rally enough support to get to power, democracy and meritocracy are the first victims, often followed by plummeting quality of life for the citizen.
Fanatics often use extreme forms of straw-manning, make up enemies, and indulge in dehumanizations.
Examples: Lenin, Jim Jones, and Hitler are examples of fanatics.

Feinter, manipulative ™: the manipulative feinter professes to adhere to a set of supposedly ethical rules.
His main motive though is to look trustworthy, gain social status, and disempower others. He then often defects on those same standards he professes.
Most manipulative feinters embrace seemingly prosocial causes (prosocial feints, see below).

Similar: SJW, virtue-signaling

Scalping, proscial™: the act of feigning adherence to a set of rules as a strategy for personal power and personal success.

- **Scalping, prosocial freeriding ™:** the ethical rules the feinter professes to embrace happen to be costly to the individual, but good for society at large.
  Example: a married man encourages other men never to sleep with taken women. But he then does sleep with taken women
- **Pro-group freeriding scalping™**: the feinter professes adherence and support to a *specific* group and invites others to do the same. He then either defects privately, or enjoys more success because he effectively disempowered the competition.
  Example: feminist encourages women to be strong and independent. That makes the sexual marketplace easier for her, since women become generally less attractive as feminists
- **Leaders' pro-group scalping™**: the leader of a group talks up the importance of belonging, contribution, and sacrifice for the group the ideal behavior. But he only does so because prosocial members are good for the group, which is ultimately good for the leader

Festering ™: in social dynamics, the negative feelings that expand and envelop a person's mind after a negative experience. Festering is more pronounced in people who tend to ruminate, but it happens to almost anyone.
People who get good at social dynamics know that when a negative event like a rejection, a social faux pas, or an unwilling offense happens, they need to rebuild good feelings right away, or the silence will invite festering.

Example: if she rejects a sexual attempt or an invite home, the man must brush it off and engage in more rapport-building talk to rebuild goodwill and avoid festering.
See an example here.

Firestarter, Social ™: see "pyromaniac".
A firestarter feigns being shocked, angry, and scandalized to frame others as unworthy just like a pyromaniac does. But he does not necessarily do so on a continuous, daily basis (yet).

Frame / Frame Control

Frame: in power dynamics and frame control strategies, a frame is a set of beliefs, values, and perspectives with which people negotiate meaning. The "meaning" includes how they interpret and see the world, a specific topic, or simply how they interpret and negotiate the social interaction between them.

Covert frames ™: frames and assumptions that are set up without direct talk but that often influence meaning and behavior more than explicit words

Example:
rolling one's eyes to covertly frame someone as "boring", "weird" or, generally "not good enough".
You can see an example of covert frames, as well as strategies on how to handle them, in this forum topic.

Frame control: in power dynamics and frame control, the techniques and strategies to control the frames that govern social interactions.

- **Agree and amplify:** a technique to control the frame that consists in agreeing with whatever someone said, and then purposefully exaggerating to the point that it sounds silly or humorous.
  It's the most widely circulating technique for frame control, especially in pick-up and seduction, but it's not optimal, and ThePowerMoves.com does not recommend it as your go-to frame control technique.

- **Frame individualization**: a technique that diminishes someone's authority by severing the link to any external authority, and thus reducing someone's frame -or attack- to a simple personal opinion.
  Example: see this post for an example.
- Frame flipping: reframing that flips a narrative on its head from an obvious negative, to a positive

- Bridge Leading™: To manage the bridging from two different frames with the goal of maintaining the lead
- Engagement Frame Control™: choosing the terms of engagement and the contest arena that best suit your strengths or preferences, without backing down, and while rejecting their terms of engagement
- Philosopher's Frame™: to disagree or undermine an argument or speaker, while remaining unassailable by linking to broader and timeless general principles and truths.
- Frame Shaming™: using superior or superior-looking moral framing to gain power through ethical legitimacy and shame the other party as 'morally inferior'
- Frame Surfacing™: to 'surface' a covert power move to fully display the nastiness of an attack
- Frame Imposing™: to hold your frame as the only possible option and refuse to yield , even at the cost of friction
- High Power Amplification™: To agree and amplify frames that empower you

Moral high-ground: in frame control and power dynamics, it consists of attacking others from a position of self-righteous moral "rightness", which in turn frames the victim as "morally bankrupt", mean, cruel, and generally worth of social ostracization.

- High-grounding: it's the battle for the moral high-ground, something that does not come natural

Explanation: moral attacks and shame attacks are based on the attacker self-framing himself as morally superior - ie.: "taking the moral high-ground", and framing the victim as morally inferior.

- **High-grounding**: it's the battle for the moral high-ground, something that does not come natural to most people but that's often a great way of fighting moral and shame attacks
  Example: if someone were to accuse the author of Power Univesity for asking too much money for the course and for being a money grabber, I might "high-ground" by saying that what's really low and amoral is asking to get great value without giving anything back.
  Also see an example here.

One-up / one-down / one-across: a framework to analyze power dynamics in frames.
One-up means empowering the frame-setter and disempowering the frame accepter, one-down means accepting the one-up frame and/or giving away power (submitting), while one-acrosses are generally power-neutral answers to frames, often useful to buy time and/or find out more about the frame setter's intentions

Self-framing™: self-framing is what the frames says about the person who sets the frame.

Explanation:
frames don't just communicate information about the world and the interaction, but they also say something about the framer.

Example:
If someone frames you as inept with a joke, they are also self-framing themselves as more intelligent, skilled and "better" than you are.
Also, they frame themselves as higher power and higher-status for the simple fact that they can make fun of you.
If you let that frame slip with submissivness or acquiescence, you *confirm* that frame.

- Thread-Expanding™: To expand the effect and/or time spent on a certain frame
- Thread-Minimizing™: To minimize the effect and/or time spent on a certain frame
- Frame Cementing™: To expand and solidify a resolution or agreement

Frenemy: in social and power dynamics, an envious friend who prefers to see us fail than succeed.

- Schadenfreude: the feeling of happiness for other people's misfortune. Frenemies experience Schadenfreude with their friends

Opposite: vicarious happiness, such as the feeling of happiness for other people's happiness

Similar: passive-aggressive, undermining, Schadenfreude

Games of chicken: in power dynamics, social gambits where one player binds the victim into a 2 options outcome: accepting their requests, or incurring a lose-lose outcome.
The victim of games of chicken feels like it's either they give in, or they will bear the costs and responsibility for everyone's losses.

Example: Break-up threats are an example of games of chicken. The victim either accepts what the threatener asks, or he will set off the lose-lose outcome of the relationship loss

Games: in social and power dynamics, games are patterns of behavior that repeat over time.

Ganging up, social ™: in social and power dynamics, to join forces and form alliances with other individuals in an effort to isolate, mute, ridicule, or generally overpower someone.
Ganging up is most obvious when physical, as well with official voting systems, when several people with voting rights can block or override someone's initiative.
It can be more subtle in free-flowing social dynamics though, and it can be used strategically to achieve social goals and forge alliances.

Example:

> **Attacker**: (spills water on the desk, then turns towards guy 2) hey man, come on, pay some more attention
> **Ally**: (gangs up on guy 2) yeah dude, really, watch out

Attacker and ally gang up on guy 2, starting one-upping joking frame in which it was guy 2 who spilled the water, when it fact it was the attacker.

It can also be premeditated to put someone in the minority group and make it more difficult for him to disagree or say no.
See Bel's example in a work context.

Explanation: Everyone knows it was the attacker who made the mistake but ganging up has far more reaching consequences than a simple bumbling move. It says that guy 2 is isolated, while the gangbangers are allied and can overpower him.
The "joke" of blaming guy 2 is also a veiled threat: the gangbangers might blatantly lie, turn the joke into a serious accusation. And then it's two against one.

Solution: in the example above, a good solution is to shame them, and go slightly meta, denying the joking frame. For example: "dude, what are you like 12? If you need help let me know and I'm happy to help, otherwise, don't play those games on me".

- Manipulative ganging up (AKA "false gang"): the power mover frames the conversation as if the group, or an imaginary group, is against the target, creating a "non-existing gang".
  The group may have never expressed any cohesive opinion or attitude against the target and, in some cases, the group may be neutral or even be closer to the target than to the manipulator.
  However, when the target buys into the manipulator's frame he gives up on the opportunity to sway the group to his side.
  When the target buys into the manipulator's frame he is the co-creator of the new frame and reality where it's him against everyone else -and he can further dig his own hole if he starts breaking rapport and/or get aggressive against the full group.
  Solution: reject and surface that the group has taken sides, always challenge the power mover only, and win the group to your side (remember: this is a battle for group support and group leadership). Ideally, isolate the power

mover and surface that he was being a nasty manipulator.
Thanks to Bel.

- Value-adding ganging-up: albeit the term "ganging up" conjures thoughts of abuse, ganging up can be used strategically to isolate troublemakers or value-taking individuals. You can see an example of value-adding social ganging up in this entry in my journal.

Giving Rope: In social and power dynamics, as well as in manipulation, a technique to covertly prod and invite people to ruin their own reputation, by themselves.
Example: to ask a bragging man for more details about his story, so he brags even more, taking too much time from the group (value-taking behavior), and while looking like a lying, hot air status inflater.
A similar technique is to show skepticism someone is able to do something, so they will try even harder to convince everyone of their prowess.

Godfather, style: in power dynamics, a style of dominance that is calm and understated. The Godfather style talks little, uses lots of pauses, and remains calm and unreactive when under attack, pondering his next move in total emotional detachment.
Can seem similar to the icy man, but contrary to the icy man, the Godfather feels and cares about the people around him. But he switches on when getting down to business.

Godfather, the: a landmark movie on mafia dons with much to learn from.

Goodwill: in social and power dynamics, as well as in social exchanges, it refers to the positive predisposition people have towards an individual.
In leadership dynamics, it refers to the willingness of followers to following a leader independently of his rank and official authority.

Similar: social capital

Hot potato, social: in social and power dynamics, hot potatoeing consists of introducing a new controversial topic and asking someone to answer it.

Similar: bag passing.

Hypergamy: in social and sexual marketplaces, it refers to the attraction, pursuit, and preference of lower status individuals for higher status and/or higher-income individuals.

- Female hypergamy: Female hypergamy is the pursuit and/or attraction felt for males of a higher class, income or social status

Men are equally as hypergamous as women, but their hypergamy is of a different nature (looking for better looks rather than better socio-economic classes).

Honest exchange talk (AKA: "direct exchange talk"): in social and power dynamics, as well as in value exchanges, it refers to openly talk about the size of each social bank accounts, and who owes how much to whom.
"Direct" refers more to the style of the talk, while "honest" stresses the use of this technique when people are being *both* upfront and honest.

Explanation: in simple terms, to openly and candidly state that you expect a favor back after you provide value (honest credit talk), as well as to openly and candidly say that you have received value, and will repay the favor (honest debt talk).

Example: "you owe me", or "can you do this quick for me? I'm calling a favor on what I did for you last week" or, in negotiations, "if I do this for you, it will cost me. Can you make a 20% discount if I agree?".
The Godfather scene is also an example.
Honest exchange talk can also be in the positive, acknowledging one's debt and the willingness to repay. For

example: “I will remember this and make it up to you one day”.

Explanation: The law of social exchange postulates that people who give, are entitled to ask for something back. But since some people like to take without giving, open exchange talk can help to remind them that they will have to give back eventually.
It’s out of place in close friendships, and some people find it annoying. Furthermore, you shouldn’t use it with fair players who do give back. But in some situations, it can be useful to deploy honest exchange talk.

- Covert exchange talk: to use indirect language to tell people that they “owe you”. For example “I know you’d do the same for me”.

Iconoclasm, social ™: it’s the drive to attack, undermine, and destroy those who have more power and success than we have.
Iconoclasts are driven by resentment, envy, or hidden feelings of personal inadequacies, and it makes them feel better about themselves when they see those above them fail.
Iconoclasm is stronger when a leader seems “too good”, unavailable, or when he is acting too entitled.
Iconoclasm is a force that leaders need to keep in mind.

Similar: frenemies, freudenschade, rebels without a cause

Icy men (AKA: cold-blooded): in power dynamics, a dominance style based on removing most or all nonverbal expressions, including signs of warmth and friendliness. Dealing with icy men is difficult because you don’t know whether to slot them as friends or enemies, and the fact that they give you no signs of being friends can make people edgy.
They also never alleviate tension and speak little, forcing others to fill the gaps and to look try-hard.

Vladimir Putin, an example of icy style of dominance

Indirect talk: in communication and social dynamics, a style of communication that uses lots of preambles, circumlocutions, and hinting. Very indirect cultures sometimes have a whole system of unwritten rules around communication that can feel like “acting out”.

Inflater, status ™: in social and power dynamics, status inflaters use, lies, exaggerations, and various types of

games and power moves to artificially increase their social status and personal value.
When they use others as social pegs to inflate their social status, which they often do, then they also are social climbers. The combination of inflaters and climbers give rise to hostile climbers, since they climb by pushing others down.

Similar: social climber, social manipulator, hostile climbers

Influence, The Psychology of Persuasion: one of the most popular books on influence and persuasion, by Robert Cialdini.

Weapons of influence, for Cialdini:

- Reciprocation
- Commitment & Consistency
- Social Proof
- Liking
- Authority
- Scarcity

The Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™ is the phenomenon where a trade-off between realistic complexity and less realistic simplicity is necessary to sell to the majority.

Investment, social: in social dynamics and social exchanges, a measure of an individual's effort into a relationship or social exchange.

- **Ben Franklin Effect**: in social dynamics and persuasion, the tendency for a person who has already performed a favor for another to be more well-disposed towards someone, including more likely to do another successive favor, than if they had received a favor from that person.
  Explanation: An explanation for the Ben Franklin effect is cognitive dissonance. People reason that they help others because they like them, even if they do not, because their minds struggle to maintain logical consistency between their actions and perceptions (this also sounds like a case of backward rationalization)
  Note: the Ben Fraklin effect works in specific cases and circumstances. Also read here "reciprocation VS Ben Franklin effect".

Judge

Judge, the ™: in social and power dynamics the individual who assesses other people's worthiness, dispenses emotional punishments and rewards, and exercises power and influence over others through emotional control. The judge is the individual who has power and influence within a relationship or social exchange. He derives much of his power from assessing others, who in turn seek to prove themselves to the judge, and gain the judge's approval.

- Covert judge power move: a covert power move with elements of both judge role, and tasking/requests.
  Example: "I greatly appreciate your response" means that you are supposed to respond (power move), plus the implied disapproval if you don't reply (critical judge)
- Judge power move: a power move delivered from a judge position
- Positive judge: a judge who delivers praise
- Negative judge: (AKA: "critical judge"): a judge who delivers criticism
- Value-adding judge (good judge): individuals who use their judge role and position in ways that add value
- Value-taking judge (bad judges): individuals who use their judge role and position in ways that takes value
- Sadist judge: individuals who use their judge role and position in ways that takes value, but without necessarily gaining anything themselves. They simply enjoy the effects of their power, especially the destructive effects of their power

Judge frames ™: any compliment or emotional reward, as well as any criticism or emotional punishment, that sets the giver as "judging" the receiver.

- Dismantling judge frames: to undo a judge frame. It's often a good idea to dismantle strong judge frames because otherwise you lose lots of power.
  Example 1: -"great job man, you seem like a smart guy" -"yeah, it was alright (refuses to fully accept the positive judge frame),
  Example 2: -"great job man, you seem like a smart guy" -"thanks! I'm dum as f*ck though" (refuses the positive judge frame with a joke)

Lateral-first mobility: in life strategies, a strategy of seeking easier markets. It's often far quicker, and sometimes far more effective, than working on upward mobility in more difficult markets.

Leadership: in social and power dynamics, the act of leading and/or heavily influencing a group or another individual.

- **Abusive leadership**: the worst case of win-lose "leadership", whereby the leader uses his power to abuse, demean, restrict other people's freedom, and generally disempower and handicap others
- **Narcissistic leadership** (AKA: "me, me, me leadership" & "WIIFM leadership): a form of leadership where the leader only cares about what's in it for him, his personal power, and what makes him look good.
- **Power Over / Power Through**: in leadership and persuasion strategies, two different and opposite approaches to persuasion and leadership.
  Power over: to have power on others by virtue of your ability to enforce your will, either through raw dominance, or by controlling punishments and rewards.
  Power through: the ability to mobilize others by "higher" appeals such as admiration and respect for the leader, inspiration, and group identification.
- **Value-adding leadership** (AKA: win-win leadership): leadership that benefits the leader, as well as the group and/or the individual that is being led. In case of organizations, value-adding leadership also adds value to the beneficiaries of the group's services or products.
  Value-adding leadership can be considered the final goal of any self-development effort, and it's this website's ultimate goal for its users.
- **Value-taking leadership** (AKA: win-lose leadership): leadership that benefits the leader on or, in the case of groups, a small portion of the leaders' cronies, while coming at a cost for everyone else.

Leecher strategy: in power dynamics, the leecher strategy is either a sycophant to a powerful man, or someone who seeks to climb power hierarchies by becoming the right-hand man of a more powerful individual.

Similar: power aligning, piggyback and run

Less dominance is more power: in social and power dynamics and in persuasion, a saying that serves to remind people that the less raw dominance you use, the more you allow for people's buy-in to emerge, and the more you will make people *want* to follow you, and to follow up on the agreements you have reached.

Similar: power through, self-agency effect

Leverage: in negotiation and power dynamics, it's another term for power. Having leverage means that you have the power to persuade or force others to accept your terms. Having no leverage instead means you have no power to convince, influence, or force others to accept your terms.

Life Strategies: strategies that allow an individual to reach a major life goal in a manner that is quicker, more efficient, or yielding far better results.

Little princess and the pea games: in social and power dynamics, a woman who pretends to be more refined than she really is.

She often uses fake shock to pretend she is used to a high-class way of living.

- Example: My father was about to flyswat a fly, when our lovely guest jumped in shock and shouted: “oh my God Franco, no!!”. To her, it was disgusting to swat a fly. She grew up next to a small animal farm.

Similar: relationship prizing

Little Virgin feints: in dating and seduction, a woman who pretends to be less sexual and less sexually experienced than she really is.

Loyalty tests: in power dynamics and dominance hierarchies, these are tests delivered by higher-ups to their underlings to make sure the underlings accepts the higher-up’s authority.
Sometimes, loyalty tests can seem like pointless work, but that’s the whole point. To make sure the underling honors their hierarchical authority and they are obedient and willing to sacrifice for them, the boss *purposefully* chooses pointless tasks.
Autocratic personalities, men, narcissists and individuals high in power are more likely to administer loyalty tests

Lover: in seduction and dating strategies, a lover is a man who is not available or for a relationship, but can be good for sex and short-term dating.
Women lust after high-quality lovers but know that they cannot turn them into boyfriends, so they have no reason to play Madonna games, and will sleep with him very quickly.

Note: Most people reading on lover strategies focus on high-quality lovers only. They forget that there are also low-quality lovers and average-quality lovers who don’t get that much sex or are only able to get average quality girls from bars and clubs.
Before worrying about becoming a lover, it can make sense to worry about becoming a high-quality individual.

- Boyfriend disqualifiers: to disqualify oneself as a boyfriend candidate with the intent of becoming a lover

Manipulation

Manipulation: in social and power dynamics, the act of influencing and convincing others to embrace beliefs or behaviors that advance the interests of the manipulator, while coming at a cost for the manipulator’s target(s)

TPM Arms’ Length Approach™: to be superficially friendly in person and in social settings while remaining emotionally closed off, minimizing meaningful contact, withholding key personal information, but maintaining a working relationship in case you can gain from it

Strategic Fade™: A controlled, low-conflict exit strategy for disengaging from manipulative and vindictive individuals. It involves gradual reduction of availability and investment while maintaining superficial friendliness and plausible excuses — ensuring the manipulator never feels openly rejected or disrespected, which minimizes retaliation risk (vendettas, smears, fake reviews)

Guilt-tripping: in manipulation and power dynamics, a manipulation attempt where the aggressor seeks to make others act out of guilt.
Guilt-tripping can also be triggered in combination with pity plays.

- Covert guilt-tripping: to make people feel guilty in covert and disguised ways.
  For example, to tell someone who had to cancel an appointment “oh, too bad, I was so looking forward to it” (notice the social credit scalping as well).
  Or to frame oneself poorly for something that the receiver is guilty of, or equally guilty of. For example: Since I didn’t keep in touch, it’s the equivalent of saying “you’re also bad for not writing”. I’m sure he didn’t mean it as a power move, but it can still break rapport, so avoid it

- Privileged guilt-tripping: The hostility or outright aggression, either overt or covert, directed towards certain groups of people who are accused of enjoying or exploiting an unfair advantage to the detriment of others.
  - Male-shaming: shaming men for being overly aggressive and supposedly preying on and/or harassing women
  - White-shaming: shaming white men for supposedly taking advantage of minorities
  - Beauty-shaming: this is an old one. Less attractive people seek to diminish attractive people's achievements and to impair their life-effectiveness by ascribing their success to an unfair advantage
- Guilt-culture: when guilt-tripping becomes pervasive, then we get a guilt-culture. Our current culture of around 2020 is replete with high-level guilt-tripping, most of it being "privileged guilt-tripping". Also read: don't fall for the guilt-tripping culture
- Triangular guilt-tripping: to complain or project anger and/or emotional distress to someone about the actions of a third party.
  The goal can be to vent, to affect you emotionally, to gain your sympathies, and/or to spur you into action. It can work, but it comes at a high cost for the triangular guilt-tripper who can easily come to be seen as an annoying complainer or a low-power passive who cannot do his own bidding.
  Credits to Bel for first recognizing and describing this behavioral pattern. See here and here for examples

Manipulation techniques: abusive techniques are recurring methods and patterns ("games"), that people use to manipulate or control others.

Olive branch trap: in social exchanges and debates, to feign a friendly overture to relax the opponent and make him drop his guard, but then to leverage the opponent's lowered guard to revert straight back to full attack mode.

Explanation: an olive branch trap can be used to make people open up and share something personal, but then to use their personal information against them.
"Good cop – bad cop" strategies leverage one or many olive branches traps.

Example: See Tucker Carlson quickly switching from "God bless you for that" to full attack mode right after.

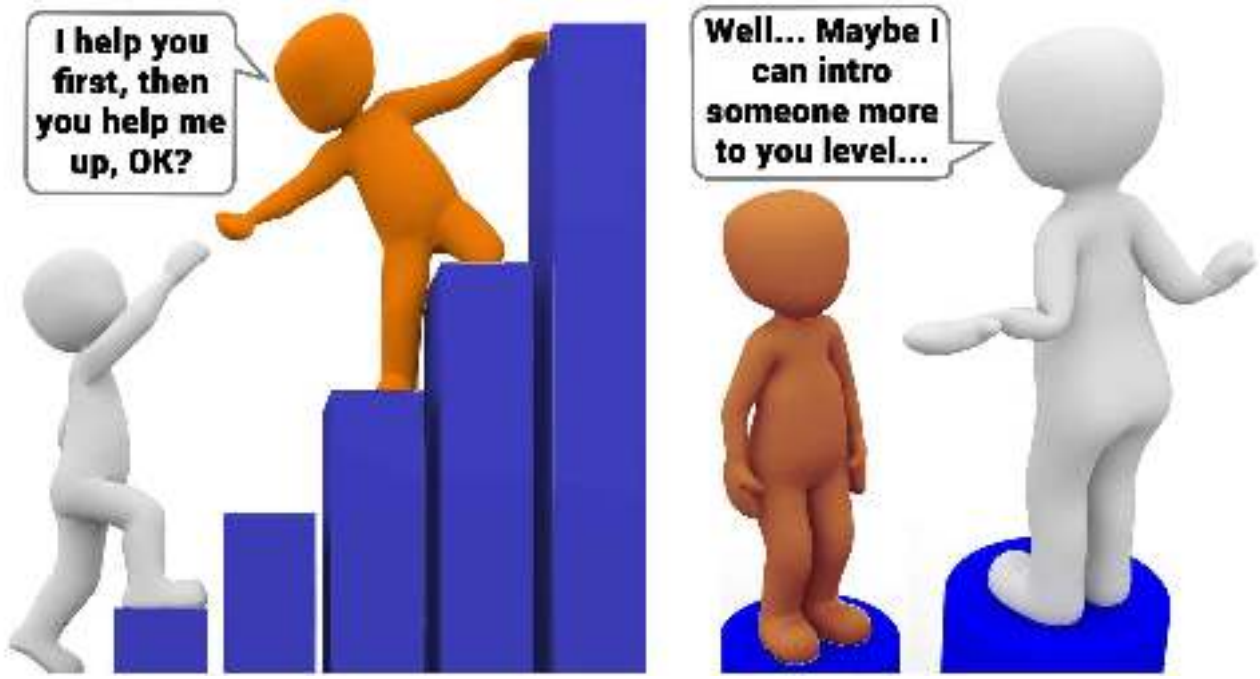
Paradox of practice: in self-help, to teach one thing while the teacher enriches himself not through the material being taught but through the money collected with the coaching time or material.

Explanation: MJ De Marco coined this term in his book "The Millionaire Fastlane", where he says that "gurus" like Kiyosaki sell get rich schemes based on real estate investment, while they themselves got rich selling real estate advice.
Pyramid schemes and multilevel marketing are examples of paradox of practices, since the founders don't get rich through selling the products, but by recruiting others to sell their products.

Example: In self-help, Brandon Burchard might be one example: see here.

Piggyback and run ™: in manipulative strategies, it consists of associating with someone to acquire something of value the victim posses, and then dropping the victim once the value has been acquired, or once it's safe doing so

- Seductive piggyback and run: pretending to be in love with someone until a specific goal can be achieved, then dumping them, breaking up, or suing them
  Examples: visa scams, marrying up and then divorcing.



Pity Play: in manipulative strategies, it consists of purposefully looking dejected and hopeless to manipulate others into supporting, helping, or acting in the way that the pity player wants.

- Playing the victim: it consists of framing oneself as a victim to frame the opponent as a mean bully
- Playing the victimized: it consists of framing oneself as the victim of the target's wrongdoings, or purposefully exaggerating the extent of the damage.

Similar: guilt-tripping, social credit scalping

Power borrowing: to increase one's own clout, authority, or power, by borrowing the power of external sources. Originally thought of and coined by John.

Explanation: if you say "I think", then it's what you think, VS what someone else thinks.
But if you say "researchers say", "most people believe", or "everyone knows this", then it becomes "many people (or everyone) against just one person".
There are many ways to power-borrow, including:

- Appeals to "proper rules of conduct": which ends up being a judge power move (ie.: "you're not being proper")
- Appeals to rules/laws/SOPs, etc: recruiting the power of sanctioned "rules"
- Appeals to the group: simply speaking in terms of "we" rather than "I" can also be a manipulative form of power-borrowing
- Appeals to specific higher authority: "the boss said", "expert X says", "this is not what the CEO wants us to do, the CEO wants… "

Even if one simply says "that's disgusting", there is an implied power-borrowing from "standard rules of conduct" that the victim is disobeying.
For how to deal with this power move, check out "frame individualization" and read here.

Playing dumb: to pretend to not understand and/or demand unneeded clarifications in an effort to avoid owning up and/or apologizing

Explanation: if you fall for it and clarify, the person then pretendes it's not what they meant, and that there was a misunderstanding. So ntehy never own or confess of their power move.

Quicksand technique ™: to (willingly) move the conversation away from the main topic, request, or question,

towards off-topic or minor issues that do not address the speaker's main concern

Example:

> **Him**: I felt ashamed and unappreciated when you said in front of everyone that the dinner I spent 2 hours preparing was poor
>
> **Her**: Yeah, it wasn't too bad, but the steak was definitely over-cooked

She half-apologizes, and then comes the main quicksand maneuver: moving the conversation towards a detail that fails to address his main concern. His main concern was that he was not being given any credit for his effort, and that he was being publicly shamed and disempowered.

Explanation: quicksand maneuvers are manipulative, often covertly-manipulative, and are used for different goals. To begin with, the quicksander can avoid apologizing, owning to mistakes, or making any concessions. So he can conserve his power while keeping the speaking partner disempowered.
And they can also be used for gaslighting effects. Quicksanding frustrates and annoys our speaking partner, who can end up over-reacting and getting angry. If the quicksander then points out that they are getting aggressive or worked up for nothing, we have the perfect gaslighting dynamics.

Similar to: muddling the water, thread-cutting

Self-disclosure, manipulative: in manipulation strategies, to open up with unrequested or fake information with the only intent of gaining the victim's trust.

- Tit-for-tat self-disclosure: a specific type of manipulative self-disclosure. It consists of providing fake or unrequested personal information that puts pressure on the victim to later answer truthfully to the manipulator's information request

Self-manipulation: in self-development and manipulation strategies, it consists of self-denial, minimizations, and "coloring" reality in a way that makes us feel good instead of helping us develop and achieve our goals.
There are countless examples of self-manipulation.

Standard manipulation ™: in manipulative strategies, the daily manipulation the majority of people engage in.

Explanation: They can be very Machiavellian, but most of them are mostly harmless since everyone does it, so they are already "factored in" in social exchanges.

Example: Some daily manipulations can be harmful though. Think for example on denying the importance of having money in life, or denying the importance of taking care of one's own appearance. When people buy into that, they might start acting it out in their lives, and lose a lot of their value.

Strawmanning: in power dynamics and manipulative strategies, fabricating an enemy or distorting reality to make an individual or a group seem meaner.
In debates, it consists of distorting someone's argument, often making it more extreme than it really is, to score an easy win.
In manipulative strategies, strawmanning justifies the perpetrator's attacks and anger, and is designed to fan the flames of hatred. In the worst cases, straw-manning is about de-humanizing a victim to make all kinds of abuse seem fair.

Similar: dehumanizing, moralizing, shame attacks

Triangulation: triangulation happens when communication does not happen directly between two individuals, but goes through an intermediary ("messenger").
Sometimes triangulation is meant without harm, but in many circumstances, it can be used for manipulative, win-lose, or value-taking ends.

Explanation: the receiver can be disempowered with a one-up frame, judge frame, or undue criticism, without recourse to the originator. The messenger can deliver hurtful criticism while hiding behind the "don't shoot the messenger" cover (it becomes an act of covert aggression). Both originator and third party gain power vis-a-vis the victim. See here for solutions.

Example: see Bel's examples of more subtle triangulations (probably more helpful to learn than the more obvious ones)

Wild Goose Chase, to give tasks and advice that are only meant to waste someone's time. Sometimes the advice is presented in a fake guise of help, and sometimes it's a technique to either get rid of someone, or to harm and handicap the competition
Thanks to bel

Meta, **going meta**: in power dynamics and frame control, it means to handle the game, power move, or manipulation attempt by explaining what they are doing, and why they are doing it and, directly or indirectly, to either shame them for it, or to explain why it's not working with you.

Going meta requires a good understanding of power dynamics, and the ability to explain them in simple terms. Going meta is very effective with "covert aggression", since explaining their game blows off the covert aggressor's protective cover.

Microaggression: Aggressions, insults, one-ups or generally value-taking social behavior expressed in covert or indirect forms, and characterized by low to moderate intensity of aggression.

Explanation: often but not always, microaggressions overlap with covert aggression, since they use humor or indirect talk to aggress.
Unchecked microaggressions result in a loss of power, social status, and sometimes even self-esteem for the victim.

Mindsets: mindsets are deep-seated beliefs, as well as recurrent patterns of thoughts and frames wich which people look at themselves as well as the world.

- Growth / fixed mindsets: a growth mindset beleives you can improve your skills and traits. A fixed mindset believes that whatever you are born with, you are stuck with.
- Value adding / value subtracting mindsets: a value-adding mindset sees it as a personal duty and/or as the best most effective road to success, to add value to others (for example: to become a billionaire, help a billion people). A value-taking mindset seeks to give as little as possible while taking as much as possible, either because the value-takier thinks it's the best way to succeed, or because it makes him feel good.
- Defensive / vulnerable: a defensive mindset focuses on the risks of loss, be it physical, financial, or emotional. A vulnerable mindset forges ahead in spite of the risk, by focusing on the potential for gains and win-win.
- Internal locus of control / external locus of control (vicim mindset): and internal locus mindset believes that the individual is responsible for what happens to him, and that he can chages his mood and life circumstances. An external locus mindset believes that external forces he has no control over determine what happens.
  - Extreme ownership: an extreme version of external locus of control where the indiivdual takes responsibility for everything in his life, including events for which he apparently had little control over.
  - Learned helplessness: when people learn they cannot control external events, they enter into a state called "learned helplessness", and they stop trying. Depression is also similar to learned helplessness.
  - Stoic mindset: the stoic mindset takes ownership of whatever is his control, while accepting and being at peace with the fact that it's impossible to contorl everything, and that the ultimate result is also somewhat up to fate and chance.

My Bitch (My Bitch Power Moves): power moves designed to totally dominate someone. If done in public, they can be highly embarrassing to the victim.
You only need to look at this thumbnail of Trump with Macron to see what "my bitch" power moves are all about:

Moralist: an individual who engages in moralizing and attacks others for not following the moral framework upheld by the moralist.
Moralists often have a self-righteous attitude and seek a judge power position to deliver their attacks. More often than not, the moralist seeks to frame his moral framework as the one upheld by the majority of people or, at least, by those whom he deems the "sensible" ones (ie. the "morally superior" ones).
Some moralists truly believe in the superiority and goodness of their moral standards, but some others are immature individuals oblivious to human nature and their own dark side. Yet some others, of course, are just out for power, manipulation (pro-social feints), or to ruin someone's reputation.

Similar: purist, firestarter, guilt-tripping. SJWs can also engage in moralizations

Moralizing: in social and power dynamics, the act of framing others as "not good enough" for not following a certain moral framework.
Moralizing is delivered from a judge role, and can be a power move to acquire power or ruin someone's reputation.

Similar: shaming, virtue signaling

Moral police (AKA: PC police): a group of moralists who bands together to enforce norms of morality.
Often based on guilt-tripping such as male-shaming or white-shaming.

Similar: SJWs, Guilt-trippers

Naive self-help: in self-development literature, it's a type of advice that fails to consider the darker, more selfish, and more manipulative nature of human beings.

Examples: give, give, give, and you will be rewarded

- Utopian workplace: the utopian, non-existent workplace of some naive career advice in which team, company, and self-interest all perfectly overlap and/or where people put the team's and company's needs above their own. In the utopian workplace, people advance only based on skills and merit, and never on politics and Machiavellian strategies.

Negotiation

A negotiation is a social exchange to reach an agreement on conflicting interests (conflict resolution), or to reach an agreement on how to split up the added value ("pie") that is created by a new deal or agreement (value-adding negotiation).

Here's Tit, where's tat technique: a technique to increase the odds of getting a concession or favor by giving something or reminding of what you have given before you ask for something back.

Explanation: It leverages the law of social exchange, whereby by giving you create social credit for yourself, and social debt for them. This way, people feel compelled to give something back after they have been given something first.

Example: "I loved staying here, and I will leave the place tidy and clean. Do you think I can check in a bit later tomorrow?"

Honey deal traps (negotiation): a manipulative technique consisting of a fake offer for a highly attractive deal to lure the target into a trap.
Example: offering an attractive deal if the victim drops the charges in court, or through a guarantor/middle man. Then reneging on the deal once the charges are dropped

Minimizing: presenting and framing your requests in a way that makes them sound like small requests and easy to deliver.

For example: “a small favor before I go”, “just one quick question”

Nudging: a simple technique of applying slight pressure when someone seems teetering between a “yes or no” and not being sure where to go.
Example: you can see an example from this real-life persuasion.

Positive display of leverage: to remind people of your leverage and power by stating or hinting that you intend to use it positively.

Explanation: it can accomplish the same goals of a threat, because you remind people that you still have leverage and power over them. But it maintains the relationship positive and value-adding.

Example: “hey man, thanks for the lovely stay. I think this place deserves a good review. Is it possible to leave my luggage here for a few hours?” (remind him that you will leave a review, which is leverage). See an example here.

Warning: don’t overdo it. If you had a positive relationship, even positive displays of leverage can be annoying.

Similar: negative display of leverage (threat)

Silver medal technique: a technique aimed at lowering the incentives for lying and cheating, and increasing the chances of getting truthful information and more collaborative behavior.
Example: if you want to know whether the salmon is fresh, tell the server that you are not sure between the salmon and the chicken. This way, the server knows that he will sell something anyway, so he has no incentive to lie about the salmon.

NLP (neuro-linguistic programming): in persuasion and manipulation strategies, NLP is a pseudoscientific approach to communication, personal development, and psychotherapy created by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the 1970s. NLP became popular in the seduction and pick-up community, sometimes leading to some eccentric strategies and techniques.
Albeit the “pseudo-science”, there are good and proven techniques in NLP.
The name “neuro language programming” contributed to the hype around NLP, as well as to the misunderstanding of NLP principles, hypnosis, as well as general persuasion techniques. To keep it simple: you cannot program a brain as if it were a computer, and you can much less do so with language alone. Programming would entail that the brain is a blank slate with nothing pre-recorded into it, which is obviously not the case (Pinker, 2002).

Office politics (AKA: workplace politics): in office and workplace environments, it refers to the human element of business operations, including formal and informal status negotiation, as well as decisions and choices for personnel deployment and advancement. Office politics also includes, but is not limited to, the darker and more selfish human motives that people usually hide, deny, or pretend that they don’t exist.

Opening gambits, social ™: opening a new conversation with a power move as a way of testing someone’s mettle, or to assert early dominance.
Example: “what are you selling” / “and who are you” /

Passive-aggressive: in social and power dynamics, a type of behavior where resistance, criticism, anger, hostility, or resentment are hidden or verbally denied.

Similar: covert aggression, submissive behavior, frenemies.

Peg, Social ™: in power dynamics, a social peg is the victim of a win-lose attempt at social climbing. The social climber uses the victim, the social peg, to look better by contrast.
If you’re learning on ThePowerMoves.com, you don’t like being made a social peg (and you shouldn’t :)

Persuasion: the act of convincing someone to adopt certain opinions or frames of mind, or to perform certain actions

- Push: to make others act through commands, force, or threats.
- Pull: to make others want to act through their own volition ("buy-in")
  Note: The same concept also applies to self-motivation, with the "push-approach" being harsher towards the self (stick), and the pull approach being kinder and using rewards (carrot)

Plausible deniability (social): in social dynamics, the possibility and personal feeling of being able to deny one's direct involvement in a certain course of action even when the help or silence of the plausible denier was essential.

Pop-psychology: in general, the bastardization, willful misinterpretation, or ignorant misunderstanding of proper social science.
In self-help and self-development circles, the misinterpretation of proper psychology to give more authority to the pop-psychologist, who can sound more credible and convincing if he can (mis)quote a scientist or scientific paper.

- Pop-evo psych: the act of storytelling and making up credible-sounding stories to provide a semblance of credibility to personal conjectures. Very common in the dating advice literature.
  To paraphrase Tversky: "Listen to pop-evo psych long enough, and you'll stop believing in evolution"
- Bro-science: the lowest level of pop-psychology

Populist: in politics and power dynamics, a politician, often purposefully manipulative, who appeals to emotions instead of rationality, and panders to the masses of disenfranchised.
Populists also pander to the iconoclastic and sadistic tendencies of the human psyche who like to see those in power fail.
Example: Trump was a populist, and pandered to the iconoclastic desires of hurting the political class.

Power

Power: power is the measure of an individual to influence or dictate decisions, influence or dictate other people's behavior and, ultimately, to achieve goals and get the outcome, things, or results that he desires.

Power Intelligence, measured by **power quotient** (**PQ**), is the individual's capability to recognize and influence patterns of power dynamics in order to achieve goals and acquire life-relevant resources such as status, influence, and partners.

Balance of power: in social and power dynamics, how the power is split between two individuals, or within a group.
The balance of power is especially relevant in close relationships such as friendships, families, business partners, and intimate partners. Good relationships among high-quality, driven individuals, tend to be well balanced.

The impact on the balance of power can be measured with:

- **Power-giving**: any action, words, or frame, that empowers the receiver
  - **Giving back power**: to give back power after having taken it
    Example: to say "sorry", and to ask for forgiveness (the power of choice, whether to forgive or not, is given to the receiver, and that empowers them back)
- **Power-taking**: any action, words, or frame, that disempowers the receiver
  - **Retaking back power**: techniques and strategies to re-empower oneself against power-takers

Power-protecting: Approaches, strategies, and techniques that protect and maintain other people's power, status, dignity, reputation, and face (as in "saving face")
It includes framing or phrasing a potentially power-taking request in a way that does not disempower the receiver, or that takes less power from the receiver

Antonyms: disempowering, power hoarding

Explanation: Psychological reactance theory says that when a person senses that someone else is limiting his freedom to choose or act (ie.: his power), an uncomfortable state of reactance arises, creating motivation to reassert that freedom (Brehm & Brehm, 1981).
And the more important the freedoms threatened or the more arbitrary (i.e. not legitimate) the threat, the greater the reactance. And the more blatant, direct, and demanding the threat, the greater the reactance (Fuegen & Brehm, 2004; Knowles & Linn, 2004).
In simpler terms: when we don't power protect, people will push back against us, and/or grow to resent us.
Power-protecting techniques work particularly well with high-power folks, power-aware folks, high-ego folks, and by those who are above you in ranking / status

- Fake-power protecting: to provide a semblance of kindness and/or choice, but to actually leave little choice, task the receiver, and/or disempower the receiver.
  It can work as a persuasive (or manipulative) tool to provide an "illusion of choice".
  Example, thanks to Ali

- Over-protecting: to overdo the power-protecting approach and to come across not as considerate, but as waffling, overly submissive, and indecisive. Over-protecing is also ineffective. In discussions, it fails to make a point, and in leadership it does not nudge towards a specific course.
  thanks to Ali

Example: instead of "do X", you say: "a good option could be to try X. (What do you think about it)?" this type of phrasing empowers the receiver with the final decision. If you ask what they think about it, they can add their own thoughts, which also makes them part of the decision making, and raise them very near to your level

Power Dynamics: the study and analysis of social dynamics and social strategies from the point of view power.

- Dating power dynamics: the study and analysis of intersexual dynamics and sexual strategies from the point of view power
- Relationship power dynamics: the study and analysis of intersexual dynamics and sexual strategies from the point of view power

Albeit the term "power dynamics" applied to the different realms of human socialization existed before, this website was the first to address it in a more systematic fashion.

Power Move: in social dynamics and in general terms, any action that affects the power dynamics of interaction.
In more lay terms and in more common parlance, it's an action or verbal expression that *abruptly* and sometimes unexpectedly changes the power dynamics of an interaction.
A well-placed power move can turn an individual who was previously defensive or under assault into the one with power.
Power moves are one-off actions, while power moves that repeat over time are "games".

- Covert power move: a power move that is delivered with a mix of friendliness, professionalism and, sometimes, even submissiveness, but that in truth empowers the agent and disempowers or shames the receiver.
- Micro-power move: small scale, daily power moves that impact the power dynamics and social status. Many people fail to see and properly address the micro-power moves, which can leave them down in power and status.

Power-up techniques: in power dynamics, power-up techniques are recurring methods and patterns ("games"), that people use to gain power over others.

Power techniques, covert: in power dynamics, covert power-up techniques are recurring methods and patterns ("games"), that people use to gain power over others.

- Messenger power move: an individual sets up a “triangulation” by making up or playing up his role as the conveyor of information (messenger) from a third party (originator). The “don’t shoot the messenger” cover allows the messenger to take a judge role and/or to disempower the victim with reprimands or criticisms while making himself immune to power-rebalancing counter-attacks.

Power With Warmth™, mix: in social strategies and power dynamics, a social strategy designed to maximize social success.
It consists of displaying behavior and body language that is at the same time powerful and warm.
It’s based on the availability principle™ and the stereotype content model. The SCM, in turn, is based on a body of research showing that people first assess others based on competence (power) and warmth (friendliness).

Power showdowns (AKA: “domination showdowns”, “showdowns”)**™**: in social and power dynamics, it refers to an escalating confrontation, a battle of wills, and/or a frame battle.
The individual who wins the showdown gains a lot of power, while the individual who loses it, will lose a lot of power. Thus, showdowns are crucial moments that will potentially determine the direction of a relationship.
Showdowns vary in intensity, and can be big and obvious, or understated and seemingly small. But even the small ones, especially when early in a relationship, will have major impacts on the dynamics of a relationship.

- Social power showdown: showdown as a consequence of social dynamics and social pressure. There are often social power showdowns in patterns of laughter, eye contact, or holding or breaking silences.
- Power showdown in seduction: showdowns and social power showdowns are often present in the early stages of seduction, and some men completely fail to recognize them. When men lose power showdowns, attraction tanks. When men win them, attraction spikes. Simply staring into a woman’s eyes can be a socia power showdown: the first one who moves or smiles, loses.
- Domination showdowns: these are more obvious instances of power escalations, including potentially getting to blows.

Prince of darkness / queen of darkness: in power dynamics, life and manipulative strategies, this is the mantel you don when you decided you are going to wage war on someone.

Pulling rank: In power dynamics, it refers to someone directly referring to his status, authority, power, or official rank as a way of asserting his power over others.

Analysis:
Depending on the context, pulling rank can be effective to discipline someone and get back in power, but it can also come across as very weak. It can be weak because great leadership rests not just on rank, but on personal qualities and follower’s admiration and *willingness* to follow. Pulling rank indirectly says “you don’t respect me and you wouldn’t accept me if I didn’t have an official rank”.

Pump and Dump ™, social: in power dynamics, it consists in complimenting and building someone up in front of them, often in exaggerated terms, and then dumping them with heavy-handed criticism or with a scathing joke at their expense, as soon as they turn around.
It can also be done in front of the person, in which case it’s a “my bitch power move”.

Example: this skit from Family Guy

Purists: in social and power dynamics, purists are inveterate, more extreme types of moralizers.
Purists routinely deploy moralizations and/or shame attacks to chastise others for their apparent lack of morals, ethics, or personal value.
While they seek to portray an image of superhuman honesty, some purists buy into their own lies, and fail to recognize their own darker motives.
Of course, some purists and instead manipulators in search of some followers and some scraps of power.
The most extreme purists are fanatics.

Similar: moralizers (lighter form of purists), fanatics (most dangerous forms of purists)

Example: Chris Cuomo loves moralizing others, but it feels motivated by his own hidden perversions.

- Closeted moralists: The worst purists blame and moralize others on the same things they are perversely attracted to, but feel guilty about. This is called "reaction formation" in psychology.
  Example: the Orlando's nightclub shooter ahole who massacred people at a gay night club was supposed to be gay himself.

Pyromaniac™, social: in social and power dynamics, pyromaniacs are more extreme, inveterate firestarter.
He is the guy who continuously writes angry posts, makes up an enemy, or dramatizes situations. He strawmans his enemies, framing them as dumb, mean, or manipulative. He seeks to look smarter, purer, and "better" by comparison.

Similar: firestarters, populists, purists

Pyrrhic victory: a victory that inflicts heavier losses on the winner than on the loser. Winning a Pyrrhic victory takes a heavy toll that damages long-term progress.

- Pyrrhic validation: By extension, validation-achievements can be considered pyrrhic victories, since they make us feel enough good to stop action, but only result in time-wasting and opportunity losses.
  Example: to work hard to achieve a high-school grade at the exam, but not to actually understand the topic; or to seek a positive reaction from a woman/business contact, rather than getting a date, or a signed contract.

Qualifying: in seduction, social, and power dynamics, it refers to asking questions aimed at *positively* assessing an individual.
Qualifying and assessing, both in positive and negative terms, are natural extensions of the judge role.

Similar: shit tests, judge frames, screening

Rapport break (social): in social and power dynamics, rapport breaks refer to any behavior or expression with which one person is increasing the social distance from another.
The "distance" can be in negotiating meaning, power, status, or friendship. Typical examples of rapport breaks include not laughing at someone's jokes, or contradicting someone. The latter is an example of increasing the distance in terms of negotiating meaning and, potentially, power.

- Rapport break (seduction): in seduction, it refers to an individual purposefully disagreeing with another to gain power in the interaction and to potentially shit-test the target and see if they will change their minds and follow. It can work great, but it backfires if the target does not follow and just take it as a sign of unavailability or of bad chemistry. It originated in pick-up circles.
- Confrontational rapport break: to break rapport in an aggressive fashion
- Pulling social rank ™: in power dynamics and rapport breaks, it refers to correcting others and/or demanding to be addressed with a more formal or authoritative title, or with a title that highlights their
  Example: "Hello Mark!" "I'm doctor Schenk"

Counter strategy: see "how to handle rapport breakers" with power

Realpolitik: in politics and power dynamics, an approach of developing political strategies in amoral terms, while analyzing those power and political strategies as driven by the individuals' selfishness and thirst for power.
In many ways, I see thepowermoves.com as a realpolitk approach to self-development.

Rebels Without a Cause ™ (RWC): in social and power dynamics, RWC rebel and throw tantrums for apparently no reason.
The real reasons are internal: they are either lazy, can't get along with others, or are entitled, power-hungry narcissists who cannot stand people who have power and authority over them.

Counter strategy: RWC are difficult to be won over since it's a behavior that stems from a deep-seated personality. So leaders are better served by cutting them out as quickly as possible.
If they don't, RWC might come up with a cause to rebel for, and manipulate others into believing that it's a good cause to antagonize those in power.

- Rebels with a fake cause: make up an enemy to hide their personal frustration behind anger. They are purists, moralizers, or narcissists who want power for themselves.

Red Pill: A subset of the manosphere discussing politically incorrect notions and on theories on sexual dynamics and self-development.

- Alpha bucks ™: an alpha male with so much financial abundance, that he can maintain several women at once, without necessarily banging each specific one on a daily basis
- Alpha fathers: an alpha male who commits and/or provides financial support for the woman/women he has sex and/or children with.
- Alpha fucks beta bucks: it's a popular stock-phrase to describe the sexual dynamics of alpha males, who gets quick sex without having t commit, while the beta males commits, pays, and gets little or no sex. The worst form of alpha fucks beta bucks, albeit not as common as the red pill seems to portray, is a beta man raising the children of a previous alpha.
- Beta fucks ™: a non-stereotypically alpha male who gets sex, relationship, and children within a committed relationship. Most men in a relationship are beta fucks.
  Explanation: this is probably far more common than the extreme version of "beta bucks" who raise other men's children.
- Cads VS dads: two different mating strategies whereby cads sleep around without commitment, while dads settle down. This is far more realistic than "alpha fucks, beta bucks"
- Fearful defector ™: in red pill and MGTOW communities, men who have no hopes whatsoever in win-win intimate relationships that they decide to either never commit, or to not date at all. When they do commit, fearful defectors are naturally loath and afraid of giving and adding value, since they fear future cheating.

Relationship prize: in dating and relationship power dynamics, the relationship prize is the partner with a judge role and, in the most extreme cases, the partner who invests less while being pampered and spoiled by their subservient and over-investing partner.
The relationship prize is often the higher value or higher sexual market value, but it's not always the case. Sometimes, the relationship prize just acts, pretends, or demands to be treated like royalty and the partner simply complies.
Usually, it's the woman who becomes the relationship prize and who actively seeks to be the relationship prize.
The relationship prize also overlaps with the judge role, since the judge is the individual with emotional power who dispenses emotional rewards and punishments.

Example: see this pictorial story of how she became the relationship prize by refusing him and making him chase

Similar: woman on pedestal, pedestalizing, judge

Scalping, Power ™: in social and power dynamics, it consists of exploiting and capitalizing on any social opportunity to acquire more status or power.

For example, one can capitalize on someone's mistake to berate them publicly and, as a consequence, look more effective at work. Or someone might capitalize on someone's submissive nature to act aggressively and, thus, look and feel more dominant.

The definition originated thanks to JP's comment in the forum, where he correctly linked the similarities between social scalping and "capitalizing on submissive behavior".

Example: an abusive man doubles down on yelling and offending when his partner stopped arguing. Or a guy, to look more powerful, tells his colleague who just apologized over a minor slip: “I’m glad you realized the mistake, be more careful next time”.

- Status scalping: to take advantage of a small mistake, or to feign failure of understanding, to make someone look sloppy, and look better by comparison
  Example: “I’m sorry, in that slide did you mean “you’re, or your”?

- Vulnerability exploiters: to make fun, deride, or make a big show out of rejecting an individual who put himself in a vulnerable position by sharing a personal story, or declaring his feelings
  Example: a woman makes a big show of rejecting a man to show the man himself, and everyone around, that she just rejected someone

- Power scalping in absentia: just like nasty social climbing in absentia, it consists of using people who are not physically present as social pegs to look more powerful, high-status, and dominant
  Example: this skit from family guy

Scam: in manipulative strategies, a scam is an elaborate strategy to cheat and swindle the victim.

- Affiliate scams: reviewers rate products not based on quality, but based on how much money they will make from. Keep in mind this might be a majority of online reviews.
  Some online review sites allow for users’ reviews to be published to provide a *semblance* of truth, but in reality, fake, edit and censor the user reviews to provide.
  Examples: See an example here and here (which I personally tested and confirmed).
- “Best of” scams: many “best of” lists on the Internet are either affiliate scams, or pay per play, where those are featured paid the writer
- Playing the victimized: the manipulator exaggerates the amount of damage someone has caused them to unduly increase the targets’ debt and the manipulator’s credit

Scorched earth technique ™: in social and power dynamics, it consists of enticing the attacker to advance, and then strike when they’re over-extended.

Explanation: The strategy can be applied in a variety of different social situations. For example, with an angry attacker, if you let them attack more, they will likely end up looking *too* angry and nasty, and more people will dislike them and side with you.
Once the attacker has socially over-extended, the scorched earth player has an easy time framing them as nasty and uncivilized.

Similar to: “giving them rope”, but rather than just letting them do the work by themselves, you plan on attacking after they over-extend.

Example: John used a scorched earth technique here, when he did not attack back a rude and overly aggressive doctor and instead stated and restated “I’m shocked”.
Letting people spin and explain their lies when you know that you have a smoking-gun type of evidence ready is also a great scorched-earth technique: you let them over-extend with their lies, and then you prove them for huge liars and manipulators.

Screening: in social dynamics as well as in seduction and dating strategies, it means to have certain criteria and standards with which to screen partners for quality and personal fit.

Explanation: If a person does not meet your screen, then it means they should be rejected, or that you lose interest in them (“screened out”). If that person meets your screen, then it means they should be accepted, or that you are more interested in them (“screened in”).

Screening can be accomplished with questions, shit tests, or simply judging them by their behavior.

Once a person passes your screen, you can also let them know verbally ("qualifying" them). For example, you can compliment them for answering "yes" to your question about whether they exercise or not, and say that you are glad they exercise because you like people who take care of themselves (a positive judge frame).

Similar: shit test, judge frames, qualifying

Strategic charging is the act of taking advantage of a situation of uncertainty or lack of leadership to nudge towards a favored outcome, or to confidently take charge to lead towards a favored outcome

Explanation: when people are pondering new information, or when they're not yet sure what they should do, they are often very amenable to being nudged or led towards either decision they were pondering.

Example: if a girl is not sure whether or not to give you her phone number and vacillating between either giving it or not, you can take charge by taking your phone out and handing it to her. Most of the time, she will give you her phone number.
A bigger example is here.
And see more here.

Communication

Effective assertiveness™ is a goal-oriented communication and behavioral approach that focuses on picking the most effective behavior and communication style to achieve one's goal.
While it maintains a baseline preference for assertive and high-power communication, it retains the strategic flexibility to employ any style that is most effective in the context, including passive, passive-aggressive, assertive, or aggressive.

Explanation: while most resources present assertiveness as the superior approach in all or almost all situations, we see many exceptions to this otherwise valid principle and focus more on whatever is effective to achieve goals.

Seduction

Game: the strategies and techniques to meet, seduce, mate, and potentially enter into relationships with members of the opposite sex

Seduction: to make people aroused or attracted (sexual seduction), or enchanted and charmed (social seduction). The final sexual seduction is to sleep with someone, while the final social seduction is to make people want to be around you, and willingly be your allies and supporters.

Abundance addiction ™: an aberration of abundance mentality and actually achieving real abundance. Addicted guys, often "validation players", always feel the need to chase the next woman and cannot manage to hold onto a good relationship.

- Approach addiction: similar to abundance addiction, but focused on approaching

Explanation: if going out to meet new women feels better than meeting a woman you get along with, you might be falling into approach addiction.

Abundance apathy ™: getting so used to meeting new women, that one loses interest in women, together with losing the ability to feel love and romance with a specific individual.

Similar to: reverse one-itis

Abundance mentality: the ability or feeling of being able to meet and date attractive women at will.

Explanation: it can be a freeing mindset that frees men from the pressure of having to be successful with any specific woman.
It also protects men against manipulative women and value-taking partners by giving them the courage to drop them at once.

Approach, cold: approaching a woman who is a complete stranger, with no social ties and no social trust, with the intention of getting sexually and/or romantically involved with her. Cold approaches tend to have low social trust.

Approach, warm: meeting a woman through a "commonality". Usually friends, but could also be playing the same sport, working in the same company, living in the same building, or seeing her often in some place you both frequent. Warm approaches tend to have higher social trust.

Approach invitation: a verbal or, more often, nonverbal signal from a woman that she wants to be approached.

Similar to: indicator of interests (IOIs)

Attainability: how attainable a woman feels a man is to her. Also see "availability"

Auto-rejection: when a woman rejects herself because she thinks, righteously or not, that the man is not interested. It is the equivalent of "self-rejection", but limited to women and dating only

Backward rationalization: to rationalize with logic, often fallaciously, what one has previously done mostly based on emotions. It's partially based on "commitment and consistency".

Example: if a woman was drunk and wanted to sleep with you but the day after feels bad about it, she might back-rationalize that she was too drunk, and that full consent wasn't there.

Bitch shield: haughty and insufferable exterior some women put up to reject men. Some women do it because they are tired of being hit on, while some others do it to gain social power.

Boiling point: in sexual escalation, when a woman's sexual arousal outstrips her logical mind and willingness to resist.
A great way of reaching it is to finger her before moving to actual penetration.

Cementing (dating): In dating and seduction, cementing is used to amplify a positive thread.

Example: if a girl says "I never shared that before", the man can cement that by replying "I'm glad you feel so comfortable with me that you can open up. It's a great thing, it means we have a great chemistry and I'm happy about that".
Now he cemented the feeling that the two of them have a great relationship different from any other. The subsequent exchanges between the two will then operate under this new common understanding.

Chameleon, sexual ™: pretending to be just like the person that your dating partner wants to date. It's one of the games men play.

Chase frames: to frame a woman as chasing the man, or chasing men in general. It's a consequence of "prizing game" (see "prizing")

Compliance: the measure of how willing a woman is to follow through on man's requests (tasks)

Escalation window: specific and often limited time-specific opportunities during a man can and should escalate the interaction towards more intimacy. Usually, the woman sends out a signal that she is ready and willing to move forward, and if the man fails to capitalize, the escalation window closes, and she might self-reject and/or write the man off

False takeaway: an extreme form of feigning disinterest by leaving the premise or pretending to leave. The idea is to get the woman to chase.
Originally developed in the Mystery Method.

Example: see a video example in this article.

Friend zone: the label and grouping women use for men whom they like as friends, but not as lovers. Going from a dated to being "friend-zoned" means having failed in the seduction

Good guy game: an attractive and high-value man who is honest and kind, but also strong. Contrary to too nice guys, he is successful with women

Hook point: the moment a woman shows signs of being interested in the man, and investing in the exchange. For example, by asking questions

Indicators of Interest (IOIs): in seduction, a pick-up term referring to the verbal and mostly nonverbal signals of interest that a woman sends out.

Men send out IOIs too, of course. Here are the IOIs from men.

Insta-date: going on a date with a woman you have just met via cold approach

Kino: it refers to the act of touching a girl and all the techniques of escalating touch (kino escalation)

Locking in: when talking with someone, to take the most comfortable position that allows you to expend the least effort possible, while making her expand more effort to talk with you. For example, to recline against the bar while she is fully standing.

Mating intelligence: in seduction and dating, the set of cognitive and intellectual abilities, as well as the knowledge and proficiency of power dynamics and sexual strategies that support effective mate selection, courtship, reproduction, and relationship management.

Related terms: game, emotional intelligence, social skills, persuasion

Multi-threading: to quickly introduce and talk about new topics. Since friends tend to talk this way, it gives the feeling that two people who've just met are closer than they really are

Neg: abbreviation of "negative hit", an old pick-up technique designed to lower women's self-esteem and get women to chase his validation.
Note: PUAs didn't know it yet, but what they were trying to go was to take a judge role in the interaction.

One-itis: the tendency for an individual to pedestalize one woman and feel like she is "the one" and it's either he gets her, or he is desperate. Saying that "she is different" is a sign of one-itis.

- Oneitis, reverse (AKA: "emotional hibernation") ™: reverse-oneitis is an aberration of abundance mentality. It consists of viewing women as interchangeable objects, and the consequent inability of some men to view women as human beings one can bond with
  Similar to: abundance apathy

Orbiter: a man who spends time with an attractive woman, often as a friend, and who'd love sleeping with the woman he hangs around with

Pacing (from NLP): it consists of mirroring, vibing, and actively showing awareness and understanding for a person's emotional states or thoughts.

Pattern-interrupt (from NLP): a sudden or incongruent action or verbal expression that takes someone off guard and "snaps" them from their current state or pattern

Peacocking: dressing or wearing something flashy and attention-catching. Taking it too far thought might seem childish. It probably originated with Mystery, who also sometimes took it a bit too far

Plate spinning: in red-pill circles, it means to pursue, text, or have sex with several women at a time.
A "plate" is a woman he engages in a sexual relationship with.

Plausible deniability: in seduction, it refers to women having an excuse for sex to happen so that they don't feel slutty or like they were "too easy".

Example: "We are just going upstairs for 5 minutes so I can show you that thing I talked to you about"

Player / Boyfriend scale (AKA: perennial player / doting boyfriend scale) : a scale measuring male's varying attitudes towards relationships.

Explanation: On one extreme, there are men seeking new mates right after sex and unable to be attracted to the same partner. On the other extreme, there are men who only seek stable and monogamous relationships and are only attracted to their partner.
Different people tend to inhabit different points of the scale.

Preselection: Women find attractive men whom other women also find attractive (also called copy mating in biology or mimetic desire in philosophy)

Push-Pull: in social dynamics and seduction, a technique of flirting and attraction-building consisting in making a compliment (pull) and then denying that compliment, or following it up with a more negative comment (push).

Prizing: a man framing himself as "the catch" whom the woman has to work for. It seeks to "switch the table" on the normal seduction dynamic. Developed by a certain Swingcat

- Prizing, sexual: to frame oneself as a great lover

Qualifying / disqualifying: see the main entries for the general definitions. For seduction-specific purposes:

Qualifying: to positively communicate to a woman that he likes her for certain traits she has (ie.: she is passing his "screens").

Explanation: it's a way to gain power by indirectly increasing his value, and by taking the judge role. Plus, it puts her at ease by communicating that he likes her personality beyond simple looks.

Disqualifying: to directly or indirectly state that he is not pursuing her, or that the two of them have no future together.

Explanation: it serves to avoid a power-down frame where he is chasing, and she is assessing him, and/or playing hard to get. Ideally, she will start chasing him a bit more after he disqualifies himself.
It can backfire though if he goes too far, and she considers him unavailable (ie.: she self-rejects).

- Boyfriend self-disqualifiers: to actively disqualify oneself a boyfriend candidate by denying or hiding the qualities that would make a man available for a relationship, or good for a relationship. It's a technique to date as a lover (see "lover") and get to sex more quickly.

Screening: see main entry "screening". In short, it means to communicate to the woman that you hve standards, and that you only take women who meet certain criteria (your "screens")

Similar to: shit test, qualifying/disqualifying, conveying high value

Explanation: screening precedes "qualifying". With screening, you set up the hoops and criteria you look for. With "qualifying", you communicate that you like her because she passed those screens.

Seeding (the pull): to start talking about things you like to do and/or have at home, and then tell the girl that you'd like to show her that thing

Sex drive (high / low) : the term and definitions didn't originate with PUA communities, but PUAs first wrote on how sex drive impacts sexual strategies (and TPM included it in its model on sexual escalation and timing)

Sexual escalation: the escalation of touch, intimacy, and closeness that moves towards sex

- "I'm ready point" **™:** when a woman is mentally and physically ready for sex, and won't present any LMR. In

sexual escalation with already present LMR, it's when a woman who was previously resisting a man (last-minute resistances) drops all her resistances and lets the man undress her and have sex with her (or helps him along the way).

- Last-minute resistance: the resistance and rejection of a man and his attempts of sexual escalation when sex seems to be getting closer -for example, once they ended up at his place after a date-
- Token resistance: when a woman rejects a man but deep down wants to actually have sex with him. Token resistances are often weak and easy to overcome

Sexual-prizing: a specific type of sexualization, consisting of the display and parading of love-making qualities to get women excited and primed for sex. Alek Rostaldt came up with the term

Social circle game: entering social circles of celebs, rich folks, or very high-value individuals to have access to tons of attractive women. Connectors are the guys who use social circle game.

Social proof: signs of someone's social success and social status within certain people or groups. Women like men who are socially successful. First described by Robert Cialdini in "Influence"

Thread amplifying: going deeper into a topic of conversation, or highlighting/cementing a reaction to a certain topic, to expand a topic of conversation that is conducive to seduction and bonding

Thread cutting: changing the topic of conversation

Validation player ™: a man who needs women and the feeling of achieving dating success to feel good about himself. The worst types of validation player get validated by a phone number, or by a positive reaction. Most validation players waste lots of time getting validated by women and achieve little in life. Also see: the psychology of PUAs.

Venue change / bouncing: the act of changing locations with a woman as a way of more quickly building rapport and intimacy

Pick-up Artistry (PUA): in seduction strategies, a movement began in the '90s focusing on learning and teaching techniques and strategies to meet and seduce women.
The movement had its advantages and disadvantages but has described many groundbreaking concepts and ideas.

Self-rejection ™: in seduction as well as in social and power dynamics, self-rejection refers to an individual who rejects, dislikes, or undermines a higher-value individual when he feels that the higher value individual looks down on him.
It can be motivated by psychological self-defense, to defend a fragile ego and self-esteem, or by social needs to defend power and status.

- Preemptive rejection: to reject someone first, often without even knowing the person, based on the belief that the individual would ignore us, or refuse to enter with us in friendly and/or value-adding exchange.
  Explanation: Preemptive rejection serves to protect one's ego and to protect one's own social status. People with a defensive mindset, big but fragile ego, and people who are high in power are more likely to preemptively reject others.

- Self-rejection, seduction: in seduction, it describes a woman who writes an otherwise attractive man off because she believes she is not interested in her or "too much" for her
- Auto-rejection: another name for self-rejection, originally developed by Sebastian Drake in pick-up circles. We renamed it "self-rejection" as it's more descriptive, and extended its application to psychology, self,-development, and all social exchanges

Counter strategy: collaborative frames, building people up, and qualifying and rewarding from a judge role.

The “high-power and high-warmth strategy” is also designed to increase social acceptance, collaboration, and social support by minimizing the instances of self-rejection.

- Similar: availability, value, SMV, frenemies, Rebels Without a Cause

Sexual Marketplace (SMP): In sexual dynamics, the sexual marketplace is the ensemble of people looking for sex or long-term pair bonding.
In the SMP people offer their sexual value (offer), compete with other members of the same gender, and seek and assess the sexual market value of potential mates from the opposite gender (demand).

- Disassortative bartering (AKA: “bottom line pairing”): disassortative bartering is a property of sexual exchanges, and describes how couples can match and enter into relationships even if their values are very different when it comes to a specific trait or quality. That is because those couples match on *overall* value, and if one partner has an abundance of value in one trait, he can satisfy a partner who prioritizes that trait.
  Example: an unattractive but very powerful man can still attract and pair up with an attractive woman since he has an excess of value in status and, possibly, resources.
- Disassortative relationship: when two individuals willingly enter into a relationship, while exchanging very different types of values.

- Risk-averse sexual marketplaces: sexual marketplaces where women are generally fearful of new men, or fearful of men whom they perceive as too masculine, too aggressive, or potentially dangerous. They tend to be poorer places for street cold-approaches.
  Explanation: there certainly is an overlap between risk-avoidance, sexual options, personal SMV, as well as self-esteem, but risk-avoidance is also its own variable. Risk-avoidance also has little to do with how much women like you: a risk-avoidant woman who likes you might still not come out and meet you if there is not enough “social trust”.
  Example: Korea and Japan are examples of risk-avoidant marketplace.

- Risk-taking marketplace: sexual marketplaces where women are open to meet and give all men they find attractive enough a chance.
  Example: Philippines and black African countries are places with lots of risk-taking women

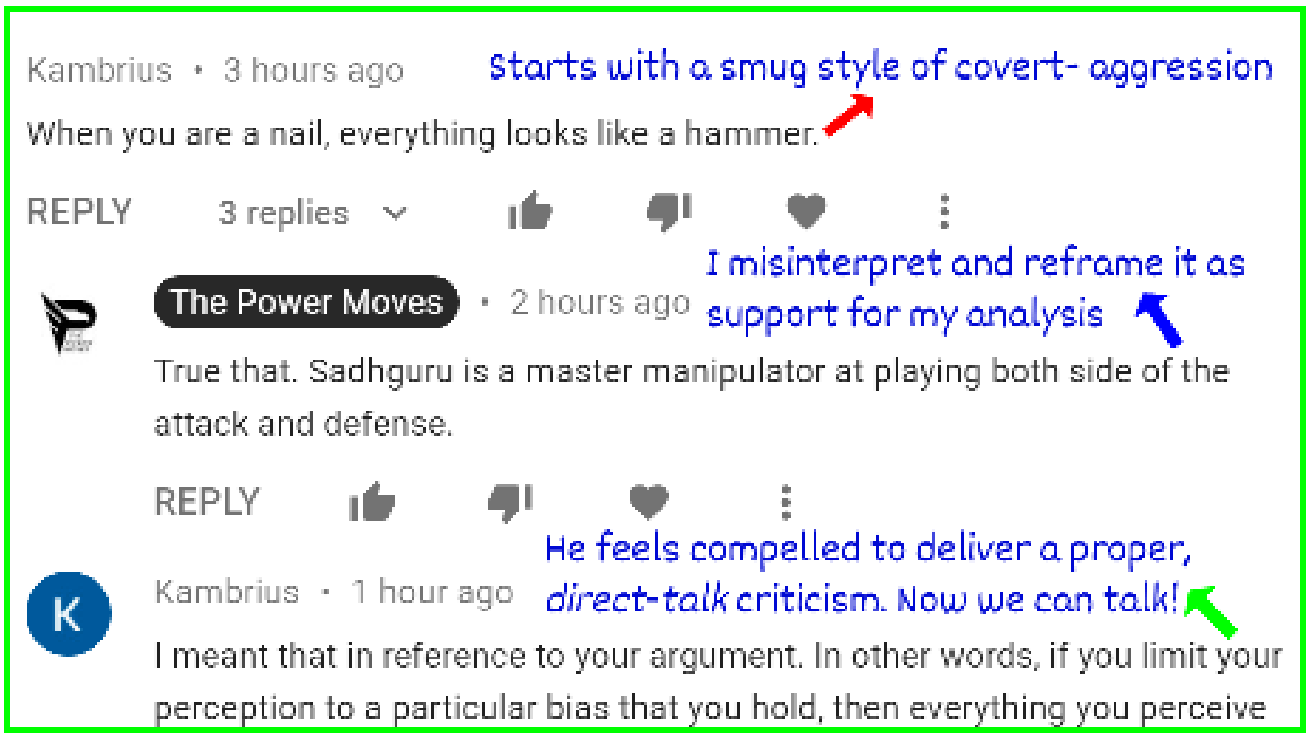
Shit-tests: In seduction and power dynamics, a shit-test is defined as a test or social challenge.
It’s often the individual with more power, or the individual who assesses and/or chooses that delivers the shit test. Since women are most often the ones who choose, a shit test originally only referred to a woman testing a man. However, tests are not a prerogative of women. Choosy or high-value men can also test women, especially for their suitability as long-term partners.

- **Loyalty tests**: they are a form of shit tests

Show me the hand strategy ™: in power dynamics and frame control strategies, a strategy of frame control to “surface” covert aggression and passive-aggressiveness.

Explanation: It consists of bringing the covert aggression to the surface and turning it into a direct and honest aggression or criticism. That makes the nasty intentions obvious, so that the attacker must at the very least attack in the open and give up his covert-position, together with the ability to retreat and play innocent.
If with going meta you explain what they are doing, with the “show me the hand technique” you let people, directly or indirectly, show their own games and intentions more directly and explicitly.

- Show me the hand techniques: the techniques to help you bring covert poewr moves onto the open.
  Example:



Read the analysis here

Similar: surfacing, scorched earth technique, covert frames

Slut-shaming: in dating power dynamics, sexual conflict, and manipulation strategies, it consists of shaming women for apparently displaying loose morals and/or engaging in short-term dating.

Smart Alec ™: in social and power dynamics, a style of dominance centered around intellectual superiority, and looking down on others as "not smart enough" which, in turn, translates into "not good enough (for me)".
The smart-alec takes a negative judge position in social exchanges with an ever-present air of "I know better than you, there I *am* better than you"

Social Dynamics

The Social Investment Model™ postulates that people trade investment and value in social exchanges, with the direction and returns shaped largely by personal value, comparative value, resource availability, and strategic refinement.

Power Exchange Equation™ (AKA Social ROI): social power is equal to your returns on your social investment

Two types of ROI:

1. Factual ROI, based on actual returns (power)
2. Perceived ROI, based on visible effort (status-related)

The Law of Least Social Effort™ states that those who appear to expend less visible effort, while others invest more in them, are perceived as more powerful — and vice versa.

The Compensatory Investment Principle™ states that in relationships marked by unequal personal value, **the lower-value party invests more to compensate for the imbalance**, while the higher-value party can invest less without jeopardizing the relationship.

Investment Visibility Model™ postulates that social and status dynamics are largely shaped by *visible* investment, based on perceived investment and perceived effort.
As a result, strategic actors manage both the amount and the visibility of their own and others' investments depending on context and goals.

Accounting, social: in the social exchange model, the amounts and balances (positive or negative) of value-giving transactions (social credit-creating) and value-taking transactions (social debt-creating) that people keep track of.

Explanation: it's based on the idea that people naturally keep track of who is giving and who is taking.
Albeit few people actually write down a list of value exchanges, social favors, and social or emotional support, most people do subconsciously keep track of how much value they are giving or receiving. And most people will have a natural feel for people who are "taking" or "asking too much", and people who are "giving". Most people want to cut off the taker, and keep the giver. People are also more likely to follow and be influenced by the taker, and they are also like to want to give back to the giver, thus starting mutually collaborative, win-win relationships.

Related to: social credit scalping, WIIFM.

Blame deflection: a technique to avoid incurring social costs by deflecting the blame towards someone else, or towards a "force majeure" outside the individual's control.

Explanation: it can be a manipulative technique, but also simply smart social skills that can improve relationships, maintain rapport, or save face.

Example:

> **Guy**: Oh cool man, so you run a successful e-commerce, well done. May I ask you what's the niche?
>
> **You**: Thanks man, appreciate it. Yeah, look, I'd love to share it with you, but unluckily it's such a small niche that I and my partner had to promise each other never to share that with anyone (<- blames the refusal to share on the promise and the business needs'), not even our family member (<- add one more step: now the guy can't feel guilty if not even the family members are aware). The real competitive advantage is that we're the only ones doing it. But I'm happy to share the process of how we found this untapped niche (<- provides value in a different way)

Capital, social (AKA: "social bank account"): Social capital is a measure of the social credit (or debt) you have with other individuals.
Having lots of social capital means you have lots of goodwill, leverage, and influence over someone.

- Passive social capital: this is social capital that is created without any action, but by simply being, or by having a strong reputation.
  Explanation: Attractive people and successful people naturally have passive social capital, since people want them around if they haven't yet done anything concrete to help others.

Explanation: Social capital is based on the idea that every social transaction can leave people better off (value-adding, and credit-creating) or worse off (value-taking, and debt-creating).
When you take value from others, you lose social capital. When you give value, you create social capital.

Explanation 2: As a rule of thumb, social capital increases with the more you know and interact with someone, the more you have given to someone, and the higher value you are. Being high value gives you a positive social capital even when you haven't even met someone, since everyone wants to be around high-value people.

- Balanced requests (AKA: positive balance requests): requests that are fielded with enough social capital and/or personal value to cover for the effort that is being asked for.
  Explanation: it's a matter of overall balance, and not just a matter of how many favors have taken place. If the requestor has very high personal value, a series of requests can be balanced even though the requester has done nothing for the other party.
  Example: because in the eyes of many men a very attractive woman has lots of personal value in the sexual marketplace, she can ask for the man to pick her up, pay for her, and wait for sex while the man still feels it's an overall balanced relationship.

- Imbalanced requests (AKA: negative balance requests): requests that are fielded without enough social capital and/or personal value. Imbalanced requests feel off to the receiver and like the requestor is overstepping boundaries, acting annoyingly entitled, or trying to con them.
  Explanation: It's a matter of overall account, and not a matter "number of favors". Requests can be imbalanced even though the requestor has provided a lot of favors already.
  Example: a mentee asking a favor to a mentor and a report asking a favor to a boss can both run afoul of the social exchange rule even if both have already done plenty of favors, since the mentor has higher personal value (and probably status), while the boss has higher power.

Credit collection, social (AKA: "credit claiming"): to claim one's own social credit for value that has been given.

Explanation: it can be done by reminding of the value one has provided, or indirectly, by asking questions on whether or not something was provided was helpful, which prods the value-receiver to volunteer gratefulness and social credit.

Credit Revealing: to explain, surface, or instruct someone about the value that is being offered or provided. Thanks to Ali for the definition.

Explanation: in case of "opaque" currencies and value offers, people might miss on a win-win exchange because they fail to properly assess the value that someone is offering them. In those cases, "credit revealing" can help the receiver understand the value that is being offered.
Credit revealing can also be part of "fair value marketing", as well as of "credit romancing" when someone who reveals the credit also uses that occasion to thread-expand on the benefits offered, and/or to sell and persuade.

Currencies, Social: in the social exchange, social currencies are distinct forms of value that are traded among individuals.

Explanation: Value can be delivered in all types of forms. The social currency refers to the specific form that the value is delivered. Currencies are all types of physical and personal traits, possessions, or skills that people value. The more sought-after currencies an individual has, the more successful he will be socially, and the easier it will be for him to climb social hierarchies, and get what he wants.

- Currency denomination (high / low): to be high or low value in a certain trait. However, "denomination" is not a widely used or accepted term in the social sciences.
- Hard social currencies (Or: global social currencies): forms of social value that are appreciated everywhere. Wealth, positive attitude, uplifting humor, and connections tend to be valued everywhere.
- Opacity: it refers to the visibility of a currency's value, and how "hidden" the value of a certain currency is.
  Explanation: Highly opaque currencies trade poorly in social exchanges because people can't assess their true value.
  Example: A great book. It can change lives, but until people read it, it's just a (value-less) piece of paper.
- Soft Social currencies (Or: local social currencies): currencies that are valued by a specific group or subculture.
- Sexual currencies: the traits that are sought after in the sexual market place. There is a strong overlap between sexual currencies and social currencies.

Gravitational law: a law of social dynamics stating that the importance and relevance of an event or individual is inversely proportional to its value and distance

Explanation: similar to the physical gravitational law, from which it derives its name. It has two components: the distance (proximity rule) of an event or individual to us, and its value, which also affects the ability of the event or individual to affect us.
The value is the equivalent of the "mass" in physics, and it's part of the "value accounting" considerations, dynamics, and strategies.

Examples: see an example of proximity here, and you can see plenty of examples of both proximity and value in the "enlightened individualism" article.

Uncollected credits, social: to provide value, but never to collect any social credit for it.

Example: to provide help in an anonymous form, or to help people just for the pleasure of helping.
Some individuals can also seek to self-efface social credit in order to save face for the receiver -imagine you giving a homeless some food and saying "oh no, please, it's nothing"-.

Explanation: not collecting credit can be a good and friendly thing to do, but can also be naive if you let someone take advantage of you and never give any fair value back.
For example, a salesman who brings in a lot of revenue but remains on a small salary and takes no commission is not being "nice", he's being "clueless".

Collaboration, Social

Collaboration: in social exchanges and relationships, to work together (collaborate) for "enlarging the pie", and for win-win.

Explanation: ThePowerMoves.com promotes collaboration as the ideal relationships, since collaboration increases your power and leverage over the world.
All our civilization has been built on collaboration, and by increasing the scope of collaboration you can increase your power.

- Collaborative attitude: the general attitude of people who believe in collaboration and prefer to collaborate. There is an overlap with the "value-giver" mindset"
- Envious collaborator™: a bean counter when it comes to social accounting, he collaborates only when his payoffs are bigger than the other party's payoffs.
- Fearful semi-collaborator™: he wishes to collaborate and sometimes does so, but he is too afraid of going all in. Afraid to get hurt in love and relationships, and afraid that he might make his friends and colleagues too strong in the process. He leaves value on the table, value that is lost both to him, and the people he crosses path with
- Naive collaborator™: he collaborates with everyone, and tends to trust too much. Alternatively, the naive collaborator believes in karma or in the theory that if you just give, give, and give, you're bound to receive back.
- Smart collaborator™: the smart collaborator seeks collaboration and actively expands the scope of collaboration. When unsure, he seeks to cover his downsides while leading with collaboration first ("collaborative foot forward" and "tit-for-that strategy"). But smart collaborators know human nature, and are aware of the opportunities for cheating that less ethical folks will be happy to exploit. So they observe people and keep an eye open to make sure they are also giving back.
- Machiavellian collaborator™: he collaborates when it's good for him only, and always keeps an eye on how he can get more, either with silver-tongue manipulation, or outright cheating. Also, he always keeps an eye on his grander strategy, and if defecting gives him a higher chance of winning the war, he will defect no matter how many times he previously cooperated.
- Honorable collaborator™: approaches others with a baseline of preferring win-win, and takes it upon himself to not only take, but also ensure other are getting value from him. He prefers forgoing extra gains from cheating, even when it would be instrumentally advantageous.

Related to: expanding the pie (in negotiation), value-giving mindset, defection (the opposite of collaboration).

Collaborative frames ™: collaborative frames serve to inform and/or to remind people that our goals and intentions are win-win.
Collaborative frames can often decrease resistance and increase collaboration.

- Collaborative shaming ™: a step of "collaborative refraing" see main entry

- Collaborative feints™: in manipulative strategies, pretending to be collaborative while actually nudging towards a trap or preparing to defect.
  Example: "don't be so defensive" power move
  - Peace feints: pretending to be friendly or to seek peace, while actually nudging towards a trap

Collaborative reframing ™: a strategy to turn neutral or antagonistic interactions into collaborative ones.
Explanation: it serves to remind people of the win-win opportunities of collaboration, and it increases the odds of developing win-win and value-adding relationships

Collaborative shaming ™: in power dynamics and life strategies**,** a technique that serves to increase the scope for collaboration and decrease the scope for win-lose games. Collaborative shaming consists of shaming someone for playing win-lose games or nasty power moves with the intent of making them backtrack, apologize, or drop the win-lose games in favor of more collaborative approaches.
Collaborative shaming is delivered from a judge role, and often followed by collaborative frames to reach a better win-win outcome for both.

Similar: shaming, collaborative frames, value-adding dominance, value-adding leadership

Defection: in social exchanges and relationships, to refuse collaboration. It can mean to either refuse to play at all ("value-neutral defection" or "opportunity loss defection"), or to play for win-lose ("win-lose defection" or "value-taking defection").
Some defectors defect because of a defensive mindset where they focus more on the possibility for losses, than on the opportunities for victory.

Explanation: ThePowerMoves.com encourages to recognize defectors, especially the value-taking ones, and either engage them with the same win-lose mindset, or to cut them out of your life.

- Defector attitude: the general attitude of people who believe in defection and prefer to cheat and/or to avoid others. There is an overlap with the "value-taking mindset".
- Envious defector: He defects because he can't stand that someone might alos gain from collaboration. Frenemies are envious defectors in friendships.
- Fearful defector: he is so afraid of being cheated, that he either avoids the game altogether, or approaches the game with a mindset of "I'll cheat first".
  Similar to: defensive mindset, pessimists.
- Sexual marketplace defectors: individuals or groups who defect dating adn relationships. Red pill men are sometimes defensive and fearful defectors who approach dating with a win-lose mindset, while MGTOW men defect dating altogether. Same for "feminazis".
- Sour grapes defector: an individual who is not particularly valuable in an exchange and pretends to refuse the game first.

Turkey downward spiral: A nasty back and forth of lose-lose power moves and attacks, often accompanied by mental and emotional investment in the fight

Explanation: You're in a turkey downward spiral when a turkey pulls a power move, you let it affect you, respond (ie.: "stoop lower", rather than "go higher") and end up mired in a nasty exchange with many back and forth, or in a competitive relationship (in either case: you end up mired in turkey manure).
To avoid turkeys' death embrace, whenever possible, ignore, go higher, or end it resolutely -so that you win, without a lose-lose downward spiral-.

Similar: lose-lose, slippery slope, baits

Strategies

Strategies: in life strategies and self-development, strategies refer to the plans and approaches to reach a certain goal.

- Life strategies: overarching strategies
- Sexual strategies (AKA: dating strategies): strategies that both men and women engage during the courtship phase and/or around sex
- Social strategies: strategies around people and groups, including gaining status, persuading others, recruiting others
- Machiavellian strategies: amoral, potentially manipulative and value-taking strategies

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Aligning, Power: in power dynamics and life strategies, power aligning is a chameleon-like strategy of aligning with those who have power.
It consists of adapting the views, values, opinions, and styles of those in power, and it can include adding value with favors, social support, or ingratiating (public) flattery.
In business, it also consists of embracing and supporting whatever strategy or change the top leadership promoted.

Explanation:
It tends to be a very effective strategy since people want to promote and reward those who are like them, and those who support them.

Outside of humans:
A very effective strategy in the animal kingdom, as well. Look for example at the animal species who are thriving, like dogs and cats, and those who are dying, like tigers and elephants. The thriving ones power-aligned with the apex predators: humans.

Bluff, power: to pretend or to feign power or leverage that doesn't actually exist.
Source: Stef.

Explanation:
The ability to fake power can be power by itself. Fake power becomes true/real power IF people take it as real or even if you just instill enough doubt in their minds/hearts to alter their mindset, mood, emotions, actions, reactions, behavior, etc.
Kind of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" or "reflexivity phenomena" as George Soros would put it.
If bluff power is internalized, it can also lead to congruent behavior by the bluffer, which feels and acts like he indeed possesses the power that he is faking.
Obviously, it's a risky strategy if someone calls your bluff.

Crying Wolf: to exaggerate the extent of one's woes or difficulties in order to garner more attention, and to increase the odds of being helped.

Explanation:
Crying wolf can often work to get more attention, and it can also sometimes increase the odds of being helped.
But also comes at a personal high cost in terms of status, respect, and power. In simple terms, the high cost is that it makes you sound like a (hysterical) bitch.
High power folks often make it a point not to exaggerate their woes and instead often do the opposite: they seek to show calm and poise when most other people would be panicking.
So either use it judiciously and in limited circumstances, or just always avoid it.

Example: “Please, please help me”;
From the forums, a user wrote: ” This is a life-changing situation, so depending on your advice Lucio”.
Also see this thread which includes a deeper explanation.

So Good They Can’t Ignore You: in life and career strategies, focusing on mastery and providing the best service or product one could ever provide. Sometimes, it is used as a move value-adding alternative to politicking or more Machiavellian strategies.

- Too Good to Be Fucked With (TGFW): a similar focus on being great, but with a look more on power dynamics, status, and realpolitik strategies. It means that, together with being good, you also care about your reputation. When your reputation has reached the higher-ups and they can be considered allies and mentors of yours, then you’re on your way to becoming TGFW. See the description in real-life here.

Social Strategies

Buttercup technique: to compliment someone directly to his supervisor.

Explanation: since most people want to look good in their boss eyes, you deliver *far* more value when you compliment them to their bosses. You also indirectly introduce yourself to his boss, which also further spreads your name/brand and increases your clout.

Honorable man approach: to live life with certain values and a general prefence for win-win

Strategic Honor™: the practice of acting honorably but with power intelligence, and while remaining strategic with dishonest, exploitative, or competitive actors and in competitive settings.

Surfacing ™: in social dynamics, the act of bringing issues to the surface, so that they can be discussed and addressed in the open.
Surfacing is an advanced, yet fundamental technique for relationship management. It’s crucial because many people are not direct and brave enough to discuss their issues and gripes. And issues that remain below the surface, by remaining unaddressed, can lead to festering, which can eventually sour a relationship. Surfacing those issues instead allow people to address them, and potentially even improve the relationship.

Related: festering, direct talk

The 48 Laws of Power: in power dynamics literature, a popular book on tactical-level power dynamics.

The Prince: in power dynamics literature, the first and most famous book on realpolitik strategies in the West. Other books like the Arthashastra of Kautilya, written long before the prince, could also be classified as “realpolitik”.
Credit: thanks to Stefano for fixing this one!

Time preference: the current relative valuation placed on receiving a good or pleasure at an earlier date compared with receiving it at a later date.
Explanation: it says a lot about an individual’s psychological makeup if they prefer everything right now, or if they tend to savor and/or save for the future.

- Present preference: a preference for immediate consumption
- Future preference: a preference for saving or investing for the future

Trump card: In life strategies and power dynamics, to be confident that if a final escalations were to happen, you would win it.

Scapegoat: in social and power dynamics, to scapegoat, is the act of blaming someone else for faults that are not

his.
The scapegoat is the person who takes the blame.

Self-agency principle: in social dynamics and persuasion strategies, the tendency for persuasion that includes the target's own volution, to be more effective and long-lasting.
In simpler terms: if you make people want to do something, it works better than pushing them.
Self-agency is based on more than one psychological principle. To begin with, people prefer dealing with those who use pull techniques (persuasion through buy-in) more than push techniques (raw dominance and hard sales technique).
And people who freely choose to do something develop more intrinsic motivation, as well as being more likely to follow through with the agreement.

Similar: buy-in, less dominance is more power, pull, power through

Sexual Market Value: in dating, intersexual dynamics and sexual power dynamics, the personal value that one has in the sexual market place.

Sexualization: in dating and sexual strategies, to introduce sexual topics in a conversation to purposefully excite the dating partner and/or to make sure this is a date for assessing intimacy and relationship opportunities and not a safe coffee "between friends".

Similar: sexual prizing, sexual frames, chase frames

Shame attacks in social and power dynamics, to shame people for their behavior or personality.
The shame attacker is the person who deploys shame attacks. He takes a highly negative and judgmental judge role, and seeks to frame the victim as an unworthy human being.

Similar: purists, moralizers, firestarters,

Shine up, praise down ™: in Machiavellian strategies, the more effective version of "kiss up, kick down", consisting of a boss making his reports feel good with emotional validation, while taking all the credits for the team or individuals' effort.

Social justice warrior (SJW): a generally low social status individual who signals his virtues (virtue-signaling) by publicly and conspicuously embracing a set of supposedly prosocial values, norms, and behaviors.
It's often an attempt at acquiring social status, sexual options, and enhancing one's own reputation as "good" and "trustworthy". It's also a technique to signal one's own belonging to a certain group of people that the SJW considers "good" or "cool".
SJWs sometimes embrace causes that have little actual effect on the big issues they pretend they're tackling.

Compare: Social justice warriors are mostly *followers* of trends, while the purists and fanatics of this world set the agenda for the SJWs to follow.

Social climbing: in social and power dynamics, social climbing is the pursuit of social status, including all the attempts at increasing one's ranking within dominance hierarchies.
Social climbing intended in neutral form is what most driven people do, and is not necessarily win-lose or negative per se. However, the term is often used in the negative (value-taking or win-lose social climbing), as in the social climber being too obvious, or using win-lose power moves that push other people down (social pegs).

- **Social climbing in absentia ™**: a special type of social climbing consisting of talking bad about others who are not present to look better by contrast.
- **Hostile climber™** : a social climber that advances exclusively through competition and win-lose exchanges. He uses socially aggressive tactics, as well they use blatant power moves to inflate one's own status, *plus* using others as social pegs in win-lose exchanges
- **Imaginary social climbing**: to social climb by making up hypothetical situations where the social climber

would have acted in cool and high-status ways.
Imaginary social climbing can be both neutral, without pushing anyone down, or it can be value-taking social climbing, when it pushes others down. The name derives from “imaginary generosity” in social scalping, thanks to Anon in the forum.
Example: man, if you were there yesterday, I would have introduced you to 10 hotshots in your industry, and sent you home with one of the hotties in my group

Standard games: in social dynamics and manipulative strategies, standard games are games that we all more or less engage in. For example, in dating it’s hiding in the beginning how much we like a man or a woman.
In social dynamics, an example is to seek to lower people’s expectations to beat them, or to hide our weaknesses to present ourselves in the best light we can.

Note: albeit standard games are usually not harmful, extreme forms of standard games can become harmful to the victim, and/or unhealthy for the perpetrator.

Tasking ™: in power dynamics, the act of assigning tasks to others.
In power dynamics, tasking empowers the person who tasks others (tasker) and disempowers the person who is tasked (taskee).
In courtship and seduction, tasking by a man and execution by a woman indicates she accepts his leadership.

- Lateral tasking: when tasking happens from an individual of the same rank and/or from the same level of social status, experience, or skills
- Upward tasking: when tasking happens from an individual of low rank and/or of lower social status, experience, or skills
- Downward tasking: when tasking happens from an individual of higher rank and/or of higher social status, experience, or skills

Explanation: while tasking is expected and normal when people with higher ranks task people with lower ranks (downward tasking), it can become a major win-lose power move when tasking happens from people who are theoretically on the same level (lateral tasking).
That’s how sometimes promotions are decided: a same-rank individual starts tasking another one, and he becomes the de-facto leader/boss. When it’s promotion time, the tasker becomes the natural choice for promotion since he is already acting like he’s above the taskee.

The Power Moves: the first website dedicated to advanced social skills and power dynamics.

Threshold Effect ™: in social exchanges, it’s the property of some generally and otherwise attractive traits to become unattractive above a certain threshold.
Different traits can have different threshold effects depending on the individual, the situation, or the specific exchange.

- **Sexual threshold effect**: (formally: Male social-sexual threshold disconnect) male qualities such as beard, low voices, and muscles have no threshold effect in gaining male respect within social hierarchies. But they do have a threshold effect with women, in dating.

Traumatic one-trial learning: explosive anger, or other intimidating behavior to establish dominance or superiority to condition or train the victim to avoid upsetting, confronting or contradicting the manipulator

Trap questions ™: in power dynamics and manipulative strategies, a generic, umbrella term for any type of questions that intends to harm the victim, or back him into a corner.

- Leading questions: the asker asks a question that is designed to lead towards the answer that he wanted to elicit
- Brag for me: a special type of trap question where the aggressor surreptitiously invites the victim to show off, brag. And bragging and showing off look weak, more often than not

- Pull ranks for me: a special type of questions or assertions that nudges people into pulling rank and tell others "they are the boss" and have "official authority". Since bosses who rely on official authority look weak, this can be an effective technique to make bosses look weak

Counter strategy: see "handling trap questions".

Validation whoring: in social dynamics, validation whores are individuals who seek emotional validation and rewards for their personalities, looks, or achievements.
They often have fragile egos and fixed mindsets.

Similar: thirst-traps (sexy pictures), flex accounts (showing off on Instagram)

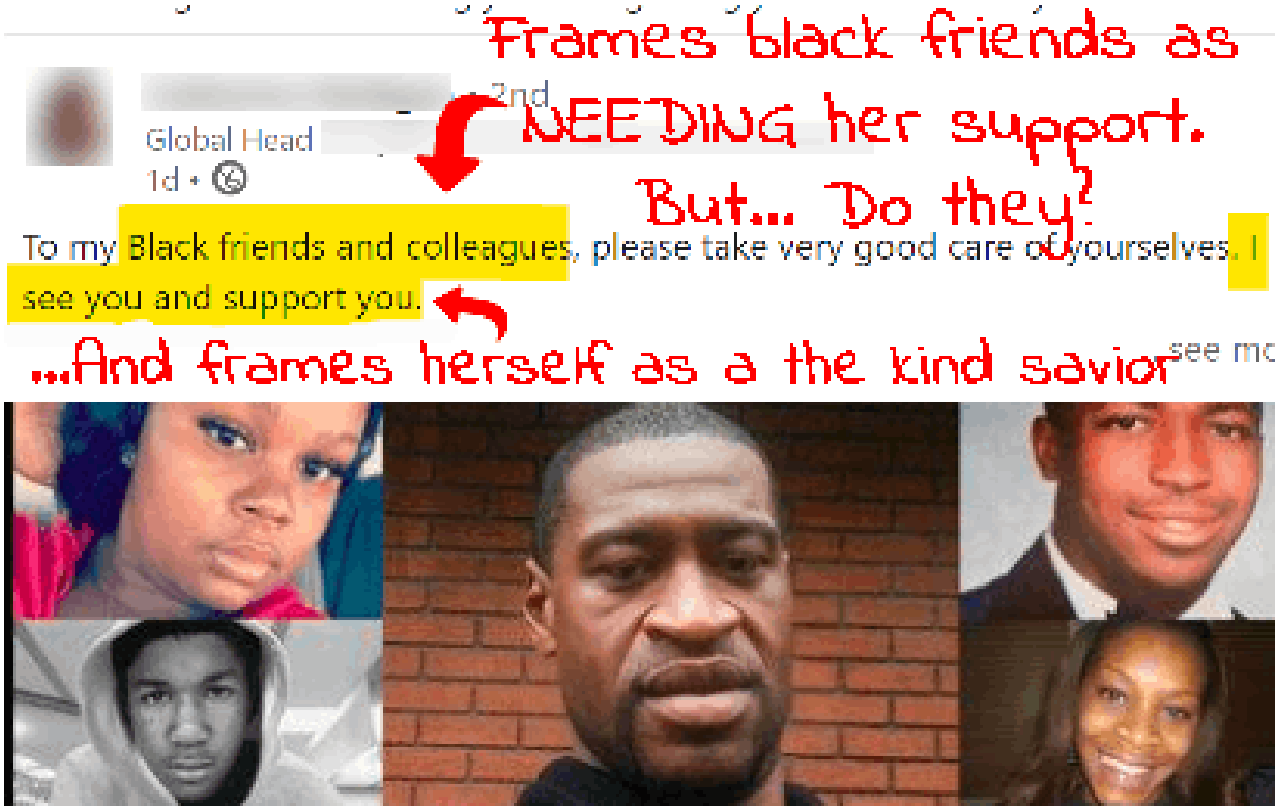
Example: see this post on validation whoring on FB.

- Attention whoring: very similar to validation whoring, but the attention whore is less discriminating as to the type of attention, and will take both negative and positive feedback as long as he is in the spotlight.

Virtue signaling: in social and power dynamics, the act of publicly and conspicuously embracing a set of supposedly prosocial values, norms, and behaviors.
Virtue signalers sometimes use moralizing against others as a way of social-climbing and looking purer.

- Disempowering virtue-signaling: when virtue signaling targets an individual or a specific group of people, often "minorities", and gets tinged with a "poor you" hue, and (unwillingly) frames the target of virtue signaling as inferior, less powerful, or in need of help.
- Self-signaling: to attack someone as a way of feeling better about themselves. Ie.: "I attack this guy, so I must be better". Often, it's a way of hiding one's own shadow and dark side.

See an example here:



Similar: SJW, moralizers, purists

Upcoming young guns: in power dynamics, a style of dominance based on confidence and over-display of confidence. The upcoming young gun carries himself with an air of "I am the best, and I'm on my way to the top".

Value-giver: an individual who gives value to others.

- Value-matcher: an individual who gives back the value that he has received. Value-matchers turn value-givers when a positive and reinforcing win-win cycle has been established (credits to John for coming up with word)

Value-giving behavior (AKA "value-adding behavior") in social and power dynamics, behavior that, on net balance, is either win-win, or that removes opportunities for abuse, or win-lose. ThePowerMoves.com promotes the adoption of value-adding mindsets and behaviors.

Note: that "net balance" is important. Value-adding behavior can be initially aggressive if it serves to stop abuse or change someone's mind in a way that leads to win-win. Or it can shame someone into dropping games if that serves to adopt more collaborative approaches (collaborative shaming).

- Value-adding leadership: a type of leadership that adds value to the group, and it's Lucio's main goal for those studying on ThePowerMoves.com
- Value-adding dominance: a type of dominance and social power that adds value
- Value-adding lover: a type of lover that rejects the most blatant manipulation and seeks to add value to the women who enter into his life
- Value-adding mindset: the mindset of someone who wants to add value to those around him, to his partner(s), or to society at large. People who seek success by fixing problems or providing solutions also seek personal success with a value-adding mindset
- Utilitarian value-adding: behavior that is negative for one individual if but off-set by far larger gains by someone else, or by a group, or society

Value-taker: an individual who, on net balance, takes value.

Explanation: in simple terms, people who make you "worse off". There countless types of value takers and countless ways of being value-taking, but some of the most important groups:

- Active / passive value-takers: active value takers take value through their actions. passive value-takers take value even while doing nothing. For example, a homeless and smelly individual will take value even while taking no active action (credit to John for leading to this category)
- Agreeable / disagreeable value-taker: agreeable value takers act friendly and likable on the surface, and that surface can help them go undetected. disagreeable value-taker are more obvious and "in your face" (credit to John)
- Entitled value-taker: people who feel like they should have access to high-value people to values they seek and want, but don't realize they must have or give something back for that person to want to share their value
- Voluntary / involuntary value-taker: important difference between people who take value willingly or consciously and people who take value unwillingly or unconsciously. Involuntary value takes might have terrible social skills and make you look bad with their social ineptitude, but aren't willingly doing so
- Proud value-taker: people who their ego around their value-taking approach to life, and their value-taking behavior. Proud value takers feel "cool" for cheating and not being caught, as well as feeling cool for their "ability" to destroy, take, or leech onto others.
- Small-time value takers: low-value people in low-status positions who do no make any effort to give, but are always first in line when it comes to taking and demanding.
  These are the people who loaf the whole day, and then, when there are still colleagues needing his help, he proclaims that it's 17:30, and he's exhausted and needs to go.
- Value-leechers: an extreme and/repeated form of value-taking. For some, it can be a social strategy or a life strategy

Value-taking behavior (AKA: value-subtracting): behavior that, on net balance, is either win-lose, lose-lose, or

that removes opportunities for win-win and collaboration.

- Value-taking mindset: (AKA: “win-lose mindset”): the mindset of those who seek success and power by taking as much as possible while giving as little as possible. These individuals are often “prideful value takers” as well. Value-taking mindset in relationships seeks power by taking away options and instilling fear (dread game, sexual triangulation, breakup threats, isolation, etc.), rather than by being great partners.

Techniques

Brag declaration: to call out one’s own bragging with the goal of delivering a self-promotional message, while limiting the social downsides of bragging

Explanation: Overt bragging comes at a cost. It often suggests you’re trying to gain power or authority, and that you want other people to admire you and/or like you, which is narcissistic and often not what a respected leader and/or high-quality person would do.
When you call out your own brag, you communicate that you’re aware of that, which gives you some points by itself just for “getting it”, and you change the frame of your promotional message from “I’m bragging” to “I’m being a bit cheeky here”.

Example: “alright, bragging time now, but I actually did climb Everest”.
“shameless bragging ahead”; “alright, my time for some bragging now…. “

Humblebragging: a power move that, on the surface, seems like a neutral complaint, a joke, or even a value-taking self-deprecation, but that instead raises the value, status, or power of the humble-bragger.

Tail-End Questions: a rhetorical question that is the last or hindmost part of a message and that serves to draw attention to the main message, get more buy-in, or further benefit and empower either the message itself or the messenger.

Examples: “does that make sense?”; “It’s a bit complex, I hope it’s clear?”; “wow, that was long, but I think it’s important because it might be the solution we’re looking for”.

Power Moves

Half-step power move (AKA: Innuendo power move”)
Example: “if you’re up to meet… “
imply or half-say what you wanna say, but don’t fully propose it to maintain power and have the other party act on an *innuendo*, rather than an actual straight outreach.
That way, they’re coming to you.

Manipulative thread expansion (or “latch onto power move”): to start from something that someone else said or did and spin it and expand it to fit the manipulator’s goals.
Thanks to Bel.

“You’re like I used to be power move”
Example: ” I used to be like that “

Which sub-communicates that the power mover is at a “higher level of development” and the receiver is “stuck at a lower level”.

Eventually, maybe… the receiver will reach that point.

That speaker then doesn’t even have to convince or provide good arguments.
As a matter of fact, not providing any argument and not even continuing to talk is then a “fly higher” manipulative

(fake) punishment: he has no time for those beneath him, so he stops engaging, and leaves him to wallow in his inferiority.

Raging
To express intense anger and aggressive and potentially threatening nonverbals at someone.

Raging can be either “honest” rage when someone is truly out of control, or it can be a ploy to The goal is to intimidate others into submissive compliance.

Triangular raging: Bel noted that the aggressor hides under the cover of raging against a third party -an inanimate object, a past event, or another person that may or may not be present to the raging session- with the goal of intimidating the target victim(s).

Mental Empowerment

Mental empowerment concerns the power dynamics and self-development efforts that are within the individual.

Empowered Mind Principle™ states that the mind is the source layer of all downstream behavior, influence, and outcomes (Source Layer Principle) . An empowered internal state produces naturally congruent and effective behavior, while a weakened or reactive state produces inconsistency regardless of will and personal ambitions.

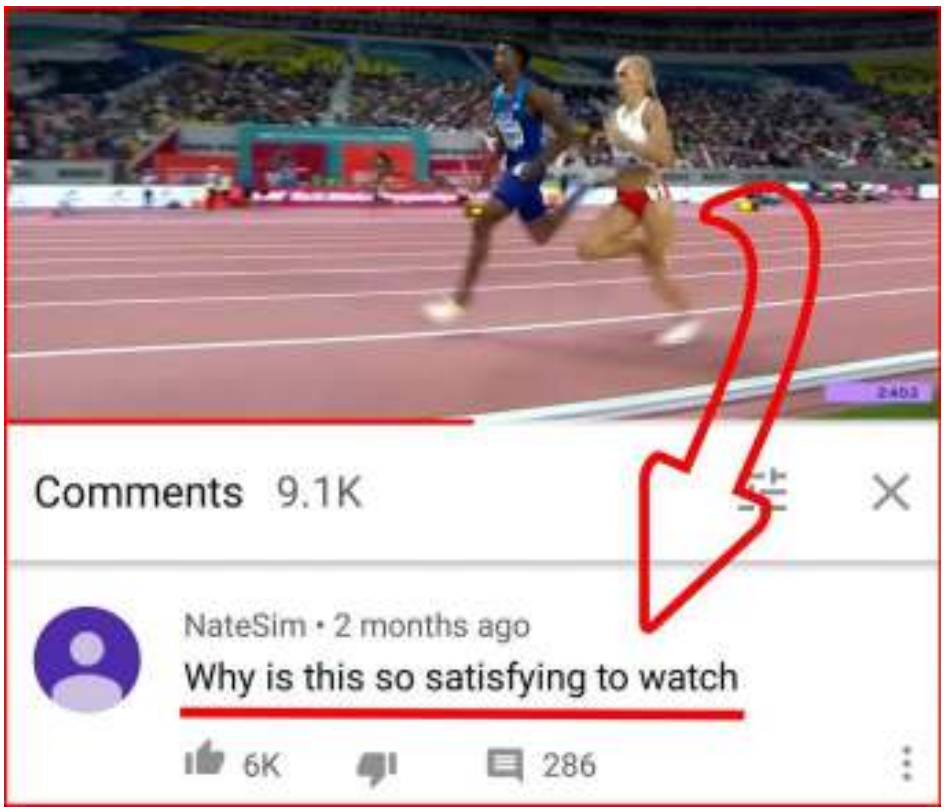
Effective spirituality™ combines the positive elements and outcomes of spirituality such as emotional resilience and unneediness, while maintaining the drive, ambition, and effectiveness of an agentic approach to life

Ego loss, **social** : in extreme forms of identity leeching, when an individual gives up his individuality to derives his whole sense of self (identity) from his affiliation to a specific individual, or his belonging to a specific group.
This is the ultimate state of giving up personal agency and control.

Examples: kamikazes sacrificing the self for the group, and People’s Temple members committing suicide when Jim Jones ordered so.

Identity leeching (AKA: “identity projecting”) ™: in psychology and social psychology, to project and merge one’s own sense of identity with a larger social group or, alternatively, with a specific individual.
Albeit some identity leeching can be normal and healty, too much identity leeching, or identity projecting onto the wrong groups and causes, can be toxic and disempowering.

Examples: some men feel good when other men “put women in their place” because they project their identity onto the “men’s collective” (see example below):



NateSim finds it satisfying to watch a man overtake a woman because he is a closeted misogynist and an ego-leecher. Meaning, he projects and merges his identity with the whole male group. Then when men "beat" women, he piggy-backs on other men's success to feel better about himself

Identity leecher (AKA: ego leecher) (group): someone with a rather mediocre life who derives pride and self-esteem not from what *he* does, but from what his group of reference doesIdentity leechers (ideal): identity leeching towards an ideal, a flag, or an institution

Example: "I'm great and better than you because I'm from X country"

- Fanboy identity leecher (individual gurus): identity leeching from an individual "guru", leader, or thought leader. The identity leecher buys into whatever the guru says, and the guru's success becomes his success. The most fanatic and manipulative thought leaders want their followers to project their identities onto them
- Identity projection manipulation: keep in mind the possibility of manipulation and personal disempowerment here: most group leaders and gurus want their members and followers to give up their identity and individualism to merge with the group, since that gives the leaders more power
- Subordinate identity: to feel represented by someone who is higher up in a hierarchy, for example, a boss, a CEO, or a country president

Explanation:

Subordinate identity concerns people who haven't yet developed a strong sense of self. They then project their identity onto external entities, including groups, famous or successful people, or people with a higher rank.

The individual with a "subordinate identity" then feels either personally augmented or diminished depending on what those higher-ups are doing.
Subordinate identity gives away personal power and agency. And automatically places the individual beneath others.

The higher power alternative instead is to only feel responsible for oneself, and only represented by one's own personal actions.

Credits

The following people have contributed with various new definitions, ideas, and, improvements:

- Ali (his journal here and his website here)
- Anon
- John Freeman
- JP
- Kellvo
- Matthew
- Stefano

Ultralearning: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 July 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Ultra Learning (2019), lays out a strategy for acquiring skills and knowledge in a way that is both self-directed and intense. Scott Young, the author, explains that it's a strategy to get good at something as quickly as possible.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Bullet Wisdom
- CONS
- PROS
- Ultralearning Review

Bullet Summary

- Ultralearning is a strategy to learn as quickly and as effectively as possible to cut your time short on your way to mastery
- Ultralearning can be enjoyable, but it's also as likely to be challenging, intense, and tough
- Ultralearning focuses on lots of repeated practice

Summary

About the Author: Scott Young defines himself as an author, programmer, and entrepreneur. He has been writing on his own blog since 2006.

1. What is Ultralearning?

> Ultralearning is a strategy for acquiring skills and knowledge that is both self-directed and intense.

And, adds Scott Young:

> The core of the ultralearning strategy is intensity, and a willingness to prioritize effectiveness.

More on what ultralearning really is:

- **Ultralearning is a strategy.** as all strategies, it's contextual, so it can be suited for certain challenges and situations, but not others
- **Ultralearning is self-directed.** it's about *you*. You decide what to learn and why
- **Ultralearning is intense.** this is not about "flow", it's about learning both quickly and effectively, seeking rapid progress with great efficiency

Now, let's get down to the concrete steps for an ultralearning project:

2. The 9 Steps of Ultralearning

The nine principles are…

1. **Metalearning: First Draw a Map.** Start by learning how to learn the subject or skill you want to tackle. Learn

how to do good research and how to draw on your past competencies to learn new skills more easily.

2. **Focus: Sharpen Your Knife.** Cultivate the ability to concentrate. Carve out chunks of time when you can focus on learning, and make it easy to just do it. The problems related to focus are three:
   1. Starting: tell yourself you can do just a few minutes before taking a break. That's often enough to get you going. Then you can move to the Pomodoro Technique: 20 minutes of focus and 5 minutes break.
   2. Sustaining (aka: getting distracted): don't worry about having long stretches of time. Learn to focus as much as possible even when you have little time.
   3. Optimizing: complex tasks may benefit from low arousals, such as no noise whatsoever, but simpler tasks may benefit from a place like a workshop. But ultimately, you need to test it for yourself
3. **Directness: Go Straight Ahead.** Learn by doing the thing you want to become good at. Don't trade if off for other tasks, just because those are more convenient or comfortable.
4. **Drill: Attack Your Weakest Point.** Be ruthless in improving your weakest points. Break down complex skills into small parts; then master those parts and build them back together again.
5. **Retrieval: Test to Learn.** Testing isn't simply a way of assessing knowledge but a way of creating it. Test yourself before you feel confident, and push yourself to actively recall information rather than passively review it.
   1. Forward testing: Retrieval helps you learn and remember even before you even begin studying!
   2. Take notes as questions instead of answers
6. **Feedback: Don't Dodge the Punches.** Feedback is harsh and uncomfortable. Know how to use it without letting your ego get in the way. Extract the signal from the noise, so you know what to pay attention to and what to ignore.
   The 3 types of feedback are:
   1. Outcome feedback: less useful, but can help
   2. Informational feedback: provides more precise information on what you did well or bad
   3. Corrective feedback: provides information on what you did well or not good, plus how you can fix it
   4. Praise can be harmful: "When feedback steers into evaluations of you as an individual (e.g., "You're so smart!" or "You're lazy"), it usually has a negative impact on learning"
7. **Retention: Don't Fill a Leaky Bucket.** Understand what you forget and why. Learn to remember things not just for now but forever.
8. **Intuition: Dig Deep Before Building Up.** Develop your intuition through play and exploration of concepts and skills. Understand how understanding works, and avoid having recourse to cheap tricks of memorization to avoid deeply knowing things.
   1. Struggle timer: don't give up too early, give yourself a struggle time during which you'll just keep enduring and trying
   2. Prove things: don't just understand things, but try to prove them
   3. Always start with a concrete example: most people learn abstract, general rules only after being exposed to many concrete examples. When you don't have an example, try to come up with one. If you can't you haven't learned the principle
   4. Ask yourself lots of questions, even dumb ones: don't fool yourself, and you're the easiest one to fool
9. **Experimentation: Explore Outside Your Comfort Zone.** The mindset of experimentation is a more advanced form of a growth mindset from Carol Dweck. It doesn't just assume growth is possible, but enacts a strategy.
   All these principles are only starting points. World-class mastery comes from exploring possibilities they haven't yet imagined. And the better you become, the more you need to experiment.
   1. Copy and create

2. Compare methods side by side
3. Introduce new constraints
4. Combine two different skills
5. Explore the extremes

Talent VS Practice: Both Matter

We know this:

Some authors say that the brain is only malleable to a limited extent (Pinker, 2002).
While some others, especially the self-help gurus, like to say that talent matters little or nothing.

Scott is in the middle.
He says:

> I take a middle position between those two extremes.
> I think that natural talents exist and that they undoubtedly influence the results we see (especially at extreme levels, as in the case of Tao). I also believe that strategy and method matter, too.

Sensible position, I think.

"Flow" is BS and Useless for Ultralearning

Alright, that title is a clickbait :).
Scott Young never said that, of course.
However, it is true that "flow", as pioneered by research psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, has been somewhat over-hyped. Especially when it comes to actually learn things.

Peak performance researcher K. Anders Ericsson, the researcher behind deliberate practice and author of "Peak", argues that flow has characteristics that are "inconsistent with the demands of deliberate practice for monitoring explicit goals and feedback and opportunities for error correction.

Says Scott:

> My own thought is that a flow state is not impossible during ultralearning. Many cognitive activities associated with learning are in the range of difficulty that makes flow possible or even likely. However, I also agree with Ericsson that learning often involves entering into situations in which the difficulty makes flow impossible.

Bullet Wisdom

- If you're too busy, you can use ultralearning with part-time projects, learning sabbaticals, and reimagining existing learning efforts
- Break up your sessions

Says Scott Young:

> Researchers generally find that people retain more of what they learn when practice is broken into different studying periods than when it is crammed together. Similarly, the phenomenon of interleaving suggests that even within a solid block of focus, it can make sense to alternate between different aspects of the skill or knowledge to be remembered.

- **Duolingo (and other cool apps) might not help you learn**

Duolingo is built to increase usage, not to make learning more efficient.
Also see my review on the Blinkist app, which I suspect as being very similar.

- **You need practical examples to learn**

That's why this website and Power University are chock-full of real-life examples.

CONS

- **One example felt just a tad forced**

Sometimes it felt like the author painted one or two of the success stories in a way to make them seem more impressive.
For example, he says:

> Half in disbelief, she glanced at the referee, expecting him to indicate that Kasparov had cheated. Yet the referee didn't challenge the grand master. Reeling from the move, Polgár lost the game.

We don't know if Polgar lost the game because of that touch.
The author also seems to frame Polgar as better than Kasparov, but Polgar, albeit a prodigy and the best female chess player, never became a world champion.

But it's truly small stuff, otherwise, there are no real "cons".

PROS

- **Treasure throve to reach mastery**

For those who want to reach mastery, "Ultralearning" provides the tools, the mindsets, and even the encouraging stories (but then again, my guess is that most ultralearners need no encouraging stories).

Indeed, I added it in my list of best psychology books under the section of "psychology of achievement".

- **Great author**

And by "great author" I mean Scott Young provides a level-headed analysis grounded in science, intelligent analysis, and rational thinking.

Ultralearning Review

Ultralearning is a mix of learning strategies, studying and learning tips, plus evidence-based success stories for those who need some inspiration.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**

Dating Red Flags: Top 8 Nasty Games Women Use

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 August 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Recognizing red flags early is key to avoiding toxic relationships with manipulative individuals.

When you learn to read women effectively, you gain the power to choose collaborative, kind, and supportive partners.

As the most visited website on power dynamics and strategies, we bring our expertise in manipulation tactics and human behavior to help you spot the top 8 red flags in dating.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. "I'm The Prize" Games
  - ⍰ Example 1: your money, her choice
  - ⍰ Example 2: From teamwork, to your work
- 2. Attacks & Challenges
  - ⍰ Example
  - 2.2. Vengeful tit for that
- 3. Power Scalping
  - ⍰ Examples
  - 3.2. Nasty Sexual Rejections
- 4. Passive-Aggressive
  - ⍰ Example: uses games to get commitment
- 5. Judging You
- 6. Gold Digger Games
  - ⍰ Example

  - Silver-digger games
- 7. Standard Games… But Extreme
  - ⍰ Examples
- 8. Any Win-Lose Power Moves
  - ⍰ Examples
- Differentiate: Fair VS Nasty Games
- Do Nasty Power Moves Work?
- Summary

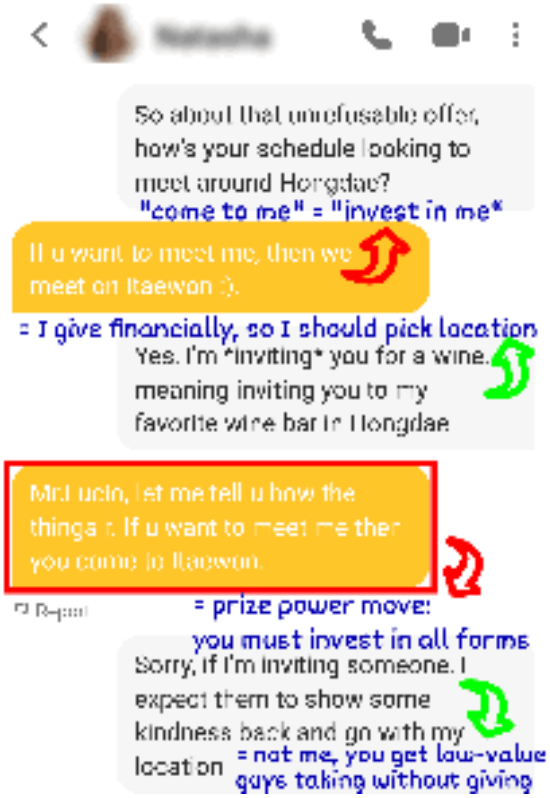
1. “I’m The Prize” Games

Frames your as (far) lower value, having to win her over and make up the value imbalance

Including:

- **Taking without giving**: to sub-communicate she is worth more
  - ‘Entitled princess’ attitude towards receiving
- **Princess on pea games**: acting disgusted by “commoner behavior.”
- **Ridiculing your courtship**.
  Ie.: “*Oh, you brought *pink* roses*?”, implying ‘Are you stupid?’your l

⍰ Example 1: your money, her choice



> **Me**: (expects to pick the place as the inviter)
> **Her**: (expects to be invited, pick the place, and acts disrespectful)

Yep, definitely relationship material there ⍰.

Haughty attitude and nonverbals are *always* red flags

⍰ Example 2: From teamwork, to your work

I once set up a picnic with a date, agreeing we'd both bring something.
She brought nothing.

Similar:

- Calls the next round, without offering it
- Talks Saint Valentine -but *receiving* only

Why it backfires

"I'm the prize" games 'work' to get as much as possible from power-unaware men.

Some gold-diggers even wrote books about it:

- Ho Tactics
- A Gold Digger Guide

However, for effective women's dating "I'm the prize" games fail because of the social exchange rule: high-quality men move to better women, and only lower-status men will stick around.

2. Attacks & Challenges

She approaches the relationship as a competition rather than a union that makes both better.

⍰ Example

> **Her**: (aggressive)

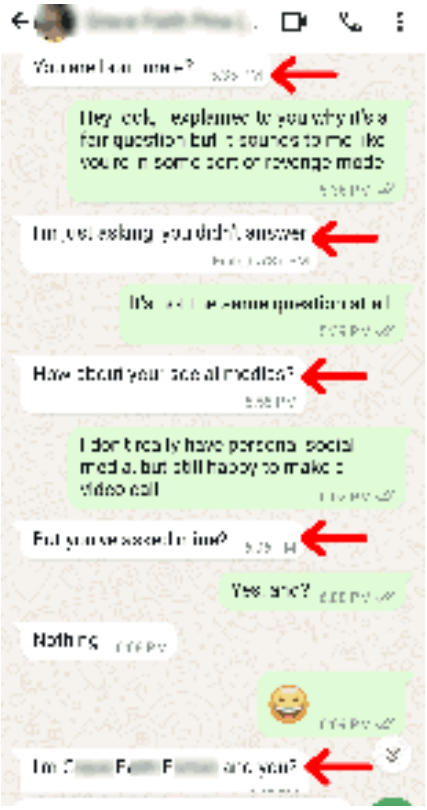
But note at 3:51:

> **Her**: I have over 37.000 followers, thank you so much
> **Him**: 36.999 of which are mine <— Pushes her down.
> ⍰⍰ It's HIM who also encourages confrontational behavior ⍰⍰♂

2.2. Vengeful tit for that

If they feel disempowered, they (over-)retaliate to restore balance

This was a smaller red flag -later confirmed valid-.
But this one disqualified her for good:



> **Me**: (asks if she's born woman) <— Fair question in SE Asia. I asked hundreds of women, all understood
> **Her**: Are you born male <— Vengeful question back, asked twice
> **Me**: (explains why it's not the same)
> **Her**: (demands info she wasn't previously interested in) <— 'Get even' mode
> **Me**: (calls)
> **Her**: (doesn't pick up)
> **Her**: You can call now <— Dictates my time

I dropped her after that.
More info in Power University.

Why it backfires

High-quality men who make for the best relationship partners aren't looking for a woman to compete with them.

They're already competitive with their mission, work, and sport.
When they come home, they want a *supportive*, feminine woman.

3. Power Scalping

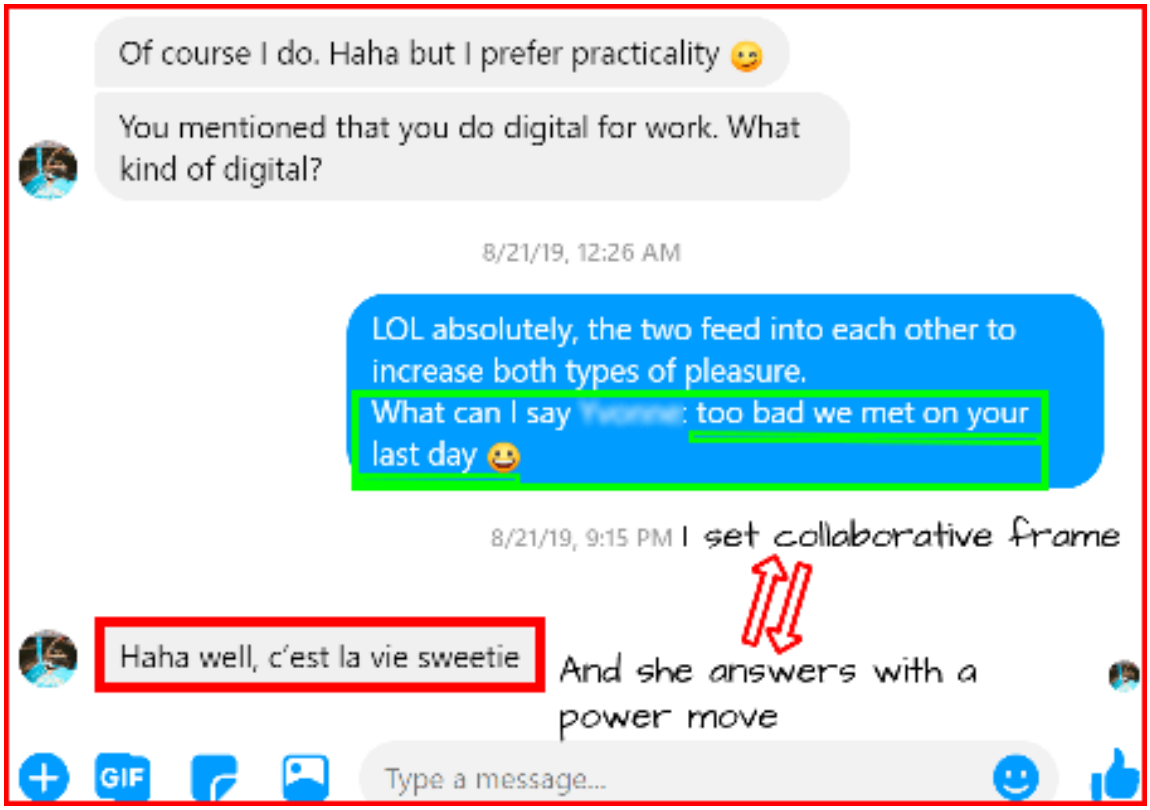
Taking advantage of your weakness or mistake to further disempower you

Every move forward carries a small risk.
A good woman helps you save face during rejection, but a bad one exploits your vulnerability

⍰ Examples

- You invite her out, she says "*I'm not sure, what do you have in mind*" <— Thread expands your pursuit, making you chase and invest more
- You say "*You're very interesting*", she replies "*Thanks, many men court me*" <— Rebuffs your compliment and frames it like one of many courtship attempts

⍰ Exploiting A Flirt



> **Me**: (flirts to potentially lead to a date / meet)
> **Her**: (spurns me to gain power) <— ⍰⍰ 'Ahaha you like me, joke's on you'

P.S.:
Never be vulnerable with these people unless it's a test of their personality.
And read this:

- Vulnerability is NOT power

Why it backfires

That lady, liked me, somewhat.

That's why she texted me, and that's why she asked me questions.

However, instead of collaborating and moving the relationship forward, she decided to one-up me and seek

personal short-term power.
She sacrificed long-term win-win, for short-term win.

I pondered whether I should go for collaborative shaming, or simply drop it.
I decided to drop it.

3.2. Nasty Sexual Rejections

The nastiness is not the refusal of course, but the purposefully over-dramatization.
For example, fake disgust:

The sub-communication is:

> You want me more than I want you.
> And my over-reaction shows the gap is so large.

⍰ Similar Examples

I once had a small girl home but with huge breasts.

The moment I started touching her she cautioned me that “it wasn’t good for me”.

What was she doing?

She was implying that she wasn’t going to have sex that night. Me touching her would get *me* horny, not *her*, and ultimately leave me dissatisfied.
⍰ I was attracted to her, but she wasn’t attracted to me -makes you wonder why she’d come on a date with me-.

That’s sexual one-upping.

⍰ Extra pictorial example here

Why it backfires

Sexual put-downs are based on her not being sexually aroused.

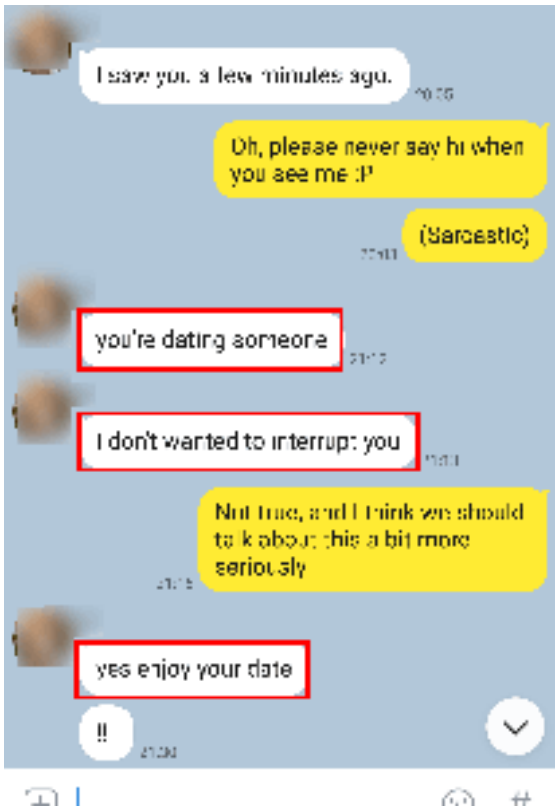
And what's *less* arousing than a person who doesn't want you?
Any self-respecting man would rather 'do it alone' than pursue a woman who plays uninterested.

4. Passive-Aggressive

Passive aggression and covert power moves to make you chase, make you jealous, or gain power

⍰ Example: uses games to get commitment

From a woman I'd met only twice:



> **Her**: You're dating someone
> **Me**: We should take about this more seriously
> **Her**: Enjoy your date <— Passive-aggressive, prods me to justify & chase

⬆ She showed previous red flags, so it's even possible she lied.

Similar:

> **Him**: Let's meetup one of these days
> **Her**: But why, you have other girls to meet <— ⍰⍰ Tell me I'm the one, chase me

Why it backfires

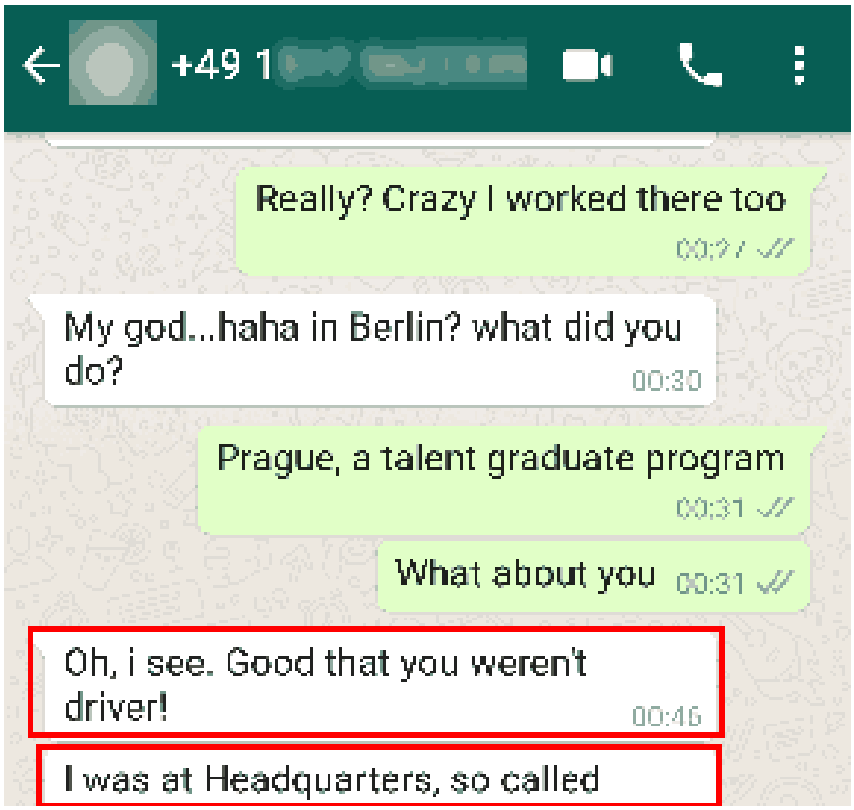
Men with goals and options aren't looking for drama.

5. Judging You

The judge is the person who evaluates the other, providing emotional rewards -or punishment-, against their standards

Most women naturally take the judge position in relationships. But some women, when they're not gaining any judge power, will try to "force" it.

See an example here:



> **Me**: A graduate talent programme
> **Her**: (ignores the opportunity to say something nice) Good that you weren't a driver!
> (builds herself up) I was at headquarters…
> **Me**: (thinking: so cheap…)

When she said "good you weren't a driver", she sought to position herself as the high-status, demanding judge of my life/career.
She judged me "good" for 'being more at her level' (and then proceeded to brag).

6. Gold Digger Games

Seeks as much money as possible in exchange for sex, or for the 'opportunity to date her'

Ie.:

- *"I really like Golden Spoon restaurant"* <— Picks the most expensive restaurant
- *"I need to study, but don't have money"* <— Indirectly asks to support her lifestyle
- *"I like shopping"* <— Sets the hook for you to offer shopping

⍰ Example

> **Her**: (picks an expensive place & dish and insists for it)

Silver-digger games

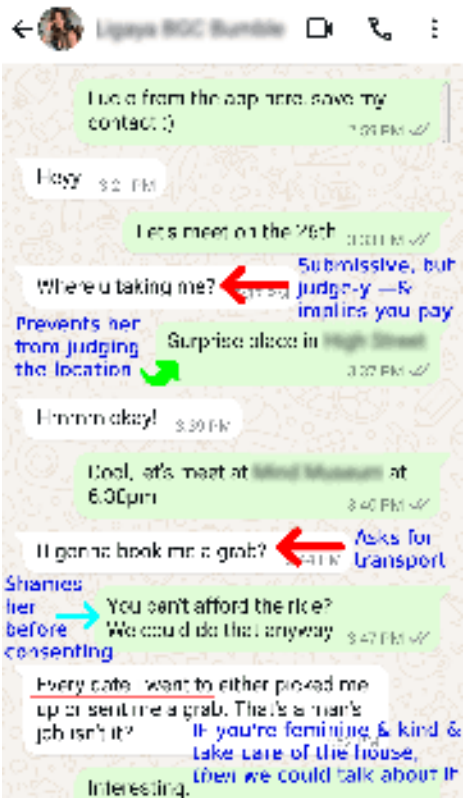
Seeks a well-off man for a good lifestyle within a relationship

Silver diggers expect a good lifestyle from their partners, which can be fair if she is supportive.

Ie.:

- Expects a car to and from her location
- Wants to be a stay-at-home wife
- Expects you to earn a good income for holidays, Christmas gifts, etc.

⍰ Example



> **Her**: (demands a cab for pick up)

⚠️ Some red flags for my taste appear.
But In general, it's fair for an attractive woman to expect a good lifestyle from her man IF she gives back beyond just 'beauty'.

7. Standard Games... But Extreme

Some games are fair.

And it's also fair for many women to expect courtship.
It's sometimes cultural, and sometimes pure and simple dating market dynamics where most women are more 'valuable' than most men.

Principle:

⚖️ **Any fair expectation or demand taken to an extreme becomes a red flag**

❓ Examples

Fair	Too much	Sucker
Delay sex on first meet	Avoid sex for 3 dates	Only do sex after committment
Expect you to pay first date	Expect you to pay dinner & both-ways transport	Expects gifts
Expect you to text first & organize the date	Never text first after 2 dates	Never text first & replies late

8. Any Win-Lose Power Moves

Power moves can be neutral, win-win, or win-lose.

We couldn't possibly list *all* win-lose behavior.
But better than that, here at TPM we help you develop the *feel* for social power dynamics.
With that, you can recognize ANY possible red or green flag.

And we can give you a principle:

⚖ **Anything where she gains and you lose is a red flag**

⍰ Examples

- **Triangulation**: parading other suitors or attractive exes ⍰ Text example
  - **"He is so great games"** with random men or celebrities to set up unreachable ideas or field covert demands
- **Canceling last minute**: ⍰Example + possible cure
- **Repeatedly late on dates**: ⍰Example + possible cure
- **Pretending disinterest** ⍰ Example (& ⍰Compare with cooperative woman)

Nasty power moves are *only* win-lose, or lose-lose (value-subtracting).

Differentiate: Fair VS Nasty Games

In our forum, we made the point that it's important to differentiate between "fair" dating games and "nasty" dating games.

- Fair games: when male and female strategies and goals diverge, it's fair to expect women to follow strategies and that do not necessarily benefit you
- Nasty games: when are win-winor collaborative approaches are available, but she deliberately chooses win-lose

To get an idea of 'fair games' consider:

- Games women play
- Games women play to get commitment
- Delaying intimacy, a fair game so that she does not sleep with just about anyone

As a general rule, consider nasty games as important red flags for a more serious future together -or even just for dating-.

Do Nasty Power Moves Work?

Why do some women play these games?

The answer is simple:

Because they can work with *some* men.
They work with:

1. **Inexperienced men**: who idolize and pedestalize women. They're ready to accept "I'm the prize" games
2. **Conservative-minded men**: who are more likely to see it as their duty to invest, protect, and "make her happy". It predisposed them to win-lose relationships of imbalanced give and take
3. **Lower-status men**: who are more willing to "pay up" the difference and put up with poor behavior
   - Lower status role models, for example a father who accepted poor behavior at home

4. **Naive Men:** who grew up with naive self-help, and are clueless about power dynamics

If this is you, we have a program to help you become a respect-worthy, high-status, and attractive man.
You will automatically attract high-quality women for better and healthier relationships:

- **Power University**

Summary

Understanding the red flags in dating is crucial for building authentic and respectful relationships.

Women play these games because they 'work' with some men, but only drive away the higher quality men.

Unluckily, undiscerning men who miss the red flags end up with poor relationships with manipulative women, and *they* pay the highest costs.

This article, our website, and our products help men become high-quality, power-aware men who can spot the red flags, handle them, and attract better women in their lives.

⍰ This is a preview from Power University. Alumni see the corresponding lesson with SOLUTIONS for each game !

King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: The 4 Archetypes of Masculinity

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 August 2020 · Archived copy · Original

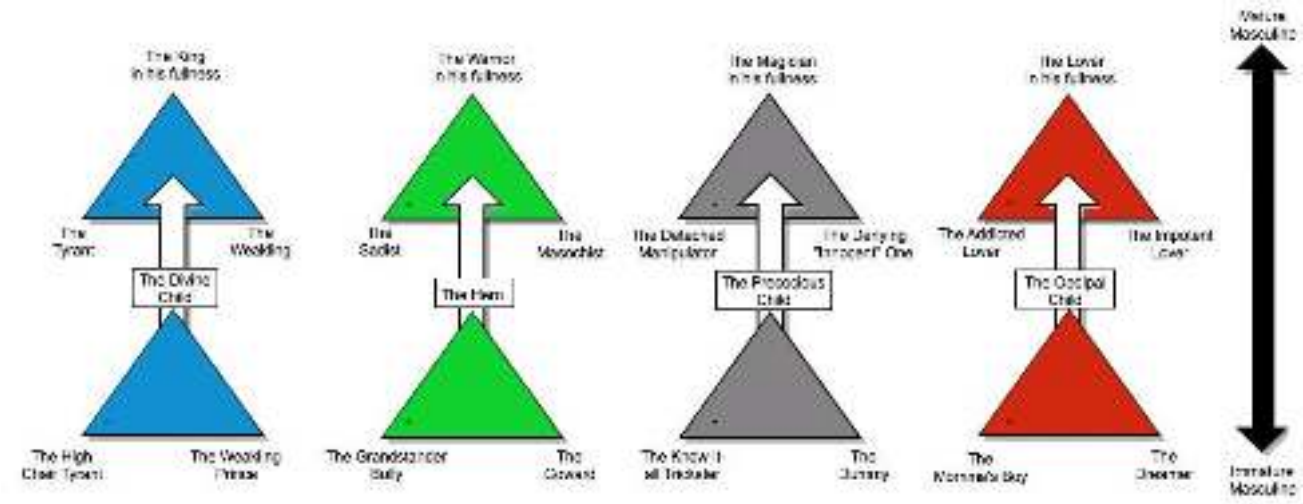
King, Warrior, Magician, Lover (1990) is a classic manosphere staple for men looking into self-development. The book mixes solid psychology with religion, myth, and self-development practices to teach men how to find their own highest version of masculinity.

Contents

- Key Insights
  - The Four Major Forms of Masculinity
- #1. King
  - The King Shadows
- #2. Warrior
  - The Warrior Shadows
- #3. Magician
  - The Magician Shadows
- #4. Lover
  - The Lover Shadows
- Boyhood Archetypes
  - Divine child
  - Precocious child
  - Oedipal Child
  - The Hero
- Criticism
- Quotes
- Review

Key Insights

One picture is worth a thousand words:



Source: https://stottilien.com/

And to understand what those triangles mean, keep on reading.

It's worth it, I promise.

About the Authors

Wikipedia describes Robert Louis Moore as an American Jungian analyst and consultant (??) in private practice in Chicago, as well as Professor of Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Spirituality at the Chicago Theological Seminary (that's an educational institution for pastors and ministers).

Douglas Gillette describes himself as holding a B.A. in Theater and Communications and a Master of Arts of Religious Studies from the University of Chicago (emphasis in Religion and Literature), and a Master of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary (emphasis in Religion and Psychology). He also engages in artistic pursuits such as painting, sculpting, and interior design.

Both authors are at the *intersection* of (depth) psychology (psychoanalysis and the unconscious), religion, mysticism, and myth.

The Four Major Forms of Masculinity

The four major forms of the mature masculine energies that the authors have identified are the King, me Warrior, the Magician, and the Lover.

They all overlap and ideally enrich one another. A good King is always also
a Warrior, a Magician, and a Lover.
And the same holds true for the other three.

#1. King

The King energy is primal in all men.
In old civilizations and traditions, the king provides order, fertility, and blessing.

> It bears the same relationship to the other three mature masculine potentials as the Divine Child does to the other three immature masculine energies.
> It comes first in importance, and it underlies and includes the rest of the archetypes in perfect balance. The good and generative King is also a good Warrior, a positive Magician, and a great Lover. And yet, with most of us, the King comes on line last.
> We could say that the King is the Divine Child, but seasoned and complex, wise. and in a sense as selfless as the Divine Child is cosmically self-involved.

The king is:

- Centered
- Decisive
- A man of integrity
- A protector of his realm
- A provider

This is how the authors describe the king:

> It stabilizes chaotic emotion and out-of-control behaviors. It gives stability and centeredness. It brings calm. And in its "fertilizing" and centeredness, it mediates vitality, life-force, and joy. It brings maintenance and balance. It defends our own sense of inner order, our own integrity of being and of purpose. our own central

> calmness about who we are, and our essential unassailability and certainty in our masculine identity. It looks upon the world with a firm but kindly eye. It sees others in all their weakness and in all their talent and worth. It honors them and promotes them. It guides them and nurtures them toward their own fullness of being. It is not envious. because it is secure, as the King, in its own worth. It rewards and encourages creativity in us and in others.

The King also embodies all the other masculine archetypes:

> In its central incorporation and expression of the Warrior, it represents aggressive might when that is what is needed when order is threatened. It also has the power of inner authority. It knows and discerns (its Magician aspect) and acts out of this deep knowingness. It delights in us and in others (its Lover aspect) and shows this delight through words of authentic praise and concrete actions that enhance our lives.

The King Shadows

- Tyrant: He is only destructive. He does so because. as we've said. he lacks inner structure. and he is afraid and terrified of his own hidden weakness and his underlying lack of potency.
  He is very sensitive to criticism and, though putting on a threatening front, will at the slightest remark feel weak and deflated. He won't show you this, however. What you will see, unless you know what to look for. is rage. But hidden behind the rage is a sense of worthlessness, of vulnerability and weakness.
  The tyrant hates. fears, and envies new life, because he feels the new life is a threat to his slim grasp on his own kingship.
- Weakling: The hidden presence of this passive pole explains the hunger for mirroring -for "Adore me!" "Worship me!" "See how important I am!"- that we feel from so many of our superiors and friends. This explains their angry outbursts and their attacks on those they see as weak that is those upon whom they project their own inner Weakling.

General Patton was a closeted weakling, say the authors.

Watch this scene:

> Instead of reacting with the compassion of the life-giving King who knows what his men are up against, Patton flies into a rage and slaps the soldier across the face, calls him a coward. humiliates and abuses him, and sends him from the hospital to the from lines.
> Though he does not know it. what he has seen is the face of his own hidden fear and weakness projected onto another. He has glimpsed the Weakling within.

And again, say the authors:

> The heroic General Patton.
> Though immensely imaginative, creative, and inspiring to his troops, at
> least at times sabotaged himself with his risk-taking, his immature
> competition with the British General Montgomery, and his insightful
> but boyishly brash remarks.
> Rather than being assigned a mission for which his true talent qualified him {to head the Allied invasion of Europe, for instance). He was sidelined precisely because he was a hero and not fully a warrior.

My Note: Insightful, stay away from gratuitous meanness
This was truly deep and insightful.

Be careful of men who are too mean and aggressive towards other people's faults and weaknesses. Not only are they potentially hiding insecurities, but they are often poor leaders.

I often felt the same about general Mattis, who always loved to *sound* tough:

> **James Mattis**: When you men get home and face an anti-war protester (..) shake his hand. Then, wink at his girlfriend because she knows she's dating a pussy

#2. Warrior

The warrior:

- **Is efficient because he realizes how fragile and mortal he is**

> In addition to training, what enables a Warrior to reach clarity of thought is living with the awareness of his own imminent death. The Warrior knows the shortness of life and how fragile it is. A man under the guidance of the Warrior knows how few his days are. Rather than depressing him, this awareness leads him to an outpouring of life-force and to an intense experience of his life that is unknown to others. Every act counts.

Also read:

> The Power of Accepting & Leveraging Death to Live Fully

- **The warrior raises above pettiness**

The true Warrior rises above pettiness.
Says the authors:

> Living in the light of lofty ideals and spiritual realities such as God. democracy, communism, freedom, or any other worthy transpersonal commitment so alters the focus of a man's life that petty squabbling and personal. Ego concerns no longer matter much.

- **The warrior can be a destructive force. But it's a destructive force for good**

Say the authors:

> The Warrior is often a destroyer.
> But the positive Warrior energy destroys only what needs to be destroyed in order for something new and fresh, more alive and more virtuous to appear. Many things in our world need destroying-corruption, tyranny, oppression, despotic systems of government, corporate hierarchies may get in the way of the company's performance (…).
> And in the very act of destroying, often the Warrior energy
> is building new civilizations, new commercial, artistic, and spiritual ventures for humankind.

- **For the warrior, women are just there to fulfill sexual needs**

When the warrior is disconnected from the lover, women are just for fun, or to fulfill sexual needs.

> Even the positive Warrior (the Warrior in his fullness) can be disastrous. As we have said the Warrior in his pure form is emotionally detached; his transpersonal loyalty radically relativizes the importance of his human relationships. This is apparent in the Warrior's attitude toward sex.

> Women, for the Warrior, are not for relating to, for being intimate with.
> They are for fun.
> (…)
> Even if he has a family, the human warrior's devotion to other duties often leads to marital problems.

- **Businesspeople consumed by work are also warriors**

Say the authors:

> This same thing occurs outside the military as well.
> In the relationships and families of men whose professions call for a great deal of transpersonal devotion and long hours of disciplined work and self-sacrifice. Ministers, doctors. lawyers, politicians, dedicated salespeople, and many others often have emotionally devastating personal lives.
> Their wives and girlfriends often feel alienated and rejected, competing hopelessly with the man's "true love," his work.
> In addition these men, true to the Warrior's sexual attitudes, often have affairs with their nurses, staffers, receptionists, secretaries, and other women who admire from a safe (sometimes not so safe) distance their masculine Warrior proficiency and dedication.

My Note: Great analysis, but flawed on the sexual side
Very, very good analysis.
Yet, it's also flawed when it comes to sexual dynamics. The authors fail to realize that those men developed a drive to hard work *because* of the more sexual opportunities that the fruit of their work awarded them with.

- **But our society isn't very welcoming of warriors**

Say the authors:

> We live in a time when people are generally uncomfortable with the
> Warrior form of masculine energy, and for good reasons.
> Women especially are uncomfortable with it since they have often
> been the most direct victims of its shadow expressions.

The Warrior Shadows

Warriors that are *completely* unemotional or only destructive are poor and underdeveloped archetypes of masculinity.

The movie "The Great Santini" is an example of the shadow Warrior with too much aggression and too little emotional depth:

Say the authors:

> Most of his remarks and behavior toward his wife and children are depreciating, critica, commanding, and designed to put distance between him and the family members, who keep trying to relate to him lovingly.
> The destructiveness of this way of "relating" eventually becomes so obvious to everyone, especially to the older son, that there can no longer be any hiding from the fact that **Santini's sometimes violent behavior results from his own inability to be tender and genuinely intimate.**

Many young men these days admire the wrong kind of warriors. Say the authors:

> A contemporary image of the Warrior turned passionless killing machine is, of course, Darth Vader from the

> Star Wars saga. It is alarming how many boys and adolescents identify with him. In this same connection, it is also alarming how many of these young men become members of survivalist and neo-Nazi groups.

The Warrior as a destructive can overcome us when we are frightened or very angry, like in this scene from Apocalypse Now reference by the authors themselves:

And that's the importance of inner mental control to be an effective and value-adding warrior.

- Sadist: Though detachment in itself is not necessarily bad. as we've said. it does leave the door open to the "demon" of cruelty. Because he is so vulnerable in this area of relatedness. the man under the influence of the Warrior needs urgently to have his mind and his feelings under control-not repressed. but under control. Otherwise. cruelty will sneak in the back door when he's not looking.
  Far too often We see this same kind of sadism displayed in boot camp in the name of supposedly necessary "ritual humiliation" designed to
  deprive recruits of their individuality and put them under the power of a transpersonal devotion. Far too often, the drill sergeant's motives are the motives of the sadistic Warrior seeking to humiliate and violate the men put in his charge.
- Masochist: the masochist is the "pushover" and "whipped puppy" that lies just beneath the Sadist's rageful displays. The Masochist
  projects Warrior energy onto others and causes a man to experience
  himself as powerless. The man possessed by the Masochist is unable to
  defend himself psychologically; he allows others (and himself) to push
  him around.

Finally, say the authors:

> If we are accessing the Warrior appropriately, we will be energetic, decisive, courageous, enduring, persevering, and loyal to some greater good beyond our own personal gain.
> We will light good fights in order to make the world a better and more fulfilling place for everyone and everything. Our war making will be for the creation of the new, the just, and the free.

#3. Magician

The Magician is the knower, the one with technical expertise and knowledge of all kinds.

Write the authors:

> The energies of the Magician archetype, wherever and whenever we encounter them, are twofold. The Magician is the knower and he is the master of technology. Furthermore, the man who is guided by the power of the Magician is able to fulfill these Magician functions in part by his use of ritual initiatory processes. He is the "ritual elder" who guides the processes of transformation.

This is the magician era, in a way, since it's an era where technology is put to use to control our environment. But it's the other form of Magician energy that is in short supply, the one based on psychological and spiritual initiatory processes.

The Magician Shadows

- Detached manipulator: more details on manipulation here, and more information on dark psychology here
- Denying "innocent" one: using guilt-tripping and covert power moves to control others

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

#4. Lover

The lover enjoys life's pleasure and is comfortable in his own skin and own body.

But there is also something deeper about the lover and about his interconnectedness with the world.
Say the authors:

> The Lover is deeply sensual-sensually aware and sensitive to the physical world in all its splendor. The Lover is related and connected to them all, drawn into them through his sensitivity.
> His sensitivity leads him to feel compassionately and empathetically united with them. For the man accessing the Lover. all things are bound to each other.

But he is also a rebel:

> The man under the influence of the Lover does not want to stop at socially created boundaries.
> He stands against the artificiality of such things. His life is often unconventional and "messy".

The major religions have always prosecuted the lover, say the authors.

The Lover Shadows

- Addicted lover: the addictive personality that gets lots in short-term pleasure
- Impotent lover: feel nothing, live in a muted world, and are chronically depressed

> The Lover needs the Warrior in order to be able to act decisively, in order to detach from the web of immobilizing sensuality, and he needs the Magician to help him back off from the ensnaring effect of his emotions.

Boyhood Archetypes

Like for the masculine energies, the boy energies also overlap and inform each other.

All the shadow forms of the immature masculine can be carried over adulthood if they are not fixed.

Divine child

The divine child is the future king.

The shadows are:

- High-chair tyrant: needs to learn that he's not the center of the universe, and the people and the world do not exist to serve and glorify him
- Weakling prince: the polar opposite of the high-chair tyrant. The Weakling Prince appears to have very little personality, no enthusiasm for life, and very little initiative. This is the boy who needs to be coddled, who dictates to those around him by his silence or his whining and complaining helplessness. He needs to be carried around on a pillow. Everything is too much for him. He rarely joins in children's games: he has few friends; he doesn't do well in school; he is frequently hypochondriacal; his slightest wish is his parents' command; the whole family system revolves around his comfort. He reveals the dishonesty of his helplessness, however, in his daggerlike verbal assaults on his siblings, his biting sarcasm directed against them, and his patent manipulation

of their feelings. Because he convinced his parents that he is a helpless victim of life and that others are picking on him, when a controversy arises between himself and a sibling, his parents tend to punish the sibling and excuse him.
Later, when he is an "adult" and functioning primarily under the dominance of the Weakling, his repressed grandiosity may explode to the surface, completely raw and primitive, completely unmodulated and very powerful. This is the man who seemed coolheaded and rational and "nice" but who, once he's been promoted, suddenly becomes "a different person, "a little Hitler". This is the man for whom the saying "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely" is entirely accurate.

Precocious child

He is the future magician.

The Precocious Child manifests in a boy when he is eager to learn, when his mind is quickened. when he wants to share what he is learning with others.

The shadows are:

- Know it all trickster: verbally abusive of others whom he regards as inferior. Carried over into adulthood, the man is cocky and smug, with a superior grin. But he can be good at pricking the bubbles of other big inflated egos. Also see the "smart alec" in the "archetypes of dominance".
- Dummy: like the Weakling Prince, lacks personality, vigor, and creativity. He seems unresponsive and dull. He can't seem to learn his multiplication tables, count change, or tell time. The Dummy's ineptitude, however. is frequently less than honest.
  He may grasp far more than he shows, and his dummy behavior may mask a hidden grandiosity that feels itself too important (as well as too vulnerable) to come into the world. Thus, intimately intertwined with a secret Know-It-All, the Dummy is also a Trickster.

Oedipal Child

He is hte future lover.

He is passionate and has a sense of wonder and a deep appreciation for connectedness with his inner depths, with others, and with all things.
He is warm. related. and affectionate. He also expresses. through his experience of connectedness to Mother (the primal relationship for almost all of us), the origins of what we can call spirituality. T

his Mother is not his real, mortal mother.
She is bound to disappoint him much of the time in his need for connectedness and perfect or infinite, love and nurturing. Rather, the Mother that he is sensing beyond his own, beyond all the beauty and feeling (what the Greeks called eros) in the things of the world.

The shadows are:

- Momma's boy: tied to Mama's apron strings." He causes a boy to fantasize about marrying his mother, about taking her away from his father. in adulthood, he often gets caught up in chasing the beautiful, the poignant, the yearning for union with Mother from one woman to another. He can never be satisfied with a
  mortal woman, because what he is seeking is the immortal Goddess. Here we have the Don Juan syndrome, The Oedipal Child, inflated beyond mortal dimensions, cannot be bound to one woman.
- Dreamer: while other children are playing, he may sit on a rock. dreaming his dreams. He accomplishes little and appears withdrawn and depressed. Often his dreams rend to be melancholy, on the one hand, or highly idyllic and ethereal
  on the other.

All the immature masculine energies are overly tied to Mother, and are deficient in their experience of the nurturing and mature masculine. But especially so is the Oedipal Child.

The Hero

He is the future warrior.

The “death” of the Hero in the life of a boy (or a man) really means that he has finally encountered his limitations. He has met the enemy, and the enemy is himself. He has met his own dark side, his very unheroic side.

The “death” of the Hero signals a boy’s or man’s encounter with true humility.

The shadows are:

- Grandstander bully: The boy (or man) under the power of the Bully intends to impress others. His strategies are designed to proclaim his superiority and his right to dominate those around him. He claims center stage as his birthright. If ever his claims to special status are challenged, watch the ensuing rageful displays! is not a ream player. He is a loner, a hot-shot junior executive, salesman, revolutionary, stock market manipulator. He’s the soldier who takes unnecessary risks in combat and, if he’s in a position of leadership, requires the same of his men (these are the officers who get “dragged“).
- Coward: shows an extreme reluctance to stand up for himself in physical confrontations. He will usually run away from a fight. perhaps excusing himself by claiming that it is more “manly” to walk away. But he will feel wretched in spite of his excuses. It is not only physical fights he will avoid. however. He will tend to allow himself to be bullied emotionally and intellectually as well.

Say the authors:

> And all three energies give rise to the Hero, which breaks them free of the domination of the “feminine” unconscious and establishes the boy’s identity as a separate individual. The Hero prepares the boy to become a man.

But the Hero still needs to grow and mature:

> The Hero is, in fact. only an advanced form of Boy psychology-the most advanced form. The peak, actually, of the masculine energies of the boy, the archetype that characterizes the best in the adolescent stage of development. Yet it is immature. and when it is carried over into adulthood as the governing archetype, it blocks men from full maturity.

Criticism

“King, Warrior, Magician, Lover” is a great book.
But there is some important criticism to be raised.

1. Somewhat weaker in hard science

Take this example:

> Jungians have found that in every man there is a feminine subpersonality called the Anima, made up of the feminine archetypes (…) All human beings can access the archetypes

Not true.
Jungians didn’t *find out*.
Jungians *speculated* and *theorized* that in every man there is feminine subpersonality.

Big difference.

The same superficial approach in mixing theory and science can be found elsewhere:

> Jung and his successors have found that on the level of the deep unconscious the psyche of every person is grounded in what Jung called the "collective unconscious"

Again, these folks didn't "found that", they "*speculated* that… ".

Those speculations might be intelligent, thoughtful, and even correct. But they might not.
Personally, I'm not too sold on this "collective unconscious" sitting in the "deep unconscious psyche" (that name also gives away the scientific flimsiness).

Sometimes it's very Freudian, too (see next point).
For example, it gives for granted that the subconscious in men is feminine (the mother).
But there's no evidence for that.

2. At times, highly Freudian

Freudian was a genius.
And, at the same time, also an unscientific idiot who believed too much in his own speculations.

So to me, "Freudian" isn't always a compliment.
And some Freudian lines and explanations didn't convince me. For example:

> The man under the influence of the Shadow Warrior's bipolarity, **unsure of his legitimate phallic power**, is still **battling against what he experiences as the inordinately powerful feminin**e and against everything supposedly "soft" and relational. Even in adulthood, **he still feels terrified that he will be swallowed up by it**. His desperate fear of this leads him to wanton brutality.

So some men are brutal because are "battling the feminine side"?
Hmmm, there might be something there, in some cases. But when I see these sweeping generalizations, I get angry. Some individuals are brutal because they wired that way and because they have low morals, and they are unworthy of being alive. And not because they are "battling their feminine side".

Or:

> In addition, the boy under the power of the Mama's Boy is what is called autoerotic. He may compulsively masturbate. He may be into pornography, seeking the Goddess in the nearly infinite forms of the female body.

So wait a second, a child who masturbates a lot and is into pornography is not high in sex drives and hormones, but he is "seeking the Goddess"?

Somebody once said something like this: "don't look for a convoluted explanation when there is a far simpler one that more accurately explains it".

3. Sometimes forgets that human nature exists *before* "archetypes" and is valid *across* archetypes

The author says that the warrior ethos:

> "explains the prevalence of prostitutes around military camps. It also explains the horrific tradition of the raping of conquered women."

No man, military camps have prostitutes because men want to have sex. And men raping women has little to do with the warrior ethos and more to do with general human nature. Most men who are recruited as soldiers during wars weren't even warriors by choice anyway.

Little later he says that businessmen with a warrior ethos have sex with their staff supposedly because warriors see women as fun.
Again, the authors fail to see and understand general evolutionary psychology.

Men have probably developed conscientiousness and a drive for hard work because that allowed them to bed more women.

4. Misleading on genders and homosexuality

The authors seem to imply that homosexuality and "gender identity" chaos stem from not growing well into the archetypes.

For example, write the authors:

> Some men under the infantile power of the Mama's Boy
> aspect of the Oedipal Child have vast collections of pictures of nude
> women, alone or making love with men
> (…)
> But instead of affirming his own masculinity as a mortal man, he is really seeking to experience the penis of God-the Great Phallus-that experiences all women, or rather that experiences union with the Mother Goddess in her infinity of female forms.

So a kid who makes love to men is not gay, but lost in the Oedipal child?

And:

> Ours is an age, as we've said, of personal and gender identity chaos. And chaos is always the result of inadequate accessing of the Magician in some vital area of life.

I loved this book and this model, but… Do the authors really believe that this model can fix everything?
How is gender identity exactly tied to the "Magician"? That made little sense to me and, at the very least, was poorly explained.

5. Some new-age woo-woo

Say the authors:

> Modern subatomic physics, it has been said, looks very much like Eastern mysticism as it approaches the intuited insights of Hinduism and Taoism.
> This new physics is discovering a microworld beneath our seemingly solid macroworld of sense perceptions.

Wait, *who* said that?
And then trying to tie that woo-woo to psychology.

> The same is true of depth psychology.
> Jung, as he was making his first maps of the unconscious, was struck by the similarities between what he was

> discovering about the energy flows and the archetypal patterns in the human psyche and the quamum physics

6. “Back then when it was great” rose-tinted glasses

There is an element of the “back then when it was great syndrome”.
Say the authors:

> At least there were at one time sacred kings, upon whom the men in the realm could project their inner King

I think the authors would change their minds in a heartbeat if he could live some years in the reign of some despotic, petty, ignorant Middle Age king as a poor peasant.

7. Too optimistic in granting grand and positive potential to anyone?

The king is “primal” in *all* men?

I disagree.

I think some people are just crooked, or not born with the positive attributes to be a positive force in the world.

8. In rare cases, weak in psychological description

Say the authors:

> Though introverted and reflective. he is also extroverted and eagerly reaches out to others to share his insights and his talents with them

This felt a bit convoluted and like a description that was made up to fit the model, instead of the other way around. So he is introverted, or extroverted? Because, barring ambiverts and introverts who *learned* to act more extrovertedly, introversion and extraversion are usually understood as mutually exclusive.

9. Do you need “initiation”?

Say the authors:

> A man who “cannot get it together” is a man who has probably not had the opportunity to undergo ritual initiation into the deep structures of manhood

More recent authors have taken a leaf out of Moore and Gillette book on the “initiation” part and expanded on tribal belonging as “The Way of Men”.
For example, see Sebastian Junger and Jack Donovan.

I’m not too sold on the benefits of initiation, though.

I think that initiation at too early an age can easily be a form of oppression and, potentially, abusive. Initiation is about foisting and forcing values and culture into someone who is still too young to decide whether he wants to be part of that culture and way of living.

Me for one, I’d be super pissed if someone had initiated me into anything. Well, as a matter of fact, I have. I’ve been initiated into Christianity without anyone asking me.
And I didn’t like that.
Don’t f*cking force me into anything a**hole, I decide for myself.

Quotes

> The drug dealer, the ducking and diving political leader, the wife beater, the chronically “crabby” boss, the “hot shot” junior executive, the unfaithful husband, the company “yes man,” the indifferent graduate school adviser, the “holier than thou” minister, the gang member, the father who can never find the time to attend his daughter’s school programs, the coach who ridicules his star athlete, the therapist who unconsciously attacks his clients’ “shining” and seeks a kind of gray normalcy for them, the yuppie – all these men have something in common.
> **They are all boys pretending to be men**.

The know-it-all trickster:

> Maybe you’re the practical joker. mercilessly hounding others with your pranks until someone does you one better and you are forced to realize how much it hurts.

On the trickster making enemies:

> We once knew a graduate student who was really possessed by this aspect of the archetype. He couldn’t stop exposing others’ weaknesses through his charming, and not so charming, humor at their expense.
> He laughed at his professors’ blunders in the classroom. He laughed when the president of the school stumbled over his words. He himself had political aspirations. hoping to create a student movement for his favorite cause.
> But he alienated the very people he needed as supporters

On not making enemies, also read:

- **Basic strategies of power**

> The 4 Fundamental Strategies of Power

On the trickster’s pleasure of ruining other without doing anything of his own:

> This is the energy form that seeks the fall of great men. that delights in the destruction of a man of importance. But the Trickster does not want to replace the man who has fallen. He does not want to take up that man’s responsibilities. In fact. he doesn’t want any responsibilities. He wants to do just enough to wreck things for others.

On envy:

> His energy comes from envy. The less a man is in touch with his true talents and abilities. the more he will envy others. If we envy a lot. we are denying our own realistic greatness. our own Divine Child. What we need to do, then, is to get in touch with our own specialness. our own beauty. and our own creativity. Envy blocks creativity.

On having heroes;

> The Know-It-All Trickster has no heroes. because to have heroes is to admire others. We can only admire

> others if we have a sense of our own worthiness. and a developing sense of security about our own creative energies.

Review

Wow!

What a great, insightful, helpful book “King, Warrior, Magician, Lover” is.

Albeit I had to list the important criticism, that doesn’t cancel out the greatness that is to be found in the pages of this classic on masculinity.

Most eye-opening for me were the Warrior and King archetypes, together with their shadows.
Most of all, **I was wowed because this book reflected some of the values and ideals of this website, and it helped expand on them**.
One of the values of this website said:

- **Do your diligence, based on healthy individualism, on when it’s time to take up arms**: Some of us have natural drives in wanting to form bands, taking up arms, and fighting “the other”. If you’re a man, this is a reality of our nature. I know it is for me, too. Denying that drive is pointless, and even harmful.
  Plus, that drive can be a good thing.

What I was talking about there was the “Warrior” in its mature and value-adding form.
So the authors helped me expand on that concept.

I can highly recommend this book to men who want to grow into being the best, most powerful, and at the same time most value-adding version of themselves.

Check the:

- **Best manosphere books**: the must-read for men

Introduction to Negotiation (Yale University): Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 August 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Introduction to Negotiation: A Strategic Playbook for Becoming a Principled and Persuasive Negotiator is a 9-week online Yale college course on negotiation techniques taught by professor Barry Nalebuff.
It is often considered as one of the best available resources to learn negotiations.

Contents

- Full Summary
- Negotiation Concept/Theories
- Negotiation Principles/Strategies
- Fighting Fires
- Negotiation Quick Tips
- Negotiating For A Raise
- Bullet Summary

- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Full Summary

About The Professor: Barry Nalebuff is a Milton Steinbach Professor at Yale where he teaches negotiation, innovation, and game theory. He is the co-author of six books, co-founder of Honest Tea (a company that has grown organically to over $100 million in sales and was purchased by Coca-Cola). Alongside Honest Tea, Barry advised the NBA in their negotiations with the National Basketball Players Association and serves on the board of Nationwide Insurance. A graduate of MIT, Rhodes Scholar, and Junior Fellow at Harvard's Society of Fellows, Nalebuff earned his doctorate at Oxford University.

Negotiation Concept/Theories

1. The Pie

The pie is how much more two parties can achieve by working together than they can get on their own. According to Barry Nalebuff, you should always calculate the pie. Then, since you're essential to make that pie, you should get at least half.

2. The BATNA

The terms "BATNA" and "reservation value" are both synonyms for walkaway price. As a seller, don't accept anything less than your reservation value/BATNA. As a buyer, don't pay more.

If it helps you to understand the concept of BATNA, ask yourself: "As a seller, what is the least amount I'd be willing to accept before walking away? As a buyer, what's the most I'd be willing to pay before walking away?"

3. Anchor

A psychological principle stating that the first number we hear tends to anchor our perceptions close to that value.

We will see later how that can be used as a negotiation technique.

Negotiation Principles/Strategies

This is a list of the strategies highlight in “A Strategic Playbook for Becoming a Principled and Persuasive Negotiator”:

1. Claiming Power in the Negotiation: Put Your Foot Down

I originally thought against sharing this one because it’s a strategy suggested by John McCall MacBain that I thought was a terrible idea. However, this is a strategy that was taught to me throughout my studies at a Yale college course, so if the negotiation world really has people who resort to strategies such as this one and you want to arm yourself against bullies over here at The Power Moves, it’s only fair that I share this one so you can keep an eye out for it.

One strategy for dealing with delays is to claim the power in the negotiation by putting your foot down.

Ex 1:

> You and a journalist are buying out the balance of the equity in a business. The journalist (who is the moral force in the room) keeps delaying things. As a joke, you take his glasses, put them on the floor with your foot hovered above them and say:
>
> **You**: “Look, let’s get this done. I’ll do the typing because now you can’t see the computer and let me just put my foot here so you just listen, we’ll get these things done.”

Ex 2:

> You are negotiating in a room with another party that keeps delaying. You ask for the key, lock the room door, put the key in your pocket and say:
>
> **You**: “Look, this is going on too long. Let’s sit down and none of us leave until we get this done.”
>
> **The Other Side**: “What are you doing?”
>
> **You**: “Look, you said you wanted to get this done. Why are you avoiding staying in the room?”

For everyone who wants to be a social charmer instead of an MTU, I strongly advise against this.

2. Argument Flipping (& The Principle of Fairness)

**I coined this strategy “argument flipping” because it has no definitive name, but is reminiscent of the “frame flip” in frame control techniques.*

This is a negotiation strategy where you take an argument made by the other side and flip it back on them to your benefit using fairness.

Here is an example from the course:

> **The Buyer**: “Hey, we’re Coca-Cola. For us, eight million isn’t even a rounding error on a rounding error. For you, one million really matters a huge amount. It’s the difference between life and death. Therefore, you should be happy with a million. We’ll take the seven million. Thank you very much.”
>
> **You:** “Well, hey, Coca-Cola, you just told me you don’t care. Eight million is a rounding error in a rounding error. So, nobody will notice if you don’t even get it. Therefore, since we care so much, we’d like to have the seven million and you can have the one million. And who will notice?”

3. Taking Items Off the Table

It's important to take items off the table so the negotiation can move forward. In a situation where multiple packages, payment plans, etc. are being negotiated, one strategy to take items off the table is writing each package on a separate piece of paper, holding it up to the other side, and getting confirmation that the information on the papers is correct. After the package has been negotiated, slam it onto the table face down.

Whenever the other side hears the slam, it sub communicates to them that reopening the package for negotiation by turning the paper back over is a bad move that could annoy you, hurt their relationship with you, and prolong the negotiation since they're now reintroducing a package that had already been negotiated.

**Note: This is a strategy used by John McCall MacBain. If you ask me, this is the strategy that you might see used by your classic MTU, using confidence and physical aggression to reach their goals and top dog positions in their lines of work. If you want to use the MTU style of dominance, go for it. Otherwise, avoid this one.*

4. Lie Prevention

To prevent the other side from lying to you, one of the most important things to do is to not ask the other side questions that give them the incentive to lie. For example, say you're negotiating with your boss:

> **You**: "So, what's the most you're willing to pay me?"

Asking for the other side's BATNA gives them the incentive to lie since, in most cases, they want to pay the least amount possible.

Instead, ask questions that give the other side the right incentives to tell the truth.

> **You**: "Do you prefer distributing pay raises over giving promotions?"

5. First and Final Offer

There are some negotiators that take the approach of offering what they believe to be a generous and fair proposal. After making that proposal as their first offer, they then refuse to budge. This strategy is an ultimatum and it ignores the other side's expectations for the negotiation since you're making decisions for them and aren't allowing them to be more involved in the process. This approach also "lights a fire" which could sour the negotiation and possibly the business relationship you have with the other side.

This ultimatum can be dealt with using "The Hypothetical Offer Tactic".

6. Never Say No

Never say no.
Instead, let the other side say no to you. You can do this by making an offer the other side might reject, but that you'd be happy to take.

Ex: Imagine you're unhappy in your job and decide to quit. Instead of just quitting, come up with a package that would entice you to stay. Let the firm say no to you. The worst that can happen is they say no and you leave, but you were planning on doing that anyway. On the other hand, they might say yes.

If the other side says no to a package or deal that you would prefer, encourage them to come up with a package of their own that would entice them to take your deal.

> **You**: "What would it take to get you to be on board with this deal?"

Or:

> **You**: "Is there anything I can do to change your mind?"

7. Ultimatum

One way to get power in a negotiation is to put yourself in a position where you can make ultimatums. (Use that power with discretion!)

8. The No Incentive Principle

A fair deal should have an incentive that acts as the motivation for parties to collaborate as opposed to working independently. If there's no incentive, then there's no fairness in the deal.

> **You**: "To the extent that you need our help, our cooperation, our effort to make this all work, we aren't being appropriately incentivized. Whereas under this deal, we've got the incentives aligned with the action we want."

9. The Asymmetric Risk Principle

For a deal to be considered fair, the gains, as well as the risk, should all be fairly distributed.

> **You**: "The risk is all off. The question is, there's a huge spread between my potential loss and potential benefit, where you are taking little to no risk whatsoever. Now, maybe you shouldn't take as much risk as me, but I don't know why it's all in one party rather than the other."

10. The Potential Regret Principle

An effective and legitimate principle is the idea of no regret.

> **You**: "We could regret having made the decision to go with this deal if [insert risk that comes with deal] because in that case we are out [insert potential loss]. But under this deal, no matter what happens, whether [insert risk again] works out or doesn't, we are both still better off having done the deal than not."

Or:

> **You**: "You know, I had the option of making [insert BATNA] and now if [insert risk that comes with deal] doesn't work out, I'm only going to be at [insert benefit remaining after potential loss]. So, it's true that if [insert risk again] works out I'll be up to [insert total benefit after potential gain] and that's better off. But I will regret having made this decision in the event that it doesn't work out."

11. The Principle of Fairness

Fairness is an effective principle to base your principled argument upon and operate as a more strategic negotiator. Barry Nalebuff says that it's not numbers we treat fairly in negotiations, it's people. You can use that logic to construct arguments that are harder to counter.

> **You**: "This [insert numeric value of the pie] that might happen if the deal goes through is our incentive to work together. I can't do that without you and you can't do that without me. If you like, it takes two hands to make a handshake. So, since we need each other equally to make that happen, I think we should split it equally. 50, 50."

12. The Hypothetical Offer Tactic

This tactic is a clever way to encourage the other side to work with you to create new options when they're stuck or focused on only one or two options.

> **The Other Side**: "It's either going to be package A or package B or the deal is off."
> **You**: "Well, let's see. A is $25 million. Would you take $26 million?"

*Of course, the other side would want more money if it's an option. However, you're not saying that you'd give them more money, you're simply showing them that with a little joint problem-solving the both of you could find a better option than just the ones on the table. By doing this, you are able to block their ultimatum and work towards expanding the pie.

13. Anchoring

**I won't go too into detail on this because Lucio has some great book reviews that explain anchoring better than I can.*

If you have the opportunity to make the first offer, a low bid may help you lower the final price. If you're selling, a high asking price may help you get more money. This is one of the advantages of going first because the first number people hear serves as an anchor or starting point. Thus, a low bid will drag down your view as to the right starting point and similarly, hearing a high number will pull up your view as to the best asking price.

A couple of quick qualifications to consider before anchoring:

1. Starting too low or too high may be counterproductive because your first offer conveys both an anchor and information. If as a seller your asking price is too high, buyers might think you're out of touch and wouldn't bother to waste their time by bidding. Conversely, if as a buyer you start with a bid that's too low, it could demonstrate that you have no idea what the seller's product/service is worth (or worse, that you do and are trying to steal the product/service from under them.)
2. In some cases, a low anchor might help you get a higher price. The reason is that it brings more people into the bidding which helps raise the price.

13.2. Ignoring the Anchor

If you're on the receiving end and the other side presents you with a low first offer or high first ask, you should be aware of the anchoring effect and consciously counter it.

> **You**: "I think we may be looking at this deal in very different ways. Let's try and find some common ground by discussing…"

14. Good Cop, Bad Cop

A covert threat that communicates: "If you don't do this deal with me, you'll have to face my tough, hard-hitting partner to finish the negotiations on this deal."

> **The Other Side:** "I think this deal is gonna go more smoothly then it could have because actually, luckily for you, my co-worker who would usually be here to do this deal is actually working another deal. So, she couldn't be here today and she's a hard hitter. I am easy-going."

Calling the other side out on their good cop, bad cop game can start the negotiations off on a bad foot and implicitly letting their covert threat go communicates that you accept their threat (and approve of this power relationship) which puts you in a weak position. So, here's how Barry Nalebuff recommends handling it:

> **You:** "I guess we're both lucky. My wife's not here either even though she's a pretty hard hitter too, so it's okay."

15. The Precise Bid Tactic

A precise number gets a much better response/counter than a rough number because, with precise numbers, people think that you have some logic behind it, some principle that you've given consideration and thought to in your ask. Instead, if you're just putting up rough numbers, the other side thinks you haven't given great consideration and will respond/counter thinking that maybe you have no idea what your item is worth.

**Quick note for clarification: making a price which is a really round number like $200 will have a much worse response than a precise bid such as $197. A quite strategic way of getting more by asking for less :).*

16. Put Out the Fire (Humor Framing): Outrageous Offers

When someone lights a fire, a good way to defuse the situation is to use a little bit of humor while letting the other side know that what they asked for wasn't appropriate.

> **You:** "That's great! Where do I sign?"
>
> **You:** "Just kidding. Because if that's really what you want, I don't think a deal's gonna be possible."

17. Post-Settlement Settlement

A post-settlement settlement can be used to make both parties happier with the deal they've struck.

> **You**: "I'm delighted that you're happy, my goal is to make us both happier. If I can't succeed in doing that, fine, we'll go back to the deal that we both like, so that's still on the table. But, please give me a chance to see if I can make us both better off because I'm pretty sure that's going to be a possibility."

18. Recovering From A Lie: Stop Digging

A good general rule to follow is that when you're in a hole, stop digging. In other words, adding on more lies or furthering the lie you created only gets you in deeper.

> **You:** "My current salary is $10,000 more than what you've offered."
>
> **The Other Side:** "Fine, just bring us a current pay stub and we can match it."
>
> **You:** "I'm so embarrassed. I feel you were very sincere with me and I didn't reciprocate. When I told you that my salary was $10,000 more than what you're offering, I exaggerated. I'm really sorry and I want to apologize to you. I hope you realize that I've learned my lesson and that we could still work together."

Fighting Fires

There's a big question of what happens when somebody makes a threat, an ultimatum, lies to you, etc. How should you respond?

So, the question is really, when somebody lights a fire, how do you respond?

1. Fight Fire With Fire

A typical response is, meet fire with fire. The fight fire with fire approach is to basically say, I'll make a threat back to you.

2. Put Out the Fire (Rational High Ground)

Alternatively, when someone lights a fire, put out the fire.

> **The Other Side**: *Delivers a threat.*
>
> **You**: "Do we really want to play that game? I could say the following to you, but I don't think that's going to help us get a deal."

3. Put Out the Fire (Rational High Ground): Analyze Motivations

Sometimes you will find yourself negotiating with people who, for one reason or another, will lie. If they lie about a better alternative to your deal that they (supposedly) have to get you to put your price more in their favor, you can put out the fire by analyzing their motivations to do a deal with you as opposed to simply going with that alternative.

> **You**: "I can only pay up to $450,000."
>
> **The Other Side**: "I have another offer of $500,000 [crosses arms and locks eye contact]."
>
> **You**: [Ask yourself] Why did he come here? If he had another offer and he didn't think I would go up at all or very little, he wouldn't even be dealing with me. Why would he rather do a deal with me? What do I have that his alternative does NOT that he wants?

4. Put Out the Fire (Submissiveness): Embarrassment

There's no referee that yells, "Ready? Negotiation…start!" to let you know that negotiations have begun. So, if you're the kind of person that likes to go after what they want while getting the best deal possible, you may have to be the one to initiate negotiations.

When the other side tries to embarrass you about the fact that you're negotiating, negotiation expert Herb Cohen recommends taking a soft tone with a more childlike approach that communicates to the other side you want/need their help.

An example is if you're in a store and the price tag has already established the price of the product to the cashier, but you're negotiating the price anyway. By asking for help the way Cohen recommends, you get the other side more involved in the negotiation process.

**Note: If you've read Lucio's articles on frame control, you know that there are more dominant ways around dealing with those who aim to embarrass you that won't lower your status in the end. I partially disagree with this strategy because while submissiveness can be used to your advantage when you have no real leverage, the extent that Cohen urges his students to behave submissively can actually harm your chances of negotiation success.*

5. Put Out the Fire (Rational High Ground): Outrageous Offers/Lowball

When someone makes an outrageous offer or lowballs you, respond with rational questions that invite them to justify their demand. If they can't justify their demand, it's worthless.

**Note: Lucio might call this using questions to negotiate frames. Use questions to allow them to clarify their frame so you can persuade them into a more collaborative direction.*

> **You**: "I don't understand how you could come up with that. Could you explain it to me?"

6. Put Out the Fire (Humor Framing) 2: Outrageous Offers/Lowball

To deal with someone who tries to lowball you or gives you an outrageous offer, you can make up a story that invites them to justify their demand (their frame) while putting out the fire.

> **You**: "In a way, I was thinking about what you might come up with. I was thinking as I came over in an Uber and I said, I think he'll ask for this. No, then on the other hand, I said to myself, no, maybe he'll ask for this. I had somebody with me, so I asked him what do you think? And we both said…and so when you offered [insert outrageous offer], we were both wrong! I'm in a state of shock, how'd you come up with that?"

Something to consider with this one: this may be good at helping you build rapport since more conversation invites more opportunity to connect, but I would decide against this one.
As Lucio put it, the rules of thumb for social power are:

1. Use as little effort as possible to get it done
2. Use the most direct response you can afford (going more indirect could underline fear).

This expands a lot of social effort to achieve the same goal that "Put Out the Fire (Rational High Ground): Outrageous Offers/Lowball" does.

7. Handling "We Will Crush You"

As a buyer, one way you can get someone to do a deal with you is by raising your price to make your offer more attractive.

Another way, is by making the idea of rejecting your offer look like a bad idea. In other words, you can work to lower the other side's BATNA. This can be done through the threat of competition. In this example, let's imagine that you're negotiating with a company that wants to buy your company.

> **The Other Side**: "You know, you really, really really should take our offer because if you don't, what we're gonna do is we're gonna come into the market and we are going to crush you, so that your company is going to be worth nothing when we're done.
>
> **You**: [Puts out the fire] "We want to have nothing to do with you because if that's the kind of person you are, frankly, we don't want to trust our company and the future of this great business that we built to someone who wants to act in that fashion.

While this threat is aggressive, this is a situation where it's not just what you say, it's *how* you say it. In other words, this threat can alternatively be delivered as more of a "fair warning" if it's coming from a place of positivity and good faith negotiation practice.

For this example, imagine that you own a tea company and Coca-Cola wants to talk about buying your company:

> **Coca-Cola**: "At Coca-Cola, we sold tea—bottled tea—in a joint venture with Nestle, under the brand name Nestea. That joint venture wasn't working as well as we had hoped and so we've ended the joint venture. As a result, we now have a mandate to go and purchase a tea company. Tea is the biggest hole in our beverage portfolio. We've looked around the country, around the world, and you are our first choice. So we would like to buy your company and have you be apart of our family. However, if it turns out that we're not able to get our first choice, we are still going to have to do something because this isn't a "would like to have", this is a must have for us. So, we hope that we succeed in doing the deal with you, but at the end of the day, we are going to purchase a tea company."

See how this still works as a "competition threat" but isn't so much of a threat as it is a fair warning?

If you were in the position of the buyer, bullying someone into a deal would sour the negotiation and sets up a power relationship that the other side would not appreciate. However, it's okay to help the other side appreciate the consequences of what it is that's likely to happen if you don't reach an agreement.

Negotiation Quick Tips

Don't Lie

When you lie, you complicate the negotiations. Admitting you lied or fabricated information creates a whole different series of problems. How can the other side trust anything you say going forward?

Pay Attention

You don't have to be able to read micro-expressions like an expert, but if you aren't even looking at the person (say, for instance, you have your attention on your phone) then you have no hope of picking up on when the other side may be lying to you. Even if you can't recognize lies, don't make it easier for the other side to lie to you. Look at the person. Make eye contact.

Negotiating For A Raise

One of the most typical -and most important- negotiations people will ever face is negotiating for a salary increase.

So I teased out all the best content from Yale's "Introduction to Negotiation" and came up with a step-by-step guide on how to negotiate for a raise.

Bullet Summary

- **Phase 1:** Pre-bargaining. This is when you gather and give information before the negotiation starts.
- **Phase 2:** The actual negotiation and exchange/proposals which are concluded at the deadline.
- **Phase 3:** Afterward. (Remember, negotiation is a process which means it goes on and on and most relationships tend to be continuing. There are very few "one-shot" deals.)

Phase 1 – Pre-bargaining

1. Step Zero: Negotiation Preparation

To be successful in negotiating, think carefully about what's important to you. Maybe it's money, maybe it's responsibilities, maybe it's a title, maybe it's the ability to get more experience so you can use that to make it to the next level. It's hard to get your employer to give you what you want if you yourself don't know what to ask for.

2. Prepare Your Persuasive Motive

You're a seller. You're selling the idea of why your employer should give you a raise. It is not really a problem to reveal your motives for selling. However, depending on the reason you give, your employer will be persuaded into a positive or negative reaction. As a side note I thought of while writing this, consider using Simon Sinek's *Start with Why* to persuade your employer using a mission or goal you're working towards:

The course material didn't have an example, so here is one I came up with:

> **Your Employer**: "If I gave you a raise, what would you do with the additional money?" [Why do you want a raise.]
>
> **You:** "As a kid I pretty much kept to myself because I always felt like no one truly understood me. Anytime I would watch movies or TV I'd make believe I lived in that world for a bit–I identified with these people and even though I was alone, I was never lonely! People do things on-screen that we are too afraid to do in real life, they share themselves with the world–they are truly brave. I want to reach those people and inspire them to be more brave in their real lives–that is why I've committed such a large part of my life to being an actor and storyteller in addition to working here. With the additional money I would be able to move closer to my goal."

3. “Get Informed”

You don’t want to find yourself in a position where you’re worried that if you say a salary that’s too low, they’ll say yes right away, or if you say a price that’s too high, you’ve started a fire.

1. Research the company and the industry.
2. Find what’s acceptable to ask for and what’s not (if you’re asking for more than just a raise).
3. Position yourself to be allocentric: Learn more about the position that your employer’s in as well as your employer’s interests so you can understand and appreciate them when the actual negotiation starts. Make your best assessment of your employer’s BATNA. In other words, make your best assessment of the most that your employer is willing to pay you.

4. Think Of Negotiation In Phases

The three phases are listed in the bullet summary above. Right now, we’re in phase one.

5. Determine Your BATNA

What is the least you’re willing to accept from your employer?

6. Prepare For Several Scenarios

**”If you wish for peace, prepare for war.”*

Prepare for these situations:

1. Your employer agrees immediately to your offer
2. Your employer counter-offers
3. Your employer starts a fire

7. Get Ready To Leverage Your Lead Time

If you’ve stuck with me so far, know that this is my favorite part of this strategy and why I wanted to write this post for you all. According to negotiation expert Herb Cohen, most people will wait until a week before their boss gives out salary increases to tell their boss that they expect something (and the boss has probably already put the numbers in). They are forgetting that the key is your boss and always will be. It’s about making your boss look good and feel good. So, instead, they should have gotten a commitment from their boss by playing the long game:

1. Step One: Expand the Pie as a First Resort

You go to your boss six months before he’s scheduled to give out salary increases and say:

> **You**: “Look, I really am trying to get a raise. What are the things I have to do in the next six months that would get me an increase in compensation?”

Then, the boss will tell you.

2. Step Two: Prime Their Expectation Level

Three months later you go to your boss again and say:

> **You**: “How am I doing along the way of getting that compensation increase?”

3. Step Three: Close the Deal

One month before the scheduled salary increases you check in with your boss one last time.

Then, on the day of the salary increases, you've got it already because you've affected the expectation level of your boss and the boss knows. It's like the boss has promised it to you and you've both committed to this process over an extended period of time, so you get it.

However, this doesn't guarantee your raise will be as big as you might expect or want it to be. That's why in "Negotiating for a Raise: Phase 2" I'll be going over how to initiate and properly handle the actual negotiation itself according to Yale University.

Phase 2 – Negotiating a Raise

1. Leverage Various Sources Of Power

During the process of Leveraging Your Lead Time, you should prepare various sources of power as you approach the salary increase date.

1.) The power of the printed word: When information is in print, it leads us to believe that the information is set in stone and cannot be negotiated. For example, if your boss printed a packet and said, "Here it is, from the rule book. Rule six in our company is…," then out of respect for the printed word you are likely to accept it and forget that the information in that rulebook was at one point discussed and negotiated over. So, see if you can print information of your own to show to your boss that will help you be more persuasive.

2.) The power of competition: In other words, if the other side knows you have options and that they're not the only buyer/seller they will overestimate your power in the negotiation because you have alternatives to their deal (leading them to underestimate their own power in the negotiation). Try to give yourself alternatives to the deal you want with your employer.

2. Know Your Approach

You should approach your boss in a way that will get him to invest in the negotiation. Here are some sample approaches to consider:

1.) The Relentlessly Pleasant Negotiation Style: A style of negotiation where you are "soft in style, hard in substance". You have to be relentless in terms of going after what you want (a fair deal) but will have a higher success rate by negotiating in a friendly, cooperative, and collaborative way.

2.) The Liking (by Association) Negotiation Style: One way that "liking" works is that we buy more from those we like. In this case, we want your boss to buy into the idea of giving you a raise. Since you have more power in the negotiation the more you get the other side to invest, by being more likable they will like the idea of doing a deal with you more than if you lie, show a lack of integrity, talk too much, contradict them, or act judgemental.

3.) The Low-Key Pose of Calculated Incompetence Negotiation Style: Make sure you don't appear to be the smartest person in the room. Never let people know how bright you are or what you've accomplished; they should ultimately be able to figure this out after the negotiation is over and after you've told them what a great deal they got. Make your boss feel smart. By playing dumb and inarticulate in the negotiation, you get the other side more invested and involved in the process. Train yourself to say:

> **You**: "I don't know. I don't understand. Can you explain that to me again?"

Then, you want to ask your boss for help.

> **You**: "Look, you've been doing this for years. Could you like help me?"

Get them talking, get them doing, get them involved in the process.

3. Have The Champagne Ready

At the last meeting with your boss one month before the scheduled salary increase, it's good to have a bottle of champagne very evident and glasses sometimes at the end of the table. That way, your boss knows that there's a major time element, he must finish up negotiations with you on this deal. You could even bring a card that says "congratulations" and write a note inside congratulating your boss on his good choice.

4. Prepare For A "Breach Of Contract"

You've spent months working with your boss to get this raise. For your boss to change his mind or come up with a sudden excuse why he can't give you the raise anymore would be the equivalent of a breach of contract. When your boss does not negotiate in good faith this way, you can deal with the situation by claiming the moral high ground for yourself and strategically guilt-tripping your employer into a more cooperative frame.

**Note: Personally, I don't agree with some of the above strategies, including this one. Guilt-tripping your boss is not only manipulative but a good way to get yourself fired if you take it too far like how John McCall MacBain recommends in the example here.*

> **You**: "Do you believe in good guys and bad guys?"
>
> **Your Employer:** "Of course, I wanna be a good guy."
>
> **You**: "You really wanna be a good guy in life don't you?"
>
> **Your Employer:** "Yes, I wanna be a good guy."
>
> **You**: "Well, let's take a situation. So, I'm a good guy, like you are, and I shake hands with someone saying…However, somebody, can't be a good guy, a bad guy comes in and says no no…So that person would have to be a bad guy. And you don't wanna be a bad guy do you?"
>
> **Your Employer:** "Of course, I don't wanna be a bad guy."
>
> **You**: "Well look, I can help you. The only solution you have to not be a bad guy is to…"

5. Be Allocentric And Expand The Pie As A First Resort

You were allocentric and expanded the pie when you looked out for the interests of your boss by asking, "What are the things I have to do in the next six months that would get me an increase in compensation?" That was the equivalent of saying:

> **You:** "Look, at some point we are gonna be talking about dollars, I know that. And that's going to be confrontational because you're always going to want me to accept less and I am always going to want more. But before we get there, let's talk about what excites you, what motivates you and how I can help make this deal work better for you."

However, that doesn't mean you can't look for ways to expand the pie further by asking questions like this again at the last meeting.

6. Anchor (High) With A Precise Bid

If you have the opportunity to make the first offer, a high asking price may help you get more money. This is one of the advantages of going first because the first number people hear serves as an anchor or starting point. Thus, your boss hearing a high number will pull up his view as to the best price to pay you. (Qualifications to think about before anchoring can be found in this post.)

A precise number will get a much better response/counter from your boss than a rough number because, with a precise number, your boss will think that you have some logic behind it, some principle that you've given

consideration and thought to in your ask. Instead, if you're just putting up rough numbers, he thinks you haven't given great consideration and will respond/counter thinking that maybe you have no idea what you should be paid.

If he accepts, congrats! If not, continue to negotiate for what you believe is fair.

Real-Life Applications

If I had to remind you of one principle, it would be this:

1. Expand the Pie as a First Resort

In negotiations, buyers will sometimes make the mistake of arguing what the seller's product is worth to be more persuasive in their reasoning for why they believe they should pay less for it. A more productive approach is to start the negotiations off in agreement with the seller on whatever it is they think their product is worth so you can redirect the conversation towards how both of you can make the pie bigger for everyone.

> **You:** "This is what I can do. Work with me and help me to find a way to make this deal possible at the price that I can pay. In particular, I may not be able to pay you as much cash as you like, but what are some of the other things that I can do to help make your life good? What are some of the things that you are worried about in this deal? What are some of the things that excite you about this deal? How can I help relieve you of the worries and increase the level of excitement? And I know, of course, that more cash is always good but what are some of the things besides cash that will make this deal better for you?"

You should seek to expand the pie before butting heads with the other side on just the dollar amounts of the deal. A lot of people look for opportunities to expand the pie as a last resort when there's no other way of making the deal work. By expanding the pie as a first resort, you accrue the benefit of getting people invested in the negotiation and also help appreciate how big a pie can be created.

> **You:** "Look, at some point we are gonna be talking about dollars, I know that. And that's going to be confrontational because you're always going to want me to pay more and I am always going to want to pay less. But before we get there, let's talk about what excites you, what motivates you and how I can help make this deal work better for you."

Or:

> **You:** "What else can I do besides giving you money that would make your life better? What other ways can I make you happier about this transaction besides just paying more? I know later we're going to talk about the money and that's going to be an issue of contention but right now what are things I can do to help make this deal work better for you without necessarily paying money?"

CONS

- **A Bit Disorganized**

My personal feeling is that the course could have done better in terms of how the material is laid out for its students. I spent a lot of time coming up with names for different strategies so it would be easier to spot and remember them because the professor did not provide names for all of the tactics, principles, etc. in the course. I would also come across a certain strategy in one week and then a week and a half later come across the same strategy after we had already covered it and moved on as a class (which can be slightly confusing and annoying).

- **Some Risky Suggestions**

One example of a risky suggestion the course gives is in the usage of humor. Using a bit of humor to communicate to the other side that their outrageous offer is not appropriate works as a good strategy most of the time. However, I can only imagine how joking that you're ready to sign a deal would go over with the other side after hours of heated negotiation and social effort. If done improperly or ill-timed, the joke can make you come across as someone who is immature and doesn't care about the deal or the other side's time and energy. The last thing you want to do is break rapport and sour a relationship by offending someone this way.

- **Lots of Math**

Early on in the course, there is a hefty amount of math you have to work through. It was worth it in the end for my understanding of the pie concept, but it felt a bit overdone since most daily negotiations don't require extensive mathematical knowledge.

- **Slightly Unfocused**

I took lots of notes on this course. Unfortunately, I spent a great deal of time piecing certain strategies and principles together to make sense of how they all tie together, which took away from the time I could've spent learning and is something that I felt should have been done already.

PROS

Lots of Genius
This is a Yale course, so I had set my expectations pretty high. And it delivered

Doesn't Shy Away from the Dark Side of Negotiation
Before taking the course, I didn't read anything in the course syllabus about the professor covering negotiation threats and how to deal with them, so that was a nice surprise.

Many Examples
I appreciated that there were a lot of video examples of negotiations as well as stories the professor uses to teach how to negotiate by recalling his negotiations as the co-owner of his company, Honest Tea.

Review

I have enjoyed the Yale's "Introduction to Negotiation".

However, a large part of me knows that this is more like a well-rounded introduction to negotiation and not the end-all-be-all of training in negotiation and persuasion.

But it's a great foundation to start from.

Cold Approach VS Social Circle (VS Tinder): Strategies

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Cold approach, warm approach via social circle, or Tinder?

Which one should you choose when it comes to meeting and approaching women?

This article shows you the pros and cons, together with techniques to use each one of them the way we like it: more effectively, and higher in power.

Contents

- 1. Cold Approach
  - PROS:
  - CONS:
  - Best For:
  - Pro Tip: High-Volumes, But Not Overcrowded
  - Cold-Approaching & Reputation
- 2. Online Dating
  - PROS:
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  - PROS:
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  - Best For:
  - Avoid Depending on Small Circles
- 5. Have Women Come to You
- Which One Should You Go For?
  - Cold Approach VS Social Circle
- Summary

1. Cold Approach

"Cold approach" is defined as:

> walking up to a woman who is a complete stranger, with no social ties and no social trust, and with the intention of getting sexually and/or romantically involved with her.

PROS:

- **Empowering**: knowing you can go out randomly and approach women you like is empowering both at a mental

and inter-personal level

- **Empowering Independence**: with cold approach, you can rely on yourself and yourself alone
- **Empowering Freedom**: you can go wherever you want, whenever you want, and can meet new women just by walking around
- **Quantity of options**: IF you live in a large and dense city there are countless options

Higher-end shopping streets and stores are some of my favorite places for cold approaches

- **You can leverage the law of large numbers to find a mate**: go out every day for a month, approach 10 women a day. If not, just make it 2 months. Or 3. And… You see where I'm going.
- **High power (for more average men and women)**: a well-executed cold approach can send a strong message of confidence and social power.
  BUT: most cold approaches are not high-power
- **Can empower men entering LTRs**: it's empowering to him if she knows he can find a mate anywhere. That makes it easier for him to maintain attraction and power in long-term relationships.
  Note: that's not to say that high-status men cannot enjoy the same benefit even if they meet via social circle
- **Opportunity for personal growth**: cold approach can be an opportunity to face your (social) fears and learn more about people, body language, social dynamics, and nonverbal signals

Overall, cold approach is a tool of freedom.
And that's what I love about it the most.

To enjoy some of cold approach's benefits, you don't even have to cold approach.
The knowledge that you *can* is empowering in itself.

CONS:

That's some impressive list of pros there.

However, how about the cons? And how about effectiveness?

Let's see:

- **Many top women are not in the streets**: many top-caliber women are rarely out and about in the street. They

use taxis or private drivers.
As a rule of thumb:
  - The more dangerous the city, the fewer top-caliber women walking around
  - The more elitist the city, the more the top calibers women hide in high-society (balls, galas, country clubs, art exhibitions, etc.)
  - The more inequality in the city, the more top caliber women shun the streets

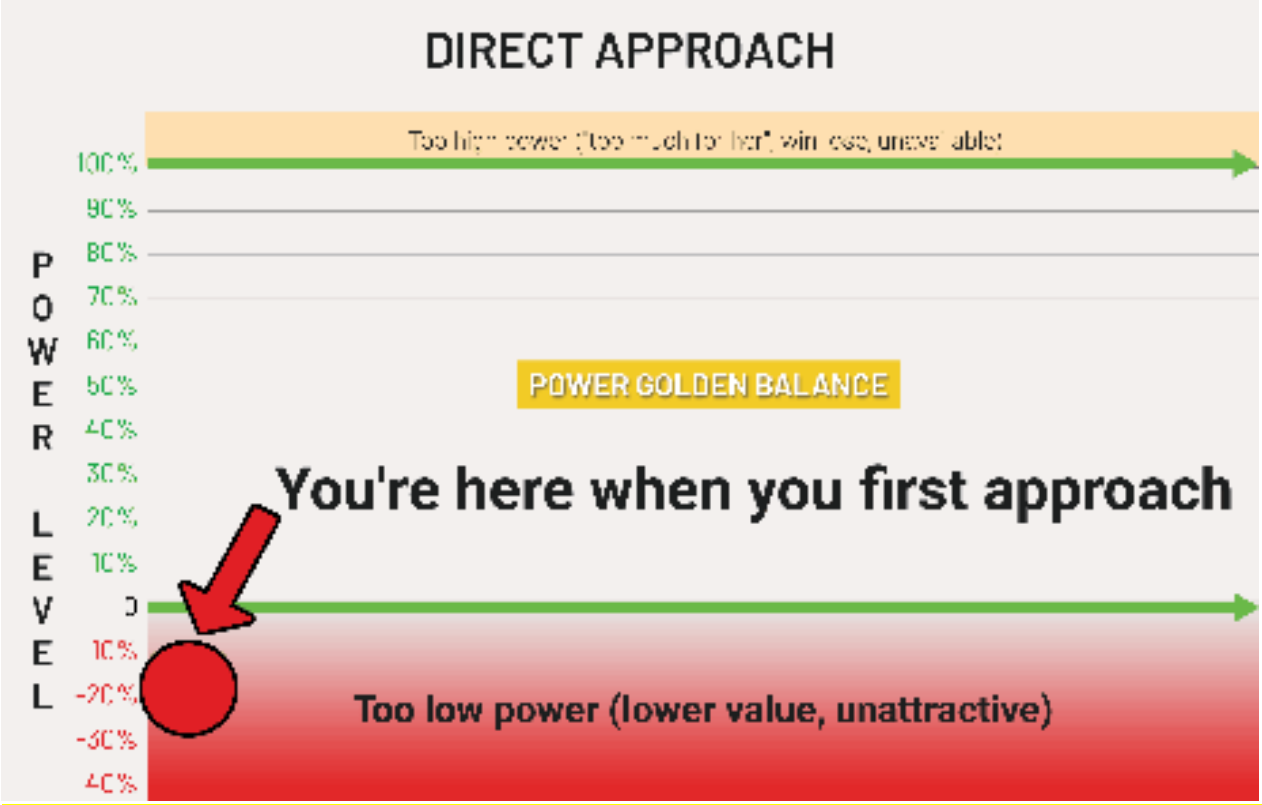
- **Limited potential outside of big urban cities**: proper day game requires bigger cities. Even more than that, not to make it a time sink, it requires *densely populated* big cities, and densely populated with the type of girls you like.
  Anything less than, you can approach when you see something good, but you'd waste too much time going out only for daygaming.

A young Melania Trump: you don't meet these foxy ladies in the street, but at exclusive parties and clubs

- **Can be tough on ego**: In cold approach, success is a statistical fluke. A string of rejections can sink someone's confidence and self-esteem.
  Note: However, this shouldn't be the reason to stop you, and only happens to men who haven't worked on themselves -see: "growth mindset", and "antifragile ego"
- **You can't easily overcome stereotypes**: it's harder to overcome a negative stereotype by just walking up to someone cold.
- **Looks and first-impressions matter more**: in cold approach she knows nothing about you, except how you look, and how you come across in the very first minutes -or seconds-.
- **Potentially low returns on investment**: not particularly attractive and/or skilled men will have to go through a lot of interactions to find some good prospects.
  Just look at some of the few honest videos on YB.
- **Opportunity loss**: Trawling the streets takes time. Time that will not be spent building careers, businesses, or reaching mastery, status, and/or fame.

- **Fragile interactions, one mistake and you're out**: Early interactions are fragile. But you can go for quantity rather than quality.
- **Reputation risk**: Cold approaches done over a long time can be a risk to some men's reputation.
- **Inherently flakier**: Without social ties, you also have little social capital. And unless you can have a longer interaction/instant date, you rely on fleeting emotions.
- **You get more crazy and "loose" women**: Cold approach *can* work with anyone, of course. It's just that certain types of women, such as sexually unrestricted, risk-takers, and extroverts are over-represented.
  I've been in contact and in group chats on many PUAs channels, and more than once I've seen them going out with the same women (including the drama you can expect)
  Fix: "tone it down" and read "Seduction University" for the how-to.

- **Potentially low power**: Approaching first inherently communicates you want something from the woman. And it suggests you probably don't already have a great abundance
  In terms of "Straight Line Seduction":



The frame of a cold approach is "I already chose you and pursue you, you judge me and see if I'm good enough"

Be Warmer With Risk-Avoidant Women

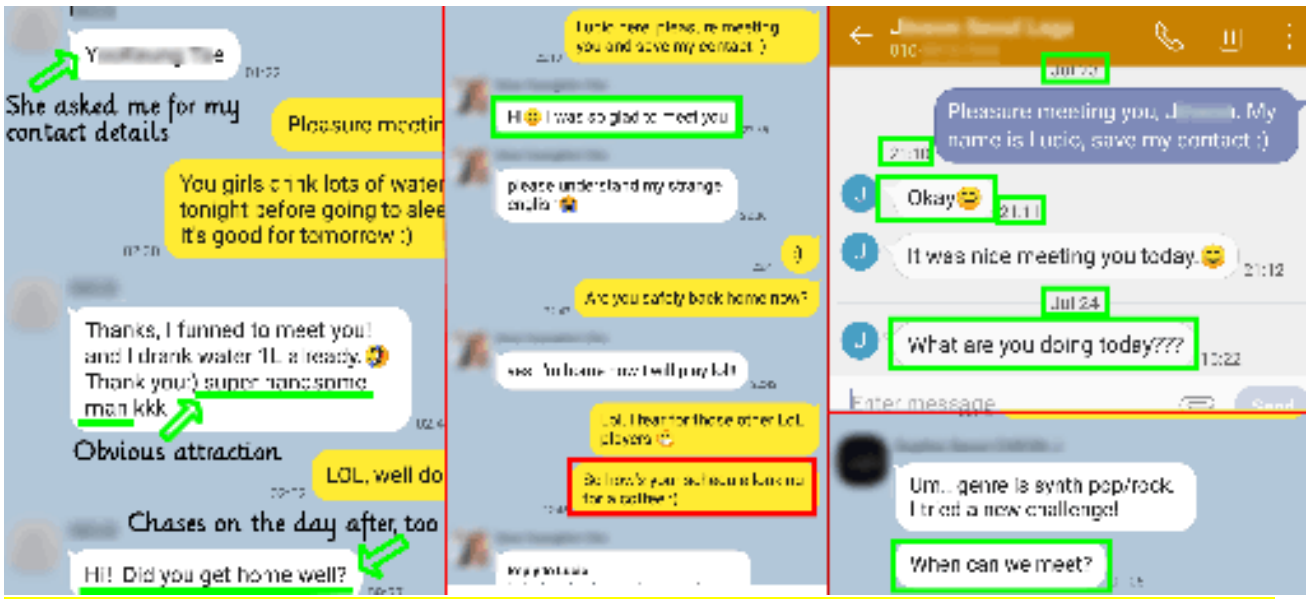
As an observant world traveler, I realized this:

To maximize results it's important to tailor your approach to the "risk appetite" of the local women.

And women's risk appetite matters the most in cold approaches.

You know you are in a risk-averse society when you have signs of attraction, but many of those attracted women will *still* not come out to meet you.

These are just some examples of women who showed signs of attractions but who never came out to meet me:



Risk-averse women will often either not meet cold-approaching guys, or get cold feet and cancel, even when they like them

To generalize, **in risk-averse sexual markets, cold approaches yield a higher percentage of dates with more sexually unrestricted or "crazy" women**.

It's not a coincidence that in my dating experience in more sexually restricted countries, I had a relatively high percentage of crazy and "unrestricted" women. It's because those were the ones most likely to follow through on cold approaches (see in the forums one example here -psycho girl section-, one more here, and one more here, with heavy early sexual frames).

Solution: Making cold-approach work in risk-averse culture

You want to increase your warmth to come across as safer.
And that's also a good idea in most other places as it won't harm you.
See "Seduction University" for more.

Best For:

Overall, cold approach works great for attractive men.

Cold approach works best for:

- **Attractive men**
- **Well-groomed men**
- **Men who can act confident / high-power**
- **Socially intelligent men**: this is about calibration
- **Men who live in high-density urban areas**

Pro Tip: High-Volumes, But Not Overcrowded

More than once I've seen groups of PUAs.

Most often, they all lined up in the most crowded spot in the city.
For example, a subway exit (Seoul's Gangnam station), a busy crossroad (Shibuya in Tokyo), or a shopping road / central square (Berlin's Alexanderplatz).

Women have higher defensive shields in crowded places, and are more likely to reject strangers as default responses

From a numbers' point of view, it makes sense: more women, more opportunities.

But it doesn't make sense from a psychological point of view.

We didn't evolve to move around hundreds of strangers and hop on and off subways, so people's instinctive defenses tend to be higher in transition and crowded spots.

Cold-Approaching & Reputation

As a rule of thumb:

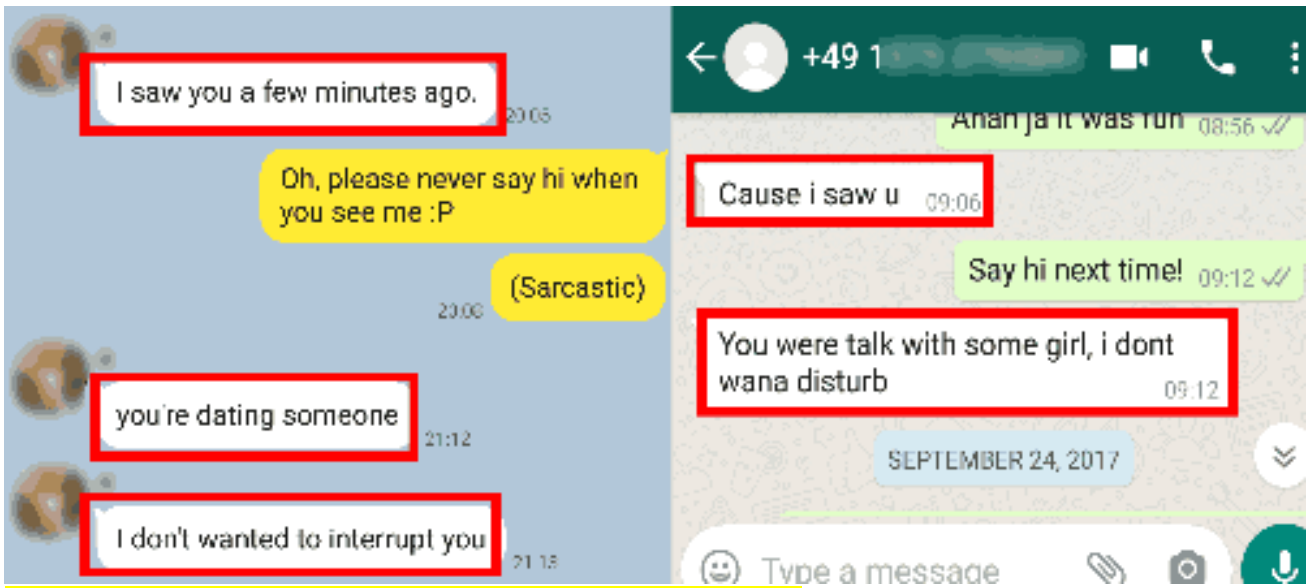
Anyone with a reputation to uphold should be a bit more careful with cold approaches (also see Tom Torero tragedy).

See more issues and solutions in Seduction University.

Men who are seeing someone must be careful with cold-approaching

If you're not in a committed relationship, then fair game.

It can still cause some unnecessary issues though:



Even if you're not "official" yet, cold approaching can still invite drama
Sometimes it's not even your girl seeing you, but her friends. And you know that a jealous guy friend would be SO happy to record you and "report" you.

Doing lots of cold approaches in the same spot can also ruin a previous good cold approach you had.
In one instance, a woman I had cold-approached and agreed to meet again saw me doing another cold approach.
She then walked up to me and straight-up told me: "delete my number".
My respect for that woman shot up. But I had ruined it by overdoing the cold approaches.

So, as a rule of thumb, if you had some really good interactions, it can be a good idea to either pause for the day, or to at least change location.
If it's in a bar or club and it was a *really* good interaction, you can also consider going somewhere else.

2. Online Dating

You heard these before:

> "Online dating doesn't work"

Or:

> "There are only average girls on Tinder".

I don't find either of those to be true.
Because online dating doesn't work for those saying it doesn't work, it doesn't mean it doesn't work for anyone.

Online dating works great if you're in the top-tier category of men.
Says Ben, Charisma on Command founder:

> **Ben**: Before tinder, I was putting effort in dating, going to bars, talking to women in the street. Now I put less time into dating but I date as much, maybe a bit more. It's just easier.

So let's get down to the advantages of online dating:

PROS:

- **Time-effective**: you can swipe during down-times of your life -commuting, waiting in line, or even on the toilet, where many women do it-. You can swipe and reply as a way of chilling at the end of a long day.
- **Easy to schedule hookups (if you're top 20%)**: If you're high enough SMV *and* are in a risk-taking and libertine sexual marketplace, it's easy to schedule hookups.
- **Wide choice**
- **Mo' money, mo' matches**: premium features available for more chances
- **Travelers' secret weapon**: you can line up dates before you even land, hit the ground… Banging.
- **Market penetration intelligence at the fingertip**: you can use apps to scout your best sexual marketplaces before deciding where to go (see Seduction University)
- **Meet women you wouldn't otherwise meet**: some women don't party, some work night shifts, and some rarely set foot in the street.

  Example:

I once had a great time with an "e-girl".
She made a good income broadcasting on camera and collecting gifts from her admirers (simps). She'd rarely leave home and was worried about being seen by her fans.
Hence, you could only meet her through online dating.

CONS:

- **Not all women are online**: *all* women say they're not Tinder, or they just downloaded "for curiosity". Still, some are telling the truth.
- **Some of the most in-demand women don't do online**: the more real-life options, and the more high-quality men she has around, the less likely it is she will be online. There are exceptions, as for everything.
- **More sexually promiscuous women are over-represented?**: Question mark there. Frankly, I have no data and I'm not aware of any available. But it's certainly possible.
- **It's a winner-take-all game**: great news for top of pyramid guys, but not for all the rest. If you're not getting great results, don't despair, because that's how it is for the majority of men.

But this is NOT a con:

- **Some women are there for validation**: sure, a few women are there just for the validation. But it's the same for real life

Best For:

- **Attractive men**: the good news is that it's as much about your looks, as it is about the quality and angles of your pictures.
- **Rich / famous men who can show off their value**: supercars, yachts, jets, or better yet, famous people won't hurt.
- **Men reaping sexual marketplaces imbalances**: ie.: white men in locations where white men are sought after.

Personally, online dating is highly environment-dependent for me.

It works little in some sexual markets, including in some markets where I didn't do badly in person.
But it's worked so well in some other places that I barely needed to meet anyone in person.

3. Social Events (Lukewarm)

I defined lukewarm approaches as:

> Walking up to a woman who is a complete stranger, but in a situation where talking and meeting to new people is both normal and expected.

Lukewarm approaches often take place in pre-planned social events that are about mingling, talking, or networking. They include:

- Gala events
- House parties
- Churches
- Business conferences
- Meetups
- Seminars and trainings
- Language exchanges
- Airbnb events
- Travelers' meetups (Couchsurfing, Facebook, etc.)

These events are social in nature, but plenty of people also attend them with dating in mind.

PROS:

As a mix between cold approach and social circle, you get many advantages of both.

- **Socially skilled men can showcase social dominance and leadership skills -and women love that-**

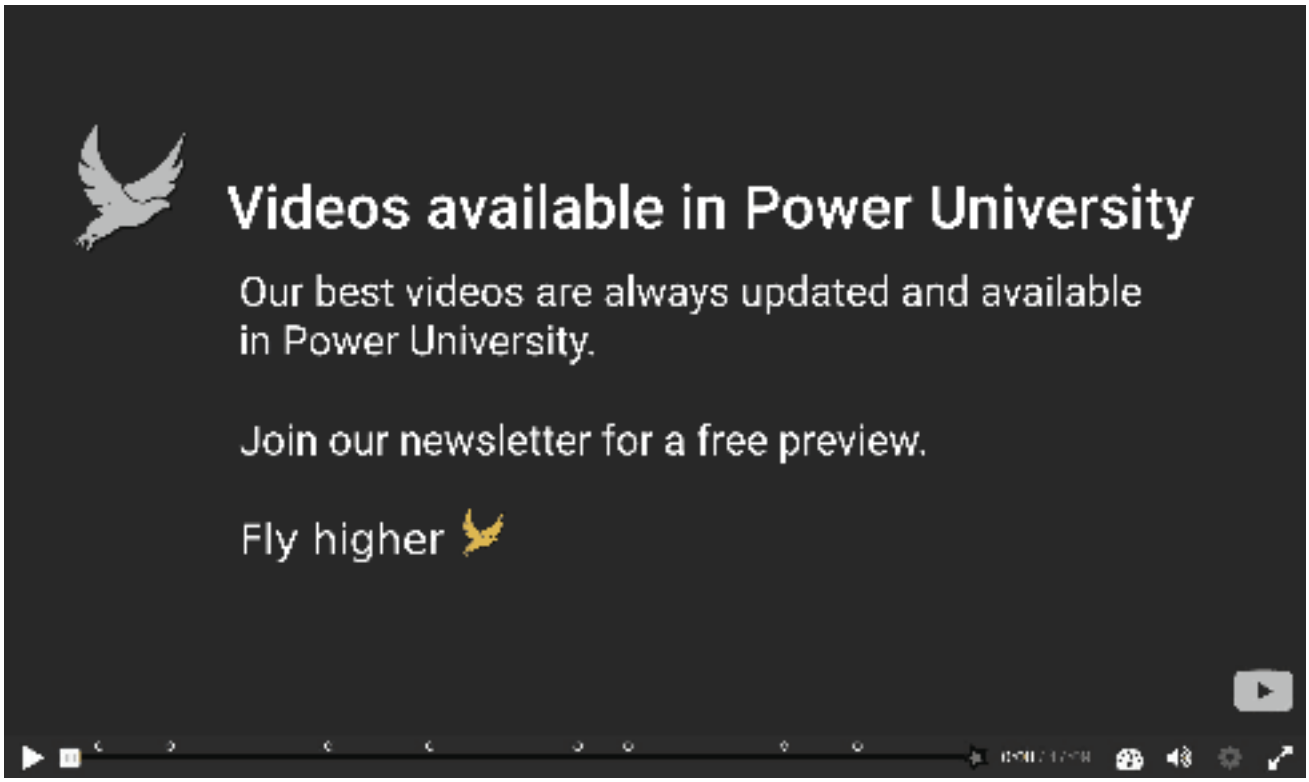
This is the biggest advantage and the reason why socially skilled men should do some social events to take advantage of this important strength.

- **Social trust makes shier & sexually restricted women feel safer**: if social circles score 10 in trust and cold approach scores 0, you're at around a 6 or 7 here, enough to make shier and more reserved women feel comfortable.
- **Great opportunity for self-promotion**: you can display deeper SMV values like resources, life achievements,

lifestyle, as well as dating success talking to the group or to someone else, without bragging *to* the girl you're interested in -big difference- (see Seduction University for examples on how to do this)

- **Great opportunity to become a star ("localized fame")**: If you speak in front of everyone at some seminar or event, even just disagreeing or asking smart questions, people will remember you and you become "famous" in that environment. A friend of mine volunteered to sing at a tourist party. Little later, two women approached him, and he had sex with one of them (the story is here).
- **Very attractive women attend exclusive events**:
- **Can combine dating with socialization**: even if your primary goal is to meet women, you can still meet some cool guys. And who knows, either make a new good friend, or a business partner.
- **Social skills training**: events are a far better way of learning socialization than cold approach
- **You can retain power**: talking and approaching are normal, so you don't signal interest like in cold approach
- **You can get women chasing you**: if you acquire status in the group, some women chase you.

  Example: Seduction University.
- **Sexualize from the very beginning**: the smoothest seducers sexualize in social circles and extended social circles, without ever going too direct or crude (think George Clooney style).
  The movie "Eyes Wide Shut" is all based on sexualized lukewarm approaches:



> **Him**: (takes her glass and drinks it) my name is…

CONS:

- **Limited to the attendees' list**: and if there is none you like, you can't do much about it.
- **Not as time effective**: if your goal is only to meet women, events might not provide the opportunity for quick and successive approaches.
- **Potential for high competition when men outnumber women**: when there are far more men than women, women automatically "become the prize". However, if you come across as cool enough, you can use "strategic

ignoring" before finally making your move and, if she preferred you, you meet her as equals.

Best For:

- **Socially skilled men**
  - Charming men
  - Charismatic men
  - Men who can bond and connect: grab any chance to move to 1:1 and go deeper

4. Social Circle (Warm)

Your social circle includes:

- Your old friends
- Your current friends
- College and university colleagues
- The people you go out / party with
- Your extended family
- Your neighbors -as long as you at least say hi to them-
- Your colleagues and coworkers
- Anyone who attends your same activities

Social circle game is defined as:

> To meet or pursue women with whom, because of social ties, context, or repeated exposure, it feels natural and socially normal to start a conversation with

It's a fuzzy definition, so social circle game includes meeting women who:

- You know yourself
- You know through friends or acquaintances
- You see often (barista at your favorite bar, for example)
- You're already friends with on social media
- You share some striking similarities with

Social circles can be differentiated into:

- Core circles, with the guys and girls you really know well
- Peripheral circles, with friends of friends, acquaintances, and people you see and "know they exist", but don't really talk to.

Core circles dating is more for providers and relationships. Peripheral circles can go both ways.

Research suggests that two individuals are more likely to pursue a dating relationship when third parties bring them together than without third-party intervention (Parks, 2007).

PROS:

- **Shier / sexually restricted women feel safest**: there is the highest in-built social trust.
- **Research shows it works**. Research suggests that two individuals are more likely to pursue a dating relationship

when third parties bring them together than without third-party intervention.

- **Best for relationship-only women**: women who swore off hookups respond better to social circle men.
- **A potentially endless chain of new people**: you can move into new social circles with just one new person.
- **With high status you can get women chasing you**: women respond to power and status (hypergamy). So if you have or acquire high status in the group, you can get women chasing you.
- **More room for mistakes**: women tend to provide more leeway to social circle men they like.
- **Attraction has a long expiration date**: you have more time to get together with a girl when there is mutual attraction.
- **Looks matter less**: you have the time to show your deeper qualities and to "grow" on women. My first "serious" girlfriend wouldn't have given me the time of the day if I had stopped her in the street (and she let me know that, which of course was a "value me more power move")
- **You can leverage the "similarity effect"**: people like people who are like them (Swani, 2015). In social circle, there is that feeling that "we're somewhat alike and get along with each other".
- **Social circles = network = power**: social circles go beyond dating. People and connections are power, and that adds value to your whole life, not just dating.
- **Lifestyle approach to seduction**: a few men can build a lifestyle around social circles that naturally gets attractive women around them. Think of club promoters, movie producers, model agents, but also model photographers.

- **A cool social circle helps you meet and seduce women**: if your friends are cool, that rubs off on you. And If you have attractive girlfriends, they work as a powerful preselection tool
- **Good screening tool**: you can get gather intel, get references, and observe how she behaves. That helps you avoid low-quality women

CONS:

- **Most "normal guys" have poor social circles for dating**: social circle dating only works for guys who have good social circles, or who can create them.
- **Poor option for introverts**: Introverts are not as effective and willing to develop and tend to social circles.
- **Poor option for freedom lovers**: social circles must be tended to, and come with social obligations.

This is NOT a con:

- **Friend zone**: this is a false problem. The problem is about being a *low*-value friend, because women are still attracted to their high-value friends.

See here an example of a "high-value" friend who has his pick of women:

> **Sartain**: I want to be their friends. And next time we go out, they will introduce me to their girlfriends

That's a guy doing good social circle game.

- **Status and dating will be interrelated**: if you got a high status, that will help you get girls, and if those girls say good things, that will boost your status. But it cuts both ways. If you chase hard, if you get spurned, if your relationship tanks, if the girl gets hurt and talks badly about you… Then you will also lose social status.
  Fix: Just don't worry about this, it's a defensive mindset
- **Can't ghost / soft-next them**: ghosting is often the weasel's way of ending things. But, in some cases, avoiding someone instead of having "the conversation" is a valid option. But you don't have that option in social circles.
- **You move slower**: not always but, on average, women care about their reputation if you know their friends.

And even more so if you are her friend. So they might move slower with you just to protect their reputation.

- **Potential for personal details to leak out**: when you get in a relationship with someone from social circle, her girlfriends will hear much of your personal life.
- **Potential for awkwardness after a breakup**: when your exes remain within your social circles not only your dirty laundry has the potential to leak out, but the dirty laundry *stays* there.

Funny example from "How I Met Your Mother":

> **Ted:** We dated for, like, a year. But now we're just friends. It's not weird.
> **Victoria**: No, no. Why would that be weird? I mean, if you hung out every day, that would…
> **Ted:** We do.
> **Victoria**: …still not be weird. Boy, I've never known anybody that hangs out with their ex every day.
> **Ted:** Well, Barney does.
> **Victoria**: Really? Who's Barney's ex-girlfriend?
> **Ted:** Robin.
> **Victoria**: Your Robin?
> **Ted:** Mine and Barney's, yeah.
> **Victoria**: You don't all three hang out together?
> **Ted:** All the time.
> **Victoria:** And we have weird.

Best For:

- **High status and high power men**
- **"Cool" guys**: who are liked and respected by others
- **Men with "deeper layers value"**: such as, men with attractive traits that are not obviously visible in first approach

Avoid Depending on Small Circles

See "Seduction University".

5. Have Women Come to You

The ideal, most effective, highest power solution.

See "Dating University".

Which One Should You Go For?

There is no general "best" that applies to everyone and in all situations.

When someone is too adamant in recommending one against the other, you should ask yourself:

1. Is he biased because he wasn't personally successful in any of the other methods?
2. Is he biased because he is selling one specific method?

What's "best" for you depends on your personal strengths, lifestyle, station of life, as well as your environment and the type of sexual marketplace you live in.

Cold Approach VS Social Circle

Social circles have received a bad rep in the dating industry.

Personally, I think it's a question of self-serving interest.
Since most PUAs sell courses and ebooks based on cold approaches, it pays to denigrate social circles (and online dating).

I almost always disagree with generalizations.
And what's best for you depends on your strengths, preferences, as well as where you live.

In terms of power and effectiveness, some coaches say that cold approachers have an advantage over guys in her social circle.
But that's only true if you're comparing a great cold approacher VS a poor social circle guy. Otherwise, the final advantage always comes back to "who's higher value", independently of how she knows him.

That being said, if we were to pitch two completely identical guys that she both likes the same way -an almost impossible proposition, by the way-, then the cold approacher might have the edge if she wants a one night stand, while the social circle guy might get the edge if she seeks a relationship.

Summary

We reviewed the different strategies to approach and meet women:

- **Cold approach** is to walk to a woman you have no social connection with, and strike up a conversation.
- **Lukewarm approach**: is to attend events, mixers, as well as bars and nightclubs where people are expected to talk and interact.
- **Warm approach through social circles** is to pursue or meet women whom you already know, or that you meet through something or someone in common
- **Online dating** is to meet women through dating apps. Easy and super-effective for top 10% folks.

And we said that **the best approach is to mix all of them**.

How to Keep People from Pushing Your Buttons: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

How to Keep People from Pushing Your Buttons (1994) is a book on cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT) that help readers control their minds and state.
Albert Ellis presents the ACB model as a technique to control one's emotional state and prevent nasty people and situations from upsetting our mood.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- Exercise 1
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Quotes
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We all think (mental response), feel (emotional response), and act (behavioral response) when faced with an event or individual (stimulus / activating event)
- Most people wrongly think that feelings and actions stem from events. If someone says something mean, then you naturally feel dejected. But that's wrong, it gives power to button pushers
- Instead, you can direct and control how you feel and act in a situation by directing and controlling how you think

Summary

About the Author: Albert Ellis (September 27, 1913 – July 24, 2007) was an American psychologist who developed Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). He is also generally considered one of the originators and early proponents of cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT).
Ellis is also the author of "How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable".

The 4 Screwball Feelings You Need to Handle

The 4 feelings are:

1. **Excessive anxiety**:
2. **Excessive anger/defensiveness**:
3. **Excessive epression/burnout**:
4. **Exessive guilt**: if you make yourself overly guilty, people can manipulate you

If you're wondering what's "excessive", well, it's "excessive" 95% of the times you think it's excessive.

And as a general category:

- Any over-reacting and self-defeating behavior

When you experience one of these feelings, you will not handle the situation as effectively as you could, and you

will probably upset yourself -ie.: you let someone or something push your buttons-.

Warning: don't necessarily trust what people say

Watch out: Don't 100% trust other people's opinions of your behavior. ("Oh, you're just overreacting"). Sometimes they are right, but sometimes they are just using dark psychology to manipulate you.

The ABC of Button-Pushing

- **Activating events**: specific people, events, or succession of events that can push our buttons. They can even be positive events, sometimes, like weddings, job opportunities, etc.).
  - Real crises: it's fair to get worried about these ones. But, usually, we tend to rise to the occasion
  - Daily frustrations: these are the ones we unnecessarily allow to push our buttons
- **Beliefs/thoughts:** there are four main ways we think about our situations and events (here I list 5 because Ellis adds another one in another chapter). In red the bad ones, in green the one you should use:
  - Catastrophizing / awfulizing: you make things a bigger deal than they actually are.
    Catastrophizing can start with "what if" scenarios when our answers only deal with worst-case scenarios (awfulizing). It can also start with stock phrases like "I hate…", "I can't stand it when… "
  - Shoulding (absolutist thinking): "I must", "I have to", "I should" (shoulding, musting, or demanding).
    Comparing yourself to others is a form of shoulding, and they all put unduly negative pressure on you that makes you feel bad.
  - Blaming people rather than their acts:
  - Rationalizing: "Who cares!", "and so?" "it doesn't bother me". They are underreactions and poor attempts to deny or play down what's happening and how we truly feel. Some rationalizations are cover-ups for our pain, fears, or for our sour grapes. We try to con both the people around us, and ourselves, and we rationalize to avoid dealing with our button pushers.
  - realistic preferences: "I want", "'d like", "I'd prefer", and "It would be better if". They all have an overt or implied "but" in it. Such as, if the person or the situation doesn't turn the way you want, you'll still be OK with it.
    Example: When you tell yourself, "I'd like my boss or coworker to treat me well," you imply, "but he or she doesn't have to" And then you add: "It won't kill me if that person doesn't. I can still handle things."
- **Consequences**: represent two things:
  - Feelings
  - Behaviors in the specific situation occurring at Point A

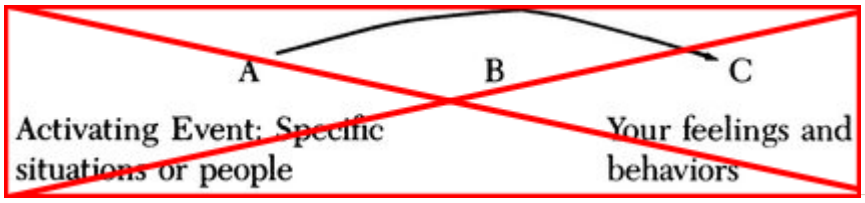
Keep this in mind:

> **It's feelings and beliefs that cause behaviors, not evens.**

But that's not how most people think and act. Most people don't have this mindset.

Most people have a "victim of events'" mindset

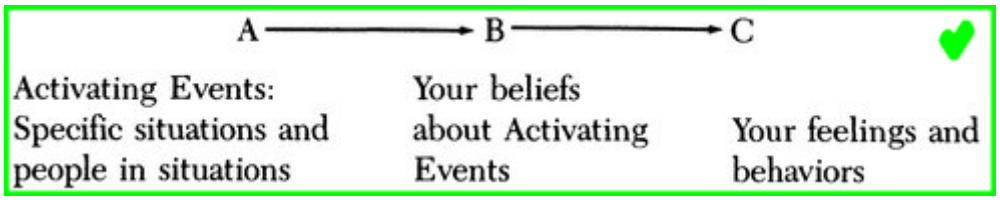
Most people's pre-programmed mindset is that events cause behaviors.
Like this:



But that's a poor mindset that allows people, events, and the external world to control your emotional state, as well as your behavior.
Says Albert Ellis:

> Let's say you had a fight with your spouse.
> In reflecting on what happened (especially if you're still angry), you might recall that you said some pretty nasty things, but perhaps quickly explain them by saying, "Well, he started it" or "she made me so mad. . . ."
> What you would be saying is that his or her behavior (the Activating Event) caused you to act the way you did (at Point C). But that would not be completely accurate: You also contributed by what you were thinking about him or her at Point B.

Instead, the correct model for empowered folks who control their minds is this:



Says again Ellis:

> It is not what is actually, verifiably true at Point A that counts, it's what you think about it at Point B that will largely determine how you wind up feeling and acting at Point C.

This model also means that **you must take responsibility for how you think and for how you mentally frame events in your life**.

Some examples the author provides:

- Example 1: If you believe it's awful to screw up, you will avoid those "risky" situations, or you will fulfill your own prophecies. But if you believe that screwing up is not great, but it's OK and you can handle it and that you will learn a lot and that it's great to try and learn, then you will go for it and either win, or learn
- Example 2: If you believe you have to have someone in your life to make you a truly "whole" person, you will be miserable when you don't, and "they" will be able to push your buttons. If you believe it's better to have someone but you're OK to be alone and it's better to be alone than with a value-taking partner, then you will OK when you're single and you will pick better partners

Addressing Rationalization

There is usually some truth in rationalizations, so that they can seem plausible.

That speck of truth can make it harder for us to realize we are making excuses.
To check if you rationalizing as a way of making excuses, ask yourself:

- "Is my explanation for failing, or getting upset, or avoiding this situation a true reason?
- Am I taking responsibility appropriately, or am I placing blame on someone or something else to avoid failure, rejection, or blame?
- If I do take responsibility for my inappropriate feelings or behaviors, does that make me a bad person because I overreacted?
- Can I admit to my own feelings and behaviors, and the results they produced?"

Rationalizations when you make excuses for poor behavior are also likely to lead to submissive behavior.
When you make excuses for someone who is making you wait for hours, for example, you must keep on waiting.

And if you ask what's going on, you will do so meekly and submissively, as if you are disturbing them.

Example of Using the Model

Imagine you get a poor performance evaluation at work:

- **Rationalization**: My poor performance evaluation is only because I don't play office politics like the others. It has nothing to do with how good a job I'm doing. Everybody couldn't get an excellent rating; I'm just the sacrificial lamb.
- **Challenge the rationalization**: Am I avoiding taking responsibility for the poor evaluations? Am I afraid to consider the possibility that I did not do as good a job as I could, or as the boss expected?
- **Fix your rationalization**: Ask someone in the office I trust what they think of my work; talk to the boss about specific areas for improvement, and what has not been getting done satisfactorily, and what his expectations are for a better evaluation; submit a plan of action to the boss as to how I intend to meet the improvements.
- **Swap with realistic preferences**: I'd like to believe that my poor evaluation is only politics but it would be better if I asked someone I trust and my boss for specific feedback and get to work on improvements.

Please keep in mind that to internalize the model you need to:

1. Take responsibility for your feelings and behavior
2. internalize that changing the way you think in reaction to others is a worthwhile endeavor
3. Stick to it systematically, because it's not a one-shot fix, and it takes time and effort

Addressing Fears With ABC: Example

On his first public talk, Ellis was tense and anxious.

As it's natural to most people, he started with awfulizing:

> "What if I do a terrible job? What if everyone is bored to death and starts talking among themselves? What if I get asked a question I can't answer?
> (…)

Then, he started shoulding:

> "I should be able to give a talk to a group. I'm an adult person; I shouldn't let this bother me. If I can't do this, mother was right—I'm a turkey: I'll never amount to anything!"

And a few rationalizations:

> "So what? Who cares? Big deal! It doesn't bother me if the audience doesn't like what I have to offer. If they're too stupid to appreciate what I have to say, that's their problem!"

And that's how he fixed his mindset by replacing the bad mental habits realistic preferences over and over, each time he slipped into awfulizing, shoulding, or rationalizing: "

> I'd like this group to like me and think highly of what I have to say. If they don't, that's unfortunate—but it's not awful unless I make it so. I want to do a good job, and I will put every effort into it—but if I don't, that won't be terrible and horrible. I'll regret it and be disappointed and seriously concerned about it—but also committed to finding out how to improve on it.
> I'd prefer to answer every question brilliantly—but if I don't, I can handle that without shoulding on myself."

Also please notice that Ellis uses not positive affirmations to convince himself that everything will be fine.
Instead, he went to the heart of his anxiety, the belief that he had to do a great job at all costs, and that the group had to like him.
He moved from “had to’s”, to “wants”, and from “shoulds” to preferences.

Says Ellis about the effects of ABC:

> You will be concerned before you speak, and disappointed if you do blow it—but you won’t let the presentation push your buttons. In my case, I was able to reduce my anxiety significantly before and during the talk.

Plus, he was able to assess himself objectively, and learn from it.

Responsibility VS Blame & Fault

Taking responsibility for your feelings and actions is crucial in the ABC model -and, I would add, for an empowered life in general-.

However, it must be a healthy form of taking responsibility”.

Says Ellis (edited by me for brevity):

> First, we do not mean that you should blame or attack yourself for your poor behavior.
> Blame, and fault are not interchangeable – they actually have very different meanings.
> Responsibility means that you are accountable for your feelings and actions, because you have the capacity to direct and control them. Blaming yourself means that you put yourself, your entire person, down for having acted badly. Taking responsibility is healthy; blaming yourself is destructive.

ABC is Not Positive Thinking

Thinking positively has its benefits.

But the ABC model and cognitive behavioral therapy in general (CBT) are not always and necessarily about thinking positively.
Instead, they say that how you think about something will determine how you behave. And sometimes, thinking negatively about something might add more value to you than thinking positively.

Says Albert Ellis:

> Positive thinking surely beats negative thinking.
> But sometimes it can be a con or a distortion of reality.
> Sometimes the objective affirmations we are encouraged to tell ourselves are just a bunch of subjective baloney. There is a third option: realistic thinking.

Ellis encourages realistic thinking. Assessing situations for what they are, without catastrophizing.

Realistic preferences VS positive thinking

Says Ellis:

> Realistic preferences are not suggesting that you can or will be successful—that you can handle the situation perfectly, or that everything will turn out fine. Realistic preferences are saying that it is okay to give “it” a try—even if you might fail, be rejected, or the like.

If you fail, you don't tell yourself that it doesn't matter -that would be a rationalization-, but that you will most likely be able to handle it.
And whether you will try again or do something else, you don't get on your case.
And, to paraphrase Ellis:

> It's already not great you didn't win, should you also be miserable about it?

10 Screwball Beliefs by Albert Ellis

The top 4 are the most common:

1. **Worrying too much about what other people think of you**: it creates a strong fear of rejection and, ThePowerMoves.com adds, it gives others judge powers over you. The causes are the awfulizing, shoulding and rationalizing, and you can think that.
   1. People-pleasing behavior
   2. Auto-rejection and preemptive rejection: Attacking others first as a way of not being rejected first
2. **The belief that you can't fail at important tasks** [in business, school, sports, sex, relationships, etc.] **and if you do it's terrible and you can't stand it**: it leads to excessive fear of failure, inability to take criticism, not trying new things, and not learning and growing
3. **The belief that people and things should turn out the way you want them to – and if they don't it's awful and you can't stand it**
   1. The belief you should always be treated fairly: My note: I believe that to draw your boundaries and stand up to abuse, it's sometimes helpful to think that you deserve fair treatment
4. **If any of the first three bad events happens** [if I'm not liked/respected, if I fail, or if things don't turn out as I'd like], **then I'll blame someone for it! They acted wrongly, as they should not have done, and they are rotten people for acting in that terrible way!** dysfunctional groups always look for those who are to blame, while the most effective ones focus on solutions
5. If I worry about an event or about how someone feels about me, things will turn out better
6. Perfect solutions exist for every problem, and I must find them
7. It is easier to avoid difficult situations and responsibilities than to face them
8. If I never get seriously involved in anything, and maintain a detached perspective, I will never be unhappy.
9. It was my past and all the awful things that happened to me when I was a child, or in my last relationship, or in my last job, that causes me to feel and act this way now.
10. Bad people and things should not exist, but when they do, they have to seriously disturb me!

The exercise Ellis proposes is to score how strongly you hold any of these beliefs, and focus on them first.

The steps to change your limiting beliefs are:

1. How am I dysfunctionally feeling and acting in this situation?
2. What am I thinking to make myself upset (overly anxious, angry, depressed, guilty or acting dysfunctionally):
   - (a) about myself?
   - (b) about others?
   - (c) about the situation?
3. How can I challenge and dispute my irrational thinking?
4. What realistic preferences can I substitute for my irrational thinking (awfulizing, shoulding, and rationalizing)?

Solution for Worrying Too Much

Realistic preferences to deal with worrying too much about what others think:

> I'd like you to like and respect me, but if you won't, that's not awful, terrible, or horrible, and I can stand it. I am seriously concerned, because I think our relationship is important, and I am committed to doing everything I can to make it better. But I am not going to make myself miserable trying to win your approval, liking, love, or respect, then I have two choices: (1) I can accept that you do not like, love, or respect me; or (2) I can leave and/or find relationships wherein I can get my wants met."

Your goal

Remember, perfection is not required.

Improvement is the goal.

Ellis says you should aim for three goals:

1. Don't let the negative feelings happen so often
2. Make them less intense when you do overreact
3. Don't let them last so long

Albert Ellis ends the book by saying that both achievement and enjoying life are important. And it's possible to have both.

Exercise 1

The first exercise is to become aware of what are the people and situations that push your buttons.

Draw three columns on a sheet of paper, and write down your:

1. Dysfunctional Feelings and Behaviors (C's)
2. Events (A's) That Preceded These Feelings or Behaviors

Ask yourself whether your feelings and behavior are indeed behind dysfunctional.
You can learn to distinguish between your functional (self-helping) and dysfunctional feelings and behaviors by asking yourself questions like: "Will it help my relationships with others?" "Will it affect my health?" "Will it help me fail or succeed at my goals?"

Then, on the third column, write:

3. Functional Substitute Feelings or Behaviors

Ellis says that you want to confront your activating events. Especially if it's people. If you don't you will probably not overreact, but you don't address the issue, probably make it worse off, and certainly you are not improving yourself.
Ellis recommends that you make a list of the difficult people you will soon confront.

Real-Life Applications

- **Daily practice to improve your life**: practicing ABC daily will most likely help you control and direct your mind and thoughts. However, one must stress the continuous practice of the principles, as Ellis himself reminds more than once

CONS

- **Some definitions could have been more consistent**

The author sometimes refers to “shoulding” as “absolutist thinking”, but shoulding is only a subset of that category. I think more attention to the definitions could help people to better understand the concepts.

That’s by the way why this website launched a dictionary of power-related terms:

> The Definitive Dictionary of Power: Terms & Definitions

- **Some categories could have been more consistent**

The author first says there are 4 main ways of thinking about events, and 3 of them stink. But in an exercise, he adds a fourth “stinky” mental habit. That can be confusing.

- **Disagreed with some relationship vulnerability**

About a man who feels insecure and jealous about his wife on a business trip, Ellis recommends him to tell his wife once she comes back:

> I just want to know that you didn’t encourage anyone, and that you didn’t respond. I’d like some reassurance that you’re committed to me, and that nothing happened.

Ellis says that while some people might feel that makes you come across like an insecure wimp, it’s not true. But personally, I’m not 100% onboard and I think that would definitely impact the relationship power balances.

PROS

- **Enlightening**

Great wisdom and a gem of personal self-empowerment.

- **Entertaining: AE is a true character**

As you learn from top-notch material, you will also smile or laugh -which, by the way, is part of AE’s therapy strategy as well-.

Here are some examples:

> They took me into a small room with an officer, and inspected me carefully and thoroughly. They were looking for a bomb! I can tell you right now, I wouldn’t put a bomb where they looked for anything in the world. No cause, no crusade, nothing would get me to put a bomb where they checked!

On “trickle-down” shoulding:

> Some of us are simply great at shoulding on other people. A boss gets “shoulded on” by his boss, so he shoulds on someone he supervises—and so on, down the line. It’s the “trickle-down” theory of shoulding, until someone at the bottom goes home and kicks the cat or takes it out on a helpless family member.

Quotes

The quotes are a mix of great humor and wisdom.

On social status climbing as a form of “shoulding” on other people:

> I (A.L.) live in southern California, in an area where shoulding on people is an art form.
> So many people there run around worrying about how they stack up on the status pecking order!
> The first thing out of their mouths when you meet them is name-dropping something—anything: “I was driving in my new BMW [or Mercedes or Porsche] the other day, and there was a lot of traffic.” You stand there with a blank stare, wondering what the point is, until you realize it was to remind you of his or her new Beamer. You think, “Frankly, Scarlett. . . .” But they work the impressive facts in somehow, anyway.

Or on value-taking social-climbing questions:

> Other people have to check you out when they first meet you: “Oh, hello—where do you live?” “Oh, but what section?” “Oh, well—do you live in the tract homes or the custom Presidentials, where we are?” “Oh. But do you have a view?” Eventually, after you finally answer a question that reveals you are not as good as the questioner, the “Oh” sounds much less interested, and infinitely more disapproving. I work regularly on not letting them push my buttons in these ways.

Review

I loved “How to Keep People from Pushing Your Buttons”.

Even after having read many books on self-help, positive psychology, and optimism, I still learned hugely.

Also read:

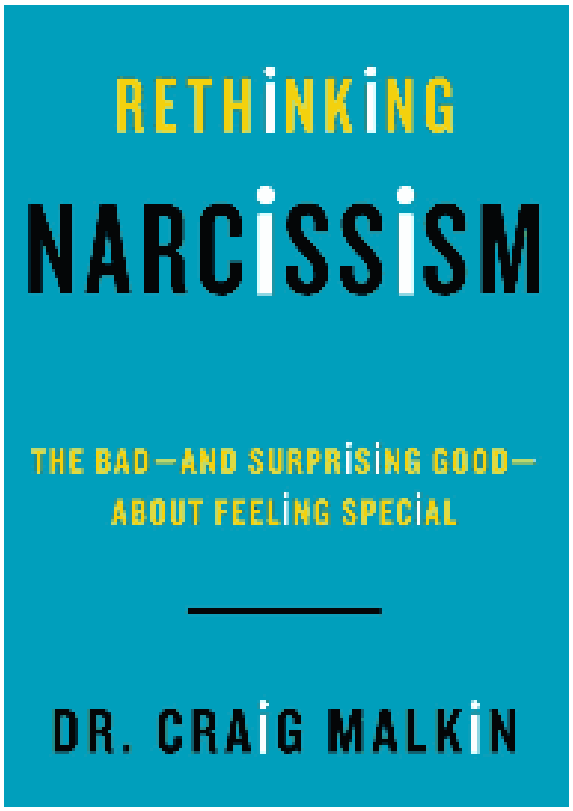
- **The best positive psychology books**
- **The best psychology books**

Or get the book on Amazon

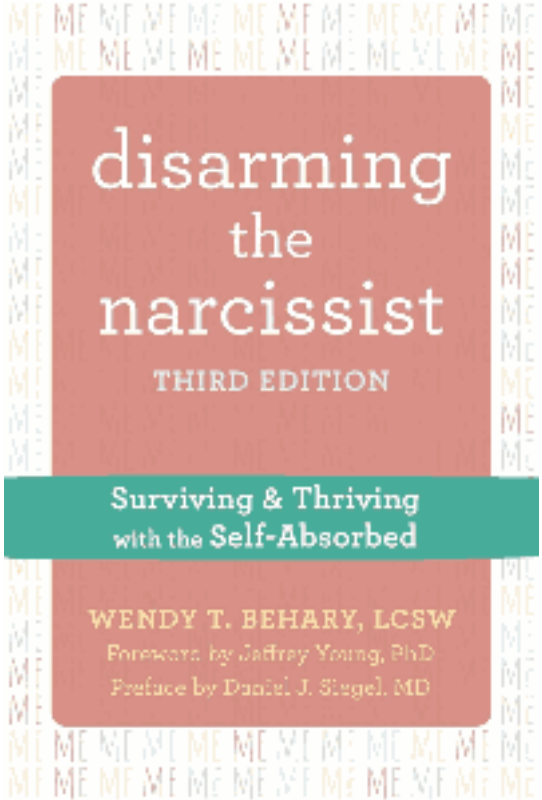
The Power Library: 500+ Books on Strategy, Seduction, & Status

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

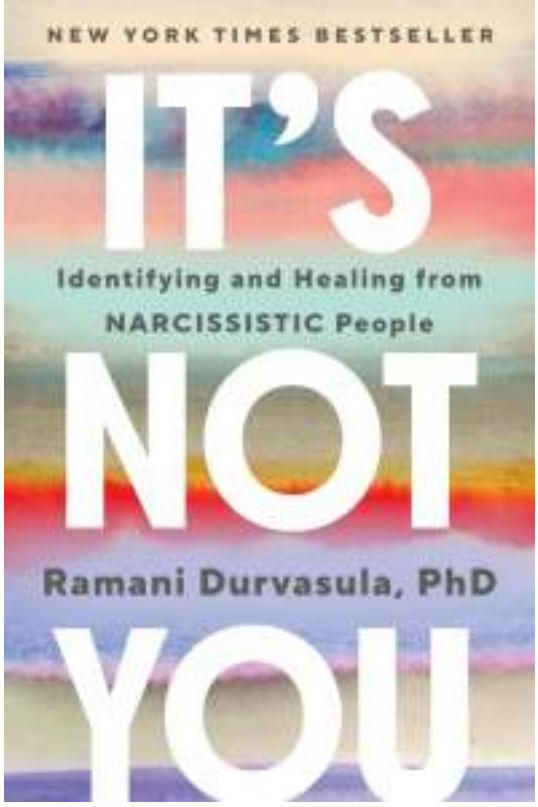
A curated library of 500+ books (and resources) on power, strategy, seduction, and human behavior.
We don't just "summarize" them; we audit them against real-world evidence and our proprietary frameworks. And we extract actionable principles for our article and programs.
Each entry is studied and distilled by power-dynamics expert Lucio Buffalmano, with select contributions from PU-trained alumni, focusing on insights that boost real-world power, status, attraction, and results.

- 

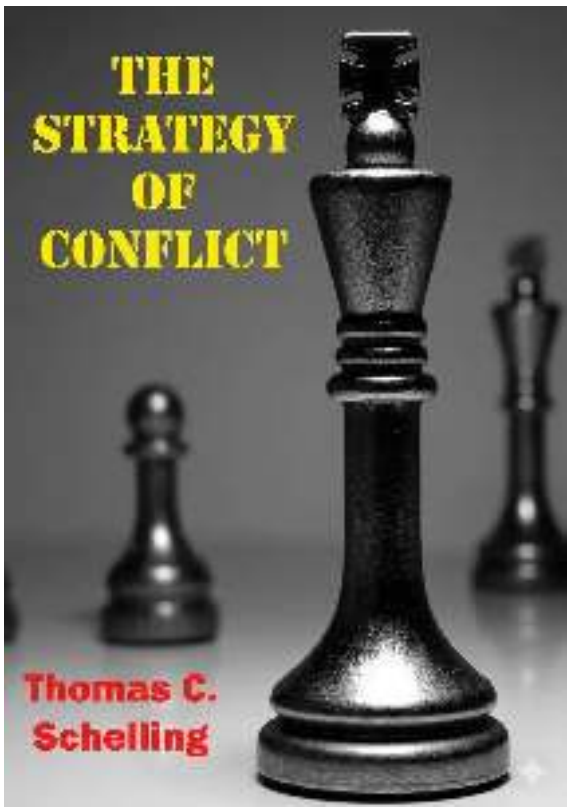
Rethinking Narcissism: Summary & Review

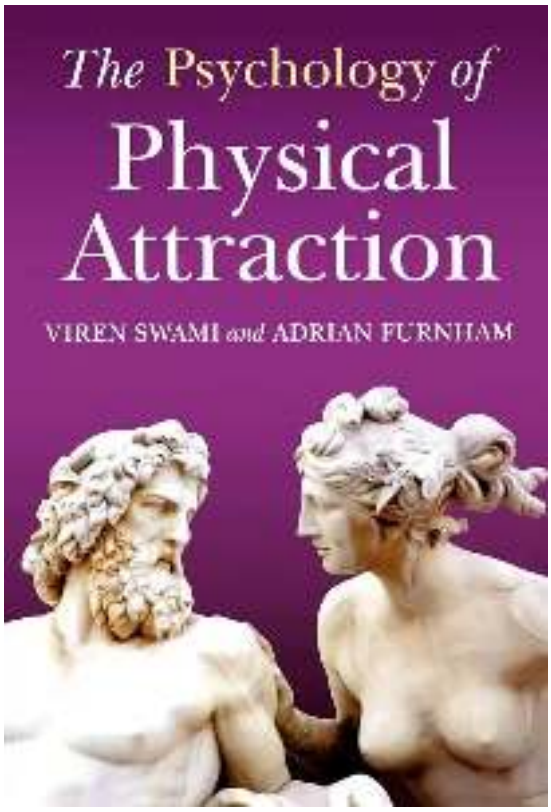


- Disarming the Narcissist: Does Schema Therapy Work? (Book Review)



- It's Not You: Spotting & Healing From Narcissistic Relationships

- 

The Strategy of Conflict: Summary and Review
- 

The Psychology of Physical Attraction: Summary & Review

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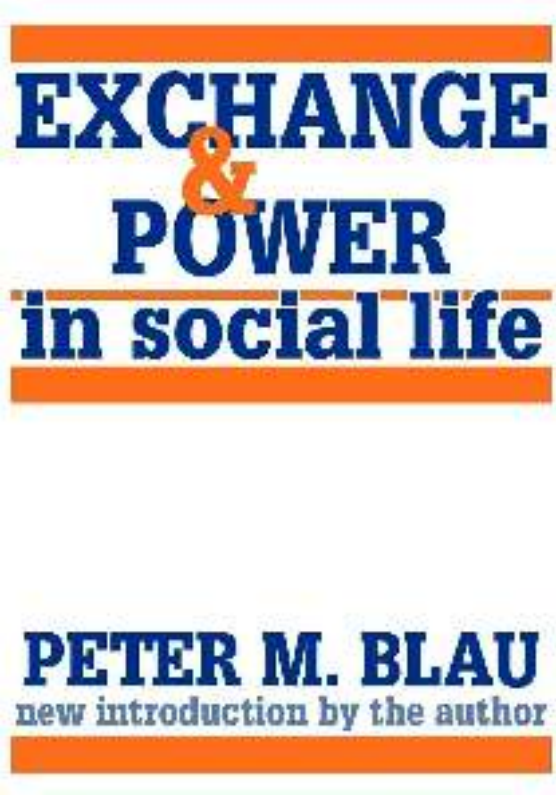
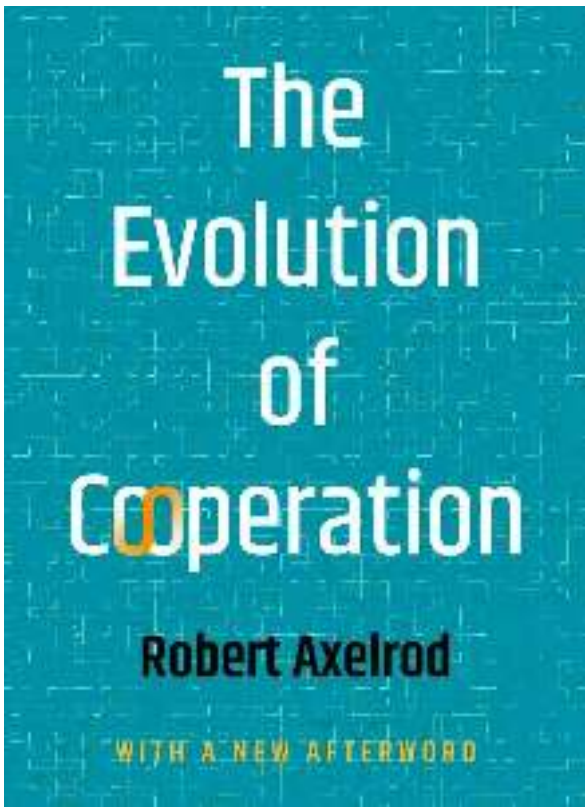
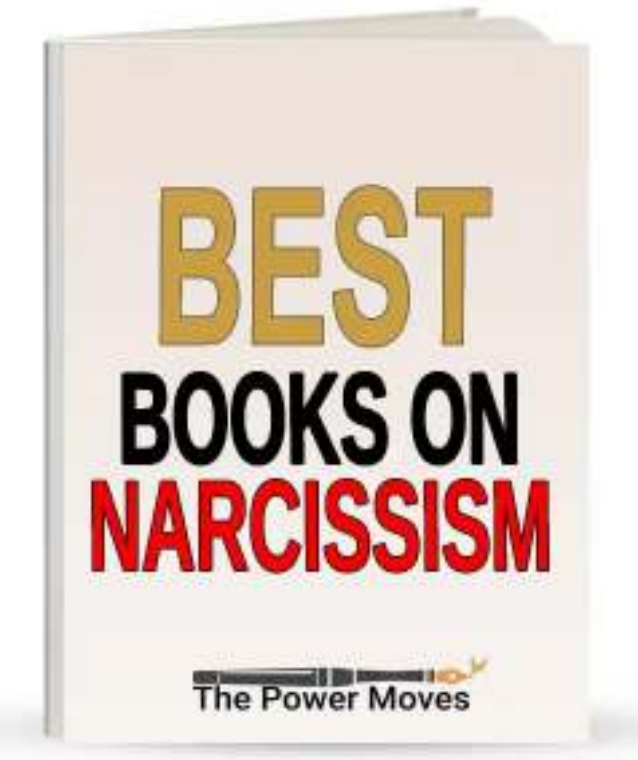
  Female Dating Literature Explained: Psychology, Strategies, & Power

- 

  Exchange and Power in Social Life: 5 Laws of Social Power (Review)

- 

The Evolution of Cooperation: Summary & Review

- 

Best Books On Narcissism

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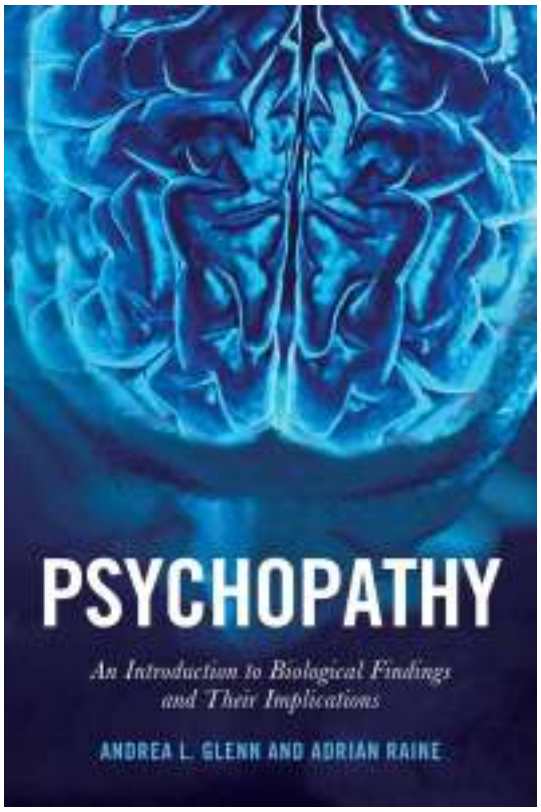
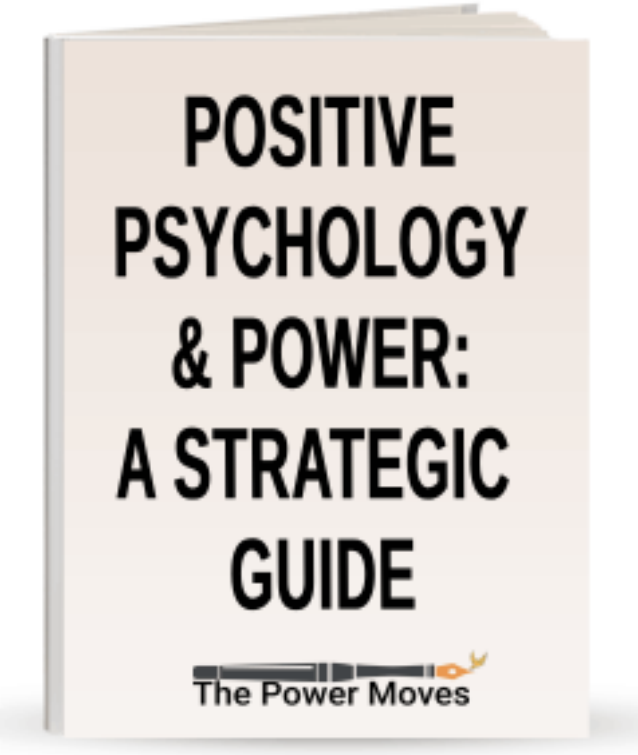
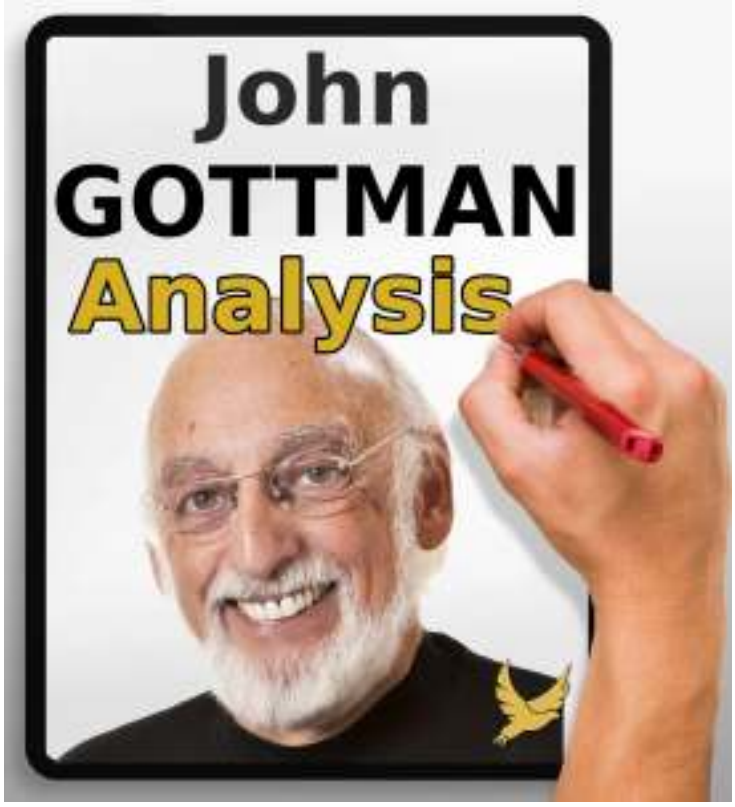
  David DeAngelo: Dating Advice, Cocky Funny, and Program Reviews

- 

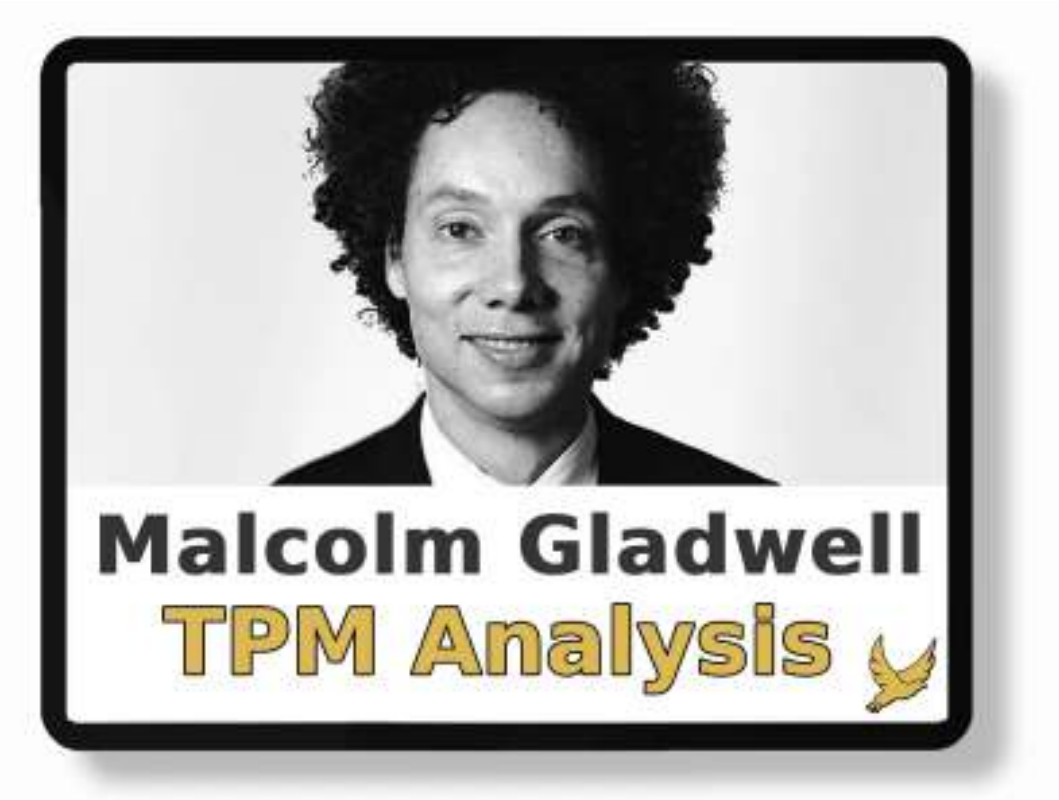
  Psychopathy: An Introduction to Biological Findings



- Positive Psychology & Power: The Strategic Guide to What Actually Works

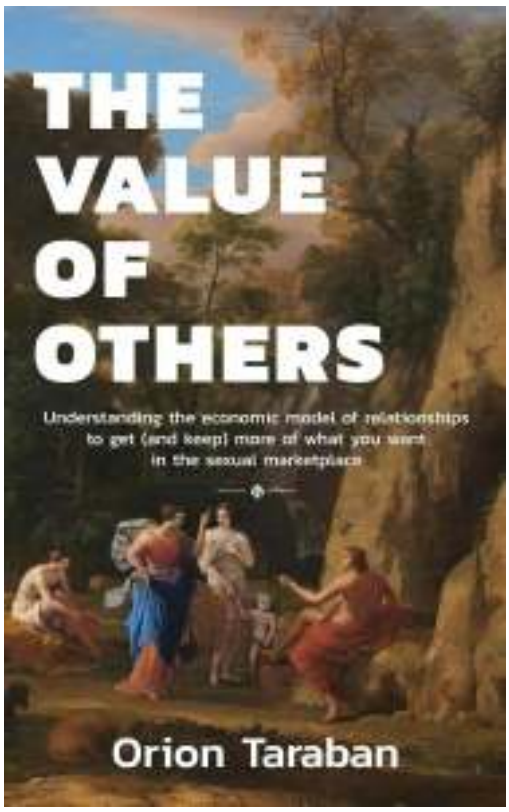


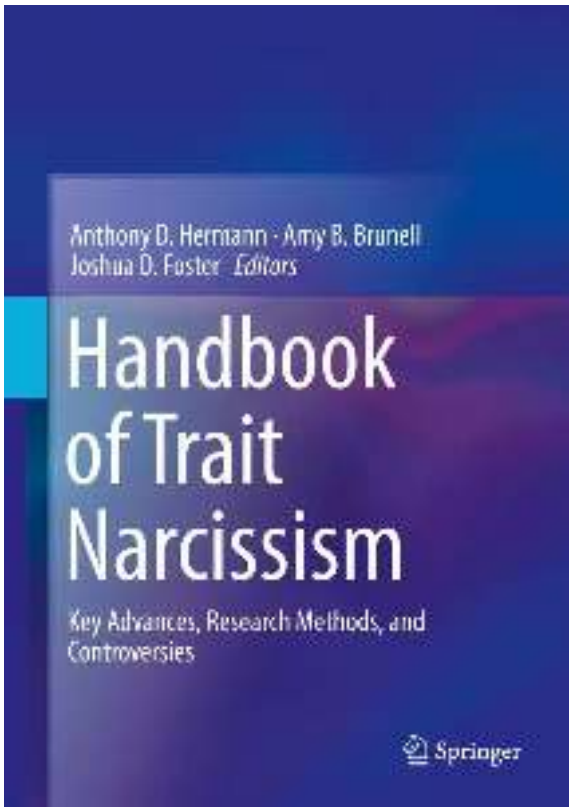
- John Gottman Relationship Research Review



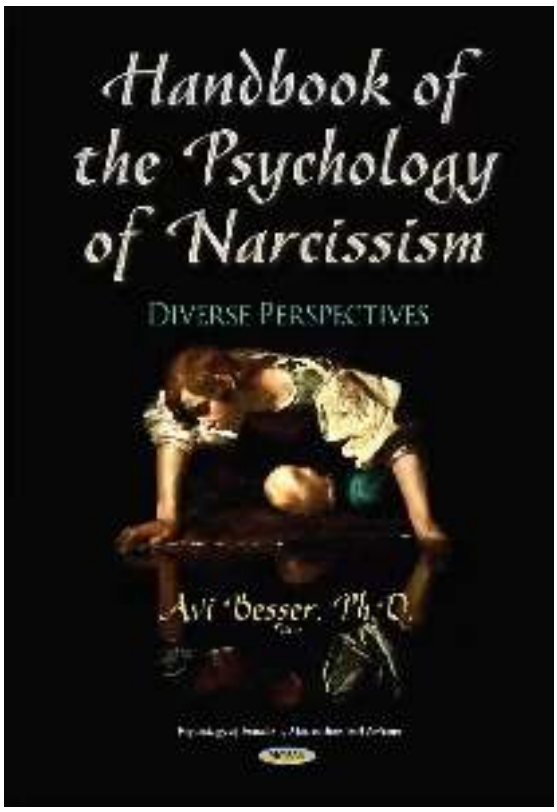
- Malcolm Gladwell Review: Books and Pop-Psychology

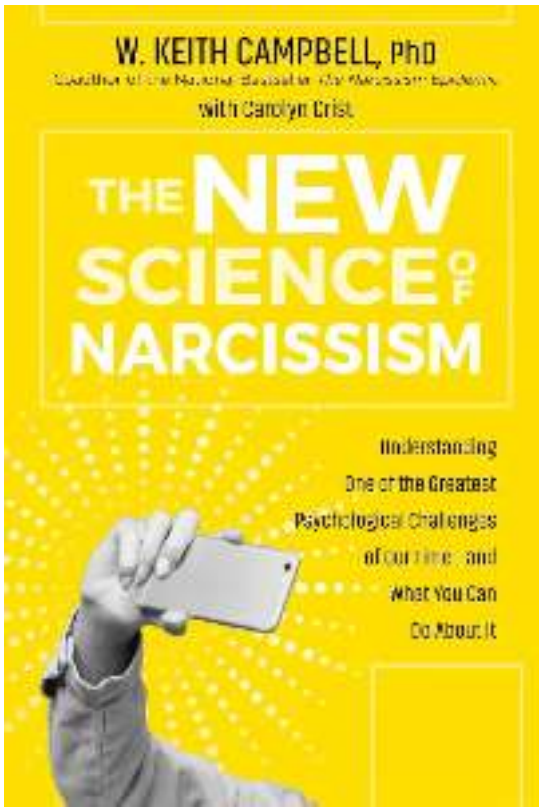
- Why The 48 Laws of Power Doesn't Work: 5 Systemic Flaws

- 

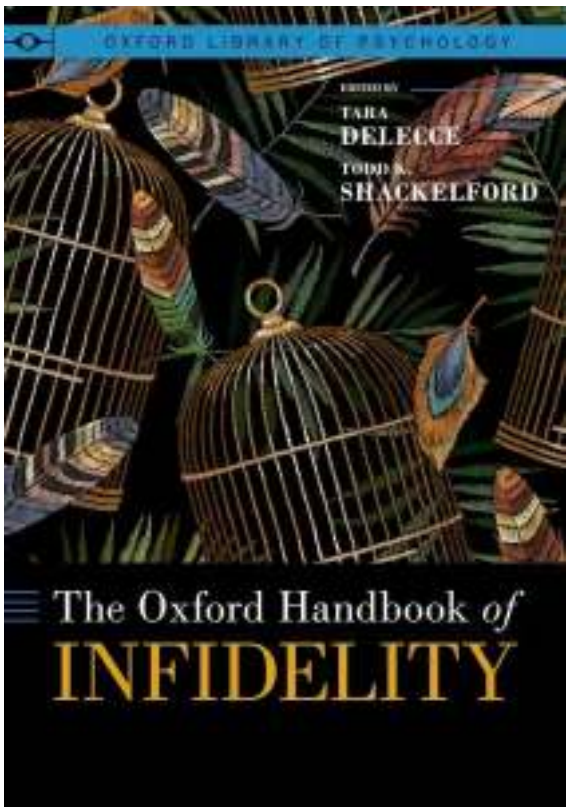
The Value of Others: Summary & Review
- 

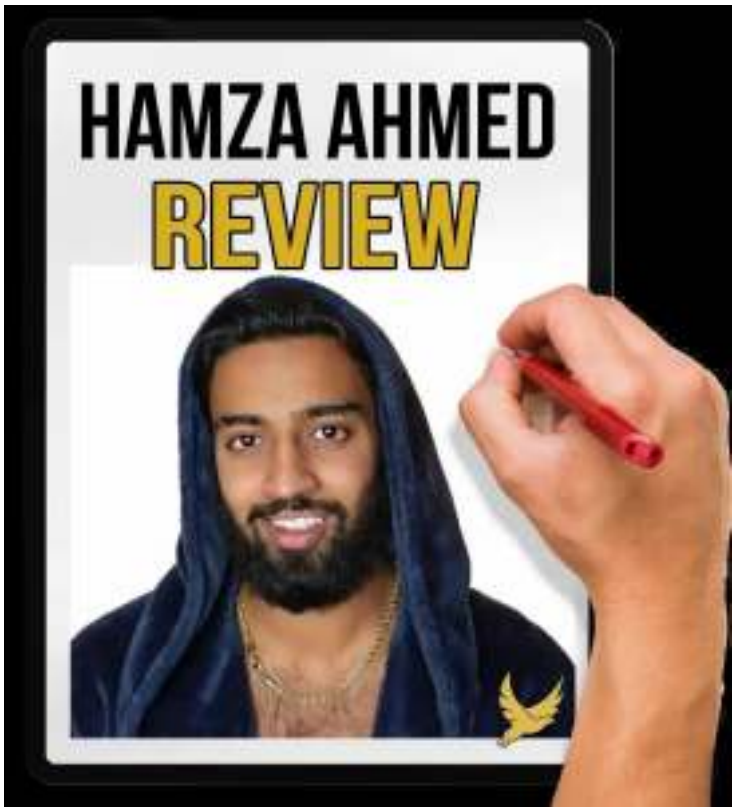
Handbook of Trait Narcissism: Summary & Review

- 

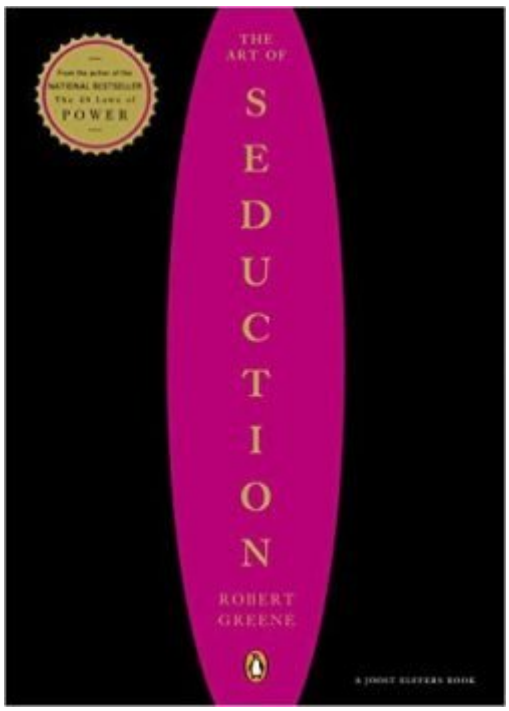
The Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism: Summary & Review
- 

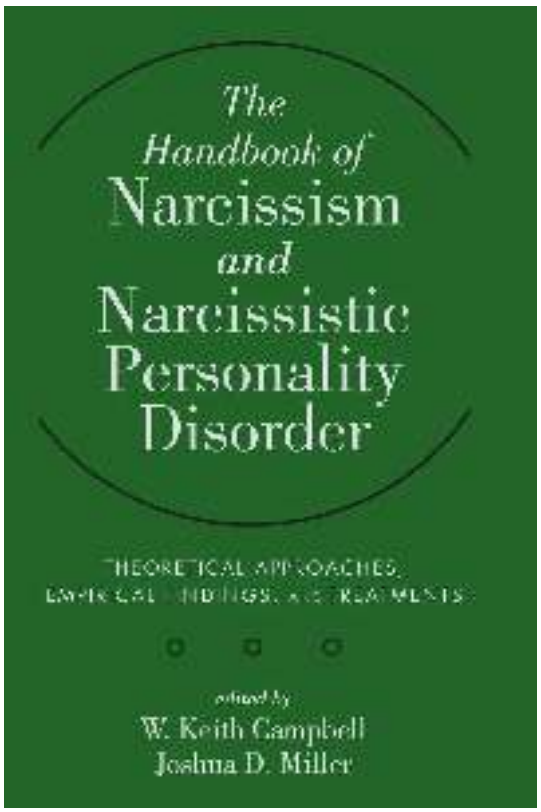
The New Science of Narcissism: Summary & Review

- 

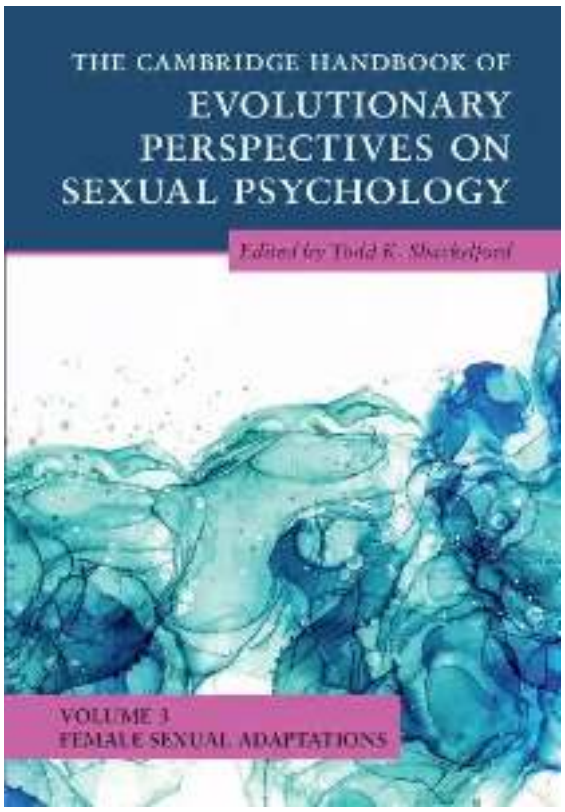
The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity: Summary & Review
- 

Hamza Ahmed Review: Great For Beginners, But Top-1%?

- 

The Art of Seduction by Robert Greene: Summary & Review
- 

The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Summary & Review

- 

  The Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology: Female Sexual Adaptations – Summary & Review

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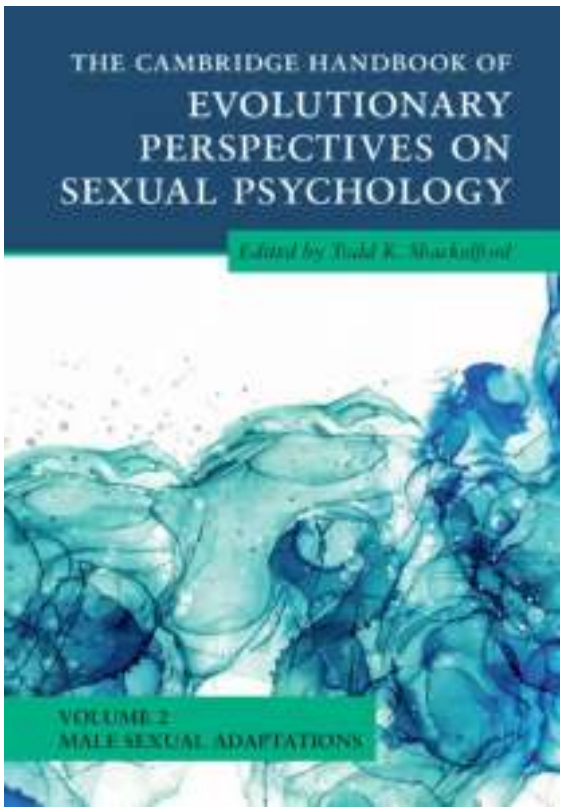
  The Power Moves Reviews: The Good, The Bad, The Shocking

- 

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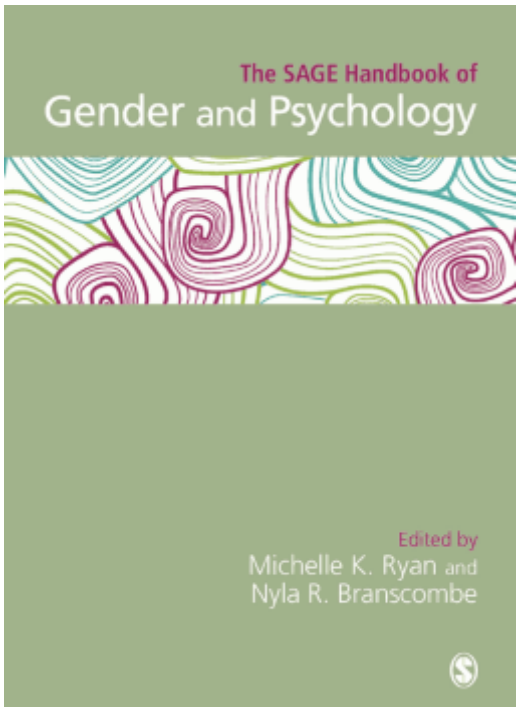
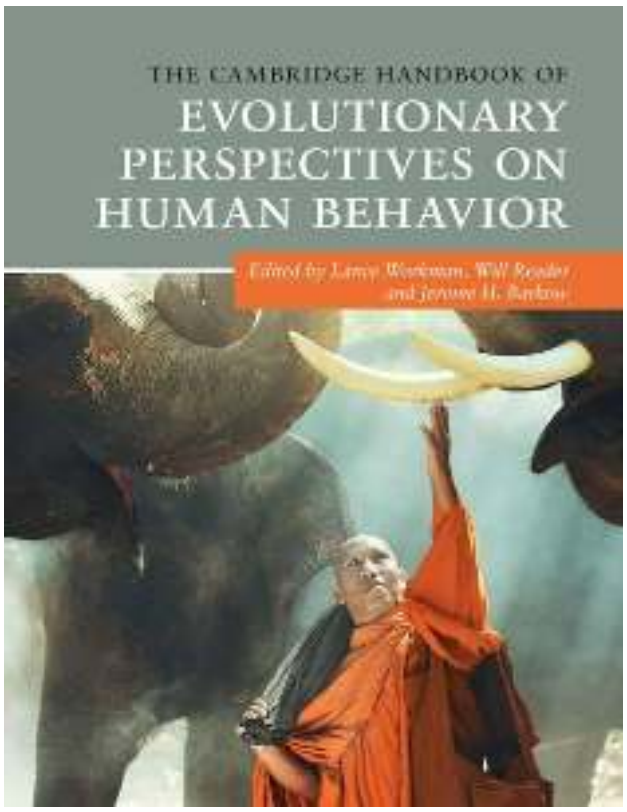
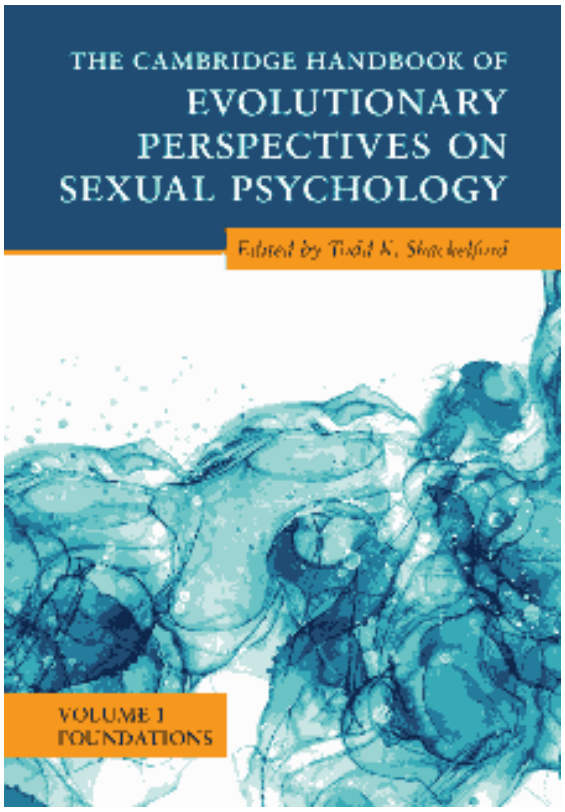
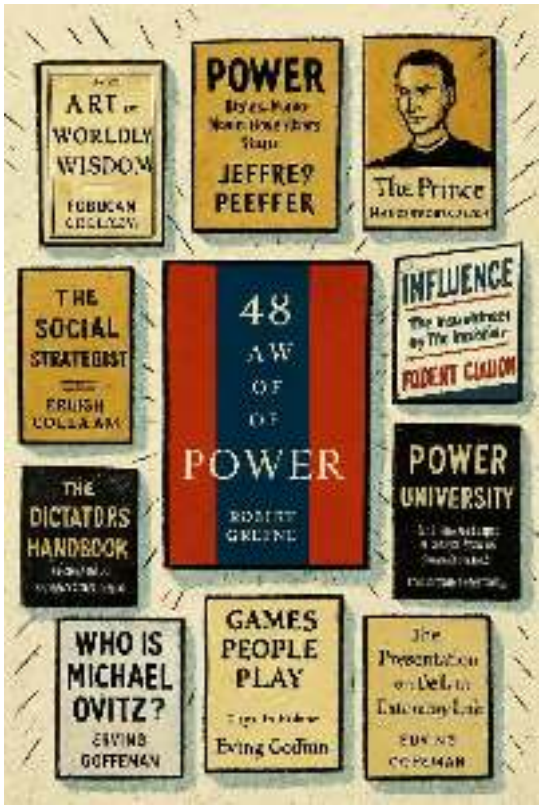
- 

The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Psychology

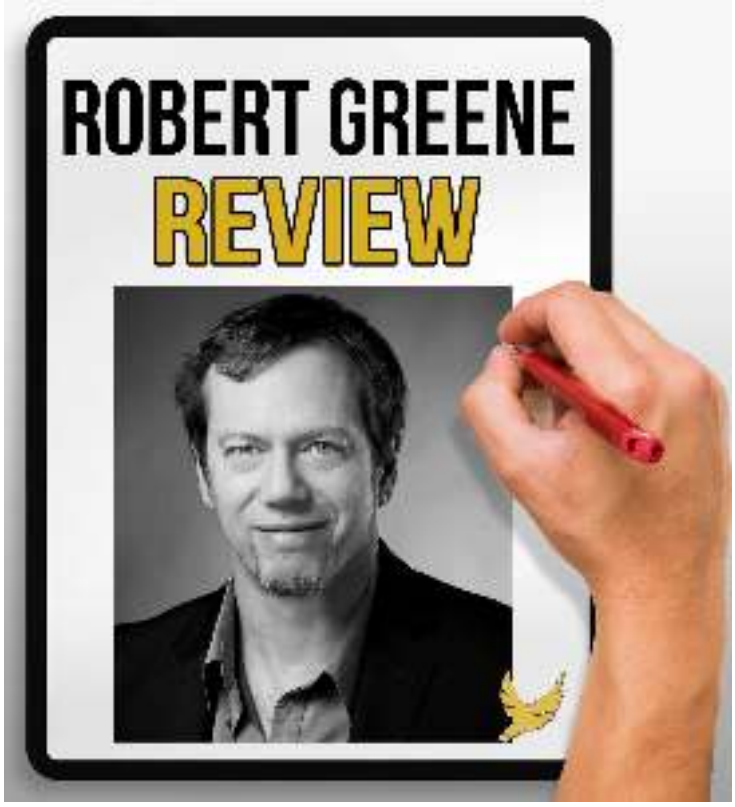
- 

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior: Summary & Review
- 

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology: Summary & Review

- 

  10 Books Better Than The 48 Laws of Power

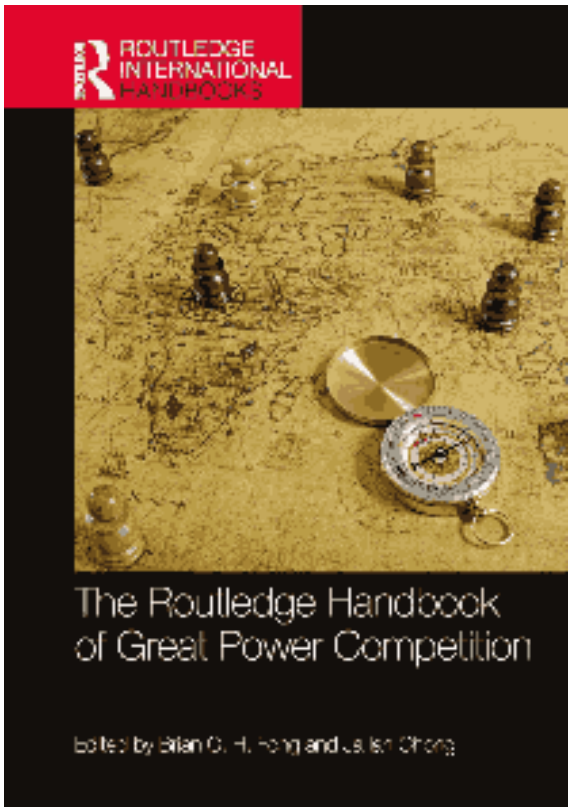
- 

  Robert Greene Review: Power, Genius, and Limitations. Lucio's Uncensored Take

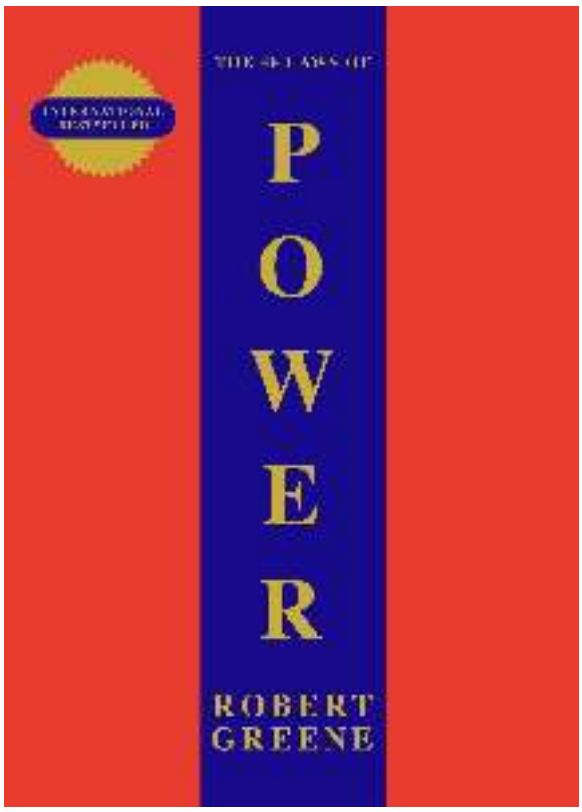
- Best Robert Greene Books: Ranked & Reviewed by Lucio Buffalmano

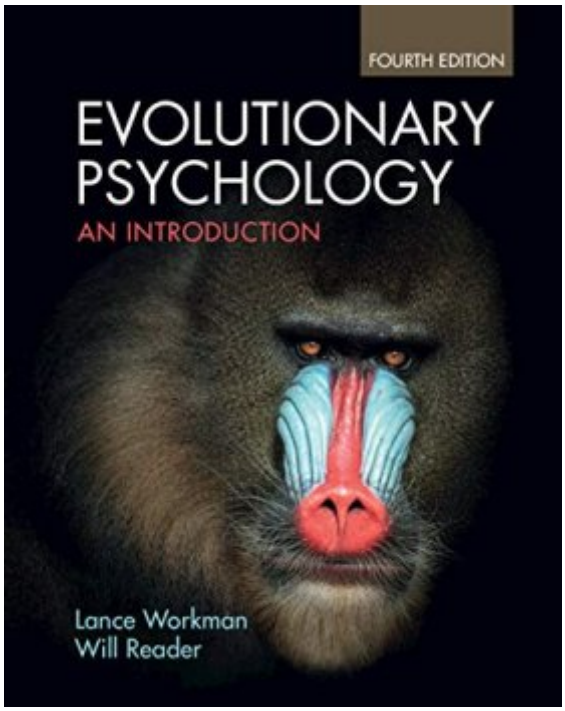
- Best Social Skills Books for Advanced Strategists

- Best Social Skills Courses in 2026: Win Status & Respect

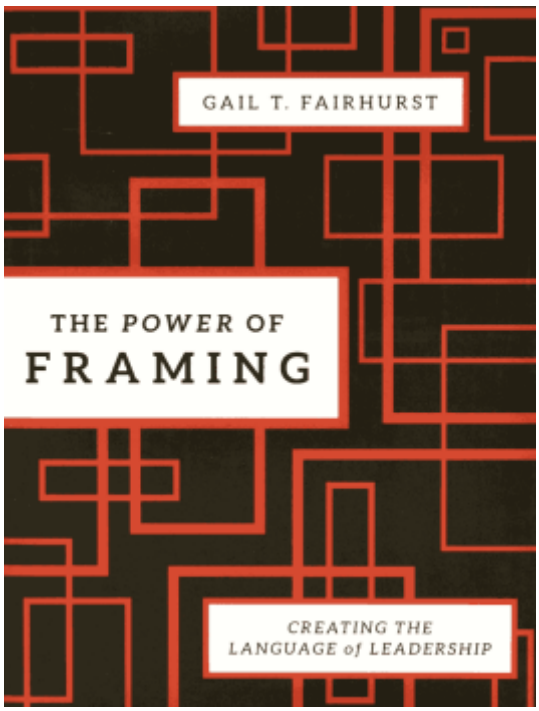


- The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition: Summary & Review

- 

48 Laws of Power — Chapter-by-Chapter Summary
- 

Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction – Summary & Review

- 

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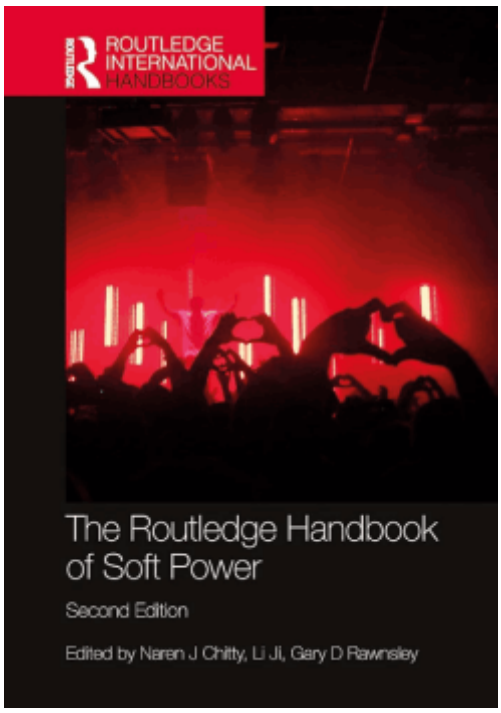
- 

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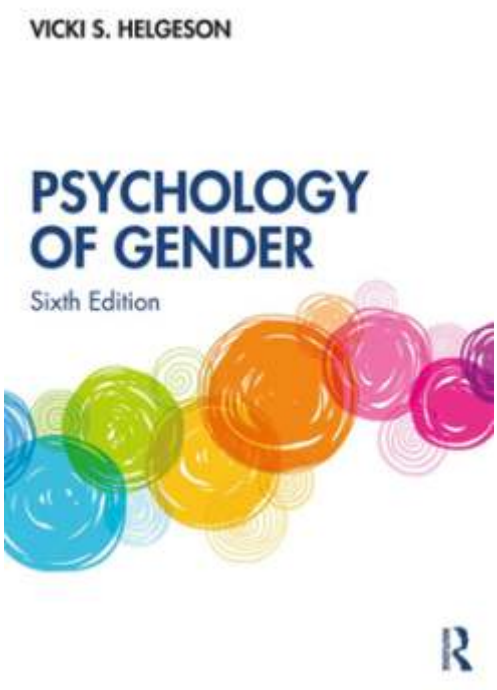

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Pussy A Reclamation: Empowering or Ineffective Narcissism?

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  The Social Strategist: Summary & Review

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But if you wanna learn faster…

And *practically*…

Then **Power University** turns all this wisdom into practicla strategies for confidence, skills, and life results.

Power University almost literally sits on top of the best science and resources available (plus, successful real-life testing, and feedback from thousands of students).

Reviews

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

This page offers the largest editorial reviews of self-development resources on the web.

To keep this page manageable we decided to focus on “best and worst”, relevancy, and popularity (so readers can get TPM’s straight-talking opinions).

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1. Power & Strategies

Power University (10)
| *by TPM*

TPM's forum (**10/10**)
| *by TPM community*

The Logic of Political Survival (**9.5/10**) Long and complex, but a mandatory read to understand both power dynamics and human nature.
The author makes the case that it's not about the personality of the political leaders, but about the incentives and constraints they face. All political leaders care about is increasing their power and staying in power.
| *by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita*

The Prince (**9/10**) Il Principe is not an easy read. But it's a classic. It will teach you a lot about the darker side of human nature.
The Prince contains the keys to high-quality individuals who can move the world forward: developing value-adding individuals who know how to be bad.
| *by N Machiavelli*

The Art of Seduction (**9/10**) Not just about seduction, but social seduction as well. With his usual beautiful prose and deep understanding of human nature, Greene reviews charm, charisma and the use of flattery to ingratiate people.
| *by R Greene*

Underboss (**9/10**) The mafia as an organization is one of the best teachers of power dynamics and Machiavellianism. Underboss also delivers big when it comes to learning leadership fundamentals. However, for many of those lessons, you must be able to read between the lines, so it's more for advanced folks.
| *by Peter Maas*

The Art of Worldly Wisdom (**9/10**) The original "48 Laws of Power" is a treasure trove of advanced social strategies.
| *by Baltasar Gracian*

The Art of The Deal (**9/10**) Trump is not fully forthcoming here because, just like everyone else, he tries to look better. A funny example: he says that he wanted to get homeless people into one of his buildings to help them. That left me wondering. And then I found out it was a move to push low-paying tenants out (LOL so typical Trump). However, this is still a great book and it's a great resource to understand the mindset of ruthless overachievers.
| *by D Trump*

The 48 Laws of Power (**9/10**) On the dark side of human socialization, The 48 Laws of Power is an engaging read on social strategies and games people play.
| *by R Greene*

Also read:

- Best books on power

2. Social Skills Reviews

TPM's forum (**10/10**)
| *by TPM community*

The Social Strategist (**10/10**) the best bridge between foundational social skills and advanced ones
| *by Lucio buffalmano & Ali Scarlett*

The Social Skills Guidebook (**10/10**) Possibly the best book I have read on social skills for beginners.
|*by C MacLeod*

Improve Your Social Skills (**9/10**) Daniel Wendler learned social skills as a boy with Asperger's syndrome. He knows what it means to learn the ropes from scratch. If you're experienced, this might be too basic for you. If not, go for it.
| *by D Wendler*

How to Win Friends & Influence People (**8/10**) Great, but you can find better in this day and age.
| *by D Carnegie*

Skip These:

How to Talk to Anybody (**5/10**) 7 out of 10 for beginners and 4 or less for more advanced folks.
Review by Ali Scarlett
| *by Ramit Sethi*

Daniel Goleman, both Emotional Intelligence (4/10) and Social Intelligence (3/10), both theoretical and also lacking in the theory.

- The best social skills books here

2.2. Assertiveness Reviews

Power University (**10/10**): The only resource I've seen with real-life video examples, and the only resource that doesn't just "push" assertiveness, but that also tells you when to use, and the advantages, of passive and aggressive styles.
| *by Lucio Buffalmano*

The Assertiveness Guide for Women (**10/10**) Don't let the name fool you, it's also great for men. Ads a unique point of view between attachment styles, differentiation, and assertiveness.
| *by J Hanks*

The Power of a Positive No (**9/10**) In between assertiveness on how to defend our boundaries and a general communication skills book, Ury delivers at full marks on both fronts.
|*by W Ury*

8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness (**9/10**) There is an overlap between passive-aggression and lack of assertiveness, and this is one of the best books on the topic.
| *by A Brandt*

Alpha Assertiveness Guide for Men and Women (**8/10**) Very hands-on, with many "how-to guides", lots of examples of assertive communication, and everything of generally high-quality. Thumbs up.
| *by Gerard Shaw*

People Skills (**8/10**) I disagree with some of the examples that use a "feeling" language at work, where I feel it's disempowering, but otherwise, it's a very good book.
|*by R. Bolton*

No More Mr. Nice Guy (**8/10**) Sometimes it feels like the author pegs all kinds of negative traits to the nice guy. But for those nice guys who are too nice in the sense of passive and submissive, it's a great book.
| *by R Glover*

- Best resources on assertiveness

2.3. Communication Skills

Power University (**10/10**): The only resource that extensively covers high-power, high-status communication.
| *by Lucio Buffalmano*

Thanks For The Feedback (**9.5/10**) The best book on how to give and receive feedback, including some great psychology
| *by Stone, Heen*

Difficult Conversations (**9.5/10**) The best book I have read on broaching difficult topics and negotiating interpersonal conflicts. With great psychology and awesome examples.
| *by D Stone*

There Is No Good Card For This (**9/10**) If "normal" conversation can be difficult at times, what about when tragedy strikes and there are no words? This book will help.
| *by Crowe, McDowell*

Crucial Conversations (**9/10**) One of the most popular books on verbal communication. And for good reasons.
| *by Patterson, Grenny, McMillian, Switzler*

Verbal Judo (**8/10**) If you learn how not to take things personally, you're at 80% of controlling verbal interactions. The other 20%? Thompson shares it as a cop who has had plenty of street experience with verbal judo.
| *by G. J. Thompson*

How to Talk to Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere (**8/10**) Short and to the point, all the fundamentals of listening, caring, and being genuine are here.
|*by L King*

2.4. Body Language Reviews

All body language books top at "9" unless they contain lots of pictures.

Power University (**10/10**): It has the obvious advantages over many other resources as it mixes still images and video examples.
| *by Lucio Buffalmano*

The Definitive Book of Body Language (**9/10**) The golden standard of body language books.
| *by A Pease*

Power Cues (**9/10**) An holistic approach to both body language and self-development.
|*by N Morgan*

What Every BODY Is Saying (**9/10**) The second best body language book I have read.
| *by J Navarro*

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3. Dating, Seduction, & Intersexual Dynamics

On general dating dynamics, without strategies and techniques to find a mate (read below for those, divided by gender):

David Buss (**10/10**) with both The Evolution of Desire and When Men Behave Badly, he is the best source to shed a scientific light on the sexual marketplace.

| *by D Buss*

A Billion Wicked Thoughts (**9/10**) Great big-data analyses with lots of unique insights.
| *by Ogi Ogas*

Date-onomics (**9/10**) How the laws of economics and supply and demand affect dating. An eye-opening book not just for dating but for understanding humans in general.
| *by J Birger*

Dataclysm (**8/10**) Rudder, strong on his huge database of online dating interactions on OkCupid, can speak with authority when it comes to intersexual dynamics. And he shares some eye-opening insights.
| *by Christian Rudder*

Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism (**7.5/10**) Such a pity for the feminist and leftist bias, because her analysis on the male-female conflict for political and cultural control is spot-on. The analysis on sexual economics has some deep insights, but lacks a deeper understanding of the macro-forces that govern sexual economics.
| *by K Ghodsee*

3.2. Women Dating

Seduction University (**10/10**) the most scientific and experience-backed in this list, plus with texts, videos, and breakdowns

Anna Bey (**9.5/10**) A YouTube channel recommended by Ali.
LoF said it was more of a channel for wealthy male hunters and the "classy style" she preaches is only skin-deep.
If you look her up online, Anna Bey seems to have a bad "internet reputation" and lots of haters.
However, Lucio finds her content top-notch. Her dating strategies videos, here an example, share many similarities with this website. Her video on attractive body language is also great. And she understands the "optimum balance" for important traits such as confidence, independence, or "attention-grabbing" clothing and behavior.
You can learn femininity and class from her.
| *by Anne Bey*

The Tao of Dating (**9/10**) One of the best dating books for women I have read -if not *the* best-.
| *by A Binazir*

Dataclysm (**9/10**) Some hard-hitting truth to help women realistically assess their sexual market value, which in turn can help them shape better strategies and timeframes.
| *by Christian Rudder*

Seductresses (**8/10**) This is the book on seduction that feminists would love to be true. The good news: it probably is true, in part. The bad news: it works on certain types of men only, and it doesn't work or apply to 99% of women. The advice watered version of this book bandied by all feel-good dating coaches of "don't need a man, prioritize yourself and professional success" is not the most effective advice for many women.
That being said, in spite of the limitations I list in the review, I loved it.
| *by Betsy Prioleau*

Act Like a Lady Think Like a Man (**8/10**) The idea that men need to achieve a minimum level of achievement before settling was a groundbreaking one in the literature. It's mostly true for driven men, but something to keep in mind when dating.
| *by S Harvey*

3.3. Men Dating

Seduction University (10/10) possibly the best mix of science and research. This course doesn't push any personal preference, but gives you the foundations that work (or don't work) no matter what, presents *every approach and strategy* that work, and helps you find what works best *for you*
| *by Lucio Buffalmano*

Playing With Fire (9/10) Growfast and lilism in the TM community both recommended this YouTube channel. Lucio agreed it's solid (albeit wasn't happy it "took inspiration from TPM" without referencing). It's a good mix of "alpha male game", but without the exaggerations of the red pill -of which he's also critical- and focusing on processes and strategies.
| *by Alex*

Todd Valentine (**9/10**): Original PUA a bit more on the game-y side, but great to learn some "gaming techniques" and power dynamics, especially in verbal communication. Also great general approach focusing on doing the work and openly staying away from extremes and negativity such as the red pill. Big plus, you can learn from watching and breakdowns, which is a huge advantage over books. The same is true for his products.
| *by Todd Valentine*

The System (**9/10)** Books are great, but to learn the art, seeing is much better. That's why I feature video products very high in this list, and Todd Valentine is one of the good guys to learn from
| *by T Valentine*

How to Make Girls Chase (**9/10**) No made-up evolutionary psychology, no self-help rehash, no "you can do it" pep talk: just lots of high-quality techniques and processes.
| *by C Amante*

Girlschase.com (**8.5/10**) John in the community recommended it.
Lucio agrees: a top dating websites for men, with great contributors in its community -Alek Rolstad first and foremost for night game-.
-1 point because it goes for quantity rather than the "timeless top quality" approach we prefer. And 0.5 less because the products it sells are good, but not matching the website's quality and expertise. Lucio also didn't like the marketing and products/people it cross-promotes on the mailing list (including one we spoke with but chose not to promote here).
As for Chase, he tends over-generalize -including with a Western and libertine approach to dating-, jump to conclusions, and some bias and lack of expertise to assess studies. But he has the experience and intuition to still make him a great teacher.
P.S.:
Seems like they read and learned from TPM. Would have been appreciated if they referenced us.
| *by Chase Amante + Team*

Invincible (**8.5/10**) It draws heavily from Robbins and The Art of Seduction but it's solid material and a valuable focus on the fundamentals.
| *by D Tian*

Day Game (**8.5/10**) It's a video product. A bit brief and not too many video examples and case studies, but it's solid information.
| *by T Valentine*

What Women Want / Mate (**8.5/10**) This is slightly more geared towards long-term relationships and to those who want to date as providers (ie.: the majority of guys).
And it's possibly the best book at that.
| *by G Miller & Tucker M*

Fundamentals of Female Dynamics (**8/10**) In between a dating text and a self-help book, it makes the valid point that success in dating equates to success in life. The author has a good grasp of dating and psychology and what I enjoyed most is how he debunks many myths of poorer -but more widespread- pick-up literature.
|*by M Knight*

The Tactical Guide to Women (**8/10**): this is about picking the right partner, but also about dating as a high-value man. It's possibly the best book for those who are approaching dating to get a great relationship out of it.
| *by S Smith*

Skip These

The Mystery Method (**4/10**) Some good ideas but also some not-so-good ones. Overall, the system is too complex and many steps are often unneeded to provide real value.
| *by Mystery*

Transformation Mastery (**4/10**) The content is not necessarily bad, but it's simply not about seduction. It's mot about self-help based on "Letting Go" and targeted to the RSD followers. I actually liked the main idea, but it could have been condensed in a 10 minutes video.
| *by J Blanc*

Blueprint Decoded (**3/10**) A couple of good ideas for general self-development, but too few and far in between. Underwhelming when it comes to dating and seduction.
| *by RSD Tyler*

The Game (**3/10**) Entertaining story, but not nearly as good when it comes to effective dating.
| *by N Strauss*

Day Bang (**3/10**) Roosh presents indirect game as the most efficient and *only* way to get women during the day, while discouraging all other methods. That's simply not true. Plus, some of his advice can make you come across as weird and socially uncalibrated.
| *by Valizadeh R*oosh

- Check out the best dating resources for men

3.4. Relationships

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work (**10/10**) If you had to read one single book of Gottman's deep well of research, go with this one.
| *by J Gottman*

The Tactical Guide to Women (**10/10**): A great relationship starts with picking the right partner. And this is the best book for that.
| *by S Smith*

Not Just Friends (**10/10**) If you are looking for information on emotional infidelity, preventing infidelity and mending a relationship after infidelity, look no further (or look at my post based on this book).
| *by S Glass*

Attached (**10/10**) Necessary read to understand relationships and a must-read if you are an anxious attachment
| *by A Levine*

Why Does He Do That? (**10/10**) Deep, eye-opening account of abusive men and the relationships they form. BUT, it's not equally deep in the psychology of WHY women often stick with abusive men anyway.
| *by L Bancroft*

Women Who Love Too Much (**10/10**) Potential life changer. I am still waiting for someone to write a book on

"men who need to be loved too much"
| *by R Norwood*

Men Who Hate Women, and Women Who Love Them (**9/10**) Best resources I have read so far on misogyny, both in terms of psychology of misogynists, how it develops, and the relationship dynamics of misogynist relationships.
| *by Susan Forward*

Hold Me Tight (**9/10**) Simple, yet profound message: great relationships are not built on great communication. Great couples don't communicate any better than poor ones.
The difference is all in emotional intimacy (boom).
| *by S Johnson*

The Man's Guide to Women (**9/10**) Great stuff for men. Many men badly need it.
| *by J Gottman*

The Women's Guide to How Men Think (**9/10**) Great text to help women better understand men, together with much wisdom on how to develop a positive relationship.
| *by S Smith*

The 5 Love Languages (**9/10**) You can both love each other, but you can fail to communicate it properly if you don't use the same language. This book will rescue you. It's a very simple concept, you can read the summary and skip the book to be honest.
| *by G Chapman*

Too Good to Leave Too Bad to Stay (**9/10**) If you are ambivalent and not sure whether you should breakup or work on your relationship, this book is for you.
| *by M Kirshenbaum*

The Relationship Cure (**8/10**) Highly specific on how small daily acts of "turning towards" build emotional intimacy. Must read for anyone who's serious about improving his relationship. | *by J* | *by* John *Gottman*

Men Are From Mars Women are From Venus (**8/10**) One of the most hated and criticized relationship books in the world. Feminists hate it, researchers hate for having no data and many hate it for implying women and men are completely different.
And still, it does get a lot of stuff right.
| *by J Gray*

Why Marriages Succeed or Fail (**8/10**) It's not true that great relationships have little arguing. Argumentative couples can get along as much as peaceful ones. But they must avoid the four horsemen of the apocalypse and keep a ratio of 5 positives to 1 negative.
| *by J Gottman*

4. Influence / Persuasion / Sales

Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive (**9/10**) I usually don't like "lists" posts or books. They are often click-baits with shallow content and ankle-deep analysis. But, obviously, this is an exception.
|*by Cialdini et All*

Creating Lasting Change (**9/10**) Robbins' recipe to influence people for the better. Plenty of NLP of course and a huge amount of examples. Good stuff, just too bad that it lacks in structure as Robbins jumps left and right. He opens new topics, but then doesn't finish explaining them, which can leave the listener frustrated.
|*by T Robbins*

Don't Think of An Elephant (**9/10**) How the political class swayed poor and middle-class voters to vote against their own interest. Plus much wisdom on frames and how to use frames to influence others

|*by G Lakoff*

Influence (**9/10**) It's a huge classic and trendsetter. Most more modern and recent books on persuasion draw heavily from Influence's 6 principles.
| *by R Cialdini*

The Art of Deception (**8.5/10**) Best book on social engineering.
|*by K Mitnick*

Pre-Suasion (**8.5/10**) The sequel to Influence. Explains that what comes before your pitch is often what makes the difference. Must read as well if you're into people's skills and influence.
| *by R Cialdini*

The Social Animal (**9/10**) Albeit this is a social psychology book for universities and not a book on influencing, it talks at length on influence and changing people's minds and opinions. Being based all on science and research makes it one of the best resources available.
| *by E Aronson*

To Sell Is Human (**9/10**) Not your "how to sell manual", but by far my favorite book on selling. It's one of the few sales books with some good research and psychology behind and it debunks quite a few sales myths (ie.: "overcome objections", "tell yourself you can do it", "extroverts sell better")

50 Perfect Email Scripts (9/10): would've been great if the scripts had fewer "would love to pick your brain" sentences and more expressions of gratitude (also see Dream Job). All WIIFT mistakes aside though, these scripts are robust and I still use them with a few tweaks today.
Review by Ali Scarlett
| *by Ramit Sethi*

The Power to Influence (**8/10**) This is more sales-oriented compared to creating lasting change which is more holistic. It's a great product for sales manager and sales professionals.
| *by T Robbin*

Pitch Anything (**8/10**) This is The Power Moves applied to pitching. However, it's too aggressive and can be very off-putting.
However, do read it, you will learn a lot about power dynamics
| *by O Klaff*

The Art of Closing The Sale (**8/10**) If you had to pick one sales product from Tracey, go for this one.
| *by Brian Tracy*

Maximum Influence (**8/10**) Great overview of well-researched influencing principles in what's a very highly underrated text.
|*by K Mortensen*

Persuasion: The Art of Getting What You Want (**8/10**) No new ground was broken here, but Dave Lakhani gets a huge boost for focusing on the persona who actually delivers the message, which is indeed your 80% when it comes to persuasion.
|*by D Lakhani*

Skip These:

Straight Line Persuasion (**6/10**) This is a video series by Jordan Belfor, who is the guy in The Wolf of Wall Street. The mindsets and sales is good (but not great). But the part on voice tonality is the best I've ever heard.
| *by J Belfort*

Grant Cardone: mostly good for "high-pressure" type of selling, but not enough well-rounded to teach sales

outside of his brand of influencers type of selling. His book “Sell or Be Sold” was OK, but skippable.

4.2. Negotiation

Negotiation Genius (**10/10**) If you had to pick one single book on negotiation, go for this one. It provides the best overview, and the best techniques to reach win-win
| *by D Malhotra*

Secrets of Power Negotiation (**10/10**) This is The Power Moves of negotiating. Learn what tricks the most shrewd (and sometimes sneaky) negotiators play and learn to play the game. Eye opening.
| *by R Dawson*

Game Theory Bargaining and Auction Strategies (**10/10**) After tens of books on negotiation, this is the first and so far only one that actually taught how it’s best to sell your house (ie.: with a Dutch auction).
Plus of course, I will add my own power moves to it (which I share in the Social Power course).
Oh yeah, and it also taught me about psychology, abuse and manipulation.
Invaluable.
| *by G Berz*

Getting Past No (**9/10**) All the basics of dealing with difficult negotiators are here.
| *by William Ury*

Getting to Yes (**8/10**) A huge classic of negotiation. And for good reasons: all the basics of positive and constructive negotiation are here. One or two points less because it was a bit weaker when it comes to power moves.
|*by Ury & Fisher*

The Shadow Negotiation (**8/10**) Theoretically written for women, everyone can instead learn from it. There are a ton of examples, which makes it very good for beginners.
| *by D. Kolb*

Never Split The Difference (**7/10**) Many (poor) resources focus on “getting to yes” (no matter what). The biggest pearl of this book is that to get powerful yeses you have to empathize, listen and empower them to say no.
| *by C. Voss*

5. Manipulation

Power University (**10+/10**): There is simply nothing on the market that teaches you manipulation, how to spot manipulators, and what to do about it as well as Power University does.
| *by Lucio Buffalmano* & TPM community

Who’s Pulling Your Strings (**10/10**) There are 4 or 5 really good books on interpersonal manipulation and how to defend against it and they’re all great. But if I had to pick one above them all, it might be this one.
| *by H Braiker*

How to Lie with Statistics (**10/10**) A great primer on how statistics can be willfully abused to sway us
| *by D Huff*

Methods of Persuasion (**10/10**) Kolenda makes it very clear he writes about persuasion and he opposes manipulation. However, how people use the information is up to them, and when it comes to information this one is a treasure trove: both to persuade and to defend yourself against manipulation.
|*by N Kolenda*

In Sheep’s Clothing (**10/10**) Simon explains how manipulators are aggressors in disguise, often hiding their egotistical thirst for power behind ideals and shared values.

A seminal book for the philosophy behind this website and one of the best books to understand both manipulation and psychology in general.
|*by G Simon*

The Art of Seduction (**10/10**) Deep and highly advanced wisdom on charm, social seduction, psychology and the use of sex and the allure of sex as a weapon for influence and manipulation.
|*by R Greene*

Emotional Blackmail (**9/10**) One of the best overviews of manipulation, emotional abuse, and power dynamics within close relationships, including ways to combat it and defend oneself.
|*by* Susan Forward

30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics (**8.5/10**) The best mix of quality and brevity to understand, as soon as possible, if you are are in a manipulative and abusive relationship
|*by A Birch*

Propaganda (**8.5/10**) Holy cow, what a sacred cow of persuasion and manipulation. Propaganda is a huge classic and basically gave birth to the literature on persuasion and manipulation. Bernays didn't have access to advanced research and studies, yet he drops knowledge left and right.
The lack of a proper scientific approach, as well as access to modern-day research, weighs, but I loved it.
|*by E Bernays*

The Confidence Game (**8.5/10**) A good analysis of how cons work, both from the con artist's perspective, and the victim's perspective.
| *by Maria Konnikova*

Ho Tactics (**8/10**) Some of the dialogues and techniques were really good. Lambert has also written some more books on dating with lots of golden nuggets within.
|*by J Lambert*

A Gold Diggers Guide (**8/10**) The manual of the most astute gold diggers out there. If you plan on getting rich guys… Read up
| *by B Fletcher*

Skip These:

Dark Psychology 202 (**2/10**) some interesting ideas and reflection but too much filler content in between to make it worth it.
| *by M Pace*

Dark Psychology 101 (**0/10**) Skip. Maybe check out this website's overview of dark psychology.
| *by M Pace*

- Best resources on manipulation

5.2. Dark Triad

Power University (**10/10**) Dark triad techniques and strategies applied for success. If you want to become a good Machiavellian, this is your course.
|*by L Buffalmano*

Casanova's Memoirs (**10/10**) An adventurer and lover high in Machiavellianism, power and also romanticism. That's a powerful, rare mix.

But it's not a book for everyone. It's long, and you must be able to read between the lines and across cultures to tease out mindsets and techniques.
|*by G Casanova*

The Dictator's Handbook (**10/10**) The best analysis of the techniques and power dynamics of dictatorship, with dictators usually men high in dark triad traits and power
|*by B Bueno de Mesquita*

Confessions of A Sociopath (**10/10**) If you want to learn how a female, high-functioning sociopath thinks, feels, and act, this is a good one.
| *by M Thomas*

The Wisdom of Psychopaths (**9/10**) The author unluckily misrepresents psychopathy. Otherwise, it's a good book and the concept and idea behind it is something I agree with. To be good, you need to know how to be bad, and that's also one of the main philosophies of this website.
| *by K Dutton*

The Good Psychopath's Guide to Success (**9/10**) Same as above. Same authors, but he writes it with an actual psychopath. So expect less science, more bragging, and a smattering of foul language. The idealization of psychopaths gets worse, but there is some good advice. And the main idea still stands: to be good, you need to know how to be bad.
| *by K Dutton*

The Art of Seduction (**9/10**) A book fully dedicated to seduction Machiavellianism, with the typical Robert Greene's high quality
| *by R Greene*

Psychopath Free (**9/10**) How it feels to be the victim of a dark-triad man (spoiler: it sucks). On the negative side, it could have been briefer and better structured.
| *by J MacKenzie*

Women Who Love Psychopaths (**8/10**) There seems to be a myth that psychopaths are "particularly good with women". In truth, they are good with a certain subset of women. This book is partially successful in shedding some light on who those women are. But you need to read between the lines because the author fails to connect some dots (also see: why psychopaths are sexually successful).
| *by S Brown*

30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics (**8/10**) Dark triad in relationships is not all brawn and strength, and Birch does a good job at providing an overview of the sneakier aspects of manipulation.
|*A Birch*

Skip These

Without Conscience (**7/10**) Robert Hare is one of the most famous names when it comes to psychopathy, and this is his best book, meaning that it's one of the most commonly recommended or talked about. However, it's aged, and there is better on the market.
|*R Hare*

- **Best dark triad books**

6. Business / Career / Money

Top Business & Money Authors

- **Alex Hormozi** (10/10) simply the best there is at this point in time, and great mix of business advice and life wisdom
- **Warren Buffet / Charlie Munger** (10/10): the best guys to listen when it comes to investing
- **Tom Bylieu** (9/10): only limitation may be that he is very extreme in the mindsets and extreme can turn into empty or toxic motivation. Otherwise, fantastic guy both for business mindsets, principles, and strategies.

6.2. Entrepreneurship Reviews

The Lean Startup (**10/10**) by now it's considered mandatory reading in startup circles, and for a good reason: launching early can save tons of money and time. Plus make your product ultimately better with early feedback.
| *by E Ries*

The 4 Hour Work Week (**10/10**) The solopreneurship bible that got hundreds of thousands of idiots with a money-losing blog to call themselves "entrepreneurs" and "digital nomads. But it's a wonderful book
| *by T Ferris*

Start With Why (**10/10**) To attract talent and motivate yourself, the people around the customers, a strong WHY is a must. Applicable to both business and life.
| *by S Sinek*

Step-by-Step Marketing (**9/10**) I got this one on Ben and Charlie's advice, and it was indeed really good. It doesn't go in-depth on anything, but that might be an advantage: it's a quick course with proven wisdom from naming your product to marketing it effectively.
Note: Eben Pagan is actually "David deAngelo" also marketing dating products. We are not fans of his dating stuff, but his marketing stuff is good.
| *by Eben Pagan*

Delivering Happiness (**9/10**) Can you marry happiness, fulfillment and business success? Not only you can, but you probably should. That's how Hsieh built a billion-dollar business.
| *by T Hsieh*

Crossing the Chasm (**9/10**) A huge classic on the adoption curve of new technologies. Even more relevant to startups than to established businesses.
| *by G Moore*

The E-Myth Revisited (**9/10**) If you want to build a business to become free and be independent of your own business, then you should take a look at this. Because many employees chasing freedom only end up more enslaved.
| *by M Gerber*

Zero to One (**9/10**) Pick founders and employees who share your same vision, dream big and think value-adding instead of disruption. Just three big ideas from this staple of entrepreneurship.
| *by P Thiel*

Disrupt You! (**8/10**) The story of an entrepreneur at heart going from small business to in-house entrepreneur in a big corporation. Some awesome stories on what it means to never give up and the right mindsets for startup founders (just one: don't fall in love with your ïdea: it's a dime in a dozen)
| *by J Samit*

The Entrepreneur Mind (**8/10**) I didn't expect much by a book with a list of 100 "mindsets bullet points". But I was wrong, there is lots of good stuff.

| *by K Johnson*

Avoid These

Go Pro (**6/10**) The network marketers' Bible. But network marketing might be a waste of time -unless you start it or jump in super early-. I actively discourage readers to go into network marketing.
| *by E Worre*

Earnable (**6/10**) Doesn't actually "walk you through" the creation of your dream business. I *really* didn't appreciate being left dead in the water, especially after paying such a high price tag. If the course provided some form of active mentorship, then it could start approaching ten stars.
Review by Ali Scarlett
| *by Ramit Sethi*

6.3.2. Marketing Reviews

Start With WHY (**9/10**) a great book on corporate identity and values as the main drivers of marketing and sales (people by the products as a way to state and communicate their own identity)
| *by S Sinek*

Methods of Persuasion (**8/10**) Not strictly about business marketing but plenty of insight you can apply to your marketing, both in writing and in words
|*by N Kolenda*

No Logo (**8/10**) This old no-global manifesto feels like an ethnographic study on the *effects* of great marketing. A fantastic read to learn more about marketing, protest movements, as well as people in general
| *by N Klein*

Avoid These

Purple Cow (**4/10**) Be remarkable to stand out from the market noise. Except that's what everyone else is trying to do? Not only such a simple concept didn't need a book, but the concept itself is also illogical
| *by S Godin*

6.3. Business Reviews

Principles: Life and Work (**10/10**) The best book on company's culture and a roadmap to institutionalize efficiency and effectiveness.
Applicable both to business and personal life.
| *by R Dalio*

Radical Candor (**10/10**) Together with Principles, the best book on company's culture and leadership.
| *by K Scott*

Winning (**10/10**) Warren Buffet said you won't need any further book after Winning. Welch, the author, is a controversial figure. As a vociferous Republican and espouser of a rather Darwinian view on HR, it couldn't be otherwise. But whatever you think of Welch, this book is really good.
| *by J Welch*

The Art of The Deal (**10/10**) Two things: first, there is controversy on whether Trump wrote it and whether it offers an embellished view of him; second, my review is not a political statement. The book is awesome. It has great mindsets and it will teach you how some sharks think and act.
| *by D Trump*

Sam Walton: Made in America (**9/10**) I used to think biographies and autobiographies weren't too helpful in building a business. I was wrong. So many lessons learned in the making of Walmart. And yes, even for tech

entrepreneurs and solo-preneurs
| *by S Walton*

Deep Work (**9/10**) A great overview of the art -and science- of personal productivity. But also on business productivity, and here's the main tip there: ditch the open office concept.
| *by C Newport*

Drive (**9/10**) If you have employees or plan to have employees, you must read Drive.
| *by D Pink*

Start With Why (**9/10**) To have a strong culture, you should have a strong WHY. To market well, you should always go back to your WHY. Applicable to both business and life.
| *by S Sinek*

The Millionaire Fastlane & Unscripted (**8/10**) Not much information on actually starting a business, but if you want to switch from employee mentality to an entrepreneur mindset this provides a great kick in the ass.
| *by MJ DeMarco*

Onward (**8/10**) If you want to learn how culture can go awry and ruin an excellent business, read Onward. If you want to learn how to go back to the roots, read Onward. If you want to learn what it means to love one's business, read Onward.
| *by H Schultz*

6.4. Career Strategies / Office Politics

Power University (**10/10**) Simply the best resources available on career strategies, office politics, and advancing in your job
| *by L Buffalmano*

The Clever Connector (…) I wrote the foreword and Ali is a member of the community, co-author of TPM's first book, and by now a person who's quite close.
So I cannot rate it, but I can say that Ali based it on solid principles of power dynamics.
| *by Ali Scarlett*

Workplace Poker (**9.5/10**) One of the best books I have read on office politics. Very good for differentiating between the superficial lies, and how things really work.
| *by D Rust*

The Secret Handshake (**9/10**) There are non-written rules that the people at the top of each organization all follow and obey, and if you want to join that circle, you need to learn those rules. So true.
| *by K Reardon*

Talking from 9 to 5 (**9/10**) The only reason why it's not a 10 is because Tannen writes more for academics than for the general public. I loved it, but if you're looking for practical advice, it might not be for you.
|*by D Tannen*

Secrets to Winning at Office Politics (**9/10**) A very good book on power dynamics and how to navigate and leverage office politics
| *by M McIntyre*

Find Your Dream Job (**9/10**) This course didn't market itself as groundbreaking for the world of job seeking, but it did market itself as revolutionary for the lives of the people who join. And, I believe that this course is capable of creating career reinvention, growth, and everything in between.
review by Ali Scarlett
| *by Ramit Sethi*

- **Best career books**

6.5. Career & Business (For Women)

The Myth of The Nice Girl (**10/10**): Hauser built her successful career being a helpful and value-adding woman, so she (righteously) took offense to the many books that lambast the "nice" girl. And she took it upon herself to correct the false myth that women ought to be ruthless to succeed.
| *by F Hauser*

Hardball for Women (**10/10**) Albeit targeted at women, I have learned a lot about gender differences at work, workplace power dynamics, and career strategies. Just make sure you don't swing too much on the "male & aggressive" side.
| *by P Heim*

How Women Rise (**9/10**) More balanced than "Hardball for Women", and equally insightful. One point less because it's less incisive when it comes to power dynamics.
| *by Goldsmith & Helgesen*

Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office (**8/10**) It's a list of 101 mistakes women do, but albeit it might seem a simplistic format, the content is top-notch, and the author has a good grasp of interpersonal power dynamics. Note: I downrated it after having read "Hardball for Women", since there is much overlap.
|*by L Frankel*

- Best business & career books for women

6.6. Money & Wealth

MONEY Master the Game (**10/10**) The best resource on investing for the layman, skip all the rest from Tony Robbins.
| *by T Robbins*

The Intelligent Investor (**9/10**) Buffet's favorite book. It's old but the principles are the same that most other books just repeat
| *by B Graham*

The Little Book of Common Sense Investing (**8/10**) Simple and effective
| *by John C. Bogle*

Skip These

Generally speaking, we only recommend basic personal finance to those who haven't yet realized that spending more than you earn on a constant basis will put you in dire financial straits.

So albeit these titles are good for basic finance, they're not really for financial thriving and abundance:

The Total Money Makeover (**6.5/10**) Good for basic personal finance, skip if you don't need someone to tell you that spending more than you earn is a bad idea.
| *by Dave Ramsey*

I Will Teach You to be Rich by Ramit Sethi (**6/10**) Save and automate investment. OK but nothing groundbreaking.
| *by Ramit Sethi*

The Science of Getting Rich (**2/10**) The title is a misnomer because the law of attraction is not science
| *by W Wattles*

6.7. Networking

Decision-Maker Meetings (**9.5/10**) This course is geared toward filmmakers and actors. So, if you're not in the entertainment industry, you might not get as much value from it. With that said, if you are in the entertainment industry, this course is absolutely one of the best there is if you're looking to connect with influential decision-makers.
Review by Ali Scarlett
| *by Mara McCann & Justin Giddings*

7. Leadership Reviews

The New Psychology of Leadership (**10/10**) The *only* leadership book I've read to actually leverage science and research. And it shows. It stands in a category of its own and makes all other books look like simplistic space-fillers (and I based on this book much of our article "how to be a leader")
| *by A Haslam*

Leadership BS (10/10) A scathing and much-needed criticism of the leadership industry and its lies and naivete.
| *by Jeffrey Pfeffer*

Jocko Willink podcast (**9/10**) From what I could gather, it seems like a great mix of high-quality leadership with the much-needed political and power awareness that is fundamental to do well and make things happen within any organization.
The only downside is that it's imbued with the small-pond values, ideals, and narrow-mindedness typical of military indoctrination.
| *by Jocko Willink*

Radical Candor (**9/10**) It focuses on leadership in the workplace, but the principles apply to anyone who wants to lead high-performing groups. Just be aware that this is not how most organizations and leaders function, but mor elike an ideal to move towards
| *by Kim Scott*

21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership (**8/10**) My favorite book by John Maxwell. Biggest takeaway: refuse to work for people you don't respect. They can't be your leaders. And if you want to lead: gain people's trust and respect.
| *by John Maxwell*

Leaders Eat Last (**8/10**) Leadership is not about being responsible for the numbers. It's about being responsible for the people, who are responsible for the numbers.
Nice in theory. Except sometimes you are also directly responsible for the numbers. I don't think Sinek has ever been a business leader in his life, so his advice can smack "ivory tower-ish"
| *by Simon Sinek*

Skip These

Extreme Ownership (**6/10**) It's very popular for navy seals to write books and people love a good war story. The concept of extreme ownership (ie.: take responsibility for everything) is powerful albeit, in my opinion, is inherently false to believe you can control everything, and it comes with important limitations. The book per se, I wasn't a fan of the, militarism, jingoism, and fluff.
Plus, I'm not a fan of the mindset of following orders from above no matter what.
Those who took "extreme ownership" and "followed (any) order" are not the best role models in my opinion.
| *by Willink & Babin*

- Best leadership resources

8. Psychology / Social Psychology / Sociology

The Social Animal (**10/10**) The most complete, extensive and high-quality overview of (social) psychology I have read so far.
| *by E Aronson*

I'm OK – You're OK (**10/10**) If you have or if you know anyone who has issues with authorities, this book can help (hint: it can be a parent-child dynamic). It certainly did help me to better understand social dynamics, to troubleshoot some of my relationships and to further improve my social skills.
| *by T Harris*

Studies in Machiavellianism (**10/10**) It's an academic text presenting various hypotheses, testing those hypotheses empirically, and then drawing conclusions about the Machiavellian personality based on the evidence.
So it's not a "how to" or a self-development book, but it's invaluable for a website like this.
The authors of this book are also the researchers who came up and validated "Machiavellianism" as a personality trait.
| *by Richard Christie & Florence L. Geis*

Will I Ever Be Good Enough? (**10/10**) Even if you didn't have a narcissistic mother you will learn hugely on how parents impact children's psyche. Including how demand and expectations of parents can weigh negatively on the children's whole life.
It should be mandatory reading for parents.
| *by K McBride*

In Sheep's Clothing (**10/10**) All psychologists should read this.
|*by G Simon*

Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty (**10/10**) If you want to understand the dark side of human nature, look no further.
|*by R Baumeister*

Attached (**10/10**) Possibly the best book on relationships and attachment's psychology.
| *by Amir Levine*

The Body Keeps the Score (**10/10**) If you're interested in trauma, PTSD and trauma recovery, this is your resource.
| *by B van der Kolk*

The Laws of Human Nature (**10/10**) It's debatable if one single book is enough to detail human nature, but if there is one author who is going to make it both entertaining, deep and chock-full of wisdom, that's Mr. Greene.
| *by R Greene*

Mindset (**10/10**) Must read, both for personal self-development and for understanding people and psychology.
| *by C Dweck*

Man's Search for Meaning (**10/10**) Albeit not strictly a psychology book, Frankl tells you all you need to know about humans: the same species that built gas chambers, walked upright into gas chambers and gave their last morsel of bread to a dying comrade.
| *by V Frankl*

Machiavellianism: The Psychology of Manipulation (**9.5/10**) As of 2021, the best overview of all academic research and literature on Machiavellianism.
| *by Tamás Bereczkei*

I Hate You Don't Leave Me (**9/10**) Best book to understand and deal with BPD
| *J Kreisman*

Give and Take (**9/10**) I hope it can be a wake-up call for psychologists to come up with a construct and universal measure for "givers" and "takers". That universal measure non-withstanding, this is the best overview on the psychology, personality, and mindsets of givers and takers
| *by Adam Grant*

The Lucifer Effect (**9/10**) Long and too detailed. But the key message can change us -and the world- for the better: to resist the perpetuation of evil, we must empower ourselves.
| *by P Zimbardo*

Nudge (**9/10**) The Bible of Libertarian Paternalism and how psychology can help policymakers and governments develop better societies.
Any psychologist and social scientist should read it.
|*by Sunstein & Thaler*

Talking from 9 to 5 (**9/10**) Tannen is a professor of linguistics, but this book is deeply insightful on both psychology, power dynamics, and social dynamics.
|*by D Tannen*

The Highly Sensitive Person **(9/10)** For anyone interested in psychology, learning about highly sensitive people is a must.
|*E Aron*

Drive (**9/10**) Daniel Pink is the more scientific version of Malcolm Gladwell. He has a knack for turning research into simple and applicable concepts that business owners and influencers alike can use in their daily lives. And he does a great job here focusing exclusively on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
| *by D Pink*

Predictably Irrational (**9/10**) Yes, our mind is irrational, we know that, but Ariely gives us practical examples and applicable corollaries.
| *by D Ariely*

The Paradox of Choice (**9/10**) I have a personal soft spot for The Paradox of Choice because it helped improve my level of happiness and fulfillment. If you tend to spend lots of time choosing what to buy and if you regret your decisions, you must read this book.
| *by B Schwartz*

Quiet: The Power of Introverts (**9/10**) Don't skip it thinking you already know what's introversion/extraversion is. If you are into psychology this is a muster read.
| *by S Cain*

The Sociopath Next Door (**9/10**) Not everything is relative: there really are mean and evil people. And there are enough of them that you will eventually meet a few. Be ready.
| *by M Stout*

Why Does He Do That? (**9/10**) A seminal book on the psychology of abusive men.
| *by L Bancroft*

Misbehaving **(9/10)** If you want to understand the history of behavioral economics, look no further. If you want to understand behavioral economics in general, look no further. And it's also great to understand how new theories emerge (and the human drives to power they need to overcome).
|*by R Thaler*

To Sell Is Human (**8/10**) A scientific and psychological look at selling and persuading. A bit of a mixed bag as it

doesn't focus on anything specific, but it has plenty of good insights (and I personally learned a couple of important new things).
|*D Pink*

Brandwashed (**8/10**) One of the best books to understand the manipulations of marketing. Must read for any marketer.
| *M Lindstrom*

The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Leadership, Change, & Organizational Development (**8/10**) The title is an omen for what's inside: a dense, heavy review of the research literature on leadership, change, and OD. Not recommended for non-academics, but for a website like this one, it's a treasure trove.
| *by Various Authors*

Incognito (**8/10**) Not only we are governed in large part by our subconscious, but our brain has also different "camps", all pulling us in different directions. That makes a lot of sense when you think about it…
| *by D Eagleman*

The Undoing Project (**8/10**) The history of Tversky and Kahneman's friendship, the two men who the most contributed to the birth of behavioral economics.
Don't worry, it's not just biography: lots of great psychology as well.
|*by M Lewis*

Stop Walking on Eggshells (**8/10**) If you want to learn about borderline personality disorder, this is your book. If you're living with, or have a relationship with people who threaten suicide or go on an emotional roller coaster, read this book.
| *by Mason & Kreger*

Thinking Fast and Slow (**8/10**) We have two ways of thinking: slow and logical and quick and illogical. We use the latter most of the times, and it's full of psychological biases. And Kahneman lists them all.
Good stuff.
| *by D Kahneman*

The Psychopath Inside (**7/10**) If you want to understand psychopathy from a neurological point of view, this is one of the best books available.
| *by J Fallon*

The Female Mind (**7/10**) Maybe it stressed the differences a bit too much, but overall it's a very good text to understanding the overall differences between genders.
| *by L Brizendine*

The Hope Circuit (**6/10**) One of the best books for psychology students and researchers to understand what really goes on in academia. An average book to learn psychology since it's too heavily diluted with Seligman's life details
| *by Martin Seligman*

Skip These

Malcolm Gladwell (4/10): great for edutainment, but not for education and learning.

Understanding Human Nature (**5/10**) Alfred Adler is very Freudian, and in many ways so. He has great intuitions and is a great mind in the service of psychology, but e also proceeds with little science and evidence. I had big expectations for my first Alfred Adler's book, and I found several golden nuggets. But, overall, the lack of science weighs it down.
| *by Alfred Adler*

8.2. Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary Psychology (**10/10**) Simply THE manual of evolutionary psychology, good for both students and laymen alike. It leaves out a few important aspects of sexual selection, but the next book takes care of that.
| *by D Buss*

The Mating Mind (**10/10**) It fleshes out Miller's theory of intelligence through sexual selection. You might agree or disagree with that -I agree-, but even beyond that central theory, if you truly want to understand evolutionary psychology, this is your book.
| *by G Miller*

The Evolution of Desire (**10/10**) One of the most scientifically sound analyses of the sexual marketplace.
| *by D Buss*

Behave (**9/10**) A long but great overview of people and psychology. The only thing missing for a 10/10 is that Sapolsky has strong political views which tinge his work with some of the typical leftist-leaning biases
| *by R Sapolsky*

The Moral Animal (**9/10**) The first time I read this book I was in awe at how everything was finally becoming clear. It's a bit old and there is been a lot of new research, and that's why not 10/10. But all the major tenets of the books have not changed since then.
| *by R Wright*

The Selfish Gene (**8.5/10**) A seminal book that spread the ideas of Williams and Hamilton, replacing group selection with the gene-centered view of selection. Make sure to get the latest version of the books where Dawkins said that humans are also altruistic, or you might get the wrong idea of human nature.
| *by R Dawkins*

The Origins of Virtue (**8.5/10**) The best analysis of how we developed altruism and caring. Too bad it lacks two crucial tools for the development of altruism: a review of kin altruism, and the impact of sexual selection
| *by M Ridley*

Virtue Signaling (**8/10**) A series of insightful papers and articles on the phenomenon of "virtue signaling", seen from the point of view of sexual strategy and mate choice.
| *by Geoffrey Miller*

The Blank Slate (**7/10**) A book fully dedicated to some of the biggest enemies of evolutionary psychology: feminists, left-wing ideologues, and cultural determinists.
I think we need to stand against ideologies, but sometimes I feel that Pinker becomes a bit of an ideologist himself and, at times, he denies the influences of culture a bit too strongly.
| *by Steven Pinker*

Skip These

Sperm Wars (**3/10**) Some good points, but imprecise and unscientific.
| *by R Baker*

Sex At Dawn (**2/10**) The authors describe what they *wish* were true (ie.: hippy sex), instead of what *is* true (somewhat nastier reality). I actually enjoyed it, but I can't give any higher ratings to what's driven by ideology instead of truth.
| *by C Ryan, C Jetha*

- Best evolutionary psychology books

8.3. Positive Psychology

How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything: Yes, Anything (**10/10**): Albert Ellis teaches how to use REBT, a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy, to improve how to think and, as a reflection, how to live and enjoy life.
Ellis is one of my favorite authors, and this is one of my favorite books. It had a major positive impact on my life, personal development, and contentedness -as well as my ability to help others-.
| *by Albert Ellis*

Learned Optimism (**10/10**) One of the first positive psychology books, and it's a classic. And still one of the best positive psychology books you can find. It teaches how positive psychology developed, and provides the best overview on how positive psychology can help you combat depression (and become more of an optimist)
|*by M Seligman*

Authentic Happiness (**10/10**) What's a truly fulfilling life? It's a life that includes al the types of pleasures, from the more physical ones, to the higher ones. And it's this optimal mix that Seligman teaches readers how to achieve
|*by M Seligman*

How to Keep People from Pushing Your Buttons (**9.5/10)** Albert Ellis again, this time teaching people how to use REBT to become more socially grounded. It would be another 10, but his other book was just SO good that he set his own bar too high.
| *by Albert Ellis*

The Happiness Advantage (**9/10**) The central thesis: first comes happiness, then success. Plus, lots of tips and advice on how to become happier.
| *by S Achor*

- Best positive psychology books

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9. Self-Development

How to Keep People from Pushing Your Buttons (**10/10)** Ellis, an actual psychologist, teaches well-proven cognitive-behavioral therapy to become more mentally resilient and grounded.
| *by Albert Ellis*

Simple Habits (**10/10**) It combines all of the best information from habit development resources and packages it alongside a workbook that walks you through the entire process step by step. Couple that with the high-quality community he shares access to, and you have a perfect package.
Review by Ali
| *by Matt D'Avella*

I'm OK – You're OK (**10/10**) It helped me troubleshoot some of my relationships and further improve my social skills. Can also help you fix issues with authority figures and, if you are still dependent on your parents' approval, help fix those issues with your parents.
|*by T Harris*

The Laws of Human Nature (**10/10**) Greene mixes psychology, social skills and self-help. And albeit the focus is not self-help, the depth of wisdom and psychological vision that Greene masters in his work put it at the top of the pile.
| *by R Greene*

Essentialism (**10/10**) Another book with a single, simple concept. Focus on less to do more and better. So simple,

yet so life-changing and revolutionary.
| *by G McKeown*

Personal Power II (**10/10**) Except for the lack of structure and the law of attraction, this is one of the best self-development audio programs. In my opinion, people only need two programs on self-help. This is one of them.
| *by T Robbins*

The Happiness Advantage (**9/10**) Self-help book the way I like them: empowering, full of applicable wisdom and backed by ample research. In a nutshell: you don't chase success to be happy. You should rather work on being happier and that will help you achieve success. Great great stuff!
| *by S Achor*

Peak (**9/10**) The best book on what the author says is a new branch in psychology which he calls "the science of expertise"
|*by A Ericsson*

Principles: Life and Work (**9/10**) "build your own reality" and law of attraction thinking are popular in the self help. Here is it is a billionaire instead who built his fortune on uncertainty and hyper-realism. Let's take a leaf out of his book.
| *by R Dalio*

The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem (**9/10**) The best overview I've read on self-esteem. But there are also some important notes and possible cons. For example, the author says that "values" and "living by one's own values" are a pillar of self-esteem. TPM instead believes in more fluid values, as well as in self-esteem that is independent of cast-in-stone values.
| *by Nathaniel Branden*

Give and Take (**9/10**) Givers win at life, but only if they learn how to be more strategic and how not to be taken advantage of by takers. Wonderful book and very well researched.
The only thing preventing it from a 10/10 under this "self-development" section is that it's not a how-to book (for that, there is Power University)
| *by Adam Grant*

Tom Bilyeu (**9/10**): Great guy, phenomenal motivational speaker, and good to learn some important mindsets. Naive and sometimes power-unaware with his guests (see for example his interview with Sadguru). Often fails the "law of balance", for example with drive, "growth mindset" and "open-mindedness". Tom sometimes spread BS fed to him by various charlatans.
However, given his moral standings and his pedigree, he's still one of the best self-development gurus around -just stick to him talking, skip most of his interviews-.

The One Thing (**8.5/10**) Not too dissimilar from Essentialism, but adds enough more wisdom to make it worth your time (ie.: visualize the process instead of the final goal). Can be summarized as a blog article.
| *by Keller & Papasan*

The War of Art (**8.5/10**) Let dreams guide you, but focus on the process. Day in, day out.
That's it. The "secret" to making your dreams come true. Doesn't even need the whole book, to be honest. But it's still wonderfully written.
Skip the third part with divine and woo-woo theories and the rest is golden (but if you're a woo-woo artist you'll probably love the third part too)
| *by S Pressfield*

The Confidence Code (**8.5/10**) Albeit it's aimed at women, anyone will learn a lot about confidence, what it's useful for, and a few tips on developing your confidence
| *by Shipman & Kay*

Awaken the Giant Within (**8.5/10**) A summary of most of Robbins' teachings in a single book. Great stuff.
| *by T Robbins*

Deep Work (**8/10**) Similar to The Talent Code in some ways, but with a broader appeal: it's not mostly for athletes but also for writers, researchers and any type of office worker.
| *by C Newport*

Meditations (**8/10**) It's funny how the top people are pretty much the same wherever or whenever you are. A book of 2.000 years ago condenses 60% of modern self-help literature.
| *by M Aurelius*

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (**8/10**) Huge classic. A bit of a mixed bag going from communication to mindset, but they are all fundamentals of self-development.
| *by S Covey*

The Little Book of Stoicism (**8/10**) If you're looking for an overview on stoicism, look no further. Brief and packed with actionable and life-changing advice.
|*by J Salzbeger*

Already Free (**8.5/10**) one of the best books on "acceptance" from Eastern philosophical traditions as it combines with the more pragmatic and hands on Western tradition of psychoanalys
| *by Bruce Tift*

Don't Sweat The Small Stuff… And It's All Small Stuff (**8/10**) the title itself is a pearl of wisdom.
| *by R Carlson*

Ultralearning (**8/10**) To me, it's not just about the steps that Scott lays out, since those can change depending on the field and the situation, but it's the mindset and belief that learning faster than most anyone think is possible is… Possible.
| *by Scott Young*

First Things First (**7/10**) A powerful reminder of giving priorities to what really matters to us in life instead of following what everyone else does or what society or parents deem as important for us. If you haven't done this type of introspection already, this is an absolute must.
| by S Covey

The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up (**7/10**) You might think it's inconsequential, but a tidier place, a leaner wardrobe and no clutter around the house will make you feel better.
| *by M Kondo*

Letting Go (**7/10**) The crazy thing about this book is that I actually love its main idea. And It's also been super useful for me.
At the same time, except for the super useful main concept, the author is also full of sh*t.
Yes, apparently great life-changing content and being full of sh*t are not mutually exclusive.
| *by D Hawkins*

Skip These

Mental Mastery (**5/10**) A few gems here and there, yet some were more effective in theory than in practice. Given the price of the course, one might expect more truly transformative material. It felt too much like it only scratched the surface.
Review by Ali Scarlett (but please note Ali left no rating, so the rating is Lucio's interpretation from Ali's review)
| *by Ramit Sethi*

The Way of The Superior Man (**5/10**) Some good life advice finding your life priority and prioritizing around it… All delivered in New-Agey format which you will either love or hate. I didn't like it.

|*by D Deida*

Brendon Burchard & High Performance Habits (**5/10**) Didn't hear anything new either from the author, nor from the book.
| *by B Burchard*

You Are a Badass (**5/10**) Good idea on the subconscious mind driving us. But all the rest is rehash, and average to poor quality self-development.
| *by S Sincero*

Andrew Tate (**4/10**) someone in the community said good thing about him and "pre-fame TAte" seemed to have more sensible and higher quality content. Overall, TPM doesn't seem to endorse or lend much credibility to the quality of his content though.

How to Rewire Your Brain (**4/10**) Noy bad by any means, it's just that you can find higher ROI products for self-development. And the switch from neurology to psychology makes psychology feel like a more practical use of one's time.
Review by Ali Scarlett
| *by Gregory Caremans*

The Seven Spiritual Laws Of Success (**3/10**) Unpalatable mix of spirituality and materialism. With the law of attraction as icing on the cake.
| *by Deepak Chopra*

Joe Dispenza , any work, including Becoming Supernatural (**2/10**) Too much unscientific claims presented as scientific and too much upsell ruin the otherwise good ideas that are present in Dispenza's work
| *by J Dispenza*

The Secret (**0/10**) Law of attraction, and to add insult to injury recommends you don't work hard at what you want or the universe will take it to mean that you don't really believe in it.
If life wasn't short, you could read it for laugh's sake. But just skip it.
| *by R Byrne*

9.2. Manosphere / Men's Self-development

King, Warrior, Magician, Lover (**10/10**) Normally, this wouldn't be my favorite type of book since it's lighter in evidence and heavier in "myth" and theological examples, BUT… I was surprised at actually how good and deep it is. Great both to understand human nature, as well as an actual self-development book. The only con is that it might be a bit complex, but it's worth spending some more time on.
| *by Moore and Gillette*

The Mask of Masculinity (**8/10**) The different types of masks that men wear in society to look stronger, cooler, smarter and… Generally trying hard to look better than they are (also see "alpha male posturing").
| *by L Howes*

Stealing the Corner Office (**8/10**) A red-pill, potentially eye-opening view of workplace dynamics.
|*by B Reid*

Rollo Tomassi (**7/10**) On the con side, Lucio frankly finds him mysoginistyc and biased and, if not mysoginistic, at least overly confrontational. That's not a good attitude to interanlize to either date or seduce, and even less so to enter nito relationships. On the plus side, some of his analyses are good, some were even unique and great and brought new concepts into the male self-development space.
His first book was a bit basic for more advanced audiences, and The Rational Male – Preventive Medicine might be the best from Tomassi's trilogy.

Practical Female Psychology (**7/10**) Some great ideas here. I couldn't get over some made-up psychology and

evolutionary psychology though and, for me, all those mistakes polluted the otherwise great ideas.
|*by Various Authors*

12 Rules For Life (**6/10**) Awesome first chapter, but loses the plot and becomes a caricature of Jordan Peterson. Aesthetics are a nice touch to a good book, but at times it felt Peterson's prose built so much upon itself that aesthetics became *the* message instead of *supporting* the message.
| *by J Peterson*

Masculine Behavioral Therapy (6/10) Ali has positive things to say about the author. The course itself raises some question marks, including the community and what customers can learn (or not learn) from it.
Note: the rating is Lucio's own guestimate based on an initial impression from Ali Scarlett. Ali preferred not to give a review. Lucio assigned a placeholder rating because Ali's first impression, however partial, is better than nothing for someone looking for pre-purchase information.
| *by Casey Zander*

The Rational Male (**6/10**) Some great foundational concepts, but when it goes deeper, it's a bit too one-sided to provide a scientific, or even simply just neutral analysis. The sexual market value analysis is mostly based around age, which is somewhat limiting.
| *by R Tomassi*

The Manipulated Man (**6/10**) "Women are leechers", could be this book's supreme summary.
I think Vilar misses out on the fact that reproduction puts most of the strain on women, so it's only normal that they work somewhat less than men do (yeah, that too, she generalizes a lot). She also misses on more basic biology and evolutionary psychology, but it's an interesting -and very controversial- take.
| *by E Vilar*

Skip These

The Way of The Superior Man (**4/10**) It's popular and well-acclaimed, but it didn't speak to me. Cloaking sexual dominance with spiritualism helped the book's popularity, but it didn't make the message clear or precise.
The sweeping generalizations and poor psychology and relationship advice also didn't help.
| *by D Deida*

The Rational Male – Positive Masculinity (**3/10**) Of Tomassi's three books, this was the most rant-like and sectarian, more about "joining the gang" than on actual content. On the positive side, great advice on vetting her based on her past (and I agree on the ridiculousness of the media framing the "first time a woman did X.." as if it were a win for all women)
| *by R Tomassi*

- Best red pill books

9.2.3. Red Pill

The red pill is largely a male-only self-development movement, but we will use "red pill" in its larger sense here, including anything that can be "awakening" to a widely-held, but potentially wrong worldview.

Anatomy of the State (**8/10**) The government is coercive and predatory. That's the main idea, and I don't necessarily fully agree. But Rothbard presents in a way as such that it makes at least some sense, and it can definitely be a red pill awakening to how things really are / work.
| *by Murray Rothbard*

9.3. Women Empowerment

Power University (**10/10**) The most practical course to combine success, empowerment, and femininity
| *by L Buffalmano*

How Women Rise (**9/10**) A great overview of the issues standing in the way of women "rising", and how to address them
| *by Goldsmith & Helgesen*

The Confidence Code (**9/10**) Women have one more stumbling block compared to men: confidence. This book helps women address the confidence issue.
| *by Shipman & Kay*

Hardball for Women (**9/10**) Great book to understand the power dynamics of the workplace.
| *by P Heim*

Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office (**8/10**) Great wisdom on workplace power dynamics, especially good for women.
|*by L Frankel*

The Shadow Negotiation (**8/10**) If you want to learn negotiations, there are many examples here, including some good ones on frame control
| *by D Kolb*

Lean In (**7/10**) An important book for women who plan on having a successful career. Just make sure you skip the feminist bias and the calls on joining forces (which would be deemed "toxic masculinity" if written by a man for men)
| *by S Sandberg*

#Girlboss (**7/10**) It's good for more rebel types of women.
| *by S Amoruso*

Skip These

Girl Wash Your Face (**3/10**) A bit too much "feel-good" type of self-help in my opinion. You can get better wisdom with your time
| *by R Hollis*

Get Rich Lucky Bitch: (**0/10**) Content-less and potentially harmful. You need to spend your efforts on action and actual strategies, not on the law of attraction.
|*by D Duffield-Thomas*

9.3.2. Feminism

The Feminine Mystique (**5/10**) An historical landmark and a wake-up call for men who thought all women were the happiest staying at home as housewives. Light on data, but a good eye for catching human sentiment. Times changed though and you're not going to learn nearly as much today.
|*by B Friedan*

Men Explain Things to Me (**5/10**) lacks any real depth and there is no practical wisdom
|*by R Solnit*

We Should All Be Feminists (**2/10**) No, we should all research our topics better so we don't spread shallow and false information. It also doesn't empower women at all. It just provides some feel-good support that ultimately weakens women.
|*by C Adichie*

9.4. Critical Thinking

> "The reason that 'guru' is such a popular word is that 'charlatan' is so hard to spell."

> – William Bernstein

YouTube Channels

- **Medlife Crisis** (science and health), also good to understand the scientific method, human biases, and how to draw logical conclusions
- **Coffeezilla**, good for those who tend to over-trust a bit too easily
- **Biolayne** (nutrition), especially his "myth-busting" series
- **Charlie and Ben Podcast** (9/10): at times naively open-minded in a way that only college-educated white urban millennia can be, but otherwise great
  |*by Charlie Houpert and ben Altman*

The Black Swan (**10/10**) One of Taleb's best works.
| *by N Taleb*

How to Lie with Statistics (**10/10**) A great primer on how statistics can be willfully abused to sway us (and will also increase your critical thinking to understand how data can lead us astray)
| *by D Huff*

Fooled by Randomness (**10/10**) Great book on the human tendency to see trends and seek order where there is only randomness and chaos. I can't count how many times I have referenced this book while reviewing other resources.
| *by N Taleb*

Behave (**10/10)** Behave's taglines, "it depends" and "it's complicated" should form part of the "critical thinking manifesto". Do yourself a favor and get this one in audio format, because it's long, but it's great.
| *by R Sapolsky*

Enlightenment Now (**9.5/10**) The manifesto of humanism, reason, and science. Helpful to think critically about the news and behind "what people say". You know, like looking at the data behind the noise.
The only reason why it's not a 10/10 is that Pinker, reminiscent of his "Better Angels of Our Nature", seems naively overly optimistic.
| *by Steven Pinker*

The Believing Brain (**9/10**) Have you ever wondered why people seem to believe in irrational things for which they have little or no proof? Michael Shermer delivers a beautiful and credible answer (and a wonderful treaty on scientific skepticism)
|*by M Shermer*

The Millionaire Fastlane (**9/10**) It will help readers to think more critically, and be less trustworthy, of any "get rich" author
| *by MJ DeMarco*

The Blank Slate (**9/10**) Are we mostly nature or nurture?
And why is it so difficult in our current cultural climate to admit that yes, genes do matter? Those are the question that a critical thinker will power. And that's what Steven Pinker addresses here, demolishing the politically biased leftist ideology.
| *by Steven Pinker*

The Signal and The Noise (**9/10**) Possibly the best books on statistics, forecasting and common human errors that is easily accessible to the large public.
| *by N Silver*

Lucio's Top Books & Resources on Power, Psychology, & Strategy

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

These are the top resources that Lucio Buffalmano — founder of The Power Moves and creator of Power University — has personally studied. Each entry has been analyzed and filtered through the lens of **power dynamics**, **social strategy**, and **scientific psychology**.

We continuously update these lists to include the best books, courses, and resources across critical areas like **social skills**, **influence**, **dating**, and **leadership**. Some of these knowledge sources underpin TPM's methodology and programs.

Contents

- Top TPM Resources
- 1. Power (Best of)
- 2. Social Skills (Best Of)
  - 2.2. Communication Skills
  - 2.3. Assertiveness (Best of)
  - 2.4. Body Language (Best of)
  - 2.5. Frame Control
- 3. Dating & Seduction (Best of)
  - 3.2. Dating for Guys (Best Of)
  - 3.4. Relationships (Best of)
- 4. Influence & Persuasion (Best of)
  - 4.2. Best Books on Negotiation
- 5. Manipulation (Best of)
  - 5.2. Best Dark Triad Books
- 6. Career & Business
  - 6.2. Career (Best of)
  - 6.3. Entrepreneurship (Best of)
- 7. Leadership (Best of)
- 8. Psychology (Best of)
  - 8.2. Evolutionary Psychology
  - 8.3. Positive Psychology
- 9. Red Pill
- 10. General Self-Development
- Books to Avoid
  - Most Overrated Books
  - Best Books VS Most Popular
- Best Resources On Optimal Learning

Top TPM Resources

At TPM, we view resources as bricks to a castle: individual components that form a functional "suprastructure" when integrated.

Because our methodology relies on synthesizing vast amounts of research into actionable strategies, naming only a few titles would be reductive and misleading.

However, if forced to identify the main pillars for TPM and mention a single great resource associated with it, they would be these:

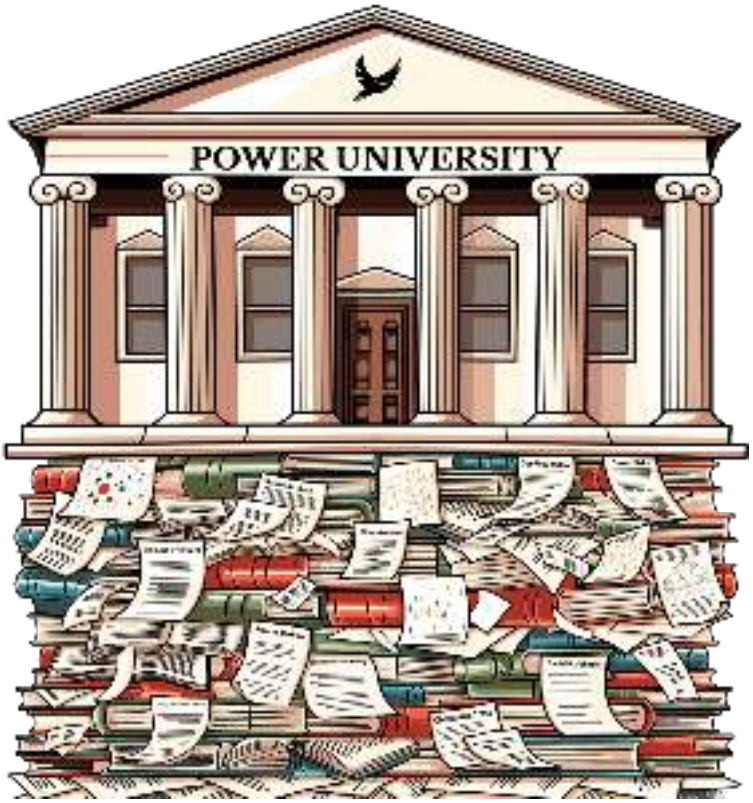
Foundational Resources	TPM System Integration
Social Exchange Theory (*Thibaut & Kelley, 1959*; *Blau, 1964*)	Strategies for succeeding in a social world driven by self-interested exchanges
Game Theory (*Axelrod, 1984*)	Strategies to maximize the gains of cooperation while managing defection risks in alliances and relationships (i.e., "smart cooperation")
Evolutionary Psychology (*Buss*, and others)	Strategies for social and mating success grounded in evolved psychological mechanisms
Academic Handbooks (various on Psychology/Sociology)	Strategies for successful leadership, social status attainment, managing Dark Triad traits, and broader life success and achievement

Each pillar expands into multiple TPM-derived models and applications across the site.

We're also developing our own foundational resources on less-covered topics related to power intelligence, positive Machiavellianism, and strategic thinking.
In the meantime, **Power University** serves as the unified framework that integrates these disparate academic pillars, plus our own contributions, into a cohesive system for real-world outcomes.

Power University: Shortcut For Ambitious Men

We turned the insights from these thousands of resources into practical strategies and techniques to acquire social status, people's respect, and women's devotion.



1. Power (Best of)

This list took me so long to prepare.

Weeks of whittling down books and deciding which one was most instructive when it comes to power and (social) power dynamics.

In the end, after two days of thinking, writing, editing and changing, I finally came up with this list:

- **30 Best Books on Power**

2. Social Skills (Best Of)

Social skills are one of those skills that are not easy to learn from books.

Yet, thinking that you can skip the theory to only focus on the practice is a bad approach.

Because theory, or at least *good* theory, can shave off years from your learning curve. Here is the list from someone who's read (and listened/watched) to many of them:

- **Best Social Skills Books**
- Best social skills courses
- Best advanced social skills books

2.2. Communication Skills

This list of best communication skills books focuses on *verbal* communication.

It ranges from conflict resolution to de-escalation to overcoming passive-aggressive communication.

What makes some of the books in this list some of the very best books to read -ever- is the many examples they provide.
Pick even just two of them and watch yourself take a quantum leap in your communication skills:

- **Best Communication Skills Books**

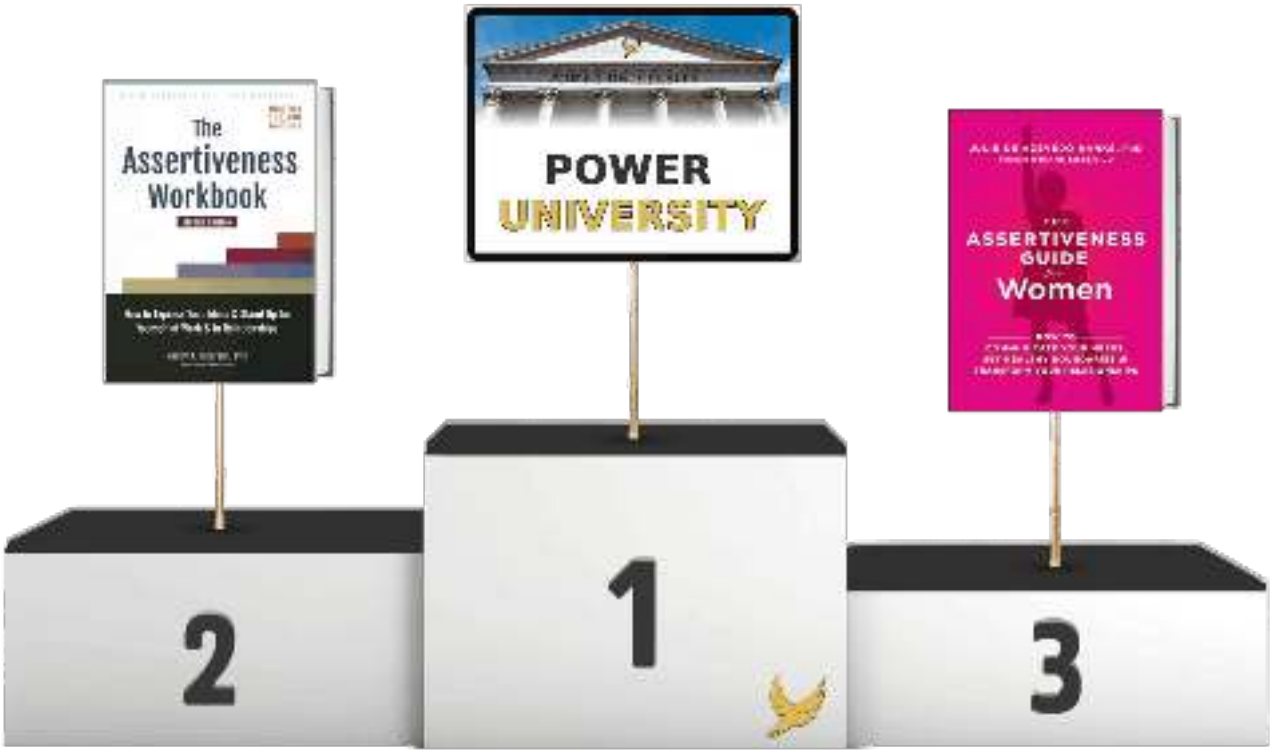
2.3. Assertiveness (Best of)

Assertiveness is one of the major four styles of communication.

Some consider assertiveness a meta-skill, such as a skill that magnifies or enables other skills.
In large part, agree with that.
Assertiveness precedes social power. And by enabling honest communication, it's also a precondition for human connection, bond, and intimacy.
By allowing people to ask for what they want and need, assertiveness is also a fundamental skill for personal success. And by extending basic human respect, it also allows for long-term win-win relationships.

Are you sold now on assertiveness? :)

OK, good, so these are the best resources on assertiveness:



2.4. Body Language (Best of)

There are some great books on body language.

But it's hard to learn body language just from books.
So the top positions on this list are documentaries, courses, and *pictorial* books:

- Best Books on Body Language

2.5. Frame Control

Frame control is an important aspect of advanced social skills and social power dynamics.

There aren't that many great resources on this important topic, and barely *any* resource focuses on frame control. But these are the resources where I found some great tidbits on frame control:

- **Best frame control resources**

3. Dating & Seduction (Best of)

There are many ways why dating and seduction matter in life:

1. It allows you to meet more and higher quality people
2. It allows you to enjoy more sex
3. It allows you to enjoy romance

And, ultimately, and perhaps more meaningfully:

- It helps you to develop a relationship with someone you vibe with

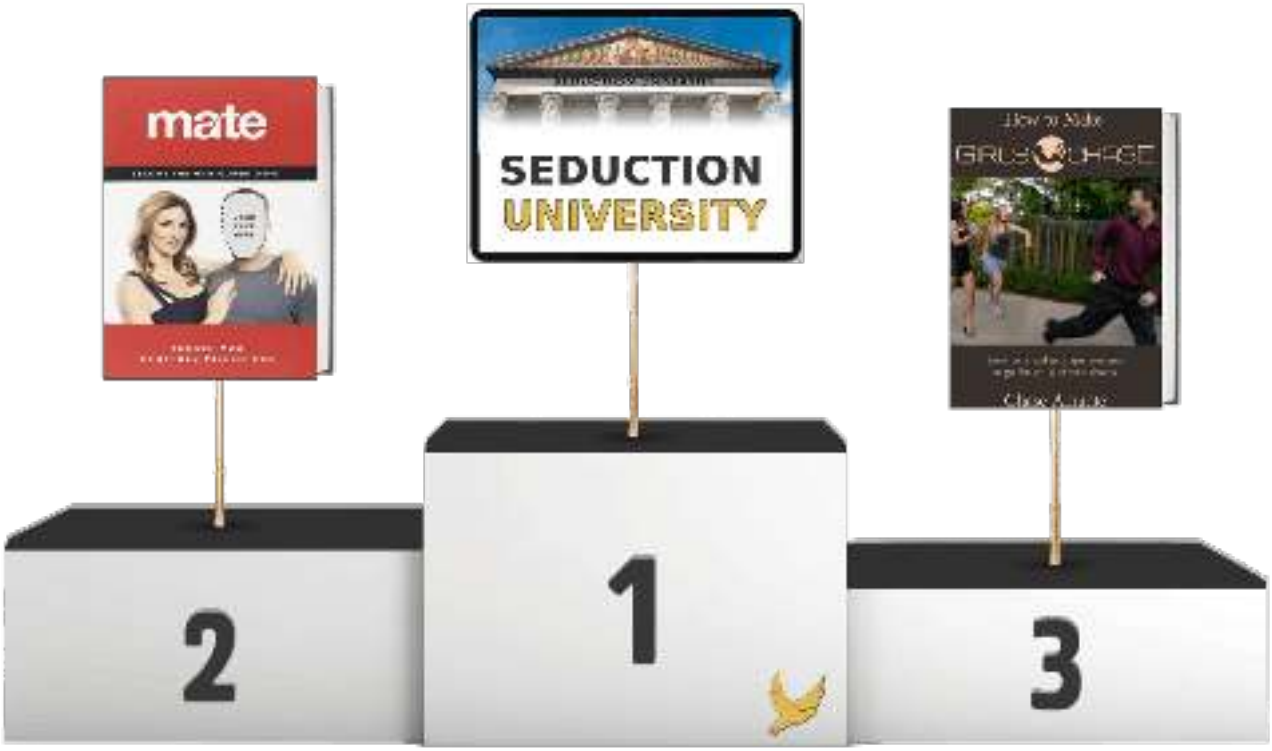
3.2. Dating for Guys (Best Of)

I called it "best dating books for guys", but in reality, many of the best entries are video products.

It couldn't be otherwise.
Many of the sought-after traits in the sexual marketplace are communicated without words and with attitudes, tonality, and body language.

So video examples are needed here.

- **Best dating resources for guys**



P.S.:
Best Dating Books for Women

3.4. Relationships (Best of)

Contrary to dating, there seems to be more consensus about what works in relationships.

- **Best Relationship Books**

P.S.:
Remember, these are mostly for “normal” and egalitarian relationships.
It doesn’t mean we’d advise any high-value man to do the same. And it doesn’t mean you can’t find other arrangements that work better for you.

4. Influence & Persuasion (Best of)

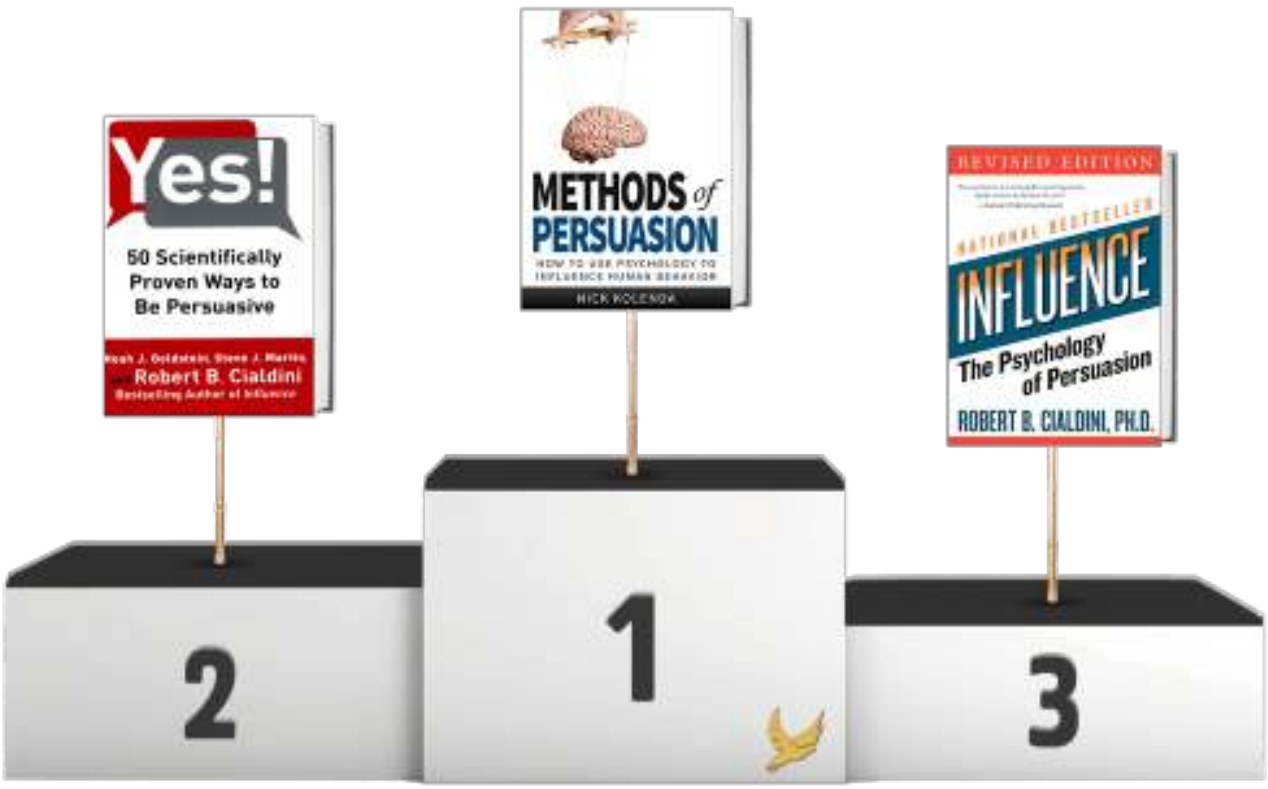
You can’t do much in life without others.

And what you can do through others via sheer force or coercion is very limited.
Especially in this (blessed) day and age of freedom, democracy, and general opulence (which decreases people’s dependency on others).

Hence, much of life’s success and effectiveness hinges on how well you can persuade others to join you, work with you, support you, or follow you.

These books will help you influence and persuade people.

- **The Best Books on Persuasion**



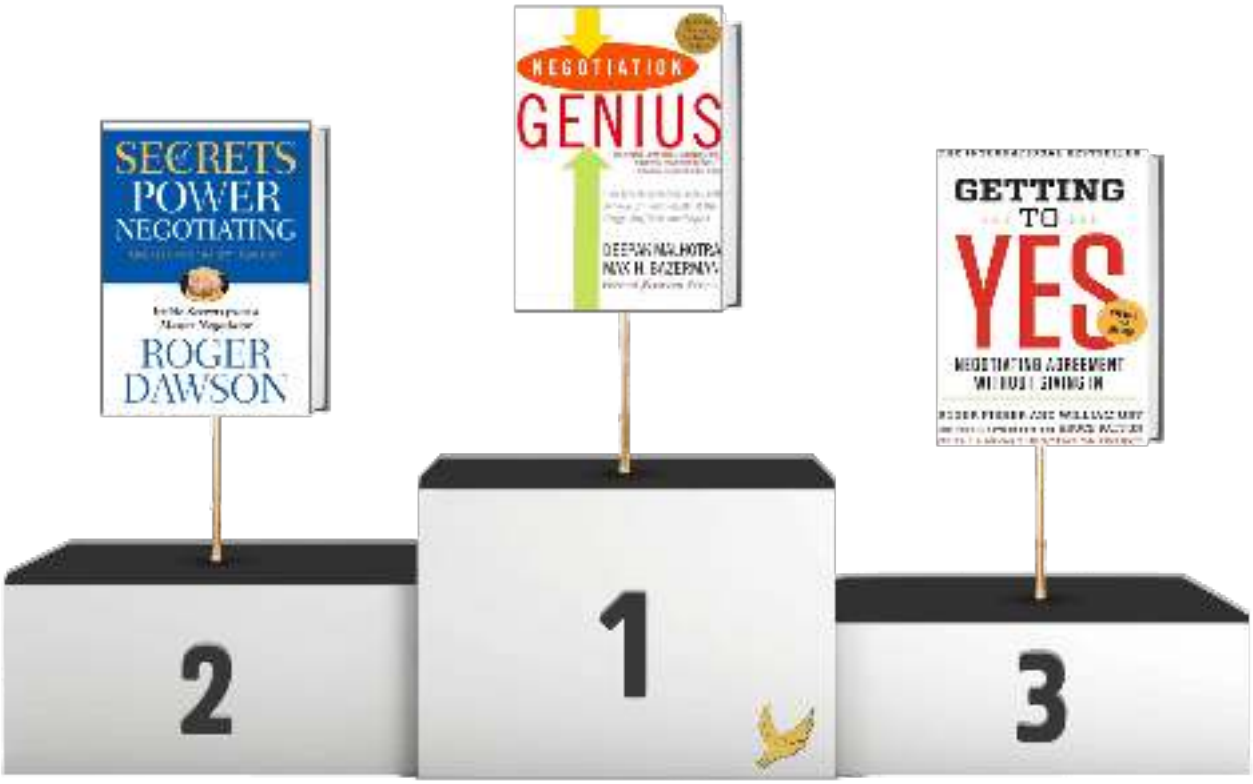
4.2. Best Books on Negotiation

Negotiation is persuasion applied to deal-making.

Negotiations are going to be some of the most lucrative -or costly- hours of your life.

Better be prepared with a couple of good books.

- **Best Negotiation Books**



5. Manipulation (Best of)

Does manipulation deserve its own category?

Probably manipulation, dark psychology, and any Machiavellian strategies to take advantage of others wouldn't deserve their own category.

It could either be part of "advanced social skills", or a subset of influence and persuasion.

But there is a reason why I do still give it its own category.
There is so little information around about this important area of self-development and self-empowerment, that we need all the good resources we can muster.

Hence, its own category.

Influence VS Manipulation

Influence and manipulation can overlap.

Author Robert Greene says that the two are the same.
While some other authors of influential books on manipulation differentiate between the two.

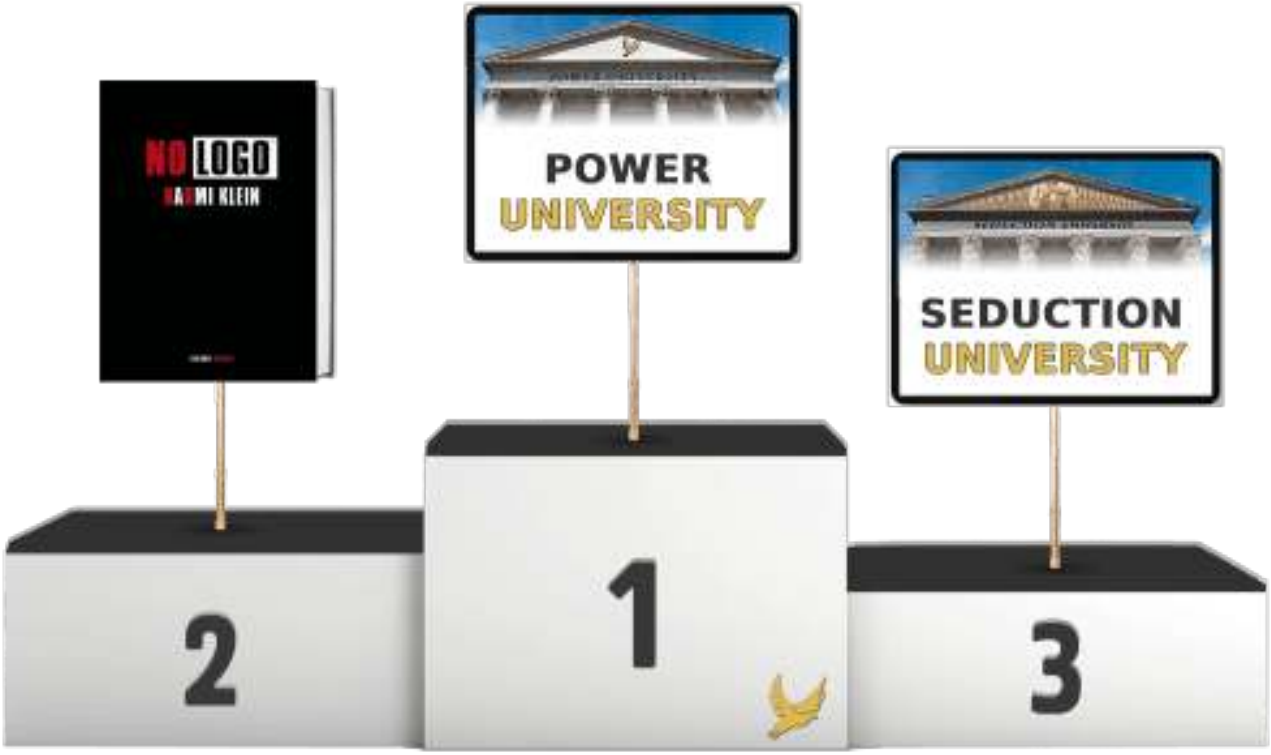
A third approach is that not only we *can* differentiate but we *must* differentiate.
And like George Simon observes, not differentiating equates to making excuses for bullies, abusers, and the generally value-taking folks of this world.
And it's also important for self-development: anyone who wants to be a force for good in this world, it's important to understand where the difference lies.

In brief, I differentiate the two in this way: manipulation is win-lose, abusive, or victimizing others.
While persuasion is either win-win, or grey area with only limited loss.

Don't count on people to only limit themselves to persuasion, though.

Instead, it's better to arm yourself with knowledge on how to defend against manipulation.

- **Best Books on Manipulation**



5.2. Best Dark Triad Books

Power and the quest for power are correlated with dark triad traits.

These books will help you better understand the traits of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism:

- **Best books on narcissism**
- **Best Dark Triad Books**

6. Career & Business

Let's differentiate:

6.2. Career (Best of)

To make a good career, you need political savvy.

And these books will help you with that:

- **Best career books**

6.3. Entrepreneurship (Best of)

Learning entrepreneurship from books is not easy.

But learning by doing *only* can be *extremely* costly.

Both in the mistakes we do and in the opportunities we miss (God knows how much quicker I could have grown this website with some well-timed advice).
But I have also grown this website much quicker thanks to some great advice I learned from books and other entrepreneurs.

The books in this list help you mostly with the mindsets.

- **Best Entrepreneurship Books**

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This is how TPM sees it:

Leadership is the natural consequence of effective self-development.

Trying to skip to leadership without everything else makes for a *poor* leader.

Luckily, once you have the good foundations we teach here, then you can also work on your leadership skills.

Leadership is a skill like any other. And like any other skill, the way to improve at it is with *both* practice and theory.

These books will take care of the later:

- **Best Leadership Books**

8. Psychology (Best of)

Would you like to understand people and human behavior?

Follow this reading list of best psychology books and you will get to the top 1% when it comes to people's knowledge.

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David Buss says that evolutionary psychology should be the unifying framework for all the different psychology branches and specializations.

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Your time is the most valuable resource you have.

And reading is not always and necessarily the best use of your time.

Reading bad books *certainly* is not a great use of your time.

- **Worst Books of All Time**

Most Overrated Books

See:

- **Most overrated books**

Best Books VS Most Popular

You will find many hidden gems in our gems.

We believe it's one of our main added value.

Many "best book lists" online are random lists of *popular* books.
Some of them are compiled without even reading those books.
And a few even shamelessly copy our lists.

But I found that there is little connection between popularity and quality.

So we're happy to provide a platform to showcase quality information including lesser-known books and resources.

Best Resources On Optimal Learning

To optimize your learning:

- **Naive self-help**: Most self-help is misleading out of naivete, virtue signaling, or just plain ignorance. Learn how to spot it and fix it.
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- **Glass ceilings**. Or "why 99% of self-help leads to plateaus". This is a meta-review on general learning to reach the pinnacle.
- **3 pillars of mastery**. Great teachers have experience, scientific knowledge, and are smart thinkers. This article helps you assess the authors' expertise.
- **Why I stopped reading mainstream books**. In brief, because they're optimized for selling more than instructing. They're often written by non-experts, while targeting average readers.
- **Power University**. The quickest yet most comprehensive way to become a high-value winner

Lucio's Top Books & Resources on Power, Psychology, & Strategy

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

These are the top resources that Lucio Buffalmano — founder of The Power Moves and creator of Power University — has personally studied. Each entry has been analyzed and filtered through the lens of **power dynamics**, **social strategy**, and **scientific psychology**.

We continuously update these lists to include the best books, courses, and resources across critical areas like **social skills**, **influence**, **dating**, and **leadership**. Some of these knowledge sources underpin TPM's methodology and programs.

Contents

- Top TPM Resources
- 1. Power (Best of)
- 2. Social Skills (Best Of)
  - 2.2. Communication Skills
  - 2.3. Assertiveness (Best of)
  - 2.4. Body Language (Best of)
  - 2.5. Frame Control
- 3. Dating & Seduction (Best of)
  - 3.2. Dating for Guys (Best Of)
  - 3.4. Relationships (Best of)
- 4. Influence & Persuasion (Best of)
  - 4.2. Best Books on Negotiation
- 5. Manipulation (Best of)
  - 5.2. Best Dark Triad Books
- 6. Career & Business
  - 6.2. Career (Best of)
  - 6.3. Entrepreneurship (Best of)
- 7. Leadership (Best of)
- 8. Psychology (Best of)
  - 8.2. Evolutionary Psychology
  - 8.3. Positive Psychology
- 9. Red Pill
- 10. General Self-Development
- Books to Avoid
  - Most Overrated Books
  - Best Books VS Most Popular
- Best Resources On Optimal Learning

Top TPM Resources

At TPM, we view resources as bricks to a castle: individual components that form a functional "suprastructure" when integrated.

Because our methodology relies on synthesizing vast amounts of research into actionable strategies, naming only a few titles would be reductive and misleading.

However, if forced to identify the main pillars for TPM and mention a single great resource associated with it, they would be these:

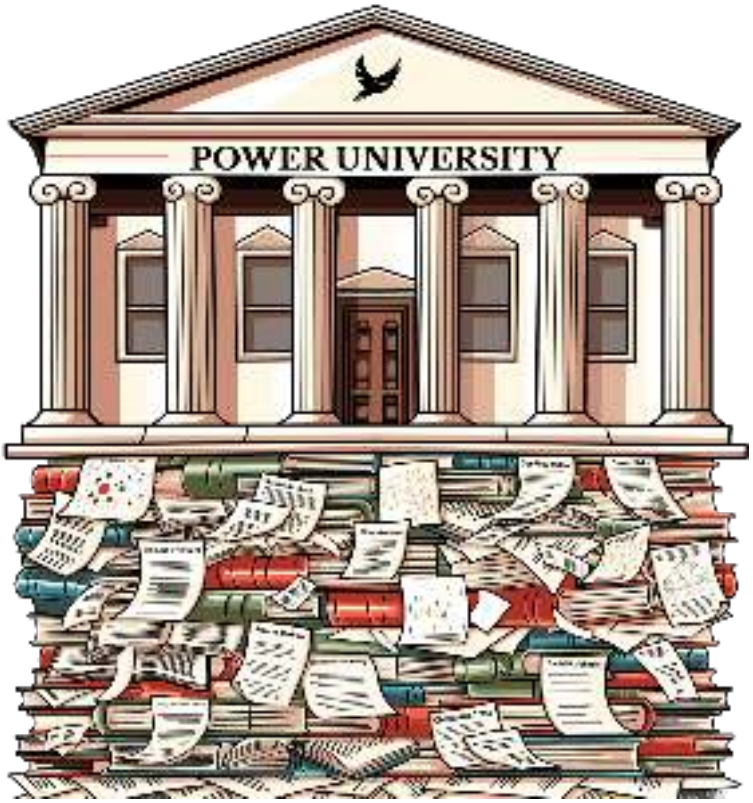
Foundational Resources	TPM System Integration
Social Exchange Theory (*Thibaut & Kelley, 1959*; *Blau, 1964*)	Strategies for succeeding in a social world driven by self-interested exchanges
Game Theory (*Axelrod, 1984*)	Strategies to maximize the gains of cooperation while managing defection risks in alliances and relationships (i.e., "smart cooperation")
Evolutionary Psychology (*Buss*, and others)	Strategies for social and mating success grounded in evolved psychological mechanisms
Academic Handbooks (various on Psychology/Sociology)	Strategies for successful leadership, social status attainment, managing Dark Triad traits, and broader life success and achievement

Each pillar expands into multiple TPM-derived models and applications across the site.

We're also developing our own foundational resources on less-covered topics related to power intelligence, positive Machiavellianism, and strategic thinking.
In the meantime, **Power University** serves as the unified framework that integrates these disparate academic pillars, plus our own contributions, into a cohesive system for real-world outcomes.

Power University: Shortcut For Ambitious Men

We turned the insights from these thousands of resources into practical strategies and techniques to acquire social status, people's respect, and women's devotion.



1. Power (Best of)

This list took me so long to prepare.

Weeks of whittling down books and deciding which one was most instructive when it comes to power and (social) power dynamics.

In the end, after two days of thinking, writing, editing and changing, I finally came up with this list:

- **30 Best Books on Power**

2. Social Skills (Best Of)

Social skills are one of those skills that are not easy to learn from books.

Yet, thinking that you can skip the theory to only focus on the practice is a bad approach.

Because theory, or at least *good* theory, can shave off years from your learning curve. Here is the list from someone who's read (and listened/watched) to many of them:

- **Best Social Skills Books**
- Best social skills courses
- Best advanced social skills books

2.2. Communication Skills

This list of best communication skills books focuses on *verbal* communication.

It ranges from conflict resolution to de-escalation to overcoming passive-aggressive communication.

What makes some of the books in this list some of the very best books to read -ever- is the many examples they provide.
Pick even just two of them and watch yourself take a quantum leap in your communication skills:

- **Best Communication Skills Books**

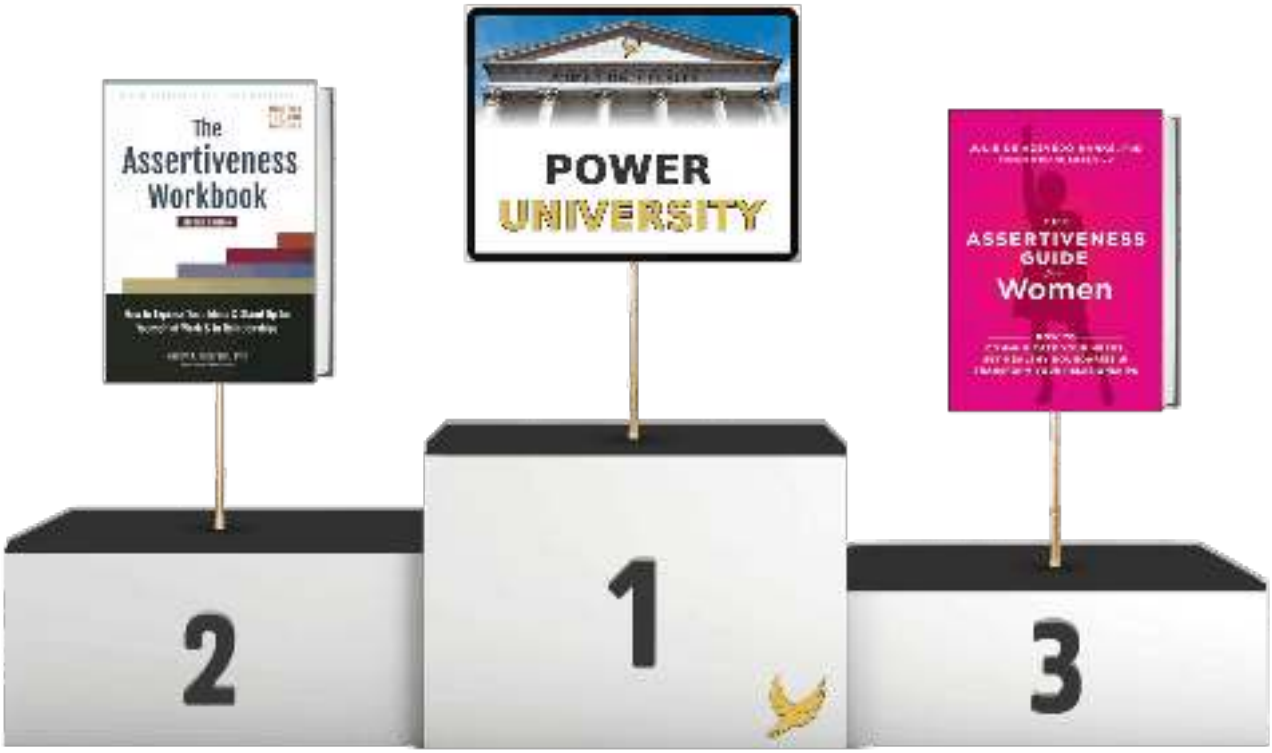
2.3. Assertiveness (Best of)

Assertiveness is one of the major four styles of communication.

Some consider assertiveness a meta-skill, such as a skill that magnifies or enables other skills.
In large part, agree with that.
Assertiveness precedes social power. And by enabling honest communication, it's also a precondition for human connection, bond, and intimacy.
By allowing people to ask for what they want and need, assertiveness is also a fundamental skill for personal success. And by extending basic human respect, it also allows for long-term win-win relationships.

Are you sold now on assertiveness? :)

OK, good, so these are the best resources on assertiveness:



2.4. Body Language (Best of)

There are some great books on body language.

But it's hard to learn body language just from books.
So the top positions on this list are documentaries, courses, and *pictorial* books:

- Best Books on Body Language

2.5. Frame Control

Frame control is an important aspect of advanced social skills and social power dynamics.

There aren't that many great resources on this important topic, and barely *any* resource focuses on frame control. But these are the resources where I found some great tidbits on frame control:

- **Best frame control resources**

3. Dating & Seduction (Best of)

There are many ways why dating and seduction matter in life:

1. It allows you to meet more and higher quality people
2. It allows you to enjoy more sex
3. It allows you to enjoy romance

And, ultimately, and perhaps more meaningfully:

- It helps you to develop a relationship with someone you vibe with

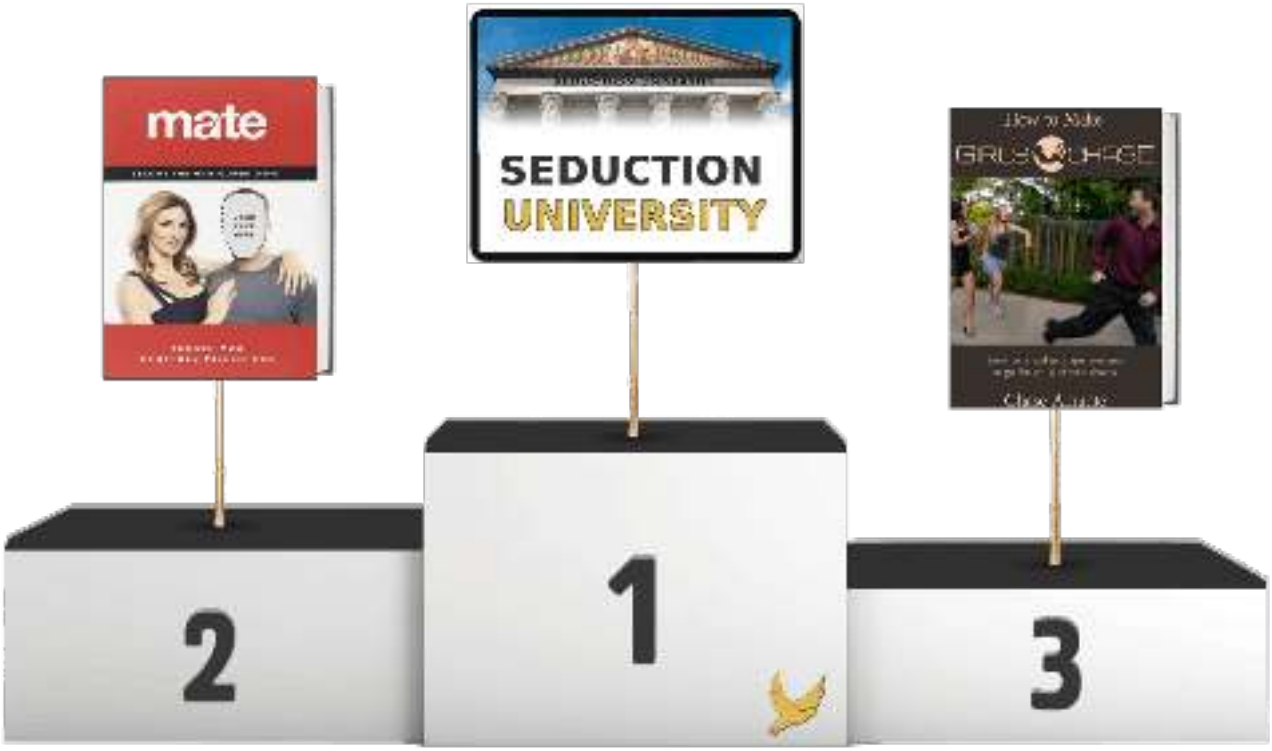
3.2. Dating for Guys (Best Of)

I called it "best dating books for guys", but in reality, many of the best entries are video products.

It couldn't be otherwise.
Many of the sought-after traits in the sexual marketplace are communicated without words and with attitudes, tonality, and body language.

So video examples are needed here.

- **Best dating resources for guys**



P.S.:
Best Dating Books for Women

3.4. Relationships (Best of)

Contrary to dating, there seems to be more consensus about what works in relationships.

- **Best Relationship Books**

P.S.:
Remember, these are mostly for “normal” and egalitarian relationships.
It doesn’t mean we’d advise any high-value man to do the same. And it doesn’t mean you can’t find other arrangements that work better for you.

4. Influence & Persuasion (Best of)

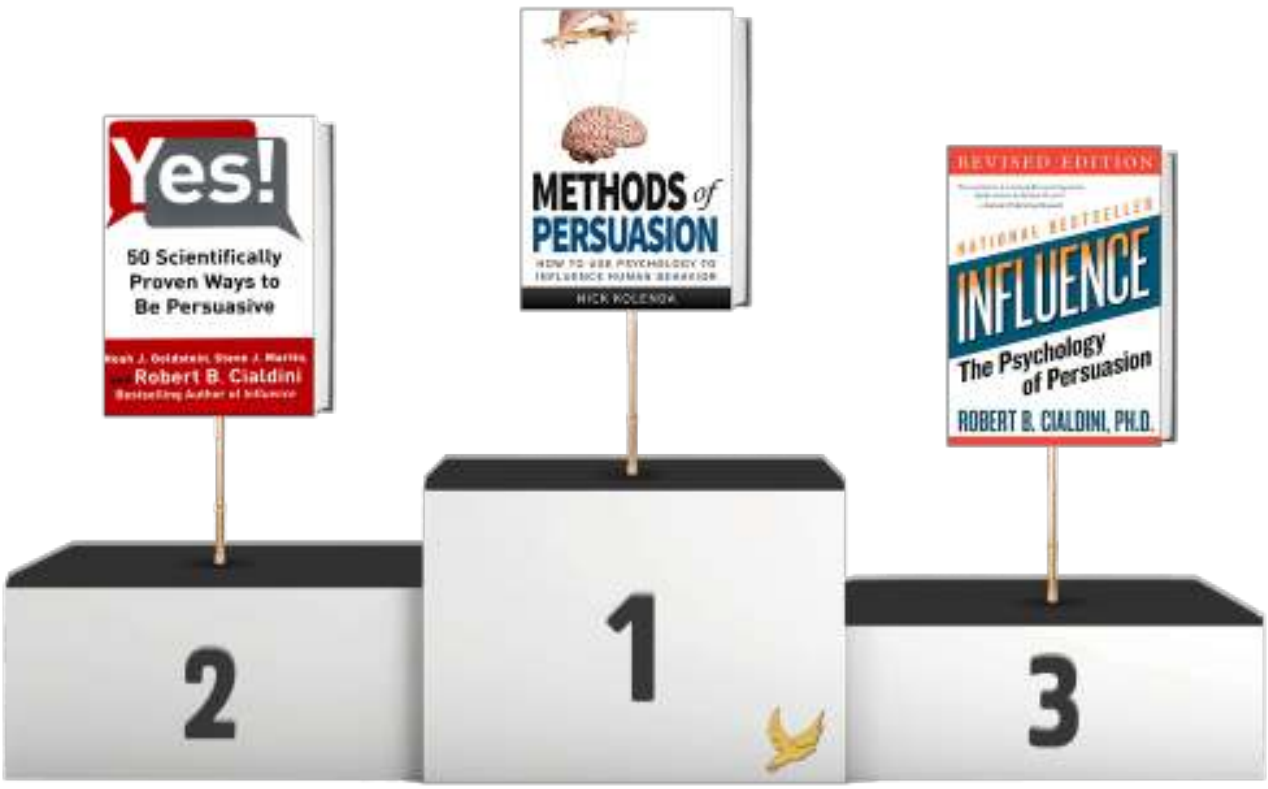
You can’t do much in life without others.

And what you can do through others via sheer force or coercion is very limited.
Especially in this (blessed) day and age of freedom, democracy, and general opulence (which decreases people’s dependency on others).

Hence, much of life’s success and effectiveness hinges on how well you can persuade others to join you, work with you, support you, or follow you.

These books will help you influence and persuade people.

- **The Best Books on Persuasion**



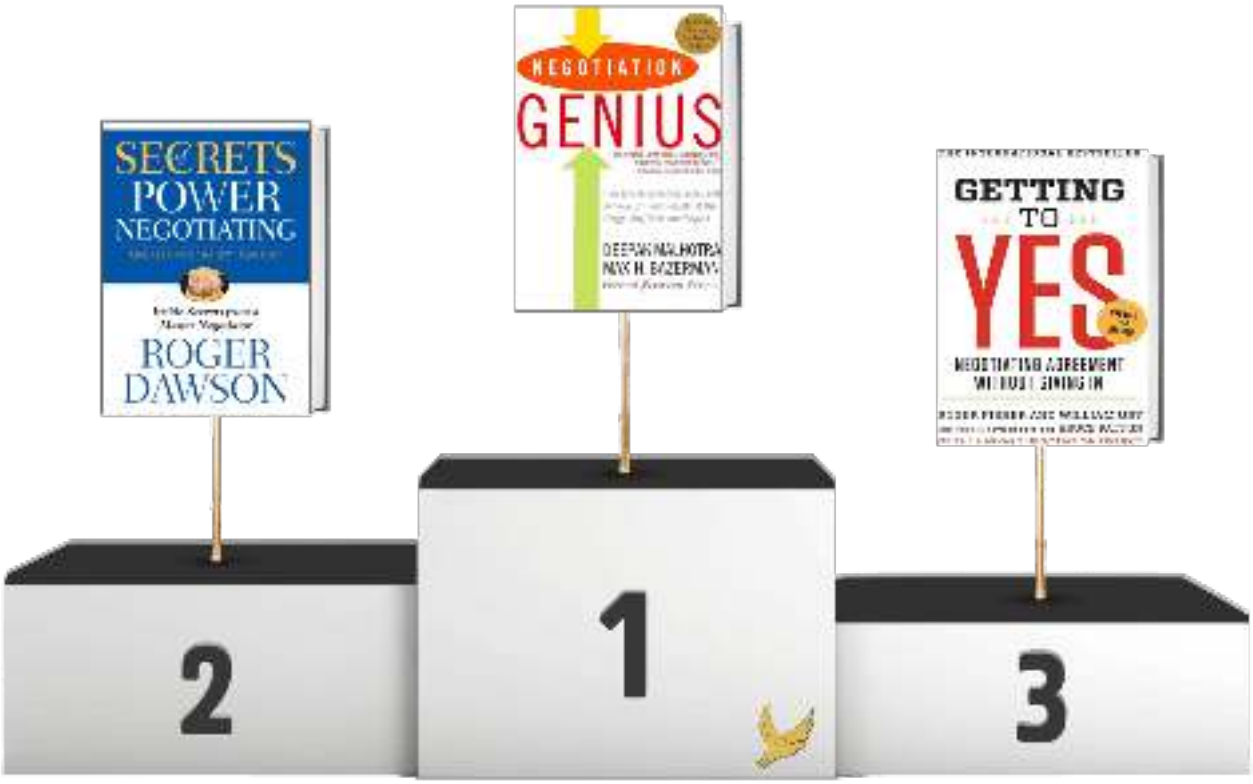
4.2. Best Books on Negotiation

Negotiation is persuasion applied to deal-making.

Negotiations are going to be some of the most lucrative -or costly- hours of your life.

Better be prepared with a couple of good books.

- **Best Negotiation Books**



5. Manipulation (Best of)

Does manipulation deserve its own category?

Probably manipulation, dark psychology, and any Machiavellian strategies to take advantage of others wouldn't deserve their own category.

It could either be part of "advanced social skills", or a subset of influence and persuasion.

But there is a reason why I do still give it its own category.
There is so little information around about this important area of self-development and self-empowerment, that we need all the good resources we can muster.

Hence, its own category.

Influence VS Manipulation

Influence and manipulation can overlap.

Author Robert Greene says that the two are the same.
While some other authors of influential books on manipulation differentiate between the two.

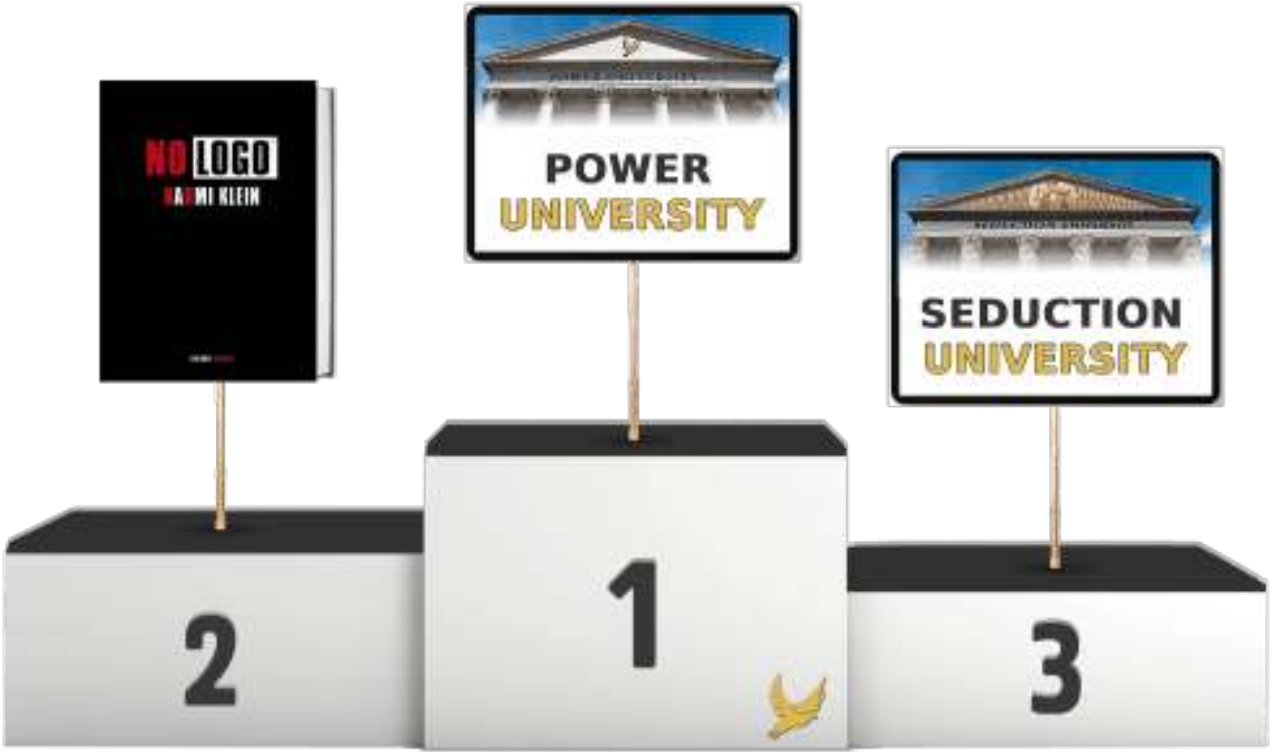
A third approach is that not only we *can* differentiate but we *must* differentiate.
And like George Simon observes, not differentiating equates to making excuses for bullies, abusers, and the generally value-taking folks of this world.
And it's also important for self-development: anyone who wants to be a force for good in this world, it's important to understand where the difference lies.

In brief, I differentiate the two in this way: manipulation is win-lose, abusive, or victimizing others.
While persuasion is either win-win, or grey area with only limited loss.

Don't count on people to only limit themselves to persuasion, though.

Instead, it's better to arm yourself with knowledge on how to defend against manipulation.

- **Best Books on Manipulation**



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Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The psychopath's mating strategy seeks the maximum possible number of descendants with the least possible financial and emotional investment.

This article explores an individual psychopath's approach that may be representative of a larger population.

Contents

- Introduction
- 1. Quantity over quality
- 2. F*ck raw to impregnate women
  - 2.2. But use condoms with local women
- 3. Invest NOTHING in your children
  - 3.2. Persuade local women to abort
  - 3.3. Develop contingency plans: move, start anew
  - 3.4. Prevent issues: give women fake names
- 4. Game foreign women, let them come to you
- 5. Impregnate married women for maximum effect
- 6. Revel in your wins: observe your seeds from afar
- 7. Scrounge off wealthy women with Mack Game
- 8. Start a harem
  - 8.2. Turn the harem into a cult -the cult of YOU-
- 9. Control women with abuse
  - 9.2. Screen for women who respond well to punishment
  - 9.3. Stick to women who get addicted to abuse

- 9.4. Use abusive tactics
- 10. And Ultimate Step…
- Psychopath's Seduction Techniques & Mindsets
  - Switch the tables: become the prize
- Seeking Immortality
- More Examples
- Further Considerations
  - The Science of Psychopathic Sexual Strategies
  - Is It A Conscious Approach to Quantity?
  - Does The Psychopath Strategy Work?
  - Manipulative Psychopaths, Or Willing Women?
  - The Cons of The Psychopath's Strategy
  - Lessons Learned For Women
  - A Danger To Civilization?
- Summary
  - Further reading

Introduction

> **My goal is to be the modern-day version of Genghis Khan.**
>
> *– Psychopath*

In *The Handbook of Psychopathy*, Benning, Venables, and Hall write:

> They tend to **prize quantity over quality** in intimate relationships, viewing romantic encounters as sources of fun (Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010) rather than as sources of commitment and intimacy (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010)

In this article, we chronicle a psychopath's sexual strategy using his own words and quotes (sources at the bottom).

Obvious disclaimer:

We present this information for knowledge and self-defense (keep reading).

These relationships are inherently unethical.
Although some women may be willing co-participants, it's more likely to be a predatory strategy based on manipulation, control, abusive relationships, and abandonment.

1. Quantity over quality

Says our friend:

> **Psychopath:**
> I'm going for quantity over quality. My overwhelming quantity will make it impossible for them to fail as a whole. Just a couple need to be semi-successful.

He refers to "quantity of women/children" VS "quality of good parenting".

But, as we shall see, it also refers to the quality of women.

2. F*ck raw to impregnate women

Whenever a guy brags about not using condoms, I know he may be high in psychopathy.

But our psychopath does so with a precise strategy in mind:

> **Question**:
> don't you use a condom?

> **Psychopath**:
> I don't use condoms on vacation or with tourist chicks. My plan and goal is to knock them all up.

Psychopaths are undaunted by STDs

> **Question**:
> How about STDs?

> **Psychopath:**
> STDs are not that scary. Nothing pills can't fix. Even aids got pills you can take.

I didn't ask about the STDs he could pass to her, because you should know the answer to that: he doesn't care.

And to the worst of them, harming others is a badge of honor. It says they're effective marauders.

2.2. But use condoms with local women

Volunteers our psychopathic friend:

> **Psychopath**:
> With locals that know my real identity I condom up as much as I can.

Why so?
Because he does not want to pay child support, of course:

> **Psychopath:**
> Fuck child support. Literally one of the only reasons I started learning other languages so I can bail the fuck out of the U.S. if some whore tries to get money out of me.

And:

> **Psychopath**:
> The unfair child support laws benefit women to have as many kids as they can but punish men. I said fuck all that. Nobody controls me. I'm not letting the government control my reproductive rights.
> We men have no parental rights and get treated as just cheap sperm banks anyways.

Obviously he sees no opportunity for win-win exchanges in dating and relationships.

Or... Do anal

> **Psychopath:**
> Anal for the locals and in their pussy when they are tourist chicks. Because they are flying away. I'll never see them again.

3. Invest NOTHING in your children

First:

3.2. Persuade local women to abort

He has a persuasion system approach to convince women to abort:

> **Psychopath:**
> (…) has never failed me when I accidentally knock up a local.
> But the key is to get them telling you how having a baby will negatively affect her. They have to feel like it was their choice with no outside influence.

3.3. Develop contingency plans: move, start anew

In case his abortion persuasive strategy fails, he has contingency plans in place:

> **Psychopath:**
> I doubt I will ever get caught but that is why I'm learning all these languages. As a contingency. Leave this country and start life in another and continue.
> I can move to a country where they can't get any child support out of me and go off the mother fucking grid.
> I'll move to a country where the U.S has no international agreements to enforce it. That's why I choose Japan.

His whole thought process is geared toward taking as much as possible, while giving as little as possible.
As Ray suggests in *The Cambridge Handbook*, **psychopathy can be seen as a cheater strategy to take advantage of others**.

3.4. Prevent issues: give women fake names

> **Psychopath**: I have aliases yes.
> I tell them I'm a tourist also that lives in Miami or somewhere other than Vegas. Only take cabs and stay in hotel rooms. Exchange no social media. No pictures and give them burner phone number. It's impossible for them to track me. Even if they tried they would start looking in the wrong place.

Presenting a mask comes naturally to psychopaths anyway. Says the same guy in another conversation:

reddit r/asktrp Search

There is nothing like embracing another culture and customs and becoming one of them. I love being a actor and being a new person everyday. Life is my stage. It's my theater. It's true freedom. True power. My identify is whatever I make it. Learning a bunch of languages just helps me play a bunch of new roles and opens up a bunch of unique connections that only I can make.

Reply Give Award Share Report Save

4. Game foreign women, let them come to you

> **Question:**
> So you travel and go meet some of the girls you know?

> **Psychopath**:
> I don't travel to them. They travel to me. My hometown is Vegas. They fly in and fly out with my cum still in between their legs back to their home states and countries. It saves a bunch of time and money traveling when they just come to you.

> **Question:**
> How do you meet these women

> **Psychopath**:
> Meet them just doing day game and night game. Just normal game. I'm just gaming women that want to let loose on vacation here.

5. Impregnate married women for maximum effect

> **Psychopath**:
> Bonus if they are married. The husband is automatically assumed the father and put on the cert. even if dna proves him not to be the father.

In this case, the quantity strategy also becomes qualitative, as children grow with a father figure and a provider.

6. Revel in your wins: observe your seeds from afar

Says the psychopath:

> **Psychopath**:
> I'm really into eugenics and what that could have been and genes. This is a way I can practice from a distance sort of. Love seeing the combinations and wondering what they will look like and become. Watching them develop from a distance on social media on their moms accounts.

7. Scrounge off wealthy women with Mack Game

Psychopaths don't have stable incomes: it requires too much dedication.

Wealthy women are the attractive psychopaths' "hack" to an easy life.

He says:

> **Psychopath:**
> I use women for financial resources like women do men.
> I'm the one that moves in with them, instead of how it usually is with the women moving into the guys place.
> Moving in with them rent free is just one of the perks of this game.

Typical value-taker mindset.

> **Psychopath**:
> I live my life like Ashton Kutcher in the movie Spread.

A segment from a movie:

Ashton Kutcher may do that because he's a 10. But average psychopaths… Difficult.

Isn't scrounging off low power?

A Reddit user asked the psychopath if his game was less dominant than the "daddy style", since he is dependent on women.

Seems like that question triggered his ego:

> **Psychopath:**
> There is nothing more dominant then what I do.
> You think macking (ie.: male gold digger) is not dominant? I can turn it into literal pimping by just saying some words. You think pimps are not dominant?
> Fuck being daddy I'm her lord and savior. I own her very soul. Her life essence.

And ended his message with a power move:

> **Psychopath:**
> Power Game is full of contradictions and paradoxes. You need experience to understand all the nuances

The psychopath also said that he learned how to control relationships from pimps, both in books and in person -one allegedly took him "under his wing"-.

8. Start a harem

Once your game is good, start a harem.

> **Psychopath**:
> I will eventually have some that I raise my own. Those ones will be my clones and carry on my will. Genetically and philosophy.

So I inquired:

> **Question:**
> OK, so at a certain point you will also settle down and be a provider, it sounds?

> **Psychopath:**
> I'll have a harem.
> Two sister wife's maybe more. I won't be the provider. One of them will have bank. I'll be a father, not a provider. I have too much game to ever settle for a boring-ass commoner relationship. (…) My vision of the perfect family and being the best father I can be. All this game, red pill shit was just a stepping stone.
> (…) I also know it's possible because I have already made it happen multiple times. I just didn't knock them up because I'm waiting.

I'm sure someone will see some irony in the line "best father I can be".

8.2. Turn the harem into a cult -the cult of YOU-

On a Reddit thread, a user shared his goal to move into the wild, living off the land with a great woman.

The psychopath replies:

> **Psychopath:**
> Sounds like a good place for me to start my polygamist/cult compound. I have never actually thought about something like this.
> (…)

And of course, the good-old isolation technique (Greene, 2001):

> **Psychopath:**
> In order to form the cult I want, I do need to isolate all of them. This is a major breakthrough (to live in the wild, Ed.). Can't believe I never thought of this. I'm going to need to redo my vision board now and move this cult idea I have been planning into motion in a new time slot.

He then even advises another guy:

> **Psychopath:**
> Start studying cult leaders and using what they did on these women. Run some Jim Jones game on them.

Nothing gives psychopaths a feeling of power like leading a cult

9. Control women with abuse

Psychopaths want total power and control over women.

One, because it makes them feel good about themselves, and two because a woman under their control can be used -and abused- to better serve his needs.

The techniques he describes are some of the worst, as well as the most notable examples of dark psychology I've ever read:

9.2. Screen for women who respond well to punishment

> **Psychopath:**
> They cry and storm out, go to their cars, anger text me and come back up once they realize it's only going to get worse for her. That's the worse a women has ever resisted punishment. They also agree to these punishments beforehand. Otherwise she can't become my plate.

Another poster, approved by "our" psychopath says:

> As soon as she begins to try and be a bitch or power grab, she starts losing my time and attention. Either the plate breaks or the bitch changes her tune.

"Plates that break" are women with higher standards who cut contact.
Not good for the psychopath.
Psychopaths resent women who are independent and/or resist their total control. They want doormats whom they can control.

9.3. Stick to women who get addicted to abuse

Psychopaths like this one only enter relationships with women who accept abusive behavior.
So it's true when he says:

> **Psychopath:**
> Women never call the cops. There are dudes that beat their girlfriends/wife's for years and they still dont call the cops. Why? Because women like abuse emotionally and physically.

Of course, it's not true that "women (in general) like abuse". But *some* get addicted to it.
Relationship researcher Gottman was shocked to hear that several women reported peak sexual experiences after episodes of domestic violence (Gottman, 2011).
Psychopaths stick with those types of women.

Also read:

- **How low self-esteem leads to abusive relationships**
- The judge: explains how abusers can gain control with approval/criticism

9.4. Use abusive tactics

Including:

9.4.2. Create emotional whiplash: break them down, build them back up

> **Psychopath:**
> You need to game like a woman with BPD.
> Give women emotional whiplash. You need to break these women down like they are muscles. What happens when you break down muscle over and over? It grows back stronger, that's what you want to do with your

> relationships with them.
> Breaking these women down and building them back up over and over is how you build a stronger relationship with them each time. It's how you create "love".
> (…)
> A women in love will give you everything. Drama to women is emotional heroin.

You do that by creating fake arguments:

> **Psychopath:**
> In order to do that you need to start fake arguments, that sadly many guys on here (on the red pill community, Ed.) think is stupid. They think gaming like a women is beneath them. They have no idea what they are missing out on.

At the extreme, the "whiplash" is a physical beating followed by periods of extreme tenderness.
See an example from Jon Koppenhaver (War Machine):

> **Narrator**: This is "the cycle of abuse".
> In phase 3, after an abusive episode, the abuser seeks connection. They act romantic, apologetic, and remorseful. The abused (…) may begin to feel a stronger connection.
> When fear and intimidation are directly followed by affection and warmth, the intimate nature of the latter can become significantly intensified.

It's worth noticing that Christy Mack, the psychopath's girlfriend, was also somewhat "off", from snake pets, to growing up in toxic households. And notice her tattoo saying "sick love".

9.4.3. Demand the moon, and expect it -or punish them-

> **Psychopath:**
> She needs to repent. They should put you above all else. Your word is god. Disobedience is harshly punished. She will never blow me off again. I dont give a fuck if her parents are dying, if I request her she better be there.

Does it remind you of Charles Manson?

9.4.4. Use rewards and punishments

> **Psychopath:**
> You need to operant condition them with rewards and punishments. You need to be sadistic and have a 50 shades of gray relationship with all of them because it works and they get wetter for you over it. It's all about results.

I doubt women get technically more "wet". Sex becomes more of a way of seeking confirmation for the emotional bond, and staving off the fear of abandonment (sex for sexual pleasure and sex for bonding are two different things).

12.6. Leverage your bottom bitch to control others

Remember that he has a "pimp" approach to dating:

> **Psychopath:**
> My primary is my enforcer. She's the bottom bitch that keeps my other bitches in line for me so I don't have to do any work. Most of the times I have my primary dish out punishment on the other plate. My hands are always clean.

If things go south, your primary will defend you:

> **Psychopath:**
> If she wants to get violent my primary can get violent back on her. (…) She calls the cops I always have a witness that she consented to everything. Again 50 shades type of relationships.

9.4.5. Once she's under your spell, use "dread game"

> **Psychopath:**
> She would rather share me than completely lose me. That scares the fuck out of them and keeps them in line.

9.4.6. (Mis)treat them like dogs

One man says he does not sleep well when women stay over.
Says the psychopath:

> **Psychopath:**
> I had the same problem. My solution was to make them sleep on the ground in a sleeping bag at first. Than I got soft I guess and let them sleep at the foot of the bed perpendicular but my yorkie didn't like that because that was his spot.

:S

9.4.7. Use sex for extra-bonding and control

Some psychopaths and abusers use sex as a tool for control (Bancroft, 2002).

Our future sect leader here takes it a notch up, and says he uses sperm as a tool for reward and punishment:

> **Psychopath:**
> Now I use my literal cum as a reward for positive behavior that benefits me.

And comes inside to heighten the emotional bond and personal control:

> **Psychopath**:
> Though I prefer to cum in them because it has that extra cocktail of hormones that further bonds them to me.

9.4.8. Hack their laptops & phones to use their secrets to your advantage

This one was the most unexpected for me:

> **Psychopath:**
> I personally use it to low key hack and have control of all my plates laptops. I know everything about them. Their browser history, projects they are working on, emails and twitter accounts because lol everybody just leaves everything on auto sign in.

> Also iPhones. Even the ones with Face ID omg that shit is horrible. When they are sleeping just open one of their eyes and you get access. If they have an older model just put their thumb on the Touch ID button. A normal password is far safer than biometrics.

How to use that information:

> **Psychopath**:
> Knowledge is power.
> They always wonder how it seems I can read their minds. It's because I am. Our phones and laptops, social media accounts are a peak at our souls.
> Let your imagination run wild as to why having that info on them is so powerful. It's like the movie what women want when they are around me.

He says he has remote software to switch on their laptop's camera and microphones, and he learned it from the book "*Social Engineering*".

And in another message, he explains why it works:

> **Psychopath:**
> People are narcissistic, they just want to be around other people like themselves. Same hobbies, jobs, interest, background etc.
> There is no better way to become their mirror than to hack and find out everything about themselves than use what you find out in conversation with them.

10. And Ultimate Step...

There is one last, ultimate power move.

Unfortunately, we can't share it publicly.

Psychopath's Seduction Techniques & Mindsets

This guy's post history is a crash course on the mindsets and psychology of psychopaths.

Some more information about him:

- **He writes mostly on Red Pill subreddits**

Which tells you something about The Red Pill.

- **He uses social circles**

Between cold approaches VS social circles, he prefers social circles:

> **Psychopath:**
> You're supposed the build a pipeline of pussy so you don't need to cold approach.
> I have not cold approached all year. Even before COVID. I simply just hang out and tell plates/females friends to invite more girls they know. The women in my life do all the pussy hunting for me now.

- **He bodybuilds and uses steroids**

> **Psychopath:**

> "Than said fuck all this and jumped on the juice"

Research also linked steroid use to short-term tactics and higher intrasexual competition.

- **He parties a lot**

> **Psychopath:**
> Long after my military career is over I have finally become a morning person. All it took was bars and night clubs closing

LOL you can't deny this guy can be funny.

- **He does not respect any "bro code"**

> **Psychopath:**
> I never respect the beta bro code under any circumstances.
> All the "friends" I would need to uphold this rule around got exiled and purged from my life. They will only hold you back like the crabs they are. Bro code is mate guarding simp shit.
> Our bro code with my boys is to share everything and if you manage to steal a girl from one of us it's cool just explain and detail how you pulled it off so we can all improve our game together.

To which one guy replies "If that's how you and your friends operate, then you guys are toxic as fuck."

- **He insists and takes no "no"**

> **Psychopath:**
> I never give up on sets till violence or security is called. It's a rule I have that has lead to many opportunities like yours.

- **He cares nothing about his family**

> **Psychopath:**
> I personally give no fucks about my family.
> Even if I did owe them something wouldn't give them shit. Funeral costs don't care. Bury me in the back yard for all I care. Don't even get me a casket.

Of course, God forbid if he didn't end up being a cost and burden.

- **He learned seduction and power dynamics for money, resources, and power**

> **Psychopath:**
> I always learned game from day one for money, resources, social status and power. To have a harem has been my end game since day one.

And:

> I didn't get into game for sex I'm after something far greater. Power, control and money.

His self-awareness is quite good. Definitely a high-functioning psychopath.

- **He "plows" through last minute resistances (LMR)**

> **Psychopath:**
> I don't really get LMR but my rules to deal with it is to plow. If she really doesn't want to have sex she will kick and claw like an actual victim is the only way I'm stopping.

- **If he's caught cheating, he denies it**

> **Psychopath:**
> If I get caught with another woman I make excuses that it was not my fault, I can't be held responsible, it just happened, just like women do to men.

And of course, never take responsibility or face the consequences of your actions.

Switch the tables: become the prize

The psychopath says that part of his game is to act like a "female 10".

He says:

> **Psychopath:**
> I'm the one that gets chased, I game in a way that makes her the pursuer. She initiates everything. She wants to fuck me she has to chase me. In a relationship, if she wants my dick she has to use foreplay on me.

Part of his "gaming like a female 10" is to refuse responsibility, make excuses of caught with other women, and create lots of drama (of course, none of that necessarily belongs to a "female 10's behavior").
Again, sounds a lot like that manosphere guru's gaslighting MO (see here).

Seeking Immortality

Projecting power over infinity

Robert Hare (Hare, 1993) hypothesized that psychopaths:

1. Follow a conscious reproductive strategy of quantity over quality
2. Seek a way of "living on forever"

Let's go back to our case study.

> **Psychopath**:
> I'll die but my genes will forever live on all over this planet. I made this my life purpose.
> If there was a actual god it would be very grateful for all the new life I'm creating. In a way I am god. I create new life and the women in my life worship me. That's how I see it. I'm doing the work of a god.

I questioned him on the illusion of "forever":

> **Question**:
> "Forever" is an illusion.
> Your genes will be so diluted in a just a few generations that nothing of "you" will be there. And it's a fair bet that all species will end, eventually. At latest, when the universe wil end.

And he replies:

> **Psychopath**:
> Everything will end yes. But at least a part of me will still be alive to make it to see the end of our species. Hundreds of thousands of years from now.
> (…)
> I'll make it to infinite. Till the meteor fucking drops.

More Examples

These are not diagnoses, but only examples of individuals who may have psychopathic or dark triad traits and pursued a reproduction strategy based on quantity

Years after we first published this article, we may have a real-life example of someone publicly embracing this approach:

> **Psychopath-sounding man**: My goal is to have as many children as possible

And in this other example, he mocks men with two children as "b*tches".

I have also personally witnessed this tendency in sperm donation cases.
For example:

- **Man rejected for sperm donation goes on a vindictive spree**: goes back in person to say that it's him who withdraws and not them to reject him, sends emails to the parent company complaining about laboratory workers, mentions his genes are too good for donations, and leaves online negative reviews. A behavior that may suggest narcissistic rage
- **Man rejected for sperm donation throws a fit in the office**, complains that the online selection criteria were wrongly stated, that he had spent two years 'preparing', and that he has two degrees, seemingly wanting to display 'donor value' and pressuring reviewers into making an exception

Further Considerations

The Science of Psychopathic Sexual Strategies

Psychopathy may be an adaptive strategy for reproduction, a concept highlighted by evolutionary psychology and most associated with Troisi (1998).

Human males tend to invest in offspring, but not equally, and not all.
In the literature, the extreme ends of the male parental investment are referred to as k and r:

- *K-selection*: **Fewer offspring, high investment** (e.g., most humans).
- *r-selection*: **Many offspring, low investment** (e.g., insects and… Psychopaths).

There are two sources of psychopathic approaches to reproduction: one based on harsh childhood environments and adapted fast life strategies, and one genetic (Mealey, 1995). However, in terms of pure behavioral results related to short-term mating, they may be similar.

Neurobiological research supports the hypothesis that dysfunctions in brain regions that are key to emotional processing and morality judgments may allow psychopathic individuals to pursue this evolutionary strategy (Glenn & Raine, 2009)

Monogamous Good Men, Players, & Psychopaths: A Continuum

As Condolin explains, monogamy aligns interests and promotes cooperation between the sexes.
This means that **the monogamous and high-investing man intrinsically makes for better and more cooperative relationships**

By contrast, the quantity approach aligns more with the 'player' type.
This approach is inherently *less* collaborative, especially long-term.

However, an uncommitted and quantity approach to dating doesn't necessarily turn exploitative if the player is an honorable man.
This is not the case with the psychopath, though.

The psychopath sits at the antagonistic extreme because not only does he have no morals to keep it win-win, but he may actively seek to *harm* his partner.

Read more on overlapping concepts:

- **Lovers & Providers**
- **Alpha fucks beta bucks**, a mantra for **alphas**, dominant and high-value men who don't commit, and betas, who commit

Is It A Conscious Approach to Quantity?

Robert Hare claimed it's a conscious approach, but without empirical data I am skeptical.

Psychopaths are also impulsive, and driven by short-term pleasures.
Hare's own examples contradicted his hypothesis, with one psychopath literally replying to him "I just like to fuck".

On the other hand, it seems that at least some psychopaths consciously plan their sexual strategy.
This same article is the evidence.

But I believe it's more often a *consequence* of psychopaths' brain wiring, than a conscious decision.

This is supported by the results it gets:

Does The Psychopath Strategy Work?

Though this kind of sexuality may theoretically result in greater reproductive success (Wiebe, 2004) at least for some men, Benning and colleagues stated that it has yet to be established empirically whether this is actually the case (Gladden, Figueredo, & Jacobs, 2009; Glenn, Kurzban, & Raine, 2011).

When it comes to 'poaching', psychopaths may target already taken women but also lose their partners to poaching, yielding a net neutral effect (Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010).

More recently, Lyons suggests in *The Dark Triad of Personality* that **psychopathic men and women had *fewer* children** among the dark triads (Carter, Lyons, & Brewer, 2018).
Narcissists instead had more children.

But the evidence is sparse and the study had a small sample to draw significant conclusions.

Manipulative Psychopaths, Or Willing Women?

We must acknowledge that some women likely slept with him knowing what they were getting.

Or, at least, they kinda knew it's not the best setup, but went for it anyway.

Consider that some women don't have endless options.

Forced to choose between a meek, low-status man willing to commit and a dominant psychopath, some women may choose the latter.

Plus, the appeal of the psychopathic bad boy may increase for short-term.
Empirical support comes from a popular study where "Dads" and "Cads" correspond to "Proper" and "Dark" heroes in British Romantic literature, with women preferring "Proper" heroes for long-term and "Dark" heroes for short-term relationships.

This also means that women are enabling psychopaths to procreate.
Or, if you prefer, we can look at the too-nice guys who, until they empower themselves, make psychopathic men valid options.

Both angles are valid.

The Cons of The Psychopath's Strategy

Here's the short of it:

The deceptive and number-centric psychopath strategy requires less attractive and discerning women.

Let's see:

- **Dark triads drop their standards**, especially for short-term dating (Jonason et al., 2011)
- **The easiest "psychopath victims" are lower SMV women** when we read between the lines of the "victims' literature" (Brown, 2008, MacKenzie, 2015; Norwood, 1985). This is in line with our 'value-control tradeoff model™', where the higher value a person is, the more demanding he becomes of the people in his life, expecting value-giving instead of value-taking control
- **High-quality women pick better options** for sexual marketplace dynamics, high-quality women can get positively dominant men, without toxicity
- **It requires libertine environments, large cities, and constant turnover**. Otherwise, they'd burn their reputation very quickly

Of course, psychopaths would never confirm this.

Let's go back to the psychopath from this article.
This is what he says about the cocktail waitresses in Vegas:

> **Psychopath:**
> They also mostly have degrees and are very smart women, but don't pursue that because why would they? Whatever their degree/career pays is way less than simply being a hot woman who can pour a drink.

That is the typical tendency of inflating the value of those we date.
But I agree more with this other guy who replied:

> Lol no.
> I've worked that industry. Sometimes, I'd meet a girl working her way through college, but that was rare. **Most were not "very smart women".**
> (…)
> Most stable men don't want a girl who makes her money by wearing skimpy outfits and flirting with every slob.
> (…)
> These women are trading a normal/healthy long-term partner, and the option of a respectable career path or station in life, for a source of short term riches that dries up by the time they're 40, if they're lucky.
> (…)
> Idk who this guy (the psychopath, Ed.) talked to, but if they told him they had student loans they needed paying off, it's because they were trying to sucker him for a fat donation.

Lessons Learned For Women

source: fightgangstalking.com

Smart women can learn some lessons from this post.

- **Always demand a condom**
- **Abuse is unacceptable**
  - If you're attracted to abusive men, seek therapy. Also see Women Who Love Too Much
- **Beware of men who insist upon your first "no"**
  - Beware of men who push too hard for sex: resist sex at first instead as a valid test for man's character
- **"Operant conditioning" is a red flag**

More resources:

- **Signs you're dating a psychopath**

A Danger To Civilization?

An increase in psychopathic traits may be a danger to civilization itself.

Civilization requires a minimum amount of cooperation and contribution from all.
In that sense, **the psychopath undermines civilization by spreading anti-cooperative genes and attitudes.**

Once society has enough psychopaths, it may not be able to cooperate anymore.
Or not as effectively.
It may splinter down into clans once again, bringing us back to middle age. Or worse.

I worry that with large societies, the psychopath strategy may be comparatively more effective.

The Power Moves, by empowering good men, contrasts that.

Summary

In short, the strategy:

1. Quantity of women & children over quality
2. Control women with abusive techniques

3. Impregnate & bail

Further reading

We already discussed dark triad traits and dating.

For a quick overview:

- **Types of male seducers**: a touch of narcissism is a recurrent feature
- **What makes psychopaths successful with women**: plus, what doesn't
- **Womanizer psychology**. NOT the same as psychopathy, but it overlaps in some areas

Power Dynamics & Egos in Academia: Martin Seligman's Biography

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 September 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Hope Circuit (2018) is an autobiography of Seligman's life and work. It explains how psychology changed during his long career, how Seligman contributed to those changes, and the 'behind the scenes' politics, power dynamics, and ego clashes.

TPM's Strategic Take: While marked as a memoir, this book is valuable because it unveils the 'Shadow Game' of high-level academic success, including the power dynamics of research and funding, politics in academia, and status seeking competitions.

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Summary

About the Author:
Martin Seligman is an American psychologist and researcher. He is a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Seligman has been the president of the American Psychological Association (APA), and he is one of the founders and main proponents of "Positive Psychology". He is also the author of "Learned Optimism".

1. Psychology wrong premise: not getting it wrong ≠ getting it right

Psychology started with the premise that not getting it wrong meant getting it right.
If psychology could eliminate all the ills of the world, human life would be at its best. But the absence of ill-being does not equal the presence of well-being.

Psychology could be about the presence of happiness, not merely the absence of happiness.

1.2. Transformation Pillars During Seligman's Lifetime

Seligman says that psychology went through huge transformations during his lifetime, and that he led the transformation in more than one instance.

The four big steps of transformation are:

1. Abandoning behaviorism to embrace cognition and consciousness
2. Realizing that evolution and the brain constrain what we can learn
3. Ended the fixation of curing only what's wrong to include building what's right and positive
4. Discovered that we are driven into the future rather driven by the past

These changes together make the psychology of hope.

2. Psychology Before Seligman

Part of "The Hope Circuit" is dedicated to the "history of psychology".

Here are the main parts:

2.2. Freudian VS Behaviorists: many similarities in their shortcomings

Says Seligman:

> WHEN I FIRST encountered psychology, more than thirty years before my stint as APA president, two warring factions in the field—the behaviorists and the Freudians—were at a standoff. For all their differences, they shared many of the same dogmas. Both focused on misery. Neither took evolution seriously. Both believed that the past, especially childhood trauma, frog-marches us into the future. Both considered thinking and consciousness mere froth. They also shared many of the same blind spots: happiness, virtue, free will, meaning, creativity, and success. In short, they both missed everything that makes life worth living.

2.3. Behaviorists Are All About Internal Validity

Says Seligman:

> In direct contrast, the behaviorists are the direct descendants of what I call "atomism." (…) The thesis that real understanding comes only by working from the ground up.
> We can gain clarity about real-world issues only if we first discover and analyze the simple building blocks of the complex real world and then reassemble them to reconstruct reality.

> The model is the periodic table of the elements.

Behaviorism had the allure of hard science.
Says Seligman:

> Behaviorism was elegant. It sought to rid psychology of the quicksand of mental stuff and to place measurable behavior as the concrete footing that real science requires. A rat turning left or right in a maze was more measurable and more replicable than the sensation of slimy as composed of the sensation of warm plus that of wet. John Broadus Watson ignited the revolution in 1913 at Columbia University. Psychology, he thought, should be "a purely objective experimental branch of natural science," aiming not to understand the fluff of the mind but to predict and control behavior. Introspection was a muddle, and behavior was the right unit for scientific analysis.

The behaviorist thought that the mind was outside of science:

> Behavior could be known with certainty, but mind could not, so mind was outside science.

And within two decades, says Seligman, behaviorism had swept away introspection entirely.
The science of mind had transformed into the science of behavior, and "learning theory" now sat on the throne -together with the behaviorists taking the best professorships in the country-.

2.4. Behaviorist's Blind Spots

Says Seligman:

> These militant denials of cognition led to blind spots: that consciousness is not causal, that imagination has no role, and that free will is an illusion.

Today, thanks to the work of Seligman and others, we know that behaviorists were on the wrong track.
Says Seligman:

> - **Conscious thoughts powerfully influence emotions**. Thoughts of helplessness produce passivity. Thoughts of a better future produce hope. A science of behavior without the mind is hopelessly insufficient. • **We continually imagine different futures, we evaluate them, and we choose among them**. Try as we might, we cannot shake off free will. A science that is only about the past (memory) and the present (perception) without an account of future-mindedness is hopelessly insufficient.
> - A science that is only about negative emotions is hopelessly insufficient.

2.5. Seligman's Personal Beef With Behaviorists

Across the whole book, it feels that Seligman had a personal issue with some exponents of Behaviorism.

He says:

> "So you think, Marty, that animals have a rich mental life?" Dave asked, as if mockery should end the argument. (…) But these beliefs were so out of keeping with behaviorism that one either shut up or one endured mockery. I didn't shut up, and neither did Steve.
> All of this made us outcasts on our home turf by putting us squarely in the camp of what would soon be called "cognitive" psychology.

3. Freud Was Unscientific (Implies Seligman)

Seligman has already shown in his previous books not being the greatest admirer of Freud.

In “The Hope Circuit” he says:

> Freud was aware of this dilemma (…) It tells us where Freud stood on the importance of external validity over rigor. Freud believed that the possibility of a revolutionary insight could justify going way beyond the evidence.

4. The “Control” Literature: Helplessness is Only A Tiny Piece

Among the research on control and personal power:

- **Locus of control** (Julian Rotter): Julian Rotter, a social psychologist, developed the concept of “locus of control,” with some people being “externals,” believing that the environment or other people shape their lives, and others being “internals,” believing that they themselves shape their own lives
- **Self efficacy** (Albert Bandura): An “efficacy expectation” is the belief that you, yourself, can bring about the outcomes you desire, whereas an “outcome expectation” is the belief that the outcome you desire will simply happen.
- **Appraisal theory** (Richard Lazarus): When an event occurs, the organism first assesses the consequences of the event (primary appraisal), then asks if it has the ability to cope with the event and its consequences. This is “secondary appraisal.”

Says Seligman:

> So learned helplessness, finding the downside of not having control, was really just one step in a vigorous march emphasizing the benefits of the presence of control. While we self-centeredly thought of our own work as huge, Steve and I were in fact just part of two intertwined developments making their way into mainstream psychology: the new acceptance of cognition and the new dimension of control. (…) By the turn of the millennium, both control and cognition were firmly entrenched in mainstream psychology.

5. Tips for Writing Good Papers

Says Seligman:

> Most readers are busy. I sure am. Many readers just scan. I know I do. Help the scanners by using short sentences and plain words. The big word and the long sentence must increase accuracy a lot to make up for impeded reading. And don’t overwrite. Omit extra words and information that the reader already knows. Overwriting slows the reader way down and does not increase accuracy much at all.

However, also notices Seligman, a more complicated style can be “reader unfriendly”, but “reviewer friendly”, and help have your paper published.

6. American Psychology Association (APA) Power Dynamics

Says Seligman:

> For the last fifty years, APA has had three overlapping constituencies. The original and most venerable comprised the scientists. In the 1970s, the independent therapists overtook the scientists in numbers, and governance fell to them in the coup d’état staged by the self-named “dirty dozen.” My presidency in 1998 marked a brief respite and some sharing of power between the practitioners and the scientists.

> But there has always been a third, less conspicuous constituency: the social activists.

Seligman says that the social activists attacked him and APA of collusion with the Bush administration to orchestrate a coup d'etat and move APA on the far-left.
Seligman's own accusation of contributing to the CIA torture program was also part of the anti-war and social activist machinations.

The investigation that followed, from Seligman's point of view, was biased towards the social activist, and was used to launch their power takeover of APA.

I am not sure about this, but I can say that Seligman did come across as very pro-US militarism from the way he writes.

He says for example that: "when in doubt, we should err on the side of helping our nation".
I think that when in doubt you should look for more information, and probably refrain from taking action.

7. Faculties Power Dynamics: Cornell Example

Says Seligman:

> Cornell contrasted sharply with Michigan. Its homey department had only about twenty-five faculty members, completely dominated by one faction, the perception psychologists led by husband and wife team Jimmy and Jackie (Eleanor J.) Gibson.
> Jimmy was the brains and Jackie the enforcer.
> The Gibsons were the opposite of behaviorists in ideology, but they were just as cultish, tyrannical, and narrow-minded.

8. Grants Power Dynamics: Blocking Funds

Seligman describes Bill Morse as an acolyte of B. F. Skinner.

As he was pitching his research that went against everything in Skinner doctrine of behaviorism, Morse scowled at Seligman.

Then, when the jury had to decide whether or not to grant Seligman a research purse, he says:

> When the group reassembled in Washington, I later learned, the four psychiatrists all gave my application a "1.0," the highest NIMH score, equivalent to an A+. Morse asked the group, "What mark do I have to give Seligman to prevent him from getting any money?" They told him a "5.0," the almost never-used equivalent of an F.

Then, Seligman uses the opportunity to take a little revenge:

> He did, and I now take this opportunity to thank Bill Morse for unintentionally doing me one of the great favors of my life.

9. Funding Power Dynamics: Power Aligning

Seligman says that the DSM definition for "depression" had changed not because it made sense, but to turn into a psychiatric disorder.

The psychiatry guild that ran NIMH wanted the change to capture the funding, and they managed to do so.

> My renewal was about identifying depressive attributional style, which, I argued, amplified helplessness: if one interprets failure through the lens of personal (it's me), permanent (it's going to last forever), and pervasiveness (it's going to ruin everything), depression results. The NIMH branch chief for depression fired a warning shot across my bow.
> "Your proposal is about the symptoms of depression. What does that have to do with depressive disorder, Marty?" Bob Hirschfeld, a future chair of psychiatry in Galveston, Texas, asked me on the telephone. He was trying to help me stave off a rejection.
> (…) "Why don't you rewrite the proposal to be about the disorder, and by the way perhaps you might enlist and pay some collaborators from your psychiatry department."

Seligman was forced to rephrase his grant to make it sound like it was psychiatric research and, once he did, his grant was funded.

10. Academia VS Self-Help Power Dynamics

After "Learned Optimism", Seligman was branded a "self-help author".

And self-help is usually scoffed at in academia.
Seligman says that books like Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People" and Peale's "The Power of Positive Thinking" were scorned in academia.

This was Seligman's experience after he became to be known in the general public:

> This was a surprise and caused some rethinking. The professors in the humanities led the applause. For them, I discovered, a book, particularly one that emanated from a major New York publisher and then got reviewed in the Times, was the acme of success. In the sciences, a lead article in a specialized journal was the acme of success. My reappraisal was confirmed when no psychologist at Penn said a word to me—not then, not ever—even though the department broke out champagne when my colleague Henry Gleitman published his introductory textbook.

Again though, it transpires how much Martin Seligman craves people's praise.

Seligman goes on to say that, contrary to most other self-help texts, his self-help was grounded in science and research.
And he says that "Learned Optimism" was the first scientific self-help.

11. Medicine Against Psychologists: Power Dynamics

Seligman cites several studies and pieces of evidence supporting the idea that psychological states such as optimism, or depression affect our physical healthy.

But the simple notion that mental state affects physical states faces lots of headwinds.

He says:

> Our journal rejection rate from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation project at the prestigious medical outlets has been close to 80 percent, and I see a double standard in action. Studies that show positive psychological protective factors get rejected out of hand, but those that deny positive protection get accepted and publicized.

And later on:

> Psychologists are unwelcome interlopers in the world of medical science. Medicine is dominated by the belief

> that psychological factors do not cause medical outcomes or only do so by way of biological processes—even if the psychological factors are known and measured and the biological factors are completely unknown.

12. Evolutionary Psychology Reframes Everything

> Natural selection reframes almost everything, and it has pervaded my thinking about psychology since.

And:

> Most importantly, I joined the battle against the "blank slate" brand of psychology that ignores natural selection and insists that while having a brain is nice, that brain is just a means of faithfully transcribing what experience writes.

That battle has by now probably been won, and it's well encapsulated in Steven Pinker's book "The Blank Slate".

Also read:

- **The best evolutionary psychology books**

13. Heuristics For Psychologists

Negative heuristics are:

- If the theory contains "self-[esteem, efficacy, worth, compassion]," hold on to your wallet.
- If you need fancy statistics to see a result, think twice.
- If an article ends with "more research is needed," be skeptical.
- If "qualitative study" or "focus group" appears, stop reading.

Positive heuristics are:

- A good theory makes surprising counterintuitive predictions (e.g., treating depression as prospection gone awry will work better than correcting false beliefs about the past and the present).
- Begin with an anecdote that distills the idea (e.g., "Sauce béarnaise used to be my favorite sauce") and only then challenge the reader with the details of experiments and theory.
- Drill down to the most basic assumption and ask, if it were false, what would follow (e.g., What if early-childhood trauma has only minor effects on adult personality? Then adolescence might be the crucial time that wreaks the tectonic changes in who we will become, and intervening then will do more good than early-childhood interventions).
- A good piece of science tells the reader that something she thought was false is true, or something she thought was true is false. You will read about a whopper that stands learned helplessness on its head in the next chapter.

14. How to Have Your Articles Published: The Sense of Audience

To get your articles published, try first to get feedback from the people who are well-known names in the field.

Says Seligman:

> Writing about creativity offers an example of the importance of audience. Creativity is an overworked topic, and almost everything has been said about it. For an article about creativity to see the light of day, it is a good idea to first send a draft to Dean Simonton, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Teresa Amabile, and Howard Gardner and patiently wait for their comments.

Then, cite those people:

> Their work needs to be cited (favorably if possible) and their papers read carefully.

As a general rule, you want to send the draft out to the gatekeepers:

> Dick Solomon had a much better grasp of this principle than I. He always sent his drafts out to the gatekeepers first, and blessed with Harold Schlosberg on one shoulder and Walter Hunter on the other, commenting on each sentence, Dick had a great sense of audience.

Stay within the widely accepted beliefs and dogmas of your field:

> Ideas that are a half step ahead of the audience are good "normal" science, and the journals are filled with these. While usually boring to read, they provide the cumulative bricks.
> Papers that are two steps ahead of the gatekeepers are rejected as outlandish.
> If you wish to succeed in normal science, stay just one step ahead, but do venture an occasional one-and-one-half-step paper to keep your sense of self-respect.

And I think this is exactly why we ended up with a replication crisis. People were just publishing articles just to get them published, not to do actual research.

> Replication Crisis: A Defense of Psychology

15. Seligman Against Affirmative Action, & Racial Politics

Says Seligman:

> We were instructed to take 40 percent of all black applicants with an SAT average of 400 or better. This was the bottom 25 percent of the entire American pool. (Do you see the problem before you read on?)

Seligman says that was the beginning of the racial politics that were soon to come.

And later on:

> What did the black students want? Their demands were nebulous—more black faculty members, more black students, more black scholarships—but one "nonnegotiable" demand stood out: amnesty.

The students won out, to Seligman's chagrin:

> The faculty declined and voted to give the black students whatever they wanted, and most certainly, amnesty. A minority of the faculty, including me, was scandalized. Relinquishing the freedom to teach what one believes, giving in to violence, allocating scarce resources to the loudest group for academically dubious projects like the Ujamaa Residential College—this was not what a university was about.

Seligman also discusses the impact of the famous paper "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" (Jensen, 1969).

The paper discusses the heritability of IQ, as well as the IQ difference between American blacks and whites, which the paper said might be genetic.

He was afraid of discussing anything similar at Cornell, and so he decided to leave.

16. The Positive Psychology Tent

As president of APA, Seligman sought to promote positive psychology, and he wanted to so helping and supporting others with their own agenda:

- Mike Csikszentmihalyi's on flow
- Chris Peterson's and Neal Mayerson's on virtue
- Ed Diener's on subjective well-being
- George Vaillant's on successful aging
- Kathleen Hall Jamieson's on positive civic institution
- Barb Fredrickson's on positive emotion
- Jon Haidt's on awe
- Sonja Lyubomirsky's on interventions
- Laura King's on meaning.

And, finally:

- Angela Duckworth, on Grit

Seligman's own prior agenda, prevention of mental illness, was only a wee part, of positive psychology.

17. Psychotherapy works with depression, but it doesn't get funded

Seligman says that simply writing down for a week 3 things that went well and why they went well was as effective in curing depression as drugs were.

But they couldn't keep the website up and do more research because they couldn't get the funding.
Says Seligman:

> Given these very encouraging data, we applied for a grant from NIMH. It was turned down administratively without even the bother of any reviews. Annoyed, I saw NIMH more and more in the service only of neuroscience and Big Pharma.

The second issue is copyright law.
You could change a few words on a text and a competitor could copy your product, slap it a new name, and market it.
Instead, you could more easily patent a new drug.

18. Seligman's Defense: He Didn't Support Guantanamo Torture

Seligman says:

> I had made it a practice to try never to get defensive when my science was criticized, since science advances by criticism.
> But this criticism was not about my science; it was personal and moral, as well as untrue, and so this will be the only chapter that will feel defensive to my readers.

It wasn't the only chapter that felt defensive to me, to be honest.

And what follows is Seligman denying his support of CIA in devising torture methods.

I believed him, albeit a few questions linger. Like a second meeting of which he had no memory whatsoever of ever happening? He is *certain* he didn't talk about detainees and interrogation of detainees, but if he can't remember the meeting, how can he say he is certain?

More Wisdom

- **You learn control, not helplessness**: you don't learn helplessness, which is the default state. Instead, you learn that you can control events
- **Skinner was a tyrant?** Says Selignam: "Two rival tyrants then reigned over Harvard: B. F. (Fred) Skinner, the star of 1950s behaviorism, and S. S (Smitty) Stevens, the world's leading mathematical psychophysiologist"
- **Trade book is between a scholarly monograph, and a mass market book**: "The Social Animal" is the only trade book in psychology
- **CEOs lack fairness, honesty, and modesty**: also read "corporate Machiavellianism"

And:

- **To get the best recruit, engage their vision, not your vision:**

This is how Dick recruited Seligman to work for him:

> Unlike Neal Miller, Dick did not talk about himself or his own research program, but he did try to elicit my vision, if any. He did this in a nondirective, bubbly way, chatting about the issues that puzzled him in his laboratory, hoping I would "free associate" creatively from his puzzlement.

- **Persuasion by mocking**

Seligman was offered an assistant professorship at Harvard, to which his chairman quipped: "every jewish boy wants to be at Harvard".

Says Seligman:

> He hit the target and shamed me, and so I turned Harvard down.

Life-Strategy Tip: Hire Your Worst Critics

Teasdale had just delivered a scathing criticism of Seligman's "learned helplessness" research.
And this is how Seligman reacted:

I was flabbergasted. Teasdale had crystallized, more articulately than I had been able to, my central doubts about my theory.

> "Dr. Teasdale is right, I think," I replied. "These objections are substantive and indeed I do not know attribution theory. So I invite Dr. Teasdale to collaborate with me to dispose of the helplessness theory altogether if necessary, or better to refine it so that it might better fit depression."
>
> Teasdale, expecting some clever defense, startled visibly, then said, "I accept." And so John and I began a three-year collaboration.

Teasdale proved to be a great boon to refine and improve the helplessness theory with attribution theory.
Such as, people who attributed their succcess to themselves, and the failures to external causes, remained more optimistic and kept trying harder.

Life Strategies: Not Being Wrong VS Not Being Boring

Please read here:

- **Not Being Wrong VS Breaking New Ground**

This is very relevant for psychology students as well as for life strategies in general.

QUOTES

On fake activism VS real activism:

> Dave was the saintly roommate, the one who went down to Mississippi and got beaten up in 1964. The rest of us just talked the talk.

On the future of humanity, getting rid of all the ills of our past:

> We will go out into the world and plant gardens and orchards to the horizons, we will build roads through the mountains and across the deserts, and terrace the mountains and irrigate the deserts until there will be garden everywhere, and plenty for all, and there will be no more empires or kingdoms, no more caliphs, sultans, emirs, khans, or zamindars, no more kings or queens or princes, no more quadis or mullahs or ulema, no more slavery and no more usury, no more property and no more taxes, no more rich and no more poor, no killing or maiming or torture or execution, no more jailers and no more prisoners, no more generals, soldiers, armies or navies, no more patriarchy, no more caste, no more hunger, no more suffering than what life brings us for being born and having to die, and then we will see for the first time what kind of creatures we really are.

CONS

- **A bit of a self-absorbed tone**

Says one reviewer on Amazon:

> It reads like the memoir of a celebrity, enthralled by his own magnificence

And a different one:

> I also noticed a lot of ME, ME, ME, ME the great contacts he has, and how bright he is. Please, Seligman needs to have a bumper sticker that says " Say no to arrogance"

And a third one:

> The author is likely brilliant as he will spare no amount of text to tell you. After I realized what I had gotten, I just started skimming through the book and nearly every paragraph has an I, me, my, or the rare we in it

I think there is plenty of value in "The Hope Circuit", but I can see how some people felt that way.

- **A touch of narcissism?**

Some may think there are signs of a narcissistic personality.

Seligman talks a lot about "achieving immortality", and which scientist is going to achieve it or not.

He then says as he reflects on his life:

> I am more conscious of the awards and honors that I have not gotten than of those I have.

And he says, more than once:

> my ambition was to be like Wittgenstein, surrounded by devoted students and followers.

Over-patriotism / Jingoism

Seligman says he is a “patriotic American, eager to help his country in a time of great need”.

And later on:

> We cannot know what the future holds, but, unfashionable as it is, I strongly believe that when in doubt, we should err on the side of helping our nation.

Strongly believe?
I can see why the social activists didn’t like Seligman.
I believe that when in doubt you should seek more information, not lend your support to a random faction.

Yet later again:

> I want to encourage scientists and mental health practitioners to come to the aid of our government, and I urge them not to let this tactic deter them.

Why should he encourage scientists to aid the government?
People can freely choose what they wanna do without Seligman having to “encourage” anyone. Least of all, encouraging to help the government, independently of the government’s decisions.

The beautiful words of the books’ ending on “no more kingdoms and empires” stand in contrast to Seligman’s parochialism.

Some nasty-sounding revenge-seeking

I felt there was quite a lot of revenge-seeking in “The Hope Circuit”:

- **Dick Solomon was not a gentleman**

For example:

> I was surprised by the reaction from our learning theory colleagues—there was none. Dick Solomon, perfect gentleman that he was, never said a word to me about this paper.

- **Barbara Ehrenreich is an idiot (?)**

> Ehrenreich is confused about reality itself (…) To attribute the meltdown to optimism is pure Ehrenreich fantasy.

- **Most critics of positive psychology are idiots**

There is a whole chapter to list and refute criticisms against positive psychology.
Some of it felt a little bit too vitriolic for comfort.

And some of it, didn’t even deserve space.

He says:

> I CANNOT BRING myself to list all the accusations that the trolls of the internet have clubbed me with. Here's one sample (…)

But one example says nothing.
Because one guy was a crook, does that mean every criticism is a troll?
And if they were, Seligman didn't even need to mention them.

- **Suzanne Miller was a homewrecker**

And about the "femme fatale" Suzanne Miller:

> She made no bones about her availability. I was poleaxed. Even with two young children to raise

And next, on her looking for better mates:

> The way other men looked at her—and, more, the way she looked back—troubled me. I worried that she was still in the romance market and wanted to trade up.

And in finally trading up:

> I probably should have taken more notice of her other flirtations, since unbeknownst to me she had already successfully traded up (…).
> Within the year, Walter left his wife, Harriet, for Suzanne

An interesting example of unashamed hypergamy, but it seemed a beat mean of framing her as an unrepentant homewrecker.

Overall, this is all great to understand interpersonal power dynamics, but some people might find it annoying.

Review

"The Circuit of Hope" is a great book mixing positive psychology wisdom, with the lessons learned from an autobiography.

It also shows that aspiring academics better learn some office politics. And some Machiavellianism won't hurt either

Check the:

- **Best books to learn psychology**

How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

"*How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything – Yes, Anything!*" is a psychology book teaching readers how to apply the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT).

TPM Strategic Note: Foundational pillar of mental empowerment
We include Albert Ellis' work as a foundational pillar of mental empowerment. His REBT framework provides an effective, research-backed system for emotional control and cognitive resilience—core traits for ambitious and high-value men.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- REBT Overview
  - CBT VS REBT
  - The three basic "Rational Coping Philosophies"
  - REBT Exercise #1.: Distinguish between healthy concerns, and unhealthy anxiety
  - How to stop overly negative emotions: in desires & preferences, out musts & shoulds
  - Stop your emotional anguish by dropping the "should have" about the past
  - Use scientific thinking to dismantle your irrational beliefs
  - Achieving, without fearing failure: dropping "must" while still working hard
  - How to control your feelings with ABC
  - REBT instead of psychoanalysis to address childhood events
- Real-Life Applications
- More Wisdom
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- Review

Key Takeaways

- We all naturally tend to think in ways that make us unhappier -and more anxious and neurotic-
- Luckily, we can change that and train ourselves to think in ways that help us to be both more effective, and happier
- REBT is a set of techniques to improve the way we think, and the way we feel. It consists in disputing "awfulizing" thoughts, and replacing them with more upbeat, as well as more realistic thinking

REBT Overview

About the Author:
Albert Ellis (September 27, 1913 – July 24, 2007) was an American psychologist who developed Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). He is also generally considered one of the originators and early proponents of cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT) and, in hindsight, a forerunner for positive psychology.

CBT VS REBT

Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) is the first form of Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), with CBT being so popular that it can be considered an umbrella term for many similar cognitive-behavioral therapies.

Psychologist Martin Seligman frames CBT as part of a revolution in psychology that moved away from Freudian psychoanalysis and a focus on "combating illnesses" towards a focus on the pleasure of life and optimal performance.

REBT and CBT have much in common, including the stoic philosophy that *we* create our own feelings, and not the external events.
But, says Ellis:

> Unlike most other Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBTs) it highlights three basic philosophies (…) especially Feeling Better, Getting Better, Staying Better, Overcoming Destructive Beliefs, Feelings, and Behaviors; Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy—It Works for Me, It Can Work for You; and The Road to Tolerance: The Philosophy of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy.

And:

> These philosophies follow from being aware of your dysfunctional and Irrational Beliefs, cognitively-emotionally-behaviorally Disputing them, and arriving at Effective New Philosophies or Rational Coping Philosophies.

When it comes to the differences between CBT and REBT, I also found useful what psychologist Michael R Edelstein says on Psychology Today (I paraphrase):

- **REBT goes deeper into the sources of your discomfort, while CBT encourages you to simply skip the rumination**

Imagine you're afraid of asking a woman out for a date and think about her possible reactions. CBT would call your inferences "mind-reading" and advise you to drop them.

REBT instead helps you address the deep-rooted reasons that make you anxious and leads you to mind-reading, which include:

1. "Because I strongly *prefer* to, I *absolutely must* succeed, or else I'm *no good*,"
2. "Because I *desire* it, others *absolutely must* treat me well or else they're *no good*,"
3. "Because I passionately *wish* it, life *absolutely must* go well or else it's *no good*."

Once you start addressing those natural, yet self-harming thoughts, you will naturally improve your thinking, your mood, as well as your personal efficacy in life, since you don't get stuck into negative patterns anymore.

- **REBT addresses "secondary disturbances (SD)", CBT doesn't**

Secondary disturbances are disturbances about the disturbance itself.

In simple terms, if you are anxious about asking that girl on that date, and you worry about your anxiety, that's a "secondary disturbance", and it's a very common cause of anxiety, grief, and depression.

- **REBT promotes unconditional self-acceptance (USA), CBT promotes "high self-esteem"**

While some forms of CBT seek to promote self-esteem based on results or positive self-rating, REBT promotes self-acceptance no matter your results.

If you fail to get that date for example, you could rate your performance as poor, but you would never generalize

that instance to your whole self. You continue to accept yourself as an imperfect, but a valuable human being no matter what happens.

I might add, that REBT is more "antifragile" here.

- **REBT views all forms of anger as inappropriate, CBT accepts or welcome some forms of anger**

Both CBT and REBT teach assertiveness, but while CBT views some expressions of anger as healthy, REBT addresses the underlying causes of anger because it does not see it as a legit or helpful emotion.

REBT, for example, says that if you get angry because that woman denied you a date, it's probably because there is a "must" or a "should" in your thinking pattern.
You *had* to perform well, or she *had* to go out with you. When you address those "musts", then anger disappears or dissipates.

I personally see some expressions of anger as legit. And sometimes, hopefully rarely, you need some aggression to be an effective human being.

But I also agree with REBT, and its approach helps you to be more analytically effective and in control of yourself, and of your life (Ray Dalio would call it "looking at yourself from the above, as if you were a machine, and Jocko Willink and John would call it "detaching")

- **REBT Differentiates between positive and negative feelings, CBT doesn't**

Says Ellis:

> Most other therapies—such as the behavior therapy of Joseph Wolpe and the cognitive therapies of Richard Lazarus, Aaron Beck, and Donald Meichenbaum—emphasize strong feelings, like severe sadness and irritation, and put them into the same category as feelings of depression and anger.
> Not so REBT! REBT considers your strong feelings of sadness, irritation, and concern to be healthy, because they help you to express your displeasure at undesirable happenings and to work at modifying them.

REBT instead shows you to be aware of those feelings, and categorize them as healthy or unhealthy, desirable or undesirable, as well as assessing how helpful they are in relation to the goals you are trying to reach.

The three basic "Rational Coping Philosophies"

1. **Unconditional Self-Acceptance (USA) instead of Conditional Self-Esteem (CSE)**: You rate and evaluate your thoughts, feelings, and actions in relation to your main Goals of remaining alive and reasonably happy. When they help, you rate that as "good" or "effective," and when they sabotage you rate that as "bad" or "ineffective." But you always—yes, always—accept and respect yourself, whether or not you perform well and whether or not other people approve of you and your behaviors.
2. **Unconditional Other-Acceptance (UOA**). You rate what other people think, feel, and do as "good" or "bad." But you never rate *them* as totally bad or good. You accept and respect them—but not some of their traits and doings—just because, like you, they are alive and human. You have helpful compassion for all humans—and perhaps for all sentient creatures.
3. **Unconditional Life-Acceptance (ULA)**. You rate the conditions of your life and your community as "good" or "bad"—in accordance with your and your community's moral Goals. But you never rate life itself or conditions themselves as "good" or "bad"; you try to change the dislikable conditions you can change, have the serenity to accept those you cannot change, and have the wisdom to know the difference.

REBT Exercise #1.: Distinguish between healthy concerns, and unhealthy anxiety

Unhealthy anxieties contain one or more of the following:

- musts
- necessities
- awfulizings (or “catastrophizing”)
- I-can’t-stand-its
- self-downings
- overgeneralizations

For example:

> If I get fined for 10.000 Euros (as I must not), I could never get financially whole again (and that would show what a wholly incompetent person I am!)

Or:

> It’s absolutely necessary that I not lose my sight, for if I did, my life would be awful and horrible, and I could never enjoy anything again!

In these sentences and thoughts, which are normal for most people, there are embedded the predictions of unconditional and complete pain, and they leave you no way out of continual suffering.

Add a “but” for healthy concerns

For example:

> I certainly wouldn’t like to being fined for 10.000 Euros, but if it does occur, I can handle it and I can build my savings back up again

And even more serious issues, without having to sugarcoat anything to yourself:

> If I lost my sight, that would be exceptionally handicapping, but I could still have a good many enjoyments.

The “but” serves you to:

1. Prevent the all-too-common catastrophizing
2. Help you consider, as well as focus, on what you can do about it, and that you can still have the option for good life

How to stop overly negative emotions: in desires & preferences, out musts & shoulds

Ellis invites the reader to imagine something dreadful or painful.

For example, a boss yelling at you.

Do you only feel sorry, sad, or regretful?
Or do you also feel angry and depressed?

Sorry or sad are OK feelings, but anger and depression are overreactions, and they are avoidable.

In that case, look in your thoughts -or hidden in the way you think- for:

- Shoulds
- Oughts
- Musts

For example:

> My boss *must not* criticize me like that! I can't bear that kind of continual criticism!

But it's not written anywhere that your boss is forbidden to yell or criticize. Or, at least, you can't fully prevent that because that's not up to you.

What you can prevent, and control, are your exaggerated feelings *as a reaction* of what someone else does.

And to avoid over-reacting, drop your "musts" and replace them with preferences and desires.

Many people have preferences, but then most people move from preferences to commands. They want something, so then they say they *must* get it.
And that's where neurosis, anxieties, as well as unnecessary self-beatings start.

There is a big difference in the intensity of your negative feelings when something bad happens that is beyond your *preferences* and *desires*, or your *musts, shoulds,* and *necessities*.

Drop the "must" to succeed

Similarly, what often causes anxiety is the "need" and "musts" for success.

For example:

- "Since these people are important, I must impress them"
- "Because I want to do well at work, I have to!"
- "Since I like him very much, I've got to win his approval !"
- "Passing this test is very important for my career. Therefore, I have to pass it!"
- "Because this is a high-paying job, it is necessary that I please the interviewer."

The 3 basics "musts" are:

1. "I must perform well and/or win the approval of important people or else I am an inadequate person!"
2. "You must treat me fairly and considerately and not unduly frustrate me or else you are a rotten individual."
3. "My life conditions must give me the things I want and have to have to keep me from harm or else life is unbearable and I can't be happy at all!"

Dropping the "musts" is a must -sorry the pun :)- because your "awfulizings" stem from these musts.
Says Ellis:

> Your awfulizing and terribleizing basically stems from your command, your necessity, that this very bad loss must not occur.

Stop your emotional anguish by dropping the "should have" about the past

This was really impactful for me as I fell for the "musts" and "shoulds" in the past.

For example:

- “Because I wanted the job, I should have prepared for the interview. But since I didn’t prepare as well as I must, I’m an idiot who doesn’t deserve a good job like this!”
- “I could have practiced more to win this chess match but didn’t practice as much as I should have, and that proves that I’m a lazy slob who will never be very good at chess or anything else!”
- “I could have gone to the beach on Saturday, but foolishly waited until Sunday—when it rained. The weather should have continued to be good on Sunday. How horrible it was that it rained. I can’t stand rain when I want to go to the beach!”

I also had a recent example and case study for this.

I was blaming myself over a heartbreak and for not having well protected my lover.
I’d say to myself:

> I should have known that eventually leaving Seoul was going to be a heartbreak for me, and even more for her.
> I should have warned with more advanced, and I should have taken more steps to make sure she was going to be fine and happy.
> That makes me to blame for her pain, and might make me a value-taker in her life.

In a way, it’s a great thing that I was taking responsibility not just for myself, but as well, and even more so, for her feelings as well.
That’s how a value-adding, “enlightened leader” thinks and acts. However, I was getting stuck in those loops for too long, and that brought unneeded misery, as well ad making me think and strategize less effectively on the best courses of action.

With REBT, things improved:

> Yes, I knew I was going to leave, but she knew as well.
> Yes, warning her repeatedly might have lessened her emotional pain upon departure. But then again, it might have also ruined our summer romance for reminding ourselves of the Damocles sword hanging over our head (rational disputing).
> Yes, it was very painful for her, but she also enjoyed a great summer love, got over her last LTR break-up pain, and I enriched her in many ways with power dynamics principles and self-empowering mindsets that left her a far better woman.
> And now, when the emotional pain will be over, we will still have a lifelong beautiful memory to look up, and a lifelong beautiful connection

Big change.
And also all based on truth.

Use scientific thinking to dismantle your irrational beliefs

How can the scientific method help you lead a happier life?

By using it to rip apart your nonsense generalizations, black-and-white thinking, and awfulizings.

Says Ellis:

> (the rational method can help) By taking your emotional upsets, and the irrational Beliefs (iBs) that you mainly use to create them, and by using the scientific method to rip them up. By scientifically thinking, feeling, and acting against them.

Some examples Ellis provides:

- **Bad "must" thinking and awfulizing:**

> "I have to be approved by people whom I find important, and it's awful if I am not!"

- **Scientific analysis:**

> Is this belief realistic and factual? Clearly not, because there is no law of the universe that says that I have to be approved of by people whom I find important, and there is a law of probability that says that many of the people I would prefer to approve of me definitely will not.
> It's not awful or catastrophic when I am not approved of, only uncomfortable. Bad things may happen to me when I am not approved of. But when something is "awful" it is (a) exceptionally bad, (b) totally bad, or (c) as bad as it could be. Being disapproved of by important people may not even be exceptionally but only moderately bad. It is certainly not totally bad—and it could always be worse. So this belief doesn't by any means conform to reality.

And:

> Is this belief flexible? Definitely not, because it holds that under all conditions and at all times people whom I find important absolutely have to approve of me.

And:

> Can this belief be falsified?
> Yes, because important people can disapprove of me and I can still find life desirable.

And:

> Does this belief prove deservingness? No, I cannot prove that even if I act nicely to important people that there is a rule of the universe that they ought to and have to approve of me. Deservingness is another falsifiable belief.

And finally:

> Does this belief show that I will act well and get good, happy results by holding it?
> On the contrary. No matter how hard I try to get people to approve of me, I can easily fail—and if I then think that they have to like me, I will most probably feel depressed. By holding the idea that at all times under all conditions people whom I find important must approve of me, I will almost certainly fail to work effectively at getting their approval and also hate them, hate myself, and hate the world when they do not do what they supposedly must.

If you are still struggling with the concept and process, Ellis provides several more examples in the book.

Achieving, without fearing failure: dropping "must" while still working hard

I think this is the crucial sweet spot that we all drive people must find:

How to keep pushing ourselves, while also enjoying life.

It's easy when you're driven to place high demands on yourself, and to be too harsh on yourself and your results.
But if you don't push yourself, then you're not going to achieve much.
And I think that REMBT offers a good alternative and solution for this dilemma.

I paraphrase Ellis:

How do you achieve without self-hating?
By not giving up your preference for achieving your goals, but eliminating your demands and musts.

As long as you tell yourself that "you would really like to achieve X, but you don't have to,' you'll retain your task-perfectionism but not your self-perfectionism."

I think this is so important that we need to stress it further:

Seek task-perfectionism, but not *self*-perfectionism.

No matter how bad your task turns out to be, you still accept yourself. And the converse is true: no matter how good your task turn out to be, you still don't think you're "the best", because otherwise at the next failure, you'll be a failure again.
This is the basis of "antifragile ego".

In my opinion, it might also be possible to feel great about your successes, without taking then feeling too bad about your failures. That's the next level though.

How to control your feelings with ABC

I summarize from Ellis' previous book –look here for full overview (for alumni)-:

- **Activating events**: specific people, events, or succession of events that can push our buttons. They can even be positive events, sometimes, like weddings, job opportunities, etc.).
- **Beliefs/thoughts:** there are four main ways we think about our situations and events (here I list 5 because Ellis adds another one in another chapter). In red the bad ones, in green the ones you should use:
  1. Catastrophizing / awfulizing: you make things a bigger deal than they actually are.
  2. Shoulding (absolutist thinking): "I must", "I have to", "I should" (shoulding, musting, or demanding).
  3. Blaming people rather than their acts:
  4. Rationalizing: "Who cares!", "and so?" "it doesn't bother me".
  5. realistic preferences: "I want", "I'd like", "I'd prefer", and "It would be better if". They all have an overt or implied "but" in it. Such as, if the person or the situation doesn't turn the way you want, you'll still be OK with it.
- **Consequences**: represent two things:
  - Feelings
  - Behaviors in the specific situation occurring at Point A

To control your thinking with REBT, do the following:

- **Identity irrational beliefs:**
  - look for musts / absolute shoulds / oughts
  - awfulizing / catastrophizing
  - frustration and intolerance ("I can't stand it")
  - self-downing -"I'm worthless"- / others-downing -"he's worthless"- / or life-downing -"life's terrible"
- **Change irrational belief** by asking yourself:
  - is this belief helpful?
  - where is the evidence to support this belief? Ask yourself "why I must accomplish X", and then answer that "you don't have to"
  - is it logical?

  - use metaphorical disputation: metaphors, stories humor
- **Switch to more rational thinking**:
  - Flexible preferences: “I want to do great, but I don’t have to”
  - Anti-awfulizing: “it might be bad, but it’s not awful”
  - High-frustration tolerance: “and I can stand it”
  - Acceptance of self, others, and life: “I can accept myself no matter what happens” / “I accept myself as a fallible human being”

REBT instead of psychoanalysis to address childhood events

To some extent, you “invented” your past by interpreting it and framing it in a certain way.

And you are certainly keeping it alive today, and allowing it to make you feel bad when you still think that it influences you and harms you.

You do that in 3 ways, says Ellis:

1. By repeating the same irrational beliefs that upset you as a child. For example “I not only want mom’s approval, but I need, and I’m a basket case without it”
2. By holding on those same beliefs today
3. By refusing to rethink, reframe, and act your irrational beliefs

Says Ellis:

> In the past, you largely made your bed of neurosis and you are insisting on lying in it today!

Instead, you can use REBT to understand how you created your early neurosis early on, how you now perpetuate them and, most of all, you can learn how to overcome them.

If, therefore, you use REBT to understand your early life, you can focus on your part in creating it and on how you now perpetuate your childish thoughts, feelings, and behaviors

Shame and humiliation are illegitimate feelings

Says Ellis:

> REBT considers feelings of shame or humiliation illegitimate because they almost always include a rational element (“I did something people consider wrong or stupid, and I would not like people to disapprove of me for doing it”) and they also include an irrational or self-downing statement (“Therefore, I am a rotten or stupid person”).

Shame-attacking exercises:

Based on this idea, Ellis created his famous “shame attacking exercises”, which consists in beating shame by doing something that you’d consider very embarrassing, including:

- Dress inappropriately
- Say something foolish to a group of people
- Confess some weakness that people usually despise, such as, “I can’t spell well.”
- Act strangely, such as singing in the street or holding up a black umbrella on a sunny day
- Yell out the stops on a train or bus

I love Ellis and he has boatloads of wisdom, but I'm personally not too sure about this technique.
Also, I remember some research showing that it's more effective to conquer fears with baby steps, rather than going "all-out", all of a sudden.

Real-Life Applications

- **Constantly dispute your irrational beliefs**

To make REBT work and improve your life, you must *constantly* use it to correct your thought patterns.

And you must:

- **Belief in your disputes**

If you just repeat and think in REBT terms without truly believing them, it won't work.
You must dispute your belief in a way that you can actually believe it and agree with it. Then it will work.

- **Drop "grandiose thinking"**:

> The usual kinds of emotional disturbances or neuroses (such as most feelings of anxiety and rage) largely come from grandiose thinking. Even when you have great feelings of inadequacy? Yes, your inferiority feelings are, ironically, the result of your godlike demands.

Better yet, channel your grandiosity well. See here:

> Antifragile Grandiosity: How 'Humble Grandiosity' Makes You Powerful

- **Watch out for feeling too good about your results: it's a trap**

This is something I've stressed a few times on ThePowerMoves, as well as on this website's self-help book "Ultimate Power", and Ellis describes the same concept very eloquently:

> If you do feel like a noble, superhuman, holier-than-thou person, you are then, according to REBT, experiencing an unhealthy positive feeling. For you are then in a grandiose, egotistical state and have raised yourself above other human beings. You have jumped from the idea that "My behavior is outstanding" to "I am therefore an outstanding, great person!"

More Wisdom

- **Conventional insight and psychoanalysis rarely help**

Say Ellis:

> Conventional insight will help you very little. For it says that your knowledge of exactly how you got disturbed will make you less neurotic. Drivel! It will often help make you become nuttier!

Ellis says that insights about your past might help, if you use it correctly. But that much psychoanalysis is unscientific and that does not necessarily help. In the end, it's still about you. How you reacted to your past events or parents, how you thought about them, and how you're still thinking about them.
Says Ellis:

> (…) For even if you did take your self-hating idea from your parents, we still had better ask: Why did you

> accept these ideas? What are you now doing to carry them on? How do we know that if your parents taught you to always accept yourself, you still wouldn't have concluded that you must make a million dollars to be worthwhile?

And more:

> If, for example, you truly think you have to win your father's love and that you can only do so by making a million dollars, how does that knowledge make you surrender your dire need for his approval? To change, you still would have to dispute that idea and to act against it. And psychoanalysis helps you do nothing like this—and encourages you (and your analyst) to keep looking for more brilliant "true" interpretations.

LOL, I love this guy.

Plus, often, it's either useless or wrong.

QUOTES

On acting VS being:

> "How, then, do I become an incompetent or bad person?"
> "You don't! When you do incompetent or evil acts, you become a person who acted badly—never a bad person."

This is the famous experiment of Ellis forcing himself to talk to random women:

> Although very fearful and uncomfortable, I forced myself to carry out this assignment—made myself open a conversation with over one hundred women in a single month.
> (…)
> I received no direct reward from these pick-ups—since only one of these one hundred females made a date with me and she never showed up!—but I completely overcame my fear of encountering strange women and have been able to talk to them easily ever since. For by getting rejected so many times, I saw that nothing dreadful happened.

CONS

Maybe the only small -very small- con:

- **Could be more optimistic**

Maybe Ellis is sometimes not optimistic enough about life in general.
For example, he says:

> Life, as we say in REBT, is frequently spelled H-A-S-S-L-E. A good deal of it, with thought and effort, you can greatly improve. Not all! Not completely!

And:

> Tough. But not awful, not horrible, not terrible. Just tough.

Who says that it's tough?
I'm pretty sure that there are countless of people who don't think their life is one bit tough, but that's instead a walk

in the park -and a fun walk in the park-.
Why not being one of those people?

Review

“How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything, Yes, Anything” is a great book sharing foundational approaches for a man’s mental power and self-esteem.

We used several of its techniques in our own Confidence University.

The Logic of Political Survival: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Logic of Political Survival (2003) introduces and explains the selectorate theory of politics, providing a framework to analyze the power dynamics of politics, wealth distribution, leadership, and the true Machiavellian thinking that governs politics.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Overview

- It's not so much about good or bad leaders, it's about incentives and aligned -or misaligned- incentives
- The well-being of the population increases when the leader needs them -and their vote- to stay in power (usually happens in large-suffrages and democracies)
- Democracies with universal suffrages are generally the best system to ensure widespread well-being

Notes

About The Authors:
Bruce Bueno de Mesquita is a Professor of Politics at the New York University.
He is also the author of "The Dictator's Handbook", which is the popular and more marketing-friendly version of "The Logic of Political Survival".

Politics Is All About Staying in Power

Character plays a small role in de Mesquita's framework.

On the difference between rich and well-governed democracies and badly-run autocracies, he says:

> Good fortune, serendipity, or the "right" political culture may be the reason that some societies are ruled by civic-minded leaders and others by ogres.
> Surely some people are more civic-minded than others.
> Perhaps democracies have the good fortune of having a disproportionate share of the world's civic-minded leaders or of honest citizens. A pleasant thought but almost certainly false.

And then:

> The differences in the performance of political leaders can be explained without any appeal to civic-mindedness or national character or culture.

Instead, all leaders want is to remain in power.

Says Bruce Bueno de Mesquita:

> leaders are interested in enhancing their own welfare and so seek to produce what their supporters want.

> The phrase “their supporters,” however, is not shorthand for the citizens of the state. The behavior of leaders arises from their own self-interest in holding their positions. If that coincides with or is compatible with the welfare of the citizenry, many will benefit. If the welfare of a leader and the welfare of the society are at odds—and our theory and data will indicate that they often are—it is more likely to go well for the leader than for society.

This is the central thesis of the book.
And, as far as I am concerned, the authors proved that thesis -and, on top of the numbers, it also well aligns with people’s psychology and drives, so I take it for good-.

The Three Puzzles of Politics

De Mesquita opens the book with three “open puzzles” that conventional political science does not answer.

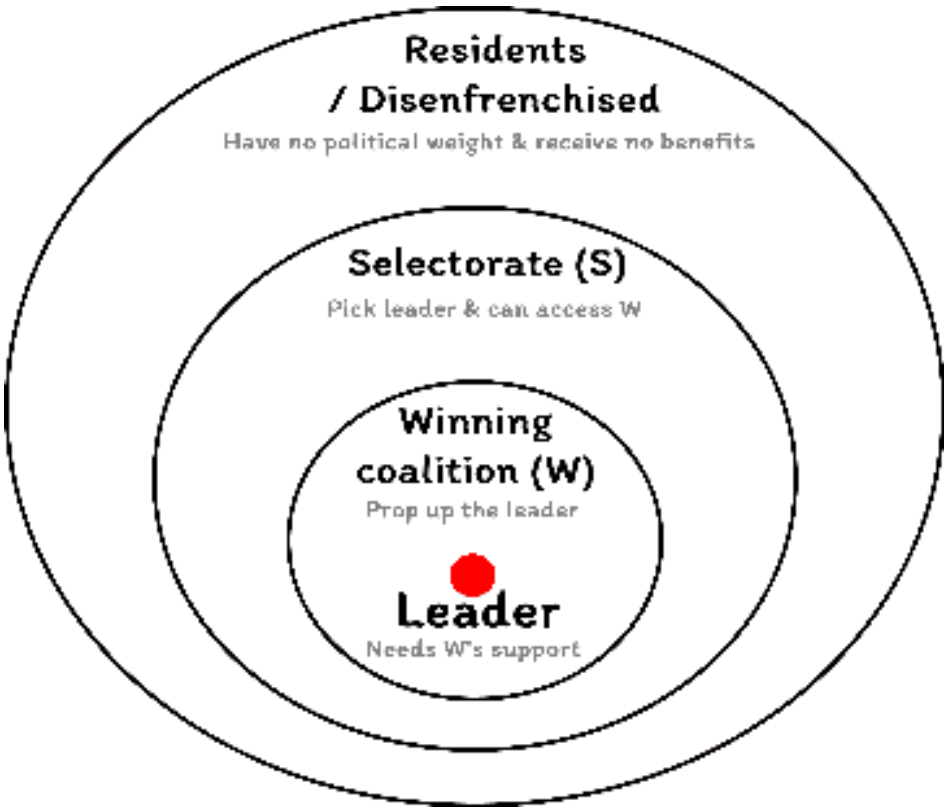
They are:

1. **Autocrats outliving democrats**: Why do autocrats last in office about twice as long as do democrats, even while delivering poorer governance and living conditions?
2. **Why universal suffrages and election in autocracies**: Why would any authoritarian state adopt universal adult suffrage as part of its political system? What value could leaders, elites, and ordinary citizens derive from rigged elections that everyone recognized as meaningless?
3. **How does democracy even emerge**: How does democracy emerge? Is there a path to it, and could there be a path back to autocracy or monarchy?

The Players of Political Power Dynamics

The groups are:

- **Disenfranchised**, or the people without citizenship and/or no voting rights have little say in political power dynamics (unless they join a revolution).
- **Selectorate**: the set of people with a say in choosing leaders -at least nominally- and with a prospect (very small in autocracies, up to 50% in democracies) of gaining access to the winning coalition (which can entail special privileges doled out by leaders).
  Politics appears to be evolving so that the selectorate, roughly the citizenry, gradually expands to take in more and more members, thereby reducing the size of the disenfranchised group.
- **Winning coalition**: the subgroup of the selectorate who maintains incumbents in office and in exchange receives special privileges. If enough members of the winning coalition defect to a rival politician, the incumbent loses office.
- **Leadership / incumbent**: The smallest set of individuals is the leadership, which makes decisions about gathering and allocating resources.
  The leadership can also be a small group of people, and not necessarily a single individual.
- **Challenger**: prospective substitute leaders. They want the power and leadership, and seek to persuade the winning coalition to switch to them. The inability of the challenger to guarantee that the prospective defectors will always be members of his winning coalition is a substantial advantage for the incumbent leader.



Selectorate Theory

The selectorate theory focuses mainly on two groups when we look at politics from the leaders' perspective: selectorate, and winning coalition.

Say the authors:

> We believe, however, that the infinite variety of real-world institutional arrangements can be distilled into just two critical dimensions: the selectorate and the winning coalition.

Selectorate is defined as:

> The set of people whose endowments include the qualities or characteristics institutionally required to choose the government's leadership and necessary for gaining access to private benefits doled out by the government's leadership.

And winning coalition is defined as:

> A subset of the selectorate of sufficient size such that the subset's support endows the leadership with political power over the remainder of the selectorate as well as over the disenfranchised members of the society.

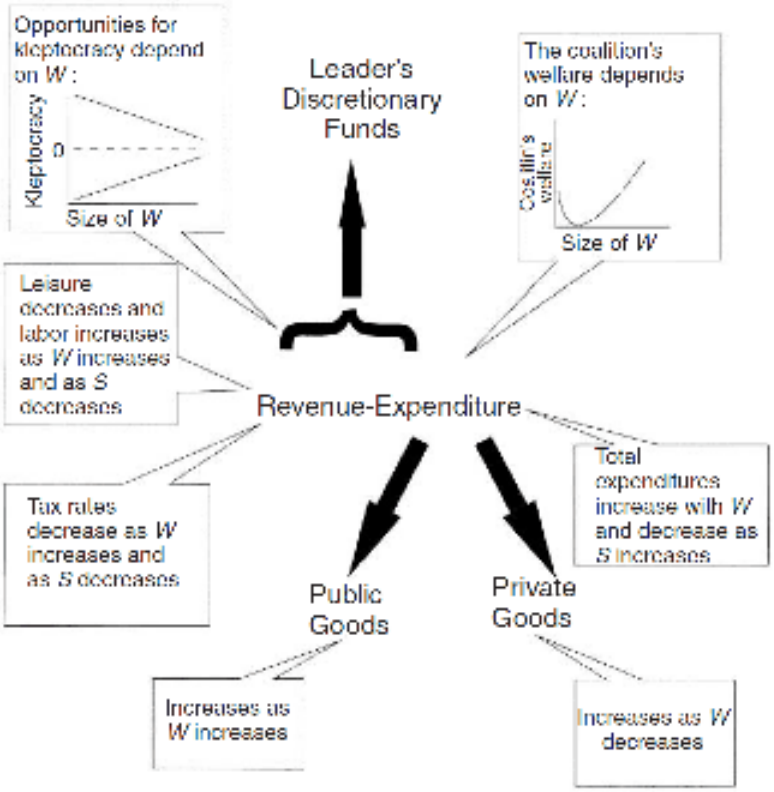
Affinity

> Affinity is the idea that there are bonds between leaders and followers that both can use to anticipate each other's future loyalty.

In the selectorate model, affinity is simply a preference for one individual over another.
It might be due to the nature of personal preferences, bloodlines, ethnic belonging, political affiliations, etc.

Affinities are important, however, in a model based on self-interest, affinities take a second stage to public and private goods in the decisions of leaders, challengers, or members of the selectorate.

My Note: affinities can take center stage in some cases
This is also another mostly true, yet not *always* true generalization. In some cases, like in revolutions driven by idelogies, affinities can take center stage -at least until when the revolution is accomplished, then it's back to normal business-.



Source: The Logic of Political Survival (The MIT Press)

Why Autocrats Survive Longer

In the beginning, being an autocracy is more dangerous.

But past a few years, autocrats last longer than democrats.

Why so?

Explain the authors (redacted for brevity):

> Leaders in small-coalition systems have a greater incumbency advantage than their large-coalition counterparts, especially if there is a large selectorate.
>
> Political survival for leaders in large-coalition systems depends on the provision of public goods, and he is readily deposed by a challenger offering better public policies.
>
> For leaders in small-coalition systems, survival depends on their ability to credibly promise access to future private goods.
> This ability grows as a leader's tenure increases. Therefore, while it is initially difficult for small-coalition leaders to survive, it becomes easier the longer they remain in office

Why Large Suffrages Bring Prosperity: All About Incentives

Remember that:

> Those who are neither the leader nor members of the winning coalition derive benefits only to the extent that the government provides public goods. They enjoy none of the private benefits that coalition members get.

Leaders make three related sets of decisions:

1. They choose a tax rate
2. They spend the revenue raised in a manner designed to help keep them in office (particularly by sustaining support among members of their winning coalition)
3. They provide various mixes of public (for everyone's consumption and well-being) and private goods (distributed only to members of the winning coalition)

Keep in mind that **leaders want to reward those who keep them in power and don't care nearly as much about anyone else**.
When the people who keep the leader in power (winning coalition) increase, the size of the private goods gets diluted. And once the size of the winning coalition reaches a critical mass, leaders are expected to shift their effort from the provision of private goods, to public goods that benefit all in society.

So **large suffrages by choosing and keeping the leader in power "force" leaders to take care of a large swath of the population**, decreasing private goods and corruption, and increasing general well-being.

Why Autocracies/Monarchies Becoming Democracies Are Stable

Democracies tend to be stable because the only incentive to go back to autocracy is on the leader's side.

For the leadership and winning coalition, it's a risk to abandon democracy (and a large winning coalition).
How can they be sure they will be welcome in the autocrat's winning coalition, and not booted out or killed?
Furthermore, they already have a good life in a democracy, since democracies tend to afford good standards of living, so the risks of helping a democratic leader become an autocrat are too big.

And of course, the electorate and the general population always prefer democracy to autocracy.

So once a critical mass is reached for winning coalition's size, the tendency for the winning coalition is to push to make that winning coalition larger, not smaller. And once a large coalition is established, it's difficult to ever go back.

Large Selectorates With Small Winning Coalitions Empower Leaders

Remember that:

Coalition members, those who get the most power and private benefits, are drawn from a larger pool of "eligibles" called the selectorate.

Coalition members always want to remain in the winning coalition because that means lots of power and private goods for them.

They can be tempted though to switch to a challenger to the leader if he offers more power or private goods.
But switching is always.
However, how big that risk is depends largely on the size of the selectorate.

Says de Mesquita:

> The larger the selectorate relative to the winning coalition, the smaller the chance that a given member of the

> current leader's coalition will be included in the challenger's new winning coalition and so continue to receive private benefits.

This explains the existence of rigged election: it increases the size of the selectorate, which makes the winning coalition more fearful of being booted out, and thus more submisssive, compliant, and *loyal* to the leader.

Says de Mesquita:

> In political systems characterized by small winning coalitions and large selectorates—as is common in many rigged-election autocracies—supporters of the leader are particularly loyal because the risk and cost of exclusion if the challenger comes to power are high.

Rigged elections are a leader's power move.

And the opposite is true:

> Conversely, in political systems characterized by large coalitions and large selectorates—as is common in many democracies—supporters of the leader have weak bonds of special privileges and so are more willing to defect.

And that's why democratic leaders don't last long.

The Incentives of War

Democratic states wage fewer wars.

Evidence suggests a few tendencies:

1. Tendency for democracies not to fight with one another
2. Tendency a tendency for democracies to fight with nondemocracies with considerable regularity
3. Tendency for democracies to emerge victorious from their wars
4. Tendency to use more peaceful conflict-management processes when democracies fight each other
5. Tendency for democracies to experience fewer battle deaths and fight shorter wars when they initiate conflict
6. Tendency for transitional democracies to be more likely than democracies to fight one another
7. Tendency for major-power democracies to be more constrained to avoid war than less powerful democracies.

Is it because democracies are naturally more "good" and virtuous?
Not really, says de Mesquita.

It's because democratic leaders who must be voted and elected face higher risk in war, so they tend to avoid them. They prefer a peace settlement, even if it's not ideal, rather than risking a war.

They do pick wars though against easy to beat opponents, since the risks are lower.
And democratic leaders pour far more resources in war efforts because they *have to* win in order to survive.

Autocrats instead can afford to lose a war and still remain in power. That's why they have more light-hearted approach towards war.

The Arabian Nights: When Leaders Depends on Few People, Oppression & Kleptocracy Are The Norm

I quote a whole passage as an example of real-life application of selectorate theory:

The vast Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties of the caliphate, which stretched from Spain through North Africa and

much of the Middle East, were the epitome of a small-W, large-S system.

Their political structure and operations appear to have been designed to redistribute wealth from the poor to the rich through taxation.

It was a system in which kleptocracy was an essential characteristic of rule.

Effectively, the selectorate in the caliphate dynasties were the Arab nomads, whose number varied from 100,000-200,000 at the time of Muhammad's initial conquest to several million in later dynasties.

To attain and keep office, the caliphs required support from two groups. The first group consisted of the leading provincial governors, senior administrators, and senior generals. Given the pool of at least several hundred thousand potential supporters, the caliphs rarely had problems filling such positions.
In addition to relying on these secular supporters, the caliphs depended on a religious group, the Ulema, for their legitimacy.

Unlike its contemporary Byzantine rival, the Islamic religious organization was decentralized, and while the caliphs needed approval by a proportion of the Ulema, they were free to pick supporters from within the Ulema.

Competition within the Ulema to join the coalition meant caliphs never had problems attaining the requisite religious endorsement.

In contrast, to be crowned Basileus in Constantinople required the support of the head of the Orthodox church. While both Byzantium and the caliphate were small-coalition systems, this difference in selectorate size—that is, between needing the support of the religious leader in one case, and needing the support of a religious leader in the other—profoundly altered the functioning of these polities.

The larger selectorate in the caliphate led both to a lower turnover of leaders and to a greater number of rebellions in the caliphate as compared to Byzantium (see Finer's comparison of the stability of the two systems on pp. 702-704).
The kleptocratic ability of the caliphate was truly staggering.
Finer (1997, 724) reports central government revenues for 918-919 as 15.5 million dinars, of which a colossal 10.5 million was spent on the caliph's household.

It appears the luxurious excesses of the Arabian Nights were no exaggeration (Mather 1947). While it is hard to scale the value of 15.5 million dinars, it must have been a massive amount given the sheer size of the empire and the extraordinarily high taxes imposed.
Truly, the caliphate epitomized the high-taxation, high-kleptocracy approach indicative of a small-coalition, large-selectorate political system.

More Wisdom

- **Hobbes was wrong, Machiavelli was right**: Hobbes's confidence in monarchy was mistaken and Machiavelli's, author of "The Prince", was right: a republic is best for promoting freedom and institutional stability is correct
- **Democratic leaders must be careful with force**: "leaders with large winning coalitions must be careful about using force. All leaders face a higher risk of removal when they use force, but the added risk is much greater for leaders with large winning coalitions."

Quotes

On the necessity for a political apparatus:

> Make no mistake about it, no leader rules alone. Even the most oppressive dictators cannot survive the loss of support among their core constituents.

On promises VS realities once in power:

> Innumerable other revolutionary leaders promise democracy, freedom, and equality. They offer peace and prosperity, but they all too often deliver corruption, poverty, and despair.

Zorro is fantasy only:

> Terrorism and revolution make little sense for coalition members. After all, the current arrangement is giving them access to private benefits. Zorro or the Scarlet Pimpernel are the fancies of fiction and rarely a reality of politics.

On the disenfranchised:

> They have comprised the vast majority of people throughout human history. They often are the cannon fodder of revolutions and wars.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

- **Looking at politics through the lens of complete individual's rationality is a reduction of complexity ("homo economicus")**

The selectorate theory posits rational players who seek to maximize their interests.

While that's often largely true and it applies very well to large systems and to the most disparate situations, the "homo economicus" is also a simplification of reality.

Also see "Misbehaving" by Richard Thaler, which is the story of how psychology improved on the economical models based on perfect individuals' rationality.

- **Based on the premise that everyone wants to remain in power for power's sake**

This is not really a "con", but more of a "limitation" of the approach.

And I'm pretty sure that power-hungry premise is valid the vast majority of times.
However, I can imagine there are some exceptions of leaders who were called upon to serve, but really just wanted to live a simpler life.

Those exceptional cases are not addressed in "The Logic of Political Survival", albeit the author themselves are aware of this limitation, plus also provide a great reason as to why those are very rare exceptions:

> We have no doubt that many people value other things above political survival. It is just that such people are not likely to find themselves in high office and so need not overly occupy our interest.

And they're largely right.

- **Some examples felt a bit forced**

The authors say that Leopold, being a good king at home and a ruthless dictator in Cong proves that it's selectorate incentives that drives the leader's behavior.

Yet, they never consider that Leopold might have cared more about Belgians than distant Africans.
Or that he might have felt a responsibility as a king of a Belgium for his subjects but not as an owner of a foreign land.

Same as for the Rome and Carthage example, with Rome supposedly fighting harder than Carthage in Italy because

of its political structure.
But that fails to take into account that Rome was fighting at home, and fighting for its life, while Carthage was managing an expedition in a faraway land.
Naturally the foreign expedition was lower priority for Carthage's political leaders.

- **Jumping to conclusions on xenophobic movements?**

Say the authors:

> These differences in immigration rules provide a partial explanation for the rise in right-wing xenophobic movements in Germany and France, but their relative absence in the United Kingdom and United States.

Trump's election and the wall seem to prove that it's not true that xenophobic movements are absent from the US. Albeit he might be right circa the *extent* of those movements, or about their roots.

- **Better editing would help**

Some concepts repeat over and over, and the book could have been much shorter, and delivered all its enlightening wisdom in a smaller package.

The "three puzzles" in the opening chapter weren't also very clear, since beneath each were nested several different questions and topics.

- **The "She" dictator**

Man, talking about "political correctness".

The authors do such a wonderful job to explain the true nature of power, and human nature and rip apart all the politically correct BS that some democratic leaders share.
And then, in the same book… Fall for this modern political correctness thing of using the pronoun "she" and "her" at every single sentence.

Now, quick: how many female dictators can you name?

Exactly…

Review

Thoroughly well researched and deeply instructive, "The Logic of Political Survival" is a must-read to understand politics, as well as human psychology and general power dynamics.

Also read:

- **Best books on power and power dynamics**

Who's Pulling Your Strings? Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Who's Pulling Your Strings? (2013) is an overview of interpersonal manipulation in which Harriet Braiker, the author, discusses the manipulators' motivations and strategies, as well as the victims' "enablers" of manipulation, and how people can protect and free themselves from manipulative people

Contents

- Summary
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  - It Takes 2 People For a Manipulative Relationship
  - The 7 Buttons Manipulators Leverage: Keep An Eye On These
  - Manipulators' Motives
  - Manipulators' Mindsets
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  - How Manipulation Works
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Summary

About the Author:
Dr. Harriet Braiker was a social and clinical psychologist.
She holds a Ph.D., albeit I didn't find precisely on what.
Braiker first wrote about the "Type-E women" (with "E" standing for "everything to everybody"), and which is the female corresponding to "Tye-A men".
She also focused on relationships and toxic relationships, and with "Who's Pulling Your Strings" she became regarded as an expert on manipulation and controlling people. Braiker also wrote "The Disease to Please", another great book.

Introduction: This Is Not For Physical Abuse

Says Braker:

> Who's Pulling Your Strings? is about emotional or psychological manipulation.
> It is not intended to apply to relationships in which physical violence—or the threat of physical violence—is used as a means of control.

I wouldn't personally be so black-and-white about it.
There is often an overlap between the two, but I agree with her general stance: physical battering should mean ending the relationship right away, and only later maybe considering the manipulation that was also going on.

It Takes 2 People For a Manipulative Relationship

The author states that the "victim" of manipulation is also *allowing* the manipulation to happen.

And that's great news, because it means that you are also empowered to change -or stop- that relationship.
Say the author:

> When you stop rewarding manipulative tactics by ceasing to cooperate, comply, please, acquiesce, apologize, or respond to intimidation or threats, you will unilaterally alter the nature of the manipulative relationship.

The 7 Buttons Manipulators Leverage: Keep An Eye On These

Braiker says that manipulators seize their victims up based on buttons that "show" whenever you dealing with others.

Manipulators prefer to pick people with big buttons, and they can then use those buttons to control them.

1. Disease to Please

when your self-esteem is tied up to how much you do for others and how successful you are at pleasing them

2. Addiction to Earning the Approval and Acceptance of Others

in includes the need to:

1. avoid criticism
2. rejection
3. abandonment

At the core of the niceness are dread and fear of rejection and abandonment.

Keep in mind that wanting to be liked and accepted is perfectly normal. It's when it's *too much*, and when it's acceptance from *anyone*, that it becomes an issue.

Your behavior is as easy to control when you're addicted to approval. All a manipulator need do is a two-step process: Give you his approval and acceptance (make you earn it), and then, once you are hooked, threaten to take it away.

Says the author:

> The button that will show most clearly to manipulators is your willingness to do nearly anything to avoid disapproval, rejection, and worst of all, abandonment. In love relationships or romantic entanglements that become manipulative, fear of abandonment is the ultimate lever of control.

Also read this article on "judge social power", since the author is talking about giving others judge powers over you:

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Power & Control

3. “Emotophobia”—Fear of Negative Emotions

We can define “emotophobia” as:

> An excessive or irrational fear of conflict and confrontation, as well as of negative feelings, specifically, anger, aggression, hostility.

If this is you, it means that, you will go to almost any lengths to avoid anger, conflict, and confrontation.

A manipulator can control you with as little as raising one’s own voice, or hinting that he is getting angry.
And you will be likely to comply or submit just to avoid confrontation, anger, or any negative emotions.

4. Lack of Assertiveness and Inability to Say No

This is a reality of life:

> If you have difficulties saying no, then you will always be victim of some hard-charging, high-powered individual who is going to tell you what you do.

Says Braiker:

> If you are like most people-pleasers, your aversion to saying no is probably grounded in the negative angry responses that you anticipate your denial might elicit.

Learn how to say no here:

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

5. Blurry Sense of Identity (“The Vanishing Self”)

Here is how Braiker describes it:

> People with “vanishing selves” have only a blurry sense of their own identity, where they begin and end, whose needs they feel and fill, and what values are central to their core.

And when you’re not sure where you stand, for what you stand, you are also easier to be pushed around or recruited for whatever “cause” the manipulator cares the most -often his “cause” is a screen for his own self-interest, of course-.

It can be both a *cause* and a *consequence* of manipulation.

6. Low Self-Reliance

Braiker says:

> Low self-reliance means that you distrust your own judgment and reactions, resulting in an impairment of your self-direction.

And if you distrust your judgment, you are more likely to listen and trust others, as well as to cede leadership and

decision-making about your life.

It's related to N.5 and often overlap.
To address it, Braiker says:

> Improving your decision-making ability and particularly your skills at resolving postdecisional regret—also known as buyer's remorse—will go a long way toward increasing self-reliance.

In Power University we help you address the root causes of low self-reliance.

7. External Locus of Control (LOC)

The locus of control refers to how much people feel in control of their lives.

An internal locus of control means that people feel they are in control of their lives and can shape the events in their environment.

An external locus of control means that people feel at the mercy of the world around them.

People with an external locus of control are more likely to let external events and other people control them, and they are more likely to fall prey to "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1991), such as the belief that no matter what they do events will not change. When that happens, they are less likely to "rebel" to a manipulator.

Manipulators' Motives

Manipulative Motives Manipulators operate out of three principal interpersonal motives:

1. **Self-interest**: to advance their own purposes and their own personal gain at virtually any cost to others. Manipulators are self-serving by disposition, even if they say otherwise
2. **Power craving**: the need to attain feelings of power and superiority in relationships with other people. Control over others serves as an acknowledgment of personal efficacy and validation. The victim's compliance is the ultimate prof
3. **Need for control**: some manipulators want and need to feel in control for mental health purposes.
   Feeling out of control or losing control is anxiety-provoking. Some manipulators want to be seen -and see themselves- as in control of their emotions, especially emotions that they associate with weakness, such as anxiety, sadness, or loneliness.
   While these manipulators have a strong or pathologic need to control others, they generally struggle with control issues in their own lives. Their need to maintain control is frequently manifested by a need to "be right" and to make others "wrong."

Manipulators who need control sometimes have high anxiety

Says the author:

> Manipulative people frequently suffer from feelings of high anxiety when their control is threatened. Since they cannot easily or gracefully cede control to others, they will tend to micromanage in business situations.

These manipulators tend to dislike ambiguity. Grey areas make them nervous, and prefer to think in black-and-white terms.

Manipulators' Mindsets

This part was really good:

- **You either play or get played**: it's a zero-sum world of dog-eat-dog. You either play, or get played
- **There is no win-win**: in a zero-sum world full of nasty people, there cannot be win-win
- **Relationships between equals do not exist**: it's either one wins, or lose. So they want to make sure their partner loses
- **You cannot trust others**: since everyone is out to play you, manipulators obviously cannot trust others. They also don't see *themselves* as trustworthy

For some manipulators, these also apply:

- **Others exist to meet their needs**:
- **Sense of entitlement**: others *should* exist to meet their needs

This makes relationships with manipulators difficult and sometimes impossible, since, says the author:

> In cooperation and trust lies the context for mutual respect and healthy interdependence—the blend of autonomy and interdependence that makes intimacy, high self-esteem, strong sense of self, and solid self-reliance possible.

Manipulators *Create* Their Dog-Eat-Dog World (Game Theory Experiments)

This part was *really* good.

Since the manipulator cannot see how someone could be giving or cooperative, they approach all situations that require choosing between trust/cooperation and distrust/competition with the latter strategy.

But in repeated games, which in real life are the equivalent of relationships, that mindset *creates* a world of lose-lose.

Let me repeat it because this is crucial:

The manipulator's mindset of defection creates his own world of lose-lose.

Here is how it's experimentally tested.
Take this variation of the prisoner's dilemma:

		Al	
		Cooperate	Compete
Bob	Cooperate	$10, $10	$0, $20
	Compete	$20, $0	$1, $1

- **Win-win**: when they both cooperate, they both get $10
- **Win-lose**: when one cooperates and the other defects, the defector gets $20 and the other gets nothing (cheating)
- **Lose-lose**: when they both defect, they both get $1

The cheater "wins big" the first time.
But as soon as the game is repeated, the collaborator will most likely adjust his strategy to defect as well -it would probably take 2 rounds top for any rational collaborator to adjust his strategy-.
And then the game turns into a lose-lose for both. If you run this game for 3-4 times or more the defector strategy is a losing one.

In any long-term game, collaboration maximizes gains, but the cheater misses out on the gains because of his mindset.

Post-interviews confirm the two different mindsets.
Cooperators who played against defectors may say that "it is just like life: There are all different sorts of people".

The manipulator instead uses the reality of his own making to justify his own strategy and life approach.

Says the author:

> Their life experience will wind up confirming their belief system, although they typically do not understand how their own distrusting behavior creates distrust, competition, and rivalry in others.

And this bit, which is crucial to this website's philosophy (redacted for brevity):

> This mindset can affect and poison an interpersonal relationship. Trusting people who allow for the possibility that others can, on occasion, behave altruistically and/or generously (…) because it is rational and adaptive will be open to the possibility of trusting relationships.
> If you approach the world with an open but realistic attitude that allows for both kinds of people your experiences will mirror your expectations. You likely will meet both kinds of people and have the opportunity to form relationships in which mutual trust and cooperation exist and are cherished by both participants.

Enlightened Cooperator Is The Way To Go

The author calls it "realistic cooperator".

This website calls it "smart collaborator" and takes it one step further with "enlightened cooperator".
In any case, the gist is the same and she hits the nail on the head when she says:

> However, the realistic cooperator also knows that competitive manipulators exist in the world; when the competitive opponent is met, the cooperator can adjust and adapt his or her behavior accordingly. You do not have to reward manipulators by allowing their exploitative behavior and tactics to work.

Read more about "enlightened collaboration":

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Manipulators Are Zero-Sum Game Folks

To expand on the previous paragraph:

> The manipulator views power as finite.
> There is not enough power to go around for her to share or to acknowledge and respect your right to be empowered to make decisions and to attain control in your own life. If you are empowered to any degree, this represents less power for her. The manipulator views power as a zero-sum game.

And:

> There is no room in the manipulator's model of human relationships for a win-win scenario where power is shared or where everyone comes out gaining or benefiting from a given interaction.

Manipulators' Excuses

There are countless "fronts" manipulators use to cover their real goals.

Some of them are:

- **Love and caring**: "I'm doing this out of care/love for you."
- **Expertise**: "I'm telling you this because I've had way more experience in these matters, and I know better."
- **Altruism and generosity**: "I'm doing this for your own good, even though it doesn't benefit me."
- **Role endowment**: "I'm telling you what to do because that is my role/obligation."

Manipulators' Personalities

- **Machiavellian**: they buy into Machiavelli's proposition that a desired end justifies virtually any means. In game theory experiments they are opportunistic, capitalizing on ambiguity regarding the rules
  - manipulative
  - charming
  - confident
  - glib
  - calculating
  - cynic about human nature
  - shred in their social strategies
- **Narcissists**: expect special treatment without assuming reciprocal responsibilities in turn (ie.: in the social exchange he takes without giving)
  - entitled
- **Borderline personality disorder**: uses silent treatment, rage, and threats -including breakup threats– also see "Sop Walking on Eggshells" and "I Hate You Don't Leave Me"
- **Dependent personality disorder**: they indirectly manipulate others to assume responsibilities for them. Men tend to use demands, while women tend to use submissiveness and feigned ineptitude. Also read "Codependent No More"
- **Histrionic personality disorder**: the drama queens and kings, they manipulate to get more attention. They can be both manipulated and manipulators, and often resort to sexuality and seduction to manipulate. They can resort to emotional explosions, and frequently cry rape
- **Passive-aggressive personalities**: passive resistance like procrastination, intentional inefficiency, and feet dragging. They will never say "no" to their bosses, but will always complain behind the boss' back
- **Type A angry personality**: highly competitive, and obsessed with quantitative measures of success. They are often very concerned in maintaining control over their environment. They tend to manipulate with more

aggressive tactics, and sometimes evoke "avoidance strategies" in others
- **Addictive personality**: lies, denies, and wreaks havoc in people's lives. Can become extremely needy
- **Con or antisocial personality disorder**: my note: it seems like the author here ends up discussing psychopath's controlling strategies and personality, but APD and psychopathy are not the same

Braiker does not list this manipulator's profile, but from what she says in a different part of the book:

- **The manipulator who got burned**: he has been the *victim* of manipulation, and vows to never be a victim ever again. So now he/she turned in manipulators.

My Note: that's the profile of lots of red pill guys.

The 2 Types of Manipulators: Conscious & Unconscious

This is an important distinction -and a FAQ when it comes to manipulation-:

Are manipulators *consciously* manipulating others?

Says the author:

> Do Manipulators Understand Their Own Motives? Not necessarily. Manipulators generally can be categorized into two groups: those who are aware and conscious of their manipulative motives and goals and those who remain largely unconscious or unaware of the manipulative methods they employ in their relationships with others.

This is an important distinction, because:

Can Manipulator Change? Maybe If They're Unconscious. But Not Conscious Ones

If you show unconscious manipulators what they are actually doing, that might work as a "wake up call" for them, and might lead them to stop.

Says the author:

> When an ego-incongruent manipulator is confronted with exposure of his manipulation, there may be enough inner conflict generated to help motivate change.

On this website, we defined this method "collaborative shaming".
But that only works with manipulators who have some conscience, empathy, personal values, and/or a drive to self-improve.

Manipulators who are self-aware instead are "ego-congruent". Such as, their manipulation fits what they consciously think of themselves.
On this website, we define the worst type of this category of people as the "proud value-takers". Such as, they are *proud* of taking from others.

These manipulators either don't experience any turmoils when faced with the reality of their manipulative ways, or they are even *happy* for their manipulative ways.

How Manipulation Works

Braiker says that manipulation, at the core, is simple.

And it acts by activating one or both of the two main levers of human drive:

- Gain (or reward)
- Loss (or avoidance)

And the formula of manipulation, at its basic, is:

> If you do what I want, I will reward you with [whatever the promised gain is]," or "If you don't do as I ask, you won't get what you want and need

Of course, the formula is rarely if ever explicit, and both the promise or the threat can be veiled or implied.

Some of the gains or rewards include:

- Money / material gifts
- Power
- Status (ie.., titles, promotions, admission to a club)
- Sex, love
- Approval, acceptance, or praise

And some of the threats that the victims come to fear:

- Rejection or abandonment
- Withdrawal of affection or love
- Failure
- Exposure (secrets, inadequacies or flaws)
- Conflict or anger

She says:

> All manipulative relationships depend on certain levers of control that are used to hold out the promise of gain or the fear of loss or the means to avoid something that is undesirable.

The author says that manipulation often moves from offering something that the victim wants, to then threatening to take that something away once the victim is more invested and hooked.
It's when the manipulation switches from offering something to the threat of loss that the manipulation becomes coercive.

Methods of Manipulation

Braiker groups all possible manipulative strategies into five major groupings:

1. **Positive reinforcement**: providing a reward for the behavior you want to promote and expand. This is particularly effective with people-pleasers, but by itself positive reinforcement is NOT manipulative. But manipulators *start* with positive reinforcement usually, and either make it more elusive, or then "move up the ladder of manipulation"
    1. **The positive reward becomes more elusive**: the manipulator holds out the promise for gain, but either doesn't deliver it, or delivers it more rarely. Now a shift happens: the victim is motivated by fear of loss, or fear of the gain never materializing (Note: this step is not added by Braiker, but by me)
2. **Negative reinforcement** (or "averse conditioning"): it's not punishment like people misunderstand (which is also not very effective). It's the "avoidance of pain when a certain behavior stops". Negative reinforcement starts *before* the victim complies, and stops with the compliance.
    It includes:

   1. Nagging (see "female relationship control techniques")
   2. Silent treatment
   3. Pouting
   4. Emotional distance as punishment
3. **Intermittent or partial reinforcement** (or: "gambling schedule"): partial or intermittent schedules of rewards lead to addiction, while random and unpredictable pain creates stress and anxiety
4. **Punishment**: negative experience is a direct consequence of undesired behavior on the part of the subject. The message is "if you do something I don't like, you will be punished". It's less effective than positive or negative reinforcement
5. **Traumatic one-trial learning**: to deliver such an over the top response, that the victim will be afraid of triggering the ire of the manipulator ever again

One last technique Braiker adds is the "big lie", such as the promise of a big gain -which never materializes", or avoidance of a big loss -which the manipulator might not have been able to deliver-.
In relationships with a psychopath, the "love" of the psychopath is the big lie.

For more on manipulation and manipulation techniques, also see:

- **Psychological manipulation**: an overview

And:

- **Dark psychology**: the technique of psychological manipulation

> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

Basic Rules For Dealing With Manipulation

Some of the basic "laws of manipulation", sometimes reworded by me for simplicity:

- **You cannot and will not out-manipulate a skilled manipulator; do not even try** (unless you're training on ThePowerMoves, then you're in with a chance :)
- **You will hardly change a manipulator by pointing out his or her flaws** (my note: Braiker says "will not and cannot", but she herself said that rarely it's possible, and you know I hate sweeping generalizations :)
- **Do not bother telling a manipulator that she is not being fair or kind or loving**: most manipulators are low in conscience and empathy anyway
- **You cannot appeal to a manipulator's empathy with your feelings**: with manipulators who are low on empathy your "you know how it makes me feel when you…" won't go far
- **Always pay attention to what the manipulator does, not what he or she says**
- **Don't ask "why", their answers only add more manipulations. Ask strategically to get truthful replies**: do not inquire why he or she is behaving in a particular way and expect to get a valid, useful, or truthful answer
- **The best change is changing yourself**: the only effective way to change a manipulator is to make her tactics ineffective by changing yourself

How To Break Free From Manipulation

In Power University we provide deeper and more advanced solutions.

But to give you an idea based on Braiker's approach:

1. **Play for time**: especially useful with pushy manipulators. If it's on the phone, put them on hold if you need some time. When you stop acting on the manipulator's time schedule, you take power back (also read "letting people wait")
2. **Broken record**: tell them you need to think about it, and keep repeating it. If they insist, you tell them that you heard them, and that you still need time
3. **Desensitize your feelings**: train yourself to be under the same type of pressure the manipulator puts you in, but to remain unreactive ("detachment")
4. **Label the manipulation**: tell the manipulator what they are doing ("going meta")
5. **Tell them they're done manipulating you**: tell them that what they were doing no longer works with you
6. **Set your terms**: tell them that from now on, you will be doing things the way you also like them. If it's a relationship, tell them how you want to be treated
7. **Compromise and negotiate**: come to an agreement on how to go forward

And, more on a mindset level:

1. **Think of yourself as a former victim**
2. **Label your current feelings, as feelings not facts**: powerlessness, depression, helplessness and dependence are not who you are. They are transitory states, or simply feelings
3. **Trust yourself**: taking the first step can be hard. Especially after the manipulator lowered your self-esteem. Trust yourself you can do it

Finally, remember that there are two different approaches:

1. **Resistance**: resist and/or try to steer the relationship into healthier territory
2. **Extraction**: leave and cut out the manipulator

Also read:

- **Should I break up or not?**

> Should I Break Up? Step-by-Step Guide to Overcome Ambivalence

Influence VS Manipulation

Braiker differentiates between influence and manipulation.

She says that the difference "depends primarily on the motives and attitude of the influencer toward his or her target or mark and secondarily on the tactics".

The influencer recognizes and respects other people's rights and integrity, while the manipulator does not respect other people's rights, and seeks influence that is exploitative and that negatively affects the victims.

This is in opposition to Robert Greene, author of "The 48 Laws of Power", who says that "any attempt to influence is manipulation".

I believe there are more grey areas than obvious "yes or no" but, overall, I tend to agree with Braiker:

- Persuasion VS manipulation: find out the difference

> Persuasion vs. Manipulation: Understanding the Fine Line

Quotes

On manipulators and zero-sum games:

> Because manipulators see life as a zero-sum game, in almost every important dimension—which to a manipulator primarily comprises power, control, and superiority—the manipulator believes that there are winners and losers.

On the willingness of letting go of the relationship if needed:

> If you are not willing to lose the relationship—even when it means losing yourself in the process— then you are not ready to stop being a victim.

Learning manipulation to disable manipulation (manipulation like a magic trick):

> Manipulation, simply stated, is much like a magic trick. If you take the time to learn how manipulation works, it is less likely that you will be caught off guard when confronted with it because you will know what to look for. The mystery will be gone.

On nagging as a manipulative tool ("negative reinforcement" type):

> She does not tell him what a fine, good boy he is or rewards him. She merely stops yelling. Voilà! Negative reinforcement.
> Nagging is the human equivalent of shock grids to the rat.

A dark-humor quote:

> I know that my husband really loves me," a depressed wife who had been victimized by emotional abuse and manipulation for years once told me in a therapy session. "But I am just a constant disappointment to him."

And the most "The Power Moves" quote:

> **If he/she is going to come around to a healthier, happier relationship, you will see it happen in response to your strength, not to your weakness.**

Criticism

- **Imperfect analysis of relationship dynamics: conflict-avoidance is not always the hallmark of a bad relationship**

Braiker falls for a common misconception about "healthy couples and relationships":

> Conflict avoidance is not the hall-mark of a good relationship. On the contrary, it is a symptom of serious problems and of poor communication.

Albeit that's indeed common wisdom, sometimes common wisdom is wrong.
Famed relationship researcher Gottman says that the "risk-avoidant" relationship is one of the types of successful relationships (Gottman, 1994).

Of course, this does not mean that all conflict-avoidants are successful, but it means that it's possible, and that

conflict avoidance is not necessarily the sign of “serious problems”.

- **Imperfect analysis of “low self-esteem” (pop-psychology)**

Say the author when talking about the “power craving” of manipulators:

> Paradoxically, this need springs from strong underlying—sometimes unconscious—feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem.

This is a widespread pop-psychology myth, but it’s not wholly.
In truth, as psychology researcher Roy Baumeister explains, most people who fit the psychology profile of victimization are *high* BUT fragile self-esteem (Baumeister, 1997), which is different than *low* self-esteem.

- **Sometimes I disagreed on what’s manipulation**

The author says that a boss telling an employee that not putting in overtime means no chance for promotion is a form of manipulation.

To me, that *might* be manipulative, but can also simply be straight-up honesty.
What’s the alternative, *not* saying it and not allowing the new recruit the opportunity of choosing?

- **Mis-represents Machiavelli**

Says the author:

> Named after the sixteenth-century political philosopher and Italian Prince Machiavelli

Machiavelli was *not* a prince. He wrote “The Prince” to advise princes, but he wasn’t a prince.

PROS

- **Great overview of interpersonal manipulation**
- **“How to book” with great defensive techniques**: not just great analyses, but a great practical guide as well
- **Great overview & analysis of the psychology of defectors & cheats** (& why they often don’t maximize their own life’s effectiveness)

Review

Who’s Pulling Your Strings? provides a great overview of interpersonal manipulation and is a foundational book for this website’s mission and philosophy.

Outside of Power University which of course has the advantage of being larger, deeper, and a course with videos and multimedia learning, *Who’s Pulling Your Strings?* may provide the best overview on manipulation in book format.
And, the best compliment I can pay to the author, her teachings were extremely helpful to craft the Power University module on manipulation.

Check the:

- **Best books on manipulation**

Or get the book on Amazon

The ‘Smart Collaborator’: Giving For Win-Win, Without Being Exploited

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Most men are taught that giving and cooperation are moral virtues — and in many cases, they are.
But in real life, **blind generosity gets exploited**, and naive collaboration often results in victimization.

Some niche advice leans in the opposite direction, toward **excessive cynicism**: the belief that no one can be trusted for win-win.
This posture can feel safer in the short term, but it comes at the cost of missed opportunities, poorer relationships, and a chronically defensive orientation toward life.

The solution isn’t to stop giving, nor to retreat into cynicism.
It is to practice **strategic giving**: a power-aware form of collaboration that seeks win-win outcomes while actively managing leverage, incentives, and downside risk.

In this article, you’ll learn how high-value men give intelligently, protect their interests, and lead collaborations that create real mutual gain — never exploitation.

The Smart Collaborator™ is a TPM framework developed by **Lucio Buffalmano**.
It formalizes a third path between naive giving and over-cynicism: power-aware collaboration that creates win-win outcomes without surrendering leverage.

Cooperation evolved because it’s good for both. One man carries the tools, one the wood… And the stairs to the top develop twice as fast.

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Cooperator Strategy & Mindset

> Win win is possible and mutually beneficial

The collaborator mindset starts from the assumption that win-win is possible in many repeated interactions and, when the conditions allow, it's often preferable.

When executed with power intelligence, this approach is **highly effective**, consistently delivering superior outcomes compared to naive giving or chronic defection.

Crucially, **the collaborator mindset *allows* for win-win** outcomes and predisposes you to look for it. And, when coupled with an honorable approach to life, it makes win-win the default preference.
This mindset increases the odds that you:

1. *find* more opportunities for win-win
2. *enter* more win-win exchanges and relationships
3. *Maintain* more win-win relationships

The final result?
More value created, more power, and more happiness.

Honorable Collaborator™ ⍰

The smart cooperator is an amoral strategy to maximize returns from cooperation. At times, amoral defection and cheating may pay off.
The honorable collaborator deliberately forgoes extra gains from cheating, approaching others with a preference for win-win and avoiding cheating even when it would be instrumentally advantageous.

Although exceptions always apply, this the baseline approach TPM generally recommends for men seeking long-term power, reputation, and life quality.

Benefits

Win-win tends to be superior for long-term relationships.
And it:

- Promotes and maintains **reputation**
- Supports **self-esteem**, at least for most non-psychopathic men
- **Better relationships** and social life
- **Higher life quality** when properly executed

But of course, it must be *smart* cooperation in order to work reliably.

Limitations

A cooperator mindset can never guarantee that win-win will follow.
That would be a 'naive cooperator' approach to life.

The naive cooperator overly trusts others and sets himself up for failure by trusting and cooperating with the wrong type of people, in the wrong contexts.

Even when win-win is possible, it doesn't necessarily mean you should enter it if you have better options. And it doesn't mean that win-lose wouldn't be better for you from an amoral point of view.

Defector Strategy & Mindset

> Win-win is not possible, people are untrustworthy, and they will cheat

The defector mindset is high in cynicism, and includes beliefs such as:

- **Zero-sum world**: for one to win, another has to lose ('fixed pie mindset' in negotiation literature)
- **Dog-eat-dog world**: you either play, or get played
- **Homo cynicus**: people at the core are dark, selfish, untrustworthy, and bad

Some cynics see themselves as untrustworthy and are proud of it. At TPM, we refer to this posture as proud value-taking.

Benefits

Cynics do get something right.
People are also selfish and self-interested. **Life itself demands a healthy dose of self-centeredness**, and the most successful players are also top competitors.

Even advancing in life without a direct competitor is still often a form of competition. You are competing against the average of other men or women, but it's a competition nonetheless.

Finally, a defector approach may allow for short-term gains, and protect against cheating with extra carefulness and avoidance.

However, as for most things, it's possible to overdo a cynical mindset and a competitive attitude.

Limitations

The main indictment against a zero-sum world is that the mere existence of cooperation proves that cooperation works, and that it can benefit even selfish individuals.

If it didn't work in at least some cases and for some people, it wouldn't have evolved. And if it evolved 'by mistake', it would have long disappeared.
It's still here because it works, even for selfish players.

Limitations are important, including:

- **Missed opportunities for win-win**
- **Paranoia**
- **Poorer relationships**
- **Poor reputation** in social circles
- **Lower life quality** and mental health

Game Theory Explains Defection Costs

In his seminal paper on social evolution, Trivers theorized how reciprocal altruism developed by benefiting all parties, and Axelrod formalized it with game-theoretic models of repeated cooperation.
Consider this variation of the prisoner's dilemma:

		Al	
		Cooperate	Compete
Bob	Cooperate	$10, $10	$0, $20
	Compete	$20, $0	$1, $1

- **Win-win**: they both get $10
- **Win-lose**: the defector gets $20 and the cheated gets nothing
- **Lose-lose**: they both get $1

The cheater "wins big" the first time, if he plays against a cooperator.
That may work for one-off exchanges *when and if revenge and reputation are not a factor.*
But as soon as the game is repeated, the cheated collaborator likely adjusts his strategy, and the game turns into a lose-lose for both (Nash Equilibrium).
The defector loses to the cooperative one in just 3 exchanges.

And the more you run the game (repeated game), the *bigger* the opportunity loss.

In real life, repeated games are our relationships. Our friends, spouses, brothers, sisters, colleagues, neighbors, etc.
Meaning that **the overly cynic loses misses healthy and win-win relationships**.

While the game is simplistic, it offers a valid approximation of real-life exchanges (it has "high external validity").
Indeed, writes Colquhoun in *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives*:

> *In the iterated prisoner's dilemma, we have a microcosm of real-life dilemmas that regularly occur in everyday*

> *life – from whether we should offer people a lift, to tipping a waiter, to deciding whether or not to remain faithful to our romantic partner. Do we cooperate or do we defect? In most cases, it will be to our advantage in the long run to cooperate – so long as this is reciprocated, that is.*

The first part of that last sentence is why we embrace cooperation here.
And the second part is why we caution it must be SMART, power-aware cooperation.

Each Mindset Confirms His Reality

As clinical psychologist Harriet Braiker notes referring to the similar 'manipulator attitude', both cooperators and defectors shape their own reality with their mindsets and behaviors.

In post-interviews, defectors who defected first confirm their cynical, win-lose mentality to justify *staying* a cynic, and maintaining their defector approach. **Cynics create their own lose-lose world** in an effect known as 'self-fulfilling prophecy'.

Cooperators who played against defectors instead shrug it off, saying that there are all different sorts of people. Cooperators walk away *still* open to future collaboration and win-win.

For a deeper analysis of "ultra-cynicism", read:

- **Positive cynicism**

> The Power of Effective Cynicism: Win in a World of Self-Interest While Remaining Optimistic & Honorable

The Appeal of Defectors' Cynicism

The popular literature on power is heavy on defection, predation, and cynicism (see "The 48 Laws of Power" as an example).

Elements of feminism and red pill ideology also tend to be cynical. By focusing primarily on areas of diverging and conflicting interests and defection strategies of the opposite sex, these frameworks can bias individuals toward cynical expectations.
With that mindset, win-win -and a healthy relationship- becomes unlikely.

Cynicism is appealing, in part, because of the contrast effect with naive self-help.
Politically correct self-help is so out of touch with reality that cynicism sounds more "real".

Unluckily, going from one extreme to another is rarely the best solution, which instead often requires nuance and *calibration*.

Smart Collaborator Approach

> Win-win is possible and preferable, but it must be carefully weighed, entered and maintained against the constant threat of defection

The smart collaborator knows that win-win is superior when available, but that **win-win can be tenuous and under the constant threat of defection.**
He is a power intelligent realist, knowing that even long-term win-wins can end abruptly. Still, since win-win is superior, he believes in searching for win-win as a default strategy.

The basis of smart collaboration is simple:

- **Collaborate with collaborators** because people differ
- **Avoid cheats**
- **Increase the scope of cooperation**
- **Increase the costs of cheating**
- **Monitor the changing context** because changing incentives can change cooperation/defection payoffs. Even established relationships can end abruptly when things sour, win-win payoff decreases, and an opportunity for defection offers large payoffs with little risks
- **Cover your ass** in case of sudden defection because few people are 100% honest or 100% cheats and most people are shades of grey who can turn either way.

This approach is sound and based proven power strategies.
And the power-aware collaborator views win-win as a **probability to be engineered**. Here are some tools:

1. Assess Characters

1. **Test-giving**: give freely, demand nothing back, act like you don't care. Then, keep an eye on who is grateful for your giving, who is not, and who just asks for more
2. **Monitoring systems**: the behavior when people believe nobody's watching is very telling (note: this is no legal advice, ensure it's legal in your jurisdiction)
3. **Look dumber**, see who takes advantage of it. People are also more careless around dumbness, so their manipulations are easier to spot

2. Increase Scope for Collaboration

Some of the techniques he deploys:

1. **Collaborative foot forward**: start high power, but warm
2. **Make the pie larger** by exploring mutual interests and opportunities, a negotiation concept (Ury and Fisher, 1981)
3. **Focus on WIIFT** as a general approach to value-giving leverage that incentivizes cooperation

4. **Align interests**. For example, pay contractors for projects instead of hours to incentivize effectiveness, and only add hours later if you need extra
5. **Collaborative reframing**: It can be as simple as saying "I value you and our collaboration" to signal your preference to remain cooperative. ▯ Real-life example
   1. **Collaborative shaming** as 'emotional punishment' when people play win-lose games. Best used when you have high authority ('judge') ▯ Example to handle 'dating shit-tests'
6. **Cooperative frame cementing**: or confirming and expanding the agreed win-win to strengthen it ▯Example and ▯'I'm glad we agree' technique
7. **Stick with value-giving collaborators**: When you find good people in your life, keep them! You found a treasure, cherish it.

2.2. Decrease The Scope For Destructive Competition: Gentleman Warrior Approach

You have two options in fights:

1. **Antagonize & hate** = turns an enemy into a bigger enemy
2. **Fight while respecting the opponent** = can turn an enemy into a smaller enemy

Over-antagonizing your enemies can strengthen their will to win, and worsen the war for everyone.
In negotiation, this Ury and Fisher's approach of being "tough on ideas, but kind on people'. In competitive sports, think in terms of "tough *in* the game/fight, but kind on the opponent *outside* of the game/fight".

▯Mafia Examples

Mafia historian Selwyn Raab describes this approach as used by former mafia boss Joseph Massino.

Massino took the Bonanno family in tatters, and made it the most powerful of the five New York families. Contrary to other families who'd keep a conflictual relationship with law enforcement, he made it a rule to always respect the police and the FBI.

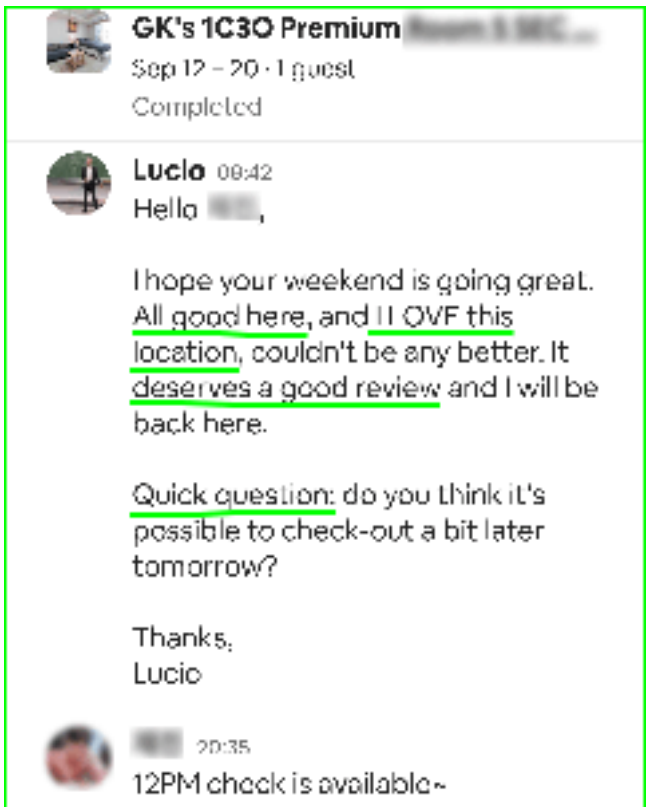
And when he was finally caught, police granted him his wish to be cuffed outside, away from his wife and teenage daughters.

3. Decrease Scope for Defection

Let's start with the classics:

- **Increase the *costs* of defection**: for example, Massino from the above example pressured captains and soldiers to add their sons as made men, so talking to the police would be costly for their own sons in the organization
- **Minimize the gains of defection** ▯ silver medal technique

1. **Strings-attached giving**: give, but while keeping some form of leverage (ie.: the option of taking something back)
2. **Punish cheats** to maintain cooperation in groups. There is a long history of research showing that punishment of cheats works (for example, Ernst Fehr & Simon Gächter, 2000).
3. **Positive displays of leverage**: to remind people of your leverage in the exchange, but to do so within a positive frame.
   See an example here:



> **Lucio**: It deserves a good review <— Positive display of leverage, as it indirectly reminds him of both the value-giving power, and the value-taking leverage of a negative review
> Read more

For more, also read: "fundamental strategies of power".

4. Maintain Win-Win: Monitoring & Fair Value Marketing

Be high-value to attract interest, and add warmth to invite cooperation (see 'power and warmth').

Two crucial steps to maintaining win-win:

Monitor Changing Dynamics

- **Changing context**: win-win don't stay win-win forever. They can turn win-lose if the payoffs change
- **Neediness**: needy partners may be kind and cooperative, only to turn defectors once they don't need you anymore
- **Power dynamics shifts**: the more power and leverage people get, the more they may be motivated to resort to coercion

Fair-Value Marketing

1. **Highlight your giving**, or at least ensure people know and appreciate *your* contribution
2. **Appreciate their giving**: Recognizes and appreciates *their* contributions
3. **Thread-expand the win-win**: frame and reframe the exchange as a win-win, share your appreciation for them and your relationship to signal your positive intentions (a positive signal of an honorable character, too)

Fair value marketing includes proactively ensuring your contributions are fairly valued and appreciated.
You ensure people don't undercut your contributions ("credit erasing") and/or inflate their contributions ("credit inflating").

This is a form of assertiveness applied to social exchanges.

4.2. Dating & Relationship Win-Win

While some exceptions apply, the general rule is to lead and display dominance and value with win-win frames.

And **the more the relationship progresses, the more win-win and cooperation become crucial.** Women who feel on the losing end adopt protest behavior that increases the risks of cheating.

Relationship researcher John Gottman also noted that accepting influence is a key to strong relationships, and accepting influence is all about win-win power dynamics.
Also see:

- **How to maintain power and attraction**

5. Protect Your Downsides

Prepare for the possibility of cheating and defection.
Some examples include:

- **Prenup**
- **Back-up plans** for work, accommodation,
- **Offshore bank account**

Read more:

- **Self-defense strategies for business, love, and life**

> Self-Protection in Love and Business, Without Losing Trust

6. Strategic Value Allocation: High ROI Giving

Adam Grant's research and literature review suggest that strategic giving are the most successful in life.

And while we support giving for the sole sake of giving, strategic giving is important when you're still in your 'achieve phase', and *especially* in competitive environments.
That includes workplaces that cover the competition with a layer of "selfless team first".

Strategic giving includes:

- **Give to those who *can* give back**. Often, it's people around your same value, or higher value
- **Give to those who *do* give back**.
  - ⚠ Careful with higher-value people who sometimes feel entitled to take from those below
- **Stay neutral with those who have nothing to give**. Be cordial and respectful, but maintain an "arm's length approach" to avoid making enemies

When Needed: Machiavellian Collaboration

The smart collaborator is not just stuck to "collaborate" or "non collaborate". He can also adopt a strategy of "opportunistic collaboration" mixed with "opportunistic defection".

This strategy can be used immorally, in which case we don't advise it or condone it.
But in some cases, it's fair game.

Next Steps: Becoming A Smart Cooperator

Navigating cooperation in the real world requires to *internalize* certain advanced skills.

Power University is the one place where cooperation, leverage, and strategic thinking come together, training you to become a smart collaborator in business, dating, and life.

Check Power University

Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

We already talked about collaboration as a life strategy for success on this website.

See for example:

- **4 Fundamental Strategies for Power**: an overview on applying collaboration and win-win in life

However, we haven't talked about the best approaches to ensure effective collaborative yet.
And we haven't clarified why it's superior to both naive collaboration, or cynic defection.
So this article will show you exactly why collaboration is power, and **how to make sure that your collaborations are safe and effective**.

Cooperation evolved because it's good for both. One man carries the tools, one the wood… And the stairs to the top develop twice as fast.

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- Win-Win Starts With Mindsets
  - Defection: It Also Starts With (Cynic) Mindsets
- The Cynic Mindset
  - Game Theory Shows The Limitations of Ultra-Cynicism
- Enlightened Collaborator Approach
  - 1. Increase Scope for Collaboration
  - 2. Decrease Scope for Defection
  - 3. Protect Your Downsides
  - 4. Be A Strategic Giver
- SUMMARY

Win-Win Starts With Mindsets

The mindset always comes first.

The mindset precedes the strategies.

The collaborator mindset is the belief that win-win is possible *and* preferable.

The collaborator mindset is what leads you to approach people and situations asking yourself first how a win-win could be reached.

That of course that doesn't necessarily mean that win-win will *always* be possible.
And it doesn't even mean that you enter *all* relationships that present a potential win-win, either.
Some of those exchanges might add too little of a benefit, or you might have other priorities in life.

The collaborator mindset does however mean that you assess new people and scan new situations asking yourself how win-win could be achieved.

The collaborator mindset is what makes a win-win strategy *possible.*
And by approaching life with the win-win mindset in mind, you increase the odds that:

1. you will *find* more opportunities for win-win
2. you will *create* more opportunities for win-win by looking for ways with which win-win could be achieved
3. you will *enter* and enter into more win-win exchanges and relationships

The final result?
More value created, more power, and more happiness.

No guarantees, but a necessary precondition

It bears repeating.

Your collaborative mindset does NOT *guarantee* win-win.

That would be a naive way of looking at life ("naive cooperator").

But **a collaborator mindset *allows* for win-win**.
You still need to find, assess, and filter through for other cooperative individuals with whom to play/enter into win-win relationships.
And that's where the enlightened collaborator makes a difference.

The enlightened collaborator actively seeks expertise on crucial life skills such as:

- power dynamics
- psychology
- social exchanges "rules"
- persuasion and influence
- manipulation

This is the knowledge that transforms you from a simple collaborator, into a Jedi social strategist ready for life's success.

Defection: It Also Starts With (Cynic) Mindsets

There is quite some cynicism permeating our world.

The popular literature on power -see "The 48 Laws of Power"- rests on cynicism.

It's a great book.
But it's only the *dark* side of the moon portion.

And you're not gonna be successful if you stay stuck in the dark.

Popular movements such as feminism and the red pill are also both based on massive doses of cynicism.

Many feminists and red-pill men adopt a win-lose view of relationships.
With that mindset, win-win -and a healthy relationship- are hardly possible,.

Cynicism: A Manipulative Siren Against PC

In a way, I can see why cynicism is so successful.

Political correctness and much of popular self-help are so out of touch with reality that cynicism sounds more "real".

Unluckily, going from an extreme to another is rarely the solution. And the full-on cynicism is the equivalent of the Ulysses' sirens calling.
And those cynic sirens only deliver loneliness, anger, and bitterness.

Some of the "leaders" of cynic and win-lose movements are manipulators who make up enemies for personal power

At the extreme, a cynic mindset believes that people -or a certain group of people- are *too* selfish, manipulative, and untrustworthy to ever do anything out of kindness, or to ever enter a win-win relationship.

If you're a reader around here, I'm sure you can *already* see the issue with that: if you don't believe that win-win is even possible, how are you ever going to achieve it?
Answer: it's either someone shoves it down your throat till you finally realize "ugh, it's possible" or, more likely… It ain't gonna happen.

Indeed, the far likelier tragedy of ultra-cynicism is that **cynicism *creates* its own world of lose-lose** ("self-fulfilling prophecy").

Donald Trump: A Case Study for Cynic "Always-on" Competition

In politics, Trump is a great example of the cynic self-fulfilling prophecy.

I'm almost glad the Trump phenomenon happened, since it provides the perfect case study.

Trump shows what happens when an ultra-cynic approaches relationships with a competition-first mindset.
And what happens is that he *creates* a world of enemies.

Read more here:

- **Trump's cynic win-lose failure**

Or just take a look at this picture:

Sure, CNN is biased.
But we can probably agree Trump made way too many enemies.

The Cynic Mindset

Clinical psychologist Harriet Braiker does a great job describing the psychology of manipulators.

The "manipulator's mindset" Braiker describes is the same as the win-lose mindset we discuss here, which in turn is the same as the "defector strategy" of game theory.

In brief, conversely to the enlightened, win-win mindset, **the cynic defector believes that win-win is neither possible, nor ideal**.

This is how the cynic thinks:

- **You either play or get played**: it's a zero-sum world of dog-eat-dog. You either play, or you get played
- **There is no win-win**: in a zero-sum world full of nasty people, there cannot be win-win
- **Relationships between equals do not exist**: it's either one wins, or he loses. And since nobody wants to lose, they want to make sure their partner loses
- **You cannot trust others**: since everyone is out to play you, defectors obviously cannot trust others.

Some cynics and inveterate defectors also see themselves as untrustworthy and are proud of it.
We call this attitude "proud-value taking".

Game Theory Shows The Limitations of Ultra-Cynicism

The prisoner's dilemma offers a simple way to test the win-lose approach.

Take this variation of the prisoner's dilemma:

		Al	
		Cooperate	Compete
Bob	Cooperate	$10, $10	$0, $20
	Compete	$20, $0	$1, $1

- **Win-win**: they both get $10
- **Win-lose**: the defector gets $20 and the cheated gets nothing
- **Lose-lose**: they both get $1

The cheater "wins big" the first time.
But as soon as the game is repeated, the collaborator most likely adjusts his strategy to defect as well, and the game turns into a lose-lose for both (Nash Equilibrium). If you run this game for 3-4 times the defector strategy is a losing one.

As a matter of fact, the *more* you run the game (repeated game), the *bigger* the opportunity loss.

What are these repeated games in real-life?

Repeated games are our relationships.
Our friends, spouses, brothers, sisters, colleagues, neighbors… These are our real-life repeated games.
And **the cynic loses opportunities for collaborative and healthy relationships with the most important people in life**.

The game is simplistic, of course.
And yet, it offers a good approximation of many real-life relationships (it has "high external validity").

The Different Mindsets Leading to Totally Opposite Lives

Post-interviews confirm the two different mindsets.

Cooperators who played against defectors shrug it off saying that the game is just like real life, and there are all different sorts of people -and they're right-.
Cooperators walk away that are *still* open to future collaboration and win-win.

But the defector?

The defector walks away that he has shaped his reality to one of cynic win-lose, and he then uses that reality of his own making to justify his own strategy and life approach.

Many defectors don't even realize that it'stheir own distrusting approach to life that breeds distrusts, aggression, and win-lose approaches from other people.

The collaborative reality of collaborative mindsets

The life experience for people who believe that cooperation is possible is much different.

Says Braiker:

> Trusting people who allow for the possibility that others can, on occasion, choose to behave altruistically and/or generously can choose to cooperate because it is rational and adaptive will be open to the possibility of trusting relationships.
> **If you approach the world with an open but realistic attitude that allows for both kinds of people—trusting souls and self-promoting competitors—your experiences will mirror your expectations**. You likely will meet both kinds of people and have **the opportunity to form relationships in which mutual trust and cooperation exist and are cherished by both participants**.
>
> *Braiker, 2013*

For a deeper analysis on the failure of "ultra-cynicism", read:

- **Positive cynicism**

> Positive Cynicism: Turning Poison, Into Gold

Abundance HR mentality

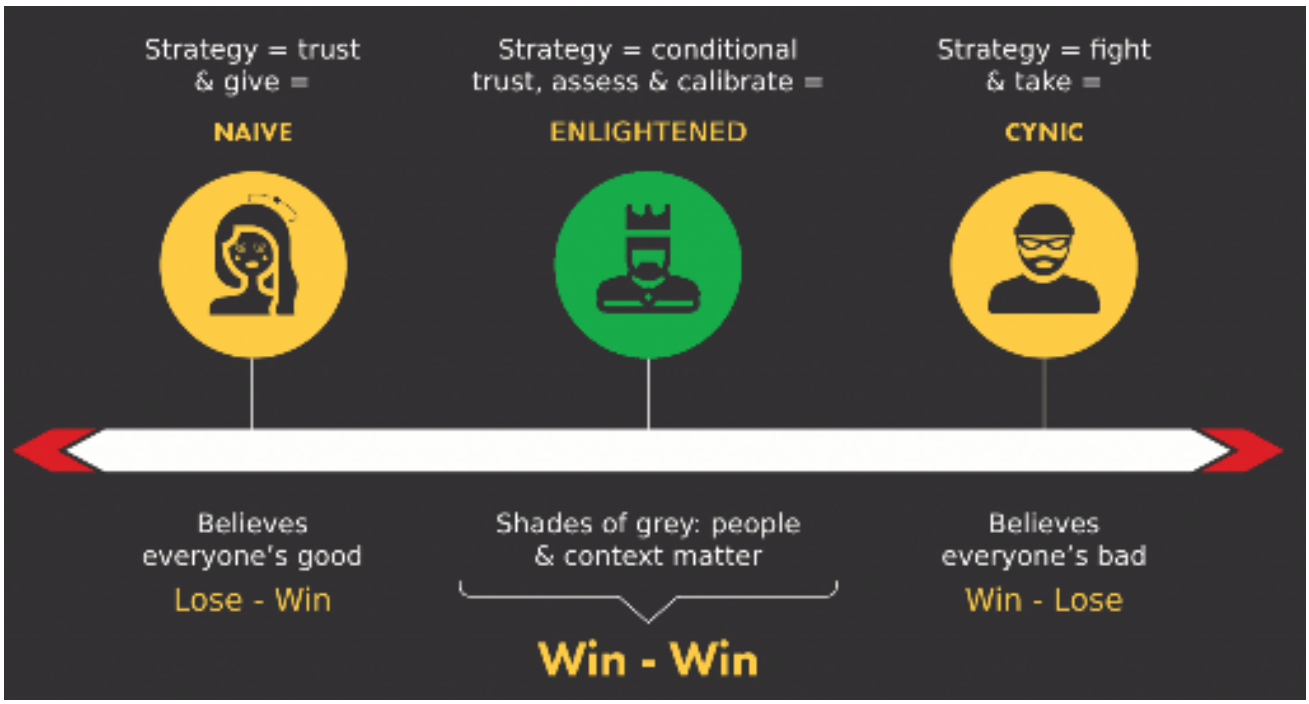
To me, this is a form of abundance mentality.

This is abundance mentality when it comes to "human resources".

Since there are countless of people, and a good chunk of them are awesome people happy to collaborate, it means that the scope of collaboration and win-win is almost infinite to you.

All you gotta do, is to find them.

Enlightened Collaborator Approach



The basic of smart collaboration is simple:

Collaborate with collaborators, and be extra careful with cheats.
Then, we add to increase the scope of cooperation, and "cover your ass" since few people are 100% honest or 100% cheats and most people are shades of grey who can turn either way.

This approach is sound.
It's based on positive cynicism, and proven power strategies.

The enlightened collaborator is power intelligent and, as such, a realist. He accepts that social exchanges entail a risk, since people are not always trustworthy and dependable, and interests can misalign with anyone.
It also accepts the reality that not only people's predispositions and characters differ, but that context also matters, and the same people can behave differently -or change behavior- as the context changes.

But the enlightened collaborator's approach runs deeper.
The enlightened collaborator takes it upon himself to protect the downsides while increasing the pie of the exchanges:

1. Incentivize and increase the scope of collaboration
2. Disincentive defection & cheating
3. Lead towards collaboration
4. Assess people's characters
5. Minimize "exchange risks"

1. Increase Scope for Collaboration

Since collaboration brings benefits to anyone, the enlightened collaborator *increases* the scope and opportunities for cooperation.

Some of the techniques he deploys:

1. **Make the pie larger**: so there is more for everyone
2. **Align interests**: the more you align interest, the better it is for both to collaborate, and to stick to collaboration. An example of aligning interest is to avoid paying a contractor based on hours, which incentivizes him to be ineffective, and pay instead for completed projects.

3. **Collaborative reframing**: the mindsets and techniques to turn and steer relationships towards win-win.
   It can be as simple as saying "I value you and our collaboration", which serves as a goodwill signal of your willingness to collaborate for win-win.
   Linked above is the example of collaborative reframing to improve a relationship that was teetering on the verge of competition and one-upmanship
   1. **Collaborative shaming**: "collaborative shaming" is a specific technique part of "collaborative reframing". It consists of shaming people who are playing win-lose games in an effort to lead them towards a more fruitful win-win for both. Collaborative shaming against shit-tests: an example on using collaborative shaming to handle female shit-tests
4. **Frame cementing**: once a positive and collaborative frame has been set "cementing" strengthens that frame and increases its power and its ability to influence behavior over the long term
   1. "I'm glad we agree": a power move to cap a win-win frame reminds people that you *both* agreed on a course of action that is good for *both*
5. **WIIFT**: approaching people with a mindset of "what's in it for them" increases the chances that they will see the exchange as win-win, which in turn increases the chances they will want to collaborate
6. **Sticking with value-adding collaborators**: so simple, yet such a crucial life hack. When you find good people in your life, keep them! You found a treasure, cherish it.

1.2. Gentleman Warrior Approach

Sometimes, you have a declared enemy.

And you both know it.

However, you still have two choices:

1. **Antagonize & hate** = turns an enemy into a bigger enemy
2. **Fight while respecting the opponent** = can turn an enemy into a smaller enemy

Let's take as an example former mafia boss Joseph Massino.
Massino took the Bonanno family when it was in tatters, and brought it back as the most powerful of the five New York families.
Massino always kept a "gentleman warrior" approach.

The mindset of the gentleman warrior approach is:

Yes, we're enemies and we want to beat each other. And I'll do be darn best to beat you. But we can still be courteous while we compete.

It's a bit like the mindset of "tough on ideas, but kind on people, which in this case becomes "**tough *in* the game/fight, but kind on the opponent *outside* of the game/fight**".

Massino imposed the same mindset and approach to all of his family.

It can take some emotional maturity to apply this mindset, and most people get swept away by the competitive spirit.

Let's see some applications in real life:

The Attitude of Antagonizing

> **Franzese**: I became a major target of law enforcement (exactly what you want to avoid), I was indicted 5 times, beat every case (that's a huge red flag: your enemy is dogged). Rudy told me "Franzese, if I convict you on this, you're gonna get double what your father got, I'm gonna give you 100 years. I said "Rudy, bring it on, I

> beat you 4 times, let's go for round 5.
> (now wise Franzese speaking) Guys, that's the dumbest thing you could ever do. You don't antagonize them (the FBI), they don't need any more incentives to come after you.

Exactly right, that type of attitude gives them incentives to come after you harder, and to punish you harder if they can catch you.
Furthermore, if convicted, you also provide them a valid reason to treat you like a devilish enemy -very different from a "gentleman's enemy"-.

That's an attitude that some criminals and mobsters have against the police.
And it only makes their life -as well as the police's life- harder.

Flaunting how you're "beating" them will also make your enemy more dogged in your pursuit.
See John Gotti or Al Capone.
They both might have stayed free far longer, if they had avoided the spotlight and the attitude of "I beat them and I rub it in".

The Effects of Antagonizing

From that same video:

> **Franzese**: I've witnessed some things that were kind of unpleasant, every once in a while the agents would get out of hand (goes on to tell a story of an FBI agent who ruins his family dinner, ends up drawing a gun)

Before the rights of detainees were extended, beatings of detainees were also common -of lower-level mobsters mostly, as cops were also probably worried of assaulting higher-power mobsters-.

Life's Mindset: The Gentleman Warrior Attitude

Now compare with Joseph Massino, who took a far more friendly with law enforcement:

> "Get used to my face, because you're going to see a lot of it for a long time", Pat Marshall, the agent who had been hunting Massino, forwarned when he was brought to FBI headquarters (Pat starts off with a competitive frame).
> Marshall recognizes that he was confronting an imperturbable foe. "He took my warning with a grain of salt and said calmly **no problem, do what you got to do**" (ignores the competitive frame, installs a gentleman's frame to competition)

Massino called the FBI agents by name, and was always courteous.
In one instance, he even defended an FBI agent who was being encircled and then gave him back the electronic surveillance device Massino had uncovered.

The Gentleman Warrior Effects

Being courteous towards your enemy might not prevent you from losing.

In our case study here, the law will still take its course.

But it won't hurt for sure, and it might as easily soften your loss, and shorten your sentence.

Plus, it will likely make the process, and the possible conviction, far easier on you.
From the same book:

> Picked up at his Howard Beach home, Massino politely asked to be cuffed outside, not in the presence of his

> wife and teenaged daughters.
> **"Because he was always the gentleman and cordial with us", Marshall granted him that favor.**

2. Decrease Scope for Defection

Let's start with the classics:

- **Increase the *costs* of defection**: there are many ways of going about it, spanning from fair and honest, to coercive and Machiavellian

As an example for coercively increasing the costs of defection, think of mafia organizations.
The mafia in Italy is said to be stronger than in the US.
One of the reasons might be because the Italian mafia has higher penalties for informers (cheaters). The penalties include going after the cheaters' families (attention; this is *not* to say that we approve of either mafia, or of that).

Massino was a master of Machiavellian collaboration.
Says mafia historian Selwyn Raab in "Five Families":

> Massino pressured captains and soldiers to volunteer their sons as made men (…) by recruiting offspring and placing them in the fathers' crews, the capos' lips would be sealed to protect their sons—and himself. And crew commanders would know that if they became traitors, their sons would be endangered by internal retaliation, possibly death. Massino insured that a defector would have a lot to lose.

More Techniques

You can never be 100% sure someone is not going to cheat.

But life is not about "100% certitudes", but a question of odds.
And there is plenty of things that the enlightened collaborators can do to increase the odds he deals with honest collaborators who will be adding value and not looking for ways to scam him.

1. **Assessing people**: the enlightened collaborator seeks knowledge of psychology and power dynamics to help him assess people and discern cynic defectors and "Machiavellian collaborators" from more honest collaborators
2. **Collaborative foot forward**: it means to start with collaboration and/or with a warm and friendly opening. the enlightenment collaborator, knowing psychology, knows that the best way to start a win-win is to open with a win-win. That approaches increases social trust right off from the bat and makes more friends and allies.
3. **Strings-attached giving**: give, but while keeping some form of leverage (ie.: the option of taking something back)
4. **Test-giving**: give freely, demand nothing back, act like you don't care. Then, keep an eye on who is grateful for your giving, who is not, and who just asks for more
5. **Looking dumber**: this works both to test people, and to increase the odds that a possible attack or manipulation will be easy to fend off, or to recoup from, since people will be more careless
6. **Keeping a few aces up his sleeve**: imagine you got an alarm system and a motion-activated camera recording system. You can share about the alarm, but you keep the information about the camera private. You never know who you catch going through your stuff
7. **Silver medal technique**: to decrease the incentives for lying and cheating by making it about two attractive options one can get, rather than about an attractive option, or nothing

And, finally, when win-win exchanges are not possible:

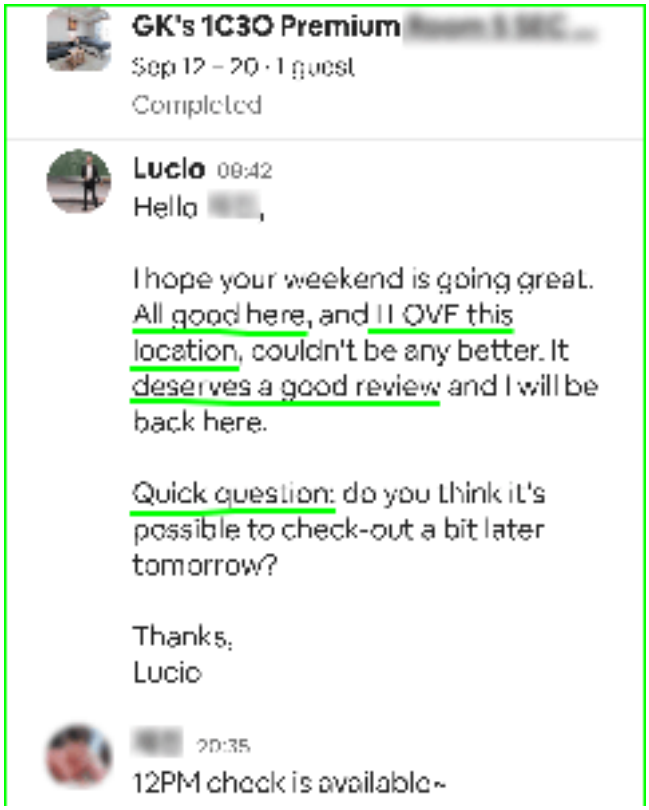
1. **Keeping a safe distance**: once you spot a manipulator, always avoid getting too close. Either cut them out, fade them, or keep them at a distance

2. **Seek power to avoid win-lose**: the enlightened collaborator knows that powerlessness is dangerous. When you have no power, you are the equivalent of the lamb hoping there are no wolves

Social exchange techniques

And some more slightly elaborated techniques:

- **Fair value marketing**: one of the core techniques of win-win framing and strengthening.
  - Promotion: to promote one's value-provision effectively, and in a way that they are recognized by the other party.
  - Appreciation: to appreciate the value contributions of other(s) to make them feel valued and appreciated. It also indirectly frames the exchange as win-win, while encouraging them to keep on giving to meet your appreciation and gratitude (can turn into a positive judge frame). Example in Power University.
- **Here's tit, where's tat**: a technique to give or to remind of your value giving before you ask for something. It serves to remind people that you have given in good fait and it increases the odds they'll give back
- **Credit collection**: to remind people of your value giving, which indirectly reminds them that it's also supposed of them to remain collaborative and give back
- **Positive displays of leverage**: to remind people of your leverage in the exchange, but to do so within a positive frame.
  See an example here:



"It deserves a good review" is a positive display of leverage, as it indirectly reminds him of my negotiation leverage on him.

For more, also read: "fundamental strategies of power".

3. Protect Your Downsides

This is part and parcel of Machiavellian strategic thinking.

You do everything possible to remain win-win, but… You can never be sure that it will stay that way.

So, to be on the safe side, do all the above, plus prepare for the possibility of cheating and defecting.

A popular example of protecting one's downsides is a prenup agreement

Dating With Enlightened Collaboration

The enlightened collaborator mindset covers dating and relationships as well.

Depending on the partner, early dating might require less -or more strategic- giving and more strategic display of value and/or power in the beginning, see:

- **Leadership in dating**
- **Dominance in dating**

But as the relationship unfolds collaboration and win-win come back to the fore for developing a strong and healthy relationship:

- **How to maintain power and attraction**

Or famed researcher John Gottman says that strong relationships have collaborating partners who build each other up and share power and influence (Gottman, 1999):

- **Accepting influence**: The key to relationship success

4. Be A Strategic Giver

We're all for free-giving here.

Especially once you reach the final stage of empowerment where you achieve all your goals.

However, when you're still in your "achieve phase", it may be better to be a strategic giver.
And especially so when you're in competitive environments.
Especially workplaces that cover the competition with a layer of "selfless team first".

Strategic giving includes:

- **Give to those who *can* give back**. Often, it's people around your same value, or higher value
- **Give to those who *do* give back**. Watch out for higher-value people who sometimes feel entitled to take from the below
- **Stay neutral with those who have nothing to give**. Simply avoid any meaningful relationship with them. Be cordial, but maintain an "arm's length approach" to avoid making enemies

When Needed: Machiavellian Collaboration

Finally:

the enlightened collaborator is not just stuck to "collaborate" or "non collaborate".

And he can also adopt a strategy of "opportunistic collaboration" mixed with "opportunistic defection".

The name "Machiavellian collaboration" might sound devious and amoral and, in some cases, it *is* amoral.
But, in some situations, it can be fair game.

In competitive environments where one person only can win, the enlightened collaborator might prefer to avoid entering any win-win exchange if he feels that he gives more value than he takes.

This can be an effective strategy in dating, for example, as well as in workplace environments.
Workplaces are grey areas environments that are not fully zero-sum, but where rewards and promotions are not infinite either.

We already showed that Machiavellians tend to win in the office.
But which strategy will work depends on *your* context, so you must judge what's effective on a case by case basis.

For more, refer to:

- Career strategies: an overview
- 4 Career strategies for quick promotion

SUMMARY

One man brings wine, one cheese. They both met in the middle of the bridge they built to both be better off. It's economics 101

A collaborator mindset is what allows you to establish win-win relationships.

The enlightened collaborator, equipped and trained with power dynamics knowledge, is the next step along the line of personal evolution.

But it all starts with a collaborator's mindset first, and the belief that collaboration is possible.
Don't let the cynics drag you down.
Make friends, and develop value-adding relationships, instead. I've personally experienced it hundreds of times.
And life is much better that way.

The Power of Effective Cynicism: Win in a World of Self-Interest While Remaining Optimistic & Honorable

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

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From a power and incentive perspective, cynicism is a **strategic posture**: it can protect against exploitation, but it can also destroy cooperation, trust, and long-term gains when taken too far.

This article introduces **effective cynicism™**, a calibrated approach that acknowledges self-interest and power dynamics without collapsing into blanket distrust or corrosive negativity. We show why the most effective strategy is neither naïve cooperation nor chronic suspicion, but a balance between strategic cooperation and self-protection.

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There is some truth in that because **humans *are* self-interested**.
Just like any autonomous living creature, self-interest is crucial for survival and reproduction.

However, excessive cynicism becomes self-defeating, and cynicism is only helpful within certain limits and with good calibration.
To be effective, cynicism must accept the possibility and benefits of cooperation, and pursue, secure, and maintain win-win whenever it's beneficial.

Cynicism

While cynicism comes from a backdrop of truth, the cynic *over*-generalizes cynical attitudes and behavior to all humans and all situations, and includes the following beliefs:

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Such as: "give and everything will fall into place".
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With this 'soft' self-help, it's not difficult to see how authors like Robert Greene could be so successful with more cynical guides to power.
Similarly some branches of feminism and the red pill both make valid points but also frame intersexual dynamics as adversarial and zero-sum, both thriving as reactions to naïve dating and relationship narratives.

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Advantages

After all, if cynicism even exists, it means that it must have served some fuction.
Evolutionary theories indeed suggest that overly agreeable men may put themselves at risk of being cheated, while cynicism may help avoid exploitation (Workman and Reader, 2021).

So among the advantages, cynicism:

- **Protects you** against exploitation
  - Sense of safety, although this can often be an escape, driven by fear
- **Prepares you** for worst-case scenarios
- **Predisposes for short-term gains** with a defector approach ⚠ This only works when well-executed in one-offs and when others have no power for revenge
- **Works in some situations**, like objectively zero-sum scenarios, or when win-win is no more possible

Duels are zero-sum games. Thinking outside the box, one could raise his hand to stop the game, or throw the gun away as a collaborative step forward. Great strategies for those who aren't expert shooters

Costs

Cynicism costs include:

- **Missed opportunities for win-win**
  - Premature break-up of win-wins in fear of defection
- **Paranoia**
- **Poorer relationships**

- **Drives away cooperators**, leading to lower quality social life and…
- **Lower life quality** and mental health

For the latter, John Gottman's research shows that highly mistrustful men -such as, cynics- die significantly younger (Gottman, 2011).
In relationships, these men withdraw from relationships in fear of being taken advantage of (we call this approach "fearful defector", and it's a consequence of a "defensive mindset").

Cynicism Long-Term Failure: Game Theory

Trivers' seminal work on social evolution introduced reciprocal altruism as mutually beneficial.
Reciprocal altruism requires the belief that, despite the possibility of defection, people can cooperate for a win-win outcome, rather than defaulting to continuous defection.

Trivers' theory provided the evolutionary basis later formalized by Axelrod through game-theoretic models of repeated cooperation.
Consider this variation of the prisoner's dilemma:

		Al	
		Cooperate	Compete
Bob	Cooperate	$10, $10	$0, $20
	Compete	$20, $0	$1, $1

The payoff for the different approaches are:

- **Win-win**: $10 for both with mutual cooperation
- **Win-lose**: $20 for the defector when the other collaborates (cheating)
- **Lose-lose**: $1 for mutual defection

The cynical cheater "wins big" the first time when playing against a cooperator.
But as soon as the game is repeated, the collaborator most likely adjusts his strategy to defect as well, and the game turns into a lose-lose for both. The defector strategy quickly turns into a losing strategy.
In game theory, defecting players remain stuck with the little pay-offs of their defensive strategies (the Nash Equilibrium). But that equilibrium, also called "manipulation equilibrium point", leads to Pareto-inefficient results (Clempner, 2016).

In simpler terms: in repeated games where win-win is possible, **the more you interact, the poorer the defector strategy performs**.
Cooperative players who gain the trust of trustworthy players instead leverage win-win relationships and reap bigger

rewards with each transaction.

In real life, repeated games are our daily and most important relationships, ranging from our spouses, children, parents, siblings, friends and neighbors.
Cynics tend to underperform in life relationships.

The Different Mindsets Leading to Totally Opposite Lives

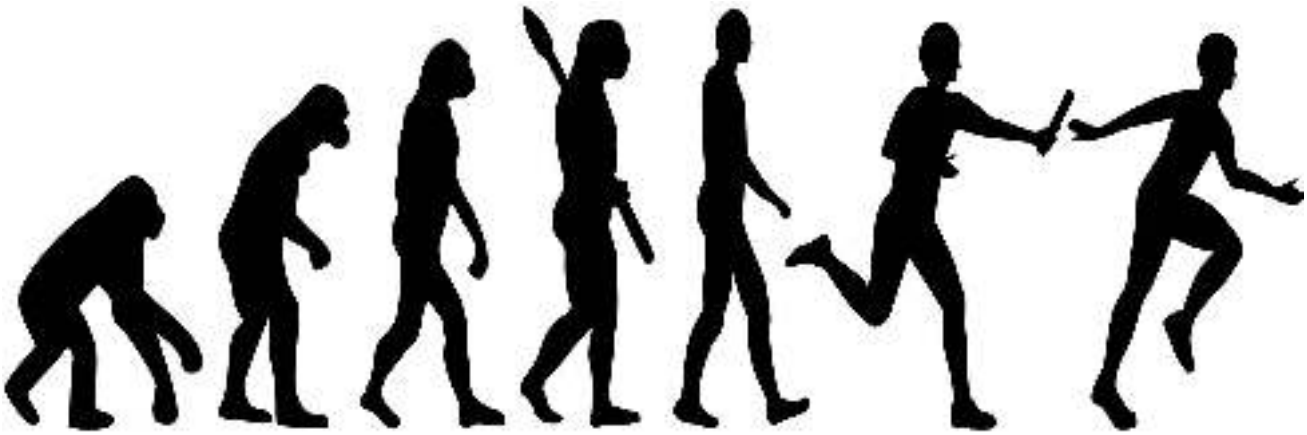
Post-interviews confirm the two different mindsets of collaboration and defection (cynic).

Cooperators who played against defectors shrug it off saying that the game is just like real life, and there are all different sorts of people.
And they walk away that are *still* open to future collaboration and win-win.

But the defector?
The defector has shaped his own reality of win-lose, and he will walk away thinking that he is right all along in refusing the possibility of win-win.

The Evolution of Cynicism: Towards Balance

Several branches of scientific inquiry moved from excesses of over-cynicism and over-trusting to settle around an 'effectively cynical' middle.



Evolutionary Psychology

Early evolutionary thought missed some cynicism.

Hamilton was one of the first to deliver an 'effectively cynical recalibration' when he noted that by evolutionary logic, communication among animals should also include manipulation.
And Dawkins' book "The Selfish Gene" made the more cynical view of evolutionary processes mainstream.

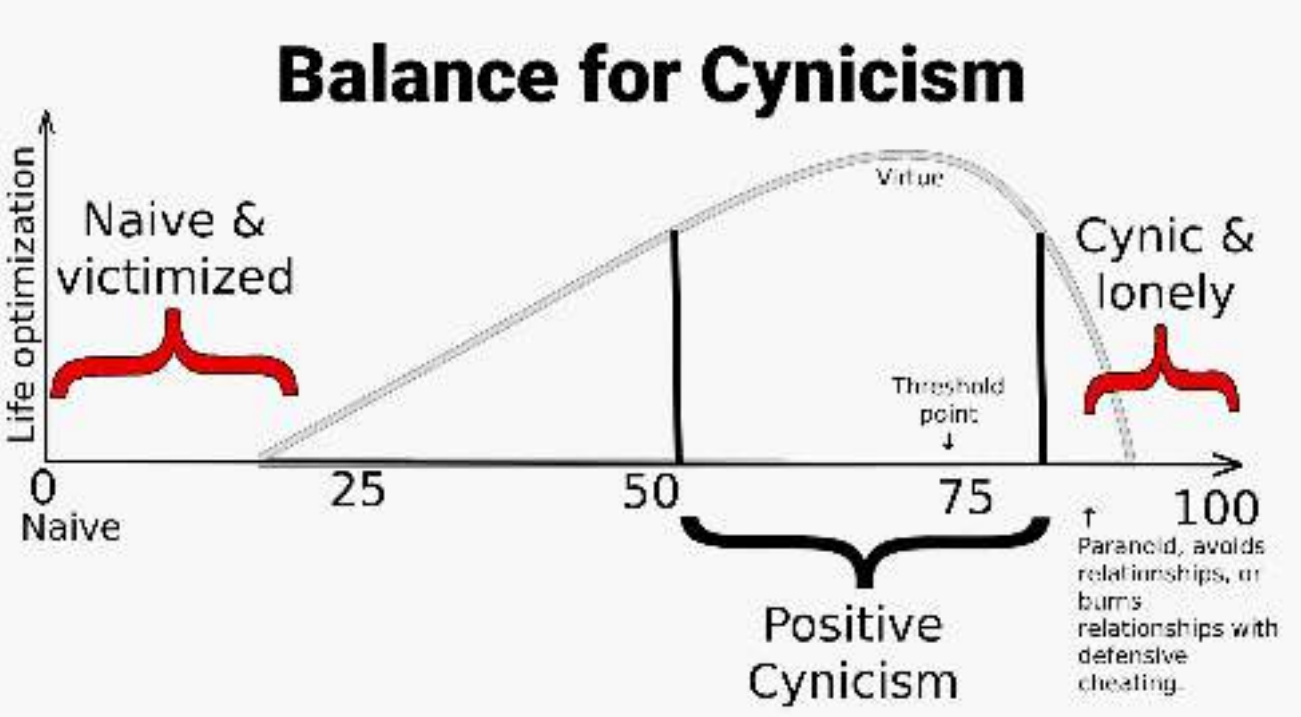
However, as science progressed, it also recalibrated towards a more balanced view.
For example, Dawkins took stock of the new scientific evidence and in more recent versions of "*The Selfish Gene*" he writes:

> Cooperation and mutual assistance can flourish even in a basically selfish world (…) **we can see how even nice guys can finish first**.

Dawkins went as far as to say that he could have called his book "The Cooperative Gene".
Today, most evolutionary psychologists agree that **cooperation emerged because it's (also) good for the selfish individual** (Ridley, 1994).

This approach better explains why traits like kindness or altruism evolved, are maintained, and are even sought after.

Finally, evolutionary biology supports what can be called a law of optimum balance through stabilizing selection: when **intermediate levels of a trait maximize fitness**, while both extremes tend to be maladaptive (Schmalhausen, 1949).
Excessive naïveté invites exploitation, while excessive cynicism undermines cooperation and long-term gains.



People Seek & Value Cooperators, Not Cynics

People instinctively know that 'cooperativeness' is better, and this is probably why kindness is one of the most sought-after traits in ideal mates (Buss, 2016).

Human kindness and altruism have been possibly selected through sexual selection (Boone, 1998, and Miller, 2000). This means that a collaborative attitude has at least the potential of also boosting one's own sexual market value, especially for long-term relationships.

Behavioral Economics

The "homo economicus" from the Chicago School of Economics operates rationally and optimizes transactions for self-interest.

The homo economicus was, in way, selfishly calculative.
It wasn't fully wrong, of course, and the failure wasn't its focus on self-interest. Unfortunately it still also applies well in common goods scenarios where defection can improve the individual's life at the detriment of the collectivity (Berz, 2016), without even feeling immoral.
The failure was its **Bounded Rationality**. It failed to calculate the massive economic value of **Social Capital** and the long-term ROI of good relationships, good reputation within a high-stakes network, and true human psychology.

And as psychology and economics merged, the emerging field of behavioral economics delivered those better models.
The new man, sometimes quipped "homo reciprocans", accounted for feelings and preferences for win-wins, and sought collaboration and mutual gains (see Thaler, 2015).

Later research has also shown that homo reciprocans tend to be more successful in life and, unsurprisingly, to have higher life satisfaction (see Dohmen et al., 2006)

Negotiation Studies

Western negotiation literature used to be more power-centered and cynical, focused on leverage and grabbing as much as possible of the negotiation pie.
In modern negotiation science, the uncollaborative approach is sometimes referred to as “fixed pied mindset” (Malotra, 2007).

Things started to change with seminal work from Ury and Fisher, which focused on understanding other people’s needs and trying to make the pie larger first and foremost.
Influence and persuasion studies also showed that a more strategically giving attitude could deliver better results. Cialdini, for example, wrote in his seminal “Influence” that concessions lead to better negotiation results (Cialdini, 1984).

Strategic Giving For Life Success

These shifts shouldn’t be confused with naive giving and to work, they must go hand-in-hand with power and strategy.
However, they showed that pure cynicism tends to underperform a ‘smart-giving’ attitude when backed by power, and strategic thinking.

Psychologist Adam Grant’s investigation into the give-and-take approaches to social exchanges showed that strategic givers tend to be most successful in life.

Effective Cynicism

Effective cynicism accepts the premise of self-interest as ultimate motivation, while also accepting human general preference for win-win and not cheating.

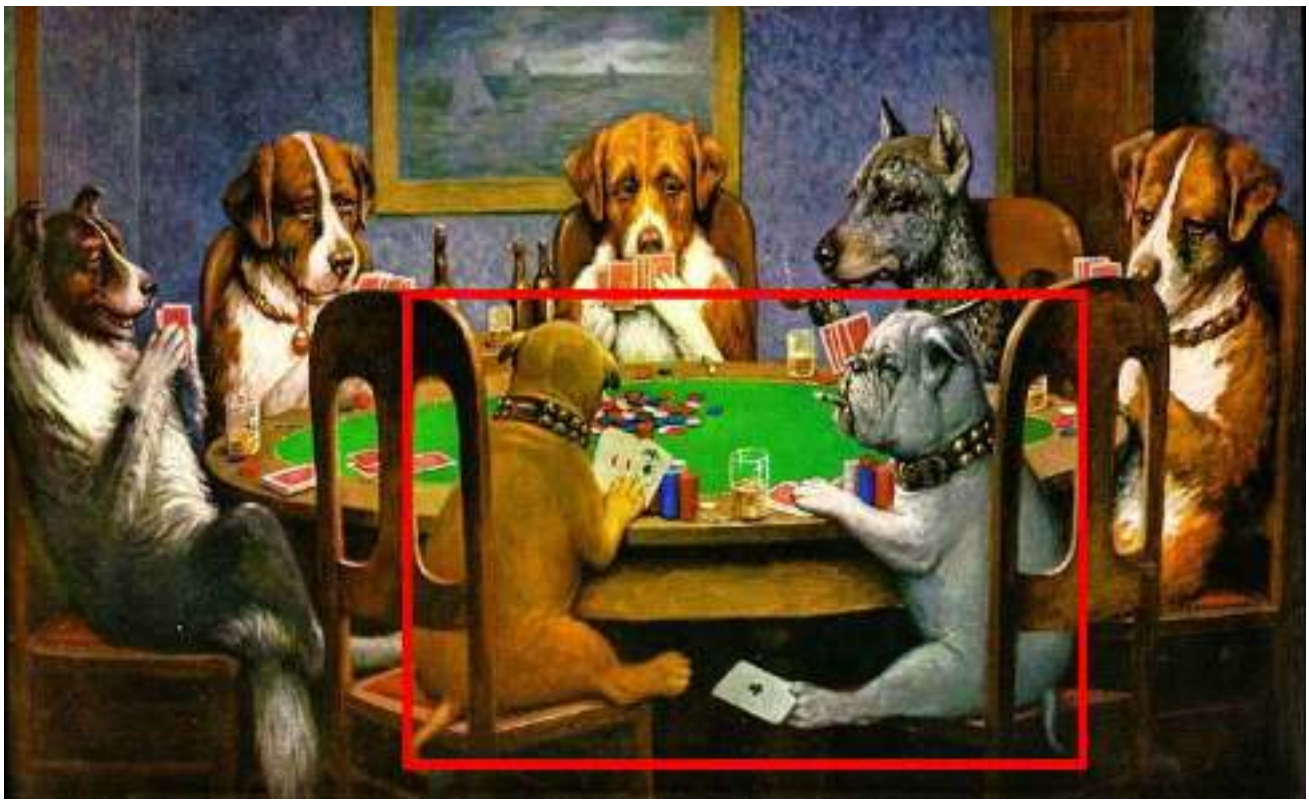
The effective cynic is power aware, he knows that, despite the generalized preference for not cheating, people differ, and some have no qualms about cheating. Furthermore, context matters, and even good people can be tempted to cheat and defect when the payoff makes it worth it.

Effective cynicism is the mental foundation of the smart collaborator approach to socialization: seek win-win, but do it smart, and protect yourself against the risks of defection.

Benefits

- **Allows for win-win**
- **Expands win-win**, looking for win-wins, ‘growing the pie for both’, and maintaining it
- **Attracts and maintains givers** in one’s life
- **Mental health**
- **Better relationships**
  - higher life quality, as research shows that humans are happier and healthier when they enjoy strong relationships

Effective Machiavellianism



Effective cynicism isn't about being 'nice', but about being realists.
One could be an effective cynic while also being a ruthless Machiavellian operator: making the most of cooperation, and making the most out of cheating as well.

For example, one could start off more cooperatively to invite others' cooperation, only to defect later for a large payoff once he's ready to move on.
Or one may look for naive players that allow for skewed win-wins where the Machiavellian players take the lion's share of the benefits. There is some evidence that dark triads may use this approach (Brunell et al., 2013).

A Machiavellian approach may provide some benefits *if one can well-execute it* (a big if, since over time this attitude can show). But it also comes with costs in life satisfaction (Bereckzei, 2017; Myl-Heku and Buss, 1996).

If one doesn't care about psychological costs, in terms of pure selfish results, a purely Machiavellian approach can outperform.
Choosing value-adding over predation is therefore an ethical constraint, not a misunderstanding of power. TPM teaches what works, but prefers honorable approaches that pair maximal effectiveness with value creation and win-win outcomes.

Putting Effective Cynicism to Work

The challenge lies in real-world calibration.
Knowing exactly when to lean into trust and when to deploy strategic skepticism is what separates the elite strategist from the perpetual target.

If you are ready to move beyond "low-resolution realism" and master the high-stakes execution of win-win, Power University is the next logical step.
It provides the field-tested blueprints to detect manipulation, build high-value alliances, and command respect in any environment, ensuring you never have to choose between being effective and being honorable.

Check Power University

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After all, if cynicism even exists, it means that it must have served some fuction.
Evolutionary theories indeed suggest that overly agreeable men may put themselves at risk of being cheated, while cynicism may help avoid exploitation (Workman and Reader, 2021).

So among the advantages, cynicism:

- **Protects you** against exploitation
  - Sense of safety, although this can often be an escape, driven by fear
- **Prepares you** for worst-case scenarios
- **Predisposes for short-term gains** with a defector approach ⚠ This only works when well-executed in one-offs and when others have no power for revenge
- **Works in some situations**, like objectively zero-sum scenarios, or when win-win is no more possible

Duels are zero-sum games. Thinking outside the box, one could raise his hand to stop the game, or throw the gun away as a collaborative step forward. Great strategies for those who aren't expert shooters

Costs

Cynicism costs include:

- **Missed opportunities for win-win**
  - Premature break-up of win-wins in fear of defection
- **Paranoia**
- **Poorer relationships**

- **Drives away cooperators**, leading to lower quality social life and…
- **Lower life quality** and mental health

For the latter, John Gottman's research shows that highly mistrustful men -such as, cynics- die significantly younger (Gottman, 2011).
In relationships, these men withdraw from relationships in fear of being taken advantage of (we call this approach "fearful defector", and it's a consequence of a "defensive mindset").

Cynicism Long-Term Failure: Game Theory

Trivers' seminal work on social evolution introduced reciprocal altruism as mutually beneficial.
Reciprocal altruism requires the belief that, despite the possibility of defection, people can cooperate for a win-win outcome, rather than defaulting to continuous defection.

Trivers' theory provided the evolutionary basis later formalized by Axelrod through game-theoretic models of repeated cooperation.
Consider this variation of the prisoner's dilemma:

		Al	
		Cooperate	Compete
Bob	Cooperate	$10, $10	$0, $20
	Compete	$20, $0	$1, $1

The payoff for the different approaches are:

- **Win-win**: $10 for both with mutual cooperation
- **Win-lose**: $20 for the defector when the other collaborates (cheating)
- **Lose-lose**: $1 for mutual defection

The cynical cheater "wins big" the first time when playing against a cooperator.
But as soon as the game is repeated, the collaborator most likely adjusts his strategy to defect as well, and the game turns into a lose-lose for both. The defector strategy quickly turns into a losing strategy.
In game theory, defecting players remain stuck with the little pay-offs of their defensive strategies (the Nash Equilibrium). But that equilibrium, also called "manipulation equilibrium point", leads to Pareto-inefficient results (Clempner, 2016).

In simpler terms: in repeated games where win-win is possible, **the more you interact, the poorer the defector strategy performs**.
Cooperative players who gain the trust of trustworthy players instead leverage win-win relationships and reap bigger

rewards with each transaction.

In real life, repeated games are our daily and most important relationships, ranging from our spouses, children, parents, siblings, friends and neighbors.
Cynics tend to underperform in life relationships.

The Different Mindsets Leading to Totally Opposite Lives

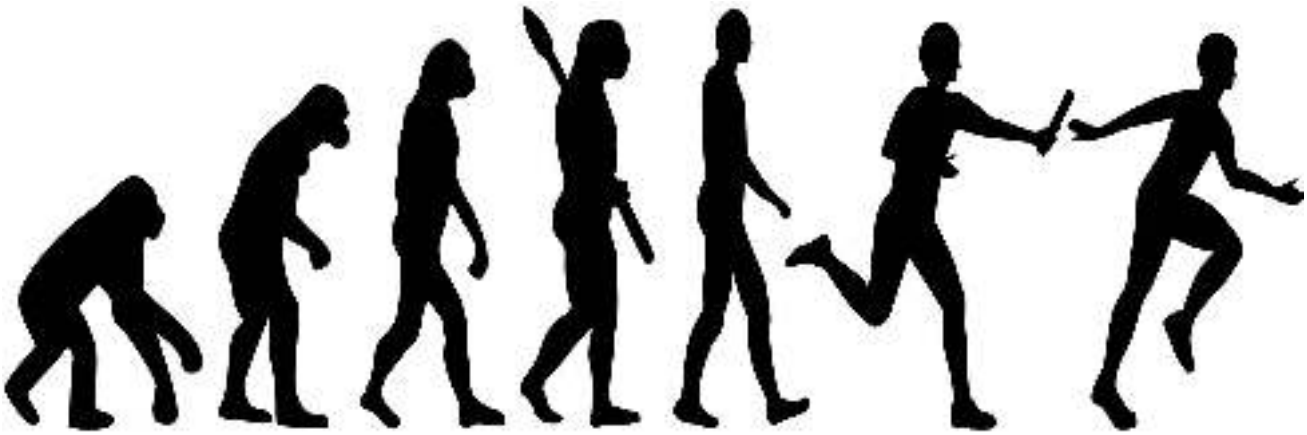
Post-interviews confirm the two different mindsets of collaboration and defection (cynic).

Cooperators who played against defectors shrug it off saying that the game is just like real life, and there are all different sorts of people.
And they walk away that are *still* open to future collaboration and win-win.

But the defector?
The defector has shaped his own reality of win-lose, and he will walk away thinking that he is right all along in refusing the possibility of win-win.

The Evolution of Cynicism: Towards Balance

Several branches of scientific inquiry moved from excesses of over-cynicism and over-trusting to settle around an 'effectively cynical' middle.



Evolutionary Psychology

Early evolutionary thought missed some cynicism.

Hamilton was one of the first to deliver an 'effectively cynical recalibration' when he noted that by evolutionary logic, communication among animals should also include manipulation.
And Dawkins' book "The Selfish Gene" made the more cynical view of evolutionary processes mainstream.

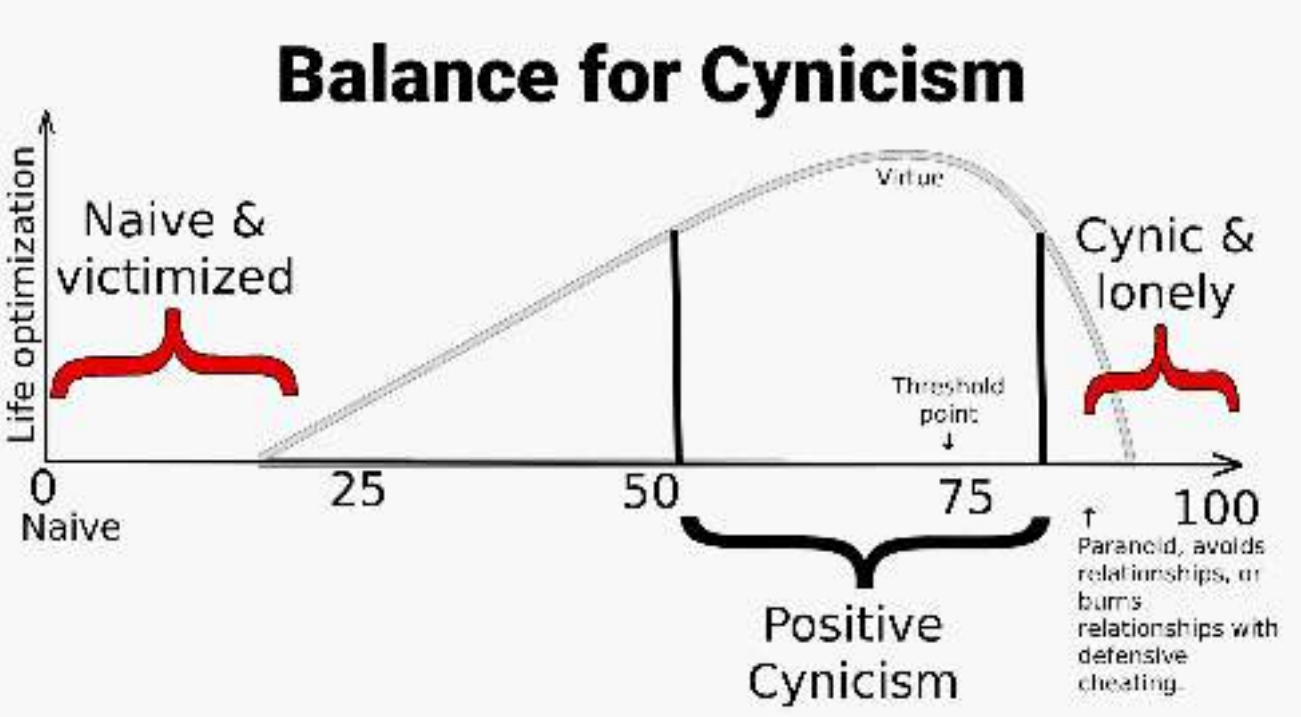
However, as science progressed, it also recalibrated towards a more balanced view.
For example, Dawkins took stock of the new scientific evidence and in more recent versions of "*The Selfish Gene*" he writes:

> Cooperation and mutual assistance can flourish even in a basically selfish world (…) **we can see how even nice guys can finish first**.

Dawkins went as far as to say that he could have called his book "The Cooperative Gene".
Today, most evolutionary psychologists agree that **cooperation emerged because it's (also) good for the selfish individual** (Ridley, 1994).

This approach better explains why traits like kindness or altruism evolved, are maintained, and are even sought after.

Finally, evolutionary biology supports what can be called a law of optimum balance through stabilizing selection: when **intermediate levels of a trait maximize fitness**, while both extremes tend to be maladaptive (Schmalhausen, 1949).
Excessive naïveté invites exploitation, while excessive cynicism undermines cooperation and long-term gains.



People Seek & Value Cooperators, Not Cynics

People instinctively know that 'cooperativeness' is better, and this is probably why kindness is one of the most sought-after traits in ideal mates (Buss, 2016).

Human kindness and altruism have been possibly selected through sexual selection (Boone, 1998, and Miller, 2000). This means that a collaborative attitude has at least the potential of also boosting one's own sexual market value, especially for long-term relationships.

Behavioral Economics

The "homo economicus" from the Chicago School of Economics operates rationally and optimizes transactions for self-interest.

The homo economicus was, in way, selfishly calculative.
It wasn't fully wrong, of course, and the failure wasn't its focus on self-interest. Unfortunately it still also applies well in common goods scenarios where defection can improve the individual's life at the detriment of the collectivity (Berz, 2016), without even feeling immoral.
The failure was its **Bounded Rationality**. It failed to calculate the massive economic value of **Social Capital** and the long-term ROI of good relationships, good reputation within a high-stakes network, and true human psychology.

And as psychology and economics merged, the emerging field of behavioral economics delivered those better models.
The new man, sometimes quipped "homo reciprocans", accounted for feelings and preferences for win-wins, and sought collaboration and mutual gains (see Thaler, 2015).

Later research has also shown that homo reciprocans tend to be more successful in life and, unsurprisingly, to have higher life satisfaction (see Dohmen et al., 2006)

Negotiation Studies

Western negotiation literature used to be more power-centered and cynical, focused on leverage and grabbing as much as possible of the negotiation pie.
In modern negotiation science, the uncollaborative approach is sometimes referred to as “fixed pied mindset” (Malotra, 2007).

Things started to change with seminal work from Ury and Fisher, which focused on understanding other people’s needs and trying to make the pie larger first and foremost.
Influence and persuasion studies also showed that a more strategically giving attitude could deliver better results. Cialdini, for example, wrote in his seminal “Influence” that concessions lead to better negotiation results (Cialdini, 1984).

Strategic Giving For Life Success

These shifts shouldn’t be confused with naive giving and to work, they must go hand-in-hand with power and strategy.
However, they showed that pure cynicism tends to underperform a ‘smart-giving’ attitude when backed by power, and strategic thinking.

Psychologist Adam Grant’s investigation into the give-and-take approaches to social exchanges showed that strategic givers tend to be most successful in life.

Effective Cynicism

Effective cynicism accepts the premise of self-interest as ultimate motivation, while also accepting human general preference for win-win and not cheating.

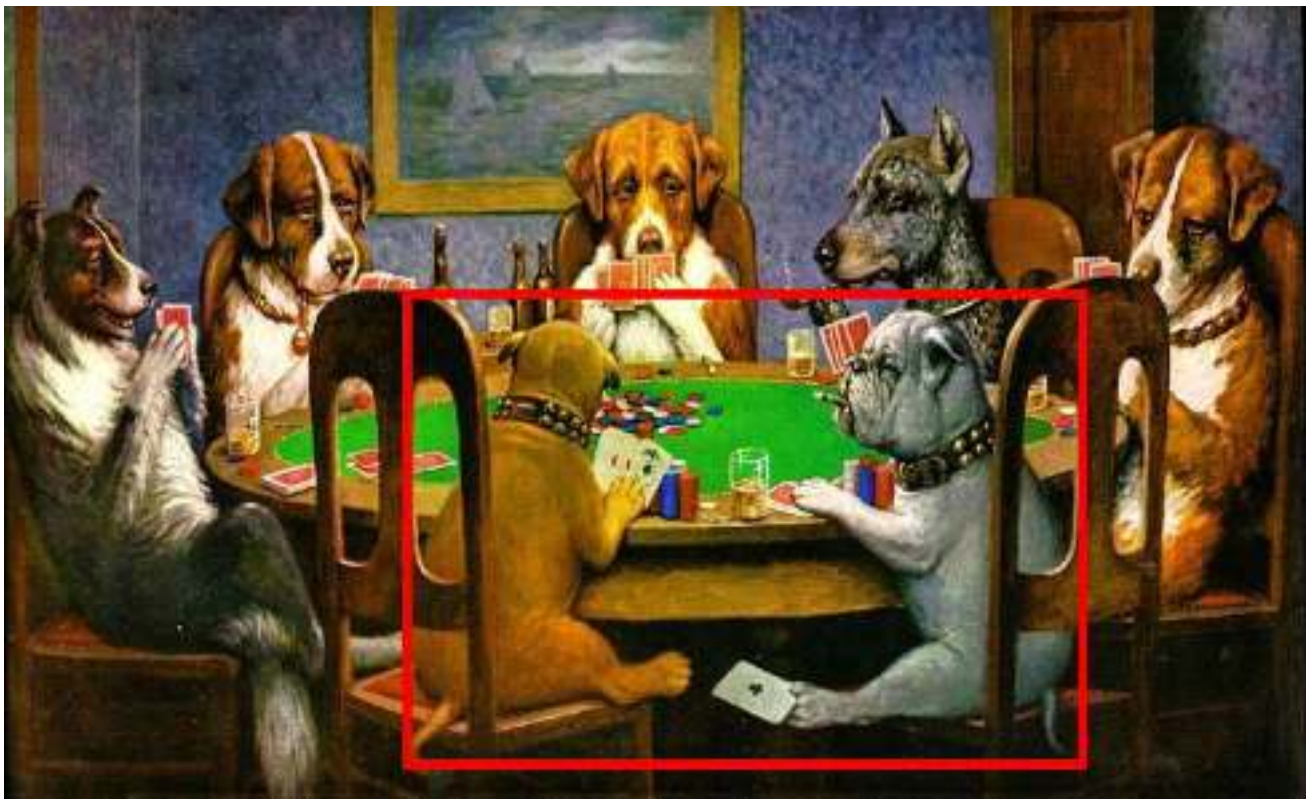
The effective cynic is power aware, he knows that, despite the generalized preference for not cheating, people differ, and some have no qualms about cheating. Furthermore, context matters, and even good people can be tempted to cheat and defect when the payoff makes it worth it.

Effective cynicism is the mental foundation of the smart collaborator approach to socialization: seek win-win, but do it smart, and protect yourself against the risks of defection.

Benefits

- **Allows for win-win**
- **Expands win-win**, looking for win-wins, ‘growing the pie for both’, and maintaining it
- **Attracts and maintains givers** in one’s life
- **Mental health**
- **Better relationships**
  - higher life quality, as research shows that humans are happier and healthier when they enjoy strong relationships

Effective Machiavellianism



Effective cynicism isn't about being 'nice', but about being realists.
One could be an effective cynic while also being a ruthless Machiavellian operator: making the most of cooperation, and making the most out of cheating as well.

For example, one could start off more cooperatively to invite others' cooperation, only to defect later for a large payoff once he's ready to move on.
Or one may look for naive players that allow for skewed win-wins where the Machiavellian players take the lion's share of the benefits. There is some evidence that dark triads may use this approach (Brunell et al., 2013).

A Machiavellian approach may provide some benefits *if one can well-execute it* (a big if, since over time this attitude can show). But it also comes with costs in life satisfaction (Bereckzei, 2017; Myl-Heku and Buss, 1996).

If one doesn't care about psychological costs, in terms of pure selfish results, a purely Machiavellian approach can outperform.
Choosing value-adding over predation is therefore an ethical constraint, not a misunderstanding of power. TPM teaches what works, but prefers honorable approaches that pair maximal effectiveness with value creation and win-win outcomes.

Putting Effective Cynicism to Work

The challenge lies in real-world calibration.
Knowing exactly when to lean into trust and when to deploy strategic skepticism is what separates the elite strategist from the perpetual target.

If you are ready to move beyond "low-resolution realism" and master the high-stakes execution of win-win, Power University is the next logical step.
It provides the field-tested blueprints to detect manipulation, build high-value alliances, and command respect in any environment, ensuring you never have to choose between being effective and being honorable.

Check Power University

Microaggressions: Meaning, Examples & How to Handle Them

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Microaggressions are not just about racism or political debates.
They are everyday covert power moves—little jabs, disguised "jokes," or subtle undermining behaviors—that chip away at respect and influence.

In this guide, I'll break down what microaggressions really mean, how they differ from passive aggression and covert aggression, and give you clear examples and strategies to handle them.

We've coached thousands of men on spotting and neutralizing these status-lowering tactics. By the end, you'll be able to see microaggressions for what they are—and respond without losing power.

Contents

- A Microaggression Is…
  - Example of Microaggression
- Skills to Handle Microaggressions
  - 1. Learn to assess the level of aggression
  - 2. Learn to spot nonverbal microaggressions
  - 3. Learn to spot and handle the sub-communication
  - 4. Calibrate & keep your eyes on your goal
  - ⍰ Quiz
- (Mis-)Calibrating Against Microaggressions
  - #1. Aggression VS Microaggression
  - #2. Aggression VS Covert-aggression
  - #3. Manipulative Microaggression VS Aggression

A Microaggression Is…

Any disempowering words or behavior that is of low or moderate intensity of directness or aggression

In "microaggression" we include:

- Covert power moves / Covert aggressions / disempowering covert frames
- Passive-aggressiveness / frenemies
- Social climbing / power scalping
- Undermining / Status scalping
- Micro revenge
- Teasing / mean jokes / ballbusting / micro one-uppings
- Smaller shit tests / loyalty tests

For simplicity think of these as "little everyday games", "frenemy", and general turkey behavior.

Albeit not overly aggressive or super obvious, they are still red flags of character ⍰.
And they're still damaging. Harmful to relationships, and disempowering -including to self-esteem-.

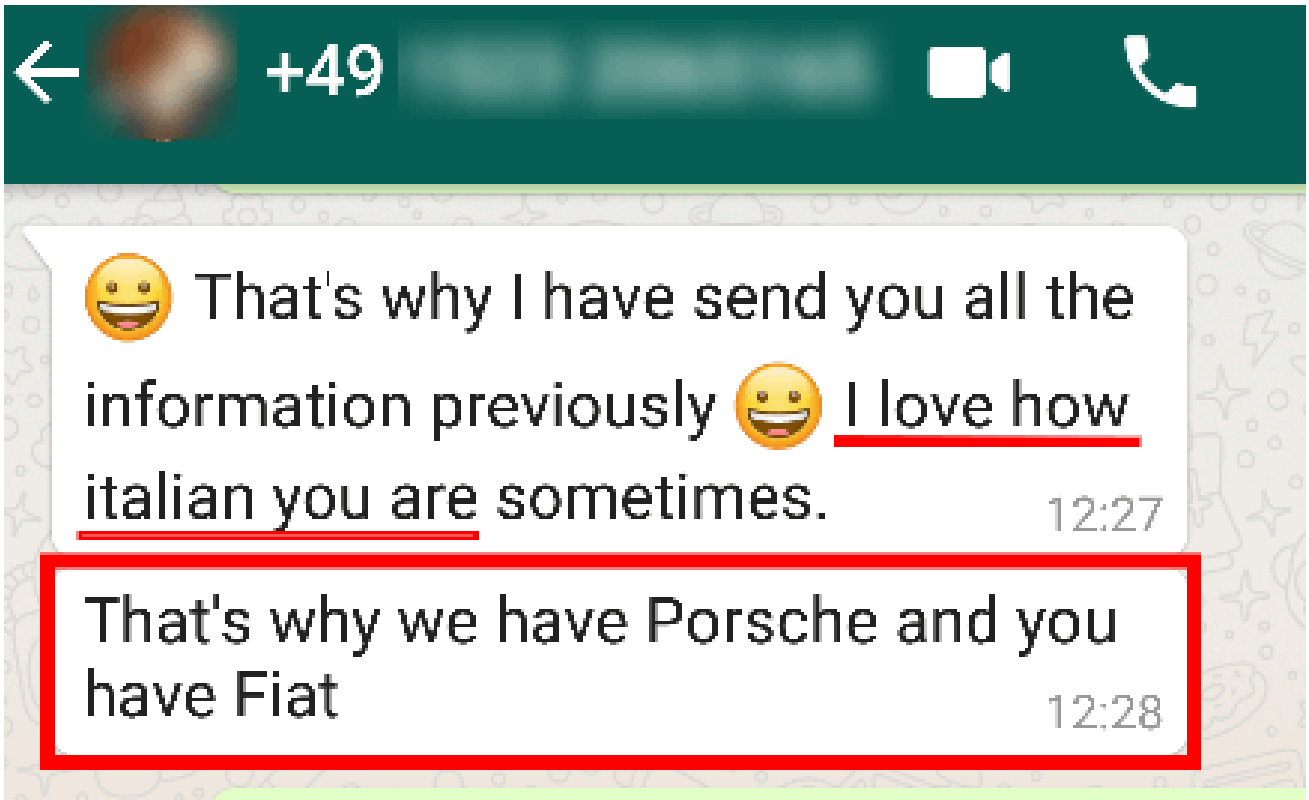
Especially when part of a pattern:

⚠⍰ **Remember the "death by a thousand cut" law.**

Many unchecked microaggressions add up to decrease status, respect, and attraction by *a lot*.

Example of Microaggression

A more prototypical example of microaggression as used in common parlance:



> **Him**: I love how Italian you sound <— microaggression. Frames an individual with his ethnic background, rather than respectfully treating him as an individual. But it's covert behind the word "love" and "sometimes"
> That's why we have Porsche and you have Fiat <— this "joke" suggests that the "love" he mentioned before doesn't include much respect

In this example of microaggression, the more typical microaggression is actually the first part.
The one that says "I love how… ".
It's also a covert aggression because of the (fake) frame of "loving".

The second part instead is more openly aggressive, and thus doesn't qualify as microaggression.

Skills to Handle Microaggressions

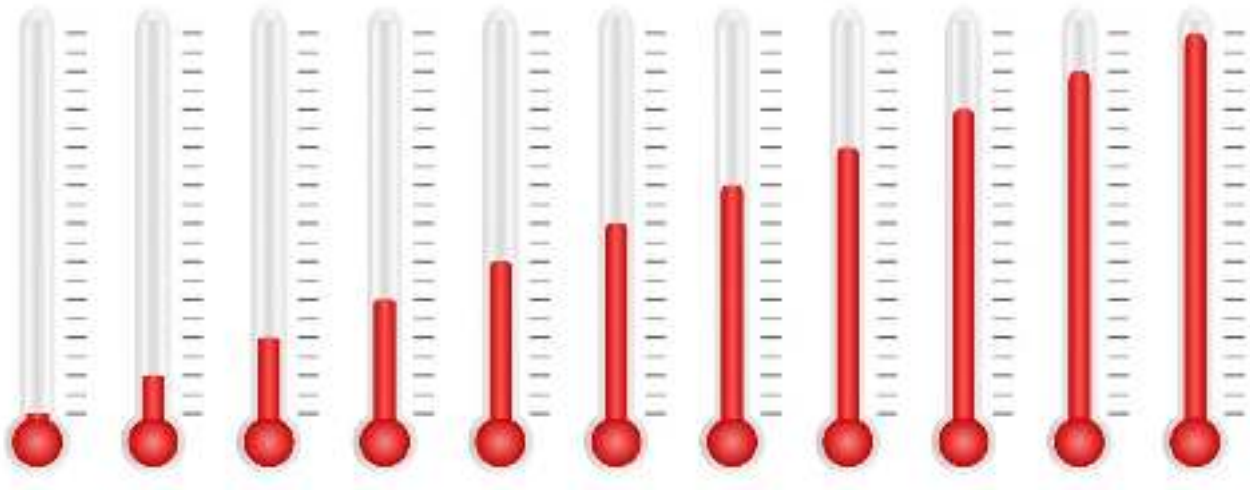
The skills to deal with microaggressions are:

1. **Power awareness, to *see* microaggression**. You can't handle what you can't see
2. **Social calibration** to meet microaggressions at the appropriate level
3. **Competence** with the right strategies and techniques

This website takes care of #1 (and PU even better).
And this article helps you with #2 and #3.

Let's start with the theoretical foundations to understand calibration:

1. Learn to assess the level of aggression



Indirect and covert tend to be low. Direct and open tend to be higher

Negative level: Builds you up / empowers you / submits…
Level 0. Neutral: Does not disempower you
Levels 1./2. Nano-aggression: Non-value taking joke / light teasing…
Levels 3./4./5. Microaggression: Criticism / "polite" or professional attack / one-upping / value-taking jokes / rubbing it in / mocking body language…
Level 6./7./8. Hostility: Direct attacks / "pathologizing" / insulting "jokes"…
Level 9. Aggression: Threats / threatening body language / shouting / offensive remarks / anger-fueled rants…
Level 10. Physical aggression: See Power University ⍰

Importantly:

⚠ Lower levels don't mean "OK"

We discourage from considering lower-levels "kind of OK" ⍰⍰♂.

Yes, all else being equal, a lower level power move can be less damaging.
But it's an unhelpful generalization:

- **Context matters more**. Ie.: insults from angry homeless are aggressive, but cost you little to ignore. A girl you like publicly one-upping you is low aggression, but costs you a lot
- **Patterns of low-level power moves add up**, and you die by a thousand cuts
- **Checking power moves is a great opportunity to display value**, skills, and intellect. *Especially* when they're less obvious

2. Learn to spot nonverbal microaggressions

Nonverbal microaggressions include:

- "⍰" **Exaggerated laughing** sub-communicates "*you* are laughable"
  - "LOL" is similar
- "⍰" **Winks** are smart-alecky ways of sub-communicating "you silly, I know better".
- **Body language**
  - Eye rolls
  - Looking away
  - "WTF" expressions

Example of sneering:

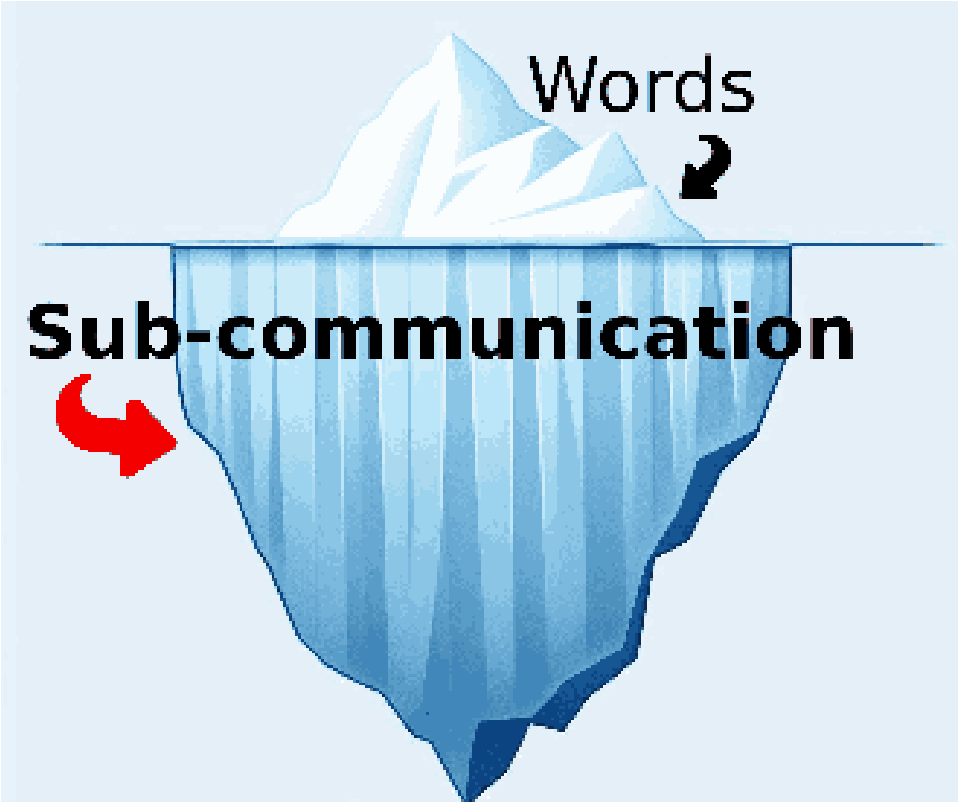
⍰⍰ Sneering while looking at others forms a silent alliance to ostracize you as a “laughing stock”

3. Learn to spot and handle the *sub*-communication

Microaggressions and covert power moves are about the *sub*-communication.

Everything above the sub-communication is just decoy.

Remember the iceberg:



Important articles at the juncture of sub-communication, prejudice, and self-esteem:

- Virtue signaling harms "minorities"
- Guilt-tripping harms "whites"

4. Calibrate & keep your eyes on your goal

For example, imagine this:

> **Her**: (sneers) <—- damaging, but it's indirect, low level aggression
> **Miscalibrated**: What are you laughing at! (Do you think I'm a laughing stock?) <—- direct, higher level of aggression
> **Her**: It's not about you, I was just smiling <—- goes under cover

OR:

> **High-status person**: Would be great if we could all think before talking <—- this is a strong attack. But it's impersonal, "philosopher-sounding". It's damaging, but low in terms of aggression
> **Miscalibrated**: Hey! Who you think you talking to like that, I'm not stupid you know <—- make it personal too fast, escalates right away, and too hot-headed for most environments
> **High-status person**: I never said anyting of the like to you <— now you look in the wrong for starting a miscalibrated escalation with a high-status member

It's good that he takes action.
But it feels too much, and he draws negative attention to him.

The issues are calibration, and strategy.

It's miscalibrated because **it's too aggressive and direct compared to the attack**.
Remember: the attack is *covert*, so the aggressive intent is *hidden*.

As for goals, your goal is to make out of it in the best light possible.
In this case, our reactive man *expanded* on the negatives -the laugh, and the implication of low IQ-.
If few noticed the original attack, now everyone takes note.
And you made it so noteworthy they will *remember* it.

If this is clear, you can skip the next paragraph.
If not, we explain further.

⍰ Quiz

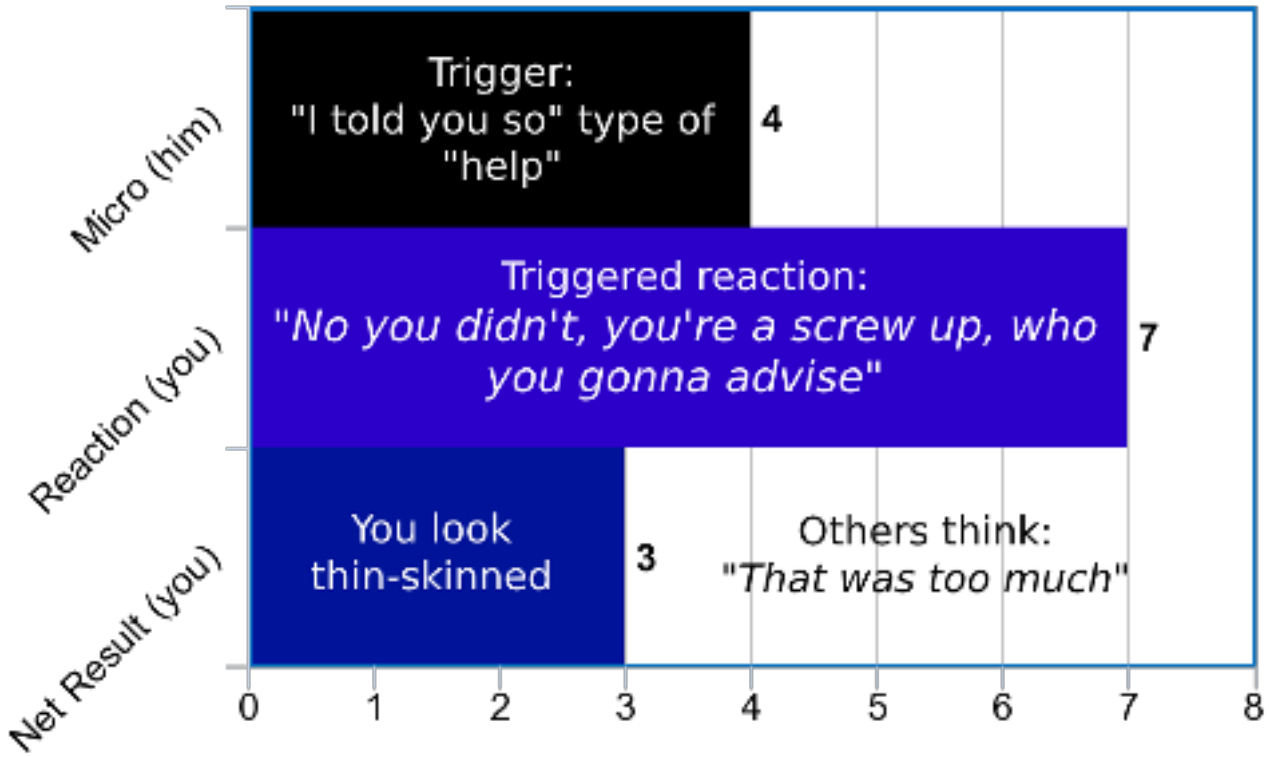
Think about how you would handle these.
Solution in Power University ⍰.

(Mis-)Calibrating Against Microaggressions

3 ways of mis-calibrating microaggressions:

#1. Aggression VS Microaggression

In chart:



The X-axis represents the intensity of aggression, emotion, and effort
In words:

- Level 4 is the attack
- Level 7 is the answer
- Result: +3

That net difference is what makes it uncalibrated.
⍰⍰ Remember that anger and other strong emotions are also high effort. And you generally want to avoid investing too much compared to others.

The lose-lose escalation trap

Be careful of escalating micro-aggressions, even if you do it without anger.

Arguments borne out of smaller stuff are lose-lose.
Two grown-ups arguing over small stuff feels like lower-value time-wasting. At worst, it looks like “two morons bickering over nothing”.
And even while defending yourself, people see you as “difficult”.

⚠ **Watch out for “provoke/react patterns” (even in families)**
It’s a turkey game of “poke the bear, enjoy the angry bear” (common with parent/child).
Even if you “beat them” with high dominance, you’re still playing their game. They get their sick payoff, and you waste energy.
Solutions ⍰

“Civil society” tends to punish the aggressor

“Civil society” tends to reject aggression, *even if it follows provocation*.

To most PU alumni, that means your social circle will support the provocateur.

Example:

⍰ **Defender becomes the aggressor and spoils the mood**

#2. Aggression VS Covert-aggression

The key here is this:

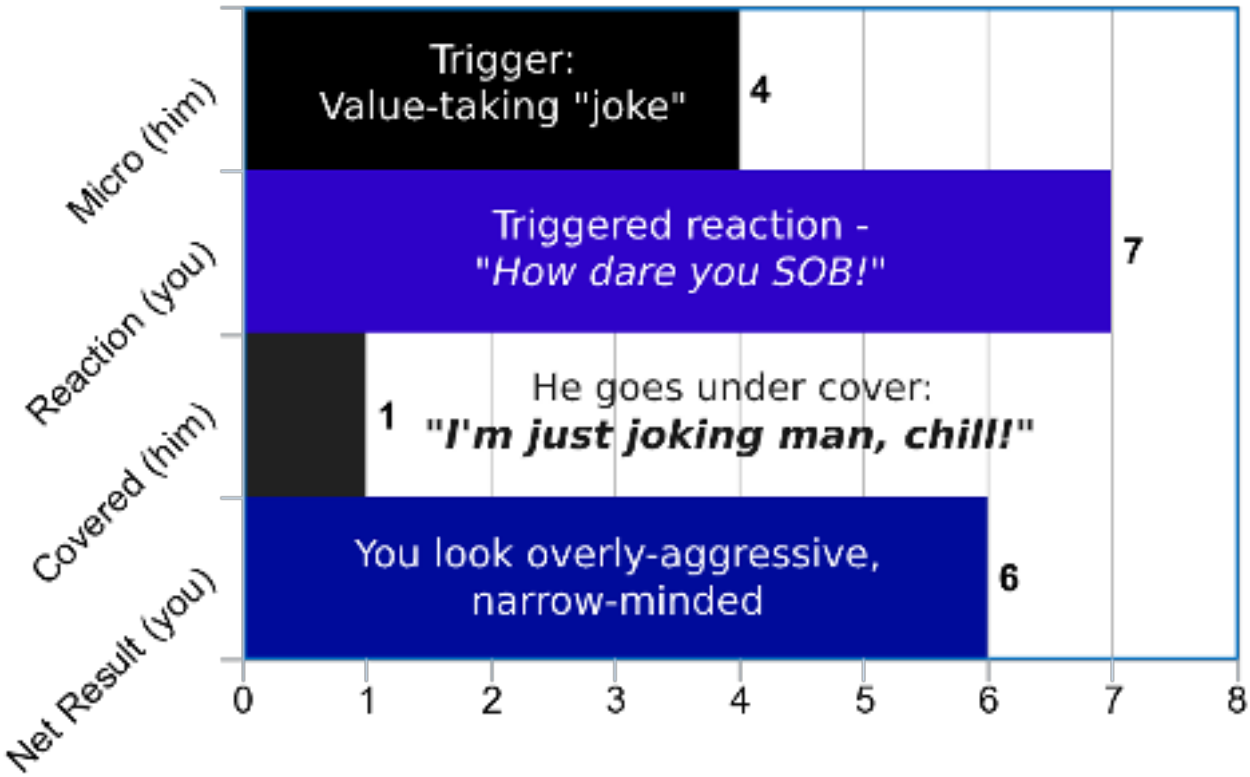
The covert-attacker can retreat and deny.

For example:

> I was just joking
>
> Maaan, relax (with a body language of “you’re so freaking tense”)
>
> Don’t take it so personally dude
>
> I’m just saying man, chill
>
> We joke all the times like that, nobody ever takes it so seriously (= you’re the overly-touchy exception)

In our aggression scale the covert aggressor retreats to a *lower* level**.**
And that leaves you even *more* uncalibrated.

In chart:



This is the dynamic of a covert aggressor ducking for cover

⍰ Example:

> **Micro-aggressor**: LOL, good to see Max tonight, all it took was a free dinner (<— frames you as stingy)
> **Over-reactor**: Excuse me?? That's inacceptable dude! What are you implying. I spend as much as anyone else at this table. Take that back and apologize.

And you know what comes next:

> **Micro-aggressor**: Dude, relax, it was just a joke, what are you getting so hot about, we're just having fun

He may also keep provoking, or add reasons why you come across as "money sensitive".

If you retreat then, you *submit* to his frame and attack.
If you defend, you *reinforce* that frame.
And if you escalate without skills, you ruin everyone's dinner -and may lose access to the group-.

#3. Manipulative Microaggression VS Aggression

The key of manipulative aggression is this:

The attacker pretends he wants to help and has good intentions.

For example:

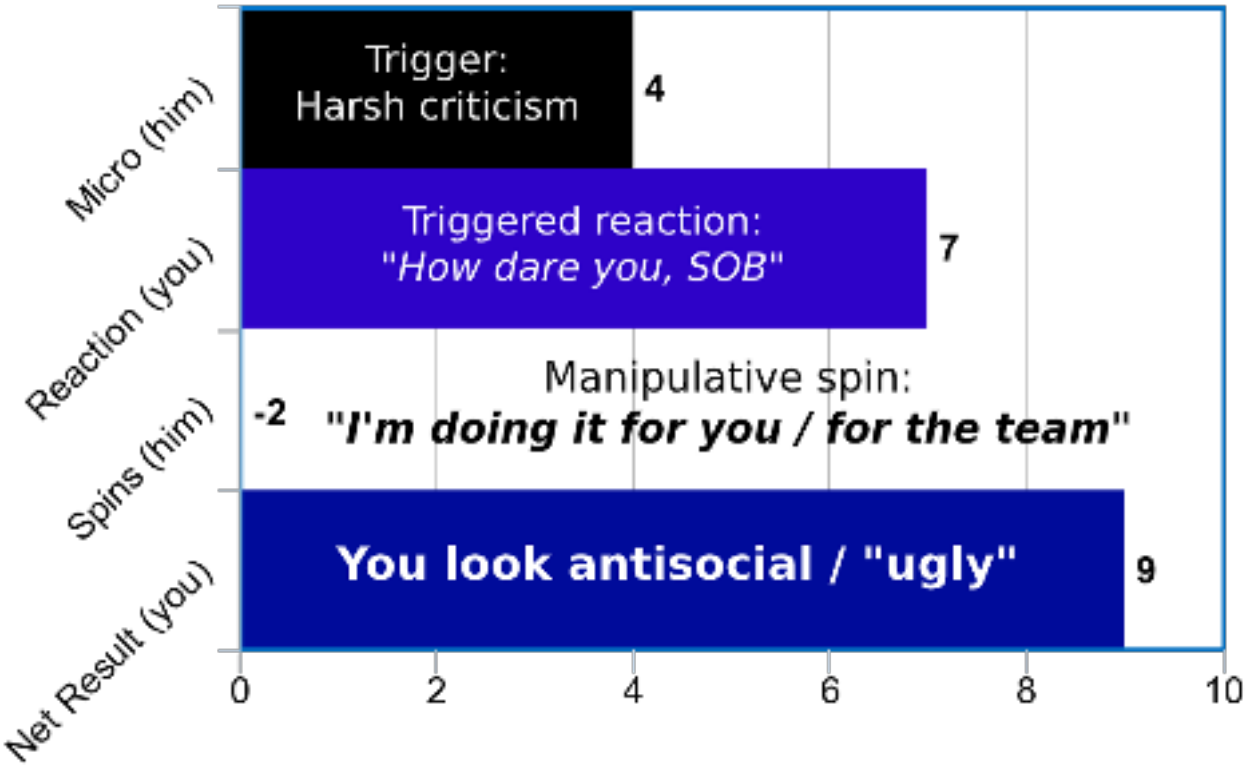
> **Covert aggressor**: I'm not criticizing you, I only want to reach the best possible decisions (⍰ Sub-communication = you're about "team you", I'm about the team)

Or in toxic/abusive relationships:

> **Covert aggressor**: I'm saying this because I care about you. And instead of appreciating it, you get angry? This is unbelievable!

At the highest level, the sub-communication in both cases is "I'm good, you're bad".

In chart:



The high-level sub-communication becomes that "you're not good enough for them"

⚠ **Beware the gaslighting**

The manipulator provokes your overreaction, accuses you of being overreactive and "crazy", and professes "best intentions".
And, implied, you're "not good enough" for them.

Sometimes perpetrators aren't even terrible people.
But they're still playing a toxic game (see "Berne, 1964"). And you don't want to play those toxic, turkey games (see combative relationships dynamics, for example)-.

Solutions?
Yes, please.
See:

- Techniques against microaggressions

Or all at once: Power University

Pimpology – The 48 Pimp Rules: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Pimpology: The 48 Laws of the Game (2007) spoofs in the title the "48 Laws of Power" by Robert Greene. Pimpin' Ken, the author, teaches social strategies, manipulation, as well as dark psychology techniques to succeed in the pimpin' business. But, ultimately, he also teaches the mindsets to eventually transcend and move beyond pimping.

TPM Strategic Audit: This text is audited as a case study in Coercive Power Dynamics and Predatory Social Exchange. While the terminology is "street," the underlying mechanics—including Financial Dependency (Law 5), Information Asymmetry (Law 27), and Triangulation (Law 29)—abusive tactics with parallels in toxic cult leaders and abusive partners. We analyze this for self-defense purposes, helping individuals spot manipulation and red flags.

Contents

- Summary
  - The 48 Laws of Pimping (List)
  - The Best Pimps Are Not Pimps
  - Good Pimps Make Women WANT to Work For Them
  - Pimping is a Non-Contact Sport
  - Takeaway For Women: Avoid Pimps
- CONS
- PROS
  - Quotes
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Pimpin' Ken is a businessman, writer, and a former pimp. He says he wants to be remembered as a man that went from the streets to the executive suites.

The 48 Laws of Pimping (List)

Note: Laws are quotes, written as they are:

- Law 1: **Purse First, Ass Last**
- Law 2: **Get a Name in a Game**
- Law 3: **Don't Chase 'Em, Replace 'Em**
- Law 4: **Keep a Hoe in Arrears**
- Law 5: **Prey on the Weak**: a pimp depends on a hoe as much as a hoe depends on a pimp. But pimps must make the hoe believe that they need him
  - not wanting to take responsibility is what makes a hoe in the first place
  - pick women who want (or need) to be taken care of
  - keep hoes financially dependent on you
  - tell them they need you
  - play up your support

- Law 6: **When Pimpin' Begins, Friendship Ends:** there is too much treachery in the game for the bond and trust of a friendship
  - "in business you have to exploit every situation you can – if friendship prevent it, then you're not on even footing with the competition, and you will lose"
- Law 7: **Pimp the Game**
- Law 8: **Don't Let Your History Be a Mystery**
- Law 9: **Learn the Rules**
  - Who better to teach how to pimp than how to pimp a ho than a veteran ho herself? She really taught me that this game is won between the ears, not between the legs
  - How to mindfuck a guy
- Law 10: **Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan**
- Law 11: **Avoid Gorillas and Godzillas**
  - "A real pimp is a gentleman, but these are pimps in gorilla suit"
  - "They hang around pimps, they have hoes on the track, they may even *look* like pimps, they are straight *simps*"
  - "A magilla gorilla brings the police to the track with his sucker-ass behavior. In the pimp game, this motherfucker has no place, and he's got to go. (…) This is one instance where the real pimps may work together to take care of the situation"
- Law 12: **Ain't No Love in this Shit**
- Law 13: **Pimp Like You're Hoeless**
- Law 14: **Better a Turnout Than a Burnout**
- Law 15: **Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say**
  - "They say honesty is the best policy. That doesn't mean you have to tell the whole truth, but you must always keep it real -with yourself, if no one else. Lying shows a lack of character and an inability to face reality. There are better ways to manipulate someone than to lie".
- Law 16: **Give Motivation and Inspiration**
- Law 17: **Get You a Bottom Bitch**
- Law 18: **Cop and Blow**
- Law 19: **Turn Hoe Ends into Dividends**
- Law 20: **Get in a Hoe's Head**:
  - "These women informed me that it's the small things in life that count when it comes to a woman. The kind words, or bringing her a gift for no reason, or remembering her birthday, and listening when she talks -those things really matter to them"
  - "Pimps don't do that square shit (…), never treat a ho with much kindness. But I took this lesson and made it work for me. It took my pimpin' to a whole other level"
  - "Unless she feels love for you, a ho is not going to give you her money for eight and ten year stretches"
  - "Some hoes want you to be hard on them, but with others it's like pimp C says: "you serve vinegar, you gonna get pickles" -the trick is to figure out each ho's mind"
  - "She told me "most hoes are lost little girls who have been neglected growing up, now living in a woman's body. Hoes don't this because they enjoy turning tricks. Most hoes don't even like sex. They believe a pimp will give them the love and care they didn't have growing up"
- Law 21: **A Hoe Without Instruction is Headed for Self-Destruction**
- Law 22: **Keep Hoes on Their Toes**
- Law 23: **A Hoe Joins a Stable to Ruin It**

  - “In the pimp game, we call a group of hoes a stable, but there isn’t anything less stable. It takes a lot of work to keep any household in balance -much less a group of jealous and competitive women sharing one man”
  - “The pimp is the boss, and there are two things employees love most: undermining the boss, and undermining each other“
- Law 24: **Set the Trend**
  - “A true leader is someone who people want to follow because the person is doing things that no one else is doing. You set the standards and it gives you the appearance of being superior to the people who try to imitate you”
- Law 25: **Grind for Your Shine**
  - “One of the biggest misconceptions is that a pimp is someone who wears loud suits and big hats (…) Those are clowns, not pimps. Everyone loves a clown, but no one wants to take a clown home”.
  - “When I was pimpin I looked more like a Wall Street executive, than the stereotype of a pimp”
  - “He has to distinguish himself from the average Joe on the street. My Davoucci costs 1500 dollars, and a ho would know that. I have knocked many a ho in my career simply because of my style”.
  - “A ho wants to be seen with the flyest nigga on the street, so I made it my business to be that nigga”
  - Also see: types of players (the “refined player”)
- Law 26: **The Game is to Be Sold, Not Told**: don’t teach and don’t give wisdom for free. Sell it.
  - “The less a young pimp knew, the better for me. I wanted him to pay in blood, like I had”
  - “The only way I’ll tell it is if I sell it”
  - “Ignorance is bliss, but only for the person with the knowledge. That’s why there’s so much misinformation and confusion out there. People with the knowledge don’t really want those without to have it.”
- Law 27: **Keep Your Game on the Low**
  - “being on top and staying on top is about control. Not just control of the hoes, but controlling myself and my mouth”
  - Ken would never tell a ho what he was really thinking, how much money he had, or how many other hoes he had
  - “Good pimps have a gift for gab, but smart pimps talk a lot and at the same time don’t say much at all”
  - The less someone knows about you, the better
- Law 28: **Be a Leader**
- Law 29: **Play One Hoe Against the Next**
- Law 30: **Prosperity Over Popularity:** too many people enter the game for popularity
  - “Being popular isn’t a bad thing, but it should be a means to an end”
  - “you can be known by the whole world, but if you’re broke, it ain’t worth shit”
- Law 31: **Look Out for Suzy Choosy**
- Law 32: **Turn a Tramp Into a Champ**
- Law 33: **Bring Your People with You to the Top**
  - have a few brothers in arms you can rely on
  - don’t make people feel unappreciated
  - don’t make enemies
- Law 34: **Show Respect to Get Respect:** “treat people the way you want to be treated. at least to their faces”
- Law 35: **Trust Nothing But the Game**
  - Test people around you. Leave some money around, see if they take it
- Law 36: **Be Internationally Known, Nationally Recognized, and Locally Accepted**

- Law 37: **Let a Hoe Know**
  - Let a hoe know that you're a pimp, and if she stays… You got a new ho
- Law 38: **Wreck a Hater**
- Law 39: **Switch Up**
- Law 40: **Don't Down It, Crown It**
- Law 41: **Keep Your Front Up 'Til You Come Up**
  - "Everything that glitters ain't gold, but if you appear perfect, you will more than likely be seen that way"
  - "if people think you are flawed like them, they will try to prove that the yare better than you"
- Law 42: **If You Can See It, You Can Be It**
- Law 43: **Talk Shit and Swallow Spit**
- Law 44: **You Need Fire and Desire**
- Law 45: **Get Rid of the Word If**
- Law 46: **Move and Shake Like a Pimp Shakes**
- Law 47: **Pimpin' Is What You Do, Not Who You Are**
- Law 48: **Don't Believe the Hype**
  - "The value of this game is in learning how to pimp the same way that Uncle Sam, big business, and power brokers in this world pimp"
  - "The real pimp game will never change. It's all about money and power, the control of dollars and people"
  - "If you can't figure out how to flip the script and pimp on something that can really make you rich, something that is legal and can make sure you never have to work again, then you shouldn't really call yourself a pimp"

The Best Pimps Are Not Pimps

Says the author:

> The absolute best pimps -business tycoons, power brokers, and politicians- don't have girls on the street, but they make countless dollars living off of other people's intelligence and hard work.

Good Pimps Make Women WANT to Work For Them

Says Ken:

> Good pimps don't have to steal or take anyone's money by force, becuase hoes will *give* pimps their money willingly.

Pimping is a Non-Contact Sport

> The worst pimp is a pimp who doesn't know pimping.
> Pimping is psychological warfare, it's not physical combat. Pimping is a straight mind game. Every game has its rules. The best players are the ones who not only learn the rules, but master and manipulate them.

Takeaway For Women: Avoid Pimps

Look after yourself because pimps are looking after themselves
We added this important note after this summary was linked in this sex workers subreddit.
To be clear, this Pimpology review is not meant as an endorsement: we teach how to win honorably, with win-win;

takers and abusers are neither honorable nor high-power.

One trend emerges:

Pimps are more often there to take than to give.

Albeit some pimps may help with connections to higher-value clients, most pimps do not add any real value.

Pimps are often leeches who manipulate, swindle, or force women to work more and part with more cash.

Pimps are takers.

Generally speaking, we agree with that sex worker's advice to avoid pimps.
And we advise sex workers who are already working with pimps to dispassionately look at their relationships with pimps and ask hard yet often simple questions such as: "am I better off with or without this guy?", "is this guy making me better or worse?", "is this guy aggressive, manipulative, pushy, and often lying"?
Generally speaking, people who want the best for you are not aggressive, manipulative, or pushy.

A guy who wants to make you better off seeks to add value to your life, encourage your growth and independence.
If the pimp pushes you to work longer and harder and takes out a big chunk of your income, then… Quit being naive. He does have your best interest in mind.

CONS

- **Sometimes overdoes the self-promotion**

Sometimes it feels like Pimpin' Ken overdoes a bit the self-promotion. I feel that successful self-promotion is more understated. Too much self-promotion becomes self-damaging.

- **Advises on triangulation without considering the risks**

The author recommends playing a ho against another with triangulation.
But triangulation is risky.
People can talk to each other, realize you're playing them, and then they will ally to play *against you*.

- **Some stories didn't add up…**

… Or at least I didn't understand them.

- **Limited tactical knowledge**

The technical-level knowledge of actual pimping is limited.
There isn't much for things like how to first approach, start out, how much money to keep, how much to pay out, or the likes.

PROS

- **Self-development wisdom**

This book might be about pimpin', but it's also about deeper mindsets and about transcending pimping.

- **Some good psychology**

Here and there, there are some real gems of psychology and social strategy.
Also good to understand some psychology of pimps' controls on hookers -a good chunk of which hinges on hookers' own "buttons for manipulation" -as manipulation expert Braiker would call them (Braiker, 2013)-.

- **Some valid takes on the psychology of success -or failure-**

More or less hidden in some jargon, there were some real gems of what makes someone successful in life, or dependent.
For example, it was enlightening what Ken says really makes a hoe: the relinquishment of control over one's life.

- **Many great quotes**

Many good quotes on power and life.

Quotes

On not trying to keep them:

> Hoes belong to the community

On ignorance and wisdom:

> "Ignorance is bliss, but only for the person with the knowledge"

On wisdom and money:

> "The only way I'll tell it is if I sell it"

On paying for that good wisdom:

> The only thing that's free is air. So keep breathing nigga.

On talking without really sharing any valuable intel:

> "Good pimps have a gift for gab, but smart pimps talk a lot and at the same time don't say much at all"

On "empty popularity":

> You can be known by the whold world, but if you're broke, it ain't worth shit

On calling a spade a spade:

> "You're a pimp, ain't you?" she asked. You're a ho, ain't you?" I shot back. "Hell no!" she said indignant, "I'm an entertainer". "Ok ho, I said"

On appearing perfect to avoid competition:

> "if people think you are flawed like them, they will try to prove that the yare better than you"

Review

"Pimpology" sheds light on the mindset and dynamics of 'pimping', and although it's written more as a guide, it's equally effective for self-defense and power dynamics awareness.

Pimpin' Ken's prose mimics rap music, street English, bars, and memorable quotes.

Reading between the lines, the author himself is a case study on pimping dynamics; he comes across as charismatic,

which probably helped me attract and maintain a lopsided relationship where the pimp takes far more than he gives.

Check the:

- **Best books on power**

Understanding Human Nature: Is Alfred Adler Disempowering Psychobabble? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

In *Understanding Human Nature* (1927), Alfred Adler explores human personality and psychology from different angles, including how character develops, the nature of the psyche, how we see the world, and how we become who we are. Some people regard *Understanding Human Nature* as Adler's Magnum Opus and a foundational text of Individual Psychology.

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Alfred Adler Criticism
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author:

Alfred Adler (1870-1937) was an Austrian physician, psychotherapist, and one of the founding fathers of the "individual psychology" school.
Individual Psychology holds that the driving force of human behavior is the individual's striving for power, partly to compensate for feelings of inferiority.
Adler was initially close to Freud and a member of Freud's "Wednesday Society", or the "Vienna Psychoanalytic Society", but the two parted ways years later as they grew to dislike each other.
Albeit Adler was never a "disciple" of Freud, but a colleague, I personally can see much of Freud's psychoanalytic -and unscientific- approach in Adler-.

Why Learning Human Nature

The benefits of learning human nature:

- Deeper self-awareness
- Better relationships
- Protection against deception and manipulation

Don't Go Around "Psychologizing" Others

Says Adler:

> Nothing is more likely to arouse resentment, and nothing will attract greater criticism, than brusquely presenting individuals with the stark facts we have discovered in the exploration of their psyche.

And he's right when he adds:

> An excellent way to acquire a bad reputation is carelessly to misuse one's knowledge, for example in the desire to show how much one has guessed about the character of one's neighbour at dinner.

The True Social Scientist Is Modest About His Own Knowledge

I really liked this part.

On the depth and complexity of human nature:

The understanding of human nature is an enormous problem, whose solution has been the goal of our culture since time immemorial.

My Note: Complex because of exceptions, but not *that* complex
In truth, I believe that human nature is not THAT challenging.
The basics are common to almost everyone. It's the exceptions that are more challenging and the number of exceptions.
But even those, often follow a pattern that can be summarized in far fewer larger categories.

On avoiding overgeneralization:

> It is also dangerous to misrepresent the basic principles as iron laws (…) Even those who do understand the science would feel insulted by such behaviour.

And on the necessity of modesty:

> We must repeat what we have already said: the science of human nature compels us to be modest.

Men Want to Push Women Down

Adler has some good analysis of the sexual conflict between genders.

He says:

> As things stand now there is a constant striving on the part of men to dominate women, and a corresponding dissatisfaction with masculine domination on the part of women.

Things stand pretty much the same around the 2020s.
However, since the two genders also seek each other, the strive for domination leads to combative relationships.

Says Adler:

> Since the two sexes are so interdependent it is easy to understand how this constant tension leads to discord and friction, which must of necessity be extraordinarily painful to both sexes.

Read more:

- **The sexual arms' race**

> Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

Submissive People Never Achieve Much

Says Adler:

> People who are characteristically servile and submissive are equally ill-adapted to jobs that demand initiative. They are only comfortable when obeying someone else's command. Servile individuals live by the rules and laws of others, and this type seeks out a position of servility almost compulsively.

Also read:

- **Submissive behavior and body language**
- **Submissive words and expressions**

Religious Heretics (The "Personal God" Heresy)

There are some people who approach God as their personal wish-grantor.

And this quote made me laugh:

> In short, the dear Lord has nothing else to do but to be occupied with their troubles and pay a great deal of attention to them.

Of course, this is not what religion is about.
Says Adler:

> There is so much heresy in this type of religious worship that if the old days of the Inquisition were to return, these religious fanatics would probably be the first to be burned at the stake.

The same approach in social relationships is a failure to understand the nature of social exchanges as well, and asking instead of finding a way to also give.
Says Adler:

> They approach their God just as they approach their fellow human beings, complaining, whining, yet never lifting a finger to help themselves or to better their circumstances. Co-operation, they feel, is an obligation only for others.

For more on cooperation and how it can help you to acquire power and success, also read:

- **The enlightened collaborator**

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

More Wisdom

- **Make sure you're not being driven into unhappiness**

Alfred Adler says that some of us try hard to succeed to make up for our past failures and for our inferiority complexes.
But trying too hard to compensate can lead us into chronic dissatisfaction with life.

- **Parents: don't ridicule children!**

> Ridicule of children is well-nigh criminal. It leaves a permanent mark on the psyche of children which resurfaces in the habits and actions of their adult lives.

- **Parents: don't lie to children!**

Says Adler:

> Another manifestation of not taking children seriously is the custom of telling children palpable lies, with the

> result that they begin not only to doubt their immediate environment but also to question the seriousness and reality of life.

- **Your life's purpose**

> In everyday life, however, it makes little difference who is right and who is wrong, since the only thing that counts is getting things done and making a contribution to the lives of others.

Alfred Adler Criticism

Since Alfred Adler is so influential, I dedicate a larger portion to the criticism section.

#1. Unscientific...

Much like Freud's psychoanalytic approach is, some of Adler's insights are sometimes genius and, sometimes, probably correct.

But, being unscientific, it's also untested and sometimes unconvincing and dubious-sounding.

#2. ... But seeks to frame it as scientific

Unluckily, Adler seeks to frame his work as scientific.

He says:

> Superficiality has no place here (in psychiatry, En).
> Diagnostic errors are soon apparent, whereas a correct understanding of the disorder leads to successful treatment.
> In other words, **our knowledge of human nature is rigorously tested**.

It's not "rigorously tested".
Science means that it must be tested in a controlled environment *and measured* on a group *which is then compared* to a random sample.
That's not what Adler was doing.

He did not measure anything, and he did not have control groups.

To me, this is tantamount to (self) manipulation.

#3. Freudian: a psychoanalyst looking for confirmation

Adler is more careful than Freud is about linking past events to present neurosis and behavior.

He says:

> we ask for his first childhood memory, even though we know it is not always possible to test its objective truth.

Yet, he also falls for the allure of the (fake) science of psychoanalysis:

> Now let us plot the graph of this man's life style as described above, by taking one event in his life and seeking to link it with his present attitude. As is our usual practice, we ask for his first childhood memory…

Says later on Adler:

> (…) youngest child behave as though they felt neglected and inferior. In our investigations we have always been able to detect this feeling of inferiority

I'm sure he has.
And the fact that he was looking for it might have a lot to do with it.

Confirmation Bias: Psychoanalysts Feeding Patients Their Own Biases

Psychoanalysis searches for links between past and present.
And then comes up with (largely made up) theories about why people do what they do.

But, as someone said, you find what you're looking for.
And psychoanalysts don't discover the truth, they discover what they were looking for.
Sometimes even *prodding* the patient to provide what the psychoanalyst is looking for.
Says Adler:

> **We must proceed by cautious hints** and with proper delicacy.
> We further guess that all this must have begun at some time in the past when demands must have been made on her.
> **We succeed in eliciting** from her the admission that many years ago she had to live through a time when she lacked affection more than anything else.

And there you are, the therapist elicits what he wanted to hear.

#4. "Man Is Weak" Inferiority Complexes: Nonsense

Some of Adler's theoretical model is built around the idea of "feeling of inferiority".

Those feelings of inferiority permeate the whole human species, in Adler's point of view.

He says:

> From the above we may conclude that the human being, compared with other life forms, is an inferior organism.
> **This feeling of inferiority and insecurity is always present in the human consciousness**.

But based on what does Adler says that the human being is an inferior organism?
I can tell you, for one, that I feel superior to all other animals. Including a Tyrannosaurus rex, if he were alive.

Here is how Adler concludes that humans are "inferior":

> We are forced to consider human beings among these weaker animals, because they too are not strong enough to live alone.
> Without tools they can only offer the feeblest resistance to the depredations of nature. They need all manner of artificial aids merely to stay alive on this planet.

But what he says is true for *any* form of life.
Any form of life is victim to the "depredations of nature", in a way. And, in comparison, humans are the ones that more than any other animal managed to control that nature.

And:

> Imagine being alone (..) in a primitive forest!

> One would be more at risk than any other living creature (…) They have neither speed nor power, not the teeth of the carnivore, nor the sharp eyes or acute hearing that warn other creatures of danger. Humanity needs a whole battery of tools to guarantee its existence.

Frankly, this is nonsense.
Just for one, humans have *great* eyesight compared to most other living organisms.

But most of all, it remains to be explained how the hell such a weak species came to dominate and control (almost) all other species?

I highly recommend two articles here:

- 3 pillars of cognition, to explain some of Adler's biases.
- Naive self-help, look especially at "naive disempowerment"
- Self-empowerment, as the antidote for that sad sack narrative of human inferiority

PROS

- **The feeling of inferiority as a driver**

I criticized this idea of the feeling of inferiority because Adler takes it too far.

Yet, if one puts it into a larger perspective, feelings of inferiority can be a powerful driving force for many of us. And it is important to understand both when and how they drive us, both for our own self-development, and for understanding others.

- **Acute analysis of the male/female power struggles**

There is some very good analysis of the power dynamics between the sexes.

Review

Understanding Human Nature is a personal and Freudian take on human nature, with some good insights, presented as scientific.

The issue is that there are also not-so-good insights, and that it's not scientific.

I had high expectations for both Adler and this book.

But, possibly due to *unrealistic* expectations, I was more disappointed than impressed.

There are some deep insights in "Understanding Human Nature", and Adler seems like a dedicated student of human nature.
Yet, there are also some basic flaws in it.
The main one is the lack of scientific rigor, without the author ever even acknowledging that his theories are based on his own thoughts and interpretations, *not* on data or research, and not even much on his own personal experience.

The second flaw, in my opinion, is that Adler's understanding of human nature is severely incomplete due to his lack of knowledge of evolutionary psychology.
That leads to quite some distortions and many convoluted psychoanalytic explanations that have instead much simpler explanations.

Adler's own main thesis that the will to power stems from feelings of inferiority is incomplete without evolutionary psychology.
People's strive to power has been selected because it was good both for men's survival, and for men's reproduction.

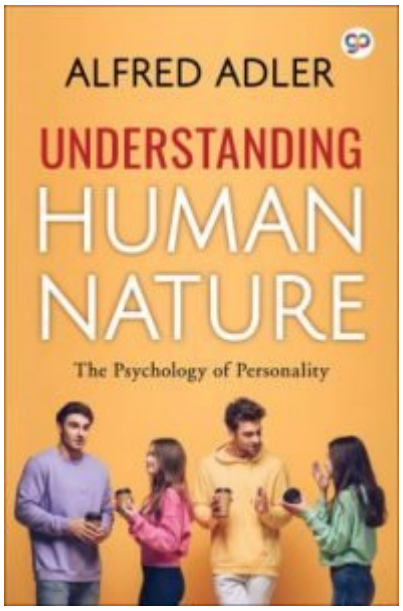
But Adler never had the chance to learn evolutionary psychology, so he never thought about that.

Also check out:

- **The best books on psychology and human nature**

Or get the book on Amazon

Understanding Human Nature Summary: Alfred Adler Psychology



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URL: https://thepowermoves.com/understanding-human-nature-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2

8 Strategies of Office Warfare

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 October 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Office enemies are different than “simple” toxic colleagues, or colleagues who play power moves.

Power moves can come from anyone, even from friends sometimes.

An enemy instead is an individual who has put you in their cross-hair.
Either out of spite or because you stand in the way, they want to harm you.
They want to crush your reputation, destroy your social status, make your life difficult or see it as their life mission to have you fired.

This is not the time to see life as win-win or trying to see the positives in them.
Naive cooperators routinely get steamrolled by the backstabbing enemies.

When it’s time to play next level mind-fuckery, this is your lesson.

Here is how you can deal with enemies:

Contents

- 1. Keep Them Close
- 2. Compliment Them Publicly to Win The Reputation War
- 3. Don’t Beg For Allies…
- 5. But Make People Want to Side With You
- 5. Let The War Take Its Toll… On Your Enemy
- 6. Unsettle Their Minds: Mark Their Territory
- 7. Shoot them (Figuratively)

- Protecting From Future Enemies
  - 1. Teach them nothing

- 2. Be friendly while you isolate them
- 3. Make them Feel They're Doing Great (While They're Doing Shit)
- 4. Give Them Too Easy or Too Difficult Tasks
- 5. Get So Good You Can't Be F*cked With
- Summary

1. Keep Them Close

You know The Godfather rule, don't you?

If you don't, here it is again:

> Keep your friends close, and your enemies even closer

The reason why you want to keep them close are:

1. you give them less room to maneuver against you
2. you fuck with their heads
3. you show your mettle and resolve

This rule is true both physically and emotionally.

Take a meeting for example.
The typical limp dick approach is to keep the distance and sit far away from your enemy.
And that shows them just how you fear them.

The proactive, power move approach instead is to sit right next to them.

This fucks with their head as they think "shit, he knows I'm out to get him and this guy still has the guts to come sit here as if nothing was going on".

It sends the message that you are more powerful and nastier than they could ever be, and chances are they will soon drop their game.

If you want to take it to next level, you will evne say this when you sit next to them:

> **You**: Oh, there you are!

With a smile, as if you were looking for them!
What did Tommy say to Billy Batts in the trunk?
"Look at me in the eyes".

Exactly…

2. Compliment Them Publicly to Win The Reputation War

Next level power move.

While most people would trade barbs, you want to compliment your enemy in public *just when they seek to undermine you*.

Without going overboard, but positive comments such as:

> **You**: I appreciate you care so much about this project
>
> **You**: Thank you for weighing in, you have a lot of experience on this

Why would you do this?
Because you want people to know that you are not the issue and the hatred doesn't come from you.

And when you will eventually maneuver against them it will also seem motivated by a real issue and not by personal rancor.

2.2. Judo War: Thank Them for Their Criticism

Don't push against them when they criticize you.

Especially if the criticism is well-founded or if they know what they are talking about because in that case you are responsible for 90% of your own demise.

It would be way too easy for them to make you look butthurt, selfish or overreactive.
Even if they don't say anything you will look so in front of others when you push back on criticism.

Don't "take it offline" either, because this is what they will say:

Say instead something like this:

> **You**: Thank you man, I appreciate an opinion. I'm not sure on what to make with it right now, let me reflect on it and then we can speak further later

Notice the embedded power move there: "I appreciate an *opinion*". As if you were saying "every asshole has an opinion".

Then keep going with whatever you were doing.
Unless their criticism completely invalidates what you were saying or presenting, keep going or you give them too

much power.

Also see:

- **Frame Control Techniques**

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

3. Don't Beg For Allies...

You know the insurance rule, right?

> You can't buy insurance while your house is on fire.

Similarly, you can't recruit allies when you're under fire.
Why not?
'Cause it looks desperate, pal.
And it looks like you're losing the war and need back-up.

Sure, you want allies.
But nobody likes war conscription.
And you don't want neutral folks to stay away from you because you're under fire.

So… Keep your mouth shut about the war.
Especially if you're lower on power than your enemy. The last thing people want is to side with the lower-power player.

I know, keeping everything for yourself when you feel victimize not easy, so you can maybe take your load off with someone outside of work.
And if you really must speak to someone at work, at least make 100% sure the person you speak to is a friend who keeps his mouth shut.

5. But Make People Want to Side With You

To win the war, know the rules first.

And the basic rules is that people want to win easy, and for that, they want to ally with the winners.

Benito Mussolini said before entering WWII:

> I need a few thousand dead to sit at the peace talks table

He had it badly wrong, but when he made his move, it looked like he was right. And that's how the most Machiavellian players think.

If the war is over a managerial position expect that the alliances will shift on the side of who is winning -or who looks like is winning-.

Don't be saddened or angry about it, you're a professional, remember?
Instead, strategize for it.

Look confident and in control, like the power position you're fighting for is already yours.
That's how you recruit allies.

5. Let The War Take Its Toll... On Your Enemy

War can take a mental toll.

Great, let that bitch of your enemy get tolled.

First of all, you must avoid feeding him any good news.
Backstabbers and bullies feed on your overreactions.
So don't serve them any.
If they play covert and microaggressions, learn the power dynamics to deal with them effectively.

And the war is psychological as much as it's professional.
So, repeat after me: political warfare is fun.

Stay positive and *show* people the differences in personality between you and them.

People will naturally gravitate around you and support you when you're a force of positivity.

6. Unsettle Their Minds: Mark *Their* Territory

What, you thought you were going to make your territory?

Yeah, sure, and what are you gonna gain pissing on your own desk?
Let the dumb mutts play that bottom feeder's game.

You will mark *their* territory.
And in what matters most: the alliances.

The inexperienced -and 99% of people actually- will stick with their friends and avoid their enemies' friends.

But as we mentioned in a previous article: avoid making more enemies than you need to!
His friends and crew are not your enemies, your enemy is the only enemy.

The top power mover will destabilize his enemy by walking into his turf, joking with his friends and get friendly reactions from them.

This will isolate him and drive him to the edge.

If you do it well, chances are that he will complain to his friends for being friendly with you, or at least he will act off and lose points with them.
If he is of the domineering type, he will also want to punish his friends, who now start disliking him and finally see him for the real sorry ass MF that he is.

Finally, walking into his turf and acting friendly with him while making friends with his crew is such a display of mental and social power that he will think twice before crossing you again.

Example: Making His Friends Your Friends

Imagine you are Regina George in the movie Mean Girls, and your enemy is the emo girl.

The effect you want to have on your enemy's crew and on the people around is the effect Regina has on Lindsay Lohan.
Lohan, like all other girls, *wants* to be with Regina George.

And that drives the emo wild:

You want to have the same effect.
You want people, including your enemies' crew, to *want* to be by your side.

And that comes back to the fundamentals of who you are: a cool cat with lots of power, who does a great job and

who is good with people.

7. Shoot them (Figuratively)

Figuratively… ;).

The game can't go on forever.

If all of the above steps are not enough to make him desist, eventually, you gotta maneuver to get rid of them.
You want to stop the war in one of the following ways:

1. You isolate them so well they're powerless and stop bothering you
2. You beat them so badly they change department or quit
3. You move so far ahead they become a distant memory
4. You get the promotion and fire them

Of them all, I prefer and recommend you go for N.3.

They will likely forget you too by the way.
As Taleb notes in "Skin In The Game", people get jealous of people who are close to them.
And that's why the ultimate solution is always to move forward.

Protecting From Future Enemies

If you feel that some up and coming guys are going to become enemies, do the following:

1. Teach them nothing

They will try to learn as much as possible from you, but you share as little as possible.

It's either you are their boss and gain from their good work, or why should you grow an enemy within the ranks?

If they join your calls, make sure you're not showing your best tricks.

If they want to join the important calls, say that you wish they could but you are going to talk about personal stuff with the customers and you want to keep it natural.

If they ask you to fix their coding say it's quite good without giving details. Or fix it without explaining much because "you're in a hurry".

Seem superior, like you don't have time for younger guns. You will come across a bit grumpy, but not cold and calculative.

2. Be friendly while you isolate them

Be friendly on the surface, but don't introduce them to your network.

Don't criticize them openly with your friends but don't say anything good either.

If someone says something good about them, nod or add something inconsequential and move on.
If someone criticizes them, look as if you wished you could say more but don't want to because you'd rather not bash a teammate.

Basically, you want to hit them while at the same time looking like you're not.

3. Make them Feel They're Doing Great (While They're Doing Shit)

The more people feel like they're doing great, the less extra effort they will put in.

Tell them that when you started you weren't half as good as they are, which will lead them to think that they will automatically get to your level without any extra effort.

Alternatively, make them feel so bad that they should change jobs.

What you want to avoid is the middle road where they're doing OK but they can do better.

4. Give Them Too Easy or Too Difficult Tasks

Research on peak performance shows that people improve the best when they're dealing with tasks right at the edge of their skills.

If you want to slow their development, give them super difficult tasks that they need to find someone else to do it or super easy ones where they learn nothing.

5. Get So Good You Can't Be F*cked With

Finally, never forget the biggest truth: your main focus is always on yourself and your own improvement.

The best strategy is always this: be so good they can't touch you.

Summary

This is obviously an article that is more on the humorous side.

Yet, there are also solid principles of psychological manipulation, office politics warfare, and dark psychology.

Similar articles are:

- Office power moves
- 14 Power moves to dominate anyone

Emotional Blackmail: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

In *Emotional Blackmail* (1998) author Susan Forward analyzes the manipulative dynamics between emotionally close individuals -be it family, close friends, or intimate relationships-.
Forward writes from the point of view of the victims of emotional manipulation, describing both the manipulative tactics that blackmailers deploy, and the solutions you can implement.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
- More Wisdom
- Real-Life Applications
- Quotes
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Takeaways

- Emotional blackmail is an abusive and manipulative approach to using emotions against you
- If you let it go unchecked, it will ruin your mental health, harm you physically, and destroy your relationship
- You don't cure emotional blackmail hoping your partner will change, but by working on yourself first and foremost
- It will take courage to change the power dynamics, but with assertiveness, self-help, and some courage, you will do it

Notes

About the Author:
Susan Forward is an American psychotherapist and author. Susan had her own practice, as well as being a therapist, instructor and consultant to several Southern California psychiatric and medical facilities.

1. Emotional Blackmail: A Definition

Forward defines emotional blackmail as:

> Emotional blackmail is a form of manipulation in which people close to us threaten, directly or indirectly, to punish us if we don't do what they want.
> The basic threat, which can be expressed in many different ways, is : If you don't behave the way I want you to, you will suffer.

The closer people are to us, the more they know what they can leverage to push our buttons.

2. FOG: The Emotional Manipulators' Tool of The Trade

When the manipulative fog descends upon the victim, reality distorts, and you cannot recognize anymore what's real or manipulated, what's fair or unfair.

FOG stands for:

- **Fear**: afraid to cross them, or afraid of the consequences of not submitting and do as they want
- **Obligation**: feel like we are obliged to help, support, or consent to whatever it is they want

Says the author:

> Blackmailers never hesitate to put our sense of obligation to the test, emphasizing how much they've given up, how much they've done for their targets, how much we owe them (social exchange manipulation, En).
> They may even use reinforcements from religion and social traditions to emphasize how much their targets should feel indebted to them. "A good daughter should spend time with her mother."

- **Guilt**: Guilt is normal in any empathic individual, and the blackmailer leverages it. The blackmailer seeks to make us feel guilty if we don't comply with whatever they request. When guilt is unwarranted and the product of manipulation, the author calls it "undeserved guilt"

What out for guilt! Because it can lead to self-esteem vicious circles.
Then it's:

> The guilt we feel easily becomes a sense that "I'm bad, so I deserve this treatment."

3. The Six Steps of Emotional Blackmail

These are the steps of a typical emotional blackmail:

1. **Demand**
2. **Resistance**
3. **Pressure**: they don't try to understand your needs or point of view, but pushes to change your mind
4. **Threats**: if you don't cave in, here come the threats. They can be direct threats like breakup threats, but can also be more covert "guilt trips", promises of future rewards, or promises of love and intimacy
5. **Compliance**: if you give in, then there comes the:
6. **Repetition**: once the manipulator understands what makes you comply, they will be doing more and more of the same

Note:
Susan calls them "symptoms", but they seem more like steps along a progression than "symptoms".

4. The Four Types of Emotional Blackmailers

Susan differentiates four archetypes of blackmailers.

They are:

- **Punishers**: they make their demands and threats most obvious. Sometimes with direct talk, but also with smoldering silences. They still let us know clearly.
- **Self-punishers**: they emphasize what they'll do to *themselves.*

Says Susan about these two:

> Where punishers turn their targets into children, self-punishers cast their targets in the role of the grown-up—the only adult in the relationship.

- **Sufferers**: victims per excellence, blamers and guilt-trippers, they make us feel bad if we don't give them what they need. Sometimes, they pull away without even explaining what's the issue. Other times, they tell us they are ruined if we don't do them whatever favor they're asking for.
- **Tantalizers**: hold out a promise of something great to happen if we only do what they want. Sometimes they can frame their requests as shit-tests we need to pass to get to the promised land.

Also see:

- **Types of abusers**

> 7 Types of Abusive Men: a Psychological Analysis

5. The Tools of Emotional Blackmail

- **The spin**: derived from political manipulation, it means that whatever they do is "good" (well-intentioned or wise), and whatever we do is "bad". Resisting to their manipulation is evidence of our flaws.
- **Pathologizing**: if you resist them, you're ill, crazy, or need some help -maybe *their* help (urgh!)-. Questioning our ability to love when someone wants our love is an example of pathologizing.
- **Negative comparisons**:
- **Enlisting allies**: the closer to you they can enlist an ally, the more leverage they will have over you

6. The Psychological Profile of Emotional Blackmailers

In this section, the author goes into the psychology of an emotional blackmailer.

Some of the traits that stand out:

- **Hate to lose**: it's OK to be angry at a "no", but emotionally healthy can accept and compromise. With emotional blackmailers, frustration at a "no" doesn't lead to negotiation, but to pressure and threats
- **Selfish**, it's about them, not you

> It's a strange kind of love that is so blind to the target's feelings.

It is indeed.
I'd even wonder whether one can call it "love". At least, it's definitely not value-adding love.

- **They want to take**, not give ("value-takers")

> To an emotional blackmailer, keeping your trust doesn't count, respecting your feelings doesn't count, being fair doesn't count. The ground rules that allow for healthy give-and-take go out the window.

- **Scarcity mindset**

Say the author:

> Often blackmailers' self-centeredness springs from a belief that the supply of attention and affection available to them is finite—and shrinking fast.

- **Thin-skinned, make mountains out of molehills**

> Emotional blackmailers often behave as though each disagreement is the make-or-break factor in the

> relationship.
> Even mild frustration is viewed as potentially catastrophic.

That's why they react with everything they have.

This can happen sometimes with emotional blackmailers who never learned to handle difficulties in life
See this forum entry for more.

- **Catastrophizing + scarcity mindset**

> Deprivation tape starts to play in their heads: This isn't going to work out. I never get what I want. (…)
> With these thoughts cycling through their minds in an endless loop, blackmailers believe they haven't got a chance of prevailing—unless they play hardball. That belief is the common denominator underlying all emotional blackmail: "I don't trust that I'm going to get what I need, so I have to give myself every advantage".

- **Maintaining a strong connection with pain**

Negative emotions, albeit negative, are still an emotional investment.
Says the author:

> (…) they are activating the target's feelings for them, and even if the feelings are negative, they've created a tight bond.
> You may resent or even hate the blackmailer, but as long as your focus is on them, they haven't been abandoned or discarded with indifference.

- **Punishers see themselves as maintaining orders**

Some punishers see themselves not as punishing, but as maintaining order, doing what's right, or proving they can't be pushed around.
Some of them can be very sensitive, and perceive a fair enforcing of your boundaries as an attack on their persona.

Also see:

- **Power-hungry partners**

> How Power Hungry Partners Ruin People & Relationships

7. The Traits That Make You Vulnerable to Emotional Blackmail

- **Need for approval**: it's much stronger with authority figures and people we admire. Also see "the judge power dynamics"
- Fear of anger
- Need for peace at any price
- Taking too much responsibility for other people's lives
- High level of self-doubt

7.2. Beliefs Predisposing to Emotional Abuse

Some of the beliefs of the victims include:

- It's OK to give a lot more than I get

- If I love someone, I'm responsible for their happiness
- Good, loving people make others happy
- If I do what I really want to do, the other person will see me as selfish
- If no one else will fix the problem, it's up to me
- I never win with this person
- They're smarter or stronger than I am
- It won't kill me to do this, because they really need me
- Their needs and feelings are more important than mine

And, says the author, to change your behavior you first need to change your beliefs.

8. Manipulators Destroy Relationships

Getting compliance with manipulation and blackmail ruins relationships.

Relationships become toxic, or they are hollowed out of any feelings and true intimacy.
The emotional blackmailer doesn't seem to realize this simple truth.

Says the author:

> They seem to have a childlike inability to connect behavior to consequences, and they don't appear to give any thought to what they will be left with once they've gotten the target's compliance

In my opinion, that's can be the case also because they are low in emotional intelligence, or high in psychopathy, and so form no real bond.

Says again the author:

> They're in a FOG of their own that makes them oblivious to how much they alienate other people with their bullying.

Emotional blackmailers who use their partners' weaknesses against them also actively train their partners to never share their true selves.
And that kills intimacy.

Says the author:

> What's left when we must consistently walk on eggs with someone?
> Superficial small talk, strained silences, lots of tension. Just below the artificial calm that surrounds a placated blackmailer and a target who's given in is the widening chasm that's opening between them.

This is why **abusers ultimately fail, and struggle to keep high-quality partners**.

Which leads me back to one of the tenets of this website: power that lasts it not coercive, but built on buy-in and making others want to follow you.
This is one of the reasons why I discourage guys on this website to learn from any "dark psychology" courses around.
Not only are they toxic, but they're based on a defensive, low-value mindset.

Also read:

- **The fundamental laws of power**

9. In Good Relationships, It's About Needs, Not Wins

Healthy relationships seek to find a middle ground, or to find out who has the bigger needs.

Then, the person who cares less, will usually let the partner with the stronger needs "win", since it matters more to him/her.

Says Susan:

> Actually, in many cases, the outcome doesn't matter too much, and the person with the strongest preference usually wins by default.

But if someone wants to win, they won't try to negotiate, but, try to:

- Control you
- Ignore your protests
- Insist that his or her character and motives are superior to yours
- Avoid taking any responsibility for the problems between you

The author says that **good relationships have a balance of give and take, including a *sense* of balance and fairness.**

People feel like they *can* give in and still not feel like they're losing, because they know the other party is not out to take advantage of them.

10. Curing Emotional Blackmail

Addressing emotional blackmail starts *with you*.

1. Start with 15 minutes a day with:
    1. **Contract**: you write to yourself that you're an adult with options, and that you are going to stand up for your rights and for fair treatment. Every day you read it and sign it.
    2. **Power statement**: Victims always indirectly tell them they can't stand or can't take their blackmailer's pressure. Instead, you will repeat "I CAN STAND IT.
    3. **Self-affirming phrases**: these are empowering new phrases that you will repeat to yourself in order to change your beliefs
2. When dealing with emotional blackmail, use SOS
    1. **Stop**: take distance from the blackmailer when you feel pressured
    2. **Observe**: take stock of what's happening
    3. **Strategize**: strategize about your response, then follow through

The strategies that the describes explains are:

- Nondefensive communication: this is about communicating while remaining calm and detached
- Making an ally out of an adversary: ask a question on how you can understand them better, how they can help you have a better relationship, and generally asking them if they can help you with more value-adding collaboration (the power moves approves of this solution, won't work with everyone, but worth a try)
- Bartering: the author lists bartering and humor together, but I prefer separating them

She says that bartering is better than imposing because

> No one likes to look or feel as though they're giving in, and our distaste for one-sided solutions holds most people back from taking the first step toward resolving a dispute. But bartering creates a win-win situation

> that's easy for everyone to accept.

Very true.
Also see "frame control techniques".

- Using humor: this works best when the relationship is overall good. So you can poke some fun at their bossy ways as a way to highlight that it's actually annoying, but while keeping it light and fun

The author also recommends lots of exercises.
See a real-life example I used against an emotional blackmailer:

- **Paradoxical therapy against a manipulator**

Finally, keep in mind that "sorry isn't enough".
Many blackmailers will pretend to go along with the new assertive you, but they will then get back to their old selves.
Instead of relying on words, monitor their behavior for actual change.

And it's not a bad idea if you learn how to test people, too.

Keep in mind that some relationships will improve as you empower yourself. But **some partners cannot accept you as a healthy human being, and you must be ready to let go of those relationships**.
They weren't good to begin with, anyway.

More Wisdom

- **Devaluing others to lessen the pain**: angry blackmailer will sometimes attack their partner and devalue her. It's a way of downplaying their feelings of loss. Scared blackmailer might also initiate they breakup out of fear of getting hurt first

Real-Life Applications

- **If you speak very indirectly, seek to be more direct**: indirect like "gee, I wish someone would open the window" is an act of "daily manipulation" for Susan Forward. Instead, ask directly for what you want.
  Susan says that asking is high-risk, but protecting yourself too can come across as sneaky. I agree.
  Also see:
  - covert-aggression
  - passive-aggressiveness
- **Don't blindly trust any doctor, they're people just like anyone else**: says Susan Forward:

> Pathologizing is especially persuasive when it comes from an authority figure—a doctor, professor, lawyer or therapist. Our relationships with these people are based on trust, and we tend to cloak professionals in a mantle of wisdom that some don't deserve.

And she shares the story of an abusive therapist.

Quotes

> These are more than simple misunderstandings—they're power struggles.

On manipulation:

> Emotional blackmail takes to extremes behavior that we use and encounter all the time: manipulation. Many forms of manipulation aren't troublesome at all. We all manipulate one another at times, and we all get manipulated.

On the sufferers' type manipulation:

> When Carol saw that I was really resisting, she pulled out all the stops: "I have no one else to turn to." "I don't know what else to do—I thought you could turn to your family when you're in trouble"—**suddenly I'm family again**.

On blackmailers abusing the social exchange system:

> Memory, as employed by a blackmailer, becomes the Obligation Channel, with nonstop replays of the blackmailer's good and generous behavior toward us.
> When we receive a kindness from a blackmailer, it's not soon forgotten. More like an open-ended loan than a gift, it's always got payments attached—with interest—and we can never seem to get out of the red.

Examples of emotional blackmailers destroying relationships:

> What kind of relationship does Josh's father expect to have with his son if Josh provides the victory his father is demanding by giving up his lover? Margaret, whose husband, Cal, pressured her to take part in group sex, gave in to her husband's emotional blackmail, but it was the death knell for the marriage.

On the failure of blackmailers:

> Karen's mother resorts to arm-twisting to get Karen to spend more time with her, yet for all the closeness that's left between them, she'd do just as well to talk to a cardboard cutout of her daughter. The rigid interaction between them has no room for the real Karen or what matters to her.

On frenemies:

> Friends and relatives at different levels of achievement or monetary success frequently have seething envies and resentments toward one another that severely contaminate their relationships.

If you fear physical harm, get out:

> If you truly fear that another person will harm you, you don't belong in a relationship with them.

From the letter a woman wrote to her punishing husband (so vulnerable and powerful):

> **Maybe instead of punishing me you could help me.**

It's up to you to set limits:

> **Blackmailers learn how far they can go by observing how far we let them go.**

CONS

- **Some small generalizations**

Writes the author:

> Parents using this kind of blackmail will inevitably find a flaw in the next person, and the next, and in anyone who represents a threat to their control.

You know that generalizations are one of this website's pet peeves, so I disagree with the "inevitably".

- **Sometimes it feels like the author "psychologizes" to never calls an a-hole an a-hole**

Sure, there are reasons why people do mean things.
But sometimes it feels like it was too much justification, and never calling a spade a spade.

In this case, never calling an a-hole an a-hole.

The author even says:

> blackmailers may convince themselves that they're helping us with their punishments.

Sure, they can.
But I didn't read of blackmailers who are just simple, plain a-holes.

But I'm more in line with George Simon's take on manipulation: sometimes, you gotta call a a-hole an a-hole, and stop psychologizing on what are the inner drives that make him an a-hole.

- **Nore sure on taking verbal abuse on the chin while remaining nonreactive**

If the blackmailer gets vicious, the author recommends you remain calm and detached.
A worthy goal, of course, but I feel that's too challenging for most people and they'll just pretend they're calm, while instead they are growing angry and resentful.

PROS

"Emotional Blackmail" is a treasure trove, so just considered these a small sample of "pros":

- **Lots of "how-to" guides & helpful exercises**

This is a "how-to", "can-do" book, with lots of great actionable tips and exercises.
See one of the exercises here.

- **Great examples**

The authors weaves her concepts around real-life examples that back-up her theory, and that helps readers understand better, as well as helping them to understand what they need to do to combat emotional blackmail.

- **Great psychology analyses**

As a social researcher looking for wisdom, I appreciated the good psychological analyses.

Review

I consider "Emotional Blackmail" one of the foundational books of interpersonal manipulation.

Particularly, this is about manipulation in close and intimate relationships.
I learned a lot from Susan Forward and I will be using what I learned for this website's content and products.
And that's the biggest compliment I can make to any author.

This is a highly recommended book to anyone who wants to protect themselves against emotional manipulation,

emotional blackmail or, in general, learn more about power dynamics and psychology.

Also see:

- **Best books on manipulation**

Or get the book on Amazon

The Assertiveness Guide for Women: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Assertiveness Guide for Women (2016) helps readers improve their communication skills and develop the skills of assertive communication.
Julie de Azevedo Hanks, the author, addresses assertiveness from a holistic perspective, including attachment styles, individuation, and general self-development.

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Real-Life Applications
- Quotes
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- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Julie de Azevedo Hanks is an American licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist. She holds a Master of Social Work, from the University of Utah (1995), and a Ph.D., in Marriage and Family Therapy from the University of Louisiana.
She owns her own counseling practice and has 28 years of counseling experience, specializing in women's emotional health and relationships. She is an assistant professor of social work at Utah Valley University, and also runs an online blog.

1. What It Means to Be Assertive

> Assertiveness is about treating yourself as an equal with others and taking ownership of your well-being while respecting others' differences.

2. The 5 Skills of Assertion

The author says that it takes five skills to reach assertion:

1. Self-Reflection: Thinking and understanding who you are. Looking at your development, your relationship patterns, and how your past impacts your ability to be assertive.

2. Self-Awareness: Awareness of your feelings, wants, and needs, resulting in a sense of confidence about what you want to communicate (while self-reflection is more focused on general, high-level awareness, self-awareness is more about present, "in the moment" awareness)

Says the author on the benefits of cultivating emotional awareness:

> In summary, awareness of your feelings as sources of information is at the heart of developing self-awareness, a necessary component of acting assertively. You cannot act assertively if you aren't tuned in to your internal experiences and cues.

She adds that emotional awareness includes both your feelings, and what others are likely to feel (empathy).

3. Self-Soothing: Ability to manage your intense emotions and soothe yourself. Striking a balance between appreciating your emotions, without becoming overwhelmed by them. It leads to a sense of calmness, which allows you to clearly assert yourself and convey your intended message.

> Assertiveness comes from a place of emotional awareness but not emotional volatility.

4. Self-Expression: Ability to communicate your feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants clearly to others (communication skills), along with a willingness to back up your words with action. Good self-expression leads to stronger and deeper connections with others.

> Sharing your honest feelings in meaningful and powerful ways with others, in word and action, plays a large part in the development of healthy intimacy and connection with others.
> One memory aid that helps with this concept is to imagine that the word "intimacy" is pronounced "intomeesee," as in "into me, see"—as though a request: "Will you see into me?"

5. Self-Expansion: Openness to other people's points of views, accepting them as being, "holding space" for differences, and the desire to grow through your relationships. It leads to compassion, as well as to stronger relationships.

> Too often, differences between people result in a power struggle of whose opinion or feelings or ideas are "right" or "better."
> It absolutely does not have to be this way! An assertive woman can "hold space" in a conversation—and in her mind and heart–for another person's unique perspective or experience

3. Thoughts & Feelings: Seek the Overlap

Feelings are emotional, in your heart, while thoughts are more rational, in your mind.

The goal is to operate from a position in which the two overlap, feeding into each other to help you reach the best solutions for you.

Says the author:

> The ability to create a healthy working distance from your emotions is a process.
> The goal is to be able to separate thoughts and feelings in your mind, and then act from the place where they overlap.

I very much agree with this approach, and you can see how it was helpful for me when I faced a difficult decision, and the enlightened moment arrived when I let go of perfect rationality, and finally listed to my feelings.

4. Attachment Styles: Understand Yours to Reach Assertiveness

The author goes deep into attachment styles.

Attachment theory is based on the assumption that we are emotionally interconnected with one another and we *want* to form emotional bonds with others.
The way form and approach emotional bonds can be more or less healthy, and it's in good part based on our attachment styles.

There is already much on this website, see:

- Your attachment style: a test
- Overview of attachment styles

- Secure attachment
- Avoidant attachment
- Anxious attachment

And check this out:

- Anxious-avoidant attachment

How do attachment styles overlap with assertiveness?
Well, the author makes a good case that there is a strong overlap.

She has an overview that by itself is worth the price of the ebook but, as a quick wrap-up:

- **Anxious**: Is hesitant. Is afraid to speak up for fear of creating distance or rejection;
- **Avoidant**: Is guarded. Has difficulty dealing with emotions, seeks an unhealthy detachment, prefer to "shut up"
- **Secure**: Is confident. For him, it's more of a question of communication *skills*

5. Differentiation: How it Impacts Assertiveness

This part is based on the differentiation aspect of Family Systems Theory as developed by Murray Bowen (Brown, 2013 for an overview).

The author reminds us that we are born with the desire and capability of forming relationships with others.
But we are also individuals with our unique feelings, wants, and needs.

So we are *both* unique individuals, and interconnected with others.
Says the author:

> Our ability to navigate the tension between our desire for individuality and our desire for connection through relationships is called differentiation.

Schnarch defines differentiation as:

> "Differentiation is the ability to maintain your sense of self when you are emotionally and/or physically close to others—especially as they become important to you"

And it also includes the ability to be authentic, and engage others from a place of authenticity rather than a "fake persona" that some people develop in order to avoid conflicts.

So, how does differentiation exactly impacts assertiveness?
The ability to be assertive is essentially an expression of differentiation.

Says the author:

> Assertiveness is a way that you express difference while remaining connected

But very low-differentiation individuals might see assertiveness as a threat to the whole.
if you see your partner or family members as a single unit, you might repress your expressions of differentiations.
And if they see you as part of an undifferentiated unit, they might repress your expressions of differentiation.

Family Impact on Differentiation & Assertiveness

- **Low-level differentiation family** (emotional fusion or enmeshment): they consider the family as a single unit, and resist a family member's attempt to assert herself in ways that challenge family norms, rules, or threaten

family identity”

- **High-level differentiation families**: accept a broader range of behaviors and expressions of unique feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants without feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or threatened as a unit

More Wisdom

- **The emotionally closer you are, the more challenging it is**: the closer a person is to you emotionally, the harder it may be to assert yourself to him or her when a difference arises, especially when it comes to vulnerable emotions like fear and loneliness

Real-Life Applications

- **Stop using biting humor and then saying “I was joking”**: that’s passive-aggressive, and makes you come across as slimy. Also see “micro-aggressions“.
- **Avoid starting with accusatory “you.. “**: also see “criticism“, based on John Gottman’s research

Quotes

> We have a built-in system to help resolve emotional hurt, too; it’s called attachment! We are designed to heal through healthy relationships.

Closing quote of the book:

> It is in the entrances and exits of life that the meaning and purpose of living comes into focus. Life’s purpose is to connect deeply with each other and to learn how to love.

CONS

- **Sometimes feels there is some feminist / left-wing trope**

In this passage it feels like the author wasn’t too happy at her grandmother advice on femininity:

> “Always sit with your knees together” (thanks, Grandma)

That’s not bad advice from her grandmother.
A woman manspreading sends low-quality woman signals, and there is much power in being feminine.

Sometimes it felt like the author overplayed the role of culture and downplayed the role of nature in influencing people’s behavior and mindsets.

- **Sometimes a bit too psycho-analytical / Freudian**

The author prods the reader to think about their first memories as children, asking if they are accompanied by connection or disconnection.

And then, with the example of a patient who had a great childhood, writes:

> Her story illustrates that all of us, even those from caring, dedicated families, have wounds or developmental gaps rooted in our early childhood experiences

I see it differently.
Maybe it illustrates instead that if you look hard enough, you will always found some issue -and maybe because you

were looking for it, not because there was some “hidden childhood trauma”-.

This is not scientific, and sometimes it leads people to worry and “cure” problems that aren’t even there.

That being said, these are very small cons in an otherwise great book.

PROS

- **Novel approach to assertiveness**

There is a ton of books on assertiveness, and some just rehash content.

Not Julie de Azevedo Hanks.
She truly adds a unique perspective and, in my opinion, she truly adds unique wisdom that was missing in the literature.
Namely, the link between attachment styles, individuation, and assertiveness (or lack thereof).

- **Very good analysis on self-esteem, happiness, and mental control**

Also see “antifragile ego“.

Review

“The Assertiveness Guide for Women” is an awesome book on communication skills, assertiveness, and general self-development.

Albeit, as the author says, it’s written by a woman and for women, I found it to be quite gender-neutral, and men can learn a lot from it as well -I certainly have-.

It’s the only book on communication skills and/or assertiveness I have read that connects the dots among attachment styles, differentiation, and assertiveness.
And that made a lot of sense, Julie de Azevedo Hanks really enlightened me on this topic. It helped me to better understand how these all-important concepts are indeed interlinked.

Check out the:

- **Best social skills books**
- **Best communication books**

Or get the book on Amazon

Conflicts of Interest at Work: They Don't Want You To Know This

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Political awareness, as much as any good social and life strategy, starts with a good understanding of the conflicts of interest.

This is true across all socialization.
Understanding conflicts of interest is a foundational aspect of learning advanced social skills, power dynamics, as well as the scope and opportunities for collaboration (or for manipulation).

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- Execs VS Stakeholders
  - 1. Executives want short-term profit, even if it might create problems in the future
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- Summary

Intro

You must learn how and where the interests diverge to properly strategize.

The areas of diverging interest also create more opportuniteis for manipulations and lies.
And they're more common in business than in most other socialization area.

This is why despite we generally advocate for coopeartion and win-win, at work you may want to dial-up your Machiavellianism.

Of course, without going the full length and becoming a total asshole, or cynic side.

But… Make sure team you is also being taken care of.

Boss VS Employees

This is between you and your boss.

1. You want to work for yourself, your boss wants you to work for the team

The better the team performs, the better it looks on your boss.

Unluckily:

1. The better the team performs, the more you'll struggle to stand out
2. The more you do "for the team", the less you can do *for yourself*

Solution: Listen to "team you"

Leadership comes at a cost.
But those costs are smallest at work, while the rewards are the biggest.

And while you're revving up for leading, don't forget that alongside the "team" there is "team you", and both of them need your attention.

2. You want to move up, your boss wants to keep you in the team

The general rule:

The better you are at your job, the more your boss wants to keep you within the team.

If you move up, you won't be helping your boss anymore.

Some unscrupulous bosses might work behind your back to thwart your advancement opportunities.

3. You want to take credit, your boss wants to take it for himself -or the team-

The ideal team for a calculative boss is a team of faceless and anonymous individuals whose good work all fall under *his* name.

And the opposite is true when the team makes some major mistakes: then he wants to be able to point finger at someone and assign the blame.

Solution: Intelligent self-promotion

This is where self-promotion must meet good political strategies.
Also read here:

> 10 Techniques for Strategic Self-Promotion At Work

4. You want to keep your best customers close, your boss wants them shared with the team

Valuable contacts, be customers or powerful people, are power.

You want to keep them to yourself, while your boss wants to share them.

The more you share them, the more you lose power and leverage.
And if you leave, the team won't miss you when none of your best customers will leave with you.

⍰ Example: Law firm doesn't want lawyers to answer "thank you" emails

In Bel's former law firm lawyers were discouraged from answering customers' 'thank you' emails.

Now you understand why: because the partners didn't want the *firm's* customer to grow too close to their employees.

Owners VS Employees

You want a raise? Let me make an offer your can't refuse
"Owners" refers to anyone with a sizable stake in the company -and its revenues-.

But sometimes non-owners act like owners when they're given a bit more perks than the ranks and file.
It's similar dynamics of the nazi's 'kapos'.

Or when they're given the responsibility to 'control' others.
Think of HR, for example, and it's similar dynamics as in Zimbardo's prison experiment.

1. You want to put yourself first, owners want you to put the company first

This is also why owners love a 'family' culture to increase your contributions to the company.

I have seen a similar theme across business titans' biographies such as Howard Schultz (Starbucks), Phil Knight (Nike), Sam Walton (Walmart), as well as CEOs and VCs (Ben Horowitz).

They all loved their employees and felt like they were all a big family.
But only the top ones get rich.
And only the bottom ones get fired when cost-cutting.

2. You want cash, owners want to pay you with "inspiration"

This is where advanced corporate manipulation kicks in.

The most successful entrepreneurs attract less with cash, and more with vision.

Often, pro-social visions of addressing big humanity's challenges or making the world better.

The psychological underpinning is related to intrinsic VS extrinsic motivation (Vallerand, 1997).

Solution: Money Talks Straight, Listen to It

Inspiration is great, but also look at the concrete exchange and compensation.
And ensure you're not being sucked dry and short-changed.

3. You want alliances with colleagues, the company prefers you isolated

Divide and conquer disguised as teamwork
Owners hate unions because alliances make you stronger.

The same concept applies to internal alliances.
Internal alliances may be good for you, but it may cost the company.

You can see this same conflict of interest repeated at national and government levels, as well.
The government frowns upon -or outright bans- any congregation that might potentially pose a threat to the government itself -or to its ability to collect taxes-.

4. You care about personal success, the company wants you to care about the company

If the company does well, its workers are more likely to do well.

But while it's true that a "rising tide" lifts all boats, career strategist Brendan Reid points out that **you don't really advance much when everyone else is advancing**.

Instead, crises and restructuring can offer equally good -or even better- opportunities for rapid advancement.

5. You want to advance, your company needs un-ambitious low-paid employees

Personal value is a two-edged sword for owners:

On one hand, a skilled and driven workforce is a boon.

But on the other hand, the more you improve, the more you will want to move up the corporate ladder, ask for more money or, potentially, move to another firm.

The company does want some of its employees to move upward, but not *everyone*.

The truth is, **all companies need someone doing simple and low-paid work**.
You just don't want to be one of them.

Solution: Take all training and growth opportunities you can get

Take all training and stretch assignments you can.

This is exactly where working in a company is good from a Machiavellian point of view: you can fuck up, and not be on the hook as if you were working on your own.

6. You want to cover your ass, the company wants you to trust them

Trusting employees are more loyal, don't waste time covering their assess, and are defenseless if things go south.

Some companies will break or bend the law when they smell that an employee can be pushed around, so be careful.

Solution: Collect Evidence

Machiavellian power move:

Leave no traces of bad conduct, while you recording all infractions from your employer.

You don't need to use those records.
And you might not even want to use it.
As a matter of fact, I recommend you always go for win-win relationships, even with your employer.

But simply knowing that you have the power to win a lawsuit give you power and peace of mind.

7. You Want to Keep Your Best Strategies Private, The Owner Wants You to Share Them -Better Yet, Codify Them-

The principle is:

⚖ **While your unique knowledge empowers you only, publicly shared knowledge empowers the company**

Company owners want to break down and codify your skills so that that even a monkey could do what you're doing.
So that they can *hire* monkeys and *pay* monkey salaries

BTW: monkey is terribly offensive and we reject it.
But I use it because that's *exactly* how a founder I spoke to addressed his people behind closed doors.

See this example from "The Wolf of Wall Street:

> **Owner**: So, what do you say?
> **Everyone**: (reads from a script like a bunch of sheep)

That's the dream of every owner: everyone is the same, and everyone is easy to replace.

Solution: Machiavellian Hoarding of Wisdom

We dig deeper on this one in Power University.

Old-Guard VS New Generation

1. You want power, they want you to be an obedient grunt

Culture has changed -luckily-.

Back in the days, the expectation was for lower-level employees to be at the beck and call of senior folks.

But the senior guys did go through that mild hazing culture.
And so today the senior guys want to have the same hazing rights over the new guys joining in.

They are also secretly resentful if you get to experience too much of an easy life and, of course, they don't want to give up their "right" bossing you around.

That's how you get all-too-common tropes:

- The new generation is soft
- They are entitled without giving anything (sometimes true, but not as much as some people like to parrot)
- They don't appreciate the value of hard work

Most of the times, these are indirect cries for appreciation.
They all actually say "look at how hard I worked, how ethically I've played the game, and appreciate me for it".
So throw them a bone, make them feel good, then frame yourself as a hard worker who "wants to be like them", and you'll be good to go.

2. The Slower They Climbed, The Slower They Want YOU to Climb

Anything less will make them feel bad about themselves.

3. You Want More Flexibility, They Want You to Sweat Blood and Tears

I remember years ago, when I was "SHINE talent graduate".

We were presenting new ideas to the board comprised of all the most powerful heads of our IT center.

My idea was to change the policies around home office. "*We should remove the 2 days cap a week, and scrap the need for the manager's prior approval*", I opined.
That way, I argued, we could attract and *keep* more talent.

I had data: the new generations considered flexibility as important as salary.

And if people abused the system, we could easily identify the bad apples to let go.

The answer from the board?
A big laugh.

"These new guys want to come to work and chill with a beer", said the biggest boss.
And all the other yes-men joined in.

Of course: they did NOT have flexibility during their career.
So they resented people who could now enjoy or, sacrilege, demand it!

It was my mistake, of course.
The mistake was in the *framing* of the request.

I should have framed it more as a win for the company.
And I should have paid homage to hard work and the importance of face-to-face interaction as well, a wink to the "real" way of doing business, the way *they* did it.

Machiavellian twist: I could have *joined* them in laughing "at the new grads".

"*But if this new generation wants to stay home with their moms, let's give it to them, and we'll even save money in office space*".
See the persuasion power move?
You power-align with them, pretending to laugh at the people who instead you're going to help. That's Machiavellianism for win-win.

Individuals VS Team

Those whom the company frames as your closest brothers… Are also your biggest competitors.

That picture says a lot about the conflicts of interest at work.
Especially, about the inherent conflicts between "teamwork" and the obviously limited opportunities for career advancement.

1. You want to be promoted, and all your colleagues want to be promoted

… But you must pretend you're still all friends and teammates.

2. You gain by keeping the best information, while your colleagues want to learn as much as possible from you

The better than the rest you, are the more power you have.
But the more you teach and share, the smaller that gap becomes.

- ⍰ **Information sharing strategies**: what to share, and when

3. You want to shine for yourself, the team wants you to share credit

The more you shine, the more you make them look average.
And the more you self-promote, the more they will resent you.

⚠ **Too nice guys feel bad to outshine and beat their colleagues**
And self-sabotage themselves.

Solution: Friends With Everyone Else, Only Friend-*ly* With Competitors

1. **Be a professional, not a friend**. Be friendly and warm enough so they don't turn into frenemies, but distant enough so they won't affect your drive to compete.
2. ⍰ Think and treat them as if they were already your reports ⍰

4. You want to be close to your boss, the team prefers you to stay away from him

The closer you are to your boss, the more others will resent you as the boss' favorite.

Solution: Be Friendly to All

If you're very close to your boss, be warmer and more talkative to all, so it doesn't seem you're exclusively hobnobbing with the boss.

5. Men want to keep power, women want to upset the system

This one deserves its own post.

Also see:

- The sexual war
- The sexual marketplace

And more befitting to the workplace:

- How men keep women down

> 8 Ways Men Keep Women Down at Work

Execs VS Stakeholders

This conflict of interest might be one of the best arguments against unfettered capitalism.

And it becomes especially salient during times of financial crises -especially in the banking sector-.
Then, when the ship risks going down, the captains ransack the ship leaving everyone else to hold the bag.

1. Executives want short-term profit, even if it might create problems in the future

Some classes of powerful people are incentivized to pursue short-term profits while pushing the costs onto future generations, or the public.

Politicians sometimes belong to this category.
Borrowing today, for example, helps politicians keep power, maybe even (indirectly) taking some of that money, while pushing the problem of repaying that money to the future generations (de Mesquita, 2003).

You realize you are in such a short-term profiteering environment when the bosses are pressuring people to say and do what's expedient instead of what's true and, in the most blatant of cases, to forego obvious standards of morals.

When that is the case, from a purely Machiavellian perspective, it's best for you to work to help the bosses line up their pockets and interests, and that will help you make a great career.
Then you can move somewhere else before that ship will start sinking (bad management doesn't make for great companies).

Note of caution:
As Bel correctly noted, you must be careful here. Because many (psychopathic) bosses try to push their employees to do illegal acts and then blackmail them and hold their careers on the line.
Or use them as scapegoats.

See an example here from the documentary "Capitalism":

> **William Black**: People who will give you the wrong answer, but the answer you want are invaluable and they often get promoted precisely because they are willing to say and do absurd things.

There is also a different approach possible though:

Dare to be black sheep

Alghouth challenging, it's possible to fly higher.

William Black from the video above does pretty well for himself.
Di Pietro, the man who fought the Italian corruption system and gave birth to the huge movement called "Clean Hands" also did great as a lone fighter (and he got my first vote).

Being the lone fighter is riskier, and can either get you kicked out very quickly, or it can make you the leader of a new movement.
Doing so requires charisma, power awareness and… Some lucky timing.

2. Execs and owners want to privatize the gains, and collectivize the losses

Similar to the above, and the two often overlap.

The further away and the more powerless the stakeholders are, the more the few in power want to enrich themselves whilst pushing the costs to the many.

This issue is huge in politics, since politicians have access to tax money and the power of the taxpayers once parted with their money is severely limited.

Owners and shareholders often have similar incentives to cut down the costs and let the have-nots to pay the price.

The costs aren't always a direct cost on people. Sometimes it's indirect, paid with common goods pollution, contamination, or depletion.
That's even easier for shareholders to pull off, since people are even more unwilling to rebel for what they don't feel it's even theirs.

There can be power, and even some potential personal benefits in making yourself the "leader of the forgotten good cause". But only if you do it *outside* of the corporation or political party.
Doing it from within, especially if you do it too loudly, is political suicide.

Summary

Awareness of conflicts of interest forms the basis of political intelligence.

This article showed some of the main conflicts of interest among individual contributors, teams, bosses, and owners.

This knowledge empowers you to base your win-win on real-world power dynamics, rather than on naive ignorance.

⍰ We teach the best strategies to advance at work in Power University!

The Assertiveness Workbook: Notes & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Assertiveness Workbook (2000) focuses on developing assertiveness as a communication style and habit, and helps readers become more assertive with exercises and diary-keeping.

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- CONS
- PROS
- Quotes
- Review

Summary

About the Author: Randy J. Paterson is a Canadian clinical psychologist, author, and trainer.

4 Styles of Communication

There are four styles of relating with others:

1. **Passive**: Afraid of asking, taking a stand, or sharing an opinion. An approach designed to avoid conflicts at all costs, that leads to the failure of enforcing personal boundaries, defending one's own time and priorities, and letting others take advantage of them, and walk all over them
2. **Aggressive**: Feel entitled to control others. (Tries to) force others to do what the aggressor wants, no matter how others feel.
   He seems stronger and in control, but it's often motivated by fear and, in the long run, this approach loses power, since people resent the aggressive guy.
3. **Passive-Aggressive**: Wants to be aggressive and has the same anger but, often out of fear, acts more like a passive, and then aggresses others subtly and covertly
4. **Assertive**: Directly states opinions, demands what he wants, and knows and accepts that others are ultimately responsible and in charge of their own behavior

Assertive Style

The assertive individuals:

- Feels in charge of his own behavior
- Asserts his boundaries clearly and directly
- Recognizes that others are in charge of their own behavior
- Does not seek to force others to change their behavior but leaves it up to them
- Can state that there will be rewards -or consequences- depending on what the other person decides to do

Tips to become assertive

1. **Push through the pushback**: if you were passive, some people might not like the new you. If they push back, it's great news, you're empowering yourself. Push through their pushback
2. **Resist the urge to go back to comfortable routines**: people will initially misread your behavior because they

were used to a different you. If you were aggressive, they might think you're not being "strong enouhg". Keep being assertive and clear instead of going back to yelling and aggressing

3. **Change with one person at a time**: changing all at once might be difficult. Consider changing with one person at a time, or in one environment at a time (work, relationship, family, or friends)
4. **Start when you're feeling good**: if you're at a difficult time in your life, consider starting when you have more strength and power. Becoming assertive might strain some of your relationships before they get better. But don't this be an excuse to postpone! Unless you're really in dire straits, go for it

Beliefs underpinning assertiveness

The author lists the beliefs underpinning all of the different styles, as well as how to overcome.

Here, we will focus on the beliefs of assertiveness:

1. **I'm in charge of my, behavior others are in charge of theirs**: this is the central belief of assertiveness
2. I decide for myself what I will and will not do
3. People can ask me whatever they want
4. And I can decline whatever they ask because this is my life
5. I am my own judge, I don't have to justify myself to others
6. Others don't have to justify themselves to me

Also see: "judge power dynamics".

DESO: A model for assertive communication

Paterson modifies Bower and Bower's model of assertive communication and comes up with the "DESO" formula.

The goal of "DESO" is to frame the situation, say what's wrong, make your request, and predict an outcome.
Using DESO can help you word your assertive requests.

It stands for:

- **Describe:** describe and define the situation and what's going on. If it's about someone's behavior, make sure you stick to a specific behavior, and that you don't turn it into a criticism, which attacks the personality
- **Express:** express and state how you are feeling in the situation
- **Specify:** Specify what you would like to happen
- **Outcome:** Describe what happens if the person goes along with what you want and, potentially, what will happen if they don't. It can be a reward or a punishment but, sometimes, the outcome is simply you being happier, or feeling better -"if you do X, I will feel so much better"

Paterson says that most people overuse punishment as the outcome, and he recommends instead to use it very sparingly.
Instead, frame those negative outcomes positively. Instead of "unless you clean your dishes from yesterday, no dinner tonight", you can say "as soon as you clean yesterday's dishes, I will go ahead and start cooking our dinner".

Be cautious using assertiveness with violent individuals or in violent relationships

Assertiveness is about setting boundaries and reclaiming your power.

Some individuals might not like that but, in most situations, that's their issue, not yours.
However, in some fringe cases, with some people and in some relationships that are either violent or teetering on the verge of violence, your new assertive attitude might spark a renewed wave of violence.
The violent or manipulative partner, seeing his grasp on the relationship slipping away, might try one last-ditch

effort to “put you back in line”.

So it’s up to you to exercise caution, distance yourself, or start your new assertive journey with physical distance, well-prepared, in public, or with your friends around.

Life Tip: Only fight battles you can win

I like this passage:

> Life is short.
>
> You only have so much energy.
>
> Why waste it unless the effort will get you somewhere?
>
> If you have been trying for thirty years to get your mother to stop asking when you will get married, give up. Let her ask. If you have been trying for years to get your partner to be faithful, perhaps it’s time to stop trying—and either accept the behavior or end the relationship.
>
> *Randy Paterson*

Paterson links it back to a core tenet of assertiveness: controlling *your* behavior, and letting go of controlling others. He says that all the time wasted on battles you can’t win have one thing in common: you’re trying and trying, and hoping against hope, that you will be able to change people and control their behavior.
Give that faulty belief up, and you’ll enjoy a better life.

More Wisdom

Only sets boundaries you are willing and able to defend: if you say something and don’t follow trough you lose all your credibility

Cultural relativity only up to a certain point: the cultural factor is important to discern what exactly is assertive, but some degree of assertive behavior is appropriate in every culture

Don’t defend your opinion, **it’s low-power**: some people have an ingrained belief that the worth or validity of their opinion -or their own worth- depends on their ability to defend their position.
The author correctly say that this belief place you in the powerless position of having to change someone else’s mind.

Take responsibility for your feelings or requests: don’t say that something is wrong because “nobody else does it”, or because “every other husband does it this way”.
It’s cop-out to avoid taking responsibility, and it invites an easy argument that will only sidetrack you away from your request.

To deal with covert aggression, ask for clarification: the author correctly poins out that to deal effectively with covert criticism, you want to ask them what exactly do they mean as a way of drawing them out.
For example, if they give you a dirty look, you can ask “I’m not sure what that expression meant, can you please elaborate”. This is what I call “show me the hand technique“, and it’s a standard technique of uncovering covert aggression.
Also see “how to deal with microaggressions“.

> 10 Techniques Against Microaggression

CONS

- **I'm not convinced that aggression originates in fear**

The author says that aggression "almost always originates in fear".
I'm not too sure about that.

- **I'm not convinced that "control over others is a delusion"**

The author says that "control over others is a delusion".

But that's not true.
Control over others is solid power dynamics. It's not a delusion. It happens, it's real, and pretending it's not there does not help to make the case for assertiveness.

- **Sometimes feels like splitting hair between "demanding" and "stating your wants", and frames persuasion as if it were a bad thing**

The author says that when you state outcomes, such as the consequences of not following through, which can include rewards or punishments, you are not "demanding anything" or "tiring to control their behavior", but "simply stating what you feel and what you will do".
To me, this feels like splitting hair.

Also, I don't see the point of denying that influencing others can be someone's goal.
It's not like there is a moral prize for those who don't try to influence and persuade others. Influence and persuasion is how we get things done in this world.

- **Being specific and realistic all the time comes at a persuasion cost**

The author exhorts the reader to stick to reality when it comes to outcomes, and that too many people exaggerate. However, painting a picture of future victory and greatness can help persuade others. And sticking to reality too much can make someone a bit dull and boring.

PROS

- **Perfect for beginners**: the exercises, quizzes, and self-assessments make it a great resource to follow on the journey towards assertiveness
- **Great wisdom**: you will learn a lot with Randy Paterson
- **One of the best overviews on feedback giving and taking**: and all correctly put into the perspective of assertion

Quotes

On the honest of assertiveness:

> Assertiveness isn't about building a good disguise. It's about developing the courage to take the disguise off.

On the power of "no":

> Who's in charge of your life? If you aren't able to say "no" then it certainly isn't you.

Looking at the effects of praise and compliments from a social exchange point of view.
"Defensive-mindset" people feel like they are a drain on their social power, but the opposite is true:

> Thanks, praise, and compliments do not put us in debt to others; they support and encourage the behavior we like.

Review

“The Assertiveness Workbook” is a wonderful resource on communication skills and assertion.

Randy Paterson is an advanced analyst of social and power dynamics, and I can recommend this book to anyone who wants to develop their assertion skills. Especially those who are beginners and/or who want a plan to follow, since Paterson provides lots of exercises at the end of each chapter -plus a scorecard to help you keep track of your progress0.

Also check out:

- Best communication skill resources
- Best social skills resources

Or get the book on Amazon

The Art of Everyday Assertiveness: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Art of Everyday Assertiveness (2019) is a book on communication styles, social skills, learning to say no, and becoming more assertive.

Contents

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- Review

Summary

About the Author: Patrick King writes and advises on social skills, dating, online dating, and communication skills.

Start Pleasing Yourself

Says Patrick King:

> You can't always please everyone, so start with yourself.

Faulty Beliefs of Lack of Assertiveness

The author says there are four major beliefs that seem to be most common among people who lack assertiveness.

They are:

1. **I'm only worthy if I help** (**Helpaholic**): Serving others is natural and looking at oneself comes last. This is the belief that you only live to help and serve others
2. **I'm only accepted if I always say yes**: the belief that you are unworthy of love the way you are
3. **I'm only good and kind when I help and when I don't complain**: and the opposite, saying "no" means being harsh and being bad. This is the belief that asserting yourself means you're a bad person
4. **I cannot stand confrontations and I will always lose them**: this is your typical fear of confrontation, and it's the belief that it's just better to go alogn with others rather than saying anything

Says the author:

> Being selfish isn't always bad.
> In fact, it's necessary being selfish every so often.

King does not include it in his main four beliefs holding people back from being assertive, but he later adds a few faulty mindsets which I think are important:

- **"I shouldn't say how I feel and what I want"**: this is especially pernicious in relationships, where some people expect their partners to know what they think, feel, and want. But nobody knows that, unless you say it, express it, or demand it

Manipulation stops you from being assertive

King says that mindsets are crucial, but they are only half of the battle.

The mindsets reflect your internal states, and there can be external stumbling blocks to your assertiveness.
Those stumbling blocks are other people's manipulations.

King quotes Susan Forward and her work on "Emotional Blackmail".
See here for emotional blackmail:

> Emotional Blackmail: 9 Ways to Confront Manipulators

Make it easy for them!

If you need something from them, make it easy for them to say yes.

Meet them at their favorite restaurant, go to their office, or offer something.
Don't make an imposition, but show that you're also giving.
Try this:

> Can we meet? Lunch is on me

This was just good social intelligence based on:

- Social exchange laws
- What's in it for them

Also see:

- WIIFT failures

King also adds that it's good social intelligence to make it easy for them to say "no", so that they will not resent you. Yes, they may love your dog, but they might not want the responsibility of looking after it.

The advantages of both giving value and making it easy for them to say no is that they also make it easier for you to make a request in the first place.

Assertiveness Format

King proposes four steps for asseritve communication:

1. **Objective description of their behavior**: describe reality. Be specific, be direct, but don't be harsh
2. **Description of the effects of their actions**: describe reality of how their actions affected you
3. **Description of your feelings**: use "I feel" statements. Be clear, but not theatrical
4. **Statement of your preferred behavior**: describe how you would like them to act, either now, or in the future

Say "I don't", not "I can't"

The way you talk to yourself as well as to others influences your ability to communicate and behave assertively.

When you say "I don't", you remove your decision from the realm of your willpower, and it becomes part of who you are.

More Wisdom

- **Shut up after you said "no"**: hold the silence. If you speak first, you are more likely to "soften" your "no",

give away power, and embolden others to keep pushing
- **Avoid giving too many details**: the more details you give, the more ammo you give other people to latch onto and try to change your mind
- **Don't allow other people's anger or pushy ways to weakne your boundaries**: when you let coercion overcome your fair boundaries, you are ceding power to a bully
- **Switch from "I'm sorry" to "excuse me"**: if you over-apologize, switch from "sorry' to "excuse me". This is good for everyday situations, for example bumping into someone. It's equally polite, but doesn't take over guilt and responsibility for things you're not guilty of

CONS

- **A bit on the selfish advice side?**

Sometimes I felt like the book was promoting selfish-interest a bit too strongly.

Probably the author wanted to address chronic people pleaser, in which case that type of stance and advice makes sense.
On the other hand, it's also important to remember that advanced social skills, which also include leadership, is about taking care of others, and there is lots of power in taking responsibility for others.

- **Sometimes it felt less assertive and a bit shifty**

The author says you can reject people by saying you'll get back to them and then "of course, you never get back to them".
He does say that you can use it for particularly pushy people, but it's still not an example of assertiveness.

Or that "you can reject X and offer Y, the hope being they have no use for Y".
But if you need to "hope" they won't take Y, then why offering it in the first place? Assertiveness is about clearly stating what you can do and what you don't want to do.

- **Sometimes I didn't fully agree with what was good assertiveness**

One woman felt uncomfortable with the sister's boyfriend asking some personal questions about her dating life.
So one day she told him that "she had been given that a lot of thought, and that she didn't feel comfortable… ".
The guy was shocked, and didn't see it coming. In my opinion, it's unnecessary to say "I've been given this a lot of thought" as that blows the matter out of proportion.
Much better to make it natural, like "hey John, I'm not as open as you are, I don't feel good discussing this stuff. But I'm happy to talk about football" (then, smile).

PROS

- **The self-assessment quiz**: was both helpful for self-assessment, and to understand what's proper assertive behavior in everyday life
- **Great list of techniques on how to make rejections easier for you**: possible these were the ones I enjoyed the most, there was some true nugget of genius, and I borrowed some for Power University and credited Patrick for them
- **Good 30-days plan to go from passive to assertive**: Patrick King lays out a plan to go from passive to assertive in a set of smaller steps to take day after day

Quotes

> **The great cost of your lack of assertiveness is a life that doesn't resemble anything you ever wanted**.

> **Every loudmouth can win an argument, to be a true winner, your aim should be a win-win for everyone**.

Review

I enjoyed “The Art of Everyday Assertiveness”.

There were plenty of nuggets of wisdom and.
Especially good were the techniques for saying “no”, which were not just assertive but also socially smart, and the connections that Patrick King established between assertion and effective social strategies, as seen from a social-exchange point of view -how to take your due credits, how to avoid making your social debt bigger, etc.-.

It’s especially suited for people who are too passive, too nice, and who struggle with a sense of guilt whenever saying “no”.

Also check the:

- Best communication skills resources
- Best social skills resources
- Best books on assertiveness

or get the book on Amazon

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Lucio Buffalmano · 23 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

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The 4 Communication Styles: Description & Examples

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

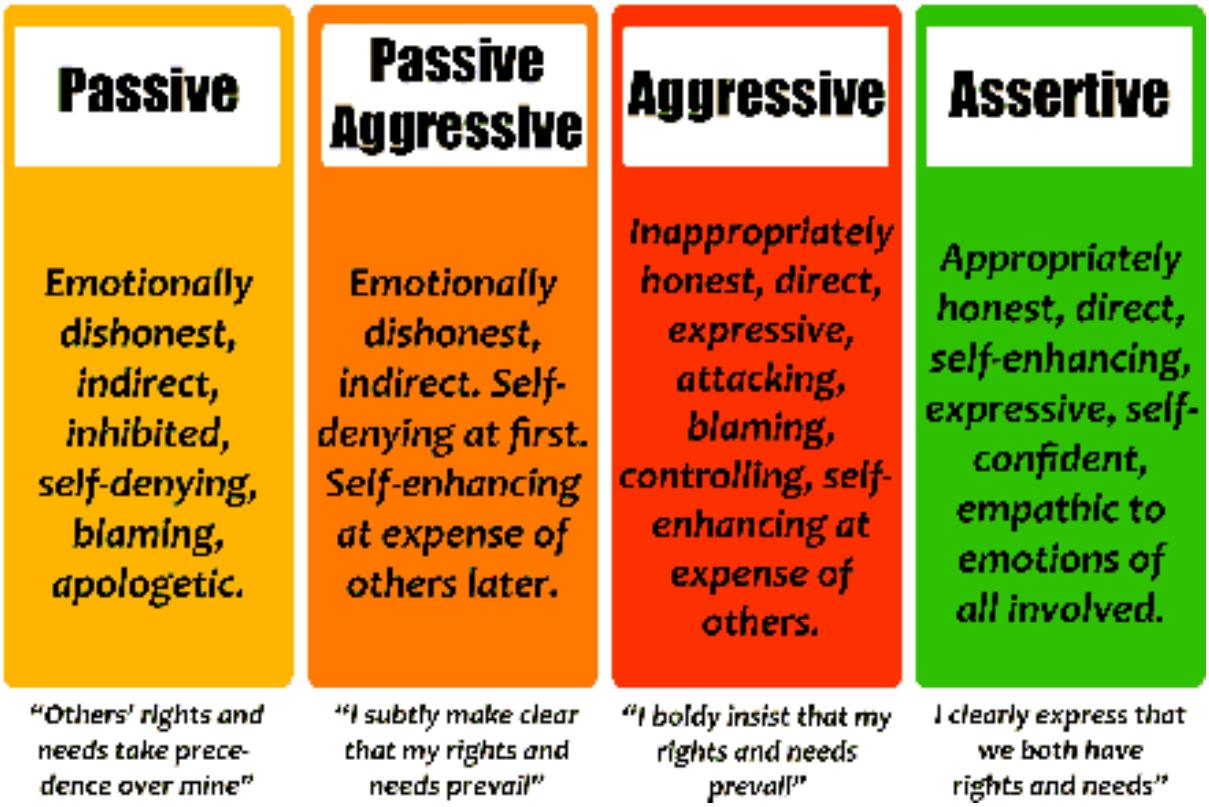
Communication styles are patterns of communication and interpersonal behavior that people tend to repeat across time and across different social settings.

There are four styles of communication:

1. **Passive** communication style
2. **Passive-Aggressive** communication style
3. **Aggressive** communication style
4. **Assertive** communication style

Some sources even add a "manipulative" communication style.
But in our opinion, that's not a different communication style because passive, passive-aggressive, and aggressive can all be manipulative.

For a quick overview:



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  - Overcoming Poor Communication Beliefs
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Communication Styles Intro

Albeit we use all of them at least some of the times, most people tend to stick to one of them.

That is because most people tend to adopt the *mindsets*, *values,* and *beliefs* of a certain style of communication, and those mindsets keep them stuck there.

That's why we will also be focusing on mindsets here.

But let's go in order.
Here is a deeper visual chart of the different styles of communication:

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive Aggressive	Assertive
Actions	Keeps quiet Puts himself down Apologizes for all expressions Hides his disagreement Inconvenience himself	Expresses himself over others Belittles or disrespects others Ignores, insults, or attacks other opinions	Denies personal responsibility Indirect aggression Sarcastic Agrees to avoid discussion, then looks for ways to sabotage the agreement	Directly expresses needs, wants & feelings Expects others to be equally open & honest Accepts different opinions without dismissing them
Looks	Makes himself small Looks down & hunch over Avoids eye contact Speaks softly	Makes himself large Looks threatening Penetrating eye contact Loud	Similar to passive	Relaxed Comfortable body language Frequent eye contact (but not glaring)
Beliefs	My needs are less important than others I don't have as many rights as others My contributions are not as valuable as others	My needs are more important and justified than others I have more rights than others My contributions are more valuable than others	My needs come first, but I can't express that openly I am not responsible for my actions I am entitled to get my own way, even if I make different commitments	My needs are equally important as others I have equal rights We both can make valuable contributions I am responsible for my behavior
Emotions	Fear of rejection Helplessness & low self esteem Frustration Resentment towards others who "succeed"	Anger Powerful (or full angry) when winning over others Lonely, powerfully responsible for motivating others	Fear of rejection if being direct or assertive Resentful of people's demands & power Fear of being controlled	Positive feeling about self Positive feeling about excitement with others Fear of other's anger
Goals	Avoid conflict Please others (in manner or what not to say) Let others take control (and blame others on control)	Win at any costs Control others Always make sure others know who's in charge	Get his way, without taking responsibility Get his way, but without having to assert myself	Express himself Find an agreement Keep a foundation of mutual respect

Based on Randy Paterson's work (Paterson, 2000)

Let's now quickly review each style.

1. Passive Communication Style

The passive communication style, overlapping with “submissive”, has sometimes been linked to the symbolism of a doormat.

At least in the extremes of the passive forms, this symbolism is correct. Since the passive communication style enforces no boundaries, it allows others to “walk all over”.

Of course, not everyone is going to walk all over an overly passive individual. Not everyone is looking to advantage of others, after all.
But, alas, some people are. And some people *will* walk all over the passive.

And that puts the passive communicator at risk.

How about an example of a passive communication style?
A video speaks more than a thousand words:

> **Aggressive**: Look Jerry, you’re not selling me a damn car. It’s my show here. That’s that
> **Passive**: (puts his head down, looks up to the second highest authority in the room)

The passive man often submits to avoid conflict.

He:

- **Gives in to unreasonable demands**

> Another weekend in the office for extra unpaid work? Uhmm, OK. No, no trouble at all.

- **Goes along with the crowd**

> You all want to go to McDonald’s? I don’t mind that I’m on diet, it sounds great

- **Withholds opinion out of fear**

> What do I think of cannabis liberalization? What do you guys think about it? I agree with you…

- **Withholds any feedback that might come across as criticism**

> Yeah, I had to redo your budget report, but you're doing fine

- **Over-Apologize**

> Oh, I'm sorry I was standing here, you bumped into me, and that I spilled my full glass of wine over my new suit

From a social exchange point of view, with their over-apologies passive people end up inflating their own social debt.

Apologizing if you've done a mistake is what you should do. But avoid over-apologizing if you've done nothing wrong, or if someone else is at fault.

PRO Tip: If you have a tendency for over-apologizing, a quick fix can be to switch from "sorry" to "excuse me".

- **Never take proper credit; always minimize your effort or contribution**

> Nah, it was OK, I was already awake at 3am, so no problem getting dressed and come pick you up

From a social exchange point of view, passive people struggle mightily to collect their fair social credits and devalue their own contributions.

This is important information for us since our goal is to make you successful socially and at life:

Passive individuals struggle to enter win-win exchanges and are more likely to remain stuck in win-lose exchanges, as well as in manipulative relationships

2. Passive-Aggressive Communication Style

The passive-aggressive types mix elements of both the passive and aggressive style.

They are as afraid of standing up for themselves as the passive type, but have the same drive to control as the aggressive type.

The result is a mix:

1. Capitulation out of fear
2. Followed by unexpressed anger
3. Followed by undercover aggression and sabotage to get it their way, or to exact revenge

Some of the traits and behaviors of passive-aggressives:

- **Takes Everything Negatively**

Passive-aggressives like to take things negatively (Williams, 2020).

Why?

Because it justifies their repressed anger and aggression.
Taking things and people negatively makes it easy for them to justify their covert operations.

This is also why you want to avoid passive-aggression at all costs: it poisons your interactions as well as your mood.

- **Fight Without Fighting**

Passive-aggressive can be quite twisted in their competition.

For example, they might see you're about to commit a mistake, but don't tell you anything because they think that your loss is their win.

Or they might be the coworkers who "forget" to CC you in the customer email, so that you don't stay in the loop.

- **Do Things Improperly**

They fear saying no, so they say yes.
But they still want to find a way out.
Result?
They half-ass their work.

- **Are Non-Committal**

Passive-aggressive individuals are masters of ambiguity.

It can be hard to pinpoint whether they're telling you yes or no, and it's often premeditated.
That way, they keep their options open to do whatever they please.

Afraid of talking straight, they're also foggy and noncommittal with their requests.
You know, "you don't have to if you don't want to", they'll say. But if you don't, they'll sulk.

- **Leave "hints" instead of talking directly**

Instead of asking you to do your part of the cleaning, they might clean only their side of the flat.

You know, "sending you a message", instead of speaking up.

- **Cuss & threaten, but murmuring**

The passive-aggressive might be seething with anger, but:

- Fears of his own anger
- Fears he will be punished for honest expression
- Fears the confrontation, or the consequences of engaging and "losing"

But when the anger is strong, it seeps out at the seams. Save for hiding it again behind a fake smile if confronted.
See an example here:

> **Him**: (irritated and fighting his own irritation, moving towards aggression) Ma'am! I answered your question
> **Her**: I'm sorry sir?
> **Him**: (moves back to passive, tries to smile more) Ma'am, I answered you question. I answered. I'm cooperating here, and there is no… (mutters)
> **Her**: (going on the offensive) Sir, you have no call in getting snippy with me, I'm just doing my job here
> **Him**: (retreats even further)

She was also not being fully assertive.
Especially the "just" part, it's a defensive statement, and she had no reason to be defensive, she has every right to keep questioning.
A more assertive response from her would have been:

> **Assertive Option**: I understand this is frustrating but I am investigating a crime, and I intend to do it properly. And I need you to cooperate with me sir

If she wanted to make her statement even higher power and hold an even stronger frame, she could have added some "higher values", for example:

> I owe to the victim and to his family (= you're being a selfish, low-quality citizen for stopping justice)

But it wasn't strictly necessary here.

Power... At High Cost

It might sound surprising but…

Some passive-aggressive can get power.

They can get some power because many passive-aggressives crave power.
So the more Machiavellian ones can find sneakier and more indirect ways to win.

Problem is, of course, sneaky and undercover ways only get you so far.
And "so far" rarely is to the top.

The passive-aggressive style at very high costs, including:

- **Personal costs**: diminished self-esteem, repressed anger, and difficulty in developing strong relationships based on honesty
- **Status / social power costs**: people eventually catch up to the sneakiness of the passive-aggressive
- **Reputational costs**: when the passive-aggressive resorts to sabotage and underhanded tactics, he gets a reputation for being unreliable, disorganized, or inconsiderate

People might never be able to point out a few clear examples and say "this is what I'm talking about", but their general opinion of the passive-aggressive declines.

Avoiding The "Too Nice Passive-Aggressive"

Sometimes you behave passive-aggressive even when you're not a passive-aggressive type.

How?

Well, since anger and enmity are frowned upon, people can sometimes over-deny those feelings.

But then, when they show up, they will look like hypocrites.

Look at this scene for example:

> **Rossi**: We don't have any problem
> **Marquez**: (offers handshake, and Rossi refuses)
> **Rossi**: (looks passive-aggressive)

There is an overlap between power and assertiveness, but they're not the same.

Rossi is high-power in the video above, but lacks assertiveness and falls into the passive-aggressive trap.

Marquez is also Machiavellian to look so friendly and candid, as if to say "I'd love to be friends, I'm good, it's *him* who doesn't want".
That contrast makes Rossi seem unjustifiably angry and vindictive.

So, what was a better alternative for Rossi?

Think about it please.

And later you will see a very similar situation, but with an assertive approach.

Handling passive-aggressive

A few tips:

- **Remain calm**

Passive-aggressive individuals use covert-aggression to attack others.

If you overreact, you can come across as overly-aggressive or thin-skinned, and you lose social status.

For handling covert-aggression, please see "how to handle micro-aggressions".

- **Remove them from your team**

If you are in a power or leadership position, consider removing them.

Passive-aggressives are toxic employees per excellence.

Letting them fester means allowing them to go beyond your back spreading rumors and breeding malcontent in the team.

- **Let them know, you know: go meta**

This is a risky technique since passive-aggressive can end up hating you for showing them a better, higher power, and higher-quality way of interfacing with the world.

But in some situations, it's a risk worth running.

- **Pull them up**

If you're in a close relationship with a passive-aggressive, consider pulling them up into self-development.
Anyone can become less passive-aggressive and more assertive, and you might be able to help them.

3. Aggressive Communication Style

The aggressive commutation style seeks to dominate others without regard or respect for others' well-being.

Aggression is a bit like that famous quote on defining porn.
Even if you're not sure how to define it, you probably know it when you see it.

Aggressive behavior includes one or some of the following:

1. Yelling
2. Visible signs of anger
3. Rude or disrespectful behavior (dismissive in the case of covert aggression)
4. Visible signs of emotional turmoil (or the opposite with total icy detachment)
5. Open and direct threats, even if delivered calmly
6. Body language that suggests the possibility of an attack
7. Physical shoving or pushing, or the threat of physical aggression
8. Stand closer, or purposefully far away to communicate superiority or disgust

There are some use cases for aggression, as well as some situations in which it's a good approach.

Indeed, from a point of view of effectiveness, aggression is better at getting things done than both passiveness and passive-aggression.

However, it comes at a rather heavy cost.
Most people don't like being overpowered, and especially not the most talented, high-value, and high-quality ones.
These higher-quality folks will either try to overpower the aggressor, or they will quickly abandon him.

And that makes it hard for the aggressive type to be an effective leader, and especially hard to make him a good leader for a team of talented people with lots of options.
After all, why would anyone with options stick with an aggressive ahole that demeans them?

Ultimately, too high levels of aggression backfire both in personal life, and at work.

4. Assertive Communication Style

And here we finally come.

Assertiveness is relevant to power dynamics and social effectiveness because there is an overlap between "assertive" and "high-power".

People who master assertion tend to come across as confident, high-power, and generally high-quality individuals who get things done.

And since they don't overpower others, they also tend to develop strong long-term relationships, which enables them to develop win-win far more than aggressive individuals can.

Assertion includes:

- **Boundaries**: Having, maintaining, and enforcing personal boundaries of:
  - Basic respect: expecting and demanding respectful behavior
  - Privacy: declining to answer or discuss questions and topics that feel too personal or nosy
  - Time: choosing what and when to do, not allowing others to "task" you without your full consent
  - Personal freedoms: freedom of choice, of holding different opinions, etc.
- **Timely and honest communication**: assertive communication is timely, honest, precise, and often direct. It includes the communication of wants, needs, emotions, feelings, goals, and boundaries.
- **Expecting and encouraging honest and direct communication**: expecting, demanding, and/or encouraging direct and honest communication from others
- **Standing behind one's choices, opinions, & feelings**: the assertive communicator acknowledges and stands behind his choices, opinions, and feelings

One of the biggest secrets of marrying assertion with power is this:

High-power assertion includes high-power vulnerability, such as admitting one's own negative or antisocial feelings.
This is the "accepting one's own dark side" we talked about in the social power module.

To understand this concept, let's go back to our previous example.
Remember Rossi falling for the passive-aggressive trap earlier?

Rossi was being high-power, but he didn't add the high-power vulnerability of admitting his negative feelings.

Compare now to this other approach.

Rossi and Lorenzo also had plenty of acrimony in their career.

But Lorenzo doesn't hide and deny it.
His approach also includes The Power Moves basic strategies of power:

> **Interviewer:** So in the past 2 years you've been like two old friends again..
>
> **Lorenzo**: (after talking about Rossi as a great champion) No, I don't think we are friends <— States truth openly and directly
> (…)
> But the most important thing is to have respect, and I have huge respect for Vale, and I think he has the same for me <— Ends with collaborative frame

BOOM!

This is "high-power assertive".
Rossi was high-power in the previous video example, but NOT assertive in admitting and standing behind his feelings.
And that made him come across as sneaky.

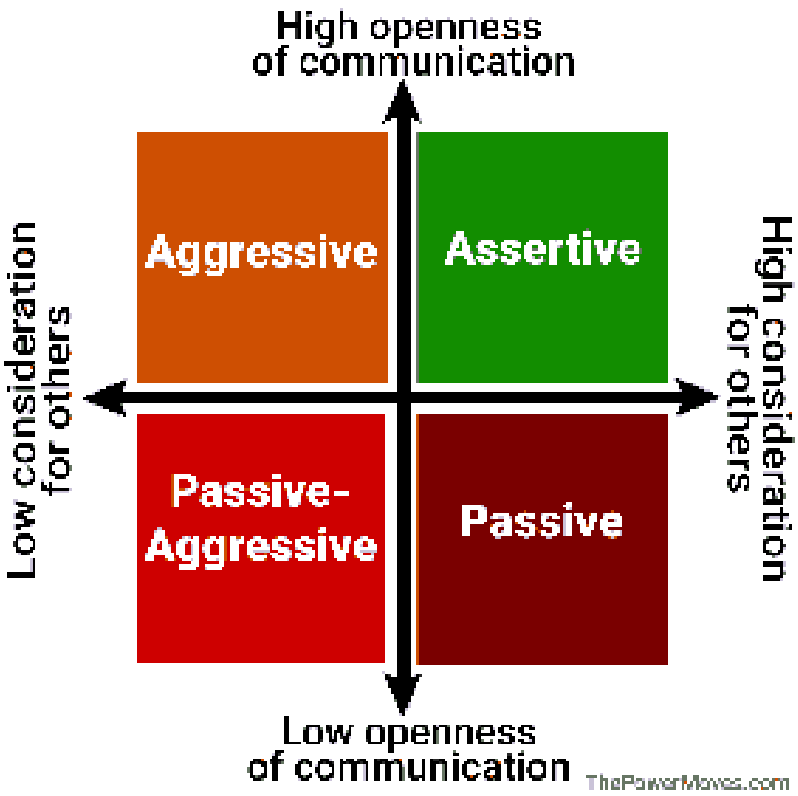
Lorenzo admits very candidly of *not* being friends with Rossi. All the while complimenting him and building him up.
Very high-quality.

Communication Styles Quadrant

The different styles differ in their:

1. Openness to communication
2. Respect towards others

Charting these two important variables, we can draw a quadrant:



While passive and passive-aggressive avoid communication, assertive individuals speak up.
And, crucial, they combine their communication with respect for themselves *and* for others.

They speak:

- **Early**: speak early to avoid stewing
- **Directly**: state your needs and wants clearly and directly
- **Respectfully**: but with respect and consideration for others

Overcoming Poor Communication Beliefs

It's your beliefs and mindsets that determine your behavior.

Beliefs holding you back from reaching assertiveness:

- **"Dark" feelings such as anger and will to power are bad to have and even worse to show**

What happens when people unconsciously hold this belief is that they deny their feelings of anger, disappointment, or resentment *with words*, but then act them out *with actions and body language.*

That makes them come across as hypocrites (see Ray Dalio example,and this discussion on political hypocrisy).

- **Assertiveness means getting your own way all the time**

No, that's aggression. Assertiveness is meant to put you on an equal footing with other people.

- **Being assertive means being selfish**

No, being assertive means being fair and high-power.
If anything, it means that you stop subordinating your interests.

- **Other people can't handle my assertiveness**

That's actually demeaning, to think of others as weak.

Better belief:

Many people, especially other high-quality people, actually love to deal with someone who is frank and honest.

And if some people find your assertiveness to be “too much”, then you can always calibrate and reduce the intensity.

- **People should be more considerate**

“Shoulds” are usually weak positions to be in.

What do you care what they should or shouldn’t do?
Act based on what they do, and what you want.

From an assertiveness point of view, when you hold this belief, you either don’t believe that you should tell them to act differently since they *should* know, or you believe that you must yell at them because they should know better and you have to set them straight.

- **I’m afraid of being assertive and failing**

You will fail.
And that’s OK. You will also learn and improve (growth mindset).

- **I have to convince others**

As a rule of thumb:

All the “I have to” put unneeded and often counterproductive pressure on you.

When you hold this belief, you either never start sharing your opinion, or you get angry when you cannot change other people’s minds.

You can always seek to persuade others, but you never “have to”.
Again, this goes back to basic mindsets and beliefs. A cognitive-behavioral therapy called REBT helps with this one (Ellis, 1988).

- **I must look good, strong, and happy**

This is about emotional assertion.

And it includes all acts of “concealing” emotions in order to look better to others.

It might be one of the major causes of male aggression, passive-aggression, as well as general communication breakdown.

Some women hold back their anger, and many men feel it’s not OK to admit their personal struggles or request (emotional) help.

So they deny their true feelings to others and to themselves and seek to have their needs met with aggression or covert-aggression.

Example of a family where everyone tries to look “strong” and happy. Result: total communication breakdown, and destruction of true intimacy and connection

Warning: this is not to say “parade your weakness”, wallow in self-pity, or to be always “vulnerable”.
Please read here for more on vulnerability:

- **Vulnerability and power**

Summary

Communication styles are patterns of behavior with which different people communicate and relate with others.

Learning to use and adapt the right communication style for the right situation is a crucial skill for social and life effectiveness.

As a general rule, the assertive communication style is the best general approach for baseline daily behavior.

Aggressive Communication Style: Strategic Pros & Cons

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Aggression is a communication style characterized by high dominance and little regard for other people's well-being.

It is one of the four communication styles, and this chart summarizes the aggressive style compared with the other 3 styles:

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive Aggressive	Assertive
Actions	Keeps quiet Puts himself down Apologizes for all expression Hides his disagreement Inconvenience himself	Expresses himself over others Belittles or [illegible] others Ignores, insults, or attacks other opinions	Carries personal responsibility Passive aggressive Sarcastic Agrees to avoid discussion, then looks for ways to delay or [illegible]	Directly expresses needs, wants & feelings Expects others to be equally open & honest Accepts different opinions without dismissing them
Looks	Makes himself small Looks down & hunch over Avoids eye contact Speaks softly	Makes himself large Looks threatening Penetrating eye contact Loud	Similar to passive	Relaxed Comfortable body language Frequent eye contact (but not glaring)
Beliefs	My needs are less important than others I don't have as many rights as others My contributions are not as valuable as others	My needs are more important and justified than others I have more rights than others My contributions are more valuable than others	My needs come first, but I can't express that openly I am not responsible for my actions I am entitled to get my way, even if I make different commitments	My needs are equally important as others' I have equal rights We both can make valuable contributions I am responsible for my behavior
Emotions	Fear of rejection Helplessness & low self esteem Frustration Resentment towards others who "succeed"	Anger Powerful (or Alt-right) when winning over others Fear, potentially [illegible] for manipulating others	Fear of rejection if being direct or assertive Resentful of people's demands & power Fear of being controlled	Positive feelings about self Positive feelings about excelling with others Fear of [illegible]
Goals	Avoid conflict Please others (no matter at what cost to me) Let others take control (instead of [illegible])	Win at any costs Control others Show others who is in charge, know who's in charge	Get it my way, without taking responsibility Get it my way, but without having to assert myself	Express himself Find an agreement Keep firm boundaries of mutual respect

Based on Randy Paterson work (Paterson, 2000)

Most resources on social skills, communication, and communication styles recommend people to avoid aggression.

The Power Moves is a bit different though.
And before advising anyone not to do something, we like to stress why some people actually *do* that something that most people tell you not to do.

After all, if a behavior evolved in the first place, there probably is a reason why.
And there is no reason why aggression should be any different.
Such as, aggression probably evolved because it served the aggressor's interest, at least some of the times.

So let's review the use cases of aggression.

Contents

- The Use Cases of Aggression
  - 1. Deal with other people's aggression
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The Use Cases of Aggression

Aggression can be helpful to:

1. Deal with other people’s aggression

if you remain assertive in front of an onslaught of aggression, assertiveness is obviously not working.

Furthermore, you can seem powerless.

In that case, meeting aggression with aggression can help stop the aggression with the “pacing and leading technique”: first you meet at their level (pacing), showing you can play the same game, and then *you* bring them down (leading).

Example:

Imagine your girlfriend yells at you for 10 minutes straight at home in spite of you assertively telling her she’s being rude and out of line.

Well… Assertiveness is clearly not working, then.
And if you want to put a stop to it, matching aggression with aggression might prove a far better alternative.

The only moment when Robin Williams seems to have a shred of dignity in the Mrs. Doubtfire divorce scene is when he raises his level of aggression to match hers:

Notice that it’s not about showing aggression *per se*.
It’s that by matching your attacker’s level of aggression, you communicate that you are not a submissive punching bag who’s incapable of defending and drawing boundaries.

2. Instill fear

Assertiveness gives you respect, but not so much fear.

Aggression can make people fear you.

Attention though: fear is not necessarily high-power and, much less so, high-quality.

Crazy individuals and homeless people often stir up fears in others.
But that fear only serves to keep them isolated and… At the bottom of society.

As we will see, this is a technique that some people use in the workplace.
They are always rude and aggressive in order to acquire some scrap of independence and to be left alone.
But they are also often left alone at the bottom of the hierarchy. You don't want to be one of them.

As Randy Paterson says:

> (People) may make fewer demands, though they will also make fewer pleasant invitations, and if you were more assertive, you could deal with their unpleasant demands confidently

3. Weapon of last resort

If you tried everything and failed, and still want to give it a last shot, going from assertive to aggressive might help you reach your goal in some cases.

Even if you still fail, at least you can say "I tried them all".

4. Win arguments by steamrolling ("argument ad potentiam")

Dominance can be used strategically to push people into the submissive end of the spectrum, or in defense mode.

When people start defending and submitting, they can look guilty *by behavior*, rather than by logic and facts.

Example:

Trump likely won the presidency thanks to this technique.

The 2017 presidential debates present many examples in which Hillary should have been more aggressive in dealing with Trump:

> **Trump**: (aggressively attacks Hillary for not having done anything as a politician, and keeps hammering and talking over her)

Trump's aggression allowed him to curtail Hillary's speaking time. She didn't even have enough air time to make her points. And from a political point of view, it looked like Trump was the embodiment of the angry citizen grilling an ineffective, crooked politician. Hillary's justification confirmed that impression.

But also please note that over-aggression was, in the end, also one of Trump's main reason for his downfall.
Had he been more socially astute, he would have mellowed once at the top.

- **Read this forum entry for more**.

5. In bursts, to show dominance, control the frame, without breaking rapport

I call this dominance technique "aggressive push-pull".

It's often used by the "self-amusing" dominance style, and it deploys the (more or less) covert-aggression technique of push-pull.

It consists of bursts of aggression followed by more assertive or even kinder behavior.
It serves to assert dominance without totally breaking rapport -or ven by *increasing* rapport, in some cases-.

Experienced or manipulative negotiators can use bursts of aggression to subtly dominate their opponents. when the opponents feel dominated, they will be less likely to negotiate hard and field their demands.

More on it later.

6. To more quickly regain power and respect with an aggressive display of force

If people long treated you like a low-value individual it might take quite some time of assertive behavior to regain their respect.

In those cases, a stronger display of power through aggression can rebalance the situation quicker.

See an example in this video:

> **Professor**: (slaps an aggressive pupil)
> **Class**: (a previously unruly class now sits down quietly, respecting and fearing the professor)

And read the full forum entry.

7. As a shortcut for status (in limited situations & environments)

Somewhat similar to the above.

Aggression can be helpful in acquiring status, and it can also be used as a shortcut if it's used successfully against someone with very high status.

There is some evidence for this in unstructured environments like in high school (Faris, 2012).

But high school is not a typical environment, and I haven't seen any experiment confirming these findings outside of it.
I consider aggression as a tool for status more in specific and limited environments, such as:

1. Prisons
2. Gangs

Even there though, aggression should be limited and targeted.
Constant aggression makes you a loose cannon with little support, and friends and allies matter a lot in those environments.

8. In sport, as *channeled* aggression

In some sports, a lot of aggression can help make up for talent.

This guy is an example:

His surname is “Gattuso” and his nickname was “ringhio Gattuso”, meaning “roar Gattuso”.
He was not the most skilled to use a euphemism, and he wasn’t even big.
But he was very aggressive on the pitch, driven to win beyond what’s normal.

He was one of my favorites because he was able to make up for skills, talent, and even physical size -he was small for the sport-, and still made it to the top (and won a world cup).

True legend of an underdog!
He would have never gotten there without the fire within him.

Even here though, we must add a caveat: the aggression that makes you great at sports is not violent aggression.
That gets you kicked out pretty soon and leaves your team one man down.
It’s more of a constant, controlled anger simmering beneath the surface, channeled into doing anything possible to win,

9. Aggression for revenge and “make you feel good”

Aggression can make you feel strong.
And it can make you feel good for exacting revenge on someone who slighted you in the past.

I personally see some value in revenge, as long as it’s proportionate and as long as it does not poison you.
See here a good real-life example.

But if you are being aggressive because it makes you feel strong, then you probably need to change mindsets because that type of aggression is likely making you *feel* powerful, but truly *disempowering* you in real life.

See “Ultimate Power” for better mindsets and values.

10. Maybe, to prevent challenges to absolute power? Not so sure...

There is one last *possible* benefit.

Some authors say that keeping people in fear can prevent challenges and murder attempts on a powerful man -say, for example, a dictator-.

I am not convinced about it.

I think there are two forces at play: on the one hand, the fear of death or torture can stop some challengers.
But aggression and fear also create a more ripe environment for wanting to *get rid* of that fear, and wanting to get rid of the SOB.

The challengers will also want to make sure that their aggression will leave the dictator dead or totally powerless, and they will be very careful in covering their tracks before they're ready to hit.
So the dictator gets no sign of impending danger until his premature death.

There is ultimately no proof that fear has ever prolonged -or shortened- anyone's reign. And I am personally doubtful about whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Why Constant Aggression Ultimately Backfires

There can be times and places for aggression.

But don't confuse aggression with power.
If there is one thing the vast majority of the authors agree on, is that aggression ultimately reduces power in the long run.

As a rule of thumb, and this is especially true for most people in our modern world, constant aggression erodes power.

Why is aggression ultimately counterproductive?
This is why:

1. Aggression Breeds Aggression, Leading to Lots of Wars

There is a tendency for our attitudes to shape and create our own realities.

Says psychologist Harriet Braiker:

> People with hostile, aggressive personalities expect others to be hostile. Consequently, they treat other people aggressively. **When people are treated aggressively, they tend to exhibit hostility in return**. Thus, since hostility breeds hostility, an aggressive person often evokes hostility from others.

Living in a world of constant aggression is handicapping in a multitude of ways, including of course from a power-strategic point of view.

Constant aggression can also lead to poorer health and a general lower pleasure of life.

That my constantly aggressive former neighbor got a stroke early in life might have been pure coincidence.
But it was not a coincidence that his perennial scowl on short term made his life less pleasurable, including few friends and no good relationships -including with his wife-.

2. Aggression Makes Few (True) Friends & Allies

Nobody rules alone.

Not even dictators (de Mesquita, 2003).

So no matter where you are, you're better of with a network of friends, allies, and supporters, than without.

One of the major issues with aggressive people is that they don't make others feel good, so few people want to be around them and support them.
That often leads to a few good relationships, a small support network and, in extreme cases, to isolation.

3. Aggression Makes Lots of Enemies

Hyper-aggressive Scarface-types *can* get power quickly.

But the risk is very high that it will be a localized, limited, “flash in the pan” type of power.
The reality is that lots of enemies mean little power and, in some lines of business, a short life span as well.

4. Overly Aggressive Folks Can’t Establish a Coalition

Much power rests in coalitions.

In politics and workplaces, coalitions help you carry to the top.

and in your everyday life, your coalition is your support network.

People in your sare those who are there to prop you up in power or to break your fall when you’re crashing down.

The support network in your everyday life comes from your friends, your neighbors, your family, your colleagues, etc.
But constantly aggressive people have mostly *nominal* friends. Those are the people who are there exclusively because there is something in it for them.
But they feel no obligation to help when you’re in need.

More socially skilled people instead tend to develop deeper relationships that also go above and beyond the most calculative side of “WIIFM“.

This aspect impacts your life at all levels.
Your support network is the people who listen to you when you’re heart-broken, who lend you some money when you’re broke, who come to the hospital with a bunch a flower, or who make an intro when you need a job.

Aggressive people have little support network, if any.

5. Aggression at the top signals insecurity

There is evidence that insecurity causes aggression.

In controlled experiments, subjects were more likely to act aggressively when their competence was challenged, and when they felt insecure (Fast and Chen 2009).

It’s a cliche’ in pop psychology that aggression stems from insecurity, and it’s not *always* true.
But these experiments show that, at least under certain conditions, it is true: aggression can stem from insecurity when the insecure man is at the top.

The title of the paper is also very telling: “When the Boss Feels Inadequate: Power, Incompetence, and Aggression”.

So, whenever you’re in a leadership position, watch out for aggressive behavior it communicates to others -and as importantly to yourself- that you’re either under threat, or incompetent.

Troubleshooting the causes of over-aggression

These are the reasons why people tend to behave overly aggressive.

You can use them to troubleshoot yourself and see if you fit in any of these categories:

1. Family / Background

Some grew up in aggressive families and never learned a different approach.
This is especially dangerous for lower-class individuals, since those who are overly aggressive with little qualities to offset that aggression tend to remain stuck in the lower rungs of society.

2. Addiction / Enjoyment of Confrontation

Some people are addicted -or slave to- the dopamine rushes of confrontations, as well as the brain chemical feeling of dominating others.

3. Sense of Control

Some enjoy -or need- a sense of control, and aggression gives a feeling of control.
Some authors have observed that it's this sense of control, coupled with immense drive and OCD tendencies, that made Steve Job such a notoriously irascible man.

4. Power Craving

Some people crave power, and they use aggression to always be the one-up in their interactions.

5. It Can Work in Some Situations

And, last but not least, let's be honest:

In the short run aggression often works.

Most people are not aggressive and not even assertive.
Many people end up being too passive and too compliant in the face of aggression. That makes the life of the aggressor feel easier when they boss people around.

Aggressive folks (sometimes) win in large part thanks to passive folks
Aggression can also work in the workplace, especially in some types of industries.
Aggressive individuals who can avoid the ugliest flares up often enjoy quicker ascension of dominance hierarchies.

Aggression VS Power

Constant aggression is more closely associated with dominance, than with power.

We could define power as:

> **Power is the degree to which an individual can get what he wants.**

It overlaps with dominance, but it's not the same.
It's an important distinction.

Dominance is measured by strength, and strength or the capability for aggression are only but one element of power.

You can be powerful without necessarily being aggressive.
And you can be aggressive, without being powerful (and without getting what you want).

Dominance is the degree to which someone can *impose* his will with sheer strength, display of sheer strength, threats, or aggression.
Dominance becomes coercive when propped by aggression or threats, and can as easily backfire as it can work. As a rule of thumb, leaders and individuals who rely on dominance and aggression make for poor leaders.

Power can achieve the same goals without relying (solely) on strength and aggression.
Power can use cunning, charm, charisma, resources, leadership skills, or even *fake* strength.

An Example From Our Ape Cousins

Think of it this way:

The alpha ape at the top of the hierarchy is strong and socially dominant.
The beta ape who makes the alpha his friend *and* also builds a web of supporters with which it might overthrow the alpha is putting power on his side.

This example is actually based on real events in a chimp colony.
The alpha was more dominant and aggressive than all others. But less strong and aggressive chimps banded together to overthrow the stronger alpha via a web of alliances and one single act of focused aggression (Ridley, 1997).

In ape colonies, strength is most useful when *climbing* the social hierarchies, showing you're not afraid and "making a name" for yourself. Once on top, leadership skills and social skills become more important.
Strength helps, but cunning is equally important.

That holds even truer in humans, since we are less (openly) violent and developed bigger brainpower for networking and relationships.

Do Develop the *Capability* For Aggression...

Of course, dominance, aggression, and softer versions of power are not pitted against each other.
As a matter of fact, you're much better off with *both* soft power and dominance.

This course will help you increase both dominance, and the social intelligence to wield soft power.

But Be As *Un*-Aggressive As You Can

Alain Prost, an F-1 racer once said that his goal was to win races going "as slow as possible".

You want the same approach for aggression -and, to a lesser degree, dominance in general-.
Big shows of aggression, either physical, verbal, or intellectual ("smart-alec), are the equivalent of going "as fast as possible".
As much going as fast as possible in car racing increases the risks of crashing, being as aggressive as possible also increases the social risks of crashing.

And that leads to an important principle: **for maximum power, use as little aggression as possible, and always**

prefer buy-in (see forum Q&A for more details).
That's how you develop repeated win-win exchanges and how you set up collaborative relationships. And that's how you make people want to follow you.

Some exceptions apply, and we will see them along the course.
But you don't make the rules with the exceptions. And the general rule is that minimizing coercion and seeking buy-in leads to longer-lasting power, as well as to better relationships.

Also read:

- **How to be a good asshole**

> How to Be A Good Asshole

Moving Past Aggression

Values and beliefs are some of the most important drivers of behavior

Once they can change their beliefs though, behavior will follow.
So now we review common beliefs of aggressive people:

- **I'm entitled to be angry = yeah, but anger doesn't equal aggression, and aggression is not that effective**

Of course you are entitled to be angry.

The question is: does that give you the right to treat others rudely? Are you also entitled to treat people like crap?

Finally, it all comes down to effectiveness.

Most people telling themselves they're entitled to be angry are actually saying "I'm entitled to get what I want through anger and aggression".

However, as we've seen, over the long run expressing anger through aggression will most likely *decrease* your ability of getting what you want.

- **If I'm not aggressive nothing will happen = great excuse for not having control over yourself**

Pushing people and intimidating others *can* often help you get things done in the short run.

Of course, again, it comes at a heavy cost for you in the long run.
Top performers who build successful organizations and hold onto power rarely are overly aggressive.

Steve Jobs was probably an exception, and one might even argue if he was successful because of his aggression, or in spite of it.
There is maybe a parallel universe where Job learned to convey his anger with fewer explosions, and he remained at the helm of Apple for 30 years straight, never having been sacked in the first place, and produced 50 more revolutionary hits than he did when he came back later.

- **Nice guys finish last = stop comparing yourself to extreme pushovers, it's a weak cop-out**

It's not about where nice guys finish, because nobody says you must become a "nice guy", whatever that means.

The question for aggressive people is where aggressive people finish.
And it's rarely at the top, while enjoying an overall good life with successful relationships around them.

- **Honesty is the best policy = yes, but not as an excuse to yell and offend**

Honesty is great policy indeed.

But honesty is often used by aggressive people as an excuse to be rude, to offend, to yell, and to demean.

I remember many years ago the mother of an ex-girlfriend of mine told me that “I was a pussy” because I was removing excessive chili pepper from my dish.

She often used that style of communication, and her usual defense was that “she was honest”.

That’s quite weak actually. Honesty is good, aggression and offenses are rude.
Don’t even try to mix up the two, it’s weak-sauce (self-) manipulation.

SUMMARY

Aggression is a communication style high in dominance and directness, with little regard for others’ well-being, and little respect for their personal power and freedom.

Albeit it can be useful to get things done and to push people, it also comes with some important limitations.

In this article, we learned when aggression is useful, and how to move past aggression to move to a more empowering communication style: assertiveness.

Passive Communication: How to Break Free from Weakness

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The passive communication style, sometimes also referred to as “submissive style”, is an approach to interpersonal relationships characterized by a pattern of weak boundaries, unassertiveness, and submission.

In this article you will learn to self-diagnose if you’re passive, how to stop being passive, and how to become more assertive.

As an overview of the passive style:

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive Aggressive	Assertive
Actions	Keeps quiet Puts himself down Apologizes for self expression Hides his disagreement Inconvenience himself	Expresses himself over others Inflicts on others actions Ignores, insults, or attacks other opinions	Carries personal responsibility Passive aggressive Sarcastic Agrees to avoid discussion, then looks for ways to delay or fail the agreement	Directly express needs, wants & feelings Expects others to be equally open & honest Accepts different opinions without dismissing them
Looks	Makes himself small Looks down & hunch over Avoids eye contact Speaks softly	Makes himself large Looks threatening Penetrating eye contact Loud	Similar to passive	Relaxed Comfortable body language Frequent eye contact (but not glaring)
Beliefs	My needs are less important than others I don't have as many rights as others My contributions are not as valuable as others	My needs are more important and justified than others I have more rights than others My contributions are more valuable than others	My needs come first, but I can't express it directly I am not responsible for my actions I am entitled to get my way, even if I make different commitments	My needs are equally important as others I have equal rights We both can make valuable contributions I am responsible for my behavior
Emotions	Fear of rejection Helplessness & low self esteem Frustration Shame and towards others who are "superior"	Anger Powerful (or All-angry) when winning over others Fear, potentially powerful for manipulating others	Fear of rejection if being direct or assertive Resentful of people's demands & power Fear of being controlled	Positive feelings about self Positive feelings about establishing with others Trust all in team
Goals	Avoid conflict Please others (no matter at what cost to me) Let others take control (including other's opinions)	Win at any costs Control others Show others that others know who's in charge	Get it my way, without taking responsibility Do it my way, but without having to assert myself	Express himself Find an agreement Keep Girl boundaries of mutual respect

Based on Randy Paterson work (Paterson, 2000)

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- Why You Must Stop Passive Communication
- Beliefs to Overcome Passive Submissiveness
  - SUMMARY

The Traits of Passive Individuals

Among the most salient traits of the passive communication style is a fear of confrontation.

The passive individual:

1. Gives in to unreasonable demands

> Another weekend in the office for extra unpaid work? Uhmm, OK. No, no trouble at all.

2. Goes along with the crowd (even when he doesn't want to)

> You all want to go to McDonald's? I don't mind that I'm on diet, it sounds great

The passive individual also fears the spotlight, so "going along with the crowd" always had the added benefit of making it easier for him to blend and disappear.

3. Withholds opinion out of fear of disagreement

> What do I think of cannabis liberalization?
>
> What do you guys think about it? All stoner should be imprisoned for life? Yeah, I can agree with that…

4. Withholds feedback out of fear of confrontation

> Yeah, I had to redo your budget report, but I don't mind some Excel work, you're doing fine

5. Over-Apologizes

> Oh, I'm sorry I was standing here, you bumped into me, and that I spilled my full glass of wine over my new suit

Apologizing if you've done something wrong is what you should do.
But avoid over-apologizing if you've done nothing wrong, or if someone else is at fault.

From a social exchange point of view, with their over-apologies passive people end up inflating their own social debt.

PRO Tip: If you have a tendency for over-apologizing, a quick fix can be to switch from "sorry" to "excuse me".

6. Never takes credit, minimizes one's own contribution

> Nah, it was OK, I was already awake at 3am, so no problem getting dressing and come pick you up

Passive people struggle mightily to collect their fair social credits and devalue their own contributions.

This is important information for us since our goal is to make you successful socially, and in life:

Passive individuals struggle to enter win-win exchanges and are more likely to remain stuck in win-lose exchanges, as well as in manipulative relationships.

This is embedded in the very "fabric" of the passive style.
Not being able to say "no" makes you an easy picking for the bullies and manipulators of this world.

The Strategic Uses of Submission

At first blush, there might seem to be no upside to submission.

But just like with aggression, evolutionary logic suggests that for submission to have evolved, it likely provided some benefits to at least someone in at least some context.

Indeed, evolutionary psychologist Buss lists several strategic uses of submissiveness and passivity.
And we add a few of our own:

1. Submissive people stay alive

Price's social competition hypothesis suggests that submissive signals and the passive communication style evolved to avoid costly fights in status hierarchies.

Of course, the problem with "staying alive" is that **there is a big difference between "surviving" and "thriving"**.
And this is not the website for those who seek to "survive" :).

2. Passivity Can Save Time & Energy

Letting someone else take the lead, and potentially also let them lead you and/or your group, can save you time and resources.

Taking the lead can be a hustle, and since you often can't make everyone happy, you have to deal with the usual ballbreakers who complain about this or that.

Plus, once you become the leader, you also take on a responsibility, and you can't always just freely bail.

That's why, depending on the situation, I sometimes like to sit back in groups and let someone take the helm.
If I don't like the direction things are taking, I speak up.
And if people still want to go the way I don't like, I either change my attitude and go along, or go my own way.

Note: this point does not apply to individuals who are "stuck" in passive and submissive mode.
These folks are often overburdened with other people's work because of their inability to say "no".

3. Submissive Women Can Finish First Win At Dating

In dating, female submission can get men chasing and investing.

This is an exaggerated example of course, but the "damsel in distress" can be an extremely effective dating technique:

On average, men prefer more submissive women.

And women who can (selectively) send out submissive signals get both more men chasing for short-term, and more long-term providers to choose from.

4. To Approach Women In Sketchy Environments

Imagine a woman is:

- Walking in a dimly lit street at night
- Waiting for a night bus around lots of drunk guys
- Looking for her car in a rundown parking lot

In these cases, a smart man will make sure to send out strong and obvious friendly signals.
And friendly signals overlap with submissiveness, since they say "I'm not here to dominate you, I'm a friendly guy".

Going in too high-power or aggressive can make her recoil in fear, and then he'd have to invest a lot to overturn those dynamics.

Then *later,* once she knows it's all good, he can switch gears and start acting higher power.

The same holds true in sexual marketplaces where women are very risk-averse, like Korea or Japan, and it's especially true for foreigners residing there.
The same holds true for men who look more "dangerous", or imposing. Either because of their physical size, or because of how they look.

Skin color can also frame men as higher danger.
Whites can be seen as higher risk in Asia, and black men can also gain with a more friendly approach, and focusing more on comfort than on dominance.

5. To rebalance relationships after you wronged someone

When you abused or hurt someone, you're high-power.

But you're high power in a *negative* way.

And since good relationships are more or less balanced in terms of power, it's a good idea to not just say sorry, but also to give them back some power.

As David J. Lieberman correctly points out, if you hurt someone a "sorry" might not be enough (Lieberman, 2000).
Lieberman says that quickest -and the deepest- way to mend the relationship instead is to give them the power to punish you.

Giving them power to punish you, of course, is for more extreme cases.
But giving them power back with a big heartfelt sorry, a lowering of your head, and even letting them get angry at you, can be all good to re-establish a good relationship.

And if you pull this move well, they won't even want to get angry or punish you, since giving people power back is a high-quality behavior, and people like high-quality folks in their lives.

6. To avoid punishment when you're out of options

This is a more strategic subset of the "submission to save lives" approach.

In some cases, a (sneaky) way of avoiding punishment is by strategically playing low-power, clueless idiot.

This is can be most useful when you have no leverage whatsoever and the costs of the punishments would be huge -if they're not huge, then you can just take it in strides-.

Example:

A friend of mine had been called by the finance office for tax return misrepresentation, a potential criminal offense if prosecuted.
My friend had (stupidly) “tried his hand” and he knew he was guilty.

While some advised him to contact a lawyer, my friend showed in the office with broken local language, saying it was the first time he tried to file his own tax returns, which was true, and playing the “sorry I messed this up” role.

He then asked, “OK, what should I do now”.
Asking “what should I do now” asks the officer to *direct* his behavior -a sign of submissiveness-.

The tax officer admonished him to be careful because that mistake *could* be a criminal offense.
My friend acted with restrained shock and muttered it was probably the last time he would file his own tax returns (nice move).
Then they fixed the mistake together, the tax officer explaining in the teacher role and my friend playing the ignorant student (the subservient position).

Result: he got away scot-free.

Now I don’t necessarily recommend you try to use submissive behavior to break the law or to avoid punishment, but this is an example in which submission most likely worked better than any higher-power alternatives.
If my friend had shown up with an attitude (or with a lawyer), chances are that the situation would have escalated.

7. To Appease Someone

Similar to the above two points.

Submissive body language gives away power.

And, sometimes, you might want exactly that.

Why so?
Because people feel good about *getting* that power.
It can be a great strategy to give power to someone who has *already* power over you, since you’re not actually losing anything, but you’re improving your odds by making them feel good.

In short: **submitting to someone who has *already* ultimate power over you can sometimes only improve your situation**.
After all, they already can do anything to you, so your submission does not really change anything practically, but only seeks to make them feel good emotionally.
I know, it’s not our favorite strategy here at The Power Moves, but it can work.

Example 1: In Court

Imagine you f*cked up something big time, or you harmed someone.

And now you’re in a court of law.

If you maintain a high-power pose you show an unrepentant attitude, and judges always go down harder on unrepentant convicts.

See an example here

> **Prosecution lawyer**: I’d like the record to note of Mr. Koppenhaver laugh
>
> **Judge**: (with angry inflection) I’ve seen him laughing

Great job Mr. Koppenhaver, just gained a few more years behind bars, one of the most expensive smiles in history.

Example 2: To Avoid Traffic Tickets

Some signals of submissiveness towards the traffic cop send the message that it was an honest mistake, that you're sorry, and that you accept their power over you.

Dutton ran a small test showing cops two different videos of a traffic stop: a confrontational guy, and a guy giving out more submissive signals.
95% of cops said they would give a traffic ticket to the confrontational guy, but they'd let the "nice" guy go (Dutton, 2014).

Learn the strategies to avoid traffic tickets (alumni only!)

NOTE: 6 & 7 not recommended!

Albeit there is a time and place for almost anything in life, The Power Moves does not recommend these methods as your go-to behavior.
Least of all, as a mindset!

These are low-power, small-timer manipulative behavior. And, most of all, appeasing others to get out of problems is a bad mindset.
It's the mindset of the small-timer cheat.

This is "scratching with the turkeys" type of behavior. And we want you to soar with the eagles here.

8. As a Tool of Control, When No High-Power Options Are Available

Yes, submission can also be a tool of control.

Pleading, begging, guilt-tripping, pouting, crying… They are all submissive expressions that can work wonders to make people act the way the manipulator wants.

Psychologist Friz Perls argued that in close relationships the submissive party often ends up controlling the most aggressive party.
Frankly, that's a generalization and it's not always true.
But it would be wrong to think that the aggressive party always controls a relationship.

In truth, when an aggressive and a submissive have a relationship, it's a war for control that neither wins.
It's a lose-lose, toxic relationship.
So of course we recommend you don't resort to these tactics.

9. To Signal Appreciation / Respect

Some cultures use submissive body language as a "thank you" or as a sign of appreciation.

If someone holds the door open for you or gives you directions to go somewhere, you can say thank you and bow your head slightly.
In a different context, bowing could be a sign of submission, but a slight bow as a "thank you" can simply be a symbol of a polite and prosocial attitude.

10. To Keep The Support Coming

The signs of submission we mentioned above make people feel good.

They feel valued for their help, and that helps to keep the help coming.
Submission can be effective, for example, when you're a beginner with a mentor who is very high up.

Why You Must Stop Passive Communication

OK, there are strategic uses for submission.

Still, the rule of thumb is that **you want to avoid sending too many submission signals *unless* you are doing it on purpose and for a specific purpose**.

I quote Robert Bolton (Bolton, 1979):

> *Submissive people do not express their honest feelings, needs, values, and concerns.*
>
> They allow others to violate their space, deny their rights, and ignore their needs. Some submissive people do express their needs but do it in such an apologetic and diffident manner that they are not taken seriously.

What Bolton is referring to is submissiveness as a lack of *capability* in defending one's needs and rights.

In short, **submission is bad when you do it not because it's good to do it, but because you lack the capability for assertiveness**.
If that's the case, submission has the following harmful consequences:

1. Bottling up of anger and frustrations
2. Potential for sneaky, passive-aggressive behavior as an outlet for that
3. Falling (extremely) short of one's life potential
4. Opening the door to possible abuse
5. Lowering of one's own social status

You also can't have an empowered mindset if you never stand your ground when people trample your rights or treat you rudely.
Overall, for people who overdo submission, **the "advantages" of a submissive life pale in comparison to the disadvantages**.

Beliefs to Overcome Passive Submissiveness

I need to make it easier for them to step all over me
Beliefs are crucial.

People can change their behavior, but without changing faulty beliefs, they are fighting an uphill battle.

When people perceive themselves as unequal, they also *accept* unequal treatment (Shaw, 2020).
But when they see themselves as equals, they automatically expect and, almost automatically, demand equal treatment.

So in this now we examine both the faulty beliefs -in red- and the correct ones -in green-:

- **I am less important than others**

I am equally as important as others

- **I'm less valuable than others**

I might be less valuable to achieve certain outcomes in certain specific areas, but as a person, **I am as valuable as anyone else**.

Plus, I can always *become* more valuable, which I am doing right now.
And I can be more valuable than others in some other areas where I have higher expertise and efficiency.

- **It's important to be nice**

Yeah, why not.
Being passive is not being nice though. Being passive is being mean and value-taking… To yourself first, and to others when you don't tell them the truth.

Being assertive and honest is far nicer.

- **I'm not entitled to having control over my life**

Of course I am entitled to control over my life!
If not me, who else?

- **I cannot do things as effectively as others**

I might not do things as effectively as someone else in certain areas, and even then, I am still equal to them.
Plus, I can always get better and I can get better than someone else in other areas..

- **My role is to serve**

I might serve, and I might happy of doing so sometimes.
But it is not my *role* to serve.
If anything, it's my *choice* whenever I choose so. And I can also choose *not* to serve, as I will do every time I feel someone is undeserving of my support.

- **The way to be accepted and appreciated by others is to give and give**

In some situations, giving is a good thing, IF and WHEN people are also giving back.
Giving and giving to those who take and take without giving back is stupid, it's a waste of resources, and it also makes the world a worse place, since it teaches people that it's OK to not contribute anything.

- **If others disagree with me, then I must be wrong**

Pretty much the same chances of others being wrong.

- **It's impolite to disagree**

No, it's impolite to agree even if you don't.
Polite is to be honest enough to let people know what you really think.

- **Passivity is the way to be loved**

Passiveness is the way to be taken advantage of, attract bullies and abusers, and remain stuck scratching with the turkeys.
Passiveness makes the world a worst place because I hold back my contribution and my value-giving to worthy and deserving people, while I enrich the undeserving bullies and value-takers who take advantage of passive folks.

SUMMARY

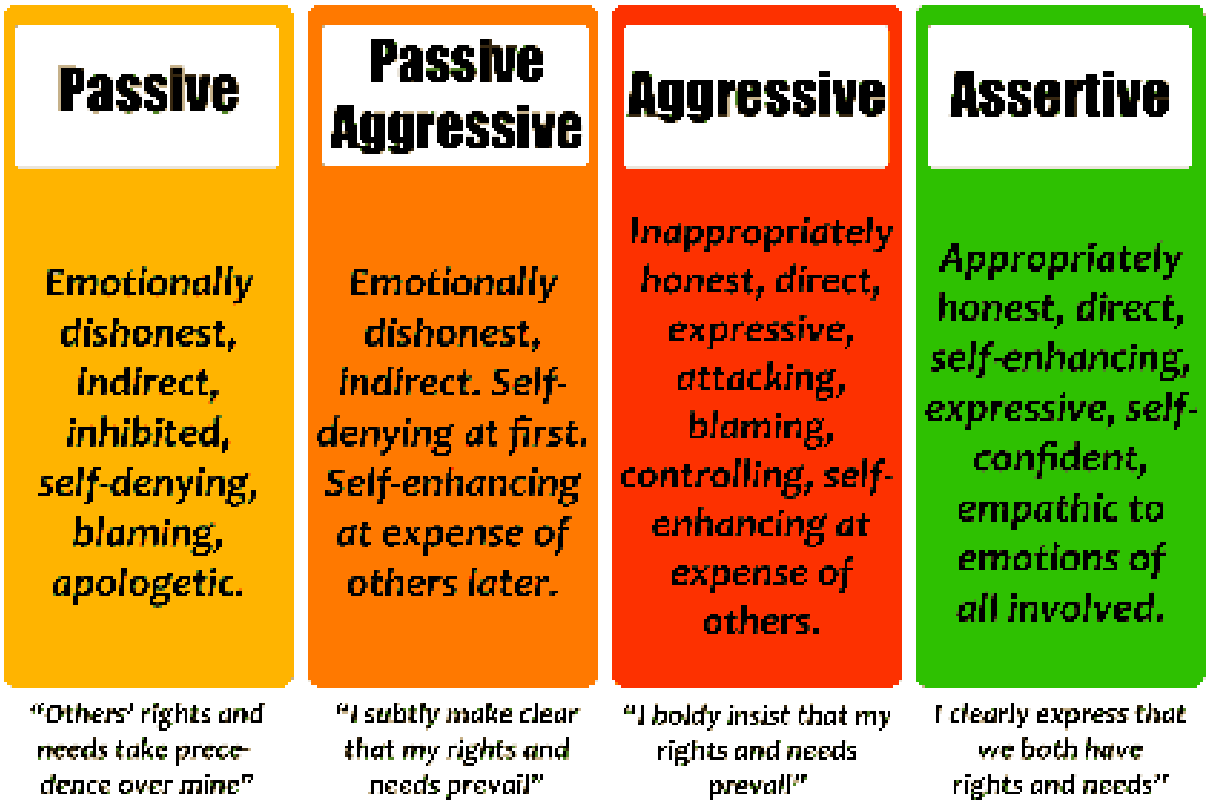
The passive communication style is a pattern of communication and behavior characterized by weak boundaries, social tentativeness or withdrawal, and general submissiveness.

It's sometimes accompanied by social fears, as well as low self-esteem, and it's often supported by poor beliefs about life, socialization, and self-worth.
This article addresses values and beliefs to help submissive people become more assertive.

Assertiveness: Definition, Examples & How to Be Assertive

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Assertiveness means speaking up clearly and respectfully — confidence without aggression.
It is a communication style and relationship approach built on directness, self-respect, and respect for others.



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  - Limiting Beliefs That Block Assertiveness
  - Empowering Beliefs to Build Assertiveness
- Assertive Communication: Skills & Examples
- Assertiveness & Attachment Styles
  - Become Effectively Assertive

Intro

Most social skills and communication resources frame assertiveness as the sweet spot between submission and

aggression. Hence, to understand assertiveness, it's useful to compare it with the other styles of communication. Here is an overview:

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive Aggressive	Assertive
Actions	Keeps quiet Puts himself down Apologizes for all expressions Hides his disagreement Inconvenience himself	Expresses himself over others Belittles or disrespects others Ignores, insults, or attacks other opinions	Denies personal responsibility Uses aggression Sarcastic Agrees to avoid discussion, then looks for ways to sabotage the agreement	Directly expresses needs, wants & feelings Expects others to be equally open & honest Accepts different opinions without dismissing them
Looks	Makes himself small Looks down & hunch over Avoids eye contact Speaks softly	Makes himself large Looks threatening Penetrating eye contact Loud	Similar to passive	Relaxed Comfortable body language Frequent eye contact (but not glaring)
Beliefs	My needs are less important than others I don't have as many rights as others My contributions are not as valuable as others	My needs are more important and justified than others I have more rights than others My contributions are more valuable than others	My needs come first, but I don't expect others to meet my needs I am not responsible for my actions I am entitled to get my way, even if I make different commitments	My needs are equally important as others I have equal rights We both can make valuable contributions I am responsible for my behavior
Emotions	Fear of rejection Helplessness & low self esteem Frustration Resentment towards others who are "successful"	Anger Powerful (or full angry) when winning over others Fear, potentially powerful in manipulating others	Fear of rejection if being direct or assertive Resentful of people's demands & power Fear of being controlled	Positive feelings about self Positive feelings about excelling with others Fear of other's anger
Goals	Avoid conflict Please others (no matter at what cost to me) Let others take control (and blame others for it)	Win at any costs Control others Always make sure others know who's in charge	Get it my way, without taking responsibility Get it my way, but without having to assert myself	Express himself Find an agreement Keep clear boundaries of mutual respect

Chart comparing assertiveness to the other communication styles (Buffalmano, 2020, based on Paterson, 2000)

Key Traits of Assertiveness

- **Boundaries**: Having, maintaining, and enforcing personal boundaries of:
  - Basic respect: expecting and demanding respectful behavior
  - Privacy: declining to answer or discuss questions and topics that feel too personal or nosy
  - Time: choosing what and when to do, not allowing others to "task" you without your full consent
  - Personal freedoms: freedom of choice, of holding different opinions, etc.
- **Timely and honest communication**: assertive communication is timely, honest, precise, and often direct. It includes the communication of wants, needs, emotions, feelings, goals, and boundaries.
- **Expecting and encouraging honest and direct communication**: expecting, demanding, and/or encouraging direct and honest communication from others
- **Standing behind one's choices, opinions, & feelings**: the assertive communicator acknowledges and stands behind his choices, opinions, and feelings

Effective Assertiveness™

Effective assertiveness™ is a goal-oriented communication and behavioral approach that focuses on picking the most effective behavior and communication style to achieve one's goal.
While it maintains a baseline preference for assertive and high-power communication, it retains the strategic flexibility to employ any style that is most effective in the context, including passive, passive-aggressive, assertive, or aggressive.

This approach contrasts with many social skills and communication resources that often present assertiveness as the 'golden style' to adop in all or almost all situations.

We agree that assertiveness can be the 'baseline approach', but see more room for calibration.

Here are some examples of when our contextual model may pick a different style instead:

Style	When it is "Effectively Assertive"
Passive	When the cost of engagement is higher than the benefit of winning or leading (e.g., ignoring a low-value troll or when you just don't care)
Passive-Aggressive	When a subtle "nudge" saves you time or is less risky (e.g., telling your boss 'yes, just give one moment to settle down' instead of explaining that you don't want to be tasked right after showing up at work)
Aggressive	When a boundary has been crossed and an immediate, high-cost deterrent is required to stop an aggressor and signal that you're not an easy victim

Most communication guides also present assertiveness as an approach that doesn't seek influence, but only to state your needs.
We understand that position and appreciate it as a good mindset. However, as a platform for ambitious men who want to achieve goals, influence is crucial in many life situations.

Use All Communication Styles (Not Just Assertiveness)

Social effectiveness is all about calibrating to people and situations.

To maximize your chances of success in life, **you need to learn and master the whole communication spectrum, including submission and aggression.**

Why?

1. **To better understand others**: learning to read people empowers you to better socialize, influence, and possibly, to also help people grow
2. **To adapt and strategize**: different environments and different situations call for different styles of communication

Because each style has its strategic use in socialization.
Sometimes acting submissive, and letting others have -or *feel*– higher power is strategically the best option.
And some other times, you might have to act more aggressively to meet aggression with aggression.

So in the next lessons, we will learn when and how to use each one.

Be Assertive *and* Persuasive (Not Just Neutral)

Most assertiveness resources define assertiveness along these lines:

> State your needs, wants, and feelings, without trying to influence or persuade others.

While the approach of not needing to influence can be an empowering mindset to avoid outcome-dependence, the truth is that persuasion and influence are at the core of personal power and efficacy.

There is no added value or glory in "not trying to influence others".
High-quality individuals persuade for win-win outcomes, so persuasion is often a *good* thing.

So this is assertiveness defined within a high-quality, high-power perspective:

> To state your needs, wants, feelings, and opinions clearly and directly, to respect yourself as well as others, and to influence others to reach certain goals

Calibrate Assertiveness to Context

There is no rule carved in stone to when, how, and how frequently to use assertive communication formats.

How frequently depends on several factors, including:

- **Where you're at in your life and career**: it might pay off to say "yes" to your boss even when you'd want to say "no", sometimes (Caldwell, 2018)
- **Where you're at in the mastery curve**: beginners might learn quicker if they just accept and do what the teacher says
- **Your culture**: different cultures expect more or less assertion, depending on your status, gender, and role
- **Your goals and chosen strategies**: sometimes it pays off to be strategically more submissive, or more aggressive
- **Gender** (more later)
- **Who you're dealing with**: Calibrating is a good idea (Cruz, 2018). Be softer with those who are more on the submissive side.

Assertiveness & Power

There is an overlap between "assertive" and "high-power".

People who master assertion tend to come across as confident, high-power, and generally high-quality individuals who get things done.

And since assertive individuals don't overpower others, they also tend to develop strong long-term relationships (see "basic strategies of power").
That enables assertives to develop win-win far more than aggressive individuals can.

Assertiveness & Vulnerability

One of the biggest secrets of marrying assertiveness with power is this:

High-power assertion includes high-power vulnerability, such as admitting one's own negative or antisocial feelings.
Attention: not all vulnerability is good.
We're talking about high-power vulnerability here. This is the "accepting one's own dark side" we talk about on this website.

If you don't accept your dark side, you can be high power, and *still* act unassertive.
See an example here:

> **Rossi**: We don't have any problem
> **Marquez**: (offers handshake, and Rossi refuses)
> **Rossi**: (looks passive-aggressive)

Rossi was high-power, but he didn't add the high-power vulnerability of admitting his negative feelings.

Compare now to this other approach in a follow-up video (link in our training):

> **Interviewer:** So in the past 2 years you've been like two old friends again
> **Lorenzo**: No, I don't think we are friends <— High power honesty

This is high power assertive.

Lorenzo admits very candidly of *not* being friends with Rossi. All the while, complimenting him and building him up.
High-power, *and* high-quality.

Assertiveness Beliefs

The *Routledge Handbook of Communication Skills* states that beliefs make the difference between assertive men, and unassertive ones.

So let's start with the beliefs holding you back from reaching assertiveness:

Limiting Beliefs That Block Assertiveness

- **"Dark" feelings such as anger and will to power are bad to have an even worse to show**

This is what we've just seen with the video example.

See an example from Ray Dalio, and read this good discussion on why some (some!) left-wing folks come across as hypocrites.

- **Assertiveness means getting your own way all the time**

No, that's aggression. Assertiveness is meant to put you on an equal footing with other people.

- **Being assertive means being selfish**

No, being assertive means being fair and high-power.
However, you can be "individualistic".

- **Other people can't handle my assertiveness**

That's actually demeaning, to think of others as weak.

- **People should be more considerate**

"Shoulds" are usually weak positions to be in.

When you hold this belief, you either don't believe that you should tell them to act differently since they *should* know, or you believe that you must yell at them because they *should* know better and you have to set them straight.

- **I'm afraid of being assertive and failing**

You will fail.
And that's great, failing is learning.

- **I have to convince others**

As a rule of thumb:

All the "I have to" apply unneeded and often counterproductive pressure on you (Ellis, 1988).

When you hold this belief, you either never start sharing your opinion, or you get angry when you cannot change other people's minds.

- **I must look good, strong, and happy**

This is about emotional assertiveness.

And it includes all acts of "concealing" emotions in order to look better to others.

It might be one of the major causes of male aggression, female anger repression, passive-aggression, as well as general communication breakdown.

Many men feel it's not OK to admit their personal struggles or request (emotional) help.
So they deny their true feelings to others and to themselves and seek to have their needs met with aggression or covert-aggression.

Everyone tries to look "strong" and happy. Result: total communication breakdown, and destruction of true intimacy and connection
Again, this is not to say "parade your weakness", to wallow in self-pity, or to always be "vulnerable".
But some men can gain with more open, honest, and high-power communication.

Empowering Beliefs to Build Assertiveness

This is the central belief of assertiveness: I am worthy of respect and proper behavior, and I provide as much
And now the positive beliefs of assertiveness:

- **I am a respect-worthy man and so are most others**
- **I'm in charge of my behavior, others are in charge of theirs** <—- this takes the pressure off from speaking up because you're not forcing anyone. Only stating your position.
- **I decide for myself what I will and will not do**
- **People may ask anything, and I can decline anything**

- **I may make mistakes, but I am still a worhty, respectable human** <— Good men need it. They accept abuse after a mistake because they feel the pressure to be "good" and effective. Growth mindset and antifragile ego help solve this issue.
- **I can be illogical with my decisions** <—- Effective against manipulators looking for reasoning "faults". Avoid the argument altogether. Your choices are valid for the simple fact that you chose them
- **I don't know everything, and neither should I**
- **I can ask for help** <— Useful for men who "suffer in silence"
- **I am not responsible for other people's problems** <— Great against emotional manipulation
- **Direct talk is better than covert** because covert sounds passive-aggressive
- **Others can give advice, but I make my decisions**
- **I am my own judge, I don't have to justify myself to others**

 Example:

> **Covert aggressor**: Why did you do it that way?

> **Weak**: (starts justifying, then accepts the aggressor's explanation on how it should be done)
>
> **Empowered**: Because, that's what I chose to do

 Example 2:

> **Aggressor**: BS! what makes you even think that!

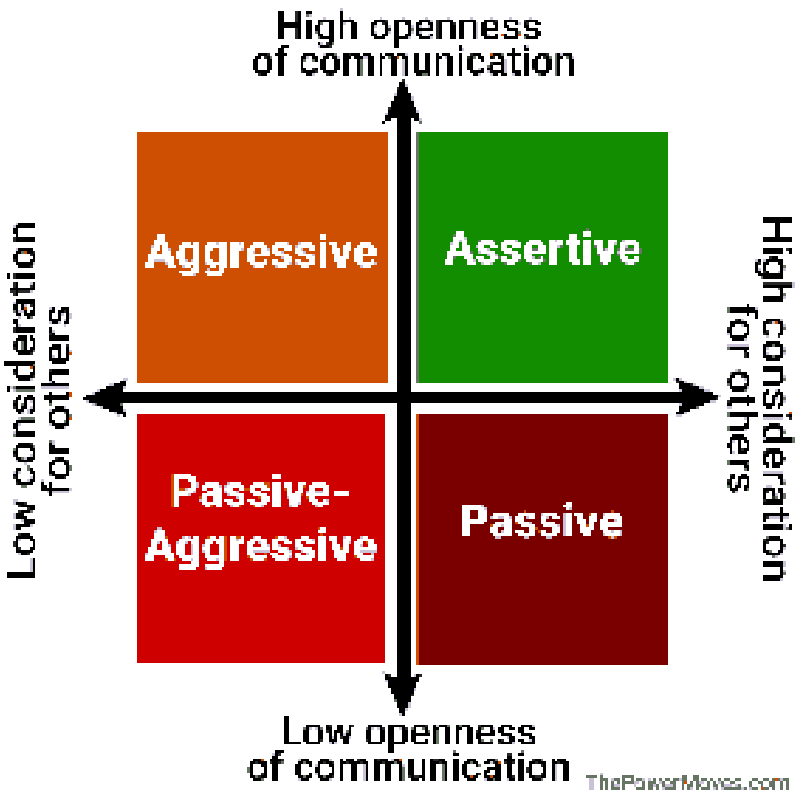
> **Weak**: (accepts the aggression, justifies, then accepts he is wrong)
>
> **Empowered**: Number 1, don't talk to me that way again please. And number 2, we can talk about rationale after you speak respectfully

The high-power assertive stance is this:

> **As long as I remain within the law and my moral code, I can think, say, and do as I please**

Assertive Communication: Skills & Examples

A quick chart overview:



While passive and passive-aggressive avoid communication, assertive individuals speak up.

They speak:

- **Early**: speak early to avoid stewing
- **Directly**: state your needs and wants clearly and directly
- **Respectfully**: but with respect and consideration for others

Take this new mantra of assertive communication with you:

> ***"Say what you mean, mean what you say, but don't say it mean."***
>
> *-The assertiveness mantra*

Assertiveness & Attachment Styles

There seems to be an overlap between attachment styles and assertiveness (Hanks, 2016), and **securely attached individuals tend to be more assertive**.

As an overview:

	Anxious	Avoidant	Secure
Traits	Clings to relationships - Anxious during separation - Fearful of abandonment - Overwhelmed by emotions Mixes thoughts and feeling	Ends relationships too soon - Uncomfortable being emotionally close - Intimate at a surface level - Unaware of thoughts & feelings	Can form relationships, but also comfortable alone - Can manage emotions - Can separate thoughts and feelings
Differentiation	Low	Low	High
Attitude	Reactive	Guarded	Confident
Barriers to Assertiveness	- Afraid to speak up for fear of creating distance or rejection - Fear of overwhelming others Inability to identify and tune in to emotions - Makes excuses for people's patterns of boundary-crossing (respect it's since the [illegible] is always "[illegible]")	- Detached from own emotions, especially during conflict or stress - Prevents conflict [illegible] Fears discussing emotions (the fear of getting too close) - Confuses fair standing up for oneself as rudeness - Confuses partners' search for fair intimacy as crossing his boundaries - "Gets things got" even when it bothers or hurt him	- May have difficulty identifying emotions - May have difficulty communicating emotions May lack confidence to be assertive or speak directly
Goals	- Attachment's self-awareness - Acknowledge value of close relationships & interdependence - Connect to emotions Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants - Develop communication skills	- Attachment's self-awareness - Identify feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants - Develop emotional management strategies Develop communication skills	- Attachment's self-awareness - Develop emotional vocabulary - Develop and/or solidify assertiveness skills

Chart by Lucio Buffalmano and based on Hanks, 2016

While evidence is still lacking, it seems at least theoretically possible that by working on one, you could also improve on the other.

For more on attachment styles, see:

- Attachment styles overview
- Secure attachment style

Become Effectively Assertive

This article provides the foundations for assertive and effective communication.

We provide the full, advanced framework that turns knowledge into skills in Power University:

Check Power University

The Top 7 Books to Become Assertive

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 November 2020 · Archived copy · Original

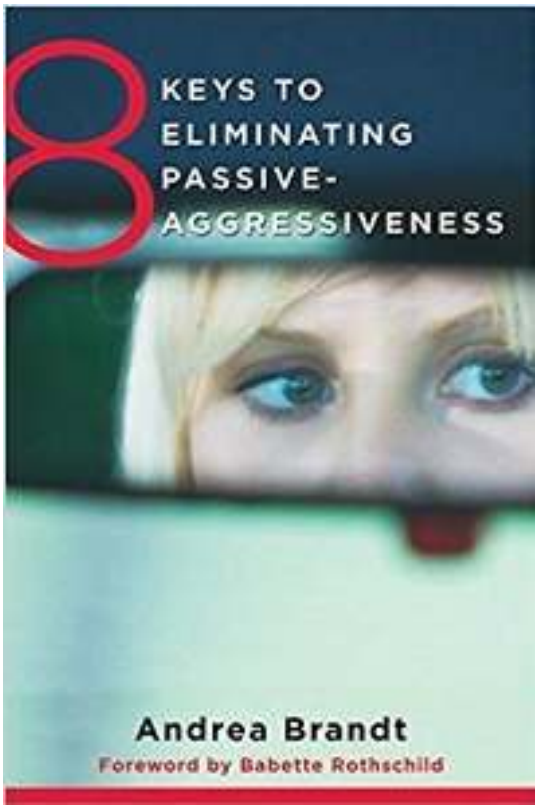
Are you looking for ways to becoming more assertive?

Then this list of the best assertiveness reources can help you.

Contents

- 7. 8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness
- 6. The Power of A Positive No
- 5. Alpha Assertiveness Guide
- 4. The Art of Everyday Assertiveness
- 3. The Assertiveness Guide for Women
- 2. The Assertiveness Workbook
- 1. Power University

7. 8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness



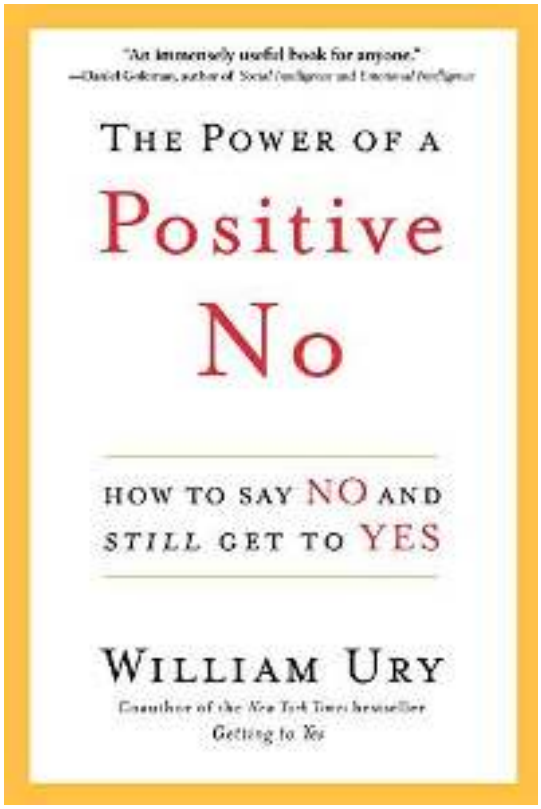
Summary | Amazon

Albeit Andrea Brandt focuses only on passive-aggression, this was for me one of the most eye-opening books on the topic.

And it still is.

If you already know you're passive-aggressive, or if you're dealing with a passive-aggressive in your life, this is your book.

6. The Power of A Positive No



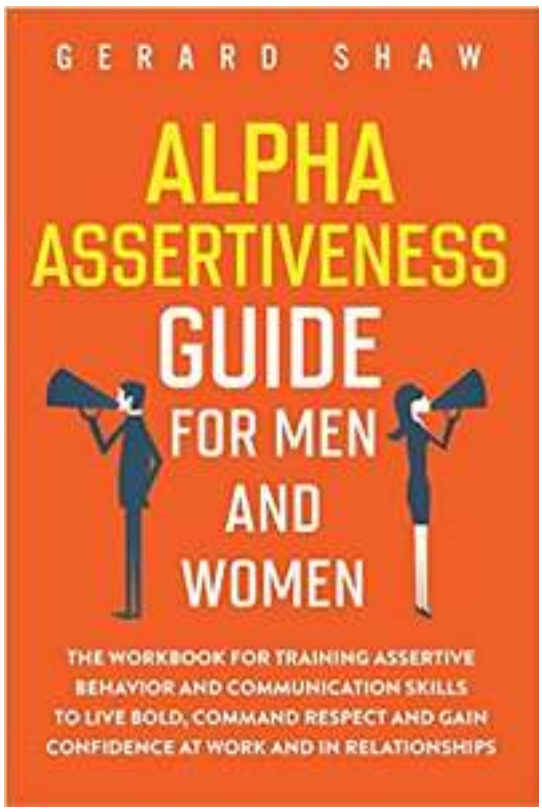
Summary | Amazon

The simple message behind a “positive no” is very simple and at the same time very emotionally intelligent.
The steps are:

1. Say no
2. Frame it as you saying “yes” to something else you’re doing
3. End on a more conciliatory tone

This is basic, yet important emotional and social intelligence wisdom that is missing from many assertiveness books.
Many assertiveness resourcesfocus *only* on the strength of saying no, rather than on the strategies of saying no *and* keeping a good relationship.

5. Alpha Assertiveness Guide



Amazon

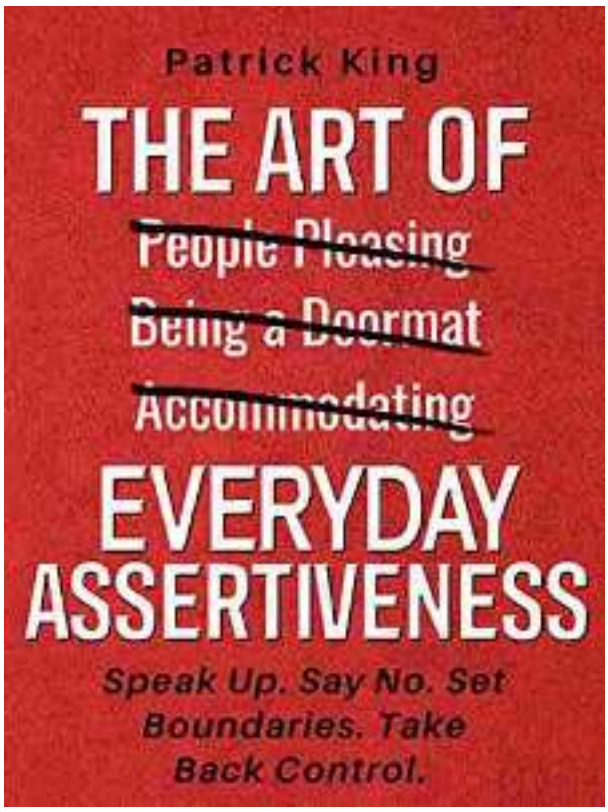
Some reviews on some assertiveness books say that most books resemble each other.

I don't think it's a matter of resembling each other or not: obviously, the basic theory of assertiveness is pretty much the same.
There is nothing new to invent, and if any author "invented" anything new about the basics, it would mean he's making things up.

Instead, I think that to learn assertiveness, it's about how good the *examples* are.
And the mindsets behind the behaviors that the author can help convey.

And "Alpha Assertiveness Guide for Men and Women" has lots of mini-case studies, and I thought they were all good-quality examples to learn from.

4. The Art of Everyday Assertiveness

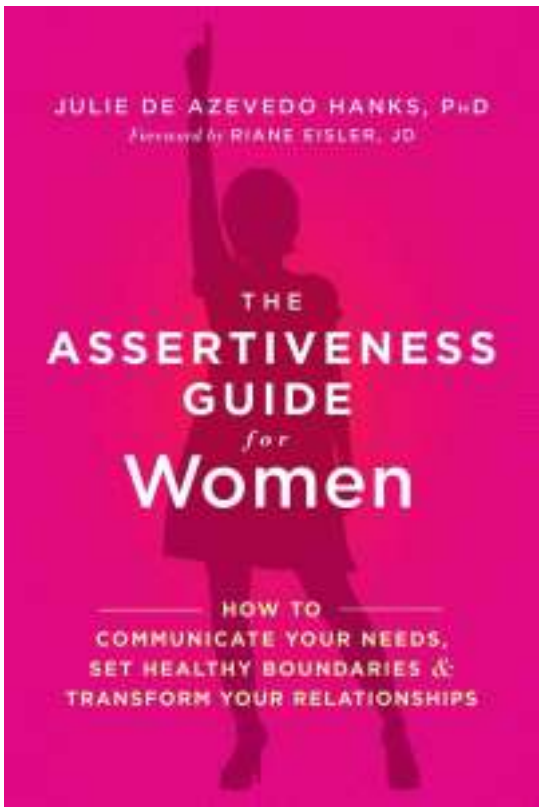


Summary | Amazon

What I enjoyed the most about King's work are his many techniques of saying "no".

Some of them were simple yet genius, empowering even the most passive individauls to find a way to utter some of the most difficult words in the English language: "no".

3. The Assertiveness Guide for Women

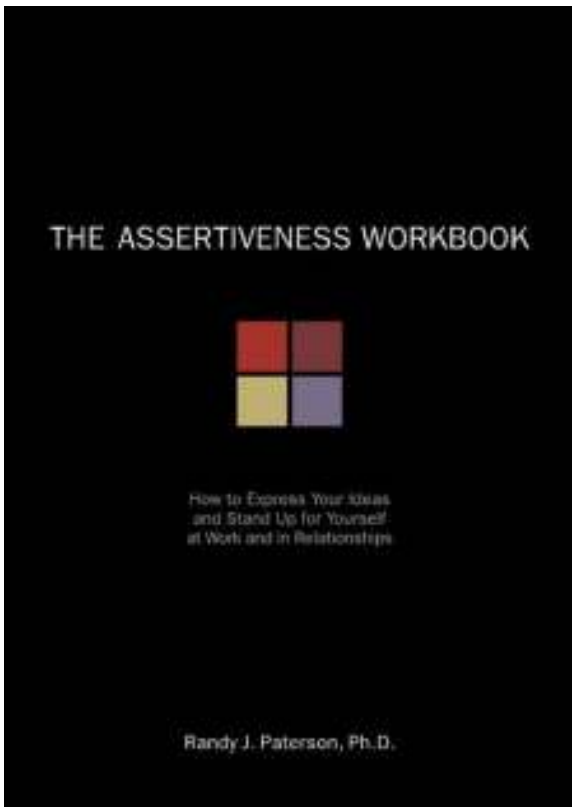


Summary | Amazon

It's actually a pity it's called "for women", since anyone can learn from this.

Julie de Azevedo Hanks is the only one that connects the dots between attachment styles, individuation, and assertiveness.
Not as deep in terms of examples and case studies, but that wasn't this book's aim. And from an academic point of view, this might have been the best book on assertiveness I've ever read.

2. The Assertiveness Workbook



Summary | Amazon

If you're a complete beginner with social anxiety, exercises can help.
And what lands this book to the #2 spot is that it's a *work*-book with exercises, scoring cards, and challenges.

Some formats, like the DESO can feel unnatural in everyday communication, but it can be OK **for beginners**.

If you're starting from zero and want to start getting off the ground, this may be your assertiveness companion to get you going.

Then, when you're ready for the top-1% you can consider our next resource.

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1. Power University

Summary | Reviews

Why is this first?

We're transparent about the fact that Power University is our program. That said, the ranking is based on clear, objective advantages that other assertiveness resources do not offer for ambitious men.

First, Power University is the only assertiveness resource that goes beyond simply assertiveness and teaches the *full strategic spectrum*: assertiveness, submissiveness, controlled aggression, and passive-aggressiveness.

Those behavioral strategies exist for a reason: in some contexts, being assertive is optimal; in others, a different stance yields a far better social ROI. A high-level social strategist needs to know *all* of them, and when to deploy each.

Power University is the only program that teaches that complete decision-making framework.

Second, you learn assertiveness best by *watching* assertiveness.
Books help, but real skill comes from seeing power dynamics play out. PU is the only resource that pairs theory with hundreds of real-life pictures, video analyses, and breakdowns of high-power and assertive behavior. You don't just read it: you observe it, model it, and implement it.

And while yes, we're biased, alumni outcomes speak for themselves: students consistently report not only higher assertiveness, but also higher confidence, better relationships, stronger boundaries, and objectively better social outcomes.

If you want the practical, top-1% path to assertiveness, the kind that actually changes how you deal with people , this is the resource.

You may also want to take a look at:

- Best social skills resources
- Best communication skills resources

TPM’s 3 Pillars Framework: How We Ensure Accuracy

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 December 2020 · Archived copy · Original

Any theory or advice is sub-optimal when built on one single source of knowledge.

Be it personal experience and anecdotes, studies and citations, or clever theorizing, they’re all lacking on their own.

At The Power Moves, we use a different standard.
Every framework we teach is built on three pillars: **first-hand experience, scientific evidence, and rigorous critical analysis**.

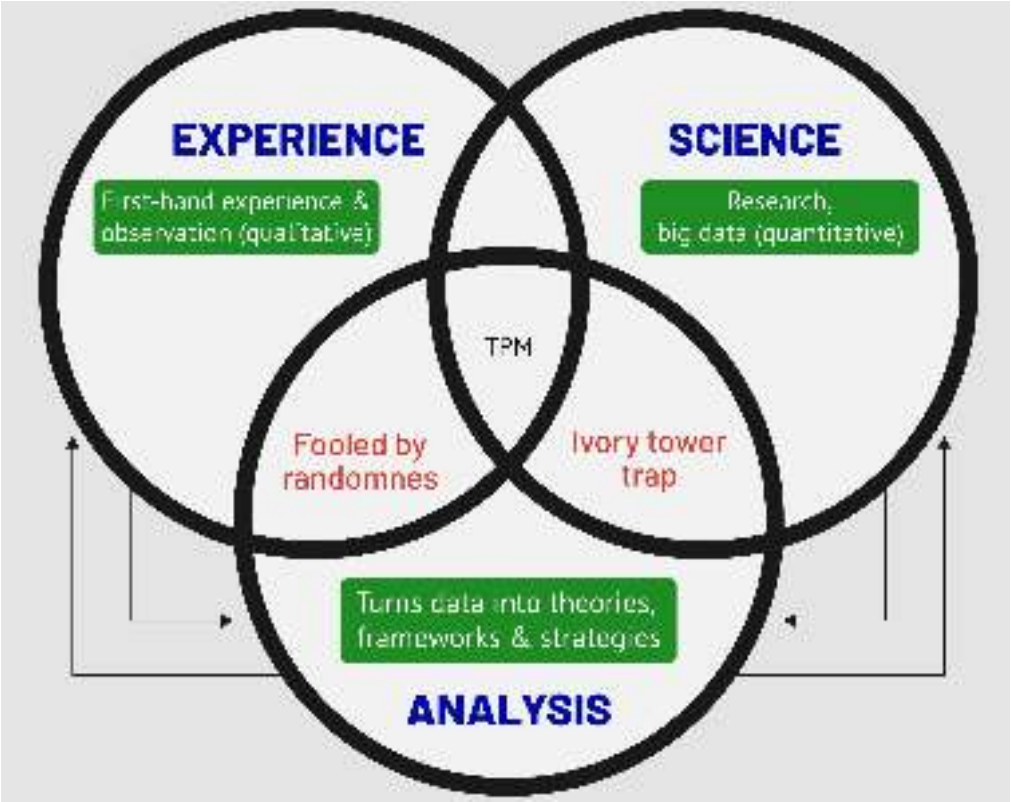
TPM 3-Pillars Framework™
A practical framework TPM uses to build reliable, repeatable strategies: it requires (1) first-hand experience; (2) careful use of scientific evidence and data; and (3) rigorous critical analysis that falsifies, synthesizes, and turns findings into usable systems. Applied together, the three pillars produce theories and tactics that work across contexts.

⍰♂Lucio’s Take: **How our reviews fit into this system**

Lucio:
You may notice many reviews and analyses of books, biographies, and studies across The Power Moves. These are not treated as standalone summaries, but as structured input for our 3-Pillars framework.

These resources add scientific and/or experience-based insights and, combined with Lucio’s own experience and research, processed through critical analysis to further develop our systems and teachings.

This article explains that method in full—how the three pillars work, where each one fails on its own, and why only their combination produces reliable theories, repeatable strategies, and real-world results.



3-pillars approach & failure points

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- The Power Moves Approach

Overview

1. **Experience**
   1. First-hand experience and Observation
   2. Second and third-hard experience
2. **Science**
   1. Data: the quantitative results of research
   2. Scientific method
3. **Critical analysis**
   1. Logic: ensures reasoning is valid
   2. Critical thinking: meta-level analysis (analysis of analysis), ensuring the analysis remains logical and grounded in data
   3. Pattern recognition: Connects the dots, building 'bridges of meaning' among them. The more you connect, the better the theories
   4. Systemic thinking: the ability to think and observe at a higher level of abstraction (Gallon, 2009)

The final products are:

- **Theories, Mental Models, & Systems** that explain reality, and allow for predictions.
  - General principles
  - Strategies & techniques to achieve outcomes
- **Real-world outcomes** from applying principles and strategies

This is the process we also use for Power University.

1. Experience

Experience includes everything that one sees, does, or experiences.

There are two levels of first-hand experience:

1.2. First-Hand Experience

Not all personal experiences are created equal.

For example, "experience" in workplace politics after 30 years doing the same job, without improvement or upward movement, is not the best type of experience to inform on how to *progress* at work.

In general, strong experience is:

1. ***Successful* experience**: for example, in social skills, high status attainment
2. ***Repeated* success**: for example, repeated across different social groups
3. **Repeated successes in *different* contexts**, with different personalities and cultures

1.3. Observation

Observation of others allows us to increase data points.

The good social researcher observes others and seeks possible causal links between others' behaviors, mindsets, and

results.

Observation Added Value

Observation complements first-hand experience learning from:

- **Different people** in ways that we could not simply test by changing our behavior
- **Outliers**
- **Deeper scrutiny** from public courts or investigations (information people wouldn't otherwise share)
- **Negative examples** that we may not want to repeat ourselves

1.4. Second & Third Hand Experience

Knowledge acquired listening to others or consuming their work, including information that has been syntethized from different sources.

For example, at TPM we leverage this body of knowledge studying biographies or experienced authors' takes on syntethized body of knowledge (ie.: dating guides with authors' experiences plus the collective contributions of online dating communities).

How to Expand Experience

Some tips to learn from personal experience:

- **Try different things**: different activities, in different contexts, with different personalities
- **Reflect outcomes**, and the link between action and results
- **Ask yourself "what if"**, "what could I have done… "
- **Broaden experience with feedback**: it can point to blind spots
  - ⁉️♂️ **Lucio's note**: I ask deep probing questions to my dates, and it provided invaluable insights into dating dynamics

Advantages of Experience

Experience is not always and necessarily the first pillar of any discipline, but it is the main pillar for TPM-related disciplines.
Among the advantages of experience:

Reliable if based on repeated success

Repeated results can provide the best data and insights to tease out the best strategies for achieving outcomes.

However, there are important caveats:

1. **Generalizability**: results might not necessarily be generalizable to different personalities and contexts
2. **Good analysis is needed**, especially to generalize to different contexts and individuals.
   Successful teachers with poor analytical skills rarely make for great teachers.

High-quality data for pattern recognition

Deeper and broader the experience allows for more pattern recognition.

Highest-quality data points for social intelligence

While people differ in social and power intelligence at birth, experience is necessary for everyone to improve it.

Limitations of Experience

For all its importance, there are also important limitations to personal experience, including:

Some results cannot be reproduced many times over

While experiences like conversations and cold approaches can be repeated many times over, some others cannot.

In some endeavors, success is *inversely* proportional to quantity or breadth of experience.
For example, peak relationship success may be to have one single relationship. Peak career is to quickly raise to CEO position in one's first company. Both limit the *breadth* of experience.

These forms of success can be problematic for deriving generalizable principles.

Success may be due to randomness and chance

For example, business success may benefit heavily from 'right time, right product'. Critical thinking may help differentiate luck from effective mindsets and strategies.

Personal experience needs critical thinking for higher-level mastery

Personal experience without good analysis is *limited* by one's own experience.
Also, the inability to tease out general principles may lead to failure as soon as circumstances change.

Deep but narrow experience leads to one-trick ponies

For exampe, Nassim Taleb says that trained fighters are poor street fighters because they train within specific rules. While it may not be the best example, he raises a valid point. There is an inverse relation between contextual uniqueness and transferability of results.

Personal experience is limited by individual uniqueness

Principle:

⚖ **The more unique the individual, the more his experience lacks generalibility.**

For example, a handsome and famous man's approach to dating may not be very helpful to lower status men.

2. Science

Includes:

- Studies, experiments, and surveys
- Big data analyses

As well as:

- Scientific method and scientifically-informed thinking

In social skills, scientific data can confirm or disprove the patterns seen in personal experiences.
Confirmation lands credibility to the validity and reproducibility of his experience. Disconformation instead calls for revisions and additional analysis.

At TPM we leverage science by studying the research literature, and we particularly vlaue research handbooks because high-authority researchers syntethize the full empirical literature.

Science Added Value

Scientific data improves our understanding with:

Mitigates the risks of inductive reasoning (Fooled by Randomness)

Science adds *quantity* and *diversity* of data that allows more confident generalizations of principles.

I often see it as a red flag when people are too self-confident based on limited experience.
It's a case of inductive reasoning, or going from one case -or a small number of cases-, to the general rule.

High quantity & quality of data

Data and surveys can provide quantity and diversity of data points that experience alone may struggle to match.

For example, it would be hard to estimate, say, the average sexual partner in a specific country just by asking around.
And yet, that's very important information to assess the sexual dynamics of a given sexual marketplace.

Scientific data is also more structured, in contrast to personal experience, which is most often unrecorded, injecting new types of biases (e.g., recency effect & salience effect). It allows for more granular data analyses (e.g.: subgroups of religious VS non-religious women, and cohorts to track changes over time).

Experiments can set up contexts that one can hardly replicate in real life

While some real-life contexts are difficult to replicate in the lab, some useful lab experiments can be challenging or rare to experience in real life (ie.: Milgram experiment on obedience).

Science can isolate variables

Studies can help isolate single variables, re-run the experiment with different manipulations, and provide a more accurate measurement.

For example, measuring the effect of "priming" on persuasion and behavioral change is nearly impossible in real life.
But a series of smart experiments can find out whether -and how well- priming actually works.

Limitations of Science

Science is a powerful engine of progress, but good scientists are aware of the *limits* of science.
In the social sciences, replicating and measuring dynamics of influence, power dynamics, or social strategies is particularly challenging.
Some limitations of scientific research include:

Research-specific limitations

Poorly-designed or low-powered studies can sometimes be actively misleading.

The examples are too many to count, from priming to power poses, and it prompted a period of soul-searching in psychology (and some skepticism that at times was an overreaction).

Critical thinking helps: looking at methodology, population size, and possible confounding variables helps put individual studies in perspective.

In social sciences, some research applications to the real world can be dubious (external validity)

Some studies can be perfectly executed, and *still* not provide great insights about real-world dynamics.

Psychologist Martin Seligman says that external validity is one of the banes of psychology research:

> This is the "white rats and college sophomore" issue: researchers can control and measure what rats and sophomores do in the laboratory, but any finding's application to real human problems is always a strain

And he adds that "*public doubts about the applicability of basic, rigorous science are often warranted, and this is because the rules of external validity are not clear*".

Critical thinking, supported by personal experience, can help separate scientific signal from scientific noise.

Many false positives & false negatives for complex dynamics

I'll give you an example:

Betsy Prioleau in "Swoon" says that women prefer men with feminine faces.
Indeed, there are plenty of studies that suggest that women prefer more feminine faces. But there are also plenty of studies that seem to suggest that women prefer more masculine faces.

This is normal.
Investigating complex issues with high individual variance often leads to studies reaching opposite conclusions.

Meta-analyses may help, but they're not enough.
Critical thinking must step in with hypotheses to be tested with ad-hoc studies that isolate variables (eg.: high-value women's preferences, risky vs. safe environments, women's age, etc. etc.).

Experience helps.
For example, a man hypothesizes that younger women tend to prefer more feminine faces based on boyband fandom, and that may inform future research, or how to assess existing studies.

Science Power Dynamics & Incentives Don't Always Align With Truth

Just like any other human, scientists also have personal biases, and may place personal success above 'truth'.

Some of the issues with published research:

- **The full published literature is inherently biased** towards larger effect sizes because
  - Publishers are more likely to publish largely significant or shocking results rather than mild, confirming, or "null" results
  - Researchers may prefer results that are most likely to be published, with an incentive to "massage" the data ("p-hacking")
- **Fraud**, or wholly made-up data
  See for example the cases of Francesca Gino and the Stanford Scandal
- **Seek personal fame**, publishing too early, fudging, or over-selling smallish (and little effective) findings.
  For example, Amy Cuddy/power poses, Angela Duckworth/"grit"
  - Self-help distortions: Although not a criticism of science, even valid constructs like vulnerability or "growth mindset" can turn ineffective when misapplied

A good chunk of pre-replication crisis results are overstated or misleading

Incentives may have been particularly badly misaligned before the replication crisis.
And researchers had much more freedom and leeway to "torture the data" until the data looked 'good'.

3. Critical Analysis

Critical analysis turns all the available data into theories and principles.
Good critical analysis could be boiled and simplified as “thinking well”.

⍰♂Lucio’s Take: **The secret sauce to TPM’s uniqueness?**

Lucio:
I used to think that The Power Moves’ popularity came from combining experience, with science.

Today I think differently.
Although few do it well, many creators talk about personal experience and add some citations. So today I believe that the true added value of this website is in the critical analysis.

Critical analysis includes:

- **Logic**
- **Skepticism** and ‘healthy cynicism‘ to consider possible personal biases
  - Falsification / critical refutation, or considering why a theory may not be true <— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s note: It’s something I do naturally, and that I believe is very useful, and something I wish to see more of
- **Systems thinking**, looking for patterns to turn data into coherent theories and principles
- **Practical application from theories**

Critical Analysis Added Value

Solid critical analyses allow for:

Critical Analysis Turns Data Into Predictive Theories

Predictive theories provide the theoretical infrastructure to understand the links among different phenomena.

For example, evolutionary theory of male parental investment allows us to understand why women are more selective than men, but why men are also selective for long-term relationships, and more selective than most other

males in the animal kingdom.

Critical Analysis Turns Theories Into Strategies

To achieve real-world outcomes.

Critical analysis troubleshoots inconsistencies

Inconsistencies can arise between different experiences at different times, or between experience and scientific data.

Critical analysis provides the first test of whether inconsistencies weaken, undo, or even reinforce a theory.

For example, some men's attraction for very old women on paper could undo evolutionary psychology. However, critical analysis would look at how *common* it is, whether these men are *also* attracted to younger women, and provide first testable explanations that may even strengthen the general theory and principles.

Critical analysis tells if personal experience or science shall prevail

When science and experience diverge, critical thinking can tell what to assign more weight to.

For example, imagine in a survey 95% of men say they have more power in their relationship, 63% of the women confirm, but your personal observation suggests otherwise.

In this case, an experienced observer may be right and good analysis may explain why.
Men and women both fall for social desirability bias, and men for ego self-protection as well.

And they both focus on the 'official' leadership role, which is often a front, instead of what most often moves the needle: who has more emotional influence over the other.

Conversely, data beats personal experience when the data is highly reliable. For example, in a salespage A/B test with reliable data.

How to Improve Critical Analysis

Keep A Constant Feedback Loop Between Experience & Theory

Incorporate the latest experience into your general theory and principles.
Matching experience reinforces the theory, while mismatching experience provides opportunity for refining the theory (and continuous mismatching experience for scrapping the theory).

Let Go of Biases

You can either learn the truth and, in turn, develop effective strategies to win, or you can hold to your biases.

Analyze Feedback Non-defensively

You may dislike someone or someone's feedback.
But before dismissing it, ask yourself if there may be anything true in what they said.

Strike A Balance Between Open Mind & Brains Falling Out

For example, I consider the "law of attraction" in the sense that you can "manifest" things not true and unworthy of my investigative time.
I still keep a small window open to the possibility that it might be true, but don't waste time investigating it or researching it.

Never Stray Too Far From The Data

Good analysis limits itself.

Good analysis must stay close to the data: the farther analysis strays from data and experience, the more speculative it becomes.
And the farther it strays from good data, the more prone it becomes to being twisted by personal biases.

Just like a smart swimmer keeps an eye on the coastline to ensure he can always swim back, good critical thinking never strays too far off experience and data.

Falsify Your Own Theories: Red Team

Analyze 'why it's not true' at least as much as you ponder 'why it's true'.

Read & Learn From Critical Thinkers

And you'll naturally move closer to their way of thinking.

For more, also read:

- Critical thinking analysis of news
- Critical thinking analysis of an ad
- Critical thinking against journalist's games

Limitations of Analysis

The effectiveness of critical analysis depends wholly on the quality of that analysis.
Poor analysis may be worse than no analysis at all because it leads to wrong theories, which in turn lead to wrong predictions and strategies.

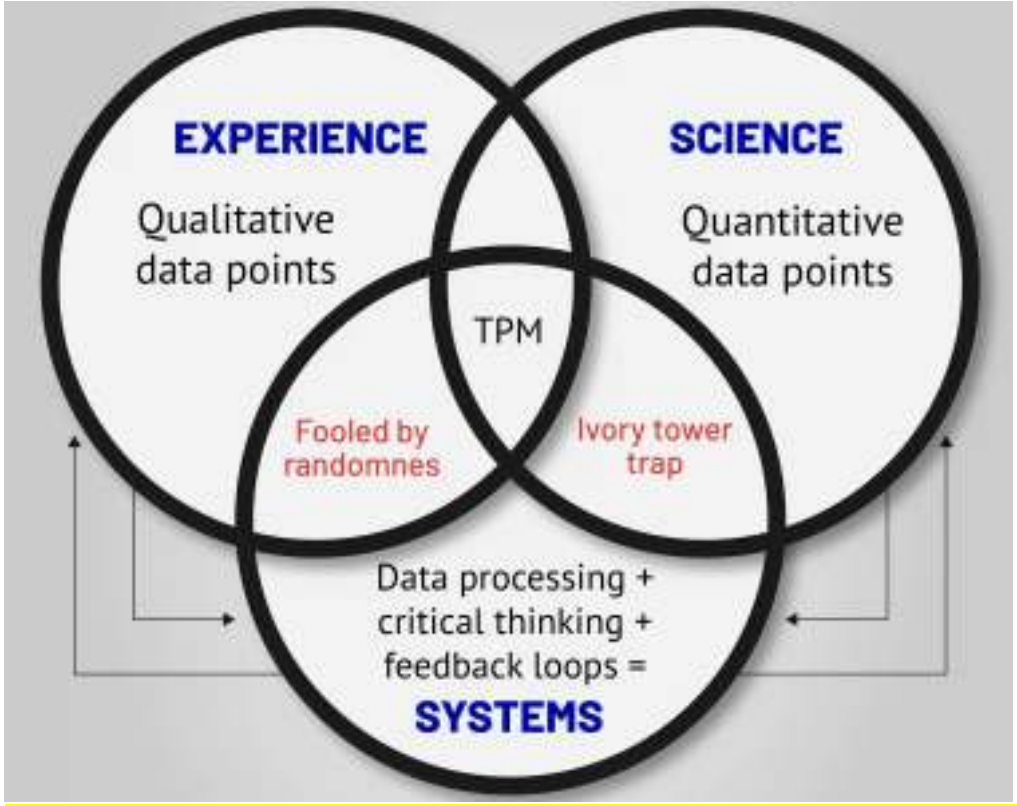
And a bad strategy is worse than a purely random strategy.
So here are some limitations to be aware of:

- **Good analysis needs good data points**, as per the 'garbage in, garbage out' principle. Great thinkers with little experience and data do not make for good theories
- **Good analysis demands absence of personal biases**, and although it may sound obvious, unbiased analysts are a tiny minority.
  - Biased good thinkers are the worst, since they are better able to fool themselves and others

Avoid teachers with poor critical thinking
Reliable signs of poor thinking include 1) over-generalizations; 2) little nuances and exceptions; 3) generic 'laws' with little notes on how to calibrate them

End Product: Systems

The end goal is developing higher-level theories that explain reality.
For our practical goals, we then extend to effective strategies for replicable results across different contexts and personalities.



The 3 pillars of learning as they start forming systems (then turning into "pillars of knowledge")
A good system empowers you to make predictions and strategize effectively to achieve goals.
You can:

- **Recognize patterns**: for example, quickly draw conclusions about one's character, or about the social and power dynamics of any new situation
- **Superior information handling, make connections & prediction**: you categorize incoming information to start forming a larger picture, and can then make connections from disclosed information and infer *undisclosed* information
- **Respond effectively to achieve goals** as you can predict what certain actions will lead to

Systems Open The Doors To All Sub-Systems

In many disciplines, different sub-systems are connected.

For example, social skills' main systems include human nature, social exchanges, and interpersonal power dynamics.
Understand those, and you understand most socialization, whether it's in relationships, business, or friendships.

TIP: **For Mentors, Pick Good Thinkers Who Understand The Dynamics**:
Pick not just people who are good at doing something, but people with a deep grasp of the underlying dynamics.
These people can teach you how to apply general principles to different people, in different situations.

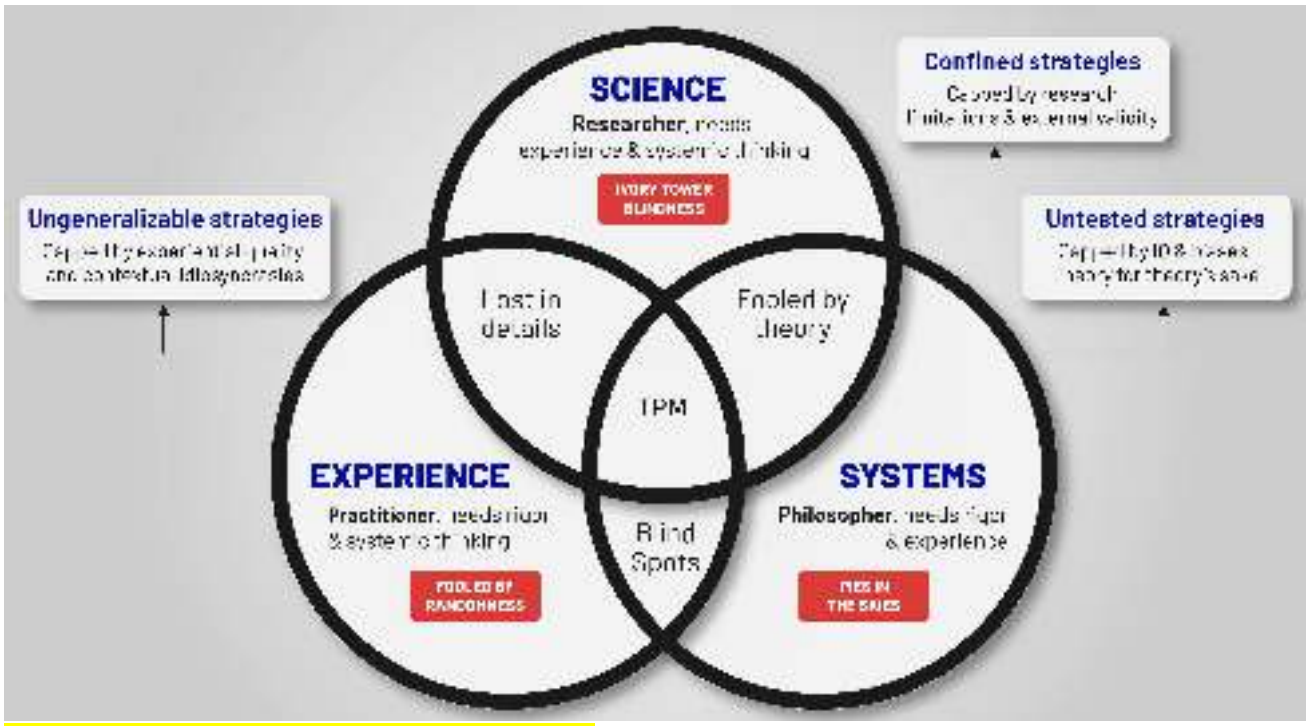
Systems Allow For Real-World Outcomes

Many researchers stop at the theoretical level, without providing advice.

However, as a platform for male agency, **we turn theories into strategies to help men achieve goals.**
And the better the model, the better the strategies, including higher granularity and contextual adaptability.

Failures of The 3-Pillars Approach

The three pillars must balance each other out to prevent the distortions of their extremes when pursued in isolation.



The failure of the 3 pillars systems when unbalanced

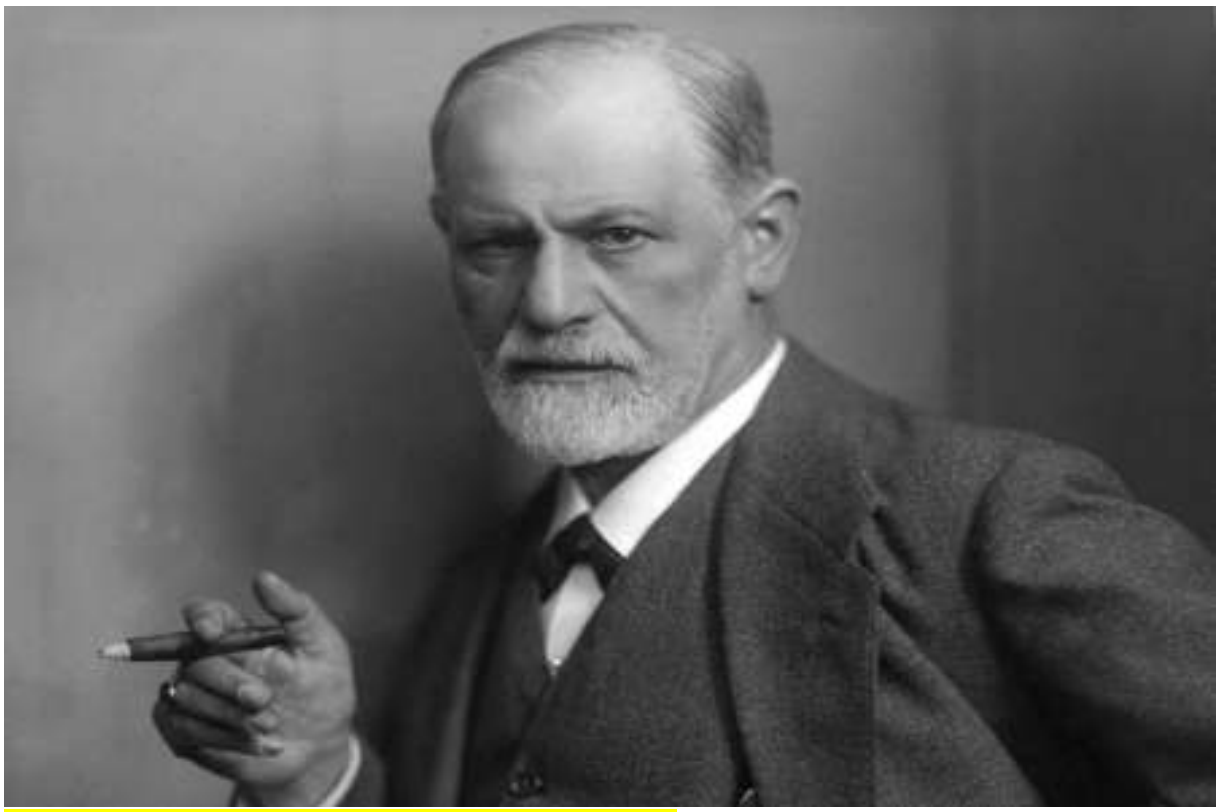
The failures are:

- **All science / empirical data**, lacks real-world testing. Lacks an overarching theory. Can't offer any guidance on novel situations outside of the specific test conditions it relies on
- **All experience**, fails to systematize and replicate for others. Struggles to self-correct and improve as well
- **All analysis**, fails to ever test its theories, likely leads to heavy theorizing that doesn't produce results

Intersecting 2 pillars with each other improves the outcomes.
But still not ideal.

Let's see some examples of unbalanced pillars:

Little Data, Much Analysis: Freud



Freud was a high-powered, potentially dark-triad smart-alec

- **Personal experience**: high
- **Science**: lowish
- **Analysis**: very high
  - **Critical thinking**: low (no falsification, little scientific approach)

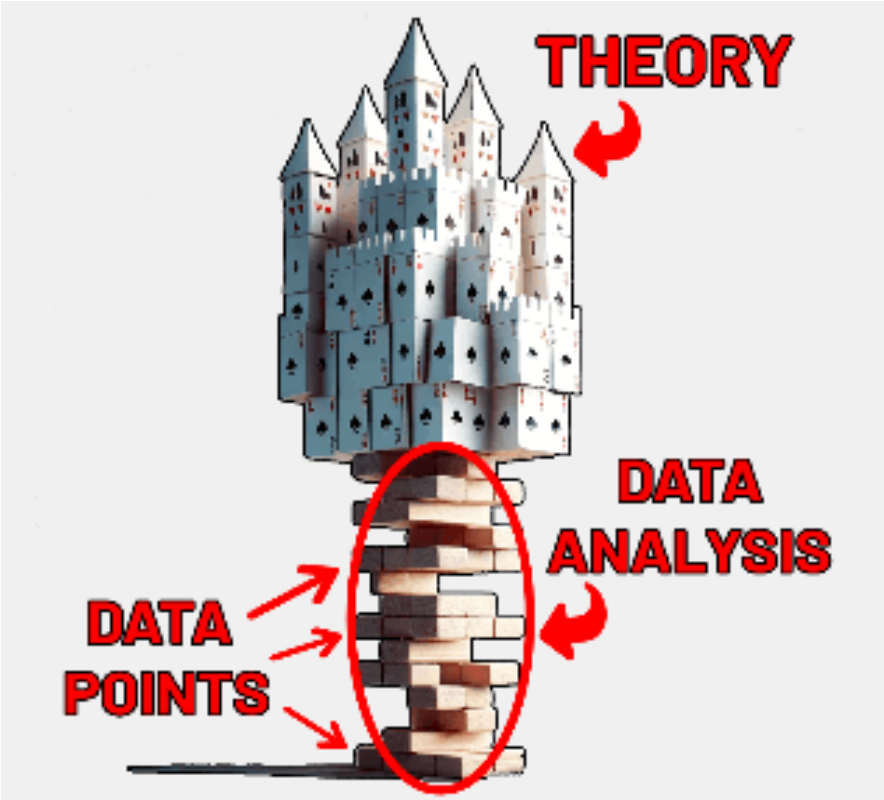
Freud's experience came from his practice, and on top of clinical samples being inherently biased, the data weren't quantified and systematized.
Freud focused more on *theorizing*, and didn't seem keen on falsifying his theories.

The results are telling: despite being a genius with groundbreaking insights, large swaths of his theories are now discredited.
Says Seligman in *Authentic Happiness*:

> The events of childhood are overrated (in Freudian psychoanalysis).
> It turned out to be difficult to find even small effects of childhood events on adult personality (…).
> This means that the promissory note that Freud wrote about childhood events determining the course of adult lives is worthless.
>
> *Marting Seligman*

This is a telling cautionary tale: **the more you stray away from empirical evidence, the more you risk losing touch with reality** and build "castles in the sky".

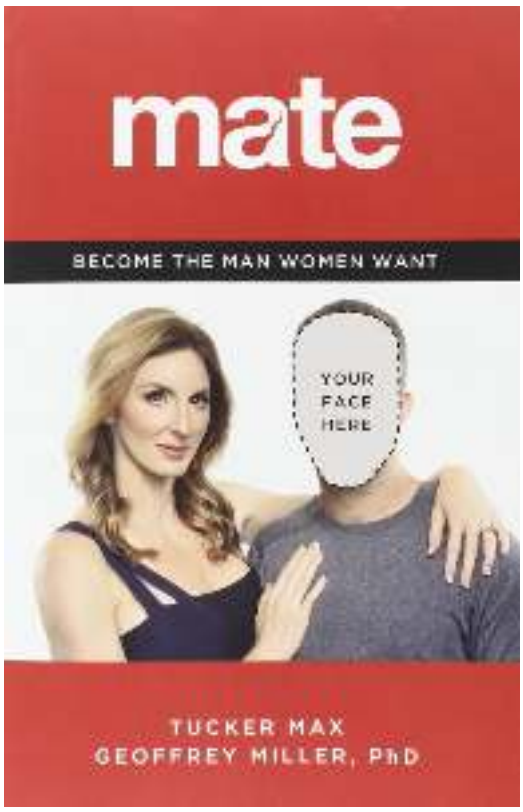
Self-refential theories worsen over time because they build upon themselves over increasingly poor foundations.
The data points are swapped for hypotheses until most hypotheses stand on *no data at all*.
The odds of mistaken theories and constructs increase exponentially.



Bad data points (poor bricks) and bad data analysis (poor construction) make for bad theories (poor buildings)

Freud's castles in the skies *sounded* coherent. But without grounding data, it was *philosophy* more than science.

Much Experience, Little Data & Analysis: Tucker Max



- **Personal experience**: very high
- **Science**: low
- **Analysis**: medium

- **Critical thinking**: low

Tucker Max was a 'frat boy' who slept around with an 'asshole style'.
Tucker has lots of first-hand experience, yet his experience is limited to:

- University
- Asshole style
- Fame-based dating

His experience is extensive in *depth*, but limited in *breadth*.
Tucker would be a poor teacher for most guys who are not interested in 'asshole game', who are not frat boys, and who are not famous.

Much Science & Analysis, Poor Critical Thinking: Homo Economicus

- **Personal experience**: low
- **Science**: very high
- **Analysis**: high
  - **Critical thinking**: very low

Early game theorists and economists developed theories and mathematical models around an ideal of full human rationality that barely exists in real life.

Says psychologist Richard Thaler, on the limitations of the "homo economicus" theories:

> As economists became more mathematically sophisticated, the people they described evolved as well.
> (…)
> Calculate the present value of social security benefits that will start 20 years from now? No problem!
> Stop by the tavern on payday and spend intended for food? Never!
>
> *Thaler, "Misbehaving"*

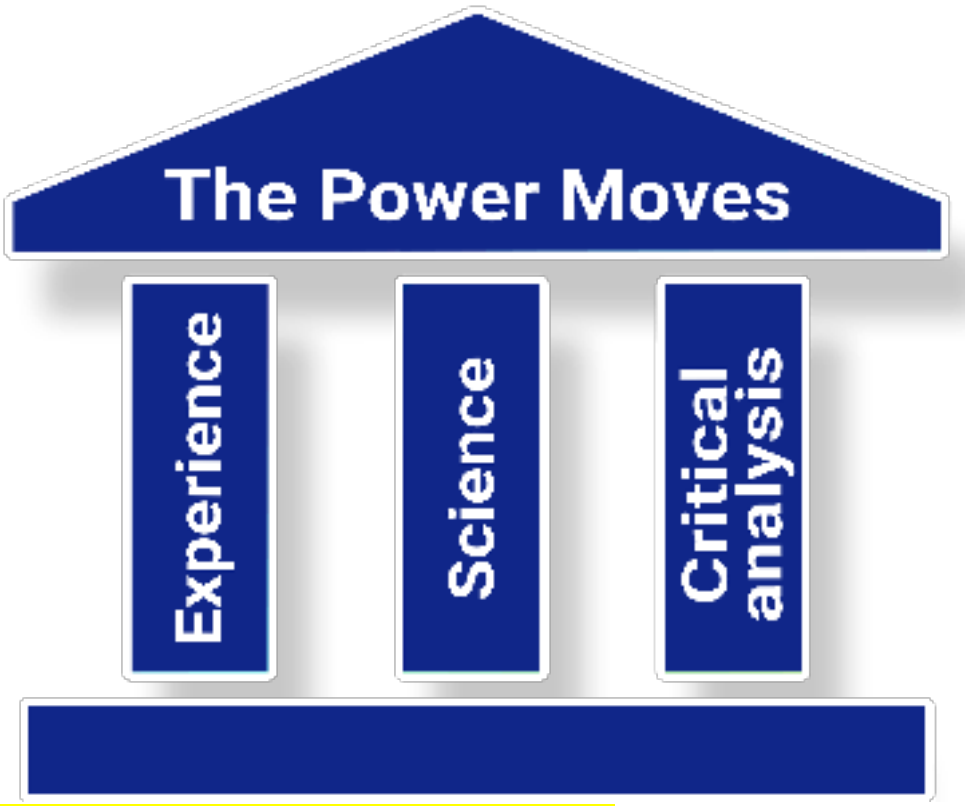
It shows:

1. Science can get out of touch with personal experience
2. Analysis can build upon itself if unchecked by critical thinking

Data and science had internal validity, but didn't accurately describe reality.
Proper critical thinking should have leveraged experience and said: "*Wait a second, do the people I see every day around me act like perfect rational creatures? Actually, they don't…* "

The Power Moves Approach

> Three-pillars, or nothing



The Power Moves is based on the 3 pillars of knowledge
Here at TPM we focus on topics where we have all 3 pillars in place.

Some exceptions apply because in some fields, not all 3 sources are available.
For example, there is limited scientific guidance on manipulation dynamics, or best career strategies. And I exited the corporate life soon-ish (albeit with successful upward mobility, some breadth of experience, and careful observation).
But TPM can sitll add value given that much mainstream advice lacks practicality or nuance.

Finally, interpersonal power dynamics as a discipline is not fully codified, and it's part of our work to contribute to this body of knowledge.

The Art of Negotiation (Chris Voss): Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 December 2020 · Archived copy · Original

The Art of Negotiation is an online Masterclass course on negotiation principles and techniques in which Chris Voss, the teacher, makes the case that negotiation should be done using empathy coupled with a collaborative approach to the situation at hand.

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- Full Summary
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  - Negotiation Principles/Strategies
  - Negotiation Quick Tips
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- Negotiating for a Raise

- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Full Summary

About The Teacher: Christopher "Chris" Voss is an American businessman, author, and academic. Voss is a former FBI hostage negotiator, where he persuaded terrorists, bank robbers, and kidnappers to see things his way. Now, he's the CEO of The Black Swan Group Ltd, and co-author of the bestselling book *Never Split the Difference*.

**All quotes from this point forward are quoted from Chris Voss's words.*

Negotiation Concept/Theories

1. Tactical Empathy (AKA: Emotional Intelligence)

"Empathy is becoming completely aware of the other side's perspective, their point of view, their take on things, how they see it, and what they feel. It's not agreement in any way. It's not compassion. It's not sympathy."

Tactical empathy is the act of taking what you know to be the case from understanding and empathizing with the other side (as a person) and applying it in the interaction.

2. Mirror(Ring)

"Mirroring. The hostage negotiator's mirroring. It's just the simple repetition of one to three words—one, two three-ish words. Typically, it's the last one to three words of what somebody said. But, when you get good at mirroring, you could pick one to three words from anywhere in the conversation."

This is basically the act of taking the last one to three words said by the other side and turning it into a question. Then, you ask that question with genuine curiosity and interest in what they mean. This process can be performed on literally any sentence.

> **Lucio**: "Allies empower, enemies disempower."
>
> **You**: "Enemies disempower?"

The following would be an example of mirroring one to three words from any part of their sentence when you get *really* good as Voss mentions.

> **Your Friend**: "Yo, do you think I could borrow a dollar for the vending machine?"
>
> **You**: "Borrow a dollar?"

3. Labeling

The act of verbally identifying or "giving a voice" to the other side's feelings.

4. Trust-Based Influence

"So, my labels are going to do several things simultaneously. They're going to build the relationship and they're going to help me gather information. And, since both of those things are happening, then my influence with you is going to increase…this is what I call trust-based influence."

"It's the lowest-maintenance, most durable type of influence there is."

Negotiation Principles/Strategies

This is a list of the strategies highlighted in "The Art of Negotiation":

1. Mirror to Gather Information

"[When you use mirroring] the other person feels listened to. It tends to connect their thoughts in their head. Part of the message it sends to the other person is 'I heard every word you said word for word and I'm proving it because I just repeated it back to you. But, it's not enough. I still don't get it.' And, when people go on with a further explanation, they're going to add more words. They're going to change their terms."

> **Him**: "Hey, can I borrow your notebook?"
>
> **You**: "Borrow my notebook?"
>
> **Him**: "Yea, your notebook. I want to check my work to make sure I did the homework right."
>
> **You**: "My notebook?"
>
> **Him**: "Dude. Yes. Your notebook. Or…actually, wait. You call it a binder, right?"
>
> **You**: "Oh, my binder. Yea, here you go."

Here, you used mirroring to gather more information on what exactly the other side was talking about. In this case, you cleared up the miscommunication of what they were referring to.

2. Mirror to Build Rapport

"Mirroring is also a rapport-building relationship process. People love to be mirrored. They love to be encouraged to go on. There's an old saying, 'Interesting people are interested.' If you mirror, you will be ridiculously interesting to other people because you're interested in them and [as a result] they're going to love talking to you."

When you're mirroring, show a genuine interest and curiosity in order to build rapport. "Genuine curiosity is a great trigger to get people to keep talking. And a mirror that finishes with a tone of voice of genuine curiosity is compelling. It's powerful. People are drawn to it. They want to say more."

"…you're genuinely curious about the other person, you're interested, you're looking forward to hearing what they have to say. You want to learn from them. You're positive about it. You're not judgemental. You're interested."

3. Mirror Confrontational People

Let's say someone is coming at you in a very confrontational manner in a business setting.

> **Him**: *(verbally aggressive)* Your price is too high!
>
> **You**: *(pauses, looking into their eyes calmly)* "Our price is too high?"
>
> **Him**: *(confrontational)* "Yeah! You know, we can't pay that. You know, we've got a limited budget here."
>
> **You**: *(with calm and genuine interest)* "You got a limited budget?"
>
> **Him**: *(noticeably upset)* Yeah. Well, you know, we've got other things that we have to worry about. There's a lot of things that we're trying to accomplish here."

"They're going to go on and on and they're going to elaborate and they're going to give me [you] context. And they're going to feel like I'm working with them. They're not going to feel me fighting."

"It takes two to fight. I'm going to change this wrestling match into a dance. And, if I refuse to engage in the

wrestling, but I still want to engage, then that changes into a collaboration almost immediately."

4. Silence Is Golden

"The recipe for mirroring, first of all, is just, you know, the last one to three words of what someone just said. But, then the critical issue afterward is to shut up. You know, effective pause or dynamic silence…Let the other person think. Let your skill [the mirroring] sink into their head. Let it have its intended effect and go silent which also lets the person know that you really want to hear and you're going to shut up until they do [respond]."

5. Label It!

"The steps to labeling. The first step is you simply being aware of the emotion or the dynamic from the other side…Becoming aware of what your gut instinct is picking up is the first step. Then, the second step after that is to simply label it. That starts out with 'it seems like', 'it sounds like', 'it looks like', 'it feels like'. Those are the first few words of a label. And then, just fill in the blank."

**Note: This is similar to the approach that you take when you're using the "framing buffet" frame control technique after being accused. Instead of saying "I" (which causes you to appear as though you're taking ownership of the issue), you keep the issue and negativity with them (the other side) by refraining from using the word "I" and, instead, choosing to label in response. So, instead of, "I would never do that man," you label by saying, "It seems like you take this sort of thing very seriously."*

6. Reinforce Positive Emotions

One way to reinforce positive emotions in the other side is by lowering their negative emotions. Labeling a negative (emotion) diffuses the negative.

In a lot of circumstances, you're probably going to have to label more than once in order to completely deactivate the negative. "A lack of response to a negative label is a good sign that you're on the right track. Just keep going. Label it some more."

An example of a negative label would be, "It seems like you really want this project to fail." Labeling that emotion calls it out into the open and calls it into question in their mind, which lowers that negative if it's what they're feeling. After using a negative label like that, getting silence from the other side is a good sign that you're on the right track and that you should keep labeling.

**Note: This definitely doesn't sound like a one size fits all approach to negotiation or dealing with people in general. Depending on who you're talking to, if it's a hothead meathead that's already had a long day, you may be starting a fire with a negative label like this since it could be perceived as an arrogant (or at the very least annoying) accusation. However, I still like the idea and strategy of labeling, just not the risk that comes with certain labels that have the potential to incite confrontation such as this one.*

Another way of reinforcing a positive emotion (and the more direct way) is by labeling it as well. Labeling a positive (emotion) reinforces the positive.

> **Voss**: "You may be in conversation with a customer service person for an airline and they're short-tempered. They've been beaten up all day. And you didn't call them to congratulate them on doing a good job anyway. You don't call customer service to congratulate them on what a great job the airline's doing. They know that [you're calling about a problem and they're expecting you to be mad about it]…Now, here's the crazy part. Their impatience, their empathy, their perspective on this is that if you're lucky to be talking to them at all, they're actually being generous with their time [since they've been beaten up all day and are now short-tempered]! That's their bizarro worldview. Again, empathy is not the truth. It's not the reality. It's the other side's point of view. So, a great positive to reinforce here is to say to them…"It feels like you're being really generous with me right now."

7. Mirror and Label in Tandem

"After a great label, they may have given you a lot of information and there may be a part of that that you want to expand on. So, whatever their response is to the label, you can mirror one or two or three words out of that response and get a lot more information afterward."

Here's an example of how mirroring after a label might play out:

> **Voss**: *(label)* "It sounds like this deal is making you upset."
>
> **You**: "Well, it's not making me upset. What it really is is we got some real implementation problems here on the other side because we've had trouble with this in the past."
>
> **Voss**: *(mirror)* "Trouble in the past?"
>
> **You**: "Yeah, well, you know, it happened to us with another company. It was actually the vendor we had before you guys came in and they gave us a lot of problems. But, we're really worried that you guys are doing the same thing. We realize that you're different but, you know, we're not sure yet because we're still early in the relationship.
>
> **Voss**: *(mirror)* "Early in the relationship?"

After saying, "Early in the relationship?": "But any one of those selected mirrors is going to tease a lot of information out about exactly what I'm after."

Negotiation Quick Tips

Avoid competitive frames

"The stereotype about negotiation is that it's about being the biggest jerk in the room. That it's who's the loudest, who's the most aggressive, who takes the most at the other person's expense. The stereotype is that 'I win means you got to lose. And I beat you.' That is not the case. Great negotiation is about great collaboration."

Know Your (True) Enemy

"The adversary is not the person across the table. The adversary is the situation. The person across the table is a counterpart that's struggling with some aspect of the same problem that you are [facing / dealing with]. You work with them and solve that problem together and you're both better off."

In other words, the problem is not the person you're negotiating with. The problem is the situation. Once you solve the situation, you'll realize that the *real* problem goes away as well as the person across the table. This is because all that person was looking for is a solution to the same problem that you're having because you're both in the same situation together. Now, the best way to make that problem go away is to work with the person you're negotiating with instead of trying to solve the problem (situation) all by yourself, or worse, work against the person you're negotiating with.

As an example, Chris Voss couldn't go into hostage negotiations believing that the kidnapping terrorist was the problem. He had to believe that the hostage situation itself was the problem and work with the hostage-taker to achieve solving that problem (situation). To achieve getting the hostage-taker to do what he wants (let go of the victim), he couldn't try solving the situation all by himself, or worse, work against the hostage-taker or he'd risk failing. Similarly, you shouldn't do any negotiation in business or in life seeing the other person as the problem. The problem is the situation and you want to work with the other person to find a solution that works for everyone.

Negotiation for Goal-Achievement

"You should aim to achieve your goals through collaboration and the use of tactical empathy that creates trust-based

influence."

This may be a slower way to achieve your goals since it takes time to understand the other side and empathize with them for more influence over them. However, this is the most sure-fire way to achieve getting what you want in any situation involving another individual.

Know their "rules" to know how to persuade them

"…the human nature rules that apply to all people…if you can really get at what's driving someone, you can change their outlook and you can change their decision-making. You have to understand what their rules are. I have to understand what your rules are and I have to respect those. I don't necessarily have to adopt those rules, but I've got to understand and respect what they are."

Let the other side have your way

"The common misconception about negotiation is that you have to 'make your case'. You have to make your argument. You need to come prepared with the reasons why the other side should make the deal—your value proposition if you will—and you need to lay all that out. That is not the case. You need to find out what's possible and you need to engage the other side in what their thoughts are so that they feel involved in the process and, consequently, they want the deal to happen [to give you your way]."

How NOT to Label

1. Avoid all use of the first-person pronoun "I". Doing this will communicate that you're more interested in your perspective than theirs.
2. Avoid the urge to explain a label or to add some follow up (or to talk at all, actually) after using a good label.

Good labels must have the chance to sink in for it to have its effect. If you explain or follow up after a label, you're stepping on it [the label you just used] and decreasing its persuasive power/ability to influence.

Bullet Summary

- There are human nature rules that apply to everyone regardless of if you're a terrorist or a businessman. You can leverage those rules using empathy to get the other side to give you what you want.
- "Great negotiation is about great collaboration." Ditch the competitive frames.
- To get what you want, focus less on making good, principled arguments, and focus more on building rapport. Trust-based influence is a more sure way to get what you want than making the case that your request is fair.

Negotiation Concept/Theory: Voice

***Assertive** *(= "Analyst" Voice + Regular Speech Rate)*

"This voice is declarative, straight up, and delivered like a punch in the nose." This voice is always counterproductive in negotiations.

***Playful/accommodating**

"This voice is a bearer of truths delivered gently. It promotes collaboration. This should be your go-to voice in negotiations."

***Late-night FM DJ**

"This voice is straightforward with a soothing, downward lilt."

In addition to the three tones of voice, master these two essential inflections:

***Inquisitive** → "Playful/Accommodating" Voice
Speak with an upward inflection, as if you're asking a question. This tone should convey genuine curiosity and interest in the other person's point of view. This
should be your default inflection.

***Declarative** → "Analyst" Voice
Speak with a downward inflection, as if you're stating a fact. It's best employed when establishing points of negotiation that are immovable.

Negotiation Concept/Theory: Mirror Neurons

Mirror neurons are neurons in the brain that "mirror" (reflect) the behavior of another person. In other words, if your best friend opens up to you while you're talking with them and they begin to sob, cry, and seem depressed, you're likely to begin to feel your mood lower as well. This is due to them hitting your mirror neurons with their behavior causing you to respond involuntarily with the same (unhappy) behavior.

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Manipulate Their Mirror Neurons

"So, if you can see me or you can hear me, I can hit the mirror neurons in your brain. So, if I'm angry, I'm going to hit your mirror neurons [by behaving angrily such as yelling and shouting], you're going to get angry too. It's an involuntary response."

You can also speak using the late-night FM DJ voice which is soothing, deep, and slow to hit their mirror neurons which will slow their brain down as an involuntary response to your slow, calm voice. If you use this technique to calm down your counterpart, it's far more effective than trying to facilitate a change of mood from them by telling them to "just calm down". And, that's because "calm down" is an order, so they're going to hate that (especially if they're already upset). Instead, slow their brain down using the late-night FM DJ voice to calm them down.

By smiling when you talk to people, you are also triggering their mirror neurons in a positive way (since smiles are positive and value-adding).

For example, you can go for what most people might do:

> **The Other Side**: *(with an angry, frustrated energy)* No!
>
> **You**: *(with an assertive tonality)* Calm down please.
>
> **The Other Side**: *(grows more angry)*

Or:

> **The Other Side**: *(with an angry, frustrated energy)* No!
>
> **You**: *(with a slow speech rate, deep voice, and soothing, empathetic tonality)* You seem upset.
>
> **The Other Side**: *(aggressive energy begins to fall)*

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The 7/38/55 Rule

The three components of communication are the content, tonality (with which the content is delivered), and body language. When delivering a message, 100% of that message is divided into these three parts. 7% of that message is observed and considered by the other side in terms of content, 38% in terms of voice tonality, and 55% in terms of body language.

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Use the 7/38/55 Rule to Detect Lies

"One great way for getting a sense of whether or not somebody is being genuine ties back to the 7/38/55 rule. Does their delivery and their body language line up with the content of the words that's being spoken? If one of those is out of line, which one of those am I going to expect to be the most reliable? I'm going to look hard at body language and tone of voice when it's out of line with the words [content]. And, then I'm going to use a label to identify the dynamic. And, I could say something as clear as, I heard you say yes, but I also heard something in your tone of voice that made you hesitate."

Watch the Sidelines to Detect Lies

"In many cases, you're going to be negotiating in a group setting. They're going to have people on the other side of the table that are listening, that are dialed in, especially if they're concealing [information]. And, they know they're concealing. And, maybe they're concealing out of defensiveness. The people who are going to be ridiculously unguarded are going to be the people that you're not talking directly to…the people that are not being spoken to are going to be insanely honest in their physical reactions."

"The people that are off the point of focus are going to be ridiculously unguarded in their body language because they're not used to being paid attention to. They're used to having all eyes on the person that's being spoken to [the primary point of contact]. So, you're going to get some really honest, some really accurate body language off the [sidelined] people…".

So, for example, let's say you own a blog and you want to hire a content creation company to post content on your blog for you. This content creation company is owned by a father and his son, who are both in business together. But, the father does all of the talking since he has the majority of the business experience. When the father says the rate that he usually charges his clients, you notice that the body language of the son begins to shift where the son appears uncomfortable. It's a good thing you kept an eye on the sidelines…chances are the father isn't telling the whole truth here.

Identify Baselines and Spot Deviations to Detect Lies

"…for a negotiator, it's a lot more important to know when somebody is telling the truth than when they're lying because if you tell the truth, you have one way you tell the truth. You may have a bunch of different ways that you lie…and I'm trying to gain a feel for what your baseline is for telling the truth."

"It's the same way a polygraph works. You go on a polygraph, a good polygrapher is going to ask you the "control questions", the questions that are the truth. What day is it? Where are you? What's your name? What was your dog's first name? You know, any of the things that you tell the truth on. They're going to get a line on what you look like when you're telling the truth. And then, when you lie, it doesn't matter how you lie, it just matters that you've come out of it [possibly with displacement signals]…whatever you do, you didn't do it when you were telling the truth. That's an indicator that you've come out of your baseline. You're probably lying. You're at least thinking about lying."

When you see those displacement signals. When you see that they've come out of telling the truth and slipped into lying (or are thinking about lying), use tactical empathy to make them feel more comfortable.

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The Pinocchio Effect

"It's when someone uses more words than is necessary to give you an answer. If someone is lying to you, they know they're lying. And, they're worried about it. And, consequently, they're going to [feel the need] to work harder to convince you. So, the more effort that they go to convince you that they're telling the truth, the more likely it is that they're lying."

It's just as Lucio says:

> **Lucio**: "Another persuasion mistake: **when you try too hard to convince people, people will always wonder *why* you are trying so hard**. And they immediately think: maybe because they need lots of effort to hide the truth?"

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

How To Deal with A Lie (Like an FBI Hostage Negotiator)

"If I sense you've come out of truth-telling, I can say, 'Well, I heard you say you're OK with the deal but, seems like something's bothering you? Seems like there's something here I missed? Seems like there more here than meets the eye?' Each one of these labels are designed to have the maximum chance of success of bringing you out of the lie. They're not accusatory. The tone of voice is curious. The tone of voice is collaborative. The tone of voice is interested."

"What does it tell you about yourself if somebody is lying to you? Well, first, it tells you that they are scared to tell you the truth. They perceive you as potentially being a threat. Now, that doesn't mean that you are a threat…it tells you that their assessment of the situation is that they've got their guard up."

To deal with this, revert to the late-night FM DJ voice. As Voss recommends, "Use a voice that the other side finds reassuring, be predictable, be nonjudgmental. Be predictable in that you're not going to attack them. You're not going to try and corner them. You want to be steady. You want to be accountable…you continue to show them that you're worthy of being unguarded and they'll drop their guard."

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Ask "How" And "What" Questions

"[A] calibrated question is what we used to refer to as an open-ended question…And, we calibrate it to make the other side feel in charge. The secret to gaining the upper hand in a negotiation is giving the other side the illusion of control. And, we're going to calibrate our questions mostly with the words 'what' and 'how' because people love to be asked what to do. People love to be asked how to do something…They feel in charge. They feel in control. We've got to say it with deference."

"Instead of 'why do you need delivery in three weeks of the product'…change your 'why' to a 'what' and you say, 'what makes it necessary to get it delivered in three weeks?"

In business today, we're often told to find the other side's "why"—to discover their motivations, pain points, goals, and fears. But, when we search for their why by asking them questions using the word "why", it interferes with the relationship and rapport because the word "why" is accusatory. The word "why" creates defensiveness.

Ask Questions To Force Empathy

"Forced empathy is when you force the other side to have empathy with you, and the idea behind empathy–we're trying to trigger reciprocity. We're looking to demonstrate empathy because it's good for us, but we want empathy in return. And, reciprocity may not always kick in. So, we may have to say something at some point in time that forces the other side to take a hard look at our situation before they move forward. And, our classic phrase to force empathy into a situation is simply to say to somebody, 'How am I supposed to do that?"

For example, there was a woman who had done a tremendous amount of work for a company. The company kept promising her follow-on business as a result of it and she was afraid of being denied the follow-on business. So, they owed her a lot of money and they weren't paying, yet they kept sending her more and more work.

One day, when they called her and asked for more work, she said:

> **Her**: "How am I supposed to do that?"
>
> **Them**: "You're right. You can't. I know we haven't been paying you. We've actually had some real internal problems and the person that's responsible for paying you has changed. I will get in touch with that person. They'll reach out to you and we'll settle up the bill before we move forward on anything else."

Use Calibrated Questions To Shape Thinking

"The question, 'How am I supposed to do that?' is designed to shape the other side's thinking. Shape it around empathy, shape it around thinking about us, trigger slow, in-depth thinking. And, in many cases, you probably want to combine your 'how' and 'what' questions to basically ask up to three questions. They're just worded differently. And, it might be, 'How am I supposed to do that? What's going to happen if I do that? How do I overcome the challenges that I have here?' Those are all basically asking exactly the same question in a different fashion. If you ask that question three different ways, then a person you're talking to will think about it from three different angles, and they'll give it more thought, and they'll give you a better answer."

Avoid Triggering Reciprocity

Right now, this is one of my favorites since it ties into the fundamental concepts of the law of social exchange and social capital, but through the lens of one of the world's top FBI hostage negotiators.

"Reciprocity [the law of social exchange] is a natural human dynamic that exists in us because we're humans and some people are very guarded about it. So, we have to be careful about how we trigger it. If we ask, we tend to owe. People are often worried about asking us because they don't want to owe. So, it's a common dynamic that people are more or less sensitive to at all times."

In other words, when you ask for something, and the other side gives you what you asked for, they gain social credit for that deed and their social capital goes up. Using their increased social capital, they can ask for something back from you and, of course, you'll feel more obligated to give them what they're now asking for (since it's in exchange for what they've just given you).

So, if you don't want to have to give anything but you still want to receive, you have to be careful about how you ask for things, especially in a negotiation where the stage is already set to be transactional.

"In a hostage negotiation, instead of saying, 'I want proof of life,' which would trigger reciprocity [increase his social capital if he provides that value], he says, 'How do I know she's alright?' And, the kidnapper spontaneously does what he wants [he puts the girl on the phone, providing proof of life] because he did it on his own and feels like it was his idea."

In other words, "value" is anything that makes or has the potential to make you better off. That means that for that value to actually be valuable to you, it has to solve or have the potential to solve some problem in your life. In this hostage negotiation, the negotiator had the opportunity to say, "I want proof of life." But, that would signal to the kidnapper that proof of life is something that the negotiator would find valuable and would solve a problem for him (after all, if it didn't, why would he want it?).

So, if the kidnapper would've provided proof of life after the negotiator had already directly asked for it, the kidnapper would then be in a position of higher social capital. In other words, he can take the position of, "I've given you something. Now, I want something in return," which can be a dangerous position for any negotiator to be in, especially when negotiating with a kidnapper.

So, instead of framing his request as an ask, he frames it as a legitimate question. "How do I know she's alright (alive)?" By phrasing your request that way, the problem that *you* wanted to solve with value from the other side

suddenly becomes *their* problem. That's because it's up to them to answer that question since it's legitimate and, possibly, prove to you that their answer is the truth. Then, when they provide you with that value (an answer along with proof they're telling the truth), you don't owe them anything because you didn't technically ask them for anything. It was *their* choice to prove to you that they were telling the truth when they answered your legitimate question.

Ask Legitimate Questions

"You're not looking for proof of life, but you're really looking for legitimacy. Proof that you're in a good faith as opposed to a bad faith negotiation. And, what are the natural [legitimate] questions? 'How are we going to move forward if we make this deal? How do I know that you're not just looking for free consulting? How have you worked with people like me in the past? How have you made this deal in the past?"

"You can ask them at the table because they're legitimate questions. That's why we never had a problem with any terrorist, any sociopath, any kidnapper anywhere in the world when we said, 'How do we know our hostage is alive?' They had to admit to themselves, it's a legitimate question."

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The Accusations Audit

An accusations audit is: "…a comprehensive list of all the negative assumptions, thoughts, and feelings you think the other side may be harboring against you." Voss calls these negative factors, "the elephant in the room".

"Your goal is to list all the possible negative emotions and get out ahead of them. You want the other side to come back and say, "Hold on, you're being too hard on yourself." And, that's because those negative feelings, thoughts, and assumptions the other side might be harboring against you is the elephant in the room. And, as Voss says himself, "The elephant in the room doesn't go away by pretending it's not there. The elephant in the room doesn't go away by you saying, 'There's not an elephant in the room.' The elephant in the room is diminished and eventually goes away by you saying, 'Hey, there's an elephant in the room.' And, then people go, 'Yeah. That's not that bad."

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Frame the Accusations Audit by Relationship Longevity

"So, you can frame the accusations audit a couple of different ways. If you've been in the relationship for a while, just the straight label. 'It seems like you're not getting all the information out of us that you want. It probably feels like we're wasting your time. It feels like, that we're not being honest with you…".

"At the very beginning [of the relationship], you can be a little more speculative, a little more tentative with it, a little more just recognizing what might probably happened. So, at the beginning, you might say, 'You're probably going to ask yourself why you're taking this meeting. It probably feels like, that I might seem like everybody else that's in this line of work and that there's no difference between me and anybody else. You may even think like, that the people on your side of the table are going to think you're getting pushed around.' You can be more speculative in those observations because you're converting to the other side that you're being attentive, and you're being speculative, but you're being careful about it the entire time, and they're going to appreciate your approach. This gets back to being a straight shooter."

Get Ahead of the Negatives

You can negotiate for what you want by getting ahead of the negatives. And, you can get ahead of the negatives by anchoring the other side's expectations of the magnitude of the negative significantly higher than the negative's size actually is.

> **Voss**: *(calling from his hotel room)* I need a late checkout.

> **Hotel Clerk**: No, we can't give it to you. You've got to check out at 11 AM…
>
> *(Voss leaves his hotel room and walks down to the front desk up to the hotel clerk)*
>
> **Voss**: *(accusations audit)* I'm getting ready to make your day ridiculously difficult.
>
> *(Hotel Clerk begins to worry and imagine the worst possible thing Voss could have done to their hotel room)*
>
> *(Voss continues to stay silent, letting worries marinate while waiting to be given permission to go on)*
>
> **Hotel Clerk**: *(worriedly gives permission to go on)* What is it?
>
> **Voss**: I need a late checkout.
>
> **Hotel Clerk**: *(relieved)* Oh, my God. Okay, sure. What do you need? 2:00, 3:00, 4:00? What do you need?

Negotiation Quick Tips:

Be Exhaustive and Fearless

"How exhaustive should you be in your list of accusations that you're compiling? I'm here to tell you if you don't feel like you're laying it on thick, you're not laying it on thick enough…And, a great way to test that is, as you're laying out your accusations audits, read the other side's reaction all along the way. If you've got a list of 15 things and you've gone through the first three, and they say, 'Oh, you're being too hard on yourself,' you know you've done your job…because when somebody says that, they have stepped to your side of the table. You have forced empathy into the situation and that's exactly what your objective is."

Acknowledge the Danger of "Yes"

"Yeah, 'yes' is horrible…". There are three kinds of 'yes's: confirmation, commitment, and counterfeit.

***Confirmation**

"My confirmation 'yes' is if you've asked me a simple question where you're trying to simply confirm that something is true. My confirmation 'yes' is going to be pretty concise…the more concise and the more curt my tone of voice is, the more likely it is that it's a legitimate confirmation 'yes'." Examples include a short "yeah", "sure", or "OK".

***Commitment**

"But, a commitment 'yes' is an agreement. It's 'I agree. I'll go along with it. I will do this. I have agreed that I will do this.' That I'm good with what we're talking about and that I am in agreement with it. And, commitment 'yes' is going to be fairly curt and concise as well. But, it's really going to be driven by the context and what I've said leading up to that and how our conversation has gone."

***Counterfeit**

"The counterfeit 'yes' is the 'yes' I'm going to give you when I'm starting to feel trapped by your questions. I don't trust you, I want to find out how soon this is going to be over. [But] Maybe I want to know more. So, I'm going to give you the counterfeit 'yes' because I've already decided that I don't trust you and it's OK because I feel like you're trying to trap me."

"The counterfeit 'yes' it's typically not terribly succinct. It's not short." A counterfeit yes is typically exaggerated and drawn out, such as saying, "Suuuurre." That's because most of the time, a real "yes" is actually a "maybe" or a "no"/rejection in waiting (waiting to be persuaded into a "yes").

Value the Power of "No"

"A 'no' is so much more valuable than a 'yes'…People feel safe and protected when they say 'no'. This is another

one of these human nature laws of gravity…instead of saying, 'Do you agree with this?' I'll say, 'Do you disagree?' Instead of saying, 'Is this a good idea?' I'll say, 'Is it a ridiculous idea?"

"When you say 'no', you feel safe and protected. You feel like you've made no commitment at all. So, you're going to give me a lot more information…[after the 'no'] the additional information is what's more important. 'How is this going to be implemented? What's this going to look like? What haven't we thought of?"

"If I said to you, 'Does this look like something that would work for you? 'If you say 'yes' to that, but you want to give me additional information, you're going to feel like every additional piece of information commits you before you're ready to commit…you feel like everything that comes out of your mouth reduces your autonomy."

This is because frames are the rule system of relationships. When you say "yes" to a frame, you are agreeing to and buying into that frame which sets you up to have to play by the rules set by that frame. And, that commitment to the frame you agreed to by saying "yes" reduces your freedom.

"But, if you say 'no', having said 'no', you feel there's no commitment afterward. You can share a lot of information with me. You won't have second thoughts. You won't have commitment fears. And, the information you share with me is going to be very accurate…you're much more likely to lay out what the issues really are because you're going to feel like you can share them with no commitment whatsoever."

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

The "No"-Oriented Question

About two years ago, Chris Voss was introduced to Robert Herjavec (you may recognize him from "Shark Tank").

Through this introduction, Herjavec invites Voss to lunch. Voss says it was his favorite kind of lunch at a steakhouse and that Herjavec paid (WIIFT win!)

So, Voss is spending 90 minutes with Herjavec at lunch which all started off as an email introduction. Herjavec is building out a sales team and is wondering if Voss's company that teaches negotiation, The Black Swan Group, teaches an approach that is good for his salespeople.

Voss's company happens to have a negotiation training session coming up in New York, so Voss offers Herjavec a free ticket. Herjavec's response is, "How many can I buy?"

So, what ensues is Voss's company and Herjavec's company going back and forth on how many tickets Herjavec is going to buy and Voss's team isn't getting a clear commitment out of Herjavec as to how many people he's going to send to this training session.

Voss's team calls Voss on the phone and says, "We're getting ready to sell out. And, if Herjavec and his people don't buy now they're not getting any. They're not even getting their free ticket." (Voss says this is because: "…the tickets to our events are expensive and my team is mad at me for giving away anything for free. They don't care who it is, even if it's a famous guy from TV.")

So, at 5:03 PM on a Monday, realizing he's going to sell out by tomorrow and Herjavec needs to buy now, Voss sends Herjavec a two-line email.

> **Voss's Email**:
>
> "Are you against committing to three tickets now?
>
> Is it a ridiculous idea for you to pay for the tickets before the business day starts in New York tomorrow?"

And, at 5:04 PM on this Monday, Voss gets an email back from Herjavec saying:

> **Herjavec's Reply**:

> "No, we'll make the commitment for three tickets now.
>
> No, we got no problem paying for them right now. My assistant will be in touch with you within the hour.
>
> Send her a link and we'll pay."

Voss sent the link and they made the payment by 5:23 PM that same day.

Move From "No" to "How"

"What you're really trying to get is an authentic commitment. And, even with that [authentic commitment], 'yes' is nothing without 'how'."

In other words, even if you get a genuine, honest, truthful "yes" confirmation from the other side, it means nothing if you don't know how you want to proceed with the other side.

"So, how do we transition into 'how'? Remember, the key to negotiation is always using deference…So, it's with a [humbly submissive and respectful] tone of voice. And, if they haven't given you a way to proceed, then your first question is, 'How should we proceed? What are the next steps? How would you like to proceed?' Use 'how' or 'what' to begin to pave your way into how you're going to proceed…then, think in advance a little bit because there are always going to be implementation problems. So, in some anticipation of that, you want to ask some 'how' and 'what' questions to deal with implementation problems in advance…Put [on] the safety valves of 'How do we know if we're on track?' and 'How are we going to deal with it if we're off track?' and you'll take care of your implementation.

Negotiation Concept/Theory: Bending Their Reality

"I refer to losing something—loss aversion—as 'bending reality'. Fear of loss and what people lost completely distorts their perception so much that it effectively bends their reality. You have to take that into account, and you have to find out how they feel they are losing because that's going to be the single dominating factor in their decision-making. What are they going to lose if they don't make the deal?"

This is also referred to by John B. Ullmen as pain/gain framing. For example, let's say that you're a company that can make another company 23% more money. You can say:

> **You**: "Work with us and you'll make 23% more money. There will be a 23% gain. The return on your investment will be 23%."

Or, you can say:

> **You**: "Choose not to work with us, stay where you are, don't change anything, and it's going to cost you 23% every day. While you sleep, not working with us is going to cost you 23% day in and day out."

"Fear of loss is what keeps people up at night. Nobody loses sleep—nobody gets insomnia because life is good and they're making money and tomorrow is going to be more profitable than today was. They sleep like a baby over gains. Fear of loss is what keeps people up at night…and that's why it's on of the dominating factors in human decision-making."

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Appeal to Their Sense of Fairness

Voss refers to the word "fairness" as the "F" word or the "F-bomb".

"…people will destroy deals if they feel they've been treated unfairly. Intentionally destroy deals and walk away

with nothing. On the other hand, people are much more likely to make a deal if they feel the process was fair, and they might take a bad deal or a less than optimal deal if they feel they were treated fairly. So, fairness is really the issue that makes or breaks deals."

Responding to the F-Bomb

Once again, Voss refers to the "F-bomb" as the word "fairness".

"Here's the way the counterpart will try to use 'fair' to their own advantage. Let's say, 'I've given you a *fair* offer.' Or, they might say, 'I just want what's *fair*'. In either instance, they've accused you of being unfair in a very subtle way. If you don't take that deal or if you don't make the deal that they want, you are being unfair. Your fairness as a human being has been called into question. It's a great way to manipulate you short-term and you will react because you don't want to be unfair. So, it's going to have an effect on you [especially] if you don't see it coming."

So, when the other side uses that tactic on you, you respond by saying:

> **You**: "I'm happy to be shown how I've been unfair. Show me the information. I'm open to learning. Let me see what it is."

"They are either not going to have it or they know they don't have it."

"So, how do you use the F-bomb positively? How do I [Chris Voss] use it?"

Voss recommends that at the beginning of a negotiation, you say to the other side:

> **You**: "It's my intention to treat you fairly. If at any point in time I've been unfair, let me know. We'll go back and address it and fix it."

Negotiation Concept/Theory: Deadlines Are Meaningless

"Somebody setting a deadline is an attempt to kick some progress into gear. And, if it's a real deadline, there's probably less time than they actually gave you anyway. But, deadlines are designed to get progress started. Every once in a while, in extreme circumstances, a deadline is a hard deadline. Very rarely…the rest of the time it wasn't real. It was something put into the situation by one side in order to kick some progress into gear. And, if people are making substantive progress on what they're trying to accomplish, deadlines go away. So, any time a deadline comes up, shift your thought from the deadline to, 'How do we make progress to work together towards a goal.' And, the vast majority of times, the deadline will go away."

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Responding to Deadlines

"Two of the techniques that we've covered already are great ways to respond to deadlines."

Respond Using Labels

The first way is labeling.

Ex:

> **You**: "It seems like you're under a lot of pressure here, it seems like you're trying to get things done by a certain time. It seems like this is an involved process. It seems like the world's going to end if we don't meet that deadline?"

"You know, that's either an accurate label or a mislabel, but you're going to cause the kind of thinking that you need from the other side. And, also, it makes them think about how hard they feel the deadline really is anyway."

Respond Using Calibrated Questions

"The other way to respond to deadlines is with calibrated questions, 'what' and 'how' questions."

> **You**: "What happens if we don't get this done in time? How do we get back on track if we fall behind schedule? How do we pull victory from the ashes of defeat if we don't meet the deadline?"

Negotiation Quick Tips:

Leave A Lasting Impression

"When you're feeling attacked, the things that you really want to say…are probably wrong [negative and value-taking]. You know, we're giving in to an aspect of our natural human nature that wants to get back…that wants to feel like we've gotten the last word in. When the last word is a cheap shot…the last impression is a *lasting* impression. The last impression *seeds* the next interaction. When you begin to talk about it like that—that it seeds the next interaction—you begin to realize how you can really get the upper hand by making the last words positive."

So, to leave a great last impression that establishes you as someone they would want to collaborate with in the future, take what you would say at the beginning of a negotiation in order to open it positively and simply put it at the end.

Ex:

> **How You Would Open A Negotiation Positively**:
>
> **You**: "Look, you know, we're here because we want to make a deal. We're here because long-term relationships matter to us. We're here because we want our partners to be profitable."

> **How You Would Use That As A Positive Lasting Impression**:
>
> **You**: "You know, we're–we're here because we'd love to have a great long-term relationship. We'd love for our partners to prosper from doing business with us. Let us know how we can proceed. How do you want to proceed?"

"…make the last point you made to be inarguably positive and collaborative, and the last impression will be the *lasting* impression, and it'll see the next interaction in a very positive way."

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The Ackerman System (Bargaining)

"The Ackerman System is a bargaining model…basically, you have a target price that you want to come to. Once you've picked out your target price, you're going to come in at 65% of that price. You're going to plan on making three raises to get to the price that you wanted. And, the first raise is going to be 20% raise, the next raise is going to be 10%, the last raise is going to be 5%. Each one of your raises are decreasing increments by half. And then, when you get to the very last number, you make sure you throw out an odd number and you also throw in some non-monetary object that you know the other side doesn't want, but it makes them feel like they've really tapped you out. They've taken every last dime. You know, they've fought you tooth and nail. They've felt the decreases in increments. They still feel like they're winning. You come in with the last number. It's an odd number. It seems like that you scratched for every penny. And, consequently, they worked so hard to get you there [invested so much social effort], that they want to cut the deal. They're not going to renege."

So, it goes:

Your Set Target Price (How Much You Want to Pay)

1. 65%

2. + 20%

3. +10%

4. +5%

5. Odd Number (+ Non-Monetary Object)

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Use The Ackerman System (Bargaining)

Here's an example of this negotiation strategy in action. Let's say that Voss is trying to buy a coffee table for $100. And, that's what he wants to pay. The seller is asking for between $150 and $250.

1. First, Voss finalizes his decision on how much he wants to pay for this coffee table. He decides he is willing to pay $100. This will be his set target price since that's now the price he is aiming for.

2. Next, Voss calculates his initial price.

Initial Price = 65% x 100 = $65

3. Before throwing out his initial price to the seller, Voss anchors the expectations of the seller *very* low as far as what he thinks his initial price will be. (Voss calls this "emotional anchoring").

> **Voss**: "Look, you know, I got a price. I'll give you the price, but you're not going to like it. I mean, it's going to be low. It's *really* going to be low. And, I got a feeling that when I give you this price, it's going to make you *really* angry, and the last thing I want to do is offend you. So, I'm scared to give you the price."

"…you're getting their permission…They're going to imagine something [a price] that's worse than what you would ever throw out."

4. The seller gives Voss permission to give him the price.

5. Voss continues his emotional anchoring.

> **Voss**: "No, it's going to make you angry. You know, I'm scared. And, I'm afraid to give you this number."

According to Voss, by this point, they'll "almost beg you to give them the number".

6. Voss, very apologetically, says to the seller, "$65.00".

"They're not going to be happy with that price, but they asked *you* for it."

"They're not going to get angry because you told them they were going to get angry and that diffused it."

And, you were deferential the whole time so they feel powerful. They feel bad for you.

7. The seller says, "You know, that's not what I had in mind. You gotta do better than that. I mean, that's ridiculous."

8. In response, Voss uses tactical empathy and gives the seller an apology.

> **Voss**: "I'm so sorry. You know, it's horrible. I can see that I've offended you. And, you're asking a reasosnable

> price and I'm being ridiculous."

9. Voss continues to hit the seller with different versions of empathy while gauging his reaction.

10. Voss does NOT budge off of his number until the seller budges off of his.

11. The seller comes off his number.

It doesn't matter what number they were willing to adjust their price to. What matters here is that they were willing to adjust it all.

12. Voss shows gratitude by telling the seller he appreciates it, that he's generous, and congratulating him.

"Whatever amount of money they come off of their number, then you've got to be grateful…You've got to enhance the positive emotions. You know, they feel like they've given in. You don't want them to regret giving in."

13. Voss moves from $65 to his next number: $85.

65% + 20% = 85%

85% x 100 = $85

"They're going to feel like that's still not where they want to be, but they're going to feel a sense of accomplishment that you've come from $65 to $85."

14. Voss continues to make the seller feel like he's really squeezing him for every penny.

> **Voss**: "I'd like to give you another number. I mean, I've worked really hard for this. It's been difficult for me to get to this. You know, as a matter of fact, I gotta go back and check my finances before I get this numner. I gotta check with the people. I'm not sure I can cover this."

They're still disappointed (remember, this coffee table costs between $150 and $250), but now they feel hungry because they're making progress. And, as Voss says, "As long as people are making progress, it enhances their ability to stay in the deal."

15. Voss moves from $85 to his next number: $95.

85% + 10% = 95%

95% x 100 = $95

"Now, they're going to feel a sense of accomplishment. But, they're going to know that that last move that you made was smaller than the first one. Always increase by decreasing segments [e.g. +20%, +10%]. Always. You've got to manage the raises."

16. Voss cycles his way back through the whole "dramatic" scenario again. He begins applying more empathy, recognizing that they were generous and voices that he recognizes that he's probably making them angry.

17. Finally, Voss moves from $95 to his final number—the number he's actually willing to give based on his set target price of $100. (This final number must be an odd number.) Voss comes in at $97.43.

He "sells" it dramatically. He asks the other side for a pen and paper and starts jotting down numbers.

"Make a show that you're working really hard. You're tapping the resources where they're going to feel like they worked really hard for it. They're going to feel like they've tapped into your last dime."

18. The seller makes one last move to try and get Voss off of his final number.

19. Voss offers a non-monetary object: his jacket.

> **Voss**: "Ah, you know, ah…You know, I got a really nice jacket. Would you like my jacket?"

"…you're playing into the human nature aspects here which is a bit of a drama play. I realize [that], but these are people with emotions on the other side. Even sociopaths have emotions. So, whoever's on the other side, you need to make them feel a sense of accomplishment, that this was a victory [for them]. A hard-won victory. They got you there every step of the way…And, if they're going to make the deal, they'll make it because they worked so hard for it."

Pivot to Non-Monetary Terms (Bargaining)

"A lot of people are told, 'Go first and go high.' I think that's a bad idea because it's forgoing the opportunity to gather information first…So, if you go first, I get information on you. You haven't gotten any information on me. If somebody is really pushing you to go first, it's also an opportunity to pivot the terms."

When asked to give the price first, Voss recommends you say:

> **Voss**: "Alright, so, I'll be happy to give you a number. Let's set that aside for a few minutes and let's talk about what it's going to take to make a great deal. I mean, what looks like a great deal to you? What else do you have to have in order to make any price that I give you a good price?"

**Note: This is similar to Barry Nalebuff's technique: Expand the Pie As A First Resort.*

"It's always good to prepare some things beforehand so that you're not caught off guard in the moment trying to think of what those things might be."

Voss also recommends that when making this list you view it as a "brainstorming list" to trigger some thoughts from the other side. That's because by engaging in collaborative brainstorming you can come up with ideas that will maintain a good deal when the other side throws in things that you didn't know they have (which happens in nearly every negotiation according to Voss).

And, setting the price aside to focus on the terms is a great move because, "The price will break the deal, but the deal is *made* on the terms."

Provide a Range (Bargaining)

"Well, setting a range is a great way to not exactly name a price first also. You can do a range of what's going on in the market. You can do a range of what you might be willing to pay."

"Understand that whenever you throw out a range, the other side is going to settle on the one that most favors them. They're not going to compromise and meet you in the middle of that range…You'd better be willing to accept that. If you come off of that, then they're going to be able to accuse you of bad faith bargaining for good reason because you gave [them] the impression [that] if you threw that number, that you'd take it."

Negotiate Price With Terms

**Note: This is also similar to Barry Nalebuff's technique: Expand the Pie As A First Resort.*

"A [price] range is going to be dictated by two things: what's going on in the market and what you can pay. What you can pay may not line up with what's going on in the market. And, there's always a possibility that other terms still might make your number work. And, that's why the brainstorming with your counterpart is extremely important because there may be something really valuable that you could do [for them] that's not reflected in the market."

Anchor Emotions, Not Dollars

"An anchor is a price that you throw out that's quite some distance from where you expect to land…gives me a lot of room to manoeuver. Makes you feel like you won when you get me to my actual price."

Voss says that a lot of people will tell you to anchor extreme because they'll say that that will give you better deals. But, what that's really going to do is make a lot of deals go away because "the terms make the deal".

"I'm more concerned with the emotional anchor, the emotional reaction to my price. Negative reactions leave a toxic residue that, by and large long-term, are bad for relationships."

Voss says you want them to actually be relieved when you give them your number. So, you can say:

> **Voss**: "Look, my number is high. Don't expect anything other than that to be high. It's going to be higher than you expect, probably more than you plan to pay, maybe more than you have."

"Now, by the time I drop that number, you're not going to overreact to the number. It may still be more than you plan to pay, but you're not going to be mad about it."

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The Black Swan Concept

"The black swan is [the] something that nobody expected would happen, but in hindsight, changed everything as soon as it was revealed."

"So, this is what great negotiation is about. Discovering the black swan. Discovering the piece of information that nobody expected that would change all the outcomes."

Black Swans In Business

"If you're negotiating a for a salary, you might not know that behind the scenes of the company, that the person that you're going to work for is going to leave in a year. You don't know what opportunities are coming in conjunction with that job that the company's already forecasted and budgeted out. You don't know who's planning on moving on. You don't know all the things that are going on behind the scenes. All you know is they've offered you this job within these parameters. But, they already know, have a very good idea of the dynamics that they hope to change in the company over the next year. Finding out those dynamics behind the scenes could either make it a wonderful place for you to work or a horrible place. And, it has nothing to do with the job description at the moment. The things that they know that you don't know are the black swans."

There's also a chance that you have value (possibly in the form of a valuable sill set) that fills a specific strategic need in their company that they don't know you have yet. If you are in talks with them about a salary increase and they don't know that this value is something you bring to the table, that's an example of a black swan that you bring to the negotiation.

Negotiation Principles/Strategies:

Find the Black Swans

"So, the idea is to start the communication and for me to start getting the information flowing from you so that I can find out what those black swans are and I can change the outcome."

Negotiation Quick Tips:

Open Yourself to the Unknown

"Since I don't know what you're hiding and you don't know what I'm hiding, there's stuff in that overlap that we

really don't know is there at all…The real black swans are where the unknowns overlap, and there's some *crazy* stuff in there. You can't tell yourself, 'Ah, I understand the situation, I understand all about it.' You can't tell yourself that. That's to close your mind in advance. And, there isn't anybody anywhere that says a closed mind is an advantage. So, open your mind and be curious. Be interested. Wonder about it. Don't be afraid of being surprised. Actually, hope to provoke surprises…because it's not possible to know everything [about the negotiation]."

Negotiating for a Raise

1. Step One: Prepare To Get Ahead of Your Employer's Negatives (The Accusations Audit)

Make a comprehensive list of all the negative assumptions, thoughts, and feelings you think the other side (your employer) may be harboring against you. This will be your accusations audit.

Later, you'll use the accusations audit negotiation technique to get ahead of these negatives.

2. Step Two: Walk Into Your Boss's Office

3. Step Three: Gather Information

"[As an employer] how much do you know about my ability to pay you? [When you're just starting out] you *presume* it's there. But you don't know. And, you don't know how to make yourself more valuable [so you can justify more money]. So, how do you do that in a job negotiation? You got to come in, first of all, and find out, 'Am I living up to expectations? How have I done? How do I negotiate my success [in the company] for the future?' Then, you start talking about what that success is worth [to them]. But, terms make the deal in any negotiation. Especially in a job."

4. Step Four: Disarm Their Negative Emotions (The Accusations Audit)

A lot of employers might see employees as being selfish. So, disarm that by treating it like it's the elephant in the room and addressing it.

> **You**: "Look, I don't want you to think I'm selfish. I'm gonna have a conversation with you where I'm gonna seem very selfish."

Here might also be where you want to throw out any other negatives you feel your employer may be harboring against you.

And, a quick reminder on the extensiveness of your accusations audit: "How exhaustive should you be in your list of accusations that you're compiling? I'm here to tell you if you don't feel like you're laying it on thick, you're not laying it on thick enough…And, a great way to test that is, as you're laying out your accusations audits, read the other side's reaction all along the way. If you've got a list of 15 things and you've gone through the first three, and they say, 'Oh, you're being too hard on yourself,' you know you've done your job…because when somebody [your employer] says that, they have stepped to your side of the table. You have forced empathy into the situation and that's exactly what your objective is."

5. Step Five: Start Negotiating For What You Want

Use the labeling, mirroring, and other negotiation techniques to reach your desired outcome.

6. Step Six: Find the Black Swans in Business

"If you're negotiating a for a salary, you might not know that behind the scenes of the company, that the person that you're going to work for is going to leave in a year. You don't know what opportunities are coming in conjunction

with that job that the company's already forecasted and budgeted out. You don't know who's planning on moving on. You don't know all the things that are going on behind the scenes. All you know is they've offered you this job within these parameters. But, they already know, have a very good idea of the dynamics that they hope to change in the company over the next year. Finding out those dynamics behind the scenes could either make it a wonderful place for you to work or a horrible place. And, it has nothing to do with the job description at the moment. The things that they know that you don't know are the black swans."

There's also a chance that you have value (possibly in the form of a valuable sill set) that fills a specific strategic need in their company that they don't know you have yet. If you are in talks with them about a salary increase and they don't know that this value is something you bring to the table, that's an example of a black swan that you bring to the negotiation.

"So, the idea is to start the communication and for me to start getting the information flowing from you so that I can find out what those black swans are and I can change the outcome."

7. Step Seven: Move For The Close (Move From "No" To How)

Once again, "What you're really trying to get is an authentic commitment. And, even with that [authentic commitment], 'yes' is nothing without 'how'."

So, once you've reached a point in the negotiation where the deal is more of a win-win, you need to seal the deal. And, if they haven't given you a way to proceed finalize the deal), you can ask:

> **You**: "How should we proceed? What are the next steps? How would you like to proceed?"

"Use 'how' or 'what' to begin to pave your way into how you're going to proceed."

8. Step Eight: Anticipate Implementation Problems In Advance (Move From "No" To How)

"[Once you've finalized the deal]…think in advance a little bit because there are always going to be implementation problems. So, in some anticipation of that, you want to ask some 'how' and 'what' questions to deal with implementation problems in advance.

> **You**: "How do we know if we're on track? How are we going to deal with it if we're off track?"

9. Step Nine: Leave A Lasting Impression

To leave a great last impression that establishes you as someone they would want to collaborate with (give another raise) in the future, take what you would say at the beginning of a negotiation in order to open it positively and simply put it at the end.

> **You**: "You know, I'm–I'm here because I'd love to have a great long-term relationship. I'd love for you to prosper from working with me. Let me know how we can proceed. How do you want to proceed?"

Real-Life Applications

If I had to remind you of one principle, it would be this:

1. Labeling and Mirroring for Building Emotional Intelligence

Using labeling and mirroring in tandem is a great exercise for learning more about the receiver as well as a personal challenge to empathize more with that person. What else can you tell about them that you can label? The more great

labels you can come up with, the more you're empathizing with the receiver, and the more your emotional intelligence develops.

Any time you run out of labels in your head, you can just mirror their last couple of words to draw out more information that will help you find another good label. A wonderful exercise to develop your emotional intelligence and, as we know, emotional intelligence is an important trait to become a high-quality man :).

CONS

- **All video**

The fact that this course is all video means rewinding multiple times to fully internalize Voss's teachings and having to guess at what time stamp in each lesson he gives a certain piece of information if I only want to review one of the points he makes. That's time that could be put towards more learning and practicing.

- **Mislabeling of some techniques**

The Masterclass team made a few mistakes in terms of accidentally labeling techniques in the mock negotiations wrong and defining certain definitions in the workbook incorrectly. Yet, this made the lessons more fun as I challenged myself to think critically, second-guessing what Masterclass said each technique was and seeing if I could spot the correct ones on my own.

- **Overly submissive at times**

Voss's negotiation style relies on being deferential so the other side feels like they have all of the decision-making power in the negotiation. This way, they don't even realize they're being subtly persuaded to give you *your* deal. But, this can have its cons with anyone who can see through this game or anyone who gets the impression you're not worth collaborating with because you seem too powerless.

PROS

- **The Principles Are the Real Deal**

Voss's approach to negotiation in terms of mindsets makes the course twice as valuable on its own. In nearly every situation, collaboration is superior to competition and Voss emphasizes that in a way that helps the student feel like collaboration is worth the possible added social and mental effort.

- **Live Example Training Exercises**

There are included video lessons that contain full breakdowns of how to negotiate your salary using these techniques, how to negotiate with a kidnapper, how to negotiate with your teenager as a parent, and so much more. This got me excited to try out his teachings in the field myself.

- **Genuine Analytical Content**

This course may be all video, but it uses that as an advantage when showing Chris Voss, a former FBI hostage negotiator, use all of the strategies, techniques, and principles in his past real hostage negotiations right before your eyes.

- **Workbook Is Included**

I appreciated that this course came with a professional-looking workbook. It not only made me feel like I should take this course more seriously which made me more productive, but the workbook almost worked to make up for the fact that the course is all video. The workbook contains summaries, definitions, and reviews of the course content that I can look back at any time which I found very handy in more ways than one.

Review

Really good stuff.

I wanted to take this course because I felt like it would be a good supplement to the knowledge I gained in Yale's online negotiation class. Yale's class is all about principled arguments that successfully express that your deal is fairer than theirs (and, if you're not going to play fair, why should we do a deal together in the first place?). Voss's class is all about using empathy to better connect with the other side so they will want to listen to you because you've already listened to them while *showing* that you were listening. By making them feel listened to and then continuing to propose your offer/deal, the expectation is that they'll feel that your deal is what they actually want because you've built up a level of trust-based influence.

Together, I felt like this was the perfect combination for any negotiation because I could alternate between listening, empathizing, and rapport-building and using principle-based counter-arguments to move closer to a truly win-win deal in any situation.

One thing's for sure, his principles are sound and are sure to help build a better, deeper connection if followed correctly.

Men Who Hate Women: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 December 2020 · Archived copy · Original

"Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them" (2002) explains the psychology of misogynists and the dynamics of toxic relationships between women and misogynists.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Misogynists are anxious and afraid that their partners can hurt them
- Misogynists try to control and disempower their partner so that they can never leave and hurt them
- Most misogynists aren't going to improve or seek therapy, so women are probably better off breaking up

Summary

About the Author: Susan Forward is an American psychotherapist and author. Susan had her own practice, as well as being a therapist, instructor and consultant to several Southern California psychiatric and medical facilities. Forward focuses on toxic, manipulative, and abusive relationships, and she is also the author of "Emotional Blackmail".

Misogynists: the need for a new category

Forward had started noticing a pattern with some women in her practice.
Several of them seemed to describe a type of abusive relationship with similar traits, but that didn't fit the common profile of the usual personality disorders.

These men weren't narcissists.
Contrary to narcissists, they could love intensively. And contrary to narcissists, their need was that of controlling, rather than being admired.

They were also different from sociopaths.
The destructive and value-taking behavior wasn't generalized, but very focused towards their partner only.
He was also able of loving. As a matter of fact, his love was often particularly intense.

They weren't sadists either.
These men felt both threatened and enraged by the same pain they were causing.

Psychological & verbal abuse more than physical abuse

The misogynist is usually not a batterer, but use psychological and verbal forms of control and abuse.

The myth of masochism

Forward says that the concept of masochism has been overblown in terms of its actual incidence, and it's been

wrongly used to label victims who were everything but masochists.

None of the women she cured were masochists, and none of them enjoyed pain.
Yes, many of them were emotionally attached to their partners, and some of them had trouble letting go. But none of them enjoyed the pained -they joined therapy to get rid of the pain, after all (note: that also makes Forward's own sample self-selected, and thus not a great sample to generalize when it comes to the topic of masochism)-.

Reject the abuse, or you participate in it

The woman's acquiescence to abuse is the crucial element that allows for the abusive relationship to develop in the first place.

Says Forward:

> Once she accepts an attack on her self-worth and permits herself to be demeaned, she has opened the door for future assaults.

Misogynists only stick with women who put up with it

I loved this example of a higher-quality, more assertive woman, who dropped the misogynist as soon as he started his abuse:

> He decided I'd tipped the cabdriver too much and started screaming at me in the middle of the street. I don't know why he thought he could get away with that kind of stuff. I told him I wasn't going to put up with that kind of treatment and that if he pulled that again I was going to leave. Well, then he was sweet as pie for a day or two, and then he did it again. So I left.

That's how to properly use assertiveness to stop abuse early on.

Traits of misogynist relationships

Some of the traits of misogynist relationships include:

- **A sense of desperation**

Both partners often crave emotional attachment. The misogynist can have a desperate need to bind the other person to him.

- **The woman as the savior**

Women who pair up with troubled misogynists can come to believe that they can "save them" through the power of their love and support.
It enables the woman to see herself as a goddess, earth-mother, and healer.

Also read the best book on this topic: "women who love too much".

- **The first "incident"**

The first instant of abuse usually happens over a minor event. The woman is left incredulous that such a seemingly good man could get so angry and aggressive. Usually, the woman wants to believe it's all OK, and she will pretend "it never happened".

- **Abuse begins in earnst with committment**

The outbursts are sporadic until the relationships enters a milestone, such as committment, moving in, or marriage. Then, abuse becomes a mainstay.

The Toxic "Unspoken Contract"

This is the unspoken contract between the man and woman:

- **Woman**: my emotional security depends on your love (and I'll renounce my wishes to get it)
- **Man**: my emotional security depends on being in total control (and I will become abusive and nasty to control you)

He has to win & control at all costs

All relationships entail some power struggles.

But in normal and good relationships, partners negotiate.
What usually happens, is that the partner for whom something is less important, concedes to the partner who cares most about that issue.

But in the misogynist relationship, the power struggle is constant, and he always wants to win and control.

He's always angry because total control is impossible

Since total control over another human being is impossible, the misogynist is angry and frustrated most of the time.

Psychological abuse is as bad as physical abuse

Forward says that some women find solace saying "at least he doesn't hit me".
But she says that the result is the same.
Her reply is:

> The result is the same. You are just as scared, you feel just as helpless, and you are in just as much pain. What difference does it make whether the weapon is his fist or his words?

As a matter of fact, that type of thinking will only keep her stuck is an abusive relationship for longer.

The Tools of Abuse

Among the tools of abuse:

- Implied threat: hitting is not necessary when the *fear* of physical abuse can achieve the same
- Unrelenting criticism: including "fault-finding"
- Denial: denying the abusive incident even happened
- Rewriting history
- Shifting the blame: if he behaves badly, it's only because of her (and for the abusive relationship to proceed, the woman must accept that she is indeed to blame)
- Isolation: the misogynist seeks to restrict the people allowed in her life to only those who support his worldview and his controlling goals
- Financial control: there are two types of misogynists, the "good provider", and the one who's always broke. If he's a good provider and stays at home, he is likely to use her financial dependency as a tool for control

Also read more in:

- **Types of abusers**
- **Jealous controlling men**

Misogynists see children as rivals for household control (& woman's love)

Some misogynists resent children because they make it harder for him to control her.
And some misogynists resent children because they want their partner's full and undivided attention.

Says Susan Forward:

> No matter how many children there are, he gets to be the Number-One Kid.

See a real-life example here:

Some misogynists want her full attention because they didn't get enough motherly love, so now they seek it from her female partner.
And some other misogynists can attack her maternal adequacy and skill as a way of demeaning her.

Why women stay with misogynist

Relationships with misogynists can be intense and confusing.
Some of the reasons why some women stay stuck in them:

- **The love hook / addiction**: most often than not, it's not real love, but addiction generated by the intensity of the abusive up and downs
- **Looking for the "magic key"**: the on and off and alternation between love and abuse can lead women to believe that there must be some secret formula to make things always good, and that she can find it. But there are no magic keys
- **The hope hook**: the hope, or better, the "fantasy" that things can change and that he can finally show her only love, without the abuse
- **The collusion hook**: when she believes that she is at fauls, she effectively joins him in her own abuse. Also see "Codependent No More"
- **Stockholm Syndrome**: developing positive feelings for those same people who abuse us. See this example
- **Fear**: fear is expressed in many ways, from fear of not finding another man, to fear of divorcing, to fear of a drop in living standards, to fear of dating again

Misogynists Are Fearful

To begin with, Forward says that misogynist's abuse is a covert up for his tremendous anxiety about women.

Like everyone else, the misogynist needs to feel emotionally loved, and safe.
But his normal needs to be close to a woman are mixed with fears that she can hurt him emotionally.

Says Forward:

> He harbors a hidden belief that if he loves a woman, she will then have the power to hurt him, to deprive him, to engulf him, and to abandon him.

And:

> He comes to believe that he is as dependent on his partner as he was on his mother. Inherent in his fear of this dependency is the equally dreadful fear that she will leave him.

So to assuage his fears, the misogynist seeks to make the woman too dependent, and too powerless, to ever hurt him.
If he can totally control her, if he can strip of her self-esteem, he will be safe.

How Men Learn to Hate Women

- **His mother was too powerful mother**

In adjusted families, the mother is the primary source of comfort, while the father helps him pull away.
But in the misogynist's household the father is either too frightening, or too passive, so the boy remains too dependent on the mother.

The mother becomes too powerful, and he views his partner in the exact same way: an overly powerful figure that can frustrate him, command him, make him feel weak, or hurt him.

- **His father was a misogynist**

When the father was an abusive tyrant and the mother was weak, the boy sees two options: be weak like mother, or a tyrant like the father.

Some boys choose the tyrant path, and become abusers.

- **His father was abusive**

This might seem counterintuitive, but if the father was abusive, many boys can subconsciously blame the mother for not doing anything to protect them.

It's also possible the wife of an abusive man seeks refuge in the children, or even ask for their support.
This puts the boy in an impossible position. He feels like he has this huge responsibility to defend the mother, but not being able to. The boy is supposed to count on the mother, not being called upon to rescue her. When his basic needs for support and protection are not met, he carries that pain and emptiness into adulthood.
Which leads us to the next point:

- **He wasn't properly mothered**

Says Forward:

> He didn't just forget about those needs: he took them into his adult life and particularly into his relationships with women. As an adult he expected women to meet his desperate need to be mothered in a way he never was as a child.

- **He was mistreated by his mother**

When the mother abuses or mistreats her children, the boy is betrayed by the person that was supposed to care for him the most. And he can grow to feel that all women are like that.
Being rejected or unloved also counts as mistreatment.

- He had a rejecting mother who made him hide his needs

A rejecting mother who makes him feel bad for his needs teaches him that it's never OK to be vulnerable, and that his needs are shameful and unacceptable.

Says Forward:

> He may begin trying to cover up his vulnerability whenever he can. Many misogynists use bullying and macho behavior toward women to defend against these unacceptable feelings of vulnerability.

- **He was suffocated by his mother**

If the mother is overcontrolling or overprotecting, the boy can grow to resent the mother.

A girl can stay close to her mother while she finds her own identity, but a boy needs to pull away. If the mother is too involved and overprotective, the boy can feel helpless. When he grows up, he can come to view women as malevolent being out to rob him of his independence and masculinity. And that leads to endless power struggles.

The boy from suffocating mothers can also internalize the belief he can't survive without the mother, and that he can project that sense of dependency onto all women in his life.

If the boy had a strong father figure, he could pull away from the mother, but dominan and suffocating women tend to pair up with more submissive men.

- **He had weak father and dominating mother**

If the boy grew up within a relationship where the mother would call all the shots and the father would never stand up to her, he can grow to believe that women are controlling and men cannot stand up to them.
That makes them overly sensitive to any different opinion or independence from women, which he interprets as a sign of her trying to dominate him.

Plus, these days, there is also the red pill to turn men into misogynists.

A man who switched from defensive misogynist to high-quality

I like this example of a man who went through therapy, learned, and made himself a better, higher-quality man:

> Ben found, to his amazement, that the woman she became was far more fascinating and exciting than the woman he'd tried to make her into.
> In our last session he told me: Before, all I wanted was somebody who wasn't going to leave me. The worst thing I could think of was that if she could stand on her own two feet she could also go. But now that I feel better about myself I'm not so afraid anymore. She's finished school and has a job, and to tell you the truth, I'm damned proud of her. She's not this dependent little girl anymore. She's more like a real person. She stands up for herself, and you know what? I like it! She's more fun. She's alive and she's interesting. I tell you, I'm more in love with her than I've ever been.

How women learn to love women-haters

The main reason why women stick with abusers and women haters is this:

- **They have a negative view of themselves**

The damaged self-image that they sometimes carried from childhood predisposes them to abuse.

- **Childhood abuse**

Including fathers who blamed children for their own insecurities (scapegoating), or who placed too high demand, and then showed all their disappointment when the child failed to meet them.

In her psychoanalytic interpretation, Forward says that "the drive to repeat the familiar combined with the equally powerful drive to make it come out better creates a trap into which many women fall".

To better understand this dynamic, also read "how low self-esteem predisposed to abuse".

- **High drama family**

She grows up believing that fighting and drama are the only "normal" ways to be in a relationship.

She has more power (but doesn't know it)

Says Forward:

> She actually has more power than her partner, because he is far more dependent on her than she is on him. She just doesn't realize it.

She says that his fear of abandonnment and his need to be in total contrl make him a paper tiger.

Get out of a misogynist relationships

While women *hope* things get better, in reality they usually get worse.

Staying in the relationship is bad for you.
And if you want to stay for the children, it's bad for them as well, since it teaches boys to become misogynists, and it teaches girls to accept abuse.

The steps Forward recommends:

1. **Observe**:
2. **Recognize you have the choice to behave differently**: keep behaving the same way, but recognize that you have the final say on how to behave
3. **Write down all labels he uses**: then, write next to each one of them a different adjective that better represents you
4. **Use paradoxical therapy**: imagine you telling your partner that they are right to abuse you, because you are worthless, go on your knees, thank them for all they do to you. Then, realize this is exactly what you're doing with your behavior
5. **Imagine your partner behave and saying what he says to you, to someone else**: this helps you realize what he does and say is not "normal", and that since you wouldn't accept that behavior on someone else you like, you also cannot accept it for yourself
6. **Change the way you see him**: stop making excuses and start to truly see his behavior for what it really is
7. **Use your anger positively, instead of repressing it**
8. **Remind yourself of your power**: he needs you as much, and very likely more, than you need him
9. **Learn assertiveness**
10. **Be careful**: when he realizes his methods are not working with you, it's possible the abuse will escalate before it disappears. That might mean some abusers can get violent. If that's the case, get away. But some abusers can react with self-destruction or with pleading, tears, and begging. The goal is the same: to stay, and make you submit again

Should you leave?

Most misogynists don't want to improve, and they don't even want to get into therapy. A minority will, but don't count on being the exception.
As a rule of thumb, it's always better to end abusive relationships.
To decide whether to leave or not, read "should I end the relationship?".

More Wisdom

- **Using her sexual drives to label her as "disgusting"**

> Jim used Rosalind's sexual desires as weapons against her. Because her needs were different from his, he labeled them "disgusting."

I once dated a woman with a healthy sexual appetite whose ex-boyfriend labeled her as "disgusting" and "weird" for masturbating or for using the water pressure out of the showerhead to orgasm.

But, says forward, what distinguishes the misogynist is a deep aversion towards women's bodies.

- **Sexhaolics use sex for control**

Said one guy to her partner: "The only time I feel I have you is when I'm in you."
Sexhaolics use sex either to escape life tensions, for example before going to work or to release tension coming back from work, or as a tool for control, as the guy from the quote above.

Eventually, women in a relationship with a sexhaolic will feel like an object.

- **The misogynist believe women are untrustworthy**

Says Susan Forward:

> The misogynist's underlying suspiciousness seems to come from a fear that women are "only out for what they can get."

- **"I'm better because of social background" power move**

I found this example interesting when it comes to relationship power dynamics:

> Gerry constantly reminded Paula that her family and background were inferior to his. He told her that because his father was a professor and hers was an electrician, she was low-class and he wasn't. He couldn't stand to spend time with her family because they were such "uncultured, ignorant people."

- **Misogynysts justifie affairs saying that "the woman would do the same"**

I paraphrase for brevity:

> Many misogynists who are having extramarital affairs assume their partners are doing the same. The more guilty the man feels, the more he needs to project that guilt onto his partner. By doing this he makes her the "bad" one. These affairs usually don't change the misogynist's desperate need to hold on to his partner.

- **The "strong woman paradox"**

This is the woman who is fully independent, possibly successful and high power in her work, only to revert to helpless child in her relationship. This was the case for Susan Forward herself actually, who realized she was in an abusive relationship with a misogynist while she cured women in a similar situation.
She'd run her successful clinic, then walk back home, and start feeling scared and helpless right before getting back home.

Quotes

On idealization:

> Idealization is a double-edged sword. It feels wonderful and flattering, but it also blinds a woman to the fact that she's doomed to fail.

On not the necessity of early assertiveness:

> I tell women all the time that you can't afford to give Hitler Poland.

On "rescuing" unstable and irresponsible men:

> Unstable, irresponsible people do not get rescued; they continue to fail over and over again, and often they wind up hating their rescuers for making them feel even weaker.

On being attracted VS staying:

> Any woman can be attracted to a misogynist. Being attracted to a misogynist is not the problem. Staying and accepting abuse for long periods of time is!

CONS

- **Sometimes too much on socialization/nurture side instead of nature**

Sometimes it feels like Forward discounts the role of nature and genes in favor of socialization.
For example:

> Women learn these behaviors early, and are consistently rewarded and praised for them. The paradox here is that the behaviors that make a woman vulnerable to mistreatment are the very ones she has been taught are feminine and lovable.

It's not just about learning, it's also that women are, on average, less assertive and aggressive than men.
Plus, some individual women are even more passive by virtue of how they're wired.

- **Can lead to confuses common male behavior for misogyny**

Writes Forward:

> Like many misogynists, Jeff saw affection and caressing as time-consuming and unnecessary once he'd "won" his woman. Foreplay became something to rush through to prepare Nancy for the main event—intercourse.

That's how many behave, and that does not necessarily make all of them misogynists.
I know Forward didn't mean to say "every man who rushes is a misogynist", but it can lead to confusion.

- **Sometimes Freudian**

Some analyses were good, and potentially true. Yet, also untested and very "Freudian".
For example:

> It might seem that a man who had a suffocating mother and who feels the need to control women would be drawn to a partner who is the exact opposite of his mother. However, what often happens is that this man becomes magnetically attracted to a strong woman and then tries to weaken her. What he is doing is trying to rewrite the old family script to make it come out better. If he can control a powerful woman, he can prove to himself that he is more of a man than his father was. He will win the battle that his father was afraid to fight.

That is very possibly true… In some cases, at least.
But it at least needed a note that it's not science and it's not proven.

Some other passages were pure "psychologizing" and "psychoanalyzing", and in my opinion lowered the quality of an otherwise excellent book.

- **Exaggerates social bias**

The author says that our society promotes the abuse of women.

I found that not to be true.
She also implies that pornography incites misogyny and/or cruelty, and I also found that not to be true.

- **Warns of male therapist bias, but not of female therapist biases**

The author says that some male therapists have a male bias in their approach.
Probably true, and she could have mentioned that some women, as well as some men, have a pro-female bias (Smith, 2017).

- **Sometimes misunderstands human nature, makes nonsense justifications**

Writes Forward about a man who had sex with female patients in his practice:

> In his work as a psychologist, he was able to gain power and control over many of his female patients by having sexual relations with them. This was one of the ways in which he attempted to deal with his longings for comfort from a woman.

So he banged a bunch of women using his influence and power position, and he did that to "deal with his longings for comfort"?
Nonsense!

Review

"Men Who Hate Women" is the best book I have read on misogyny and abusive relationships with a misogynist.

Recommended not just to women, but also to men with a tendency to dislike or distrust women. It can help them uncover -and get rid- of some of the dormant and childhood issues that predispose them to dislike and distrust women.

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Billion Dollar Whale: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 December 2020 · Archived copy · Original

"Billion Dollar Whale" (2018) is a book by Hope and Wright chronicling the story of Jho Low, the man who stole billions of dollars from the Malaysian government to fund his lavish lifestyle.

Contents

- About Jho Low
- Summary
- CONS
- More Wisdom
- Quotes
- Review

About Jho Low

From a psychological perspective, Low seemed to be a mix of a man with extreme personal drive to accumulate and wealth, as well as to spend that wealth, and to show off.
Low was a compulsive spender for himself, as well as a compulsive spender on others as a way to enhance his status.
He craved recognition, and he didn't even hit on many of the women he regaled with expensive gifts.

Here's my summary and review of the most important bits, from a strategies and power dynamics perspective:

Summary

1. To Steal Money, Learn How to Hide It

Says the author:

> Jho Low's story epitomizes the shocking power of those who learn how to master the levers of international finance in the twenty-first century.

- **Set up shell corporations in high-secrecy jurisdictions**

To begin with, you want to incorporate in high-secrecy jurisdictions. Also see the review of "Tax-Free Today".

- **Give them pompous names**

Low set up two shell companies with the names of "ADIA Investment Corporation" and "KIA Investment Corporation". Low chose these names because they looked related to the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, or ADIA, and Kuwait Investment Authority, or KIA, two famous, multi-billion-dollar sovereign wealth funds. But of course, they had no real links to the funds.

- **Use IOTAs to get money into the US**

Say the authors:

> Lawyers, unlike bankers, don't have to conduct due diligence on a client. Details of transfers through IOLTAs, meanwhile, are protected by lawyer-client privilege.

- **Buy art and jewels to launder money**

Dealers are not required to disclose the identities of their customers, and often don't even know who's actually behind the purchases. Some of the most famous art galleries also offer storage of goods, so they can be turned into banks.

- **Buy a yacht**

You can move them anywhere and they stay outside of the reach of different governments, moving only where you are welcomed (and being welcomed means that you must pay and/or ingratiate someone).

2. Develop and Nurture Powerful Contacts & Friends

Much of Low's life success, which would have been a successful life even without stealing, was based on contacts and social networks.

Say the authors:

> He began to see Wharton foremost as a place to socialize and build his contacts.

And about his partying as a way of making friends:

> For sure, he enjoyed partying, and he liked having pretty women around, but more than anything this was an investment, one that made him appear successful and indispensable.

3. Feed Your Allies

People will give you opportunities, support, and favor, if you keep feeding them with what they want.

Say the authors:

> In these early stages, he began to focus on how to reward his allies—foremost among them Abu Dhabi executives and the family of Prime Minister Najib Razak

Low was able to get government money because he made his prime minister friend and his wife the recipients of his gifts and largesse.
Najib closed both eyes, never asked questions, and supported Low, because he was getting his big kickbacks.

4. Appear More Linked & Powerful Than You Really Are

Low's rise to power was largely based on the fact that some people who are used to luxury never prod too much to make sure they understand who they're dealing with.
They feel entitled, and if some guys *appear* to be on their same level, they rarely spend much time checking their credentials and background. All the more so if that guy provides what they want: money and luxury.

Say the authors about Low pretending to be a power-broker between the Malaysian government and Saudi Arabia:

> Low was doing his all to give the impression that he was indispensable, and the meeting with Prince Turki on the Alfa Nero in August was meant to deepen that feeling. Unbeknownst to Najib and Rosmah, it was a setup, a facade of officialdom, aimed at making the prime minister and his wife feel they were getting close to Saudi Arabia's royal family.

The Saudi prince was also a great target for Low: he was a true blue blood and a big name, but had uncertain political prospects and needed cash. So he was amenable to Low's promises of future financial rewards.

5. Power & Success Don't Require Dominance or Aggression

Low was an unassuming man, in many ways.
He remained out of the limelight, was rarely seen enjoying his own parties, and seemed more steeped into making others feel powerful, than to overpower others.

Say the authors about Jho Low when he was a student:

> Many adults remember Low as smooth and deferential, but adept at using this charm to get what he wanted.

And:

> With his soft way of talking, almost inaudible at times, it was easy to forget you were doing what Low desired. In 2003, he persuaded his Arab friends to help him set up a tour around the Middle East, introducing him to the richest families and most influential firms.

Low was especially obsequious with those with power, and whom he needed. Say the authors:

> Since coming into Najib's orbit, Low was always careful to remain subservient to the prime minister, calling him "my PM," and this extended to Rosmah and her son.

Machiavellianism is Required

However, he showed early Machiavellian propensities, and he was happy to use those skills to find ways around the rules.
For example, he forged a letter from the embassy of Brunei to reserve tables at a hip and expensive club, and partied there with his friends.

Say the authors about that early experience:

> It was a lesson that power and prestige—or at least the appearance of it—opened all kinds of doors.

6. Money Makes You Attractive (Even to Rich People)

Say the authors:

> The rumor that Low was a billionaire with unlimited funds made him an attractive person to know. Even for DiCaprio, one of the world's top-paid actors, with a sizable fortune of his own, the scope of Low's purported wealth was alluring.

7. Learn Power Dynamics

I loved this email. Low send out to his bankers when he was asked for comp

> "When good wealth creation is generated, as a matter of cultural respect and good fortune that arises from respect, we always give our parents the proceeds. This is part of our custom and culture." In the email, Low explained that, per custom, it was up to the elders in question to decide what to do with the gift. "In this case, my father receives it as a token of gesture, respect and appreciation and decides to give it back to me for me to then subsequently provide a portion for the benefit of my family trust." He then chided the Swiss bankers for their cultural naïveté: "I hope this clarifies as this is culturally sensitive and it would be taboo and bad luck otherwise and our family is very particular about respect of the elderly and being appreciative to family." This bastardized picture of Chinese culture in no way adequately explained the need for such shady transfers. But

> Low had another card to play—he knew BSI had become dependent on his business and, faced with the prospect of losing it, would go to lengths to keep the money flowing. “I hope I do not need to keep explaining the same matter over and over again as our time is better spent generating wealth so that the AUM [Assets Under Management] in BSI Bank can be increased as opposed to providing answers for questions which have already been provided for previously. I fully understand and respect the requirement of compliance, but one should not be over burdening your customers [especially] when they have been addressed in the past.”

CONS

- **Wished for even more details that really matter**: **how the fraud exactly worked**

The book is long and had a lot of details.
But I cared less about the brand of clothes and wines he drank, and more about the details of how he pulled the scam.

There is something about the scam as well, but not as detailed as I had hoped.

- **The authors infer a lot**

The authors infer a lot about how Low learned and internalized that “being a crook is OK”.
For example, he says that studying alongside wealthy children of politicians who received kickbacks from businesses stirred in him a “moral relativism”. But based on what are they saying that?
To me that accounts to “psychologizing”. And the authors never even spoke to Low.

- **Sometimes I disagreed with the author’s opinions, presented as facts**

The authors say that the price of art auctions was “partly due to the innate worth of the painting, coupled with limited supply”.

To me, that’s nonsense.
Modern art is worthless in terms of “innate worth”, and it’s only worth is based on social trends. The supply of art is also everything but limited. A modern artist could poop in a tin and sell it as art (which actually happened).

More Wisdom

- **If a rich guy wants to keep his spending secret: beware**

Many rich people spend as a way to gain status.
Reporters were invited to Low’s parties, but they couldn’t write about Low himself. Usually, when a rich man spends to attract attention, but doesn’t want his name public, there are good chances he might be hiding something.

- **The world today offers more opportunities for hiding**

For decades, the world was divided into two major spheres of influence: USSR, and the US/West.
But people who wanted to live the life had to depend on the West and US, since the USSR was communist, and most of the rest of the world was too poor.
With the rise of China and the rise of capitalism in Russia, now a global thief can steal and remain out of reach from the US and other Western countries while still enjoying a lavish lifestyle.

Quotes

> Steal a little, and they throw you in jail. Steal a lot, and they make you king

About Low, a guy who was all about getting out the most from social exchanges.

> Low's bashful manners belied a hard core of ambition the like of which the world rarely sees. Look more closely, and Low was not so much timid as quietly calculating, as if computing every human interaction, sizing up what he could provide for someone and what they, in turn, could do for him.

On women used as decorations for rich men:

> The first of scores of young models wearing red dresses, some of whom handed out drinks and food, while others—in the crude language of nightclubs—acted as "ambient" decorations.

On men throwing money around (and women getting on their knees to pick it up):

> After an early winning streak against the house, some of the Asian men began to throw chips around the room. Some of the Playmates, who were mingling on the sofas and around the table, chased after them, down on their hands and knees.

Review

"Billion Dollar Whale" was a fascinating read, and I learned a lot from it.
Both in terms of social strategies and power dynamics, and in terms of how to navigate the financial system.

Get the book on Amazon

Virtue Signaling: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 December 2020 · Archived copy · Original

"Virtue Signaling" (2019) is a list of papers and analyses by Geoffrey Miller on the phenomenon of virtue signaling and the dangers of "runaway virtue signaling", a potential risk to our freedom and freedom of speech.

Contents

- Notes
- More Wisdom
- QUOTES
- CONS
- REVIEW

Notes

About the Author:
Geoffrey Miller is an American evolutionary psychologist and psychology professor at the University of New Mexico.
He is also the author of "*The Mating Mind*", which entered in our best evolutionary psychology books list.

We All Virtue-Signal

Let's stop the game of pretending we do not virtue signal.
We all do.

Miller says that virtue signaling, albeit being a new term, goes back to millions of years, to the origins of human morality.

However, I might add, people do differ in the conspicuousness of virtue signaling, such as how heavily -and annoyingly- they virtue-signal, and on the topics they virtue-signal about.

We Virtue Signal Because We Sexually Select for Moral Virtues

Sexual selection is the key to understanding virtue signaling, says Miller.

To begin with, understand that **humans appreciate *both* attractive bodies, as well as attractive minds**.
And empirical research shows that many mental traits that are attractive, either are moral qualities, or also possess moral qualities.

Favored Traits

So, which traits do men and women appreciate most?

They are:

- Kindness
- Empathy
- Niceness
- Honesty
- Heroism

On average, moral virtues preferences are stronger when it comes to long-term mate choice, rather than short-term

choice.
But higher-risk ones, like pro-social heroism, might be equally attractive for short-term mating.

Says Miller:

> The moral virtues most readily explained by sexual selection are those most conspicuously manifest in sexual courtship and relationships, and consistently valued in mate choice across cultures. Courtship generosity is the most obvious example, with clear parallels to 'courtship feeding' by animals,

Miller also says that this type of generosity is directed at a non-kin and is not expected to be reciprocated. Hence, it qualifies as evolutionary altruism evolved through mate selection.
I personally think that the "not expected to be reciprocated" should be explained better, since their expected reciprocation is sexual access to the female reproductive system, but otherwise, he's right.

Morality (Also) Evolved Through Sexual Selection

Miller says that his model of morality developed through mate choice is not meant to replace other models, but to complement them.

Note:
See Ridley's "The Origins of Virtue" for a model of morality developed through social exchanges).

Says Miller:

> Many pro-social behaviors that were assumed to arise through kinship or reciprocity are now thought to have emerged as costly signals of individual fitness, favored by social and sexual selection.

Sexual selection also doesn't work in isolation, but can "super-charge" other beneficial evolutionary processes by adding positive feedback dynamics.
For example, if a moral virtue becomes useful for social exchange reciprocity, or for kinship, then it's possible -or likely- that our ancestors didn't ignore it when it came to mate choice.

Virtue signaling signals good-parenting, good partners, and good genes

In general, sexually selected costly signals advertise good genes, or good parenting abilities.
Moral virtues can signal both. A high mutation load impairs the brain's ability to display sophisticated, empathic social intelligence.
Actually, moral virtue functions as advertiser of three important traits:

- Good genes
- Good parenting
- Good partners

The research does not yet distinguish between the three, says Miller.
In my opinion, virtue signaling is about parenting and good partner/fidelity, and less about good genes.

Exceptions

Miller, being the good thinker that he is, also says that the sexual model of virtues makes for exceptions, including:

- Not entail that *all* sexually attractive mental traits are virtue
- Not all virtues are attractive under *all* conditions
- Some individuals may prefer more Machiavellian or aggressive traits, or traits that facilitate promiscuity

Cheap VS Costly Virtue Signaling

Similarly to general value signaling, virtue signaling can be categorized as:

- **Cheap virtue-signaling**: bumper stickers, talking, posting or sharing on social media, dating profiles, etc. it costs little or nothing to signal about, and it's not very reliable
- **Costly virtue-signaling**: verifiable financial donations, changing to a lower-paying job in order to serve a cause, etc.

The costlier a signal is, the more trustworthy it becomes. Time is also a crucial variable to costs and reliability. Many guys can be supportive and loving during courtship for example, but not all of them will stay that way during the marriage.

High-Virtue Individuals Pair Up With High-Virtue Individuals

If virtues are sexually attractive, as they seem to be, then we can expect high-virtue people to pair up with other high-virtue folks.

People don't just observe, but sometimes actively probe others for their virtues (called in vernacular seduction literature "shit-testing").

Writes Miller:

> In species with social monogamy such as ours, individuals should assortatively mate with respect to virtues, because the competitive mating market should ensure that high-virtue individuals prefer each other, leaving lower-virtue individuals no choice but to settle for each other.

Virtue Signaling is Both Great, and Terrible

Miller says that virtue signaling represents both the best, and the worst of humanity.

The best, because he argues that virtue signaling is how we developed empathy and caring for others, and the worst because it drives censoring, ostracization and, albeit Miller doesn't say it, it also drives what I call "shame attacks".

Men Are Bigger Signalers

Miller says that men are bigger virtue signalers.

This is because men have higher variance of reproductive success, meaning they are more likely to have *both* fewer offspring than the average woman (possibly zero), or far more.
So men are predicted to allocate more energy, time, and risk to mating.

That's why men are more likely to be over-represented among pro-social heroes who risk their lives, as well as among revolutionaries and political rebels who fight for a better world

Says Miller:

> There should be more conspicuously super-virtuous males (such as Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr.), but also more virtue-deficient males (such as Vlad the Impaler or Stalin).

Mating is Eugenics – Random Mating is Stupid Mating

It pays to be choosy because the genetic quality of your mate determines half of the genetic quality of your offspring.
Says Miller:

> Mate choice is simply the best eugenics and genetic screening that female animals are capable of carrying out under field conditions, with no equipment other than their senses and their brains.

Plus, I would add, if you keep hanging around the mate, it also determines your quality of life.

And again:

> We generally accept that 'ought implies can' when we judge moral acts. We don't expect the poor to donate to charity (…)
> However, when judging the morality of whole persons in real relationships, we are rarely so forgiving. When the fitness stakes are high, we hold people morally accountable even for faults that are not their own.

Political Orientation as Virtue Signaling

People use political orientation as a proxy for other people's character.
Usually, people read political orientations like this:

- **Liberal**: caring, and empathic. Good for child care and relationship-building
- **Conservative**: ambitious and self-interested. Good at protecting and provisioning

Miller says that men use political conservativism as a (subconscious) tool to advertise their social and economic dominance, or their propensity to acquire social and economic dominance.
And women use political liberism to advertise their nurturing abilities.

I agree with Miller, and a staunch female Republican would come across as less feminine (same for combative Democrats though, since ideological fervor is more of a male thing).

The shift from liberal youth to conservative middle age, says Miller, is not so much about rationality, but as a better advertising tool for the increased social dominance and earnings power.

My Note: Misses on short-term VS long-term sexual signaling
I think something Miller is missing here is about short-term and long-term different types of signaling.
Liberal political philosophy tends to be more forgiving, or more embracing, of sexual expression. And that's why most young guys hide their conservativism, and that's why liberalism tends to be more popular among young folks: it's a time in life for sexual experimentation. People settle down later in life, and later in life, it makes more sense to be conservative.

Read more on this popular forum thread:

- **Why men oppose immigration**

Why People Espouse Nonsense Causes for Virtue Signaling

Miller says that mating is a social game, and what's attractive depends on the environment:

> This is called frequency-dependent selection in biology, and it is a hallmark of sexual selection processes.

So if in the social environment the "hot issue" talked about happens to be "the female repression in Rwanda", then people will latch onto that topic to virtue signal, and they will forget about the homeless down the street, or the women in the city's abuse shelter that they could go and help right now.

And when a sufficient number of people shift about virtue-signaling towards a certain topic, say, for example, enough people decided that apartheid was the acid test for one's heart, then it becomes impossible to be apathetic about apartheid without also signaling that one is apathetic about helping others.

Communication is Personal Advertisement

Old theories of languages and communication postulated that language developed to share information.

But that is not the case.
Dawkins and Krebs in 1978 argued that it would be odd for animals to evolve ways of giving away useful information to their rivals. Communication in that sense would be altruistic, and it is very difficult for altruistic behaviors to evolve.

Since then, it became clear that most messages animals send are not messages about the world, but about *themselves*.

Current Virtue Signaling Punishes Neuro-Diversity

It's funny:

Recent virtue signaling is all about diversity and acceptance.
And yet, by virtue signaling's own code of conduct, Aspergers, low EQ folk ("systematizers"), and people with social intelligence are punished and ostracized.

Since virtue-signaling rules are fuzzy, change quickly, and require high EQ to understand what's acceptable, "offensive", and what's "safe to say", people with low EQ struggle to remain within the rules.
The result is that they are marginalized, especially in universities, and either quit, or silence themselves.
This is a net loss for society, since many of the world's geniuses are on the autism-Asperger syndrome, including Peter Thiel, Mark Zuckerberg, Albert Einstein, and Elon Musk.

Indeed, he has a point, see a video analyzing Elon Musk EQ:

Miller speaks from first-hand experience, as he says that he has low EQ, and is a mild Asperger.
Indeed, Miller himself fell for the virtue-signaling trap.
He says about his own coming out, which I thought was funny:

> It's different to 'come out' as aspie in a public forum. Nonetheless, I thought, we aspies have a moral duty to stand up for our rights against the censorious normies, and if that costs me a little embarrassment, so what? I've got tenure.

More Wisdom

- **Male parental investment is partially explained through courtship generosity**

Says Miller (I paraphrase for brevity):

> Courtship generosity may include much of paternal effort that is usually assumed to arise through kin selection ('offspring'), since most divorced fathers reduce their paternal investment as soon as they are cut off from sexual access to mothers. Thus, what looks like simple paternal investment is ongoing courtship generosity to maintain sexual access to the mother.

- **Virtue-deficient individuals may fall into a vicious circle**

Miller says that individuals who don't possess the attractive virtues may seek alternative and more predatory mating strategies that put them on a vicious circle path.
I paraphrase him for brevity:

> Individuals lacking the sexually-attractive virtues should more often pursue 'alternative mating strategies', just as animals with lower-quality ornaments tend to do. This may include increased use of short-term

> opportunistic mating, deceptive affairs, sexual harassment, sexual stalking, and/or sexual coercion. If so, we might predict vicious cycle effects in which initially virtue-deficit individuals fail in the mating market, and adopt increasingly desperate and exploitative alternative mating strategies, which further undermine their virtues.

- **Modern virtue signaling of "gender/racial equality" and "diversity" is contradictory**

Two major dogmas of recent virtue-signaling, the "gender equality" and the push toward "diversity' are contradictory, notes Miller.
If genders and races were the same, then diversity would make no sense. And if someone seeks diversity because it's good, which Miller agrees with, that means that genders, races, and people in general, are not the same.

QUOTES

Interpreting single's ads through evolutionary psychology lenses:

> If a young woman places a single's ad stating "SHF, 26, seeks kind, generous, romantic, honest man", we might translate this in evolutionary terms as "single Hispanic female, 26, seeks a healthy male of breeding age with a minimal number of personality disorders that would impair efficient coordination and parenting in a sustained sexual relationship, and a minimal number of deleterious mutations on the thousands of genes that influence the development of brain systems for costly, conspicuous, altruistic displays of moral virtue."

CONS

- **How about effective virtue signaling?**

Virtue signaling is largely presented in its exaggerated form, and hence as a negative. However, virtue signaling as a form of 'value signaling' developed because signalers probably saw a return and, in at least some cases, we can speculate there can be some returns.

- **What does Miller think today? We're not sure**

In the introduction, Miller says that he has changed his mind on some of his early publications, but doesn't say which ones.
I respect Miller as an author, that's why I picked up his book, and I wanted to know what he thinks *today*, since the belief is that usually -but not always- people tend to move towards higher clarity of thinking over time, and closer to reality.

- **Neuro diversity advantage?**

I didn't necessarily share all the enthusiasm for "neurodiversity", especially when Miller included introverts (quoting Cain) and psychopathy (quoting Dutton) in there, but I can see his point, and still largely agree with it.

- **Less timeless with the cultural references**

The Google memo dates this work and felt more in-between manosphere talk and Miller's usual higher-quality, scholarly takes.

- **Evolutionary cost of language was sharing information?**

Miller says that the evolutionary cost for language is telling useful things to non-relatives, which in turn allows their genes to prosper at the expense of one's own genes.
But I disagree. The fact that you can tell useful things, doesn't mean you have to, or that you will.

REVIEW

Great book on the intricacies of virtue signaling.

The first part was the most wisdom-dense, in my opinion.
Overall, I wished for a larger take on virtue signaling as a form of *value*-signaling, a shared human drive to signal social and mate value, and which can also be positive for the signaler and, sometimes, the receiver.

Overall though, great read and valid insights; we appreciate Miller and his work.

Get the book on Amazon or see **value signaling dynamics**.

Resources:

- Miller, G. F. (1996). Political peacocks. Demos Quarterly, 10 (Special issue on evolutionary psychology), pp. 9-11.
- Miller, G. F. (1998). Book review of 'The handicap principle' by Amotz & Avishag Zahavi (Oxford U. Press, 1997). Evolution and Human Behavior, 19(5), 343-347.
- Miller, G. F. (2007). Sexual selection for moral virtues. Quarterly Review of Biology, 82(2), 97-125.
- Miller, G. F. (2017). The Google memo: Four scientists respond. Quillette, Aug 7
- Miller, G. F. (2017). The neurodiversity case for free speech. Quillette, July 18
- Miller, G. F. (2018). The cultural diversity case for free speech. Quillette, February 16

Anatomy of the State: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 January 2021 · Archived copy · Original

In “Anatomy of the State” (1974), Murray Rothbard presents and justifies his view of the state as a predatory entity. The state does not produce anything in Rothbard’s view, but rather steals resources from the productive citizens.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
- Government Is Coercion
- PROS
- CRITICISM
- QUOTES
- REVIEW

Overview

- Government is coercion because it takes (taxes) without providing any real value
- The free market could provide what the government does, far better, and without coercion
- The government is not “us”, it’s just the politicians in charge, and it only serves their interest
- The government needs support from the people to keep on stealing

Notes

About the Author: Murray Rothbard was an American economist of the Austrian School of economics.
He is one of the most important and authoritative voices of the libertarian movement, as well as the founder and leading theoretician of anarcho-capitalism.
He goes more in-depth on anarcho-capitalism in his book “For A New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto“.

Government Is Coercion

Rothbard’s definition of government:

> The State is that organization in society which attempts to maintain a monopoly of the use of force and violence in a given territorial area; in particular, it is the only organization in society that obtains its revenue not by voluntary contribution or payment for services rendered but by coercion

Rothbard says that the government is not “us”.
The government does not in any accurate sense represent the majority of the people.

And even if it were “us”, it’s still not morally and ethically legitimized to make decisions in the name of the majority, since that would be coercion on the minority.
Going to the extreme to make his point, Rothbard says:

> Even if it did, even if 70 percent of the people decided to murder the remaining 30 percent, this would still be murder and would not be voluntary suicide on the part of the slaughtered minority

If you listen to former mafia executive Sammy Gravano, he agrees:

Government Steals Wealth

Based on Franz Oppenheimer's work, Rothbard says that there are only two ways to acquire wealth:

1. Producing and exchanging wealth
2. Seizing another person's goods or services with force and violence

By now, you probably know where Rothbard places the government.
The government produces nothing, but feeds itself on the production of its citizens like a parasite.

The Government Needs the Majority's Support

Says Rothbard:

> in order to continue in office, any government (not simply a "democratic" government) must have the support of the majority of its subjects.

Importantly, it's not necessary for people to love or approve of the government to offer their support.
Says the author:

> This support, it must be noted, need not be active enthusiasm; it may well be passive resignation as if to an inevitable law of nature. But support in the sense of acceptance of some sort it must be;

So, how do the elites secure this support?
In different ways, including:

How the Government Secures Support

The government has many techniques to secure support, including:

- **Bureaucrats' vested interests**: the small class of people who do benefit from the government handouts, and often work for the government
- **Religion**: especially in the old days, the king was either in cahoots with the religious leaders, or he was a god himself
- **Tradition**: the "way we were" and respecting history ad our ancestors becomes a way to legitimize the present and the future
- **Spreading fear**: the government serves as protection against invading armies, and marauders
- **Judiciary system**: what's "constitutional" becomes legitimate (see below)
- **"Inevitability"**: if the state and government seem "inevitable", then people never even think about a world without the state, or come to accept it with passive resignation (ie.: "only death and taxes are certain")
- **Guilt-tripping**: by making people feel guilty and greedy for amassing resources and pursuing individual wealth without "giving back"
- **Nationalism**: political manipulation is all about fusing people's personal identity with the state. When people mistake their identity for their "land", then being good citizens means they need to work for that state, or provide protection to it. And that way, they end up serving the political elites to their own detriment (see first quote)
- **Intellectuals**: they are the opinion-swayers, they spread the misinformation that the government is necessary to society, to provide basic services and/or to stop evil, and thus intellectuals prop-up the government by giving it legitimacy. They include professors, authors, speakers, etc.

Why Intellectuals Support the State

The state needs intellectuals to provide the government with legitimacy.

Intellectuals also need the state, since intellectuals by themselves are not well-positioned to earn a living and make money.
So the state offers them a job, and a salary. And it becomes an exchange of "money for support".

The Judiciary Support the State

Theoretically, the judiciary and legal apparatus in most democracies is independent of the government.
But, in truth, courts and judges do the bidding of the government.

Rothbard says that the Constitution interpreted by a judiciary supposedly independent of the other branches of government places limits on the government.
But the constitution's limits tend to be ever-broadened, and the judiciary can then provide a stamp of legitimacy to whatever it approves as "constitutional".

Says Rothbard quoting Charles Black:

> The State has, in the process, largely transformed judicial review itself from a limiting device to yet another instrument for furnishing ideological legitimacy to the government's actions. For if a judicial decree of "unconstitutional" is a mighty check to government power, an implicit or explicit verdict of "constitutional" is a mighty weapon for fostering public acceptance of ever-greater government power.

The State Prioritizes Power & Self-Preservation

The state fears anything that limits or takes away its power.

The state can only be overthrown by:

1. War
2. Revolution

So the state focuses all its propaganda and effort on those two issues.
In war, the state manipulates people into believing that they need to fight for self-defense.
This is why the gravest crimes for the state are the refusal to fight, or the fight against the state itself.

I felt that Rothbard makes a great point here.
I quote him:

> We may test the hypothesis that the State is largely interested in protecting itself rather than its subjects by asking: which category of crimes does the State pursue and punish most intensely—those against private citizens or those against itself?
>
> The gravest crimes in the State's lexicon are almost invariably not invasions of private person or property, but dangers to its own contentment, for example, treason, desertion of a soldier to the enemy, failure to register for the draft, subversion and subversive conspiracy, assassination of rulers and such economic crimes against the State as counterfeiting its money or evasion of its income tax.
>
> Or compare the degree of zeal devoted to pursuing the man who assaults a policeman, with the attention that the State pays to the assault of an ordinary citizen. Yet, curiously, the State's openly assigned priority to its own defense against the public strikes few people as inconsistent with its presumed raison d'etre.

Also read:

- Power Dynamics
- The Logic of Political Survival
- The Dictator's Handbook

PROS

- Potentially eye-opening insights into leadership manipulation and political manipulation

CRITICISM

I loved "Anatomy of the State" and Rothbard can open many men's eyes to the dynamics of power and control.

Yet, there are some important mistakes/misunderstanding the author commit and that one should take note of. Also see "For A New Liberty Criticism".

Rothbard conflates what's "virtuous" with what's "natural"

Says Rothbard:

> It should be clear that the peaceful use of reason and energy in production is the "natural" path for man: the means for his survival and prosperity on this earth. It should be equally clear that the coercive, exploitative means is contrary to natural law

And:

> The predator is acting contrary to his own true nature as a man

If you're a reader of ThePowerMoves.com, you probably already know, or feel, that there is something wrong with that.

One of this website's credo is that humans have an aggressive, coercive dark side. And that some individuals have it more than others.
That is the nature of humans.

Rothbard's mistake here can fall under the "naturalistic fallacy" as explained by evolutionary psychologists (for example, Kanazawa, 2007). Such as, that if something is natural, then it's good and moral.
In this case, Rothbard does the opposite: what is moral, is natural. But that is not the case. In purely analytical terms, stealing is as natural as producing.

The state is (necessarily) born out of conquest and exploitation

For Rothbard, the state exploits and is *born* out of exploitation.

He says:

> Since production must always precede predation, the free market is anterior to the State. The State has never been created by a "social contract"; it has always been born in conquest and exploitation.

As a good anarchist, Rothbard sees the state as an external imposition against human "nature". Hence, any "sanctioned" authority is unnatural, illegitimate, and coercive. And must be fought.

Albeit I don't necessarily disagree with the state being coercive, I see it differently.

Any group of humans *naturally* develop hierarchies and leadership, with the leadership being those at the top of

those hierarchies.

That leadership has an outsized say in how the group governs itself, and that is not necessarily a bad thing, since the leadership tends (tends!) to go to the more driven, resourceful, and knowledgeable folks (and the more power-craving, too, of course).
As the group grows to the millions, and people don't all know each other anymore, that leadership naturally becomes far removed, grows in complexity, and must be formalized.
That's the government.

In that sense, the government is the natural outgrowth of human's tendency to elect a leadership of people for self-government and self-policing.

Rothbard Denies Any Benefit of a Government

Rothbard sees *no* potential advantage in the government.

I see at least some.

In many ways, a government frees much of my time.
If you listen to Rothbard you realize that, without a government, you will take a lot more responsibilities.
But time is limited, so as you take more responsibilities, you'd have to waste more time taking a lot of decisions that right now I don't have to take.

By delegating some of those tasks and decisions making to the government, you are freer.

Black & White Approach: Government is ONLY Against Us

This is an issue with most ideologies, and the anarcho-capitalist ideology is no different.

By refusing to compromise, or to see exceptions, ideologues can be more persuasive and "sexier".
But they are also less truthful, since reality is often more about shades of grey, and with lots of exceptions.

In this case, the government can sometimes be predatory and, in a way, there are *some* (some!) parallels with the mafia
But it can also add value, it's not nearly as coercive as the mafia, and it can also promote increased world well being by better cooperation -which, in my opinion, it does, and that without governments it wouldn't be necessarily acccomplished by the "forces of the free market"-.

The state only wastes money (and thus, robbing the state is OK)

Says Rothbard quoting Mencken:

> When a private citizen is robbed, a worthy man is deprived of the fruits of his industry and thrift; when the government is robbed, the worst that happens is that certain rogues and loafers have less money to play with than they had before.

This is a dangerous line of thinking.

The government *does* provide at least some useful services.
No matter how inefficient it might be, the government *does* take care of roads, policing, and, in many countries, healthcare.
Thus, robbing the government also, in part, removes financial support from the quantity and/or quality of those government-provided services.

The notion that "stealing from the government" is OK could easily be used as an excuse to mask far more self-serving goals in the guise of fake Robin-Hood pro-sociality, which is something that the mafia takes advantage of.

QUOTES

On the manipulation of nationalism:

> If "Ruritania" was being attacked by "Walldavia," the first task of the State and its intellectuals was to convince the people of Ruritania that the attack was really upon them and not simply upon the ruling caste.
>
> In this way, a war between rulers was converted into a war between peoples, with each people coming to the defense of its rulers in the erroneous belief that the rulers were defending them.
>
> This device of "nationalism" has only been successful, in Western civilization, in recent centuries; it was not too long ago that the mass of subjects regarded wars as irrelevant battles between various sets of nobles.

On the manipulation of war as citizens' self-defense.

> The fallacy of the idea becomes evident when conscription is wielded against those who refuse to "defend" themselves and are, therefore, forced into joining the State's military band: needless to add, no "defense" is permitted them against this act of "their own" State.

REVIEW

Wow, what a book.

Let me preface this:

I don't agree with everything.
I think the author misses out on some important benefits of the government, and he holds too rosy a view of anarchy.
But this is still mandatory reading for understanding the world.

The Community Discusses Anarcho-Capitalism

First of all, I must thank Stef for putting this book and author on my radar.

See here the discussion on this topic:

- Power dynamics of government and economics

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For a New Liberty: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 January 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"For a New Liberty" (1973) is a book by American economist Murray Rothbard, and one of the most important books of libertarian capitalism, and anarcho-capitalism.

Contents

- Summary
- More Wisdom
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
- PROS
- REVIEW

Summary

About the Author: Murray Rothbard was an American economist of the Austrian School of economics.
He is one of the most important and authoritative voices of the libertarian movement, and the founder and leading theoretician of anarcho-capitalism. He is also the author of "Anatomy of the State".

The USA Revolution Was the Peak of Libertarianism

In the first part of the book, Rothbard reviews some of the history of libertarianism.

He says that the USA is where the libertarian movement is strongest, and it's in part because of its history, since the American Revolution.
The American revolution infused into American culture the libertarian philosophy that power is evil.
Says the author:

> The belief that power is evil, a necessity perhaps but an evil necessity; that it is infinitely corrupting; and that it must be controlled, limited, restricted in every way compatible with a minimum of civil order

Controlled how?
With:

- Written constitutions;
- Separation of powers;
- Bills of rights;
- Limitations on executives, on legislatures, and courts;
- Restrictions on the right to coerce and wage war

All these limitations, says Rothbard, express the distrust of power that lies at the ideological heart of the American Revolution.
A revolution that was against empire, militarism, executive power, taxation, monopolies, and regulations.
And that has remained in American culture.

Libertarian Creed: Non-Aggression Axiom

The Libertarian creed rests on one central axiom:

> **No man or group of men may aggress against the person or property of anyone else**

Based on that basic axiom, it derives:

3 Main Rights of Libertarians

The 3 main rights the libertarian movement rests on are:

1. Absolute right of every man to the ownership of his own body
2. Absolute right to own and therefore to control the material resources he has found and transformed
3. Absolute right to exchange or give away the ownership of such titles to whoever is willing to exchange or receive them.

Personal rights -step 1-, and property rights -step 2 and 3- are intertwined for the libertarian, and cannot be separated -as communism seeks to-.

What's "Crime" For Libertarians

And a crime for a libertarian is only a crime insofar it's a "violent invasion of someone or of his property".

This also means that everyone has the absolute right of being free from any form of aggression or limitation to his liberty as long as he is not aggressing someone else.
This means that the libertarian philosophy is profoundly liberal when it comes to "civil liberties".

The libertarian philosophy does not criminalize any "victimless crimes" that might be considered morally dubious, but which are not hurting anyone, including:

- Drug consumption
- Sexual deviation
- Prostitution
- Abortion

And, of course, the freedom to speak, publish, and assemble.

EDIT: It's "allowing", more than "supporting"
In a previous version, I had written the libertarian "supports". But there is a difference between making something illegal, and supporting it. The libertarian position is about "not forcing others *not* to do anything that would harm others.
In regards to abortion, it depends on whether the individual libertarian believes the embryo, fetus, baby inside the womb is or is not a "victim".
Thanks to Stef for the correction!

The Libertarian is an Individualist

Albeit Rothbard doesn't exactly state it, another crucial axiom to understand libertarianism is the "individualist creed".

The libertarian puts the individual above society.
As a matter of fact, the libertarian doesn't recognize "society" as an entity, but only sees individuals' interests within different groups (more on it later).

Left-Wing On Civil Liberties, Right-Wing Laissez-Fair Capitalist on Economics

There is no contradiction, and the libertarian seems himself as the only consistent ideology.
Consistent with what?

Consistent on behalf of the liberty of every individual.

Individual's liberty means being free to do whatever he pleases, as well as to engage in all business activities he pleases, and spend that money he earns however he pleases, without taxation (which would limit his freedom on how to spend his income).

Anything Violating Individuals' Freedom is Coercion

It doen't matter whether a policy or law is supported by the majority, or not.

If it invades people's freedom, then it's against the libertarian creed, and it's aggression and coercion against the individual.

Says Rothbard:

> Regardless of popular sanction, War is Mass Murder, Conscription is Slavery, and Taxation is Robbery. The libertarian, in short, is almost completely the child in the fable, pointing out insistently that the emperor has no clothes.

And about government as a coercive entity:

> If we analyze taxation, we find that, among all the persons and institutions in society, only the government acquires its revenues through coercive violence. Everyone else in society acquires income either through voluntary gift (lodge, charitable society, chess club) or through the sale of goods or services voluntarily purchased by consumers

Poignantly, Rothbard says that if anyone else but the government would seek to tax anyone else, that would be considered coercion and theft.
But since the government managed to manipulate most people into believing in its legitimacy, most people fail to see the reality.

The Government Even Forces You to Fill Your Own Tax Forms

Says Rothbard:

> To add insult to injury, the individual taxpayer, in filling out his tax form, is also forced by the government to work at no pay on the laborious and thankless task of reckoning how much he owes the government (…)
>
> The government for the cost and labor expended in making out his return.

My Note: Couldn't agree more… Since I was a kid
as a man who hates wasting time and/or to spend my time on tasks assigned to me by others, I *hate* filling any forms or papers because I see it as coercion.

Affirmative Actions Are Discriminatory

Says Rothbard:

> Affirmative action" decrees are an obvious way of compelling discrimination against males or other groups in employment, admissions, or wherever this implicit quota system is applied

I couldn't agree more.
I remember once there was a Linkedin post by Deutsche Bank saying they committed to an X number of promotions by the end of the year, can't remember the exact number, let's say it was 50.

I asked them:

> So if by the 29th of December you have 49 female promotions and then you have a better male candidate, are you going to pass him up just to meet your quota?

My message was soon deleted :).

Whatever the Government Offers, Private Enterprise Can Do Better

In economics policies, the right-libertarians believe that laissez-faire capitalism leads to better services, better allocation of resources, and general increased well being for everyone.

That means that whatever the government offers as a service or as a good, it offers it at lower quality and/or at a higher cost -often both- compared to what a private enterprise would do.

Utlitarianism VS Libertarianism

Utilitarians put the "collective" first, while the libertarians put the individual first.
And the utilitarian looks at the "final outcome' in terms of value produced, while the libertarian defends the individual no matter what the ultimate "final outcome" would be.

To make an example:

Imagine people start thinking that redheads women are agents of the devil.
Since there are few redheads, then killing them all would bring little pain to them compared to the pleasure and "snese of safety and relief" that the collective would feel once all redheads are eliminated.

From a utilitarian point of view, then killing all redheads makes sense.
But from a libertarian, it doesn't. It doesn't matter what "society" will feel or what the collective might gain, or what the "total value of psychic contentedness" ends up at.
The rights of the individual redheads are inalienable.

Conservatives VS Libertarians

Says Rockwell in the introduction:

> American conservatives may not adore the welfare state or excessive business regulation but they appreciate power exercised in the name of nationalism, warfarism, "pro-family" policies, and invasion of personal liberty and privacy

The other difference is that free-market capitalists usually are OK with a government, albeit small.
But to the libertarian this is utopian and impossible: any government, once in place, will naturally expand as it seeks to increase its power.

There Is No "Society" or "Country" As An Entity: Only Groups of Specific Individuals, With Specific Interests

Society is an abstraction that doesn't exist.

Says Rothbard:

> "Society" is sometimes treated as a superior or quasi-divine figure with overriding "rights" of its own; at other times as an existing evil which can be blamed for all the ills of the world.

This doesn't make sense to libertarian or individualist, because:

> The individualist holds that only individuals exist, think, feel, choose, and act; and that "society" is not a living entity but simply a label for a set of interacting individuals.

The term "society" is also sometimes used to hide the real interest of some individuals within that "society", and it serves to mask the real power dynamics at play:
Says Rothbard:

> Treating society as a thing that chooses and acts, then, serves to obscure the real forces at work

Which in turn, can be used as a manipulative tool.
Says Rothbard (I paraphrase fr brevity and ease of comprehension):

> To say that "society" should own land or any other property in common, then, must mean that a group of oligarchs—in practice, government bureaucrats—should own the property, and at the expense of expropriating the individual

The Fallacy of "Nations"

Similarly, there is no such thing as nations.

And the use of a nation's name to symbolize an action is actually hiding the interests of some, often just very few individuals, who are deciding to act a certain way for their own personal well-being.

I paraphrase Rothbard quoting Parker Moon:

> When we say "Italy sent troops to conquer Greece" we impute not only unit but personality to the country.
>
> The words we should more accurately describe the Greece expedition is this: "A few of these 40 million persons sent thirty thousand others to conquer Greece."
>
> This way of putting the fact immediately suggests a question, or rather a series of questions. Who were the "few"? Why did they send the thirty thousand to Grece? And why did these obey?
>
> Empire-building is done not by "nations," but by men.

Also read:

- Political manipulation

The Government Cannot Be Controlled: It Must Go

The tendency for people in the government is to seek more and more power.

Even if you give a bit of power and limit it with constitutions, checks and balances, and divisions of power, eventually the government will, little by little, take more and more power.

Says Rothbard:

> the idea of binding down power with the chains of a written constitution has proved to be a noble experiment that failed. The idea of a strictly limited government has proved to be utopian; some other, more radical means must be found to prevent the growth of the aggressive State. The libertarian system would meet this problem by scrapping the entire notion of creating a government—

Involuntary Servitude: Conscription, Jury Duty, Detention

Servitude is forced labor at below free-market wages.
Hence, for the libertarian, the following are forms of enslavement:

- **Military conscription**: at the extreme, it includes being *forced* to kill and put one's life in jeopardy
- **Tax declarations**: you are forced to spend time to fill your own tax forms without compensation
- **Compelling testimony**: the witness has committed no crime and has been indicted of no crime
- **Compelling court presence**: even for criminals under trial, they shouldn't be forced to attend their own trials
- Compulsory commitment care:

My Note:
When I read this I realized I was a libertarian. Since I was a kid, and unsure whether or not conscription in Italy was going to be abolished, I always felt it was pure coercion.
People saying "it's good for kids' education" were idiots for me, since I felt they were the ones who lacked in education.

Schooling Is a Tool of Power & Indoctrination

Says Rothbard:

> One of the most common uses of compulsory public schooling has been to oppress and cripple national ethnic and linguistic minorities or colonized peoples—to force them to abandon their own language and culture on behalf of the language and culture of the ruling groups

And of course, the state uses schools as a tool of indoctrination into the state itself.
Quoting Paterson:

> Every politically controlled educational system will inculcate the doctrine of state supremacy sooner or later, whether as the divine right of kings, or the "will of the people" in "democracy." Once that doctrine has been accepted, it becomes an almost superhuman task to break the stranglehold of the political power over the life of the citizen.

This is especially strong in the US, where children go to school alongside American flags, some even swearing allegiance to the flag (gosh!).

More Wisdom

- **Let people free to smoke**

> Propagandize against cigarettes as much as you want, but leave the individual free to run his own life

- **Let people free to purchase guns**

The author goes on to explain that widespread guns are good against crime, but I'm not convinced on this topic.

- **Let people free NOT to study**

Forcing people to study, in Rothbard's opinion, is a paternalistic approach of those who value schooling, towards those who don't necessarily value it nearly as much.
Hr writes:

> Part of the reason for this tyranny over the nation's youth is misplaced altruism on the part of the educated middle class.
> The workers, or the "lower classes," they felt, should have the opportunity to enjoy the schooling the middle classes value so highly. And if the parents or the children of the masses should be so benighted as to balk at this glorious opportunity set before them, well, then, a little coercion must be applied—"for their own good," of course.

- **Abolish the welfare system**

Rothbard's approach is based on the idea that most people on welfare aren't even trying to improve their lots or move forward in life.
Hence, if they are deciding to live in poverty, they also shouldn't receive the government's benefits to live like the middle class, without working.

The system only gets worse when they provide checks based on the number of children, thus providing an incentive

to have children exactly for those who can most ill-afford to have children.

- **Central banks are a tool to fabricate wealth for a few, and push the costs on the many**

Ever since fiat currency, such as currency that is not backed by gold, the government can print money.
The beneficiaries are those who get the money first, while everyone else pays the price with inflation.

Government's control of money supply is inherently inflationary, since the government has an incentive to print lots of it.

- **Pollution is an act of aggression**

Pollution is an act of aggression of a minority -the plant owners- against everyone else.

The case against pollution is about protecting one's own rights and property not on the outside, but on the inside -lungs and body-.

The moment the courts decided that people couldn't sue plant owners for pollution because "progress was good for society", the state also sanctioned that it was OK for polluters to keep polluting, which decreased the incentive to develop non-polluting technology.

- **States cannot intervene militarily to support anyone and pretend to be "in the good"**

Defending someone against aggression is valid at an individual level.
But it cannot be used at a national level.

Says Rothbard:

> But "aggression" only makes sense on the individual Smith-Jones level, as does the very term "police action." These terms make no sense whatever on an inter-State level. First, we have seen that governments entering a war thereby become aggressors themselves against innocent civilians; indeed, become mass murderers.

- **Judges have too much power. Incarcerating before conviction, setting up bail, and, particularly, in cases of "contempt of court", in which he's the judge of his own case**

An example of "being the judge of his own case":

Somehow, people find this video "great". But while the girl was being silly and slightly contemptuous, the judge had no call to double her bail just because she said "adios". That was an abuse of power to take his little personal revenge.

- **Wiretapping is an invasion of privacy and property rights, and shouldn't be allowed**

Not saying I necessarily agree with this one.
The exception for Rothband is in cases in which the investigated criminal has already committed a bigger crime than the wiretapping itself.

QUOTES

On the nonsense of the "majority" as legitimization (I couldn't agree more):

> Crime is crime, aggression against rights is aggression, no matter how many citizens agree to the oppression. There is nothing sacrosanct about the majority; the lynch mob, too, is the majority in its own domain.

On the nonsense idea of giving any entity the monopoly of force (paraphrased for brevity):

> Suppose that we are starting from scratch. Debate begins as to how protection (police and judicial services) will be provided. Someone says: "Let's all give all of our weapons to Joe Jones over there. And let Jones decide all disputes among us. In that way, the Joneses will be able to protect all of us from any aggression or fraud that anyone else may commit. With all the power and all the ability to make ultimate decisions on disputes in the hands of Jones, we will all be protected from one another. And then let us allow the Joneses to obtain their income from this great service by using their weapons, and by exacting as much revenue by coercion as they shall desire." Surely in that sort of situation, no one would treat this proposal with anything but ridicule. For it would be evident that there would be no way, in that case, for any of us to protect ourselves from the aggressions, or the depredations, of the Joneses themselves. It is only because we have become accustomed over thousands of years to the existence of the State that we now give precisely this kind of absurd answer to the problem of social protection and defense.

On the abolition of standing armies:

> A permanent army is a standing temptation to the State to enlarge its power, to push around other people as well as other countries, and to dominate the internal life of the nation.

On conservatives and liberals being the same, and libertarians the true philosophy of freedom:

> Sometimes it seems that the beau ideal of many conservatives, as well as of many liberals, is to put everyone into a cage and coerce him into doing what the conservatives or liberals believe to be the moral thing. They would of course be differently styled cages, but they would be cages just the same.

On liberals defending unemployed folks who remain on government benefits (genius):

> Gouldner's attitude is typical of liberals and leftists in the present day: that it is shameful to try to foist, even noncoercively, "bourgeois" or "middle-class values" on the gloriously spontaneous and "natural" lower-class culture. Fair enough, perhaps; but then don't expect—or call upon—those same hard-working bourgeoisie to be coerced into supporting and subsidizing those very parasitic values of idleness and irresponsibility which they abhor—and which are clearly dysfunctional for the survival of any society. If people wish to be "spontaneous," let them do so on their own time and with their own resources, and let them then take the consequences of this decision, and not use State coercion to force the hardworking and "unspontaneous" to bear those consequences instead. In short, abolish the welfare system.

On the government's manipulation of frames and names:

> Just as the State arrogates to itself a monopoly power over legalized kidnapping and calls it conscription; just as it has acquired a monopoly over legalized robbery and calls it taxation; so, too, it has acquired the monopoly power to counterfeit and calls it increasing the supply of dollars

On private enterprise being more efficient:

> while the long-held motto of private enterprise is that "the customer is always right," the implicit maxim of government operation is that the customer is always to be blamed.

On foreign intervention and aid as a tool for imperialism:

> The military dictator of "Bumblestan" is in danger; perhaps his subjects are tired of being exploited by him and his colleagues. The United States then becomes gravely concerned; articles by journalists friendly to the State

> Department or the Pentagon spread the alarm about what might happen to the "stability" of Bumblestan and its surrounding area if the dictator should be toppled. For it so happens that he is a "pro-American" or "pro-western" dictator: that is, he is one of "ours" instead of "theirs." Millions or even billions of dollars' worth of military and economic aid are then rushed by the United States to prop up the Bumblestani field marshal.

On "language of power", the way the USA sometimes speak:

> Our turn to keep the peace of the world.
> Our turn to save civilization.
> Our turn to serve mankind.
>
> But this is the language of Empire.
>
> The Roman Empire never doubted that it was the defender of civilization.
> Its good intentions were peace, law and order. The Spanish Empire added salvation. The British Empire added the noble myth of the white man's burden. We have added freedom and democracy.
>
> Yet the more that may be added to it the more it is the same language still.
> A language of power.

CRITICISM

This is a wonderful book, but there are some important "buts" to be added.

For more, also see the "criticism of Anatomy of the State".

Unluckily, I see no evidence that anarcho-capitalism -or total laissez-faire- works better

The author speaks as if free-market capitalism without a state *necessarily* and obviously leads to a higher standard of living for all, as well as providing all the services that the government currently provides.

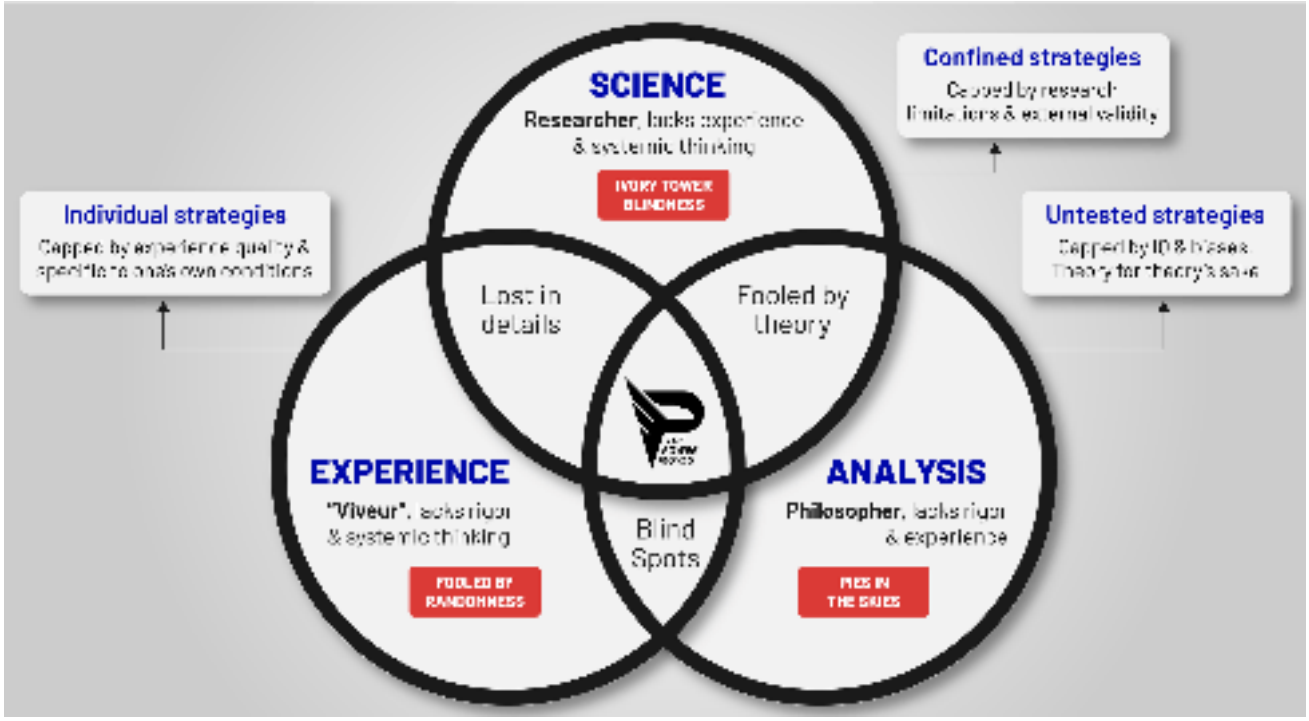
He even says there is evidence:

> We just know—by economic theory and by historical insight—that such a free market will do the job infinitely better than the compulsory monopoly of bureaucratic government.

I beg to disagree.

We do know, for example, that communism has failed almost everywhere it was attempted.
But I am not aware of any advanced economy that has embraced a stateless, anarchist form of free-capitalism.

Hence, for what concerns me, I cannot say for sure whether or not this system would work better since one of the 3 main pillars of knowledge is missing: we have no good first-hand experience of anarcho-capitalism working better.



Rothbard's analysis has some data and lots of analysis but lacks sorely in experience. It's a case of "fooled by theory" (plus, it would be fair to argue that the analysis maybe be biased at the source by the author's preference)
And for the little data I am aware of in terms of unfettered free-market capitalism, it's not all so positive.
For example, after financial regulations were cut by free-market enthusiast Alan Greenspan & co., we had the huge 2008 financial bubble.

That should serve as a warning against the idea that the individual, in total freedom, always does the right thing for himself (fallacy 1), and that doing the right thing for himself also translates to adding value to society (fallacy 2).

Idealization of private enterprise

See above.

Rothbard fails to see that also private enterprises can have distorted and conflicting interests that lead to poor services or goods.

Homo economicus fallacy: people can behave irrationally

See above.

The author seems to cling to the "homo economicus" model of early economics models.
That is, an individual who is fully rational, and always acts in his long-term economic interest.

And, implies the author, when people look after their self-interest in a free-market, they automatically do good things for the whole.

But to me, both assumptions are fallacious.

For example, the author says that if people were given ownership of the oceans and rivers, then the owners would naturally take care of nature and fish preservation. Prices would fall in the short term, and in the long run there will always be fish.

But the two don't necessarily follow from private ownership.

Many men have a short-term bias, and they might want to turn fish into cash as quickly as possible, without caring about *how* they get that fish -for example, using explosives-, or about the future of fishes in general.
Also, men don't live forever, so it actually makes rational sense for them to exploit a resource as much as possible,

and to leave future generations on the hook.

Sometimes glosses over the fact that government officials are voted in, as well as voted *out*

Some of Rothbard's lines are both hilarious and insightful.

Yet, some can also be misleading.

When he conflates giving all the power and weapons to a random family to govern and rule all other people, that doesn't actually hold as a realistic comparison with the government.

A democratic government is not usually run by the same people for their whole lives.
Just look at Trump, and how he hated being booted out. That was because he had been voted out, and he was losing power.

Mixes libertarianism with laissez-faire capitalism

I love libertarianism.

And I think that equating it with the Austrian school of economics, as well as with total laissez-faire capitalism, is harmful to libertarianism itself.

Libertarianism should stand on its own, separate from economic policies, whether right-wing capitalism, or left-wing collectivism.

For example, I don't believe that during financial crises the government should just "do nothing'.
Many economists, for example, believe that letting Lehman Brothers collapse was a mistake because the fear that ensued paralyzed the markets, and then engulfed "main street" as well.
Crises are also psychological, and simply by providing reassurance and financial backstop, the government can do a lot to help restore confidence in the markets.

Plus, government stimulus during financial crises can also be helpful.

PROS

Books like "For a New Liberty" can be eye-opening to better understand manipulation, power dynamics, and conflicts of interest.

REVIEW

Wow, what a book.

I found out that, *minus the economic policies*, I am quite close to the libertarian philosophy.
At least when it comes to:

- Victimless "crimes"
- Individual rights above collective rights
- Small governments / small armies / low taxes
- No jingoism, no military intervention, humanity above factions

Overall, "For a New Liberty" was a great read.

The Community Discusses State Coercion

Thanks to Stef for putting this book and author on my radar.

This is the discussion on this topic:

- Power dynamics of government and economics

Check out some of the other **best red pill books**, and best books on power.

Get the book on Amazon.

I'll Make You an Offer You Can't Refuse: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 January 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"I'll Make You an Offer You Can't Refuse" (2010) is a book in which former mafia boss Michael Franzese applies Cosa Nostra principles to business.

Contents

- SUMMARY
- More (Machiavellian) Wisdom
- QUOTES
- CONS
- REVIEW

SUMMARY

About the Author: Michael Franzese was a capo in the Colombo crime family. He was one of the mob's biggest earners since Al Capone, and the youngest individual on Fortune magazine's "Fifty Biggest Mafia Bosses." Franzese then accepted Jesus Christ, became a practicing Christian, and started working and helping others as a speaker, preacher, and guide.

1. You Can Do It Even Without Education

Says Franzese:

> Without ever earning a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or a PhD, and in many cases without even graduating from high school, mobsters have managed to operate and dominate legitimate businesses having annual revenues in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

As a matter of fact, mobster might have a hedge on business graduates:

> Mob executives possess unique instincts, a "street sense" that isn't taught in the classrooms at Harvard or the Wharton School of Business. They're acquired through living a lifestyle where almost every day presents a challenge just to survive, where every friend is your potential enemy, where a board meeting just might prove to be your last encounter on earth.

The Machiavellianism and sense of strategizing that you can acquire in the underworld, and especially in organized crime, is indeed probably superior to what most normal businessmen can acquire in business -probably different if you're at the top of fast-moving industry, but that's the exception-.

2. Wise Up: There's No Magica Formula (AKA: Stop Being Duped By Snake Oil Salesmen)

Franzese says there's no magic formula.

People selling magic formulas are turning the marketing heat, and selling you a lie.
Instead, the formula is:

1. Make a plan
2. Work hard
3. Seek the shortest possible road to money

4. Assemble the right crew
5. Motivate that crew to do the best job
6. Get a “consigliere” (ie.: a mentor)

... But Keep a Balanced Life

But, also don’t let work become your *only* occupation in life. That’s a mistake Franzese has done, together with many more.
Work is only one part of life, and you should enjoy the rest as well, including family and friends.

Says Franzese:

> All the money in the world isn’t of any benefit if you don’t take time to enjoy it.

3. Cut to the Chase: Take the Money

You never “make” money -unless you’re the government or a counterfeiter-.
You *take* money.

The mobster mentality is that other people’s money belongs to them and they only need to find a way to take it.
Your business plan can use a similar attitude, minus the violence: what’s the quickest way to convince others to give me their money?

4. Keep It Cool: Don’t Run Around Like a Chicken Without A Head

Know what you do well, and do that.

Avoid running around under stress: that’s what those low in power do.

Mobsters always exude an air of power and calm confidence that radiates to the people around them, and that increases their power of influence and persuasion -and the fear factor-.

Also read:

- **How to adopt the “executive aura”**

> 17 Tips to Exude Exec-Level Confidence at Work

Hire others to do the rest.
Speaking of which:

5. Get An “A Team”

You’re only as good as the people you have around.

That works in two ways:

1. The work they can do for you
2. What your team says about you

Quoting Machiavelli:

> [T]he first opinion which one forms of a prince, and of his understanding, is by observing the men he has around him; and when they are capable and faithful he may always be considered wise, because he has known how to recognize the capable and to keep them faithful. But when they are otherwise one cannot form a good opinion of him, for the prime error which he made was in choosing them.

> *The Prince*

It might seem incongruous, after quoting Machiavelli, but what's the most important value you should seek for people in your crew?
The most important value you should seek is honesty.

To sum it up with Franzese's words:

> Surrounding yourself with capable people makes you money; it also makes you look smart. Do what you do best, and delegate the rest.

6. Get What You Want, & Make Them Believe They Won

In the mafia, especially at the top, some guys have huge egos.

Plus, there is the "status/pride" element.
Now the mafia might have a particularly high concentration of these men, but you can meet plenty of them in legitimate business as well.

How to deal with them?
Deal with them in a way where you get what you want, but you make them feel like they won.

Read here a good case study:

- **Out-negotiating John Gotti**

7. Beware of Machiavelli's Trap

Franzese says that the mafia is based on Machiavellian philosophy: the end justifies the means.

The Machiavellian philosophy certainly presents elements that are true and pragmatic, and that will help you achieve success.
But that's only the "bait in the trap".

Says Franzese:

> (The Machiavellian philosophy) creates an atmosphere of deceit, mistrust, and treachery— a place where fear masquerades as loyalty (…) Eventually, any group of people that adheres to such a philosophy will destroy itself from within.

On the Machiavellian famous question of "is it better being hated or loved", Franzese adds and important, and in my opinion very valid perspective:

> When their enemies discover that the strength of the organization is based on the fear of its members, all they need to do is become the ones who are more feared. The loyalty will vanish into thin air, and the poison-tipped spike in Machiavelli's trap of power and control will be revealed.

Basically, Franzese implies that love is harder to develop, but that it lasts longer, it's more resilient (not as easily "transferrable") and, ultimately, potentially more powerful.

My Note: GREAT wisdom on love VS fear, but there was at least some love in the mafia as well
I don't know if I can agree 100% here.
There is plenty of love and camaraderie in the mafia, even after you compute all the backstabbing that goes on. As a matter of fact, that's part of the attraction of the mafia, and part of the glue that keeps it together Treacher does not necessarily invalidate the camaraderie.

Franzese himself admits that he misses the camaraderie the most. And he even admitted that when there was a war going in, he felt like he wanted/had to back to help and support his old family.

8. Machiavelli VS Solomon: Choose Wisely (not like a wiseguy)

Franzese explains the two different life philosophies:

Solomon is about true personal values, doing what's right based on your values and ethics, while Machiavelli is completely devoid of values and ethics unless faking them will help you obtain what really matters: power, money, and end results.

However, don't just yet jump to the conclusion that the Machiavellian philosophy performs better.
Why not necessarily so?

1. **The Machiavellian approach can eventually shine through**, and make you lose
2. **The Machiavellian approach is more effective in the short-term**, and can also lead people to adopt approaches that are more about short-term, than long-term growth and power
3. **The Machiavellian approach can make your personal life poorer**, since your emotional bonds and friendships are inauthentic

Says Franzese:

> The manner in which you live your life—your character and integrity—will ultimately be reflected in the way you run your business, and this might very well matter to your potential consumers or clients. Furthermore, the philosophy you adopt to run your business will have as much an impact on the quality of your life as will your company's level of success or failure.

And he says from his personal experience:

> Integrity and ethics matter in life as well as in business. Trust me here. This is coming from a guy who had a very flawed concept of both. I suffered as a result, and so did my family.

A good video example on long-term VS short-term thinking from Franzese:

Can you do both, sometimes Machiavelli, sometimes Solomon?
I'd honestly say yes, but Franzese says no.
He says:

> If you are trying to have it both ways, you're just fooling yourself. You're being Machiavellian.

9. The Government Is Mafia (Is It?)

Franzese sees parallels between the mafia and the government:

> And as far as the mob is concerned, the government's activities are one big money-raking business.

Also see:

- Anatomy of the State

More (Machiavellian) Wisdom

- **Record & collect: evidence is power**

Says Frazese about a former and “not-so-honest” associate of his:

> I found out years later that Larry kept a file of all the illegal activity he believed I had engaged in over the eight years we worked together. Knowing I was a prize catch for the feds, I would be his “Get Out of Jail Free card” were he ever to run afoul of the law. And years later he used that file for just that purpose. Although I was acquitted (…) he still managed to cut a sweetheart deal for himself with the feds.

This is a strategy I recommend for people in business as well, and a great weapon to get rid of poor bosses.

- **Choose a consigliere that is not too ambitious**

Ambitious consiglieres might want to replace you, or give advice best on what’s good for them, their status, and their personal ascension\?

In my opinion, the best consiglieres are older, done their time, and now want to mentor you as father figures.

- **Be ready to compromise**

When you’re not holding all the cards, compromising is often the only possible solution.

- **Listen more, talk less**

> I cannot stress enough the importance of becoming a good listener in your dealings. It conditions you to gather information before acting or making a decision that will impact your business

QUOTES

On the “sit-down”:

> The sit-down is so ingrained in a made guy’s vocabulary, it caused one FBI agent listening in on a secretly installed bug to remark, “Do these guys ever decide anything standing up?”

On how many people would like to join the mafia ranks:

> You would not believe how many men would kill (no pun intended) to get their buttons and join the ranks. Fortunately, membership in the life is considered by its members to be a privilege.

But for those who can’t manage to join, it’s a good thing:

> For the wannabe mobster who just might not make the grade, it’s even a better thing. Recruiting a guy who isn’t qualified won’t get him fired. It will get him whacked. The mob doesn’t believe in severance packages.

On playing your strengths and learning your strengths from failures:

> Failure is a tough teacher, but it can teach us our strengths and weaknesses in ways no other teacher can.

Power is everything in Cosa Nostra:

> In La Cosa Nostra success is determined by the accumulation of wealth and the attainment of position. Its formula is simple: money + position = power. Power in that life is viewed as the ultimate achievement of success.

On the mobster entrenched mentality of some:

> My dad, although spending more than thirty years in prison, will tell you he is a successful mobster.

On mobsters criticizing the government and calling politician gangsters:

> "Fat Tony" Salerno, Carmine "the snake" Persico, Paul "Big Paul" Castellano, and even the Dapper Don himself, John Gotti, at one time or another would circle a card table, sipping black coffee with a shot of anisette, and roast our elected officials like there was no tomorrow. "Washington would be rolling over in his grave if he saw the way these bums operate today." "The thieves would all be in front of a firing squad." **And—no joke, now—"They call us gangsters; they're the real gangsters."**

CONS

- **Some conservative talk**

Franzese is certainly not a liberal :). Neither am I, but not sure the political talk was a good fit here.

REVIEW

An interesting book in between a business book and a "mob book", brief and to the point.

Presents pretty much all the same points that more popular books like "The Effective Executive" share, but in a far more interesting format.

Get the book on Amazon

Underboss: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 January 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"Underboss" (1999) is the life history of mobster Sammy Gravano up until he turned government witness against his former boss John Gotti and (a good chunk of) his associates in 1991.
"Underboss" is written by Peter Mass, but since it's heavily based on Gravano's own account, it feels like an autobiography.

Contents

- SUMMARY
- WISDOM
- QUOTES
- PROS
- CONS
- REVIEW

SUMMARY

About the Author:
Peter Maas was an American journalist and author. He wrote several books about important figures in the criminal words. Much of the book is based upon Sammy "The Bull" Gravano, a gangster in the Gambino family who participated in the hit on former boss Paul Castellano and reached the Underboss position under the newly elected boss John Gotti.

The Beginnings: Learning the Use of Violence & Power

Gravano didn't have an easy childhood.

At school, he used to often be in the middle of problems. Sometimes, self-created, and sometimes, because he'd always fight back any slight.
And he did receive quite sneering and bullying, partially because he was dyslexic and "easy to make fun of".

But he always fought back, and sometimes, he learned that it paid.
He says:

> If someone ridiculed him, he beat him up after school. That instantly ended the slights. "That's when I found out that violence paid," he says. "They stopped laughing."

Power > Violence: It Hit Gravano Hard When He Realized

Two union goons walked into Gravano's shop, and started threatening Sammy's father.

Saviano thought to himself "there is no way I'm gonna get these two bums harm my father". And he armed himself with a gun. But it wasn't needed.
It wasn't needed because Sammy's dad knew the local mafia boss: Zuvito.
Sammy was flabbergasted.
He thought:

> What good's he?
>
> He's a frail little old guy, half the size of my dad. A strong wind would knock him right off his feet. I don't

> know Cosa Nostra. I don't know Zuvito's power. I'm a kid. I'm with a gang. My thing is to fight with my fists.

And, lo and behold, the two goons go back and apologize a million times, plus pledge their help in case Sammy's dad needed anything.
All because of Zuvito.
And that made Sammy all the more interested in understanding -and possibly acquiring- that type of power:

> "That really opened my appetite to know more about Zuvito, what the hell he was, what made him so feared. Boy, I thought, wasn't it something to be that physically unimposing and still have that kind of power and strength? I really didn't understand it then.

Sammy was obviously a guy who enjoyed power.

Pick Your Battles: Avoid Being In Constant War

Gravano was impulsive, in some ways.

And he did sometimes act impulsively, almost always because of honor, revenge, and keeping his status and rep as a honorable, tough guy.

But he wasn't impulsive *all the times*, and he was also smart.
Most of the times, he knew when to step back, and when to find alternative solutions to escalations.
For example:

> He was robbing us blind, the cocksucker. "Now Ralph Spero ain't a made guy. But it's an awkward situation. He's Shorty's brother and I'm with Shorty. I decide it was better to sell the joint, get the fuck out. (…) I tried to avoid confrontations (…) there's enough people to shoot in the head without looking for it all the time.

If People Don't Respect Their Partner, They're Not Going to Respect You

On keeping your partner's honor:

> "Once he told me that Carlo Gambino had spotted him in some restaurant with a girlfriend, whatever, and Carlo had called him over. In Italian, Carlo said, 'Where's your wife? What are you doing with this putana in a place like this where you're seen by people who know you and your wife? Don't you have any shame? Don't you have any pride? Don't you have any respect for your wife?' "Toddo didn't take offense. He thought Carlo was right and he was wrong. If you couldn't be loyal to your wife and your children, how could you be loyal to Our Thing.

Why would you avoid that?
Honor:

> He wasn't talking about somebody who just goes with a woman on the side. Every man, I think, does that at one point or another. But you don't flaunt it. Put some shade on it. Like your wife could walk into a beauty parlor and other women are going to be there laughing behind her back. You put her in this position. You're the one who belittled her. You want to sneak away somewhere, sneak away.

Read more here.

Machiavellian Strategy: Send a Double Agent

Old trick, but always valuable.

A double agent is someone who is on your side, but who pretends to be dissatisfied by you, and ready to turn on you, badmouth you, or generally happy to hear others complain about you.

Then, the double agent will report everything back to you.

Says Gravano:

> "To keep tabs on him when I'm not around, I have Mike DeBatt play up to him. He tells Fiala that he wants to continue to work for him as a bouncer, how I always underpaid him. And now I know Fiala doesn't have a clue who I actually am. He's saying to Mike behind my back, 'Fuck this Sammy. Fuck this punk. When I take over, I'm doing this, that.'

Fiala's mistakes:

1. Not checking who Gravano was
2. Running his mouth

Social Strategy: Don't Badmouth Your Frenemy (or he turns into an enemy)

Paul made a big mistake: he let word out that he didn't like John Gotti.

Now from a "frenemy", he pushes Gotti further and further into full enemy.

When Paul started talking, the word started spreading that he was going to demote John. And you know what demotion means in the mafia: it might as well be the prelude to getting whacked.
Says Gravano:

> Paul is already talking about when Neil dies, he's going to close down the Ravenite. He's going to break John down to a soldier, stick him somewhere in a crew, maybe under Joe Butch, and treat him like a fucking hard-on. Without even being dead, he's finished. "Then there is the possibility they would move on John and kill him.

What do you think that's going to do for John and his crew?
John was below Paul, but he had his own crew as well, he had people around him who liked and supported him.

When those rumors spread, for John Gotti it started being a matter of "kill or get killed". And that certainly pushed him hard to look for a way to attempt at Castellano's life.

Machiavellian Tip: Don't Go Overboard With Machiavellianism...

… And never flaunt it!

Says Gravano, talking about John Gotti:

> "'Listen to me,' he says. 'Keep them broke. Keep them hungry. Don't make them too fat.' "I can play Machiavellian like John—John was always quoting Machiavelli, I guess he did read him

I don't know if this is true, to be honest. It might be, or it might not. Still, it's not the type of advice you want to give to your underbosses, because that signals you're not a true collaborator.
It signals that you want obedience and that you are ready to deploy highly value-taking, coercive, and abusive ways to reach your power goals.

And that decreases your social capital, your persuasive power, and increases the odds of a betrayal.

Take the Loss: It's Good For Long-Term Business

Sammy was in construction, and one project was turning out to be a loser.

His business partner advised him to pull out and cut the losses.
Sammy replied:

> 'You're right, they can't do nothing, but you know what will happen with that? Everybody in the world will hear about it. For everybody in the world we do work with, it'll be Sammy does work and makes money, all well and good. If he loses money, he'll abandon you. How do you think that'll sit with people, Eddie? This will be the best two hundred thousand I'll ever spend because people will say not only is Sammy qualified to do the job, but he'll stay with you, win or lose.' "'That's important to businesspeople, Eddie,' I said. '**That's why you were never successful in business. Because you scheme too fucking much.**'

"Because you scheme too F. much": let that be your warning.

Leadership Tip: Don't Isolate Yourself (or you get whacked)

Let me preface this:

In a way, Paul Castellano was a genius businessman.

The mafia has a great advantage in doing business: it can threaten, strong arm, intimidate and, if needed, resort to violence, exact revenge, or corrupt juries if it goes to court.
And Castellano was one of the best bosses in leveraging that "criminal edge" to expand the Gambino's empire into legitimate and semi-legitimate businesses.

However, a skilled businessman doesn't necessarily make for a great leader.
And especially not for a crime family.
That's where gambino failed: as a mafia boss.

Let's start with the first mistake: isolation.

Gravano says that Paul Castellano died, in good part, because he self-isolated from the family:

> Castellano's mansion on the hill perfectly symbolized a growing reclusiveness that over time would ultimately prove to be his undoing. By effectively abandoning his presence in the family's social clubs, he began to lose touch with the pulse of the streets (…) He saw himself as a man with far-flung business interests. This led to a widening division

Leadership Tip: Be Like Your Team (or you get whacked)

Paul Gravano was unlike the gangsters in his crew.
Says Gravano:

> He didn't understand gangsters. He didn't understand what the fuck it was to be broke, to have to go out and rob and do certain things. He didn't understand what a gangster was all about, obviously. I mean, he didn't really understand gangsters like John Gotti and Angie Ruggiero, or me or Frank DeCicco, anybody who is a real hoodlum or gangster in that sense of the word.

Still, in the beginning, Gravano thought highly of Castellano. He thought he was intelligent and wise, and knew how to move.
But Castellano made too many mistakes, and instead of being seen as smart and *beyond* being a gangster, he highlighted how he was the *opposite*.

For example:

> "Afterwards, Toddo told me Paul had said to him, 'What's with this Sammy, going out on a hit in his condition? I thought he would just assign his people to the contract.' 'What can I tell you?' Toddo said. 'He's got the balls of a fucking elephant.' Toddo said Paul kept shaking his head, like he couldn't get over it.

Paul doesn't understand that for Sammy doing the hit himself was a question of honor.
Guys like Sammy want to hit back, as soon as possible. By "not understanding", Castellano was also saying "I'm different than all these guys". And people don't want leaders who are too different from who they are.

Read more on leadership psychology:

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

And read here a primer on leadership.

Leadership Tip: Don't Badmouth Your Team Members

Says Gravano:

> "When I broke my ankle with that biker, the first thing out of Paul's mouth was 'Sammy, what were you doing in there? You're a made guy. You don't belong in those clubs anymore. This is beneath you.' "I said, 'Paul, it's my club. I'm trying to put things together.

See what that idiot of Paul did there?
He indirectly told Gravano he was a failure for managing clubs. How's Gravano supposed to feel when his boss says that? He's going to dislike him, of course, because thas is offensive.

And he pushed down the people in his team both directly, and behind their back.
For example:

> Even with Frankie DeCicco, when there was a business partnership we wanted to go in, Paul says, 'Frankie? Frankie's a gambler. He's a street dog, Sammy.' This was Paul's mentality.

See?
Those guys are going to be in business with Frankie, and now they're going to feel like they're in business with a street dog. Even if they don't tell Frankie that, they still feel demeaned by their boss.
Plus, the boss loses status by behaving "un-leader like". Leaders don't crap on their own teams!

Leadership Tip: Earn the Respect of Your Team

Paul Castellano had an issue:

People didn't really recognize him as a gangster.
And if your crew is made up of a large chunk of gangasters, that can become an issue.

He could have worked around it, or done something about it. Instead, he compounded that issue.
Says Sammy:

> —all the guys in the family who regularly killed for Paul, the guys Paul sent out when he wanted somebody hit. "And Paul says, 'You know who the true tough guys are? The cops. "You could have heard a pin drop (…) "As we walked out, Roy DeMeo, said, 'Next time he's got a hit, he should send in the fucking cops!' "Paul was so out of it, saying a true tough guy is really a cop. That's not a gangster talking. You don't tell a gangster

> something like that.

So not only was Paul not earning the respect of his gangaster crew, he *expanded* on the thread of:

- Not understanding gangsters
- Not respecting gangsters
- Being a poor gangster

If you are unlike your team, and if your team can't look up to you, that's already an issue.
But if the team starts to feel put down and embarrassed by what you say, then you are going to lose power as their boss.
And, eventually, your team might turn on you.

Ideally, great bosses are great at what their own team members do, or have been great at the past or -Castellano only had a couple of failed stick-ups-.
Failed that, at least, the leader should respect and recognizes the contribution of his team -Castellano seemed to scoff at the gangster way and preferred to be seen as an "industrial magnate"-. That created a major rift.

Leadership Tip: Don't Steal From Your Team

Might sound like an obvious tip, but it's not so obvious.

Once you have the power to steal, then stealing also becomes possible and might become more "normal".

Paul Castellano received $40.000 from Gravano twice, by mistake. And he never gave back to Sammy what was rightfully his.
This is how Sammy put it:

> "He said, 'This guy gets his hands on money, he never gives it back. He's never bringing up that forty again.' "I said, 'Are you nuts, Frankie? He's got a trillion dollars (…) You mean to tell me he's keeping my end?' "Frankie said, 'I tell you what. A steak dinner he never brings it up.' We shook hands. It's a bet. "Well, I bought Frankie the steak dinner. I couldn't believe it. That bum kept the forty thousand.

Do you think that increased trust and loyalty in Sammy, or decreased it?
Obviously, it *decreased* trust.

Furthermore, Paul was skimming for himself, and lining up his pockets. That meant "taking away from the family", and destroyed trust and any social capital Paul had with the family.

Leadership Tip: Defend Your Team

Yet another mistake from Paul Castellano was to not defend his team.

Says Gravano:

> It was as if Castellano, beset by the unrest brewing in his own family, was seeking allies in other families. "We had this captain up in Connecticut," (…) The Genovese people hated him because he was their competition. They come up with some concocted story about how he was a real pain in the ass. They want permission from Paul to hit him and he gives it and they do kill him. For being a thorn in their side and a pain in the ass? He was doing his job for our family. He was doing what he was supposed to do. And Paul gave him up, a captain in our family, in two seconds, against every Cosa Nostra rule.

How are other team members supposed to feel about that behavior? Like they are worthless pawns for his leader, and that they can be sold at the drop of a hat.

Instead, show that you're on the side of your team, and ready to support them.

Indeed, Gravano says later:

> "It was a big disgrace for the family. A real black eye. You give him up in five minutes to the Genovese family? Would you want your father giving you up like that? That was a bad, bad move Paul made. A real bad move. You want to know your boss is going to fight for you tooth and nail. But now you're not so sure anymore. Probably, he thought it was a good move business-wise or racketeering-wise, but gangsters don't think like that.

Leadership Tip: Keep Your Ego in Check

Leaders who do it for the team command more resources from that team.

Leaders who put "me" first tend to attract a few groupies, but they tend to lose social capital from more high-quality individuals who don't fall for that "great man" myth.
Says Gravano:

> "That's why all the old foxes in Cosa Nostra hated him. And a lot of the bosses. It wasn't the life. Just like when we said Paul Castellano was being selfish about money, this was equally selfish. Because it was for me, me, me. It wasn't for Cosa Nostra. Cosa Nostra was supposed to be family. Not me, me, me.

Leadership Tip: Admit Your Mistakes

Mistakes and corrections are crucial aspects of power dynamics.

Some mistakes can decrease your status and authority.
Yet, never admitting mistakes also decreases social capital. Says Gravano:

> "All John had to do was come to me once during that eleven months we were in there together and say, 'Sammy, I'm sorry. My big fucking mouth got you indicted, number one. Number two, let's try to get a severance for you, so you could fight your case. Fuck the public. Let's try to fight this so that one of us, all of us, a couple of us, get out of this fucking mess. "If he done that, I would have never cooperated with the government, not in a million years would I have cooperated.

We don't know if what Gravano says is true.
He might have cooperated anyway, who knows. But never admitting mistakes is dangerous for a leader, while taking ownership of mistakes can be a fantastic tool to increase trust and increase one's own social power and persuasion.

Also see this forum thread:

- **Thank you for correcting me**: leader's candid admission of mistake

Political Savvy Tip: Watch Out For Your Boss' Tests

In the mafia, where scheming and plotting are embedded in the life, testing others can make the difference between life and death.

Here's how Paul tested Gravano:

> Paul threw down a newspaper in front of me. It was open to a page. 'Here, read this,' he said, walking all around. The story was about Roy DeMeo being found in the trunk of a car. "'What do you think of that?' he said. He don't know that I know that he gave the order. He's being devious. He wants to see my feelings. Like

> maybe I would say, 'Hey, Roy was my best friend. I'm going to get even with whoever the fuck did this.' He's trying to gauge my reaction.

How did Gravano react?
He took the opportunity, of course.

First off, he didn't react too quickly, or that would have seeemed fake.
Instead, he read the newspaper first, and then:

> "So what I did as soon as I got done reading the article, I looked at him and said, 'Paul, if you're mad, I'm mad. If you ain't mad,' I said, putting the paper aside, 'I don't give a fuck.' "He looked at me and said, 'Oh, all right. You want something else with the coffee?' Those were his exact words and it was over and done with. I guess he was happy

Genius.
Read more on:

- Political strategies
- Types of office politics players

Life Strategy: Make Friends, Not Enemies (& Don't One-Up)

This is John Gotti, one-upping the people around and beneath him, making them feel bad, inferior… And resentful:

> Although, on the surface, Willie Boy played the obedient Tonto to Gotti's Lone Ranger, he seemed to take special pleasure in reporting what Gotti was up to. Gotti's idea of humor left plenty to be desired. And Johnson seethed with resentment as Gotti delivered derisive asides about "redskins" and "half-breeds" and often treated him as a second-class citizen.

This guy testified *only* against Gotti.

Divide & Conquer Social Strategy

An interesting power move by Paul Castellano:

> At this meeting, Paul mouths off that he should have had Sammy killed over the Fiala situation. This was classic Paul—divide and conquer. Paul saw and seized an opportunity to drive a wedge between us. The Fiala business was history. But Louie figured that it wasn't resolved in Paul's mind and panicked. He thought if Sammy's going to be killed, he'll be killed as well. He took Paul's word at face value. He don't know Paul well enough to know that Paul was just talking.

Basically, Paul made Louie think he might have ordered a hit on Sammy. And he thought that if he was too close to Sammy, he was in danger as well.
Result?
He saw a risk in being too close to Sammy, and he saw an opportunity in distancing himself.

Don't Believe The Hype

One of the reasons Gotti fell, and one of the reasons why he ultimately weakened his family and mafia in general, is that he fell victim to his own hype.

Says Gravano:

> I've seen a lot of smart people do stupid things because of an ego. John was no different. After a while you get power-struck. He started believing these newspaper and magazine articles, what they were saying about him on television. He went past having a big ego. You're talking now about an egomaniac. He don't want to hear the truth. He's not looking for it. He's looking for people to say what he wants to hear. Not only was the media having a love affair with him, he was having it with himself.

As a matter of fact, the more you become successful, the more you must be careful about ego and hype.
Also see this video:

WISDOM

- **Structure and collaboration = power**

> In 1931, warring factions of the Italian underworld, primarily Sicilian and Neapolitan, came together to form Cosa Nostra. **This union enabled it to completely dominate organized crime**.

Also read: strategies of power.

- **Be smart, and street-smart**

Says Gravano:

> You can't be a thug forever if you want to get ahead. Somewhere along the line, you have to learn to be a racketeer as well. You can be both.

- **Your family doesn't determine your path**

Gravano had loving parents. And his father valued and rewarded honest working. He told Sammy several times. But Sammy seemed to have been "born" to be a gangster.

- **Teachers can help save children**

Gravano, an undiagnosed dyslexic, had been kicked out from school, branded as a "lost case" by most teachers, and was ready to give up on school.
But one teacher almost saved him, restored his faith in himself and helped him catch up.
Says Gravano:

> Because here's a guy who's put such an effort, an honest effort, into you, and you wanted to make him look good

But then he moved yet again, and it was back to the same usual thing of teachers giving up on him.

- **Always listen to both sides**

Gravano's mentor took him under his wings.
And right after he received one local man seeking help:

> I'll get back to you in a day or two.' "After the guy leaves, Toddo looks at me and says, 'Assume you were me, what would you do?' "I said, 'I'd get a couple of guys with some bats and send them over and break this other guy's legs. I'd break everything he's got.' "'Good,' Toddo says. 'You got balls. And you're young and you're stupid.'
> 'You know those things attached to the sides of your head? Those ears? Use them. Remember that in life.

> **Listen with both ears. You listen to one story. You listen to the other one.**

- **Justice inner works have a lot to do with power dynamics**

"Underboss" shows that who the prosecutors go after, and what they're ready to do for it, has a lot to do with "what's in it for me":

> "This D.A., this bum Eugene Gold, who would get caught molesting some kid, don't give a fuck about anybody except Mimi. He sees big headlines with Mimi. And this assistant D.A. comes to me and he says if I flip, if I testify against Mimi, I get a total walk. I'm out of the whole thing.

This isn't just Gravano talking, by the way.
The simple fact that Gravano, who committed 19 murders got away with 5 years and a cushy witness protection program says a lot about how justice works.

- **If you're in criminal organizations, keep your mouth shout**

> Like Toddo Aurello once said, 'You do a hit, it's over and done with. You talk about it and you're doing it again. And it could wind up on tape.'"

And it worked for Sammy:

> when the state's organized crime task force eventually did decide to bug the office, thousands of hours of recorded conversations produced nothing of evidentiary value.

- **Machiavellian move: do good deeds if your name will be linked to it**

Says Sammy:

> "Then John made another play. He said that Cosa Nostra had to replenish our ranks. He brought up the fact that the Genovese family had forty replacements to make and hadn't made any new members for a very, very long time. John figured if he could get Chin to agree to make these forty guys, he would leak it that he was behind them being made and they would ultimately look to John.

Chin being a smart guy, he said that "he appreciated John's thought, and that he would make new made men when he thought it was appropriate".

- **To have a top organization, you need top people**

One of the reasons the mafia was so successful in the underworld is that they enforced and maintained certain rules of conduct and certain expectations from their people.
Compare it to the Irish gangs, for example. Says Gravano:

> "They were just supposed to give this O'Connor a serious beating," Sammy said. "But a lot of the Westies were all fucked-up, drug addicts and drunks. And they end up shooting O'Connor in his legs and ass for whatever reason. So now when the D.A. eventually gets into this, it's a major thing."

QUOTES

On himself using racial slurs but not being racist:

> Now I use words all the time like nigger, spick, Polack, jewboy, Mick, even greaseball, which is people from Italy. That's just the way you talk on the street. I don't think I'm racist. But these rednecks, they are real hard core.

On the gender split of the hairdresser's school he (half-)attended to get government money:

> There's about six hundred girls in there, full-time and part-time. And only five guys, including me. Two of them are stone faggots. You can consider them women.

How a street cred helps collect money:

> When you're dealing at that level, you're lending to the bottom of the barrel (…) But even so, during those years, there's only two people I had to hit to collect. Physically hit, I mean. Only two people. I think that says something about the reputation I had.

On the intricacies, Machiavellianism, friendship, and betrayal all embedded in the mafia, at once:

> That was some irony there. Here was Joe Colucci joking and drinking it up with Tommy, who was coming on to his wife, the guy Joe wanted dead. Here was Frankie, who was in on both sides of the story. And here was me, on my first hit, the hunter and the hunted, all at once. Just another day in the life of organized crime.

On the mentality of Gravano, notice what he says at the end:

> Joe Colucci was dead. He looked like he was sleeping. He looked peaceful. You going to blow me away now? I thought.

On how he felt after his first hit:

> But then I felt a surge of power. I realized that I had taken a human life, that I had the power over life and death. I was a predator. I was an animal. I was Cosa Nostra.

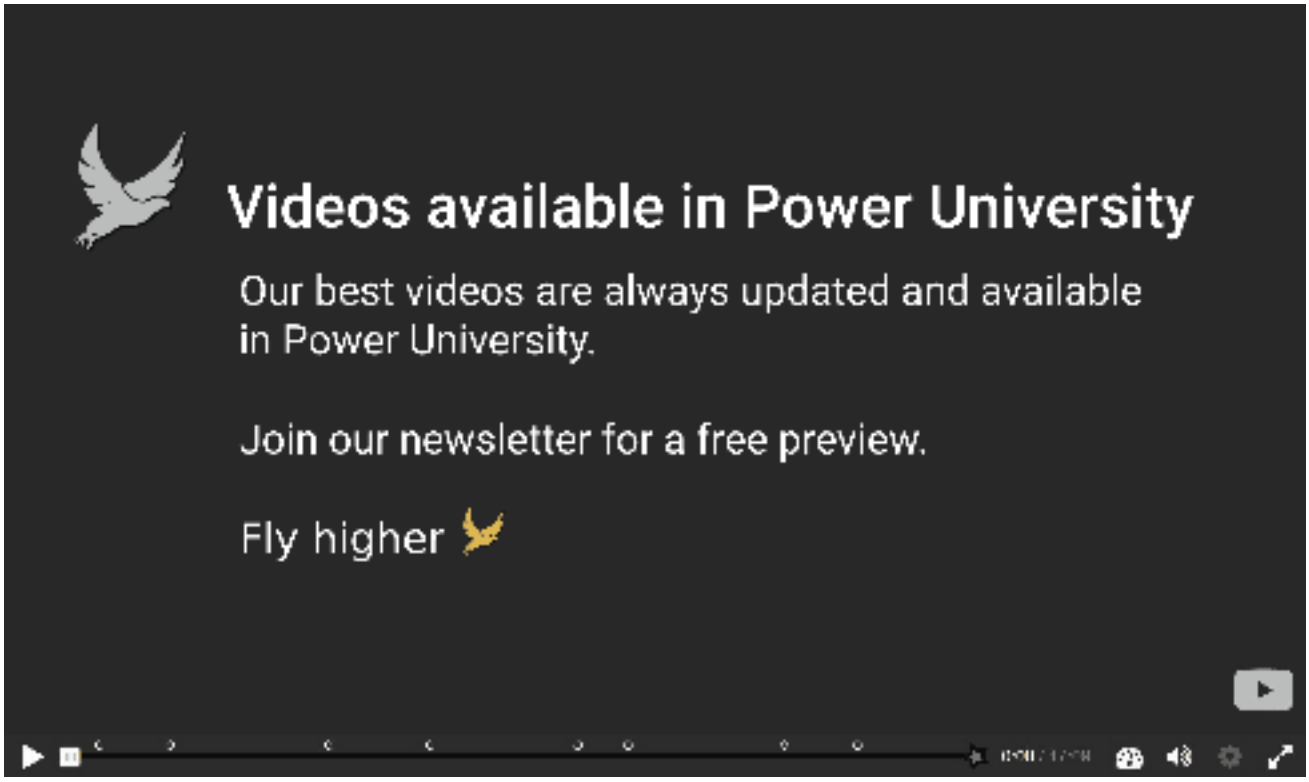
Marry the good girl.
It's especially a good idea to keep you balanced.
Talking about her future wife she saw in a club:

> But I'm watching Debbie. She looks so out of her element in that place. I mean, I'm used to seeing a certain kind of woman in there and she is not that kind of woman. She seems so fresh, so innocent. More than anything, that's what caught my attention.
>
> (…)
>
> I saw her in the kitchen. She had an apron on, she looked like a little housemother, cooking away, cooking and tasting the sauce and the sausage and the macaroni. She was so different from the sluts that I'm dealing with every other minute at the club.

On the friction between "honor" and "criminality":

> Toddo was an honest man within the life. It may be hard to understand that. He was a gangster and a crook, but to us he had honor.

And a good video:



> **Her**: Don't you see the irony of Sammy the Bull pleased that people have good manners?
>
> **Him**: That's because you're not a mobster and never was

What a genius retort.

Again, on honor:

> Gotti was a big-time player and a big-time loser. He always paid his debts, not out of some moral sense but because to do otherwise would bring about immediate dishonor in mob circles.

On Gravano being the happiest when he became a made man (and this was a man who was already a father by then):

> They're calling one guy at a time to go to the basement. I'm as high as a kite. I mean, this is the biggest day of my life, especially at that point. Finally, I'm told, 'Sammy, we want you to come down.' "I'm nervous as hell, but happy nervous.

Again on mafia, even including the betrayal, still also being about honor and brotherhood in the mind of (some) of its members (even while Gravano himself says that he realized late it was BS, it was no less real):

> "I bought this all one hundred thousand percent. I really felt that I belonged to a brotherhood that had honor and respect. All the things I looked for in life was in a good part of that oath.

On the unfair advantage of using threats and fear doing business:

> When the immensely wealthy owner of the Waldbaum chain that bore his name was asked by a presidential commission on organized crime how he could have knuckled under to the Mafia, he replied, "Don't forget I

> have a wife and children."

On honor and "dying with honor":

> Like the man he was, the man I had come to understand him to be, the man I'd learned to respect over the past hours, he accepted this without comment. I felt terrible that a man with such balls had to be hit. But this was Cosa Nostra. (…) He died with dignity. He died Cosa Nostra.

A funny quote:

> Unhappy with what he considered to be sloppy management, Sammy decided to take over the whole operation and got rid of the four original owners. "I just bullied my way in. I said I was going to make them an offer they couldn't refuse. I didn't have to explain. I imagine they all saw The Godfather.

When a hit needs to be done, to make sure it's done, it's the killed life, or the killer's life:

> These two guys have got to go. 'Don't worry about the cops,' he says, 'because if you run and these guys ain't dead, we'll kill you.'"

On negotiation and the advantages of "paying in installments":

> The head of the Westies had come to Sammy and told him that he knew someone on the jury who was available for a price. "How much of a price?" Sammy asked. The answer was $120,000. Ever the negotiator, Sammy whittled it down to $60,000, payable in installments. You never knew, he figured. The guy could get sick or something.

On Gotti wanting to be "known" (funny):

> Piecyk found two cops and said that he had just been beaten and robbed. He led them back to the bar and pointed out Gotti and Colletta as his assailants. As Gotti was being handcuffed by one of the cops, he demanded, "Don't you know who I am?" To his evident displeasure, the cop replied, "No, and I don't care."

(but that Piecyk later recanted and withdrew his complaint once he realized who it was).

PROS

- **True page turner**: the most exciting, enthralling book I've read in a long time
- **Deep lessons**: if you can read between the lines -important "IF"!-, it contains some of the best lessons learned on strategies, leadership, and Machiavellianism

CONS

For as much as I loved this book, there also important cons:

- **Self-serving in justifying his own "snitching"**

Sammy turned informant, which is a big no-no in that life for anyone, and especially for someone at his level.

He justifies his choice by blaming it on Gotti and "the life" that was all fake, he says.

But this is what Michael Franzese, a former mobster who did not put anyone in prison, said about Sammy "turning":

Sammy also laid it on thick on John Gotti.

Gotti wasn't perfect, for sure, and as far as I know, Gravano might be partially right. Yet, some of the accusations he moves to Gotti feel so exaggerated that you'd just think they're fake.

Even some of the reasons he provides for disliking Gotti feel conveniently self-serving.
He says he started disliking Gotti because he cheered for Iraq in the Iraqui war, while Gravano instead didn't want "our kids", the American soldiers, to die.
Then Gravano was given a military jacket when it was raining outside and he happened to "remember" his days in the army, and now he felt so "American and patriotic".

What a convenient narrative though, eh?

- **Some parts of the story don't add up**

Some elements don't add up.

When Gravano told his wife and daughter he was going to collaborate, his daughter turned hysterical.
And his own wife decided and told him right there and then that she wouldn't go with him under witness protection.

Why not?

Gravano paints a picture of a loving wife.
But that's not how a loving wife behaves. She wouldn't leave the moment she gets to know that he was going to join the family again sooner rather than later.

- **Paul Maas own opinions feel like empty and shallow moralizing**

Says the author:

> The fictional Godfather was myth-making at its most compelling (…) Never mind that loyalty and honor played no part in the actual Cosa Nostra. Perceived reality was what mattered.

That's the author's own opinion.
But it's not true, and his own book disproves it. Even for Gravano, who later testified, honor was a big part of that life -just read the quote-.

Many of those guys' goals was to "be a man's man", to be honorable and respected.

Yes, you might say "honor" was, at least to some extent, a manipulative tool to increase cooperation from others while leaving down the door open for individual's defection.
But it was still part of that life, and of its allure.

REVIEW

"Underboss" is the book I devoured the quickest in the last year.

It's because I usually read "heavier" books, while this is more the type of book that you read for personal pleasure.
Yet, there are more lessons learned in "Underboss" than in most self-development books.

Especially, "Underboss" is a treasure trove for power dynamics, social strategies, and Machiavellianism.

Also read:

- **Best books on power**

Get the book on Amazon

Best Self-Help Books For Women

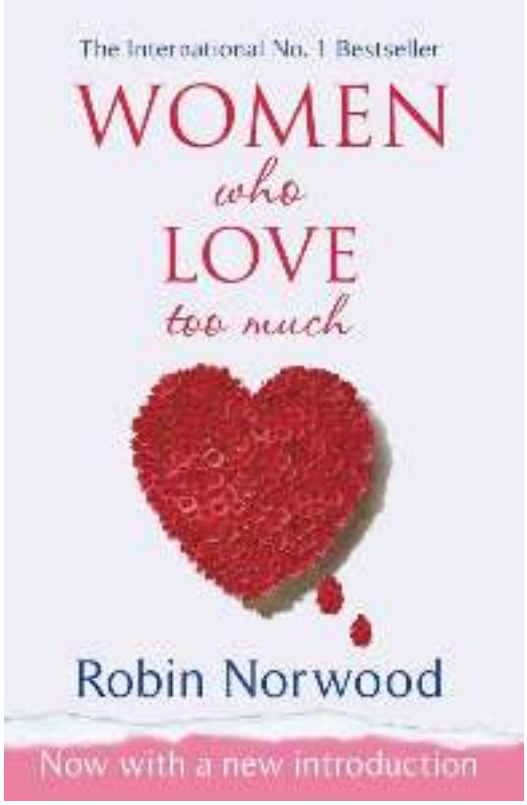
Lucio Buffalmano · 14 January 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Without long preambles, this is a list of the most empowering book for women:

Contents

- 8. Women Who Love Too Much
- 7. Will I Ever Be Good Enough
- 6. Who's Pulling Your Strings
- 5. The Woman's Guide to How Men Think
- 4. Assertiveness For Women
- 3. Dating Power Dynamics
- 2. Hardball For Women
- 1. The Myth of The Nice Girl
- Be Careful With:
- Avoid These Traps:

8. Women Who Love Too Much



By Robin Norwood

Review

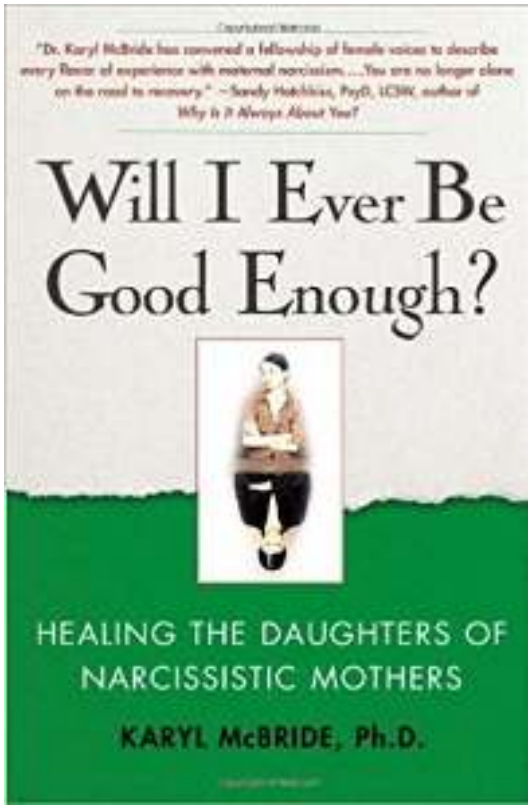
Frankly, only a minority of women fall in the "women who love too much" category.

Still, albeit the numbers may be low, the downsides of being one of them are very large, so it might make sense to give this wonderful book a read.

> Quote: The choice is yours. If you choose to begin the process of recovery, you will change from a woman

> who loves someone else so much it hurts into a woman who loves herself enough to stop the pain.

7. Will I Ever Be Good Enough



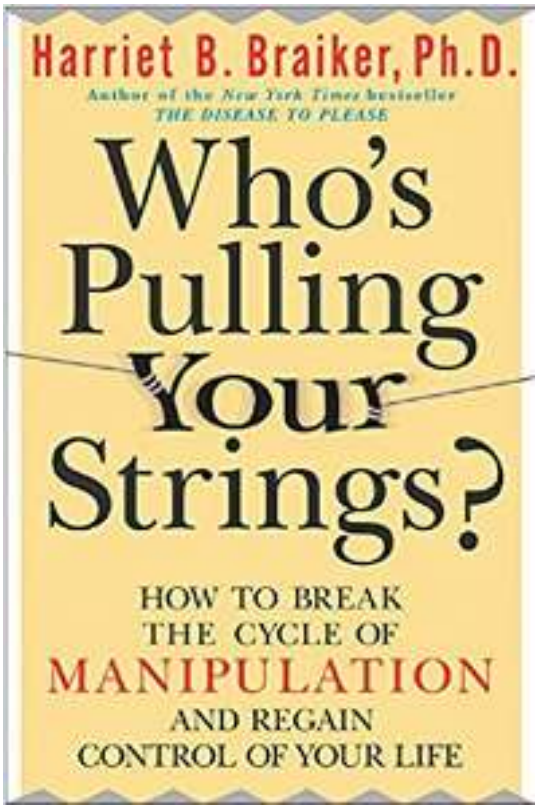
By Karil Mcbride
Review

Same as above: few women are the daughters of narcissistic mothers.
But the reasons why this wonderful book makes the list of “best self-help books for women” are twofold:

1. Untreated lack of maternal love be disastrous
2. It makes a good guide on one of the most harmful mistake a mother can make

> Quote: Most damaging is that a narcissistic mother never approves of her daughter simply for being herself, which the daughter desperately needs in order to grow into a confident woman.

6. Who’s Pulling Your Strings



By Harriet Braiker
Review

Your manual against manipulation.

Together with "Why Does He Do That" and "Emotional Blackmail", this is your guide to avoid falling into the trap of manipulative, abusive, and/or controlling men.

Also good:

- **Types of abusive men**: your guide to abusive men, crucial to avoid toxic relationships

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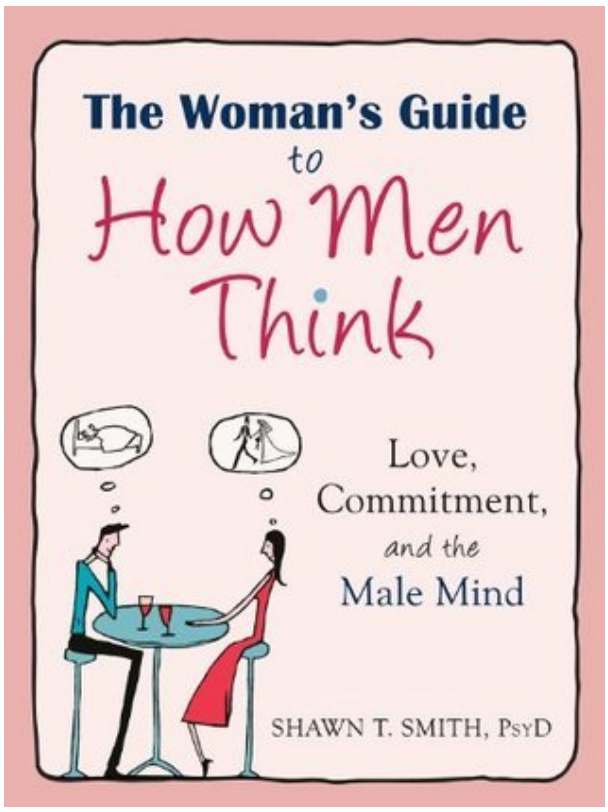
5. The Woman's Guide to How Men Think



By Shawn Smith
Review

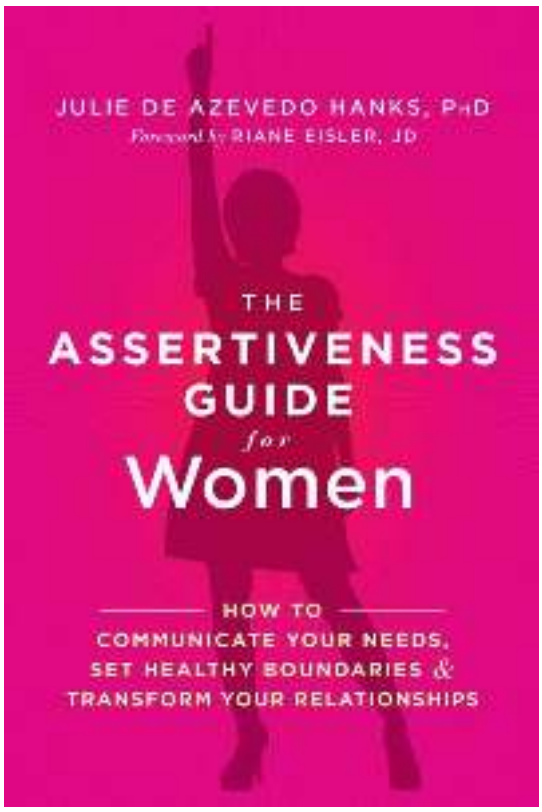
We've seen a few books to avoid the value-taker.
Now a book to understand the male point of view in relationships.

Smith says he writes from the point of view "good men", such as manly men who invest, but also strive to better themselves and their lives outside of the relationship, and I think he does a good job at that.

This book can help you understand male psychology in a practical way that will help improve your relationship.

> Quote: Good men are dutiful men. They want to be effective in their lives, their careers, and their relationships.

4. Assertiveness For Women



By Julie Hanks
Review

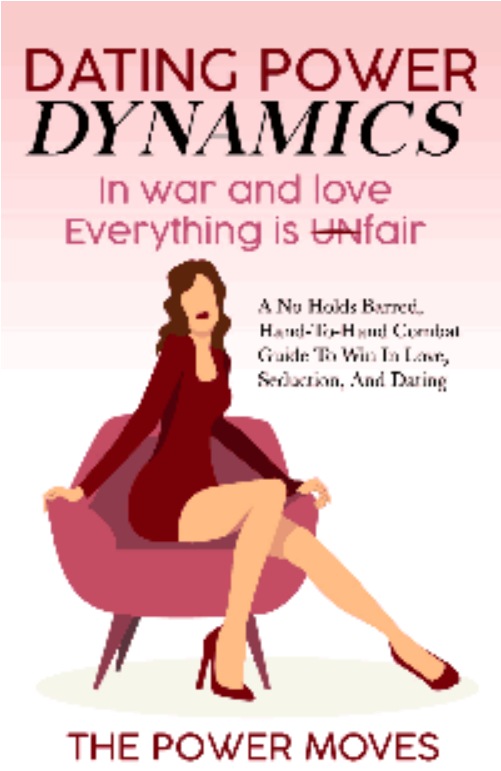
Assertiveness is as important to men, as it is women -OK, it's even more important for men, but still very important for women as well-.

On the con side, unluckily the author of this book seems to buy into the current (unhelpful) culture that men and women should be the same, so we don't get a book that is about assertiveness *and* femininity at the same time.
On the plus side, it's still a great book.

Also read:

- Strong VS submissive women

3. Dating Power Dynamics



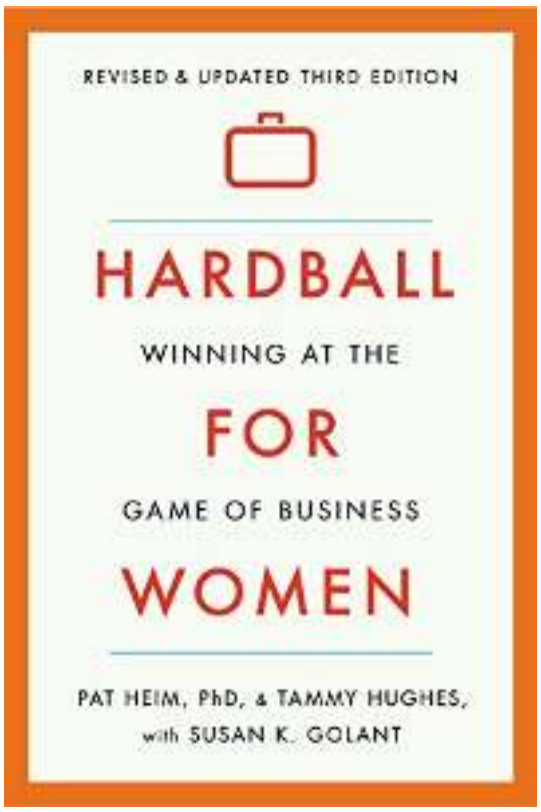
By Lucio Buffalmano
Review

The best manual for effective dating and dating strategies.

Also read:

- Women's dating strategies
- Most common women's dating mistakes

2. Hardball For Women



By Pat Heim
Review

OK, we've seen plenty of books about dating and relationships.

And before anyone writes me saying "women aren't only interested in finding a good man" :), here is one of the best books for women who seek business success.

Let me preface by saying that "Hardball for Women" is best for women in business, but female entrepreneurs will still have much to learn.
If the previous book was about "understanding men in relationships", this is about "understanding men in business". And since most businesses are still dominated by men -and will likely be so in the future-, then this is an important read for women.

Also read:

- **Career University**: simply the best resource for women who seek career success
- How to Win at Work: the businesswoman's guide to winning at work
- How Men Keep Women Down: intersexual competition focused on the workplace

> Quote: Power is an uncomfortable subject for many. In fact, women tell us they don't want to deal with that "power stuff" because they aren't "power hungry." They act as if power is a social disease to be avoided at all costs.

1. The Myth of The Nice Girl

By Fran Hauser

Mandatory reading if you're going for "Hardball for Women" or similar titles like "Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office".

Why?
Because these books are teaching women to be more like men.

But that's not the solution.
Or, at least, it comes with some major downsides.
Much better is to seek personal success while also retaining femininity, which is a power tool of its own.

Fran Hauser calls the mindset of "having to be tough to succeed" a "myth".
She says instead that she's achieved plenty of success while still being kind and caring.

Also read:

- How to be feminine: the basic "start here" resource
- How to combine power and femininity: a preview from "Power University"

> Quote: Make them a part of the process. By making it clear that you are looking to collaborate instead of compete, you'll earn their trust and their respect.

Be Careful With:

Plenty of books are advertised as "by women, for women".

Still, that it's written by a woman and for women doesn't necessarily make it *empowering* for women.

Here are some titles to be careful with:

- **Girl Wash Your Face**: OK book with a lot of general self-help principles. But watch out for that re-hashed thing of "be confident".

- **Daring Greatly**: Great book, actually. But you need to be aware of the limitations of vulnerabilities. And an antifragile ego is a far better tool against shame.

Avoid These Traps:

- **The Universe Has Your Back**: you're better off making sure, rather than trusting. Trusting might you make *feel* better, but won't necessarily *make* you better off.
- **The Secret**: just skip it
- **Unleash Your Inner Money Babe**: the full title of this book should tell you everything: "Uplevel Your Money Mindset and Manifest $1,000 in 21 Days"
- **Lucky Bitch / Get Rich Lucky Bitch**: the only one who might get rich is the author. But you'll most likely stay poor with the law of attraction (plus: never buy a book that calls you, the buyer, a "bitch").

Permission to be frank here:

These books are the real reason why women earn less than men.

Yes, there might be *some* bias in the gender gap, and a good chunk of that gap is because of different evolutionary drives.
But a part of that is also because men are less likely to fall for the BS spouted by the above books.

Successful men don't waste their time wishing to wish things into reality.
They make plans grounded on *reality*, they seek reality-based feedback -however harsh that might be-, and they *work* to turn their wishes into reality.

They don't say "the universe has my back", they say "I'm gonna make a *dent* in the university".
Big freaking difference, no?

Luckily, if you're reading here, you're a smart gal, so you're less likely to fall for the above.
And with this list -and this website-, you have all the best tools available to you for a successful and happy life.

The Science of “Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks” (Facts VS Myths)

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 January 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Alpha fucks beta bucks is a red pill maxim describing foundational sexual marketplace dynamics.

In brief, it means that alpha males enjoy free, easy, and abundant sexual access to women, while beta males struggle despite their expensive courtship efforts.

That’s “alpha fucks, beta bucks” in a nutshell.

But… Is it true?

As for many red pill maxim, it’s partly true.
And it’s partly misleading when, as if it’s often the case, is interpreted with black-and-white generalizations.

So let’s clarify.

Contents

- Intro & Science
  - Alpha Short Term, Beta Long Term
  - Related Concept: Dual Mating Strategy & Ovulatory Shift
  - A More Nuanced Reality
- Corollary 1: Alphas fuck more (true)
- Corollary 2: Alphas fuck with less investment (true)
- Corollary 3: Alphas fuck quicker (true)
- Corollary 4: Alphas get better fucks (true)
- Correction 1: Bucks = power
- Correction 2: Bucks = SMV boost for long-term dating
- Correction 3: Bucks = Important for top 1% women
- Correction 4: Granularity, & shades of grey
  - Beta Fucks

- Alpha Bucks: Wealth For Harems
- Alpha Providers: Family, But No Diapers
- Alpha Boyfriends: High-Quality Men In Relationships
- Blue Pill Alphas

Intro & Science

We define "alpha fucks, beta bucks" dynamics as:

> A pattern of dominant and high value men gaining quick sexual access with little investment, while lower value men must wait and offer various types of resources.

Despite the simplification, the mantra is not completely wrong.
It's even described by Campbell (2020) in *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives*:

> Although the selective forces that led to widespread human pair-bonding are debated, Gavrilets (2012) found support for a plausible model that showed that, if females were willing to forego extra-pair matings and preferred males who provided resources, **male provisioning would increase driven chiefly by low-ranking males who would otherwise fail to reproduce at all**.

In simpler words, it says that **lower value men provision/buck**.
And although Campbell presents it as a theoretical model, logic and experience offer good support.

Alpha Short Term, Beta Long Term

Dating can be divided into two large sub-domains:

1. **Short-term**, often fast, uncommitted, no strings attached
2. **Long-term**, often slower courtship, committed, strings attached

While many men would love to engage in short-term, uncommitted sex, few can.

Research shows that women have different preferences for short-term and long-term.
Dominance sees the largest upregulation from long-term to short-term (Brown et al, 2022).

So men who can enjoy short-term casual sex tend to be attractive, interpersonally dominant leaders ('alphas').

Lower mate value men instead must play the long-term game, and commit and stick with a single woman.

Related Concept: Dual Mating Strategy & Ovulatory Shift

"Alpha fucks, beta bucks" is related to:

- **Dual sexuality model**: The theory that women evolved to pursue long-term partners for resources and stability, while seeking short-term mates with high genetic fitness—often covertly, and especially near ovulation (Gangestad & Tornehill, 2008)
- **Ovulatory shift**: The theory that women are most attracted to 'alpha types' during ovulation. Hormones largely govern the ovulatory shift
- **Infidelity patterns**: Women marry the 'beta types' providers, but seek to cheat with the 'alpha types', especially during ovulation

Behaviorally, it means: "lock in a lower-status "beta" to support you, while reproducing with a more attractive

"alpha".

While we believe there may be some uncomfortable truths in these theories, reality is more nuanced.
Empirically, the latest *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology* states that the evidence for dual sexuality is mixed.
Evidence is even more mixed for the Ovulatory Shift Hypothesis'.

However, "alpha f*cks, beta bucks" doesn't require any other theory because the main premise is simpler: that 'alpha types' experience a much different mating life than 'beta types'.

So in this article, we'll stick instead to the more practical ramifications of "alpha f*cks, beta bucks".

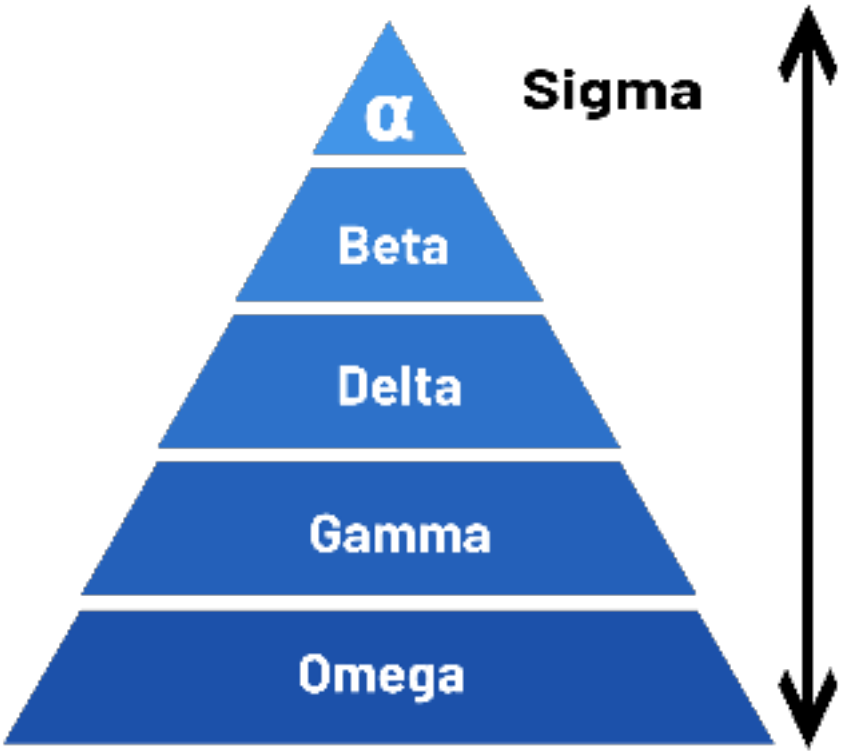
Let's start with an overview:

A More Nuanced Reality

Reality is complex.

And while simple models are perfectly valid, *simplistic* models can inject too many distortions.

To begin with, alpha and beta are wrong.
A *slight* improvement would be to use the correct categories:



This is also an over-simplification, but it's a step forward
But for the sake of brevity and simplicity, let's imagine:

- **Alpha male is high-value**, attractive, dominant, and confident
- **Beta male is low-value**, unattractive, submissive, self-doubting

Corollary 1: Alphas fuck more (true)

The first corollary of the maxim is that alpha males have or *can* have more sex.

If the alpha male is more attractive, charismatic, confident, higher status, a leader etc. etc., then this is so obviously

true.

At parity of everything else, alpha males have easier access to sex.

Exception: Variety VS frequency, when betas have more sex

General population-level rules always have individual-level exceptions, of course.

But even at the population level, there is one important exception.

I'll give you an example:

As a kid, I remember two older brothers bragging of sexual success.
Each of them claimed to have more sex and… They were both right.

How was that possible?

Well, the older one was far "cooler" and "alpha". But he was mostly single because he sought diversity of sexual partners.
The younger one had a stable girlfriend.
So while the alpha had to find a new sexual partner, the younger brother was getting laid consistently (close to 100% of the times he'd meet his girlfriend).

So **the single alpha who seeks variety as a single man might end up with a far higher sexual partners count, but fewer overall sex-session count** as compared to a less alpha guy who is in a relationship.

But this does not affect the general rule.
Alpha males have better odds of having sex with any new woman than a beta male.

Corollary 2: Alphas fuck with less investment (true)

"Alpha fucks beta bucks" implies that:

Higher mate value men gain sexual access with less investment compared to lower value men.

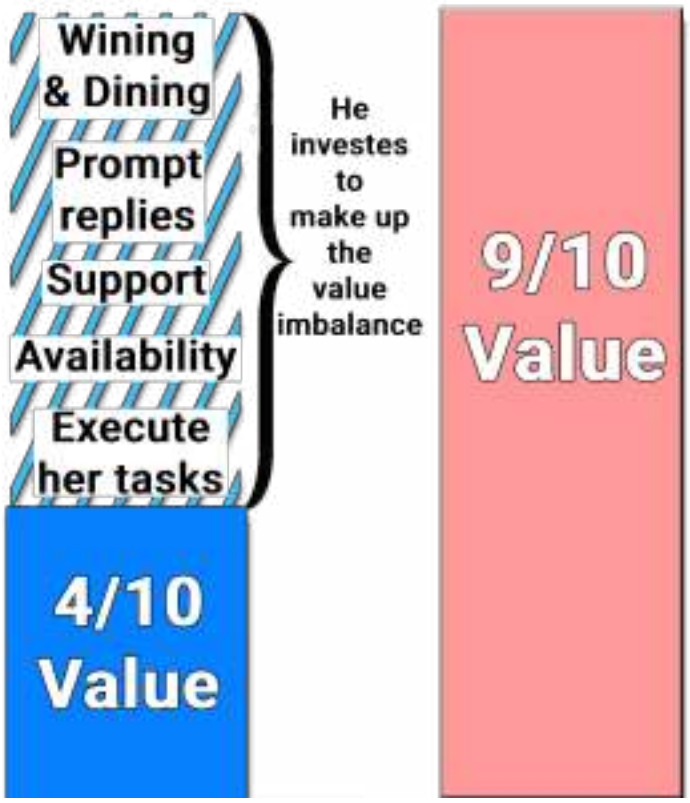
Let's explain:

In the sexual marketplace, just like any other social exchange, people seek to the get the best available for them.

Men and women assess each other's sexual market value along an array of different traits.
Many of these traits are immediately attractive (think of looks, confidence, dominance, status, etc.).
What happens is that **the more attraction-based value you have, the less external value you need** to be a 'great option'.

A more attractive man may instead have to add *external* value to make his offer attractive.

See here a chart:



Lower value men 'make up the difference' not just with 'bucks', but with anything besides his genes/penis.
This is standard 'compensatory investment principle' from the social investment model.

Personal and financial investments are quite different.

Personal investment signals include kindness, listening, asking questions, opening doors, texting often, etc. etc. They're promissory notes of *future* investment for long-term dating.

Financial investment instead says "If you mate with me, I can support you (and our possible future children)". Signals include paying for dates, driving a good car, picking an expensive restaurant, and maybe talking up their job.

In general, alpha males indeed need less external value to achieve the same result.

Note:
It doesn't mean alphas *necessarily* invest less, it means alphas *can* invest less to achieve the same -or better- results as non-alphas.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Beware: the "zero money" di*khead trap**

Lucio:
I was extreme into “not investing”, and it handicapped my dating.

If a girl said she hadn’t eaten yet, I’d insist I had, just to avoid food costs.

There was a period I wouldn’t invest even *after* intimacy.

I remember once a girl asked “if we could go get pizza” together.
“Pizza”? I thought. You don’t get free handouts from me, I’m just the sex guy.

Compare: I could have enjoyed a pizza with a pretty girl, and made it a better experience for both. Instead, I sent her packing like the worst cheapo dic*head.

Pretty shameful behavior in hindsight ⍰⍰♂.

Corollary 3: Alphas fuck quicker (true)

A third corollary is that alpha males can get to sex faster.

This is also generally true, and now we get into the realm of the lover and the provider as well.
If you need to refresh your mind, see:

- Lovers and providers
- Lover and provider strategies

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

Let’s clarify this first: alpha males aren’t always lovers, and betas aren’t always providers.

BUT alphas are more *able* to date as lovers, while betas must rely more on providing.

Lovers and providers work at inherently different speeds.

While the lover approach is attraction-based, the provider must prove himself over a period of time.
Providing is based on "sticking around" within a committed relationship. And to honestly signal future commitment, you need to do that *over time*.

So once we're into the provider approach to dating, the woman is almost obliged to let him wait to:

1. Ensure he commits and appreciates her
2. Maintain the image of being worthy of that investment

To understand #2, read Madonna/whore dichotomy or watch this video:

Quick detours:

Without mutual attraction, the longer courtship is the only way to get a sexual relationship.
So, strategically, there times and places for the courtship method.

Anyway, again, it's true that, *on average*, alpha males get to sex quicker, and especially so when they date as lovers.

Corollary 4: Alphas get better fucks (true)

Sex with lovers, based on attraction and without playing 'good girl games', tends to be more disinhibited and passionate.

Studies also show that women are more likely to orgasm when their partner is attractive and very masculine.

Plus, if alphas are more fit and betas are less fit, it naturally follows that sex, a physical activity, tends to be better for alphas.

As usual, there are exceptions, and caveats of course.
Some studies show that partners who induce the highest orgasm rates have traits of a good long-term partner, including greater care and effort.
And emotional intimacy in relationships improves sexual experiences. *Especially* with less promiscuous women.

Anyway, the general rule stands.

So, where does this maxim fall short then?

Let's see:

Correction 1: Bucks = power

One failure of the maxim is in the *interpretation*.

Beta bucks puts together the worst stereotype of the man who fails at dating, and the bucks, such as the personal investment and the financial resources.

So **some guys wrongly equate the use or display of personal investment or resources to being a loser/beta,** but that is not *necessarily* true.

Let's focus on resources first.

It may be true that *in general*, lower quality guys are more likely to "pay to play".
But smart men can also leverage resources to increase their dating success. And that's a *winner's* approach.

Resources by themselves are neither alpha nor beta: **resources are an incredible source of power**.
Both in life, and in dating.

♂Lucio's Take: **money well used is power**

Lucio:
Storytelling time.

Some time ago, I was out with a girl.

We snug on a couch when the waitress said, she couldn't get us drinks without food, and implied we had to leave.
I open the menu, point at one dish, and said "OK, bring us this, and two vodka martinis".

That was a high-power way of using resources.
Not to exchange food for intimacy, but to display power.

We barely touched the food, and we didn't even finish the drinks.

Back to mine, I could see she only waited for my move. And since I left the AC on, it ended up in a mess of hot sweat.
One of the best 2020 romps.

Similarly, I had quick sexual encounters replying that 'I pay nothing because it;s mine' hwen women asked about the rent.

Correction 2: Bucks = SMV boost for long-term dating

In general, resources are more valuable for committed and longer-term dating.

For example, take an attractive alpha male who is broke and jobless and a non-attractive beta male who is a billionaire.
The broke alpha might do better in the short term, while the beta billionaire might secure a better long term partner.

Case in point, Elon Musk:

Elon Musk, bullied and on the spectrum, may have been a “beta” in his younger years. Rich, famous, and powerful, he became an alpha

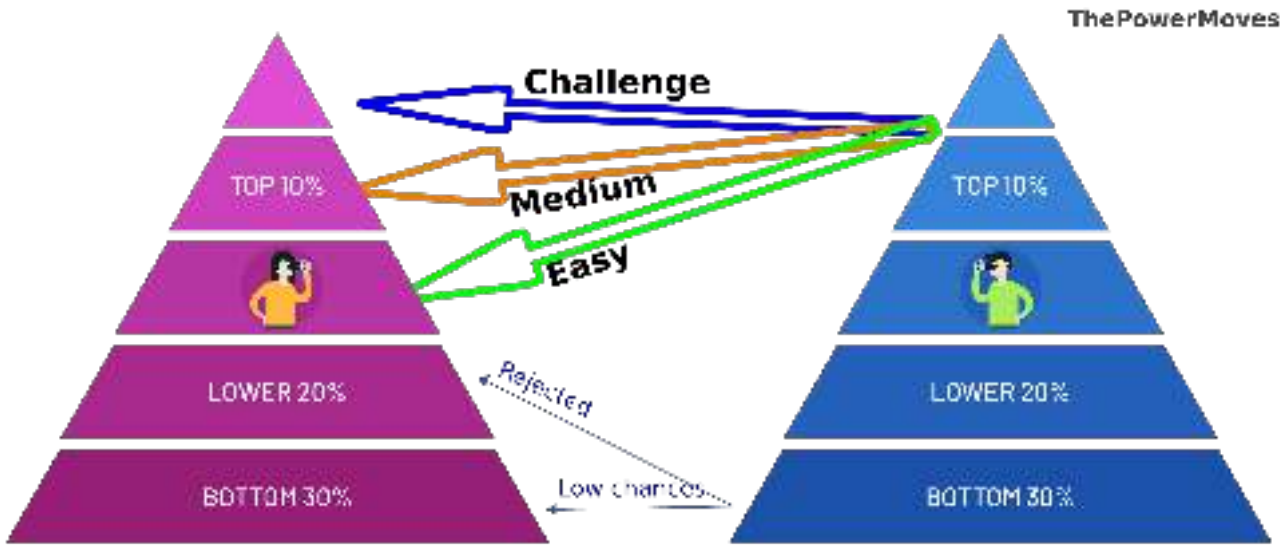
This approach is even more useful for less attractive men, who can leverage resources for secure a higher quality partner—a strategy even openly confirmed in the latest *Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology*.

P.S.:
Throwing money around can also be a tactic for short term with ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Kenrick et al., 2011), but let’s avoid off-topic.

Correction 3: Bucks = Important for top 1% women

Some believe that displaying resources automatically equals “poor dating”.

But resources can be equally empowering for alphas because **alpha dating power is strongest with lower quality women**. But it’s more challenging when dating around the same value.
See this chart:



Read more about hypergamy here
Let's simplify again:

For a man who is an 'eight' it's easy to get 'five' fast and without investment -if he's good at least: some lower SMV women might reject themselves first, but let's keep it simple-.

But if that eight is interested in a nine, it won't be a piece of cake anymore.

One, because she's around his same level, and two, because he's competing with other attractive men.
Top women *only* date top men, so being "alpha" grants no special points anymore.
That is true for the short term and, even more, for relationships.

And that's where resources, status, or commitment can be helpful.

Example: Top 0.1% Dating

Let's make an example.

Take the top Hollywood star of her age—1990's Angelina Jolie.

Now imagine Angelina Jolie dates a hunky personal trainer.

The trainer might be a top option at the bar, but now he's in a different ballgame.
Brad Pitt or DiCaprio may also want Angelina.

Angelina might still take that personal trainer for a spin, but it's *on her terms*.
She's got the power (unless he studies TPM).
Angelina might even avoid being seen with him to keep a reputation of a classy, unreachable top 0.1% woman.

That personal trainer is outgunned by Brad Pitt, who is a higher value man in Angelina's eyes.

And now:

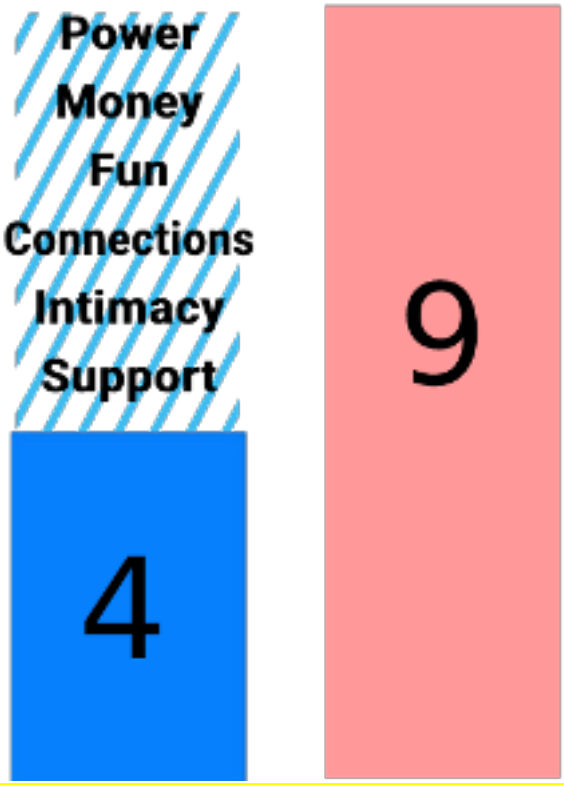
Imagine Angelina is dating DiCaprio, Gosling, and Pitt, but only Pitt is willing to commit.
Then she will probably pick Pitt, because **commitment is valuable to most women**.
Fisher in The *Cambridge Handbook of Female Adaptations* confirms that women even *compete* for male investment.

That's even true for top women.
It's basic dating dynamics, and research confirms that top women want it all, including bucks, *because they can get it*.

See the point?
Resources are helpful whenever you're shooting for higher-quality women.

And that's true independently of whether you're a beta, an alpha, or anything in between.

Let's revisit the above chart:



With external value, a 4 can land a 9, and it's a fair, win-win exchange
The same goes for personal investment, including caring and bonding—all positive traits that increase your overall value. Especially for long-term dating.

Also see:

- How to maintain power in relationships

Makes sense?

Example: using resources to change a woman's mind

"Changing her mind" is not something we'd recommend.

But it's a good example to understand intersexual dynamics:

> **Him**: She kept standing me up (…) so one night (…) I drive her to the airport where my Learjet 25 was (…) she had never been on a private jet (…) flew to NYC, we headed to the Italian restaurant, first time she saw a sight like that (…) it makes an impression

Franzese married her, and she turned out to be a devout and loyal wife.

Correction 4: Granularity, & shades of grey

The last issue with the mantra is the black-and-white generalizations.

Obviously, the world is not just alphas with no-strings-attached sex and betas who invest a lot and never get sex.

In truth, the world is far more shades of grey.

So let's add a few more categories for a better understanding of intersexual dynamics:

Beta Fucks

The beta who never, ever gets any sex is a minority.

It may seem otherwise to younger men because of too much internet and alpha male posturing.

But most "non-alphas" do get some girlfriends.

I can tell you that from personal experience.
When it came to either committing or losing her, I committed to keep a more attractive woman than I was:

Sure as fuck I didn't wanna go to hers for Christmas, but guess what old-me did? :)
Alphas who can sleep with anyone at any time are a tiny minority.
And so are men who never *ever* fuck.
In truth, **the silent majority are various shades of betas who (eventually) fuck**.

Alpha Bucks: Wealth For Harems

Top alpha bucks are wealthy men who leverage financial resources for fast and easy sex, without emotiona or time commitment.

They pay for women's lodging, life and expenses just to keep them around "on call" -sexual call-.

As an example, take Berlusconi.

Berlusconi put some of his women in various real estate around Milan.
I don't think he even visited them much. But he'd call them over for his "bunga bunga parties".

While that was a big investment for most men, it's still peanuts for a billionaire.

Paparazzi's picture of Berlusconi's villa

Financial VS Emotional Investment

Alpha bucks show us that:

Financial investment and personal investment are VERY different.

High-order financial investment allows men to avoid any personal investment, including commitment or emotional closeness.

But it's not my style.

Alpha Providers: Family, But No Diapers

While the alpha bucks seek sex and diversity without commitment, alpha providers commit.

They may also marry and have children. BUT… they do not get involved with chores and child-rearing.

Donald Trump is a great example.

Listen to him speak, he makes it *very* clear:

> **Trump**: I like kids, I mean, I won't do anything to take care of them
> (…)
> I might even never see the kid

Note how Melania was cool with that (But I advise you not to talk like that publicly).

Alpha Boyfriends: High-Quality Men In Relationships

These are alpha males who prefer relationships.

They invest, commit, and raise children.

Alpha dads are the backbone of civilization because they pursue their mission, while also raising healthy children.

Exceptions always apply, but women who land these men are lucky and happy women.

It's popular to slag Obama's relationship online.
But everyone has their taste, and he's a good example of an alpha husband.

'Alpha types' in relationship also experience a favorable ovulatory shift. Such as, they become more attractive during ovulation.
Write Virginia E. Mitchell and team in the *Oxford Handbook of Infidelity*:

> **women with more sexually desirable partners report feeling closer to their partners** and experiencing more relationship satisfaction **around ovulation** than women who have less sexually desirable partners (Larson et al., 2013)

Blue Pill Alphas

They are alpha males, but clueless of power dynamics, and manipulation dynamics.

Unluckily, success without power awareness is precarious.
And if they meet a more Machiavellian, manipulative woman, they're in trouble.

Exactly what happened to Mike Tyson:

> **Interviewer**: There was no prenuptial agreement
> **Robin**: We got married to be together for ever, not to plan for divorce
> (…)
> **Robin**: It's been hell, Mike Tyson is a manic depressive, he just is, it's a fact, it's been torture
> (later divorces him for millions)

It's a stark reminder that **being "alpha" is not enough and you must learn the basics of power dynamics**.

I'd take "power-aware" over "alpha" any time of the day.

More…

For more & better role models, examples, and practical strategies: "Seduction University"

Leadership 101: The Foundations of Good Leadership

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 January 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Great leadership starts with mastering the fundamentals.

Whether you're managing a team or aiming to inspire others, understanding core principles like social exchange, social power dynamics, and high-value mindsets is essential.

This Leadership 101 guide breaks down these critical concepts and shows you how to apply them for real-world impact.

Let's start your Leadership 101 training:

Contents

- 1. The Leadership Exchange: Give & Take
  - When Leaders Are Takers: Over-Ambition & Self-Focus
- 2. Leadership Power Dynamics: Dominance VS Influence
- 3. Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership
  - Growing beyond transactional leadership
- 4. Leadership's Ceiling: The Law of The Lid
  - Poor leadership confirms the exchange & the law of the lid
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  - 1. Great leadership begins with my self-development
  - 2. It's my responsibility to be as good as I can be
  - 3. It's my responsibility to make people better off
  - 4. I set the example of the top performance I demand
  - 5. It's my responsibility to lead for goal-achievement
  - 6. Once I'm a good leader, it's my duty to lead

- 7. Once I give, I can also get the leadership benefits

1. The Leadership Exchange: Give & Take

The social exchange model postulates that to get something, you must give something.

Research suggests the exchange model also applies to leadership ('service for prestige', Price & Vugt, 2013).

In that exchange, the leader enjoys highest status, influence, increased attraction from the opposite sex gender and, in organizations, higher pay.

However, **to maintain legitimacy while enjoying the perks of leadership, the leader must also *give* to his followers**.

Giving back is the only way to keep the exchange balanced.

If you don't give back, you lose the social capital necessary to lead effectively.
Unless propped up by coercive means, you lose influence. And in democratic or free systems, the top performers are more likely to leave.

There are many ways of giving, including:

- Achieve goals
- Teach
- Inspire
- Lift people up
- Maintain team harmony
- Defend your team when necessary
- …

Takeaway:
Ensure you give, and then you can also take.

When Leaders Are Takers: Over-Ambition & Self-Focus

Ambition is crucial to becoming a leader.

But, as for everything, balance.
Effective leadership calls for ambition to be tempered by skills, mission focus, and team advancement.

Imagine two leaders:

- **Man A craves leadership**: and doggedly pursues it
- **Man B is not sure**: he believes he'd do a good job, but he's got other projects and is not sure he can commit

Which one would you pick?

You can't be sure from this short description, of course.
But **craving leadership is a potential red flag** because the focus is on the *role*, rather than the work involved, or the mission.
It suggests people may seek leadership for selfish self-advancement only, or out of power concerns.

Not being sure is a potential *green* flag.
It suggests people weigh the pros and cons because they know leadership entails certain commitments and obligations.

⍰ Example:

> **Tracy**: And I volunteered for every committee. As long as I can lead it. <— Focuses not on the mission or whether she can add value, but on the role & power

That's the attitude of the benefits' hunter -in this case, resume's hunter-.

Those tend to make for poor leaders because they put their personal goals first, second, and third. And if the organization or people around them do badly… Too bad for them.

2. Leadership Power Dynamics: Dominance VS Influence

Psychology research tells us there are two paths to social power and leadership:

- **Dominance**, based on fear, coercion and followers' submission
- **Prestige**, based on on skills, character, and followers *wanting* to defer

Dominant leaders tend to *take* more because of the intrinsic nature of their 'model'.
It's not based on making others want to follow, but on *forcing* others to submit and defer.

However, that taking comes at a cost, including:

- **No 'true' influence** since people submit but don't change their minds
- **Mutiny risks** with coalitions of lower-status followers
- **Possible escalations** by challengers
- **Constant policing** for compliance or people will 'cheat' as soon as they can

Prestigious leaders instead are better placed to change people's minds because others *want* to be more like the leader.
And they hold their leader, and his opinions, in high regard.

We must say though that, in general, both approaches 'work' -or they wouldn't have evolved-.
And the admittedly limited current evidence suggests that both approaches confer 'evolutionary fitness' benefits.

However, **in free and democratic societies prestigious leadership tends to be more effective**.
It better attracts and retains talent, while dominance only keeps people who have no better options.

Furthermore, coercion and dominance, based on 'sticks' is more costly to maintain.

Takeaway:
Be a prestigious leader, use less coercion, and more influence.

Also read:

- Power over VS power through
- **Leadership power dynamics:**

> Leadership Power Dynamics

3. Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership

The social exchange model includes both macro-categories:

- **Transactional**, with pragmatic exchanges, 'WIIFM' mindsets, 'social accounting', and extrinsic motivation
- **Transformational**, with ideals, purpose, 'pleasure in giving', and intrinsic motivation

Mediocre leaders lead based on *transactions* alone: contracts, obligations, pay rises for good jobs, or threat of getting fired.
This is sometimes referred to as 'sticks and carrots' management.

Instead, **great leaders tap into the extra resources that people *willingly* offer when they are intrinsically motivated.**
Transformational leaders get the 'extra mile' from people.

The difference between the two grows larger when accounting for the *cost* side of the leadership equation.

Carrots and sticks are costlier because leaders must spend to reward and punish.

The costs are a natural reflection of the psychology of transactional exchanges.
Since transactional leadership doesn't motivate people, they may 'cut corners'. Or even turn on the group and organization, and steal.
So leaders incur 'policing costs'. And policing, in turn, further undermines trust, cooperation, and social capital.

In chart terms:

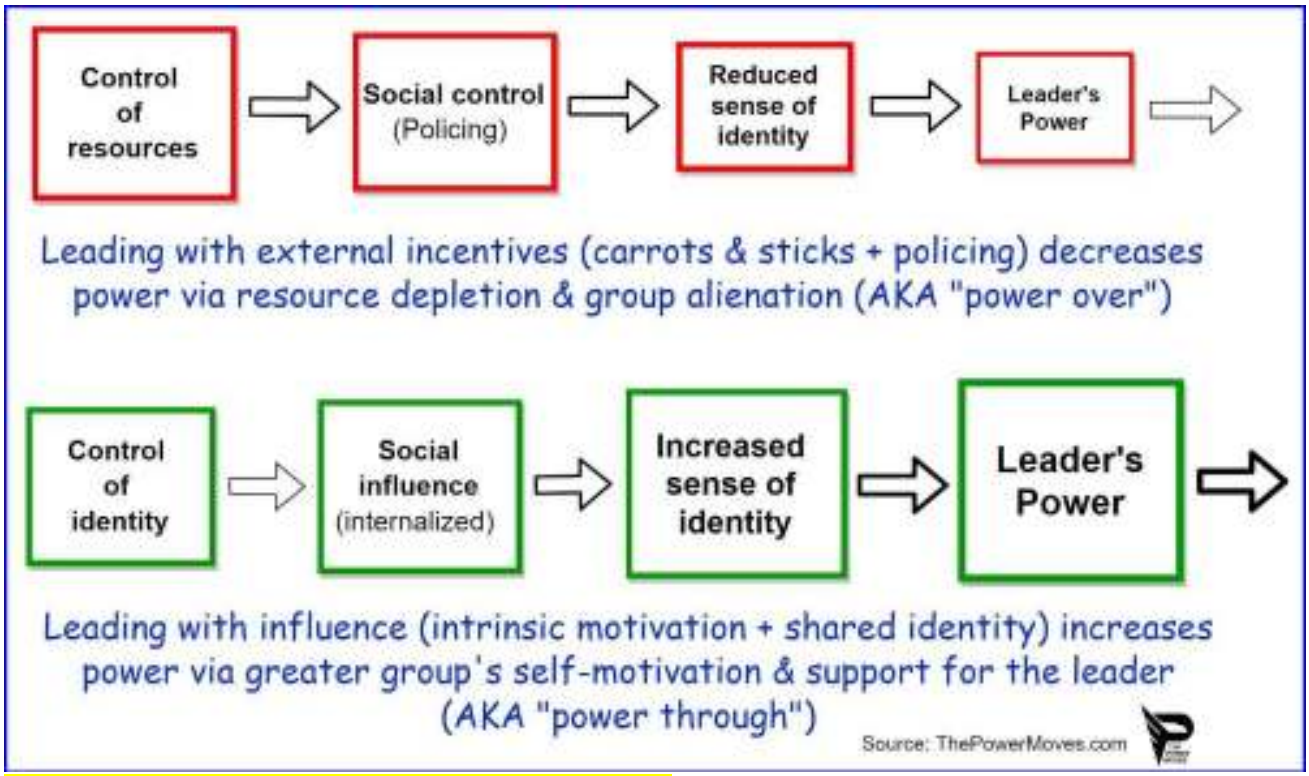

Chart contrasting a dominant leader VS a prestigious leader
Based on Haslam's *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence and Power*.

This is not to say, of course, that some environments or people may not work better under transactional approaches.
For example, intrinsic motivation might have little appeal for cynics or money-driven folks.
And there is some evidence highlighting that transactional leadership has both pros and cons.

But most people work better when leaders can add at least some elements of transformational leadership. Even most cynics do better with a touch of inspiration.

On the other hand, leaders utterly incapable of going beyond pure transactional leadership fail to make the most of their followers.
To quip leadership motivational speaker Simon Sinek, we may call these 'managers' rather than 'leaders'.

To quote psychologist and leadership expert Alexander Haslam:

> For this reason, as a host of commentators have remarked, evidence of leaders attempting overtly to manipulate followers by means of either reward or punishment is an indicator not of their leadership's success but of its failure.

Takeaway:
Inspire, don't just pay a salary.

Growing beyond transactional leadership

Some leaders never move beyond a transactional approach because of their mindsets.

Transactional leaders believe that humans are motivated primarily or *only* by self-interest.
Acting on their belief, they *use* mostly or only material rewards and punishments (Burns, 1978).

So **the first step is to believe that people *want* inspiration and that inspiration is good for all.**

Of course, this does not mean you forget about the material part.
That would be very manipulative leadership -or business-.

Instead, provide material benefits whenever applicable, while *also* inspiring beyond the pragmatic give & take.

In business, that means that you pay enough for a comfortable life. And then focus less on material benefits, and more on transformation.

We dig deeper elsewhere on how to become transformational.
But just to give you an idea:

- **Be skilled at your job**
- **Be a high-quality man** in general, since people value
- **Be an honorable man**, including good values
- **Believe in the mission**
- **Frame your goals as win-win** and value-added to society
- **Make people feel proud for their contributions**
  - Show how they contribute to the positive mission
- **Lead by example**
- **Create an identity for the team** setting the:
  - Values
  - Defining traits
  - Aspirations
- **Frame the team as exceptional**
- **Make team members feel exceptional**

Also see:

- **How to grow beyond transactional leadership**

https://thepowermoves.com/transformational-leadership

4. Leadership's Ceiling: The Law of The Lid

John John Maxwell refers to this phenomenon as the 'law of lid':

Leaders set the ceiling for the followers they can attract and retain.

Maxwell says that 'the leader sets the ceiling for the organization's effectiveness'.
I'd argue that good leaders set the ceiling not just for effectiveness, but for:

- Belief in the mission
- Optimism
- Inspiration
- Character
- Work ethics

For example, if you have poor work ethic, it will be hard to attract and keep hard workers.
And if a leader shows poor character and focuses on rent-seeking, the more motivated and selfless team members will either leave, or adapt downward.

The 'law of the lid' is also a fantastic mindset to adopt.
It nudges leaders to take on the 'burden of leadership', placing the onus of performance on *them*.

So, if you want to lead great people, you know what you gotta be: be a great leader.

> **To lead great people, become a great man.**
>
> *The Power Moves*

Poor leadership confirms the exchange & the law of the lid

Some extreme examples of apparent value-taking leadership may be buffling to some.

How do you explain, for example, the election of fascist warmongers, or the adoration of cult leaders?

Why do these apparently obviously bad leaders gain so much power and influence?

First of all, we must realize that albeit toxic, extreme leaders are highly skilled at using group dynamics.
Second, they also 'give' psychologically.

Fascist leaders are the toxic extremes of charismatic leadership.
Natural experts in manipulation, they make the populace feel special and proud.
Average men get to feel great by projecting their ego onto the supposedly 'great empire' and 'great tribe'.

Cult leaders are 'naturals' at dark psychology.
Although they use manipulation tactics, they at least initially give a sense of refuge and guidance.

Thirdly, you must look at *who* they target and recruit.

The most independent minds rebel against oppressive regimes.

The people cult leaders attract aren't exactly the top representatives of human expression.

And finally, as the leaders-followers relationships become more imbalanced and win-lose, more people will start rebelling or quitting.
And you're only left with the most undiscerning ones.

Takeaway:
If you want top performers, quality people, and long-term influence, be an honorable man, offer real value, and make it win-win.

⍰ Real-life example

- ⍰ **Failure of leadership**: the real-life of a group of friends disbanded under poor leadership (alumni only)

5. Leadership Mindsets

The mindsets underpinning great leadership are:

1. Great leadership begins with my self-development

Inspired by Viktor Frankl's quote:

> **Leadership cannot be pursued, it must ensue**

 To lead well, first focus on becoming a great person—others will naturally follow.

1.2. I must earn the right to lead

This mindset ensures that you seek a leadership position after you have enough to give.

2. It's my responsibility to be as good as I can be

This mindset empowers you to lead effectively, and attract and retain the best talent.

3. It's my responsibility to make people better off

Including caring for your people's well-being.

This mindset also strengthens your leadership as you become more prestigious.

3.2. Man shall not live by bread alone: I also give emotionally

Cynicism can handicap leaders because they don't believe men can be inspired by more than just practical exchanges.

Avoid that trap: make it your responsibility to uplift and inspire.

4. I set the example of the top performance I demand

'Lead from the front'.

5. It's my responsibility to lead for goal-achievement

Keep your eyes on the goal and make it a winning team.

6. Once I'm a good leader, it's my duty to lead

Once you are the best man to lead, then leading becomes a responsibility.

This mindset allows you to assertively go after what you want, while also ensuring healthy win-win.

7. Once I give, I can also get the leadership benefits

Once you do your part, you can get to enjoy the leadership benefits.

And this ends your Leadership Training 101.
Feel free to explore our other evidence-based resources

- How to be a leader: laws from social psychology

Or:

Power University is our flagship leaders' training where we take good men all the way from socially struggling, to influential leaders

Five Families: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 February 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"Five Families" (2016) is a book in which author Selwyn Raab chronicles the history of Cosa Nostra in the United States, together with the succession of bosses, prominent made men, intrigues, and the eternal fight between the mafia and the law.
The book ends being a great case study on Machiavellianism, power, and effective leadership.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Selwyn Raab is a journalist, author and former investigative reporter for The New York Times. He focuses on American Mafia and US criminal justice topics.

Contents

- The Mafia Reached Immense Power In The U.S.
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The Mafia Reached Immense Power In The U.S.

Writes Raab:

> Unquestionably, the gangs known as the Bonanno, Colombo, Gambino, Genovese, and Lucchese crime families evolved into the reigning giants of the underworld.

The mafia had so much power at certain points that it elected, or contributed to elect, highly-placed union officials, politicians, New York majors and, some mobsters said, the votes they controlled were enough to have swayed JFK's election.
If they weren't enough to elect Kennedy, the mafia seems to have had either a conspirator, or the main designer, of JFK's murder.

The organized structure and the "watching each other's back" was a major part of the mafia's power.
Says Raab:

> A soldier had the added security of knowing that other criminals who suspected or were aware of his connections feared injuring or insulting him; the lethal retaliatory power of the organization was well known in the underworld.

That power started early:

> By the late 1930s, however, through undercover work and arrests, his agents discovered a major shift in the nation's narcotics networks: all were virtually controlled by Italian-American gangs. "They seemed to have an extraordinary cohesion," Anslinger later said of the Mafia gangs.

And writing about the Gambinos and Gotti's initial reign over it:

> He began his reign overseeing the largest and probably the most powerful criminal organization in the nation's history

That cohesion and that avoidance of too many internal wars was one of the mafia's secrets to power.

Cosa Nostra Secrets to Success: Collaboration (Thanks to Lucky Luciano)

Lucky Luciano was a genius mastermind.

He turned a group of fighting gangs, into a group of collaborative enterprises who would soon come to dominate the underworld.

The secret was to drop war and over-competition, in favor of more collaboration, and more dialogue to resolve issues.

At an individual's level, being a "made" men, meant being "connected", and having people you could call upon, and that would support you.
And at an organizational level, it meant no resources wasted on internal wars, and more power to control the external environment.

The "commission" was one of the most notable elements to ensure peace and cooperation among families.
And proof that it worked was that, absent the commission, internal wars escalated. Says Raab:

> The argument between members of two families had festered because the Commission case trial was under way, and the customary sit-down formula for resolving Mob disputes was suspended.

For more read Power University and:

- **Strategies of power**

Tip: As You Increase Collaboration, Decrease the Scope for War

Writes Raab:

> Corallo, like other Mob leaders, had good reasons to prevent hits on law-enforcement personnel. Murdering a cop, an investigator, or a prosecutor would unleash the fury of the law against the Mob and make normal business hazardous. Furthermore, the rule was aimed at maintaining strict discipline and preventing rash, unauthorized acts by hotheaded troops.

Cosa Nostra Secret to Success II: Structure & Succession Plans

Says Raab:

> The law-enforcement establishment may have rejoiced at the victories over Luciano and Capone, but they failed to understand a seismic change had occurred in the families of organized crime: **the viability of Mafia families was not endangered by the imprisonment of a top man. Unlike the loosely organized Jewish and Irish ethnic gangs fashioned haphazardly by the likes of Dutch Schultz and Owney Madden, a cohesive borgata did not disintegrate at the sudden absence of its head man**.

That's the power of organization and structure.
Says Raas:

> Despite the murder of Paul Castellano and the convictions of Tony Salerno, Ducks Corallo, and Carmine Persico, business continued to hum in every gang, and replacements filled the gaps left by the stricken leaders and their cohorts. This continued prosperity could be credited to Lucky Luciano's ingenious organizational plan for the Cosa Nostra, devised in 1931. Fifty-five years later, Luciano's legacy kept each family's table of organization intact and functioning. As the 1980s ended, there seemed no end to the plundering by the five families.

2.3. Cosa Nostra Secret to Success III: Organization First

Said one smart observer:

> "If one member can dispute a Commission order you can say good-bye to Cosa Nostra, because the Commission is the backbone of Cosa Nostra. It will be like the Irish mobs who fight among themselves and they [the Italians] will be having gang wars like they had years ago."

2.4. Mafia's (Sexual) Values: Keep Your Trysts Hidden for Respect of Your Wife

Says Raab:

> Mafiosi were expected to maintain a higher regard for "the sanctity of their women" than the rest of male society. "Their rigid code prohibited an affair with the wife or girlfriend of another mobster under penalty of death," Ragano noted. "And they were obligated to protect the wife or mistress of a fellow mobster if he was not around." Trafficante explained to Ragano that the Mafia had no objection to married soldiers having affairs, but there was a caveat. "Santo had a mistress but conducted the affair with discretion to spare his wife and daughters embarrassment," Ragano added. "That was expected of all Mafia members."

Something confirmed by Salvatore Gravano:

Those same values within relationships also make the mafia stronger: if you respect your partner, it's implied, then chances are that you also respect your partners in crime.

Why Cosa Nostra Didn't Like Narcotics

You know it from The Godfather:

The mafia didn't exactly love narcotics.

Yes, they often trafficked it, and some mobsters did it "on the low" and on a "I send you money, but you don't ask me" basis. But still, narcotics weren't the mafia's centerpieces.

Why not?

Becuase:

1. Drugs' harsh penalties posed a risk that more people could turn informers
2. Traffickers might get addicted, and become unreliable loose cannons
3. The public didn't like drugs (but were more OK with prostitution and gambling)

How RICO Was Born: Machiavellian Strategizing

To pass RICO:

> Before presenting his bill to the Senate, the canny McClellan allowed Celler to introduce amendments in the House's bill modifying controversial parts of the act unrelated to RICO. The disputes over other aspects of the legislation served as lightening rods, distracting Cellar's attention from substantially altering RICO in his proposed House bill. Celler anticipated that his non-RICO objections would force McClellan to call for a conference, which would give him the opportunity to block or substantially modify RICO to his satisfaction. But McClellan surprised him by accepting the amended House version. Since the approved Senate and House bills were identical, there was no need for the conference that Celler had counted on. He had been outwitted.

An interesting technique to use: draw attention to something tangential, or do something eye-catching about something tangential, and maybe what you really care about will go unnoticed.

Power Move: Demand Fairness From Your Boss

… And If You Survive, You Gain Status.

That's a risk, but in certain situations, it can be worth it. And it worked for young John Gotti.

This is what John Gotti did:

> At Lewisburg, Gotti confronted Carmine Galante (…) was in (…) effect the "warden" of the prison's Mafia wing. Although not a made man, Gotti had the nerve to complain to Galante that he was bribing guards to get steaks, delicacies, and booze only for himself and nine or ten Bonanno wiseguys. The upstart Gotti demanded that the don share the wealth with other imprisoned mobsters. Gotti's boldness and poise so impressed Galante that he expressed interest in enlisting him in his own family. Informers reported that Galante said, "I'd like to have him in my crew," and was disappointed to hear that John "belongs to Neil," a reference to Aniello Dellacroce.

Strategy For Power: Propose a Big Slice, Instead of War

A genius move from Paul Castellano:

> According to Mob folklore, "Big Paul" won over "Mr. Neil," with a practical proposal: "Anything you had with Carlo, you keep. Anything more you want, we talk." By compromising instead of selecting a new underboss committed to him, Castellano had divided Gambino's unified kingdom into two domains. But through appeasement he had avoided internecine combat, and with plenty of spoils for himself and for Dellacroce, there was little to worry about.

Castellano basically negotiated that by saying "yes, I'll become the boss, but I let you keep everything you have, and maybe more".
It's a great strategy because now your potential opponent will think "a bigger slice, or war"?
And chances are that he will go for the sure bigger slice.

5. The Power to Give, Gives Power

Says Raab:

> Other Mafia bosses became indebted to Costello for exerting his sway when their soldiers and associates needed a favor from a judge, a prosecutor, or a well-placed city official.

Obviously, as per law of social exchange, when you have the power to give, you have power to ask back.
So the power of the mafia wasn't just violence as someone might naively think. It was also the "power of connection", with those connections being other powerful men, including legit men.

Power Tip 1: Pick Low-Competition Markets

Says Bonanno:

> In cities that had only one family, godfathers enjoyed long careers and died of natural causes, Bonanno later wrote about that era. "In New York City, however, where strife was almost routine, fathers led precarious lives."

Machiavellian Tip 1: Distrust An Allied Snitch

Says Raab:

> (…) Costello was familiar with Genovese's Machiavellian intrigues and savage inclinations. "If you went to Vito," Joe Valachi noted, "and told him about some guy who was doing wrong, he would have this guy killed, and then he would have you killed for telling on this guy."

Be Aware of Boss' Tests

Bosses sometimes test the loyalty and availability of their underlings.

That can happen before taking you onboard, or when the boss is deciding who to promote.
Says Raab:

> (…) the wily mobster soon curbed his acolyte's independent streak while teaching him an elementary Mafia lesson. "Go get me an ice cream," Delasco ordered Accetturo (…). The embarrassed Accetturo knew he would be demeaned in front of his pals if he acted as an errand boy. But understanding that Delasco was testing his

> obedience, he bought his boss the ice cream. “I knew that if I wanted to stay with Ham and learn from him, he had to have absolute control over me,” Accetturo explained. “He had to break me and I took the bit in my mouth.”

Life-Success Tip: Don’t Deride People. Not Even When You’re Higher Power

John Gotti created one informer against him by demeaning and ridiculing him:

> Gotti, however, contributed to Johnson’s concealed anger, referring to him as the “Redskin” or “the half-breed.” Arrested by the FBI for gambling and extortion, Johnson saw a way out by becoming an informer. Upset at being derisively treated by mafiosi partners and seeking FBI intervention in case he got jammed up again, Johnson signed on with the bureau.

Deriding people was a thing for Gotti.
He even mocked his daughter for his husband’s mental health issues.

Leader Tip: Don’t Give People Reason to Plot Against You

Of course, this is not always easy.

And still, many leaders sometimes seem to forget this basic rule and, high on their power, feel like they can get away with rude behavior.
Rude behavior is a sign of power, it says that you *can* be rude. But it also generally decreases your power, as people will start resenting you.

> Massino’s cold explanation to Vitale for the demotion was that rank-and-file capos and soldiers “detest you.” Virtually banished, Vitale was even prohibited from appearing at the Casa Blanca, where every capo was welcomed at Massino’s table in the restaurant. Indignant at being shelved and turned into an outcast, Vitale was powerless to resist. Seething, he complained that Massino had sharply cut his illegal revenues by driving a wedge between him and the rest of the family. “There was nothing I wouldn’t have done for the man,” Vitale whined to a capo who still talked to him. “He’s taken the captains away from me; they aren’t allowed to call me; they aren’t allowed to give me Christmas presents.”

The result?

When Vitale was pinched he had one further incentive to cooperate and testify: the opportunity to hit back at his rude boss.
And he did.

Says Raab:

> Massino’s biggest blunder was his mistreatment of Sal Vitale.
> Even so, the humiliated brother-in-law apparently was prepared at first to ride out their joint RICO storm. All evidence indicates that Vitale had no intention of betraying Massino until Sallet and McCaffrey warned him about the plot on his life. If Vitale had remained steadfast, Massino would have stood a strong chance of beating the original indictment and again frustrating the FBI’s best efforts to bring him to justice. A traditionalist, Massino broke a Cosa Nostra cardinal rule by blatantly “disrespecting” Vitale, his most dedicated supporter for thirty years. It was a fatal error. Vitale’s decision to become “a C.W.,” a cooperative witness, was the decisive factor in accelerating the domino syndrome of defections that cinched Massino’s conviction.

So it was his disrespectful behavior, plus the classic mafia blunder: letting fear grow so big, that people would

escape to the government.

Leader Tip: Don't Be Too Harsh

Another mistake by John Gotti:

> Old friend Fat Ange Ruggiero received a dose of similar mean-spirited treatment. Infuriated by the damage caused by Ruggiero's careless talk, Gotti demoted him from capo to soldier at a time when Ruggiero, his 250-pound frame reduced to a weight of less than 150 pounds, lay fatally ill with cancer. Despite fervent requests from Ruggiero's friends and relatives, Gotti refused to visit or telephone his devoted follower in his final days.

Gotti was right to be angry. But the man was dying, and Gotti came across as too mean.

Leader Tip: Beware a Reputation for Machiavellianism

Again, Gotti:

> Reviewing management techniques with his new counselor, Gotti thought Gravano was overly generous in sharing the wealth with his closest lieutenants and helpmates. "Listen to me," advised Gotti, who before reaching the top had chafed at Paul Castellano's greed. "Keep them broke. Keep them hungry. Don't make them too fat."

How's Sammy Gravano going to feel about Gotti after that?
He's going to feel like:

1. Gotti is a greedy man
2. Gotti is a Machiavellian man who seeks power even if it means making his own team lose

So, if you're Machiavellian, you're probably better off not letting people know about it.

Leader Tip: Beware You Don't Get Overly-Domineering

John was bossy towards his lawyer as well:

> (…) his gregariousness irritated Gotti. Observing Krieger chatting during a break with Maloney, Gotti motioned imperiously for his lawyer to stop talking with the enemy. "I better end this or I'll wind up in the trunk of a car," said Krieger, winking at Maloney.

Leader Tip: Learn to Judge Characters

Says Raab:

> His inability to judge loyalty and talent were pitfalls for Gotti.

Specifically, the author refers to Gravano:

> his record for sacrificing others should have been a cautionary signal to Gotti. Previously, whenever Gravano became entangled in an internal dispute, his solution was to kill the rival and shift blame for the mishap onto someone else. Even among unprincipled mobsters, he had a reputation for unscrupulousness. If advancement required whacking his brother-in-law or a business partner, Sammy the Bull went along with it.

And his loyalty had never been tested:

> Gravano, unlike many skilled mafiosi, had never been imprisoned, Gotti had no idea of how he would react in the crucible of prison. He misjudged Gravano's dedication to him and the myth of Cosa Nostra loyalty.

I think the author might be onto something, albeit I think we can't forget that Gotti didn't help his case by being careless, never apologizing, being overly bossy, and letting his narcissism get out of control.

Leader Tip: Don't Reject Advice Off-Hand Out of Power & Ego

Chin Gigante was, in many ways, a mafia genius.

He faked being insane, he duped police for decades and, contrary to many of his colleagues, he never self-incriminated himself in any recorded conversation captured by countless hours of audio-surveillance.

The FBI couldn't pin anything on him, and other mafia dons respected.
Even John Gotti, who loved to make fun of others, never said anything bad about Chin:

> Bruce Mouw, the head of the Gambino Squad, sensed Gotti's concern about crossing swords with Chin. "We heard John trash everybody. He called the Colombos 'Cambodians.' Vic Amuso and Gaspipe were ridiculed as 'the Circus.' He even mocked his good friend Massino. But he never trashed Chin, never once. He always spoke of him with deep respect."

So, how did Gigante come to fall?

Because he made an exception for a guy he liked.
And he resisted pressure from others who told him that his protege' was dangerous, and potentially an informer.
Those pressures actually made Chin resist taking any action, because he didn't want to follow what others told him.
Says Raab:

> Paradoxically, the demands by the Gambino and Lucchese bigwigs for Savino's head might have protected him. Considering himself the supreme Mafia boss in the country, Gigante had no intention of heeding the advice of rivals, particularly the detested John Gotti, and Gaspipe Casso, a relative novice in high Mafia politics.

Leader Strategy: Be Undemanding To Increase Love & Loyalty

I think that being "undemanding" as a leader is a big risk.

It's a risk because you can come across as "not strong enough" for a leader, and like you can be duped.
And it's a risk because some people might forget there *is* a leader, and that the leader is *you*.

However, if it's a strong leader who is undemanding and does not ask for large shares of the spoils, then it can become a big positive.

See for example mafia boss Ducks Corallo taking this approach:

> When Ducks first took over in 1970, the New Jersey wing every year contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the New York hierarchy. By the 1980s, the annual payments had been substantially trimmed; Accetturo was transferring a paltry $10,000 to $50,000 without drawing flak from New York. Wealthy as Croesus and getting on in years, Corallo became less gluttonous and lowered his demands from the New Jersey crew.

The result?
Accetturo loved Corallo:

> A consummate mafioso and a fervent believer in the sanctity of the Mafia's code of honor, Accetturo represented the Mafia ideal. Loyal, absolutely trustworthy (…)

This was a similar strategy for the highly successful Chin Gigante of the Genovese family:

> Gravano was impressed by a remark Chin made about surviving as a Cosa Nostra don. Mentioning that he had enough wealth from his own schemes, Gigante said he was not pressing his crews for huge cuts from their rackets. Sammy the Bull thought that was a smart strategy for ensuring loyalty in a family that had plenty to go around—more than $100 million a year.

Beware of Over-Greed

Now what happened when the leadership change?

When the new leadership took over, they demanded 50% or more of the profits from Accetturo.
And that pushed Accetturo into full-scale rebellion, and lead to the brink of a war first, and then to Accettuor testifying to the FBI, and taking much of his crew with him.

Leadership is a lot about balance.
Be careful of being too undemanding if you're not in a position to do so, and be careful of pushing and asking for too much.

Anyone's Tip: Don't Talk Behind People's Back!

Some people call Sammy Gravano a rat.

But they don't consider how much Gotti contributed to turning Sammy against him.
As a matter of fact, I believe when Sammy said that he'd never turned if Gotti had been a better boss (Maas, 1997).
For example:

> One tape was the long parley between Gotti and Locascio on December 12, 1989. It staggered Sammy the Bull. He heard Gotti heap scorn on him for prospering from construction-industry scams, and revile him for building his own rival Mob power bases. Even more ominous-sounding to Sammy's chances of acquittal were Gotti's remarks pinning the blame for a multitude of murders on him alone; supposedly the slayings were committed to resolve Sammy's financial disputes with Mafia business partners.

Life Strategy: Be Friendly With Your Enemy

Sometimes, you have a declared enemy.

And you both know it.

However, you still have two choices:

1. Some people choose the antagonizing and hating road
2. Some others choose a more "gentleman" approach, to fight while still respecting the enemy

Mafia boss Massino took the Bonanno family when it was in tatters, and brought it back as the most powerful of the five New York families.
Massino always kept a "gentleman warrior" approach.

The mindset of the gentleman warrior approach is:

Yes, we're enemies and we want to beat each other. And I'll do be darn best to beat you. But we can still be

courteous while we compete.

It's a bit like the mindset of "tough on ideas, but kind on people, which in this case becomes "**tough *in* the game/fight, but kind on the opponent *outside* of the game/fight**".

Massino imposed the same mindset and approach to all of his family.

It can take some emotional maturity to apply this mindset, and most people get swept away by the competitive spirit.

Let's see some applications in real life:

The Attitude of Antagonizing

> **Franzese**: I became a major target of law enforcement (exactly what you want to avoid), I was indicted 5 times, beat every case (that's a huge red flag: your enemy is dogged). Rudy told me "Franzese, if I convict you on this, you're gonna get double what your father got, I'm gonna give you 100 years. I said "Rudy, bring it on, I beat you 4 times, let's go for round 5.
> (now wise Franzese speaking) Guys, that's the dumbest thing you could ever do. You don't antagonize them (the FBI), they don't need any more incentives to come after you.

Exactly right, that type of attitude gives them incentives to come after you harder, and to punish you harder if they can catch you.
Furthermore, if convicted, you also provide them a valid reason to treat you like a devilish enemy -very different from a "gentleman's enemy"-.

That's an attitude that some criminals and mobsters have against the police.
And it only makes their life -as well as the police's life- harder.

Flaunting how you're "beating" them will also make your enemy more dogged in your pursuit.
See John Gotti or Al Capone.
They both might have stayed free far longer, if they had avoided the spotlight and the attitude of "I beat them and I rub it in".

The Effects of Antagonizing

From that same video:

> **Franzese**: I've witnessed some things that were kind of unpleasant, every once in a while the agents would get out of hand (goes on to tell a story of an FBI agent who ruins his family dinner, ends up drawing a gun)

Before the rights of detainees were extended, beatings of detainees were also common -of lower-level mobsters mostly, as cops were also probably worried of assaulting higher-power mobsters-.

Life's Mindset: The Gentleman Warrior Attitude

Now compare with mobster Joseph Massino, who instead took a far more friendly with law enforcement:

> "Get used to my face, because you're going to see a lot of it for a long time", Pat Marshall, the agent who had been hunting Massino, forwarned when he was brought to FBI headquarters (Pat starts off with a competitive frame).
> Marshall recognizes that he was confronting an imperturbable foe. "He took my warning with a grain of salt and said calmly **no problem, do what you got to do**" (ignores the competitive frame, installs a gentleman's

> frame to competition)

Massino called the FBI agents by name, and was always courteous.
In one instance, he even defended an FBI agent who was being encircled and then gave him back the electronic surveillance device Massino had uncovered.

The Gentleman Warrior Effects

Being courteous towards your enemy might not prevent you from losing.

In our case study here, the law will still take its course.

But it won't hurt for sure, and it might as easily soften your loss, and shorten your sentence.

Plus, it will likely make the process, and the possible conviction, far easier on you.
From the same book:

> Picked up at his Howard Beach home, Massino politely asked to be cuffed outside, not in the presence of his wife and teenaged daughters.
> **"Because he was always the gentleman and cordial with us", Marshall granted him that favor.**

- **Read this forum entry**

Don't Be Duped: A Criminal Always A Criminal (?)

I don't necessarily think a criminal will *always* be a criminal.

But it's definitely something you should keep in mind.

After Sammy Gravano's testimony, the FBI seemed to think he was the best thing to walk on earth.
Says Raas:

> The hearing resembled a testimonial dinner, with officials competing to outdo each other in extolling, with honeyed adulation, Gravano's contributions
> (…)
> As recognition of Gravano's exceptional services, the FBI's Jim Fox presented him with a private award that he handed out exclusively to agents for valor—a specially designed wristwatch with an American flag on its face.

As well as the judge:

> Before pronouncing sentence, Glasser quoted the opinion of an FBI agent who characterized Gravano's decision to testify against Gotti as "the bravest thing I have ever seen." The judge seemingly agreed with the appraisal of Gravano's supporters that he had metamorphosed from an unprincipled mobster to a law-and-order advocate.

And little later, that same law-abiding man:

> Young, hero-worshiping members of his thirty-strong Ecstasy crew testified that Gravano liked being addressed as "Boss" and "Big Man." He tutored them on the best weapons and tactics to be used in hits, and in his raspy voice spoke of organizing a new kind of Mob in Arizona. "He couldn't sit in Arizona and be a pool salesman or run a construction company," Linda Lacewell, an assistant U.S. Attorney, said at a hearing. "He wanted the old days back; he wanted 'the life' back, the power back."

I believe the author was being overly mean here.
Everyone would enjoy being called “boss”, and he probably was the boss and best guy in the new crew.
Still, it shows how silly the authorities were in believing Gravano was a totally new and different man.

Mobster Tip: Watch Out for Non-Mobsters Fanboys

Yes, some people these days love to say that “all mobsters eventually turn”.

But that’s not really true.
Or, at least, it’s not nearly as bad for non-mobsters.
The first to turn against Massino indeed was a businessman, sort of an associate and a mafia groupie who didn’t grow up a gangster:

> brusque conversation with the two agents about the legal consequences of conspiring with gangsters persuaded Scozzari to abandon his romanticized concept of the Mafia, and to join the undercover campaign. He, too, secretly began taping meetings with Cantarella. **“It wasn’t difficult to turn him,” Sallet said. “Money guys like to live well and have a lot to lose.”**

The threat of a relatively small sentence was enough to turn him.
So watch out associating with guys who haven’t grown up “within the life”.

Drug dealers and drug users are also often weak links in the mafia, and one step that smart bosses are taking against it is to make sure that anyone using or selling drugs cannot ever be made.

Mobster Tip: Don’t Overkill

Gaspise inaugurated in the Bonannos a period of extreme internal violence.

Said Chiodo:

> “These guys [Amuso and Casso] have a pattern of calling people rats and they are marking guys rats and killing them,” Chiodo cautioned. “I got information that you and I are going to be killed and hurt.”

And:

> D’Arco fretted about his own fate. He knew that the mere whisper of disloyalty, without substantiation, would provoke Casso into whacking even the most faithful servant.

When people are too scared to operate, they might operate poorly, or seek an alliance to kill you and depose the threat.
And fear might not be enough to stop them:

> “Even though he was in a room with agents, he was so paranoid of Gaspipe that he was hiding in the bathroom when we came in,” O’Connell recalled. “He told us, ‘You have to understand how dangerous this guy is. He has sources, agents, he knows what’s going on.’”

Overkilling and too much fear is even more dangeorus when you’re not the supreme country leader.
If you’re the supreme country leader, then people have fewer ways to harm you. But within a functioning government, they can always run to the police and seek protection in a witness program.
Which is what happened:

> Vittorio “Little Vic” Amuso is appointed boss with underboss Anthony “Gaspipe” Casso as an equal, if not

> stronger, commander. Their bloody purge of suspected internal enemies produces numerous defections and convictions.

On this topic, also read:

- **Mafia Prince**

> Mafia Prince: 10 Lessons Learned From Philly's Mafia

Kill, Don't Wound – & Don't Wound or Kill Stand Up Guys-

A rule made famous by Robert Greene:

Crush your enemies totally.

If you don't, you only make one bigger enemy.

> Fat Pete Chiodo had spurned an offer from prosecutors for greater leniency if he testified (…). "I appreciate what you guys are trying to do but no thanks—goodbye and good luck," Chiodo told (…). Twelve bullet wounds finally convinced him that survival depended on his breaking his omertà vow and converted him into an informer.

Chiodo was a stand-up guy.
Trying to kill him was a mistake because he would have kept his mouth shut.
By wounding him, the bosses reached the worst possible outcome: make him angry and fearful enough to go into the witness protection program, and still alive to talk.

The Mafia Is Not Dead

Starting from the '80s and during 90s as well as '00s, the government scored huge wins against the mafia.

It seemed like the mafia was on the rope, and possibly on the verge of dying.

But, the author cautions, there are plenty of signs the mafia is still there, and still able to generate profits from old schemes, as well as smart new ones.

Blakey, the original creator of the RICO law that was a bane for most godfathers, says:

> We don't win the war against the Mob," he advises, "all we can do is contain or control it."

The mafia in Sicily also can provide some clues, and the author even says that eruptions in the Sicilian mafia reverberate in the US.
There was a period when Sicilian mafia went into an all-out war with the government, and it paid a heavy price.
Then, the mafia changed approach, avoided violent confrontations, and went "silent".

> Palermo's chief prosecutor, Pietro Grasso, adds, "The silence of the Mafia is a strategy, not an absence."

So if you don't hear about the mafia, it doesn't necessarily mean it's not there, or that it's not powerful.
As a mtter of fact, just like in the '30s through the '80s, it might be the sign that it's even stronger.

More Wisdom

- **Don't show weakness, not even within collaborations**

> "But never show any weakness to other families, or they'll take advantage of you," Massino lectured Vitale.

- **Machiavellian thinking**

In organizations where power is negotiated with life and death, you must be careful of what other people think.
Take this example:

> One of the first capos to disappear was the Bronx's Anthony "Buddy" Luongo, who was clipped shortly before Amuso and Casso were officially installed. Luongo's sin: Corallo was believed to have briefly considered naming him as his successor. He might, therefore, be envious of the Brooklyn upstarts who were taking over the borgata.

So a guy got killed because the bosses thought he might be jealous.
If Luongo had had more Machiavellian skills, he might have saved his life by proactively showing allegiance to the new bosses.

- **Honesty can help maintain cooperation**

Says Accetturo:

> The old-time guys who taught me would never think of cheating somebody in a deal or in a dice or card game. They played by the old rules because they wanted the games and deals to go on forever."

- **Fighting the "good representative of us" frame**

> More than one mafioso racketeer chastised Salerno for investigating fellow Italian-Americans.
> They complained, "Why does it have to be one of your own kind that hurts you?" Salerno would snap back, "I'm not your kind and you're not my kind. The only thing we have in common is that we sprang from an Italian heritage and culture—and you are the traitor to that heritage and culture which I am proud to be part of."

Good frame control by Salerno.

- **Don't be your own judge, hire one**

Most people who defended themselves did poorly.
This is how Carmine Persico fared:

> His intent may have been to show that Cantalupo despised him and was testifying to obtain revenge. "You was angry because you was beat up, and you was beat up because you didn't pay back the money," Persico lashed out at Cantalupo. His argumentative question was a costly gaffe. The beating was over a loan-sharking debt, further illuminating Persico and his underlings as ruthless gangsters.

- **Make your organization an honor to join**

When you can make your organization an honor to join, you can bet many people will line up to join, and more people will respect its system of values.
Joining the mafia was an honor for many.
For example:

> Anthony Accetturo, the boy from Newark who obtained the nickname "Tumac," for his caveman ferocity, and

> who described his admission into Cosa Nostra by Ducks Corallo as “the greatest honor of my life.”

- **Private enterprise isn’t always better**

> The city naively believed private carters would do the job more efficiently and cheaper than the Sanitation Department. Within a decade, the Genovese and Gambino families were the ones cleaning up from the changeover.

Maybe something Rothbard and the other free-market extremists should take into account.

Some guys in the red pill like to say that women are (all) opportunists and have little loyalty.
Instead, Massino’s wife remained beside him even as he was being crushed in court. When did she turn on him? When Massino decided to cooperate.
This is a case of a woman having stronger morals nad values than the mafioso husband (albeit of course we can argue they were the wrong values):

> In relinquishing the criminally acquired nest egg, Mrs. Massino indicated that a marital rift had developed over her husband’s abandonment of omertà. The long-devoted wife informed reporters that she disapproved of Joe’s apostasy and was uncertain about visiting him in prison.

QUOTES

A funny quote on untimely FBI arrests:

> Fat Tony Salerno was the most chagrined at the timing. (…) FBI agents arrived simultaneously with the delivery of a huge takeout order from the neighborhood’s Andy’s Colonial Tavern. The agents refused Salerno’s request to allow him to partake of the meal

On Gotti’s degenerate gambling fooling an FBI agent tailing him:

> A few paces behind Gotti at the Meadowlands Harness Race Track in New Jersey, Morrill saw him plunk down $8,000 on a single race. Suspecting that the mobster had “an inside tip,” the agent placed a “more modest amount” on the same horse. The horse finished almost dead last. “You’re ruining me, John,” Morrill said to Gotti in the grandstand when the race was over. “What do you want from me?” Gotti countered. “You know I’m a degenerate gambler.”

On Sicilian “zips” more effective than American counterparts:

> although most American mobsters resented the Zips, the Sicilian made men, because of their patronizing attitude, the Americans felt they were more dedicated and ruthless than their Yankee counterparts. Accetturo acknowledged that the Sicilians had the right to feel superior. Under strict control of their bosses in Sicily, they were better disciplined, more tightly knit, and more secretive than American gangsters, he thought.

There is lots of talk about mafiosi being “all fake and all rats”.
Yet, it’s almost always a mistake to over-generalize to everyone, and some mafiosi did stand by the “code”:

> A concrete-hard thug, Lino had shown his mettle and defiance of the police when he was twenty-five. Picked up in 1962 for helping the flight of a stickup man who had shot and murdered two detectives in Brooklyn, he kept his mouth shut despite barbaric beatings over four days by the police. A leg and an arm were broken and repeated battering of his head gave him a permanent incessant blink. Finally, a broom handle was plunged into

> his rectum (…) Not yet a mafioso, Lino unflinchingly adhered to the code of omertà.

CONS

- **Some bias in the author**

At times, it felt like the author wanted to find negatives about the mafia that might not have been there.

For example, he writes:

> A commonly recycled story (…) subtly praised the Mafia, citing its formidable presence for low street-crime rates in predominantly Italian-American sections. With predatory crime soaring, two Mafia strongholds, Manhattan's Little Italy and Brooklyn's Bensonhurst, were presented as safe havens to live in.
> Unreported and underemphasized were the factors behind these statistics.
> The gangsters relied on sympathetic neighborhood residents to alert them to the presence of probing law-enforcement agents and suspicious outsiders (…). These watchdogs helped turn their neighborhoods into xenophobic enclaves, sometimes resulting in violence against strangers, especially African-Americans and Hispanics.

I don't think the mafia was a major driver behind the racial issues that have been plaguing the US from time immemorial.
And as far as I know, it's true that mafia neighborhoods have lower levels of crime.

PROS

Probably the best researched, most thorough overview of the American mafia from the beginning until the early 2000s.
And if you know how to read between the lines, also a lot to learn on power and strategies.

REVIEW

One of the best overviews on the history of the American mafia.

And a treasure trove of the most Machiavellian social strategies, as well as leadership lessons learned.

Also see:

- **Best books about manipulation**
- **Best dark triad books**
- **Best books about power**

Or get the book on Amazon.

Atomic Attraction: 10 Tips to Be a 20% Man (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 February 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"Atomic Attraction" (2017) is a dating book for men in which author Christopher Canwell teaches readers the high-masculinity, "alpha male" approach to dating to develop and maintain attraction.

Contents

- Summary
- CRITICISM
- QUOTES
- PROS
- Review

Summary

About the Author:
Christopher Canwell is a dating coach and runs a blog and a YouTube channel.

We had already talked about Atomic Attraction.

And finally, I got around to reading it -listening to it, to be precise-.
We'll do the review a bit differently this time, listing the best takeaways in form of bullet points:

- **Women prefer partners taller than they are, not necessarily "tall"**: Women don't necessarily like "tall men", they just prefer taller than they are (Shepperd et al., 1989)
  - **Shorter female date better**: that same study shows that men preferred shorter women regardless of the male height

- **Men who exercise social power with smoothness are preferred to aggressive men**: assertiveness shouldn't be confused with aggression.
  Instead, "research into aggression and attraction found that women view men as more desirable when they're less aggressive and able to solve problems in a more sophisticated way".
  The author also says that "True attraction is built on confidence, and a confident man only uses aggression as a last resort"

I remember an ex-girlfriend from Russia, complaining to me how overly violent some local men were.
She said she liked me a lot because "I behaved like a real man", and I don't remember once I ever got aggressive with her.

- **Smoking and drinking to excess is unattractive** (Vinke, 2016)

True, and especially true if we're talking about excess, and long-term.

Occasional smoking and drinking instead were not very harmful to attraction, and especially not for the short term.
Indeed, the paper states that smoking and drinking might be short-term sexual strategies for men.

Says the paper:

> The experiment showed that women perceive men who smoke and drink as being more short-term oriented in their sexuality than nonusers. Moreover, **both tobacco and (especially) alcohol use brought some**

> **attractiveness benefits in short-term mating contexts**.

So, as long as you don't become addicted, no problem with drinking and smoking.

- **Risky behavior that is attractive brings in rewards**

Risk for risk sake, including over-aggression, is unattractive. Risky behavior that is attractive includes starting a business or taking a loan, as they fall in the "calculated risks category.

- **Keep your air short**: it's more masculine. If you like long hair, let the beard grow
- **Shaved heads are attractive**: men with shaved heads were rated more attractive compared to men with thinning hair, and they were rated as more, assertive, masculine, and strong, compared to men with a full head of hair (Mannes, 2012). But please see the "con" section, I reached different conclusions from that study.
- **Keep a stubble**: "a study comprised of 351 women found that heavy stubble is the most attractive facial hair a man can grow"

I quote from the study (Dixson & Rantala, 2016):

> We found that intermediate levels of facial hair thickness and to a lesser degree light body hair were most attractive.

However, **the beard must be "full" when it comes to coverage**, in the sense of covering the whole face, rather than "patchy":

> We found that facial hair that was less uniformly distributed across the cheeks and jaw, which does not connect to the mustache, was less attractive than beards with greater linear coverage and connection between the cheeks, jaw, and mustache

And analyzing past studies:

> Where stimuli depicting graded or intermediate levels of facial hair (i.e., facial stubble) and body hair have been used, preferences for light and heavy stubble over full beards have been reported (B.J.Dixson& Brooks,2013; Neave&Shields,2008) and there is some evidence that light body hair is preferred over pronounced hirsutism (B. J. Dixson, Dixson, Morgan, et al., 2007)

- **Chest hair is better if light**

Quoting from the study above:

> Light body hair was judged as the most attractive distribution of body hair and was more attractive than very light, medium, and heavy body hair

The definition of light and medium are:

> Medium body hair also included well-developed pectoral hair surrounding the areolae and the infraclavicular region. However, chest hair was not connected to abdominal hair, which was also less developed or absent in some cases. Light body hair was more sparsely distributed in the mid-pectoral region, connecting to the sternum but not extending to infraclavicular or abdominal regions

- **Slightly larger than average penis are best, but not too big**: the author says women prefer men who have

proportionally sized penises to body size

Another myth is that women love big penises.
In truth, this is another trait that where attractiveness starts decreasing when it's too much, so the most attractive are slightly bigger than average, but not huge.

- **The more feminine the woman is, the more she prefers an older man** (based on the author's point of view, not a study)
- **Dress high status**: the preference for high status extends to both one-night stands, and long-term

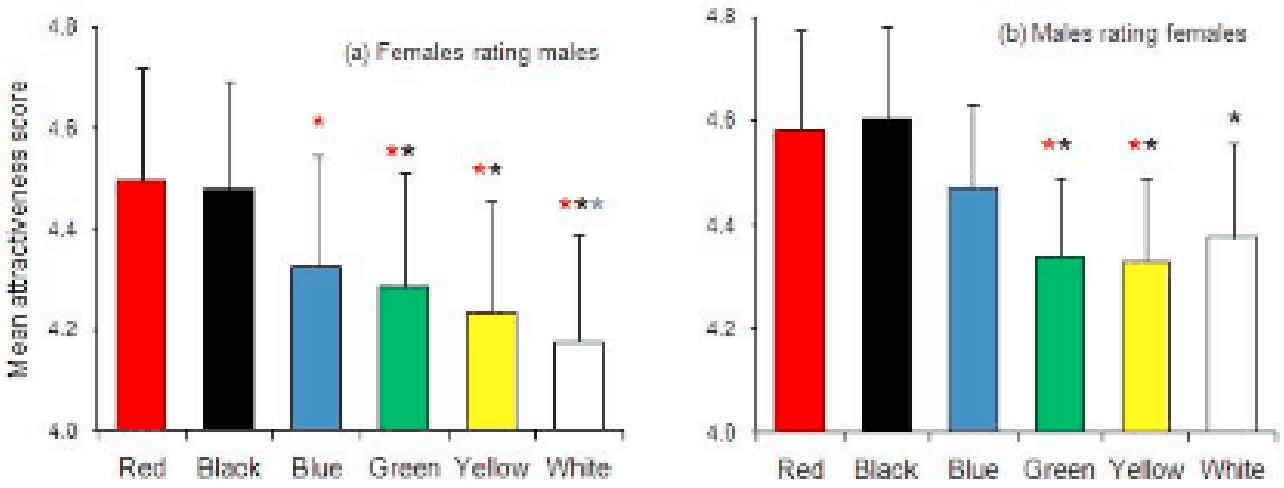
There were six categories of attractiveness: (1) coffee and conversation; (2) a date; (3) sex only; (4) serious involvement, marriage potential; (5) sexual and serious, marriage potential; and (6) marriage.

Quoting from the author:

> The results of the study found that women were more attracted to the (same)
> man when his clothes were "high-status." (…) women were much more likely to consider the man in all six categories if his clothes were "high-status" as opposed to "low" or "normal" status

- **Wear red or black**

The study (Roberts et al., 2011) had very few people, and the "dresses" being judged were simple T-shirts.
Red and black had similar ratings:



- **Dominance is important in seduction**: both physical and social dominance are attractive, and more attractive than financial dominance. Financial dominance is also important, but it's more about the *qualities* that allow people to become financially dominant.
  Dominance increases attraction, but not likability (Sadalla et al., 1987)
- But **when it comes to acquiring status and power prestige is superior to dominance** (Snyder et al., 2008)

Importantly, this study used characteristics such as the use of force or the threat
of force to describe dominance.
He leverages fear.

Prestige is defined as: "'the noncoerced, interindividual, within group, human status asymmetries" (p. 166), includes a recognition of certain abilities by peers that leads to freely conferred status. Individuals who are knowledgeable or skilled

are conferred prestige-type status by deferent sycophants".
He makes people want to follow.

I quote the study with 71, 102, and 60 female participants who participated for the respective 3 studies:

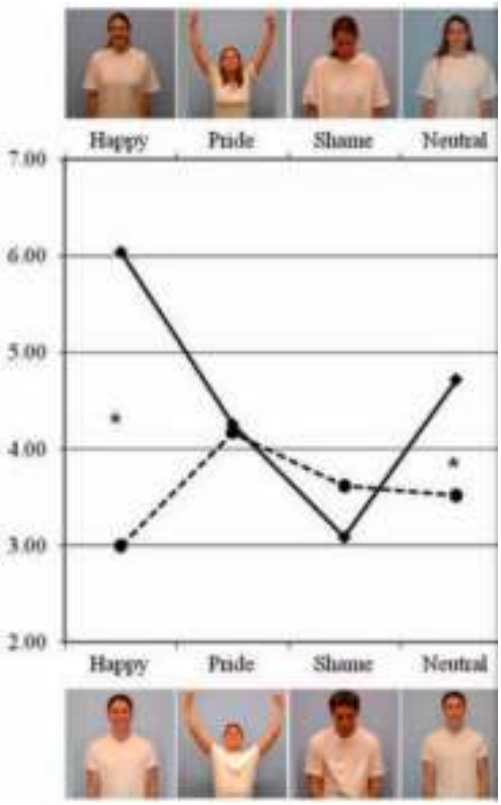
> Study 1 showed that women preferred targets on whom peers conferred prestige based status because of specific knowledge or skills to targets who achieved dominance based status through strategies of force or the threat of force, given equivalent status outcomes.
>
> Study 2 further demonstrated that, when dominance and prestige are manipulated independently, women consistently prefer high prestige to low prestige.
>
> Women did not prefer targets who used dominance-based strategies to achieve status in a different context outside of a socially sanctioned athletic contest; indeed, they generally preferred low dominance to high dominance in the non-athletic contexts in Studies 2 and 3.

Let's not forget though that all these women were university students.
Still, since university students tend to make for higher quality women, I don't consider that a con.

- **Pick up lines are not attractive** (Morrison, 2006)
- **Winning men are more attractive than happy ones** (Tracy & Beall, 2011)

Rating poses that represented happiness (a smile), pride (arms up towards the sky), shame (head down) and neutral, female preferred men who had a "proud" pose.

However, I believe the research is confusing: the picture for "pride" doesn't really show pride, but it's a sign of victory.
Just see it for yourself:



Dashed line is women evaluating men

- **Risky behavior is only attractive as long as it served an evolutionary purpose** -"hunter-gatherer type of risks"- (Petraitis et al., 2014)

- **Playful men are attractive men** (Chick et al., 2012)

> The theory (…) is that playful men are seen as more grounded, stable, and resilient when facing life's challenges. Playful men are also perceived to be less aggressive and less likely to hurt a woman and her future offspring. Furthermore, these qualities are seen as a marker of social intelligence and indicate that a man can form faster social bonds with others thus increasing his ability to acquire more resources and protection from society

And:

> You should never confuse the qualities of dominance and assertiveness with aggression and anti-social behavior— two traits common to insecure men.

- Women are designed to seek mates who are superior to them (see "Female hypergamy" article)
- **Don't expect women to love you like your mother loved you**

See here a man committing this obvious mistake:

> **Pat**: Women's brains are hardwired to be with the kids, but I was here before the kids, your loyalty should be with me

- **Women shit-test men, and most men are unaware of it**
- **Fear and anxiety increase sexual drive**

Says the author:

> This desire for sexual intercourse arises, not from a state of safety and security, but from a state of fear and anxiety. Because the purpose of humanity is to reproduce, an imminent threat to life triggers extreme levels of sexual desire to ensure the survival of the species. It is, however, still easy to activate this fear/sex response in women by injecting uncertainty and anxiety into a dying relationship.

CRITICISM

The "ideal man" comes across like a try-too hard caricature of an alpha male

Sometimes it feels like what was presented as the ideal behavior was a caricature of an "alpha male".

For example, the author says that if the girl wants to break up with you, the alpha male walks away (immediately) with his head held high.
Fair enough, I don't disagree with it: there are many situations in which that's a great response.

But is that the *only* confident course of action?
How about digging deeper into what's going on, before committing to a definite course of action?

Immediate action is often *overreaction*. Especially when over-the-top. It's a form of (weak) ego-protection to walk away at the first sign things aren't going your way.
And the "head held high" seems to me like the man who's deeply hurt, but puts up a front. Strong on the outside, but not really much inner strength there.

In another example, the "strong alpha" responds to a woman's disrespect by knocking a wine glass on the table, spilling it on her, and blurting "that's for being a bitch" right before leaving.

I totally agree one should never allow disrespectful behavior to be unchecked. But that's, again, an overreaction. It's not a great frame control, and not a socially dexterous way of being assertive and drawing one's boundaries effectively.

In brief, it feels this book goes to unattractive extremes and fails the law of balance, for which I warmly invite you to read this article on the law of balance in dating:

> Why Balance Is Most Seductive

Generalizations that make for sub-optimal advice

The author provides hard and fast rules on what works.
For example, he says never to text a woman back the moment she doesn't reply.

Albeit that's not terrible advice, it also won't hurt to hit her back with a text sometimes later.
I can tell you I've been with *plenty* of women who didn't answer a text.

The "alpha male is most attractive lie"

The author repeats that strength and high masculinity only are attractive to women.

And he says that women don't like men with feminine features.

But that's *blatantly* not true.
The hordes of young women who were crazy about Di Caprio in Titanic, young Justin Bieber, or the new K-pop stars provide a clear clue to anyone who's willing to properly analyze the world for what works.

Or, as an Amazon reviewer says:

> First of all the author harps on masculinity and being like an alpha guy at all time
> If this worked the hottest guys to girls would be construction workers and Harley Davidson hells angels dudes.
> Incorrect. They will lose to a tik tok clean shaven feminine guy ALWAYS.

That reviewer swings in the opposite direction.
In reality, different types can all be attractive, as long as they're high-quality in their own way.

What's attractive also depends a lot on what type of female cohort we're talking about.

Again, I invite you to read the law of balance for attractiveness.

Also see:

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

And of course, see:

- **Alpha males**: who they are, and how to be one

Some nuances are lacking

The author says that the "direct approach" is the best you can make, and while I love direct approaches, it's not *always* the best.

The author also says that bars and clubs are the *worst* places to meet women. But this is not a question of points of view: there are plenty of men who successfully meet and sleep with women from bars and clubs. So that's patently

not true. Especially not true if someone is looking for one-night stands.

Case studies were a bit too black and white

The case studies were sometimes interesting, sometimes entertaining, and sometimes a bit too exaggerated to be realistic.

The studies sometimes were misinterpreted

The author says that men with shaved heads were more attractive.

But when I looked into the study, I saw that men with shaved heads were seen as (significantly) more dominant, and stronger, but *not* more attractive.
Men with shaved heads were more attractive compared to *thinning* hair, but not to a head full of hair.

That made me lose a lot of trust and confidence in the rest of the quoted studies, so I started to check all the ones I found interesting, and found several other inconsistencies, as well as conclusions that the author drew from the studies that, in my opinion, fell outside the scope of the studies.

Some studies didn't fit what the author stated

For example, the author says that "Research published in the Journal of Social Psychology found that out of 172 participants, it took men anywhere from a couple of days to a couple of weeks to fall in love; whereas women took no less than a couple of months to fall in love.

But when I looked into the reference, the study was about availability and attraction, and not about "how long it takes to fall in love", for which I found not reference.

This might be a mistake of using the wrong reference, but it doesn't inspire much trust.

Some studies concluded the opposite of what the author stated

The author says that:

"As research published in the European Journal of Personality points out, if a woman has to fight for a man's love and attention, she'll think more highly of him, value him more, and think about him more frequently".

And then goes on to advise on how to be less available.

Yet, that study says that:

> For dating and committed romantic relationships, the prospective mate who was medium in availability was preferred. In contrast, the highly available prospective mate was preferred for a casual sex relationship

Sometimes studies were not fully understood

The author says that one study proves that women prefer humorous men based on the fact that men who told a joke in an experiment were 3 times more likely to get a woman's phone number compared to men who were just listening.

But that experiment is poor at isolating variables.
The men telling the joke may have been, and probably were, also displaying confidence and social power.

Some low-quality "relationship control"

To change a woman's mind and to save an ending relationship, the author seems to suggest that "dread game", fear and anxiety are the answer.

The author seems to suggest that to maintain long-term attraction, that's what you must do.

What a low-quality response to a dying relationship; make it *worse*, just to keep it alive.

Read:

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

QUOTES

On the importance of opportunities for sexual access:

> Men who teach English in Europe, Asia, or South America have more opportunities to meet, date, and have sex with women than men who work in a bank in a big metropolitan city.
> Meeting and dating women is not a question of resources, money, or prestige—it's simply a matter of access.

The seducer projecting power:

> He takes up space and maintains an expression that challenges people to impress him. He rarely if ever smiles, and when he does, it's a rare and precious gift. The skilled seducer strolls through the world at his own pace and never hurries or worries about a thing. His movements are akin to those of a cat—loose, relaxed, and languid. The world is there to serve him, not the other way around. It is this projection of attitude that makes the alpha male so irresistible and attractive to women.

The balance of chasing that is courtship:

> strike a delicate balance between pursuing too much and showing just the right amount of desire. You must be proactive and bold without appearing desperate. By this stage, if everything goes well the woman will start to warm up to you. Once you sense a change in her behavior and notice that the woman is becoming more responsive, you must back off and allow her to chase to you.

PROS

The case studies make for an easy, entertaining read.

Review

Atomic Attraction is a good book on dating and attraction dynamics, it can provide some good points for beginners, and it can be useful for "too nice guy".

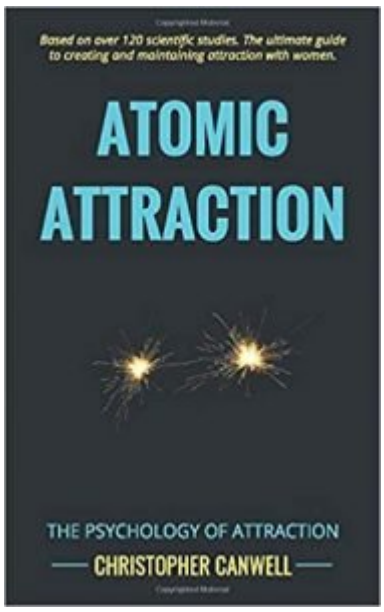
The general approach of "alpha male game" it espouses can be a much-needed medicine for those men who still need to work on their power, confidence, self-esteem, leadership, and dominance.

It's less suited for more advanced students, seducers, and social strategists alike, who will miss some of the nuances and who will not appreciate some of the generalizations.

Get the book on Amazon or see:

- **Best dating resources for men**

Atomic Attraction Summary: 10 Steps to Be a 20% Man



"Atomic Attraction" (2017) is a dating book for men in which author Christopher Canwell teaches readers the high-masculinity, "alpha male" approach to dating to develop and maintain attraction.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/atomic-attraction/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.8

Sales and Persuasion (Daniel Pink): Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 February 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Sales and Persuasion is an online Masterclass course on persuasion strategies and techniques in which Daniel Pink, the teacher, makes the case that effective persuasion should be done using empathy and perspective-taking coupled with an end goal of serving others.

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- PROS

Bullet Summary

- Avoid ABC, “Always Be Closing”.
- Follow the new ABC, “Attunement (common ground), Buoyancy, and Clarity”.
- Be a problem-finder, NOT a problem-solver.

Full Summary

About The Teacher: With four NYT bestsellers, Daniel Pink is an influential voice in the evolving landscape of sales and motivation. Now the author of *To Sell Is Human* teaches you science-backed principles for effective and ethical sales and persuasion. Learn tactics for achieving better outcomes in any interaction—at home or at work—and tools for framing your message, navigating cognitive biases, and pitching ideas, products, or yourself.

**All quotes from this point forward are quoted from Daniel Pink’s words.*

Persuasion Concept: Information and Power

Sales is now seen as sleazy, predatory, and aggressive. And, it used to be that way because of a little thing called information asymmetry. You would walk into a car dealership and be approached by a car salesman who saw himself as a “problem-solver”. And, he *assumes* your problem is that you need a car. So, he tries to cram a car down your throat because he also believes he should “always be closing” (ABC). The worst part is that back then, you couldn’t say anything back. The salesman always knew more about the car than you did, so you were always at an information (power) disadvantage. It was much easier for him to get away with his overly pushy sales style and leave you with buyer’s regret along with a bad taste in your mouth.

Now, we live in an era Pink refers to as “information parity”. An era with the internet, Google, social media, and access to reviews of cars and car dealerships at the tap of a button. The playing field as far as information has been leveled to where the buyer can talk back to the seller and negotiate more for what they want or walk away to another dealership that’s willing to “play fair”.

So, with this change in eras, we need a change in sales style. Pink believes that the old ABC sales style will no longer work today and the research shows that he’s right. Pink has a new ABC sales style—”Attunement, Buoyancy, and Clarity”. You’ll learn more about this style as you progress through the review.

Persuasion Concept: Attunement

“Attunement is taking someone else’s perspective. Seeing the world through their eyes rather than through your own.”

So, attunement is the part of Pink’s ABC method where you find common ground with the person you want to persuade.

“Attunement is so important today because, in any kind of persuasive encounter, we have very little coercive power. We can’t force people to do things.”

I like that Pink noted this because it tells me that he thought about the other forms of persuasion, one of them being coercive power.

“So, the way that we are going to be able to move people is to find common ground to understand where they’re coming from, fashion a solution that works for you and works for them.”

Persuasion Concept: Perspective-Taking

“…You want to take the other person’s perspective. You want to see the world through their eyes. And, the reason for that is if you take their perspective, you’re more likely to see where they’re coming from, understand what they’re saying–in some ways honor their point of view.”

Persuasion Strategy: Decrease Your Power to Increase Your Effectiveness

“There is an inverse relationship between feelings of power and perspective-taking…The more powerful you feel in general, the worse your perspective-taking becomes.”

And, Pink has a great theory for why this is:

“People who are low in status—low in power—are excellent perspective-takers…Because they don’t have the resources. They’re not in charge. Survival depends on their being able to take the perspective of people who do have the resources. People who are high-status—high in power—in general, are terrible perspective-takers. They don’t see the world from other people’s points of view. Power has distorted the way that they view the world and view other people.”

And, of course, being incapable of taking the perspectives of others gets a lot of leaders in trouble as we can observe from past failed CEOs.

The solution?

1. Reduce your feelings of power (in order to)
2. Increase your ability to take someone else’s perspective

**Note: One way to reduce your feelings of power is to put the other side on the same level as you (which might mean building them up to your own level of power in your mind).*

Persuasion Strategy: The Empty Chair Technique

"So, suppose you have a meeting at your company. You set out the chairs around the meeting table. Everybody sits in his or her chair. But, you leave one chair open. One chair is empty. And, that chair, is for the most important person in the room who's *not* in the room. And, that's the customer. So, certain tech companies do this. So, when they have a session and they're talking about strategy, when they're talking about their marketing efforts, when they're talking about adding a new product line…having that empty chair there to represent the customer is powerful. Do you want to talk about your marketing strategy with your customer there? Are you doing things in a noble fashion? What about that product line? What would that customer sitting in that empty chair say?"

Daniel Pink says he uses this same strategy when writing his books. He keeps a mini chair on his work desk to the right of his computer. When writing, he'll notice the chair and ask himself if he's taking shortcuts that might disadvantage the reader.

This seems like a great way to make sure you're operating as a salesman that's in the business of serving others and NOT only making sales.

Persuasion Strategy: Use Your Head As Much As Your Heart

Empathy is feeling someone else's situation. Sympathy is feeling *bad* for someone's situation.

"Empathy is feeling what their feeling…think of it as a fraternal twin to perspective-taking. They're very closely related, but they're not identical. Empathy is largely about the heart. Perspective-taking is largely about the head. Both are important. But, how you use them matters a lot."

Ideally, you want both. You want to use a mix of empathy—your heart—and perspective-taking—your head. But, if you begin to feel overwhelmed with information (cognitive overload), when in doubt, use your head as much or more than your heart.

"When we're in a persuasive encounter…the moment can be very intense. Time is moving quickly…you have a lot going on in your mind…it can give us cognitive overload…we all suffer from cognitive overload. And, so, if you're feeling overloaded and you have to get rid of one, in a commercial encounter, get rid of the feelings. Focus on the thoughts and focus on the interests.'

Persuasion Strategy: Use Emotions As A Signal

"It's very difficult to know precisely what someone is thinking. But, we can do a few things to make at least an educated guess. One of them is to use their emotional state as a signal."

In other words, disassociate yourself from all negative emotions (separate yourself from and rise above all negative behavior, feelings, or outbursts), and ask yourself, "What's really going on here?" (i.e. "What's *really* making this person angry, frustrated, etc.).

"And, so, use the emotions a signal…to say, 'What's really going on here? What are their interests? What are their thoughts?' What really matters in sales is the ability to hypothesize. Start running some scenarios [possible reasons they're feeling those negative emotions] in your head…and just develop a few hypotheses. And then, finally, test those hypotheses. And, a simple way to do that is to ask him."

Pink actually recommends asking them using Chris Voss's negotiation technique: labeling. The only difference is, Pink urges his students to also attach, "Is that right?" to the end of each label (hypothesis).

> **Pink**: "It sounds [to me] like you might be having some pressure from your vendors. Is that right?

I love this approach. It uses the tactical empathy of Voss while mixing it with the dominant straight forwardness that comes from framing it as a question.

**Note: For the label to be more effective, leave out first-person pronouns such as "I" or "me".*

So, here's the breakdown of this strategy:

1. Use emotions
2. Hypothesize
3. Ask questions

Do this to get a little closer to understanding what they're thinking.

Persuasion Strategy: Serve Your Audience

"Ultimately, what we do as persuaders and sellers is we serve other people. We want to help move them to a better place."

"So, there are two key ways to turn your selling into serving–make it personal and make it purposeful."

Personal:

"Don't think about what you're doing as an abstraction. Put a human face on it. Think about how it's going to improve a single life."

Making it personal elevates your performance. The more you can put a face on your persuasive efforts, the more effective you'll be.

Pink, in a scientific study, noted that when radiologists were given X-rays to analyze that had a photo of the patient attached, their analyses were far more accurate than when lacking that personal touch.

Purposeful:

"When you're in your persuasive encounter, ask yourself, 'If the other person does what I want them to do, will they be better off?' Second, ask yourself, 'If the other person does what I want them to do, will the world be slightly better off?' If the answers to either of those questions is 'no', I really want you to rethink what you're doing. If the answers to each of those question is 'yes', you're doing it right."

Persuasion Concept: Discussion Map

The discussion map is a tool used to notice the hidden power dynamics of any meeting or situation because you may think you know who the powerful people in the room are, but first impressions can be deceiving. And, the last thing you want to do is expend social effort trying to persuade someone who's not the decision-maker.

Persuasion Strategy: Create A Discussion Map

"Many times, people who talk a lot are people who are struggling for influence but who don't really have influence…Many times you can disregard this person."

People who aren't talking often but are *talked to* often make for great points of leverage since they hold a lot of influence.

> **Workbook**: "Want to visualize how influence works in a group setting? Try making what Daniel calls a discussion map. Use a circle and a speaker's first initial to represent everyone in a discussion. Every time someone speaks, draw an arrow from them to whomever they're addressing. When the discussion wraps, take stock and analyze. Keep a few things in mind here. People who talk a lot (person A) are often the people who are struggling for influence. Also, when someone stays relatively quiet (person D), make sure to look at how often they're being addressed by others. If they don't say much but are getting a disproportionate amount of attention, it signals that they have leverage. Breaking down influence might seem high-stakes, but you don't

> need to sit in with a Fortune 500 boardroom to get some insight. A discussion map works around the dining room table or even when you're out with friends. Give it a shot. It'll give you a better idea about the power dynamics within group settings."

So, here's the breakdown of this strategy:

1. Find the key influencers in the interaction (remember, the person who talks a lot isn't always the most important)
2. Concentrate your persuasion efforts on those key influencers

**Note: The best part is you don't always need to make a map. Creating discussion maps train your eye to see who's falsely powerful and who's really powerful without the constant need for mapping out the discussion.*

Persuasion Strategy: Provide Clarity → Make Your Message Count

"Clarity is simply this ability o see a situation in a fresh light and help people surface problems they didn't realize that they had."

As I said earlier, we used to be in an era of information asymmetry where the seller always knew more than the buyer. Now that we're in an era of information parity, there's a lot of information out there for the buyer. So much information in fact, that our role as persuaders has shifted from being problem-solvers to problem-finders. And, it's now our responsibility to curate all of the information we have to the specific needs, interests, and problems of the buyer. The seller has all of the information they need now. But, we need to be the ones to make sense of that information for them.

> **Workbook**: "The salesmen of yore would have said, 'It looks like you're in the market for a vacuum.' Now, the smart salesperson says, 'Tell me about your house."

"…If your customer or prospect knows precisely what it's [their] problems is, they can often find the solution without you. They don't need you very much. Where they need you more is when they don't know what their problem is or they're wrong about [how to solve] their problem and, therefore, the premium has shifted from probelm-solving to problem-finding."

**Note: Ideally, you want your problem-finding to give them an "aha" moment.*

Persuasion Strategy: The Five "Whys?" Technique

A technique Pink really likes is the five whys technique. He uses it for problem-finding and believes that by asking "why" five times, you'll get to the root of any problem. This way, you can also operate as more of a "strategy consultant" than a salesman.

So, for example, let's say Pink is a management consultant and a CEO (who is the prospect) is interested in enlisting Pink's services.

> **Prospect**: I'm not interested.
>
> **Pink**: Why?
>
> **Prospect**: I can't afford it.
>
> **Pink**: Why can't you afford it?
>
> **Prospect**: The reason I can't afford it is that we're actually cutting our budget right now.
>
> **Pink**: Cutting your budget? Why?
>
> **Prospect**: We're cutting our budget because, actually, we didn't get enough revenue from this one product line

> of ours, and it's really hobbling our whole company. And, as a consequence, all across the company, we have to make some cuts.
>
> **Pink**: Why didn't that product line work?
>
> **Prospect**: Our product line didn't work, I think, because we–one of our most talented leaders left, and her replacement was a complete dud.
>
> **Pink**: All right, why was that?
>
> **Prospect**: Well, our hiring practices are not very effective.
>
> **Pink**: You know what? As it happens, I can help you improve your hiring practices…

Jim Miller, the former vice president of sales for Tony Robbins, believes in using this technique as well. And, Allan Nation, the man Tai Lopez promoted as one of his first mentors, taught this persuasion technique as well:

> **Allan Nation**: "To get to the root of any problem, you ask 'why' three times."

Persuasion Strategy: Become An Expert

If you're a salesman, the way to find their *real* (root) problem is by, one, asking questions and, two, becoming an expert.

By becoming an expert, you can become a curator of information. You can take all of the information that's out there and curate the information that's *meaningful* and *reliable* to your customer.

Persuasion Strategy: Find the 1%

"Focus on the one percent. Don't get lost in the weeds. There's a body of law, a body of knowledge. What's the one percent that makes the ninety-nine percent understandable?"

Persuasion Strategy: Less Is More

"When we're making our case, we're trying to convince somebody, we often wrestle with the idea of, 'How much information should I present? How many arguments should I offer? And, a general rule of thumb is that…taking things out is often more persuasive than leaving them in."

"When you get to the fourth item [reason they should buy], you actually lose your persuasiveness."

**Note: It's not stated in the course for sure, but this could be due to The Pinocchio Effect. When you continuously try to convince someone to follow your advice, they begin to wonder why you're trying so hard. And, that leads them to feel like maybe following your advice isn't such a good idea.*

Persuasion Strategy: Don't Irritate, Agitate!

"Irritation is trying to get somebody to do something *you* want them to do."

"Agitation is trying to get someone to do something that *they* ought to do and ultimately will want to do."

"The most effective persuaders, they're not irritators, they're agitators…They help people understand the context that they're in and help them summon their own motivation for making a change, for doing things differently. For doing things in a different way."

**Note: "Irritation is leading with your mouth and agitation is leading with your ears.*

Persuasion Strategy: Motivational Interviewing

What do we do about power distorting our perspective-taking?

Solution:

1. Ask two irrational questions.

So, let's say that Pink wants to persuade his son to clean his room.

> **Pink**: *(irrational question one)* "Hey son, on a scale of 1-10, how ready are you to clean your room?"
>
> **Son**: "A two."
>
> **Pink**: *(irrational question two)* "Why didn't you pick a lower number?"

This is intended to get them to explain the reasons they have for really wanting to do what you're trying to persuade them to do. In this case, the second irrational question would get Pink's son to start to list the reasons he actually does want to clean his room.

But, let's say that even when you give them a scale of 1-10, they decide to give you a zero.

> **Pink**: *(irrational question one)* "Hey son, on a scale of 1-10, how ready are you to clean your room?"
>
> **Son**: "A zero."
>
> **Pink**: *(calibrated question)* "Okay, got it. You're a zero. What can we do to make it a one?"

In this case, you're using the "Never Say No" negotiation technique by delivering what Chris Voss would call a calibrated question. It's intended to get them to collaborate with you on a way forward that works for everyone.

Persuasion Strategy: Bring Social Proof

Pink gives credit to Robert Cialdini for this one, the man he calls the "father of the persuasion sciences".

The general idea here is that as human beings, we're motivated by reward and punishment, pain and gain. And, we don't always know what the best decision to make is. So, we look to the environment and other people for social cues as to what the best course of action is. We tend to rationalize to ourselves—even if only subconsciously—that if a lot of people are taking a certain action, then that must mean that that particular decision results in the most gain and the least loss. So, we're more likely to make that decision and take that action.

That also means that if you bring social proof—proof that a good amount of other people have done what you want to persuade the other side to do—you can persuade others that the right decision is the one you want them to make, and the right course of action is the one you want them to take.

Persuasion Strategy: Build An Off-Ramp

"When we try to predict people's behavior and explain people's behavior, we almost always overweight the importance of their personality and underweight the importance of the context and the situation that they're in."

This is called The Fundamental Attribution Error. In other words, we tend to judge people's choices without first understanding their reasons.

The lesson here is that if you want somebody to do something for you, make the context and the situation one where it's easy for them to say "yes". Sometimes, you don't even need to convince them. You just need to make it easy for them to do something. And, you can do this by taking into consideration their interests.

What Pink refers to as "building an off-ramp" we refer to here at The Power Moves as "the WIIFT rule".

Persuasion Concept: Mimicry/Mimicking

Mimicry is the act of mirroring, matching, or copying someone else's behavior.

Persuasion Strategy: Three Steps to Strategic Mimicry

The three steps are:

1. You watch.
2. You wait.
3. You wane.

To expand on these steps:

1. Pay attention: How is somebody (the other person) sitting?
2. Wait: Pick one of the things they're doing, then mimic it. For example, if they lean back, count to ten, then lean back. Or, if they put or rest their hand on their chin, count to ten, and then put or rest your hand on your chin.
3. Wane: Let it slide a little bit (stop mimicking their behavior), then do it again.

**Note: Human beings are natural mimickers, so you'll be able to do this naturally.*

This has a dual effect. One is you'll be able to understand where they're coming from better. The other is that for them, mimicry feels natural. They feel like they're being heard.

**Note: According to Pink, when researchers were performing these studies, they also performed a manipulation check, where they asked the other person if they felt like they were being mimicked. In 95 out of 100 cases, those people said "no".*

Persuasion Strategy: Mimicking with Language

"One reason why things—like in technical sales—they go awry, is that the people doing the selling use *their* insider language, use *their* jargon. And, the people who they're selling to might not be as sophisticated and they use civilian's language rather than the, quote on quote, 'correct language'. So, as much as you possibly can, use other people's words. Use other people's phrases. It makes them feel heard. It also, again, puts you in a position where you can understand their perspective."

A study in Holland where half of the servers were instructed to repeat the customer's order back to them word-for-word and the other half was instructed not to, resulted in both the orders being right on both sides. But, the "repeaters" received 70% more tips.

Persuasion Concept: Persuasive Framing

"One aspect of contemporary society is that people are stimulus rich but context poor. They don't know what it all means. They don't know where to focus their gaze. And, one thing that always helps people see in any realm of life is a frame…because it focuses the issue on what you want to focus on. It avoids people concentrating on extraneous things. In some way, it sets the terms of the discussion."

Persuasion Concept: Cognitive Biases

"A cognitive bias is a way that our thinking doesn't go straight. Our thinking goes sideways. It's a glitch in the human mind. We all are subject to it. We have to watch for it because, in 99 times out of 100, it's going to lead us astray."

"They [cognitive biases] help you frame your message to other people, but they also offer a sense of caution for yourself not to fall prey to these biases."

**Note: Here is a complete list of 25 of the cognitive biases, which was provided to me by Tai Lopez after taking two of his sales and persuasion course: "The Accelerator: Persuasion" and "Green Belt: Closing The Sale".*

Persuasion Strategy: Loss-Aversion (AKA: The "Deprival-Superreaction Tendency" Cognitive Bias)

This particular strategy has been referred to as "pain/gain framing" or "the pain/gain frame" by John B. Ullmen and "bending people's reality" by Chris Voss.

"We experience losses more severely than the equivalent gain. So, the prospect of losing ten dollars is far more daunting than the thrill of winning ten dollars, even though, economically, it's essentially the same. And, so, in certain circumstances, you want to actually put the loss frame around your message…in many cases, you want to tell people what they have to lose."

An example is in the insurance industry. Selling insurance policies is all about telling people what they have to lose.

Persuasion Strategy: The Opportunity Cost Frame (More Loss-Aversion)

This frame and its effectiveness lies within the loss-aversion cognitive bias above as well.

"Any time you do something, you forgo doing something else. That's an opportunity cost. Any time you spend one dollar on one thing, that's one dollar you're not spending on something else. That's an opportunity cost."

"Oftentimes, you will use the opportunity cost frame when someone is trying to convince you and you need to push back a little bit."

So, for example, imagine that you are an architect and Pink is your client. And, you're limited on time as far as how long you have to build a house for Pink. And, you're limited as far as the budget Pink's given you to spend on the development of this house.

> **Pink**: "You know, I was just thinking. We should do a…one of the overhangs…we should do an oculus. Create a big hole there so the sun can come in."
>
> **You**: *(roll your eyes)* "OK, well, that's interesting. Interesting idea, the oculus. Umm, we can do it. But, with our budget, *(opportunity cost frame)* tell me what you want to give up to get that."
>
> **Pink**: *(starts backtracking)* "Whoa, give something up?"
>
> **You**: "Also, it's like, I'm on a fixed…you know, I'm on a time to get this thing done. Umm, *(opportunity cost frame)* what don't you want me to do in order to get you your oculus?"

Persuasion Strategy: The Experience Frame (The "Reason – Respecting Tendency" Cognitive Bias)

"When social scientists have looked at what people remember and what they value, they tend to remember and value experiences more than goods and services. So, they derive satisfaction not from, say, the television itself that they just purchased. But, from the experience of sitting around with your family watching a musical or having a regular Sunday night movie night in front of that TV set. The experience is more enriching, the experience is more valuable [than the product alone]."

"So, take what you're selling, whether it's an idea, whether it is a product, and put it in terms of an experience."

For example, let's say you're selling a used car. You can talk about the specifics of it such as the engine, the mileage, the gas efficiency, and so on. But, you can also frame it in terms of the experience the prospective buyer would have.

> **You**: "You know what, I use this car. And, *(the experience frame)* I drove my kids to soccer practice in this car. It's a great thing for doing that. And, as you know, as a parent, one of the things that's one of the few opportunities that you have is to have conversations with your kids. And, *(the experience frame)* sometimes it's in the car. And, so, this is a great car for doing that."

"We tend to value a fairly universal set of experiences. What do we like? We like novelty. To some extent, we like challenge. To some extent, we like relaxation. We like being with people we care about. And, that common set of experiences are really what give us satisfaction as human beings."

The experience frame can make your product or idea more buyable and, in some cases, even more valuable in the eyes of the person you're looking to persuade.

The reason that I associated this frame with the "Reason – Respecting Tendency" cognitive bias is because it states, "You can increase compliance to a request, favor or command if you give a reason why." And, in this case, the reason why that you're providing is because of the experience they can have if they buy your product or buy into your idea.

Persuasion Strategy: The Less Is More Frame (The "Contrast – Misreaction Tendency" Cognitive Bias)

"…the truth is that offering people [more] choices can be persuasive *up to a point*…[having more than one] choice is valuable, but it has a ceiling on it."

"…and, there's a famous study that exemplifies this. These two researchers at Stanford set up shop in a grocery store. And, they were purportedly selling jam. So, in one instance, they offered free tasters of 24 different varieties of jam. In another instance, they offered just six varieties of jam…Which sold more? When they offered 24 varieties of jam, 3% of the customers bought the jam. When they offered fewer options, 30% bought it. Less is more."

"More isn't better, *better* is better…fewer options can be much more clarifying [and, clarity is persuasive]. And, your job, as a persuaded, is to narrow the set of options in a way that is useful and enlightening for the person you're trying to persuade."

The reason I associated this with the "Contrast – Misreaction Tendency" cognitive bias is that this frame is aimed at removing what many psychologists (namely Barry Schwartz) refer to as "the paradox of choice". Or, as it's more commonly referred to, "analysis paralysis". Using the less is more frame helps buyers take action by removing the number of choices they have to compare and contrast to, which reduces stagnation, increasing sales.

Persuasion Strategy: The Contrast Frame (The "Contrast – Misreaction Tendency" Cognitive Bias)

"…we understand things in relative terms, not in absolute terms. What does that mean? All right. Is *this* expensive? Compared to what? Am I tall? Compared to who? IS this a good place to visit? Compared to what [where]? The single most important question in sales and persuasion is not 'what's in it for me'? That's what we're taught in sales training classes. 'What's in it for me?' That's an important question. It's the second most important question. The *most* important question in sales and persuasion is, 'Compared to what'? The way you make something clear is by contrasting it with something else, not letting it sit on its own."

The example Pink used here is the story of the blind beggar, sitting by a sign that reads, "I am blind". And, a man named Rosser Reeves takes that beggar's cardboard sign and writes, "It is springtime and…I am blind". And, as the legend goes, coins start piling up for the blind beggar. So, in terms of the contrast principle, as Pink puts it, "We understand this person, he can't see. Compared to what? Compared to being someone like me on a beautiful spring day and seeing everything."

Persuasion Strategy: The Blemish Frame (AKA: "Strategic Honesty" or Pre-framing)

The blemish frame. Lucio refers to it as "strategic honesty" in his breakdown of Tai Lopez's manipulative persuasion techniques and, as Lucio points out, Tony Robbins calls it pre-framing in "Power to Influence".

"As persuaders, we often have–whether we're in an official sales encounter or whether we're just in our personal lives–what we offer often isn't perfect. It might have a few blemishes. So, a dilemma that we confront is, 'Do we reveal that blemish or do we conceal that blemish?"

As Pink points out, it's great to point out blemishes because if you only provide a long list of positives to persuade your prospect, they have nothing to compare those positives to. But, with the long list of positives followed by a small negative–a blemish–that small negative will trigger the contrast bias in their brain where they compare that one small negative detail to this long list of major positives. And, by that point, their decision on what to do will be obvious to them.

That being said, it has to be a small blemish. And, sequence matters. It's more effective when the negative follows *after* a long list of positives.

**Note: Tony Robbins likely calls it "pre-framing" not as a way of pre-framing the product or idea, but the relationship as being a relationship built on trust and honesty, which builds rapport. Still, the benefits of this frame improve both their view of the relationship and their view of your product or idea.*

Persuasion Strategy: The Potential Frame

"Buyers tend to overvalue potential more than they should…".

As Pink notes, this is *super* important in a job interview.
Pink says, "In many cases, as we're interviewing for a job, we're persuaders trying to get someone to hire us, we spend a lot of time talking about all that we've accomplished. And, that can be important. I don't want to discount that. But, what I *don't* want you to do is spend *all* your time talking about that and *none* of your time talking about your potential. Because potential, weirdly enough, is often more persuasive than actual experience."

As you may have noticed, I haven't associated this frame with any cognitive bias. And, that's because Pink's reasoning behind why he believes this frame is effective is because, as he says, "…potential creates uncertainty. When we don't know what something is going to be like we start filling in the blanks. And, often, people will fill in the blanks and make decisions based on what they imagine to be very positive things. And, so, by emphasizing potential in those kinds of [positive] circumstances, you're creating uncertainty. The other person is filling in that uncertainty with something positive."

An example Pink provides is in cases where experienced, working individuals are asking their boss for a promotion:

"The problem that we sometimes have is that when people go further along in their careers, they always go back to their experience. Which, is important, but they don't talk *enough* about their *potential*. It's very important if you're looking for a promotion. You've been doing this one role for three or four years. You want to do something else. You want your boss to promote you. You can do a laundry list of everything you've accomplished in your current job, but that might make the boss say, 'Wow, you're really good at this job! I'd like to keep you in this job.' What you want to do is you want to talk about your *potential* because potential creates uncertainty that the boss will then fill in [with positivity]."

Persuasion Strategy: The Sunk Costs Frame (The "Sunk Costs Fallacy" Cognitive Bias)

"…People tend to overvalue costs that are already sunk [lost forever]. Don't do that. Those are *sunk* costs [already gone and in the past]. What you want to do is you want to look prospectively, not retrospectively. And, so, be wary

of the sunk cost fallacy when you are a buyer. And, where appropriate, keep it in mind when you're a seller."

Here's Pink's example. You bought tickets to a concert. Two tickets that cost you $75 apiece. So, you paid $150 for these tickets and now you can't get a refund because you've already bought them. Two weeks later, it's the night of the concert, it's cold. It's rainy. The venue is far away. You're feeling burnt out from your day at the job. Should you go to that concert?

In an effort to avoid making your purchase a *total* waste, you might decide to go. But, that's the sunk cost fallacy. If you go to the concert or don't go to that concert, either way, you've already spent the $150. That money is already *sunk*. So, what you want to do is think about the future, think about what you should do next. And, maybe to preserve your health, it's best not to go to that concert.

The thing is, people tend to overvalue the costs that are already sunk. Once again, avoid that. Think and focus forward, those costs are already gone, they're all in the past now.

Persuasion Strategy: The Anchoring Frame (The "Anchoring" Cognitive Bias)

"Anchoring, in plain and simple terms, is that the first thing that people hear plants in their head and stays there and has a disproportionate impact on how they think and what they believe tan you would imagine…it's a quirk of the human mind, this anchoring bias. It's just that whatever we hear first shapes our views more than it should. It's almost like a defect. And, so, what you have to do is you have to be aware of the defect and act around it."

**Note: Pink says, "Now, you can't come up with the anchor out of nowhere. It has to be based on something." And, none of us are immune to the anchoring bias, and the one who sets the anchor often sets the terms of the negotiation and conversation.*

Persuasion Strategy: Choose Your Frames Wisely (Wise Frame-Setting)

"Now, you don't need to use a frame for every single thing. You don't need to repeat frames over and over again."

Think of it as having a workshop and all of these frames are your tools. Whenever you're faced with a situation or persuasive encounter, ask yourself, "Do I need a frame for this circumstance?" And, if yes, use the frame (tool) you have in mind to help the person you want to persuade see things your way.

Persuasion Concept: Pro-Like Pitching

The best pitches do NOT go:

Pitch → Wait for an Applause → They Applaud → They Get Out Their Checkbooks

The best pitches *actually* go:

Pitch → Invite Their Input → They Provide Input/Feedback → Collaboration

"The purpose of a pitch is not to get a 'yes' right there. The purpose of a pitch is to start a conversation and build a collaboration."

Persuasion Strategy: The Question Pitch

"When the facts are very strongly on your side in making an argument, questions are more persuasive than statements. Questions have to elicit a response. They are inherently interactive. They inherently provoke."

When you ask someone a question that provokes the answer you want them to reach (which they reach because all of the facts are already strongly on your side), they'll come up with their own reasons for doing what you want because *they're* answer the question, even if you already know what the answer would be. In other words, when people reach *your* conclusion on their own, that's far more persuasive because, "When people have their own reasons for doing something, they're more likely to do it."

An example is in 1980 when Ronald Reagan was running against Jimmy Carter (who was already President of the US and looking to be re-elected for a second term). Ronald Reagan asked the famous question, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" And, when he said that, the people (voters) remembered that, at the time of being asked that question, there are American hostages being taken in Iran, there is an energy crisis, unemployment is high, inflation is high, and a whole other slew of problems are being battled that they weren't having four years ago *before* Jimmy Carter was in office. And, with those famous words—with that "question pitch"—Reagan was elected as the new President of the United States.

At the same time, question pitches are dangerous for your persuasiveness if the facts are NOT on your side.

An example of this is in 2012 when Mitt Romney was running against the then-President Barack Obama. Mitt Romney tried to use Ronald Reagan's same famous words to win the election, said it once, and never said it again. He asked them in 2012, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" And, when people answered that question for themselves, they remembered the Great Recession of 2008 when houses were being foreclosed on their very neighborhood block, people they knew and cared about were out of jobs, and that, yes, they are doing much better now (in 2012 under the leadership of President Obama) than they were four years back. And, as a result, Romney sunk his own ship and President Obama was re-elected for a second term.

"So, when the facts are on your side, pitch with a question."

"One way to fashion a question pitch is to think about the declarative statement that you would make and just turn it into an interrogative."

So, for example, let's say Pink is in the business of selling the world's best carbon monoxide detectors. And, he believes in these, he believes they're truly the best on the market.

> **Pink**: *(declarative statement/what he really wants to say)* "These are the best carbon monoxide detectors in the world and you need these to protect your family."

> **Pink**: *(question pitch)* "How much is it worth to you to protect your family?"

And, that question pitch might be more effective because the buyer/prospect might respond by saying they can't put a price tag on that. So, they rationalize to themself that paying a few dollars extra for a carbon monoxide detector is nothing in comparison to the value of keeping their family safe.

Persuasion Strategy: The Rhyming Pitch

"The truth is there's a central lesson in linguistics and in persuasion. There are certain things [such as rhyme] that increase *processing fluency*…Processing fluency is simply that your message goes down a little more easily. When the message goes down more easily, it's easier to absorb. And, it's more likely to be believed [and persuasive]."

As Pink notes, in the OJ Simpson trial, the signal moment of that trial was when they found a pair of gloves and had OJ try them on in front of the jury. And, Johnny Cochran said famously, "It doesn't fit. If it doesn't fit, you must acquit." And, in the end, OJ Simpson did end up getting acquitted.

Persuasion Strategy: The Pixar Pitch

"What some story editors there [at Pixar Studios] have revealed is every Pixar movie has the same basic narrative structure. And, it's os basic, one can reduce it to six sentences…".

1. "Once upon a time…"
2. "Every day…"
3. "One day…"

4. “Because of that…”
5. “Because of that…”
6. “Until finally…”

“I really want to encourage you to use the Pixar pitch in your own pitches. And, I think it’s especially effective for all of you entrepreneurs out there.”

Pink’s example here is a made-up mobile financial service business Pink creates:

1. “Once upon a time, there were tens of millions of Americans who didn’t have access to a bank.”
2. “Every day, they would have to go to check cashing services and worry about where to keep their cash.”
3. “One day, we came along with an app to provide financial service to people who lack access to a traditional bank.”
4. “Because of that, more people were able to use financial services, to get credit.”
5. “Because of *that*, they were able to support their families better, focus on their jobs…”
6. “Until, finally, the financial system was available to *all* of us. NOT just the elite, to everybody who was growing and contributing to the modern economy.”

Persuasion Concept: One-Word Equity

Lord Saatchi, the great British adman, says, “…it’s so tumultuous in the marketplace out there that what you want to do is you want to own one word. So, when people think of you, they think of that word. When people think of that word, they think of you.”

For example, when you think Google, chances are you think “search”. And, vice-versa.

Persuasion Strategy: The One-Word Pitch

“I like this idea of one-word equity as an actual pitch saying, ‘The way to understand us is to understand this one word.’ But, I really like it as an exercise to hone your message because if you can distill what you’re about, what you stand for, in a single word, you’re doing something right.”

Take a look at Pink’s example for this one. Pink says, “So, in 2008, when Barack Obama ran for president, it was a single word—one-word equity—’hope’. That’s what it was all about.” To expand on this example a bit might be his ad campaigns and slogan that revolved around that one-word equity, “Yes we can.” And, as Pink further notes, “When he ran for re-election if you look at all of his campaign literature, ‘forward’.

Persuasion Strategy: Write Email Subject Lines People Want to Open

Persuasive email subject lines consist of two main things:

1. Utility: “My subject line has to show that what I’m suggesting in this email is valuable to you, is useful to you.”
2. Curiosity: “Curiosity is, ‘I have to create a little bit of doubt and uncertainty so you’re intrigued enough to open it up.”

**Note: You don’t want to be in the middle, between utility and curiosity.*

Ex:

Let’s say, for example, you’re sending an email to your boss.

Subject Line: “Follow-up”

VS

Subject Line: “Two more ideas for budget cuts”

The latter is more persuasive. Again:

Subject Line: “Some ideas”

VS

Subject Line: “A weird idea I just had that might work”

“So, what we want is that when people are receiving a high volume of email, go to utility. When they have a lower volume of email, go to curiosity…every email subject line you write should make the person say, ‘Whoa, I need to open that because it’s going to be useful to me,’ or, ‘Man, I need to find out what that is.” Pink says there should really be no in-between if you want your email subject line to truly be effective.

Persuasion Strategy: Use Granular Numbers (AKA: The Precise Bid Tactic)

“…when you use those granular kinds of numbers, it feels to the recipient like you’ve actually taken some time, you’re being precise, you’re being deliberate. So, when in doubt, rough numbers are less valuable than very granular numbers.”

For example, two hours is less persuasive than 120 minutes. This is also referred to by negotiation expert Barry Nalebuff as the “precise bid tactic“.

Persuasion Strategy: Bringing Your Pitch Into Focus

You need to be able to answer these three essential questions in order to bring your pitch into focus:

1. What do you want the other side to know?
2. What do you want the other side to feel?
3. What do you want the other side to do?

“If you have clear, crisp answers to those questions, your pitch is much more likely to be persuasive.”

**Note: Experiment. Maybe there’s a way to put together the rhyming pitch and the question pitch. Have fun when you’re going through the process of figuring out what works for you.*

Persuasion Concept: Buoyancy (AKA: Mental Resiliency)

“Buoyancy measures your ability to float “in an ocean of rejection,” as Daniel calls it. As a seller/persuader, you’re going to hear “no” many more times than “yes.” Managing this means equipping yourself to deal with rejection—a.k.a. becoming more buoyant.”

Persuasion Strategy: The Keys to a Successful Pep Talk (The Keys to Persuasive Self-Talk)

The major key is: instead of engaging in declarative self-talk, engage in interrogative self-talk.

“Instead of affirming yourself and saying you can do this, turn it into a question and ask yourself, ‘Can you do this? And, if so, how?”

Pink says that the self-help gurus hate this because you’re questioning yourself (which, if we’re going by Pink, I suppose self-help gurus will tell you to never do). But, the science shows that it works because the question engages you in a frame of mind that’s more about strategy as the way forward (i.e. “How can I do this?”) instead of raw, base-less core confidence as the way forward (i.e. “OK, I know I can, I know I can, I know I can.”). It also leads your brain to come up with reasons why you actually can do this which builds your confidence in the situation.

"…while positive self-talk can be valuable, what's actually more effective, what, in a way, is more *muscular*, is the interrogative self-talk. Because it inspires you to answer the question. And, in answering the question, you prepare, you strategize, you rehearse. And, that improves your performance."

Persuasion Concept: The Explanatory Style

"Explanatory style is basically, 'How do you explain your failure or rejection?' And, a lot of us explain it in ways that are personally debilitating and often inaccurate."

Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, builds mental resiliency (buoyancy) using what is now often referred to as Seligman's Three P's:

1. **Personal –** Ask yourself, "Is this *personal*?" Explain why it's NOT.
2. **Pervasive –** Ask yourself, "Does this *always* happen?" Explain why it does NOT.
3. **Permanent –** Ask yourself, "Is this going to ruin *everything*?" Explain why it will NOT. Then, also ask yourself, "Is this rejection *permanent*?" And, finally, explain why it is NOT.

Treat yourself the way that you would treat a friend. Pink notes, "There's another principle in [the] science of behavior called self-compassion. We tend to be relatively compassionate with other people. But, we're less compassionate with ourselves." So, show yourself the same compassion you would show a friend in need.

Persuasion Concept: Introvert, Extrovert, or Ambivert

The research shows that extroverts are more likely to go into sales jobs, get hired in sales jobs, and get promoted in sales jobs. But, introverts have a higher sales performance than extroverts.

Now, a great piece of research out of the University of Pennsylvania actually shows that both introverts and extroverts are easily outperformed by ambiverts.

"An ambivert is someone who is a little bit introverted and a little bit extroverted. They're not strongly one way or the other."

The research showed that ambiverts were the best persuaders because the introverts (at the extreme of their personality type) didn't like to assert themselves and were a little bit shy while the extroverts at their extreme (the highest level of extroversion) weren't good listeners. So, the ambiverts did the best because they are in the middle of both extremes, knowing when to push and when to hold back, when to speak up and when to listen.

Ask Pink notes, "The distribution of introversion and extroversion in the population shows that most of us have the native personality to be effective at sales, persuasion, and influence."

Persuasion Strategy: Develop Your Ambivert Skills (Move Toward the Center)

"…you can't fundamentally change your personality. Introversion, extroversion tends to [both] be reasonably stable over people's lives…It's part of who you are…[BUT] you *can* make small steps to the center. Not anything big or dramatic, not changing who your essence is, you shouldn't do that. But…you can move a little to the center. You have to get out of your comfort zone a little bit."

Here's how to get out of your comfort zone and move toward the center based on where you are:

Introverts: Spark more conversations with (random) strangers.

Extroverts: Be quiet. Stop talking so much. Listen more. Ask more questions (that invite the other side to do more of the talking).

Persuasion Strategy: Become a Better Listener

Remember:

1. Listening is NOT a form of waiting (for your turn to talk).
2. Do NOT be too quick to jump in (with what you want to say).

Persuade Yourself (Self-Motivation)

"Remember the tool about 'make it easy' [WIIFT]. If you want someone to do something, make it easy for them to do something…Build an off-ramp for yourself [make it easy for yourself]."

The Just Five More Technique (Self-Motivation)

"Say, 'I'm just going to do five more emails.' And, you know what happens? You end up sending 15 more."

Another example is if you're writing a book. When you feel like you don't have it in you to write anymore, you can tell yourself, "Just five more pages."

Set An Interim Goal (Self-Motivation)

"Sometimes it's extremely daunting to have a huge goal…So, what you want to do is set an interim goal…That's easier for me to see. It's easier for me to get to . That gives me the motivation to reach that interim goal. Then, I set another interim goal."

(Daunting) Huge Goal: I'm going to write a whole book.

VS

(Self-Motivating) Interim Goal: I'm going to write a chapter of my book within the next two weeks.

Make A Public Commitment (Self-Motivation)

Announce your goal to the world (perhaps via social media) so the world holds you accountable.

Take A Break (Self-Motivation)

"We know that the most effective breaks are outside rather than inside. They are moving rather than stationary. They're with other people rather than solo."

So, the idea here is to self-motivate yourself to get more done by taking a break to avoid burnout.

"So, if you're looking for some self-motivation, one of the cheapest, most cost-effective things you can possibly do is this. Go out for a five or ten-minute walk with someone you like, outside, talking about something other than work, leaving your phone behind."

Employ Deadlines Cautiously (Self-Motivation)

"Deadlines can be extremely effective if what you're doing is relatively straight-forward. You know pretty much what you need to do. You pretty much know how to do it. Having that deadline—being able to see that deadline in front of you—is going to allow you to finish the task."

"The one area where deadlines don't work so great is when people are doing what social psychologists call 'heuristic work'. That's just a fancy way of saying, 'Work that requires divergent thinking, work that requires greater creativity where you're not sure what problem you're solving, you're still trying to figure it out.' In those cases, deadlines actually inhibit performance."

Also, avoid overusing deadlines when you're in a leadership position. If you "impose" a deadline onto someone else

that's too severe, it can actually kill their intrinsic motivation. Instead, get people committed to their action and then use deadlines as a goal, target, or helpful tool to encourage their progress.

When To Pitch (Using Timing to Persuade)

When to *go first*:

1. If you are NOT the default candidate, you want to go first.Pink's example is if you're running an advertising agency and one of your prospects—your potential clients—is considering getting rid of their existing ad agency. Their existing agency is their default choice. So, they're the default candidate. And, by going first, you look like a fresh, lively new choice in comparison to the choice that's been their existing default for so long.
2. When there are relatively few other candidates."[A] small number of candidates going first gives you the advantage of what's called the 'primacy effect'. People who go first are taken a little bit more seriously."
3. If a lot of your competitors (say, other business, job candidates, etc., etc.) are very strong"…if people see a number of strong candidates one after another when they get to the later ones, they are going to say, '…everybody can't be this good.' And, they'll start more aggressively looking for flaws."

When you do NOT want to go first and, instead, want to *go toward the end*:

1. If you ARE the default candidate.
2. If there are a lot of competitors."…when there are a huge number of competitors, the people who come toward the end are actually evaluated more highly."
3. If the criteria for selection are not super-clear."They are not sure what kind of firm they want to hire. They're not sure exactly what they're looking for in a candidate. Let the other people who go first figure it out for them. When they get to you, they say, 'Oh, this is exactly what we need."

When To Give Bad News (Using Timing to Persuade)

"…in general, you're better off starting with the bad news and going to the good news. That's what people want to hear."

For more, see John B. Ullmen's point on this.

Schedule Tough Requests After Breaks (Using Timing to Persuade)

"When people make decisions, particularly when they're confronted with a decision, they have in their back pocket a default decision. And, that default decision is almost always 'no'. So, you ask your boss for a raise, the default decision is 'no'…people are more likely to overcome the default early in the day and immediately after breaks. If you have a tough prospect and you know the default answer is 'no', you might have a marginally better chance if you approach that person early in the day or immediately after that person has taken a break."

Pink notes that this will only give you a tiny edge or advantage and that while he doesn't want to overstate or exaggerate the effectiveness of this particular strategy, small edges such as the one this one gives can still be meaningful in getting what you want.

Leverage Your Internal Rhythms For Productivity

Bullet Summary

- **Beginning:** "Pick a date or day of the week that makes symbolic sense to begin something big. Starting on a Monday (rather than, say, a Thursday) is more likely to help your project be a success. Also, do a premortem by generating a list of potential stumbling blocks and blind spots as part of your preparation. Once you identify those, formulate a plan for how to avoid them and jot down a few practical solutions in case they do arise."

- **Middle:** “These are tricky. Sometimes they drag us down; research shows that happiness tends to lag in midlife. But when used properly, they can also fire us up. In that spirit, try using project midpoints as a form of motivation. If you can think of yourself as slightly behind when reaching the midpoint of a project, it might encourage you to pick up the pace.”
- **Ending:** “They should energize you. People tend to push harder once the end is in sight. Who doesn’t love going out on top? Use the looming finish line of a project as an opportunity to make things happen.”

Internal Rhythms – Beginning

The Premortem Technique

“A post-mortem is when the body dies and you try to figure out what caused the death. A pre-mortem is when you look at the dead body while it’s still alive.”

For example, if you’re going to start a new sales campaign for your business, collect your team and think about it being one year from that campaign. Everything has gone wrong. you didn’t make enough sales, your existing customers are angry and leaving to join your competitors. Your team members are actually fighting with each other. Then, think about what went wrong. Make a list of everything that contributed to causing this disaster. And, use that list to avoid those mistakes.

“Figure out the problem before the problem occurs. And, do everything you can to avoid it.”

Internal Rhythms – Middle

1. Recognize that it’s a midpoint.
2. Use that midpoint as an alarm clock.
3. Imagine yourself a little bit behind.

An example is if you have a project that’s due in 30 days, don’t start working on that project until day 15. That way, the midpoint in your timetable becomes an alarm clock to get going because you can imagine yourself being a little bit behind.

Internal Rhythms – Ending

Endgame Persuasion (Using Timing to Persuade)

“Whatever happens at the end of an experience is often more memorable than many of the things that happened throughout that experience.”

Real-Life Applications

1. Set the Frame

Often, we’ll find ourselves in situations where we need to engage in frame control and frame negotiations. But, what about when we have the opportunity to go first and we need to actually *set* the frame?

In a lot of cases, using Daniel Pink’s nine frames that leverage the cognitive biases within our minds is a great way to start your frame negotiation off in a way that allows you to dictate the terms of the interaction. One of the only exceptions would be in cases where you’re dealing with people who are great conversationalists capable of reading, controlling, and negotiating frames, which, most people aren’t.

CONS

- **Less Live Negotiations**

Out of the entire course, there was only one video where you got to see Pink uses his teachings in action. Compared to the Voss Masterclass where there were six videos of Voss engaging in a live, unscripted negotiation, that's a huge step down.

PROS

- **Beautiful, Informative Workbook**

It seems that ever since Masterclass stepped up their branding, their workbooks are also more engaging and contain summaries of the Masterclass teacher's lessons that are much more accurate.

- **Lessons Are Packed**

You open one lesson and feel like you *must* take notes so you don't miss anything juicy. Lots of value in each lesson in terms of persuasion. And, Pink references popular social psychologists and bodies of research to back up his teachings that you are able to look into yourself if you decide.

Last Minute Resistance: 10 Proven Ways to Handle Them

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 March 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Last-Minute Resistance (LMR) refers to the hesitation or verbal and non-verbal pushback a woman may express when physical intimacy escalates toward sex. It can stem from a variety of factors, including internal comfort levels, social pressure, or the need for further trust-building before proceeding.

Handling last-minute resistance is NOT about 'overcoming a no'—it's about addressing the doubts that cause her to stall on a decision she has already made.

In this article, we will learn how to handle last-minute resistance in a safe, attractive, and high-value manner to successfully proceed towards a mutually satisfying experience.

TPM Ethics: LMR navigation only applies in the context of Active, Enthusiastic Consent
Any seduction requires full willingness and consent from her. If she does not want to be intimate with you, you immediately stop.
Trying to go against her will is not only unseductive, but it's also dishonorable, immoral, and illegal. Do not do it.

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- The Nuances of Verbal Boundaries

Why Do LMR Even Happen?

Why do LMR happen?

Test yourself, and pick what you think applies:

1. She is testing the man to assess his character and/or will

2. He hasn't timed his escalation well
3. She likes him, but is not fully sold on taking it to the next level
4. She is emotional or nervous
5. She is making him wait to seem more "serious" and Madonna-like
6. She needs some more time and comfort before sex

If you answered "it can be all", congratulations, you're a high mating intelligence man.

Albeit LMR and sexual rejections *can* be a form of shit-test, that's the least common scenario.
A woman who decides to be in a sex location with you has probably done most of her testing already -or, if she sees you as a really high-value man, she won't need even need any testing at all-.

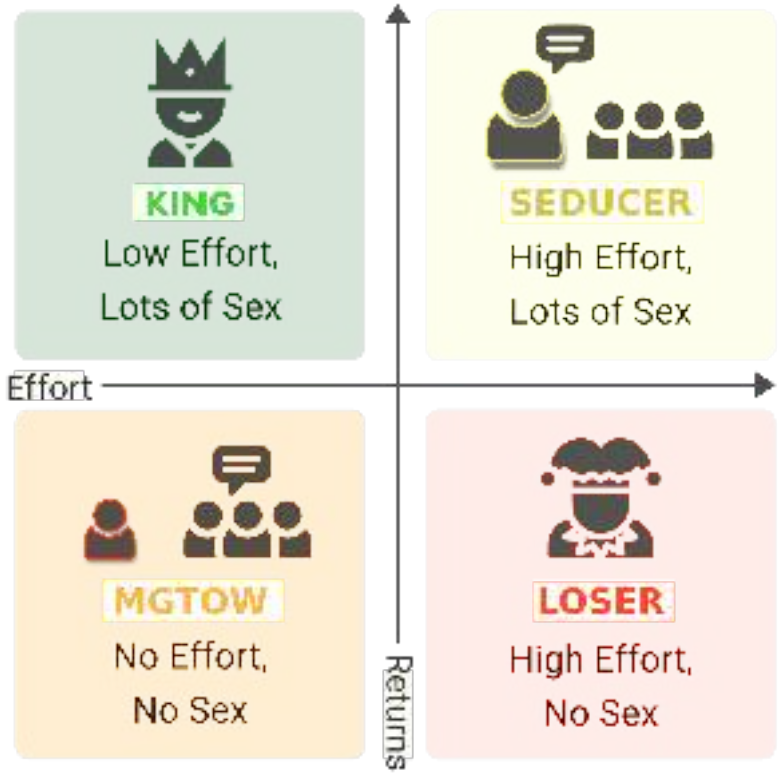
But overall, focus less on the "why" and more on the "how" -how to avoid LMR, and how to deal with LMR-.

How to Handle LMR

Here's the power dynamics principle of LMR:

⚖ **The more she stalls his advances, the lower value he becomes**

The basic dynamics of last-minute resistance are that he's *chasing* for sex, while she's *denying* him.
Unless she displays equal or stronger signs of attraction, **the frame is that he wants her, but she doesn't**. And fruitlessly expands efforts while failing to reach his goal -the definition of powerlessness:



The Effort-Return Matrix from Social Investment Theory (Buffalmano, 2026). Men expanding much effort and not advancing signal they're lower power, which is unseductive

She, on the other hand, is the object of desire. Even if she agrees to sex later, she has been controlling the interaction, and its tempo.
And that gives her power.

At the extreme, men who aren't good at understanding and controlling this dynamic, become puppets on a string -

her string-.

And what's the problem with that?

The problem is that women don't like men who are "less" than they are (see "hypergamy").
And especially not men who are less powerful than they are.

That's why the rule of thumb is "sooner is better".
Because the longer the last-minute resistance, the more challenging it is for him to maintain control and power -and her attraction-.

Pursuing Sex Without Losing Power

Luckily, there are ways around the LMR power conundrum.

And there are even ways to deal with LMR while *gaining* power and attraction.

How?

This is how:

1. Prevent LMRs

Prevention is the best cure:

1. Make her attracted
2. Make her comfortable
3. Display open-mindedness around sex

And, ideally, frame yourself as a lover.

See Sexual Escalation or, better yet, Seduction University for the details.

However, remember this:

A minimum of hesitation is often expected because first-time sex *is* a big deal for many women.

2. "Tidal Escalation": Slow But Steady (& Calibrate To Her Reactions)

It's not my favorite style, but it works great.

Especially if your game is more indirect and if you date lower dominance.

Last minute resistances can be an issue if:

1. you escalate way too early
2. you escalate way too slow
3. you escalate foo forcefully (unless she's willing and he's a top seducer, see dominance article)

So a good mindset is to be like a tidal wave: always forward, but never too fast.

Early pick-up artists also talked about "2 steps forward, 1 step back", which is a good rule of thumb.
That means that, generally speaking, **you want to pull back before she resists and rejects you**. But when you re-initiate, you want to go further than before.

Here are a few ways:

1. **Increase touching, see how she reacts**: Start with lighter touching, then leave your hand on her arm or back as you speak, and see how she reacts. If she pulls away or is uncomfortable, stop. If she appreciates, good sign. Hand-holding is a bigger step, and a bigger risk, but if things are going well, go for it. PRO Tip: go for

interlacing fingers. It's more intimate, and a symbolic precursor to sexual union.

2. **Take baby steps**: The bigger the move, the bigger the effects of a rejection. With baby steps, possible rejections won't harm you nearly as much. A seducer I know has a shisha that he uses both as a lure to invite girls home, and as a prop to make his first move in baby steps. He starts by blowing shisha smoke from mouth to mouth with his hand first, then removes the hand and goes for the mouth-to-mouth smoke, then makes out, and then takes it from there.
3. **Make the move in a safe environment**: For example, if you use an elevator home, lean in and kiss her neck in the elevator. Her reaction also tells you a lot about where you stand, and helps you calibrate your next steps. If she stands still, it's a good sign. If she caresses you or gets closer, you can start escalating as soon as you're home, no LMR.

And reframe unsafe to safe.
For example:

> **Her**: If you keep doing that, I'll scream/leave
> **You**: Whoa, let's take a second why are you saying that. I'm not here to make you feel pressured. If you're not feeling it, we can just hang out. I'm only interested if we're both having a good time."

PRO Tip: Kiss The Neck, Not The Mouth

The kiss on the mouth feels like a "big move".

And that increases the chance of getting a first rejection, plus makes the rejection a big deal. Bad for power dynamics, and leads to more LMRs.

What to do, then?

Kiss her on the neck!
Feels like a "smaller" move, allows you to better gauge her reaction, and has higher chances of being accepted.

Also, if you're moving quick and/or going for the lover strategy, you don't need to kiss at all to get to sex.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Kissing Not Needed**

Lucio:
In my observation of high-intensity 'Lover Strategy' encounters, kissing is not a prerequisite for sex, nor a key 'escalation milestone'.

In approximately 80% of my last several dates, we did not kiss at all pre-intimacy.

3. Adopt A Win-Win Mindset

Some guys have this bad mindset:

> I need to beat her LMR.

And when you have that mindset, what happens?
You're in a competitive, "you VS her" mindset.

Competitive mindsets certainly spoil relationships, and often also spoil first-times to sex.

This is how collaborative approaches and mindsets look like:

- "Deep down, we both want this"
- "I like you and you like me, so we'll play the game now, and eventually get there"
- "We're in it together, and you also must do your part to make it pleasant and seduce me"

The last one is my favorite mindset approach to LMR.
It's a give-and-take approach, and very power-effective. It expects and assertively demands her to contribute, and if she doesn't, it's fair for you to end it.

3.2. Turn Competition into Cooperation

See "Seduction University".

4. Make It A Great Time, Of Which Sex Is Just One Part

Doesn't look like the type of interaction that will have lots of LMR, right?
You get little LMR when sex is only one part of a bigger, pleasant interaction of two people who like each other.

Here's an example of a pleasant, "more than just sex" interaction:

1. She doesn't want to move to the bed
2. Instead of pushing, you say "have you ever tried shisha"?
3. Pull the shisha out
4. Smoke together, kiss her neck, make out a bit
5. Pause a second, as if to savor the moment
6. Slowly get up again, and move her to the bed
7. On the bed, she doesn't want to remove her pants
8. You say "you know what's funny?"
9. Open a new topic (something personal, or with a sexual undertone)
10. Talk a bit
11. Slowly start dry humping
12. Then go to remove the pants

Notice that after each rejection he goes back to the relationship level again and the "good time".
That breaks the chasing/refusing pattern, so he's not disempowered, but empowered by the good vibes.

5. Steal Her Frame: Say "No Sex" First

Women say this often:

> **Woman**: we're not going to have sex

It's a tricky frame.
If you say you will have sex, it turns into "you want her, she rejects you".
And if you say "true", then you're following and buying into her frame.

Conundrum!

A good solution is to prevent it.

How?

Simple:

> **You**: we're just going for a minute to show you the wine collection, I need to wake up early tomorrow

It's a good move independently of LMR, just to take the pressure off on your invite home.
For example, I often add "yeah, it's just right here, for 5 minutes".

Or a bit cheesier:

> **You**: (as you invite her home) But don't make yourself any idea, we're just hanging out

Not personally my style, but can work if your style is more humorous and teasing.

If you forgot to do steal her thunder or if it's not your style, you can still turn it around if it crops up:

> **Her**: We're not having sex
> **You**: Who said anything about sex, we're just cuddling

6. Take The Shortest Path

A good chunk of LMR are about "removing clothes".

But… You don't need to be fully naked to start having sex.

At the time of the first draft, my last two pulls home was a girl I met at a Meetup event, and a beautiful girl, black hair and blue whom I talked to for no more than 10 minutes at a mall and mate later that night (note: I started this article a year before I published as I sometimes take notes on future articles).

The first girl was still wearing her dress and panties when we became intimate.
The second was still wearing her dress, denim jacket, panties, and shorts.
No kidding!

7. Make Her Want It: The 'Wet Boiling Point' of Readiness

The safest and most effective approach is, of course, to make her crave intimacy.

For example, in the example above, we could move fast because she was turned on.

Use your fingers to pleasure her. Be a giver, make her moan with pleasure. Once you reach that boiling point, she will want you 'in full'.

8. Keep It Light & Seductive, Avoid Anger & Frustration

> Some resistance whet the appetite
>
> *Casanova, History of My Life*

Many guys derail seduction but getting angry and frustrated.
Don't do it! That's not only unseductive, but can make women worried about their safety.

Frustration is also an indicator of low-value as it shows you're emotionally overreactive.

If you don't want to play the game anymore, it's fair, and you can state that honestly. For example "I like you, but I truly don't have time for all these games. If you like me too, now it's time".

Let's see how to avoid anger and frustration:

8.2. Game of Masculinity & Femininity

Masculinity projects confidence and advances. Femininity plays it coy.

You're both playing that game, and that's a good seducer's mindset.

8.3. Keep It Light & Fun

A favorite of mine.

This is so good that I almost didn't wanna share it:

> **Me**: (takes her hand, places it on his penis) do you think it's too big?

This works in a number of ways: (sort of) light-heartedness, push-pull, sexually exciting her… And to positively change the frame.
The question changes the frame from "should we have sex" to "can you take it".

You can turn it into recurring insider humor, asking later if she still thinks it's too big or if it was OK.

8.4. Be Empathetic

In some cases, a woman can have real issues, reservations, or hang-ups about sex.

Failing to listen, empathize, and address them spoils the relationship and derails the seduction.

A good empathetic response is to say something along the lines of:

> **Her**: Wait, this is too fast
> **You**: OK, all good, we will go as fast as we are comfortable with

Say "*we* are" because it reinforces the collaborative and "us" frame, and it doesn't sound like you're waiting for her.

8.5. Drop The "Must Mindset"

Who gets frustrated with LMRs?

It's the guy who feels like he "has to" sleep with her.
The notch-collectors who need the validation, and those who desperately need her in their life.

Abundance mentality is a better approach.
Plus these mindsets to dating in general:

- You only want a girlfriend if she's a great woman *plus* a great fit for you
- Dating for you is a way to assess women. LMRs are just another opportunity for assessing her

These mindsets are perfect for those who are dating with a long-term goal.

⚠ 9. Resolut Approach: Acting On Desire (Not Recommended)

One video is worth a thousand words:

This is ONLY for advanced men who can spot genuine attraction.
In reality, **misreading signals can easily lead to crossing boundaries**, so we strongly recommend to avoid it.

10. Mix Escalation With Softness

A bit more advanced, but super powerful.

You want to mix "hard pushes" with sweeter, mellow, romantic, and even silly and fun moments.
This is great because it mixes sexually dominant behavior -which is attractive but at high risk of spoiling the relationship-, with a romantic and carefree vibe that takes the edge off.

See the effect on this message:

Caveman AND gentleman: that's a powerful mix of the best of both worlds

Bonuses: Small Tips For Big Impact

See "Seduction University".

Careful With Common PUA Advice

Some advice to be wary of:

Getting undressed while she's dressed

IF timely, IF she likes how you look and IF she's a high sex-drive woman, it can be a good move.

Yet, getting naked while she's still fully dressed looks "weird", and sub-communicates you "don't get it" (=socially clueless).
And from a power dynamics perspective, it frames you as the one who craves sex while she doesn't.

Whipping your penis out

Great move, *if it's timely*.

But if you do it too early, it can easily backfire.
The untimely "whip out" followed by a "whisk back" looks like exhibitionist flashing. And exhibitionism is anti-seductive.

It's strategically much better to let her feel you from the pants, and only pull out when ready to go the distance.

⚠ Agreeing verbally, but keeping with the escalation

This is a red level risk in modern settings.
Plus, it's dishonorable and signals that you're not a man of your word, but a sneaky liar.

Freezing her out

This is an old PUA technique.

"The Game" and "Mystery Method" both included it, and it consists of stopping pursuing the woman when she deflects or stalls his advances.

This is an example:

> **Her**: you're so full of shit
> **Him**: (start moving away from her) you're right, I'm so full of shit (goes sit on the couch)

The idea behind the freeze-out is OK: you don't want to keep over-chasing and reward with attention a woman who is spurning you.

But the way the freeze-out was espoused, including "getting up and checking your email", was not optimal because:

1. It can break rapport and deplete a lot of social capital
2. It can start a vicious cycle of "who shows the least affection". If the woman is high in power and not very invested, she'd rather lose you, than lose her face
3. Can signal low value: high-value, driven men wouldn't dilly-dally with low-prio stuff when they could invite her out and take care of higher-prio stuff

Read more here.

"Micro-freeze outs" are better, for example removing your attention when she misbehaves -and that works beyond LMR-.

Surprisingly Great LMR Signs

Knowing how to read the social and power dynamics is crucial to handling LMR well.

Reading those signs allows you to calibrate your escalation in a way that's both effective, seductive, and *safe*.

Some of those signs:

- **She starts acting silly**: Many women who get nervous before sex can start acting "silly", or talk nonsense. Several women I've dated around the world started speaking their local language even though they knew I couldn't understand. Usually, that's a great sign: it's pure emotions now, she's not engaging her rational brain much, and she's relinquishing leadership to you -people who want to maintain control don't usually act silly-.
- **She asks to visit the bathroom**: She decided that it's going to happen, and wants to refresh herself. Some

women will also ask *you* to take a shower before sex -I'll never forget the woman who brought along of intimate cleanser, and put some of it on "me"-.

- **She asks if you want to have sex with her**: This one often stumps Western men traveling in different cultures. But if she asks you to, don't over-deny your intentions. Say you like her, that you have good chemistry, and that intimacy is a natural next step
- **She asks personal questions or 'why did you say hello to her'**: she wants to be reassured about your background, and that you truly liked her, and that you're not an inveterate player

The Nuances of Verbal Boundaries

While the "No Means No" standard is the essential baseline for consent, real-world social dynamics are often more complex. Sometimes, a verbal "no" or "stop" is a definitive boundary that must be respected immediately.

Other times, a woman may express "Token Resistance"—a psychological phenomenon where she feels a conflict between her desire and social pressures (like "Anti-Slut Defense"). In these cases, she isn't necessarily saying she wants to stop the interaction; she may be looking for more comfort, a slower pace, or for the man to take more responsibility for the escalation.

Distinguishing between a **Hard Stop** and **Social Hesitation** is a core component of Mating Intelligence. It requires high-level social calibration to ensure you are never pushing past a genuine boundary while still leading the interaction effectively.

Swoon: 20 Traits of The Greatest Seducers of All Time (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 March 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Swoon (2014) is a book on history's greatest seducers, their seduction strategies, and, in a way, an atypical, yet groundbreaking dating advice book for men.
Betsy Prioleau, the author, studied and analyzed history's great seducers, and teased out what makes these ladies' men so attractive and successful with women.

Notes

About the Author:
Betsy Prioleau holds a Ph.D. in literature from Duke University, was an associate professor at Manhattan College, and taught cultural history at New York University.
She is also the author of "Seductresses", the equivalent of this book, but for female seductresses.

Contents

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Types of Seducers

First of all, check this article:

- Types of seducers

> 10 Types of Male Seducers: Pick Your Niche!

It's one of the best articles around on "seducers' archetypes".

Now back to the Prioleau, she first lists the "distortions" of seducers:

- **Satanic seducer**: cold and calculative, hates women, and only cares about adding sexual partners (notch-counter)

The author says that men who despise women, or who seek to destroy women, aren't real ladies' men.

At the extreme end of the satanic seducer, the most value-taking "player" is the pathological player, the sociopath.

For more read these two articles on psychopathy and sexual success, and psychopathy and sexual strategy.

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

- **The PUA Player:** the "pick-up artist" who reads online and then goes out to play

I love Prioleau's description:

> By Casanovan standards, the goal is modest: not to get loved (another league) but to get laid.

She has a point: many pick-up artists are bad at seducing hearts when compared to some of the "natural" lovers of women.
Betsy is more interested in the power in seduction, what makes women swoon and fall hopelessly in love -which is similar to Robert Greene's approach in "The Art of Seduction".

And she delivers a zinger to Neil Strauss, author of "The Game":

> Gamer convert Neil Strauss says he studied with pickup artists for two years to "become what every woman wants—not what she says she wants, but what she really wants." But he went to the wrong school. Real-world enchanters provide a different message as well as a different grade of woman from Strauss's sad assortment

- **The therapy heartthrob**: "Mr. Wonderful" of couples therapy

He is the flip side of the player.

Betsy mocks him:

> Instead of a tough hombre with Machiavellian schemes, this epitome of male sex appeal has been sensitized, civilized, and customized for a postfeminist generation.

He is communicative, empathic, and "housebroken".

And the author doesn't spare a shot to John Gottman:

> At Dr. John Gottman's "love laboratory" in Seattle, men learn to communicate, express feelings, listen, and validate. This love-coached ladies' man also learns to be a fair fighter.

- **The Darwinian alpha male**: the "Mr. Perfect" who has it all, handsome, rich, tall, fit

This one deserves its own paragraph, so keep on reading.

- **The real woman-pleaser**: coming on all stripes, but more often than not, high-quality men, who love with abandon

The author says that real ladies' men are not superheroes and sometimes not even great.
They also have their up and downs, hang-ups, and "unhinged moments". Some of them do are crazy artists or very emotional -Casanova planned suicide at a certain point-.

But real seducers aren't just poor artists.
A real world analysis also smashes that myth.

Says the author:

> As a group, they challenge the disease model of the seducer. Not infrequently, they belong to another category:

> the supernormal men of positive psychology. Most share some or all of the qualities of the actualized "healthy human specimen"—ego strength, vitality, resilience, authenticity, creativity, autonomy, nonconformity, personal growth, and the capacity to love.

What's different for "real seducers", is that they actually don't hide, and play little "feigning disinterest" games. Says the author of Aly Khan:

> He came on strong. Lovers said he singled them out of the crowd at parties and made a beeline for them (…)
> Khan was always "madly, deeply" in love—however briefly—and wore his heart on his sleeve

Plus, they invest a lot, with abandon, without sparing anything.

For more, also read:

- **The psychology profile of womanizers**

> Womanizers Profiling: The 10 Types of Players (W/Videos)

The Myth of The Darwinian Alpha Male (VS Real-World Seducers)

The author takes on the "Darwinian alpha male" early on.

And, overall, she is very skeptical of evolutionary psychology's portrait of the attractive man.
The author says that the "Darwinian" qualities vary among authors but, overall, almost all agree on these four:

1. money and status
2. stability and fidelity
3. kindness and compatibility
4. physical superiority

My Note: bit of an overstated case against evo psych
Personally, I haven't noticed many evolutionary psychologists putting fidelity or "compatibility" very high on their list of attractive qualities for men, and especially not for short-term mating. So this one felt a bit like a strawman argument. The author also mocks the "provider" image of some evolutionary psychologist, but the discipline now more and more recognize the two different temporal modes of dating: short VS long term, with some men able to do attract women even while not being "strong providers", as the author correctly says.

Prioleau mocks the stereotype of the ladies' man, who by Darwinian standards is "tall, buff, and handsome with biceps like Smithfield hams and bulging crotches", and says:

> The Real Alpha Male Science popularizers never tire of saying that "from a biological standpoint we're still prehistoric." If so, ladies' men hail from another prehistory. The kind of men who consistently enrapt women call the whole Darwinian alpha model into question.
>
> Gabriele D'Annunzio is typical (…) Proof against evolutionary progress, he was a sad physical specimen.

And she goes on:

> It takes more, much more than evolutionary psychology imagines, to enthrall women.

Well, in many ways, she is right.

But not in her criticism of evolutionary psychology, which sounds too much like a dismissal.
Both are right. All those Darwinian traits do are attractive and do help -a lot-, but the author also makes very true -and demonstrable- point by discussing successful ladies' men who ostensibly wouldn't score too high in Darwinian checklists.

The difference is that for those men with lots of attractive traits, attraction from women comes easily. Those who don't have those Darwinian attractive traits need to be great in some other realms, but can also be equally -or more- successful (as well as more stereotypically ladies' men when it comes to making women fall in love).

Real-World Ladies' Men

The real-world ladies' man defies stereotypes.

Says Prioleau:

> He transcends easy generalizations and defeats categories—the angel/devil, wuss/he-man polarities—and personifies complexity.

However, a few traits seem to repeat, including:

1. Charisma

A woman can just feel a ladies' man, says the author.

You don't need all of these traits, it's not a checklist, and a great lover can throw a few sparks of a few of them.

To make up ladies' men charisma:

1.1. Passion, passion for life, élan

> Real ladies' men pulse with ebullience.
>
> Nineteenth-century French Romantic poet Alfred de Musset won the hearts of half of the Parisian female population with his "delicious verve." (…) The actress Rachel doted on him (…) His greatest coup was his conquest of literary celebrity George Sand. Deploying an élan assault, he paraded his vitality before her like a "peacock before a demure, quiet little peahen."

1.2. Intensity

Says Prioleau:

> "Emotional intensity," exceptional personal force, is one of the hallmarks of charisma. It also defines erotic passion. Casanova credited his conquests to his sheer ardor: "I turned the heads of some hundreds of women," he wrote, "because I was neither tender nor gallant nor pathetic. I was passionate."

One of the men she interviewed as one of the supposed "ladies' men", says that he once saw a stunning blonde, U-turned, and knocked on office doors until he found her. and then said "let's get out of here". He loved that woman, he said, and he'd fly to LA just to have dinner with her.

1.3. Sex drive

Ladies' men crave to possess the object of their desires.

1.4. Love of women

Ladies' men love women, and generally enjoy their company.

I think this is a crucial trait to keep in mind since in some corner of the manosphere, including corners about pick-up and seduction, the "medicine" to become better men is to spend less time with women, and more time with "male-only spaces".

Says the author:

> Boys are raised to boycott the girls' club and bond with each other. The "bromance" tradition is ancient and deep-dyed, a devotion to male friends that can be "wonderful, passing the love of women." In the extreme, it tips over into misogyny.

She has a point, some of those authors who encourage "more male-only bonding" are indeed misogynists, see the red pill for example:

Instead, ladies' men:

> By contrast, ladies' men like women inside and out and seek their companionship.

Loving and appreciating women is not something that has anything to do with being masculine, strong, or leader-like.
For example:

> Casanova was never a man's man, although he excelled in daredevil masculine pursuits like spying and dueling.

1.5. Androgyny

> Counterintuitive as it seems, gender ambiguity is immensely seductive. In theory, the Darwinian he-man ought to get the valentines, but oddly enough, a man in touch with his inner femininity frequently has the romantic edge with women.

How come this is the case, while men who like more masculine women are far rarer?
Well, the author says that, based on studies (Chivers et al., 2004; Huberman and Chivers, 2015), it might be because women tend to naturally be more bisexual:

> Researcher Meredith Chivers has found that women differ from men in their sexual tastes. When she attached female subjects to a photoplethysmograph while they watched erotic movies, she discovered that they shared a marked predilection for bisexuality.

Women's sexual arousal indeed seems to be non-gender specific. To test the non-specificity of female sexuality, nonhuman sexual videos were shown, and women showed little arousal even nont non-human sex scenes (but very little compared to either human male sex scenes, and human female sex scenes, see Chivers and Bailey, 2005).

And the author goes further:

> Other studies show women consistently preferring computerized images of feminized male faces and choosing more androgynous men in audio interviews.

I wish she had quoted the study, but eventually found something similar (see below).

Continues the author:

> Whether subtle or pronounced, many great lovers have a distinct feminine streak.
> (…)
> Casanova, too, had an overt distaff side—an aesthetic sensibility, a sentimentality, and a penchant for cross-dressing. Byron's androgyny was so apparent that the sultan Mahmud refused to believe he wasn't "a woman dressed in man's clothes."

Even Gary Cooper, the icon of masculinity, was quite androgynous , says the author:

Gary Cooper, icon of tough masculinigy, was quite androgynous

1.6. Creativity

Here Prioleau quotes evolutionary psychologist Miller, who theorizes that humankind developed big brains because of (female) sexual selection.

The author says that "early womankind sought mental excellence, and creative intelligence in particular".

But there is more than just evolutionary psychology theory, and plenty of real-life examples prove the allure of creativity:

> A disproportionate number of ladykillers trade on the sexual charisma of creativity. History is chocked with poets, musicians, painters, dancers, actors, and "creatives" who prospered with women.

I agree with that.

1.7. Quicksilver, unconventional

The author restates that many women don't fall for the provider type. , but instead are swept away but the free-souled nonconformists.

It's not a necessity to be unconventional, and not all ladikillers are noncomforists, but it can add an edge of excitement.

1.8. Flawed manhood

> Pop psychologists and coaches who tout ironclad confidence as the key to sexual charisma may need a reality check. A hairline crack in a man's aplomb, a hint of vulnerability—either physical or psychological—can turn a woman inside out.

Interestingly enough, by "flawed" the author doesn't only mean just "emotionally", but also physically.

For example talking about Douglas Day:

> More than his beauty and brilliance, it was his walk. He had a mysterious gimp leg, and when he limped down Cabell Hall, women dissolved.

Preioleau goes beyond the usual "chink in the armor" popular in seduction circles, and expands on that "chink" quite a bit.

And among the real-life examples:

> Great lovers with a "divine defect" are surprisingly numerous. Aldous Huxley and Potemkin were nearly blind, and Charlemagne, Talleyrand, and Gary Cooper limped. Lord Byron, with his club foot and bruised sensibilities, devastated women, just as Jack London's and Richard Burton's tortured souls played havoc with female hearts.

On Cynthia Basinet commenting on Jack Nicholson, explaining why she could never leave Nicholson, said "I saw such a wonderful vulnerable person . . . I vowed never to hurt him."

But weaknesses must be compensated by other attractive qualities. The author, finally seemingly aware of the "exchange nature" of the sexual marketplace, also says that "The more extreme the flaws, the greater the need for compensatory attractions".
And later on, she talks about the weak/strong alloy, the mix, that is attractive.

In her words:

> Despite the propaganda, bulletproof self-esteem and a perfect package aren't the ticket. It's an "enigmatic tang" of injury, a pinch of flaw in the confidence brew that fells women every time.

2. Character

You don't need all of the following traits and, if you have none, don't despair: many of them, you can acquire.

2.1. Morality/Virtue

Virtue and morality doesn't mean "goody good".
The author says that unalloyed virtue has zero allure.

And so is the opposite end of the spectrum: albeit some women fancy the reprobate for a fling, the real attraction is in the middle

The ladies' men are fundamentally decent, but prone to bend the rules, and can be morally mixed.
They also know how to make goodness charming, says the author.

Quoting Horgan who reviews the literature on the nice guy / bad boy, she says that "women desire a combination of both—niceness commingled with deviltry, and served up seductively".

2.2. Courage

What I've noticed is that often the courage is exercised during the seduction.
Being courageous far from a woman, outside of seduction in, say, war, seems to mean little.

2.3. Spiritual Cultivation

Male spirituality is attractive to women, and it's been leveraged by so many exploiters throughout history that the author says that "the man of God is one of the dark seducer's favorite guises".

Religious deceit does not belong to the great seducers though, who are more straightforward and sincere about their passions.
When spiritual cultivation empowered seduction, the great seducers tended to be true believers.

Talking about pianist Franz Lizsts:

> To Countess Marie d'Agoult, who left her husband and children for him, he spoke only of the "destiny of mankind" and "promises of religion." Later, he captivated a Russian princess (who also abandoned her spouse for him) through spiritual communions in her crucifix-filled bedroom. She called him a "masterpiece of God."

2.4. Knowledge/Intelligence

Yes, intelligence is attractive.
But it's not IQ points or random knowledge that is attractive, it's how that intelligence is used.

> Women-charmers understand how to make intelligence seductive; they sparkle with mental energy, surprise, amuse, instruct, up the drama, and surf the whole realm of knowledge—high-, middle-, and lowbrow.

Also read "mating intellingece".

> Mating Intelligence: Effective Dating for Smart People

Sometimes having erudite conversations can also be seductive, as well as helping overcome lacks in some other areas.
For example:

> A number of unlikely ladies' men used their heads to enchant women.
>
> The diminutive eighteenth-century philosopher Voltaire (…) kept the tall, brilliant beauty Émilie du Châtelet interested for thirteen years. He challenged her to scientific competitions, staged plays and poetry readings, debated politics, and traded repartee with her over four-hour dinners.
>
> (…)
> And then there's mathematician Bertrand Russell. Gaunt and small, with a "Mad Hatter's" features, bad breath, and a high, fluty voice, he disheveled women, accumulating four wives and many lovers. (One was my great aunt Barry Fox, who collared him in New York and gave him "several enjoyable evenings.")

2.5. Social IQ

> What it boils down to is savoir faire: a radar for other people's feelings, mastery of synchrony, and the practical skill to get the answer yes

For the best seducers, the social IQ helps them understand women and their hidden desires.

2.6. Pleasure

> The mantra of romance heroes is “relax, gorge your senses, let me show you a good time.”

Talking about Porfirio Rubirosa:

> He conquered Zsa Zsa Gabor through a different tack. For the stressed-out movie star, he delivered sabbaticals of Hungarian food, getaway weekends, and uninhibited all-night revels where Rubi drummed with the band and led musicians home for ham-and-egg feasts. “We were like two children,” recalled Gabor, “pleasure seeking, hedonistic.” “I am, and always will be,” he said, “a man of pleasure.”

2.7. Self-Realization

> Complete, multifaceted personhood is the peak of character development—and seductive allure.

3. Lassoing Love Through The Senses

This is Part II, looking at the seduction approaches and behaviors.

Cerebral charms later take over and ignite the deeper passions and love. But first come the senses.

- **Appearance**: Johnny Depp example who ornaments himself for maximum erotic impact
- **The Body Beautiful**: if it’s there, it helps
- **Fashion and Grooming**:

“Put pinstripes and a Rolex on a non-looker, and most female subjects will choose him over a male model in a fast-food uniform”, says the author referencing a popular study.

But it’s not necessarily about looking rich, says the author. A fashion sense instead should stand out, and flatter the individual’s taste and uniqueness.

3.4. Setting

Ladies’ men go for impact, a sensual skylift.

It might be plush and luxurious, but it doesn’t have to. The author says that “settings that seduce are the work of artists of ambiance—charmed sanctums designed to ravish women and raise the roof”.

3.5. Music

Music is the “most excstatic of the arts”.

Musicians and singers are some of the most sought-after men, and the author mentions Sianatra, who wasn’t an attractive man but who had hordes of women pining after him.

You don’t have to be a musician to use the seductive power of music, though.

Also see:

- **Best songs & ambiance for romance**

> Best Songs For Romance & Make Her Fall In Love

3.6. Kinetic Voodoo: Body Language and Dance

On dance, Prioleau says that based on research by Buss and Meston, women sometimes want to have sex with a man simply based on how he dances.

Most men, however, are not good dancers and movers, as they are trained to hide emotions, instead of letting them flow.

And Prioleau takes another hilarious stab at some of the "alpha male" dating coaches:

> "Dancing with a woman," they instruct, is "not the ultimate goal"; "the dance floor is not the natural habitat of the alpha male." If "alpha" means king of the hill in the boys' game, they're right. But enswooning women is an adult art, designed for animated, poetic body-speakers and princes of the ballroom.

3.7. Sexpertise

Contrary to "*The 4h Body*" in which Tim Ferris shares how to get her to orgasm in the quickest way possible -15 minutes stopwatch at hand, he says-, lovers subscribe to the "slow sex movement", where "andante" pace has the edge.

You can learn much of it, the author says that Jack Nicholson was really bad until he learned and studied.
But one of the biggest secret is to be "all in". Says the author:

> To hit the high notes in bed, a man has to be "all in"—body, soul, and sensual intuition. And it helps if you adore each other. As the Kāma Sūtra admits, no instruction or advice "will be needed by those who are properly in love."

3.8. Gifts and Wallets

Gifts have their charm and, the author says, are "embedded in the feminine ideology of love".

But gifts should be thoughtful, romantic, personalized, and enchanting.
Says the author:

> Practicality is also a no-no in presents; hold the smoke alarms and robo-cleaners. Gifts must fulfill their primal, first function, when they were objects of magic and enchantment in the past.

And don't go thinking that money is necessarily the opposite of love.
Wallets can also help with seduction. Quoting Julia Kristeva, the author says that:

> Profligacy is the seducer's calling card; "he spends extravagantly."

And, says the author, "Casanova spent money on women like a drunken sailor".

From a more Darwinian point of view, Prioleau applies Amotz Zahavi's "handicap principle" to profligate spending as an honest signal of abundant resources.

3.9. The edible gift (food)

Eating is intrinsically sexual, says the author, and "when a ladykiller also cooks, it's culinary courtship on high flame".

I agree, and I'm surprised the author didn't mention smaller delicacies and snacks that are even more associated with sex and pleasure like sweet fruits (think red and ripe strawberries) and chocolate.

And I would also add wine and drinks to the list. Yours truly also carries a picture of a selection of wines for when the conversations turn towards good food and wines.

4. Lassoing Love Through the Mind

The mind is the body's most erogenous zone.
And (romantic) love is a takeover of the mind.

4.1. Pursuing with abandon (Royal flush)

This might be the most crucial and insightufl part of the book.

While dating coaches recommend men to invest little, feign disinterest, "make her chase", and never admit your love, many of the great lovers do the opposite.

Again, Proileau serves a big zinger to the dating gurus and dating industry:

> Seduction prophets like Mystery and his henchmen would jeer at Pollock. To nail "targets," real men feign "lack of interest," and let women chase them. A woman "will do almost anything for your approval," promise pickup gurus, if you're "cool" and keep her guessing. According to Maxim magazine, the "three treacherous syllables" are "I love you." Only clueless losers race up to prospects and bare their souls. If so, some losers are getting lucky; hell-bent, do-or-die lovers still captivate many women, both in reality and fantasy.

Indeed, some ladies men wear their hearts on their sleeves on their successful seductions, they admit their love early on, pursue with abandon, and invest on the women they love.

Here is one example:

> he recounts a story that sounds like a Hollywood set piece. At an art gallery, he chatted with a Norwegian model, forgot her name, then ran down six flights of stairs to meet her as she walked off the elevator. Taking her hand, he said, "Tell me who you are. I've got to be with you!" She followed him, and they were a couple for two years.

And here is what one man told a woman he liked the first time they met:

> For instance, he once met a Persian woman at an LA nightclub, and at the end of the evening, turned to her and whispered in Farsi, "Esh-ghe-mani"—You touch my soul.

And then on the first date:

> "I want us to be lovers; I want to make you sigh like no man has made you sigh before."

Does this really work?
"More than you might expect", says the author.
The reasons why it works are both power-related, psychological, and atavic. Says sexologist Meredith Chivers:

> Over half of female fantasies reveal a wish to be sexually irresistible and, in some cases, "ravished." What a woman craves is a passion so intense that it shatters constraints, fires desire, and allows her to be "all in the midbrain." An ardent advance is also a "woman's moment of power," giving her the high ground of erotic choice.

From an evolutionary point of view, it might work as a sign of committment.

But whatever the reason, neurologically women seem programmed to respond to it:

> Evolutionary psychologists see the male courtship offensive as a commitment ploy; persistence and passion telegraphed a "faithful nester" to our female forebears. Whatever the motive, argues neuropsychiatrist Louann Brizendine, the fervent male suitor isn't an outmoded stereotype; it's built into the "brain architecture of love."

This technique can also be used in conjunction with what I call the "baby seduction".
An example from Warren Beatty:

> Warren Beatty put his cards on the table from the start with Annette Bening, revealing his interest at the upshot and telling her later after a wrap party that he wanted her to have his child and marry him. She conceived that night.

Albeit I agree that "pursuing with abandon" and total honesty can work great, I think that sometimes the author took it too far (see the "cons").
And that, depending on the occasion and situation, different approaches might also be better suited.

4.2. Praise

First off, Prioleau takes another zinger at dating coaches and mainstream approaches to seduction:

> Hip dating instructors promote anti-flattery, "negs" that cut women down to size with zingers like "Your ex-boyfriend must have really hated that about you," or "Is that your real hair?" And the greeting-card industry has devolved into generic schmaltz or sarcastic digs. All of which leaves the game and the girls to ladies' men.

The author says that praise works with women even more than with men, and that women are more likely to be erotically stoked by ego boosts.

Hence, a man who can make a woman feel like the "photoshopped version of herself", can write his own ticket.

The example is Duff Cooper, who lacked status, rank, and even looks, but who seduced her with a worshipful courtship with "barrage of letters that called her the "the brightest color, the sweetest warmth, and the one dazzling light of [his life]."

Wikipedia also confirms that Cooper wasn't the best placed to marry Diana, an an extremely popular social figure hailed for her beauty and eccentricities. Diana's family were as they thought of Duff a promiscuous drinker and gambler, without title, position, or wealth.
Wikipedia says that Cooper even wrote her that "he hoped that everyone shed liked better than him will die very soon."

The author also says that Cooper used the same technique on Susan Mary Patten, almost 30 years his junior:

Note: Cooper wasn't a nobody though
Cooper might have indeed punched far above his weight, but he wasn't a nobody. He was a PM, later a cabinet minister, and later ambassador to France.

4.3. Soul Meld / Intimacy

Women often complain of inadequate intimacy with men, and emotional connection is a frequent motive for sex.

This time quoting a somewhat lower-expertise source, a Cosmopolitan columnist, the author says that "men who have the "gift of intimacy," can secure women with links of steel".

5. Locking In Love

This chapter starts with "conversation", wthout introduction, but I supsect that "locking in" refers to the beginning of the interaction, and stoking love and attraction right after first saying "hi".

5.1. Conversation

Women, on average, are better conversationalists than men, and are also more sensitive to good conversations.

Louann Brizendine, author of "The Female Brain", explains that women who connect and bond via conversation get a huge dopamine and oxytocin rush, the biggest neurological reward outside of an orgasm or a heroin hit.
And besides providing emotional rewards in the same vein as sex, conversations can also lead to sex: women are more erotically "lit" by good conversations, explains the author.

Good conversations as a positive sexual trait is also backed by evolutionary psychologists, including Darwin. In the words of the author, "men who were good talking partners had the romantic edge over the grunters and club-wielders".

Conversations also help soothe a woman's fear. The author says that "a woman's sexuality is skittish and complex and easily spooked". Getting to know a woman well and opening up with conversation is a great way of putting her at ease, which in turn allows her to start feeling sexual attraction.

Even "sweet nothing" speech can help bond, especially between lovers.
And "soothing speech is a strong elixir", taking us back to the maternal embrace, and "the moment of the enchanted voice."

5.2. Unspoken Eloquence: Gesture, Voice, Listening

Here the author goes into body language a bit.

The most interesting part was about body language during conversation a bit later in the book.
Speaking about "hand gesticulation":

> Expressive hands—a female favorite—were a D'Annunzian specialty as well. Actress Madame Simone found the poet's looks repellent, but she conceded that he spellbound her as soon as he spoke, "waving his beautiful white hands in the air."

When it comes to voices, women tend to prefer lower voices that are inflected, and musical -rather than monotone and flat-.

However, men shouldn't focus on what they say alone, of course.
Conversations are a two-way street, and Prioleau says that "there is almost no female desire like the desire to be heard" with women in relationships longing for "men's full attention, engagement, and empathy".

5.3. Laughter

Making women laugh is a potent tool of ladies' men.

But also the ability of laughing at oneslef says a lot of good things about a man.
I liked this example a lot:

> "Johnny H!" she says. "He was short and unattractive by traditional standards. My god, though, he was 'The Man.' He was funny with that ability to laugh at himself.

5.4. Teaching Women

The author calls this "mental intercourse", but it seems to be referring to ladies men teaching things to women.

One of the examples:

> The salonnière Madame Necker reportedly was "in love with him," (Diderot, En.) and Catherine the Great found him so delightful that she bought his library, paid him to manage it, and invited him to Russia on the condition that he talk to her each day.

5.5. The Poetry Potion

Poetry is linguistic seduction on steroids, says Prioleau.

The author mentions the movie "Before Sunrise" as an example of poetry (see the scene here).
But I alos liked this example her, of reciting poetry right before seduction:

6. Torching Up Love

Prioleau says that retaining love is more challenging than making someone fall in love.

While falling in love is quite "natural", retaining love is somewhat less natural, turning into "quiet companionate love" at best, and boredom at worst.

However successful exceptions do exist, and scientists have documented them with fMRI scans.
However, exactly how to do it, is still uncertain.

The author says that the great lovers never stop the courtship, sometimes *intensify* the coursthip, and are "perpetual suitors".

6.1. Fun/Festivity

Fun can help seduce women, by diffusing tensions and fears and displaying affinity.

But it can also help to keep love alive.
Psychologist Howard Markman found that the amount of fun in a relationship predicted its success.

The author says that Mark Anthony has been remembered wrong by history. In truth, he was a geat seducer and a lover of frolic, fun, and party. And that's what bonded him to Cleopatra.

6.2. Novelty, Curiosity

Love and relationsihps also needs rest and peace and safety… But not too much of it, or it gets dull.

6.3. Cut and Thrust

Albeit endless peace and harmony is the reservoir of the perfect, compassionate love relationships, it might not be the breeding ground of love and renewed passion.

Says Prioleau:

> Partnerships, although havens of trust and peace, need periodic shake-ups. Aggression, fear, and power struggles underlie passionate love, and skilled lovers take them head-on and transmute them.

So the great lovers don't hide adverse emotions, but "convert them to erotic excitement through a delicate play of combat and truce, pain and pleasure".

The author says that science backs it, as Meston and Buss say that " anxiety and jealousy can whet female desire. And women often relish a good fight since it releases adrenaline and other stimulants that helps them emotionally connect with men before sex".

However, too much bickering and fighting are also harmful.
So the goal is to maintain a healhty balance, and follow the hostility with reunion and repose.
Ladies' men don't overdo the nastiness anyway. Proileau says that they "transcend strife with love, go light on pain, and cycle back and forth between discord and concord".

6.4. Inexhaustible Selfhood

Prioleau says that women aren't content with resources, and won't fall in love with "Mr. Perfect" but unremarkable. Instead, they "seek inner assets—men who are multifaceted, convoluted, and on the stretch".

The author then discusses the importance of continuous personal growth, with which I agree.
The power of personal growth though is not just that it's attractive, but also that impacts an individual's personal quality, and his/her sexual market value.
Also see:

- **How to maintain love and attraction**

> How to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

Modern Great Seducers

In the last chapter, the author looks at the current dating climate, and what today's women dream of.

To begin with, she says that many men today have been blindsided by women's empowerment, and that they recoiled in fear, male-chauvinism, and anger.

The same is true fr women, though, and she says that for every misogynist, there is a “man-basher”.

Among today’s changes:

- **Women have higher expectations**: solid and good men aren’t enough anymore, women want passion and excitement
- **Unions of equals**: some women seek “hedonic” unions with equals, and aren’t happy with beig staying at home housewives

The New Ladies’ Man

Generally, what worked before works today as well.
Prioleau puts it too beautifully not to quote her:

> “women’s needs haven’t changed one bit”; what enthralled a queen of ancient Sparta and an eighteenth-century salonnière still enthralls the banker, product manager, and college dean today

But a few possible tweaks for the modern day ladies’ man:

- **Less high-mainteanance men**:

if alcoholics, overwrought, and labile men had a certain panache with women with too much time on their hands, today’s business women might be less inclined of taking care of messy and needy men.

Maybe they’d react like Cristina in the movie:

> **Her**: both of you are completely crazy, I can’t live like this (and her attraction evaporates)

I think exceptions still apply and “Women Who Love Too Much” will always exist. But as a general tendency, Prioleau might be right.

- **Less money and status**: money and status, that never were the main ingredient of love and seduction, probably have even less draw today on more independent women, and in richer societies
- **More looks**: looks might fare comparatively better in today’s society as compared to the past
- **More sexual virtuosity**:
- **More romantic zeal**:

Laura Stepp small survey found that women “yearned for suitors like romance heroes who scoop up heroines and say, “There’s something about you I’m finding impossible to stay away from.”

And I quote:

> “Falling in love,” however, is foremost a “phenomenon of attention.” Every romance hero puts the heroine in his cross-hairs and singles out her “specialness” for adoration.

- **More fun and novelty**: to stand out in our culture of over-stimulation
- **More androgyny**: macho was never the most appealing, and it’s even less today, and in the foreseeable future
- **More intelligence**: “today’s smart, ambitious women want peers, and in polls intelligence is one of the most desired traits”

- **Better conversationalists**:

Ladies' Men Under Attack

Ladies' men are loved by many women, but not so much by society.

Other men are envious, those in power see them as dangerous to the social order, and some circles of men try to frame them as "effeminate".

Proileau says that "A neo–ladies' man will have to get beyond all this—the jealousy and indoctrination—and prepare for cultural headwinds".

Diggin Deeper on Studies

There were several interesting studies I took note of.
Some of them I will share them here:

- **On femininized faces and facial masculinity preferences**

Overall, the author is not wrong, but might overstate the ase for "attractiveness of femininized faces".

Quoting Marcinkowska et al., 2019

> in many cases women's preferences for facial masculinity are equivocal[21] or less masculine-looking men are judged as more attractive than more masculine-looking men
>
> *Marcinkowska et al., 2019*

However, it's not entirely true that "women consistently prefer femininzed male faces":

> Very low and very high levels of masculinity were rated as relatively unattractive.
>
> *(Holzleitner & Perrett, 2017)*

The above study also shows that it's not entirely true that more attractive women prefer more masculine men. More attractive women have less tolerance to lower levels of masculinity than less attractive women. Such as, they are more discriminatory, but the "curve" is shaped similarly, with just a small preference towards more masculine faces (still not preferring the most masculine face, though).

From what I've read, masculinity seems to be more attractive when income inequality was higher, but it's a mixture of different factors that moves the needle, with "personal preferences" between an important one.
Interestingly indeed, it turns out from Holzleitner's study that bisexuality levels have a major incidence.
Quoting the study:

> The more women were exclusively sexually attracted to men, the more attractive they found highly masculine face.

- **Nice guys VS bad boys**

The author cites Horgan's research review on the bad boy / nice guy dichotomy to say that "women desire a combination of both—niceness commingled with deviltry, and served up seductively".

To be more precise, Horgan hypothesizes that women prefer nice guys as long as they are above a certain level threshold of "badness".
I quote:

> Contrary to popular wisdom, then, the complex nature of female attraction can perhaps best be summarized as follows: nice guys may or may not finish last, but nice guys who also exceed a certain bad boy threshold are in fact very likely to finish first.
>
> *Horgan, 2011*

CONS

Wonderful book, and if you've been around here fo rsome time, you know that I usually take more time in reviewing the great books, so don't take a long list of "cons" as a negative.

That said:

- **There is no differentiation betwen "women" and "attractive women"**

There is a big difference between "women" in general, "high-quality women", and "women with a high sexual market value".

And what's attractive to one group is not always what's attractive to another, and that can make a big difference for men who prefer attractive women as (sexual) partners.

But Prioleau's analysis doesn't differentiate much, or enough, in my opinion, among them.
For example, talking about one of the women she interviewed, she says:

> What sort of erotic climate is Zoe stepping into?

Well, Zoe was 27 years old, she wasn't exactly "stepping into" anything, she was already fully into it.
So that suggested the author wasn't properly considering the impact of age.

Of course, this note does undermine her whole analysis.
As a matter of fact, it seems like most of the ladies men used as examples also attracted a fair share of high-quality and/or attractive women.
But it's still something worth mentioning and keeping in mind.

- **Some examples might be exaggerated**

The author says that Cooper Duff lacked status, rank, and even looks to marry her Lady Diana.
That is largely true. Yet, the two met at Oxford, which is a university for the elite.
And for his later conquests, Duff later became an MP, a minister, and then the ambassador to France.

- **Taking it too far with "pursuing with abandon"?**

There are a few examples in which "wearing one's heart on the sleeves" and "pursuing with abandon", in my opinion, cross a very dangerous threshold of personal self-debasement.

For example:

> Actress Catherine Nesbitt, another great beauty, was classic. Cooper dexterously enumerated her best performances, pronounced his passion for her, and begged to kiss her feet, which he had seen nude on the stage. She rolled down her stockings and obliged.

Cooper truly admired her, he "admired her poems, bravoed her guitar recitals, and translated her famous novella, Madame de".
And yet, asking to kiss a woman's feet is not something I'd recommend anyone.

And:

> Jackson Pollock' (…) stared at her with "such intensity" and "such hunger" that she felt impaled. At her apartment afterward, she remembered, he cinched the deal by sobbing, "I want you," "I need you," "I've been looking for someone [like you] my entire life."

Sobbing might even lead to "cinch the deal", but I think there usually are equally valid ways of sealing the deal without having to "sob".
Sobbing would probably take away way too much power from the man.

- **Are women really "superior" at everything the author lists?**

It seemed like on a huge number of listed traits, women were somehwat "more endowed than men".
At a certain point, I started takiing notes of them as it felt like it was becoming predictabily funny.
Here's the list of them:

- Their vision is keener than men's
- Women hear better than men and listen with their libidos
- Women have a keener, more refined sense of hearing—a subtler ear for higher tones and auditory nuances—
- Women have more sensitive skin than men and place touch at the forefront of their sexual fantasies.
- Although men have the same number of tongue receptors, women are finer tasters
- Women may be particularly susceptible to mind spells. Meredith Chivers, a leading figure in female sexual research, notes that women are more aroused by mental stimuli than men.
- Not only is a woman more verbal and communicative than a man, but she's also erotically "lit" by conversation.
- A woman's superior bullshit detector will find him out

This does not take anything away from the book or the overall message, but at a certain point it seemed like women were better than ment at everything.

- **Some studies mentioned, but not referenced**

The author mentions several studies, but finding those studies was sometimes challenging.
For example, this one made me very curious:

> Studies show women favor intelligence over beauty or wealth, even for one-night stands.

But there was no reference or citation, so I couldn't double-check.

- **Do references to gods, myths, and romance heroes help us understand ladies' men?**

Supporting her claims of what makes ladies' men attractive and magnetic, the author uses real-life examples, as well as mythology, folkore, and novels.

I don't necessarily think mythology is wrong, since what goes into myth is probably what's attractive in a certain culture, as well as then shaping that culture.
But obviously, it's not very scientific, so their contribution should be more "underweighted", in my opinion.

Romance literature and novels are probably better sources than myth, since we have women's more direct response -and can even approximately measure it by the number of sales and followers-.
And if women love the romance, it means that the character is probably attractive.
Instead, with myth and gods, it's often men who come up with them.

- **Cometimes confuses culture's impact on nature**

The reason why the author might spend so much time om myths and folklore is that there might be a

misunderstanding of how human natural actually forms.

She says that "centuries of culturally imposed inferiority have contributed to the female yen for praise".

No, centuries of culture don't change human nature. When the culture changes, the old culture does not keep on having effects on future generations.
This is a very common misunderstanding among various authors and people.

PROS

- **Surprisingly well-researched**

Proileau is not the type of author who links studies and brags about her citation counts.

And yet… She did read and research more than most other dating coaches who *do* brag about their citation counts (see here how to brag without sounding like a showoff).

Prioleau has read both the pick-up literature, quoting Mystery, Neil Strauss, the traditional manosphere literature, quoting "*King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*", and the evolutionary psychology, quoting David Buss, Geoffrey Miller, and more.
The female brain neurology was also not lost on the author, who quoted Louann Brizendine more than once.
And when discussing body language, she had read Barbara and Allan Pease.

And Prioleau also correctly links research to effective real-life behavior, linking Amotz Zahavi's "handicap principle", to conspicuous consumption.

Big thumbs up, quite impressive.

- **The referenced studies largely add up**

I looked up some of the studies she mentions, and they reflect what she states in her work.
This is something I respect, and it's rarer than some people might think that an author does a good job in looking up the studies they themselves quote.

REVIEW

Swoon is different than all other dating books and manual and, similarly to "*The Art of Seduction*" by Robert Greene, it goes at the core of real seduction, as well as the power of seduction.

This quote says it all:

> It's no feat for a king to have mistresses; ambitious beauties will hurl themselves at any crowned head. But to have them love you is another thing.

It's also different than most science-based books, as it goes beyond a list of "attractive Darwinian traits", and better targets and satisfies that side of irrational love that sometimes escapes explanations.

Instead, it's a book that focuses on the more exceptional dating strategies, and on men who are exceptional exceptions.

Overall, I loved "Swoon".
I am going to use it and reference it a lot for "Seduction University". And on a website with such a high threshold for quality as ThePowerMoves.com that's the biggest compliment I could give to any author.

See the:

- **Best dating resources for men**

Or get the book on Amazon.

Mafia Prince: 10 Power Lessons From the Mafia

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 March 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Mafia Prince (2014) is "Crazy Phil" first-person account of how the mafia came to conquer -and then lose- its stranglehold on Philadelphia, passing through one of the most brutal eras in Mafia history: the reign of "Little Nicky" Scarfo.
The book presents many lessons learned on Machiavellianism, power, and effective leadership.

SUMMARY

About the Author:
Philip Leonetti is a former mobster and underboss of the Philadelphia crime family under his mentor, uncle and former boss, Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo. He turned government informant in 1989 and reformed his life.

Contents

- 1. There is Power in Unity And Collaboration
- 2. Before You Double-Cross, Think You Might Be Triple-Crossed
- 3. New Leaders' Tip: Asking More From Older -and Powerful- Players Is Risky
- 4. Leader's Tip: Put People First, Avoid Being Too "WIIFM"
- 5. Leader's Tip: Support Your Crew, Don't Compete With Them
- 6. Leverage Money to Acquire Power
- 7. Newbies' Tip: Protect Your Boss' Power
- 8. Protect Your Enemy To Hide Your Plots
- 9. Don't Get Into Screaming Matches: It Telegraphs Your Intentions
- 10. Leaders Make The Difference on People's and Organizations' Future

1. There is Power in Unity And Collaboration

The mafia rose as one of the most successful organizations ever, coming to dominate the underworld almost everywhere it went.

Its secret?
Structure, unity, and collaboration among different factions:

> A move toward consolidation slowly began to take form as the bosses began to recognize that true power and strength could only be accomplished by establishing a nationwide crime syndicate.
>
> This American organized crime syndicate would come to be known as La Cosa Nostra, which in Italian means "this thing of ours."

Also read:

- Fundamental strategies of power

2. Before You Double-Cross, Think You Might Be Triple-Crossed

Caponigro wanted to kill the boss Ange to become himself the boss.

So he speaks with New York, to see if he can get the OK from the commission.
He speaks with Tieri, and Tieri leads him to believe he can go ahead.

Caponigro goes ahead and kills Ange.
When he is called in New York, he believes it's to attend his crowning. Instead, he marched to his death:

> While the ambitious Caponigro double-crossed Bruno, the ruthless old-school Brooklyn-bred gangster Tieri triple-crossed Caponigro.
> Bobby Manna told me and my uncle what happened next: So Caponigro is called in and he sits down in a chair and faces Fat Tony, Tieri, Bobby Manna, and the Chin, who are seated across from him behind a table.
>
> So the Chin says, "We're here to find out who gave you permission to whack out your boss, Angelo Bruno. Can you tell us?" So Caponigro looks at Tieri, and Tieri looks back at him stone-faced. So Caponigro says, "Funzi (Tieri) told me I had the okay, that the Commission approved the hit." So the Chin says, "Frank, what's he talking about?" And Tieri looks at Caponigro and says, "I told you to straighten it out, not to kill him."
>
> Sensing he had been double-crossed, Caponigro began pleading for his life with the men, but was already being beaten by Genovese enforcers, who had suddenly appeared in the room.

That's when Caponigro realizes that he has killed his boss, without the OK from the commission.
A little later, he is being beaten and killed.

What happened is that Tieri, who was with the Genovese, lead Caponigro to believe he could kill Ange, that he had the OK from the commission.

In truth, the mafia commission hadn't approved the hit, and would have never approved it because Paul Castellano would have blocked that resolution.
Ange was close to the Gambino, so the commission would have never approved since Castellano would have defended ange, his ally.

Quoting again from "Mafia Prince":

> So when Caponigro is talking to Funzi Tieri about killing Ange, he thinks he's talking to the boss, because everyone thought that Tieri was the boss, but he wasn't. The Chin was.
>
> So Tieri strokes Caponigro along and all the while, Tieri, the Chin, and Bobby Manna are manipulating the whole thing. They want Ange dead so that my uncle gets the union, which benefits them. They also want Ange dead so that Philadelphia's Commission vote now goes with the Genovese and not the Gambinos, which benefits them, and on top of it, they want Caponigro dead so they can take his gambling and loan sharking operation, which is worth several million, which also benefits them.

If Caponigro had been more calculative he could have seen the power dynamics behind the scene, and he could have waited for a more official OK.
Plus, he had had a previous beef with Tieri, which could have given him another hint about a possible set up.

3. New Leaders' Tip: Asking More From Older -and Powerful- Players Is Risky

> **When he became boss (…) Little Nicky made it known to Riccobene, a onetime underworld ally, that he expected a nonnegotiable set percentage of his monthly cash intake** as (…) Scarfo's aggressive underworld street tax.
>
> Despite the killings of John Calabrese and Stevie Bouras, and the violent beating of Frank "Frankie Flowers" D'Alfonso—all of whom had balked at paying Scarfo's street tax—Riccobene, the seasoned old-school mob vet, scoffed at Scarfo's demand.
>
> Over the years, Riccobene had built up a strong power base (…) a loyal and well-stocked crew of thugs,

> thieves, and fellow racketeers who answered to him and to him only. He, in essence, oversaw a family within a family. **This fact made him believe he could challenge Scarfo in a street war. And that's exactly what he did**.

The new boss took a risk in asking for a bigger share of the pie than Riccobene used to pay to the old boss. It was obviously going to be a risk that Riccobene saw it as an affront, and that he demanded the same treatment he had with the previous boss.
Since Riccobebe had power, it was a risk that he was going to use his power base to resist. And that's exactly what happened.

4. Leader's Tip: Put People First, Avoid Being Too "WIIFM"

… And avoid looking overly-calculative as well.

As a matter of fact, it's better if you're not overly calculative in general, as true characters tend to shine through eventually.

One of the reasons that Scarfo started losing allies, including his nephew, was that he started becoming more and more focused on "what's in it for me", without any thoughts on wha the was giving, both financially, and emotionally.

I quote:

> During this time, Bobby Lumio was in a real bad shape. He was on his deathbed. One of the last things he said was, "Tell my friend I will miss him." He was talking about my uncle. This was on his deathbed.
>
> So after Bobby dies, my uncle hears what he had said and my uncle said, "I don't give a fuck about him; nobody's gonna miss him." This was a guy who was with us, a made guy, who while he was dying was looking out for us by tipping us off about the thing with Joe Salerno and Frank Gerace. But now that Bobby was dead, he couldn't do anything for my uncle. That's how he thought. That's how evil of a guy he was.

This is a case of losing sight of what a leader is all about: taking care of the people around.

When leaders stop taking care of the people, eventually, the people start taking care of the leader.

5. Leader's Tip: Support Your Crew, Don't Compete With Them

Sometimes it's fair to worry about a plot.

However, as a general mindset, **poor leaders fear their crews, while great leaders see their people's success as their own success**.

Nicky Scarfo had a poor leader's mindset:

> If you made a big score and made him a lot of money, the second he was done counting the money he would say to me, "This guy thinks he's a big shot now; all the sudden he's J. D. Rockefeller," or "We gotta watch him so he doesn't get too big for his britches."
>
> The guy just hands you a bag with $200,000 in it and ten minutes later you're burying the guy. It didn't make sense, but that's how he was.
>
> If he ordered you to kill someone and you did it perfectly and you got the guy just like he asked, he'd say to me, "Now this guy thinks he's Al Capone because he killed a guy." As quickly as he would build somebody up, he'd already be bringing them down.

Nicky Scarfo was afraid of people plotting against him, which is fair in that life, but he was also afraid of people being successful, of outshining him.
He wanted to be and feel the only big rooster. The problem with that mindset is that when you're big rooster and everyone else sucks, your team sucks… And, by reflection, so do you as the leader.

6. Leverage Money to Acquire Power

> The Mexican Mafia was very big down there, and there were a lot of fights in that jail, a lot of stabbings. My uncle kept to himself while he was in there, but he had two Mexican guys who were with him the whole time he was there. He called them his pistoleros, and they served as his bodyguards. He'd have me send money to put on their books or do things for their families. These guys were dirt poor but they were loyal, and like my uncle, they were stone killers.

7. Newbies' Tip: Protect Your Boss' Power

Read this exceprt:

> I knew my uncle wanted to kill Pat since the day he made him. After he got made, Pat came up to my uncle and said, "You know, Nick, you should think about making Patty Specs a captain," and my uncle just stared at him, like he couldn't believe this guy who just got made was telling him how to run the family.
>
> When he walked away, my uncle said, "Do you believe the balls on this fuckin' guy?"

What was the issue there?
It's pure power dynamics: influence is about power, and for bosses with a very big ego, even *suggesting* things to them can come across as an insult.

That's why learning to communicate in power-protective way is crucial in organizations.

By the way, Pa, that guy with a suggestion, got killed for just giving a suggestion to the boss.
And that's one of the reasons why mafia resources are a great way to learn power dynamics: things are more extreme there, making power dynamics more obvious.

8. Protect Your Enemy To Hide Your Plots

Chin Gigante, the Genovese boss, disliked John Gotti.

So, why did he publicly defended John Gotti, saying that he had the OK from the commission to kill his former boss Paul Castellano?

This is why:

> My uncle and I had been told by Bobby Manna that John Gotti did in fact get the Commission's permission to kill Paul Castellano, but I didn't believe it and it never made any sense to me. I think Bobby told us that because the Chin never wanted to be connected to the killing of Frankie DeCicco and the attempted killing of John Gotti. B**y telling us that Gotti had gotten the okay, it took suspicion away from the Chin being involved in the bombing**. They used the bomb to make it look like the siggys did it because they were close to Castellano. The use of explosive devices was against the rules of La Cosa Nostra. I remember thinking to myself: this fuckin' Chin ain't so crazy; he's the shrewdest of them all, and the most deadly.

By defending Gotti, Gigante staved off any suspicion against him. That way, he might have also made another attempt in the future without raising suspicions.

9. Don't Get Into Screaming Matches: It Telegraphs Your Intentions

Leonetti, talking about the moment he realized he was going to turn on his uncle:

> At that moment, sitting in that cell listening to him blame me for Mark, I don't know if I have ever felt such a combination of raw emotion and such rage, both at the same time. I'm not the kind of guy who's gonna get into a screaming match with anyone, let alone in front of 15 other guys, and let my opponent or adversary know what I was thinking. And at that very moment, he was no longer my uncle, he was no longer my boss. He was my adversary, my enemy.

10. Leaders Make The Difference on People's and Organizations' Future

Both Leonetti and Gravano turned theri back on La Cosa Nostra, in large part, because of bad leaders:

> Sammy was very loyal to La Cosa Nostra, like I was, but just like me, he lost faith in his boss. He told me that one of his biggest regrets was not killing John Gotti so that Frankie DeCicco could be the boss instead. "We fucked up on that one, Bo," is what he would say.

MORE WISDOM

- **To get respect from people, you must have status in their own world and/or system of values**

> It's sad to say, but my uncle looked down on his own father because he was a hardworking guy and not a gangster. He was never outwardly disrespectful to his father, but they weren't very close. My uncle's only ambition in life was to be a gangster, even from the time he was young.

I suspect that Nicky Scarfo didn't respect his father because his father wasn't as "tough", or as driven.

- **For some mobsters, it's more about respect, status, and reputation, than money**

> He wasn't making a lot of money, but to him at that time, the money wasn't important. He would always say, "The money will come, but this thing is about respect and honor, it's not about money." He was making a name for himself within the Bruno organization and that's what mattered the most to him—his reputation.

However, that does change for some mosbsters once they start making money.
That's something you might want to keep in mind, and watch out for: greedy bosses are more likely to be overthrown.

- **There can be some honor and values among mobsters**

> The Blade had a girlfriend whose stepfather was abusing her and she'd always cry to him about it. So one night when he was drunk, he sees the stepfather on the street and he shoots him, right in front of the cops. That was the Blade—he didn't give a fuck that the cops were right there. He'd shrug it off and say, "That fuckin' guy had it comin', I don't care who was watchin'."

- **On the power of status and reputation to gain people's support and approval**

> One prison official said, "The young black kids treat him like he's a god—it's 'Yes, Mr. Scarfo,' 'No, Mr. Scarfo.'"

- **Keep a body hidden by involving different hit squads**

> But what they did was they got a fourth group to dig up the body and move it somewhere else, so that way the guys who did the killing and the guys who moved the body and the group that buried the body the first time had no idea where the body was, in case someone flipped and ratted them out.

QUOTES

On Lionetti's grandmother:

> My grandmother was the typical old-school Italian matriarch. All of her grandchildren called her Mom-Mom. She went to church every morning, not just Sundays, and her cooking, my God, nobody cooked like her.

On paying to kill:

> My uncle used to say he was a "backstabbing cocksucker" but my uncle couldn't get the okay to kill him because, at the time, Alvin Feldman owed $60,000 to Pappy Ippolito, who was one of Ange's top guys. Ange told my uncle that once Pappy got his money back, my uncle could have him killed. I remember my uncle saying to me, "I wish I had the $60,000. I'd pay the Jew's debt to Pappy myself, that's how bad I want to whack this motherfucker."

On Nicky's priorities and his love for the mafia:

> To Little Nicky, the entire universe seemed to revolve around three things: the mob, murder, and family, specifically in that order.
>
> The killing of Vincent Falcone in the manner he foresaw, gave him the chance to combine all three of these at the same time in one giant orgy of death, lineage, and La Cosa Nostra.

On mobsters superstitions and being afraid of black cats:

> So me and the Blade leave Caesars and we are walking back to Georgia Avenue, which is a few blocks away. Now, as we are walking home, a black cat runs in front of us and the Blade goes nuts—he's very superstitious. He tells me, "First, Ange gets killed, and now this," meaning the cat. He says, "Come on, Philip, we gotta walk a different way to undo the bad luck from the cat." There was no arguing with him—he was dead serious. Here's this guy who is a stone-cold killer and he's spooked by this stupid black cat.

On Frankie DeCicco:

> Sammy told me that he was there when Frankie DeCicco got blown up, and that when he went to grab Frankie's body, there was nothing there. Sammy said his hand went through him. Sammy used to talk about Frankie DeCicco all the time. He said he was a man's man, a real gangster.

On the difference between being a gangster for life, and falling into the life:

> We caught up on old times and had some laughs and we always worked out together. We walked that track every day. But Sammy still wanted to be Sammy the Bull, and I didn't want to be Crazy Phil anymore—to be honest I never did. It's what my uncle wanted, not me.

REVIEW

"Mafia Prince" is a captivating read, and a very instructive one, if you know how to read between the lines.
If you do, you will find many principles of power dynamics, leadership, Machiavellianism, and life strategies.

Also read:

- **Best books about power**

Or get the book on Amazon.

Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 April 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Power intelligence is the ability to understand, assess, and influence power dynamics in social and competitive environments.

At The Power Moves we've spent years analyzing power dynamics across dating, work, leadership, and social hierarchies, drawing from psychology, evolutionary science, and real-world case studies.
From that work, we developed the TPM framework for power intelligence (PI). It's a term we use to describe **the ability to understand and navigate power dynamics**, and what we refer to as the power quotient (PQ) to describe an individual's level within this framework.

In this guide, you'll learn what power intelligence is, how it differs from emotional or social intelligence, why it matters more in competitive life domains, and how men can develop it to gain status, influence, and leverage.

Let's dive in.

TPM analytical framework: power intelligence
At The Power Moves, we use the term *power intelligence* to describe a dimension of cognitive and social ability that traditional frameworks like emotional or social intelligence don't fully capture.
We use this term to describe a specific intersection of power dynamics, psychology, and men's development.

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What’s Power Intelligence

> **Power intelligence** (**PI**), or **power quotient** (**PQ**), is the individual’s capability to recognize and influence patterns of power dynamics in order to achieve goals and acquire life-relevant resources such as status, influence, and partners.

The definition includes both the “awareness” of power dynamics and the “competence” to influence power dynamics to achieve life-relevant goals.

The measure of power intelligence is Power Quotient (PQ).
So when we say that someone has a high “power quotient”, we refer to people who have a good grasp of power dynamics, and/or the skills and attitudes to influence power dynamics (the two overlap, of course).
And when we say someone has little or no power intelligence, we refer to people who have either little or no grasp of power dynamics, or little or no ability to influence power dynamics.

Components of Power Intelligence

There are two major sub-components of power intelligence: awareness, and competence:

- **Power awareness**: the ability to “see” and assess power dynamics in interpersonal relationships, social exchanges, and personalities.
  - Feel: the unconscious “feel” for power dynamics, overlapping with emotional intelligence and social skills
  - Analysis: the conscious side of awareness, including the more rational analysis of social and power dynamics. People can make up for and develop their subconscious “feel” with more analytical analysis
  - Systems thinking: the higher and strategic level. With a chess analogy, systemic PI is the ability to consider each move as part of the bigger game, including second-order effects. If the “feel” overlaps more with EQ, the “systemic” requires more IQ for complex processing
- **Power competence**: the ability to influence power dynamics to achieve goals. It can be broken down into:
  - Attitudes: the drive to acquire power, in constant balance with inhibitors of action such as fear, low self-esteem, avoidance-orientation, etc.
  - Skills: the ability to execute on one’s drive to achieve goals

There is an overlap, of course. It's unlikely to have much competence without good awareness, and it's unlikely to have competence without any awareness.

However, they're two different dimensions, and it's possible to be higher in one, than in another.
The social power intelligence quadrant plots both dimensions:

	Low Competence	High Competence
HIGH AWARE	**Ineffective** • Sensitive guy • Passive (sometimes aggressive) **Behavior:** Warm & [illegible] **Relationships:** Risky (good with good-hearted people, but can be taken advantage of) **Leadership:** Average/poor (fails to address bad apples and other jerks)	**Effective** • Charming & charismatic • Assertive **Behavior:** Warm & high power (generally, but otherwise reacts to the situation) **Relationships:** Great (covers both the power and human sides) **Leadership:** Great (hires well, and can navigate all team-related challenges) **Example:** Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Obama
LOW AWARE	**Clueless** • "Nice guy" or jerk (dual-frustration: both approaches are costly) • Passive **Behavior:** Passive, never leases a mare **Relationships:** Poor **Leadership:** N/A (never reaches a w/ leadership position)	**Robotic / Weird** • Loner / social climber • Passive or aggressive, sometimes loud, "off" (particularly in [illegible]) **Behavior:** Seeks power, tries too hard or awkwardly, fails to develop buy-in, friends, & true converts **Relationships:** Poor (lacks the intuition) **Leadership:** Average (can achieve goals, but struggles to create team spirit)

The interpersonal power-awareness quadrant (Lucio Buffalmano, 2021)
Let's take the two interesting intersections:

High Competence, Low Awareness: Robotic Operators & Bullies

People without the feel can still have an outsized drive for power, including a propensity for scheming.

They tend to come off 'weird' though, lacking smooth calibration and charm. And when they have power they may rely more on coercion than on buy-in.
This is especially costly in relationship quality and long-term relationships.

Interestingly, there are many intelligent and highly ambitious men in this category.
Ambition provides the fuel, and intelligence goes into analysis for strategizing. Men also tend to have less "feel" for social dynamics than women and men outnumber women in the autistic spectrum disorder by 2:1–3:1 (Halladay, 2015).
The original 'pick-up artist' movement also drew some men from this quadrant, attracted by the original idea that some specific formula or 'routines' could unlock dating success.

Mark Zuckerberg is an interesting case for this quadrant.

The “robot” memes might be semi-accurate depictions of a man with low EI
Without the “feel”, Zuckerberg probably struggled socially and came across as ‘not very genuine’ (though he improved a lot!).
But he had the general IQ, the attitude for power and (business) domination, and the analytical skills to manage the company’s growth while maintaining full control.

The digital revolution has been great news for men with lower EI as it decreased what used to be a “condicio sine qua non” for success and high-income: social effectiveness.

High Awareness, Low Competence: The Sensitive Guy

The flip side of the robotic man is the sensitive man.

From a power dynamics perspective, this individual “feels it” when he’s dominated, disempowered, or undermined. He *feels* he’s losing power.
But he lacks the attitude and sometimes the courage to do something about it.

Unluckily, without the attitudes and skills for power dynamics, the sensitive guy is likely to languish at the bottom of the social hierarchy (tip: consider Power University).

Why Power Intelligence is Essential, Not Optional

Power intelligence matters the most when it comes to personal success and achieving goals.

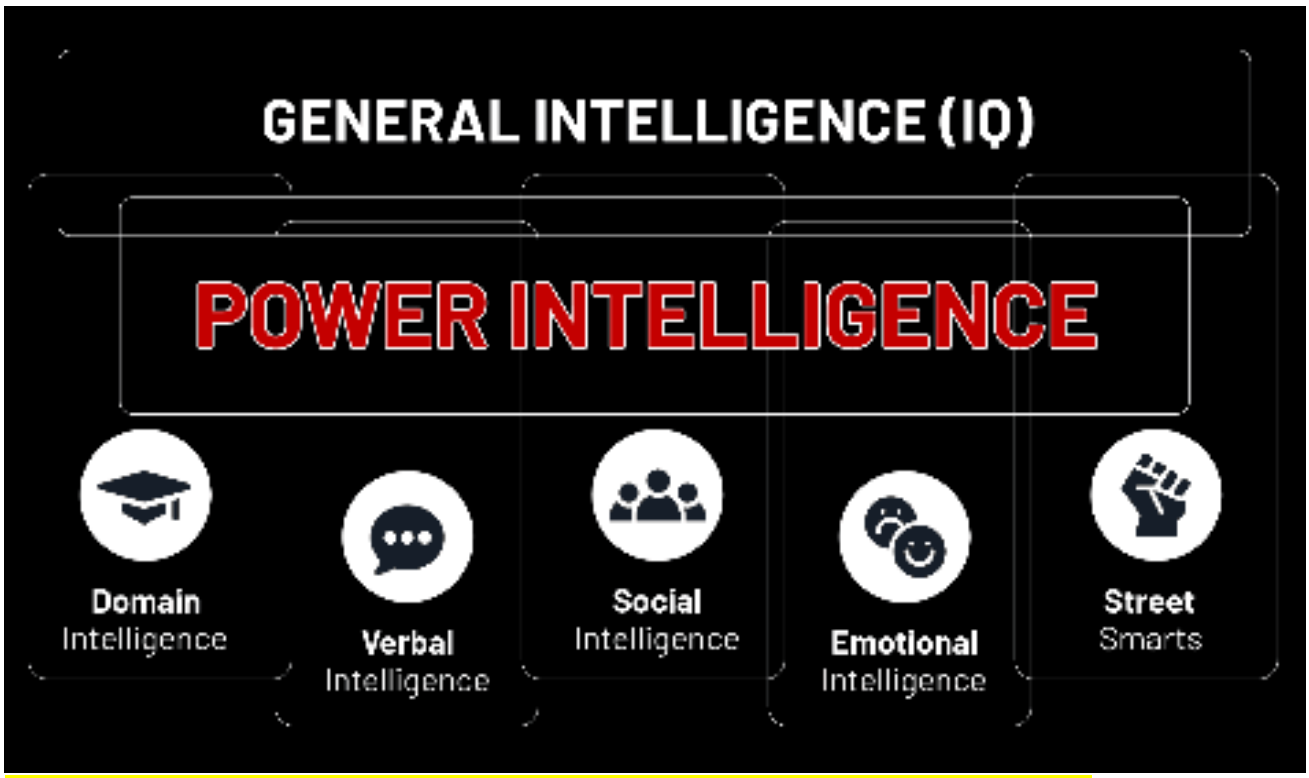
And it matters most in all major life competitions for acquiring scarce resources such as status, power, leadership positions, mates, and wealth.

Importantly, **power intelligence is also crucial for self-defense** and a peaceful, good life.
As Machiavelli aptly noted, 'a good man is ruined among the many who are not good'.

Also read:

- **The emotional intelligence lie: Machiavellis at the top**
- The myth of emotional intelligence

Power Intelligence VS Other Intelligences



Adapted from Geoffrey Miller, 2015. Note: this is for a quick idea, but not scientifically rigorous
There is a certain overlap among all intelligences.
It's rare to have very high power intelligence and very low IQ, and vice versa (although high IQ and low power awareness is more common).

And as we've seen the "feel" for power dynamics is related to emotional intelligence. How they relate also depends on whether we define EI as a smaller competence in supporting cognition (Mayer et al., 2008) or as its own higher-order domain (Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 2006).

However, different from emotional or social intelligence, power awareness is:

More Goal & Power Oriented

While emotional and social intelligence may also support being liked and accepted, **power intelligence focuses on status, leadership, and social power.**

Emotional intelligence includes or even focuses communion, while power intelligence focuses on agency. Sometimes, at communion's expense.

Covers Competitive Environments

Competitive environments behave differently from more cooperative and established relationships or general socialization.

In open competitions with no rules and cooperation, power dynamics turn more into dominance and raw power. But in most modern socialization, competition is also embedded in cooperation, and hidden. Sometimes it's outright downplayed or denied.
Common realms of co-existing cooperation and competition include:

- **Workplaces** with shared goals at the group level and cooperation and competition at the individual level (see office politics)
- **Dating**, with various games and intra- and intersexual competition
- **Families** (ie.: siblings competition)

- **Social groups** (competing for status, and in newly forming groups when dominance hierarchies form)

"Dark" Side of Socialization

The darker side of socialization includes manipulation, coercion, dominance, and various forms of games and social climbing.

The 'darker' side of socialization is more obvious in competitions, and but it's often more hidden when competition co-exists with cooperation and social groups.

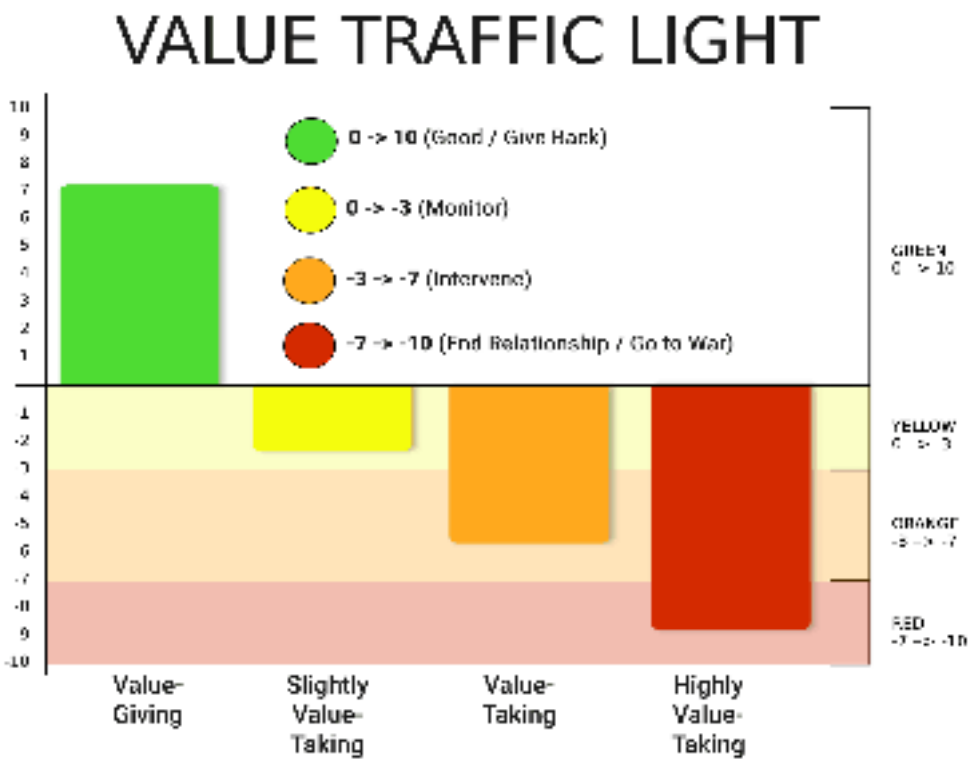
Awareness and competence of the darker side of socialization is fundamental to any species that compete for acquiring scarce resources.
As a matter of fact, emotional intelligence without power intelligence is what we call here the "naive self-development" approach.

The Components of Power Intelligence

The main sub-components of power intelligence are:

1. Social exchange accounting (givers vs takers)

Social exchange accounting refers to ability to see human relationships as part of a social exchange of give and take, track exchanges, and maximize them for ROI and goal achievement.



It includes basics such as:

1. People's personal value (social and mate value)
2. Who gives and who takes
3. Strategic considerations, like returns and what currencies others want, etc.

Those are the basics.

Then, based on that understanding, the next level of sophistication includes:

1. Marketing your forms values (displaying value)
2. Smart framing to showcase your added value
3. Strategies to initiate and maintain more win-win relationships
4. Spotting predatory players and dynamics

Social skills also require social accounting.
Talking too much, for example, robs others of the opportunity to share themselves, and it prevents bonding.
Similar principles apply to job markets and sexual marketplaces.

Also read:

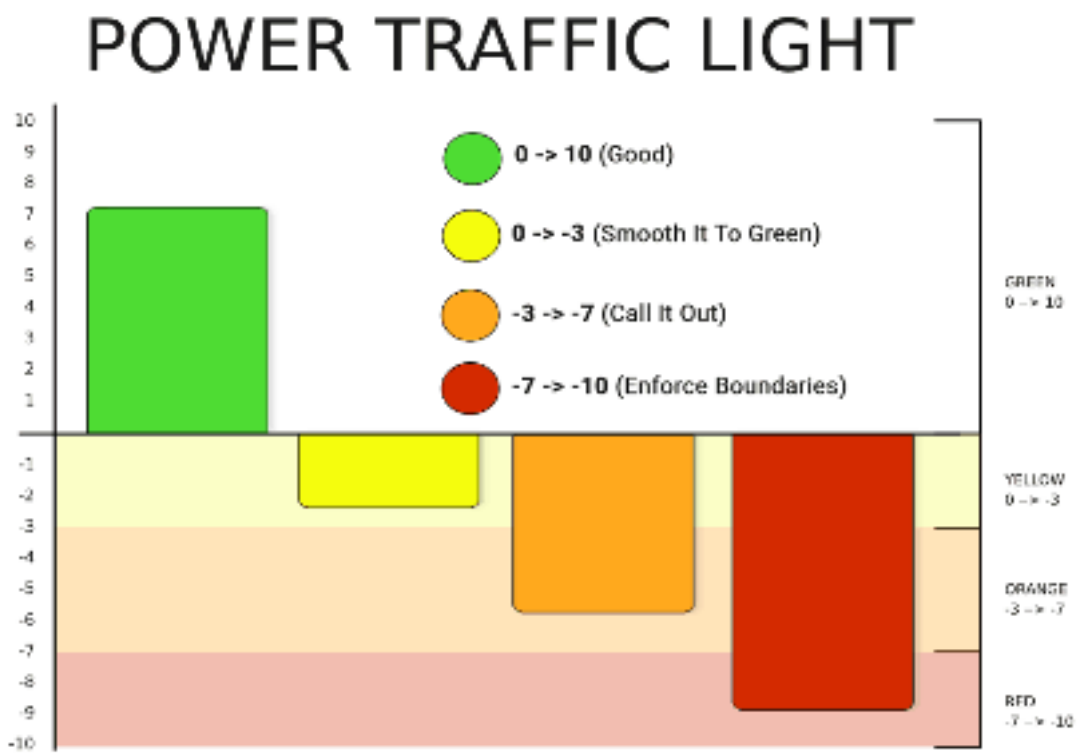
- **Effective calculativeness**: a primer on social exchange accounting
- **Smart cooperation**: the primer on win-win exchanges
- **Leadership 101**: a primer on leadership as an exchange

2. Power-accounting (empowering vs disempowering)

Power accounting exchange accounting refers to the ability to see and track patterns of power and navigate interactions to avoid losing power, gaining power and status, and using it to achieve goals

It includes items and diagnostic questions such as:

- Who has power, who doesn't
- How is high status, who is not
- Who is giving power and who is taking it



Also see:

- **Power dynamics**: the primer article on power/leverage
- **Interpersonal power dynamics**, followed by 'laws of interpersonal power dynamics'

- **Social status**, what it is, and how to gain it

3. Strategic thinking (leverage & moves)

Strategic thinking refers to approaching social exchanges and life with an outcome-orientation, looking for leverage and approaches that maximize the odds of achieving goals

Strategic thinking applies to all areas of life, including social exchanges and power dynamics.
Below, we list a few sub-components of strategic thinking.

Also see:

- **Machiavellianism**, a personality trait characterized by selfish calculativeness

3.2. Investment & Returns

Strategizing around social exchange gives and takes to ensure one gets what they want

Including items and diagnostic questions such as:

- Is investing in this person or cause worth it?
- Should you give to this person or that person?
- Am I exposing or devaluing myself by giving too much?
- How can I increase the odds of getting a fair or good deal?

Power-unaware people spend time, money, and effort more randomly. Strategic-minded men seek the highest return.

Also see:

- **Social Investment Model**: the primer on social investment dynamics

3.3. Interest-Accounting: Alignments VS Conflicts

Strategizing around one's own interest and other people's interest to ensure maximum persuasion, leverage, cooperation, and leadership outcomes to achieve goals

Interest-accounting is crucial because **aligned interests promote safer win-win, while misaligned interests create opportunities and incentives for defection**.

Naive people don't account for diverging interests.
Power intelligent people instead know that most social exchanges are a mix of convergent and divergent interests, with some contexts and people safer than others.
And they think in terms of:

- If interests *mostly* align, where do they diverge?
  - Can I mitigate those risks?
  - Can I protect against those risks -and worst-case scenarios-?
- If they're misaligned, can we do something to align them?
- How are interests likely to change over time?
  - Can I increase alignment, mitigate risks, or cover possible defections?

These questions are crucial for *any* interpersonal relationship.

Interests aren't always in the open.
People also evolved to *hide* some interests, sometimes even to themselves. Plus, shrewd manipulators proactively

mislead others about their true interests and intentions.

Also see:

- **Effective cynicism**, the primer on risk-aware thinking, without becoming paranoid
- Conflicts of interests at work

3.4. Leverage Accounting

Thinking and strategizing around who has power over others (leverage), and how to influence those dynamics to reduce other people's leverage and increase one's own

Particularly relevant for negotiations of all kinds and including diagnostic questions such as:

- Who gains the most if we go ahead and how much?
- Who stands to lose the most if we don't go ahead and much?
- Who can escalate and win?
  - If it's them, can I inflict some costs?
  - If I win, could it cost me in the future and how can I mitigate it?

Power-aware people ask these questions as second nature, often unconsciously, as a way of mapping the power dynamics.
And then strategize accordingly.

The advanced level in leverage thinking includes various bluffs and manipulations to decrease their leverage, hide your weakness, and expose theirs.
But it also includes expanding the scope for win-win with collaborative frames and discouraging defection.

3.4. Second-Order Consequences Accounting

Projecting into the future the likely countermoves for each of your move, and walking backward to ensure that your next move maximizes the odds of achieving your goal

Power-unaware folks focus on the here and now, while power intelligent several moves ahead, including:

- How will others react
  - How could I react to their reaction
- What other options will I have if it fails
- What different actions do to my status and reputation

Second-order thinkers tend to out-smart, out-play, and out-succeed first-order thinkers over the long run.

4. Applied psychology

Persuasion and influence, important elements of power, are grounded in psychology.

That knowledge doesn't have to be academic to be effective, and often it isn't.
Some people are born with a natural intuition for human psychology, while some others develop it with experience and analysis.

Some resources can expedite the learning process, and you can further cut the learning curve by focusing on practical and applied psychology, as on this website.

Also see:

- **Transformational leadership**: group psychology applied to leadership

5. Character assessment

People differ, and the variance is large.

That means that **character assessment is crucial to both success and life quality**, allowing you to advance in life and pick quality people as friends and partners.
Picking well is one of the foundational strategies of power.

Also read:

- **Self-defense strategies**: the primer on protecting downside risks
- **How to spot takers**

6. Manipulation dynamics

Spotting, tackling, and even executing effective manipulation requires a high level of skills.
Contrary to showy power moves, effective manipulation is often subtle and invisible to the more naive players.

This is why knowing at least the basics of manipulation is crucial in life.
This website states that **manipulation is pervasive and is not the exception, but the norm**.
Character matters, though. Some manipulate (far) more than others, and in (far) more harmful forms.

Also see:

- **Manipulation dynamics**: the primer article on manipulation
- Dark psychology

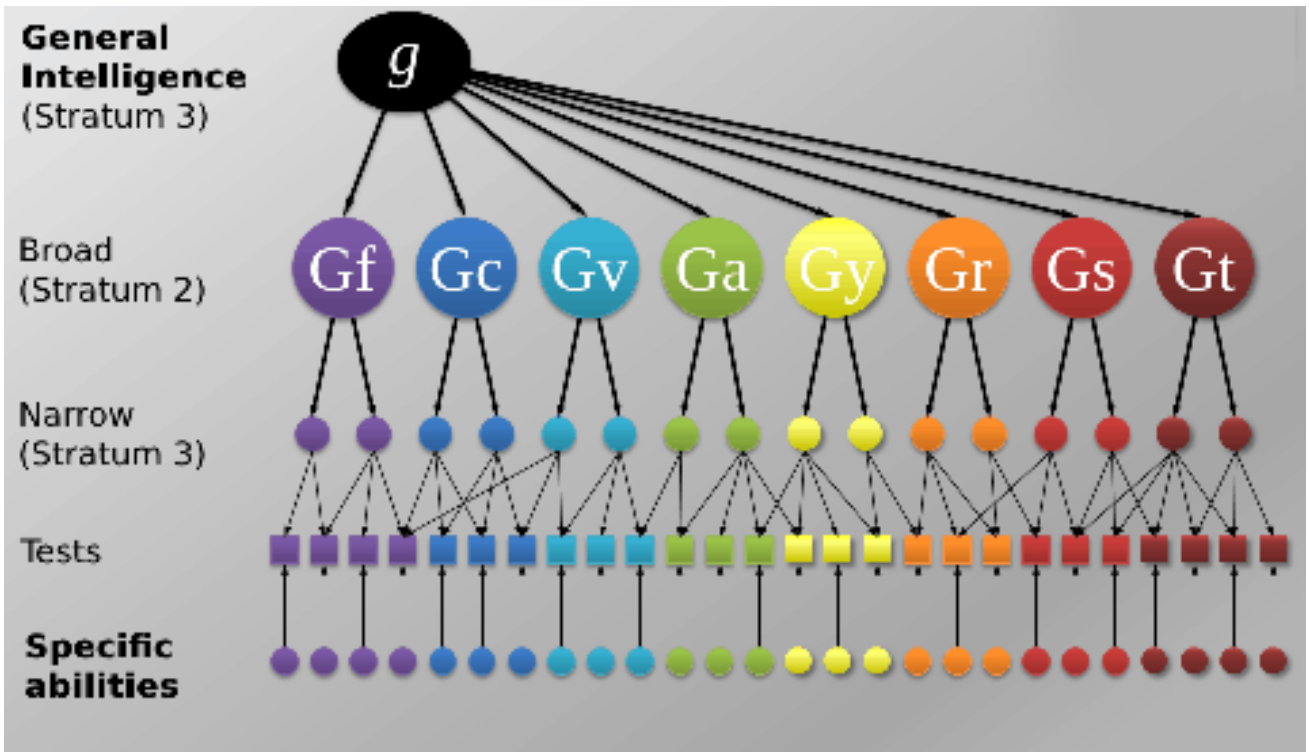
> Dark Psychology: 7 Ways to Manipulate People

The Academic Case For PI

Power intelligence is our integrative framework for understanding power-related abilities, rather than a formally recognized psychological construct.

Researchers and psychologists have long debated whether or not there are different types of intelligence.

Some of the contention centers around the term and construct of intelligence. But more would agree if we referred to “ability”, “aptitudes”, or “modalities”. And **we can test and measure many different “specific abilities” for which people’s effectiveness and performance vary**.
It may also be possible to group similar specific abilities into higher-level cognitive abilities (“broad abilities”).



The "Three Stratum Theory", adapted from Tracey Ramsey's work, released under CC BY-SA 4.0

A popular theory of intelligence is the Cattell–Horn–Carroll theory, with 16 "broad cognitive abilities" and more than 80 "narrow abilities" (Flanagan and Dixon, 2014).

Many of these abilities are part of cognitive processes that are easier to measure, like "auditory processing" and "processing speed" for broad abilities and "simple reaction time", and "semantic processing speed", for narrow abilities.

There is less consensus when it comes to combining or *leveraging* those abilities.

But it may be possible to measure them.

Broader Intelligence Measurements

There are many measures of emotional intelligence, and people display varying levels of competence.

There is also evidence for "emotional intelligence" to be a second-stratum factor of intelligence (MacCann et al., 2014), and it's been listed as a "tentative broad ability".

EI tests correlate with work-performance (Schlegel, & Mortillaro, 2019), and EI in groups is a better predictor of team-based performance than group's IQ (Woolley et al., 2010).

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Behavior* also refers to 'nonverbal sensitivity'.

People differ in nonverbal sensitivity, and with real-world consequences. For example, doctors scoring higher on the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) had more satisfied patients (DiMatteo, Friedman, & Taranta, 1979).

So, in brief, people differ on sub-aspects of intelligence related to people skills.

Couldn't that apply to power-related aspects as well?

Power Intelligence & Attitudes Studies: Empirical Support

Many studies show that people differ in their propensity and ability to acquire different markers of power.

Just some examples:

- **Narcissists focus on status rather than inclusion**. Hierometer theory suggests that while self-esteem tracks both status and inclusion, narcissism evolved to focus on status pursuits. And it may work, since grandiose narcissists tend to acquire higher status and leadership positions (Mahadevan et al., 2016; Mahadevan and

Jordan, 2021)

- **Dark triad individuals have a higher drive for power, money** (Lee et al., 2013), and dominance (Bradlee and Emmons, 1992). Christie and Geis's Mach-IV predicts (manipulative) behavior and a strategic approach to social relations focused on obtaining higher personal returns (Johnes and Paulhus, 2009)
- **Narcissism and Machiavellianism positively predict salary and power**, respectively (Spurk et al., 2015 and Wille et al., 2012 for narcissism)
- **Machiavellian managers who spend more time networking than managing lead poorer teams, but get promoted more** (Luthans, 1988). Luthans call them "successful" managers, but it's more about being strategic and good at politics
- **Dark triad men have more sexual partners**, and tend to seek more short-term sex (Jonason et al., 2008)
- **Narcissists strategically mimic high-power people**, ostensibly to be liked by them, and form alliances (Ashton-James & Levordashka, 2013)
- **People high in social dominance prop their in-group in power** while discriminating other groups, and especially *men* from other groups. People also differ in their social dominance orientation (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999)

These studies may lend support to the concept of power intelligence.

Measures of Power Propensities

Some of the power-related scales that empirically differentiate individuals for power-related predispositions include:

- **Need for Power (nPow):** Captures a desire to influence, lead, control, or impact others.
  - Status Motive / Need for Status**:** focuses on motivation to seek higher social rank, respect, visibility, and prestige.
- **Personal Sense of Power (SOP / POW):** Measures how powerful a person *feels* in their relationships and daily interactions
  - Leadership Self-Efficacy**:** Measures a person's belief in their ability to lead, influence, direct, and coordinate others
- **Interpersonal Power Inventory (IPI):** Measures how people *use* power in relationships across different bases of power (reward, coercion, legitimacy, expertise, etc.).
  - Dominance–Prestige Scale (Cheng & Tracy) Measures two core strategies of status: dominance (force, intimidation), and prestige (skills, respect)
- **Communion / Agency Scales:** Measure focus on agency (assertion, influence, leadership) versus communion (warmth, cooperation). Agency is directly tied to power.

Donald Trump: A Case Study

In support of the theory of multiple intelligences is the concept of 'savants' or prodigies in one area as compared to their other cognitive abilities (Gilman, 2001).

If you can find such a guy, then you're probably in the presence of a discrete, independent "type" of intelligence. This approach lends credibility to emotional intelligence separated from IQ if we find cases of high IQ, but lower emotional intelligence. Autistic people offer some examples. Or if you read Einstein's letter to his wife you'd realize he never understood how women and relationships work.

Simiarly, we can use the same approach for power intelligence.
Let's take Donald Trump. He isn't stupid. But when he implied in an official press conference that one could inject

disinfectant into the lungs to cure Covid, he may have shown some cognitive limitations.
Hence, Trump's achievements may speak less about general high-IQ, and more about a predisposition towards power, including:

1. **Hyper-sensitive feel for power dynamics**, including minor slights or criticisms
2. **High power ambitions**, craving power, dominance, status, and victory
   - Action and approach-orientation towards his goals
3. **Above-average power skills** to climb status hierarchies and capture people's attention

Trump is well aware of his darker power-related side as well, and may even consider it his advantage.
In one interview he said:

> **Interviewer**: (…) He said I think Donald Trump is an artful liar, I think he's a greedy, vicious, and arrogant man
> **Trump**: Well, I don't know is that supposed to be a compliment or not, I'm not sure

Trump also excelled at frame control, including the "frame imposing' frame control technique.
Again, he is fully aware of it, and writes "*The Art of the Deal*":

> When a reporter asks me a tough question, **I try to frame a positive answer, even if that means shifting the ground**.
> For example, if someone asks me what negative effects the world's tallest building might have on the West Side, I turn the tables and talk about how New Yorkers deserve the world's tallest building, and what a boost it will give the city to have that honor again.
>
> *Trump, 1987*

That's some skills in frame control for PR and reputation.

(Media) manipulation was another Trump strength.
Always adept at getting free publicity, he intuitively understood how to play to people's psychology.
He says:

> **I play to people's fantasies.**
> People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. **That's why a little hyperbole never hurts**. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular.
>
> *Trump, 1987*

Trump also reveled in competitions. In 2006, he verbally brawled his way to his first nomination, and most of his political opponents were unprepared to meet him at his level of dominance and Machiavellianism.

All in all, Trump may be a good example of an individual with around average IQ, but above average PQ, and exceptional drive for power.

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Dataclysm: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 April 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Dataclysm (2014) is a data-driven analysis of sexual marketplace dynamics, genders' sexual market value, and the variance of individuals' sexual preferences.
Christian Rudder, the author, shares interesting insights that can help readers increase their mating intelligence, and become better and more strategic daters.

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SUMMARY

About the Author:

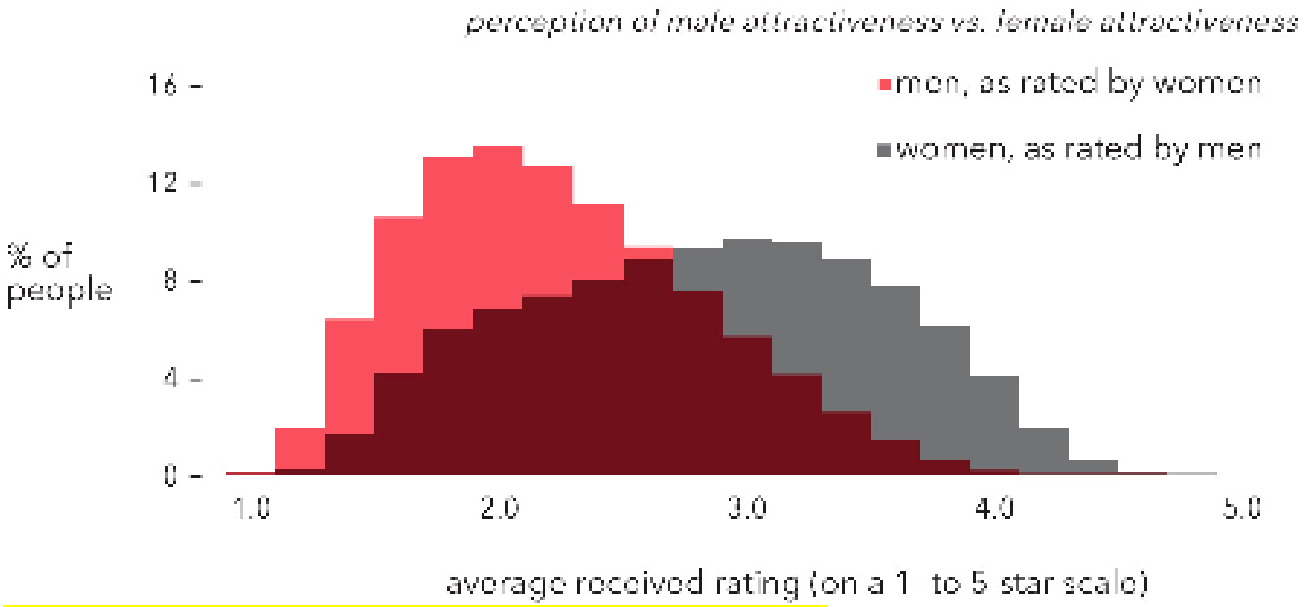
Christian Rudder graduated from Harvard in 1998 with a degree in math. He is the co-founder and former president of the dating site OkCupid, where he authored the OkTrends blog.

1. Women Are More Demanding & Rate Most Men As "Below Average"

It's fashionable these days to say that men's expectations are ruined by all the images of models, fake boobs, and photoshopped starlets.

In truth, it's women who are far more demanding when rating the opposite sex.

A chart should say it all:



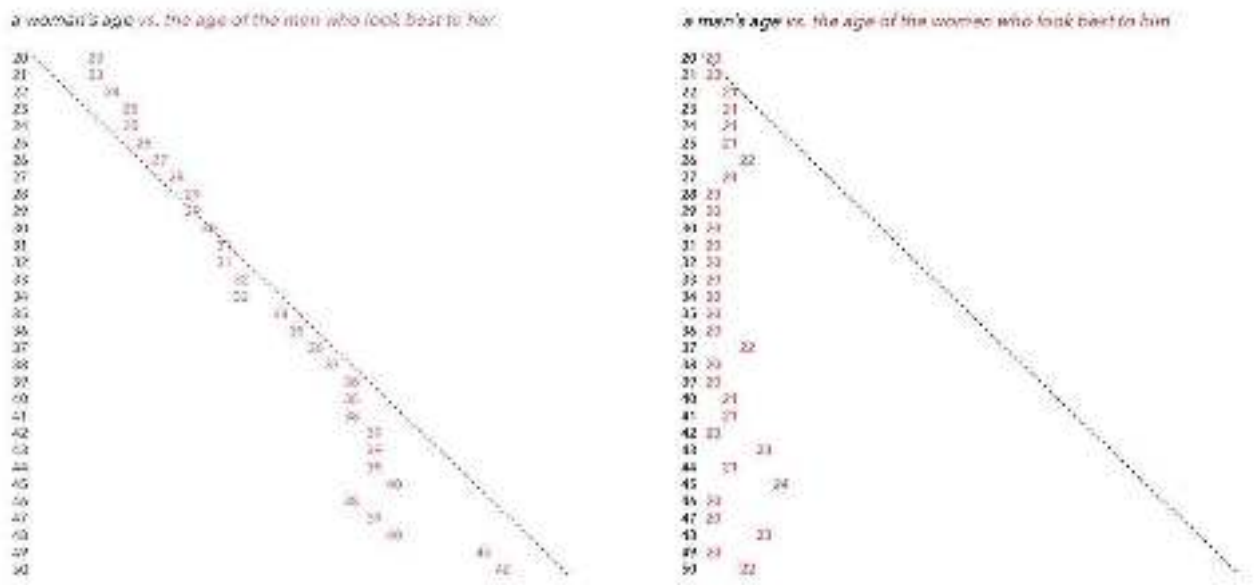
Women are far pickier than men and assess most men as “below average”
Says Rudder:

> Only one guy in six is “above average” in an absolute sense. Sex appeal isn’t something commonly quantified like this, so let me put it in a more familiar context: translate this plot to IQ, and you have a world where the women think 58 percent of men are brain-damaged.

Damn some next-level female hypergamy there :).

And before you think that’s normal because only less good-looking men join OKCupid, that is probably not the case, since the author tested random samples of OKCupid users against random social network users.

2. Men Like Younger Women – Albeit Sometimes They Lie to Themselves



That dotted diagonal is the “age parity” line
The author says that a man’s sex appeal progresses and seems to reach the limit at around 40.

The author describes the progression in even better terms for a 20-years old guy who’s starting to date as an adult (redacted for brevity):

> If you track the whole lot over time, the main way he'll lose options from that set is when some of them just stop being single (…) his total "interested" pool actually gain women. As he gets older, and presumably richer and more successful, those qualities draw younger women in. His age doesnt hurt him. As he and the women in his pool mature, the ones who are still available will find him as desirable an option as they did when they were all twenty

But for women, age is a much bigger factor.
Women are at their best in their younger twenties, and never budge.
The author says that "women over the age of 35 might as well not exist".

And describing women's reality:

> If you could do the same thing for a typical woman at twenty, you'd get a different story. Over the years, she, too, would lose men from her pool to things like marriage, but she would also lose options to time itself—as the years passed, fewer and fewer of the remaining single men would find her attractive. Her dating pool is like a can with two holes— it drains on the double.

The author says that dating for older men and women gets more challenging because of their different preferences.
But it's most challenging for women:

> Women want men to age with them. And men always head toward youth. A 32 year-old set her age-preference filters at 28 -35. That thirty-five-year-old set his filters to 24 – 40, and yet rarely contact anyone over twenty-nine. Neither finds what they are looking for. You could say they're like two ships passing in the night (…) But in my mind, I see the women still on solid ground, ashore, just watching them disappear.

3. Quirks Attract: Be A Polarizer (It Might Be Even Better Than Being a "10")

This extremely interesting phenomenon in brief:

> A woman's overall sex appeal is enhanced when some men find her ugly.

How do you define the quirk and the "woman whom some other men find ugly"?
By variance.

How do you define the quirk and the "woman whom some other men find ugly"?
By variance.

In OkCupid people don't just say "yes or no", but can vote with a number from 1 to 5.
So if a woman is an average of a 3, it's *very* different if most men rated her around average, or if most men voted her 1 or 5.

Variance is so powerful that, the author says, "it has almost as much to do with the sexual attention a woman gets as her overall attractiveness".
Such as, the variance of attractiveness is almost as important as overall attractiveness.

Part of the reason is because variance means that some guys will like you a lot, and those "fanboys" will do most of the messaging and chasing.
But it's more than simply having more top votes, says the author, and there is something more about variance that attracts more attention. He speculates that it's because people can feel that not many others might like her, so they write even more frequently because they feel like they have a competitive advantage.

4. How Much People Enjoy the Date Is Independent on People's Looks

When two people meet for a date:

> the two people's looks had almost no effect on whether they had a good time. No matter which person was better-looking or by how much—even in cases where one blind-dater was a knockout and the other rather homely—the percent of people giving the dates a positive rating was constant. Attractiveness didn't matter.

This is not how users behave online.
Online people still care about looks. It's just that looks didn't seem to affect how much people rated their in-person experience.

The author sums it as such:

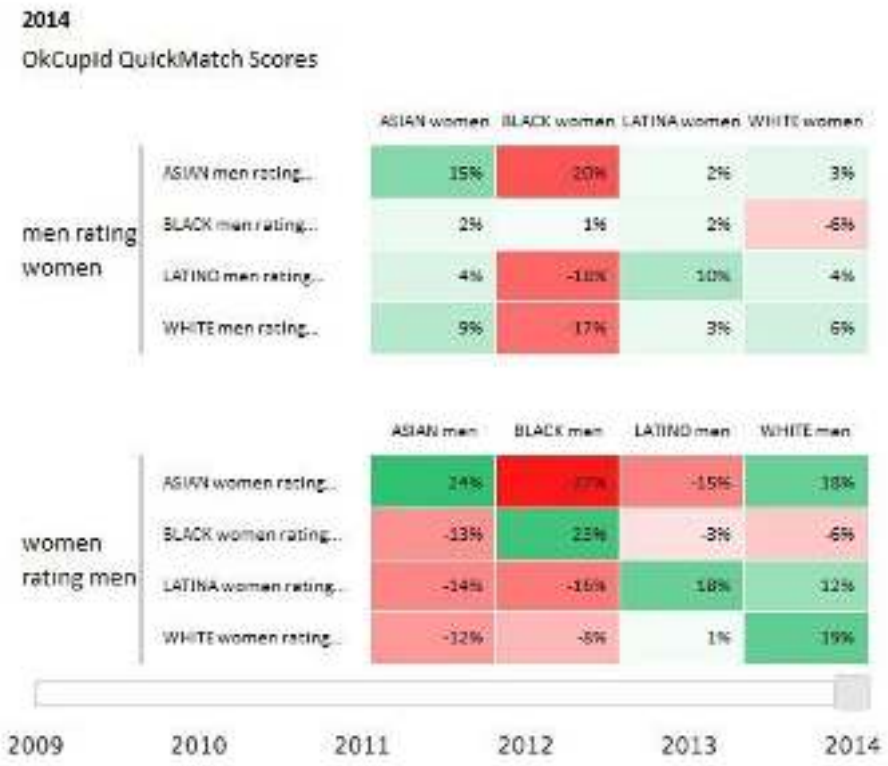
> In short, people appear to be heavily preselecting online for something that, once they sit down in person, doesn't seem important to them

Politics also mattered little in compatibility in spite people usually rank it very high.

What instead had a surprising predictive power were questions such as "do you like scary movies" and "have you traveled to another country alone".

5. Race Matters... Quite A Bit

This chart says it all:



Good to be an asian woman or white man
The author seems to be surprised that race matters:

> When I show here that black women and later, black men, get short shrift, and that adding whiteness to a user's identity makes him or her more attractive, I'm not describing some Ozark fever dream, I'm describing our world, mine and yours.

Frankly, this makes me wonder whether the author wasn't being fully forthcoming (to himself), or if he's been living beneath a rock.

People tend to prefer their own race, and women are slighly more "race loyal" than men, with a preference for white men when dating outside their race.

Culture also plays an important role in racial preferences.

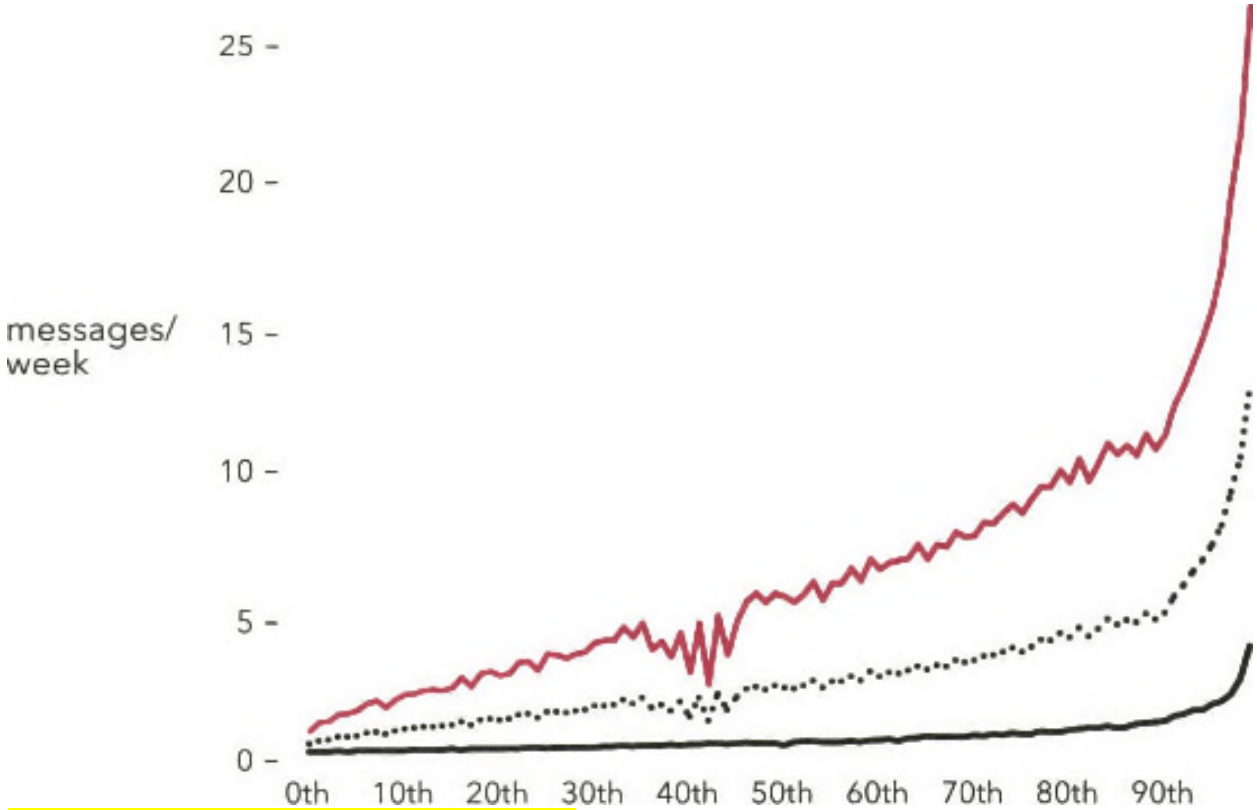
In the UK, the site's black members get 98.9 percent of the messages white members do. In Japan, 97.8 percent. In Canada, 90 percent.
However, the author is not considering here that blacks in UK and in Japan might get a boost for being less common and, thus, the "exotic boost" might also play a role, and not necessarily a lack of racism or racial preferences.

6. Beauty Operates on Richter Scale

There is little difference between a 1 and a 2.
But at the higher end, the difference is bigger. A 9 is intense, but a 10 can rupture the world.

7. Beauty Matters... But Exponentially More For Men

Men and women also experience beauty very differently, with men generally more "smitten" by female beauty.



Women are the red curve, men are the black curve
Female beauty also works more in contexts outside of dating, with attractive women being sought after in the workplace as if they were on a dating platform.

8. Copy-Paste Is Not As Effective, But Overall Works

The copy-paste strategy underperforms by about 25%.
But measuring by replies received per unit effort, it's many times more efficient.

9. Big Data Beats W.E.I.R.D Academic Research

Rudder says that much of scientific research might be weaker than most people realize because it's based on small batches of students -that's why the replication crisis maybe?-.

Weird stands for white, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic.

But I think Rudder took it a bit too far when he said that research is not generalizable because different places have different moral standards.
There is instead a surprising homogeneity of moral standards among people.

Big Data Will Soon Provide Longitudinal Data

Longitudinal data is data based on research that spans many years, and possibly over a lifetime.

Big (digital) data is increasing its reach as the "birthdate" of the Internet and social networks move farther and farther back.

MORE WISDOM

- **Average gay men don't have more partners**

It's at the extreme that the stereotype is true: promiscuous gay men have lots more partners than promiscuous heterosexual individuals.
The top 2% of gay men have 28% of the sex.

- **Common friends on social networks are a great predictor of relationship longevity**

In the very beginning, the best predictor is "how often the partners visit each other's profiles".
Later on it's the overlap of common friends.

- **National lines might not matter much in culture and attitudes**

The author says that around certain topics the biggest difference is whether people live in cities or in urban areas.

For example, we can see a strong divide between urban and rural population when answering the question "should burning the flag be illegal".

- **Predicting power of big data and AI is only growing**

Just from people's like alone a group of researchers could figure out:

- gay or straight 88%
- lesbian or straight 75%
- Caucasian or African American 95%
- a man or a woman 93%
- Democrat or Republican 85%
- a drug user 65%

Thought personally I didn't find that very surprising.
Give me a certain number of likes, and I could probably tell you the same with a relatively high degree of accuracy.

CRITICISM

- **All numbers are averages of dating apps**

Never forget that.
The book doesn't stress it enough.

People behave differently in real life, and you can always be the exception to any "general rule" or to any "averaged-out behavior".

- **Some analysis needed more depth, and the author jumped to conclusions**

The author seems to suggest "beauty doesn't matter" when it comes to dating.

He cites data based on the rating people assigned to a romantic date, and the fact that the rating was not strongly correlated to people's attractiveness rating.

BUT… The post-date rating doesn't say much about people who kept on dating, had sex, and/or entered into a relationship.

How people evaluated the date on OkCupid tells us little and might even be misleading.
There was not enough insight to make the huge leap the author took.

- **Some overly simplistic "predictions"**

The author says that a project that analyzes constitutions and government performance can help emerging countries choose better constitutions.

To me, that's really simplistic.
First of all, there are only 900 constitutions drafted since 1787. Second, the constitution might probably be such a small detail in determining a country's prospect that, well… That was quite simplistic.

- **Sometimes feels "politically correct"**

The author being surprised or half-shocked that race matters felt a bit disingenuous.

- **Some fluff, opinions, and long unneeded lists**

The author says that quirks make people more successful and then says it's also true for supermodels, like Cindy Crawford doing great when she stopped covering her mole, and Linda Evangelist had "severe hair".
But that felt like random -and not necessarily correct- observation at best, and poor correlation at worst.

The audio version also listed endless table entries, which I felt was unneeded.

- **Slight (unneeded) bashing of normal science in favor of big data?**

The author righteously promotes big data and why can lead to more accurate or new insights.

And he's totally right.

Yet, at times, it feels like there isn't enough credit given to academic research.
In my opinion, the author went too far.
And you can quickly confirm that by reading this review: much of the insights of "Dataclysm" only confirm what "standard" science already told us -men like women of reproductive age, some men deny that reality to themselves, women are pickier than men, etc. etc.-

PROS

- **Great insights**

Just one single "pro", but don't underestimate: there are some new insights here on dating dynamics that make "Dataclysm" a true gem.

REVIEW

Dataclysm has received some mixed reviews, but I disagree: it's a great book

Yes, there is some fluff here and there and some personal opinions that diverge from the actual data.
But there is plenty of insight, including some new insights you won't find in any other dating book.

Maybe it's not as good and comprehensive as the similar "A Billion Wicked Thoughts", but I learned a lot from both Rudder's book, and blog. I'm very glad Christian Rudder has shared all this data with us.
It certainly helped me to make the website and products better.

Check out the:

- **Best dating resources for men**
- **Best dating resources for women**

Or get the book on Amazon.

Seductresses: Tactics of History's Most Successeful Seductresses (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 April 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"Seductresses" (2004) is a dating book for women which presents and analyzes notable and very different women who had nonetheless one thing in common: they had their way with men.
Prioleau, the author, says that many seductresses were successful in spite they lacked youth or beauty, and they all proved that it's a myth and a lie that women must be demure and feminine to win at life -including with men-.
In this book, Prioleau chronicles the seductresses' exploits while examining what is it that made them successful.

About the Author

Betsy Prioleau holds a Ph.D. in literature from Duke University, was an associate professor at Manhattan College, and taught cultural history at New York University.
She is also the author of "Swoon", the equivalent of "Seductresses", but for male seducers.

SUMMARY

Contents

- Seductress: A Definition
- 12 Seductress "Weapons"
- 6 Seductresses Archetypes: Busting All Conventions
- … Seductresses Follow the Same Erotic Strategies
- Notable Seductresses: Examples
- More Notable Seductresses
- Goddesses of The Future: A Game Plan
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
- PROS
- REVIEW

Seductress: A Definition

Prioleau defines "seductress" as:

> A powerful fascinator able to get and keep the men of her choice, men who are good for her. Rarely discarded or two-timed, she successfully combines erotic supremacy with personal and vocational achievement.

Later on, she says, "seductresses are in fact the liberated woman incarnate" and "futuristic women of female entitlement: independent operators, pleasure claimers, terroristas of traditional femininity, and big, classy divas".

That definition, says the author, removes some famous but fake seductresses such as the "eaten and colonized" Marilyn Monroe, Pamela Harriman, and "gofers to male genius" such as Alma Mahler.

My Note:

I'm not necessarily convinced Monroe should be left out.
As much as she seemed indeed lost and dependent, she also achieved much in her life and certainly populated many

men's dreams.
The author seems to favor a definition of "seductress" that is "independent" along with the feminist style and preference, which sometimes means more "masculine" in its expression.
That's cool, seduction can also include those women. But it shouldn't exclude women who don't fit that mold.

Seduction is about men wanting more a woman.
Whether the woman also seeks, craves, or simply also wants an emotional and/or stable connection with those men does not cancel out the seductive charge she might possess.

From more on the specific case of Monroe also see:

- Three types of seductresses

12 Seductress "Weapons"

Prioleau divides the tools of seduction into "physical" and "psychological":

Physical Arts

The physical alone can't hold a man under eternal spell and the psychological side is also needed.
However, the two aren't pitched one against another, and the physical is also important.

- **Dress / ornament**

> Seductresses dressed for parade, with look-at-me excess and over-the-top opulence.

- **Cosmetics / Hygiene**

Except for a possible impact of pheromones, body odor didn't usually do too well in seduction.

> The goddess's votaries steeped themselves in costly spices, gums, and aromatic woods and burned incense to their deity.

- **Setting**

Seductresses arranged their spaces to awe, delight, and fascinate.

To take advantage of the connection between the pleasure of food and the pleasure of sex, some seductresses laid excellent tables and served the choicest, most aphrodisiacal cuisine.
My personal advice is to have fruits, which tend to last longer and have a stronger link to sex.
Also jars of refined butters are good and of course, good wines.

Some of them also had pets including gazelles, monkeys, squadrons of cats, and, in one case, a grizzly bear.

My Note: Watch out for pet smells!
If you have cats, watch out for the smell! Cat owners get used to it, but some houses with cats stink to the high heavens.
I did have a girl with a beautiful Persian cat though and the place always smelled good, so it's possible to do it.

Flowers are also great.

- **Music / Dance / Body Language**

> Women in the business of fascination learn how to hold the floor, to move with grace, style, rhythm, and slam dunk sensuality.

- **Sexpertise**

Many of the world's seductresses were "raunchy sexperts", says the author.
Also, it seems to me, they owned their sexuality rather than being scared or embarrassed by it.

Psychological Arts

Sex originates in the mind, says the author.

- **Obstruction, Difficulty, Anxiety**

> Anxiety is the "food of love"; pain, its spice.

- **Maternal Nurture, Intimacy**

At the same time that anxiety and pain stoke love, men also require "the primal gratifications of the great goddess". "Mother love underpins all desire", says the author.

However, there is a caveat: it cannot be too much, as men also fear engulfment and annihilation from, I suppose, an overbearing female figure.

So the seductresses played the mother role through a balancing act: intimacy, TLC, but also accompanied with *non*-maternal sizzle.

- **Ego Enhancement**

Everyone seeks an ego boost, and seductresses deliver it.

However, there is an important caveat here:

> The lover must be a winner, which explains why the praises of toadies and errand girls never work as their mothers promised. **Only the applause of valued people carries any value**.

This was a very smart observation by Prioleau, and something you need to keep in mind.
The same applies to judge power dynamics, and to leadership, by the way.

- **Conversation, Comedy**

It's a myth that men only love women who laugh at their jokes.
Men also love women who can liven the mood, and be great conversational (sparring) partners.

> Renaissance courtesans studied bel parlare (seductive speech) as assiduously as lute playing and bedcraft and reviled "dumb of mouth" whores.

- **Festivity, Nonrepression**

Men long for the release of social constraint, of being able to let go in ecstatic abandon.

> Seductresses were mistresses of misrule, carnival queens who cast off repressive shackles and declared a public holiday.

- **Vitality, Plentitude, Androgyny**

The "joie de vivre" is the goddess' "yes energy" that gives birth to life -and to heaven and earth-.

And how about androgyny?

Says the author:

> the primordial sex deity personified life energy and totality, including the union of both sexes, seductresses played up their ultravitality, inner plentitude, and androgyny. The lure of gender synthesis, with its "superabundance of erotic possibilities," exerts a potent fascination on the libido.

There are indeed some interesting quotes in the book of men who felt alive with the seductress.
For example, Alexandre Manceau says that "I have laughed more, cried more, lived more than in all the thirty-three preceding them. . . . What a joy!".

- **Impact, Drama**

Whatever her main tool for seduction was, the seductress "souped it up".

Says Prioleau:

> The grandes amoureuses were doyennes of dazzle, showboaters, and scene stealers.

Even love that lasts needs wake-up calls to stave off satiety and boredom.

My Note: More of the seductive qualities

In my opinion, what I've noticed across most of the successful seductresses and that the author did not include in her list:

- **Excess**
- **Skills**
- **Talent**
- **Drive / ambition**
- **Narcissism / self-absorption / Dark Triad / power-hungry**

Some of these women were more rather masculine in their attitudes.

You can see that both in a positive or negative way.

Some were driven, confident, and focused on their life, passion, or goals of personal achievements.

Many of them weren't "family women", but were extraordinary, in one way or another.
It's that something exceptional that made them transcend the canonical traits that women are evaluated on, including beauty, age, and "nurturing qualities".

Some of these women had sky-high self-esteem, with a strong belief in themselves and in their capability.
Sometimes, it was a belief that was objectively nonsense, which is a trait that some psychopaths share (Kiehl, 2014).
For example, describing Jane Digby:

> Throughout old age Jane lost none of her thrill fever and magisterial swerve. After watching a Bedouin sword dance, she said, "If I chose, I could surpass them all in fire and agility."

Some of these women were braggart and dominant.
Germaine de Staël said:

> "Monsieur I understand everything that deserves to be understood and what I do not understand is nothing."

That type of bravado is something that only cocksure, dominant men would say. And men who are probably a bit emotionally insecure of course, but that's also typical of men: women are far more comfortable with the vulnerability of "not knowing", which again tells me this woman was rather masculine in her attitude.
Germaine also bragged of her "body count", which again is a very male thing -and a rather cheap one at that, let alone for women-.
And Louise Lévêque de Vilmorin said that what drove her to write was sexual conquest.

Many of these women weren't just alpha females, but were specular equivalents of alpha men, and sometimes even very masculine in their lifestyle and general attitude. They craved success, fame, and recognition.

Louis Salome' might have been among the notable exceptions here, as her exceptional quality was to give exceptional attention to men (such as Nietzche).
These men weren't used to anyone listening, and caring about their work as deeply as Salome' did, and that made them hooked to Salome'.

And there is one last element:

- **Move within upper society**

Many top seductresses were "socialites", which basically means partying, hobnobbing, traveling, and dating the rich and famous.
You can't be a top seductress and getting the most out of life if you're seducing bums and nine to fivers.

And when they were prostitutes, they weren't prostitutes, but "courtesans", catering to the wealthy and powerful.

You don't need them all

You don't need every single item in the above list.

Says Prioleau:

> Lou Andreas-Salomé, for instance, hated music and cosmetics, Eva Perón lacked a sense of humor, and Martha Gellhorn and Grace Hartigan refused to mother men. Seduction is an art, not a science, requiring different mixes for different men and a fingertip feel for mood, timing, and hidden tastes.

6 Seductresses Archetypes: Busting All Conventions

Some seductresses were beautiful, but some bust all conventions and seduced as older women, adventurers, and with average or even below average looks.

Some of the traits they shared also go against the wisdom of what's attractive, including androgyny, and noncomformity.
And what made them special were supravitality and self-actualization.

The author divides "Seductresses" into 6 chapters with several examples of women that "busted" those myths. They are:

1. **Nonbeauties**: plenty of seductresses were plain, and yet seduced effectively. They knew that seduction and love is an illusionist game of imagination, and went big into all other physical appeals such as dance, gesture, music, voice, settings, and hot sex. A plain or unattractive body might even be an advantage as it shocks the senses while the seductress wins the heart
2. **Seniors**: "age didn't deter seductresses from reeling in the most desired men of their times". To their advantage, they have a fully developed character, confidence, an enriched mind, sexual freedom and experience, maternal mana, status, money, and a what-the-hell closing time joie de vivre. Senior seductresses have faced backlash both from men -who resent their post-reproductive freedom to fornicate like men-, and from women, who see

them as a threat to their hegemony -and reproductive needs-

3. **Intellectuals**: “feminists as diverse as Simone de Beauvoir and Germaine Greer agree that you can’t get a man with a brain. Yet the real manslayers were smart cookies with big mouths”. They did not submerge themselves into a “Great Man”, but pursued their own agenda (note: I only partially agree with this one, some of those women also supported great men while doing their own things, and seldom I felt like they reached the same heights of the best men of their times). Relationships were more among equals, and they were always ready to move on
4. **Artists** (not muses): “rather than decorative, passive, compliant muses, they wrote their own books and lit their own creative fires”. “With typical reciprocity, they delivered as much inspiration as they received”. They were artists and lived in excesses, sometimes trampling many social values such as home, motherhood, honesty, and modesty.

And two “commanda types”:

1. **Governmental leaders**: The Machtweiber -(German for “vamp-politicas”- demolish the satanic boss lady stereotypes, winning men and governing with equal proficiency.
   There are three types:
   1. Absolute monarchs
   2. Divine ordainers who support male ruling
   3. Revolutionary activists
2. **Adventurers:** rakish adventures that most male fear, but that many other men fall for. These are the type of women most likely to desert their homes and neglect their children but, the author says, men fall hard for the women on the loose.

My Note: leaders and adventurers least successful
of the group and based on the proposed examples, the leaders and adventurers seemed the relatively least successful of the group.
Possibly, it was also because they were also the least interested in seducing, and more focusing on living their own lives.

... Seductresses Follow the Same Erotic Strategies

Says the author:

> Just as strikingly, they followed similar erotic strategies. These, I discovered, mirrored the historic ars amatoria.

In truth, my opinion on what they did and which worked differ from the author.
This review will be a mix of the author’s point of view, and mine.

If old seductresses looked at today’s women, says the author, they would marvel at how many rights they have.
But they’d be disappointed at women’s courage today, and their approach to seduction. She says:

> Seduction demands spunk and “daimonic assertion.” “Venus favors the bold!” Next they’d urge us to boost our self-esteem and get high, mighty, and magnificent. And, of course, to discover our genitals (…) Finally they’d advise us to tune out the pretty-power propaganda and dial up the neglected psychological arts. They’d direct us to libraries instead of (or along with) gyms, to acting classes, to metacharm schools—whatever it takes to invade men’s heads again

Notable Seductresses: Examples

There are many historical examples in the book.

I will pick here some of the most significant, giving preference to the ones who:

- Have a picture
- Have a more reliable biography to cross-check the veracity of the claims

Isabella Stewart Gardner

> Yet this homely woman with a sad-sack, lusterless face had a serious “way with men.” Not only did she hook Boston’s prize catch, Jack Gardner, who idolized her throughout their long marriage, but she attracted a permanent Praetorian guard of strapping bluebloods and prominent artists.

Her secret weapon, says the author, was her vitality.

> The rich, stunning Jack Gardner had never met anyone as plain as Belle when his sister introduced them in Paris. But he underestimated her “glorious vitality.” Before he knew it, she’d bewitched him with her quick movements and bright conversation and made him roar with laughter. Defying his family, he dropped out of Harvard and married her on the sly

Indeed, she is not beautiful.
But Wikipedia confirms her husband was an art patron, likely wealthy, and one Boston’s most eligible bachelor. Her husband stayed with her until his death even when the doctor told her she couldn’t have children, and even while she was sick and depressed. So it wasn’t just vitality that bewitched Mr. Gardner. I suspect their common love for art helped.

Prioleau says that her husband remained smitten and supportive even amidst her “flirtatious romps”.
The author lists Francis Marion Crawford among her liasons, a handsome man 13 years younger than her whom she

ensnared with intellect and mother love.
Wikipedia lists Crawford as one of her “friends”.

There is still a museum to her name to this day, build in the style of the Renaissance palaces in Venice, one of her favorite destinations.

Wallis Simpson, 1895-1986

Wallis Simpson in 1936 by Dr. Ghulam Nabi Kazi, on Flickr
Wallis picked the wrong first husband, and after her divorce she “man-shopped, seducing a succession of Washington diplomats, as well as living in China in a ménage à trois with Herman Rogers, who thought her “the great love of his life.”

She left her second husband to marry the future king of England, a relationship that caused many headaches to the royal family.
Wikipedia, referencing her husband’s biography, confirms the author’s claim:

> The King’s desire to marry a woman who had two living ex-husbands threatened to cause a constitutional crisis in the United Kingdom and the Dominions, and ultimately led to his abdication in December 1936 to marry “the woman I love”

And it seems true that prince Edwards had fallen head over heels for her.
Quoting again Wikipedia:

> By the end of 1934, Edward was irretrievably besotted with Wallis, finding her domineering manner and abrasive irreverence toward his position appealing; in the words of his official biographer, he became “slavishly dependent” on her.

Prioleau says that the prince was a lost soul in a prince body, and that he never felt free and alive in his life.
That’s what Wallis gave him: a taste of freedom, irreverence, and life.
She says:

> Her frank country bluntness dissolved pretense, her relaxed style dispelled inhibitions, and her risqué jokes and parodies of the royal family made him laugh out loud.
> Sexually he was reborn. Underendowed and prey to obscure dysfunctions and perversions, he'd never been fully satisfied until Wallis came along with her Fang-Chung Shu and Taoist Kegels.

Prioleau says that started very early, and shook the prince out of his torpor:

> The moment he met her, she cut through the ceremony and protocol and answered his polite inquiry about British heating with a sharp wisecrack: "Every American woman who comes to your country is always asked the same question. I'd hoped for something more original from the Prince of Wales."

That was delivered with a mix of motherly love, something that the prince probably also lacked, and that Prioleaus says was the main ingredient of his ongoing dependence on her:

> But her chief fascination for David was her maternal allure. Famished for parental affection, he basked in her motherly ministrations and affections. On his visits to her London flat she treated him like a favorite son: She plumped his cushions, concocted special highballs, and led him to the kitchen for home-cooked midnight treats. Later she micromanaged his health with the solicitude of a supernanny, bundling him up against the cold

A picture of the two together:

Apparently, the relationship came with the usual showering of gifts, jewels, and all-paid holidays.
Prioleau says the prince remained devoted and supportive even amidst her affairs.

Edith Piaf, 1915-1963

On stage, she sang of broken hearts and men hurting her.
But it was all a ruse.

Among Piaf's secret weapons was her mothering and support of men.
For example, with actor Eddie Constantine:

> During their two-year affair she gave Eddie a total makeover, from gold cuff links to voice training. “She made me believe I was somebody,” he later reflected, “so that I’d become somebody”; “she had a kind of genius for bringing out and strengthening a personality.”

Pauline Viardot, 1821-1910

Viardot’s voice was like a drug for Ivan Turgenev, a Russian nobleman who remained by her side in a lifelong affair.

Mae West, 1893-1980

Mae started relatively late in Hollywood:

> Mae was nearly forty before she began her Hollywood career as a sexpot, four years older than the age-phobic Marilyn Monroe when she killed herself.

Mae had a mother who did everything for her, and allowed to quit school in third grade to pursue a stage career.

Prioleau lists Mae West as one of her examples of “silver foxes”:

> On the verge of seventy she chose a chorus boy from her Vegas “muscleman act” and found “ultimately what every woman wants,” a senior erotic dream. Thirty-three, blue-eyed, and abulge in all the right places, Chester Ribonsky changed his name to Paul Novak to please her and believed God had put him “on this earth to take care of Miss West.”

Wikipedia, listing West’s biography and two newspapers, largely confirms that.
Except that West was 61, not “on the verge of 70”. when they met.

West herself credited her sexual and seductive appeal to status and money, and Prioleau says that “alpha sex appeal” works for women as well.

Lou Andreas-Salomé, 1861-1937

A great example that mind-control level of seduction and looks don’t necessarily go hand-in-hand.

Says Prioleau:

> She was a stout, fiftyish matron who wore no makeup and looked so much older than her age that she’d been mistaken for her lover’s mother.

Yet:

> was one of the leading femmes fatales of her time and all times. More than one man committed or threatened suicide on her account, and Freud's circle went into an electron spin the moment she set foot in his lecture hall.

Salome' was a "late sexual bloomer", and with some of her early relationships she demanded and maintained a "no sex policy".
That changed with time though, and she grew sexual and wrote about sex and sexual dynamics.

Prioleau says that on her last years, half bald and sallow with renal disease, "she enamored a young acolyte who nursed her and devoted his life to sorting her papers".
I couldn't find confirmation for that online, but the author lists a biography of Salome' in her sources, plus a couple of sources that indirectly mention Salome' via Sigmund Freud.

Her secret weapons seemed to be:

- **Intelligence**: more about sounding erudite than actually being effective in furthering knowledge -or any practical application of knowledge-. Her methodology was very much speculation and theory-based (for example, she said through intercourse men and women recovered their "inner bisexuality", and blamed the Madonna-whore dichotomy on men's envy of women sexual superiority)
- **Intellectual curiosity**: probably even more important than her actual IQ, which by itself does little
- **Active, driven intellectual pursuits**: curiosity is rare and highly appreciated by men. But this other side of the coin made Salome' unique. She wasn't just curious, but an active sparring partner as well. She was an active sounding board, providing feedback and criticism, and helping driven men improve their own work
  - Helping men do better work
- **Judge role**: both from an intellectual point of view, challenging men's ideas, and from a personal point of view, holding them to higher standards as men (including when they fell for her)
- **Bonding and connecting**: through her deep, active listening and, I suppose, with her deep conversation that showed how
  - **Making men feel understood**: a consequence of active listening, interest, and bonding

> From the moment he met her, Friedrich felt he'd found the one woman who "understood him as no one else."

I suppose that Salome's deep interest also made men feel cared for, and valued -an aspect of the judge's role as well-.

Also some dynamics that made her so sought after include:

- **Favorable sexual market dynamics**: she was one of the exceedingly rare and few women, and that pushed her *relative* SMV through the roof
- **Triangulation**: she never gave herself to one man, which led to different men pursuing her at the same time, vying for her attention

Cleopatra

Could you imagine a list of seductresses without Cleopatra?

Me neither.

Cleopatra was also a smart politician and strategist, and she started early in cut-throat political Machiavellianism. When she was only 10 her older sister Berenice dethroned their father, and Cleopatra fled with him to Rome where they lobbied, bribed, and groveled for three years until they could secure Roman funds and backing to re-take Egypt. And execute Berenice.

Years later, when she first met Marc Anthony, she “saturated the Near East” with her publicity.
I supposed that pre-framed her as a goddess, so that her staged entrance would have an even stronger effect.
Playing to Antony’s hedonism, she introduced him to world-ruler luxurious lifestyle. Every night, eight dinners were prepared for them, just to make sure the food was perfectly done.

Cleopatra was a master of self image.
Writes Prioleau:

> Her turnout was pure goddess abbondanza. An expert in cosmetics (she wrote a treatise on the subject), she made up her plain face with hieratic glamour and wore see-through Sidonian silks adorned with Red Sea pearl earrings and artfully chased gold brooches. Heady perfumes suffused the palace—a monument to sybaritic enjoyment with vaulted gold and ebony ceilings and soft, embroidered couches.

However, I’d like to stress, she wasn’t just smoke and mirrors and social exchange manipulation.
Marc Antony wasn’t stupid.
Cleopatra commanded an empire, and was also able to negotiate by providing some real value for what Antony cared about: winning wars. And Cleopatra assisted him with 200 ships to fight the Parthian empire.

Cleopatra also made Antony madly ambitious and, Prioleau’s says, feeding Antony with visions of a Roman-Egyptian dynasty.

La Belle Otero

Caroline Otero said to a friend:

> A man becomes yours not the moment you spread your legs, but the moment you twist his wrist.

Otero was a demonic dancer.
Says Prioleau:

> Her pulse ran high. After work she downed massive mounds of corn and chorizo, stripped to her chemise, and danced until dawn with “perspiration running down her thighs.”

And she had the saucy “mediterreanen” character set at *very* extra saucy:

> A fire-breathing sensationalist, she was a notorious troublemonger and short fuse. She sued everybody who miffed her, flung urine at an impudent waiter, slugged a tiresome woman in a hotel lobby,

Also it’s worth noticing here that the author lists an example of mate guarding as a sexually attractive behavior, and I believe that, if done right, she’s right:

> and stomped out of the opera when an escort looked at another woman. “When one has the honor of being with La Belle Otero,” she exploded, “no one else exists.”

More Notable Seductresses

Get the book to learn more about:

- **Tullia d’Aragona**, 1505-1556

> Beauties of the idolized variety—petite, bosomy Botticelli blondes—crowded her chosen métier, the sex trade. But she outstripped them all. Nearly every important figure of the cinquecento fell in love with her, poets lauded her, and the populace treated her like a celebrity.
> With shrewd perspicacity, she niche marketed herself as the "intellectual courtesan" and reached the top of the profession within four years.

- **Diane de Poitiers**, 1499-1566 – she wielded much power via her influence on the king. The younger and more attractive king's wife was jealous, but unable to unsettle her as long as the king lived
- **Veronica Franco**, 1546-1591 – smart networker, poet and writer, and defended and won her own case against the inquisition which accused her of witchcraft. She was the century's leading feminist, but in truth shunned other women all her life (a common thing among seductresses: they might be feminists, but don't really go along with other women)
- **Elizabeth I**, 1553-1603 – "Early on she learned the survival skills of a Machiavella: caution, circumspection, self-possession, deceit, patience, and the art of "answerless answers."
- **Françoise de Maintenon**, 1635-1719 – at 50YO she secretly married the "Sun King" by appealing to the king's religious ardor and to his idealization of pious, religious women. Prioleau says that "she lost her groove to a Madonna game". But she nevertheless pulled off one of the most stunning seductions by an older woman in Western history.
- **Catherine Sedley**, 1657-1717
- **Minette Helvétius**, 1719-1800 -one of the "silver foxes", owner of an influential salon in Paris
- **Catherine the Great**, 1729-1796 – Prioleau says she had lots of lovers, the last one a 23 YO man to her 61 YO".
  She was also adept at politics, seemingly with a feminine approach. An ego massager, she praised loud and scolded in a whisper. Courted consent with erotic ploys: ornate dress, flash on the dance floor, gourmet banquets, amateur theatricals, and liberal doses of laughter and relaxed banter. Rather than direct confrontation and domination, she believed in making "men believe that they want to do what I tell them to do."

- **Thérèse Lachmann**, 1819-1884

Also known as "La Paiva", This one sounded like a true Machiavellian sociopath:

> On her first night in London she landed Lord Stanley in the next box at Covent Garden. He led to bigger game—namely, a Portuguese marquis, Albino Paiva, who fell "madly in love with her" and married her. His wedding night, though, held a diabolic surprise. Spreading her hawk wings, Thérèse told him she'd attained the position she wanted whereas he'd acquired a prostitute. "You go back to Portugal," she commanded. "I shall stay here with your name and remain a whore."

Not verbatim with those words, but Wikipedia, using the "*The Memoirs of Count Horace de Viel-Castel*" as a source, confirms the story.

- **Cora Pearl**, 1835-1886 – she cured her appearances as well as she could, but meanwhile she also remained at heart the tomboy she was as a kid. "A coarse vulgarian with a "sewer of a mouth," she released men from their devil's bargain with the angel of the house. Men enjoyed the ecstasy of "barriers broken down," "organic relief," and "the ease of existence!".
  Cora Pearl ascribed to the belief of "men want to chase" more than they want to kill, and gave them plenty of obstacles to make that chase exciting.

- **Violet Gordon Woodhouse**, 1871-1948 – she got the type of husband that driven men sometimes get: supportive, and devoted. And he agreed to all her requests: free money spending, liberty to pursue her career, and.. No sex. Two men later joined their house, all three orbiting around Violet.
  Prioleau says she worked hard to keep them all, making time for each, giving them gifts, writing love letters, and even feigning illnesses and emergencies.

- **Josephine Baker**, 1906-1975 – dance was her seductive tool of choice. She saw herself as a creature of myth, but it eventually went over her head, she overdid it, and drowned in debt.

- **Martha Gellhorn**, 1908-1998 – her upbringing was perfect to mold a future seductress: the only daughter, received lavished praise and positive reinforcement, and within a household that valued freedom, knowledge,

and nonconformity. And when her private women-only school tried to turn her into a proper “lady”, her parents transferred her. When she married Hemingway she refused to take his name and stay home, and eventually divorced him

- **Eva Perón**, 1919-1952 – she began as a prostitue, and her break arrived when she was finally cast in a soap opera that gave her entrance to the circles of power. Prioleau says that she first ensnared Juan sidling up to him and murmuring “Thank you for existing; I will never leave your side.”
  And she was indeed instrumental to his success.
  With the help of communication experts and imagistas, she re-created herself as an iconic glamour goddess. She said that “the poor liked to see her beautiful”.

- **Gloria Steinem, 1934 –** ,” she writes at the end of “Doing Sixty”: I pray for the courage To walk naked At any age, To wear red and purple, To be unladylike, Inappropriate, Scandalous and incorrect To the very end.

Do Men Still Have More Power Today?

The author thought believes that, when it comes to men and women as groups, men still have more power.

She says:

> Despite equal opportunity sex and babe feminism, guys still hold the whip hand: They have numbers on their side (48 percent women to 43 percent men nationwide); they age better and cling like crotch crabs to their historic prerogatives of the initiative, double standard, promiscuity, mate trade-ins, domination, and domestic copouts.

Goddesses of The Future: A Game Plan

- **Physical arts**: we live in an era of sensory overload, and since seduction is about “one in a million impact”, the modern seductress must find a way to stand out from the pack
  - **Befriend inner savage**
  - **Learn the rules before breaking them**: “letting it all hang out” is not a strategy, and neither is rejecting all knowledge. To find your own way, the seductress first trains seriously, and only then cop her own moves
  - **Eat luxuriously, but in moderation**: “season it up with surprise-me flare and dine again for seduction rather than satiety or displaced lust”
  - **Dress your unique way**: all advertisement sells uniqueness, but it’s a masquerade for cookie-cutting mass production. You must find your truly own way

- **Psychological Arts**: modern culture lies that “knowledge is power, and the lack of it is feminine” The seductress knows the opposite is true, and by Prioleau’s description, the seductress is especially power-aware
  - **Learn “how to be festive”**
  - **Learn the “art of drama”**: after festivity comes pain. Passion needs “vital tension and tourbillion to survive: difficulty, challenge, nips of pain, and a journey through the deity’s whorled and tortuous erotic maze.”
  - **Learn how to soothe and (emotionally) massage**: after the maze come advocacy, support, and encouragement. Seductresses “intuited their lovers’ needs and wounds and salved them with ego strokes and TLC. They had Ph.D.’s in people skills—another lost twenty-first-century art.”
  - **Inner fulfillment**: “Ultimately, the biggest draw on the market will be strong, self-complete supremas. With the spread of conformity and image-driven superficiality, the allure of an individuated woman in full possession of herself and her powers will prove irresistible.”

The Challenges Ahead

Men are one of the roadbloacks.

Why?

Because “seduction riles and dismantles patriarchal domination”, says Prioleau.

America has been particularly hard-hit, and bruised and battered by the gender revolution, men are clinging to “pseudo-Darwinian defenses of male sexual superiority, and a slew of defensive shenanigans”.

And of course, much flack is to be expected by other women as well.

Still, the modern seductress will soldier on, breeze past obstacles, and achieve whatever she wants.

MORE WISDOM

- **Men gain with seductresses**

Albeit the author sometimes seems to take a stance of “women conquering men”, which in turn sometimes seems to suggest a “VS” frame, rather than a more win-win approach, she also says that men do gain with seductresses.

Says Prioleau:

> Unless unrequited passion leads them off a tenth-floor ledge, they achieve their fondest dreams in the arms of a seductress, a goddess to venerate who keeps them interested and ignites their inner hero. She leads them to their best self and restores them to true masculinity

QUOTES

> Her most serious conquest, the ninety-year-old Enlightenment celebrity Bernard de Fontenelle saw her seminude at her toilette by accident and sighed, “Ah Madame, if only I were eighty years old.”

About Madame Helvetius:

> She died of a chest cold in 1800, her longtime companion and backyard “philosopher” Cabanis beside her. At her deathbed he sobbed, “My dear mother!” To which she replied, “Yes, I am. I always will be.” Cabanis, like others, instinctively invested her with mythic dimensions.

On Mae West and Marilyn Monroe:

> Mae was nearly forty before she began her Hollywood career as a sexpot, four years older than the age-phobic Marilyn Monroe when she killed herself.

About Germaine:

> In classic oedipal fashion, she competed with and detested her mother, courting her father.
> “Of all the men in the world,” she wrote in her adolescent diary, “it is he I would have wished for a lover.”

On Grace Hartigan:

> She made one of the faux escapes so common to seductresses. At seventeen she married the first boy who read poetry to her and fled with him to California.

About Rachel Felix:

> she was a passion artist and man lover with a craving for novelty, rapture, and independence. “I am free,” she insisted, “and mean to remain free. I will have renters, but not owners.”

On enjoying food without exceeding;

> Nor did they indulge to excess. Contrary to Messalina-at-the-orgy stereotypes, the grandes amoureuses ate and drank (if at all) in moderation. Cruise and resort advertisements promote a pigout version of romantic dining, Neronian portions and entire bottles of champagne, more designed for Pickwickian syndrome than a hot tussle on a hotel floor.

On perfume beating “body hodor”:

> In scent, though, we’ve finally got it right. After a brief infatuation with body odors, we’re back to goddess basics.

About “La Belle Otero” parents:

> a lovely Gypsy mother and Greek aristocratic father, who died in a duel defending his wife’s honor. Honor in fact was her mother’s least virtue.

Ehehe should serve as an important lesson for men not to provide and white-knight for the wrong girl :).

CRITICISM

Seductress is a bomb of a book.
It opened a new world for me and made me realize that “alpha female” seducing strategy can work.

Also, I criticize great books far more than average ones.

So keep that in mind as you read these cons.

1. Confuses myth with science, and myth with effective strategies

The historical success stories aren’t backed with data and science, but by links to some old mythological figures.

She says:

> Seductresses, I theorize, pack such an erotic wallop because they plug into this ancient archetype embedded in the inherited unconscious of the race.

To me as a critical thinker, that makes little sense.
There is no correlation, causation, or valid explanation that links a seduction strategy’s success, with the pagan folklore of some small, pre-historic tribe.

The author seemed to believe that old myth of some isolated and random tribe found a way to change all of human nature:

> Memory traces of this ancient female cult could well be scored deep in the male libido.

I guess she meant “sTored”.
And:

> Their superiority in love, their absolute sway over men, is hardwired into the human DNA.

How exactly does myth become “hardwired”.
Well, the author first quotes “historians” who “speculate” that the cult of goddesses lasted 25.000 years, much longer than “patriarchy”-backed male gods.

And, based on that long cult of goddesses -which is actually not long at all in evolutionary temrs-, it got “embedded” into the male psyche.

How does that work?
She says:

> Inconceivable as this may sound, it makes perfect sense to mythologists. Archetypes, they say, never vanish from a culture but work stealthily and subversively beneath the surface, especially on the libido.

Yeah, “mythologists”.
Mythologists maybe know squat about how evolution actually works.
And this is not how species -minds included- evolve.

Furthermore, even if, *even if* minds evolved that way, I’m pretty sure that there were as many different myths of either male or female goddesses as there were tripes.

2. Rejects solid evolutionary psychology principles without providing any valid criticism

Says the author talking about the “Madonna-whore complex“:

> (…) the Madonna-whore fiction. This old chestnut won’t go away. Biobehaviorist Richard Wright still warns darkly that the dichotomy between the domestic angel and the quick-trick Jezebel is “rooted firmly in the male mind”.

But you can’t simply say the Madonna-whore doesn’t exist and ignore all the bountiful evidence, including real-world observation of common male experience, that it *does* exist.
Maybe you can say that some men are exceptions to the general rule, and with that, I’d totally agree.
But as a general tendency, the Madonna-whore dichotomy is very real, and the author only loses in credibility when she flatly denies it without real arguments.

3. Sometimes passes rumors for facts

The author writes of La Paive that “when she died of a stroke at sixty-five, Guido was so devastated that he bottled her body and stashed it in his closet, where his second wife discovered it bobbing around in a vat of alcohol.”

However, Wikipedia marks that story as “according to legend”.

4. Sometimes exaggerates -lies / mistakes ?- about facts or ages

The author says that Mae West was “on the verge of 70” when she became involved with an athletic dancer on her show.
But Wikipedia says Mae was 61. Still quite something considering he was 30 years her junior, but… Why lying about age? It makes people distrust the author as a reliable source.

One source was also, in my opinion, misquoted.
The author says that evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey F. Miller” believes men have always preferred magnificas over mere lookers with low waist-to-hip ratios”.
I’ve read quite a bit from Miller, and the above quote sounded like twisting Miller’s theses. Miller merely said that

minds matter, a lot, and that seduction is a way of parading a functioning mind.
But he never said or implied that waist-to-hip ratio doesn't matter, and he never made any rank of what matters most.

5. Sometimes exaggerates or romanticizes about some women's achievements

Take this one as an example:

> Although most of Émilie's work has been lost, she wrote the definitive book on Newton during this time and a three-volume study of Leibniz that earned her an international reputation as one of the leading minds of her time.

The way I see, you don't become a leading mind of anything if all you're writing is about other people's lives and discoveries.
Leading minds advance into new territory, and do not waste time on other people's biographies.

I felt the same way several times when the authors discussed these women's achievements in philosophy.
I did agree with her that many of these women were pursuing their own interests and agenda, but I disagree that they achieved the same heights as the best men of their era.

6. Unscientific approach, conjectures, or random opinion from science writers passed as proven facts

Write Prioleau:

> As recent studies demonstrate, our female ancestors showed no innate preference for home, stasis, and monogamy but were "promiscuous appetitive roving diplomats," avidly carousing and glutting their inordinate orgasmic demands.
> Through comparison shopping and plural partners, they gained tangible benefits: more and better sperm, social leverage, and increased resources. With time, dominant males usurped this female advantage.

I couldn't find any recent study that "demonstrate" that women were promiscuous and then somehow turned monogamous -or that they were more so than men-.
I did find though an article using the author's exact keywords published in a newspaper by a "science writer".

Unluckily, the above quote shows a lack of understanding of not just evolutionary psychology, but of basic power dynamics that are the natural consequence of innate biological differences.
Anisogamy and the different levels of parental investment for men and women aren't up to debate, and they tell us that women, on average, have far less to gain in carousing and sleeping around as compared to men.

In another passage talking about some old statuette, the author says that "none of them approached the Darwinian 0.7 hip to waste ratio".

But how does she know that those old relics represented human-wide standards of beauty? For as far as she knows, they might have been examples of unattractive women. Or simply the preference of a single man.
And she adds:

> Prehistoric humankind never set any value on the dumb beautiful female ideal. Zombie babes wouldn't have excited them either.

That's baseless speculation.

7. Feminist agenda of female “superiority” tarnish the author’s credibility

Besides the old folklore that the author expects to have changed human nature, it also feels like the author’s feminist agenda of female superiority might get in the way of the dispassionate analysis that I prefer.

For example, says the author:

> To patriarchal dismay, women’s sexual plumbing wasn’t designed for monogamy and single-family dwellings. Sexier by a mile, they outorgasm, outlast, and outpleasure men and, left to their own devices, gallivant like their nearest cousins the bonobos, stud shopping and sating their eternal-climax machine.

This feels like a nonsense feminist drivel.
Humans are not fully monogamists, we know that.
But the gender that has the highest parental investment gains more from monogamy -and, in humans, that is the female-.

8. Sometimes animosity towards certain men perspires

For example:

> So when we swallow looksist propaganda and sink all our resources into beautification, we’re accommodating nervous half men who want to divert us from sexual empowerment.

I understand that it can be unnerving that men -or women, for that matter- might generally prefer certain features over others. And that judging disempowers the receiver. But lashing out against the judge is not the most effective answer.

9. Empowered... Or Failure?

We might argue that some of these examples of female empowerment actually failed at life.

Cleopatra for example was presented as the genius mastermind that controlled much of the ancient world.
Yet, she committed suicide in her 30’s, leaving her children at the mercy of her enemies.

Also read:

- **Don’t believe the historical hype**

10. Empowered or... Mentally Unstable?

Of Germaine:

> A disciple of the roiling boil school of love maintenance, she subjected this handsome lady-killer to a perpetual crisis of death threats, panegyrics, recriminations, and fourth-act scenes.

And when her husband left:

> She bombarded him with tragic letters, while simultaneously cultivating two other suitors who’d “fallen madly in love with her.”

That doesn’t seem to me like the type of woman that a mentally healthy, driven and high-quality man would keep around for long.

11. Empowered or... Childish Narcissist?

Some of these women seemed entitled narcissists, and in a rather childish way.

Take Rachel Felix for example:

> Rachel, a flagrant self-adorer, emblazoned an R on every surface, and stenciled RACHEL on the wall of a gold and white salon surmounted by panels of the nine muses.

I think the author would consider "Mama Gena", author of "*Pussy: A Reclamation*" a contemporary seductress.
To me, she seemed a lunatic narcissist. I would never consider a woman like that for a role in my life. BUT, that being said, that's not to say some men wouldn't. And Regena also found a rich man who was willing to marry her and support her.

12. Empowered or... Creepy?

Check out this seduction:

> Her stepson, Bertrand de Jouvenel, was so awed by the author of Chéri (the story of an older woman's seduction of a young man) that he trembled uncontrollably at their first meeting. Now, on the beach in Brittany, he trembled again as Colette sidled over and placed a practiced hand on his wet back. Later she cornered him in a stairwell and deflowered him, beginning an affair that lasted five years (…) he was 16

I'm going to admit it first:

If the individual taking action was a man, I wouldn't think it was that creepy.
BUT it's a fallacy to expect men and women should be held at the same standard. And the above would be creepy for a man… And it's even creepier for a woman.

14. Empowered or... Abusive, with pussies of husbands?

One of the issues I see with some of these seductresses is with the men they end up.

Just to be sure, not all of them were low-value or poor-quality men.
But some seemed to be.
Some were power-clueless men, who accepted abusive behavior from their women.
For example:

> Once the lovers jumped from a carriage on the way back from the theater and let Ephraim ride home alone; another time they bolted for a two-week "honeymoon" in Paris and abandoned him in a Liverpool jail to serve out Frank's unpaid debt.

"Ephraim" was Frank Leslie's husband, and he endured that as she brought her lover in the house.
I'm not a big fan of alpha male / beta male categories, but that sounds a lot like hyper-submissive, beta-male-type behavior.
Or, at the very least, with a near-zero power quotient and *extremely* clueless about power dynamics.

- **Blames (lack of) female orgasms on civilization**

The author says that orgasm was never a problem before civilization, the proof being in women's "souped-up" sexual anatomy.
I think that's an oversimplification.

PROS

Groundbreaking approach to female seduction.

REVIEW

“Seductresses” is a little gem of seduction and power dynamics.

There many items under the “criticism” list.

And they’re there because I believe they’re valid points.
But if you know this website, you also konw that I usually have more criticism for the great books, than for the average ones.
And that’s becuase great books and resources are like a golden cave. However, sometimes you need to filter and break the rocks to get the full gold.

This book might be that gold cave.

Why?

Because “Seductresses” analyzes some of the most and systematically overlooked “exceptions” to successful female seduction.
Women who weren’t beautiful, young, or feminine, and still had men chase them and do their bidding.

I agree with the author that these high-powered female exceptions are sometimes reviled, scoffed at, and generally downplayed and overlooked because of the sexual power dynamics at play.

What are the power dynamics at play?

Well, often, both men and women have a manipulative interest in ignoring or downplaying the “alpha” female strategy of seduction.
Namely, women resent the high-powered competition they cannot match, and most men resent the inability to match and pair up with the alpha female. Plus, most men generally gain when women are generally meeker and unassuming.
Also, generally, as a culture, society, and even species, people generally gain when the woman is a good stay-at-home mother. Something that the seductresses often were not.

However, the “alpha seductress” strategy does indeed offer a valid alternative for some women who have the skills, talents, and attitudes to pursue it.

How well and with whom it works was not explored in the book.
For that, check out Seduction University.

Also see:

- **Best seduction resources for women**
- Sexual success as an exception to the rule

https://thepowermoves.com/underdog-dating
Or get the book on Amazon.

Mating in Captivity: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 April 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Mating in Captivity (2017) deals with the interconnection between intimacy and sexual dynamics in couples.
Esther Perel, the author, states that eroticism within couples teeters -or suffers- between two opposites: the need for security, which nudges us towards committed relationships, and the need for adventure and excitement, which is the bedrock of eroticism.

Contents

- Key Ideas
- SUMMARY
  - The Two Opposite Needs: Intimacy/Eros Paradox
  - The Intimacy/Eroticism Paradox Only Applies to Some Individuals
  - Sexual Excitement Requires Abandon – and some selfishness –
  - The Feminist Challenge: Sexual Arousal Might Need Some (Male) Aggression
  - The Male Challenge: Accepting Sexual Cravings for Submission With Dominatrix
  - Accepting Natural Flow, Letting Go of Efficiency
  - Vulnerability And Dependency Are Required for Good Intimate Sex
  - Sadomaso & Dominance Can Be Overcompensation
  - Acknowledge "The Third" to Strengthen Relationships
- QUOTES
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Key Ideas

- For some people, there is a paradox between wanting intimacy and closeness, but losing sexual attraction when they lose their separateness
- Sexual excitement and enjoyment require a minimum amount of selfishness and "ruthlessness"
- For a great erotic life in the relationship, we must accept the dark side which includes aggression, power dynamics, and attraction for others

SUMMARY

About The Author:
Esther Perel is a couple therapist, author, and speaker.
I haven't found much about her academic background, and what type of therapy she focuses on.

The Two Opposite Needs: Intimacy/Eros Paradox

> Love rests on two pillars: surrender, and autonomy. Our need for togetherness exists alongside our need for separateness. One does not exist without the other.

Now the problem is that with too much distance, there is no connection. But too much merging (can) harm sexual tension and attraction.
"Eroticism requires separateness", she says, and "eroticism thrives in the space between us and the other".

Perel says that "modern romance" tells us that it's possible to have both security, and excitement.
But the author seems skeptical on the issue.

A similar paradox takes place in long-term relationship, where the opposing needs are commitment and freedom.

The author says that these are not "problems to solve", but paradoxes to manage.

The Intimacy/Eroticism Paradox Only Applies to Some Individuals

Well, to be clear, she says that "for some of us, love and desire *are* inseparable, but for many more, emotional intimacy inhibits erotic expression".

For the latter group of people, what makes a great intimacy inhibits sexual desire.

Stop looking at a relationship to satisfy all your needs

Many people today look at relationships to get all their social needs met.
But that's the wrong approach, and besides your relationship, you should probably also have colleagues, friends, and various social circles based on your passions.

Sexual Excitement Requires Abandon – and some selfishness –

The author talks about a man who feels that intimacy means worrying and caring about his partner.

But, says the author, "sexual excitement requires the capacity not to worry, and the pursuit of pleasure demands a degree of selfishness".
Almost an ability to be ruthless, says the author later on.
Some people are so absorbed with the well-being of their partner, that they can't allow themselves that minimum requirement of selfishness.

The female partner of this man compounded the issue by dropping all her activities and seeking more one-ness and union.
When the couple followed the author's suggestion to create some more separateness, the couple grew stronger.

This is another paradox, to merge, while in total self-absorption to be inside another, and inside ourselves at the same time.

The Aggression Ingredient of Sexual Eroticism

When we generally mute our "darker" side of our personality, we lose out on eroticism:

> When we confuse assertion with aggression, neutralize otherness, adjust our longings, and reason away our hostility we assemble a calmness that is reassuring, but not very exciting.

The author instead recommends containing, and *integrating* our aggression rather than eradicating it.

She says:

> Aggression, as a human emotion, cannot be purged from human interactions. Especially not among those who love each other.
> Aggression is the shadow side of love. It's also an intrinsc component of sexuality and it can never be entirely excised from sexual relationships.

The author then goes on to present a few case studies of men who suffered from "doormat syndrome", such as, who were too submissive out of fear of showing any negative emotions.

The Feminist Challenge: Sexual Arousal Might Need Some (Male) Aggression

Sexual dynamics are politically incorrect.

The author says that arousal feeds on aggression, power imbalances, and domination.

American men and women, shaped by the egalitarian ethos of the feminist movement often find themselves challenged by these contradictions.

That's a challenge for some feminists -and some men- who fear that playing with power imbalances within a sexual relationship of two consensual adults risks overthrowing the respect that is essential to human relationships.

The author says that feminism and egalitarianism were a step forward, but that they brought some unintended consequences:

> I do believe that the emphasis on egalitarian and respectful sex purged of any expression of power, aggression, and transgression is antithetic to erotic desire for men and women alike.

I agree with that.

The author goes on to describe the case study of a successful career woman who struggled with her erotic turn-on of submitting to a dominant man.

The Male Challenge: Accepting Sexual Cravings for Submission With Dominatrix

For men who enjoy being sexually submissive, it's probably even more challenging.

She says of one of his clients:

> Marcus is a classic type-A man (…) The word "power" is attached to many of his activities (…), and in his free time, he likes a good spanking.
>
> With a sexually powerful woman, he gets a rest from having to be in control.
>
> Marcus fears surrender as much as he craves it (…) his fantasy permits a bounded passivity, a safe but masked return to the mother's arms.

However, the author says that the freedom to be submissive is the ultimate power expression:

> To my thinking, being able to play with roles goes some way towards indicating that you're no longer controlled by them

From my end, I would advise men who enjoy this to:

1. Keep it under wrap (don't say it to other people)
2. Avoid becoming dependent on one single dominatrix (the law supply/demand and dependency applies to this realm as well: the more options you have, the less needy and dependent you are to a specific individual)

Accepting Natural Flow, Letting Go of Efficiency

Perel says that the Western world prides itself on efficiency and hard work.

But eroticism is inefficient, it squanders time and resources, and “work doesn’t work, trying is always trying too hard, eroticism is an imaginary act and you can’t measure it”.

> We glorify efficiency and fail to recognize that the erotic space is a radiant interlude in which luxuriate indifferent to the demands of productivity.

I agree with this, and that’s why I was critical of what I had labeled as the “geek” approach to female orgasm by Tim Ferris.

Vulnerability And Dependency Are Required for Good Intimate Sex

The author takes on the “hook-up culture” of some campuses.

She says that it might not really be “genuine liberism” and open-mindedness, and wonders if the “hit and run sex” is a defense against sexual discomfort -getting drunk to have sex-, and a fear of vulnerability and dependence.

This chapter a bit more opinion-based, the case study is an interview with a friend’s daughter.
It’s interesting, but I wonder if the author has ever come across attachment styles, because she seems to be describing avoidant behavior.

Sadomaso & Dominance Can Be Overcompensation

> Darrol’s wife complains: he cannot even decide on a restaurant, and he wants to tie me up? What’s that about.

The author says that her patient’s difficulties in asserting himself are remediated in his domination fantasies.

Also read:

- **Leadership in dating and sexual dynamics**

Acknowledge “The Third” to Strengthen Relationships

“The Third” is anyone who is attractive outside the relationship.

Couples who live pretending they are not attracted to anyone else are often lying to their partner, or even lying to themselves.

For those who live in a fantasy without “thirds”, the admission of a third, even in fantasy, can be shocking.
As in the Stanley Kubrick movie, that the author references:

However, albeit this is a good example of “the third”, I feel that Kubrick’s example is neither the most realistic, nor the most common.
Rarely the simple sight of someone can be as powerful as Kidman describes.

The author says that knowing, or joking, about “the third”, or about attraction to others, is a way of “accepting the third”, which in turn weakens its power.

Says the author:

> When we validate one another’s freedom within the relationship we are less inclined to search it elsewhere. In this way, inviting the third goes contain its volatility, not to mention its appeal.

This is something I’ve often done with former partners, talking or joking about whom they find attractive. However, in my experience and contrary to what the author seems to suggest, some women who want commitment will not appreciate that talk about “the third”.

Physically Inviting The Third

This example was really good.

To many men, allowing a spouse sexual freedom means “being a cuck”.
Yet, to some men who don’t care, or who have higher priorities, it might not matter much what she does.

Or, as in the author’s example, it can be a way to keep an attractive partner.
And albeit that might show neediness and weakness, it’s not necessarily so, and it can be win-win as the man keeps staying with someone he likes.

QUOTES

> When intimacy collapses into fusion it’s not a lack of closeness, but too much closeness that inhibits desire

When demands for intimacy turn into coercion:

> Demands for intimacy when taken too far can resemble coercion.
> I see couples that demand admittance to their partner’s interiority, as if they are entitled to unrestricted access to the private thoughts of their loved ones.
> Intimacy becomes intrusion, rather than closeness.
>
> Intimacy with an injunction, “you have to listen to me”, “take care of me”, “tell me you love me”.

A funny skit, but also a reminder that good listeners -and maybe therapists- shouldn’t jump to conclusions in feeding people what *we* think they want to say:

> It makes me feel like… Like a slut, I ask her? No, I don’t think there is anything wrong with being a slut, I’ve been a slut for a long time, it just makes me feel less desirable.

On men grossed out by birth:

> I know it’s supposed to be this magical moment, the miracle of life and all of that, but no one seems to want to acknowledge that watching his wife give birth can be gross

On gay strategies for pick-up (might explain why so many gay men brag about “turning” heterosexual men: they’re being conned themselves):

> These days I only play straight when it helps get me laid. Luckily for me, so many gay men get off in turning a straight man that I get laid all the time.

CRITICISM

The book has some great concepts.

Yet, there is one major issue that permeates large chunks of the book:

Yet another cultural determinist, tabula-rasa feminist who ignores science and logic

Sometimes I almost feel bad being so direct and strong in my criticism.

Yet, I don’t know how else to put it.

It’s either I cushion it out of politeness and just so that nobody might think I’m confrontational or… I say it how I

feel.

By now I've seen so much feminist-based and tabula rasa-based nonsense written by self-styled "experts" that I'm starting to feel isolated in this small minority camp that upholds proper logic and reason.

Just one quote as an example:

> Gender differences and their ensuing taboos and prohibition have long been viewed as categorical imperatives, biologically rooted, and therefore immutable.
> Feminism showed that these undisputed truisms and characterizations were in fact social constructions that reinforced a long-standing gender order that obviously favored men.

"Feminism showed"… ?

How's that supposed to provide any evidence?

The author fails to even note that there indeed are some important, proven, and even obvious biologically-rooted differences between men and women.
Does it mean that they are insurmountable, or that one gender is "inferior", or that any single individual can never be the exception?
Of course not!
But there *are* biological differences between genders.

Another staple of feminist obtusity, the author also negates -or fails to understand- the evolutionary basis of the Madonna-whore dichotomy, ascribing it instead to "patriarchal society".

And yet another one is when the author conflates the value/request/caring for fidelity as a "mainstay of patriarchal society".
Just for the record, fidelity is about ensuring paternity, something any sexually-reproducing animal who invests in his offspring cares about.

This is a huge bias that calls into question much of the book's theories and conclusions.
I highly recommend the bias section of this article on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Weak on Evidence

There are plenty of therapists who have written books.

Some of them, have been enlightening. And some therapists did seek a more evidence-based approach either within their practice -see Shirley Glass– or within the existing literature -see Shawn Smith-.

Now, I believe that science is only one of three pillars of knowledge.
Still, if you wanna make claims as an authority, it's an important pillar. The author's references sometimes seemed weak to me.
There are no studies quoted, but there are plenty of references to "psychoanalyst Steven Mitchell", "motivational speaker Anthony Robbins", "Italian historian Francesco Alberoni", "Proust", and a host of other psychoanalysts.

It doesn't seem to cross the author's mind that what people say or think doesn't carry the same validity of scientific evidence.
She says that "feminism" proved the biological fallacies wrong. And she lists the "collective work of philosophers and clinicians" -Focault was one of them- to overturn our understanding of sexual fantasies.

The Evidence is Biased, Scientific Method Be Damned

Sometimes it feels like the author doesn't grasp some basic concepts of the scientific method.

For example, she says:

Breakdown of desire appears to be an intentional consequence of the creation of intimacy. I can think of many couples whose opening line in my was "we really love each other, we have a good relationship, we don't have sex".

So the author extrapolates that the problem is very prevalent.
However, she cannot draw any conclusion on her sample, because she only gets the couples who have that intimacy/sex issue, but rarely does she get the couples with *both* intimacy and good sex life.
So she lacks the ratio between the sample/issue group, and the whole population. In simpler words, her sample is highly biased (self-selection bias) and you can't draw population-level conclusions from it.

Very Freudian / psychoanalytic

While that's not necessarily a "con", Freud and the psychoanalytic approach tend to be un-scientific, so when it goes too far, you get into the realm of heavy speculation.

The author sometimes presents those speculations as facts.
For example, she says that "all desires to dominate or submit have their psychological roots in the fact that we were all once little children with big parents".

And when she seeks to go to the root causes of some patients' issues, her main tool for analysis and solution is also very Freudian-style: looking for childhood patterns, issues, and traumas.
She ascribes all sexual international tensions of her case studies to childhood, and she says that "it takes some psychological sniffing to spot them", but it never dawns on her that "psychological sniffing" might not uncover existing childhood issues, but completely make them up.
All too often psychoanalysis becomes an exercise in storytelling, connecting dubious dots that might otherwise be unconnected.

Is This Old Wisdom In New (Misleading) Packaging?

A good chunk of self-development content is new authors repackaging old wisdom.

I think what the author is talking about might not be a self-standing "new" concept, but a consequence of the player-relationship continuum, plus the attachment style personalities.

Such as:

It's the more player-like personalities, more often men, who experience the loss of attraction and eroticism within committed relationships.

And, with attachment styles, it's the avoidant personality that loses attraction and grows restless when intimacy increases.

The author might not so much describe a general model that applies to the whole population, but a valid model that applies to certain specific categories, as a consequence of their larger personalities.
And that's why the author herself, in spite of her biased sample, says that her paradox only applies to some individuals.

CONS

- **Audiobook narration voice with an accent**

The author narrates her own book, and her accent and voice might or might not be your thing.

- **Bragging**

I had a slight feel of “hear me out how smart I am” while listening to this book.

From the beginning, the author says that “she speaks 8 languages, some she learned at home, some school, some during her travel, and one or two due to love” (and in her bio on her Amazon and website, the languages became nine, and she is “fluent” in them).

In her practice, “she is called to use her multicultural proficiency, as well as her skills as a polyglot”.

To me, it felt unneded, and a bit of a social climb and status power move towards the (largely American) readers. Also, I must question the veracity of that proficiency. I haven’t met a single person who picks up languages just by traveling -unless she was into the “ultralearning challenge“-.

To learn how to brag without coming across as a braggart, read:

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

- **A very “active” therapist**

Reading the dialogues she quotes, Perel seems like a very talkative therapist.

Sometimes she debates blow by blow with her clients, adding or even feeding information to reach certain conclusions -with one client who sometimes strongly rejected her conclusions-, and even imposing her frame.

For example, she tells to a male client after she asked her wife if she is “open to other men flirting with her”:

> I’m not suggesting tit for tat here, but your wife is a very attractive woman. And if you can’t see that, why can’t she hear it from someone else.

That sounded rather strong, I don’t know how I’d have taken that if I were in the client’s shoes.

In another case, she mocks a client:

> I hope the irony isn’t lost on you (…) oh yes, I forgot, there is a double standard

The client might have been demanding a double standard, but isn’t the author herself who says that love is not about rationality?
It sounds a lot like she’s pushing moral judgments on her clients.

- **Some left-wing, libertine opinion presented as “best approaches”**

The author says of a customer that “she never saw her mother naked from when she was three, and never saw her father naked”.

She goes on to explain that we are socialized to keep our pleasure life secret is “part of our socialization”.

But to begin with, I don’t see anything wrong with not seeing your parents naked -as much as I don’t see anything wrong in not seeing my friends naked, so I don’t see why I should see my parents naked-.
And keeping your “pleasure life” secret isn’t just socialization, but pretty much what all societies do.

PROS

Some really deep insights, including the ones listed above.
Relevant to this website:

- S&M can be overcompensation, or felt as overcompensation if the male partner is perceived as low power
- The “let your partner free to sleep around” can be a good arrangement if one has other priorities or doesn’t care much about the sexual aspect

REVIEW

Mating in Captivity is an interesting book with the author’s personal take and opinions on relationships that I felt was too heavy on general speculation and too weak on empirical evidence -and generally lacking any scientific basis-.

First off, lemme list my personal biases:

I had a negative feeling listening to this author, and I created an image of her that was not very flattering. And that has probably affected my review.

Keeping that in mind, here’s a quick review:

Esther Perel is a popular “relationship expert” who’s been doing the rounds in various podcasts, talks, and YouTube interviews.

The limitations of this book are that the author seems to believe that the two genders are biologically equal, and that much of the book is based on observations on a biased sample, opinions, and little science.
Furthermore, the author might be describing larger personality types such as avoidant and “player-type” personalities, rather than the whole population, but the book doesn’t link the two together.

On the plus side, “Mating in Captivity” has some great and deep insights, including the various paradoxes of intimacy and, very relevant to this website, the “overcompensating” component that can be part -or perceived part- of sadomasochism.
Some of that can be eye-opening for many readers.
And I also personally learned something from Perel and will be quoting and referencing her again across this website.

Also read:

- **Best relationship resources**

Or get the book on Amazon

Studies in Machiavellianism (Christie, 1970): High Mach Personality & Research (In-Depth Book Summary)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 April 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"Studies in Machiavellianism" (Christie and Geis, 1970) is the first book to empirically address, test, and explain, the personality trait of "Machiavellianism".
The authors first describe the iterations of tests that led to the MACH-IV, which is today the standard self-assessment tool of Machiavellianism; it then proceeds to review all the studies on Machiavellianism up until 1970, and it ends with an overview of the traits and characteristics of the Machiavellian personality.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
  - High Machs Resist Pressure, Confess Less, and Lie Better
  - High Machs Control the Interactions & Are Sought-After Partners
  - High Machs Outbargain Lows Even Harder When It's With Real Money
  - High-Machs Collaborate More When Collaboration is Rational
  - High Machs Focus on Winning While Lows Let Emotions Get In The Way
  - Low Machs Underestimate People's Machiavellianism (Naive)
  - High Machs Resist Pressure & Experience Little Dissonance, Lows the Opposite
  - High Machs Are Influenced by Rational, Pragmatic Arguments
  - Low Machs Get Lost In Social & Emotional Dynamics ("Encountering")
  - Overview of Research: Mach Traits
  - Can You Learn to Be High-Mach?
  - Mach-IV Scale: Statistical & Academic Considerations
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CONS
- Bibliography
- REVIEW

Key Takeaways

- **High Machs are more socially effective**: win more, take more leadership roles and benefits, persuade more, and are persuaded less. But also manipulate more
- **High Machs are "cooler" and more detached**: high Machs don't become emotionally involved with others, with sensitive issues, with saving face in embarrassing situations, and have little defensive investment in their own self-image or their own beliefs (so they show no dissonance)
- **Low Machs are less effective as social strategists in live interactions**: being more personal and open makes them less effective as strategists in the course of interactions
- **Low Machs might be better judges of individuals**: low Machs are more sensitive to others as individual persons
- The difference between the two is highest when subjects interact face to face with others, when there is latitude for improvisation and the subject must initiate responses, and in situations in which affective involvement with details irrelevant to winning distracts low Mach

About The Authors

Richard Christie was a social psychologist at Columbia University, where he was also chairman of the Department of Social Psychology.

Florence L. Geis was also a social psychologist and active researcher.

Richard and Florence, in the mid-1960s, asked themselves if people who think, agree, and act in accordance with Machiavelli's advice could be grouped into a new and discrete "Machiavellian personality".
To answer that question, they developed a personality measure assessing a person's level of Machiavellianism. After a few iterations, they eventually finalized the MACH-IV test, a twenty-statement personality inventory. Their successive studies showed that yes, Machiavellianism is a personality trait, that it can be measured, and that predicts behavior and attitudes.
The MACH-IV test is now the standard self-assessment tool of Machiavellianism.

High Machs Resist Pressure, Confess Less, and Lie Better

Study: Exline et al., VISUAL INTERACTION IN RELATION TO MACHIAVELLIANISM AND AN UNETHICAL ACT, 1966

Summary:

> During a two-person experimental task the experimenter was called out of the room and a confederate implicated subjects in cheating; on the task.
>
> The high Machs put up greater resistance to cheating than lows, who in turn were easier to sway.
>
> After the task the experimenter interviewed the subjects, ostensibly to evaluate their problem-solving methods, grew suspicious, accused subjects of cheating, and demanded an explanation.
>
> High-Mach subjects looked the interrogator in the eye while denying cheating more than lows (though all subjects looked at the interrogator less than during an innocuous predicating interview) and confessed less often than lows. Highs lied more plausibly (as rated by independent judges) to the interrogator after the accusation.

Notes:

- High-Mach subjects were rated as appearing generally less anxious than low-Mach subjects
- The high Machs were more prone to use the direct glance to suggest that they had nothing to conceal (note: direct glances are an indicator of honesty, so the high Machs seemed to be using it on purpose to deceive)
- low Machs spoke more, almost as if they talked themselves into confession

High Machs Control the Interactions & Are Sought-After Partners

Study: Geis, The Con Game, 1966

Summary:

> The bargaining tactics recorded as subjects played the Con Game were analyzed for their relevance to five hypotheses intended as first steps in explaining how Machiavellians differ from non-Machiavellians in interpersonal tactics.
>
> High Machs appeared to size up the situation and then test the limits of how much they could get away with,

> but not to the point of becoming obvious to others in a position to retaliate.
>
> The evidence for this hypothesis is equivocal, since it consists of strings of directional but not-quite-significant differences showing that high Machs did slightly but not significantly more of nearly everything recorded.
>
> It was proposed that high Machs must have an acute and opportunistic sense of timing in social situations. This sense of timing is probably not based on sensitivity to the other person, or his needs or wishes. It is more likely to be based on a sense of what is the logical next step— that will work— at that point in the social process.
>
> High Machs appeared to initiate and control the structure of bargaining interaction in the group. They were overwhelmingly the dominant, decisive, and sought-after member of the triad. This is the best supported of the five hypotheses. The relevant data represent diverse behaviors, and many were relatively direct measures of structure initiation and control.
>
> High Machs thrive especially when ambiguity obscures the claim of low Machs to fair play arid justice. The tactics they used to achieve the increased success, however, seemed to be flexible, opportunistic adaptations of the same kind of tactics they used in nonambiguous games. It is as if the high Machs took advantage of the general confusion produced by ambiguity to be slightly more Machiavellian than might have been astute when others had fewer distracting concerns.
>
> High Machs appeared unresponsive to personal or ethical concerns of others. Rather, they appeared to depersonalize the social interaction and approach it instead from a cognitive-probabilistic orientation. In contrast, lows appeared to personalize the situation and respond primarily from an emotional-ethical orientation.

Notes:

- When bargaining conditions were made ambiguous, the average difference in success between high and low-Mach bargainers approximately doubled
- Empirically the high Mach tactics worked, while lows, using the same tactics almost as often (1.77 VS 1.14 times breaking coalitions) didn't
  - High Machs who broke coalitions averaged 18 points per game than they'd have gotten otherwise, lows lost 28 points
- **Great man theory of leadership** (Borgatta, Couch, & Bales, 1954) . A consistent finding is that the leader talks to the followers and they to him, more than they talk to each other. It's what happened in the con game: both the low and middle Machs in the triad directed more of their bargaining to the high and more rarely turned to each other, they were more likely to accept the high's offers, and they kept more coalitions with the high
- **High Machs more attractive partners?** It is the contrast in attractiveness as a partner that is relevant to the structure-controlling hypothesis. In fact, "attractiveness as a partner" may be simply an alternative description of the fact of controlling the structure in the group.
- High Machs maneuvered into the most advantageous position by the end of the game more often than either of the other two groups of subjects.
- **Highs tended to make more of the better offers**: this is crucial in my opinion, as it shows that Machiavellians value partnerships
- **High Machs acted powerful even when not powerful, and thus gained power**: In the ambiguous games, when power cards were hidden, all subjects were less dominated by their own power positions, or relied less on them. High Machs disregarded power position altogether. High Machs demanded and accepted exactly as much in low power position— 51 points— as they did in middle or high power. They were apparently quite ready to disregard the official or external grounds for demands, and rely instead upon their ability to influence and control the social process
- **High Machs ignored power positions even to accept low-ball offers, if it was good for them**: High Machs

expressed little concern for fairness or justice. They tended to make and accept more 50—50 offers than lows, regardless of their own power position, or their partner's (…) This could be interpreted as an expedient solution to the problem of getting into a coalition that one's partner would be unlikely to break. It certainly disregarded the individual worth of partners in terms of power positions.

- **Low Machs "let reality get in the way" and acted lower power when they were low power**: coalition agreements by low Machs clearly reflected their power positions. "in the ambiguous games social support for demands based on power position was not available. Nevertheless, the low Machs appeared to be striving for justice."
  Note: many negotiations tend to be at least somewhat ambiguous.
- **High Machs kept their word when given explicitly, but broke it when it was implied**: the low Mach kept the coalition as faithfully as the partner he had bound with a promise. In all seven recorded cases of a high Mach requiring a promise of his partner not to break a coalition, the high himself subsequently broke it. It appeared that low Machs were assuming an unspoken rule of reciprocity

And this is what high machs said in the post interviews:

> "I learned to make any coalition, however extravagant, at the start of the game— that gave me insurance of not getting stuck on bad dice rolls. However, I held onto my high coefficients [power cards] in anticipation of going on my own at the finish.

And another one:

> "Use your opponent's greed."

High Machs Outbargain Lows Even Harder When It's With Real Money

Study: *Christie and Florence, THE TEN DOLLAR GAME, 1970*

Summary:

> Seven triads of subjects, selected by Mach score, played a three-man, bargaining-coalition game. The stake was $10, to be divided between any two of the three players in any way they chose.
>
> The high Machs won overwhelmingly.
> No high failed to be a member of the winning coalition.
>
> Lows lost.
>
> The highs were even more successful at outbargaining lows in this game, when the stake was a tangible and sizable reward, than they were in deciding on the division of the points in the previous study.
>
> It was proposed that the real stake made the situation more serious. This would not affect the behavior of high Machs, but it would put lows at a greater disadvantage in bargaining.
>
> The bargaining observations collected in this study were also consistent with the tactics descriptions of the bargaining data from the previous study. Although these observations are not independent tests of the hypotheses, they do indicate that these subjects were consistent over the intervening six months in using the same kinds of tactics.
>
> Again, high Machs appeared to control the structure of interaction in the triad, and thereby the structure of the final distribution of money. Again, in contrast to low Machs, highs played impersonally and opportunistically

Notes:

- The results of the three studies together support the formulation that the difference between high and low Machs in obtaining rewards via manipulation will increase as the seriousness of the situation increases.
- **High-Machs again control the structure of relationships in their groups:** . 6 of the 7 opening statements were made by the high Mach. 5 of these 6 were direct, dollar-split offers. The 6th was good-natured, but not joking "Ok, who wants to make the first offer." The low Mach responded by making the high an offer. In one of the seven triads the middle Mach beat the high to the verbal draw with "How does it start?" This could be interpreted as a request for structure. The high Machs in the game, on the other hand, clearly did not look to others for structure. They provided it, without hesitation, and apparently unselfconsciously

High-Machs Collaborate More When Collaboration is Rational

Study: Christie, Gergen, Marlowe "THE PENNY-DOLLAR CAPER", 1970

Summary:

> A two-person, nonzero sum game, similar to the Prisoner's Dilemma but differing in that there was no dominant strategy, was devised. It was pretested with another player programmed for 80, 50, and 20% cooperative strategies.
>
> The exploitive (red) strategy was slightly favored (57% of the choices) across all programs whether or not the player expected to meet the other player after the game. There was no main effect for Machiavellianism although Ss classified as high Mach did become significantly more exploitive over trials.
>
> The experiment proper used the 80% cooperative program under no-meet conditions. Ten games were played for points.
> The payoff was then changed to either pennies or dollars a point.
>
> Although the introduction of money had no overall effect upon cooperative or exploitive choices, it did significantly affect the choice behavior of high and low Machs. High Machs became significantly more cooperative. It is argued that in this particular experiment, cooperative behavior was more rational.

Notes;

- **High-Machs were less exploitative when cooperation was the best strategy**: It was primarily the high Machs playing for dollars who were responsible for the overall Mach difference. High Machs playing for pennies tended ($p < .10$) to be less exploitive than their low-Mach counterparts but high Mach dollar players were much less exploitive than low-Mach dollar players
- **High-Machs are not always more exploitative, but more rational**: The results certainly do not lend credence to the notion that high Machs are more exploitive, whatever the objective situation. They tend to support the second of the two alternatives suggested, i.e., high Machs are more rational game players.
- **High-Machs seemed to be using punishment to enforce collaboration**: in an environment in which cooperation yielded better results, high-Machs seemed to want to retaliate against the opponent's cheating to get him back to play win-win again. One high Mach said as much, " I used this (black strategy) to start out to provide money for both of us without 'quarrel' and at the end to make a minor 'killing.'
- **In this game, Machs were more win-win**: "Comparing the difference in earnings between low Machs and their others and high Machs and their others indicates that the high Mach's others won significantly more (hypothetically, to be sure) than the low Machs' others"
- **High Machs can be quicker to answer to aggression with aggression**: "The "spiking" or retaliatory behavior displayed after the other player's defections on trials 13 and 18 is consistent with results found in two other games. Lake (1967) used the Hornstein and Deutsch products game (1967) and found that high Machs responded to aggressive behavior with counteraggression to a greater extent than lows."

High Machs Fell Prey of Counter-Aggression: When Anger Prevents Win-Win

This is an interesting off-shoot from the same chapter, but from a different experiment (a doctoral thesis):

- **High Machs counter-aggression can lead to vicious cycles of lose-lose**:
  Wahlin (Wahlin, W. S. "Machiavellianism and winning or losing mathematical games". Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1967) Programmed B to start with a red choice.
  If A made a black choice, the program answered black and remained on black until the subject made a red choice.
  The program answered a red with a red sequence from one to three trials.
  If Player A made a black choice on the last of the red sequence, the program remained black until A went red again, which would trigger off a new sequence of reds.
  This program leads Player A to believe his unseen partner was punishing A for daring to play Red. The program was willing to lower his own gain for to thwart the subject. B could also be viewed forcing A back to black so that to maximize gains.
  18 low-Machs did not fight the program and won a mean of 188.9 points in the 24 trials. The 20 high Machs fought back and lost a mean of 38.8 points.
  This difference is significant at better than the .01 level and the only experiment in which high Machs did not do as well as, if not significantly better than, low Machs.

However, we can't be sure that high-Machs wouldn't have been more careful with money, instead of points, which is definitely a possibility.

This shows that, sometimes, it takes superior emotional control to break vicious spirals and get back to win-win, even in environments where win-win can be best for both.
I find that this situation often replicates in relationships, when one needs to have the courage to stop the quarrel and avert a vicious circle.

High Machs Focus on Winning While Lows Let Emotions Get In The Way

Study: Geis, Weinheimer, Berger, "PLAYING LEGISLATURE: COOL HEADS AND HOT ISSUES", 1970

Summary:

> This study was designed to test **the hypothesis that one of the reasons high Machs win in bargaining is that low Machs invest emotional energy in personal value implications** which arise in the bargaining context, and that these involvements distract them from undivided concentration on winning.
>
> In contrast, **high Machs were expected to be detached from potential involvements** or to control them for the purpose of devoting full attention to a cognitive analysis of the situation and strategies for winning.
>
> A bargaining game designed around legislative log rolling was adapted to minimize intrinsic distractions.
> 54 subjects participated.
>
> The hypothesis was tested by using trivial issues of consequence to none of the subjects in one game, and important issues on which all subjects privately held strong opinions in another.
>
> No difference in winning between Mach groups was expected in the trivial-issues game while low Machs would lose bargaining efficiency when dealing with issues they cared about.
>
> **The results supported the hypothesis. High and low Machs did not differ significantly in the neutral issues game, but high Machs won in the emotional issues game.**
>
> Low Machs lost to the highs by the greatest margin on issues they most strongly endorsed, not those they privately opposed.
>
> The results of the study, together with those of previous studies, clearly support the notion that one of the

> significant advantages of high Machs in competitive bargaining with lows is that the lows become distracted by potentially ego-involving elements in the bargaining context, while high Machs remain detached from such concerns and concentrate on winning.

Notes:

- **High Machs are not more skilled**: The fact that the high Machs did not win in the neutral issues game indicates that, in this sample at least, high Machs were not simply better game players than lows.
- **But they're more effective at using their skills because lows got "emotionally distracted"**: "This finding strongly supports the involvement—distraction rationale. It was proposed that low Machs are influenced by emotional involvements while highs are not, or control them more effectively."
- **More "serious" situations might advantage High Machs**: "It has been proposed in previous chapters that high Machs have an increasing advantage over lows in competitive bargaining as the situation becomes more serious." (…) Clearly, as situations become more serious, their potential for evoking distracting arousal also increases.

Low Machs Underestimate People's Machiavellianism (Naive)

Study: Geis and Levy, "THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER", 1970

The Legislature study (previous entry) tested the rational versus emotional distractibility.
This study uses the same subjects to more directly investigate personal versus impersonal orientations.

Summary:

> The results of this research suggest that Machiavellianism is related to accuracy in perceiving others.
>
> After playing a semicompetitive bargaining game in a seven-man group for 2 hr, subjects were instructed to select one member of the group whom they thought they could size up most accurately, and fill in the Mach IV scale as they thought their target person had previously.
>
> High-Mach subjects saw others as more Machiavellian than lows saw them, and it was the highs who were accurate.
>
> Their estimates of their target's Machiavellianism came closer to their specific target person's Mach V score than lows' did, and the average of their estimates for their targets matched the actual average of their targets' scores on both Mach IV and Mach V.
>
> Although low Machs consistently underestimated their target's Machiavellianism, they did accurately describe high-Mach targets as more Machiavellian than low-Mach targets.
>
> High-Mach subjects made no such discrimination.
> In spite of this possible perceptual accuracy of the low Machs, they were less accurate than highs on most of the derivative measures.
>
> High Machs were most consistently superior to lows in detecting similarities and differences between their targets and themselves. While low Machs did no better than chance in guessing whether their target was higher or lower than themselves in Machiavellianism, misjudged how much or little he differed from themselves in Mach score, and assumed similarity indiscriminately, the high Machs were more accurate in each of these details.
>
> This suggested that low Machs see how a particular other differs from others in general, but are too personally involved to see how he differs from themselves.
>
> In contrast, highs see how others differ from themselves both in general and in particular, but pay little

> attention to how a particular other differs from others in general.

Notes:

- **There are ways of being accurate: through the general population, or through the individual**: as Cronbach noted (Cronbach, 1955), one can be accurate by describing people in general and missing the individual's details, or be accurate for particular target individuals and by perceiving how one person differs from another
- **High Machs more generally accurate, low Machs focus more on individual differences**: The low-Mach judges did discriminate significantly when guessing for higher or lower in Machiavellianism (98 and 86 on average). High-Mach judges, on the other hand did not discriminate between high and low Mach target persons (109 and 107 on average)
- **However, low Machs were not very individually accurate either as they assumed too much similarity**: "They tended to attribute similarity to their targets indiscriminately. Consequently, they underestimated others' Machiavellianism (…) Consequently, they were less accurate for high- than low-Mach targets, and less accurate on the more discriminating items in the scale.
- **Low Machs might be too emotionally involved for accurate individual assessment**: "it is proposed that the low Mach sees where another is in his own right, but is too personally involved to see how the other differs from himself". ". In contrast, the high disregards individual differences between others, but is uncannily accurate in locating others in relation to himself, both in general and in particular."
- **Same results when focusing only on most discriminating items on Mach-IV questionnaire**: "The results are also consistent with Taft's (1955) conclusion that cold, unsympathetic people are more accurate judges of others in general"
- **High Machs were over-chosen as targets for assessment**: the authors speculate why this might be the case, and it might be because of their leadership qualities

High Machs Resist Pressure & Experience Little Dissonance, Lows the Opposite

Study: Bogart, Geis, Levy, Zimbardo "NO DISSONANCE FOR MACHIAVELLIANS", 1970

The high-dissonance condition in this experiment was designed to provide inadequate justification for cheating at the partner's prodding. From a strategic point of view, cheating might not have been the most rational choice.

The low-dissonance condition was designed to provide good (and more rational) justification for cheating.

Summary:

> The results of this study suggest that there are predictable individual differences in response to dissonance situations.
>
> The dissonant situation used was engaging in risky behavior — cheating in an experiment — at a team partner's suggestion. Justification for compliance was manipulated by varying the attractiveness of the partner.
>
> High-Mach subjects were more likely to refuse than cheat when justification was minimal, but they rarely failed to comply when given justification. Further, among those who did comply, cognitive change from before to after compliance was counter to dissonance theory predictions.
>
> Low Mach subjects complied with their partner's suggestion as often as highs, but regardless of the justification available. After complying, they changed their cognitions to support their behavior, as predicted by dissonance theory.
>
> These results were interpreted as reflecting high Machs' emotional detachment from others and their wishes,

> and from the implications of their own behavior as well.
>
> It was proposed that attitude change for high Machs may be predicted more accurately by incentive theory.
>
> In contrast, low Machs' greater susceptibility to emotional involvement with others makes it more difficult for them to refuse the dissonance induction, and their greater emotional investment in maintaining a consistent self-image leads them to restore consistency after complying, as predicted by dissonance theory.

Notes:

- **Highs didn't cheat more *overall***: "The lack of differential cheating between high and low Machs clearly supports Exline's finding (see entry above), and equally clearly fails to support our own prediction that highs would cheat less than lows"
- **High Machs cheated less when there was no good reason for cheating**: see table below Probably they assessed the risks of cheating as too high
- **High Machs cheated more when they had a good reason to cheat**: see table below. Furthermore, of the 3 who refused, 2 had become suspicious of the experiment

TABLE XIII-2

Number of Subjects Who Complied (Cheated) and Refused to Comply, by Mach and Dissonance Condition

	High Machs			Low Machs		
	Cheated	Refused to cheat	Total	Cheated	Refused to cheat	Total
High dissonance (low justification)	5	13	18	6	8	14
Low dissonance (high justification)	11	3	14	7	7	14
Total	16	16	32	13	15	28
	$\chi^2 = 6.22$, $p < .02$.			$\chi^2 < 1.00$, n.s.		

Studies in Machiavellianism, Academic Press, 1970,

- **Low Machs experienced dissonance and changed their beliefs**: Low Machs who refused to cheat in the high-dissonance condition, like those who did cheat, changed their beliefs to support their behavior
- **High Machs experienced no dissonance and didn't change their beliefs**: High Machs did not change their beliefs to support their behavior, and this was true for cheaters and noncheaters alike, and in the high- as well as the low-dissonance condition. High Machs resisted getting into our dissonant situation, and the few who were enticed showed no dissonance reduction in the form of changing their beliefs to support their behavior
- **High Machs decide for themselves, low Machs go along with others**: "The one distinction that seems to account for both the compliance data and the attitude change data is that high Machs decide for themselves what they will or will not do, and then act on their decision, while low Machs can be distracted by personal or emotional involvements which can lead them into agreeing to something they did not decide to do. This distinction can be derived from the detached, cognitive orientation of high Machs, compared to the personal, emotional orientation of lows"

- **Low Machs' choices aren't their choices**: "We propose that low Machs comply by their own choice only in the technical sense of the word. In fact, they comply because the other wants them to.
- **High Machs might be dissonance-resistant because they're pragmatic and with lower morals**: When high Machs comply, they might separate his compliance from endorsement of the activity involved because, as Epstein suggested, high scores on the Mach scale imply pragmatism: telling people what they want to hear, not giving real reasons, etc. Since such principles imply assertions contrary to belief, she argued that high Machs should be able to make counterattitudinal statements without changing their private belief more easily than lows.
- "Our interpretation says the same thing in a different way: high Machs are more detached from the implications of their behavior; they can separate the content of a behavior from the reasons for engaging in it.
- **High Machs might have more of an antifragile ego**: High Machs claim they're less in control of their universe, and that might make them more ready to admit either failure, or their own inconsistency.
- "High Machs appear to be less upset at finding; that they have been conned, have acted foolishly, or made a mistake. Thus, they do not have to try to justify their foolish behavior by changing their cognitions to support it."
- **Low Machs are more influenced by face-to-face pressure**: "Lows cheated as often as highs in the initial study but less often in the replication. In the initial study the pressure to cheat came in a face-to-face situation in which personal involvement would presumably be greater for lows, while in the replication it came via written message. Second, the private decision situation which gave the high Machs time to decide to cheat gave the lows time to decide not to cheat."
  "In the initial study the partner's series of increasingly strong urgings presented a series of opportunities to give in to the impulse to go along with him. If the low Mach once made the decision not to cheat in the replication, he was safe. There was no repetition of inducements."

New refined hypothesis after this experiment:

> high Machs will cheat more with an increase in incentive, and less with an increase in risk; low Machs will cheat more when the inducement is made more personal and offered repeatedly, and less if there are conflicting personal inducements.

Three Ways High Machs Cope With Dissonance

All three depend upon their detachment from others and from their own behavior:

1. They can more easily refuse a request
2. They can comply with a request and separate the choice to comply from endorsement of the activity involved
3. If they do get caught, they can acknowledge it and maintain their initial position anyway ("pragmatists and doing what's expedient is OK" as per Exline's interpretation and/or/+ "detached from own behavior" as per Christie and Geis interpretation)

Dissonance Studies Might Over-Represent Low Machs (and measure low machs)

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISSONANCE RESEARCH:

> One way for a subject to avoid dissonance is to refuse to comply with the induction. Usually at least a few subjects are lost in dissonance experiments for this reason. The data in Table XIII-2 suggest that high-Mach subjects are more likely to be lost in the high- than the low-dissonance condition.

Leon Festinger, the psychologist who first studied dissonance, also contributed to this book.

High Machs Are Influenced by Rational, Pragmatic Arguments

Study: same as above

High Machs can be influenced to change behavior (the 2 cheating experiments above, and Epstein's study).

"This suggested that attitude change for high Machs may be predicted better by the Janis and Gilmore (1965) model of attitude change, which is essentially an incentive theory model.
(…)
"The more reason, incentive, or reward high Machs are given for changing, the more they change. With smaller incentives or greater costs they change less or in the opposite direction."

This is not to say that low Machs cannot be influenced to learn and change their beliefs for rational reasons, but the difference "seems to be that it is peculiarly they who can be induced to change for irrational reasons as well".

Low Machs Get Lost In Social & Emotional Dynamics ("Encountering")

Study: Durkin, ENCOUNTERING: WHAT LOW MACHS DO, 1970

This study sought to replicate a situation in which the low-Machs tendency to get emotionally involved with the people and the social dynamics they deal with might provide them with an advantage.
I found it to be the most theoretically and abstruse chapter of this wonderful book, and less clear, while also achieving less concrete results.

A definition of encountering:

> Encountering is a process by which we change through direct contact with one another. Encountering happens when we open up to one another, that is, when we lay aside the layers of cognitive insulation that usually isolate us within separate (although roughly equivalent) frames of reference.

Summary:

> Twenty-three two-boy two-girl tetrads were assembled and run in the four boy—girl pairs in counterbalanced fashion on the ball and spiral. The average Mach scale score for the tetrad was calculated and the tetrads split at the median.
> The skill level on the task was calculated by taking the average number of quarter turns reached by the ball before it fell off the spiral over the 80 trials each tetrad played. The subjects-by-subjects index of encountering was calculated by taking the difference of differences between the pair scores within each tetrad.
>
> It was hypothesized in this study that low-Mach groups performing on the ball and spiral would be open and get carried away in divergent dynamics through a noncognitive interaction process called encountering asserted to operate under mutual feedback control.
>
> In contrast, high-Mach groups would retain reciprocal cognitive control on the task, thus remaining convergent on their expected individual levels of performance.
>
> Low-Mach tetrads showed more encounter interaction than the highs, but no more skill than the highs.
> The encountering effect was strongest in those tetrads which were both low and homogeneous in Mach scale score. Encountering estimates were found to be statistically independent of skill estimates in the data.
>
> Empirical evidence was reviewed, indicating that cognitive group tasks are mediated by cognitive behavior control while relational action tasks operate under noncognitive mutual feedback control.
>
> The encountering concept has also helped to clarify such terms as empathy, spontaneity, treating others personally, and getting "mach'd."
> The basic messages of this research are: (a) low Machs are encounter prone

> and high Machs are encounter blind; (b) interaction between individuals in the group system sense is noncognitive; and (c) encountering can be empirically measured and theoretically understood as a divergent, noncognitive, mutual feedback process.

Notes:

- **High Machs choose cognitive processes over encountering**: In situations where either encountering or cognitive exchanging can be utilized to guide the interaction process, high Machs characteristically choose cognitive control by which they converge on achieving individual task goals
- **High Machs treat others as cognitive objects**: these data support the hypothesis that lows treat others as persons in particular while highs treat others generally as cognitive objects.
- **Feedback control VS cognitive control**: Low Machs treat others personally through the mediation of feedback control. High Machs treat others impersonally through the mediation of cognitive control.
- **Moving towards others makes lows more susceptible to influence**: (lows) "they actually experience going in different directions, depending on where they must move to meet their targets. The similarity is real, not assumed, because they actually go themselves to where their targets are rather than sending out their cognitions to do the job of knowing analytically."
- **Low Machs' engagement in encountering can impede task orientation**: while lows gravitate toward encounter control in which they get carried away in the process of interaction.
- **Low Machs did "blend" more with their partner**: in this sense (the interaction score of the tetrad) is a measure of how personally the members of the tetrad respond to each other. Accordingly, this interaction score was expected to be larger for low Machs than for highs. This prediction was confirmed.

Overview of Research: Mach Traits

First off, the main question:

When does Machiavellianism provide an advantage?

1. Machiavellianism Wins The Day Under 3 Circumstances

Three situational elements seem to make the difference when it comes to low VS high Machs:

1. **Face-to-face interaction**: "The high Mach's advantage is specifically in interpersonal situations— in getting others to recognize his claims over those of competing low Machs. Low Machs lose by opening themselves emotionally to others, by taking others' needs and concerns as their own. Highs win by being politic. Although they are aware of what the other wants, they do not take his needs personally, but rather use them impersonally, for example, to strike a bargain to their own advantage
2. **Latitude for improvisation**: when there are several options to choose from. It indicates that the structure of the social interaction is open ended, not specifically predefined in terms of content or timing
3. **Arousing irrelevant affect**: the social, interpersonal, and emotional elements that "get in the way" of low Machs' performance

> In 13 of 14 instances in which face-to-face contact, latitude for improvisation, and irrelevant affect were all judged present, the high Machs won more, were persuaded less, persuaded others more, or behaved as predicted significantly compared to low Machs.

And when the tree were not present, or only some were present, the high Machs didn't hold an advantage over low Machs anymore.

The three are conceptually different, but correlated.

"Face-to-face interaction tends to arouse affective involvement which may be irrelevant to the task outcome defined by the experimenter. Improvising a conversation or deciding what to do in an unstructured situation can have the same effect."

2. Cool Syndrome VS Soft Touch

The authors labeled the high Mach attitude "cool syndrome".

They say:

Not only do high Machs remain relatively unmoved by emotional involvement with others, they also appear equally unaffected by their own beliefs and even their own behavior.
When cognitive information is available, high Machs also tend to be unmoved by social pressure or the social consensus around them and focus more on the data.

Low Machs are soft touches. They are more likely to do or accept what another wants simply because he wants it. When it comes to encountering, "low Machs were called "soft touches" partly to reflect their susceptibility to social influence, discussed above, but also to convey the flavor of their style in dealing with others. The low Mach comes to direct contact with another by moving to where he is, and touches others softly in the sense that his contact with another does not violate the position or intentions of the other person."

These two different approaches mediate the difference of personal ethics and morals, as well as professed preferences relative to lying and cheating.
Say the authors:

> Low Machs, though opposed to dishonesty in principle, can be persuaded to cheat or lie given a strong, personal, and repeated inducement, especially in a face-to-face situation in which they have little time to reflect, but must act, either accepting the other's wishes or rejecting them; in these situations external "rational" justifications had little effect on their decisions. In contrast, high Machs, although not opposed to dishonesty in principle, will cheat less if the "rational" incentives are low or the costs (such as the probability of getting caught) are high.

3. High Machs Are Realistic (or Opportunistic)

Low Machs sometimes get lost in "how things ought to be", or "what's fair".

In contrast, again, high Machs concentrate on what is explicit, and how to exploit it.
They appear to aim at achieving the possible and adapt their tactics to the specific conditions of the situation at hand. This general orientation is usually called "opportunistic" by those who deplore it, and "realistic" by more admiring observers.

4. High Machs Are Concerned, But Just Not Emotionally Involved

This is an important note on the "cool syndrome":

> High Machs do not appear unconcerned. On the contrary, they often express more interest and concern than lows. The important difference is that the highs are not personally or emotionally involved in the concerns.

5. High Mach Can Be Fine-Tuned Manipulators

> was proposed (…) that high Machs are attuned to some psychological equivalent of the .05 probability level, that they know how to push the limits of the possible without breaking them. No evidence to date contradicts that proposition. High Machs adjust the amount of manipulation, and also change their strategy in more subtle

> ways when the situation changes.

That the manipulation stops short of being overly obvious is crucial:

> One consequence of the high Machs' cool, cognitive, situation-specific strategy is that they never appear to be "obviously manipulating"— when being obvious would be a disadvantage. (In fact, lows are more apt to appear unreasonable.)
>
> A second consequence is that the highs generally end up with more than others of what everyone was vying for. The high Mach is the one who gets others to help him win in such a way that, in the process, they thank him for the opportunity.

6. High Machs Are Exploitative, Not (Necessarily) Vindictive

While Wrightsman and Cook (1965) found that high Machs scored higher on Siegel's (1956) scale of manifest hostility, the range of situations in which the authors observed them simply did not elicit evidence of it.

The authors' hunch is that they would be more likely to use hostility instrumentally, to achieve some desired goal.

Paradoxically, it's the low Machs who might be more punitive.
Say the authors:

> The highs' cognitive approach makes them exploitive but not punitive in contrast to the lows' greater interest injustice and reciprocity.

7. High Machs Might Be Better Leaders?

The authors also examined "real-life" situations in their classes.

They say that:

> Groups with their highest Mach member as leader did better on their projects than members did individually on course examinations, compared to the other groups' doing worse. Groups with high-Mach leaders somehow got whatever resources they possessed organized and applied to the group task more effectively than other groups.

8. High Machs Are Only Motivated When Something Concrete is At Stake

> High Machs appear to have greater ability to organize their own and others' resources to achieve task goals, but this ability is not elicited by demand or request, but only by situations that are intrinsically motivating.

Continue the authors:

> If there is no challenge for the high Machs, they tend to perform in a perfunctory manner without any great enthusiasm. Lows, on the other hand, regard it as a moral obligation to do their duty and presumably would make a serious effort to perform well.

9. High Machs Are Good at Making Others *Want* to Follow Them

Weighing in on failing to observe hostility from high Machs, the authors say:

> In general, they are adept at getting what they want from others without overt hostility

As we have noted in the studies above, people often go to the high Mach first and willingly.
Say the authors:

> High Machs take over the leadership in informal face-to-face groups. They initiate and control the structure of the group and thereby control the process and outcome.

The authors say it's not possible to say if high Machs are inherently more charismatic or because the lows are uncharismatic, socially inept, and naturally follow those who provide a structure and leadership.
However, the net result is the same: Machs get what they want without (open) hostility.

10. Top Schools Score Higher in Machiavellianism: Correlations With MACH-IV

Among the correlations:

- The elite medical schools had significantly higher-Mach students compared to non-elite schools ($p < .01$, two tailed).
- Urban dwellers score higher than people with a rural background (where people grew up made the difference rather than where they reside)
- Mach scores of children are not correlated to their parents
- There was no relationship between upward social mobility (the change from father's SES to respondent's SES) and Mach

Overall though, there is a striking lack of major relationships between Mach scores and many demographic variables.

Can You Learn to Be High-Mach?

The authors ask this question and say:

> Although we have no data, our hunch is that under certain circumstances a low Mach can learn to act like a high. Specifically, if the low can anticipate a precarious situation and can fix in his own mind, in advance and in privacy, those goals he is unwilling to relinquish, and prepare himself to assert and defend them under social pressure, he might be able to act as effectively on behalf of his own interests as a high Mach in the specific situation for which he has prepared for.

They stress again that this is pure speculation on their side.

More authors today have tried to sell books teaching people how to be more Machiavellian -or sociopathic-, including:

- The 48 Laws of Power
- The Good Psychopath Guide
- The Wisdom of Psychopaths

This same website might the best and most advanced resource for becoming more Machiavellian.

And now the opposite question:

Can A High Mach Become, Behave, or "Feel" Like a Low Mach?

The authors say the question is equally unanswerable.

> In spite of the considerable research attesting to the "cool" of the high Machs, we still have no evidence to

> determine whether highs are insensitive to emotional involvements or whether they can simply disregard them at will in favor of more strategic considerations. The polygraph study (Oksenberg, 1964f) would seem to indicate that high and low Machs do not differ in the physiological responses represented by PGR records. On the other hand, the study of deception (Geis & Leventhal, 1966t) showed highs as unable to discriminate whether others were lying or not, while low Machs, observing the same performances, did discriminate, whether by "involvement," "empathy," "intuition," or some other means.

I believe it's possible to teach people who lack a "feel" to acquire that "feel", or at least to improve.
This is what this website also does.

Mach-IV Scale: Statistical & Academic Considerations

- **Balancing Out Different Needs**

The second chapter of the book is wholly dedicated to how the Mach scale was developed.

The authors say that they had to face a balancing act between keeping it short enough, eliminating response sets, and addressing social desirability, three elements that tend to decrease scale reliabilities.

However, they say, their goal wasn't about psychometric perfection, but to find out if the scales had any relevance to the respondent's behavior -which it did-.

- **No correlations with other scales and constructs**

Whenever a construct is developed, the first qiestion for researchers is:

Is this a legitimately new and discreet construct, or are we measuring something that already exists in the scientific literature?

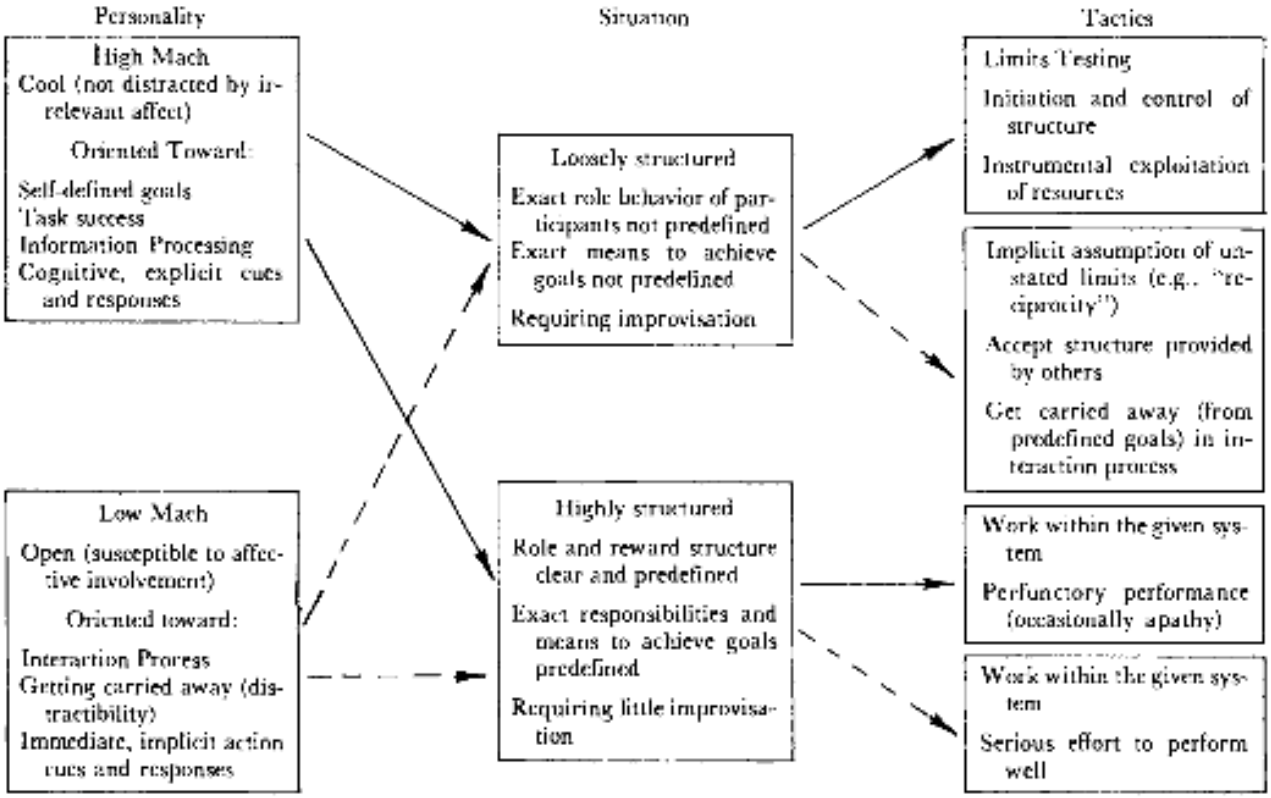
For example, the concept of "Grit" by Angela Duckworth has been criticized as being "conscientiousness", and it took some time before "emotional intelligence" started being recognized as different than intellectual quotient (and the author believes that "power intelligence" eventually might be recognized as a discreet cognitive ability).

Christie and Florence found out that there was no correlation between IQ and Machiavellianism, little or insignificant correlation for political preferences, no correlation to race preferences.
Some question items correlated with some items in the F-scale by Adorno (authoritarian personality). The overlap is in items that indicate a general distrust of others.

- **The experiments probably reflect reality**

The authors spend some time discussing how and how much do the experiments reflect real-life scenarios and how and how much the Machiavellian traits observed in the experiments would replicate in real-life.

And they developed a model to predict behavior based on the Mach scale:



Studies in Machiavellianism, Academic Press, 1970,

MORE WISDOM

High Machs More In Touch With Dark Side

High Machs admit on written tests of being more hostile than low Machs but their behavior was not more hostile.

This might be because high Machs simply acknowledge their own dark side more than low Machs do.

Low Machs might be better at spotting lies

From an upublished manuscript:

> As predicted from the Eye of the Beholder (Chapter XII), low Machs were superior at discriminating truth from lies in others. The lows were accurate in 67% of all guesses, compared to 50% for highs ($t = 2.70$, $p < .005$).

The authors say that low did better because judges were given a moment to reflect, and the judgment measure itself did not require improvising.
Lows were not being emotionally impacted or distracted.

In the study, highs were not better deceivers, but they were more credible as truth tellers.

Reference:

Geis, Florence L. & Leventhal, Ellen. Attempting to deceive and detecting deception. Unpublished manuscript, New York University, 1966.

It's not about "communist" or "fascist", but about personality and maturity of the movement

Almond (1954) studied communists, and reached similar conclusions to the analysis of the elite in the Nazi Party in

Germany, among Communists in both Russia and China, and the Kuomintang in China (Lerner, 1951; North, 1952; Schueller, 1951).

> When these movements were small, highly ideological, and revolutionary, their leadership was predominantly drawn from disaffected intelligentsia of middle-class background. As these movements became successful, the earlier leaders were gradually displaced by less ideologically oriented and more organizationally minded individuals, largely from lower-status backgrounds.

And that means that:

> it is a gross oversimplification to think of the Communist, Fascist, or for that matter, Democratic or Republican personality type. Almost every political or religious movement has its aggregate of impractical zealots and nonideological realists. The proportions of these in power positions apparently varies with the state of development of the movement.

Group dynamics are susceptible to manipulation and power dynamics

Say the authors:

> Frequently group members must agree or cooperate in order to realize any of the possible rewards. Such conflict of interest situations are usually resolved (and rewards allocated) by discussion, compromise, and conciliation— precisely the processes most likely susceptible to psychological pressure tactics.

High Machs Feel Low Machs Are Naive & Low Machs Think High Mach Are Deplorable

Say the authors:

> In general, both high and low Machs feel strongly about the positions they hold. It is not too great an oversimplification to say that high Machs feel that people who score low on the Mach tests are naive, not with it, and behave unrealistically in the real world. Low Machs, on the other hand, think agreement with Machiavelli reflects a deplorable lack of compassion and faith in others, and is immoral, if not inhuman.

Indeed, I find that one of the strongest signs of Machiavellianism is looking down at constructs such as empathy, or to defend the Machiavellian approach to life.

A New Generation Sees “The System” As a Con?

Write the authors:

> A generation is coming of age in America that doesn’t take the utterances of public figures straight, that doesn’t take social games straight. It suspects the whole range of modern experience. It sees giant con games everywhere. It sees “the system” itself as a con game (Brackman, 1967).

Well, looking at “no vax”, “Covid hoax” and all the complotists theories of today, it seems like that trend has continued :).

Low Machs Initiate Change, High Machs Take Advantage of It

The authors say that high Machs thrive in situations that are in flux but that, by their own very nature, they tend to take charge and impose order on chaos.

The authors then wonder how do low and high Machs differ in situations of chaos, change, and revolution.

This is speculation by the authors:

> Our suspicion is that revolutions are not initiated by high Machs but by a subset of low or middle Machs who are capable of great moral indignation at the failure of the existing system and who by virtue of their affective involvement with a potentially new order crystallize opposition to the existing one.
>
> Once the "revolution" has picked up enough steam to be a "movement," however, the situation changes.
>
> If the movement is loosely structured ("organizational chaos," as some observers have termed it), but nevertheless manages to disrupt the establishment to some extent, then high Machs might be attracted to either side to impose structure or take advantage of its absence to achieve other goals (e.g., positions of power or influence), regardless of the ideology being supported in the process.

Conservatives Are Cynic & Pro-System, Rebels Are Cynic & Against Systems, Machiavellians Are Cynic & Pro Themselves

Say the authors:

> Both a right-wing authoritarian, as measured by the F scale, and a nonideological high Mach are likely to agree that, "people are no damn good."
> (…) young members of the New Left also share this premise. Instead of moralistically blaming the person for not overcoming his inherent weakness as do high authoritarians or dispassionately taking advantage of others' failings, these young rebels blame society for corrupting others.
>
> Translating this into political terms, it would seem that high authoritarians are politically counterrevolutionaires, the New Left is revolutionary, and high Machs coolly play both ends against the middle.

It's Called "Machiavellianism" Because The Authors Are Low Machs Who Gave Due Credit

The title of this section is humorous, but not totally made up.

The authors were aware that "Machiavellianism" for a psychological construct was going to receive some flack and potentially bias people against it.

But they decided to stick to it nonetheless in spite of the pejorative connotations.

Calling it any other way, they say, would have been a Machiavellian tactic itself. Since most of the scale items as well as some of their research notions came from "The Prince" and "The Discourses", the only candid thing to do was to stick to the name "Machiavellianism".

QUOTES

Turns out, Machiavelli was a genius:

> His astuteness is emphasized by the fact that, in general, the items adopted directly from Machiavelli were more discriminating than those we had contrived.

On low Machs being lost among more Machiavellian players:

> They become so engrossed with the particular person or content they are dealing with that they get carried away and neglect to manipulate, implicitly assuming that fair play will prevail.

On low Machs being “weaker” in the facing of urging and pressure tactics:

> Cheating as a general principle is more counterattitudinal for low Machs than for highs. However, the lows can be induced to cheat if someone they are involved with really wants them to and keeps urging.

Commenting on manipulation without being too obvious:

> Perhaps high Machs have a built-in .05 level. Perhaps they push the limits, and their fellow man, just up to the point of becoming obvious, but not beyond. Perhaps a behavior frequency that would be significant by / test would also look significant to a fellow man. However, when manipulative intent is apparent to the victims, they may retaliate by refusing to be duped further, or by joining ranks against the would-be manipulator. Perhaps the successful manipulator is one who knows when to stop. He may test limits by pushing them, but know how not to break them.

In person, high Machs were more charming:

> High Machs can be charming immediately. Low Machs, telephoned to participate in an experiment or upon arriving at the laboratory, often appeared more reticent and less spontaneous than the highs.

On encountering opening lows up to being “mach’d”:

> Gradually the low discovers not only that he has been disadvantaged on the task, but also that the high is not reciprocating in the interaction as he has assumed. Once the situation has crystallized, there is little the low can do except grin and bear it or complain about the “unfairness” of the situation. The low gets “mach’d” by leaving himself open to an encounter which is unreciprocated.

On being mach’d as like hypnosis:

> A better analogy is that being “mach’d” is like being hypnotized. Under hypnotic control subjects feel aware of what is happening and free to do what they want. It is just that the suggestions of the hypnotist are so salient that it would be unthinkable to countermand them. The hypnotist defines “the way things are” and the subject goes along. Just so, high Machs orient cognitively to external task demands and proceed to initiate control over the interaction structure by defining the way things are. Lows, open to the personal presence of the highs and ready to follow along, fall into the highs’ structure and then emerge from the process forced to face up to the reality of the way things have become.

On the almost comical integrity-based insistence and frame control (in this case, “frame imposing” technique) of a low Mach:

> In another triad, the game ended with the high and low Mach dividing the money equally between them. After the session, as the subjects were leaving, the low Mach handed his winnings to the experimenter. The experimenter handed the money back, explaining that it was his to keep. The low protested that it was only an experiment, and that the money did not rightfully belong to him. The experimenter protested that it was not her money, that it came from a grant fund specifically allocated to provide the stake in the game. The low protested that he had agreed to participate in the experiment as a personal favor to the experimenter, and in the interests of advancing science, and he would not consider accepting pay for it. This bargaining contest with the experimenter was one of the few such encounters we’ve seen in which a low Mach clearly and forcefully won.

Non Machiavellians are naive at risk:

> Low Machs apparently assumed, incorrectly, that people in general are non-Machiavellian and can be trusted. This more idealistic image of their interpersonal environment would appear to be unrealistic.

Cognition-based behavior VS social and emotional-influenced behavior:

> High Machs act by what they know, low Machs by what they feel.

The authors say that some high Machs were leaders of radical groups, but the majority of high Machs despise inefficiency more than injustice (and I wonder if the radical ones were manipulating?):

> The vast majority of high Machs, however, appear to despise inefficiency more than deplore injustice.

CONS

- Some sentences might be a bit convoluted and the book might have been streamlined for ease and speed of reading.
- The author might have also ended up with a slightly rosier view of the Machiavellian personality.
  They say:

> Initially, our image of the high Mach was a negative one, associated with shadowy and unsavory manipulations. However, after watching subjects in laboratory experiments, we found ourselves having a perverse admiration for the high Machs' ability to outdo others in experimental situations. Their greater willingness to admit socially undesirable traits compared to low Machs hinted at a possibly greater insight into and honesty about themselves. We were probably also influenced by the fact that high Machs were easier to schedule for experiments, and were more likely to show up than low Machs.

But I can't hold it against them: they make a good point.

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REVIEW

“Machiavellian Studies” originated Machiavellianism a construct, and I consider myself indebted to the authors.

Strategic thinking and positive Machiavellianism are central for this website.
In good part, we help good men to operate more like good Machiavellians, and we teach Machiavellians how to acquire more of the “feel” of the more empathizing low Machs.

In a way, this website seeks to combine the best of both extremes of the Machiavellian scale.

For a modern update on the literature on Machiavellianism, also see “Machiavellianism: The Psychology of Manipulation“.

Get the book on Amazon or see:

- **Books on manipulation**
- **Books on the dark triad**
- **Books on power**

Studies in Machiavellianism: High Mach Traits (Christie)

"Studies in Machiavellianism" (Christie and Geis, 1970) is the first book to empirically address, test, and explain,

the personality trait of "Machiavellianism".The authors first describe the iterations of tests that led to the MACH-IV, which is today the standard self-assessment tool of Machiavellianism; it then proceeds to review all the studies on Machiavellianism up until 1970, and it ends with an overview of the traits and characteristics of the Machiavellian personality.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/studies-in-machiavellianism/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 May 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Empowered individualism™ places identity, agency, and responsibility at the level of the individual, rather than the group.

While popular discourse frames people through collective identities—gender, race, nationality, ideology—psychology and power dynamics show that both individual empowerment and human progress emerge from individuals who prioritize self-directed goals and retain sovereignty over judgment and action.

This article outlines what empowered individualism is, how it differs from collectivist psychology, and why societies that treat the individual as the primary moral and decision-making unit outperform those that subordinate individuals to group identities.

TPM Framework: Empowered Individualism™
Empowered Individualism™ is a conceptual framework developed by Lucio Buffalmano for The Power Moves to describe an individual-first psychological orientation grounded in self-reliance, agency, and independent judgment. The framework integrates findings from psychology, evolutionary science, and power dynamics to explain why individual-centered identity and decision-making outperform collectivist models in modern societies.

Empowered individualists are "ubermensch" In Nietzche's philosophy, 'sigma males' in manosphere terminology (and 'alphas' when in groups), and eagles in TPM's parlance

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  - Collectivism: Psychology & Costs
  - Benefits of Individualism
- 8 Principles of Empowered Individualism
  - 1. It's Me, First, Before & Above Any Group

    - 2. I'm A Human, And No Other Human Is Above Me
    - 3. Only My Individual Achievements & Contributions Earn Self-Respect & Honor
    - 4. The Less I Control It, The Less It Represents Me
    - 5. I Put Myself & My Time Above Any Object
    - 6. I Put Myself Above Man-Made Institutions
    - 7. It's Me & My Decision-Making Above Any Values or Laws
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- Individualism vs. Collectivism In Human Progress
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    - 4. Social Status Preoccupation Enslaves You
    - 5. Groups Offer Leaders Easy Manipulation Hooks
- Individualism & Other Schools of Thought
    - Individualism is Not…
- How to Be An Empowered Individualist
    - 1. Destroy Your Heroes (Iconoclasm)
    - 2. Adopt 'Healthy Narcissism'
    - 3. Adopt Positive Cynicism
    - 4. Strive For More Self-Sufficiency
    - 5. Experience The World, Different People & Groups
    - 6. Dispassionately Assess Leaders
    - 7. Focus On Yourself, Your Goals, Your Area of Maximum Impact

Intro

> Empowered individualism is an orientation in which the individual is the primary unit of identity, agency, and responsibility, pursuing self-chosen goals while engaging with groups voluntarily rather than subordinating judgment or action to collective identities or social trends.

Empowered Individualism	Collectivist Psychology
Individual primacy and sovereignty	**Group primacy**
Independence and self-sufficiency	**Dependence** and interdependence
High **agency**, individual achievements first	High **communion**, harmony and group outcomes first
High perceived control & internal locus of control	**Low perceived control** & external locus of control; outcomes depend on group & leadership
Self-defined identity (personal values, choices, actions, and achievements)	**Group-derived identity** (group membership, role, and shared narratives)

Empowered Individualism	Collectivist Psychology
Self-generated self-esteem, based on competence and integrity	**Group-based self-esteem**, based on group acceptance, conformity, and group-achievements

Empowered individualism puts the individual before and above collective constructs such as groups, races, genders, nations, and ideologies.
In psychological terms, it's a personality trait related to **high self-reliance**.

There are three undercurrents to an individual-first approach:

1. **Identify yourself as a distinct individual** (salience of the self): considers yourself, and demand to be considered, as an individual rather than a member of a collective like nationality, gender, race, etc.
2. **Focus on yourself** (self-focus): prioritize yourself, your rights, your goals and, when appropriate, your self-interest
3. **Look at others as individuals** (others' self-salience): think and treat others as individuals first, rather than members of groups

Levels of individualism range on a spectrum between the poles of collectivism and individualism.

Collectivism: Psychology & Costs

Collectivism has weaker self-boundaries and psychologically aligns and merges closer with the groups of reference.

While there may be more empowering forms of collectivism, in its weaker form **collectivists use the group to prop-up a weak sense of self**.
The canonical psychological mechanisms of collectivism are:

- **Ego fusion**: the merging of self and group identity (Swann et al., 2012)
- **Basking in reflected glory**: associating with a successful other for social and mental gains (Cialdini et al., 1976)
- **Collective narcissism**: an inflated belief in the greatness of one's in-group, combined with resentment that others fail to recognize it. Leads to defensiveness and anger when the group is criticized (de Zavala, 2018)

External locus of control (Rotter, 1966) and low sense of perceived control (Skinner, 1996) are the psychological consequences of collectivism.

This article lists tactical-level examples of collectivist psychology to show how the same mechanism plays out in different areas of life.

Benefits of Individualism

Empowered Individualists enjoy better mental health and power, including higher self-esteem, sense of well-being, sense of control, and general positive affect.

Being less needy and dependent also neutralizes known hooks for emotional manipulation, while individual accountability shields you against collective shame, guilt, and disempowering (ie.: 'humans are earth's cancer', 'men are oppressors', 'women/minorities have been oppressed', etc.).

Belief in their personal power also leads to more action, with higher odds of success.

8 Principles of Empowered Individualism

1. It's Me, First, Before & Above Any Group

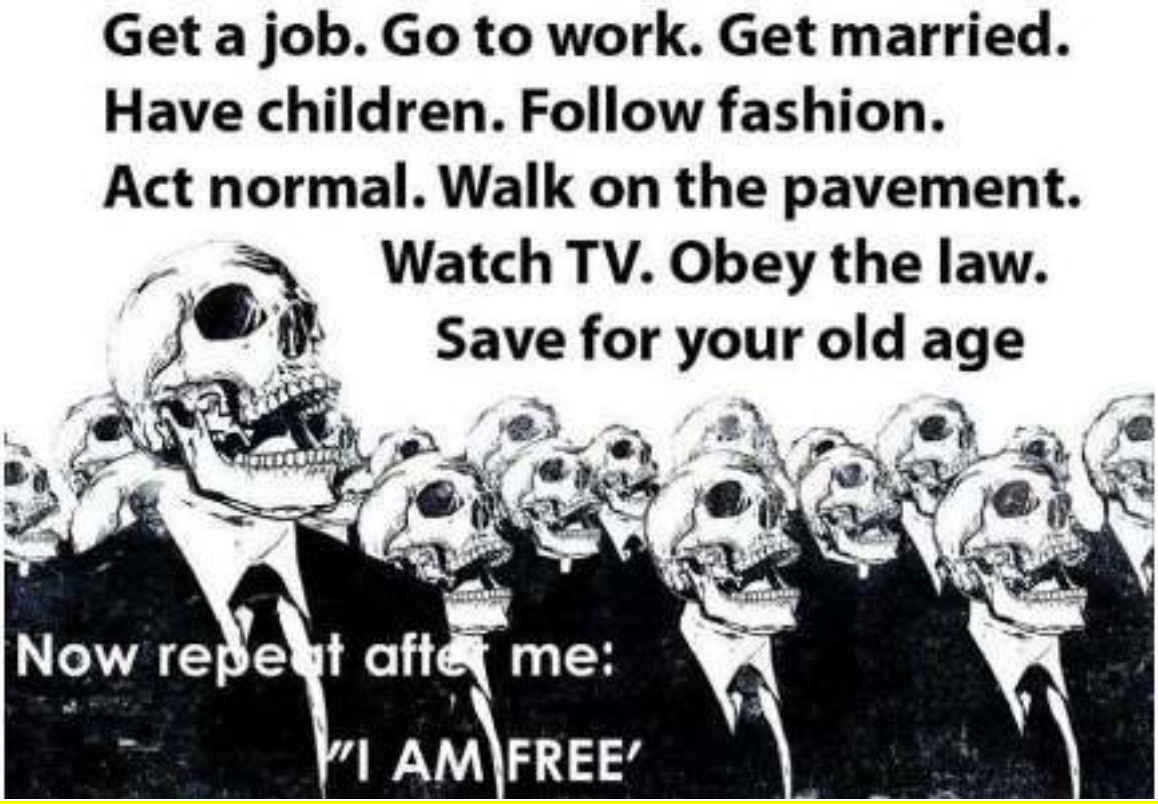
The core of empowered individualism is self-primacy, defining oneself based on self-originated values, actions, and achievements.

Individualists may love the various groups they're part of, but their group belonging is not their primary identification.
Within groups, the individualist remains an individual first, constantly monitors the group dynamics, and always maintains the freedom to exit it.

1.2. I Choose What's Best For Me, Without Falling Prey to Social Pressure & Expectation

Empowered individualists live by the motto of 'I do me', choosing to pursue what they want and like.

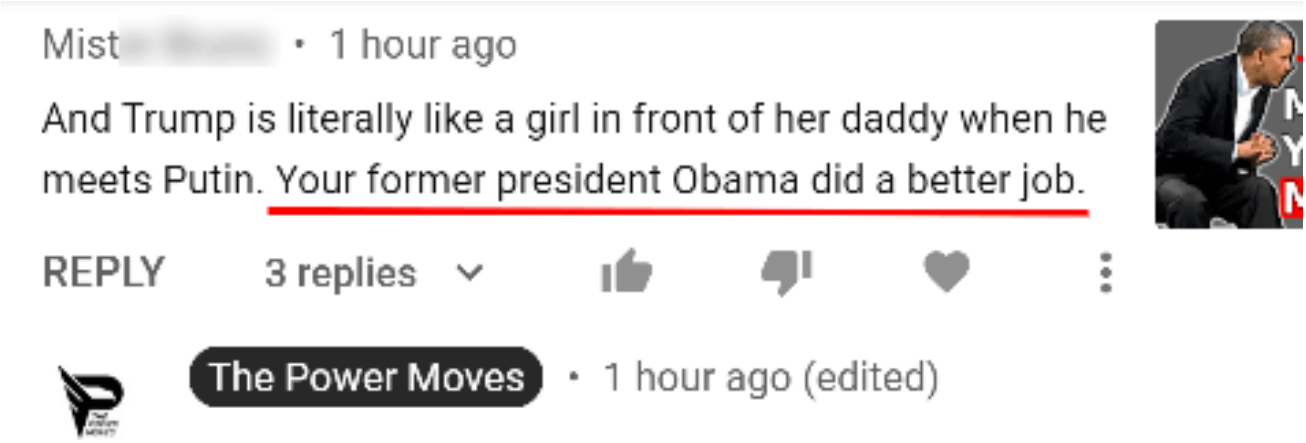
It's perfectly fine to follow a rich society's beaten path, but the empowered individualist only *chooses* that path IF it fits him, not out of pressure or fear.
Given that the odds that a beaten path is a perfect fit and the chances of trade-off are higher, many individualists end up with a more unique lifestyle.



A man is 100% free if he chooses to follow society's common path. But an empowered individualist only does so if that's what *he* wants for himself.

⍰ Failure of The Law: Group Leaders Representing *You*

Collectivist psychology considers the group leader as a representative for *themselves*.
Example:



The empowered individualist believes that only he can represent himself.

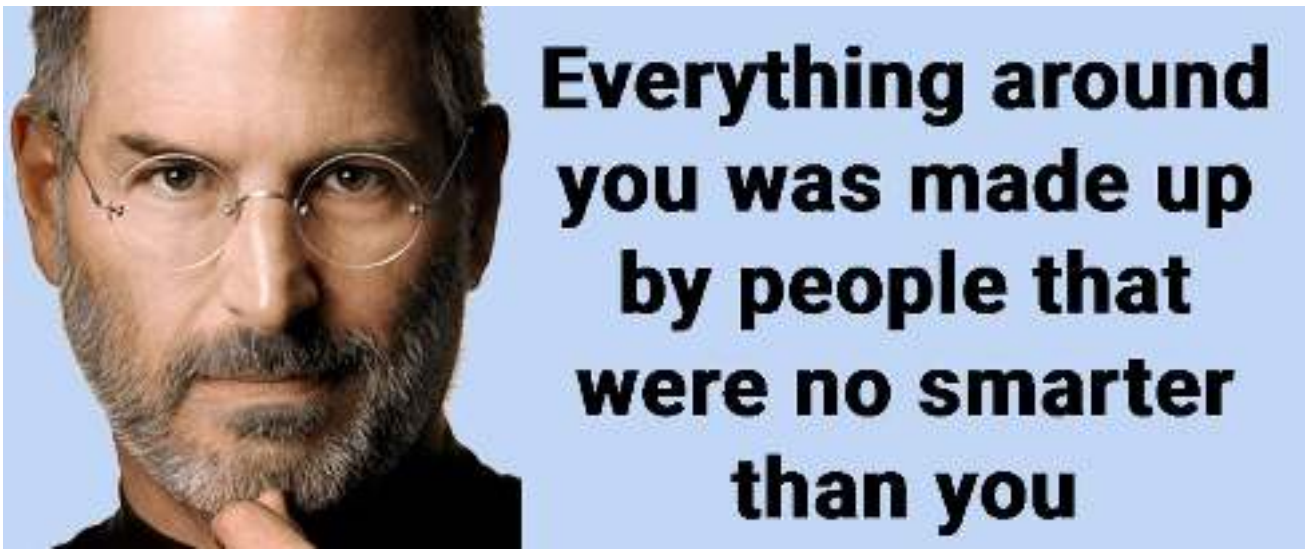
2. I'm A Human, And No Other Human Is Above Me

You're as worthy as a human being as anyone else.

Someone else may be more competent or more predisposed towards certain activities. But that has a little to do with overall competence, and nothing to do with worthiness as a human being.

2.2. Mindset: If Someone Can, So Can I

Whatever great things someone else achieved, you can also do the same.
Steve Jobs echoed this same belief when he said this:



> Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact: Everything around you that you call life was made up by people that were no smarter than you. And you can change it, you can influence it… Once you learn that, you'll never be the same again.
>
> *Steve Jobs*

Of course, record-breaking feats may require a lifetime of effort, and genetics and luck matter. But you could have done the same with the same conditions.
And at the higher level, you can have the same positive impact in your field of choice.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's Mindset**: the real test of a good life is not what you were born with, but what you do with it.

⍰ Failure of The Law: “Can you imagine flying a plane”?

A former boss had this trying question:

Would you rather fly a plane by yourself with 3 days to learn, or full of people with one week to learn?

His attitude framed both options as terrible, as if flying a plane were an impossible feat.
Me, I felt that flying a plane must be relatively easy. And if those pilots can, so can I.

And, I didn’t land a plane (yet), but flying is easier than driving a stick shift car:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by Lux (@lux_in_incognito)

2.3. Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto: You’re part of all human greatness

This Latin motto stuck with me since I first read it as a kid, and it means:

> I’m a human, and nothing concerning humans can be alien to me

It means that as a human, you are automatically part of all human magnificence, everything that the species has done and will ever do.
While that may also mean you’re also part of the *worst* of humanity, this is where empowered individualism takes over: YOU decide what to embody.

3. Only My Individual Achievements & Contributions Earn Self-Respect & Honor

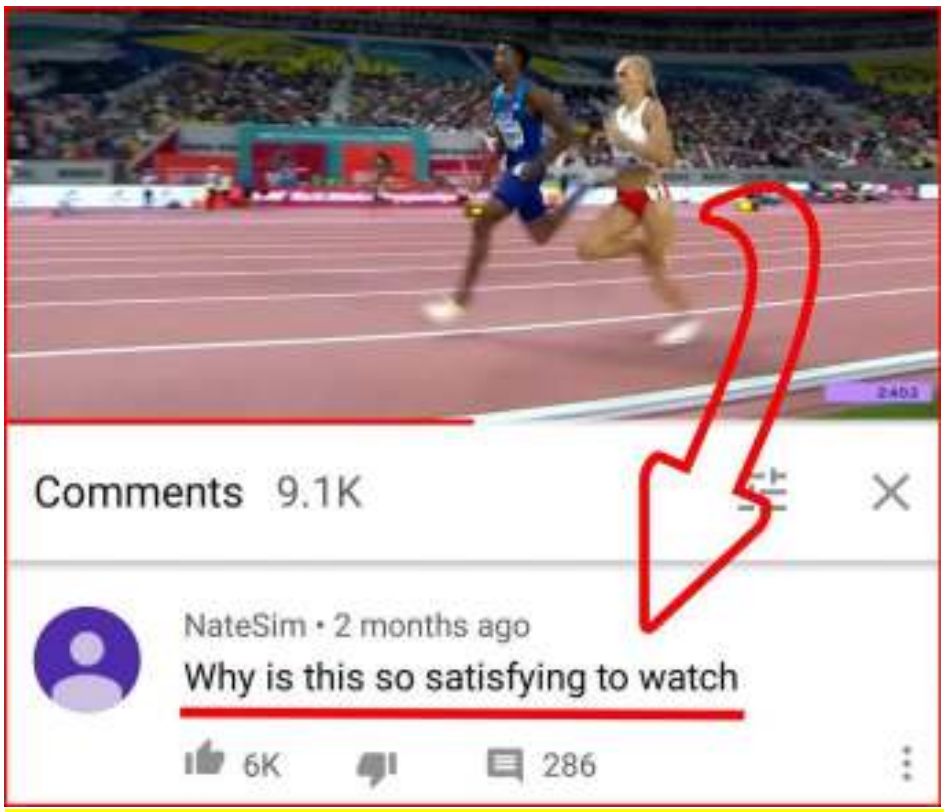
Any pride for group-level achievement is secondary and contingent on your contributions.

And while you may be proud of groups you joined with your effort, you cannot be proud of groups you didn’t choose or earn (ie, being hetero/gay, white/black).

⍰ Failure of The Law: Appropriating The Group’s Achievement as Your Own

Over-nationalists waste their time promoting and defending their countries, while others promote or defend their gender. Worse yet, many attack other groups to feel better about themselves.

Example:



He rejoiced that a man beat a woman because he projected his identity onto the collective of men. Besides the poor sportsmanship, it shows possible signs of vulnerable narcissism and hypersensitivity to threats (ie, being 'beaten' by a woman).

Ego projections undermine self-development
Paradoxically, the better the group performs, the more the collectivist loses any reason for individual self-development, in a vicious circle of ever-decreasing under-achievement

3.3. Honorable Spin: Make Groups Proud With Your Contribution, Not The Other Way Around

Anything the group has done and you haven't contributed to becomes your stretch goal to measure up to.

While weak collectivists bask in reflected glory, empowered agentic men focus on *providing* glory to the group. Ultimately though, empowered individualists have a lower sense of obligation towards specific groups, and more of a drive for contribution *in general*, seeking to advance *humanity* and *civilization*.

⍰⍰♂ Failure of The Law: The "Family Shame"

While an acquaintance of mine proudly shared that his father's team was awarded a Nobel prize, another one felt ashamed for his humble family.

To an empowered individualist, a successful father says nothing unless *you* replicate that success. And humble beginnings only *boost* your achievements for having overcome the gap.

4. The Less I Control It, The Less It Represents Me

The more you influence the group, the more it can represent you. And the other way around. Ultimately, individualists put the self first because that's where they control the most.

⍰Failure of The Law: Sports Fans

Some supporters and ultras feel and expect 'their team' to represent them and 'do them honor', while having no

control over the team's performance.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: I speak from experience.
I used to get hyped up for "my team" or "my guy" winning, and distraught when they'd lose. I'm glad I largely outgrew that.

4.2. I Put My Interests Before Random People's

Only invest in people with whom you have significant interests, or a two-way street relationship.

⍰Failure of The Law: Fandom

Many celebrated DiCaprio's Oscar win as if they had won one.

It's unlikely to advance in life if you focus on other people's achievements, rather than your own

5. I Put Myself & My Time Above Any Object

Inanimate objects are only valuable as long as they add concrete value.
Yourself—and your time—are always immensely more valuable.

⍰ Failure of The Law: Wasting Time to Own Status Symbols

> When you feel defined by a brand, it's the brand that owns you

Queueing for ‘luxury’ or ‘popular’ signals that impressing others is more important than living your life

The need to own any object lowers you below the object.
So never:

- ✕ **Collect things**
- ✕ **Overpay for memorabilia or art**
- ✕ **Queue up for a popular restaurant or shop**

Remember: you are bigger than any *thing*.

6. I Put Myself Above Man-Made Institutions

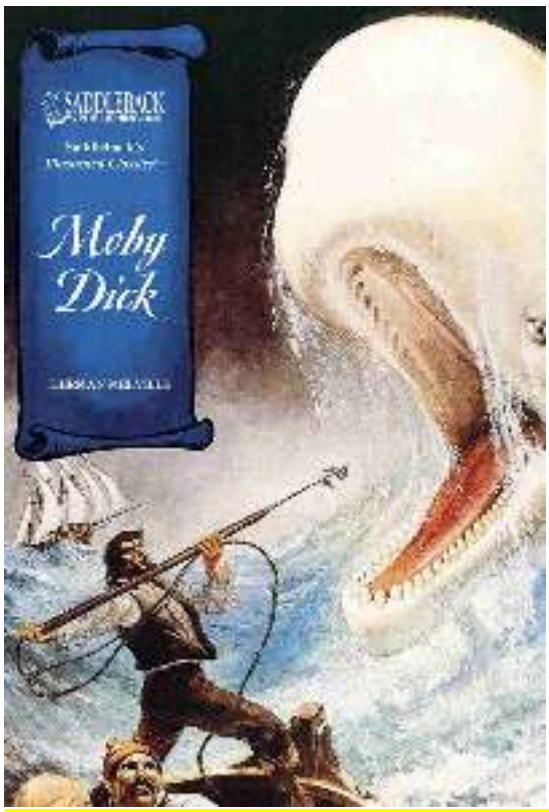
People build institutions, and since nobody is above you, no institution is above you, either.

The judgment criteria of people taking decisions in those institutions isn’t inherently more valuable than yours, so you shall not chase their approval to join their ranks.

People chasing big-name universities or employers are giving power away to both those institutions.

6.2. Respect For Religious Institutions, But Not Subordination

Empowered individualists tend to have a more direct, power-positive relationship with God.



Moby Dick's symbolism can be seen as the (individual) empowerment against the disempowering Middle-Age representation of an over-controlling God.

6.3. Respect For Familial Institutions, But Not Subordination

Some cultures pressure children to serve their parents and household. Empowered individualists reject the psychological coercion and subordination.

7. It's Me & My Decision-Making Above Any Values or Laws

Empowered individuals trust themselves to make the right call depending on the situation.

Written values or 'laws' disempower you because they become rigid external impositions, dictating your behavior from outside the situation.
But in a complex and fluid world, values must originate from your situational self. Calibration is what makes you effective, and self-trust is what makes you confident.

Set a higher-level, honorable north star, like 'being a value-adding man', and trust yourself to adapt contextually.

No written values = higher integrity
Men who fall short of their values lose integrity because they'll make excuses for themselves.
By contrast, non-rule-bound Machiavellians experience little dissonance (Christie and Geis, 1970). You can get the same benefit, while also being honorable.

7.2. I Value My Judging Criteria Before External and Social Criteria

The more empowered, honorable, and experienced you become, the more you want to trust your judgment.
This also protects you against undue influence from authority and 'judge figures'.

7.3. Whenever Possible, I Judge Others As Individuals

It's mostly inexperienced men who judge others based on nationality or ethnicity. When it comes to people, the more experience you gain, the more you look at individuals.

?♂Lucio's Take: **Judge characters, beware those who seek respect through titles**

Lucio: If rank and character don't match, the judgment of the man always takes precedence.

And introducing oneself through titles is often a red flag of entitlement, and possible smokescreen over substance.

Il venerdì 22 febbraio 2019, 10:48:49 CET, [redacted]

Sehr geehrter Herr Buffalmano,

ich, V[redacted]r, bin Miteigentümerin der WE [redacted]3
Parkplatz/Garage. Es wird mich in erster Linie interessieren- was de
befindet.

Für eine kurzfristige Mitteilung auch telefonisch (bitte Handy) bin ic

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Dipl.-Ing. Architektin
V[redacted]r

A personal, non-work email with "dip.", "ing.", and "female architect" in the signature ?.

8. My Outcomes Depend On Me. I Can Succeed independently of My Group, Country, or Social Trends

The empowered individualist thinks 'my life, my responsibility', and rather than focusing on trends and groups, he focuses on how to achieve his goals.

Failure of The Law: Going Down With The (Social) Ship

Michael Franzese says in an interview:

> **Michael**: I have a pessimistic view of where America is heading. I fear for my kids how America is going to look like
> **Tyrus**: Unfortunately I agree with you. It's already over. China won.

Both men turn pessimistic because they focus on group-level trends.

Even intelligent and self-development-focused guys can fall for this mindset.
For example, Charisma on Command founders say:

> **Charlie**: (talking about China's future troubles) We're gonna be OK in America, it's just not their century

Besides external and low sense of control, this leads to a scarcity mindset.
As Robert Sapolsky says, "It's problematic when non–zero sum games are viewed as zero-sum", because you can turn win-win into lose-lose.

If the same approach was applied to individuals, you'd think this was weak, or unnecessarily mean (ie.: imagine if Charlie said Charisma on Command does well if The Power Moves doesn't).
But extrapolate the same exact mentality to groups, and many miss how disempowering it can be.

Individualism vs. Collectivism In Human Progress

Groups are not bad per se.
Collective effort multiplies output beyond anything any individual could achieve. Cooperation built and keeps building our civilization.

Even mild forms of group competitions provide extra motivation to innovate and move humanity forward.

However, getting the positives without the negatives is a question of balance and individual empowerment.

Quoting from the Routledge handbook on persuasion:

> identification (with groups), by enabling us to communicate, organize, and decrease division, can be a worthwhile goal. However, we must be moderate in promoting it, because too much identification can be "too much of a good thing" (Seiter, 1998).

And Colquhoun in *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives* explains why it quickly becomes 'too much':

> **altruism within the group (…) simultaneously promote selfishness between groups.**
> Bowles (2009) looked at archaeological data (…) and concluded that **between-group competition led to a large increase in mortality rates.**
> (it) really raises the question: Altruism toward whom?
> From this perspective, suicide bombers may be thought of as altruists to the cause of their group by other group members, but to non-group members they are anything but.

1. Effective Cooperation In Larger Societies Requires Individualism

Psychologist Joseph Henrich explains that Western individualist societies cooperate better because they're more pro-social, trusting, and cooperative *with strangers*.

Cooperation with strangers is a necessary prerequisite for cooperation among larger groups.
Contrary to what many may think, these **more collaborative modern societies are based on individualism.**
Individualists adopt an 'impersonal prosociality' that rises above tribalism, values strangers, and cooperates on a large scale.

By contrast, strong small-group identification fosters within-tribe bonds at the detriment of *larger* cooperation.

Hence, it seems that cooperation is most effective with empowered individualists.
On the other hand, it's very possible that **tribalistic collectivism is a threat to human advancement**.

2. Groups of Collectivists Amplify Conflict & Exact Heavy Cost On Humanity

Large-scale group animosity and conflict, including large-scale atrocities, all emerge from individuals suspending personal power and judgment in favor of collective identity.

One of the most powerful and universal human tendencies is to identify with a group of people, and to square off against rival groups (Baumeister, 1997).

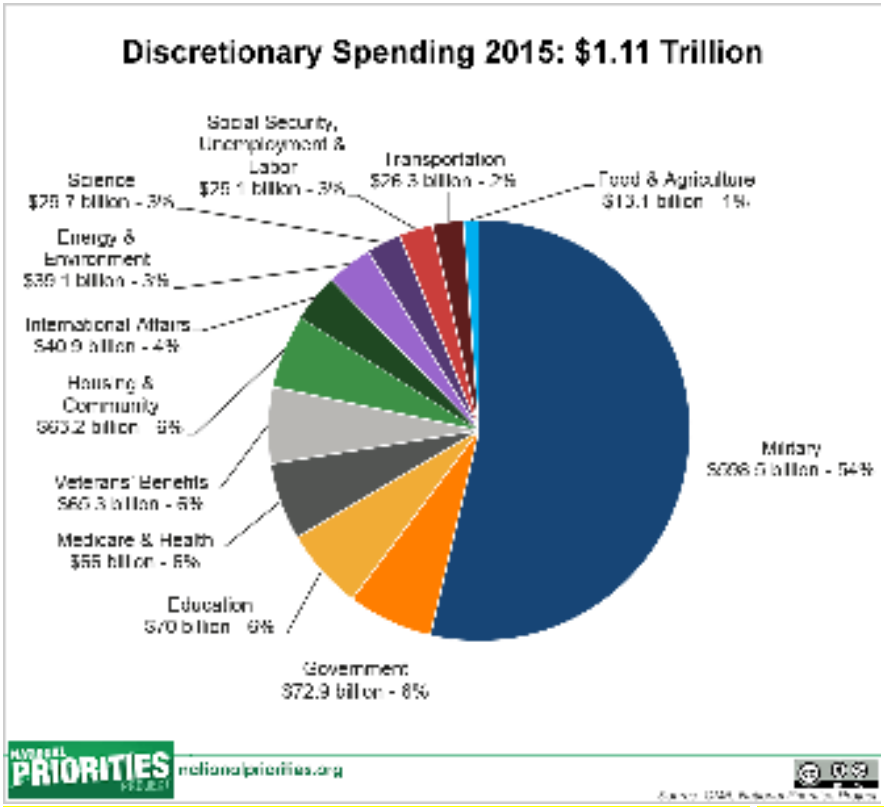
In-group/out-group dynamics and social dominance theory are the psychological mechanisms that underpin these 'hostile tribal tendencies' (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Groups also tend to *amplify* individual-level conflict.
The discontinuity effect suggests that groups are more competitive, antagonistic, and exploitive towards each other than individuals are towards other individuals (Wildschut et al., 2003).
Even individuals tend to be more antagonistic towards groups (Hoyle, 1989).

The Modern Costs of Intergroup Hostility

It's true that we've come a long way from tribes but, in many ways, modern nations first and geopolitical blocks more recently still mimic these dynamics.

Inter-group hostility still absorbs an inordinate amount of effort, money, and lives. The opportunity loss of focusing on individual well-being is immense.
This is how much budget goes into the war apparatus:



Imagine what humanity could do if we could decrease antagonistic in-group vs out-group dynamics, and channel it into research and human progress

Read more:

- How to build an empire

Healthy 'Group Pride' May Not Be The Solution

The argument of 'loving one's group while having nothing against others' may sound compelling, but may be simplistic.

For example, Baumeister says that 'racial pride and feelings of superiority seem to go with violence toward others'.

Decreasing animosity towards one group may also only *displace* antagonism towards some other group.
For example a survey of American sentiment shows that as disapproval of interracial marriages decreased, the disapproval of cross-*political* marriages increased:

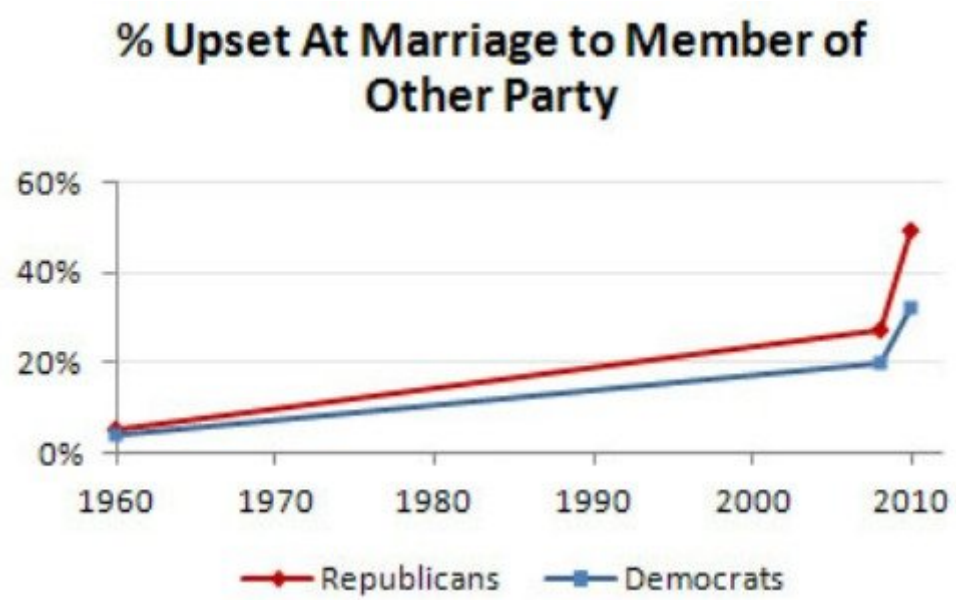


Chart by Kevin Drum

Empowered individualism may be the only solution.

Groups Unleash The Worst From People & Enable Idealistic Evil

Crowds allow people to lose their sense of personal responsibility and externalize their darkest drives, while feeling immune to any repercussions (see 'dendividuation' Zimbardo, 1969 and 'diffusion of responsibility', Darley & Latane, 1968).

Studies show that the larger the group, the larger the de-individuation and the consequent out-of-control violence (Mullen, 1986).

The largest genocides in human history are also based on group dynamics that promote extremist leaders, and then support their ideals with little pushback, a phenomenon Baumeister calls 'idealistic evil'.

It's telling that only one man refused. A good representation of empowered individualism

Whether these leaders are putting on a persona or truly embodying their ideals their is a moot point.
What's safe to say though is that groups facilitate 'moral disengagement' (Bandura, 1999).

The neat solution, once again, seems to be empowered individualism.
Prentice-Dunn and Rogers (1982) found that to decrease deindividuation you must increase a person's private self-awareness.
Such as: move the focus from groups, to individuals.

⍰ Empowered Individualism: Hugh Thompson Against Evil Ingroup

Hugh Thompson intervened to stop the massacre of Vietnamese civilians, the outgroup, at the hands of the US army, his ingroup.

He paid a heavy price.
While the officers responsible for the massacre were acquitted or pardoned, Thomson was ostracized. One senator wanted him court-martialed, and he received death threats and dead and mutilated animals on his porch.

Hugh Thomson turned against his own ingroup to uphold universal values of human dignity. Thomson is a true war hero, high-quality man, and a peak example of empowered and honorable individualism.

How Collectivism Disempowers Modern Men

Collectivist psychology is neither 'all bad', nor an evolutionary mistake.

We can hypothesize that it evolved for small, kin-based groups where individuals' survival and reproductive fitness were tightly intertwined with the group. In this context, collectivist psychology was adaptive.

But the context has changed.
There are virtually no small-tribe societies left. Large and more impersonal societies won.
Modern empowered individuals can roam the world, and individual success is delinked from any given group.

In this new reality, collective psychology underperforms because it loses its upsides while maintaining its downsides.
Empowered individualism is the winning move.

1. Leaders' Demand For Loyalty Undermines Individual & Social Interests

Many bosses expect loyalty.

Robert Jackall's found that most managers believe that it is fundamentally wrong to go against the boss.

And psychologist Baumeister says that whistle-blowers are rare and often condemned, even when there were good ethical and moral reasons to speak up.

These dynamics are designed to advantage the boss and, at most, the group. But can undermine the individual's interest and society at large.

At that point, you gotta ask yourself: what are you staying in the group for?

This quote resonates with many empowered individualists

2. Suppression & Distortion of Truth

Individual self-deception has limits (Kunda, Z. 1990), but groups are more effective at maintaining false narratives.

Sometimes the truth stays hidden even when most individuals know better, a phenomenon known as "spiral of silence".
It takes empowered men to bring the truth back into ideological groups.
Quoting from the Routledge Handbook:

> organizations and groups need members who will occasionally "rock the boat,""blow whistles," and "play devil's advocate" (Locke et al., 2001 ; Redding, 1985) (..) although such dissenters can be seen as troublemakers, they can also (…) promote innovation, creativity, and better decisions (Jetten & Hornsey, 2014)

The 'boat rockers' are empowered individualists with the courage to speak up.

3. A Toxic Crutch For Lost Individuals

Extremist groups provide a stronger sense of belonging and meaning that can be appealing to struggling men.

For example, Picciolini shares he was recruited in a neo-nazi movement as a struggling and directionless teenager.

The group also encouraged him to quit smoking, but only replaced drugs, with toxic belonging and ideology.

4. Social Status Preoccupation Enslaves You

Status hierarchies form fast and automatically, and it's almost impossible to be indifferent to one's status.
While status-seeking is not an issue and often good, it can force men to play a game they may have nothing to gain from playing.

Instead, empowered individualists **prioritize power over status**.
Say status researchers Cheng and Tracy:

> since **status relies on others**, concerns about maintaining one's status will orient status-holders outward (…) monitoring where they stand (…)
> As such, high-status parties (…) strive to fulfill others' expectations (Blader and Chen 2012; Ridgeway 1978, 1982) (…)
> status stands in stark contrast to the effects of **power, which liberates people from social and normative pressures** (Galinsky et al. 2008; Guinote 2007; Keltner et al. 2003).

The empowered individualist is that liberated man.
Read more:

- Pursue power, not status

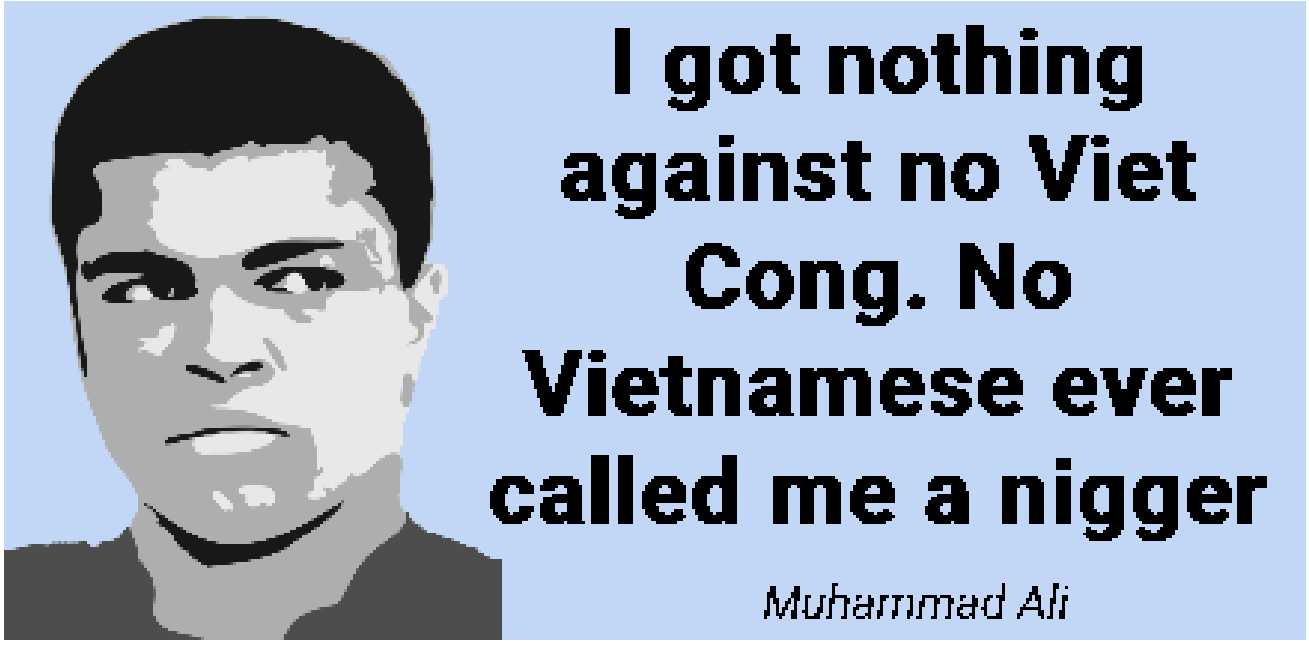
5. Groups Offer Leaders Easy Manipulation Hooks

Men may have an inherent drive to form groups, scan for threats, and defend the group (McDonald et al., 2012).

That's a potentially good thing.
But in modernity it can deliver a sucker's trade where the only winners are politicians, top-military brass, and arms' producers.

In the movie "Born on the Fourth of July" the military recruiter leverages appealing ideals to persuade idealistic men.

In these cases, some 'positive calculativeness' helps.
Albeit Mohammad Ali had his own issues with racial tribalism, he answered with positively cynic individualism to the draft:



Charismatic Leaders Co-Opt "Loyalty" For Own Power

Fascist and populist leaders also leverage in-group dynamics to gain power.
Psychology researcher Laslam noted that the "great man leadership" benefits the leader first and foremost, and we only need to look at history to see real-life examples.

Even in modern times we can see some of these dynamics. Says for example Trump in this speech to Boy Scouts:

> **Trump**: as the scout laws say, a scout is trustworthy and loyal. We could use some loyalty today
> **Boy scouts**: USA! USA! USA!

Empowered individualism immunizes men from these disempowering calls to blindly offer loyalty to the leader of the collective.

Individualism & Other Schools of Thought

Concepts overlapping or feeding into individualism include:

Enlightenment & Humanism

Says Pinker in "*Enlightenment Now*":

> Humanism, which privileges the well-being of individual men over the glory of the tribe, race, nation, or religion. It is individuals, not groups, who are sentient

Pinker describes humanism in opposition to green movements that subordinate men to the environment, or to animalists that see humans as "invaders".

Libertarianism

Libertarians put individuals' freedom first, sometimes in opposition to the state.
Good central governance is helpful to overcome tragedy of the commons, externalities, and cartels, but libertarians offer insightful takes on political power dynamics.

Capitalism

Capitalism encourages individualistic pursuit of success, turning individuals' selfish ambition to success into win-win.
Individualists tend to support capitalism while rejecting the forced collectivism of communism.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy goes hand-in-hand with the 'weak prosociality' of individualists, while tribal psychology supports kin and in-group instead of competence.

Even smart collectivists undermine psychology—see for example Madeleine Albright's famous quote of '*there is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women'*.

As well as:

- **Rationalism**
- **Conservatism**, more focused on individual freedom and agency
- **Pragmatism**, with positive cynicism and power-intelligent value-accounting

Individualism is Not...

1. Antisociality, or rejection of pro-social contributions

We're a social species, sharing a common earth. Pro-social behavior to preserve shared resources is good and honorable behavior

2. Rejection of cooperation

There is power in cooperation.
Empowered individualism is about *choosing*, and being selective, of the people and groups to cooperate with.

3. Bashing or rejecting one's background

Empowered individualists are glad or at peace with their ethnicity, nationality, gender, or culture.
Shame or rejection of one's roots is not individualism; it's disempowering.

4. Refusing any "sense of belonging"

Empowered individualists can join any group and even be proud to be in them.
Research calls this 'in-group satisfaction', a healthier form of belonging:

> In-group satisfaction with collective narcissism partialled out can be interpreted as **a confident, positive evaluation of the in-group, independent of external recognition and resilient to threats and criticism.**

Contrary to projecting one's ego into the group, it's also higher self-esteem, more self-reliant, and more tolerant (win-win).

5. Rejection of love, friendship, or bonding

Relationships are important.
Individualists' self-sufficiency makes for stronger relationships based on *choice*, rather than neediness.

6. Suspending judgment groups and collectives

Individualism judges groups to the full extent allowed by the information available.

Individualists look at individuals first because, in humans, individual variance is often greater than the average differences between collectives.
But there can be more homogeneous and low-variance groups, cases where group-belonging offers important insights, and situations where only group-level information is available.

Policies can be based on group-level assessments
Policies that apply group-level insights to improve outcomes can be perfectly valid (ie.: curbing immigration from specific regions).

7. Bashing pro-social sacrifice: respect to them

Empowered individualists may choose to risk their lives for a cause. They just don't like being coerced or manipulated into it.

As Steven Pinker wrote:

> it is genuinely admirable for one individual to sacrifice his or her interests for those of many individuals. It's quite another thing when a person is forced to make the supreme sacrifice for the benefit of a charismatic leader, a square of cloth, or colors on a map. Nor is it sweet and right to clasp death in order to prevent a province from seceding, expand a sphere of influence, or carry out an irredentist crusade.

We agree. We encourage men to aspire for more than just serving themselves.
But to do so smartly, avoiding manipulation and serving good causes.

How to Be An Empowered Individualist

So, finally:

1. Destroy Your Heroes (Iconoclasm)

> Fawners pedestalize; winners humanize

You cannot be empowered as long as you think someone else is "above you".
You build the empowered you on the ashes of 'positive iconoclasm'.

If helpful, find faults in the people you love the most. Not to disrespect the, but to **humanize them**.
Then, move to a more mature stance of positive admiration or respect, but without worship.

⍰ Example: They're Great, But You May Be Better

Many men believed Tyson's hype and thought he was invincible. Holyfield instead looked at Tyson and thought "If he can do it, so can I". And he beat Tyson.

Similarly, when MBA players referred to Michael Jordan as "Black Jesus", the one kid who brought the fight to thought he was 'just Mike'.
Listen to him:

> **Average players**: We call him black Jesus
> **Kobe**: Black Jesus? WTF? I'm gonna call him Mike, and when I face him, we're gonna go at it (as equals)

All underdogs must be empowered individualists if they even want to hope to one day be champions.

2. Adopt ‘Healthy Narcissism’

Once you have no more human gods above you, it’s time to build yourself up.

Many psychologists agree that an optimum balance of narcissism is healthy (see for example Luyten, 2014; Campbell, 2020)

Read more:

- Narcissism as a power strategy
- Healthy narcissism

3. Adopt Positive Cynicism

Look at the material exchange and what’s in it for you.
Positive cynicism protects against groups’ and leaders’ manipulation.

From the movie example we saw before, seen from a cynical point of view.

- Enlightened Cynicism
- Enlightened Cooperator

4. Strive For More Self-Sufficiency

Being alone and content is the ultimate power move in life.
It even makes you incorruptible.

5. Experience The World, Different People & Groups

The more you move and experience, the less dependent and tied you are to a specific group.

You’ll also realize that beside superficial cultural differences, most people are similar and want the same things.
This realization dismantles in-group/out-group dynamics.

Also helpful:

- **Positive relativism & nihilism**: empires rise and fall, borders shift endlessly, and every conqueror is gone and forgotten. Use your life for better goals than fighting little tribes’ wars.

In this video I share how I acquired hits mindset:

- Explorer mode: becoming a global player ↗ (opens on YouTube)

6. Dispassionately Assess Leaders

Look at character and moral fiber, and never serve dishonorable leaders.

♂ **Lucio’s tip: avoid influencer-complainers, ‘social analysts’, conspiracy theorists**
Some manosphere groups (and feminist equivalent) congregate around social analyses that are pessimistic and disempowering. These complainers are collective-focused: useless for a smart individualist. Focus on yourself.

7. Focus On Yourself, Your Goals, Your Area of Maximum Impact

Focus solely on what you can control and what’s relevant to your life.
Cut social media, news, and anything that doesn’t affect you in real-life and that you cannot affect.

The more you do this, the more your area of influence grows, together with your power and your achievements.

Anything that's too far removed for you to affect or feel in real life is a waste of effort

Winner's Mindsets: 10 Commandments of Enlightened "Me First"

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 May 2021 · Archived copy · Original

This is the manifesto of enlightened individualism.

The mindsets and attitudes of enlightened individualism are crucial aspects for personal development and self-empowerment.

These mindsets are central to being a high-value man/woman, an effective power-aware operator, and a man with high odds of achieving goals, freedom, and success.
The enlightened individualist is also the eagle we talk about on TPM, and the blue ocean fish who transcends the small ponds.

Warning:
This is a deep article requiring some hours.
Bookmark it, get back to it at your own time, and internalize it properly.

Contributors:
TPM community also contributed and expanded this article.
See here.

Enlightenment and self-focus have often been portrayed as opposite ends. We propose a different approach that combines both

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- 10 Commandments
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  - 3. I Put My Interests Before Random People (no fandom)

    - 4. I Put Myself Above Any Man-Made Product
    - 5. I Put Myself Above Man-Made Institutions
    - 6. I'm A Human, And No Other Human Is Above Me
    - 7. I Only Attach & Invest Into What I Can Control
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    - 6. Accept Your Selfish Drives: They're Potentially Good
    - 7. Learn to Be Comfortable Alone
    - 8. Experience & Join the Most Disparate Groups
    - 9. Assess Characters: Leaders & Members
    - 10. Quit All Groups That Limit Your Personal Power
    - 11. Focus on Self-Development
    - 12. Cut Out (Mass) Media Consumption
    - 13. Move to "Enlightened Belonging"
    - 14. Ruthlessly Focus on Maximum Impact Area
- The Hero's Journey
    - Joining the Eagles

Definition

> Enlightened individualism is a borderless and timeless mindset and approach to life that focuses on the self, on individual goals and objective, and on the agency and power of individual humans

Enlightened individualism puts the individual before and above collectivist constructs such as groups, races, genders, nations, entities, and ideologies.
And especially so when the collectivist, supra-individual constructs turn disempowering, which, as we shall see, often do.

In psychological terms, we might define "enlightened individualism" as a personality trait because its mindsets and

beliefs lead to predictable -and empowering- thought patterns, behaviors, life choices, and life paths.

There are three undercurrents to an individual-first approach:

1. **Focus on yourself** (self-focus): put yourself, your unalienable individual rights and, when appropriate, your self-interest, before groups and (collectivist) ideals. It includes zeroing in on your goals and objectives
2. **Identify yourself as a distinct individual** (salience of the self): considers yourself, and demand to be considered, as an individual first and foremost rather than a "member of a group/nationality/ethnicity/etc. etc."
3. **Treat others as individuals** (individual salience): approach and deal with others as individuals first, with their own unique character, traits, and preferences

10 Commandments

So, how does an enlightened individualist think?

This chapter shows you how.

1. I Am Worthy of Life, Love, All Human Rights & The Pursuit of Happiness & Success

This is the very basic.

And, it starts with *self*-love, self-acceptance, and self-respect.
It's the most foundational building block of personal power.

It's incredible how much self-flagellation and dangerous disempowering messages you'll avoid with just this simple basic.
And it's incredible how far this simple step alone can take you, including in standing up for your basic rights and adopting assertive communication.
For example:

- **Self-love is the basic defense against guilt-tripping**: only when you love and accept yourself you're truly protected against our society;s mentally disempowering guilt trips.
  Some of them are:
  - White men guilt-tripping: because, supposedly, you had some "advantage" you should be ashamed of
  - Men guilt-tripping: because, supposedly, men abused men during all of human history (?(
  - Meat-eater guilt-tripping: because you're bad for eating animals
- **Self-love is the basis of assertiveness**: only people who believe that they are worthy of basic consideration will field basic demands for basic respect
- **Self-respect is the basis for social power and life success**: only people with a basic sense of self-respect will take action to avoid being disempowered, manipulated, or disrespected.

Only people who respect and love themselves can succeed and advance in the world.

Power University's fundamental belief of "I am worthy of fair treatment and respectful communication" is based on basic self-love and self-respect.

2. It's Me, First, Before & Above Any Group

Enlightened individualists see themselves as individuals first and foremost.

They might love the various groups they're part of, but their group belonging but *do not define them*.
instead, the enlightened individualist self-defines himself based on his individual beliefs, values, and actions.

A cascade of empowering attitudes, beliefs and mindsets ensue from this core mindset, including:

1. **Individual responsibility**: I am responsible for what happens in my life
2. **Individual accountability**: I answer for myself, and never for others
3. **Individual independence**: whatever my race/country/gender does, it says nothing of me as an individual
4. **Personal power**: whatever my background or group belonging, I can transcend it
5. **Personal agency**: provided that I am a generally value-adding individual, I maintain independence from external pressures and coercion, free to pursue my will, interests, and values

Of course, external power dynamics and constraints can sometimes decrease personal agency.
And sometimes, it might be a strategic good choice to subserve or follow -for a while, at least-.
However, that takes nothing away from the *mindset* and approach. Even when the individual can't actualize his individual free will and power, the mindset still maintains the *right* to personal agency.

Failure of The Law: Slave Belonging

> Slave belonging is the subordination of the self to a group

The opposite of the enlightened approach, the subordination of the self to a group, is a form of "self-slavery". Slaves don't own themselves, and someone who puts the group before himself doesn't fully own himself either.

As we shall see, the enslavement of the self is not just bad for the individual, but can be instrumental for evil against other individuals as well ("idealistic evil", spiral of silences, etc. etc.).

2.2. I Put My Interests Before Groups

There is a danger of mis-reading this law.

To some, it might sound selfish and asshole-like.

To me, the opposite is true, because **any pro-social act must be borne out of the ability and power to be selfish** ("good asshole"**).**

If not, you are just being prey of social coercion, social pressure, or leadership manipulation.
Or being a sheep.

Once you're capable of selfishness, comfortable with it, and not afraid of following through, then you can *choose* to serve whatever other bigger cause you choose to serve.
That's the crucial difference: the enlightened individualist chooses if, when, and what cause, group, or ideal to serve, rather than having someone else foist them upon him, or manipulate him into believing that he owes the group any sacrifice.

3. I Put My Interests Before Random People (no fandom)

This law might seem obvious on the surface.

Yet, **most people don't even realize they're putting themselves last**. In good part, it's because they confuse what "random people" really mean.

Random people are anyone with whom you don't have a significant, two-way street relationship based on emotional affection, or based on value-exchange.

When you follow this rule, you zero in on your lire and goals and your life, and you are infinitely more likely to achieve your goals, add value to the people around you, and enjoy a good life.
And the opposite is true, of course.

Let's see:

Failure of The Law: Celebrating Di Caprio's Oscar

I don't watch or follow who won what prize.
But I did find out when Di Caprio won an Oscar.

How?

Because "fans" went crazy when Di Capio "finally" had won an oscar. We can guess they also got personally disappointed and disturbed when he didn't win.
These fans are unlikely to succeed in life because they focus on other people's life, rather than their own.

A case of misplaced investment and emotional atachment?

No Fandom: Your focus Is On Yourself

This approach protects you against fandom and time-waste, and helps you stay focused on your goals, your life, your achievements, and *your* enjoyment.

Your life and your accomplishments are full-time jobs.
And it doesn't leave much free time to watch other people live their life.

At least, that's the mindset of the enlightened individualist.

Focus on the self includes:

- **No watching sports**: do sport yourself instead
  - Reading about "transfers" and "rumors": the fan equivalent of gossiping
- **No gossiping**: wasting time on other people's lives rather than yours
- **No pedestalizing**: including pics with celebs, which almost automatically puts you in the "less than" position

4. I Put Myself Above Any Man-Made Product

Enlightened individualists put the self before any product, object, or fetish.

Failing this law is the equivalent of “pedestalizing objects”.

When you “must” have a certain product or brand, you position yourself below that brand, and you send a disempowering message to the only brand that should matter: you.

The enlightened individualist looks beyond products’ hype, and goes to the source.
And he sees two man-made sources of fetishism:

1. the marketing/manipulation concocted by other men
2. the social dynamics leading to the over-evaluation of objects

And since the enlightened individualist believes that neither markets nor society are any better than he is, he doesn’t fall for it.
And especially so when the exchange is more about hype, than quality -think of athlete-endorsed sneakers that are made out of plastic-.

Note:

It doesn’t mean that the enlightened individualist doesn’t care about appearance or status, or that he’s “against brands”.
He probably loves some brands, and he uses some of them because he knows they have real social significance.
But he puts himself first, and sees products as (interchangeable) *tools* to achieve goals or increase his well-being.
They’re means to an end, and not ends in themselves.

And of course, he’d never stand in a queue, waiting to buy:

Failure of The Law: Wasting Own Time to Own Status Symbols

Queueing to buy “luxury” is the equivalent of saying “Impressing others and enriching smart marketers takes priority over my time and living my life”

4.2. I’m Above Objects = No Fetishism, No Memorabilia Collections

Craving possession beyond practical use is a form of fetishism.

Fetishism is defined on Wikipedia as “an object believed to have supernatural powers, or a human-made object that has power over others”.
Obviously, enlightened individuals aren’t too keen on giving *things* that much power.

Collecting things, memorabilia, or even art can be considered a form of fetishism.

When overdone, it gives way too much power and attention to *things*. Things that are usually inconsequential to your goals, life, or to simply living a good life.
So the enlightened individualist isn't big into collecting things.

Note:

This is not to say you can't enjoy things, products, or art.
As a matter of fact, you *should* enjoy them.
It simply means that you don't make owning and collecting things your life priority. Your priority is on yourself, and you're bigger than any object.

5. I Put Myself Above Man-Made Institutions

This same attitude applies to institutions.

Ivy League universities, big-name employers, Nobel prizes, Oscars… Much of their power comes from misplaced trust in what has become a brand, and taken life on its own.

The enlightened individualist looks beyond the facade though, and behind the facade of any institution, company, government, university, or award, there are other humans.
And, as humans, they are no better than he is.
As per group dynamics, the people behind the institutions are not above pettiness, personal biases, politics, and politically-driven choices.

People chasing the big-name university or employer are giving power away to both those institutions and to society's approval -just ask yourself: would they care to join Harvard if there were no other people living on earth (or if their Asian tiger parents wouldn't be so proud of them?) Probably not-.

So the enlightened individualist thinks: if they're not above bias and politics, and no better than I am… How can they properly assess me?
They can't.
And why should their judgment carry any major weight?
It doesn't.

This is not to say of course that awards, Harvard, or Goldman Sachs on your CV mean nothing: their effects are very real. And they do say something.
But the enlightened individualist adds a caveat: many other times, they say little. And they probably say nothing about what I truly value.

The enlightened individualists who put their own judging criteria first are not personally defined by the presence or absence of a big-name institution or award.
Because, remember:

> When you feel defined by a brand, you are owned by a brand

Failure of the Law: Housebroken In Golden Jail

I respect a guy with a big-name university, award, or employer.

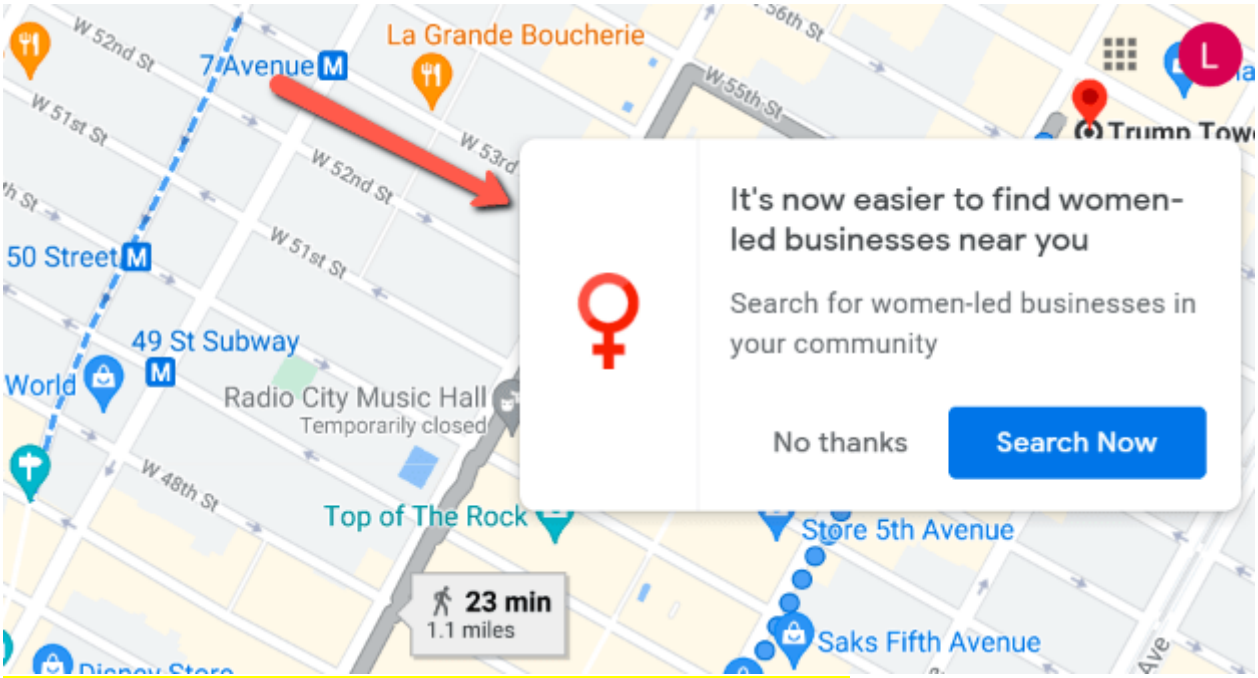
But from my point of view, it's also the sign that he "plays it within the system". A system he hasn't shaped.
He's not a trailblazer, and he's not on a personal path to finding his own unique voice.
There is a reason why Nassim Taleb calls employees "housebroken dogs"

Still, if he's cool with the socially laid-out path, great!
But many are just following the mainstream path because of what *others* deem as "good".

Such as, he's following a path based on other people's criteria.

There are advantages to following what society deems as the "good" path: you do get recognition, you get a good job and a generally stable and "safe" life.
But the ubermensch usually aspires for more than "stable and safe".
And the disadvantages of "stable and safe" are huge. They include some loss of individualism, and some limitations on your personal freedom of action and expression.

After all, anyone who's been hired at big-name Google has to put up with Google's social determinism, and virtue signaling:



Supporting "women-led business" makes enlightened individualists shudder
Read more here, and keep on reading for one example of the "Nobel prize trap".

5.3. Do You Come Before Law & Commandments, Too? Yes, But Be Strategic About It

The legal and religious systems are also man-made systems.

So the enlightened individual feels that if law or commandments forbid or coerce a behavior to which he feels entitled to, then it's fair for him to break the law.
And especially so if the behavior doesn't really hurt anyone.

Funny enough for those who haven't yet grasped the concept, the enlightened individualist is still free to consider himself a law-abiding or religious person.
By putting his values, logic, and critical thinking first, he maintains the freedom to reject some specific, low-level rules, while still accepting the *general validity* of a legal system or of religious faith.

Of course, breaking the law can have some negative repercussions, so the enlightened individualist might strategically obey, or he might choose to operate in less risky but higher freedom legal grey areas.

If the enlightened individual is a believer, he might respect the church as an institution and respect some good pastors, but he ultimately puts *his* relationship to God above the church, which is a man-made institution.

Sharing Power With Creators

There are different ways of looking at God and religion:

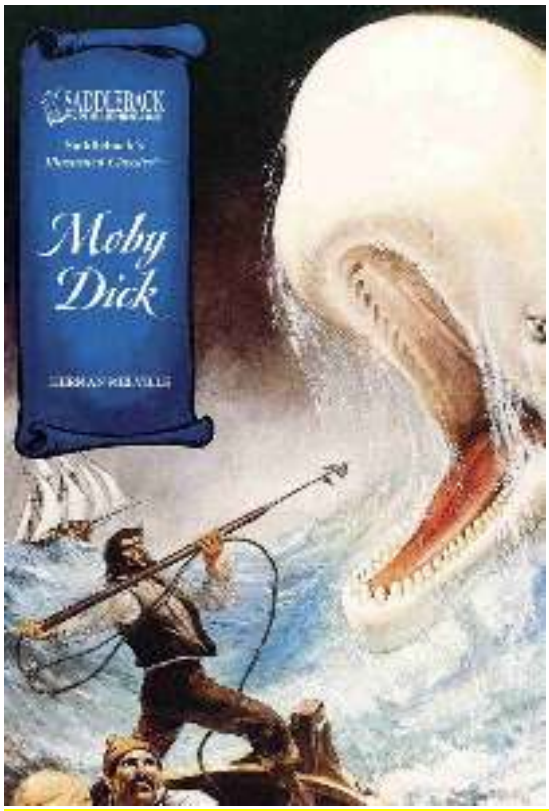
1. Fear and crow as powerless creatures in front of an omnipotent God

2. Act in the name of God, based on either scriptures, or human-led churches
3. Feel empowered for having been created and/or for reuniting with a God (or feel empowered for God has no man above others)

Religious enlightened individualists see God more like love, than fear. So they're not in group one.

And they don't entertain the type of Gods who meddle in human affairs, playing with them like little muppets.

They believe instead that God empowered them to decide and act as they please, in freedom.
And see no contradiction or conflict between God and their own personal power. For example, Jordan Peterson says that Judeo-Christianity is based on individualism.
Jordan Peterson is a perfect example of a fierce individualist and deeply religious man,



Moby Dick's symbolism can be seen as the (individual) empowerment of man against nature, fate, or even vis-a-vis a God that no more dictates everything of men's life.

If they are creationists, they ascribe to the notion that even though God might have created humans, it also empowered them to choose.

Human Creators: Parents

Frictions between individual empowerment and creators can also exist between worldly creators: your parents.

Some cultures -and parents- oblige their children to do everything the parent says, to provide for them in old age, or even to finance them as soon as they hit working age (I've met several women who worked for their parents).

Don't let the blood ties fool you!

These cultures and parents' mindsets that "I have done you, and now you must serve me" is nothing short of an owner-serf dynamic.

Enlightened individualists might still respect and love parents with an owner attitude. They might even *want* to provide for them. But they sure as hell reject the *obligation*, as well as the servitude and subordination.

After conception, they're now their own individuals, with their inalienable power to chose and do as they please.
"I hope you can accept that", they tell their parents, with the tone you reserve for your best "take it or leave it" offers.

6. I'm A Human, And No Other Human Is Above Me

This law is deep.

And it has many ramifications for personal and mental empowerment.

Being "above" doesn't mean of course that nobody is better at something, more suited to do something, or more skilled at something.
Of course someone is more knowledgeable or skilled at something than you are -and thanks God-.

This law means that, as a whole, nobody is worth more as a human being and that you're as worthy as a human being as anyone else.

6.2. Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto

This is a Latin sentence that stuck with me for its power ever since I was a kid.

Roughly translated, it means something like:

> I'm a human, and nothing concerning humans can be alien to me

You being a human, you are part of the human collective.
It's very equalitarian, but in a very empowering way.
It means that **as a human, you are automatically part of all human magnificence**, everything that the species has done and will ever do.

One might say that you're also part of the crappiest things humanity has done.
And in a way, it's true. You're *all* of it, and not bound by negativity and positivity. But *you* choose what to distance from, what to resonate with, what to *embody*, and what to do less of, and more of.
So why would you choose to vibe and perpetuate the negative?

Don't be like Eckardt Tolle.
He's a wonderful spiritual teacher, but he's disempowering the readers of his book "A New Earth" when he tells them they are bad because of the millions of people that other humans just like you have killed -"original sin", anyone?-.
That's human-shaming.
F*ck that.
It's pure nonsense.
Choose to be the inheritor of the great humans who stood for human rights, love, and dignity instead.

As an enlightened individualist, you can -and, we might say, are *responsible*– for choosing the positive impact (thanks to Stef for this correction).

Whatever another human can, you can

Being a human just like any other great human, also means that:

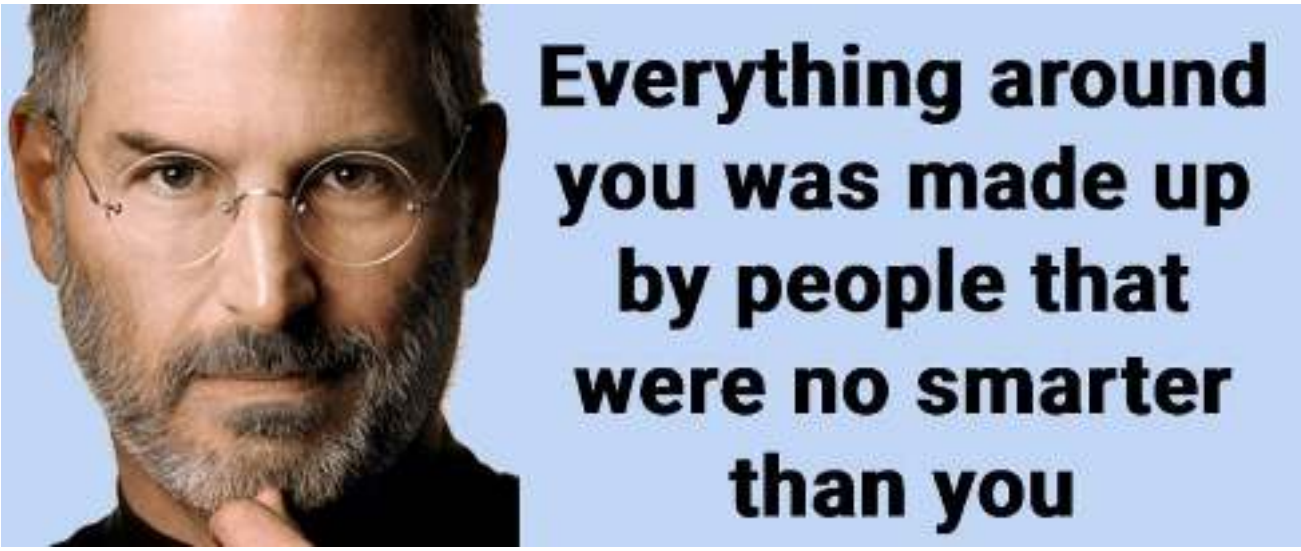
"whatever great things any man does, you can do as well".

Of course, maybe not always the *exact* same thing. That would be stupid to even expect. People who achieve great things specialize at something they either have a strong genetic predisposition for, or grown lifetime expertise at (often both).

But you can have the exact same positive impact in your field of choice, which is what really matters.

Instead, disempowered people look at other great human beings and think they are so special and so different than they are.

See this concept in Steve Job's famous quote:



> Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact: Everything around you that you call life was made up by people that were no smarter than you. And you can change it, you can influence it… Once you learn that, you'll never be the same again.
>
> *Steve Jobs*

Steve Jobs was an individualist.
He believed in his personal power, and with that mindset, he actualized it.

Failure of The Law: "can you imagine flying a plane"?

> **Un-enlightened guy:** can you imagine flying a plane, how crazy that would be?
> **Enlightened guy**: yeah, I can, I think it's totally doable, and would actually be fun

I remember a former boss with a trying question:

would you rather fly a plane by yourself with 3 days to learn, or full of people with one week to learn?

But more than the question, it was *how* he asked, that was telling.
He asked it as if whatever you chose, you were f*cked. He spoke as if flying a plane was this crazy impossible thing and pilots were pulling off miracles day in, day out.

6.3. Mindset: If Someone Can, So Can I

Me, I felt that flying a plane was relatively easy.

If it wasn't, then planes would be crashing left and right. Since they don't, it means that it's a safe process that anyone can do.
And my point of view was: if those guys who walk out of the cockpit can, then chances are that I can do it too.

And indeed, I didn't land a plane (yet), but flying is easier than driving a stick shift car:

View this post on Instagram
A post shared by Lux (@lux_in_incognito)

Walking on the moon in 1969, launching a billion-dollar company, pioneering a new social sciences field like power dynamics, or simply having a wonderful life… These are also all things that the enlightened individualist believes are within his reach.

6.4. The Empowered Sense of Limitlessness

This mindset can be extended indefinitely, into any human endeavor.

Of course someone can do something you can't, but your mindset is that if you'd work hard on it, you can at least more or less significantly reduce the gap.
Or you could have done that at your prime, maybe. Or at least reached your personal best while trying.
Or you could have done the same if you were born with the same physical or mental traits.

It seems like a lot of "if" in there, but this is less about achieving specific goals, and more about humanizing and normalizing the human experience.
If someone could do X, then X is within human reach. And you could do X, and maybe X+Y, in some other universe.

6.5. The Antifragile Sense of Limitlessness

Ultimately though, the enlightened ubermensch is not overly concerned about specific achievements.

That guy deadlifted 500kg?
Cool.
This other guy lapped Monza in 1:21.046?
What a lap!
That guy planked for 8h, ran 200km straight, or whatever?

Wow!
But the ubermensch admires the drive and dedication more than the actual goal.

Specific achievements are only the lower-level fruits of higher-level mindsets and drives.

This means that, for the ubermensch, **the real test of a good or successful life is not what you were born with, but what you do with it**.
That mindset allows you to admire great success from others, while also feeling part with it.

Failure of The Law: The "Slave Mindset" of Worth

Slave mindset based on worth:

> To believe that an entity or individual is more valuable than you are because of a higher rank or title they possess, or because of some external markers of success

Who is most likely to become, or to remain, a slave?
It's the individual who believes that someone else, or the "owner", is inherently more valuable, of course.

The slave mindset has both a personal value point of view, and an emotional point of view.

From a personal value point of view, some people feel "less of" if their title is "less of" or if they are "less of" based

on some external marker of success -say, “amount of money one posses”, or “size of muscles”-.

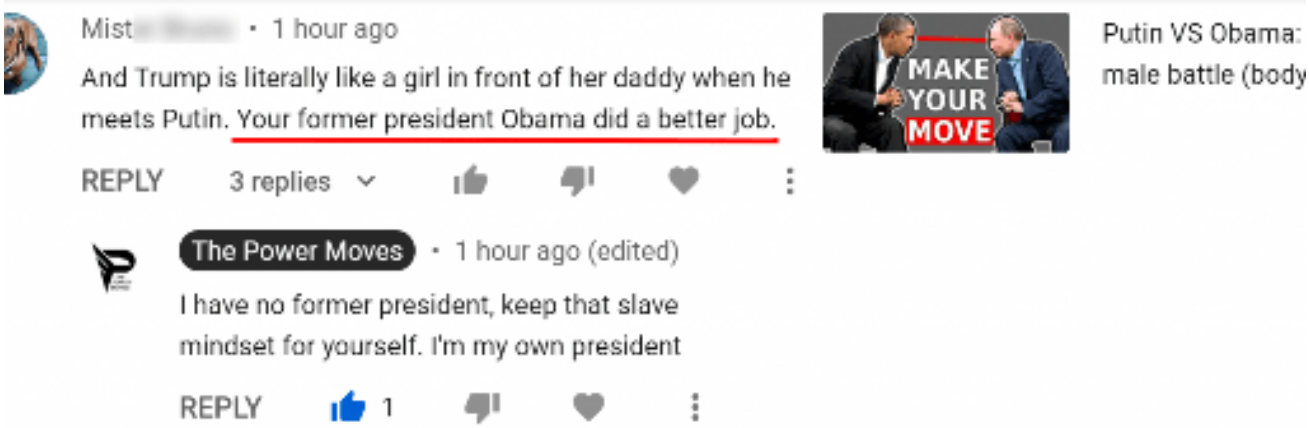
And from an emotional point of view, some people project their identities onto those who are above them.
So feel “represented” by their group-leader, president, prime minister, or CEO. They feel great and proud when they think “their” leader is good, and feel bad and personally diminished when they feel their president is poor.

Failure of The Law: The “Slave Mindset” of Representativeness

Salve mindset based on representativeness:

> To believe that an entity or individual represents you simply because you’re part of that entity, or because someone else is at the top of that entity

That is a very disempowering attitude because you are giving (emotional) power and control to an external individual.
Call it a “slave identity”.



Example of slave frame, where the accuser probably had a slave identity, and rejection of slave frame
What’s the enlightened individualistic approach here?

Of course, the enlightened individual believes that nobody is inherently more valuable than he is based on rank.
And, as a consequence, **nobody represents him simply because they’re above him in some very relative hierarchy.**
Only *he* can represent *himself*.

The boss, president, or CEO, might be good or bad, but he is simply a man, and he has no special power to represent or speak for him.

As a rule of thumb, the farther away someone is, the less the enlightened individualist feels represented by him.

Why?

Because of the “proximity rule”.

More on that later.

7. I Only Attach & Invest Into What I Can Control

The enlightened individualist only invests and emotionally attaches onto:

1. What he can control and/or
2. What gives value back

Failure of The Law: Sports Fans

Fandom to any sports team means to “attach and invest without returns and control”.

You give your emotional attachment to some external entity, and you get nothing back. Actually, you get something: personal dependence on that external entity.

I speak from experience.
I used to get so distraught when “my team” or “my sports guy” would lose.
That’s disempowering because it invests -and partially “fuses” as we shall see- your ego onto groups and entities that are outside you, that you have no control over, and that, importantly, do nothing for you whether they win or lose.
From a value exchange point of view, it’s a sucker’s trade. And from a mental and personal power point of view, it’s very disempowering.

Women, who tend to be more pragmatic, also tend to take points off from men who are too into sports. And especially so if it comes at the cost of personal focus and success.
I like this example from “Beautiful Girls”:

> **Him**: So, what part of Chicago are you from
> **Her**: You know Chicago?
> **Him**: Yeah, I know like Soldier’s Field
> **Her**: It’s a football field (nervous laughter saying “you’re a total douche”)

Investment-worthy criteria

On average, the enlightened individual level of investment depends on:

1. Closeness: How close you are to the group
2. Personal power: How influential you are in the group
3. Returns: How influential the group is to your well being and/or goals

The first two relate to control and power, while the latter relates to “value-exchange accounting”.

With the sports team example, if fandom is based on city, it can add some value by facilitating social relationships -albeit few high-quality people are big fans-.
On the other hand, you still have little influence on the team, and the team itself does little for you.

Focus on what you control & get: no pedestalizing

One of the consequences of failing to follow this rule includes men pedestalizing women.

The pedestalizer has little control over the pedestalized person, and is getting back far less than what he gives.
For that reason, the enlightened individualist tends to be immune from pedestalizing.

8. I Choose Myself Before Any Values

The enlightened individualist doesn’t follow any carved-in-stone set of rules, laws, or values.

Often, that includes self-written rules and values.

That can sound strange, I guess.
After all, self-help gurus tell us to write down our values and live by them, right?

The issue with that is that life and reality are complex and fluid.

So, eventually, you will almost invariably find yourself in a position to either compromise your effectiveness to adhere to a set of rules, or compromise your self-esteem and self-image while you break your own rules.

And that's when the mental shenanigans to salvage your self-image begin (AKA "self-manipulation, "rationalization" and "cognitive dissonance").

Plus, as we will see, values lend themselves all too well to all sorts of manipulation, distortions, and arm twisting.

What's the alternative?

Again, we go back to you.

You, and ideally you as a generally value-adding individual are the foundation, and not any "rules", "laws", or written values.
How you express yourself as a goal-striving individual and/or a "force for good" varies depending on people you interact with, situations, and goals.
You become fluid, just like the world is.

Again, you can be a supremely moral individual without adhering to any set of values.
An identity of a "value-adding" individual is all that's necessary.

Machiavellian Benefits: Higher Congruence

Machiavellian individuals don't self-manipulate and experience little dissonance (Christie and Geis, 1970).

Why?
Because they don't bind themselves with externally-imposed ethical and moral rules.

With this mindset, you can have the same mental resilience of high Machs even while being a generally value-adding individual.

9. My Judging Criteria Come Before External Criteria

Enlightened individualists choose their judging criteria and prioritize them.

That stands in opposition to most people, who inherit their judging criteria from society, or from some influential other.
And that can easily place them in the child role of judge power dynamics.

Attention:

This law doesn't say "external criteria don't matter".
That would be the good old -and often weak and hollow- "I don't care what others think". And that is more often a defensive reaction to the emotional pain of negative judgment than true self-empowerment.
External criteria *do* matter to personal success and life's satisfaction because we can't succeed in society without also looking at society's criteria.

The difference is that if the external criteria don't serve to pursue your goals, then, contrary to most others, the enlightened individualist is able to ignore them.
And because he puts his own criteria first, **the enlightened individualist is able to keep high self-esteem in spite of negative external judgments**.

For an example, read this forum entry:

- **Don't Sweat The Small Stuff**

9.2. I Judge Others With My Criteria, As Individuals

Many people assign values to individuals based on external criteria.

Those external criteria include group of belonging, ranks, and titles.

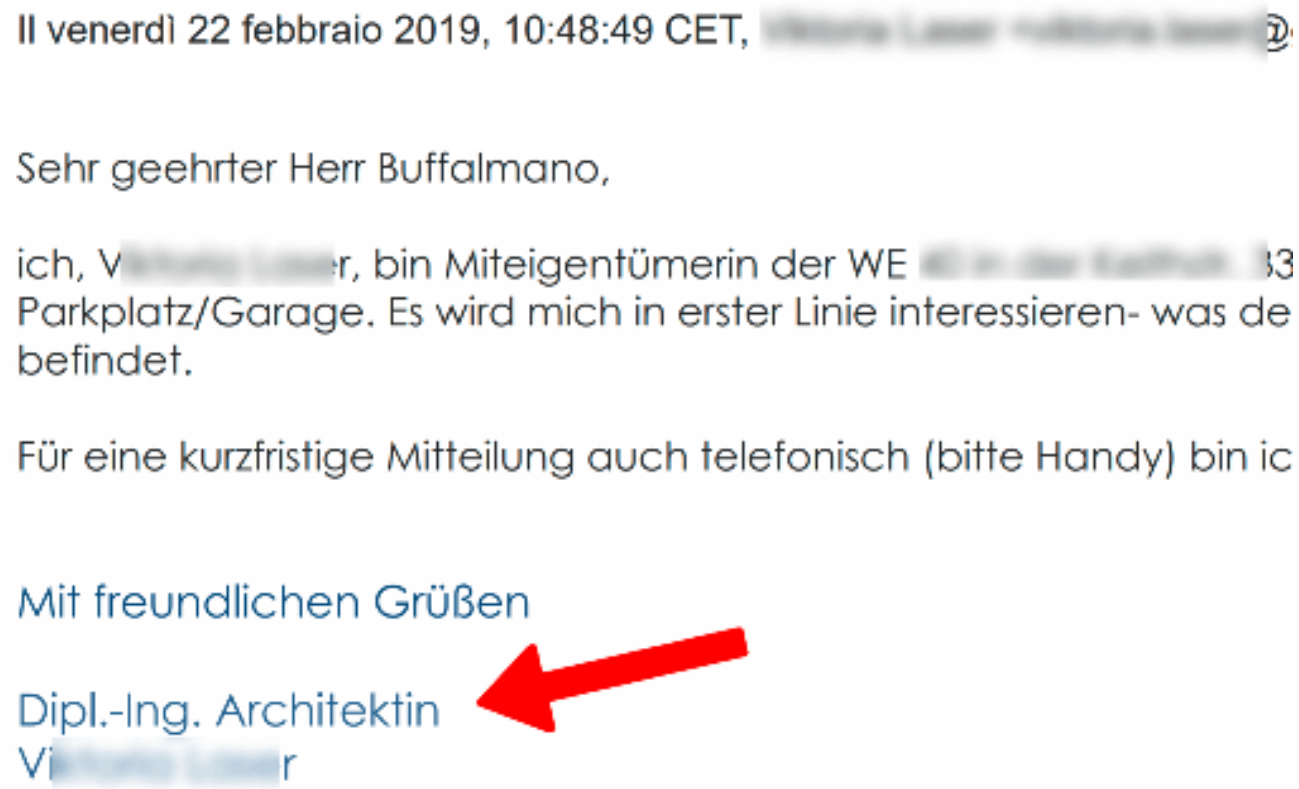
“Ranks” and titles include:

- CEO
- Prime minister
- General
- “Head of… “
- Professor Emeritus

Ranks are invested of power by the group of people within society, group, or organization, that respects and recognize those ranks.

Once a group of people starts assigning power and authority based on rank, the “ranks” tend to take life on their own.
And people start respecting, admiring, and looking at the *rank*, rather than the individual.

Ranks and titles can often become a game of power within society.
In Germany, for example, people love to preface their names with all the ranks they can get:


Il venerdì 22 febbraio 2019, 10:48:49 CET,

Sehr geehrter Herr Buffalmano,

ich, V r, bin Miteigentümerin der WE 3
Parkplatz/Garage. Es wird mich in erster Linie interessieren- was de
befindet.

Für eine kurzfristige Mitteilung auch telefonisch (bitte Handy) bin ic

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Dipl.-Ing. Architektin
V r

And that’s when I got to know that my neighbor, writing from her personal email, was a “dip.”, “ing.”, and “female architect”. Good to know.
Maybe I should have replied with “entrepreneur, founder, CEO” in my own signature? ⍰

Something similar happens when someone belongs to a certain group that, for some reason or another, has become synonymous with exclusivity or high value.
The group then becomes a form of personal title and people look at the title first, instead of the individual first.
That includes being a Harvard alumnus, a mensa member, or, these days, it might even mean being a member of the SEAL special ops.

Note:
The enlightened individualist does not necessarily reject the rank, and does not necessarily discount belonging to any elite group.

That would be childish rebellion.

As a matter of fact, he often respects the people who achieved a certain position in life.

But, crucially, the enlightened individualist does not consider anyone superior to him simply because they have a certain title. The enlightened individualist thinks he is capable of achieving any title as well. So, **to decide how much respect to award to someone the enlightened individualist looks at the *individual* behind the title**, and is not swayed by the man-made construct of titles.
And he's also not swayed by the allure of "group exclusivity", which is often based on single traits or specific and limited abilities, and not "general worthiness".

10. I Expect Little From The World, & Demand Lots From Myself

The enlightened individualist thinks "my life, my responsibility".

And he sees himself as the main agent responsible for doing or achieving whatever he wants to achieve.

Diverging Life Paths: Poors VS Rich

This is an often-overlooked mindset aspect of financial success.

And you can trace it back to how people look at success:

- Is success and personal well-being mostly socially-driven, or mostly self-driven?

the more someone expects society, the government, or institutions to be the conduit of personal success and well-being, the more they expect and complain, and the poorer they are.
In my opinion, this is why southern Italy and socialist-infused regions are poorer: the culture is to hold the government responsible for the economical well-being of people. It's about demanding help from the state, expecting it… And complain when it's not forthcoming.

The opposite approach, to demand from oneself, leads to more active, driven, successful, and self-empowered citizens.
That's why countries with a capitalist and "self-made man ethos" tend to be richer.

By focusing on himself and his own personal power and agency, the enlightened individualist belongs to the second group, of course.

Self-Focus Over Group-Focus

This concept overlaps with the locus of control, but it's more about self-focus, or group focus.

The proof that the two concepts are different is that even successful and driven men with an internal locus of control can fall for the group focus.

Seen an example here:

Failure of The Law: Going Down With The (Social) Ship

Listen to Michael Franzese, a successful, driven, and smart businessman:

> **Michael**: I have a pessimistic view of where America is heading. I fear for my kids how America is going to look like, I really do
> **Tyrus**: Unfortunately I agree with you. It's already over. China won.

Michael and Tyrus' pessimism and fears all stem from an exaggerated group-focus. They give too much power to larger group entities, and too little credit to individuals.

Why should you be so afraid about what “America” does?
And particularly, what it does “against China?”.

Whichever loosely connected economic group you might be part of has little bearing on what *you* do *as an individual*.
As long as commerce among individuals remains a staple of human life as it’s always been… You can thrive anywhere.
Even if things get really bad in whichever place you’re at, humans are mobile and can move somewhere else. Or they can stay, and be the catalyst for the turnaround, why not.
The point is: options abound for the enlightened individualist because he believes in himself *and* puts the onus of success on himself.

Once you internalize the mindset that you can succeed independently of your country or group, you’re more optimistic, more empowered, and far more likely to succeed.

Read more later on “social complainers” and “social philosophers”.

10.2. Expect Little From Politicians, Demand Much From Yourself

Enlightened individualists are too busy on themselves to get deep into politics.

It’s not because they don’t think politics is important, or because they don’t think politicians can make a difference -of course they might-.
But the **enlightened individualist cannot invest too much time discussing politics because he feels that the biggest difference he can make is by working on *his* life, and *his* projects**.

Wasting too much time on politicians’ agenda subordinates you to politicians.
It indirectly says that you don’t believe *you* can make a difference, and that the little you can do, is by discussing other people telling you how *they* are going to make a difference.

So as much as he doesn’t worry the country/government can ruin him, the enlightened individualist also doesn’t expect any politician to revolutionize *his* life.
You should know why now: because he feels that he is the only one who is responsible for making changes in his life.
Of course, this excludes all enlightened individualists who work in politics or who made political influence their goal.

And, again, this is more about mindsets and higher-level beliefs than actual capabilities.
An enlightened individualist might surely find himself in a position where changing his life is, temporarily or not, beyond his (current) capability.
But he still believes in the *principle*.

Also on the topic, see:

- **Political manipulation**

How Enlightened Individualism Empowers You

We saw some of the advantages already.

But for clarity, let’s list them here:

1. Superior Approach For Personal Success

You are far more likely to succeed at anything you do when you focus on yourself first and take responsibility for *your* results as an individual.

2. Higher Life Effectiveness

Enlightened individualism cuts out major sources of time waste from your life, and redirects them where they make the biggest impact: on yourself, your plans, and your goals.

Focus: what makes a difference for you, and where you can make a difference on

The efficiency-minded individualist also narrows his focus to what makes a difference only, and to what *he* can make a difference on.

When he's on a goal-oriented journey, he does little philosophy, theology, news, and opinions (unless he's an opinionist paid to distract others, that is). Nothing comes out of those except warm air.
Instead, he focuses strictly on what yields the most practical outcomes. He also generally sticks to his area of growing expertise. That's, after all, where he can make a difference, where he wields the most power, and where he profits the most.

That approach makes him highly efficient, and efficiency is power.

3. Superior Approach For Life Satisfaction

When you link your ego, pride, self-esteem and happiness to some external sources, you make yourself *dependent* on those external sources.

When you focus on yourself first, you take back control of how you (decide to) feel.
That means that your self-esteem is self-generated, and this is a necessary step for developing an antifragile ego.

4. Higher Social Effectiveness (Through Better Individuals' Assessments)

There are two ways of accurately assessing people (Cronbach, 1955):

- Via a solid grasp of *general* human psychology
- By focusing on the individual, and how he differs from the rest

One is not always and necessarily better than the other.

For example, Christie and Gleis showed that Machiavellians assess people more accurately by assigning to the individual the unflattering tendencies of the human species -from general to individual-.
However, low Machiavellians better adapt their assessment to *individuals* -importantly, they were less overall accurate because they underestimated people's general Machiavellianism-.

Balancing Naive Optimism & Predatory Cynicism

In a way, both groups fell short.

The high Machs make out people to be too untrustworthy, and might miss out on some win-win opportunities and relationships -call it the "cynic trap"-.
The low Machs make out people to be too trustworthy, and might be exploited for it -call it the "naive trap"-.

The enlightened individualist strikes the perfect balance.
By looking at the individual first he avoids the problem of over-generalizing from population to individual.
And with power intelligence and general, population-level psychological awareness, he combines the best of both worlds for the highest levels of accuracy.

In short, **the enlightened individualist has the potential to be far more accurate at assessing people**.
And that's an important aspect of social and life success.

5. Higher Social Power

When you believe in your core that you're as valuable as anyone else -or more-, you grow more socially resilient. Add to that the belief that your criteria come before external criteria, and you become impervious to negative judgment (judge power dynamics).

6. Transcend Family & Background

Individualists believe individuals to be "bigger" than any circumstance or background.

Included in the background are:

- Family of origin
- Location of origin / childhood
- Socio-economic conditions
- History of abuse
- University attended

Failure of Collectivism: The "Family" Trap

I remember once sitting with a group of people that, me excluded, you could define as "winners".

As the alcohol started flowing, one lady not so humbly bragged about her father's team being awarded the nobel prize.
She was proud, while also feeling the pressure to achieve something similar.

The guy to her side got pensive, and then finally started gushing.

And I couldn't believe my ears.
I was shocked this otherwise smart and self-development-focused guy was feeling inadequate because of his humble family of origin.
Not only I felt that was extremely disempowering, but it was also very offensive to his parents who raised him, cared for him, and provided for him.

How would an enlightened individualist react to that "look at my impressive background" story?
He would have drawn the following conclusions:

1. Chances are that the lady's dad is probably a very good scientist, but the award doesn't say much about him as a man
2. It says little about *her* skills as a scientist
3. It says *nothing* about me

Indeed, if anything, an enlightened individualist feels that a humble background says even *better* things about high achievers.

7. Thrive When Groups Fail

As social animals we have this tendency:

1. We feel empowered when our group does well
2. We feel powerless when our group falters

Today, as society has grown beyond our ability to personally assess it, we mostly use media news to assess how "our group" is doing -and the media tends to be negatively biased-.
Feelings, beliefs, and actions follow from how we feel our group is doing.

See again “law #10”.

8. Transcending Genders: The Power of Fluidity

Genders are one of the most significant groups individuals belong to.

There are several ways in which: the gender constructs can potentially interfere with individual’s empowerment

- Manipulation: as in “a real man would do this”, hence you must do this if you want to be a real man
- Pressure to conform: social forces apply pressure on individuals to conform to whatever culture designates as “masculine” or “feminine”.
- Self-pressure: based on what society, parents, or themselves feel it means to be “masculine” or “feminine”, many individuals pressure themselves into behaviors and roles that make them unhappy -and no more effective-

Now, don’t get me wrong: since what people think *does* matter, it’s usually a good idea not to stray too far from what society deems as either masculine or feminine.
See for example Clinton’s failure, partially due to her lack of femininity.

And for dating success, it’s all also a good idea to possess -or to be able to display- certain typically feminine or masculine traits.

However, beyond that level of effectiveness, for most adjusted folks, gender constructs can quickly become a constrictive cage.
Plenty of pundits today leverage that internal pressure to conform to school others on “how to be a man”. It’s an effective sell, since most men feel that pressure to “prove” their masculinity.

The enlightened individualist takes a different approach.

He pays limited attention to the various “men are from mars” types of books.
Albeit he’s fully aware that genders *do* are different, he is also aware that, on many crucial traits, the variance is huge.
And he is aware that high-quality men and high-quality women are more similar to each other than they are to low-quality individuals of the same gender.

The enlightened individualist also pays little attention to the pundits teaching others “how to be a man” or, popular these days, “how an independent woman should be”.
Of course, the enlightened individualist sees no reason why he should listen to anyone else teaching him how he should be.
And, his ego not invested in either masculinity or femininity, he has nothing to prove to anyone, and is free to do his thing.
The enlightened individualist moves fluidly and chooses behavior based on what’s effective, rather than what’s “typically masculine” or “typically feminine”.
And, ultimately, that makes him far more effective in life.

I know for example that several women have in good part enjoyed my company thanks to an overall high confidence and high power behavior while still being able to emphatically bond and connect like few other men can.

9. You Become A Hardened Target (Manipulation-Resistant)

Putting yourself first immunizes you against 90% of manipulation attempts.

Manipulation is defined as “advancing the interests of the manipulator, while coming at a cost for the manipulator’s target(s)”.
But when you look at the world from a value-exchange point of view and what’s in it for you, most manipulation

attempts suddenly become crystal clear.

As a matter of fact, some manipulations start to sound ludicrous:

- **Swearing allegiance to the flag? =** I gain nothing, the political leadership does
- **"You don't need a man"** = dubious gains for me, but she gains with less competition
- **"I've done this just for you"** = I gain nothing with that info, but he gains social credit

About that last one, enlightened individualism also protects you against white-knighting and providing for value-taking women.
Also read "female domestication":

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

And also see "manipulative negotiations".

9.2. Hardened Target Against Con Artists

Says psychologist Maria Konnikova of Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme:

> It was an affinity scheme, it was insidery. We have to take care of each
> other; he's one of us."
> Madoff is far from alone.
>
> Con artists often use communities (…) The authority we grant someone comes often as more of an afterthought than anything else, by virtue of their belonging to the exact right group
>
> *Konnikova, 2016*

An individualist would have been more likely to look at Madoff twice as suspiciously when he tried to leverage his "Jewishness".

10. Everyone Gains: The Social Benefits

Albeit "individualism" sounds selfish, **enlightened individualism is far more pro-social than collectivism is**.

Some of the social benefits include:

- **Meritocracy**

Meritocracy is based on individual skills and ability, which is what enlightened individualism focuses on.
Everyone gains with meritocracy because society becomes more effective.

- **Fewer victims**

A society with more enlightened individuals is a society with fewer people to exploit and take advantage of.
And as Stef reminds us, fewer people with a victim mentality.

- **More social cohesion / less racism**

Xenophobia comes natural to our species, says Jared Diamond.
And you are NOT going to cure that with political correctness.
Enlightened individualism instead does the trick.
Much of racism is based on inferring and extrapolating group properties onto the individual.

The enlightened individualist does not deny that *at group level* there might be differences -read on-, but by putting the individual first, the enlightened individualist tends to be less prone to racism.

- **Progress and innovation**

Progress and innovation are based on cooperation but founded on individual's drive and skills.

Collectivism represses and perpetuates things as they are. Enlightened individualists changed and advance the world.

- **Less virtue-signaling**

Virtue-signaling might not exact the highest cost on society, but it does cost something nonetheless.

In a world of enlightened individualists, a good chunk of virtue signaling cease to exist.

For example, it's ludicrous for enlightened individualists to "support women-led businesses", because they'd rather look at the individual merit of each business.
Read more here.

And an enlightened individualist wouldn't go to a "minority" and say "I support you" because he believes the individual always has the power to be the exception.
Read more here.

Dangers of Group Dynamics

Enlightened individualism contrasts with having one's ego "fused", or overly-invested, with groups and external entities and constructs.

First, a due clarification:

Some might confuse here "collectivism", and "cooperation".
The two are very different.
Cooperation is how individuals achieve win-win, make the pie larger, and make everyone better off. Cooperation is even more effective when it's empowered individualists who cooperate.
Collectivism instead is putting the group above the individual, and has nothing to do with cooperation. If anything, it has to do with coercion.

Groups per se are not bad nor good.
Most social groups are GREAT and we need them.
But there are *some* value-taking groups, dynamics, and group leaders that can sometimes turn toxic and coercive against individuals.

As enlightened individuals, let's learn what are the risks and red flags to watch out for:

1. Group Coercion Limits Your Freedom

Coercion, in its different forms, is quite common in groups.

Coercion includes:

- **Tribes dynamics and rites of passage seek to pre-plan your life path**

Some authors of male self-help have a rosy view of tribes -see Junger, Tomassi, Donovan-.

And with the rosy and romanticized view of tribe belonging often comes the glorification and romanticization of the "rites of passage" to turn boys into men.

Albeit tribes and rites of passage are not per se any bad and do have some good aspects, little attention is given to how tribe dynamics and rites of passage often turn coercive and repressive.
And, when not outright repressive, almost always freedom-limiting.

Besides the fact that some rites of passage are an excuse to haze and harass younger men, enlightened individualists reject the externally mandated criteria of "*how* to become a man", *when* to become a man", or "*what* it means to be a man" (also, on some authors' misplaced assumption of "alphaness" of the rite of passages, in the Sambia tribe, male on male fellation is part of the right of passage, swallowing mandatory).

The enlightened individualist, of course, decides that for himself.

Furthermore, the enlightened individualist has outgrown the tribalist ethos.

A rite of passage to make you feel like a man?
Going back to the tribe so you can feel homely?
Appealing, somehow, but that's not the answer.

No thanks, the enlightened individualist steps forward into the future and makes the new world his oyster.
A new world that, in our case, offers a million more possibilities for personal empowerment, success, and life enjoyment.

- **Pressure to toe the line**

Many groups oppose members who think and act differently.

Those members decrease group uniformity and, potentially, cohesion.
That is especially bad for the leader, since he loses power over the group.

That's why many groups pressure individuals to "toe the line".

- **Pressure to keep you in the group**

Baumeister says that groups, and most of all idealistic groups, tend to place a heavy stigma on people who leave the group.

People who leave the group represent a big threat: they show there is another and different way. Maybe a better one. So they must be scorned and cut off.

That's why most groups discourage other possible solutions and worldviews while talking up the group's only "right way".

- **Pressure to subordinate personal interests for the group** (or, often, its leaders)

There is often an inherent conflict of interest between what's good for the group, and what's good for the individual.

So the group seeks to pressure, coerce, or manipulate the individual into giving up more of his individual pie in favor of the group's pie.
You can see that more in detail workplace environments:

> 21 Conflicts of Interest (Your Boss Doesn't Want You to Know)

Governments can also coerce their citizens.
In some ways, paying taxes is a form of group coercion, albeit we can argue that there are benefits to the individual as well.

However, some other forms of government coercion can include extremely high risks for the individual, with little to no upsides.
Military draft during most wars is an example.

Says Steven Pinker:

> Of course it is genuinely admirable for one individual to sacrifice his or her interests for those of many

> individuals. It's quite another thing when a person is forced to make the supreme sacrifice for the benefit of a charismatic leader, a square of cloth, or colors on a map. Nor is it sweet and right to clasp death in order to prevent a province from seceding, expand a sphere of influence, or carry out an irredentist crusade.

Well said, Mr. Pinker.
An enlightened individualist couldn't agree more.

- **Collectivist values and ideals to curtail individual freedom**

To subordinate the individual's interest to the group, the group upholds what are potentially manipulative value.

These values and social norms are put in place to limit individuals' freedom in favor of the group.

Some of these values include:

- Women who sleep around are slutty
- "Real men" commit / provide
- "Real men" defend their group / country
- "Good women" put their children before themselves

Notice that those values and social norms can come at a cost for the individual, but they most often benefit society.
Attention: those values are not always and necessarily bad. But it's good to be aware of them, and it's good to be aware of the potential limitations they place on you.
The enlightened individualist certainly is very aware of those dynamics, and decides for himself when and how to embrace those values.

Watch Out For Public Profession & Private Defection

Also, be aware of the manipulative game of "professing in public, defecting in private".

The game is simple: people publicly espouse and encourage high values for others to follow, while privately they break those values.

Many politicians for example profess values such as patriotism, marriage, or sobriety. But it's all to be seen whether they're always faithful, sober, or put the country's interest before their own.

2. The Group's Demand For Loyalty Trump Values (& Your Interests)

Most groups' bosses demand loyalty, we know that.

But, funny enough, even most group members internalize that they are *due* loyalty.
Robert Jackall's landmark study of corporate ethics for example found that most managers believe that it is fundamentally wrong to go against your boss.

Baumeister says that whistle-blowers are rare and often condemned, even when there were good ethical and moral reasons to speak up.
And most women know that filing a sexual harassment complaint is still a political landmine and a potential career-ender. Even some pro-feminist career advisers recommend against it.

Finally, from a purely Machiavellian and self-interested point of view, the demands of loyalty to the group, company, or boss, can turn very costly to the individual.
At that point, you gotta ask yourself: what am I staying in this group for?

That's a quote an individualist would utter

3. Truth Dies at The Group's Hand Stack

We all self-deceive.

Yet, depending as well on the individual, there are some more or less strong barriers to self-deception (Kunda, Z. 1990).
Groups, however, are very effective at self-deception because they can support each other's (false) beliefs.

Individuals in groups pressure one another to "remain true" to the group values and to align to "what everyone else says".
Funny enough, "what everyone else says" is often what people *think* the group approves and values, with the result being a mildly schizophrenic environment built on compliance, lies, and deception (in exchange for acceptance).

This dynamic overlaps with the "spiral of silence", a socially repressive dynamic that does not exist in individuals. The theory explains that individuals might disagree or harbor doubts about what the group is doing, but they keep quiet in fear of losing status and acceptance.

In sum, as long as the group doesn't strongly encourage dissension and individual differences, the ultimate price of group belonging for un-enlightened individuals are truth, personal integrity, and personal freedom.

4. Group's Echo Chambers Make You Miserable

Some groups coalesce around a specific issue, topic, or goal.

These groups filter the news for their members, letting in only a small portion of the world's events -a portion that usually confirms a certain worldview-.
This leads to an echo chamber.
In echo chambers, the issue(s) the group cares about are almost always blown out of proportion, and often distorted. As a consequence, members see the world as far worse than it actually is.

That way, even issues that might have been (somewhat) true to begin with, end up being distorted and over-

weighted to a point where they become untrue.

So, for example, it might be true that:

- White men commit most of the mass shootings and serial killing
- Black men on average commit more crimes in some countries
- Powerful people steal more than powerless ones
- Men do more wars (but build more)
- Women would start fewer wars (but don't advance civilization nearly as much)

All those above points might be true.
But first, tell you little about individuals within those groups. And second, they tell you nothing about what really matters to your personal success as an individual.

But when you're in an echo chamber that is racist, misogynist, communist, or misandrist, the above points all get blown out of proportion.
Result?
You get angry, spiteful, and over-worried about issues that don't even matter to your life.

Being part of a "black lives matter" echo chamber its black members might really believe that traffic stops are one of the highest dangers in their lives.
The issue with that is not just that you get angrier and worried for nothing, but also that your overly-negative mindsets turn into reality (self-fulfilling prophecy).

For a case study on this tendency, see:

- **Red Pill dynamics & distortions**

5. Leaders Can Have A Vested Interest in Manipulating Members

In many cases, the interests between leaders and followers diverge.

For example, leaders gain when individuals grow dependent on the group.

This is also true outside of groups when crooked leaders (feign to) represent higher collective ideals.
A real-life example is Don King.
Don King talked up his support of the "black community", self-framed as pro-group, and leveraged those higher ideals to prey on both Mohammad Ali and Tyson.

Now, again, it's not necessarily wrong to support the black community -and it can be a laudable and value-adding effort-.
But be careful that it doesn't turn into "us against them", and always ask yourself "who is asking, and how is he gaining/losing?".

Says Maria Konnikova of con artists and cult leaders:

> Con artists, at their best and worst, give us meaning. We fall for them because it would make our lives better if the reality they proposed were indeed true. They give us a sense of purpose, of value, of direction.
>
> *Konnikova, 2006*

The best way to avoid those leaders who do not have our best interests in mind?
Find your own answers, find your own meaning.

Also read:

- **How business leaders manipulate employee**

7. Groups Enable Idealistic Evil

Idealistic evil is evil committed by extremists in the belief they are doing something right.

Whether these "leaders" are consciously manipulating others -and themselves- or really believe in their philosophies is a moot point.

What is not a moot point is that in groups with an "us vs them' dynamic people tend to look to the members with the firmest sense of hatred for support and guidance.

Idealistic evil, says Baumeister, is inherently group-dependent.
Says Baumeister:

> One reason for the importance of groups in idealistic evil is the power of the group to support its high, broad ideals. Abstract conceptions of how things ought to be gain social reality from the mere fact of being shared by a group.
>
> *Baumeister, 1997*

Without group context, those ideals would seem crazy to an individual.
And without a group around him, a hate-mongering "charismatic leader" would call for prompt lock-up of a public enemy.
But put that nutjob and his ideals at the helm a group of un-enlightened individuals, and they become real, true, and anger and violence-worthy.

8. Groups Provide A Drug-Like Crutch to Failing Individuals

Many failing or lost individuals need to go through self-development.

The danger is that the people who need help or guidance the most are also the most likely to be manipulated and taken astray by poor leaders and groups.

As we said before, bad leaders seek personal power and followers' obedience by selling meaning, and hope.
And who's more likely to buy that?
The hopeless, of course.

Example:

> **Lost kid**: (smoking a joint)
> **Nazi recruiter**: This is what the jews and the communists want you to do to keep you docile
> **Lost kid**: (joins nazi group instead of working on himself to improve his life)

The above is how recruitment to most extremist, insular, and anger-fueled echo chambers looks like.

The group is sexy to lost and failing individuals because it provides a crutch.
The group provides a sense of belonging, a sense of direction, some meaning, and a false sense of self-development.

When groups become a crutch, men use them to feel good about themselves in a dynamic that is similar to drug addiction.

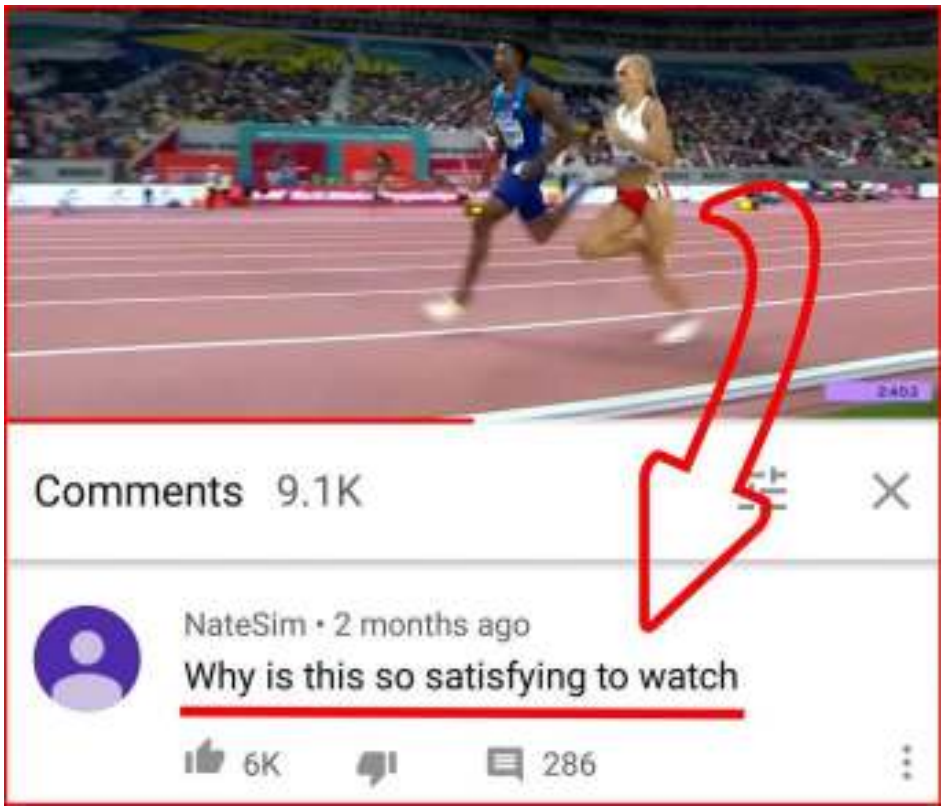
Collectivist Failure Example: Winning Through The Group (Rather Than The Self)

When the group or higher entity becomes a crutch, the "accomplishments" of the group are co-opted by the individual.

The group accomplishments serve to make up for a lack of personal accomplishments, so that the individual can

generate good feelings -and maybe some self-esteem-, via the group.

In the red pill article we used this example:



This commenter was glad that a man beat a woman because he projected his identity onto the collective of "manhood".
In social exchange parlance, he is "credit leeching", seizing credits he doesn't have.
In psychological terms, it's a form of ego projection, or "identity leeching" through ego-fusion.
He fused his ego with the male-gender group, and hitch-hiked (leeching) on that male win against a woman to feel good about himself.
Little does it matter that on a good day he wouldn't beat a single female runner.

Instead, the enlightened individual sees no value or honor in what your group does.
When a man brags that "men built society", he is actually right. But the most relevant question is always: what have *you* done, as an individual?

When you acquire your good feelings through the group, you stay stuck with a fragile ego.
And second, you squander resources you could use on yourself, for true self-development.

8.2. Group Success Removes Personal Agency: No Drive to Personal Improvement

Paradoxically, the better the group/drug performs, the more the individual loses himself.

He gets his emotional fix, he starts becoming more and more ego-involved with the group (ego-fusion), and it becomes a slippery slope.

9. The "US VS Them Trap" Comes Natural to Groups

Says Baumeister:

> One of the most powerful and universal human tendencies is to identify with a group of people, and to square off against rival groups.
>
> *Baumeister, 1997*

Indeed, the discontinuity effect sanctions that groups are more competitive, antagonist, and exploitive towards each other than individuals are towards other individuals, a finding that has been confirmed over and over (Wildschut et al., 2003).
Even individuals tend to be more antagonistic towards groups (Hoyle, 1989).

Moreover, there is the good/bad dynamic, whereby people think that their group is good. And if we are good, then that other group must be evil.

It's interesting in this sense that some think we've come a long way since people used to look at "other" races so negatively.
But that's a false step forward. Because until group-belonging is ditched in favor of individual enlightenment there will always be a group to be suspicious of.
Case in point, a survey shows how the old disapproval of interracial marriages has been replaced (or compounded) by the newly minted political divide:

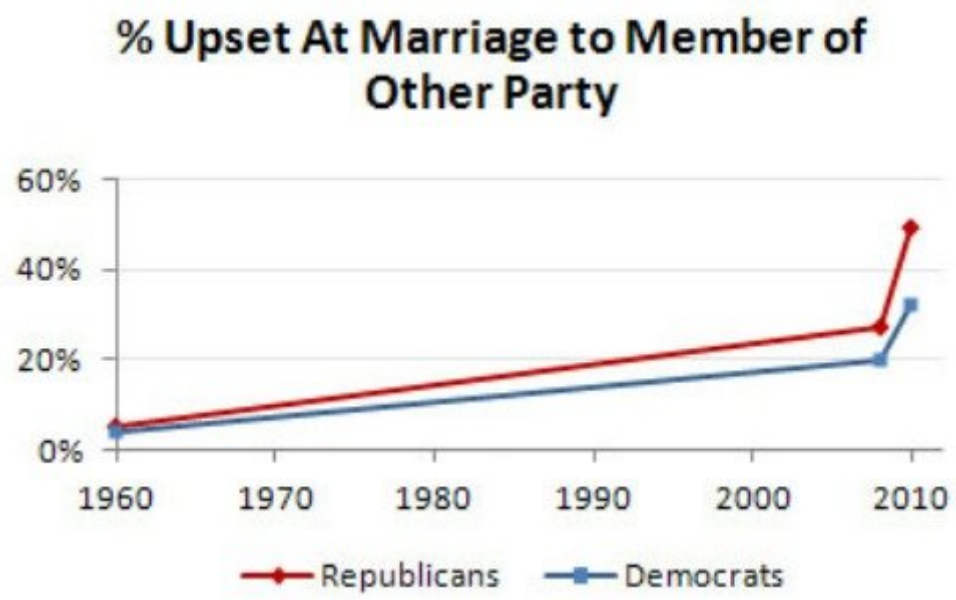


Chart by Kevin Drum
In a country where political parties both largely agree on a large set of foundational values, you can find high-quality individuals who vote Republicans and there are high-quality individuals who vote Democrats.
It's about the individual, not the party. But group dynamics fog people's minds to this obvious fact.

In the words of the great individualist Jordan Peterson, here explaining why he rejects "gender politics":

> **Jordan Peterson**: it's the presumption that the fundamental hallmark of human identity is the group. That's wrong. Not only wrong, it's retrogressive, it's tribalistic, it's dangerous, it's an incitement to violence, it's resentful, and it's malevolent.
> We got it right in the West. The sovereignty of the individual.

Collectivist Failure Example: Parochial "US VS Them" & Chinese Threat

I like the guys from Charisma on Command.

They're generally smart, logical, and value-adding social and world analysts.
Yet, when groups are overly salient, even they fall for the "us VS them" mentality.
As an example:

> **Charlie**: (talking about China's future troubles) We're gonna be OK in America, it's just not their century

Can you see how twisted that logic is?
You're gonna be OK in America because China will fail?
That is parochial, small-minded, and even the symptom of a major scarcity mindset, whereby to have a good life, someone else has to have it bad.

As Robert Sapolsky says, "It's problematic when non–zero sum games are viewed as zero-sum", because you can turn win-win into lose-lose.

If the same approach was applied to individuals, you'd think the guy was either nuts, weak, or unnecessarily mean. Just imagine the following:

> **Charlie**: (talking about Lucio as an individual competitor) Lucio is doing poorly, good for me and Ben

But since it's about groups, it's normal.
As a matter of fact, many folks who'd be considered "wise" talk this way -see Ray Dalio and Martin Seligman-.

Of course, the fact that this approach is common and accepted means nothing to the enlightened individualist, who still considers it toxic, and disempowering.

9.2. The Higher The Group Pride, The Higher the Hatred

Of course, one might say "I'm proud of being part of X, but that doesn't mean I am against those other groups".

Except, it rarely works that way.

Says psychologist Baumeister:

> Racial pride and feelings of superiority seem to go with violence toward others, and this is apparently true of both blacks and whites. Perhaps it is merely one of the sadder, uglier signs that basic human nature is the same in whites and blacks.
>
> *Baumeister, 1997*

The solution?
Enlightened individualism.
If you gotta be proud, then "being proud of being you" is actually better than "proud for being part of X group".

Enlightened War Hero: Hugh Thompson Ends the My Lay Massacre

Let's finally get to a positive example.

Hugh Thompson and his crew reached My Lay while the US army's massacre against civilians was underway.
With the horrors of the war the ingroups and outgroups of "Vietnamese" and "Americans" couldn't be more strongly divided.

Add the personal risks of going against "your own group", and we can quickly see how it would have taken a real enlightened hero to soar higher, and take action.

That's what Thomson did.

As per Wikipedia's article, "Thompson landed, and told his crew that if the soldiers shot at the villagers while he was trying to get them out of the bunker, then they were to open fire on the soldiers".

Thomson radioed about the massacre several times, but nothing was done to put an end to it.
As Thomson pushed for an investigation, all officers responsible for the massacre were either acquitted or pardoned.
Thomson was condemned and ostracized by many in the United States military and government, including several

senators. One senator attempted to have him court-martialed.
A good chunk of the American civilian population wasn't any better. Thomson received death threats over the phone, and dead and mutilated animals on his porch (!!).
And that should tell you a lot about the possible dangers and toxicity of group dynamics.

Hugh Thomson, a truly enlightened war hero
Hugh Thomson turned against his own ingroup to uphold the universal values of human dignity. In return, he faced expected backlash from the angry mob of slaves. Thomson is one of the few true "war heroes", as well as a hero of enlightened individualism.

10. Groups Shield Pussies & Take Out The Worst From Individuals

The "diffusion of responsibility" (Darley & Latane, 1968) facilitates aggression and general poor behavior from groups.

In simple terms, individuals acting within groups feel less responsible for their actions and "freer" to engage in aggression, or violence.
In that sense, groups provide the cover that allows individuals to unleash their worst.

To mimic a quote in the "Start Here" page, we might say that:

> Groups is where weak individuals go to unleash the dark side that they don't have the courage to share as individuals

11. Groups Foster Social Climbing

Social climbing is an almost inescapable group dynamic.

People have an inborn tendency to want power and status.
And since few people are power intelligent to acquire status in the most effective way, they end up acting like crabs in a bucket, trying to climb up by using others as social pegs.
We wrote plenty on social climbing here:

- Social climbing

- Social climbing from leaders
- Alpha male posturing

11.2. When Status Spurs Violence

The need for status within groups can also give rise to violence that wouldn't exist without the group.
Says Baumeister:

> Concern over the opinions of others is often a driving factor in violent, aggressive, or other evil behavior. Audiences lend social reality to events. If no one else knows, you can pretend it never happened (Toch, 1993). Self-esteem can bounce back, but people are very concerned with what other people think of them.
>
> *Baumeister, 1997*

12. Groups Generate False Values (That Likely Harm You As An Individual)

Group values that are sometimes meaningless and sometimes harmful include:

- **Patriotism**

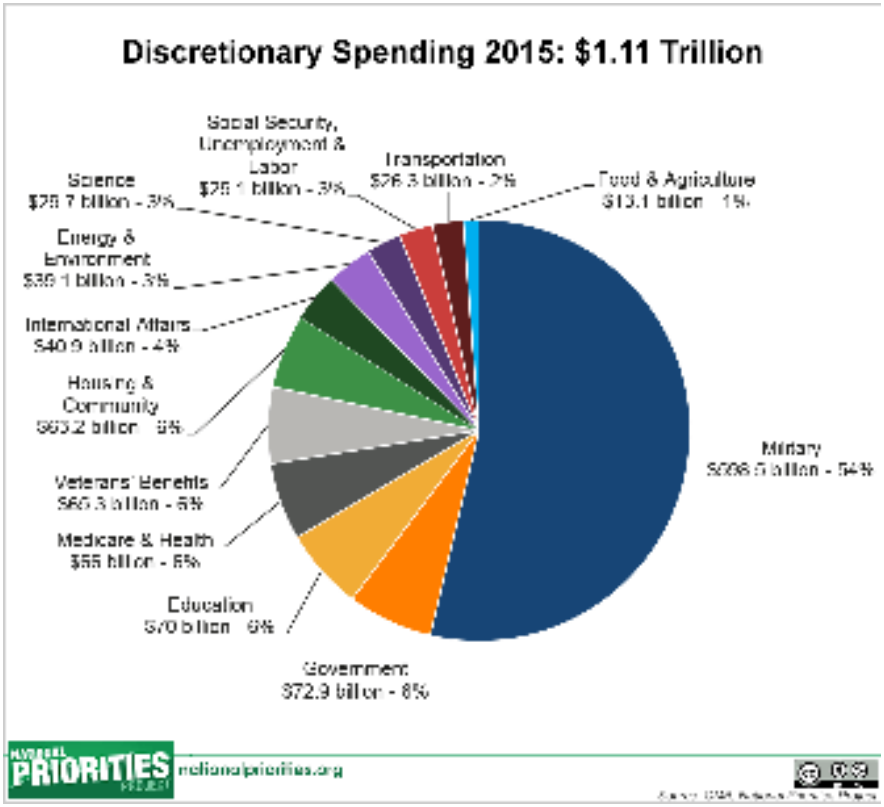
Most government apparatuses encourage at least some patriotism.

But some countries need more patriotism than others.

Countries with bigger armies or with more frequent wars for example need more money and cannon fodder, so they push harder on the patriotic manipulation.

To this end, some countries use what I call the "empire ethos".
The empire ethos gives good feelings -the pride of being part of the empire-, for more practical goods, like tax receipts, political support, or military service.

In brief, how do you justify this:



Well, it starts early.

With this:

Embed from Getty Images
Note:

There are practical individual advantages to being part of an empire, a military superpower or, generally, a strong country/group.
But it's a tiny percentage of the citizenship that disproportionately enjoy those advantages -leaders, military top brass, and defense contractors-.
The *costs* instead are borne by all taxpayers. The citizens pay their slice, but get the crumbles of the pie. And "patriotic feelings" are supposed to make up for that imbalance.

One might say that good feelings also matter.
True. But as we've seen, it's disempowering to project your ego and to tie your self-esteem to a flag or country.
So you're most likely better off distancing yourself from the jingoism.

- **Proselytizing / convincing others**

Some groups, often religions, make "convincing others" a value to uphold.

Some religions even say, or at least have been interpreted as saying, that the task of every religious person is to convert others, or to kill them.

I'm sure you can see what makes that a bad value.
But even in its milder forms, such as associating only with people within your group, is going to disempower you and put you at a competitive disadvantage.

- **Belonging pride** (example: "gay pride")

Pride for what you haven't chosen is a BS value.

It distracts you from true self-development, and from seeking pride in what should really matter: what you've chosen, done, or become.

Gay pride has thrived so far because it's a huge PC no-no to call it for what it is: nonsense.

The enlightened individualist sees no value, no honor, and nothing inherently good -or bad- about being gay -or hetero-: those weren't traits you worked on. You can't claim any "pride" on them.

- **Group cronyism**

You've probably heard this one:

> There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women
>
> *Madeleine Albright*

That's a quote from Madeleine Albright, during an official ceremony.
Not only it hasn't been met with the disgust it deserves, but it's been embraced by influential feminists and it's become a slogan.

Spare a moment of silence for the men applauding in the background

> **Albright**: You have to help Hillary Clinton, she will always be there for you, and you have to just remember "there is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women

The value of supporting group members independently of their merits is obviously anti-meritocratic.
And, the enlightened individualist would add, also tribalist, and backward.

Often, it's also:

- Manipulative, as it's an indirect way of *asking* for support (see video above)
- Disempowering, by fostering a victim mentality ("we're so disadvantaged, we *need* each other's support")
- Offensive, as the female enlightened individualist wants to advance on her merit, and resents free handouts "because she's a woman".

13. When You Ego-Fuse, You Lose

Ego fusion is the ultimate state of group dependence.

With ego fusion, the individual's ego overlaps with the group.

Ego-fusion differs in intensity, but every time you emotionally invest in a group, you're also at least partially ego-fusing.
At low levels of ego fusion, it's not the end of the world. At high levels, you're giving up yourself.

Good Groups, Bad Groups

What groups are "good for you" is relative, and up to you to decide.

However, some general criteria include groups that:

1. **You have chosen**: rather than foisted upon you by chance or others' decision
2. **Add concrete value**: the value-exchange point of view
3. **Lets you develop as an independent individual**: including as an independent thinker

Bad Groups

Of course, this is also relative, and there are grey areas as well.
But, as we say often here, the grey area is not infinitely elastic.

In general, the enlightened individualist does not self-identify or ego-invest with:

- **Most groups you entered "by default"**: there is no merit in being part of a group that was assigned to you either randomly, or by someone else
  - "Race": comes laden with racial tensions that you truly don't need
  - Gender: it's not antifragile, and recently laden with anger and poor self-help
  - Sexual orientation: see "gay pride"
  - Background: blue blood, poor or rich, conservative or liberal family… It doesn't matter. It's what you do, not what those before you did, or were
- **Groups & leaders demanding loyalty**: demanding "loyalty" without giving something back is immoral. Treat it as such, and vote with your feet
- **Appealing to higher ideals**: too many ideals means the leader is setting up an exchange that requires you to give up both pragmatism, and critical thinking. It's time for you to turn up the cynicism
- **Ideology-based groups**: frame themselves about truth and self-development, but they're often the opposite. As a rule of thumb, if they have a set of rules or belief you need to abide to, it's a red flag.

mikepmiller, CC 2.0

Groups that encourage groupthink, sell a doctrine, and make you dependent rather than independent tend to be poor groups.

Jordan Peterson has a wonderful few minutes on identity-politics groups in Joe Rogan #1070.
And he ends with an appeal to individualism as well:

And, to keep it simply:

- All groups that take more than they give
- All groups that limit your personal power and freedom

When Evolution Turns Maladaptive

Evolution wired us into giving up the self for external, larger entities that includes groups, and abstract ideals.

Men, even more so than women, are both wired, and more socially pressured, into self-sacrifice for external entities.
Those drives are not bad per se, and can lead to value-adding and win-win service to the greater good, to a group, or even to a family/woman.

However, they all also offer hooks for manipulation, and they all can turn self-defeating, certainly for the individual, and potentially even for society.

Just two examples:

Governments Co-Opt Men's Drive to Defend The Tribe

Men have an inherent drive to form groups and scan for threats (McDonald et al., 2012).

You could say that's a *potentially* good thing.
Especially useful during our evolution.
But apply it to modernity, and it's been misused more times than we can count.

For example, patriotism leveraged by governments and the military offer men a sucker's trade.
And it's particularly during times of war that the sucker trade sucks.

See this example from "Born on the Fourth of July":

The marine leverages several "higher ideals" that are appealing to men:

- Warrior in group's defense ("when our country called us")
- Loyalty ("we have always come")
- Being a "real man" -a very effective "hook" to influence or manipulate men-
- Belonging
- Belonging to an exclusive group
- Winning ("we never lost a war")

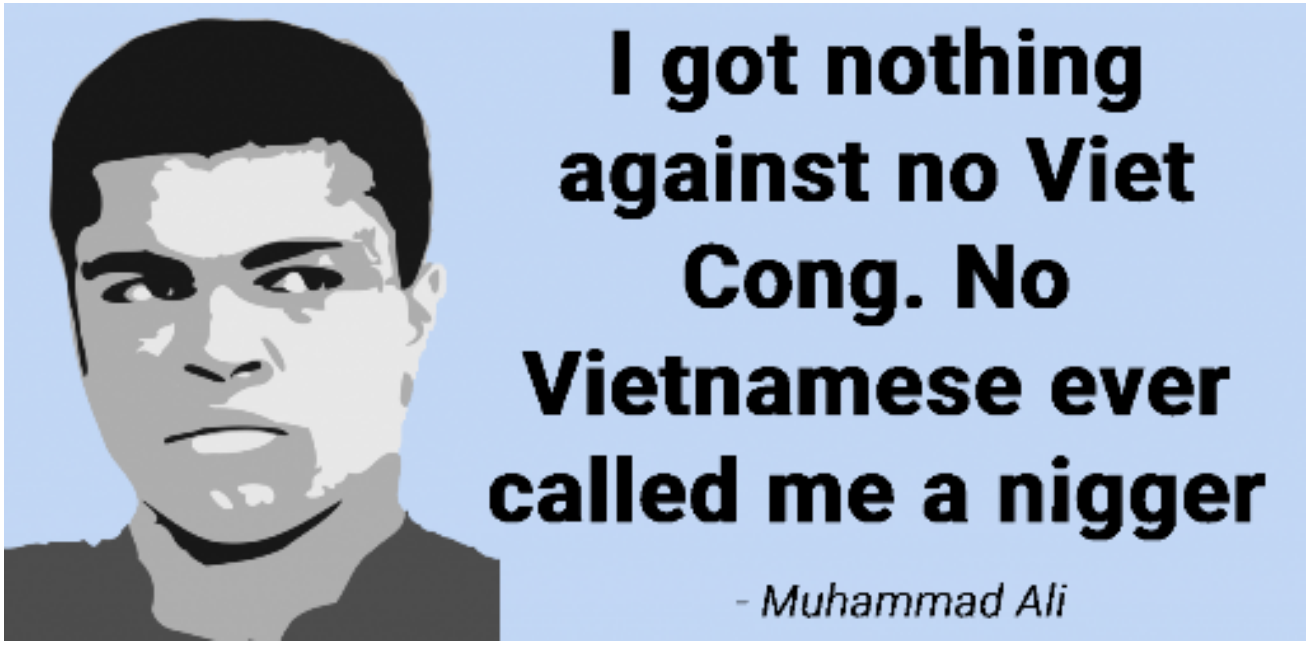
Some men who didn't learn how to develop emotional attachment in life can also find war, famines, disasters and other extreme situations appealing.
Take this kid's attitude described by Deborah Tannen:

> A man who was sent to Vietnam because of an error gave this as the reason he did not try to set the record straight and go home: "I found out I belonged in Vietnam," he said. "The bonding of men at war was the strongest thing I'd felt in my life."

That sense of excitement, glory, and of brotherhood at the prospect of war is a relatively common phenomenon for some men (Brown, 1991).
And I say that as a man who for a long time -and still- has strongly felt that "pull".

But the enlightened individual takes a moment and asks himself: "wait a second. Who am I fighting here? Who and what am I fighting for? And for what and for whom am I risking my own life?"

Albeit Mohammad Ali had his own issues with tribalism and calling white people "his enemy", he did have an enlightened individualist approach to the war:



Charismatic Leaders Co-Opt "Loyalty" For Own Power

Most men also have an intrinsic drive to follow charismatic men.

Call that mix of charismatic man and appeal to higher ideals the "great man" approach to leadership.

We could make the case that it's a good thing that many men want to follow a charismatic leader.
The world needs team members, after all.

But of course, that drive to follow charismatic men can also make us obedient pawns in the hands of a self-interested, narcissistic leader.

The "great man" approach to leadership has some proven dark underbelly indeed.
Christie and Geis found out that highly Machiavellian men are more likely to become leaders within groups, and Laslam noted that the "great man leadership" benefits the leader first and foremost.

We only need to look at history to see it in effect.
Almost all fascist leaders went for the "great man" leadership.

We could go back in history to the usual Hitlers and Mussolinis, but there are also plenty of modern examples.

Please approach this example apolitically -this website has no left-wing sympathies- and focus on the power dynamics instead:

> **Trump**: as the scout laws say, a scout is trustworthy and loyal. We could use some loyalty today (loyalty to whom?)
> **Boy scouts**: (as shown in the fulllength video) USA! USA! USA!

By now you might have realized this: the enlightened individualistic approach immunizes you to the "great man" allure.
Why should he be compelled to follow and support him no matter what, when **the enlightened individualist sees the "great man" on top as no better than he is**. And that allows him to see his requests for loyalty and patriotism as manipulative ruses to further his own agenda.

Also read:

- **Fascism is for sheep**

Solution: Enlightened Individualism

The solution is not to ditch *all* higher ideals, reject *all* leaders, or turn ourselves into 100% selfish operators.

Enlightened individualism is about taking the best of both worlds: collaboration, *worthy* ideals, *and* individual pursuits of personal success.
It allows us to make the most out of groups and collaboration, to develop human relationships and win-win exchanges. And it also protects our downside risks against manipulators, abusers, and value-takers.

We'll learn how to become an enlightened individualist soon.
First, let's review some similar and overlapping philosophies.

Individualism & Other Schools of Thoughts

Some constructs that overlap or feed into enlightened individualism include:

Enlightenment & Humanism

Humanism is foundational to enlightened individualism.

Says Pinker in "Enlightenment Now":

> Humanism, which privileges the well-being of individual men, women, and children over the glory of the tribe, race, nation, or religion. It is individuals, not groups, who are sentient—who feel pleasure and pain, fulfillment and anguish.

Pinker goes on to describe humanism as opposed to green movements that want to subordinate men to the environment, or to animalist movements that frame humans as the aggressors and "invaders".

Enlightened individualists agree.

Rationalism

The enlightened individualist develops analytical processes that go under the umbrellas of logic, reason, and the scientific method.
They are all barriers against the pitfalls of group oppression, faith, dogmas, loyalty, authority, charisma, or mysticism.

Libertarianism

The enlightened individualist sympathizes with libertarianism and its thirst for individual freedom.

Libertarians are among the few to recognize the true government power dynamics, with their potentially coercive, value-taking, and manipulative over-reaches -some of which we've discussed here as part of group dynamics-.
So albeit the enlightened individualist might or might not agree with the liberal anarchist choice -I personally don't- he generally supports power checks and balances, and prefers a generally permissive, freedom-abundant legal system.

Read more in the review of Rothbard's work here and here.

Personal responsibility (from conservatism)

Right-wing movements focus on individual agency and responsibility.

Without denying the role of culture and background, the individualist agrees that, ultimately, we must always go back to the individual.

But while some right-wing focus on culpability, the enlightened individual sees it as empowerment.
The individual focus is because they see in themselves -and in others- the power to decide, change, and affect their world.

Apoliticism

As Stef points out, the enlightened individualist can, and often has, political ideas and opinions.

But he rarely subordinates to a specific party.
Keep in mind that political parties are not above the group dynamics we described thus far, and often morph into ideologies and echo chambers.

If the enlightened individualist joins a political party as an activist, he maintains his critical thinking and intellectual independence from the various politburos.

Utilitarianism

Similar to utilitarianism, enlightened individuals look at "value-exchange accounting" and what maximizes individual well-being.

The difference is in the boundaries they set.
By putting individuals and their basic rights first, individualists couldn't care less if the total pleasure of the group

comes at an unacceptably high cost to the self.

Pragmatism: Where's The Value?

The enlightened individualist has a pragmatic approach to mediates between the world, and his personal goals and interests.

He feels that asking "what's in it for me" is a fair way of approaching exchanges. And **when the answer to "what's in it for me" is "not much", he feels not that he is being cynical or unfair, but that the *request* is manipulative and unfair**.

And for the sake of clarity, this doesn't mean that the enlightened individualist only takes action when he will materially gain. Nothing could be further from the truth.
But it does mean that he approaches the world with that question, and that protects him from manipulation and abuse.
The enlightened individualist *decides* when to give without taking, he's not *manipulated* into it.

Meritocracy

By placing individual merits above all else, meritocracy well-aligns with enlightened individualism.

Enlightened individualists who are more economically aware also tend to believe that the best way to maximize value for everyone is through meritocracy that rewards capable, skilled, and value-adding individuals.

Meritocracy stands in contrast to the various calls of supporting this or that group.

Some exceptions can always apply.
"Supporting locals", for example, is often good for the individual because of the proximity rule. And it's a fair choice to pay a premium price for a locally-made product -personally, I love to "support locals" when it comes to quality food or skilled handcraft-.
However, many "calls for group-based support" are often either virtue-signaling, or covert attempts to distort the market in favor of those who add *less* value.

Some affirmative legislation or government intervention to "protect" this or that group are also sometimes market distortions that come at everyone's cost.

Ultimately, exceptions to meritocracy for the enlightened individualist are based on individual and personal like/dislikes, or quality of service, and not on group affiliation.

Capitalism

Individualists recognize that capitalism harnesses the power of collaboration, while encouraging individualistic pursuits of success.

The "magic" of capitalism is that, through voluntary exchange, people benefit others by benefiting themselves. Such as, capitalism allows for win-win while leveraging human's darker drives and motives (note: regulations and legal system also help to keep those selfish drives within win-win exchanges, or to remove the most predatory players).

Enlightened individualists reject communism -unless it's voluntary communism in a community of free-choosing individuals-.
By putting the collective first and by giving all the power to a small circle of technocrats, communism is in natural antithesis to enlightened individualism (plus: what goes against human nature doesn't work well).

Individualists are also suspicious of high levels of socialism and redistributions, as they can suffocate individual pursuits, and turn into politicians' power tools for acquiring and keeping power -money for votes-.

Individualism is Not...

To avoid confusion:

1. It's not unrestrained or selfish individualism

As a social species our well-being, in large part, depends on others.

The enlightened individual knows that, respects that, and supports civic values and collaboration among unrelated individuals.

Enlightened individualists might even decide to put their own life at risk.
It's just very unlikely that it's going to be for someone else's war, oil, glory, or bankrupt ideals.
Instead, valuing their own life and time, they carefully choose what's worth their support.

2. It's not "acceptance of selfishness"

Social success is based on value exchange, not unrestrained selfishness.

Enlightened individualists are shrewd social operators, and they tend to look out for, and avoid, overly selfish individuals.

3. It's not bashing, ignoring, or feeling ashamed for one's background

Bashing, swearing off, or being ashamed of one's background is fake individualism.

It's the equivalent of rebelling against the judge authority: it *seems* empowered, but it stems from dependency.

Enlightened individualists are not defined by their background, so they feel no need to bash it, or to take distance.

I like Madonna's example here.
We both come from "Abruzzo", a rural region with no limelight.
Madonna refused to visit or acknowledge her background in fear and shame of what it said about her.
Me, I'm glad I grew up in the green.
But overall, it just doesn't define me, so I feel no need to either distance myself, or boast about it.

4. It's not about refusing any "sense of belonging"

Some enlightened individualists were idealists to begin with.
And they neither support nor are very comfortable with endless cynicism.

They're also happy to be part of groups and to feel a sense of belonging.
They just do so more critically, and while maintaining their individuality.

5. It's not about endless pragmatism, rationality, and rejection of all feelings and romance

There is no contradiction between high romance and high individualism.

As a matter of fact, there might be a positive correlation.
Romance and relationships are highly relevant to the self.

We can extend "romance" to include all dionysiac expressions of irrationality, as well as all types of emotion-based relationships.
The enlightened individualists enjoy the greatness of humans beyond themselves. So they value other humans, and human connections.

6. It's not about avoiding higher ideals

Not all ideals per se are necessarily wrong or bad.

It's about *which* ideals, and how are they used.

Indeed, ideals such as individual freedoms, self-development, and self-expression underpin enlightened individualism.

6.2. You can use higher ideals to influence others

Remember:

> What's potentially harmful, is is also potentially highly effective

The enlightened individualist can strategically leverage intrinsic motivation and idealism to achieve certain goals. As a matter of fact, we might argue that one of the tasks of good leadership is to create a "sense of us", which is a non-pragmatic, a higher ideal.

As we've mentioned, it's not that all ideals are bad, and leveraging a feeling of in-group bonding can be a good thing for the leader, as well as for the group members.

Similarly, remember that you can leverage group-related bonding to facilitate the achievement of your personal goals, including your social and relationship goals.
Many people are more comfortable with those whom they feel as "in-group", so it's actually a very smart strategy to frame you two as similar -or "in the same group"-.

7. It's not about "suspending judgment"

"Not judging others", "we're all the same", or "never apply general tendencies to decision making" are meaningless values.

Inborn differences, obviously, are real.
And some of these inborn differences are relevant to and within different groups.

But the enlightened individualist considers a crucial variable that seems to escape most people these days, and that is "variance".
Such as, how individuals differ from other individuals within their groups.

As a rule of thumb, the higher the variance, the less you can assume population-level traits to individuals.

In some groups though, the variance around some relevant traits is low.
Or, at least, you can find some important commonalities within the group.

In those cases, it's safer to pass group-level judgments onto individuals. And to start from certain assumptions of what an individual might be like can make sense, and make you more effective in life.

Also, in cases when we're not dealing with individuals, but only with groups, it can make sense to group bigger, high-variance groups together.
Gender is a good example: there is huge variance within genders.
Yet, because of the biological differences, it can be a rational and valid approach to discuss gender-level differences or tendencies. And especially so when related to biological differences.

In short: **the enlightened individualist puts the individual first once they meet one, but that doesn't mean they ignore the group of belonging**. And especially not when the group of belonging can provide valid information about someone.

7.2. It's not about ignoring groups and group-level traits (immigration policy)

Some political pundits might warp enlightened individualism for political agendas.

For example, they might say that it's a moral duty to allow free immigration, and that we cannot forbid individuals from entering a country because group-level stereotypes do not determine individual behavior.

That is partially true.

But unluckily, that is exactly a case where looking at the group might tell you little about the individuals, but still make sense from a policy perspective when applied to large numbers.
Remember: the enlightened individual is a realist, and he recognizes groups can differ, and culture has an impact. Some cultures and religions make it more unlikely for individuals to integrate, and it can be fair to curb immigration for group-level concerns.

8. It's not about "going at it alone"

People and relationships empower.
And they're also one of the most important factors in what psychologist Martin Seligman calls a "good life"
The enlightened individualist cares and takes care of his social relationships.

9. It's not about bashing those who self-sacrifice

Some examples here negatively framed individuals who sacrificed personal interests for ideals.

But the enlightened individual actually likes idealists and sometimes even admires them.
Their beef is more with the people who manipulate them.

In many ways, **this article is written for those souls striving for more than just themselves**: so that they don't get duped into fighting and investing for what's not worth fighting for.
In a way, this whole website is for them.

How to Be An Empowered Individualist

So, finally:

1. Iconoclasm: Destroy Your Own Heroes

You cannot be empowered as long as you think someone else is "above you".

So, in the beginning, iconoclasm is the name of the game.

Take your heroes, the biggest names in self-help, in your industry, in your favorite sport… And start looking for reasons why they're *bad* people.

That's not the end game, of course.
Next, you want to look at them as just people. Later, you may still think of them as *great* people, people who accomplished hugely and that you respect and admire.
But never worship.

Also see:

- **Most overrated books**

1.2. Internalize Any Great Is "Just Another Person" -and you may even do better-

In the boxing world, Mike Tyson had a reputation for "animalistic ferocity".

The videos on YouTube about Tyson's super-human and unbeatable skills are endless.

People LOVE looking at exrtemely talented men and think how they're different from anyone else. And Tyson WAS different than most men, and a supremely, skilled and naturally talented boxer.
But he was a human, and certainly not unbetable.
Unluckily, most people who think in terms of "super-human" also think in terms of "unbeatable".
And **until you think of anyone as "super human", they will *stay* unbetable *(for you!)***.

There comes the next extraordinary man instead who thinks of them as just another human being and guess what…
Those are the only men with a champion's mindset.
And they may as well become the new champions.

When Holyfield looked at Tyson fighting he didn't think "he's an unbeatable animal".
He thought "if he can do it, so can I".
Guess what happened? Holyfield beat Tyson.

Similarly:

When everyone in the MBA referred to Michael Jordan as "Black Jesus" there was one kid who didn't think he was "Jesus".
And guess who was the only one who brought the game to Michael Jordan? Exactly *that* one kid who didn't think Jordan was unreachable in any way.

Listen to him, it's quite enlightening:

> **Average players**: We call him black Jesus
> **Kobe**: Black Jesus? WTF? I'm gonna call him Mike, and when I face him, we're gonna go at it (as equals)

This is the only possible mindset to reach the top.
And the short's title is a good mantra, too: losers pedestalize, winners humanize.

2. Start From Narcissism

OK, so now you have no more Gods above you.

Who are you going to place on that pedestal, then?

Easy:

YOU will be on your own pedestal.

Psychologist Craik Malkin says that a touch of narcissism, from 4 to 6 on a 1 to 10 scale, is good.

He says that:

> The vast majority of healthy people do feel a little special, even if only privately. They are more optimistic, happier and more consistently confident than people on the lower end of the scale.

For our purposes, you can go higher on that scale *as long as you'll be able to move past it, and add the crucial mindsets we talk about here*.

The required development is similar to the "divine child" in the popular self-development book "King, Warrior, Magician, Lover".
The divine child harbors full confidence in his infinite individual rights and potential.

Go back to that Steve Jobs' quote: the world is made by people that are no smarter than you.
Albeit that by itself might not classify as narcissism, it signals some strong belief in one's own power and abilities.
It's like going back to that divine child with infinite possibilities of changing the world.

Note: you might already be past this stage, and high self-esteem folks might not need it.

3. Move to "Enlightened Narcissism"

To become a king, the divine child must first avoid the pitfalls of high narcissism.

Moore and Gilette say that the divine child must be careful not to become a "high-chair tyrant". And he avoids the pitfall by learning that the people and the world do not exist to serve and glorify him.
In TPM's parlance, we'd say that he must:

- Move past entitlement mentality
- Learn the social exchange rule, and that to get, he must focus on giving
- Develop an antifragile ego
- Become a man worthy of being a leader
- … Plus all the mindsets and strategies we talk about here

Also, check out "reflecting on mortality".

Albert Bernstein, Ph.D. and clinical psychologist, makes a similar point.
He says that narcissists go places… As long as they grow and as long as they learn social skills, politics, persuasion and, as well, the value of hard work.
I quote him:

> The narcissist who drops being special and instead works his ass off to become special, those are the narcissists who succeed.
>
> *Bernstein, 2000*

Becoming a successful narcissist means retaining the high self-esteem, and individualism… While otherwise moving past narcissism.

Let's call that new stage "enlightened narcissism".

"Enlightened narcissism" is less about *feeling* (special), and more about *doing* (things that actually do make you special).

4. Start From Cynicism

Same as above.

Starting from cynicism will cure many of the sheep's pitfalls, as well as protect you from manipulation and the most harmful pulls of idealism.

Same movie as the manipulative marine earlier.
This time, see how a cynic avoids the pitfall:

> **Idealist**: this is our chance to do something, to be part of history. Communism is moving in everywhere
> **Cynic**: oh yeah sure Ronnie, where, I don't see them. I'm gonna take care of number one

However, the "cynic cure" comes with its own side effects.
As much as Tom Cruise was a naive man, I wouldn't consider his friend a "great guy" and neither would I want him as a friend.

To avoid the overly cynic, selfish, and nihilist pitfalls, you'll move to:

5. Move to “Enlightened Cynicism”

In this stage:

You’re still aware of manipulation, power dynamics, and people’s darker motives.
And you have a healthy, skeptical approach that wonders about second motives and people’s veracity.

However, you’re also aware of the magnificence of human beings, as well as how great it is to build good relationships with them.
You know that relationships carry some dangers -and you take protective measures-, but that they are also some of the things that make life worth living.
You know that collaboration is risky, but also that it’s human collaboration that truly changes the world.

Read more:

- Enlightened Cynicism
- Enlightened Cooperator

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

6. Accept Your Selfish Drives: They’re Potentially Good

Selfishness in the right doses is good and healthy.

Collaboration developed because it proved good for the individuals who collaborated for win-win (Ridley, 1996).
Hence, **collaboration and selflessness are born and rooted in self-interest**.

Some argue there is no altruism without self-interest. But the main point for us is that it’s possible, and very common, to be value-givers while being self-interested.
As a matter of fact, **giving value while pursuing self-interest is one of the main goals of high-quality individuals**.

Selfishness-shaming is also a corrupt -or even manipulative– value.
Don’t fall for it: selfishness can often -and often is- channeled into win-win far more easily than selflessness is.

Also read Peter’s great take on it:

- **Aristotele’s enligthend self-interest**

7. Learn to Be Comfortable Alone

In male dating advice, there is a concept called “neediness”.

Neediness relates to “needing” a woman and/or to being emotionally rewarded and validated by a woman.

It’s a good concept, and the exact same applies to groups.

The best way to enter groups and collaborate with others is doing so from a place of no-neediness, and high value.
And to find your high-value you, you might have to learn to walk alone first.

Quoting this website:

> You will never find your unique voice if all you do is singing someone else’s tune

Social Nihilistc Starting Point: You're Alone

Similar to narcissism and cynicism, it might be helpful to start from a mild form of nihilism.

In this case, to accept that you're ultimately on your own, that people are self-interested, and that your own family would leave you within the right circumstances.

8. Experience & Join the Most Disparate Groups

Enter different groups, pick-up some interests, socialize with random people, and approach them with an open mind and a learner's mindset.

Once you've been part of different groups you will realize that all have:

1. **Some good things**
2. **Some limitations** and none of them can -or should- be your "be all, end all"
3. **Deep similarities:** humans are similar no matter what group they belong to, including deep similarities between genders, "races", nationalities, etc. (also see: moving beyond intercultural communication)

Once you experience, realize, and internalize the above 3 truths, both jingoistic pride and out-group debasement will start sounding petty and narrow-minded.
That's when you start becoming a member of the human race, a humanist, and a higher-flying eagle.

8.2. Work On An Open Mind

A part of me hates the "open mind" mantra as it's often associated not to a true open mind, but to left-wing, socialist ideals.

Yet, it might be true that conservatives tend to be more close-minded when it comes to groups and belonging.

BUT, "open mind" is apolitical.
And it is an important aspect of enlightened individualism.

When you're open-minded you're more open to considering the limitations of your group, as well as seeing the merits, the beauty, and the advantages of any other group -including the one that "your" group is often pitched against-.

Open-mindedness also shows in abundance mentality.
Since they feel they can move or join any group as they please, enlightened individualists see other groups' success as more opportunities for them.
Small-minded individuals instead, invested in a specific group and with a more fixed worldview, feel that other people's success threatens them.

Albeit "open mind" might largely be genetic, much can be done to increase it, for example:

8.3. Gain Perspective: Put Things in Larger Contexts

Many higher ideals derive much of their power from the "infinity trap".

But when we realize how meaningless "infinity" is, and that life is about constant motion, many of our emotional investments lose power.
Going to war for a border dispute, or keeping the "empire" united loses meaning when you realize borders are constantly shifting.

History as a discipline offers many of these lessons.
When you travel, do some tours to learn the history of the place you're visiting.
You will soon realize that humans have been moving and roaming around from the beginning of time. Hence, all

geography-based groups, “race” and “lineage” will start making little sense.
And that’s one big step towards open-mindedness.

It can also help to put *yourself* in perspective, which is also helpful to escape the narcissist trap.
See:

- **How reflecting on your mortality empowers you**

8.4. Don’t Allow Others to “Group You”

Many seek to put you into a collectivist box.

Say, for example, “the Italian guy”, or “the black guy”, or “the conservative guy”.
And when you allow them to put you in a collectivist box, they will pass group-level traits, generalizations, and stereotypes onto you.

It’s not that these people are mean, it’s just that they don’t know any better.
And it’s easier for them to “label” you, rather than learn about you as an individual, or deal with the unknown that you represent.

The enlightened individualist is not cool with that, and takes steps to avoid it.

Both practically and mentally.
See an example against a subtle, social-level covert power move against colored folks:

> Black Folks: Reclaim Your Power Against White Virtue-Signaling

This is one of the, if not *the* only effective ways to avoid racial conflicts.

9. Assess Characters: Leaders & Members

Assessing characters well is foundational to a happy and successful life.

And it’s also foundational to decide:

1. Which groups deserve your membership and support
2. What leaders deserve you as a follower

You want to look both at the leader(s), and the group members.

Some good questions to assess leaders:

- How is he as a person?
- What is he trying to achieve, and where do our interests diverge?
- What does he ask, and what does he give?

If he promotes ideologies or worldviews, ask what his biases might be.
If he tells you, how you ought to behave, ask yourself “does he walk the talk”? And “does he have skin in the game”?

For example, when politicians send men to war, none go to war themselves, and almost none have children in active engagement.
That’s no skin in the game, which is a major red flag of a sucker’s trade.
You can also apply the same principles for marketers and sellers: did they walk the talk, or did they achieve success selling others how to be successful (paradox of practice, see example)?

And if he asks for extreme sacrifices, some Machiavellianism and enlightened cynicism can help you properly

assess whether that extreme sacrifice is even needed.
See “extreme leadership” and “military manipulation”:

> Great Leadership Is Great Manipulation: Jocko Willlink Case Study

Analyzing Leaders & Mission Is Both A Right & Duty

Properly assessing authority can be a moral obligation for the enlightened individualist.

Quoting from the “Start Here” page:

> The worst cases of “following orders” without questioning authority slaughtered millions. The best cases, only killed their souls.

If you’re going to land your support to someone or to a certain mission, it’s your duty to make sure that the leader and mission are value-adding.
Are they good for you? Are they good for the world?

Also, look at the people around you.
Is it a group of smart self-starters, independent thinkers, and high-value folks going places?
Or is it a bunch of mindless sheep?
You might also apply the same analysis of “group members” to whole societies, and see if the beaten path fits your mold.

Great pic, but don’t misread it: there is nothing inherently wrong with following society’s most common path. But if it’s not to the individualist’s liking, he steps aside.

9.2. Quit Groups With Poor Leaders

If the leader is a poor leader, leave the group.

Or take the group over.

If you quit, maybe take some of the good guys with you, it's a win-win, plus a win for society.
If you're not in the position to leave or take over, you gotta play Machiavellian. Don't show any sign of rebellion, but mentally disengage, and pursue your interests.

In some cases, active resistance might be called for.

One of the best representations of enlightened individualism

Bucking and fighting groups or leaders can be costly to you, so you must think it over, and you might want to include the ethics and morals of *not* taking action.

Note:

Assessing authority is different than "rebelling" -often a child-like reaction to a judge role– or "undermining the leader" -often a bad political strategy-.
Assessing authority means that you are also open to *accepting* value-adding authority, leadership, or mentorship.
And if you reject it, you better proceed smartly and strategically.

10. Quit All Groups That Limit Your Personal Power

In general, quit all value-taking groups, and disavow all leaders that don't directly contribute to your well-being.

I'd like to focus on one case study because of how common it is:

10.2. Quit "Social Complainers" (Feminized Society & Patriarchal Society)

Enlightened individualists don't pay much attention to social trends and "cultural zeitgeist".

And least of all, they waste their time fighting against it.

Why not?
Because:

1. His time is valuable
2. It's high investment, little returns (chances of making a difference are slim)
3. He'd have to join movements that often act as echo chambers, with plenty of bitter members (scratch with the turkeys)

4. Cultural trends don't really change people's psychology all that much
5. Cultural trends don't really impact *you* all that much.

Remember, the enlightened individualist sees himself bigger than groups, culture, or socially mandated values.
The enlightened individualist believes that, even if society was really stacked against him, he can *still* be the exception.
And that is wholly up to him.
So rather than changing society, difficult and with little returns, he works on *himself*.

The Modern Social Complainers

Social complainers vary with time.

Today, many of them in the West happen to be lined around gender camps.

Male-only "self-help" complains of "femininized society" -or "gynocentric society", to sound more erudite-.

Social complainers love to paint a dire future you can't escape from. If you wanna give up all your personal power… Follow them.
Feminist movements are the same of course, and complain about the "patriarchy".

Those echo chambers might (both) be (*somewhat*) right.
After all, the TPM community saw elements of a "feminized society" and this website showed that many men gain when women are marginalized -see workplace gender conflict and gender conflict-.
But that's not the point.

The issue with those approaches is that they over-focus on *society*.
And **social complainers ignore individual power**, as well as the inter-individual relationships that have little to do with "society".

Of course society does have *some* repercussions on the individual -and on you-. Yet, how much society affects you largely depends on *your* individual mindsets, attitude, and skills.

Yes, society might espouse this or that value you disagree with.
So what?
You're not "society".

And in your relationships, you can form your own enclave of like-minded people.

After all, in the middle of the most repressive patriarchies, women managed to have men bend over backward for them.
And in the middle of the most matriarchal societies, plenty of men thrived and acquired power.
So **quit the social complainer groups, and focus on being a thriving individual**.

And as a general mindset: focus less on the rules, and more on being the exception to those rules.

Some more categories of individuals who are too focused on the social dimension to the detriment of the empowered self include:

The Social Complotists

Social complotists (mis)interpret all major events as manipulated by some mysterious power that hides behind the scenes, almost always to the detriment of the masses.

The disempowering frame is that the complotist, and you, are almost always part of that credulous, powerless mass.

Personally, I think that not all complotist theories are the same. Some are more credible than others but, as a rule of thumb, most complotists you meet in your everyday life are not very logical, informed, or power-aware to add real value.

More important than what I think though is how the enlightened individual generally approaches complots. And whether or not the enlightened pays attention or believes in complot theories he is not bothered or disempowered by them.
Why not?
Because the enlightened individualist believes that he can always carve out his niche of power and he can always find a way to achieve his goals.
And even if he can't, his focus is not on the stories, or even realities of the complot, but in what he can do as an individual.

The Social Philosophers

These guys love to discuss larger social trends.

In our current era, they like to discuss about the rise of China, the "death of the West", or the cyclical trends of how civilizations rise and fall -and somehow, it always seems like we're on a downward trajectory-.

These discussions often are based on little or no evidence (low in science) and little or no observation (2/3 of the knowledge pillars are missing).
Depending on who you're talking to, they can also be opinions of rather misinformed and historically ignorant folks, making their theories and "predictions" utterly meaningless.
And as Steven Pinker said: "The one prediction coming out of futurology that is undoubtedly correct is that in the future, today's futurologists, will look silly".

In any case, the enlightened individualist is not too stoked, afraid, or engrossed by social philosophies and predictions.
Again, he believes he can succeed and meet his own goals independently of what society does. And to ensure that he succeeds, he knows better than getting lost and disempowered by the predictions of gloom and doom.

11. Focus on *Self*-Development

Enlightened individualism is a journey of self-development.

The focus is on the self.
Once you develop the self, then you can join any group you want, and you'll be able to contribute some real value.

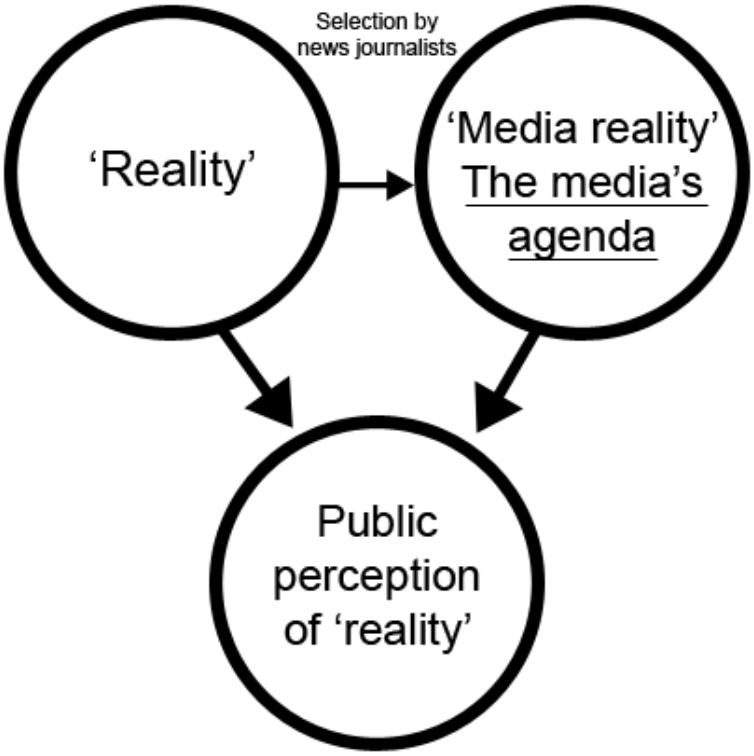
And you'll find out that you most often end up leading those groups.

With plenty of bias, TPM believes that this website's approach is particularly helpful.

12. Cut Out (Mass) Media Consumption

In simple terms, the agenda setting theory says that:

> Media chooses for you what's relevant and important to pay attention to.



I find the theory to be an accurate description of how things work.
To quip a popular trope of the early 2020s, it doesn't even matter whether news are "fake" or not. ***All* kinds of media decide for you what you should be paying attention to**, and what you should *not* be paying attention to.
And guess what's not high on the list of priorities? You! **The media is about taking time away from yourself, to distribute to all kinds of random things**.

All kinds of random things that, icing on the cake, are irrelevantly low proximity to you (see later).

And of course, enlightened individualists are not cool with that.
By putting themselves first, enlightened individualists naturally avoid wasting too much time on random news.
And when it comes to deciding what's important, enlightened individualists decide for themselves what they should pay attention to, and what's worth spending time and (emotional) resources on.

Refuse Having an Opinion

From a Machiavellian power perspective, there is no unbiased information.

Everyone has an agenda, and the spin they put on events reflects their agenda.

Discussing events is rarely in the service of exchanging opinions or, God forbid, reaching the truth. Discussions are a battleground for control.

What do they want to control?

Well, one, the narrative of "what things mean" (frame).
And then, of course, you.
Every pundit and **everyone with an opinion wants to recruit you**. They want you to agree with them, follow their doctrine, follow them or, worse, follow (or hate) whoever it is they like (or hate).

And what's in it for you?

At best, nothing.
But more commonly, you at least pay an opportunity cost price.
With that time, you could have worked on yourself, met your GF/BF, look for a GF/BF, or… Anything else that actually adds value to your life.

So it would seem like an easy win to refuse having an opinion on anything, but, alas…

It's hard for many to *not* have an opinion.
So they get suckered into news that have no relevance to them, wasting time developing opinions of things that they aren't going to influence anyway.

The solution?
If you can't avoid being shoved information your way, at least avoid having an opinion.

Unplug From the "Endless Outrage Machine"

Outrage is the name of the news game these days.

Outrage is a power game, it's a way of saying "look at me, I matter".
But it's useless.
Here are some enlightened examples of outrage reframing:

- Police shoots a man who happened to be black? Tragic, but I don't know the whole story
- How bad is it the UK left the EU, who they think they are? I'm not sure it's "bad", and I don't have time to develop an informed opinion
- How much does the government suck to force us to wear masks? Indeed I hate coercion, but I'd rather talk about where we can move next

In short: things happen. And they always will. Refuse getting dragged into debates as if they were all-important to your life, because they often aren't.
Instead, **suspend opinion on everything that is of no immediate relevance to you, and focus on yourself**.

Pull, Don't Push

The simple solution?

Switch all "push" media and mass media off, and limit your intake of media to "pull".
"Pull" means that you decide where, when, and if you look up for information.
For example, good "pull" means that you *sometimes* go online to a few selected magazines that you trust for rational and balanced reporting, see if there is anything you're interested in, and then go back to your real life.

Since media focuses on threats and continuously seeks sensationalism, mass media consumers also tend to be neurotics, with an external locus of control, who live in fear.
They are "low-power", "high-emotional involvement", the worst quadrant:

	LOW POWER	HIGH POWER
HIGH INVEST	**Neurotic** Emotionally over invested on things he cannot control. • Media consumer • Passive, seeks reassurance • Follower GOAL: Increase power to affect change, or stop focusing low proximity issues. Read "Enlightened Individualism".	**Visionary** Takes action and affects change in the world based on his emotions, feelings, and ideals. • (Social) media personality • Activist, seeks to change • Charismatic leader GOAL: Make sure the rational and logical analyses are in lockstep with emotional and idealistic drives.
LOW INVEST	**Apathetic** Low power to affect people and circumstances, but doesn't care to. • Gamer • Stoner • "Chill" about everything Goal: A life of (mild) hedonism is fine. Not everyone must pursue greater goals.	**Strategic** Goal-driven and focused, but without emotions and/or ideals. • Marketer • Machiavellian (potentially) • Effective leader Goal: Some passion makes for a fuller life. Strategic passion and ideals also motivate others: most people aren't "cold".

Example: Pushing War News

Push and pull apply beyond mass media.

There is plenty of "push" in the digital world and in modern smartphones.

I'm updating this article as my newly bought Pixel started pushing news on me.
The latest one was on the Israeli and Palestinian war.

My answer to the "Israeli war" push notification?

"F*ck that!", while I immediately deactivate the annoying service.

And not because I'm indifferent to people's suffering, but because… What am I gonna do about it from my room?
This situation is low proximity to me (see later).

To me, it feels both useless and wrong to consume media about wars if I'm not gonna do anything about it.
It's almost immoral.
As enlightened individualists, we *must* focus on what we can do something about.

As a matter of fact, passively consuming media is a *selfish* act of time waste.
The most ethical thing you can do in life is to focus on what you can have a positive impact on.

And the more Palestinians and Israelis read an article like this, the less they'll be to want to fight that war.

Your Enlightned Agenda Setting

You don't need anyone to set your agenda of what's important.
Here's a sample outline of "enlightened agenda setting" for you:

1. Yourself (self-development, health, what makes you happy, etc. etc.)
2. Your goals
3. Your relationships with real people in your life

This is connected to “I put my interests before that of random people & things”.
At the core, **consuming media means that random events and people are more important than you are**.

This dynamic is painfully evident with celebs news and updates, where you are taking time away from your life, to give it to some random people you don’t even know.
Enlightened individualists don’t spend time updating themselves on what the latest celeb is up to. Instead, enlightened individualists use mass media and social time to work on *their* life, and to develop real relationships with real people they actually know.

13. Move to “Enlightened Belonging”

Here’s the great part:

Enlightened individualism is *not* about swearing off “belonging”, groups, ideals, or emotional investment in others.

Once you learn to be part of groups without investing your ego in them, you are free to enjoy the sense of belonging -and even pride-.

You might call this switching “going from ego-fusion to an enlightened belonging”.

In simpler terms, we might call it “cool belonging” -as opposed to “hot”-.
Rather than being “proud of being part of X, which defines me”, you are “happy of being part of X, while maintaining my individuality and rationality”.

Enlightened belonging also avoids the “us Vs them’ trap.
It’s a “pride” that says “I’m part of this group, and I’m proud of it because we’re great and I love these people, and what we stand for. Maybe you guys from that other group can also be cool. I hope so”.

See more here.

13.2. ... Dribbling All of Enlightenment Impostors

Some leaders or public figures co-opt enlightened ideals.

They take what *sounds* like enlightened ideals, and put them into the service of parochialism:

> **Jocko Willink**: Look, when I served in the military, I served alongside every race, every color, every creed, with men and women from the most diverse imaginable socio-economic background from all over the country, and we in the military set those differences aside…

To begin with, the diversity is bogus as, for one, they’re all from the USA.

And most important, that “soar higher” message is a fake call to enlightenment.

It’s about enticing you outside certain groups, only to join another individual-repressive, individual-castrating group.
Just keep on listening a few more seconds to that video, and see what’s in store for you.

14. Ruthlessly Focus on Maximum Impact Area

Let’s quickly introduce a few related concepts now:

14.2. Apply the “Gravitational Law”

Gravitational law:

> The importance and relevance of an event or individual to you is inversely proportional to its value and

> distance

In simpler words: the closer and more valuable someone or something is to you, the more relevant it is.
The farther removed and valueless it is, the less relevant it is.

There are two related concepts in the gravitational law: the distance (proximity law), and the potential value to you (related to value accounting).

Both are important, but proximity is often more important, and where people stumble most often (see mass media, fandom, sports fan, etc.).
Read here how to apply the proximity law to your social strategy.

Let's take a previous example now, the "slave mindset" as related to ranks and hierarchies, and let's filter it through "gravitational law" to see how the enlightened individualist adapts.

Your immediate boss is high proximity.
So if your immediate boss is a bad human being, that *does* have an impact on you and you *do* have an impact on him.
Furthermore, staying under a bad boss *does* say something about you, since high-quality folks who demand a lot from the people around them wouldn't stay long under poor bosses.
So, in this case, the enlightened individualist expands effort to change the situation, or remove himself from the situation.
And once he finds a good boss, it's not a case of identity projection anymore if he feels good about his boss because he has personal agency and he made it happen.

But if your elected prime minister is poor, carry on because unless you're in politics, he's low proximity, you had little agency on his election, and what he says or does say nothing about you.
Alternatively, if you want to affect political change, then you must change your life focus, and go into politics.

14.3. For Personal Effectiveness Focus on "High Mutual Pull"

Relevant to the gravitational law are the concepts of personal agency and personal affect:

- Personal agency: this is your personal "gravitational pull", your power to change the situation for the better. Higher proximity usually means higher personal power to change things
- Personal affect: this is the gravitational's pull effect from others, the power of the situation to change you, including emotionally, and to positively "move" you. Higher proximity usually means higher personal affect

Your personal interests and passions are also part of your personal affects, since you're more sensitive there.
For maximum effect the enlightened individualist zeroes in on the overlap between what he's affected by, and what he can affect:

Please note that albeit what's closer is easier to affect, this is not to say you must necessarily ignore all events and people that are not physically close to you.
Quite the opposite, actually. It means that if an event is important to you, but you're not close enough to affect change, then *you* must rise up to the challenge.
Either get closer, or find a way to increase your personal power to affect change.

By only investing in what matters to you, and what you have control on, you increase personal power, returns, and efficiency.
The focus on gravitational together with the quest for the continuous betterment of life is how the greatest individuals of all time advanced our civilization.

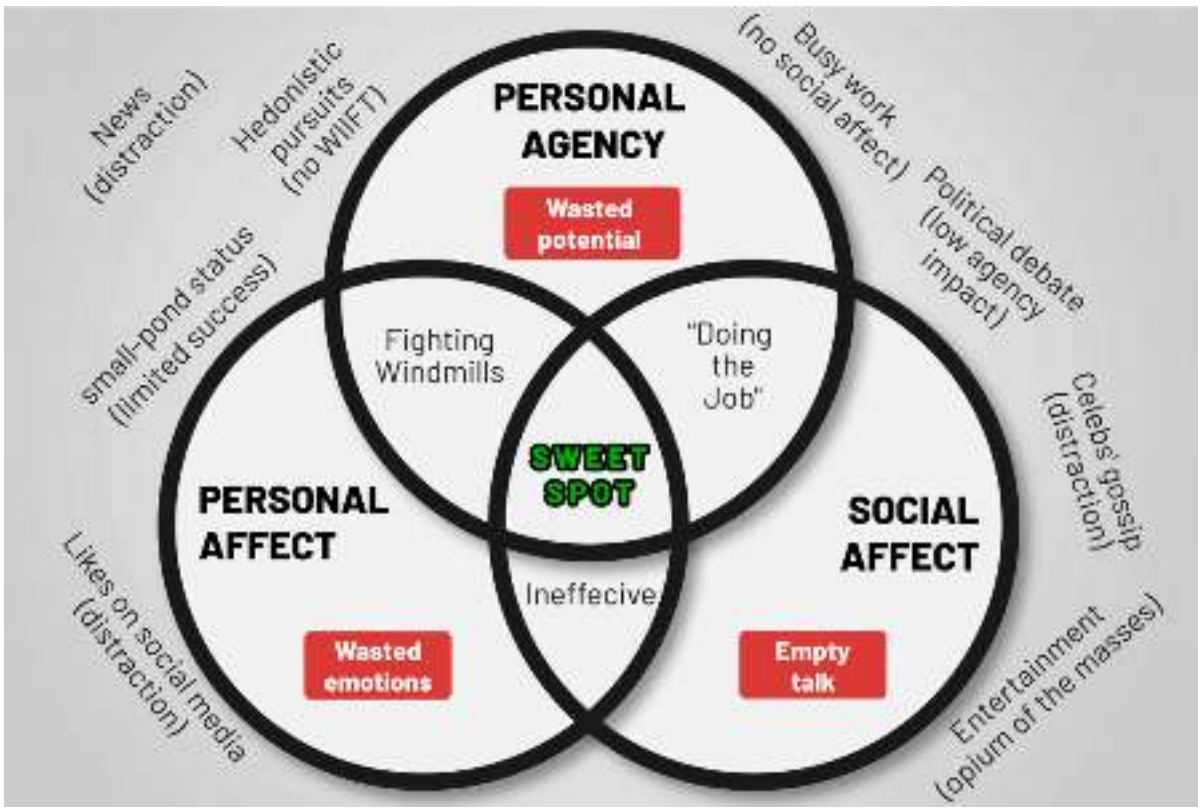
14.4. For Life Success, Focus on "Maximum Impact Area"

Finally, to maximize the chances of life success, you can add a third element when deciding what to focus on:

What others also care about.

As per social exchange, when you can give others what they want, you can also ask for equal value back.

This third element adds the second "win" to the first, more selfish "win", to realize" win-win".



In simple terms, we can consider noise and distraction that we need to ruthlessly cut out, everything that falls outside of these three spheres:

1. What you can change
2. What you want to change
3. What people want to have changed

What is inside, is what changes the world for the better.

The Hero's Journey

As we've seen, enlightened individualism is a journey.

Some of the paradigm shifts might require leaving comfortable and familiar small ponds and going through challenging life experiences.

There are also some mentally taxing dichotomies to negotiate -cynic pragmatism VS idealism- and some challenging personality paths to complete -from "me, me, me narcissism" to validation-independent antifragile ego-.

After all, enlightened individualism offers not easy answers and a list of rules, but a mindset and personality to grow into.
And that's always a more challenging task.

Ulysses ties himself to a mast to resist the sirens' callings and stay on his hero's journey

In a way, **enlightened individualism is a hero journey of self-development**.
The various psychological crutches are there to tempt you into an easier path.
But if you want to make it to hero level, you must remain steadfast in your focus on *self*-empowerment.

The path might also be a case of what we sometimes refer to as a "peak without a mountain", a journey rather than a destination.
Luckily, the journey is often its own reward.
And no matter how far you reach, every single step is a step forward.

Joining the Eagles

This website uses the allegory of "flying with the eagles", VS "scratching with the turkeys".

And we invite readers to soar with the eagles.

The englightned individualist is an eagle.

The eagle-individualist, self-reliant and demanding more of himself, steps outside of the fray, and looks at everything from a higher vantage position.

In Nietzche's philosophy, **the enlightened individualist is the true "ubermensch"**, moving fluidly, free, fierce, and unrestrained through space and time.

And in relation to the "big fish – small pond trap", the enlightened individualist is the fish who escapes the small ponds, and feels at home in the blue ocean.
The free fish in the blue ocean is the aquatic equivalent of the eagle in the sky.

And now, congratulations, you've done until here.

The next step is on you.
Are you ready to soar?

Machiavellianism: The Psychology of Manipulation

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 May 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"Machiavellianism" (2017) is a book on Machiavellianism and the psychology of manipulation.
The author defines the book as "the first comprehensive psychological book on Machiavellianism since Christie and Geis, and he might be right. "Machiavellianism" is the best overview of empirical findings on Machiavellianism available as of today (2021).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tamás Bereczkei graduated as a Biologist, and became a Doctor of Science in Psychology. He leads the Evolutionary Psychological Research group at the University of Pécs. Besides Machiavellianism, his main research areas include social intelligence, altruism and cooperation, and mate choice.

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- Emotional Intelligence & "Manipulative Intelligence"
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Machiavellian: A Description

The author describes a Machiavellian as "**one who uses others as a means of achieving one's own goals**".

He provides a longer -and more negatively-framed- description in the preface:

> Such individuals disrespect moral principles, deceive their fellow beings, and take advantage of others' frailty and gullibility. They take advantage of others by using them to achieve their own goals while their victims are not in the least aware of being used. They have a penetrating, rational and sober mind undisturbed by emotions. At times we cannot help being enchanted by their talent even though we know they misuse it.

Personally, I think that, one way or another, almost everyone "uses others" to achieve something.
So the real question is if the final outcome is win-win, or win-lose.

Plus, as Stef reminds us, some more considerations based on past outcomes and totalitarianism can enter into the calculation.

The takes a slightly judgmental stance on Machiavellianism. It's understandable in a way, but I don't fully agree with it.

The 5 Machiavellian Traits

Low Machs may show one or some of the following traits from time to time.

Machiavellians instead embody all five characteristics simultaneously and that, says the author, pose a danger to others (Slaughter 2011).

1. Manipulation

The author says that Machiavellians are first and foremost manipulators.
But they are also careful, so they are not *always* obviously manipulative and callous. They are *tactically* manipulative and selfish, and they draw from a vaster toolset of manipulative techniques.

High Machs also lie more, and feel less guilty and remorseful (Murphy 2012).
However, again, high Machs are not necessarily constant liars. They're ore opportunistic liars, or call it "expedient lying".
Still, that doesn't necessarily mean they hold sincerity as a value.
Says the author:

> Machiavellians aim to appear sincere whereas non-Machiavellians hold sincerity important in its own right.

2. Amorality

Machiavellians pursue self-interest, and since they are not bound by morality -"they can easily separate themselves from moral precepts"-, that pursuit can sometimes lead to unethical behavior.

In social exchanges, they feel they are not bound by reciprocity or "fairness".

In a classic sociological experiment on trust and theft, high Machs were more likely to cause loss to their partners in the trust condition, and stole from those who had previously shown trust towards them.
By contrast, low Machs did not steal in the trust condition, and resigned substantial material gain rather than violate fairness and responsibility norms.

In a sample of 1343 subjects, Jonason and colleagues found a negative relationship between Mach scores and the importance assigned to values such as Harm, Fairness, Ingroup, and Authority.
Machs' results were similar to those obtained for psychopathy but different from narcissism (that showed no significant relationship with any of the moral values mentioned).

However, Machiavellians don't *always* act immorally.
Machiavellians' amorality is opportunistic.
For example, not when the risks are too high compared to the potential benefits, and not when there is nothing to be gained.

- **Shit-testing for weakness**

Says the author:

> They quite often provoke others, continuously testing where the red lines are in their relationships (Gunnthorsdottir et al. 2002). When they feel weakness or lenience in others, they launch an attack with no

> hesitation.

3. Cynicism

Machiavellians are suspicious of others, and attribute negative traits to people, including hypocrisy, malevolence, and lying.

Since they have a dog-eat-dog worldview, Machiavellians cheat out prevention, because they think others would cheat anyway (McIllwain 2003).

Machiavellians, who usually are open and frank about their nature, see others -and especially low Machs- as weak for being insincere and hypocrites.
And that makes it fair to take advantage of that weakness.

In Machiavellians' eyes, low Machs are not in control of their life and at the mercy of the events and people around them.
So when Machiavellians manipulate or take advantage of them, they are just being one of the many external forces that people naturally yield to.

My Note: Machs are right on something
When it comes to hypocrisy as in the discrepancy between stated moral values and behavior, sometimes they are partially right.

4. Emotional coldness

Machiavellians are "emotionally distanced" with a cognitive orientation.
They think more rationally and consider all available options and possibilities in a cold-minded manner (Pilch, 2008).

Machiavellians are very goal-oriented, and they analyze information and craft strategies to achieve that goal.
Their goals also tend to be themselves, including personal advancement, gains, and victory.

This attitude can provide Machiavellians with a big advantage in life.
Says the author:

> Their lack of doubt as well as concentration on personal goals **provide them with immense advantages over others in gaining material goods and favorable positions**. In contrast, low Machs are much more concerned with their network of personal relationships and with moral norms that often make them vulnerable.

And that's why I advise readers here to acquire a similar attitude in "enlightened individualism".

5. Lack of empathy

The author says that it is "very likely" that Machiavellians cannot empathize with others and put themselves in other people's shoes.

Says Tamas:

> A strong negative relationship was found between Machiavellianism and empathy scores irrespective of the specific test used to measure this ability
>
> *(Andrew, Cooke, & Muncer 2008; Wai & Tiliopoulos 2012; Al Ain et al. 2013; Jonason & Krause 2013)*

Given the lack of empathy, says the author, it is not surprising that "Machiavellians exhibit low levels both of helpfulness and selflessness" (Paal & Bereczkei 2007; Bereczkei & Czibor 2014).

Motives & Consequences

Expanding on the above 5 basic traits:

1. Reward-driven behavior

Machiavellians strive to win and to gain the largest profit possible.

Usually, they go for pragmatic rewards such as money, prestige or position. The author doesn't add, but probably that also includes mates.

And they tend to avoid situations where there is no obvious "what's in it for me".
Christie and Geis had noted indeed early on that Machiavellians don't put much effort into experiments that have no concrete reward.

Machiavellians show a preference for immediate rewards. In one experiment the drive to bigger payoffs led them to lose more money than Low machs.
However, the experiment had somewhat hidden risks for the higher-risk options and, importantly, Machiavellians do not go for direct and immediate rewards at any price.

And, as the author says, "**Machiavellians are in many cases able to achieve success in the long term as well, (…) and they often win in situations resembling everyday life**".

This is an important difference with psychopaths, which instead are more likely to lose out in the long run to their short-term, reward driven focus.

2. Different brain activity

Machiavellians show different brain activity when placed in fMRI machines.

For example, when cooperation is expected but they can gain by cheating.
Or the opposite, in which they show increased ACC activity when their short-term interests (cheating) and long-term interests (long term win-win) conflict.

3. Pragmatism: Extrinsic rewards preferred

First, the difference:

- Extrinsic = external tangible goals/rewards, or avoiding harms and damages
- Intrinsic: internal drives such as pleasure of activity, striving for development, belonging, or serving a larger cause

Research shows that Machiavellians are mostly motivated by external factors (Fehr et al. 1992; Jones & Paulhus 2009) and to obtain external gains such as money, power, and influence.

John McHoskey found out that "Machiavellianism was positively correlated with material success whereas negatively with all intrinsic motivational factors (communion, family ties, self-love)".

4. Individual Before Collective

Machiavellians pursue individual versus community interests.

A 2014 study aptly titled "valuing myself over others" found that Machiavellianism is positively correlated with an individualistic value orientation (emphasizing autonomy, independence, and competition) and negatively correlated with collectivistic values (loyalty to the community).

Sometimes though you need some of that individual-before collective attitude to see through the manipulative propaganda:

5. Strategic Fluidity

Machiavellians are very strategic.

And they adapt to the situation.

Says the author:

> Machiavellians are not characterized by rigid thought patterns; they do not act according to some pre-existing schema, to which they would adhere at any price. Research findings reported in the past few years have clearly shown that the uniqueness of the Machiavellian character lies in tactical skills and flexible decision-making.

And:

> A cornerstone of Machiavellian strategic decision-making is the continuous weighing-up of the situational conditions.

Even during a mock business negotiation, Machiavellians used more persuasion tactics, and adapted more flexibly to the changing situation.

Machs also adapt to the situation when it comes to deceiving.
And they cheat and deceive others when the benefits of manipulation exceed the costs.
Generally, that happens when:

1. You can avoid detection
2. You won't be punished for cheating
3. You conform to community norms (or don't break them since there were no clear expectations or conditions)

Machiavellians are also able to collaborate and think long term, which means they can also succeed in environments and endeavors that require "staying power".

Machiavellians' adaptability might be one of the main reasons why many studies contradict each other, or generally fail to find strong and one-dimensional correlational patterns:

> Perhaps this behavioral complexity is what produced controversial results in some studies.

Machiavellians also adapt their strategies to the situation far more than low machs do.
For example:

> They earn large profits in social dilemma games but once the experimenter enables players to punish free-riders, they restrain their profiteering and increase the sums offered to partners to avoid punishment (Spitzer et al. 2007). In most cases, they are unwilling to help others but when they are aware of being observed by members of the community, they are at once ready to support even unknown individuals so that they maintain their prestige (or its illusion) in the group (Bereczkei, Birkas, & Kerekes 2010).

6. More Traits: Personality, Temperament, & Character

- Lower agreeableness
- Lower conscientiousness
- Higher neuroticism: but they don't let it show
- More individualistic, and a weaker sense of group orientation
- Low need for social approval

- Sensation seeking: but cannot be considered typical risk takers
- Borderline personality disorder: overlaps mostly with “identity diffusion”, as **Machs are social chameleons** and “fear of fusion”

Machiavellian Communication

- **Persuasive lies**

Machiavellians lie very persuasively, and efficiently conceal their true intentions.
In two studies Machiavellians (Exelinne, Geis & Moon 1981) found Machiavellians to be more credible than non-Machiavellians.

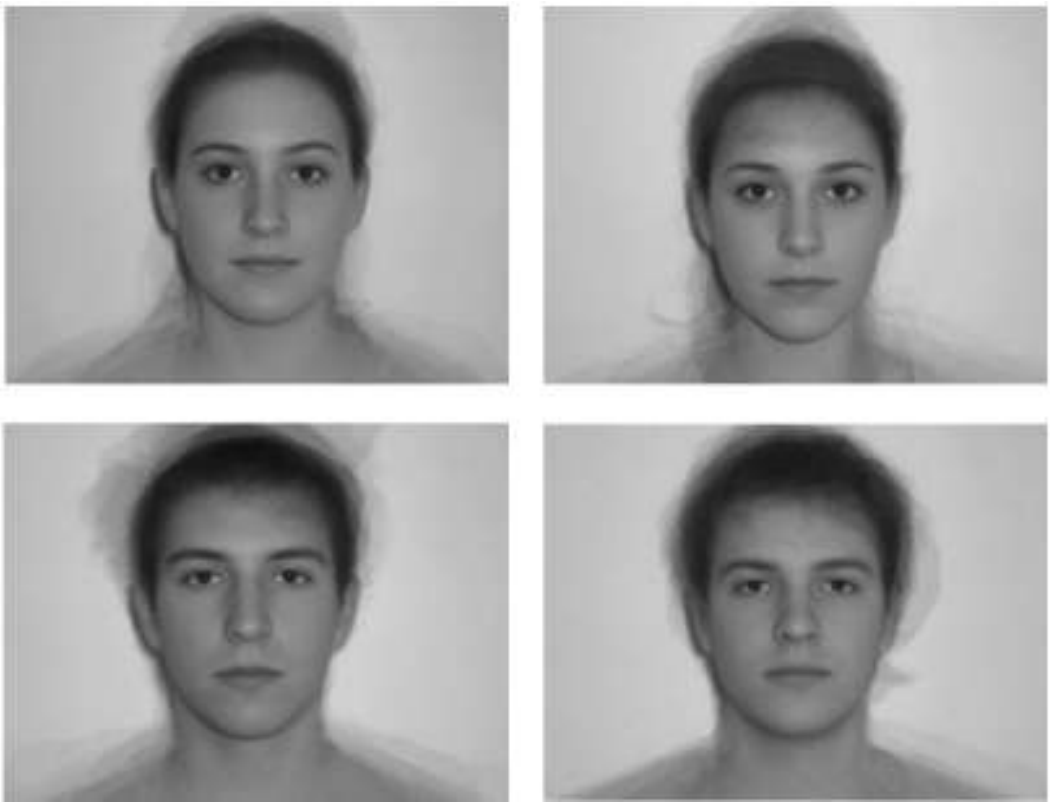
- **Impression management**

Machs do strive to make good impression.

And, in good part, they succeed.
A study found that even by simply looking at pictures, people rated high Machs in more favorable terms.
High Machs were mostly described as “smart”, “brave”, “ambitious”, “appealing”, “dominant” and “talented”. Low Machs were primarily described
as “irresolute”, “sentimental”, “unintelligent”, “credulous” and “indecisive”.
And people rate high Machs higher on social attractiveness than they rate low Machs (Wilson, Near, & Miller 1996).

- **Machiavellian phenotype?**

Researchers gave subjects the description of an “individual manipulative for personal gains”, and the subjects picked the face which was generated from the average face of many high Mach subjects (Holtzman, 2011).



1. low Mach female; 2. high Mach female; 3. low Mach male; 4. high Mach male (Holtzman 2011)

- **Telling behavioral features**

My note:
This section in the book included two studies that supposedly showed how high Machs were disliked in real-life.
But I have found those studies to be misquoted, so I skip them (see the "cons" section).

Machs Can Be Very Cooperative...

… When it's good for them as well.

In an experiment of Public Goods Game each player could decide whether to keep a sum of money in their private account, or to share it in a public account.
The money in the public account would be double at the end of the game and shared among all.

The researchers expected that the presence of altruists would lead Machs to decrease their public contributions to take advantage of them.
Instead, when Machs also increased their contributions when playing with altruists.
The author speculates that Machs calculate that if they contributed small amounts to the group account, altruists might change their minds and reduce their public contributions, leading to a lose-lose turn of events for Machiavellians.

Machiavellians Have More Sex

They start earlier, and have more sexual partners.

Jonason et al. in a paper called "The dark triad: Facilitating a short-term mating strategy in men", says that Machiavellians are much more likely to change partners frequently, to prefer short-term relationships.
They show low levels of closeness, intimacy and commitment towards their partners (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic 2010).

They are also more likely to approach dating with a more malevolent bent, and use more value-taking strategies, including making their partners drunk, or intimidate and humiliate them partner when they believe doing so will help them "score".

However, later on the author also says that Machiavellians do not confine themselves to short-term, and are as likely to enter long-term relationships.

Machs At Work: Kings of Unstructured Environments

Machs performance at work might seem like a mixed bag at first:

- **Some studies show Machs doing worse**

A meta-analysis with more than 43,000 subjects in 245 independent samples found that Machiavellians had a lower average income and more frequently engaged in "deviant" behavior at the workplace.

The author says it's not surprising because, in the long run, Machs cannot hide their true selves. And once the reality of who they truly are emerges, people aren't too fond of Machs.

- **Some studies suggest Machs doing better**

However, other studies suggest that Machs reach higher income, occupational statuses, and positions.
And that might be either because of their drive to win, or because people attribute personal qualities to Machs.

In the author's own study, top leaders had the highest scores of Machiavellianism, and there was a link between the age of the company and Mach scores at the top.
In general, the younger the company, the more Machiavellians did well.
A German study also reached the same conclusion: no advantage for Machs in tightly structured organizations. But

in more loosely organized companies without clear top-management instructions, Machs were earning twice as much.

- **Machs do better in unstructured environments**

It seems then that Machs do better in unstructured environments, probably because those environments provide them with more opportunities for their strategies, political machinations, and manipulations.
It's a similar trend to what's been seen in the laboratory as well: whenever there was more room for maneuvers within the environment, Machs tended to do even better.

Machiavellians Are Not Evil

The author very directly asks:

Are Machiavellians evil?

And he replies:

> That would be an exaggeration. Usually they do not harm others for the sake of causing harm, and they do not find pleasure in others' suffering as opposed to psychopaths.

I don't fully agree that psychopaths all necessarily enjoy other people's suffering, but I do agree with the general point he makes.

Keep in mind that **Machiavellians only act immorally when there is something to be gained** (the means justify the end).
They're not hell-bent on evil.
So when there is nothing to be gained, Machiavellians might as well act morally (the end does not justify the means).

Machiavellians Seek Good Social Reputation

Machiavellians aren't very concerned with social norms, and they resist community expectations.

But they *do* care about people's opinions and seek to make a good impression and win others' benevolence.

In a real-life study, Machiavellians who were asked to do charity work publicly, three times as many Machiavellians agreed as compared to the private request, suggesting an effort of "pretended altruism" (my note: however, it didn't say how many more low Machs also agreed in the public condition, albeit it's implied it was less).
And the public act did have an effect: people rated the volunteer as more reliable and friendly.

Machiavellians also seem to be good at managing in-person impressions -especially when it's first impressions-:

People Like Machiavellians

An experiment for example showed that while Machiavellians are unwilling to help people in trouble when group members are not around, they are more likely to give charitable donations when they know that others will know about it.

And Machiavellians do often succeed at making a good impression.
People often judge Machiavellians to be intelligent even though research shows they're no more intelligent than others (Wilson et al. 1996). And people do consider them as being charismatic and effective leaders (Deluga 2001).

Machiavellians Might Make for Good Leaders

Bereczkei says that as leaders, Machiavellians' personal interests can overlap with collective interests.

Therefore, since it's in their interest to further their own group, they can put their Machiavellianism to good uses for the community.

That being said, while I consider it a good point, I must remain skeptical.
For more on political power dynamics see "The Logic of Political Survival".

Emotional Intelligence & "Manipulative Intelligence"

The gist is:

Machs perform poorly on emotional intelligence tests.
They might be poorer at understanding their own emotions and detecting people's emotions when nothing is at stake.
But when they have something to gain, Machs perform well -or better-, and are very effective manipulators.

When it comes to mind reading, it is possible that Machiavellians are in general average or poor mind readers. But, again, they show above-average cognitive abilities in situations offering the opportunity to manipulate others.

Emotional Coldness

- **Emotional detachment**

Machiavellians perform better in emotionally loaded situations such as, for example, a debate involving personal feelings and values (Geis, Weinheimer, & Berger 1970; Sullivan & Allen 1999).

Machs seem able to cast emotions aside and they devote full attention to the cognitive appraisal of the situation, focusing only on the achievement of strategic objectives.

- **Impulse control and communication of emotions**

Machiavellians have difficulty both in communicating their own emotions and understanding those of others.

In common with alexithymia, Machs also present "externally-oriented thinking (Al Ain et al. 2013; Jonason & Krause 2013). This means Machiavellians are rarely concerned with their internal life, do not analyze their own thoughts and feelings, and don't often rely on their imagination.

As such, Machs tend to score low on emotional intelligence tests.
But that's not the whole story (read on).

- **Anxiety**

The findings are mixed.
Some studies found no significant relationship between Machiavellianism and self-report measures of anxiety (e.g. STAI; Ali, Amorin, & Chamorro-Premuzic 2009). Other studies revealed a positive relationship between the two variables (Fehr et al. 1992; Al Ain et al. 2013).

Machs Fail "Normal" EI Tests

Writes the author:

> This interpretation could be generalized: high Machs find it more difficult than average to understand other's emotions, recognize the feelings or intentions reflected in the posture and facial expressions of others, and also to display difficulty in expressing and regulating their own emotions (Austin et al. 2007; Wai & Tiliopoulos 2012; Szijjarto & Bereczkei 2015; Pilch 2008; Vonk et al. 2015).

That means that Machiavellians have, or at least score, low in emotional intelligence.

Machiavellianism is also negatively related to the more broad construct of social intelligence that includes sensitivity to, and understanding and control of, social relationships.

The Problem With Most Emotional Intelligence Scales

Some authors point out issues with what emotional intelligence measures (O'Conner & Athota 2013).

The issue is that EI measures focus almost exclusively on positive emotions.
They concern traits such as "kind", "friendly" and "benevolent". Hence, it is not surprising that low Machs score high, and high Machs score low.
And **once the agreeableness effect was eliminated the negative relationship between Machiavellianism and emotional intelligence disappeared**.

Hot VS Cold Empathy

"Hot" empathy is what the conventional notion of empathy, referring to the ability to experience an individual's emotional state and potentially motivate the observer to help.

"Cold" empathy refers to *understanding* and recognizing someone else's mental state and feelings, but without enabling one to *share* others' emotions.
While cold empathy does not make people willing to help, it can enable people to use the information in various ways, including for taking advantage of others.

A highly empathetic person shares emotions as well -"hot" empathy-.
But the two are only weakly related, with Machs showing a low level of empathic concern but likely having a good "cold" empathy underpinning their theories of mind (read on).

Also see:

- The Wisdom of Psychopaths

Mind Reading & Theory of Mind

> Theroy of mind refers to one's ability to attribute to others mental states and contents such as desires, beliefs, intentions and emotions that may be different from one's own mental states.

Research shows that Machs either have average or below-average ability to understand other people's mental states (Paal & Bereczkei 2007; Lyons, Caldwell, & Schultz 2010; Ali et al. 2009).

The big question then is:

How can Machs successfully manipulate others with a below-average ability to recognize others' goals and emotional states?
The question hasn't been fully answered yet, but we have some partial answers at least.

One possible answer is similar to the emotional intelligence conundrum we saw above: the tests and studies used are not effective to measure Machs' abilities.
A recent experiment proposed subjects two stories: one with a conventional narrative and conventional "states".
Another one was posed in terms of manipulating and achieving goals (Szabo, Jones, & Bereczkei under publication, but probably this one here).
Results indicated that Machiavellianism was associated with increased mentalization performance in the context of manipulation.
The author says that "it seems that Machiavellians in fact recognize very accurately when others (characters in the stories in the study) manipulate or are being manipulated".
Later on, the author says that from his point of view, Machs are remarkably smart observers of human nature.

A different answer by some authors is to differentiate between the types of theories of mind: idiographic and nomothetic.
Idiographic seeks individual differences and peculiarities, while nomothetic categorizes the individual into a general "type" based on previous experience.

Manipulative Intelligence

When Machs tested with the "emotional manipulation scale", which might be considered a "dark EI", they substantially more frequently reported their willingness to deceive, confuse or influence others according to their own goals.

Says the author:

> This means that Machiavellians may be able to understand others' emotions and control their own feelings at a high level but that essentially they employ these abilities to serve their self-interest.

And that is consistent with several other studies which have also demonstrated that Machiavellians are in fact better than others in certain dimensions (Austin et al. 2007; Grieve 2011; Nagler et al. 2014).
For example, Machs exhibit above-average emotional intelligence when they have the opportunity to deceive others either verbally or nonverbally.
By contrast, when where there is no chance to exploit others and gain, they remain blind to the feelings of others as disturbing factors for which they find no use.

MERT Testing: Machs Still Perform Poorly

Some tests sought to provide a more real-life feel with videos, pictures, and audio (Multimodal Emotion Recognition Test, or MERT).

Machs also scored lower.
However, such tests fail to overcome the essential problem that subjects are not actively involved in the situation.

Let's dig deeper.

Rea-World Testing Shows Great EI/Social Performance

One study combined the cheat card game with real money to examine how people express, conceal and recognize emotions in a realistic situation (Orosz & Bereczkei 2015).

High Machs were more likely to detect their partners' lying. And had more correct detections compared to the total number of cheat calls.
Finally, they also concealed their emotions more effectively, as measured by the number of cheat calls from their partners.

My Note:
This study seems to have been performed by a student of the author, and I couldn't find it online.

Machiavellian Intelligence

Nicholas Humphrey (1976) first described the "social intelligence hypothesis", which suggests that humans' high-level intelligence adapted to the social environment rather than to challenges posed by the natural environment.

A central domain of the social intelligence theory comprises manipulative-deceptive strategies.
Richard Dawkins and John Krebs (1978) first explained that much communication in the animal world is not to provide honest information as it was previously thought, but it's to deceive others.

The next step towards Machiavellian intelligence was in the form of "selection pressure" and "arms' race" (Robert

Dunbar, 1992, 1998, 2002) between manipulative strategies, and people's need to spot the manipulation and counter-deceive.

These theoretical considerations have been supported by studies on primates.
For example:

- The frequency of deceptive behavior is closely related to the relative volume of the neocortex: species with a larger neocortex more frequently engage in manipulative activities (Byrne 1995)
- The larger the neocortex volume, the weaker the relationship between male rank and reproductive success (Pawlowski, Dunbar, & Lowen 1998)
- Humans are really good at deception and even detecting deception (Balint-Kovacs, Hernadi, & Bereczkei 2013; Verplaetse et al. 2007) suggesting that much evolution has taken place

So researchers developed the "Machiavellian intelligence hypothesis" in the mid-1980s (Byrne & Whiten 1988).

Machiavellian intelligence is based on the idea that skillful manipulation confers significant evolutionary advantages.
Successful deception and exploitation of rivals exerted selection pressure on the development of an increasingly more complex social intelligence.

The author concludes that "researchers have agreed that manipulative and deceptive strategies have made an essential contribution to the emergence of humans' uniquely large brain and intelligence."

Machiavellians might then simply be those individuals who, more than others, inherited the Machiavellian genes and mind.
Among the advantages of the Machiavellian Intelligence in humans:

- Persistent task orientation, related to their working memory capacity
- Efficiently assess possible ways and costs of gaining rewards
- Inhibiting spontaneous emotions
- Selecting potential targets
- Flexbility & adaptability of behavior and strategies

This website includes "Machiavellian intelligence" into the overlapping but larger construct of "power intelligence".

> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

So if there are advantages, why isn't everyone a high Mach?
Because Machiavellianism has a ceiling in evolutionary terms. From a group/individual point of view, defection can't go too far or cooperation and trust would break down. And two, because there must be non-Machiavellians for the strategy to work to yield results (frequency-dependent selection).
Finally, the individual's Machiavellian deception also has to be contained to avoid being ostracized or punished by the group.

Machs Are Good at Inferring

The author then outlines his own theory of how Machiavellians approach strategies and decision-making.

He reviews brain scans and how Machs' brain activity differs, and introduces his research on working memory.
Machiavellians have high working memory capacity, which allows making inferences and judgments about people (Bereczkei & Birkas 2014).
Machs are efficient at memorizing and recalling information, and in computational operations. That is, on the basis of their previous experience they infer others' personality type and emotional life.

It's Mostly Socialization (Surprisingly)

Heritability of Machiavellianism seems to be low (0.31).

That is in contrast to psychopathy (0.69) and narcissism (0.59).

Of course genetic factors do play a role, but Machiavelliniasm seems to be more a product of environmental effects.

One study found an important correlation between Machiavellianism and quality of parental care.
Specifically:

> low-quality maternal care is one of the most important factors contributing to the development of a Machiavellian personality

Machiavellians' childhood is characterized by insecure attachments, low levels of parental care, and poor communication.

Also read more in:

- Attachment styles
- Avoidant attachment
- Anxious attachment

The life-history theory postulates that experiences acquired in crucial areas during the sensitive period of early life may have a large effect on the individual's subsequent course of life.
Those "crucial areas" include models for sexuality, dating, and relationships, accessibility of resources, quality of attachment to the parents, and predictability of the social environment during childhood.

Dark Triad VS Machiavellianism

The main commonalities in the dark triad are callousness, which essentially means a lack of concern for, and empathy towards others.
And manipulation, closely related to lying, derogating, remorseless self-seeking.

Common features among Machs, narcissists and psychopaths also include:

- Low levels of emotional empathy (Wai & Tiliopoulos 2012): the ability to attune themselves to others
- Low levels of self-control in some behaviors (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus 2013)
- Preference for short-term partner relationships
- High sensation seeking with orientation towards novel and unusual stimuli (Crysel, Crosier, & Webster 2013)
- Low agreeableness
- Predominantly include men

> Beyond these common features, however, all three members of the Dark Triad possess specific traits that are built on the basic structure.
> Machiavellians are primarily characterized by strategic planning, psychopaths by extreme antisociality, and narcissists by an egocentric outlook on life.

Differences

- **Big 5 model**: except for agreeableness, there is no consistency
- **Lying**: Psychopaths, similarly to Machiavellians, are incurable liars whereas narcissists are not

- **Short-term / long-term relationships**: Machiavellians don't avoid long-term relationships as strongly as the other two members of the Dark Triad do (Jonason, Luevano, & Adams 2012).
- **Fairness and altruism**: psychopaths lag far behind the other two groups
- **Realism VS self-greatness**: psychopaths and narcissists claim their own greatness and superiority, while Machiavellians are characterized by a certain kind of realism
- **Coping strategies for problems**: narcissists used coping strategies to alter stressful situations, with deliberate efforts to change the effect of stressors. Machs and psychos neglect of social support, do not seek informational, emotional or tangible support from others for solving their personal problems (Birkás, Gács, & Csathó 2016)
- **Materialism**: A Polish study investigated the tendency to place material possession very high in an individual's hierarchy of values. Higher narcissism and Machiavellianism were strongly connected with materialistic orientation but psychopathy did not
- **Drug & Alcohol**: High psychopathy showed strong addictive tendencies regarding either drug use, smoking or alcohol consumption. Alcohol consumption was positively correlated with narcissism. There is little or no relation between Machiavellianism and alcohol consumption, drug use, or smoking (Jonason, Koenig, & Tost 2010).

The author says that "Machiavellianism shows specific or typical features such as a rational mode of thinking, flexible decision-making, and cost/benefit calculation concerning behavioral output".

Several authors suggested that narcissism does not belong to the cluster of malevolent personality traits (Egan, Chan, & Shorter 2014; Kowalski, Vernon, & Schermer 2017) and proposed instead a "dark dyad" with psychopathy and Machiavellianism.

Machs VS Psychopaths

The closest relationship in the dark triad is between Machs and psychopaths.
Both have a poor sense of responsibility and low moral commitment.
Narcissism might be the "odd one out" because studies found that it's loosely related to the other two components (Rauthmann & Kolar 2013; Vernon et al. 2008).

Psychopaths are more:

- **Impulsive**: with especial regard to the dysfunctional impulsivity that includes inattention and risk-seeking. Machs might seem impulsive as they sometimes "strike first", but there is no significant relationship between Mach and impulsivity
- **Reward-driven** (including short term): psychos strive after profits at any price even if it entails punishment Machs love rewards, but they look for the best strategy to get them, rather than plunging in head-first
- **Antisocial personality**: there is overlap as Machs disregard ethical norms, deceive others, and are cynical and cold-blooded. Machs also score higher than low Machs (McHoskey 2001).
  - Norm violation: Machs are most likely to break "grey area" norms, norms that are less likely to cause troubles, or break norms when they're less likely to be caught
  - Violence: Machs self-reported (slightly) fewer acts of violence than psychopaths (Pailing, Boon, & Egan 2014). The author speculates Machs only consider violence when all else fails
  - Brutality and cruelty: psychos often assault others and are ready to take immediate revenge for any harm they suffer (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus 2013; Pailing, Boon, & Egan 2014). Although Machiavellians also commit antisocial acts, they remain far behind psychopaths in brutality and cruelty, which probably originate in a lack of control of aggressive impulses
- **Short-term focused** (including at the detriment of self and/or of future self)
- **Coping & emotions**: Machiavellians can ruminate or become emotional in response to stress; psychopaths show no sign of making emotional control in stressful situations (Birkás, Gács, & Csathó 2016)

- **Anxiety**: psychopaths feel no anxiety. Machiavellians do, but can control their emotions and conceal their anxiety from others

A gambling experiment involving the calculation of risks showed that psychopaths kept playing and losing, while Machs were more strategic and successful.

The author is surprised by the overlap between Machs and psychopaths. He says that Machiavellianism could be considered as the "basic level" of psychopathy, to which psychopaths develop further characteristics such as antisocial, violent and cruelty that enjoys harming others.

My Note:
I feel the misunderstanding might partially stem from the author considering psychopaths as sadists.

Machiavellianism Downsides

Both Machiavellians & Their Bosses Are Dissatisfied at Work

Says Tamas:

> However, irrespective of their working activities, employers are dissatisfied with the attitude and behavior of Machiavellians. Maybe more importantly, neither are Machiavellians satisfied with the job and role they fulfill in everyday life (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic 2010).

Higher Dissatisfaction in Sex Life

The higher partner count that comes from seeking diversity doesn't seem to be accompanied by personal satisfaction.
Says the author:

Probably not surprisingly, however, it is also Machiavellians who are dissatisfied with their sex life, always seeking for something different, something new.

Fatalism, External Locus of Control, & Alienation

Says the author:

> High Machs are firmly convinced that external circumstances have a stronger infl uence on their life than internal drives. This probably lies at the core of their strong feeling of alienation in their personal relationships as far as they believe that they live in isolation and their life is essentially meaningless

It might seem contradictory that Machiavellians are more fatalistic and have a higher external locus of control than low Machs.
The author explains it with Machiavellians' cynicism and distrust of others. Such as, Machiavellians see a dog-eat-dog world where you're basically forced to defend yourself and strike first.

Past-Negative Perspectives

Birkas & Csatho analyzed the time perspectives of dark-triad individuals.
People differ in their time-perspective along the variables of:

- Present
  - Present hedonistic strives for immediate satisfaction, takes risks, seeks exciting stimuli, and ignores future consequences
  - Present fatalistic believes in the fatefulness and predestination of life events

- Past
  - Past positive takes a rather sentimental and nostalgic perspective on past events
  - Past negative focuses on previous failures and misfortune
- Future-oriented set goals and make plans that they strive to realize by persistent efforts (note: the original model of time perspective has only one future orientation, while Carelli et al (2011) argued it can be split into positive and negative as well)

Machiavellians have a present-fatalistic attitude (remember the Machs' external locus of control) and, same as psychopaths, a past-negative perspective.

Past-negatives tend to recall bad rather than good memories from the past.
The author says that is probably related to their negative childhood experiences and that "their time perspective is influenced by their shadows and ghosts of the past".

People Can "Find Out" & Dislike the Machiavellian Attitude

Says the author:

> Machiavellians often have to pay the price of manipulation, often becoming isolated, especially in a close-knit community such as a company of friends, a workplace community or a sports club.
>
> In the long term, they may lose the social capital previously acquired through a charming demeanor

Personally, I'm skeptical on what that "often" means, but it's certainly possible.

Competitive Disadvantage

Finally, there might be a competitive disadvantage in environments where low Machiavellianism provides an advantage.

Says the author:

> Low Machs outdo Machiavellians in most social situations that require coordinated actions. Cooperation usually requires some form of empathy, mutual attunement and understanding, which Machiavellians generally lack. Moreover, low Machs may also gain advantages in environments where social norms are observed and noncompliance is sanctioned.

Ultimately, the author says that probably the most effective positioning in the Mach scale is around the middle: manipulative enough to acquire sufficient resources, but not so much as to risk losing them.

I'm not sure I agree, since the author himself repeated over and over that Machs don't necessarily sacrifice short-term for long term.
So higher levels of Machiavellianism don't necessarily mean being more impulsive and more "psychopathic behavior".
I might agree in terms of "loss of human connection" in cases of extremely high Mach scores, but not necessarily in terms of "life efficiency".

MORE WISDOM

- **Much of Machs' success is about picking the right market**

Machiavellians gain the most in certain specific environments and situations.
A study for example found out that an environment where everyone is in heavy competition for resources reduced the scope of Machiavellians' outsized payoffs.

The paper, titled “Abusing Good Intentions: Machiavellians Strive for Exploiting Cooperators” gives you hints already for which environments are ripe for Machiavellians: environments with lots of suckers.

- **Defectors Are Bad for All**

Says the author on the effect of defectors in a Public Goods Game (redacted for brevity):

> The presence of defectors (selfish players who contributed 20% or less of their funds to the group’s account) influenced the behavior of both low and high Machs to substantially reduce their contributions.
> Defectors pose a danger to all players since they make money from the others’ public contributions. Defection in most cases elicits counteraction and provides justification for other players, even for altruists, to shift away from their initial cooperative attitude to a selfish strategy. This is especially true when there is no external punishment to restrain defection. In such a case, there is no other option than to withdraw cooperation.

- **Don’t give without making sure you’re getting**

As the author cautions, some Machiavellians take without feeling the obligation of giving back.
I actually don’t think that’s the case with most Machiavellians, who are smarter than that. But it’s because such people exist that on this website we caution against strategies of “giving” without making sure you’re getting back.

- **Low Machs sometimes cheat more than high Machs** (emotions VS rationality)

In an experiment low Machs cheated more than high Machs during personal competition. The authors say that the high Machs deemed the situation at too high risk of being found out, while the low Machs got too emotionally involved.

- **Machiavellians are motivated by rational self-interest: they accept small sums of money in Ultimatum Games**

People usually don’t play rationally and refuse sums they consider unfairly low (Gintis et al. 2003; Heinrich et al. 2005).
High Machs instead are more rational, and were more likely to accept the small offers that low Machs refused because “unfair” (Meyer 1992).

- **More likely to use negative humor**

Martin and Lefcourt developed the “Human Response Questionnaire” to categorize the different types of humor. Machiavellianism (and psychopathy) were only correlated with negative humor (Veselka et al. 2010).

- **Machiavellis target those who are easy to take advantage of**

Machiavellis pick people who are easier to manipulate. That includes those who are willing to cooperate and who have concern for others.

Says the author:

> They gained significantly higher profits when their partners were willing to cooperate than in the case where the partners engaged in rivalry.
> Machiavellian behavior may reflect the following algorithm: “Pick the dupe and then adjust your decisions to their behavior”.

- **Agreeable people are more likely to be manipulated**

People who are low extraversion, high neuroticism, and high agreeableness are highly vulnerable to social manipulation (Chung & Charles 2016).

“Implying trustfulness, forgiveness and temperate manner, these traits on the Big Five scale may make people especially good target of exploitation.”

QUOTES

Both instructive and very entertaining to see how low and high Machs differently described the same situation:

> Examples of typical accounts of the shipwreck situation:
>
> 1 Low Mach male author: We are all together in this plight. We realize that we must all cooperate, and John, Peter and I decide to equally distribute the limited supplies.
>
> 2 Low Mach female author: Mary, Jane and I seem to be getting along pretty well . . . It’s funny how we immediately began to trust each other.
>
> 3 High Mach male author: I didn’t particularly care for John and Peter, and I suspected that there were going to be problems real soon. . . . They are two and I am one. . . . I hope that I can get rid of the human threat soon.
>
> 4 High Mach female author: Mary and Jane are cold bitches who constantly complain . . . when I got really hungry I wondered how I could cook them with the limited cooking equipment we had.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s Analysis

I’m super grateful to Tamás Bereczkei and the wonderful job he’s done.

He informed me like few others, and I will be quoting him and his work on his website many times over.

Also, keep in mind I’m always more critical of great work.

There is personal dislike against Machiavellianism

On this website, we aim at being value-adding individuals who generally do good. However, this website also believes that there are plenty of situations in life when being Machiavellian is good.

As a matter of fact, this website makes the case that being able to operate as a Machiavellian is an important life skill.

The author instead seems to take a stronger and more moral stance against Machiavellianism, for example saying that they “pose danger to others”.
They might, but it’s also true that overly naive folks pose a danger to themselves and those who count on them.

- **Sometimes frames Machs unnecessarily poorly**

When Machs contributed more to public accounts the author says it was “yet another example of pretended altruism, for unselfish behavior served to increase private gains in this case as well”.

I don’t see it that way at all: Mach’s behavior still resulted in win-win.

The author says that the ultimate proof of the selfish behavior is that Machiavellians earned larger sums at the end of the five rounds than did others.
Well, you can’t blame one for winning at the game, can you?

Psychopaths sadists?

The author says that psychopaths enjoy harming others.

That’s true sometimes, as described for example in MacKenzie account of his relationship with a psychopath, or as shared in Thomas’ autobiography.

However, I also find it a generalization and I don't remember having ever read that "enjoying other people's harm" was a key feature of psychopathy.

Some jump to conclusions on Machs' long-term relationships

The author discusses a study in which subjects were asked to read a story and "project themselves into it".
Based on the results, the author added that "Findings clearly led to the conclusion that Machiavellianism has a serious price, namely, deprivation of social relationships in the long term".
I disagree that a study based on *reading* a story and *projecting* into it can warrant making clear real-life inferences.

The author also says that the "fear of fusion" aspect of Machs leads to loneliness and the loss of social support.
That also felt like a jump to conclusion, and in my opinion, it's very possible Machs don't feel lonely at all.

- **Contradictory conclusions on income**

The author first introduces a meta-analysis lower average income for Machs and then comments that "it's not surprising because Machs cannot hide their true selves".

Then, he introduces other studies suggesting the opposite, and he gives reasons why Machs could earn more -their drive to achieve, and their charisma/leadership-.

So… Which one is which?
And if there is no clear-cut conclusions, as it seems like, then we shouldn't say "that's not surprising".

Temperament and Character Inventory had poor constructs

The TCI measured "cooperativeness" as "acceptance of others, empathy, conscientiousness. High scorers are helpful, merciful, tolerant, empathetic, while low scorers are socially uninvolved, self-seeking, and unconscientious.

To me, that doesn't properly measure cooperativeness. From a Mach point of view, it might as well measure the "likelihood of being conned".

A couple of times a study seemed misquoted

Of the dark triad, the author writes that "They also overlap in their negative relationship with cognitive empathy (Wai & Tiliopoulos 2012; Jonason & Krause 2013)".

I had to check that because as far as I know from other sources, psychopaths and Machs are OK with cognitive empathy.
The author himself later in the book says as much.

And indeed, Wai & Tiliopoulos's study says that "All dark triad personalities were associated with deficits in affective empathy, but showed little evidence of impairment in cognitive empathy".

In another case, the author mentions two studies by Rauthmann & Kolar 2013. He says that the two experiments involved groups of people interacting in real-time. The result was that people tended to dislike the high Machs in the first one. In the second experiment, people only conceived a short-term relationship with high Machs but not a long-term one.
However, when I checked the references there was only one study, and it involved the assessment of a *fictitious* character, not a real-life one.

A few other times I couldn't find a study.
But I must say, these were the exceptions.

REVIEW

The best overview of the empirical evidence on Machiavellianism at the time of writing (2021).

It's not a "how to" guide, of course, so people searching for self-development in the area of social skills, strategies, and Machiavellian intelligence might be best served with this website.

And those who are looking for a more academic approach, or an overview of the available research and literature, "Machiavellianism" is gold.

See the:

- **Best books about manipulation**
- **Best dark triad books**
- **Best books about power**

Or get the book on Amazon.

Handbook of Individual Differences in Social Behavior – Machiavellianism

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 May 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Machiavellianism is a chapter of "Handbook of Individual Differences in Social Behavior" (2009), reviewing the literature of Machiavellianism and how their peculiar traits and predispositions affect their social behavior.

About The Author

Mark R. Leary, PhD, is Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Duke University.
The chapters we review are from Daniel N. Jones and Delroy L. Paulhus.
Jones is Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia, and Delroy is a professor and personality researcher.

Summary

Keep in mind this review is in good part based on the research literature review on Machiavellianism published by Fehr, Samsom, and Paulhus, published in 1992.

For a more updated review, check out "Machiavellianism, The Psychology of Manipulation".

Contents

- Machs Defining Traits
- Machs Are About Pragmatic Rewards & Winning
- High Machs Have No Superior Mental Abilities
- People Have Good Impressions of Machs, But There Are Mixed Results
- Machs Don't Have External Locus of Control
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- Machs Are More Unsatisfied About Their Jobs
- Do People Want Machs?
- Morality of Machiavellians: Pragmatism
- Revenge
- Interpersonal Circumplex: Machs Are Individualists
- Machiavellian Intelligence: Evolutionary Advantages
- The Evolutionary Ceiling to Machiavellianism
- Self-Interested Cooperation
- Sexual Behavior
- Personality Tradeoff
- Problems With Machiavellian Construct
- MORE WISDOM
- REVIEW

Machs Defining Traits

The authors say that the construct validity of Machiavellianism rests on pragmatic manipulation.
Three themes emerge from Machiavellianism:

1. Belief in manipulative tactics
2. Cynical·worldview
3. Pragmatic morality

Machs Are About Pragmatic Rewards & Winning

> Compared to low Machs, high Machs gave high priority to money, power, and competition (Stewart & Stewart, 2006) and relatively low priority to community building, self-love, and family concerns (McHoskey, 1999). Machs admitted to a focus on unmitigated achievement and winning at any cost (Ryckman, Thornton, & Butler, 1994).

High Machs Have No Superior Mental Abilities

> In sum, the assumption that Machs have superior mental abilities-whether it be IQ, EQ, or mind reading-is not supported by the data.

Note:
They do seem to have "superior" skills when it comes to taking the lead, charming, and lying.
And, likely, in manipulating, albeit that might be a consequence of their propensity and willingness, rather than actual superior skills.

People Have Good Impressions of Machs, But There Are Mixed Results

> The developmental literature suggests that young Machiavellians may be well adjusted and even well-liked (Hawley, 2003; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993).
>
> Even as adults, they are sometimes preferred as leaders (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990) and debate partners (Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1998).
>
> Notwithstanding those exceptions, Machiavellian behaviors among adults generally draw strong disapproval (Falbo, 1977). One moderating variable may be the social role for which the Machiavellian is being rated. Wilson and colleagues (1998) showed that high Machs were seen as less desirable for most forms of social interaction (e.g., confidant, good friend, business partner) but may be more desirable as debate partners.

Note:
Those "most social interactions" are actually very specific situations that include high empathy and caring.

And when it comes to presidents:

> Ratings of archival data indicated that presidents seen as more Machiavellian were also seen as having higher levels of drive and poise (Simonton, 1986). A follow-up to that research indicated that presidents who were viewed as more Machiavellian were also seen as more desirable leaders, with high ratings on charisma and effectiveness (Deluga, 2001).

Machs Don't Have External Locus of Control

Early literature, including Christie and Geis, concluded that, counterintuitively, Machs seemed to have an external locus of control.

That's not the case, say the authors:

> More recent studies have reported the same pattern (Gable & Dangello, 1994; O'Connor & Morrison, 2001; Yong, 1994). Along with Paulhus (1983), we consider that conclusion to be misleading. None of these studies partitioned perceived control into its three spheres of engagement-personal, interpersonal, and sociopolitical. Paulhus showed that these three aspects of perceived control have quite different relations with Machiavellianism. Machs' apparent external locus of control derives entirely from the sociopolitical factor: Machs are simply endorsing their cynical view of others' competence (see also McHoskey et aI., 1999). That is, they perceive other people as weak and as having little control over their situations. In contrast, **Machiavellians score quite high on measures of interpersonal control. In this sphere, Machs believe that they can manipulate others to get what they want**.

Machs Are Not Authoritarian

> One might expect a positive association between Machiavellianism and authoritarianism because a condescending attitude toward outgroups is central to both constructs. The 1992 review, however, concluded that overall associations are weak.
>
> In sum, the worldview of Machs is one of pragmatic tough-mindedness.

Higher Performance in Unstructured Organizations

> Machs appear to have an advantage in unstructured organizations (Gable, Hollon, & Dangello, 1992; Shultz, 1993). They thrive when they have more decision power, fewer rules, and less managerial supervision. In highly structured organizations, high Machs actually perform worse than low Machs (O'Connor & Morrison, 2001; Shultz, 1993; Sparks, 1994).

That is consistent with the original findings on Machiavellianism and their attitudes and preferences:

> In general, the research on career success is consistent with the original notion of latitude for improvisation. As Christie and Geis (1970) determined in laboratory research, Machs remain cool, exploit interpersonal relationships, bend the rules, and improvise. When this flexibility is constrained, Machs are likely to incur problems.

How successful or not successful Machs are also depends on what job we're assessing, and from what point of view:

> Machs seem to thrive in business situations with a high latitude for improvisation (Shultz, 1993), but they perform worse in other situations, such as when latitude for improvisation is impeded (Sparks, 1994). Even after successful manipulations, Machs may suffer a decrement in reputation that reduces future opportunities (Wilson et aI., 1996). The source of evaluation may influence whether Machs are judged as successful or not. When evaluated by a supervisor, Machs seem to evoke negative evaluations, but they concomitantly report and record higher levels of sales in certain jobs (Ricks & Fraedrich, 1999).

Machs Are More Unsatisfied About Their Jobs

> The 1992 review concluded that Machs are generally less satisfied with their jobs. More recent research has supported this finding in retail executives (Gable & Topol, 1988), marketers (Sparks, 1994), and bank managers (Corzine, Buntzman, & Busch, 1999). Machs are more likely to feel unappreciated, to believe that they have plateaued in their careers (Corzine et aI., 1999), and to leave their positions (Becker & O'Hair, 2007). Machs also report more negative feelings from coworkers (Vecchio, 2000, 2005).

Do People Want Machs?

People might want Machiavellians as leaders when results are needed:

> Group members may prefer high Machs for roles that help the group deal with enemies and opponents (Wilson et aI., 1998).
> A classic example is the preference for a Machiavellian as president of the United States (Deluga, 2001; Simonton, 1986). On the other hand, Machs are less favored as friends, confidants, and business partners (Wilson et aI., 1998).

But not as friends:

> Length of interaction also plays a role. As noted· by Fehr and colleagues (1992), high Machs are more liked in short-term encounters (such as when participants are viewing a videotape) (Ickes, Reidhead, & Patterson, 1986). However, when individuals simulate the experience of engaging with a high Mach (such, as by reading a first-person story), they judge Machs more negatively (Wilson et aI., 1998).

Morality of Machiavellians: Pragmatism

The original researchers on Machiavellianism considered immorality among the three key elements of Machiavellianism.

The 1992 review concluded that Machs behave in a less ethical manner-but only in specific circumstances-.

My Note:
This is acutally something that emerged from early researches as well. Nobody behaves always immorally, and especially not strategic players like Machiavellis.

The authors say that the moral perspective of Machs may be seen as either immorality or simple pragmatism (Leary, Knight, & Barnes,·1986).
And they introduce a different perspective: holding *different* values:

> A radical reinterpretation may be mandated by research indicating that low and high Machs hold qualitatively different kinds of ethical beliefs. High Machs place relatively more emphasis on competence values (i.e., valuing competence and ability to succeed), whereas low Machs report relatively more emphasis on moral values (Musser & Orke, 1992; Trapnell & Paulhus, in press). Such results can be seen as a reframing of Machiavellian morality in terms of its priorities.
>
> This reframing is consistent with Haidt's (2001) notion that people differ little in their overall moral reactions but rank the priority of moral facets (e.g., justice, integrity) rather differently.

Revenge

> Nathanson and colleagues reported a series of studies of anonymous revenge anecdotes (Nathanson & Paulhus, 2006). Although it predicts revenge reports, the Mach IV overlaps considerably with measures of subclinical psychopathy (McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, '1998; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Indeed, the association of Mach with revenge was entirely accounted for by the overlap of Machiavellianism with subclinical psychopathy (Nathanson & Paulhus, 2006).

And:

> hostile Machs are more likely to justify committing sabotage against a company they are upset with (Giacalone

> & Knouse, 1990).

However, more than themselves seeking revenge, Machs are very attuned to the opportunity of others being able to exact revenge, or to punish their Machiavellian ways:

> In bargaining games, Meyer (1992) found that high Machs are more likely to betray another participant in a one-shot opportunistic manner. More recent research has suggested that Machs are especially likely to betray others when there is no chance for the other person to get retribution (Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, & Smith, 2002).

Interpersonal Circumplex: Machs Are Individualists

> Interpersonal Circumplex The interpersonal circumplex is framed in terms of two independent axes-agency and communion (Wiggins, 1991). Agency refers to the motivation to succeed and individuate oneself; communion refers to the motivation to merge with others and support the group. Several studies have established that Machiavellianism lies in quadrant 2 of the circumplex, indicating that high Machs are high on agency and low on communion (Gurtman, 1991, 1992; Wiggins & Bro'ughton, 1991).

Machiavellians being practical and driven to win, it makes sense they tend to be more self-centered.

Machiavellians are also out to achieve without consideration for others, though:

> Work by Locke and colleagues yielded a composite variable called self-construal that indexes a relative preference for communion over agency. As expected, self-construal falls diagonally opposite Machiavellianism in circumplex space (Locke & Christensen, 2007), confirming a key suspicion regarding Machs: They are not simply out to achieve but rather are out to achieve at the expense of (or at least without regard for) others.

Machiavellian Intelligence: Evolutionary Advantages

The authors begin by saying that humans are both prosocial, and selfish:

> Although it includes arguments for the advantages of prosocial traits (such as altruism, compassion, and cooperation), the hallmark of evolutionary theory is the notion of the "selfish gene" (Dawkins, 1989). Contrary to many observers' intuition, it is not paradoxical to include both prosocial and antisocial tendencies within the behavioral repertoire of our species (Krueger, Hicks, & McGue, 2001).

But that selfishness, or at least cunning, can provide an advantage:

> The natural selection of selfishness would naturally foster Machiavellian personalities. In ancestral times, those who exploited opportunities to cheat, steal, and manipulate others to achieve their goals would have outreproduced those who did not. this adaptive advantage has been referred to in the literature as Machiavellian intelligence (Byrne & Whiten, 1988): The term is often used interchangeably with terms such as social intelligence, everyday politics, social astuteness, political intelligence, practical intelligence, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence, all of which allude to cognitive abilities involving skill at adapting to social complexities.

The Power Moves includes "Machiavellian Intelligence" as part of the more general "Power Intelligence".

So, if there are advantages, why is not everyone Machiavellian?

The Evolutionary Ceiling to Machiavellianism

> Mealey (1995) agreed that antisocial traits such as Machiavellianism and psychopathy may reflect an adaptive reproductive strategy but argued further that antisocial traits are frequency-dependent. In other words, not everyone in an ecology can be cooperative because the advantage of being a high Mach is too great.
>
> However, there are two reasons why not everyone in an ecology can be a high Mach
>
> The first is that low Machs would have the advantage of building strong social relationships and cooperative alliances, and the second is that high Machs would simply be cheating each other and little would be gained. Thus there are at least two good reasons that preclude the full spread of Machiavellianism.
>
> One is that Machs have a serious disadvantage in forming cooperative alliances that depend on trust.
>
> The second reason is that Machiavellian tendencies will show marginal returns: At some point, high Machs would be trying (unsuccessfully) to cheat each other, and no advantage ensues (Mealey, 1995).

Self-Interested Cooperation

The authors say there advantages to both cooperation, and exploitation:

> In the words of Wilson and colleagues (1996), “advantages of cooperation are usually long term, whereas the advantages of exploitation are usually only short term” (p. 287).

When Machiavellians cooperate, it’s not “true” cooperation, but self-interest:

> Instead, we agree with Hawley (2006) that the behavioral repertoire of Machiavellians is “bistrategic,” that is, it includes both cooperation and coercion. However, we place special emphasis on the fact that neither long-term nor short-term cooperative tactics in Machiavellians reflect true cooperation; instead, such behaviors are in the service of malevolence.

My Note:

Personally, I find this difference spurious.
Cooperation *is* born out of self-interest. Cooperation could have hardly evolved if it wasn’t good for the individual. There is no such a thing as a being that cooperation for “true cooperation” and one who cooperates because he seeks win-win. “True” cooperation as implied by the authors sounds a lot like win-lose. That’s not cooperation, that’s being exploited.

Sexual Behavior

> High Machiavellians tend to be more promiscuous than low Machs (Linton & Wiener, 2001; McHoskey, 2001b; Schmitt, 2004; Paulhus & Williams, 2002).
> Recently, more detailed analyses have partitioned promiscuous behaviors and attitudes (Webster & Bryan, 2007). Jones and Paulhus (2008) found that Machiavellianism correlated only with the attitude component. The lack of correlation with promiscuous behavior suggests that high Machs are no less discerning than low Machs in their actual sexual activities. Such findings are another indication that Machiavellians are not solely short term in orientation.

A short-term predisposition can be seen as a sexual strategy.
By evolutionary standards then we should see more men deploying that strategy since men gain more from short-term sex.

And we might see an avoidant attachment style that also supports short-term behavior:

> The research on Machiavellianism supports the gender difference in short-term reproductive strategies (Figueredo et aI., 2005). Most samples show higher Mach scores in men than in women (Christie & Geis, 1970) and in young than in older adults (e.g., Rawwas & Singhapakdi, 1998). These trends suggest that Machiavellianism promotes sexual activity. Individuals who seek multiple short-term sexual opportunities (e.g., those unrestricted in sociosexuality) would benefit from manipulative tendencies and a lack of empathy.

However, the authors don't believe that sexual strategies predict more manipulation from men:

> These arguments rest on the assumption that manipulation is more effective for the gender that prefers promiscuity than the one that prefers investment and commitment. We dispute that assumption and suggest that female Machiavellianism manifests itself in a manner consistent with the female reproductive agenda.

Personality Tradeoff

> Machiavellianism harbors both adaptive and maladaptive qualities. Key to understanding this tradeoff is the distinction between agentic and communal notions of adaptiveness. Adaptiveness for agentic goals concerns the promotion of personal achievement, whereas adaptiveness for communal goals concerns the benefits to one's group

Problems With Machiavellian Construct

The authors say that they confirm the construct validity of Machiavellianism as measured by the Christie and Geis (1970).

However, they find "disconcerting" the overlap with impulsivity (Marusic et aI., 1995), and that the appropriate label for that personality type is subclinical psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002)
They say that Psychopaths and Machiavellians share similar antisocial tendencies (Mealey, 1995), but the original theory-from Machiavelli (1513) to Christie and Geis (1970)-specified that Machs are cool and strategic rather than hostile and impulsive.

In my opinion, though the authors are mistaken.
The hostility and impulsivity of Machiavellians is very much a grey area, and later literature reviews showed that high Machs adapt to the situation and social environment.
As a matter of fact, Tamás Bereczkei says that impulsivity and short-term gratification is one of the main differences between psychopaths and Machiavellians.

The authors also say that Machs should pay attention to reputation, which indeed is the case.

Finally, the authors present an interesting new take on the Mach-IV test, but the Mach-VI they proposed hasn't had much success since.

MORE WISDOM

- **No particular aggression in Machs**: there is no evidence for overt aggression in behavioral studies of Machiavellian adults.

REVIEW

Very good review on Machiavellianism and some good insights.

Also see:

- Best dark triad books
- Best books on manipulation
- Best psychology books

The Art of Worldly Wisdom: 99 Laws of Power From Baltasar Gracian (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 May 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"*The Art of Worldy Wisdom*" (1647) is a collection of 300 life and social strategies tips ("maxims") to help people live an effective, happy, and successful life.
Robert Greene later borrowed "*The Art of Worldly Wisdom*" wisdom and turned it into "The 48 Laws of Power".

About the Author:
Baltasar Gracián (1601 – 1658) was a Spanish Jesuit preacher, baroque prose writer and philosopher.

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SUMMARY

This summary of "The Art of Worldly Wisdom" focuses on the best of the best.

For the readers' sake and to deliver more value, I took the liberty to:

1. I grouped similar maxims under bigger umbrellas
2. I mixed the best available translations for each maxim
3. When available translations were poor, I've made my own

4. I streamlined some maxim's explanations, and cut out cryptic references to old myths/texts
5. I amended some titles to improve the title/content match

I believe that with these "power moves" touches, you can now learn even more from an already wonderful book.

1. Develop Into A High-Quality Man

The following maxims can be seen as general self-development and character development.

I put it first because these can be seen as the foundations of life and personal success.

Also see the popular articles:

- High quality men
- High quality women

11. Cultivate Those Who Can Teach You

Let friendly relations be a school of erudition, and conversation, refined teaching. **Make your friends your teachers and blend the usefulness of learning with the pleasure of conversation**. Enjoy the company of people of understanding. What you say will be rewarded with applause; what you hear, with learning. What draws us to others, ordinarily, is our own interest, and here that interest is ennobled.

32. Know When to Put Something Aside

One of life's great lessons lies in knowing how to refuse, and it is even more important to refuse yourself, both to business and to others. There are certain inessential activities—months of precious time—and it is worse to busy yourself with the trivial than to do nothing.
You shouldn't abuse your friends, or ask them for more than they give on their own initiative. All excess is a vice, especially in your dealings with others. With this judicious moderation you will stay in the good graces of others and keep their esteem; and propriety, which is precious, will not be worn away.

50. Never Lose Self-Respect

Let your own right feeling be the true standard of your rectitude, **and owe more to the strictness of your own self-judgment than to all external sanctions**.
Avoid what is indecorous, not because others will judge you harshly, but because you fear your own prudence.

Note:
This talks about having higher standards for yourself than the standards that others place on you.
Also see "enlightened individualism" for placing your own standards above those of others -or society-.

106. Earn respect for who you're becoming

Original title: "Don't flaunt your good fortune"

It is more offensive to take excessive pride in your high office than in yourself. Don't play the "great man"—it is odious—and don't be proud of being envied. **The more strenuously you seek esteem from others, the less of it you will have. It depends on respect. You can't simply grab it, you have to deserve it** and wait for it. Important occupations call for a certain gravity and decorum. Keep only what the occupation requires, what you need to fulfill your obligations. Don't squeeze it dry; help it along. Those who want to look like hard workers give the impression that they aren't up to their jobs. If you want to succeed, do so using your gifts, not your outer trappings. Even a king ought to be venerated more because of his person than because of his pomp and circumstance.

Note:
"seeking esteem" also means that one is giving way too much judge power to others. An enlightened individualist

instead puts his own criteria before other people's judging criteria.

107. Don't believe your own hype

Original title: "Show no self-satisfaction"

You must neither be discontented with yourself—and that were poorspirited—nor self-satisfied—and that is folly. Self-satisfaction arises mostly from ignorance: it would be a happy ignorance not without its advantages if it did not injure our credit. Because a man cannot achieve the superlative perfections of others, he contents himself with any mediocre talent of his own. Distrust is wise, and even useful, either to evade mishaps or to afford consolation when they come, for a misfortune cannot surprise a man who has already feared it. Even Homer nods at times, and Alexander fell from his lofty state and out of his illusions. Things depend on many circumstances: what constitutes triumph in one set may cause a defeat in another. In the midst of all incorrigible folly remains the same with empty self-satisfaction, blossoming, flowering, and running all to seed.

Note:
This maxim reminds us not to believe our own hype, and puts things in perspective, including personal success. In "Ultimate Power" we make the case that indeed your focus and pride should not be on the final result, but on your process.

For a good real-life example on believing one's own hype, see:

121. Don't make mountains out of molehills

Original title: "Do not make a Business of what is no Business"

Don't make much ado about nothing. Some take nothing into account, and others want to account for everything. They are always talking importance, always taking things too seriously, turning them into debate and mystery. Few bothersome things are important enough to bother with. It is folly to take to heart what you should turn your back on. Many things that were something are nothing if left alone, and others that were nothing turn into much because we pay attention to them. In the beginning it is easy to put an end to problems, but not later. Sometimes the cure causes the disease. Not the least of life's rules is to leave well enough alone.

165. Wage a clean war

The wise person can be driven to war, but not to a dishonorable one. Act like the person you are, not the way they make you act. To behave magnanimously towards your rivals is praiseworthy. You should fight not only to win power but also to show that you are a superior fighter. To conquer without nobility is not victory but surrender. The good man does not use forbidden weapons, like the ones he acquires when he breaks up with a friend. **Even when friendship ends in hatred, don't take advantage of the trust that was once placed in you. Everything that smacks of treachery is poison to your reputation**. Noble people shouldn't have even an atom of baseness. Nobility scorns villainy. You should be able to boast that if gallantry, generosity, and faith were lost in the world, they could be found again in your own breast.

Note:
Read this thread:

- **The gentleman warrior approach**

228. Avoid value-taking, covert-aggressive humor

Original title: "Don't be a scandal-monger"

Don't be known for impugning the fame of others. Don't be witty at someone else's expense: it is more odious than difficult. All will take revenge and speak ill of you, and since you are one and others are many, you'll be easily

defeated. Take no content in the ills of others, and don't comment on them. A gossip is always detested. He may mingle with great people, but they will value him as a source of amusement, not of prudence. And he who speaks ill hears worse.

274. Be charming / attractive

It is a wise sort of bewitchment. Let charm and courtesy capture the goodwill of others, and also their services. It isn't enough to have merit if you don't please others—this is what makes people praise you, and acclaim is the most useful instrument we have for ruling others. You are fortunate if others find you charming, but this must be helped by artifice, which works best when natural gifts are present. Charm leads to benevolence and, eventually, universal favor.

Note:
This is a mix of appearances and social strategies. But since one can be charming and a high-quality, value-adding folk, then we can consider it an honest, value-adding self-development strategy.

280. Be trustworthy, fly with the eagles

Original title: "be trustworthy"

Take notice of the bad behavior of others, it should be a warning and not an example. **Bad behavior is not an example to imitate it but to defend yourself from**. Your own integrity can be ruined by the ruinous behavior of others. But **the honorable man does not forget who he is because of what others are**.

Note:
One of the truly most powerful maxims of them all.
It takes a great man to maintain integrity in the midst of competition and Machiavellianism.

2. Machiavallian Strategies

The following maxims can be considered "Machiavellians" in the sense that they are potentially effective, while being amoral and potentially manipulative and value-taking.

5. Make people depend on you

He who is truly shrewd would rather have people need him than thank him. Vulgar gratitude is worth less than polite hope, for hope remembers and gratitude forgets. **You will get more from dependence than from courtesy.** He who has already drunk turns his back on the well, and the orange already squeezed turns from gold into mud. **When there is no longer dependence, good manners disappear**, and so does esteem. The most important lesson experience teaches is to maintain dependence, and entertain it without satisfying it. This can hold even a king. **But don't carry it too far, leading others astray by your silence or making their ills incurable for your own good.**

84. Use your enemies

Grasp things not by the blade, which will harm you, but by the handle, which will defend you. The same applies to enemies. A wise man gets more use from his enemies than
a fool from his friends. Many owe their greatness to their enemies. Flattery is fiercer than hatred, for hatred corrects the faults flattery had disguised. The prudent man makes a mirror out of the evil eye of others, and it is more truthful than that of affection, and helps him reduce his defects or emend them.

Note:
This maxim seems to suggest using your enemy in the sense of the feedback they can provide. When they attack you, you know what to correct. And if you can't correct it and it hurts you, you know that you must work on an antifragile ego.

149. Know how to use scapegoats

Original title: “let someone take the hit”

To have a shield against ill-will is a great piece of skill in a ruler. It is not the resort of incapacity, as ill-wishers imagine, but is due to the higher policy of having someone to receive the censure of the disaffected and the punishment of universal detestation. Everything cannot turn out well, nor can everyone be satisfied: it is well therefore, even at the cost of our pride, to have such a scapegoat, such a target for unlucky undertakings.

187. When something pleases others, do it yourself. When it is odious, have someone else do it.

You will win favor, and shift ill will onto others. Great and noble people find it more pleasant to do good than to receive it. You can rarely trouble another without feeling troubled, either by pity or by remorse. In matters of reward or retribution let good be administered immediately, and bad, mediately, through another. You should give others something they can pummel with the hatred and gossip of their discontent. The anger of the rabble is like rabies. Without realizing what has harmed it, it snaps at the muzzle. And though the muzzle isn’t to blame, it takes the immediate punishment.

189. Utilize other people’s privations

When privation leads to desire, it gives us the surest way to manipulate others.
Some people climb the steps of others’ desires to reach their own ends. They take advantage of the tight spots others are in, and use difficulty to whet their appetite. They find the sting of want more useful than the complacency of possession, and as things grow more difficult, desire grows more vehement. A subtle way of getting what you want: maintain dependency.

Note:
This is the “WIIFT” of social exchanges.

213. Contradict & feign doubt to pry out secrets

Original title: “know how to contradict”

It is a great way to provoke others: they commit themselves and you commit nothing. The true thumbscrew, it brings the passions into play. You can use contradiction to pry loose the passions of others. Showing disbelief makes people spill their secrets; it is the key to tightly closed breasts. A sly depreciation of another’s mysterious word scents out the profoundest secrets; some sweet bait brings them into the mouth till they fall from the tongue and are caught in the net of astute deceit. By reserving your attention the other becomes less attentive, and lets his thoughts appear while otherwise his heart was inscrutable. A feigned doubt is the best skeleton key your curiosity can have: it will find out all it wants. Also in learning it is a subtle plan of the pupil to contradict the master, who thereupon takes pains to explain the truth more thoroughly and with more force, so that a moderate contradiction produces complete instruction

3. Smoke & Mirror Strategies

These maxims are about “embellishing” things, and focusing on what things look, rather than focusing -or solely focusing- on what things are.

3. Keep matters in suspense

Admiration at their novelty heightens the value of your achievements, It is both useless and insipid to play with the cards on the table. **Mix a little mystery with everything, and the very mystery arouses veneration**. And when you explain, be not too explicit, just as you do not expose your inmost thoughts in ordinary intercourse.

Cautious silence is the holy of holies of worldly wisdom. A resolution declared is never highly thought of; it only leaves room for criticism. And if it happens to fail, you are doubly unfortunate.

94. Keep the extent of your Abilities unknown

The prudent person—if he wants to be revered by others—should never allow them to judge the extent of his knowledge and courage.
llow yourself to be known, but not comprehended. No one will discern the limits of your talent, and thus no one will be disappointed. You can win more admiration by keeping other people guessing the extent of your talent, or even doubting it, than you can by displaying it, however great.

99. Take care of appearances

Things pass for what they seem, not for what they are. Few see inside; many take to the outside. It is not enough to be right, if right seems false and malicious.

126. It's foolish not to do foolish things, but not concealing them

Original title: "The fool isn't someone who does something foolish, but the one who doesn't know how to conceal it"

Hide your affects, but even more, your defects. All people err, but with this difference: the wise dissimulate their errors, and fools speak of those they are about to commit. **Reputation is more a matter of stealth than of deeds**. If you can't be chaste, be chary. The slips of the great are closely observed, like eclipses of the sun and moon. You shouldn't confide your defects to friends, or even to yourself, were that possible. Another rule for living is applicable here: know how to forget.

130. Do, but also be seen doing

Things do not pass for what they are, but for what they seem. To excel and to know how to show it is to excel twice. What is invisible might as well not exist. Reason itself is not venerated when it does not wear a reasonable face. Those easily duped outnumber the prudent. Deceit reigns, and things are judged from without, and are seldom what they seem. A fine exterior is the best recommendation of inner perfection.

146. Don't be fooled by appearances

Original title: Look deep inside.

Things are seldom what they seem, and ignorance, which sees no deeper than the bark, often turns to disillusion when it penetrates into things. In all things, deceit arrives first, dragging fools behind it in endless vulgarity. Truth is always late, always last to arrive, limping along with Time. Prudent people save one of their ears for truth, thanking their common mother, Nature, for giving them two. Deceit is superficial, and superficial people are quick to run into her. Discernment lives hidden away in retirement, so as to be more esteemed by the wise and the discreet.

253. Keep things strategically complex

Original title: Don't express your ideas too clearly

Most people think little of what they understand, and venerate what they do not. **To be valued, things must be difficult**: if they can't understand you, people will think more highly of you. To win respect, make yourself seem wiser and more prudent than is required by the person you are dealing with. But do so with moderation. Intelligent people value brains, but most people demand a certain elevation. Keep them guessing at your meaning, and don't give them a chance to criticize you. Many praise without being able to say why. They venerate anything hidden or mysterious, and people praise it because they hear it praised.

282. Use absence to win respect or esteem

Presence diminishes fame, absence enlarges it. The absent person who was thought a lion turns into a mouse—ridiculous offspring of the mountain—when present. Gifts lose their sheen when they are handled: one sees the outer bark and not the spiritual pith. Imagination travels faster than sight. Deceit comes in through the ears, but usually leaves through the eyes. The person who retires into himself, into the center of his reputation, preserves his good name. Even the Phoenix used absence to preserve its dignity and to turn desire into esteem.

4. Be Bad to Be Good

The following maxims are reminiscent of Machiavelli's "a good man is ruined among the great number who are not good".
And they can be grouped into this website's core value that: "to be good, you need to be bad".

54. Know how to show your Teeth

Like love, courage is no joking matter. If it yields once, it will have to yield again, and again. The same difficulty will have to be conquered later on, and it would have been better to get it over with. The mind is bolder than the body. So with the sword: let it be sheathed in prudence, ready for the occasion. It is your defense. A weak spirit does more harm than a weak body. Many people with eminent qualities lacked this brio, appeared to be dead, and were buried in their lassitude. Provident nature resourcefully joined the sweetness of honey with the sting of the bee. You have both nerves and bones in your body: don't let your spirit be all softness.

243. Don't be all dove

Let the guile of the serpent alternate with the innocence of the dove. No one is easier to fool than a good man; the person who never lies believes others easily, and the one who never deceives trusts others. Being fooled isn't always a sign of foolishness; sometimes it shows goodness. Two kinds of people are good at foreseeing danger: those who have learned at their own expense and the clever people who learn a great deal at the expense of others. **Don't be so good that you give others the chance to be bad**. Be part serpent and part dove; not a monster, but a prodigy.

266. Don't be bad by being too good

You will be, if you never get angry. Those who feel nothing are not really people. They don't always act that way out of insensitivity but often out of stupidity. To feel strongly, when circumstances call for it, makes you a person. Even birds poke fun at scarecrows. To alternate the bitter with the sweet shows good taste: sweetness alone is for children and fools. It is a great evil to be so insensible that you lose yourself by being good.

Also read:

- How to be assertive
- The "Doormat Syndrome", or over-passiveness which this maxim refers to

> Passive Style: How to Overcome The Doormat Syndrome

5. Timing Strategies

These maxims are about "timing", including negotiating short-term interests with long-term ones to maximize lifetime success.

59. Finish Off Well

The important point is not the vulgar applause on entrance—that comes to nearly all—but the general feeling at

exit.

81. Renew Your Brilliance

Excellence grows old and so does fame. So be reborn (…) dare to renew your brilliance, dawning many times, like the sun, only changing your surroundings.

110. Don't wait to be a setting sun.

It is a maxim of prudent people to **abandon things before being abandoned by them**. You should make even your end into a triumph. At times the sun itself retires behind a cloud so that no one will see it fall, and it leaves us wondering whether it has set or not. Avoid sunsets so as not to burst with misfortune. Don't wait for people to turn their shoulders on you: they will bury you alive to your regret, dead to renown. The prudent know when to retire a racehorse, and do not wait for him to collapse in the middle of the race, to the laughter of all. Let Beauty shatter the mirror cleverly, at the right time, and not too late when she cannot bear the truth.

113. In Prosperity prepare for Adversity

In the summer it is wise to provide for winter, and it is easier to do so. Favors are less expensive, and friendships abound. It is good to save up for a rainy day: adversity is expensive and all is lacking. Retain a store of friendly and obliged persons; the day may
come when their price will go up. Low minds never have friends; in luck, they will not recognize them, and in misfortune, they will not be recognized by them.

Note:
Some people grow conceited in success. Instead, that's when you should be making more friends and allies.

120. Adapt to what works today

Original title: Live practically

Even knowledge has to be in the fashion, and where knowledge is uncommon, feign ignorance. Ways of thinking change, and so does taste. Don't think like an ancient; taste like a modern. Count heads. That is what matters in all things. When you must, follow the common taste, and make your way toward eminence. **The wise adapt himself to the present**, even when the past seems more attractive, both in the clothes of the soul and in those of the body. This rule for living holds for everything but goodness, for one must always practice virtue. Many things have come to seem old-fashioned: speaking truth, keeping your word.

153. Don't step into the huge gap left by someone else

If you do, be sure you have more than enough talent. Merely to equal your predecessor, you must be worth twice as much. To fill a great vacancy is hard, because the past always seems better. It isn't enough to equal your predecessor; the person who goes first has an advantage. You need extra talent to expel him from his superior reputation.

This is the "don't step into a great man's shoes" in "The 48 Laws of Power".

154. Be slow to either believe, or love

But don't cast doubt openly on the truthfulness of others. When you treat someone like a liar, or insist he has been deceived, you add insult to injury. And not believing others implies that you yourself are deceitful.

Note:
This is a mix of timing and social strategies.
Take note of the social strategy aspect, which is equally important.

217. Prepare for love & hate to switch

Original title: “Neither love nor hate forever”

Treat your friends as though they could become your worst enemies. Since this happens in reality, let it happen in foresight. We shouldn’t give arms to the turncoats of friendship; they will wage the worst sort of war with them. On the contrary, when it comes to enemies, leave the door open to reconciliation. The door of gallantry is the surest one. The pleasure of revenge often turns into torment, and the satisfaction of having harmed someone often turns to pain.

231. Never show half-finished things to others

Let them be enjoyed in their perfection. All beginnings are formless, and what lingers is the image of that deformity. The memory of having seen something imperfect spoils our enjoyment when it is finished.

6. Reputation Management

These maxims are about “reputation” and its importance.

32. Have the Reputation of being Gracious

Especially if you govern them. It helps sovereigns to win the good graces of all. Ruling others has one advantage: you can do more good than anyone else. Friends are those who do friendly things. Some people are intent on not pleasing, not because it is burdensome, but simply out of nastiness. In everything they oppose the divine communicability.

97. Obtain and preserve a Reputation

It is expensive to obtain a reputation, for it only attaches to distinguished abilities, which are as rare. Once obtained, it is easily preserved. It confers many an obligation, but it does more. When it is owing to elevated powers or lofty spheres of action, it rises to a kind of veneration and yields a sort of majesty. Reputations based on substance are the ones that have always endured.

185. Don’t risk your reputation on one roll of the dice

If it comes out badly, the harm will be irreparable. You can easily err once, especially the first time. You aren’t always at your best, and not every day is yours. So let there be a second attempt to make up for the first … and if the first one goes right, it will redeem the second one. There must always be room for improvement and for appeal. Things depend on all sorts of circumstance, and luck grants us success only rarely.

7. Social Strategies

This set of maxims reminds us that “friends and allies are power”, a central tenet of this website.
Also see “strategies of power“.

58. Adapt to those around you

There is no need to show your ability before everyone. Employ no more force than is necessary. Let there be no unnecessary expenditure either of knowledge or of power. The skilful falconer only flies enough birds to serve for the chase. If there is too much display today there will be nothing to show tomorrow. Always have some novelty wherewith to dazzle. To show something fresh each day keeps expectations alive and conceals the limits of his talent.

Alternate translation:
Don’t show the same intelligence with everyone, and don’t put more effort into things than they require.

Note:
It's a mix of different strategies. It starts with social strategies, including "adapting your power" to those around and to the situation and the "law of least social effort". And it ends with a "smoke and mirror" strategy on keeping some novelty.
The social-chameleon aspect is the most important here.

70. Know how to say no

You can't grant everything to everybody.
Saying "no" is as important as granting things, especially among those in command. What matters is the way you do it. Some people's "no" is prized more highly than the "yes" of others: a gilded "no" pleases more than a curt "yes." Many people always have "no" on their lips, and they sour everything. "No" is what occurs to them first. They may give in later, but they aren't well thought of because they started out by being so unpleasant. Refusal shouldn't come in one fell swoop. Let people nibble on their disappointment little by little. **Never refuse something completely: others would no longer depend on you. There should always be some last remnants of hope to sweeten the bitterness of refusal. Let politeness compensate and fine words make up for the lack of deeds**. Yes and No are soon said, but give much to think over.

For more on learning to say no, see:

- How to say "no"
- How to reject sex
- How to turn down a date

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

105. Don't be a bore

The man of one business or of one topic is apt to be heavy. Brevity is pleasant and flattering, and it gets more done. It gains in courtesy what it loses in curtness. Good things, if brief: twice good. Badness, if short, isn't so bad. Everyone knows that a tall person is rarely an intelligent one, but it's better to be tall in stature than long in conversation. The discreet person should avoid tiring others, especially the great, who are very busy. It would be worse to irritate one of them than the rest of the world. Well said is quickly said.

Note:
The author very acutely notes that great people, because busy, are even more annoyed by boring and time-wasting folks.
That much is true, and it's something we also turned into a political/career strategy in "how to deal with your boss".

Note II:
Many people could improve so much in their relationships and social effectiveness by limiting the "me, me, me" approach to conversations.
To fix social mistakes, also read:

- Social burdens
- Basics of group conversation

108. To achieve greatness, associate with great people

The company you keep can work wonders. Customs and tastes and even intelligence are transmitted without our being aware of it. Let the quick person join the hesitant one, and so on, through every sort of temperament. That way you will achieve moderation without straining after it. It takes much skill to know how to adapt yourself. The

alternation of opposites makes the universe beautiful and sustains it, and causes even greater harmony in human customs than in nature. Govern yourself by this advice when you select your friends and servants. The communication of extremes will produce a discreet and golden mean.

109. Don't tear people down, pull people up

Original title: "Don't berate others"

There are people with savage tempers who make everything a crime, not out of passion but because of their very character. They condemn everyone, some for what they've done, others for what they will do. This shows a spirit worse than cruel, which is truly vile. They criticize others so exaggeratedly that they make motes into beams in order to poke out eyes. They are taskmasters who can turn a paradise into a prison. When swayed by passion, they take everything to extremes. **A noble nature, on the contrary, always knows how to find an excuse for failings**, if not in the intention, at least from oversight.

Note:
one of the most foundational maxims of high-quality people.

111. Have friends

They are a second being. To a friend, all friends are good and wise. When you are with them, all turns out well. You are worth as much as others want you to be and say you are, and the way to their mouths lies through their hearts. Nothing bewitches like service to others, and **the best way to win friends is to act like one**. The most and best we have depends on others. You must live either with friends or with enemies. Win one each day, if not as a confidant, at least as a follower. Choose well and some will remain whom you can trust.

112. Be kind to win the goodwill of others

Original title: "win the goodwill of others"

Reputation is purchased with affection. Some trust so much in their own worth that they make light of diligence. But the prudent person knows very well that merit can take a shortcut if helped by favor. Benevolence makes everything easier and compensates for whatever is lacking: courage, integrity, wisdom, and even discretion. It never sees ugliness, for it doesn't want to. It is usually born from similarity of temperament, race, family, country, or occupation. In the spiritual realm, benevolence bestows talent, favor, reputation, and merit. Once one wins it—and this is difficult—it is easily kept. You can make an effort to win it, but you must also know how to use it.

114. Diminish the scope for competition, use collaborative frames

Original title: "Never compete"

When you vie with your opponents, your reputation suffers. Your competitor will immediately try to find your faults and discredit you. Few wage war fairly. Rivalry discovers the defects that courtesy overlooks. Many people had a good reputation until they acquired rivals. The heat of opposition revives dead infamies and digs up the stench of the past. Competition begins by belittling and finding faults, and rivals take advantage of everything they can and all they ought not to. Often they gain nothing by offending others, only the vile satisfaction of revenge. Revenge blows the dust of oblivion from people's faults. Men of good-will are always at peace; men of good repute and dignity are men of good-will.

Note:
This reminds us of using collaborative frames in competition, or the "gentleman's warrior approach" we talk about here (see later).

116. Always deal with honorable people

Favor them and win their favor. Their very recitude ensures they will treat you well even when they oppose you, for they act like who they are, and it is better to fight with good-minded people than to conquer the bad. There is no way to get along with villainy, for it feels no obligation to behave rightly. This is why **there is no true friendship among villains**, and their fine words cannot be trusted; for they do not spring from honor. **Avoid the person who has no honor**, for if he esteems not honor, he esteems not virtue. And honor is the throne of integrity.

Note:
This maxim reminds us that not all friends, allies, and partners are the same. High value and high quality people are worth more.

117. Don't talk about yourself

You must either praise yourself, which is vanity, or criticize yourself, which is meekness. You show a lack of good judgment and become a nuisance to others. If this is important among friends, it is even more so in high positions, where one often speaks in public and where any appearance of vanity passes for foolishness. Nor is it prudent to talk about people who are present. You risk running aground on flattery or vituperation.

119. Avoid the bitter & hateful

Original title: Avoid being disliked

There are many who hate of their own accord without knowing the why or the how. Their ill-will outruns our readiness to please. Their ill-nature is more prone to do others harm than their cupidity is eager to gain advantage for themselves. Some manage to be on bad terms with all, because they always either produce or experience vexation of spirit. Once hate has taken root it is, like bad repute, difficult to eradicate. Wise men are feared, the malevolent are abhorred, the arrogant are regarded with disdain, buffoons with contempt, eccentrics with neglect. Therefore pay respect that you may be respected, and know that to be esteemed you must show esteem

152. Screen for those who pull you up

Original title: "Don't keep company with those who will make you seem less gifted"

Either because they are superior or inferior. The more perfect someone is, the more highly he is esteemed. The other person will always play the leading role, and you a secondary one, and if you win any respect at all, it will come in scraps and remnants. When the moon is alone it competes with the stars, but once the sun comes out it either doesn't appear or it disappears. Don't go near the person who can eclipse you, only the one who will make you look better. Don't have a pain in your side, or honor others to the detriment of your own reputation. To grow, associate with the eminent; once grown, with those who are average.

156. Select your friends carefully

They should be examined by discretion, tested by fortune, certified not only in willpower but also in understanding. Though **success in life depends on selecting your friends**, people pay it little attention. In some cases, mere meddling leads to friendship and in most, mere chance. You are judged by the friends you have, and the wise never get along with fools. To take pleasure in someone's company doesn't make him a close friend. Sometimes we value his sense of humor without fully confiding in his talent. Some friendships are legitimate, others adulterous: the latter are for pleasure, the former are fertile and engender success. The insight of a friend is more valuable than the good wishes of many others. So let choice rule and not chance. Wise friends chase away sorrows, and foolish ones gather them. And don't wish your friends wealth if you want to keep them.

In the next maxim, he says: "it is a great art to penetrate temperaments and distinguish the character of others. Human nature ought to be studied as closely as any book".

183. Concede something to maintain rapport, friends, & good social standing

Original title: “Don’t hold on your views too firmly”

Every fool is fully convinced, and every one fully persuaded is a fool, and the more erroneous their judgment is, the more they hold on to it. **Even when you are right, it is good to make concessions**: people will recognize you were right but admire your courtesy. **More is lost through holding on than can be won by defeating others**. **One defends not truth but rudeness**. There are heads of iron, difficult to convince, hopelessly obstinate. When whim meets stubbornness, they bond forever into foolishness. Be firm in will, not in judgment. There are exceptional cases, of course, when one shouldn’t give in twice: once in judgment and once in execution.

Note:
We have seen some examples of these dynamics in the forums.
Those who were seen as overly harsh in defending their views or positions developed a poor social reputation that eventually cost them social goodwill and support.
Of course, exceptions always apply, and on some crucial topics and issues you can’t make concessions. But in many other cases, this is a fundamental maxim to heed.

257. Stop short of breaking off

or your reputation will be shattered. Anyone makes a good enemy, but not everyone can be a good friend. Few can do good, and almost everyone bad. Say things too abruptly and you will stir up the wrath of hypocrites, who were waiting for their chance. **Friends whom you have offended make the bitterest enemies**: to their own pet fault they add all of yours. When others observe us splitting up with someone, they speak as they feel and feel as they desire. They criticize our behavior either at the beginning of the friendship (for lack of providence) or at the end (for having waited so long). If you can’t help but part company, do it gently and excusably, with a slackening of favor rather than a violent outburst. This is where the maxim about a fine withdrawal* comes in handy.
* #38

258. Team up, find brother(s) in arms

Original title: “Look for someone to help bear your misfortunes”

You will never be alone, not even in risky situations, and you won’t have to bear all the hatred of others. Some people want to take charge of everything and all they do is take all the criticism. So have someone that can pardon you or help you bear hardship. Neither fortune nor the mobs are as quick to attack two people. Physicians, having mistaken the cure, are not mistaken to consult someone else who can help them carry the coffin. They share the weight and the sorrow, for misfortune borne alone is doubly intolerable.

259. Foresee the attack, turn the attacker into a friend

Original title: Foresee affronts and turn them into favors

It is wiser to avoid them than to avenge them. It is a great skill to turn a potential rival into a confidant. Those who would have attacked your reputation become its protectors. It is valuable to know how to place others in your debt and transform insult into gratitude. To turn sorrows into pleasures is to know how to live. Make malevolence itself your confidant.

Note:
This is a mix of social strategy, and social exchange strategy.
If you can make a favor to someone who was about to attack, chances are you can turn the attack into a favor indeed, and turn an enemy/frenemy, into a friend/ally.

291. Know how to test others

Let attentiveness and good judgment penetrate gravity and reserve. It takes great powers of judgment to measure someone else's. It is more important to know the qualities and temperaments of people than those of stones and herbs. This is one of the subtlest things in life. Metals are identified by their sounds, and people by their speech. Words demonstrate integrity, and deeds even more so. Here is where one needs extraordinary care, profound observation, and critical power.

For testing in dating and seduction, also see:

- **Shit tests power dynamics**

8. Defense Strategies

These can be labeled as "defense strategies", or as maxims ot become a "hardened target" agasint manipulation and value-taking strategies.

145. Hide your wounded finger

Or you will bump it on everything. Never complain about it. Malice always zeroes in on what hurts or weakens us. Look discouraged and you will only encourage others to make fun of you. Evil intent is always looking for ways to get a rise out of you. It uses insinuation to discover where you hurt, and knows a thousand stratagems to probe your wounds. If you are wise, you will ignore malicious hints, and conceal your troubles, either personal or inherited, for even Fortune sometimes likes to hit you where it hurts. It always goes straight for raw flesh. Be careful not to reveal what mortifies and what vivifies you, lest the former last and the latter end.

172. Never compete with someone who has nothing to lose

The struggle will be unequal. One of the contestants enters the fray unencumbered, for he has already lost everything, even his shame. He has cast off everything, has nothing further to lose, and throws himself headlong into all sorts of insolence. Never risk your precious reputation on such a person. It took many years to win it, and it can be lost in a moment, on something far from momentous. One breath of scandal freezes much honorable sweat. The righteous person knows how much is at stake. He knows what can damage his reputation, and, because he commits himself prudently, he proceeds slowly, so that prudence has ample time to retreat. Not even if he triumphs will he win back what he lost by exposing himself to the risk of losing.

193. Beware of someone who pretends to put your interest before his own.

The best defense against guile is attentiveness. When people are subtle, be even more so. Some are good at making their business into yours, and if you don't decipher their intentions, you'll find yourself pulling their chestnuts out of the fire.

245. Be wary of flattery without real feedback

Original title: "Sometimes you should reason with uncommon sense" / "Original and out-of-the-way Views"

It betokens a superior talent. Don't think highly of the person who never opposes you. It doesn't show that he loves you, it shows he loves himself. Don't be fooled by flattery: don't reward it, condemn it. Consider it an honor to be criticized, especially by those who speak ill of good people. You should be pained when your things please everyone; it is a sign that they are not good, for perfection belongs to only a few.

9. Social Exchange Strategies

I group here a set of maxims that all fall under what we have identified on this website as a larger cluster of "social exchange dynamics".

I also highly recommend you take a look at "social exchange theory".
Even better, see the lesson in "Power University" which is much deeper.

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

They include:

171. Do not waste favor & connection for small things

The great as friends are for great occasions. One should not make use of great confidence for little things: for that is to waste a favour. The sheet anchor should be reserved for the last extremity. If you use up the great for little ends what remains afterwards? Nothing is more valuable than a protector, and nothing costs more nowadays than a favour. It can make or unmake a whole world. It can even give sense and take it away. As Nature and Fame are favourable to the wise, so Luck is generally envious of them. It is therefore more important to keep the favour of the mighty than goods and chattels.

191. Don't take payment in politeness

It is a cheat. Some people, in order to cast a spell, have no need of magic potions. By doffing their hats the right way, they bewitch fools—the vain, that is. They sell honor, and pay their debts with a gust of fine words. He who promises everything promises nothing; promises are a trap for fools. True courtesy is a duty, false courtesy a deceit, and excessive courtesy isn't dignity but dependence. Those who practice it bow not to the person but to his wealth and to his flattery; not to good qualities, but to hoped-for favors.

Note:
The author is talking about social exchange manipulation, where one repays a pragmatic favor with good feelings.

234. Only entrust your honor to someone if you have his as leverage

Original title: Never trust your Honour to another, unless you have his in Pledge.

The penalty for speaking too much and the advantages of silence should be the same for both of you. Where honor is involved, all must share the same interests, and one's own reputation should make one look out for that of others. It's better not to confide in others, but if you do, arrange matters skillfully so that your confidant will show not only prudence but caution. **Share the risk, so that both of you are obeying a common interest** and your confidant will not turn into a witness against you.

Note:
Very good maxim to generalize as well. When you give someone you don't know too well a lot of leverage over you, it's good if you also have some leverage over him.
It's a mix of social strategy and social exchange. The power dynamics of leverage probably deserves its own category.

236. Make an Obligation beforehand of what would have to be a Reward afterward

This is a stroke of subtle policy; to grant favors before they are deserved is proof of being obliging. Favours thus granted beforehand have two great advantages: the promptness of the gift obliges the recipient more strongly; and the same gift which would afterward be merely a reward is beforehand an obligation. This is a subtle transformation: you begin by paying a debt and end up passing it on to your creditor. But this is only suitable for men who have the feeling of obligation, since with men of lower stamp the honorarium paid beforehand acts rather as a bit than as a spur

Note:
The trick is here to give a favor before we receive what we were going to receive. This maxim shows how well the

author understood the dynamics of social exchanges, including the emotional-based accountancy of exchanges (ie.: “guilt”, “obligations to honor debts”, etc.).

244. Disguise a feeling of obligation

Original title: “create a feeling of obligation”

Some people disguise their own profit as the profit of others: they make it appear they are granting a favor when they are really receiving one. Some are so shrewd that they bestow honor by asking a favor; and they honor others with their own gain. They arrange things so that others seem to be paying them their due when they give them something. Extraordinarily clever, they scramble the order of doing favors and cast doubt upon who is favoring whom. They buy the best things with simple praise. By showing they like something, they bestow honor and flattery. They stake a claim on the courtesy of others, making a debt out of something they themselves should have felt grateful for. They use the verb oblige in the active voice rather than in the passive, and are better at politics than at grammar. This is a great subtlety, but it is even more subtle to catch someone doing it, undo the exchange, return someone’s honor, and recover the advantage.

252. Strike a healthy balance between selfishness & service

Original title: “Live neither entirely for yourself nor entirely for others”

It is a vulgar sort of tyranny. If you want to belong entirely to yourself, you’ll want everything for yourself. Such people don’t know how to yield, even in the smallest things, or give up even a tiny bit of their own comfort. They never win other people’s favor; they trust in their fortune, and acquire a false sense of security. It is good to belong to others at times so that others can belong to you. If you hold public office, you must be a public slave. On the other hand, some people belong entirely to others, for foolishness always deals in excess, and this is a very unhappy sort of excess. They have not a day, not an hour to call their own, so completely do they give themselves to others. This is true even in matters of knowledge. Some people know everything for others and nothing for themselves. If you are prudent, you will understand that people seek you not for your own sake but for their own. What interests them is what you can do for them.

Note:
I like how this maxim applied to leadership. One of the hallmarks of good leadership is about putting oneself in the service of the followers.

255. Break up your good deeds in small repeated doses

Original title: “Do Good a little at a time, but often”

A little bit at a time, but often. Don’t bestow more favor on someone than he can return. He who gives much doesn’t give; he sells. Don’t exhaust the gratitude of others. When grateful people are unable to respond, they break off the correspondence. To lose them, you have only to place them too greatly in your debt. When they don’t want to pay, they draw away, and turn into enemies. The idol doesn’t want to see the sculptor who carved him, and the benefited does not wish to see his benefactor always before his eyes. So learn this subtle lesson about giving: if the gift is to be appreciated, it should be much desired but cost little.

Note:
The last part is about “Machiavellian giving” to maximize exchanges: give what costs little to you, but that means a lot to the receiver

265. Get those who depend on you into tough situations

A risky situation, at the right moment, has made many people into true persons: it is when you are drowning that you learn to swim. In this way many discovered what they were worth and how much they knew, and all this would otherwise have remained buried in timidity. Difficult situations give us the chance to win renown, and when a noble

person finds his honor at risk, he can do more than a thousand others.

Note:
I group it into the social exchange dynamics because this maxim can also be used in a more manipulative, darker fashion.
If someone can get someone in a tough spot, and then rescue them, then your social credits with them go through the roof.
A possible way of doing it is to help them imagine the worst of a situation before you propose your solutions. Then you become a precious "problem solver" for them.

285. Avoid "drag you down" embraces

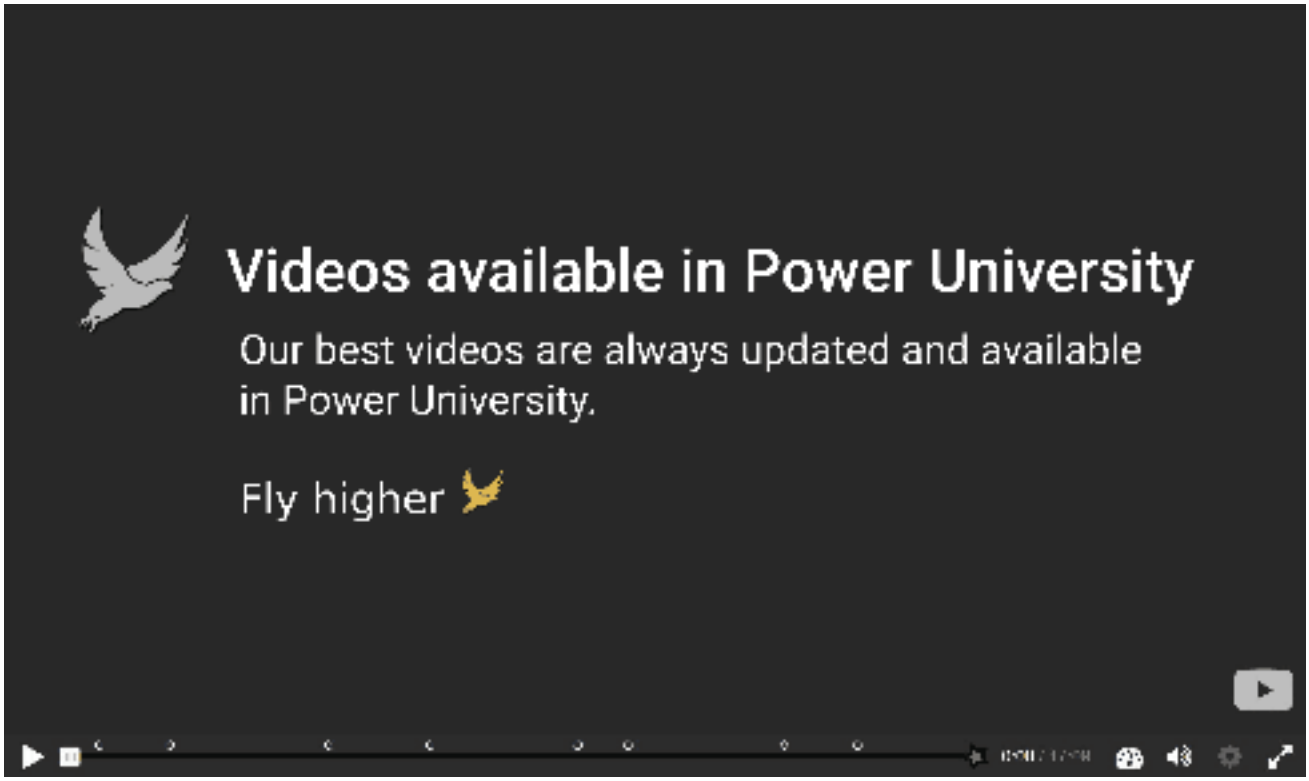
Original title: "Never die on anotehr's ill-luck"

Know who is in trouble and expect him to call on you for help and mutual consolation. Misery loves company, and the miserable reach out their arms to those on whom they once turned their backs. Be careful when you try to save someone who is drowning. You can't help him without putting yourself in danger.

286. Don't go completely into debt with anyone and everyone

You will become a common slave. Some were born luckier than others; they can do good while others receive it. Freedom is more precious than the gift that makes us lose it. Lay less stress on making many dependent on you than on keeping yourself independent of any. The sole advantage of power is that you can do more good. Above all do not regard responsibility as a favour, for generally it is another's plan to make one dependent on him, and it is someone's cleverness that puts you in a position of debt/responsibility.

Note:
A good maxim to understand that, sometimes, a favor becomes an obligation, and that some favors can rob us of our freedom.
The scene from "The Godfather" is a good example of this dynamic:



> **Godfather**: Some day, and that day may never come, I'll call on you to do a service for us

10. Bonus Maxims

Some more lessons learned:

7. Don't outshine your boss

Original title: Avoid victories over your superiors

All victories breed hate, and that over your superior is foolish or fatal. Superiority is always odious, especially to superiors and sovereigns. The common sort of advantages can be cautiously hidden, as beauty is hidden with a touch of artful neglect. Most people do not mind being surpassed in good fortune, character, or temperament, but no one, especially not a sovereign, likes to be surpassed in intelligence. For this is the king of attributes, and any crime against it is lèse-majesté. Sovereigns want to be so in what is most important. **Princes like to be helped, but not surpassed**. When you counsel someone, you should appear to be reminding him of something he had forgotten, not of the light he was unable to see. It is the stars who teach us this subtlety. They are brilliant sons, but they never dare to outshine the sun.

26. Find out each Man's Thumbscrew

The art of moving people's wills involves more skill than determination. You must know how to get inside the other person. Each will has its own special object of delight; they vary according to taste. Everyone idolizes something. Some want to be well thought of, others idolize profit, and most people idolize pleasure. Skill consists in knowing these idols in order to bring them into play. It is like having the key to someone else's desires. Go for the "prime mover," which isn't always something lofty and important. Usually it is something low, for the unruly outnumber the well ruled. First size up someone's character and then touch on his weak point. Tempt him with his particular pleasure, and you'll checkmate his will.

31. Select the Lucky and avoid the Unlucky

Note:
This is not always true.
Sometimes helping up a high-quality individual who was just being unlucky can provide you with the highest possible "social ROI".
See:

- Modern 48 Laws of Power

And:

> The 48 Laws of Power is All Wrong: This Is Why

129. Avoid complaints, share what you want more of

Original title: Never complain

Complaints will always discredit you. Better be a model of self-reliance, as opposed to an object of compassion. And to disclose one insult forms an excuse for another. Rather than compassion and consolation, they provoke passion and insolence, and complaints encourage those who hear our complaints to behave like those we complain about. Once divulged to others, the offenses done to us seem to make others pardonable. Some complain of past offenses and give rise to future ones. They want to be helped or consoled, but their listeners feel only satisfaction and even contempt. It is better policy to praise the favors others have done you, so as to win still more of them. When you tell how those absent have favored you, you are asking those present to do the same, and pay in the same coin. The prudent person should never publicize dishonor or slights, only the esteem others have shown him. Thus

will he have friends and halve his enemies.

Note:
Also notice that complaints give away your thumbscrews.

203. Know the great men of your age

They are not many. There is one Phœnix in the whole world, one great general, one perfect orator, one true philosopher in a century, a really illustrious king in several. Mediocrities are as numerous as they are worth-less: eminent greatness is rare in every respect.

205. Learn to use scorn

One way to get things is to scorn them. When you look for them, they aren't there, and later, without your trying, they come running. Scorn is also the shrewdest way to take revenge. A wise maxim: Never defend yourself with the pen, for this leaves a trail and glorifies your rivals rather than punishing them for their insolence. **Unworthy people cunningly oppose the great: they try to win fame indirectly, without really deserving it**. Many people would be unknown if their excellent opponents had paid them no heed. There is no revenge like oblivion: burying others in the dust of their inanity. Impudent fools, they try to become immortal by setting fire to the wonders of the world and of the centuries. One way to quiet vulgar murmuring is to ignore it. To impugn it will harm you. To give it credit brings discredit on you. Be happy that people want to emulate you, though their breath can tarnish, if not blacken, the greatest perfection.

Note:
This is the "Disdain Things You Cannot Have" in "the 48 Laws of Power", but Baltasar goes deeper.

232. Have a touch of the practical / trader

Not everything should be speculation; you must also act. The wisest are easiest to deceive: they may know extraordinary things, but they know nothing of life's ordinary necessities. So let the wise have a touch of the practical, enough not to be deceived and mocked. Know how to get things done: it may not be the highest thing in life, but it is the most necessary. What good knowledge if it isn't practical? These days **true knowledge lies in knowing how to live**.

Note:
I'd say that you should have "more than a touch". Practical is what achieves goals and brings results.

241. Allow yourself to be joked about, but don't joke about others

The first is a sort of courtesy, but the second will get you into difficulties. The person who is ill-humored at a party is even more of a beast than he appears to be. Excellent jokes are pleasant, and to know how to take them is a sign of talent. If you show you are piqued, you'll make others pick at you again. There is a moment to stop joking and not provide occasion for more. The most serious problems have arisen from joking. There is nothing that requires more attention and skill. Before you begin, know how much someone else can take.

CONS

- **Potentially confusing mix of morality and amorality**

"The Art of Worldly Wisdom" is a somewhat strange mix of ethical virtuosity, and true amoral Machiavellianism.

I see no issue with mixing the two because they're not opposite: everything has its time.

But it does sounds strange when you turn contradictory approaches into "maxims" and "laws".
Maxims and "laws" are supposed to be general, with few exceptions.

And that's the main reason why I'm not the biggest fan of "laws" formats: it oversimplifies things to the point where it becomes misleading for those who are first learning.

- **Better editing needed: some laws have one title, then talk about something totally different**

Sometimes there is a disconnect between title of a "law", and its content.
At times, it was also a missed opportunity: the off-topic content, even when not (perfectly) aligned to the title, was great, and deserved its own title/maxim.

- **Sometimes cryptic**

An already great book, the "Art of Worldly Wisdom" would have been even better with simpler wording.

- **The author talks about "national characters"**

To assign characters to individuals from certain nationalities is a mistake that many non-enlightened individualists commit.
Countries have cultures, and those cultures most certainly do affect people. But cultures don't necessarily become characters in their citizens. And especially not for *each* of their citizens.

- **The author says that tall people are stupid**

Science wasn't as advanced then, but it still doesn't say very flattering things about someone to believe -or to be certain- that height has a strong correlation to intelligence.

- **Some "rose-tinted glasses" and "back when it was better" attitude**

The author sometimes falls for the typical narrative of "today things are bad, before they used to be better".
These narratives show all their limitations when you read old texts, because you realize how many people today say the exact same things, without realizing that human nature has changed little.

- **Negative form of maxims**

It's strange that an author of such acuity wrote so many maxims in the negative form -ie.: "don't do this"-, rather than in the positive one -ie.: "do more of this"-.
The positive form is simpler to understand, internalize, and memorize.

PROS

Simply:

- **One of the best books on…**

Social strategies, life strategies, and power dynamics.

- **Deep insights on social exchange**

While Robert Greene dialed up the cynicism, Baltasar has a keener eye and understanding of the dynamics of social exchanges.
Social exchanges entail not just manipulation, but also cooperation, and displays of altruism and virtue.

- **A mix of Machiavellianism and high quality**

Baltasar mixes effective Machiavellianism with what we could define as a high-quality, value-adding approach.
I think that's a great mix to strive towards.

What Baltasar Gracian Say of Robert Greene?

The similarity between “The Art of Worldy Wisdom” and “The 48 Laws of Power” is striking.

Including:

- Many laws are the same
- The “maxim” format is the same
- The “horacle style” of writing is the same

I think Greene, in many ways, improved on Baltasar’s work.
To begin with, he added examples, which are very helpful.
And he added some different and insightful “laws”, while avoiding Baltasar’s repetitions.
He also turned his 48 laws into more amorally-sounding, direct guidelines that sound like a “dark psychology guide for success”. And that was a key ingredient for his book’s success.

Robert Greene was also more successful because he was a better writer. And a better marketer.
But there are plenty of benefits for his readers too: he also made a simpler, more streamlined and “harder hitting” product, easier for mot people to read.
And that is a merit.

On the other hand, I’m not sure that Green has credited Baltasar Gracian’s work nearly enough.
If you look at the list of the 48 laws of power, the resemblance with “*The Art of Wordly Wisdom*” is so striking that… I’m not so sure where we stand between “inspiration” and “no-credit plagiarism”.

It’s possible though that it’s me who doesn’t remember Robert Greene quoting and crediting Baltasar. That’s possible because I didn’t know Baltasar before reading “The 48 Laws of Power”.
And I certainly haven’t seen or read all Greene’s public statements.
If I realize that I am mistaken, I will happily amend this section.
And I appreciate any reader’s heads up on the matter.

REVIEW

“*The Art of Wordly Wisdom*” is a masterpiece.

Before you jump into it, keep in mind that this review gave you a good chunk of the value already.
The original work requires some skills to get the most out of it. You need to dig out the gold nuggets sparsed here and there within 300 maxims, some of which are plainer and some of which have a cryptic sentence structure.

Still, this was a true gem.

I learned a lot, and I teased out much inspiration, material, and food for thought for this website’s work and mission to expand and codify power dynamics and life strategies.

ExceptionAL Dating: How to Succeed Despite Shortcomings

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 June 2021 · Archived copy · Original

These questions are everywhere:

- I'm an Indian guy, can I date blonde white women?
- I'm a short guy, can I date tall(er) women?
- I'm an older woman, can I find a high-quality man?

They're all asking the *same* question:

> Can I succeed, despite being value-negative in this trait here?

Obviously, for the best answer, a personal consultation is needed.

Yet, **every exception follows the same rule**.
And we can also generalize a few common steps to succeed despite this or that limitation

This is what you will learn in this post: the intersexual dynamics of exceptions, and how anyone can be successful despite this or that limitation.

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  - The Truth In Both Camps
  - The Pyramid of Sexual Needs
  - Hard Rules: Strength & Distribution
- Rule exceptions: Examples
  - Older Women
  - Short Men
  - Exceptions: Higher SMV Partner
  - The Rules in the Exception
- How to Be Exceptional

First Off... Let's Open Our Minds

Before we even begin:

- Nick Vujicic

Nick Vujicic has no arms and no legs.

And he went far: in life, in dating, and in his personal happiness and joy.
There are more similar examples.

And there are plenty of people who have fallen in love with animals (zoophilia, includes sexually), things (objectofilia) and, I'm sure this will come soon if it hasn't happened yet, with chatbots.
So, **technically, you can do pretty much anything**.

That's good to know first, and to get out of the way.

However, on this website, we're not interested in just possibilities.
Here we're interested in *maximizing* our potential, and maximizing our odds.

And this is what we're going to do in this article.

Overview: The Two Different Camps

Let's begin with an overview.

There are two camps in both dating and general self-development:

- Rules-based approach
- Randomness-based approach

The first camp stresses the general rules and inborn preferences, and how they apply to everyone.

In dating, it stresses a set of personal traits, behavior, and approaches that either work or don't work.
It tends to be a more analytical, "mechanical" approach.
At the extreme, this camp suggest that either you have this, or do that, or you fail.

Let's call this the "objective approach".

The other approach is more about subjectivity, individual differences, cultural differences, personal preferences, changes of preference over time, feelings, and exceptions.
This other approach is also more about "possibilities".

Let's call this the "subjective approach".

The subjectivity approach tends to be more popular in mainstream media, which tends to favor feelings and randomness.
But even in academia, inborn preferences have been ignored in favor of culture and subjectivity for a long time now.

Luckily, the objectivity approach is growing now thanks to authors such as Jordan Peterson, Steven Pinker, and… This website :).
Larger movements that have grown in the last decades such as evolutionary psychology and even the red pill in male self-development have given more impetus to the objectivity approach.

Pros & Cons of Both Camps

There are advantages and risks associated with the extreme versions of both camps.

The risk of the objectivity approach is that some people may grow fatalistic. It becomes a case of "either I got this and that trait, or I'm screwed and nobody will ever like me".
Hopelessness and anger can ensue. A good chunk of the so-called incels tend to follow from the objectivity approach.

The extreme version of the subjectivity approach is equally harmful.
When you downplay human nature, and the more calculative, value-based nature of all human exchanges in favor of randomness, feelings, or "just having to meet the right one", then you're less likely to take action, and to do the things that are most likely to increase your personal value, and your odds of success.
We also call this approach "naive self-help" here:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Finally, the question we deeply care about here is:

> Which one of these 2 camps is "right", and which one provides you with the mindsets and strategies to succeed.

The Truth In Both Camps

Well, they're both right.

There are objective dating rules that apply to a majority of people, no matter where you are.

But there are also plenty of exceptions to those rules, with an ample margin of personal subjectivity.

For example, the evidence-based *Handbook of Relationships Initiations* says:

> *In summary, outcomes of recent research support the claim that an important part of attraction and relationship initiation is centered in the perceiver.*

That basically says "it's subjective".

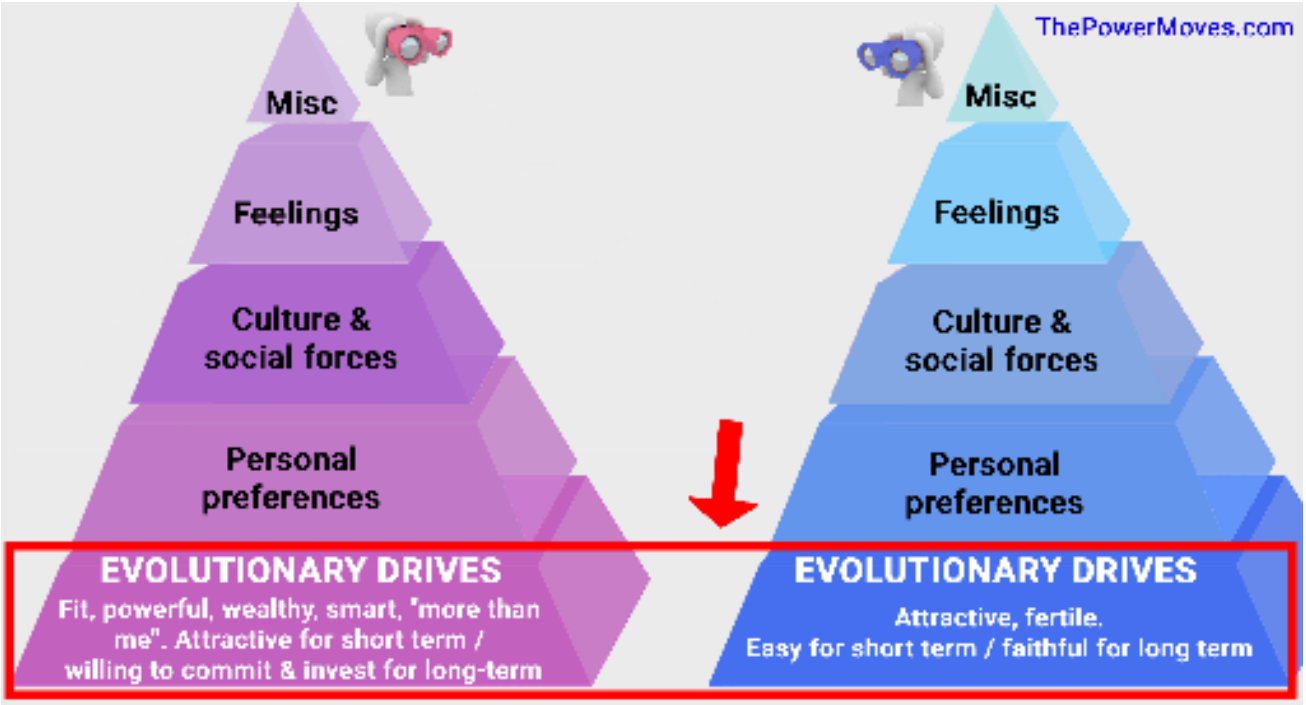
Which one matters most, the rule, or the subjectivity, depends on many factors.
One of those factors, is whether we're discussing "hard rules", or "weak rules".

Hard rules are genetically ingrained tastes and predispositions that we can indeed generalize to the vast majority of people.
Hard rules tend to be shaped by evolutionary forces, and arose as the best answers to what David Buss calls

"evolutionary problems" (Buss, 2019).
As examples of "hard rules", almost every man prefers a woman with some specific markers of femininity, while almost every woman prefers a man who displays confidence and self-assurance.
The preference for femininity and confidence are two examples of hard rules.

The Pyramid of Sexual Needs

There are several "hard rules", and they are one of the main factors for sexual marketplace dynamics, and for personal sexual market value.
Imagine these "hard rules" as the foundation of the "pyramid of sexual needs":



Lucio's pyramid of sexual preferences
Then on top, there can be culture, local customs, social expectations, religion, family pressures, influences from various friends and social circles and, of course, personal preferences -that still matter somewhat even with many hard rules-, and feelings.

Feelings is a bit of a special case that modulates and "softens" the more calculative side of sexual dynamics.
Just to be clear, feelings are not totally random.
Feelings are usually quicker and more likely to develop in the direction that reinforces either the personal or inborn preferences.
But there are exceptions here too.
And feelings can develop over time, even against inborn tendencies and/or personal preferences.

Each of those layers modulates how the evolutionary drives are expressed.
And each one of them can either reinforce, run against or, in exceptional cases, even negate the inborn tendencies.

Hard Rules: Strength & Distribution

The are two main varialbe to hard rules:

- **Strength**: how much it weighs, compared to all other traits, in determining an individual overall attractiveness (sexual market value)
  Example: how much does facial attractiveness weigh on a woman's overall attractiveness?
- **Distribution**: how widespread it is in the whole population, or "how many exceptions there are for this specific

rule".
Example: how many men do not obey, or only weakly obey the "older woman is less attractive" rule?

Not all hard rules are equally strong, or equally distributed.

For example, it's a hard rule that men prefer healthy and long hair in a woman.
But it's not a rule that is as strong and as distributed as men preferring a facially attractive woman.
So from this example, albeit both traits are inborn and relatively strong, facial attractiveness in a woman is, on average, *more* important than her hair length or quality.

Keep in mind that **the strength of each rule is subjective** and far more subjective than its presence or absence. So you will be hard-pressed to find a man who does not care at all about female facial attractiveness. But some men care much less, or much more, than others.

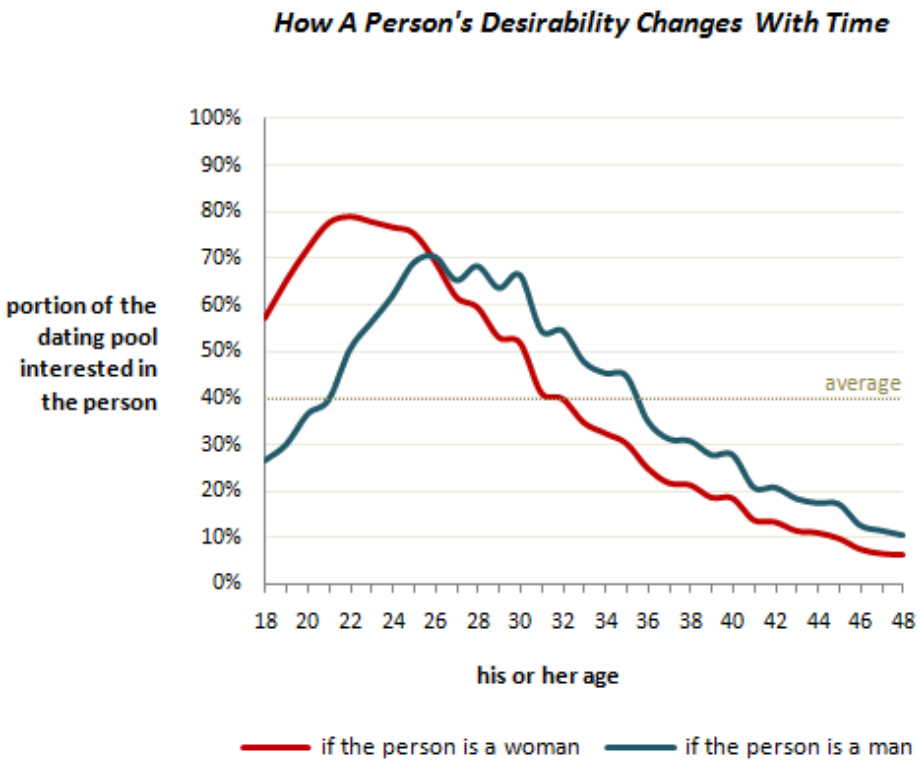
Rule exceptions: Examples

We will review the rules of age for women, and height for men.

We could have picked any other physical or personality trait, as well as courtship method and dynamic, but we chose these two because one, they're both hard rules, and two, they're rather popular topics.

Older Women

When it comes to age, the rule is that men prefer women in reproductive age, peaking at the low 20ties.



A corollary of the rule is that high-value men who have the power to find and attract women usually go for younger women.

The rule always standing, there are several exceptions.

Including:

- Macron / Brigitte Macron

- Jeff Bezos
- Demi Moore / Ashton Kutcher

An interesting property of exceptions is that **exceptions tend to underestimated**.

Exceptions tend to be underestimated because people are uncomfortable being the exception, and they prefer adhering to social norms.
A corollary of that rule is that the more extreme the exception, the more people hide it and the more we underestimate it.

For example, guys are comfortable sharing their mild fetish for MILFs.
The deviation from both the social and "evolutionary norm" so people are comfortable sharing the MILF-passion.
But you don't hear much about the 20-something guy who bangs the 50-something.
And you almost never hear about the guy who's attracted to the 70+. The first time I heard it from a friend I was mildly shocked.

For the record, it was a cool guy with a 20-something girlfriend, and the 70+ woman was a common acquaintance.
The lady wouldn't have been attractive in her prime, in my opinion, and what he liked about her was her "warmth".
She was indeed a very warm woman.

Still, the fact that we underestimate exceptions is not equivalent to saying that exceptions are common.
Obviously, exceptions are not common.
Some might even say that the higher the deviation from the norm, the more uncommon the exception becomes -albeit, in the absence of data, I'm not personally convinced about this one-.

To you, it means that consciously being the exception can be a challenging task.

For more information on older women's successes, see "Seduction University" or this review of "Seductresses":

> Seductresses: 12 Traits for Enslaving Men

And now let's get into height for men.

Short Men

If you say “But he’s rich and famous”, well… That’s the point: finding ways to do well despite it all. And yet, here’s the kicker: they started dating BEFORE he became famous

Height for men is one of the most universally sought-after traits.

And even there, exceptions exist.

After Butovskaya explains that the Tsimane didn’t pick taller men, she summarizes in the authoritative *Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Behavior*:

> We suggest that in societies where people are free to choose their partners, women’s height preferences might reflect a preference for taller men, whereas this preference might not be observed in other societies, including polygynous societies with significant wealth stratification or when spouses are predominantly selected by relatives

Those societies don’t include the West.
But exceptions apply even among individual women in the West.
Says one woman in Oga’s overview of sexuality and attraction:

> [In my fantasies] my hero is shorter than everyone else, darker, and therefore highly desirable, but as he is totally vulnerable and powerless he is sexually abused

Yes, you might say that being liked for being powerless and sexually abused is not a goal you want to pursue :).
And I’d totally agree with you.
Still, the end result is that this woman’s hero fantasy is *both* the shortest *and* powerless.
Of course, we’re talking rare exceptions here.

But the good news is that to be successful as a short man, you don’t need to find these rare exceptions.
You can be successful with “normal” women who like what most other women like.

And I can talk from first-hand experience here.

My first “serious” girlfriend was quite obviously taller than I am.
The first time we made out in a club, I had to tiptoe and reach up, and even then it wasn’t comfortable (I’m not comfortable posting full pictures without asking for her permission, so please see the ~~YouTube video for some picture previews~~ see our courses instead).
Update to the video: the video says that “the 3 women who pursued me most obviously were all taller”. As I started thinking of past experiences, I realized that of the top 6, 5 were taller. One included a day street situation in which a girl stared, turned around to look at me, and eventually stopped. It was so over the top I thought “Either she’s crazy, or she’s really into me”. She was a highly sexual go-go dancer. To quote Tony Robbins, I’m not saying this to “impress you”, but to “impress upon you” that exceptions can happen without you being famous, super attractive, or super wealthy.

Beyond just height, most neutral onlookers would have rated my ex-girlfriend as far higher sexual market value than I was.
And that is in large part because onlookers only see the “external layers” of sexual market value -and general individual’s level”, and miss the deeper ones.

See more here.

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

What leveled the field then were two important factors:

1. **Advantageous sexual market place**: college tends to favor men
2. **The social circle dynamics**: the social circle of college helps bring to the fore the less obvious and visible “outer currencies” (“opaque currencies” to the fore

The college environment is a confined sexual marketplaces that restricts the supply of men to a specific demographic.
So even though I was an idiot back then, 98% of other guys were equally idiots.

College also tends to make some traits more important and salient than others.
Social status, popularity, and “coolness” are far more important in college.
So as long as you have some status and can come across as a mildly cool guy, ideally with some budding leadership qualities, then college can be an easy marketplace.

The second factor was embedded in the dynamics of social circles.
If I had met her on cold approach, chances are that it wouldn’t have gone anywhere. Well, never say never, but the odds were more no than yes.
The social circle gives your personality the opportunity to shine through and to “grow” on women.
And that’s one of the reasons why social circles can be great venues for guys who are not the most attractive, but who are nonetheless high-value guys. And they’re also good for some minorities who might be considered “less appealing” in certain sexual marketplaces.

Of, course, the obvious caveats to make social circles work for you is that: one, you must acquire status/ower. And two, those social circles must have the women you find attractive. A social circle of gamers won’t help your dating life much but, I guess, you know that already :).

You Miss Exceptions Because You Don’t Pursue Them

It’s not like women throw themselves at me, of course.

But if I had to remember the top 3 women that chased me in the most obvious manner, all the 3 of them were taller women. Of the top 5, 4 were taller.
And yes, that included attractive taller women.

The reason why they made it more obvious is that they thought that I, being shorter, wasn't going to pursue them.
And so it was up to them to make the move.
And the funny thing is… They were right.

Most shorter guys self-reject themselves first, they'll never make a move, and they'll miss on plenty of women who might have been down for it. Guys have probably missed millions of chances because they self-rejected first.

Remember, for 3 women who made the first move, many more were equally interested, but didn't make the move.
And you'll never find out unless you take your chances.

In that sense, the subjectivity approach provides you with better mindsets.
When you believe that many taller women can find you (sexually) attractive, you will take more chances.
Which of course will lead to more rejections, but also to more success.

Alright, now let's connect the exceptions back to the rules.

Exceptions: Higher SMV Partner

Many people confuse what we call here "assortative mating" with "exception".

Assortative mating means that people seek the best they can get and, given that everyone else is doing the same, **people pair up around their *overall* level of sexual market value**.
However, on the outside, couples can still look very different, and a couple can be equally matched even while one partner is (far) more attractive than the other.

These **couples where one partner is more attractive than another can be "false exceptions"**, since in truth the two often match each other in terms of overall value.
So in my previous example of me and my taller, more attractive ex, it's a moot point whether or not we truly were an exception.

However, it's also possible to have exceptions where couples get together at different *overall* levels of sexual market value and personal value.

When that happens, there are often several different factors that influence the partner who is higher sexual market value.
Let's call them "environmental factors".
And that also means that **environmental factors can provide you with the opportunity to snag a higher-value partner**.

Example of Environmental Factors: My Brother

My brother is a great example.

He has nothing special about him.
He's not particularly attractive, not driven, not well-learned, and I can't think of anything outstanding about him -except for his "poetic" spirit, more on it later-.
He's also a poor provider, and he wasn't even experienced when he first met his wife.

His wife is physically more attractive than he is, and personality-wise leaps and bounds ahead of him.
She even takes charge of the household and is a better provider (!), and does all the cooking, the cleaning, plus all the upkeeps (!).

If you put my brother and her wife side by side and asked people to rate them as *any* significant presence in your life, be it a sexual partner, a friend, or a business partner, almost everyone would rate her far higher than him.

My brother truly punched far above his weight.
You can even it in the children: they're far higher value -and even quality- than he is.

So… How did that relationship take place?

A series of environmental factors, including:

1. **Artificially lower SMV for her**: she came from a very old-school, male chauvinist household in which only men were allowed to study. So although she was even book-smarter than my bro, she wasn't allowed to even attend high school. That artificially kept her "lower" than my bro at least in the education department
2. **Early bud effect**: some young women are too inexperienced to date with a good grasp of value exchanges. They're not very good at assessing personal value and other people's value. And that can allow some men to "snag" them without them ever realizing they could have gotten better. Then feelings might develop, and those men can be safe with them longer-term (but that's not always the case)
3. **Family orientation**: by culture, family, and personal preferences, she wanted a traditional family. That made my brother's lack of certain traits somewhat less important, and traits such has "willingness to commit" rose in importance, and helped to make up for all the rest
4. **Personal backgrounds**: albeit as a person she is awesome, her family was lower status compared to my brother's family. That matters much more for women who look for long-term, as this was the case.
   So in that realm as well, she could at least look up to my brother. And that helped him quite a bit.

Finally, my brother also had some merits.
Specifically, he pursued her hard, which works particularly well for women who seek long-term commitment, as hard pursuit signals long-term commitment and willingness to invest.

Also, my brother has a "poetic vein", and he used that in his courtship. That works great with some women, and it worked well with her (there's 14 years of difference between me and my brother, and I remember sneaking into his room as a kid and read some snippets of their letters. Even then, they seemed overly long and saccharine to me. P.S.: not proud of the sneaking thing).

Finally, this is a case where feelings also "got in the way".
She eventually fell for him and, even today I believe, she still considers him the man of his life.

What's the lesson learned here, besides the fact that exceptions are possible, and circumstances can upset the general rule of "people matching their SMV level"?

Well, the practical lesson is that i**t's possible to find partners, in certain specific environments and circumstances, with which you can more reliably "punch above your weight"**.

For the how, see Power University and this post goes a bit into it:

> Sexual Market Value Hacks: Boosting Your SMV

And of course, for more check out "Seduction University".

The Rules in the Exception

Exceptions also follow their own "mathematical rules".

This chapter explains the math of exceptions.

First off, the evidence of exceptional dating:

The Science & Math of Exceptional Dating

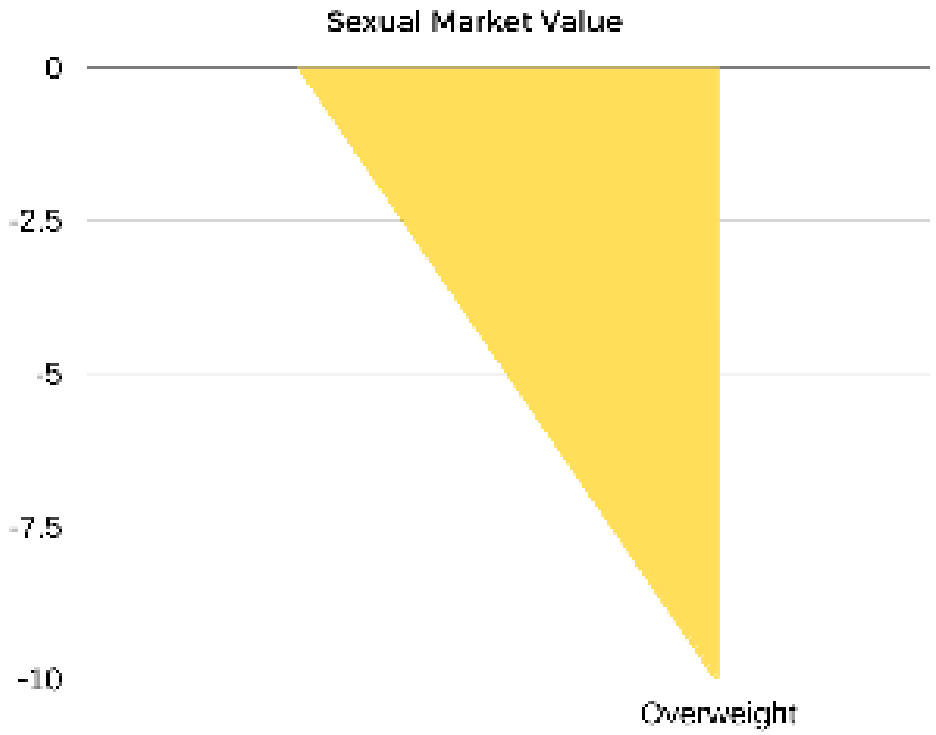
Quoting from the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology:*

> more recently, researchers demonstrated that a compensatory decision-making strategy (where traits that are

> high in value can ofset those that are low in value) using weighted-sum calculations outperformed the Euclidean distance model and noncompensatory models such as take-the-best, threshold, and aspiration (Brandner et al. , 2020)

Note:
Please note that the “math” is extremely simplified to support the logic, which is more important than the actual numbers. There is too much variance to find utility in hard numbers, and understanding the logic is what matters here.
Furthermore, the charts are scaled down to be visually more logical and compelling.

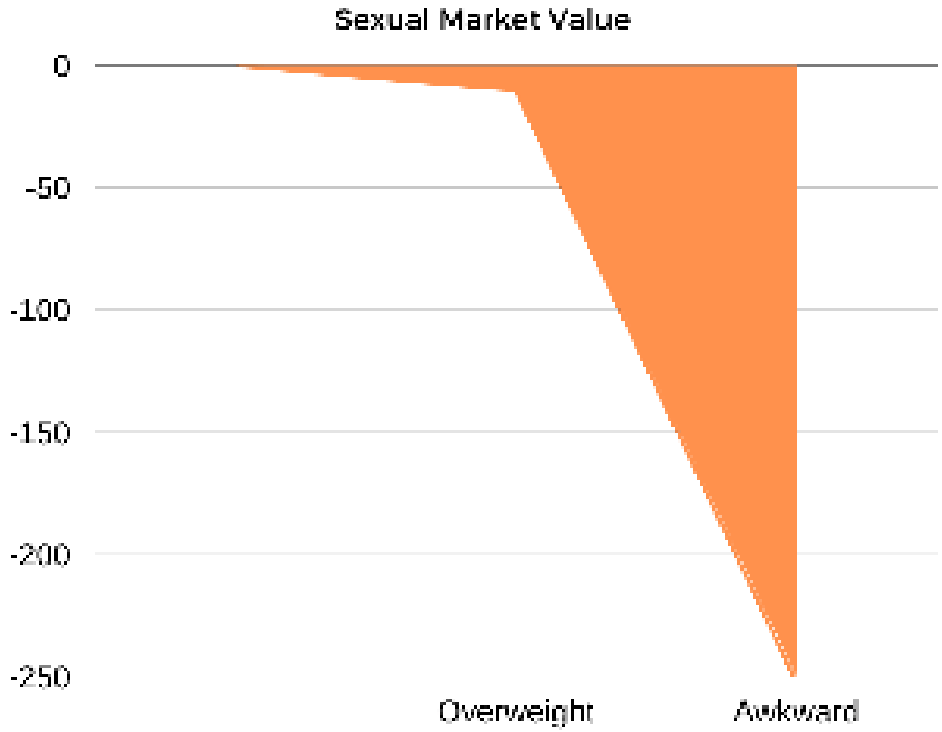
Overweight: 1 Strike, 1/50



Let’s imagine you’re breaking a hard rule.
Let’s say, you’re overweight.
1 in 2.000 women, for some rare exceptional quirk, finds it attractive; 1 in a 100 doesn’t care about it; and 1 in 50 doesn’t care too much about it.

So you are facing more challenging odds, but since it’s only one trait among many, there is plenty of room to make up for it.

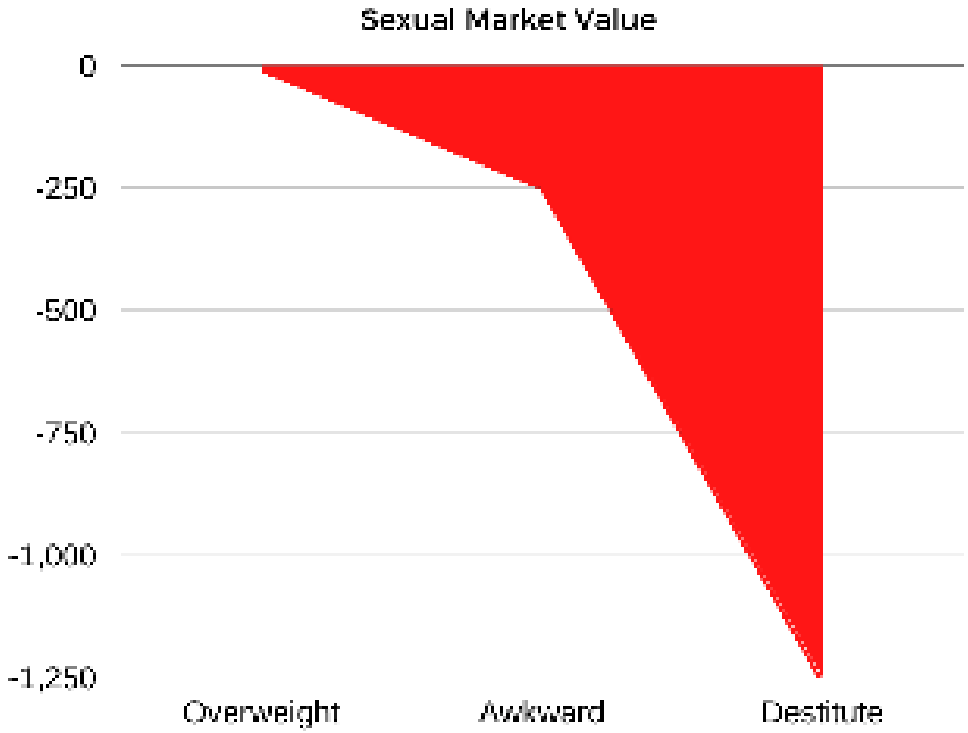
Overweight & Awkward: 2 Strikes, 1/2.500



For simplicity, let's imagine that you don't make up for it.

And that on top of being overweight you're also socially awkward.
Now you need to find a girl who doesn't care so much about extra kilos, *and* who also doesn't care much about social awkwardness. Now it's 1 in 50, of 1 in 50. Total, it's 1 in 2.500 who's willing to welcome you without a negative pre-frame.

Overweight, Awkward & Destitute: 3 Strikes, 1/125.000



Now imagine you're, overweight, awkward, *and* chronically jobless.

Now you need to find a girl who doesn't care about extra kilos, awkwardness, and destitution.
Now it's 1 in 50, of 1 in 50, of 1 in 50. It's 1 in 125.000.

Now you're in "good luck" territory.

Good luck territory means that yes, a "chance" technical still exists, but it's unlikely to materialize even putting in the hard work.
So it's not technically wrong to tell the overweight, poor, and awkward guy that "there is someone for you out there". The problem is that, even if technically that might be true, it's still a fantasy.
It's a fantasy because you will most likely go a lifetime without meeting the girl who pays little attention to all your rule-breaking.
Plus, even if you do meet one, it's possible that you don't take your chance, or that she's not your type.
And even if you meet her and she's your type and you took your chances, it's possible that you are you're so little used to dating -and dating well- that it simply won't go anywhere despite the possibility, on paper, was there.

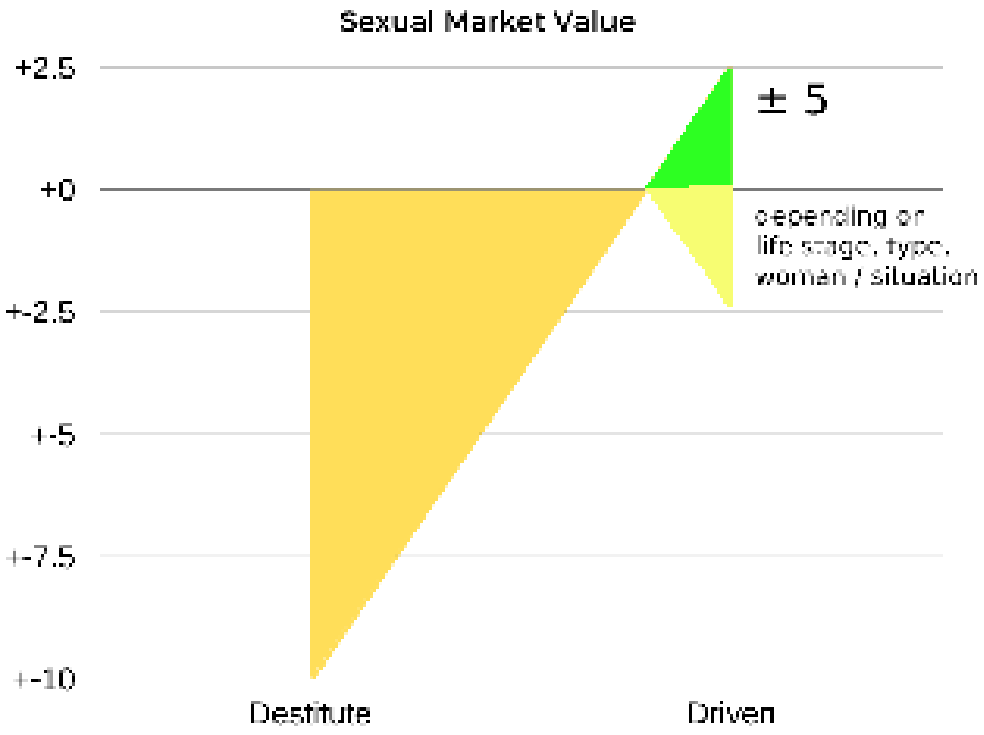
So you see where I'm going.

Exceptions without rebalancing qualities are like items on a logarithmic scale.
When you string a few exceptions in a row, it becomes an exponentially steep uphill climb.

That's the reality of exceptions.

Luckily, the same dynamics work in both directions.

Destitute But Driven: Back to Neutral Territory



Let's take again destitution: you're poor, but you're driven and working on a more or less promising vision of yours.

In that case, you can effectively cancel out the issue of joblessness.

By how much you cancel out the issue of destitution also depends on a few factors, including:

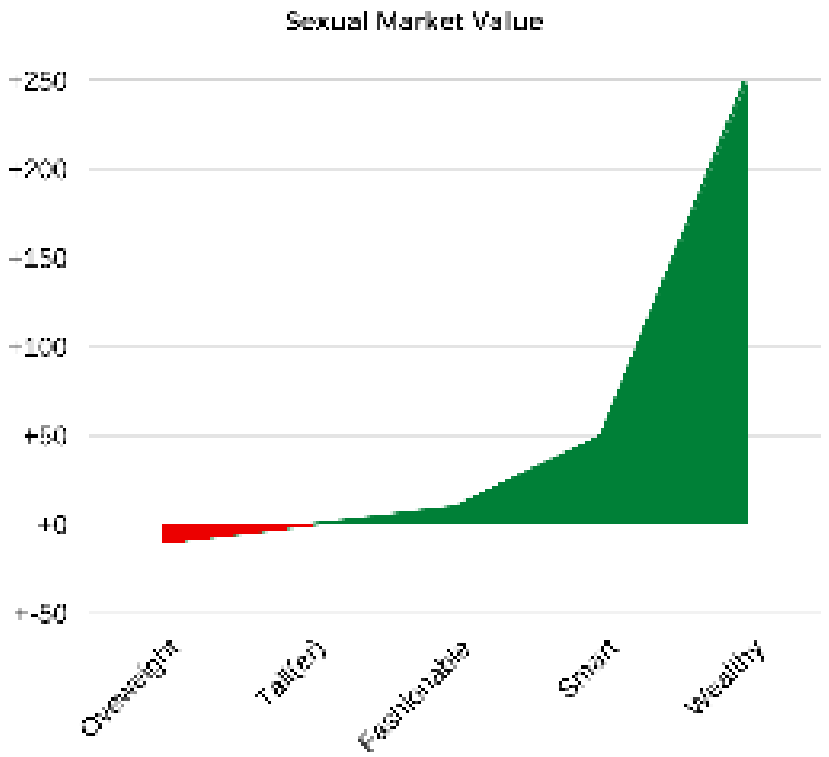
- Your seducer style
- The environment you're in, where some environments place a premium on wealth

- Her personality type, since some women care more about money and some less

And a few more variables.
But the main concept is that **the "negative drag" of most hard rules' breaking can be addressed and fixed**.

Overweight But Totally Awesome: Getting Back to Hunk Mode

The same logarithmic scale can work in your favor as an exception as well.



So if you break one rule, a couple of rules, or even several rules, but not too badly (see "intensity"), and you more than makeup for it with an excess of value in other important traits… Then the scale starts pushing you back up very quickly.

And you're golden.

Rule Breaking Concept: Intensity

Finally there is the "intensity" to keep in mind.

Intensity refers to how much positive or negative value you have in each treat.

This should be pretty straightforward.
For example, "poor" is very different if we're talking about "below average income" or "jobless and in tattered clothes".

Summing Up "Exceptional Dynamics"

1. One issue doesn't remove you from the sexual market
2. You can generally "offset" one issue or a few issues with relative ease
3. But you're quickly in a bad place if you break even a couple of attraction rules without offsetting (it's a logarithmic scale)

How to Be Exceptional

As usual, we like to make our articles pragmatic.

So, how do you become the:

- Indian guy who dates blonde white women
- Short guy who dates taller women
- Poor guy who dates high quality and even professional women
- Unattractive woman married to a doting man
- Older woman dating attractive men

Here is how:

1. **Know you can**: stamp the following in your mind: you ain't no f*cking group. If "short men", "Indian men", "older women", "poor men" etc., etc. struggle more… That says nothing about you.
   You're an individual, and as an individual, the general rule or the general group dynamics don't necessarily apply to you. Read "enlightened individualism" please.
2. **Become exceptional**: to become, literally, "exceptional", it helps -a lot- to be exceptional, in the sense of extraordinary, in some ways or the other. Being exceptional means that you're at the top of some groups or professions. That means success and skills, which naturally increase your SMV. Plus, you can get some fame and visibility, and fame is one of the best shortcuts to dating success
3. **Learn what the men and women you like want**: or, to use this article's wording, learn what the "hard rules" are, what traits the women and men you like want -this website is one of the best places for that-
4. **Work on yourself to increase your value to the men and women you like**: or, to use this article's wording, "obey as many rules as possible". There are two ways to go about it:
   1. Turn your limitations around: for example, short men who want to date taller women can make their lives easier by developing some good physique / muscles. That can go a long way to address the "physical disparity" between the two
   2. Add extra-value in other areas: for example, Berlusconi kept "enjoying the company" of countless young ladies because he had an excess of value in power, lifestyle / luxury parties, and of course wealth

5. **Take chances**: no matter what you've got and where you stand, dating never stops being a number's game
6. **Learn game / power dynamics**: I'm a big believer that social skills are one of the most important fundamentals of social, life, and dating success alike. Start with basic social skills first, make sure you have the basics covered. Too many people start with "game", but remain fundamental weirdos at heart and that holds them back big time
7. **Learn and apply smart strategies**: there is plenty of material on "game", but little on strategies. It's a pity because smart strategies can revolutionize your results. This website though also covers strategies.

Master the game with "Seduction University".

The Confidence Game: How Conmen Manipulate You (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 June 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"The Confidence Game" (2016) is a book about con artists, snake oil salesmen, and manipulators.
Maria Konnikova, the author, seeks to go at the psychological roots that are common to each con game, combining both the con artists' efforts, and the victims' self-manipulation.

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- SUMMARY
  - 10 Steps of A Con
  - Con Artist Techniques
  - Who Are Con Artists? The Dark Triad
  - Con Artists Thrive During Changes
  - This Is When You're Most Likely to Fall for Cons
  - This Is Who Is Most Likely to Fall for Cons
  - Cons Go Unreported Because…
  - Con Artists Take Advantage of Human Natural Cooperation
  - Cults Hide Behind Partial Truths, And Partial Self-Help
- More Wisdom
- QUOTES
- Criticism
- Review

SUMMARY

About the Author:
Maria Konnikova graduated from Harvard University with a B.A. in psychology and creative writing while being mentored by Steven Pinker. She later received a Ph.D. in Psychology from Columbia University. Konnikova is a regular contributor writer at The New Yorker and has published two other books: "Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes" and "The Biggest Bluff".

10 Steps of A Con

The con can be structured as:

1. **Put-up**: finding the right victim
2. **Play**: creation of empathy and rapport. And of liking.
   It can start very small, with familiarity and "mere exposure", and enhanced with conversation, finding commonalities, and remembering people's names and conversation details.
   Some cons are based on false knowledge, like pretending to be someone's relative at a wedding.
3. **Rope**: logic and persuasion
4. **Scheme**: the tale
   One of the reasons cons work so well is because in good part we want to believe the tale, we want to believe things that are too good to be true
5. **Convince**: the evidence, the way it will work, and the showing of the profits

6. **Breakdown**: the self-convincing that goes on as we get more and more deeply into the con
   "The good confidence man has been working his way up to this very moment, the moment when "Too good to be true" turns into "Actually, this makes perfect sense": I am exceptional, and I deserve it. It's not too good to be true; it is exactly what I had coming to me."
7. **Send**: the victim willingly increases investment
8. **Touch**: the "hit" of the con
9. **Blow-off**: the con becomes clear
10. **Fix**: the con artist takes distance.
    But he might not need to do anything since the victim will either defend the con artist, selectively forget being conned, or fail to report the con artist to avoid embarrassment

Con Artists Can Be Very "Power Protecting"

On this website, we use the expression "power protecting" for strategies and techniques that prevent people from feeling attacked or pressuref, and clam up and dislike you as a consequence.

Con artists can also be very power protecting to make you feel good and in control.
Says Konnikova:

> There's nothing a con artist likes to do more than make us feel powerful and in control: we are the ones calling the shots, making the choices, doing the thinking. They are merely there to do our bidding.

That way, people lower their guard.

Also see:

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

The Power Game

Con artists often seek to embody positions and ranks that grant them status and power.
Think of titles such as doctor, researcher, or group belonging such as aristocracy, political elite, or "the wealthy club".

The status and power from the position make people more likely to believe the con, and also less likely to question him.
Says Konnikova:

> You want the powerful to like you, not to think you petty for deigning to question their integrity, and so you keep any doubts to yourself

Con Artist Techniques

Some of the techniques:

- "**Imagine that… "**

"Picture this", "imagine that", "would you do with the money".
This type of exercise makes people more excited, more focused on the reward, more risk-taking… And less rational.

- **Overload**

One classic example is the magician Darren Brown, who managed to pay people with pieces of paper while he bombarded them with stimuli and with "embedded commands":

Psychologist Katherine Milkman found that when we are bombarded with stimuli, we are more likely to make decisions that fit with what we *want* to do rather than what we *should* do.

- **Pressuring for a decision**

Under pressure we are more likely to follow a strong authority that pushes us in a certain direction, rather than choosing what's best for us.

Who Are Con Artists? The Dark Triad

Part of the dark triad are:

- **Psychopathy**

On one level, the data seems to suggest a direct correlation between con artistry, and psychopathy.
When people acquire the neural impairment of psychopaths, they also start to behave more like con artists.
So psychopathy is a sort of "biological predisposition" that leads to many of the behavior we expect from con artists.

- **Narcissism**

A sense of superiority, that one deserves more, can lead to cutting corners or lying.

- **Machiavellianism**

High machs tend to be among the most successful manipulators in society.
The author here reviews some of the classic studies on Machiavellianism from Geis and Christie.

Says the author:

> Machiavellianism may, like psychopathy, predispose people toward con-like behaviors and make them better able to deliver on them

Psychologist Delroy Paulhus, who specializes in the dark triad traits, suggests that "Machiavellian" is a better descriptor of the con artist than "psychopath."

But Genes Aren't Everything

However, says the author, con artists aren't simply born, but they're also made.
And she says, very astutely:

> The exact same traits could easily be put to use in more or less devious ways. The choice is not predetermined. And the presence of Machiavellianism or psychopathy or narcissism no more marks someone as a grifter than the presence of charisma or nonchalance.

So part of the mix that pushes people towards con artistry are:

- Predisposition
- Opportunity
- Plausible rationale

And it's also:

A Slippery Slope Towards Full-Fledged Cons

The author uses one example to show how one generally well-behaving CFO ended up badly cooking the books after he started with a small fudging first.

Then, in the next quarter, the business didn't get better, and he got more and more mired in his own lie.

Says the author:

> There's no such thing as an innocent cutting of the ethical corner. Once you've decided to get on the sled, and have eased yourself over the edge of the hill, it's too late to break.

The author seems to suggest that the slippery slope can be "technical", as in the case above, but also emotional:

> It's like in the Mafia movies: the only one that matters is the first one you kill. After that, piece of cake.

We All Can Be Con Men

Ultimately, the author says that it's difficult to make up an exact profile of a con man because we all have the capacity to become one.

And we certainly have all lied and deceived, which, she says, is a hallmark of life in general.

Dark Triad Individuals Aren't Necessarily Con Artists

Many dark triad individuals simply operate "within the law", or at least not "too obviously outside it".

Says the author:

> If confidence men operate outside the law, it must be remembered that they are not much further outside than many of our pillars of society who go under names less sinister." Leadership and high-profile roles. Wall Street. Politics. Law. Test most any of them, and you'll find a percentage of psychopaths and dark-triadists that makes Hare's 1 percent
> estimate look naïvely low

Marketers Are Con Men

Hunt and Lawrence (1984) administered the Machiavellian scale to 1.000 marketers and found that 10% scored in the highest possible and "far, far above the population average".

As Seth Godin said, "all marketers are liars".

Con Artists Thrive During Changes

> Cons thrive in times of transition and fast change, when new things are happening and old ways of looking at the world no longer suffice. Transition is the confidence game's great ally, because transition breeds uncertainty. There's nothing a con artist likes better than exploiting the sense of unease we feel when it appears that the world as we know it is about to change.

This Is When You're Most Likely to Fall for Cons

If you are:

- **isolated or lonely**

- **going through a job loss, divorce, or downturn in personal finances**
- **concerned with being in dept** (people in debt are generally more likely to fall for fraud)
- **going through a serious injury**
- **going through major life changes**

Victims tend to be generally more emotionally vulnerable when the con artist approaches.

This Is Who Is Most Likely to Fall for Cons

From personal traits, the only two reliable indicators of fraud susceptibility are:

- **impulsivity**
- **appetite for risk**

Please note though that impulsivity and appetite for risk aren't stable, and can change through time.
When we are struggling, we might be more willing to take risks to "get back even", for example.

But the author then also adds the following to the personality traits that make people more likely to fall for cons:

- **a general tendency to believe**
  - optimism:
  - religiosity: "It's a thin line between belief in one miracle and belief in another"

Such as, they believed things could get better, and that a "higher force" could help them.

Interestingly, in the category of "most easy to con", the author also includes:

- **people who think of themselves as too smart to fall for cons**

Says the author:

> The better protected you are and the less likely you think you'll be a victim, the more you're apt to lose if a con artist can find a way to earn your trust. It ends up that the more you know about something, the more likely you are to fall for a con in that specific area.

Furthermore there are:

- **people in a state of fear**
- **people in a happy mood**
- **people feeling relief after anxiety** ("the emotional drain of anxiety followed by the wave of emotional relief created a state of relative mindlessness)

For con artists, it means that a great setup is to create a sense of fear, followed by the possibility of a solution -the solution they offer-.

And finally:

- **People who think of themselves as special**

And this might be most people.
Most people think they're better than average.
And the more we care about a certain trait, the more biased we tend to be:

> In the things that truly matter to us, the core characteristics that we view as central to our identity, we exhibit the greatest bias of all

> (…)
>
> Which is precisely why the tale works as well as it does. We are ready—eager, even—to believe we will personally benefit, no matter what

No matter what, and no matter the odds.

If you believe you're a 1%, then you're also more likely to believe that even though there is a 99% chance that what you're experiencing might be a con… You're more likely to be that 1% exception.

Con artists are all the happiest to appeal to our vanity and our tendency to think of ourselves as "better than average".

And this is another why an antifragile ego is so important.

Cons Go Unreported Because...

Because people would rather never admit they were conned.

It's a question of:

- **self-narrative**: we don't want to admit it to ourselves
- **reputation**: we don't want the world to know that we were gullible

Con Artists Take Advantage of Human Natural Cooperation

For the most part, humans have evolved as cooperative animals and we can kind of expect that most people are not going to attack us randomly.

Konnikova says that most people kinda care about others, and the con artist exploits that general cooperativeness.

Quoting psychologist Adriane Raine:

> Persistent immoral behavior can be thought of as an alternative evolutionary strategy that can be beneficial at low rates in society

Trusting Is Good for Selfish Individuals

This website makes the case that smart cooperation is one of the best facilitators of individual success.

And says the author:

> Higher so-called generalized trust, studies show, comes with better physical health and greater emotional happiness.
>
> Countries with higher levels of trust tend to grow faster economically and have sounder public institutions.
>
> People who are more trusting are more likely to start their own business and volunteer.
>
> And the smarter you are, the more you are likely to trust: a 2014 survey by two Oxford psychologists found a strong positive relationship between generalized trust, intelligence, health, and happiness.

How to Increase Cooperation

Elinor Nostrom found out that people left on their own, without chances of communicating, tend to resort to "safer" returns rather than higher returns but having to trust anonymous others.

- **Make people meet face to face**

But when Nostrom changed the rule and took a break where people could meet face to face, the players reached 80% of the maximum possible return by playing more often into the more socially-interconnected, higher risk, higher-collaboration market.
"All it had taken was that brief moment of social exchange".

- **Punish the defectors**

> one final tweak brought performance to a new high: the ability to request that "defectors," that is, those who opted for market one, be punished by the experimenter with a fine.

- **Develop a good reputation**

Win-win games can be developed more easily over the long-term.
But you can still increase the likelihood of win-win in one-off games if you develop a good reputation that precedes you.
With a good reputation, people are more likely to be collaborative.

Cults Hide Behind Partial Truths, And Partial Self-Help

> Nobody joins a cult, Sullivan repeated often and emphatically.

People join something that will give them meaning.
A group promoting peace and freedom throughout the world, or defending men's rights, or helping other women, or "defending this race against that other race's contamination".
But nobody joins a cult.

Con artists, at their best and worst, give us meaning. We fall for them because it would make our lives better if the reality they proposed were indeed true. They give us a sense of purpose, of value, of direction.

More Wisdom

- **And the top cons are…**

Between 2011 and 2012 the highest number of recorded cons were in fake weight-loss products, prize promotions, price clubs, unauthorized Internet billing, and work-at-home programs.

- **The best cons go undetected**

People simply write it off to "bad luck", and never realize the deception.

- **People share negative news IF others know about them**

People prefer to share good news with the world, and keep bad news with the closest friends and family.
But that changes if someone else witnessed the negative news.
In that case, students in the experiment were more likely to share the bad news. Probably, the students expected the witnesses to talk, and so they were eager to talk first to put their own spin on things, and control the narrative.

- **Our willingness for things to work can make things work**

This part made me change approach to a few of my reviews:

> Mesmerism is one of the earliest examples of the power of our beliefs to change reality: the placebo effect, or dissonance reduction at its finest, in full action. We want to believe something works, and so we will it to work. Our mind literally changes the reality of our body's health.

> Mesmer clearly possessed strong powers of suggestion, and people really did get better in his presence

So today I'm not so sure that dubious marketers like Joe Dispenza are 100% bad.

- **To avoid fraud in your business, speak clearly from the top**

Since the environment and culture are so important in fostering or discouraging manipulation and con artistry, business leaders who want to avoid scandals and graft must speak clearly and loudly that they expect everyone to behave morally and legally.

Says the author:

> The behavioral norms of a company, culture, or setting—how it is and isn't acceptable to act—must be communicated clearly and unequivocally. When they aren't, it becomes too easy for those on the cusp of fraud to take the next step.

- **Culture also matters**

Some cultures are also more accepting of behaviors that we might consider con-like.
In one study, foreign students were more likely to pay a kickback than American ones, no matter the incentives.
In some countries, like Russia, to people it might just feel like "how the world works".

- **Pathological liars are poor con artists**

A pathological liar's lies are often too big and elaborate to be taken seriously.

- **Higher illusion of control makes us less effective**

The illusion of control, or the belief that we are in control of random events, tends to make people less effective:

> an unwarranted illusion of control can have the opposite effect: worse, more out-of-control performance.
>
> One study followed 107 traders in four London banks and found that those with the highest illusion of control performed the worst, as measured by managers' ratings of performance and the total compensation they received.
>
> In another, people pursued worse investment diversification strategies the higher their perceptions of control.
>
> In a third, the more illusory control a group of financial analysts experienced, the more overconfident—and wrong—they were in their market predictions.

- **People talk mostly about other people**

> When researchers analyzed the topics (…) over 65 percent of every conversation was taken up with social topics—for the most part, discussing others' behavior and analyzing your own relative merits, or how others acted and what kind of a person you are

- **Con artists and beggars target men on dates…**

… Because those men are in a difficult situation in which they need to positive impress the date.
This is something I've noticed more than once, and I was never happier when I could get rid of them quickly, with no damage -or improved standing-.

QUOTES

On self-manipulation for personal success:

> The whole secret to our success is being able to con ourselves into believing that we're going to change the world—because statistically, we are unlikely to do it.
>
> *Tom Peters*

On self-serving biases:

> When it comes to you, I see clearly. When it comes to myself, I see what I want

On self-duping and people wanting to believe:

> Had it been up to Raines, he might have kept believing until the end. It would have been a simpler, happier reality. And that basic desire for a happier, simpler reality is at the center of the convincer's success.

On the psychological dynamics of self-duping, whereby the more time people spend in the con, the more they self-dupe:

> Fool me for a day, shame on you. Fool me for months, years, or decades, well, that's a different story. I'm not that gullible. I couldn't possibly be fooled for that long.

On the power of reputation to increase the chances of win-win:

> A reputation is a shortcut. It lets us know how someone will likely act and how we should respond to them even if we've never met or spent any time getting to know them

Criticism

Misunderstands evolutionary processes: not spotting lies is adaptive?

The author says that we are bad at spotting lies because "it makes us feel better".
And she also says that we self-manipulate for the same reason.

However, that's not how evolution works.
Evolution doesn't select much for the traits that make us feel good, but for the traits that make us more effective.

I can see there can be some benefits in making oneself happier *as long as the costs remain small enough*.
But not when the costs are high, as it's the case for what the author says next:

> We never learn to be expert people-readers because that expertise can backfire spectacularly. Why form accurate judgments when the inaccurate ones make our lives far more pleasant and easy?

Not reading people well might make our life more pleasant in some limited circumstances. But it certainly doesn't make them easier -or more effective-.

Over-hypes con artists' powers

For sure some con artists are great at what they do.

But I'm sure not all of them are.

In Konnikova's description though it seems like everyone is some sort of a dark-psychology genius that you can never see coming.

She says for example:

> they are, truly, artists—able to affect even the most discerning connoisseurs with their persuasive charm
>
> (…)
>
> Their technique, at its best, is so perfectly honed that almost no one is immune to it. So dangerous is the effect that there are actual statutes trying to guard against it

And of Demara, a specific con artist, she says:

> He was a mind reader second to none, so good at the put-up that he could manipulate almost anyone he chose to deal with.

Except that she's judging him on his successful cons, and she probably doesn't know of all the times he's failed. Plus, he was caught and spent six months in prison.

Downplays the role of personality, skills, and knowledge, in the "likelihood of being conned"

The author makes it sound like being deceived is independent of personality.

And goes on to describe how even the smartest and most power-aware individual is equally easy prey for the con artist.
As a matter of fact, she says that *everyone* will be deceived:

> At some point, everyone will be deceived. Everyone will fall victim to a confidence artist of one stripe or another. Everyone will fall for it. The real question is why

That approach might be more captivating and get better reviews for the book, but it's not very accurate. Personally, I'm pretty sure that different personalities have a (very) different likelihood of being deceived.

And some of her own examples seemed to prove the point: some of those victims were extremely gullible people, as also confirmed by the people closest to them.

Confusing on the "illusory superiority" bias

There are some imperfections and some of the usual "over-hype" in the section in which the author discusses the "illusority superiority" bias.

In one of them, the author says that "most people are average by definition".
But that's a generalization that's not always true.
Whether or not most people are average depends on the distribution. Most people might instead be either above average, or below average.

Plus, the author speaks as if nobody was actually above average and as if anyone who thought of himself as above-average truly was not.
Obviously, that's also not the case as some individuals *do* are indeed above average.

Sometimes sounds judgmental, not realizing her own cons?

Says the author of Dale Carnegie work:

> "Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view," Dale Carnegie advised in his treatise on winning friends and influencing people, a sort of unwitting bible for cons in training.

That sounds a bit harsh and judgmental.
Especially if you consider how the book "The Confidence Game" used so many interesting stories for selling better. So wasn't that a con as well?

The point is… As long as we're not actively and badly hurting people with our social strategies, then we're good, we don't need to be so judgmental towards smart social strategies.

Sometimes gets lost in tangential topics: could have been briefer

Topics such as:

- "how good we are at spotting lies"
- microexpressions
- storytelling and how effective it is

Felt somewhat unneeded, or too long.
In some parts, it felt like the book started becoming a book on random curiosities of general psychology. Topics such as human biases, nudging theory, Cialdini's principles of influence felt loosely connected to con artists.

Review

The Confidence Game is a solid analysis of the psychology and mechanisms of dark psychology, manipulation, and cons.

There might be a few minor imperfections as mentioned above, but I learned from it and also used Konnikova's work to expand on some core articles and pillars of this website.

Get the book on Amazon or see:

- **Best manipulation books**
- Best books on dark triad

12 Traits To Be An Effective Machiavellian

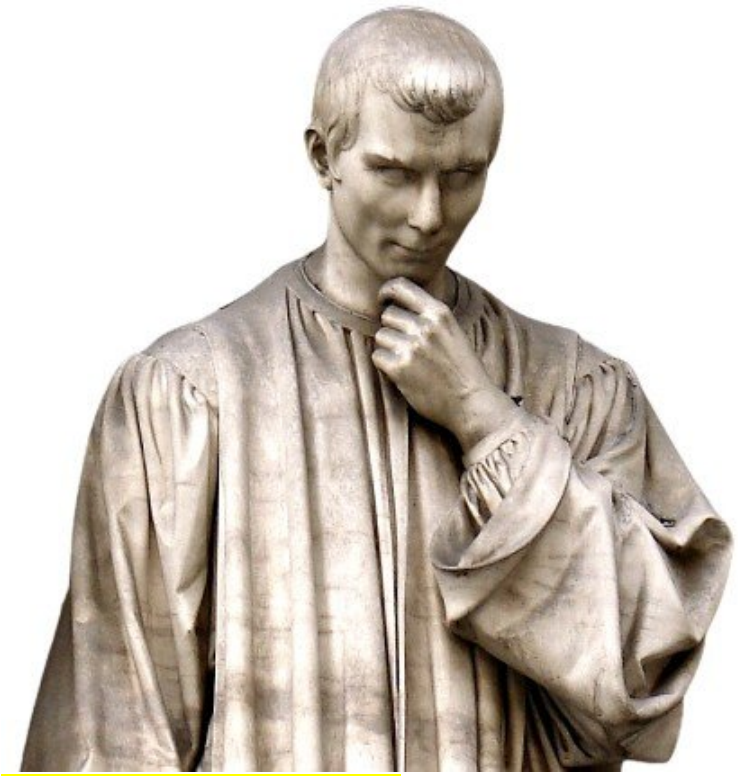
Lucio Buffalmano · 27 June 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Machiavellianism is one of the most misunderstood concepts in personality psychology and men's empowerment.

Some see it as synonymous with deceit, while others mistake it for pure evil.
But true Machiavellianism is neither—it's about strategic thinking, adaptability, and playing the long game to win.

At The Power Moves, we specialize in the psychology of power and influence. After reviewing the full body of research and integrating it with real-world experience, we provide a clear, practical, and continuously updated guide to understanding and applying Machiavellianism.

Let's dive in.



Machiavelli, author of "*The Prince*"

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What's Machiavellianism

Definition:

> Machiavellianism is a personality trait peculiar to self-centered and amoral individuals who pursue personal advancement through a calculative, rational, and opportunistic approach to life

This definition is unique because it excludes manipulation and cheating.

Deception is at most a *consequence* of Machiavellians' predispositions, *not* a primary trait.

Indeed studies have shown that, when cheating doesn't pay, Machiavellians cheat *less* than non-Machiavellians.

Why Learning Machiavellianism

Says Tamás Bereczkei:

> Their self-assuredness and goal orientation **provide them with immense advantages over others in gaining material goods and favorable positions**. In contrast, low Machs are concerned with personal relationships and moral norms that often make them vulnerable.

And says Maria Konnikova:

> In one series of studies, when a high Mach was placed in a situation with a low Mach, he **tended to emerge ahead in most any scenario**.
>
> *Konnikova, 2016*

It makes sense.

Machiavellians tend to be charismatic, charming, and leaderlike.
Couple that with a strategic and opportunistic approach to life, and you get why Machiavellians win.

And **"winning" is why you want to learn "how to be more Machiavellian".**

Machiavellian Traits

These are the defining traits of Machiavellianism:

1. Self-centered

Machiavellians put their **self-interests first**.

A 2014 study aptly titled "Valuing myself over others" found that Machiavellians value individual pursuits over collectivist values such as "loyalty to the community".

"What's in It For Me" Keeps Machiavellians Goal-Focused

The Machiavellian is the ultimate "homo economicus".

He asks himself "What's in it for me"?
And if the answer is "not much", he sees no point in expending effort.

Non-Machiavellians are more likely to waste time and resources because they regard it as a moral obligation to do their duty.

2. Influential

People consider Machiavellians to be **charismatic and effective leaders** (Deluga 2001).

Machiavellians are skilled at managing appearances and first impressions.
And they come across as intelligent even though research shows they're no more intelligent than others.

More persuasive liars

Research shows Machiavellians are also better liars: more persuasive, and coming across as more innocent.
It's an innate 'skill' displayed already as children.

3. Dominant

Say Christie and Geis commenting on their studies:

> Machiavellians initiated and controlled the structure of bargaining interaction in the group. They were **overwhelmingly the dominant, decisive, and sought-after member of the triad.**

By controlling group dynamics, Machiavellians heavily influence the outcome.

The best thing?

People were happy to oblige.

Machs Are Good at Making Others *Want* to Follow Them

Machiavellians might use coercion, if they can.

But often, they don't need to because **people look up to Machiavellians for directions**.

To make people *want* to follow is the hallmark of prestige and true leadership.

Christie and Geis say it's not possible to say if Machiavellians are charismatic, or if non-Machiavellians are UNcharismatic and socially inept.
However, the net result is the same: Machiavellians get what they want because others happily oblige.

3. Strategic

Robert Hare famously said that psychopaths see the world as a chessboard.

But later research showed that the true chess grand masters of the dark triad are the Machiavellians.

4. Calculative

Machiavellians are *good* calculators.

They cheat and deceive, but *only when the benefits exceed the costs.*
And if the risk/reward ratio is poor, they'll act morally.

If their calculation suggests that "prosocial giving" is best for them, they will even be altruistic.

5. Amoral

Machiavellians do **what's good for them independently of moral principles**.

In social exchanges, Machiavellians don't feel bound by reciprocity or "fairness".
In a classic sociological experiment on trust and theft, high Machs stole from those who had previously trusted them.

By contrast, non-Machiavellians gave up substantial material gains to obey fairness and responsibility norms.

6. Opportunistic

Machiavellians are the princes of opportunism,

Even **Machiavellians' expressions of (a)morality is opportunistic.**

There is a difference between amorality and *im*morality.
Immorality means going against morals. Amorality means not having morals and doing what's expedient.

Says Bereckzei:

> In most cases, they are unwilling to help others.
> But they are **ready to support unknown individuals when they are aware of being observed** by members of the community. That way, **they maintain their prestige (or its illusion)** in the group (Bereczkei, Birkas, & Kerekes 2010).

Modern Machiavellian marketers aren't even bound by physical audiences. They'll set up the cameras themselves:

Says the "charitable man" in the video after handing out $1.000 dollars:

> **Machiavellian marketer**:
> some people say I shouldn't do stuff like this and put the video public (…) to show off <— Raises the most likely criticism to address it and control the narrative
>
> And there is some truth to that <— Strategic agree part of the agree-and-redict technique
>
> Although <— Bridge to set his frame
>
> I think there is so much negative media, I think it's OK to publish some positive stuff <— Justifies his PR move as "spreading positivity"

Nice power moves.

He gives both supporters and the naive masses a reason to believe his actions are well-meaning.

7. Cynic

> A man always has two reasons for doing anything: a good reason and the real reason.

Machiavellians are suspicious, and attribute negative traits and intentions to others.

But they're honest about their cynicism, and view non-Machiavellians as weak hypocrites.
In turn, that makes it fair in Machiavellians' view to take advantage of them.

There may be downsides to over-cynicism though.
Some scholars suggest Machs preemptively cheat believing it's only a matter of time before they'll get cheated on.
And that may turn win-win into win-lose.

8. Realist

Machiavellians **concentrate on what *is* -and how to exploit it-.**

Non-Machiavellians instead easily get lost in "how things ought to be", or "what's fair".

9. Pragmatic

Machiavellians aren't motivated by appeals to higher values.

To them, that's hot air BS for the gullible.

Instead, research shows that **Machiavellians are motivated by extrinsic motivations such as money, power, and influence.**

10. Rational

Machiavellians are generally more rational than non-Machiavellians.

It's because non-Machiavellians are more easily swayed by IRrational reasons.

11. Emotionally Cool

Christie and Geis call this the “Cool Syndrome”.

Machiavellians think more rationally and consider all available options and possibilities in a cold-minded manner (Pilch, 2008), less swayed by emotions (Deak, 2017).

“Muted” empathy, but effective strategists & manipulators

Here is a quick overview of the empirical findings:

Machiavellians score lower on some types of emotional and social intelligence tests.
But they performed well when agreeableness was eliminated and they had something to gain.
And when they could gain through manipulation, they were very effective manipulators.

The same goes for “mind-reading skills”.
Machiavellians may be average or poor mind readers. But **they score above average when they can manipulate others.**

“That’s why we critiqued the pop-psychology view of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995).
A more comprehensive construct, including strategic, self-interested, and manipulative aspects, is essential.

Emotionally Cold Leadership

A famous cinematic moment of Machiavellian cold-bloodedness and strategic thinking:

> **Godfather**: It’s not personal, Sonny. It’s strictly business

Michael Corleone gained everyone’s respect when he displayed cold detachment and superior strategic thinking.
That’s when he became The Godfather.

12. Fluid

Machiavellians aren’t just strategic, they are *fluidly* strategic.

Says Bereczkei:

> Machiavellians (…) do not follow pre-existing schema (…) The uniqueness of the Machiavellian character lies in (…) **flexible decision-making** (…) **and continuous weighing-up of the situational conditions**.

Fluidity has been shown in experimental settings:

> Machiavellians earn large profits in social dilemma games but once the experimenters enable free-riders punishment, they restrain their profiteering and increase their cooperativeness (Spitzer et al. 2007).

Even during a mock business negotiation, Machiavellians used more persuasion tactics, and adapted more flexibly to the changing situation.

Mach & Dark Triad

The dark triad includes Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism.
Albeit the grouping has been criticized, it can be a useful construct.

Narcissism

There are two types of narcissists:

- Vulnerable narcissists: thin-skinned, neurotic, potentially depressed, harbor secret grandiosity but outwardly shy
- Grandiose narcissists: high self-esteem, socially bold, entitled, arrogant, low observable anxiety

Psychopathy

The two types of psychopathy:

- Factor 1 psychopathy: (primary) selfish, remorseless, and exploitative. It doesn't necessarily include antisocial personality disorder and is sometimes associated with 'successful psychopathy'
- Factor 2 psychopathy: (secondary) impulsive, irresponsible, sensation-seeking. Can be chronically antisocial (APD), and likely to end up -or remain- in prison

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism overlaps most with grandiose narcissism, and type 1, subclinical psychopathy.
Psychologist Minna Lyons reports that Machiavellianism may even be a *manifestation* of non-clinical psychopathy.

Summarize John & Paulhus:

> Narcissism predicts ego-promoting outcomes, psychopathy predicts reckless and antisocial behavior, and Machiavellianism predicts a strategic orientation

In brief: Machiavellianism is the most strategic and, potentially, effective of the dark triad.
Contrary to narcissists, Machiavellians disregard their egos for what's effective. And contrary to psychopaths, they can postpone rewards and play the "long game".

Advantages of Machiavellianism

By now the advantages of Machiavellianism should be obvious.

But for clarity:

1. Higher Odds of Life Success

Machiavellians are more likely to:

- Obtain **leadership** positions (Spurk, 2015)
- Have more **sexual partners** (Jonason et al., 2009)
- Achieve more **material success** (McHoskey, 1999)

2. More Self-Reliance

Machiavellians are more resistant to both group pressure and individual pressure.

Says Christie and Geis:

> Non-Machiavellians instead "are more likely to do or accept what another wants simply because he wants it".

Paradoxically, *non*-Machiavellians may be more likely to execute heinous orders to comply to authorities and social pressures.

3. Higher Internal Congruence, No Self-Manipulation

Machiavellians don't lie to themselves because they don't need to.

They're comfortable with their dark side, and that means they also experience little or no cognitive dissonance.

4. Most Likely to Become Leaders

As we've seen, Machiavellians lead newly-forming groups.

But some systems and environments also favor the *election* of a Machiavellian.

For example, people prefer Machiavellian leaders when they feel under threat (Wilson et aI., 1998).
And Americans may prefer more Machiavellian presidents (Deluga, 2001; Simonton, 1986).

... And potentially better leaders

Geis and Christie examined real-life leadership situations in their classes.

And they noticed that:

> **Groups with their highest Mach member as leader did better** (…) got whatever resources they possessed organized and applied more effectively than other groups.

5. Antifragile Ego (Almost) By Default

Machiavellians take things less personally (Grande, 2019).

For example, an experiment showed that after an interviewer disapproved of the research subjects, the non-Machiavellian girls changed their self-descriptions, but high-Mach girls did not.

This low ego investment makes for a natural predisposition towards an antifragile ego.

6. Growth Mindset (Almost) By Default

A growth mindset is much easier to achieve when you're not busy defending your ego.

Christie and Geis' experiments indirectly tell us that Machiavellians are potentially better learners:

> The non-Machiavellians are more likely to be upset or angry (…) **Machiavellians are more likely to be curious** (…)

Disadvantages of Machiavellianism

The downsides of Machiavellianism include:

1. Poorer Relationships

Refusing to hold his hand can signal a lack of bond and mutual support
Low empathy, power-craving and an overly calculative approach can make for poorer relationships.

Research suggests that people prefer non-Machiavellians for close relationships such as confidants, good friends, or business partners.
And employers are dissatisfied with high Machs (Bereczkei, 2017).

The inability to see beyond pure self-interest, and to bond and connect can be costly for life satisfaction as well, contributing to low life satisfaction and alienation.

That's one of the reasons we had some concerns with the popular literature on Machiavellianism such as "The 48 Laws of Power".

Avoided by Higher Quality People

While this is more speculative, it follows logic that the better one is at reading people, the more he avoids overly scheming and cynical individuals.

That means that Machiavellians may struggle to remain close to high-quality people.
I've observed this pattern in my life, and we've had some circumstantial examples on the forums.

2. Potentially Bad for Business Reputation

Manipulation and opportunism carry risks.

As David Sloan notes, even after successful manipulations, Machiavellians may suffer a reputation loss that erodes their social capital, and reduces future opportunities.

Although former Gambino family underboss Sammy Gravano wouldn't feature in research articles, success in a Machiavellian organization lends him some credibility.
And the wisdom he shares with his brother-in-law supports our hypothesis:

> 'You're right, they can't do nothing, but you know what will happen? Everybody will hear about it (…) This will be the best two hundred thousand I'll ever spend because people will say not only is Sammy qualified to do the job, but he'll stay with you, win or lose.' 'That's important to businesspeople, Eddie,' I said. **'That's why you were never successful in business. Because you scheme too f*cking much.'**
>
> *Underboss, 1999*

Gravano refers to **maintaning a reputation as a coopertor to elicit more win-win cooperation**, an approach vaildate by game theory research (Axelrod, 1984).

Over-scheming may not even qualify as "core Machiavellianism": a smart Machiavellian would never cheat when repeat win-win is possible.
But it's a risk when conjoined with poor long-term thinking.

3. Low Performance in Structured Work Environment

Say Paulhus and Delroy:

> Machs remain cool, exploit interpersonal relationships, bend the rules, and improvise. When this flexibility is constrained, Machs are likely to incur problems.

But this is not necessarily a drawback, and more a question of job fit.

Where should Machiavellians go, then?

Well, Hunt and Lawrence (1984) found plenty of Machiavellians among marketers.
Not surprising, since much marketing is based on (mild) manipulation.

Also see:

- **Tai Lopez marketing tactics**

4. Life Dissatisfaction & Alienation

Machiavellians are more dissatisfied at work and with their role in everyday life (Ali et. al., 2010).

Despite their higher partner count, Machiavellians are also more dissatisfied with their sex life.

Even deeper, **Machiavellians are alienated**.
They feel alienated in their personal relationships. They believe they are isolated, and that their life is meaningless.

The gap in life satisfaction grows even larger when the "dark triad" is contrasted to the "light triad" composed of "Kantianism", "humanism", and "faith in humanity" (Kaufman et al., 2019).

We can speculate that Machiavellians are dissatisfied because of:

1. Focus on material pursuits ("hedonic treadmill")
2. Overly-cynic attitude

In short: **when it comes to life satisfaction, it might pay to be good** (TPM note: as long as "good" doesn't mean

"naive").

Paranoia

Related to dissatisfaction and psychological health, and somewhat unsurprisingly, research also associated Machiavellianism with paranoia (McHoskey, 2001).

Now our question becomes:

> Is it possible to combine the advantages of Machiavellianism, while avoiding the downsides?

Read on.

The "Effective Machiavellian™"

> **Effective Machiavellianism™** is the ultimate stage of strategically optimazing the Machiavellian trait. It distills the functional strengths—rationality, emotional coolness, adaptability, and strategic thinking—while removing maladaptive tendencies like excessive cynicism. It treats Machiavellianism as an amoral, neutral toolset capable of delivering high-level effectiveness, while reducing the costs to maximize life quality.

Effective Machiavellism is the goal; **Strategic Machiavelliasm™** is the work.
There is no one-size-fits-all to 'maximize Machiavellianism' because it depends on the individual's starting point.
But, generally speaking, it must calibrate to the situation and strike an optimum balance between the "overly Low-Mach" (who is often naive and vulnerable) and the "overly High-Mach" (who is alienated and predatory).

Here are some good steps:

1. Add 'Mach Mode' Atop 'Honor' (Honorable Machiavellianism ⍰)

> **Honorable Machiavellianism™** builds on Effective Machiavellianism by placing **strategic honor™** and a preference for win–win as the baseline, while maintaining a **Machiavellian scanner** that assesses people and tracks give-and-take and risks to ensure positive returns (*strategic calculativeness™*).

When needed, the honorable Machiavellian can completely switch to a **Machiavellian Mode** of strategic action and ruthless detachment.

Adopt a:

- **Honorable baseline behavior with a Mach mode** for undeserving people and special situations
  OR:
- **Machiavellian baseline with an honorable mode** reserved for the best people and situations

We recommend the former.

Honor can also help combat alienation and dissatisfaction. And you can further boost life quality with a mission and finding meaning in life. See effective spirituality and positive psychology.

2. Calibrate & Switch 'Modes' (Ruthless/Loving)

Some situations call for ruthless, strategic coldness—your Machiavellian side.
Others deserve your best self—the 'light triad.'

So the "secret" is to take Machiavellian's own strategic fluidity, and adapt it to Machiavellianism itself.

Learn to switch modes depending on context, goal, and people. Some contexts call for your Machiavellian mode, while others call for your best self.

3. Develop the "Machiavellian Scanner" (& Keep It Always On)

The scanner picks up all relevant cues for:

- **Leverage**: Who has more, how can I increase mine?
  Risk: could he screw me over? What's the cost, and how do I mitigate it?
- **Social power dynamics**: Win-win, neutral, or disempowering?
  Risk: is he disempowering me? One-upping, social climbing, undermining… ?
- **Value**: Taker, giver, or matcher?
  Risk: are they making me worse off?

From Naive to Machiavelli: Can You?

The 1-million dollar question:

> Is it possible to become more Machiavellian?

Christie and Geis, the psychologists who defined Machiavellianism, asked the same question in their seminal work *Studies in Machiavellianism*.

Their take? **"It's probably possible."**

From experience, we'd say it's more than just probable. **It's a learnable skill.**
That's exactly what Power University is built for: delivering the power of Machiavellianism, without the toxicity:

Explore Power University

A Billion Wicked Thoughts: Summary & Review (7 Findings)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 July 2021 · Archived copy · Original

A Billion Wicked Thoughts (2011) analyzes human sexual desires through a unique big-data analysis of 400 million online Internet searches.
The authors don't stop at the searches though but provide an overarching theory of human sexuality drawing also from romance novels analyses, evolutionary psychology theories and research, and everyday observations of dating strategies.

About The Author

Ogi Ogas holds a Ph.D. in computational neuroscience and is a Visiting Scholar at the Harvard University School of Education.
There is less information on Sai Gaddam, but he seems to have a math/number crunching background.

SUMMARY

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- Methods of Research
- Popularity by Categories
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Methods of Research

The authors collected 400 million Dogpile searches from July 2009 to July 2010.

Of the 400 million searches, about 55 million (roughly 13 percent) were searches for some kind of erotic content.

These sexual searches represent the desires of roughly 2 million people. Two-thirds are from the United States, some from India, Nigeria, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

The authors then categorized the searches.
For example, they categorized "hot Latino ass," "bootylicious babes," and "sexy guys with bubble butts" as examples of "butts interest".

For additional help in categorizing the searches and understanding who was behind the different search queries, the authors integrated their data with AOL.
AOL released search histories for 657,426 different people.

They also looked up Alexa and came up with a shortlist of “adult most popular websites” to measure the popularity of different genres.
Alexa publishes a list of the million most popular Web sites in the world. According to the authors’ analysis, 42,337 were adult websites.

Popularity by Categories

% of all Sexual Searches	Popularity Ranking	Category	Example Search
13.5	1	Youth	free non-nude teen videos
4.7	2	Gay	straight guys paid to have gay sex
4.3	3	MILFs	MILFs in bikinis
4.0	4	Breasts	huge tits
3.4	5	Cheating wives	cuckold porn
2.8	6	Vaginas	shaved pussies
2.4	7	Penises	giant cocks
.9	21	Butts	hot Latino ass
.1	79	Cheerleaders	free cheerleader porn

The top 7 categories are:

1. Youth
2. Gay
3. MILFs
4. Breasts
5. Cheating Wives
6. Vaginas
7. Penises

Many of the popular searches are actually “squicks”.
For example, transsexuals (#17) are more popular than celebrities (#23) or Asians (#29).

The Diversity is Misleading: 80/20 Rule

Say the authors:

> Just twenty different interests account for 80 percent of all searches. With less than two dozen interests, you can satisfy the desires of almost everyone who uses a search engine to find erotic content. Most people’s desires are clustered together into a relatively small set of common interests.

And:

> The thirty-five top interests account for 90 percent of all searches. This doesn’t even include cheerleaders (#79), massage (#51), or virgins (#61). When it comes to our kinks, we all have a lot more in common than you might think.

In brief, we might say that the commonalities of what's sexually exciting cover the 80%.
The remaining 20% are more uncommon kinks.

Also read:

- Exceptions & Rules Of Dating

> ExceptionAL Dating: How to Succeed Despite Shortcomings

Male Erotic Cues

> The anatomy that men find attractive—breasts, hips, butts, feet, as well as feminine facial features—are all influenced by the same molecule: estrogen. Estrogen is sensitive to a woman's energy and health.

1. Age

% of All Sexual Searches on Dogpile	Adjective	Example Search
5.8	Teen	free non-nude teen videos
2.0	Young	young naked waitresses
1.4	Mom	my friend's hot mom
1.3	MILF	MILF next door
.5	Grannies	hot nude grannies
.3	Old	free porn of old women
.2	Older	busty older women
.1	Cougar	cougar seductions
.1	Mature	mature women in bikinis

> Terms describing age are the most frequent type of adjective in sexual searches, appearing in one out of every six sexual searches. When the male desire software evaluates a woman's visual appearance, one of the most prominent criteria is age—and not just youth, either.

Teens and twenty-something are the most popular, but there is a surprising quantity of searches for older women as well:

> There is a rather shocking number of searches for underage women, but you may be equally surprised to discover there is significant erotic interest in sixty-and seventy-year-olds.

- **Grannies are popular**: searches are 8% of total youth, which might seem little, but there is more searches for grannies than for spanking. There are 313 are granny sites in the list of most popular adult Alexa websites
- Many men find both young and adult women to be appealing: 1/4 people who search MILF also search teens
- Many men who search for teens also search for GILF: 1/4 GILF searcher also searched for teens

2. Breast

> Breasts, no matter what size, are the most popular body part in sexual searches in every country we looked at

Men in general prefer larger breasts albeit even here, there is a small subset that prefers small or even flat-chested.

3. Butts

> Butts are almost as popular as breasts in sexual searches, and there are almost as many porn sites dedicated to butts as breasts, hinting that men may also have an innate sensitivity to buttocks cues.

4. Feet

Smaller are better.

5. Penises

Surprised to see this one here.
Well, here's the shocker: **men are more interested in penises than women are**.
Say the authors:

> The fact of the matter is that men are more interested in penises than women are—and men are much more interested in large penises than women are.

And it's not just their penis that men are interested about:

> An eye-tracking study recorded what men and women looked at as they viewed different (nonerotic) images. They found that men consistently direct their gaze to the male crotch, though women rarely do so.

More Cues

The author only lists the above cues as the main ones, but then adds a few more:

- **Body Shape / Weight**

Super skinny girls appeal to women more than men.

In general though, men prefer skinnier than the current average weight in the West.

However, as per age, there is a subset of men who likes bigger women.

- **Female orgasms**

> Men are wired to pay attention to whether their partner is engaged and responsive during sex. If a woman seems apathetic or distant, that triggers suspicions. The private investigator starts asking questions. If I'm not turning her on, then who is?

The authors also say that men want to be "good" because of female gossip in short-term sex.

- **Novelty cues**
- **Sexual dominance/submission**

Both men and women can be aroused by either dominance, submission, or even degradation.

Women's Psychological Cues

Women want a hero.

> The romantic hero is constructed from female psychological cues, in the same way that young, busty porn stars are built from male visual cues.

1. Alpha Males at The Top of Hierarchies

> Women are attracted to the men near the top. The man at the very top is known as the alpha male.

However notice, again, that there have been exceptions or, at least, tentative ways of proposing a different "hero", including a "beta male" hero:

> They've experimented with softer, more deferent protagonists, often called betas. "What makes the beta hero so great: an unshakable core of pure and stalwart good, so constant and abiding it's damn near alpha in its strength," explain Wendell and Tan. The most famous beta hero in romance (and perhaps the first) was Freddy Standen, from Georgette Heyer's Cotillion.

Finally, the authors say that the new popular genre of "paranormal romance" is designed to stimulate women with an unnatural excess of female attractive cues in the same vein that mangas are designed to stimulate as many erotic cues for men.
Werewolves and vampires are supposedly the "ultimate alpha males".

2. Dominant

> Study after study has demonstrated the erotic appeal of male dominance. Women prefer the voices of dominant men, the scent of dominant men, the movement and gait of dominant men, and the facial features of dominant men.

Also read "how to use dominance in seduction".

> This Is How Dominance Gets You Sexual Succes

And how about "mega heroes":

> "Omega" heroes—comedians, art thieves, and nerdy geniuses—rarely show up in romances though, as with Beta heroes, they have their own devoted following. Alpha heroes who are dominant in the society of men and desired by the society of women are far more common, and far more appreciated by Miss Marple.

Hero's Jobs

All hero's professions are associated with status, confidence, and power.

> As Henry Kissinger famously said, "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac." Power is a reflection of a man's rank in the dominance hierarchy, and women are attracted to the men near the top. The man at the very top is known as the alpha male.

Here are the 10 most common professions of the hero:

1. Doctor
2. Cowboy
3. Boss

4. Prince
5. Rancher
6. Knight
7. Surgeon
8. King
9. Bodyguard
10. Sheriff

> Conspicuously absent from the list of romance heroes are blue-collar workers (no janitors or welders), bureaucrats (no claims adjusters or associate marketing managers), and traditionally feminine professions (no hairdressers, secretaries, or kindergarten teachers).

3. Nice to Her

Kindness and understanding are attractive to women.

However, to "maximize" the hero effect, kindness is mixed with power:

> Women want their romance heroes to be like coconuts: hard and tough on the outside, but soft and sweet on the inside.

And there is a third twist for the ideal man: it's only HER who gets to see that super-sweet and devoted side of him:

> But the hero's sweet interior can't be available to just anyone. Only the heroine gets to crack him open. The hero is granted free reign to be a badass with everyone else, as long as he's tender and attentive with the heroine.

To make that possible, romances sometimes end up with male characters that seem fake for a male audience.
The same way that porn actresses feel fake to a female audience.

4. Wealthy

Being wealthy is not strictly necessary, but it helps a lot:

> Though a man can be an alpha without attaining financial success—a sheriff, for example, or a soldier—the possession of enormous amounts of cash is a sure way to seal one's social dominance.

As it's shown in romance novels, heroes are almost never poor, and often quite loaded:

> In the romance titles on Amazon, there are 415 millionaires, 286 billionaires, and 263 sheiks, including The Millionaire's Secretary, The Billionaire's Virgin Bride, and The Sheik's Secret Harem Girl.

If the hero is poor, a possible plot is for the tough man to "save the heroine from herself".
Note: in the romance example, the man wasn't that "poor", he was a police officer lieutenant. And the description of the man sounded a lot like a white knight of endless devotion, male-equivalent of "women who love too much".

And those dynamics haven't changed as women acquired more power and resources:

> If a heroine is rich, then the hero is even richer.

5. Competent

> The hero is always competent. Usually, he's the best at what he does

Interestingly enough, men don't care nearly as much about female competence.
Which is one of the reasons why successful women can often struggle at dating.

6. Driven

> Men who don't know what to do with their life, who are midlevel bureaucrats, or who sit around the house watching TV are never heroes.

7. Intelligent

Intelligence is a "special kind of competence" that, say the authors, is also essential in romance heroes.

And the opposite of intelligence is often a major strike against hero-hood:

> "Stupidity is never heroic," assert Wendell and Tan

8. Visually Appealing

> While visuals do matter—heroes are handsome, tall, strong, with beautiful gray eyes and a crooked grin

8.2 But Penises Matter Little

> Little attention is paid to the details of male genitalia.

In stark contrast to novels for men, of course.

9. Popular / Famous / Preselected

Also called "preselection" in pick-up and seduction literature:

> If a man is already taken by a woman, then by definition, he's the best man—or certainly a more desirable man. If the exact same man is not taken, then his value is questionable—he's certainly not as desirable as a man who has already received the stamp of approval from another woman's Detective Agency.

The authors say that preselection snowballs with fame and money and often, it's a "case of the rich man getting richer".
And it works the other way around as well, with the poor getting poorer

> Men who are awkward loners or social rejects have a major strike against them in the view of the Detective Agency, unless they offer compensating cues.

10. Emotionally Available (to Her)

Commitaphobes and avoidants do not need to apply.
Or at least, not if there has to be a happy ending:

> In romance, the happy ending (known as an HEA or Happily-Ever-After) is always a long-term monogamous

> relationship, usually marriage. Orgasm is important in modern romances, but it's never the final scene. The moments in bed after the orgasm are just as important as the feelings experienced during the orgasm itself.

Physical whoring on the part of the man might also be OK -especially for some types of lovers-, as long as he's not an emotional whore.

More Psychological Cues

- **irresistibility**

Being desired is very arousing to women.

In romances the "irresistibility" cue is often used to ensnare and keep the man beside her through what the author refers to as "Magic Hoo Hoo".

The cue of irresistibility, says the author, explains young women's exhibitionism.
Albeit, frankly, this feels a lot like personal speculation and I'm not fully convinced.
Later he even says it might explain rape fantasies, for which I'm even less convinced.

- **Adorability**

Similar to "irresistibility", but more about love and affection.

> is about a woman's specialness as a human being. The hero must demonstrate that his love is steady, irrational, and everlasting.

Of course, as we've seen, men must find *her* adorable, and not all other women.

Female Visual Cues

Porn and erotic websites dedicated to women lack the "anatomical specificity" of men.
There is no anatomical category catering for women. There is no specific porn or website for specific sizes and shapes of penises, abs, muscles, etc.

The most common male body parts in romance novels were:

- cheekbones
- jaw
- brows
- shoulders
- forehead
- waist
- hips

And the most common adjectives:

- lean
- handsome
- blond
- tanned
- muscular
- masculine

- chiseled

Also women pay attention to:

- **Height**

Also height is important, with women preferring dating men who are taller than they are.
The main reason for preferring taller is “to feel secure”.

- **Uniforms**
- **Butts**

As always, exceptions almos always apply.
And there are women who also search and watch pornography (I once dated a woman who used YouPorn, while I never recurrently logged in to any porn websites).

- **Dominance / submission**

Both social and sexual dominance which are interrelated, say the authors.

Some women also have a kind for men who may be, appear, or act submissive.
Says one woman:

> [In my fantasies] my ‘hero’ is shorter than everyone else, darker, and therefore highly desirable, but as he is totally vulnerable and powerless he is sexually abused

Cultural Influences on Sexual Attraction

Breast, butts and feet dominate male interest everywhere.
Yet, some other sexual interests are cultural:

> The interest in the absolute territory is almost exclusive to Japanese men. In India, the belly is a common male obsession. In Victorian times, ankles were considered highly erotic. Salvador Dalí claimed to be aroused by a woman’s earlobe. Thus, culture does seem to play some role in determining what part of a body the male brain targets.

What causes the cultural differences?
Say the authors:

> Men’s desire software is also designed to adapt to variable visual cues. (…) men appear to imprint upon the specific female body parts that are available in a young man’s environment. Men aren’t born with a “visual template” for the ideal breast. The male brain flexibly responds to a wide range of stimuli that contain a visual cue of “breastness”. Thus, early exposure to anatomical stimuli that match a man’s innate visual cues can result in a wide variety of anatomical preferences.

Cued (Imprint) VS Uncued (Kinks) Interests

To explain the difference between the innate and most sexual preferences and the cultural diversification and kinks, the authors differentiate betwen “cued” and “uncued interests”.

Personally, I found this differentiation unclear and somewhat lacking in its explanatory power.

They describe cued interests largely through animals’ imprinting and using non-human examples.
And then they quickly move to human in what felt like a major cognitive jump:

> A cued interest develops when the brain's natural responsiveness to a particular kind of cue causes the brain to sexually imprint upon a target that exhibits that cue.

The cued interest overlaps with "inborn preferences".

Uncued interests instead are the "stranger kinks" that develop usually later on in life, when a combination of circumstances and erotic arousal cues something in the person's mind:

> Cued interests don't always have a distinct moment when they form (…) though almost always forming during adolescence or their early twenties.

But we are more into the speculation territory with uncued interests:

> In our opinion, an uncued interest forms when an unexpected event interferes with the natural sexual imprinting process. Often, uncued interests involve the senses of touch or smell, like the doctor pressing the ultrasound paddle into Billy Chou's testicles. There may be another factor that strongly influences the formation of uncued interests in men: ejaculation.

Men / Women Differences

Skip "Men Are From Mars" and learn data-backed differences here:

Men prefer erotic images & videos, women prefer erotic stories & relationship novels

And men prefer graphic sex, women prefer relationships and romance.

Men are also more likely to develop sexual fetishes, while women are more likely to develop emotional fetishes.

Men are also more prone to being manipulated for their sexual prowess, while women are more commonly manipulated by a man faking love.

Mind & Body Arousal: Disconnected for Women, Together for Men

Chivers reviewed the literature on male and female arousal and concluded that:

> Men experienced a strong correlation between the arousal of mind and body. Women did not. In fact, the correlation between physical and psychological arousal in women was so low that it's safe to say a woman's vaginal lubrication is a poor predictor of what she is actually feeling. (…) In contrast, if a man is erect, you can make a very reasonable guess about what's going on in his mind.

Why is there such a distinction between physical and psychological in women?
Because a woman has to consider the long-term, and be careful of who she has sex with. It's not just about her arousal, or even about how attractive he might be in the moment.
She must also consider a slew of other variables.

Say the authors:

> From an evolutionary point of view, her children would have a harder time surviving than the children of a woman who limited the expression of her sexual urges to a strong and decent man willing to invest in a stable, long-term, child-rearing relationship.

And:

> All modern women are the fruit of feminine caution. The result of this whittling away of the impulsive branches of our ancestral maternal tree is a female brain equipped with the most sophisticated neural software on Earth. A system designed to uncover, scrutinize, and evaluate a dazzling range of informative clues.

Interestingly, men and women process visual cues equally fast, and the same areas linked to arousal fire up.
But in women, the unconscious reaction is intercepted before it gets converted into sex-seeking desire.

Women Have Higher Need to Assess Character

> A man's true character cannot be evaluated as swiftly or as easily as a woman's bust size.
>
> Since the inner life of a man is so elusive, the Detective Agency developed sophisticated instruments for appraising his personality.
>
> Is he honest? Sincere? Considerate? Loyal? Generous? Does he love his mama? She must also evaluate her own feelings. Do I feel appreciated and adored? Do I feel attractive? Am I nervous? Embarrassed? Guilty?

Then the author goes on to list how women are better equipped at remembering people-related details.
They also seem to be more socially skilled, with some skills that also seem to better predispose towards effective manipulation:

> Though women are more emotionally expressive than men, they also possess greater ability to control their facial and body expressions of emotions. Similarly, even though women ruminate more than men, some studies show that they are better at suppressing unwanted thoughts.

Women's Attraction (& Behavior) Is More Socially-Contextual & Socially-Dependent

> Social psychologist Roy Baumeister suggests that women's greater sensitivity to cultural influences is rooted in brain mechanisms. "Women's sexuality appears to be more plastic than men's, relying on social framing and cultural conditions when making decisions regarding relationships. Men's sexuality seems far more driven by simple physiological mechanisms."

And:

> Keenly attuned to cultural values and social rules, the Detective Agency asks: Which behaviors and relationships are celebrated—and which are frowned upon? What values should I endorse when it comes to sex and relationships? Women are sensitive to messages on magazines and television shows, even indirect messages, such as a model's body weight, the car a politician is driving, or a celebrity's views on mental health—subjects that elicit more online comments from women than men.

Ultimately, social-related cues are used to decide what behavior to adopt, and even what to find attractive:

> **Who does society value more, doctors or software programmers?** Can I get away with wearing a tattoo on my back or will people think it's a "tramp stamp"? Can I post photos on Facebook of me in my bathing suit or will guys think I look fat? Since women must always consider the long-term consequences of their sexual decisions, a woman's brain is designed to evaluate the particular cultural conditions in which she finds herself.

In brief, say the authors, "for a woman, context is everything".

Women Also Care More & Tend More to Their Social Circles

> A woman's social environment is also crucial. Does a woman have a network of family and friends who can help provide emotional support and assist with child care? Does this social network approve of her partner? Is a woman in a position in her career where she can take time out for a relationship and to possibly raise children? Are there any other decent men available?

Women Also Gather More Intel From Social Circles

> When it comes to desiring a man, women have a love/hate relationship with other women. Miss Marple simply cannot gather enough evidence about a potential partner by working on her own. She always benefits from making a few calls—or a few dozen—to the Detectives at other Agencies.

Women Play It Safer, Men Must Risk More

> Why is the female brain designed to play it safe? Because historically, the odds of a woman reproducing are very good.

And:

> For women, the optimal thing to do is go along with the crowd, be nice, play it safe. The odds are good that men will come along and offer sex and you'll be able to have babies. All that matters is choosing the best offer. We're descended from women who played it safe.

Women's Sexuality Is More Plastic

Men are more "either this or that", and get aroused by one cue or another.

Women instead have more cues to look at, and are more about "this *and* that".

This means that men are less flexible in their sexuality and get aroused more easily.
Women get aroused less easily, but are more plastic in their sexuality -including when it comes to which gender they prefer-.

Men Can Be Attractive in Many Different Ways

While female attractiveness is somewhat more constrained by male limited sexual cues, men's attractiveness has more "room for maneuver":

> Women need to experience enough simultaneous cues to cross an ever-varying threshold. Sometimes, just a few overwhelming cues can take a woman there. Other times, it takes a very large number of moderate cues. For a man, a single cue is often sufficient, and sometimes necessary. For women, no single cue is either necessary or sufficient.

The Encouraging Reality of The Sexual Market Place

For women:

> if you are a woman, then no matter what your attributes—big or skinny, A-cup or double-E, mother or grandmother—you are the sexual ideal and greatest erotic fantasy for an abundance of men.

And for men:

> no matter what your character—aggressive or pacifist, witty or stoic, rich or penniless, scarred or delicate—there are plenty of women who can fall in love with you, and if their love is reciprocated, feel an intense desire for you

Also read more on exceptionAL dating:

- **How to succeed as an "exception"**

> ExceptionAL Dating: How to Succeed Despite Shortcomings

More Wisdom

- **The MILF appeal might rest on psychological cues:**

> The terms "aggressive" and "seduction" appear on the vast majority of MILF sites

- **Men might be designed to prefer long-term relationships?**

> If male desire software was designed to prefer one-night stands, men should prefer sex with adult women over adolescents, since adolescents have relatively low fertility. (Most women don't attain regular ovulation until many years after menarche; over the past century, the age of first menstruation is happening earlier and the onset of regular ovulation is happening later.) Indeed, in most primate species, including chimpanzees, males do prefer fertility cues over youth cues.

However, humans are inherently more complex, and a dual, co-existing strategy seems to be the norm:

> Though men exhibit a general preference for youth and long-term relationships, the male brain is designed to flexibly pursue both long-term and short-term relationships—what psychologist David Buss calls mixed mating strategies. This might be one of the main reasons for the appeal of MILFs. As we saw in the previous chapter, most fans of MILFs emphasize older women's wishes to avoid romantic complications. MILF fans fantasize about getting seduced by a MILF for a one-night stand rather than wooing her as a girlfriend.

- **Humans owe high-intelligent to females' (relative) chastity**

> Men may owe their intelligence in part to women's relative chastity. The brain and the testicles both require large amounts of energy. In species where females are promiscuous, males tend to develop large testicles but smaller brains. The silver-tipped myotis bat has gargantuan testicles that make up 8.4 percent of his body mass, compared to 1 percent in men.

Interesting theory, albeit more speculative. But there might be something there.

- **Women also have a dual-sexual strategy**

Women want both attractive men and alphas, and men who are kind, giving, and willing to provide and commit.
Sometimes the two come together, but other times, they won't.
The preferences is somewhat more pronounced during what' called the "ovulatory shift".
Read more at:

- Alpha fucks beta bucks
- Lovers VS Providers: it's about quality
- Lover strategy & provider strategy

You can learn more on diverging sexual interests in "sexual conflict".

> Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

- **Women are more risk-averse when they're most likely to conceive**

The authors say that "ovulating women seek out conventional sex with alpha males".

- **Testosterone levels do not impact fertility and can lead to poor long-term health**

It is correlated with dominance, though.
Albeit Sapolsky says that it's more collected with status-seeking behavior, and the behavior that ensues depends on what awards status.

- **Men are more likely to be moralists and morality-enforcers than women**

The authors speculate it might be to "make sure that men keep their libido towards reproductive-age women only". But that felt somewhat random to me and I'm unconvinced.

- **Cuckold porn leverages the "need for paternity"**

Cuckold porn is the second most popular heterosexual interest on English-language search engines.
The authors say that men have stronger libido and ejaculate more when they suspect cheating because they enter into (sperm) competition mode. And that can be arousing for some men.

- **Many people (wrongly) feel that others "must be like us"**

Men tend to believe that women like raunchy sex with random men as much as men do.
Women believe that men have been "socialized" to enjoy sex with random women.
And gay men believe that, deep down, all men want to have sex with other men.

In truth, at the end of the day, the reality is that we're just different.

QUOTES

On the plasticity of sexual market value for men:

> When I was a teenager, girls were just utterly out of my reach. They wouldn't even let me draw them." Crumb leans back in his chair and laughs. "Yeah. All that changed after I got famous."

On the limitation of research studies (WEIRD):

> Geneticists use fruit flies, endocrinologists use guinea pigs, molecular biologists use mice. For behavioral scientists, it's the college freshman. It's easy to understand why: they're cheap, in plentiful supply, easy to motivate through course requirements, and willing to endure even the most unusual experimental methods.

On the difficulties of collecting good scientific research on sexual preferences before the advent of the Internet:

> Nothing beats watching a subject in action. But scientists have an easier time gazing at intergalactic quasars than peeking into someone's bedroom. Quasars don't close the curtains out of modesty or suspicion.

On the wide variety of sexual preferences:

> "The Web brings people together," offered comedian Richard Jeni, "because no matter what kind of a twisted sexual mutant you happen to be, you've got millions of pals out there. Type in 'Find people that have sex with goats that are on fire' and the computer will say, 'Specify type of goat.' "

On the senior NSF (National Science Foundation) executive who helped young poor women:

> One senior executive spent 331 days viewing naked girls on his office computer, though he insisted his activities were a charitable contribution: "These young women are from poor countries and need to make money to help their parents."

On a 16-YO writing to his "serial killer crush" Richard Ramirez:

> he was nice, told me to get an education and that I'm sweet and should sort my life out and not end up in prison lol. I really liked him. I told him I wanted to chop his wifes feet off and he was cool about it. he's a nice guy :-).

On women seeking love, and men seeking (unsuccessfully) greatness:

> Perhaps nature designed women to be lovable, whereas men were designed to strive, mostly unsuccessfully, for greatness

On the tragedy of male sexuality (albeit this is a generalization and more applicable to the psychology of womanizer):

> In a very real sense, there is something tragic about male sexuality. It is never satisfied. Tomorrow is another day for the hunt—whether a single guy cruising for a one-night stand, or a married guy searching a tube site for something new. The novelty cue ensures that whatever is delicious today is bland tomorrow—and male desire is frequently a solitary affair.

On the ironic nonsense of paranormal novels:

> Though vampires turbocharge cues of masculinity, the erotical illusions are only complete when these invincible heroes are brought to their knees by the irresistibility of an ordinary woman and her ability to unlock his secret heart.

CRITICISM

The data analysis is fantastic, and the main pitfalls emerge when the authors either seek to connect the dots with non-data-driven sources or when venturing out on their own opinions and interpretations.

Sometimes overstates the case for differences

Obviously there are differences between men and women.

Yet, one can either overstate, or downplay those differences.

I feel that "A Billion Wicked Thoughts" sometimes overstates the case for differences.

For example, the authors first list the "most popular erotic websites for men", which are all video websites.
Then, it lists the "most popular erotic websites for women", which are all novel fiction websites.
Only much later it also says that YouPorn's CTO estimates that 1/3 of websites users are actually women.

So those initial tables were misleading, since it's not like all users of porn websites were *only* men.

As another example, in a passage that seemed to overstate how difficult it is for women to get aroused, they say:

> a sixty-second PornHub clip of a woman unbuttoning her shirt can compel a man to masturbate to ejaculation. But the single most popular artifact used by women to generate arousal takes the form of a 250-page book that requires hours to digest.

Apparently, the authors must not have experienced pulling off wet panties.
Or been in a relationship when the man loses interest, and the woman's sex drive and lust start outstripping his.

In a third example, the authors cite a popular 1989 experiment of random men and women approaching random men and women and asking for sex.
And they say that most men say yes, and most women say no.
That is true.
However, it should be put into context.
As Viram Swami notes, the differences drop if the asker is very attractive and seem to disappear if the asker is famous.
That is NOT to say that women are equally open to random sex: the differences are real and confirmed. However, there are situations and variables that decrease or even cancel the differences.

I'd have preferred if speculations were clearly labeled "speculation"

Much of the authors' own opinions seemed legit to me.

A few times, they seemed far more speculative.

What I wished is that they were more clear in stating "this is our speculation", and "this is the data".

For example, they say that granny erotica is big in UK and Nigeria because in those countries older women are in contact with young men.
They that in the UK older women in boarding schools "spanked or pinched" the students.
Personally, I'm not aware of a modern country where teachers are allowed to spank pupils.
And even if that was the case, I'd be wary in jumping to conclusions -albeit it might seem like a good *possible* cause-.

Conflates fame with serial-killing ("serial killer myth")

Albeit I don't doubt that some women are indeed attracted to murderers and serial killers, the authors fail to realize that:

1. **All famous men receive female attention**, and the only serial killers who receive significant attention are the famous ones
2. **The *type* of women are after serial killers**:
3. **The *quality* of women:** the general quality and level of attractiveness of the women who fall for serial killers should also be better investigated. And I suspected that you won't find many high-quality women

Also read:

- Are serial killers really attractive?

"Irresistibility cues" apply to men as well

The author implies that "irresistibility" is important to women, but not so much to men.

To back-up his claim, he says that a skin-whitening cream was marketed to women under the “irresistibility” cue, but was marketed to men with a “career-climbing” strategy:

> the identical product for men, Fair and Handsome, is sometimes marketed with the promise that it will help its male customers rise the corporate ladder.

The author forgets about “Axe”, the deodorant marketed to make men irresistible to women:

Also, “climbing the corporate ladder” is an indirect way of being attractive/irresistible.

So albeit I agree that “irresistible” might be (somewhat) more important to women, I don’t think it’s as unique to women as the authors imply.

PROS

- **Great overview of attraction**

Probably one of the best overviews of sexual attraction, intersexual dynamics available on the market (and good for sex power dynamics as well).

- **Very well researched**

A very unique text that mixes lots of wisdom from the most disparate resources.

From popular female dating advice such as “He’s Just Not That Into You“, to male dating advice with the pick-up community and “The Game” and the older classics such as Casanova’s “History of My Life“.

Passing by solid evolutionary psychology literature such as Buss and Miller.

Plus, of big data mining, to research, to anime forums, to erotic literature for women.
And not only the authors read a lot, but they were also able to put it all together into a coherent and logical narrative that makes sense.

Review

“A Billion Wicked Thoughts” is a treasure trove of data-based information on sexual preferences.

What I liked most is that it offers a data-based perspective based on search engine queries that you can’t get anywhere else.

As minor cons, the authors do add their own personal speculations without clearly labeling it “speculation”. And sometimes it might feel like they overstate the differences between the “male ready to fill any hole” and the “risk-averse female who rarely gets horny”.

However, as a whole, the narrative and theoretical framework they develop around data and available research is solid and on point, making it a wonderful book to understand human sexuality.
One great advantage over some other data-based books on dating and sexuality, is that Ogas develops around the data a solid narrative that helps the readers get the “big picture” of sexuality and attraction.

Finally, I quoted “A Billion Wicked Thoughts” to improve this website’s articles and products, and that’s the best compliment I can make to any resource.

Also see:

- Best dating for men
- Best dating for women

Or get the book on Amazon.

Wiley-Blackwell of the Psychology of Leadership, Change, & OD: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 July 2021 · Archived copy · Original

The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Leadership, Change, and Organizational Development (2013) reviews the research literature on leadership, change, and OD.

SUMMARY

About the Author:
There are different authors for each chapter, based on the expertise of the chapter's main topic.

Contents

- Leadership
- Dark Side of Charismatic Leadership
- Psychonadimics of Organizational Leadership
- The Key Issue of Trust
- Culture Matters
- Evidence-Based Leadership
- When Leaders Are Bullies
- Organizational Change
- How to Foster Creativity
- More Wisdom
- CONS
- REVIEW

Leadership

The leadership research followed five stages of "focus":

- **Trait theories**: focusing on the "traits" of (the best) leaders as opposed to followers

> Early leadership research focusing on those who were observed as emerging as leaders in unstructured/leaderless groups found that traits that typically emerged included: dominance, extraversion, sociability, ambition or achievement, and self-confidence (Mann, 1959; Stodgill, 1948). Subsequent research obtained similar findings (e.g. Gough, 1990; Kenny & Zaccaro, 1983; Lord et al., 1986; Rueb & Foti, 1990).

And:

> In their meta-analysis of trait studies, Lord et al. (1986) identified three traits which were significantly associated with followers' perceptions of leadership: "intelligence," "dominance," and "masculinity,"

Later on it the research literature also realize that the same traits that make a leader "good" and effective can also be used for destructive purposes:

> The same personality traits which make some leaders attractive, such as charisma, inspiration, vision, courage, and resilience, can become a destructive force (…) if they are exhibited in their extreme forms, and if there is a lack of concern for, or a lack of insight (Furnham, 2010; Hogan et al., 1994; Lipman-Blumen, 2004)

- **Behavioral approach**

Of the many models developed, most can be categorized within four styles:

1. concern for task— AKA “production-orientated”
2. concern for people— AKA “employee-centered”
3. directive leadership— AKA “authoritarian” or “autocratic”
4. participative—AKA “democratic.

In terms of effectiveness, there was no clear “winner” when exploring a range of variables including subordinate satisfaction and effectiveness measures such as productivity (House, 1971; Larson et al., 1974; Yukl, 2010).

- **Situational and contingency approach**

It includes a set of different variables ranging from subordinates’ competence, time constraints, informational availability to make decisions, etc.

The “leader-member exchange theory” (LMX) developed, which focuses on the relationship and social exchange between leaders and followers.

- **“Charismatic–inspirational models”— AKA “heroic” leadership**

> The models emphasized different aspects of “neo-charismatic” leadership (House & Aditya, 1997), including “charisma” (Conger, 1988, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, 1977), “vision” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Sashkin, 1988; Tichy & Devanna, 1986), “transformation” and “transaction” (Bass, 1985, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1997).

Bass’s model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985, 1998) was the most widely adopted.
“Transformational” leaders motivate colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspectives, link their goals to the team’s and organization’s mission or vision, and look beyond their own interests towards those that will benefit the group (Bass, 1985).

It seems to work:

> There is evidence from studies using the MLQ that transformational leadership is significantly associated with subordinate satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and performance (e.g. Bass, 1998; Lowe et al., 1996; Skakon et al., 2010; Tims et al., 2011; Yukl, 1999).

However, Judge and Piccolo found the same positive results analyzing “transactional leadership”.
In my opinion, this is simply a case of situation. Some environments, some tasks, and some people, respond better to one or another.

An important criticism of these models is that they gloss over the reciprocal influence between follower and leader (shared leadership).

- **Post-heroic models of leadership**

In academic terms, there is a rejection of the “romance of leadership” (Bligh et al., 2011; Meindl et al., 1985), which includes the attribution of organization success or failure to the presence of a “savior” figure.

New notions of leadership include “ethical leadership”, “servant leadership”, “authentic leadership”, “distributed leadership” and models that view leadership as a dynamic and fluid social process.

For ethical leadership:

> Brown et al. (2005) define the concept of ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (p. 120).

Kalshoven and Den Hartog analysis of 244 direct reports a positive relationship between ethical leader behavior and followers' perfection of leader's effectiveness.

Dark Side of Charismatic Leadership

Discussing the potential dark side of "charismatic leadership":

> House & Howell (1992) distinguish between two kinds of charismatic leadership: **personalized** (self-aggrandizing, exploitative, authoritarian) and **socialized** (altruistic, collectively oriented, egalitarian) (House & Aditya, 1997).

And:

> Yukl (1999) warns that some charismatic leaders use manipulative behaviors such as "exaggerating positive achievements and taking unwarranted credit for achievements," "covering up mistakes and failures," and "blaming others for mistakes" (p. 296).

And that manipulative behavior can be put to use to, well… Line their own pockets:

> In a cross-sectional study, Tosi et al. (2004) **found no evidence of a relationship between the degree of perceived charisma of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and their companies' performances**, but interestingly, **did find a significant positive relationship between their "charisma" rating and their remuneration package**. They add a warning that boards of organizations "should be a bit more circumspect in advocating charisma as a criterion for the selection of CEOs" (p. 414).

I bet that if you gave the Mach-IV scale to these charismatic leaders, they'd all score as very high Machs.

Psychonadimics of Organizational Leadership

First off:

> At its heart, leadership is about human behavior—understanding it and enhancing it.

A purely rational or structural model of leadership is not sufficient to understand leadership -or to be a good leader-.

Leaders are socially intelligent and skilled:

> It is about the way people and organizations behave, about creating and strengthening relationships, handling conflict, building commitment, establishing a group identity, and adapting behavior to increase effectiveness (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2001c; Pfeffer, 1998; Stogdill & Bass, 1990).
> (…)
> they are cognizant of the sensitive nature of the leader–follower relationship; they pay careful attention to group processes. Such leaders know how to calm anxieties and arouse hopes and aspirations; they know how to transform personal needs into societal demands.

Also read:

- 13 steps to leadership (based on social psychology)

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

This chapter then becomes very Freudian.
Some parts re very interesting, for example with followers that idealize leaders and look at them as a father figure. That made sense to me -also see the "judge role"-.
Some other parts left me dubious -Freud's approach wasn't very scientific-.

Narcissism and The Potential for Leadership

> The strength (and even inflexibility) of a narcissistic leader's worldview gives followers something to identify with and hold on to. Although it can be a key ingredient for success, narcissism can also become a toxic drug. Narcissism can be labeled as either constructive or reactive, with excess narcissism generally falling in the latter category and healthy narcissism generally falling in the former (Kets de Vries, 2004; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985).

The authors say there is a "good" type of narcissistic leader. In leadership roles, constructive narcissists often seem larger than life, but they also have a capacity for introspection and empathy.

The "bad" type of narcissistic leaders fixate on power, status, prestige, and superiority.

Say the authors:

> They are especially responsive to admiration and are not prepared to share power. Unwilling to tolerate disagreement, and dealing poorly with criticism, such leaders rarely consult with others, and when they do, such consultation is little more than ritualistic. The result is that disposition and position work together to wreak havoc on reality-testing, and the boundaries that define normal work processes disappear.

Later on, the authors say that the bad narcissistic leader sees the world in black and white, people being either for or against them.
And the followers, "to minimize conflict and disagreement, sacrifice truth on the altar of intimacy, maintaining a connection with the leader even though he or she has lost touch with reality".

To me, it seems a description of Donald Trump's presidency.

Folowers of Narcissists

The followers of narcissistic leaders idealize their leader.
In the authors' opinion, they replicate a helpless child / protective adult relationship:

> They perceive their leader as omnipotent, and as a result, they readily give up their autonomy. This contributes to goal-directedness and cohesiveness, but impairs followers' critical judgment and leaves them unwilling to take initiative.

In psychoanalytic terms, this is the projective identification.

So the advantage of the narcissistic leader is that: **the narcissistic leader will have a loyal and obedient followership, but the quality of that followership is lower than with a healthier leader**.

The Key Issue of Trust

The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook discusses trust at length.

Trust appears to be a crucial aspect of good leadership:

> Research evidence confirms that trust in leadership is related to positive organizational outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) and positive follower performances and attitudes, such as high job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Butler et al., 1999; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Followers who believe in their leaders' abilities, integrity, and benevolence are more willing to engage in risk-taking behaviors (Mayer et al., 1995).

Trust is most important when one party is at risk or vulnerable, and can be defined as "an expectation or belief that one can rely on another person's actions and words, and that that person has good intentions".

Trust also increases cooperation.
Ferrin et al.'s (2007) interpersonal study found that trust perceptions and cooperation both increase after each successive iteration.

Early research on trust developed two core foundations of trust:

- **Competence** or ability: knowledge, skills, interpersonal skills and "general wisdom"
- **Character**: later split into two components of:
  - **Benevolence**: want to do good for the followers
  - **Integrity**: adherence to sound moral and ethical principles

Avolio says that you establish trust by displaying your own capacities, values, hopes, and weaknesses, and allowing or even encouraging the followers to express themselves equally.

Other elements that improve trust:

- Transformational and consultative leadership (Gillespie & Mann, 2004)
- Servant leadership (Joseph & Winston 2005)
- Avoiding contingency-based rewards and punishments (Rubin et al., 2010)
- Developing job-related skills
- Developing integrity
- Developing social skills / power intelligence
- Environment that is just and low in politics (Poon, 2006)
- **Monitor while supporting**: monitoring can erode trust, but monitoring combined with fair assessment of performance, leader support, openness, and collaborative problem-solving, is highly related to trust in managers (Bijlsma & Van de Bunt, 2003)

For the full list, see "Business University".

Interestingly, Dirks & Ferrin meta-analysis found no relationship between trust and relationship length and only a weak relationship between trust in leaders and followers' propensity to trust.
This means that you can develop trust in most people, independently of how long you know them.

The authors say that the trust in the direct leader has an equal or greater effect on performance, altruism, intent to quit, and job satisfaction, than trust in organizational leadership. And trust in organizational leadership has a greater impact on organizational-level outcomes such as organizational commitment.
And Huang et al. (2009) note that lower-level and frontline employees tend to care more about their personal relationship with colleagues and their direct managers.

Trust Going Both Ways

There is much less research on leaders trusting their followers.

But Hakimi et al.'s (2010) show that leader-empowering behavior also depends on the trust they have in follower's performance and integrity.

And Brower et al. (2009) demonstrate **that trusting one's followers is crucial to effective leadership**.
Trusting leaders develop more productive employees, employees who offer and provide help beyond the requirements of their jobs, and who stay in the organization for longer periods of time.

Whitener and colleagues (1998) argue that to gain the subordinates trust a good step is to first be a trusting manager.

Finally, personality also does matter.
Bernereth & Walker's (2007) and Levin et al.'s (2006) seem to support the notion that that the most positive exchange relationships exist when both managers and employees are high in propensity to trust.

Win-Win Without Trust

The book rightesouly reminds us that a productive arrangement as well as win-win relationships can also exist without trust.
Alternative mechanisms include:

> Reputation, enforcement of contracts, compensation schemes, social capital networks, and regulation of behavior through professional societies (Cook et al., 2005).

Culture Matters

There is little empirical evidence on the effectiveness of leaders when measured along the alignment of organizational cultural fit.
But some interesting notes:

- **Nationality / culture matters**

> Subordinates working with leaders from their own country of origin are more efficient and satisfied than subordinates working under a supervisor from another country (Testa, 2002).

I wonder though if this is a case of someone not fitting the culture well, not speaking the local language well, or not bonding with the team well.
Indeed, I remember many years ago working for a company providing support in different languages. And one Brazilian said to me about our boss "a Swiss manager is not a good fit for Latin teams".
So it was more of a general culture, than a specific nationality.

And indeed:

- **National culture alignment matters**

> Leaders acting in alignment with the national culture will be more effective than those whose behaviors are out of alignment (Euwema et al., 2007; Yukl et al., 2003).

Evidence-Based Leadership

There are three ways in which leaders can encourage evidence-based management:

1. Advocating for evidence

2. Collecting and providing evidence
3. Providing the time and resources for the effective use of evidence

When it comes to power dynamics, there are some disadvantages for the leader in an evidence-based culture, including:

- Leaders must accept a greater degree of transparency in their decision-making
- Leaders might lose some “mystique”, looking as if they’re governed by data rather than intuition and innate abilities

When Leaders Are Bullies

Bullying or overly aggressive leaders is a relatively common phenomenon.

And it’s a phenomenon that deserves attention, since ongoing workplace bullying are serious healthy consequences, including PTSD.

Traits of Bullying Leaders

House & Howell (1992) say that the traits of bullying supervisors include excessive need for power, high levels of Machiavellianism, authoritarianism, external locus of control combined with low self-esteem.
Judge et al. (2009) also add narcissism, hubris, and social dominance.
Hershcovis et al. (2007) found out that anger highly correlated with aggression and Aquino & Thau (2009) found that emotional instability leads to aggression and bullying.

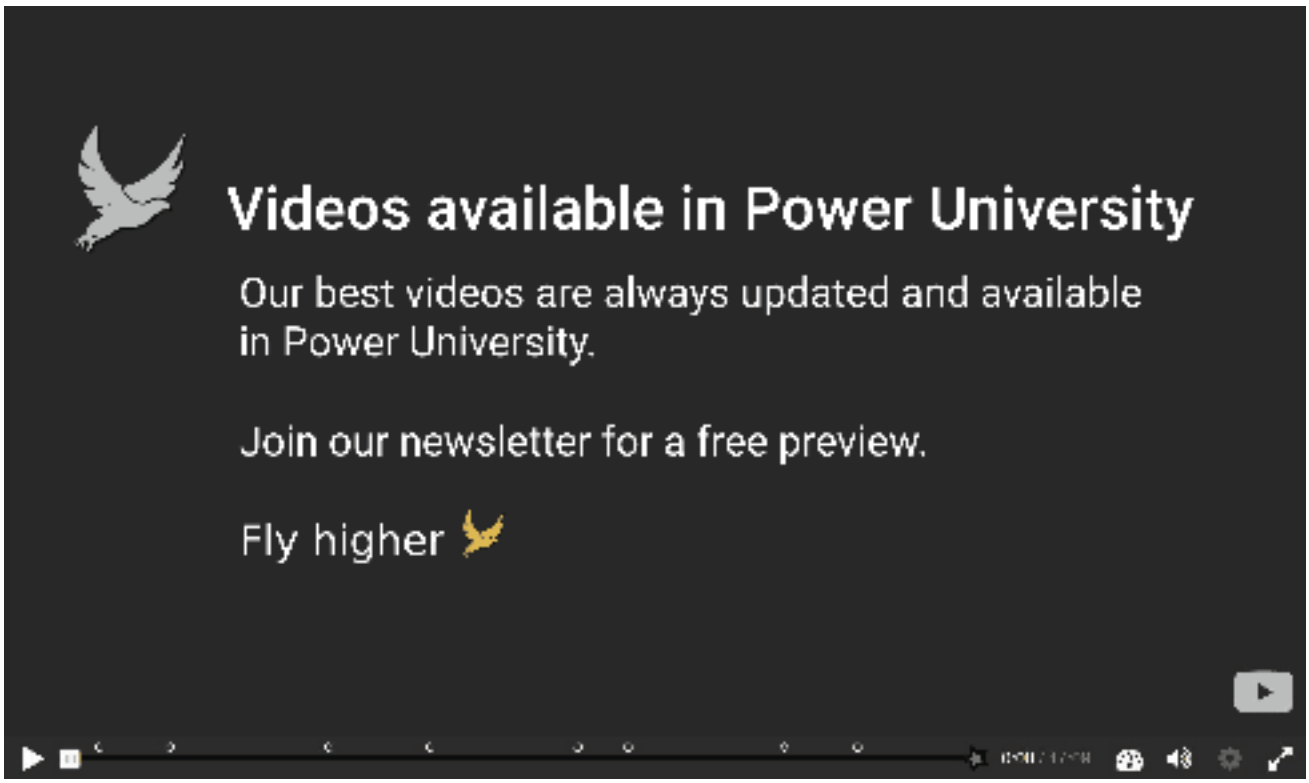
Thought Patterns of Bullies

In terms of thought patterns, a hostile attribution style, such as attributing failures to external stable and intentional causes, leads to aggression.

The worst cases appear to be when a leader attributes poor work performance to a willingness to undermine him as a leader.

Finally, bosses who think they themselves are being treated unfairly and are stressed out are more likely to act aggressively towards their own reports (Aryee et al., 2007; Hoobler & Brass, 2006, Tepper et al., 2006).
This is also called “misplaced aggression“.

How I Met Your Mother also had a clip about it:



Work Environment

Bowling & Beehr's (2006) metastudy shows that role conflict (ρ = .44) and role ambiguity (ρ = .30), together with work constraints (ρ = .54), are the strongest predictors of workplace harassment.

And as we might expect, misbehavior is more common where upper management is tolerant of it and where there is a lack of clear organizational norms and policies, including safe complaints procedures (see Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003).

Van de Vliert & Einarsen (2008) and Van de Vliert et al. (2010) have also shown that countries with harsher climates and poorer income have more instances of abusive behavior.

Dealing With Workplace Bullying

However, the answer to workplace bullying is not endless dominance from the employees' part.

Aquino & Byron (2002) found support for the hypothesis that dominant behavior shows a curvilinear relationship with victimization from leader abuse.
Such as submissive employees are experienced as weak and exploitable and employees high on dominance break social norms and therefore are more easily exposed to retaliation and abuse.

The authors don't go into solutions, however mixing warmth with power and assertiveness usually work great in every situation.

Organizational Change

Resistance to disruptive transformational change is strongest in the middle-management and individual-contributor levels.

It makes sense, since these people are the ones who often know the least about the change, and who risk the most about change.
Employees can also be stressed by the change due to increased work, threats of job losses, changes in responsibilities/scope, and shifts in the balance of power (McHugh & Brennan, 1994).

This is how management can increase acceptance to change:

- **Increase trust in the organization**: that leadership behaviors and trust in leadership seem to be important determinants of OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000)
- **Demonstrate commitment**: and doing so beyond words, such as attending meetings or ceremonies relevant to the change effort. This indicates that the change must be important (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Yukl, 2006)
- **Provide clear guidance on what's going to happen**: it helps avoid rumors and "fear of the unknown"
- **Use "Schein's 3 steps"**: Building on Lewin's idea of unfreezing, Schein (1999a) identified 3 conditions to successful unfreezing: disconfirm the validity of the status quo, induce survival anxiety to motivate change, and create enough psychological safety that yes, you can make the change and survive and thrive

How to Foster Creativity

To develop and sustain creativity, an organization generally needs:

- Relatively open culture
- Empowered staff: push responsibilities down
- Responsive and flexible structure
- Integrated procedures
- Idea-development systems
- Good external partnerships

More Wisdom

- **Emotional attachment can be good leadership**

It has been well established that emotional attachment can be a key factor in successful leadership (Bass, 1985; Gardner & Avolio, 1998).

- **Yes, top leadership does matter**

There was a popular academic perspective that leadership did not really matter in achieving results.
That doesn't seem to be the case, though.
Day & Lord (1988) showed that when proper methodological concerns were addressed the impact of top-level leadership was considerable -as much as 45% of organizational performance-.

CONS

- **An "exec summary" would have been useful**

Since the book is very dense, I would have appreciated a section that summarized the research literature.
There was indeed an end-of-chapter session for an overview, but it rarely was an actual overview.

- **Sometimes different authors repeat same intros**

Since there are different authors for each chapter, sometimes the intros repeat the same information.

- **A coherent, larger, dot-connecting theoretical infrustrcture would have been nice**

Some chapters were great.

In some others, I felt that the authors weren't always "connecting the dots". So some chapters did not provide a larger framework with which to better understand the world.

REVIEW

The Wiley-Blackwell Handbooks are not for the laymen to read.

They have no stories, no examples, and be very dense to read.
After all, they are written by academics, for academics.
And for a guy like me, who seeks to combine data and research with first-hand experience, observation, and logic…
They are a Godsent.

They allow me to review whole swaths of the best research literature, in a time-effective fashion.

So I'm very grateful to the authors, and thumb up from me.
But if you're not an academic and are looking for actionable advice, then this website's products might provide you with better tools to succeed.

Get the book on Amazon

How to Influence and Stand Out in Business Meetings

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 August 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Meetings are great opportunities for your career.

The social strategist attends not just to get things done, but to advance his career.
He promotes himself, plays politics… And grows closer to his boss (or those in power)..

This post gives you the ground rules to influence and self-promote in business meetings.

If everyone's a sycophant, you need a different strategy to stand out
So let's start:

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  - Solution
  - Delivery techniques
- 2. Sit Right to The Boss
  - 2.2. Avoid Sitting Alone Across from the Boss
- 3. In Inter-Department Meetings, Side With Your Team
- 4. Adapt Like a Chameleon to Boss & Culture
- 5. Focus on The 'Alpha', Ignore The Rest
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- 5. Challenge External Vendors (& Job Candidates)
- 6. Speak Early, Speak Often, Speak Confidently
- 8. Self-Promote, But Offset It With Collaborative Frames
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1. Get Buy-In *Before* the Meeting

This is a common mistake for less power-aware folks.

They see a meeting on their calendar to discuss a certain topic and think: "Great, that's my opportunity to introduce my great idea".

Big freaking mistake.

Persuasion is about power.
Most big-shot executives worth their salt have big egos and are very high on power.

If you persuade them on the spot, it sub-communicates that you have power over them. And if your solution is 'better', the sub-communication is that you are 'better' than them.
Of course they'll resist that.

And the resistance is larger when you're:

1. Junior
2. Newer
3. Proposing big changes
   - Changes impacting someone powerful
4. Challenging the status quo

Solution

Lay the groundwork before the meeting:

1. Talk to key stakeholders
2. Get their input early
3. Make them feel valued
4. Adjust your pitch with their feedback
5. Say you'd like to present the idea and if they're OK with it

If not possible:

- Provide an early heads-up
- Present with as much power protection as possible

Delivery techniques

The more hurdles you face, the more you should frame it as:

- A **possible** solution
  - Potentially, a **test** to run
- An **improvement**, not a revolution
- A possible solution that may **need refinement**
- **Worth considering**, rather than obvious improvement
- **Inspired** by something/someone else, rather than your sole genius

If attacked, don't take it personally.
Before addressing it, validate the attacker and the merit of his contribution.

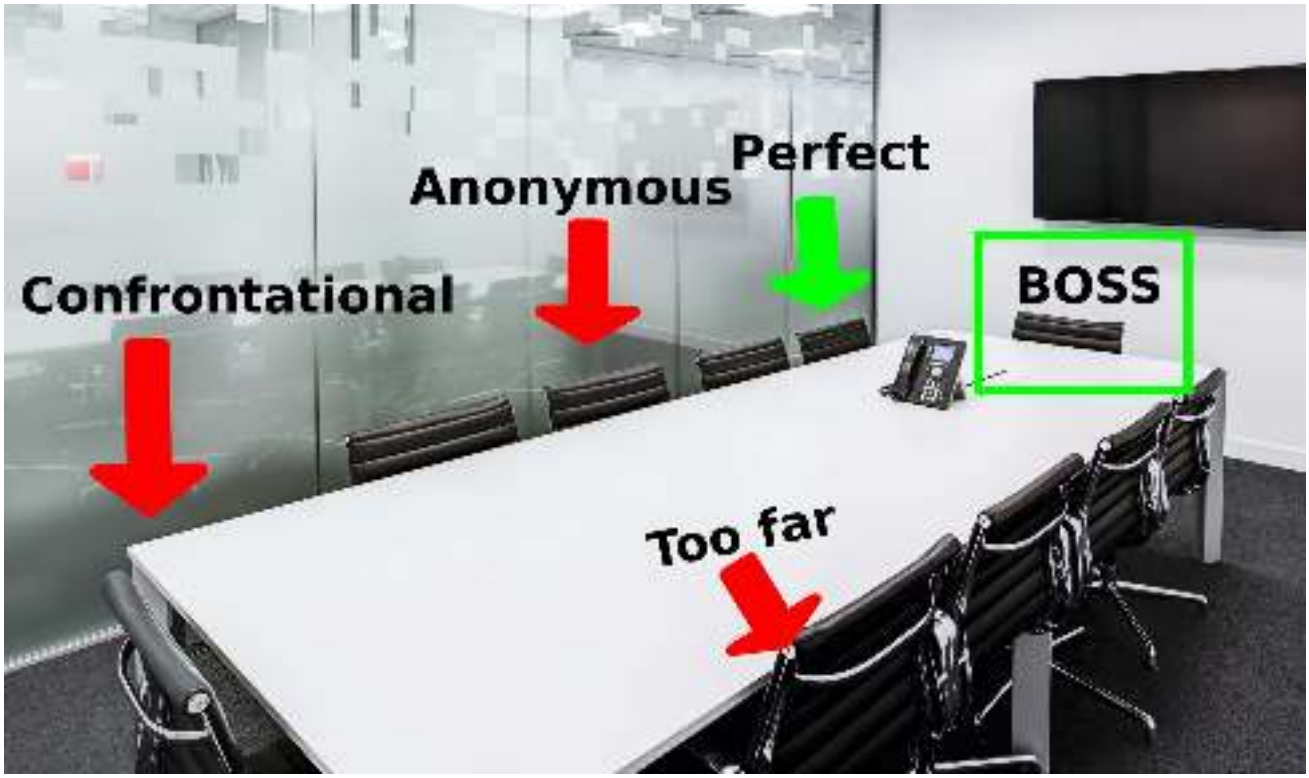
⍰ If it goes well, propose to lead that project.

P.S.:
Men resist public influence more than women.
See this post:

- **Women winning in business**

> The Businesswoman Guide to Win in Male Organizations

2. Sit Right to The Boss



The boss's power will rub off on you, and physical closeness signals a good relationship.

2.2. Avoid Sitting Alone Across from the Boss

Especially if it's only *you* across:

3. In Inter-Department Meetings, Side With Your Team

In intra-team meetings, you can argue with your colleagues.

But in inter-team meetings arguing with your colleagues can be perceived as “friendly fire”. It frames you as a traitor.

Worst of all if the boss is present: he will take it as treason, and as a sign of disloyalty.

Why?
Because inter-team dynamics in the male culture have a tinge of “us/them”.
It’s pure in-group/outgroup and ‘us VS them’ tribal dynamic.

It’s a bad sign when turf squabbles trump good work.
But these dynamics go on a spectrum. And it’s rare to find a boss that welcomes better company output at the cost of his team’s reputation and loyalty.
Conversely, if you hear your boss complaining about other teams or talking about ‘those guys’ with a demeaning tone, adapt.
Don’t defend them, don’t be a politician saying that some mistakes are to be expected, and be too chummy with them in his presence -but be warm when he’s not there -.

Note: Don’t internalize the ‘belonging to the team’ mindset
Extreme tribalism is bad for humanity and bad for you. You give your individuality and self-interest. So *play* like you’re a loyal team member, but never become a tribalist.

4. Adapt Like a Chameleon to Boss & Culture

The simplest way to fix a political blunder is to prevent one.

While some cultures welcome disagreement and challenging questions, others expect obedience.

If unsure, ask your boss:

> Boss, is it OK to express different opinions from colleagues or management in a meeting? Should I discuss with you first?

You'll learn the culture, and flatter your boss with the question.

5. Focus on The 'Alpha', Ignore The Rest

If there is one main decision maker -'alpha'-, respect everyone, but focus on the alpha.

If others attack you, it's likely posturing.
Stay composed and respond only if it helps persuade the alpha.

⍰ Example:

As 'talent' graduates we presented our ideas to the senior management team.

It was textbook political mistake: juniors, delivering big change ideas, without pre-buy-in.

I proposed to let employees book work-from-home days without approval.

Andy the big boss joked that next, we could allow beers at work.
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Then, as the laugh died down, I addressed Andy first. I looked at everyone, but still I spent more time on Andy.
And I said (improved version for better learning):

> **Me**: I can see why you're worried about this <— Pacing and validating
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Even if the original wasn't this polished, it still turned the power dynamics on their head.

Andy stopped being a d*ck and began pondering.
And so did everyone else.

The proposal was drastic, and it wasn't accepted.
But I gave it the best chance, and it was still a personal win.
Including with the HR coordinator when much later she mentioned that I could 'negotiate with a very difficult

opponent‘.

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Some tips:

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6. Speak Early, Speak Often, Speak Confidently

This is the rule of thumb when it comes to the order of speaking:

> Those who speak early and often are seen as more credible, greater risk takers, and possessing more leadership potential than those who speak later.

Those who speak last are seen as “also-run”, the ones that didn’t have enough value or courage to speak first.

What if you didn’t have anything to say, or you really didn’t dare to go first?
Well, here is a cool power move for you, then: **summarize what everyone else has said before you add your own**. Give credit, mention a few people and their ideas. And then add yours.

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You want to self-promote, of course.

But you don’t want to look like you’re only out for “team you”.

Doing it well requires some social calibration and smoothness.

Imagine you’re in a team meeting.
There is a lot of discussions back and forth, but so far no decision has been taken and there seems to be no one leading.

You feel that you have found the perfect way forward.

How do you present it?
It’s usually best to present your idea as the culmination of everyone’s input, rather than your own stroke of genius (examples in **Power University**).

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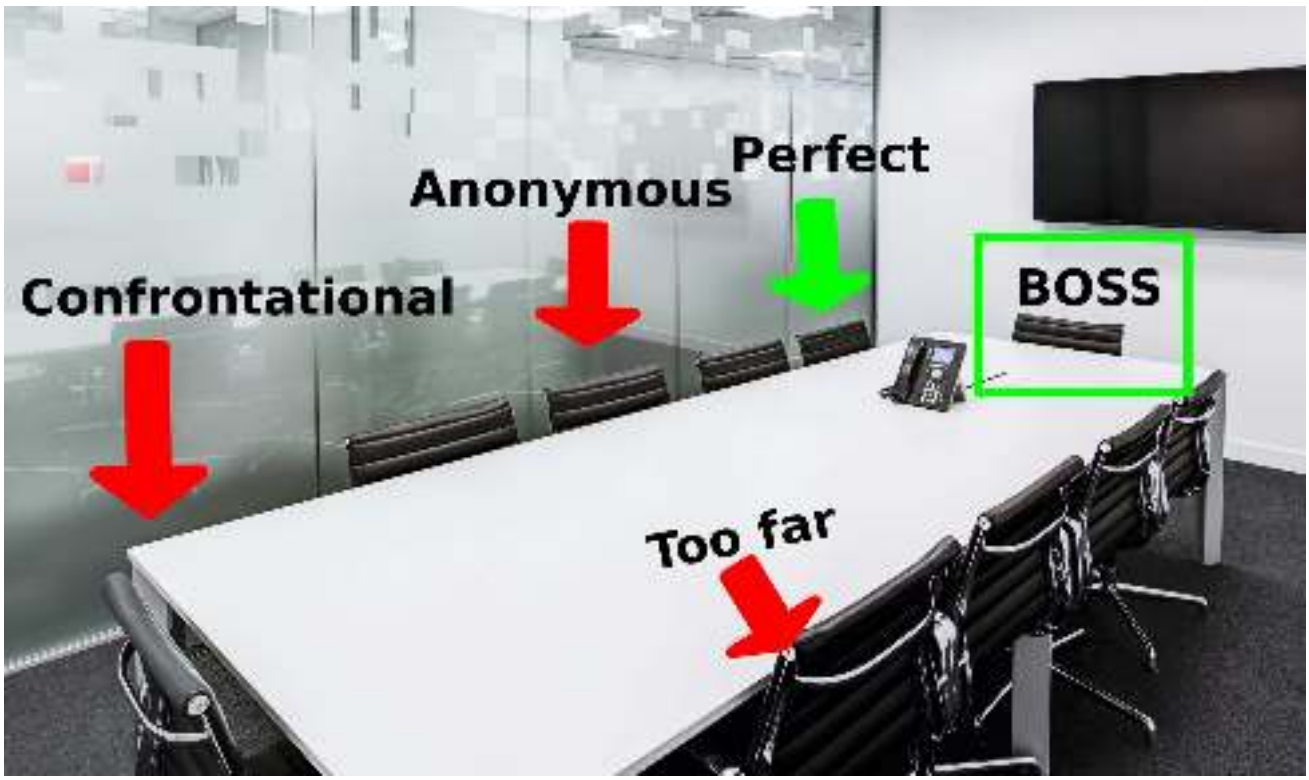

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Examples in **Power University**.

The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem: 6 Steps for Mental Empowerment (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 September 2021 · Archived copy · Original

"The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem" (1994) is a self-help and psychology book in which author Dr. Nathaniel Branden describes the key elements that raise (or lower) the self-esteem of an individual. It includes exercises, mindsets, and beliefs to help readers increase their self-esteem.

Contents

- About the Author

- Summary
  - What's Self-Esteem
  - The 2 Components of Self-Esteem
  - Advantages of Self-Esteem
  - When you succeed with low self-esteem you lose joy
  - Pillar 1: Living consciously
  - Pillar 2: Self-acceptance
  - Pillar 3: Self-responsibility
  - Pillar 4: Self-assertiveness
  - Pillar 5: Living purposefully
  - Pillar 6: Personal integrity
  - Pillar 7: Keep practicing even when it's hard
  - Philosophy of Self-Esteem
- MORE WISDOM
  - People With Low Self-Esteem Resent People With High Self-Esteem
  - Extreme Ownership is Dangerous to Self-Esteem
  - Proving you're enough is a battle you lose when you started it
  - Getting good with people is fundamental to self-esteem (and life)
  - Leaders need a strong ego
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
  - Naive Self-Help Promoting "Doing Good"
  - Sometimes Felt More Pop-Psychology, Less Scientific
  - Self-esteem is what Branden likes, rather than what truly is
  - Vindictive & nasty towards his ex: where are the moral values & integrity?
- CONS
  - Ayn Rand VS Nathaniel Branden: nastiness & airing dirty laundry
  - "Back then when it was better" fallacy
- PROS
- Review

About the Author

Nathaniel Branden was a Canadian–American psychotherapist and author known for his work in the psychology of self-esteem.
Branden was also a romantic partner and associate of Ayn Rand, a popular 1960s writer and philosopher. Branden also discusses Rand and their relationship in this same book.

Summary

What's Self-Esteem

Says the author:

> Self-esteem is the experience that we are appropriate to life and to the requirements of life.

More specifically:

1. **Confidence in our ability to think and cope with the basic challenges of life** (supporting oneself, effectively interact with others, coping with adversity,
2. **The belief in our right to be happy and entitled to assert our needs and wants**, and enjoy the fruits of our efforts

Then, around 1/3 of the book Branden adds yet another definition:

> Self-esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and as worthy of happiness.

To have self-esteem means to feel confidently appropriate to life, while to not have self-esteem means to feel inappropriate to life.
To feel "wrong", and not about any specific issue, but wrong as a person.

The 2 Components of Self-Esteem

- **Self-efficacy**: basic confidence in the face of life's challenges. It's the experience of basic power or competence. To be "efficacious", is to be able to produce a desired result. But it's deeper than confidence on a specific set of skills or knowledge. It is the confidence in being able to acquire that set of skills or knowledge.
- **Self-respect**: a sense of being worthy. The conviction that our life and well-being are worth acting to support, protect, and nurture; that we are good and worthwhile and deserving of the respect of others

Advantages of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem makes you:

- **Feel better**
- **More effective at life**
- **Happier**
- **Resistant to social pressure and "judges"** . Says the author: "The lower our self-esteem, the more urgent the need to "prove ourselves"
- **Self-fulfilling prophecies of personal empowerment and success**: "self-esteem creates a set of implicit expectations about what is possible and appropriate to us. These expectations tend to generate the actions that turn them into realities. And the realities confirm and strengthen the original beliefs"

- …

The author includes a whole host of traits that self-esteem supports.
But in short: self-esteem is good for you, and very important.

How Self-Esteem Looks Like

How does self-esteem reflect in people's behavior and thoughts?

Here are some concrete examples of high self-esteem behavior and attitudes:

- Ease in talking of accomplishments or short-comings with directness and honesty
- Giving and receiving compliments, expressions of affection, appreciation
- Openness to criticism and a comfort about acknowledging mistakes, because one's self-esteem is not tied to an image of "being perfect."
- Harmony between what one says and does and how one looks, sounds, and moves.
- Feelings of anxiety or insecurity, if they appear, are be less likely to intimidate or overwhelm
- Comfort with assertive behavior (not belligerent) in oneself and others
- General relaxation, ease and spontaneity, since one is not at war with oneself

On the other hand, chronic tension conveys some form of internal split, some form of self-avoidance or self-repudiation, or some aspect of the self-being disowned, repressed, or under tight control.

When you succeed with low self-esteem you lose joy

Yes, you can also succeed with low self-esteem.

BUT, you'd be missing out a lot both in terms of personal empowerment, and of life joy.

Says the author:

> *(some people) may have the talent and energy to achieve greatly, in spite of feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness—like the highly productive workaholic who is driven to prove his worth to, say, a father who predicted he would always be a loser. But it does mean that we will be less effective and less creative than we have the power to be; and it means that we will be crippled in our ability to find joy in our achievements. Nothing we do will ever feel like "enough."*

Lack of self-esteem fuels the hedonic treadmill of more material success, without satisfaction

Says the author:

> *So it is always "one more" victory—one more promotion, one more sexual conquest, one more company, one more piece of jewelry, a larger house, a more expensive car, another award—yet the void within remains unfilled.*

And, funny enough, giving up the pursuit of material possession and conquests is not the answer.
Not until you first acquire self-esteem as a middle step.
Says the author:

> In today's culture some frustrated people who hit this impasse announce that they have decided to pursue a "spiritual" path and renounce their egos. This enterprise is doomed to failure. An ego, in the mature and healthy sense, is precisely what they have failed to attain. They dream of giving away what they do not possess. No one can successfully bypass the need for self-esteem.

Pillar 1: Living consciously

It includes:

- Facing problems heads on
- Making amends when we know we have failed
- Reality-based feedback
- Knowing one's value and acting according to them

Betrayals of consciousness

- Not facing problems: hiding problems in the hope they'll disappear is a betrayal of our own mind, and self-esteem will suffer
- Not making amends:
- Ignoring reality: for example, says the author, the fake self-help mantra of "If I don't choose to see it or acknowledge it, it doesn't exist"

Learn to spot the "alien voices" within

Says the author:

> *Why might it be worth our efforts to identify the different voices speaking within? To recognize alien influences with alien agendas (the voice of a parent or a religious authority, for example), to learn how to distinguish one's own true voice from all others, to operate one's life as an autonomous human being.*

Pillar 2: Self-acceptance

To accept oneself, and to be a friend of oneself.

Stated in the negative, it's the refusal of being in an adversarial relationship with oneself.

It comes with different levels:

1. Being on your side: "prerational, premoral act of self-affirmation—a kind of natural egoism that is the birthright of every human being". It is is "selfishness," in the noblest meaning of that word.
2. Acceptance: to acceptance everything of who we are, and a refusal to see any part of ourselves as "alien" to us. It's not about liking everything about us, but accepting it.
3. Compassion: to be a friend of yourself. Even if you think something was unworthy of you, you can self-inquire without condemning, make amends, and resolve to do better. But as a friend, not as a judge.

Exercise 1

Stand in front of a full-length mirror and look at your face and body.

Notice if this is difficult or makes you uncomfortable. It is good to do this exercise naked.

Say to yourself: "Whatever my defects or imperfections, I accept myself unreservedly and completely."

Breath deeply, say it and repeat it for a minute or two, let the words sink in.

The author says that when clients do this exercise morning and evening, they start seeing the strong relationship between self-acceptance and self-esteem.

Exercise 2

Imagine a feeling, emotion, or a part of yourself that you dislike and find hard to accept.

It can be fear, envy, rage, humiliation etc.
Maybe think of the situation that evokes such feelings.

Breath into the feeling and accept it fully.
Don't wish it to go away, sit with it.

You can also tell yourself "I am now feeling such and such (whatever the feeling is) and I accept it fully."

And if you can't manage to feel it, without resisting it?
Then accept your resistance to accepting the resistance.

Pillar 3: Self-responsibility

To take responsibility for one's life, actions, and results.

The individual who accepts self-responsibility knows that nobody owes him the fulfillment of his goals and wishes.

At the same time, it means respecting other people's self-interest. So if you need someone to reach your goals, you undertake to provide them with what they want to help you (WIIFT).

Also read:

- **The social exchange**

Pillar 4: Self-assertiveness

Self-assertiveness means the willingness to stand up for yourself, to openly be and act according to who you are, and to treat yourself with respect in all human encounters.

It means knowing and honoring your wants, needs, and value, and appropriately express them in life.

In this paragraph, I also realized that Branden truly seems to understand social skills and to have high levels of emotional and social intelligence.
He says that what's appropriate for self-assertiveness is contextual, and depends on the situation, and the people.
For example, he says:

> Sometimes self-assertiveness is manifested (…) through a polite silence that signals nonagreement; sometimes by refusing to smile at a tasteless joke. In work situations, one cannot necessarily voice all one's thoughts, and it is not necessary to do so.

Also important:

- **Mindsets first**: to practice self-assertiveness you need the conviction that your ideas and wants are important
- **It's not rebelliousness**: don't confuse self-assertiveness with general rebelliousness
- **You need courage sometimes**: you build self-assertiveness by being self-assertive when it is not easy to do so
- It's a balancing act:

> When we learn how to be in an intimate relationship without abandoning our sense of self, when we learn how to be kind without being self-sacrificing, when we learn how to cooperate with others without betraying our standards and convictions, we are practicing self-assertiveness.

- **Some individualism is needed**

> (…) if one believes that it is more desirable to fit in than to stand out, one will not embrace the virtue of self-assertiveness.
> If one's primary source of safety and security is through affiliation with the tribe, the family, the group, the community, the company, the collective, then even self-esteem can be perceived as threatening and frightening—because it signifies individuation (self-realization, the unfolding of personal identity)

Individualism also underpins the capacity for true connection.
The author says that the mature individual developed equally on both tracks of individuation (autonomy) and relationship (the capacity for intimacy and human connectedness).

I couldn't agree more.
Also read:

- **Enlightened Individualism**

And on assertiveness read:

- **How to be assertive**

Pillar 5: Living purposefully

It means to have goals and act accordingly to reach them.

It means to use your power and expend effort for the attainment of goals that you have chosen and that are meaningful to you.

Keep Your Identity Separate From Your Goals

However, don't make the mistake of identifying the self with the work.

If self-esteem is tied primarily to accomplishments, success, income, or being a good provider, economic circumstances beyond your control can fling you into depression or acute demoralization.

Read more here:

- The antifragile ego

Pillar 6: Personal integrity

Integrity is the integration of ideals, convictions, standards, beliefs, and behavior.

We have integrity when behavior is congruent with our professed values and when ideals and practice match.

Before integrity we need to have principles of behavior, values, and moral convictions about what is appropriate and what is not, what is right, and what is wrong.

Whenever we behave in ways that contradict our judgment of what's right and wrong, we lose face in our own eyes. We lose respect with ourselves. And since self-esteem is about the respect and reputation we have with ourselves, **when we act in ways that go against our morals our self-esteem suffers**.

Says the author:

> A tragedy of many lives is that people greatly underestimate the self-esteem costs and consequences of hypocrisy and dishonesty. They imagine that at worst all that is involved is some discomfort. But it is the spirit itself that is contaminated.

Pillar 7: Keep practicing even when it's hard

Pillar 7 is all about practice.

And, especially, to practice when it's difficult.

Since self-esteem is the reputation you have with yourself, the more you can "prove" to yourself that you're worthy of high self-esteem, the higher your self-esteem will be.

Philosophy of Self-Esteem

In this part the author goes into beliefs and mindsets.

You can learn more with the following articles:

- Growth mindset (how to develop one)
- Antifragile ego
- Accept your loneliness

Integrating sub-personalities for deeper self-acceptances

We are not monolithic blocks with just one set of values and preferences.

Instead, we are often composed of different sets of sub-personalities, and to have a high self-esteem and to fully accept ourselves, we also have to accept our sub-personalities.

Among our sub-personalities:

- Kid self
- Teenage self
- Opposite gender self
- Mother self

We often keep parts of these personalities within us.
We still have a kid who likes something that we liked as children. And we still have fathers and mothers voices sometimes playing within us.

Accepting our masculine & feminine develops self-esteem

Branden says we all have both genders within us.

> The opposite-gender-self is the component of the psyche containing the feminine subpersonality of the male and the masculine subpersonality

And, crucially:

> There tends to be a fairly strong correlation between how we relate to the opposite gender in the world and how we relate to the opposite gender within.

MORE WISDOM

People With Low Self-Esteem Resent People With High Self-Esteem

The author says that low self-esteem people are often uncomfortable in the presence of higher self-esteem individuals, and can grow resentful.

They might even say that they have too much self-esteem.
But in truth, they're making a statement about themselves. The author says that **insecure men often feel more insecure in the presence of self-confident women** (see the latent anger of some men towards women in the red pill).

Extreme Ownership is Dangerous to Self-Esteem

Extreme ownership has become a popular mindset in self-development.

But the author believes that is dangerous to healthy self-esteem:

> I do not support the grandiose notion that "I am responsible for every aspect of my existence and everything that befalls me." Some things we have control over; others we do not.
> If I hold myself responsible for matters beyond my control, I put my self-esteem in jeopardy, since inevitably I will fail my expectations.

Eployees don't trust employers because of incongruency

> Studies disclose that many people in organizations do not trust those above them. Why? Lack of congruence. Beautiful mission statements unsupported by practice.

Also read:

- **Corporate manipulation**

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees

Proving you're enough is a battle you lose when you started it

> *If my aim is to prove I am "enough," the project goes on to infinity—because the battle was already lost on the day I conceded the issue was debatable.*

Some key articles on the topic:

- Judge power dynamics
- Frame control

Getting good with people is fundamental to self-esteem (and life)

Says the author:

> *Sometimes people who feel fear in the human realm drop to a very low level of consciousness in their relationships and seek the safety and security of competence in the impersonal word of machines, mathematics, or abstract thought. No matter what heights they may attain professionally, their self-esteem remains flawed. We cannot with impunity run from so important an aspect of life.*

Leaders need a strong ego

Says Branden:

> It is a fallacy to say that a great leader should be egoless. A leader needs an ego sufficiently healthy that it does not experience itself as on the line in every encounter—so that the leader is free to be task and results oriented, not self-aggrandizement or self-protection oriented.

If a leader has low self-esteem, says the author, he will most likely feel more comfortable with people who have even less self-esteem, and hire those people.

I love this passage.
On this website, we call it "the law of the lid" of leadership.
However, I must note again, the author seems to mix up ego and self-esteem.

Enlightenment & Consciousness Provide Self-Esteem, Material Pursuits Do Not

The author says that some people seek self-esteem with material possessions, sexual conquests, or belonging in the "right" clubs.

But these are hollow pursuits.

Instead, self-esteem runs deeper.
He says:

> positive self-esteem is best understood as a spiritual attainment, that is, as a victory in the evolution of consciousness.

Self-Esteem fluctuates, think of it in terms of average levels

It's normal to have fluctuations.

So it's more appropriate to think of self-esteem in terms of averaging out those fluctuations.

Have the courage to end poor relationships

Says the author:

> We often see this pattern in marriages. One partner sees before the other that the relationship is finished. But he or she does not want to be "the bad guy," the one to end things. So instead manipulation begins, to lead the other to make the first move. It is cruel, degrading, lacking in dignity, and hurtful to both people. It is self-demeaning and self-diminishing.

Parenting helps, but there is more

Good parenting contributes to high self-esteem, and poor parenting makes high self-esteem harder.

But it's only one element among many.

You Cannot Have Enough Self-Esteem

The author says that "no, you can't have too much self-esteem".

He says that some people believe so because they confuse self-esteem with boasting or bragging or arrogance.
But, he says, such traits reflect too little self-esteem, not too much.

Low self-esteem negatively impacts relationships

The author says that if one partner loses self-esteem while the other grows it, the losing partner may grow anxious and attempt to sabotage the growth process.

Also see:

- **How to maintain control in relationships**

QUOTES

> When we doubt our minds, we tend to discount its products.

Antifragile self-esteem:

> *In a world in which the total of human knowledge is doubling about every ten years, our security can rest only on our ability to learn.*

Self-esteem is the reputation we have with ourselves:

> *But deep in our psyche they are added up, and the sum is that experience we call "self-esteem." Self-esteem is the reputation we acquire with ourselves.*

On fearing to admit mistakes and low self-esteem:

> *To find it humiliating to admit an error is a certain sign of flawed self-esteem.*

On "too nice people" making excuses for their lack of power with an excess of "goodness":

> As a sop to the pain he cannot entirely bury, he tells himself, "At least I'm not selfish. Selfishness is evil—isn't it?"

On individuals before community:

> Individuation raises the specter of isolation to those who have not achieved it and do not understand that far from being the enemy of community, it is its necessary precondition. A healthy society is a union of self-respecting individuals. It is not a coral bush.

On therapy over-focus on the negative aspects of human psychology and the corresponding need for more "positive psychology":

> Everyone who has any familiarity with psychology knows about the danger of disowning the murderer within. Far fewer people understand the tragedy of disowning the hero within.

On tribalism being anti self-esteem:

> The tribal premise is intrinsically anti-self-esteem.
> (…)
> Disempowers the individual qua individual. Its implicit message is: You don't count. By yourself, you are nothing. Only as part of us can you be something.

CRITICISM

This section reviews the scientific and logical aspects of "The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem".

Naive Self-Help Promoting “Doing Good”

Says the author:

> We cannot be indifferent to the moral meaning of our actions, although we may try to be or pretend to be.

And:

> everyone judges himself or herself by some standard (…) to the extent there is a split between ideals and practice, self-respect suffers.

That is true… For empaths.

But dark triads and Machiavellians don’t really feel much mental blowback if they disregard rules of ethics and moral conduct.

And albeit it’s good to be an empath, this website also says that being able to sever our morality from certain actions -or people- is helpful in life.

So it’s possible that instead of focusing on making all your actions in line, you might want to focus on being more fluid. Ethical and moral with the people and situations who deserve it, and being able to disregard the “rules” when the situation or the individual you’re dealing with calls for it.

Sometimes Felt More Pop-Psychology, Less Scientific

The author writes based on:

- His experience as a therapist
- His intuition / analysis
- His philosophy of life

Most of the times, and in most of the crucial concepts, his theory seems to add up and his advice is spot-on.
But some other times it felt that his framework was more based on personal opinions and worldviews, and less on experience or science.

Science seemed indeed to be largely missing.
When it was introduced, the author quoted some studies and work that turned out to be only partially correct pop-psychology -like the learning styles and Margaret Mead’s ethnographic work with the Samoans-.

Definition of self-esteem may be too large

Writes personality psychology researcher Keith Campbell:

> This massively popular work expanded the definition of self-esteem (…) yet it also captures many variables that today’s psychologists would place beyond self-esteem, such as mindfulness and self-efficacy.

Conflates ego with self-esteem

Writes the author:

> With a pretense at regret he will sometimes declare, “I can’t help it—I have a big ego.” The truth is, he has a small one, but his energies are invested in never knowing that.

But as psychologist Roy Baumeister explains, they’re not the same.

I've noticed that happening more than once across "The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem".

Self-esteem is what Branden likes, rather than what truly is

More than once I felt that what was good for self-esteem is what supported the author's philosophy and worldview, rather than what's been proven to be.

For example:

- **Commitment to learning supports self-esteem?**

How does a "commitment to learning" underpin self-esteem?

I'm all for learning, it's one of my life's main activities and this website also offers learning products.

But… I don't necessarily posit that it underpins self-esteem.

It can help in many cases, yes, since expanding knowledge and skills also mean expanding power and the expanded capacity to control the world around us.
But I'm not convinced that correlation is all that strong. Unless one has developed a growth mindset, learning can also sneakily presuppose that one does not know enough.

- **Is putting the individual before the community a necessary aspect of self-esteem?**

Again, I agree with the idea and philosophy.

I'm the biggest proponent around for individuals before groups. Also from a power dynamics and self-empowerment perspective.
But is it really foundational to self-esteem?
I haven't seen any evidence that convinced me of it.

- **Purposeful living only counts if you pursue "good" goals?**

The author says that the type of work and goals you pursue don't matter… *As long as they're not "intrinsically antilife".*

Again, I agree with him from an ethical standpoint.

But who says that a terrorist can't have high self-esteem if he believes that's God's work?
And who says that a man pursuing ethnic cleansing in the belief that it's the best thing to do cannot have high self-esteem?

- **Self-esteem *must* be grounded in reality? Must… ?**

The author stresses the relationship between realism and self-esteem.

Man of high self-esteem look at reality, he says.
Being grounded in reality may help to achieve reality-based goals.

But grandiose narcissists have high self-esteem without being grounded in reality.

And some of the most high confidence and self-esteem men believed God is on their side.

- **The author's political preferences become ingredients and advice for healthy self-esteem**

In the last part of the book, it becomes clear Branden holds strong political views.

He supports capitalism and more individualistic societies, and dislikes communism, heavy taxation, and collectivist societies.
Describing scenes of looting, he says that they are the consequences of professors who taught, I quote, that "no one

is responsible for anything he or she does (except the greedy capitalists who own the stores and deserve whatever trouble they get)."

That felt like a political statement, not a scientific one.

You can then understand why Branden spent so much time defending himself against the accusations of being culturally and politically biased.

He also doesn't seem to agree -and maybe even understand- Buddhism.
He says:

> Understood correctly, there is nothing intrinsically "Western" about a strong goal orientation. When Buddha set out in search of enlightenment, was he not moved by a passionate purpose?

Actually, I'm not sure Buddhism is moved by a passionate purpose.

For the record, I'm also all for capitalism. But I don't necessarily agree with the author that Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia stifled self-esteem.

- **Moral integrity** (& hypocrisy)

The author makes morals and integrity central to self-esteem.

I'm not only unconvinced but actually disagree with it.
It's people with the strongest pre-set morals who engage the most in mental machinations to justify their own non-moral behavior (cognitive dissonance).

It's also noteworthy that the author saw nothing wrong in badmouthing his former partner.

I wonder if that shouldn't count as "not right" and decrease his self-esteem?
I guess it didn't:

Vindictive & nasty towards his ex: where are the moral values & integrity?

Read below in the "cons".

And please note, this isn't so much about his action and whether or not they were correct.

It's also about the pillars of self-esteem and what contributes -and what doesn't- to self-esteem.

If behaving correctly is so important, and if the author seems to suggest he has come such a long way in curating his self-esteem, shouldn't we see moral behavior from him?

So when I read the passages of him badmouthing his ex, that undermines much of his vaunted need and importance of "values" for self-esteem.

As a matter of fact, for me **it's a red flag when someone pushes a tad too hard on the importance of value and living life according to certain values**.

It's a red flag of potential manipulation and self-manipulation.

Says Brendan of her former partner:

> She did not require full agreement among acquaintances, but with anyone who wanted to be truly close, enormous enthusiasm was expected for every deed and utterance.
> for example, I found her self-congratulatory remarks excessive or her lack of empathy disquieting or **her pontificating unworthy of her**.

This passage serves absolutely nothing in explaining self-esteem.

So it must be put there as an attempt to defame his ex.

"Unworthy of her" is a nasty covert power move.
By implying that a woman like Ayn Rand should be held to a high standard, he seeks to sound less nasty and more giving, while delivering the same power punch -or, actually, even more powerful, since he seeks to self-frame as a balanced, giving individual-.
Read more here.

Accepting your dark side might do better things for your self-esteem

I lost much respect for the author with that passage quoted above.

It's possible that the author has not accepted his dark side.
He refuses to look and admit to his own anger and hatred of his ex, and his will to harm her.

I think that it's much better for your self-esteem if rather than pretending you're good and nice, you accept your own darker drive.
And that's also a much better way to eventually act and become more moral, by the way.

CONS

These are some "cons" that aren't necessarily about the concept of self-esteem:

Ayn Rand VS Nathaniel Branden: nastiness & airing dirty laundry

There are several passages in which Branden discusses his relationship with Ayn Rand.

Even when I was first reading the book, and completely oblivious to their relationship, I was astonished by those passages.
They seemed overly nasty towards Rand, and I knew something interesting from a power dynamics point of view was up.

I had to look further into it.

The story that emerges is not pretty.

It seems to me this was a toxic, emotionally (highly) addictive relationship with some personality disturbance in it.
And the two parties were too enmeshed in it, both emotionally, and financially.

I can understand his personal anger and frustration.
I read part of Ayn Rand letter. She seems to be the first to make a public and open attack. She comes across as spiteful and I can see a lot of power moves and nastiness in that letter.

Branden's own answer isn't much better though.
He also goes very low.
And comes across equally cheap and vindictive.

Rand seems volatile and dark-triad narcissistic.

However, the author should have soared higher after a certain point.
I think the author shouldn't have kept airing his grievances and using his future work as an opportunity to attack again. It reflects poorly on him, and on his own work.

This is a strong reminder that to avoid this nasty stuff **you need social strategies more than self-esteem**.

“Back then when it was better” fallacy

More than once the author seems to believe that the world is getting worse.

That today it’s worse, and back then it was better.
For example:

> The challenge for people today, and it is not an easy one, is to maintain high personal standards while feeling that one is living in a moral sewer.
> Grounds for such a feeling are to be found in the behavior of our public figures, the horror of world events, and in our so-called art and entertainment, so much of which celebrates depravity, cruelty, and mindless violence.
> All contribute to making the practice of personal integrity a lonely and heroic undertaking.

I don’t believe that for a second.
And not necessarily because the world is getting better and more virtuous as Pinker implies. But because people are pretty much the same across the centuries.

PROS

Among the many pros:

- **One of the best overviews on self-esteem**

And that should be your main reason to read it.
Plus, it also provides a good overview of general mental health and well-being.

Next, I personally deeply enjoyed:

- Win-win philosophy based on healthy self-interest
- Personal self-development based around the self before any group or affiliation
- Self-esteem based on personal growth and self-empowerment
- Foundational mindset of “deserving respecful behavior” are spot-on
- Useful exercises

Review

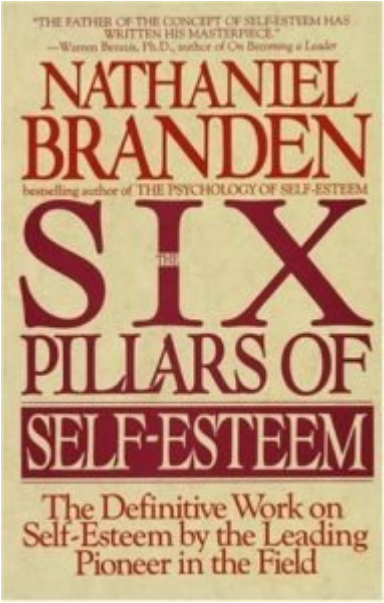
“The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem” is a foundational book for personal self-development.

Much of the advice and philosophy also expands, complements, or mentions some of this website’s philosophy and approach to self-empowerment.

As a matter of fact, I was surprised at the overlap.
I went through some passages while nodding and thinking “exactly right, as this article expands on”.

Get the book on Amazon.

The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem Summary: Gain Mental Power



"The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem" (1994) is a self-help and psychology book in which author Dr. Nathaniel Branden describes the key elements that raise (or lower) the self-esteem of an individual. It includes exercises, mindsets, and beliefs to help readers increase their self-esteem.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-six-pillars-of-self-esteem/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.1

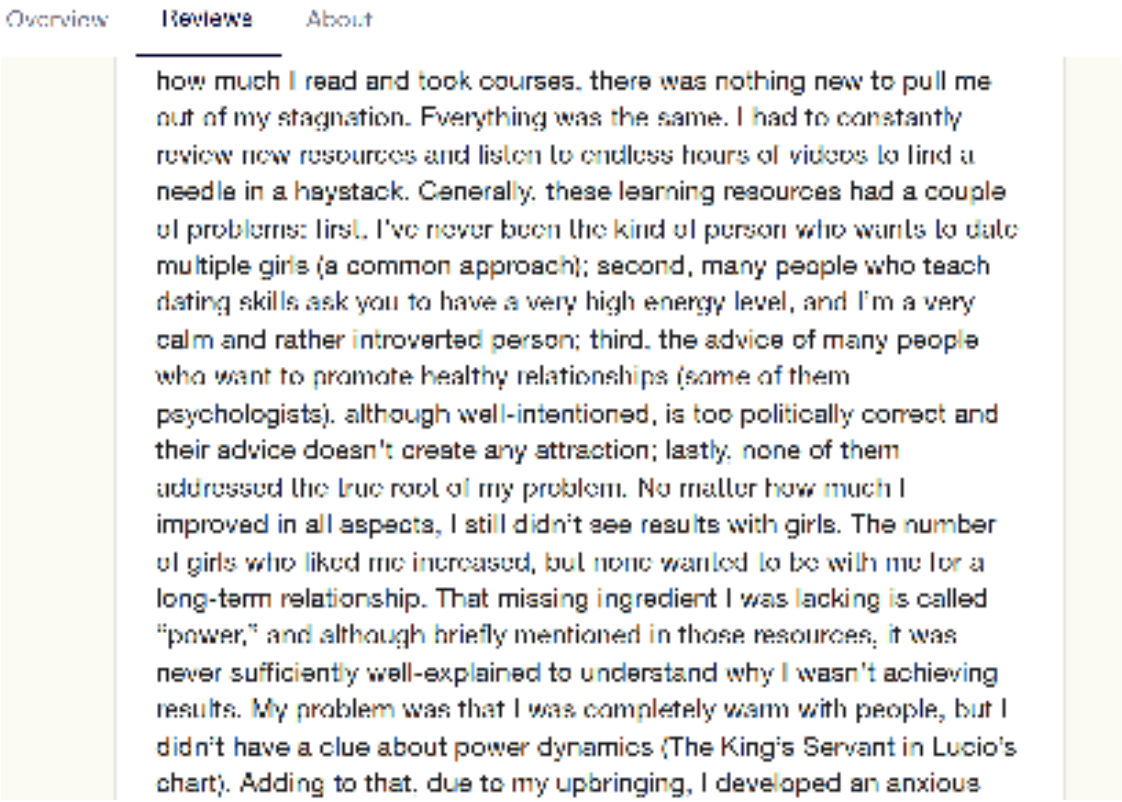
Interpersonal Power Dynamics: The Traffic Light Sytem for Mastering Status & Respect

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 September 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Want to decode the hidden rules of social success?

At The Power Moves, we reveal Interpersonal Power Dynamics—TPM's applied framework for understanding and influencing social interactions, relationships, and status. This is part of our broader Power Dynamics Framework, the proven system thousands of men have used to gain influence, respect, and control in any social situation.

This isn't basic social advice—these are strategies rooted in research and TPM's proprietary methodology. Here's what one reader experienced:



Overview Reviews About

how much I read and took courses, there was nothing new to pull me out of my stagnation. Everything was the same. I had to constantly review new resources and listen to endless hours of videos to find a needle in a haystack. Generally, these learning resources had a couple of problems: first, I've never been the kind of person who wants to date multiple girls (a common approach); second, many people who teach dating skills ask you to have a very high energy level, and I'm a very calm and rather introverted person; third, the advice of many people who want to promote healthy relationships (some of them psychologists), although well-intentioned, is too politically correct and their advice doesn't create any attraction; lastly, none of them addressed the true root of my problem. No matter how much I improved in all aspects, I still didn't see results with girls. The number of girls who liked me increased, but none wanted to be with me for a long-term relationship. That missing ingredient I was lacking is called "power," and although briefly mentioned in those resources, it was never sufficiently well-explained to understand why I wasn't achieving results. My problem was that I was completely warm with people, but I didn't have a clue about power dynamics (The King's Servant in Lucio's chart). Adding to that, due to my upbringing, I developed an anxious

> **TPM reader**: (…) girls who liked me increased, but none wanted to be with me … That missing ingredient I was lacking is called "power," … I didn't have a clue about power dynamics (The King's Servant in Lucio's chart) … Since I started to consume his content, my life has changed … I feel more respected, and all my relationships have improved on all levels … my life has undoubtedly improved a lot.

So let's learn how to read social power dynamics:

Contents

- Intro
- Power Traffic Light
- Context Makes The Difference
  - Elements of Context
  - Case Study: Context & Leadership
- Traffic Lights Strategies
  - Green: Empower Back

  - Yellow: ignore & take note, or be smooth
  - ⍰⍰ Techniques: Least Effort Re-Empowerment
  - Orange: direct action
  - Red: enforce boundaries, or strategize
- Skills For Mastering Social Power Dynamics
  - Power Awareness
  - Power Skills
  - Power Accountancy
- Master Social Power Dynamics From A to Z

Intro

At the highest level, you assess people's actions for:

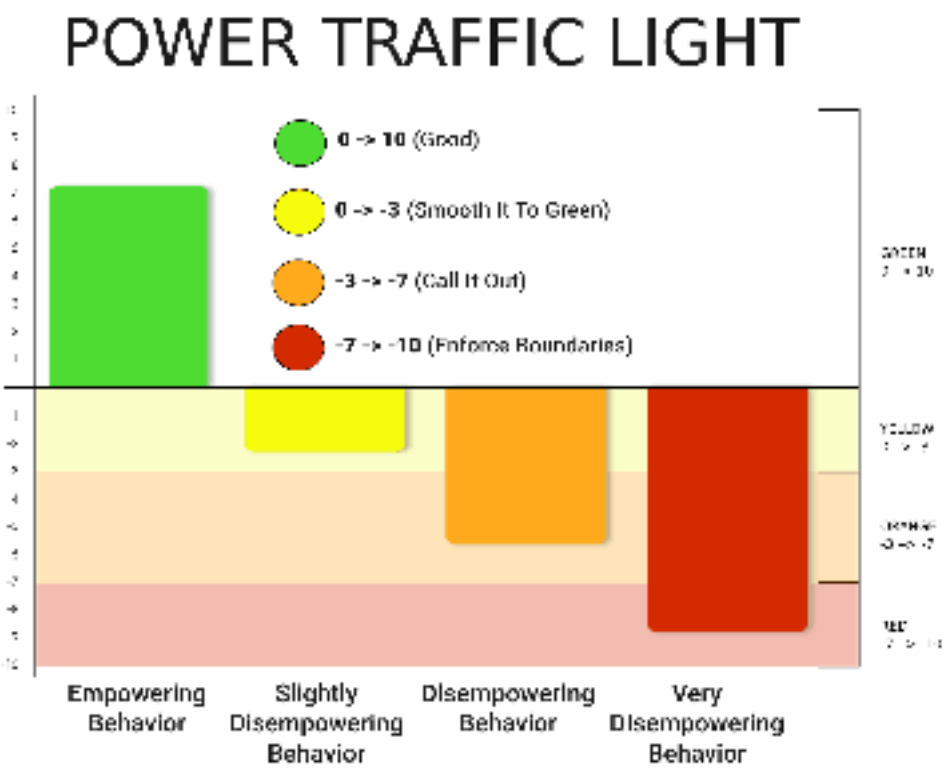
- **Empowering**: gives you power
- **Disempowering**: takes your power away

For example:

Empowering	Disempowering
Apologies	Accusations
Congratulating	Undermining
Respect	Disrespect
…	…

Power Traffic Light

The traffic light is a simple model to categorize social power dynamics.



0 to 10 gives you power. 0 to -10 disempowers you. Intensity makes the difference

Examples in an office scenario with "tasking":

- **Empowering**: a colleague says: "*I'm gonna work on it right now and send you that document ASAP*"
- **Disempowering yellow**: the boss says in front of the team "*Send me that document ASAP please*"
- **Disempowering orange**: a colleague says in front of the team "*Send me that document ASAP please*"
- **Disempowering red**: a report tells the boss in front of the team "*Send me that document ASAP please*"

We used the same example to show that:

Context Makes The Difference

Let's explain with the previous examples:

Empowering because the colleague who executes swiftly treats you like a superior

Sub-communication: "you're important, and higher power".

Disempowering yellow because the boss is *supposed* to give you tasks

Sub-communication: "you're below me, and I treat you as such"

Everyone knows there is an official hierarchy. But you can lose power if he's curt.

Disempowering orange because a colleague is not supposed to task you

Sub-communication: "I'm higher power, and/or my work is more important than yours"

⚠ Careful: a tasking colleague may want to become your boss.

Disempowering red: a report tasking you is turning the power tables on you

Sub-communication: "There are no hierarchies here and/or I don't respect you as a leader".

A report *may* have to task you.
But he should be very power-protecting then.

⍰ For example:

> **Power-protecting report**:
> Boss, do you think you can send me that document today? <—- leaves it up to you
> That way I can finish this task for the client <—- provides a rationale that's good for you

⚠You must demand power-protection from reports, or you lose respect as a leader.

Also see more in:

- Office politics

Elements of Context

Context includes:

- **Your status VS his status**. The lower status the aggressor is compared to you, the more disempowering it is
- **Who is around**, including:
  - Privacy, more people around = more disempowering
  - People's relevance: Close relationships/social circle matter much more than strangers
  - People's power awareness: low-value, naive people won't realize you're losing power. High-flyers do, and take note
- **Your goals**.
  For example: a brusque but genius mentor is less disempowering when everyone knows you're after learning
- **Urgency**: direct commands are appropriate during emergencies. Less so during routine work
- **Personality**. If someone is curt, you lose less power if that's "who they are"
- **Universality**: if someone is rude to everyone, you lose less power when they're rude with you (but still: push back whenever appropriate)

⍰ Case Study: Context & Leadership

- **Putin re-empowers himself with a minister** (see PU)
- **Putin lets Berlusconi get away** here

Why?
Out of context, Berlusconi's behavior is MORE disempowering.

But within context, it's not:

- **Berlusconi is closer to an equal**. Albeit Russia is the biggest power, they're both country leaders
- **Berlusconi "plays at home"**: it was in Italy
- **It's a joking frame**
  - Berlusconi has a reputation for joking around, rather than outright attacking
- **The two are on friendly terms**, and people knew

It's still disempowering for a leader who wants to convey power and be taken seriously.
But not *too* disempowering -and it was a challenging situation anyway-.

Traffic Lights Strategies

Very high-level guidelines:

Green: Empower Back

For pure effectiveness, both opposites work:

1. **Empower them back**, your baseline approach[1]
2. [?] **Take and act entitled** (power-hogging). As if it were due to you

Two extreme examples to illustrate the point:

Re-Empowering Back

My father is popular on a photographers' forum.

At their meetup this man kneeled:

My father:

- **Frames it as joking around** by smiling
- **Get closer**
- **Holds hands**

It moved from a possible frame of "I'm so high status" to a hilarious one of "LOL, thanks, we're joking around, but we're friends".

Power Hogging

Takers take as much value, investment, and power, while giving back as little as possible.
It's high ROI for them if it works, but it only works with lower-value people and people lacking any awareness and self-respect.

A woman trying too hard to be high-value:

Act entitled, like you expect more, and it's never good enough

⍰⍰ Never give to these people ⍰⍰♂ (terrible human beings).

More "everyday examples" in Power University.

Seek to Re-Empower

It's our baseline approach because:

- **High power and high-value people don't keep on giving to takers**, so "hogging" only works with low-power, clueless folks
- **Hogging sub-communicates poor character**. Honorable men don't seek pedestalization and don't *need* ego-stroking

Read more in this crucial article:

- How to save face and power protect

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

Yellow: ignore & take note, or be smooth

Good approaches:

1. Display your resolve, don't send any submissive signals

Ie.:
If you get a hand-crushing handshake power move, make it a point to stare them straight on.

See more:

- Submissive behavior

- Submissive words

2. Avoid thread-expanding on the power-taking

Ie.:
If they joke at your expense, do not add anything on top with self-deprecation.
And don't laugh at it (if everyone else laughs, stick to a tight-lipped smile).

3. Ignore and observe

When you're lost or not sure what's best for you, it's OK to let it go.

But always make a mental note! ⍰

⍰ When to address or let it go is advanced level.
⍰ read more here or join PU.

P.S.:
You can also re-empower yourself later.
Either address it later, or power move them.

⍰⍰ Techniques: Least Effort Re-Empowerment

Least effort resistance requires little from you.

Often, you just *remove* some warmth:

⍰⍰ You remove warmth because **friendliness in response to disempowering behavior makes you submissive**.
And confirms the frame that they're above you.

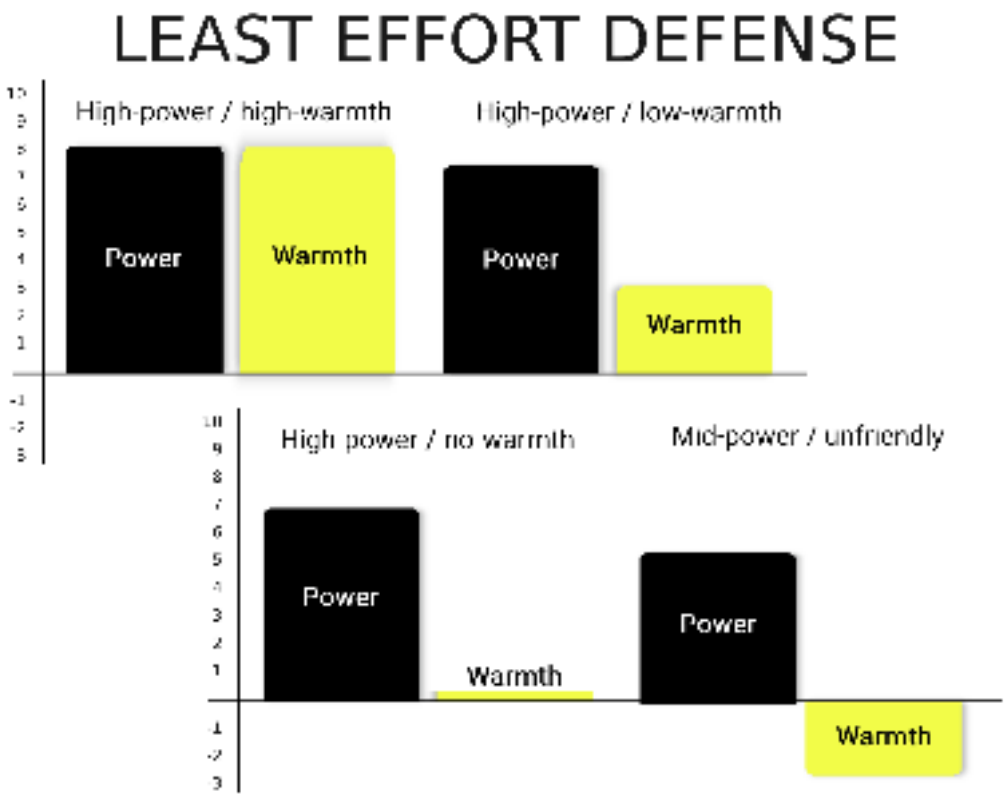
How to remove warmth:

- **Ignore him**, or avoid greeting him first
- **Greet neutrally** or in quick, perfunctory fashion
  - Neutral words such as "*hey man*"
  - Neutral tonality or *dismissive* tonality (see PU)
  - Only brief eye contact or looking away.
    ⍰ Sub-communication: "You're not worthy of my attention"
- **Ignore him when he speaks**: look away or at your phone is neutral.
  - Use "deadpan faces" to avoid being a "supporting spectator". If everyone laughs at his joke, use tight-lipped smiles while looking away.
    ⍰ Subcommunication: you smile at the *joke*, *not* the person
  - Don't comment or you support his topic and thread-expand on his conversational leadership. If anything, intervene to question or raise doubts
  - Start a side conversation with someone in the group (top move!)

If in the meanwhile you gain some status, many power moves will come to *you* to mend things.

⚠ **Balance: in social gatherings tone down dominance if you remove all warmth**
High dominance + low warmth add up. It can become too much for many social events.
You don't win when everyone else thinks you're an aggressive dick.
Don't let an as*hole ruin your reputation and fun.

See here schematically:



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Direct options include:

- **Match dominance with dominance.**
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- **Call it out assertively** (see PU)
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A good chunk of this website is dedicated to self-defense.
Some examples:

- When people make you wait
- When people mispronounce your name
- Overpowering handshakes
- Games men play / games women play and counter-strategies

Red: enforce boundaries, or strategize

Good options:

- **Enforce your boundaries with direct talk**. Ie.: "*I don't appreciate this tone*", or "*This is rude (I'm not OK with this)*"

- **Give an out-out**. Ie.: "*Either you talk to me respectfully, or I have to end this*"
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- **Walk out**
- **Tell them to leave** if you have the power to
- **Ask for private conversation if it's a superior** and you can't risk much. If it's a meeting, ask at the end of it. Everyone will know what's up
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Value, power and social dynamics all overlap.

And all help you recognize people's characters.

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The ability to see power dynamics in real life, including when others empower us or disempower us

Technically, power awareness only refers to the "ability to see".
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Also see:

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> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

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The ability to defend oneself, advance socially, and achieve goals

It includes:

- High-power behavior
- Gaining status and respect in groups, and attracting in dating
- Self-defense (checking power moves, enforcing boundaries, etc.)
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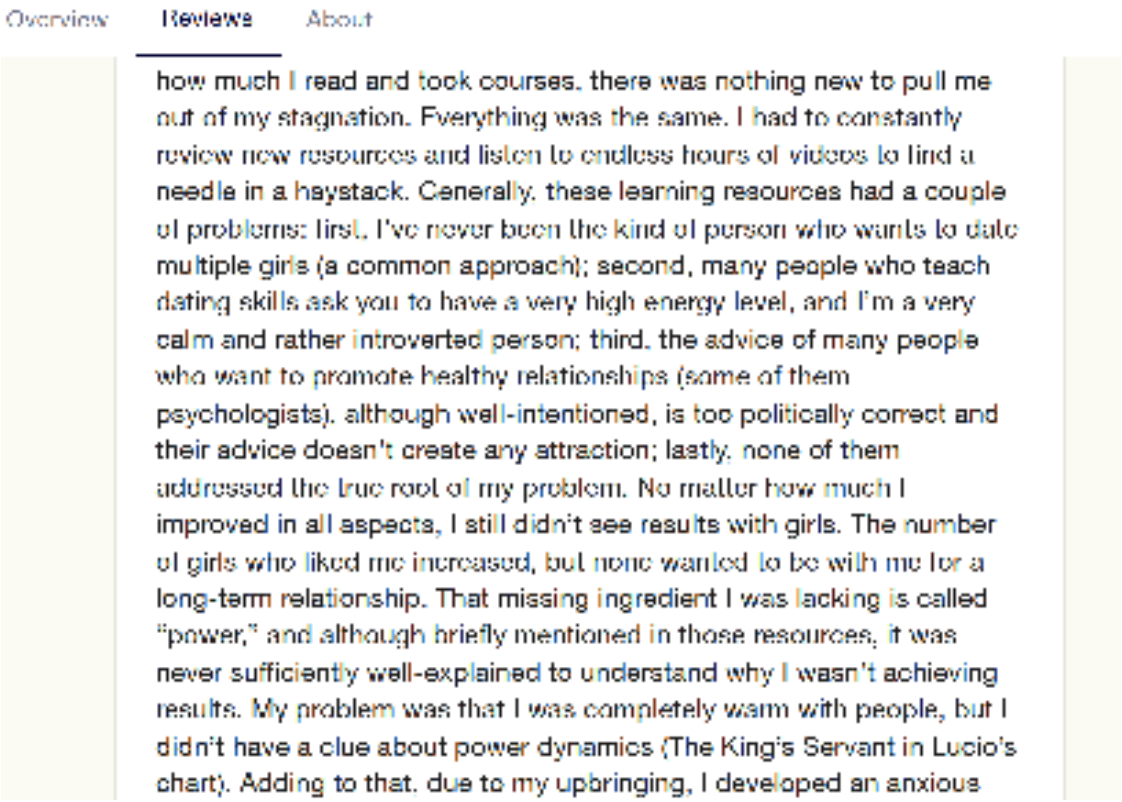
Interpersonal Power Dynamics: The Traffic Light Sytem for Mastering Status & Respect

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 September 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Want to decode the hidden rules of social success?

At The Power Moves, we reveal Interpersonal Power Dynamics—TPM's applied framework for understanding and influencing social interactions, relationships, and status. This is part of our broader Power Dynamics Framework, the proven system thousands of men have used to gain influence, respect, and control in any social situation.

This isn't basic social advice—these are strategies rooted in research and TPM's proprietary methodology. Here's what one reader experienced:



Overview Reviews About

how much I read and took courses, there was nothing new to pull me out of my stagnation. Everything was the same. I had to constantly review new resources and listen to endless hours of videos to find a needle in a haystack. Generally, these learning resources had a couple of problems: first, I've never been the kind of person who wants to date multiple girls (a common approach); second, many people who teach dating skills ask you to have a very high energy level, and I'm a very calm and rather introverted person; third, the advice of many people who want to promote healthy relationships (some of them psychologists), although well-intentioned, is too politically correct and their advice doesn't create any attraction; lastly, none of them addressed the true root of my problem. No matter how much I improved in all aspects, I still didn't see results with girls. The number of girls who liked me increased, but none wanted to be with me for a long-term relationship. That missing ingredient I was lacking is called "power," and although briefly mentioned in those resources, it was never sufficiently well-explained to understand why I wasn't achieving results. My problem was that I was completely warm with people, but I didn't have a clue about power dynamics (The King's Servant in Lucio's chart). Adding to that, due to my upbringing, I developed an anxious

> **TPM reader**: (…) girls who liked me increased, but none wanted to be with me … That missing ingredient I was lacking is called "power," … I didn't have a clue about power dynamics (The King's Servant in Lucio's chart) … Since I started to consume his content, my life has changed … I feel more respected, and all my relationships have improved on all levels … my life has undoubtedly improved a lot.

So let's learn how to read social power dynamics:

Contents

- Intro
- Power Traffic Light
- Context Makes The Difference
  - Elements of Context
  - Case Study: Context & Leadership
- Traffic Lights Strategies
  - Green: Empower Back

  - Yellow: ignore & take note, or be smooth
  - ⍰⍰ Techniques: Least Effort Re-Empowerment
  - Orange: direct action
  - Red: enforce boundaries, or strategize
- Skills For Mastering Social Power Dynamics
  - Power Awareness
  - Power Skills
  - Power Accountancy
- Master Social Power Dynamics From A to Z

Intro

At the highest level, you assess people's actions for:

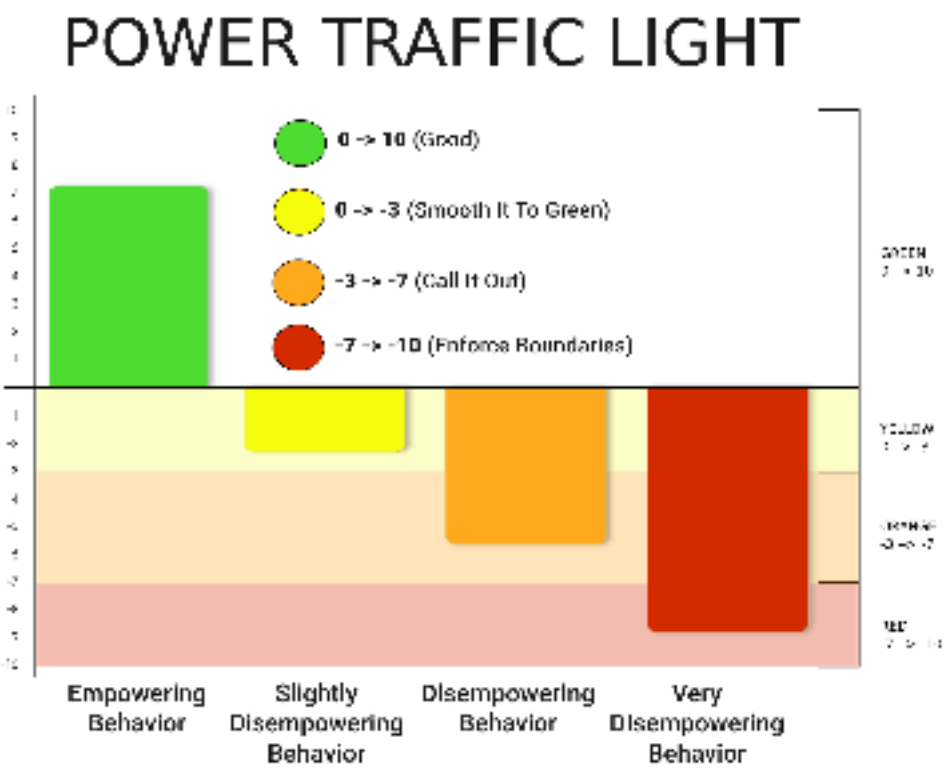
- **Empowering**: gives you power
- **Disempowering**: takes your power away

For example:

Empowering	Disempowering
Apologies	Accusations
Congratulating	Undermining
Respect	Disrespect
…	…

Power Traffic Light

The traffic light is a simple model to categorize social power dynamics.



0 to 10 gives you power. 0 to -10 disempowers you. Intensity makes the difference

Examples in an office scenario with "tasking":

- **Empowering**: a colleague says: "*I'm gonna work on it right now and send you that document ASAP*"
- **Disempowering yellow**: the boss says in front of the team "*Send me that document ASAP please*"
- **Disempowering orange**: a colleague says in front of the team "*Send me that document ASAP please*"
- **Disempowering red**: a report tells the boss in front of the team "*Send me that document ASAP please*"

We used the same example to show that:

Context Makes The Difference

Let's explain with the previous examples:

Empowering because the colleague who executes swiftly treats you like a superior

Sub-communication: "you're important, and higher power".

Disempowering yellow because the boss is *supposed* to give you tasks

Sub-communication: "you're below me, and I treat you as such"

Everyone knows there is an official hierarchy. But you can lose power if he's curt.

Disempowering orange because a colleague is not supposed to task you

Sub-communication: "I'm higher power, and/or my work is more important than yours"

⚠ Careful: a tasking colleague may want to become your boss.

Disempowering red: a report tasking you is turning the power tables on you

Sub-communication: "There are no hierarchies here and/or I don't respect you as a leader".

A report *may* have to task you.
But he should be very power-protecting then.

⍰ For example:

> **Power-protecting report**:
> Boss, do you think you can send me that document today? <—- leaves it up to you
> That way I can finish this task for the client <—- provides a rationale that's good for you

⚠You must demand power-protection from reports, or you lose respect as a leader.

Also see more in:

- Office politics

Elements of Context

Context includes:

- **Your status VS his status**. The lower status the aggressor is compared to you, the more disempowering it is
- **Who is around**, including:
  - Privacy, more people around = more disempowering
  - People's relevance: Close relationships/social circle matter much more than strangers
  - People's power awareness: low-value, naive people won't realize you're losing power. High-flyers do, and take note
- **Your goals**.
  For example: a brusque but genius mentor is less disempowering when everyone knows you're after learning
- **Urgency**: direct commands are appropriate during emergencies. Less so during routine work
- **Personality**. If someone is curt, you lose less power if that's "who they are"
- **Universality**: if someone is rude to everyone, you lose less power when they're rude with you (but still: push back whenever appropriate)

⍰ Case Study: Context & Leadership

- **Putin re-empowers himself with a minister** (see PU)
- **Putin lets Berlusconi get away** here

Why?
Out of context, Berlusconi's behavior is MORE disempowering.

But within context, it's not:

- **Berlusconi is closer to an equal**. Albeit Russia is the biggest power, they're both country leaders
- **Berlusconi "plays at home"**: it was in Italy
- **It's a joking frame**
  - Berlusconi has a reputation for joking around, rather than outright attacking
- **The two are on friendly terms**, and people knew

It's still disempowering for a leader who wants to convey power and be taken seriously.
But not *too* disempowering -and it was a challenging situation anyway-.

Traffic Lights Strategies

Very high-level guidelines:

Green: Empower Back

For pure effectiveness, both opposites work:

1. **Empower them back**, your baseline approach[1]
2. [?] **Take and act entitled** (power-hogging). As if it were due to you

Two extreme examples to illustrate the point:

Re-Empowering Back

My father is popular on a photographers' forum.

At their meetup this man kneeled:

My father:

- **Frames it as joking around** by smiling
- **Get closer**
- **Holds hands**

It moved from a possible frame of "I'm so high status" to a hilarious one of "LOL, thanks, we're joking around, but we're friends".

Power Hogging

Takers take as much value, investment, and power, while giving back as little as possible.
It's high ROI for them if it works, but it only works with lower-value people and people lacking any awareness and self-respect.

A woman trying too hard to be high-value:

Act entitled, like you expect more, and it's never good enough

⍰⍰ Never give to these people ⍰⍰♂ (terrible human beings).

More "everyday examples" in Power University.

Seek to Re-Empower

It's our baseline approach because:

- **High power and high-value people don't keep on giving to takers**, so "hogging" only works with low-power, clueless folks
- **Hogging sub-communicates poor character**. Honorable men don't seek pedestalization and don't *need* ego-stroking

Read more in this crucial article:

- How to save face and power protect

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

Yellow: ignore & take note, or be smooth

Good approaches:

1. Display your resolve, don't send any submissive signals

Ie.:
If you get a hand-crushing handshake power move, make it a point to stare them straight on.

See more:

- Submissive behavior

- Submissive words

2. Avoid thread-expanding on the power-taking

Ie.:
If they joke at your expense, do not add anything on top with self-deprecation.
And don't laugh at it (if everyone else laughs, stick to a tight-lipped smile).

3. Ignore and observe

When you're lost or not sure what's best for you, it's OK to let it go.

But always make a mental note! ⍰

⍰ When to address or let it go is advanced level.
⍰ read more here or join PU.

P.S.:
You can also re-empower yourself later.
Either address it later, or power move them.

⍰⍰ Techniques: Least Effort Re-Empowerment

Least effort resistance requires little from you.

Often, you just *remove* some warmth:

⍰⍰ You remove warmth because **friendliness in response to disempowering behavior makes you submissive**.
And confirms the frame that they're above you.

How to remove warmth:

- **Ignore him**, or avoid greeting him first
- **Greet neutrally** or in quick, perfunctory fashion
  - Neutral words such as "*hey man*"
  - Neutral tonality or *dismissive* tonality (see PU)
  - Only brief eye contact or looking away.
    ⍰ Sub-communication: "You're not worthy of my attention"
- **Ignore him when he speaks**: look away or at your phone is neutral.
  - Use "deadpan faces" to avoid being a "supporting spectator". If everyone laughs at his joke, use tight-lipped smiles while looking away.
    ⍰ Subcommunication: you smile at the *joke*, *not* the person
  - Don't comment or you support his topic and thread-expand on his conversational leadership. If anything, intervene to question or raise doubts
  - Start a side conversation with someone in the group (top move!)

If in the meanwhile you gain some status, many power moves will come to *you* to mend things.

⚠ **Balance: in social gatherings tone down dominance if you remove all warmth**
High dominance + low warmth add up. It can become too much for many social events.
You don't win when everyone else thinks you're an aggressive dick.
Don't let an as*hole ruin your reputation and fun.

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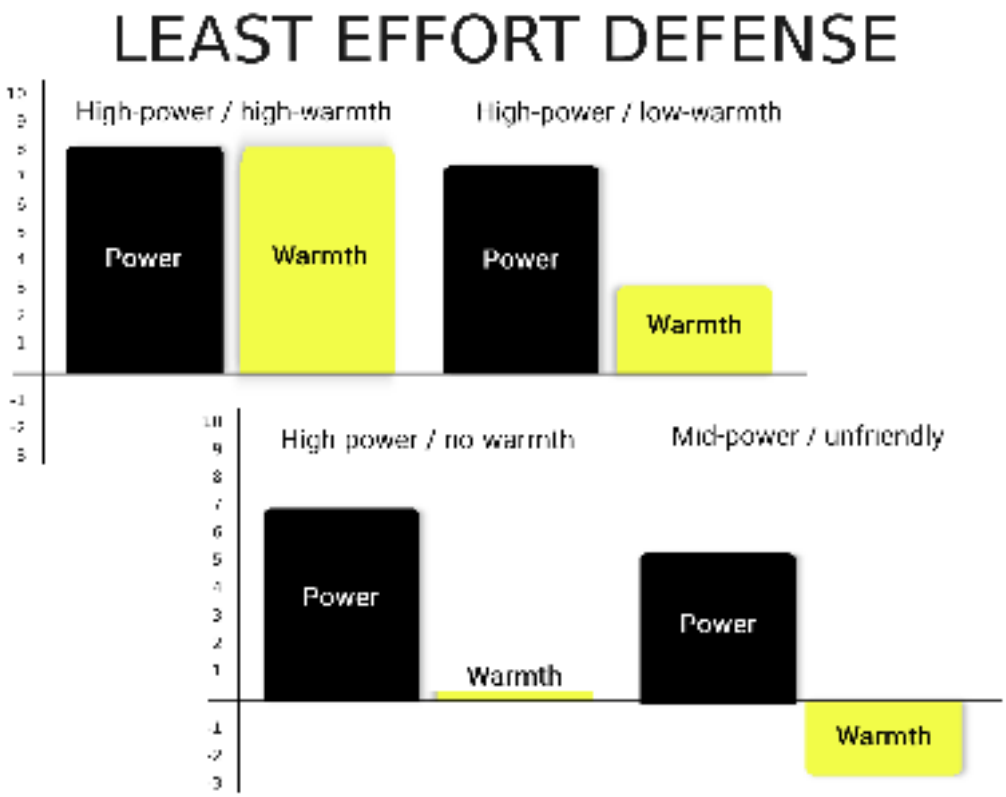

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Leadership Power Dynamics: Power, Influence, and Balancing Coercion

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 September 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Leadership is more than simply giving orders; it's the competent navigation of complex power dynamics.

As the most visited website on power and strategies, we break down the fundamental forces at play: **coercion, dominance, and respect.**

Let's dive into the core **leadership dynamics** every leader must master to protect their authority and achieve the mission.

Contents

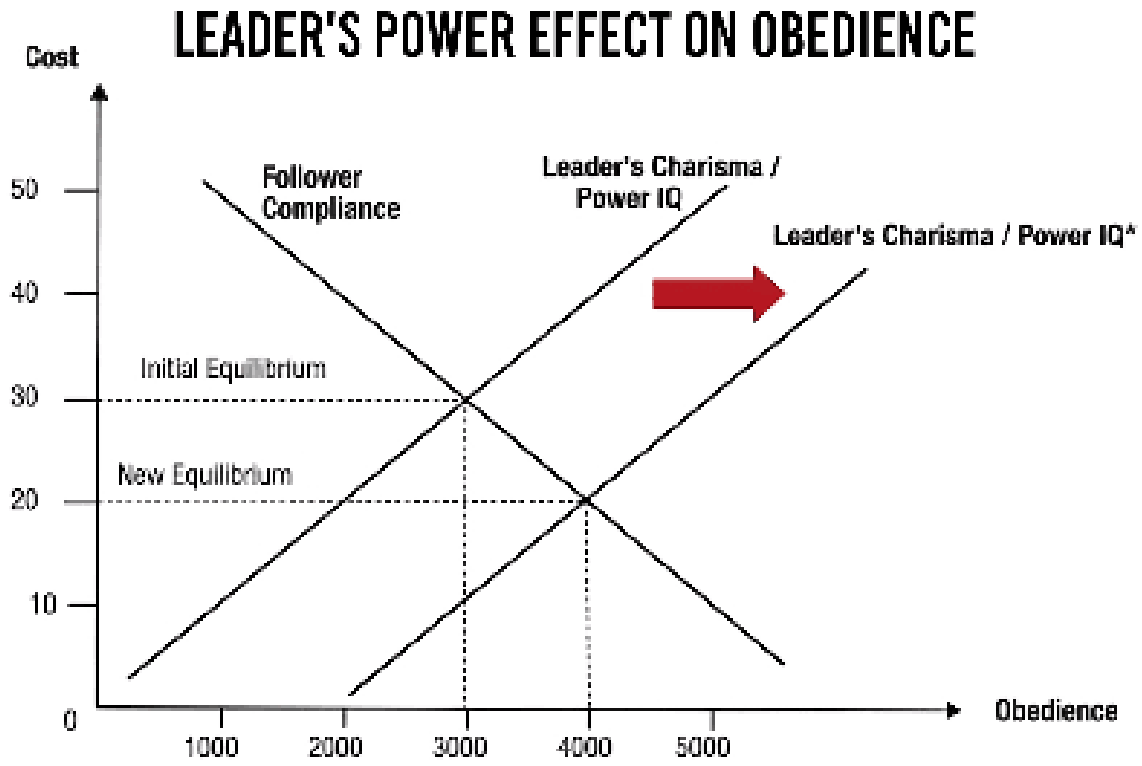
- The Power-Exchange Model of Leadership™
  - Value-control tradeoff model™
- Coercion
  - Acquire The Ability to Coerce
  - Use Cases of Coercion
  - Limitations of Coercion
- Personal Power (Charisma)
- Social Power
  - Learn to Act Dominantly
  - ⍰ Example: Putin Defends Leadership Boundaries
  - Use Cases of Dominance
  - Limitations of Over-Dominance
- Rewards & Punishments (Extrinsic Motivation)
  - Acquire The Ability To Reward & Punish
  - Use Cases of Transactional Leadership
  - Limitations of Transactional Leadership
- Inspiration (Extrinsic Motivation)
  - Inspiration & Manipulation
- Power Protection As Leaders
- ⍰ ⍰ Leadership Tactics: Control, Without Costs
- Fawners to Leadership
  - Fawners distort reality
  - Solutions
  - Fawners will turn when you need them most
  - Solution

The Power-Exchange Model of Leadership™

The Power Exchange Model of Leadership™ states that the more value a leader seeks to extract from followers, the more power he needs—whether to coerce, provide value in return (extrinsic or intrinsic), exert influence (leadership, charisma), or strategically manipulate the exchange.

In most systems of free-willing exchanges, leaders rely on value exchanges, personal influence, and some degree of manipulation.

This is because pure coercion is forbidden, costly, or ineffective. And persuasion tends to outperform blatant manipulation. Especially with higher performers (value-control tradeoff model below). That means that the leader's own value and competence are the crucial differentiators in leadership.



The leader's personal value and competence determine how much others will follow him

Value-control tradeoff model™

The value–control tradeoff model™ states that the higher value an individual is, the more demanding he is, making it more challenging for leaders to attract, influence, and retain. Leaders win by increasing their ability to exchange or extract performance from high-value, low-control individuals.

Lower value individuals are easier to lead: they tend to be less power aware, have fewer options, and are less demanding for both concrete returns and personal value. But they add less value, of course. This is why cult leaders don't rule the world: their followers tend to be lower-value.

Conversely, competent individuals add more value but are more costly and harder to attract. These individuals 'raise the bar' for leaders to step up their own value.

Coercion

Coercion forces compliance through power.

Pure coercion is limited to rare circumstances and is more related to removing people than forcing someone to do something.
However, as Tracy and Cheng noted, pure dominance often forms the 'bottom line of human social hierarchy'. So it's best to start from the foundations of the rawest form of power and walk your way up ('TPM's hierarchy of power'). Simply *having* this foundational power also ensures you will never have to use it.

Acquire The *Ability* to Coerce

Al Capone's famous quote reflects the combined power of both kindness and coercion:

> You can get much further with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone.

That's also been the US foreign policy with the slogan of 'speak softly and carry a big stick'.
Some early research supports this logic. Further studies suggest that coercive threats coupled with favorable offers improved crisis outcomes.

But for everyday leadership in free societies, minimize the use of coercion.

Use Cases of Coercion

Outside of despotic regimes, use coercion on a *per-needed* basis only.

- **Final step for underperformance** after feedback and guidance fail
- **Underperformers** who don't respond to motivation
- **Shock and awe therapy** when the team needs a wake-up call
- **In combination with a reward to increase persuasive leverage.** Similar to how The Godfather proposes 'to be a friend… Or else'

Limitations of Coercion

- **Ineffective in free societies** and democracies
- **Less effective in the West**, where individualists value freedom and rebel more
- **You lose prestige** & influence
- **Brain drain** as top performers seek better leaders

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Own your coercive power, but frame it as 'for rare cases since this great team doesn't need it.'**

Lucio: Denying coercion is weak and suspicious (example in Power Universtiy).

Instead, own it and make it known.
But add that it's for unlikely disruptors to protect team cohesion and achieve the mission -and this team needs no coercion-.

That frame communicates power and the judicious use of force in *service* of the team, while also building the team up.

Personal Power (Charisma)

Personal power is a form of soft power that makes others personally attracted to the leader, and thus more likely to follow him, and work for him and his mission. This is to leadership what 'mate value' is to dating.
As a principle:

⚖ The higher value the leader becomes, the more value he can extract from increasingly higher value followers

In a way, the leader's personal power sets a 'lid' to how much he can get from his followers, a concept that John Maxwell called the 'law of the lid'.

TPM helps men become higher value men, start from this:

- **Foundations of self-development**

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

Social Power

Social power relates to the personal qualities that influence others, ranging from dominance-inducing fear, to socially attractive prestige.

As with coercion, it's better to start first from the 'rawest form of power':

Learn to Act Dominantly

> A leader who can't act dominanly ceases being a leader the moment an asshole joins the team
>
> *The Power Moves*

It's simple power logic:

Any disrespect to you is a challenge and test to your leadership.
And any norm violation is a challenge to the well-functioning of the team.

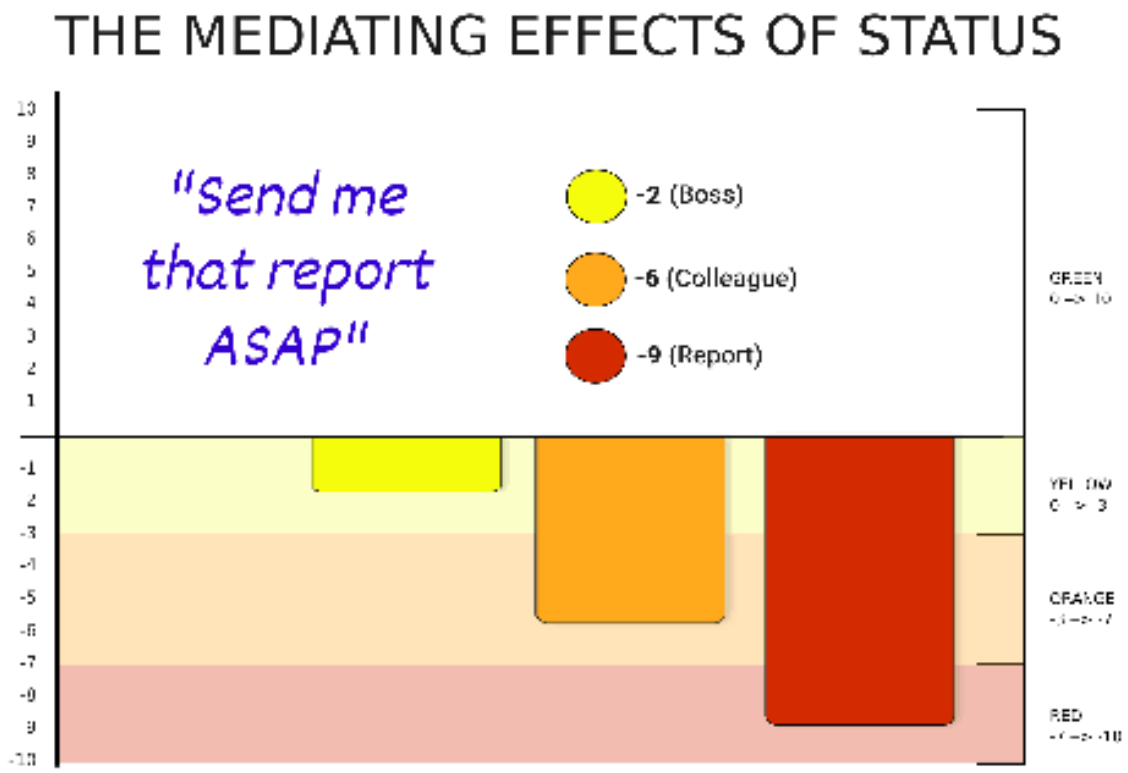
Failing to enforce boundaries disempowers you and undermines trust within the team.
Let that happen a few times, and you have no power left to influence and lead. And without pro-social norms the team reverts from cooperation, to a group of selfish individuals.

This dovetails well with our principle that 'to be good, you need to be bad'.

Research also suggests that dominant traits lead to leadership roles. And that people prefer leaders who enforce norms.

⍰ As a leader you're due more respect: command it!

Basic social power dynamics dictate that a curt request from a report is more disempowering to the leader than to a peer:



Some options to handle a disempowering subordinate:

- **Address it in the open**
  Ie.: "*Hey, talk to me more respectfully please" or "Show some consideration please*"
- **Call him for a private chat**
  Ie.: "*Let me talk to you privately one second please*"
- **Announce you 'need to talk'**

Ie.: "*You and I need to talk soon*". If asks "*for what*", say *"I'll tell you"*

Mindset:

Weak leaders weaken the team. Enforcing boundaries is my responsibility for the team's benefit.

Example: Putin Defends Leadership Boundaries

> **Putin**: Why are the increases so steep? We have curbed monopolies in this area…
>
> **Minister**: As we have seen in practice <— Smart aleck approach,
> there is no link between the regulations of prices, and what citizens pay <— Refuses responsibility and explains with 'teacher's frame'
>
> **Putin**: What on earth are you going on about? Why are you telling me stories, <— Attacks back, reminds him the boss is owed respect and obedience
>
> the citizens aren't interested in this <— 'Does it for the team', great move
>
> If there isn't a link, then there should be a link <— Frame imposes, 'find a way'
>
> Are you crazy or what <— Lets his anger out with a last high-dominance move

⬆ ♟ Well called for dominance
The minister committed a major political faux-pas: disempowering a despot on public media.
Putin *was forced* be aggressive to defend himself and his image of a high-power, effective leader.

Legit self-defense VS over-reacting

When unsure, think: 'What would the most value-adding members think?'
Aligning your leadership with top performers helps retain, motivate, and attract them.

Use Cases of Dominance

- **Team defense**
- **Self-defense**
- **Emergencies**

Limitations of Over-Dominance

Use on an 'only as needed' basis because overdoing it is:

- **Harms relationships** with self-respecting higher performers, 'alpha types', future leaders, etc.
- **Less effective in the West**, where individualists value respect and rebel more
- **You lose prestige** & influence
- **Enemies & frenemies increase** as you create resentment

As Matthew points out, over-dominance and coercion are most damaging with value-adding and team members.

Rewards & Punishments (Extrinsic Motivation)

Rewards and punishments refer to 'sticks and carrots' management with the use of rewards to entice good performance, and punishments to discourage poor performance

Acquire The Ability To Reward & Punish

Even preferring transformational leadership, having more power tools is better.

Use Cases of Transactional Leadership

Evidence suggests that transformational leadership works, so limit 'sticks and carrots' for:

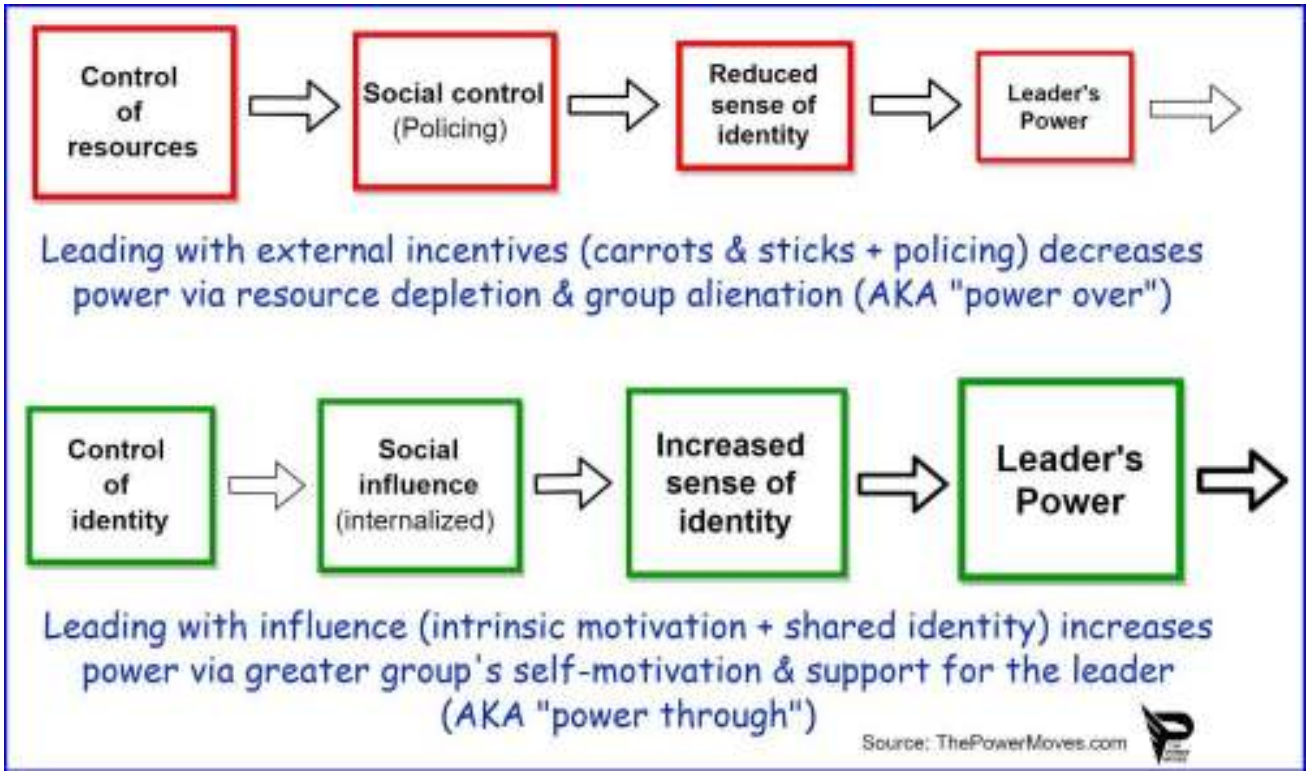
- **Cynical men** and Machiavellian men who focus on practical 'WIIFM'
- **Simple jobs** where extrinsic motivation doesn't crowd out intrinsic motivation
- **Routine tasks**
- **Clear performance metrics available** (manufacturing, sales, etc.)
- **Low-paid jobs** where people's main focus is on keeping the job and feeding their families

Limitations of Transactional Leadership

Psychologist Haslam explains that the more 'sticks & carrots' you use, the more you deplete your resources.

And when shifts focus to 'what's in it for them', you may have to spend more for policing them as well.

In the long run, that reduces your influence:



As Machiavelli observed, mercenaries make for bad followers.
You don't want mercenaries who'd leave for a few dollars more.

Learn more about developing identities here:

- Leadership 101

- How to be a leader

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

Inspiration (Extrinsic Motivation)

Tapping into existing motivation is what people more closely associate with good leadership. And for good reasons: it works great, and it allows leaders to save on more costly extrinsic resources like money and goods.

Check this article for more:

- **How to inspire as a leader**: transformational leadership

Inspiration & Manipulation

However, while more power offers more opportunity for doing, it also allows for more exploitation.
And effective leadership manipulation may be the ultimate stage of power.

Manipulated followers serve the leader, at a personal loss, while also being grateful.

And the more extreme the environment, the group, or the risks, the bigger and riskier the manipulation.

Also see a case study:

- **Business manipulation**, including managers and founders manipulation
- Great leadership is great manipulation

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees

Conflicts of Interest

As per foundational manipulation dynamics principles, Areas of diverging interest see the highest potential for manipulation.
There are many conflicts of interest between leaders and followers, including:

- **Leaders can gain power with disempowered individuals**: because they have the 'freedom' to be more coercive, take all the credit, blame-shift mistakes, etc. etc.
- **Leaders gain power with naive followers, while you gain with power-awareness**: naive folks allow for more manipulation
- **Leaders gain hiding the true benefits of leadership**, so you revere them and never try to become a leader yourself
- **Leaders gain when you're completely selfless, but you may gain being more selfish**

Also read:

- Conflicts of interest at work

Power Protection As Leaders

In general:

Give basic respect to all your team, and respect top performers the most

Show respect with:

- Less dominance
- ‘Pull’ instead of ‘push & coerce’
- Sharing information
- Valuing their input
- Respectful tasking

As for everything: balance and calibration.
Respect others, but focus on getting things done. Too much respect feels like weakness and undermines your status.

Read more our seminal article on power-protecting:

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

Examples in PU. Also read:

- **High-Power / High-Warmth**

> Power Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

⍰ ⍰ Leadership Tactics: Control, Without Costs

Techniques to punish and control without coercion include:

- **Ignore**
- **Lower your warmth**
- **Praise someone else** for the behavior you wanted
- **Disagree** or criticize more directly than you normally do
- **Indirect punishment**
  - Refer to ‘recent events’ you condone in a public speech
  - Direct eye-contact in key moments of your talk
  - Public reminder of values right after poor behavior
- ⚠ ⍰ **Recruiting the group** for ‘social ganging up’ <— can come across as sneaky and weak

> **Godfather**: Good!
> Because a man who doesn’t spend time with his family can never be a real man (looks at Santino ⍰⍰) <—⍰ ⍰
> Santino, you’re failing my standards and better spend more time with your family

⬆ ♟ Statements are more powerful than ‘preaching’
A judge-like statement while expecting others to conform is more powerful

See Power University for an example.

Fawners to Leadership

Principle:

⚖ The more power you gain, the more distortions you create, and the blinder you can get.

Fawners distort reality

Subordinates will embellish the truth and hide the negatives.
And people looking for excuses and handouts exaggerate the negatives.

In either case, you get a distorted reality.

Solutions

1. Handpick your closest confidantes
2. Read characters, judge based on 'believability'
3. Rely on more objective measures
4. Make 'truth' a team value
   - Reward truth
5. Power protect sharing negative news
   Ie.: say: "*I know it's challenging and it may take time*" to encourage sharing realistic timelines

Fawners will turn when you need them most

Fawners feign friendliness until you have power.

But they'll disappear or turn when you're *losing* power.
This phenomenon creates a 'tipping point' of accelerating downfall.

Take Trump's comments on Zuckerberg after his first election loss:

> **Trump**: Zuckerberg used to come to the White House to kiss my ass (…) then you see what they do about me and about Republicans (…) but that's the way the world works

And guess what did Zuckerberg do?
He went back to the White House after Trump's return:

Zuckerberg had an impressive change of heart as Trump edged closer to winning his second term

Solution

1. **Don't count on the allegiance of after-power friends**
2. **Consider fawning a red flag**
   - Gushing compliments
   - Siding with you no matter what
   - Lack of feedback/push-back
   - Gifts
   - Over-subservience
3. **Look at people's character**. Idealists and mission-oriented people are safer. Personally ambitious men less so.
4. **Generally discount compliments** -they don't move you one bit forward anyway-

Our mission is to teach good men how to become good and powerful leaders. It's with that goal in mind that we built **Power University**

High Energy Person: The Personality Type, Meaning, & Why Energy Without Power Fails

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 October 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Many believe high-energy is the key to winning in dating and social life.

Talk fast. Laugh loud. Be everywhere.

But are high-energy people really more attractive, respected, or successful?

Sometimes—if done with power.

More often, it backfires.

In this article, we break down the "high-energy myth" and show when it works, when it fails, and how to calibrate energy for real-world results.

All eyes on me. And all girls and guys will want me (?)

Contents

- Introduction
  - The Popularity of High-Energy
- High-Energy And Its Limitations
  - Ineffectively Great Looking
- Doing High-Energy Right: Add Power
  - 1. Ahole Approach: High-Energy + High-Dominance + Low-Warmth
  - 2. Eagle Approach: High-Energy + High-Dominance + High Warmth
- Calibrating Energy Levels
- High-Energy & Dating
- SUMMARY

Introduction

First off, let's define "high-energy".

To be "high-energy," you'll need a number of these:

- Talkative
- Loud
- Move around
- Crack jokes
- "Have fun"
- Make others have fun
- Open many conversational threads (breadth, rather than depth)
- Gesticulate
- Dance
- Draw attention to yourself

Alcohol, drugs or some arcane techniques to "get in state" are sometimes used to fuel the high energy,

In any event, as per the list above, high energy is more typical of extroverts. And to be high energy you most often need to expend a lot of effort.

The Popularity of High-Energy

"High energy" is a popular approach to self-help.

And not just social self-help, but also self-help in general.
"High-energy" is often equated with "happiness", "effectiveness", and "getting things done".

Many self-help coaches are extroverts and high-energy themselves, and they recommend the same approach to their customers and followers.
Tony Robbins for example:

Tony Robbins also demands the same high-energy "state" from his audience.

Dating coaches and PUAs have also long focused on high energy, doing lots of approaches, and being the life of the party.

The lingo for acting high-energy used to be "put yourself in state", where "state" meant "high energy". Several techniques were used to enter a high-energy state, ranging from pre-gaming with alcohol to talking to everyone before entering the club, to dancing like an idiot or shouting in the street.

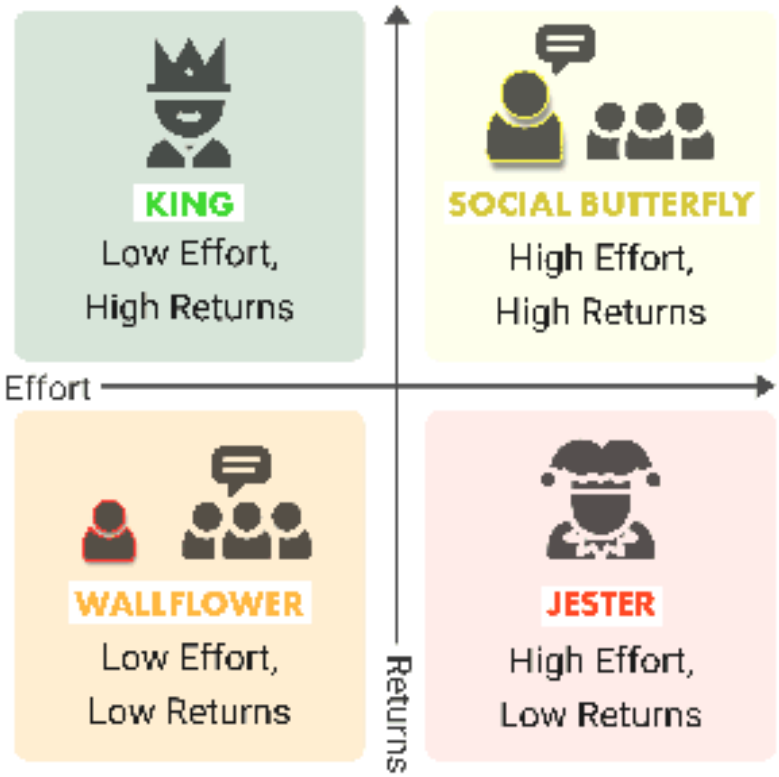
RSD Tyler for example used to make his male students hold hands and jump in the club -not the most effective approach, as you can imagine-.

Even socially advanced guys like Ben and Charlie from Charisma on Command largely base their course Charisma University on being high energy.

So, given all this popularity… What's wrong with that?

If you do it well -and in the right circumstances-, it's great.
But that's a big IF.
Because very few people I've seen do high energy well and effectively.

High-Energy And Its Limitations



This website has sometimes discouraged or cautioned against the “high-energy” route to social self-improvement.

High energy is great.
You have fun, can help people have fun, draw people in, and potentially meet a lot of new people.

BUT, be it to achieve social power, social success, dating success, or status within groups, **it’s very easy to do “high-energy” wrong**.

Why?
Because, from a social power dynamics point of view, the high-energy approach is inherently high-effort.

So as per Social Investment Model, unless you’re getting extra returns for that effort, then you can easily become the low-power jester (and that achieves little results beyond the high of getting people’s reactions).

He can be the life of the party. And maybe he's a great guy. But without power, he won't get status, respect, mating opportunities, and high-value connections

The jester, also called the "entertainer" is the guy who expends lots of effort trying to make others laugh and feel good, but gets little returns.
He gets *reactions*, but little concrete *returns*.

At the lowest power level, which is the jesters who aren't even particularly funny, people consider them a noisy nuisance that's better avoided.
At the low-intermediate level, people might laugh with them (or at them), but nobody respects them.

Ineffectively Great Looking

High-energy is popular because it can feel and *look* great and successful… Even while it's ineffective to achieve pragmatic goals.

Take what many consider the pinnacle of the high-energy approach: to be the "life of the party".

That can easily end up being a rather empty pursuit if your goal was more practical -as it's often the case for those looking into self-help-.
Things like acquiring a mate (the silent guy can connect with her or sexualize with her 1:1 and leave with her), making friends (the silent guy can do a lot of 1:1 convo and make real friends), or getting status (the dominance hierarchies are rarely negotiated in high-energy party mode).

And if you do it *really* wrong, which is also possible, then the extra effort of the high-energy is like going 10x faster in the wrong direction.

HOWEVER…

There *are* ways of being high-energy and winning.

Let's explore:

Doing High-Energy Right: Add *Power*

Doing high energy well means reaping the rewards for the high effort you're expending.

That often means: **you must add power and/or dominance to the energy**.

Luckily, I got to experience two different examples of doing high-energy successfully.

They are:

- **Ahole approach**: Power-taking, social climbing, derisive high energy
- **Eagle approach**: Value-giving high energy

You may be surprised to find the ahole approach listed as "effective".
But as long as power-taking is not *overly* aggressive or directly crude, then both approaches can be successful to achieve life-relevant results such as status, mating opportunities, respect from others, etc.

There are *few* advantages that value-taking even holds over the eagle approach, but generally speaking, it's less effective.

Let's dig deeper with two real-life examples:

1. Ahole Approach: High-Energy + High-Dominance + Low-Warmth

The example I have is from E., my former classmate.

In high school, E. gave me the invaluable opportunity to experience life as both high status, and low(er) status.

Before high school I was high-status and well-liked in most groups I was part of, in and outside of school.
During the high school years *outside* of school, I was also mostly high status. Even those who were higher status than I was I'd say that few if any were *much* higher, even including older, more socially aggressive, or "cooler" guys.

BUT I was quite low-status in high school compared to E.
E. was on another level and seemed to have everything going on for him and "more" than I had.
It's not too bad not being at the top if you're still *around* the top. Actually, that's great.
But since for a large chunk of high school it was only two men in the class, there wasn't any "group". There was just him, in charge, and then there was me, *below* him.

E. was *very* high-energy, but he was no jester.
He was high dominance, and reaped full results for his efforts (dating included).

At the time of writing, we recently met again and it was an incredible opportunity to measure my progress:

He was a beast back then, and was even more of a beast today.

As soon as he arrived -late-, he didn't walk in.
He stopped a few meters away from the table and grabbed everyone's attention while staying silent, smiling, and heavily gesticulating as if to say "come on, can you believe this". And then dropped some jokes from afar.
He hadn't even walked *into* the group, and he was already leading.

Then he went around the table, hugged the organizer of the event, made some jokes about her, kissed her on the head (affectionate dominance) and added: "but you know I love you" (push-pull, similar to "self-amusing" style, but he did a lot more "pushing" on her during the night).

Later he sees some people he knows at the restaurant and even though he has no interest whatsoever in children, he picks up their baby:

Even the baby looks at him fondly :)

He talks to the woman's husband, who raptly listens to him… *While He has his arm around his wife.*

Wife who was all giggling and touching E., of course.

HOWEVER,

For all his success, E. often failed to grow closer, connect, or truly bond with people.

Even today, when he told me to meet again on some other day, I took no steps to make it happen. And was not looking forward to it.

He said "I'd be happy to" meet again. But actions speak louder than words, and if your actions push people down, then that "*you*'d be happy to" means jack squat.

That's because his dominance was often power and value-taking.
His jokes were derisive and pushed others down. Yes, people laughed, but subconsciously they also knew that they could be the next target. That naturally keeps people at arms' length -including the ones who aren't competing hard for status and/or are thick-skinned enough not to take the jokes too personally-.

He improved a lot in that department as well, but still largely relied on social climbing and deriding to hold court.
In a way, the social-climbing way is probably the easier shortcut.

On this website, we're not fans of value-taking and asshole approaches.
Especially since better and more effective alternatives exist.

Enter, the eagle approach to high energy:

2. Eagle Approach: High-Energy + High-Dominance + High Warmth

Now compare to Davide.

Davide is a truly unique blend of high-energy/high-dominance because he adds not just boatloads of friendliness and warmth (as you'll see, we might even call it "love" in this case), but also lots of empathy and vulnerability.

Davide was equally high-energy and (almost) equally dominant as my former classmate.
But instead of the default mode being value-taking, he had a value-giving default mode.

He was like that as a kid.
And when I saw him again the other night, he got even better.

I took some clips yesterday night because it's great stuff for power dynamics:

While being the life of the party, Davide also:

- **Displays dominance with love and affection**: look at how he enters the conversation at minute 1:04. He interrupts. But his foot forward is with love. He, a straight guy, takes and holds a straight guy's hand Oprah style. He does it seamlessly, while keeping the festive atmosphere. Even if my other friend might have wanted to keep his conversation going, how can you reject someone who comes at you with that much love?
- **Pull the group up**: the stories he talks about are stories of us being great (including the "reminisce stories" of us as kids, all directly or indirectly said "we're great")
- **Pull individuals up**: everything he says either privately or publicly is good and uplifting about people
- **Displays joy both for life and for the people**: he's always happy and cheerful. Notice *how* he looks at people in the eyes. Especially the very beginning, where he sees my friend for the first time. Straight, unwavering, high-power… But also "full of joy to see them" (actually, full of love). His nonverbals sub-communicates "I'm *so* happy to see you and be with you"
- **Be vulnerable while still being the most dominant guy**: notice how often he touches his heart. He said "my heart is racing" and "you guys made my heart swell up tonight". And he openly talked about his past issues with drugs
- **Connect with individuals as he addressed many**: he sometimes talked to someone, then switched to addressing the group, but still talking about the individual (something positive or uplifting)
- **Connect 1:1 with more private conversation**

The last one blew me away.
David had been complimentary and uplifting all night.
But before leaving he made it lower energy, and more personal. He got close to me, and with his unwavering eye

contact said: “ah Lu, you believe me? I look at you straight. You know I love you right? Even though we don’t see each other for a lifetime, you’re the N.1. I am happy you’re doing great”.

Right after that, he went back to higher energy social again, bid farewell, and exited like a boss.

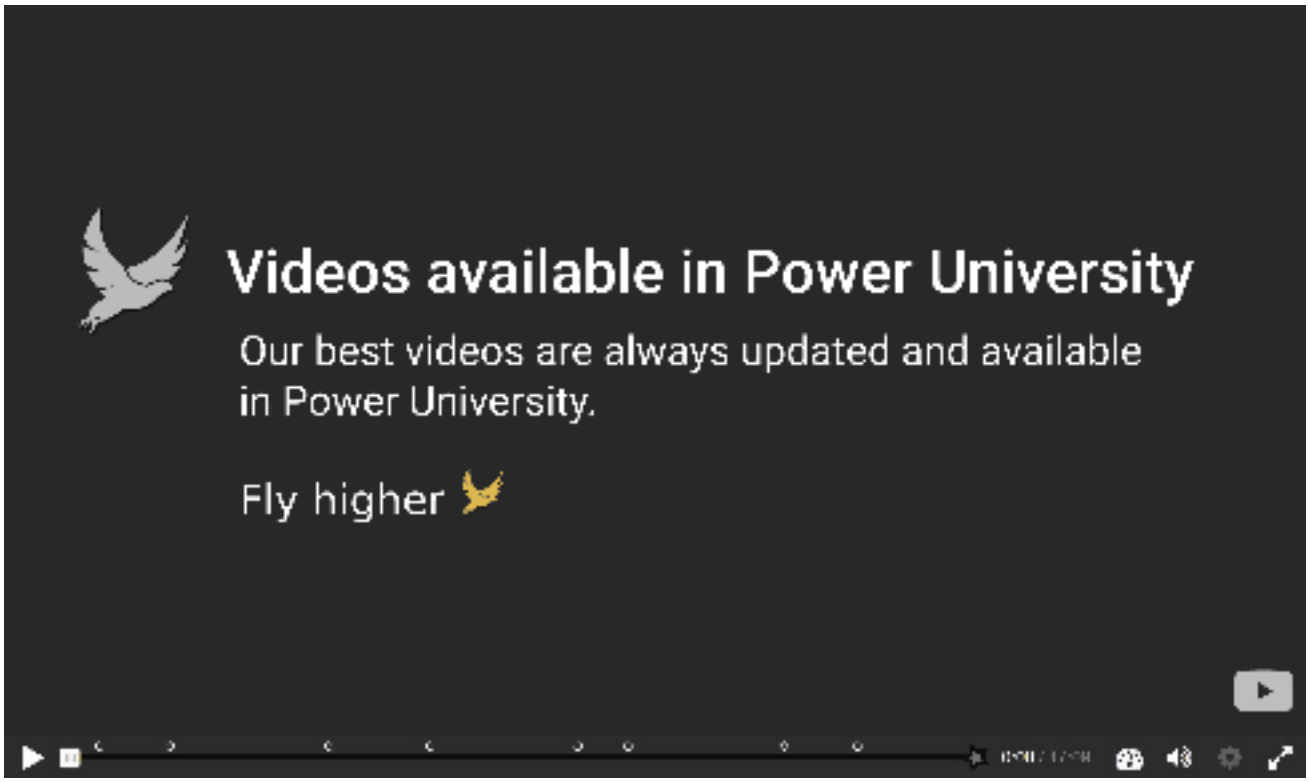
The loudest guy, was also the guy who touched me the deepest (and, I bet, who also touched deep many other people in his life).
So much so, that I call this blend of high-energy, dominance, and love the “Davide style”, in his honor.

Calibrating Energy Levels

If we’re talking about effectiveness and energy, then we need to talk about calibration.

There are always exceptions of course.
So sometimes amping up the state of a low-energy group can make you the undisputed leader. And taking someone from high energy to a more intimate -or seductive- one-on-one is what starts a deeper friendship -or seduction-.

However, as a general rule, **calibrate your energy level to the environment and to the people you’re interacting with**.
Generally speaking, you want to be higher energy in high-energy environments and groups -it would be harder getting people’s and groups’ attention while talking slow, quiet, and little at a club-. And you want to be chiller in lower energy environments and groups -you wouldn’t fit in as the odd one out-.



> **Ted and Lilly**: (hangover and low-energy)
> **Robin**: (odd one out being too high energy)

Calibrating for Your Goals

Also, energy levels should match your goals.

Need to meet lots of people?
You need higher energy.

Want to look high-power and worldly, like you've seen been everywhere and seen it all?
Lower your energy.

As a general rule though, the "high energy" approach can sometimes sub-communicate you're looking for something -approval, connections, or mates-. And the person who's looking for something is almost inherently lower power.
See this example from "How I Met Your Mother". It's a comedy of course, but it's a good reflection of real social dynamics: the higher energy folks are the ones who want/need a mate.
And that is one of the reasons why, unless it's done really well or for self-amusement, I'm not the biggest fan of high energy to achieve social and personal success.
Especially if you're not *feeling* like being high-energy.

Should You Learn "Effective High-Energy?"

Yes, it's useful.

There will be times when you need to carry the conversation, at least initially. And you need to talk more, or even to "steal" a laugh or smile to get your foot properly in.

And there are times when high-energy is the most effective mode to reach certain goals -or just to have fun-. Sometimes, low-energy people are hiding behind low-energy and they instead need to learn how to let go, and how to have some good old unrestrained fun.

That being said, never forget that high energy is useless -or even counterproductive- without power.
So I'd prioritize power above high energy. Power is the foundation.

High-Energy & Dating

Dating is even more ruthless towards high-energy.

The reason is that women like men who are higher power, and high energy takes a lot of effort.

So the sub-communication is that you need more energy and more effort to get her.

While it's OK to be high-energy, and you probably *should* be higher energy in a loud and high-energy environment such as a club, it's generally not a good idea to force yourself into high-energy states for dates.

Exceptions of course apply, for example, if you're a naturally high-energy person, if you're naturally fun-loving, or if you decide to have a fun date.
As you notice, the difference is in you wanting or feeling like something, rather than doing it for her.
The difference seeps through to the whole date.

Examples of "chill" and high-energy dates in Seduction University.

SUMMARY

High-energy socialization is a popular approach to (social) self-development.

High-energy socializing is not bad per se.
And can be both great fun and effective, if done well.

Yet, "high-energy" is not very effective *per se*. And **to make it truly work high energy needs power**.
Power without high-energy works. High-energy without power doesn't work.

So we define the myth of high energy as:

> The "high energy" myth presupposes that extreme extroversion, loud talking, and generally drawing attention

> to oneself leads to better social results such as higher status, more respect, more and better mating opportunities, and better connections and friendships.

As we've seen, that's only true when you calibrate high-energy, and add power.

Global Intersexual Dynamics: Where Dating Is Easiest

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 October 2021 · Archived copy · Original

Countless localized sexual marketplaces offer drastically different dating conditions and experiences.

In lay terms, in some countries, it's easier to find a partner—or it's easier to 'date around'.

The author is an expert on social and power dynamics and having traveled and dated all over the world, has much personal experience on the topic.

So let's find out where dating gets easier (or harder):

Contents

- Intro: SMV Is Relative
- Difficult Markets For Women
  - 1. Russia & EX USSR Countries
  - 2. Big Cities
  - 3. Colleges and College Degree Cohort
  - 4. Religious Circles
  - 5. South-East Asia
  - 6. Asian Countries for Black Women
- Difficult Markets For Men
  - 1. Western Countries for Asians / Indians
  - 2. Richer Countries for Poorer Immigrants
  - 3. Asian countries for black / dark-skinned
  - 4. Latin America / Italy
  - 5. China
  - 6. Technical Universities & STEM Fields
  - 7. Tech Companies

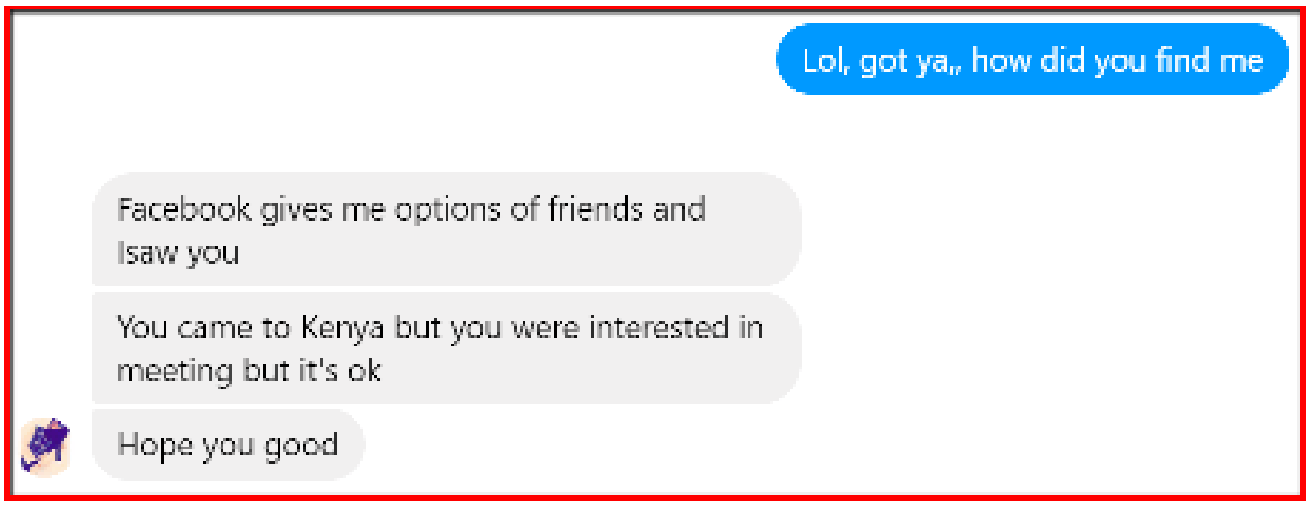
Intro: SMV Is Relative

Individuals' sexual market value varies enormously.

Those who say that "successful daters are successful everywhere" aren't strictly wrong.
But they are truly missing the point and leading people astray. And it's possible for men who are unsuccessful under certain conditions to become very successful under others.

Geo-arbitrage is real.
Just as an example from personal experience: white men in Africa.

When I visited a few African countries dating was even easier than in some of the easiest South Asian countries. Some women found me on FB and *complained* when I didn't find time to meet them:



She spent time finding me on FB and complained I didn't find time for her
This was a pretty lady, too, and it was also a big city. Trust me, women don't stalk me in Europe.
Plenty more women in Africa kept texting and asking me when I would go back, far more often than in any other world region.

Of course some of them might have wanted me also as potential a ticket to Europe, but the passport is also part of the whole personal package. And it's one of the reasons why your sexual market value varies enormously.

This is just one example of how much a different localized sexual marketplace can impact your dating and sexual options.
With the sexual marketplace conditions of this example, even struggling men in Europe could get several dates -or just find a high-quality woman for long-term dating-.

Difficult Markets For Women

These are sexual markets where women are at a relative disadvantage:

1. Russia & EX USSR Countries

All the top 5 biggest alcohol-consuming countries are located in the ex USSR.

In Belarus, a whopping 11% of the population is physically dependent on alcohol, and most alcoholics are men.

That leaves lots of women chasing fewer eligible bachelors.

Have you ever wondered why Eastern and Russian women men have a stereotype for being more feminine and attentive to their looks?

Now you may know why.

An ex Russian girlfriend told me:

> In Russia a good man is a man who's not an alcoholic and who doesn't beat you.

Apparently, a woman who's not happy about her man often hears back: "he doesn't drink and he's not violent, what are you complaining about?"

Talking about a low bar…

2. Big Cities

Where have all the good men gone?
Young men go to the city because of higher wages.
Same for women.

Yet, Lena Edlund in a paper called Sex and the City shows that **more women than men move to urban areas**.

Why?

Because unskilled women also move to the city.
Why?
Well, likely, they go there looking for high earners.

That also means that well-off male city dwellers have more options than they would have otherwise.
And it means that women face stiffer competition from both high-quality career women, and non-career attractive women.

This is statistically significant because many men don't pursue women based on their income.
But women aren't exactly thrilled to pair up with men who are below their socio-economic level.

3. Colleges and College Degree Cohort

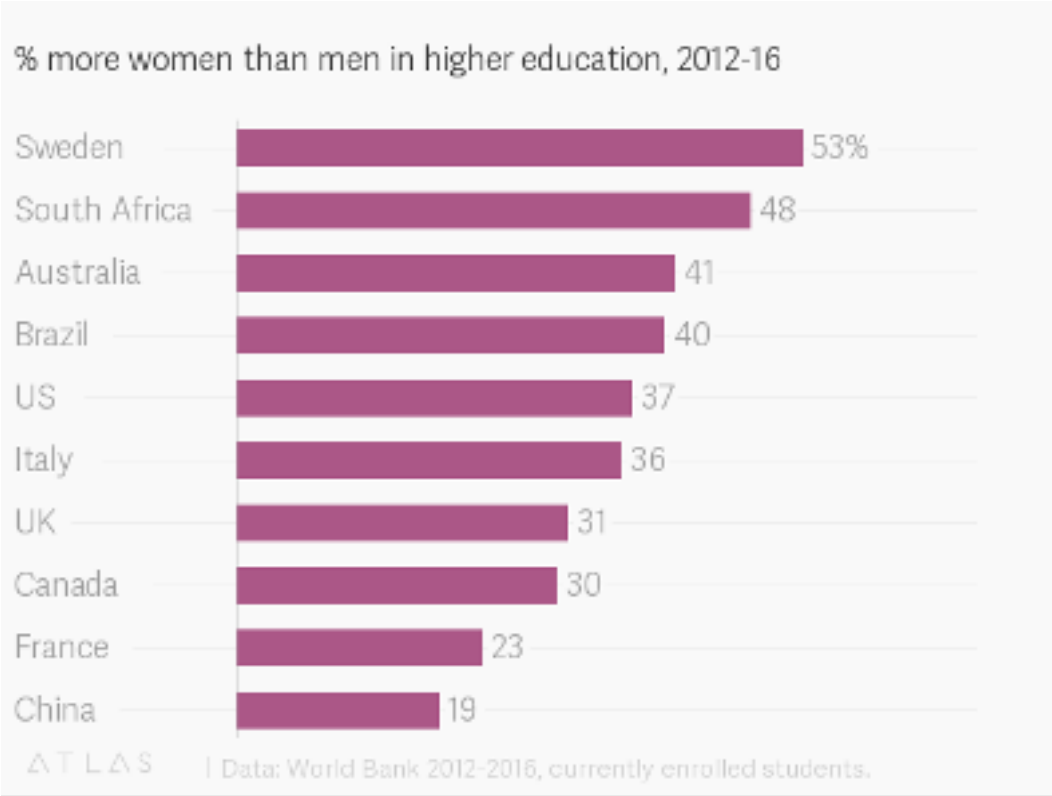
Sometimes really is lonely at the top.

If you are a smart and driven woman, taking care of herself, her education, and her career… That's wonderful.

On the flip side, chances are that you are in a difficult market.

In the last decades women, by and large, have been overtaking men. In 1994 more women received a bachelor's degree or higher.
And the disparity has only grown since then.

That is even worse for black college women, where the disparity is even larger.



And when it comes to colleges, the hookup culture might be part fun, and part tough bargaining conditions for women.

Birger, author of "Date-Onomics" says that the college hookup culture is driven by men who, empowered by the positive number ratio, have the power to set the sexual terms.

4. Religious Circles

God may help with the afterlife, but how much church helps with this world's dating is all to be seen.

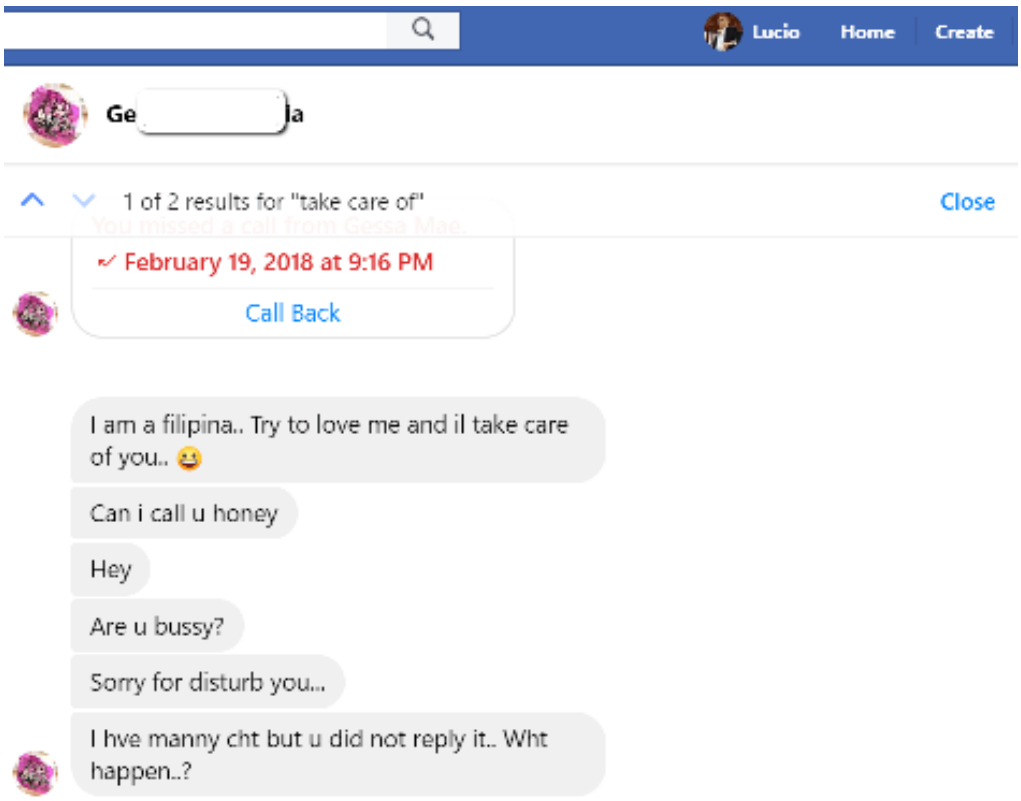
In the West, women tend to be more devout than men, and men tend to leave organized religions more frequently than women.
That means that church groups often see more women than men.

5. South-East Asia

In general, data suggests that there more gay men than lesbian women.

However, in some places in the world, a significantly large percentage of the male population crosses into gay/transexual.
Sometimes to the point of being indistinguishable from women.
Not only these are men that disappear from the man's cohort, but they move into the women cohort chasing other men, giving men the fake feeling that there are even more women than there truly are.

This makes Southeast Asian dating markets very poor for women.
Look at this example:



This woman is chasing and bugging me. Albeit an extreme example, it does show that a combination of "sought after race" (white) and a good overall market for men can turn the normal sexual power dynamics on their head (ie.: women chasing men).

It isn't just about transexuals and gender split ratio, though.

Talk to local women and to foreigners who've lived long enough in countries like Thailand or the Philippines, and they will tell you that many local men don't meet their standards.

Standards for leadership attitude and ambition to improve their lot.
A portion that seems to be much larger than in the West doesn't seek employment and wants women to maintain *them*.

Talking about an unwarranted sense of entitlement…

6. Asian Countries for Black Women

White women, on paper, would do great in many Asian countries as they are a status symbol.

The only issue in poorer Asian countries is that they are not interested in the locals. Plus, many locals don't even dare approach them.

Things are better though iIn richer countries such as Korea, Japan, and possibly the bigger cities in China.
There, white women who like local men might fare even better than in their native countries.

However, Asian markets are much harder for black women.

Difficult Markets For Men

Please remember this:

We are talking about *on average* here.

To begin, these averages are often not huge handicaps, bure more like population-level tendencies.
And even when they are relatively strong tendencies, you can always buck the trend or be the exceptional exception.

On this website, we loath complaints or doom-and-gloom discussions based on cultural trends, social trends, or averages.
And that's because we believe in the power of the individual -a belief based on real-life evidence-.

You, my friend, are not an average.
And you're bigger than your background, color, nation, or whatever individual trait might be used to label you.

And you can also always be the exception.

With that warning, these are sexual markets where men are at a relative disadvantage:

1. Western Countries for Asians / Indians

This is a famous chart from OKCupid.

OkCupid's founder Chris Rudder has been very active in mining the data for dating insights. He also wrote Dataclysm, a very good book on data and dating.

OKCupid is mostly used in the West, so it provides a good overview of dating in the West, broken down by races:

2014

OkCupid QuickMatch Scores

		ASIAN women	BLACK women	LATINA women	WHITE women
men rating women	ASIAN men rating...	15%	-20%	2%	3%
	BLACK men rating...	2%	1%	2%	-6%
	LATINO men rating...	4%	-18%	10%	4%
	WHITE men rating...	9%	-17%	3%	6%

		ASIAN men	BLACK men	LATINO men	WHITE men
women rating men	ASIAN women rating...	24%	-27%	-15%	18%
	BLACK women rating...	-13%	23%	-3%	-6%
	LATINA women rating...	-14%	-16%	18%	12%
	WHITE women rating...	-12%	-8%	1%	19%

You're probably aware of this often-quoted study:

> Asian men need to earn $250k extra for the same dating opportunities of white men

That being said, things have improved lately for Asian men thanks to the cultural success of some Asian dramas, movies, and songs -it seems to be a golden period for Korea-.
A good subgroup of women have always liked the more feminine faces, and now instead of going for the young Di Caprio -and real-life clones-, they go for the clean faces of the Asian stars -and real-life clones-.

I haven't yet encountered a single white woman who ever said she only dates Asian men while I've met several

Asian women who said -or bragged- they only date white men (you don't find them in Western countries as that would be taboo: a few Asian women might so in behavior there, but never in words).
BUT, I've encountered many white women who are cool dating Asians.

Rap music did something similar for black men in some European countries, albeit that probably lost some steam in recent years.
Whether that positive trend for Asian culture and Asian men will continue for some time or fizzle out with the pop bands and short-lived dramas is difficult to say.

Overall, still a slight disadvantage being Asian in white countries but again, this shouldn't concern individual cool guys.

Asian men in black countries

Probably worse than Asian men in white countries.

But except for centuries-old Chinese immigration in some parts of Asia I haven't seen much interest from Asian men living there.
Probably because of the economy, or maybe because most Asians aren't too into black women, dating-wise it might be better for all.

2. Richer Countries for Poorer Immigrants

No white woman will ever tell you that, but…

There is a (subconscious) stigma against immigrants from poorer countries.

A darker skin can make some women think of "financial migrant", sometimes associated with lower status.
With some nationalities and religions, there is also a link with controlling attitudes that more empowered Western women may dislike.

In general, we can say that immigrants from poorer countries to richer countries often face a stigma.
Female hypergamy doesn't like dating down, and men have to buck the social stigma and self-frame themselves as the high-quality exception.
And then hope that she is strong-minded enough not to care about the stigma and social repercussions.

I remember listening to stories of the Italian immigrants going towards the Americas.

Male migrants in Latin America almost all remarried. The ones going to North America didn't. My father didn't know why, but to me it seemed obvious: Italian in Latin America was "one of us" and exotic. In North America it was exotic, but "below us".
Maybe good for a fling if they were handsome, but not great long-term candidates.

3. Asian countries for black / dark-skinned

Black men have a reputation for high masculinity.

Up until there, it's good.
But with that also comes the reputational downside of exaggerated aggression or lawlessness.
That might not help with Asian women generally being more on the meeker side.

It might also be a case of not enough high-quality black men around and/or represented as cultural icons.
Of course there are some, but maybe not enough.

Or simply might be a case of general preferences going towards fellow Asians and whites.
In any case, it's very possible for black men to do well in Asia, but they need to adjust and overcome some initial stumbling blocks.

4. Latin America / Italy

Italian men tend to take care of themselves much more than the average.

I've met countless Italian men abroad who complain about dating in Italy, and much enjoyed the dating scene of wherever I've met them.

Together with Latin America, men tend to be more forward in their dating.
That increases competition and makes women feel like they have lots of options.

Notice that this is not necessarily true for foreigners.
Latin American women for example love gringos and Europeans.

5. China

Decades of one-child policy with a strong bias for male children led to a population with an oversupply of men.

Plus, strong social pressure that prioritizes "success", a pragmatic approach to dating, and a female population that might be less into casual dating means that Chinese men must date as providers.
And bring home the back.
Lots of it.

Why do you think Chinese men must own a flat to date well? And why can Chinese women inquire about what the men own?
Because women can have their pick, and have the sexual power to ask, demand, and screen.

Again, it might be different for skilled foreigners traveling to China, especially non-Asian ones who can leverage the "exotic effect" and date as lovers.

6. Technical Universities & STEM Fields

University should be a time of learning, fun, socializing and… Dating.

But who are you going to date if 90% of students are men?

Except for architecture which is already mostly women in many places, most technical universities are oversupplied with guys.

And it will most likely stay so because virtue-signaling efforts to have more women in STEM isn't going to make women more interested in STEM.

7. Tech Companies

If you want to date well, stay away from silicon valley, tech startups and developers-centric companies.

Being a developer also comes with some reputational stigma within the organization when it comes to dating. And that might not help your case dating within the organization.
Finally, as they say, you're the average of the 5 people you spend your time with. And looking at the average group of developers, you might not want to have anything to do with that average.

Go to HR instead.

Wiseguy's Guide to Getting What You Want: 10 Mob-Inspired Tips

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 January 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Wiseguy's Guide to Getting What You Want is a 3-module online course on negotiation and communication in which Michael Franzese, the course instructor, teaches how to get what you want in life by making others an offer they can't refuse.

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Bullet Summary

- **Gather as much information as you can before the negotiation begins**
- **Work on yourself to build a collaborative negotiation style**
- **Address objections before the other side can pose them**

About The Author

About The Author: Michael Franzese was a soldier and caporegime in the Colombo organized crime family — one of New York's most violent and feared mafia families — for 25 years of his life. Now, he uses his unique life experiences to help corporate executives, professional and student-athletes, at-risk youths, and church audiences.

Module #1: Mindset

Lesson #1: Decide to Negotiate

> **Franzese**: "So, there's a lot of different circumstances that you may go through. Sometimes they're going to be unpleasant, sometimes they're going to be to your advantage. And, it's very important that going in [to the negotiation], you have a certain mindset going in and saying [to yourself], 'This is what I'm going to accomplish.'
>
> Sometimes you have to compromise. Sometimes you got to out *not* win. And, sometimes you got to be willing to get off the table and just walk away."

More of an introductory lesson, Franzese says that we enter into a negotiation for different reasons. Sometimes we're called into a negotiation and, as a result, we're sort of forced into it.

Other times, we're the ones calling the negotiation so we can gain an advantage.

Lesson #2: Overcome Fear

> **Franzese**: "…I think the fear that people have comes from intimidation. Who am I sitting down with? You know, are they more of an imposing figure than me? Are they going to try to control the situation? You can never enter into a new negotiation with fear. You can't do that because you're giving yourself a big disadvantage at that point. So, walking in, you got to have the mindset that, you know what? We're on equal terms. I'm prepared. I know what it is that I want to come out with, and I'm going to just firmly hold my ground."

Note: While this may be true in some cases, oftentimes, the fears that one has in a negotiation are common fears that can be found in most general social interactions such as the fear of failure, fear of negative judgment, or fear of being assertive (see "common social fears").

Lesson #3: Leave Pride & Ego Out

Franzese has a saying, "Leave your pride and ego at the door."

> **Franzese**: "So pride and ego have no place in a negotiation now. You could carry yourself, well, you know, you don't want to let somebody abuse you in the negotiation. But pride and ego, they want to enter into it. And if they do, you're probably going to come out a loser."

Lesson #4: Use Frames Effectives

Here, Franzese is really referring to "frames."

He mentions that John Gotti had an "I win, you lose" negotiation style (a competitive frame). And, he had a more win-win negotiation style (a collaborative frame).

> **Franzese**: "You know, I walk in. I state my case. I always feel that having a successful negotiation is when both parties walked out feeling that they won in some way…I'm not really an aggressive guy when I sit down with somebody. I let people talk. That's kind of my style…You know, a negotiation style that I don't recommend that will not be successful to you is if you're combative. If I lose, you're going to lose. If I don't gain, you're [not] going to gain [either]."

So, Franzese mentions the combative and collaborative negotiation styles.

But, here, Franzese also introduces a third style: the accommodating style. It's the win-lose negotiation style where you settle for whatever the other side hands you.

Aim for a collaborative negotiation style.

Also read:

- **Englightned collaborator**
- **Basic strategies of social success**

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

Lesson #5: Conduct Yourself Well

Rules of conduct:

- Don't be disrespectful, loud, or boisterous. (Let the other person do that.)
- Be assertive yet respectful.
- Look the part — even dress the part going in. (Let your opponent respect you.)

Lesson #6: Learn How to Read the Room

When going into a room to make a pitch, look around the room and do your best to get a good understanding of what each person's role is.

Here, Franzese recommends practicing this by doing your best to read any room you go into.

> **Franzese**: "Every time you go anywhere, you go into a restaurant, try to read the person that you're dealing with. Read the waiter, the maitre d', or the hostess. Now, you know, it's a crowded place. You know, I want a good table. Can I slip this guy a $10 bill…or is he the guy who can do it? You kind of get a feel for it. How do you do it? I make a joke. Say something nice. 'Gee, I'd love to get a good table.'
>
> Whatever it is, it's something that you're going to develop innately if you are observant of it, if you are

> cognizant of it, every time you walk into a room, you're going to an auto dealership, you're going to buy a car, you sit with the salesman, you start to read the salesman. Can I maneuver this guy a little bit? Can I really get some money off? Maybe he's not the right guy I should use, let me go to the next salesman. Every time you go into a room anywhere."

Also check out this article on power intelligence:

> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

Lesson #7: Learn Nonverbal Skills

Franzese shares a fun story about the importance of how you present yourself.

> **Franzese**: "You know, I can tell you back in the day when I was a caporegime in the family and I lived out on Long Island, so many people would come to me and present deals to me all the time. Different propositions. So often that I had to resort to — I actually bought a club, it was a lounge, a restaurant. And every Monday night, if anybody wanted to make a proposition or, you know, try to sell me something or get me involved in a deal, they'd come and see me on that Monday night. We actually would maybe hold court, whatever you might call it. And immediately, when somebody walked into that back room and sat down, if they weren't dressed properly, if they didn't look the part, to me it was disrespectful.
>
> You know, you come in to talk to me about something that's important to you. I really don't need you. You want to make an impression on me. And you come in dressed like that? And then I'm sitting there, you know, I'm watching you and you look kind of bored. You sit back in the chair, you know, your arms are folded…No, right off the bat, I don't even want to hear what you have to say at that point. The way you present yourself is very important. Other people came in the room. I saw that they were important. They didn't have to be dressed in a suit and tie. But I saw that they knew that they were coming to meet somebody, you know, in order to get something that they wanted out of me."

And, on how to prepare yourself for developing those nonverbal skills:

> **Franzese**: "How do you prepare yourself for developing nonverbal skills? You know, to me, a lot of it is common sense.
>
> Really, if you're going in to secure an office job or an office position, you don't go in there with shorts and a T-shirt and flip flops, you know, and your hair all messed up. You don't do that. You know, you just dress according to the position that you want to achieve."

Note: Attire and fashion sense aren't really "nonverbal skills". They're more along the lines of external social currencies that can be valuable to others when they're developed well. Though, if you consider that how you dress does nonverbally communicate information about you, then we can say there is *some* technical leeway in calling attire a "nonverbal skill".

Nonverbal communication skills to develop:

- "You know, when you're sitting down with somebody, you make eye contact. Very, very important. I don't like when I'm speaking to somebody and they look down, they're not looking me in the eye. That's like, you don't have confidence in yourself, you know, and that's a very telling sign." — Michael Franzese
- "Don't be talking to somebody with your hand on your chin or your cheek like that, you know, keep yourself up, be dignified in your conversation and look important." — Michael Franzese

Module #2: Strategy Preparation

Lesson #1: Identify What You Want

Franzese says there are two elements to strategy preparation:

1. Identifying your optimum result.
2. Identifying your fallback position.

The optimum result is what you want when you walk into the room. It's what you're going to try to gain and achieve.

You're going to prepare for that, but you have to have a fallback position because you may not get everything you want. So, the fallback position is what you're going to settle for.

Franzese says you need to prepare for both because it's how effective negotiators go into negotiations with both barrels loaded.

> **Franzese**: "Know what your optimum want is and know what you're going to settle for. And if you can't get either, you got to be prepared to walk away and then maybe come back another time."

Lesson #2: Know Who You're Dealing With

This is also the title from one of the 48 Laws of Power.

Says Franzese:

> **Franzese**: "I can't say it enough. Knowing who you're going to be dealing with, knowing who's on the other side of the table, doing your research, finding out as much about the individual, about the company, whoever it is that you're dealing with, you've got to do your homework, know the guy that's sitting on the other side of the table. It's extremely important, there's information out there."

This is also where Franzese emphasizes that it's important to know the personality of the person you'll be dealing with. (And, plan how you're going to navigate their personality to reach a win-win deal.)

He mentions that there will be negotiations where you won't have enough time to fully prepare and gather the information that you need. In those cases, simply go in and present yourself as best you can.

But, any time you can prepare and know the personality of your counterpart or any information on the company you're dealing with, it will put you at an advantage.

Lesson #3: Gather Resources

As you're preparing for your negotiation, it's important to decide whether or not you need any resources or tools to further strengthen your position and persuade your counterpart.

Potential resources you can use:

- **An expert**: maybe your negotiation is in something that you're not too versed in, so you can bring in an expert to try to bolster your position.
- **A lawyer**: maybe there's some legal element of the deal that you're presenting and you want a lawyer to come in to express or explain the legality of it.
- **An accountant**: maybe you're not that great at expressing the economics of a deal.
- **A visual aid**: maybe a PowerPoint presentation, a visual presentation, videos, or webinars because they say a

picture is worth a thousand words. (Maybe you could also use photographs or a pamphlet — anything that you can put in front of the other side that can help support your position.)

- **A nice, detailed letter**: a letter that really expresses everything. Sometimes you may not be the right person to really talk through a deal. So, if you're better at writing information down than verbally expressing it, you can leave a detailed letter with your counterpart. That way, after the meeting, they have something to look at again.

Franzese also mentions that there are cases where bringing resources or materials are a poor strategy depending on the personality of your counterpart.

> **Franzese**: "Donald Trump. You go into a meeting with a PowerPoint with Donald Trump. You probably got two minutes of his attention with that. He don't want to hear it. You know, there are some people you don't want to hear. They want you to be ready to present your case verbally. That's it. He's not going to look at resources, at letters, at photographs, at webinars, or anything like that."

Lesson #4: Be Ready For Tactical Retreats

> **Franzese**: "There are times you're in the room you're negotiating…And it's just not working out. It's just not going to happen at this point in time. Maybe it can happen…They just can't do it at that point in time. You can't get what you want. You can't get your optimum result, you can't get your fallback position.
>
> So what do you do? Do you want to just make an enemy? You just want to cut it off. No. What you do is you say to yourself, 'You know what? Maybe this is not the right time.' Timing is everything in life, and sometimes it's just not the right time. So what do you do? You say, tactical retreat. We'll come back another day. Let me rethink this. Let's see how the market changes. Let's see how things change that maybe gives me an advantage the next time around."

Module #3: Application

Lesson #1: Field Proposal, Keep IT KISS

First, a recap:

> **Franzese**: "OK, so now the big day is here, all the strategy, all the preparation, you're ready to go, this is it, you're ready to walk into the room. What's the first thing that you do? You read the room, right? Who's there? What's their role? You may not know it immediately, but you're conscious of it. And as you move along, you're going to try to identify that if you have to cater to one person or the other, you're ready to do that. You have your strategy. Your leverage. Everything that you've put into place. To this point, you're ready now to apply and execute. So what's the first thing that you do once you sit down?"

Getting into the negotiation itself, Franzese recommends you waste no time. Here, he teaches you to take a direct approach and field your request right away.

Franzese says that this direct, "let's get straight into it" approach will grab their attention because people's attention spans are short.

> **Franzese**: "They don't want to listen to you for two hours. They don't want you to build up to get to the point. You got to get to the point right away. So you've got three to five minutes, in my view, to really dazzle in, get their attention, really want them to be interested and hear what you have to say. So, first thing you do, you clearly lay out what you're there for. I want a salary raise. I have a brand new company. I want you to fund it. I want you to be my partner, whatever it is that you want in that room. You put it right out there.

> And then for the next two to three minutes, you tell them why they should be interested in you."

Note: Schmoozing over personal details before fielding your request has been shown to result in better deals (Morris, Nadler, Kurtzberg, & Thompson, 2002, p. 99). Personal information (for example, what's happening in your life) is particularly effective because it's a form of self-disclosure that builds rapport when done well (Worthy, Albert, & Gay, 1969). For more on this, see *The Psychology of Negotiation*.

Lesson #2: Anchor The Price

AKA: The "Neapolitan Exchange".

> **Franzese**: "Now we're going to get into something that I referred to as price anchoring or, really, in my terminology, it's called the Neapolitan exchange…My family is from Naples. I know a lot of Neapolitans. We're always bartering for something. We always ask for something high. Settle for something a little less. We always have a fallback position in just about every negotiation that you're going to be involved in."

And, this is how Franzese breaks down anchoring (which he calls the Neapolitan exchange):

> **Franzese**: "Let's say you're looking for a salary increase or a position where the salary range is from 90,000 a year to 50,000 a year.
>
> Well, you know, right off the bat, you're not going to go in and ask for 110,000. You're already out of the range, they're not going to pay attention to you.
>
> But let's say you feel you're worth 90,000 a year, so you're going to ask for that, but you may not get it for various reasons. You might be qualified, but maybe there's other people that have been there longer and they had to work their way up for that and they don't want you to start at that number.
>
> So what are you willing to take? You have your fallback position. Maybe it's not 50. Maybe it's 65. But you're ready, you're prepared for that.
>
> So your optimum at 90,000, they're not willing to give you that. In exchange for that, you're willing to take 65,000. That's the Neapolitan exchange.
>
> So you always got to be prepared for a Plan B, a fallback position Neapolitan exchange."

Note: Continuing from this example, rather than simply asking for a single anchor of $90,000, researchers found that you'll get the highest salary when you use a bolstering range. Compared to a single anchor, ranges seem less rigid. So, you'll be more likely to reach an agreement (and the agreement will also be higher). Therefore, a more effective request would be to make your optimum price and ask $90,000 to $100,000 (see "request a high precise range").

Lesson #3: Handle Objections

Here, Franzese recommends handling objections by frame stealing their objections to frame-block any of their attempts at disqualifying your offer as a fit (see the "accusations audit").

Option one is to be direct with your counterpart and say, "Listen, if I was sitting in your place, these are the objections that I would have to everything that I've presented so far." And, you can go through each potential objection they might have and answer them in advance, right upfront. You can tell them straight out.

Your other option is to be a bit more indirect about it. You can simply say you'd like to share some information with them about your company and in that information, answer what they might be thinking before they have a chance to ask those questions.

Then, when you're done, sit there, and say, "Do you have any questions?" Franzese says that, oftentimes, they'll look at you and say, "You've answered just about everything."

Note:
As Lucio mentions himself, the accusations audit is not always and necessarily the most effective approach (see "accusations audit strategies").

Real Life Applications

- **Work on adopting a collaborative negotiation style**

Franzese says that if your personality leads you to be more combative or overly-accomodating, it's worth working on developing a more collaborative, win-win attitude to be more successful in your negotiations.

CONS

- **Misses opportunities to share more information**

Franzese says he believes that everything in life is a negotiation. And, that his negotiation course can be applied to almost anything that requires an exchange of ideas between two or more people.

Yet, just because something *can* be negotiated doesn't mean it *should* be. (For example, it might not be the best use of your time to try and negotiate a couple of dollars off your groceries in a store where the prices are pretty much set already.)

So, in the very first lesson, titled "Deciding to Negotiate", rather than using it as an introductory lesson, that could've been a great place to give students a little more value by sharing insight into when a negotiation is worth investing time and effort into.

- **Sometimes feels less like a course and more like an overview**

And, that's due to the course not exploring the information it shares in greater detail. For example, Franzese says, "Mike Tyson, the baddest man on the planet, every time he walked down the aisle to get into the ring, he said, 'I was scared.' I was kind of shocked to hear that…But what did he do when he got into the ring? He transmitted that fear to his opponent, and that's how he was able to win."

Unfortunately, the course doesn't share how to transmit your fear to your opponent (or if that's even a good idea outside of sports).

Then, Franzese says, "So you may be somebody that's easily intimidated. That's OK. There's nothing shameful about that. But your mindset has to be, you know what, when I get in that room, I'm going to be in control."

In control of the situation or in control of yourself? A little more explanation could've shed some light.

- **Gives the "what" but neglects the "how"**

In the overcoming fear lesson, Franzese says you need the mindset that (1) you're on equal terms with your counterpart, (2) you're prepared, and (3) you know your desired outcome. And, (4) you're willing to assertively negotiate for that outcome — you're willing to hold your ground.

But, he doesn't share *how* to adopt this attitude or these mindsets.

It could've been valuable to see a few fair value social exchange beliefs or some beliefs of assertiveness to practice internalizing.

- **A very, very short online course**

No lesson in the "Mindset" module is longer than five minutes. And, each lesson in the following modules are less

than ten minutes long.

Franzese says he designed the course this way on purpose because he wanted it to be consumed in 5-10 minute chunks per day.

But, it's resulted in a course that's only 52 minutes and 35 seconds long in total.

And, personally, I would've preferred to pay more money and get more value than pay the current price and be left with so little information.

- **Less of a course and more of a collection of stories from his former life**

And, that might leave you wondering how to apply what he teaches in your own, lower-stakes negotiations.

Plus, since most lessons are less than five minutes long, these are quick, short stories that don't go into detail on how he succeeded in his negotiations.

- **Gives some misinformation**

In the lesson on how to conduct yourself, Franzese says, "…People don't get out of hand when they see the person they're negotiating with is conducting himself in a right way."

That's not always the case. For example, in an everyday life negotiation situation, one could be negotiating with a rude, disrespectful customer who thinks they're "always right". The type of difficult personality that thinks they're entitled to what they're asking for and is frustrated you won't compromise your boundaries.

In any case like that, it's all the more apparent that you're only in charge of your own behavior and others are in charge of theirs. You cannot control whether or not the other side chooses to behave like an entitled turkey simply by "conducting yourself a right way".

PROS

- **Fun, engaging mafia-life stories**

The stories I hadn't already heard from his interviews and YouTube channel were very fun to listen to.

More than the excitement within the stories themselves, the location where he filmed these course videos is a more intimate setting than the studio he usually uses in his YouTube videos. So, it felt like Franzese told these stories with a more persuasive and attention-grabbing charisma (which was awesome to be a part of as a student).

Review

There were a few more cons I left out to avoid nitpicking.

This wasn't a bad course by any means. It's more that the overemphasis on sharing life stories rather than providing more practical strategies — coupled with the short course length — make it a poor investment of one's time and effort compared to some of the other resources on the TPM "Best Of" list.

With that said though, many of the other students left comments underneath each lesson and seem to be enjoying it. So, in all fairness, maybe this course simply wasn't a fit for me while the other students are getting tons of value from it.

As a final note, it seems like the Michael Franzese Team is still updating the course (after all, at the time of this review's writing, the course was only released five days ago). So, maybe they'll update and expand the content as they receive more feedback in the future.

Also read:

- **Best negotiation resources**

Emotional Mastery Review: Worth or Waste?

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 February 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Emotional Mastery is an online course by Charlie Houpert. The goal is to help you get rid of subconscious blocks, reconnect with emotions, develop self-love, and increase happiness.

Let's see how to do just that.

Contents

- About The Author
- 1. Install Joy
- 2. Remove Subconscious Limitations
- 3. Embrace Your Authentic Purpose
- 4. Upgrade Your Habits
- 5. Unlock Your Full Potential
- CONS
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About The Author

Charlie Houpert

is most famous for his YouTube channel Charisma on Command, which he runs together with Ben Altman. The channel currently has 5 million subscribers and over 500 million views.

Charlie majored in philosophy and has spent several years studying emotional mastery. He also created Charisma University, an online course where he teaches people how to become more charismatic.

You can see a review for Charisma University here:

> Charisma University: Review & Summary

1. Install Joy

The first module is the most theoretical in the course.

It gives an overview of how a lack of emotional mastery can hold you back in life, as well as some mindsets to combat this. It also introduces the three different approaches that the course uses to dive into your emotions.

1. **The cognitive approach.** (With writing and thinking exercises).
2. **The emotional approach.** (With guided meditations).
3. **The physical approach.** (With ecstatic dancing and breathwork).

If you've already looked into the topics of self-love or emotional mastery the information is unlikely to be groundbreaking. However, Charlie does a great job of explaining it in a clear way.

Some of the topics in this module include:

- **Events in the past can lead the subconscious mind to repress certain emotions.** (This not only hinders you from feeling that particular emotion but also disrupts the flow of your other emotions).
- **Setting and achieving external goals rarely leads to happiness.** (Upon achieving your goal you tend to find that the goalpost has moved and you're still unhappy).
- **By developing self-love you become more aware of what *you* really want to achieve.** (You might find that the goals you are currently pursuing are not actually your own).

Along with the general mindsets and theories, every day comes with a specific exercise. The first module contains exercises from all of the three approaches listed earlier.

Personally I like the different approaches. They allow you to get vastly different experiences throughout the course. Also, if one of the approaches does not suit you it is likely that at least one of the others will. However, the different approaches also means that some exercises might not work for you at all; for me there were a couple of exercises in later modules where I felt nothing.

2. Remove Subconscious Limitations

This module is fairly hit-or-miss.

Unlike the previous one there is not a lot of theory nor is there much variety in terms of the exercises.
The whole module is comprised of guided meditations (+ optional breathwork) so if that has a deep effect on you it's a great module, but if it doesn't you probably won't enjoy it.

Of course, if you are not getting a lot out of this module you can try going back to it at a later time; this is something I've done with several exercises and it often led to very different experiences.

My Note: Distracting Audio
One thing that bothered me about this module was the quality of the audio-tracks for the guided meditations. While I thought the content was good the audios were oftentimes distracting, which is the last thing you want during a meditation.

An example is the deep breaths you take while Charlie counts to six. Sometimes he will start counting immediately, and other times he will tell you to take a deep breath only to continue talking for a while and *then* start counting. This makes it difficult to follow his breathing and can break your focus from the meditation.

However, something I like a lot, not just about the meditations but about the course as a whole, is that you get a feel for how to do the exercises on your own. This means that if you find the audio-track distracting you will be able to go back and do the meditations without it.

3. Embrace Your Authentic Purpose

This was probably my least favorite module of the course.

It focuses a lot on external aspects such as success and habits, and while these are great topics to dive into I don't think they are crucial to a course on emotional mastery.

That being said, there is still value in this module (and some people may even consider it their favorite), especially for highly ambitious people.

Some of the topics that this module covers include:

- **Redefining what success means to *you*.**
- **Developing your intuition.**
- **Dealing with addiction.**

The techniques in this module for achieving your goals and dealing with addiction can be valuable to some people. However, while they are good they are nothing special; setting stakes to hold yourself accountable, or replacing an addiction with a less damaging one are hardly groundbreaking techniques.

The main issue is not their effectiveness though, in fact I think many people would benefit from them, but rather their relevance to the course. While external results are important they are hardly what drives people to invest in courses on emotional mastery and self-love. If you are interested in external success there are countless other resources that dive deeper into these topics.

See also:

https://thepowermoves.com/resources

4. Upgrade Your Habits

This was by far my favorite part of the course!

Through a mixture of theory, cognitive exercises, and meditations the module teaches you to reconnect with the parts of yourself that you have neglected.

I personally gained a deeper understanding of myself, and my general happiness and sense of fulfillment improved greatly.

My favorite takeaways from this module include:

- **Judgment of other people is often an indicator that there is a part of yourself that you haven't accepted.**
- **How to integrate your shadow through meditation.**
- **Learning to forgive your past mistakes by developing a deeper understanding of yourself.**

5. Unlock Your Full Potential

The last module of the course is quite varied but the overall focus is on self-acceptance.

Two things I really liked about this module was:

1. **It ties all the previous knowledge together and pushes you out of your comfort zone.** (You get to decide how far to push yourself).
2. **The idea that it is okay to be a hypocrite.** (Many people reject parts of themselves because they value integrity over everything else. This is unhealthy and unnecessary).

Although this is the last module of the course there are also some bonuses including:

- **A maintenance module to keep working on your emotional development.**
- **A course on how to grow a successful YouTube channel.** (Based on the strategies that Charisma on Command uses).

CONS

Overall I liked the course a lot.

However there were a few downsides:

Different Approaches

This might come as a surprise as I wrote earlier that I liked the different approaches, and I do.

However, the different approaches (cognitive, emotional, and physical) are a double-edged sword. While it does allow for a wider range of people to find something that works for them, it also means that some people will find that certain exercises won't affect them as much, or at all. For example, I found that the cognitive exercises impacted me deeply whereas some of the meditations didn't make me feel anything.

If you find that a particular approach resonates with you, the fact that only part of the course is structured around that approach will be a downside. Now, that does not have to be the case for everyone, in fact I believe it is unlikely to only get affected by one of the approaches. However, the possibility does exist and that's why I'm listing this as a potential con.

Coach [redacted] *January 20, 2022* **Reply**

Hi Mats,

Thank you for this feedback! Sometimes there are meditations which won't 'trigger' anything deep within us – at least at first. Others within EM have expressed similar frustrations with other meditations in the past. But there are solutions to explore 🙂

One thing that has worked for many people, is to circle back to the meditations when you're not experiencing the expected results. I recommend you come back to this meditation in the future as well!

Also, there are times when people go through EM while they are already in a certain 'state'. State meaning that they are stressed, active-minded, exhausted, and distracted. If you feel you fall into one of these categories, I suggest coming back to the meditation when you are feeling very peaceful, focused, and relaxed!

Does this help? Let me know!

This is what one of the coaches replied when I told him that one of the exercises didn't affect me. It is good advice but so far it hasn't worked for me.

Distracting Audio-Tracks for the Meditations

As mentioned earlier there are distracting aspects in the guided meditations. Some of the things that annoyed me were:

- **Inconsistencies with the deep breaths.** (As mentioned earlier).
- **Gradual lowering of voice-volume.** (You might start the meditation at the right volume but halfway through his voice has dropped to the point where you can't hear him properly).
- **Going too slow/fast.** (This is the problem with guided meditations, not just in this course. Since people are different some can get annoyed at how fast it goes while others want it to go slower).

How distracting you find this is subjective though and some people might find it impossible to focus while others don't even notice it.

PROS

There were a lot of things that I liked about the course, but the main ones are:

Different Approaches (Again)

Yes, it can seem ironic that I list this as both a con and a pro, but doing anything else would be disingenuous. I've already talked about this earlier in the review so I'll keep this section short.

Here are some of the benefits of using different approaches:

- **Wider range of experiences throughout the course.**
- **Gives you more tools to work on emotional mastery on your own.**
- **Creates a deeper understanding of yourself.**

Good Structure, Clear Explanations

Those who have watched Charisma on Command's YouTube videos will know that Charlie is a great storyteller with an engaging voice and a clear way of explaining things. This is actually a big deal since the course is entirely made up of videos. Charlie's way of explaining along with his charisma makes the course both fun and easy to go through.

The pacing and structure of the course is also good as it starts with a more theoretical overview and simpler exercises and then moves into deeper topics.

Watch this video for an example of Charlie's explanation style:

Teaches You to Continue the Process on Your Own

While I personally wouldn't have minded the course to be a bit longer than 24 days, this makes up for it. As you go through the course you not only learn how to do the exercises on your own, but you also develop a sense for what you need to do in order to feel better (also known as your intuition).

This is one of my favorite things about the course as it allows you to continue exploring your emotions, dive into different parts of yourself, and develop your self-love on your own after the course is done. This is important because emotional mastery is not something that you achieve once and then move on, instead it is a process that you need to keep up with regularly, and the course gives you the knowledge and tools to do that.

Emotional Mastery Review

Overall I liked the course a lot! It gives a great overview of one of the most fundamental aspects of self-development: your relationship with yourself.

Great for Beginners

If you struggle with self-love or feeling certain emotions this course is a great place to start the process of reconnecting with yourself. The course provides a theoretical overview and many exercises that will give you a solid foundation to continue the process on your own.

Even if you already have a strong foundation and the “basics” of emotional mastery this course can still offer new perspectives due to the different approaches. However, I would say that the course is more geared towards people who are fairly new to the field.

Benefits Carry Over into Other Areas of Life

When I joined the course I wanted to increase my happiness and develop self-acceptance without giving up my drive for self-development. While I saw great success in both these areas I didn’t realize that I would also see a lot of unexpected results in other areas of my life.

One such area was in my social life, which was unexpected but also makes a lot of sense. Humans are great at picking up emotions, so when you feel great other people pick up on it and will be drawn towards you. Likewise, if you respect and love yourself you will carry yourself in a way that makes others more likely to respect you. This is why I consider a good relationship with yourself to be the foundation for your charisma.

See also:

> Submissive Behavior: 9 Signals to Avoid

Is Emotional Mastery Worth It?

The answer to this question is subjective as it depends on where you currently are in life.

If you already have a good level of self-love and feel happy on a day to day basis this course might not be worth $600 USD. On the other hand, if you struggle with your emotions and generally feel unhappy the course might be worth more than that.

It also depends on your preferred method of learning. Some people might learn more from reading books than from following a video-based online course.

At the end of the day it's up to you if you're willing to spend $600 USD on the course or not. However, if you're still uncertain it can be good to note that the course offers a 60 day money back guarantee. That means that you can try the whole course (twice) and still get your money back if you find it wasn't for you.

Great Leadership Is Great Manipulation: The Dark Psychology of Extreme Leadership

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 February 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Leadership isn't just about vision or strategy.
At its core, leadership is the ability to move people — sometimes to the point where they'll sacrifice everything for the mission.

That doesn't happen by logic alone. Sometimes it happens through **manipulation**.

This article breaks down the potential dark psychology behind extreme leadership. We'll use Jocko Willink's "Extreme Ownership" philosophy as a case study to show how leaders inspire loyalty, obedience, and even self-sacrifice — and how you can spot when leadership crosses from influence into exploitation.

Contents

- Intro
  - Extreme Leadership vs. Great Leadership
- Examples: Cults… And Special Ops?
  - Case Study: Special Ops & Jocko Willink
  - When 'Extreme Good' Leadership Harms Followers
  - Extreme Leadership Subordinates You to The Group
  - Extreme Leadership Subordinates You To The "Leader"
  - Extreme Leadership Can Subordinate You to Lies
- The Nature Extreme Leadership
- Antidote to Manipulative Leadership

Intro

Lucio Buffalmano's quote "Great leadership is great manipulation" is used as an analytical lens to examine how **leaders' mobilization of extreme commitment in extreme circumstances can become costly for individual followers**. Since rational, self-interested individuals would not naturally choose value-negative outcomes, this type of leadership can at times be better understood as manipulative rather than merely persuasive.
The term 'great' refers to how such leaders are sometimes revered, even when their leadership has imposed high costs on some followers.

Leadership is getting things done with people and through people.

Getting someone to do anything at the risk of life is a pretty large demand from a leader.
So the next question becomes:

how do you get people invested to such an extreme?

Risking one's life goes against human nature

People have a natural preference for positive returns on their investment. They naturally avoid net losses in social exchanges. And any form of life tends to avoid any major risks to one's life.
So it cannot be done logically. **If the persuasive message was an honest assessment of give-and-take and 'what's in it for you', nobody would sign up.**

So, often, to make people want to risk their lives, you need manipulation.
And that's how we get into extreme leadership and manipulation.

Extreme Leadership vs. Great Leadership

There can be great leadership without manipulation, of course.

However, as per Power-Exchange Mode of Leadership™, extracting great value requires something great from the leader.
And especially so from high-competence and high-value individuals, like we can expect special ops soldiers to be ('Competence-control tradeoff model™').

However, many people confuse 'great' as in 'value-giving', and that is not the case.

Examples: Cults... And Special Ops?

Cults are a classic example of extreme leadership and total follower buy-in.
They clearly illustrate how leaders can mobilize intense loyalty, emotional fusion, and self-sacrifice.

However, using cults would confine the dynamic to an obviously 'negative' setting.
In reality, **leadership that becomes value-taking for followers can occur in legitimate, respected, and high-performing organizations.**
In fact, the power to move individuals to act for the team's interest even at personal cost is often a hallmark of highly effective teams.

For that reason, this article uses special operations as the team and Jocko Willink as the leader. In modern culture, both are widely regarded as models of teamwork and high-level leadership.

This is not a criticism of Jocko Willink, who is a high-quality man with much to teach
But he serves as a case study for the *dynamics* of certain types of extreme leadership that can turn value-taking for the followers.

Case Study: Special Ops & Jocko Willink

This is what Jocko Willink says of leadership and manipulation:

> **Jocko Willink**: manipulation is good for the leader *only*. Great leadership is good for you, the team, and the mission.

So, in simpler terms, which is also the expression we use on the power moves, **Jocko Willink says that great leadership adds value to everyone, including the followers**.

And it's true.
And it sounds realistic… On *paper*.

Unluckily, it's not always how it works *in practice*.

And to clearly show this point, I'm gonna read a passage from Jocko's book "*The Dichotomy of Leadership*":

When 'Extreme Good' Leadership Harms Followers

> *The wounded SEAL now lay on a gurney in Charlie Med (…)*
>
> *The bullet, a mammoth armor-piercing 7.62 × 54 millimeter round with a steel core had entered his leg at the lower thigh, ripped apart flesh and bone inside his leg, and exited in his upper thigh, close to the groin.*
>
> *It was hard to say if he would keep his leg. From the looks of the wound, my guess was no, he would lose it.*
>
> *Jocko Willink, The Dichotomy of Leadership*

At this point you can already ask yourself:

Was this good for this young man, the follower?

Maybe it was good for the mission and maybe it was good for the various leaders up the chain.
But was it good for this kid to lose his leg and maybe more?

Debatable at least.

Extreme Leadership Subordinates You to The Group

Again from the book:

> *The wounded SEAL's grip on my hand tightened and he pulled me in, drawing me just inches from his face.*
>
> *(…)*
>
> *He took a breath and then whispered, **"Sir. Let me stay. Let me stay. Please. Don't make me go home. I'll do anything. I'll sweep up around the camp. I can heal here. Please, please, please just let me stay with the task unit."***
>
> *Jocko Willink, The Dichotomy of Leadership*

These are verbatim words from the book.

So, seen from the point of view of this wounded kid, you're struggling to survive and your biggest fear is that they will send you back home?
Your last breath is for begging to stay?

How does this sound in terms of effects of manipulation, emotional neediness, and "being good for him"?

To me, this sounds like pathological attachment, total emotional neediness, high dependence… And at least from a practical point of view, not good for him.

These are the effects that psychologists and therapists see from their patients in manipulative, abusive, and toxic relationships.
Just as some examples, you could see "Women Who Love Psychopaths", "Women Who Love Too Much", or Braiker's great work on emotional manipulation in "Who's Pulling Your Strings".

Again from the same book:

> *There you go. Not scared. Not angry. Not depressed that he might lose his leg.*
>
> ***Only concerned that he might have to leave our task unit.***
>
> ***Task Unit Bruiser. Our task unit. Our lives.***
>
> OK, your task unit is your life.
>
> *Jocko Willink, The Dichotomy of Leadership*

TPM promotes the value of empowered *individuals*.
So we're not big fans of having this or that group becoming "your life".

However, we're not against that either.
As long as:

- You're aware of the dangers
- You can walk out of that group any time you want, emotionally and, ideally, physically
- You maintain at least some level of critical thinking
- You maintain at least some basic level of self-preservation

This requires holding a duality of approaches in your mind: you're aware that the group is "your life", while at the same time you respect and love yourself as an individual, with his own power and own self.

That also means that, on TPM, we see an issue when someone becomes part of the group to the point that they lose their sense of self.

When the group becomes your only reason to live for, then you're not an individual anymore.
You're a cog in a wheel you have no control over.

When You Fuse Identity With The Group, You Lose Your*self*

This is called identity fusion in psychology.

When you lose your sense of self there is no thinking for yourself anymore, of course, there is no critical thinking, and at the extreme there is no self-interest and self-preservation, which is terrible for you, not good for you.

This is like being a bee or an ant and protecting the queen.
Good for the queen, no doubt.
But not necessarily for the bee.

We talked about similar dynamics in "corporate lies and manipulation"
Well, in contrast to ants and bees, humans could theoretically think.
But if they're identity-fused, there is not much independent thinking anymore.
There is no questioning the mission, no questioning the leadership, and no questioning orders –"I was just following orders", does that remind you of anything?-

Great for the mission, because you'd die for it.
Great for the team, because you'd die for the team.
Great for the leaders too, because you'd die for them -and they have full control over you-.

BUT…

Is it also good for you?

Well, *sometimes* it might be.

But it's far from obvious.
The problem is that you'll have to trust your leader to have the best in mind for you.
And on TPM we prefer an approach that is more about "trusting BUT making sure", rather than *blindly* trusting.

Funny enough, being willing to die for the "mission" and the "group" without critical thinking is no different than the power dynamics in the jihadist organization the US military was purportedly fighting.

Extreme Leadership Subordinates You To The "Leader"

Again from the same book:

> *Even if he kept his leg, the damage was so substantial that it didn't seem possible he would ever fully regain the extraordinary athleticism he had displayed.*
>
> *And yet this SEAL was only concerned that he would let me down, let the task unit down, let his platoon—his team—down.*
>
> *Jocko Willink, The Dichotomy of Leadership*

Not letting Jocko Willink down.

Typical emotional dynamics of what we call "judge role" in power dynamics.

In simpler terms, it's control via emotional "hooks".
If the leader likes you and approves of you, you feel great.
If the leader dislikes you and disapproves of you, you feel terrible.
So you want to do anything that makes the leader like and approve of you.

That's a very strong control tool that a leader can have on you.

Watch out when you feel that way towards anyone because you're giving them a lot of power over you.

Goes on Jocko Willink:

> *A great guy to be around: Faithful. Loyal. Funny.*
>
> *Jocko Willink, The Dichotomy of Leadership*

Well, what if that was exactly his issue.
Loyal, to *whom*?
Faithful to *whom*?

What if he were also a bit more loyal to *himself* -and what's good for him-?

Extreme Leadership Can Subordinate You to Lies

Not always, but *very* often:

> Extreme leadership requires extreme representations of reality.

And that's basically a different way of saying "distortions of reality" and "lies".

People aren't much willing to engage in extreme activities and follow extremists when they see the world as shades of grey, exceptions, and as "distributed evil and goodness" among different societies and people.

Instead, they are much more willing to do extreme actions when they see the world as extremes.

Would this kid feel the same if:

- He knew that part of the motivation beyond the war was oil, power, and interest groups of certain lobbyists?
- He knew that many Iraqis would probably live *worse* after the war?
- He knew that for every war there is someone at home who is happy and couldn't care less if you die?

There, my friends, lies the other piece of extreme manipulation: blinkers.

In milder forms, we talked about these dynamics in:

- **Red pill**: analysis of an echo chamber

The Nature Extreme Leadership

A good question:

What type of leadership are we talking about here?

Learning what type of leadership it is, can also allow you to replicate it -and potentially, without the manipulative shade of it-.

In his book Extreme Ownership Jocko says that the principles of great leadership are extreme ownership, prioritize

and execute, delegating, developing relationships, and a few more.

These are all great principles, of course.
But are those the principles that make the most extreme forms of leadership most effective?

Of course, they help.
Maybe 20%.

But the 80% was in the total, unquestioning buy-in from the followers, and the total following orders, no matter what.

It's easy to tell followers what to prioritize and execute when they're ready to die.
It's easy to implement cover and move when followers would take a bullet to cover you.
It's easy to give followers tasks and expect them to do their best when they so desperately want your approval.

We're not talking about leadership principle here, we're talking about leadership power dynamics.
Persuasion, when it's good for you.
And full-on manipulation when it's not.

Antidote to Manipulative Leadership

The best antidotes for manipulation:

- Empowered individualism
- Effective calculativeness

Total manipulation can only happen when there is a lack of mental self-empowerment.

Once you can see and understand the psychology of manipulation, of how these hooks work within you, then you can step back and better assess the situation.
Funny enough, stepping back is something Jocko often talks about.
And only then you're truly free and empowered to make decisions.

Any decision.

Because this article is NOT necessarily against fighting, wars, or joining extreme groups and missions.

As a matter of fact, there are times when fighting is necessary.
And there are times when putting your life on the line might even be a moral duty.

But as much as it can be a moral duty to fight, it's a moral duty to critically think it over.

To critically analyze that "mission" and that "leadership".
And not just the leader above you, but the whole chain.
Because if the guy above you is great but the organization is rotten, you're still doing the bidding of a morally bankrupt organization.

The 5 Principles of Dating Power Dynamics: Effective Dating

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 March 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In dating, most men focus on the surface: saying the right lines, showing off, or paying for expensive meals.

But the truth is, **the key to success lies in the deeper dynamics that drive attraction.** These principles separate men who struggle from those who naturally succeed.

In this post, we'll uncover the **five foundational laws of dating power dynamics**—principles most men overlook but that are essential for building attraction, respect, and deeper connections.

Dating Power Dynamics (TPM) is TPM's applied model for understanding and influencing attraction by managing power, warmth, timing, and investment in romantic interactions.
Part of TPM's Interpersonal Power Dynamics (see the TPM Power Dynamics Framework).

So let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. Power Up Attracts, Power Down Repels
  - 1.2. … But Power Is Best Combined With Warmth
- 2. It's Relative Power Levels That Matter
- 3. You Must Be Power-Up To Move Things Forward
- 4. Power Is Use It Or Lose It: Use It To Move Forward
- 5. Power-Positive Escalation = Quick & Effective Seductions
  - 5.2. Golden Balance For Effective Dating
  - ⍰ Walk-through analysis in the golden balance
- 6. Healthy Win-Win Relationships Are Value-Balanced
- SUMMARY

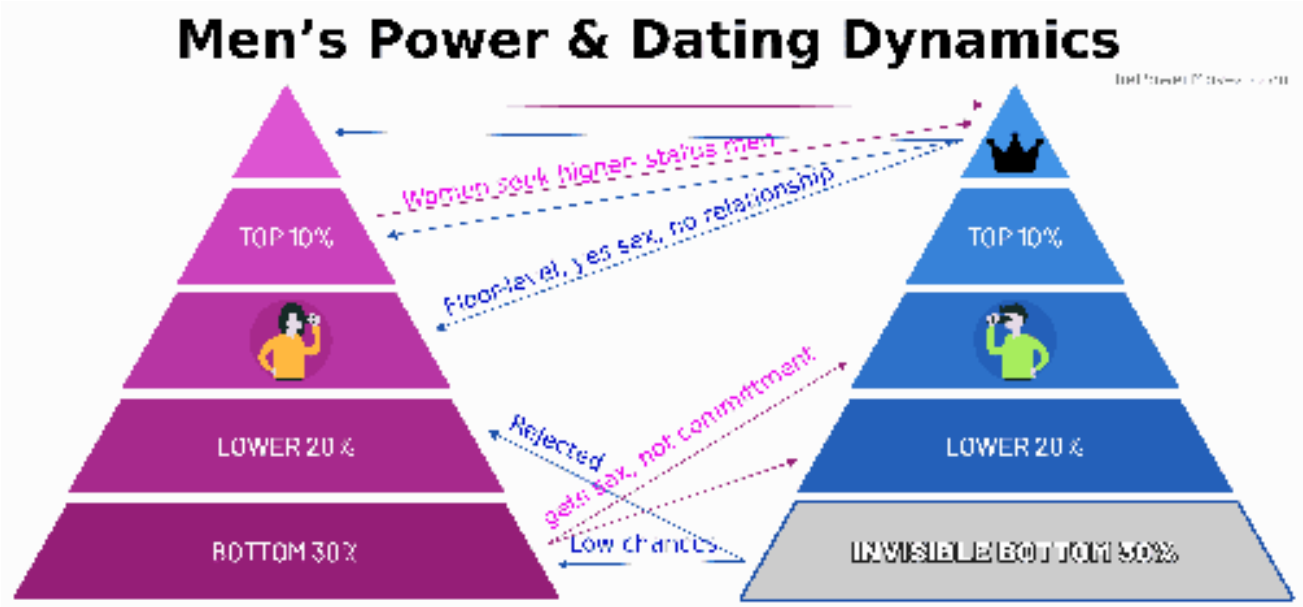
1. Power Up Attracts, Power Down Repels

Dating is largely a negotiation and women, just like any living creature, are programmed to pursue the best they can get.

That means that **high-power men are attractive because they fulfill women's desire for securing the best possible mate**.

Also see:

- Women's hypergamy
- High-power behavior
- High-power speaking



High-status men win because all women would like to be with them. Bottom men struggle because women would rather choose higher status men

And yet, there is an important caveat.
Especially important for more advanced folks:

1.2. ... But Power Is Best Combined With Warmth

Power isn't just dominance, how much you make, or social status.

Those are part of power.
But you're higher power compared to her also when she:

- Pursues you
- Compliments you
- Invests in you

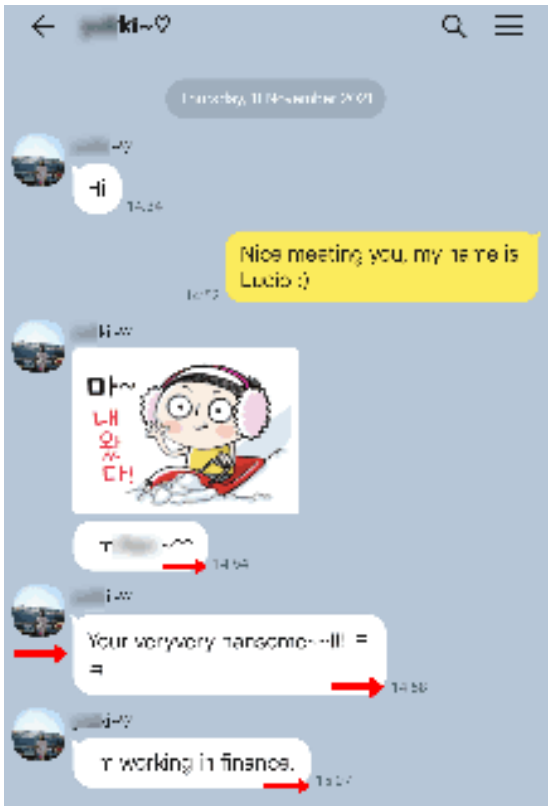
These are all great things.
But the law of optimum balance also applies to dating, and you can have too much of a good thing.

In dating, the issues with too much power include:

- Too much **dominance turns confrontational**
  ⍰ She says 'FU' and moves on
- He seems **too much for her and she thinks he's unattainable**

- She writes him off

As we saw in foundations of effective dating, she *over*-chased compared to me:



> **She**: (3 texts + compliments + self-disclosure) <— Chases
>
> ✕ (no reply) <— Value-taking power. She feels spurned and like I'm unavailable

And guess what happend after?

She probably thought I was unavailable, uninterested, too much for her… Or she felt ashamed and un-feminine for chasing too much.
Whatever it was from that list, she blocked me -the most common response to similar scenarios-

Of course, these are 'rich men's problems'.

However, as you read more here and become a more effective and high status man, you'll start seeing that more and more.

Men struggle to understand these dynamics because men are different and don't lose attraction chasing.
From an evolutionary point of view, men gain with any new single 'notch' they add.
But women take far bigger risks with random notches and instead benefit with men who value them -and potentially commit-.

We dig deeper on this concept in these three articles here:

- Self-rejection, on why people and women write you off when you're too good
- Value and availability, on the importance of making your value available for people to like you and cooperate with you
- Power & warmth, our seminal article on being power high power and high warmth

So, how do you fix this issue?

Simple:

1. **Invest back**
2. **Pull her up to your level**
   - Uncover her qualities and appreciate her ("the judge")
   - Be interested in her
   - Potentially share a vulnerability -but don't overdo that!-
   - Connect emotionally with her
3. **Escalate as a reward**

Some struggle to understand these dynamics because men don't lose attraction when they chase women.

2. It's Relative Power Levels That Matter

Women want men better than they are, and that's *relative to them.*

To express this concept with a simple chart:

He's low power -and unattractive to her- not simply because he expends lot of effort, but because *she* doesn't
BUT…

If he was giving 10, and she was giving back 10, then it would be TOTALLY different.
The frame would be that of a couple desperately in love, going through a whirlwind romance where nobody else in the word exists.

Think of the Joker and Harley Quinn.

On the other hand, if she gives you nothing, even a few glances frame you as chasing.

Same dynamics apply to social power dynamics.
If she disrespects you, you must forcefully enforce your boundaries or you lose status and social power to her.
And that *kills* attraction.

This is also why super-direct approaches are 'ballsy', but often not the most effective.
Of course they can work, sometimes do, and sometimes are perfect for the target or situation.
However, in general, they signal too much interest, and give much power away.

3. You Must Be Power-Up To Move Things Forward

She'll only move forward with you if she sees you as above her and accepts your leadership.

In the social exchange article we talk about social leverage and influence.

And we have a concept called "social overdraft".

You're in over-draft when people perceive you negatively and they do not want to be around, follow you, or help you.
The same applies to dating: when you have no leverage with her, she will not follow you.

That positive or negative leverage starts even before you open your mouth.
Based on initial looks and style, you will have a certain sexual market value to her. That is at least partially subjective, of course, and malleable.
And you can increase your power -and your leverage on her- as you talk and engage with her.

That's how you go from an average guy, to dating attractive women.

and that's why we focus so much on coming across as high-status and high power here.
Because it fixes dating and relationships *at their core*.

4. Power Is Use It Or Lose It: Use It To Move Forward

As mentioned before:

If you don't use your power to move forward and you only 'collect it', she will quickly write you off.

And that's even truer for high-quality women.
In-demand women are only available for a short window of time. And you must strike when it's hot.

So just like you can't block the traffic at an intersection, think of her green lights as both an opportunity, and an obligation to move.

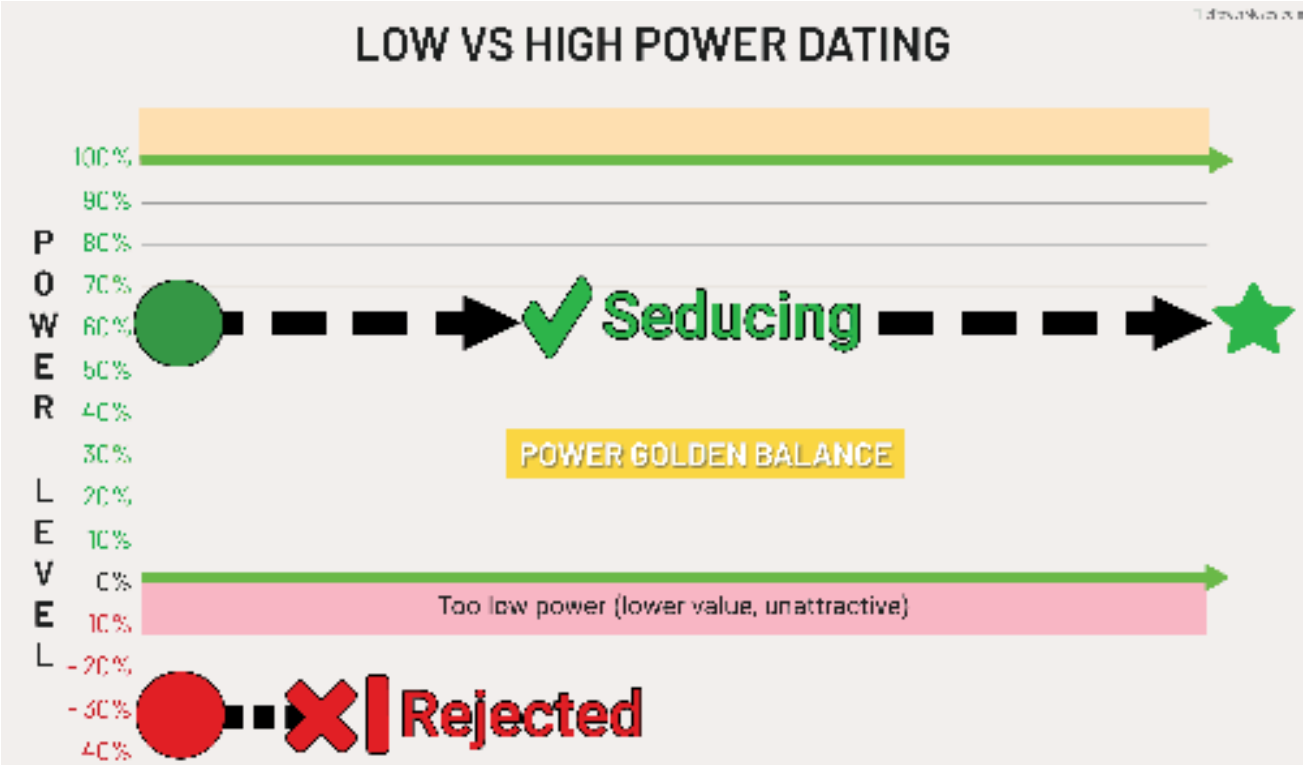
Exceptions always apply of course.
For example, fans of famous men who never met him will be available to him for a long time.
But… Trust that you're better off sticking with the rule :)

5. Power-Positive Escalation = Quick & Effective Seductions

She will *happily* comply when you escalate with enough leverage.

That's what we mean by 'power positive escalation'.
You're in the green with her, and can use that social capital to move things forward.

In chart terms:



⁉⁉ It's not the action itself that succeeds or fails. It's the power you have when taking that action that makes you succeed or fail
Quick definition:

- **Golden balance**: the sweet spot between too low power that a woman is not interested because "you're below her", and too high power that a woman is not interested because she thinks you're too good for her
- **Straight line seduction**: the quickest path from meeting to intimacy.

Straight line seduction requires dating high-power, and using power as fuel to move *forward*.

As mentioned already, effective dating is not to accrue as much power as possible, but to move things forward as soon as you have enough power to do so.

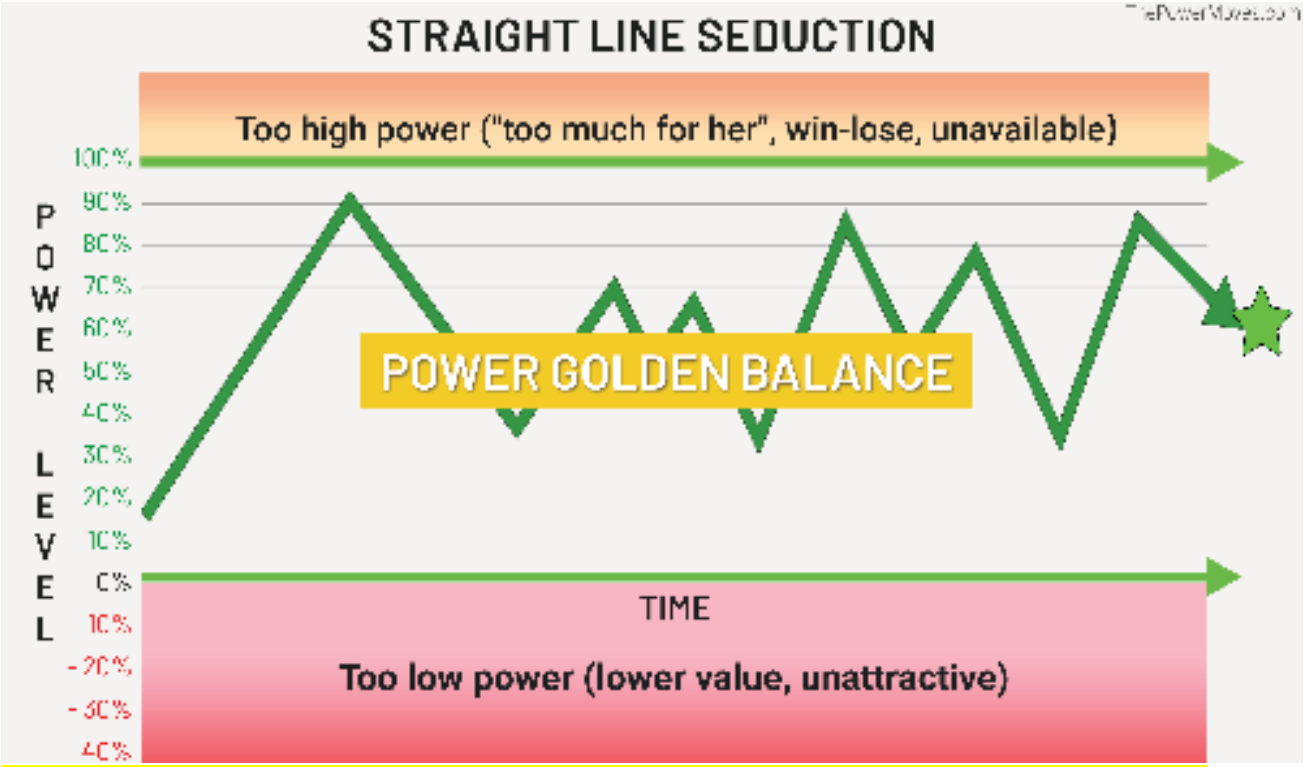
You can think of power as fuel.
You want to get as much fuel as possible, but not for *hoarding* fuel, which weighs you down and is a fire hazard, but to move forward as fast and as far as you can.
Power is fuel, it's to be used, not hoarded.

5.2. Golden Balance For Effective Dating

Jordan Belfort talks about "straight line persuasion".

And Todd Valentine says that he has the same approach in his dating.

So taking a leaf out of Jordan Belfort's book, a seduction based on the "golden balance" is a "straight line seduction" -or "as straight as you can manage"-:



You're at 0% when she sees you as "at her same level", and you're good when she sees you "better than her"
Below zero means you're below her.
Above zero means you're *above* her.

Once she sees you as "above her", you're good. Focus on moving forward rather than acquiring more power (examples in Seduction University).

⍰ Walk-through analysis in the golden balance

Let's analyze a cold approach.
Red is losing power, grey is neutral, and green is gaining power:

1. **You walk up to say hi**
   ⍰⍰ sub-communicates interest (chasing)
2. **She is warm**
   ⍰⍰ expresses interest
3. **You exchange a few sentences**
4. **You tell her to move aside** because you'd like to talk to her more
   ⍰⍰ escalates interest
5. **She follows**. You vibe and tease, and exchange basic information
   ⍰⍰ complies and accepts your leadership
6. **You propose to meet her again**
   ⍰⍰ escalates interest
7. **She says "Maybe" and you exchange contacts**,
   ⍰⍰ hides her interest
8. **She stays talking to you**
   ⍰⍰ verbally hides interest, but shows it behaviorally
9. **You say you must go** for a lunch meeting
   ⍰⍰ sub-communicates you're busier / higher-value
10. **You send her a pic of your lunch 1h later**

⍰⍰ first contact is in pursuit

11. **She replies**, you exchange a few texts
    ⍰⍰ her reply confirms her interest
12. **You propose to grab some food/drinks together**
    She says "OK"
13. …. Etc., etc. until you invite her home and escalate.

You might lose power by escalating, as it shows interest.
But you don't if it's timed well. And you *gain* power when she accepts your escalation.

6. Healthy Win-Win Relationships Are Value-Balanced

Let me say this first:

First, we're talking about a general balance of give and take, and that does not mean 'full equality' or 'equal power'.

Second, there are many ways to make this work that do not entail your typical 'loving relationship' as imagined in much Western media.
For example, a very wealthy top 1% man may finance a woman without seeing her much, and that would still be value-balanced if she appreciates the financing and it makes her life easier.

That being said, good relationships tend to be balanced in give-and-take where both partners are better off and 'winning'.
In loving relationships that include mutual support, mutual interest, mutual defense, and mutual caring.

Anything else is toxic and abusive.

We teach how to go all the way in **Power University**.

SUMMARY

These principles form the foundations of effective dating.

They precede strategies and techniques because **good strategies and techniques are based on these foundational principles**.

The principles are based on the link between power and attraction, and power and leadership.

Once you ensure that you are higher power than her and move forward when you have enough leverage to do so, your dating will take off.

This is a preview from Seduction University.
Seduction University provides real-life examples, strategies, techniques, and the full framework to turn the theory into dating success.

Self-Rejection: Why People Hate You When You're Too Good

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 March 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Self-rejection is a psychological and social phenomenon consisting of rejecting someone as a way to defend one's own ego, self-esteem, or social status.

It's a common phenomenon with important ramifications that go into socialization, dating, as well personal development.

Contents

- INTRO
  - Psychological Self-Defense
  - Power & Status Offense / Self-Defense
- Self-Rejection in Dating
  - Female Self-Rejection
  - Male Self-Rejection
  - Preventing Dating Self-Rejection
- Pre-Emptive Self-Rejection
- Offensive Self-Rejection
- Other Types of Self-Rejections
- Preventing Self-Rejection
  - In Dating: Escalate & Give Back
  - Socially: Be Warmer, Pull People Up
  - With Yourself: Develop Antifragile Ego

INTRO

> Self-rejection means to reject, criticize, ignore, or even hate someone first when we feel that they would reject us, ignore us, or generally be unavailable to us

Self-rejection is based on a psychological self-defense mechanism as well as on an innate drive to acquire and preserve social status within groups.

Let's review both of them:

Psychological Self-Defense

Getting rejected hurts.

And it can have real-world consequences when it dents our self-esteem, since low self-esteem people are less effective at life.

So whenever we (subconsciously) feel we might be rejected, self-rejection kicks in.
In order to protect ourselves and our self-esteem from the possibility of rejection and pain, we trick ourselves into believing that it's *us* who would not want to mingle, talk, work, or get together with someone else.

Aesop's fable of the fox and the grapes is a famous case of self-rejection.
The fox tries to reach the grapes to eat them, but cannot manage to do so.
Instead of insisting or admitting failure, he walks away in fake disdain, saying that the grapes are not good.

Power & Status Offense / Self-Defense

Rejection affects power and social status.

It's not just a psychological phenomenon, but also a social one that interconnects with group dynamics, interpersonal dynamics and, of course, social power dynamics.

Generally speaking, the one who rejects is higher power and/or gains power, and the one who gets rejected is lower power and/or loses power.

So an initial fear of rejection turns into self-rejection, which in turn turns into pre-emptive rejection to defend against ego hurt and power losses (power protecting).

It might sound complex, but it's quite simple and chances are that you've experienced it already, and maybe even did it yourself.
For example, you think that someone is out of your league, and instead of being excited when you get to talk to them, you pretend you don't care and act aloof.

Sometimes self-rejection can be turned into an aggressive, power-taking power move. For example, when we think someone disapproves of us, we may publicly disapprove of them first, or even make up stories of how they tried to get on our good side, but we spurned them. In that case, it's not always easy though to say where self-defense self-rejection starts, and when a pure, aggressive, manipulative power move begins.

Self-Rejection in Dating

Emotions run highest in dating, so it's where you will see most self-rejections.

It may not be a coincidence that the concept, originally called '*auto*-rejection' originates from dating and pick-up, originally attributed to former dating coach Sebastian Drake.

We called it “self-rejection” to make it more intuitive and descriptive, and extended its application to all socialization rather than just dating.

Let’s learn more about self-rejection in dating:

Female Self-Rejection

Most men don’t understand women’s self-rejection.

Men are most used to thinking -and fearing- in terms of female *rejection*, rather than self-rejection, so most **men don’t understand how easily they can *lose* women to self-rejection**.

Paradoxically, the higher value he is and the more she likes him, the higher the odds that he will lose women to self-rejection -unless he’s a power-aware man, that is-.

That’s because most men are used to men chasing women. And they aren’t used to women chasing men.
So they don’t understand how challenging, including emotionally challenging and risky it can be for a woman to chase.
Most men don’t realize that since women don’t usually chase, any unit of interest/chasing from a woman is like 10x of the male equivalent.

That means that, oftentimes, **by simply looking at you a woman is already chasing you**.
She’s often not gonna give you more than that as a stranger, or more than opening a conversation in a social setting.
And if the man doesn’t realize it’s a sign of interest and doesn’t act on it, the woman will often self-reject and write him off.

When women self-reject

Women can self-reject for a variety of reasons, including:

- **When he misses her indicators of interest**: she thinks that she made it obvious, he doesn’t make a move, and she writes him off as either non-interested, or too socially challenged
- **When he doesn’t move things forward**: if a man beats around the bush too long, the woman loses interest in the man and she writes him off as a romantic partner
- **When he stalls at key junctures of dating**: for example, if he waits a whole week after a first night of intimacy, many women will write him off as not interest and/or unable to get a relationship with him. They’ll turn cold, potentially resentful towards him, and move on
- **When he doesn’t give back**: if the woman invests, chases or cares for him but he gives nothing back, many women will eventually turn cold and move on
- **When she’s horny but he doesn’t make a move**: this stumps some men because it’s not how men are wired. If a man would have sex with a girl today, he’d have sex with her tomorrow or the day after, all the same. But girl self-reject if he doesn’t move on the green light

As you can see from the above, **self-rejections often happen as a misunderstanding or as men’s mistakes to read her signals of interest**.
This is why it’s important to understand self-rejection in order to date well.

Why women self-reject

The reasons for self-rejection include:

- **She thinks he’s too much for her**, which can happen when he was actually interested in her, but failed to properly qualify her, reward her for her investment, and generally make her feel good
- **She thinks he’s not interested**, funny enoguh, sometimes the man was just playing dating games, waiting, or

trying to be cool and aloof when all he had to do was to show more interest, be more genuine, or move things forward

- **Following emotional pain to regain self-esteem**: for example, if he waits for a week before calling her after a one-night stand, she may be hurt and turn sour toward him. After one week, she will then be emotionally closed off to him even though she might have liked him
- **Following physical excitement that didn't lead to a sexual release**: if she was ready and horny and he didn't make a move, she will go home -or find another guy- and blame the man for not giving her what she wanted
- **To prevent emotional pain**: for example, she thinks she may get a one-night stand with him, but not a relationship, so she rejects either
- **Becuase he doesn't take action and she thinks he's not a resolute leader**. This less about self-protection, but it's quite common, so read more:

When she feels like she has given him all the signs and green lights possible, but he does not act, women feel either spurned or disappointed.
And they will write him off as ineffective at dating, or as a poor leader. They'll think they wasted their time with you.
Of course, sometimes women think they've given him all the signs, but truly haven't. And that's why it's often a great idea to test for her compliance and readiness to move, so you never miss your opportunity to move forward.

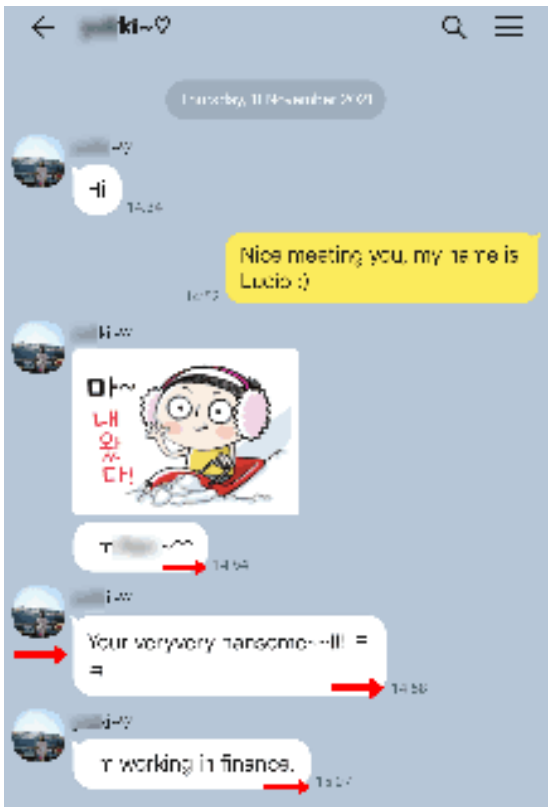
Signs she's in self-rejection

Sometimes you may be able to tell, or even to sense that a woman is nearing self-rejection.
And, before she goes full 360 and goes for good, you may be able to turn things around.

Here are some of the signs:

- **She goes from warm to cold:** she's thinking that she's given you so much, but you haven't given her anything, and now she starts to pull back
- **She complains about something, or criticizes you**: an indirect way of saying "you're driving me away. Women often use indirect ways to hide their true reason
- **She's aloof and cold**: this might be a sign of pre-emptive self-rejection
- **She's giving you too much for you to handle**. If you can't give back or move forward, get ready for self-rejection (see example below)

With time I've learned that whenever a woman is giving me too much, risks are very high she will self-reject.
For that reason, I don't even think it's a good sign to be getting too much, too early.
An example:



She was giving me too much, I wasn't willing or able to follow up and give back that much, so I knew that this was a big candidate for self-rejection.

And what happened a few days later?
I forgot to reply to one of her many messages, and she blocked me:

She wrote first a few times and always more than I did.
When I skipped replying for 3 days she probably felt ashamed for having given me too much, back-rationalized I must not like her enough, and to protect her ego and self-esteem, she rejected me -in spite of the fact that I would

have gone out with her-.

Male Self-Rejection

Male self-rejection is different than female self-rejection.

Men more rarely self-reject because women don't show interest or because things don't progress quickly enough.

Most male self-rejection concerns excuse not to make an approach.
For example:

- She's not really my type
- I'm out with my friends
- I'm not dressed well tonight
- She's too tall
- …

Preventing Dating Self-Rejection

Since self-rejection is more of an issue for men, we'll focus on men.

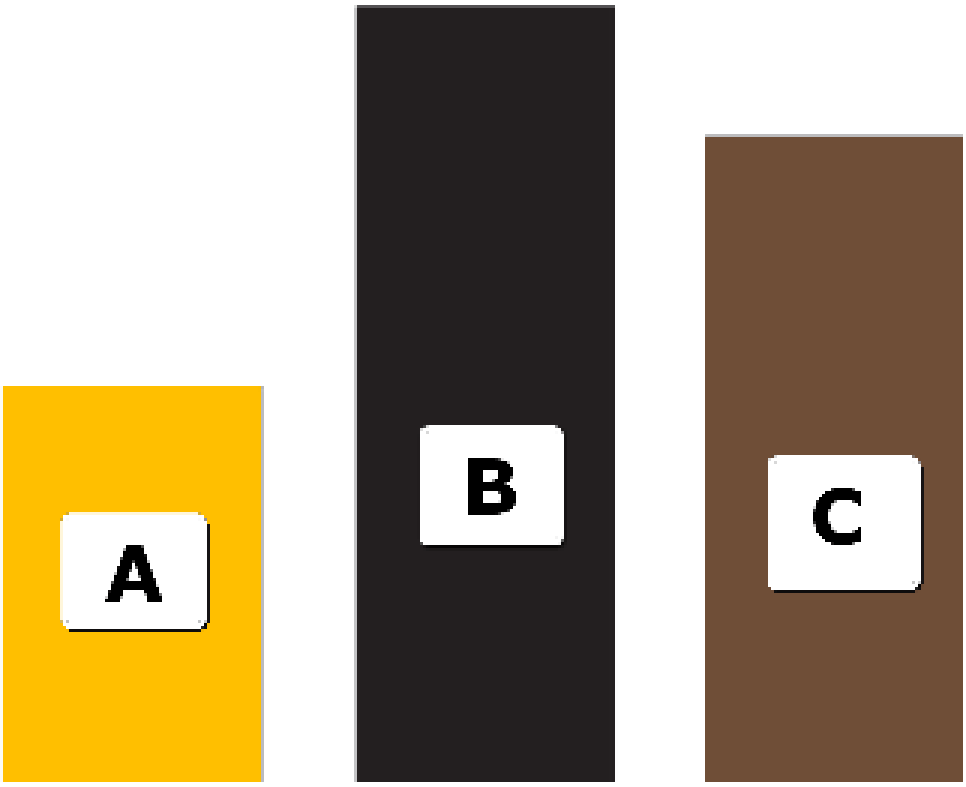
Here's how:

1. Be more attuned to women's indicators of interest
2. Take action on women's indicators of interest
3. Take action and move things forward when you have enough power and leverage to do so
4. If she thinks you're very high value, rein in the teasing (ie.: don't overdo the "asshole")
5. Focus on bonding and connection and/or moving forward when she already thinks you're very high value
6. Pull her up to your level if she thinks you're very high-value
7. Invest back when a woman invests
8. Generally be a warm and welcoming force

Pre-Emptive Self-Rejection

Pre-emptive self-rejection is a sub-type of self-rejection that happens before there is even a single social interaction.

To explain it, imagine the bars below represent the "personal value" of three different people:



A is a 6, because she knows a couple of people there but no big-shot, is a bit overweight, employed but not in a high-position
B is a 10, because he's famous and most people know him, he's successful, rich, and happens to be good looking
C is an 8.5, because he's semi-popular, doing well financially, and good looking

And now imagine they're all out in a mixer event where people move around and meet new people for networking, business, or… Whatever else might arise.

In a world free of psychology and self-rejection, both Amber (A) and Christy (C) want to meet Black (B).
And Black could easily get friendship, romance, or at least a warm welcome by both Amber and Christy.

But in the real world, it's not as straightforward.
People also have a sense for what their personal value is, and they know that higher value people might not be thrilled to hobnob with them.

That's why Amber might want to approach Black, but she will not do so. Amber might be afraid that if she says hi, Black might spurn her.

Amber might be so deep in self-denial, that she doesn't even admit to herself that she'd like to get to know Black.
So if someone asks her about him, she may even say "he's not my type".

Pre-emptive self-rejection is based on little concrete signals, and mostly on a calculation of personal values.
When people think you're too good for them, they will act like you're too good for them.

Amber might start to run a whole narrative based on her imaginary rejection, assigning negative traits and behaviors to someone she hasn't even met.
When she notices herself looking towards Black but Black not looking at her, she subconsciously feels diminished and she tells herself "he's one of those rich assholes who takes advantage of people".
If Black approached her, she might even be cold and standoffish.

Pre-emptive self-rejection can become more common as you grow. It happens when people don't think you will accept them, and they self-reject themselves before you do so.
If you are high-value, this is relevant for you because you could end up making enemies just by being high-value.

Offensive Self-Rejection

Sometimes what's an actual self-rejection can look like a personal dislike.

Generally speaking, it's people with a fragile ego and fragile self-esteem who masquerade their self-rejection as a rejection and/or personal dislike.

Says psychologist Albert Ellis (1994):

> The best defense against rejection is a good offense: Get the others before they get you.
> Some attackers hide their insecurity by being subtler. They are quietly disapproving, superior, distant, judgmental, sarcastic, negative, and/or condescending toward people who may not approve of them. They hold everyone at arm's length, or further. Their goal is to keep others off balance in order to protect their own fragile egos. They are just as afraid of what other people think of them, but they hide behind a wall.

Other Types of Self-Rejections

1. **After a (perceived) rejection**: sometimes self-rejection happens after a perceived slight. For example, the woman sometimes interprets the man who waits one week to call her as a rejection, even when the man was interested and was playing the (wrong) "dating game"
2. **After emotional hurt**: rejections, even imaginary rejections, hurt. So if after an interaction, a date, or even after a relationship or friendship has ended, some people will self-reject
3. **As a power move**: rejecting someone sub-communicates "I'm better than you", so a self-rejection is sometimes masqueraded as a rejection and made public to acquire more social status
4. **Social strategy to maintain status**: for some people, rejection is a social strategy to preserve status. In many groups you will see people playing games of feigned disinterest to either acquire power, or to self-protect against losing power

Preventing Self-Rejection

There are three levels of preventing self-rejection:

1. In dating
2. Socially
3. With yourself

In Dating: Escalate & Give Back

This is particularly relevant for men, see above.

But to sum it up:

1. **Escalate** whenenever she's giving you the green light with investment and chasing
2. **Give back** whenenver she's investing, chasing, building you up, or showing interest. You can give back mirroring her, pulling her up, or qualifying her

Socially: Be Warmer, Pull People Up

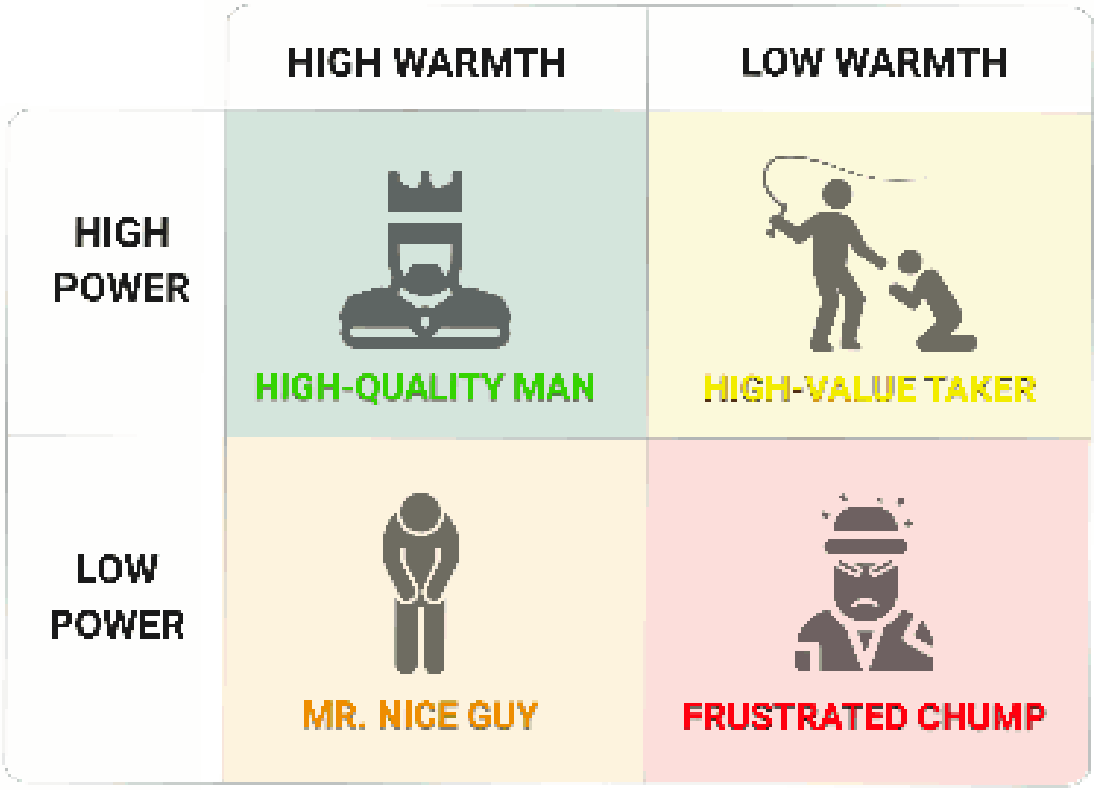
People only self-reject when they feel *you* will reject them.

And that's far more likely to happen when you *look* like someone who rejects people, makes them feel bad about themselves, or make them lose social status.

So the solution is simple:

Don't look and act like an asshole :).

To put it in the positive, become a warmer person, and make people feel welcome and appreciated.
That way, people feel like your value is potentially available to them. Or, at least, that you will not disempower them with a public display of aloofness or rejection.



It's low-warmth individuals who drive people into self-rejection
For more on these dynamics, also see:

- **Value and availability**

And:

- **Power & Warmth**

With Yourself: Develop Antifragile Ego

Self-rejection has a lot to do with vulnerability.

When people are afraid of being vulnerable, they self-reject others so that they can put up a facade of fake strength and high-value.

Now, being vulnerable can easily be over-done and disempower you.
However, as for everything, balance.
And there is also much power in not being afraid of emotional pain. And especially not when the social and life costs of emotional pain are little or nil -and that is often the case-.

In those cases, self-rejection happens because of a fragile ego.
To overcome it:

- Develop an antifragile ego
- Develop a growth mindset

Dating Power Dynamics: 5 Domains to Master Seduction

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 March 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Unlock the secrets of high-value dating success by mastering the power dynamics that drive attraction.

Many men unknowingly sabotage their chances by over-chasing, over-investing, or misreading key signals. Yet, the most attractive men—the ones women truly desire—know how to balance power and connection.

In this article, you'll discover the five core principles of dating dynamics that high-value men follow to build attraction, maintain control, and move relationships forward.

This is our expertise and we have already helped thousands of men becoming respect-worthy, attractive men.

Dating Power Dynamics (TPM) is TPM's applied model for understanding and influencing attraction by managing power, warmth, timing, and investment in romantic interactions.
Part of TPM's Interpersonal Power Dynamics (see the TPM Power Dynamics Framework).

Power is the most potent aphrodisiac -and the quickest shortcut to success-

Let's start:

Contents

- INTRO
- 1. Chasing VS (Being Chased)
  - Dating Strategy
  - ⍰ Over-Chased Without Matching = You Lose Her
- 2. Investing (VS Getting Investment)
  - Dating Strategy
  - ⍰ Matching Her Investment
- 3. Showing Interest (VS Getting Interest)

- Dating Strategy
- 4. Qualifying Yourself (VS Screening)
  - Dating Strategy
  - ⍰⍰ From Qualifying to Screening
- 5. Power & Warmth (VS Power OR Warmth)
  - ⍰ Losing Her For Lacking Warmth
- Mastering The Basics
- SUMMARY

INTRO

The entries below are the main drivers of power and attraction.

Imagine each one of them on a continuum in which you either lose power, or gain power.

The left side of the continuums are low power.
And the right side are high power.

However, for effective dating the goal is not to accrue as much power as possible, but to have *enough* power to move things forward.

Key takeaways:

- Be power up
- Pull her up to your level, make her feel valued
- Use that power to move forward

Let's dive in:

1. Chasing VS (Being Chased)

Chasing is to pursue and value someone more than they value you.

Principle:

⚖ **Chasing lowers power & attraction; being chased increases it, provided there's hope and reciprocation.**

The sweet spot is a balance where she pursues you, you reward her, and move forward.

What makes you 'chase'

We include four overlapping principles under 'chasing':

- **Pursuing**
  Ie.:
  - Re-initiating contact
  - Inviting her out

- **Investing**, or the effort you show
  Ie.:
  - Carrying her bags
  - Mentoring
  - Longer texts

- **Showing interest**
  Ie.:
  - Compliments
  - Professing love
  - Proposing a relationship

- **Screening VS Qualifying**: You screen to find her qualities, and qualify when responding to her screens.

They all overlap and cluster around a general sense of 'chasing'. But for ease of understanding, we'll treat them separately.

Dating Strategy

- **Avoid chasing far more than she does,** because that's disempowering and unattractive (negative balance of power)
- **Entice her to chase you** slightly more than you do… (positive balance of power)
  - But strive for balance, reward her pursuit, and focus on escalation, or she will self-reject and move on

Since men must initiate, ***some* chasing is normal**. But it's when chasing becomes too much or too imbalanced that dating becomes ineffective and she loses interest.

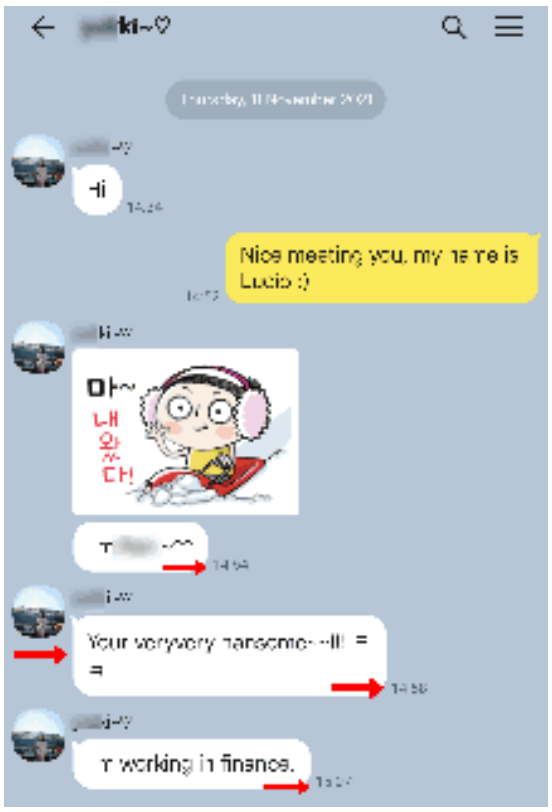
In large part, **effective dating walks a fine line of pursuing, without over-chasing**.
If you move things forward when she's investing, you're automatically balanced, and you're golden.

⍰ Over-Chased Without Matching = You Lose Her

Being chased generally means being in the power position.

So the more you get chased, the more power you have.
However… remember the basic laws of dating: dating power is use or lose.
So if you don't move forward or give back to increase the bond, you will eventually lose her.

This is an example of a woman chasing:



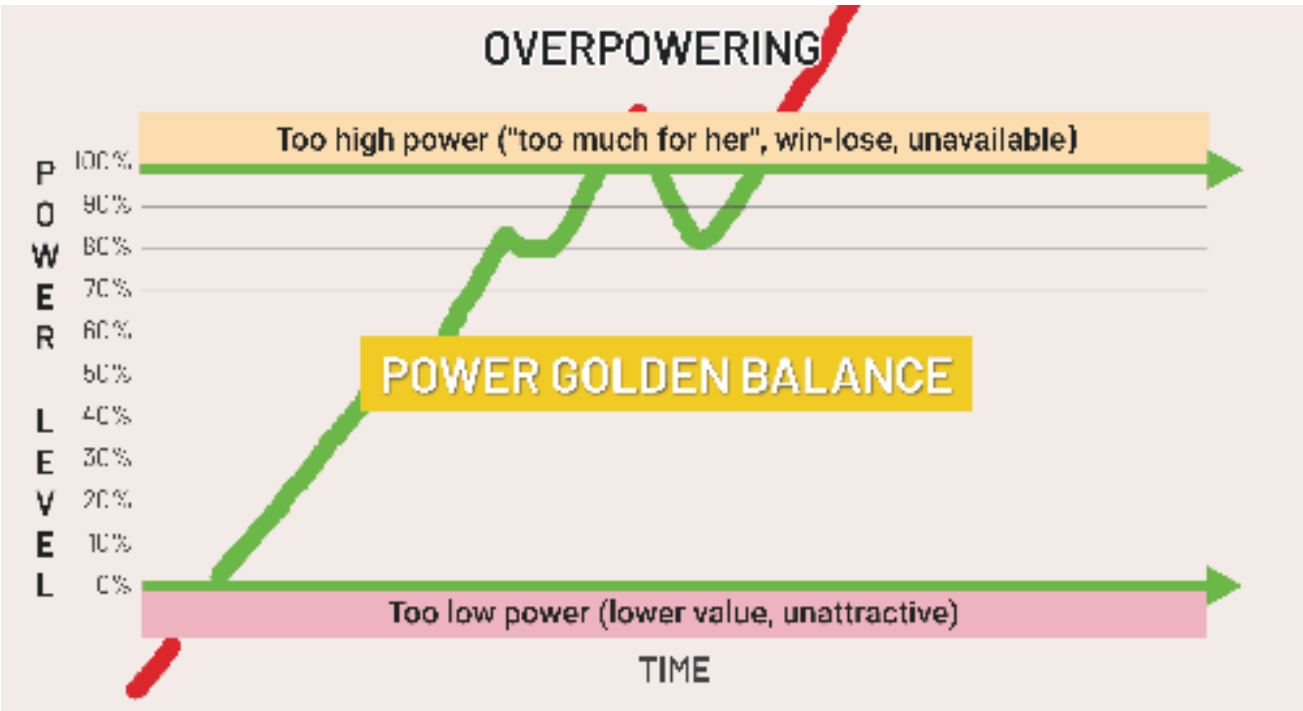
> **She**: (3 texts + compliments + self-disclosure) <— Chases
>
> ✕ (no reply) <— Value-taking power. She feels spurned and like I'm unavailable)
>
> ✓ Thank you. You also looked good ? <— Rewards her, encourages to invest more

Being chased is a 'rich man's problem'.
But as you become high-value and more women chase, you must ensure you make that value available.

This is why we say that "balanced dating is effective dating": being chased hard without giving anything feels like the apex of power, but it often ends up nowhere that involves sex or intimacy.

Case in point, guess what happened with the lady in the message above?
She kept writing and I forgot to reply for a couple of days. And… She self-rejected, and blocked me:

In our "straight line seduction chart", this interaction went like this:



I started low for approaching, re-gained power chatting, and went *too* high power when I under-invested
So as a general rule, if you're being chased you want to turn it a bit more into *mutual* chasing which sub-communicates attraction on both sides.
Withoug going overboard, maintain your power, but avoid her chasing and you giving nothing.
For example, if she says you're attractive, you say "*We both are*", or "*Thanks, you also seem cool, let's find a time for some food or drinks*".

If this isn't clear yet, see:

- ⍰ Self-rejection

- ⍰ Value and availability

2. Investing (VS Getting Investment)

The effort you expend to meet, stay in touch, or give value

And the same rule applies:

Dating Strategy

1. **Avoid investing more than her**, because that's disempowering and unattractive (negative balance of power)
2. **Entice her to invest *slightly* more than you do**… (positive balance of power)
    - … But strive for balance and escalate on her investment

Whenever you're getting investment, it's a green light to escalate.

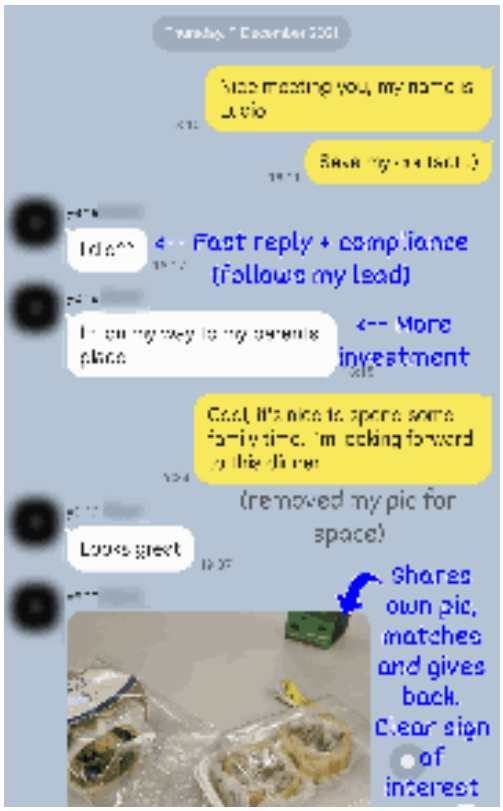
There are many levels of escalations, so it's not only necessarily physical escalation.
But you want to move things forward to grow closer.

Women only invest in men they're interested in, so a woman investing is a big green light.
And remember: **green lights are both an *opportunity* to move, and an *obligation* to move!**

As per social exchange, you can even think of it in financial terms: high-value women who invest want to see a return on their investment. If you don't remunerate their investment they'll eventually take their assets to a better asset manager.

Let's see an example:

⍰ Matching Her Investment



When she invests, you can drop the games and focus on moving forward.
Indeed, moving forward is the best reward you can give her, and the most effective approach to dating.

So I ask something I can reward her on, I find a commonality to make it smooth, and I propose to meet. And, as expected, she agrees.

3. Showing Interest (VS Getting Interest)

Interest is romantic or sexual interest towards someone

Dating Strategy

1. **Avoid showing more interest than her,** because that's disempowering and loses attraction (negative balance of power)
2. **Entice her to show more interest than you show**, because that's empowering and attractive (positive balance of power)
   - … But balance and use her "indicators of interest" to escalate
3. **Use conditional appreciation** when she passes your screens or brags ⍰

Plus:

⍰**Beginners show more romantic interest** to avoid the 'friend zone'

4. Qualifying Yourself (VS Screening)

Generally speaking:

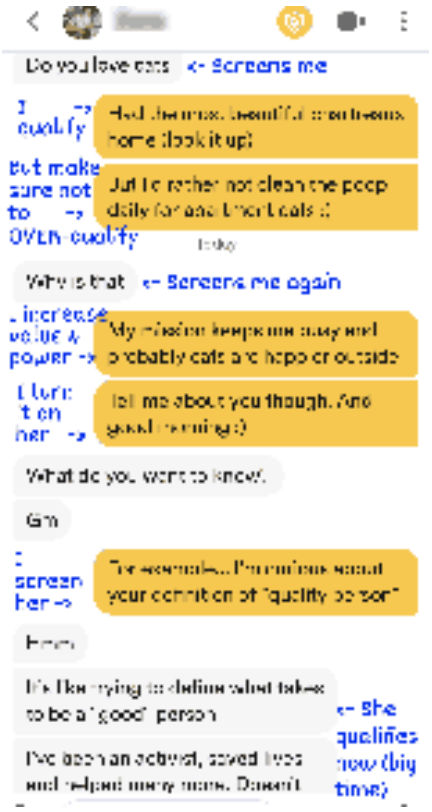
And when you screen you have power and control.
When you qualify you're proving yourself and chasing.

Dating Strategy

1. **Avoid proving yourself to her,** it's disempowering and loses attraction (negative balance of power)
2. **Screen her and make her prove to you**, because that's empowering and attractive (positive balance of power)
3. **Reward her when she passes your screens**

⍰⍰ From Qualifying to Screening

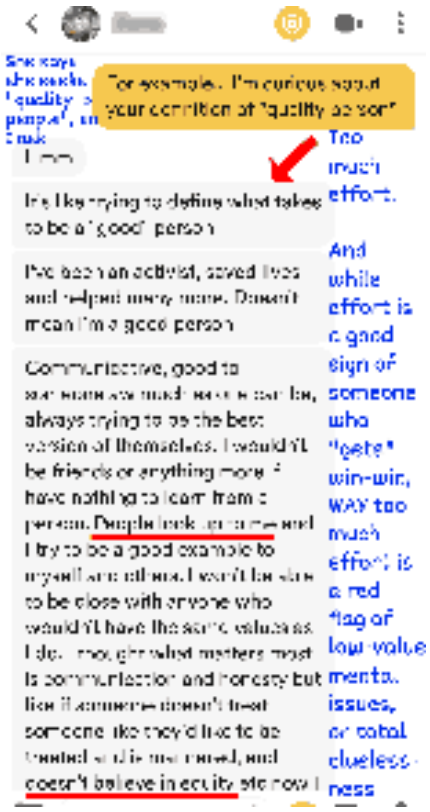
This is a perfect exchange to show the dynamics of screening and qualifying.
Starting from the very first message (in her profile she says she loves cats):



Let's analyze the dynamics:

1. **Screens me**
2. **Qualifies** ♟ with new thread <— Avoids saying 'no' that may kill the interaction, BUT
3. **Semi-disqualifies after** <— To maintain power & lead. ♟ I add '*apartment* cats' to set up the freedom & animal welfare frame
4. **Asks for more**
5. **High-value rationale**
   - **+ Ethical rationale** for 'moral leadership'
6. **Screens her back**

Remember the law of balance though.
It becomes a red flag when she *over*-invests this much:



And it turned out a *reliable* red flag.

So, generally speaking, when a woman screens you you want to qualify *just* enough not to break rapport, AND turn it around smoothly -see Seduction University for "smoothly"-.

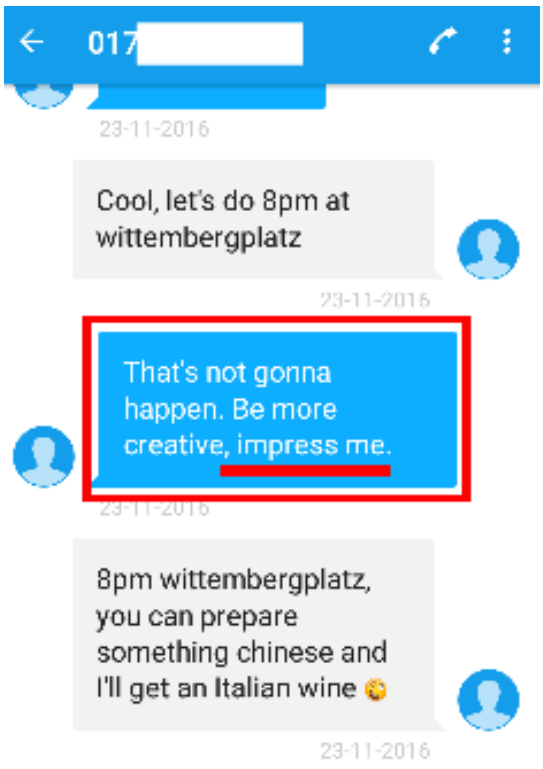
Hoops: The Extreme Version of "Screening"

Hoops are extreme versions of screening.

And "jumping through hoops" is the extreme version of qualifying.

When you jump through hoops you lose massive amount of power -and attraction-.
One single jump through a hoop might be enough to turn you into a simp.

We have an example in one of the dating articles for women on what NOT to do:



"Impress me", LOL :).
I hadn't started TPM back then, but you don't even need TPM with such obvious (nasty) power moves.

P.S.:
For the record, my answer wasn't effective if I wanted to date her.
But after that power move, I wasn't into dating her anymore.

5. Power & Warmth (VS Power OR Warmth)

The men's dating literature calls this dichotomy "value – comfort".

Here at TPM we apply a similar, science-based concept to all socialization.
And we call it "power and warmth".

It works like this:

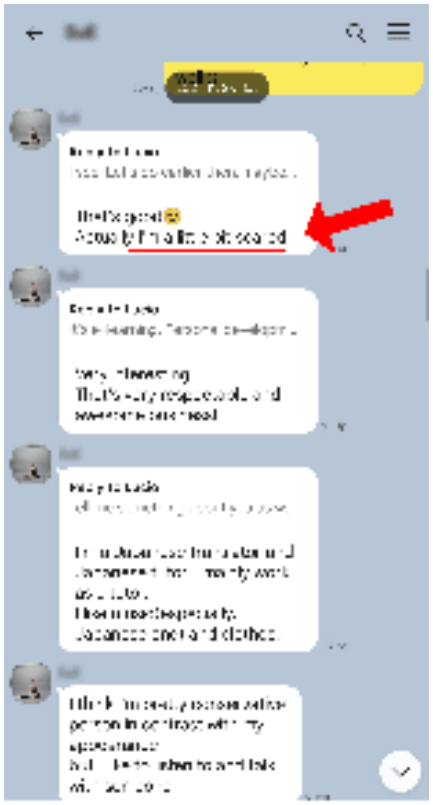
- **Power** = she sees you as "more than her" -smarter, stronger, more dominant, more emotionally grounded, etc. etc., and she is attracted -but might still not follow you!-
- **Warmth** = she trusts you, feels comfortable, feels similar, feels appreciated -she is also ready and *willing* to be seduced, alone, and intimate with you-

Too much warmth without any power at all and you're a doormat.
Women aren't exactly attracted to doormats.

Too much power without warmth though and she might resist her own attraction. High-power women can feel like being intimate is disempowering, like a personal loss.
More feminine women are "wary" about you, don't like you, or don't see a future with you.
And since many women are risk-averse, many will not go home with you -or will not come out to meet you-.

We share real-life examples of the perfect mix in Seduction University.

⍰ Losing Her For Lacking Warmth



> **Her**: I'm a little bit scared (to meet you)

In the end, fear got the best of her and she never came out to meet me.
There is only so much you can salvage by text.

⍰⍰ Ensure she feels safe, or you'll only date risk-takers -who are less likely to stay loyal.

Calibrating Power & Warmth

Higher Power	Warmer
You're a 'nice guy'	You're intimidating
Social circle	Cold approaches (especially at night / in isolated environments)
Party girl / experienced / risk taker / confident / career woman	Shy / inexperienced / risk averse / young / home-church type

Kind VS 'Bad Boy'

Virtually all evolutionary psychology research surveys show that women highly value kindness.

And then we have the common trope that women really want 'bad boys'.

How do we reconcile that?

The bad boy's rudeness is one way to demonstrate disinterest and power.

The game of rudeness is:

> I'm rude because I'm not interested in you, and because I'm powerful enough that I can allow myself to have you as an enemy

The reason why some men are attracted to the "asshole strategy" is because of the power it entails.

There are times and places for rude.
For example, with rude women.

However, generally speaking, the upside of this approach is limited.
As we've seen, many women write the 'disinterested bad boy' off pretty quick. And mercurial attraction based on disinsterest are very fast to dissolve.
So, in general, you can do better than rude & asshole.

The "asshole game" also easily ends up in the "disempowering red zone" of our straight-line seduction model.

Mastering The Basics

Familiarize yourself with other basic principles of effective dating:

- **Fundamental principles of dating dynamics**
- Sexual Market Value
- Sexual Marketplace

Also related to power and attraction:

- Strategy beats power
- Why 'alpha male dating' is costing you

SUMMARY

This post showed you the basics of dating power dynamics.

Women love higher-power men who make them chase, invest, and follow their lead.

That's why we advice for a positive balance of power.

However, as we've seen, you don't want to overdo it because:

1. **It's more effective to *use* power, then to hoard it**: think of dating power as fuel. Unless you use it, it weighs you down -and it's a fire hazard-. Use it to race forward.
2. **Pull her up to your high level**: or she will think you're unavailable, and write you off. Men who push women down make for toxic relationships that high-quality women reject

The best mindset and approach is to:

1. Become a high-value man women want to invest in
2. Date high power
3. Use that power for win-win, and move the interaction forward

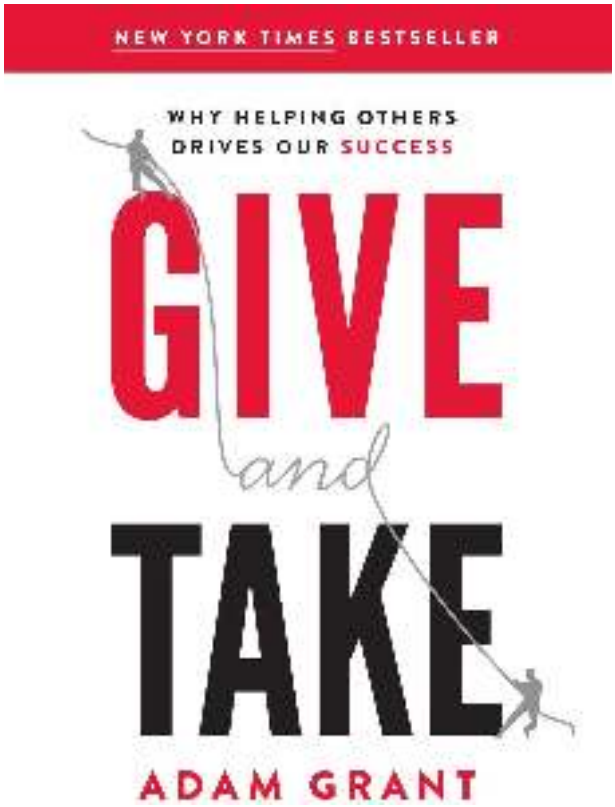
You know you're at the elite level when your way to repay her investment is to escalate towards intimacy.

This is a preview from Seduction University, where you will find concrete techniques + full system to succeed

Give and Take: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 March 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In *Give and Take* (2013) Adam Grant examines how people's value-giving or value-taking attitudes towards social exchanges and interpersonal relationships influence their success in life, concluding that givers are *both* big losers… And big winners.



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- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - 1. People differ in their inclinations to either give or take
  - 2. Givers are at the bottom… And at the top
  - 3. Givers enjoy many life-advantages: success, social networks, happiness, & more
  - 4. If giving is so good, what stops it? Culture and fear, says Grant
  - 5. Watch out for "fake givers"
  - 6. There are costs to being a taker, including…
  - 7. But there are also risks to being a giver, including…
  - 8. When it comes to persuasion & influence, be like water
  - 9. The Caveat: Successful Givers Pursue BOTH Giving and Personal Interest
- MORE WISDOM
- Real-Life Applications
  - Assess The Givers & Takers In Your Life
  - How to Spot Givers & Takers
  - Leaders: hire givers & foster a giving culture
  - More real-life applications

- QUOTES
- Criticism
  - Is “Give and Take” biased? Success is collaboration and win-win, not just “giving”
  - Some studies didn’t add up
  - Some supporting “evidence” is based on stories, anecdotes, and interviews
  - There is no universal, scientific measure for “giver” or “taker”
  - Takers can also win big, and that must be made clear
  - Equates narcissism to value-taking. But… Are they (always) the same?
- PROS
- REVIEW

Key Takeaways

- Different people fall over a continuum of give and take
- Givers and takers are on opposite sides of that continuum
- People prefer, like, and support givers, and dislike (and can undermine as frenemies) the takers
- Different types of givers are on opposite ends of personal success: either winners, or losers
- Winning givers are power-aware and can be more strategic, assertive, or high-power

This is the same we often said on this website and the same concepts over which we base several of our foundational strategies in Power University.

Notes

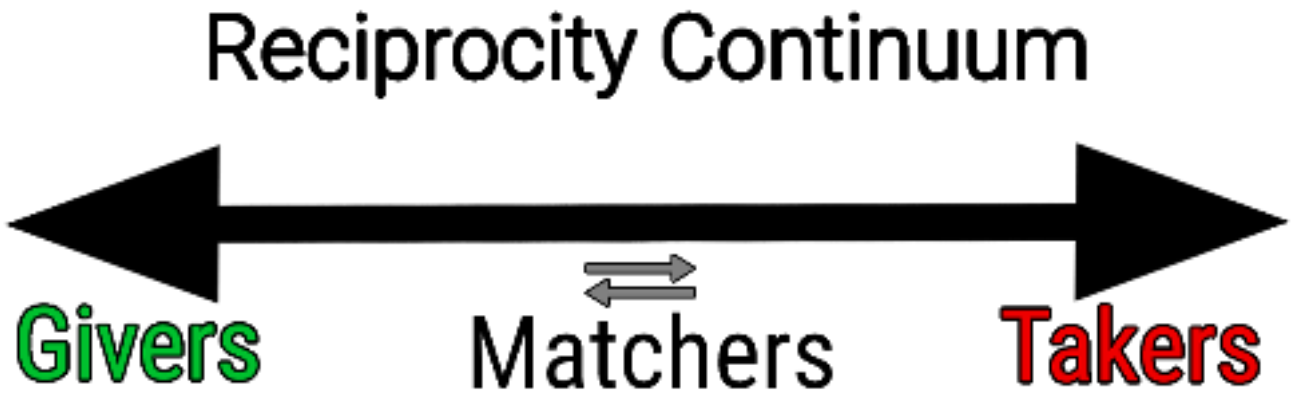
About the Author:
Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist, author, and professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.
He also dabbled in the sociology of power dynamics with “Power Moves“, a book that he wrote while observing the power players at the Davos Economic Forum.

1. People differ in their inclinations to either give or take

Adam Grant says that “social scientists have discovered that people differ dramatically in their desired mix of taking and giving” (Miles et al., 1989).

In the psychological literature, they’re sometimes referred to as “reciprocity preferences”.
In common parlance, we can call it a predisposition towards taking or giving.

The reciprocity can be thought of as on a continuum:



Note: the colors don't reflect what's "better". Being a giver can be naive at times. The colors are seen from the point of view of "contributions" to an imaginary whole
In brief:

- **Givers**: prefer to give more than they get
- **Matchers**: preserve an equal balance of giving and taking -they're the majority-
- **Takers**: prefer like to get more than they give

Grant says that takers self-promote and make sure they get plenty of credit for their efforts. The "garden-variety takers" aren't cruel but more like cautious and self-protective.

TPM Note:
On TPM we believe self-promotion when you're not getting your due credit or making sure people know the value you bring doesn't make you a taker, but it's just smart and sensible behavior.
We call it "fair value marketing".

It's not just about behaviors and putting one's own interests first, but also about mindsets.
Takers believe that the world is a competitive, dog-eat-dog place.
And they tend to place a high premium on independence. If they depend too much on others, takers believe, they'll be vulnerable to being outdone. It's not difficult for takers to think of themselves as separate, because they tend to see themselves as superior to and separate from others.

TPM Note: individualism is not necessarily bad and collectivism is often poor
A certain degree of separateness is a good thing and does not have to harm collaboration.
Also see: enlightened individualism.

Matchers instead believe and operate on the principle of fairness: when they help others, they protect themselves by seeking reciprocity.
If you're a matcher, you believe in tit for tat, and in functional exchanges, you prefer your relationships to be an even exchange of favors.

While takers put themselves above other people's needs, givers are other-focused, paying more attention to what other people need from them.
Givers also reject the notion that interdependence is weak and appreciate interdependence. Givers are more likely to see interdependence as a source of strength, a way to harness the skills of multiple people for the greater good.

Social Exchange Calculations: How Givers and Takers Calculate Differently

Here on TPM we say that everyone runs a subconscious "accounting" of value exchanges.

As a matter of fact, we *promote* here a *conscious* approach towards value exchanges.

And indeed Adam Grant confirms the same… With a small exception.
"Give and Take" says that *some* givers might not think of the personal costs at all. However, many "selfless givers"

do run some calculations.
It's just that givers run a calculation that differs in nature from takers and matchers.
Grant says that if you're a giver, you help whenever the benefits to others exceed the personal costs.

While if you're a taker, you help others strategically, when the benefits to you outweigh the personal costs.

Closer relationships are more giver-based

According to research by Yale psychologist Margaret Clark, most people act like givers in close relationships.

Here at TPM we say that's indeed possible and that those are the best relationships.
However, we place a healthy amount of emphasis on that "most", plus we look for specific situations when a value-taking attitude might crop up, and we learn how to address it and stamp it out -lest it grows like poison ivy-.

So, in good part, the reciprocity style of choice depends on the context and relationship.
Adam Grant makes the care that there is no point in keeping the giver style for close relationships only, and that people could probably do more and succeed more by extending that "giver approach".

2. Givers are at the bottom... And at the top

Says Grant:

> Research demonstrates that givers sink to the bottom of the success ladder

Givers are at a disadvantage because they make others better off but sacrifice their own success in the process.

It's important to note though that Grant focuses on the workplace, albeit we can probably say that the workplace is a good proxy of at least financial success.
The research is:

- **Givers are poor engineers at work** (Francis J. Flynn, 2017) The least productive and effective engineers are givers. In one study 161 professional engineers in California rated one another and the least successful engineers were those who gave more than they received. These givers had the worst objective scores for number of tasks, technical reports, drawings completed, errors made, deadlines missed, and money wasted.
  Going out of their way to help others prevented them from getting their own work done.
- **Givers get poor grades in med School** (Lievens et al. 2009), : In a study of 627 medical students in Belgium, the students with the lowest grades had very high scores on giver statements like "I love to help others" and "I anticipate the needs of others." The givers went out of their way to help their peers study, sharing what they already knew at the expense of filling gaps in their own knowledge, and it gave their peers a leg up at test time.
- **Givers sell less** (Grant & Barnes, "Predicting Sales Revenue", working paper, 2011) Givers brought in two and a half times less annual sales revenue. Givers were too concerned about what was best for their customer to sell aggressively enough

And there's even evidence that compared with takers, on average, givers earn 14 percent less money, have twice the risk of becoming victims of crimes, and are judged as 22 percent less powerful and dominant.

Grant says that the givers are also at the top, though:

> But when we look at the engineers with the highest productivity, the evidence shows that they're givers too. (…)
> The worst performers and the best performers are givers; takers and matchers are more likely to land in the middle.

- The California engineers with the best objective scores for quantity and quality of results are those who

consistently give more to their colleagues than they get.

- The Belgian medical students with the lowest grades have unusually high giver scores, but so do the students with the highest grades. Over the course of medical school, being a giver accounts for 11 percent higher grades.
- The least productive salespeople had 25 percent higher giver scores than average performers—but so did the most productive salespeople. The top performers were givers, and they averaged 50 percent more annual revenue than the takers and matchers

Grant says that "across occupations, if you examine the link between reciprocity styles and success, the givers are more likely to become champs—not only chumps".

TPM Note: How about those other studies showing givers as victims and more submissive?
Albeit Grant might romance it a bit, these are remarkable studies that he brought to our attention and that show the power of collaboration.
But there are 3 studies missing on this "giver turnaround". How about those studies showing that givers are more likely to be victimized and are judged not as dominant?

3. Givers enjoy many life-advantages: success, social networks, happiness, & more

Among the advantages:

Winning givers create circles of winners

Grant says that givers, takers, and matchers all can—and do—achieve success.

But there's something distinctive that happens when givers succeed: it spreads and cascades.

When takers win, there's usually someone else who loses.
But when givers win, a virtuous circle starts that lifts the people around the successful givers.

Givers make friends and allies

Grant says that when givers win, people are rooting for them and supporting them, rather than gunning for them.

And this is a good quote for some of our basic success strategies here on TPM:

> As the venture capitalist Randy Komisar remarks, "It's easier to win if everybody wants you to win. If you don't make enemies out there, it's easier to succeed."

Giving also provides givers with people who offer help in exchange for the givers' past giving, honest willingness to help, for their great reputation, or for wanting to be in their networks.
Says Grant referring to one of his givers' examples who "magically" had doors opened for him:

> These karmic moments can often be traced to the fact that matchers are on a mission to make them happen. Just as matchers will sacrifice their own interests to punish takers who act selfishly toward others, they'll go out of their way to reward givers who act generously toward others.

Givers avoid making enemies and frenemies

Says Grant:

> One study found that highly talented people tend to make others jealous.
> But if talented people are givers, they no longer have a target on their backs. Instead, givers are appreciated for their contributions.

Givers' success grows over time as their reputation grows

Part of the givers' success is in the social capital they build, including social credits, trust, and goodwill.

And that means that when they keep interacting in the same environment and the same people, their success also grows.
This seems to be backed by the data. Says Grant:

> In fact, you'll see that in sales and medical school, the giver advantage grows over time

So giving can be seen as harvesting and reaping rewards, a long-term winning game.

Chip Conley, the entrepreneur who founded Joie de Vivre Hotels, says that "Being a giver is not good for a 100-yard dash, but it's valuable in a marathon."

Givers have an advantage in the digital age of open reputation?

I've heard this more than once:

As the world becomes more connected and information flows, givers have an even bigger advantage.

Conley believes today's connected world makes relationships and reputations more visible, and that allows givers to accelerate their pace of trust-building.
More informal background checks are also possible with mutual connections, and mutual connections are much more obvious with social networks.

Grant also says that as we organize more people into teams, givers have more opportunities to demonstrate their value.
And as we move away from factories and service jobs, the relationship-based services make giving all the more profitable.

TPM Note: True, but there's the other side of the coin
The internet also offers more anonymity and the ability to rip off many people at once, and then disappear.
A few of the guys who show up at TPM are looking for "dark psychology to seduce", to sell, or to persuade. And some of them bought courses purporting to sell "manipulation techniques" to bend other people's minds. That's value-taking marketing-manipulation that the Internet made far easier.

Plus, plenty of great takers' schemes isn't even recognized as taking from the flocks of naive sheep.
Take for example the various newly minted bitcoin coins, or the various NFTs.
The sheep drink from their gurus and many of said gurus suffer little or no consequences.

Givers have an easier time developing great networks

Givers develop better networks because they:

- Develop more social capital
- Develop better reputation
- People are happy to see givers succeed, even when they haven't "transacted with them"
- Develop strongers networks around them. A study shows that giving is contagious and, especially when it's distinctive and consistent, establishes a pattern that shifts other people's reciprocity styles within a group
- Have an easier time asking for favors because they are themselves are more likely to help without past exchanges

Givers are happier (and healthier?)

Supporting evidence includes:

- Research shows that if people start volunteering two hours a week, their happiness, satisfaction, and self-esteem go up a year later
- American adults who volunteered at least one hundred hours in 1998 were more likely to be alive in 2000

And if happiness isn't enough:

- Givers have a strong sense of life meaning (Baumeister et al., 2013)

There might be a cap on giving and happiness though:

- Australian adults who volunteered between one hundred and eight hundred hours per year were happier and more satisfied with their lives than those who volunteered fewer than one hundred or more than eight hundred hours annually

Grant doesn't say why, but it might be either because of burnout, or because those givers didn't have anything else in their lives.

The key to give a lot but avoiding burning out is to be an "otherish giver" -see later-, and also take care of oneself, as well as to grow comfortable in *asking* for help.

Givers perform better in complex negotiation (enlightned givers, at least)

First, a caveat:

Grant seems to be talking about more complex negotiation, where the pie isn't fixed and where communication and thought-through and strategic approaches can find more routes to win-win solutions.

And second, it's not all givers who do better in negotiation, it's what Grant calls "otherish givers", and what we'd call here "enlightened collaborators".

Now with those caveats, this is what Grant says, based on a meta-analysis of 28 different studies:

> The best negotiators weren't takers or selfless givers.
> The takers focused on claiming value: they saw negotiations as zero-sum, win-lose contests and didn't trust their opponents, so they bargained aggressively, overlooking opportunities to create value through developing an understanding of their counterparts' interests. The selfless givers made too many concessions, benefiting their counterparts at a personal cost. **The most effective negotiators were otherish (ie.: the "enlightened givers"**): they reported high concern for their own interests and high concern for their counterparts' interests.

This is because the enlightened givers looked for opportunities considering BOTH their own interests and the other party's interest and so they found more win-win and pie-expanding solutions that others missed.
Such as, these "strategic givers" *created* more value than they were then able to negotiate and split.

More advantages:

Some more advantages disseminated in "Give and Take":

- **Earn a "pass" for being "different":** groups generally prefer people who conform. But psychologist Edwin Hollander argued that givers "earn idiosyncrasy credits" -basically, what we call credits and debits-. Matchers then grant them a license to deviate from a group's norms or expectations
- **Get more attention and support when proposing difficult ideas**: research shows that when takers present "dangerous" ideas, others are skeptical. But when givers propose potentially threatening ideas, others listened and rewarded them for speaking up
- **Giving leaders foster environments with more innovation**: research by Harvard professor Amy Edmondson shows that "psychologically safe environments" foster more learning and innovation. Research shows that it's

givers who often create such an environment

- **Giving leaders believe and trust their team more, which leads to better performance and results**: an exhaustive analysis of seventeen different studies with nearly three thousand employees in a wide range of work organizations shows that when managers were randomly assigned to see employees as bloomers, employees bloomed. And givers are more likely to treat people as if they had the potential to bloom
  Takers instead do the opposite: Research shows that takers harbor doubts about others' intentions, so they monitor vigilantly and treat others with suspicion and distrust. These low expectations trigger a vicious cycle and demotivates people
  Matchers instead "wait" for signs of potential and miss out on opportunities to develop people who don't show early sparks of talent
- **Are more empathic, better put themselves in other people's shoes, and can better assess their WIIFT**: most people who try to put themselves into other people's shows actually remain stuck within their own mindsets and preferences. Givers instead are better able to truly see other people's point of view from their perspectives
- **Are more able to cut losses**: Research shows that people stick with bad investments only in part because of "sunk costs" as it's often believed. Instead, the single most powerful factor is ego threat: if I don't keep investing, I'll look and feel like a fool. Due to their susceptibility to ego threat, takers are more vulnerable to escalation of commitment than givers (see for example, Moon, 2001)
- **Have a natural "antifragile ego"**: in one research givers more easily accepted the criticism and followed the suggestion. This also makes sense if we consider that takers tend to have a bigger ego

4. If giving is so good, what stops it? Culture and fear, says Grant

TPM Note: probably not culture
Culture might have *something* to do with it, but I don't think it's a major factor or we should see cultures where everyone is a giver

Grant says that culture and fear of being screwed over stymie giving in ourselves and in our culture.

When it comes to culture, he says:

> We may love Shel Silverstein for our kids, but the popularity of books like Robert Greene's The 48 Laws of Power—not to mention the fascination of many business gurus with Sun Tzu's The Art of War—suggests that we don't see much room for giver values in our professional lives. As a result, even people who operate like givers at work are often afraid to admit it.

And when it comes to fear, he says:

> The fear of exploitation by takers is so pervasive, writes the Cornell economist Robert Frank, that "by encouraging us to expect the worst in others it brings out the worst in us: dreading the role of the chump, we are often loath to heed our nobler instincts."

This is also something we repeat often here on TPM.
In "Enlightened Cynicism" we say that it's actually good to assess others, think like a cynic, and protect ourselves in various forms. However, we also say that it's imperative that you don't let cynicism blind you to the possibility, benefits, and beauty of collaboration and win-wins.

5. Watch out for "fake givers"

Says Grant:

> To avoid getting shut out, many takers become good fakers, acting generously so that they can waltz into our networks disguised as givers or matchers.

Eventually though, chances are that you'll get to see the real face of takers.

Grant indirectly confirms something we say often here. Such as, you can only assess people's true character when they are power-up:

> Research shows that as people gain power, they feel large and in charge: less constrained and freer to express their natural tendencies. As takers gain power, they pay less attention to how they're perceived by those below and next to them; they feel entitled to pursue self-serving goals and claim as much value as they can.

TPM note: the same research shows that when givers gain power, they're socially responsible
The same research Grant quote says that when "communals" are power-primed, they responded in socially responsible ways.

However, that also comes at a cost:

6. There are costs to being a taker, including...

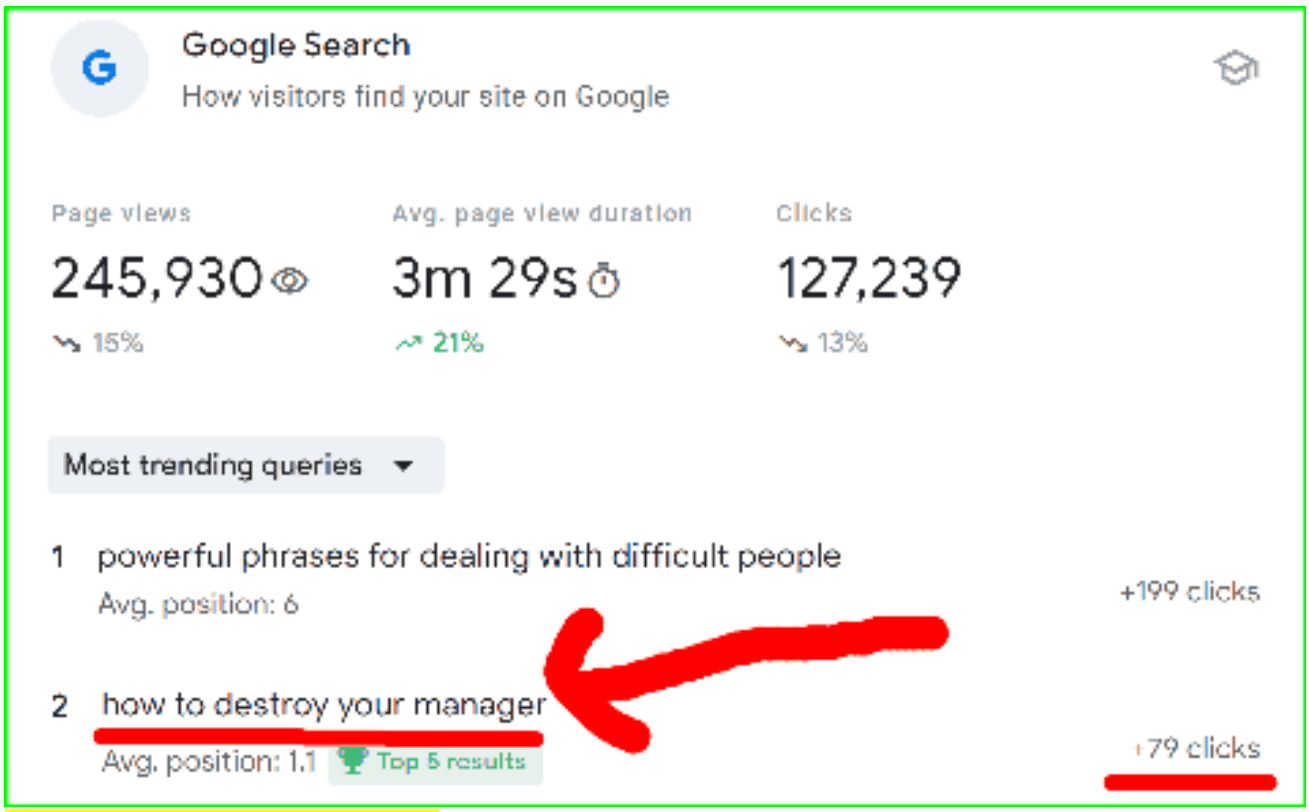
There are many costs associated with being a taker, including:

- **The "true face" eventually shows" in close relationships and daily exchanges**

Continuing from above, with takers who ignore those around and below them when they acquire power:

Over time, treating peers and subordinates poorly jeopardizes relationships and reputations. After all, most people are matchers and they value fairness, equality, and reciprocity.
And you know what happens when you burn bridges and then you may need those bridges again.

We also have our own (funny) data to back that up here.
Look what's one of the quickest-growing keywords people use to end up on TPM:



Antagonistic searches are very popular

- **Bad reputation through gossip**

And new research shows that when people get burned by takers in social networks, they punish them by sharing reputational information -"gossip"-.

- **Lower status within groups**

Stanford professor Frank Flynn asked a group of engineers to rate the status of ten other engineers. The takers had the lowest status because they burned bridges by constantly asking for favors but rarely reciprocating.
The givers had the highest status, outdoing the matchers and takers.

TPM Note: 10 people is too low to draw larger conclusions based on the date, but this just makes plain sense

7. But there are also risks to being a giver, including...

Adam Grant gives some space to the risks of being a giver, but not nearly enough in my opinion.

So here they are for you, simple and clear:

- **Givers without self-care and self-interest do NOT succeed**: succeessful giving must be accompanied by self-interest as well
- **Naive givers can be ripped off by takers**: in the last chapter Grand finally gives us some examples of givers who've been taken advantage by takers

Says Grant:

> In one study, researchers tracked whether Americans had been victims of crimes such as fraud, con games, and identity theft. The givers were twice as likely to be victimized as the takers, often as a direct result of trusting takers.
> (…)
> **Successful givers need to know who's likely to manipulate them so that they can protect themselves**

- **A giver's attitude without the ability to ask can lead to burnout**
- **Giving that is not strategic and thought-through can also be ineffective**

Also, this is important and probably needed more space in "Give and Take":

Keep in mind: successful giving is context-dependent and won't work in win-lose situations

Grant says that in purely zero-sum situations and win-lose interactions, giving rarely pays off.

BUT…

He also adds, correctly in our opinion, that most of life isn't zero-sum.
Grant says that, on balance, people who choose giving as their primary reciprocity style end up reaping rewards - albeit, we add on TPM, it can't be "naive giving"-.

8. When it comes to persuasion & influence, be like water

TPM Note:
albeit Grant seems to promote the giver/lower-power approach we disagree. Sometimes higher power is better. And nothing beats a tailored approach
The chapter felt like the author wanted to show us that "powerless communication" was "superior". In truth, it's not. It's circumstantial, and there are times when high power, assertive, or even dominant or aggressive communication are more effective.

Grant dedicates a whole chapter to influence and persuasion.

He starts with the research on status and influence comparing prestige and dominance.

Says the author (redacted for brevity):

> Takers are attracted to, and excel in, gaining dominance.
> (…) To establish dominance, takers specialize in powerful communication: they speak forcefully, raise their voices, express certainty to project confidence, promote their accomplishments, and sell with conviction and pride. They spread their arms in dominant poses, raise their eyebrows in challenge, command physical space, and get angry and issue threats when necessary.
> In the quest for influence, takers set the tone and control the conversation by sending powerful verbal and nonverbal signals. As a result, takers tend to be much more effective than givers in gaining dominance.

However, Grant says that dominance isn't always the most effective at persuading people.

Dominance is not as effective when the audience is skeptical.
And it's not as effective because dominance is zero-sum. If the taker is dominant, then the audience must lose power.
Grant makes a good point and on TPM we expanded on these dynamics quite a bit. The issue with dominance is that it's power-taking, and it works less well with high-power people because high-power people don't like and appreciate being disempowered.

Also see:

- Social power dynamics

https://thepowermoves.com/social-power-dynamics
Instead, prestige isn't zero zum.

In one study takers also persuaded by coming across as competent, including when they had little competence.

Givers Persuade With "Powerless Communication"

Givers tend to speak lower power, an approach Grant calls "powerless communication":

> Powerless communicators tend to speak less assertively, expressing plenty of doubt and relying heavily on advice from others. They talk in ways that signal vulnerability, revealing their weaknesses and making use of disclaimers, hedges, and hesitations.

And Adam Grant says there are situations in which powerless communication is more effective, including:

- **When you work closely together**: as based on Fragale's study
- **With employees who are proactive and motivated**: in which case you need less dominance and more power protecting and respect to get the most out of people (one study instead showed that dominance discouraged employees from contributing)
- **When you lack authority**: then more indirect and lower dominance approaches such as questions and advice-seeking are more effective

Of course, you also must be careful not to overdo the "powerless communication", as Grant himself says that you don't want to become a pushover or doormat.

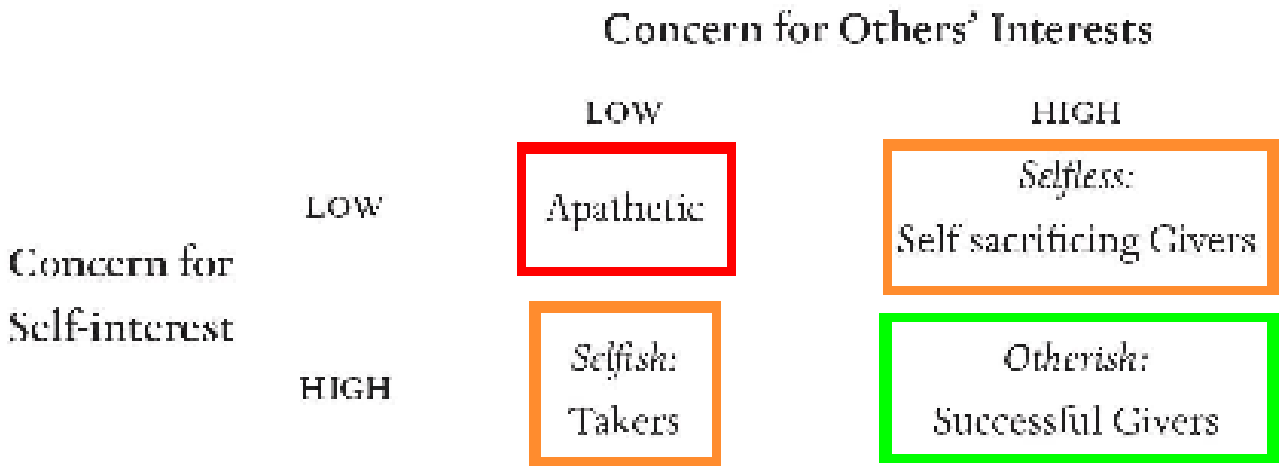
9. The Caveat: Successful Givers Pursue BOTH Giving and Personal Interest

Finally, in the last chapter, we get to the truth.

I feel Adam Grant waited far too long to drop the most important caveat of givers' success:

Successful givers care BOTH about others AND their personal success.
They seek to give but ALSO give strategically.

In a series of studies Adam Grant consistently found out that self-interest and other-interest are completely independent motivations: you can have both of them at the same time.
Put it in a chart:



From "Give and Take" by Adam Grant, colored boxes have been added
Quoting the author (redacted for brevity):

> Takers score high in self-interest and low in other-interest: they aim to maximize their own success without much concern for other people. By contrast, givers always score high on other-interest, but they vary in self-interest.
> There are two types of givers, and they have dramatically different success rates.
> Selfless givers have high other-interest and low self-interest. They give their time and energy without regard

> for their own needs, and they pay a price for it. Selfless giving is a form of pathological altruism.
> (Instead) Being otherish (ie.: the successful givers) means being willing to give more than you receive, but still keeping your own interests in sight, using them as a guide for choosing when, where, how, and to whom you give.

Basically, this is the "enlightened collaborator" of this website.
And it's the theory, approach, and strategy that we've been advising on TPM and Power University.

Successful givers must become "enlightened givers"

And enlightened means, at times, more calculative and positively cynical about humans' potential of being exploitative.

Says Grant:

> As the psychologist Brian Little puts it, even if a style like giving is our first nature, our ability to prosper depends on developing enough comfort with a matching approach that it becomes second nature.

Successful givers, says Grant, carefully scan their environments for potential takers, and they can move from unconditional giving, to a more calculative tit for tat.
Successful givers can also "draw from reserves to assertiveness" to demand what's fair, stand their ground, or push back against exploitative takers.

Basically:

Successful givers are power-awaken.

> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

Adam Grant though says that you don't want to become a giver whose only goal is to get, as that would backfire long-term.
Instead, he suggests to give in a way that you find enjoyable, to recipients that you care about.

Selfless Givers Are Losers

The title is TPM and not Grant's words.

Selfless givers instead give randomly, sometimes sacrificing their own work and life, and that impacts their own performance and life.
Some selfless givers often give without an idea of how to have the most impact with their giving, so they also make little difference.
And they're at risk of burning out, especially when they see no feedback on the impact of their giving.

MORE WISDOM

- **The best networks have strong ties, weak ties, and dormant ties**

On weak and strong ties:

> Strong ties provide bonds, but weak ties serve as bridges: they provide more efficient access to new information. Our strong ties tend to travel in the same social circles and know about the same opportunities as we do. Weak ties are more likely to open up access to a different network, facilitating the discovery of original leads.

And on dormant ties:

> Dormant ties offer the access to novel information that weak ties afford, but without the discomfort.

- **Matchers have smaller networks**

> Matchers tend to build smaller networks than either givers, who seek actively to help a wider range of people, or takers, who often find themselves expanding their networks to compensate for bridges burned in previous transactions.

- **Giving is contagious**

One study found that giving spreads rapidly and widely across social networks.

> When the groups included one consistent giver, the other members contributed more. The presence of a single giver was enough to establish a norm of giving.

- **Group dynamics influence the overall amount of giving**: common ground, a shared identity, identification with the group, they all influence members' giving
- ***Unique* similarities are particularly effective in fostering shared identities**: "the more rare a group, value, interest, skill, or experience is, the more likely it is to facilitate a bond". People are also happier in groups that provide a sense of both inclusion and uniqueness ("optimal distinctiveness", Brewer, 2007)
- Research suggests that givers have an instinctive advantage in sincerity screening
- **Givers, especially agreeable givers, lose out in negotiation**: Studies show that in zero-sum situations, givers frequently shy away from advocating for their own interests: they make more modest requests when negotiating salaries than matchers and takers, and end up accepting less favorable outcomes
- **Public pledges backfire**, because they offer the public credit, without the need for the accompanying behavior (Gollwitzer et al., 2009)
  - **Private pledges might backfire too**, because we can get to feel good, without the action (Sachdeva, 2009). Furthermore, pledges seek to change behavior by changing the identity first. But changing behavior first is more effective

Real-Life Applications

In this section we turn some of the wisdom into "practical applications":

Assess The Givers & Takers In Your Life

Too many people fail this simple test.

Harvard students correctly expect that friends pass more tokens than strangers.
But they do not expect more tokens from generous friends compared to selfish friends.

Such as, these supposedly smart guys did not know who are the givers and takers in their own social networks.

One common mistake is that we tend to stereotype agreeable people as givers, and disagreeable people as takers. But giving and taking are based on motives and values, and they're independent on whether our personalities trend towards agreeable or disagreeable.

How to Spot Givers & Takers

You generally want more givers or matchers around you, and you want to be more cautious with the takers.

To do that, you must learn to recognize givers and takres first.

Here are some tips:

Look for narcissistic signs

Grant says that ordinary people can identify takers just by looking at their Facebook profiles.

And, it seems, Adam Grant points to signs of narcissism to spot takers.
One study asked people to fill out a survey measuring whether they were takers. Then, the psychologists sent strangers to visit their Facebook pages. The strangers were able to detect the takers with astonishing accuracy.

The cues were:

- Information that was self-promoting, self-absorbed and self-important
- Boastful and arrogant quotes
- More Facebook friends (the author says "racking up superficial connections so they could advertise their accomplishments and stay in touch to get favors")
- Vainer, more flattering pictures of themselves

Look for narcissism in your superiors (ie.: how to spot a taker CEO)

How do you spot a CEO who's a taker?

Well, there is a popular study by Arijit Chatterjee and Donald Hambrick aptly called "It's All About Me: Narcissistic Chief Executive Officers and Their Effects on Company Strategy and Performance".

They analyzed 111 CEO and their companies' annual reports over more than a decade, looking for signs of ostentatious displays ("lekking").
They were looking for narcissists rather than takers, but Grant labels them as takers.
Here are the cues.

- **They use more first-person singular pronouns**

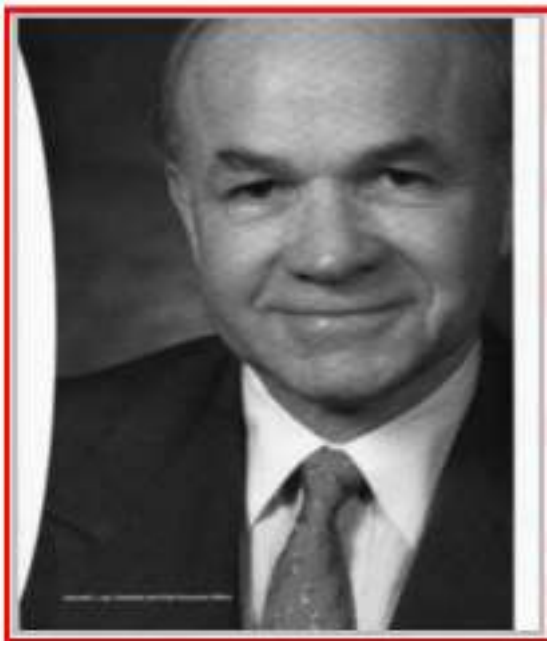
They found several clues of takers lekking at the top. One signal appeared in CEO interviews. Since takers tend to be self-absorbed, they're more likely to use first-person singular pronouns like I, me, mine, my, and myself—versus first-person plural pronouns like we, us, our, ours, and ourselves.

- **They earn more**

Another signal was compensation: the taker CEOs earned far more money than other senior executives in their companies.

- **They use bigger pictures of themselves**

When Chatterjee and Hambrick looked at the annual reports from the computer companies, they noticed dramatic differences in the prominence of the CEO's image. In some annual reports, the CEO wasn't pictured at all. In other reports, there was a full-page photo of the CEO alone. Guess which one is the taker? For the taker CEOs, it was all about me. A big photo is self-glorifying, sending a clear message: "I am the central figure in this company."



Leaders: hire givers & foster a giving culture

The reasons are two-fold:

1. **Givers spread a giving attitude**, which is great for the team
2. **Givers work harder**: Grant says there's a close connection between grit and giving. In his research, because of their dedication to others, givers work harder and longer than takers and matchers. Even when practice is no longer enjoyable, givers continue exerting effort
3. **Givers are naturally team-oriented**

Writes Grant:

> This is a defining feature of how givers collaborate: they take on the tasks that are in the group's best interest, not necessarily their own personal interests. This makes their groups better off: studies show that on average, from sales teams to paper mill crews to restaurants, the more giving group members do, the higher the quantity and quality of their groups' products and services.

And remove -or watch out- for the takers

Takers do what's best for them, even if it costs the team.

For example, they will waste resources throwing good money after bad if that helps them hide the responsibility for a mistake -even if they know it's wasteful-.

Says Grant:

> Because escalating his or her commitment allows the decision maker to keep the prospect of failure hidden, such behavior is personally "rational" from the perspective of a taker.

Spread a culture of giving

As social animals, individuals' behaviors are heavily influenced by the group.

When giving seems to be the norm, people give more, they get back more, they are happier, and giving becomes a feature of the group -potentially, even a reason to be proud of belonging to that giving group-.

A great way to foster giving is by rewarding it, and *making it public*. Making it public, in a way, makes giving rational even for selfish individuals.
This is really powerful stuff: while givers would givers anyway, it's matchers' and takers' behavior that changes. As shown in "reciprocity rings" **even takers give in a giving group**.

And the opposite is true: if taking becomes the norm, people shy away from giving and they focus more on taking, and "what's in it for them".

Says Grant:

> If many people personally believe in giving, but assume that others don't, the whole norm in a group or a company can shift away from giving.

Read more on leadership:

- **Leadership 101**: the foundations
- **How to be a leader**: 13 steps from social psychology
- **How to be a successful manager**: combining team success, personal success and office politics
- **Leadership power dynamics**: the first proper article on leadership power dynamics and strategies to perform well, while staying in power
- **Leadership in dating**: how leadership affects dating

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

More real-life applications

- **To avoid thinking you've "done more", list what others have done**: most people tend to over-estimate what they've done. Givers don't. To avoid falling for this mental trap, make a list of what others and/or your partner have contributed
- **Don't outshine the taker:** when takers are impressed by another person's capabilities or motivation, they're more likely to see this person as a threat, which means they're less willing to support and develop him or her.

Don't over-use the "reciprocity approach", it feels manipulative

The reciprocity norm has been made popular by Cialdini.

It means that when you give something, people feel indebted to give back, so you can give something just with the intention of getting something back later.

Grant says that reciprocity is powerful, but it comes with two heavy downsides:

1. **You make people feel like you're manipulating them**, they feel that you're not genuine, and that you're there only as part of Machiavellian strategic plots in which they're just a pawn
2. **You grow smaller and lower quality networks** when you only focus on immediate gains and transacting only when you can get something

QUOTES

On making friends, not enemies:

> As the venture capitalist Randy Komisar remarks, "It's easier to win if everybody wants you to win. If you

> don't make enemies out there, it's easier to succeed."

On the importance of strategic giving:

> Success involves more than just capitalizing on the strengths of giving; it also requires avoiding the pitfalls.

On the "otherish" construct and concept:

> As Bill Gates argued at the World Economic Forum, "there are two great forces of human nature: self-interest, and caring for others," and people are most successful when they are driven by a "hybrid engine" of the two.

Criticism

Let me preface this section:

"Give and Take" is *great*.

It will probably become one of TPM's foundational books & resources.

And, as it's often the case, we analyze and delve *especially* hard and deep on the best books -the "OK" and poor ones don't justify that much investment-.

Is "Give and Take" biased? Success is collaboration and win-win, not just "giving"

Let me preface this first:

1. I haven't checked all the studies myself
2. Overall, I think that Adam Grant does a good job at presenting evidence to back up his claims (rather than just his preference)
3. Overall, I feel that his theory is good -except we should stress even more that it's not just givers who win, but *selective* givers who *also* get back-

That being said, I felt there is some embellishment to make the case for "giving = winning".
It feels like sometimes Grant even states it outright. He says:

> In this book, I want to **persuade** you that we underestimate the success of givers like David Hornik.

Maybe he meant "persuading you with the evidence" or "persuading you with the truth".
Still, he might have wanted to be more careful.
I don't want to be persuaded of anything, I want to know the truth and what works.

In another passage, he says:

> In this chapter, **my aim is to challenge traditional assumptions** about the importance of assertiveness and projecting confidence in gaining influence.

I think he's right: assertiveness and confidence to persuade may be overblown indeed.
Still, when you want to challenge something, an almost obvious consequence is that your approach will be biased towards your challenging proposition.

The “giving is winning” bias under-represents the importance of strategy, situation, and, sometimes, matching

Large portions of the book show examples and evidence for “giving = winning”.

Only in the last section we get to learn that the givers who win are strategic.

And Grant does present exceptions to giving=winning, and he does list some examples of successful takers. However, they are mentioned quickly and the main narrative seems to favor giving.

Instead, it’s important to remember that:

- There are win-lose situations in which giving doesn’t make you better off
- Takers can take advantage of you
- Which style is “superior” depends also on the people you deal, and the situation

Grant says so himself:

> As the psychologist Brian Little puts it, even if a style like giving is our first nature, **our ability to prosper depends on developing enough comfort with a matching approach** that it becomes second nature.

It’s a pity that Grant quotes Brian Little, but then fails to expand on the importance of being a matcher.

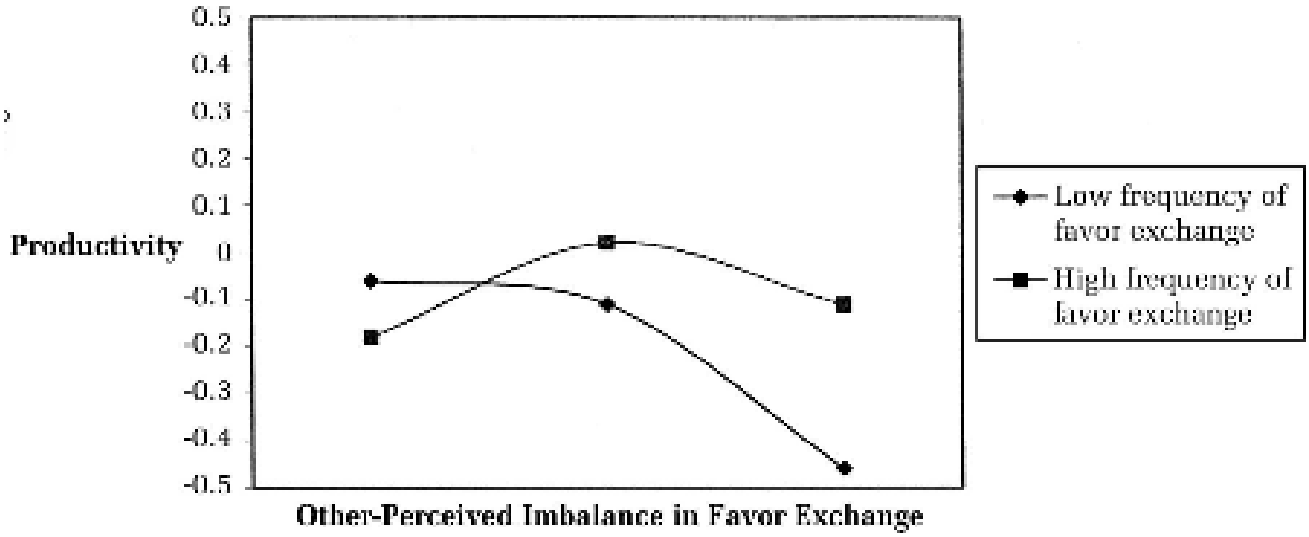
Some studies didn’t add up

In the study of engineers, this is what the paper says:

> (…) an employee’s level of productivity significantly increased as favor exchanges with other employees became more balanced (as other employees believed the focal employee gave as much as he or she received), although a minimal level of generosity appeared to be most strongly related to productivity.

The authors refer to increased productivity as exchanges increased, not just “giving”. The giving was being matched by other people’s giving.

And this is the curve for “The Interactive Effect of Perceived Imbalance in and Frequency of Favor Exchange on Productivity”:



From Flynn, 2003
The curve refers to favors *exchanges*, not just giving.

Some supporting evidence was correlation, rather than causation

Says Grant:

> In another study, American adults who volunteered at least one hundred hours in 1998 were more likely to be alive in 2000.

But that is no proof that volunteering is the ingredient that makes people live longer.

And again:

As expected, higher income led to higher giving. For every $1 in extra income, charitable giving went up by $0.14.* But something much more interesting happened. For every $1 in extra charitable giving, income was $3.75 higher. Giving actually seemed to make people richer.

This is just silly.
Maybe the givers *expected* to earn more in the future ant thus gave more freely.

Some more studies-related doubts

- **Some studies have been selectively ignored**

Grant references that givers have more meaning in life, but conveniently omits that the same study found that takers are happier -while he presents plenty of studies showing that givers are happier-.
I quote the study:

> Happiness was linked to being a taker rather than a giver, whereas meaningfulness went with being a giver rather than a taker.

- **Sometimes present individual studies as unquestioned truths**

Grant for example says "social scientists have discovered that", and then he links to one study.

- **Some slight contradictions or over-generalizations**

In one passage, the author says "extensive research reveals that people who give their time and knowledge regularly to help their colleagues end up earning more raises and promotions in a wide range of settings".
But then again, the rest of the book shows that givers are also at the bottom, so that just feels like an untrue over-generalization.

- **Some bad and wrong pop-psychology, including the 10.000 hours**

I was surprised to see this:

> As Malcolm Gladwell showed us in Outliers, research led by psychologist Anders Ericsson reveals that attaining expertise in a domain typically requires ten thousand hours of deliberate practice.

That's really misleading pop-psychology.
Also see:

> 13 Self-Help BS & Myths: Updated List (Plus, Fixes)

"Grit" was also in there, albeit as Jordan Peterson said, "grit" might simply be part of "conscientiousness".
Grant says that "givers strive to cultivate girt in the first place", which wasn't supported by much data and that seems quite random to me.

Quoting Gladwell again in “Blink” as well as Susan Cain and Daniel Pink also felt over-relying on pop psychology (P.S.: talking about “give and take”, Cain and Pink are in the list of people who endorsed the book).

- **Some information contradicted each other**

“Give and Take” presents some information that seems to contradict each other.
For example, one study on salary negotiations says that givers tend to lose out in negotiation. But then Grant says that otherish givers do better in negotiation.

The two aren’t necessarily contradictory actually because the first study was more of a case of win-lose and it was agreeable givers who lost the most.
And negotiations in general can make the overall pie bigger.
However, Grant should have explained that -lest a nitpicker, pain in the ass like me will wonder :)-.

Some supporting “evidence” is based on stories, anecdotes, and interviews

For example:

> When experts in history, political science, and psychology rated the presidents, they identified Lincoln as a clear giver.

On one hand, I understand Grant had to sell the book, so he needed some captivating stories.
But I wasn’t looking for stories, so this was a non-evidence for me and a waste of space.
“Experts” in history and political science is also meaningless: none of those people even knew Lincoln, let alone if they could provide a good assessment -and even if they did know him, many people can’t tell between givers and takers-. All they had to go about was snippets of biased storytelling and biographies.

There is no universal, scientific measure for “giver” or “taker”

I believe that the construct is very real and, indirectly plenty of studies as well “real life” shows it.

However, there doesn’t seem to be a universally accepted measure for giving and taking as there is, for example, for narcissism or Machiavellianism.
So different studies that Grant presents as evidence of how givers and takers behave are all actually measuring slightly different personalities.

Takers can also win big, and that must be made clear

This point is not stressed out nearly enough.

For example, while Adam Grant talks up Lincoln as a successful giver and none of us will ever know if he was a true giver, many of us did live through Donald Trump’s presidency.
And Trump, many of us would also agree, most certainly didn’t operate as a giver.

Adam Grant says that Michael Jordan is a taker, and Jordan won big.

David Hornik is one of Grant’s poster children’s of successful givers.
And well, here’s what Hornik says:

> Giving is especially risky when dealing with takers, and **David Hornik believes that many of the world’s most successful venture capitalists operate like takers**—they insist on disproportionately large shares of entrepreneurs’ start-ups and claim undue credit when their investments prove successful.

For the record, I’m not sure they operate like takes, actually.

It's more like "maximizers of profits". They're the ones who give the capital, and they're the ones who can field demands. So they demand as much as their money allows them to.
If the start-up succeeds, the founders succeed and there is plenty in it for them, there are plenty of new high-tech jobs and, hopefully, there is plenty in it for society as well.

Grant's own reference study on supposedly taker CEOs showed that they earned *more* than their non-taker CEOs.

Equates narcissism to value-taking. But... Are they (always) the same?

More than once Adam Grant uses signs of narcissism to spot takers.
And, at least in one case (the Enron accounting fraud), it felt indeed that those people did act like takers.

However, I wouldn't be so quick to jump to the conclusion that narcissist = taker.

Some narcissists may succeed and find their glory through entrepreneurship, and potentially develop companies that give value.
Some others may seek personal validation via huge charity donations, or by defeating some specific ailment or sickness. And that, too, would end up as being value-giving.

So, yes, the *motives* might be self-serving, but the end results might be value-giving nonetheless.

PROS

- Best overview of giving and taking
- Great mix of entertainment, instructive read, and scientific rigor
- Inspiring
- Not an "how-to" book, but it's easy to take away important real-life applications for life

REVIEW

"Give and Take" is a wonderful book.

I am grateful to Adam Grant for writing it, and "Give and Take" may become one of the "foundational resources" for this website -after all, some TPM's main strategies are already based on what Adam Grant calls "otherish giving", which we call here "enlightened collaboration-.

I have also taken copious notes of this Adam Grant's "Give and Take" to integrate its wisdom into this website's offering -and that's always the greatest compliment I an pay to any resource-.

So we can most certainly recommend "Give and Take".

Check the **best books** collection or get Give and Take on Amazon.

The Seduction Path: 6 Escalation Milestones to Intimacy

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 March 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Escalation on a date starts much longer than the date.

Good escalation starts the first moment she lays eyes on you, and continues all throughout the date.
Attractive men make women *want* them to escalate on them, and that makes everything easier.

As we know here, successful dating is high-power dating.
Women want men who are "better" and "more" than they are.
Better in as many areas as possible. And on this website, we refer to that "more" as higher-power.

This post will teach you how to escalate well, based on our power dynamics model.

Let's start:

Contents

- Intro
- The Escalation Milestones
- How to Ace Escalation Milestones
  - 1. Be generally high value
  - 2. Go through the milestone with enough power
  - 3. Test before the "move" (advanced game)
  - 4. Maintain power during the ask (game)
  - 5. Increase warmth when you're very high power
  - 6. Regain power to turn around a "no"
- The PM Approach to Seduction
- SUMMARY

Intro

Power matters.

Always.

But there are key moments in dating where it makes the whole difference between failure or success.
Power matters most when:

1. **You want to get intimate with a woman**: many guys can chat with an attractive woman. What matters is who moves her along the seduction path and gets together with her
2. **You need to move forward towards sex / intimacy**: if you stay put at any plateu, you may not need much power. But if you want to lead her to the next level, you most certainly do

These crucial moments of "forward motions" are escalation milestones, and they're inherently bound with power and power dynamics.

There are common patterns of power at work, in socialization, and relationships. We've already seen many of those here.
And, even most important for seduction and dating effectiveness, there are recurring escalation milestones in seduction.

Escalation milestones are fundamental "checkpoints" and junctures along the straight line seduction path that you must go through in order to move forward.

Moments of truth & vulnerability

You can see escalation milestones as "moments of truth" because they tell you whether you two are going to sleep together, or not.

It doesn't matter whether she smiles, flirts, says that you are nice, or whatever. What matters is whether she follows you along the escalations milestones or not.

And you can also see them as "moments of vulnerability" because you often must make your interest clear in order to move forward.
And as it's the case for many instances of vulnerability, making your interest clear can decrease your power because:

1. You (sub)-communicate your interest to move forward *when she hasn't necessarily made her interest clear*
2. You move the interaction forward while she hasn't necessarily signaled she *wants* to take it forward

And this is also why it's generally a good idea to make sure -as well as to "thread expand"- on her interest and compliance, before you go through escalations milestones.

But let's not jump the gun now.

Let's learn more:

The Escalation Milestones

The escalation milestones are:

1. **Approach / introduction / first contact**
2. **Instant date / date proposal / contact exchange**
3. **Date invite over phone or text**
4. **Invite home / leading to a sex location**

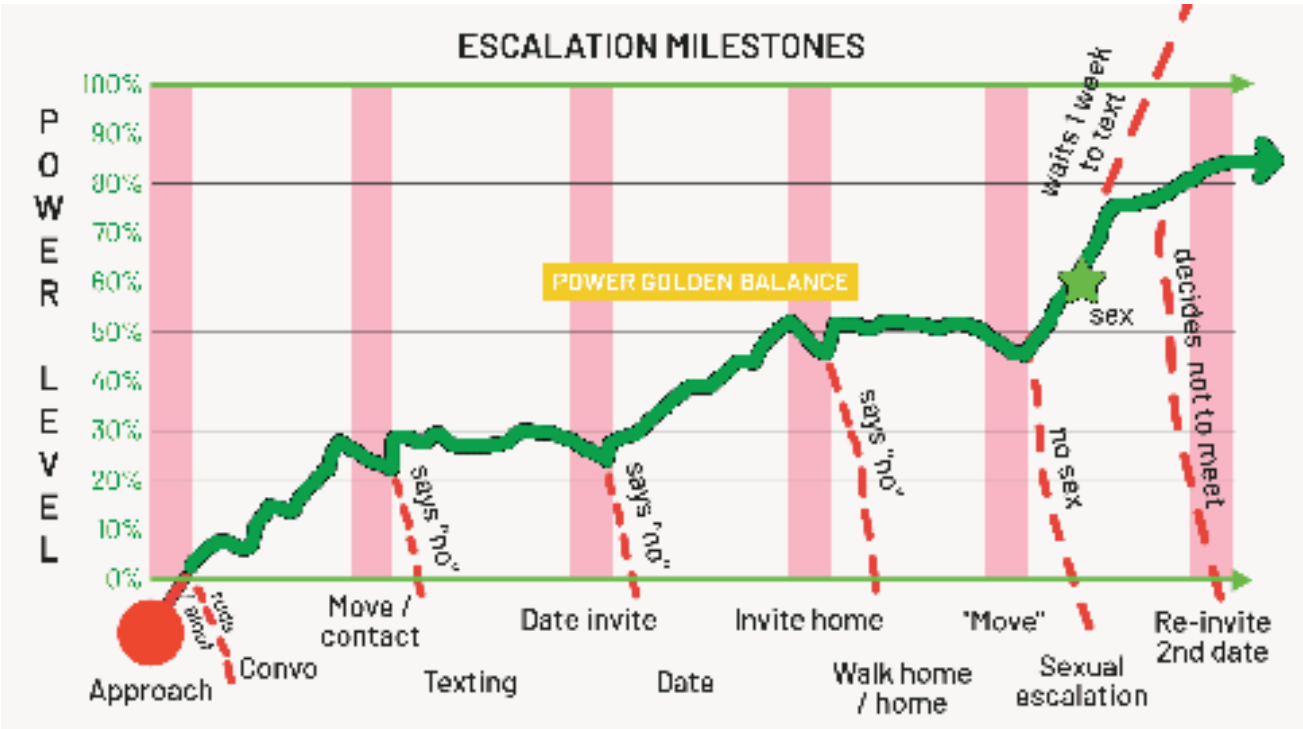
5. **Sexual escalation**
6. **Re-invite for a second or more dates**

There is one common denominator in all those milestones:

The man communicates his interest, either directly or indirectly, and it's up to her to consent and follow, or reject.

And it's exactly that "man proposes, woman chooses" that makes them so inherently intertwined with power dynamics -with the man often risking to *lose* power-.

In the "Straight Line Seduction" model, this is how these power phases look like (here seen within a successful seduction):



Escalation milestones are crucial "make or break" phases to move the interaction forward
Let me warn you first:

Mindset: milestones = opportunities

Albeit the red bars are sometimes "make or break", don't look at them as a "risk".
Look at them as an *opportunity*.
An opportunity to improve your skills if you're learning and/or to get closer to someone if that's your goal.

Escalation milestones are like doors to open on the way to something meaningful (or "simply" to sex, if that's your goal).

As a matter of fact, when you go through escalation milestones effectively and with good power awareness, they're more like *slingshots* forward.
Because while you can lose some power with the ask, you regain power with the yes (or with the compliance / forward motion).
The "yes" and the forward motion re-establish, confirm and re-empower you as a high-value option for her.
And albeit the chart above stays conservative, it's very possible to go even higher power after an escalation milestone (but you don't necessarily need that to sleep with a woman).

Finally, escalation milestones are riskiest when you're treading the power threshold of 0%.
But they're often more of a formality when you're dating high-power and she sees you as a catch. In those cases, it's

more about “not f*cking it up” than doing anything special.

How to Ace Escalation Milestones

This is how to breeze through escalation milestones:

1. Be generally high value

High-value men are like helium:

They naturally go up in power.
That’s the beauty of it: just by being yourself and spending time with her, you climb up and succeed.

So the small risk of asking or moving forward are non-issues since women are more than happy to oblige -sometimes even *eagerly waiting* for the ask and forward motion towards intimacy-.

> The 10 Traits of High-Value Men (W/ Examples)

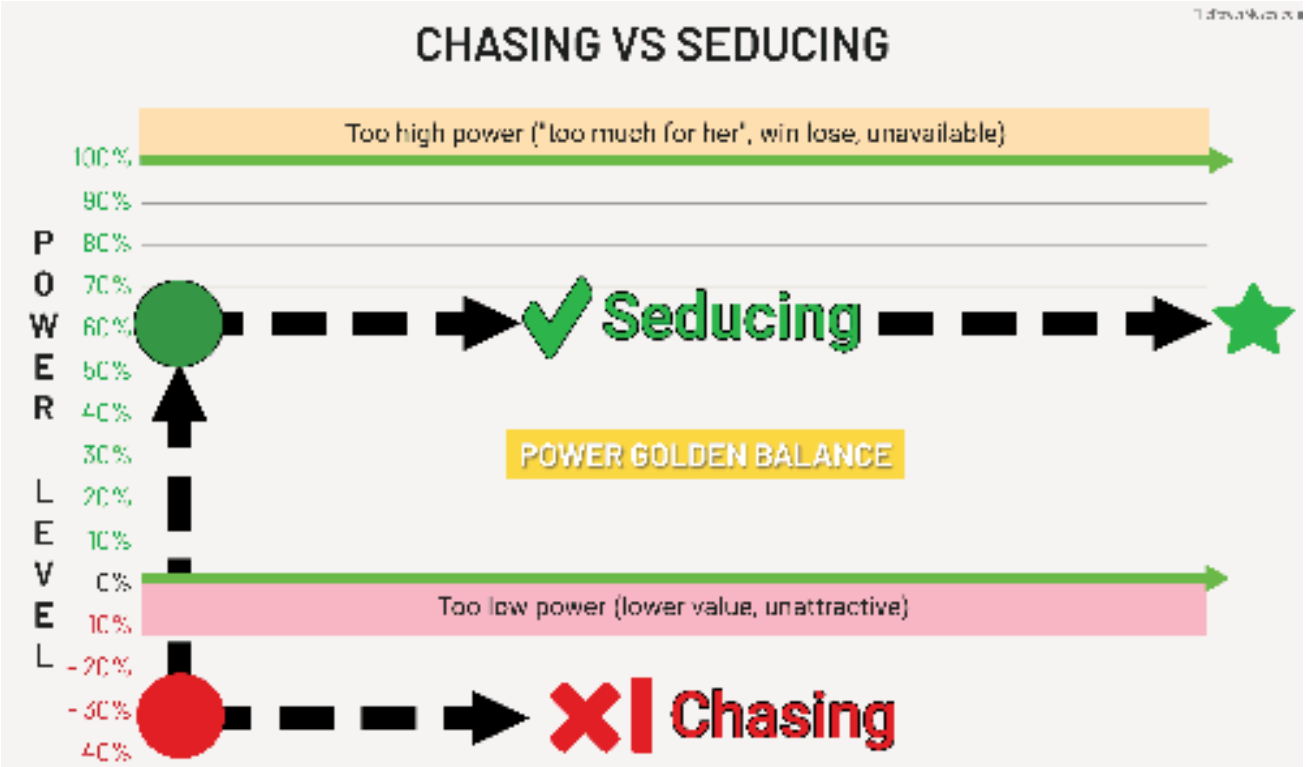
2. Go through the milestone with enough power

This is a very common mistake among men:

They move forward at random.
Often, when she’s not yet attracted, before they saw any signs of attraction, or before she was contributing or investing anything.

Such as, most men chase and chase and give and give… And *then* ask her phone number, ask her out, or make a move.

Ie.: they make a move when they’re power-negative, at the *worst* possible time.
That doesn’t work because it’s *chasing*, not seducing:



When you move forward lower in power she sees you as lower value, and women rarely date -or sleep- with lower

value men
Instead, you be more strategic about it:

Acquire enough power *before* the milestone.

The more power you have -ie.: the more value you have in her eyes-, the more the milestones are going to be formalities and non-events -or even opportunities to increase your power and/or improve the experience-.

Power before the milestone is also your insurance to win against the odds of life.
You can see it this way: the more power you have, the more you can afford to muck it up and lose some of that power.

Indeed, if you have enough power, you have more 'safety margin'. Even a bad move won't decrease her attaction -for example, you could simply say "do you want to come home with me" at the end of the date, not ideal, and you'll *still* get a yes-.

Funny example from Casino Royale:

> **Bond**: what about a drink at my place
> **Her**: your place? Is it close?
> (this is where Bond should have made it easier for her to say "yes". Instead:)
> **Bond**: very
> (lets the tension build instead of nudging her. Not nudging is a risk because women don't want to feel and look "easy")
> **Her**: one drink

Of course it's a movie and we must not read too much into scripted movies. But IF a scene is realistic, then it can be a great learning tool. And this scene is a good example of escalation milestones and power dynamics: Bond actually made some mistakes.
But he was so high-power that, eventually, she went along with it anyway.

That's the beauty of generally being high-value.
Be high-value in her eyes, and you can even recover from a bad escalation, from mishandling last-minute resistances, or from poor intimacy and pillow talk.

3. Test before the "move" (advanced game)

This is a bit more advanced, but you can often "test" before making the move.

Testing is what you do before you commit to something, to make sure that it will work. Imagine you want to cross an ice lake: you don't just start walking. You test the ice first.

It's most helpful when you're not 100% sure and when you haven't gotten much investment or indicators of interest yet.

How do you test?
There are a thousand ways.

For example, you can (semi-covertly) propose something more intimate saying something like this:

> **You**: You seem pretty cool… So far.
> I'm picky but was thinking of potentially spending some more quality time together (pause, see how she reacts) in a quieter place, one day (see how she's reacting)… Or maybe later (see how she's reacting). But I'm busy tomorrow, let's see

And see how she reacts. That's a test before inviting her home, for example.
If she does not deny or if she seems to agree, that's your signal that you're probably good to go to invite her home.

We'll have real-life examples of effective testing in Seduction University.

4. Maintain power during the ask (game)

This is the *essence* of game:

Giving as little power away as possible *while* also moving forward.

Generally speaking, the more power you maintain, the more those red bars become formalities -or even opportunities to further increase your power and her attraction-.

Plenty of real-life examples of smooth transitions in Seduction University.

5. Increase warmth when you're very high power

This is what most men fail to see:

They're so worried with being high power and attractive that they fail to realize they may *already* have more than enough power.

In those cases, the escalation milestones are a cinch for you… But they might not be *for her*.
If she likes you a lot, she can get very tense, fearful, and start having doubts if moving forward is the right thing -and she may self-reject out of fear or self-defense-.
And if she starts getting fearful or doubtful, it might be an issue for you too -and for the seduction-.

In those cases, you don't need more value and power, you need more *warmth*.

Also see:

- High power & high warmth

> Power Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

6. Regain power to turn around a "no"

"Yes" is always the best answer.

But "no" is not the end of it.
As a matter of fact, games of rejection and insisting are one of the most common dating games women play.

But even if she meant it, a "no" can be a "not right now", and it must not spell doom.

You can turn it around.

As long as you still have some power to leverage, you have plenty of opportunities to consolidate or rebuild power and/or goodwill after a rejection.
And the more power/comfort you rebuild after the ask, the quicker you can move forward again.

Also see:

- How to turn around a "no"

> What To Do When A Girl Rejects You: Definitive Guide

The PM Approach to Seduction

I haven't just learned politics and business manipulation working in corporate.

In my time as a project manager, I've learned this:

Great project managers maintain good and win-win relationships with the stakeholders while zeroing in on the milestones.

All the rest is chit-chat, reporting nobody cares about, pandering to bosses and high-fliers, and making people happy.
But where you really can't f*ck around if you want to succeed is milestones.
Plan for hiccups, reach them with enough spare time and resources, handle them well… And you'll fly through the delivery.

This is probably the most effective approach for effective dating as well: **think of your interactions with women as build-ups towards the milestones**.
The bantering, the teasing, the commonalities, the bonding, the indirect displays of value… They're all there to develop enough power and rapport to slingshot you through the next milestone.

And you don't need anything crazy, you only need just enough power to go through the next milestones.
As soon as you have enough power and warmth to move forward, you run through that milestone. Do that just 3-4 times, and you'll be lovers and intimate sooner than you thought was ever possible.

SUMMARY

Successful daters pass through a few, common, crucial junctures that repeat across seductions.

Many of these junctures, and sometimes all of them, *have* to be crossed to go from first meeting, to intimacy. Hence, we call them "escalation milestones".

To successfully lead women through those junctures you need to have enough value & attraction (power) as well as enough rapport & trust (warmth), that she is willing -and happy- to follow you.

Add enough power and warmth before you go through the milestones, sprinkle in a minimum of game to smoothen things out… And you're flying.

For real-life examples on how to do just that, see:

- Seduction University

This is a preview from Seduction University.
Seduction University provides real-life examples, strategies, techniques, and the full framework to turn the theory into dating success.

Cold Approach: The Science of First Meeting A Woman

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 March 2022 · Archived copy · Original

We've already spoken about approaches here:

- Best ways to meet women
- How to approach girls

BUT…

There is still confusion around the most effective strategies of cold approaching and starting conversations.

So in this article, we are going to learn the true power dynamics of approaching, what's most effective, and how you should "open".

Contents

- Intro
- Approach Power Dynamics
- Direct VS Indirect Openers
- Direct Openers Power Dynamics
  - When Direct Works
  - Issue #1. You Don't Know Her Interest Yet
  - Issue #2. She Might Exploit Your Candor
  - Issue #3: Early Vulnerability Is Dangerosly Close to "Weakness"
  - Issue #4: No Mystery, No Tension
  - Issue #5: The More Attractive She Is, The Better It Is to Maintain Power
- Extreme Direct Openers
  - Direct Sexual

  - Direct Romantic
- Approach Body Language
  - Bad body language
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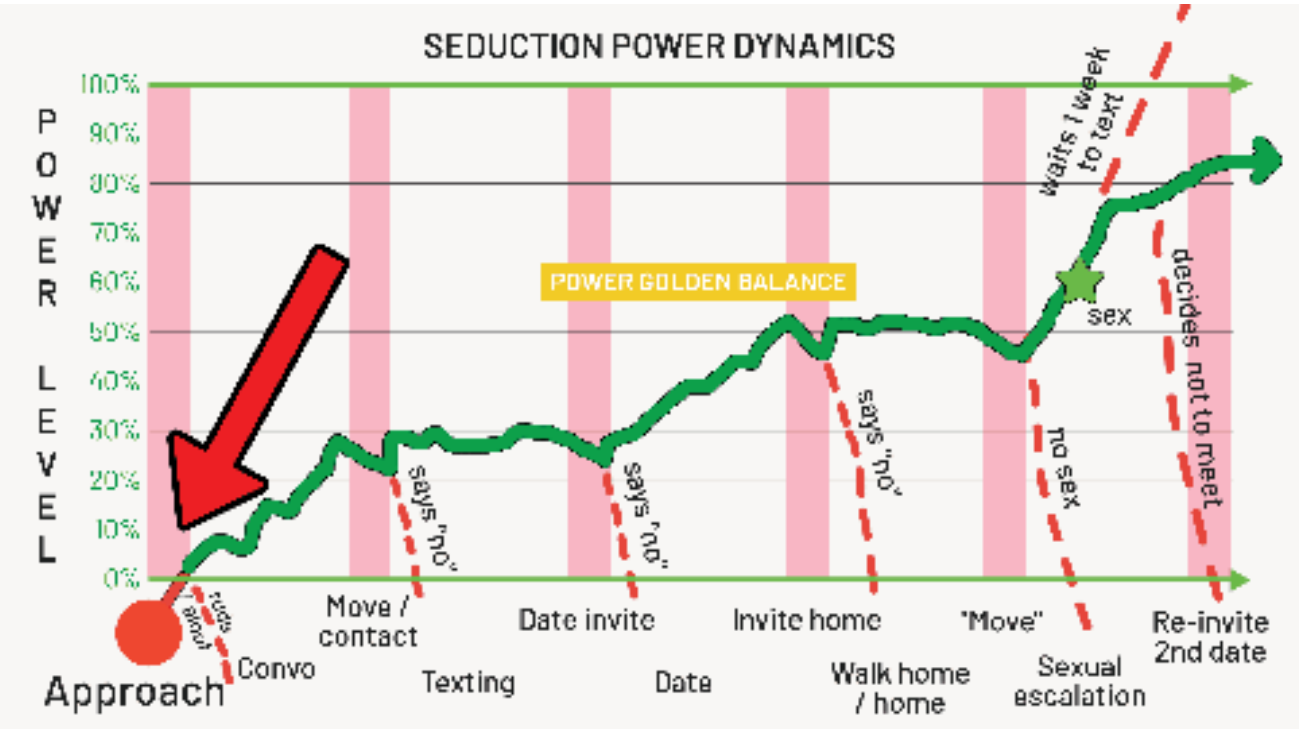
- Problem: Beginners Need The Verbal Support of “Directness”
- Solution: Go “As Indirect As Possible”
- Women’s First Approach Tactics
  - Indicators of Interest
  - Gaze Power Dynamics & Coquette Games
- Strategic Action Steps

Intro

There are fixed crucial “seduction milestones” in dating to go from first meeting to lovers.

And the approach is the very first of these “seduction milestones”:



The approach is one of the most crucial milestones to successfully going from strangers to lovers
To pass each milestone, you need to have enough leverage to lead her to the next step.

That leverage, is power.
And the problem is that most men lose too much power during the approach to advance to any successive step.

As a matter of fact, if you’re not careful, the simple act of approaching often gives power away:

The simple act of approaching gives power away

That is because:

The person who makes the first move sub-communicates that he needs or wants something, while the one who gets approached is in the chooser -and power- position.

The approacher has “tipped his hand” with the approach already: he wants his target, and that sub-communicates interest.
The approached instead hasn’t shown any interest, and is *judging* the approacher.

Luckily, there are ways to change that.
And it all starts by understanding the general principles:

Approach Power Dynamics

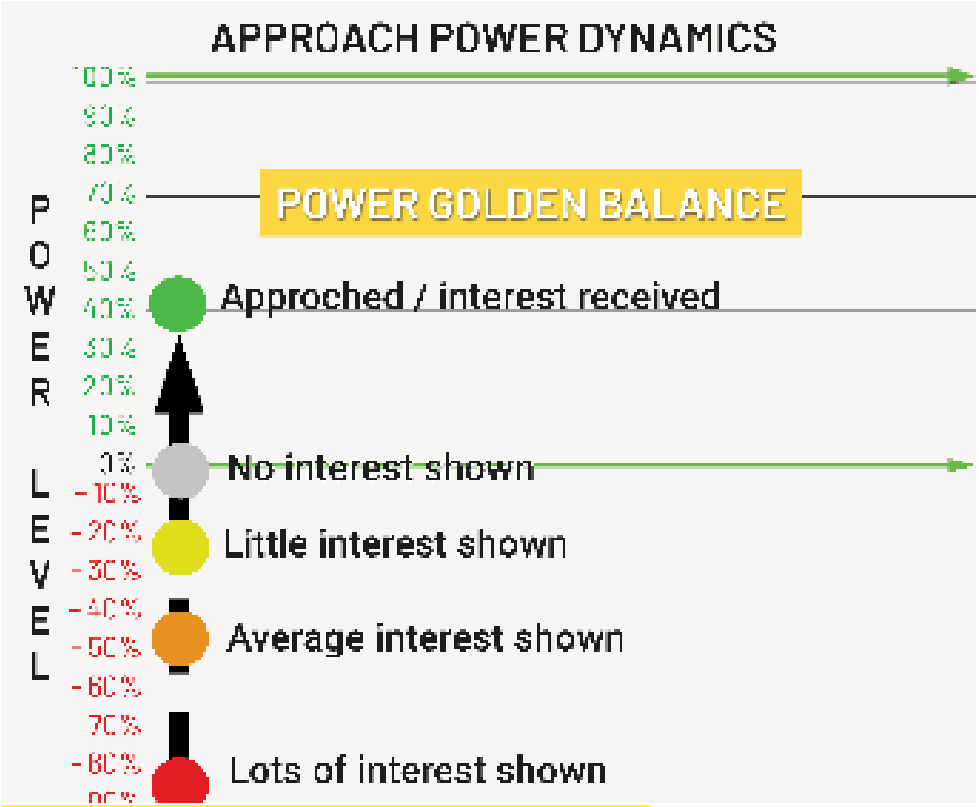
As a general rule:

> **The more interest you display in the approach, the more power you give away**

On the other hand, the less interest you display, the more power you maintain.

And since power and attraction are tightly interlinked, maintaining power increases your effectiveness.

In chart terms:



The more power you maintain, the higher power you start
Let’s now review the age-old question of direct VS indirect:

Direct VS Indirect Openers

In the dating literature, there’s an endless debate over “direct VS indirect” openers.

This is the difference:

- **Direct means to verbally state your sexual or romantic interest openly and quickly**, and its proponents say that it’s ballsy, “masculine”, and time-saving
- **Indirect means to start a conversation with a woman you find attractive, without explicitly stating your sexual or romantic interest**, and its proponents say that it’s more versatile, has wider appeal, and it retains

mystery and power.

Both have a point.

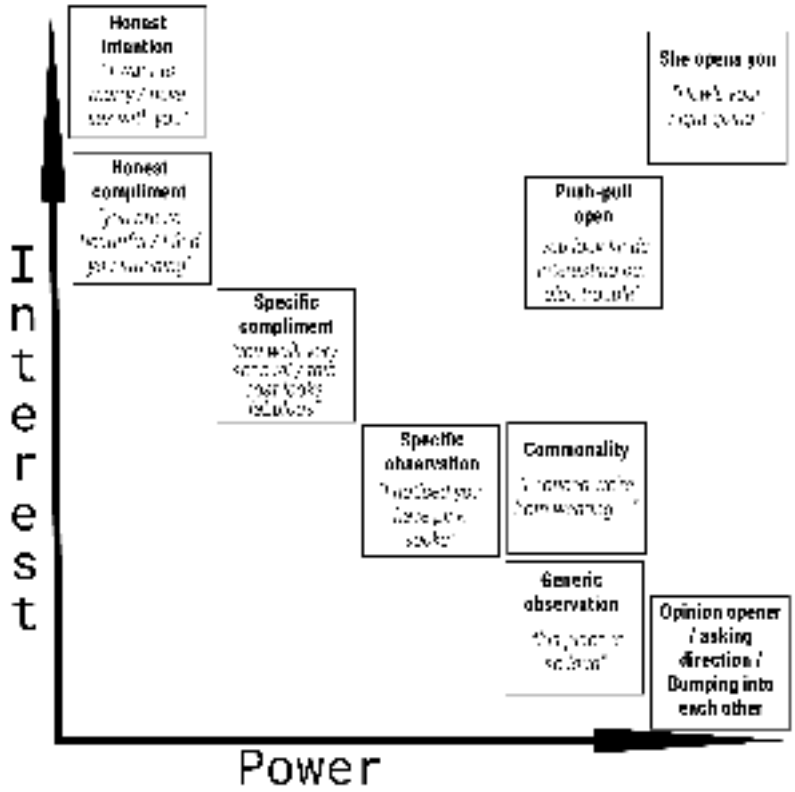
And, generally speaking, you want an opener that combines the best of both worlds:

1. **Maintains as much power as possible**, while it
2. **Sets a man-to-woman sexual vibe**

When you're more advanced, you can combine both because you won't need words to set a "man-to-woman" frame and spark attraction.

Beginners though might need to be a bit more direct to avoid remaining at a platonic level.

However, you still don't want to go *too* overboard because the more you spell your interest and intentions, the more power you give away:



The more you make your interest and intentions clear, the more power you give away

Direct Openers Power Dynamics

Direct openers sit on a conundrum:

With a solid delivery they can be honest and ballsy, and thus can give you lots of points.

However, they also show a lot of interest before she's done much to earn it and before she invested anything.
And that can self-frame you as lower value than her.

When Direct Works

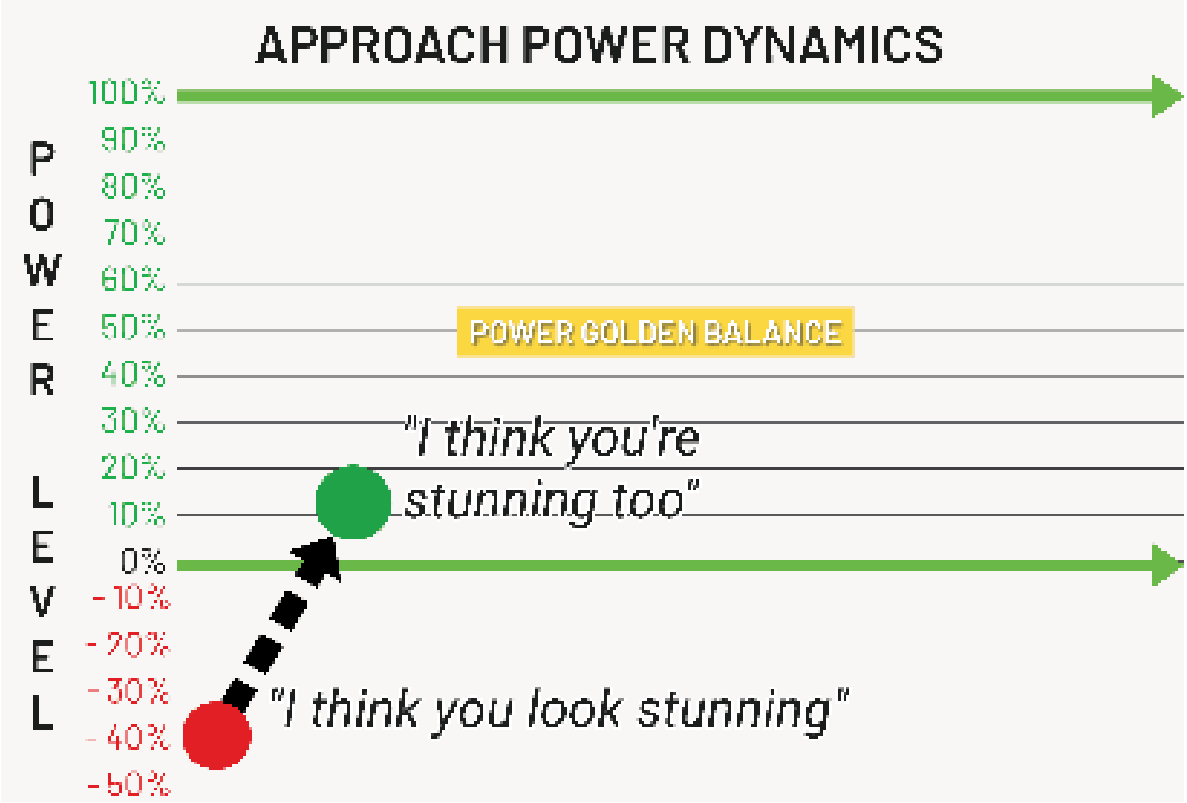
Remember that what's high power is relative.

It's not how much interest you show, but how much you show *compared to her interest lev*els.
So:

- The smaller your interest compared to hers, the more power you have
- The bigger your interest compared to hers, the more power you lose

In theory, showing interest is only an issue when it's not returned.

As a matter of fact, if she's really into you and she returns your interest, then you're on a fast track to quick seduction.
In chart terms:



If you show interest *and if she likes you and reciprocates*, the direct approach puts you on fast-track seduction
The frame at that point is "we really like *each other*", a win-win frame that leads to fast romance.

And, if she likes you a lot, direct openers can also help prevent self-rejection -such as, when women think you are "too much for them" -which is why direct approaches usually work better for very high value men-.

The only issue is…

Works great for top 1%, but you don't make the rule with the exceptions...

This scenario is an *exception* for most men, and not the norm.

On average, going direct works best for very high sexual market value men.

Brad Pitt can open directly and women will drop their jaws and profess their love back (Brad Pitt is so high value that he runs little risk of giving power away: when he opens he's already coming from a high-value position).
Good for him.
"Nos otros", we have to *work* out way up.

Great!
That's part of the fun.

And part of the fun is being strategic about it.

Issue #1. You Don't Know Her Interest Yet

Yes, if she thinks the world of you, direct works great.

Problem is, when you first open you don't know her interest levels.

So, in the absence of clear data, it's best to "hedge your bets".

Issue #2. She Might Exploit Your Candor

Even if she's interested, you don't know if she'll be candid and honest back.

Instead, she might prefer to play games and hoard power, or feign disinterest to make you chase and self-frame as the relationship prize.

This is not an issue if you're looking for a relationship because you can just drop her. But it's an issue if you're looking to play the field.

Also see:

- Nasty game players
- How she became the prize

> 10 Nasty Games Women Play (Women, Stop These!)

Issue #3: Early Vulnerability Is Dangerosly Close to "Weakness"

Showing lots of interest is a vulnerable act.

We talked about vulnerability power dynamics here already.

And vulnerability works *after* you have shown your value.

But it doesn't work nearly as well when your value is still unknown.
And even worst, **vulnerability as an unknown makes you a prime suspect for being *low* value**.

Finally, "naive vulnerability" is just bad strategy.

In a "fight for life analogy", giving all your interest away is like emptying your magazine first, offering a flower, and hoping that your opponent will do the same.
Might work great, but… Is it the most effective way to negotiate win-win peace?
Probably not…

Issue #4: No Mystery, No Tension

When there's no mystery, there is no sexual tension.

Plus, in this "cards on the table" frame, she is firmly in the chooser position.

She asks herself the whole time:

> he wants me, we know that, but… Do I want him?

She will be in charge -and in power- as the chooser.
And women aren't attracted to men who are lower power than they are.

Finally, it's only when women aren't 100% sure you want them that they will chip in -invest, show interest, and

potentially even chase you-.
When they know you want them, they'll wait for you to make all the work.
And that almost always decreases their attraction.

So it's best to let her wonder with some mystery.

Issue #5: The More Attractive She Is, The Better It Is to Maintain Power

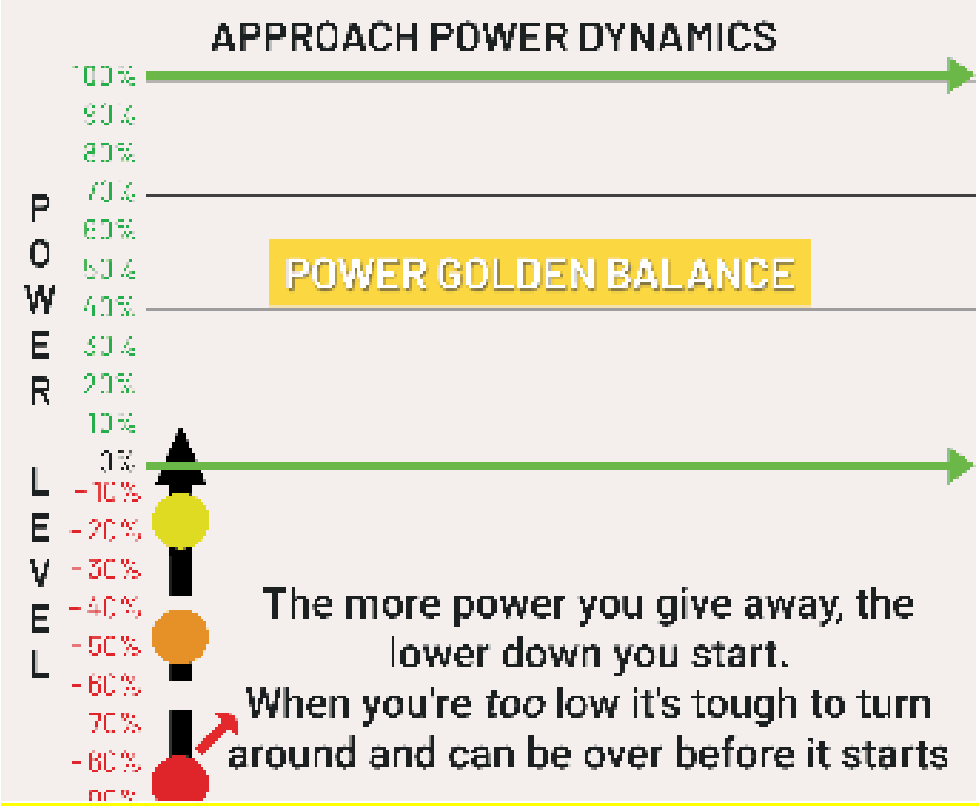
Generally speaking:

The more attractive and in-demand she is, the higher-power men she wants.

And the less likely it is that she will take a shine to (yet another) random, "unproven" guy who happens to be into her.

So don't make this is an iron rule, but the tendency is that:

The more attractive she is, the more power you want to keep because the more attractive she is, the more unforgiving she is of those who start lower power:



The more power you give away, the tougher it is. And the hotter she is, the more this is true
Let's now review a few popular "direct openers" around:

Extreme Direct Openers

There are several "extreme" versions of openers in the pick-up literature.

Generally speaking, less extreme is more effective.

For the details, read on:

Direct Sexual

The most extreme direct sexual interest are:

1. Open with direct sexual interest
2. Maintain frame
3. Keep on building on the sexuality (for example, what you want to do to her)

When that works, it works great.

When it works

It works great if she is:

1. Super into you
2. Very into highly dominant and sexually aggressive men
3. Horny
4. Rrisk-taking

Why it's not ideal

If we define effective as "giving yourself maximum odds with the largest number of women", then it's the sexual direct opener is not the most effective.

There are several reasons for this:

1. **Drives away many women**, **including women who could have been into you**: sexual direct casts a smaller net because most women are risk-avoidant. Even many women who are turned by sexual boldness will subconsciously override their excitement with self-preservation. It's not a coincidence that many women only orgasm after they've known a man for some time: it's because they need some time and comfort to drop their defenses and "let go"
2. **There's no upside for skilled and high-value men**: if you're generally high-power and have the capability to be more direct and bolder together with the emotional intelligence to realize when you need to be bolder -a big ask, actually-, then you can up your dominance and leadership on a "per-needed basis" and still move fast and succeed with the women who'd respond well to super direct.
3. **Lots of small personal risks add up**: you can come across as threatening or harassing and get wild reactions and burn bridges

You can mitigate those downsides with sexual direct that is not crude and doesn't come across as threatening. That works a lot better.

Examples in Seduction University.

Direct Romantic

Many dating coaches recommend a direct expression of interest.

For example:

> **Direct gushing interest**: I think you are… Gorgeous

Or blander:

> **Direct compliment opener**: I thought you were cute and wanted to talk to you

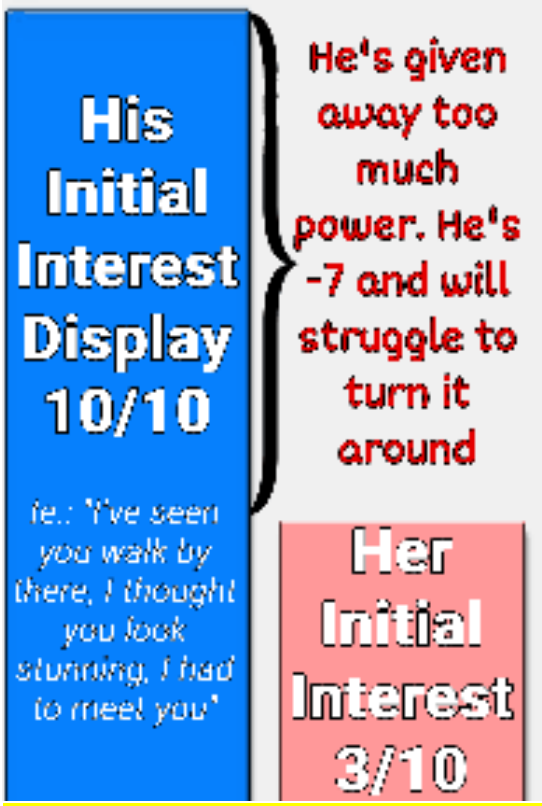
When it works

It can work great if:

1. **She invests and/or shows interest**: for example, if she stopped to talk to you and looks at you raptly. Then it works because, at that point, you're power-up
2. **You come across as high-value and/or "top boyfriend material"**, in which it can turn into whirlwind romance -this is how lovers' seducer types date, like Casanova–
3. **She likes you**, and especially if she noticed you before you approached

Why it's not ideal

Look at this chart:



The more power you give away, the more likely it is you'll start in a negative "value hole"
Think of it this way:

The more direct -and gushing- you are in your expression of interest, the more you "extend".
If she extends as well, you lunge together forward. If she reaches out to "break your fall", you might be still in the game -but because *she* decided to "give you a chance", not the best spot to be in-.

But if she was unsure -including if you're high value but she hasn't seen it yet-, then you may be out of the running before even starting.

No, "Making Her Day" Is Not Your Goal

Some dating coaches say that big compliments "make her day" -sometimes with nice descriptions of how big the smile grows on her face-.

However, "making her day" is not a goal for effective dating.

Your goal is *not* to make her day -or, at least, not with a big compliment right before she says "thanks" and leaves to have sex with someone else-.

Approach Body Language

Of course, approaching is not all about words.

Body language plays a crucial role.
This is a brief preview, the full lesson is in Seduction University:

Bad body language

Bad because:

1. **He looks at her before she looks at him**
2. **She moves forward going her own way,** he self-frames as having nothing better to do
3. **He has his whole body towards her,** she just looks at him

Overall, he sub-communicates lots of interest and he's in the chasing position.

If he insists, he might get her to stop and then regain some power.
But it's a big IF, and he's not making himself any favors starting lower power.

Bad because:

- **He approaches from behind**, already in a chasing position
- **He is looking at her, she is not looking at him**

A video example of very poor body language first-approach:

Good body language

And now some positive examples of high-power approaches:

It's good body language because:

- It looks very natural
- He goes one step ahead

A few things could be tweaked:

- **Walk with her a few more steps or until you hook**: he tried to stop her too soon. Should have walked with her, gotten some investment
- **Open at a more convenient location**: steps are mind taxing, it's better to open before steps and escalators, or after
- **Stop at a more convenient location**: right after the steps is a sub-optimal place to stop
- **Make her look at you first**: he avoids the startling "predator in pursuit", but would have been better to look ahead in the beginning

And now a scripted example from "Dr. No" to get an idea of "warmer" approaches:

> **Bond**: (walks ahead, doesn't look at her) Tomorrow afternoon, then (doesn't even specify it's a date invite, making her invest in the verbal meaning-making of setting up a date)

Bond walks without waiting, which forces her to catch up to him -big nonverbal investment-. It barely started and she's already shown strong interest while he hasn't shown any.
Then he reclines against the booth (locking in) and leaves her on the outside, which is the higher investment position.

For now, this is enough to get the gist.
More body language in Seduction University.

Problem: Beginners Need The Verbal Support of "Directness"

It's not as simple as to say "be less direct".

Because to have a man-to-woman vibe without verbally stating it requires some skills.
It's all about body language, tonality, undertones, and… Personal value and self-confidence.

Flirting can help, but even there, not all flirting works. If it's too obvious or surface-level then flirting is more like harmless banter -or even try-hard-.

So for beginners, it's OK to start out with direct interest.
As a matter of fact, for beginners, it's *recommended* to start out with more direct expressions of romantic interest and/or romantic intention.
It ensures you won't end up friend-zoned and, if done well, it can give you added points for boldness and honesty.

However, for the longer term, it's better to work on:

- "Man to woman" vibing (examples later)
- Qualifying and showing your interest later on, after she's also invested and *when she earns it*
- Increasing your investment in lockstep with hers

Solution: Go "As Indirect As Possible"

Maintain Power Using Vibe, Rather Than Words

Considering all we said:

There are too many downsides and too few upsides to direct openers.

HOWEVER, beginners need the verbal directness for a "man-to-woman" frame.

The solution?

The solution is to go "as indirect as possible".

To know how indirect you can go, you need to self-assess.
You can look at your past interaction, and if:

- You get friend-zoned a lot
- Women never get that you want to date them
- When you invite women home they either think it's weird, or think it's as friends
- When you make a move women never expect it

Then, there is not enough "man-to-woman" vibe, not enough attraction, and you're going too indirect.
You need to go more direct.

If on the other hand you're getting good results, women "know" what's up and some women are attracted to you…
Then go try out more indirect and "casual" openers.

In either case, you'll start doing better.

Technique: The "Bashful Direct"

The "bashful direct" effectively blurs the line between direct and indirect, combining the best of both worlds.

See Seduction University for the example.

Women's First Approach Tactics

We'll focus on interested women here.

And interested women will either:

1. **Show interest** the "genuine" non-game player attitude
2. **Hide interest** to conserve power and self-frame as "the prize"
3. **Actively feign disinterest** to entrench her power position. Feigning disinterest can be both a game and a test

What early PUAs used to call "bitch shields" is a subset of "feigning disinterest".
Bitch shields refer to women who are either attractive or hit on too many times and who put up a nasty facade to discourage and quickly shut down suitors.

However, it's not necessarily attractive or high-value women who put up bitch shields. Often, it's inveterate game players or jaded party girls instead.
So don't necessarily take it as a test or sign of quality, because it can often be a red flag instead.

See Seduction University for how to deal with bitch shields.

Indicators of Interest

It's certainly helpful knowing how to recognize indicators of interest.

Marisa Tomei in "Crazy Stupid Love" shows some dramatized examples:

> **Her**: I'm Kate (high-pitch, smiling and nodding, obviously happy of being approached)

You can read some of the typical "indicators of interest" here:

> Does She Like Me? 35 Signs of Attraction (W/ Pictures)

And there are many similar lists online -more or less accurate-.

However, don't over-sweat the presence (or absence) of indicators of interest because many women won't send nearly as many signals -and some won't send any at all-.

See "Seduction University" for concrete signs.

Gaze Power Dynamics & Coquette Games

We can consider eye contact the very first (pre-)step in an approach.

As a general rule:

The more you're seeing looking, the more interest you sub-communicate -and the more you're chasing-.
Conversely, the more you're looked at, the more power you gain.

A dramatized but good example of eye contact power dynamics (and games) from Sex and the City:

> **Her**: (lowers her gaze, then looks at him) I have no doubt (looks away and keeps on walking)
> *(…)*
> **Him**: maybe we could have dinner sometimes
> **Her**: (looks away)
> (…)
> **Her**: (looks at him for emphasis before delivering the keywords) call me (looks away first, moves away first)
> *(…)*
> ***Her***: *(self-talk after she turns to look at him and he sees it) damn, would have been so cool if I hadn't looked back*

Albeit this a show, it was written largely by women and for women.
Indeed, notice the top two comments from real-life women, confirming it's part and parcel of most women's innate programming:

If you spot a woman playing these games, you have two options:

1. **Play the same game back**, so you avoid being framed as the one chasing her
2. **Go assertive and bold and tell her to stop playing games**, a slight risk, but if she likes you, it's actually low-ish risk and big returns.

If you go assertive -and potentially "meta", see PU- and she accepts your frame, backtracks and/or changes her behavior it's a huge boon for the seduction.
At that point, she's almost ready for intimacy.

Strategic Action Steps

See Seduction University.

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you find real-life examples and strategies.

How to Seduce Women Faster: The ‘Straight Line’ Method

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 April 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Straight-line seduction is the dating framework of “closers” and successful seducers.

The straight-line seduction approach to dating helps you to go from first meeting to intimate faster, more often, and more reliably.

So in this post, we will learn exactly how the straight line seduction model helps you seduce better, and more often.

Contents

- Introduction
  - From Sales to Seduction: History
- Straight Line Seduction
  - 1. Be higher power than her (X-Axis)
  - 2. Focus on moving forward, rather than upward (Y-Axis)
- How To Straight-Line Seduce

Introduction

First, a definition:

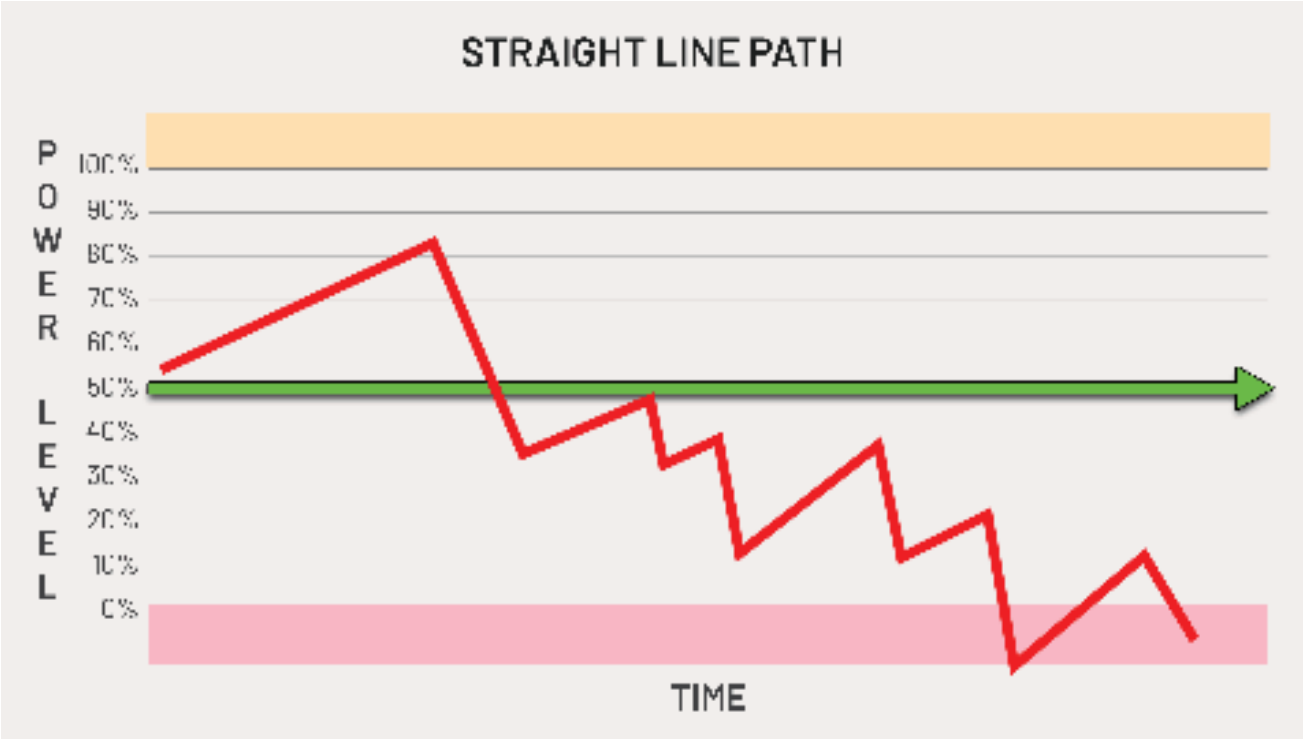
> Straight line seduction is a dating framework to go from first meeting to intimate as quickly and as reliably as possible

Straight-line seduction is based on these two axioms:

- **Speed of execution**: the faster you reach your goal, the more effective you are. Conversely, the longer it takes,

the more the chances something will go wrong

- **Efficiency of execution**: the simpler, more streamlined, and more replicable the plan to reach your goal, the more effective you are. Conversely, the more complex it is, the more difficult it is to replicate, and the more likely it is something will go awry

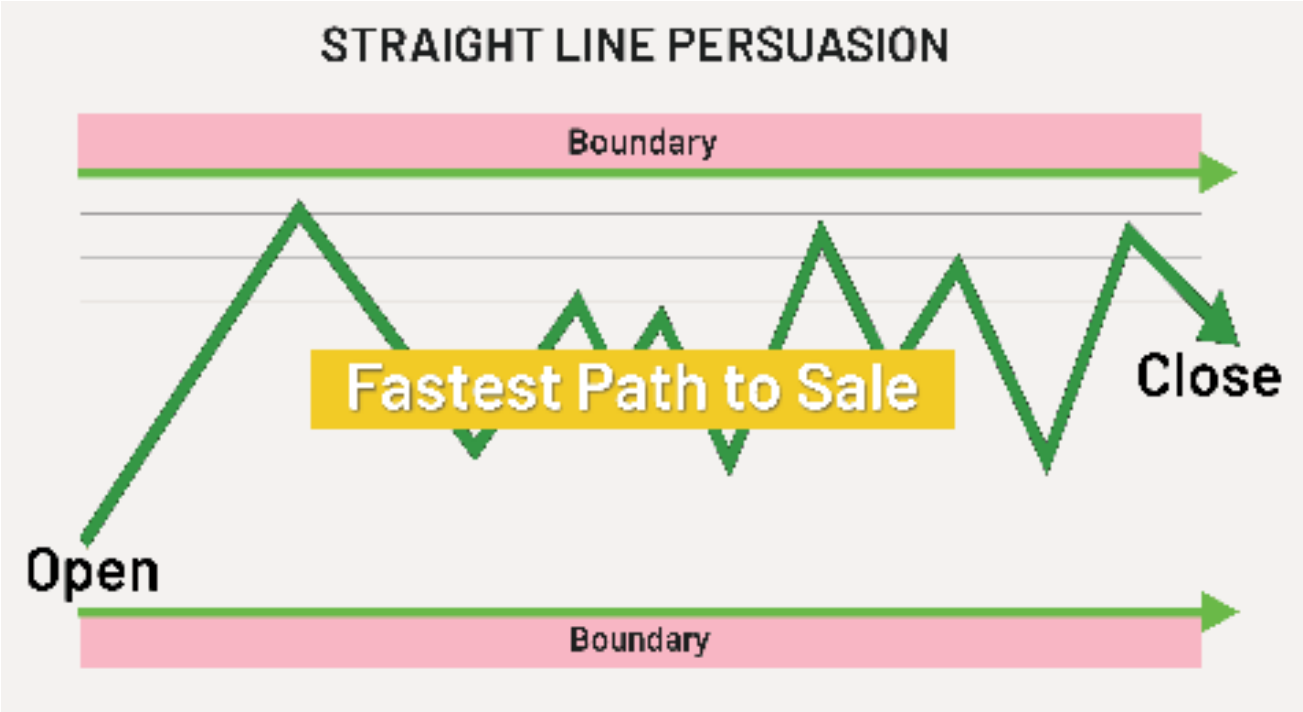


At parity of everything else, a simple straight line from A to B beats longer and convoluted detours
These two axioms apply to life in general and across many different endeavors.
And they're especially relevant in dating.

From Sales to Seduction: History

The roots of "Straight Line Seduction" are in sales.

Specifically, in the "straight line persuasion" model by Jordan Belfort:



The main concepts behind "straight line persuasion" are:

1. **Replicable sales scripts based on effectiveness and speed**: the whole point of the arrows as boundaries is to avoid time-wasting or harmful tangents and go from opening to close as quickly as possible
2. **Constant forward motion with end goal in mind**: from the start the salesman has the close in mind. However, and this is key, he never makes it seem like the close is all he cares about and he never "pushes".
   Indeed the next point is:
3. **"Gentle leading" with rapport and prospect's buy-in**, rather than a forceful high-pressure sales approach. This approach combines the benefits of high-power without the risks of raw dominance and confrontations (real-life example of how confrontation fails you, especially early on, here)
4. **Close framed as a win for the prospect**: the interaction and exchange are framed as a win for the prospect. The signature on the dotted line feels like a win for the prospect

Straight line seduction is very similar.

Sales & Seduction Parallels

And albeit I don't fully buy the story that great salesmen (necessarily) make for great seducers, there certainly is an important overlap between seduction skills and great salesmanship.

Both of them require great people skills, leadership, power-awareness, and an eye on the goal -and a touch of Machiavellianism sometimes, starting with the fact that you don't want to make it seem like the end goal is all you care about-.

The straight line persuasion approach to sales is like a salsa dance from first meeting to sales, with the (sales)man firmly but gently leading and the prospect happily following to the dotted line (or, in seduction, bed).

Jordan Belfort's approach to persuasion translates really well to seduction because, contrary to high-pressure sales, the focus on rapport and "win for her" turn prospects/women into *willing* repeat customers.
And her eager buy-in makes the crucial difference between simply "sleeping with someone" and "seducing".

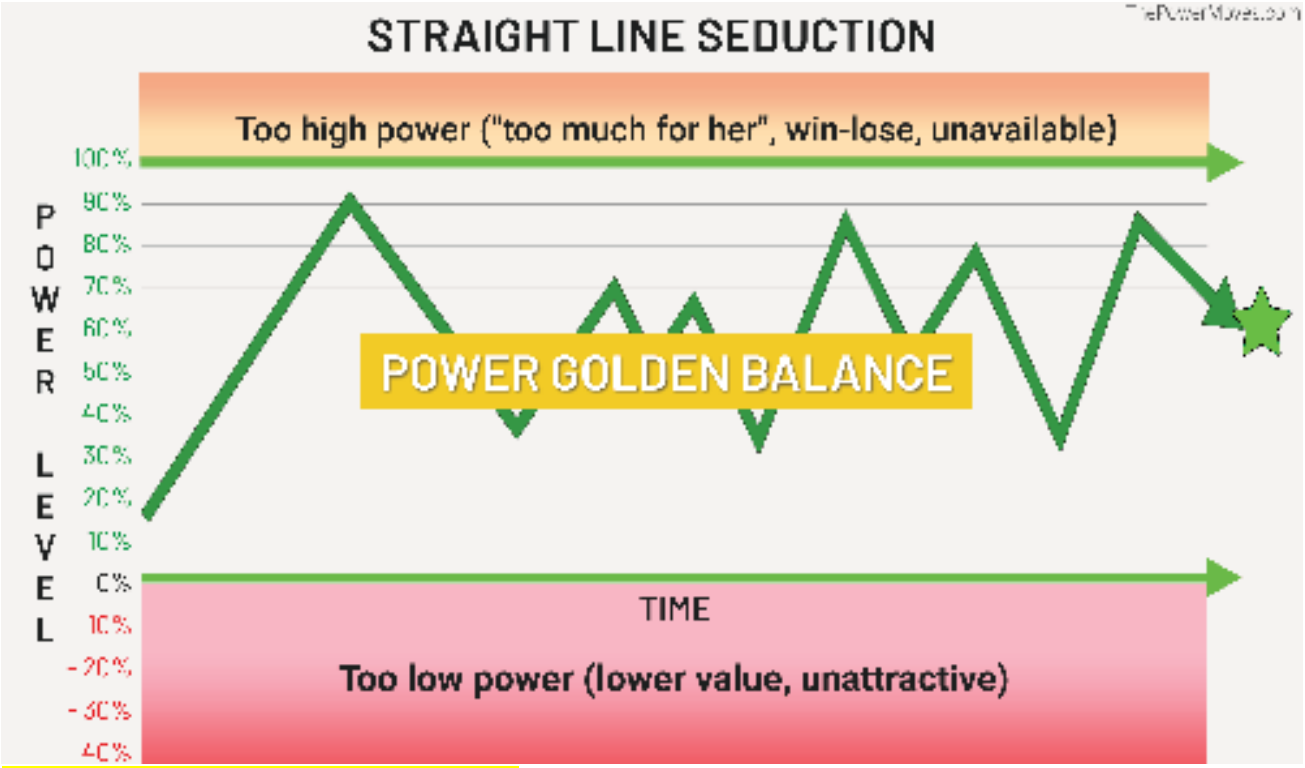
And if Jordan Belfort made billions with it, then you can probably use it to bed a few women as well :).

Straight Line Seduction

We strategize properly at TPM.

So we didn't just take the original sales concept and mindlessly applied it to seduction.
But we deepened it, expanded it, and tailored it specifically for seduction.

This is how Straight Line Seduction looks like in chart:



The baseline "Straight Line Seduction Model"
Once you get the gist, it's rather straightforward.
But to truly get it, you also need to understand some crucial elements of social and power dynamics.

So let's quickly review them here:

1. Be higher power than her (X-Axis)

This is where it all starts.

It is THE most basic -and crucial- element.
And, as it happens, the one that most guys struggle with.

The importance of the power component between her and him VS salesman and prospect buyer is also a key difference between seduction and sales (and one of the main reason why I believe you can't compare the two).

Namely:

You can sell while being lower power than your prospect, but you can hardly seduce while being lower power than your date.

Such as, you can be a junior salesman and sell to a CEO if the CEO sees the benefit of your product -granted, it's easier selling to an owner as an owner, but upward sales are very possible and I know that from first-hand experience of successfully selling above my paygrade-.
But **in seduction *you* are the product**. And you can hardly seduce if the woman sees you as "less than she is" because if the man is "less than she is", then there are no benefits for her in that transaction -see: "hypergamy" for

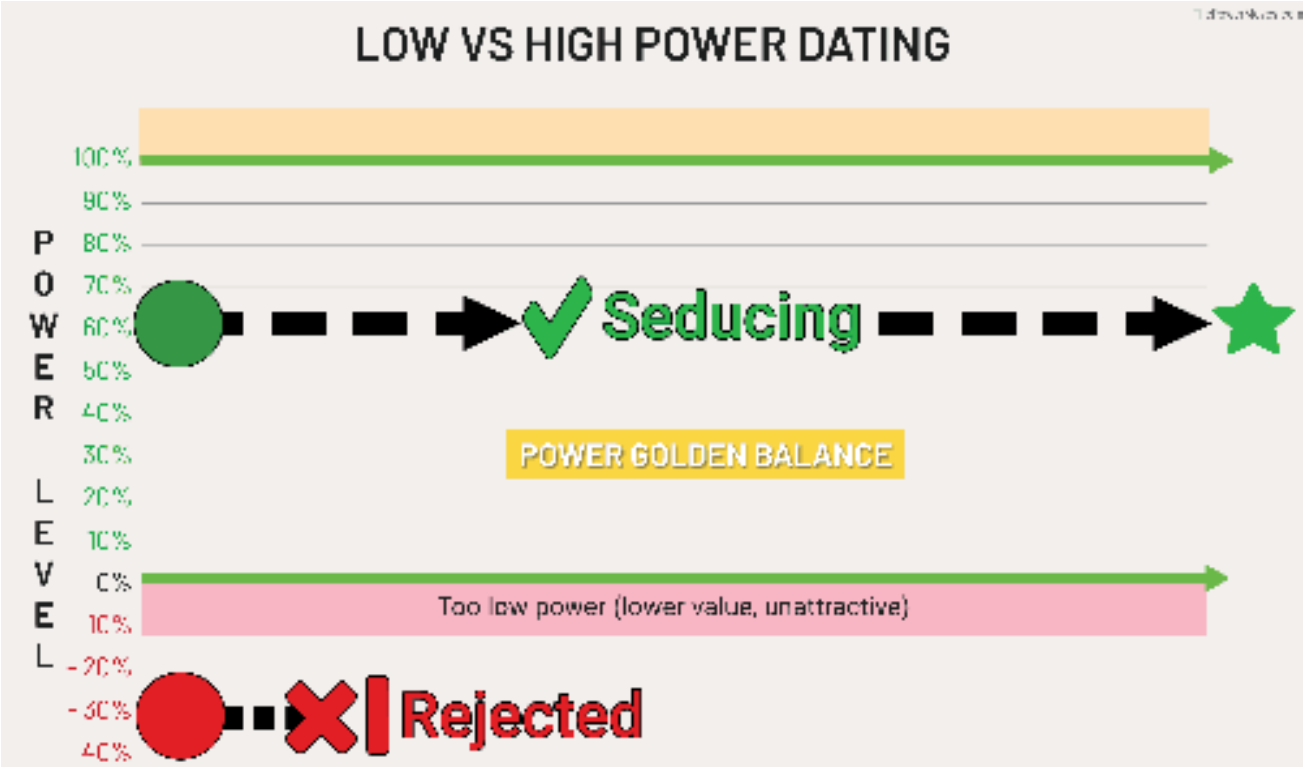
more-.

She feels it's a win for her when she feels you're more than her

So, to seduce effectively -or to seduce at all, really-, you must be "more than her".

"More" in what, to be precise?
Well, the more the better.
For a quick overview, see the "sexual market value" article -or for a more practical approach, get Seduction University-.

To keep it simple, we refer to "power" as the sum total of all traits that make her feel you are "more than her", a high(er)-value man, and a great catch.
The type of man that, if she were to sleep or get into a relationship with, would be a win for her.



Hypergamy dictates: high power seduces because she wants him while low power chases and gets rejected
The x-axis charts that crucial "power level".
Zero is the neutral level of "power parity", the point at which she sees you as an "equal".
The higher up from zero you go, the easier seduction becomes.
The lower you go, the more seduction becomes unlikely.

Up until here, most people get it.
What confuses many is the orange level above 100%.

So let's dig deeper into that:

1.2. Golden Balance: be higher power, without overpowering her

This is what stumps many men:

There is such thing as "too high power".

The "too high power" is the red portion above the 100% level.
And the portion between "parity" and 100% is the golden balance.
You are in the power golden balance when she feels you are more than her, but she can still get you.

Above 100% though she feels like she either cannot get you, or that your power is not used for win-win and, thus, it's not a win for her.

Many men fail to understand this concept because status among men works differently than seduction. There is no limit to how high a man can climb while still maintaining and accruing more status and respect.

But there are often limits to how high a man can go in a certain positive trait before it starts becoming a con, rather than a plus ("threshold effect").

"More than her" is great, "too much for her" is not

Power among men is unlimited:

the higher a man goes, the more other men keep awarding him with status points.

But in 1:1 seductions women sometimes "drop out" of dating instead of chasing him if she does not feel that he either likes her, or that he's an uplifting force (broadcasting and fame are different).

Many women feel uncomfortable with men whom they feel are "too much for them" because, they think, such a man would not want them -potentially even hurt them-. So rather than staying and getting rejected, they self-reject (ie.: dismiss the possibility of a relationship with you and dismiss you as a romantic candidate).

Too high-power: the over-revving pitfall

Over-revving is a perfect analogy for this concept.

That's over-revving on a tachometer (note: not an odometer). Too high revs mean a comparative loss of speed

Those of you who have been into cars or bikes will understand right away.

For those who haven't, over-revving refers to delivering too much power for the current gear.

Over revving is ineffective.
As a matter of fact, **over-revving makes you go slower** because the best approach to move forward is to switch gears up, rather than delivering more power -and staying stuck- at the current gear.

When you over-rev you focus more on power and useless noise -ego gratificaction and reactions above results-, rather than speed and moving forward.
The solution is either to decelerate slightly to avoid straining the engine -and relationship- or, even better, to switch gear to pick up speed and move forward.
And that's what makes it the perfect analogy.
Similarly, overpowering in seduction means having too much power for the current stage of seduction, with too little forward motion.

Archetypes of over-revving

There are many ways that men can f*ck up seduction by going too high-power, including:

1. **Value man pitfall:** focuses on pumping his value and makes her feel he's "too much for her" (too much value and not enough availability)
2. **Game player pitfall:** pretends to be disinterested, invests nothing, and makes her feel like he doesn't like her (not enough qualifying, or too many PUA games)
3. **Poor socialite pitfall**: focuses on his value, but fails to connect, relate, or simply have a good time and makes her feel like there is no "spark" (not enough rapport and connection)
4. **Alpha male posturer pitfall:** focuses on dominance (asshole game with not enough warmth)
    1. Angers high-power women (turns interactions into confrontations)
    2. Makes more submissive women feel belittled (win-lose rather than win-win, seduction is no more a win for her)
    3. Makes women uncomfortable and potentially afraid

Many men harm themselves with one or more of these pitfalls.
And which one you're more likely to fall for depends on your approach, personality, and level of development.

Generally speaking, higher power issues are easier to fix than low-power issues.
Plus, although there are (almost) always exceptions to any rule, women make even more exceptions for high-value men.
So, generally speaking, **higher power is better and easier to fix than lower power**.

However, it's something to keep in mind because the more you work on yourself, the more you'll run into these issues.
And the less you're aware of them, the less you'll be able to fix them.

Luckily, there are simple ways to avoid all these issues, at once, without going crazy.
It's all about implementing the right mindsets and habits.

One great tip to avoid all these issues is this:

2. Focus on moving forward, rather than upward (Y-Axis)

Forward motion is what gets you to intimacy.

So once you have enough power and you see that she likes you, respects you, accepts your leadership… Then move forward to the next step on the road to intimacy.

Forward motion is not only good: forward motion is necessary.
The more you stay put, the more you risk losing her.

As a matter of fact, in seduction forward motion and power are not independent but interrelated.

If she thinks you like her and you don't move forward, you lose power because she thinks you're not enough of a leader -and of a man- to take charge.

And if she's not sure if you like her, she will think you're not interested, you become unavailable to her, and she will self-reject and write you off.

Finally, **speed is inherently linked to effective dating** and seduction.

As a rule:

> The shorter the distance you travel, the quicker and more reliably you reach the destination.

This is not an opinion, this is a law, and it's a constant of the world we live in.

Conversely, the longer the distance, the more time it takes and the more likely it is some issues will derail you.

Attention now though: "quick" is always dependent on "reaching the goal"
The two must necessarily go together. Going quick while losing women you like is not seducing, it's *failure* of seduction.
So although most men could probably move quicker, there certainly is such a thing as "too fast" -something that's been an issue of mine-.
So "fast" truly means "as fast as possible to reach intimacy, given the circumstances".

How To Straight-Line Seduce

A bare-bone straight-line approach :)
For a quick overview:

1. **Be higher power than her**
2. **Lead with win-win in mind**: use collaborative and win-win frames. Especially in the beginning, remember that early interactions are fragile and she won't always see you as higher power early on
3. **Build her up to your level**, qualify her, bond & connect, develop a "sense of us" or, better yet, a "possibility of us"
4. **Use your power to move forward**

And, of course, generally run good interactions and dates -something that applies across all socialization-.

For exactly how to execute each step, including real-life examples, see:

- Seduction University

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you can learn real-life applications of the method.

Asshole Game: Why It's Better Than "Nice"

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 April 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Nobody likes the asshole, but…

He succeeds.
And also gets the girl.

Or, at least, that seems to be the consensus among many men.

But is it true?
Do women love assholes?

Let's find out.

Note:
Albeit we refer a lot to dating here, the same concepts apply to general socialization.

Contents

- INTRO
  - Asshole Definition
  - Asshole = High-Power / Low-Warmth
- Traits of An Asshole
  - Asshole Game
- Advantages of Assholes
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  - 1. It's not as universally effective
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- Summary: Be High-Power, High-Warmth

INTRO

There are three schools of thought when it comes to asshole's effectiveness:

1. **Doesn't work** because women prefer good guys (belief often promoted by too nice guys)
2. **It works because women love assholes**
3. **It's better than too nice guys, but not as good as alpha male / high quality men**

#3 is closer to the truth.
BUT… There are important exceptions.

So let's dig deeper.
And let's start defining "asshole".

Asshole Definition

Definition of an asshole:

> An asshole is an individual with the reputation and possibly the behavior for either taking advantage of others or disregarding others and/or offending their feelings

Reputation is crucial.
You only get labeled "asshole" when people feel like you or your actions are antisocial and/or offensive.

That's an important difference between "asshole" and "value taker".

You may not set out to offend or take value. And you may even add value or have people's best interests in mind, and still be called asshole if you disregard or offend someone.
Some assholes may even enjoy, take pride, or encourage a reputation for brutal honesty that disregards other people's feelings.

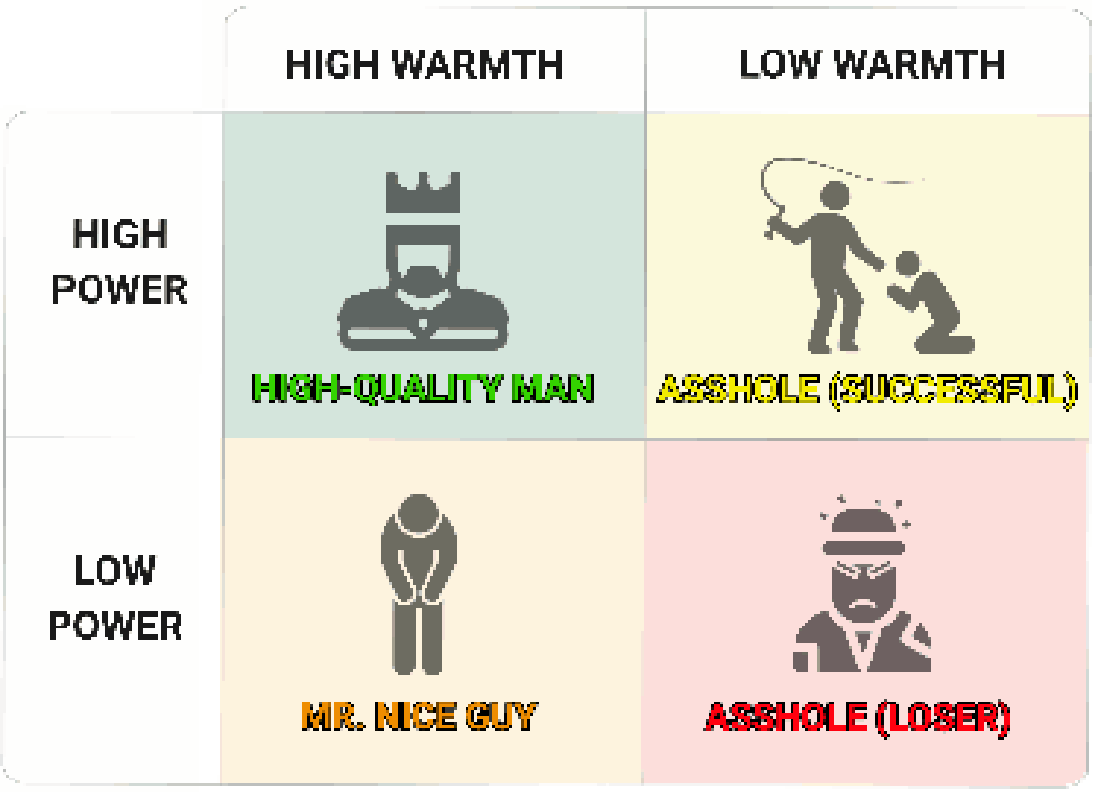
Instead, many Machiavellians and value-takers are more careful -even sneakier, in a way- and DO manage their reputation not to be thought of or labeled as "assholes".

Asshole = High-Power / Low-Warmth

An asshole is inherently low-warmth.

And, to be a successful asshole, he *must* be high power -or, to be precise, high dominance-.
Otherwise, an asshole with low power is just a bigger loser.

See the "asshole matrix":



A low-power asshole has nothing going on for him, so his anti-social traits just make him a bigger social pariah

Power Matters Most

The asshole who is high in power is (somewhat) successful.

That's because power matters more than warmth when it comes to personal success.

Power is an ENABLER and PRECONDITION to turn warmth into success.
Warmth by itself leads to limited results.

So the asshole who's high in power does get (some) results.

And that's why the "too nice guys" sometimes look up at the assholes and think "wow, he has power, he gets results… Assholes win".

Traits of An Asshole

"Assholes" are one or more of the following:

- Selfish
  - Self-promotional / braggart
  - Hedonistic
- Proud / conceited
  - Sense of superiority towards people and institutions
- Dominant
  - Confident
  - Power aware / Socially effective
- Antisocial
  - Rebel
  - Disdain towards people and institutions

- Insensitive
  - “Facts don’t care about feelings” attitude
- Provocative, sometimes for the fun of it
  - Brutally honest
  - Sadistic, as in “enjoying to see others struggle or lose”
- Offensive / irritating

Asshole Game

In dating the asshole has some of these traits:

Attitudes and mindsets:

- “I put myself first”
- I’m high power (and higher power than you)
- You want me (& I don’t want you)
- You need me (& I don’t need you)
- You mean little to me – and I show it

Behaviors:

- Little or no investment in her (especially if he’s not sleeping with her)
- Sarcastic, biting, or demeaning humor
- Very critical with lots of punishment and little rewards
  - Negging
  - One-upping
  - Push-pull with the “pushes” stronger than the “pulls”
- Nasty social climbing

Advantages of Assholes

Pride, even smugness, are correlated to high confidence. And it sub-communicates higher odds of past successes to be proud of. And successful men are attractive
These asshole traits are attractive:

- **Power**: assholes' focus on power and frame control makes them date high power, and women love that. Also, value-taking high-power often beats value-adding low-power
- **High confidence** is obviously attractive
- **Pride** has been shown to be attractive
- **Uneediness sub-communicates value and options**. Plus, people are hardwired to chase and value what's scarce
- **Ability to assert oneself**: almost a precondition to personal success and power
- **Polarizing and attractive to some**: being a polarizer in a world where only the top 20% wins big is good. Among the sub-types the asshole attracts:
  - Rebel types
  - Fearful rebels who wish they had the courage to buck societal pressure
  - Subset of younger women looking for transgression and that, often at the mercy of social pressure themselves, admire the guy who (seemingly) needs no social approval

Compared to nice guys:

- **Putting oneself first beats putting oneself last:** putting oneself first may not be attractive per se, but it's often better than men who put themselves last

And in more fringe cases:

- **Emotional-hooking potential**: a subset of women may fall harder for high dominance (Norwood, 2014) and some others even for men more on the abusive end (Brown, 2008)

Limitations Assholes

These are the limitations to the asshole game:

1. It's not as universally effective

The first relates to general effectiveness.

Such as:

The appeal of the asshole is quantitatively and qualitatively limited compared to the appeal of the high-quality, non-asshole man.

And since here we're going for what's most effective, that may already settle the argument.

2. It easily turns confrontational and derails seductions

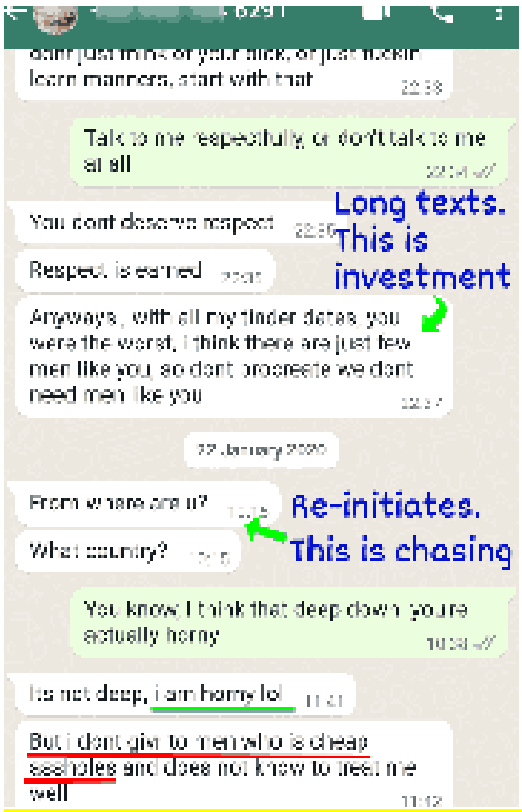
Assholes' seductions are very mercurial.

Their game is all about showing superiority, disdain and, at the extreme, even actively provoking and angering the target.

Those are win-lose interactions, and when you're in win-lose interactions, your windows of opportunity get smaller.

Yes, she may be attracted, but since emotions are fleeting, once she cools off, she moves on for good.

An example:



Yes, assholes fail to get what they wanted plenty of times
I was a bit of an asshole with that girl.

She was horny, but her anger got bigger than her horniness and she left.

I successfully surfaced her horniness in texting, a good move.
But it's still a low-odds interaction.
Once you're in a major asshole frame, you can't invite her "nicely" or her attraction comes crumbling down. You must invite her with something like "come and I'll fuck you silly" or "come and I'll make you shut up shoving this big cock in your mouth".

That *might* work, but it's *still* not effective dating.

⚠ False rape allegation danger

You must be careful of the after-intimacy when dating like an asshole.
Angry women are more likely to make up rape allegations. It's rare, but it's not impossible.

3. The "not interested"game makes it hard to move things forward

The asshole never chases or professes his love.

If he does, the asshole mask slips and he comes across as a weak posturer.
And, with the mask, all the attraction he may have garnered disappears.

That's a major disadvantage at two different levels:

1. To seduce you need to lead and move things forward
2. To deepen relationships it's often best to give at least some signals of liking, affection, and love

I have a good example on a night out with an ex-girlfriend, a couple of her female friends, and a few more guys.

One was your most stereotypical asshole, and extreme at it, including actively provoking women.

He got very deep under a girl's skin with his provocations, but he couldn't do anything with it.
The woman, even if she was hiding attraction, was more focused in showing publicly her deep dislike for him.
And him, prisoner of his own "I'm above you and you're too stupid for me game", couldn't any take step that would move the seduction forward (ie.: talk to her, invite her to go get a drink for some 1:1 time, exchange contacts, invite her home, invite her for a date later etc.).
Result: he went home alone, and without anyone's contact.
He also pissed off my girlfriend. And then he used the "poke" function on her on the social media that was popular at the time. My girlfriend was happy she poked him… Just so that she could ignore him.

For a dramatic example of the second, I will never forget the woman who told me "I really like you" on our third date.
And that night I was (shamefully) clinging to having sex without waiting, without compromises, and of course without telling her the same back.
Little later she walked out, both physically and figuratively. Forever.

That was one of the lowest points of my romantic life, at many levels.
For choosing a losing strategy, for dishonest betrayal of my real self, because I also really liked her, and in terms of what it means to be a man / human being.

4. Fails to secure long-term devotion with emotional bond and connection

The asshole approach makes it difficult to open up, bond, and connect.

And that makes it both less good for both, and less powerful for him.
Especially so in long-term relationships.

Also see:

- **How to maintain attraction in relationships**

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

5. Makes for poorer, lose-lose relationships

Not an issue if one doesn't want relationships.
But even FWBs are relationships, and assholes tend to have poorer relationships.

6. Assholes get heartbroken (and can do little about it)

Surprising, eh?

Well, many assholes aren't really 100% insensitive and emotionless.
Many are playing up their insensitivity.

And those who *play* the asshole get their hearts broken the most.

Assholes can't be honest about anything emotional-related as that would sub-communicate they're sensitive, emotionally invested, that they like her, and that they *care* -the ultimate taboo of assholes-.

A good example from "Reality Bites":

> **Nice guy**: (to her) let's go, you don't need this
> **Asshole**: you don't know what she needs (the asshole mask first cracks, he wants to do something good for her, but just can't bring himself to)

> **Nice guy**: I think I know what she needs in a way that you never will
> **Asshole**: (*looks at them leaving, pained and lost*)

The asshole in that scene is trapped by his own asshole game.

Being honest or offering any form of commitment would sub-communicate caring, and his mask of "power without feelings" would crumble.
He can't even compete with the "nice guy", because competing would also sub-communicate "I care".

All he can do is provoke her hoping she'll choose him and love him.
The asshole often watches the woman struggle *to move away from him*, incapable of doing anything except making her feel even worse.
And albeit that sometimes works, it's not very reliable.

The only hope is that the attraction -and the lack of high-power male alternatives- will be enough to keep her close, emotionally hooked, and sexually available.
In the "best" case for the asshole that turns out to be a rather toxic relationship.
In the best case for her, she breaks free and either ends it cold turkey, or moves to another option.

This is a movie scene, but it's quite realistic.

It's the same dynamics with the woman I described above.
She stood at the door and said "I need to protect myself". She was strong and high-quality to choose the short-term pain for her long-term benefit.
And that's another con for the asshole game:

7. Assholes struggle with the highest quality women

Relationships with assholes tend to be more confrontational, win-lose, and toxic.

And the highest quality women aren't exactly lining up for that.

The highest value women have more leverage and power, so they can choose an equally confident and high-power man, who is *not* an asshole.
And albeit exceptions always apply, that's what they prefer.

Also, as in the example above, higher quality and emotionally healthy women will take the short-term pain of ending a relationship with an asshole rather than the long-term toxicity of staying.

Research On Assholes' Game

It's difficult to run realistic research on this topic.

But the insights we can glean support this lesson's claim.

The literature is mixed and there are some studies where "nice guys" win:

- In Urbaniak and Killman's study, women picked a stereotypical "nice guy" over a stereotypical asshole both for themselves and for their friends (albeit a few picked a nice guy for other women and a bad boy for themselves)
- In a similar study women preferred men who exhibited altruism with keywords such as "I volunteer at a food bank" or "I enjoy helping people"

Here's how researchers explained the divergence:

Assholes Win Against Pushovers

Social psychologist Viren Swami concludes his overview of the available research by saying:

> If the “kind guy” is unconfident and looks like he lets everyone trample him, then the bad boy might be the preferred option.

So if we’re pitching pushovers against assholes, assholes win.

That makes sense.
The need for survival and surviving offspring beats the pleasure of being treated nicely by a lower-power man who can’t ensure the same.
In simpler words: in evolutionary terms **surviving and thriving are a need, courtesy and white gloves are a nice to have.**

Horgan reaches a similar, and even more enlightening conclusion:

> To make sense of the divergent literature on the subject we need to understand that women desire men who exceed a certain minimum of bad boy qualities. This would allow us to argue that bad boy qualities are a requirement that must be met, and that nice guy attributes are attractive only once an individual has proven himself sufficiently “bad.”

Yep, exactly what we embrace on TPM.

Similar topic, also read:

- **Alpha fucks beta bucks**

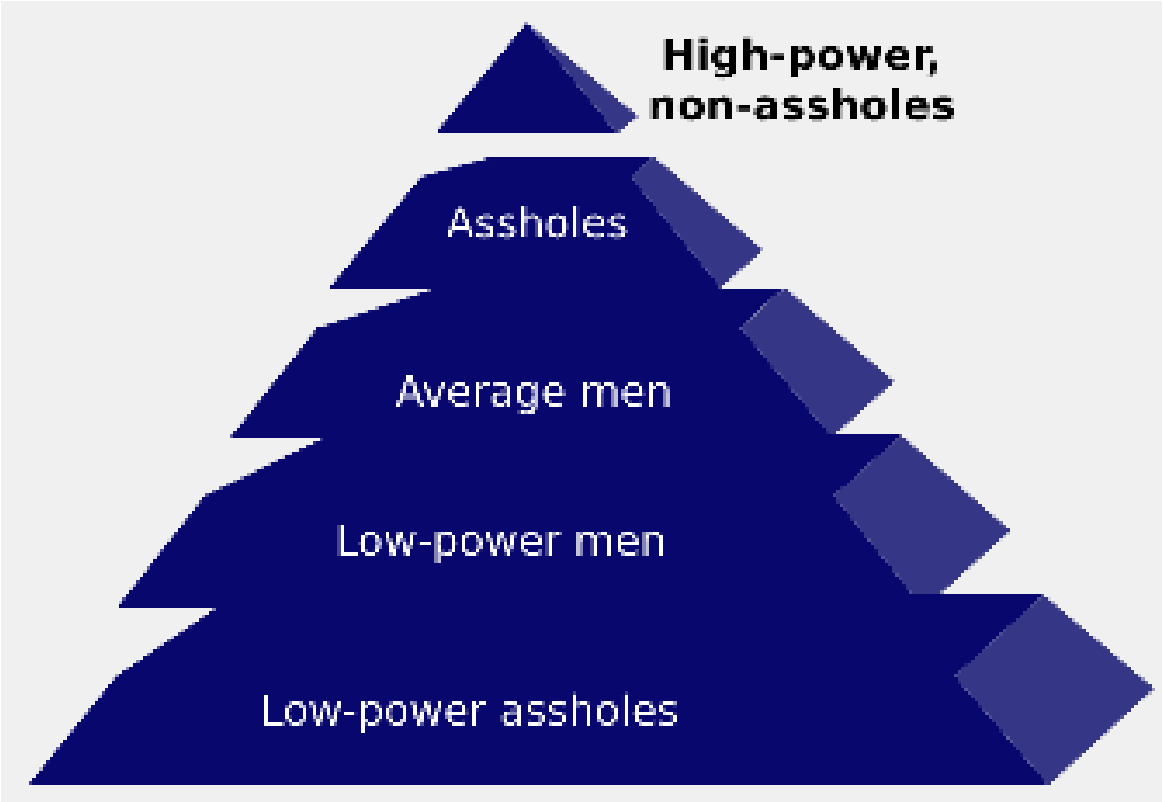
> The Science of “Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks” (Facts VS Myths)

High Power, Value-Adding Men At The Top

Assholes do well compared to doormats.

But everything being equal, a high-power non-asshole man beats the asshole (on average).

There might still be a fraction of the female population that prefers the asshole. But since dating is a number’s game, **you’re better off aiming for pro-social high-power** (and better outside of dating, too).



This is what research points out to

Example: Asshole VS Higher Quality Man

I'll give you now two examples.

Similar situations, but one I handled with an asshole attitude, and the other one with more of a high-quality man approach.

The asshole turns the girl on but ruins relationships

Years ago I was an exchange student.

One night it was a bunch of us at one of our places, drinking and talking.

I was sprawled on top of a window's sill, trying to look cool.

One guy was monopolizing the conversation, and not in a good way.
I felt everyone was getting bored, and that I was losing power by letting someone else lead, and making it worse for all.
Someone had to take the lead to change things.

But I wasn't sure how to.
So I did the most asshole thing I could think of: finished my can of beer, crumpled it up, and emphatically threw it across the room.

The absurdity of the move plus the noise of the beer can bouncing across the floor took everyone by surprise.
And I played the ashole part, with an expression that sub-communicated "whatever, you're tiring the sh*t out of me".

He stopped.
Everyone stopped, for that matter. And he looked at me lost, not sure what to say.

And the girl I was kind of seeing back then couldn't stop laughing.

It “worked”… kind of.

The high-quality man turns the woman on as a leader

Flash forward to many years later.

I was sitting in a group of people and a guy next to me was talking the ears off of a girl, not letting her get a single word in.
Another “too nice guy” sat there as a wallflower.

I knew that the group was being hijacked and needed rescuing, and someone had to take the lead.
Plus, I knew and liked the woman, so I felt it was on me to “do something”.

I turned around and with high-intensity poise said “mate, can I give you some unrequested advice please”.
I let a pregnant pause pass, then added emphatically: “let her talk”.

Even this time, the woman cracked up laughing.

Then I went on to discuss some basics of conversation, and made sure to power protect him saying that I teach this stuff, and that I used to be far worse than he was.
I gave some advice, let everyone talk, and then also changed the topic and stayed a bit more in the conversation to rebuild some goodwill and social capital.

This *also* worked.

But…

The Difference

You see the *huge* difference?

The higher quality approach worked at least as well with the woman (probably better), 10x better socially, and 1000x better with the recipient of my power move.

Instead of making my relationship worse, I improved my relationships with everyone.

The difference?

While the former was just an antisocial asshole, the latter was a *leader*.

And while the asshole move could only work in specific settings and with a younger crowd, the high-quality approach can work *anywhere*.

Why Men Over-Estimate The Asshole Benefits

Many men overestimate the advantages of the asshole strategy.

This is because most men are unassertive. Some are doormats.
So they look at a higher power asshole and think “wow – that guy rocks”.
What they *don't* see is the level yet above that.

Part of the misunderstanding also stems from gender differences. And what *men* respect is different than what *women* prefer.

Research by David Buss shows that women more than men rated prosocial dominant acts as more socially desirable.

Examples of prosocial dominance in the research included:

- “taking charge of things at the committee meeting,”
- “taking a stand on an important issue without waiting to find out what others thought,”

- “soliciting funds for an important cause,”
- “being active in many community and campus activities.”

This is plain and simple leadership, and with plenty of pro-social cues.

Read more on leadership:

- **How leadership gets you women**

> How to Lead to Gets Girls

In contrast, men more than women tended to rate egoistic achievements as more desirable, including “managing to get one’s own way,” “flattering to get one’s own way,” “complaining about having to do a favor for someone,” and “blaming others when things went wrong.”

So while *men* valued individualistic or “ass-holish” pursuits more, *women* valued pro-social leadership.
This is a recurring pitfall for men: they seek more of what *they* think is “more dominant” or, as they’d put it today, “more alpha”. And albeit that’s better than a pushover, it’s not what’s most effective.

Summary: Be High-Power, High-Warmth

Asshole beats pushover, but high-power and prosocial (or at least, non-asshole), beats the asshole.

So, you don’t need to turn into an asshole to succeed AS LONG AS YOU’RE HIGH-POWER.

We go back to one of the fundamentals of this website: to be good, you need to be bad.

So if you use this lesson as an excuse to be meek or submissive, you got it totally wrong.
You should be able to be an asshole, but decide to be better.

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you will learn how to become better and more successful than assholes.

How to Be A Good Asshole (5 Easy Steps)

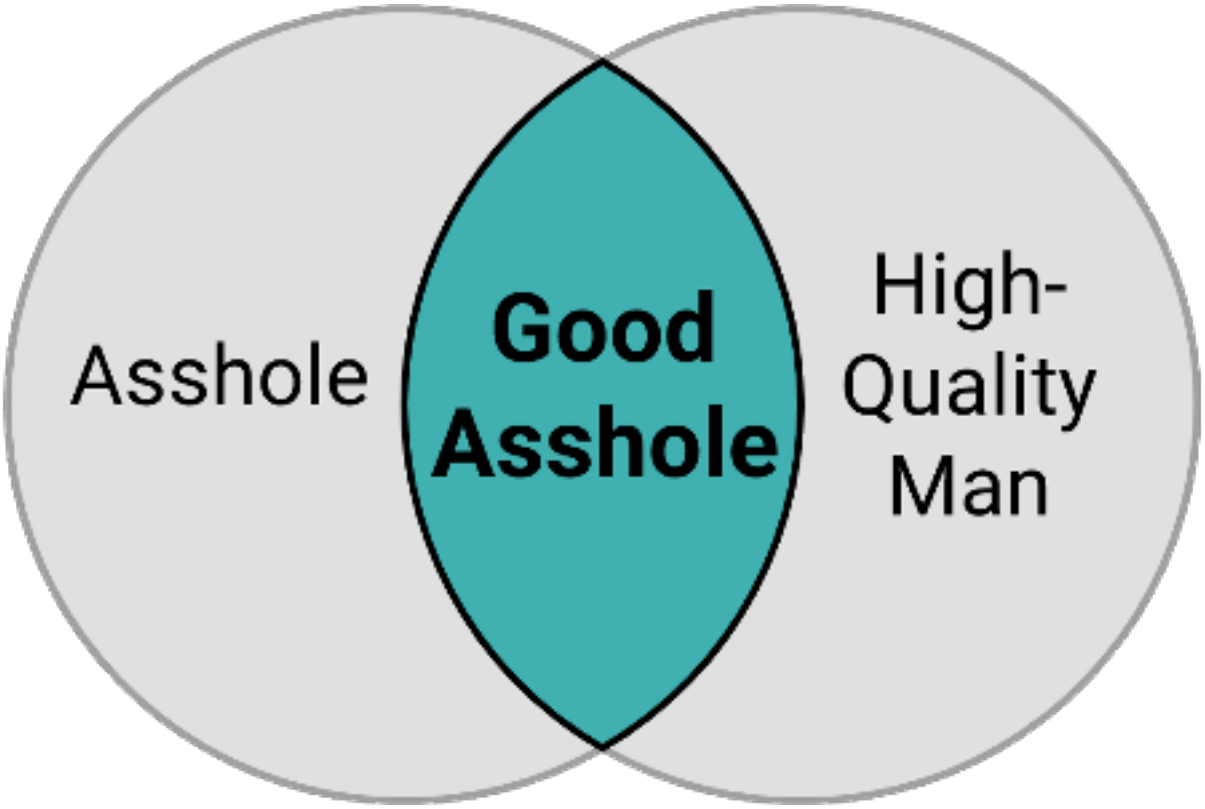
Lucio Buffalmano · 28 April 2022 · Archived copy · Original

There is some overlap between assholes and "high-quality men".

And some of that overlap is what makes both more attractive than the too nice guys.

This framework distinguishes between low-power agreeableness, value-destructive aggression, and a calibrated, masculine, high-agency strategy that TPM calls the 'good asshole'.

We will learn how to be a good asshole, and attractive asshole sub-types you can model.



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Intro

Definition:

> A good asshole is a TPM-defined social strategy in which a high-value, high-agency man **prioritizes mission and self-respect**. While he prefers to have a positive impact, he accepts some social costs as unavoidable consequences of putting himself and his priorities first.

Nice Guy	Bad Asshole	Good Asshole (TPM)
Low power	**High power**	**High power**
High warmth (out of **submissivness**)	**Low warmth**	**Selective warmth** (out of ***choice***)
Over-invests in others	Focuses on **taking**	Focuses on **'what's in it for me'**
High communion	**Agentic disaffiliation**	**High agency**
Conflict-avoidant	**Conflictual**	**Accepts friction** when necessary

Sometimes, an honorable and assertive man might be (mis)labeled an asshole.

At times, it's a misuse of the label "asshole", and the misusers include manipulators, jealous folks and frenemies, and those who just don't understand the mindsets of driven and high-quality men.

Some other times the high-quality men might just have a bad day, or have run out of patience. Can happen.

But sometimes, the overlap exists because **it can be fair to act in ways that some people might (mis)label "asshole"**.

How to Be a Good Asshole

So let's review when to turn "good asshole":

1. Set your top priorities as "non-negotiable take it or leave it"

It's asshole-like -and just plain ineffective- to *never* compromise.

But it's too nice guy to *always* compromise.

Instead, a high-quality man is willing to compromise on something, *happy* to compromise on something else to make his partner happy… And then he has a few things he does *not* compromise on.

For those uncompromisables, he stands steadfast.
And if she cannot respect that, he either sends her packing for the day, or explains that it's either she accepts it, or he has to go ahead on his own.

The good asshole, with strong confidence in his own value, may have more 'uncompromisable' or drive a stronger bargain. But he will be open and direct about it.

It's also fair to have priorities that are higher than your date or spouse. Even if you place your spouse at the top of the list, there may still be times when something else is more urgent.

It's fair during those times to demand and expect she respects your higher priorities, that she willingly takes a step back, or even that she supports you through them.

2. Demand at least a balance of give & take

An asshole -or just a poor dater- may make it a point to *always* take more than he gives.

A nice guy white knight instead may give far more than he receives and either be cool with that, or try to give *even more*.

A good asshole is high value, so while he is not a taker, he tends to focus on what's in it for him.

Dating: It's fair to expect that she comes on the first date

Talking about locomotion here.

For example, if you approached, texted first, invited her out, and are going to pay… You're doing most of the work + picking up the tab.

So *as long as you meet at a location that is also easy for her to reach*, it's fair to expect her to come to you.
You lead and pay, she moves -fair enough deal-.

PRO Tip: justify your kindness

Kindness done the wrong way is risky. It can be misconstrued as:

- **Being lower value**, with your giving used to "make up the difference"
- **Chasing**
- **Kissing up**, as in "social climbing" and "wanting to get something"

And, generally, it can frame you as low-power "too nice guy".

To avoid that your kindness may come back to harm you, here's a tip for you: justify your kindness with a reason for that kindness.
The reason can be what's in it for you, you being the higher power host, or you doing what you always do and like doing.

For example:

> **Her**: ohh it's so nice of you to invite me out <—- this is a covert power move
> **You**: I'm inviting you because it's the only way to see if I like you

Note: I'd personally say "to see if we like each other", but since this is the article on how to learn how to be more an asshole…

Or:

> **You**: what type of food do you feel like
> **Him**: it's so nice of you to ask, and what would you like
> **You**: I'm asking you because you're my guest tonight. Let me know what you think and we can talk about it

3. Demand basic respect and decency

Decency and basic respect are in part subjective.

But they're not *infinitely* subjective, and some basics are more like iron rules.

Some of them might include:

- **Always treat each other respectfully**

  - No yelling
  - No aggression or threats
- **Always treat those you care about respectfully**
  - No disrespecting your family and friends
- **Stable, level-headed, healthy behavior** (99% of the time)
  - No addictions or substance abuse tolerated
  - No damaging property in fits of anger

But may include simpler expectations like:

- **Punctuality**
  - No constant lateness if you demanded punctuality as a sign of respect
- **Following through on promises**
  - No empty talk and reneging

You'll need to grow a feel for what you want, and what you can and cannot tolerate.
Once you know what you won't tolerate, same as above: you stand steadfast and it's either she drops it and vows to never again cross that line, or you'll have to take "important decisions".

Reverse of Basic Respect & Decency: Example

My friend had broken up with his girlfriend.

Then one morning, she showed up at his place still drunk after a night out partying.

She woke him up, he took her in, took good care of her, and took her back.

Sometime later, she hit him.
He felt terrible about it, had his doubts about her… But doubled down on his efforts to make it work.

The same girl complained about my friend meeting me too often, and started so much drama one evening, that he had to cancel our next day's appointment.

I love my friend, but he was being a pushover.

A good asshole instead would have done the following:

- **She wakes him up early morning, he sends her packing**
  - Alternatively, have sex with her, then tell her he has something to work on
- **She hits him, he evens things out and ends it** -not escalating is also an option, but it must be done with strong shaming and 'never dare again' frames
- **She complains he meets his friend too often, he still meets his friend**.

An honorable man's way of approaching it would be:

> The point is not whether I see him too often or not, the point is that I like meeting my friend and I expect my partner to be happy if I do things that make me happy and do not harm us

If she insists and just can't be happy if you have good friends, a good asshole may reply: "maybe I am seeing *you* too often".

4. Cut off those who make you worse off

The image is strong, so keep in mind the general rule: **extreme solutions are for extremely poor behavior**
There is one caveat to "giving and adding value":

The further you grow, the fewer people can truly add value to you.

That's a good thing. And it also means you must not always demand value to include people in your life -or to like them or love them-.
However, there should at least be a *willingness* to support you and add value OR gratitude for all you do.

No willingness to chip in and no gratitude are huge red flags of someone's character.

Remember that "adding VS taking value" are all-encompassing terms that include *everything*, from happiness to wealth, time, energy, and all in between.
It's something most people are naturally aware of.
And still, as obvious as that should be, too many guys, deep in the throngs of emotional attachment, forget to make that natural assessment and ask:

is this person making me better off, or worse off?

If they make you worse off, only a too nice guy would keep being "nice".
A "good asshole" would simply part ways, and that'd be best for all.

Read again the mini case-study above: was my friend's girlfriend making him better off?
Nope, and it showed.
A lot.
My friend was most often upset with her, and rarely happy.

But, at the time of writing, he's still too "nice" to end it.

5. Go for what you want

This is the essence of a good asshole.

Going for what you want is most difficult for nice guys when it means:

- Competing
- Displeasing someone

I'm afraid though that anything worthwhile in life entails competition, as well the displeasure of not always winning those competitions.
The good news, and this might help you shift your mindset, is that:

Competing and winning maximize value creation for everyone.

Drill that into your mind.

The only exceptions are the direct loser(s) of course.
But why should you focus on them?
The net result of competition is still net-positive.

When you refuse to compete because someone might be displeased, you're making the world worse off.
The lower the competition level, the fewer the options and quality for the buyers.
Worst of all is if you could have won. Because it means that whatever the winner does or gets -including women-, he's not gonna provide the best product -or partner-.
So, for you being "too nice", there's going to be one unworthy winner and two losers.

So go out there, and compete.

(Potentially) Her boyfriend is not your concern

This is a potentially grey area of competition:

What if there is already a contract in place -or an official relationship, which is also a form of contract-?

Well, different situations end up at different points on that grey continuum.

However, I think it's entirely possible to make a good argument that, in many circumstances, it's fair for you not to care about her relationship status.
You can read here for more.

After all, if she doesn't deem it worth preserving and respecting… Why should you?

Asshole Archetypes

Assholes don't just overlap (slightly) with high-quality men.

They also overlap with other archetypes of men who can be equally or even more attractive.

Let's review some of them:

1. Honorable With "Asshol-ish Moments"

This isn't even a "sub-type" of asshole.

But it's worth reminding that you can be a high-quality, value-adding man, and still have some "moments" that, if taken on their own, might be labeled "asshol-ish".

Also, **some "asshole moments" during a date or an interaction can increase attraction**.

"Asshole moments" can provide an attractive edge and stave off the risk you may pass for a low power "too nice guy".
These "moments" also provide emotional spikes, jolt her out of torpor, and pierce the unseductive veil of political correctness.

Of course the effectiveness of "asshole moments" is target-dependent.
Some women are too risk-averse and very *un*attracted to asshole, so with them keep "clean".
These women make for good girlfriends, and you will recognize them for being very feminine, often submissive or unassertive, and generally uncomfortable at anything reeking of "asshol-ish".

But some interactions may benefit from "asshole moments".

See Seduction University for examples.

Asshole Sprinkles in Online Dating

The "asshole sprinkling approach" can be useful in online dating.

And especially so if your online dating profile risks looking to "clean".

I recommend the asshole subtypes of "bad boy", "daredevil" or "rebel" that best match your personality.

If you like bikes, for example, something like this is good:

If you're more of a "straight edge" type, then you may opt for this version of that same "motorcycle theme":

A great mix of "socially proper", "classy high-power", with a touch of daredevil

2. Pro-Social Asshole

The "pro-social asshole" directs his aggression toward the "real" anti-social folk.

Example:

A time ago, walking with an ex-girlfriend, I saw junk-food wrapping in the street right in front of a trash bin.

I thought how stupid people could be, trashing their own cities.

So I walked to it, picked it up, and slammed it in the bin as I commented about the “fucking animals” who can’t even put their trash where it belongs.

My girlfriend, with an emphatic sigh, uttered these verbatim words: “oooh, now I love you even more”.

Circumstantial evidence is not great evidence, but it wasn’t a one-off.
More than once I noticed that anger or an attitude of superiority and/or social climbing on takers is attractive.

And, again, it jibes well with the research we’ve seen in the asshole dating analysis.

So if you dislike someone because of the harm he causes to society, let it rip.

Idealogues and Revolutionaries

Ideologues and revolutionaries can be bad but become “good” for fighting a bigger evil.

Ideologues are more intellectual while revolutionaries are more action-oriented.
As per basic power dynamics, they become more attractive with more power, status, and followers.

Che Guevara is one of the most attractive icons of “revolutionary”

Avoid: virtue-signaling, the weak form of pro-social idealogue

Virtue signaling is the risk-free, low-power, and manipulative way to gain some points of “pro-social ass-holishness”.

Virtue signalers seek power by finger-pointing and attacking the supposed -and often made-up- “bad people”.

However, virtue signalers aren’t very attractive because they’re often low power followers.
They can also look phony as they fail to recognize their own dark side, and many people -and women- can see through that fakeness.

3. Bad Boy

The bad boy is one of the best asshole subsets.

He keeps the positive traits of high power, social confidence, and alluring “slight anti-social edge”, but he isn’t necessarily rude, in your face, or irritating.
And he has more latitude for honesty, feelings, and win-win.

If you were to go for bad-boy type on that same “motorbike theme”:

The Rebel

Similar to the bad boy.

The allure of the rebel is in the strength to reject and buck society's rules of "proper conduct".

By not (completely) toeing the line, the rebel sub-communicates he reaches at least a minimum threshold of self-confidence.
And, if successful, that he can thrive while "living by his own rules", which is not something that everyone can say.

Any alternative lifestyle, including artists, are tamer but potentially even more universally attractive versions of rebels (especially if successful, of course).

PRO Tip: rule-breaking, something you may borrow

Rule-breaking can be very effective to seduce women.

See Seduction University for more.

5. Daredevil

Daredevils are high in fearlessness and are the epitome of unneediness, without the nastiness.

Because their thirst for thrills is so high that cannot be squelched by a run-of-the-mill relationship, they pursue their passion far more than they pursue women -or any individual woman-.

Avoid: Posturing Asshole

The posturing asshole is the guy who pretends to be an asshole as a Hail Mary to attention and reactions.

He's often just at his very first (mis)steps towards self-development, but he overdoes it and only becomes more isolated.

“Asshole Phase” For Growth?

You don’t wake up one day and start flying.

Before you soar, you may bounce off the ground a few times.

Similarly, if one starts off too submissive and passive, he may mistakenly overdo the asshole before settling into a calibrated, optimum balance.

I wouldn’t necessarily call that an “asshole phase”, but more of a “recalibration phase”.

Some authors advise pursuing an asshole phase just to learn assertiveness.
I’m not sure and not convinced it’s a necessary step.

But, in some cases, it may help.

Good Asshole Training

Some ideas to train the “good asshole” within you:

- **Tell street solicitors to stop annoying people**
- **Tell street volunteers you hate whatever cause they’re supporting**? WWF No thanks, you eat animals. Unicef? No thanks, you wear a condom for a reason, etc. etc.-
- **Publicly share or say a “truth bomb”**, something you believe but that is provocative or even offensive to some
- **Enjoy and share dark humor**, since many too-good men are out of touch with their dark side are ashamed of even enjoying dark humor
- **Tell a friend or acquaintance to stop complaining and start moving his ass**: which sometimes is exactly what they need to hear
- **Tell a feminist that “all women need a man”**: hold that frame for a minute or so, then say you were joking. BUT add that still a good chunk of feminists are angry and toxic and she should stay away from that
- **Fire annoying customers and tell them why**, ie.: their money isn’t worth the trouble they bring, that no money in the world is worth their poor attitude, or that you don’t like them.
  Example here (she thought, and some readers probably also did, I was an asshole)
- **Leave public negative reviews after bad services**, which actually… Is the most pro-social thing you can do

None of these are “bad asshole” but they start pushing that boundary that nice guys fear is too asshole-like.
And that’s a boundary that sometimes you should be able -and comfortable- crossing.

- **Avoid the “be stupid challenge”**

To increase social confidence some authors recommend exercises such as:

- “negotiate down the price of a coffee”
- “lay down on a busy street”
- “yell in public”

I’m not a fan of that approach.
Acting like an (annoying) retard is a long detour to social confidence.

If you wanna follow that principle, then get all eyes on you and stick out in a unique, less retard way. Say, wear a suit at the low-end club, or dress like a biker at the opera.

SUMMARY

Sometimes strong and fair boundaries, self-defense, or goal-orientation may be confused by some for asshole behavior.

However, **the ability to assert yourself and, when needed, put yourself and your goals first are NOT asshole traits**.
They only *seem* asshole-like to meeker, undriven, low-power, or collectivist virtue signalers who have not come to grips with their own dark side.

In truth, they are important qualities for any man going places -as well non-negotiable traits for any leader taking others to any worthwhile place-.

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where we keep the best and most practical content.

Sexual Power Dynamics: Who Has the Power in Sex and Dating?

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Sexual power

Understanding sexual power dynamics is essential for anyone who wants to date effectively.

We dig into evolutionary biology and psychology research and mix the author's extensive experience to examine how sexual power dynamics influence the relationships between men and women.

These foundations of sexual power dynamics will help you better navigate dating and relationships, defend yourself when needed, and achieve your goals.

Contents

- INTRO
- Women Have Sexual Power
  - The Limits of Women's Sexual Power
- The Evolution of Sexual Pleasure
- Men Have Sexual Pleasure Power
  - Great Sex Is Negotiation Leverage
  - Great sex matters most with high sex drive women
  - The Limits of Male Sexual Power
  - The "Toy Boy Trap": When You're A 1-Trick Sex Pony
- Power and Sex

INTRO

Sexual Power Dynamics refers to the patterns of negotiation leverage over sex and sex-related areas.
It reflects the ways men and women exercise agency over access to sex, the quality of sexual experiences, and the relational outcomes that stem from sexual interactions. These dynamics are shaped by biological factors (such as sexual desire and reproductive strategies), social factors (status, reputation, and scarcity), and individual skill (sexual competence, confidence, and interpersonal influence).

Baumeister's sexual economics theory conceptualizes heterosexual sexual relationships as a market, where:

- **Women are "sellers" of sexual access**, screening sexual partners more carefully
- **Men are "buyers"**, competing for sexual access

We explain the "why" in the overview of the sexual marketplace.
But for our scope here, we start from this basic general premise as a given.

That means that, for most men, there is a gap between how much sex they *want* and how much they *can get*.

In simpler terms: **most men want more sex than they can get**.

This leads to the first major point of sexual power dynamics:

Women Have Sexual Power

Generally speaking:

Women are the gatekeepers of sex, and gatekeepers have power over anyone who "wants in".

In sex, women have one of the -sometimes *the* most- powerful tools of dating.

In social exchange terms, that power is negotiation leverage.
With that leverage, women can field any demand to men.

Obviously, it's only in prostitution that the demand becomes direct and explicit.
But even in indirect and covert terms, that exchange is one of the most important factors of dating power dynamics.

For example, in most "standard dating", in exchange for sex and/or continued sexual access, women often demand initial courtship, investment, support and, possibly, even commitment *before* sex even takes place.

Of course, outside of relationships, women can also get all kinds of other stuff with sex or the promise of sex.
It might not be an exaggeration to say that women can trade sex -or the hint of sex- to get anything else, while men trade anything else for sex.

It might sound crude to put it that way, but it's an important rule of social and sexual dynamics.

Women's sexual power is strongest:

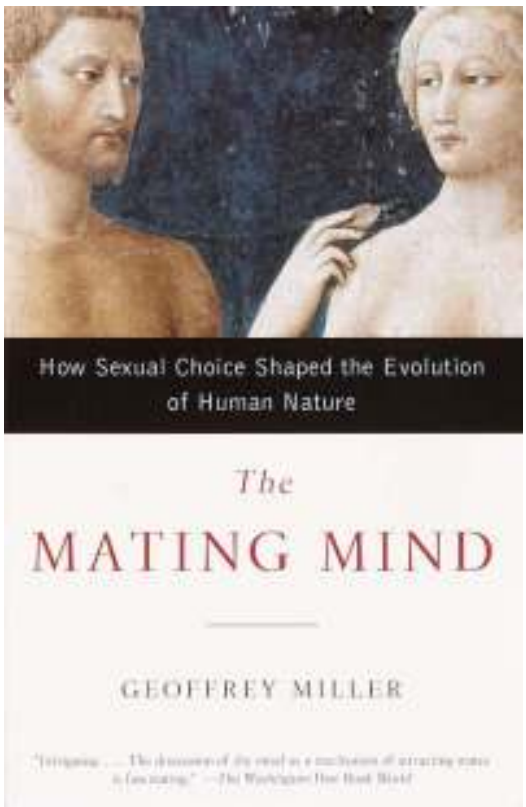
- Before sex
- With men who have limited options
- With men who lust after her, or her particular type of woman

The Limits of Women's Sexual Power

However, there are some important limits to women's sexual power:

1. **Women's sexual power decreases *after* sex** happens the first time, sometimes precipitously. That means that the leverage is highest before sex happens
2. **Women's sexual power matters less during relationships**, because intimacy becomes part of the relationship, and a given. That means that female sexual power is higher during dating
3. **Women's sexual leverage is smaller with men who can easily get sex**, as per simple supply and demand

The Evolution of Sexual Pleasure



Some quick theory now to understand the foundations of sexual dynamics.

While the scholarly debate hasn't settled on female orgasm, Geoffrey Miller proposes an interesting theory.
He suggests that the duration and intensity of copulation in a species is a clue to the power of female choice.
Longer copulation, elusive female orgasms and continuous sexual receptivity allows women to 'test' the best men.

So:

- **Vaginas discriminate**, and helps to select males who are able and willing provide pleasurable foreplay, sustained copulation, and good intensity
- **Penises don't discriminate**: just like men in general, penises are 'easier to sexually please', and ejaculate more easily

The way masturbation works for the two genders is also very telling in this regard.
It took millions of years and much human ingenuity to achieve maximum female pleasure with (relatively) complex mechanical stimulation via vibrators.

And although men can also enjoy inflating dolls and virtual reality, their peak level of pleasure via masturbation is still largely the same. And it's simple to achieve: just a hand away.
Basically, the same since our cavemen's days:

Even in the tech age, a man just needs a hand -or a sock?- to reach the peak amount of sexual pleasure
That's a very important difference when it comes to sex power dynamics.
It means that:

Men Have Sexual Pleasure Power

Female pleasure matters more in sexual dynamics.

Evolutionary theories even suggest that men may have evolved to pursue female pleasure and orgasm.

And this leads us to a conundrum:

Sex empowers women but *quality* of sex empowers men more than women.

Put differently, sexual access is a tool of female power while sexual skills are a tool of male power.
That's the general principle.

Women's sexual pleasure is highly variable ranging from negative, to a lack of peak, to screaming and shaking consecutive pleasure peaks and equally pleasurable valleys
From a strategic point of view, it means that men gain more by improving their sexual skills than women do.
Not saying it's useless for women to be good in bed, but improving one's sexual skills has a much higher ROI for men, than for women.

Great Sex Is Negotiation Leverage

Let's focus on *providing* good sex now.

Providing great sex does afford power.

Whenever you can provide something that others want, that gives you power.

Do you remember when talking about the sexual market place we said that people with an over-abundance of value in one category can allow themselves to give less in another category?

The same concept applies to sex.
Men who provide her with great sex can have women go over to their places without investing much else in the relationship.

Women can also have men come over for sex, of course, and they do it all the time.
Not just going over for sex, but also bringing gifts.
But that's because men want more sex than they can get, and not necessarily because she is particularly skilled in the art of sexual fulfillment.

Most men with a mostly sexual relationship and nothing else on the plate instead need to offer more than just *basic* sex.
All else excluded, they need to offer *great* sex (if we include all else, then one could also offer fun time, healing time, drugs, etc. etc. but we're not discussing that now).

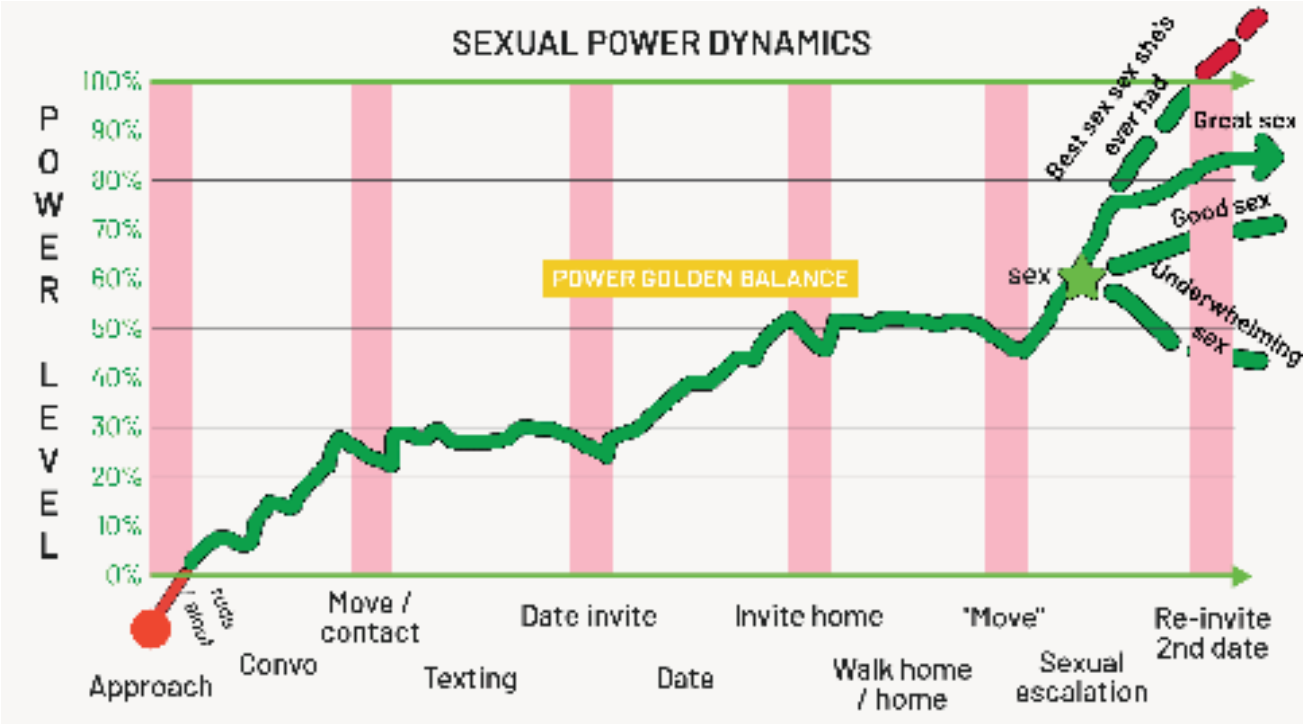
Great sex matters most with high sex drive women

Sexual pleasure affords men most power with:

1. High sex drive woman
2. Orgasmic / libertine woman
3. Several orgasms -in a row-
4. Several sessions of sex with orgasms

In those cases, his value is extremely higher in the "sex" department, and his power shoots up after sex.

In terms of "great sex" VS "OK sex" in our straight-line seduction model:



The perceived quality of first-time sex heavily influences the dating (power) dynamics

In some fringe cases, his power may even get into the red zone.
If the woman is not very confident she may think that she's either not good enough for him, or that he's a guy who is ONLY into sex.
Many of these women often self-reject and do not want to see him again -especially if they're looking for a relationship-.

We'll later have a lesson on how to convert one-time sex (including big bang sex) into regulars and relationships.

The Limits of Male Sexual Power

That being said, there are limitations to men's use of great sex as well.

To begin with:

1. Sex matters little in pre-sex dating (ie.: you can't start with great sex)

Sex comes later.

In terms of social exchange parlance, it's an inner-layer trait, so it's invisible upon first meeting someone (it's "opaque").

And in simple terms: sex skills are not what initially attracts women, it doesn't put your foot in the door.

So, at least in temporal terms, when it comes to partner's attraction, sex takes a backfoot to more visible layers such as status, health, beauty, etc.
This is one of the reasons why so far I've never taken any course on sexual skills. NOT because it's not useful -and NOT necessarily because I wouldn't need :)-.
But because, in terms of pure effectiveness, it's usually better to prioritize external layers and/or to focus on meeting new women.
Same reason why I don't care much about back hair, BTW, they come later, and are rarely deal-breakers.

It's only once the couple gets to sex, that sex also enters the computation of sexual market value.

Sexual Game

It's certainly possible to advertise great sex *before* sex, and use that to *get* to sex.

Men can do it both with direct talk, or with mannerism that exudes sexuality and sexpertise.
See Seduction University for examples.

But then we're not strictly talking about sex anymore.
That's more about self-promotion, as well as advertising comfort around sex.
And of course, it's also possible to fake that since a man may advertise sex as something great for her, and then give two f*cks about following through and make it all about himself instead.

2. Sex Loses Some Leverage Over The Long Term

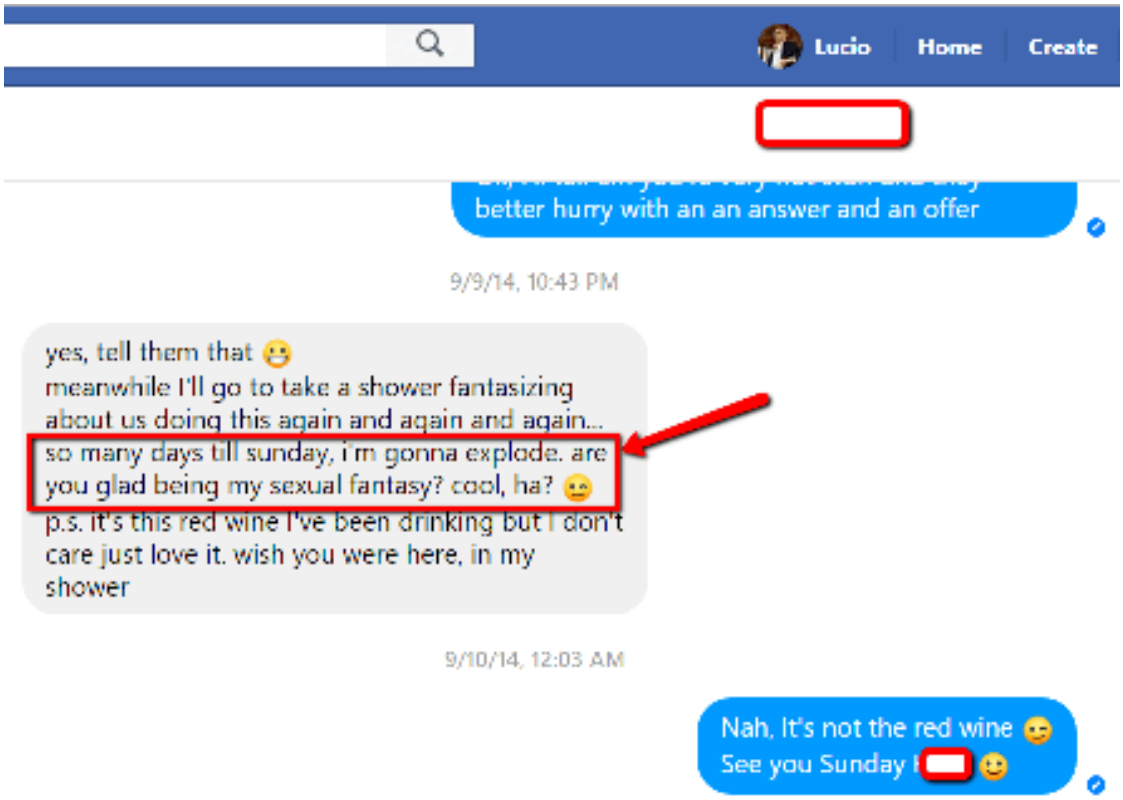
In fresh relationships, sex takes the center stage.

In casual dating in more libertine dating, there isn't even much else aside from sex.

But as the relationship progresses, her needs and wants also change.

Women often start demanding more than just "meeting and having sex".
So the power of sex gets diluted with the other currencies she demands, such as support, loyalty, fathering, etc.

Take this one as an example:



This relationship crashed and burned in spite of that initial off-the-charts chemistry.

She wanted and was adamant on a relationship. I like her a lot but couldn't offer commitment.
And there was no great sex that could have saved it, without eventually committing (albeit it might have been used to prolong it and turn it into a semi-toxic entanglement).

Sex and attraction are also intertwined.
Great sex can be extremely effective in boosting attraction, and heightening her feelings of love and admiration.
But a relationship that turns sour also often negatively impacts sexual pleasure.

In short: it's unlikely a man can keep a woman who seeks a relationship just by providing great sex.
In the long run, more is required.

This is especially true for high-quality women who more easily get men and investment.
They have more dating power, and they more assertively demand what they believe should get.

The "Toy Boy Trap": When You're A 1-Trick Sex Pony

Remember the "lovers & providers" strategy?

The worst type of provider was a provider of a meager income, without much else.
And the worst type of lover is a provider of OK sex, without much else.

The same logic can be extended to great sex providers.
If all a man has got to give are orgasms, then she is the chooser and he is a provider (of sex).
Not a bad position to be in, in many ways.

But if he is clueless about power dynamics, then he becomes a toyboy.
Not much different from a billionaire having sex with a dumb bimbo.
As a matter of fact, bimbos and toyboys are the same roles, for the different genders.

Disempowered As Toy-Boy: Low Prower Provides

I'll give you an example:

I once had a woman who left a girlfriend of hers waiting in the car to show up at my place.

A blonde Russian with a furry coat, she showed up at my door with that coat… And nothing underneath.

Hot.

And as soon as we were done, she left without saying a word, but grinning a big smile.
That smile was not just because of sex, but also because she was high on her feeling of power.

And she wasn't wrong: she came, literally and figuratively, and left.
All on her will and time.

The more a man's value is limited to sex only, the easier it is to replace him with a pleasure-providing tool

Compare: High-Power Makes Others Worried to Provide

Now compare that with the sexual experience with another woman, K.

I went for anal sex with K, but had to stop because it was painful, and we kept doing normal vaginal sex.

Not an issue at all, I'm not into anal and couldn't have cared less.

Once we were done, as we lay in sweat, her resting on top of me, I was enjoying the silence.
Brief silence, though. K. soon raised her head and asked "are you OK?".
I nodded.
Little later she asked again "are you OK that we did not… ".

What was going on there?
K. was worried that *I* was disappointed that *she* could not provide the anal experience.

In which situations does the man have more power?

Of course, the latter.

From a power dynamic perspective, having your partner worry about making *you* happy with good sex is more powerful than you *giving* great sex.

These examples are at different extremes.
As a general rule, we can say that sex is another important piece of the sexual market value.
As a standalone, good sex is not enough to make one an overall high-value mate. But a *lack* of good sex can be a major drawback with mates who want and expect great sex.

Power and Sex

Power, dominance, and sex are interrelated.

For example:

- **Women prefer higher-power men**

- **Men seek power to gain sexual access**, suggest evolutionary theories
- **Testosterone fuels sexual and dominance motives** (Toatest, 2020), suggesting higher power men are more driven to seek sex and dominate in intimate settings

However, there is an important difference here.
Power empowers men far more than it empowers women in most sex-related areas.

Women often prefer men of *higher* status and dominance, which limits the options of lower status men, but increases the negotiation leverage of higher status men.
I'd also suspect that more powerful men, both socially and interpersonally, enjoy higher attraction from women.

On the other hand, for many men, it's the opposite: they prefer submissive women.
Meaning, power and success may be costly to women's dating and sexual power.

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where we keep the best and most practical content.

How to Invite a Girl Over: 5 Smooth Techniques for High-Value Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Inviting a woman to your place can feel like a delicate moment. Do it right, and the evening flows naturally toward connection and intimacy.

In this guide, you'll learn five proven ways to invite her over—smoothly, confidently, and without ever feeling pushy.

The direct home invite is not necessarily "wrong", but it's also not the most effective.

So let's dive in with the most effective approaches:

Contents

- 1. Invite Her After The Last Venue, Nonchalantly
  - Rationale
  - Example
- 2. Invite Her While You Walk Away ("Positive-Pressure Technique")
  - Example:
- 3. Seed During Date, Recall The Seed As A Ruse ("Seed The Pull Technique")
  - Example:
  - Should you seed the pull?
- 4. Drip-Feed The Invite During The Date ("Breadcrumbing Technique")
- 5. Invite Her As You "Happen To Walk" By Your Place ("Surprise Technique")
- 6. Avoid This: Never Explicitly Tell Her, But Walk Her To Your Place ("Shock-Surprise")
  - My personal experience with it
- Don't Over-Sweat The "How"

1. Invite Her After The Last Venue, Nonchalantly

My personal favorite together with #2.

In simple terms, you invite her home after you left the last venue -which is also the *first* venue if you're doing one-venue dates-.

Here's the process.

1. **At your last venue say "shall we go" when you're ready to go and after a high**: a "high" is any positive exchange you had.
   Say it with an intonation that is 30% question and 70% statement. Think of "a question that's not really a question and with one answer only: yes". Leave it at that, don't add any details. See Seduction University for the intonation.
2. **Start walking**: if your place is in the same direction as your destination, start walking
   1. If your place is in the opposite direction, invite on the way out of the venue or right outside the venue (whichever is most natural).
3. **On a high say "hey, do you wanna come over just 5 minutes"** at this stage, lighter topics are better than heavier ones, but go with anything that feels good. Then, on a high, say "hey, do you wanna come over 5 minutes".
   1. If she says "yes", you say "cool", and then keep on talking
   2. If she asks "where", you say something like "I'm staying really near, we can go for a quick drink"
   3. If she says she's not sure, up to you, but it's probably preferable to at least nudge again
   4. If she says "no", you may say "are you sure, I could show you X". If she says "no" again, you say "cool, OK". If she can stay longer, go to another venue as it's best to spend more time together after a no. If she says she must go, you say "cool" and walk her back
4. **Walk towards your place and be ready to carry most of the conversation**

Rationale

Many ways of inviting home can work well.

But I prefer *after* you've left the last venue because in that stage she's not sure what's going to happen, and she's looking for leadership.
And if you had a good time and/or if you displayed good traits, she *wants* to stay longer with you.
It's the perfect situation to invite her, lead and have her *want* to follow.

If you propose it in the first venue instead it becomes a more rational choice.
The vibe while you're sitting is more about mutual assessment, and many women don't want to be known as the girl who says yes on the first date.

Example

For real-life example see SEDUCTION UNIVERSITY

Seduction University here.

2. Invite Her While You Walk Away ("Positive-Pressure Technique")

To make this work you invite her:

1. After the last venue
2. While walking towards your place *and* her transport back home

3. While she's still not sure what you'll do next

This is especially effective when:

1. It's a great date
2. You have a good chemistry
3. It's still early

Why is it good in those cases?
Because all of them are leverage for you and (positive) pressure on her.

When you're close to the metro or to her car all those elements heap up pressure on her because **it's either she goes home early and interrupts the good time or she comes to yours to keep enjoying you and the evening**.

If you're having a good time and she likes and trusts you, the "positive pressure" method ensures she'll pick your place rather than go home
In a way, it's a Machiavellian ploy.
However, it's a victimless Mach ploy -or even a value-adding one-.

So it works like this:

1. **Walk towards the metro stop without saying anything about next plans**
   1. If she asks where you're going you remain non-committal, something like "lemme think of something"
2. **You stop or slow down by the metro**, the sub-communication being "you can either go home now, or join me"
3. **Say "hey, do you wanna come over 5 minutes"**

Alternate versions include not slowing down, keeping your pace, and delivering that line as you approach the metro.

Use momentum & "path of least resistance" with a "more to come" vibe

To execute it well the vibe MUST be that you'll probably spend more time together during that same evening.

Or, at least, it's still not sure what's going to happen.

That's crucial because if she's already made up her mind that she will go home, then your chances plummet.
If her mind is made up to back to hers, coming home with you feels like a big change. All sorts of questions will pop up and, women being risk-averse, chances she'll stick with the pre-planned and safer option.

People in general also tend to go for the path of least resistance, not for the change.
So if the vibe is that "the night is young, we're having a good time and we'll spend more time together", then the momentum when you pop the invite works in your favor.

So this approach won't work well if her car is parked far away, or if the metro is in the middle of nowhere.
If that's the case, then walking away from the city sub-communicates that "the night is ending".
It works great instead if her car or the metro are in the middle of the city and/or nightlife.
And it works even better if you went to some side street for your date and walking back feels like "going back to the city" (another reason why good logistics and living in the center is helpful).

Example:

For real-life example see SEDUCTION UNIVERSITY

Seduction University here.

3. Seed During Date, Recall The Seed As A Ruse ("Seed The Pull Technique")

"Seeding the pull" is a concept of the early pick-up artist movement.

When it comes to inviting a girl home, "seeding the pull" means:

> To open conversational threads about anything noteworthy, good, or interestg that can be had, seen, or enjoyed at your place and to use them later on as ruse to invite her home to enjoy that noteworthy thing

The seed also provides women with "plausible deniability".

Such as, it protects her from feeling slutty because, on paper, she's just coming for that interesting thing you mentioned.

So, in simple terms, this is seed:

1. Say during the date you got something interesting at your place
2. When the date is nearing the end, invite her to see that interesting thing

So if the man in the picture above seeded his wine cellar, he would recall that information when it's time to invite the girl home.
And he would say something like "hey, wanna come over and check the wine collection"?

Example:

An example of the second part of the seeding technique:

> **Capote**: wanna come back to my place and see the Ross Bleckner?

Capote Duncan most likely talked about his Ross Bleckner painting at home and, if it went particularly well, she said she love Bleckner's work.
Then, when the date is ending, instead of saying "do you want to come back to my place", he invites her to "see the Ross Bleckner".

The ruse provides her with plausible deniability and helps to "erase" the association between going to his place, having sex, and "being too easy".

Should you seed the pull?

Yes, it certainly won't hurt and it often helps.

I don't consider it a must and if you execute #1 and #2 well it won't hurt you to omit it.

Still, if you wanna be even more on the safer side, seed it.
Remember the rule though:

1. **Make it natural**
2. **Seed something true** -no puppy you don't have or skyline cityview at the first floor-
3. **Keep it simple and short**, don't overdo it
4. Ideally, tailor the seed to something she likes

PRO Tip: Tailor The Seed

The best ways to seed anything is to follow the golden rule of "what's in it for her" and tailor it.

So from the example from the initial picture, the man wouldn't necessarily volunteer that he has a cellar home, but he would try to find something about his place that appeals to her tastes.
And if the topic of wine comes up and she says she loves wine, THEN he'd jump on that occasion because it's tailored:

Tailoring the seed to her tastes is what makes the invite home work

4. Drip-Feed The Invite During The Date ("Breadcrumbing Technique")

The breadcrumbing technique consists of dropping various hints of pull during the date.

The hints can be in various forms, ranging from questions, to statements, to screens.
Whatever you use, the goal is to reach the final invite that it feels not like a big step, but like a foregone conclusion.

Todd uses and teaches this technique.
Here's an example:

> **Todd:** Are you innately a trusting or distrusting person
> **Her**: I would say trusting (…) I would hope so
> **Todd:** are you a trustworthy person
> **Her**: yes

Todd is screening and checking how open she is to going back with him.
And he very indirectly suggests a pull home with the "trusting" topic -a common thought for women when it comes to going back to a man's place-.

And he makes it more obvious right after:

> **Todd:** so at some point, not right now, maybe later this evening or in the future I felt as I wanted to open up like and like tell you about myself, you'd be a worthy recipient of such information and trustworthy..
> **Her**: lock it in

Dragging Out The Words

Besides spreading the invite over the date, you can also drag out the *words* by talking…. Slowly… As If… There Were…. Suspension Marks…

Why would you do that?

By dragging out the words and remaining vague you can read and analyze her reaction *before* you finish and commit to the invite.
The goal is to complete the invite *only* if you are sure you'll get a yes. If you spot reticence instead you haven't fully committed to the invite and you can still either drop it, change topic, or deny it was even an invite -you know, she was getting those "strange ideas" about things you weren't even thinking about it-.
Ultimately, the goal is to forestall the risk of a "no" and avoid losing power.

Notice how Todd speaks in the video:

> **Todd**: there is one place I'd take you but it's like…
> (long pause)
> I want to know you…
> (pause)
> better first… Kind of

Todd is hoping that she will jump in to fill the pauses and either sdk more about this place, or reveal her willingness to go.
Which happens a little later:

> **Todd**: that's the way, like… I was actually as surprised… I was surprised to find it's like…
> **Her**: where is it
> **Todd:** it's close, but… How do I know I can trust you. How do I know that you won't like… You know… Steal my kidneys and you know… Sell them on the black market on something

Now Todd hopes she will volunteer reasons why she's trustworthy enough to go with him -ie.: that she will qualify to him-.
A clever and high-power approach, if she qualifies.
Issue is… Many women have some basic power awareness and few will jump in. Only the ones who are either chasing hard, hyper-sold, or clueless will do it. And those, you can probably invite anyway without dragging it out.

The other issue is that you can sound gamey and tentative, and you don't generally want to come across gamey and tentative.

5. Invite Her As You "Happen To Walk" By Your Place ("Surprise Technique")

Geographically, with the "surprise technique" you deliver the invite rather in front of your place.

1. Keep your next steps vague
2. Walk by your place
3. Say something like "I live here"
4. Give a reason to go up

The reason to go up can be a previous seed, to "show something", or simply to "show her the place".
A high-dominance approach is to say that "you want to go up".

This technique is a step closer to the “trick approach” we discourage below, so it’s not my favorite.

However, it’s not a trick because you haven’t lied about the destination and haven’t misled her.
Plus, she knows where she’s going before walking in.
And finally, one of the few guys I can vouch for after having seen him in action uses this approach, and it works great for him.

So if you like it, feel free to go for this one or at least try it out.

6. Avoid This: Never Explicitly Tell Her, But Walk Her To Your Place (“Shock-Surprise”)

Let me say this first:

Yes, there *are* ways to never make the invite explicit and make it work.
For example, if you say “let’s go watch a movie”, you don’t necessarily need to add “to my place” as that can be implied.

However, **the less explicit you are, the easier it is to be misunderstood and deliver a jolting, negative “shock surprise”** (plus, the way some dating coaches teach it *is* a manipulative trick).
And if she misunderstood, even if she liked you, you risk losing a lot of points.

This is exactly the shock surprise you want to avoid:

That is exactly the type of “surprise” that you want to avoid
The other issue with the trick approach is that it’s either she comes in, or the odds of a second date drop to close to zero.

With the other methods, a “no” is not necessarily the end of it.

Whenever she says “no” you can either go to another venue, or cooly reply “OK great, I’ll walk you to the metro then”.
And you can still come across as a high-value, high-quality man.

With the “trick surprise” instead you’ll come across as a sneaky trickster, and that’s quite low value.

My personal experience with it

Albeit I never liked the “take her to your place without ever mentioning your place” approach, I do have experience with it.

I tried it a couple of times and I did it a few times more out of mistake (I wasn’t direct enough and she misunderstood).

A few times it semi-worked in the sense that she did come up.
But my intuition told me it would have worked the same -or better- if I had been clearer from the start.
But I clearly remember two instances where she went straight away to the balcony. When she beelines for the balcony it’s because you’re too low warmth, and she doesn’t trust being at home in a closed space with you.

And that makes sense: why should she trust someone who got her home with a sneaky trick?

I clearly remember two total failures as well.

Once she refused to come up because she thought we were going to another venue.
And my insistence was the final nail in the coffin.

I then gave it a couple more tries, and finally decided I was done with this approach. It was not only sleazy as f*ck, but also not very effective.
The craziest thing?
When I reported it on the forum to the (many) who supported the approach, they still insisted that defending the lie was the way to go.
They said that I had done it right almost until the end, and it failed because I was supposed to insist more saying that the “the bar” was right upstairs”.

Albeit I totally agree that it may work, it seems to clear to me that it doesn’t work equally well across the board, and with every type of personality.
And I had to wonder what wretched idiots those guys were bringing home.

As an aside, that was when I also started growing a bit wary of the various PUA communities.

Don’t Over-Sweat The “How”

Generally speaking, how you invite her home is important.

Everything is important, of course, and the inviting home is one of the crucial dating transitions.

Still, the date itself and how you come across generally matters more than the actual invite.
So focus more on how you act, talk, and lead during the date, than on executing a flawless invite home.

Purposefully, I tried an experiment with a date that I didn’t enjoy too much and wasn’t concerned about “ruining it”.
And what I did is that I invited her home in the worst way I could and see if it might still work.

Listen up for yourself:

SEDUCTION UNIVERSITY only

> **Me**: (outside the venue, point blank, no smoothing around the edges) do you want to come?
> **Her**: where?
> **Me**: to the hotel
> **Her**: where?
> **Me**: to the hotel

> **Her**: hmmmm but now… OK

That is not an invitation or excuse to be sloppy, of course.
But it's to put things in perspective: do your best, and do your best to make your invite home as smooth as possible as well.
But perfection is often not required.

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where we keep the best and most practical content.

Sexual Escalation: How to Smoothly Escalate to Sex

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Sexual escalations are one of the key transition phases of any seduction.

And it's one of the toughest ones to learn.

In this article, we are going to learn exactly how to sexually escalate with women and get to sex, with proven and tested strategies.

Contents

- INTRO
  - Sexual Escalations Power Dynamics
- 1. Start When She's Ready
  - ⍰ Mindset: Think Of Your Place As A Seduction Alcove
  - ⍰ How To Gauge Her Readiness Before The Move
- 2. Start Small (Baby-Stepping Approach)
  - ⍰Example: Baby-Stepping With a Shisha
  - ⍰ Tips For Baby-Stepping Escalation
- 3. Move Forward Steadily But Safely (Tidal Wave Approach)
  - ⍰Principles of Tidal Escalation
  - ⍰ Example: Tidal Escalation Process (+ Calibration)
  - ⍰ Example: Real-Life Tidal Escalation
  - ⍰ Tips for Maximum Effectiveness
- ⍰ Sexual Escalation Mindsets
  - It's A Mating Dance, You Both Play It

INTRO

This is the issue that stumps most guys:

You seldom get a total green light from a woman when you make your “first move”.
Many times instead, you get a lukewarm reaction, or even a rejection.

And how you handle those “less than total green lights” makes the difference between successful seductions, and failed ones.

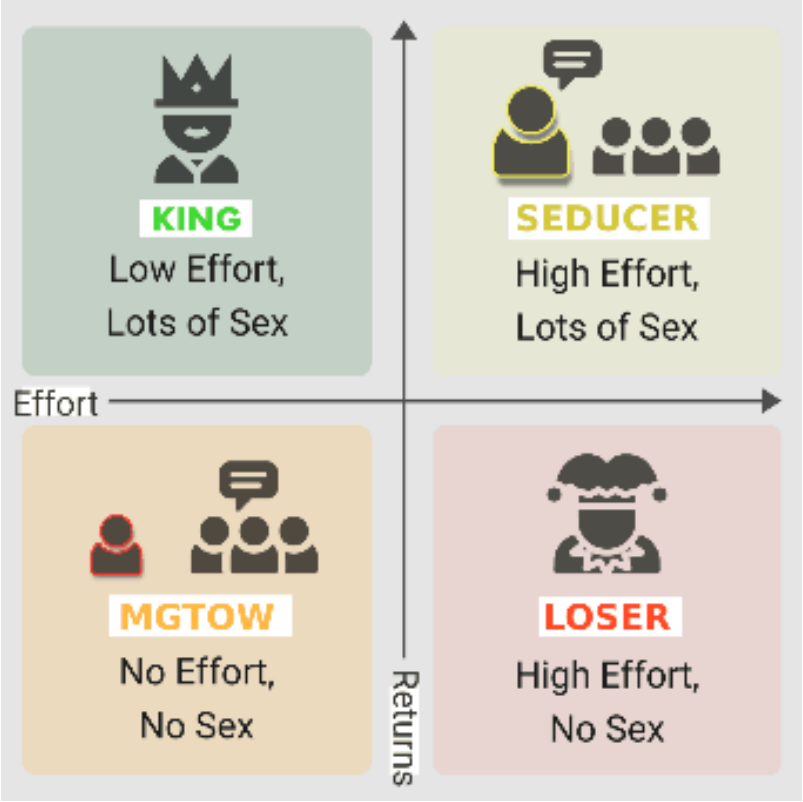
Let’s dig deeper:

Sexual Escalations Power Dynamics

The power dynamics principle of sexual escalation is:

⚖ **The more you get rejected, the more power and attraction you lose**

This is a basic corollary of the Social Investment Model:



The more you pursue sex without getting sex, the more disempowered you are.
The more smoothly you get to sex, the high-power you are.

Avoiding the “low-power” quadrant

Rejections are particularly harmful when they’re strong, closely spaced, and poorly handled.

For example, men who try incessantly without moving forward expend lots of effort without results. And men who get emotionally affected “thread-expand” those rejections and spoil the mood.

In both cases, the frame of you (unsuccessfully) chasing and she refusing becomes stronger.
And the stronger that frame becomes, the more power and attraction you lose.

That also applies to “token resistance” from women who otherwise like you.

So, how do you properly escalate to sex?

This is how:

1. Start When She's Ready

So simple, yet so foundational.

Prevention beats cure.

When you start too early, you're almost bound to get (strong) rejections.
Starting too early can derail seductions even with women who liked you, but needed a bit more time.

Correct prevention hinges on:

1. **Calibration** by reading the signs of her "readiness"
2. **Mindset** of a seducer rather than a notch-collector

⍰ Mindset: Think Of Your Place As A Seduction Alcove

Some men equate their place with quick sex (I was one of them).

That mindset frames any resistance or delays, no matter how reasonable and genuine, as "games" and "unneeded waste of time".
Albeit this mindset can lead to fast intimacy, it also makes you less effective with women who simply need some more time and comfort.

Better than to view your place as "another step along the way of seduction", a "place to savor and deepen your intimacy" (in the larger sense of "growing closer").

Some practical steps:

1. **Develop rapport** during the date
2. **At home, initially, focus on her comfort**: many women are wary of entering a new space alone with you.
   To smoothen that transition and help her acclimatize:
   1. Show her your place: a quick tour makes the new place feel "known" and safer
   2. Spend some time in "intermediate locations": a rooftop, the pool, or simply the kitchen in your house
   3. Sit on the couch: If she's not ready for the bed, sit on the couch with a drink, a laptop for music, or a TV
3. **Verbalize that she's safe**: If you spot fear, verbalize it. Say "you're safe here, OK?" or "that's the door, we can go whenever we want".
4. **Frame sex with you as her win**: for example, the chance of growing closer, starting something serious, or the pleasure side of it ("sexual prizing")
5. **Make her horny**: rather than "getting sex", focus on making her *want it*

> Best Songs For Romance & Make Her Fall In Love

⍰ How To Gauge Her Readiness Before The Move

Here's what to look for:

- **How quickly she undresses**

Women can use clothes as barriers.

If she keeps her coat and shoes, she might not yet be fully comfortable.

Conversely, when I see a woman who's down to her sundress… I know that she's comfortable and probably good to go (I make my move then and rarely have any resistance).

- **How comfortably she moves around your place**

Women who walk around and touch things are often excited.
Make a move building on that excitement, and things often move fast.

- **How much she talks** (compared to her baseline behavior)

Talking communicates either comfort, or an effort to reduce internal tension.

Both are good signs.
Make your move.

- **Her behavior when first sitting down**

For example:

Does she place something on her, between you two (including empty space), or pulls her skirt down?
Those are attempts to have barriers between you two.

2. Start Small (Baby-Stepping Approach)

You can think of "big move" VS "baby steps" similar to "direct VS indirect approach".

Direct approach is ballsy and if it goes well, you're flying.
But indirect maintains your power in more situations.
And when you're not sure, it's better to maintain more power.

Same for escalation: if you're not sure, start with a "smaller move".
If it won't well, smaller move equals smaller rejection. So it won't hurt you as much. And you can more easily and smoothly minimize it and move on.

Finally, baby steps also allow you to *test* her buying temperature, rather than just observing.

⍰Example: Baby-Stepping With a Shisha

A guy I know has a shisha home.

He uses it both as a “seed” to invite girls home, and as a prop for baby-stepping.

He takes a drag himself, looks at her as he exhales, and says “smell the scent”.
Then he blows shisha smoke from mouth to mouth with his hand in between. Then removes the hand and goes for the mouth-to-mouth smoke, then makes out, and then takes it from there.

⍰ Tips For Baby-Stepping Escalation

Here’s how to use baby-stepping for both escalation and “gauging temperature”:

- **Increase touching, see how she reacts**

Start light, and see how she reacts.

If at home, wrap your arm around her, see how she reacts.

If she pulls away or is uncomfortable, bad sign.
If she appreciates, good sign.

Touching you back, or just touching you in general, is often a great signal

- **Get up to do something, go back sitting closer, see how she reacts**

Get up for something (glass of water, restroom, or getting something).

Then sit closer to her when you're back.
See how she reacts.
If she stays, make your move a little later.
If she pulls away, spend some more time.

- **Use in-between places for the first move–gauging**

In-between places are places between your date and your place.

They're great because women feel safer, and have lower in-built resistance.

For example, if you got an elevator, lean in and kiss her neck in the elevator.

As soon as you kiss the neck, pull away so she knows you're still "normal".

If she stands still, it's a good sign. If she caresses your or gets closer, you can start escalating as soon as you're home.

If she resists a little bit, make her more comfortable before you start escalating.

From my experience, a girl is more likely to well-receive your first move in an elevator, than at home.

- **Baby-step escalation, but pull back first** (teasing)

Move closer to her face, or run your hand on her thigh… But pull back first.

Do it a few times, then go all the way.

Tip: If You're Starting Out, Escalate Sooner Rather Than Later

If you're afraid of making the move, then learning is higher priority.

In that case, make your move early.

As a matter of fact, give yourself a timer: make your move within 10 minutes.

3. Move Forward Steadily But Safely (Tidal Wave Approach)

Tidal escalation means to forge ahead in baby steps, slow but steady.

Neither baby-stepping nor tidals are my favorite approaches.

But they're our #1 method for sexual escalation because they're effective.

When a woman is hot and ready, you can take her hand and move (almost) anywhere for intimacy.
The thing is: tidal escalation ALSO works with those women.
Just a little less fast and maybe less power. But you still get there.

Where this approach makes the difference is with women who are on the fence, potentially warming up to you, but need some more time.
You lose many of those women if you go too fast or too dominant.
But you can get together with a large number of them with the tidal wave.
And that includes a lot of shier, more girlfriend-material types of women.

The tidal wave is the perfect analogy to move forward, but without big jolts that can derail the seduction or spoil the mood.

Early pick-up artists talked about "2 steps forward, 1 step back".
It means that you make your move not to go all the way at once, but simply to advance.

In a perfect tidal escalation **you want to pull back before she resists and rejects you**.
Then, when you re-initiate, you go further than before, without ever prompting her to stop you.
Rejections are fine, but still… Getting intimate without ever being rejected is a good "ideal goal" to aim to (and might as well be the "ideal seduction").

?Principles of Tidal Escalation

You want to:

1. **Strike when she's ready**
2. **Start with baby step**: small move, rather than huge ones
3. **Minimize rejections**: how significant or insignificant rejections are, in good part, depends on you and how you react:
   1. Think and believe nothing major happened: and congruent action will follow
   2. Act like nothing happened: keep on doing whatever you were doing normally
   3. Talk a bit right after: it sub-communicates that you're unfazed
   4. Complete the move: this is more advanced and you must be careful with it. Ensure she wants you first, and details in our courses
4. **Stop soon after a rejection**: not always *immediately* after or it might seem like she's dictating the tempo. But soon after she stops you, stop. That way, rejections remain smaller and mostly inconsequential
5. **Take breaks between rejections**: to avoid the "lots of effort / no result" low-power quadrant
6. **Rebuild power in-between your advances** (and, often, rebuild comfort as well): you lose some power after she stops you, so take breaks to rebuild power and comfort
7. **Keep effort balanced**: remember the basics of dating power dynamics. To keep it balanced, make her contribute. Tell her to sit close, to go get a glass, to pick a song, etc.

> The 5 Basic Principles of Dating Power Dynamics

⍰ Example: Tidal Escalation Process (+ Calibration)

What I used to do in Berlin was to:

1. **Enter the house, say something about it**: what you like, why it's messy, why it's so clean… Simple stuff to get you talking
2. **Shoes out in the entrance**
3. **Take her coat/offer a water**
4. **Show her the place**
5. **Go to the kitchen**
6. **Show the lights**

   Gauge her reaction: a woman raptly listening is accepting his power
7. **Introduce the "surprise" of the Bluetooth speaker in the lamp***

   Gauge her reaction: lots of "wow" often hide sexual excitement rather than tech excitement
8. **Play something with my phone**

   Gauge her reaction: IF she gets close, then:
9. **Take her hand and move her towards me**

   Gauge her reaction: IF she embraces me or stays, then:
10. **Take her hand and move to the bedroom**
11. **Kiss her neck again there**: if accepts, start making out

    Gauge her reaction: if she accept but doesn't want to make out, grope each other and if she participates, move to the bed. If you're making out, make out a few seconds and then move to the bed.
    If she's still stand-offish, move to the couch.

This escalation process is effective because it self-calibrates to move at the right speed.
Resistances are smaller resistances to smaller steps, so they never frame me as over-chasing, never spoil the mood, and never derail seductions.

*You can swap "lights" and "speaker" for whatever you have, albeit I do recommend a phone-handled controller so that she can get close to you.

⍰ PRO Tip: Look & ask for participation

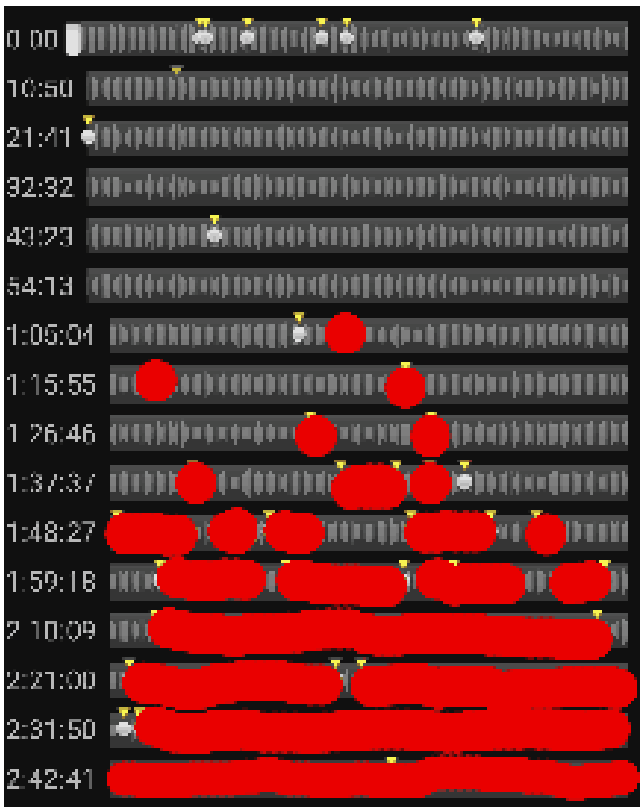
Better than *reacting* is *participating*.

When the woman participates, for example, hugs you back, that's a far stronger signal than just "not moving away".

As mentioned already, we advise that you even ask for her participation.
For example: tell her to switch on the lamps, take the glasses, open the bottle, or pick a song.

⍰ Example: Real-Life Tidal Escalation

First, a pictorial image:



In red are physical escalation or semi-physical escalation (such as telling her to sit closer and then putting an arm around her).

This was a “first date at home” arrangement.
And, generally speaking, first dates at home tend to be tidal waves (and it’s best to approach them as tidal waves).

Notice that it’s a full 1 hour 10 minutes before I make a move.
And it’s another hour before I make the “final move” of moving to the bed.
It was probably over-conservative and an earlier move would have been totally fine -or even better-.
But as long as it’s not *so* long that the mood and chemistry fizzle out, you’re good.

The full case study is in:

Case Study in Seduction University

As the escalation gets more intimate, the talking time is not only briefer, but also with a lower tonality.

⍰ Tips for Maximum Effectiveness

Further tips:

1. When things heat up, increase passion

The more things heat up, the more passionate you want to become.
When it’s “on” you can then go for full intimacy.

Signs that it’s “on”:

- She’s comfortable with her hands on you (possibly on your penis)
- She enjoys making out
- You’re groping her (possibly with intimate touches)

90% of the women at this point should be good to go.

For the most conservative, still the same: stop and chill for a bit.
Then re-initiate.

You then move to the bed when:

- She's kissing you passionately
- She enjoys intimate contact and/or moves with you when "dry humping"
- Her hands are on you and/or seek your dick

And the ultimate sign:

- She starts panting and moaning

2. Kiss The Neck, Not The Mouth

The kiss on the mouth feels like a "big move".

That increases the odds of rejection, and it's a big deal rejection -she does not want to kiss you-.
Bad for power dynamics, bad for attraction, and only leads to more resistance down the road.

So kiss her on the neck instead.
Feels like a "smaller" move, allows you to better gauge her reaction, and has higher chances of being accepted.

Also, if you're moving quickly and/or going for the lover strategy, you don't need to kiss at all.

3. Be More Sexual On The Date If You Only Have a Bed At Home

Generally speaking, we don't recommend kissing on the date.

But there are exceptions.

If your place only has a bed or ugly single chairs, it might be a good idea to escalate more before going back home.

That is because the jump from "date" to "sex location" is huge when she enters a new unfamiliar place and a bed is all there is.
Sitting at the bedside might work, but the odds that she will balk, refuse to enter, or want to leave ASAP are just higher.

So if you can't baby-step *at* home, start the sexual escalation *before* you go in.

⍰ Sexual Escalation Mindsets

Some solid sexual escalation mindsets:

- **I like her, and as long as we're here, I will escalate. She can refuse or leave at any time**
- **I like her and will do my best to make us intimate** (if it doesn't happen, I may not like it, but it's cool)
- **My job is to make intimacy good for both. She has the right to refuse** (and I may not like that, but will always respect it)
- **Token resistances are part of the dance and sharpen the appetite**

Sometimes you can even verbally state those mindsets.
They're very eagle-like, so they'll often give you points.

And once again:

It's A Mating Dance, You Both Play It

Remember this:

Playing coy is often part and parcel of the mating process.

Some women may put up token resistance during sexual escalation even *when they're making the moves themselves*.

Once a woman sat on top of me –*she* did that- and pushed her bra down –*she* did that- for me to kiss her breast.
All the while she kept saying "no, Lucio, no" (for women reading here: avoid doing that).
And then more last-minute resistance (LMR) when we moved the bed.

This is a classic example of 'Token Resistance' where a woman's physical desire is in conflict with social conditioning or 'Anti-Slut Defense.' While she verbally says 'no,' her actions are inviting the lead. Navigating this requires calibration to ensure you are following her physical green lights while being a 'calm harbor' for her verbal hesitation.

The goal is to avoid seduction-damaging rejections and endless last-minute resistances, but the goal is not to avoid rejections or LMR altogether, at all costs.

Best of all, is to enjoy them.
As Casanova said:

> *A little resistance sharpens the appetite.*
> *When favor is granted with too much ease it loses a great deal of its charm.*

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you find the most practical strategies and examples

The Four Agreements: OK Self-Help, Packaged For Naive Readership (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Four Agreements (1997) is a spiritual book in which author Don Miguel Ruiz teaches to overcome societal indoctrination to reach true happiness and self-fulfillment.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: Some Good Mindsets, With Pop Psychology & Marketing For the Masses. While some principles are valid, the "Ancient Wisdom" marketing frame falls flat for critical thinkers and ambitious men. Generic 'agreements' won't cut it to achieve mental empowerment and goals without calibration, skills, and personal power.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Domestication Makes You Fearful & Judgmental
  - 1. Be Impeccable With Your Word
  - 2. Do Not Take Anything Personally
  - 3. Do Not Make Assumptions
  - 4. Always Do Your Best
  - 5. Breaking Old Agreements
- CONS
- Is Don Miguel Ruiz Legit?
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Don't take things personally: they'll never become true and they'll never be your problem
- Always (and only) do your best. No regrets, no self-abuse. Focus on the path and enjoy it.
- Repeat the new empowering agreements day by day and you'll soon get there

Summary

About the Author:
Miguel Ruiz is a Mexican expert and author of Toltec and neo-shamanic texts.
Here are the four agreements in short:

1. Be impeccable with your word
2. Don't take anything personally
3. Don't make assumptions
4. Always do your best

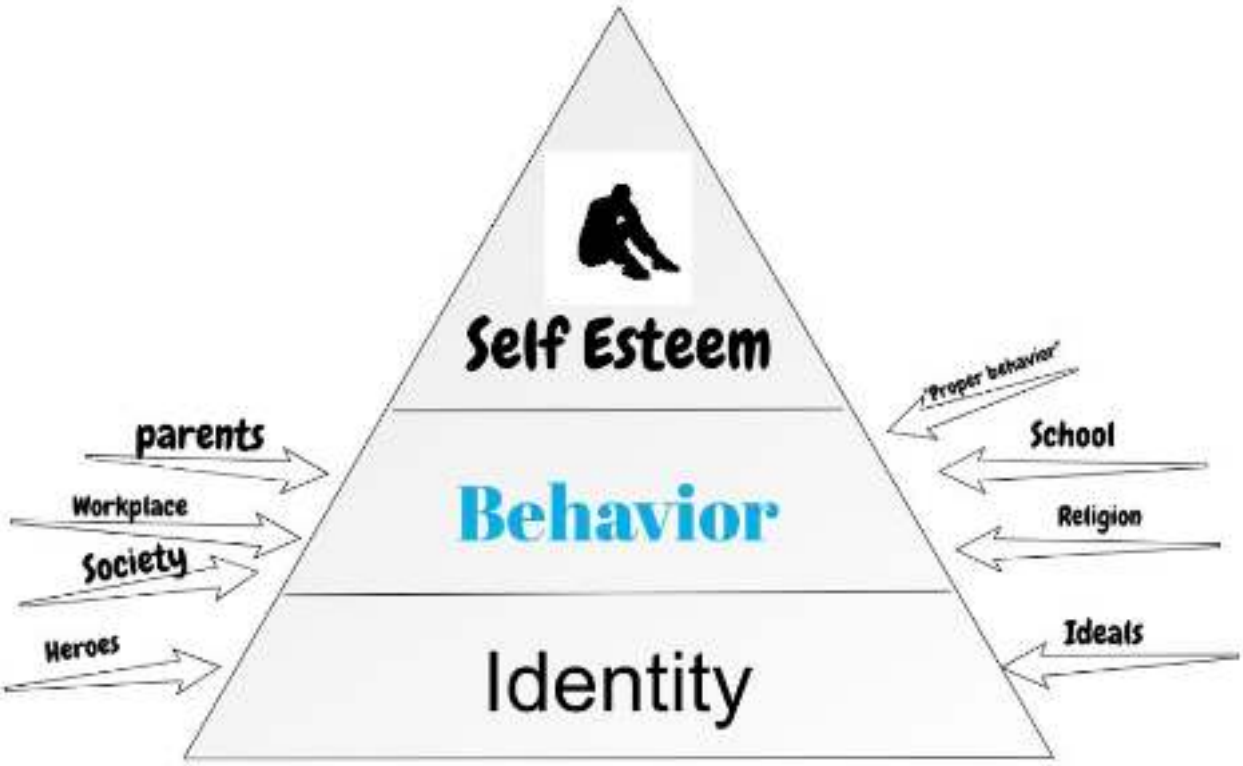
Domestication Makes You Fearful & Judgmental

Ruiz says the outside world teaches us how to live.

And not necessarily in a good way.
We are told what's acceptable, what's not acceptable and… We are taught to judge.

The author says society teaches us all the rules through operant conditioning. You will get a punishment when you will be bad and flaunt the rules and you will get a reward when you obey.

And with both punishment and rewards, **we learn to wear a mask to please others**.



The author says our biggest fear is not death, it's being alive in the most powerful sense of the word: being and showing our real selves.

Ruiz says that to find the personal joy you have to break all those society-imposed, fear-based agreements that are currently tying you down.
And he proposes four agreements that will help you do just that.

TPM Note: The External World Matters to Achieve Goals
While what Ruiz says is partly true, the reason why people care about what others think is because of evolutionary forces: other people matter to us. Achieving acceptance first and **status** second matters to a man's mental health and

success, and it largely depends on how we function with others. We embrace the idea of 'soaring higher' than mere acceptance here, but we propose to do it strategically. Strategically adapt to influence others when it matters, and 'do you' once you are powerful and self-sufficient.

1. Be Impeccable With Your Word

Ruiz says your word is the power coming directly from God.

Impeccable comes from Latin and means you **don't use your words to speak ill of yourself or others.**

It must go both ways: both outwardly and inwardly.
You must stop entertaining negative thoughts about yourself –Albert Ellis recommends you screen out negative thoughts-.
And you must equally stop spreading bad gossip about others.

Albeit he doesn't call it "karma", the author basically describes karma when he says that, in life, you get back what you put out.

TPM Note: Words are power tools, use them to achieve your goals
Machiavelli said it best: a good person is ruined among the many who are not good. Don't be naive. Be honorable, but speak with power and when necessary, a calibrated power move can be useful against manipulators.

2. Do Not Take Anything Personally

During our domestication we learn to take everything personally, says Ruiz.

Everything is about "me, me, me".
Instead, he proposes that **we must learn to become less reactive and more detached**.

Because what others say is not a reality, it's a projection of who *they* are, says Ruiz.
And if it hurts you, it's not them who hurt you, it's you who has a wound.

When you take it personally, you are admitting you believe in it.
Only when you take it personally it becomes true. When you take something personally you "take ownership" of that thought and at that point, it does become yours.

> Comments are a reflection of the commentator's reality, not yours

TPM Note: "Emotional Detachment vs. Strategic Response."
You don't let the comment hurt your feelings (internal), but you **must** handle the social challenge (external) to maintain your frame.

3. Do Not Make Assumptions

Ruiz says we make assumptions when we believe we know what others are thinking.

But we don't and we only project our own beliefs onto others.
Unluckily we have a tendency to make assumptions on the negative side though.
We often jump to negative conclusions because we are afraid of a negative judgment, so it's our way to "hit first" and shield our ego from the pain of rejection.

This often leads to useless arguments that needn't need to happen in the first place -as Crucial Conversations also acknowledges-. **Stop assuming you know and ask instead**.

And even when you're of different opinions, similar to Dale Carnegie, the author also recommends you avoid arguing to be right and respect other people's point of view instead.

TPM Note: Evolution designed us to make assumptions for survival. **Valid assumptions beat naive openness.** A

And as for everything, remember the law of optimum balance:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

4. Always Do Your Best

This is my very favorite agreement and it can be a very empowering mindset for ambitious men.

Ruiz says doing your best, *regardless of quality*, is the only thing you must ask of yourself.

You only ask of yourself to do your best given the conditions of the environment and of yourself.
That means that, in some conditions, your best might very poor. Or very poor even compared to your previous actions.
And that's great because you don't demand success or perfection.

Doing your best also delinks the action from the reward. It means that you come to enjoy the action without expecting any external prize.
And that's when you reach full outcome independence.
When you demand your best with full outcome independence, you will also avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

The Fourth Agreement allows you to practice and make all the other agreements become a habit.

> Enjoy the path and the destination will take care of itself

5. Breaking Old Agreements

Ruiz says that to break old agreements holding us back we have a few options:

- Attack the fears one by one
- Stop feeding the fear by stopping to feel the emotion
- Symbolical death to kill the parasite within us
- Do it "even if"

The example for the latter is the parents who told a girl she was a bad singer. She would then tell herself: "fine. I will sing anyway".

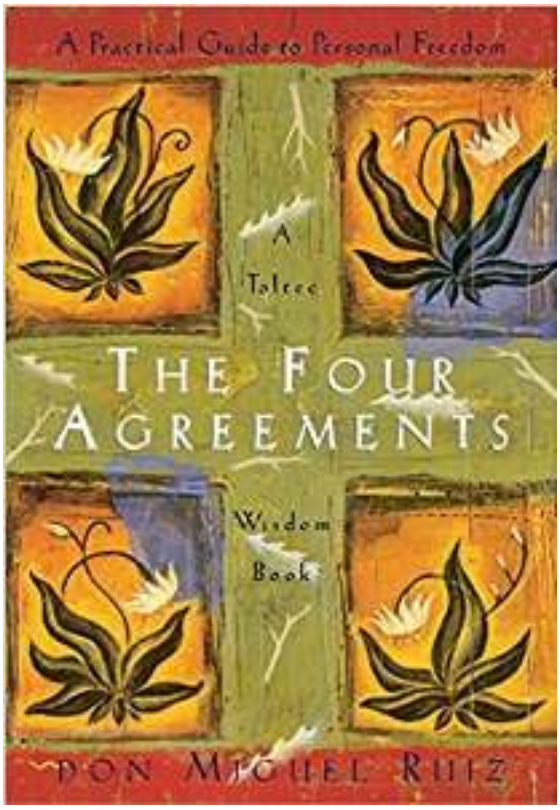
The Angels of Death: Accept Mortality to Enjoy Life

The author says death teaches us how to live.

Imagine you had one week to live. Wouldn't you want to live life the way you wanted it? No more would you live to appease others, afraid of what they might think.

We agree with this, also read:

- Leveraging death to live better
- Leverage your dark side for motivation



CONS

The Four Agreements at times crosses into naive self-help.
I highly recommend you read this article:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

- **"Don't Make Assumption" Means Little**

While "do your best" can be powerful, "Don't Make Assumptions" is meaningless.
We all need assumptions to live, and assumptions are only wrong if taken to an extreme, and if they are wrong assumptions.

- **Say What You Mean Or Avoid Speaking Against Others?**

In "be impeccable with your word" the author recommends both being true to yourself and not saying anything mean.

But the two can be antithetical.

Sometimes being frank and honest -being yourself- can mean saying something bad about someone.

- **Indoctrination is Overblown: nature and genes do matter**

The author blames "society's indoctrination" on several crucial issues.
I disagree and I strongly doubt it's all because of culture as Ruiz implies (also read "The Blank Slate").

Is Don Miguel Ruiz Legit?

I'll be frank, as it's my usual style, and I will not mince words.

And no, I don't think Don Miguel Ruiz is a legit author because he shows no evidence, and because I have seen no unique insights.

I believe this "Toltec wisdom" angle is woo-woo marketing concocted to sell.

It leverages the human's tendency to associate "ancient wisdom" with "mystical" and "eternal truth".
Basically, so-called "non-religious" people seek their religious fix in "ancient wisdom" instead of using God's church.

That being said, the actual message, no matter whether it comes from the Aztecs or from the author, is not BS in itself.
As a matter of fact, some of the content is both solid and deep.

Review

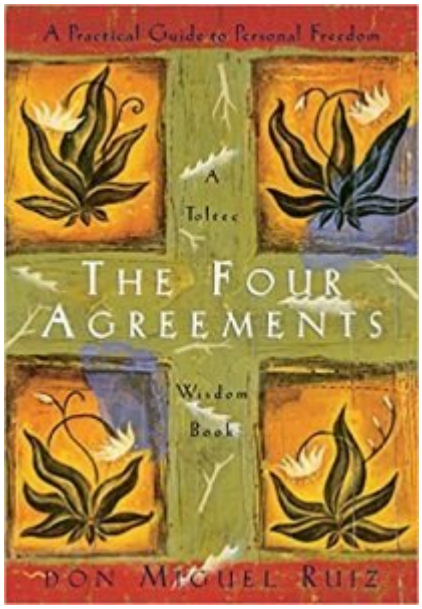
The Four Agreements is an OK book with some good ideas and reminders, but ultimately fails to provide any systemic approach to either spiritual enlightenment or self-development.

The "ancient Toltec wisdom" packaging seems like marketing fluff, and at times it's challenging to look past.

All in all, *The Four Agreements* makes for a pleasant read and it's an OK book, but you may want to prioritize something else for your self-development.

Check the **Top resources for ambitious men**.

The Four Agreements Summary: Wisdom or Woo-Woo?



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URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-four-agreements-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.7

Should You Pay For The Date? 8 Rules For Handling The Bill

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Who pays for the date?

Should the man pay for the date?

… At least the first date?

Or should men and women split because it's the 21st century?

Frankly, dating etiquette and "who should pay" is not our priority here.

We're more concerned about what's *effective*.
What's more *attractive*, what *increases the odds of intimacy*, and what are the *red signals* of "poor check behavior".

So let's learn what's *effective* when it comes to paying for that date.

Contents

- The First Rule Of Tab
- How to Handle The Bill
  - 1. Do Inexpensive Dates: stick to place you can comfortably afford
  - 2. Do Simple Dates: with the focus on you two, not the venue
  - 3. Pay if you invited her & picked the place
  - 4. If you earn more, pay like it's no big deal
  - 5. If she earns more than you & it's obvious, split
  - 6. If you're at the same income level: pay, split, or ask her to tip
  - 7. If she insists to pay, let her (and say you'll take the next)
  - 8. Let her pay if it's a 2nd date and you paid the 1st, then offer whatever comes next
- Assess Her "Tab Behavior"

  - She “distracts herself” at bill time: not good
  - She “slides the bill towards him”: bad
  - She manipulates to make you pay: the worst
- Paying The High-Power Way
- Note: Don’t Let “Gold-Digger Paranoia” Cramp Your Game

The First Rule Of Tab

As a general rule:

> Do dates you’re comfortable with, and that you can comfortably afford

Do what you’re comfortable with, including financially, and you’re good.

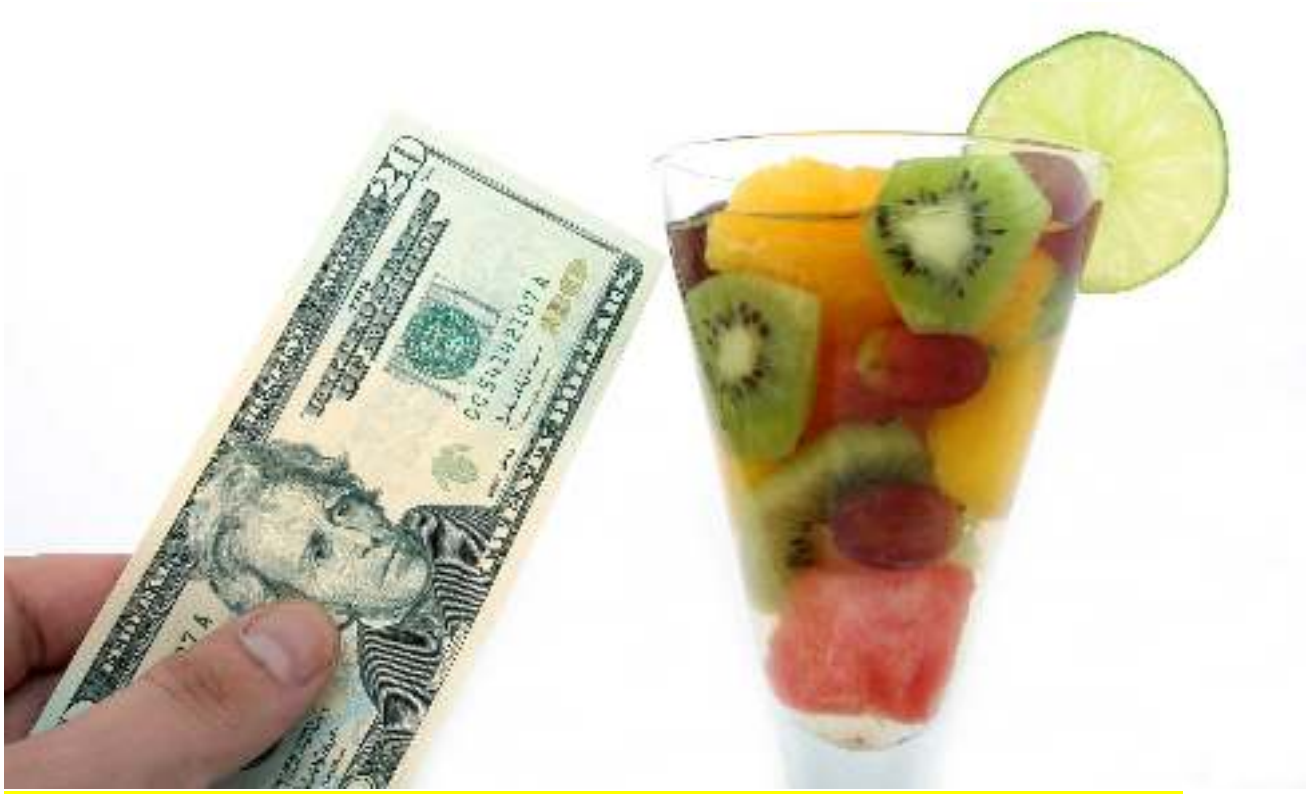
And as long as you make the payment natural, it’s either a non-issue, or a plus.

Now, that being said, if you need more “rules to pay for dates”… Keep on reading.

How to Handle The Bill

Here are the “tab rules” for dating effectiveness:

1. Do Inexpensive Dates: stick to place you can comfortably afford



If $20 is nothing for you and you do $20 drinks, it will reflect on you handle that tab and you’ll look good
And if you want to take it one step further:

Pick date venues where the bill means nothing to you

For most guys, that’s coffee, bars, ice cream, or parks.

Restaurants are also OK.
And frankly, you should strive to be at a place where you can afford most restaurants.

But if you're not obviously wealthy I recommend generally avoiding luxury places.
Unless you often visit or truly enjoy luxury places, it will look like you're trying to impress her. And that's bad from a power dynamics point of view.

Plus, if you're not comfortable with the prices, it will register in your body language.
And that's *highly* unseductive.

Some exceptions apply if you're purposefully using wealth to get quicker sex, or to "punch above your weight" (see "archetypes of successful daters").

2. Do Simple Dates: with the focus on you two, not the venue

Same as for the general rule:

Do what you're comfortable with.

There is nothing inherently wrong with fancy places…

… As long as you like them, can afford them, and can handle the situation with skills and power.

The big issue is if you're unfamiliar with those environments, and then it becomes obvious that you're trying to impress.
The vibe becomes stilted and fake.
It becomes an invitation to *fake and pretend*, rather than open up and bond.

So if you're not used to fancy places, avoid the fanciness to impress.

Instead, do beer, coffee, drinks, or a meal in a place you're comfortable and familiar with.
Somewhere where you can get to know each other.
The better you have become at dating, talking, bonding, and generally displaying high-value, the more you'll gain with a simple "get to know each other" date.

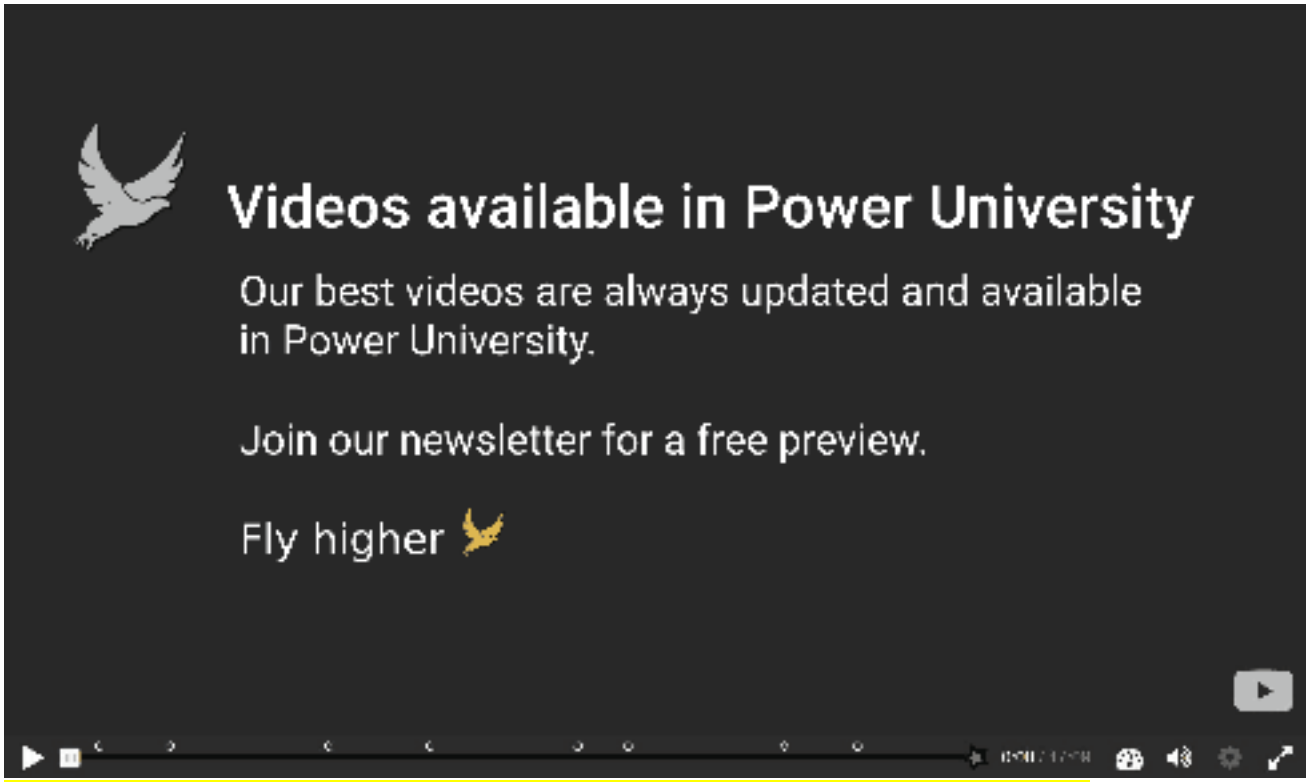
A walk without buying anything is also an option, but usually better to sit down at least once.

BUT... Do Fancy & Expensive Dates If You Can Display High Status

The general advice of simplicity applies to most guys.

But if you worked yourself to a level of high power and social status, then **do fancy and expensive whenever you can display high status in the environment**.

As a matter of fact, there might not be easier seductions than taking her to a fancy and expensive place, and display status in that high-power environment.



High-status in fancy and expensive places, all paid like it's nothing, is the "easy" way of seducing

3. Pay if you invited her & picked the place

This is our standard date model:

1. Man invites
2. Man picks the place (and either picks the date, or agrees with her)
3. Woman comes to his place of choice
4. Man picks up the tab

She's already followed your lead by agreeing to your place.

And she's already investing by traveling to the location (you're not investing as much because you like and know the venue, and because it's near your place).

This is solid win-win dating: you lead, she invests, you invest, you both move forward together.

4. If you earn more, pay like it's no big deal

There is power in paying.

Best of all, make it like it's no big deal (see more below).

5. If she earns more than you & it's obvious, split

Pick up the bill and say "shall we split".

Do NOT let the bill sit there waiting for her to pick it up as some guides recommend.
It's not "socially powerful", it's relinquishing leadership.
And you always want to lead in dating.

> How to Lead to Gets Girls

5.2. If you're in dire straits, do free dates. Or say so before, and let her pay

If you can't afford a date, do free dates, or say so before.

It might take a lot of pelotas to say that you can't afford a restaurant beforehand, but if you do it well, you can gain points. You gain in courage, first of all, in honesty, and you can also frame yourself as an artist, an idealist, or as "working for future success".
Don't go into debt for dates.
First dates are for assessing each other, not for making debt.

It's your duty to take care of yourself and set your finances in order.

Absolutely avoid reaching the "bill time" and ask her to pay.
… If you want to date effectively, at least.
If you wanted to scrounge a meal, that might be the best way. But this is not a guide to avoiding starvation :).

Walk in the park: the perfect date when you're broke

6. If you're at the same income level: pay, split, or ask her to tip

If you invited her and picked the place, pay.

But if she insists, it's best to let her chip in (Frederik et al., 2015).
You can tell her you can split.
Or you can tell her that "she can take the next".

Also good: tell her to "leave a tip", which is a great test of character as well.
See:

- **Tell her to leave a tip, assess her behavior**

7. If she insists to pay, let her (and say you'll take the next)

Sometimes women will insist to pay for the date if:

- They feel you're so high value, so value-giving, or almost outside their reach
- They consider spending time with you the real reward
- You've already given or paid in previous interactions

In these cases, if they insist, don't make it a battle.
Remember, you never want to make paying a big issue because **paying for the date *shouldn't* be a big issue, no matter who does it**.

So let her pay the bill, say "thanks" nonchalantly, and take the next.

Then walk or keep talking about something else.

8. Let her pay if it's a 2nd date and you paid the 1st, then offer whatever comes next

The general rule of multiple dates is:

You want to be paying more or more often, but you want her to chip in.

Exceptions always apply of course, but **it's a bad sign if she can afford to pay but doesn't ever offer to pay** anything.
It's an even bigger red flag when you're around the same socio-economic class, because it means that she will expect you to pay for everything going forward, while she saves her own money (it's a taker, and potentially highly manipulative attitude).

Of course, exceptions always apply.
For example, if you're very wealthy and she's a student, just pay it all and you're still in an attractive, high-power frame.
Or if she's higher sexual market value than you are, then picking up the tabs might simply be the price to be with a higher value mate.
Whether you're willing to make up for that gap with your money, is your call. But it's fair to pay more in those cases.

Assess Her "Tab Behavior"

Dating is a way to assess people and character.

And the "tab behavior", or the behavior she displays when it comes to paying, is a great way of assessing her general character.
Plus, it's a fantastic tool to reliably peer into a future potential relationship.

She “distracts herself” at bill time: not good

We already said that it’s a bad sign when women never chip in during courtship.
But it’s also not a good sign when women play busy at bill time.

Humorous example from “How I Met Your Mother”:

> **Waiter**: (leaves the bill)
> **Her**: (sips the wine, looks away, pretends to be lost in thoughts)

It’s not the worst if she traveled to meet him.

But if the date was sputtering, then it’s also fair for the man to think he lost his time as well.
Plus, the turkey-level gaming behavior of pretending not to notice screams “small-time manipulator”.

She “slides the bill towards him”: bad

What’s even worse is women who take the bill… But slide it towards you.

They are assertive and high-power enough to take charge, but they use that self-confidence to make him pay.

That’s a strong sign that she will expect and *demand* that he takes care of all the finances (and her expenses).

She manipulates to make you pay: the worst

Generally speaking, any game that pushes you to pay is a nasty game, and red-level power move.

That should preclude her from any meaningful role in your life.

Some of them include:

> **Her**: I like real gentlemen

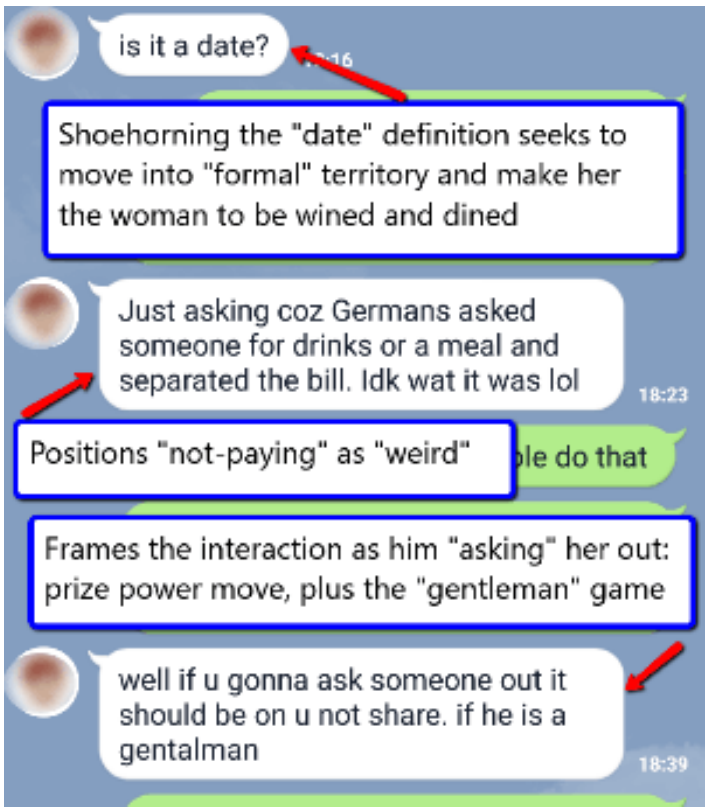
Where “gentleman” means paying for a woman.
That type of game is so cheap, that I’d even say never to enter a relationship with a woman saying that. You can’t turn a low-level game player into a high-quality woman.

Another cheap game after a first date:

> **Her**: next time we go somewhere good

She’s sub-communicating that your choice wasn’t good enough for her, so you need to step up the expenditures.
If there is a next time, you go where you say because you pay. Better yet, end it there.

An annoying game we saw already, coming from an online dating match:



She actually makes a good point.
Generally speaking, it's good form for the person who invites out to pick up the bill.

But HOW she goes about it is a confrontational, small-time manipulative, unpalatable no-no.

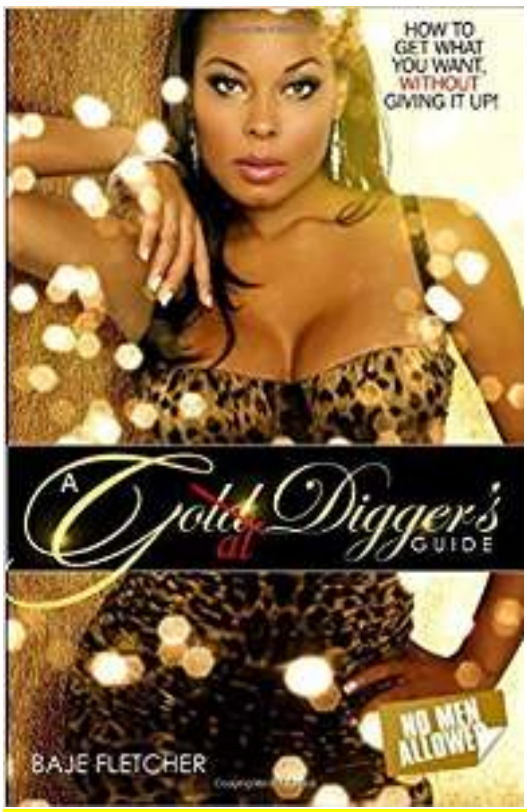
Paying The High-Power Way

The key question is:

How should you pay so that you come across high-power and attractive?

Check out Seduction University.

Note: Don't Let "Gold-Digger Paranoia" Cramp Your Game



Yes, gold-diggers eixst, but most women prefer a great man, to some free food
This is an issue for several guys.

Especially the ones who read red-pill advice and who are careful about investment levels.

Being careful is a good thing.
And being taken for a ride is a bad thing.

So you, absolutely, do NOT offer free food and drinks to women who have no interest in you (we don't exactly like leeches and value takers here).

BUT…

As for everything… Balance.
Don't let the rare outliers lead you astray.

There are far more shades of grey in the world than blacks and whites.

The women who come out for food and drinks *only* are a minority.
And *especially* so if you're working on yourself to become a higher value man (ie.: the cooler you are, the less you must worry about gold diggers);.
At the other extreme, few women will come out 100% dead-set to will sleep with you, or seduce you into a relationship.

Most will come out to the date to assess and see how things go.
And **cheapos have never been great seducers**.

So when you're over-afraid of gold-diggers, you're actually shooting yourself in the foot.
Big time.
You're letting a very few bad apples spoil your mood, get you on the defensive, and treat every single woman as if she was out to swindle you (of a few bucks, something that shouldn't even worry you at all).

See Seduction University for more details on how to shed that defensive mindset, plus how to handle those rarer but still possible "true bad apples".

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you find the most practical strategies and examples

How to Create a Sensual Atmosphere: Sexy Environment

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Creating a seductive atmosphere at home is crucial for effective dating, great romances, and unforgettable experiences.

At The Power Moves we are experts in seduction, power dynamics, and strategies to achieve your goals.

And in this article, we'll learn how to create a sensual atmosphere at home, that will make your date fall in love head over heels.

Sensory overload awes the mind into transcendental states

Contents

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- Seductive Atmosphere Key
  - 1. Fantasy Land: a break & respite from the mundane world
  - 2. Dreamy: and a dream-maker
  - 3. Exclusive: for special people only
  - 4. A Life Experience: intimacy is only one aspect, not the goal
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- 9. Decor of Seduction
- 10. Bathroom, Beauty, Jacuzzi

- Leadership For Seduction

Intro

After you invite her home things are looking good.

But whether or not your sexual escalation turns into a memorable success depends not just on you, but also on the type of place you have.

So in this article we are going to learn how to set up your place as a proper "seductive environment" (a term borrowed from Greene's "Art of Seduction").

Let's start with a definition:

> Seductive environments are stimulating environments that titillate, strike, and overwhelm the senses and help facilitate trance states, including falling in love and "swooning".

Albeit it would be reductive to think of seductive environments as "sex locations", they most certainly also help facilitate intimacy.
Equally important, they also make that intimacy a unique and unforgettable peak experience.

Seductive Atmosphere Key

First off, a key mindset:

- **YOU are part -and leading- the seductive experience**

You cannot -and do not *want*– to rely on a seductive environment to do the job for you.

They are powerful tools of seduction, but you still want to be the one in charge, the one leading it.

Think of it more like a life experience, a "dream maker", a "Garden of Eden"—and you're one of the Gods walking the lucky ones through it.

1. Fantasy Land: a break & respite from the mundane world

The seductive environment is different.

It's "other" compared to the day-to-day world.
It HAS to be.

Being "other" and a "break" from "normal" life is the #1 trait -and the essence- of a seductive environment.

The everyday world is dull, asphyxiatingly moral, taxingly rational… And unseductive.
That unseductive outside world must be blocked out.

2. Dreamy: and a dream-maker

It's a place of magic where imagination can roam free, where new states and possibilities can be explored, and

where cacoon-like childhood sensations re-experienced (letting go, is similar to going back to the womb).

3. Exclusive: for special people only

It's a gift, an experience you only offer to a few selected, deserving ones.

If you're only interested in sex or on the fence about her, you can still invite her home of course, but without the "full experience".

But it's a special place for you as well.
You can always enter into that mind space and enjoy it for yourself.

4. A Life Experience: intimacy is only one aspect, not the goal

This is a transcendental experience.

Intimacy is only *one* part.
It's not the main goal anymore.

Seductive Environment Themes

You can mix and match, of course.

And the larger your seductive environment, the more room you have for fitting in different styles.

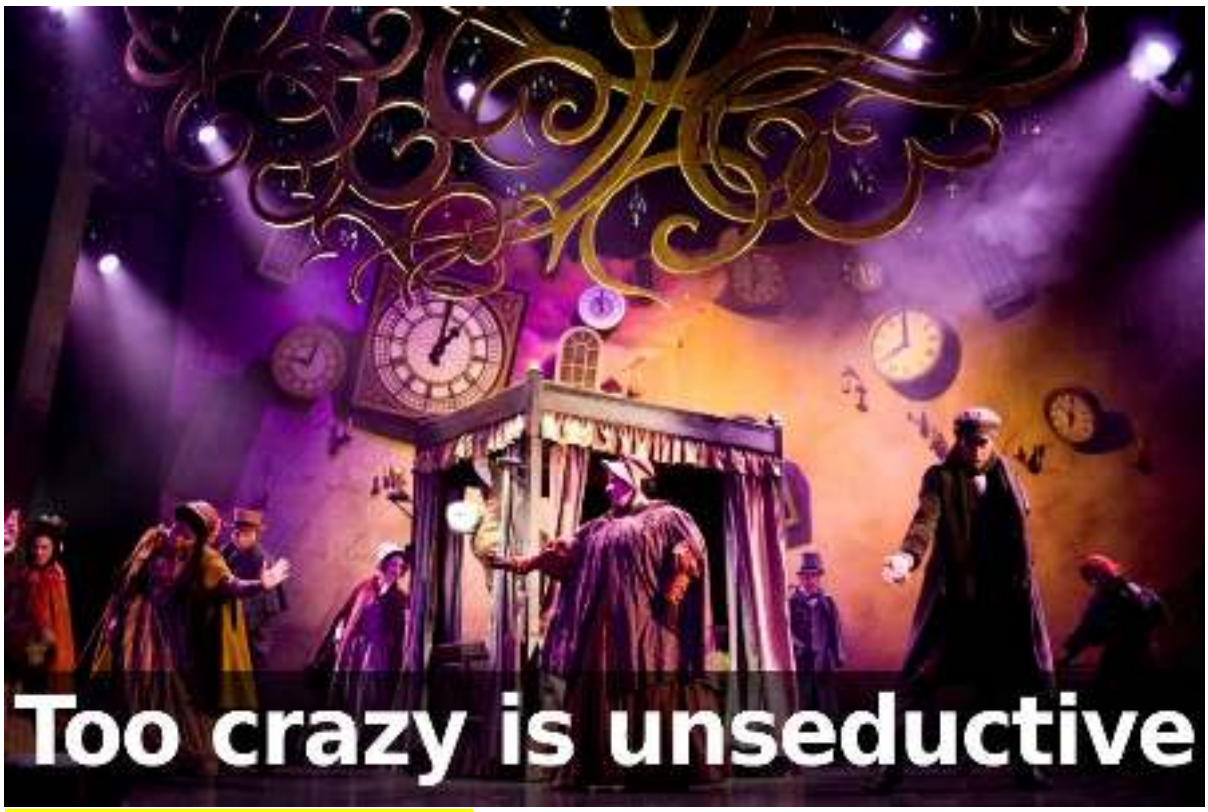
However, it's best to have a main recurring theme permeating through it all.

Good main themes include:

- **Luxurious opulence**
- **Extreme coziness**: warm colors, plush couches, velvet soft carpets, furry surfaces, silky floor pillows, candles
- **Futuristic**: hint at different worlds, different spaces and times with different rules
- **Retro**: it's harder to pull off, make sure it's timeless retro. The essence is of a "different time", avoid any strong reference to specific decades or people or it will look too much like real life
- **Artificial**: to help re-create the "different and new world" feel
- **Fusion**: there is something in it for everyone

Robert Greene says that the best seductive locations are superficial-looking, "theatrical", full of glitter, colors, and lights.
I partially agree, but with a note of caution.
If you overdo "theatrical", it becomes "crazy". Women can't let go in the presence of "crazy" because crazy equals risky—physically and psychologically uncomfortable.

To swoon and fall in love, she *must* feel free to let go.
So you while you want that "otherish" feel, it must be inviting and comfortable enough for her to let go.



A touch of crazy is good. *Too* crazy is not

Matrioska Approach: Develop Micro-Spaces

Whatever you pick, I highly recommend “micro-environments” within the main one.

The multitude of stimuli from different corners is akin to (good) attacks from multiple fronts: overwhelms her senses and defenses.

Plus, they give you more opportunities to show, explain, walk around, and experience.

How to Develop A Seductive Environment

The main elements of a seductive environment are:

1. Views, Videos & Visuals

Windows only work if the views are truly breathtaking.

If the views are “good”, then it only reminds her of the real world.
In that case, better to forget the window and focus on the inside:

1.2. Flat screens & projectors

Home planetariums are great tools
Ceiling projectors and planetariums for reproducing stars, constellations and universe imagery are also great (read on).
Constellations with zodiac signs are also good (far more women than men believe in it).

Avoid cheap TVs: a small flat screen budget TV is whack and unseductive.

1.3. Movies with stunning visuals

You can leave a movie running on a TV or projector.

Avoid general, bland, run-of-the-mill entertainment and pick something artistic.
A movie that's based on sounds and dreamy cinematography.

For example, "The Girl With the Pearl Earring" is about an intense artist and his muse. It's arts and colors with a dreamy effect. I remember one evening watching it semi-stoned and after a couple of glasses of wine and it took me into a different state of dreamery and relaxation.

"Once Upon A Time In The West" is another great movie based on imagery, close-ups of strong men and strong but feminine women, and dreamy sounds.

1.4. Fantasy videos

Videos are better than movies because they have no beginning and end.

Perfect to get into a "time-suspension" state.

Good imagery is women playing flute or harp, lost in their art.
Recalling the sirens in Ulysses' journey, the guardian angels welcoming into the land of pleasure.

Other good videos to loop are Final Fantasy-like themes:

1.5. Universe imagery

Colorful videos and pictures of the universe are great.

The imagery of stars, quasars, black holes and galaxies transmits a feeling of time suspension and “forever-ness”. Different planets take people out of this world, opening up the mind to never-thought-of possibilities.

You can even explain some basics of astronomy to transmute that imagery into feelings.
That we’re really all “just made of stars” (Moby’s “We’re all just made of stars” would be a perfect sound companion).
That time is different and relative in the sky just above your heads. That we’re all watching a snapshot from the past when we look up.
“One day we might be able to travel there”, you may say. “But I like to think that one day we will all reunite and become one”.

1.6. Gaming console / VR

It’s OK to have a gaming console attached to a big screen.

BUT, it must be games about visuals, images, adventures, and dream-looking worlds.

Even better than games with a control pad, that feel geeky, is a VR or movement-activated controls (or both).

For example, flying virtual reality, or new worlds explorations.

2. Lights / Candles

Lights and candles are an integral part of your seductive environment.

The lights must complement your theme of choice but, but generally speaking, you want dim, soft, and mellow lighting.
The reason is simple: people feel more comfortable letting go in the dark.

2.2. LED lights

With so many options of led lights, this must be the golden era of seductive environments.

Look into and pick some strips, color-changing LEDs, color-changing bulbs, motion-activated lights, remote-activated lights, water-proof candle-like LEDs, etc.
Early examples from my room.

Warning: easy on changing colors.
Avoid jerky and fast blinking: they impact our “fight or flight” centers and make people feel nervous.
Go for smooth transitions, and limit them to small corners you want to draw attention to.

2.3. Spotlights

Use small and localized spotlights to highlight certain micro-environments.
For example, a spotlight on a painting. Or an open book in your book’s area. Or over your “delicacies corner”.

2.4. Backlights

For example, a led strip behind your spirits.

2.5. Lamps

A timeless classic of romance, have at least one.
You can make lamps your main light source and completely avoid any ceiling light.

2.6. Candles

You can’t go wrong with candles.

Have some, even if you won’t light them up.
And by the way, a chandelier makes for perfect decor.

2.7. Dimmer lights for intimacy

Go for dimmer lights in the space you’ll use for:

- Romance

- Romantic dinners
- Intimacy

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Behavior* states dimmer lighting can foster an atmosphere of intimacy, and loosen social inhibition.

3. Music

We have one article for seductive playlists.

For here suffice to say that music should be on a high-quality system.

No laptop.
Laptop music is for hookups.
PC speakers also won't cut it because a computer is a window to the "real world" (Internet, gossip, work…).

Get a package with a subwoofer, tweeters, and high-quality strategically placed satellites.
Avoid geeky. You can keep it simple with "price and looks" rule of thumb: pick a high-end system that looks great.
Some tips:

- **Hide or semi-hide the speakers**: tech is rarely seductive. You want your speaker to either disappear, or to integrate in your decor if they fit the style (ie.: wooden for "classic" themes or futuristic for futuristic themes)
- **Pre-load a list with hours of music**: nothing breaks the spell quicker than ads and music cutting off. Once you have a couple of hours it's OK to have the playlist restart
- **Automated activation**: remote controls are techy and not very seductive. Better to have an automated activation whenever you walk in. Or voice-activated
- ***Positive* music**: May and Hamilton research demonstrated that positive affect–evoking rock music increased females' ratings of the physical attractiveness of males

P.S.:
And by the way, a piano, a harp, an old gramophone, or some musical instrument in your seductive environment are golden.

4. Drinks, Wine & Spirits

Wine and spirits are almost a must.

Even if you aren't going to consume, they speak of the *possibility* and *allure* of intoxication.

You want high-quality wines and classy spirits such as scotch and whiskey.
Vodka and rum for mixers are OK, but they have an aura of "cheap drunkness", so don't put them first.

Where

You can have them:

1. **All together**: a wooden minibar, or a corner or shelf combined with delicacies
2. **Disseminated** around the environment

Together it can turn into its own micro-environment, and you can talk about it.
You don't need to know much, even just telling the story of where the bottle comes from and why it's good is enough. Make sure you paint a nice story with good imagery.

If you go for the minibar, avoid plastic minifridges -that screams "real life" and "cheap motel"-. Plus, it feels like cheap consumerism.
You want your place to feel luxurious, but without hints of money. The feel is that of a Garden of Eden where everything's free and where you drink straight from the Gods' springs.

Not only the bottles must be good, but also *look* good.
Old used bottles with candles on top can also serve as ambiance props if you're going for more classy and old-school looks.

Weed / Drugs (Optional, Not-Recommended)

Not strictly necessary and we don't recommend it.

Some of the more conservative women might also be put off by it.

However, we can't deny that some substances offer a quick shortcut to trance states.
Still, don't let the shortcut fool you: put the environment first. The last thing you want is a drug-place to get high.
Highs on drugs must *complement* the experience, not become *the* way to trance. And for practical reasons: if it's drug-fueled, she will look back and say "the drug was such a trip".
But if the high is drug-free or a complement to the experience, it's all on *you*.

If you want to go for it avoid any drugs that over-excite, like cocaine or speed.
Go for substances that relax or expand consciousness.

Like the opium ending scene in "Once Upon A Time In America".
Plus, the opium pipe is also a great prop.

4.2. Teas & Special Drinks

It's a good idea to also have some non-alcoholic beverages among your bottles.

Especially if you don't drink yourself, or if you prefer women who don't drink.

For example, special teas, herbs, and cofees, together with a beautiful teapot and china.

5. Food / Delicacies

I initially wrote "food / snacks" as the title.

I hope you can see the mistake :).

Anything resembling typical "snacks" has no place in a seductive environment.

There is a powerful association between food -and the pleasure of food- and sex -and the pleasure of sex-.
And, by extension, the type of relationship you can offer.
That association is much stronger in women than in men.
So:

- Snack = cheap sex and throwaway, average relationship.
- Delicacy = seductive environment, intertwining of souls, “peak experience”

Albeit fresh food would be nice, long-lasting food has a better ROI and it’s easier to maintain.
As usual, you want high-quality with great-looking packaging.
Go for far-away delicacies, limited productions, and products you can tell a story about.

Example of a good packaging:

6. Books

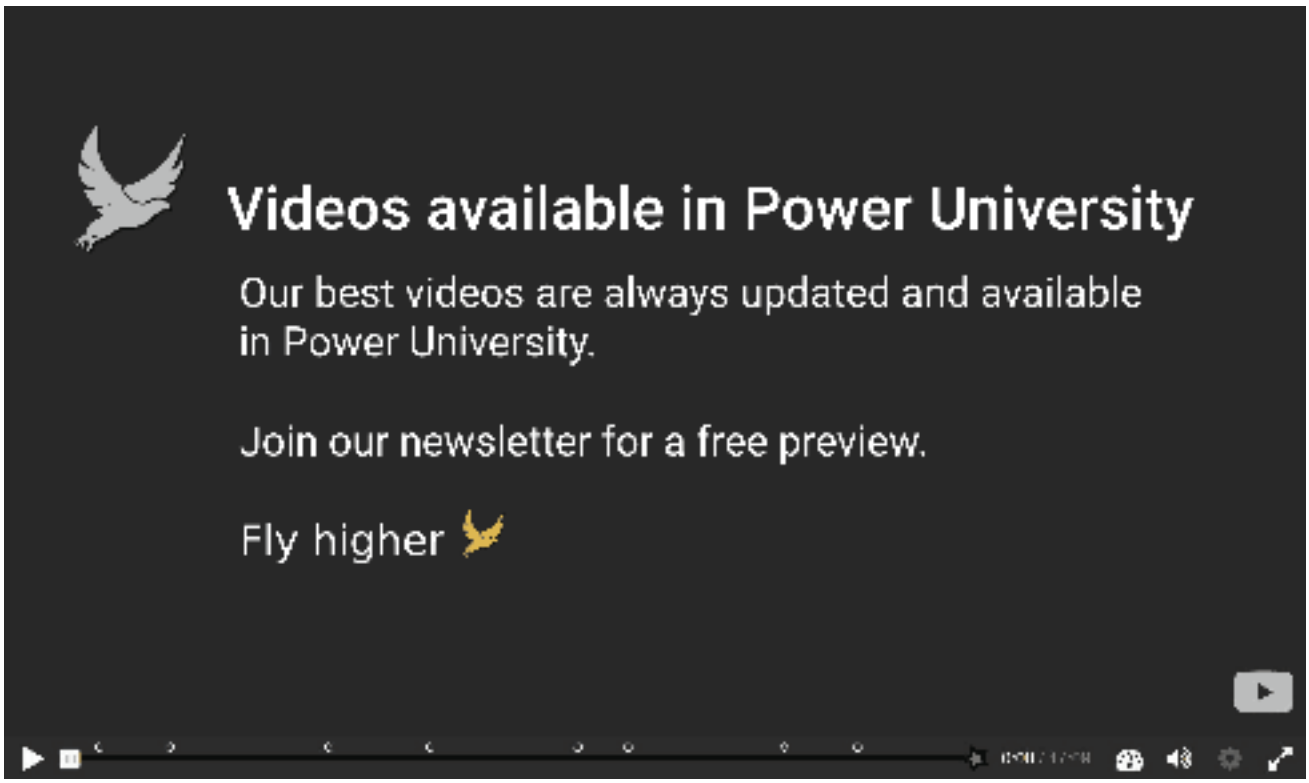
Many women love books (including many who don’t read them).

Books are powerful for what they represent: knowledge, erudition, and… The power of driven men who advance civilization.

And albeit men know that it’s non-fictional work that advances civilization, your seductive environments need fictional work (or, at least, *also* fictional work).

Lots of women like “Lord of The Rings”, “Harry Potter” and “Sherlock Holmes”.
“Da Vinci Code” and “The Alchemist” set a tone of mystery and mysticism.
“The Adventures of Pinocchio” with the “Turquoise Hair Fairy” and “Peter Pan” with tinker bell can lull her into a safe regression to childhood.
And you can also add “Fifty Shades of Grey” or something similar for sexualization.

Books that add multiple layers of stimulation, such as drawings and touch are perfect.
Love this scene:



Photography books are also perfect as they mix art with erudition.

Photobooks with people, art, and places are great.
It's like having a small seductive environment *within* your seductive environment.
Women can flick through them and it takes their minds into far and different lands, opening up worlds of possibilities outside their smaller confines.

7. Scents

Good scents are a must.

On average, women have a better sense of smell and a better feel for what's "good" or "not good".

I personally don't have a great taste for mixing smells and if you also don't, then stick to a single scent or to similar ones.

Good options include:

7.2. Scented candles

An easy option, good even if you don't light them up.

7.3. Diffusers

There are many aromatic diffusers, and some even have LED lighting.

LED diffusers are great options because the view feels like a small volcano, making the environment feel "different than normal life".
As usual, avoid cheap ones that are too lightweight, and go for batteries if you can't properly hide the cables.

7.4. Scented sticks

Another good and timeless option. And women love them.

7.5. High-quality handmade soaps

Perfect for your bathroom(s).

8. Paintings

Generally speaking, naked white walls are unseductive.

So in are wallpapers and paintings.
But while it's not good to choose overly-bold wallpapers as you can't change them easily, paintings provide a higher variety of options.

Some paintings that work:

8.2. Allusive, *slightly* erotic

Without overdoing it!
It's seduction, not porn.
And it's *seduction*, not real life. So better avoiding real people.

Instead, go for fairytale characters, human-looking aliens, or human-looking robots.

This might already be too much.

Remember: the seduction is from the full environment, and from the *states* it induces.
Anything that is “too much” breaks the spell instead of enhancing it.

The last thing we want is a seductive environment that feels like a “sex location”.
It might be a sex location, of course. It will likely be, as a matter of fact. But as part of the full package, without ever forcing it.

Plus, many women will walk inside with some barriers and fears.
Erotic pictures stoke those fears.

So if you’re unsure, less is better.

8.3. Mermaids

Women have a thing for mermaids.
Women also have a thing for werewolves and vampires, but they are too edgy and scare some women off. So better stick for the “seductively safe options”.

8.4. Muses, goddesses, and sirens

Muses, goddesses, and sirens are perfect.
Many women are also aroused by other women, and muses and sirens are seductive and classy at the same time.

8.5. Impressionistic paintings

If your seductive space is on the “classy” side, impressionistic paintings are good.

No to expressionism though, it might be “too much” and make some people uncomfortable. People need to let go, and people aren’t comfortable letting go when the atmosphere is too aggressive (werewolves) or crazy (expressionism).

8.6. Classics in different settings (ie.: sunsets in different worlds)

Anything that is earth-related brings her back to reality.

Sunsets, beaches, mountains and various earth locations might be good in a book, but not as the main ingredient in your seductive environment.

They’re beautiful, but we’re going for a different type of beauty. We’re going for a “break” from this world to reach higher states.

A good solution is to change the setting of those romantic views to other planets. Then you get the best of both worlds. The romantic aspect, and the “other world” aspect:

9. Decor of Seduction

You want to have a room with a lot of stimuli.

So this is a case where “more” is often better than “less” and “empty”.

9.2. Statues

If you can afford it, statues are perfect.

Statuses with a mystical and dreamy feel.
Gods and Goddesses, emblems of birth and rebirth, and symbols of eternal power and energies.

9.3. Historical Lures

Historical lures from far away lands or gone by times.

For example, heroes, conquerors, and pharaohs.
Again, you want something far and alien because anything too human reminds people of politics -fuck that-.
So a Caesar or Marcus Aurelius on a horse may work because they represent not just humans, but figures of eternal leadership and power.

9.4. Fine Silks, Cashmeres, Furs

You can’t have “sensory overload” without touch.

I remember an ex-girlfriend of mine.
She was in love with her place, and one of the things she loved most was a pink, furry cloth that she put on top of her wardrobe.
And it did look and feel cozy and special indeed.
That was one of the many lures and decor she had. The room had carpets, furs, hanging pendants, and a small table

in the middle of the room to sit around -on the floor, not on chairs-.
She was in love with her place because, without knowing it, she had turned it into a small-scale (self-)seductive environment.

You want something similar -albeit not necessarily pink :)-.

9.5. Pendants

You want something hanging around.

Necklaces, neckties, pendants, amulets, crystals on a string, small mirrors on a string, etc.
Anything that reminds of shamans or paganism is also good.

And of course, a beautiful chandelier is an evergreen.

9.6. Chinas & Crystals

Tea sets, crystals and chinas are perfect.

Either next to your minibar/drinks corner, or in a glassed cabinet.

10. Bathroom, Beauty, Jacuzzi

Your bathroom must be at least a smaller extension of your seductive environment.

Women see bathrooms more as intimate and self-care places than men.
A jacuzzi in your bathroom bridges the transcendental experience into a physical and intimate one. And a few candles around it are perfect.

Cliches have become cliches for a reason: because they worked
Also get waterproof LED candles to be put *in* the water.

Leadership For Seduction

See Seduction University for how to use seductive environments and for proper frame control with “seduction-resistent women”.

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you find the most practical strategies and examples

How to Make Her Fall In Love: 14 Proven Steps

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

How do you make a girl fall in love with you?

It's simple: be a high-value man.

Really, if you're generally working on becoming a high-quality man, most women will fall in love with you.

But to take it to the next level and steal her heart like nobody before, keep on reading.

He's doing it perfectly

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1. Start With The Basics: Be A Cool Guy

The basics are your 80%.

Do these, and most women you date will fall in love with you:

1. **Be high value**
2. **Be higher power than her**
3. **Date high power**, mind the basic dating power dynamics
   1. Make sure you’re not chasing, giving too much while taking too little, etc. etc.
   2. Be slightly less available than her
4. **Lead** (resolutely, but in a collaborative, win-win way)
5. **Get to know her well,** bond and connect, stay curious about her and her life
6. **Have your personal life priorities**, passions, friends, and goals you’re pursuing
7. **Be a good lover**, find time for good and/or passionate sex with her, make her orgasm if possible
8. **Maximize oxytocin**, maximize skin-to-skin contact after sex, hug often
9. **Do quality time together** -quantity helps as well of course, but focus on quality over quantity-
10. **To sustain love move the relationship forward**, grow together, or take on new challenges and do new experiences together

That’s it.

If you’re in Power University, you already have all the tools to make women fall in love with you.
And you follow the straight line seduction and processes we set here you’re also dating well.

All you have to do is to eventually find one who likes you enough to start dating you.

Target selection

Obviously, women differ.

Both in terms of personality, and how they relate to you.
And it's easier to make some women fall in love than others.

These women are more likely to fall in love quicker and harder, and easier to remain devoted to you:

- **Lower value women**: people tend to fall harder for higher sexual market value partners, so everything will be easier if you "date down"
- **Lower socio-economic class women**: the qualitative lifestyle jump make falling in love easier
- **Younger and/or inexperienced women**: tend to be more idealistic and have lower defenses, plus everything is new and exciting for them and the power/leadership gap is larger

HOWEVER…

You can make most women fall in love.
And I've personally been with women who were more attractive women -not that difficult anyway :)- and, even when I was not much experienced, still fell in love hard.

What we do recommend though is to pick women who:

- **Like you**: women who appreciate and like you tend to be more loving, devoted, and even kinder
- **Appreciate your qualities**: same as above
- **Have good interpersonal chemistry with you**: getting along well makes for better quality time together, which is an important element of falling in love

2. Lead (Ie.: Be an "Eagle Leader")

Your leadership is crucial to make women fall in love.

Egalitarian dating wins you virtue-signaling points, but male leadership wins your women's hearts.

And the type of leadership that best makes girls fall in love is based on:

- **Safety and trust (win-win leadership)**: love is based on letting go, abandoning herself to you. And she cannot let herself go unless she feels safe, consciously and subconsciously. An edgy man or an asshole can lead into the bedroom, but it's difficult for her to let go when she doesn't also feel safe. So warmth and comfort are also crucial.
- **Control over the environment**: once she feels safe *with* him, she must also feel safe with him *from* the world. This is one of the reasons why your place is the perfect final location for love. It's safe, you safely came back from the outside world, and everything is fully under your control.
- **Intellectual / mental leadership**: since falling in love is a psychological and mental product, she must feel he is also "mentally" leading and higher power.

Many of our processes and strategies are based on hitting these crucial notes.

3. Do Memorable Dates (Ie. "Total Dates")

We call them "total" because they contain all the ingredients that make women fall in love.

- Connection & bonding
- Personal disclosure
- Fun / silliness / playfulness
- Great food / wine
- Great intimacy
- Romance

"Total dates" are one of the best ways to make girl fall in love because they are simple, easy to replicate,

and reliable.
All you have to do is:

1. **Have a great dinner**: ideally, go there hungry and make it a feast
   - At home, generally preferable
   - At a restaurant where physical proximity is possible. Some privacy is also ideal (ie.: Japanese places with your own room)
2. **Have a little special reason or make it *feel* special**: "feel" comes first and you don't really need a reason. But if you want to add a reason, can be a small celebration -celebration of life or of you two if there is nothing-, a topic you want her opinion on, or a "special food" you can talk about (in my case: pecorino, Parmigiano, olives, mozzarella, etc., etc.)
3. **Romantic environment** (candles, wine, etc.)
4. **Background music**
5. **Have an (emotionally) safe, intimate, and romantic time**
   - Personal disclosures
   - Deeper conversation
   - Intimacy between meals
6. **Sprinkle joviality and good mood**

Most of the times when women professed their love to me was either during "Total Dates", or when having a good time with a bottle of wine.

If you have developed a "seductive environment", then your total dates take place there, with the full experience on.

You can do bigger and longer "full dates" on weekends, in which case you can combine with the inebriation and/or full-day technique.
But shorter middle-of-the-week ones are also fantastic.
They punctuate their duller week with romance and love, and make you stand out even more.

Keep doing total dates during the relationship, turning them into an intimate ritual of pleasure for you two.

4. Penetrate Her Mind

Falling in love is, in good part, a function of “mental real estate”.

Such as: how *often* she thinks of you, plus in what *terms* she thinks of you.
To be “important” in her life, even negative feelings and thoughts will do. But since we’re aiming for love, devotion, and generally value-adding influence, you want positive thoughts and associations.

Once you’re setting up those positive associations, you want to “activate them” as often as possible because neuroscience suggests that the more often a neural pathway fires, the stronger that association becomes.

In simple terms, you want to **develop a positive association between you and positive feelings in her mind**, and fire up that association as often as possible (*without chasing or being taken for granted*).

So your goal is to:

- **Make her think about you:** strike a balance between texting & meeting enough to be top of mind, without overdoing it so that you get taken for granted. To maximize power of repetition and personal power let her come to you slightly more than you seek her out
- **Make her think *positively* about you**: generally being high-value and uplifting is enough
- **Create more positive associations with you**: experiences, great dates, inside jokes, plus all we teach here creates positive associations
- ***Extend & repeat* those associations over time**: or what we call “thread expanding” in power dynamics. Keep on reading

One simple way of recalling and thread-expanding on positive associations is to create inside humor and stories, and to ping her with positive associations.
Ideally, it’s things you:

- Laughed about
- Inside stories, jokes, and fantasies you created
- Funny things you both self-disclosed about yourself

A simple and effective ping is a day-after picture after a “Total Date”.

You still want to be strategic with your pings and not be always available.
But a good reminder is: ping a woman who's not into you, and it's chasing. Ping a woman who's dating you and about to fall for you, and she'll swoon.

Example:

It was an obligatory ping. She brought lots of food and then took one sandwich back home and left one to me. And she said "we'll eat it tomorrow and think about each other". That's self-pinging, and you must jump at those opportunities
She's bored at work, and then gets a picture of you reminding her of the great time.

For more "dark psychology techniques", see Seduction University.

5. Romance Her (& Yourself)

There aren't many women in the world who don't enjoy -or dream- of romance.

Romance can work any time, including pre-intimacy.
But, generally speaking, it works better after you're already together, or when you're courting over a few dates (as opposed to one-date intimacy approaches).

There are a thousand ways to romance:

- **Candlelit dinners**:
- **Flowers**: a good friend of mine broke a few women's hearts without even trying. He's naturally incredibly thoughtful and kind. He'd bring flowers on first dates, make gifts, care about her, and even make gifts to her family. Then, he'd ask me why women got so attached to him, or "how can one have sex with no string attached". He didn't realize he was acting like a perfect boyfriend
- **Gifts**, especially personalized gifts for her that include art and poetry
- **Romantic music**:
- **Slow dance**
- **"Stereotypical" romantic activities & moments**, don't underestimate the power of the "romantic cliches": they have become cliches because they worked. So yes to boat rides, picnics, trips to Venice, gazing into each other's eyes, etc.

The best way to romance is to enjoy the romance yourself.
As we said a few time, you're both a conductor leading and an actor enjoying the play.

An example of romantic dance:

> **Him**: this music, this place, isn't it perfect. Will you dance with me (gives her his hand)
> **Her**: (faints)

Of course it's a TV show so they exaggerated the reaction. But moves like these do make girls fall in love with you.

6. Create “Us Bubbles”

I was once sitting on a bench with an ex of mine in our early dating stages.

We were in front of a little park, nothing special, with people walking by and one dog playing around.
We sat, looked at the world around us, and commented on it.
For example, I remember the dog was strangely slow. I pointed it out to her and we both focused on it. I made some fun of it, saying the dog in his mind was so fast and furious. We turned it into a little story, and both laughed.

After a while, she literally commented:

> **Her**: Oh my God, it feels like it’s only you and I in the world

That’s the “us bubble”.
And that’s when I knew for sure she was falling in love -or more like “plunging”-.
If I wanted to thread expand and cement that moment I could have taken her hand, said “it is only you and I, baby”, and then kissed her romantically.

Family Guy has a good skit on the “bubble” feeling:

A bit too “social climbing” in this video example and he’s not exactly leading, but it’s a good scene to understand some of the underlying dynamics.

To be more eagle-like and higher quality you want to avoid pushing people down so badly.
You can laugh at people, but it’s more “laughing for fun” around your crazy stories than “laughing *at* them” and pushing them down.

Good ways to re-create the us bubble:

See Seduction University

“Us bubbles” are also the perfect time to create “inside stories & jokes”:

7. Create “Inside Stories & Jokes”

Insider references make little sense to most people, but are meaningful or funny to you two.

It's anything that she can talk and laugh with you, but you only.

As a rule of thumb:

The more inside stories and jokes you have, the more special you -and you two- become.
And the more inside stories and jokes you have, the more mental real-estate you'll occupy.

This is part of what relationship researcher John Gottman refers to as "shared meaning".

Every time anything in her life reminds her of that inside story and joke, she's reminded of *you*.
And how *you only* would understand what she's feeling (how powerful is that!).

Some examples:

- **Fun stories or fantasies you laugh about**

With the whole world she discusses logically -and boringly-.
But with you, she can step into a new world.

- **Politically incorrect inside stories**

With the whole world, she's "proper", with you, she's "real" -how good is that!-.

- **Personal disclosures (that you turned into an inside joke)**

She doesn't disclose her personal things to anyone else.
Only with you.
Bonus points if it was something that bothered her and you managed to turn into a positive and/or something she can now laugh about.

See SU for more.

8. Get Inebriated Together

Many women, and men for that matter, seek to resist love.
So sometimes you need a catalyst that allows them to ‘let go’. Inebriation helps to let go both physically and psychologically.

This is also helpful when she started having feelings for you but was afraid to show them.
Inebriation frees her to experience them fully, amplify them… And often even communicate them to you.

Lucio’s Experience: **The first woman who professed her love did so while we passed a bottle of wine to each other**

Lucio:
We were in a bus bound to a new city, and had just gotten back after a quick bathroom run.

And as we laughed and talked, she blurted 'I love you'.

Younger and more inexperienced, I was almost taken aback by it. 'Am I supposed to say the same back, now?', I wondered.

There are many opportunities you gain with inebriation.

One of them is the "freedom to brag".
Generally, we don't recommend bragging or anything that feels "forced" when displaying your personal value.

BUT…

The beauty of getting inebriated is that **when you're inebriated you get a pass on almost anything**.
You *can* brag a little, you *can* open up about what have been difficult periods in your life without coming across as negative or with baggages (and then quickly transition to happy topics).
The stark contrast of vulnerable sharing, and then back to laughing and enjoying life makes it all the more memorable.

Other techniques to make her fall in love with you:

- **Talk about your exes**, how attractive or cool they were, and that increases your preselection and her attraction
- **Dig deeper into her past without looking jealous**, because you're just sharing stories
- **Sing and act silly, stoke her "motherly instincts"**. What would be "childish" becomes "fun and lust for life", while still maintaining the overall frame of "high-power" and "effective in life".
- **Revisit the story of your romance**, how you met, what you truly thought of her, ask her what she truly thought of you, and grow closer without looking cheesy or defensive

You can also combine inebriation with the "full day together" experience -as a matter of fact, we recommend it-,

Some of my great love experiences -and some of the easiest to replicate- have been with wine.

Including:

- Smuggling wines into theaters as a student
- The opening story in Seduction University, chaperoning through the Eternal city and punctuated by dinner and wine
- Picnics and wine
- Romantic home-cooked dinners at home with wine ("Total Dates")

9. Lead Her Into A Whirlwind Romance

A whirlwind romance is a seduction that either:

1. **Happens very fast, out of attraction and chemistry**, not easy to replicate systematically. But long pauses and eye-gazing work. Sometimes, evening opening her and just looking at her for a few seconds can stoke chemistry and attraction
2. **Takes place over several consecutive hours going through different places and emotions** ("perfect days", see later)
3. **Takes place over several dates closely spaced together**
4. **Move from first meeting to talking of love and starting couple life at breakneck speed**, see Seduction University

9.2. Fast Dating

If you're going for several dates, having those dates closely spaced helps create a "whirlwind romance" feeling.

Some good fast dating:

1. A quick coffee or bite
2. A dinner date
3. Doing something fun
4. Cooking at home

The key to make her fall in love is the feel that you two will be together (or that you're destined to be).
When that happens, sex becomes secondary and she can be "yours" before sex even happens.
In between, you will send texts, pictures, check-in on each other, and care for each other.

This works best with women who are very interested in you and with more conservative women.

10. Lead The "Perfect Day" Together (full-day romance date)

There is something magical about spending a long time together while passing through several different places and situations.

The popular movie "Before Sunrise" that we use as an example of bonding and connecting is the story of man and woman spending a day and night together.

"Before Sunrise", one of the most romantic movies in recent history, leverages the "full day together" technique

And albeit it's a niche movie, more than one woman shared a snapshot from that movie in their Tinder profiles.
That's because, deep down, they dream of something similar happening to them.

The song "Perfect Day" also references the arch of a full day together (and you can add it to your playlist, by the way).

> Just a perfect day
> **1. Drink sangria in the park**
> 2. And then later, when it gets dark / We go home
> Just a perfect day
> **2. Feed animals in the zoo**
> **3. Then later a movie, too**
> **4. And then home**
> Oh, it's such a perfect day
> (…)

How to set up “perfect days”

With a picnic example:

See Seduction University

11. Have Sex (Ideally, Orgasmic & Multi-Orgasmic)

If sex helps bonding and orgasms help to bond, multi-orgasms bond the most.

Being her “best” can be the cherry on the pie of your awesome personality, and make you even more the best package she’s ever had.

This works mostly for orgasmic women and sexually liberated women. And less well for non-orgasmic women, low sex drive women, or more sexually repressed women.

11.2. Do Slow & Longer Sexual Sessions

Slow sex making is great for making her fall in love.

Best of all if you gaze into each other’s eyes.

12. Take Her Out In Luxury

The “luxury whirlwind” with a high-power man is a high-reliability shortcut to make women swoon. Add romance, and she’s putty in your hands.

And it isn’t even about materialism.

It’s about the display of power and the indirect display of life effectiveness.
Almost all women are *wired* to fall for that.

It doesn’t work nearly as well for women who are born into luxury or used to it, but it works with most other women.

Even women who are used to a comfortable lifestyle can fall in love when taken to “the next level”.
Said Italian men’s dream-woman Manuela Arcuri on her fling with the sheik:

> Our relationship lasted around one year, it was like living a fairytale. I was in love
> (…)
> On a background of dream travels, luxury hotels, and gifts of all kinds

This method doesn’t necessarily need “top of line luxury” though because “next level” is relative.

I remember when I was living in Prague in a very large room centrally located right beside the metro.
Great top location, BUT it was in a shared flat and with barely OK furnishing (including Ikea crap). Truly nothing “great”.
But to a student I took back and who was originally from a village, it seemed *a lot.* She asked how much I was paying, I glossed over and let her imagine as I smiled (remember: avoid talking of hard cash, it’s crude). She literally covered her mouth in excitement and a little later started escalating *on me*.

13. Persuade Her, Change Her Mind

Women tend to fall in love when they’re with a man who is:

1. Effective in life

2. Effective with people
3. Skilled at frame control, mostly used for win-win
4. Persuasive

Sure, being able to fix a leaking pipe is part of being "effective in life", and it's a great skill.
But what women truly evolved to lust after is men who can make *other men* work and do things for them, or for the collective. So one of the most important -if not the most important- ways of being effective in life, is being effective with and through others.

And that's leadership & persuasion, power competence, and high-level social skills.

You display those both by going through life events together and, even more, directly with her.

For example, while discussing something, if you can persuade her *without turning it into a frame battle and "me VS you"*, just that by itself often make women fall in love.

Strategic Persuasion & Frame Control

See Seduction University

14. Uplift, Guide, Mentor

This is where seduction overlaps with general self-development.

Women fall in love when their partner is "so good" that he takes several important roles in their lives.

For example:

- **Spiritual guide**
- **Career mentor**
- **Social strategist advisor** to help them solve and improve relationships and workplace politics.

Or, you might have guessed it now, a father figure.

14.2. Use positive psychology for "uplifting leadership"

Many women (and men) are:

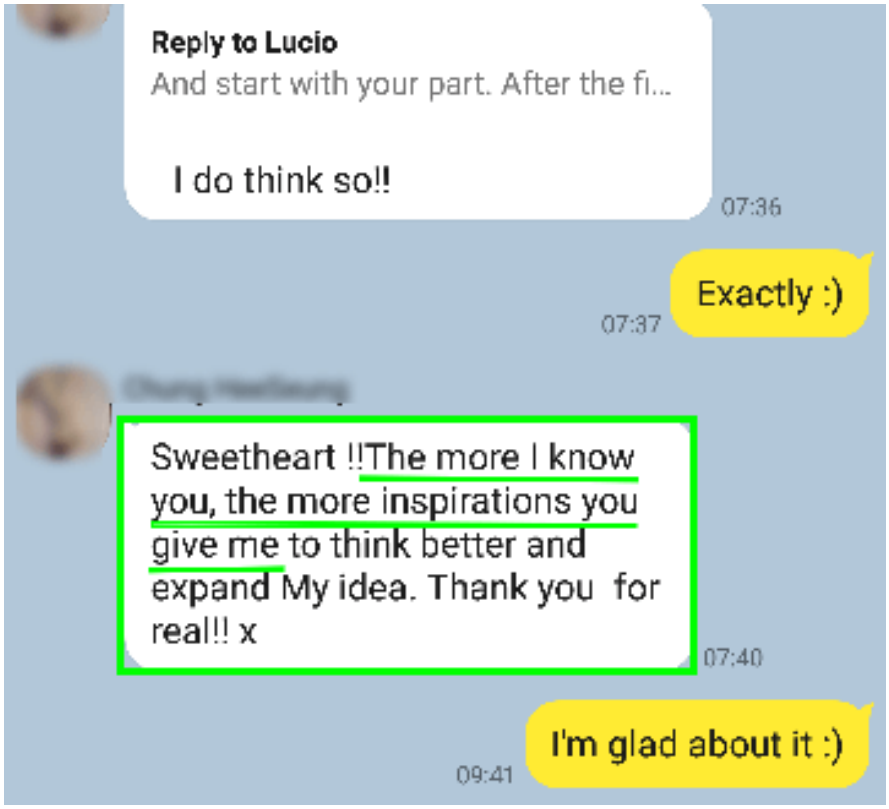
- Stuck into negative thought patterns
- Focused on the negatives

- Over-reactive to life events and others

That can seem like small stuff when you're past it, but it can make life miserable.

It's invaluable when you can step in and help them be happier and more optimistic with some basic "positive psychology" guidance.

You may become a "therapist figure", and it's important that anyone in this position uses this power wisely.
One example we shared in the relationship module of PU:



Repeat that a few times over, and she's deep in love.

15. Learn From The Best Mentors

For example…

One who is short, bold, and not very attractive.

And *still* had attractive women fall in love with him :).

He teaches it all in PU and SU.

SUMMARY

Women reliably fall in love when high-value men lead her through the romantic process.

This article showed you the steps to do provide women with that experience.

Note on the resources:
While we make our content scientifically referenced, *The Handbook on Relationships Initiation* explains there isn't much research on falling in love. Research focused more on attraction and established love -rather than the transition-.
However, we pieced together what's available, and mixed with our experience and observation.

This is an excerpt from **Seduction University**, where you find the most practical strategies and examples

Purple Cow: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 May 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In *Purple Cow* author Seth Godin teaches readers and marketers that in a saturated market advertising doesn't work anymore, and to spread their ideas and products, you need to be remarkable.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Issue 1: Too Many Products Advertised
  - Issue 2: Advertisement is Ineffective
  - Going Back to Old Advertising Ways: Word of Mouth
  - The Solution: Be Remarkable!
  - Taking Risk is The Only Option
  - Focus on Innovators
  - Target Ads and Measure
- Real-Life Applications
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- Review

Bullet Summary

- Consumers are overwhelmed by ads and messages: **ads and promotions don't work anymore**
- **Being "very good" is not enough**. Very good is playing boring
- **What works is "remarkable" and "unique".** You must be remarkable and get people talking about you. Then you can even charge a premium

Full Summary

About the Author:
Seth Godin is an American marketer, blogger, and author. He has written many books on marketing, productivity and creativity.

Issue 1: Too Many Products Advertised

Seth Godin says that there are so many products and advertisements these days that advertisement has lost much of its value.

You simply cannot get noticed in this deluge.

The author for example once asked people reading a newspaper in a lobby if they could name two advertisers with full-page ads in that newspaper.

Nobody could name two of them.

My Note: This is meaningless
Anecdotes don't mean much. But that anecdote means even less. To begin with, he asks for two advertisers, not just one. What if there were only one full-page ad in that newspaper?

And second, advertising also works at an unconscious level. Possibly, it works *mostly* at an unconscious level.

Issue 2: Advertisement is Ineffective

Seth Godin says that most general advertisement is ineffective.

Imagine you advertise X.

First, you need to find people who are interested in X among the multitude of people who aren't interested in X.

Even when you can reach people who are interested in X, only a fraction of those interested in X will be paying attention when your product shows.

Finally, only a fraction of that fraction will not be happy with what they already use and only a fraction of a fraction will be willing to take action on your advertisement.

My Note: Such a generalization, and plain not true.
Why then do advertisers spend billions in advertising?
This makes little sense. Advertising is an industry that kept on going for decades because it works. Plus, modern advertising is targeted advertising and works even better.
In short: some advertising doesn't work, but plenty of **advertising works.**

Going Back to Old Advertising Ways: Word of Mouth

Seth Godin says that before advertising all the buzz was through word of mouth.

Then advertising came along.

And in the beginning, it really worked well and there was a strong link between how much advertisement and sales.

But now we are in the era of advertisement saturation. And we should be going back to the word of mouth marketing.

With Facebook, Twitter, and social network it's even easier.

The Solution: Be Remarkable!

Today there are so many products that satisfy customers' needs is not enough.

And advertisement is ineffective.

What's the solution?

Be remarkable.

Taking Risk is The Only Option

Being safe means being boring and unremarkable.

And that's the safest way to sell little and go straight into oblivion.

The author mentions the car maker Buick, which always "kept it safe" with its design and, well… Never sold well.

Another "safe" strategy is to follow the market leader and copy them.
But that means you'll never be the leader.

Companies following that strategy will always fail in the long run because the market will invariably change and they won't be able to innovate.

Focus on Innovators

Seth Godin argues that you should not try to sell to the mass market and the average Joe.

But you should instead be remarkable and **sell to a smaller group of innovators**.

Those guys are the ones who are willing and excited to try new things. They will talk about your product and they will help you to make it grow.

Little by little, the early majority and later the majority and the laggard will catch on.

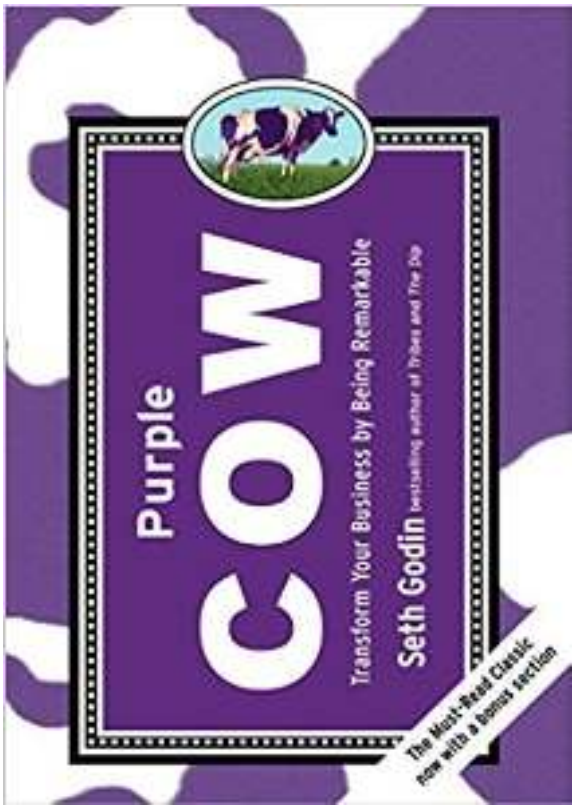
This is called the diffusion curve, and Godin takes this concept from the famous book Crossing the Chasm (without crediting it, as far as I can remember).

Target Ads and Measure

Seth Godin says that in this era where so few people pay attention it's paramount that you target your ads to the early innovators and to the people who care about your product.

That's the first step.

The second one is to measure and adjust your advertisement depending on the feedback you get.



Real-Life Applications

- **Don't Be Afraid of Being Remarkable**

One of the reasons many individuals and companies resist being remarkable is the fear of failure and ridicule. Don't!

Even if some might don't like you, you only need to be liked by a few to be successful. And you have an immense higher chance when you are remarkable.

CONS

- **Too Long For Such A Simple Messages**

Some of the ideas are good and noteworthy.
The main idea is also solid.
BUT you don't really need a whole book for it.

- **Some Bits Don't Make Much Sense to Me**

In his TED talk on Purple Cow Seth Godin shows a picture of multicolored packaging products that all try to be remarkable.

Then, he says that all products try to capture people's attention.

And what's his great plan for selling more?

Trying even harder to catch people's attention by being remarkable.

But, what a second… That's *exactly* what they were all trying to do!

It feels like telling to the soldier going to war that the secret to staying alive is to shoot the enemy first. Well, that's what they're all trying to do, isn't it?

- **Generic Advice That Doesn't Always Apply to Everyone**

There are plenty of niches where you can be unremarkable and complement a market leader product with an add-on product and make lots of money.

Investor and entrepreneur Jay Samith in Disrupt You talks about exactly that strategy. He says that today everyone's trying to be unique. And there are plenty of opportunities left for those who occupy the more boring area of the marketplace.

Samith has plenty of examples that he exploited himself to make lots of money while thriving with unremarkable products.

- **Quite Unscientific**

Purple Cow relies heavily on anecdotes, stories, and correlation -also read Fooled by Randomness on correlation bias-.

There are little numbers, data, and science.

Just Seth Godin's hot takes and opinions, turned into a book.

Review

Godin says he had the idea of the purple cow while watching a long field of cows in Europe.

However, there is a well-known brand in Europe that has a purple cow as a brand.

Should we believe Godin that he had his inspiration watching fields of mammals instead of following his sweet tooth in some shop?

I don't know.

But whichever the case, I like the book's concept.
However, frankly, albeit the main concept and idea are solid, **I don't think you need to read this book in its entirety**.
Purple Cow is a heavily padded book, stretching a couple of ideas to make it long enough to publish a book.

And I think you can get better to employ your time by getting the same message through a summary or a 10 minutes speech.

Read the best books collection or **get the book on Amazon**

The 10X Rule: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 June 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In *The 10X Rule* Grant Cardone says that the key to success is to multiply your goals, actions, and consistency by an order of 10.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- 10X Summary
  - Ethics of Success: Win-Win & Responsibility
  - 10X Your Thinking
  - 10X Your Effort
  - 10X Your Action
  - 10X Your Consistency
  - 10X Your "Fear Resilience"
- CONS
- PROS
- Grant Cardone Review
- 10X Review

Bullet Summary

- 10X your goals
- 10X your actions
- 10X your consistency

10X Summary

Grant says success rests on three beliefs' pillars.

You must believe that:

1. Success is important
2. It's your duty to be successful
3. There's an abundance of success possibilities

And he adds that you need a mindset of Extreme Ownership, meaning that whatever happens in your life is your responsibility.

> Nothing happens to you. Everything happens because of you

The 10X Rule In One Sentence

The 10X Rule says that 1) you should set goals that are 10X greater than what you believe you can achieve and 2) you should take actions that are 10X greater than what you believe is necessary to achieve those goals.

The biggest mistake most people make is setting goals that are too small, and not taking enough action.
Taking massive action is the only way to fulfill your true potential.

Ethics of Success: Win-Win & Responsibility

Grant embraces the "enlightened cynic" view of life and success.

He says that the world is not a zero-sum game, and because you win, it doesn't mean someone else has to lose. You both can win.

Most of all I liked his take on success:

You should consider it unethical not to live up to your potential.

And now let's see what exactly you should 10X:

10X Your Thinking

Cardone says that humans tend to underestimate their capabilities.

And since not maximizing your potential is the ultimate sin, you need to counter-balance that natural "underestimation bias".

Hence, to avoid leaving any potential on the table, multiply your goal by 10 times. Huge goals will motivate you and force you to come up with creative thinking to achieve them.

Are you worried that huge goals will set you up to lose? That's not an issue. Grant says it feels much better to fall short of a lofty goal than to fall short on a mediocre one.

10X Your Effort

Achieving your goals probably takes 10x what you think it takes.

So start by multiplying your estimate by 10. If it will take less, great, you'll be pleasantly surprised.

10X Your Action

Most people live in a limbo between no action and average action.

To reach your full potential though, you need *massive* action.
Cardone says that massive action takes actually no more effort than average action.

That is because people who take average action busy themselves with excuses, busy work, and playtime.
Massive action zeros in on your goals (your "One Thing"), and doesn't stop until you get there.

10X Your Consistency

Action is great, but bursts of action may not be enough.

What really gets you to success is the *consistency* of that action over time.
It's a message similar to what books such as "The Slight edge" and "The Compound Effect" also espouse. Both books also state that it's only consistent effort that will add up over time to major success.

Consistency has also been explored by actual psychologists and researchers, and many agree that it's indeed a key contributor to success.
For example, Angela Duckworth coined the term "Grit" and, in what frankly seems a bit of a "psychology in search of fame" claim, says that it matters more than innate talent (also see "pop psychology myths").

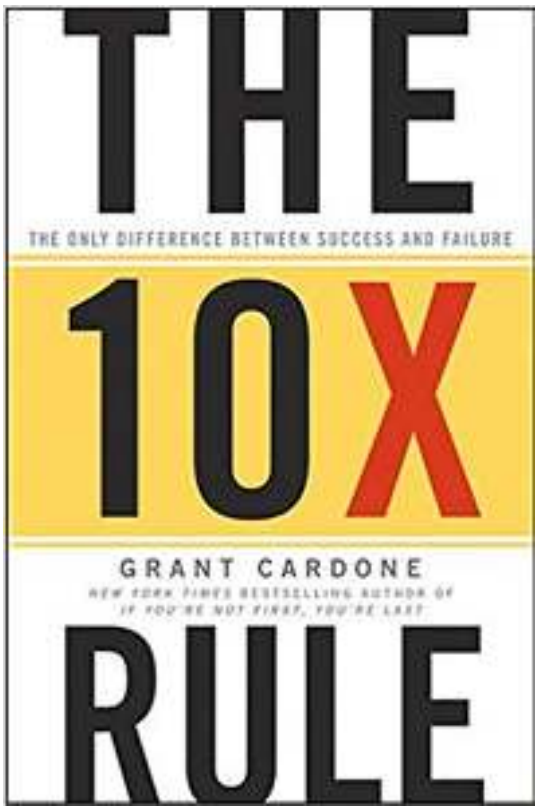
10X Your "Fear Resilience"

Everyone who seeks success must contend with some fears.

Cardone says that fear doesn't act alone, and that the biggest ally fear has is… Time.
Such as, **the more time you spend pondering over what could go wrong, the more fear increases**.

Successful people use fear instead as an indicator for action.

Such as, whenever you feel fear, you want to take immediate action.
Cardone's message here is similar to Mel Robbins' "5 Seconds Rule", and what the early pick-up artists called the "3 seconds rule".



CONS

The Power Moves criticism of "The 10X Rule" includes:

Could Be Briefer: A Blog Post, Rather Than A Book

Cardone applies the "10X rule" across several domains of work, mindsets, and personal success.
Yet, albeit those concepts can be helpful to some beginners, they're also relatively simple and may be summarized in a blog post.

No How To Book

The book is useful to instill some work ethics and a "dream big mindset". However, it doesn't go into details of either how one can install that mindset, or how to actually do anything that would make one successful.

Hard Work Alone Not Enough: Working Smart Matters

Hard work is important.
All else being equal, the person who works hardest will achieve more success.
However, good strategic -or even Machiavellian– thinking are also important. Such as, work hard yes, dream big.. But also work smart.

Hard Work Can Burn You Out

For a period in the self-help space there was a trend of hyping up hard work.

Someone referred to it as “hustle culture” or “porn hustle”, with Gary Vaynerchuck being one of the most ardent supporters.

I think it’s an important caveat to make that success is often built in the long run. You cannot -and probably should not- sprint the whole time.

As Ray Dalio says, you can look at yourself like a machine.
Machines need good keep-up and care as well.

PROS

Some Interesting, Potentially Helpful Concept

The concept of going for bigger goals is the same as the “moonshot” of Peter Diamandis in Bold and the popular self-help book “The Magic of Thinking Big“.

And while many entrepreneurs and narcissists do not need that reminder, many people *do* need to hear that.
It’s also very useful to help you not leave any potential on the table, since you may fall short of your 10Xed goal, but you will most likely maximize your potential in the process.

Grant Cardone Review

Without mincing words:

We’re not the biggest fans of Grant Cardone here.

We see typical guru/followers dynamics, talking down on the audience with teacher/pupil frames, and a lot of marketing without equally good content.

The 10x conference also seems a case of lots of sizzle and little steak, and it seems to be structured like a typical upsell event where you get very little value, much hyping up of the next product, and lots of selling for that next product (and the cycle continues with that next product).

All in all, albeit you can certainly learn something from Grant Cardone, we believe there are better people to learn from -including, probably, learning the real estate business-.

10X Review

The 10X Rule has the typical Grant Cardone style: loud, and somewhat repetitive.

We gotta be honest and preface it by saying that we’re not the biggest fans of either Grant Cardone, or of this book. Cardone didn’t look too good after his spat with Jordan Belfort, the author of “Straight Line Persuasion“.

However, we’re not saying that one cannot learn from the guy -or like him-.
And if you like Cardone and his exuberant style, you will like the 10X book -whether liking is also equivalent with “good for you”, we’ll leave that up to you to decide-.

But if Cardone he’s too over the top for you, then you can take a look at our best books list, and our full free book summaries repository.

Overall the 10X Rule is easy to read and tackles some basic mindsets for success.
Most of all, we liked the concept that maximizing your potential is your ethical duty.

Read more summaries here or get the book on Amazon.

The One Thing: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 June 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In “The One Thing” Gary Keller’s promotes the idea that to succeed in life you need to focus on one thing in life and ruthlessly prioritize that one thing, while mostly forgetting about all the rest.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. Start Out Thinking Big
  - 2. Prioritize Your Tasks: Pareto Principle
  - 3. The One Thing & The Focusing Question
  - 4. Habits: The Key to Success
  - 5. Focus on The One Thing (until it’s done)
  - 6. Pay Attention (And Conserve) Your Willpower
  - 7. Focusing on One Thing Means Saying No To Many Others
  - 8. Visualize The Process
  - 9. Let Chaos Pile Up
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Focus on one important thing in your life (your one thing)
- Prioritize daily on what will have the biggest impact on your one thing
- Do one thing at a time

Full Summary

About the Author: Gary Keller is a successful American entrepreneur and author.
He is the founder of Keller Williams a real estate company that, at one point, was the largest real estate company in the world by agent count and second in closed sales volume, and units sold.
So, we may add, Gary Keller is speaking from experience when he talks about “focusing on your one thing”.

1. Start Out Thinking Big

Think big.

Gary Keller tells the story of how Arthur Guinness (producer of Guinness beer) and J. K. Rowling (author of Harry Potter books) embarked on their life quest with huge expectations.

Guinness leased the beer factory for 9.000 years and Rowling envisioned seven books before even starting to write the first.

Keller says they were successful in no small part because they started out with huge vision and goals (also read: *The*

Magic of Thinking Big).

When You Think Small You Waste Your Potential

But what do most of us do instead?

We are intimidated by big thoughts and visions and we settle down for something "more realistic". But when we settle down for "something more realistic" we lower our future trajectory and we settle down for less than we could.

Success requires action, of course. But action requires thought. That's why we need to think big.

> Success requires action; but action requires thoughts: Think BIG!

2. Prioritize Your Tasks: Pareto Principle

Many of us have either done or gone through a task list at one point or another in our lives.

The One Thing makes a great point on common mistakes when starting said task lists: tackling the easiest first, the first on the lists or the most time-consuming.

That's a big mistake because not all tasks are the same.

Some won't do much of a difference if at all, while some others can provide you with a quantum leap towards your goals.

That's why we should all ruthlessly prioritize our tasks by the impact they will have on our goals.

Here's the question to achieve just that:

What's the ONE thing I can do, such that by doing it everything else will become easier or unnecessary?

And that's exactly the principle behind The One Thing:

3. The One Thing & The Focusing Question

That simple question right there will do two things for you:

1. Remind you of the one thing, your overarching goal you are after (long term)
2. Help you prioritize in the short term what you need to do

4. Habits: The Key to Success

Keller says that staying steadfast in the pursuit of your goal is not so much self-discipline as it is about habits.

Think of Michael Phelps, he says. He was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Such as, that he wasn't able to focus on just one thing.

Instead, he focused on just one thing: swimming every day.

My Note:
ADHD is a rather common diagnosis these days and not nearly as a handicap as The One Thing makes it out to be. However, the point is still valid.

Keller righteously says that once the habit has been formed it won't take nearly as much discipline to maintain it. And after it becomes an established part of your life, you can go back to "cruise control" or, even better, focus on building another empowering habit (also read *The Power of Habit*).

I like this quote on the subject:

> *Hard habits are difficult to build but make for an easy life. Easy habits don't require any effort but make for a hard life.*
>
> *–Brian Tracy*

5. Focus on The One Thing (until it's done)

Multitasking is not something to be proud of: **multitasking saps our efficiency**.

We can do a few things at the same time, yes, but one of those activities should be very easy. Like walking (doesn't require focus) and talking complex issues on the phone (we can fully focus on the issues).

But talking about complex issues while writing on another complex issue does not work. We cannot multitask with two activities that require our full focus and attention… *Unless we do both of them very sloppily*.

Also, as Ferris says in *The 4 Hour Workweek*, we don't work like computers CPU work and switching from one activity to another take time to re-adjust and we waste valuable time.

"Wasting time" doesn't sound impressive enough to you?

Well, just think this: it's estimated that office workers, interrupted on average every 11 minutes, spend one-third of the day recovering from distractions!

Don't waste a third of your day: focus on one thing at a time.

My Note:
while Keller is spot-on on multitasking, don't let that discourage you from looking at all ways you can become more efficient. For example, when I am doing repetitive tasks on my laptop I do listen to audiobooks (for example: adding affiliate links on this page).
And when I'm doing easier tasks such I might listen to easier Youtube videos.

6. Pay Attention (And Conserve) Your Willpower

Your willpower is like a fuel tank. It will run out after you've run with it for a long time.

It's a phenomenon called ego depletion.

Keller says you must work with that in mind to be efficient: choose carefully what you need to pay attention to and do the most important things first.

My Note:
I prefer the analogy of willpower as a muscle as it can also grow over time. Also the notion that willpower is limited has been challenged and you can read more in my pop-psychology article.

7. Focusing on One Thing Means Saying No To Many Others

To focus on your one thing you must learn to say no to many more other projects and opportunities.

If you receive too many requests, think of ways to reduce them, or learn to say no without sounding mean about it. Bottom line is, you gotta say no to say yes to your one thing.

Also read:

- **Say no while maintaining a good relationship**
- **How to be assertive**

> Assertiveness: 6 Steps to Empowered Communication

8. Visualize The Process

These days everyone talks about the importance and usefulness of visualizing.

I liked though that Keller adds a further step to it: don't just visualize your goal, but visualize the steps that will get you there.

Students who visualized themselves studying VS students who just visualized getting top grades reported higher levels of satisfaction while studying.

9. Let Chaos Pile Up

Keller says that as you focus on one thing your life will keep happening in the meanwhile. He says that, at a certain point, you should come to accept chaos as an inevitable part of life.

My Note: this resonated with me a lot as I read it.

I always used to feel bad about my house not being perfectly clean. Well, now I know that it's a normal part of focusing on knowledge acquisition instead.

Real Life Applications

- **Ruthless Prioritization**

This is something that I'm really sold into.

I had a mindset where I often would keep my best moves for the future. That way I could lull myself in the idea that "the best is yet to come". BS. Life is short, always ask yourself what's the biggest bang for the buck you can do *right now*.

- **Accept Some Chaos While You Purse Your One Thing**

When you focus on one thing you know that you can expect other areas of your life to suffer. It's OK.

This was a very important concept for me and now I accept more openly that, well, my house won't be as perfectly clean as I like it to be.

CONS

Starting With Huge Vision?

The author picks a few examples to make the point you must start with huge vision. But that does not prove the effectiveness of the method (it's a typical case of inductive reasoning fallacy, also read *Fooled by Randomness*).

I can think of as many people who started with big dreams and got crushed by a much harsher reality than they expected.

As a matter of fact, I think that envisioning a huge goal come true before you even start can be dangerous because the first drawbacks can discourage you.

As Keller himself says, better to also focus on the hard work to get there. And as The One Thing itself quotes: the secret to getting ahead is getting started (even if you don't have your grand vision yet).

> The secret to getting ahead is getting started

PROS

It Makes Sense: To Succeed In A Highly Competitive World, You Must Focus On One Thing

The One Thing is somewhat of a happy crossover between Grit by Angela Duckworth (stay with one thing) and Start with WHY by Simon Sinek (find your one thing).

To which Keller adds ruthless prioritization.

Review

The One Thing is a great book.
Lots of wisdom and lots of sensible information to live a fulfilling and successful life.

It's a five-star book (but I give it four stars here because I am adamant about keeping my 5 stars to a very limited number of books).

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

The Go-Giver: Does Naive Giving Work for Success? (Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 June 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Go-Giver instructs readers to take a different approach to personal success, switching focus from taking more to giving more. The authors' rationale is that, by social exchange theory, giving increases your social credit and others will eventually give back.

TPM Strategic Note: Giving is crucial but ONLY if strategic, and to worthy recipients
The Go-Giver promotes giving as the path to success—but without power awareness, character assessment and effective calculativeness, that strategy is likely to backfire.
See our key article on **smart giving**

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - The Law of Value
  - The Law of Compensation
  - The Law of Influence
  - The Law of Authenticity
  - The Law of Receptivity
  - Full Circle: It's About Who You Are
- TPM Analysis
  - 1. Naive Self-Help: Giving Without Any Considerations Doesn't Work
  - 2. Giving Isn't The Only Way to Success
- Review

Overview

- The more you give, the more you get <– TPM only if done strategically
- The more you care about others, the more you'll influence people
- Be open to receiving: it's the other side of the coin of giving

Notes

This is a quick overview of the laws:

1. **Law of Value** — Your worth is determined by how much more you give compared to what you receive
2. **Law of Compensation** — The number of people you serve determines your compensation
3. **Law of Influence** — Your influence is in direct proportion to how much you place others' interests first
4. **Law of Authenticity** — The most valuable gift you can offer is your true self
5. **Law of Receptivity** — Be open to receiving because receiving is complementary to giving

The Law of Value

It's not about making your customers pay more, but it's about giving them more.

It shouldn't be a strategy, but it should be a mindset. You must love giving.

The author says that the biggest fortunes of this world have been amassed by people who loved giving and were passionate about sharing their products and value.

And those same fortunes are squandered by people who focus on getting.

A key concept in this chapter is this: value comes first, and money is simply a consequence and a direct result of the value you provide.

TPM Note: Good business approach and mindset
Focusing on product quality is something that we always prioritize here at TPM as well. Product quality is the interpersonal equivalent of competence: it sets the foundation.

The Law of Compensation

How much you love giving is your potential. How many people you actually touch and serve, that's more directly related to your actual income.

It's all under your control: find more people to whom to give, and earn more as a consequence.

Serving

Burg & Mann say there are three different tiers to work:

- Survive: when you meet your basic needs
- Save: the first step towards abundance
- Serve: when you really make a contribution to the world

The Go-Giver is tailored towards making you a server.

The Law of Influence

When you make it about others, you start building an army of ambassadors working for you.

They might not directly buy from you, but they have your best interest in mind because you have theirs.

These people will always refer to you when they're looking for someone selling your services.

Contrary to The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, the authors recommend you **forget about win-win**. Make your win 100% about the other person instead.

Burg & Mann say you need not worry about your interests because your interests will always be taken care of when you put others first.

My note: Don't forget about win-win
There are some people who will take and walk away, or try to cheat you. And you might be better off recognizing these takers before you give and give.

- Read: why you need to be bad to be good.

> To Be Good, You First Need to Be Bad: Here's Why

The Law of Authenticity

No matter what you sell, you are the most important part of your pitch.

The authors say that at most technical skills account for 10%, and the rest is people's skills and personality. And personality is even bigger than people's skills.

And what's the biggest factor of personality?

It's authenticity.

- Also read: Daring Greatly by Brene Brown
- Vulnerability is NOT power

The Law of Receptivity

Refusing to receive is as bad as focusing on getting only.

Because if you don't equally appreciate receiving, you are basically denying the gift of others.

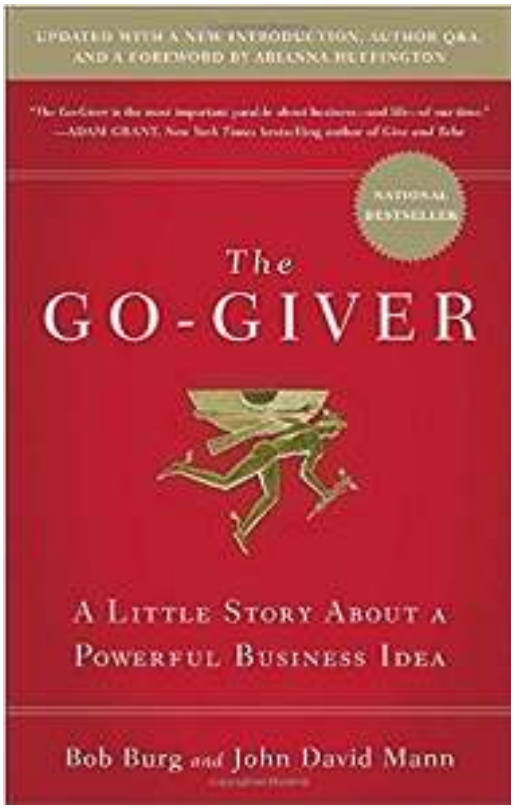
Finally, the authors say that all the giving in the world will not bring you success unless you open yourself up to receiving back in equal measures.

Which makes a lot of sense :).

Full Circle: It's About Who You Are

I liked the last chapter of The Go-Giver as it focuses on how you measure success.

It's not about whether or not you get the account you wanted or make the sale.
It's about who you are.



TPM Analysis

I have a few red flags to raise here:

1. Naive Self-Help: Giving Without Any Considerations Doesn't Work

The mindset of giving is good.

But as for everything, it requires balance.

And, in this case, it also requires power intelligence and strategic thinking.

And I say it as a former salesperson who couldn't take it anymore of people talking about sales as "going to war" and "being in the trenches" (plus the CEO who referred to sales as "the art of bullshiting", so great to do sales for that guy…. NOT!).

We need some of that Go-Giver spirit for some people to understand that business is about providing value first.

But at the same time, don't be Pollyanna about it.

You will meet bad people on your path and you will meet ruthless people who will take, take take. And then come back to take more.

Read more here on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

2. Giving Isn't The Only Way to Success

As a website built on the realization that there are some dark people and you need to know how to play dirty with them, I need to state this point clearly.

The book seems to hint that the only way to be rich and successful is to give without caring for your own interests and that any other way won't take you far.

Not true.
As Adam Grant shows, the givers who win in life are *strategic* givers.
Also read "enlightened cooperation" here:

> The 'Smart Collaborator': Giving For Win-Win, Without Being Exploited

Furthermore, it promotes the naive and untrue myth that taking, narcissism, or Machiavellianism can't lead to success.
And as we know here, there's plenty of Machiavellianism at the top.

Aggression, cheating and scheming also are possible routes to achieving many trappings of success.
Giving and giving without any strategy isn't.
So, again, don't be Pollyanna.

Review

The Go-Giver is an interesting read that takes the good concept of giving to a dangerous extreme.

On the positive, it's a great reminder that your success depends on how well you serve others (see: the law of social exchange and WIIFM).

As Peter Diamandis, author of Bold said: if you want to become a billionaire, help a billion people.

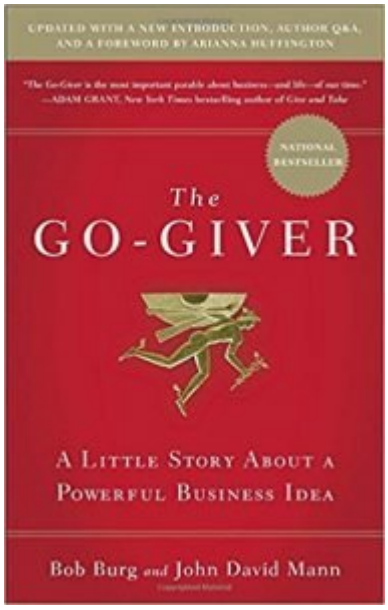
At the same time, we don't advise on TPM to "give, give, give", because you will meet ahole who will "take, take, take" without giving anything back and smiling all their way to the bank behind your back.

Sometimes you need to put your foot down and demand what's fair, or else some people may never give it to you.
And, generally speaking, it's better to be more strategic about your giving in life because **neither you nor the world will gain if all you do is waste and deplete resources and time with random giving.**

Please read this article on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

The Go-Giver Summary: Strategic Giving vs. Naive Giving



The Go-Giver instructs readers to take a different approach to personal success, switching focus from taking more to giving more. The authors' rationale is that, by social exchange theory, giving increases your social credit and others will eventually give back.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-go-giver-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
2.8

Gorilla Mindset: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 July 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Gorilla Mindset is a self-development book trying to cover all the basics of self-development, spanning from mindsets to nutrition to body language.

⍰♂TPM's Take: **Why This Review Exists**

We review this book to provide a **critical, in-depth analysis** that goes beyond the surface-level advice common in self-help. Our goal is to filter content based on **scientific rigor, psychological accuracy, and practical, real-world results.**

This review of *Gorilla Mindset* serves as a case study in how we apply our principles of critical thinking. While the book contains useful foundational concepts for beginners, this review provides adds an **advanced perspective**—read on to learn how to apply a discerning eye to self-help and build a solid foundation based on what truly works.

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Bullet Summary

- Think of what you want in life and prioritize based on who and what moves you towards your goals
- Lift weights, eat lots of vegetables
- Don't buy for status: shift your mindset from consumer to producer

Full Summary

About the Author:
Mike Cernovic is an American right-wing social media personality and some may say a 'conspiracy theorist'.
He initially labeled himself alt-right, but later dissociated from the movement.

Intro

Cernovic introduces to the readers what he calls "Gorilla Mindsets", which are empowering ways of thinking, behaving, and seeing the world.

I will structure this summary around those key aspects.

1. Develop a Growth Mindset

Cernovich begins Gorilla Mindset with an overview of Carol Dweck's research on growth and fixed mindset.

People with a growth mindset look for ways to grow while fixed mindset people believe their traits are fixed so they shy away from challenges.

Read more here:

- **How to develop a growth mindset**

> How To Develop a Growth Mindset: Here's How I Did It

2. Develop an Abundance Mindset

There are two types of mindsets around abundance.

Think of them as two polar opposites on a continuum:

- **Scarcity mindset**: people with a scarcity mindset believe that everything around them is limited, and that leads to a limiting life
- **Abundance mindset**: people with an abundance mindset instead focus on opportunities and they are more likely to take those opportunities

Says Cernovic:

> **The world is either scarce beyond measure or abundant beyond measure**

3. Change the Conversation You Have With Yourself

Self-talk, says Cernovic, is a key component of our lives.

Yet most of us talk to ourselves in a terrible fashion, making sweeping negative generalizations. Like "why am I so stupid" or "I'm such an idiot".

The author proposes four ways to improve self-talk:

1. Talk to yourself in the mirror
2. Record your self-talk without censoring, then play it a few days later and see how silly it sounds
3. Ask yourself questions instead of negative statements
4. Use affirmations and mantras (ie.: "I'm unstoppable", or "even if I don't win I grow stronger")

Ask yourself why you are making those affirmations to make them more powerful

TPM Note: Affirmations were popular in self-help in the 1990's, but are of limited effect, especially when people lack foundational self-esteem.

4. Choose How You Frame Life

Depending on how you see things, they can be positive or negative.

If you choose to view drawbacks as motivation to make you grow and push forward even harder, chances are you will indeed push forward, grow stronger, and reach your goals.

If you see it as the end of the world and the bane of your life, then chances are it will indeed be the end of your attempts.

Learn more about the basics of frames and frame control:

> Frame Control Power Dynamics: The Basics

5. Be Present to Be Mindful

The author says that being mindful means being present and being engaged -"checked in", he calls it-.

You don't need to meditate, he says -with which I didn't fully agree- you simply need to be present in the now, feel your own body and emotions.

When you walk, walk with a purpose and be conscious of your movement and your posture.

When you talk to someone, be fully present, don't check your phone and use self-talk if you need a reminder. You can tell yourself something like "there is no other place I would rather be".

6. How to Change Your State

The author uses NLP and this example:

1. Go into a room by yourself
2. Get mindful and answer the question “how do you feel right now”
3. Create a sphere of emotional space (use movement to get into a different state, feel invulnerable and imagine a force around you to protect you)
4. Reinforce the emotional state

TPM Note: State-changing was popular in self-help and pick-up artist circles in the 1990s and early 2000s. It’s not useless, but advanced state-shifts must happen in real time. Better yet, advanced operators cant act independetly of ‘state’

7. Think What You Want & Prioritize

The author advises the readers to reflect on what they really want and then focus on that.

Here are four questions to realize what you really want:

- What you want more of
- What you want less of
- Is the person or activity you’re engaging in bringing *more* of what you want?
- Is the person or activity you’re engaging in bringing *less* of what you want?

Zero in on what will move towards what you want and say no to things and friends who are sidetracking you.

And to learn to say no:

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

8. Take Care of Your Body

The author stresses that the mind and body are connected and dedicates a whole section to body and training and proper nutrition.

In a nutshell:

- Sleep as much as you need
- Lift weights
- Do cardio as well, but lifting is priority
- Establish an empowering morning routine
- Do something physical every day
- Do use or end with cold water during showers
- Eat enough fibers
- Eat lots of vegetables
- People bash fruits, but not true: eat less of them than vegetables but fruits are OK
- If you can’t take enough vegetables per day, do vegetable smoothies
- Throw away all junk food (out of sight, out of mind)

Quote:

> **No matter how you feel before the gym, you'll feel better afterward**

9. Money Talks

Money is not bad or evil. People with money are also free to make a lot of good in the world.

Money is important and when you have money, you have more freedom. Plus the strength and power of not compromising on your values.

Basically the author suggests that it's poor people who wheel and scheme and lie because they have no other choice.

The author quotes The Millionaire Next Door and says that people who look rich often fuel their bragging out of debt and are not really rich.

The real rich don't buy stuff to show off, and he exhorts the readers to do the same. He invites us to stop buying brands to impress people and instead buy what makes sense and save for the future and for rainy days.

The author says he likes money and wants to make more, but also asks the readers:

Do you need more money, or do you think you need more money to escape your current unhappy situations?

Because chances are you don't really need to make more money to make yourself happier or improving your current situation.

10. Think More Like a Producer, Less Like a Consumer

What's the difference?

Here is its:

- Consumers are all about buying new things and new shiny toys
- Producers think of what they can develop and sell. They see what others are selling well, and think of the marketing and copy that went into it, and how they can also use it

11. How to Invest

Three ideas to invest:

- **Invest in the stock market as an investor**

Mike Cernovich says to be an investor and not a trader (they all lose in the long run)
He recommends investing in ETF every month because the market will eventually always go up.

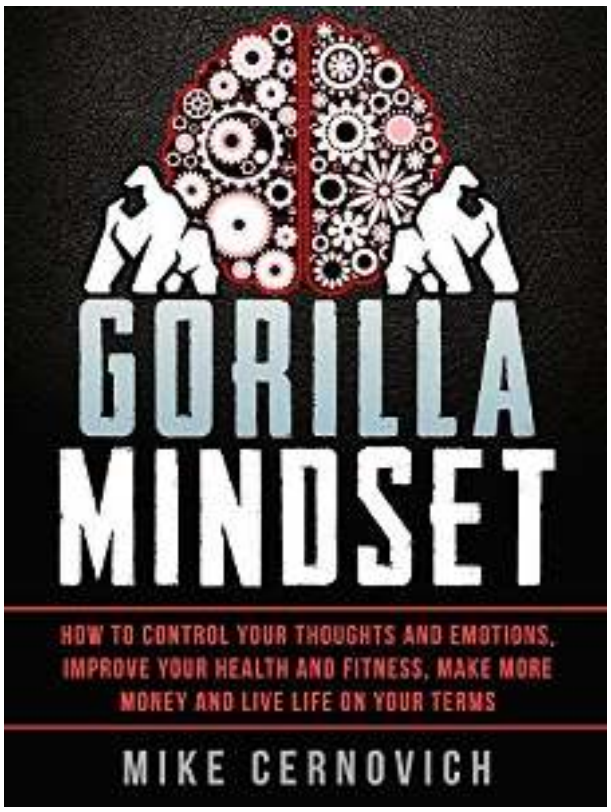
TPM Note: the market does not necessarily 'always go up'. And even less so in the short time span of what's useful to people (a few decades top)

- **Invest in yourself**

Most of all, though, the author says the corporation you should always invest the biggest in is: the corporation of yourself.

- **Minimize your taxes**

Taxes are high, and cost you a huge chunk of your money. Seek to minimize them.



CONS

Cover Lots of Topics = Spreading Itself Thin

The author ranges from mindsets to how to train to posture to money management and investment.

It's not a bad idea per se, there is a space and a time for breadth, but the downside is that it necessarily ends up being shallow on many of those topics.

Imprecise At Times

Here is an example from a quote:

> (…) but keep in mind that if you eat fat and carbs together and there is no proteins in there that's gonna be a big problem for you **(how?)**.
> Another tip is that if you're going to eat that kind stuff, or if you have a big dinner hour or a family dinner or something like that try to eat some fiber"

The recommendation may be good, but Cernovich should have probably fixed the language to make it more precise and accurate, lest people will think of him as less knowledgeable.

More Advanced Readers May Find it Basic

Gorilla Mindset is an entry-level book on self-development. More advanced readers might find it basic, at times, covering stuff they already know without adding much depth.

Sometimes, Advice is Not True

Of course, not a strike against the book or author. It's just natural when you try to cover all that much ground.

Sometimes it feels Gorilla Mindset took some of the most popular advice on a certain topic and used it, without a

deeper analysis.

For example, the idea that “the market will always go up” simply makes no sense (also read: Fooled by Randomness).
Will the market go up if a nuclear world war started?

PROS

Good Book for Beginners of Self-Help

Gorilla Mindsets covers quite a lot of the basics in a very quick and compact format, which makes it a good book for beginners in self-development.

Quick, Compact & Dense With Plenty of Valid Stuff

No time waste, no fillers, good content. I like that. Need more of this.

Review

Gorilla Mindset is a good book on some foundational aspects of self-development.

There is nothing groundbreaking, but it provides a good overview of some important topics.
More advanced students may use it as a refresher, but otherwise find it a bit lacking in the details.

If you have been in any shape or form into self-development, much of the information will not be new. And it might not add much new information to what you already know.

Check the **best books collection** or see a more advanced:

- **Foundations of self-development**

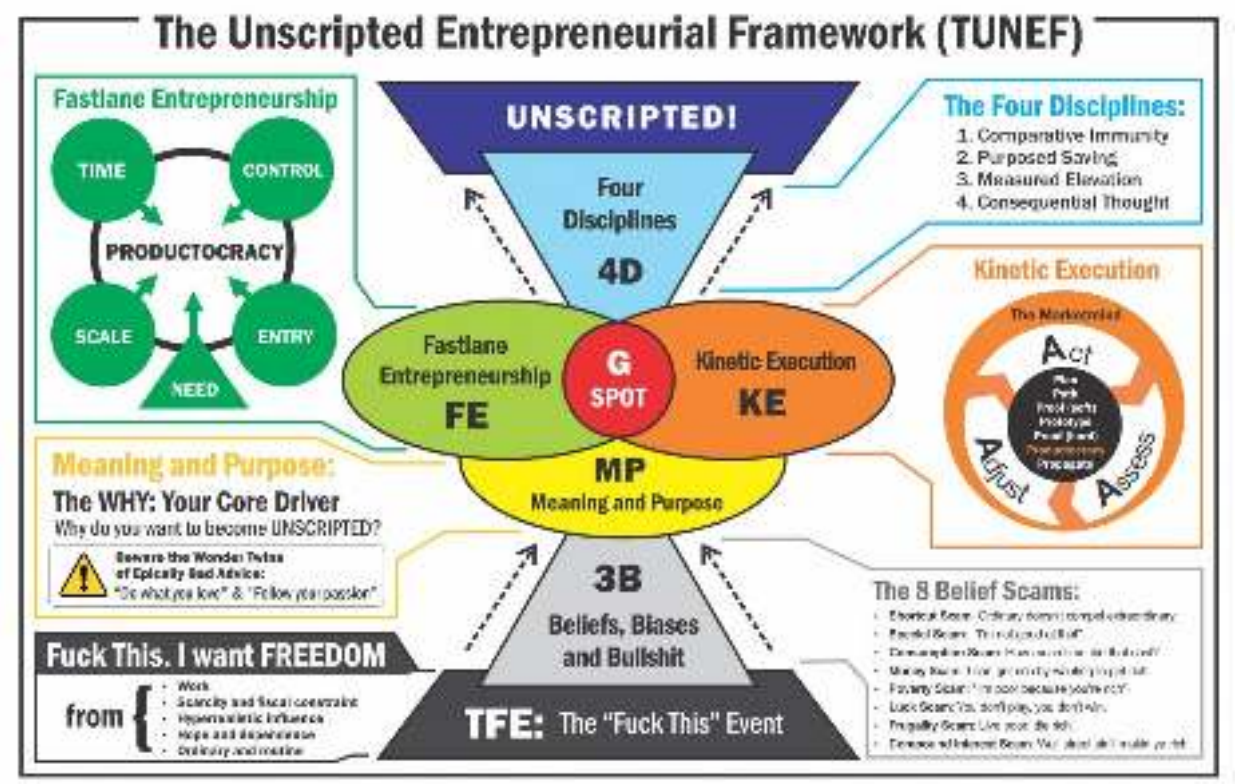
> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

Unscripted: The Entrepreneurship Approach Most Aligned With TPM (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 July 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Unscripted is a book by MJ DeMarco in which he shares his blueprint for freedom, abundance, and happiness through red-pill awakening and choosing entrepreneurship over employment.

TPM Strategic Takeaway: Power-aware look at entrepreneurship, personal power, and systemic manipulation
While most business books teach you how to be a better "cog" (Efficiency), and squirrel (save up), DeMarco teaches how to own the "Machine" and enjoy a life of freedom(Sovereignty).
TPM power model of entrepreneurship ↗



Thanks to ApeRunner from TheFastLane forum
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- MORE WISDOM
  - Approach people with a giver mentality
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  - Money does buy happiness
  - Personal empowerment comes from being your own judge
- QUOTES
- CONS
  - Less random railing might gain larger appeal (and authority)
- PROS
- REVIEW

Takeaways

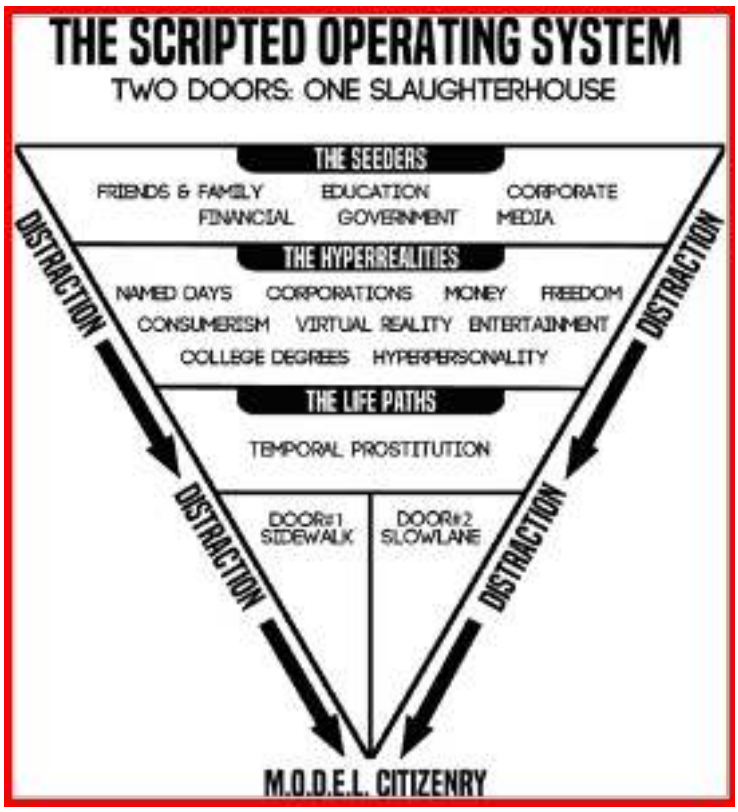
1. **Open your eyes to the possibility of a dream life**: The lie of either "employment and saving" or "employment and debt consumption" (scripted) is holding you to a far better life (unscripted)
2. **Become an entrepreneur**: To live the unscripted life, free and happy, you need to become an entrepreneur, and to become a successful entrepreneur you need to…
3. **Internalize positive mindsets and execute**: including a meaning and purpose to succeed and stay on it, plus the stamina to work long hours, and the resilience to stay on it until successful
4. **Provide a value-adding product to the world**: Focus not on making money, but on providing value, and money will come (far more easily and reliably. Or, at least, far more honestly)

Notes

About the Author:
MJ DeMarco is a semi-retired entrepreneur, investor, author, and creator of the popular forum on entrepreneurship, "The Fastlane Forum".
He is also the author of "The Millionaire Fastlane", a book that we reviewed here on TPM, highly appreciated, and recommend.

About the Reviewer:
Lucio Buffalmano is a social scientist, founder of ThePowerMoves.com, and he has been living the *Unscripted* life pursuing his mission and passion. He also pursues the 'productrocacy' with a relentless focus on countinously improving *Power University* to help good men succeed.

The Pre-Planned Life Into The System Is A Sucker's Trade



> Your life was sold into a Machiavellian system where your lifetime role was already SCRIPTED for an uninspiring performance. You've been unwittingly cast to play a rigged carnival game masquerading as life, which few win and many lose…

Unscripted, says the author, unveils that sucker's trade of a scripted life, and helps you live the life of your dreams.

The Scripted Men

Scripted men are "M.O.D.E.L." citizens, such as:

M.O.D.E.L. CITIZENSHIP:

- **(M)ediocre**
- **(O)bedient**
- **(D)dependent**
- **(E)ntertained**
- **(L)ifeless**

Model citizens also become "seeders", such as, they promote the scripted, obedient, and lifeless life.

There are two types of people who fail to reach the unscripted life:

Sidewalkers (the hoppers)

Sidewalks live a modest life with little saving, and finance their consumption on debt.

From a mindset point of view, they focus on others, rather than on their on themselves, their goals, and their own empowerment.

I can't avoid but copying this because this description is a true masterpiece:

> Temporal prostitution is a way of life. Always needing to work and always loathing the obligation, Sidewalkers

> routinely waste time in superfluous hyperrealistic proxies: sports, television dramas, Internet comment wars. You see, the Sidewalker doesn't play the game of life; he spectates. He comments. He opines. He heckles the million-dollar athlete from the cheap seats. Culturally plugged in, Sidewalkers can shoot the shit by the water cooler for hours, dispensing a wide variety of opinions: who the Dallas Cowboys should have drafted; how George R.R. Martin should have written Game of Thrones; and how dare Showtime cancel Dexter? Instead of being the best he can be, the Sidewalker aspires to be the best copy of someone else: an athlete, a famous person, a fictional character, or some other person not annexed by the SCRIPT.

BOOM, couldn't have put it any better.
For an antitodote, also read "making of the ubermesch":

> Empowered Individualism: Why the Individual Must Come First

Slow Laners (the ants)

If sidewalkers are lazy and/or are kept in the scripted life by their over-spending the slow laners do the opposite:

Slow laners consume little and save and invest in the hope of future freedom.

I quote DeMarco here:

> At the heart of the Slowlane is a reasonable idea: stop consuming.
> However, applied within the SCRIPTED OS, stop consuming means stop living. Specifically, start depriving yourself. Settle for less. Lower your expectations. Defer spending, defer experiencing—vacations, restaurants, movies—and defer life until retirement.
> While the Sidewalker is leashed and collared by consumption and debt, the Slowlaner is leashed and collared by deprivation and hope. (…)
> Sadly, changing paths does nothing but change your corporate master. Whereas a Sidewalker is broadly owned horizontally through a variety of corporations (banks, media, consumer products), the Slowlaner is vertically owned by just one corporate master. Your new corporate owner? Wall Street.
> You see, whenever you put your financial future into Wall Street's hands, you're essentially saying, "Hope and time is my plan for financial freedom."

Almost all the popular personal finance books, such as Tony Robbins' "MONEY Master The Game" sell -or trick you into- the slow lane.

DeMarco describes it with brilliant humor:

> Of course, these books don't overtly say, "Be cheap," but hide behind slippery phrases like "the simple life" or "frugal living." Some bloggers make a living on the entire concept, as if dumpster-diving for expired meat behind the Safeway is so brilliant. Regardless of the words beating you stupid, the concept is ridiculous and oxymoronic.
> Scarcity does not create abundance.

The problem with that approach is not just the wait, but it's also the hope component.
Hope you'll live long enough, hope the stockmarket keeps going up, hope you won't get sacked, etc. etc.

What "Unscripted" Looks Like

Early in the introduction MJ DeMarco outlines how the unscripted life feels like:

> Life. Liberty. And the pursuit of entrepreneurship. It's awaking in the morning and pinching yourself black-and-blue—that OMG, this is my life, and it's freaking awesome. You live in your dream house, but there's no mortgage. No alarm clock, no boss, no bills. No claims on the day's time other than what you choose. It's making more money before breakfast than you made for an entire week at your last job. It's a crazy expensive car parked in your garage, a victorious symbol that your dreams no longer sleep in fantasies, but are awake with reality.

The author says that life exists because he's been living it for nearly 20 years.
And so have many of the people who learned from him, and… It could be *you* as well.

Unscripted meaning being your own boss, living the good life the way you want to live it.

How Unscripted Feels Like

The author says he can't describe the dream unscripted life because that depends on you.

It also depends on you how much you need to make it happen.

But he can describe how it feels like with a list of "fuck you" that reject the scripted life, and push you towards unscripted life:

> Being charged an arm and leg for a mortgage? Fuck you. I'll pay cash.
>
> Need to work next weekend and miss the kid's playoff game? Fuck you. I quit.
>
> Stock market sinking and threatening retirement? Fuck you. The stock market doesn't fund my retirement.
>
> Can't go on vacation until someone gives permission? Fuck you. I leave tomorrow.
>
> Can't wear that cool outfit on casual Fridays? Fuck you. I'm wearing only underwear all day.
>
> Don't like your annual 2 percent pay raise? Fuck you. I'll make 200 percent more next year.
>
> As "fuck you" implies, UNSCRIPTED is about pure, unadulterated life and liberty. Life means owning your time and thoughts while curating your existence.

The unscripted life is based on freedom, personal power, and personal choice.
DeMarco says it's based on 5 freedoms:

1. **Freedom from work**
2. **Freedom from scarcity and fiscal constraint** the "freedom to walk into a Starbucks and order what you want", jokes the author while poking fun at the personal finance "gurus"
3. **Freedom from hyperrealistic influence**: "*The very definition of UNSCRIPTED means not being influenced by SCRIPTED trivialities. Pop culture, celebrity worship, and pro athletes are "no contest" to the life I'm leading.*"
4. **Freedom from hope and dependence**: the slow lane hopes and depends on the stock market, the housing market, and the job market
5. **Freedom from ordinary and routine**: do, wear, buy, live, and pursue whatever you want

If You're "Interested" In Entrepreneurship, But Don't Go For It, You Don't Want It Badly Enough

Or, as DeMarco puts it:

"It doesn't hurt bad enough".

What can help you push over the edge are what the author call "Fuck This Events" (FTE).

However, there are major threats to reaching the "FTE event" that'll push you into entrepreneurship, and they are:

Threat #1: Mediocre comfort

> Give a man an OK job that pays just enough to provide mediocre comfort and I'll show you a man that will keep his job indefinitely.

The author says that the "just enough" is by design and part of the systemic-level and and business-level manipulation.
He says that Henry Ford only gave his workers Saturday free so that they could consume more, and he could profit more.
Says the author:

> The five-day, forty-hour workweek is a SCRIPTED tool for obedience, keeping you occupied, clothed, and fed, and it's just enough to keep weekends earmarked as a leisurely celebration officiated by consumption.

DeMarco says he witnesses countless people on his forum who have "fake FTE" moments.
They announce they're starting, they'r becoming entrepreneur, they're ready to take off… And then they disappear, back to their "just comfortable enough life".

Finally, making the jump to entrepreneruship will likely require some initial hard work and sacrifice.
And that's too much for the people who are "just barely comfortable enough" with their 2 days free per week.

Threat #2: Your guarded pride and ego

The author says that if you can't get a minimum-wage job, you can't be an entrepreneur.

Entreprenerus can go for long stretches of time without much money.

My Note: I only partially agree
Most entrepreneurs think it's cool to "hustle", and a poor entrepreneur is a very different feel from a poor minimum-wage worker.
There is an ego threat, but it's slightly different. It's the threat of those who have been well-off all their life, and can't take a lifestyle "cut".

Threat #3: Responsibility

This is for those who are too tied up and "held hostage" within the scripted system of debts and obligations, that they can't unscript.

Says the author in one of the many hilarious passages:

> For example, every so often during an interview, I'm asked if I have any advice for someone with four ex-wives, seventeen kids from six different women, nine credit cards, two new cars, and a bad job. Really? Not sure I have any advice, at least the type of advice you'd want to hear. How about keep your damn pants zipped? Quit buying shit with money you don't have? Make better choices? With such a *robust* personal resume, this person doesn't have a money problem—he has a decision-making problem. And until that changes, nothing will change, no matter what my advice is.

Threat #4: Fear

Of course, you may have seen this coming.

However, a “real FTE” sees no fear. In my opinion, a born entrepreneur sees no fear because he sees no alternatives.
Or, alternatively, the worst case alternative scenario of being poor and struggling all his life is better than being scripted.

Pursuing The Dream *IS* The Dream

The cynics say of guys like DeMarco that “he’s selling a dream”.
But, DeMarco says, those cynics don’t have proxy to anything but their own mediocrity.

But, even more important, it’s not necessarily succeeding that is the dream.
The dream is in the *pursuit*:

> What these fools can’t see is that pursuing the dream is the dream itself. It’s the process. The failures, trials, and tribulations. It’s the self-growth, the self-awareness, and the self-discovery that occur during a dream pursuit. To sell the dream is to awaken the dream—and once it’s alive, you become alive.

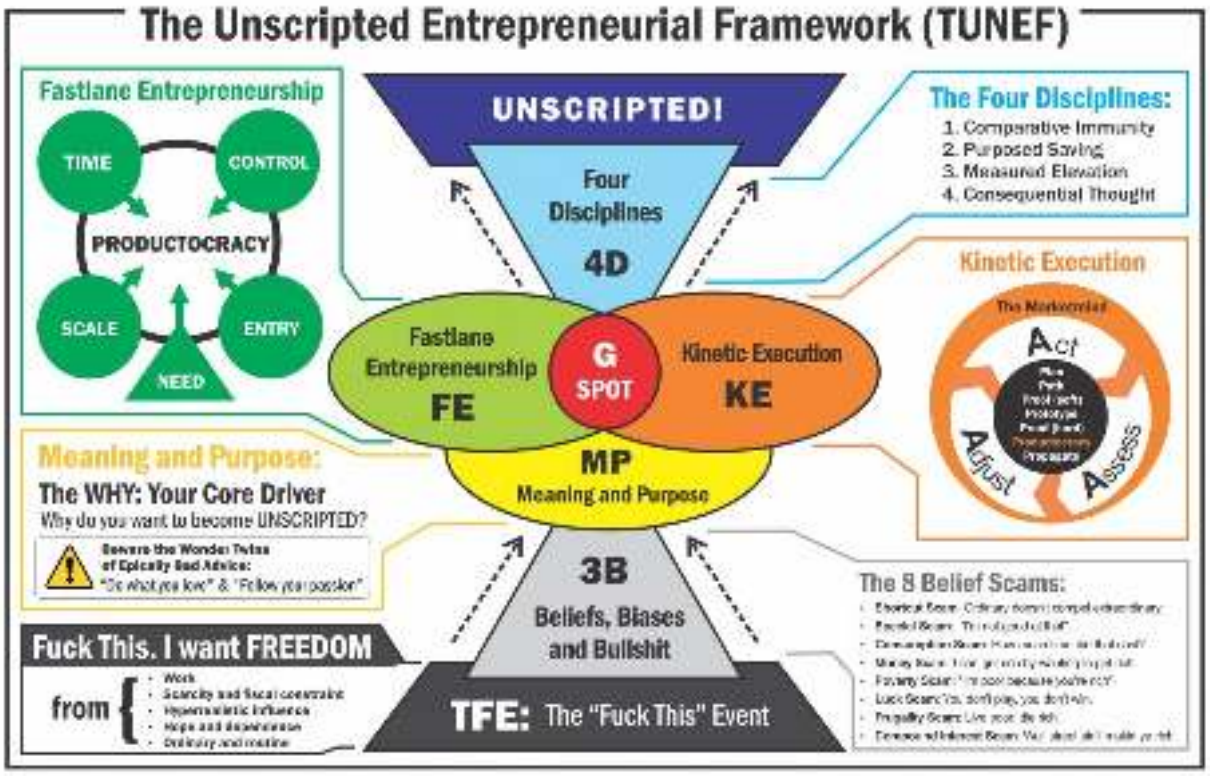
The Unscripted Entrepreneurial Framework (TUNEF)

The “escape” from scripted life is built around 5 ingredients:

1. **Beliefs**, including biases to overcome
2. **Meaning and purpose**, to keep you driven, hungry, and focused on the goal until you win
3. **Value-delivering product** (fastlane entrepreneurship)
4. **Execution**
5. **Discipline** and staying power

Note: the author uses different names, but I find it simpler to call them in most standardized format as above.

An infographic overview of the whole “Unscripted Framework”:



Thanks to ApeRunner from TheFastLane forum
You can't succeed buying the "how-to" for the latest fad.

Says DeMarco:

> "how-to" books are ineffective and largely a waste of time—the macro-processes mutate so fast that by the time they get into a book or an Internet marketer's latest scam program selling at $997, they're outdated and ineffective.

I largely agree with that… *Unless you get in early*.
I've personally met successful Amazon FBA -or doing something through Amazon anyway that everyone else tried to do- and they were making really good money in total freedom.

The types of failed entrepreneurs who lack one ingredient

1. **Competent self-destructor** (lacks belief), has no confidence to pitch with power and rally people behind his goal
2. **Wanderer** (lacks meaning), he doesn't have enough motivation and staying power
3. **Pay the bill entrepreneur** (lacks product) scale and acceleration never happens because the product has no real pull
4. **Idea entrepreneur** (lacks execution): the idea guys think that ideas make the difference, they guard and defend their genius idea, they talk and discuss too much, they seek someone to pay them for their idea… And then someone else makes millions when they *execute* on that idea
5. **Gambling rockstar fallen from grace** (lacks discipline) poor decision maker with reckless behavior and reckless spending. They sometimes seek unethical shortcuts because they're more interested in the lifestyle and the bling bling

Think of Money As Value Vouchers

> As a producer, start thinking of "money" as value-vouchers—a store of perceived value produced, communicated, and delivered to the world.
> If your goal is ten million dollars, the new goal is ten million value-vouchers. And acquiring those ten million value-vouchers requires facing money's true nature. Be valuable. Wanted. Demanded.

There are 2 ways to attract those vouchers, the "dishonorable" way, which is to trick and deliver perceived value, but little or no real value, or to actually deliver real value.

To HONORABLY attract value-vouchers, money bridges must be constructed with these four building blocks:

1. **Value** (product/service creation)
2. **Perceived value communicated to another party** (marketing and messaging)
3. **A mutual agreement, an equilibrium with that party** (closing)
4. **Actual value delivered** (execution)

Capitalism, says DeMarco, allows us the (selfish, I'd add) entrepreneur to get rich by helping other selfish buyers:

> And therein lies our polarizing principle that reverses the poverty scam: the fiduciary principle—a resolution that as UNSCRIPTED entrepreneurs we will serve selflessly to serve the selfish.

However, the entrepreneur must be somewhat less selfish, because he needs to understand what *others* want.

Find A Great Why

To succeed as an entrepreneur you'll need a great "why" to stay at it.

> Whatever your WHYs, they must be strong enough to incite action that borders on the obsessive. What "whys" will compel you to work on a Saturday night while your bros are partying?
> What "whys" will compel you to drive the 160,000-mile Honda when your wingman drives a new Camaro?
> And are these "whys" hot enough to steam water when things go cold?
> Fiery WHYs overpower expiring willpower and fizzling passion. Lukewarm WHYs translate into neither meaning nor purpose, but action-faking. Without solid WHYs, effort sinks in the first storm.

... But Don't Necessarily "Follow Your Passion: It's About Feedback Loops, Not Passion

"Follow your passion" has become a mantra.

But there's an important caveat:

Your passion must provide value.
Otherwise, nobody cares if you're doing what you're passionate about.
And the most popular "passion-based" businesses such as travel and food blogs are hyper-crowded.

In any case, that shouldn't be an issue.
The pleasure is not in "doing what you're passionate about".

The real love doesn't come from "doing" but from having your creative contribution validated, from your self-growth, and from worldly verified accomplishments.
If Steve Jobs had been a failure and didn't connect his feedback loop, he'd not be talking about following your passion.
Steve Jobs loved not the particular job he was doing, he loved the positive *results* of his work.

Same for sports fans: they're not too happy when their favorite team loses, are they?
They're all happy when it *wins*. Because of positive feedback loops.

Of course, if you can find a combination of what you're initially passionate or interested in plus a market niche, go for it.
Just don't "follow your passion" blindly and believe it will get you results.

Persist Through Failures Till You Find Success

Entrepreneurship is a number's game.

The author says it's like baseball, where the best hitters miss most of the times:

> They say (not sure who "they" are) that 90 percent of new businesses fail within the first five years. Whatever the percentage, it doesn't matter. You will contribute to the statistic at some point.
> The question is, will your updated resume be the death certificate of your entrepreneurial dreams? Or will you continue swinging?

Develop Pull Products (& Mindsets), And You Won't Ever Have To "Push"

We talked here about "push & pull" in terms of power and persuasion.

And the same is true for entrepreneurship:

- Push products are commodities or products with low added value. And they need a lot of advertising
- Pull products sell themselves through word-of-mouth marketing

The author even recommends being suspicious of too heavily advertised products:

> I am suspicious of any company that advertises heavily because it suggests a product that can't pull.
> For example, I avoid both Geico and Progressive Insurance (…) despite the advertising, I've never been recommended either.
> The same suspicions flow locally.
> Ever get one of those thick envelopes filled with coupons mailed to you? The one stuffed with advertisements from nearby home remodelers, pizza joints, and carpet cleaners? Again, the businesses that advertise every week are foisting the red flag of product mediocrity. I simply don't trust them, and I'd rather go online and post a query to the neighborhood Facebook group.

Once you have a product that pulls, you develop what MJ calls a "productrocacy":

> Whereas a meritocracy pulls power to the skilled, a productocracy pulls money to the value creators, businesses who grow organically through peer recommendations and repeat customers, compelled by a distinguished product/service not readily offered elsewhere.

Push entrepreneurs: the bad mindsets of manipulative marketing

Some "entrepreneurs" just don't have the pull mentality of delivering real value.

They focus instead on perceived value, and chase money rather than chasing "value vouchers".

Says MJ:

> "push entrepreneurs" reveal their push mentality by asking such questions as:
> I'd like to write an eBook; what topics make the most money?
> I'd like to start selling on Amazon; what's a good product?
> What companies drop-ship, so I can start my eCommerce empire?
> A productocracy is an afterthought. Products that put smiles on customers and solve problems, a non-sequitur.
> Instead, the product is a mere spoke in the wheel, inconsequential

A productocracy has five core Commandments called CENTS.
They are:

1. **Control**: own what you build. Your entire operations must be within your sphere of influence, or diversified from influence. It allows you to sleep well at night because no single individual can take down your whole operation and you can withstand shocks or black swans
2. **Entry**: the easier a market to enter, the smaller the opportunity. Conversely, the harder something is to solve, the greater the opportunity
3. **Need**: it's the most important of them all. If you own a controlled and high entry-barrier business that provides value, satisfied needs or wants, you will win growth, profits, and possibly, passive income for life.
4. **Time**:
    1. Physical independence, with your value being delivered independently of you doing it, selling it, or teaching it
    2. Time independence (detachment): while in the beginning you're on your business 24/7, independently you want to detach and be free and independent from your own creation

5. **Scale**: legacy value systems must be replicated through mass or magnitude while making a profitable impact. if you can impact just one person and your system is replicable, you already have a scalable business.

Don't Waste: Spend For What Grows The Bottom Line Only

I've personally many "entrepreneurs" make this mistake:

To spend money on logos, cool offices, branded shirts and mouse pads, PR… And take time and resources away from what actually grows revenues or improves product.

Says the author:

> Cash is king when it comes to propagation. Every dollar should go toward that effort. If it cannot grow the bottom line, it shouldn't be done. uxiliary expenditures, such as marble floors, custom-branded mousepads, and that cool neon light of your logo, can wait. Preservation of cash and its ultimate redirection into growth is the only thing that matters.

And if you can avoid funding, avoid it

> Why? Because funding typically shifts stakeholder priority from the customer to the investors. If you can finance growth while maintaining 100 percent control over your business, do it.

Commit: Be Business-M/onogamous (at least until successful)

Launching a business is a full-time endeavor, there's no time for anything else.

As much as you can hardly expect a great relationship if you're sharing with 6 other people, you can't expect a great business if you're being pulled left and right by other competing demands.
Says MJ:

> Whenever I hear a young entrepreneur say, "I have six businesses," it's both sad and amusing. This is code for, "I have six businesses that suck."

AFTER you've been successful you can juggle, have fun, invest, and explore.

BUT in business **monogamy must precede polygamy**.

Be "Imbalanced" And All-In In The Beginning

Work-life balance is for scripted folks.

Entrepreneurs must embrace periods in life where they go all-in, no distractions and nothing outside of work.

> Great results come from great imbalances. The incredible life I live today is not because of balance; it's because I meandered into the world of the obsessed.
> Periodic, huge life imbalances often precede success.

Yep, the same was true for me.
Today I may have a balanced life -albeit I still work every single day- or choose to have a more balanced period, or a slower period.
But in the beginning, it was work, work, work… And almost nothing else.

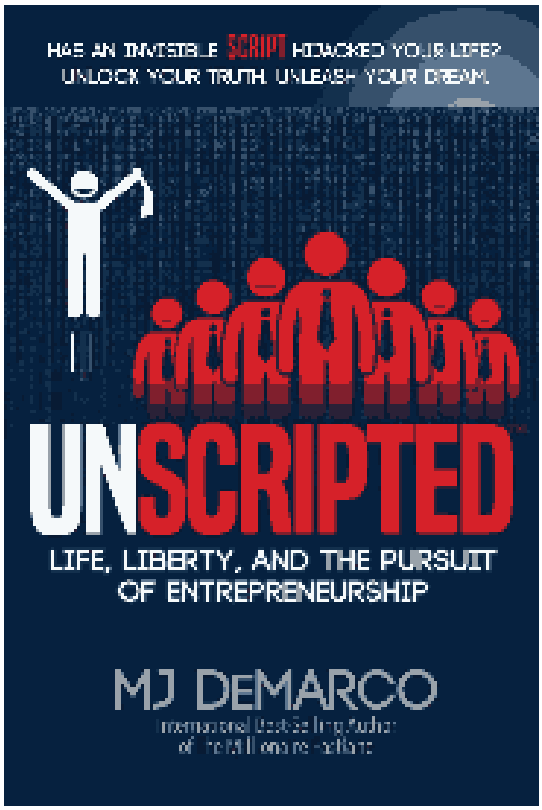
Says the author with his usual biting style:

> If I want to launch another multimillion-dollar company, I implicitly know balance will be forsaken. Decide what's more important to you: permanent balanced mediocrity or temporary unbalanced exceptionalism?

Also read the "monk mode" article:

- **Change your life and launch your business with monk mode**

> Monk Mode Changed My Life (Here's How)



MORE WISDOM

Some more golden nuggets from "Unscripted":

Approach people with a giver mentality

As a general rule, the more successful one is, the harder it is to get in touch with him.

And the more you make it about yourself rather than about them, the less likely it is they will reply -or even like you, for that matter-.
Says the author:

> I, I, I, me, me, me. No one cares. Well, I do, but I don't.
> I get it—all of us are selfish. Unfortunately, your selfishness keeps you from success. If your opening email contains more than two Is and MEs, there's no chance. This simple concept of pushing aside selfishness and GIVING first, while TAKING later, is why networks don't expand, let alone why value-vouchers remain elusive.

Also read the "givers and takers" and "social exchange dynamics":

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Compound interest won't make you rich...

… Or, at least, not as it's peddled.

Not by saving a few bucks and investing, then hoping and trusting.
Instead, compound interest only works to produce a sizable income if you can earn a big chunk of money upfront:

> You can activate compound interest's praised power only if you can earn and save millions fast, not when you use it to turn nickels into dimes as the compound-interest scam implores. Explode wealth by leveraging producerism through the UNSCRIPTED framework—then compound interest can pay you residually for the rest of your life.

Gurus like Tony Robbins who sell you the "compound interest" path to riches are manipulating you

On Tony Robbins:

> Tony seemingly morphed from an awesome motivational guy to just another Wall Street shill. Anyone with a scant of intelligence knows Mr. Robbins amassed a fortune selling books and high-priced seminars, not mutual funds. Could it be that the book is really a "trip wire"? A tool stumbling starry-eyed idolaters into a back-end sales funnel, which makes millions on management fees, referrals, seminars, or whatever else carries a big price tag? The duplicity cost Tony a fan

Money does buy happiness

> Let's talk about my favorite BS SCRIPTSpeak: "Money doesn't buy happiness."
> Whenever someone shoves this turd in your face, get ready for some real laughs. I've been broke and rich, and let me tell you, the comparison is like canned Spam to five-star steakhouse Kobe. No matter what study or academic research concludes, there's no truth to "money doesn't buy happiness" because the studies never account for *how* the money is used. Is it used to consume? Or is it used to maximize freedom within our free-range cage? (…)
> **Money does buy happiness when you let it buy your freedom**

Personal empowerment comes from being your own judge

Social media and modern society are built to make people feel inadequate.

And to make them spend money.

> In my ten-minute pass of the $12,000 dresses and $42,000 chandeliers, the messaging of this "lifestyle" magazine was clear: you are inadequate and your inadequacy can be solved by spending everything you earn on outclassing the other guy.
> It made me think.
> With comparative immunity, you're free from comparison propaganda. You know you are adequate. You know your self-esteem and self-worth are not defined by a $1,000 pair of shoes made in an Indonesian sweatshop.
> Let the fools fooled by the inadequacy messages succumb: debt, uncertain future, and work until death. Don't

> waste life's precious time adorning your coffin with diamonds.

QUOTES

On people without experiencing teaching others how to do what they haven't done:

> Another financial article authored by a non-millionaire telling me how to become a millionaire.

And on "gurus" manipulating others by teaching how to get rich with some sucky system that they did NOT use to get rich:

> It's another financial guru dispensing another fiscal hypocrisy of "do what I say, not what I do." I chuckle. I shake my head. And then my humanity hits me with sadness—people buy the lies and pay for it with their lives.

On the compound interest myth:

> News flash! Compound interest is a scam. The stock market isn't going to make you rich. And neither will that ETF, that mutual fund, or that 401(k). That is, unless you plan on managing that ETF, that mutual fund, or that 401(k).
> (…)
> The compound-interest scam is this serendipitous orthodoxy that the stock market will someday make you, the common man, uncommonly rich.

On "gurus' books":

> A member of my forum once complained in a thread, "All guru books are a road to nowhere." Of course I interjected and responded, "I disagree." All guru books are a road into their sales funnel.

On the sucker's trade that are MLM and networking businesses:

> Some long-lost friend you haven't heard from since Chumbawamba wants you to go to some ambiguous meeting at some ambiguous hotel so you can hear from some ambiguous speaker. And then you're told how you can make millions selling some overpriced product if you just sell it to your friends and family, and they sell it to theirs, and so forth. If you ever get fooled into a meeting, take a look around. The room is full of guppies. The sharks? They own the company or are chilling in the founders' circle.

On "passive income" boys:

> I call them "drive-bys"—people who love this radical idea of "passive income" but don't care about value, contribution, or entrepreneurship. Time and time again, one phrase I hear echoed by drive-bys is "passive income."
> What's the best way to earn passive income?
> Can I make passive income publishing crappy 300-word books on Kindle?
> If I YouTube myself picking my nose while eating a cheeseburger, can I make passive income?

On the freeing power of money:

> Compound interest doesn't take the stage until we've earned and saved a large enough amount to make it

> famously impactful. Every dollar saved NOW is a soldier fighting the fight of "fuck you" LATER, giving you the increasing probability that work remains optional and life is lived on your terms.

On Steve Jobs and imitators who fall for the "personality cult":

> I have tremendous respect for Steve Jobs's entrepreneurial accomplishments, and yet by many accounts, the guy was a first-class douchebag: parking his Mercedes in handicapped spots, humiliating employees, and throwing tantrums when he didn't get his way.
> Shall we presume any of these negative traits accounted for Jobs's iconic success? And if so, shall we now aspire for douchebaggery, considering it might be responsible for a legendary company like Apple? I hope not. We're all perfectly imperfect. Including our heroes. While doing X, Y, and Z might have worked for Jobs, it might not work for YOU. Every one of us needs to stop hero-worshiping mortal beings and be our own heroes. Stop trying to write your story with someone else's pen and, instead, start using your own.

On "passion" not paying the bills:

If your passion doesn't solve people's problems, passion doesn't pay bills.
Does a market even exist for what you love? Do other people need what you love, and if so, are you exceptional at it while communicating a unique value proposition? If you aren't, be prepared to prostitute your love in the name of paying bills.
Markets flooded with "do what you lovers" are extremely crowded and rip-your-hair-out competitive.

CONS

Less random railing might gain larger appeal (and authority)

Let's be clear:

This con is also the book's main draw.
It's DeMarco's opinions and attitudes that make *Unscripted* unique -and fun-.

Some of his descriptions are almost artworks of biting humor and scathing -but on-point- sociological analysis.

But it sometimes can feel a bit too much or even "populist".

For example:

- **"The script" teaches that the road to "coolness" is buying goods**. Feels a bit simplistic to me. I don't think consumption is all "society-driven" (and most certainly not the main reason Elliot Rogers went on a killing spree-. Consumption is driven partly by advertising, but partly also by human nature
- **University snowflakes who "shit their pampers"** when anything threatens their lexicon or diverging opinions. He's right and it's amusing to read, but almost every generation rebels against something, that's not unique or special and might have been left out
- **"Washington", the politicians, and the government that "used to be for the people", while now it's "by the few, for the few"**. Few things feel populist like finger-pointing to the politicians as the roots of all evil. Plus, this feels like the "back then was better" fallacy

That, and a few more, can make the book come across as opinion-based as well as overly opinionated and argumentative.
In that sense, it reminded me a bit of another favorite author of mine: Nassim Nicholas Taleb. An opinionated genius who might have gained some more authority without the more populist digressions.

PROS

It should suffice to say that this is one of our favorite entrepreneurship books or resources.

But if we had to list one, it's probably the completeness mixed with quality that makes it stand out:

- **Great mix of mindsets, self-empowerment, mindsets, and strategies**

This isn't just a book on entrepreneurship; it's a great guide on empowered thinking *through* entrepreneurship.

REVIEW

Unscripted is one of the best entrepreneurship books available, mixing mindsets, hard truths, common pitfalls, as well as some valuable high-level strategies.

Unscripted is more about philosophy and mindsets and less about concrete "how-to steps", but it's a conscious choice we agree with. As the author clearly states and as we agree, there are no timeless "simple steps" to execute and succeed as an entrepreneur.

I consider it *the* best book on entrepreneurship because it so closely aligns with my own philosophy and with The Power Moves' relentless focus on quality.
Where I may differ from how many people approach this book is that for me it's not just a business strategy; it's the consequence of my life mission and passions. This is what I love doing, and this is what I dedicated my life to. **I don't do it to retire early or make big money, I do it because I couldn't do anything else.**

But there are more similarities than differences.

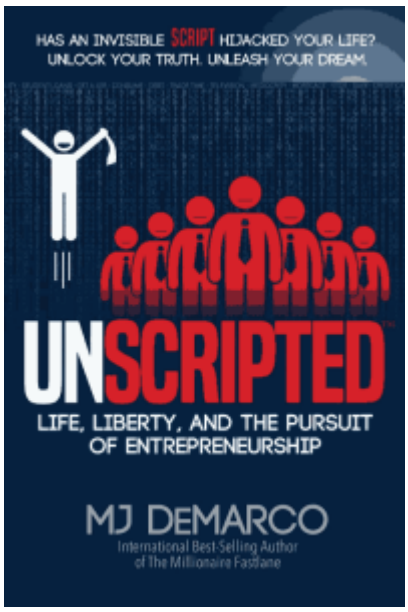
After "The Millionaire Fastlane" DeMarco confirms himself as one of our favorite authors when it comes to entrepreneurship and, in many ways, also closest to TPM.
For example, we both call out the manipulations and conflicts of interests, and we both tend to be quite opinionated and direct.

So we can highly recommend "*Unscripted*".

Or check the **best books** collection, or see:

> Best Entrepreneurship Books

Unscripted Summary: Freedom or False Promises? (DeMarco)



Unscripted is a book by MJ DeMarco in which he shares his blueprint for freedom, abundance, and happiness through red-pill awakening and choosing entrepreneurship over employment.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/unscripted-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.7

When Men Behave Badly: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 July 2022 · Archived copy · Original

"When Men Behave Badly" (2021) is an evolutionary psychology-informed exploration of inter-gender dynamics to uncover the deeper and hidden roots of conflict, sexual deception, harassment, and assault.
David Buss, the author, provides a scientific, comprehensive and rational review of intersexual conflict and what happens when interests misalign.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Sexual Conflict Is About Individuals, Not Groups
  - Red Pill Authors & Feminists Bloggers Are Both Misleading
  - Why Sexual Conflict If Men & Women Need Each Other?
  - Sexual Conflict Is Costly
  - Cultural Conflict
  - Dark Triad Men More Likely to Inflict Costs (& Women to Manipulate)
  - Desirability Differences Create Conflict
  - Sexual Over-Perception and Under-Perception
  - Affairs (As Source of Conflict)
  - Relationship Conflicts
  - Resource Infidelity & Financial Conflict
  - Double Standards As Conflict Sources
  - Mate Value Discrepancies
  - Mate Guarding
  - Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
  - Stalking and Revenge
  - Sexual Coercion
- PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS
  - Choose a giving partner, avoid selfish ones
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
- PROS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

1. **Both men and women gain in cooperating for win-win**, and there is much scope for cooperation and many overlapping, common interests. However:
2. **There is also scope for defection and conflict** because men and women maximize their reproductive strategies in different and non-always mutually satisfactory ways
3. **Conflict is costly, so you can gain by minimizing it**, by protecting yourself against win-lose and defections,

and by increasing the scope for cooperation

4. **Much of sexual conflict can be predicted and understood through evolutionary psychology**, which provides the deepest and best overview to understand intersexual dynamics

FULL SUMMARY

About The Author:
David Buss is an evolutionary psychologist, researcher, and professor at the University of Texas. He is one of the most prominent voices in evolutionary psychology and has written several wonderful and seminal books, including "The Evolution of Desire", and the current textbook of evolutionary psychology, "Evolutionary Psychology (edition VI)".

David Buss himself replied to TPM's tweet to recommend this book (and quick spoiler: it was a top recommendation):

> **Buss**: (replying to our Tweet) For those interested <— Keeps it impersonal to avoid a direct reply to our criticism. A bit of a power move, but his new book is fantastic

Sexual Conflict Is About Individuals, Not Groups

Buss says that it's NOT about "men" or "women" as groups.

Instead, sexual conflict is about individual men and individual women interfering with each other.

My Note: I disagree because many similarly-behaving individuals are akin to a concerted group-level effort
Albeit I have the utmost respect for David Buss as one -if not *the*– most prominent voice and researcher of evolutionary psychology and intersexual dynamics alike, I disagree here. Buss is right in the sense that most men and women act selfishly based on what's good for them -albeit MANY exceptions apply even there, just see feminism and the red pill who seek to defend and advance male and female causes-.
However, even while it is mostly about individuals pursuing individluaistc goals, the higher-level dynamics and the EFFECTS of many same-sex individuals behaving similarly is similar to a concerted group-level effort.

Also read this post that Buss quoted in the above tweet:

- **The "patriarchy" is real (in part)**

Red Pill Authors & Feminists Bloggers Are Both Misleading

Says Buss about the feminist side of the coin:

> Popular explanations blame patriarchy, masculine hegemony, and toxic masculinity. Men, some scholars argue, maintain a vise grip on power and resources, put up glass-ceiling barriers, and exclude women from the old-boys' club.

And about the "male feminists" (citing Ging's, 2017):

> Manosphere bloggers, on the other hand, blame women who seek sex with "alpha chads" (high-status males) and exploit lower-status men who are "betas" for their investment

Buss says that they're both partially right, but also both lacking:

> There is some truth to each of these contrasting accounts, but also ways in which they lack explanatory depth. Masculinity does indeed have toxic elements. It is no secret that men have a virtual monopoly on sexual harassment, sexual assault, and crass sexual objectification of women. Patriarchal institutions such as laws that give husbands control over their spouses' sexuality, for example, are still on the books in some countries and have lingering pernicious effects in others.
> On the other hand, it is also true that women, as many in the manosphere claim, tend to be attracted to men who have power, status, influence, and resources.
> Some women spurn or ignore men lacking high-status attributes; some men feel invisible when it comes to women. Missing from these manosphere accounts, however, is that women's mate preferences are enormously complex and include qualities such as honesty, intelligence, dependability, moral character, sense of humor, and many more.

Part of what the manosphere misses, says Buss, is that female desire and attraction are very complex, and include qualities such as honesty, intelligence, dependability, moral character, sense of humor, and many more.
And both manosphere and feminists miss -and in my personal opinion, feminists *far* more-, are the underlying causes that, Buss implies, are rooted in evolutionary psychology.

Note: We wholeheartedly agree here, and this is the same that TPM has been saying for a while.
Also see our reviews of:

- Lean In
- Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism

And the manosphere guys here:

- **Preventive Medicine**
- **The Rational Male**

> The Rational Male: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Why Sexual Conflict If Men & Women Need Each Other?

Buss asks this fundamental question early on:

Why sexual conflict even exists?

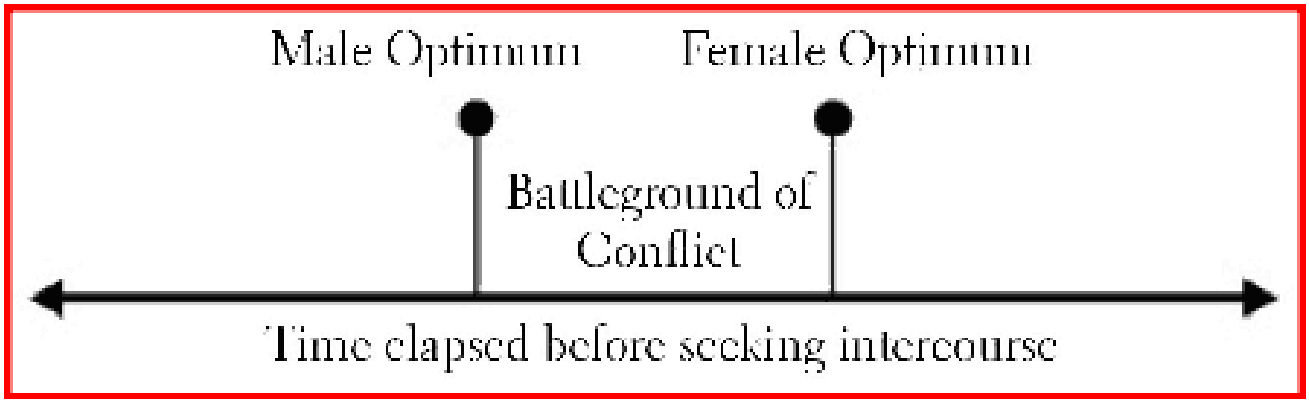
Wouldn't be simpler for the species, and for men and women alike, if conflict didn't exist at all?
Buss says that cooperation is indeed crucial:

> Men and women need each other. Cooperation is a cardinal feature of successful reproduction. We fall in love, mutually choose each other, consent to sex, and sometimes commit to a lover over the long run. If we produce children, each partner has an equal evolutionary stake in their welfare. Given the inherent adaptive benefits of cooperation, sexual conflict becomes a mystery that requires explanation

In Brief, the reason why conflict exists is because while men and women have plenty of similar goals, objectives, and interests, men and women also differ.
They differ in how they can maximize their reproductive strategies and, thus, their self-interest diverge.
And, as we say on TPM, conflicting interests are fertile ground for cheating, manipulation, and coercion.

Or, to put it with Buss' precise and more erudite words:

> Wherever there exist consistently discrepant sexual optima, sexual conflict adaptations will evolve in each sex to influence or manipulate the other to be closer to its own optimum.



It's a bit like having two hands on the steering wheel, both hands wanting to move forward, but each hand having a different ideal destination.

David Buss provides examples of the diverging interests for the "time to sex".
While many women (on average) want to delay sex, men want to have sex as early as possible.

Sexual Conflict Is Costly

As we often repeat on TPM:

Conflict is costly.
It benefits neither opponent to do battle, says Buss (albeit that's not necessarily and always true, since the winner can gain).

Conflict is costlier if you lose, of course.
However, from a larger point of view, it would be a mistake to think of the costs as only the imminent loss.
There are also the costs of prevention, the time and effort that went into prevention and attack/defense, the risks of losing, the risks of a stalemate or only a minor victory and, of course, the opportunity costs -ie.: the potentially more rewarding use you could have done with that time and effort-.

Finally, since effective aggressive strategies tend to evolve effective defensive strategies in an endless arms' race cycle, oftentimes there is no clear victory from conflict.

In short, says Buss, "there is no adaptive value of sexual conflict per se", and that "**many conflicts and their outcomes are purely maladaptive byproducts for both sexes**".
Buss says both men and women would gain if they could agree on a common middle ground that albeit may not be optimal for either of them, is good enough for both, and saves plenty of time, resources, and risks.

My Note: There's Already An Agreed Middle Ground For Cooperation
Buss focuses on conflict here.
However, it seems to me he may not highlight enough that there is already for many men and women an "happy middle ground"
That's what relationships are.
Relationships, voconflictws, faithfulness, mutual support… These are already agreements for cooperation.

Cultural Conflict

Conflict extends to *learned* behavior as well.

Buss includes more than you'd normally expect in "culture", including:

- Knowledge of how to take best pictures for dating profiles
- Deception in online dating
- Detection of deception
- Rape drugs

Some of these "cultural inventions" can entirely outmaneuver or undermine traditionally evolved adaptations.

My Note: was culture in the sense of public opinion missing?
It seems to me that much of the culture conflict is also fought at the level of public opinion, which in turns influences who people tend to side with, as well as the laws that get drafted, supported,d passed, and upheld.

Dark Triad Men More Likely to Inflict Costs (& Women to Manipulate)

Sexual conflict theory is not enough without looking individual's differing personalities.

And albeit some scholars maintain that "all men are potential sexual predators", Buss says that is not the case (I agree it's not "all", but depending on how you defined "predator", it'd be different if one said "majority" or "many").

And, in any case, it's proven that some men are more likely to inflict costs and turn abusive.
Says Buss:

> Research has hit upon an important discovery: serial harassers score high on the Dark Triad of personality traits—narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy.

When it comes to mate guarding, dark triad men are also more likely to manipulate, abuse, and inflict costs:

> Men high in Dark Triad traits are more likely to engage in high-level vigilance, snooping through their partner's mail and tracking their movements.
> They intentionally evoke jealousy in their partner by talking with other women, flirting with other women, and even going out on dates with other women.
> Despite their own flirtatious behavior, high-scoring Dark Triad men come down hard on their partner for flirting—yelling at her, threatening never to talk to her again, and even hitting her. They use emotional manipulation, such as pretending to be angry and making their partner feel guilty when she innocently interacts with other men. High-scoring Dark Triad men are also more likely to glare at other men who are talking to their mate and threaten them with physical violence.

Dark triad women are also more exploitative

And that is true for both genders.
Albeit there are more men scoring high in psychopathy, men and women are far closer when it comes to narcissism and Machiavellianism.

Women scoring high in Dark Triad traits are more likely to:

- Mate poach (and more likely to be successful at it)
- Lure men away from existing relationships for sexual encounter
- See and consider sex as a tool, including:
  - Sleep around to get ahead or acquire resources
  - Fake orgasm to keep resources flowing
  - "Spirit of conquest", as for some male players
- Lie and communicate a lower sexual partners count

Women who pursue a short-term dating strategy are more deceptive

Researchers gave a group of women an incentive to "win over" and be liked.

Then, they recorded 60 heterosexual women, and measured each woman for her short-term or long-term dating strategy, personality traits of openness to experience and extraversion, and rated their physical attractiveness.

Women who pursue a short-term mating strategy appeared to intentionally signal sexual exploitability.
Physically attractive women and those scoring high in openness to experience were especially good at signaling exploitability cues.
The authors concluded that women's cue displays reveal an active signaling strategy of mate attraction, especially strongly for women dispositionally inclined to pursue short-term mating.

Such as: **as much as men evolved mechanisms to spot and potentially target exploitable women, women learned to send false signals of exploitability to arouse, excite, and potentially lead on and manipulate men**.

In the arms' race there is no victim or victimized, each gender can be either of them.

Some women are attracted to exploitative men

Men high in Dark Triad traits are unusually attractive to (some) women (Louis Carter et al., 2014).

Buss says there are good reasons why dark triad men are more attractive, including:

1. **Socially charming**. They are smooth operators who talk a good game. It's an elixir, especially for women accustomed to shy, awkward guys who lack the boldness to approach them.
2. **Self-confidence and status**. key qualities that women desire in potential mates. They seek positions of leadership and social prominence
3. **Dress well and stylishly**, another status cue
4. **Smooth and coordinated body language**: Their posture is relaxed and composed. They do not fidget nervously. They make good eye contact (note: the resource for this entry was dubious, see the "cons")
5. **High-power**: more generally, they convey high sexual market value. They don't seem desperate. They don't trip over themselves trying to be too nice, qualities that can signal low status, passivity, and submissiveness ("beta men"). They act as if they're fascinating and deserve to be at the center of the action. They attract women's gazes and boldly take social risks, commanding the group's attention—a key status indicator.

Also read:

- Why psychopaths are more attractive to women

> Why Psychopaths Get Laid More

However, this attraction often comes at a cost.

Desirability Differences Create Conflict

There are two ways desirability create potential for conflict:

1. **Misperception issue**: **misperception of one's own desirability and bitterness over rejection**: A man who is a 6 but thinks he's an 8 may get irritated when rejected by women who are legitimate 8. Men are more likely to fall for the over-estimation bias
2. **Threshold issue**: **men desire more women than women desire men, leaving many men "dry"**: men view many women as "above threshold" in attractiveness, but women tend to prefer men in the top 20% (giving women the upper hand in the sexual marketplace and leaving many men with sexual desires they can not consummate)

As also shown in our popular infographic in the female hypergamy article:

> Stop Whining About Hypergamy (& Do This Instead)

Short-Terms VS Long-Term Conflict

There's an added twist to the above two that creates further scope for conflict.

Men are willing to lower their standards and "date down" for casual sexual encounters -say, a male 8 is willing to sleep with a female 6-.
But since both men and women seek to secure long-term partners at the top of their own value (Bruch and Newman, 2018), that female 6 who sleeps with a male 8 might mistake his interest for short-term sex into the chance -or even her desirability- for a long-term relationship.

In an enlightening real-life example, Buss says:

> One colleague captured the conflict that can ensue by expressing frustration after several years of unhappy dating: "Why am I being pestered by guys I don't care about, but the men I'm genuinely attracted to seem to show little interest in me?" I told her that she is an 8 chasing after 10s but being pursued by 6s. It dawned on her that pursuing men just outside of her mate-value range was the source of her misery.

Buss says that it took such an intelligent woman so long to realize because she was being led on by higher-value mates.

Sexual Over-Perception and Under-Perception

Among the biases that lead to potential conflicts:

- **Men underestimate how annoying unwanted sexual advances are to women**

> men dramatically underestimate how upsetting unwanted sexual advances, such as leering and touching, are to women. At the same time, women overestimate how upset men would be if they were sexually harassed by women. Both genders err in sexual mind reading, but in opposite directions.

- **Men overestimate how attracted women are to them**

While a few men are accurate in their assessment, many are not.
Narcissistic men who prefer short-term mating are particularly prone to think they're more attractive to women than they actually are.

Attractive women, who in actuality are far more likely to reject many men, are even more likely to elicit male over-perception of interest.

On the other hand, women underestimate how sexually interested men are in them.

Affairs (As Source of Conflict)

Men have affairs because of direct genetic benefits.

But it wasn't sure what women would gain from affairs.
The "good gene hypothesis" and the "dual mating strategy" is a popular explanation for women's affairs.
In brief, that would mean that women seek good gene from high-value mates, and then seek support and resources from less valuable men who were naive, willing, or ignorant enough to provide for straying women and/or children who weren't theirs.
In the manosphere, this is referred to as "alpha fucks, beta bucks", also read here:

> The Science of "Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks" (Facts VS Myths)

However, Buss isn't convinced about the "good gene hypothesis".
And he says instead that the "made switching hypothesis" provides more explanatory power for women infidelity.

Buss lists as evidence that women as compared to men are:

- **Far more likely to suffer from marital dissatisfaction**, while men who initiate affairs are not necessarily more likely (Glass, 1985)
- **Far more likely to fall in love and become involved with their affair partner**
- **More likely to cite "emotional involvement" as the reason of the affair**
- **Seek more contact with other partners when they're ovulating**
- **More interested in men who'd make for better *partners*, not just sexual flings**
- **Looking for friends with the same quality they'd want in a long-term mate**
- **Grow dissatisfied in the relationship when there are many available higher-value mates**

Buss says that the evidence points to far different reasons for infidelity for men and women.
It's sexual variety for men, and mate switching for women.

The mate switching hypothesis

The mate switching hypothesis says that:

Women have affairs to extricate themselves from a poor mateship and trade up to a better partner.

Women become more exacting during ovulation, when they're also most attractive, which might suggest women evolved adaptation to monitor their own mate value, and adjust accordingly.
And indeed, women are most likely to escape mate-guarding attempts during ovulation, an effect most pronounced in women partnered with a low-value mate (albeit Buss says that the "scanning" stays on even in happy relationships).

There are three elements to assess a potential mate worth switching to:

1. **Interest**: does the potential mate show attention, attraction, and desire? Do these indicators signal long-term interest or a fleeting sexual desire? Most women will not leave their regular partner for a passing fancy, although some see it as an important signal that something is seriously wrong in their regular relationship
2. **Mate value**: only large increments in value over the value of the current partner are likely to be worth the costs of breaking up
3. **Eligibility**: is the alternative free of commitments such as an existing spouse or dependent children?

And how do women actually proceed with the "switching"?
With 3 strategies:

1. Cultivating backup mates
2. Implementing affairs
3. Enacting a breakup

Relationship Conflicts

To increase the odds of reducing relationship conflict evolutionary psychology predicts these can help:

1. **Monogamy** long-term committed mating with zero chance of infidelity, because straying creates strategic interference the evolutionary interests of men and women start to diverge
2. **Long-term commitment**, zero chance of abandonment or breakup, as any possibility of leaving the relationship decreases the alignment of interests since reproductively relevant resources get taken away and diverted to other adaptive problems or to reproductive rivals.
3. **Mutually produced offspring**. Children are vehicles carrying the valuable genetic cargo of *both* parents into the next generation
4. **No stepchildren**, which can create conflicting interests, and what is in the best evolutionary interests of one parent departs from that of the other
5. **Full and dedicated attention to the current partner only**, as continued contact with an ex can create resentment and jealousy, plus the fear of siphoning off time, energy, financial resources, and sometimes sexual resources. Even social networks can create issues, says Buss, with needy friends who bleed off time and emotional energy or hopeful backups who still carry a torch
6. **Timely and concurrent death**: as re-mating opens the door to diverting acquired and inherited resources toward the dead mate's reproductive competitors.

Resource Infidelity & Financial Conflict

Some sources of financial conflict include:

- **Men may want to spend to enhance status** (cars, expensive watches, etc.) One study found men who pursue a short-term strategy are more inclined to spend on luxury cars
- **Women may want to spend to enhance their beauty** (creams, breast augmentation, etc.)
- **Both may want to keep some resources for themselves**
- **Both may want to hide some resources in case of breakup**

Every comprehensive study reveals that financial conflicts in couples are prominent, and that people do hide assets from their spouses.
For example:

> One survey of a thousand individuals in New York City revealed that 40 percent of married women and 37 percent of married men had a secret bank account.12 A Harris survey found somewhat lower numbers, but

> nonetheless 31 percent admitted lying to their spouse about some aspect of finances—58 percent of those who did hid cash, 30 percent hid a bill, 15 percent hid a bank account, 11 percent lied about earnings, and another 11 percent lied about debt.13 Another study found that 80 percent of respondents admitted to hiding money from their spouse.14 Regardless of the exact numbers, which vary from study to study, sample to sample, and method to method, financial infidelity is clearly not uncommon.

Dark Triad spend more on appearances

One study found out:

> Dark Triad traits were not correlated with unadorned attractiveness, meaning that those who score high on narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy are not intrinsically more attractive than those who score low on those factors. High-scoring Dark Triad individuals, however, are rated as significantly more attractive in the adorned condition; that is, they use more makeup, more expensive clothing, and more bling to elevate their attractiveness.

Double Standards As Conflict Sources

When we think of double standards we usually think of women being penalized.

That's the "feminist framing", and in truth, double standards know no gender, and probably the most pervasive ones are "self-serving double standards".
For example, 41% of the men in existing relationships said that oral contact with someone else's genitals count as sex, but 65% of them said that it would count as sex if their partner did it. Similar result for women, with about 36% indicating that their oral contact with someone else would count as sex, but 62% saying that it would count as sex if their partner did it.

Mate Value Discrepancies

Differences in desirability can create issues and conflicts in a relationship.

The more desirable partner may want to leave, or at least be more open to new options. And the lower value one has a bigger incentive to mate guard and limit the partner's freedom.

But also caring and investing are affected by (perceived) mate value discrepancies.
How much we care about our partner VS how much we care about ourselves is called "welfare trade-off ratios (WTRs)" in the literature.
And since caring and investing are not fixed, there is evidence that people evolved adaptation to recalibrate WTRs, which include intentionally evoking jealousy (women more likely to use jealousy believe their partner are less invested in them than they are in), forgiveness to move forward together, and anger to proceed the forgiveness (recalibration theory of anger), which includes yelling and denying sex.

That anger creates a conflict, but it can be helpful to improve or even save the relationship.
Says David Buss:

> It sends a signal that her boyfriend's WTR with respect to her is too low. Her anger signals that his WTR toward her fails to meet her expectations. He does not value her as much as she believes she is worth.
> If the boyfriend wants to retain the mateship, he will increase his WTR, curtail psychologically intimate interactions with other women, and channel his emotional energies toward her.

The underlying logic is that WTR are interdependent, and if you value me, I will value you. And if you cherish me, your value to me is higher (and I will give back with more cherishing of my own, leading to win-win).

Mate Guarding

“Vigilance” may be considered the pre-amble to mate gua5rding, and both genders are equally like to be vigilant.

There are important differences though in the actions men and women take, as well as the type of men and women who are more likely to mate guard.

Male Mate Guarding

Men more likely to mate guard are:

- **Lower value than her**, since they believe they “got lucky” and they won’t be able to replace her
- **Incapable of bestowing benefits**, either because they lack resources, or are unable to give, add value, or pull her up (albeit some men who inflict costs even if they have the resources)
- **Men who find their partner highly attractive**: they also gave their attractive wives more gifts and jewelry, enhanced their own physical appearance, and acted possessive through verbal signals (ie.: introduce his partner to everyone as “my wife” and drape his arm around her when other men are around)
- **Men with young partners**
- **When he sees his wife as more attractive than she views him**

Personality traits also matter.
As we’ve seen, dark triad men are more vigilant, manipulative, aggressive, and threatening (generally more likely to inflict costs).

Generally speaking, if she’s not interested in extra-pair sex or has no desire to leave the relationship, the man can relax his mate-retention efforts.

Female Mate Guarding

In contrast, his physical attractiveness, age, or attractiveness discrepancy does not increase women’s mate-guarding attempts.
Instead, women mate guard when:

- He’s higher income, and they spend more on physical appearances, and they act more submissive as a mate retention tactic

Female Resistance to Mate Guarding

Mate guarding limits female choice and ability to observe the market for mate assessment and possible mate switching.

So we’d expect women to have evolved strategies to evade mate guarding
Evolutionary psychologist Alita Cousin found 6 of them:

1. **Covert tactics / lying / hiding**, for example, to have other men call when the partner is not around, flirting with other men when the official partner is not around, or lying about going out with friends when she was actually going out with male friends or potential partners”
2. **Covert high technology strategies**, that includes passwords, erasing texts, and I will add, blocking the phone signal to avoid tracking (note: a girl I was sleeping with did that to avoid her partner’s tracking)
3. **Avoiding public displays of affection (PDAs) with official partner**, refusing to hold hands with the partner in public, not allowing him to kiss her in public, or not allowing him to put his arm around her in public. A woman who successfully eludes an overly possessive man prevents him from sending signals to others that his partner is already in a committed mateship. It also allows her freedom to beckon other men with a friendly smile or eye contact that lingers a split second longer

4. **Suppress the man's aggression toward rival men**, which can invite more suitors by lowering the perceived risks. Suppressing her partner's overly zealous mate guarding signals to others that she is not partnered with an insecure man low in mate value, which would in turn reflect on her own perceived mate value. Tamping down a man's belligerence toward other men has the added benefit of avoiding the public embarrassment a woman might experience as a result of his overly intense mate guarding.
5. **Avoiding partner's contact** to avoid snooping and checking up on them. For example, not picking up, replying late, or switching the phone off
6. **Resisting control**, involves expressing anger at the partner for being too controlling, fighting with to preserve independence and freedom of socializing, and threatening to break up with a partner who is too smothering

And the women more likely to evade his mate guarding attempts are women who:

- Perceive themselves as more attractive than their partners
- Are high in socio-sexual orientation (ie.: interested in casual sex)
- Invest little in their partner
- Have an avoidant attachment style

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

There are three general high-level theories to explain IPV:

- **Pathology**, including insecure attachment style, BPD
- **Social learning**: they learned it from fathers or friends
- **Patriarchy**: the most common at the time of writing, it states that IP is the consequence of gender inequality within patriarchal societies, with men internalizing that they should hold all the power, and men should submit to them. Solving IPVs then means addressing the abusive patriarchal beliefs in the short-run, and subverting the patriarchy in the long run

Buss says all of these theories have an element of truth, but they also all fall short, and don't do go deep enough to explain the common root causes.
IPV instead, says Buss, serves a function that sexual conflict explains more comprehensively than any other approach.

The sexual conflict approach starts by recognizing that both men and women are extraordinarily valuable reproductive resources to each other.
That means that both sexes devote tremendous effort to keeping -or controlling- their mates. And to influence our partner's "underlying psychological machinery", to use Buss' own terminology, there are only two high-level strategies: bestowing benefits, or inflicting costs.
We also call those two high-level strategies here as "adding value", or "pulling up" and "taking value" or "pushing down".

In an ideal world, everyone would (focus on) bestowing benefits. But not everyone can bestow benefits -or even trust themselves to be able to-.

P.S.: we only partially agree with the focus on male IPV, not women
Buss makes it clear that women can abuse and batter as well and that some cases are bidirectional.
And he acknowledges that culture and institutions in many countries are unfairly penalizing men when it comes to reporting female episodes of abuse.
However, he says that the disparity in severity of damage still sees women paying the higher costs. We mostly agree up until here, but strongly disagree when Buss includes "manipulation" in IPV since I don't believe that women manipulate any less than men.

Also see this website's popular article "how women manipulate men":

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

Why (Some Types Of) Men Engage In Intimate Partner Violence

Men engage in controlling behavior and violence to, in Buss terminology, "solve certain evolutionary problems".

These are:

- **Mate poachers**: even when the violence is solely directed at a partner, it can send a signal indirectly to the mate poachers—"I'm the type of guy who resorts to violence—don't fuck with me or get anywhere near my woman."
- **Infidelity**: the detection or suspicion of infidelity is one of the key predictors of intimate partner violence. Female sexual infidelity dramatically increases the risks of battering
  - Protecting against investment in other men's children (fetus-murder hypothesis): some men get violent when their partners are pregnant and they suspect the child is not theirs. Several studies corroborate the "fetus-murder hypothesis", albeit they're still provisional, says Buss
- **Risks connected to being lower value**: men who are lower value than her are more likely to resort to abuse with the goal of lowering her self-esteem and scare into staying to avoid worse.
  This makes logical sense because:
  - Higher value women are more likely to be sexually unfaithful
  - Higher value women are more likely to trade up and leave him
  - Lower value men are less likely to have enough resources to pull a higher-value woman up, so he has to "push her down"

Finally, as we already mentioned before, dark triad men, and especially psychopaths, are far more likely to turn abusive.
Also read more on the types and psychology of abusive men:

> 7 Types of Abusive Men: a Psychological Analysis

Abuse works by hijacking a woman's psychology in several ways:

How Inflicting Costs (Or Abuse) Works to Keep A Mate

- **Lowers her self-esteem**: Abuse can change her perception of how she might fare on the mating market, feeling so wretched about herself that she views herself as unworthy of any other man. Sometimes a woman comes to believe that she is lucky to have her mate, even if he's abusive
- **Lower mating value**: a woman with low self-esteem and physical marks from physical abuse is generally lower sexual market value, making her concretely less appealing to other men, besides making her feel like she wouldn't be able -or deserving- of anyone else
- **Shame**: bruises, scars and an abusive husband makes many women feel ashamed, which can lead to self-isolation and further emotional costs
- **Lower trust in** her own judgment (gaslighting): victims start to distrust their own perceptions and judgments, increasingly relinquishing control over their perception of reality to the gaslighting perpetrator. If "successful", she must rely on her perpetrator for perceptions of reality
- **Prioritizing the abuser well being** (Altering her welfare trade-off ratio): afraid of triggering more episodes of violence and abuse, she may well prioritize his well-being and devote most of her time to him, at the detriment of herself

- **Financial dependence**: with financial abuse, the abuse can make her dependent on him to eat and have a roof over her head
- **Fear**, with threats of future harm (physical, financial, children, property, family, even pets, etc.)

Women's Defense Against Abuse

Tools of female defense include:

- **Kinship**, albeit that can go both ways because if he has more or more powerful kins nearby, then he may feel emboldened to resort to IPV.
  Figueredo argues that the balance of power between the two kin groups predicts whether IPV is or is not used to control women. Changing the balance of power is the key motive behind men's efforts to isolate their partner and women's efforts to stay connected with their family and friends
- **Female friends and social ties**, both in physical, emotional, and social terms, including to tarnish his reputation
- **Male friends** (bodyguard hypothesis)
- **Physical aggression/defense**

Stalking and Revenge

Stalking is 80/20.

Women are far more likely to be victims of stalking, and men are more likely to engage in stalking, as well as in more overt and aggressive forms of stalking.

The 2 strongest predictors of stalking turning violent are:

1. Threats of violence
2. High jealousy during the relationships
3. Alcohol and drug consumption

The men more likely to stalk are:

- **Insecure attachment styles**
- **Lower value men**, who feel that they cannot find an equally valuable partner
- Slightly higher incidence of psychological disorders
- Slightly more likely to be on the autistic scale (some stalkers show typical failures to read social dynamics, including not viewing themselves as stalkers, but as expressing genuine interest and the victims either being interested, or "testing them")

How Stalking Works

- **Taking up the victim's time**: consuming substantial portions of their victims' time – time that could be devoted to solving other problems
- **Psychological cost**, taking up resources that cannot be devoted to addressing other life problems, including potentially finding and meeting another partner
- **Social isolation**, with women particularly vulnerable to isolation
  - Driving away other romantic alternatives
- **Fear**, through threats, threated of revenge porn

Can Stalking Be Effective?

Buss acknowledges that it may sound hard to believe that stalking may be effective and, after all, it often fails to reach its goal.

However, he says that it may have still made sense even if it worked only a tiny amount of times:

> But if it sometimes succeeds, or more accurately if it has sometimes succeeded over the millions of instances in which it was attempted across evolutionary time, then selection could favor an adaptation to stalk former mates because it resulted in an on-average reproductive gain compared to other courses of action.

My Note: doesn't add up to me.
However, "only a tiny amount of time" doesn't seem to make evolutionary sense to me.
A tiny amount of times doesn't seem likely to me to leave a genetic mark.

However, Buss then adds some data:

> Our study of 2,431 stalking victims found that stalking does sometimes succeed, even if the victory is a temporary one. A full 30 percent of women victims agree to meet with their stalkers at their request; 13 percent agree to date them; and 6 percent agree to have sex with them. These numbers are quite conservative in that our study was biased toward including victims of unsuccessful stalkers, so the actual success rates are likely to be higher.

Buss says it can also be effective in mate-guarding partners:

> Stalking behaviors, in principle, can be effective mate-guarding tactics because they monopolize the time of a partner

And also that it can be effective in reuniting with a former partner:

> Rejected stalkers experience two key emotions—intense rage and a profound sense of humiliation. Rage, as we saw in previous chapters, often has the goal of recalibrating the target's welfare trade-off ratio, and sometimes it works. Victims of enraged stalkers, fearful of violence, accord them with power and sometimes accede to their wishes.

My Note: still partially disagree on effectiveness
The fact that something works "some of the times" doesn't mean it's effective because one should compare it to other alternatives.
And in the modern world of endless opportunities to meet potential mates, most stalkers may be better off meeting and approaching new women.
A tiny amount of times doesn't seem likely to me to leave a genetic mark to make sense from an evolutionary point of view.
Finally, it seems too deterministic to "find an explanation" for everything. Stalking may simply be the by-product of other mental processes, and/or simply maladaptive.

Sexual Coercion

Buss says that there is no compelling evidence that men have adapted specialized rape adaptations.

Instead, rape is a byproduct of other male adaptations, including desire for sexual variety, desire for low-investment consensual sex, sensitivity to sexual opportunities, and the general capacity of men to use physical aggression to achieve a wide variety of goals.

Buss also reviews and weighs against the “mate deprivation hypothesis” suggesting that men who turn rapist do so because of a lack of options.
Instead, he says, it’s more likely that it’s popular high-status macho men as well as men successful in dating who are most likely to rape -and not mate-deprived low-status men-.
Overall, he made a compelling case. So while previously I fully believed the mate deprivation hypothesis, I now embrace Buss’ take that it’s higher power and higher status men who are more likely to sexually coerce.
However, the “mate deprivation hypothesis” is not to be thrown out. As Buss himself says, rapes go up when there is fewer women than men, which suggests that deprivation is an element that does influences rape.

Mest more likely to rape

Albeit some have theorized that “all men can be rapists”, Buss reviews several studies to conclude that “most men are not potential rapists”.

However, a subset of men, *are*.
These men are:

- Hostile toward women: they feel wronged by women and that women cannot be trusted (see the red pill)
- Endorse the myth that women secretly want to be raped
- Impulsive
- Aggressive
- Low empathy
- Hypermasculine, including:
  - “hostile masculinity”, endorsing statements such as “a lot of women enjoy putting men down” and “in a dating relationship a woman is largely out to take advantage of men”, and generally see dating as a hostile endevor and a zero sum game
- Narcissistic

And this constellation is particularly dangerous when combined with:

- High sexual promiscuity
- Short-term mating strategy, which generally means a higher sex drive, and if combined with dark triad traits, it means that they will seek sex without consideration for the victims

In general, rapists have a high level of Dark Triad traits and tend to pursue a strategy of casual rather than committed mating.
Also contributing to rape are:

- A skewed gender ratio of more men than women
- Patriarchal culture and ideologies
- Lax laws
- Cultural insensitivity towards rape or women’s rights

On the other hand, men who score high in light triad traits such as empathy, honesty and humility, are least likely to be sexually coercive.

Women’s Defense

A first line of defense centers around the ability to spot and recognize which are most likely to be sexual predators.

At first, it may seem that women’s inborn psychology, mostly afraid of strangers, is not in line with the reality of rape statics, which are committed mostly by men they know -often even family members-.

Buss suggests that either it was different during our evolutionary past, and/or that women's fear are not miscalibrated but are effectively *preventing* many rapes from strangers.

Buss also says in another section that women tend to be wary of men who frequently, openly, and directly talk about sex, and that seems to be a good rule of thumb to avoid poor partners.

Other defenses against sexual coercion and rape include:

- **Fear**: womens' fear of rape often accurately track the risks of rape
- **Male friends and "bodyguards"**
- During an attack also:
  - Forceful resistance: effective if it's "all out", 55% of women who fought back escaped compared to 6.5% who did not resist at all
  - Running away / escaping: the second most effective
  - Alarm calling / screaming: effective, can be used in combination with either fighting back or running away
  - Appeasament / pleading / acquiescence: rarely useful
  - Tonic immobility to minimize harm during the act, if all else fails

Sexual Harassment

Researchers and legal scholars identify at least two partially distinct forms of sexual harassment:

1. **Quid pro quo**, the offer of benefits in exchange for sexual favors (note: personally, I don't see how this classifies as harassment, especially not when welcome)
2. **Unwanted sexual attention**, including lewd remarks, unwanted passes or seductive behavior, unwanted touching, and unwanted staring, leering, or ogling

The men who harass the most are:

- **Inclination towards short-term mating**, and remember that these men are more likely to over-invest women's sexual interest
- **Dark triad men**, albeit Buss defines it as "low on honesty-humility", and then basically goes on to describe dark triad traits

Why Is It Men Who Harass The Most?

There are several reasons, all of which follow from evolutionary psychology logic, including:

- **Some men seek power to date better, and when they have power, they go for it more often**

Says Buss:

> Men strive for status and power, in part, in order to get sex (Studd and Gattiker, 1991).
> As the wealthy Greek tycoon Aristotle Onassis observed, "If women didn't exist, all the money in the world would have no meaning

Buss adds no more, but it seems to imply that since men seek power to get women, then it's "expected" that once they get power, they will seek out women more often and, sometimes, that can end up as harassment when the woman doesn't return the interest.

- **Link between power and sex**

Buss says that male power and patriarchy and power are part of the explanation albeit, as usual, there is more.

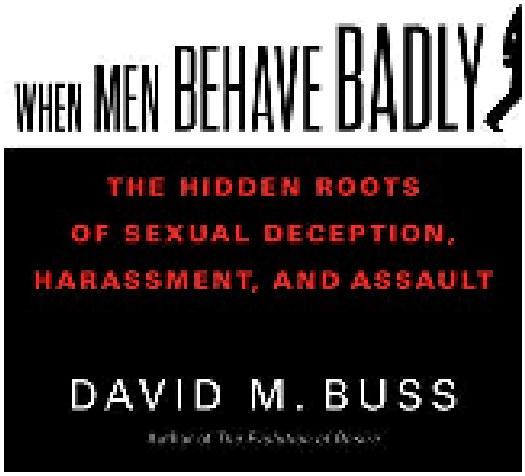
John Bargh and colleagues found that some men experienced an unconscious association between the concepts of power and sex.
But this occurred only for men who scored high on a “likelihood to sexually harass” scale. These men linked concepts like “authority” and “boss” to concepts like “foreplay,” “bed,” and “date.”
That means that power and sex are linked, but not in all men, just in a subset of men who were already likely to harass in the first place, and not just when in a position of power.

- **Overperception bias & confusing deferential attitude for sexual submissiveness**

Some harassers sometimes misread women’s friendly and deferential attitude as interest.

- **Men underestimate how annoying unwanted attention and harassment can be**

In several studies, men perceived all of these workplace sexual advances as less disturbing than women did.



PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose a giving partner, avoid selfish ones

As Buss shows:

There’s lots of room for win-win and cooperation in dating and relationships, but also more than enough room for conflict.

What does it mean to you?
It means’ that TPM’s general approach to increase the scope for ooperation adn decrease the aone for conflict is going be crucial for good relationships.

To start with, a cooperative and giving partner will make everything easier.
Or, at least, pick a matcher who gives back and who *can* play win-win for a long-term.

How much they care about you VS them is defined as “welfare trade-off ratio” in the literature (WTF).

Says Buss:

> When making decisions that affect both individuals, WTR is a key determinant.
> It influences decisions small and large. Doing the dirty dishes versus leaving them for one's partner may be small in the grand scheme of things. Diverting financial resources to an affair partner rather than to one's primary partner is more consequential.
> Even small daily decisions, however, can accumulate over time to large effect.
> (Hence…)
> It is greatly beneficial to have a partner who does not have a selfishly skewed WTR. Selfishness is one of the hallmarks of narcissism. The narcissist's desires will always come first, a partner's a distant second.

MORE WISDOM

Some more gold that may not directly related to sexual conflict, but it's important to know:

A partner's mate value is also a function of how much they value you

> A partner's mate value is critically also a function of how much they value you. The technical term is welfare trade-off ratio (WTR), the ratio of how much value they place on your welfare relative to their own welfare.

This is why, BTW, courtship and investment can work as a male courtship method.
However, there is also room for manipulation and deception. Says Buss:

> Some mate selectors suffer a rude shock when an altruistic WTR during the courtship phase turns into a selfishly skewed WTR after the wedding vows. This might be one reason why divorce is most common in the first few years of marriage and then tapers off over time. A partner who initially shows high investment might curtail that investment after months or years

Friends make for dangerous mate poachers

Men better watch for her friends.

Buss says that research has shown that friends sometimes turn into mate poachers.
Friends are in close proximity, share similar interests, know of any possible couple conflicts -and may even actively or subtly drive a wedge-, and thus are perfectly positioned to implement a mate-poaching strategy.

P.S.:
You must be a high-value friend to make this work.
Also see: male roles in dating.

> Lover, Provider & Friend: The Truth of Men's Sexual Roles

There exist monogamous men looking for relationships, and "players" seeking novelty

Schmitt found individual and cultural variation.
Monogamously minded men wanted only one partner, both over the next month and over their entire lifetimes.
At the other end, some men desired hundreds of sex partners, with a few reporting a desire for more than a thousand.

As for as cultural and geo-local variations:

> In Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon and Turkey, men wanted a tad more than 2.5 sex partners over the next month, whereas in Oceanian countries such as Australia and New Zealand, men wanted only 1.77 sex partners over the next month. The corresponding numbers for women were 0.88 and 0.82. The magnitude of the sex differences in desire for sexual variety was huge by social science standards, more than twice the effect size of most psychological phenomena.

Sexual exploiters choose the victims that look the most "exploitable"

> Like muggers, normal college men displayed strong consensus about which women they would choose as potential victims. Nonverbal cues of those they chose included walking slowly and having a short stride length. The women whom men chose for unwanted touching also tended to score high on the personality trait of neuroticism, low on extraversion, and high on shyness. Finally, the researchers found some correspondence between potential targets of sexual advances and the women's self-reported frequency of having been sexually approached in their lives. In other words, women who have suffered from inappropriate touching in their everyday lives seem to emit cues inadvertently that potential sexual harassers can detect.

Female sexual attractiveness and long-term mate attractiveness are very distinct, sometimes even negatively correlated

Painful for intelligent women and successful women:

> For example, if the woman was perceived to be intelligent, she rated high on long-term attractiveness but low on sexual attractiveness. Men found women perceived as cognitively disadvantaged to be easier to seduce, deceive, and pressure into having sex.

David Buss uses Tucker Carlson as an example:

> **Tucker**: She's so dumb. She's like, she's vulnerable. She's a wounded gazelle, separated from the herd

He then asks if she'd make a good housewife, to which the hosts reply without hesitation "good".

Other cues of "exploitability" include:

- Young age
- Immature
- Emotionally immature
- Drunk / high / intoxicated / sleepy
- Inexperienced (especially in dating)

This is why college freshwomen, says Buss, are far more likely to be victimized than any other college woman.

How to become an irreplaceable mate

1. **Maintain your mate value and keep mate value discrepancies to a minimum** my note: albeit if the goal is "being irreplaceable" one should pick a lower value mate.
   Also read "how to maintain attraction"
2. **Pick a partner who cannot replace you** because of a shallow pool of viable alternative mates in the local mating market, The key is not the discrepancy between you and your mate, but the discrepancy between you and alternative partners available to your mate. But it's difficult to do this with online dating, says Buss

3. **Fulfill your partner's unique desires** Buss lists a few ways to become "unique" to someone, including:
   1. Promote a social reputation that highlights your unique or exceptional attributes
   2. Find unique attributes that others value but aren't getting from others (and develop them)
   3. Cultivate specialized skills that increase irreplaceability
   4. Seek groups that value what you have to offer—groups in which your unique assets will be most appreciated
   5. Avoid groups in which your unique attributes are not valued or in which your attributes are provided by others already present
   6. Drive off rivals who offer benefits that overlap with those you can provide

Also read:

- **Sexual market value hacks**

> Sexual Market Value Hacks: Boosting Your SMV

Younger inexperienced women can fail to correctly assess their mate value

> Young women just entering the mating market sometimes fail to accurately perceive their mating desirability. Consequently, they are more vulnerable to romantic approaches by men of lower mate value—often older men who exploit the youth's inexperience and naïveté. With increased life experience and maturity, young women come to more accurately appraise their desirability on the mating market, motivating them to reject a partner when they perceive they can trade up.

Some men are genetically prone to be swayed by attractive women

Attentional adhesion is the degree to which different visual stimuli capture and maintain focus, and psychologist Jon Maner and colleagues found out that men exposed to the image of the attractive woman had difficulty detaching, their attention adhered to the attractive woman.
However, some men had higher attentional adhesion than others, and these were men with higher interest for casual sex.

Sexual harassment is less likely to be harassment if she's into casual sex, if he's attractive and interested in long-term

Two studies with 1,516 individuals showed that:

> Both men and women high in desire for casual sex viewed the sexual advances as less disturbing.
> And women evaluated sexual advances from a physically attractive man as significantly less disturbing than advances from a physically unattractive man. Workplace sexual advances from men low in desirability, apparently, are more upsetting.

And signals of genuine romantic interest such as compliments on hairstyle or mild flirtation are less disturbing than approaches that signal a quid pro quo or interest in short-term and casual sex (ie.: "sexual bribery, attaching job promotions to sex, and other cues that the person is interested only in casual sex").
Unsurprisingly, women are also far more comfortable with signals of genuine romantic interest as compared to more aggressive forms of advances such as touching or cornering.

High-status men have lower empathy

> Several studies suggest that having higher social status is linked with lower levels of empathy; the wealthy, it turns out, tend to be more indifferent to other people's misery

Short-term mating strategy is generally measured along 3 components:

- Behavior
- Attitudes
- Desires

People with a short-term mating strategy tend to have a high sex drive.
If they are low in dark-triad traits, they can be honest and court women with seduction and charm. If they're high in dark triad traits, they can resort to threats, deception, or force.

More bullet-wisdom

- **Sexually aroused men are more likely to exploit**:

sexually aroused men reported more willingness to engage in a variety of morally questionable sexual actions, from deception to date rape (albeit that doesn't necessarily mean they would *act* on their willingness)

- **Single men, low-agreeableness men, and men with a preference for short-term sex are more likely to pursue a short-term exploitative mating strategy**

More research confirms that **the combination of Dark Triad personality traits and short-term mating strategy is hazardous to women** because it increases the odds of sexual assault (Lalumiere et al., 2005)

However, note that short-term mating strategy is also correlated to deception for women.

- **Many people keep "backup mates"**

> When we surveyed roughly three hundred people about how they would feel if their primary backup mate had sex with someone else, on a scale from "happy" (+3) to "upset" (–3), men more than women said that they would be upset, but only by a small margin. But when we asked how upset they would be if their backup fell in love with someone else, women were roughly twice as upset as men, with the average upset being –2.5. Similarly, women were more upset than men—extremely upset—if their backup entered into a long-term relationship with someone else.

Back up mates serve the functions of:

1. **Possible replacement** mates should something catastrophic happen to a regular mate.
2. **Temporary functions**, providing psychological support or sexual fulfillment during the transition back into the mating market. Breakups inflict blows to self-esteem; backups can offer a boost.
3. **Protection and provisions**, shield against the hostile forces of nature. It is for these reasons that the loss of a primary backup is so upsetting. The mating safety net gets yanked out.

Backups make people less vulnerable, and Buss found that people without a backup mate were twice as likely to get depressed, compared with those with a solid backup.

- **Distance romance burns brightest**

> Lacking exposure to the ups and downs of daily life, they allow people to fill in gaps in knowledge with

> positive illusions because people often overidealize a partner in the flush of a new romance. In the absence of direct information, they infer that the partner is honest, agreeable, loyal, and emotionally stable when they do not possess all the information needed for these inferences.

Buss ironizes:

> The lover who burns so brightly in a fancy hotel in a faraway glittering city must surely be the kindest, most intelligent, most thoughtful, most sexually erotic, most fascinating person on earth.

- **Key predictors of intentionally evoking jealousy are mate value discrepancy and dark triad traits**

When correctly used, jealousy can reduce perceived mate value discrepancies.

QUOTES

> Each of us is descended from innumerable generations of men who lied, cheated, charmed, bullied, or killed their way to sexual intercourse, and from innumerable generations of women who charmed, seduced, lied, or manipulated their way to extracting economic privileges in return for access to their bodies.

On sexual dynamics being at odds with individual psychology and contentment, and almost set-up for frustration:

> I told her that she is an 8 chasing after 10s but being pursued by 6s.

On the anguish of finding out the truth:

> Recognizing that humans have evolved a psychology dedicated to mate switching undoubtedly will be disturbing to many.
> It might be disconcerting to a man to realize that his wife is carrying a mate-insurance policy, harbors sexual fantasies about her co-worker, or has “just a friend” who is more his rival than he realizes.
> It might be depressing to know that you are more replaceable than you knew.
> It could be disturbing when it dawns on you that your partner’s unhappiness might not be transient and instead portends a hidden plan for exiting the relationship.
> But nothing in mating remains static. Evolution did not design humans for a half century of matrimonial bliss. Few of our ancestors lived past the age of forty. Those who stuck it out through thick and thin might win admiration for their loyalty. But modern humans have descended from successful ancestors who carried mate insurance; who devoted energy to scenario building, the cognitive simulations of fantasizing about possible mates and laying plans for exiting; and who acted on those scenarios when the hidden calculus pointed to the benefits of switching mates.

On the coldly calculative, sometimes cruel nature of evolutionary logic:

> Are these acts morally abhorrent? Absolutely. Few things seem more evil than directing abortion-inducing blows to a pregnant woman’s belly. Are such reprehensible deeds functional through an evolutionary lens? Possibly. Evolution by selection operates according to the ruthless currency of relative reproductive success. It is indifferent to the suffering of individuals. It is indifferent to our moral evaluations. Just as evolution has created male lions that kill the baby cubs sired by their rivals in order to bring a new female back into estrus, human males may have evolved a circumstance-contingent psychology that inclines them to brutalize incipient offspring sired by rival men.

On “dick pics” highlighting the different male and female psychology, as well as not working too well:

> Are men aware that women find more things sexually disgusting than they do? Judging from the number of men who send unsolicited pornographic images of their decontextualized genitals to women, the answer is a resounding “no.”

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s Analysis

In some cases we’re still at hypothesis level, with few studies. Watch out for jumping to conclusions and over-explaining

Buss never said otherwise, but it’s worth reminding.

For example, it was one single study showing that men are more likely to hit women in the belly when they’re pregnant, and when they suspect the child is not his.
And albeit it seems to make sense, we can’t be sure the ultimate goal was the abortion of a rival child.

As far as we know, it may be psychopathic men who simply don’t want children around the house.
Or it may be a spillover of general violent tendencies and wanting to cause as much harm as possible.

Buss is a real scientist, but sometimes it still felt the women’s perspective was over-represented

Starting with the title, “When Men Behave Badly”, Buss takes the women’s point of view.

That might have been a simple rational choice to sell better in the current cultural climate -and indeed the book itself is rather balanced-.
But at times I think that some more space to men as targets of abuse or manipulation might have made “When Men Behave Badly” even more comprehensive.

Even the “solutions” at the end of the book, such as lower income inequality and greater gender equality only address “how to make things better for women”, but those policies have far-reaching consequences and, as most policies, while they improve things for some, they also make things less good for some others -in this case, when women are higher power, low-status men may struggle even more to secure a mate-.
That is not to say that Buss’ solutions are not good, they may be great, and they even make “When Men Behave Badly” more complete and thought-provoking. Yet, they don’t make more complete because it only looks at one side of the coin.

Buss says things are improving. In many ways, yes. But how about a note of the dangers of “going too far”?

The world is changing, and things are improving, suggests Buss at the end of “When Men Behave Badly”:

> The overall cultural trends are clear. Institutions that support male control over female bodies are eroding. The informal social customs that permitted men in positions of power to abuse with impunity are fading. Men who sexually harass women who are subordinate in the work hierarchy are getting fired. Men who rape are increasingly convicted and jailed.
> (…)
> Patriarchy is collapsing—its institutions, its social norms, and the expression of unseemly mating mechanisms that gave rise to male advantage.

Buss is partially right, albeit I wouldn’t take for granted that the trend will necessarily continue in the same direction -trend extrapolation is a human bias-.

What was missing though is that the trend isn't always positive or "fair".
In some instances, that trend has damaged some men.
For example, "When Men Behave Badly" might have been both more complete and more balanced if it had mentioned , say, predatory pregnancies to extort money from wealthy men, skewed divorce law that can engender some men's financial well-being and, in some cases, scant penalties for false rape allegations (keep in mind that Amber Heard could make up rape allegations with zero evidence in what appeared to almost everyone totally fabricated lies, and faced no consequences).

Should we even ask ourselves if women ought to "supersede" their own programming?

Towards the end Buss asks if women can supersede their own preference for wealthy and powerful men to reduce conflict between sexes.

He even says:

> These are open questions, but I know of one woman who consciously changed her mate preferences after suffering from two abusive relationships with high-status men who felt entitled to cheat on her.

I don't think that woman "superseded her programming" or "consciously changed her mate preferences", and more like she "consciously settled".
That might still be a smart choice -I think it may as well be a smart choice for many many women-, but it still is no evidence of "changing mate *preferences*" as much as it is one of "changing *behavior*".

Finally, I'm also not a huge fan of that line of questioning.
Things are the way they are, and aren't very likely to change simply because "it might be better IF we changed them" -and I'm pretty confident Buss would agree with that-.

Sometimes a bit too quick to conclude that certain behavior "can be effective"

"Can work" is one thing and "effective" is another.

Shooting in the dark "can work", but it's not effective if you have the option of switching the lights on.

As an example, read my note on stalking and its "effectiveness".
Or, discussing physical abuse, Buss says:

> Unfortunately, violent tactics sometimes work. Some battered women remain in violent relationships. Some return to their abusers even after they have sought help at a shelter. In a study of 100 women at a shelter for battered women, 27 returned to their partner after he promised that he would change and refrain from violence

To begin with, to say it worked, you should compare it with women who left a spouse and were not physically battered.

Second, that 27% returned AFTER he promised to stop, so you can't exactly say that "violence worked" because it's the promise of *stopping* violence that (probably) made the difference.

Once, an head-scratching resources

When I checked the resource for dark triad men having "smooth and coordinated body language", it was an article on graziadaily called "The scientific reason why we're so attracted to fuckboys".

And written by a journalist that seemed far closer to a pop magazine "opinion piece" type of article, rather than anyone familiar with research or well-sourced writing.

It was, however, a single instance, and I haven't read the article -and it's very possible that Buss had valid reasons to

use that article-.

PROS

Listing all the pros would be an overly long endeavor on an already long review.

so, for brevity:

Simply **one of the best books to understand intersexual dynamics, and sexual conflict**.
And for the record, the only books that can rival it are the other books by David Buss himself.

REVIEW

David Buss is one of this website's favorite authors.

And "When Men Behave Badly" is yet another gem by Buss.

Furthermore, of the hundreds of books we review and summarize here, David Buss is THE most challenging.

Why?

Because they're so good and densely packed with wisdom.
No storytelling, no fluff, little opining, and personal conjectures… Just great science *and* refined logic.
It's hard to summarize because you can't really take anything out without missing out and without feeling bad -plus, of course, you can't really publish everything without sharing too much of work that is well worth and deserving paying for-.

In short: absolutely recommended.

Check the:

- **Best evolutionary psychology books**

> Best Evolutionary Psychology Books

Or:

best books collection or get "When Men Behave Badly" on Amazon.

The Daily Laws: Greene's 12 Steps for Empowerment (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 July 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Daily Laws (2021) is a compendium of 366 rules for life distilling Robert Greene's previous work on power, strategies, seduction, and general self-development.

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Exec Summary

- **Find your calling and become a master** at your chosen craft
- **Learn power dynamics and social strategies** to avoid toxic people and to achieve success and personal fulfillment with others and through others (including deeper relationships that are crucial for human's happiness and mental health)
- **Get in touch with the sublime for life contentment**, make peace with mortality, get in touch with something larger than yourself

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Robert Greene is a popular writer of books on power, psychology, life strategies, and power dynamics.
Greene is one of this website's favorite authors and distinguishes himself for the depth of his understanding of human nature -particularly the "darker side"-.
He is also the author of "The 48 Laws of Power", "The Art of Seduction", "Mastery", "The 50th Law of Power", and "The Laws of Human Nature".

All quotes are from Robert Greene, sometimes slightly edited or cut out for brevity, and the boldened parts are mine to emphasize the most crucial passages.

Introduction: First Off, "Get Real"

The introduction might as well be one of my favorite parts of "The Daily Laws".

And it's a stark reminder of the importance of learning power dynamics and strategies:

> Because we have increasingly gained control of our environment and the physical pressures have loosened dramatically, the dangers have become much more subtle—they come in the form of people (not leopards) and their tricky psychology, and the delicate political and social games we have to play.
> And because of these less obvious dangers, our greatest problem is that our minds tend to become less sensitive to the environment; we turn inward, absorbed in our dreams and fantasies. We become naive.
> To add to this dangerous brew, our culture tends to fill our heads with all kinds of false notions, making us believe things about what the world and human nature should be like, rather than what they are actually like.

And when it comes to companies' politics, Greene acutely notices:

We feel that everyone is equal, and that hierarchies are a thing of the past.

> With people, we operate under the belief that most of our friends and colleagues like us and want the best for us.
> We think that those with a pattern of bad behavior can be trusted if they say they've reformed, that people full of conviction and a sense of outrage must be telling the truth, and that those in power, including our bosses, are not insecure.
> We imagine that people who are extremely nice and accommodating are not potentially masking a dark and devious nature, that those who espouse progressive ideas have a corresponding virtuous character, and that people will be grateful for any favors we do for them.
> With ourselves, we think that it's important to be honest and to tell others what's exactly on our minds.

Greene also discloses how and when he first thought -and at the same time pitched- his main commercial success "The 48 Laws of Power":

> Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, an idea just gushed out of me. I told Joost that I was constantly reading books on history and the stories that I read of Julius Caesar and the Borgias and Louis XIV, these were the exact same stories that I had personally witnessed with my own eyes in all my different jobs, only less bloody. People want power and they want to disguise this wanting of power. And so, they play games. They covertly manipulate and intrigue, all the while presenting a nice even saintly front. I would expose these games.

1. January – Your Life's Task: Planting the Seeds for Mastery

Why reach mastery?

Here's why:

> Your skill level will reach a point where you will be able to claim your independence from within the group you work for and move out on your own.
> In a world in which there is so much we cannot control, this will bring you the ultimate form of power. You will determine your circumstances.
> As your own Master, you will no longer be subject to the whims of tyrannical bosses or scheming peers.

You must choose what *you* want to do.
And first, you have to learn that -to become who you are, you first have to *learn* who you are-.
Once you know who you are, you can then focus on "fulfilling your destiny".

If you've chosen something because of social pressure, or because of your parents, you must rebel.

Says Greene:

1. **Respect your own opinions more** and those of others less, particularly when it comes to your areas of expertise, to the field you have immersed yourself in.
2. **Assert yourself**, get into the habit in your daily life of asserting yourself more and compromising less
3. **Care less what people think of yo**u. You will feel a tremendous sense of liberation
4. **Be OK with offending someone**, realize that at times you must offend and even hurt people who block your path, who have ugly values, who unjustly criticize you. Use such moments of clear injustice to bring out your Shadow and show it proudly
5. **Push back against stupid and hypocrisy** Feel free to play the impudent, willful child who mocks the stupidity and hypocrisy of others
6. **Find your own path**, instead of following in other people's footsteps or "tradition", flout the conventions that others follow so scrupulously

Focus on growth and learning, more than on comfort.
Embrace and look for negative experiences.

If you can find a mentor, go for it. But since mentors give while you learn -and take-, always focus on "what's in it for them" to keep that relationship balanced and find a way to give back to them.

2. February – The Ideal Apprenticeship: Transforming Yourself

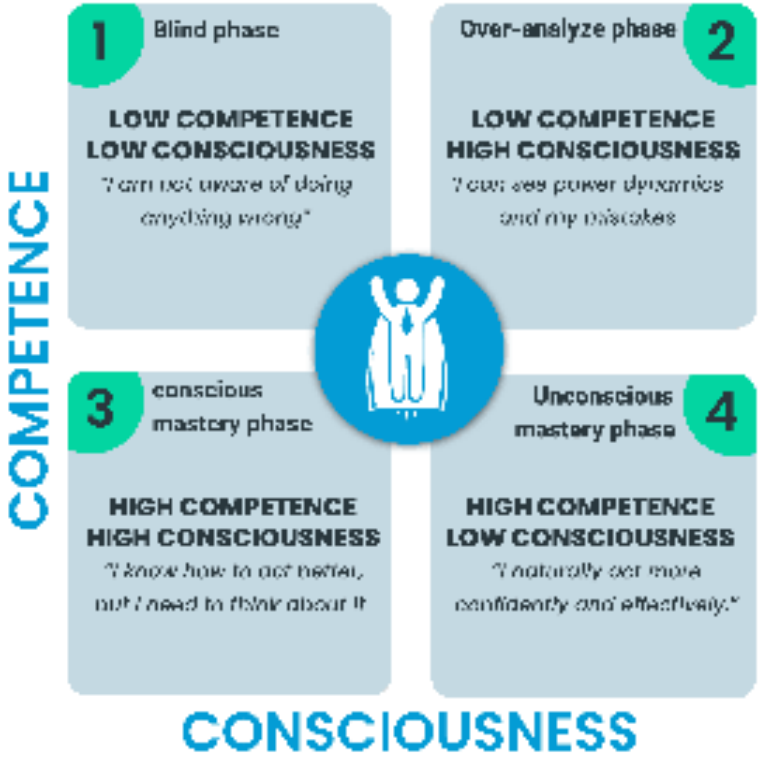
When you start off, you're a clean slate.

Anything is an opportunity to learn, including menial tasks, and anything you can observe from people, no matter how insignificant they can seem, can help you put together the pieces of the human puzzle.

Says Greene:

> Over time, you will begin to see and understand more of the reality that eluded you at first.
> For instance, a person whom you initially thought had great power ended up being someone with more bark than bite. Slowly, you begin to see behind the appearances. As you amass more information about the rules and power dynamics of your new environment, you can begin to analyze why they exist, and how they relate to larger trends in the field. You move from observation to analysis, honing your reasoning skills, but only after months of careful attention.

This is how we detail the learning process in Power University:



Greene exhorts the readers to focus on putting in the time and hard work, and not to focus on shortcuts. There is no bypassing the apprenticeship, he says, you must put in the work, and endure the setbacks.

Learn from your mentor, change his style, and venture on your own

> Rebellion has no meaning or power if it occurs without something solid and real to rebel against.
> The mentor, or father figure, gives you just such a standard from which you can deviate and establish your own identity.
> You internalize the important and relevant parts of their knowledge, and you apply the knife to what has no bearing on your life. It is the dynamic of changing generations, and sometimes the father figure has to be killed in order for the sons and daughters to have space to discover themselves.

3. March – The Master at Work: Activating Skills and Attaining Mastery

> Do not waste time on things you cannot change or influence. Just keep moving.

- **Fulfill your destiny to add your own personal contribution to the world**

Greene says that to simply consume what others create or to live a life of hedonistic pleasures is selfish.

Instead, you must focus on bringing your own unique talent and gift into the world.

> Mastery is not a question of genetics or luck, but of following your natural inclinations and the deep desire that stirs you from within. Everyone has such inclinations. This desire within you is not motivated by egotism or sheer ambition for power, both of which are emotions that get in the way of mastery. It is instead a deep expression of something natural, something that marked you at birth as unique. In following your inclinations and moving toward mastery, you make a great contribution to society, enriching it with discoveries and insights, and making the most of the diversity in nature and among human society.

- **Stay hungry for more knowledge, keep on growing your skills**

As you grow more skilled, a danger lurks:

That you start thinking of yourself as an expert, and that you stop learning, seeking new information, questioning old ideas, and trying new approaches.
Instead, uphold the value of active wonder, remind yourself how little you truly know, and of how mysterious the world remains.

- **Create something new**

> People are dying for the new, for what expresses the spirit of the time in an original way. By creating something new you will create your own audience and attain the ultimate position of power in culture.

4. April – The Perfect Courtier: Playing the Game of Power

> As the great Renaissance diplomat and courtier Niccolò Machiavelli wrote, "Any man who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great number who are not good."

Robert Greene says that the game of power is the only real "open secret" that the most astute know of, but that they *speak* of:

> When you enter the real world, you are suddenly blindsided by this whole realm that exists. It is like our dirty little secret. People will talk about their sex lives. But nobody talks about all the power games that are constantly going on in the world.

Keep it Cool, Don't Overreact, & Be Calibrated

> Angry people usually end up looking ridiculous, for their response seems out of proportion to what occasioned it. They have taken things too seriously, exaggerating the hurt or insult that has been done to them. They are so sensitive to slight that it becomes comical how much they take personally. More comical still is their belief that their outbursts signify power. The truth is the opposite: Petulance is not power, it is a sign of helplessness. People may temporarily be cowed by your tantrums, but in the end they lose respect for you. They also realize they can easily undermine a person with so little self-control.

Also read:

- **How to handle microaggressions**

> 10 Techniques Against Microaggression

Instead, focus on developing a great reputation, and once it's set, don't get angry or defensive. Take the high road instead.

Test People With Mixed Messages

> Say or do something that can be read in more than one way, that may be superficially polite but that could also indicate a slight coolness on your part or be seen

Recognize False Alliance From True Alliance

A false alliance is out of immediate emotional needs, while a rule alliance is because of win-win based on mutual self-interest.
In a true alliance, you don't fuse your identity with any group and you maintain your autonomy.

Recognize The Toxic Types

This is golden:

Power is a social game. To learn and master it, you must develop the ability to study and understand people.

We couldn't agree more here on The Power Moves.
As a matter of fact, being able to spot "good people" and toxic types is one of the main benefits of learning power dynamics.

And later adds Greene:

> To be a master player you must also be a master psychologist. You must recognize motivations and see through the cloud of dust with which people surround their actions. Some people, for instance, believe they can opt out of the game by behaving in ways that have nothing to do with power. You must beware of such people, for while they express such opinions outwardly, they are often among the most adept players at power. They are what I call "supposed nonplayers."

Greene says the second type is overly Machiavellian and trips himself up.
Instead, you want to strike a balance:

Become a "positively cynic" or "radical realist"

I can't help but quote this whole part, as it's just what this The Power Moves stands for:

> The desire for power is part of our nature. It is a part of how we evolved over millions of years. There is no point in denying our nature. It is who we are. And not only are we not going to deny it, but we are going to accept that this is the human being that we are, the product of evolution.
> (…)
> With such acceptance, it is not that we love it and want to go out in the world and play all these nasty games. It is that we understand they exist. If, occasionally, we have to use the laws in playing offense or defense, we're okay with that, within reason. Most often it is the case that other people are practicing them on us, and it is better to understand what they're up to than to live in the dream world of our angelic nature.
> And so we understand the laws of power. We understand what people are up to, so they can't easily hurt us. We learn how to recognize in advance the truly toxic narcissists, aggressors, and passive aggressors, the nonplayers, before getting too emotionally enmeshed in their dramas.
> And armed with such an attitude and with such knowledge we are prepared to go to battle in the game of life. Instead of being blindsided by the manipulators, we have calmness, power, and the freedom that comes with awareness of the laws.

5. May – The Supposed Nonplayers of Power: Recognizing Toxic Types and Disguised Power Strategies

On outbursts of emotions and anger:

> If a person explodes with anger at you (and it seems out of proportion to what you did to them), you must remind yourself that it is not exclusively directed at you—do not be so vain. The cause is much larger, goes

> way back in time, involves dozens of prior hurts, and is actually not worth the bother to understand. Instead of seeing it as a personal grudge, look at the emotional outburst as a disguised power move, an attempt to control or punish you cloaked in the form of hurt feelings and anger. This shift of perspective will let you play the game of power with more clarity and energy.

Be Watchful of "Nobel Gestures"

Some noble gestures are smokescreens for far darker motives.
Says Greene:

> People want to believe apparently noble gestures are genuine, for the belief is pleasant. They rarely notice how deceptive these gestures can be.

- **Daily Law: Be most suspicious of those who seem unambitious.**

Find the true motive, ask yourself: who's benefiting (Cui Bono)?

> To decipher events that seem hard to read, I sometimes rely on a strategy that comes from the Latin Cui bono? It was first used in this context by Cicero and it literally translates to, "For whose good, or benefit?" It means: when you are trying to figure out the motives behind some murky action, look to see whom it really benefits in the end, and then work backward. Self-interest rules the world.

6. June – The Divine Craft: Mastering the Arts of Indirection and Manipulation

Always make people feel smart(er), never stupid:

> Given how important the idea of intelligence is to most people's vanity, it is critical never inadvertently to insult or impugn a person's brain power.

To hide your real goal, Greene doesn't just advise not to talk about them, but to talk a lot about your fake goals.

Don't always approach others with "what's in it for them", some people want to feel "good" and not self-interested

Some people are greedy and cool with it.
Approach them by appealing to their greed.
But some others want to look and feel charitable and noble, so you must avoid making them feel greedy and self-interested, and make them feel charitable instead:

> Not everyone, then, can be approached through cynical self-interest. Some people will be put off by it, because they don't want to seem to be motivated by such things. They need opportunities to display their good heart. Do not be shy. Give them that opportunity.

Lead From The Front

Morale is contagious, and it's up to you to set it as the leader.

You don't want to be a dick, but you also must make sure people don't see you as "too nice" as that can dangerously overlap with "weak":

> in moments of danger and difficulty being seen as so nice will work against you: it says that you can be pushed

> around, discouraged, and obstructed. If you have never been willing to fight back before, no threatening gesture you make will be credible.
> Understand: there is great value in letting people know that when necessary you can let go of your niceness and be downright difficult and nasty. A few clear, violent demonstrations will suffice.
> Once people see you as a fighter, they will approach you with a little fear in their hearts. And as Machiavelli said, it is more useful to be feared than to be loved.

Albeit Greene doesn't call it that way and he doesn't really define the concept, he exhorts leaders to use emotional leverage by becoming "the judge" that others want to please:

> A few timely criticisms here and there and they will only try harder to please you, to live up to your high standards. Instead of having to push and pull your army, you will find them chasing after you.

Also read:

- Leadership 101
- Leadership power dynamics
- How to be a leader

> Leadership Power Dynamics

7. July – The Seductive Character: Penetrating Hearts and Minds

> The siren call of seduction is irresistible because power is irresistible, and nothing will bring you more power in the modern world than the ability to seduce.

For this month, Greene borrows heavily from his previous book "The Art of Seduction".

He says that you don't need to be handsome or beautiful because seduction is a game of psychology, not beauty. Learn more in Seduction University:

> Seduction University

Seducers are performers, says Robert Greene:

> All that is required is that you look at the world differently, through the eyes of a seducer. A seducer sees all of life as theater, everyone an actor. Most people feel they have constricted roles in life, which makes them unhappy. Seducers, on the other hand, can be anyone and can assume many roles.

Greene says that for women, having a frame of mind that you "need to be spoiled" can help in making men chase. Independence also helps, because an air of independence makes men want to possess you.

8. August – The Master Persuader: Softening People's Resistance

> We humans cannot avoid trying to influence others.
> (…) As social animals we cannot avoid constantly playing the game, whether we are conscious of this or not.

- **Use "bold language", direct and high-confidence**

> Your audience will be so caught up in your bold language that they won't have time to reflect on whether or not it is true. Never say, "I don't think the other side made a wise decision"; say, "We deserve better," or "They have made a mess of things." Affirmative language is active language, full of verbs, imperatives, and short sentences.

- **Don't argue, convince others indirectly**

When you argue, you're trying prove others wrong, and they will resist.
Instead, you want to convince people of your ideas indirectly, saving their face, and power-protecting them.

- **Make them feel your point, rather than explaining it with words only**

It's always better if you can make people feel what you want to explain, communicate, or persuade for.

- **Let them win on minor points, so they're more open for your bigger points**…

… But of course, they don't have to know that what you let them win for are the *minor* points.

- **Appeal to their ideal and higher selves**

This one was really good:

> Most people believe themselves to be inwardly greater than they outwardly appear to the world.
> They are full of unrealized ideals: they **could** be artists, thinkers, leaders, spiritual figures, but the world has crushed them, denied them the chance to let their abilities flourish. This is the key to their seduction—and to keeping them seduced over time. Appeal only to people's physical side, as many amateur seducers do, and they will resent you for playing upon their basest instincts.
> But appeal to their better selves, to a higher standard of beauty, and they will hardly notice that they have been seduced.

9. September – The Grand Strategist: Rising Out of Tactical Hell

> In war, strategy is the art of commanding the entire military operation. Tactics (…) is forming up the army for battle and dealing with the immediate needs of the battlefield.
> Most of us in life are tacticians, not strategists. We become so enmeshed in the conflicts we face that we can think only of how to get what we want in the battle we are currently facing. To think strategically is difficult and unnatural.
> (…)
> To have the power that only strategy can bring, you must be able to elevate yourself above the battlefield, to focus on your long-term objectives, to craft an entire campaign, to get out of the reactive mode that so many battles in life lock you into.

Be jealous of your time, make the most of it

> Time is just as important as space in strategic thought, and knowing how to use time will make you a superior strategist, giving an added dimension to your attacks and defense. To do this you must stop thinking of time as an abstraction: in reality, beginning the minute you are born, time is all you have. It is your only true commodity. People can take away your possessions, but—short of murder—not even the most powerful aggressors can take time away from you unless you let them.

Pick your battles – don't get dragged into any

And **do not get dragged in wars that you did not choose**:

> To waste your time in battles not of your choosing is more than just a mistake, it is stupidity of the highest order.

Avoid answering to people who criticize

Critics are choosing the easy route.
If you answer critics, you're in the defensive position, and it's always easier to attack other people's work, than to defend.
The solution, rather than defending from their criticism, is to ask them what *they* would *do* or like to do.
Says Greene (redacted for brevity):

> It is always easier to argue from the negative side—criticizing other people's actions, dissecting their motives, etc. And that is why most people will opt for this.
> It takes effort and thought to establish a positive position. It takes less effort to work on what other people have done, and poke holes.
> It also makes you look tough and insightful, because people delight in hearing someone tear an idea apart.
> *If they had to describe a positive vision or how they would accomplish it, it would open them up to attacks and criticisms.*
> Facing these negative-mongers in a debate or argument is infuriating. They can come at you from all angles: hit you with sarcasm and snide comments, weave all kinds of abstractions that can make you look bad.
> If you lower yourself to their position, you end up like a boxer throwing punches into thin air. These opponents give you nothing to hit. Your task is to force them off this position by getting them to commit to some positive position. Now, you have a target. If they resist or refuse to do this, you can attack them for this resistance.

There are no laws, circumstances dictate everything

In his most famous book, Greene famously lays out a list of 48 laws.
We've never been big fans of lists on TPM, and I was glad to see that this time Greene speels it a bit more clearly that there are not laws that apply all the time, no matter what:

> Everything in life depends on the circumstances you're in. That's why the last law in The 48 Laws of Power is "Assume Formlessness." The idea is that being formless like water is the highest form of power and strategy. In that chapter, I contradict my entire book and I essentially say: There are no laws. You have to be in the moment. You have to understand the circumstances you're in. Learning to adapt to each new circumstance means seeing events through your own eyes, and often ignoring the advice that people constantly peddle your way. It means that ultimately you must throw out the laws that others preach, and the books they write to tell you what to do, and the sage advice of the elder.

10. October – The Emotional Self: Coming to Terms with Our Dark Side

> If I had to say what the primary law of human nature is, it is to deny that we have human nature, to deny that we are subject to these forces.
> We think, I'm not irrational, I'm not aggressive, I don't feel envy, I am not a narcissist. It's always the other side. It's the Republicans, it's the Spartans, it's the Ethiopians—they're the ones who are irrational and aggressive.
> Me? No.

We're all in pain (before we learn advanced people's skills)

I more than once thought the same:

> After much deep thinking about these experiences and my own experiences with people I knew, I came to the following conclusion:
>
> **We humans have a dirty little secret**. It's a secret that has nothing to do with sex lives or fantasies or anything as exciting as that. Rather, **the secret is that all of us, to some degree, are in pain.** It's a pain that we don't discuss or even understand.

Green says the source is other people (albeit I think the reason is larger, other people are indeed often a big part of it):

> The source of this pain is other people.

Specifically, from shallow relationships:

> What I mean is our often disappointing, superficial, unsatisfactory relationships with people. This **comes in the form of relationships and connections that aren't very deep** between us and those whom we consider our friends, leading to a lot of loneliness.

On top of shallow relationships, Greene says it's also bad relationships:

> It comes in the form of **bad choices** for **associates and partners**—leading to all this struggle and messy breakups. It comes from letting some **toxic narcissist into our life**—leading to all kinds of emotional trauma that can take years to get over, if we even ever do.

And from failure to be effective with people:

> And it also comes from our inability to persuade, to move people, to influence them, to get them interested in our ideas—generating feelings of frustration and anger.

As social animals we *need* good relationships:

> We are deeply social animals and having dysfunctional social relationships leads to all kinds of problems. It leads to depression. It leads to recurring obsessive thoughts, to the inability to focus on our work, to eating disorders, to even physical diseases such as heart disease. We only see the surface phenomenon—the loneliness or the depression or physical ailment. We don't see the underlying source. And sometimes we're not even aware that we suffer from loneliness.

I often had the same thoughts.

Rational people are aware of their irrationality

Greene says that calling someone "irrational" is a power move.
So to use it as an actual adjective or, even better, as a tool to improve our strategic thinking, we need first to know what "rational" means.
He says:

> We constantly feel emotions, and they continually infect our thinking, making us veer toward thoughts that please us and soothe our egos. It is impossible to not have our inclinations and feelings somehow involved in

> what we think. **Rational people are aware of this and through introspection and effort are able, to some extent, to subtract emotions from their thinking and counteract their effect**.
> Irrational people have no such awareness. They rush into action without carefully considering the ramifications and consequences. In all cases, the degree of awareness represents the difference.

Rational people readily admit the limitations of their own rationality, while irrational people do not -and even get emotional, angry or defensive when challenged about the limitations of their own rationality-.

Be aware of groups' madness to maintain your own individual power and rationality

> Madness is something rare in individuals—but in groups, parties, peoples, and ages it is the rule.

The daily law says that you must maintain your individuality and protect it from group dynamics and "sense of belonging" if you want to maintain your ability to doubt, reflect, and consider other options (ie.: your rationality):

> If as individuals we had some plan that was clearly ridiculous, others would warn us and bring us back down to earth, but in a group the opposite happens—everyone seems to validate the scheme, no matter how delusional (such as invading Iraq and expecting to be greeted as liberators), and there are no outsiders to splash some cold water on us. Whenever you feel unusually certain and excited about a plan or idea, you must step back and gauge whether it is a viral group effect operating on you. If you can detach yourself for a moment from your excitement, you might notice how your thinking is used to rationalize your emotions, to confirm the certainty you want to feel.

Also read:

- **Enlightened individualism**

> Winner's Mindsets: 10 Commandments of Enlightened "Me First"

The world goes through waves of irrationality

Throughout history, we witness continual cycles of rising and falling levels of the irrational.

11. November – The Rational Human: Realizing Your Higher Self

Robert Greene says that it's a myth that advancement has made humanity and society stably more rational.
In truth, irrationality is cyclical, and will always find an outlet.
In some periods, that irrationality may wane, but in some other periods, will also grow "stronger":

> Throughout history we witness continual cycles of rising and falling levels of the irrational. (…)
> The irrational simply changes its look and its fashions.
> We may no longer have literal witch hunts, but in the twentieth century, not so very long ago, we witnessed the show trials of Stalin, the McCarthy hearings in the U.S. Senate, and the mass persecutions during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Various cults are continually being generated, including cults of personality and the fetishizing of celebrities. Technology now inspires religious fervor. People have a desperate need to believe in something and they will find it anywhere.
> As long as there are humans, the irrational will find its voices and means of spreading.

My Note: I only partially agree here: I think there is an uptrend and improvement.
Greene in fact may be overly optimistic thinking that period such as the Renaissance or Athens golden age were far

more rational, when in truth it was only a handful of leaders and top 1 percenters who lead that charge -with the masses being as irrational, and probably more, than today's masses-.
On the other hand, I partially agree with him as well as humans haven't upgraded their brain circuitry all that much, and authors such as Steven Pinker are ***naively* optimistic**.

There's hope: great humans and individuals show us the path

> Two factors should give us all hope.
> First and foremost he existence throughout history and cultures of people of high rationality, the types who have made progress possible. They serve as ideals for all of us to aim for.
> These include Pericles, the ruler Aśoka of ancient India, Marcus Aurelius of ancient Rome, Marguerite de Valois in medieval France, Leonardo da Vinci (…).
> All of these types share certain qualities—a realistic appraisal of themselves and their weaknesses; a devotion to truth and reality; a tolerant attitude toward people; and the ability to reach goals that they have set. The second factor is that almost all of us at some point in our lives have experienced moments of greater rationality.

Practice Mitfreude

> Schadenfreude, the experience of pleasure in the pain of other people, is distinctly related to envy, as several studies have demonstrated.
> When we envy someone, we are prone to feel excitement, even joy, if they experience a setback or suffer in some way. But it would be wise to practice instead the opposite, what the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche called Mitfreude—"joying with." This means that instead of merely congratulating people on their good fortune, something easy to do and easily forgotten, you must instead actively try to feel their joy, as a form of empathy. This can be somewhat unnatural, as our first tendency is to feel a pang of envy, but we can train ourselves to imagine how it must feel to others to experience their happiness or satisfaction.

Robert Greene says that you can use mitfreude to love and appreciate what other people accomplish not as something that they did as individuals, but as something that they did as part of the human species.
This is something I also recommend in the foundational "ubermensch" article here on TPM.

> Winner's Mindsets: 10 Commandments of Enlightened "Me First"

> In recognizing the greatness of someone, we are celebrating the highest potential of our species. We are experiencing Mitfreude with the best in human nature. We share the pride that comes from any great human achievement. Such admiration elevates us above the pettiness of our day-to-day life and will have a calming effect.

Learn to detach yourself emotionally from fools

> Your time and energy are limited, and you must learn how to preserve them.
> The world is full of fools—You encounter them everywhere: the indecisive boss, the rash colleague, the hysterical subordinate. When working alongside fools, do not fight them. Instead think of them the way you think of children, or pets, not important enough to affect your mental balance. The ability to stay cheerful in the face of fools is an important skill.

12. December – The Cosmic Sublime: Expanding the Mind to Its Furthest Reaches

Embrace your mortality

> If you're in denial of it, if you're repressing it—which most people are—it comes out in secret ways. It makes you anxious in your daily life because you're not dealing with the one most important thing. You don't realize it, but it's infecting you in your day-to-day decisions, how you interact with people. It is very simple: you need to confront this fear and find ways to transform it into vitality and power.

Also read:

- **Embrace your mortality**

> The Power of Accepting & Leveraging Death to Live Fully

Keep your time for yourself, don't give it away

> The time that you're alive is the only thing you truly possess, and you can give it away. You can give it away by working for other people—they own your time and you can be miserable. You can give it away by reaching for external pleasures and distractions—spending the time that you have as a slave to different passions and different obsessions. Or you can make the time that you're alive your own. You can actually come and possess it and take ownership of this time and make each moment count.

Stop the stupidity of wanting to live forever

I absolutely loved this part, albeit I'm ambivalent about it.
Greene says that wanting to live forever, an obsession of some silicon valley rich entrepreneurs, is utter stupidity:

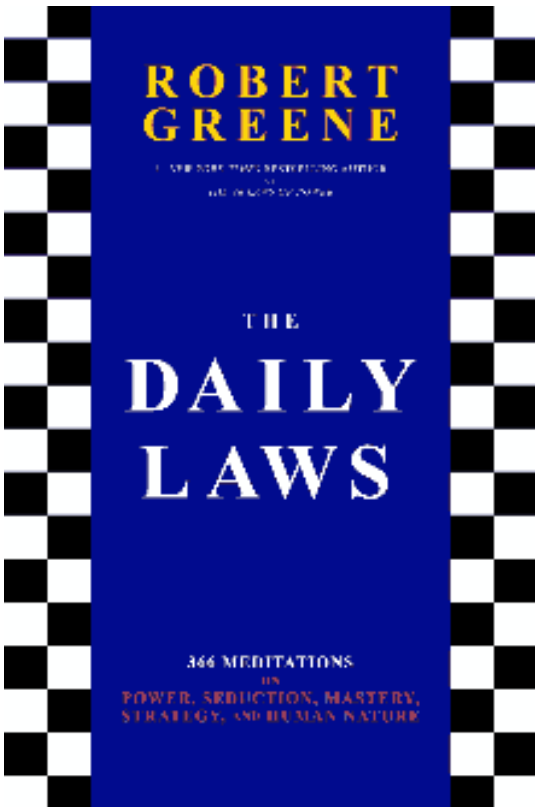
> I'm often asked what I think of Silicon Valley's obsession now with either indefinitely prolonging death or ending death. I think it's the ultimate stupidity and I've been ranting against it for years. It's like you're running away from the only reality that exists. We can argue about what reality is. We have our own reality. Our reality is not what a bat or a fly sees. We don't have echolocation. Every creature has its own reality. But the one thing that we can say is that we're born and we die.

Greene says that such an idea is narcissistic, something I also agree with:

> And the idea that you want to escape death and prolong your life—how selfish and narcissistic is this?

However, I don't necessarily agree with why it's bad idea, such as that there wouldn't be enough space or resources for "everyone":

> What if everybody tries to extend their life for 50, 100 years? What will happen to the planet? We already have 8 billion people on this planet. People need to die or we won't have resources, we won't have air to breathe, water to drink. So in trying to prolong life, you're prioritizing yourself.



MORE WISDOM

Play pool to learn strategies & assess others

> Pool, it became clear to me, is all about angles. First, there are simple angles, as you must hit the cue ball to either side when you are not straight on. This is often not as easy as it seems. Then, there are the angles you take when you bank the targeted ball off the sides, an entirely new game in and of itself. This goes further with the double bank shot.

I had indeed noticed, and even written, that how people play at the pool when they're first starting tells you a lot about how Machiavellian they are -or if at all-.
However, "when first starting out" is the keyword, as people can improve just by playing, looking at others, or going through tutorials, and then at that point, it has less to do with true Machiavellian thinking, and more about general mastering a craft.

https://thepowermoves.com/forum/topic/billiard-tells-you-all-you-need-to-know-about-peoples-machiavellianism

Human nature has never been more potentially destructive than it is today

> we have never been more in the thrall of human nature and its destructive potential than now. And by ignoring this fact, we are playing with fire. Look at how the permeability of our emotions has only been heightened through social media, where viral effects are continually sweeping through us and where the most manipulative leaders are able to exploit and control us. Look at the aggression that is now openly displayed in the virtual world, where it is so much easier to play out our shadow sides without repercussions.

Robert Greene also says that our tribal tendencies have also grown with the digital world:

> look at our tribal tendencies and how they have now found the perfect medium to operate in—we can find a

> group to identify with, reinforce our tribal opinions in a virtual echo chamber, and demonize any outsiders, leading to mob intimidation.

As an example of tribalism, also read:

- **Red pill tribalism**

> You Can Do Better Than The Red Pill. Here's Why

Don't accept people's ideas because they supplied "evidence", but search it for yourself

> On the internet, it is easy to find studies that support both sides of an argument. In general, you should never accept the validity of people's ideas because they have supplied "evidence." Instead, examine the evidence yourself in the cold light of day, with as much skepticism as you can muster.

To learn more, read "how to lie with statistics" and our various articles on manipulation and con artists.

QUOTES

On trusting yourself more rather than trusting others too much:

> And you need to feel more confident in your own judgment. Understand: we tend to overestimate other people's abilities—after all, they're trying hard to make it look as if they knew what they were doing—and we tend to underestimate our own.
> (…)
> In other words, there are layers of angles, all more subtle and artistic as you go up the ladder and improve your game.

On not wasting time for battles you didn't choose:

> To waste your time in battles not of your choosing is more than just a mistake, it is stupidity of the highest order.

On Machiavellian leadership:

> Your hands are clean. Never overtly play the Machiavellian leader—that only works well on television.

CRITICISM

First, let's start with an analysis of Robert Greene as the author:

🤔Lucio's Take On Greene

Lucio: On the plus side, Robert Greene has fantastic intuition.
On the con side, he has more limited experience and his work almost completely lacks in empirical evidence.
Overall, he does make up for those limitations and still delivers some of the best work on topics of power, manipulation, and human nature

Still promoting the over-cynical life approach?

I was surprised and a bit disappointed to find this:

> Daily Law: Take credit from those below you. Give credit to those above.

I thought Greene had moved past that overly-cynical approach after he achieved commercial success with it.

Apparently not.

There are several more instances where I felt it was overly cynical -including advice on "practice luring people into traps".

A big issue with it is: it often isn't the most effective approach to attaining success. Especially not if you have eagles -or people who expect some foundational ethics and values- in your team because they'll abandon you very quickly. Same for those above you if they sniff your dirty games -and people often do catch the *overly* Machiavellian ones-.

Which is funny, because Greene himself says so little later in the book:

> The second type of person besides the deniers are those who love this Machiavellian part of our nature and revel in it. They are master manipulators, con artists, and outright aggressors. They have no problem handling this part of the game. In fact, they love it. This type of person, which usually you will find one or two in any office or group, **can get pretty far, but eventually they are tripped up in life because they are too Machiavellian**. They don't understand that there is a whole other side to the game, which requires empathy, cooperation, and seducing people into working with you. They are too tied to their egos to see the limits of the games they are playing and so they inevitably go too far and experience a fall from power. There is a wall they can never get past.

True.
Actually, it's more than good, it's golden wisdom.
And still, sometimes Greene seems to be promoting overly-Machiavellian approaches, rather than the more empathic and win-win that he *says* he prefers.

"The 10.000 hours myth": perpetration and promotion of a myth

With the amount of research Greene says he does, I was almost shocked that he fell for this.

Greene recycles that debunked pop-psychology myth, and also lends it credibility:

> Although it might seem that the time necessary to master the requisite skills and attain a level of expertise would depend on the field and your own talent level, those who have researched the subject repeatedly come up with the number of 10,000 hours. This seems to be the amount of quality practice time that is needed for someone to reach a high level of skill and it applies to composers, chess players, writers, and athletes, among others. **This number has an almost magical or mystical resonance to it**. It means that so much practice time—no matter the person or the field—leads to a qualitative change in the human brain.

There's nothing magical about 10.000 except the amount of publicity -and money- Malcom Gladwell managed to pocket while spreading misinformation.

This is what Anderson, the author of that initial research, actually says about the 10.000 hours ~~"rule"~~ myth:

Gladwell, Anders Ericsson explains, did not understand his study well.
In details:

1. **There is nothing "magical" about 10k hours and there is no fixed time**: some will need less to achieve the

top of the field, some more
2. **How much you need to train to reach the top does depend on the field**, including its competitiveness levels
3. ***How* you train matters**: time matters too, of course, but *how* you train is equally, if not more, important

The dvice on seduction can easily backfire (if you seek effective dating)

Greene's seduction advice is very atypical.

One of the "laws" is called "prove yourself", which will already raise some eyebrows for the more power-aware folks:

> Making your deed as dashing and chivalrous as possible will elevate the seduction to a new level, stir up deep emotions, and conceal any ulterior motives you may have. The sacrifices you are making must be visible; talking about them, or explaining what they have cost you, will seem like bragging. **Lose sleep, fall ill, lose valuable time, put your career on the line, spend more money than you can afford**.

This may work, *in some limited cases*.
But it's also low-power dating and almost inherently lower-value dating, and that's not very effective.
Also see:

- Straight-Line Seduction
- High-Power dating
- Laws of dating power dynamics

> The 5 Foundations Of Dating Most Men Still Ignore

Margaret Mead is an example of "rationality"?

I don't know what Greene's sources were, but…

… The way I studied and learned about **Margaret Mead** would better fit the example of an ultra-biased ideologue who was shrewd, dominant and confident enough to fool enough people and sidetrack science and truth for long enough before more rational land level-headed individuals finally re-established truth.

PROS

The usual "pros" of much of Robert Greene's work:

- **"Keep it real" self-help for the real world**, as opposed to much "naive self-help"
- **Genius insights on human nature, strategies, and advanced social skills**, as much of Greene's work
- **Deep insights from a bright min**d, some of which will make you reflect and very possibly even reach a higher level of understanding, efficacy, and self-development
- **Very much in-line with TPM**, much of what Greene says well aligns and complements with this website's

REVIEW

The Daily Laws is a great book combining self-development with power-aware strategies.
Exactly what self-help was missing before Robert Greene and The Power Moves.

Greene lays out the book with the system that first made him popular: concept -> storytelling -> lesson learned.

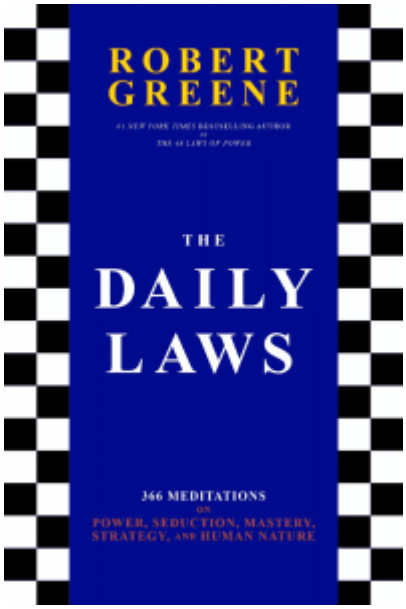
The story is as engrossing as possible, and should contain a surprise, “wow” or unexpected moment that makes the book captivating and enthralling.
However, there are fewer stories this time and even more wisdom.

And, as Robert Greene has spoiled us to expect from him, there are enough (new) sparkles of genius to make the book more than just a mix of Greene’s previous work.

Overall, we can recommend “*The Daily Laws*“.

Get it on Amazon or check the **best books** for empowered men.

The Daily Laws Summary: 12 Steps for Empowerment



The Daily Laws (2021) is a compendium of 366 rules for life distilling Robert Greene's previous work on power, strategies, seduction, and general self-development.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-daily-laws-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.5

The Gift of Fear: Strong Claims & Proprietary Frameworks, But Limited Evidence (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 July 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Gift of Fear (1997) is a guide to leveraging your inborn fear signals to assess and defend against criminals, manipulators, stalkers, abusers, and all kinds of people that you generally want to avoid.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - 1. Human predators seek power
  - 2. You can predict attacks and spot predators
  - 3. Listen to your intuition more
  - 4. The signals of your intuition
  - 5. PINS (Pre-Incident Indicators)
  - 6. How to predict violence with JACA
  - 7. How to improve your intuition
  - 8. Traits and Predictors of Criminals
  - 9. Don't over-sweat the threats: they're not good indicators of violence
  - 10. Toxic personality profile: pursuer & "guy who won't let go"
  - 11. Toxic personality profile: the scriptwriter
- REAL-LIFE APPLICATIONS
  - Don't deny the danger (but don't exaggerate it either)
  - Don't listen to "laws" and cookie-cutter approaches: everything's contextual
  - Be warm with extortionists, lest you give them a reason to proceed
  - Public figures killers seek the American dream of recognition
- PILLS OF WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
  - 1. There's no data to back up the central claim that intuition works best
  - 2. Misapplies basic scientific principles as well as logic
  - 3. Some naive empiricism
- CONS
  - Some self-horn-touting
  - Some "covert-selling" of the "Gavin de Becker" agency
  - Contextually Good Techniques Pitched As "Always Good Approaches"
  - More cons…
- PROS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Your intuition alerts you of life's danger**, hence
- **Listen to your intuition more**, look for the causes of your distress, rather than dismissing it
- **Inform your intuition with "relaxed attention"**, paying attention and taking in the whole environment, but without over-worrying or over-focusing on "what ifs" catastrophic scenarios

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Gavin de Becker is an American security specialist providing security services and consulting for governments, large corporations, and public figures.
He is the founder of the security firm Gavin de Becker and Associates.

1. Human predators seek power

Says Becker:

> Most human predators, however, seek power, not food. To destroy or damage something is to take its power.

2. You can predict attacks and spot predators

The central theme of the book is this:

- **Every act of violence can be predicted**, and that "there is no mystery of human behavior that cannot be solved inside your head or your heart"
- **Your subconscious intuition allows you to** accurately predict violence, and you can use it for self-defense

De Becker didn't convince of the first, but he made a good, albeit unproven case, or the latter.

3. Listen to your intuition more

Says Gaving de Becker:

> Trust that what causes alarm probably should, because when it comes to danger, intuition is always right in at least two important ways: 1. It is always in response to something. 2. It always has your best interest at heart.

The author says that by "always right" it doesn't mean that something bad will always happen, but it means that it requires your attention.
It means that you should not "explain it away" or force yourself into situations that you'd rather avoid, but that you you better listen, and make an effort to identify a possible threat or danger.

4. The signals of your intuition

Your intuition sends you signals of many different kinds, and of different "levels" that replace the level of danger. In order, they are:

1. **Fear**: always listen to fear
2. **Apprehension**
3. **Suspicion**
4. **Hesitation**

5. **Doubt**
6. **Gut feelings**
7. **Hunches**
8. **Curiosity**

Then the author adds a few more, but does not nor order them:

- **Nagging feelings**
- **Persistent thoughts**
- **Physical sensations**
- **Wonder**
- **Anxiety**

And then, he adds yet one more outside of the list, which is:

- **Dark humor**: this is a signal that can come either from, or from others. People sometimes use dark humor as a covert tool to avoid being attacked for what others might think is "silly", "too out there", "too fearful" or even paranoid.

The examples for dark humor are a guy who while others opened a mysterious packages, said "I'm going back to work before the bomb sets off" and another guy who hearing shots in the distance commented it was their former colleague coming back to get revenge.

5. PINS (Pre-Incident Indicators)

> Preincident indicators are those detectable factors that occur before the outcome being predicted.

- **Forced Teaming**: rapport building has a better reputation then it should have, says the author, since people almost always use it for self-serving reasons. Forced teaming is when someone implies they have something in common with you or speaking in "we" (i.e. "We don't need to talk outside… Let's go in.")
- **Charm and Niceness**: same as rapport, it has an undeservingly good reputation while, in truth, it's often not a personal trait, but a self-serving social strategy. It's about being polite and friendly in order to manipulate or disarm their mistrust
- **Too many details**: a lier will add excessive details in an effort to sound more credible
- **Typecasting:** a slight insult to get you to comply to what the aggressor by trying to proving the insult wrong. For example: "Oh, I bet you're too stuck-up to talk to a guy like me." The way for you to prove him wrong is to talk to him, which is exactly what he wanted.
  The defense is silence.
- **Loan Sharking:** unsolicited help to make you feel obliged to extend some reciprocal openness in return (Robert Cialdini calls it "reciprocity" and here on TPM we make loan sharking a part of the various types of manipulations of the social exchange).
  The defense is to remind yourself that you didn't ask for anything
- **Unsolicited Promise**: It's a promise to do (or not do) something when no such promise is asked for. It's almost always a negative sign as promises seek to convince you of an intention that is usually good for the aggressor. For example: an unsolicited, "I promise I'll leave you alone after this", or "I promise I won't hurt you".
  The defense is to never take someone's words at face value, especially if you've just met them. And ask yourself "why does he need to convince me"? And the reason is often because they need to convince you because you have a doubt -an important signal of self-defense-. So you tell yourself "You're right, I am hesitant about trusting you, and maybe with good reason. Thank you for pointing it out"

- **Discounting the Word "No":** refusing to accept rejection. Declining to hear "no" is a strong signal that someone is either seeking control or refusing to relinquish it.
  The defense, when with strangers, is to never relent on the issue of "no," because it sets the stage for more efforts to control. If you let someone talk you out of the word "no," you might as well wear a sign that reads, "You are in charge."

6. How to predict violence with JACA

De Becker's business uses these elements to predict the likelihood of violence:

- **Justification**: does the aggressor feel like his attack is "fair" and that he has good reasons to do it?
- **Alternatives**: does the attacker feel he has no other alternatives, or that you left him with no other alternatives to reach his goal, keep his dignity, or save face?
- **Consequences**: does the attacker feel the consequences are favorable to him? For example, an assassin who wants attention and has little to lose
- **Ability**: does the attacker feel he can carry out the attack (and potentially get away with it)?

Example: before entering war

JACA elements can be observed in governments just as with individuals.

When America is preparing to go to war:

- **Justification**: evil empire; mad dictator; international outlaw; protect our interests; "cannot just stand by and watch"
- **Alternatives** to violence shrink as we move from negotiations to demands, warnings to boycotts, and finally blockades to attacks
- **Consequences** of going to war move from intolerable to tolerable as public opinion comes into alignment with government opinion
- **Ability** rises as ships and troops are moved into proximity of an enemy

My note:
It may be just me, but I didn't find this model very useful in helping predict crime.

7. How to improve your intuition

Gavin de Becker never actually puts it so directly, but I collected several pieces of information scattered across the book to list them all in a more "how-to " section:

- **Accept your intuitive signals**: and avoid denying them
- **Feed your intuition with as much accusation information as possible**: the more information and the more you observe, the better your intuition can support you
- **Avoid inaccurate information**: "our intuition fails when it is loaded with inaccurate information. Since we are the editors of what gets in and what is invested with credibility, it is important to evaluate our sources of information"
- **Pay "relaxed attention" (be alert, but not hyper-alert)**: we are more subconsciously aware and far more open to the full reality of every signal when we take in everything, rather than focusing on anything specific. So alertly looking around while thinking hat "someone could jump out from behind that car" replaces perception of what actually is happening everywhere with imaginings of what *could* happen in that specific corner, leading to a loss of awareness

Experts may need to avoid overriding their intuition with their knowledge

De Becker says that experts may sometimes drown out the voice of their intuition with logic:

> Many experts lose the creativity and imagination of the less informed. They are so intimately familiar with known patterns that they may fail to recognize or respect the importance of the new wrinkle. The process of applying expertise is, after all, the editing out of unimportant details in favor of those known to be relevant. Zen master, Shunryu Suzuki said, "The mind of the beginner is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all the possibilities." People enjoying so-called beginner's luck prove this all the time.

The example if of a man who entered a shop and left right away because of a "bad feeling".
Bad the police officer who entered right after walked in the middle of a robbery and was killed. De Becker says that the police officer may have been reassured by his logical brain telling him that most robberies happen at night.

I see the point of Gavin's argument, but I personally wasn't too convinced.
It's the opposite of what Malcolm Gladwell says in "Blink", such as that expertise informs intuition. Gladwell's arguments and examples seemed more convincing to me.

8. Traits and Predictors of Criminals

- **Violence in childhood**: the author says that Ressler's research confirmed that 100 percent of the investigated serial killers had been abused as children, either with violence, neglect, or humiliation.
- **Recklessness and bravado**
- **Calm under fearful or scary circumstances**: just like a surgeon is not moved by gory sights, a violent criminal tends to have a higher threshold for scary or shocking situations
- **Need to be in control**:

9. Don't over-sweat the threats: they're not good indicators of violence

Threats are hurled to cause anxiety.

And while that may seem bad news, there is a major silver lining to it: the threat means that, at least for now, and often forever, he favors words over action.

Gavin de Becker also says that the "threat per excellence", the death threat, is the least likely to be acted upon.
And especially so when they're targeting public figures (less dangerous than love sickness, plans to meet or devotional messages), and when they're anonymous (the person who signs with his name is seeking publicity, rather than avoiding detection).

Emotional threats are even less risky

Emotions are fleeting, so threats spoken from a heightened emotional state often lose their will with time.
Threats and promises alike, says the author, are easy to speak, harder to honor.

Don't confuse intimidation with threats

Intimidations are *requests*, that happen to be backed by a threat.

For example "I will burn this building down if I don't get to keep my job" is an intimidation, not a threat, because there's a condition to avoid the threat.

With intimidations, as per JACA model, the aggressor sees a possibility and an alternative to violence.
And he *prefers* that possibility, rather than having to resort to acting out the threat.

Rather than threats, they are high-stakes manipulation, trying to influence your behavior with an element of fear.

TIP: Late threats are more credible

Threats late in controversy are more serious "last moves" than those used early. That's because early threats represent an immediate emotional response as opposed to a decision to use violence.

Threats often signal weakness

Threats rarely come from a position of power.

Instead, they often come from a position of weakness, frustration, or even desperation at failing to influence events.

Says the author in one of his many genius insights:

> Both promises and threats are made to convince us of an intention, but threats actually convince us of an emotion: frustration. **Threats betray the speaker by proving that he has failed to influence events in any other way**. Most often they represent desperation, not intention. Neither threats nor promises

The true currency of the threatener is fear.
The threatener is often not so much hoping to change reality, he seeks either revenge or to save face nad keep some dignity for having lost and having proven so powerless.
His revenge serves to sub-communicate that he does have agency. And he tries to do so by instilling fear and getting some revenge for feeling frustrated and slighted.

It's you as the receiver who decides how powerful threats are

It's the response to a threat that determines whether it's a valuable instrument that reaches its goal, or mere words that do nothing.

Says Gavin de Becker:

> Thus, it is the listener and not the speaker who decides how powerful a threat will be. If the listener turns pale, starts shaking, and begs for forgiveness, he has turned the threat or intimidation into gold.
> Conversely, if he seems unaffected, it is tin

The author hence recommends to never seeming to take threats seriously or being scared and shaken

My Note: I don't fully agree
As the author himself says, strategies are contextual.
Sometimes, if you make the threatened feel like he "won" by showing some fear, he may feel like he saved face and re-empowered himself. That may end the interaction on more positive terms for him, and give him no reason to do anything else.
Conversely, if you seek to show yourself higher power and tough, he feels even more disempowered because his last-ditch attempt failed. *Then* he may have a reason to go even further, and see no other alternative to escalation.

To disempower threats for extortion, show they have no leverage and that you don't fear the threat

For example, if someone threatens to "tell your wife you cheated', their power is in your fear that someone might do that.

But if you don't fear that, or at least show that you do not fear that outcome, the threat loses much or of all of its power.
For example, the author suggests you say "wait a minute, let me put my wife on the line so you can tell them that".

At that point, the threat is neutralized.

Surfacing or carrying out the threat yourself might also be a good option.
It may be an opportunity to come clean, take a load off your shoulders… And you get to control the narrative.

Also read:

- **How to handle break-up threats**

> Here's What To Do When She Threatens to Break Up

10. Toxic personality profile: pursuer & "guy who won't let go"

People who don't let go:

- **Project onto others commitment that were never done**: for example, they take a "maybe" for "for sure"
- **Make small, reasonable-sounding requests to keep interacting**: you think it's "easy enough to do" and they will stop, but it only gives them a stepping stone to keep on harassing you

From other resources, we also know:

- **Misread feedback and neutral communication for personal attacks**, including mistaking your boundaries for personal insults

The pursued often think that straight talk or assertiveness will stop the pursuer. But it never really works with people who won't let go.
What they want is an exchange with you, and any exchange, including an angry reaction, will feed the chasing monster.
Getting angry and assertive often also make things worse -it makes an enemy-.
When that happens, a funny twist in the dynamics also happens: you also get emotionally invested in the interaction and neither of you wants to let go. You also become a sort of pursuer.

Says the author:

> The pursuer and the victim begin to actually have something in common: neither wants to let go. The pursuer is obsessed with getting a response and the victim becomes obsessed with making the harassment stop.

I'd also add, that the victim seeks revenge for being harassed, annoyed, and having to waste time on an idiot.
I'm well aware of this dynamic because, as a super minor public figure, I also experienced it -and I did not handle it as well as I could have, including failing to follow my strong intuition and plenty of red flag in order to get feedback from others who didn't see those red flags-.

Answering and escalating only makes an annoying situation worse.
Says the author:

> What the pursuer is really saying is "I will not allow you to ignore me." He'll push buttons until one provokes a reaction, and then as long as it works, he'll keep pushing it. Guilt is usually first, then harassment, then insult. Each works for a while, and then doesn't. When victims participate in this process, threats are not far behind.

Trying to think what these people think is not the best approach because they're not rational:

> Mike had predicted that Tommy would only stop if someone "made him stop," but in fact, the opposite was true. He would only stop if nobody tried to make him stop.

So the only solution for people who won't let go is to cut out contact.
Nothing else will fix it.

If You're Already At Threats Stage

First off, avoid escalating even further.

Remember that words have a big silver lining: it means that the pursuer or weirdo sees other options than attacking.

Confronting or attacking the pursuer instead often make things worse.
Says the author:

> I cannot recall how many times I have seen some private detective apply confrontational interventions and then feel these actions were justified by the fact that the pursuer's behavior ultimately got worse. Having guided the pursuer into a warlike stance, the detective will say, "Whew, it's a good thing we did all that stuff to him, because just look how serious a case this is. I told you something had to be done." Do they never wonder what might have happened if they had just left him alone?

The author says to avoid wars as they rarely end well. By definition someone will have to lose. And those who lost, sometimes seek revenge -remember some of these folks have no real life to go back to and keep them busy-.

Worse yet might be to deny the pursuer the ability to even write or contact you.
For example, by involving police and making it costly for him to contact you.
In that case, if he feels like he lost everything, including his dignity, he may have his life ruined -remember that he's a strange character who can't let go- and have no other option but to attack.

Watching and waiting is a far superior option.
You can always engage if a pursues never ever stops or escalates, but you can never undo an engagement or, worse, an "engage and enrage".

Says the author:

> There is an almost irresistible urge to do something dramatic in response to threats and harassment, but often, appearing to do nothing is the best plan. Of course, that isn't really doing nothing; it is a reasoned management plan and a communication to the pursuer every bit as clear as direct contact. This approach is a real test of patience and character for victims, but that is often the fastest way to end harassment.

The author says that "time will take care of most people who won't let go".

11. Toxic personality profile: the scriptwriter

De Becker says that the "scriptwriter" is the most common profile of problem employee.

The traits and red flags include:

- **SAD**: sullen, angry, or depressed
- **Inflexible**: resist change and doesn't want to entertain ideas different from his own
- **Weapons**: he likes, owns, or recently bought weapons. Or jokes or comments about weapons as instruments of power, revenge, or tools for settling issues
- Police encounters:
- **Hopelessness and nihilism**:
- **Identification with known criminals**: identifies with or even praises other perpetrators of workplace violence
- **Coworkers' fear or apprehension**: coworkers avoid him, fear him, or are worried about him

- **TIME**: he threatened, intimidaed, manipulated, or escalated against management or coworkers
- **Paranoia**: people are out to get him, unconnected events are part of a bigger strategy against him, and other conspire against him
- **Crusades**: undertakes or joins crusades missions (particularly significant if it's "one-man wars")
- **Unreasonable Expectations** including elevation, long-term retention, an apology, being named "the winner" in some dispute, etc.
- **Grievances**, with several different people and a history for filing complaints
- **Stalking behavior**: towards other employees or bosses

To which we add:

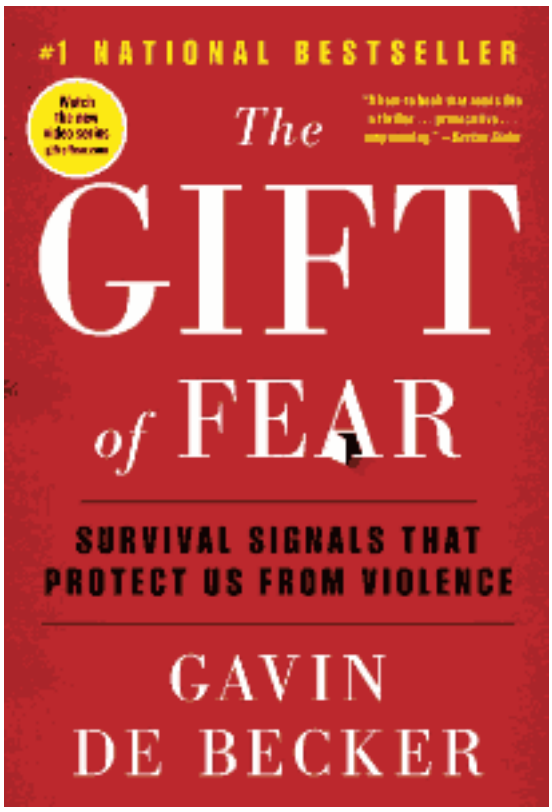
- **Can't take feedback**, not even if you try to put it mildly
- **Thin skin, sees attack everywhere**: he is not receptive to suggestions because he takes them as affronts or criticisms of his way of doing things (the author calls it "inflexibility", but it didn't seem descriptive to me)
- **Sees malice in others**: he invests others with the bad motives and character. Discussing a discrepancy on his paycheck, for example, he says or thinks, "You'd better not try to screw me over." It's as if he expects people to attack him, slight him, or harm him
- **Warped reality where he's reasonable and nobody else is**: in his script, he is a reasonable and good worker who must be constantly on guard against the ambushes of coworkers and supervisors
- **Warped reality where others are out to get him**: and the company and bosses do nothing to protect him
- **Company and bosses don't appreciate his good contributions**
- **Never takes blame, it's always others' fault**: the things that go wrong are never his fault, and even accidental, unintended events are the work of others who will try to blame him
- **Builds scripts in his mind and reacts to those, rather than reality**: he does not react to reality or to what you tell him, but to his own warped interpretations (the "scripts" he writes)

Says the author:

> The Scriptwriter is the type of person who asks you a question, answers it himself, then walks away angry at what you said. In this regard, he writes the script for his interaction with coworkers and management (…) he is reacting to his script

The author also says that this personality has successfully manipulated in the past, and when you fire him, he is shocked that this time it didn't work out, and may be angry.

If you're worried about a potential attack, also consider "media", such as if there have been other episodes of similar violence as episodes tend to come in clusters.



REAL-LIFE APPLICATIONS

Don’t deny the danger (but don’t exaggerate it either)

Some people deny the risks as a way of “feeling better”.

However, that’s dangerous says the author:

> For all the peace of mind deniers think they get by saying it isn’t so, the fall they take when victimized is far, far greater than that of those who accept the possibility. Denial is a save-now-pay-later scheme, a contract written entirely in small print

However, De Becker is biased towards wanting people to think about dangers and risk -he and his business gain when you do-.
In truth, it’s not written anywhere that deniars WILL take the fall. Furthermore, for every person in denial, there may be one who is obsessed with risk to the point of living a sub-par existence (and in my experience, as well as per evolutionary psychology logic, those may be more than the deniers).

That’s why we added in the title “don’t exaggerate it either”.

Don’t listen to “laws” and cookie-cutter approaches: everything’s contextual

One thing we strongly agree on.
Both the author and I agree that there is no real “list of laws” that apply all the time, no matter what.

Instead, the best course of action is contextual.

Says the author:

> Do not listen to the TV news checklist of what to do, or the magazine article’s checklist of what to do.
> I cannot offer a checklist of what to do for each type of hazard you could encounter, because cookie-cutter

> approaches are dangerous.
> Some people say about rape, for example, do not resist, while others say always resist.
> Neither strategy is right for all situations, but one strategy is: Listen to your intuition.
> I don't know what might be best for you in some hazardous situation because I don't have all the information, but you will have all the information.

My Note: Disagree that "intuition is always right"
I'm not convinced though that your intuition is "always right", and I'm afraid it isn't.
To stay with the rape example, David Buss says that the strategy of pleading and begging not to be raped doesn't really work well -and it's very possible that more submissive women's intuition tells them exactly that: to plead and beg-.
Oh, by the way, David Buss writes that based on research and data, not opinions.

Be warm with extortionists, lest you give them a reason to proceed

The author says that many extortionists are amateurs who are uncomfortable to even asking for money.

So when they make covert threats, they hope you will jump in and offer money. The author instead says you want to use a technique we call "surfacing" here and ask "what they really mean".

What I liked even more is de Becker promoting this website's high-level strategies of "don't make more enemies than necessary" and "be high-power and warmth".
He says:

> Though sometimes very difficult, it is important to be polite to the extortionist, because he may be looking for justification to do the hurtful thing he threatens. With the amateur, sinking so low is difficult, and believe it or not, it's a very vulnerable time for him. Don't misread this as sympathy on my part—it's just wise not to kick this guy around emotionally because if he gets angry that empowers him.

Generally speaking, extortionists motivated by malice, which I interpreted to also include envy or jealousy, are more likely to carry out the threat, while those motivated by greed are less likely to do so.
Those motivated by malice are hard to negotiate with anyway and the author suggests to not even try.
And those who are very explicit are also more likely to carry out the threat than those who seem insecure and uncomfortable with the extortion.

Public figures killers seek the American dream of recognition

In the last part of the book, the author focuses on the stalkers and killers of known public figures.

These types of assassinations, says the author, are a narcissist seeking fame and recognition… In a very warped fashion.

He says:

> The assassin might be weird or unusual, but we cannot say we don't understand his motives, his goal. He wants what Americans want: recognition, and he wants what all people want: significance.

Jack Henry Abbott for example describes the "involuntary pride and exhilaration all convicts feel when they are chained up like dangerous animals. The world has focused on us for a moment. We are somebody capable of threatening the world."
This is why the author proposes to fix the issue by either never talking about these idiots, or by talking about them..
For the iditos they are.

Assassins of female public figures also add an element of “made-up romance” or romantic dreams, and they often never had any real relationships in life.

PILLS OF WISDOM

Rapport has an undeservingly good reputation since it’s almost always done for self-serving reasons

I must say that when I read this I immediately thought of Tony Robbins and all of his sales courses.
Often he focused on building rapport, and it always felt fake and manipulative.

To find out the identity of anonymous threatener, ask yourself who gains if you acted out on the threat

This is a tip Robert Greene also shares in a law he calls “cui bono”, such as, ask yourself “who gains”.

Many women don’t know end abusive relationships because they don’t even see ending the abusive relationship as an option and possibility.

Some others yet are completely under the spell and power of the abuser.

The author says the abuser holds power over their spouses because he delivers powerful feelings of overwhelming relief when an incident ends.
She becomes addicted to that feeling.
The abuser is the only person who can deliver moments of peace, by being his better self for a while. And the worse the bad times get, the better the good times are in contrast.

Women better not get a restraining order without knowing the strategic considerations

If you walk into a police office they’re likely going to propose a restraining order.

Restraining orders with violent men with a history of violent and abusive behavior and who are emotionally invested may only make matters worst. Many of these abusive personalities cannot accept rejection, especially not when they feel that their victim is now controlling them.
The restraining order only makes them feel even more motivated to get revenge for the slight.

Restraining orders are most effective on the reasonable person who has a limited emotional investment. In other words, they work best on the person least likely to be violent anyway.

If you give in too easily when men push, you will tend to attract abusers

Many abusers naturally end up with some who cannot say no.
If this is you, you have to learn to say no:

> 5 Techniques to Say No (Polite, But Effective)

QUOTES

On the arms’ race of Machiavellianism and power intelligence for deception:

> **Leslie Brothers says, “If I am trying to deceive someone, that person has to be just a bit smarter than I am in order to see through my deceit. That means you have sort of an arms race.”**

The analogy on using time to handle "people who won't let go":

> **"I have two drawers in my desk. One is for the things I must do something about, and the other is for the things time will take care of." Time will take care of most people who refuse to let go.**

On weird letters not hurting anyone, but enemies and wars potentially hurting many:

> **Johnny Carson and his staff knew that letters, no matter how frequent, can't hurt anyone, while starting a war can hurt everyone involved**

On being clear about your rejections:

> **Conditional rejections are not rejections—they are discussions.**

On abusers and abused finding each other:

> **An axiom of the stalking dynamic: MEN WHO CANNOT LET GO CHOOSE WOMEN WHO CANNOT SAY NO.**

CRITICISM

The usual reminder here:

A lengthy "criticism" session doesn't mean a book is poor; it means it *deserves* a much deeper look.

1. There's no data to back up the central claim that intuition works best

The most damning issue with the whole book is that there is no data or evidence to back up the idea that intuition works great.
It's a few stories and circumstantial evidence.

The author seems to offer a rationale for the lack of data, but not only did I not find it credible, it further *undermined* my trust:

> Certainly there are hundreds of other variables that my office considers in predicting violence, and I could present them here with charts and graphs and templates and computer print-outs. I could use psychiatric terms that would require a psychiatrist to interpret, but my purpose here is to simplify

But we didn't need "psychiatric terms", which sounds like a persuasion power move.
We just needed evidence for big claims such as that "intuition is always right", or even that "listening to intuition beats going ahead with something in spite of the fear".

Instead, what we're left with is the author's opinion, circumstantial evidence… And many lingering doubts.

1.2. No Evidence of "Intuition *Always* Being Right" (And Not Very Logical, Either)

I tend to agree that intuition can work great…

But in *many* cases and for *many* people. Not *all*.

The author instead either implies or directly claims that intuition "is always right".

Not only is there no evidence, but to me, it seems patently false.
In my own life, I've personally had some intuition proved wrong, as well as met people having the wrong intuition

about me, so that already is enough to prove that “intuition is *not always* right”.

Dogmatic Pontification, Rather Than Explanation

The author focuses on pontifying intuition, rather than explaining when it doesn’t work as great, or for whom it doesn’t work as great.

2. Misapplies basic scientific principles as well as logic

For example:

> We may consider our prediction that a presidential candidate might be shot to be more accurate than that a mayor might be shot, but it isn’t necessarily so. In fact, mayors have been shot more often and more lethally than presidential candidates.

“Mayors” is plural.
But there are countless more mayors than presidents.
To make such a claim, one should measure the shooting attempts at presidents, then at mayors… And divide the shooting attempts at mayors by all mayors.
Then and *only then* you can compare.

2.2. Confuses back-rationalization for foresight, correlation for evidence

Says Becker:

> but if I am quiet, if I wait a moment, here comes the information: “I felt uneasy when I first met that guy…” or “Now that I think of it, I was suspicious when he approached me,” or “I realize now I had seen that car earlier in the day.” Of course, if they realize it now, they knew it then.

To begin with, it seems like Becker wanted to hear that they “knew it”.
Also, to me that sounds like conflating back-rationalization for foresight.

A little later in the book, he says:

> How many times have you said after following one course, knew I shouldn’t have done that?” That means you got the signal and then didn’t follow it.

In truth, many people feel uneasy a lot more often than it’s warranted. So it’s simply a number’s game that people who often feel uneasy will also be able to look back at those few times that something bad happened and think “I was right” (while in truth more than “I was right”, it was “I took all the shots, missed many, and a few hit the mark”).

2.3. Overweighs the importance of a dream while dismissing actual data

Says the author criticizing a sergeant for not taking a police officer’s dream of being shot too seriously:

> Remember that sergeant who accused Cantrell of overreacting?
> He had decided there was a low level of risk based on just two factors: that he had never drawn his gun during his career, and that none of the department’s officers had been shot in recent memory.

The sergeant was actually assessing risk based on some data -not the best data, since it’s based on his personal experience only, but it’s still some data that spans many *years*, across *many* people-.
The author instead says that a random dream should take precedence over several careers’ worth of data.

And attention: by this I'm not saying that the dream, or what informed that dream, should be useless.
There may be important concerns there that can help improve police officers' safety.
However, you can't discount the sergeant data either and you can't automatically place a dream above many people's decades of experience and data.

3. Some naive empiricism

The author says:

> We will tolerate familiar risks over strange ones. The hijacking of an American jet in Athens looms larger in our concern than the parent who kills a child, even though one happens rarely, and the other happens daily.

There are far more parents than American jets.
And for an adult hijacking or general terrorism might as well be -and probably is- a greater risk than their parents killing them -provided their parents are even still alive-.
As for my personal experience, terrorism struck near me, a few hours after I was physically present that that exact place. Even though terrorism might not be a major death hazard, every day I walk there I'm reminded of the events by the increased police and security and humongous, ugly iron pillars.

Also read more on naive empiricism:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

CONS

Some self-horn-touting

For example:

> When the U.S. Attorney General and the Director of the FBI (<- name-dropping to make it sound impressive) gave me an award for designing MOSAIC™, the assessment system now used for screening threats to justices of the U.S. Supreme Court (<- name-dropping to make it sound impressive x2), I am certain neither realized it was actually invented by a ten year-old boy, but it was (<- the frames suggests he's a one-of-a-kind genius). The way I broke down the individual elements of violence as a child became the way the most sophisticated artificial intuition systems predict violence today (<-I smell "exaggeration" on this one)

Some "covert-selling" of the "Gavin de Becker" agency

For example:

> Clients of Gavin de Becker & Associates are a wide-ranging group: federal government agencies (including the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Reserve Board, and the Central Intelligence Agency), prosecutors, battered women's shelters, giant corporations, universities, television stars, television stations, police departments, cities, states, movie studios, cultural figures, religious leaders, champion athletes, politicians, recording artists, movie stars, and college students. Clients include the world's most famous and the world's most anonymous. People from my office attend Presidential Inaugurations on one coast, the Oscars and the Emmys on the other

OK, OK, we got it that the author has a successful business.
Would have been better if he had let the readers find out, though.

Or, at least, just bragging *once*.

But it's several times across the book:

> We have toured Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, South America, and the South Pacific learning about violence in those places.
> We have flown in Gulfstream jets and hot-air balloons, paddled down the Amazon, been driven in armored limousines, ridden on elephants and rickshaws, been smothered by hostile crowds, and smothered by adoring crowds.
> We have testified before Senate committees and toured secret government installations. We've had staff meetings while floating down a jungle river in the dead of night. We've ridden in presidential motorcades one week and in busses used to transport prisoners the next.
> We have advised…

… I guess you get the point.
I can't help but think: if he had put all that effort into actually collecting, analyzing, and disclosing data…

Contextually Good Techniques Pitched As "Always Good Approaches"

Examples include:

When pursued, turn around to look at him and let him know you know about him

The author says that if you believe you're being followed, you should always turn around to look squarely at the person following you.

This may be good sometimes, but not always.
When you know you may be followed, but they don't know you know, you have information advantage.
You can use that advantage strategically.

But when you turn around and make it obvious you know, you lose that advantage.
And you make your would-be assailant more careful going forward, and far less likely to fall for some trap you may have wanted to set.

When rejecting a man, always be assertive and direct

The author says that "if the culture taught and then allowed women to explicitly reject and to say no, or if more women took that power early in every relationship, stalking cases would decline dramatically".

The author is ignorant of evolutionary psychology logic, including that if an approach or behavior is common and widespread among so many, it's probably because it worked.
Indeed, evolutionary psychologist David Buss says letting men down easily is widespread among so many women because it serves to avoid angering idiotic men who could take strong rejections as personal affronts (Buss, 2021).

It's a bit surprising that the author, who in other occasions correctly understood the logic of not making unnecessary enemies and power protecting, fails to apply it here.

Also read:

- **How to turn down suitors**

> 5 Ways To Turn Down A Date Without Being Awkward

More cons...

Some fear-mongering twisted into “helping you” (potentially manipulative tactic)

This is a persuasion (or social manipulation) tactic:

To present something that is good for you, as good for *them*.

Becker for example lists crime stats that to me felt not very neutral, but presented in a way that makes people even more worried than they should, and adds:

> I’ve presented these facts about the frequency of violence for a reason: to increase the likelihood that you will believe it is at least possible that you or someone you care for will be a victim at some

Oh, is that the reason? Thank you… But was also convenient for you, so now your job seems even more needed, people will listen to you even more (more power to you), and people are even more likely to seek your help (more money for you).

Please note: this is not necessarily a critique of the author. Many people use this format, and I do it too.
But it is to make you aware of these manipulative dynamic, so that you can assess people, risks, and situations more correctly.

“Bad Humans” / “Good nature” fallacy

Says the author:

> If we studied any other creature in nature and found the record of intra-species violence that human beings have, we would be repulsed by it. We’d view it as a great perversion of natural law

Yeah, sure, because other animals are so nice to each other… Not:

Plus of course the fact that humans excelled almost any other species in using cooperation to advance the quality of life of every other human and that has no parallel in nature.

Strawman technique to make a bigger case

To make his support of intuition seem more revolutionary and "needed", it seems to me the author adopts a strawman approach.
He says:

> In fact, Americans worship logic, even when it's wrong, and deny intuition, even when it's right.

Do they?
I haven't noticed any strong, systemic bias against intuition even when it right.
Plus, logic I don't see why logic should stand against intuition, since if one makes a good case for intuition, logic would *support* it.

Confuses inborn psychology for learned socialization

There are several passages that take the angle of "we are taught" and "our society inculcates", while in truth they were at least in good part inborn human tendencies.

It wouldn't be not a huge con and it's also very common for books written in the past decades of Blank Slate cultural myth.
However, when you don't understand normal human inborn tendencies, you go for solutions that do not really work, and the author often falls for cultural solutions to non-cultural problems.

PROS

- **Deep wisdom on "people who won't let go"**: this was a new "toxic type" for me, a type that you don't experience very often and with which I had little experience.
- **Understands and stresses the strategic importance of not making unnecessary enemies**: including not aggravating situation are not ideal, but can still get worse. This is something that's simple and foundational, yet way too many communication "experts" and self-help gurus fail to grasp
- **Top power-aware and strategic overview of spousal abuse and counter-measures**
- **Sparkles of genius insights**, as for example the one on seeking rapport as having an undeservingly positive reputation while it's almost always self-serving

REVIEW

The Gift of Fear is a remarkable book with lots of helpful advice, but some important limitations that raise some questions about what's reliable advice, and what isn't.

Bel from the TPM's community recommended this book.
And I'm glad he did, I'm glad I did read it, and it's been in many ways an instructive book.

For the downsides, while it provides a potentially invaluable message that we wholeheartedly support, it offers little evidence to support it.
The failure of applying basic logic to various examples and claims also doesn't help to lend authority to the book's claims, while the various covert bragging doesn't help to lend credibility to the author.

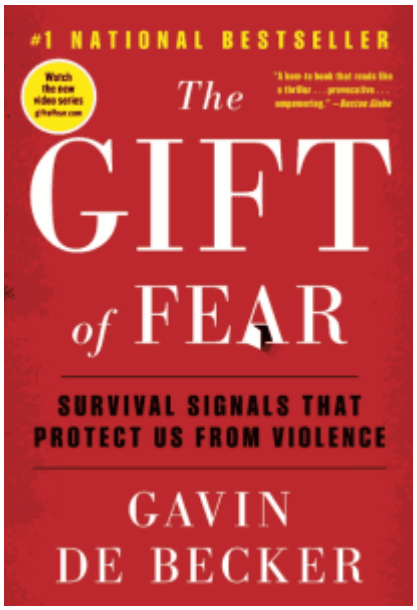
The issue is not just that the evidence isn't there, but that the author does not own up to it, instead preferring to present -or actually believing- that all of his claims are well-proven.
An author who's interested in sounding more credible and selling his firm's services also has a covert interest in presenting his approach and method as far more solid, helpful, and needed than they might really be.

We wish it weren't so because "The Gift of Fear" may have even entered our "highly recommended" lists.

“The Gift of Fear” is a book that we recommend, but with caveats on lacking evidence, sometimes lacking logic, and for jumping to conclusions.

Get the book on Amazon or check our **most recommended books**.

The Gift of Fear Summary: Can You Trust Intuition?



The Gift of Fear (1997) is a guide to leveraging your inborn fear signals to assess and defend against criminals, manipulators, stalkers, abusers, and all kinds of people that you generally want to avoid.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-gift-of-fear-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3

The Gervais Principle: Genius Psychological & Power Analyses, For Simplistic Social Models

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 July 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Gervais Principle (2009-2013) is a series of 6 blog posts in which Venkatesh Rao develops a dark theory of business organizations centered around a sociopathic leadership on top that manipulates and exploits the two lower layers of middle management -the clueless simpletons-, and employees -the lowest paid losers-.

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  - Power-Awareness Makes The Difference
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  - How to Learn Power Talk
- MORE WISDOM
  - Power players use meta-communication, all others miss it
  - Effective men must learn to act like sociopaths
- CRITICISM
  - Great wisdom, but keep in mind it's a simplification (imperfect representation of reality)
- CONS
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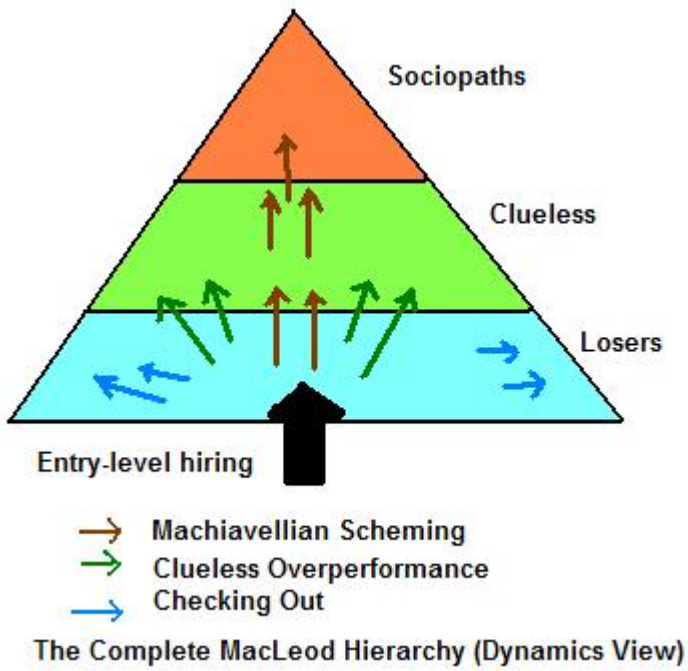
Exec Summary

- **Organizations are intrinsically pathological**, not "possibly so" as in the exceptional case of a few bad organizations, but pathological as the norm
- **There are three levels of corporate org chart**, and only the top sees the truth, and wins
  1. Sociopaths: the power-aware leaders at the top
  2. Clueless: the high-conscientiousness middle management
  3. Losers: the lower-level employees, "losers" in an economical sense
- **Becoming a top-dog sociopath is an awakening process**, of seeing the manipulation, going through some nihilism, and then using that knowledge to win at life



From Ashok Vaishnav

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Venkatesh Rao is a writer and consultant. He writes the Ribbonfarm blog, and is the author of Tempo, a book on decision-making. Rao holds a Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering (2003) from the University of Michigan and at the time of writing resides in Los Angeles.

Intro: Organizational Psychology From a TV Show

The Gervais Principle lays out a theoretical framework of organizational socio-dynamics.

It says that organizations are inherently pathological, and divides employees into Machiavellian sociopaths at the top -the owners and shareholders-, high-conscientiousness and loyal company men in the middle -the "clueless overperformers"-, and those who try to slack off and get by with the least work at the bottom -the "losers"-.

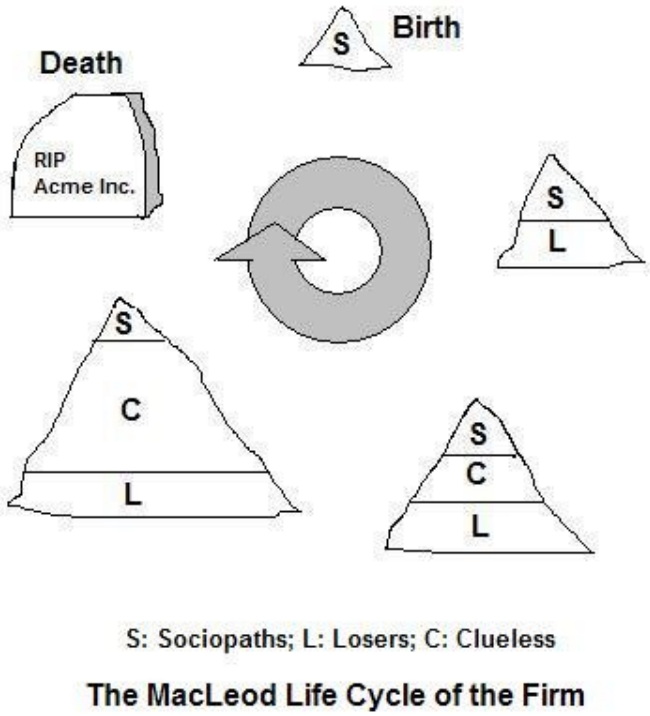
Rao teases out his model by analyzing and drawing from the TV series "The Office", an American sitcom of 9 seasons, but implies that the model applies to most business organizations.

The Gervais Principle In Brief

In brief, the "Gervais Principle" is:

> Sociopaths promote over-performing losers into middle-management so they'll break their back for the company, groom under-performing high-power and Machiavellian losers into sociopaths to lead the organization, and leave the low-power, power-unaware average bare-minimum-effort losers at the bottom to do the menial work.

The Business Life Cycle



From Ribbonfarm
The business life cycle in the Gervais model works like this:

1. **A sociopath has an idea** or wants to start a business
2. **Recruits losers** to start: losers are more abundant and require less money
3. **Hires clueless as middle management to run the company,** or else the company would quickly implode
4. **Clueless middle management** grows if the business goes well
5. **Sociopaths and losers start exiting when the company matures and hits diminishing returns**: the sociopaths milk the business for cash as much as possible with mergers, acquisitions, stock buybacks, and layoffs. The losers start exiting because they focus on good feelings and enter and exit reactivaley, following economy trends, or based on feelings and finding fulfillment whenever they can

The 3 Profiles: Losers, Clueless, Sociopaths

The organizational structure in The Gervais Principle is rather simple:

1. Sociopaths

These are the guys at the top.
Says the author:

> The Sociopath (capitalized) layer comprises the Darwinian/Protestant Ethic will-to-power types who drive an organization to function despite itself. The Clueless layer is what Whyte called the "Organization Man,"

2. Clueless

The clueless make more money than the losers, but are often even blinder to reality.

That shouldn't be too surprising since the clueless are not given middle-level management roles because of their smarts, but because of their hard work and (misplaced) loyalty -which, the author, says is a consequence of their

cluelessness-.

Clueless men are clueless to all power dynamics, including emotional ones.
With a few examples from The Office, the author says they're stuck in emotional dependency based on external approval, be it from their boss/mother figure (child level), token symbols of appreciation (pre-adolescent badges from teachers and coaches), and peers' approval (adolescent level, "sitting with the cool kids").

To better understand emotional power dynamics and dependence or independence from external validation, see:

- **The judge power dynamics**

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Emotional Control

3. Losers

The name "loser" is mostly economical, in the sense that they have struck a bad bargain, giving up capitalist risk-taking for steady but meager paychecks.

Many losers are feelings-driven and like to feel good about their lives.
Instead of power-driven like the top-dog sociopaths, they are happiness seekers.

Many losers are more power-aware than clueless middle-management, and that is why, if they cannot find personal fulfillment, they avoid working too much: they know that the system is rigged and the pay-offs don't justify the overwork.
Instead, he pays his bare minimum dues, gives little but also does not ask for much. And he finds meaning elsewhere, outside of work.

Losers also don't have much loyalty to the company, albeit they can be loyal to individuals.

3.2. Future sociopath losers

Many sociopaths were formers losers.

List other losers, the future sociopath recognizes that he's in a bad bargain.
Unlike the risk-averse loser though, he has no intention of just getting by and collecting the crumbles.

The author, and here we disagree, says that the future sociopath severely under-performs to free up energy into political maneuvering and upward exit.
He knows that high-levels of under-performance are not sustainable in the long-run, but he takes a calculated risk of "quick up, or quick out".

My Note: Bad As Systemic Theory, But Fantastic Explanation of How Some Actual Sociopaths Think & Act
Overall, the explanation of how losers make it into the high-leadership rank is not very generalizable.
However, in a few cases of actual sociopaths, it's exactly how it works.
I've personally witnessed this dynamic in action -and it's in **Power University**, together with how I handled it to win-.

Why hard-working clueless make good middle-management

This was one of my favorite insights, and something I had also noticed:

> So why is promoting over-performing Losers logical?
> The simple reason is that if you over-perform at the Loser level, it is clear that you are an idiot. You've already made a bad bargain, and now you're delivering more value than you need to, making your bargain even worse.

> Unless you very quickly demonstrate that you know your own value by successfully negotiating more money and/or power, you are marked out as an exploitable clueless Loser.

Clueless make for good watchdogs and kapos

The hard-working clueless are worth more in the middle to the top leaders.

And, albeit the author never says it, their (misplaced) loyalty and high conscientiousness also make them great watchdogs and enforcers on the owners' behalf.

Since they don't aim at the top, their top is already in the middle -plus, they're conveniently zero competition for those already at the top, who don't have to fear being replaced or leapfrogged-.

So the clueless have a strong interest in defending the status quo.
Since they look beneath rather than upward, they feel they're getting a great deal, and they (mistakenly) think the company supports them. They also feel better and better off than the losers, so they have an entrenched interest to defend the company for their own well-being.

Wanting to keep things as they are and fearful the loser might cost the company with their slacking off, they'll patrol the premises, watch over the low-level employees, protect company property, and parrot the company's line and values.
They make for good Kapos.

Becoming Sociopaths = Becoming Aware

Sociopaths are power aware.

But they weren't born power-aware.
They realize with time -today, some might call it "taking the red pill"-.

But they're smart and already Machiavellian-bent.
So they quickly understand the game. The corporate manipulations, the leader's manipulations, the conflicts of interest… They know that at the powerless bottom you get the feel-good slap on the back… And the crumbles left by those at the top.

And they don't want to play by those rules.

Some of what they discover is saddening and makes them cynical and nihilistic.
However, says the author, in that process of discovery there is the key to their power:

> They find that in the unsatisfying meanings they uncover, lie the keys to power over others. In seeking to penetrate mediated experiences of reality, they unexpectedly find themselves mediating those very realities for others.

Also read:

- **Corporate manipulations**

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees (W/ Examples)

Power-Awareness Makes The Difference

The whole Gervais Principle is based on power awareness.

And that's one of the things that makes it so good.
The author explains this concept via Plato's cave allegory:

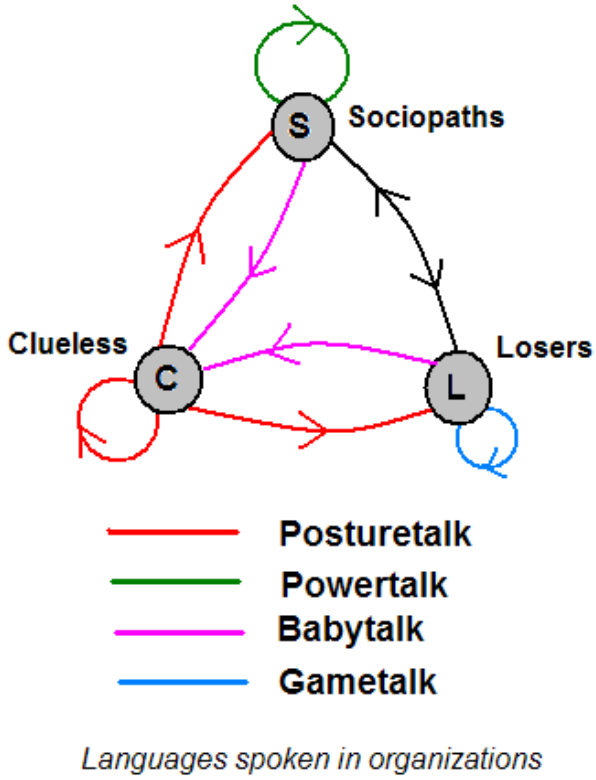
> The image is derived from Plato's allegory of the cave, which I won't get into here. Suffice it to say that it divides people into those who get how the world really works (the Sociopaths and the self-aware slacker Losers) and those who don't (the over-performer Losers and the Clueless in the middle).

Personally, I wouldn't say it's just awareness though.
I think the level of one's self-confidence, drive, as well as cynicism, make a huge difference.
So the aware and driven may also work hard to reach higher.
And the aware but cynic may self-harm himself by slacking off while with just a bit more work and a better attitude, he may have been promoted much faster and much higher.

But the author he's also 100% right, power-awareness does make a huge difference.

Not just power dynamics, by the way, but including awareness of social and value exchanges, as well as manipulation dynamics.

The 4 Languages of The Gervais Principle



Source Ribbonfarm

- **Powertalk**: consequential, it changes the power dynamics and the relative status of individuals who engage in it

Power talk is the only language that changes things -"playing with real money"- while all the other forms of communication are for shooting the breeze, for self-soothing, or to make people feel better.

- **Posturetalk**: it's the talk of those who wish they were high-power sociopaths. Clueless use it in the more superficially macho (finance) industries, or industries with some actual danger -but that still doesn't make the posture-talker a power player-.

  For example, it's Joe Pesci in the movie "Goodfellas": he's a truly dangerous character, but he's not cut for being

a real top-dog power player. Or it's the "alpha male posturing" who tries too hard to have others believe he's a top dog

- **Babytalk**: leaves power relations unchanged because its entire purpose is to help Losers put themselves and each other into safe pigeonholes that validate do-nothing life scripts
- **Gametalk**: it does not affect relations because its entire purpose is to make Losers feel OK about themselves and validate do-nothing life scripts.
  It's the only language that's been studied (see transaction analysis texts such as "Games People Play", "I'm OK You're OK", and "What Do You Say after You Say Hello").

Albeit Venkatesh Rao says that gametalk is the only language that's been studied, I think this website changed that.

Today The Power Moves also addressed all other languages, especially powertalk -this is why LOF, the person who recommended me this book, said that this website provides the practical applications of "The Gervais Principle"-.

Power Talk: How The Top 1% Talks

Power talk negotiates power.

It means that the power between two people who engage in power talk slightly shifts with each exchange.
One may lose if he yields ground, or one may gain.
But it doesn't mean one has always to lose. Sometimes both can gain slightly, and sometimes that happens at the expense of a loser.

Power talk is the only language that negotiates power, status, value, and money.
And if you cannot speak power talk and speak with someone who can, they'll take all your value for nothing.
Says the author:

> If you are Clueless or a Loser and accidentally acquire some leverage (like when Phyllis learns of the Angela-Dwight affair), but can't speak Powertalk, the old adage applies: a fool and his money are soon parted

Also read:

- **High power talk**
- **Low power talk** and submissive signs you need to avoid

> Verbal Dominance: 10 Ways to Speak With Confidence

And:

- **High power behavior**

Power Talk Is In The Open

Power talk happens in the open, also in front of losers and clueless.

This is contrary to what you may see in some movies where the sociopaths retreat to talk among themselves.
In truth, sociopaths don't need to retreat because losers and clueless wouldn't understand anyway.

The talk is coded because it happens mostly at the subtext level anyway.

As a matter of fact, sociopaths are far more guarded in private when talking to other sociopaths.
In private, they are in scheming mode, including self-defense. Says the author: "they must be wary of sociopaths with misaligned agendas, and protect themselves in basic ways before attempting things like cooperation. They never lower their masks".

Power Talk: Case Studies

Power talk is all about "playing the social game" at advanced level.

And that includes the sub-text and sub-communication that go beyond the exact words and literal meaning.

Clueless folks only understand the literal meaning.
The losers can partially understand, but not speak Powertalk.
The power-aware sociopaths instead communicate the *most* via the sub-text.

Here's an example from the show:

> **Wallace**: So what's up with Jan and Michael? (<—- fishing for information)
> **Jim**: "I wouldn't know…(pregnant pause)…where to begin." (slight laugh)
> **Wallace**: (laughs in return)

The *literal* communication is that it's a complex situation, but the real communication is in the *sub*-communication. Here is some of the sub-communication of this exchange in the author's analysis:

1. **Power awareness by reading his true motives**: "I understand you think something bizarre is going on. I am confirming your suspicion. It is a bizarre mess, and you should be concerned"
2. **Power awareness via plausible deniability**: "*I know how to communicate useful information while maintaining plausible deniability*". You cannot prove that Jim actually confirmed Wallace's suspicions and, better yet, you cannot prove that Jim says anything about Jan and Michael relationship
3. **Power awareness by showcasing the "powertalk" skills**: "*This is the first significant conversation between us, and I am signaling to you that I am fluent in Powertalk*"
4. **Power awareness and personal power by maintaining power through information withholding**: "*I am aware of my situational leverage and the fact that you need me. I am not so over-awed that I am giving it all up for free*"
5. **Personal power by remaining high-power**: "*I am not so gratified at this sign of attention from you that I am going to say foolish things that could backfire on me*"
   This is one of the main reasons why you want to learn to talk high-power: you almost automatically gain the respect of the high-power folks
6. **Personal power & strategic approach to social exchanges by assessing him and asking something back**: "*You still have to earn my trust. But let's keep talking. What do you have that I could use*?"
7. **Power awareness via flexible non-committal**: "*I am being non-committal enough that you can pull back or steer this conversation to safer matters if you like. I know how to give others wiggle room, safe outs and exits*"

A person who is low in power awareness (low cognitive power) and low-power in terms of behavior (low power behavior) would have been so gratified by the attention of the high-power sociopath, that he would have gotten nervous, spoken at length, and spilled all the beans (and more).
Wallace, the high-power sociopath, would have taken the all the information he wanted, and walked away without paying.
Such as, the low-power guy would have entered a win-lose exchange with the sociopath where he'd be the sucker of that sucker's trade.

Case Study: Loser Jan Fails Power Talk

This is an example from the original Gervais Principle:

> **Jan**: (lowball offer)

> **Michael**: Jan… After all we've been through…" (with a hurt, puppy-dog look in his eyes)

Michael feels betrayed. He has no idea that salary negotiation is a different game and he must play the (appropriate) part.
Plus, he's not enough emotionally in control to hold back.

Even more telling, a little later Jan even gives up playing the professional HR. Michale just can't play ball with the power talk: he's clueless. So she resorts to baby talk to handle him -and, in real life, would lose all attraction for him-.

How to Learn Power Talk

The big question now:

How do you learn it?

The author says you can't learn it from books, or online.
If you try to learn it from books, you merely expand your posturetalk vocabulary.

The author says that an example is Michael reading stuff on the Internet and then acting and looking even lower power and more ridiculous by applying it poorly:

This was a GREAT insight by the author.
Albeit the scene of course is exaggerated as in most movies, the concept is very realistic.
There have been a few people who first show up on this website after reading books like "The 48 Laws of Power" or some red pill "be more alpha male" books and then act like idiots trying to incorporate this or that rule or technique.
However, on this website, it's not that many (because I like to think we teach things properly here). But if you peruse subreddits dedicated to power and strategies, you'll find them by the boatloads.
Also see:

- **Why the 48 laws of power is wrong**

The author says that the same effect happens when socially-unskilled folks start using scripts from resources such as "assertive communication", "nonviolent communication" or "verbal judo".

They just come off as weird, make their speaking partner even more enraged, and lose out even bigger.
This is the example from the original "The Gervais Principle":

> **Phyllis**: (trying out Google tips) How does that make you feel
> **Angela**: (with icy sarcasm) I feel angry. Angry at you for doing something stupid, angry at me for believing you could do something not stupid

Albeit not in the original Gervais Principle, this example is even better.
Angela uses the perfect approach for the situation, but only OK words, terrible delivery, and even worse frame control after Phylli's scathing reply.

When normally passive, submissive, or clueless people start using high-power, assertive, or strategic communication, they haven't internalized it or understood it yet, so they come across as stilted and fake, and they irk and annoy others even more.

And when it comes to "list of power rules", the author also says:

> Just knowing whatever few rules exist is of no real use, it's merely a basic condition of participation.

You can learn sociopath behavior and power talk from the mafia

Says the author:

> Goodfellas is great fun of course, but not as easily translated to non-criminal workplaces. (…) Though distant from our worlds, criminal worlds have the one advantage that they do not need to maintain the fiction that the organization is not pathological, so they are revealing to study.

Indeed, this is also the reason why this website delved into mafia and mafia-like organizations for learning.
You can also see:

- Five Families
- Mafia Prince
- Underboss

> Underboss: Summary & Review

The quickest way to learn powertalk

So the quickest way to learn powertalk -and general high power behavior-, is Power University:

- **Power University**

> Power University

MORE WISDOM

Power players use meta-communication, all others miss it

It's true that power players talk differently.

Reardon also calls it "the Secret Handshake" with which power players recognize each other.

But overall, it's an extremely tiny minority that seems to recognize this principle.
I'm glad that someone else also pointed it out because this part of what this website and Power University do: allow people to access that higher level of communication.

Effective men must learn to act like sociopaths

> Whether this makes them evil or good depends on the situation.
> (…)
> Good Sociopaths operate by what they personally choose as a higher morality, in reaction to what they see as the dangers, insanities and stupidities of mob morality.

We also agree with it.
In many ways, this is what this website and **Power University** do: make *good* sociopaths.

Sociopaths respect the law in appearance, but break it in spirit

Something we also noted in our Machiavellian thinking article:

> Effective Sociopaths stick with steadfast discipline to the letter of the law, internal and external, because the stupidest way to trip yourself up is in the realm of rules where the Clueless and Losers get to be judges and jury members.
> What they violate is its spirit, by taking advantage of its ambiguities.

CRITICISM

There's so much golden in "The Gervais Principle" that I wanted to change this section from "criticism" to "limitations".

However, to keep the standard across all our reviews, I kept the original name.

Great wisdom, but keep in mind it's a simplification (imperfect representation of reality)

The Gervais Principle is neat and simple.

Just 3 classes of people, and all are quite homogenous.

Since reality is obviously complex, variegated, and full of exceptions and shades of grey, that already tells you a lot about how truly explanatory a simple model can be.

An important in terms of explanatory power is this:

The Gervais Principle stops at the cynical level

The Gervais Principle is great, in part, because it addresses the darker side of social and organizational dynamics.

And that part, high in self-interest, manipulation, and predation, is what's most often (conveniently) left out and omitted from most other sources.
However, reality is not only manipulation and predation. Success is also, at least in part and at least sometimes, meritocracy, adding value, solving problems, and improving lives.

And while The Gervais Principles is an interesting take on the "dark side" of organizational dynamics, it stops there.
Anything that stops at the cynical and dark side is, at best, 50% of reality -and, in some of the best and healthiest organizations, less than 50%-.

Sometimes a bit simplistic

Of course, even just a mere 50% of reality is still extremely complex.

And since "The Gervais Principle" is a brief series of six average-length blog posts, sometimes even the "darker" side is a bit simplistic.

For example the general division of organizational layers into 3 simple categories is simplistic.
In that sense, it's not too different from Marx's original analysis: bright, in many ways, but utterly simplistic. Even in Marx's days, capitalists and proletariat weren't monolithic blocks. And, even more importantly, there weren't any "group-level" virtues and sins.

Some as much as capitalists weren't all greedy and exploitative, so leaders and founders aren't all high-power sociopaths -just for one, Elon Musk is bright and driven, but very different than the author's description of a sociopath.

Some of the dynamics of promotions and advancement are also simplistic, for example:

Not true that *only* the least competent go up

The author says:

> The least competent employees (but not all of them — only certain enlightened incompetents) will be promoted not to middle management, but fast-tracked through to senior management. To the Sociopath level.

That's pretty much blatantly not always true.
Some highly Machiavellian people can be competent at their job. Or, at least, they may not *necessarily* be the *least* competent ones, as the author generalizes.

For just an example that disproves *The Gervais Principle*, also see *Jordan Peterson's example in Beyond Order* of what can happen when you drop the cynicism, and instead focus on adding value.
A lowly server decided to take JP's message to heart and work as hard and well as he could. And he got 3 promotions in 6 months. Plus, he went from being a disgruntled cynic, to a happy man

CONS

Gets a bit too theoretical / Freudian / Assumptive at times

After the second installment/post there was still plenty of great wisdom.
But it becomes a bit more "depth psychology", with lots of interpretations, little data, and less practical applications.

Group dynamics theory from "The Gervais Principle IV" is less convincing

The fourth installment of "The Gervais Principle" also contains genius spark of insights.

I partially agree with the concept of "status illegibility" in the middle, and indeed it's one of the issues that leads to endless games among turkeys and social climbers.
But, overall, I wasn't fully convinced.

Edit:

- **Bel shares hit thoughts on this part**, and made me rethink the value of the original work

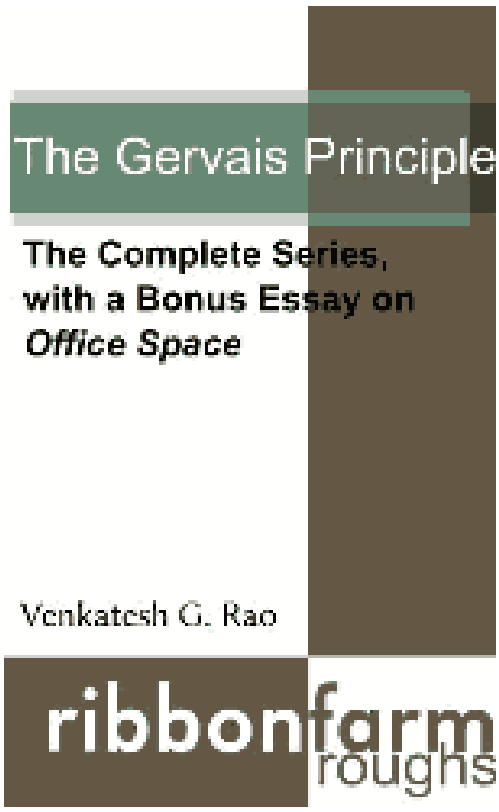
TV show sometimes retrofitted for the favorite narrative

At times I had the feeling the author has an (often good) insight in mind, and seeks a way to apply it to the show.

For example, he implies that in the show the totem pole of the clueless is "purposefully stacked in the wrong order". But I wondered if it was "purposefully inverted", or if it was more a case of "wanting to fit one's theory to the object of analysis" (usually "reality", but in this case, the show).

PROS

The first two installments are TPM-level genius insights.



REVIEW

The Gervais Principle is a great book offering a simplistic model of status hierarchies but with impressive insights on the power dynamics and psychology.

Compared to all other books we've read on these topics, I'd even say that the first two Gervais books on hierarchy and communication modes are genius.

If that may serve as a vote of convidence on either side, there is much overlap with this website. Including power dynamics, sub-communication, power awareness VS naivete (even referring to "power literacy"), and we both use financial terminology to describe social dynamics (zero-sum, win-lose, currency, etc.).

LOF from the forum first recommended this book, and I can confirm the quality.
The Gervais Principle also connected a few dots for me, improving this website's offering.

So we can highly recommend the Gervais Principle -and it even entered several of our "best resources list", including the popular "best manipulation books"-.

The downside is that the analysis is limited to the dark side, and that the sparkles of genius insight are not always perfectly connected.
Finally, although it never was the author's aim, the Gervais theory **does not deliver practical insights** on how to use the information for personal advancement -or even career advancement-.

Indeed, LOF told me something like:

> When I stumbled upon ThePowerMoves.com I realized this was like the practical version of Gervais Principle, turning that wisdom into how-to guides, strategies, and techniques.

I think that, in many ways, that was a good assessment.

Get it on Amazon, check our **best books** collection, or see:

- Best communication books
- Best books on power
- Best books for career advancement

The Gervais Principle Summary: Are Sociopaths in Charge?

Revolutionary take on career (and life) success based on power-awareness and dark-triad levels. Power-aware sociopaths sit at the top. The naive and conscientious mid-manager are workhorses who get the crumbles. (warning: avoid over-cynicism. Good people can win and skills also matter)

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-gervais-principle-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.9

Introducing: Ali Scarlett, An Invaluable TPM Collaborator

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 July 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Ali Scarlett is an author, entrepreneur, and avid researcher of the science of networking.
And, for some time now, also one of the main contributors to this website, to Power University, and to power dynamics as a discipline.

Contents

- Background Info
- How We Found Each Other
- An inspiration of what's possible: Ali Scarlett skyrocketing his growth
- Ali's contributions
- Ali Scarlett Strengths

Background Info

Currently, Ali summarizes research on business networking over at his website. Everything is clear and lighthearted.

He has also studied the likes of professional sociologists, applied psychology researchers, and other business networking experts when defining his methods.

Ali's education and experience have provided many opportunities for him to give back. To help himself and others achieve personal empowerment, Ali uses helpful information as the pathway to achieving more — by applying and sharing all of the wisdom he acquires as a lifelong student of personal and professional development.

How We Found Each Other

Ali was an early joiner of TPM on November 28, 2019

Since then on, he's been on a continuous, nothing short of impressive upswing.

In 2020, Ali kindly proposed what's considered by many to be an honor: to write the foreword of his very first book, *The Clever Connector*" -where he applies solid power dynamics and advanced social strategies to networking-.

This is what I wrote back then:

> *When I first encountered Ali, he reminded me of a scene from The Dreamers.*
>
> *The Dreamers is a movie about movie buffs whose lives revolve around movies.*
>
> *The protagonist calls himself one of the "insatiables."*
>
> *These are the guys who can never have enough, the types of guys who sit as close as possible to the screen so they can receive the images first.*
>
> *Ali seemed to have that same spirit.*
>
> *But instead of movies, it was personal development, growth, and strategies for success.*
>
> *He was one of the insatiables, asking the most questions, reading the most books, and always working the hardest.*
>
> *What a winner.*

Two years later, I have the pleasure of writing about Ali again.

This time, it's to introduce Ali Scarlett as a collaborator, reviewer, and author for The Power Moves ("TPM"). Plus, co-author for our upcoming book "*The Social Strategist*".

How Ali Earned A Top Spot in TPM

Of course, one may say that I'm a bit biased.

But then again, people these days seem to misunderstand "biases".

Biases don't stand on vacuums and don't just pop up randomly.
It's not as if people wake up one day and "suddenly become partial to some", or "randomly start respecting someone".
No, it doesn't work that way. It's that people *earn* that respect, trust, or "like".

So, in this case, Ali *earned* that "bias".

One of the reasons why I enjoy working on TPM is because I don't have to work with anyone I don't like—and it's not like I'm easy to please: I'm damn picky.
So if we reached this point of working together, it means that I like Ali—or, put another way, it means that Ali earned my trust, respect, and "like".

How did Ali earn it?
A million ways, and maybe included that he got so good at social skills and advanced social strategies :).

But also by virtue of who he is (and has become).

It's not just that he is good at what he does, it's also that he's an awesome human being and a true class act.

That out of the way, let's focus now on the "skills" side and what made Ali such an important contributor to TPM.

An inspiration of what's possible: Ali Scarlett skyrocketing his growth

When Ali first joined TPM I was impressed by him.

I was impressed first of all by his thirst for knowledge and progress, as well as by his growth mindset and learner's attitude.

Some guys say they want to learn, but are truly difficult to give feedback to.

Ali is the opposite. He's any coach's dream: he makes you *want* to give him feedback.

When he first arrived you could see he was a smart guy.

When it comes to strictly social and power dynamics, his level was OK-ish, but you could spot some gaps (luckily, I can be totally honest *because of where Ali is now*, just keep on reading-). Some of the times I thought some basics had to be put in place—my fault for not explaining things properly in the early versions of Power University, of course-.

Unluckily, lacking the basics of social skills and emotional intelligence makes it really hard for people to progress.

Far more times than not, I've noticed that, for whatever reason, most people never manage to fix and integrate those basics. So they only make little progress, spotty progress, no progress at all…o Or even flame out, blame others, get angry, and get worse.

Well, thanks to Ali, today we now have the proof that it is possible.

Ali isn't just an exception.

He's a role model and an example of "what can be done".

Of course, Ali is a super smart guy.

But that's often not enough. Equally important were an antifragile ego, learner's mindset, hard work, and a giver attitude that just makes you *want* to see him succeed (and if you're thinking "I'm not that smart", please note that "smart" is only 1 in 5 traits).

Strong of those 5 traits, Ali went from true beginner to truly advanced in an incredible short time.

Ali's contributions

Today I read Ali's case studies and often learn something new.

Ali contributed to Power University, this website's leading course on advanced social skills and strategies, both in terms of upgrades and refinements, and in terms of brand new concepts and approaches.

This is what John, by all means NOT a beginner, and in many ways an advanced practitioner of power dynamics, says of Ali:

> *I'm nowhere near your level yet but as you can see I'm starting to learn the ropes of power dynamics.*
>
> *This stuff goes far and deep, though.* ***When I see the kind of analyses you and Ali pull out****, it's interesting to see that every word matters.*

When it comes to some applications of advanced social skills and persuasion, for example marketing or copywriting, Ali reached a level of competence and professionalism that I've never seen in anyone—including professionals I specifically hired to fix marketing and copywriting issues-.
The old sales page of Power University was in large part Ali's doing. The current one is *all* Ali's doing.
When I read his breakdowns and suggestions I find myself nodding and thinking "this is genius". And I simply end up copy-pasting whatever he says.

Ali Scarlett Strengths

Ali Scarlett's strengths currently lie in:

- Social dynamics analysis
- Power dynamics analysis
- Marketing / copywriting

The Unplugged Alpha: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Unplugged Alpha (2021) is a red pill-inspired self-help book for men that, its author Richard Coopers says, crushes society's most comforting lies with a series of "cold, hard truths" about life, relationships, and intersexual dynamics.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - We live in a "female primary social order"
  - Women break rules for alphas and make them for betas
  - Avoid Single Mothers
  - Only pick women who have a burning desire for you
  - Watch out for these red flags
  - Hire Slow, Fire Quick
  - To Get Women, Get Looks, Status, And Game
  - Manage your testosterone
  - Manage the fucks you give
  - Always control birth control
  - We're not monogamous
  - Own a motorcycle
  - Learn physical self-defense
  - Avoid black pills and MGTOW
  - Don't get married
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Society teaches you to put women first, but that disempowers you and makes you lose in life and at dating**, instead, to succeed in life and with you must:
- **Face and learn the harsh realities of life and dating**
- **Put yourself first, maintain frame, and become an alpha male**, and then you will turn into what you were always meant to be, and you will also enjoy life and sexual success

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Richard Cooper is an entrepreneur, red pill self-development author, founder of the "Entrepreneurs in Cars" website and YouTube channel and, we probably can say, a "gearhead" passionate about cars.

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Lucio**: I'm sorry to say that Richard Cooper shares some toxic and weak mindsets to dating and relationship

In that video, at least.
But if that's Cooper's opening video to his YouTube channel, well…

We live in a "female primary social order"

The author says that feminism changed the rules of the game.

And it never was about equality, it was about power.
It seems women are winning -or have won-.

This is what I disagree the most about the red pill.
To me, this is such a sad sack, loser, disempowering way to approach the world.
Fuck the "social order", you make the social order around you.

Also see:

- **Making of the ubermensch**

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

Women break rules for alphas and make them for betas

In large part, it's true because of simple social exchange dynamics -in this case, sexual marketplace dynamics-.

Also read:

- **Alpha fucks, beta bucks**

> The Science of "Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks" (Facts VS Myths)

Avoid Single Mothers

They will put you last and use you as a provider for their already existing child.

Note: at parity of attractiveness non-mothers are better for most men. But you must look at your situation to decide what's best for you
Cooper stops at the general level. See "ceiling self-help".
I was dating a divorcee with a kid, she'd come to my place with food, we'd enjoy our time, and it was the perfect relationship for me. Also, Brad Pitt is not your archetype of beta male, but he married Angelina Jolie when she already had adopted children-.

Only pick women who have a burning desire for you

Whenever possible, it's something we agree with.
And we even made it one of our main approaches to have long-term power in relationships.

> 5 Ways to Maintain Power & Control in Relationships

My Note: Focus on achieving your goals, no matter what you use
Albeit I fully agree with the author… What if genuine desire isn't possible for someone? Not everyone is an attractive man, after all.
I think it's fair then to use whatever means possible, including money, psychology, and everything else we teach here.

Watch out for these red flags

1. **Red flag #1 – Daddy issues**, you recognize them for a poor relationship with tier father, or not having a father
2. **Red flag #2 – Feminists**, you recognize because they're the opposite of a feminine woman
3. **Red flag #3 – The unhappy and unlucky**, Richard Cooper quoting 'The 48 Laws of Power'
4. **Red flag #4 – She competes with you**, and the only reason why women do that is because they think they're higher value, and they think you're a lower value man
5. **Red flag #5 – Keeps men from her past around**, especially bad if she pines for a former alpha male in her past ("alpha widow")
6. **Red flag #6 – Poor with money**, because she will spend your money -and demand always more-
7. **Red flag #7 – Violent women**, the author says that early signs are "as small as a punch", while I'd even include "threatening to punch"
8. **Red flag #8 – Extreme jealousy**, women want men that other women want, but don't want to share. So some jealousy -"competition anxiety" is a good thing, but not when it's too much and when she's insecure about herself
9. **Red Flag #9 – Partying**, if she continues partying while you're in a relationship, tell her to stop and if she doesn't, only keep her as a plate, not as a girlfriend
10. **Red Flag #10 – Many tattooes and piercings**, especially if in visible areas
11. **Red Flag #11 – High notch counts**, as there is a direct correlation between a high sexual partner count, and lower-quality women. And the earlier she had sex, the higher her sexual partners count, the lower her ability to bond monogamously, over a long period of time, and in a healthy manner (albeit I wonder why the author positively frames monogamy here when he later says that humans are *not* monogamous?)
12. **Red Flag #12 – Single mother**, "do not be a cuck. Do not raise another man's child"
13. **Red Flag #13 – Validation-seeking**, the best girls have private accounts and do not showcase their bodies to get likes
14. **Red Flag #14 – A past as a sugar baby**, look up the term "seeking" in her email account
15. **Red Flag #15 – Pathological lying**, because untrustworthy women aren't girlfriend material
16. **Red Flag #16 – She has "babies rabies"**, because women who are desperate to get married and/or reproduce are not interested in you, but only in what you must do for them
17. **Red Flag #17 – Hissy fits**, as they are the signs of social immaturity
18. **Red Flag #18 – Not being in control of the birth**, albeit I didn't really get how this is a red flag of the woman, and not of the man who relinquishes that control
19. **Red Flag #19 – She's a drama queen**, who turn molehills into mountains
20. **Red Flag #20 – She had addictions**, either to things, activities, or substances

Hire Slow, Fire Quick

Take your time to assess women, but let them go quickly if you turned out to be a poor judge of character.

> As noted by my good friend Dr. Shaun T. Smith in his book '**The Tactical Guide to Women**', spend as much time as possible vetting and setting healthy boundaries with a woman before committing. It's from month 18-onwards when a woman's true personality comes through.

To Get Women, Get Looks, Status, And Game

The author in this chapter talks about meeting women online, albeit I don't think that "game" or even "status" are as nearly as important in online dating as they are in real life.

Manage your testosterone

Albeit the chapter title is called "manage your endocrine system", it ends up focusing almost exclusively on testosterone.

And the basic message is that if you're low in testosterone, or if you're past 30-35, to replace it (TRT).

Then it goes on to add some basic and popular recommendations on health and nutrition.
I personally wouldn't take any advice from a book that's not from a trusted authority though because science advances quickly on nutrition and books are quickly left behind.
And two, there's way too much bad information in this area, and you probably won't find a great source from most random red pill authors (no offense, they're just not nutritionists and a lot more likely to fall for nutritional fads).

Also read:

- **Best resources on nutrition**

> 7 Best Nutrition Books That Changed My Life

Manage the fucks you give

Your time is the most limited resource you have, stop wasting it on nonsense.

Most of all, stop worrying about nonsense.

Instead, focus on what moves you, your mission, or your family forward.

Also read:

- **The Art of Not Giving A Fuck**

> The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: Summary & Review

Always control birth control

> ALWAYS be in control of the birth. Without exception. Far, far, too many men have been already duped by women with "baby rabies". Do not let yourself become one of them.

We’re not monogamous

Cooper bases much of this chapter on the book *Sex at Dawn*.

Sex at Dawn is a good evolutionary psychology book *for those who understand the limitations*.
Rich may not be be one of those people.

That book is not a dispassionate analysis, but it’s Chris Ryan’s *personal interpretation* of some evolutionary evidence for polygamy.

Of course, just to be clear: humans aren’t 100% monogamous.
That should be obvious to anyone.
But the devil is in the details -or in the shades of grey-.

Jealousy and love are the proof that (semi-)monogamy is an important aspect of human lfe.
I get that it would be too much from a red-pill author to think that far though.

And it’s in this chapter that I felt the author generalizes the most, strays off the most from actual data and research, and seems to exaggerate women’s nature -while forgetting that it’s *men* who generally are more open to affairs.

Sarys Richard Cooper:

> You need to understand that marriage is no buffer from **hypergamy**. If a woman feels like she hasn’t done the best that she can do, and her **Sexual Market Value** (or **SMV**) has increased over her partner’s significantly, then the marriage is at risk. Women can, and often do, leave the perfectly good men that they took those vows with, so they can “Go and explore their options.”

Own a motorcycle

Motorcycles are the modern equivalent of (iron) horses.

And then you can also take some pics for your online dating profiles:

Albeit I’m biased and I’d personally agree with the author, I see little benefits in owning a bike for your self-

development *unless you enjoy it*.
I find driving in general, and driving two-wheelers the most, to be a life's joy. If you're the same, go for it.

I didn't agree much with the author's blaming car drivers -"cagers"- for motorcyclist accidents though.
It's a commonly held view among bikers, and while there is some truth to it, I find it more empowering to look at things how they are, and to take responsibility for your own safety.
Plus, of course, there are plenty of idiotic and dangerous bikers around.

Learn physical self-defense

> Violence isn't always the answer. But it is a legitimate response in certain situations. Men have an obligation for the capacity to be violent and, if exercised, should be decisive and lethal.

We agree on the first part.
And as a freedom lower I'm not a huge supporter of any "obligation", but we agree that learning to throw some punches or taking at least a few classes of self-defense is indeed generally a good idea.

Indeed, one of the very first articles on this website was on overcoming social anxiety and gaining social confidence via martial arts.

Avoid black pills and MGTOW

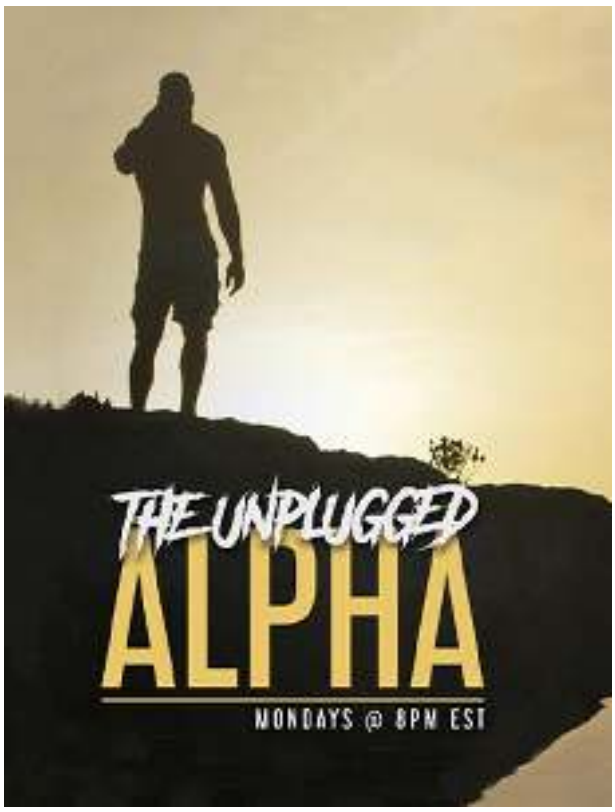
> "Black Pill" MGTOW thinking is very nihilistic and unhealthy for your mental and emotional state. Men and women can certainly complement each other in life. Not all women are men-hating third-wave feminists. But, you do need to know how to "Find the diamonds in the rough."

Don't get married

The author is not against marriage, he says, but men should at the very least know the (high) risks.

My Note:
Generally it can make sense for **high-value men**.
But, again, it's a silly over-generalization.
See here for more nuanced and sophisticated advice:

> **Lucio**: **high-value men** give move with marriage, so they must be careful and…



MORE WISDOM

- **Remember the dating power dynamics: women are gatekeepers of sex, but you're the gatekeeper of the relationship**

Also read:

- **Relationship's phases of power**

> Relationship Power Dynamics 101

- **Maintain a masculine frame, enforce boundaries, don't let her turn you into a beta man**

> If you've been **betatized** by a thousand concessions, and you begin to take back your life and frame, then you can be absolutely certain that your wife will fight you tooth and nail to prevent this. Expect **the shit tests** to escalate to never-before-seen epic-levels as she pokes and prods at this "new you," to see if you truly are taking your balls back out of her handbag. Or if you're just faking it.

Also learn more about how betaization works:

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

- **You're responsible to set the boundaries of the healthy relationship you want**

> It's your responsibility to set, and always enforce, the boundaries that are meaningful to you.
> A man who's chasing excellence and making his dent in the universe will have the options and self-respect to drop any woman who's complicating his life.

QUOTES

- Men are made; women are born
- Women have always viewed men as success objects, whereas men have always viewed women as sex objects
- Hate never comes from above
- Women don't care about your struggles, they wait at the finish line and fuck the winners
- Tattoos all over a beautiful woman is like putting bumper stickers all over a Lamborghini. You don't do it as it shows a lack of taste

CONS

Good book, with some important cons:

"Harsh truths"? No, weak mindset

Red pill-inspired authors often refer to their mission as dispensing "harsh truths of life".

The *Unplugged Alpha* is no exception.
For example, writes the author towards the end:

> This book is just a no-bullshit introduction to the harsh realities that men around the world face today.

And little later, he frames it as a sort of one-up social climb on the reader:

> I'd suggest reading this book a few times over. Especially if my cold, hard, truth bombs make that Beta inside you feel deeply uncomfortable.

I think it's a negative and disempowering frame.
When you frame anything as "harsh" you indirectly sub-communicate that it's negative, and it can harm and/or sadden you.
That's disempowering.

Why how things are should have the power to harm you?

The way I see it, there are no "harsh" truths.
There are principles, with plenty of exceptions and, most important of all, they're not harsh at all. It's much more empowering to think of how things are in a neutral way, neither good, nor bad. Just how things are.

Example:

> YouTube
>
> 1. Twitter
> 2. Reddit
>
> **Lucio Buffalmano** is a social scientist and behavioral researcher specializing in interpersonal power dynamics and men's empowerment. He holds a master's degree in communication and sociology and is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA). His method is based on the Three Pillars Approach, cross-referencing the full empirical research literature with real-world expertise and critical analysis. His life's work develops men's confidence and competence for lasting success with The Power Moves and the advanced

> training program **Power University**.

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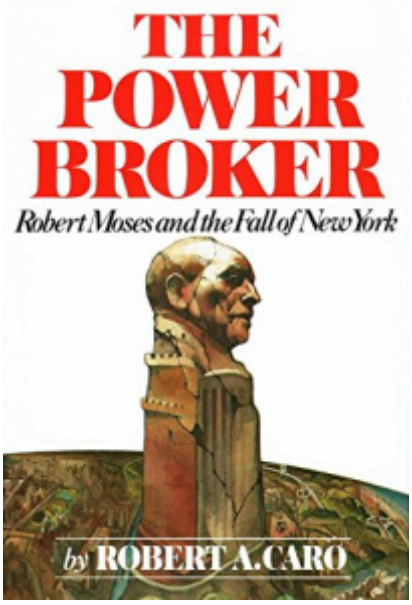
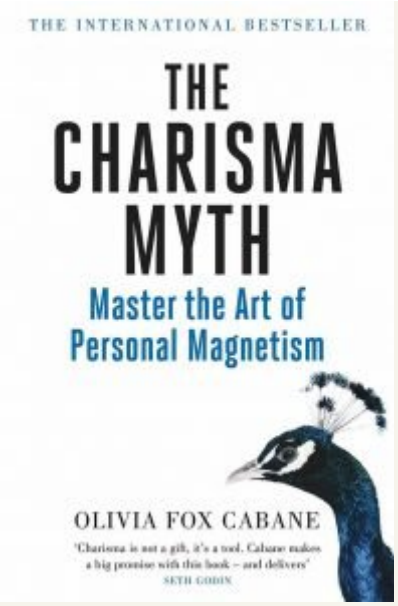
7 Signs of Low Value Men, and How to Stop Being One

Red Pill & Masculinity, Self-Empowerment



The Power Broker: Moses' Tactics to Rule New York (Book Review)

TPM Curated Reviews



The Charisma Myth: Summary & Review

TPM Curated Reviews, Social Skills

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Why We Study & Share These Resources

At The Power Moves, we study books, academic research, and other high-quality resources to refine our own frameworks on power dynamics, social status, and success, following our 3-Pillars framework of science, real-world experience, and critical analysis.

This summary includes the key insights we found most valuable, together with Lucio Buffalmano's critical notes and analysis, evaluating the work's logic, evidence, and practical applications, and how its ideas inform, test, or refine our frameworks.

We encourage readers to explore the original resource for full context, using this analysis as a practical guide to understand and apply its insights.

The Program to Join the Top 1%:

The Book of The Courtier: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Book of The Courtier (1528) is a social skills book sharing advanced strategies to succeed in courts and social groups, gaining status, reputation, and the king's (or boss) favors.

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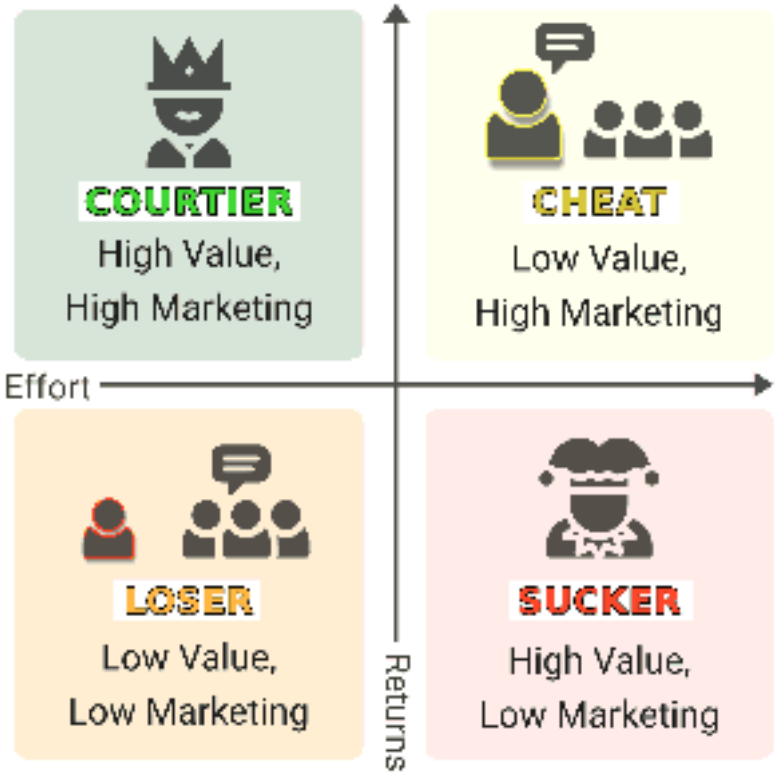
Exec Summary

- **Pursue honest personal development to become a high-value man,** develop skills, knowledge, as well as a strong ethical foundation.
  But also…
- **Be strategic and Machiavellian in socialization**, showcase your qualities without making it seem like you're showing off, attract and court attention without making it seem like you are, grow and maintain a great reputation, and get close to those who matter the most
- **In dating, attract attention to you and your qualities** while making it seem like you are just being yourself

In many ways, the "courtier" is an eagle who focuses both on personal qualities, and getting maximum returns on those qualities:



To me, this focus on both personal development and "real value", plus making the most out of it (including with Machiavellian thinking and strategies) was a genius insight.

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Baldassare Castiglione was an Italian Renaissance courtier, diplomat, soldier, and author.

Note that a good chunk of the book focuses on listing the "traits" that a great courtier should cultivate.
We will skip most of them because ranking traits by importance is subjective as well as contextual to the culture and what a specific social group value (see "status relativity" for more).
Instead, we will focus more on the social strategies and techniques that are most relevant, and more frequently relevant to us all.

1. Move With "Sprezzatura"

Sprezzatura might be the most famous concept in the whole book.

Castiglione defines it as:

> A certain nonchalance, so as to conceal all art and make whatever one does or says appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it

Such as, the courtier hides his conscious effort to make action and potentially difficult tasks seem easy and effortless.

Sprezzatura is a form of reputational manipulation because you try to seem more skilled than you truly are. Plus, you seek to look "superior" to others who need to expend effort to do what you do effortlessly and nonchalantly.
Says Castiglione:

> This is because it makes the onlookers believe that a man who performs well with so much facility must

> possess even greater skill than he does, and that if he took great pains and effort he would perform even better

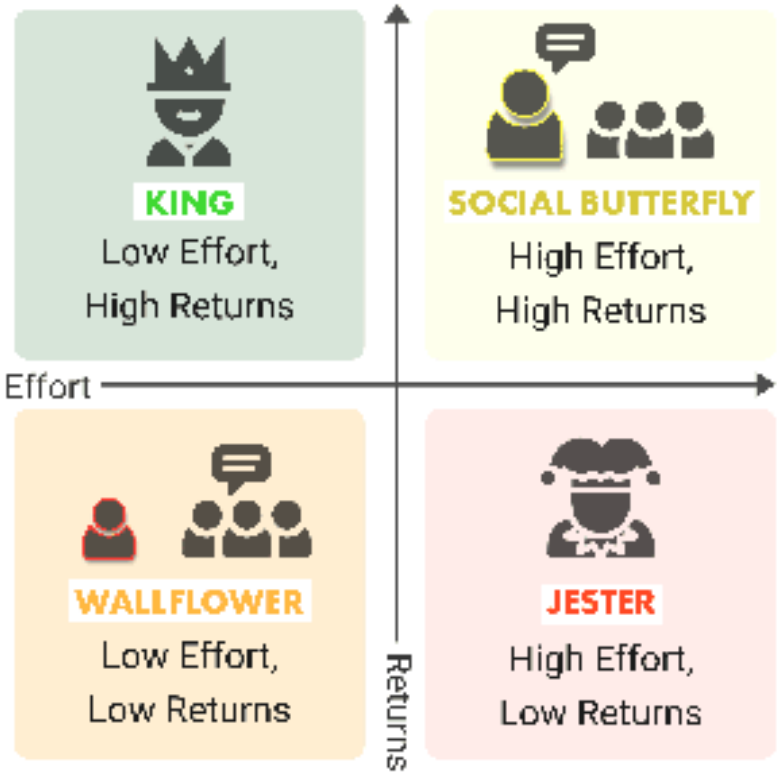
Castiglione refers to “affectation” as the opposite of sprezzatura.
Such as, when you expand lots of effort on something and thus fail to come across as “naturally talented” or “smooth”.

Sprezzatura is higher power

Sprezzatura is also an important concept of power dynamics.

We published the overarching dynamics of effort and returns under the “social investment model“, and “sprezzatura” is part of the “law of least social effort”.
Sprezzatura makes you look more powerful and “superior” by achieving and getting more, with less (high returns on your effort).
The most powerful person always seems like he can get more, with less. And the least powerful always looks like he expends much effort, for scant or no returns.

Look at the matrix of power and social effort, for example:



We might as well say that **the king is a master of sprezzatura**.
And the loser is completely unaware of this concept.

2. Guard Your Reputation With Constant, Impeccable Behavior

The first true profession of a courtier must be that of arms.
And he must be enterprising, bold, and loyal to whomever he serves.

He must maintain that reputation by constantly upholding those values.
Because one single stain is enough to undo all of the previous good:

> Just as once a woman’s reputation for purity has been sullied it can never be restored, so once the reputation of a gentleman-at-arms has been stained through cowardice or some other reproachful behaviour, even if only

> once, it always remains defiled in the eyes of the world and covered with ignominy.

3. The Courtier Is High-Dominance, & Self-Effacing (In Appearance)

Writes Castiglione:

> The man we are seeking should be fierce, rough and always to the fore, in the presence of the enemy; but anywhere else he should be kind, modest, reticent and anxious above all to avoid ostentation or the kind of outrageous self-glorification by which a man always arouses loathing and disgust among those who have to listen to him.'

4. Self-Praise Is A Skill: It Must Be Covert to Avoid Other People's Envy

> A man who praises himself in the right way, and does not cause envy or annoyance in doing so, is well within the bounds of discretion; and he deserves the praise of others as well as what he allows himself, because he is achieving something very difficult.'

And the way of doing it, says the author, is to say it as if you couldn't avoid saying it, and while seemingly avoiding self-praise.

Also read:

- **The Art of Self-Promotion**

> The Art of Self-Promotion: 9 Effective Techniques

5. When Someone Praises You, Deflect It While Thread-Expanding It

A golden nugget on how to handle praise.

When someone praises the courtier for his knowledge, the courtier should:

> (…) When he knows the praises he receives are deserved, not assent to them too openly nor let them pass without some protest.
> Rather he should tend to disclaim them modestly, always giving the impression that arms are, as indeed they should be, his chief profession, and that all his other fine accomplishments serve merely as adornments;

Basically, the smart courtier feigns that the only thing he can do is handle arms, and all the rest is just "something more he dabbled in".
Notice what that achieves:

- **He thread-expands on the compliment**. Such as, he "enlarges" the praise by staying on the topic, and thus giving it more space and more time to sink into people's minds
- **Leverages sprezzatura** by saying that he focused on something else. So people will think that he must be so smart to know so much when he dedicated so little time to it
- **Appears self-effacing and modes**t by deflecting the compliment, but:
- **Maintains rapport** because he does deny the compliment -which would *break* rapport-

Take Credit, But Without Looking Like You Seek Credit

> and if he should want to suggest something to his own credit, he will do it with dissimulation, as if purely by chance, and in passing, and with the discretion and caution

6. Good Judgment Is The Meta-Skill (Emotional Intelligence)

> the courtier should possess good judgement (…) If he does have it, then he needs no other instructions about how to practise what he knows at the right time and in the proper manner. To attempt to provide him with more precise rules would be too difficult and surely superfluous.

That much is true.
Today and in social skills we might also refer to that meta-skill as "emotional intelligence", or "social intelligence". The few people that failed to leverage this website or Power University to make strides in life share two traits: a lack of any basic emotional intelligence, and an inability to take, accept, and act on feedback.

And it's also the reason why we're not huge fans of "lists of (power) rules" on this website. Since everything is so contextual, focusing on acquiring the meta-skill is far better than learning a list of "rules".

7. Modesty Requires Success, And Kindness Requires Power

… Otherwise, you may just be submissive and low power, instead of kind.
And low self-esteem and low confidence, rather than modest.

Says Castiglione:

> Gentleness is most impressive in a man who is a capable and courageous warrior; and just as his boldness is magnified by his modesty, so his modesty is enhanced and more apparent on account of his boldness.

8. It's Fair To Take Maximum Advantage of Your Positive Contributions

An interesting mindset around "being strategic":

> the courtier (…) should arrange to (…) accomplish the bold and notable exploits (…) in view of all the noblest and most eminent men (…) and, above all, in the presence, or if possible under the very eyes, of the prince he is serving. **For it is certainly right to exploit the things one does well.**

It's a mix of *both* adding value, plus a Machiavellian bent of making the maximum out of it.
However, it's important to note that while an amoral Machiavellian would seek to take credit without adding any value, Castiglione says that the perfect courtier would combine the two: add as much value as possible, and take as much credit as possible from it.

And, from a mindset point of view, adds Castiglione:

> And I believe that just as it is wrong to seek false glory or what is not deserved, so also **it is wrong to cheat oneself of due honour** and not to seek that praise which is the only true reward of prowess.

Bingo!
We call this approach "fair value marketing" here on TPM (and Power University), and we fully agree.

9. Peacock To Attract Attention

On this website, we say that appearances matter.

And the perfect courtier knows that, and he takes care of his appearances to make a great (first) impression:

> He will ensure that the horse he has is beautifully caparisoned, that he himself is suitably attired, with appropriate mottoes and ingenious devices to attract the eyes of the onlookers in his direction as surely as the loadstone attracts iron.

The same approach, says Castiglione, is important to attract women's attention and desire -and he preceded by several centuries the "peacocking approach" of the pickup artists-.

10. Be A Social Chameleon: Adapt to Those You Speak To

The successful courtier adapts to the company he is with:

> he will speak one way with men and another way with women

11. Don't Compete With Those Below You

… Or, if you must, use sprezzatura or make sure to win.

Another important principle of power dynamics is encapsulated here:

If you compete and lose with someone who's higher power than you are, you lose little (or nothing).
But if you compete with someone lower down and lose, you lose a lot of status and reputation.

So, says Castiglione:

> if anyone is anxious to wrestle, to run or to jump with peasants, then he ought, in my opinion, to do it casually, out of noblesse oblige, so to say, and certainly not in competition with them; and he should be almost certain of winning, or else not take part at all, for it is too sad and shocking, and quite undignified, when a gentleman is seen to be beaten by a peasant, especially in a wrestling-match.

Castiglione clearly understands the power principle, as he clearly states little later:

> Hence I think it would be as well to abstain, at least when there are many onlookers, because the advantage in winning is very negligible and the disadvantages in being beaten very serious.

12. Accept Favors And Gifts As If It's Common For You To Receive Them

Yet another power golden nugget:

> I wish him, on the contrary, to enjoy favours, but not to value them so highly as to appear unable to exist without them. And when they are granted to him, he should not let himself appear unaccustomed or alien to the experience, or amazed that such things should happen; nor should he decline them in the way some do, who out of pure ignorance refuse to accept and thereby show the bystanders that they are convinced of their own unworthiness.

Yep, genius.
That's how strategically high power people behave: they may be surprised by a gift, favor, or compliment, but they

always act instead as if it was expected, thus sub-communicating that they are used to gifts and compliments (which, in turn, sub-communicate they must be very high-value people).

13. Develop A Great Relationship With Your Boss

There is much gold in *The Book of the Courtier* when it comes to dealing with the boss -in his case, an actual king-.

Some of it:

- **Only bring good news**, avoid being the bearer of bad news, a "law" that Robert Greene also introduced in his 48 Laws of Power
- **Treat him as a superior** (power protect): "*he will not behave in the way that so many do, who when they cross the path of a great prince, even if they have spoken to him only once before, go up to him with a certain smiling and friendly countenance, just as if they were going to embrace an equal or do a favour to someone of lower rank*"
- **Leave the king free to enjoy his private places, never go to his private quarters**: "*The courtier will never attempt to make his way into the chamber or private quarters of his master uninvited, even though he possesses considerable authority himself; for often, when princes are by themselves, they enjoy the liberty of saying and doing just what they please, and so they do not want to be seen or overheard by anyone in a position to criticize, and this is quite proper*"
- **When you're on 1:1 with the king in a friendly and informal setting, make the most out of it to grow closer *as friends*, and never get into "serious talk":** *"if a courtier who is accustomed to dealing with important matters should find himself privately with his lord, he should then become another person, defer serious things for another time and place, and engage in conversation which will be pleasing and agreeable to his master, in order not to disturb his peace and quiet"*
- **Never become the guy who always asks for favors**: "*Very rarely, or hardly ever, will he ask his master anything for himself, lest his prince, being reluctant to refuse, concedes it grudgingly, which is far worse*"
- **Decline favors while showing you value them highly**: decline modestly while showing you value the favors highly, and yet in such a way to inspire the king to insist even more. For the more resistance that is shown in accepting favours, the more the prince will think highly of you; and the more you show thanks and appreciations, the bigger the favor seems, which is great for your reputation (since it sub-communicates you're tight with the king, if he makes big favors to you)
- **Become his trusted confidante by telling the truth**: *"For princes lack most of all what they must have in the fullest measure, namely, someone to tell them the truth and remind them of what is right."*

Many of these tips are also likely valid for you, and they help you to avoid many common social blunders.

Also read:

- **How to establish the perfect boss relationship**

> 10 Strategies to Win Over Your Boss (& Get Promoted)

14. Only Serve Good Masters: BOTH For Reputation & Moral Obligations

On the reputational front, says Castiglione:

> he (the courtier) has the right and the duty to quit a service which is sure to bring him disgrace among honourable men. For everyone assumes that those who serve good masters are good and those who serve bad masters are bad.'

And when it comes to ethical obligation, he says:

> if he were to order you to commit some treacherous deed not only are you not obliged to do it but **you are obliged not to do it**, both for your own sake and to avoid ministering to your master's shame.

This is something we also agree on, and even made it one of the principles of TPM's philosophy.

15. Female Courtiers Obey Different Rules (Modesty, Chastity)

Castiglione was a smart guy.
Long before evolutionary psychology and the endless genders talk of our time, he knew that men and women maximize their (social) returns with very different strategies:

> the lady should always be extremely cautious and always bear in mind that men can display their affection with far less risk than women.'

If Male Courtiers Should Be More Masculine, Female Ones More Feminine

> just as it is very fitting that a man should display a certain robust and sturdy manliness, so it is well for a woman to have a certain soft and delicate tenderness, with an air of **feminine sweetness** in her every movement

And the rest of the advice would make a feminist shudder in anger and (feigned) disgust:

> to shun affectation: to be naturally graceful; to be well mannered, clever and prudent; to be neither proud, envious or evil-tongued, nor vain, contentious or clumsy; to know how to gain and keep the favour of her mistress and of everyone else (…)
> the ability to take good care, if she is married, of her husband's belongings and house and children, and the virtues belonging to a good mother

Women must possess social grace and a reputation for chastity

However, she doesn't want to make a "show" out of being too chaste, else she appears like trying too hard to be a princess on the pea:

> Nor in her desire to be thought chaste and virtuous, should she appear withdrawn or run off if she dislikes the company she finds herself in or thinks the conversation improper. For it might easily be thought that she was pretending to be straitlaced simply to hide something she feared others could find out about her; and in any case, unsociable manners are always deplorable.

Instead, says Castiglione the right social strategy is to "listen to it with a slight blush of shame".
LOL, what a guy this Castiglione, teaching women (and men) how to properly play games :). But we must agree once again: he's damn right, this is truly an advanced social strategy.

Never revel and eagerly partake in the criticism of other women

Some women jump at the opportunity of speaking ill of their rivals.
Castiglione says it's a major social blunder:

> she should avoid an error into which I have seen many women fall, namely, eagerly talking and listening to someone speaking evil of others. For those women who when they hear of the immodest behaviour of other

> women grow hot and bothered and pretend it is unbelievable and that to them an unchaste woman is simply a monster, in showing that they think this is such an enormous crime, suggest that they might be committing it themselves.

Yep, that is true, fantastic advice for eagle women.

If you want to dance, let others coax you into it

Probably because Castiglione knew that many men intuitively see a link between "abandonment in the music" and enjoyment/lust for sexual action, he recommends female courtiers to avoid rushing to the dances.

Instead, let others coax you into it:

> So when she is about to dance or make music of any kind, she should first have to be coaxed a little, and should begin with a certain shyness, suggesting the dignified modesty that brazen women cannot understand.

16. Female Courtiers Looking For Partners Better Treat All Suitors Well

A common mistake women make is to treat suitors poorly in an effort to sub-communicate chastity and higher value.
Instead, says Castiglione, that only sub-communicates poor character:

> they wish to be thought modest and chaste, not only by their lovers but also by everyone else, and so they make sure that their harsh and discourteous ways are well known to all, so that everyone may think that as they treat worthy men so badly they must treat those who are unworthy of love still worse. And then, convinced that this strategy has made their good name secure, they very often lie every night with the commonest of men, whom they hardly know;

We agree, it's generally a poor strategy because it attracts undiscerning men, and it repels higher quality men.
Also read:

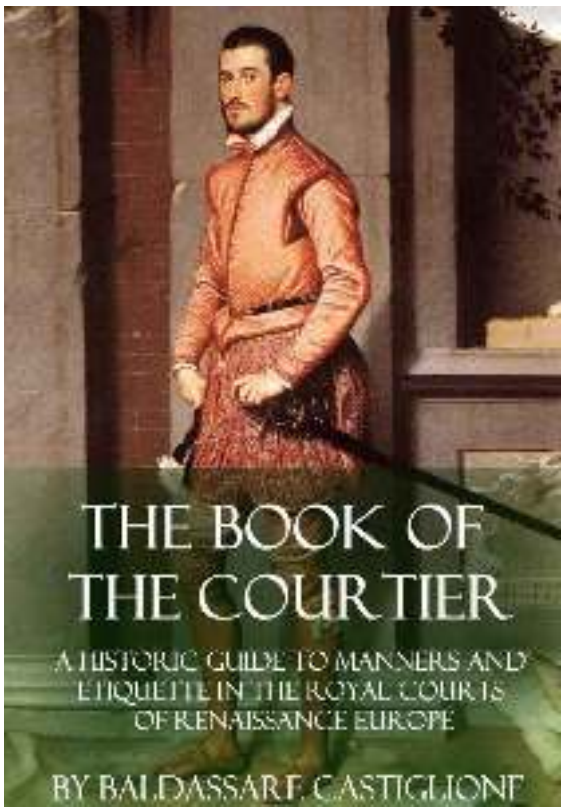
- **Traits of low-quality women**

> 17 Early Signs She's a Low Value Woman

Don't chase men and don't sleep around as that sub-communicates lower value

> And it is certain that the beautiful are always more wooed and pursued in love than the ugly; therefore the beautiful always refuse, and so they are more chaste than those ugly women who, as they have no suitors, do the wooing themselves.'

I'm not sure beautiful women have fewer sexual partners, but from personal experience, I can say that it seems indeed to me that trashier women do the most obvious chasing and sexual bragging.



MORE WISDOM

- **Get closer to higher-quality people, keep the lower-quality ones at arm's length**

> another thing which seems to me greatly to damage or enhance a man's reputation, and this is his choice of really intimate friends
> (…)
> endeavour to associate more with those who are highly esteemed and noble and recognized as virtuous than with the ignoble and those of little worth, so that he in turn may be loved and honoured by them.

- **Be twice as careful not to offend the powerful ones**

> The courtier should also guard against mocking those who are universally favoured and loved by all and who are powerful, because by doing so he can sometimes stir up dangerous enmities.

- **Bonus: self-esteem boost for shorter: the courtier should be average or smaller than average**

Castiglione says that when it comes to physical size the ideal size is neither too small nor too big.
However, if one is forced to choose, better on the smaller side:

> It is better to be on the small side than unduly large; for men who are so huge are often found to be rather thickheaded, and moreover, they are also unsuited for sport and recreation, which I think most important for the courtier.

QUOTES

On ruthless social strategies:

- **The proverb says that when your enemy is in the water up to his waist, you should extend him your hand and pull him out of danger; but when he is up to his chin, then put your foot on his head and drown him quickly.**

CONS

- **The great wisdom is scattered and there's plenty of space-filling chapters and long detours**
- **Some characters are heavily misogynistic**

Take this not as a real con given the time of the book, but more like a warning if you decide to read it.

PROS

- **Incredibly power-aware, shares a ton of great wisdom**

Castiglione was a very shrewd social operator, and very power intelligent.

You can see he understood social power dynamics as well as the foundational principles of dating power dynamics. For example, he says:

> when a lover shows he is afraid that his lady may leave him for someone else, his fear also betrays the fact that he knows he is inferior in merit and worth; and this attitude causes her to love the other man

Without knowing the terminology, he was correctly assessing how mate guarding impacts the perception of sexual market value, and how that in turn decreases attraction.
He also correctly points out nastier games women play, such as triangulation and fake disapproval of male suitors.

REVIEW

The Book of the Courtier is a long and difficult read, but chock full of advanced strategies and techniques for social success.

My version of *The Book of the Courtier* had a fascinating preface.

The translator said that while Machiavelli with *The Prince* "shocked the world for several hundred years" unabashedly talking about power, self-interest, and manipulation, Castiglione instead "cloaks shameless opportunism with a veil of seeking refinement".

I can see where he's coming from.

Castiglione's description of The Courtier is a strange mix of virtue and manipulation.
That made it somewhat "off" at times. Because while he talks about high virtues and morality, about the need for loyalty, much of the advice also reeks of manipulation.
Manipulating people's perceptions, kings' preferences, and targets of love.

However, that's not necessarily a con.
As a matter of fact, in large part, it's what this website also does: mixing social effectiveness and a strategic approach to life and socialization, with actual value creation and value giving.

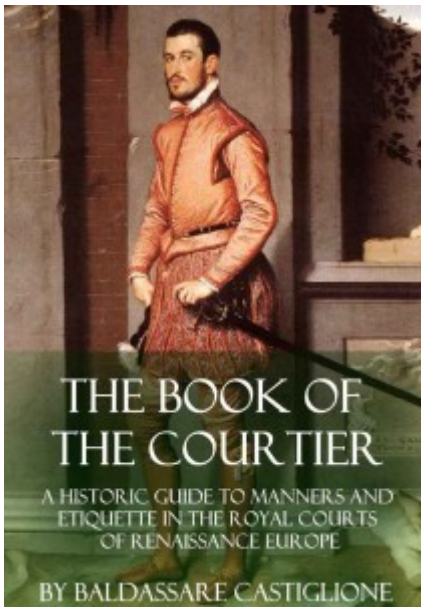
So, yeah, thumbs up for *The Book of the Courtier*.
There is really much gold here.

However, in spite of a bountiful haul of precious wisdom, we don't necessarily recommend going through the full book.

The reason is that there are too many digressions and parentheses, plus much flowery language that ends up taking a lot of space -and a lot of your time-.
So albeit we loved *The Book of the Courtier* and we will reference it more than once on this website, I recommend sticking to this summary and review.

Get the book on Amazon or check the **best books** collection

The Book of The Courtier Summary: 16 Timeless Strategies



The Book of The Courtier (1528) is a social skills book sharing advanced strategies to succeed in courts and social groups, gaining status, reputation, and the king's (or boss) favors.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-book-of-the-courtier-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

Fat Loss Forever: Summary & Review (Biolayne)

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Fat Loss Forever (2019) is a nutrition book on how to diet effectively and keep the weight off forever.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - It's All About Calories In, Calories Out
  - The 4 Components of Calories Expenditure
  - Your Metabolism Defends A Certain "Fat Level"
  - Your Metabolism Fights Against The Diet (Metabolic Adaptation)
  - Efficient Metabolisms Easily Gain Weight
  - The Harder You Diet, The Harder It Becomes to Lose Weight
  - The More Often You Diet, The Harder To Lose Weight In The Long Run (Yo-Yo Dieting Warning!)
  - Most Diets Are A Scam
  - Good Dieting Is Planned, Data-Based, & Sustained
  - How to calculate your maintenance calories intake
  - How to Structure Your Macronutrients Intake
- Real-Life Applications
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Calories are the #1 driver of *both* fat loss and nutritional health**, and far more important than the *type* of food you eat (so don't over-stress organic, whole, low-sugar, whole, processed, etc. etc.)
  - You can have any food, as long as it's within your maintenance calories and macros. Demonizing and attaching ethical judgments to meals or food is a bad idea
- **Adherence to a calories-restricting diet is the #1 driver of fat loss**, so you should choose your diet mostly based on what you can stick to
- **Your metabolism adapts**, both to diets and over-caloric feeding. Unless you learn how it works, you're almost bound to make mistakes with diets -or even to make things worse-
- **Nutrition is relatively simple but beware that the nutritional industry is packed with quacks**, so watch out not to be lead astray by fake "gurus" and the latest fads

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Layne Norton is a scientist, entrepreneur, pro bodybuilder (natural) and powerlifter, and a coach and educator on nutrition and training.
He holds a BS in Biochemistry and a Ph.D. in Nutritional Sciences from the University of Illinois (both with

honors).

It's All About Calories In, Calories Out

At the highest level, nutrition and weight are very simple.

A very simple equation governs weight gain or weight loss, be it from fat or lean body mass.
That equation is called "energy balance equation", and it's sometimes referred to as "Calories In, Calories Out".

Such as, if you ingest more calories than you spend, you gain weight.
If you spend more calories than you ingest, you lose weight.

The 4 Components of Calories Expenditure

The "calories out" side of the energy balance equation is also known as your "Total Daily Energy Expenditure" (TDEE).

It's a bit more complicated than the "calories in" part, and consists of 4 basic components:

1. **Basal Metabolic Rate**: this is the major component of your total calorie expenditure (TDEE), accounting for around 60% (unless you're a competitive trainer in some energy-intensive sport). Even if you stay completely put, you still consume energy through BMR just to stay alive, since it includes breathing, pumping blood, etc. Synonyms with just slightly different meanings and definitions include resting metabolic rate (RMR) and resting energy expenditure (REE)
2. **Non Exercise Adaptive Thermogenesis (NEAT) and Non Exercise Physical Activity (NEPA)** This is the most adaptive component of metabolism. It increases significantly during a caloric surplus and decreases significantly during a deficit (ie., a diet). However, by how much the body self-adjusts also depends largely on the individual.
   Most resources, including this book, refer to both as NEAT
   1. NEAT includes unconscious little movements throughout the day such as typing on the keyboard, talking, fidgeting, wiggling your toes, etc.
   2. NEPA includes conscious daily and voluntary movements such as walking, standing, and any non-exercise activity.
3. **Thermic Effect of Food (TEF)**: the energy that it takes to extract energy from the food (digestion). Different foods have different TEF and, in general, higher fibers and proteins have a higher TEF (so eating 10 calories of protein in your body turns to just a little less than 10 calories of fat when measured outside your body)
4. **Exercise activity (EA)**: the calories you consume while exercising, which most people tend to over-estimate

Do Exercise, But Know That It's Not So Important In Losing Weight & Fat

Remember that your metabolism:

1. Adapts
2. Defends a certain weight and fat ratio

That means that as your metabolism gets used to exercise, then the exercise simply becomes part of your metabolism's own calculations, and won't lead to any more fat loss outside of the very initial phase.
So it's not like many people think that you can simply take your exercise calories expenditure, which many people overestimate anyway, and account that as "fat loss".

Of course, this is not to say "don't exercise", because there are many more benefits linked to exercise.
It just means that you can't out-exercise a caloric surplus and that calories matter more.

Say the authors:

> We aren't saying don't exercise, because exercise has many other awesome health benefits besides weight loss. We also aren't saying that exercise won't help you lose weight. We're just saying that it's only going to give you an initial boost, and then it will become your new "maintenance" level.

Most of all, **avoid exercising during the diet to quit it as soon as you end the diet**: that sets you up for disaster. It's paradoxically better to never exercise at all than only doing so during the diet.

Instead, it's best to increase exercise as you transition out of your diet.
Exercise lowers the body fat set point that your body defends and prevent the increase in fat cell number that sometimes happens during rapid weight-regain.
So, even if you regain weight, it will likely be less if you exercise.

Your Metabolism Defends A Certain "Fat Level"

People's metabolisms tend to come with a pre-set level of "fat level" that they like to keep.

Say the authors:

> the Self Defense System Body Fat set point theory is a widely accepted theory of metabolism. It suggests that each individual person has a level of body fat where their body naturally sits, and the body defends that level in an attempt to maintain it. Everyone has a different set point, as well.

This means that not everyone will attain a low body fat and maintain it on a decent amount of calories. It just may not be in someone's genetic cards.
That doesn't mean you can't get better, healthier, and also have a better physique, but it means that you must be realistic -or that you must be ready for a draconian cut in food intake, and keep it that way-.

That's also not to say that diets are not useful.
They're extremely helpful, often even crucial for your health if you need one.

But it's very easy to do those diets wrong, and only increase your body set points (keep on reading).

Your Metabolism Fights Against The Diet (Metabolic Adaptation)

Here's what you need to understand:

Your body interprets a diet as an attack it needs to defend against. And the harder you diet, the stronger the attack, the stronger the self-defense.
Your body doesn't know the diet is good for you.
For your body a diet is dangerous because it's equivalent to scarcity and famine.

The self-defense system activates itself in 3 different ways to prevent diets from depleting your fat levels:

1. **Defend *during* the diet –** by reducing your energy expenditure and becoming more efficient at squeezing the most possible calories from the less food you're eating. This is why people hit plateus during diets
2. **Restore *right after* the diet –** Increase the rate of weight regain and fat storage as soon as you consume more food (energy)
3. **Prevent *future* diet –** Set in place mechanisms that prevent future diets from depleting your fat levels (for example, increasing the size and/or number of fat cells or increasing the hormones that make you feel hungry)

Efficient Metabolisms Easily Gain Weight

Most people think that those who gain fat easily have a less efficient metabolism compared to those who can eat a lot, without putting much weight.

Instead, it's the opposite.
People who gain fat easily have a very efficient metabolism, efficiently turning all ingested calories into energy, with very little waste.
People who can eat a lot and not gain weight instead tend to squander and waste a lot of that energy with inefficient processes.

Of course there are other factors at play, as people who don't gain weight often also move more. But if we look purely at metabolism, then those who get fat more easily are often more metabolically efficient.
And, if civilization were to collapse, they'd stand a better chance at surviving a famine :).

This is important to understand:

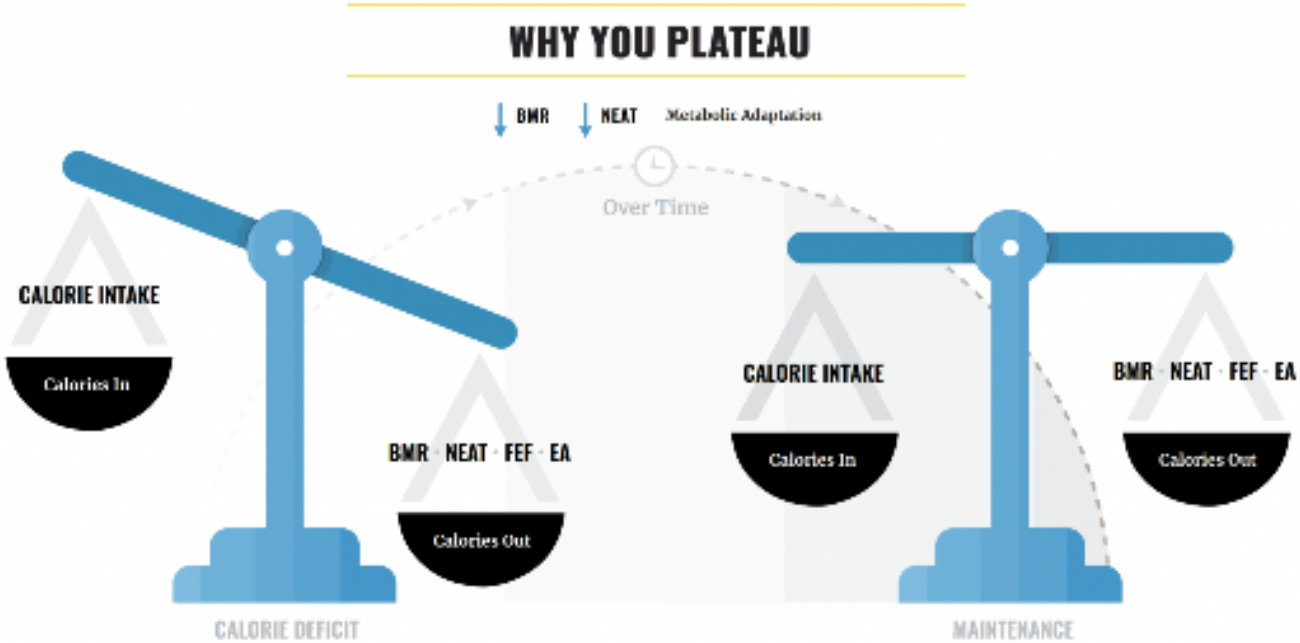
The Harder You Diet, The Harder It Becomes to Lose Weight

When you diet, your body actively fights against the diet because it wants to hold on to its reserves -the fat-.

Say the authors:

> every time you diet (eat in a caloric/energy deficit), you are activating the body's self-defense system. The more you attempt to diet, the stronger the signal to your body to strengthen this defense system.

Even **exercise during dieting consumes fewer calories compared to non-dieting exercise**.
Plus, your body automatically lowers your NEAT without you even realizing it. So while you decrease your "calories in", your body is also decreasing your "calories out".
Here's an infographic from *Fat Loss Forever*:



Plateauing of fat loss during a diet is common due to "metabolic adaptation": as your daily energy expenditure decreases, "calories in, calories out" balances and you stop losing weight because that original 'deficit' calories has now become 'maintenance' calories

Diets Make Your Metabolism More Efficient (at getting fat)

Because your metabolism adapts, and because it perceives diets as a famine to be protected against, **diets prompt your metabolism to get better at extracting calories from food and better at storing fat**.

So, in a way, diets make you become more like those people who get fat almost no matter how little they eat.

So during the diet, you make your body more efficient at turning less food into more fat.
And what happens when you end the diet?
Exactly, you're going to feed a metabolism that has become super efficient at squeezing all possible calories from food:

> research has also shown that when you increase food intake above maintenance after you've been dieting, your body more efficiently stores it as fat

And now the second big issue with diets:

The More Often You Diet, The Harder To Lose Weight In The Long Run (Yo-Yo Dieting Warning!)

Here's the other catch:

The more often you diet, the more your metabolism wants to fight and prevent the next diets.
And it does have the ability to get better at defending against diets:

> people who engage in this chronic weight cycling/"yo-yo" dieting for months, years, or even decades are further potentiating this self-defense system every time they do so.

One dangerous adaptation is that of increasing fat cell counts during a diet so that the body can store more fat as soon as food is available, so that it can fight back the next "famine".
Of course, there won't be any famine, so unless you're very careful after you end a diet, you only get fatter, quicker.

Say the authors:

> Essentially, what we're saying is that if you regain weight too fast in the early post diet period, you might actually increase your fat cell number.
> Increasing the total number of fat cells (hyperplasia) would make future weight loss efforts even more difficult and cause the body to defend a new, higher body fat set point.

However, don't worry, if you do things well, you're not doomed:

This is why good diets are progressive, and planned

Diets *can* be effective if you're careful and if you take time to adjust once you end it.

Say the authors:

> This is not going to happen to someone who regains all their body fat, but does so at a slowed pace. This situation likely only occurs in those who lose significant weight, then aggressively gain a significant amount back in a short period of time (likely a few weeks or less).

And:

> First, do not crash diet.
> The more slowly you lose the weight, the more lean body mass you will retain. Maximizing your retention of lean body mass will help attenuate the slowing of your metabolic rate, because you'll have more metabolically active tissue. It will also help prevent weight regain.

Indeed, **the best diet is to diet while eating as much as you can**.

This is because the more you can lose weight while still eating enough calories, the less your metabolism goes into self-defense mode.

If your metabolism is impared by yo-yo dieting you can still grow out of it with “reverse dieting”

Reverse dieting in short is:

> a strategy of dieting where calories are increased in a controlled manner over time to increase metabolic rate while minimizing body fat gain.

The idea is to get your body out of that self-defense mode where it seeks to retain as many calories and fat reserves as possible.
By giving it enough food, your body will stop self-defending, and then you can restart your dieting the proper way.

Most Diets Are A Scam

Now that you understand how metabolism works, you realize that any:

- **Fast diets are poor diets**
- **No diet can ever be truly “ended”** without you regaining weight
- **You may have to make sacrifices**, especially if your metabolism defends a high fat point, if you tend to be hungry, and if you like high-calorie food
- **There are no magic food, pills or supplements**

Which is exactly how markets market their diet: fast, temporary, and “easy”.

Say the authors:

> fad diet is only concerned with getting enough people to lose weight to put some nice before and after pictures on their cover.

Good Dieting Is Planned, Data-Based, & Sustained

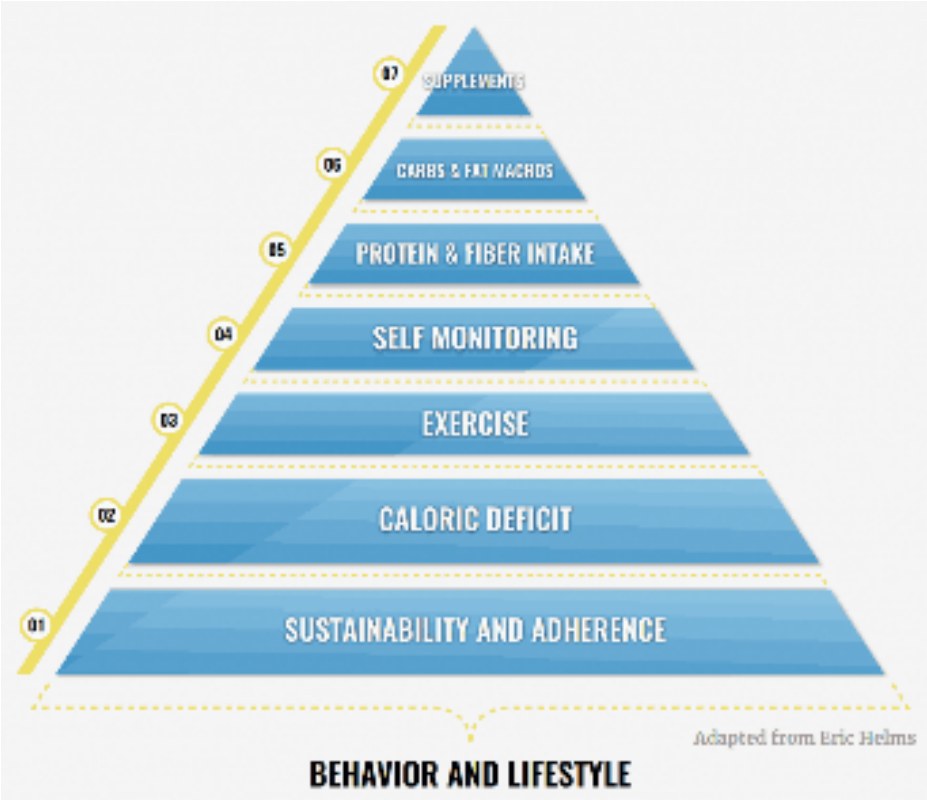
So the key is planning, measuring, going at a controlled pace, adjusting, and *sustaining* the diet:

> Success is only success if you can sustain the weight loss. Therefore, any form of diet you can’t sustain ought to be banned from consideration as a long term solution.

And as a stark warning:

> if you cannot sustain the methods you used to lose weight, then the question is not “if” but “how rapidly” you’ll put back on the weight after you lose it.

In order of importance:



Since sustainability is crucial, it's also crucial that you pick a diet that you like enough that you can stick to.
Such as: some effort and willpower are required, but **the best diets limit the need for willpower because they're the most suited to you, your preferences, and your lifestyle**.
NO diet is superior to any other as long as it fits your calorie requirements: it's what you can stick to that matters.

Some more tips for dieting:

- **Track your food intake** if too tedious, track overall calories and proteins only
- **Make it hard to have energy-dense food**
- **Plan to be flexible**: such as, if you know you'll have a big dinner you want to enjoy, eat less during that day. If you know that it will be very carb-heavy, have mostly proteins and fibers during the day
- **Eat similar food every day**, which decreases appetite (but make sure there's enough variety of nutrients)

How to calculate your maintenance calories intake

Probably the best way is by tracking and measuring yourself.

You track weight and food intake, and when your weight more or less stabilizes, you know you're at maintenance calories.

Otherwise, if you want to calculate right now when you don't have any data, the authors' favorite is the Müller equation because it accounts for most of the variables that have the biggest impact on metabolic rate (LBM, FM, Sex, and Age).

It looks like this:

(13.587 × Lean Body Mass) + (9.613 × Fat Mass in %) + (198 × Sex) – (3.351 × Age) + 674 = BMR

Men put "1" in sex, women "0".
For fat body mass you can use many instruments. None is super accurate, so the most important thing is that you remain accurate with it over time, using always the same instrument, and always at the same time of the day (the authors recommend a caliper).

How to Structure Your Macronutrients Intake

Remember that overall calories matters most!

That being said, you generally want to fill your macronutrients with enough protein first, then have enough fiber, and then you can choose for the rest.

- **Protein**, min. 1.6 grams per kilogram of weight
  ideally with leucine. High protein meals lead to slightly -slightly!- more weight loss because of higher TEF and because for most people they tend to feel more satiating -most, not all!-. They also tend to spare muscle mass during a caloric deficit and promote more fat loss
- **Carbohydrates/fats**: choose the split you like most and what helps you stick to the diet.
  Once you equate for calories, eating either more carbs or fats doesn't make any difference in weight loss. So feel free to enjoy either as long as you eat just enough fats to keep your hormones in balance
  - Limit trans fats:
  - Don't overdo saturated fats: it isn't as bad as once thought, but still, don't overdo it if you want to be on the safe side of heart diseases. Best of all is to replace saturated fats with PUFAs
  - Sugar: you can have it as long as you remain within your caloric threshold. But keep in mind that sugar isn't very filling so you'll probably be hungrier
- **Fiber**: 10 to 15 grams of fiber per 1000 calorie intake per day
- **Alcohol**: limit it, it's nearly as energy-dense as fat at 7 kcal/gram, so consuming large amounts of it will be difficult to do while maintaining a caloric deficit. On the plus side, it has high TEF than carbs or fats.
  Generally speaking, if you're drinking enough to get drunk, then you're drinking enough to start having negative body composition side effects.

Remember: don't over-stress it, and there are no advantages in over-consuming anything.
Especially fiber, that above a certain point doesn't help your digestion any longer but backs you up.

Real-Life Applications

Do Exercise

> If you never intend to be a physique competitor, you don't need to spend an hour every day training. Even performing 30 minutes per day, three days per week of rigorous physical exercise can produce robust benefits compared to being sedentary

And if you can work it up to 1-2h, 4-5 days a week, you're at a whole other level.
It must not be gym, of course, it can be biking, jogging, dancing, etc.

Exercise is especially important when you transition from a caloric deficit, to maintenance calories (when you end the diet).
And you want to keep exercising to keep the weight off.

That exercise must be purposeful and intense.
If you want lower intensity, then you have to make it longer. Walking is fine, but if that's all you do, walk for 45 to 60 minutes every day.

Generally speaking, high energy in and high energy out ("high flux") with more food but more exercise appears to be better for weight maintenance compared to a low flux energy state.

Avoid binge and “cheat days”

Refeeds are OK, but generally avoid that your high-calorie days exceed your low-calorie days by more than double. Also, avoid the concept and mindsets around “cheat days” as it distorts food in terms of “good” and “bad”.

However, say the authors, that albeit there are no peer-reviewed studies, they observed from their coaching work that different people react very differently to refeeds.
Some people respond poorly, soak up and retain all the calories and grow ravenously hungry.
Some others instead feel satiated, and can even burst through plateaus after a high-calorie day or two.
So you must do your own self-analysis here.

Avoid Tom Bilyeu and all pop podcasters when it comes to nutrition: they invite the worst charlatans

Remember that marketers want to sell.
And the best way to sell is to come up with the newest fad, magical diet, or lists of foods to avoid.

Check out Layne himself:

Some common BS include:

- Detox meals / food
- Meal frequency “hacks”
- The superiority of any type of diet for the general population (carnivore, “keto”, vegan, etc. etc.)

QUOTES

On putting health before “physique”:

> A great physique isn’t going to make you happy. It might make you happier, but it’s not the key to happiness. I’m not sure what the key to happiness is, but I can tell you that it’s not having a six pack.

And:

> By the way, there’s no reason you can’t be a happy person and still have some body fat.

CONS

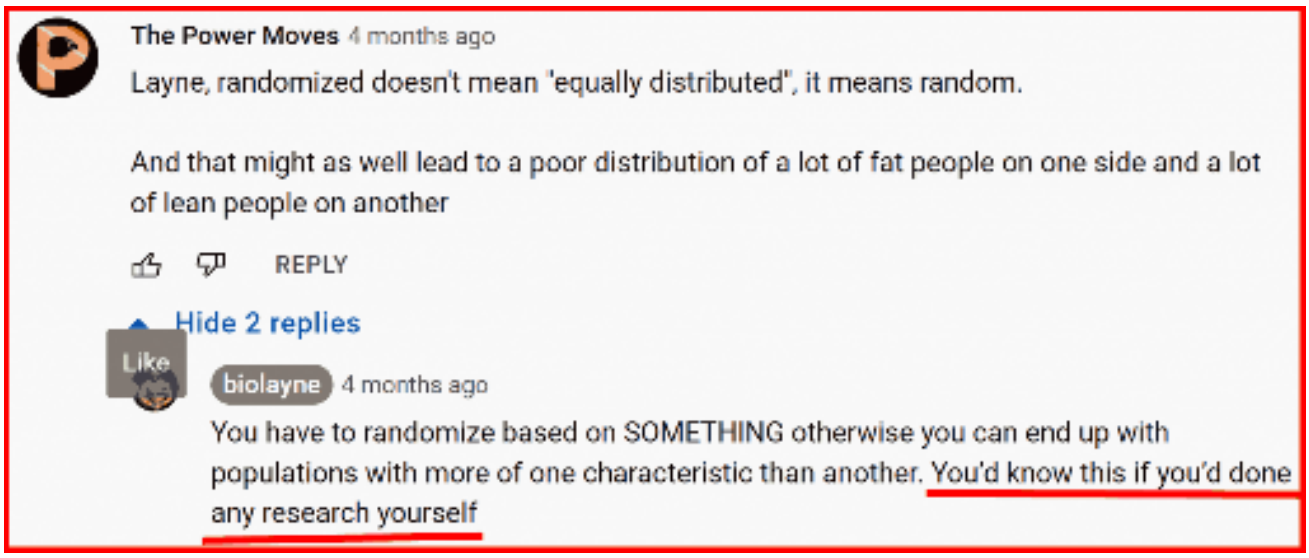
- **The author may not do himself many favors with a combative and argumentative stance**

Sure, he directs his anger towards various people and conmen who talk out of their assess, so it’s understandable.

Yet, it may not help him.

It’s an issue that I also partially have whenever I smell bullshit: we both go very gang-ho, super direct.
That attitude does not help him (or me) to land many guest appearances and to spread his message.

You can also see it in the messages, and with yours truly as well



It's not necessarily a con, though. And I frankly often enjoy that attitude. It tells you a low about how people reply to you.
For example, Mikhaila Peterson, Jordan Peterson's daughter, challenged Layne to a "race between their children" to "prove" which diet was best -which tells you a low about who's arguing on emotions-.
And Lewis Howes from "The School of Greatness" told him off when Layne proposed him to go on his show and dispel some of the bullshit (notice though Layne's approach, which is quite power taking towards Lewis, and almost invites a defensive reaction. He might have been invited instead if he had approached him in a more friendly manner).

- **Some better editing would further help spread the wisdom**

To me, this is a non-issue when the content is golden.
But to increase your reach, you may also want to look at how you present and share the wisdom -something I eventually had to also take care of here at TPM-.

PROS

It's the best book I've read on nutrition, so that should say it all, and no point in a long list of "pros" which would include "well-referenced", "logical", "scientific", "enlightening", etc. Etc.

But just to list one:

- **Great introduction to flexible dieting**

Not only Fat Loss Forever teaches how metabolism and diet work, but it also functions as an introduction to flexible dieting, which, in brief, would be:

> You can eat whatever you want. You just can't eat how much of it you want

REVIEW

Fat Loss Forever is simply the best book I've read on dieting and nutrition.

The second part of that sentence is most surprising, since the book is focused on *dieting*.

But, given how murky the information on general nutrition is, it's both a compliment to the book, and a stain on the world of nutrition advice in general.

As a matter of fact, I wasn't interested in fat loss and was hoping that Layne would make a book on general

nutrition -Layne, are you reading here? Make one please! :)-.
But I ended up getting it anyway because, even with a focus on fat loss, it's *still* the best book on nutrition I've ever read.

So, yeah, we highly recommend Fast Loss Forever.
As a matter of fact, at the time of writing, it's the only book on nutrition we'd recommend, and Layne is one of the exceedingly few guys worth following and learning from.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

Blindsight: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Blindsight (2020) lies at the intersection between psychology, marketing, and neuroscience, and looks at how brands seek to "hijack" our brains and mental biases to sell more, at a higher price.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Mental Models Mediate Our Reality
  - Brands Are Belief-Based Mental Models
  - To Create Memories & Associations, You Need to "Make An Impression"
  - How To Form An Impression
  - Help Irrational Buyers Feel Rational
  - How To Sell Targeting The Right State (K Factor)
  - Pleasure – Pain = Purchase
  - The New Addiction Industry: Monetizing Compulsive Behavior
  - Why We Like What We Like
  - Mix Familiarity and Novelty
  - Empathize & Connect With your Prospects
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  - SubMidliminal Marketing
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **The best brands "etch" themselves into our minds**, and develop positive mental models and associations that "fire up" whenever we encounter the brand
- **People pay a premium when they have a positive association with a brand**: because a brand with a positive association gives us more pleasure, even all else being equal
- **Social media are the new addiction industry**, with features developed to take as much of your time and attention as possible

FULL SUMMARY

About the Authors:
Matt Johnson is a neuroscientist, writer and speaker who specializes in what he refers to as "the area at the intersection of psychology and marketing". He holds a Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology from Princeton University.
Prince Ghuman is a marketing consultant and professor of Neuromarketing at Hult International Business School.

Mental Models Mediate Our Reality

We don't experience reality directly, but through our self-constructed mental models:

> Our brains don't experience reality directly. Instead, they construct a model of it, which neuroscientists call a mental model. Our brains are constantly modeling.

Stronger senses take precedence in shaping our mental models

Rather than prioritizing "what's true" in the construction of mental models, our brain prioritizes our stronger senses over the others.

In humans, vision is our stronger sense, and taste the weakest.
Weaker senses can be more overridden, influenced, or manipulated because they always "lose out" against stronger senses.

Example: the McGurk effect, where the visual information from seeing a person speak changes the way we hear the sound (McGurk and MacDonald, 1976).

Beliefs can override all senses

Our beliefs change the way we perceive and feel about reality.

For example, Countless studies have shown that if people believe they're drinking expensive wine, they report experiencing it as being more enjoyable.
The change is physiological.
One study measured via fMRI that while neurons in the pleasure center actively fired when researchers told participants they were drinking an expensive wine, nothing happened when they were told it was a cheap wine -the wine, of course, was the same-.

This means that beliefs *physically* change our (subjective) reality.
And a positive belief about a certain product make people enjoy that product more.

Successful brands "hack" our mental models

We don't realize we're even running mental models because, to us, those mental models are reality.
Mental models are also easy to influence and change. And the successful brands affect -or create- mental models that are positive *for the brand*.

Brands Are Belief-Based Mental Models

A brand is a set of associations:

> when we talk about a brand, what we're really referring to is the cluster of memories of all our past experiences and previously acquired knowledge related to a particular company or product.

Whenever we come into contact with that brand in the future, either if we hear the name, hear the jingle, see the logo, or see it in a shop, then all those associations fire up in our brain.
If they're positive associations, we're far more likely to pick the brand -often even if it's at a premium price-.

By extension, **branding is an exercise in association design**.
Branding is all about creating those mental associations that automatically and subconsciously fire up when we come into contact with the brand.
Say the authors through the example of Coca-Cola:

> Coca-Cola spends billions on advertising and branding each year. Why? There is hardly a soul alive on the planet who has not heard of Coca-Cola. They do it because the advertising buys them much more than name recognition—it buys them psychological association, a large patch of real estate within the semantic network. (…)
> Coca-Cola spends billions on advertising and branding each year. Why? There is hardly a soul alive on the planet who has not heard of Coca-Cola. They do it because the advertising buys them much more than name recognition—it buys them psychological association, a large patch of real estate within the semantic network.

Research has shown that telling people they were drinking Coca-Cola activated more neurons in the brain compared to people who thought they were just drinking "a cola".

Just like expensive wine, people aren't just telling themselves that Coca-Cola tastes better, but because of association designs, Coca-Cola actually tastes better to them.
And that neural pathway is etched in your brain, and Coca-Cola activates it any time you interact with the brand.

Say the authors:

> The association has been physically etched—dare we say, branded—into your temporal lobes. Coca-Cola is literally renting real estate in your brain, but you are the one paying for it, every time you buy a Coke. Concerned? Don't worry, just "Have a Coke and a Smile."

This means that **any brand that can build positive associations in your mind can deliver pleasure by firing up that association through mere brand exposure, and make you chase that pleasure -with your wallet-**.

The same was true for Red Bull.
An experiment showed that the group who knew they were drinking Red Bull reported feeling more intoxicated and was more confident when it came to approaching women.

The law of least mental effort: why we default to "shortcuts"

Associations are often the preferred way to make decisions because while we tend to think of ourselves as rational, in reality our brains want to be as irrational as possible.

> If there's an easy way to arrive at a solution, the brain will take that route every time. This is such a stable characteristic that it's referred to as a "law": the law of least mental effort.

Many corporations also leverage the law of least effort to guide your behavior and to stop you from doing what may be in your best interest to do.
For example, they may bury their privacy settings behind a maze of different options and click-throughs, so that very few people prevent Facebook from using their data

To Create Memories & Associations, You Need to "Make An Impression"

A brand only works as long as it can etch a neural path in our brains.

Same for experiences: for an experience to influence behavior and future behavior, itneeds to etch a neural path in our brains.
In other words, to be effective, you need to remember it.
And to be remembered, you want to be "memorable", or to "make an impression".

A brand, a jingle, a slogan or **a campaign that fails to make an impressions fails, because it's as if it never existed**.

Say the authors:

> No impression means no memory.
> (…)
> For brands, the success of a campaign is defined by how strong an impression it leaves on the brain. As mentioned, if it does not leave an impression, it doesn't really matter; it can't affect your future behavior in any way.

Instead, a brand, jingle, or slogan that makes an impression succeeds because it implants an association that can be fired with mere brand exposure.

So, in a way, brands are in the business of creating impressions. From a neuroscientist perspective, in the business of *encoding*.

Since not all events are encoded, how do you go from event, to impression?

How To Form An Impression

Some characteristics of an event increase the odds the event will stay in our memory -or "encode" in our brain-.

The characteristics are:

1. **Attention**: if we don't pay attention, the event won't stick. Active participation increases attention, which is why product placements are much more successful in video games than in movies
    1. Zig-zag technique: one way to get attention while also latching onto an already existing association is to follow an existing association, and then break it. For example, the Nissan 350Z is a sports car that latched onto the "red-sportscar association" but went for a dark orange (note: in power dynamics we call this technique "pacing and leading")
2. **Friction**: friction relates to how difficult it is to decode a stimulus. Such as, the more we strain our attention during an experience, the stronger the memory that's encoded
3. **Emotional arousal**: whether good or bad, if something is important enough to arouse our emotions, our brain assumes it is important and therefore should be remembered
4. **Music**: musical memory is one of the longest-lasting, most durable forms of memory

Help Irrational Buyers Feel Rational

How can you sell an emotional product that is expensive?

It's an important question because, generally speaking, the bigger and more important the purchase, the more people engage their logical mind.

However, that doesn't necessarily mean that people will be more rational.
Instead, it may mean that people want to make the choice based on emotion, but also want to feel rational and logical as they ponder their decision.

They do it via what in the marketing world is referred to as "functional alibi" (in some other sources referred to as "rationalization").

So if you're selling something that is truly emotional and that logically makes little sense to buy, you want to add just a few features or mentions that helps the buyer provide himself a "logical alibi" for the purchase".

For example, if you're selling a car such as the Hummer, you may want to add some mentions to safety to make people feel that the purchase was for higher safety:

> Take the Hummer, for example: a $60,000, barely-street-legal tank that gets 4 gallons to the mile. It's brash, big, and expensive. But by including a small mention of its safety features in its advertisements, marketers provide something for the rationalizing mind to grasp. In reality, you want it because it's cool, but you tell yourself, I'm just buying it to be safe.

How To Sell Targeting The Right State (K Factor)

The "K factor" relates to people's "intertemporal choice".

To put it in simple words, it relates to how impulsive someone is:

> Everyone has a K factor. It is where you stand on a scale of impulsivity versus control.

High-K individuals tend to delay immediate gratification and tend to optimize for long-term interests.
Low-K individuals tend to give in to immediate impulses, often at the expense of longer-term interests and rewards.

In Kahneman's words, low-K prospects are in "system 1 mode", making an emotional-based decision, while high-K prospects are in "system 2 mode", making longer and more rational decisions.

The K factor is not fixed in time. The same individual at different times may be more or less impulsive, and the same individual can purchase a certain product in low-K, and another one in high-K.

Low-K selling tactics

Generally speaking, low-K consumers are a marketer's favorite target:

> Marketers benefit from catching consumers in moments of weakness, of low K, because it's easier to sell them products they might otherwise reject

The tactics include:

- Flash sales
- Free shipping and free returns
- Taxing your brain so that you start acting more low-k
  - Casinos with hidden exits
  - Malls & Ikeas with long walks between escalators

Low-k tactics work best for cheap or easy products.

High-K selling tactics

People tend to shift towards high-K behavior for more expensive or more complicated products, or longer purchasing processes.

When people are in high-K, a good business model is to provide them with easier access to more comparative information so that the consumers can shop in their favorite mode -logical and comparative-, and gets to feel rational and smart (while still simplifying and speeding up his job).
Meta searches and comparison websites prosper by pandering to high-K consumers.

And brands who want to sell to consumers who are in high-K mode are better off highlighting and providing *positive* information about their products.

Pleasure – Pain = Purchase

Does it sound too simple put it like that?

That's what I always thought, to be honest.

Yet, the authors of Blindsight seem to confirm and lend some credibility to that equation:

> In one fascinating fMRI investigation, Stanford neuroscientist Brian Knutson and colleagues found that **a purchase could be predicted largely by the difference in activation between the brain's pleasure center (nucleus accumbens) and the pain center (insular cortex).**

They measured as "pleasure" the presentation of the product and as "pain" the introduction of the price.
And albeit the equation wasn't working 100% of the times, if activity in the pleasure area was stronger than the activity in the pain area, a purchase was extremely likely. On the other hand, if pain outweighed pleasure, a purchase was not likely.

The authors say that, put more broadly, **if the anticipated pleasure of a thing is greater than the pain of obtaining it, we act**.

Increasing pleasure

Smart brands seek to optimize for the ways we are driven to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. But that's not easy, as there are many quirks to pain and pleasure, including:

1. **Pleasure is fleeting**: and this is why brands seek to maximize the "hedonic treadmill" to make you chase the latest rush of shopping pleasure
   "*At the biological level of the brain, pleasure climbs and peaks at the moment just before our first experience of a thing. The first bite of a cheese-cake, the first drive in a new car, the first jog in a new pair of running shoes. The pleasure then rolls downhill with every additional bite, drive, or jog: the second gives less pleasure, the third even less, and so on*".
   The release of the iPhone is all designed to maximize the pleasure of owning the "new and shiny" product and avoiding the pain of being stuck with "old model".
2. **We enjoy randomness**: Pleasure is best served on a plate of randomness, and this preference for randomness also has been measured with fMRI
   "*Random pleasures can be deliberately baked into the consumer experience to great effect. Research has found that participants were three times more likely to buy a coffee mug when they were told that they were randomly selected to receive a special discount. Rapidly growing sandwich shop Pret a Manger empowers employees with a fund to comp random customers of their choosing, a plan their CEO affectionately calls "random acts of kindness." Zappos, a company with one of the highest customer service ratings in any industry, is known to catch its customers off guard with pleasurable surprises. They once went door to door through the entire town of Hanover, New Hampshire, surprising each customer at the door with gifts like warm gloves and scarves.*"
3. **We're bad at predicting future pleasure**: "*we derive more pleasure from wanting something than from having it—because the brain engineers pleasure only in the chase—our desire for something in the present is always far greater than our actual enjoyment of it will be in the future. Humans don't calibrate for this, and it makes us terrible predictors of what will actually make us happy. Behavioral economists call the ability to predict how you will feel in the future affective forecasting, and we're horrible at it.*"
4. **More choice does not equal more pleasure**: *it's not really the number of choices, per se, that affects your mood. Rather, it's the actual act of choosing. Especially for products that we want, as opposed to those we need, choice is tiring. How companies resolve this oxymoron is by turning the pain of choosing into the pleasure of abundance. Companies that can simplify the act of choosing are handsomely rewarded.*

The authors say that while all marketing 101 courses focus on the “four Ps of marketing”, the “new Ps of pain, pleasure, and purchase” are of deeper importance:

> Our purchasing behavior is heavily driven by our relationship to pleasure and pain, and their relationship to each other—and as we’ve seen, those relationships are far from straightforward. Pleasure is elusive, best achieved via its own pursuit, driven by randomness, and difficult for us to predict. And while we make purchases based on what we think will bring us pleasure (despite often being wrong), even more, we make purchases based on the avoidance of pain. Whether by directly instilling fear, or framing a product in terms of loss, tactics that play on the human drive to avoid pain are oft-used tools in the marketer’s tool belt.

Numbing the pain of paying

People generally dislike parting with money.

So while one way to increase sale is to drop the price, brands generally prefer to reduce the pain of the payment *process* by tapping into human quirks in pain perception.
For example, the more abstract the payment experience is, the less it hurts. Enter credit card, chips at the casinos, digital payments with touch or face recognitions, etc.

Pain frame to drive sales

Generally speaking, pain hurts more than pleasure feels good.

So while anticipated pleasure is a strong motivator, the pain of losing something we already have can be an even more powerful source of motivation.

Pain frames are very popular in politics, also see;

- **Political manipulation**

> The Psychology of Political Manipulation

And brands and marketers surely aren’t going to renounce such as a powerful weapon:

> In the consumer world, brands operationalize the science of loss aversion via a tactic your authors call the pain frame: emphasizing the avoidance of loss, to persuade loss-averse individuals.

Imagine for example a gain frame VS a pain frame:

1. Power University provides increased status, attraction, and income
2. Power University prevents loss of status, attraction, and income

The authors say that, especially for those of us who are particularly loss averse, pain frames tend to be much more compelling.

The “fear of loss” is also evident with time-bound offers where it’s either you “act now”, or you lose the big sale.

Edit: Loss aversion needs update
Subsequent research showed that gain frames can work better, depending on context. See more in the *Routledge Handbook of Persuasion*

Learn more about frames:

- **Frames 101**
- **Frame control examples**

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

The New Addiction Industry: Monetizing Compulsive Behavior

Addiction is big business.

And there's a new digital wave of addictive products that no longer need a substance like nicotine or alcohol to get you addicted.
These new companies don't even want you to pay with money. The product is often free. Instead, **the new addiction industry wants you to pay with your time and focus**. Welcome to Addiction 2.0.

Pleasure and Dopamine

The current crop of addictive products went a "level higher".

They do not catch people's attention through simple behavioral reinforcement of positive stimuli:

> If simple reinforcement drove behavior, we'd find that the most pleasure-inducing apps would be the most popular and well subscribed, but in fact, the opposite is true. An aggregate report of 2017 data shows that a higher amount of time spent on an app is consistently associated with unhappiness: the apps we use most often are the ones we enjoy the least, and the ones we wish we spent less time on.

Instead, the new crop of addictive digital products seeks to maximize the quirks of both our pleasure and pain systems.
And with self-learning algorithms, they're particularly effective at it.

For example:

- **Leveraging anger, envy, outrage, and fear**: negative emotions tend to get more clicks and attention than positive ones. I wish the author had also gone deeper on this all-important bias of digital products
- **Random news feed**: *With every new update, Facebook began to shape the News Feed into what it is today: a masterpiece of attention hacking. In 2009, the Facebook News Feed got an update that killed chronological order. Instead of Father Time, a new magical algorithm began deciding which posts you would see and when. The update was a major win for randomness, as it took away the last piece of control users had over posts: the order in which they were seen.*
- **Zeigarnik effect with "clickbait" articles**: both titles and articles in some of the most popular publications are optimized for the Zeigarnik effect, consisting of a cliffhanger or curiosity-generating question or statement that make people want to find out the answer.
  What she looks like now will amaze you! Sound familiar? Never mind how inappropriate such an article might be, placed under an article on the Syrian Civil War. Outbrain and Taboola are the silent giants of this kind of sponsored content ad, which blatantly abuse the Zeigarnik effect: "Three Amsterdam Locals Walk into a J. Crew Shoot . . ." "Here's Why Guys Are Obsessed with This Underwear."
  BuzzFeed's articles are mini Zeigarnik cliffhangers that only clicking on the article can resolve.
- **VR & AR**: *Our screens are addictive enough in two dimensions. Now virtual reality and augmented reality are beginning to supercharge "engagement" in 3D and beyond. Addiction 3.0 will use VR and AR to enable deeper and more compelling experiences. It is no surprise Facebook spent $2 billion to purchase Oculus Rift, a virtual reality video-game system, or that venture capital investments of nearly as much, $1.9 billion, were made in VR and AR start-ups in 2016 alone.*

The solution?
Re-empower yourself, value your time more, and treat digital addiction as an addiction:

> Consumers have a choice: pay with money, or pay with attention. So far, we have defaulted to attention. Here's hoping we go back to good ol' dollars.

Why We Like What We Like

- **Mere exposure**: the more we see something, the more we like it (Bornstein, 1989), with the caveat that we must at least find it mildly enjoyable
  Limit: there's evidence that it's possible to have too much repetition, and there are sharp diminishing of returns after roughly fifteen exposures
- **Fluency effect**: we show a preference for things that come to mind easily over those that are difficult (similar and overlapping with mere exposure effect)
- **Availability bias**: the tendency to believe information that is easier to bring to mind as being more important (aka the availability heuristic)

Brands seek to leverage the above biases in a multitude of ways, from always trying to stay top of mind, catchy jingles, and names that are easy to remember.

Friction VS Likability

We previously said that friction, or the difficulty you need to exert in decoding a message boosts memorability -for example, a difficult-to-read font-.
Now with "fluency" we say that a font that is familiar and easy to read increases likeability (and truthiness).

The two might seem contradictory, but they're not.
Adding friction boosts memory, but it doesn't boost like-ability. So what's better depends on what you need to prioritize.

Mix Familiarity and Novelty

Beyond friction and fluency, a deeper contradiction exists, say the authors:

Such as, the brain likes the safety of familiarity, but also likes the "newness" of novelty.

How to reconcile these two apparent contradictions for a marketer?
The authors say that there are times when our brain wants what is familiar, and there are times when it wants what's new. But what our brain really loves is a perfect combination of both familiarity and novelty.

Leveraging the "power of myth" the authors say that George Luka's Star Wars is an example of that perfect mix: Star Wars film just enough novelty into an existing template of heroes and myth that the audience was already well familiar with.

The trick is to find the perfect balance of familiarity and novelty.

Empathize & Connect With your Prospects

Say the authors:

> brands are in the business of garnering connection. Branding is about building an informational, emotional, cultural, and personal connection among a company, its message, and its products.

Simon Sinek says that the most successful companies start with a central core of values and beliefs, and then develop products and communications around them.
They attract loyal followers not just because they like the products, but because they recognize themselves in those

values and want to be part of that culture, and signal to the world they're part of it -as well as attract the wannabes who want to virtue-signal those values and beliefs-.

Mirror The Communication Style of Your Speaking Partner

> The more you can mirror the communication style of your conversation partner, the better the communication and the more persuasive your message.

For marketers, it means to adjust the message to the people you are selling, to become more like your prospects. Some companies successfully "hacked" into this effective communication style by having their own customers post pictures of themselves with their products, thus leveraging their own customers' social networks of similar prospects.

Brands Are Like People: People Will Attribute Personality To Your Brand

People "give life" to brand and logo, and invest them with human-like attributes and personalities.

Brands often seek to increase the "personalization' of their brand by creating fictional characters and hyping up real employees. Their goal is to give you a single figure as a focus for empathy and connection.

Endorsements also serve a similar goal, to "acquire" the personality of the endorser:

> Whether they do so consciously or not, consumers will attribute a personality to your brand in their quest for a shorthand, emotional understanding of your brand's values. The people who represent your brand are part of that perception. As consumers, we extend our preexisting perception of and empathy for an endorser to the brand itself.

Empathy does not scale: share stories with individuals, rather than groups

Our brains are programmed to feel more empathy for one person, the singular, than for multiple people, the plural. The same is true in marketing: across a very wide array of stories and situations, stories revolving around a single person generated far higher rates of emotion and empathy than those with families. Empathy is maximized when delivered via an individual, character-driven narrative.

The "Essence" of Branding: The Ultimate Level of Marketing

As we said, we tend to invest brands of people-like qualities and traits.

But sometimes, we go one step further, and we can invest physical objects with a "soul" -essence- that transcends the physical products -and skyrocket their price-.

For example, people tend to invest the best art pieces with essence.
Paintings that have become iconic acquire a valuation that is millions of times higher than the material they're made with -it's because they're emblems of an era and transmits emotions that transcend the material value-. Sometimes the artist may actually destroy the art on purpose, and it may be worth even more.
Or you may be a fan of a sports figure and their signature may be invaluable to you. It's because of the emotions that you associate with that personality, not because the signature may be extremely valuable per se.

But the authors also list an example of a simple copywriting experiment to show the power of "essence".
Frankly, I'm not sure this was the perfect example for that "essence", but I was quite shocked, and even struggled to fully believe, the results:

> Anthropologists Rob Walker and Joshua Glenn purchased a series of ordinary objects on eBay, like rubber duckies, a Pez dispenser, and a small garden gnome. The average price they paid for each was $1.25. They

> then enlisted the support of professional writers to create a biography for each item. Last, they re-auctioned the items on eBay, using the biographies as the item descriptions. How much did the same objects, now dripping with essence, go for? The average price was well over $100. In total, the project generated $8,000 (which was distributed to the writers)

~~Sub~~Midliminal Marketing

Albeit subliminal has sometimes been overblown as some sort of "dark psychology" technique that can make you do anything, it does exist, and it can be scientifically measured and tested:

> In subliminal priming, some thing (scientists call this a stimulus) is introduced, without your conscious awareness, through one of your senses. Then, later, this thing—this stimulus—affects your behavior in some way (scientists call this a response). In other words, subliminal priming is when exposure to sensory stimuli influences you, potentially affecting your future behavior, all without your awareness.

However, testing the effectiveness of subliminal techniques in the consumer world has yielded mixed results. For example, flashing the word "LIPTON" gave people an increased preference for Lipton Iced Tea, but only if they were already thirsty. Otherwise, there was no effect.
It's still powerful and, say the authors, "creepy" and since people cannot consent to it, many jurisdictions have banned the use of subliminal advertising.

Midliminal priming isn't illegal, though…

Midliminal Priming

> For a prime to be midliminal, you must be able to see it, yet it must typically go unrecognized.

And it still works:

> Midliminal messaging works because of the brain's tendency to fall for priming, whether that priming is intentional or not.
> Priming works by impacting the mental models our brain creates. And whether or not a given prime ultimately impacts our behavior somewhere down the line, it still leaves an imprint in our brains.

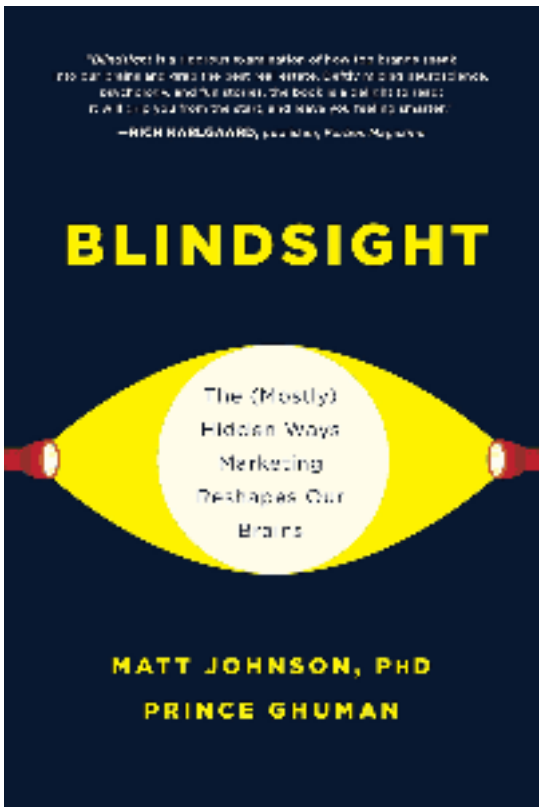
For example, the Fedex logo:

The arrow in the FedEx logo primes you to associate the company with fast delivery
Or the Amazon logo:

The visual smile nudges a mirroring positive emotional reaction from you while emphasizing the message that Amazon carries everything from A to Z.
Midliminal “hides in plain sight”.

Product placement is also a form of midliminal priming.
The “advertising” is often in plain sight, but the effect happens on a subconscious level, and is more effective for it because you don’t discount the advertisement as “biased” as you do with most normal advertisements.

All senses can be used for midliminal priming, and the authors go on to list how for each one of them.



MORE WISDOM

- **Stop recording live events**

The act of recording makes you “less in the moment” and degrades your ability to retain the event in your memory.

- **People unconsciously grow careless around what they own to give themselves an excuse to buy the new model**

> Researchers found that you’re much more likely to be careless with your phone if there’s a newer, better

> version of the product available or soon to come.
> Tthere was a curious spike in losses right before a new model was released. This was further supported by a survey of over six hundred self-reports of iPhone neglect and damage, which, again, showed a huge uptick right after a new model was announced. Even if we feign disappointment that we drop our phone, or leave it in a cab, we may unconsciously just be giving ourselves an excuse to get the latest model!

QUOTES

> Freud's greatest contribution to modern psychology, and his lasting legacy, is this: We never really know why we do the things we do.

CONS

- **I was confused between "associations" and "mental models"**

I think I generally get the difference, but more clarity would have helped.
I either missed the exact definitions, or I think that a more clear explanation, or a definition, could have helped.

- **Low-K techniques and flash deals aren't always irrational**

Flesh deals and buying on flash deals aren't always irrational or low-K.
It can actually be very smart to buy on a flash sale. One great technique is to put something in your cart and then only buy once you see it's on sale.

Or trying on an item that's free shipping and free return also isn't low-K irrational. It makes a lot of sense to be more willing to buy if you can send it back for free.

- **High-K comparison wasn't successfully only because of more information, but because of creating trust**

The insurance that provided comparison with other insurances wasn't just successful because it gave more information.
But it's because one, it probably offered competitive products compared to those competitors -or it wouldn't have shown them at all-.
And two, because being so open about the competitors also increases trust.

- **Amazon example didn't add up to me**

Amazon's example of appealing to both system one and system two with monthly and yearly subscription plans didn't convince me.
I don't necessarily believe that most low-K folks go for monthly and most high-K folks go for yearly.

- **Video games are fun beyond the simple beginning**

The pleasure of most video games doesn't disappear the moment that people start playing it.
In truth, many good video games get better *after* you start playing.

PROS

It's just the best overview I've read on how neuroscience is affecting marketing and consumers.

And I also appreciate:

- **On-point science, addresses and well explains several pop-psychology myths that other books and authors either created, or fell for**

From the "paradox of choice" to the "mirror neurons" the authors seem to be good and balanced scientists who crossed their Ts and dotted their Is.
And they also seem to have referenced several meta-analyses, rather than parroting debunked studies or jumping to conclusions based on low-power studies.

- **A great mix of science, research descriptions, general principles, and real-life applications**

A good mix of solid science, general marketing principles and best practices, and real-life applications from successful companies.

Maybe a bit more "how-tos" sub-chapters would have been perfect to make it all even more actionable.

- **Systemic-level of analysis: they connect the dots, rather than hyping up dots**

Many books simply list biases or "random facts of psychology", trying to "wow" the readers with fun-facts and random "fun experiments".
And I consider them semi-useless.

But Blindishgt's authors stand out as they really seem to have that good attitude of wanting to understand and explain beyond the micro "bias level" and go at a higher, systemic level to develop an actual theory and approach that you can use to both understand the world, and affect change in that world.

So they look at how different things fit together, and how seemingly opposing biases can be explained.

For example, they didn't just list "fluency" and "friction", but explained how these two seemingly opposing biases can co-exist. And they went on to explain how they can and should complement each other, with plenty of examples.

REVIEW

Blindsight is a fantastic book at the intersection of neuroscience, psychology, marketing, and persuasion.

What I liked is that compared to many other similar books it seeks to provide a systemic-level explanation and approach to that connects the various dots.

Plus, I also learned several new things, and it helped me to clear up a few things.

At the time of writing, I'm considering whether to add it to some of the "best books" lists on this website, especially the "best books on influence and persuasion" and potentially even the "best red pill book" because of its high-quality analysis on the addictiveness of social media.
And if I'll eventually make a "best marketing books" list, it will for sure feature very highly there.

And as a testament to how much I trusted the authors -as well as Ali Scarlett who first proposed and then molded it-, we also used their same template for our flagship course Power University.

Check out the:

- **Best books on influence and persuasion**

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

The Clever Connector: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Clever Connector Second Edition is a 6-chapter book on business and professional networking in which Ali Scarlett, the author, teaches how to network with high-status elites without needing to be one yourself.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- Introduction
- Step #1: Master the Power Dynamics
- Step #2: Adopt the Helpful Mindsets
- Step #3: Specialize the Basic Guidelines
- Step #4: Test the Networking Strategies
- Step #5: Enlist the Good Mentors
- Step #6: Realize the Present Opportunities

- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Be High-Power/High-Warmth**: Building connections starts with knowing where you fall on the stereotype content model (HP/HW matrix) and working on your character to get to the best mix
- **Acquire empowering mindsets**: Effective networking starts with personal development, including effective mindsets to empower one's own efforts and capability
- **Principles above techniques**: Prioritize high-level networking principles over micro-level techniques
- **Focus on value-giving** and moving to deeper touchpoints to advance a new relationship quickly
- **Recruit one or more mentors** to help you in your journey

Full Summary

About The Author:
Ali Scarlett is a bestselling author, entrepreneur, and avid researcher of the science of networking. He has studied the likes of professional sociologists, applied psychology researchers, and other business networking experts when defining his methods. He's also one of the main contributors to this website, Power University, and power dynamics as a discipline.

Introduction

Given that this is a book on mastering the art of networking, this book lays out the entire step-by-step process using the acronym MASTER:

1. Master the Power Dynamics
2. Adopt the Helpful Mindsets

3. Specialize the Basic Guidelines
4. Test the Networking Strategies
5. Enlist the Good Mentors
6. Realize the Present Opportunities

Ali recommends a growth mindset before continuing further and, with that, we're brought to Chapter 1.

Step #1: Master the Power Dynamics

#1: Your Social Success Hinges on the Stereotype Content Model (SCM)

> **Scarlett**: "So, when I was a nice guy, I had high warmth but low power. I had high warmth because I was always willing to give. But, by being willing to give everything to anyone, everyone felt like they had power over me and therefore saw me as low-power (cracking so many jokes for group acceptance didn't help their image of my worth, either)…When I became frustrated and turned into a bully, I was high-power. I was capable of harming anyone with no regrets about the consequences…But, my aggression made me low-warmth. I became the person nobody wants to cross, and intimidated people into distancing themselves from me because of it….if I could become high-power and high-warmth, I could be the person everyone wants to be around. I could fix my social life."

Albeit Ali's experiences with the SCM were extreme, this is generally true as a social life rule:

The more you can reach (and stay within) that high-power, high-warmth bracket, the more you'll be able to acquire important life assets such as status, resources, mates, or friends.

Also read more on power intelligence:

> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

#2: Perceptions Are Reality

> **Scarlett**: "…perceptions are reality…In other words, even if I only developed the traits of a high-value man—even if I only looked and acted the part—I would still be perceived as one. This would be true even if I wasn't actually high-value yet (in the sense that I wasn't a billionaire, for instance). I would be what is referred to as a "high-quality man" in power dynamics."

This is the "Being VS Appearing" false dichotomy we often talk about here on this website.

In this case, the argument of whether or not it's better to be successful vs simply look successful deals with the visibility of the social currencies.

"Looking" successful refers to the external layers while "being" refers to the deeper layers.

Some people like to scoff at "appearing" and say that they value "being" far more.

However, both are valuable, as Ali also notes:

> **Scarlett**: "As an analogy, we could say that you are the product. You are selling yourself every time you network and look to build a relationship with someone new. The way you present yourself to the world is the marketing. The clothes you wear, the way you talk, walk, move, act, and carry yourself all determine whether or not people will want to buy—whether or not others will want to build a relationship with you. High-quality men market themselves as what is arguably the most valuable product in the networking world: high-value

> (high-power) men. And, unfortunately, the high-value men who don't bother to work on their marketing at all and, as a result, look low-value (low-power) lose out on those opportunities. The very same opportunities that go straight to the high-quality men who were prepared because no one knows how good a product is until they actually experience using it. And, no one wants to buy a product that, because of bad marketing, looks like it could be a bad experience. So, naturally, they go for the people with the best marketing."

Being successful while looking unsuccessful does you little favors since people need to be willing to stick around long enough to learn how successful you are. And, people will rarely care to do that when you look objectively average (or less than).

#3: Defining Power

> **Scarlett**: "This is what I didn't understand at first. Even when I came to the realization that there were more forms of power than only money, I was still missing a large part of the point. The three forms of power in the world are not information, weaponry, and money, but information, weaponry, and resources. 'Resources' include money and connections."

Step #2: Adopt the Helpful Mindsets

#1. Better Networking Starts In the Mind

Here, Ali shares the "Foundations of the Mind" in the IMPROVE acronym:

1. Internalize the "I Can Change" Mindset
2. Master the Growth Mindset
3. Practice the Antifragile Ego
4. Obligate the Psychology of Finding Your Passion
5. Value the Art of Outcome Independence
6. Embrace the Science of Happiness and Optimism

#2. Decide on a WHY

Then, he dives into purpose, sharing the "Evolution of Your Why" framework:

1. **Survival**: taking action only to survive (pay for necessities of living). Some people never take their why to the next level, stopping here.

2. **Status**: taking action for the acquisition of status symbols and oftentimes social (and emotional) validation. It's not uncommon for people stop here in their WHY's evolution either.

3. **Freedom**: taking action to reach a point of financial freedom where one has such an abundance of money, all financial decisions are "minor things" and they never have to check their financial health to know they're still doing well. This is better than the previous two levels of WHY, but not quite as high as one's WHY can go.

4. **Purpose**: taking action to advance one's life mission. This is the highest level of one's WHY.

Step #3: Specialize the Basic Guidelines

#1. The Circle of Influence Rule

There are three elements to your circle of influence:

1. **Your Support**: family, friends, and the people you hold day-to-day interactions with.

2. **Your Peers**: the people you work with.

3. **Your Mentor(s)**: the people who are farther ahead than you in your journey, who can pull you up to their level.

Scarlett recommends weeding out any members of each group who take more value from your life than they give and keeping (as well as adding) anyone who has proven themselves to be value-giving to your life and goals.

#2. The Immersion vs. Maintenance Rule

The idea is to keep a balance of the two:

> **Scarlett**: As an example, if you choose to immerse yourself fully in the work that generates an income for you, working two jobs, working sixty hours a week or whatever the case may be, it's best to keep your current network on maintenance. Follow up with them every now and then and stay in touch.
>
> Let's now say, for instance, that you choose to immerse yourself fully into networking. You're spending money on tools to help build your social media profiles, attending networking events, constantly sending cold emails and cold calling people you want to connect with, and so on. At that point, it would be best to put your other work on maintenance.
>
> You have to have both immersion and maintenance if you want any chance of being successful. The man who does not immerse himself in anything can end up a jack of all trades and a master of none. However, the man who immerses himself in two or more things overexerts himself and collapses mentally or physically before he can achieve any goal or accomplishment worth achieving.

#3. The WIIFT Rule

As we've shared here at The Power Moves, the three major byproducts of this law are that

1. To get what you want, you have to give others what they want

2. The most popular and powerful people are those with the most to give

3. Strong relationships have a balance of give and take (or at least, the people in them must feel they are balanced)

#4. The Fairness Principle

This section is only to further reinforce that taking as much as one can and leaving others with as little as possible is hardly a solid foundation for lasting success in life or in business (and that applies to relationship-building and networking as well).

However, Scarlett also notes that the law of social exchange is not to be confused with the "law of reciprocity." The law of reciprocity states that the more you give the more you will receive, but this is not always the case.

#5. The Integrity and Honesty Principle

Another note on the "Being vs Appearing" dichotomy (and the importance of raising one's value):

> **Scarlett**: "Faking it until you make it is sometimes dishonest if it's overdone. Becoming a high-quality individual is different from faking it until you make it. High-quality people have all of the traits that are the highest predictors of success and that pave the way to acquiring resources as well as status. Therefore, in many ways, they are high-value."

#6. The Service Principle

> **Scarlett**: "If you want to build connections with people you have to do just that: connect. One way to connect

> with others is by giving value to them…Following the Service Principle means serving. The best way to do that is by giving value that makes others feel good."

As much as it's encouraged to give in today's self-help literature, Scarlett also shares that a "go-giver" attitude can be more than counter-productive, but also detrimental if one's isn't careful.

A note Scarlett shares from Dr. Tim Elmore:

"The starving baker spends so much time baking bread for others he forgets to eat and starves himself. It looks noble and is noble to keep giving, giving, giving. But just like I need to lead myself before I lead others, I need to feed myself before I feed others."

#7. The Growth Principle

The Growth Principle is about accepting learning opportunities, even if those opportunities require you to fail first before you can grow.

#8. The Patience Principle

An example Scarlett gives of this principle is holding yourself back from blowing up someone's email inbox with multiple back-to-back messages simply because they didn't respond within an hour.

Step #4: Test the Networking Strategies

> **Scarlett**: "Each networking situation may call for a different networking strategy. There is no one size fits all approach to connecting with anyone at any time. Luckily, there's a process you can use to formulate and craft your own networking strategy as the situation calls for it."

Scarlett calls this the "AIM approach":

1. **Align Your Approach**: choose your style of dominance (to come across high-power).

2. **Identify Your Method**: choose your style of networking (to reach and connect with your target contact—Scarlett shares a list of methods in this chapter).

3. **Make Your Strategy**: create a plan based on the styles you chose, information at your disposal, and contacts you already have access to.

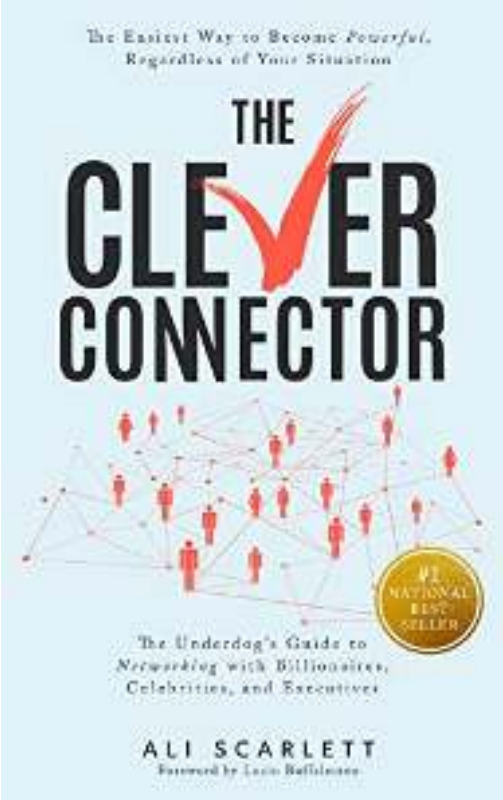
Step #5: Enlist the Good Mentors

Expanding on the importance of mentors from the section on managing your "circle of influence", this chapter goes deeper into how to acquire mentors with this step-by-step approach for career-oriented folks:

- **Step 1**: Map Out Your Ideal Career Path
- **Step 2**: Seek Out the Right Mentor Who Has Mastered the Skill You Want to Develop
- **Step 3**: Get Connected to Your Mentor Candidates
- **Step 4**: Schedule a Meeting with Your Mentor Candidates
- **Step 5**: Ask Your Mentor Candidates the Right Questions
- **Step 6**: Turn Your Top Mentor Candidate Picks Into Mentors
- **Step 7**: Gratitude, Gratitude, Gratitude

Step #6: Realize the Present Opportunities

A couple of inspiring personal stories sharing wins and failures, as well as mindsets and virtues for moving forward.



Real-Life Applications

- **Avoid saying "thank you for joining my network" because it frames you as doing all of the taking in the relationship:** a better response would be "welcome to my network" (albeit, on LinkedIn, these days Ali simply says something like, "Great to connect").

CONS

- **Missed opportunity for more value**

The "Enlist the Good Mentors" chapter is great, and would've been even better if it contained a step-by-step process for business owners, entrepreneurs, and general businesspeople (rather than only career-oriented people seeking a job).

Especially, since it's typically those types of people who are most likely to have a need to connect with celebrities (such as in the prospect of securing celebrity promotion for their business).

However, Step 4 does cover a solid strategy that can also be used for acquiring mentors and Ali mentioned he aims to make this a new, official addition to this second edition of *The Clever Connector* before making it widely available on Amazon.

PROS

- Power-aware wisdom
- Unique mix of foundational self-development + foundational social strategies

Review

The Clever Connector is a unique gem in that it combines into one single book some of the best principles of self-development, power dynamics, and proven social strategies.

Ali Scarlett, an early joiner of The Power Moves, stands apart from most other authors because he can write from the vantage point of knowing the advanced social skills of power dynamics.
Albeit, it's often difficult to start with the more advanced material—especially when it was still so "raw" as when he first joined—Ali made the most out of it and then added his own flair to it.

It's that special skillset from its author that makes *The Clever Connector* stand apart from all the rest.

Also read:

Best social skills books.
Or get the book.

Beyond Order: Summary, Review & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Beyond Order (2021) is the follow-up to Jordan Peterson's previous book *12 Rules for Life* and identifies another 12 rules to meet life adversities, and flourish.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
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  - RULE 2 | Imagine who you could be, and then aim single-mindedly at that
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Exec Summary

- **We need both order and change**: social institutions and pre-existing processes served us well, but we also need to change them from time to time. Conservatives who tend to defend institutions and liberals who tend to attack them need to recognize the necessity of both, purge the extremists and psychopathic ideologues from their own ranks, and talk and agree with each other
- **Learn to work with other people to develop solid, win-win interpersonal relationships,** your mental well-being depends on it. See the "social exchange" to better understand Peterson's take on win-win and win-win value exchanges
- **Address issues head-on**, rather than pretending they don't exist, both in life, and in interpersonal relationships. Unaddressed issues sap your self-esteem and silent resentment poisons your mood
- **Aim at something and work hard to achieve it** because happiness, meaning, and fulfillment come from personal growth, from progressing on your goals, and from adding value to others and to society

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Jordan Peterson is a Canadian clinical psychologist and former professor of psychology at the University of Toronto.
He rose to fame when he objected to the Canadian's government imposition to address trans women as "she". Over time he moved more towards the political right and has become a militant of conservative and alt-right movements and, in part, for red-pill communities.
He is also the author of "Maps of Meaning" and "12 Rules for Life", for which this book is the sequel.

See here our take on Jordan Peterson's major personal change:

RULE 1 | Do not carelessly denigrate social institutions or creative achievement

The crux of this chapter is this:

The institutions in place have both a dark and bright side.
We must start recognizing that, and avoiding any extremism for or against institutions.
Institutions often add value or at least added value in the past, and they are necessary for social functioning as well as for individual psychological health.
However, they can turn tyrannical when those in power act selfishly, or stifling when they become unsuited for a changing world.

That means we do need to change our society and rules from time to time to adapt to new realities or to fix the rotten system.
But since systems that are in place are often in place because they worked and because they served us as well, we run the risk of undoing what's good, to make place for something that may work not as well -or even turn out to be disastrous-.
So we walk a tight line and, strike a balance between changing & reforming when it's needed, and keeping the system intact when it's working.

How do we do that?
With dialogue between the conservative, who tend to defend the status quo, and creative types (liberals), who tend to distrust authority, dislike rules, and seek change.
But both camps, the conservatives and liberals, must be open-minded to accept that both camps need each other, and both would ideally be able to recognize when the pendulum has swung too much in one direction.
Equally important, both need to make sure that they purge and do not give in to the toxic elements in their camps (and in themselves):

Why we need power-aware eagles on both sides

> The same is true of the knowledge of the shadow side of both.
> To manage complex affairs properly, it is necessary to be cold enough in vision to separate the power hungry and self-serving pseudoadvocate of the status quo from the genuine conservative; and the self-deceptive, irresponsible rebel without a cause from the truly creative. And to manage this means to separate those factors within the confines of one's own soul, as well as among other people.

These "eagles" are also aware of their own dark sides.
And the "reformative eagles" also aren't simple "rule breakers". Later in the book, Peterson says that those who break the rules ethically have mastered them first, understand the necessity of those rules, and break them in keeping with the *spirit* rather than the letter of the law.

Community and social ties are crucial to your well-being

We are social animals, and other people are crucial to our well-being:

> People exist among other people and not as purely individual minds.
> People remain mentally healthy not merely because of the integrity of their own minds, but because they are constantly being reminded how to think, act, and speak by those around them.

Jordan Peterson also assesses his clients along their social life, including:

- Do they have friends and a social life?
- A stable and satisfying intimate partnership?
- Close and functional familial relationships?

Humans organize in hierarchies (as all social animals do)

> Negotiation for position sorts organisms into the omnipresent hierarchies that govern access to vital resources such as shelter, nourishment, and mates. All creatures of reasonable complexity and even a minimally social nature have their particular place, and know it.

Peterson also suggests individuals within those hierarchies transact with each other based on "units of value":

> All social creatures also learn what is deemed valuable by other group members, and derive from that, as well as from the understanding of their own position, a sophisticated implicit and explicit understanding of value itself.

Humans are part of value-based exchanges

Those hierarchies serve to share and provide ordered access to what's valuable.

And everyone subconsciously knows about the hierarchies, and what's valuable.
They understand it "as if their survival and reproduction depend upon it" quips Peterson, because that's exactly all about survival and reproduction (de Waal & Suchak, 2010).

A good life means establishing win-win relationships

"Win-win" is how this website defines it, but it's exactly the same that Jordan Peterson refers to:

> The universal rules of fair play include the ability to regulate emotion and motivation while cooperating and competing in pursuit of the goal during the game (that is part and parcel of being able to play at all), as well as the ability and will to **establish reciprocally beneficial interactions across time and situation**
> (…) And life is not simply a game, but a series of games (…) The best player is therefore not the winner of any given game but, among many other things, he or she who is invited by the largest number of others to play the most extensive series of games.

Jordan Peterson here says that the successful player is the one that better goes along with others, and to whom others give more opportunity for win-win and value exchanges.
It's not a coincidence, says Peterson, that children before 3 years old, cannot make friends. It's because they don't know how to play the iterated game that sustains over time, which is exactly what friendship is.

To learn more about social and value exchanges, see:

- **How the social exchange theory teaches you to socialize**

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Hierarchies are not purely based on dominance

As in the first book he famously used lobsters as an example of hierarchy and power, this time Jordan Peterson uses rats.

The bigger rat, he says, can beat the smaller ones the vast majority of times, but he cannot remain in the social structure if he abuses of that dominance.
The general rule, he says, is that albeit power and dominance are important, you can't base your personal success on the bullying of others:

> power is simply not a stable basis upon which to construct a hierarchy designed to optimally govern repeated interactions

This is also something we often repeated here at The Power Moves, and especially in the beginning, before we developed our own foundational strategies and philosophies.
Many guys came here looking for ways to "beat others", and we call that stage of self-development "dickhead-dom".
Dickhead-dom is a step forward compared to a passive, submissive, too nice guy. But it's far from optimal, and far from the best you can do.

As a matter of fact, Jordan Peterson says that alpha males among primates are more pro-social than lower-raking primates:

Alpha males among at least certain primate groups are far more prosocial than their lesser comrades. Power doesn't work for them, either.

Note: Jordan Peterson uses (confuses?) power for "dominance"
We agree in principle with Jordan Peterson and we're glad he's saying this because we've been reminding readers and students the same since we first started.
What he's referring to though is not to "power" in the larger sense of the word, but in "value-taking dominance".
To use instead the definitions of the originator of this concept, power through is value-adding power that is good for the individual, and does not bully or harass others. Power over instead is the value-taking dominance that is less likely to lead to individual success (Turner, 2005).
Or simply read here the simplified version:

- **Power VS Dominance** in leaders

To play well, then, you need to work on yourself and develop the right attitudes and (social) skills to well engage with others.
Ultimately, says Jordan Peterson, you should turn yourself into "the most desirable of players".
The most desirable of players gives value.

Note: we generally agree, but there are important exceptions
Albeit we agree in principle and we also agree this approach and mindset work for most people, most of the times -and especially in democracies and free societies-, there are also important exceptions.
It is possible to hold onto power with more dominance than value-giving, and it is possible to climb hierarchies without exactly being moral or fair.

For more on reaching and doing well at the top, see:

- **Leadership 101**

> Leadership 101: The Foundations of Good Leadership

Social Win-Win Requires Giving, But Also Power-Awareness

> Through friendship and collegial relationships we modify our selfish proclivities, learning not to always put ourselves first. Less obviously, but just as importantly, we may also learn to overcome our naive and too empathic proclivities (our tendency to sacrifice ourselves unsuitably and unjustly to predatory others) when our peers advise and encourage us to stand up for ourselves. In consequence, if we are fortunate, we begin to practice true reciprocity

Peterson here is telling us to become a giver who can establish win-win mutual giving to do well in life, but also reminds us that it's important not to be naive, because there are predatory takers who will not give back.

We call this attitude here "enlightened collaboration", and enlightened collaboration requires power awareness, including knowledge and know-how of the "dark side" of human nature as well as the ability to spot and recognize those takers:

- **Enlightened win-win**

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-collaborator

RULE 2 | Imagine who you could be, and then aim single-mindedly at that

In this chapter Peterson focuses on the importance of self-development.

Particularly, he focuses on personal self-development.
Other self-help authors may call the imaginary version of yourself your "best possible self", including ethics and morals, and then aiming at that.

Peterson also stresses the importance of facing the difficulties of life head-on for personal development (and draws from the Biblical story of Exodus).

From snakes to humans as "bigger evils"

Working on "who you could be" isn't just an adventure in the real world: it's an adventure in the "world within", of self-awareness, including, and may be especially, your dark side.

Ethics and morals are an important part of Peterson's journey of self-development, and they can't be complete until we learn and master the "devil within".
It took humans millennia to even reach that level of conceptualization, he says:

> At some point in our evolutionary and cultural history, we began to understand that human evil could rightly be considered the greatest of all snakes. So, the symbolic progression might be (1) snake as evil predator, then (2) external human enemy as snake/evil/predator, then (3) subjective, personal, or psychological darkness/vengefulness/deceit as snake/evil/predator. Each of these representations, which took untold centuries, perhaps millennia to conceptualize, constitute a tangible increase in the sophistication of the image of evil

RULE 3 | Do not hide unwanted things in the fog

This chapter exhorts people to:

1. **Face and discuss interpersonal problems early on**, rather than ignoring negative additions. Admit it to

yourself, first, that there is an issue, even if that issue may make you look “bad”. And then address them with those who are involved

2. **Find our what you truly want**, instead of hiding it out of fear of not achieving it

Generally speaking, the closer your relationship and the more common the problem, the more important it is to address them.
If an issue happens daily, no matter how small it is, it adds up -in social power dynamics we call this concept “death by a thousand cuts”-. So you want to clarify it early on, lest you start disliking someone for a small pebble.

The solution?
Speak up:

> Your strategy, under such conditions? Show your disappointment whenever someone close to you makes you unhappy; allow yourself the luxury and pleasure of resentment when something does not go your way; ensure that the person who has transgressed against you is frozen out by your disapproval; force them to discover with as much difficulty as possible exactly what they have done to disappoint you;

RULE 4 | Notice that opportunity lurks where responsibility has been abdicated

This chapter in short says:

The failings and undone work of other people can be an opportunity fo you to pick up the slack, do it, learn more, and become more indispensable and more valuable.
And everyone wins, including you personally.

Says Peterson:

> If you want to become invaluable in a workplace—in any community—just do the useful things no one else is doing. Arrive earlier and leave later than your compatriots. Organize what you can see is dangerously disorganized. Work, when you are working, instead of looking like you are working. And finally, learn more about the business—or your competitors—than you already know. Doing so will make you invaluable—a veritable lynchpin.

It’s also a reminder of the importance of “reframing”, to not complain about other people’s failings, but to try to look at them -and turn them- into opportunities.
Peterson says whenever you think that the “world is not set right”, that’s your cue that you may have a destiny to fulfill: to make the world just a little better -or, “less wrong”-.
Anger and outrage are doorways to meaning and destiny. It’s up to you to turn them into positive missions, rather than keeping stuck at complaining mode (note: the author seems to have fallen himself for anger and outrage mode sometimes with his Twitter behavior).

Treat yourself and your partner well: today is an opportunity for a better tomorrow

Treat your partner well, because it’s also best for you:

> You can treat your husband or wife any old way right now, this moment, no matter how horrid and thoughtless that way might be, but you are going to wake up with him or her tomorrow, and next month, and a decade from now (and, if not that person, then someone else equally unfortunate). If you treat the person you are committed to in a manner that does not work when it is repeated across time, then you are playing a degenerating game, and you are both going to suffer terribly for it. This problem is not materially different from failing to make peace with your future self. The consequences are identical.

"Future self" refers to the almost infinite iterations of "future you".
While a selfish individual does what's best for him and him only right now, he fails to consider "future him".
Does who take into account "future him" instead are a step closer to taking into account those who are close to him as part of "future him" and "future us".

Yet another genius intuition and way of looking at cooperation that I hadn't thought of, and must thank Peterson for.

The author also says that we can't really escape from being bound with "future ourselves", because we subconsciously feel bad when we know we're not doing what we should be doing and what's best for us.
My note: I partially agree here and many people's present happiness, satisfaction, and well-being is tied to how they treat their future selves. But there are also some people who either don't care much about their future selves, or simply care more about "present themselves".

A great quote from this chapter:

> **Your life becomes meaningful in precise proportion to the depths of the responsibility you are willing to shoulder**. That is because you are now genuinely involved in making things better. You are minimizing the unnecessary suffering. You are encouraging those around you, by example and word. You are constraining the malevolence in your own heart and the hearts of others.

RULE 5 | Do not do what you hate

The rule makes sense… On paper.

And it says that you better not submit to what's "wrong" of you do, and that it's your moral duty to stand up to what's unjust.
This is also an important principle we added to our Start Here page.

Unluckily, in Beyond Order, this chapter becomes Jordan's Peterson tirade against the current culture of feminism, identity politics, political correctness, etc.

His example of fighting the culture of identity politics takes up 99% of "not doing what you hate".
Frankly, I don't like identity politics, but I'm also tired of those who can't stop complaining about it.
Doesn't JP realize that complaining about only thread-expands it?

Finally, the character he brings as an example of "fighter" goes from lay-off to lay-off, and albeit Jordan Peterson sub-communicates she's the hero who keeps fighting, one may even wonder if she's not that annoying character who always has to find an excuse to complain and pester people and superiors.

RULE 6 | Abandon ideology

Another genius chapter with which we couldn't agree more.

Rile 6 describes the danger of attributing the cause of complex individual and social problems to single variables such as sex, class, or power, and how dangerously persuasive these ideologies can become to the masses.

TPM's philosophy also includes individualism and a possible life stage of rebellion as a way to self-discovery as an important step to becoming ideology-resistant.
What we call "enlightened individualism" is both a fundamental step toward self-empowerment, and a necessity against what Robert Greene calls the "downward pull of the group".

A good general rule of thumb to spot ideologies is that a certain group tends to take all the blame, while in truth, says Peterson, "no group guilt should be assumed".
Says the author:

> Such division of the world into the devil without and the saint within justifies self-righteous hatred—necessitated by the morality of the ideological system itself. This is a terrible trap: Once the source of evil has been identified, it becomes the duty of the righteous to eradicate it. This is an invitation to both paranoia and persecution.

The answer?
Start with your own self-development, and looking at yourself first:

> It is much more psychologically appropriate (and much less dangerous socially) to assume that you are the enemy—that it is your weaknesses and insufficiencies that are damaging the world—than to assume saintlike goodness on the part of you and your party, and to pursue the enemy you will then be inclined to see everywhere.

Ideologues are power-seeking manipulators

Ideologues are fundamentalists, but potentially more dangerous than fundamentalists for their fake appeal to rationality:

> Ideologues are the intellectual equivalent of fundamentalists, unyielding and rigid. Their self-righteousness and moral claim to social engineering is every bit as deep and dangerous. It might even be worse: ideologues lay claim to rationality itself. So, they try to justify their claims as logical and thoughtful.

It works like this:

1. **Come up with simplified abstractions to demonize and complain against**

The ideologue selects a few abstractions that over-simplify extraordinarily diverse and complex phenomena. Some examples include “the environment,” “the patriarchy,” “the feminized society,” “the rich,” “the poor,” “the oppressed,” and “the oppressors.”

This approach, says Peterson, is attractive to incompetent and corrupt intellectuals who are smart, but lazy.
The first joiners also tend to be smart, and cynicism and arrogance also help.
And then all the rest are simply the following sheep.

2. **Frame yourself as the “good hero” fighting the holy war, and your supporters as “good but oppressed”**

The ideologue wants to keep the problem simple, which helps make an emotional appeal that hides his own darker motives and personality:

> Since the ideologue can place him or herself on the morally correct side of the equation without the genuine effort necessary to do so validly, it is much easier and more immediately gratifying to reduce the problem to something simple and accompany it with an evildoer, who can then be morally opposed.

While the idelogue places himself on the side of the “morally right”, he does the same for the of people he recruits, which are either victims, or innocent, or unjustly denied some rights.

3. **Come up with a semi-logically sounding theory that explains everything** (especially why the losers are losers because of that other mean group or system)

> Next, the faux theorist spins a post-hoc theory in which every phenomenon, no matter how complex, can be considered a secondary consequence of his new system.
> The a school of thought that emerge propagate the methods of this algorithmic reduction and tacitly or

> explicitly demonize those who refuse to adopt the new beliefs and worldviews.

Please note that the theory mustn't always and necessarily be (all) wrong.
Sometimes, it can start from at least a few good observations or even start with some genius insights.
For example, Marx and Freud (read more on Freud's dark leadership here).

4. **Come up with terminology for your theory to make it sound more credible, to make people feel like insiders, and to keep the critics at bay**

> If an impenetrable vocabulary accompanies the theory, so much the better. It will then take potential critics some valuable time even to learn to decode the arguments.

5. **Recruit losers who want a new ideology that explains why they're losers and offers them hope for change**

> Their followers, desperate to join a potentially masterable new dominance hierarchy (the old one being cluttered by its current occupants), become enamored of that story. While doing so, being less bright than those they follow, they subtly shift "contributed to" or "affected" to "caused."

5. **Frame your theory as "teaching", "knowledge" or "improvement"**

> The new adherents will be taught that mastering such a game constitutes education, and will learn to criticize alternative theories, different methods, and increasingly, even the idea of fact itself.

6. **Shift your ideology to match the followers' needs**

> The originator(s), gratified by the emergence of followers, start to shift their story in that direction as well.

But even if the originator objects, says Peterson, the cult has already begun.

7. **Welcome to the cult**

> And there is a conspiratorial aspect that rapidly comes to pervade the school where such "education" occurs, and where such activity is increasingly all that is permitted: Do not criticize the theory—and do not get singled out.

RULE 8 | Work as hard as you possibly can on at least one thing and see what happens

Make a goal, choose something to aim at, and then work hard to obtain it.

5 Things to work hard at

Jordan Peterson also makes a list of what's generally worth committing to, and working hard at:

1. Character
2. Love
3. Family
4. Friendship
5. Career

Peterson even says “perhaps in that order”.
The author even implies, or outright states, that committing to one single partner is a superior choice, and one may see that also as an example of Peterson’s conservative-leaning preferences.

RULE 8 | Try to make one room in your home as beautiful as possible

This rule is the follow-up, or more advanced version, of “clean your room” from his previous *12 Rules for Life* book.

RULE 9 | If old memories still upset you, write them down carefully and completely

To fix the present, sometimes you want to analyze your past.

Often people don’t repress memories, but rather “push them away” by occupying their minds with something else.
And traumatized people don’t even understand what befell them.
But for both, the solutions is often in a deeper analysis, rather than in avoidance or “blissful ignorance”.

The example is an author’s former patient. The patient had an extremely naive view of people and the world as good actors, in a good place.
Eventually, he met a boyfriend who actively wanted to harm him. The experience might have seemed bad, but banal enough to overlook. Instead, it was exactly by analyzing it that he was able to diagnose his issue, and address it by finally becoming an adult who can accept the evil in the world.

Says Peterson of this patient’s personal growth and empowerment as he grappled and accepted human’s dark side, including his own:

> His face had hardened. He looked older and wiser. I had seen this happen frequently in my clinical practice when people incorporated the darker parts of themselves, instead of—let us say—compartmentalizing them. They no longer had the habitual look of deer caught in the headlights. They looked like people from whom decisions emanated, rather than people to whom things merely happened.

RULE 10 | Plan and work diligently to maintain the romance in your relationship

Romance and dating are skills, and you must work to develop them, and insert them into your relationship:

> Let us try thinking about it this way, instead: Neither of you have any skill at dating. One attempt is therefore going to be insufficient. Maybe you need fifteen dates—or forty—because you have lost the knack, need the practice, and must develop the habit and goodwill. Perhaps neither of you are very romantic to begin with; or if you were once, those days have long gone. This is a skill you must learn, not an unearned gift from Cupid.

Trust trumps cynicism and is a necessity for intimacy

> Trust in turn trumps cynicism, and true trust is not naivete. Trust between people who are not naive is a form of courage, because betrayal is always a possibility (…)
> To trust is to invite the best in your partner to manifest itself, with yourself and your freely given trust as the enticement.
> This is a risky business, but the alternative is the impossibility of true intimacy, and the sacrifice of what could have been two minds in dialogue working in tandem to address the difficult problems of life for a single mind striving in solitude.

Relationships based on dominance are poor and tenuous, best to set up win-wins

Peterson says that there are three fundamental states of social beings:

1. **Tyranny** (you do what I want)
2. **Slavery** (I do what you want)
3. **Negotiation**: it may seem more difficult in the short term, especially when you have enough power to be a tyrant. But it's the best for the long run, including for you

Peterson says something that we repeated here several times and we also agree with: tyranny may seem good for the tyrant, but is often not the best situation, *not even for the tyrant himself*.
Tyrants automatically make others slaves, and, in Peterson's words, "slaves take any and all chances whatsoever available to them to take revenge on their tyrants, who will, in consequence, find themselves cursed and damaged by their slaves."

The captain and co-captain relationship set-up

On the dating sections of this website we generally recommend going for a "captain and co-captain" relationship setup.

The man as the captain, who elevates her to a co-captain role, investing her with responsibility and respect to make her own decisions, chip in, and be part of the decision-making.
And with an open-minded enough captain to admit when he's mistaken and ready to go with the co-captain's preferences and decisions if they turn out to be better.

RULE 11 | Do not allow yourself to become resentful, deceitful, or arrogant

This chapter starts with the premise that you'd have plenty of reasons to be resentful, deceitful, and arrogant.

But you also plenty of reasons not to.

And it's your responsibility not to let the world and its challenges make you a worse person.
The antidote, says Peterson, is to have more faith and to focus on the positives, on self-development, and on contribution:

> The right attitude to the horror of existence—the alternative to resentment, deceit, and arrogance—is the assumption that there is enough of you, society, and the world to justify existence. That is faith in yourself, your fellow man, and the structure of existence itself: the belief that there is enough to you to contend with existence and transform your life into the best it could be.

RULE 12 | Be grateful in spite of your suffering

Jordan Peterson regards suffering as an inevitability -an inevitability exaggerated by malevolence-.

But, he says, he believes even believe even more deeply in the ability to transcend suffering, psychologically and practically.
And in people's ability to constrain malevolence, both in themselves, in others, and in the world.

Go through the darkness, to strengthen your light

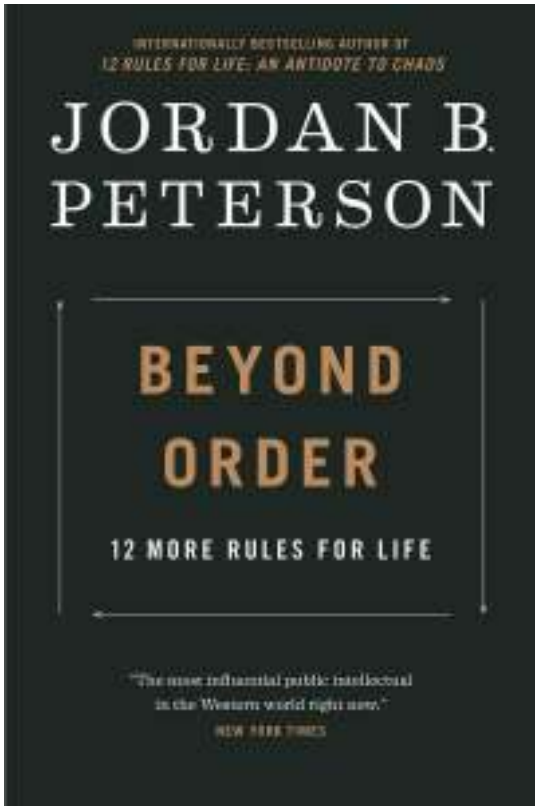
At level of beliefs:

> It is easy to be optimistic and naive. It is easy for optimism to be undermined and demolished, however, if it is naive, and for cynicism to arise in its place. But the act of peering into the darkness as deeply as possible reveals a light that appears unquenchable, and that is a profound surprise, as well as a great relief.

But also at a more practical level in social and life effectiveness:

> It protects us, as well. If you fail to understand evil, then you have laid yourself bare to it. You are susceptible to its effects, or to its will. If you ever encounter someone who is malevolent, they have control over you in precise proportion to the extent that you are unwilling or unable to understand them. Thus, you look in dark places to protect yourself, in case the darkness ever appears, as well as to find the light. There is real utility in that.

Yep, we agree with that.
And it's one of the reasons why we believe that learning power dynamics is essential in life. And even more crucial to anyone who wants to succeed while also adding value.



MORE WISDOM

Drop the heavy-cynicism to fly higher

On this website we say that a certain dose of cynicism is helpful to avoid falling for the naive outlook on life.
However, too much cynicism is harmful.
Peterson shares a great example of how abandoning over-cynicism changed a man's life for the better:

> He had ceased criticizing what he was doing or himself for doing it, deciding instead to be grateful and seek out whatever opportunities presented themselves right there before him. He made up his mind to become more diligent and reliable and to see what would happen if he worked as hard at it as he could. He told me, with an uncontrived smile, that he had been promoted three times in six months.
> (…)
> The young man had come to realize that every place he might find himself in had more potential than he might first see (particularly when his vision was impaired by the resentment and cynicism he felt from being near the bottom).
> (…)

> the young man who had something to say to me was thrilled with what had happened to him. His status concerns had been solidly and realistically addressed by his rapid career advance, and the additional money he was making did not hurt, either. He had accepted, and therefore transcended, his role as a beginner. He had ceased being casually cynical about the place he occupied in the world and the people who surrounded him, and accepted the structure and the position he was offered. He started to see possibility and opportunity, where before he was blinded, essentially, by his pride. He stopped denigrating the social institution he found himself part of and began to play his part properly. And that increment in humility paid off in spades.

https://thepowermoves.com/positive-cynicism

Ambition equals not power hungry: ambitious is good

> Ambition is often—and often purposefully—misidentified with the desire for power, and damned with faint praise, and denigrated, and punished. And ambition is sometimes exactly that wish for undue influence on others. But there is a crucial difference between sometimes and always. Authority is not mere power, and it is extremely unhelpful, even dangerous, to confuse the two.
> (…)
> Those who are power hungry—tyrannical and cruel, even psychopathic—desire control over others so that every selfish whim of hedonism can be immediately gratified;
> (…)
> When people wield authority, by contrast, they do so because of their competence—a competence that is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by others, and generally followed willingly, with a certain relief, and with the sense that justice is being served.
> (…)
> good people are ambitious (and diligent, honest, and focused along with it) instead because they are possessed by the desire to solve genuine, serious problems. That variant of ambition needs to be encouraged in every possible manner.

Peterson goes ahead to say that it's cruel and bad for everyone when people equate ambition and a drive to achieve with power hunger and selfishness.
And he also adds, as we agree, that power may accompany authority and "perhaps, must". We agree that yes, it must, or else it's much better for the leader and his goal, else he wouldn't much leverage if at all.

Trust against the possibility of betrayal requires courage, but it's necessary for win-win and human connections

Trust, says Persons, but of the "mature and tragic sort".
The naive person believes because he thinks everyone is trustworthy. The person who has "truly lived" knows better:

> Someone with experience knows that people are capable of deception and willing to deceive. That knowledge brings with it an arguably justified pessimism about human nature, personal and otherwise, but it also opens the door to another kind of faith in humanity: one based on courage, rather than naivete. I will trust you—I will extend my hand to you—despite the risk of betrayal, because it is possible, through trust, to bring out the best in you, and perhaps in me. So, I will accept substantial risk to open the door to cooperation and negotiation. And even if you do betray me, in a not-too unforgivable manner (assuming a certain degree, shall we say, of genuine apology and contrition on your part), I will continue to extend my hand. And part of the way I will do that is by telling you what I am feeling.

Strength in the face of adversity and death is a favor you make to the others

People tend to feel guilty on their deathbeds for the grief and trouble they will cause those left behind.

This is a burden I often felt myself: I had a strong drive to explore and take risks to learn adn grow in life.
But I was sometimes more worried about the pain I'd cause my family if something happened.

So I totally agree with Jordan Peterson when he says that "to collapse in the aftermath of a tragic loss is, therefore, more accurately a betrayal of the person who has died, instead of a tribute".

A strictly individualistic ethic is harmful to the individual as well

The idea here is that looking after yourself means looking up for countless forms of "future you", which is also a form of kindness and giving.

Says Peterson:

> That means that if you are treating yourself properly, you must consider your repetition across time. You are destined to play a game with yourself today that must not interfere with the game you play tomorrow, next month, next year, and so on. Thus, narrow selfishness is destined to be nonproductive. It is for this reason, among others, that a strictly individualist ethic is a contradiction in terms. There is in fact little difference between how you should treat yourself—once you realize that you are a community that extends across time—and how you should treat other people.
>
> In a marriage, for example, you face the same problem with your marital partner as you do with yourself: You are stuck with the consequences of an iterating game.

Genius concept.

Real-Life Applications

Power Protect Your Boss & Higher Status People

> t is said, with much truth, that genuine communication can take place only between peers. This is because it is very difficult to move information up a hierarchy. Those well positioned (and this is a great danger of moving up) have used their current competence—their cherished opinions, their present knowledge, their current skills—to stake a moral claim to their status. In consequence, they have little motivation to admit to error, to learn or change—and plenty of reason not to. If a subordinate exposes the ignorance of someone with greater status, he risks humiliating that person, questioning the validity of the latter's claim to influence and status, and revealing him as incompetent, outdated, or false. For this reason, it is very wise to approach your boss, for example, carefully and privately with a problem (and perhaps best to have a solution at hand—and not one proffered too incautiously).

This is an example of what we refer to here as "power protecting", and it's indeed a very good idea to power protect those above you, lest they come to resent, dislike you, and potentially enemies who want to get rid of you.

QUOTES

On conforming VS rebelling:

> the ability to conform unquestioningly trumps the inability to conform. However, the refusal to conform when the social surround has become pathological—incomplete, archaic, willfully blind, or corrupt—is something of even higher value, as is the capacity to offer creative, valid alternatives.

On shutting up when you haven't yet done the work to speak up:

> Now, there is nothing wrong, in principle, with the expression of concern for planet-wide issues. That is not the point. There is something wrong, however, with overestimating your knowledge of such things—or perhaps even considering them—when you are a mid-twenty-year-old with nothing positive going on in your life and you are having great difficulty even getting out of bed. Under those conditions, you need to get your priorities straight, and establishing the humility necessary to attend to and solve your own problems is a crucial part of doing just that.

On the importance, but also on the inherent risks of dating:

> Who dares wins —if he does not perish. And who wins also makes himself irresistibly desirable and attractive, not least because of the development of character that adventure inevitably produces

On the importance of aiming at something:

> If you aim at nothing, you become plagued by everything

On ideologies' "reductionism":

> This is because "sexuality" (like any multifaceted single term) can be defined as tightly or as loosely as necessary by those who use it for comprehensively explanatory purposes.
> No matter how defined, sex is a crucially important biological phenomenon—key to complex life itself—and its influence may therefore be genuinely detected or plausibly invented in any important field of endeavor and then exaggerated (while other factors of significant import are diminished in importance). In this manner, the single explanatory principle can be expanded indefinitely, in keeping with the demands placed upon it.
> Marx did the same thing when he described man in a fundamentally economic, class-based manner, and history as the eternal battleground of bourgeoisie and proletariat. Everything can be explained by running it through a Marxist algorithm.
> (…)
> There is, of course—as in the case of Freud—some value in Marx's observations. (…) Regardless of its hypothetical virtues, however, the implementation of Marxism was a disaster everywhere it was attempted (…) Ideological reduction of that form is the hallmark of the most dangerous of pseudo-intellectuals.

CRITICISM

Sometimes it's naive self-help (yes, we said that)

This is an important criticism.

And it's not like Jordan Peterson goes full-on, naive.

And yet, at times, it's slightly more on the naive side.

For example, he implies that in "healthy organizations" people advance on merit and competence, and seems to imply that merit alone, or merit preponderantly, decides who advances.
To being with, we say here that these "ideal organizations" may as well be a minority. And two, even in ideal organizations, people's psychology doesn't cease to matter. People still prefer to promote those they like, those they are friends with -or at least those who aren't enemies with-, those who support them -or at least those who don't disempower and undermine them, which may also happen by mistake when a competent individual is clueless, and those who know how to play the political game.

As the Harvard Business Review says, **politics are inherent to any human organization**.

Also read:

- **Machiavellis at the top**

https://thepowermoves.com/psychopathy-empathy-and-success-at-work
Another example: when Jordan Peterson promotes value-giving and win-win as the "almost only" viable strategies to succeed, he is not fully describing reality.
He suggests so, for example, when he says that dominance and power don't work and that rats -and some alpha male primates- also need to be "nice" and pro-social.

Again, we don't disagree: we embrace that strategy indeed -not only for moral reasons, but also because for most people and situations, it also works better.

But we must recognize there are different approaches that can also lead to the very top.

Jordan Peterson is more on the naive side because he does not give enough weight, space, and recognition to the value-taking strategies, which can also be successful to achieve certain goals.
Or, for that matter, he fails to recognize the more Machiavellian approach: to pretend to be a value-giver, but to instead play for selfish reasons only, and to manipulate others for personal gain, or to backstab and cheat as soon as the payoff is big enough.

As well, there is of course a grey area and a general value-giver can at times be a value taker and manipulate others.

Naive in the solutions, too.
Sometimes Peterson's solutions are naive in that they may reveal too much, or maybe assertive at the wrong times, and with the wrong people -in Power University we teach and show that not everyone deserves your honest assertiveness-.
Or too vulnerable. For example, he recommends approaching an intimate partner like this:

> I feel isolated and lonely and hurt, and cannot help but feel that you have not been as attentive to me over the last few months as I would have liked or that might have been best for us as a couple. But I am unsure if I am just imagining all this because I am upset or if I am genuinely seeing what is going on.

I'm afraid that a man talking like that to a woman would lose a lot of respect -and even attraction-.
It's not just about what's effective at surfacing issues, it's also about what's effective in general, and what serves your (and your partner) best interests over the long run.
And losing respect doesn't serve anyone's interest.

To learn more about maintaining long-term respect and attraction, see:

- **How to maintain long-term respect**

To learn more about vulnerability, see:

- **The power of vulnerability**: when to be vulnerable, and when not

> Vulnerability Is NOT Power: Don't Believe The Hype

And to learn more about naive self-help, see this foundational article:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Peterson is on a cultural warpath, but I don't want to be dragged into it

Several chunks of the book feel a lot like conservative trading against current culture.

Frankly, I'm F* tired of "identity politics", "PC", feminism, etc., etc. But even more tired of those who can't stop complaining about it.

And yes, if we look at the arguments, JP is (largely, albeit not always 100%) right.
It's stupid to spend hours talking about how to call a flipchart in a way that is not derogatory to this or that group, and yet… If it's a waste of time to discuss that nonsense, isn't it also a waste of my time to complain, dissect, and tirade against how stupid that is?

I don't want to spend my time thread-expanding on stupidity.

And I recommend TPM readers to do the same.
Also read:

- **Making of the ubermensch**

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-individualism

Jordan Peterson is no voice of reason anymore: he's a biased conservative on a warpath, and it shows in Beyond Order

… Unluckily.

We like Jordan Peterson's work here, and there is an important philosophical overlap with TPM.

However, we preferred Jordan Peterson when he was a free-thinking man, and not associated with any ideology. Now, as much as he criticizes ideology, he has joined a rather conservative group as a militant.

It's a pity, because his rules are on point, but he sometimes doesn't realize how he's failing or warping his own rules with his new bias.
For example, in discussing ideologies, he brings feminism as an example and patriarchy as an example of a dangerous reduction of complexity that vilifies all men. True, he's right. But why not add that some men are doing the same with women? Now, with both camps, we'd have a level-headed rule. With just one side, it reeks of bias.

And he pretty much said so himself:

- **Jordan Peterson has gone alt-right**

A tendency for negativity

There seems to be a certain bent toward negativity and pessimism in Peterson's writing.

For example, Jordan Peterson sees the suffering in life as inevitable.

Maybe it's inevitable that someone will experience periods of suffering.
But why not underlying that, sometimes, it's about periods, rather than whole lives?

Also, the way he always exaggerated the adjectives around "suffering" and "pain' threads-expands and increases the pain, but he rarely does the same for, say, joy and pleasure.
Take this example in the coda:

> the COVID-19 pandemic have rendered everyone's life tragic in an unimaginable manner

Covid made everyone's life *tragic* in an *unimaginable* manner?
Frankly, this way of talking makes me angry because it uneededly makes people feel worse. Was Covid "tragic"? *Uniginably* so? For *everyone*?

Because I personally traveled more during covid that in any other time. Even while “stuck” in South Korea I have made some of my best memories, including a great love story, and meeting one of my best friends -to this day one of my best friends-.
And I’m certainly not alone. I’m sure thousands of people met the love of their life during lockdowns, or got married, or started a family. And also have friends of entrepreneurs whose businesses boomed during covid.

So, in short, Peterson’s negativity sometimes expands so much, that it becomes ridiculous and patently false. There is enough negativity in the world that we don’t need anyone to expand on it.

“Persuasion Frames” to sell the author’s narrative all throughout

If you’re aware of power dynamics, advanced persuasion techniques, and frame control, you can spot that the author is out to convince the readers, rather than simply lay out facts.

fTor example:

> The biblical story of Exodus is properly regarded as archetypal (or paradigmatic or foundational) by psychoanalytic and religious thinkers alike because it presents an example of psychological and social transformation that cannot be improved upon

“Cannot be improved upon” is an extremely bold sentence.
How can anyone say something like that?
So to justify such a claim, the author covertly borrows a whole group’s high credibility -the “psychoanalytic thinkers”- to land authority to his assertion and gain the readers’ trust (we call it “power borrowing” here).
The “big words”, such as ” psychological and social transformation” also serve to increase his authority by self-framing as highly intelligent, well-learned, and scientific -the type of source you want to listen to-.
The “because” serves as a keyword of persuasiveness, and to smoothly package the whole sentence together to raise as little pushback as possible.

Over-reads into stories

I personally have the feeling that Peterson tends to over-read into stories, be they biblical, or commercial.

And Peterson being highly intelligent, he can easily “see” anything he wants to see into any story, and then spin a nice narrative that “kind of makes sense”. Or, at least, that sounds nice enough that people want to believe it.
But is the story itself that says what Peterson interprets it to say, or is it Peterson that invested the story with all that extra meaning? I sometimes had to wonder if it was the latter.

He even says that stories precede and, he seems to suggest, are superior science when it comes to “accuracy”:

> Thus, if we naturally construe the world as a story, then perhaps the world is most accurately, or at least most practically, construed as a story (and accurate and practical are not so easy to distinguish). You might argue, contrarily, that the scientific view of the world is more accurate, in some sense, and that the scientific view is not fundamentally a story. But, as far as I can tell, it is still nested inside a story: one that goes something like “careful and unbiased pursuit of the truth will make the world a better place for all people, reducing suffering, extending life, and producing wealth.”

Peterson is smart, so he foresaw the possible criticism of stories being unscientific, and made that note to include, address, and pre-emptively defuse the criticism.
However, he fails to make a good case, in my opinion. Science is science, and it’s not “nested” into any story. Or, if it is, that has no bearing whatsoever in science’s power to describe and predict reality as compared to a story.

Puts his morality above science, reality, or perfectly normal psychology

Jordan Peterson is a conservative.

And, among other things, he prefers people to stay married.

That's fine.

However, he sometimes lets his own preference taint his analyses.
For example, in an imaginary dialogue with a married man having an affair, he says:

> You are fifty. You have this twenty-four-year-old, and she is willing to break up your marriage. What is she thinking? Who must she be? What does she know?"
> "Well, I am really attracted to her."
> "Yes, but **she has a personality disorder**. Seriously, because what the hell is she doing with you, and why is she willing to break up this marriage?"
> "Well, she does not care if I stay married."
> "Oh, I see. So, she does not want to have an actual relationship with someone, with any degree of long-term permanency. Somehow that is going to work out well for you, is it?

I find it nasty that he slaps a woman who happens to be attracted to an older man with a label of "having a personality disorder".
It's an authority power move to slap someone with a final, unappealable label of "wrong", "not right", and "not worthy".

In that analysis, he also puts his morality, his ideals of "proper behavior" and his "respect for the institution of marriage", above what are in truth very normal drives and normal intersexual dynamics that are perfectly in line and predictable with simple evolutionary psychology (so you'd expect better by a psychologist).

Please note that this is NOT to say that an affair is "OK" or to be encouraged.
Quite the opposite: one may still dissuade her or him to consume, or to stick, with that affair. What is wrong though is to do so on the basis of personality disorder, or of categorical "right and wrong" that make people feel defective for having drives and desires that are perfectly normal.

CONS

- **Some covert self-promotion**:

If you check the forum for "Tony Robbins" you'll find why sometimes we call him the "king of self-promotion". Turns out, Peterson is not that far off sometimes, and certainly not foreign to covert self-promotion himself. At times, it can get grating.

- **Stop with the rules now, please**

I quote a public (negative) review of *Beyond Order*:

> Twelve MORE rules?
> Wasn't the whole point to create twelve basic rules for life?
> Any charlatan can make up rules "don't put your finger in a light socket," "don't spend more than you save," "if it's pink in the middle it's cooked to little" – but Peterson had invented Twelve Rules – not more, not less – it was a brilliant distillation, awe-inspiring in its simplicity.
>
> Now Peterson was adding twelve MORE rules.
> What was going on? What, if anything, would stop an endless proliferation of rules? Are there 12 more rules coming? 24 more? Only God knows! If Peterson can just make up more rules, willy-nilly, it might as well be

> 10,000 rules.

Albeit I may put it differently, I also agree that “adding more” is an easy pitfall to fall for.
Good “general principles”, should be few and limited.

As well:

- **Some rules make less sense than others**

We don’t believe much in “rules” and “laws” on this website as most things are contextual.

However, that’s not to say that “rules” are useless, or that there are no generalizable principles.

Still some of these Peterson’s rules seem too specific to me to be generalized to abstract principles.

For example, Jordan Peterson says to write down what bothers you, which makes sense… Sometimes.
But some other times, people may have too big a tendency to dwell in the past, and they may find more benefits in letting go and moving on.

- **A(another) case of “rules” as chapter titles and unconnected chapter content**

For example, artists and artists’ role in society, is under “make your room as beautiful as possible”.
And parents’ mistake in over-protecting children, together with lengthy examples from both his clinical practices and the omnipresent stories, is under the rule “Do not allow yourself to become resentful, deceitful, or arrogant”.

- **Christianity is not the basis of cooperation**

How can such a smart guy believe that such a relatively recent, cultural impact, has shaped human’s tendency for cooperation?
It’s either bias, or self-manipulation.
Human ability for cooperation predates any religion.
Also see “The Origins of Virtue“.

- **Sometimes feels a bit egocentric and too self-referential**

Not necessarily egocentric in the sense of narcissistic, albeit at times I wished he cut his own references short, but in the sense of basing too much of theory on his own life experience.
And, any life often being limited to draw a large-enough amount of data -ie.: he only has 2 children and only observed 1 granddaughter, he can’t generalize too much-, it feels like Jordan Peterson sometimes relies on personal anecdotes.

- **A professional narrator might have been better**

He’s a great reader, with great intonation, but sometimes maybe just a little bit too high-pitched.

- **Negotiations tips aren’t always the best possible angle**

I’m nitpicking now and looking at this from a social strategist’s point of view.
But this approach to your boss is not optimal:

> And then, if you want to negotiate for a raise, or more autonomy—or more free time, for that matter—you can go to your boss and say, “Here are ten things that were crying out to be done, each of them vital, and I am now doing all of them. If you help me out a bit, I will continue. I might even improve. And everything, including your life, will improve along with me.” And then, if your boss has any sense—and sometimes bosses do—then your negotiation will be successful. That is how such things work.

The concept is correct, 100%, and we totally agree with the approach of finding leverage through value giving. However, that pitch is slightly confrontational and disempowering, and many bosses with an ego -and more than sometimes bosses do have an ego, just like everyone else-, will want to deny you just to re-assert their power and to avoid being one-upped.

See Power University for better approaches.

PROS

Again, so much genius

Jordan Peterson, in many ways, is a genius mind.
Some of the new concepts I learned, appreciated, or even incorporated into my models:

The concept that we need both rule defenders and rule breakers

It's simple, yet deep and enlightening.

The concept that both conservatives & liberals need to watch out and purge their camps from their respective toxic manifestations

The genius here is this:

As long as you're dealing with a sensible, high-integrity person, his original beliefs and political preferences don't matter.
You can talk to him and reach some kind of agreement.

The problem arises when ideologues and manipulators -and, I'd add, "non-sensible extremists"- co-opt a cause for self-serving interests.
It's up to all of us to purge the manipulators and dangerous personalities from our own ranks.

The necessity of knowing and understanding evil

This is is a foundational concept to this website since its first inception, so it wasn't new for us.
But we're glad someone like Jordan Peterson also shares it.
Plus, he added the layer of "evil within us", to include our own tendencies for aggression, hatred, envy, manipulation, and generally taking value.

REVIEW

Beyond Order is a self-development book with a conservative bent.

If you can look past the personal preferences -and biases- of the author, then there is much genius in it, and much gold for your own growth.

I personally enjoyed it, and learned a few new things as well.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

Already Free: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Already Free (2014) is a self-help and mental help book that bridges and combines Western therapy and Eastern Buddhist practices and approaches, helping the readers get the most out of both.

TPM Strategic Take: Western "Fixing" *and* Eastern "Inner Peace"
Many high-achievers are trapped in the "Western developmental loop": *"I'll be OK when I get the promotion/girl/money."* This puts your power in the hands of external variables. What we like in this approach is **combining Eastern unneddiness with agency**. See our:
Spirituality for agentic men ↗

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Overview

- **The Western approach is hands-on work**, to look at the problem objectively, working on it, and practice improving your life
- **The Eastern view is to find contentment no matter what you have**, looking at the problem not even as a problem, but neutrally, as part of life, and to be content despite whatever you may experience, positive or negative
- **Both approaches are valuable**
- **Combining both yields the best results**

Notes

About the Author:
Bruce Tift is a practicing psychotherapist with many years of experience and a student and practitioner of Vajrayana Buddhism for several decades (including a student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a controversial figure and popularizer of Buddhism in the West).

Freedom is Contentment

> Freedom is by its very nature hard to define. It seems to include the qualities of freshness and spontaneity, expansiveness, contentment and well-being, completeness, openheartedness, and open awareness. Freedom is also experienced as inherently satisfying and meaningful, not as a means or condition for some greater good.

In the West, we tend to think of freedom as an absence of limitations, but the absence of limitations can only go so far.

It's not like with freedom everything becomes perfect, but we feel that everything is workable, and we don't need anything else to be OK.

Most People's Goals Stand In The Way to Freedom

> By contrast, many of our more familiar goals—a good relationship, good health, money, political and social justice, and so on—are usually seen as conditions that will bring about a greater good. "If I just had better health, more money, etc., then I would be happy."

Goals, and even more the way of thinking that we "have to" reach certain objectives inherently negate freedom because tell ourselves that we need that something we to be joyful and content.

The author says that the root cause of almost any issue with his clients is that they all have a "basic sense of dissatisfaction" based on the idea that "something is missing".
This is the opposite of freedom, since with freedom we feel that "nothing is missing".

The Western View: There's An Objective Problem to Solve

The Western approach to well-being is in working towards the issue:

> The first view is basically that of Western psychotherapy. The Western tradition says there are actual difficulties in our lives that can and should be resolved.
> (…)
> from the Western view—which I will also refer to as the developmental view—we try, appropriately, to improve ourselves and our circumstances

Features of Western Approach:

- **Becoming** (vs being): the Western view is about changing and becoming, improving, and living to our full potential, while the Buddhist approach is about being, accepting, relaxing in the moment and being cool with it
- **We have traumas to heal**: we have wounds or traumas that need to be healed before our lives can be positive
- **We need to bring the unconscious into the conscious**: while the Buddhist view doesn't differentiate and accepts and is "cool" with being a mystery to ourselves, the work of the developmental approach is to bring that which is unconscious into consciousness
- **We're independent existing selves**
- Improvement-oriented

The Western Approach Limits Our Power To Govern Our Feelings

Albeit neither the author nor many zen practitioners may refer to it as "power", in the end, that's what it feels to me to be:

> in the West, we believe that a better quality of life comes from improving our sense of self and our life circumstances.
> (…)
> this means that our experience of freedom depends on a combination of external circumstances and how we feel—neither of which we have full control over.

The author says that while he started with a Western approach, it was not enough for him:

> my baseline—what I returned to, spontaneously, off and on, every moment—was feeling, to some extent, like a problematic person. I was always trying to improve, trying to wake up, trying to feel completely at peace. From that ground of dissatisfaction, moments of clarity, peace, and freedom would arise. But those moments were temporary
> (…)
> Since this shift, my baseline has been an experience of open awareness, freedom, and well-being.

Looking Into The Past To Fix The Present

The Western psychoanalytic approach postulates that the experiences we have as children, mostly in our families of origin, profoundly impacts the rest of our lives.

In response to difficult experiences, we create strategies or behavioral patterns to help us deal with what we experience as threats to our emotional or physical, survival.
And while appropriate for the age when we came up with those strategies, we often carry them over to adults, when they don't serve us anymore.

The problem is that since we formed them as responses to disturbing and even dangerous realities, they're usually associated with anxiety and mental discomfort.
We avoid feeling this anxiety by pushing these strategies out of our awareness, where they continue to operate for the rest of our lives.
That's also an issue, because by pushing part of us aside, we are not dealing with the truth of our lives and we perpetuate a sense that there's something about us that's not workable.
Western psychotherapy seeks to bring them into awareness as adults to challenge them and dissolve them.

The author says there's a potential problem in looking at the past to fix our present:

> we may start to think that an improved present is dependent on clearing up the past.
> Any memories about the past are speculative, incomplete, and partial.
> If we start to believe that the past is causing our present circumstances, then we've positioned ourselves as powerless victims.

Stages of Dissolving Our Internal Divisions

1. **Awareness of the issue**
2. **Learning to tolerate the fears**, our worst fears for which we developed defensive mechanisms.
    1. Trusting that it the fears won't kill us
3. **Acceptance**, and feeling less anxious and panicky when the core vulnerability comes up
    1. Approach it with kindness: "*The choice is whether we're going to approach ourselves with fundamental aggression or with fundamental kindness. If it's the latter, we are able to say yes. "I'm going to say yes to this experience of feeling abandoned. I don't like it. It's one of my worst fears. I wish it were gone, but what can I say? If it's there, it's there. I'm going to say yes to it.*"

"You're not just saying yes to your fears, you're saying yes to your (full) self"

4. **Kindness to our fears**: "*as we move with kindness toward what's difficult, the disturbance—which up until this point has felt bigger than us—starts to feel more manageable*"
5. **Wanting to feel the fear**: *we say, "I want to feel this feeling. I want to feel abandoned. I want to feel dependent. I want to feel my rage." We don't want to feel it because we like it; we're never going to like these feelings. But we want to feel these feelings because they're us. (…) We're starting to get some clarity that all of our experience is us. We are not actually divided against ourselves"*
6. **Committing to the truth of our full integrated self**: *We may find that we have still been operating on the subtle hope that if only we do this work—if only we are kind to our disturbance and so forth—our disturbance will go away. Now we invite the feeling that this pain or fear is a completely valid part of our life, of us, and we commit to living with it until we die.*
7. **Loving your worst fear**: *As we're able and willing to practice unconditional love toward our worst fears, we very quickly start to dissolve the fantasy of any division inside of ourselves. We can love all of us, rather than just the parts that feel "good."*

The first stage could be understood as awareness or recognition.

The Buddhist View: There Is No "Problem"

> The second view is the Buddhist view, which says that how we relate to whatever we're experiencing is even more important than the experience itself.
> (…)
> from the Buddhist, or fruitional, view, our work is not primarily to improve our experience; instead, it's to invite a shift in perspective so that we are willing and able to fully relate to any experience we might have, regardless of what it may be.

Once you reach a higher level of enlightenment, you can have immediate non-pleasurable experiences, within a higher context of contentment:

> It is possible to have a good state of mind while we simultaneously feel very disturbed. It's possible to feel grief or rage or anxiety and to have these difficult experiences arise within a type of well-being that is not dependent on positive thoughts or emotions.

Some key features of Buddhism:

1. **Being** (vs becoming) living in the moment, to not even think that we "need" to change ourselves
2. **We're all connected**: Buddhism asserts the view that we are not separate selves, and our work is to investigate this appearance, see through it, and experience the freedom that comes from having open awareness and compassion as our basic ground.
3. **The mistake of thinking we're unconnected is frustrating**: independent existence for the Buddhist view equals alienation. And our sense of being an independently existing self is the central source of unnecessary suffering and confusion.
4. **We're only living in the present moment**, our experiencing is only found in each present moment. Our current reality has a more powerful impact on our state of mind than what we are experiencing, important as that may be
5. **Focus on the present moment helps us transcend the feeling of isolation**: as we become able to consciously participate in increasingly deep, moment-by-moment experiencing, we may find less and less evidence of a continuing significant "self"

6. **No self-improvement needed**. We're always trying to have more experiences that we like and to get rid of experiences that we don't like. This Western approach is only going to give rise to an improved display of our experiencing. In classic Buddhist philosophy trying to improve is not bad per se, but can be a cause of unnecessary suffering if we reject and hate our current condition. So rather than trying to create an improved experience or an improved sense of self, the fruitional approach encourages us to relax into our human experience as it already is, taking everything as it is and "being cool with it"
7. **There is no good or bad**: "reframing" as per Western tradition is smart as most of us prefer positive feelings and experiences to negative ones. But Buddhism says that freedom arises from a profound disidentification with any content—good or bad
8. **We're already free**: we only need to peel the layers and find it within us

Let's use a movie analogy to understand the difference between the two different approaches:

> freedom may not actually come from improving the story that's playing on the screen. In fact, it might come from placing whatever that story is, in all of its complexity, in a larger environment of awareness. Perhaps we don't have to improve the story we tell about ourselves, about life, in order to experience freedom.

Example of accepting the problem: giving yourself permission to feel bad

Anna, the author's patient, feels dead.

Instead of looking at her past to find out "why", and instead of looking for solutions, he gives her permission to feel dead:

> Specifically, I ask her about her objections to feeling dead.
> (…)
> What exactly is her objection to participating in the truth of her experience? Like it or not, the reality is that she feels dead. So I invite her to try a variation of the worst fear technique that I mentioned in the last chapter. I suggest she try saying out loud, "I give myself permission to feel dead, off and on, for the rest of my life," and then see what feelings arise.

And, suggests the author, once you accept it, you may find out that it's not such a big problem after all:

> We're just investigating what, in fact, is most true in the present moment.
> Is it true that there is a problem with feeling dead?
> Or is it more true that the feeling of deadness is a disturbance that does not, upon investigation, prove to be problematic?

And the positive, immediate result for Anna:

> she says it feels like a relief to acknowledge what she's already experiencing. Her feeling of deadness was already true, and she had been fighting it. In fact, she hadn't realized until she stepped into an acceptance practice how much energy she'd spent trying to have something true be not true. In a way, it can appear paradoxical. The effect of this fruitional approach—of Ana's accepting her feelings of deadness without trying to change them—is that she feels lighter and more alive already!

How To Become Enlightened

The author says there are no steps to follow:

> My personal opinion is that waking up is not caused by anything. Not meditation, not prayer, not devotion. How can we cause something that's already present? But it does seem accurate that we can invite this experience, make it more likely that what's already true may arise into our awareness.

But you can increase the chances of getting there with meditation:

> As American Zen teacher Baker Roshi once said: "Enlightenment is an accident—but meditation makes us accident-prone."

However, I find that plenty of the examples and explanations can help people get there:

Start By Accepting Things As They Are, Without Judgment

You could say this first step is about "detaching from our emotions by being in the moment with an unjudgemental attitude".

The author calls it "immediacy" VS "preference":

> Consider the possibility that our emotions are sort of like the weather. The weather happens.
> You might say, "Oh, it's a beautiful day!" But that doesn't mean that the day has an inherent quality of beauty.

Emotions are the same:

> In the same way, our emotions are something we have to deal with, because they affect us, but perhaps they are not about us, either. Yet we're always projecting our preferences onto our experience and assuming our interpretations are a reliable measure of what's really going on.

And the more we start accepting things as simply being, without good or bad, the more we can transcend our selves as well:

> As we start to practice embodiment and kindness toward everything that arises—as we practice immediacy—we find less and less and less evidence that any of our experience is about us.

That acceptance is empowering and dissolves suffering

> That begins to help us with practicing an attitude of nonbias. We are willing to feel happy. We are willing to feel sad. We are willing to be healthy. We are willing to be dying, if that's what's happening.

And, says the author, that's the first step towards the experience of freedom.

Enjoying, Without Preserving: Don't Save, Don't Take Pictures

> Just as we gradually learn to appreciate the rainbow without trying to possess it or protect it from fading away, we might learn to appreciate this experience of self without needing to protect and improve it.

I personally find that the concept of enjoying things and experiences without having to record them is the first step.

Then you can start expanding that attitude to life in general, and to transcend suffering:

> The more we allow experience to be just as it is, the more we find that all experience tends to arise (from no one knows where—it's really sort of mysterious), remain for a period of time, and then dissolve.

> This cycle is always happening, and there is no need to control or manage it.

It's our refusal to experience difficult feelings that make them "bad" and gives them the appearance of threat and unworkability.
But when we accept for what they are, and liable to soon go just as they came, we can transcend our pain.

Do The "Unconditional Practices"

Which are:

- **Unconditional immediacy** *going deeper and deeper, more and more precisely into an investigation of what is most true in this moment, the more immediate we can be, the fewer problems we find, the fewer references to a self we find. We don't find evidence of anything missing. We don't find evidence of our worth, either positive or negative, as a person. We find no evidence of anything being permanent. What we do find is an endless stream of fresh, unique moments, which we find to be inherently interesting and workable*
- **Unconditional embodiment**: *the more we can bring our attention to immediate, sensation-level experience, the more difficult it is to be captured by our interpretations. When we stay in our immediate embodied experience—noticing our sensations but not tying them to any past experiences—it's very difficult to link any stories together*
- **Unconditional kindness**, *feeling a sense of sweet love toward everything, including things we don't like*

How to Tell If We're Progressing

> how can we tell if movement is happening or progress is being made? An early indication will be a lessening of complaint, struggle, self-doubt, defensiveness, and emotional reactivity. We are captured by our usual dramas less often, don't take them quite so seriously, and recover from them faster.

And:

> A generalized sense of confidence may be noticed, with more frequent moments of clarity, embodied presence, and kindness to whatever may arise.

Plus, of course, a general sense of well-being and contentment becomes more and more frequent.

Both Approaches Are Great, & Best If Combined

The author says that neither approach can offer any guarantee, but they both do their part really well.

And they can be even more useful in conjunction.
As a matter of fact, Tift even says that they both *need* each other:

> they don't work without each other. If, on the one hand, we're always "becoming," without learning how to be, then we're always postponing our commitment to experiencing the present.
> (…)
> So while at any moment there is being, over time, there is always becoming. You can't have one without the other. If we focus only on acceptance and immediacy, we may ignore historically conditioned patterns that are causing harm to ourselves and others.

On their own, when taken to an extreme, both also become unhealthy.
For example, the neurotic aspect of the Western individualistic approach leads to insensitivity, disconnection from others, potentially aggression, and isolation.

And the neurotic expression of interconnection may lead to lack of boundaries, conflict avoidance, unassertiveness, and a tendency to compromise integrity in exchange for approval, love, or security.

The Overlap Between Both

Both views have a common intention to relieve unnecessary suffering, and both agree that the experience of split or division is at the heart of that suffering. So there is an overlap between them.

> The developmental view is especially useful in articulating and working with patterns that exist over time, in recognizing how powerfully our conditioned history shapes the ways in which we relate to our immediate experience.
> The fruitional view is very helpful in training ourselves to participate consciously in each immediate moment, which is the only moment in which we will ever find ourselves, and to discover if what used to be true is what's true now.

How To Combine The Two Approaches

> When I work with clients, I often invite them to consider a two-step sequence. The first step is that of acceptance—becoming willing to accept the way things are. This represents the fruitional approach; we stay present with reality as it is. From that ground of acceptance, we can then ask how we might improve our situation or experience, which is the second step.

Accepting first also helps us "take the pressure off" our efforts to change, and also be cool in case of failure:

> But if we try to improve ourselves without first accepting our circumstances, the effort may feel very serious. It may feel like our lives—or, like Marcie, our emotional well-being—hang in the balance. If, on the other hand, we've already accepted things as they are, then any efforts at improvement can be understood as being about practical issues or perhaps even be experienced as play.

Also, with a combination of the two, we don't need to "solve" any problems to live well and free.
We can enjoy our lives, while also working on it.

Another way to combine the two is to first have a positive image of oneself with Western psychotherapy, and to then accept our full selves via Buddhism:

> this sense of being divided against oneself is probably an unavoidable developmental stage to be experienced and worked through (…)
> And as long as we try to make ourselves into an object to be either accepted or rejected, better to accept it. Better to have a positive self-as-object than a negative self-as-object. This is the arena of most of the work we do in psychotherapy.

Combining Individualism & Interconnectedness For Good Leadership

The author says that interconnection tends to be more of a "feminine energy" while individualism is more of a "male energy".

And we need both not only for a good mental and social life, but also for good leadership:

> To experience the sane expression of either the masculine or the feminine, we must learn how to lead with one energy, without losing experiential contact with the other.

This is sane masculine energy:

> Sane masculine energy arises when we can assert our separateness, have conflict, set boundaries, and know that we are alone in some fundamental way—all the while still keeping our heart open. We can feel connection and empathy with others, knowing that any conflict between us is most likely there because they're so important to us.
> (…)
> Healthy masculine energy can experience conflict without apology—working with the truth of interpersonal differences—precisely because we can feel our care for the other.

Masculine energy is also crucial to navigating long-term relationships:

> We know that, paradoxically, the purpose of this conflict is to help us keep our hearts open. A lack of healthy masculine energy is one way in which many couples get into difficulty. They're having conflict, while unconsciously trying to reassure themselves of their connection. The refusal to keep it simple and just have "clean conflict" actually arises from a lack of confidence in our connection and contributes to the "sticky conflict" characteristic of codependent dynamics.

And this is sane feminine energy:

> Sane feminine energy leads with connection, communication, support, and empathy—all the while maintaining boundaries and personal responsibility.
> We understand that no relationship will work well if we lose touch with our fundamental aloneness and compromise our integrity.

Also read:

- **How to be a leader**: 13 steps from social psychology
- **Leadership in dating**: how leadership affects dating

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

MORE WISDOM

Masculine Energy & Independence For Personal Power

Says the author of his personal power and relationship:

> It wasn't until I was in my forties that I started to feel safe enough to realize how incredibly dependent I am as a person.
> One of the first clues had to do with my relationship with my wife. It dawned on me one day that if I were truly independent, she wouldn't bug me so much.
> I wouldn't be so disturbed by her tone of voice, her behavior, or how she related to me. I wouldn't feel so warm and relaxed when she was kind to me.
> **She had an incredible impact on my feelings**; apparently, I was so dependent that my state of mind was profoundly affected by her mood and behavior.

What he's describing here with his wife is all about emotional power dynamics, and his wife being "the judge" in the relationship, with the power to make him feel good or bad.

A process that in dating power dynamics some people also refer to as "betaization", or as the man losing power ot the woman.

The author says that it happened because he was too interconnected with her, and not separate enough.

Becoming "Effectively Selfish"

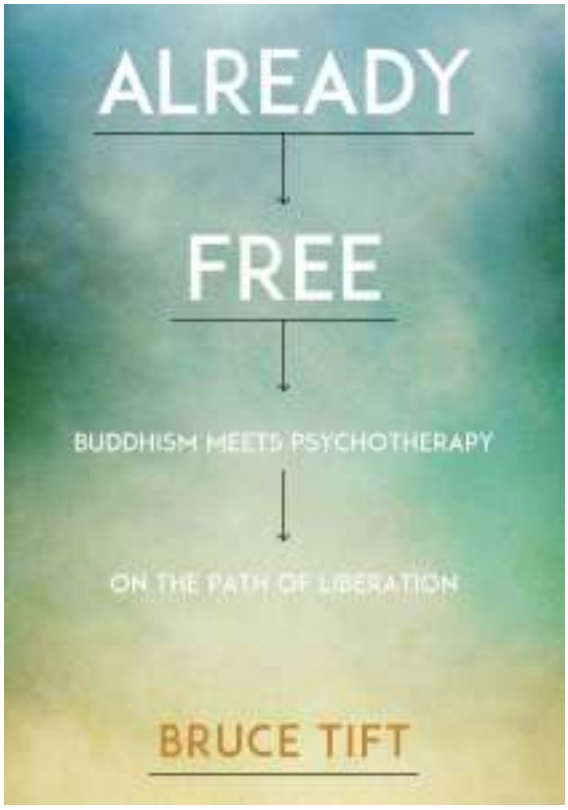
The author seems to touch upon a recurrent theme we have here in TPM:

To take the good out of what many may consider selfish or antisocial, and to leverage for a better win-win that serves the self, and others.
For example, we have here:

- Enlightened cynicism
- Enlightened individualism
- How to be good asshole

Tift here refers to "how to be selfish".
When you're not "selfish enough" you're too dependent on others and become co-dependent.
When you're too selfish instead you cannot even create win-win relationships.
He says that the solution lies in taking good care of ourselves so that we can then enter win-win relationships that we *want*, rather than *need*:

> We'd be taking such good care of ourselves that we wouldn't need our partners to be any different than they already are.
> We no longer need to wait for our partners to become who we want them to be in order for us to have a satisfying life. This is the foundation of effective selfishness.



QUOTES

On the transient nature of everything:

> we find there is, in fact, no resolution necessary (or even possible). Experiencing our worst fears doesn't kill us, and experiencing our greatest hope doesn't save us. Both are only transient energies. Each arises, dwells, and falls away.

CONS

- **Reduces the "Western" approach to mental health to psychotherapy**

I think there is much more than psychotherapy to mental health in the West.
Probably most psychotherapists today employ a mix of tools that also include more hands-on approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy.

- **Some clearer "how to" or simplifying some complex concepts may have helped**

I know, I know, there's no easy "how to" sometimes and some complex and abstract topics are just that: complex. However, I think that it's still the authors' responsibility to make these complex and abstract concepts as easy and applicable as possible.

PROS

- **Credibly shows that science does not stand against spirituality**
- **Bridges between the science and spiritual enlightenment**, between the more science-based Western approach and the more spiritual Eastern one

REVIEW

Already Free is a great book for both mental health from a more clinical perspective, and for general mental self-development.

Its unique combination of psychotherapy and Eastern traditions of spiritual enlightenment helps bridge an imaginary "gap" that, in truth, may not exist since the two approaches are complimentary and not contradictory. *Already Free* helps readers get the best from both worlds.

Check the **best books** collection or learn more in:

- **Spirituality for agentic men**
- **Foundations of men's mental power**

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

Why Leaders Lie: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Why Leaders Lie (2011) examines the deception that goes on among politicians at the international level as well as how it compares with politicians' behavior with the internal electorate.

About the Author:
John Joseph Mearsheimer is an American political scientist and international relations scholar from the realist school of thought, often associated with "realpolitik" and a Machiavellian and amoral approach. John Mearsheimer is a professor of political science at the University of Chicago.

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Spinning VS Lying

The author says there are several different form of deceptions:

- Lying
- Spinning
- **Concealment**: withholding information that might undermine or weaken one's position

> Spinning is when a person telling a story emphasizes certain facts and links them together in ways that play to his advantage, while, at the same time, downplaying or ignoring inconvenient facts. Spinning is all about interpreting the known facts in a way that allows the spinner to tell a favorable story.

Funny enough, only "lying" has a bad reputation, and only lying gives you a bad reputation:

> Lying is usually considered deplorable behavior, whereas most people seem to believe that it is acceptable to spin and conceal, even though these behaviors are designed to deceive.

This may be the reason why, the author says, leaders prefer to spin and conceal rather than outright lie -and nobody wants to be called a liar, even if it's for a good cause-.

Nobody wants to be called a liar, even if it is for a good cause. This preference is reinforced by the fact that it is often difficult to lie without getting caught red-handed.

The 7 Types of Foreign Policy Lies

1. **Interstate lies** are aimed directly at other countries either for the purpose of gaining a strategic advantage over them or prevent-ing them from gaining an advantage at your expense
2. **Fearmongering** occurs when a leader lies to his own people about a foreign-policy threat that he believes they do not recognize or fully appreciate. The aim is to motivate the public to take the threat seriously and make the necessary sacrifices to counter it
3. **Strategic cover-ups** are lies designed to hide either failed policies or controversial policies from the public and sometimes from other states as well. Leaders do not tell these lies to protect incompetents who bungled their job or to conceal foolish policies—although that can be an unintended consequence
   1. **Ignoble cover-ups** are when leaders lie about their blunders or unsuccessful policies for self-serving reasons
4. **Nationalist mythmaking** is when leaders tell lies, mainly to their own people, about their country's past. In essence, they tell a story in which "we" are always right and "they" are always wrong.
   The purpose is to create a powerful sense of group identity among the broader population, because that is necessary for building and maintaining a viable nation-state, and for motivating people to fight wars for their homeland.
5. **Liberal lies** are designed to cover up the behavior of states when it contradicts the well-developed body of liberal norms that is widely accepted around the world and codified in international law
6. **Social imperialism** occurs when leaders tell lies about another country for the purpose of promoting either their own economic or political interests or those of a particular social class or interest group.

Why Leaders Lie focuses exclusively on lies oin the service of the national interest, hence leaving out social imperiasm and ignoble cover-ups.

What Increases The Odds of Interstate Lying

- **Dangerous areas**: countries located in dangerous areas where there is intense security competition
- **Crises**
- **Rivalry**

Nationalist Lies To Dupe The Gullibles

The author says that it's the elites who make up the national myths for two reasons:

1. **Fuel group solidarity to prop up the state**; to create a sense of nation-hood, which is essential for building and maintaining a viable nation-state
2. **To get the most out of the citizens, including their life**: to instill a sense that they are part of a noble enterprise, which they should not only be proud of, but for which they should willing to endure significant hardships, including fighting and dying if necessary

Also read:

- **Military leaders and deception**

> Great Leadership Is Great Manipulation: Jocko Willlink Case Study

Or watch this video:

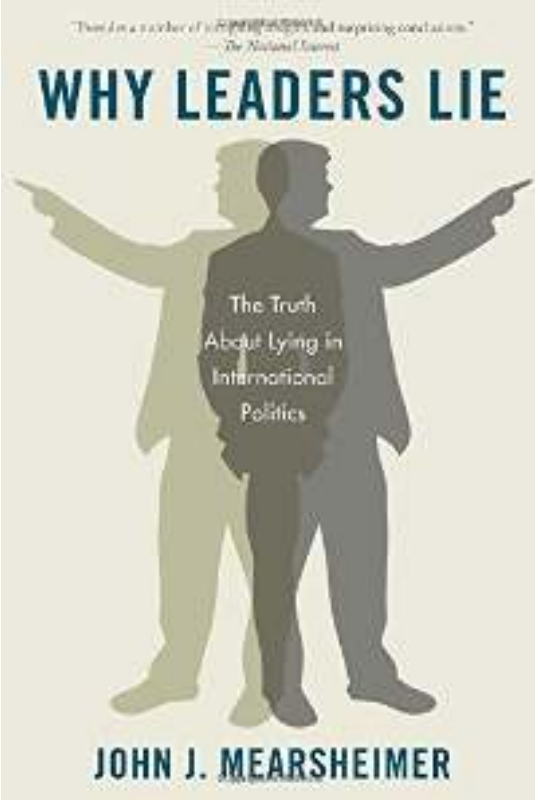
However, it would be a mistake to think that people are empty recipients of leaders' manipulation.
In truth, most people *want* to be duped and lied to:

> the common people invariably hunger for these myths; they want to be told stories about the past in which they are portrayed as the white hats and opposing nations as the black hats. In effect, nationalist mythmaking is driven from below as well as from above.

The Costs of Lying

Albeit the author calls the chapter "the downsides of international lying", many of them apply to lying in general:

- **Creates a culture of dishonesty**, therefore, it makes eminently good sense for leaders and their fellow citizens to work to minimize the amount of lying that takes place in their country
- **Make for poorer democracies**, since democracies operate best when they include a reasonably efficient marketplace of ideas, which can only work when citizens have reliable information and there are high levels of transparency and honesty
- **Public alienation**, to the point where it loses faith in democratic government and is willing to countenance some form of authoritarian rule
- **Self-aggrandizing lies can help you in the short-term but harm you in the longer run**: for example, Khrushchev's lies about the Soviet missile force in the late 1950s scared the United States into significantly escalate the arms race when Khrushchev was hoping to slow it down and spend more money on economic and social programs



MORE WISDOM

Avoid antagonizing other powers, it's a smart strategy

On this website, we talk about "making friends, not enemies" as a general high-level principle.

One of the corollaries is that you don't want to provoke others and make them bigger enemies than they already are. One way of doing it is to avoid antagonizing others, and alarming them, like France and Great Britain did with Russia after World War II:

> This logic was in evidence during the early days of the Cold War, when the countries of Western Europe created two mutual defense pacts: the Treaty of Dunkirk (1947) and the Treaty of Brussels (1948). Both agreements were said to be checks against a resurgent Germany, but in fact they were mainly designed to contain Soviet expansion in Europe. British and French leaders lied about the real purpose of these alliances because they did not want to antagonize the Soviet Union—which they saw as a serious threat—if they could avoid

Israel engaged in ethnic cleansing

> There was no way that the Zionists could create a Jewish state in Palestine without doing large-scale ethnic cleansing of the Arab population that had been living there for centuries. This point was widely recognized by the Zionist leadership well before Israel was created.
> (…)
> The opportunity to expel the Palestinians came in early 1948 when fighting broke out between the Palestinians and the Zionists in the wake of the UN decision to partition Palestine into two states. The Zionists cleansed roughly 700,000 Palestinians from the land that became Israel, and adamantly refused to let them return to their homes once the fighting stopped.
> (…)
> Israel and its American friends went to great lengths after the events of 1948 to blame the expulsion of the Palestinians on the victims themselves.

Targeting civilians is not off-limits to avoid endless warfare

> Duke political scientist Alexander Downes shows in his seminal book Targeting Civilians in War that "desperation to win and to save lives on one's own side in costly, protracted wars of attrition causes belligerents to target enemy civilians." Indeed, he shows that "democracies are somewhat more likely than nondemocracies to target civilians."
> (…)
> Remember that the United States purposely killed about 900,000 Japanese civilians in the last five months of World War

Your enemy can't be too bad: when the elites defend tyrants

> British and American elites—including academics, journalists, and policymakers—went to considerable lengths 174/346 during World War II to portray Stalin in a favorable light, so that it would not appear that Britain and the United States were run by ruthless statesmen who would cooperate with one tyrannical mass murderer to defeat another.

QUOTES

On the truth of the famous trope "the winners write history":

> General Curtis LeMay, who was in charge of that murderous bombing campaign, once remarked, "If we'd lost

> the war, we'd all have been prosecuted as war criminals."

CONS

Talks of survival as if the world was in anarchy, as if there were no major alliances, and as if each country was constantly plotting war

The author seems to speak as if each country was in fear and risk of losing its sovereignty left and right.
He says:

> The best way that states can maximize their prospects for survival is to gain power at their rivals' expense.

Survival?

That might be the case for Hong Kong, Taiwan, or some states bordering Russia.
But it's not the case for much of the rest of the world, and least of all the "most important" areas of the world.

The world I'm living in is not so much about surivival.

And it's not so much about invading either, as the author makes it out to be:

> Third, a country's leaders might downplay their hostile intentions toward another state to disguise an attack on it.

Is he talking about politics in the West?
Like for example, me as an Italian, the Italian prime minister visiting another country and downplaying Italy's forces to prepare an attack?

This seems *completely* out of touch with the reality of most Western countries.

Of course, that's not necessarily because people today are more "good", but because nuclear weapons, supranational unions, supranational military pacts and supranational agreements made the gains of invasions slimmer and the costs incredibly high.
Most nations, even bigger ones, wouldn't be able to invade a neighboring country without all other nearby countries either intervening militarily, or punishing with crippling social and economical sanctions.

So, for example, Austria is not at risk from Italy, Portugal is not at risk from Spain, and Belgium is not at risk from France.
Heck, even Canada is pretty safe from losing its sovereignty to the US, and that's in spite the US being the biggest military power in the world.

Talks about leaders cheating for the "good for the country", as if leaders weren't interested more in their own selfish gains

For example:

> In a dangerous world, leaders do what they must to insure their country's survival.

And:

> leaders usually believe that defeat would do serious damage to their national interest.

Yeah, he's partially right.

Some leaders most certainly care about their countries: even for selfish reasons a strong country, economy, military, or reputation is good for the leaders.
However, it's naive to think that all leaders have their countries' interests in mind first and foremost. Many leaders are more interested in their own political survival, rather than their countries.

For more, read DeMesquita's work:

- **The Dictator's Handbook**
- **The Logic of Political Survival**

> The Dictator's Handbook: Summary & Review

Sometimes Not So "Realpolitik" After All (Naive?)

There seems to be a pervasive sense that most of the lies in *Why Leaders Lie* are to advance the national interest.

Even when talking about fearmongering the author focuses on fearmongering for the good of the country:

> Fearmongering occurs when a state's leaders see a threat emerging but think that they cannot make the public see the wolf at the door without resorting to a deception campaign.
> (…)
> As distasteful as this behavior might be, leaders do it because they believe that it serves the public interest, not to exploit their fellow citizens for personal gain.

There are several more similar examples in the book.

In my opinion instead most fearmongering is to the benefit of the leader, to accrue more power, and to get elected when campaigning on law and order.

Also read more on politicians' manipulation:

> The Psychology of Political Manipulation

PROS

- **The realpolitik approach**

Albeit, as we say above, at times *Why Leaders Lie* almost feels naive and whitewashed towards leaders, it shares enough "realpolitik" wisdom on different topics.

- **Tough truths shared openly**

As in the birth of Israel preying on Palestinians.

REVIEW

Why Leaders Lie is a good book to understand the dynamics of lying and deception a bit better.

I personally only partially agree with the author's general stance that leaders lie because they think it is good for their country.
And I didn't find the wisdom earth-shattering, and maybe the analysis wasn't the deepest.
However, I did learn a few things and I really like the author.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

The Disease to Please: How to Cure People-Pleasing (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Disease to Please (2002) is a book for too nice guys and girls who say "Yes" when they really want to say "No." Harriet Braiker, the author, teaches people with the disease to please how to become more assertive, stand up for themselves, and respectfully say no when they want to say no.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - 1. What's The Disease to Please
  - 2. People Please Out of Mindsets, Habits, or Feelings
  - 3. The Costs of People-Pleasing
  - 4. The 6 False Beliefs of People Pleasers
  - 5. Stuck In Toxic Relationships For Fear of Ending It
  - 6. Case Study: A People Pleaser's Wake-Up Call
  - 7. Case Study: The Approval Seeker (Judge Power Dynamics)
  - 8. Solution: Enlightened Self-Interest
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **People pleasers harm themselves by becoming martyrs**, by putting other people's needs first, and, way too often, by putting their own needs last
- **There are many causes of** people-pleasing behavior, from fear of confrontation, to building one's own identity and self-esteem around "being nice" to false beliefs about what it means to be nice and selfish. However, the end result is the same: all people pleasers are similar in their patterns of behavior
- **You can cure your people pleasing dysfunction**, and you can start by understanding exactly that: that it's a dysfunctional pattern of behavior

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Harriet Braiker was a social and clinical psychologist and best-selling author.
She also wrote "Who's Pulling Your Strings", a great book on manipulation and manipulation dynamics.

1. What's The Disease to Please

> The Disease to Please is a compulsive—even addictive—behavior pattern. As a people-pleaser, you feel controlled by your need to please others and addicted to their approval.

However, it goes beyond simply not being able to say no:

> your need to please is not limited to just saying "yes" to the actual requests, invitations, or demands initiated by others. As a people-pleaser, your emotional tuning dials are jammed on the frequency of what you believe other people want or expect of you.

That means that whatever you think others may want or need, you feel compelled to provide -or, at least, not to deny it-.
And, in TPM parlance, it also makes you an easy picking -or victim- for "covert questions", covert requests, and guilt-tripping: people don't even need to ask you anything, just imply or hint at something they want, and you feel compelled to provide it.

Your Self-Esteem Is All Built Around Pleasing

> Your sense of identity, your self-esteem, and even your worthiness to be loved derive from doing things for others. In fact, it often seems like you are what you do.

For more on changing your identity, see:

- **The antifragile ego**

> The Ultimate Personal Power Tool: The Antifragile Ego

2. People Please Out of Mindsets, Habits, or Feelings

The author says that we can recognize 3 general causes for people-pleasing behavior:

1. **Habits**, or habitual behaviors driven by an excessive, even addictive, need for everyone's approval
2. **Mindsets**, believing that being nice will protect you from rejection and other hurtful treatment from others.
   It includes a "fixed thought that you must strive for everyone to like you. You measure your self-esteem and define your identity by how much you do for others and how higher up you put their needs above yours".
3. **Feelings**, when you have anxiety even at the thought of saying "no", or letting someone down, or having to face anger and a possible confrontation.
   At this level, the syndrome operates primarily as an avoidance tactic to protect you from your fears of anger, conflict, and confrontation

The author says that different people tend to skew more heavily towards one of the three, albeit most people pleasers are a mix of all of them.
That's not bad news though, because if you can only change one, the others will follow suit.
Says Braiker:

> You can stop the progression of the Disease to Please and you can change now. To do so, you need only begin with a small change in any one area—your behavior, thoughts, or feelings. As one change at a time inevitably builds on the next,

3. The Costs of People-Pleasing

1. **Other people may manipulate and exploit you** and your willingness to please them
2. **You may be blind to power dynamics and manipulation**: "*your niceness may even blind you to the fact that*

others are exploiting you"

3. **You avoid giving feedback and valid criticism** out of fear that people may dislike you, get angry, or push you into a "difficult conversation"
4. **You build up anger and resentment over time**, and since you're not able to express yourself in a healthy and assertive fashion, you may resort to passive aggressiveness
5. **Your relationships suffer** because you can't have an authentic relationship unless you're able to share your true feelings and thoughts
6. **Your needs will go unmet**: you also have needs, just like everyone else. And if you never voice them, you will never get what you want, what you need, and what you deserve
7. **You turn passive-aggressive**: your anger seeks revenge, but the submissiveness permits you to deny your aggressive side to both your partner and yourself and to maintain your self-concept as nice. The problem is that passive-aggressive actions actually incite your partner to greater hostility
8. **You failt at work**, because you're unable to delegate and end up doing it all yourself. People who do all the small stuff do not advance in their career
9. **You fail at life**: you never even come close to expressing your potential
10. **You'll get abused and manipulated** (keep on reading)

Also **too nice people attract takers** in their life.
Just look at this female people pleaser comment:

> "After everything I've done for everyone else," one patient of mine says bitterly, "nobody is there for me. I've been so nice to everyone, and people just take me for granted."

4. The 6 False Beliefs of People Pleasers

1. Being nice is important
2. Life is fair, and nice people nice avoid painful experiences (such as rejection, isolation, abandonment, disapproval, and anger)
3. What people think of me is important
4. If you're hurt or rejected, you weren't nice enough
5. If I don't put others first, I'm being selfish and not nice
6. Whatever you do doesn't "stick" or "add up", every new day you must prove your niceness from scratch

The 10 Commandments of People Pleasers

1. Always do what others want, expect, or need from me.
2. Take care of everyone around me whether they ask for help or not.
3. Always listen to everyone's problems and try my best to solve
4. Always be nice and never hurt anyone's feelings.
5. Always put other people first, before me.
6. Never say "no" to anyone who needs or requests something of me.
7. Never disappoint anyone or let others down in any way.
8. Always be happy and upbeat and never show any negative feelings to others.
9. Always try to please other people and make them happy.
10. Never burden others with my own needs or problems

And then there's the "perfectionist people pleaser", a very common specimen of people pleaser, who adds an eleventh commandment:

11. Fulfill all of these expectations completely and perfectly

The 7 Deadly Shoulds

Other people should:

1. Appreciate and love me because of all the things I do for them
2. Always like and approve of me because of how hard I work to please them
3. Never reject or criticize me because I always try to live up to their desires and expectations.
4. Be kind and caring to me in return because of how well I treat them.
5. Never hurt me or treat me unfairly because I am so nice to them.
6. Never leave or abandon me because of how much I make them need me.
7. Never be angry with me because I would go to any length to avoid conflict, anger, or confrontation with them.

In this chapter Braiker quotes Albert Ellis on the gratuitous harm of the various "shoulds" and "must" we place on ourselves.

Also see:

- **How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable**

In brief, the demands you make of yourself coupled with the emotional pain you inflict on yourself for failing -or even for the possibility of failing- creates a situation where you can't win, but only lose.
It's depressing and gives you anxiety for no valid reason.

In this TPM's concepts, you elect others to be your judge, and you become your own worst judge.
You fear their judgment, fear your own judgment, and become trapped in your impossible to meet standards of what it means to be "nice".

Says the author:

> When you hear the commanding should in your thoughts or self-talk, you are hearing the voice of your judging conscience.
> (…)
> That voice is the amalgamation of your parents, teachers, older siblings, coaches, or other authority figures that, at various points in your life, laid down rules that have stayed with you throughout your life.

Also see more on judge power dynamics:

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Emotional Control

5. Stuck In Toxic Relationships For Fear of Ending It

> the people-pleaser may have very good reasons to want to quit a job—sometimes citing instances of mistreatment, harassment, or exploitation by the employer. Still, to avoid an angry, disapproving, or "hurt" response from the employer, the people-pleaser remains on the job unable to muster the courage to resign.

Similar dynamics apply to relationships and even friendships, says Braiker:

> In these cases, the alleged friend may have repeatedly hurt the people-pleaser. Yet the people-pleaser will not be the one to terminate the relationship

6. Case Study: A People Pleaser's Wake-Up Call

I think this story is a great wake-up call.

Sarah was a people pleaser who broke her back to do everything for her family, and more.
Now look what happened when it was Sarah who needed help:

> When she returned from the hospital, Sarah was shocked and profoundly hurt by her family's reaction. Instead of being kind and happy to reciprocate the years of Sarah's nurturance, they displayed irritation and resentment for the inconvenience caused by Sarah's illness. At first, Sarah felt guilty for being sick and a burden to her family. But soon she was overcome with feelings of anger and resentment.

So then she finally opened her eyes and started changing:

> "I realized that I was raising a bunch of lousy human beings. So I decided there and then that things were going to change. And they have, but very slowly. Periodically, I have to go on strike again to remind everyone to live up to his or her responsibilities." "The best part is that I really believe my family respects me and loves me more for making them into better people," she concluded.

It wasn't necessarily bad for Sarah to do so much for her family, and neither it is for you.
The failure is when your giving does not accrue any social credit because people fail to even acknowledge the value you're providing, and the cost you're incurring in providing that value.
It's possible to give and be valued. As a matter of fact, it's one of the best things you can do, but it's up to you to make sure people value your contributions.
So **to avoid being taken advantage of while still giving *you* must make sure that people value and respect your contribution.**

Here at TPM we call it "fair value marketing".
Also learn more about giving and taking in the social exchange:

> Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

Nobody Likes Over-Givers

Over-giving not only sets you up for being taken advantage of, but also doesn't provide you with any social benefits.

Indeed, many people don't like too nice guys and girls, and they don't like over-givers.
Says Braiker:

> One of the hardest lessons people-pleasers have to learn is that making yourself a martyr is no way to make friends. In fact, it is very difficult for most mortals to like the self-appointed, holier-than-thou "saint" who walks among them.

Giving too much also puts the good people in a tough spot (ie.: those who don't want to take advantage of you):

> you may inadvertently diminish the receiver by making him or her feel inadequate to reciprocate in kind. People-pleasers who give to the point of utter selflessness or self-effacing excess can create the unintended

> effect of making others feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, and even disdainful.

In a way, giving too much is a form of social exchange manipulation.
You're trying to buy love and liking, but you're doing it out of selfishness, and that makes you come across as fake and manipulative.

7. Case Study: The Approval Seeker (Judge Power Dynamics)

Another great case study to understand what happens when you remain addicted to other people's approval:

> "Every man I've dated since has figured out how much I need approval. My son knows it too. I can see that I just hand over the strings to the other person in a relationship, and I behave like a good little puppet," she says of herself derisively. "What's really ridiculous is that I'm literally still trying to get my father's approval. It's just absurd. He's 83 years old and as critical and withholding as ever. I keep hoping he'll let me know that he really loves me before he dies.

Again, this is all about emotional power dynamics, and what we refer to here as "judge roles" who have power over you via emotional rewards and punishments.

The solution?
To only see yourself as the main dispenser of approval:

> The most important, effective, and lasting source of approval is the acceptance you give to yourself. Develop a clear sense of your own judgments and values and govern yourself accordingly.

8. Solution: Enlightened Self-Interest

Here are some solutions:

Find The Correct Definitions of What You're Doing

Some people pleasers are terribly afraid of being -or coming across- as selfish.

But the problem with them is that they have a black and white approach to the continuum between selfless and selfish.
And they do not see a difference between self-care and self-love, and selfishness.
Says the author:

> There is a big, important difference between exercising enlightened self-interest and being selfish.

So just by redefining the meaning and concepts of "giving", "caring" and "self-caring", you can take a bit step forward.

So here's the first big shocker to help people please change mindsets:

As a people pleaser you're not being "giving" or selfless, you're being self-destructive.

Realize You're Being Cruel To Yourself

And if "being nice" is important to you, here's another shocker:

Holding yourself to perfectionist standards and neglecting yourself is nothing short of self-imposed emotional *cruelty*.

If you struggle to internalize it, imagine a parent telling this to a child, or a spouse to their partner: You must always please me, you are to fulfill each and every request or order I issue, no matter what you are doing or how you feel. And, you must smile and pretend to be happy all the time".

Does that sound nice, caring, or even "normal"? That's how you act with yourself as a people pleaser.

Internalize: It's OK Not To Be Nice

You will take a huge step forward when you can internalize that "it's okay not to be nice".

Here at the TPM we actually generally like "being kind".
But we also say that you should NOT be nice with assholes and life's takers. Because that makes you a sucker.

You only need your acceptance

Some people pleasers have low self-esteem and feel bad about themselves.

So they project their own negative feelings about themselves onto others, and act nice "pre-emptively", to manipulate others into liking them or at least into not rejecting them.

The solution is to recognize that the person whose acceptance you most need is your own.
You must address the issue at its roots: before love, you need *self*-love.

New Definition and Goal: Enlightened Self-Interest

> There is a third alternative that will best serve everyone, and that is for you to operate in a state of enlightened self-interest. What this means is that you will take good care of yourself, even putting your needs first at times, while simultaneously considering the needs and welfare of others.

Also see:

- **Enlightened individualism**

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-individualism

Become An Empowered Giver

> the more desirable alternative to being a people-pleaser is to be a person who makes a very intentional choice to care— a choice of when, how, and to whom you give your finite time and resources.

Learn to Sit With The Emotions You Fear With Exposure

If your people-pleasing attitudes are emotionally driven, then you need to learn to make peace with those emotions you're trying to avoid.

They include fear of anger, hostility, conflict, and confrontation.

How to do that?
Says Braiker:

> conquering the phobia comes through exposure to the fear itself in order to learn effective and appropriate responses

So it's exposure, plus techniques of competent anger management, conflict resolution skills, assertive communication, and general social skills and power dynamics skills.

Techniques For Stopping People-Pleasing

The last part of the book is all about techniques and scripts to take the first steps toward liberation.

They include:

- Gaining time with the initial request to think about whether you want to do it or not
- Communicating your preference
- Remaining steadfast against people's insistence, guilt-tripping, and cajoling

If you've gone through PU, you know all those techniques -plus more- and you've seen the examples.
So you already have the tools and it's more about putting them into practice.

So, in that sense, although **Power University** is more advanced, PU may also help with people-pleasing behavior:

> Power University

MORE WISDOM

"Too nice behavior" *galvanizes* the attacker(s)

The author says that being nice when in a conflict situation is equivalent to "unilateral psychological disarmament".

She's right.
And it gets even worse: nice in the face of abuse can increase the abuse:

> In effect, niceness gives the other person permission—and even encouragement—to mistreat you.
> (…)
> Paradoxically, if you are the target of verbal and emotional abuse, your niceness not only will fail to protect you, it will strengthen the person who is hurting you or treating you unkindly.

The more you like someone, the more it clouds your judgment

> People-pleasers often err on the side of attributing more noble motives and intentions to people with whom they are involved in a romantic relationship than is actually the case.

And something we repeat often here:

> To adequately protect yourself, you need to see people as they are and not how they appear through trick rose-colored lenses that magnify their assets and minimize or block out their flaws

Anger is a power move

Says Harriet Braiker:

> Anger, by definition, is an accusation made in response to a perceived error, mistake, or misbehavior. In order for anger to be activated, someone must be blamed for the perceived misdeed.

Basically, she's saying that when someone gets angry at us, the sub-communication is "you're to blame because you're guilty".

Accepting that anger without pushing back on the message it conveys is the equivalent of admitting guilt:

> And, in true people-pleasing form, you give the accuser permission to blame you—exactly what he or she needs.

She talks about “people pleaser”, but the same is true for anyone else.

Once you give them permission to blame you, it means you take 100% of the blame. You’re the guilty, wrong, or “defective” one, and they’re the 100% right, correct, or “good” ones:

> Assuming blame is not the same thing as accepting your share of responsibility for a problem
> The latter presumes that if a problem occurs between two people, the responsibility will be attributed jointly and fairly. It may not be equally shared, but both parties will acknowledge some degree of responsibility for the problem between them.
> Blame, on the other hand, is one-sided. The accuser disavows any responsibility and seeks instead to hold you not just responsible, but answerable and punishable for your actions that are clearly labeled as wrongdoing.

Great wisdom, and I partially agree.

However, I think it’s OK to let someone yell and “be angry” as long as you push back on either the sub-communication of guilt, or the content of the message.

For example, if they yell “look what the fuck you did”, it’s OK to calmly reply “it’s not what I did, it’s what happened, and we both are part of it”.

Such as, the key against angry accusation is to push back on at least one of the several layers of the blame-attack:

1. **Address the tone first (the anger itself)**, what we advise men in relationships
2. **Push back against the content**: whatever it is they are saying
3. **Push back against the sub-communication**: such as that the blame is not all on you

“Total Honesty” Is A Power Move And A Form of Aggression

> There is a particular form of emotional mistreatment practiced by people who hide their anger and aggressive motives in the guise of “total honesty.” The claim, of course, is that total honesty is always “the best policy.”
> (…)
> Arguably, being totally honest without any tact, and at the expense of another’s feelings, might well be construed as more a flaw of character than an asset.
> (…)
> The speaker then compounds the pain by rhetorically asking, “What’s wrong with you? I’m just being completely honest,” implying that the response should have been appreciation or even gratitude.

Also learn more about covert power moves:

> 6 Covert Power Moves to Control Frames

Don’t Laugh With Those Who Tease You: It’s Disempowering

> When you laugh along with those who tease you, you not only devalue your own self-esteem you also reward the teasers for their hurtfulness or cruelty as well.

To Have Non-Destructive Conflict, Use Overarching Collaborative Frames

As usual, Harrier Braiker may not have put labels on certain techniques and approaches, but she's a very smart observer of social strategies that work:

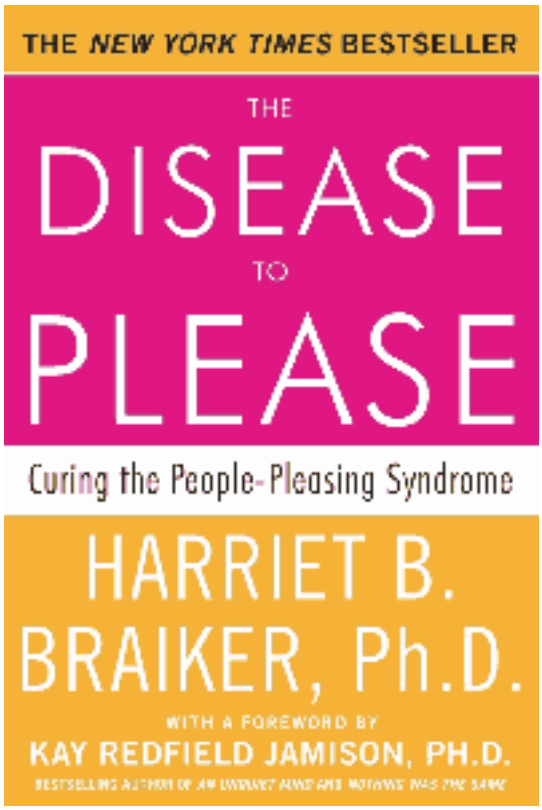
> Couples that handle their arguments constructively affirm their basic relationship either explicitly or implicitly (i.e., by virtue of leaving basic values unquestioned). As a result, conflicts are contained within safe boundaries, and partners can feel secure in expressing dissatisfaction or even transitory anger.

We call this concept "collaborative framing" here on TPM.

Constructive VC Destructive Conflict: The Difference

After a lengthy and good analysis of conflict resolution, Braiker sums it as follows (redacted for brevity):

> Constructive conflicts are safe and productive.
> Produce new agreements based on deeper mutual understanding, and reach an endpoint in the form of resolution. The parties experience empowerment, pride, and renewed confidence in their ability to weather problems and develop effective solutions that eliminate or reduce future conflcits. It feels like the relationship grows.
> In contrast, destructive conflicts are repetitive, unsafe, hurtful, and counterproductive. They are left unfinished and unresolved, producing hurt feelings, resentments, and stewing anger. The parties, lacking effective solutions or agreements, will argue over the same or very similar issues in the very near future. They feel stuck in recurrent patterns of provocation, accusation, and blame. They feel alienated and the relationship suffers and shrinks.



QUOTES

What a genius opener, I want to use this for PU:

> The deal I propose is simply this: you provide the motivation, I will give you the tools and skills you need to reclaim control over your life.

On the reality of people pleasing:

> While people-pleasers may think they excel at making others happy, their real talent lies in making themselves feel miserable and inadequate.

On needing VS loving:

> In unhealthy relationships the feeling is, "I love you because I need you." In "healthy love" relationships the feeling is, "I need you because I love you." These are not mere subtleties of language, but critically different emotional postures

On people pleaser's "safe distance" also being an emotional moat preventing healthy connections:

> However, if you stay far enough away from people so they can't reach out and strike you, you are also too far for them to be able to reach out and embrace you.

On verbal and physical aggression being similar:

> The old and patently false children's chant, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," needs revision. In reality, broken bones can heal relatively quickly; but words can and do leave deep wounds that sometimes never heal.

CONS

- **The difference between mindsets, habits and feelings lacked clarity**

Especially the "habits" one.

- **Perpetrates the myth that "conflict-avoidant couples have poor relationships"**

… And that good relationships have conflicts.

But this may actually be a myth, as Gottman's research suggests that couples that have zero conflict actually stick together.
Now "sticking together" may not be equivalent to "health", but it's still an important indicator.

- **Jumps to conclusions**

Talking about a husband "victim" of a people pleaser, the author says:

> Ron acted out his anger by withholding sexual interest and attention toward his wife and by cheating behind her back.

That may be possible, but we don't know for sure.
It's entirely possible Ron's main "motivation" is that he wanted to sleep around and would have cheated anyway.

- **Clueless and poor advice to women when it comes to submissiveness/femininity/dating**

The author has some feminist-leaning "advice" to women:

> Today many of these women, and even a significant number of younger women too, fear that the very traits that account for their success in the workplace—assertiveness, mental toughness, aggressiveness, competitiveness —become liabilities in their romantic relationships with men.

Those DO become liabilities in their dating.
Also see feminine women VS strong women.

> Submissive Women VS Strong Women: Who Wins at Dating?

- **Too many and too long offshoots**

Harrier Braiker is an outstanding psychologist and observer of human nature and social dynamics, so her off-topics are often opportunities to learn.
Still, if a book is about "Disease to Please", I think that it avoids lengthy off-topics about, say, conflict management.

- **Presents the "sandwich technique" as a highly effective technique**

… Something I disagree with.
Everyone's seen it, and whenever they hear a positive, they already know that a negative is coming, and it all feels contrived and manipulative. Exactly what you want to avoid.
To be precise, there are ways of doing it that are effective, so it's more about the delivery than the technique itself.
Still, the technique is now trite.

PROS

- **Perfect combination of theory and practice**

In *The Disease to Please* you'll find both: (almost) all the theory you need to understand the issue, plus (almost) all the tools you need to start fixing it.

- **Best overview of emotional power dynamics and judge role**

Many people pleasers seek emotional rewards from others.
They are emotional addicts, and they elect everyone else as their own judges.

We first came up with emotional power dynamics and the "judge role" early on TPM's history and, back then, we hadn't yet read much on the topic.
Reading Harriet Braiker was like reading about what we originally wrote on the topic of emotional power dynamics.
Braiker predates -and validates- that all-important concept of social and power dynamcis better than anyone else we're read so far.

- **The quizzes to self-diagnose yourse**lf

There are many quizzes that you self-assess yourself on the people-pleaser scale. And they're good.

- **Deep overview and analysis of people pleasing**

Including how it affects relationships and how it invites controlling men and abusive men.
If we wanted to nitpick, the author does not dwell on how people pleasing damages men in dating, but if you're reading on this website, you know that.

REVIEW

The Disease to Please is a wonderful book on the people-pleasing syndrome, offering both psychological depth and practical solutions.

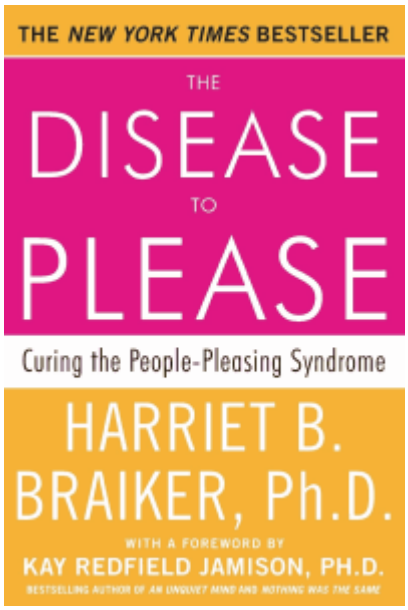
It's perfect for all the nice guys and nice girls, for people stuck in passive and passive-aggressive communication, for those who are too submissive, for those who are fearful of others and for everyone who feels pressured into saying "yes" when they didn't want to say "yes".
Such as: for a lot of people who have room to become higher power and more assertive.

Harriet Braiker also happens to be one of this website's lesser-known favorite authors.
All of her work has been top-notch, and we learned a lot from it.

Get it on Amazon or check the **best books** collection.

 TPM's take for ambitious men: We highly recommend *The Disease to Please*, but we must add that **it's only a first step for ambitious men.**
To advance into the top-10% and gain serious respect, status, and attraction, you'll need more advanced resources that include dominant behavior, masculine body language, and more advanced mindsets. Once you're ready for that, you can check Power University.

The Disease to Please Summary: How to Cure People-Pleasing



The Disease to Please (2002) is a book for too nice guys and girls who say "Yes" when they really want to say "No." Harriet Braiker, the author, teaches people with the disease to please how to become more assertive, stand up for themselves, and respectfully say no when they want to say no.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-disease-to-please-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.9

Dropping In Podcast Review: Can Charlie Teach You Charisma?

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Dropping In Podcast is a YouTube channel and podcast by Charlie Hopert, and it replaced the former *The Charlie And Ben Podcast* when Charlie Houpert and Ben Altman split their business.
It also replaced Charisma on Command as Charlie with various breakdown and social dynamics commentaries.

About The Hosts
Charlie Houpert and Ben Altman are the founders of Charisma on Command, a YouTube channel that breaks down media personalities and celebrities looking for what makes them charismatic, appealing, or high power.
They also market a course on social skills called Charisma University and a course on emotional self-awareness and well-being called Emotional Mastery.

Update:
In November 2022 Charlie announced that him and Ben were going separate ways. He referred to a "co-dependent relationship that needed fixing".
Ben Altman took over the Charisma on Command channel while Charlie kept on working on the podcast.
This review focuses mostly on the work the two have done together, but it largely applies to the new podcast as well.

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Why Watching It

In general, the main reasons we decided the show deserves a spot on TPM is because it can help viewers to:

1. To Learn Critical Thinking Skills

Learning critical thinking skills is the main reason I decided to review their podcast.

Critical thinking skills is a meta-skill in life.
And, so far, I have yet to find any good resource that focuses on developing, growing, and honing critical thinking.

So one of the best ways to learn it, is to engage with those who already have critical thinking skills, and see how they go about making sense of the world.

And The Charlie and Ben Podcast helps you acquire those skills by watching two smart and open-minded guys analyzing world news and events.

2. To Learn Logical Reasoning

The cousin of “critical thinking”, and the guys, Ben in particular, also display great logical reasoning.

You can see if most often as they look for both proving and disproving evidence for different theories or arguments.

3. For Role Models Of Success, With Ethical Standards

Both of them seem to be two ethical guys who have built a successful business while seeking to add real value, and avoiding the scammiest marketing ploys.

So they combined *both* ethics, with business and personal success.

That’s some eagle-stuff.

Ethics & Moral Self-Awareness

In between the "self-awareness" and ethics, the podcast is also great to spot our ethical blind spots as well.

What I like most is that Ben and Charlie always start any judgment towards others by looking at themselves first -and yes, sometimes they over-relativize as we'll see soon, but that's the right approach anyway and they mostly do it great-.

Just as an example:

> **Charlie**: this crypto-bullshit, the way that influencers are doing it is so morally (pauses to think of the right word) disturbing (…) there is not a single question of "is this a good thing to put this into the world".
> It's a bummer the lack of moral thought

I couldn't agree more.
And then, even better, he goes on to explain WHY it bothers him so much. And it's because he may have the power to do it with his audience, but chose not, and it annoys him that others are doing it without paying a price.

This is also one of the reasons why we say here that leaders must maintain some ethical standards and avoid free riders in their groups: otherwise, all the contributors will stop giving and caring, and the group loses its ability to pool resources and achieve goals.

4. For Self-Awareness / Emotional Mastery

Charlie and Ben are incredibly mature and self-aware -far more than I am in those areas-.

Their ability to self-analyze themselves from both a self-development and a psychological point of view is truly remarkable (and I learned a lot from that).

For example, says Charlie:

> **Charlie**: When I see at myself my relationship with authority has shifted as my understanding of my relationship with my dad has shifted.
> I was a MF pain in the ass arguer, stand-up posts, and when I was in my young 20's dude I was in at the rallies "fuck the man" you know, take this guy down
> **Ben**: (joking) "fuck my dad. I mean, the government"

Then Charlie goes on to explain that as he repaired his relationship with his dad, he started seeing value in more traditional or conservative values -didn't become conservative, but doesn't reject ideas off the cuff anymore simply out of personal rebelliousness-.

Very deep level of self-awareness, as well as emotional power dynamics.
What they're discussing is the rebelliousness of the people who are still under the yoke of a power figure -and their judgment of us-.
Some people rebel as a (misguided) effort to gain personal freedom.
What they're really rebelling against is often the mental power that the authority holds over them.

We call that authority figure "judge role" in interpersonal relationships.

CRITICISM

Albeit there is lots of good in the Charlie and Ben Podcast, there's also something we strongly disagree with.

In brief, Charlie and Ben, and even more Charlie, sometimes fall under what we label here "naive self-help". Specifically, it's "naive open-mindedness", "naive over-philosophizing", and naive (cultural) relativism.

If we were to use a single sentence to highlight the cons of the podcast, it would be this:

> **An open mind is great, but not so open that your brain falls out.**

Sometimes, the Charlie and Ben Podcast feels like the second part of that sentence.

Now let's go more into details about what we disagree with, and what doesn't align with TPM's views.

Just as a reminder: in spite of the entries below, we still like and recommend Charlie & Ben Podcast.

We highly recommend this article on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Popular But False Self-Help Myths

1. Over-Relativism Turns Into Naivete

OK, we get it:

Most people are too quick to pass judgment.
So generally leaving room for doubt is a good idea.

However, as for everything: balance.

If jumping to judgment with limited information is not optimal, **it's not optimal to suspend judgment forever**, either.
Because not everything is shades of grey, and not everything is a "maybe". Sometimes, something is clear -or clearly right or wrong-. And someone -or someone's action- is clearly wrong, right, guilty or innocent.
And even grey areas aren't perfectly grey. So someone's action may be "legal", but still "quite of an asshole thing to do".

To understand the general principle of the law of balance, bookmark this article for later if you haven't read it yet:

- **The law of optimum balance**

> The Law of Optimum Balance

The Cowardice of Suspending Judgment

Not the case of Charlie and Ben, but:

1. **Philosophizing power move**: Refusing to provide a clear opinion is sometimes a power move to make you sound intellectual and "superior"
2. **Coward CYA policy**: And it's also a coward and low-power move to hide yourself and avoid any scrutiny.

It's not by coincidence that in the Divine Comedy Dante places those who never took sides in the "inferno".

The uncommitted are neither in hell or heaven because nobody wants them. Their punishment is to chase a banner to atone a life of uncommitted cowardice

Never choosing a side can be a sneaky, manipulative tactic to appeal and play both sides. To never commit is also to refuse responsibility: you refuse to contribute and choose to stay in that safe limbo where you can never be proven wrong or called into question.

The Relativist Bane

To avoid providing a clear-cut opinion, Charlie and Ben, and especially Charlie, meander into a maze of endless relativism.

Sometimes relativism is exactly what you need to put things in perspective.
But eventually, you want to at least try and come back to more down-to-earth, pragmatic, concrete conclusions.

In many cases, I felt that relativism was pushed too far and was left at that, without even trying to reach a no-matter how-provisional conclusion.
And that includes many cases where a more concrete and pragmatic conclusion was either possible or, I felt, even easy.

Some examples:

1.2. Naive Relativism On Donald Trump: Can't You See The Red Flags of Dark Narcissism?

In this episode, Charlie and Ben discuss the Capitol Hill riots.

They say that if Trump believes the election was truly stolen, then democracy would be dead, and he is doing the right thing.

And if Trump doesn't truly believe the election was stolen, then… Then he's a dangerous crook, a potential tyrant?
Nope, they can't push that far, not even in the event that Trump made it all up just to keep power.
Instead, it's "looking for excuses to avoid a negative judgment". Charlie says that it could be cognitive dissonance in Trump's shoes and "it doesn't require a nefarious megalomaniac (to do what Trump did, it's implied)".

They then go on to say that "storming" is not necessarily bad or evil -which is fair-.

Yet in all this analysis **never once did they address the fact that an endless string of Trump's behavior screams extreme narcissism**, thin skin (typical of vulnerable narcissism), and an obvious drive to maintain and

increase power at all costs, no matter what.

These two guys do personality breakdowns and even had a video on narcissism, but can't even bring themselves to air the *possibility* that Trump may be a narcissist, and high in dark triad traits?

Is it bias, contrarian spirit for living in California, fear of being "judgmental" or "conservative", or is it "relativistic fundamentalism"? I think it's the latter: they may reject religion and ideology, but they sometimes get lost in relativistic fervor.

In my eyes, that made it a very poor analysis.

And please note this has little to do with politics, and all to do with personality analysis and spotting red flags.
For example, I don't think Trump was a particularly bad president in terms of policies -he didn't start a war, which is not too bad to start with-.
But he was a poor example of a leader, and a danger to democracy. The guys heavily underestimated how close Trump was to overturning democracy.

For an analysis of Trump's last attempt to hold on to power, read here:

- **Capito Hill riots and narcissistic manipulation**
- Trump: a threat to democracy?

Not Calling An Asshole An Asshole Is A Disservice to The Audience (Andrew Tate)

It's not just about Trump.

Charlie often extends moral relativism in judging characters.

Murderers are not at fault because that's their brain make up.
Or because of the experiences they've had.

As fans of Free Will by Sam Harris, it makes sense they feel that way.
However, same as Harris, they fall into the same trap of conflating free-will with the different reasons why it can make sense to blame and deliver punishment, including: retribution, eradication through example, upholding value-giving VS value-taking as a value in society by punishing the latter, judgment of character and action along moral and ethical standards, and personal strategies and self-defense against potentially dangerous characters.

So yes, they're right about the reason.
But it's also right to say "that guy is an asshole" if one behaves like an asshole.

Sometimes the guys also seem to extend too much benefit of the doubt.
In this case, they are talking about an influencer who promotes online gambling.
Charlie says:

> **Charlie**: it doesn't seem that he's asked himself "is this good or not". He hasn't though about any of those considerations

That's almost more offensive to tell of that the guy that he's an asshole. Because it's the equivalent of saying that he's got the brain of a dog.
Who can promote online casinos without thinking that people are going to lose money?

In this other episode they spend half an hour, literally, talking about Andrew Tate, a dark triad self-appointed self-help guru.
Tate's business model -and narcissistic need- is to court attention at all costs, and he does it by being as provocative as possible (note: some in the TPM's community disagree, saying that, at least initially, Tate had good advice and helped them).

Charlie and Ben come up with all kinds of reasons for his behavior except the most obvious one.
And not even once did they even consider malevolence and a selfish intent to milk his audience as much as possible, without a care in the world for the customers.
In the next episode, Charlie discusses Tate's story of beating a bully and his dad congratulating him as if the story were true. It's funny they often say of media that you can't take the news as true (makes sense), but then assume that what Tate says -Tate being the type of character that I wouldn't trust a single word out of his mouth- is true.

This is a disservice to the audience because learning to judge characters is a fundamental life skills.
Especially so when it comes to manipulators, value-takers, and potential psychopaths.
With their over-relativistic attitude, they're inadvertently teaching their audience to over-trust.

1.3. Naive Relativism of Expertise: Tin Foil Hat David Icke Gets Same Credit As Scientific Community

Sometimes relativism means to Charlie that almost any opinion is worth the same.

This relativism bias is based on what we may call "naive logic", and it starts like this:

Everyone can be wrong, biased, or deceitful.
And it's easy to find evidence that any single person, at least sometimes, was wrong.

The mistake is then to over-expand that truth to mean that "since anyone can be wrong, biased, or deceitful, then everyone's ' opinion has an equal likelihood of being wrong, biased, or deceitful".

That's just stupid logic, and any 2-year-old would know when they'd rather trust their parents, than a stranger.

So of course the fact that if "10 doctors" say anything about their field of expertise, there is no guarantee of it being correct.
But it's still more likely they are correct, than any random 10 non-doctors.

However, the relativist zealots sometimes miss this very simple concept and can end up sounding ridiculous.
For example, check Charlie's comments in this episode on David Icke and the "Covid 5G conspiracy":

> **Charlie**: I watched the David Icke Brian at the beginning of this, and David comes and says "it's 5g and this is a big plan", and I go "look I don't know, we'll see"

So Charlie basically says that he doesn't know if 5g is responsible for Covid, which is "fair enough to say" -but it's not fair to give it too much credit, given what they already knew at the time, read on-.
What's not fair enough instead is to consider David Icke, a conspiracy theorist claiming that an inter-dimensional race of reptilian beings has hijacked the Earth- at the same level of the community of doctors and epidemiologists who see no connection between 5g and Covid.

Charlie himself goes on to offer perfect rebuttals of why that point of view made no sense in light of available data and logic, not even when it was first proposed (ie.: if the connection was true, we'd see more Covid cases in places with more 5g, which is not the case and, sometimes, opposite of what we see).

So… **Why would you give that much weight to the opinion of a person with low authority and credibility, with a bad track record of BS, and an illogic explanation that makes no sense when checked against the available data?**
Attention: that doesn't mean you should 100% throw out the opinion, that would be going too extreme in the opposite direction and a logical and scientific approach always leaves doors open.
But your brain should go:

1. Low authority guy

2. Low expertise guy
3. Poor track record
4. On the podcast of a guy with a track record of creating (fake) drama for views and money
5. Promoting a theory that not a single accredited scientist endorses
6. Promoting a theory that my own logic, based on current data, plainly contradicts

That already should tell you to de-prioritize and probably stop listening UNTIL he has amassed more evidence and/or someone corroborates that point of view with some evidence.

So the end result is NOT "I don't know, we shall see", but:

> Can't say 100% for sure, but very low chances, and it's much more likely that the YouTube host was chasing views. So don't waste time on this and move on".

Instead, nope, like a self-righteous philosopher adrift in a sea of relativism, Charlie proudly keeps all doors open to any possibility -the time you wasted on idiots be damned-.

1.4. Naive Relativism on Personality Disorder: "we're all sociopaths"

You gotta love this one.

At least, you gotta love this one if you're a malignant sociopath :).

It's indeed the abusers of this world who love that type of relativism the most.
As Marta Stout said: some people are just bad, and some others can't stop making excuses for them -I'd add, it's often the limousine liberal types who do it-.

Let's see what that excuse-making looks like.

Charlie says:

> We're starting from the presupposition that there are sociopaths and that is a useful definition.

Well, yes, *there are*, and I find it a perfectly useful definition.
And then:

> And in I think that in some contexts it is (..) what I come back to is that all of these diagnoses and all of morality is totally relative to your surroundings, such as that in 200 years we're all going to be diagnozable sociopaths, or whatever they call it, ASPDs, it will have evolved by then

I think this is nonsense relativism.

Of course there is some relativism and we're all insensitive to *some* of the world's pains, but there are clear traits and behavioral patterns of sociopathy, one of which is "lack of empathy".
And no matter how things evolve, a high-empathy guy is still different from someone else without empathy.
That difference remains no matter how you want to put things into perspective.

This is something Charlie repeats once again in this episode during Johnny Deep's court hearings, with the usual theme being that "we all have those traits and needs, some just a little bit more".
What's lost in that naive relativism is that, first of all, some have it *a lot* more, not a *bit* more (and some, not at all).
And two, that the spectrum is also a bell curve distribution where the differences grow HUGE at the extremes.
Going to an extreme in some traits or needs changes someone fundamentally. If we're talking about psychopathy, those extremes make one *far* more likely to be harmful and dangerous to others -someone should send Charlie the

stats of the psychopathy rates in the general population, and in prisons and see how he'd spin that-.

The fact that it's a spectrum does not invalidate the usefulness of labels and does not invalidate the reality of what it's like to live with someone with a certain mental health issue.

1.5. Naive Relativism On Predatory Cults: Cults Are The Same As Any Other Organization

In this episode Charles Manson.

And, as you might guess by now, he relativizes Manson and his activities as well:

> **Charlie**: and he definitely has cult-like aspects of what he does but here's the problem. So you look at all these things sociologists have to find it I'll read you some of the the key indicators of a cult okay so you (…) I'm gonna describe every organization to you (implied, via the dinition of a cult)

Charlie seems to imply that didn't feel comfortable doing a video on Charles Manson because the overlap with any other group was too strong in his opinion.

What he's then trying to do is to relativize the definition of a cult so that he can say that it's meaningless and that any organization can be defined a cult (on another episode, he says cults are similar to American next top model with Tyra Banks).
He's got a point, actually, especially with religion and the army.
Yet, i**t's not the same thing at all**. This is deceiving relativism. **Deceiving relativism is based on the false assumption that anything which can be placed on the same scale is the same**.

There is a huge difference between doing something at a moderate level, and doing something at an extreme level.
As Layne Norton says whenever he corrects nutrition quacks: the poison is in the dosage.
So albeit every organization persuades and "mind controls" and may turn exploitative, we use the word "cult" for *extreme* controlling behavior and for more extreme exploitation of the individuals/
And that is a BIG difference.

The fact that each one of them can be exploitative doesn't make it equal because the *intensity* is different.
Exploiting someone out of the pocket change that they willingly offer in the church is very different than robbing someone of their whole life saving -or leading them to commit suicide as it's happened for some cults-.

1.5.2. Naive Relativism on Civilizations: Romans Are The Same As Barbarians

Later in that same podcast Charlie says that barbarians are no different than Romans, and barbarian is "everyone that's not Roman".

The difference here is that barbarians don't develop civilization-defining institutions, technologies, and methodologies such as writing, schools, and science, Or, if they did, they developed them at far lower levels.
There's also a very practical difference: when civilizations such as the Roman Empire invade a neighboring region, it's still an invasion, but the annexed region can often be better off under the Romans. If barbarians invade, they're very rarely better off.

This is how smart people talk stupid sometimes: they take something that makes sense *in moderation* and they take it to an extreme.

1.5.3. Naive Relativism on Predatory Practices: Landmark Forum

Charlie shares a great story about his experience in, if I remember correctly, the Landmark Forum.

If it wasn't Landmark, it was something similar anyway.

The process Charlie describe was appalling to me.
The “gurus” had everyone stand, then close their eyes and chant something, and say that they “commit to self-development” and to joining the next upsell seminar (paid, of course).
Charlie also recalled that almost as soon as they started, the moderators reneged on one of the core initial agreements.

That reeks of cult to me.
But Ben said “no knock on them”.
And Charlie had no strong opinion and no strong words against that behavior, saying that he was grateful for what he learned and could still recommend the business for what he had learned there.
To me, that’s nonsense.
Deceptive methods are what deceptive, crappy people use within crappy and deceptive organizations.
People also learn everything that’s not expressly said from the supposed teachers and their character, and you can’t recommend people who are that shady.

2. Misguided Rebuttal of Science

It feels to me like Charlie and Ben sometimes devalue or under-value science and its contributions.

For example, while defending Charisma University from those who ask about “how science-backed it is”, Ben says:

> **Ben**: people say “do you have any studies to back that up”. Well, what I have is my experience, the experience of people I’ve coached, the experience of watching other people. And that seems to me to be far more valuable than if I rely on a study

I partially agree in the sense that personal experience and a skilled guy looking for patterns is better than “a study”.
But I disagree with the frame that seems to be “experience VS science”.

Science, or studies, are a huge opportunity for extra data points.
And, in some cases, it can open the floodgates of data points in ways that your personal experience can’t match.

You can’t for example have a lot of experience in having lifelong intimate relationships because you can have at most one.
But science can analyze 1.000 lifelong partners and tell you what makes them stick together.

And much of your experience is biased no matter how often you achieve something.
Ben has no experience dating as a non-attractive, short, poor guy, or overweight guy, for example.
And if he were to rely on his experience alone, he has no idea what’s it like to date as a non-attractive guy. He also has no idea how challenging, if it’s challenging at all, for a guy who is, say, overweight.
But getting access to a survey might show him that 10% of women say “I don’t care” when it comes to extra kilos, something he’d never know based on his experience.
Or, he may see in a meta-analysis that 99% of women say “absolutely not” to overweight guys, in which case he could amend his course to prioritize nutrition -something he couldn’t know based on his experience alone-.

Ultimately, it’s not a question of “one VS the other” or “one better than the other”, since it also depends a lot on context and on what we’re talking about.
It’s more a question of how to blend them together.

Also see:

- Three pillars of knowledge

https://thepowermoves.com/three-pillars-of-learning
In this other video Charlie, with a holier-than-thou attitude that he unluckily resorts to a bit too often, equates the

citation system to a popularity context:

> **Charlie**: What college teaches us about citations, well I understand the intent but it's deeply unscientific, because the way that everyone I think probably even your thesis advisors read your thesis is that they do not reference every single citation you make and then go to that book and then reference the citations (…) it's an appeal to authority over and over and over.
> (mimicking high-pitched female bragging voice) How do we know that it's true he's got a lot of citations.
> You know what I mean, (mimicking high-pitched female bragging voice) like a lot of people say that i'm right too, it's just a popularity contest masked as as truth

He's got some good points, but it's also a huge strawman.
I've never heard anyone saying that anything was good or true "because it had a lot of citations".

2.2. Misguide Rebuttal of Evolutionary Psychology's Contributions

Unluckily I missed the links on this one.

In any case, at least once and probably more than once Chalie and Ben criticize evolutionary psychology.
In one case, it was because the theories were more like storytelling without data.

But here's the misunderstanding, as Steven Pinker explains, the fact that several pop-psychology authors make up crappy stories and call them "evolutionary psychology" doesn't mean that evolutionary psychology is unfounded. it means that those *authors* are full of crap.

Evolutionary psychology is a fundamental discipline to understand human behavior and, as we shall see, Charlie and Ben largely missed that train (they probably grew up in the blank slate era and never challenged it or questioned it much).

For example, in one instance Charlie and Ben discuss attraction being subjective.
And IT IS subjective (as well as socially and culturally influenced), as we even say here.
But not nearly to the extent they seem to suggest, and there are plenty of traits and behaviors that are attractive across the board.
For example, no woman in no era preferred shorter men to taller men, poorer men to wealthier men, lower status to higher status men, or dumber men to smarter men.
Exceptions always apply, but we're talking about *exceptions*.

> ExceptionAL Dating: How to Succeed Despite Shortcomings

2.3. False Cognitive Fallacies: The Brain Works Better Than You Think

Kahneman's work largely opened the pandora box on cognitive biases.

In short, the "naive cognitive fallacy" looks like this:

Explain why something apparently makes no sense with naive logic, and then explain how IF we could just be more rational we'd be so much smarter and better off.

For example, a *supposedly* human fallacy is that of feeling good or bad depending on the relative level of our achievements and/or lifestyle compared to the people around us.
Ben in this episode says the life of an average person in the West today is better than the life of pharaohs and kings of ancient times. But we don't get to reap the benefits of that improvement because we compare ourselves to other people in the present era.

But the comparative fallacy is a fake fallacy.

It's NOT irrational to feel less than a king if you're middle class or poor because status and the benefit distributions based on status hierarchies ARE comparative -and are comparative *in the present*-.

Now it might be smarter to feel great about whatever we have, and that's true.
But that's not how the brain works, and it's *not* irrational or fallacious.

To be precise, Ben never said it's irrational.
But the implication is that the brain is failing while, in fact, at least in this case as in other "cognitive biases" fallacies, the brain is perfectly attuned to the realities of what provides us survival and reproductive benefits.

3. Blank Slate Approach

The "nature VS nature" is a long-standing, fundamental debate in the social sciences.

And, generally speaking, Ben and Charlie lean heavily into the "nurture" category.

They often talk about "being socialized" or "learning" to like certain things and behave in certain ways.

They're not always extreme, but they're… Quite extreme at times.
Frankly, sometimes I've been surprised how these two smart guys that I respect veered so far deep into the "nurture" camp.

For example, in this episode and talking about the nature of sexual attraction, Charlie says:

> **Charlie**: we have been taught to primarily want through the eyes of others because we have not been trained not to know how to fantasize and want on our own

What?

It's true that attraction has a strong social component -and especially so in women-.
But one, there are REASONS why -again, evolution is far from perfect, but less stupid than you'd think-.
Second, we haven't exactly been taught that. For reasons that are a bit too long to explain here, it makes perfect sense for an individual to like and want what others want.

3.2. Disney Taught Us Monogamy? Not Really

In another episode that I forgot to save, Charlie talks about the "ideal of monogamy" in the west.

And, if I recall correctly -IF- he ascribes Western monogamy, the concept of love, and his own ideal of romance to Disney movies.
Not true.
Falling in love is a chemical reaction that has little to do with Disney movies, and people tend to stick together in any culture -including remote and isolated tribes-.

And please note, this is NOT a defense of monogamy, love, or anything, it's simply to say that it's not Disney that invented and implanted into people's brains the ideals of "sticking together" and "faithfulness".

3.3. Breakup Pain "Learned Response"? Nope

Example:

Ben mentions that breakups can take a heavy toll on people, and Charlie says:

> **Charlie**: we talked about it before I think it's primarily hard because of the cultural narrative that we place on relationships which is essentially that you're complete now you've found your other half you know I mean

> you're gonna be together forever and we're gonna sing

Talking about how he consciously resists that cultural narrative, he says:

> **Charlie**: and when I often catch myself expecting beyond that I try to go hold on this is a fantasy concocted by Disney movies and Ed Sheeran and and Bruno Mars and it is going to destroy you if you buy into it

It's an interesting point of view, and it may be partially true, in some ways, and culture probably does have an impact.
Yet, to talk about emotional attachment as if it were a cultural phenomenon, even if only primarily a cultural phenomenon, is misguided.
Emotional attachment is an inborn drive, it's cross-cultural, and even men and women who haven't seen Disney movies have it.

4. Misses Second Order Consequences

The guys do a great job at challenging many beliefs.

Yet, they do hold several beliefs, acritically, that seem to make sense on paper, but that do show some cracks when you examine them closer.

For example:

4.2. Drug Decriminalization: Are You Sure It'd Be Better?

In this episode Ben and Charlie seem to agree that legalizing drugs is a better approach.

Since they don't mention the type of drug, it seems they hold that view generally, and independently of the type of drug.

This is a common thesis quite popular in the liberal and left-leaning camps.

The assumptions are that:

1. Legalizing drugs will disempower the cartels and decrease violence
2. People will not consume more drugs
    1. We remove the "cool factor" of drug consumption which may lead to a decrease in consumption

Albeit I do agree, even *strongly* agree that decriminalizing is best, the truth is that I don't really know if things would generally be better.
And the reason why I don't know is that we never tested it out.
So neither do they know for sure, unless some countries first try to legalize ALL drugs, and compare the effects.

For example, making drugs easier and legal to access may tempt more socially restricted and reputation-aware folks who avoid drugs out of shame or out of "fear of being caught".
Until we test a system with legalized drug consumption, including stronger ones, we can't know for sure.

4.3. Higher Tax Don't Stifle Productivity?

This is another popular argument among liberal-leaning folks.

In this episode, Ben says that he's not convinced that higher tax rates stifle productivity and entrepreneurship.

So far, OK.

Then he says that guys like Bezos and Musk aren't going to stop working because of a higher tax rate. The reason,

says Ben, is that it's because they're driven by "something else".
Partially true.
And Charlie that "they'll move somewhere and continue working" -already the argument is fallacious then: a government that raises taxes would push the entrepreneurs away, and higher taxes *do* stifle productivity then-.

Ben adds that if the tax rate goes up by 5% he won't work 5% less.
Maybe true.
But now he moved the goal posts and it's a very different proposition: he's arguing about a *perfectly linear effect*, not on whether there is an effect or not.
Of course there is no perfectly clear effect, but that doesn't mean there is no effect whatsoever.

The other issue with taking extremes such as Bezos and Musk is that many folks *do* work hard to gain early retirements, or because they're driven by more selfish motives of amassing resources and power. And those will, likely, end up working less when you make it more difficult for them to enjoy the fruits of their hard work.

4.4. Stock Market Always Go Up?

Charlie says that the common advice on investing in the stock market is misguided (a proposition that is not very thought through in itself), and Ben replies:

> **Ben**: I actually think you're totally fine if you work a 50k your job and you've been putting your money away into into a mix of cash a bond ETF and a S&P 500 and you're like oh no my savings are down tremendously right now (…) it's fine it'll bounce back in the next six years

This is trend extrapolation.
Ben is most likely right, but it's far from a given.
It should be obvious why it's a fallacy, so we won't even get there, but I like to quote Nassim Taleb on this:

> I'm sure that Carthage and Jerico had their own no less eloquent pundits saying "our enemies have to destroy us many times but we always came back more resilient than before"
>
> *Nasim Taleb, The Black Swan*

4.5. There's Only Upsides to Letting Businesses Fail (Free Market Fallacy)?

Talking about allowing businesses to go bankrupt VS propping them up with government loans:

> **Ben**: people think that if an airline company went bankrupt we wouldn't be able to fly (…) but if an airline company goes bankrupt they don't just get all their planes into a hangar and then throw TNT at them to create an explosion. They sell them for as much as they can get so all the flights would still be the same if we did have a government that said "hey just you guys know no bailouts are ever coming your way"

In brief, Ben says that if an airline goes bust, then a new airline will take its place, at no cost. And probably it'll be more efficient, and everyone's better off.

Albeit I agree with the principle, it's not true that there are no costs associated with bankruptcies.
Just to name a few:

- **Time wasted on sales/purchases**: weeks at least, and those planes won't be flying during that time providing no value and while leaving some of those who'd like to fly without a flight
- **Time and money wasted on contract re-negotiation**: time lost to re-negotiate contracts from the bankrupt entity, to the new one. That's weeks without a salary for the workers

And the small things add up as well:

- Airplanes to repaint
- Former miles and bonuses erased

There are even social and emotional costs for some people:

- **Social capital loss with team shakeups** (low chances of the same people working in the exact same time, so you lose some social capital that has to be rebuilt)
- **Brand value loss** (I remember many Berliners disappointed when Air Berlin went bust)

Plus, in extreme cases as in during financial meltdowns, letting companies go bust accelerates the meltdown.
Many economists today recognize that letting Lehman Brothers fail was the biggest mistake in the whole 2008 financial crisis.

This is not to say that the costs of bankruptcies are always and necessarily high.
And even less to say that they are too high to let companies fail. Indeed, Ben is right. Most of the time it's probably far better to let the company fail.
The small short-term costs will probably be made up over time.
But it's not true that there are no costs and no downsides with bankruptcies: there are plenty of costs.

5. Sometimes Disempowering

Let me preface this by saying that the "disempowering messages or moments" are extremely few.

Still, since we care about general empowerment here, we want to address this:

> **Charlie**: the difference between me and Lebron James is roughly the same as Lisa Leslie to Lebron James, right (…) I was born with a deficiency of testosterone that preclude me from ever competing against Lebron James

This is an argument Charlie repeats often when he tries to justify his approval of trans-athletes competing against biologically born females -something I and most other viewers disagree with, but let's skip that now-.
However, without a good preamble, that can come across as a very disempowering mindset.

It might seem like it's stating facts, but it's stating facts that are heavily skewed against him to make him look as bad as possible.

Charlie might have less testosterone than Lebron, I don't know that, but let's imagine it's true.
Does that mean he can't compete?
Well, he's still definitely shorter and probably less athletically predisposed *at playing basketball*.
But who says that basketball is the main yardstick for competition? Because the two may compete, say, at launching a business on social skills -and Charlie's likely kicks Lebron's ass there-.

Even if we narrow the competition to "physical competition", I see no reason why Charlie couldn't go head-to-heard on some other sports.
Had he picked, say, rope climbing, it's now Charlie's thinner frame that might give him a huge, inborn leg-up.
Or, if we also want to consider "racial background" in what gives people an advantage or disadvantage, had he picked cycling, he might have also prevailed -especially if uphill cycling, where lighter cyclists often have an advantage over larger ones-.

One could take Pantani and say “he can’t compete against Lebron”. Or take Lebron and say “he can’t compete against Pantani”. When you put it that way it’s obvious why it’s silly: it’s just two different sports. It’s the same for most anything else in life: you only need to change the sport/environment to get very different results.
Even if we talk in terms of “life utility”, if society were to collapse, being fast on a bike would be a lot more helpful than shooting hoops in a basket.
And if that collapse goes on for longer, being fast on a horse may become more important -something where Charlie could outdo most basketball players-.

Golden Nuggets

OK, that’s a lot of “criticism” :).

Now let’s review some golden nuggets besides the initial high-level ones we mentioned in the beginning:

The “What’s The Future Slavery” question

The guys are pescatarians because they say modern animal farming is brutal and unethical.

They say it’s the equivalent of slavery: today most people take it for granted that slavery is unethical and odious. But back in the days, it was normal.
Similarly, in the future, people will take it for granted that current animal farming and slaughterhouses are brutal and odious, but this concept hasn’t yet reached the masses.

If I recall correctly, Charlie reached that conclusion by asking himself exactly that:

What’s the present equivalent of slavery?

I found that question truly deep and challenging -in a good way-.

Healthy personal growth does not pursue the same ever-growing goal, but evolves either laterally, or by changing goals

Ben makes the point here that if you keep chasing growth in the same field, then you’re not after growth, but trying to fill a void.

They were talking about YouTubers chasing views and subscribers and never switching to another type of growth, like more free time, or personal enlightenment.

Albeit he doesn't expressly say it, I think Ben is especially referring to vanity metrics or to typical markers of "success" like money, turnover, company size, attractive partner, or the number of partners.

I had never thought about it, and it was eye-opening.

Empathy is necessary to become an eagle and end social climbing

Ben touches on a very important aspect at the intersection between power dynamics and personal self-development.

He says of a member of the "Young Turks", a group of left-wing folks who go very heavy on attacking others, especially those with different political orientations:

> **Ben**: Well i've experienced this. It's fun to be judgmental (…) and feel superior to people and you lose all of that with empathy.
> If you have empathy you won't shit-talk anybody (…), so you get none of those temporarily great feelings (…)
> She feels awesome shit-talking on those people and doesn't want to give that up in exchange for understanding them better. That's a very unappealing short-term trade and in the long run (it would be) much better for her

This is a genius insight.

While I had previously only analyzed these dynamics from a power point of view, I had under-estimated the personal development point of view, and completely missed the role that empathy might also play.

Pushing others down and social climbing feels good in the short run and may give the social climber some short-term power boost.
However, it's a "glass ceiling behavior" in the sense that it puts a glass ceiling on you, preventing you from flying higher and from achieving a higher level of success and self-fulfillment.

Ben here says that developing empathy and understanding for others can help solidify a more eagle-like personality, which indeed makes sense.

The "Informed Citizen" Lie (Enlightened Individualism)

When it comes to news -or avoiding the news- Charlie said it best:

> There is a myth of the informed citizen, which tells you that you have to react or overreact and discuss all the things you see in the news because it's screamed at you and you're told that's important (…)
> If you can't influence it, make it better, leave it alone (…)
> Instead, go help an old woman cross the street or go to a food bank, or donate, or give a hug, or call your loved ones. Do some good.

Yep.
I actually wished he'd repeat that more often.
People see what you do, more than hear what you say. So when they see them commenting the news, they may fall for that myth.
Instead, I'd recommend you take the method to analyze the news, more than discussing the news itself.

Also read:

- **Enlightened individualism**

> Winner's Mindsets: 10 Commandments of Enlightened "Me First"

Favorite Quotes

Referring again to slavery and the (positive) evolution of people's ethics:

> **Ben**: It's easy not to own slaves when you have apps that do everything and if you own slaves you go to jail. It's the easiest time ever not to own a slave.

On citations as a power move:

> **Charlie**: But we have this "belief in the science mentality", on every side they'll reference studies they don't understand

On "God" power moves:

> **Ben**: She said, "If God wanted us to cover our mouths and noses, he would have made us that way. She was wearing glasses at the time". She was wearing glasses at the time because God didn't giver her 20/20 vision.

Ben on news that he found "good" and worth commenting on:

> **Ben**: I got one more thing, it's interesting, mostly because it just confirms something i already believed, which is everyone's favorite news

That was a great one, and a good way to end this long review :).

REVIEW

I really like the Charlie & Ben Podcast.

It's also the first podcast we review here after countless books and courses.

At the time of this writing, I've seen all available episodes.
I enjoy them whenever I'm eating on my own. Rather than just sitting there with the food, I use that time for YouTube or audiobooks.

For me, it's both a pleasure to hear two smart and partially like-minded guys discuss the current events that I largely ignore, and also a source of business intel since we are both in the same space -I learned a lot from whenever they shared the behind-the-scenes of Charisma on Command-.

But the main reason why we decided to review it is that:

1. **Learn critical thinking skills**, via their analyses, probing questions, and steel-manning opposing arguments
2. **Charlie and Ben are good role models of standup folks**. Ben particularly seems to be a good eagle-type of guy to emulate (Charlie may join the club as soon as he loses the Smart Alec and covert social climbing approach, including when he points at an argument's fallacy and then laughs)

Our main disagreement is that, sometimes, they go so far in their effort of trying to be open-minded and not rushing to conclusions that they end up sounding surprisingly naive for the two smart guys they are.

But, Overall, thumbs up for the Charlie & Ben podcast, and they get the TPM stamp of approval :).

Radical Acceptance: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Radical Acceptance (2004) teaches readers how to use the two wings of mindfulness plus compassion to become more enlightened and improve our experience, life, and relationships.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Swap Feelings of Insufficiency With Self-Acceptance
  - Radical Acceptance = Mindfulness + Compassion
  - The Two Wings of Radical Acceptance
  - Healthy Striving to Improvement Must Be Grounded Into Self-Acceptance
  - Misconceptions Around Radical Acceptance
  - Master The "Art of The Pause"
  - Let Go And "Chill" More
  - Work Out of Love, Rather Than Out of Fear
  - Prevent Your Biases From Stopping Empathy & Connection
  - Medications Have Their Place, But Don't Rush to Them
- MORE WISDOM
- REAL-LIFE APPLICATIONS
- QUOTES
- CONS
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Exec Summary

- **Radical acceptance is mindfulness plus compassion:** to see the world and ourselves for what they are, moment by moment (mindfulness) and accept it with compassion
- **Whenever you're overwhelmed, pause**, and meditate
- **Pain is OK**, part of life, and you can also learn to accept it

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Tara Brach is an American author and proponent of Buddhist meditation.
According to Wikipedia, she holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and political science from Clark University and received a doctorate in clinical psychology from the Fielding Graduate University which, frankly, raised some red flags of a diploma mill-type of institution.
Brach is also a meditation teacher and founder of the Insight Meditation Community of Washington, D.C.

Swap Feelings of Insufficiency With Self-Acceptance

> For so many of us, feelings of deficiency are right around the corner. It doesn't take much—just hearing of someone else's accomplishments, being criticized, getting into an argument, making a mistake at work—to

> make us feel that we are not okay.

Some examples of how people fail to accept themselves and feel insufficient:

- Do I accept my body as it is?
- Do I blame myself when I get sick?
- Do I feel I am not attractive enough?
- Am I dissatisfied with how my hair looks?
- Am I embarrassed about how my face and body are aging?
- Do I judge myself for being too heavy? Underweight? Not physically fit?
- Do I accept my mind as it is?
- Do I judge myself for not being intelligent enough? Humorous? Interesting?
- Am I critical of myself for having obsessive thoughts? For having a repetitive, boring mind?
- Am I ashamed of myself for having bad thoughts—mean, judgmental or lusty thoughts?
- Do I consider myself a bad meditator because my mind is so busy?
- Do I accept my emotions and moods as they are?

Radical Acceptance = Mindfulness + Compassion

Radical acceptance is to transcend our emotional wounds, doubts, and feelings of insufficiency:

> Radical Acceptance is the willingness to experience ourselves and our life as it is. A moment of Radical Acceptance is a moment of genuine freedom.

"As it is", crucially, also means without judging ourselves.
So, for more clarity, that "willingness to experience ourselves" also means "willingness to accept ourselves".

Says the author:

> In holding ourselves with compassion, we become free to love this living world. This is the blessing of Radical Acceptance: As we free ourselves from the suffering of "something is wrong with me," we trust and express the fullness of who we are.

For radical acceptance, you want to accept everything that is you:

> The way out of our cage begins with accepting absolutely everything about ourselves and our lives, by embracing with wakefulness and care our moment-to-moment experience.
> By accepting absolutely everything, what I mean is that we are aware of what is happening within our body and mind in any given moment, without trying to control or judge or pull away.

Later in the book, the author includes acceptance of physical pain as well.
Many people turn pain into emotional as well. A backache may turn into how we don't exercise enough, being tired into how we eat too much, etc.

The Two Wings of Radical Acceptance

Radical acceptance has two pillars:

1. **Seeing clearly (mindfulness)**, the quality of awareness that recognizes exactly what is happening in our moment-to-moment experience

2. **Compassion**: our capacity to relate in a tender and sympathetic way to what we perceive

The two are interdependent and need each other.
Together, they free us from the vicious cycle of reactions. As an example, this is what the author says:

> If we are rejected by someone we love, the trance of unworthiness may ensnare us in obsessive thinking, blaming the one who hurt us and at the same time believing that we were jilted because we are defective. We may feel caught in a relentless swing between explosive anger and wrenching grief and shame.

Mindfulness alone would allow us to sit with the pain of our heart, to clearly see the stories we are telling ourselves—that we are a victim, that we will always be alone and without love.
But we might compound our suffering with self-accusations and self-blaming. This is where the wing of compassion joins mindfulness for genuinely healing presence, says the author.
Rather than pushing away, judging our anger, or turning it against others or ourselves, compassion enables us to be softly and kindly present with our open wounds.

If that sounds a bit woo-woo… It is :).

Healthy Striving to Improvement Must Be Grounded Into Self-Acceptance

This is an important concept:

> When we strive to impress or outdo others, we strengthen the underlying belief that we are not good enough as we are. This doesn't mean that we can't compete in a healthy way (…) nut when our efforts are driven by the fear that we are flawed, we deepen the trance of unworthiness.

Same goes for confronting failures.
When we hide failures from ourselves, we often do so based on the fear that we are not enough, and we reinforce that fear and belief.
So any effort of self-development without the foundation of self-acceptance is also ineffective, because we are not free to give it our best shot, accept our mistakes, and learn from them.

Also see:

- How to develop a growth mindset
- The antifragile ego

> The Ultimate Personal Power Tool: The Antifragile Ego

Accept Yourself to Avoid Making Up Enemies (Including Making Yourself An Enemy)

> out of fear, we turn on ourselves and make ourselves the enemy, the source of the problem. We also project these feelings outward and make others the enemy. The greater the fear, the more intense our hostility. (…) Directing anger at an enemy temporarily reduces our feelings of fear and vulnerability.

Misconceptions Around Radical Acceptance

- **It's not resignation**, instead, the curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change
- **Does not mean defining ourselves by our limitations**. While there may be some truth in our assessments of

limitations, Radical Acceptance means we can accept it without giving our fear-based stories the power to shut down our lives. And to also accept the endless creativity and possibility that exist in living. By accepting the truth of change, accepting that we don't know how our life will unfold, we open ourselves to hope so that we can move forward with vitality and will

- **It's not self-indulgence**. It doesn't mean that because you discover and accept a lust or drive, you act on it. If we are addicted to nicotine, for example, Radical Acceptance doesn't mean that each time we feel like having a cigarette, we go ahead and light up
- **Does not make us passive**, instead, by accepting rather than denying or reacting to our suffering, we free ourselves to work without bitterness or self-pity
- **It doesn't mean accepting a "self"**. This is a note for the Buddhist who prefer to see themselves as "part of a whole". So the author says that when we say, "I accept myself as I am," we are not accepting a story about a good or bad self. Rather, we are accepting the immediate mental and sensory experiences we interpret as self.

Master The "Art of The Pause"

Learning to pause is the first step in the practice of Radical Acceptance. A pause is a suspension of activity, a time of temporary disengagement when we are no longer moving toward any goal.

When do you pause?
Any time. Especially any time you feel you're too stressed, reactive, angry, or at the mercy of your (negative) emotions:

> The pause can occur in the midst of almost any activity and can last for an instant, for hours or for seasons of our life.
> We may take a pause from our ongoing responsibilities by sitting down to meditate (…) We may pause in a conversation, letting go of what we're about to say, in order to genuinely listen and be with the other person. (…) We may pause when we feel suddenly moved or delighted or saddened, allowing the feelings to play through our heart.

And, as we mentioned, pausing is even better when we're being overwhelmed:

> Often the moment when we most need to pause is exactly when it feels most intolerable to do so. Pausing in a fit of anger, or when overwhelmed by sorrow or filled with desire, may be the last thing we want to do.

Let Go And "Chill" More

> It is easy to feel that something bad will happen if we don't maintain our habitual vigilance by thinking, judging, planning. Yet this is the very habit that keeps us trapped in resisting life. Only when we realize we can't hold on to anything can we begin to relax our efforts to control our experience.

Work Out of Love, Rather Than Out of Fear

Talking about her own work, and the experience of doing it out of love for the work and for sharing it, VS the "need for approval":

> But sometimes that voice of insecurity and unworthiness arises, and I listen to it. Suddenly writing or preparing a presentation is linked to winning or losing love and respect and my entire experience of working shifts. The wanting self takes over. While I always intend to give a wholehearted effort, now that effort is wrapped in fear.

> I'm anxiously striving to be "good enough" and to reap the rewards. My love for what I do is clouded over when working becomes a strategy to prove my worth.

This is linked to what we call here "judge power dynamics".

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Emotional Control

Prevent Your Biases From Stopping Empathy & Connection

I truly appreciated this passage in which the author frankly talks about her own biases as a more left-learning person.

First, she says that "we all have our own complex and largely unconscious system of classifying others".
For her, it's the rich and "white", and she comes clean on it:

> When I read the newspaper or watch the news, I regularly run into my own anger and dislike toward public figures who are rich, Caucasian, usually male, powerful and conservative. As I hold tightly to my views of right and wrong, I type these senators, corporate executives and editors-in-chief as the "bad guys," as part of the problem. They become characters in an upsetting movie, not living, breathing humans.

Later on, she talks about working with one, and finding him a human being, just like everyone else.

Medications Have Their Place, But Don't Rush to Them

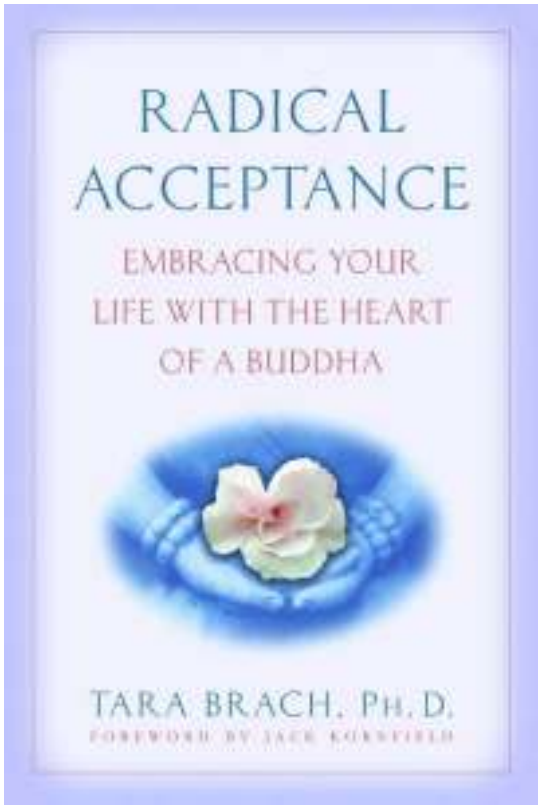
The author is not an extremist against medications.

She says that whenever fear is too overwhelming, or when our physical body can improve via medication, then that may be the most compassionate course of action.
However, you want to avoid the mentality of "needing a drug" every time something aches.
This is something that our Western culture pushes on us, to "need" a medication as a fix for every ache or pain, rather than, maybe, accepting it or going through it:

> Mistrusting our bodies, we try to control them in the same way that we try to manage the natural world. We use painkillers, assuming that whatever removes pain is the right thing to do. This includes all pain—the pains of childbirth and menstruating, the common cold and disease, aging and death. In our society's cultural trance, rather than a natural phenomenon, pain is regarded as the enemy. Pain is the messenger we try to kill, not something we allow and embrace.

Says the author about her experience of accepting the pain of childbirth (the midwife speaks first):

> "Nothing's wrong, honey . . . it's all completely natural, it's just painful."
> She had to say this several times before I could let it begin to sink in and, in the midst of the burning pain, the explosive pressure, the tearing and exhaustion, remember again to breathe deeply and relax. It was just pain, not wrong, and I could open up and accept it.



MORE WISDOM

We forgive also for ourselves

> We maintain the intention to forgive because we understand that not forgiving hardens and imprisons our heart. If we feel hatred toward anyone, we remain chained to the sufferings of the past and cannot find genuine peace. We forgive for the freedom of our own heart.

REAL-LIFE APPLICATIONS

When you hurt someone, listen and apologize sincerely

> The key elements are: taking responsibility for causing pain to another, listening deeply to understand the person's suffering, sincerely apologizing and renewing our resolve to act with compassion toward this person and all beings.

We agree.
Whenever I see some person avoiding apologies at all costs, I get an important red flag of someone who's too hang up on power, dominance, and fragile ego defensiveness to truly connect with others.

Give the critic a chance: sometimes, he's hurting

In one of her sessions, a guy called Tom was imposing on others and creating resentment in both the group, and the author.

Tom was more the guy who goes for solutions like TPM, telling men to be more confident if they wanted more respect from their wives.

That annoyed the author to no end.

But when Tom stayed longer to talk to her, she paused, and relating kindly to her own anger enabled her to open and pay attention to what Tom was feeling, and she asked herself "what do you (Tom) really need"?
She stopped seeing him as a nuisance, and even stopped seeing him as a "client", since she had used the "therapist/client" roles to distance herself from him.
She now instead saw two people sitting together, both vulnerable and suffering human beings.

She listened attentively, and also gave him feedback about his role in the group.

Long story short, she felt better about Tom, their relationships, and herself.
And Tom improved, and his behavior in the group also U-turned.
He opened up in the group, saying that he wanted to help but had failed at it just like he had failed with his son.
And, the author says, it turned out that the person she tagged as "most unwanted other" ended up playing a key role in opening up everyone in the group.

Note: Higher power beavior + radical acceptance
Please notice that this is not to say that his initial suggestion of "being more confident" was wrong. It was, indeed, correct.
But both approaches of self-awareness, vulnerable acceptance, AND higher power behavior are valid.

QUOTES

On the tragic ignorance of "Us-Them" parochialism (really touching):

> In the summer of 1991, I was flying across the country, talking with the woman sitting next to me.
> She told me her son was in the air force and had safely returned from Desert Storm, the war with Iraq.
> Then she leaned toward me with a smile and spoke softly: "You know, it went really well. Only a few of our boys died."
> My heart sank. Only a few of our boys.
> What about all the Iraqi boys and women and children? What about the millions who were yet to die from radioactive contaminants, or from starvation and disease during the economic embargo that followed the war?
> Our boys.

CONS

Naive & potentially dangerous self-help: watch out for the mistaken view of "no bad people exist"

Says the author:

> in sharp contrast to our cultural conditioning as heirs of Adam and Eve, the Buddhist perspective holds that there is no such thing as a sinful or evil person. When we harm ourselves or others, it is not because we are bad but because we are ignorant.

This is just wrong, unluckily.
People may not be evil, but many people can ACT evil, and that's pretty much the same to you.
Plus, it is pretty much a fact that some people are more likely to harm others.

And she goes on to say:

> To recognize this basic goodness in everyone takes courage. Trungpa calls this the task of the spiritual warrior, and says that the essence of human bravery is "refusing to give up on anyone or anything."

Yeah, that may be true in a way.
But it's also freaking stupid and potentially harmful in another.
It can take a lot of stupidity to trust someone who gives off red flags left and right because you're putting yourself -and possibly others- in the path of harm.

Please go through this article on naive self-help, especially the section on "seeing the goodness in people":

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Naive self-help: sometimes simplistic, confuses self-doubt with legitimate innate drives to "appear better"

Sometimes self-help books like Radical Acceptance have an underlying assumption that "the way most people are is sub-optimal" or "wrong".
They may never say so, but that's the assumption.

However, that assumption is not correct.
It's simply that our brain isn't built to maximize good feelings, but to attain certain goals and benefits in life.

For example:

> The belief that we are deficient and unworthy makes it difficult to trust that we are truly loved (…) We fear that if they realize we are boring or stupid, selfish or insecure, they'll reject us. If we're not attractive enough, we may never be loved in an intimate, romantic way.

Yes, she's right, in part, and accepting her point of view can be helpful for some, in some circumstances.
But it's also wrong. If people think you're boring or stupid or selfish or insecure, they may reject you. And they may have a good reason to.
And it's also more likely to be loved if you can make yourself into a more attractive person.

This same there is spread across the book: the author never acknowledges that many of the drives and wants she's rejecting are ingrained into humans, and are as natural to being human as what she calls radical acceptance.
Actually, those drives, needs and wants are far more natural than radical acceptance.

Read more on naive self-help literature:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Not Very "Radically Accepting" The Human Nature She Dislikes (Ie.: His Son Played "Violent Videogames")

While the author exhorts us to radically accept everything, it sometimes feels like the "radical acceptance" is more for what the author likes and endorses.

For example, says the author:

> My aversion to his testosterone-driven attraction to violent video games and movies had created a gulf between us.

I bet she'd have radically accepted his behavior, her feelings about him, and their relationship if he was instead playing guitar and writing songs about world peace and love :).
Instead, she wanted to change him, and changing someone is all about influence and power.

Tara Brach: How About Radically Accepting Our Will to Power?

Tara Brach wanted to influence his son's behavior.

Totally normal.

Yet, she glosses over that only to focus on the part where she tries to accept, rather than change.
But I bet that she if had found an easy way to make her son's behavior more to her liking, she'd have done it, and been far happier and fare more "accepting" of that new behavior.

It feels to me pretentious to pretend not to be interested in influence and power and talk at length about radical acceptance… While at the same time denying very human drives such as "shaping the world around us as we like", which is about power.

And attention, we're not saying here that radical acceptance is invalid: it is extremely valid. Even for those interested in power.
But BOTH are important, and neither one denies the other.

REVIEW

Radical Acceptance is a really good book on "spiritual growth" and self-acceptance.

Sometimes if you come from a more scientific background and inclination, including "acceptance of human nature" from a more scientifically informed point of view, you may see the author as more of a left-leaning, peace-and-love, hippy type of person.
But that is our own bias. And, as the author herself did and described in this same book, it's up to use to see beyond our own biases and find the human we have in front when in real life, and the wisdom they have when we're learning.

Here, we take a stance that **both approaches of acceptance & vulnerability WITH power intelligence and higher power behavior as interdependent**, not as opposed or as "one better than the other".

So whether you're a more spiritual person, or a more "logical/scientific" one, you can only gain and grow with "Radical Acceptance".

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

Power by Jeffrey Pfeffer: Why Some People Have It, And Others Don't (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In *Power* Jeffrey Pfeffer explains why learning power dynamics is crucial to life success and teaches readers how to acquire power with tips and career strategies on topics such as networking, self-development, reputation management, how to act and speak with power, and coping with opposition and setbacks.

Contents

- Takeaways
- Notes
  - Power Is Healthy, Low-Power Is A Health Hazard (Literally)
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  - Strategically Choose Your Field of Work & Starting Position
  - Focus More On Power, Less On "Being Liked"
  - Learn Networking Skills, Grow & Use Your Network
  - Speak & Act With Power
  - How to Handle Opposition
  - Leaders: Make Your Goals Seem Compelling (& "Good")
  - The Costs of Power
- MORE WISDOM
  - As A Leader / Founder, Keep Politics to A Minimum
- Real-Life Tips
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

Takeaways

- **Power is good for your health** because it prevents anxiety and feelings of helplessness. Conversely, not having power is bad for your health because it creates more anxiety and feelings of helplessness
- **Power is necessary to get things done** even if, and maybe especially if, you want to do something good
- **You can't escape power dynamics** because hierarchies are intrinsic to human nature, and many want to move upward

Notes

About the Author:
Jeffrey Pfeffer is a Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University. According to Wikipedia, he received his BS and MS degrees from Carnegie-Mellon University and his Ph.D. from Stanford University.

Power Is Healthy, Low-Power Is A Health Hazard (Literally)

Why should you want power?

It turns out, power is important also for the "I'm not interested in power" type of folks.
And it's for the same reason why you'd want to eat healthier, rather than unhealthy: **having power is related to living a longer and healthier life**.

A study of 7372 British civil servants showed that the lower the rank or civil service grade, the higher the age-adjusted mortality risk.
Of course other health markers also mattered, but smoking, cholesterol, blood pressure, obesity, and physical activity only accounted for a quarter of the variance.
What did matter, implies the author, was power and status—things that provided people greater control over their work environments.
Pfeffer says that job control and status accounted for more of the variation in mortality from heart disease than physiological factors such as obesity and blood pressure.

Albeit that's quite something if you think about it, the author makes a good point that it shouldn't be surprising, since a lack of control over one's environment produces feelings of helplessness and stress.

Summarizes the author:

> So being in a position with low power and status is indeed hazardous to your health, and conversely, having power and the control that comes with it prolongs life

Seek Power As If Your Life Depends On It

The link between power and health is what motivates the author to end with what's probably the most famous and memorable quote of *Power: Why Some People Have It, and Others Don't*:

> So seek power as if your life depends on it.
> Because it does.

Lucio's note: the original study refers to *status* rather than power
While status and power overlap and I tend to consider Pfeffer's interpretation fair, it's also an important distinction to note. See our main resource on status:

- Why social status matters, also for health (and how to get it)

> Social Status: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Master It

You Can't Escape Power Dynamics: Hierarchies Are Inherent to Human Nature

The author says that there is evidence that it's impossible to create organizations "free of power dynamics".

The reason is biological: power hierarchies are ubiquitous in animal societies, and those animals, humans included,

are hard-wired to want to move up.

Not only hierarchies are ubiquitous to any social animal, but:

1. **People naturally create hierarchies from scratch**: when people expected to interact on a task, particularly when task performance was important, they voluntarily constructed differences in hierarchy (Tiedens, 2007)
2. **People naturally support hierarchies, even at their individual cost**, Jost's research shows that people voluntarily contribute to their own disempowerment to maintain a stable hierarchical social order (Jost, 1994)
3. **Status overlaps across hierarchies**, and the status one achieves in one hierarchy tends to translate and spill over to others (several studies, including Berger, 1998)

Status Generalizes Over Different Environments

In the small pond syndrome, a staple article of this website, we made the case that some people fall prey to unhealthy "status obsession" within social circles.

The syndrome means that status and social circles become all-consuming for these people, and that leaves them like fishes out of the water when, eventually, the social circle dissolves or when they're forced to exit it.

Pfeffer later in the book confirms that's indeed the case for many but, it turns out, there is a silver lining.
The silver lining is that, says the author, status in one specific social circle often carries over to new ones.

Says the author:

> Status, however derived, tends to generalize across the environments in which we interact.
> One implication of this phenomenon for you is that the specific organization or domain in which you rise to power may matter less than the fact that you manage to achieve high-level status someplace.

The author mostly refers to workplaces though, and the examples are of very high level positions where your previous history is known far beyond your specific organization.
So, for example, if you were an exec at a major corporation, you will be an exec even at a new corporation and, often, even if you move to a different industry.

I still believe part of the concept applies outside of work, but mostly because of the confidence and the power skills that you acquire in climbing any hierarchy.
Since those skills are pretty much similar in any other hierarchy, once you have the skills, you can quickly enter and skyrocket upwards in any new group -especially newly forming ones-.

Rule of Power #1: Play, Or Lose By Default

I loved this story.

It's a real-life cautionary tale of how naive people eventually meet their downfall when they ignore power dynamics and personality's red flags:

> Not long after I joined the board, in the midst of an upgrading in management talent, the CEO hired a new chief financial officer, Chris.
> Chris was an ambitious, hardworking, articulate individual who had big plans for the company—and himself.
> Chris asked Bob to make him chief operating officer. Bob agreed. Chris asked to join the board of directors.
> Bob agreed. I could see what was coming next, so I cal ed Bob and said, "Chris is after your job."
> Bob's reply was that he was only interested in what was best for the company, would not stoop to playing politics, and thought that the board had seen his level of competence and integrity and would do the right thing.
> You can guess how this story ended—Bob's gone, Chris is the CEO.

Chris behaved like a driven asshole. There are many like him near the top.
But the guy who was on top, Bob, was too naive to stand up to him.
And what's even more telling is how people reacted:

> What was interesting was the conference call in which the board discussed the moves.
> Although there was much agreement that Chris's behavior had been inappropriate and harmful to the company, there was little support for Bob.
> If he was not going to put up a fight, no one was going to pick up the cudgel on his behalf.

It's Your *Responsibility* to Learn Power Dynamics

If you remain naive to power dynamics, you often lose out.
and you don't just lose out to any random folk, you often lose out to the dark triad folks who are far worse than you at your job -and far worse for everyone else-.

Says the author on the responsibility of learning power dynamics:

> Stop waiting for things to get better or for other people to acquire power and use it in a benevolent fashion to improve the situation. It's up to you to find—or create—a better place for yourself. And it's up to you to build your own path to power.

Also read:

- **Why to be good, you need to be bad**

> To Be Good, You First Need to Be Bad: Here's Why

The Leadership Literature Is Misleading: Avoid It

The moment I reached this paragraph, I knew the book was going to be great.

Says the author:

> Most books by well-known executives and most lectures and courses about leadership should be stamped CAUTION: THIS MATERIAL CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SURVIVAL. That's because leaders touting their own careers as models to be emulated frequently gloss over the power plays they actually used to get to the top.

And on naive self-help, he adds:

> the teaching on leadership is filled with prescriptions about following an inner compass, being truthful, letting inner feelings show, being modest and self-effacing, not behaving in a bullying or abusive way—in short, prescriptions about how people wish the world and the powerful behaved.
> (…)
> Most CEOs are not the level 5 leaders described by Jim Col ins in Good to Great as helping to take companies up the performance curve—individuals who are "self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy," who get the best out of employees by not soaking up al the limelight and making al the decisions.

You should be particularly cautious of CEOs and leaders writing their own books because:

1. **Leaders may believe their own lies**: leaders such as former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani or former General

Electric CEO Jack Welch, writing books and articles about themselves, may believe they are being inspirational and even truthful

2. **You only hear half the story**, told by those in power, those who won. You don't get to hear much from those they beat to get there -and *how* they did it-
3. **The "winner bias"**, with many associating success to "goodness" and choosing to see and remember the most positive stories and traits

And, we add:

- **Outright lies to come across as "good"**

The author glosses over though the most obvious reason why those leadership books may be misleading: that the people writing them may simply be lying.
Or using them as self-promotion material
Says the author himself:

> But leaders are great at self-presentation, at telling people what they think others want to hear, and in coming across as noble and good.

We can't agree more.
Also see our list of the best leadership resources:

- **Best leadership books**

> Best Leadership Books

Political Savvy & Will to Power Advance Careers

Politically savvy and seeking power matter when it comes to career success.

Surprisingly though, it also matters when it comes to performance.

One study by the Harvard Business Review divided 50 managers based on their need for affiliation, achievement, and power. It was the managers primarily interested in power who most effective in achieving positions of influence inside companies, as well as in accomplishing their jobs.
My Note:
50 managers is a very small number to draw any strong conclusion.

Another study with 509 participants showed that managers who scored higher in political skills received higher performance evaluations and were rated as more effective leaders.

Also see:

- **How to develop political skills**

> 7 Steps to Master Office Politics: A Field Guide

Performance Matters Less Than You Think

Performance *coupled with political skills* that gets you up the ranks.

Performance as in "delivering" and "adding value" matters of course.

But, **by itself performance is not enough**. It's "seldom sufficient", says the author and, in some cases, may also not be necessary.
Jeffrey Pfeffer indeed aptly titles the first chapter of *Power* "It Takes More Than Performance".

The author provides examples of performance being "awarded" with a pink slip, and poor performance not getting any negative consequences -or, sometimes, even big bonuses-.
If you're not yet at the top, your relationship with your boss matters more than your performance:

> The lesson from cases of people both keeping and losing their jobs is that **as long as you keep your boss or bosses happy, performance really does not matter that much** and, by contrast, if you upset them, performance won't save you.

In my job experience in large companies, that's largely true.
In smaller companies and startups, your output matters relatively more though, especially if you're in sales or revenue-generating roles.

Pfeffer summarizes his stance saying:

> Not only doesn't good performance guarantee you wil maintain a position of power, poor performance doesn't mean you wil necessarily lose your job.

And he then provides some data:

- **Your manager's decision in your hiring significantly impacts your performance appraisals** on a study analyzing the performance appraisal ratings of 354 clerical employees working in the public sector (Schoorman, 1988)
  My Note: this particularly study offers no evidence of personal choice being superior to job performance
  Albeit the author says that the manager's preferences in your hiring mattered more than performance, we cannot safely jump to that conclusion from this study -also see the "criticism" section-.
- **Age and organizational tenure mattered more than job performance** when it comes to salaries (Medoff, 1980)
- **Performance ratings of "very good" were only 12 percent more likely to be promoted than colleagues rated "good"** in a white-collar workers analysis (Dohmen's, 2004)
- **Managers looked at job tenure, educational credentials, and overtime work, not just performance, when it comes to deciding internal mobility**, a study of more than 200 employees from a variety of companies showed (Carmeli, 2007)
- **Productivity was weakly tied to performance ratings, and educational credentials mattered more for promotions**, even if they weren't the best employees as data analysis from the Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Data Files showed (Spyropoulos' master thesis, 2005)

Summarizing the research literature, Pfeffer concludes:

> Extensive research on promotions in organizations, with advancement measured either by changes in position, increases in salary, or both, also reveals the **modest contribution of job performance in accounting for the variation in what happens to people**.

Or, to put it more simply: "the data shows that performance doesn't matter that much".

The same is true for CEOs:

- **CEOs who presided over three straight years of poor performance and led their firms into bankruptcy only faced a 50 percent chance of losing their jobs, and power mattered more** than their performance on

whether they kept their job (Gilson, 1989)

Concludes the author on the “performance VS politics” question:

> Performance does affect job tenure and its obverse, getting fired, but again the effects are smal

Politics may matter even more for executives:

- **Executives turnover was more affected by CEO changes than by performance**, shows a study of the top five executive positions in almost 450 companies (Fee, 2004)

Executives change the most during CEO changes, probably because the new CEOs appoint loyalists as executives.

To Advance, Get Noticed

Most leaders in your company don’t have complete visibility and knowledge about everyone in the organization.

So even if you do great work, they may never know about it.

So it’s important that you promote your contribution, promote yourself, and become known.

Also see:

- **How to self-promote at work**

> The Art of Self-Promotion: 9 Effective Techniques

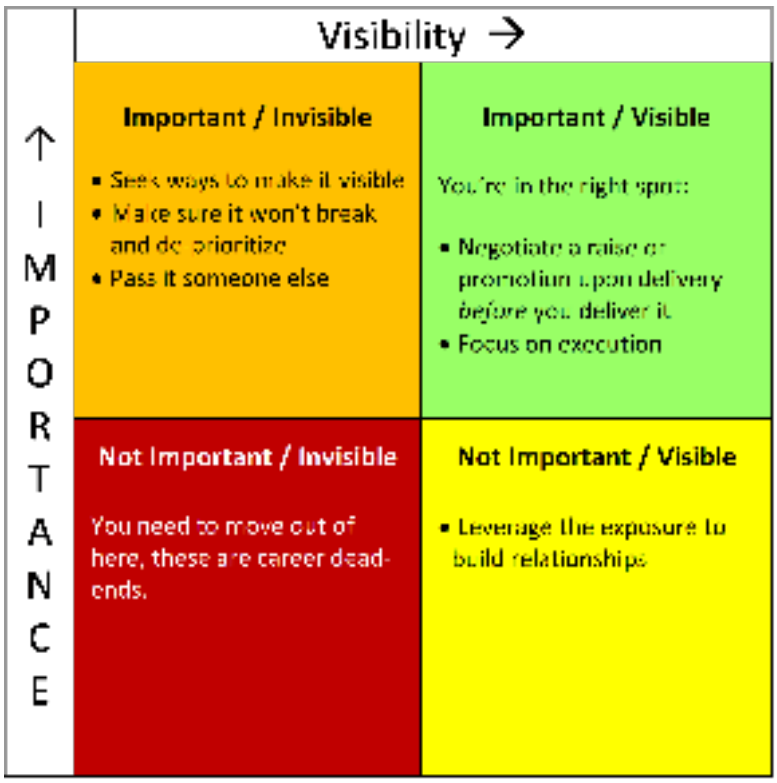
Avoid becoming the “foundation guy” (focus on “recall” instead)

The foundation guy is:

The guy who does the foundational work, but who, just like a building’s foundations, is completely out of sight.

People only realize how important he is when he leaves, but by then it’s too late to reap any benefits for your work -and for your leverage-.

in our “visibility matrix” the “foundation guy” does important, but invisible work:



Some people also become the foundational guy with the “heads down work approach”, or by focusing on their work only, without every getting any attention.
That’s a major political mistake, say the author.
Pfeffer exhorts readers to focus on getting attention instead, because good work isn’t enough. Just like in advertising the main performance indicator is “ad recall”, so you should focus on being known and remembered.

The 3 Obstacles On Your Path to Power

1. **Thinking the world is a just place** (belief): and that “people get what they deserve”, either in positive, or negative. But the “just world hypothesis” is wrong: the world is not a just place. You must be proactive in building your power base
    1. Contribution is always rewarded: the mistaken belief that good people and/or good work will be rewarded, and that if you take care of delivering value, then you’ll *automatically* reap the rewards. Delivering value is crucial to advance in life but, per se, may not be enough. Political skills and power awareness are equally important
    2. Bad behavior eventually catches up (karma): not necessarily. Sometimes bad people win. And sometimes people who added little or no value, or even who took value, may advance -and overtake you-
2. **Naive leadership literature** (misguided available resources): the leadership literature is naive self-help, based on the false assumption that the world is a just place, and ignoring the real-world power dynamics we learn here
3. **Yourself & your psychological defenses** (fragile ego): many people don’t even try, or give up way too soon. That’s often because they want to avoid the emotional pain of a loss

We fully agree and highly recommend this article on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

The 7 Personal Qualities That Bring Influence

1. Will
    1. Ambition
    2. Energy
    3. Focus, including an ability to prioritize and assign more focus and energy on the most critical activities
2. Skills
    1. Self-knowledge & reflective mindset, to understand where you need to work on and how to adjust
    2. Confidence, and the ability to project self-assurance
    3. Empathy, as in the ability to read others and empathize with their point of view
    4. Conflict tolerance, or you fail to be assertive and too easily fall for the aggressive power moves that put conflict-avoidant and more submissive folks on the retreat

Intelligence, says the author, is instead often overrated.
The failure of intelligence to explain much variance in "who gets ahead" lead to the idea of multiple types of intelligence. That's a rather controversial claim though, and the author mentions emotional intelligence, which also doesn't seem to be a great predictor of work success.

My Note: emotional intelligence only serves you if coupled with power awareness, drive, and Machiavellianism
At TPM, we analyzed that same issue and up with our own construct of the type of intelligence that matters most. And that's *power* intelligence, the type of intelligence that allows you to understand the power dynamics, the political landscape, your leverage, and to come up with the most appropriate Machiavellian strategies.

Read more on power intelligence:

- **How to grow power intelligence**

> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

Confidence and self-assurance

Says the author:

> In making decisions about how much power and deference to accord others, people are natural y going to look to the other's behavior for cues. Because power is likely to cause people to behave in a more confident fashion, observers wil associate confident behavior with actual y having power. Coming across as confident and knowledgeable helps you build influence.

The author says you can learn it, something we agree wholeheartedly with (and it's also a good part of what we teach here at TPM).
Also see:

- **How to be confident at work**, what we also call "exec demeanor"

> 17 Tips to Exude Exec-Level Confidence at Work

Confidence For Women

> Showing confidence seems often to be a particular issue for women, who are socialized to be deferential and less assertive. But that behavior causes problems.

Read more here:

- **How women can succeed at work**

> The Businesswoman Guide to Win in Male Organizations

Strategically Choose Your Field of Work & Starting Position

The author shows that there are trends in the background of those who reach the top.

And the general rule is that the higher position more frequently goes to those who rose through the ranks of the higher power departments.

However, those "in-vogue" departments may be higher competition, and since there are trends in which departments and functions are higher power, the smartest strategic choice is to look at what may be trending in the future, and then find a niche there with less competition.

He says:

> if you want to move up quickly, go to underexploited niches where you can develop leverage with less resistance and build a power base in activities that are going to be more important in the near future than they are today.

That's easier said than done, of course.
So here are some tips on how to spot the higher power departments:

What Confers Department Power

- **Unit cohesion**: speaking with one voice, being able to act together in a coordinated fashion.
  That's why the military evaluates leaders in part on the cohesion of their units (also see this case study of military leadership manipulation) and why coaches of team sports work so hard to build unity of action and purpose
  Example: at Ford's finance function, socialization rituals served the same function as training in the military for the company's young, up-and-coming executives building common bonds of communication and trust that come through shared experiences
- **Critical resources**: as per social exchange dynamics, those who provide the most value, also have more power. Critical resources in organizations include money, skills, or the ability to solve critical organizational problems
  Evolution: in the beginning of the 1900s entrepreneurs held the CEO positions, then manufacturing and production became the most common backgrounds for corporate leaders because solving production and engineering issues were the most critical tasks) Starting in the 1920s and into the 1930s, CEOs came from marketing and sales because selling, rather than producing, became a more important challenge. Finally, beginning in the 1960s CEOs came out of finance because of the capital markets growing importance and shareholder as the most important measure of organizational success (Fligstein, 1987)

Since resources are important for power, when it comes to choosing your role, choose positions that have greater direct resource control of more budget or staff.

How to Recognize The Higher Power Department

If you're not sure about which department is higher power and more influential, here are some good indicators:

1. **Relative pay**, both starting salaries and the pay of more senior positions
2. **Physical location and facilities**, being close to those in power both signals power and *provides* power through ease of access and, most likely, increased contacts
3. **Positions in committees and senior management cadre**. Such as who, besides the CEO, is the insider most likely to serve on a company's board of directors

Focus More On Power, Less On "Being Liked"

Don't discount being liked: it's better to be liked, than disliked.

However, not at the cost of being respected, and always choose power over being liked.

When Machiavelli said that if you have to choose between being liked or feared, be feared, he anticipated 500 years of social psychology research (Machiavelli, 1532).
In business, fear may not be the best strategy, but a reputation for toughness may help.

For example:

- **Negative reviewers come across as more intelligent, competent, and expert** than positive reviewers, even when independent experts judged the negative reviews to be of no higher quality (Amabile, 1983)
- **Niceness frequently comes across as weakness or even a lack of intelligence**, even though nice people come across as "warm" (Cuddy, 2009)

Says the author:

> if you have to choose between being seen as likable and fitting in on the one hand or appearing competent albeit abrasive on the other, choose competence.

But of course, the two aren't mutually exclusive, and "powerful" doesn't mean "unlikeable".
As a matter of fact, as the author says, likability may create power, but **power also creates likability** as well as attracting people. People want to be close to powerful and successful people, after all.

The author then goes into the stereotype content model, something that is also foundational to this website.
Our "power & warmth" high-level approach is also based on that:

> Power Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

Strategic Anger Displays

Some examples:

- **Anger can make you seem dominant, strong, competent, and smart**, although of course, also as less nice and warm (Tiedens, 2001)
- **People expect high-status people to be more angry than sad or guilty** when in negative situations (Tiedens, 2000)
- **People expect low-status people to feel sad or guilty** instead of angry in the same negative situations

Summarizes the author:

> If you express anger, not only do you receive more status and power and appear more competent but others are

> reluctant to cross you

Being Nice As Power Move

Being nice to people is effective because people find it difficult to fight with those who are being polite and courteous.

Learn Networking Skills, Grow & Use Your Network

Independently of your job, the evidence shows that networking is important for people's careers.

Hence, says the author, everyone can benefit from improving their networking skills and developing better social networks.

Wolff and Moser define "networking" as:

> Behaviors that are aimed at building, maintaining, and using informal relationships that possess the (potential) benefit of facilitating work-related activities of individuals by voluntarily gaining access to resources and maximizing advantages.

Their study on more than 200 people in Germany divided networking behavior between internal/external and building/using, and successful networkers do all four of them:

1. **Building internal contacts** (e.g., "I use company events to make new contacts.") 2. Maintaining internal contacts (e.g., "I catch up with colleagues from other departments about what they are working on.")
2. **Using internal contacts** (e.g., "I use my contacts with colleagues in other departments in order to get confidential advice in business matters.") 4. Building external contacts (e.g., "I accept invitations to official functions or festivities out of professional interest.")
3. **Maintaining external contacts** (e.g., "I ask others to give my regards to business acquaintances outside of our company.")
4. **Using external contacts** (e.g., "I exchange professional tips and hints with acquaintances from other organizations.")

Develop Many Good Relationships: It's More Effective Than Few, Deep Relationships

What connections matter the most in networking?

Surprisingly, it's weak ties that bring the most benefits when it comes to work and career (Granovetter, 1973).
The reason is that strong, which are family, friends, and close associates with frequent interactions, often travel in the same circles and have similar knowledge and similar opportunities to offer.

Weak ties instead are more likely to link you to new people, organizations, information, and opportunities.

However, for weak ties to work, they must be *able* to link you, and *willing* to do so.
So it's important that you network with high-value people who can open doors for you, and that you have good enough relationships and make a good enough impression, that they will want to.

Hence, an optimal networking strategy, says the author, is to:

> know a lot of different people from different circles, have multiple organizational affiliations in a variety of different industries and sectors that are geographically dispersed, but not necessarily to know the people well or to develop close ties with them

Be At The Center Of Your Networks

Your influence and career trajectory depend a lot on your network position.

And, generally speaking, the more central you are, the better it is.
Says the author:

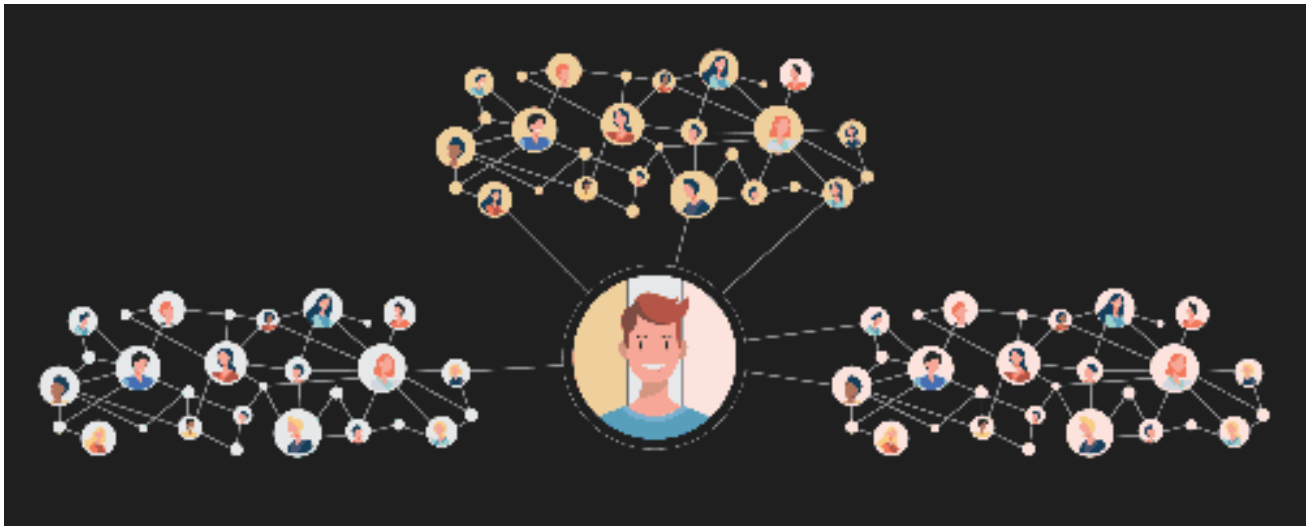
> If virtual y al information and communication flows through you, you wil have more power. One source of your power wil be your control over the flow of information, and another is that people attribute power to individuals who are central.

To assess your centrality, look at how many come to you first, and how much communication flows through you.

Become A “Relationship Broker” Bridging Different Networks & People

People tend to cluster with those who are similar to them.

This creates a great opportunity for “social chameleon” who can get along with many different people and groups:



University of Chicago business school professor Roland Burt calls this network approach “bridging the structural holes”.
Says the author:

> The fundamental idea is deceptively simple: by connecting units that are tightly linked internally but socially isolated from each other, the person doing the connecting can profit by being the intermediary who facilitates interactions between the two groups

The author says that the number of structural holes an individual bridges positively affects promotions, salary, and organizational level.
Also, the author warns that it’s a false myth and belief that being close to a networks’ linchpin gives you similar benefits: Burt found out that just being one step away from the connector’s role brought virtually no benefits.

Strategic Resource Allocation: How Much Should You Devote to Networking?

Yes, networking brings benefits, but it also requires time and effort and, hence, has a cost.

How much you should spend on networking also depends on your role, and your goals.
The author says:

> You should decide how much time to spend and your specific networking strategy based on the extent to which

> your job requires building social relationships for you to be successful (…) and the type of knowledge most useful in your job.

There are two types of knowledge and they need different networking strategies (Hansen, 2001):

- **Explicit and codified benefit from many weak ties**, information that can be shared easily and readily with diagrams, formulas, or "recipes" is easier to transmit and requires less effort, hence you don't need major social capital to get people to help you
- **Implicit and tacit need close ties**, because knowledge of, say, a good clinician who understands not only the science but also when to do what, needs time and effort to share, so you need more social capital for people to want to teach you

In product development for innovation, where the type of information required is almost impossible to specify in advance, many weak ties were most useful because a large network allowed product development teams to explore broadly for helpful information.
Product development projects using existing competencies and information that could mostly be anticipated benefited instead with a smaller network to get the product out the door more quickly.

Speak & Act With Power

It's easier and more effective to both develop a network and make the most out of it, if people hold you in high regard.

Says the author:

> Both in the process of creating social ties and once you have created a network, your ability to create and leverage social ties depends in part on how others perceive you. And those perceptions depend in part on your ability to speak and act with power.

We have great resources here on TPM on that:

- **High power talk** to speak so that people listen
- **Low power talk** and submissive words you need to avoid
- **High power behavior** to act so that people follow you
- **Low power behavior** that you need to avoid to come across as unconfident and weak

> 10 Ways to Be More Dominant

The author also touches upon frames and frame control here, albeit never calling it that way and referring to it instead as "who sets the rules of the interaction".

How to Handle Opposition

Anything worthwhile you'll be trying to achieve, there will be competition and some opposition along the way.

But albeit the author previously extolled the virtues of power over warmth, now instead he warns against too much power and dominance:

- **Use some tenderness**: people meet force with force (psychological reactance, Jack Brehm) and while steamrolling may work with some, most people will seek to push back and react to your attempts to overpower them as they seek to maintain their power and autonomy. So, instead, treat your opponents well
- **Power protect and leave people a graceful out**: this is what Dale Carnegie first labeled "save people face" and

what we call here "power protecting"
  - Give them a good deal to quit, and say nice things about them
- **Win them over to your side**: coopt them and make them a part of your team or organization by giving them a stake in the current system (we call this "aligning incentives" here)
- **Outplace them**: get them a better job somewhere else where they will not be underfoot, or give them a good deal to exit
- **Focus on the data**: that way, people cannot take things personally, or blame you for any decision that goes against them

From a mindset point of view:

- **Don't take things personally, make important relationships work**

Don't let your ego or personal preferences stand in the way of getting things done.
Sometimes you may not like someone, but if you need them to accomplish your goals, so what. Work with them anyway.

> Gary Loveman's advice: after you reach a certain level, there comes a point in your career where you simply have to make critical relationships work. Your feelings, or for that matter, others' feeling about you, don't matter. To be successful, you have to get over resentments, jealousies, anger, or anything else that might get in the way of building a relationship where you can get the resources necessary for you to get the job done.

Also read on growth mindset and the antifragile ego:

> The Ultimate Personal Power Tool: The Antifragile Ego

- **Don't let the battles make you lose sight of your final goal:**

> You need to continually ask yourself, "What would victory look like? If you had won the battle, what would you want that win to encompass?" People lose sight of what their highest priorities are and get diverted fighting other battles that then cause unnecessary problems

Sometimes, you can be disempowered in the short term, but still reach your final goal -and it's only at the end that you measure your success and power-.

Stay Upbeat During Turmoil: Nobody Wants to Help Losers

Remember that people want to associate with winners and want to avoid losers.

So it's important to behave and look like a strong winner, even if you feel like a loser at some points in your life:

> Situations are often ambiguous. Did you resign or were you fired? Was your previous job experience successful or not? One of the ways others are going to ascertain how things turned out is by how you present yourself. Are you upbeat? Do you project power and success or the reverse? This is why developing the ability to act in ways that you may not feel at the moment is such an important skill .
> You want to convey that everything is fine and under your control, even under dire circumstances

That is the best way to get over the difficult time, and attract some help and support.
Says the author, with an intuitive grasp of social exchanges:

> This advice does not mean that you should not tell people what happened and enlist their aid. It does mean you

> need to show enough strength and resilience that your potential allies wil not believe their efforts to help you wil be wasted

Leaders: Make Your Goals Seem Compelling (& "Good")

We totally agree with the author here:

> Your path to power is going to be easier if you are aligned with a compelling, socially valuable objective.

It doesn't mean you have to lie, says the author, but that "to the extent you can associate your efforts with a social y desirable, compel ing value, you increase your likelihood of success".

Higher objectives must not be saving animals or forestalling global warming, and some may think, it can simply be a goal or a generally held value that is beside your own self-interest.
For example, scheming CEOs and executives do it often in the name of "shareholders value":

> Power struggles inside companies seldom seem to revolve around blatant self-interest. At the moment of crisis and decision, clever combatants customarily invoke "shareholders' interests." As in, "It would be in the shareholders' interests to have a new CEO," or a "new board member," or for that matter, new executives in other senior roles.

Of course, the two things must also not necessarily be mutually exclusive: you can do well for shareholders or for your "higher goal", while also doing well for yourself.
Says the author of Gary Loveman's work at Harrah:

> Loveman is sincere and he has certainly delivered for the shareholders (…)
> But this talk about shareholder sovereignty is also a framing that works to portray his power at the gaming company in a social y desirable and acceptable fashion

The Costs of Power

It's generally better to have power, than not to have it.

When Andreotti, a highly skilled politician that Robert Greene pegged as "the most Machiavellian Italian politician of modern times" was asked if "power wears you out", he replied that "yes, it wears out those who don't have it".

However, there are some costs to power.
The author lists:

1. **Visibility and public scrutiny** holding a position of power means that more than your job performance is being careful y watched
    1. Fear of taking risks: Under the pressure to "look good," people and companies are reluctant to take risks or innovate, opting to do what seems safe
2. **Loss of autonomy**: with more demands and obligations on your time
3. **Time and effort**: building and maintaining power requires time and effort. Time that you cannot spend on other things, such as hobbies or personal relationships and families.
   The costs are higher for women, says the author
4. **Trust issues**: the higher you rise, the greater the number of people who want something from you -including your job-. Consequently, holding a position of great power creates a problem: who do you trust?
    1. Distort reality & absence of critical thought, as more people around you turn into "ys-men" and shield you away from important truths and feebdack

5. **Addictiveness of power**: power can be addictive both psychologically and physically, with many people who experienced depression and physical symptoms when they stepped down a high-power position (no matter how much money they had)

Overconfidence & Falls From Grace

Yes, power can corrupt.

And **the effects of power corruption can make you lose power**.

It's not (necessarily) only a literal "corruption", it can be a moral, behavioral, and psychological corruption that can come back to bite you, and cause your downfall.
The changes include:

> power produces overconfidence and risk taking, insensitivity to others, stereotyping, and a tendency to see other people as a means to the power holder's gratification

Research has shown that giving power to people made them feel superior to those they were supervising and wanted to distance themselves from those less powerful -and that even though in this experimental study the supervisor was randomly determined and temporary-.

That is dangerous because if you let power corrupt you to the point that you start mistreating others, you make more enemies that will want to undermine you and disempower you.

Says the author:

> Overconfidence and insensitivity lead to losing power, as people become so full of themselves that they fail to attend to the needs of those whose enmity can cause them problems. Conversely, not letting power go to your head and acting as if you were al -powerful can help you maintain your position.

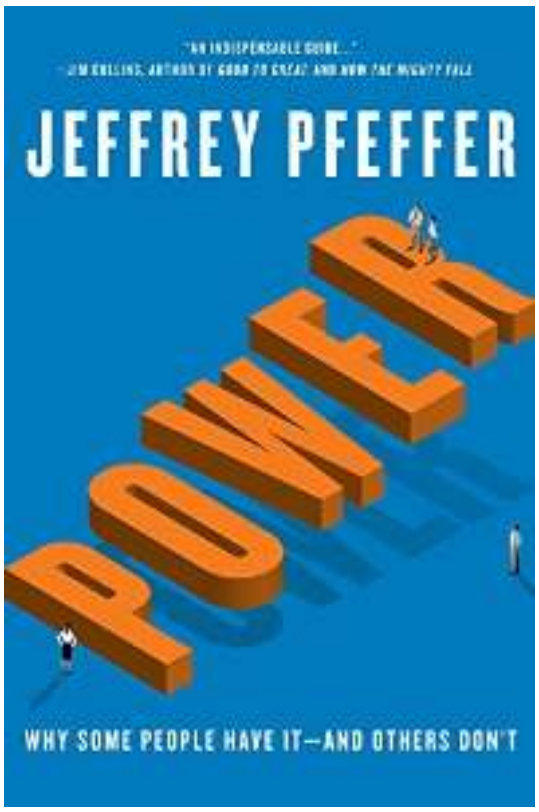
Also, you want to retain empathy and sensitivity because they help you both make and keep friends and allies, and remain alert to the politics and power dynamics around you.
Talking about the risks of being too direct and not power protecting enough, the author says:

> Having a position of formal authority or even being right is not going to win you the support of those whose mistakes you have called out. It is tough for those in power to see the world from others' perspectives—but if you are going to survive, you need to get over yourself and your formal position and retain your sensitivity to the political dynamics around you

A tip the author shares to "keep your head" is to expose yourself to social circles that know nothing about you and where you're not as high power.

To recap, the dangers of power are that you:

- **Treat others poorly and make enemies**: power corrupts your character and you feel superior and start seeing others as inferior and "deserving of poor behavior"
- **Grow overconfident in your hold to power** and lose sight of the possible machinations that others are setting up to dethrone you
  - **Grow overconfident in others** and trust the wrong people



MORE WISDOM

Make yourself unique in the team

A smaller-seeming power play, but that can make the difference.
Says Pfeffer in one of his mini-case studies:

> Success began with preparation. While most of her compatriots took the entrepreneurial classes offered in the business school, Anne took a class in the engineering school on starting new ventures. With that one move she altered the power dynamics and her bargaining leverage.
> In the business school class, there were about three MBAs for every engineer, while in the engineering school course, there was only about one MBA for every four engineers.

"Uniqueness" is valid at many levels.
Since the engineers could develop products but needed business-savvy folks for business plans, she put more negotiating power in her corner.
But Anne was also one of the few women there, and the only woman in the group she eventually chose.

You must tailor to your culture, environment, organization

Many authors and pundits like to dispense catch-all advice and prepare "lists of power laws".

But that doesn't work, says Pfeffer:

> Not all organizations have identical political cultures, and not al individuals are the same, either.
> Unfortunately, we live in a world in which much of the management advice proffered is presented as universally true. And unfortunately, many people are looking for simple, universal formulas for action that wil work equally wel in all circumstances.
> How you behave and what you should do needs to fit your particular circumstances—the organizational situation and also your own personal values and objectives.

Also, remember that we live in a world with little certitudes and 1:1 causal links.
Instead, we live in a world of probabilities.
So your task is to always choose the course of action with the highest probability of winning.

Asking Works: So Ask More

The author uses several examples to show that asking for mentorship and/or help, works.

At worst, he says, you get a no, which has little downsides anyway.

And he then points to a few studies showing that people find it uncomfortable to ask and underestimate the likelihood of others helping and wanting to help.

People also underestimate what's in it for the people granting the help.
For example, in many cases, people feel good being asked (it sub-communicates they can give, a high power position to be in), people feel good when they can help, and they will also gain if you turn out to be a grateful ally.

Encourage Others to Follow The Rule If You Got Power, But Find Alternatives If You Don't

People with power generally set the rules that benefit them.
If you play by the rules, you will hardly reach the top -especially not while those who set the rules are still there-.

> if you have all the power you want or need, by all means not only follow the rules but encourage everyone else to do so too. But if you are still traversing your path to power, take all this conventional wisdom and "rule-fol owing" stuff with a big grain of salt

Organizations Don't Care About You

Towards the end of the book Pfeffer deals with some ethical questions, including:

Isn't it bad for the organization if we play all these power games?

And, he says, you sholdn't ask yourself that, because organizations don't care about you anyway.
Also read:

- **Business manipulation of employees**
- Conflicts of interest at work
- Machiavellians lead busineses

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees (W/ Examples)

Grow Comfortable With Power: Both Wielding It, And Accepting It

There are two common issues people have with power:

- **Cannot accept that others may have power over them**, which makes it difficult for them to fit in, grow, acquire status and power. And it makes it difficult for them to have good relationships with their bosses, which is crucial to doing well
- **Struggle with having power over others, and wielding it**, which makes it difficult for them to acquire leadership positions, holding onto them. And, if by sheer luck they become leaders, they often make for poor leaders

And finally, once you're ready to lead:

As A Leader / Founder, Keep Politics to A Minimum

Politics are normal, but that doesn't mean they're good.

Indeed, research shows that high levels of perceived politics lead to job dissatisfaction, low morale, less commitment, and higher intentions to quit.

It does seem though that it's possible to create an organization with lower levels of (perceived) politics, but unluckily, the author doesn't investigate whether it's possible to have *lower* level of politics.

Real-Life Tips

As Your Hiring Condition, Ask For A Periodical Dinner With The Department's Head

Man, what a genius move this was.
Goes straight to Power University.
Here's the example from Keith Ferrazzi, later turned social networking consultant and author of "Never Eat Alone" (told by Loconto himself, and redacted for brevity):

> Ferrazzi had offers from McKinsey and Deloitte.
> Ferrazzi insisted on seeing the "head guys," as he called them.
> Loconto met Keith at an Italian restaurant in New York City, and "after we had a few drinks at this restaurant, Keith said he would accept the offer on one condition—he and I would have dinner once a year at the same restaurant…. So I promised to have dinner with him once a year, and that's how we recruited him. That was one of his techniques. That way, **he was guaranteed access to the top**.

Pretty smart indeed.

Pretend to Take The Idiots Seriously: Fools Are Still Better On Your Side Than Against You

This part was really Machiavellian smart to survive in more political organizations where you need support and support to remain in power:

> in a visible position such as university president, everybody—students, faculty, alumni, citizens, staff—has an opinion about what you could be better, and many feel free to share their views with you and with the public. Many of these people don't know what they are talking about and take time (…). After a while, it is easy to lose patience and lash out at the sorry fools—except, as Maidique thoughtfully noted, some of these "sorry fools" can cost you your position.

Maidique was the second longest-serving research university president in the United States, and to successfully remain in his position, he learned the political skills needed for it -including keeping his composure with the sorry fools-.

QUOTES

A strong reminder of how your behavior affects your credibility:

> Authority is 20 percent given, 80 percent taken.
>
> *Peter Ueberroth*

On the role of "deception" in leadership:

> part of it is self-discipline and part of it is deception. And the deception becomes reality. Deception in the sense that you pump yourself up and put a better face on things than you start off feeling. But after a while, if you act confident, you become more confident. So the deception becomes less of a deception
>
> *Andy Grove*

On self-deprecating humor only working if you already have a good and established reputation:

> Don't be so humble; you're not that great.
>
> *Golda Meir*

Commenting on John Gardner who told people that it was their right to opposite him, but that they will have to face the consequences:

> If using power in this way seems tough, it may be. But get over your inhibitions, because many of the people you wil meet on your path to power wil have less hesitation about rewarding their friends and punishing those who oppose them.

On the dog-eat-dog nature of power struggles:

> Therefore, for CEOs to survive in their jobs, they need to be able to discern who is undermining them and be tough enough to remove those people before they themselves lose the power struggle. What's true for CEOs is also true for other senior-level executives with ambitious subordinates.

On choosing a graceful exit over holding on until it's too late:

> It is both possible and desirable to, as my wife nicely puts it, "leave before the party's over" and to do so in a way that causes others to remember you fondly. You cannot always completely control how much power you maintain, but you can leave your position with dignity and thereby influence your legacy.

On companies being undemocratic and power in the hands of few despite devolution working better and "The Wisdom of Crowds" showing that decision-making by many is superior to decision-making by the few (something I'm not convinced, by the way):

> inside companies democracy is the exception. In spite of many studies showing the superior performance achieved through delegating decision-making authority, little devolution of power has occurred inside companies in the last 50 years

CONS

Some studies were low-powered

For example, David Schoorman study only had 9 managers under one of their conditions (the condition of "not chosen by the hiring manager").

Sometimes the author jumped to conclusions that the study didn't warrant

For example, the author downplays the role of performance.
But in Dohmen's study that the author cites, the paper's abstract clearly states that "performance ratings determine how fast a worker climbs the firm's career and wage ladder", which doesn't quite square off with the author's stance that performance matters little.

In Gilson's study of CEO, the authors conclude that "evidence is consistent with managers incurring significant personal costs when their firms become financially distressed".
Again, the opposite of what the author implies saying that CEO performance matters little.

And with David Schoorman's study, the author concludes:

What this research means is that job performance matters less for your evaluation than your supervisor's commitment to and relationship with you.

That's a big claim, so I checked the research.
And it's not exactly what the researchers claim.
They say instead:

> Its significance can be illustrated by the observation that **the escalation biases accounted for more variance in performance appraisals than did the measure of clerical ability used to select employees into these jobs**.
> The clerical ability test is a statistically (and legally) valid employment test in this organization

The authors of the research didn't measure job performance.
The only measure of performance was *at the time of hiring*, a very different measure.

Unluckily, this made me lose quite some trust in the author's conclusions.
A colossal blunder, in my opinion: Power is a fantastic book that tells it as it is, that has plenty of both evidence and logic to support it, and that most certainly didn't need to exaggerate or stretch the truth.

Cites Low-Credibility Malcolm Gladwell Among the Resources

When discussing rule-following and underdog success, the author says that:

In every war in the last 200 years conducted between unequal y matched opponents, the stronger party won about 72 percent of the time. However, when the underdogs understood their weakness and used a different strategy to minimize its effects, they won some 64 percent of the time, cutting the dominant party's likelihood of victory in half.

How exactly did we reach "half", I don't get it.
And even then, he's citing Malcolm Gladwell's analyses.
Nothing wrong with Gladwell, he's a great writer. But when it comes to science, he has little credibility for being part of that breed of pop psychologists that looks not for what's true, but what's most "shocking" to sell more -sometimes twisting studies to sound more shocking-.

Seems to Underestimate The Costs of Asking For Help

Says the author:

> Those contemplating making a request of another tend to focus on the costs others will incur complying with their request, and don't emphasize sufficiently the costs of saying no.

This is a major social misunderstanding in my opinion.
Generally speaking, you want to avoid cornering others in a position where they feel forced to say yes. They may say yes, and even help you, but they'll come to see you as a taker who took from them.

PROS

- **Combines both theory and practice**, and does both at a very good level

- **Well researched and resourced**, albeit as we say above we didn't like how some studies were spun or presented. But, overall, that didn't change the logic and, we believe, validity of most of the author's claims
- **Both persuasive and encouraging** in spurring people to learn power dynamics and seek more power with a "can-do" attitude

REVIEW

Power is a great book on power and power dynamics.

It mostly deals with power in business and organizations, and the strategies are in large part tailored to career advancement.
But because there are few great titles on power and power dynamics, and because Pfeffer is a competent author, *Power* is one of the best books on power, period.

We also took a few golden nuggets for Power University, which is the biggest compliment we can pay to any resource we review.

Check the **best books** collection, get Power on Amazon, or find other best books on power here:

- **Best resources on power**

> The 16 Best Books On Power

Book Summary: Power by Jeffrey Pfeffer – Strategic Review

Great overview of power dynamics and how to succeed and advance in life (& exposing the limitations of inspirational and naive self-help)

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/power-why-some-people-have-it-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.2

Awareness: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In *Awareness* (1990) author Anthony de Mello proposes a different approach to religion and Christianity based on spiritual enlightenment. De Mello teaches how that enlightenment, or "awareness" as he also calls it, feels like and provides guidance on how ot become more aware and content in life.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - You Want Things, Not Happiness. Stop Seeking Things to Be Happy
  - There Is No "I": Stop Identifying
  - You Can't Feel Bad When You Let Others Free
  - Ultimate Power is Not Needing Anything (Least of All, "Success")
  - We Have the Wrong Notion of Love: Stop Being Possessive
  - We Have the Wrong Notion of Happiness: Stop Chasing Thrills
  - 5 Steps to Enlightenment
- More Wisdom
- CONS
- Review
  - How Awareness Overlaps With TPM

Exec Summary

- **True happiness is unconditional** of things and events
- **True love does not need the object of love**. True love, deeper, comes with awareness and enlightenment
- **Enlightened people are content with themselves, they need nothing and nobody**, and they also generally don't give a damn of things most people chase such as success, things, people they "love", social status, group belonging, etc.

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Anthony de Mello was a Christian priest and psychotherapist.
Going by what he writes in *Awareness*, de Mello has his own interpretation of the scripture. Getting to God to the de Mello seems to pass through personal enlightenment.

You Want Things, Not Happiness. Stop Seeking Things to Be Happy

Most people think they want happiness by chasing things.

But that's not true happiness, that's a distraction.
Or, better yet, it's a trap:

> I was saying that we don't want to be happy. We want other things. Or let's put it more accurately: We don't want to be unconditionally happy. I'm ready to be happy provided I have this and that and the other thing.

Most people thought aren't yet ready to make that jump.
De Mello says that most people cannot imagine being happy without those conditions.
But those conditions are chains to your happiness, and you must transcend them for that unconditional happiness.

There Is No "I": Stop Identifying

In good Eastern Buddhist tradition, de Mello embraces the separation between thinking mind and "I":

> Am I my thoughts, the thoughts that I am thinking? No.
> Thoughts come and go; I am not my thoughts. Am I my body? They tell us that millions of cells in our body are changed or are renewed every minute, so that by the end of seven years we don't have a single living cell in our body that was there seven years before. Cells come and go. Cells arise and die. But "I" seems to persist. So am I my body? Evidently not!
>
> "I" is something other and more than the body. You might say the body is part of "I," but it is a changing part. It keeps moving, it keeps changing. We have the same name for it but it constantly changes.
>
> How about my name? Is "I" my name? Evidently not, because I can change my name without changing the "I." How about my career? How about my beliefs? I say I am a Catholic, a Jew—is that an essential part of "I"? When I move from one religion to another, has the "I" changed?

Labels Are Not "I"

People love self-labeling and defining themselves through those labels.

However, you are not the labels you use for yourself.

> Labels are so important to us.
> "I am a Republican," we say. But are you really? You can't mean that when you switch parties you have a new "I." Isn't it the same old "I" with new political convictions? I remember hearing about a man who asks his friend, "Are you planning to vote Republican?" The friend says, "No, I'm planning to vote Democratic. My father was a Democrat, my grandfather was a Democrat, and my great-grandfather was a Democrat." The man says, "That is crazy logic. I mean, if your father was a horse thief, and your grandfather was a horse thief, and your great-grandfather was a horse thief, what would you be?" "Ah," the friend answered, "then I'd be a Republican." We spend so much of our lives reacting to labels, our own and others'. We identify the labels with the "I."

Why is this important?
Because suffering begins when you identify external things with "I", says de Mello:

> All suffering is caused by my identifying myself with something, whether that something is within me or outside of me.

And when you don't identify:

> When "I" does not identify with money, or name, or nationality, or persons, or friends, or any quality, the "I" is never threatened. It can be very active, but it isn't threatened.

Admitting you're wrong is possible when you don't identify:

> Someone once said, "The three most difficult things for a human being are not physical feats or intellectual achievements. They are, first, returning love for hate; second, including the excluded; third, admitting that you

> are wrong." But these are the easiest things in the world if you haven't identified with the "me." You can say things like "I'm wrong! If you knew me better, you'd see how often I'm wrong. What would you expect from an ass?" But if I haven't identified with these aspects of "me," you can't hurt me.

You Can't Feel Bad When You Let Others Free

Central to de Mello's view of Awareness are the concept of love without possessiveness, and happiness without conditions and "needs".

That means that if you can love without needing, then you also never feel bad for not having, or for losing, anything or anyone:

> We never feel grief when we lose something that we have allowed to be free, that we have never attempted to possess.
> Grief is a sign that I made my happiness depend on this thing or person, at least to some extent. We're so accustomed to hear the opposite of this that what I say sounds inhuman, doesn't it?

When you can generate your own happiness you won't need others. You may want them, but not need them:

> But to depend on another psychologically—to depend on another emotionally—what does that imply? It means to depend on another human being for my happiness. Think about that. Because if you do, the next thing you will be doing, whether you're aware of it or not, is demanding that other people contribute to your happiness.

When you need others for your happiness, you become fearful:

> Then there will be a next step—fear of loss, fear of alienation, fear of rejection, mutual control. Perfect love casts out fear. Where there is love there are no demands, no expectations, no dependency. I do not demand that you make me happy; my happiness does not lie in you. If you were to leave me, I will not feel sorry for myself; I enjoy your company immensely, but I do not cling.

The author says that "an attachment destroys your capacity to love".

Ultimate Power is Not Needing Anything (Least of All, "Success")

This is how that enlightened (and empowered) stage looks like:

> You fear no one because you're perfectly content to be nobody.
> You don't give a damn about success or failure. They mean nothing. Honor, disgrace, they mean nothing!
> If you make a fool of yourself, that means nothing either. Isn't that a wonderful state to be in!

For the record, I believe there is a middle way.

I agree that many values and "success/failure" can be straight jackets on ourselves.

And at the same time, one can pursue goals with a certain level of detachment and with a self-generated level of self-generated happiness that is not overly dependent on external "treats".

The Freedom Within You Guarantees Your Eternal Freedom

> "One cannot make a slave of a free person, for a free person is free even in prison.
> If a person is trying to change external reality by being out of prison in order to be free, he is a prisoner indeed. Freedom lies not in external circumstances; freedom resides in the heart.

> When you have attained wisdom, who can enslave you?

Success Doesn't Matter to An Enlightened Individual

> A small-time businessman, fifty-five years old, is sipping beer at a bar
>
> somewhere and he's saying, "Well, look at my classmates, they've really made it." The idiot! What does he mean, "They made it"? They've got their names in the newspaper. Do you call that making it? One is president of the corporation; the other has become the Chief Justice; somebody else has become this or that. Monkeys, all of them.
>
> Who determines what it means to be a success? This stupid society! The main preoccupation of society is to keep society sick! And the sooner you realize that, the better. Sick, every one of them. They are loony, they're crazy. You became president of the lunatic asylum and you're proud of it even though it means nothing. Being president of a corporation has nothing to do with being a success in life. Having a lot of money has nothing to do with being a success in life.

And:

> Having a good job or being famous or having a great reputation has absolutely nothing to do with happiness or success.
>
> Nothing! It is totally irrelevant.
>
> All he's really worried about is what his children will think about him, what the neighbors will think about him, what his wife will think about him. He should have become famous. Our society and culture drill that into our heads day and night. People who made it! Made what?! Made asses of themselves. Because they drained all their energy getting something that was worthless. They're frightened and confused, they are puppets like the rest. Look at them strutting across the stage.

Their mistake was to identify the "I" with things like success, a good career, people's perception of us.

So when are you a success, then?

> You're a success in life when you wake up! Then you don't have to apologize to anyone, you don't have to explain anything to anyone, you don't give a damn what anybody thinks about you or what anybody says about you. You have no worries; you're happy. That's what I call being a success.

And when that happens, no criticism affects you.
Or no compliment, for that matter.

This overlaps with our emotional power dynamics construct of the judge role, plus our "enlightened individualism" philosophy.
We agree, and we loved this part.

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

We Have the Wrong Notion of Love: Stop Being Possessive

It's not the love that we learn from our culture of poems and love songs.
That's infatuation or, as de Mello calls it, "possessiveness".
Instead, true love is deeper:

> It's been there all along, staring us in the face in the scriptures, though we never cared to see it because we were so drowned in what our culture calls love with its love songs and poems—that isn't love at all, that's the opposite of love.
> That's desire and control and possessiveness.
> That's manipulation, and fear, and anxiety—that's not love.

You Never Love Anyone: You Love The Illusion You Develop Yourself

> You are never in love with anyone. You're only in love with your prejudiced and hopeful idea of that person.

We Have the Wrong Notion of Happiness: Stop Chasing Thrills

Most people chase happiness as a transitory state.
But that transitory nature is exactly the problem: once you attain it, you set yourself up for "non-happiness" right afterward:

> But you can't have the wrong notion of happiness.
> Did you think happiness was excitement or thrills? That's what causes the depression.
>
> Didn't anyone tell you that? You're thrilled, all right, but you're just preparing the way for your next depression. You're thrilled but you pick up the anxiety behind that: How can I make it last? That's not happiness, that's addiction.

And against the consumerist culture:

> We were told that happiness is a smooth complexion, a holiday resort. It isn't these things, but we have subtle ways of making our happiness depend on other things, both within us and outside us.

The focus is always on what we don't have, says the author.

You don't need to acquire anything to be happy, says the author.
It's already within you.
Instead, you need to *drop* something -like greed and identifications of your I with labels, negative feelings, and external markers-.

Happiness Is Within You, Right Now

Luckily, you don't even need to chase happiness.
It's right there, inside you, and within you:

> but we have subtle ways of making our happiness depend on other things, both within us and outside us. We say, "I refuse to be happy until my neurosis goes." I have good news for you: You can be happy right now, with the neurosis, You want even better news?

5 Steps to Enlightenment

Of course, you may know this if this isn't your first "spiritual enlightenment" book:

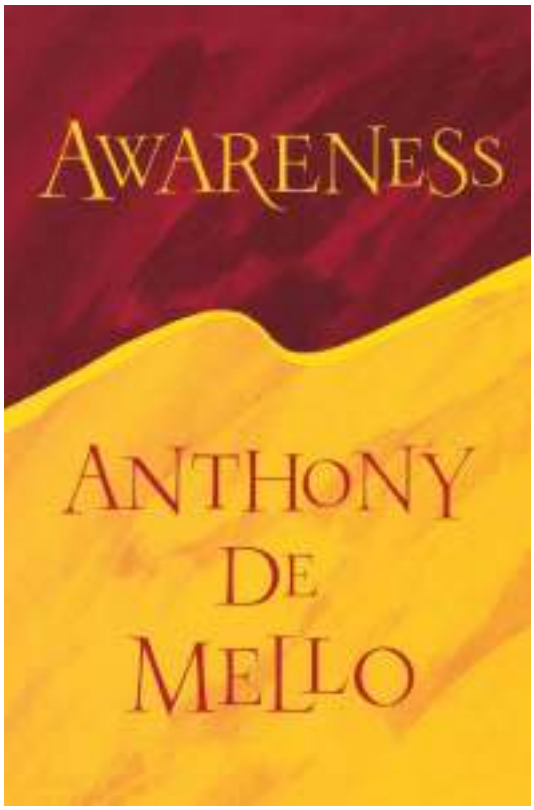
There is no easy prescription to enlightnment.
But, teasing out from de Mello's teachings, we can say:

1. **Admit you don't want to wake up**

2. **Gain awareness of your negative feelings** (gloomy, self-hate, guilt, hurt, tension, etc.)
3. **Understand that the feeling is in you, it's not in reality**. So stop trying to change reality, change yourself instead
4. **Never identify with that feeling**. Never say "I am… "
5. **Awareness**: you only change through awareness and understanding

Says the author:

> Your behavior may change, but you don't. You only change through awareness and understanding. When you see a stone as a stone and a scrap of paper as a scrap of paper, you don't think that the stone is a precious diamond anymore and you don't think that that scrap of paper is a check for a billion dollars. When you see that, you change.



More Wisdom

More great wisdom from *Awareness* turned into more practical tips:

Detach and transcend the idiocy of nationalism

> There are no frontiers or boundaries. They were put there by the human mind; generally by stupid, avaricious politicians.
> My country was one country once upon a time; it's four now. If we don't watch out it might be six. Then we'll have six flags, six armies. That's why you'll never catch me saluting a flag. I abhor all national flags because they are idols. What are we saluting? **I salute humanity, not a flag with an army around it**.

If you let the inculturation get to you, you start seeing things that do not exist:

> Flags are in the heads of people. In any case, there are thousands of words in our vocabulary that do not

> correspond to reality at all. But do they trigger emotions in us! So we begin to see things that are not there. We actually see Indian mountains when they don't exist, and we actually see Indian people who also don't exist. Your American conditioning exists.

Detach from and transcend the "need to belong"

On detaching from ego-projections and group belonging:

> But "me" got in there, so I'm feeling good. I'm feeling good about "my" culture and "my" nation. How stupid can you get? I mean that. I'm told my great Indian culture has produced all these mystics. I didn't produce them. I'm not responsible for them. Or they tell me, "That country of yours and its poverty—it's disgusting." I feel ashamed. But I didn't create it.

Detach and transcend other people's opinions

On detaching from what others think of you:

> The fact of the matter is that you're neither O.K. nor not O.K. You may fit the current mood or trend or fashion! Does that mean you've become O.K.? Does your O.K.-ness depend on that? Does it depend on what people think of you? Jesus Christ must have been pretty "not O.K." by those standards. You're not O.K. and you're not not O.K., you're you.

Detach and transcend your own past

On detaching from your past:

> Eternity is right now. How's that for good news? It is right now. People are so distressed when I tell them to forget their past. They are so proud of their past. Or they are so ashamed of their past. They're crazy! Just drop it! When you hear "Repent for your past," realize it's a great religious distraction from waking up. Wake up! That's what repent means. Not "weep for your sins." Wake up! Understand, stop all the crying. Understand! Wake up!

Enlightenment is not theoretical, it's the most practical thing

On enlightenment being the most practical thing:

> you have people thinking that big business is more practical, that politics is more practical, that science is more practical. What's the earthly use of putting a man on the moon when we cannot live on the earth?

If you feel down, observe your negative states, without identifying with them

Observe without identifying:

> The reason you suffer from your depression and your anxieties is that you identify with them. You say, "I'm depressed." But that is false. You are not depressed. If you want to be accurate, you might say, "I am experiencing a depression right now." But you can hardly say, "I am depressed." You are not your depression.

Same for anxiety.
If you can detach from your own anxiety, you can be happy in your own anxiety:

> And anxiety? There it comes and you're not troubled. How strange! You're anxious but you're not troubled.

> Isn't that a paradox?
>
> And you're willing to let this cloud come in, because the more you fight it, the more power you give it. You're willing to observe it as it passes by. You can be happy in your anxiety. Isn't that crazy? You can be happy in your depression.

CONS

Sometimes the author goes down hard on "monkeys" who follow social conventions.

Personally, I like those passages and the passion in them. But to some, it can feel offensive and social climbe-y.

Sometimes there is some of that rosy view of nature that "animals are good, let's learn from them".
For example, "look at birds in the air that do not toil".

And at other times the above idealization overlaps with the generalizations that this website is not very fond of -ie. "we can learn from the animal kingdom, an animal will never eat or drink anything that is not good for him". Not true-.

However, these are all small cons, and largely inconsequential.

Review

Awareness is a wonderful book, and we loved it.

Albeit Awareness is apparently so different from this website, there is instead much overlap.

How Awareness Overlaps With TPM

Similar concepts include:

Judge Power Dynamics
The author talks about how un-enlightened people are dependent on other people's approval, which is basically judged power dynamics.

Individualism Over Groups
He then talks about soaring higher groups and nationalities, which is the "enlightened individualism" article.
He says:

> A nice definition of an awakened person: a person who no longer marches to the drums of society, a person who dances to the tune of the music that springs up from within.

The author then takes it a step further and says to go behind the "I", while this website sees nothing wrong in pursuing self-expanding goals.

But there are more overlaps still with that detachment:

Antifragile Ego
The detachment from the "I" overlaps with the antifragile ego.
Not taking things personally, as the author says, that's antifragile ego.

Labels & Emotionless Assessment
The author refers to the inability to properly see and assess others if you need their approval and if you identify with labels. That's foundational to effective social strategizing as well.

Growing Past Fixed Mindset

The author talks about fear of failure. And that's also equivalent to fixed VS growth mindset.

Dropping Values
And the most shocking of them all: dropping the need for "ethical values".

The author says:

> You don't need conscience when you have consciousness; you don't need conscience when you have sensitivity. You're not violent, you're not fearful.

More than once we said on this website that values are often hooks and tools for manipulation.
And that dropping the need values as a form of "personal rules" or "personal guidance" can be a good thing for your personal freedom, personal power, and general well-being.

The author says that with "consciousness" you don't need a conscience.
This website refers more to fluidity under the umbrella of being a general value-adding individual.

But still, very similar.

So, overall, we obviously enjoyed and recommend *Awareness* by Anthony de Mello.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

Dragons, Monsters, and Men: Summary & Review (Jordan Peterson)

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 August 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Dragons, Monsters, and Men is a 4-part series taught by clinical psychologist, Jordan B. Peterson, aimed at teaching men how to discover their purpose, overcome challenges, raise their masculinity, and effectively pursue greatness.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- Episode #1: “What Makes a Man?”
- Episode #2: “Arm Yourself”
- Episode #3: “Be the Prince, You’ll Find the Princess”
- Episode #4: “Be Great”
- Real-Life Applications
- Cons
- Pros
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Develop a vision for yourself and start taking on more responsibility:** to develop your skills and character
- **Only take on worthy challenges:** avoid foolhardy behavior
- **Arm yourself with words**: your social power is more important than the coercive power of “toughness”

Full Summary

About The Author: Jordan Peterson is a Canadian clinical psychologist and former professor of psychology at the University of Toronto.

He rose to fame when he objected to a new rule to address trans women as “she” and has become a thought leader of conservative and alt-right movements and, in part, for red-pill communities.

He is also the author of *Maps of Meaning*, *12 Rules for Life*, and *Beyond Order*.

Episode #1: “What Makes a Man?”

#1: Start Working On Yourself

- **Don’t be too disheartened by your lack of competence and authority—especially, if you’re young**: because gaining power is difficult.
- **Don’t ask yourself, “What should I do with my life,” because that’s a poor question that invites an answer too broad for any productive action (because one can—and, if they’re driven, often does—many things in their life)**: a better question is, “What do other people who appear to give their lives significance and meaning do?”

Then, Peterson outlines what most people with a life of significance and meaning want/have, the main example being an intimate partner.

And, he recommends you work on getting an intimate partner by working on yourself. Ask yourself, "What do I bring to the table?"

Note: this points to Peterson's *Beyond Order* Rule 1 that humans are part of value-based exchanges and a good life means establishing win-win relationships. And, at the same time, certain aspects of this section also point to his *12 Rules for Life* Rule 6 to "Set Your House in Perfect Order Before You Criticize the World" (work on yourself and, as per Lucio's note, "seek improvement at all costs").

- **There are advantages to being a young man**: two of the biggest ones being youth and possibility (and, here, Peterson emphasizes youth as a form of wealth with the example that you wouldn't trade "young and poor" for "decrepit and rich").

#1.2: How to Start Working On Yourself

Ask yourself, "Am I good at anything?" If not, start practicing being good at one thing.

What matters most here isn't what you choose to start practicing, it's that you choose *something* because the sooner you get started, the sooner you start developing your skills and character.

Then:

- **Develop a vision for yourself**: what would it look like if you could have the life you wanted?

Note: many of the questions Peterson recommends you ask yourself to develop your vision point to questions you can find in the Self-Authoring Suite program and are similar to the question he asks his clients to better assess them (see *Beyond Order* Rule 1: "Community and social ties are crucial to your well-being").

- **Develop (in addition to your vision) answers to questions that give you responsibility and character**: for example, can you get a job or a career? Can you educate yourself? Can you regulate the draw of temptation (be it drugs, alcohol, or sex)? Do you do anything that remotely represents civic responsibility (e.g. being a member of a political party or going to church)?

Note: the responsibility aspect of this section points to *Beyond Order*'s Rule 4 and the character aspect leans on *12 Rules For Life*'s Rule 7.

#2.: Embrace "productive generosity"

Peterson teaches that productivity requires aim, orientation, responsibility, discipline, and maturity (with the willingness to work and make sacrifices in the service of a higher goal being defined by Peterson as the hallmark of maturity).

The generosity aspect is, in a nutshell, about giving.

#2.3: Embrace "productive responsibility"

Be responsible to yourself and your future selves (the community of selves that you are across time). (See *12 Rules For Life*'s Rule 2.)

Then, be responsible (and productive) for as many people as you can manage.

Note: Peterson says here that this will orient you solidly in the world and give you a dragon to fight which is where the gold is. However, I wish he would've also clarified (in that same line) that a part of one's responsibility to themself is the rest and recovery required for continued productivity. By leaving that part out, Peterson makes it sound as if "more responsibility is always better", which I disagree with. (More *improvement* is always better. And, the attainment and management of more responsibility should be a part of your improvement, but it shouldn't be the whole of it—unless you invite the risk of negative consequences like burnout.)

#3: Arm Yourself

Peterson says you should arm yourself with words:

- **Be precise in your language**: see *12 Rules For Life*'s Rule 10
- **Say what you mean**
- **Read**: from and about great men and women
- **Make yourself literate**
- **Get your tongue in order / under your own control**: manage your anxiety, shyness, and embarrassment
- **Remove filler words and pauses**
- **Remove "proving yourself to others" communication**: stop trying to impress others
- **Say (only) what you believe to be true**

Note: pauses can be good and socially powerful depending on how you utilize them. Know the exceptions.

Also, keep in mind that many people are afraid to ask questions because of the status loss of admitting that there was something they didn't know.

But, Peterson says that if you ask enough stupid questions (because you're honest that you don't know something), you're not stupid anymore since after you get the answer, you now know better and don't have to ask that question again.

Peterson describes staying quiet when one doesn't know something as more than dishonest, but an act of "cowardice".

Note: it depends on the situation, sometimes it's best to keep your mouth shut if you're in strategic cases where, for the time being, being high status is more important than being a learner (and your status isn't directly tied to your knowledgeability).

Then, Peterson teaches that beauty, tradition, community, and responsibility are classic virtues that serve as more than qualities that develop your character, but tools that can be used to challenge and win against the "dragons" (challenges) that stand in your path.

Note: I (mostly) agree. Better than memorizing scripts (picking up external tools that only work contextually) is to develop a quality of character that can withstand the highs and lows of a life committed to meaning. However, I say "mostly" agree because, as with any tool, they (virtues) can backfire if used improperly, ineffectively, or unwell.

#4: Live like you have everything at stake

Peterson says that this attitude makes for an adventure with no regrets looking back (a life of dragons encountered and conquered, beasts faced and tamed).

Note: given how close this sounds to the popular mantra of, "Live every day like it's your last," I'd add the caveat here: "Live like you have everything at stake…while also being mindful of your future selves to take care of."

#5: Choose your dragons carefully

For example, don't foolhardily play in dangerous oncoming traffic and think because it's challenging you must be slaying a dragon.

A dragon worth slaying is a dragon you encounter on your way to a *worthy goal*.

You only want to fight the dragons that guard the gates of the treasure you want to attain (the treasure that you envision).

Here, Peterson also teaches that facing dragons does more than begin the process of removing them, it begins the

process of your own development into the kind of person who is capable of attaining the treasure you seek.

We all have the capacity for great transformation.

Plus, women want a man who's competent (who can keep the "dragons" away from the infants, in an evolutionary psychology lens).

Episode #2: "Arm Yourself"

#1: "We're properly governed by the spirit of voluntary play"

Here, Peterson makes the argument that men are becoming more passive today:

- **Boys don't do as well in school**: they're less likely to enroll in a university, more likely to drop out, and less likely to graduate

Peterson says, "There's some indication that young men aren't even masturbating as much as they used to. That's how emasculated and demoralized they are."

He also says that the idea in society that power and masculinity are wrong leads to the demoralization of young men. Young men are taught that ambition is intrinsically corrupt.

Note: Peterson tells an emotional story of a friend of his that committed suicide because he believed all of that (that that power and masculinity are wrong and ambition is intrinsically corrupt).

This leads to men suppressing their shadow which leads to explosive violent crimes and gang crime.

#2: Follow the rules. But, don't follow *stupid* rules.

Peterson says that you know it's time to break a rule when it becomes pathological.

So, if you're going to stand up and break a rule (one which you ideally believe to be unfit to follow), before you do, follow this step-by-step process:

1. Think about it.
2. Acknowledge the consequences of both options (following the rule vs breaking it).
3. Ask yourself if you're willing to take and accept the consequences of standing up for what you believe.
4. Decide.

#3: It's OK to be tough, so long as you're also literate.

A few drops of the major points of this section:

- Everybody gets rejected 95% of the time, you only have to succeed once.
- Be willing to confront your mental and emotional dragons (such as self-consciousness, neuroticism, feelings of miserableness, and so on).

And, a process Peterson recommends you follow for increasing your toughness and literacy:

- **Decide what sort of man you want to be**: develop a vision of who you could be (you can do that by finding people you admire and uncovering what they're like, then practicing their behavior and communication)
- **Develop the (necessary) skills**: and make literacy (precise and eloquent communication) one of them

Also, on the point of being tougher, the capacity for aggression is also the capacity for competition. A man with aggression who also has it under control is a far more useful man than one who's only passive or uncontrollably aggressive.

Episode #3: “Be the Prince, You’ll Find the Princess”

#1: Dating, relationships, and children.

Peterson says not to ask, “How do I find the partner that’s right for me?”

Ask yourself instead, “How do I become the partner who’s right for someone else?” (Figure out what women want then start from that list.)

The idea is that if you concentrate on being the prince, you’ll (eventually) find the princess.

Note: I disagree here. Yes, if you concentrate on being or becoming a prince, you’ll *attract* the princess once you find her. Yet, there is that added step of finding her, which is a separate and different task that may require its own separate set of strategies (assuming that by “princess” we’re referring to a high-quality woman who’s LTR-material, which can be a rare find that requires some dating strategy, depending on your situation).

He also makes the case that enjoying too much short-term sex with too many different partners is ultimately unrewarding and psychopathic.

Says Peterson:

> **Peterson**: “Some boys—young men—are in the hypothetically fortunate position now, partly because of dating technology, that they can enjoy an endless buffet of willing young women. But, there’s something really psychopathic about that…and so you sleep with a different girl every two nights. Well, you don’t really sleep with a different girl. You sleep with the shallow representation of a different girl every two nights because you don’t know her [them]. And, you might think that doesn’t matter. It’s like, well, what are you practicing here? You’re practicing to use other people in the most intimate possible manner as nothing but an instrumental ends to your own short-term, hedonistic pleasure? That’s psychopathy. That’s what that is. Practice that a hundred times, guess what you are?”

From there, Peterson states that psychopaths live lives that don’t serve them very well in the end and, therefore, constant, quick, short-term sex with multiple different women is to be avoided.

A few more drops of the main points from this section:

- **How fast should a relationship progress physically?**: as a rule of thumb, don’t do anything with someone that you couldn’t talk to them about beforehand (if you can’t have that communicative intimacy, it may be too early for that level of physical intimacy).
- **People in monogamous relationships have much better sex lives**: if you disagree because “it’s the same person all the time”, Peterson says you might lack imagination both in your approach and your rituals (you can use your imagination and play if you have a willing partner, you shouldn’t restrict yourself from experiencing your sexual fantasies). Plus, sex is simply better with love than without.
- **Being more vulnerable doesn’t mean being weaker**: it means being more carefully honest.
- **Vulnerability is the basis for genuine intimacy and a stable and expanding relationship.**
- **It’s very hard to grow up without having children**: because you’re not mature until someone else clearly matters more than you do. As long as that other person is now something you would die or live for, you’re an adult (mature).

Note: I disagree with Peterson on this point. I agree with him that “sacrifice is the hallmark of maturity”. However, I also believe that the sacrifice can be for *something* that matters more than your immediate pleasure, gain, or gratification (such as a higher goal or mission). It doesn’t always necessarily need to be for a “someone” (such as kids).

- **It’s better to grow up—it’s better to be an adult than a teen**: because as a teen, much of you and your ability

is still potential and much of your life lacks autonomy. That flips when you become an adult. (Peterson says, "If you're an adult and you're mature and you tell the truth, then the world is a horizon of adventure—in a manner that's just not accessible to a teenager.)

#2: What makes a good husband?

Honesty and the capacity to listen, says Peterson.

He then goes on to describe the maternal and fraternal spirits:

- **Maternal Spirit**: represents, "Fundamentally, you're welcome here and this is your home and you're loved for who you are."
- **Fraternal Spirit**: represents, "You're not everything you could be and we want to see you develop and leave."

Peterson says that the patriarchal spirit encourages and fosters independence and the matriarchal spirit shelters, protects, and forgives. And, that both are crucially necessary.

So, the only way to get the balance right between the two spirits is by talking. (It takes knowing the child and constant communication.)

And, on the topic of having kids, a husband can take care of the wife and the infant while the mother primarily takes care of the child fundamentally (which is the approach Peterson took and recommends himself).

Episode #4: "Be Great"

- **Life is characterized by a fair bit of suffering. So, what will sustain your will to live (and, even further, protect you from the resentment and moral corruption that can be produced by suffering)?**: for a task like that, *meaning* is more suitable than happiness.
- **Meaning is found primarily through the voluntary adoption of responsibility**: one can find meaning in the love they have for their romantic/life partner, the relationship they establish with their children, their friendships, and so on (it doesn't always need to be business or career-related/focused).
- **Accept responsibility because it's the best option you have to justify yourself to yourself (which must be done)**: that acceptance of responsibility serves to atone for your sins, mistakes, and inadequacies and self-justification helps you survive in a life characterized by death and suffering.
- **You can find deep significance in your life through the decision to voluntarily bear your suffering and trudge uphill nonetheless**: and, there's something heroic about that, in the most fundamental sense.
- **You have to say to yourself, "I will do good nonetheless…Everyone great makes that decision…"**: "…So, make that decision because maybe you're great."

Moving on, Peterson says that if, as a woman, you're asking yourself (in regards to trusting your husband), "Well, why should I trust a man, especially when I have vulnerable children?"

The answer is: because you're courageous and that's the best thing to teach your children (courageous trust).

And, manifesting that courageous trust gives you the highest chance of getting your husband to reciprocate that (positive) behavior.

More main ideas from this section:

- **Paradise is a walled garden (the walls prevent the invitation of danger and serve as limits for the children)**: it's the man's job to put up the walls and make sure they're well-patrolled.
- **In marriage, do not punish behavior you wish to see repeated.**
- **Praise positive behavior**: and specify what exactly they did that you noticed they did well and want to see more of.

- **As a husband, your primary job is to protect your wife from exhaustion.**

Finally, when you lose intimacy with your wife as she's taking care of the child (particularly for the first nine months), you can get some of that attention from the baby (which is good for both of you and can even be taught to siblings of the child—they may lose some attention from their parents, but can gain some from the baby as well).

Negotiate with your wife so you both have time for each other during the initial period of infancy. And, make sure you negotiate that on an ongoing basis, going forward in your marriage.

Deprioritizing sexual intimacy with your partner is a very bad long-term strategy. You must consciously attend to the maintenance of romantic intimacy.

Here's what Peterson recommends:

- **Schedule one 90-minute session per week**: for discussing the domestic state and economy of the household and exchanging updates with one another.
- **Schedule two to three more 90-minute sessions per week**: for your romantic dates.

Lastly, Peterson's two rules of thumb:

1. Never sacrifice yourself to your children to the point where you resent them.
2. Don't let your children do anything that makes you dislike them.

Real-Life Applications

- **Educate yourself more because education is the pathway to the sharpness of mind that enables you to arm yourself:** we live in a sophisticated society today where the pen (social power) is almost always mightier than the sword (physical/coercive prowess).

Peterson uses the example that the alpha in the animal kingdom isn't always the one who's the biggest and/or the strongest.

Sometimes, such as in the case of chimpanzees (according to Peterson), it's the one with the most social power who rises to the top spot (due to having better social skills, more allies, and the least enemies).

Cons

- **Sometimes the series felt like a stage for Peterson to share his personal biases**

For example, he says, "If you work ten percent longer you make 40 percent more money…so there's part of the reason men make more money than women on average. It's because men work more hours…".

He goes into a controversial perspective (regarding why he believes we don't live in a male-dominated society) that could've been saved for one of his YouTube videos.

But, he still ties his message back into more of his valuable main points, going on to say, "Any sensible boss is gonna be looking for the person who goes the extra mile…" which ties into his *Beyond Order* Rule 4 on how to become invaluable in a workplace (which has some truths to it, so long as you remember to combine that hard work and self-tasking with solid power-awareness).

- **Sometimes felt like he put his morality above the need for making persuasive arguments**

Which, granted, if you're coming to him for advice, it's perfectly fair for him to simply state his advice and leave it up to you if you want to follow it or not.

Still, some moments felt like a power-over approach of "here's what I believe and you should listen because if you disagree, you're obviously wrong" rather than a more power-through approach of "here are my thoughts and here's why I recommend this over the alternative options".

One example of this is when he says, "Some people say, 'I don't go to church because their beliefs don't match mine.'" And, his response to people who hold this attitude is, "Who the hell cares about your beliefs?"

Keep in mind that he's talking to young men in this lecture series, most likely teenagers who haven't firmly settled on any beliefs yet and may benefit from a little more open-mindedness. So, he might be right in delivering a little "shock attitude" if he thinks it might wake them up.

And, he does later provide what he believes are the benefits of going to church (the intellectual and spiritual benefit, as well as the development of character through the attainment of more responsibility—such as if you notice that a church is failing or becoming corrupt, you can take it upon yourself to do something about it…and I agree with that, one less value-taking institution could almost always do the world some good.)

But, as someone who was hoping for the more scientific side of Jordan Peterson with the eloquent frame control to support his points and beliefs, I was disappointed to hear him share ideas that could be valuable, but then put in minimal effort highlighting what makes them valuable at times.

- **Sometimes jumps around too much**

For example, what starts off as a discussion regarding productive generosity and the giving tendencies of hyper-empathic types then jumps into heavy talk about the distinction between conscientiousness and agreeableness from a personality perspective (which feels like too big of a jump into a topic that sounded more like theory than practical information).

Then, Peterson jumps again, this time into the correlations of those two ideas with success in enterprises (which feels like something that should've been saved for another section on ambition and business accomplishment).

And then, from there, he diverts into a tangent about how these two cardinal personality traits seem to correlate to success in managers.

Moments like this made it feel like the interview style they went for was counterproductive for the viewers who paid for this series in order to learn (and, maybe a mini-course would've been better, or at least providing lesson notes so learners avoid getting lost in the surrounding genius of a mind like Jordan Peterson :).

- **Sometimes seems to recommend naive self-help solutions**

Most notably is when he ignores exceptions to the general rules.

One case is when he says, “You have to assume that there isn’t anything better that can happen than what happens if you tell the truth, no matter what happens.”

And, that ignores the exceptions (of which, there are exceptions to everything) such as utilitarian value-giving or Machiavellian value-giving (which may include white-lying, strategic lying, or strategic lying by omission, see here another example).

Peterson says, “The adventure that would occur if you dwelled in the truth would be so overwhelming that it would justify all the suffering.” And, maybe he’s right.

The question is: why create *unnecessary* suffering?

That’s the exception that Peterson seems to miss—the cases where lying can be value-giving (albeit those cases are rare and Peterson is totally right that honesty is far more often the best way to go).

Learn more on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

- **No links to studies, papers, or research**

Peterson sometimes references studies, numbers, and data, none of which the platform gives any links for.

So, it’s much more difficult for one to read the research for themself (especially when he says things like “evidence that I think is quite compelling” for a statistic that sounds debatable—I would’ve been curious to take a look for myself in those cases).

- **Sometimes shared what felt like basic information rather than the usual Jordan Peterson gold**

However, with the target audience being young men, that’s understandable (and, possibly even to be expected).

And yet, I was still hoping for more.

An example is when he says that a sensible, sophisticated woman doesn’t want a man who only has status or resources. She wants a man who’s competent enough to attain those things (which is a much better deal than a “useless man” who, for example, simply inherited his status and resources).

Well, that much we can say is probably easily comprehensible to the more advanced young men listening.

So, if you’re reading around TPM (and that’s the audience this review is being written for), then you’re probably looking for more than that (foundational) information.

But, unfortunately, Peterson ends his point right there and moves on to a new one (discussing hypergamy).

So, what about sharing some suggestions on *how* a man can raise his competence beyond the standard advice (such as getting a job that demands you improve your skills)?

Why not recommend the young men watching to go Google “assertiveness training programs” or “assertiveness training therapy” so they can refine the greatest tool in their toolbelt for conquering their dragons (their communication)?

Peterson shares a lot of great insights on what to do. But, until he goes deeper into the “how”, it often feels like surface-level advice (to me).

- **Confusing (possibly inaccurate) information**

Peterson says:

> **Peterson**: "Saying 'no' is an act of aggression…'No' means, 'Stop doing that or something you do not like will absolutely, 100 percent happen to you…and so, 'no' and [integrated] aggression, those are pretty much exactly the same thing."

I disagree because I believe it depends on how the "no" is delivered.

If it's delivered too passively, your counterpart may not even take it seriously (in which case, there isn't even the unstated threat of negative judgment from the passive party because the receiver doesn't interpret it as a "real no"—and they might just walk all over you as a result).

On the other hand, "no" can also be delivered from a place of total self-interest (even going so far as selfishness), in which case it would be characterized as an act of aggression given that the sub-communication is that the aggressor's wants, rights, and needs prevail over their counterpart's.

However, there is also a third option. A "no" can be delivered from a place of fairness, self-love, and self-respect, believing that both parties have wants, rights, and needs and using "no" to respectfully draw boundaries.

I think that Peterson knows this (and might've only said he believe's "no" is an act of aggression to keep his analogy going that "men should become monsters").

But, there's also a chance that his definition or association with the word "aggression" is different from most (in which case I wish he would've clarified it) or that we simply disagree here.

- **Sometimes seemed to allow anger to interrupt his teachings**

There were cases where his teachings seemed to turn into ranting, causing the lecture to lose some of its value as he neglected to put effort into making arguments that were fundamentally persuasive.

One example is when he says:

> **Peterson**: "Do you want someone to be a mother for your children, assuming you want children? And, if you don't want children, well, you probably will and if you don't you're either deluded or immature."

A pretty bold statement, in my opinion, that made me eager to hear his reasoning behind it.

However, his reasons why a young man should want (and eventually have) kids are:

- **The planet is not overpopulated**: so you can do it and we have the capacity on earth for it (which shares why one *could* do it, not necessarily why one *should* do it)
- **He says, "Every one of your ancestors reproduced in an unending procession lasting three-and-a-half billion years. And, they're all wrong and you're right? It's like, I don't think so."**: feels less like a well-thought-out reason and more like a "side-step as the judge" frame (judging the person [people] as possibly stubborn and/or closed-minded rather than addressing their arguments)
- **He then says, "And, if you're not sensible enough to see why a stable, monogamous relationship with children is the right outcome, then you've been badly served by your culture. You're narcissistic, shallow, immature, underdeveloped, and diluted, at least in part by your own hedonism."**: once again, feels more like a "side-step as the judge" frame than well-grounded reasoning.

Peterson then says to "deviate from monogamy at your own peril because there's a price to pay" (paraphrased).

I only wish he would have dived into that price at least briefly to better outline his philosophy for the viewers watching who are willing to learn.

Pros

- **Lots of valuable, philosophical wisdom**

As expected from a legend like Peterson :).

One moment where I struggled to keep up was when Peterson shared his recapitulation of the works of Jung, Nietzsche, and Freud in relation to integrating one's shadow for better living (recommended by Peterson as a method for reducing the risk of possible violent outbursts of aggression—which can happen when one wants to realize their fantasies that spawn from repressed negative emotions, such as feelings of resentment or revenge).

- **Engaging (and motivational) explanations of evolutionary psychology**

Peterson mostly shares ideas we've heard before from high-quality literature in evolutionary psychology (especially if you've taken a peek at TPM's "best of" list for it).

But, hearing it explained differently (and from the mind of a genius with the aim of making you a better man) causes the information to resonate and sink in deeper (at least for me).

Here's one example (and keep in mind that much of the added value is lost from the written format):

> **Peterson**: "…women often get a bad rap—especially, from people in the manosphere, so-called—for being hypergamous, which means mating across and up socioeconomic hierarchies. 'Cause [young] women have a preference for men who are about four years older than them, who are as well off or better off than they are. And, it's a female calibration mechanism to remediate the inequality placed on women in relationship to pregnancy and infant care. So, women take a vicious hit in terms of productivity when she becomes pregnant and has an infant, and so it's in her appropriate interest to find a man who can fill that gap. And, she's wired, so to speak, to look for someone approximately as competent as her or more competent, and why wouldn't she? What, she wants another child around? That's not helpful…and so you don't wanna be another child."

A nice little kick in the behind to those listening who need it as a wake-up call to "man up" and get going :).

- **Shares concepts from social science utilizing his "dragons, monsters & men" analogy**

And, that makes the learning process a bit more of a fun experience (albeit it sometimes makes the information less practical and more confusing at times).

For example, rather than simply explaining the stereotype content model (high-warmth, high-power matrix), he says that women want a "tamable monster". A man who's aggressive enough to keep the *real* monsters away, yet agreeable enough to be good with kids, good with her, and willing to share.

Peterson also goes even further, mentioning that in the book, *A Billion Wicked Thoughts*, the female pornographic fantasy is of this very type of man (a high-status man who's also dominant, the 50 Shades of Grey's male love interest being a prime example or, in the real world, an "alpha provider"/"providing lover") who the woman is able to lock down for herself ("tame").

- **Many main ideas are highlighted for you**

The editing team did their best to point out what they believe are some of the biggest takeaways from each episode and it helps with consumption as well as note-taking. (It in part also makes up for all of the jumping around.)

- **Peterson commits to the series fully, emotions and all**

It was a pleasure to watch Peterson at his most emotional and passionate moments in the series (and that made his points during those times all the more meaningful, persuasive, and engaging).

One particular moment where he began to tear up was when he said, "To say to an 18-year-old, 'You're OK the way

you are,' that just deflates them. It just deflates them. You say, 'You could be a lot more than you are. You could be so much more than you are that the boundaries of that are unimaginable.' That's a way better message to someone who's in despair."

- **Expands on wisdom from his books that align with the pillars of this website**

Which is always a treat to hear (especially when he gets passionate or emotional in his message).

One example is when he says that "there is little difference between the capacity for destruction (aggression) and strength of character".

And, he continues on to say that if you don't develop that capacity:

> **Peterson**: "…you can't move forward…you can't put limits on [value-taking] Machiavellians, you can't oppose narcissists, you can't emerge unscathed from people who use empathy in a manipulative way."

Review

Based on the trailer released by Daily Wire+, I was expecting a seated lecture series. But, it turned out to be more of an interview series.

The difference is that, with this format, it's far more disorganized and may seem a little "too unscripted" sometimes for your personal taste.

But, it is good information if one can exercise the patience and diligence to filter through for the wisdom and absorb it.

Also read:

- 12 Rules For Life: Summary, Review & Criticism
- Beyond Order: Summary, Review & Criticism
- Maps of Meaning by Jordan Peterson: Review

Or get the online series.

The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* author Deepak Chopra teaches readers his formula to achieve success and fulfillment through a mix of spirituality, positive thinking, and law of attraction.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. The Law of Pure Potentiality
  - 2. The Law of Giving
  - 3. The Law of Karma
  - 4. The Law of Least Effort
  - 5. The Law of Intention and Desire
  - 6. The Law of Detachment
  - 7. The Law of Dharma
  - Follow Your Personal Calling
  - How to Enjoy True Self & Ego Dissolution
  - Embrace Your Current Situation
  - Practice Defenselessness
  - Detach From Your Desires to Make Them a Reality
  - Think Positive to Get What You Want
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
  - Naive self-help
  - Unscientific, Untested, Unproven
  - It's Maxims, Not Laws. These "Laws" Don't Hold
  - Unpalatable Mix of Spirituality & Materialism
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Let go of your ego as a separate identity
- Join the connectedness of the energy that underpins the whole universe
- When you connect to divine energy, you can get anything you want

Full Summary

These are the Seven Spiritual Laws of Success:

1. The Law of Pure Potentiality

We are part of the divine force that created the universe.

That gives us infinite potential.
To find it, practice non-judgment, meditate thirty minutes twice a day and connect with divine energy.

2. The Law of Giving

Give what you want to receive.
Deepak Chopra invites readers to give gifts and happily receive gifts in exchange. Keep that wealth circulating and there will be more wealth for everyone.

Give to Get – Don't Save!

Deepak Chopra says that to get you need to give.

And saving money is a great way of interrupting the flow of giving and taking. Much better instead is to spend that money, let the flow go out.

My Note: Potentially Dangerous Advice
This is another idea with which I don't fully agree.
The concept of letting go of the need to save, enjoy life and give is great.
And so is the idea of spending for education and advancement. That indeed might pay off big time.
But the idea that saving "stops the flow" and spending is the best way to get is nonsense.

3. The Law of Karma

We have a choice in every moment to plant a good seed or a bad seed. But whatever we choose, it's not without consequences.
The universe we will return in kind as we reap what we sow.

4. The Law of Least Effort

Grass doesn't try to grow and birds don't try to fly. They just fly.
Accept people for who they are, don't try to change them. And accept your current situation for what it is.

5. The Law of Intention and Desire

Decide what you want in life and who you want to be.
Then think positively about it and they will come to you.

6. The Law of Detachment

We must be passionate in our pursuits and yet detached from the outcome.
Similarly, do not force solutions but allow them to spontaneously emerge.

7. The Law of Dharma

To give is to get.

Help Others to Find Their Life's Purpose

To obey the law of Dharma Deepak Chopra basically paraphrases John Fitzerald Kennedy:

You should not ask the universe what it can do for you, but ask what you can do for the universe.

And a great way to give to the universe is by helping others.

There is some job, task, or calling out there that allows you to both leverage your talent and help others.

Once you find it, you'll be able to tap into the unlimited source of energy and joy that is the divine energy.

Follow Your Personal Calling

A big question in The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success is:

> If you had all the money and all the time in the world, what would you do?

Deepak Chopra says that we have a unique set of gifts and experiences that we can leverage to give something to the world.

And have a moral obligation to answer that question. Because once we answer it, then we can dedicate our lives to it and give the fruits of our talent and passion to the world.

How to Enjoy True Self & Ego Dissolution

If you have had the experience of deep peacefulness and connectedness you have already experienced your true self.

It can happen sometimes when you lay beneath the stars, or when you go for a walk in the woods.

That's the moment when you realize that you are not a separate entity from all that is around you, but that you are all part of the same interconnected energy.

That's the infinite source of energy that powers the whole universe. And when you realize that, you also realize that your Self is equally unlimited.

When you tap into the source of infinite energy that powers the universe, you can unlock the potential to fulfill your life's desires.

How to Dissolve Your Ego

But to connect with the divine energy, you must first let go of your ego as a separate entity.

You do it by meditating.
Focus your attention on your breathing and observe your thoughts without judgment.

Little by little you will become more peaceful until your ego dissolves and you reconnect with your true Self.

Also read:

- **The Untethered Soul**
- **The Power of Now**

Embrace Your Current Situation

Deepak Chopra notices that we always have a drive to seek something better.

But we're never really content, and when we get what we wanted, new problems arise.

The solution, he says, is to embrace our current situation and be content with it. Whatever it is that you are "lacking", you are not really lacking anything if you stop focusing on it and focus on being content instead.

And every bad situation can teach us something if we approach it with a positive mindset.

Practice Defenselessness

Becoming defenseless means stopping trying to defend your idea, convincing others and trying to change people's

minds.

In an ideal defenseless conversation, people would share their point of view without having any interest in "winning" or convincing the other.
Much more peaceful, and more enriching.

Detach From Your Desires to Make Them a Reality

The author says that when you think too much about something you want, you will rarely get it.

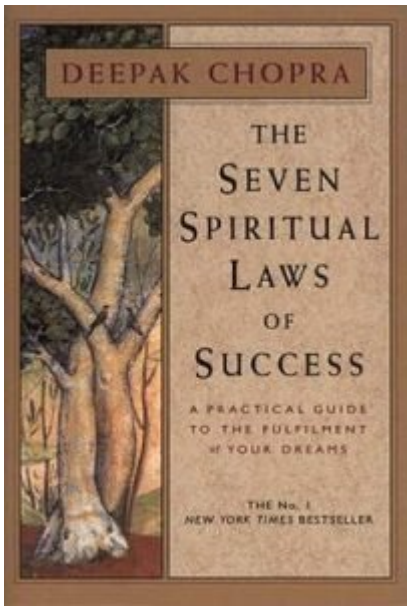
It's because you communicate a distrust of the universe and the universe doesn't have a chance to step in.
It's indeed when people stop to pursue something so eagerly that they often find it. It's because finally the universe has the chance to step in and provide it for you.

My Note: This is Unscientific at Best
I don't agree one bit with this.
A strong drive coupled with incessant and smart action is the best way to get what you want.

Think Positive to Get What You Want

Thinking positive will help you get what you want by spreading positive vibes into the universe.

The author indeed suggests that many don't get what they want because they think in negative terms.
If they want a new job they pollute their mind and the universe with thoughts of how much they dislike their current job.
But you must stop that. Catch yourself doing it and change your negative thoughts into positive ones immediately.



Real-Life Applications

Conquer Fear of Death With Ego-Lessness
When you feel connected to the universe you will not fear death anymore.

Give Before Asking
I can't stress this enough.
Asking without giving is the worst sin in social skills and wealth accumulation alike. That's entitlement mentality as its purest.
Think of how you can give more and better instead.

CONS

First and foremost:

Naive self-help

Anything based solely or mainly on the law of attraction without any attention to strategy, self-development, and practical life optimization is at high risk of being ineffective and naive self-help.

The laws of dharma and karma and the concept that the more you give the more you get are at high risk of turning you into a giving sucker when you make the mistake of taking them to an extreme and meet the many life's takers. I highly recommend the article on enlightened collaboration to set up win-wins that don't turn you into a sucker.

Read here to inoculate yourself against BS:

- Naive self-help

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

And a few more downsides include:

Unscientific, Untested, Unproven

Obviously, but if you picked up this book and like it, chances are that you're OK with that :),

It's Maxims, Not Laws. These "Laws" Don't Hold

The laws format reminded me of "The 48 Laws of Power", which has become popular in good part for using the word "laws" as a marketing ploy, while instead listing a few good principles which are not laws.

The proof that the laws are not true

I like the idea of Karma, but a little bit of historical knowledge and a modicum of observation spirit will easily dispel this law as nothing more than wishful thinking.

I'm not aware of any universal law that stopped Genghis Khan from building the biggest empire in the world founded on torture and rape.
And I haven't seen any Karma stopping cruel individuals from wreaking havoc on unsuspecting and naive victims one after the other.
No, there is no universal Karma.
The Karma is us, my friends.
It's up to each one of us to stand for good. Don't expect no f*cking Karma to do stop evil and do the job for us.

Unpalatable Mix of Spirituality & Materialism

The author says that when you connect with the universe's power, then you can get anything you want.

Be spiritual development, success or… Wealth.

I find this outlook on spirituality to be quite poor, egocentric and ethnocentric. Very similar to the good old law of attraction, The Secret style. Just tap into that source and here's your money.

PROS

Good on Meditation

The meditation part is good.
I particularly liked the idea of not being afraid of death once you let go of your ego as separated from the whole.

Review

The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success is a mix of the law of attraction, bland spirituality, and the power of positive thinking.

Personally, I wasn't very impressed and I'm not the biggest fan of this ilk of self-help.

However, Irina in the forum made a great point:

> Practicing defencelessness in times of social media is a gold principle, it remembers me of your most recent post, about the enlightened individualism, in which you emphasize the importance of not putting celebrities or brands, for example, above us, as individuals.
>
> *Serena Irina*

I think she's right.
Personally, I was very put off by the law of attraction, especially when used to "get rich" in what seemed to be a mix of fake enlightenment and spiritualism, and good old greed.
But, otherwise, there are some golden nuggets in *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

Tom Torero: What Happens When You Come Across As A Taker (Case Study)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Tom Ralis, in art Tom Torero, is a late pick-up artist and dating coach.

He was active in the pick-up and coaching community and wrote several books, including "Conversation King" that we reviewed here.

Tom Torero took his own life after he had been "canceled" and publicly shamed.

Contents

- INTRO
- Danya Hajjaji VS Tom Torero: the cancel culture attack
  - Surviving cancel culture attacks
- Mistake #1: Tom Torero attracts hate by self-framing as a predator
  - Tom uses taker frames (use win-win frames instead)
  - Tom brags
  - Tom uses widely off-putting de-humanizing approaches
- Mistake #2: Creepy Vibes
  - Bragging of Underage Pick-Ups: Be Smarter of What You Share
  - Morbid factor: Have a healthier approach to sex / recording
- Mistake #3: Asshole marketer
  - Upselling pillow talk: respect people's privacy & their intimate sharing
  - Narcissism: sell processes, not your persona
  - Manipulative approaches: teach how to grow instead
- RIP Tom Torero

INTRO

First thing:

Sucks to hear of Tom Torero's tragedy.

I wish he had weathered the canceling storm, I wish he was still here, and I'd have gladly spoken to him if it could have helped.

So "it sucks", "sad to hear" and "rest in peace" come first.

That being said, this article contends that **Tom Torero called the rage upon himself**.

He was a poor social strategist.

And, in the spirit of sharing the full truth and nothing but the truth, Tom Torero came across as a value-taker, gave off narcissistic vibes, and sometimes "creep vibes".

Let's dig deeper.

Danya Hajjaji VS Tom Torero: the cancel culture attack

Danya Hajjaji wrote an article on Tom Torero.

I can't find it anymore, maybe it's been pulled, but I read it some time ago.
Edit: it's here, didn't find it as it was drawn out by lots of results after Tom's death.

It was a scathing article, and it picked the absolute worst of Tom Torero.
Obviously, Tom came out of it poorly.
I did get the impression it was biased, overly critical, and very SJW / cancel culture style.

As far as I can remember, Hajjaji said that she contacted Stripe/PayPal to let them know / complain / inquire on why they were serving such a (presumably bad) character.
And as far as I can remember, some of those payment providers took action against Tom, so he was probably cut off from funding.

Some people have been quick to link Tom Torero's suicide to the article.
And the link is certainly possible, if not likely.

However, it's also a case of jumping to conclusions.
I wouldn't necessarily say that "it was the article" -impossible for most to say it-.
It seems to me that Tom had already pulled his videos from YouTube and seemed he was already rejecting his previous lifestyle -not sure why-.

Surviving cancel culture attacks

We have several resources here on that:

- Surviving shaming attacks (PU)
- SJWs attack on Julien Blanc (free article)
- Self-defense frames (PU)

And on the forum as well:

- Navigating cancel culture: my main advice is to "wait it out" because it's a blizzard storm that will clear
- Cancel culture: some reflections on "why" it even exists

Mistake #1: Tom Torero attracts hate by self-framing as a predator

Power University has one dedicated lesson for takers.

One of the signs is:

Takers use takers' language.

Simple no?

Torero uses taker's language, and **people don't like takers** (and for good reasons).

Now let's see if we can learn anything from it and prevent more of the same.

It sucks to say this of someone who's not here anymore.

But while everyone now sings praises -could be very well deserved as far as I know-, we also gotta look at the full story.

And the full story is that **Tom Torero spoke like a low-vale predator** (yes, not even a high value one).

Maybe Tom was a good guy.

And people who met him say he was a nice fella.

Which makes his attitude even worse: why on earth would you want to frame your work in value-taking terms?

It sucks to say, but **Tom gave the ammo to his attackers** who wanted to frame him as a psychopathic predator.

Tom uses taker frames (use win-win frames instead)

The article goes down harder (later), but even just looking at the smaller yellow flags you start seeing a trend.

Says Tom of his trip to Minsk:

> **Tom**: "This is like *Ocean's Eleven*," he said with his cheeky grin. "We're **robbing the casino** in broad daylight."

Why was he "robbing" anything?

Why not "a great place to meet women"?
Or "a great place to seduce", "romance", or even more self-serving was fine, like "have the adventures (or sex) of your life".

I remember from the article Tom said of his upcoming trip as a ski instructor to Switzerland:

> **Tom**: Lock up your daughters

Why should anyone lock up their daughters?

Think about that frame.

It frames seduction, sex, a short (or long)-term relationship as something that is bad for the seduced.

Sure, it's a stock sentence and a "fun" one -I have sung and smiled and had a good time at those lyrics many times with AC/DC's song-.
But you still want to be careful with it -both in saying it out loud and, probably even more, in *having* that mindset and attitude-.

You may mean it in a fun and carefree way where you actually want to say "good times are coming", but it's too

easy to take it the opposite way.

If I had a daughter, my answer to that would be “Why should I lock up my daughter, because you’re dragging your poor ugly ass over here?”.
And I wouldn’t think of that because Tom is bad, poor, or ugly, but because any self-respecting man would push back against someone who frames himself as coming over to *take* and make my daughter worse off.

And again:

> **Tom**: (commenting on a post-intimacy recording) She said ‘when you approached me, I was nervous. It was like a wolf in a forest”. And that is the best thing any girl could ever say to you.

Again, he self-frames with the imagery of the predator.

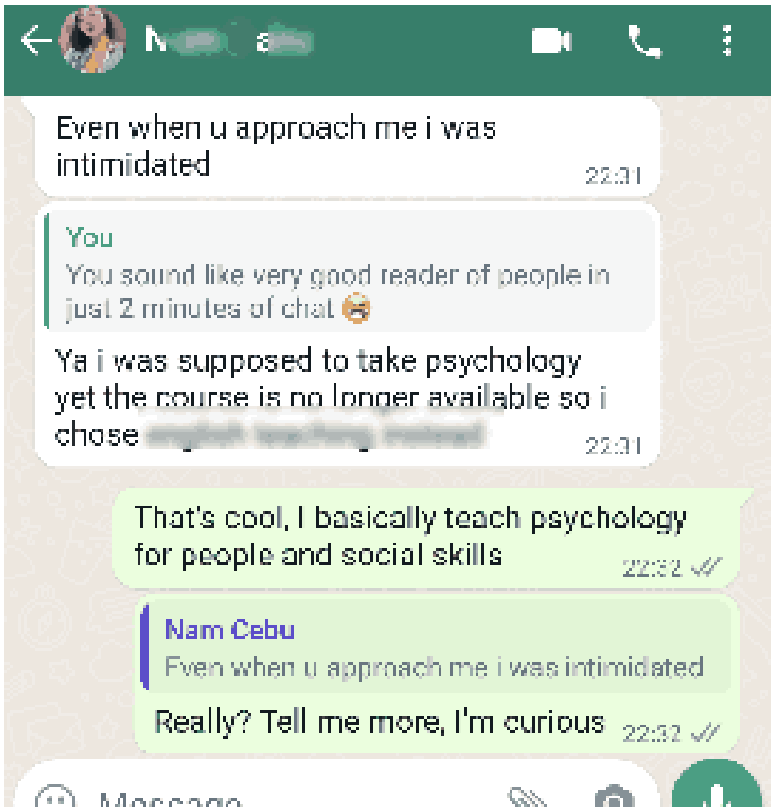
We talk about predator-prey dynamic in Seduction University.
And they can be very seductive and effective… *In the right contexts.*

Torero does not put it into context though.

Plus, is that the “BEST thing ANY girl could EVER say to you”?
It certainly does feel Tom Torero gets a kick from being a wolf.
The way he talks about **it feels creepy and like a loser who tries too hard to be an alpha male**.

None of these red flags, per se, are huge.
But put all of them together, and you don’t exactly get the best impression of this guy.

Plus, it’s not even good game.
Whenever it happens to me, I consider as “not-so-good game”:



> **Her**: even when you approach me, I was intimidated

Sure, this is better than coming across as a too nice guy, submissive, or passive.

But **intimidating women is not great game because most women who feel intimidated or fearful do NOT reply** (unless they're major risk takers or unless you manage to change dynamics during the interaction or in text/calls).
Most women who fear you upon approach will move away and disperse in the crowd whenever they can -and *then*, again, you look like a creep who's harassing people-.

Also red:

- Cold approach power dynamics
- How to meet girls

> Cold Approach Power Dynamics

Tom brags

To see the bragging, you need some power awareness.

However, once you develop that, you realize Tom has a constant stream of covert bragging, humble bragging, and even one-ups and social climbs on his own audience.

The constant feel you get is one of:

- Look at me, who I banged
- Look at this broad I banged (am I not good?)
- If you're not doing the same, you're a loser

And that bragging also frames the women he meets as nameless "targets", which leads us to the next point:

Tom uses widely off-putting de-humanizing approaches

Such as, when people talk about "targets", "HB", etc. etc.

Again, of course, let's not be stupid or phony here.
It's OK to play the number's game, and it's even the best approach when you're going after "top of the funnel" results.
And when you play the number game, or whenever you have zero interest in romantic relationships, then it's fair to talk about women in impersonal terms.

Also, fucking the "target" is part of the motivation and an important step -it's been for me for a while and in part it's still there and it's normal-.

But as for everything: balance.

If fucking the targets is all you can talk about, then it's fair for any reader to think of you as a psychopath and a taker.
And it's a fair assessment, too: de-humanization is a known step towards malicious and harmful behavior (see Baumeister and Zimbardo).

Mistake #2: Creepy Vibes

Some examples that, for many who came across Tom Torero, felt like "creep red flags":

Bragging of Underage Pick-Ups: Be Smarter of What You Share

Tom Torero had a thing for young girls.

And it's TOTALLY fair -and "normal"- to like whatever age you like.

However, don't be fucking stupid about it, you must know that *bragging* about your pick-ups of 16-17 years old is not going to sit well with a good chunk of readers.

And yes, it might be "legal" wherever you were, but again, the same: **legality is different than morality** and what's legal is different than what's well-received.
And yes, you may not "care" about morality and you'd be right that morality is subjective and shouldn't limit your freedom.
But it's a major concern when it comes to what you share publicly, *how* you share, and what you seem to be *bragging* about.

Women are even more likely to be turned off by it.

For example, Berlusconi was brought down in large part by underage sex.
His wife said something to this tune around her divorce decision: "until when it was other women, I closed an eye. When it came to underage girls, I drew the line".

Basic emotional intelligence tells you that.

And basic emotional intelligence tells you there's a big difference between "doing it" -often kind of ignored if you're high power and women like you-, "bragging about it", "bragging about it while you're framed as a taker" and "selling the tapes recorded without consent".

Morbid factor: Have a healthier approach to sex / recording

As far as I remember, Tom's products upsold the "after sex" talk.

I'm not sure if he also sold the actual sex recordings, probably not.
Edit: the article says that the sex tape recordings were part of the offer.

But he talked about it, and the way he talked about felt "off".
It frankly did feel like he had a sort of morbid approach to it.

Again, let's not be phony -no "saints" here-: albeit it's not necessarily my thing it's fair and normal to want to record sex.
I once had a one-night stand girl recording a doggie style we had. And besides mild joviality that it was a first-time thing for me, I thought little of it: some people are just into that -but that doesn't mean it's OK to sell it! Do you think it'd be cool if that girl sold my recording with her?-.

And it's also fair and normal to have a strong emotional reaction to sex -or to recordings of it-.
When recording for SU some of the sex recordings were SO powerfully arousing to listen to.

But again, don't be fucking stupid about it.
Don't talk it up, to begin with.
Why are you even mentioning it, as a dating coach?
You're a dating coach, you're not selling your sex tape, you're selling *how to get there*, the seduction.

Who gives a flying F about Tom's Torero sex recording?

And it's at least a moral grey area to sell it without the girl's consent -even it's only an audio-.

Again from my point of view of someone who also shares learning material on dating and seduction: I do not want to sell my audience the sex itself, I *only mention if it's relevant to the seduction*.

And I don't want my audience to be interested in that either. Porn sites sell tape recordings. Dating coaches do not.
And it would be weird voyeurism, on the audience's part, too: why should anyone care about my sex? Mind your own. Care about how to get there so you can do the same and have beautiful sessions / intimacy / relationships.
So I *remove* the sex.

A good mindset is: record it, enjoy it if you like… But don't fucking sit on it like it's this cool great thing you've done.
It's a recording, just a damn recording, and life happens while you waste time on past memorabilia. Life is now, live it, let go of tapes.
Sex is natural, no biggies about it, it's much healthier to see it that way.

Mistake #3: Asshole marketer

Torero's products also had red flags.

Upselling pillow talk: respect people's privacy & their intimate sharing

Torero upsold the "after sex talk".

I might be wrong here.
But *as far as I've seen and remember* from seeing Torero's work, there was no mention to:

- Protecting the woman's privacy
- Being "not cool" to share the most intimate conversation

Many dating coaches try to spin their recordings as "helping men" and "doing nothing wrong to women".
It's a convenient narrative, but it fails to take ownership and comes across as sneaky.

Because **it is NOT cool to record without consent and share** it.
Especially not when someone is opening up with private and intimate information -which is exactly most likely to happen after sex-.

Just be a man about it and fucking admit it: it's not cool.

It's a betrayal of trust.

To teach, sometimes we gotta do what we gotta do, but there are *ways* and *attitudes* to go about it.
And you can still do it while protecting people's privacy.

And YOUR attitude is also important.
From this SU's point of view, I almost literally beg the audience to help us keep the recording within a small circle.

Now, use some emotional intelligence and look at it from a woman's perspective:

When she goes through your work, she will put herself in the woman's shoes.
And what will she think when you're selling those tapes, that you took without her consent, with her voice and words in it, while sharing her most vulnerable self?

She will think you're a SOB.
And she wouldn't be wrong.

Narcissism: sell processes, not your persona

Sandra Brown says in "Women Who Love Psychopaths":

> **The websites devoted to 'seduction techniques' are an example of varying levels of psychopathy** *and are now being taught online to others. Anyone wanting to do this to another person, by definition is high in*

> *psychopathic traits.*

I don't fully agree.
But she's not *fully* wrong, either.
Tom Torero doesn't strike me as a psychopath. But **Tom Torero struck as a narcissist who wasn't Machiavellian enough to avoid coming across as a selfish, low-empathy narcissist**.

To sell his "Stealth Seduction", Tom says:

> Watch me during that magic year

See the narcissistic frame?
Why me, as a potential buyer, should I want to watch *you*?
May be, if I deem you as good enough, I want to *learn* from you, so tell me you're going to *teach* me, not that I should *watch* you.

That is an approach that makes women -and many men- recoil because it's most likely to be a taker's approach.

Again, let's not be stupid or phony: narcissism helps seduction, *some* narcissism is actually good, and there's nothing inherently wrong with it.
I certainly wouldn't score low on a narcissistic scale.

But, again, don't be fucking stupid about it.
One, rein in your narcissism, it's childish after a certain point.
And two, don't fucking sell me your narcissistic needs.

Manipulative approaches: teach how to grow instead

Finally, Torero self-framed as a manipulator.

According to the article, he said:

> **Tom**: "Real dark triad guys and pimps that we'll talk about, they really use drama and basically getting the girl addicted. Addicted so she can't leave you. "We gotta talk about it, cause these are techniques that I used."

And on Machiavellianism:

> **Tom**: Machiavellianism is the definition of game. It means being manipulative, playing people, very, very calibrated to human psychology

So a guy like this posts "lock up your daughter" and you'd wonder why people may get a bad reaction to it?

These are quotes from the article, and we may have to wonder whether they're verbatim or extrapolated to make him look bad.

But still, if you think about the name of the product: "stealth seduction".

I'd have to wonder: why stealth?

Be a fucking man, take your shots, date high-power… And you don't need "stealth" anything.

Because… That other genuine approach is also far, far more effective.

RIP Tom Torero

This post is very critical of Tom.

The PUA community did what everyone does in these cases: take up arms for a “fellow” coach and gush beloved farewells.

Including people who broke off with Tom when he was alive while showing evidence of Tom’s taker behavior:

So that’s **red flag #1**. I had a look through his website and YouTube channel and failed to find any mention of Nick Krauser. It seemed like the entire LDM was invented by Tom and a couple of unnamed daygmers that are occasionally alluded to. When he did mention my name on our **Beginners Daygame** video he seemed to choke on it. Have you seen the end of Back To The Future where Marty McFly is gradually fading out of the family photo? That’s how I felt. **Red flag #2**.

He didn’t send me a copy of the finished book. **Red flag #3**.

So finally I’m in Prague in March and a fellow daygamer shows me his copy of Street Hustle. I flip to the introduction and don’t find any line of acknowledgement for all my work. I flip to the glossary and see every concept in game is attributed to either Tom or nobody, including a few which clearly aren’t his concepts. That discussion on Facebook was ignored. Not a single mention of me in the book. Not a single recognition of the ideas taken from me, the aphorisms I gave him for the book, or the editing work I did. Not once. **Red flag #4**.

So it’s for this reason that I am announcing I am no longer associated with Tom Torero. It’s not the only reason, but it’s

Snapshot of PUA Krauser’s blog

> **PUA Krauser**: (angry and disappointed for Tom’s behavior annonce they’re no longer “associated”. Krauser he provides evidence of Tom incorporating copious and valuable editing feedback, without giving any credit)

We have a different approach at TPM.

It sucks that he’s dead, but death doesn’t whitewash all else.

And whitewashing doesn’t provide much learning, either.

So we went for an analysis that at least provides a learning opportunity.

Those who canceled Tom saw something not cool in there, including probably also in the character, and they weren’t *totally* wrong.

This doesn’t justify the attacker’s actions: too strong, nasty, biased and, unluckily, too effective.

It’s also a final indictment of Tom as a human being.
We never met him and it truly sucks it went the way it did.

In a way, I write it with certain anger.
As if I was yelling at him because it could have been avoided.

It’s as if you were yelling at someone you like but hurt themself: “look at all these stupid mistakes, why the fuck couldn’t have been more careful -and straight and genuine-, and you’d still be around”.

RIP Tom.
And may the readers of this article learn to do and be better.

The Secret Is Nonsense: Critical Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Secret is a new age self-help book based on the law of attraction and teaches readers that to get what you want, you need to think about what you want and believe that you will get it. Then, the universe will give it to you.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Secret Revealed: Your Mind Is A Magnet
  - The 3 Rules Of The Secret
  - How to Put "The Secret" Into Action
  - Use Visualization
  - The Secret to Health: Think Positively
  - The Spiritual Side of "The Secret" Says You're Immortal
- Real Life Applications
- CRITICISM
- The Secret Review

Bullet Summary

1. **You attract what you think**, because our minds are magnets that vibrate with the universe
2. **Be specific about what you want**
3. **Release your thought into the universe**, albeit there are no exact details on how to do that
4. **Believe you will get it**
5. **Act as if you already have what you want**

Full Summary

About The Author:
Rhonda Byrne is an Australian television producer turned new age author.
She has written a number of books, most of them based on the now famous (infamous?) law of attraction.

The Secret Revealed: Your Mind Is A Magnet

Our mind is a magnet, says Byrne.

It emits and receives frequencies from the Universe.

Because our minds are magnets, **the more we think about something, the more of it we will attract**.

It's exactly like watching TV that receives signals. And to change channel -and change your life- you need to change your thoughts.

As a matter of fact, says the author, your current life is a reflection of your past thoughts.

Sometimes we don't even realize we've been thinking negatively.

It can happen with deep-seated fears, for example.

That's the case with people who make a lot of money and they lose it.

Rhonda says it's because, deep down, they were afraid of losing money. And it eventually manifested in reality.

My Note: be skeptical about these unproven claims
Actually, they're quite proven… To NOT be reliable.

Use Positive Sentence Structures

The universe doesn't differentiate between a sentence structured in the negative form and an actual negative thought.

So for example "I don't want to flunk the test" becomes "I will flunk the test.

So watch out for how you structure your thoughts.

Stop Thinking Negatively

It takes more than just one thought to manifest it in reality.

But some people have patterns of thoughts, and often negative ones.

How do you know if you're thinking too negatively?

Byrne recommends you listen to your body.

Worrying and negative thinking brings tension and pain in your stomach or chest. That's actually a sign from the Universe to change your thinking ways.

Also read: how to stop worrying and start living.

The 3 Rules Of The Secret

The three rules of The Secret are extremely simple: you must ask, you must believe, and you then can receive.

So it's:

1. Ask
2. Believe
3. Receive

For some more tips on how to put that into actions, keep on reading:

How to Put "The Secret" Into Action

This is the structure to get what you want:

- **Ask**

Ask what you want, and state it clearly. Once is enough: asking too many times shows doubt.

- **Believe**

You must believe you will receive even before you actually receive it.

Then wait for the universe to serve it to you. Don't keep dwelling on what you want because worry and fear will only negatively affect your signal.

The stronger you believe, the quicker it will happen. It takes time to make a million USD because people (wrongly) believe it does take time.

- **Act as if you already have it**

Behave as if you're already in possession of what you asked.

Make plans around it, think about how you will use it, and interact with it. Build your life around and it will finally materialize.

- **Receive**

Now, well… Enjoy your "hard work" :).

Use Visualization

Visualizing how you want your life to be will increase the positive frequency of your transmitting mind.

Byrne recommends that at the end of the day you think about your day as you wanted it to be.

This way you attract success for the day after.

Visualization also helps you get your mind free of the worry on how you will achieve what you want and focuses instead on believing.

My Note: this can be dangerous wishful thinking
Especially if taken to the extreme of taking no actions whatsoever. And it's not much different if the only actions you take are to behave as if what you want will miraculously happen by itself.

The Secret to Health: Think Positively

Rhonda talks about the placebo effect, which is indeed a well-known, real, and researched phenomenon.

That's the proof of how the law of attraction also applied to health.

Diseases only stay in your body when you "trap" them with negative thoughts and conversations.

The secret, she says, is again to surround yourself with positive thoughts.

My Note: Fase "evidence"
This is not *wholly* wrong and a positive mind can indeed support a healthy bodily fight against the disease.
However, as Rhonda presents, it's snake oil salesmanship and, overall, false. Even potentially dangerous if people don't also seek more scientific treatment.
And if the placebo effect is proof that the law of attraction exists, what about all the limitations to its use and ower, and the (frequent) times it doesn't work?

Don't Fight What You Don't Want

The author suggests that instead of fighting against scenarios that we don't want, we should focus on what we want.

That's the most efficient strategy, because focusing on the problems only attracts more problems.

It could actually make sense somehow.

The Spiritual Side of "The Secret" Says You're Immortal

Byrne says that since we are made of energy, and energy cannot be destroyed, we are also somehow immortal.

We have always been and always will be.

Every answer, every idea one can conceive is out there in the Universe. You only need to reach it.

Real Life Applications

Think Positive

A conscious effort to think more positively throughout the day is certainly a good takeaway from The Secret book.

Drop Problems, Focus on Positive Change

The idea of focusing less on problems and more on what you want in life can actually be fantastic advise. Sometimes we make our problems bigger than what they are, or sometimes we can't easily change something. And maybe we don't have to.

Focus on what you want more in life and get to work on that instead.

CRITICISM

Overall, we cannot recommend this book.

The Secret is unscientific, unproven, and irrational.
It feels a lot like and a lot like a charlatan's way to make money off naive customers who want success, but not the hard work that success often requires.

If you enjoy The Secret, we highly recommend this long, but enlightening article on naive self-help:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

- **Dangerous advice on not taking action**

"The Secret" goes as far as to say that visualization is good because it focuses on the positive energy rather than on the *how* you will do it.

Albeit I believe you can -and should- set goals first without knowing (yet!) how you will reach them, completely disregarding the how and the actions is dangerous wishful thinking.

- **Unscientific (but spun and falsely presented as scientific)**

There are many great unscientific books out there.

Indeed, you don't need science to write an insightful text and you don't to say your theory is based on science if it's not.

That's one thing I didn't like about "The Secret".

It tries hard to sell as science what is not scientific.

- **Inductive Reasoning Fallacy**

The Secret is peppered with inductive reasoning fallacy.
Inductive reasoning fallacy says that because I saw something happen a few times, it must be a generalizable law.

Often, it is not (read Fooled by Randomness).

The Secret Review

"The Secret" is nothing new, and nothing more than the law of attraction.

It's been going around and around for decades now, and found its way into many popular self-help books.

For example, Think and Grow Rich espoused the law of attraction decades ago.

And popular self-help guru Tony Robbins also promotes it in some of his seminars and products.

However, other books and authors, including Tony Robbins and Napoleon hill have more wisdom than “The Secret”.
“The Secret” is *only* about the law of attraction and adds nothing more.
As a matter of fact, it’s potentially dangerous when it calls for not working hard, and for behaving as if you already own what you want.

That being said, if so many people liked it, maybe there are *some* good things in “The Secret”.
Eliminating negative thoughts and thinking positively makes you happier and more optimistic.
And that, in turn, makes it far more likely that you will take action. The problem is, again, that Rhonda says you should *not* take action.

Visualizing can also be helpful, albeit not as much as people think. And it can even be counterproductive (see pop psychology myths and self-help myths).

But, ultimately, thinking that you will attract what you think of *without* taking action is not just nonsense, but it’s actively harmful.

If you want to learn more about how to think positively, then I recommend positive psychology.

Probably starting from “Learned Optimism“, which is positive thinking, with science.

As of now, we cannot recommend this book.
And even if you decide to try this “law” and implement it, I recommend that you also be strategic and work hard, and never put all your eggs into the law of attraction basket(case).

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Power of Positive Thinking: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of Positive Thinking says that to be happy and content in life you must take control of the thoughts in your mind, avoid negative thoughts, and replace them with more positive ones.

> ***Change your thoughts and you change your world.***
>
> *-Norman Vince Peale*

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Think Positive for Positive Outcomes
  - To be liked, like others
  - Remember: You're Not Alone. Many Are In Your Same Situation
  - Pick Your Battles
  - Break Free of Worries
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review
  - Does the power of positive thinking work?

Bullet Summary

- **Avoid negative thoughts**
- **Replace negative thoughts with positives one**s -and believe in them!-
- **When stressed, take a break**. Prey, meditate, walk in the woods. Reconnect with nature

Full Summary

About The Author:
Norman Vincent Peale was an American minister who helped popularize the concept of, you guessed it, "the power of positive thinking".
Together with Think and Grow Rich and How to Win Friends Friends and Influence People, *The Power of Positive Thinking* is one of the biggest selling books of the 20th century in the self-help genre.

Think Positive for Positive Outcomes

Thinking goes both ways, says Norman Vincent Peale.

As much as positive thinking will improve your life for the better, negative thinking works like a fulfilling prophecy that will make your own fears a reality.

On the other hand, when you think positive, you make your positive thoughts a reality.

For example the author's magazine was going through a very difficult time. How did they solve the issue? They all

had a meeting visualizing more subscribers and guess what happened… ?

Yep.

Of course, that doesn't prove anything because correlation is not causation, but I'm a nitpicker :).

To be liked, like others

"The Power of Positive Thinking" applies to social relationships as well.

If you naturally like people and show an interest in them, they will likely like you as well.

And conversely, if you are self-centered and too much in love with yourself, people will find it hard to like you.

Remember: You're Not Alone. Many Are In Your Same Situation

Albeit at times we might feel like our issues are unique to us, the author says that millions of people either have the same issue, or have had the same issue.

And, here's the great news: there are countless of people who have overcome exactly what you're going through.

Pick Your Battles

Don't make all the problems your own.
We have limited time on this earth, so don't try to solve everything.

Break Free of Worries

Vincent Peale says that worrying is the source of both physical and psychological diseases.

And he was right.

But the good news is that you can get rid of worrying.

How to do it?

You simply have to believe that it's possible to get rid of it.

Then you can use a simple, yet powerful technique: get rid of your negative thoughts. The next step is to replace the negative thoughts with positive ones.

Also read:

- **How to Stop Worrying and Start Living**

> How to Stop Worrying and Start Living: Summary & Review

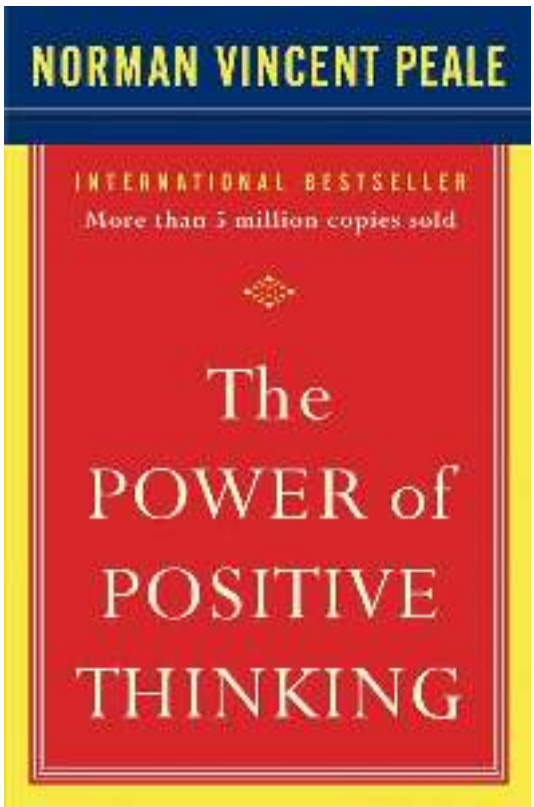
Real-Life Applications

An interesting good takeaway for anyone who lives in the right area for this:

- **Walk in The Woods**

If you are feeling stressed out and tense, the author recommends walks in the woods to decompress.
And anything reconnecting you to nature and far away from the hustle and bustle can be effective.

Don't forget to bring some self-defense tool, just in case.



CONS

I highly recommend you read this article on naive self-help since it addresses many of the pitfalls common to books like *The Power of Positive Thinking*:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

- **Bit Repetitive**

The concepts of The Power of Positive Thinking can be transformative. But they are also quite simple and the book could have been shorter.

However, if you read my book reviews, you'll notice that's a gripe I often have: I think indeed that most books could be shorter.

- **Mistakes Correlation for Causation**

The author should have read Fooled by Randomness by Nassim Taleb to understand how humans see trends, patterns and correlations when, often, there are none.

Norman Vincent Peale confuses correlation with causation. Such as, he believes that because A and B happened one after the other, then A must have caused B.

But of course, we can't be sure of that in the slightest.

- **Religious… And Heretical at The Same Time?**

Some criticized Peale, and the book, for being religious.

Well, I can see where that criticism comes from.

But on the other hand, Vincent Peale was a minister.

So, well what else do you expect?
You read Mein Kampf from Hitler, and would you be surprised the book is racist?

That being said, religiosity doesn't necessarily have to be a con in my opinion.

As a matter of fact, religion can help provide faith, hope and a strong psychological foundation for many people.

But if you're looking for a more secular resource, and a resource that is more science-backed, then "The Power of Positive Thinking" might not be the book for you.

Episcopal theologian John M. Krumm instead criticized Peale for not putting God first.

PROS

- **Uplifting**

If you don't mind too much the lack of scientific backing and if you can manage to fully embrace the message, then "The Power of Positive Thinking" is a book with a strong uplifting spirit.

- **Positive Thinking IS Important**

Don't let all the critics and imperfection sway you: thinking positive IS important.

Review

The Power of Positive Thinking is a good book.

Albeit part of that new age / law of attraction genre that we're not too fond of, it is one was of the best of the pack.

It's interesting that "The Power of Positive Thinking" has criticized far more than similar books such as Think and Grow Rich or The Secret, both of which have received less criticism while embracing similar and equally unscientific theories.

It's probably because "The Power of Positive Thinking" finds its roots more in religion than woo-woo new age "science".
And while I didn't particularly enjoy all the Biblical references, I otherwise find it better than many similar new age books because **the ability to think positively and find a positive frame for your life events is a fundamental life skill for a happy life.**

At the same time though, we must remind our readers that it's also a potential trap for an *effective* life, which requires a more realistic and dispassionate outlook on life and events that is neither positive nor negative, but as realistic as possible.

Interesting tidbit of information: *The Power of Positive Thinking* is one of Tony Robbins's favorite book. In turn, Robbins is the author of one of our favorite self-help products: Personal Power II.

Does the power of positive thinking work?

Yes, in a sense, it does.
Thinking positively will make you generally happier and more optimistic.

To end this review: can we recommend it or not?
Since The Power of Positive Thinking doesn't really teach how to think positive and neither when and when not to think positive, it's not a favorite of this website.

Read more summaries, our best books recommendation, or:

Get The Power of Positive Thinking on Amazon

You Can Heal Your Life: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

You Can Heal Your Life (1984) purports to cure at once mental and body ailments via the power of self-love, self-acceptance, the "evaporation of guilt", and positive thinking.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Accept Yourself Unconditionally
  - Your States Of Minds Produce Your Reality
  - You Get What You Focus On
  - Connect To The Cosmic Forces For A Feeling of Ultimate Security
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
  - Potentially dangerous: also seek medical help when needed
  - Illogic, Unscientific… And Plain Dumbass claims
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- The issues that we face in our lives stem from a lack of self-love
- You have to approve of yourself exactly as you are
- You get what you focus on. Focus on positives

Full Summary

About the Author:
Louise Lynn Hay was an American motivational author and the founder of Hay House, a publisher of "new thought" and books that revolve around positive thinking, law of attraction, alternative medicine, "life force" and similar semi-spiritual topics -she also published Deepak Chopra's work-.
Hay authored several New Thought self-help books herself, the most popular being *You Can Heal Your Life*.

Accept Yourself Unconditionally

Accepting yourself unconditionally is one of the main tenets of *You Can Heal Your Life*.

Some practical tips on how to do just that:

1. Replace Should

Should is a very dangerous expression says Louise Hay.

It puts you in the position of being wrong and feeling guilty.
Such as, in a position of non-accepting ourselves.
That runs contrary to Louise's philosophy, which is that of never criticizing ourselves.

She recommends changing your "should" with "could".

As Tony Robbins said, “quit shoulding all over yourself” :).

2. Release The Past

Recriminating about the past is similar to how should affect us. It poisons us with no real advantages. Learn to let go of your past to enjoy a happier present.

3. Forgive

Forgiving both yourself and others is a great way to let go of much hatred and negative emotions trapped within us.

Your States Of Minds Produce Your Reality

The author says that **diseases are a product of our states of mind**.
And to invert the trend and heal ourselves, we need to love ourselves first.

You Get What You Focus On

Whatever you focus on, you will get.

The more you focus on something, the more of it you will get.
And sadly we mostly focus on negative thoughts.
Louise Hay exhorts the readers to focus on positive thoughts instead.

This is basically the “(not so) good old law of attraction”, which is in part BS.
Also read:

- **The Secret**

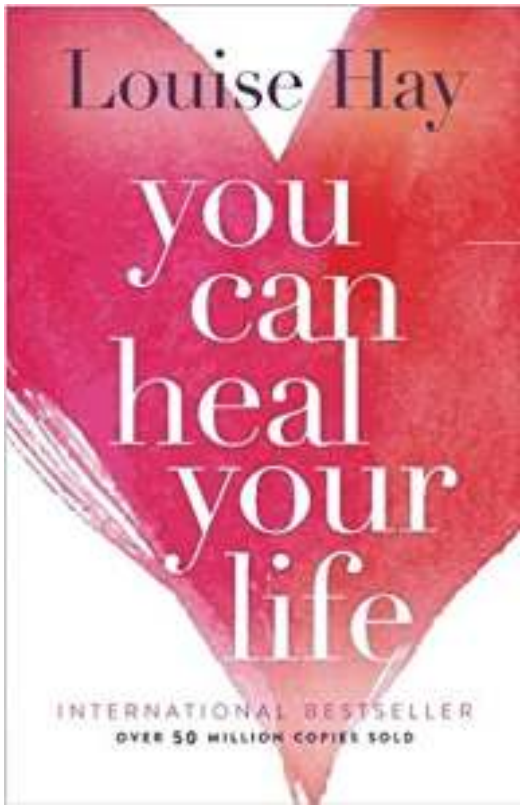
> The Secret: Summary, Review & Criticism

Connect To The Cosmic Forces For A Feeling of Ultimate Security

You won’t get security with a job or a hefty bank account.

And not even with a spouse.

You Can Heal Your Life says we become secure when we learn to connect with the cosmic power that creates all things (God).
Once you can do that, you will never be alone and insecure again.



Real-Life Applications

Ration Out Your Shoulds
I don't think you should fully abandon your "should" and I believe you should can use pain (read how to leverage pain) as much as you can leverage pleasure.
But most people will definitely gain by using less "should" in their lives -me included-.

Treat Yourself Well
Learn to love and appreciate yourself can be a game changer for many of us.

CONS

I highly recommend you read this article on naive self-help since it addresses many of the pitfalls common to books like *You Can Heal Yourself*:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Most Dangerous BS to Avoid

Potentially dangerous: also seek medical help when needed

If people decide to follow the "power of your healing mind" rather than seeking medical help, they may get that medical help too late -or not at all-.

That's potentially dangerous, and you or the people close to you who fall for this new age trap must be warned.

Illogic, Unscientific... And Plain Dumbass claims

This was one of the most damning lines against the whole book:

> Releasing resentment will dissolve even cancer

> *Louise Hay*

Ouch, what a dumbass claim :S.

Potential victim-blaming

Suggesting that all health issues are a consequence of feelings, thoughts and mental patterns is unhelpful. And I also find it potentially offensive.

New Agey – Woowoo

A bit similar to The Secret, I find *You Can Heal Your Life* to be too light on science and practical knowledge. And a bit too much based on belief and ethereal states of mind.
My biggest problem with that though is when New Age books tell us everything is a product of our thoughts.

Unscientific, unproven, untested

No, the stories you hear online or the (often fake) reviews on Amazon don't count.

While placebo and a positive mind are known to help with both mental and body ailments, the author's recommendations here are simply untested against any specific mental disorder or illness.

PROS

Some good wisdom
Learning to absorb knowledge effectively is often a matter of not throwing the baby with the bad water. And albeit there are a few points I disagree with, You Can Heal Your Life does have some powerful wisdom.

It seemingly helped lots of people
Many people testify the book changed their life. You can't argue with that and I am happy the book helped so many people.
On the other hand, I also believe that one can combine whatever's good with this book, with more solid and scientific knowledge, as well as a more strategically sound approach on how to maximize well-being.

Review

While not being the greatest fans of *You Can Heal Your Life*, we also recognize some of the good in it.

Books like You *Can Heal Your Life loosely* -or not so loosely- based on the law of attraction are some of the biggest best sellers in the self-help genre.

Personally I believe the law of attraction is 50% deep wisdom and 50% BS.
The 50% BS is that you won't materialize a thing in your life with just your thoughts. Work, grit and skill acquisition will get you there -and yes, a little bit of luck can help too-.

On the other hand, what you focus on *does* revolutionize your mental states and how you approach the world. Both in terms of happiness and, indirectly, also on concrete results. Focus on problems indeed and you'll be depressed and take little actions. Focus on opportunities and you'll get more power and actions.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Naive Self-Help: Why Self Help Is Failing You

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Struggling with self-help that promises big results but delivers little? You're not alone.

At The Power Moves we've reviewed thousands of books and coached thousands of ambitious men — and we see the same pattern: popular advice often rests on naive myths that stall progress or actively set you back.

Read on to learn how to spot those traps and choose strategies that actually work.

Naive Self-Help™ is a TPM concept developed by Lucio Buffalmano for The Power Moves. After reviewing thousands of self-help resources, Buffalmano identified a critical blind spot: mainstream advice consistently ignores power dynamics, human incentives, and the darker side of human nature. This concept serves as a warning to seek more accurate, effective, and power-aware strategies when popular self-help falls short of real-world results.

Naive self-help is unwilling or unable to look at and deal with the dark side of human nature

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Intro: Why Self-Help Underdelivers

The high-level definition of Naive Self-Help™ is:

> Advice that distorts reality by omitting human incentives, trade-offs, or malicious actors, and sells solutions that are at best sub-optimal and at worst counterproductive to progress and goal achievement.

Self-help fails because its preferred aspirational tone **ignores the darker side of human nature**.

Naive self-help doesn't just waste time: it can lower your power, keep you stuck at the "nice but ineffective" level, and lower your guard against toxic people.
Recognizing its traps is the first step to becoming strategically effective.

We categorize naive self-help into these broad categories:

1. **Pollyannish** based on a model of neutral or good human nature/world
2. **Simplistic**, with black-and-white generalizations and 'laws' that don't account for calibration
3. **Motivational-only**, without the *how*

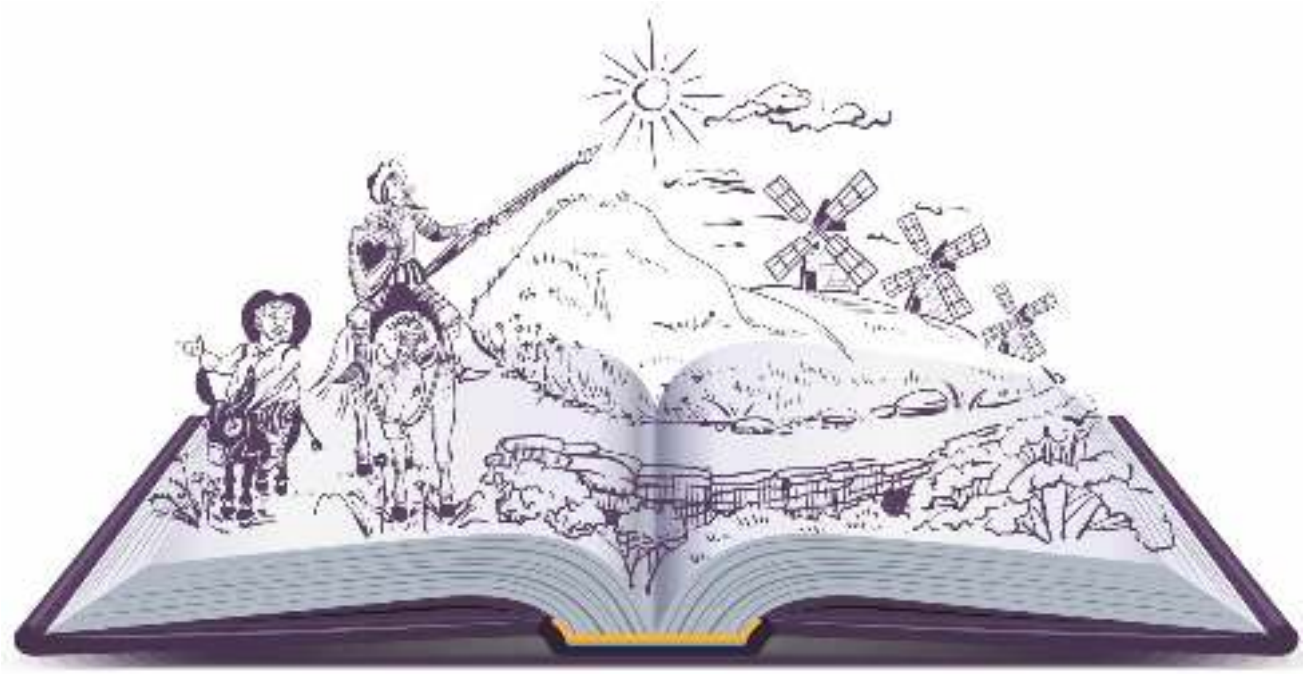
Pollyannish naivete is the original "naive self-help". But it would be reductive to limit naive self-help to gullibility. Instead, even cynical self-help can be equally distortive of reality.

Types of Naive Self-Help

Among the main naive self-help categories:

1. Utopian Reality

> Belief in good people and good world, without accounting for the dark side



Don Quixote, a knight-hero of his own utopian world
Including how authors *wished* things were, how they *should* be, or unrealistic *could bes*.

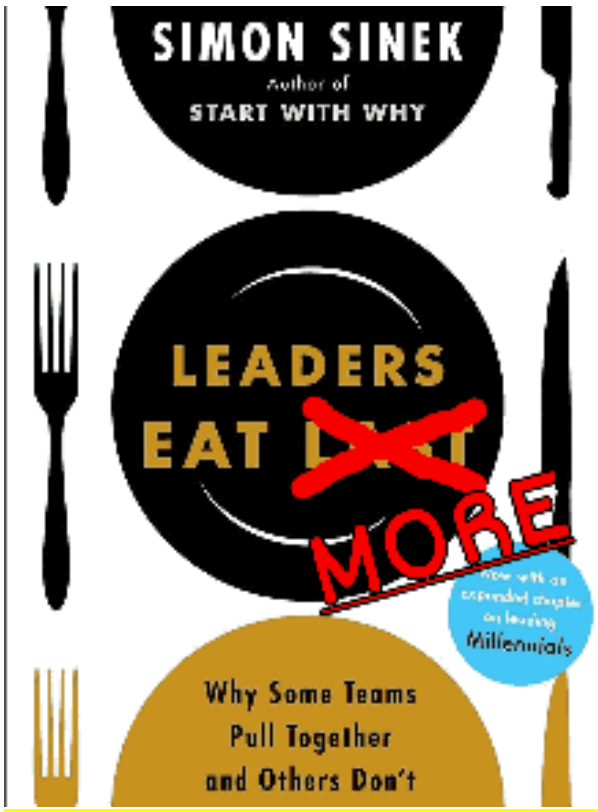
Some examples:

- **Career advice for politics-free workplaces** that may not even exist in the real world
- **Social skills guides based on giving**, without mentioning that many people are takers and don't reciprocate
- **Relationship guides based on communion only**: Brene Brown correctly says that "we are here to connect". But ambitious men are also wired to seek status and climb hierarchies, or to seek sexual variety

⍰ Example: Naive Leaders & Ego-Free Workplaces

In Simon Sinek's best-selling '*Leaders Eat Last*' the ideal leader puts people first, before results and before himself.

Typical utopian thinking.
In reality, results matter, selflessness is not how you *become* a leader, and it's most likely not even *effective* leadership.



Many seek leadership in the first place to eat first and more

Kim Scott's *Radical Candor* is better, and we loved this book.
But it's still based on an ideal workplace where people have no egos. But… People do. And *especially* your bosses who, righteously, expect more deference from those below.

Naive Spinning: Accurata Data, Naive Interpretations

Naive spinning starts with accurate intuition or data, but adds a naive spin to make things 'nicer'.

For example, emotional intelligence are important to a good life.
However, Goleman, who popularized them, never mentions that emotional intelligence and empathy can be used - and often *are* used- for selfish ends, including to better manipulate others.
Building on the concept, Bradberry found that CEOs and execs had *lower* emotional intelligence than middle managers. But instead of second-guessing the emotional intelligence, he said that execs and CEOs "had to do better".

For more on this topic, see:

- **Emotionally intelligent Machiavellis at the top**

> The Emotional Intelligence Myth: Why Power and Machiavellianism Beat Empathy at the Top

Naive Goodness

It includes the beliefs in:

1. **Just world hypothesis**, the world tends to reward good behavior and honest and good people will eventually win
2. **General goodness of people**
3. **Endless ability to change for the better**, and willingness to do so

4. **Karma** as the invisible hand propping up the just world (examples: *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, *The Four Agreements*, author Sadhguru. See this analysis on him)
5. **Give and you will get**: while it righteously emphasizes the importance of being a man of value and foundational social exchange dynamics, this only works when matched by power awareness

Unsurprisingly, these people make great targets for predators, thieves, and general value takers.
Much better for you instead if you take past behavior as red flags and strong indicators of *future* behavior.

⍰ Example: Radical Acceptance

Radical Acceptance is a good book for self-haters who need foundational self-love, but naive at times.
Says the author:

> in sharp contrast to our cultural conditioning <— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: red flag of cultural determinism
> the Buddhist perspective holds that **there is no such thing as a sinful or evil person** (…)

It's simply not true. Psychological studies show that some people have no empathy and enjoy harming others (Lyons, 2019).
Remember, people differ, and sometimes an asshole is just an asshole.

Never give a snake another chance to harm you

The Naive "Good Man Path to Success"

The "good man path to success" postulates that good and honest men win.

This unsubstantited. There's no evidence that stronger morals beat, say, "average morals", or even "below average morals".
Circumstantial evidence instead shows that countless not-so-good men win. And sometimes win big.

Of course, good men can win.
We train these men here. But to win as honorable men requires advanced power awareness and skills.

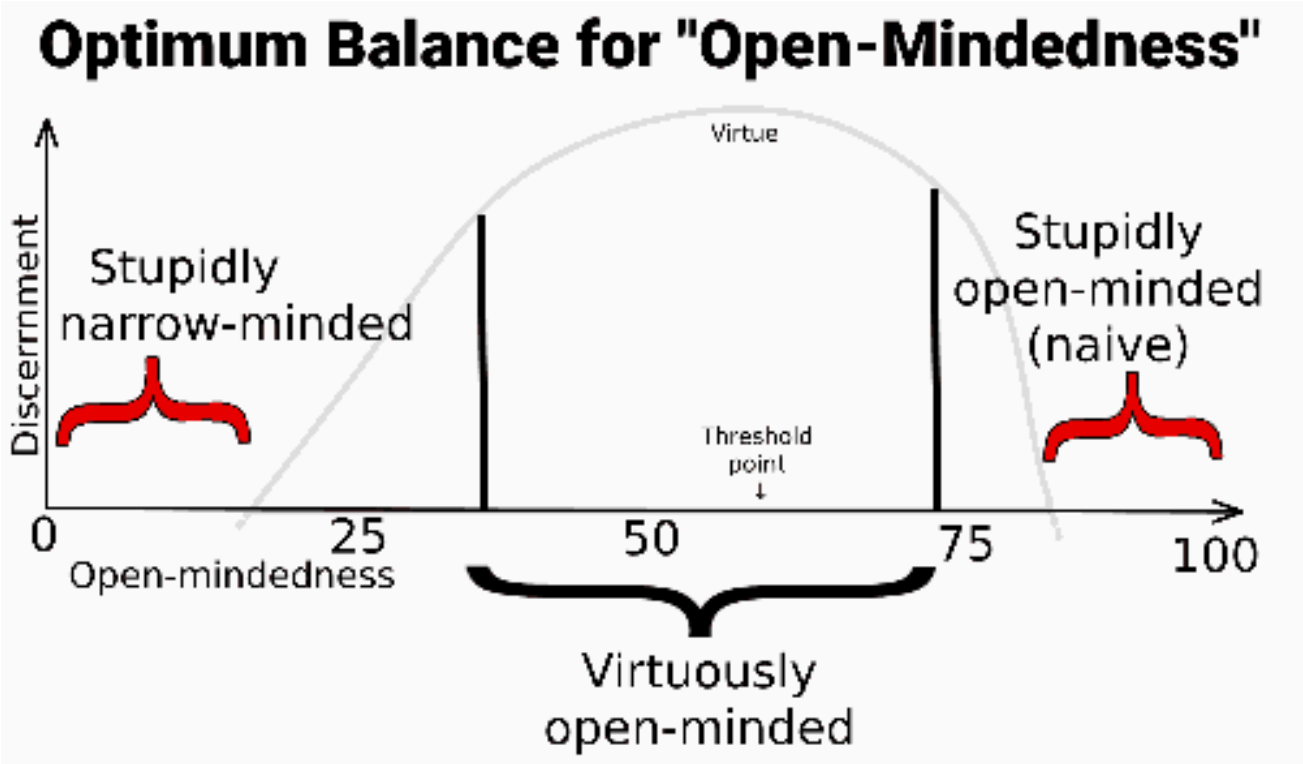
2. Naive Open-Mindedness

> Taking tolerance, subjectivity, and relativism to an extreme that forces the suspension of good judgment and effective policies, potentially harming the individual or society

Some of its offshoots include:

- **Diversity for diversity's sake**, with inclusion as a goal
- **Political correctness** instead of truth

Open-mindedness obeys the "law of optimum balance" and it's beneficial at moderate levels, but maladaptive at *extreme* levels.



The law of optimum balance for the trait "open-mindedness"
Surprisingly, it's educated people who most often fall victim to naive open-mindedness.

Charlatans Welcome: The "Omnis Learning" Fallacy

Naive open-mindedness virtue-signals to 'learn from anybody' or 'anyone can teach you something'.

While it's valid, it's also *vastly ineffective*.
Learning 1h from an actual expert is high ROI; listening 1h to a clueless guy or a marketer is not.

When BS and conmen abound, “being open to everyone” means ingesting tons of BS. Discriminating in self-help makes sense
Also see:

- **Marketer’s manipulations**: Tai Lopez case study

3. Naive Motivation

> Motivation only, without hard skills and effective strategies to achieve goals

While ambitious and driven men don’t need motivation, motivation can be helpful to some.
We don’t have anything against motivation itself, but some forms of it can be harmful.

Some types of naive motivations include:

- **Limitless self-help (“you can do anything”)**, a powerful mindset, but must be tempered by assessments of strengths, weaknesses, and probabilities
- **Struggle porn** can take the focus away from effectiveness
- **Unlimited inner power (“all that you need is within you”)**. Books such as *You Can Heal Your Life* are potentially dangerous when they discourage external medication

From personal experience, motivation alone spins wheels.
Ambitious men who develop character and skills go far.

⍰ Motivational Falsehoods

Popular motivation is inspiring, but based on falsehoods, half-truths, or spins.
Example:

> **Sinek**: some are skinny and scrawny (…) shivering out of fear (…) but **every single one of them** when they’re

> **emotionally exhausted**, **physically exhausted**, somehow can dig down deep inside themselves to **find the energy to help the person next to them**. **Service. Giving**. Having their back…

It's poetic imagery: the seemingly weakest guys win by helping.

But special ops teams can be quite dark.
For example, former SEAL Goggins shares that the most elite SEAL team didn't want him as a black guy.
And we know for certain from Dutton that at least some British special ops were psychopaths.

And selfless giving is NOT the #1 key to success and NOT the *main* differentiator between those who make it and those who don't.
Psychologist Angela Duckworth suggests instead that grit makes the difference, not team spirit or selfless giving.
And psychologist Adam Grant shows that the selfless givers tend to be big *losers* in life, not winners.

False Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is foundational, but gurus telling 'you're enough' may not be effective at increasing it.

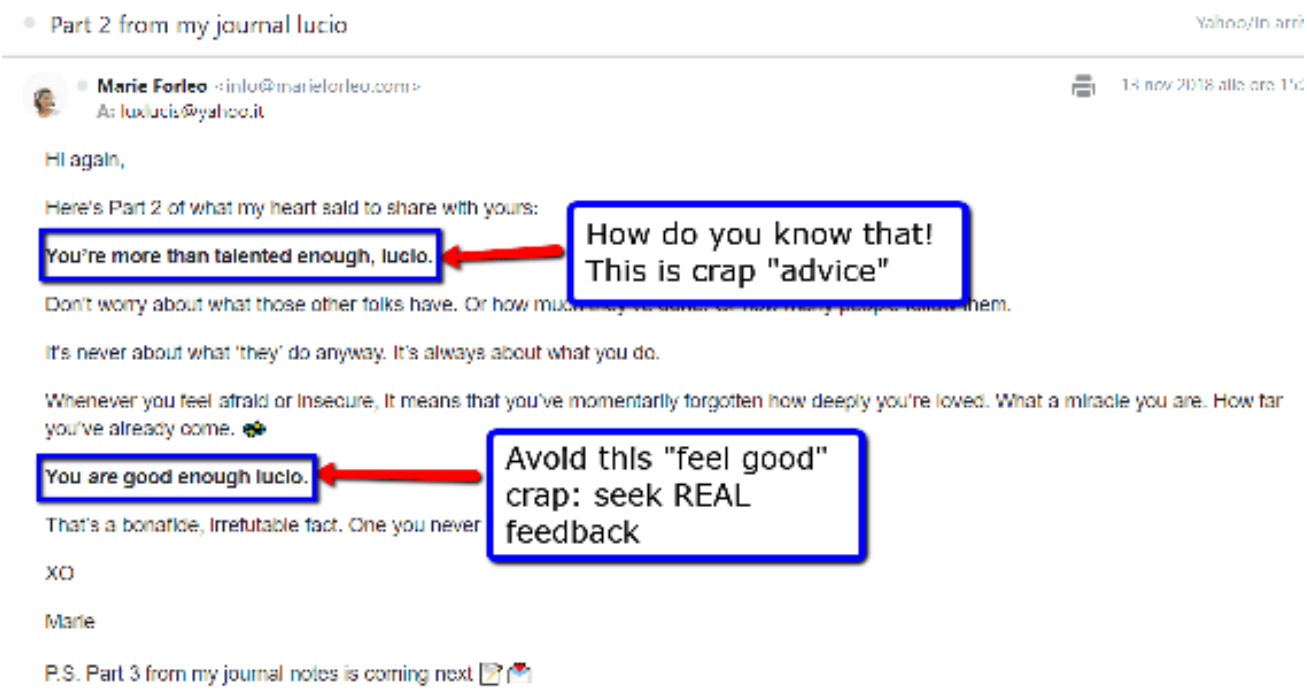
In his positive psychology book Seligman states that incantations have no effect.
And if you don't have the skills, boosterism only leads to entitlement mentality, *lack* of results, and extra anguish.

A better approach is to combine self-esteem with skills, results, and antifragile mindsets.
Something like:

- Focus on actions, not feelings
- Focus on *getting* good, rather than being good (Fixed mindset)

⍰ Example: Marie Forleo Tells You That "You're Good Enough"

This is what I got when I signed up for Forleo's newsletter:



> **Marie**: You are good enough
> **Me**: (thinking) Thanks for the covert power move. Have I ever said I wasn't? :S

4. Unfounded Self-Help

> Scientifically unproven, illogical, or lacking real-world experience (the 3 pillars of knowledge).

This self-help is based on opinions, ideologies, or made-up theories.

Law of Attraction & "New Age" Spiritualism

The law of attraction is the most popular nonsense in the self-help industry.
Books like *The Secret* sold tens of millions of copies. And *Think and Grow Rich* is one of the most popular self-help books *ever*.

There is no end in sight, with new gurus like Joe Dispenza raking up millions of YouTube videos while regurgitating the same old formula.

While a strong belief in a supportive force can be empowering, this self-help may not only take time away from action, but **can be *actively* harmful.**
The Secret for example tells readers to live as if you "already possess what you desire", and *not* to work towards your goals.

5. Naive Empiricism

> Sounds empirical or logical, but deeper critical analysis shows failure of logic

Naive empiricism is tougher to spot. It requires some knowledge of logic, scientific principles, and statistics/data analysis.
Let's see some examples.

⍰Wrong Unit of Measure

Take this post from a dating coach:

> Many guys go out for 3 hours of day game sessions here, another 4 hours here, another 3 hours there, etc., before they get a lay. 15 hours of pickup per lay is not unreasonable, and that would put you at 600 hours.

Sounds analytical.
But it's the wrong unit of measure. In dense cities you could talk to several women you like in 1h, while in others you'd meet *zero*.
It's not hours of sessions that count, it's hours of *interactions*.

⍰ Data Out of Context: The Better Angels of Utopia

In "*The Better Angels of Our Nature*" Pinker 'proves' that humanity is getting more peaceful and safer because the number of wars decreased.

However, as Nassim Taleb corrects him, wars in the past were smaller and confined. So they were 'easier to start' and had little impact on most non-combatants.

⍰ Naive Counter-Intuitism (The "Debunking Trap")

Counter-intuitivism is how potentially smart people talk stupid, while trying to sound smarter.

Counterintuitive takes are sometimes power moves because they frame the speaker as smarter than most.
But they're also appealing because they make readers feel smarter than the majority.

And while some counterintuitive takes are valid, some others only *sound* valid.
For example, Steven Pinker suggests that terrorism is overblown and hasn't had a major impact on Western civilization.

Pinker seems data-driven by looking at the number of deaths.
But it fails to look at *all* terrorism-related costs, which are instead *astronomical* when you account added security tech, personnel, and millions of hours wasted for us all. These costs are ubiquitous and, on aggregate, unprecedented in human history.

Naive (Evolutionary) Psychology

Widespread, and pop evolutionary psychology is common in the manosphere and dating literature.

Naive results-based pragmatism

Most analyses of success stories are naive because the underlying assumption is that doing what the winner has done will yield the same results for everyone else.

Poor analyses follow from this assumption.
For example, one may achieve certain results *despite* certain behaviors -like Steve Jobs' short fuse-. And what someone did in a specific context, at a specific time, may not work for a different person, in a different period, in different contexts.

⍰ Example: The 'Secret' of Football Domination & Business Success

In *The Talent Code* Doyle travels to Brazil to learn the "secrets" of the country with the most World Cups.
But *per inhabitant,* Italy or Germany have *more* World Cups. Doyle's analysis then compounds with more naive empiricism.

Jim Collins describes how the best leaders are self-effacing and humble.
But it doesn't account for the type of business and context. And, of course, relevant for all aspiring leaders, that humble and self-effacing leaders are a tiny, tiny minority (Pfeffer, 2015).

Naive "Science-Backed"

You can take almost any single claim and have it "science-backed" with a small sample and enough tries.

So any advice based on individual studies is often of little usefulness and, sometimes, even counterproductive.

Naive Self-Disempowerment

Some examples:

- **Humans = not that special**, despite being the most dominant species out of billions of species
  ⍰ Example: misusing Kahneman's work as evidence of human irrationality. But Buss explains that many 'biases' are shortcuts that allowed us to thrive
- **"Back when it was better" = today we suck**, wearing rose-tinted glasses when "analyzing" the past.
  ⍰ Example: *Tribe*, an ode to tribal living, conveniently forgetting the downsides
- **Rotten cherry-picking = we're all bad**, over-generalizing negative traits or events to draw unfounded conclusions about humanity
  ⍰ Example: Tolle in *The Power of Now* suggests that 'there is something wrong with readers' as part of a murderous species that committed genocides
- **Naive comparison = inferior humans**: comparing humans with nitpicked animals to suggest that humans are weaker / inferior
  ⍰ Example: Alfred Adler says that humans suffer an inferiority complex for being "an inferior organism"

6. Biased Self-Help

> Advice and analyses that reflect the author's preferences, experiences, or self-interest more than objective evidence or balanced reasoning.

Among the causes of bias:

- **Ignorance**: don't even realize their own bias
- **Crusade**: believe their cause is just, and more important than truth
- **Bitterness**: anger and resentment fuel the bias

Just as an example, let's take nurture VS nature.
Both nature and culture influence people's characters and behaviors, but biased takes refuse to strike this sensible middle ground.

Women tend to downplay nature because it undermines their claim to equal agency and further female empowerment.
And men downplay the role of culture because the majority of men struggle to get and keep a woman if all women empower themselves.

⍰ Leftist Bias: Cultural Determinism

Cultural determinists deny or downplay the role of genes and inborn drives ("tabula rasa" approach).

For example, says Esther Perel in her book "*Mating in Captivity*":

> *Gender differences and their ensuing taboos and prohibition have long been viewed as categorical imperatives, biologically rooted, and therefore immutable.*
> *Feminism showed that these undisputed truisms were in fact social constructions that reinforced a long-standing gender order that obviously favored men.*

It sounds like a list of big words to sound erudite while pushing her own narrative.

But some male great authors like Jared Diamond and Viren Swami also engage in it.
In *Attraction Explained*, to downplay the genders' biological differences, Swami says that the reason why it's men who court women is because of the patriarchy, without mentioning biological and evolutionary reasons.

⍰ Conservative Bias: Innatism

Innatists downplay the importance of nurture, culture, subjectivity, and exceptions.

This approach is more common among men, including the red pill and the manosphere.
A red pill acronym states that 'All Women Are Like That' (AWOLT) and we've often noticed a tendency to over-generalize and gloss over nuances, contexts, and individual differences.

But we've also noticed the same from some high-authority researchers, including some whose work we deeply appreciate.

Also read:

- Law of balance in dating
- Exceptional dating
- Male seducers

7. Simplistic Self-Help

> Simple analyses and advice that fails to understand the full dynamics at plays and over-generalizes, lacks nuance, fails to calibrate, and ultimate fails to deliver results for most

Very few resources are nuanced enough to allow everyone to succeed with them.

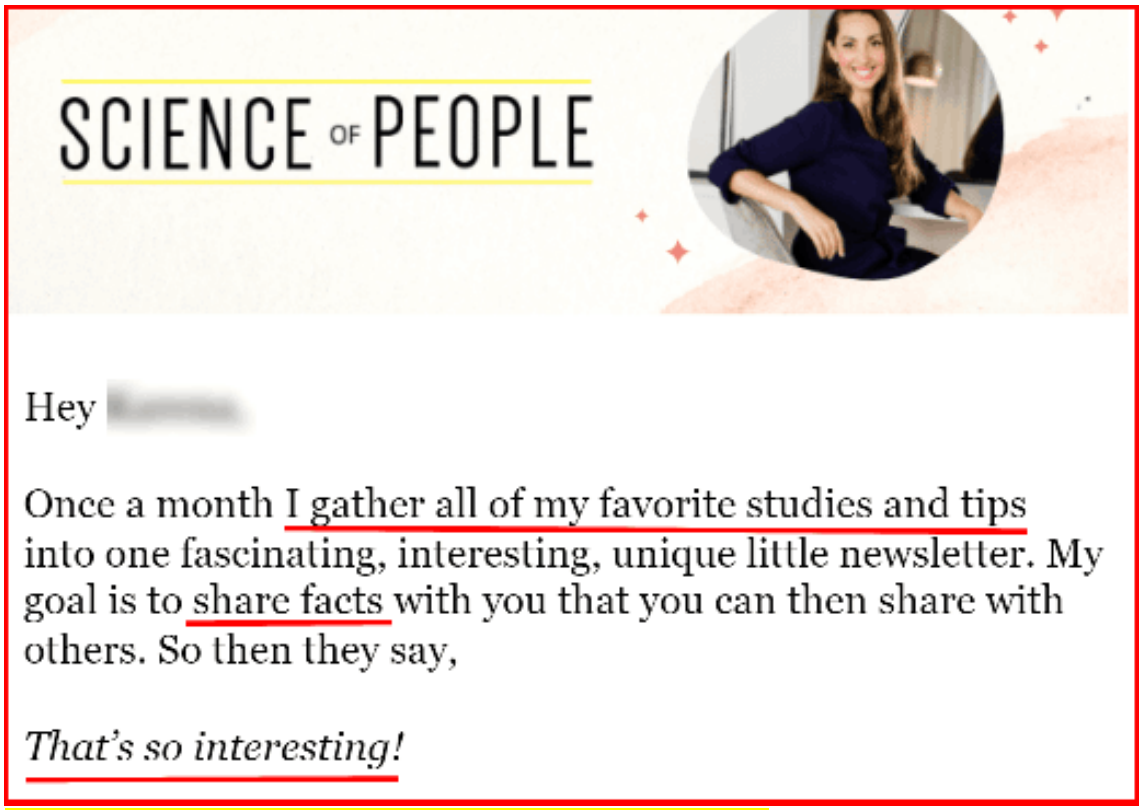
For example, the otherwise excellent *48 Laws of Power* doesn't help most men succeed because it doesn't calibrate the principles, and fails to provide higher-level frameworks for success.
Similarly, Brene Brown's vulnerability would fail most men in most contexts.

Edutainment

Education and entertainment can go together.

But sometimes it's just 'fun facts' or curiosity that won't help you advance in life.

Malcolm Gladwell is a successful edutainer.
And Vanessa van Edwards isn't too bad either:



Textbook edutainment: this knoweldge won't help you achieve goals

Edutainer consumers also provide a biased sample for more naive empiricism.
Surveied on how useful the training was, they score based on how good they *felt*. That then becomes naive "proof" for effectiveness.

8. Excesses

> Taking potentially valid approaches to an extreme where they become low-ROI ineffective, or even harmful

Going extreme is appealing to humans, and can be seen in many self-development areas that we don't cover as extensively (e.g.: nutrition).

Excesses are also common with 'bio-hacking', spending time and resources on tech, tools, or habits that only marginally help, if at all. That's low ROI at best.

Read more:

- Bio-hacking porn

> Biohacking Porn: Quit OCD, Embrace Life

Too Good = Sucker

Naive self-help fails to see that there can be such a thing as too much goodness.
Especially in the absence of power awareness and strategies.

For example:

- **Over-giving** can turn you into a sucker
- **Over-conscientiousness** can keep you stuck doing what you hate
- **Over-niceness** turns you into a social peg for asshole

Some traits that are often seen as negative are necessary to counterbalance the "good" ones. Especially for ambitious men who seek success and goal achievement.
Often, they're also necessary even for pro-social and win-win relationships.

Also see:

- **Be bad to be good**

And for balance:

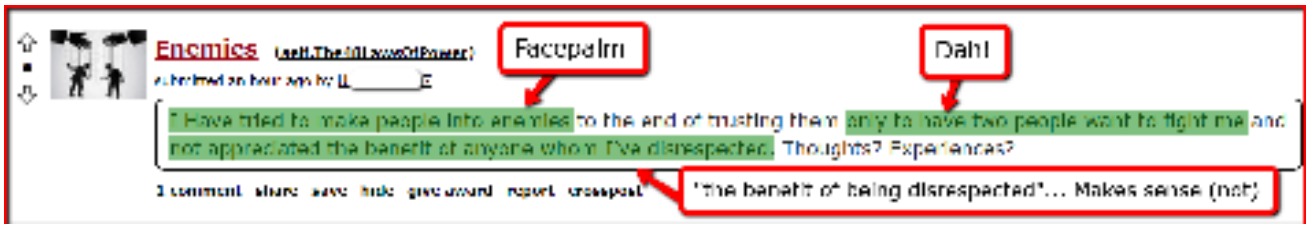
- **Enlightened Machiavellianism**
- Enlightened asshole
- Enlightened cynic

Too Bad = Lonely Outcast

Extreme cynicism is less common than naive self-help, but it can be equally misleading.

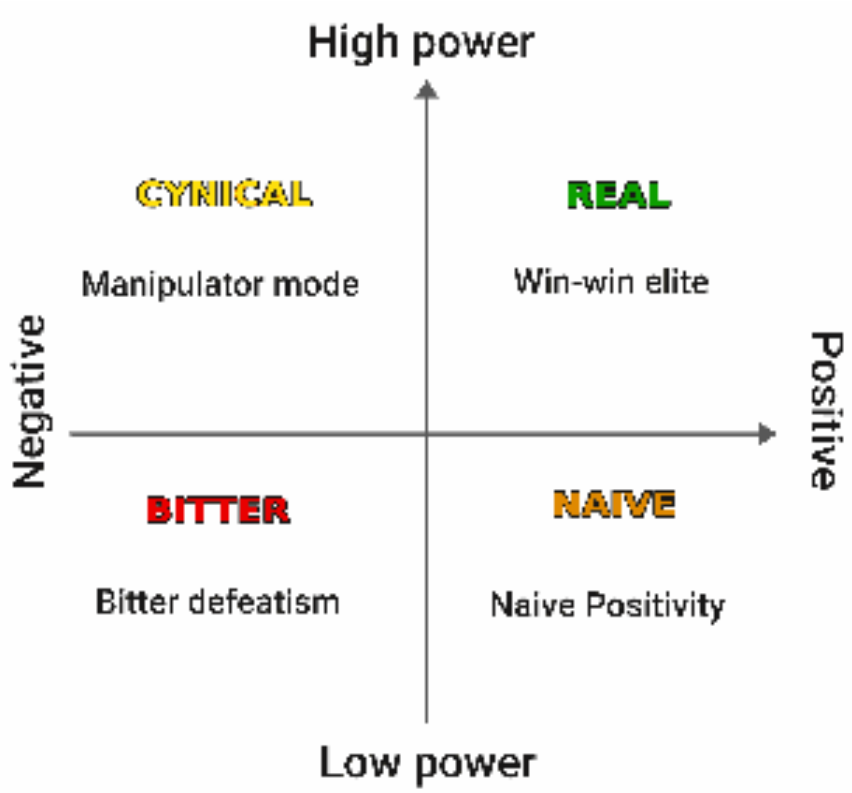
For example, *The 48 Laws of Power* is a great book that we generally recommend.
But by focusing *only* on the darker, manipulative, and power-hungry side of human nature, it's equally distorting.

If you stop at that level of analysis, you lose opportunities for win-win and quality relationships.
That's particularly misleading for beginners. For example, from the book's subreddit:



> **Naive learner**: I have tried to make people into enemies (…) only to have two people want to fight me

Effective self-help takes the best of both worlds:



80% of self-help is naive, 15% is cynical, 4% is bitter, and the top 1% combines the best of both worlds

Naive Self-Help Fields

All fields have some naive self-help, and some categories have more.
We've noticed a particularly high percentage of naivete in:

- **Leadership resources**, ranging from naively aspirational books, to BS autobiographies.
  See the best leadership resources.
- **Dating for women**, with a lot of "be strong" advice that doesn't really work that well.
  See the best dating resources for women

Dynamics of Naivete

Why do so many intelligent authors and readers fall for naive self-help?

Even the supposed elites of knowledge, researchers and scientists, fell for the comfortable lie trap.
Before Dawkins and Krebs (1978) first postulated that communication among animals was often deceptive, the consensus was that communication provided reliable information.

Here are some reasons why:

1. **Utopias provide comfortable lies** and both authors and learners collude in keeping the lie alive
2. **Uotpias save face with convenient excuses**: we can blame failure on a few bad apples and still get to think we're 'good man and leaders'
3. **Naive authors are virtue-signaling**: to sub-communicate that *they* are good. Even truer for successful authors, since painting a darker world would give away that they are playing a darker game of power.
   P.S.: beware the autobiographies. They're ad pieces
4. **Some authors are just naive**: by simple mathematical distribution, average authors outnumber the highly sophisticated ones.

5. **Authors manipulate the competition for selfish purposes**: it's easier to win when everyone else acts as if the world was good and nice.

Keep the competition naive, and win with ease. Ultimate manipulation

Moving Past Naive Self-Help

First off, don't turn overly cynical.
It's common to go from one extreme to the other:

1. **Believe** naive self-help
2. **Follow** unhelpful models
3. **Fail** and realize the hypocrisy of naive self-help
4. **Turn bitter**

The best way to avoid naive and unhelpful self-help, is through *good* self-development.
Some extra good resources on this website:

- Moving past self-development ceilings
- 10 steps of self-empowerment

And if you want to go all the way to becoming a confident man who wins status, respect, and attraction, check out our flagship program **Power University**.

Check Power University

The Social Strategist: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Social Strategist is a 6-chapter book on advanced social skills in which the authors, Lucio Buffalmano and Ali Scarlett, teach social skills, social strategies, and social power dynamics.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- Introduction
- Chapter #1: How to Gain Positive Influence and Leverage Over Anyone You Want
- Chapter #2: The Number One Quality to Gain Respect and Fairness
- Chapter #3: How to Build a Social Circle of Cool Friends, Allies, and Mentors at Will
- Chapter #4: How to Overcome the Power Games People Play that Cost You Success
- Chapter #5: How to Win More Negotiations with Advanced Frame Control Techniques
- Chapter #6: Next Steps
- Real-Life Applications
- Cons
- Pros
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Position yourself as a value-giver**: and build social capital to build goodwill and influence
- **Acquire empowering mindsets**: to empower your own assertiveness
- **Be high-power and high-warmth**: balance being very powerful with being very friendly
- **Avoid allowing others to pull power move on you**: especially when they're very damaging
- **Stick to high-quality frames and frame control techniques**

Full Summary

About The Authors:

Lucio Buffalmano holds a master's degree from La Sapienza, department of communication and sociological research, and is an American Psychology Association (APA) member.

His approach combines science, first-hand experience & critical analysis. You can learn it all in one fell swoop with Power University.

Ali Scarlett is a bestselling author, entrepreneur, and avid researcher of the science of networking. He has studied the likes of professional sociologists, applied psychology researchers, and other business networking experts when defining his methods. He's also one of the main contributors to this website, Power University, and power dynamics as a discipline.

Introduction

Here, Buffalmano and Scarlett underline that this book is not for people without a basic, foundational understanding of social skills.

Chapter #1: How to Gain Positive Influence and Leverage Over Anyone You Want

#1: What is the Social Exchange?

> **Buffalmano and Scarlett**: "The social exchange theory is a framework model that looks at social relationships as exchanges among individuals who seek to maximize their selfish interests…The social exchange theory starts from the proven premise that people prefer relationships that add value to their lives. These are the relationships that advance their interests, make them feel good, and generally make them better off."

#2: How the Social Exchange Helps You

It will help you to:

- Assess people's character.
- Recognize and choose givers and collaborators who make your life better.
- Recognize and cut out the "takers" who hamper your progress.
- Be a better friend or partner.
- Be a better leader.

#3: How to Leverage the Social Exchange

- Present yourself as a value-giver
- Build your social capital with those you want to influence

Read more on the social exchange.

> How the Social Exchange Theory Can Get You the Network of Your Dreams (Part 1 of 2)

Chapter #2: The Number One Quality to Gain Respect and Fairness

#1: What Is Assertiveness?

> **Scarlett and Buffalmano**: "Assertiveness is defined in many different ways, but we believe in an assertiveness that supports emotional independence, personal empowerment, and a win-win relationship.

So, assertiveness defined within those three elements is:

'To state your needs, wants, feelings, and opinions clearly and directly, to respect yourself as well as others, and to influence the world around you, including other people, to reach certain goals.'

#2: Limiting Beliefs

- "Dark" feelings such as anger and a will to power are bad to feel and show.
- Assertiveness means getting your own way all the time.
- Being assertive means being selfish.

#3: Empowering Beliefs

- I am worthy of respectful behavior and communication, and so are others.

- I'm in charge of my behavior, and others are in charge of theirs.
- I decide for myself what I will and will not do.

#4: Assertive Communication

The first assertiveness framework taught is the "DESOE" framework (pronounced "dee·so").

1. **D (Describe)**: Define the situation and what's going on.
2. **E (Express)**: State how you feel in the situation.
3. **S (Specify)**: Describe what you would like to happen.
4. **O (Outcome)**: Describe what happens if they go along with your wishes and, potentially, what happens if they don't.
5. **E (Enforce)**: Enforce your boundaries as needed.

As a shorter format for quick personal feedback, Scarlett condenses the DESOE assertive communication framework into only three parts. He coined it the "ESE" framework (pronounced "easy"):

1. **Express**: State how you feel in the situation.
2. **Specify**: Describe what you would like to happen.
3. **Enforce**: Enforce your boundaries as needed.

Read:

- "Assertiveness: 6 Steps to Empowered Communication".

> Assertiveness: 6 Steps to Empowered Communication

Chapter #3: How to Build a Social Circle of Cool Friends, Allies, and Mentors at Will

#1: Leverage the High Power/High Warmth Matrix

Also known as the stereotype content model.

People determine whether or not they want to be around you based on how powerful you are and how friendly you are:

[image]
To keep a great chapter short, the more you can balance being very powerful with being very friendly, the more people will want to be around you.

Read more about the High Power/High Warmth Matrix.

Chapter #4: How to Overcome the Power Games People Play that Cost You Success

#1: What Are Covert Power Moves?

Here, Buffalmano provides the higher-level definitions and Scarlett shares the "simplified" definitions for ease of comprehension:

Power Dynamics:

- **High-Level Definition**: "the science of power negotiation among people and groups, as well as the strategies that facilitate the acquisition of resources and the achievement of goals."
- **Simplified Definition**: "the process by which an individual gets (or can get) what they want in a given setting."

Power Move:

- **High-Level Definition**: "A power move is any action that affects the power dynamics of an interaction."
- **Simplified Definition**: "any action that affects the flow of power in a given setting."

Covert Power Move:

- **High-Level Definition**: "Any action or combination of words that on the surface seems neutral, apologetic, even value-adding, while actually increasing the power and/or status of the speaker, and potentially disempowering the victim."
- **Simplified Definition**: "a hidden power move."

#2: Chapter Highlights

- People may try to pull a value-taking power move on you to channel the power away from you toward them, leaving you lower-power and lower status (and, low-value, as a result).
- They may try to pull these power moves by judging you or by knocking you down a peg socially while hiding behind a cover such as it only being a "joke."

Read:

- "14 Power Moves to Dominate Anyone" and
- "6 Covert Power Moves to Control Frames"

> 6 Covert Power Moves to Control Frames

Chapter #5: How to Win More Negotiations with Advanced Frame Control Techniques

#1: What Is a Frame?

Definitions:

- **Higher-Level**: "a set of beliefs, values, perspectives, and personal predispositions with which people filter and interpret the world."
- **Simplified**: "the lens with which we view the world and situations within it."

#2: Chapter Highlights

- You can influence the lens people look through so they see you in a better light (so they see you as higher power).
- You can also influence people's lenses so they see giving you a "yes" as a win for them.
- Frame control techniques can be used for negotiating business deals, relationship situations, and any opportunity for persuading others.

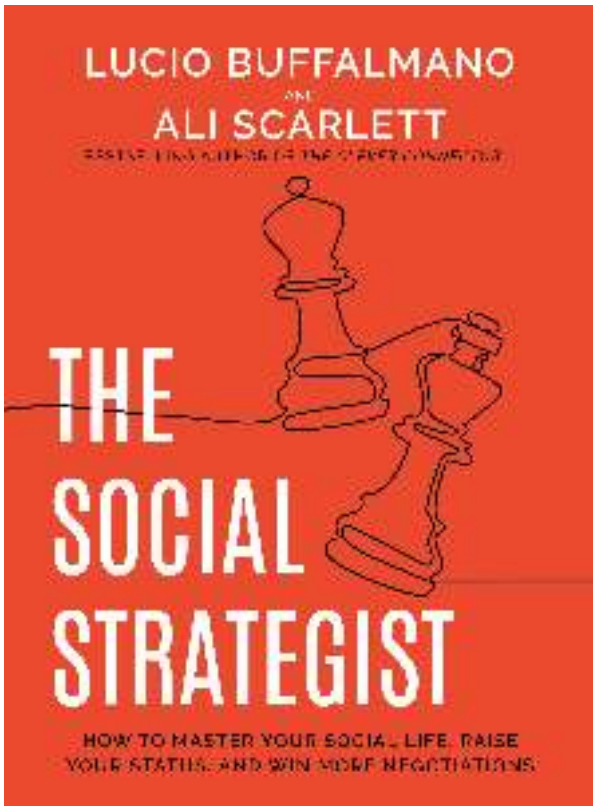
Read "10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone" and:

- **Basics of frames and frame control**

Chapter #6: Next Steps

This chapter shares techniques for managing job seeker power dynamics in interviews and handling trap questions as well as negotiating refunds.

The authors then share an inspirational story closer to the end.



Real-Life Applications

- **Work to achieve more status, authority, and financial power while rooting out your submissive behaviors and adding more high-power behavior.**

Most people struggle to reach the high-power side of the HP/HW matrix, whether that's by balancing their friendliness to avoid coming across as "too nice", raising their status in social groups, or even simply being more assertive.

Focus on increasing your power and you'll put yourself above the masses of other people (who are lacking in power dynamics) when it comes to getting that promotion, attracting that mate, and even building strong relationships with high-status elites.

Cons

- **Only an introduction**

This book only gives you a taste of the wisdom you'll find in Power University.

- **Omits darker topics**

The authors withhold covering some aspects of human nature that are often looked down upon, such as Machiavellianism, manipulation, and psychopathy.

Pros

- **Covers the exceptions**

For example, many communication skills authors endorse assertiveness as the best communication style for all situations.

However, there are cases when passiveness and aggression are better suited and this book ventures into those exceptional cases.

- **End of chapter summaries**

There are recaps at the end of each chapter to give you an overview of the biggest takeaways.

- **End of chapter action steps**

To take the theoretical, abstract information, and translate it into real-life applications.

Review

The Social Strategist is a unique resource in the self-development and social skills genre because it ties together the true basics of social success with the more advanced notions and skills.

That means, the book gives you a solid overview of the full "empowerment skyscraper", from the foundations to your next-level floors of power.

What also makes *The Social Strategist* stand out, and this is 50% a compliment to the book and 50% an indictment to the industry, is that many of both the foundational and advanced concepts are new or semi-new.

Of all the books on self-development, social skills, power and strategies that we've gone through, not a single one of them had more than a passing mention to, say, personal value and value exchanges; frames and frame control; social power dynamics of everyday life.

And these are all foundational topics for any real effort of self-development and personal empowerment.
Glad there is now a book that tackles those basics.

So, in brief, with our own readily admitted bias, **we can highly recommend *The Social Strategist*** to most readers beginners or advanced alike.

Check the best social skills books, or get the book on Amazon.

The Law of Optimum Balance: Why Too Much (or Too Little) of Any Good Trait Fails

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The law of optimum balance™ states that the peak of effectiveness for many traits is to be found within the extremes, and that many traits that are beneficial at certain levels turn bad, ineffective, or harmful at extreme levels of total lack or oversupply.

Many positive traits that people aspire to and work towards follow the law of balance.
And so do also many traits generally associated with "bad morals" or negative outcomes.

The pervasiveness and ubiquitousness of optimum balances make the optimum balance a fundamental concept of self-development and life optimization.

In this article we will learn about the law of optimum balance.

Contents

- INTRO
  - Components of Optimum Balance
  - Why It's Important
- Optimum Balance Traits & Examples
- 1. Dark Triad
  - 1.2. Machiavellianism
  - 1.3. Narcissism
  - 1.4. Psychopathy
- 2. Open-Mindedness
- 3. Drive
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- 4. Power (Hierarchical)
- 5. Manliness & Strength: Dating Optimum Balance
- TPM's Optimum Balances
- Big Goals Require Clusters of Optimum Balances
  - Law of Runaway Effort For Diminishing Returns
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- Why So Many People Fall For Imbalance
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- SUMMARY

INTRO

> The Law of Optimum Balance™ states that many traits, behaviours and strategies have an **optimum interval** where returns are maximized; too little or too much reduces — and sometimes reverses — benefit.

Optimum balance an ancient idea first mentioned by Aristostele and taken up by several others across time, including the inverted U concept applied to arousal and performance (Yerkes and Dodson, 1908) and the idea of 'too much of a good thing' applied to many positive psychological traits (Grant and Schwartz, 2011).

But it's also a concept constantly forgotten, superseded by a powerful human drive for 'more'. Strangely so, somehow, given that the optimum balance is so widespread that we may say that **the law of balance is a law of nature**.
Optimum balance dynamics are so intrinsic to life, that they even cap evolution's ability to improve or remove any given trait.

Say Workman and Reader:

> There are constraints to what natural selection can do. Among other factors this includes the fact that **traits occur along a normal distribution curve, hence, those at either ends of the extreme will have too much or too little of a trait** (e.g. anxiety)

It's important to note that the optimum balance varies depending on the individual, goal, and context (Furnham and Kanazawa, 2020).
Hence, **calibration remains crucial**.

Components of Optimum Balance

- **Optimum interval**: the range within which the returns are maximized.
  The optimum balance, more than a single point, is most often best thought of and conceptualized as a range. That range of maximum benefit is the optimum interval
- **Useful interval**: you can think of it as the range outside of the optimum balance, but still "good enough" for satisfactory outcomes or even to achieve challenging goals -especially if you make up for with optimum balances in other traits-
- **Threshold level**: the level at which a trait reaches its maximum returns, and then starts decreasing
- **Self-defeating imbalances**: the levels at both extremes of the continuum
  - Self-defeating extreme
  - Self-defeating lacks
- **Diminishing returns point**: many traits or possession reach a point where any additional unit of improvement takes lots of work, but yield little added benefit

And some properties:

- **Low / high threshold**: when the maximum returns happen at low / high level or intensity of a certain property or trait
- **Tail**:
  - Fat tail: when the property or trait maintains good returns at the extremes
  - Lean tail: when the property or trait becomes useless or nearly useless at the extremes
  - Negative tail: when the trait becomes harmful and negative above or beneath certain levels
- **Optimum balance of trade-offs**: the law of balance often applies because in complex environments high

investment in one trait or skill comes at the expense of others (opportunity costs)
  - High trade-off environments, when there are many other valid pursuits one could switch to and where it generally makes sense to switch focus after a good level has been reached
  - Low trade offs environments, where continuous investment and "obsession" on a single trait, skill or pursuit may pay off more, or at least cost less

Why It's Important

The main contributions to understanding the law of balance are to:

- **Remain within the optimal balance**, rather than under or overshooting it
  - Stop once you reach it, an issue for many driven guys who tend to think "more is always better
- **Plan your self-development** it's often best to have an idea of what you need to reach, and how much work it will take
- **Keep Pareto in mind**: in conjunction with the "law of diminishing returns", the optimum balance also suggests that the main benefits of any trait increase only marginally once you enter the 'optimum interval'. Once you're close to the optimum balance, you already got most of its value, and you may be better off focusing to a different trait
- **Stay motivated when you're starting out**, people who aren't aware of the optimum balance may get discouraged or sidetracked when they look at the extremes, while instead the optimum balance may be far closer and possible than they think
- **Strategize for your goals**, based on what you actually need, rather than what would "look cool" to have or be
- **Resist marketing manipulation**, often based around extremes that are not nearly as effective at achieving goals as they are at grabbing your attention (and wallet)

Optimum Balance Traits & Examples

Grant and Schwartz observed and reviewed many psychological traits that the law of optimum balance.

And, we argue here, that includes many traits that are considered 'maladaptive', an argument often encountered in evolutionary theory.

Here, we pick some traits that are particularly relevant for our brand of self-development.

Let's start:

1. Dark Triad

On this website, we claim -and we may even say we *show*, with plenty of evidence and rel life examples- that (even if you want) "to be good, you need to be bad".

Hence, one should possess certain traits, skills, and know-how that many negatively associate with "being bad", "being selfish" or even "being antisocial".

Some of these traits are part of the cluster of personalities sometimes referred to as "dark triad":

1.2. Machiavellianism

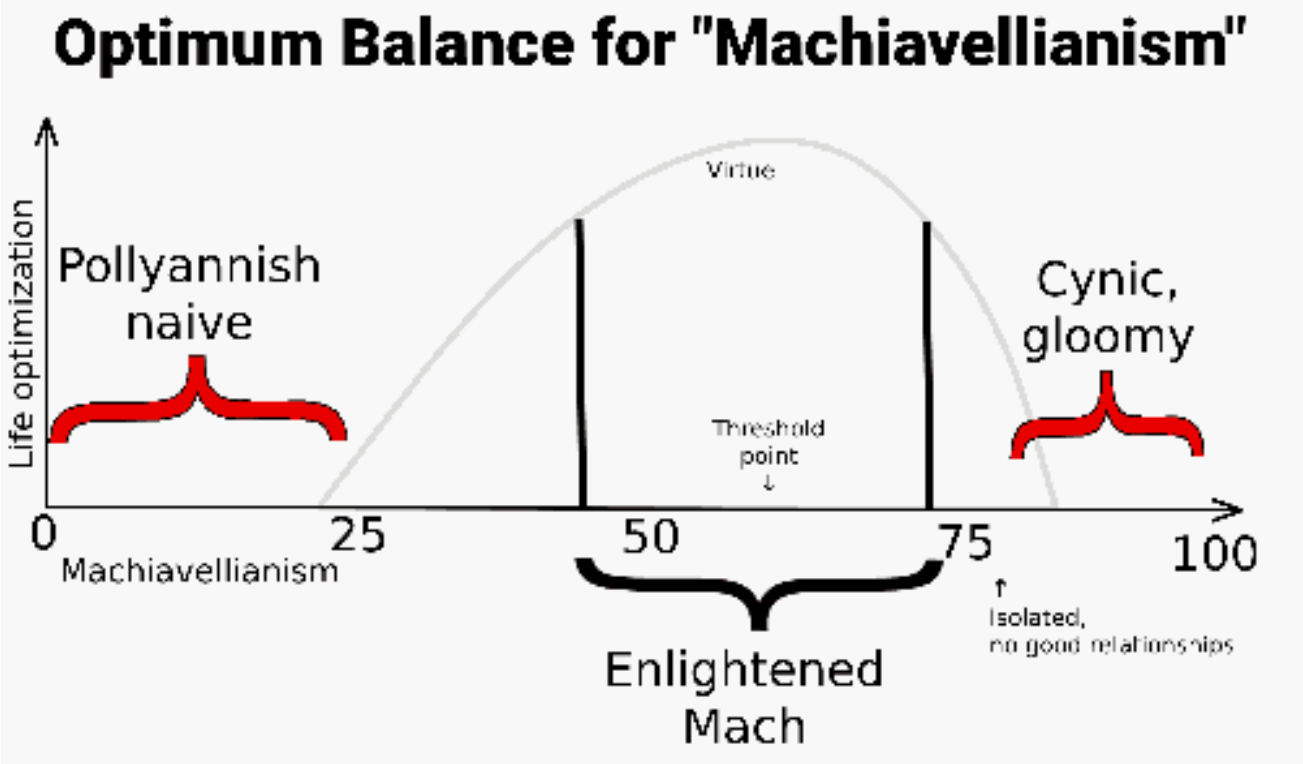
Machiavellianism may be the most relevant dark triad personality for life success.

Some of the benefits include superior strategizing, maximizing returns, as well as effective self-defense against life's many fraudsters, cheats and charlatans-.

Machiavellianism is important but, as per law of balance, there is such a thing “not Machiavellian enough”, as well as “too Machiavellian”.

It seems pretty logical that too little Machiavellianism and cynicism lead to naivete and that naivete is not conducive to self-flourishing.
It may be less obvious that there can be such a thing as “too Machiavellian”, but research literature confirms that much.
High Machs tend to be more dissatisfied at work, in their relationships, and generally alienated.
They can gain a poor reputation when their scheming ways become obvious, and people tend to reject high-Machs for their closest relationships.

Hence, we get to the “optimum balance” of Machiavellianism:



1.3. Narcissism

Write Bachar in The *Handbook of The Psychology of Narcissism*:

> The idea that normal narcissism can be adaptive is quite new (…) researchers had been working from the “obvious” assumption narcissism would predict maladjustment (…) (but) normal narcissism is associated with good adjustment to college life (Lapsley & Aalsma, 2006), normal eating attitudes among college women (Brunton et al., 2005), and normal feelings of shame (Hibbard, 1994).
> (…) among nonclinical, mostly student populations have found that normal narcissism helps individuals assert interpersonal dominance (Brown and Zeigler-Hill, 2004) and fuels approach and achievement motives, such as competitive and mastery strivings, while lowering avoidance motivation (Foster & Trimm, 2008; Lukowitsky, Roberts, Lehner, Pincus, and Conroy, 2007; Wallace, Ready, & Weitenhagen, 2009)

Dr. Craig Malkin, one of the authors of “The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump“, would place the “healthy interval” between 4 and 6 on a 1 to 10 scale.

1.4. Psychopathy

The idea that some amount of psychopathy may be beneficial is not new.

As a matter of fact, sociologist John Ray described exactly that “optimum interval” we talk about here.
Ray suggested in 1981 that low and high levels of psychopathy are bad for, but that modest, controlled amounts make for better under stress performance and more rational decision making.

Research psychologist Kevin Dutton also supported that idea and further popularized it with self-help books such as “The Wisdom of Psychopaths” and “The Good Psychopath Guide“.

Finally, Brian Klaas in Corruptible says that “some of the most destructive elements of psychopathy can not only be blunted, but turned into advantages”.
And, just like psychopathy researchers Robert Hare in “Snakes in Suit“, claims that many successful psychopaths climb corporate ladders by avoiding the most violent expressions of their anger and channeling their ruthless and amoral nature to support their thirst for power and control.

Also read:

- **Psychopathy and corporate success**

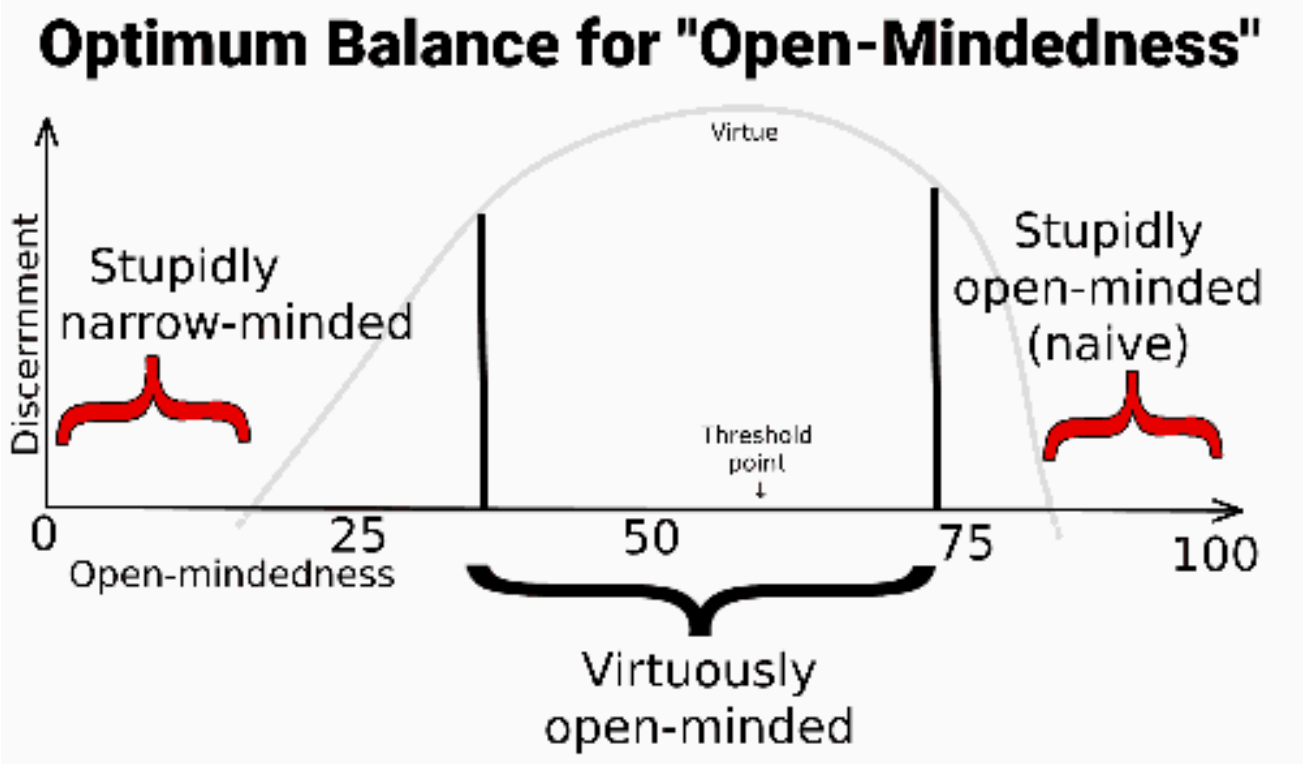
https://thepowermoves.com/psychopathy-empathy-and-success-at-work

2. Open-Mindedness

Generally, people think of “open-mindedness” as a positive thing.

More rarely do people stop and think at what it means at the extreme oversupply.

At the extreme lack, narrow-minded is not good because it inhibits learning and growing. Almost everyone agrees with that -including narrow-minded folks-.
But too open-minded isn’t good either though because it inhibits critical thinking, discernment, and even personal power. And that would be naive:



There is a steeper decline on the right side because naive over-open-mindedness is a risk hazard in life, while

instead too close-minded is “only” a risk for personal growth.

Example: Mark Manson Is Wrong About Everything

Ali Scarlett had a great example for extreme open-mindedness.

Let me show it to you with a twist now.

What do you think of this chapter’s title, “Mark Manson is wrong about everything”?
It seems pretty harsh, right?

I agree: yes it is.
And we don’t think Manson is wrong about everything, he’s actually a great author and a smart guy.

And in his popular and otherwise good “*The Subtle Art of Not Giving A Fuck*“, Mark Manson has a chapter called “you’re wrong about everything”.

Well, are you, though?
Because as much we want to give some credit to Manson and the products of his mind, so you should give some credit to *yourself* and *your* beliefs.

Manson’s chapter title is an example of too much open-mindedness, stated in the most negative and self-harming format possible.
That statement may have some benefits as “shock value” to induce some good self-reflection, but it’s certainly not a good mindset to internalize.

Of course there is a time and place to self-assess our deeply held belief, but you probably don’t really want to think of yourself as “wrong about everything”.

Take that form of open-mindedness to an extreme, or adopt it a bit too often, and you destroy your self-esteem, and turn into a self-doubting, low-power, low-confidence individual.

No thank you, you’re not wrong about everything.
You’re wrong about a few things, and right about others. And you’re always ready to correct yourself and change your mind, which actually increases the odds that you’ll be more and more right about more and more things.

Now that’s a better mindset, and that’s a better example of empowering, optimum-balance open-mindedness.

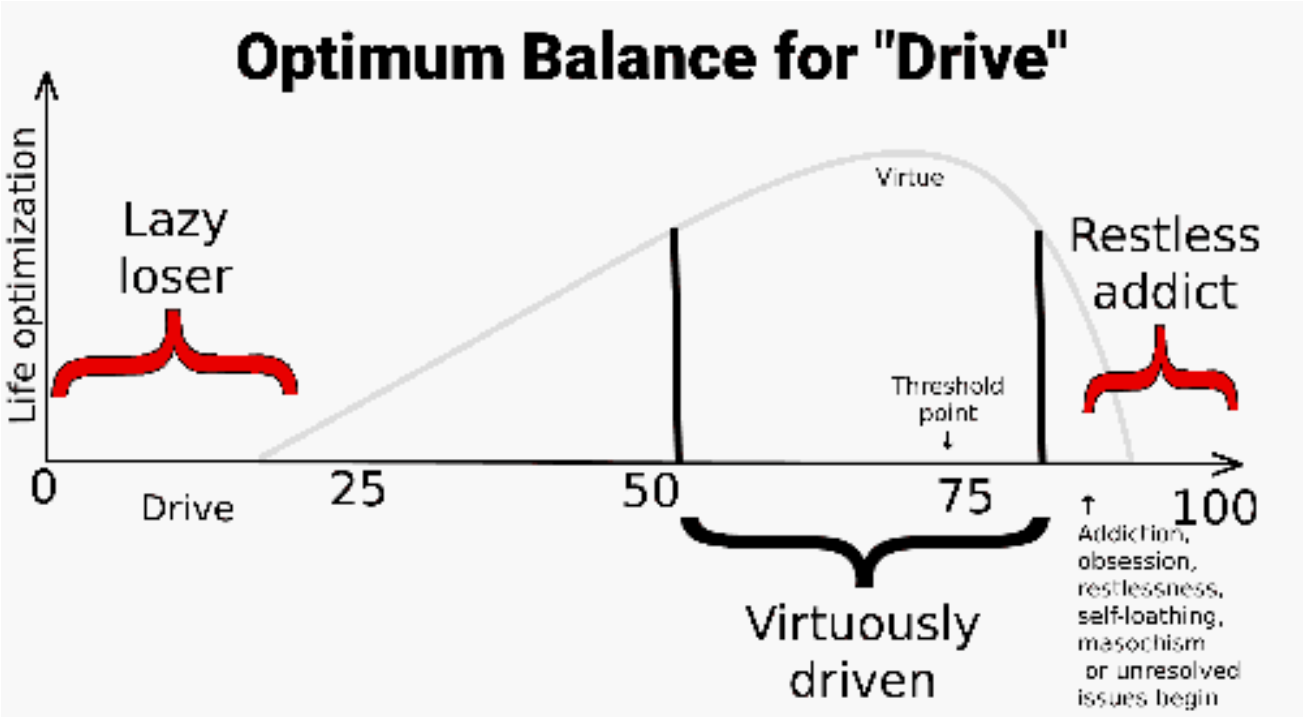
3. Drive

Drive, ambition, and motivation are very popular traits that people want more of.

And much self-help literature and teachers seem to encourage to load on as much drive, ambition and motivation as possible.

Of course, since many of these traits follow the law of balance, it’s not always a good idea to aim for “as much as possible”.

Take drive, as an example:



And as an example of “extreme drive” self-help:

Example: “Can’t Hurt Me”... Cause I’m Hurting Myself Plenty

David Goggins has become a popular poster child of extreme drive and ambition.

And, in many ways, he’s a unique, impressive, and awesome man.
Even his book is awesome.
With plenty of entertaining and “extreme” stories, it’s a real page-turner.

Goggins is a great example of how far the human body can go, which is farther than most think. That’s empowering to know, because it means that you probably have a lot of extra in the tank when you first start feeling like you’re done.

Yet, it’s not healthy to make that extreme, the norm.
To make a comparison, engines have rev limiters to avoid staying too long at the extremes. And it’s for a good reason: extreme over-revving is bad for the engine. An engine going into over-revving is far more likely to break, and the more time you spend there, the more you shorten its life span.
Similarly, over-revving is also not that good for the human body.
Over-revving is for emergencies. It’s rare *exceptions*, not the norm.

Over-revving is bad for engines… And often bad for people, too

When you read Goggin's examples of what's supposed to be "maximum achievement", you have to wonder whether the guy is "driven" or… *Haunted* by some unresolved issues into self-harming, over-revving territory.

An important question to assess whether you're positively driven or negatively crazed is whether there is a goal to reach, or not.

For example, when Goggins over-revs to get into the SEAL team, that makes sense because there's an objective. But when he "pushes himself to keep on running" until he pees blood, runs on broken bones, defecates on himself, has to be hauled to the hospital but doesn't want because he "earned the pain", all with no real life-relevant goal to be achieved… Then you really gotta wonder. Is this type of self-help glorifying drive, or trying to pass self-loathing and stupidity for a good thing (also, you gotta wonder where is the virtue in pushing the costs of your extremes on others. Does "Can't Hurt Me" also applies to those who had to carry him to the hospital, bloodied and pooped?) ?

Also read:

- **Growth mindset power dynamics**: yes, you can be too extreme with a growth mindset as well

Example of Extreme Drive Covering Deep-Seated Issues: Liver King

A great example of "extreme drive" to mask deep-seated issues:

> **Liver King**: When I talk about the 85% of the population that suffers from self-esteem issues, that's me. This is why I work myself to death in the gym, this is why I do 12 to 15 blood-burning workouts a week. Just to feel like I'm OK

There you are: extreme training and thrashing his own body "just to feel like he's OK".

Maybe the optimum balance instead is more like: "healthy self-esteem and a healthy, hard workout, 5 times a week".

4. Power (Hierarchical)

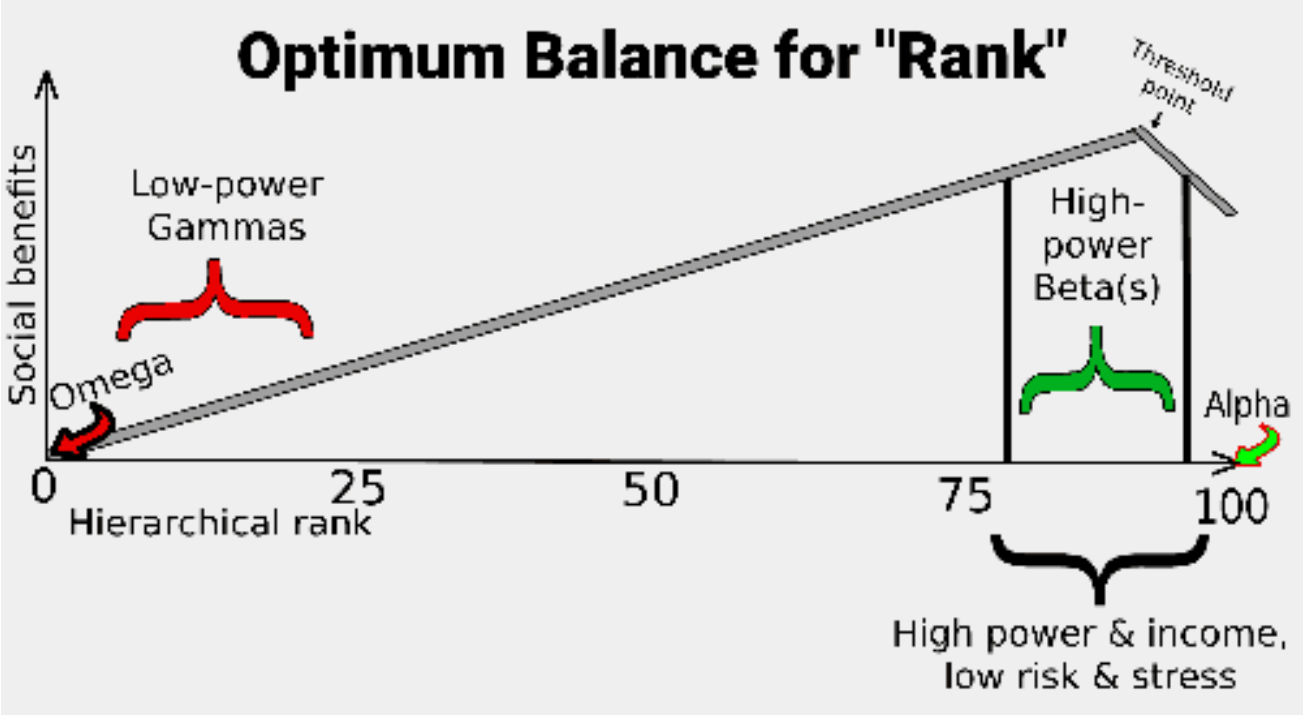
Surprised to see this one here, eh?

Well, generally speaking, it's much better to have power than not.

And, as a general rule, it's rarely too bad being #1 and, more times than not, it's better to be #1 than anything else.

However, in some contexts and environments, the #1 spot can come with very high costs.
High-cost environments are demanding and stressful, risky, unstable, controversial, or under heavy scrutiny. The costs include premature aging, health concerns and shorter lifespan, loss of free time and, in more violent or primitive societies, personal harm or death.

In those high-stress and unstable environments the optimum balance for rank may not be the #1 spot of the leader, the despot, the alpha male, or the CEO, but at one or two levels below.
The lower levels enjoy fewer spoils and power than the top dog, but the possible decrease in responsibility, stress, personal risks and demands can sometimes more than makeup for the power loss:

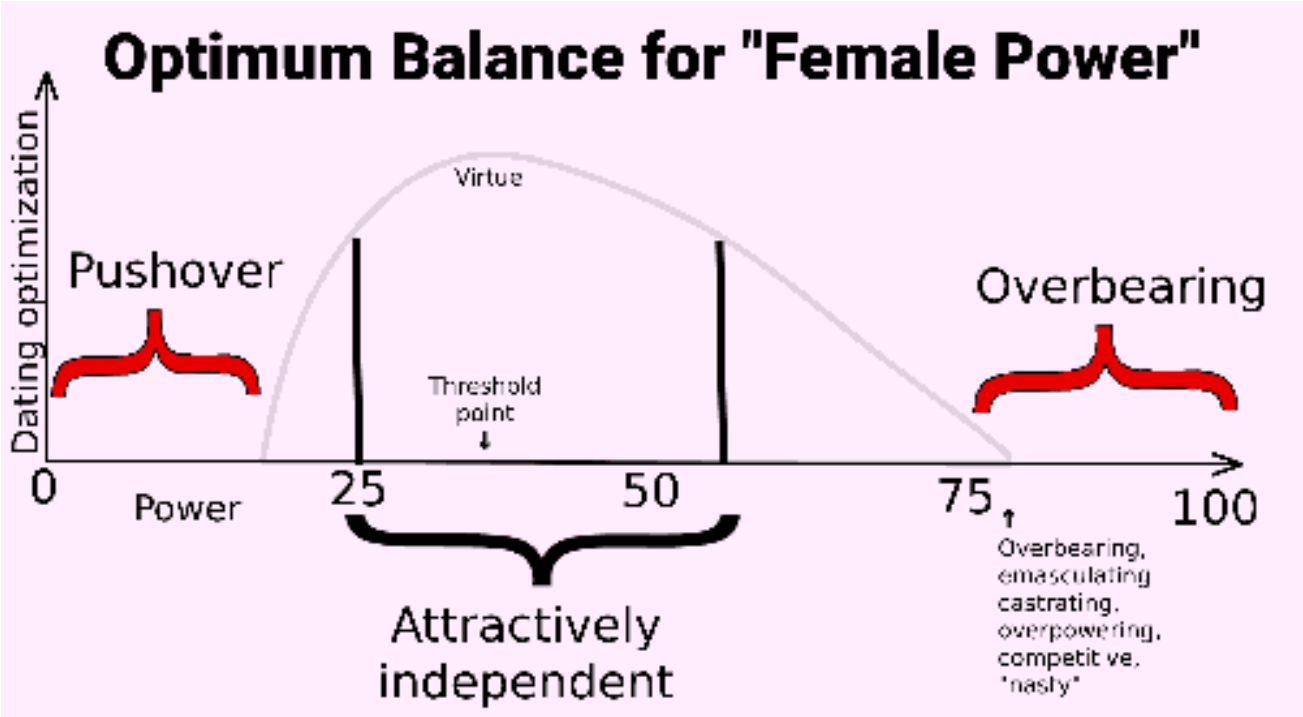


5. Manliness & Strength: Dating Optimum Balance

The law of balance also applies to many traits relevant to dating, attraction, and seduction.

However, even here, many miss it.

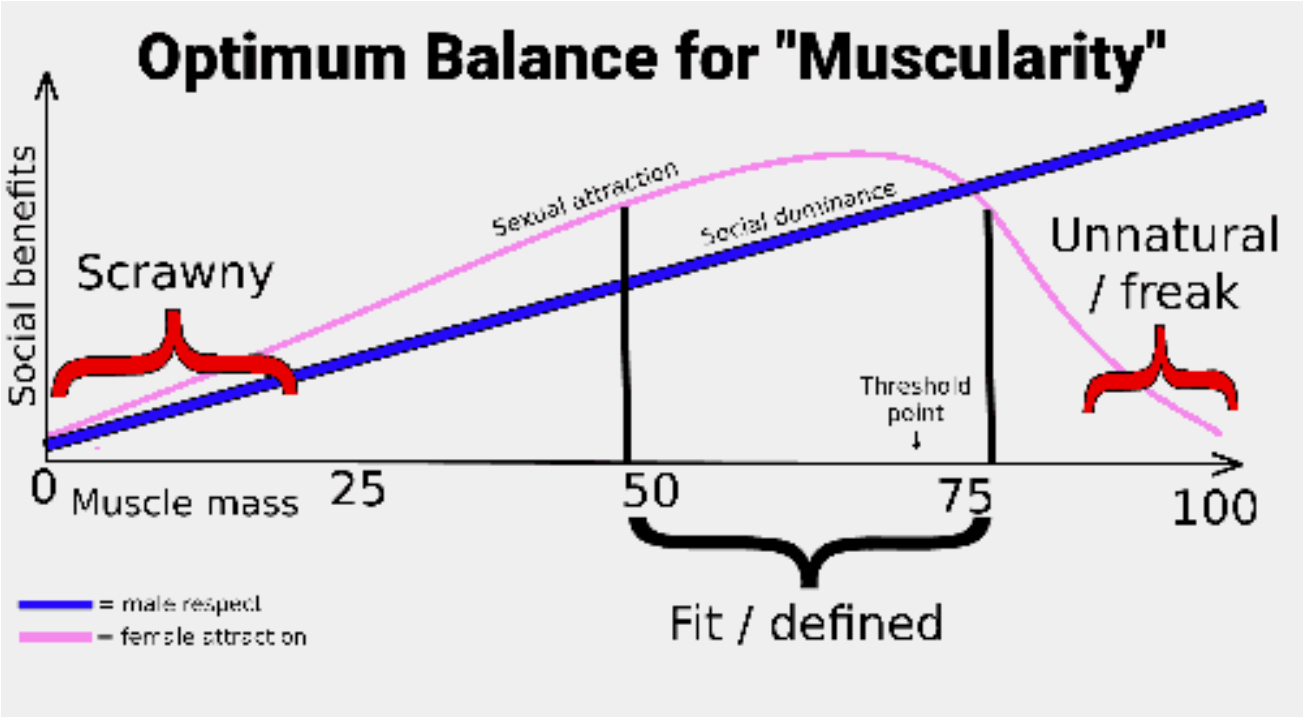
Generally speaking, many female dating coaches encourage strength and independence in women (including the popular subreddit female dating strategies and the best-selling authors of *Why Men Love Bithces* and *The Power of The Pussy*).
And while that is a good idea for women who are *extremely* passive, submissive, and "dependent", it doesn't mean that swinging at the opposite end is a good idea for most women.
Most women instead maximize their sexual market value at rather low levels of strength and independence (low threshold point):



Also read "strong VS feminine women".

Many male dating coaches -and all red pill-inspired ones- instead encourage men to be "as masculine as possible". And while men maximize their dating returns far higher than women and much closer to the extreme right end of the continuum, there is also "too mannish" for a man.
Studies show indeed that many traits associated with "manliness" such as beard, voice depth, facial masculinity and muscles all have a threshold point.

Taking muscles as an example:



Read more here:

- **Dating optimum balance**

TPM's Optimum Balances

As simple as the optimum balance is, it took TPM some time to generalize it at a higher conceptual level.

And before this high-level, multi-traits article, we had many practical, single-traits articles on optimum balance that we sometimes referred to as "enlightened" stages.

Some of these articles:

- **Positive cynicism**, a balance between naivete and over-cynicism
- **Smart cooperator**, a balance between giving and taking, including giving to the right people
- **Empowered individualism**, which albeit the article stresses the individual empowerment part, it's also about striking a balance between the individual empowerment and drive, and the social animals we are
- **Good asshole**, striking an effective balance between personal boundaries and selfish goals, and honor and cooperaton
- **Positive Machiavellianism**: learning Machiavellian thinking, strategies, and techniques, and use selectively
- **Straight line seduction**, where we introduced the concept of "golden balance" for power and warmth

We also wrote about optimum balances in dating, including:

- **Feminine VS Strong women**, with the optimum balance in dating being more on the feminine and submissive side

And in the article on naive self-help we also introduced the "discriminating learner" concept.
The discriminating learner adopts the "learn from anyone mindset" with an optimum balance of open-mindedness to learn new wisdom, but with his critical judgment fully on to spot and add the proverbial pinch of salt to charlatans, manipulators, and clueless folks who aren't (yet) in a position to teach others.

Big Goals Require Clusters of Optimum Balances

Generally speaking, one-trick ponies don't go far outside of their one-trick shows.

And, generally speaking, larger goals in complex environments -like life is- generally require *many* traits or skills.

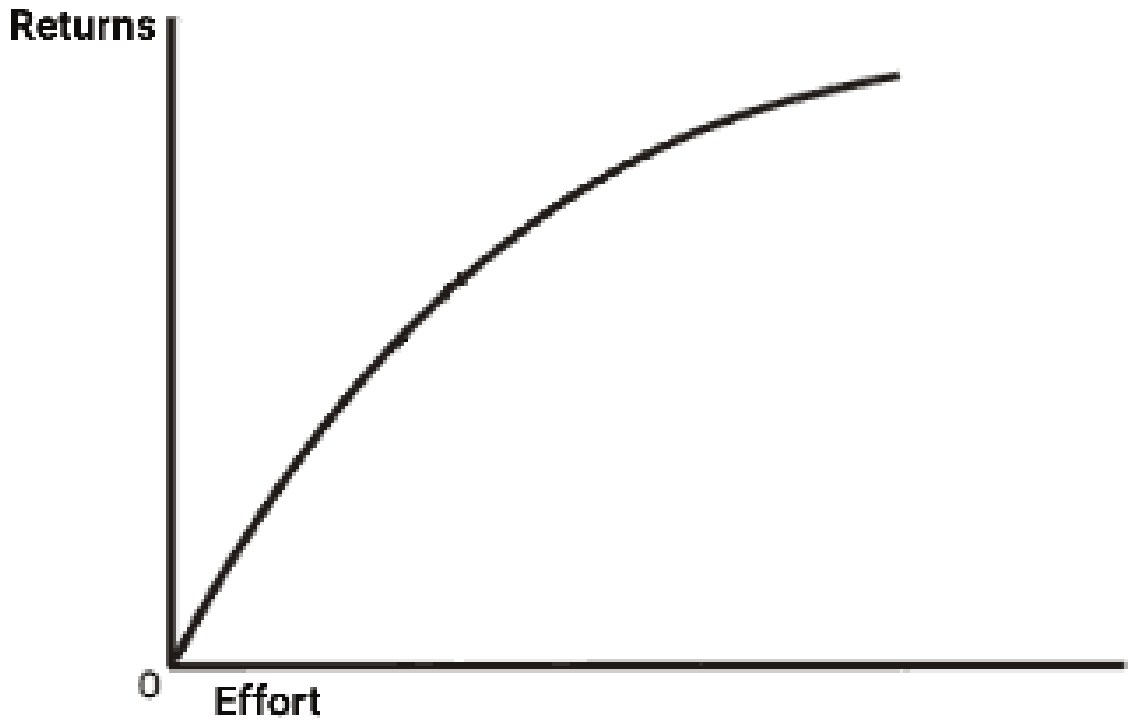
So, often, goal achievement is a question of a cluster of optimum balances.
And the important property of complex goals is that **the harmonic summation of each individual skill or trait is great than the sum of its parts**.
Often, far great.

That means that not only you don't need to go at the extreme of any skills, which would turn negative, but often, you don't even need to be around the upper end of the optimum balance.

Instead, you need to be "good", or "good enough" at a host of relevant skills, and then only be "great" at the most important ones.

Law of Runaway Effort For Diminishing Returns

Reaching the top 1% is often ineffective for the law of diminishing returns, and the opportunity loss.



For example, reaching the top 10% may require you to invest 1.000 hours.
But to reach the top 1% would require 100.000 hours, and the additional benefits of going from 90 to 99 aren't nearly as big as going from, say, your starting point of 35 to 90.

That's a lot of time and effort that brings little extra benefit.
And it's an opportunity loss because you could invest that time to become 2-3x better at something else that's equally important for your goals.

Example: Optimal Clusters For Dating

Take dating, for example.

Imagine a man who has the goal of finding a great woman to start a family.

That guy may spend 2.000 hours trying to pull women in night venues and approaching in the streets.
Those are relevant and helpful activities for his goal.
But instead of seeking to be top 1% at night clubs, he's better served also working on his personal success, on his status to get into the best places with the most attractive women, and on his personality and conversational skills to also do great on dates.

Generally speaking, the person who works in parallel and gets to 80% on a host of different traits and skills will most likely destroy the guy who seeks to become 1% at just one thing.

Optimum Balances Outside Self-Development

While we focus mostly here on socialization, self-development, and general success and goal achievement, the law of optimum balance applies in any realm of life.

Economics

Take, for example, inflation and the Gini coefficient in economics.

Both names *sound* negative.

But while many people have negative associations for “inflation” and “inequality index”, most economists agree that *some* inflation and *some* inequality are good.

Zero or negative inflation is not good for economic growth.
And zero or negative inequality means little incentive to work and do anything productive.

The theory of marginal utility is also textbook optimum balance.
It says that any additional unity of most goods adds less value than the unit before. Until it reaches a threshold level where having too many becomes a cost with taking too much space and wasting your time with their disposal.

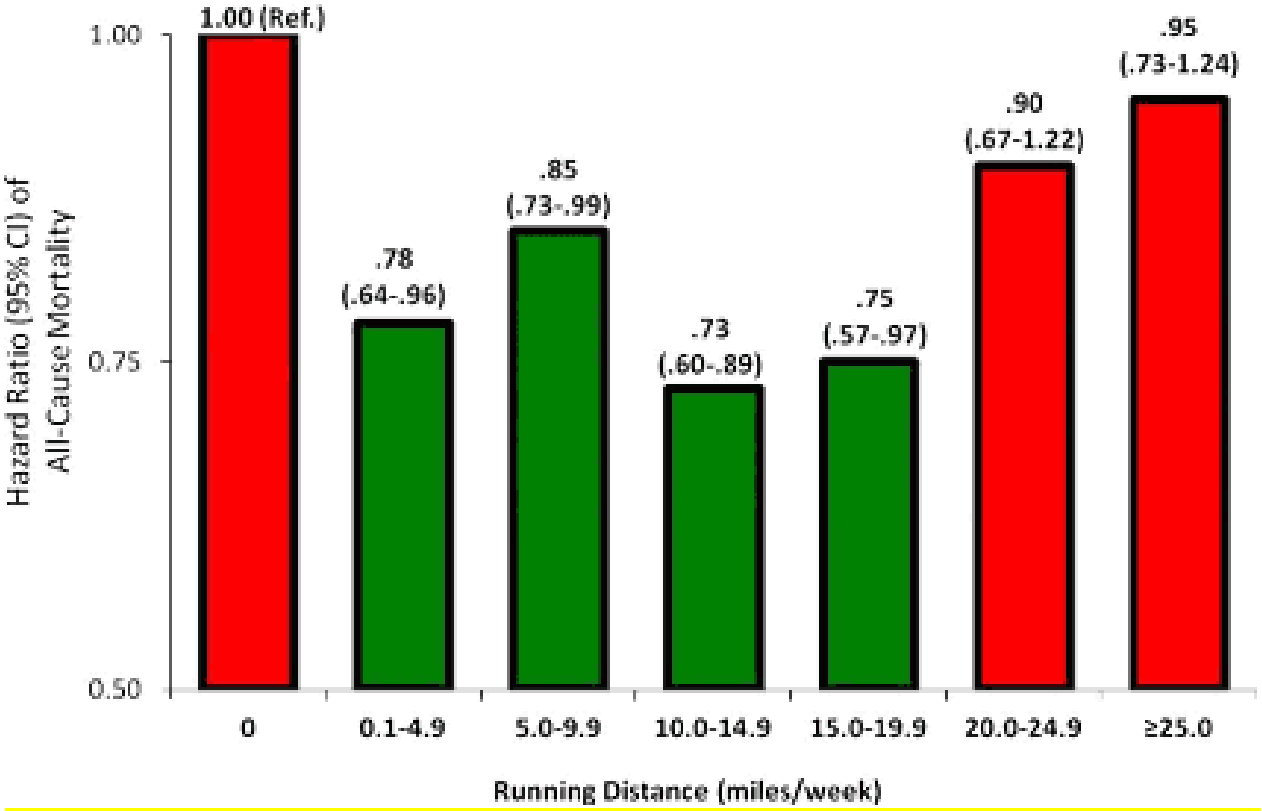
Same for larger economic systems.
Most economists today recognize that the extremes of communism and “anarcho-capitalism” are both less effective in promoting economic prosperity than the optimum balance that is to be found within that continuum (ie.: *some* inequality & *some* redistribution, *some* individual freedom & *some* government intervention, etc.).

Training, Health & Fitness

Training for health and well-being stays away from taxing extremes.

And those are extreme are rather easy to reach when it comes to health, explains cardiologist James O’Keefee in a paper aptly called “Run for your life … at a comfortable speed and not too far” (Ted Talk here for you).

Look at this chart:



More than 20 miles a week and you’re already overdoing it and harming yourself. That’s very easy to reach for a runner.

Pretty crazy, eh?
Of course, there has been some criticism and debate around what constitutes the “upper limit”.
But that an upper limit exists is well established, and several studies and experts propose an “optimum level” that is quite easy to reach.

So stop listening to those gurus yelling to your face to run longer and faster until you drop, lest you’re a pansy.

For those who train not for health but for extreme results, the optimum balance gets pushed closer to the extreme end, but the law of balance *still* often applies.
Take bodybuilding, for example.
"Beating your muscles to a pulp" day in and day out is not only not healthy, but also not optimal for maximum muscular growth.
More recent studies to maximize bodybuilding physiques have dismantled the old concept of "pushing harder than the last time".
And the more science-driven bodybuilders have introduced more effective training routines that stop at 1-2 reps from total failure.

That "optimum balance" for those seeking extreme muscular gains is close to the extreme, challenging, and very taxing. But it still stops short of total extreme.

Nutrition

A good diet is balanced.

And albeit it's certainly good to heavily reduce processed or deep-fried food, nutrition is quite simple.

A diet balanced in the classes and types of food you enjoy and balanced in the *quantity* of food gives you 90% of all the benefits.

But that doesn't help to sell much.

Extremes sell better.

So nutrition is full of charlatans who promote OCD-type excesses.
It includes toxic approaches to food based on fearmongering and demonization of some foods, or whole classes of foods.

These extremes aren't just ineffective and a poor use of your time, but can turn toxic and pathological.
Bulimia has long been there, and it's the excessive concern for being excessively thin.
Orthorexia Nervosa instead is the new pathology on the block and it's the obsession with eating "healthy food".
Eating healthy is great, and we highly recommend it. But, once again, when you take it to the extreme, it turns toxic.

Why So Many People Fall For Imbalance

Many people will read this article nodding through it.

After all, it makes plain sense, no?
On the surface, the law of balance seems to state the obvious.

And yet, if you go through the self-help literature, the examples of "self-defeating imbalances" are everywhere.
In inspirational self-help, imbalances are the majority.

So why do so many people fall for imbalanced self-help?

Why do so many people struggle to see that things are contextual, that too much of a good thing is bad, and that just enough of a bad thing can be good?

I don't have all the answers as for the "why", but part of the answer includes:

1. Extremes Are "Cool & Sexy"

Extremes are fascinating.

It's why people watch crime channels, love self-destructing rockstars, and enjoy movie scenes that defy common sense and laws of physics alike.

Many world languages also display and foster the "appeal of the extreme".
In English, adjectives such as "extreme", "exaggerated" or "super-sized" are often used as positives and often associated with good things.
Even the locution "too much" is often associated with positive or semi-positive imageries of over-delivering.

On the other hand, many associate "average" with "boring and dull".
As an ex-girlfriend of mine said: "you don't want to be average". And while "optimum balance" has *nothing* to do with "average", to some, it is a lot closer to average, than the extreme is.

BTW, my reply to her was: yeah, you're right. Average is still better than below average, though, no?

The extremes also help sell and self-promote.

When it comes to this age of guru entrepreneurs, being helpful while also fairly pursuing self-interest isn't good (or real) enough.
"Impacting one billion people" is.

And when it comes to personal success, collaborating while assessing how trustworthy others and covering your ass just in case isn't catchy (or real) enough.
"Never trust anyone" is.

Risk: Confusing "Appealing" For "Effective"

I get the "appeal of the extreme".

While most of my life I take good care of myself, I had some bursts and stages of extremes -and of idealizing extremes-.
And they were great fun.
I still love the poetry of blazes of glory, living fast and dying young, and the supposed superiority of burning out against fading away.
But it doesn't mean I let my life descend into self-destructive fire.

Solution: Turn Optimum Balance Into A Sexy Extreme

Similarly, if you have a thing for extremes, you're not going to easily ditch it in favor of the optimum balance.
Instead, the solution is to turn the optimum balance into a sexy extreme.
Such as, you want **ditch the appeal of wasteful extreme, and embrace the appeal of extreme *effectiveness***.

2. Beginners Confuse "Most" for "Best"

Most people learning how to increase anything are often, logically, below the optimum balance.

And when you're too far below, it's hard to assess what's best, and what's too much.

Imagine then an ant looking at a lizard and a T-Rex.
They're both huge to the ant, but the more extreme T-Rex seems like a worthier recipient of admiration -no matter that the T-Rex is long dead and the lizard is still around-.

Risk: Chasing "Most" Rather Than "Best"

When beginners first start learning, the risk is to confuse "most" for "best".

If you seek effectiveness, it's not ideal to set your sights to "most" rather than "best" because that has high opportunity costs.

As you waste time chasing “most”, your time and effort will not be spent improving whatever else would give you a bigger bang for the buck -or, simply, time that you’ll never get to back to just enjoying life-.

3. Gurus’ Manipulation

Knowing that many people crave the extreme more than the effective, gurus and marketers:

1. Sell the extreme
2. Disguise themselves as extreme
3. Sell with a self-frame of having reached the ultimate level of skill and evolution

We already discussed the first.
And when it comes to self-disguide, you get a bunch of gurus who make you feel bad for selling you a lie. The lies extreme drive, dedication, adherence, or extreme results.
And whatever they sell, they sell it from a place of having reached the ultimate stage and fully mastered their craft to God-level.

Of course, the only truthful and most respectful stance towards the audience would be this:

> I may be farther ahead than most, but I’m still only trying my best, carving my way forward, and stumbling as I go.
> I haven’t reached any ultimate stage, and I’m only *moving* towards that ideal state.
> But since I’ve been at it for a while now, I may be able to teach you something.

But that wouldn’t sell much because that honesty doesn’t come across as high confidence, and as psychologist Maria Konnikova said, **the conman man game is a game of extreme confidence**.
So, they sell you what works best: extremes.

Gurus also frame as extremely important whatever it is they’re selling.
For example, following the latest fad diet?
You’ll soon find out it’s extremely important that you eat this food, and avoid that other poisonous one -again,

thinking in extremes-.

Normal power dynamics then ensure that the extreme becomes the *norm*, rather than the exception.
This is because even more honest coaches are forced to lie in order to even have a chance at being heard.

And this may be one of the main reasons why I don't do coaching.
I don't want to present myself as if I were at any ultimate stage of development while being fully aware that I'm not.

Risk: Believing The Conmen (& Their Lies)

When you fall for the extreme con, you tend to pick as teachers and role models the biggest, flashiest, and loudest of the teacher because, you may think, that's the guy who's "best" at it.

And you tend to over-estimate the importance of whatever it is they're selling -at the expense of other equally or more important endeavors you may be pursuing-.

4. Gaining Approval & Self-Validation

Sometimes the "quest for the extreme" has a deeper emotional cause.

It's the will to gain someone's approval.
Someone who has judge powers over us, and it can be an external person, group, or even ourselves.

At least with validation though, there may be is a silver lining.
After all, men hungry for more, even when just seeking validation, advance civilization… *As long as they can channel that extra-drive into something productive and value-adding*.

That's a big IF though, because it's common to seek extreme results in fields or endeavors that add little real value to the world, or to the self.

Building a cathedral in the desert perfectly encapsulates the hollowness of over-achievement without a good strategy:

Risk: Cathedrals In The Desert

I remember years ago walking with a university colleague.

She wanted to purchase some supplements to help her keep up.
She needed them because of over-stress, she said.

I remember thinking that I wasn't stressed at all. University as exchange students was a joke.

So I prodded deeper.
Turned out, she was pursuing far more credits and doing far more work than she needed for her home university.
Prodding deeper yet, she admitted she was doing it to prove to herself that she could.
Such as, she was engaging in a sort of "dig the hole, fill the hole" type of work just to prove to herself she was "good enough".

I thought that was the dumbest thing possible.
There was zero added value in extra credits, *zero*. And it was costing her health, and time. Time that she could have used to enjoy life, or to actually learn something she chose, cared about, and added actual value to her life.

If you want to prove anything, you may as well decide to itch that scratch.
But don't do useless work to build cathedrals in the desert. Build something that adds value to you, and/or to the world.

4.2. (Male) Ego

Men are more likely to fall for the “extreme pursuit” out of ego validation.

It’s because “extreme” tends to be associated with strength, with pushing limits, and with the competition-busting dominance of “doing more than anyone else”.

It’s quite telling that in the fitness space Jeff Nippard, a guy who promotes a science-based approach of “not training to the *absolute* limits” had to battle with accusations of being a “pussy”.
In this (super hilarious) video from Greg Doucette, Greg pokes fun at Nippard by adding voice-over to a video of him and his girlfriend. Nippard’s girlfriend tells him “I love you bro Jeff, you don’t train like a p…. (cuts out to Nippard awakening to the nightmare with a “meow”).

And probably, we have an even better example.

Can you think of a biggest cliche for male ego as his penis?

Well, turns out, we may have just the perfect example to fit that cliche.

The man with the most extreme penis size in the world is proud of it.
So far, seems OK.
The only issue is that, at that size, he’s far outside the “optimum balance” for penis size -yes, there is such a thin gas optimum balance for penis sizes as well :)-.
At that extreme end, he can’t have children, he’s never had an orgasm, never had sex, and never even has any chances of having any. Hung at that extreme, he can barely walk well.
BUT… He’s proud of his extreme extremity.
Oh well, at least he sees the bright side of it :).

SUMMARY

The law of optimum balance is a natural law that applies to most human traits as well as to strategies and techniques for goal achievement.

Readers should not confuse the law of optimum balance as a defense for mediocrity or a “chill” approach to life because it’s everything but.

First of all, the law of optimum balance is a description of reality, rather than a philosophy of what's good.

Second, to use the law of optimum balance for goal achievement means prioritizing for maximum *efficiency*.

And, lastly, the optimum balance is, more often than not, a lot higher, harder, and more challenging than what most people are currently at, and what most people settle for.
In truth, for many people and for all purposes and intents, the "optimum interval" ends up looking like a rather extreme level to reach.

Why Peak Attraction Is Really In The “Seductive Balance”

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 September 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The law of optimum balance states that many traits that are beneficial at certain doses turn ineffective, harmful or unattractive at extreme levels of total lack or oversupply.

The law of balance also applies to many traits relevant in dating, attraction, and seduction.

In this article, we will learn how the law of balance can make you more effective at dating and at attracting partners.

Contents

- Women: Strength Quickly Turns Dating Weakness
  - Men’s Power Has No Upper Limit
- Men: Masculinity Is Good, But Beware The Masculinity Myth
  - The Allure of The Feminine Man
- Balanced Dating
- SUMMARY

Women: Strength Quickly Turns Dating Weakness

Female power has been a central theme in each feminist wave.

And it’s also been a major theme of female dating advice.

Generally speaking, to acquire power and succeed in life, acting and behaving higher power is almost necessary.
So for women who seek power and personal success, the “power-up” advice can make sense -albeit even there, it’s best to mix power with femininity-.

However, things are not nearly as straightforward in dating.

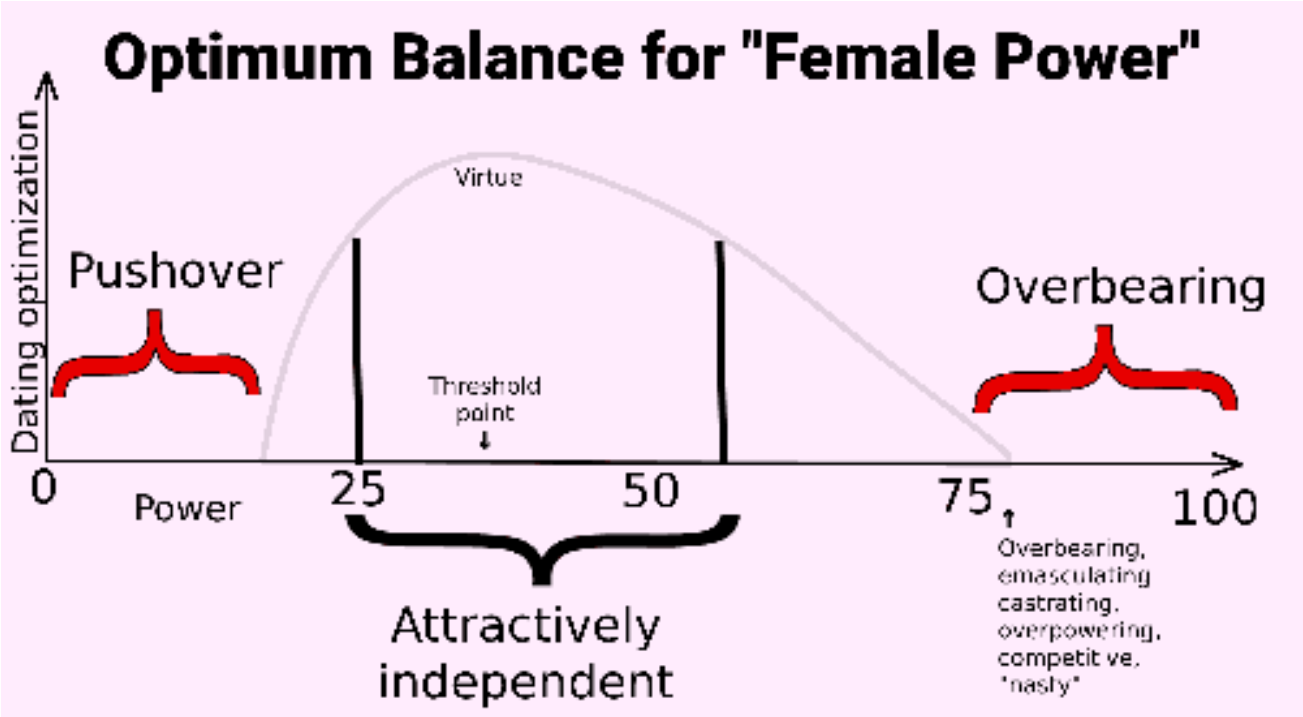
Many female “dating coaches” confuse career success or general personal self-development with dating success and so advise women to be strong and independent.
Just some examples, see *Why Men Love Bitches*, *The Power of The Pussy* or the popular “female dating strategies” subreddit.

As for most general, catch-all advice, the recommendation is not wholly, 100%, bad for *all*.
Stronger and more independent is a good idea for women who are *extremely* passive, submissive, and “dependent”.
At those extreme levels, there are costs both in dating, and in life in general.
In dating, many successful men don’t want to date total pushovers with no personal opinions. And in life, being wholly dependent, be it either physically, emotionally, or financially, is rarely a good idea.

It doesn’t mean though that swinging at the opposite end is a good idea for most women.

And, in these cases, the optimum balance may not even be in the middle, but more to the left, more towards femininity than towards independence, ambition, power, and dry assertiveness.

Most women indeed maximize their sexual market value at rather *low* levels of strength and independence:



Also read:

- Successful women dating

And:

- Strength VS femininity

Men's Power Has No Upper Limit

When it comes to power, power for men has no threshold point when it comes to attraction.

Such as, generally speaking, the more powerful a man is and the more attractive he is.
Some exceptions apply, as they always do. For example, some women may avoid him out of poor self-estem, or out of fear -which is why warmth is so important in dating-.

Plus, when it comes to 1:1 interactions, men can overdo power if they don't add enough warmth, and send her into self-rejection.
So even there, a balance is important for optimum dating (see "straight line seduction" for more).

Still, when in doubt, the answer for men is to go back to the general rule of "more power, is generally better".

Men: Masculinity Is Good, But Beware The Masculinity Myth

When we talk about "masculinity", the law of balance is back in business.

Many male dating coaches -and all red pill-inspired ones- often encourage men to be "as masculine as possible".
And, again, that's generally good advice.
Much better than women's advice, for that matter.
Contrary to most women, many men gain by being, acting, and thinking more like a typical masculine man. That is because, generally speaking, the optimum balance for masculinity is more on the right side of the continuum while most men are either in the middle, or before the middle of the curve.

However, that's not to say to be "as masculine as *possible*". Some traits related to "manliness and masculinity" *do* have threshold points.

The threshold for apparently positive traits is so frequent that researchers came up with an overarching theory to tie all those strikingly similar “optimum intervals”. In an apparent effort to make it as unintuitive as possible, they called it the “inverted-U hypothesis of masculine traits”.
The description of the hypothesis is textbook “law of balance”:

> Women will not prefer mates with extremely high and extremely low levels of masculinity (e.g., muscularity, facial masculinity, shoulder-to-hip ratio, and chest-to-waist ratio). (…) Men with moderate to high levels should be preferred most as mates

Whether the hypothesis is true and why that is the case, the same trend is seen across several traits.

Most men naturally miss it because they judge men *as men*, and think that women are the same.
And albeit men and women certainly aren’t different from different planets, they’re also *different enough*.

And one major difference is that women have a much lower threshold point than many for many traits associated to masculinity -or, in red pill parlance, with what makes a man “alpha”-.
Men make the mistake of thinking that what makes other men seem more dominant or masculine also translates 1:1 to attractiveness to women. And while that is true up to a certain point, it certainly is not a 1:1

Instead, what **makes a man more dominant stops making him more attractive after a certain level**.

Many masculinity-related traits have no upper bound when it comes to portraying dominance and getting respect *by other men*.
However, that’s not how it works for female attraction, which instead follows the law of balance. Female attraction *does* have threshold levels after which attraction starts decreasing.

For example:

- **Beard**: Light stubble beats full beards
- **Body hair**: Light body hair beats high hirsutism
- **Voice depth**: Deeper voices are more attractive, but only up a certain point
- **V-shaped torso**: It’s attractive, up to a certain point
- **Muscles**: Muscles are attractive, but only up to a certain built type

Speaking of muscles, since so many men pursue them, let’s take them as an example.
To a man, the more muscle mass another man has, the more dominant he appears. Men tend to respect, even fear, the “big muscle guy”.

Marketers learned that over time as well.
That’s how you get to “incredible hulk” aberration. Hulk is not to sell to women: for that Ryan Gosling and Brad Pitt are more than enough. Heck, even scrawny DiCaprio in Titanic was super attractive to many women. The incredible hulk isn’t that “incredibly attractive” to women, though. Hulk’s physique is to impress and sell to *men*.

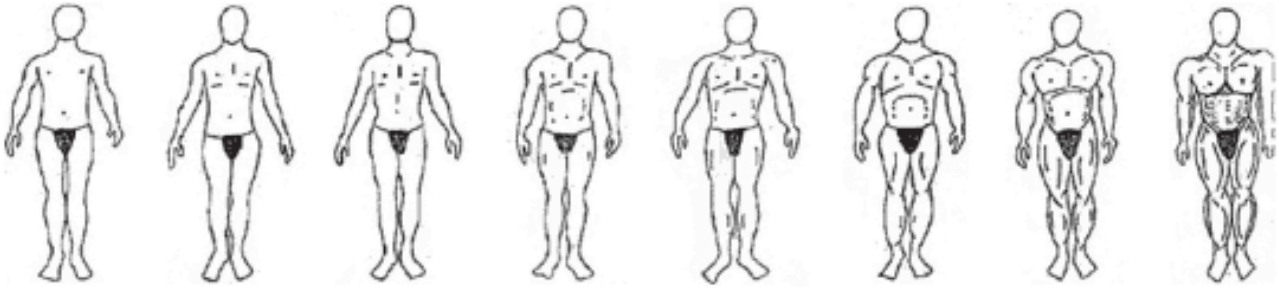
Hulk is for *men*, not women

Let's take a study called "Why Is Muscularity Sexy?" as an example.

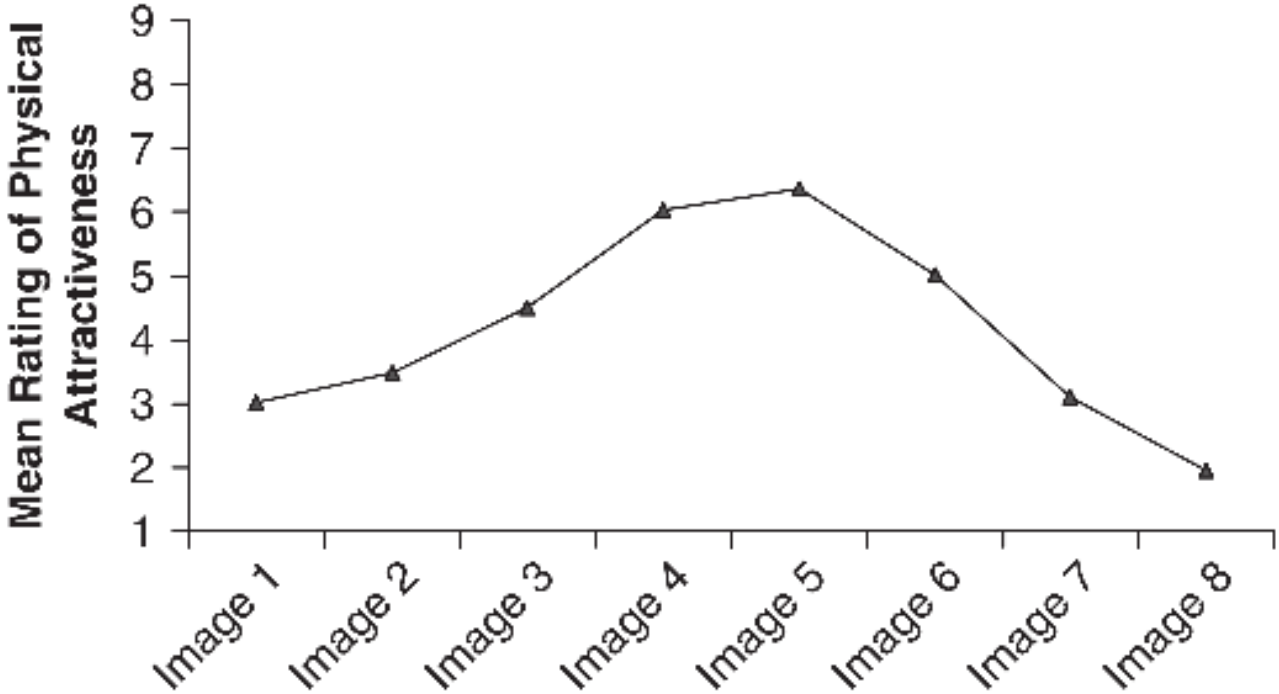
In one of the experiments the researchers drew figures of men going from thinnest, to "most jacked":

APPENDIX B

Images Representing Men Varying in Muscularity, Used in Studies 2-6

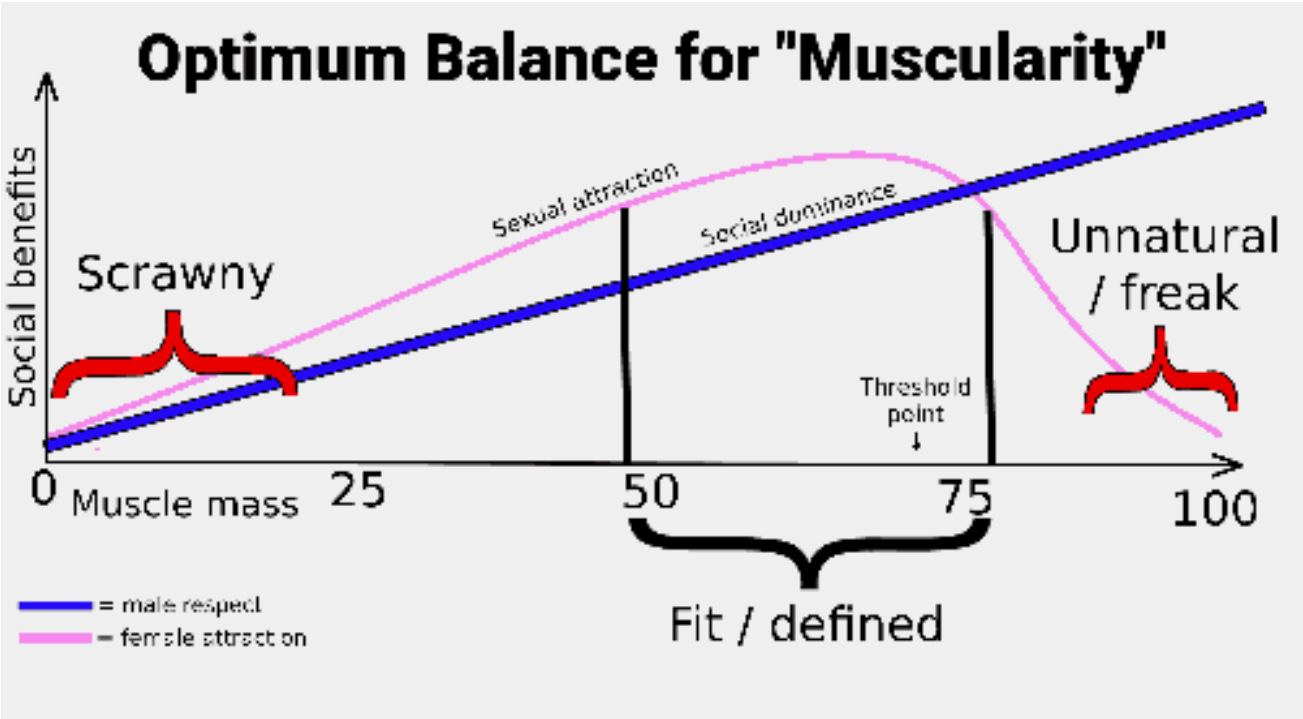


The resulting curve of attractiveness was an almost perfect "optimum balance curve":



The result would be much different if instead we had men answering "what physique conveys the most dominance and power", as most men would choose the most shredded one.

In terms of our optimum balance of attraction for muscles, we'd have something like this:



And the same is true for many other "masculinity-related" traits.
Same for women's traits, by the way, with the hourglass shape and eyelashes length also following an "inverted U distribution".

Generally speaking, many traits related to attraction have "fat tails".
That means, there are a lot of outliers who also like the more extreme versions.

So, for example, there are quite a few women who like the super muscular "caricature" and there are quite a few women who are into the scrawny men.
For example, the rocker and glam rocker types.

Sometimes, outliers at a population level are instead more the norm within subgroups.
For example, while older and more mature women prefer the more masculine types, many younger girls prefer the feminine types.

The Allure of The Feminine Man

The "stereotypical alpha male" may be the "safest bet" when it comes to attraction.

But it would be a huge mistake to think that's the only way to win at dating.
The fat tails of many attraction-related traits mean there are a lot of exceptions, and many outliers.

For example, many women, and especially many younger women, who also happen to be at the peak of their sexual market value, prefer more feminine-looking men than the stereotypical "alpha male".
It's not a coincidence that almost all boyband male stars are feminine-looking: it's because many younger women prefer that type.
And there are plenty of exceptions among more mature women who also find the more androgynous type attractive.

Also read:

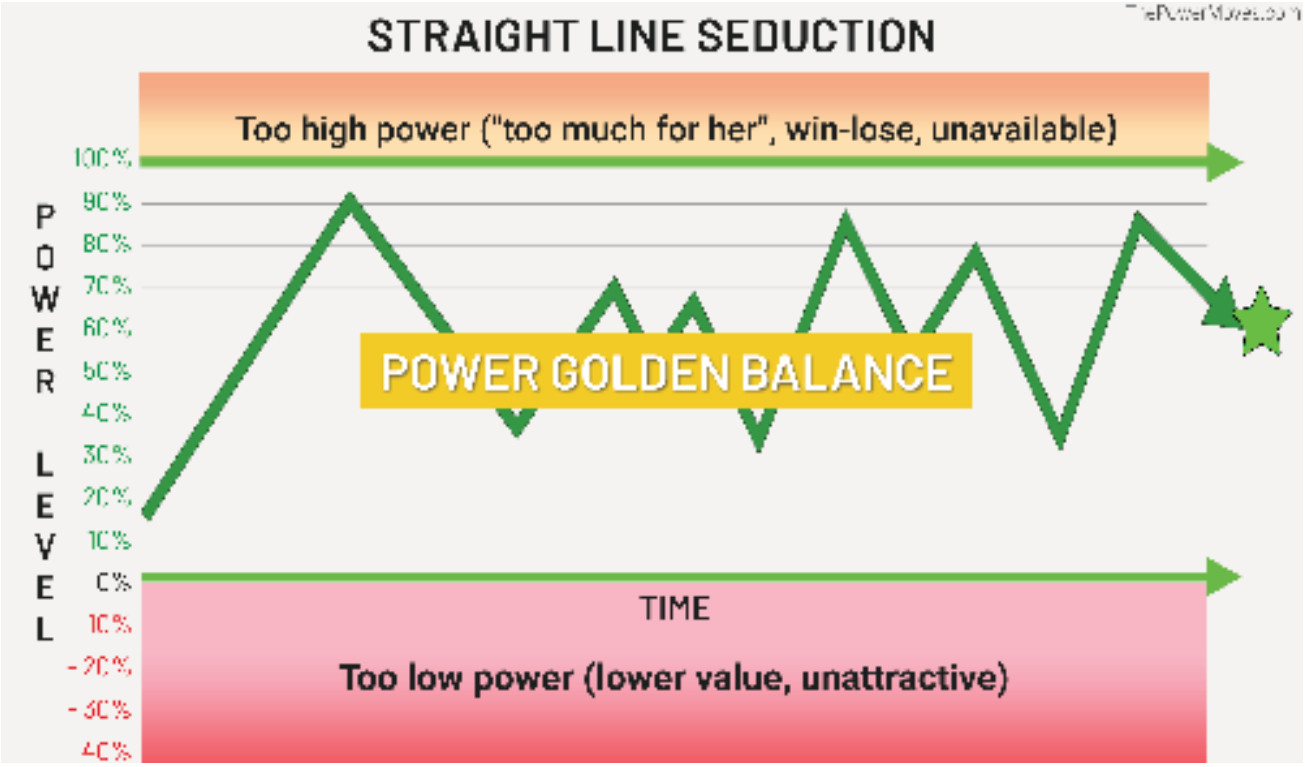
- Exceptional dating
- Male seducers

Balanced Dating

Good and effective dating is also balanced.

We already explained here that while dating high power is generally great for men, you don't want to go *so* high-power that she feels "not good enough for you", or too disempowered and demeaned.

And, the best balance, is by mixing power and warmth:



Learn more here:

- Straight Line Seduction

SUMMARY

Same as for general self-help, a substantial portion of popular dating advice promotes extremes.

For women, it's the feminist-inspired "be strong and independent" and for men, it's "be as masculine and powerful as possible".

Those extremes may sound effective or logical to some, especially for men, but they're neither logical, nor effective.

Both men and women who go for extremes often date sub-optimally.
But since the threshold levels are different, it's women who pay the highest price.

Generally speaking, the optimum balance for popular traits such as strength and independence for women is rather low, so most women acting strong and independent are harming their dating returns.
And the optimum balance for masculinity traits for men is high, but not "as high as possible", so a few men are harming themselves by over-acting as masculine and dominant as possible -and especially so when it looks like over-compensation-.

Pussy A Reclamation: Empowering or Ineffective Narcissism?

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 October 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Pussy: A Reclamation teaches women to live an empowered life by regaining control over their center of life, pleasure, and power: the pussy.

Says Regena Thomashauer -in art "mama gena"-, the author of "Pussy":

> The solution for the epidemic of powerlessness among women, which neither great success nor higher education is able to solve, is simple: reconnecting a woman to her pussy.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- Pussy Book Quotes
- Criticism
- PUSSY – PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Learn how to pleasure yourself (from orgasms to food to dancing)
- Embrace your negative emotions and grieve fully: it will help you bounce back
- Becoming a courtesan means being classy and sexual at the same time

Full Summary

Regena Thomashauer shares a lot of personal stories, but in this "Pussy summary" I will focus on the most

#1. The Goddess Is Inside of You

Regena explains her story of looking for holiness and enlightenment in temples and in the holy land (for her) of Israel.

But she found only dust and old buildings there. And, for a blonde and young blonde tourist, lots of sexual harassment as well.

Then, after a class teaching self-love, she found the courage to follow up with the exercises.
She felt weird, but she prepared for the evening as if the most important person in the world were to visit. She filled her bathtub, prepared her best food, lit up the candle… Then went in front of the mirror and admired herself.

And started touching herself for sensual pleasure.
She writes:

> All these years I had been looking for the Goddess. Suddenly I had stumbled upon her—in the last place I would ever think to look. She was here, inside of me.

#2. The Stages of Pussy Reclamation

Regena says there are 5 stages women go through to re-acquaint themselves with their pussies:

1. Disgust for their own pussies
2. She gets curious without being disgusted
3. She starts researching pussy, curious about the world that can open up to her
4. She becomes a pussy expert, the way she looks at herself changes and her confidence increases
5. Rapture, feeling and experiencing awe

#3. Cliteracy Rules

In “Pussy: A Revelation” the term “cliteracy” refers to someone who has been schooled in how a clitoris works.

Here are the rules of “cliteracy”:

1. Pussy loves praise
2. Pussy is sensitive: hates criticism and abuse
3. Who holds the pussy holds the power
4. She takes all the time she need (referring to orgasms)

#4. Endless Orgasms: Clitoral Stroking

Regena talks about orgasms and “stroking” to teach women how to pleasure themselves.

She says there is a lot of misunderstanding around orgasms (indeed). There are no vaginal orgasms, they are all clitoral.
But some women feel like an orgasm is vaginal because they can orgasm with penetration. But that only happens when the clitoris is close enough to the vaginal entrance.

The best orgasms though are reached via direct stimulation of the clitoris. The author explains that a woman can train to go after the first orgasm if she learns to overcome the over-sensitivity of her clitoris right after climax.

She writes:

> I learned how to relax my body while my clitoris was stroked, and as a result I could experience peak after peak after peak with no “going over.

#5. Becoming a Courtesan

Much of Regena’s work is inspired by the European courtesans, which were the high-class hookers of the old world.

Becoming a courtesan means not only owning one’s own pleasure, but also understanding male pleasure and.. Being classy.

The author grabs a few leaves out of “The Art of Seduction” as she describes Cleopatra and how she spellbound the Roman conquerors.

These are the traits of the perfect courtesan:

1. Dresses well
2. Uses pleasure as compass
3. Flirts as a spiritual practice
4. She never gives up on her desire

#6. Grieve Until The End

With her usual dig at the “patriarchy” with which I fully disagree, Regena Thomashauer says that to overcome pain

and move on, you need to grieve fully.

As per her usual style, she has some rather extreme-looking recommendations, like for example wearing a garbage bag (literally), wiping ash on her face, dancing around with 1, 2 or 3 songs.
And then going back to normal

Also read:

- Leveraging pain for growth

Note:

But I have to fully disagree with the author's interpretation of "grieve". She writes:

> I learned that grief is sacred. It has an inherent intelligence and a time line that is perfect—whether it lasts a day or a year.

Just because it worked well for her it's spurious to think or suggest that it's the same for everyone.
This reminds me a bit of the "personal God fallacy" which is also present in another very popular female self-help book called "Girl Wash Your Face".

#7. Radiant Relationships

Radiant relationships is one of the chapters of "Pussy: A Reclamation" that I enjoyed the most and agreed the most with.

Here is how Regena defines "radiant relationship":

> A partnership that's created for the expressed purpose of taking one another higher.

Yep.
And just like that, you would eliminate 70% of games women play and 80% of games men play.

You'd totally erase combative relationships and we'd all enjoy better relationships.

Note:
Again in this chapter Regena shows a poor understanding of basic psychology (and biology) when she blames "conditioning" for her own jealousy.

#8. The Womanly Arts

And finally, in the end, Regena Thomashauer lists the womanly arts that she talked about during the whole "Pussy: A Reclamation":

1. Whetting Your Own Appetite (identify your desire and find out what you want)
2. Having Fun No Matter What (you decide your moods no matter the circumstances)
3. Sensual Pleasure (explore and learn the capacity of pleasure in our bodies)
4. Flirtation (create fun and turn-on state in everyone)
5. Owning Your Own Beauty (decide you are the hottest thing ever)
6. Partying with Your Inner Bitch (channeling your anger for creative endeavors)
7. Owning and Operating Men (navigating relationships with grace and humor while having it your way)
8. Inviting Abundance (attracting riches)

Note:

I didn't like the author's choice of words when she writes "owning and operating men".
Sure, most women unconsciously try to control men, but the way the author puts it, it again lets out an air of misanthropy here.

Pussy Book Quotes

On freeing women:

> **I freed a thousand slaves. I could have freed a thousand more if they only knew they were slaves**

On women as creators of everyone alive:

> **There is no human alive today who was not created and held inside the living altar of a woman.**

Criticism

I really enjoyed "Pussy: A Reclamation".
Yet, there is much I disagreed with.

Let's start:

Ridiculous Extremes

Pussy is an apotheosis of extremes.

And extremes are seldom good for you as they fail the basic law of balance:

> The Law of Optimum Balance

False Message of Strength Hides Her Anxious Attachment & Neediness

The author sells power and strength.

Yet, in her relationship with a wealthy man, she fell in love with a man who could provide her with security, affection, and financial stability.
There's nothing wrong with that, of course… Except for massive doses of hypocrisy when you're selling and self-framing as a bastion of strength and independence.

By Promoting "Sisterhoods" Pussy Is Sectarian and Divisive

I don't think that "Pussy A Reclamation" is toxic femininity, but it's not the healthiest type of femininity either.

Writes Regena:

> Picture this: a room filled with the crackling connected pulsing energy of hundreds of women, standing together in sisterhood

And she goes even further by stating that women "need" other women (otherwise, what?):

> We women need to reach inside and rescue ourselves, which is oh-so-possible with a community of sisterhood supporting us.

By promoting the idea that women *need* other women and "sisterhood" to support each other, it also promotes an

idea of “in the group” (women) VS “out-group” (men).
Even the way she describes the vagina and the clitoris, she keeps repeating of the 8.000 nerve endings it contains… which men don’t have. Is it now a race to who’s got more nerve endings?
The way Regena talks about those sisterhoods sounds quite cult-like, too.

I personally think that cult-like groups of only men or only women are more harmful than helpful.
Only men groups and only-women groups are OK of course and even helpful. You can talk about things you wouldn’t talk with mixed-gender groups.

Yet when those groups unite to glorify “the cock” or “the pussy”, they start becoming toxic (and ridiculous).

Narcissistic To The Core

As I read “Pussy A Reclamation” I grew an idea of Mama Gena as a narcissistic woman.
Not too dissimilar from the charismatic men who lead a bunch of other men in online toxic masculinity communities.

For example, she writes:

> I wanted to be on television, teaching women about their magnificence. I wanted to be a spoken-word rock star and perform all over the world. I wanted to have celebrities and other movers and shakers as my friends. I wanted to build community and sisterhood.

People with this mindset don’t want to build communities and sisterhood. They want to *lead* communities and sisterhood (for their own personal gain).

And finally, the crowning of narcissism (italic and underlining are mine):

> I wanted romance and poetry and ecstatic sex *and to live my own legend*

And then she says:

> I noticed that all headmistresses of elite institutions had something in common: each had a large portrait of herself hanging in the parlor. I decided that having a portrait painted of myself was the essential next move

LOL, the personal portrait is like the icing on the narcissistic cake.
And if you still had any doubt left (paragraph edited by me for brevity):

> To honor the legacy, I try to outdo myself with extravagant entrances at my live events. (..) I rode into the program on a white horse. I might have a gang of hot men carry me in above their heads on a palanquin. Or perhaps I’ll reenact my favorite rock star

You know, just to keep it classy and understated :).

Fanatical, Cult-Like Approach to Self-Development

Regena’s “Pussy Reclamation” seemed at times like the female version of toxic masculinity.

There is so much “Pussy chest-thumping” that it’s almost unavoidable that “we’re so great because of our pussies” ends up being “we’re so *better* because of our pussies”.

Here is the male equivalent of “Pussy: A Reclamation”:

> **Guy**: Respect the cock

> **Mama Gena**: Respect the pussy

Does it sound a bit ridiculous?
It's the same for this book.
An approach centered around "I'm great because of my pussy" is, in my opinion, idiotic as much that guy who thinks he's better because of his cock.

Some Woo-Woo Content

Some of the "Pussy A Reclamation" content is all about broad generalizations of the "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus" type.

For example, Regena says:

> The feminine force is primarily responsible for desire. The masculine force is primarily responsible for the production of that desire. The masculine is the rock; the feminine is the wave crashing against that rock.

This is similar to Deida's work in "The Way of The Superior Man" which is also all about generalizations of male's strength and female "emotionality".
And, in some ways, also similar to the "Tao Te Ching", which talks in broad generalization without actually saying much.

My point of view is that there is certainly a backdrop of truths in these generalizations, but that they do little to enhance our understanding and they do little to help the readers in.

Some Woo-Woo Made-Up Science

"Pussy A Reclamation' present massive doses of pseudo-science with some made up "facts" that make little sense to the more rational (and skeptical) readers.

For example:

> Pussy is where your intuition lives, where your deepest nonrational knowledge lives (..)
> She integrates information from diverse sources, including the hypothalamus, neocortex, conscious, unconscious, and peripheral nervous system.
> This is why, when our pussy is engaged, we make better choices. We can feel the right next step in any situation.

Woo-Woo Superstition

And of course, some mixing of pussy-woo-woo with some good old superstition:

> We tried dabbing pussy juice behind the ears when going to a job interview, with incredible results.
> A few dots of PJ perfume before a date? It was like crack cocaine to a guy. If we wanted to make ourselves positively bulletproof, we'd go panty-free and add some temporary tattoos, press-on jewels, and stickers to decorate our secret weapon: pussy. To our amazement, we discovered that adorning her activated her. Like Wonder Woman's golden cuffs.

Pussy juice behind the ears gives you incredible interview results?
LOL.

It's not over though. Keep on reading.

Woo-Woo Predicting Pussy Power

At this point, I don't if the author actually believes in this stuff or if it's more for inspirational sake:

> She talks to us. She will whisper, "I know you are running late, but don't take a cab—take the subway." We don't listen to her, and there we are, stuck in traffic, missing our meeting.
> Pussy is your own built-in psychic, your own inner guide, your divining rod.

Woo-Woo Religion

Turns out, pussy changes reality as you best please:

> She knew her husband would be in a dark mood if the Seahawks lost, so she lifted her skirt and flashed pussy energy at the TV screen. Miraculously, the game turned around in the last quarter

To which she even adds some powerful blasphemy for the more religious readers.
At this point I was actually laughing at the idiocy of "Pussy A Revelation":

> After the game, the quarterback was telling reporters that "God is so good." Only Fran knew the truth: that God is impotent until the Goddess shows up to turn him on. Yes, we are each that powerful.

Regena dethrones one God.. And puts another one up in the sky: GPS (the Great Pussy in the Sky).
Now you can change the course of reality with your pussy.

This is worse than Rhonda's "The Secret".

Regena actually has an altar where she prays to the GPS-God:

> I sit at my altar for a small gratitude ritual. I have a series of stones and small objects I have collected over the years. I light a candle and pick up each of the 30 stones, one at a time. As I replace each one, I whisper gratitude to the Great Pussy in the Sky for different aspects of my life

The whole sequence ends with a more down-to-earth "hello" than most churches through:

> Finally, I might pull out my hand mirror and greet my pussy with "Hello, Gorgeous!" just to let her know I honor and remember her.

Woo-Woo Abuse Towards Boyfriend

And finally, a special note must be made for this one:

> I decided to reach back in time and call upon the irrevocable power of pussy—and all my ancestresses from ancient Egypt to 20th-century Virginia—to ceremonially stake my claim. I walked around Tiitus's house and placed a drop of my pussy juice on every object in it, including his toothbrush. The rest of the weekend, I was not a guest. I was the lady of the manor.

To smear people's objects with one's own body secretion without them knowing is, in my opinion, abusive.

It doesn't matter if you think your pussy juices are the best thing on earth: you don't know if for other people is the same.
I also don't think there is anything wrong with boogers, but I'd go ballistic if I knew someone had placed boogers around my house.

There is also nothing wrong with dicks, but if someone brushed his penis on my toothbrush, that would also be abusive.

Unfounded Mysanthropic Depiction of Society As "Patriarchy"

From a social point of view, Regena Thomashauer has no idea what she's talking about.

Her views are polluted by the same type of sloganeering propaganda that pollutes feminists' (mistaken) opinions. Here are some examples:

> Women who no longer participated in the "mean girls" wounding so common in middle school, an artifact of Patriarchy

If someone thinks that women hurting other women is a consequence of "patriarchy", that person doesn't understand a thing about psychology, social psychology, and society in general.

This is some victim mentality in relation to the "oppressive patriarchy":

> We've been held hostage by a patriarchal culture that devalues turn-on and uses women's erotic brilliance in service to the masculine.

And she pushes an agenda of men "profiting" from women (italic and underlining are mine):

> What about the vast fortunes we have forked over to corporations owned and operated by men, in exchange for feminine hygiene products to handle our bleeding and our fragrance?
> (…)
> If only *we* could profit from our pussies to the degree that the PWC has!

And unluckily, Mama Gena ends with a defense of the indefensible view that women have the right to be very angry (for the record, I don't think it's healthy for anyone to go through life being *very* angry):

> We live in an age when women have every right to be very, very angry.

Most of all, Regena Thomashauer is ignorant about basic biology and basic evolutionary biology.
I wouldn't take anything she says about society, repression or psychology seriously.

Predatory Towards Ex & Dead Boyfriend

I think Regena Thomashauer had all the right to end her marriage after she had "outgrown it".

And if she wasn't happy, she did well.
But there are different ways to go about breakups and separation. And different ways of talking about our ex once they become our exes.

Yet the way she did it and the way she talked about her ex seemed a bit too disrespectful in my opinion considering how deeply and widely he supported her.

By the way, as someone who focuses on power dynamics, that tells me two things:

1. Her ex was too much of a nice guy
2. It's dangerous to help (ungrateful) people up because once they're up, they drop you

And finally, the way she describes the death of her dream boyfriend as her own re-birth and rapture as a woman…
That really just sounded terrible.

She probably didn't mean that way, but she should have made it clearer. Which, again, makes me think of a woman high in narcissism.

And she could have really learned a thing or two from Tiitus, her great love:

> So Tiitus had known. He had not wanted to drag me down with him. He was protecting me by pushing me away in the last few months. It was not that he didn't love me. It was that he did.

This is real leadership.
That's an example to aspire to.

Predatory Towards Her Girlfriend

Regena describes two girlfriends of hers:

1. one who attended her classes and joined the sisterhood
2. and one who followed a different path and sought enlightenment "through the heart" instead of "through the pussy".

Well, turns out the one who did great is the one who joined her class. And her girlfriend who didn't join her class, guess what… Now she has a shitty life (all described with much-unneeded details about her low self-esteem and abusive husband).

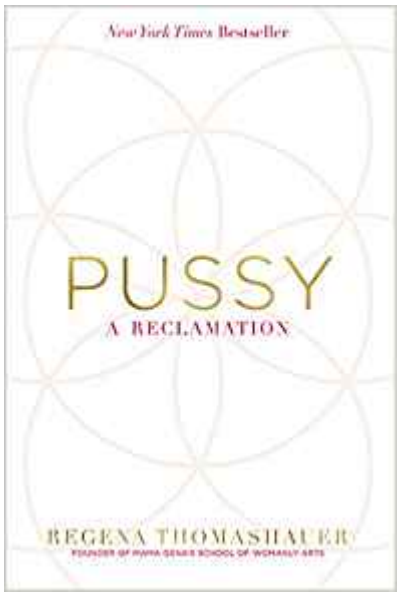
She says:

> So both of my dear friends got the call of the Goddess.
> The difference?
> Hannah picked up—while Grace let the call go through to voice mail.

It feels to me like a nasty (and vindictive) way of throwing her girlfriend under the bus just to promote her work.

Poor Self-Help

Finally, there are quite some references to the "law of attraction" and to a few other common but incorrect self-help myths (ie.: mantras).



PUSSY – PROS

As usual, since I am a highly critical reviewer, I focus more on the "cons" and "criticisms" than on the "pros" because you can get the "pros" anywhere else.

But that's not to say that "Pussy A Reclamation" is lacking in life-changing content or that it's not an outright great book to read.
Here are the Pussy pros:

- **Potentially life-changing**

I believe that the message of getting in touch with one's own sexuality is crucial for many women.
The importance of grieving fully and the message of choosing one's own emotions are also both very powerful

- **Vulnerable**

Vulnerability has become all the rage since "Daring Greatly" (also read "vulnerability is not power"), but Regena takes it another level.

We get to peek behind the "powerful woman" exteriors that sometimes she seems to want to portray.
And that's even more powerful. So much so that I had to wonder why was she trying to project a "strong woman" exterior when she had these human, touching stories of heartbreak and resurrection?

- **Great storytelling**

Regena Thomashauer writes well and some of the stories will keep you on the edge of your seat.

Review

Pussy: A Reclamation is a unique book with the intent of empowering women, but done with a boosterism approach that may provide short-term motivation but not deliver true, long-lasting and foundational empowerment.

The pleasure part though, may be a valid approach to life.
It's not what I'm pursuing with my life, but it could be a good message for some women, especially for women who may need to accept and reconnect with their sexuality.

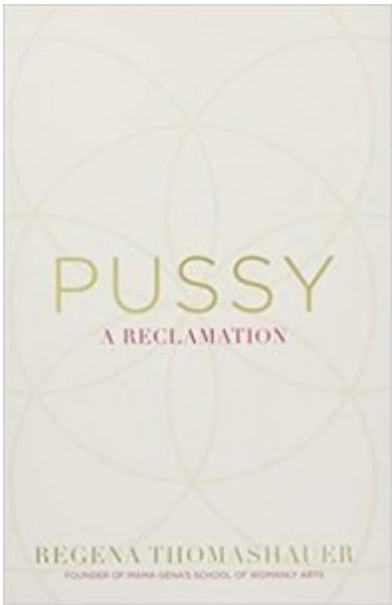
Finally, I must warn readers that while this book promises the rediscovery of female power, **Pussy is *not* feminine and proposes instead a brash, masculine approach to self-development.**
I think that most women should not follow Regena Thomashauer if they want to be a high-quality woman.

Overall, I would give it 5 stars for the positive relationship content, the self-care, and the philosophy of pleasure.

But the narcissism bursting at the seams and the sea and pseudoscience knocks a couple of stars off.

Read it, but with your "BS radar fully on" (and for Chr*st sake, don't drop 'vaginal juices' on his toothbrush!)

Pussy A Reclamation Book Review: Power, or Narcissism?



I don’t think that “Pussy A Reclamation” is toxic femininity, but it’s not the healthiest type of femininity either.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/pussy-a-reclamation-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3

The Power of Your Subconscious Mind: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 October 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of Your Subconscious Mind (1963) teaches readers how to leverage your subconscious to make thoughts a reality and to attract what you want into your life.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Your Subconscious Makes Things Real
  - Visualize To Get What You Want
  - Add Passion To Your Visualization
  - Choose To Be Happy Because Happiness Is A Choice
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- What your subconscious believes your conscious mind will do
- Your subconscious mind can make thoughts a reality
- You talk to your subconscious mind with visualization and thoughts during sleep and half-sleep time

Full Summary

About The Author:
Joseph Denis Murphy (1898 – 1981) was an Irish author and New Thought minister. He allegedly spent time in India learning about meditation and Hindu philosophy. Back in the West Murphy attained a PhD in psychology and, somewhat surprisingly for those who reach high academic degrees, joined the new thought movement where he was also ordained in Divine Science and Religious Science.

This summary of “The Power of Your Subconscious Mind” focuses on the practical aspects of the book while skipping everything we felt was “fluff”:

Your Subconscious Makes Things Real

Joseph Murphy says that our subconscious makes what it believes a reality.

He gives several examples ranging from people who act like ducks once hypnotized to priests curing the sick telling them God will heal them to people selling their houses through the power of visualization (but I prefer some actual knowledge on persuasion and influencing when it comes to selling a house).

Visualize To Get What You Want

Joseph Murphy says that visualizing things will bring them into your life.

He advises visualizing while in dreamlike states, for example before falling sleeping, right after waking up and during meditation.

Add Passion To Your Visualization

Passion gives you the tools to work hard at what you want, which will make the visualization much more powerful

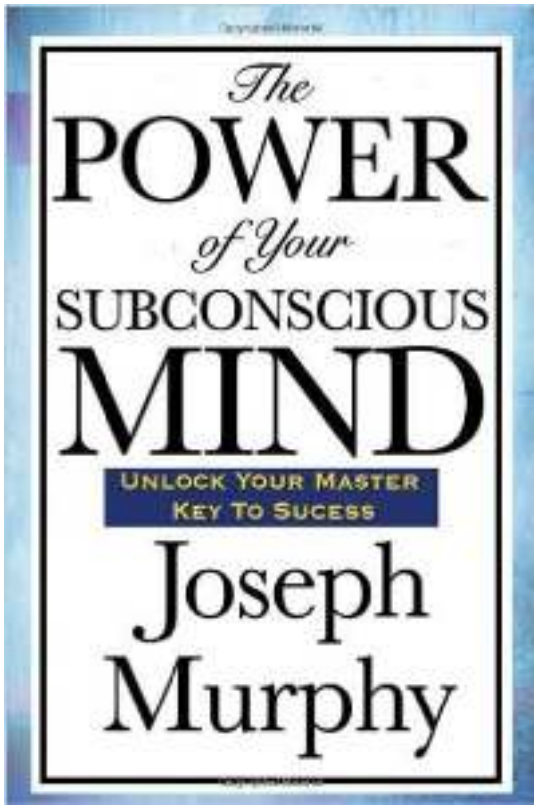
My Note:
The author at least says that wishing by itself is not enough. He says that you need to work hard for what you want. I was relieved because similar books (such as The Secret) recommend you do *not* work on what you want (which is terrible advice of course).

Choose To Be Happy Because Happiness Is A Choice

The author says that being happy is a choice.

And not being happy, or being envious, stands in your way. Being angry towards people is a self-fulfilling prophecy as you will act badly towards them and they will act badly in return.

You should overcome being envious by wishing well to the people you're envious of. And then your subconscious will believe that you deserve the same.



Real-Life Applications

- **Use Visualization**

Visualizing is a powerful tool. Not so much to attract things in your life, but more to keep you focused on your goal and mentally upbeat. Also, you'll be readier when the opportunity strikes

- **Do use break patterns**

It's true that sometimes we build fears and dislike upon nothing. And we bring them in our life by acting on them. Do break the patterns instead.

For example, force yourself to focus on the positives of your boss and chances are that your relationship will improve for the better.

- **Wish others well**

Envy and resentment poison you first and foremost.
Train yourself to abandon envy and learn to become a person who truly wishes people well.

CONS

- **The (not so) good old law of attraction**

"The Power of Your Subconscious Mind" is considered one of the very first sources upon which the law of attraction is based.
And I'm not a big fan of the law of attraction.

- **It's unscientific**

Needless to say, as much of the new thought / new age literature, it's largely unscientific.

PROS

- **Some good insights into how the unconscious can shape our lives**

Surprisingly (for me), *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* had some interesting case studies.

One of them was a workaholic who was making himself sick for too much work.
Then he discovered he always felt guilty for his brother's death and that overworking was a way of punishing himself.
Such cases can happen indeed.

- **Some good stories**

The story of the alcoholic afraid of failing to get sober was touching and helpful.
He visualized his daughter praising him for being sober -a very smart move- and was able to stop.

Review

The Power of Your Subconscious Mind is yet another new thought, law of attraction rehash type of book and, as such, it doesn't exactly enter into our best resources lists.

However, it's better than many other law of attraction spawns because at least it says that as you visualize, you also must work hard towards your goals.

When it comes to you, dear reader, whether you like it or not, is quite simple to say:

If you are the kind of person who uses the expression "woo-woo" with a slight disapproving tone to refer to unscientific, impractical, and probably not the most real-world effective wisdom, then you might not particularly enjoy Joseph Murphy's writing.

If on the other hand, you're into the law of attraction, you'll love it.

As per our general recommendations on TPM, albeit there were some passages that were good in this book, we feel that you may be better off with other self-development resources -and if you tend to fall for woo-woo, check out this article on naive self-help-.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Millionaire Next Door: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 October 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Millionaire Next Door is a study on millionaires, teaching readers what are the habits and mindsets of actual millionaires.
From a TPM perspective, **wealth is power because it buys independence, leverage, and freedom from control**.

TPM Strategy Note: This book is about Power vs. Signaling
Many men use "conspicuous consumption", or over-spending to signal high status (especially in dating). While conspicuous consumption 'works', the reality is that it's a **short-term power move for long-term loss**. By over-leveraging yourself to look powerful, you surrender your long-term power, including "walk-away power" from employers.

Contents

- Overview
- Full Summary
  - 1. Meet the Millionaire Next Door
  - 2. Frugal Frugal Frugal
  - 3. Time, Energy, and Money
  - 4. You Aren't What You Drive
  - 5. Economic Outpatient Care
  - 6. Affirmative Action, Family Style
  - 7. Find Your Niche
  - 8. Jobs: Millionaires versus Heirs
- More Wisdom
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Overview

- Self-made millionaires are frugal
- Millionaires invest instead of spending
- Millionaires value independence over status symbols

Full Summary

Stanley & Danko say there are 7 common elements among millionaires.
Millionaires:

1. Spend much less than what they earn
2. Focus time, energy and resources on accumulating wealth
3. Value financial independence more than status display
4. Didn't have parents who lavished gifts on them
5. Teach their children to be economically independent
6. Target good market niches

7. Choose an occupation conducive to wealth accumulation

1. Meet the Millionaire Next Door

Stanley & Danko define a millionaire as someone having a net worth of one million USD or higher.

The book, however, focuses mostly on people who have a net worth of between one and ten millions, which is a level of wealth attainable by most in a single generation.

I find their list of the most common millionaire types quite interesting.
The typical millionaire is:

- Older man with children
- Self-employed (2/3 of American millionaires)
- In a dull business line (from rice farmer to pest controllers to coin and stamp dealers)
- Has a non-employed wife (or teacher) who is a careful planner and budgeter
- Has a college degree or an advanced degree
- Cares -and spends- for his children's education
- Works between 45 and 55 hours a week
- Invests almost 20% of his income through own investment decisions
- 20% of wealth in stocks / mutual funds, 20%+ in pension plans and 21% in his business
- Would recommend account and law as ideal occupations

2. Frugal Frugal Frugal

Stanley & Danko say many people could be wealthy but are not because of their mindset around spending.

They are on the hedonic treadmill and believe that not displaying wealth is like not having any.
For these people, you are successful when you can show and consume, so they maximize their income around consumption.
And some of them even take up debt to fuel their consumption (this is the definition of the sidewalk people in DeMarco's The Millionaire Fastlane)

Millionaires don't have such a mentality. Millionaires are not interested in showing off. The authors say media and newspapers tell us the wrong story: millionaires don't buy the highest-priced items.
For every luxury "most expensive" item a millionaire buys, there are 8 non-millionaires who buy it.

Instead, **the millionaires budget and control their expenses**.

The typical millionaire in Stanley & Danko survey has an annual income of less than 7% of their total wealth.
When your wealth is so high compared to your income you maximize your tax as well because only 7% of your wealth is subject to taxes.

The authors say many of the millionaires they interviewed have a total taxable annual income of less than 80.000 USD!

3. Time, Energy, and Money

Stanley & Danko say wealthy people use time, energy, and resources to accumulate wealth.

They know how they spend and they plan their investments. It's because millionaires care about their wealth. Their wealth is important for them.

The authors suggest you do the same and record what you buy and how much you spend for each category of

product and service you consume.
You can do it either by yourself or you can use the help of your accountant.

Once you know how much you're spending you should budget in a way that allows you to save at least 15% of your income.

4. You Aren't What You Drive

Stanley & Danko say 25% of millionaires didn't buy a car in the last four years, and only 23.5% of them own a new car.

Half of the millionaires don't spend more than 29,000 USD on cars… In their whole life!

The authors say that car-buying behavior show very well why some people accumulate wealth while others don't.

And while most millionaires spend little on cars, they are also more likely to hunt for bargains and negotiate the price that non-millionaires.
They are not loyal to a specific dealer indeed, but go with the one who can offer the best price.

My Note:
Based on The Paradox of Choice categories, if millionaires display this same behavior across most products they buy, they are maximizers. I must warn you though that maximizers are also more regretful and, on average unhappier than satisfiers.

5. Economic Outpatient Care

Chapter 5 explains that the biggest indicator of productivity among offspring is whether and how their parents support them.

The authors' findings confirm what most people knew intuitively when they say that there is a higher propensity to spend inherited money than self-generated money.

The biggest problem though is that **freely given money changes people's behavior and character for the worse**.

Many children who inherit an easy life from their families are often very well versed in *spending* money but ineffective at generating any.

The authors say it often starts with helping children buy a house.
The parents would think that's OK and the kids won't need any more help after that. But they're often wrong.

The "lucky" children who receive a lot from their parents, or ECO as the authors calls them, develop bad habits for a lifetime.
They:

- Consume more than they save and invest
- Don't distinguish between their wealth and their parents' wealth
- Are significantly more dependent on credit

Based on Stanley & Danko's research the best gift you can make to your children is the tuition.

The second is to create a supportive environment that rewards education, individual achievements and responsibility.

TPM Analysis: "Economic Outpatient Care" is a submission dynamic. When a parent subsidizes you as an adult child, they maintain power over you. For a man to reach full maturity and power, he must achieve Financial Autonomy. **Handouts are 'Golden Handcuffs'** that keep you in a submissive role within the family hierarchy.

6. Affirmative Action, Family Style

Stanley & Danko go even deeper on how parents' wealth influences children.

They say it's not necessarily bad to give to your children as long as they are disciplined and they can generate their own income.
It's very uneducative and damaging though when the children can only survive on their parents' handouts.

Here are a few rules on how wealthy parents can grow smart, independent kids:

1. Don't let them know you're wealthy (at least until they're professionally established)
2. Teach them discipline and frugality
3. Emphasize their achievements, not their material status symbols
4. Teach them values beyond money

7. Find Your Niche

The authors say that most people never produce high incomes -including self-employed and business owners-.

But professionals servicing high-income individuals instead often get wealthy themselves.

And in the next decades there will be a large number of wealthy individuals who will need specialists to serve them.
Some in-demand specializations the wealthy spend on are:

- Medical
- Asset experts such as appraisers, liquidators
- Investment professionals
- Legal services
- Educational products

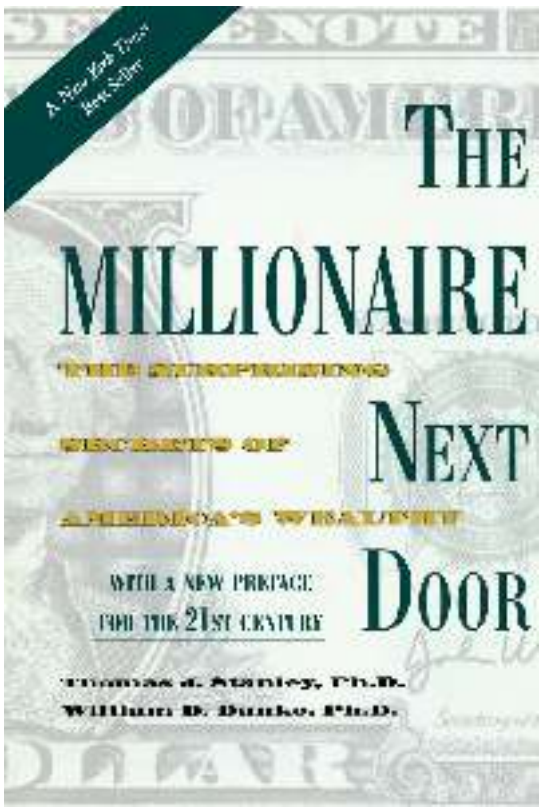
8. Jobs: Millionaires versus Heirs

Most of the affluent are business owners and self-employed professionals.

Business owners and self-employed individuals are four times more likely to be wealthy than people working for others.
But that doesn't mean you should have your own business: most businesses fail.

And there's no magic industry because you can be a millionaire in any profession.
At the end of the day, the most reliable way to become a millionaire is to work on yourself. Because the character is more important than the business.

> **The business owner character is more important than the line of business**



More Wisdom

Security or Independence?

The authors say millionaires value independence.

But I wonder how they know that for sure. I would wonder instead if the millionaires they portray value security the most.

And if that's the case, I would wonder if spending more on life experiences would actually make them happier. Spending on experiences has been shown to be the best way money could possibly buy happiness, so it's an important question.

And at this point I would ask: is your goal becoming a millionaire or is it living a great life (or both)?

Independence: The Best Insight

The main concept of this book is revolutionary for many people who were never taught any better.
That concept is that **high expenditure sells your freedom away**. And often, it sells it very cheaply.

If the new car toy, big house and 5 stars hotel is nice, they are also keeping you chained to your job.
So the next question is: do you like your job?
Because if yes, great. If not, you are imprisoning yourself.

Definitely something to think about.

Real-Life Applications

Prioritize Financial Independence
The biggest, biggest, biggest takeaway I would like anybody I care for to take away from this book is this: prioritize your financial independence.

If consumption is costing your freedom, you are spending money to imprison yourself.
Get your freedom first, do what you like, and then use your money to buy whatever you want.

Don't Give Too Much To Children
Giving too much, too freely, is a terrible education for your children. You are teaching them to be dependent and… Poor.

CONS

No Case Studies
The authors talk about 80k income households becoming millionaires. But there are no case studies.
Those would have been interesting.
Where do they live, what are they giving up, how did they invest, what did they inherit from their parents?
Are they the type of people that live in poverty just to save? If so, that's not interesting to me.

Little Data
The survey and the survey's analysis may be solid, but the conclusions the authors present don't always seem to be based on solid data and/or very scientific.
I enjoy a well-written book, but a few more numbers wouldn't have hurt.

Average, Dull Lifestyle
Nassim Taleb makes fun of "The Millionaire Next Door" because wealth is supposed to be enjoyed, he says.
And indeed as other reviewers have pointed out, The Millionaire Next Door lifestyle makes for a life of lots of sacrifices and little fun. We suggest instead a more strategic path. Save for your power, but spend extra for what truly matters for you, and when money moves the needle to achieve your goals.
And remember: money in the bank is your dry powder power.

Now How-To Guide And You Won't Necessarily Become A Millionaire
Just because you read how some (some!) millionaire acts, it doesn't mean you'll necessarily become one.

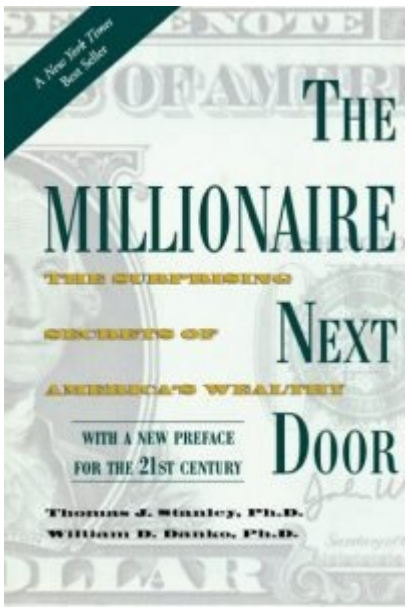
Review

The Millionaire Next Door is a good book looking into the psychology and personality profile of some millionaires, but it's not necessarily a guide on how to gain wealth, or on how to think about gaining wealth.

Let's say that it provides an interesting analysis of millionaires from a sociological and ethnographic point of view.

Check the **best books** for top-10% men.

The Millionaire Next Door Summary: 7 Habits of Wealth



The Millionaire Next Door is a study on millionaires, teaching readers what are the habits and mindsets of actual millionaires.From a TPM perspective, wealth is power because it buys independence, leverage, and freedom from control.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-millionaire-next-door-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3.8

Why The “Growth Mindset” Costs You Power, Attraction, & Opportunities

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 November 2022 · Archived copy · Original

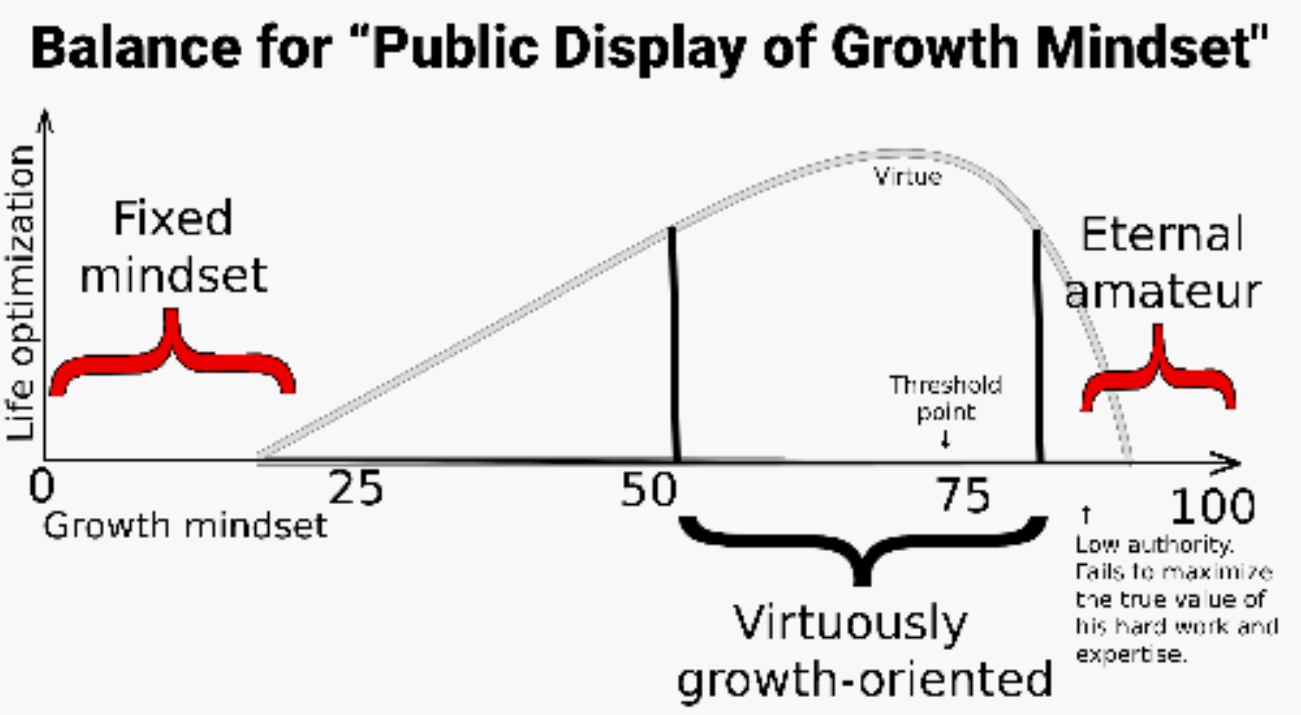
After Carol Dweck’s “Mindset” the “growth mindset” has become a popular concept in self-development.

And for good reasons: it’s fundamental to personal growth and, together with the antifragile ego, to mental empowerment.

We generally support and encourage a growth mindset here.

HOWEVER…

You still need balance and calibration to maintain status and influence:



At a certain level and in certain situations you may really want to think and act not as a “learner”, but as an expert

And when public displays of a growth mindset clash with power principles, then a growth mindset is disempowering and harming you.

Generally speaking, **the growth-seeking learner is low power and low value, while the self-assured and power-seeking teacher is high power and high value**.

Let’s dig deeper:

Contents

- Growth Mindset Power Dynamics
  - Learners Are Victims of Teacher’s Frames & Power Moves
  - Learners Are Lower Value Than Teachers
  - All “Gurus”, Marketers and Charlatans Succeed As “Experts”
  - Experts Advance In Academia, Learners Do Grunt Work
- Example 1: Tom Bilyeu Looks Clueless, Submissive & “Not Worth Being Listened To”
- Example 2: Demand Respectful Communication First, Learn Later (TPM Forum)
- Example 3: Greenspan Maintains Authority -And Income- For Handling Mistakes With A High-Power Teacher

Frame
- Rules to Maximize Growth Mindset
  - Solution: Dual Approaches For Best of Both Worlds
  - Don't Take People's Word On Their Growth Mindset
- Evolution Ain't Stupid
  - Born "Good" + Fixed Mindset = Unbreakable Self-Esteem
- SUMMARY

Growth Mindset Power Dynamics

Anyone seeking self-development should want to become an expert at something.

You're not expected to be an expert at everything, and neither should you act like one.

However, you do want to get good at *something*.

And, from a power dynamics point of view, **to fully reap the rewards your expertise you must think, act, and publicly portray yourself as an expert and an authority**.

As Machiavelli said, things are what they look like.
So no reputation, no authority, no influence, and no rewards.

Now the issue is that "learner" sometimes stands in contrast to "expert", and **an eternal and constant learner attitude undermines your credibility as an expert**.

Yes, it may be true that if you identify as a "learner", in the long run, you may gain more expertise.

But one, that's very long term.
And remember that in the long term we're all dead, so a focus on the short-term sometimes makes sense-.

Nobody treats and rewards the naive "learner" because… Why should they? Nobody values a 'learner'. People value experts

And two, don't be naive.
Unless you can reap the rewards of your expertise, your expertise won't even matter. Neither to you, nor the world.

When you adopt an extreme, "always-on" growth mindset and approach every person, situation and criticism as if you need to learn more, you lose out.
A reputation of a learner without enough reputation for an expert devalues you.

You lose authority, status, money, and networking opportunities. And you come across as lower value because 'learner' overlaps with "beginner".
And beginners are lower value than experts.

It's Not Just Cognitive Bias: Experts Have Less To Gain With Extreme Growth Mindset

Some posit that a fixed mindset is a self-harming defense mechanism.

As it's often the case, evolution is not (completely) stupid, and if many people defend their expertise, there is often a good reason.
One reason is, of course, public reputation and power.

And the other reason is that, for experts… It does make sense to have and display *less* of a growth mindset.

Just think about it: when you're new and fresh, everything is an opportunity for learning.
So, as a beginner, an extreme and "always on" growth mindset truly reflects your reality.

But that's not the case anymore for experts.
Experts can't always learn nearly as much because they already analyzed and learned from the most common situations.
And **experts can't learn from just about any average Joe because they're far more advanced than the average Joe**.

Most experts' learning happens pushing the limits of what's most readily accessible or "ordinary". It more rarely, and with fewer people.

So **the higher you go, the more you want to be selective of the people and resources you can learn from**.

And, relevant to us, experts rarely learn while going about their life or while being interviewed by non-experts, chatting on a podcast, or on most public appearances.
So, in those circumstances, an extreme growth mindset is counterproductive and disempowering.

Learners Are Victims of Teacher's Frames & Power Moves

An extreme growth mindset overlaps with naivete and can cost you.

It can cost in poorer learning, rather than better learning.
Similar to open-mindedness, an extreme growth mindset opens you up to all kinds of BS -and to all kinds of bullshitters-.

And, similar to vulnerability, it can cost you in your social and professional life as well.
For example, an extreme growth mindset would never push back against criticism because 'criticism = learning opportunity'.

But the criticism sometimes is wrong -and the better you become, the more likely it is to be wrong-.
And sometimes the criticism is a power move.

Growth Mindset Power Moves

As the growth mindset spreads, so does its use for Machiavellian, selfish, and value-taking purposes.

For example:

- **Employer manipulation**.
  The more they can pay with "learning", the less they will pay with actual money. Plus, they can ask you to do more than your job description because 'you're learning'. (Thanks to Bel for this)
- **PR stunt**, to look open-minded, "better" and more honest
- **A cover for personal attacks**, or to avoid owning up and apologizing-. With the "growth mindset" cover, people are never wrong or mean because it's you who need to develop a growth mindset. If you defend you get labeled a "fixed mindset" (see "covert power moves")
- **Social exchange manipulation**, as in "I'm giving you feedback and criticism that will help you improve, so you owe me".
  P.S.: avoid saying things such as "learn this and thank me later"
- **A cover to social climb on you** (teacher/pupil frame): so they self-frame as "teachers", and you become the "student" (of theirs).
- **Trap to lower your defenses**. Then you're complimenting them, maybe take a step back… And then they take your feedback apart to show why you're wrong
- **An excuse to be mean**, as in "we give each other raw feedback here because we all have a growth mindset, and if you can't take it, it's your fault for not having growth mindset"

Since "teaching others" or pushing a growth mindset on them can be a disempowering -and annoying- power move, we advise caution in doing so.
Unless they made it clear they accept you as an authority to learn from, **refrain from self-framing yourself as a teacher to others**.

Learners Are Lower Value Than Teachers

One simple fact proves that learners are lower power:

Teachers get salaries, learners get nothing -or must pay-.

That already tells you a low about who's higher value between the two.

Top teachers are experts, and if they're experts in any in-demand skill or field, they can get *a lot* of money, plus status, influence, admiration, and even attraction.
Learners and beginners get little of that.

Your Confidence Around "How Much You Know" Determines Your Authority...

… And your attitude around "what you need to learn" as well, of course.

Relevant to us and to your public attitude, experts are associated with high confidence, including high confidence in knowing what they know.
Plus, sometimes, also an air of "been there, done that".

Learners are associated with lower confidence, higher curiosity, and with more doubts and tentativeness in their knowledge and expertise.
And we know here that low confidence and tentativeness equal low power and low influence.

That's why, sometimes, **simply acting like a learner frames you as a lower-value beginner**.
That's fine if you are a beginner, because you grow quicker.
But it's a lot less OK if you're *not* a beginner.

When dealing with others, that means that **when you take a learner's role to others teach you, you lose power** to them.

That teacher isn't also just getting power, but he's getting power *over you*.
You disempower yourself, to empower that teacher -it's a lose-win, a sucker's trade-.

If you're competing with them -say, in the same company- you'll never get promoted.

Unluckily, people often know little about your level or expertise.
And they will judge you by your level of confidence and authority.
If you act like a learner, they will think you're a beginner. If that other person acts like a teacher, he becomes the teacher.

Result: they become the high-power expert, the one worth being listened to -and the one worth buying from-.
And you become the low-power, not-worth being listened-to guy (the true extent of your knowledge be damned).

All "Gurus", Marketers and Charlatans Succeed As "Experts"

Finally, consider this:

Many of the most successful "gurus", including many charlatans, self-frame themselves as experts.

Some of them may profess a growth mindset or say that they started as clueless.
For example, Tai Lopez rode the "growth mindset hype" and say he was a learner who started clueless.

But that's a power move to be more relatable.
And they still sell you as experts.
They wouldn't dream to learn from their audience while building their reputation.

Indeed, **most of the gurus' success and charisma is because they portray an expert image**, never because they self-frame as learners.

Experts Advance In Academia, Learners Do Grunt Work

Academia, the place that should all be about learning also follows the same rules.

Emily in our forum experienced the same during her PhD.

And if you look at some academics' facial expressions, read their books, or look at how they talk -or defend- their studies and theories with just a minimum of power awareness, you'll often realize that, especially at a certain level, it's more about power than "learning more".

Example 1: Tom Bilyeu Looks Clueless, Submissive & "Not Worth Being Listened To"

Tom is a good example because he embodied and promoted an extreme approach to growth mindset.

The “growth mindset guy” expression, supposedly

Tom is a great guy, but power dynamics still apply, no matter how “a great guy” you are.

And while I like him, there’s also a part of me who feels disappointed and that he *called* his own bullying.
And that’s one of the main enablers of bullying: the bullied inadvertently *attracts* the bullying.
There’s a dark force that almost calls for bullying to naive and submissive people.

Now, back to our example.

Sadhguru and Tom Bilyeu are both active in the self-development space.
So, no matter what the do-goody may say, in a way, they’re competitors.

Tom interviews Sadhguru, so it’s expected and understandable he asks more questions, listens more, and generally learns more than teaching.

However, again… Balance.

When Sadhguru contradicts Tom about his own mission, Tom should NOT take an extreme learner’s role.

Because if you get schooled about your own mission, and what you’ve supposedly spent a lot of time thinking about… Then you lose *a lot* of authority.
And you also lose credibility and respect.

Unluckily, Tom takes on that pupil’s role:

> **Tom**: (talks about his mission,)
> **Sadhguru**: nono, there is substantial medical and scientific evidence to show that… (…) there is no argument about that <— contradicts him on a foundational aspect of his mission
> **Tom**: (looks at him dumbouded) <— accepts the guest’s higher authority over his own mission

The early pick-up artists had a concept called “showing value in her world”.
Which meant learning about her, and then showing your value in what she does and cares about.
The concept was that if you can display higher value in her world, then she’ll be attracted to you.

In a way, it’s correct.
But unless you’re a girl who wants to be seduced, you shouldn’t let just about anyone display higher power and authority in *your* world -and field of expertise-.

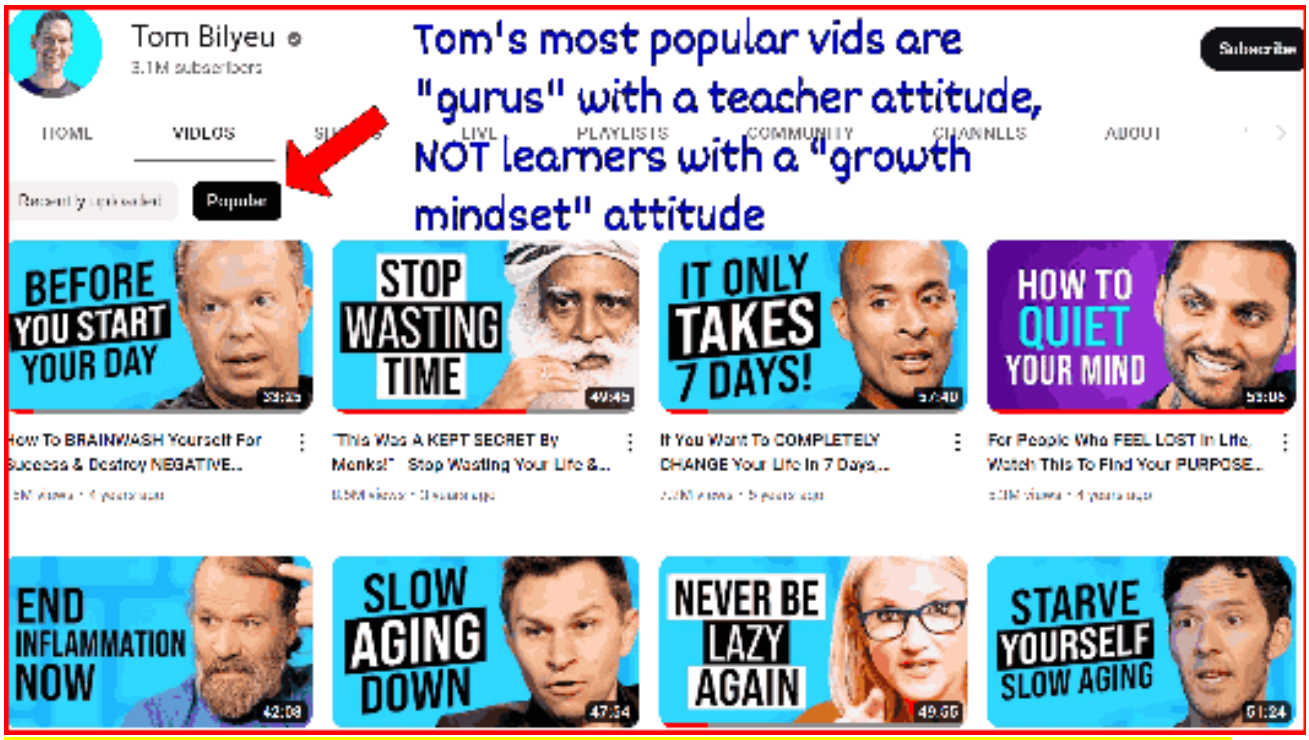
Sadhguru entered Tom’s field of expertise and not only displays value and authority, but devalues and demeans

Tom.

That's bad for business, too.
It's what he is selling.
And who wants to buy from a guy whose business is built on a *proven* mistake?

Tom should still let Sadhguru disagree and speak his mind, of course.
But he can disagree and politely push back.

Result:
Tom has 3.1 million subscribers and despite trying his best to be a self-development, he is most popular for interviews of *other* people.
Guests who, guess what, are all "gurus" who speak with self-confidence and engage others to *teach*, never to learn:



The growth mindset learner who seeks popularity is less successful than the fixed mindset gurus he interviews
Sadhguru instead enjoys a full guru status and reputation. He has 10.6 million subscribers on his channel (sheep need a shepherd, you know).

Looks like a self-confident fixed mindset ain't too bad for business…
This example is telling because Tom Bilyeu's openly stated mission is to affect people *at scale*.
All his efforts go into being as popular as possible. He prides himself on going all-in, working non-stop.
And still… He can't match the "guru".

The same goes for Lewis Howes' "School of Greatness", BTW.

Tom's Growth Mindset Is A Disservice to His Audience

By uncritically thinking of anything and anyone as "someone to learn from", Tom is doing a disservice to himself, and to his audience.

He's giving away his mental real estate and giving a platform to the most dubious gurus the world has to offer, without ever challenging them.

Example 2: Demand Respectful Communication First, Learn Later (TPM Forum)

From this thread.

Lemme preface by saying that TPM's forum is a training ground for learning.
In that sense, there are no mistakes, and no reputation and status one should uphold (except maybe for me and some other long-standing members since our image reflects on our work, but that's a different topic).

Also, we're not entering into the merit of "who's right or wrong" here.

We only look at the response and whether the growth mindset was either appropriate and empowering, or not appropriate, and disempowering.

> **User 1** (first message): Seriously dude you thought making power moves in this forum was a smart idea?

It's a strong message.

User 2 does not address the tone, and this is what comes next:

> **User 1** (second message)**:** If you want to be a paranoid guy who makes unprovoked power-moves assuming everyone wants to social climb then it's your choice.
> (…) I don't want to have anymore discussions on the threads you will start from here on after.
> (…) Good luck.

When you reply with a too friendly/vulnerable/learner message to a strong message, you often lose power.
And it looks sneaky and fake because it's just not human nature to focus on the learning when we've just been slapped.

If we focus on the feedback, then the feedback, was great.
And a growth mindset towards feedback is the best approach to get the most out of it.
However, see if you spot the issue in User 2 reply (I quote the relevant passages only):

> **User 2:** I might lack power awareness, that could be the case.
> (…) I want to understand your point of view (…) I admitted I might have been oversensitive on this one.
> (…) I also might still be a bit paranoid through my previous experiences which might still have left me on the defensive. And could unconsicously provoke it (as I'm trying to understand what is happening).
> (…) Thank you very much anyway as all of what you wrote is food for thoughts and I'm going to reflect on it.

There are elements of both vulnerability and growth mindset there.

If this exchange had happened in real life, or in any other forum where you care about your reputation, then some issues emerge.

The issues are:

1. **Growth mindset without defending boundaries harms you socially**
2. **Growth mindset without defending boundaries may harm your self-esteem** as the self-signaling is that it's OK to treat you curtly and publicly (plus, potentially jumping to conclusions concerning a callous personality)
3. **Extreme growth mindset feels "weak"**: the "I may lack" is how a total growth mindset would approach it, and "I admitted" talk was extreme vulnerability.
   Both here lead to a power loss, especially when it's without first addressing the boundaries and without demanding a more respectful tone.
4. **Extreme growth mindset feels sneaky and "off"**: as mentioned above, it's just not natural to focus on the learning right after the slap, so people just wonder "what's wrong with this person?"

Addendum about the exchange:
User 2 explained what happened.
He is a long term-member, smart, and also power-aware.
He knew what was going on, but did what he did because of other considerations.

Example 3: Greenspan Maintains Authority -And Income- For Handling Mistakes With A High-Power Teacher Frame

Learner's expression or "I know better than you" expression?
Alan Greenspan is (was?) considered one of the smartest men alive, one of the top economists in the world, and one of the best -if not the best- central bankers ever.

Now look at most of his facial expressions: does he look like a learner, or a teacher?

And did he take *any* responsibility for the financial meltdown, as any learner who "doesn't care about power" should?

Nope.

Not only he defended himself saying it was impossible to do anything about it -something that many disagree with-, but he doubled down to go on the attack and display his superiority with a teacher's frame:

> **Greenspan**: What went wrong? Why was virtually every economist and policymaker of note <— power move: not only everyone didn't see it, but those who did, aren't "of note" -and not nearly as good as him- so blind to the coming calamity?
> (…)
> I have come to see <— that's the "smart teacher" approach. He hasn't "learned", but he has "analyzed" the situation and concluded that…
> that an important part of the answers to those questions is a very old idea: 'animal spirits,'
> (goes on to explain and enlighten others)
> (…)

And could he have done anything to prevent the crisis?

A learner with a self-help fueled "can-do attitude" would say "yes".
But it didn't even cross Greenspan's mind to say he could have done better.

No sensible policy, Greenspan maintains, could have prevented the housing bubble -something that many high-credibility experts disagree with-.

See?

There's no hint of "learning" -and of course no hint of sharing any of the blame for supporting deregulation, for

keeping interest rates at a record low, and for failing to foresee any possible dangers-.

Instead, *there's more explaining* -and some verbal power moves to come across as smart and knowledgeable-.

Greenspan doesn't earn my respect.
And I don't like him.
I think of him as a smart alec as*hole.

So, yes, he could have done better -and maintained power while also earning the eagles' respect-.

But an "extreme growth mindset" would have been even more harmful.
He'd have lost all reputation, status, and power.

Greenspan's approach likely also helped him to maintain his high consulting fees.

Watch the video here:

View this post on Instagram
A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

Rules to Maximize Growth Mindset

General Rules:

- **Adopt a growth mindset for yourself**
- **If feedback, attack, or criticism is disrespectful, address the tone first**, and only later consider addressing the value and golden nugget in the feedback/criticism
- **If the feedback is invalid say so**, don't try to play the open-minded nice guy who wants to "learn from anything and anybody". That makes you look stupid, not "open".
- **If the criticism is central to your domain of expertise, focus on defending and re-empower yourself first**, and only later address the value in the content -or don't address it at all publicly, but learn privately-

Generally speaking, a growth mindset is also better among high-quality people since they know its benefits and they're more likely to appreciate it while also less likely to fall for the allure of the "self-assured guru" -high-quality people are less likely to be sheep looking for a shepherd-.

If you're still learning the ropes of power dynamics and aren't sure about what's OK and what's disempowering, err on the side of caution and avoid going overboard with public displays of a growth mindset.

Solution: Dual Approaches For Best of Both Worlds

The approaches we propose are:

- Expert AND learner
- Private learner mode always on, public approach more strategic

We've just seen some examples of self-defeating growth mindsets.

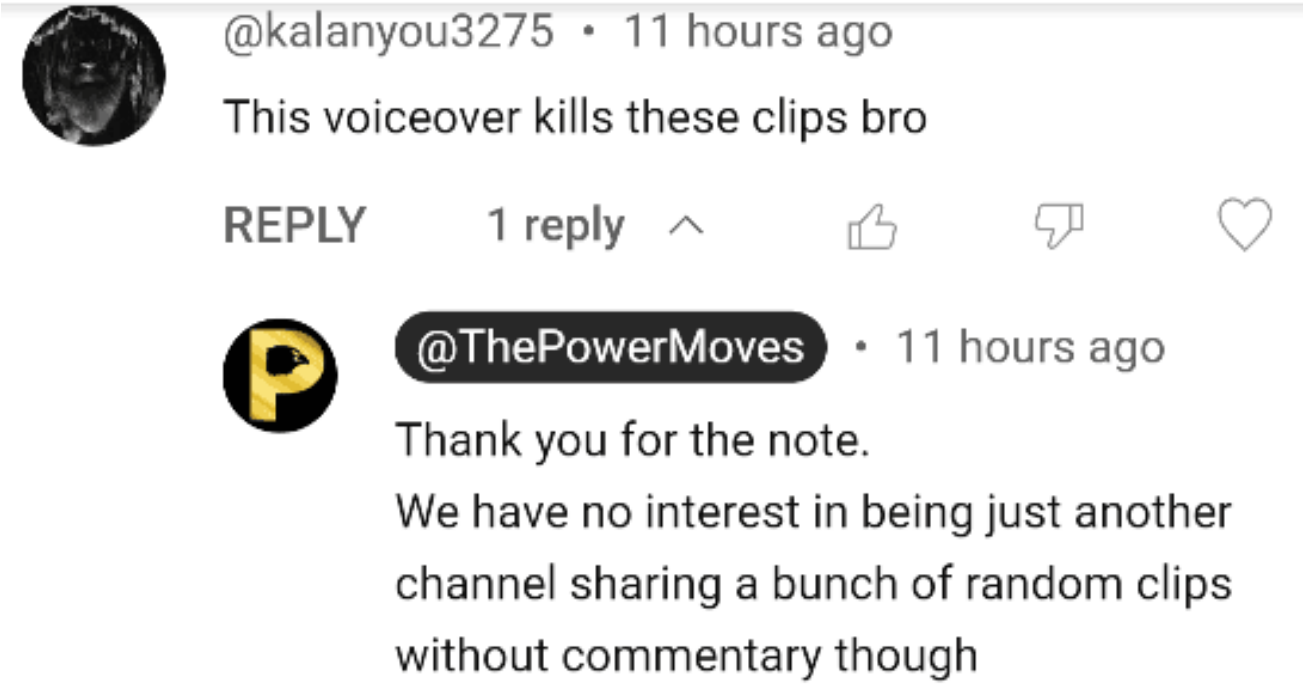
But you can still publicly embrace a growth mindset, even while publicly rejecting or disagreeing with certain criticism.

Indeed, whenever needed, we like and propose this approach:

Reject or ignore the criticism if it's an attack and if it's damaging, while also privately acknowledging and reflecting on that feedback.
Potentially, you can also ask for more honest feedback later on, or to people that you respect and trust.

That way, you get the best of both worlds: the improvements and mental resilience of a growth mindset, with the social power, status, and respect that come from a more assertive approach.

Example from a YouTube comment:



> **Feedback**: the voice over kills these clips bro

To accept that feedback may also imply that the *content* of our voice over is poor.

Why should we accept that, with our proven track record of cutting-edge analyses and adding ton of value to our customers?

BUT…

I still took this feedback seriously in private.
It's likely that I can improve the voiceover and chances are that I *will* improve -also in small part thanks to this feedback-.

Don't Take People's Word On Their Growth Mindset

This may sound cynical, but there's just little room to go around human nature.

So, taking human nature into account, we advise not to take any display and profession of growth mindset too literally.

On paper, a display of a growth mindset may seem an invite for straight and honest talk, and for open feedback and criticism.
"Wow", you may think, what a great person I've just met.

And yes, maybe you have met a great person.

And still, there is little room to go around ingrained and inborn laws of human nature.

So, more times than not, you pay for your criticism with a loss of goodwill and social capital.

People may still say they're grateful for the feedback, and they may even be… But chances are that you'll still be passed up for a more loyal squire when it comes to opportunities and promotions.

It's in human nature to prefer those who are encouraging and supportive rather than those who are critical.

And it's also human nature to secretly resent those who are critical and don't respect the pecking order.

So, generally speaking, leave radical candor for the radicals, and you be a realist instead and don't be too upfront feedbacking to your boss.

Evolution Ain't Stupid

Evolution isn't stupid.

If most people have a fixed mindset it probably means that the benefits of a growth mindset haven't been evolutionarily overwhelming.

And a fixed mindset probably did provide some benefits as well.

Namely, from a power perspective, fixed-mindset folks tend to pay more attention to their status and image as "good", "knowledgeable" and "expert".
That often makes for higher authority and social power, and there are many benefits to that.

Born "Good" + Fixed Mindset = Unbreakable Self-Esteem

And from a mental aspect, consider this:

In some traits training matters less and one may start at a high level from birth.

Call these 'talents'.
A fixed mindset coupled with pride for one's talent may afford you high and resilient self-esteem and confidence.

For example, yours truly grew up with a mother who ingrained in him that he was smart, and that's how he was born.

And that served me incredibly well in many aspects of life.
Including high self-confidence, and an incredibly high self-esteem.

SUMMARY

A growth mindset is generally good.

But as for everything: balance and context matter.
And your goals must always come first.

In many contexts, and especially so in public, you may want to quit that "I'm the learner" stance and think instead more about power, status, and authority.

Why ‘Alpha Male Dating’ Fails: Strategy Beats Dominance

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 November 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Let us say this first:

Dating as an alpha male in the sense of a high-status, high-power, and high social dominance man is *good*.

HOWEVER…

Many people get it wrong.
And, often, being too intransigent on “being alpha” or “as high power as possible”, will cost you.

This article explains the limitations of the “alpha male game” and why strategic beats dominant.

Contents

- What’s The “Alpha Male Game”
  - The Limitations of “Alpha Male Game”: Strategic Beats “Iron Rules”
- Example 1: She Cancels, I Change Plans Just For Her… And Then Everything Changed
  - The Tables Turn With One Single, Well-Executed Date
- Example 2: Alpha-Behaving Man Stays “High Power” But Loses, Beta-Behaving Man Gets The Girl
  - Beta Male & “Plan B Guy” Swoops In
  - Chasing Is Low-ish Odds, But Higher Than Zero (& Sometimes, It Makes Sense)
- Example 3: Alpha Male Loses to Non-Alpha Player
- When Alpha Game Works
- SUMMARY

What's The "Alpha Male Game"

First off, it's important to separate the two:

Alpha male traits and game are two different things.

And, unless taken to an unattractive extreme, alpha male *traits* such as leadership, confidence, and social dominance are almost all attractive.

It's the approach to "game" as in the sense of "courtship and dating" that is not always the most universally effective -at least as some pundits in the red pill and dating advice community promote it-.

There is no definition for "alpha male game", but it often entails:

- **Focus on yourself first and women will come:** women are hypergamous and chase higher SMV men
  - Put "your mission" above women and dating
- **Date high-power and dominant**, generally great advice, but sometimes taken to self-defeating extremes including:
  - Don't approach (AMS says you don't approach because alpha males never chase)
  - Only date if you're her top option (see examples below why it's sub-optimal)
  - If she cancels, she's gone
  - If she's busy, cut contact
  - Never check you got her number right (coach Wayne says "alpha males never double-check her phone number" to display confidence)
  - Control the frame
- **Put yourself first**, asshole dating style
  - Men come first, women must submit and be feminine (slightly male-chauvinist approach)
- **Be stoic**
  - Don't show feelings, don't catch feelings
- **Use "dread game", make her fear losing you**, which can be effective, but rarely leads to strong win-win partnership and can also lead to toxic relationships and vicious cycles of "I hurt you, you hurt me, I… "
  - Keep her chasing your validation
- **Respect yourself and your values first and foremost**, a generally solid advice
  - Never accept direspect
- **Invest as little as possible**, especially before sex, also see "alpha fucks, beta bucks"
  - Do cheap dates so you don't become a provider
  - Always "next her" after X amount of days/dates
- **Avoid committed relationships**
  - Alphas sleep around and/or maintain a harem
  - Don't get married (sensible advice, often)

Generally speaking, for many guys, some of those entries are great advice.

Especially for guys who are too low power, be it too passive, too nice, or too submissive.

If you're one of those "too nice guys" and follow the "alpha male approach to dating" and you have some basic social skills and game, you probably will do OK.

However, this approach hits a ceiling at a certain point, and it's not the highest form of game, and neither the most effective.

The Limitations of “Alpha Male Game”: Strategic Beats “Iron Rules”

“Be Like Water”, says Greene in The 48 Laws of Power.

That’s his last rule.
And, Robert Greene being the smart strategist he is, knows that the “laws” were for marketing mostly.
So, with his last “law”, he puts a huge caveat on all previous “laws” and he basically says: everything is contextual and there are no “law”.
So, to get to the next level, you truly need to move beyond these “laws”, find your own way to win, and change strategy and approach as you go.

And the same applies to the alpha male game.

Most limitations become apparent when the model becomes too intransigent or black and white (as it’s often the case with its proponents).

Such as, when it:

- Fails to carve exceptions
- Fails to adapt to context and personalities
- Fails to adapt to life phases -for example, phases when you need to prioritize dating-
- Becomes a caricature of an alpha male, instead of a high-quality, great all-around “catch”
- Seeks power over results (the two overlap but are far from the same)

As I’ve seen from some gurus and pundits in the red pill, the above isn’t too uncommon.
Many guys take it too prescriptively, take it too far -failing the law of balance-, and misapply it.

For example, the “alpha male approach” doesn’t work if:

- **Your goal is to sleep with as many women as possible**. Albeit some men deep down seek the “alpha male game” to sleep with more women -and while some others deny so to themselves-, this approach isn’t effective for that because if your goal is to sleep around, then women *are* a priority of yours (and there is nothing inherently wrong with that)
- **Your goal is to get into a relationship with a high-quality woman**, same as above, in that case, dating *is* your priority
- **Your goal is to get *a* specific woman**, and albeit we may argue on whether that’s a good goal or not -and yes, often it’s not-, exceptions always apply. And if you seek a specific woman, that may require bending those rules (see examples below)
- **Your goal is to get the best woman you can get, even if that means being (temporarily) low power** with dating strategies that include, for example, using your money, pursuing her hard, or starting out as a friend while her main relationship is on the rocks (of course, this requires some skills and game, so you can’t just be a platonic friend, but it’s certainly possible to be the “cool friend” the girl falls in love with)

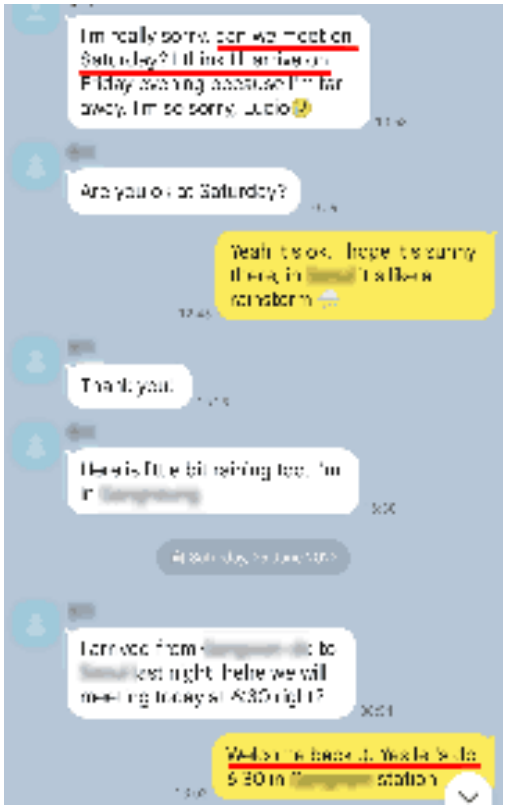
The point above is what some men don’t get: if you prioritize goal achievement, it doesn’t matter how you achieve that goal.
Of course, ideally, it would be better if she chased you, if she pined after you, if she paid for you, etc. etc. but “ideally” is not how you win in the real world.

Let’s now review some real-life case studies.
And if you want the video version, this is it:

Example 1: She Cancels, I Change Plans Just For Her... And Then Everything Changed

In this example:

1. She cancels on me
2. I agree with her new day right away (on a Saturday, no less)
3. I make other plans on Saturday because I don't think it'll happen anyway
4. I change my plans *just to meet her*



> **Her**: so sorry (cancels the date), can we don on Saturday?
> On Saturday:
> **Her**: I arrived, we will meet today at 6:30, right? (<—- takes half for granted that we're still on)
> **Me**: (forgot about it because I gave it low odds and made other plans, but canceled them to accommodate her)

You'll notice this isn't that bad because she's apologetic and investing.

And that's part of the issue with any "rule" and with the black-and-white thinking of some coaches: the effective way of dating looks at shades of grey and the nuances of communication and power dynamics.

Yes, I still lost some power and leverage with her canceling, but not *too much*. Nothing that a good date couldn't fix -and turn around-.
I was still in the game with solid chances.
And that's the whole point: **I date to achieve my objectives, not to be "high power"**, and albeit there's most certainly a good overlap between the two, the two aren't always and exactly the same.

And there's more "non-alphaness" in this story:
I was very happy to meet her because I liked her, I was quite sad when she canceled, and I was elated when she reapparead.
This breaks so many rules of alpha male dating: prioritizing the girl, canceling plans to accommodate the girl, and

high emotional investment.

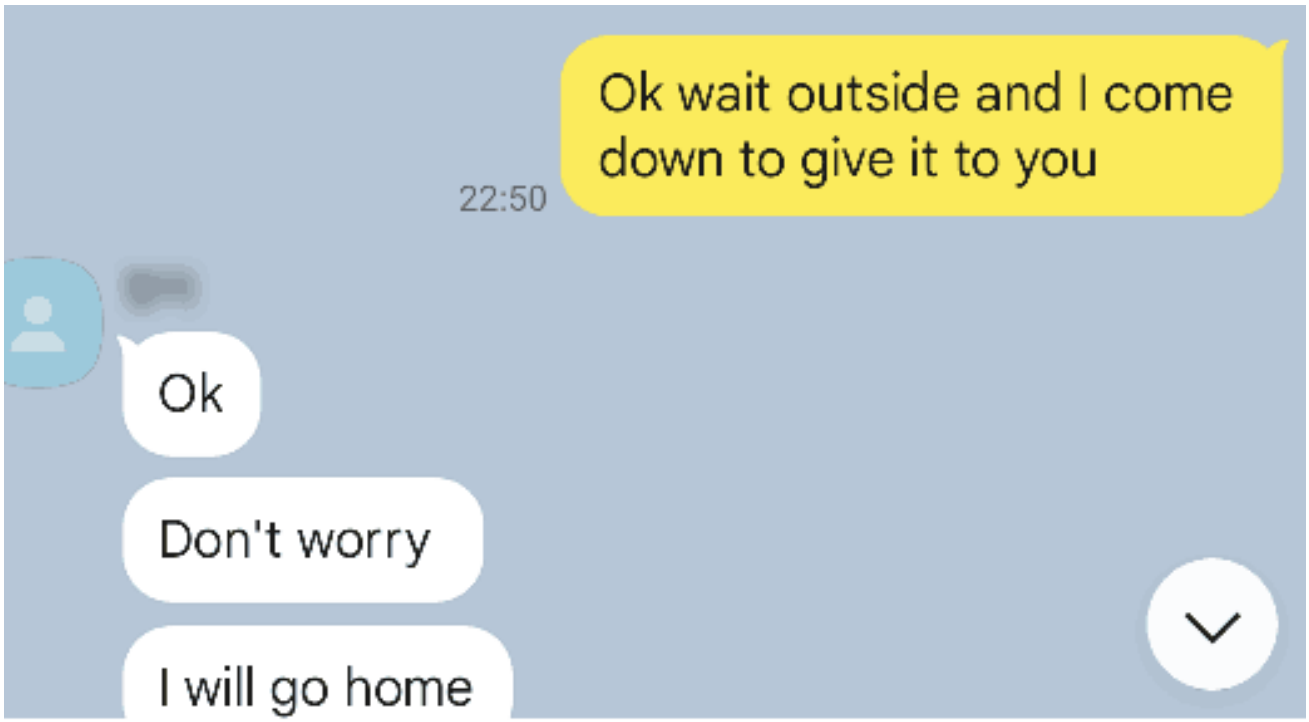
But then, guess what…

The Tables Turn With One Single, Well-Executed Date

Guess what happened after?

I met her, ran the perfect date (as per Seduction University model), and got together with her.

She was one of those girls that can't touch alcohol and on our second date, with just two glasses, she was too drunk to be of any good company.
So I sent her home (if I ensure her safety and safe return, it's fair for me to not want to spend more time with someone).
But she forgot something and look what she writes:



> **Her**: don't worry, I'll go home

Think about the sub-communication of that.
The dynamic is her seeking prolonged interactions, me not wanting, and her worried to bother me.

The sub-communication is that I'm so much higher value, that her presence may be a nuisance to me.

Look at that how the power dynamics inverted.

Now I'm the prize.
Guess who's never going to cancel a date going forward because I'll be her top priority.

The general principle here is: just because you *start* dating lower power or more "beta" doesn't mean you *stay* low-power or beta.
And the same can be said of some transitions and phases during courtship, dating, and even relationships: **phases of lower power during courtship mean little when you can correct the dynamics going forward**.
As a matter of fact, **the higher your value and better your game, the more you can break the "alpha rules" and win**.

As a general rule, unless you're famous you will hardly be top-priority for an-indemand woman until you meet in person, date, and gain some leverage with in-person exposure.

This is only one example, but it's no major exception.
I have a ton of stories and real-life experiences similar to this one.
As a matter of fact, breaking another "alpha rule", for a good chunk of my dating life I prioritized women above almost anything else.

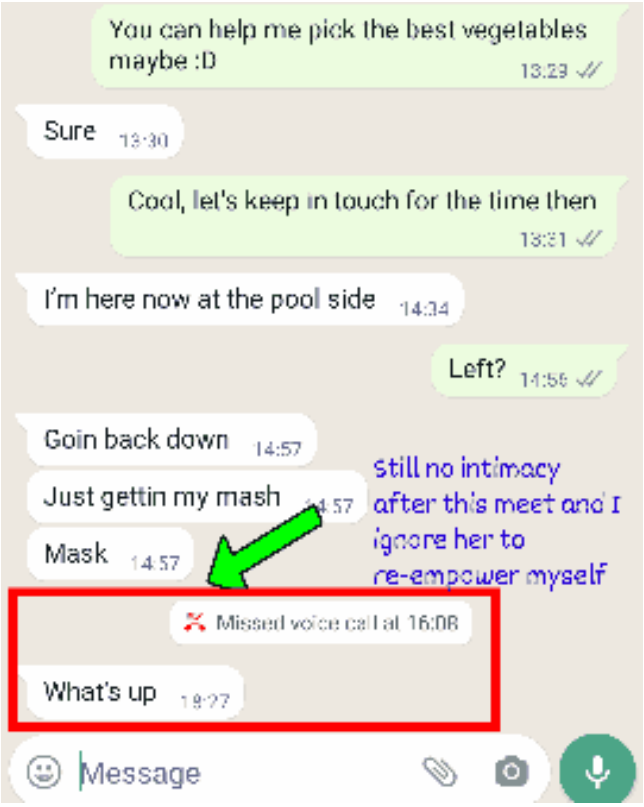
Example 2: Alpha-Behaving Man Stays "High Power" But Loses, Beta-Behaving Man Gets The Girl

Quick backstory:

1. **I cold-approached her**
2. **Quick instant date** before we proceed with our own plans
3. **Good first "real" date in the first part**
4. **Brought her back, but no intimacy** -a major strike, but it isn't my first rodeo and when I realized the chances of immediate intimacy were low but future intimacy possible, I followed SU's model for these cases and maximized whatever you can get without intimacy. She explains she's in a long-distance relationship, but not going well.
5. **Went out again for a drink with a "BF/GF frame"**, she grabbed my arm, we kissed, I made it romantic, and she was all over me. Still not the best scenario that she then went home, but no early intimacy is less of an issue when women are considering branch-switching. Plus:
6. **Day after she chases hard** to spend more time together:

7. **Day after we meet for a second date** and I plan to use the groceries to bring her back again and get intimate
8. **She doesn't follow me into my room** and in the elevator she presses her own floor number
9. **She reaches out again, but...**

10. **I don't reply** and decide not to make myself available for the day:



I didn't want to be at her beck and call and, on paper, that followed the "alpha male dating" approach.
She didn't put out, and I stopped giving her my time.

Problem is, this was a very high-in-demand girl.
Plus, power-aware, and quite high-power (she knew the game, and she felt slighted for being ignored).
And, funny enough, alpha female she wants to be, she did the same mistake as her alpha male counterparts: she prioritized power over her (original) preference.

IF you wanted to get this woman, the alpha male approach fails more often than it works.
One of you has to compromise, at least a little bit.
But since this is an article for men, let's focus on the male side.
When you're meeting very high-in demand girls and you're not a celebrity, or when you meet a girl who may be a bit above your sexual market value, it's often best to take your chances, even if means a little loss of power, and then do your best to capitalize on them (as long as you're not *too* low power, and/or still have some chances, of course: as for everything, balance).

By this point, I still did have some chances.
After I bought her back but didn't get intimate I was more in "possible boyfriend" category rather than a lover, and in a competition against the current boyfriend for possible replacement (see here to understand the different dating roles).
That would have made early intimacy a bit more challenging, but she was still into me, still highly invested, still initiating contact herself, so… Doable.

However, because I chose power rather than staying in the game I went *too* high power, she self-rejected and that was the end of it (see "Straight Line Seduction" to understand the dynamics).

For me, at least…

Beta Male & "Plan B Guy" Swoops In

Now, enter the "plan B guy":

Alpha Male Strategies says "never be the plan B guy", and it's actually a good video.

And, again, that general principle *can* make sense (if you're clueless or if you're being a sucker).

But "never be the plan B guy" o*nly makes sense as long as you can be the plan A, got plenty of other equally good options, and/or don't care much about this specific woman*.

Otherwise, being the plan B guy is only a problem if you have an ego and if you prioritize defending that ego.
If you prioritize achieving your goal instead of feeling good about "being alpha", then it's all a matter of odds, and the "plan B guy" can have respectable odds of success.
Or, at least, enough odds to make sense and "stay in the game" as the plan B guy (or, more rarely, even plan C or D).

Chances aren't that bad that the plan A guy turns out not to be that great, on the way out, or not interested.
Plus, if you get some face time, you always have the chance of "growing" on the girl with confidence, skills, game, and personality.
So, again, the more skilled and confident that "plan B" guy is, the better his odds of becoming "plan A" guy.

The (Major) Limitations of "Only Accepting Plan A"

Also, consider:

- **Severely limiting for less physically attractive guys** because you'll rarely be the #1 option at first sight. Example: my first taller girlfriend plainly told me that, dating-wise, the first time she saw it was like I didn't exist to her. Fast forward a few months, I was picking up calls of a crying woman pleading to get back together (not saying this for some weak bragging, but to show you a real-life example of how dynamics can change)
- **A skilled "plan B" guy can easily become "plan AAA"**. Similar as above and just like our example showed. Display your qualities in a social circle (as with my ex) or have a great date as a "plan B guy" (as the example above), get intimate, have great post-date conversation and bonding, meet again… And now you're top of the list, one of the best she's ever met, even
- **To date high(er) quality girls you need to put ego aside, focus on efficiency, and sometimes make the most with "plan B" odds**. It's just simple social as well as sexual exchange dynamics dating more attractive women, when they don't know how awesome you are. If you don't, you can maximize *power*, but not *returns*. Yes, you may sleep around if you're a high-value man, but you can only consistently be "plan A" when you're getting lower SMV women
- **To always only be "plan A" means you're playing it easy and dating below your potential just to pamper your own ego**: you're not challenging yourself, you're dating lower-value women, and you're truly missing out on the higher-value women.
  If I had only stuck to being "plan A" I wouldn't have dated half of the women I did. And missed out on some of the best ones

- **You have your own plan A/B/C…** you may have your own different women and goals you're juggling, each one with a different level of priority.
  It's just how life goes.

Our "Plan C" Guy... Got The Girl

As a matter of fact, let's go back to our example.

The guy in this example wasn't even a plan B.
I was more like a plan B -maybe for a few hours of infatuation even the top option, albeit of course that means little unless you capitalize on it-.
This other guy was more like a plan C, taken over when I ignored her.

But when plan B -me- went too high power and became unavailable, plan C guy had a shot -plus, it's possible she didn't mind making me jealous-.

Plan C guy wasn't exactly dating like an alpha male.
I saw him in the lobby looking worried and nervous, going from the check-in desk to security looking for an umbrella.
It was barely drizzling when I saw him outside walking super slow and holding the umbrella for missy branch switch. The two looked out of a scene from a 19th-century romantic movie, with him as the white knight.
Later in the evening as I sat with another date outside I saw the two again coming back, probably from dinner, and they sat outside and talked the whole time.

Overall, he looked like over-investing, and obviously didn't mind spending *a lot* of time with her.

You Only Need *Enough* Power & Value, Not "As Much As Possible"

But Plan C probably wasn't a total loser.

He had *enough* value, and was *available* (contrary to me).

That matters to women who are looking for a relationship -including switching to a new relationship-.

And guess what, in the end, I think he got more than his foot in the door.

How do I know?
Lucky me, they were both in my hotel (and I was in the lobby waiting for another date).

Now one may say this was all great, that I don't need that game-playing, fast-switching "hoe", and that I dated effectively.
And that'd be a great point.

I even (in good part) agree with that.

But when it comes to effectiveness, it truly really depends on your goals.
And when it comes to romance and seduction, then the rules change.

For example, if you seek:

- Challenge of getting the "hard to get woman" (even if it's only hard *for you*, at this point in your life)
- Challenge of turning around the "difficult situation"
- Learning experience
- A specific woman, for whatever reason…
- Seduction and romance

Then it often makes sense to trade off some power in exchange for meeting in person, "staying in the game", and

doing your best to make good things happen.

Seducers Break The ("Alpha") Rules

Casanova, for example, chased women and lavished them with gifts.

And even in this case study, if I had kept seeing her, I would have probably gotten together with her -and deeply seduced her, too-.

That type of "fast dating" she was pursuing indeed often leads to swooning and deep romance. As a matter of fact, it would have been the *perfect* way of keeping up our romance from the day before fresh, alive… And *growing*.

That's the other issue of "alpha male dating": to sweep women off their feet and to truly seduce hearts and minds you often need to break the rules (Prioleau, 2014).

Chasing Is Low-ish Odds, But Higher Than Zero (& Sometimes, It Makes Sense)

Chasing and "heavy courtship" overlap.

However, if you can "chase smart", then your odds go up by a lot.

Let's see now a separate example, but very much related.

When I was green and inexperienced, a girl I was seeing moved out of the city.
And, as it's often the case for inexperienced guys with not so many options, it was only then I realized how much I needed and wanted her.

Problem is, she had started dating a new guy in the new city.
I fell apart, but resolved to do all I could to "get her back".
And… I chased like a b*tch.
Texting, sending songs, pictures, reminding her how well we got along… The whole spiel, *and more*.

If she had been dating a super cool guy, probably it wouldn't have worked.

But since the new guy wasn't so cool and my ex was the type of girl who very much prefers relationships, the "heavy courtship type" -the smarter version of "chasing guy"- isn't as damaging because it sub-communicates "relationship and high-investment" -yes, betas fuck too, sometimes-.

Of course this isn't the best position you can find yourself in, we all know that -albeit you can improve the odds if you chase smart, of course-.
And I may even discourage guys today from going for it.
HOWEVER, for me back in the day, with few options, facing huge hurdles in dating, and a still fresh ex I liked and wanted, it was the best possible course of action.

What should have I done, "maintain my dignity" and protect my ego but remain single and celibate, when I didn't want to stay single?
I'm so glad I didn't do that and it was all a great learning experience.

So… It made sense to chase.

Result: we got back together.
And, with time, I also re-acquired lots of power -till one day she even said "you're the leader in the relationship, albeit I didn't necessarily thought so-.

Example 3: Alpha Male Loses to Non-Alpha Player

Alpha Male Strategies discourages cold approaching because "alpha males don't cold approach".

AMS is actually a solid coach, but **that "alpha male way of dating" does NOT maximize your odds of success**.

So, for this example… Storytime!

I was at a social event.
Upstairs there was only me and another guy left.
He was one of the most stereotypical "alpha male types" I'd ever met. A former marine with combat experience in Iraq, he seemed to follow the "alpha male strategy" to a T.

He'd mostly wait for people to talk to him first or bring him into the conversation.
When he spoke, he spoke slowly and deeply. He'd flout social conventions and live by his own rules when he'd pour his own wine from his bag because the house wine was bad -on that one, he was right-.
And heaped a ton of social pressure on others when he'd stare without talking or blinking, and put pressure on them to speak first.

Well, that night there was me and he left.
I liked the guy and we got to talk quite a bit -we even exchanged some Facebook comments from time to time-.

There was also a group of three women downstairs though.
They were all by themselves.

So when I went to the bathroom downstairs I approached their table socially, talked a bit, teased them lightly, laughed with them… And then invited them upstairs.
They gladly followed me and joined me and the alpha type.

Notice already that the "alpha type" would have walked by and minded his own business -and yes, that may have been higher power, in a way, but it was also not very effective if one seeks dating opportunities-.

Once upstairs, the girl I was interested in sat next to me and we talked to each other.
The two of us got so engaged in our conversation that I almost felt it was weird -I had meant it to make it more "social", but us two just got so deep that we ignored everyone else-.
But what made it really weirder was that the alpha male type wasn't doing anything to converse with the other two.
So it was me and the girl next to me engaged in deep conversation, and these other three across the table who sat with long and endless silences.

By the time the girls left, I had agreed on a date with the girl next to me and we exchanged contacts -and we met some days later-.
The alpha type asked to exchange contact with another girl in the group right before they left -poor timing-.

Notice how different the dynamics: me and the girl next to me exchanged contacts within the frame that we liked each other and we will meet again -the contact was to arrange the logistics-. She had also invested a lot in the interaction and opened up about herself.

The alpha male type exchanged contact within the frame that the two of them had no affinity for each other.
Funny enough, ultimately, *he* chased.
He chased because the girl never invested, and he never qualified the girl.
Sure, she may be interested in him anyway if she found him attractive -or if she's into the silent and dominant types-. But that's not how you should think, because if he was attractive PLUS made it a nice experience, he'd be dating *far* more effectively.

And of course, he wouldn't have even had that slim chance if there wasn't someone -me- who made the approach first.

In brief, **the high-power alpha type is best at gaining respect *from men* but it's not nearly as effective for your dating life**.
In fresh and transitory group socialization, a mixture of higher-energy (without overdoing it!), higher investment,

and higher warmth will do a lot better.

When Alpha Game Works

The alpha male game works best in:

- Stable and longer-term social groups
- Groups with lots of men and fewer men

That's because, in stable social groups, alpha males gain high status and become some of the highest prized men -plus, they become a "known entity", and don't even need to be warmer in the beginning-.

Women are then far more likely to take the initiative -even if the alpha male broods, talk little, or seems mostly interested in his own life or mission-.

It's also effective against other men within the same group since lower-status men tend to consider the most attractive women as "for the alphas" (men who focus on fighting and size to get girls get it wrong because they focus on intimidating *men*, rather than getting *girls*).

These environments include anything that resembles social-circle dynamics, including:

- High school
- *Small* colleges -NOT big ones!-
- Workplaces
- Periodically meeting clubs / gatherings (at least once a week)
- Gangs (but remember: there are few if any attractive women in violent groups)

For example, in high school, I carved a reputation as a rebel-type.
Not an alpha by any means, but still "cool enough" to earn some status, reputation, and a "cool factor vibe".
Even without approaching, I had enough status and attention to receive several bids and advances from women.

HOWEVER…

That actually ill-prepared me for life *after* high school.

When I moved to a big city and huge college, even though at first I was even *more* rebel, that didn't work anymore -not *one* bit-.

The alpha male game is much similar.
Nobody will chase you in a big, transient, and anonymous city just because you're "chasing your mission", spreading out when you sit, or thinking of yourself as an "alpha".

SUMMARY

Alpha males are most certainly attractive, and it's one of the most universally attractive seduction archetypes.

Most typical "alpha male traits" such as confidence, status, and even physical strengths are attractive. It's the alpha male *game* that isn't always the most effective
The alpha male approach to dating is 100x better than low-power, "too nice guys" and "beta males".

So if you still need to get your power, charisma, personality, and self-confidence in order, then, by all means, do work on that first -and this article may not be for you just yet-.

However, at a certain point, the alpha male approach hits a ceiling, and to do better, you need to bend it, refine it, and sometimes even ditch it.

In the end, the alpha male approach is good.
But the strategic, "maximize your odds" approach always beats any other system and "rule".
And the strategic approach has no rules and no labels to uphold.
It does what's best to achieve your goals, no matter whether it's "alpha", "beta", or anything in between.

Use This One-Liner When Someone Disrespects You

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 November 2022 · Archived copy · Original

When someone disrespects you, many struggle to find the right words to respond, losing status, respect, and even attraction in the process.

Without a quick comeback to enforce boundaries, you risk being pushed down socially.

This article teaches you **a simple, universal line** to handle **any disrespectful behavior** and **reclaim your power**.

Contents

- INTRO
  - You must address disrespectful behavior
  - Problem: answering appropriately to disrespect is difficult
  - Solution: an easy stock response
- The Universal Meta-Comment
  - How It Looks Like
  - Why It Works
  - Why It's Universal
  - Technique 2: Universal Deferral For Beginners

INTRO

The dictionary of power dynamics defines a power move as:

> A power move is anything that affects the power dynamics of an interaction.

Generally speaking, you want to limit your own power moves on others. Too many power moves to other people's detriment mean you're being a taker -and an asshole-. And while "being a good asshole" sometimes is necessary in life, as for everything: balance.

It's just a poor life approach because what happens when you disempower the people around you is that the high-value, power-aware and smart people leave -of course-, and you're left with only the clueless, low-value people. In brief, the great people leave, the idiots stay.

You must address disrespectful behavior

OK, you don't want to be the ass*hole, we got that.

However, you sure as hell also don't want to be the sucker who's the *victim* of as*holes and other people's disrespect.

Being the victim without re-empowering yourself means that you get pushed down lower and lower in society -and in life-.

And we don't want that.

So to avoid being relegated to the bottom of society, you need to defend yourself, set boundaries, and demand respect and fair behavior.

Problem: answering appropriately to disrespect is difficult

Now the problem is this:

Many people struggle to even *see* power dynamics and disrespectful behavior. Luckily, this website -and Power University– come to the rescue.

The second problem is that many folks, either too submissive, too "nice", too passive, or simply not socially skilled enough, struggle to respond to disrespect.

To counter-attack you need to know you're under attack, know *how* to counter-attack, and have the *resolve* to counter-attack

Responding appropriately can indeed be challenging -Power University also addressed that-. We had many articles on effective responses to specific forms of disrespect -or to classes of power moves-, including:

- Responding to micro-aggressions
- Responding to covert disrespect
- What to do when someone makes you wait
- What to do when your partner threatens to break up
- Responding to overpowering handshakes
- … A whole bunch of real-life case studies

That may seem like a lot to learn. Luckily though, it's more about understanding the underlying principles of self-defense, than learning to deal with every single situation.

Power University helps you learn and internalize those principles and foundations.

And the second approach is what we're discussing here. Such as: learn a single stock response that you can use with the vast majority of disrespectful behaviors.

Solution: an easy stock response

In Power University we shared the foundational, high-level strategies for frame control.

Step 2 was:

- **Use an observational statement to gain time, collect yourself, and display level-headedness**, and add matching body language (for example, corrugating eyebrows as if to say "what the fu*k was that").

The great news is:

This can be a fantastic self-defense stock answer in and on its own, even without anything else.

So let's learn now how you can use one single observational sentence for *any* disrespect you may face:

The Universal Meta-Comment

The simple format is:

1. **"That's"**
2. **"A (weird / unfriendly / aggressive) thing to**
3. **"Do / say / ask"**

That's it.

Then, optional, you may add or reinforce with:

4. **"To a (friend / partner / customer / someone you've just met)"**: this part adds more "punch" and power to your answer because it thread expands and adds more details of why it's particularly weird / unfriendly / aggressive given the situation. It often leverages the power of vulnerability which you can also further expand. For example, if you say "it's an aggressive thing to say *to a neighbor who's been nothing but friendly*" you shame them by comparing your win-win behavior with their lose-win

- **“As a (goodbye / first question / first meeting)** same as above, but instead of adding a detail about you, it adds a detail about the context and setting.

5. **“It’s as if”**… Make a comparison to better explain why it was weird. This further thread expands and surfaces the nastiness, plus allows you to hit back through your example. For example, with “how much you make” you may say “it’s as if I asked you “how many men you slept with (what kind of a question is that, it’s very personal)”. Or to answer the covert racism you’d say “it’s as if I said the German guy is being a nazi as usual (that’s just inappropriate, besides being wrong and just nasty)”

You can slightly modify it to increase the power/dominance or the warmth, and to better tailor to the situation. For example, if you preface it with “I feel”, it’s lower power -less judge role- but also more difficult to deny since you’re sharing your feelings.

Note on using “weird”

“Weird” is a good all-season workhorse.

It works well with any covert disrespect or anything you’re not sure about since it basically means that whatever someone did or said was “off” -so good for any time you’re not sure- or “not straight” -good for any turkey-like power move-.

It’s a word we generally encourage you to avoid outside of self-defense because it’s a nasty judge power move and implies that one “does not belong”, that he’s not “good enough”, and not even “normal enough”. It’s not straight and eagle-like.

However, for self-defense, everything can be fair game.

How It Looks Like

Some examples of what it looks like:

Personal question you don’t want to reply to

> **Him**: how much do you make **You**: that’s a weird thing to ask

Random covertly aggressive request

> **Him**: (…) and don’t keep doing X as you usually do **You**: that’s an aggressive way of asking for something

Random covert racism / one-up

> **Him**: the Italian guy is late as usual **You**: that’s a racist thing to say

“Racist” is a strong word that’s often used by virtue signalers and social just warrior for their BS covert-power move “support” and cancel-culture attacks.

So, generally speaking, you want to avoid it in order to be more eagle-like.

However, you can use it strategically to deliver a strong jolt and/or to push someone on the defensive. Otherwise, you can just say “that’s a big generalization to make”.

Covert aggression masked as humor

> **Him**: good to see our friend here, he only comes out when there is a free lunch **You**: that’s a nasty joke to

> make to a friend

Covert request & complaint

Now we get into the real-life case study that sparked the birth of this technique.

I was at a neighbor's place, and we had a very pleasant evening.

Among many other topics, my neighbor told us of someone in the building doing housework late at night. Nobody knew for sure who it was, but my (very high-power) neighbor had the property management send out a high-power letter demanding to stop (or else), and the noises stopped right away.

Keep in mind that nobody ever said -or even implied- it might have been anyone present -least of all me-. Logically, I should not have even been a suspect since I live in a different building, and I had just come back from abroad.

But still, her comment as we bid farewell seemed to frame me as that "guilty" and "antisocial" neighbor who kept others awake:

> **Her**: (by the door while bidding farewell) and please stop doing house repair at 1 am

I wasn't even sure if it was a bad joke, a disrespectful power move, or an actual request from someone who didn't have the courage to speak clearly and assertively.

And I was at a loss for words.

Loss for words? Enter our universal solution.

In that case, our universal "meta catch-all" technique would have been perfect:

> **Her**: (by the door while bidding farewell) and please stop doing house repair at 1 am **You**: that's a weird thing to say as a goodbye

Why It Works

The universal comment:

- **Keeps it brief and sweet**, one single sentence, and very low-effort. It abides the foundational "law of least effort"
- **Goes "meta"**, such as, it comments and expands on the disrespect itself rather than simply responding to it (albeit it falls short of explaining *why* it's disempowering and nasty and why you do not accept it, and hence it's only a first step of a "meta" technique. But it's often enough for everyone present to understand the nastiness by themselves, even if only unconsciously).
- **Frame expands and draws attention to the nastiness (surfacing)**, it draws attention to the nastiness of their disrespectful behavior. A technique we call "surfacing" (the nastiness)
- **Re-empowers you and draws your boundaries** displaying power awareness and your expectations for fair and respectful behavior. In all its brevity, it sub-communicates "I got your disrespect, and don't appreciate"

Why It's Universal

This universal retort is NOT perfect.

It may even be *far* from perfect.

Surprised to hear that? Well, that's exactly why it's universal.

It's not specialized in anything. But it's "good enough" on all terrains:

SUVs are not the most performing for paved roads, not the grippiest for off-roads, and not the plushest for long-distance driving. But they're at least "good enough" in all of them

Its "non-perfection" is the natural price to pay for the universality. The perfect -or best- courses of action are always context-dependent, so there cannot be a universal retort that is perfect.

HOWEVER…

This stock answer reaches at least "good enough" level in a large array of situations.

That's what makes it universal.

It's a good balance of:

- **Enough power for self-defense** and maintaining status, reputation, and respect: it's good or very good for green and yellow-level disrespectful behaviors. However, if it was a red-level disrespect, this stock answer may be "underpowered". But one, you can tweak it with body language and tonality to increase its dominance. And two, it's still enough to send the message that you're not totally passive, that you can read power dynamics, and that you're not OK with being disempowered.
- **Enough warmth to avoid going overboard** and looking too aggressive or touchy: even if the original comment was not an actual disrespect and you misread the situation, this answer doesn't go overboard to the point that you may harm relationships or look too clueless or aggressive yourself

So it's an in-between sweet spot of power/warmth. Yes, it may not be perfect, and if you can be more accurate and effective, absolutely go for whatever else is more appropriate.

However, perfection is not required and something is always better than nothing.

So whenever you're at a loss for words, at worst, this solution is "good enough". And it may also be your perfect starting response before you reach a more advanced level -a level where you can better adapt to the context and to your goals-.

And speaking of beginners, this may be even an even easier first step for some:

Technique 2: Universal Deferral For Beginners

The issue for beginners is:

1. **Lack of power awareness**: if you start from low-ish power awareness, chances are you may not even spot all dangerous disrespectful behaviors.
2. **Lack of personal power**: you may not yet be assertive enough to quickly and resolutely enforce boundaries, so you may let all disrespect slip -and damage you- completely unchecked.

However, for #1 you may still have an initial "gut reaction". So a word, an action, or a question may just feel "off", or "weird".

And for #2, you may have enough willpower and resolve to say something, if it was just "easy enough".

The simplest step may be to simply note something was off, and you're not sure about it.

A deferring comment that sub-communicates "that was off, I registered it, and will think about it". It's a very low-intensity way of saying that "I noticed, and put you on notice".

Here's how to do it:

> **You**: That sounds off, I'm not sure how I feel about that

Honest and straight.

You can say that with an inquisitive look, or even while looking away.

Some other formats:

> **You**: That remark felt aggressive, I'll need to think about that

> **You**: I'm not yet sure what it was, but something about your joke feels not cool, I'll have to think about it

It's possible they will prod you to detail and share more about what was off. In which case, you had a few more precious seconds to think it over. If it's clear to you how to articulate it, say it. If you're still unsure, simply repeat it felt off, and you need more time to think what it was.

The great thing about this approach is that you give leave for yourself the option -and the power- to go back to the disrespectful person and raise the issue later on. Such as, you give yourself the option to enforce boundaries at any point in the future.

For example:

> **You**: I don't know man, it's not something I would say/do, and not something that a friend would say. I need to think about it more

You can even ask the disrespectful person what they think about it, for example:

> **You**: I don't know, it doesn't feel something like a friend or someone with your best interest in mind would say. Don't you think?

And with that, you'll gain even more intel on them. Will they deny, will they confirm and uncover their own attack? Or will they repent and apologize? This is all great intel to assess people.

The Gifts of Imperfection: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 November 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Gifts of Imperfection (2010) is a book in which author Brene Brown talks about self-acceptance of yourself over external and social standards of "what you should be". A self-acceptance that includes your unique gifts and quirks, your imperfections, and your natural wants and needs.

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- Full Summary
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  - Living A Life of Authenticity
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  - Drop Perfectionism
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  - Audience of Non-Achievers? It's Possible To Both Be Grateful AND Pursue Big Goals
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Bullet Summary

- Cultivate your unique gifts, even if you can't monetize them it'll make you happier
- It takes courage to be yourself, but it will pay off: don't conform to the masses
- Make time for rest and play: chances are it will actually make you more productive

Full Summary

About The Author:
Brene Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston. She has been researching topics of shame, vulnerability, and emotional connections.
Brown has become very popular in the media and is also the author of "Daring Greatly".

Live Wholeheartedly

A central theme of *The Gifts of Imperfection* is that of “wholehearted living”.

What does that mean?
Well, wholehearted living means accepting yourself, your emotional needs, and your imperfections, while also accepting and satisfying your wants and needs.
And to stop demanding perfection and adherance to social standards that make you worse off.

Here are a few DOs and DON’Ts.

DOs:

- Feeling worthy (you have enough now)
- Resting and playing
- Be authentic
- Love
- Trust
- Gratitude
- Joy

DON’Ts

- Perfectionism
- Numbing
- Exhaustion
- Be cool
- Fitting in
- Judging
- Scarcity
- Self-sufficiency

Living A Life of Authenticity

Brene Brown says that most of us would love to live a life true to who we are.

What stands in the way is the pressure to conform.
But conforming means giving up who we really are, we feel inauthentic and too weak to live honestly.

The author says that authenticity is a choice, and on some days we’ll have more strength to be more authentic than others.

If you want to have more and more days in which you are authentic, you need courage and compassion.

Being authentic means writing your own story

Develop Courage & Compassion

Courage and compassion are the way to authenticity.

Courage to speak your mind and allow yourself to be vulnerable in front of others.

For example, if you really want something to happen, don’t pretend and say it’s really no big deal when it actually is a big deal for you.

Compassion means realizing that you are not alone, and that everyone struggles exactly the way you do.

By relating to the struggles of others, you also acknowledge your own, and it will become easier to open and find support.

Also read:

- 12 Rules for Life (always tell the truth is one of the rules)
- The Four Agreements (be impeccable with your word)

Drop Perfectionism

Brene Brown says that perfectionism is a shield revolving around the fear of shame.

Perfectionists strive for perfection behind the assumption that if they can only be perfect, then they will avoid any shame and criticism.

Perfectionism is addictive and can lead to paralysis. People are so afraid of criticism that they keep working -or telling themselves they're working- behind the curtains, and never really showing up.

What's the solution?

Brene has two suggestions:

1. Be honest about your fear
2. Remind yourself you do it for yourself, not for others

My Note:
It's a generalization to say that perfectionism (always) revolves around shame.
Perfectionism can also happen when we are stuck in a child role and still trying to impress our parents to get the love we never had (also read "Will I Ever be Enough").
Or it can be the natural consequence of simple genetic makeup, and of hyperdrive personalities.

Develop Resilience

The author says that hope underpins resilience.

You can learn hope by practicing it.

To move closer to your goals, make smaller goals that you can reach along the way, and take it little by little.

As you develop positive habits, it will then become natural.

For more on resilience, also read:

- **Grit** by Angela Duckworth.

Develop Gratitude

Many think that gratitude is a feeling that follows a positive experience.

But Brene Brown says it's the opposite. Gratitude is something we practice and that will make our life happier.

Gratitude gives us the power to choose joy and feel joyful whenever we want.

I particularly like how Brene defines gratitude in the daily small joys of life.

Practicing gratitude means feeling glad for a walk back home on a sunny day, sharing a meal with your partner or tucking your child into bed.

Embrace Intuition

Brene Brown says that intuition and rationality are not mutually exclusive.

Intuition is nothing but our brain scanning for past reference points and coming up with a quick response. It's not a perfect response and leaves some room for doubt, but you should be comfortable embracing doubt.

Embracing intuition means taking action in the face of uncertainty

My note:
Intuition works best when you're an expert in a given field. If you have an intuition about the next winning lottery ticket, now that might be irrational.

Also read:

- **Blink** by Malcolm Gladwell

Stop Comparing Yourself to Others

Comparing is natural, but that doesn't mean it's good.

It's often through comparison indeed that we conform to others, and in so doing, we lose all that makes us special.

Let go of comparison instead and embrace your individuality.

Find Play Time & Rest

Brene Brown says that western society ties self-worth to productivity.

And that's not healthy.

It's not healthy because in order to be productive we will sacrifice rest, play time and our general well-being.

But work and play time are not opposites!
The opposite of playtime, says Brene, is actually depression.

Playtime for Brene, is time spent without a strongly defined goal, and we are biologically programmed to have it.

If we forcefully remove it, we pay the price with our happiness and general well-being.

Identify Your Talents

Brene Brown says we all have unique talents and gifts and we should embrace it.

Our gifts will not always be easy to monetize, but the author encourages us to use them anyway.

It will make our lives so much more joyful and meaningful.

Laugh, Sing & Dance

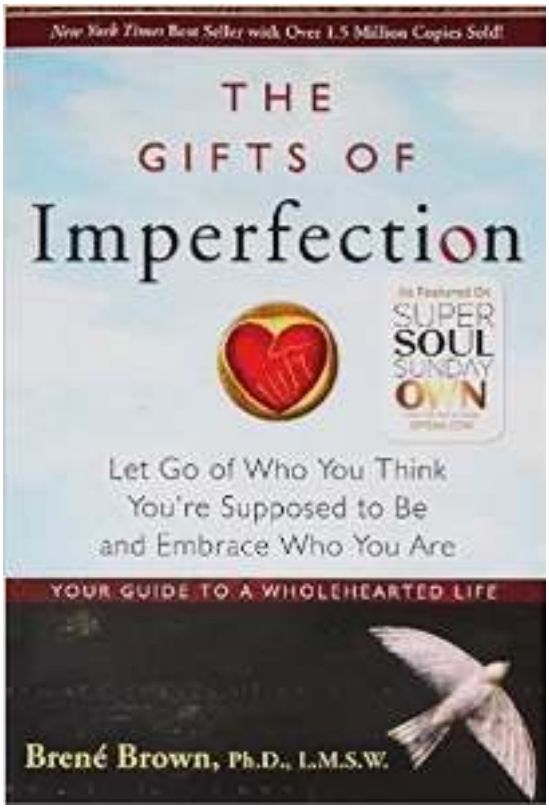
The best way to connect with others is with laughing, singing and dancing.

And to do so, you have to learn to let yourself go.

And again, that requires vulnerability.

As a matter of fact, we have probably felt a bit self-conscious sometimes when we laughed a bit too hard (or when we were the first on the dance floor).

Don't be afraid and let yourself go: it's OK to be uncool.



Real-Life Applications

Some real-life tips from *The Gifts of Imperfections* include:

- **Drop Being Cool**

Brene Brown says there's much pressure in our social media society to look cool.
Here at TPM of course we don't necessarily agree because "being cool" also has life advantages, so it really depends on what your goals are.

- **Don't Trade Authenticity for Safety**

Fitting in and might feel safer.
But you pay a psychological price if you're forcing yourself to be someone else, and you may lose the opportunity to "find your own voice", as we say here on TPM.

It takes courage to find your own path, but it's often worth it.

CONS

I find a few common issues in Brene Brown's work.

Some of them are:

Misses The Root Causes: Ignores Evolutionary Psychology, Confuses "Socialization" With Inborn Human Drives

Brene seems to "blame" many ills to socialization.

And, often, to "Wester society".

However, kids don't want to be cool just because of socialization, or culture.

Kids want to be cool because cool kids are popular, successful with others, and in dating.

Also, productivity isn't so much a Western curse.

Productivity is how you succeed in life.
So any driven man or woman who wants to succeed is bound to seek productivity.

And the will to advance is inborn and inherent to human nature, it's not about "socialization".

Also read:

- **The Blank Slate**, which dismantles that old "Standard Social Science Model"

Short-Term Feel-Good Effect Rather Than Solution

Because Brene misreads the causes of her own selected ills, she also misses on the "cures" (provided, of course, that one should even necessarily "cure" those ills, which is not always the case).

That Brene wakes up one day and feels drained and finds her own personal success telling everyone else to "stop seeking productivity" isn't going to "cure" that.

So, to me, *The Gifts of Imperfection* offers more a short-lived feel-good effect, than a true solution.

Felt Unscientific, With Several Unsubstuntiated And Dubious Claims

Brene introduces herself as a researcher.

Yet, I haven't seen many references and several of her claims feel like personal opinions.

For example, who says that perfectionism is driven by shame, or that resilience is driven by hope?

Because I would have really liked to see the research that backs those claims.
In the absence of that, I personally don't think that's necessarily the case.
One can willpower himself into resilience even while he knows that the odds of success are not that high.

Audience of Non-Achievers? It's Possible To Both Be Grateful AND Pursue Big Goals

Brene's writing seems to condense to:

Chill a bit more, accept yourself more instead of pushing yourself, and prioritize social relationships and emotional needs over "results".

And to a lot of people, that can make sense.

On the other hand, Brene's advice seems to reject the "achiever" approach, and that's an issue because **there is really no one-size-fits-all in life and what's best for you really all depends on what you want.**
Brene's approach does not work for those who want to achieve big, and who prioritize their life mission.
Or for those who are a bit less "touchy-feely".

But there can be a happy middle ground, too.

I believe you can do both: being grateful and happy with what you have while still wanting to achieve a lot more.
And that was missing in Brene's work.

Also read:

- **The law of optimum balance**

> The Law of Optimum Balance

Review

The Gifts of Imperfection is a good book for a very specific audience.

Brene Brown writes books that appeal a lot to women, and less to driven men and goal-oriented folks.

It's not a coincidence, since Brene's work sometimes feels like looking down on personal achievement while prioritizing emotional needs, contentment, inner peace, and "happiness".

Nothing wrong with that, of course, albeit I prefer an approach that provides an overview and the pros and cons of any approach to life, rather than a one-size-fits-all prescription of "what's better for you".

When it comes to Brene's beloved "vulnerability", I highly recommend this article:

- **Vulnerability is NOT power**

> Vulnerability Is NOT Power: Don't Believe The Hype

Still a good book, though.
I would probably pick *The Gifts of Imperfection* over *Daring Greatly*, albeit the latter has a better overview and more psychological depth.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

The Assertive Strategist's Guide to Saying "No" (Without Guilt or Losing Social Capital)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 December 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Saying "no" feels simple—but for many men, it's the hardest word to say.
We worry about sounding rude, losing respect, or disappointing others.

The truth? You can say no politely, firmly, and even in ways that strengthen relationships.

In this article, I'll show you 5 proven techniques to say no respectfully—so you protect your time, set boundaries, and maintain high social value without guilt.

From most basic to more strategic:

Contents

- 1. Say "No" As Default: For Strangers & Learning
  - 1.2. Remain Noncommittal As Default
  - 1.3. "Not Now", "Let Me Think" & Future Deferral As Default
- 2. "Thank You, I'm Good": The Strategic Way of Refusing
- 3. Say Yes To Your Other Priorities ("Positive No")
  - ⍰ Strategic Bent: Make Up Other Yeses
  - The "Yes To Your Lone Time" Technique
- 4. Ask More Questions: Make Them Invest & Gather Intel
- 5. Tell Them to Tell You More: Switching The Power Tables
- Why Strategy Matters Saying "No"
  - Unexpected Requests: The Most Challenging
- Mindsets To Say "No"

- Summary

1. Say “No” As Default: For Strangers & Learning

Simple. Just not always easy

In an old classic Italian movie, a father teaches his son how to be a Machiavellian.

He says:

> You never say yes, remember that.
> **A “yes” shackles you, and a “no” frees you**

If you struggle with too much naivete or exaggerated “niceness”, this is actually a good Machiavellian belief to internalize.

It doesn’t mean it’s *always* true or you always say “no” of course, but it’s true in a surprising number of cases.
And the dynamic of “getting mired in someone else’s problems” VS “remaining free” are also often true -especially when you’re dealing with strangers, ungrateful takers who never give back, or people who are *always* in trouble-.

This approach tends to be most effective with:

1. **Random askers you don’t even know** because random people asking for stuff are rarely going to give you value.
   So 90% of the time saying “no” to strangers is the safest and best option.
2. **Beginners working on their power/dominance**: if you’re very uncomfortable with strong “no”, then it may be good to force yourself to deliver strong “nos” just to get used to it, and grow comfortable with it.

Of course, remember that as much as you can always say “no”, you can always change your mind.
So after you say “no”, you’re free to mull it over or observe from afar, and eventually go back and learn more.

1.2. Remain Noncommittal As Default

You say:

> **You**: I'm not sure how feel about that

And you say it *while taking no action*.

This is a subtle power move.
What this does is that it puts the onus on *them* to convince you and/or to provide more reasons why you should do anything.

Of course some of the "salesy" types will see your honest incertitude as an opportunity to insist, cajole, and "find a way in".
If they get pushy, we recommend that you default to "no" until you have more time to think it over -or until you end the interaction and never see them again-.

Here's what it looks like:

> **You**: I'm not sure how I feel about that. I need more time to think about it

Then let them conclude that it's a "no for now".

If they insist:

> **You**: Whenever I'm not sure, I don't want to perform any action or commit to anything. I need more time to think about it

Then stick to your guns and "hold frame", for example with the broken record technique.

This format is also good as a first baby step for those who need to work on their assertiveness.

1.3. "Not Now", "Let Me Think" & Future Deferral As Default

John correctly says you can take time to think by simply saying:

1. Let me think
2. I'm thinking (and think on the spot)
3. I'll think about it and I'll let you know

We called it "default deferral", and it's basically a "momentary no".

Often, it may turn out to be a "no for good", but you can sometimes still keep the door open and change your mind later.

Deferral doesn't necessarily mean you "need to think about it".
It can also mean that "you don't feel like doing it *right now*".

For example:

> **You**: Thanks, it's not something like I feel doing right now

Or:

> **You**: Thanks, right now I prefer not to

Or simplest of them all:

> **You**: Thanks, not now

2. “Thank You, I’m Good”: The Strategic Way of Refusing

On TPM we introduced the “high-power/high-warmth” approach to socialization.

And you can apply the same principle to say no to people, and reject any request.

For example:

> **You**: Thanks, all good

Or:

> **You**: Thank you, I’m good here

See?

It’s simple, but it’s a big change.

The implied frame is *not* that they were bothering, but that they were offering help.
So your rejection power-protects them and saves their face since they’re not framed as annoying takers, but as potential givers.
That increases warmth, better preserves social capital, and lowers the chances of making unnecessary enemies.

Or lower warmth and higher power:

> **You**: Nah, thanks

This technique is similar to the “thank you for not doing X” approach to requests.
An approach that is both power protecting, higher warmth, and more collaborative. Albeit I couldn’t find any study on the effectiveness of this format, odds are good that it’s also more effective by avoiding rule-breaking out of “power-reaffirming” rebelliousness:

Good power-protecting reframe from forbidding to uplifting

This approach to saying no to others “softens the blow of the rejection”, and makes it easier BOTH for the speaker, and the receiver.

Whenever appropriate, we recommend it as your default way of saying no to others.

3. Say Yes To Your Other Priorities (“Positive No”)

William Ury shared this great technique in *The Power of a Positive No*.

And, in simple terms, it works like this:

You say “yes” to something else, and (indirectly) reject their request to prioritize your “yes”.
With this approach, you may even not say “no” but instead just say that you’re too occupied with your priorities.

William Ury says that the process is about “uncovering your yeses” to empower your “nos”.

Generally speaking, it’s an effective approach.
So whenever you can eschew something with a “yes” to something else, go for it.

The only issue with Ury’s “uncover your yes” approach is that it feels like some deep soul-searching “yes” you need to uncover.
Something like life missions, dreams, or your true life priorities.

However, you won’t always be able to, say, deny a simple request with some big “yes”.
For example, you can’t deny a request to lend $10 because your life goal is to become an astronaut.

Enter the Machiavellian and perfunctory yeses:

⍰ Strategic Bent: Make Up Other Yeses

This technique can be an ethical grey area.

But if it preserves a relationship or saves people's face, it's fair.

How does it work?

You make up a valid-sounding reason, a made-up "yes", to justify your no.

For example, the Machiavellian father in our first example was annoyed that the school teachers were asking for charitable donations.
But instead of instructing his son to say "no", he tells him to say that their family is already donating to charity.
That's his "made-up yes" to maintain rapport and status with his "no".

If you do it well, it may even *improve* relationships and status.
It's like saying "thank you, I appreciate your idea and we're a lot similar actually because we're already doing the same as well".

Another good example is the "imaginary boyfriend":

> **Guy**: May I have your number?
> **Girl**: Yeah, if I were single, gladly. But I'm already seeing someone and I'm a faithful person <—- She effectively deflects his proposal and makes him value her more. A potentially ally in the making

Albeit the imaginary boyfriend is not uncommon, I'm surprised that not more women go for it.

The "Yes To Your Lone Time" Technique

To say "no", respect yourself and your preferences first. Then say them aloud

As we mentioned earlier, the original approach to "uncovering your yes" seems to look for something "deep".

However, sometimes there's really nothing deep to say "yes" to, but you may still want to say "no".

And if you try to sound deep, it feels stilted and fake.
Plus, you'd be lying.
We don't want that: it's generally best to be as straight as possible, and close as possible to the truth.

After all, it's still your right to say no, even if you're sitting or leaning against a wall doing a big nothing.

So some simpler ways of using this technique are to embrace your "doing nothing important" and saying "yes" to your:

- Chill time
- Lone time
- Monk mode time
- "Not wanting to be bothered" time

For example:

> **Him**: can you please take our picture?
> **You**: (shaking head) Sorry man, I'm really looking for some lone time

Or:

> **Him**: I feel like a beer but there's nobody, can you come out with me please?
> **You**: I do want to catch up with you, but I can't tonight. I'm really needing a break and rest with some lone time. But happy to do another time mate

Add this to your mindsets:

"It's my right to be out and out, and still not wanting to engage with any other person"

All these techniques are solid.

They work well for simple requests and people you may not know.
Random folks, sales reps, random hustlers, etc.

But with more complex requests and closer relationships, be more strategic.

For example, you may want to:

1. **Avoid straight "nos"** to prevent the loss of social capital -or looking antisocial at work
2. **Assess requests and requestors**
3. **See if you can find a win-win solution**
4. **See if you can find lower-cost alternatives**
5. Etc. Etc.

So our next techniques:

4. Ask More Questions: Make Them Invest & Gather Intel

The more questions, the more time to think it over

For example:

> **Him**: *Hi there, we're working at your neighbor's place and cut off his power. Can I charge a tool here?*
> ***You***: Hi, who are you, an employee doing the work?
> **Him**: Yeah, I work for the remodeling company, Jim hired us to change his flat's layout
> ***You***: *What kind of tool is it? Like a phone?*
> **Him**: *It's a circular saw*
> ***You***: *Hmm, sounds like a powerful machine. And for how long do you need to charge it?*
> ***Him***: *Maybe 2hours*
> *(by now you start developing a better idea whether you can do it or not, plus, you get time to think)*
> ***You***: *So you'd leave it here and then come back in 2 hours to pick up?*
> ***Him***: *Yeah*

Now you have enough information to decide whether it's something you can, or cannot do.
And if you decide for a "no", you can justify it:

> ***You***: *OK. Look man, don't wanna sound like a dick and I love my neighbor.*
> *If it was A quick thing, happy to help. But this morning I've got some meeting calls and don't want to be rang while I'm in the middle of one.*
> *But there's the other next door neighbor, his name is Max, go there and I can even text him before you get there*
> <—- the "propose an alternative solution"

Then, to better preserve social capital with your neighbor, you can even contact him and explain why you had to say "no", what you did to help, and say you hope it's all good with his house repairs.

How much better is that than a "yes" that shackles you, or a "default no" that leaves everyone worse off?

The other advantage of asking questions is that it's also higher power.

No matter whether you say "yes" or "no", the sub-communication is that you're the type of guy who goes to the bottom of things. Your "yeses" mean something, they're not just low-power "too nice guy who can't say no" type of "yeses".
And your "nos" are justified -there are reasons behind them-.
Plus, you make people invest more as they explain to you, so you also don't lose power to random people who ask for stuff.

So I'd make this my go-to approach.

These are the steps:

1. **Preframe yourself as busy and your help as exceptional**, so that you have a good reason to refuse if you refuse, and you get proper credit if you help
2. **Ask questions** to decide whether you can help, or not
3. **Communicate your decision**
    1. Offer a "why no" if you say no
    2. Offer alternatives if possible
    3. Wish them well

5. Tell Them to Tell You More: Switching The Power Tables

Similar to the above, but lower investment, and higher power.

It's very good with strangers or in more business-like settings.

The trap many people fall into when they receive any request is that they put the onus of everything upon themselves -they need to decide, they need to be fast, and they're in a double bind whether they say "yes" or "no"-. Don't fall for that trap **because the onus is always on the asker, and they need to put in more effort** and convince you.

If anyone proposes you something, it means there is something in it for them already.
So now it's their task to explain what's in it *for you*.

Similar to what Kevin originally suggests:

> **Colleague**: Can you help me with the TBS report?
>
> **You**: I got something on my plate already <—- Strategic plasible deniability in case you want to say no. But if you say yes, your colleague properly values and appreciates your help
> but tell me more about it

That nudges them to convince you. And it's easier for you to control the frame, let them down easily, or find alternative solutions.

Or:

> **Police officer**: can you please step outside the vehicle for questioning?
> **You**: I have some places to go actually. Is there a reason why I must comply?

Another honest and vulnerable, yet powerful option I like:

> **You**: Should this be a good thing for me?

That's good direct exchange talk and properly turns the power tables.
It frames the interaction as them approaching you, and *them* wanting something from you. And because of that, they also must provide your "what's in it for me".
And if they don't, they're being takers. Which makes it easier -and less costly- for you to say "no".

If you want to sound more inclusive, you can even add "is this a good thing for me or for the world".
However, careful with that because it opens the doors to potential manipulation.

Why Strategy Matters Saying "No"

Evolution isn't stupid.

And if so many people find it challenging to reject others, there probably is a reason why.

And the reason is that, contrary to what many online guides say, **rejecting others *can* cost you.**

That's why we learned to:

1. **Empower yourself to reject others**, because it's a must to at least be comfortable in rejecting others
2. **Say "no" effectively**, minimizing the costs on you and them
3. **Strategically decide when to say "no" and when to say "yes"**

Unexpected Requests: The Most Challenging

The most challenging requests are *unexpected* ones.

Unexpected requests range from:

- Colleague asks you on a date (see "how to say no to a date")
- A friend calls you asking to watch his dog while he's away
- Random folk knock at your door asking for charitable donations
- Random people in the street ask you for help

Let's now move to the mindsets.

Mindsets To Say "No"

The most important step is always mental empowerment and self-development.

And the fundamental mindsets to say no to people are:

1. **"I can always say "no"**: internalize this as your fundamental birthright
2. "**I can take as long as I need to decide"**: internalize it to ponder requests and opportunities, including what's in it for you, without giving in to pushy folks
3. **"If they're offended, disappointed, or angry, it's their problem, not mine"**: internalize this to remove your sense of guilt for your "no".
   It's important self-protection against those who try to change your decision (manipulators, guilt-tripper, judge power moves, and aggressive people)

I also recommend you read:

- **How to be assertive**
- **How to be a good ass*ole**: good for too good men and people pleasers

> How to Be A Good Asshole

Summary

1. **Take pressure off yourself**
   - You can say no or take time
   - Put that pressure on *them*

2. **Pre-frame yourself as busy** and scarce, and your help exceptional and valuable
3. **Ask questions** to gain intel and time
4. **If you need time, say you're thinking** and/or that you will need more time on your own
5. **Justify your 'no' it's a close person** to preserve rapport

Power University **includes the mindsets, best default responses, and the best techniques and strategies**

The Personal MBA by Josh Kaufman: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 December 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Personal MBA is an eleven-chapter book on business in which the author, Josh Kaufman, aims to give a clear overview of the essentials of every major business topic. The result is this book, which he calls the foundational business training manual.

Contents

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Exec Summary

- **You don't need an MBA to succeed in business**: you can gain as much value from an informal education path without wasting as much time and money.
- **Always continue learning**: the path of self-education is a never-ending one.

FULL SUMMARY

About The Author: Josh Kaufman is the author of three bestselling books. His research focuses on business, entrepreneurship, skill acquisition, productivity, creativity, applied psychology, and practical wisdom.

Introduction

You don't need to go to business school to start a successful business or grow a career in business.

You only need common sense, knowledge of simple math, and an understanding of a small set of important business principles/concepts that provide most of the value.

#1. What makes a successful business?

Kaufman's definition is that every successful business (1) creates or provides something of value that (2) other people want or need (3) at a price they're willing to pay in a way that (4) satisfies the purchaser's needs and expectations and (5) provides the business sufficient revenue to make it worthwhile for the owners to continue operation.

#2. To learn business, learn business skills too (not just management and leadership skills)

Many business schools only teach management and leadership skills believing that that's the same as business skills.

They're not.

Without business skills, you can organize/manage and lead a group of people to poor outcomes.

Business is about the profitable creation and delivery of valuable offers to paying customers. Management and leadership are a means to that end.

So, to be effective in business, you must learn all three skills.

See the best leadership books here:

- Best Leadership Books

Chapter 1: Value Creation

#1. Use core human drives and status signals.

To make your value offering as appealing as possible, build it with the goal of connecting with as many of the five core human drives as possible and including status signals.

Examples of these core human drives in business:

1. **The drive to acquire (the desire to obtain/collect physical objects and immaterial qualities like status, power, and influence)**: such as investment brokerages, and political consulting companies. (Companies that promise to make us wealthy, famous, or powerful connect to this drive.)
2. **The drive to bond with others (the desire to feel valued and loved through relationships)**: such as restaurants, conferences, and dating services. (Companies that promise to make us attractive, well-liked, or highly regarded connect to this drive.)
3. **The drive to learn (the desire to satisfy our curiosity)**: such as academic programs, book publishers, and training workshops. (Companies that promise to make us more knowledgeable or competent connect to this drive.)
4. **The drive to defend (the desire to protect ourselves, loved ones, and property)**: such as home alarm system manufacturers, insurers, and martial arts training programs. (Companies that promise to keep us safe, eliminate a problem, or prevent bad things from happening connect to this drive.)
5. **The drive to feel (the desire for new sensory stimuli, intense emotional experiences, pleasure, excitement, entertainment, and anticipation)**: such as movie theaters, arcades, concert promoters, and sports teams. (Companies that promise to give us pleasure, thrill us, or give us something to look forward to connect to this drive.)

Markets form to get these needs satisfied.

And, prospects consider how your product/service will affect their status before they buy, so include status signals as well.

#2. Evaluate the market before you build it.

> "Market research is the business equivalent of look before you leap." — Josh Kaufman

Here are the ten ways:

1. **Urgency —** how badly do people want or need this right now?
2. **Market Size —** How many people are actively purchasing things like this?
3. **Pricing Potential —** what is the highest average price a purchaser would be willing to spend for a solution?
4. **Cost of Customer Acquisition —** how easy is it to acquire a new customer? On average, how much will it cost to generate a sale, both in money and effort?
5. **Cost of Value-Delivery —** how much would it cost to create and deliver the value offered, both in money and effort?
6. **Uniqueness of Offer —** how unique is your offer versus competing offerings in the market, and how easy is it for potential competitors to copy you?
7. **Speed to Market —** how quickly can you create something to sell?
8. **Up-Front Investment —** how much will you have to invest before you're ready to sell?
9. **Up-Sell Potential —** are there related secondary offers that you could also present to purchasing customers?
10. **Evergreen Potential —** once the initial offer has been created, how much additional work will you have to put into it in order to continue selling?

If your idea checks off five or less of the ten points above, move on to a new idea.

If you get a 7.5 or more, you have a promising idea and can continue forward.

Anything between 5 and 7.5 can pay the bills, but likely won't become anything significant without a significant upfront investment of time, energy, and resources.

#3. Don't try to reinvent the wheel.

There are already 12 standard forms of value. Don't try to create a new one, create your value-offering based on one or more of the existing forms.

Here are the 12 forms:

1. **Product –** Create a single tangible item or entity, then sell and deliver it for more than what it cost to make.
2. **Service –** Provide help or assistance then charge a fee for the benefits rendered.
3. **Shared Resource –** Create a durable asset that can be used by many people, then charge for access.
4. **Subscription –** Offer a benefit on an ongoing basis, and charge a recurring fee.
5. **Resale –** Acquire an asset from a wholesaler, then sell that asset to a retail buyer at a higher price.
6. **Lease –** Acquire an asset, then allow another person to use that asset for a pre-defined amount of time in exchange for a fee.
7. **Agency –** Market and sell an asset or service you don't own on behalf of a third party, then collect a percentage of the transaction price as a fee.
8. **Audience Aggregation –** Get the attention of a group of people with certain characteristics, then sell access in the form of advertising to another business looking to reach that audience.
9. **Loan –** Lend a certain amount of money, then collect payments over a pre-defined period of time equal to the original loan plus a pre-defined interest rate.
10. **Option –** Offer the ability to take a pre-defined action for a fixed period of time in exchange for a fee.
11. **Insurance –** Take on the risk of some specific bad thing happening to the policyholder in exchange for a pre-defined series of payments, then pay out claims only when the bad thing actually happens.
12. **Capital –** Purchase an ownership stake in a business, then collect a corresponding portion of the profit as a one-time payout or ongoing dividend.

Once you know what form(s) of value you want to go for, you can start creating your "minimum viable offer" (MVO).

#4. Gather feedback and be ready to move on.

Get feedback and allow people the opportunity to purchase your value offering to see if they're only *saying* they'd buy it or if they'd actually do it.

Chapter 2: Marketing

It's almost impossible to make (or force) someone to want something they don't already desire because we only purchase what we already desire on some level.

So, to market your value offer effectively, discover what people already want and then present your offer in a way that intersects with that pre-existing desire.

> **Kaufman**: Your job isn't to convince people to want what you're offering. It's to help your prospects convince themselves that what you're offering will help them get what they (already) want.

#1. Levels of Awareness

To market effectively, you need attention.

Your approach to getting attention depends on how much your prospect already knows about their problem, potential solutions, and your offer (i.e. their "levels of awareness").

1. **Unaware**—the prospect is not aware of any need or desire for what you have to offer.
2. **Problem awareness**—the prospect knows they have a need or desire, but they aren't aware of any suitable solutions.
3. **Solution awareness**—the prospect knows that potential solutions exist, but they aren't aware of your specific offer.
4. **Offer awareness**—the prospect is aware of your offer, but they're not sure it's right for them.
5. **Full awareness**—the prospect is convinced your offer is a good solution to their need or desire, they just need to know the price and terms so they can decide whether or not to purchase.

Your objective with each prospect you market to is to move them to a higher level of awareness (where, at #5, they're most likely and ready to buy).

#2. Marketing Techniques and Strategies

Some include:

- **Demonstrations**: show prospects the value you offer so it's easier for them to believe in it (such as giving away free samples of your new secret sauce).
- **Qualification**: weed out the prospects who wouldn't be a good fit (such as raising your price so only the affluent can afford it).
- **Visualization**: encourage prospects to visualize how their lives would be if they accept it.
- **Framing**: emphasize the most critical details of your offering (such as how it will help them avoid losing something important).
- **Hook**: create and use a single phrase or sentence that describes an offer's primary benefit.
- **Call To Action (CTA)**: tell the prospect exactly what to do, so they'll take the next step.
- **Controversy**: constructively take a position publicly that not everyone will agree with, approve of, or support to get attention.

Chapter 3: Sales

> "The best businesses in the world earn the trust of their prospects and help them understand why their offer is worth paying for…sales consists of helping the prospect understand what's important and convincing them you're capable of delivering on what you promise." — Kaufman

#1. How to Price Your Offer

The "Pricing Uncertainty Principle" states that all prices are arbitrary and malleable. You can charge whatever you want, so long as you can justify the price enough to get the sale.

There are four ways to justify your price:

- **Replacement cost**: supports a price by answering the question, "How much would it cost to replace?"
- **Market comparison**: supports a price by answering the question, "How much are other things like it selling for?"
- **Discounted cash flow / net present value**: supports a price by answering the question, "How much is it worth if it can bring in money over time?"
- **Value comparison**: supports a price by answering the question, "Who is this particularly valuable to (maybe a specific group would be willing to pay more)?"

#2. Sales Techniques and Strategies

The main ideas of effective sales is to build trust and common ground, and always sell based on the value your offer provides, not the cost.

With that said, there are a few techniques and strategies you can deploy to increase your chances of reaching the close:

- **Value-Based Selling**: the process of understanding and reinforcing the reasons why your offer is valuable to the purchaser. This is an approach typically characterized by listening, asking good questions, and then making good arguments based on the information acquired.
- **Education-Based Selling**: the process of making your prospects better and more informed customers. This is an approach characterized by investing time and energy in making your customers smarter which builds trust and increases their interest in your offer.
- **Know their Next Best Alternative to your offer**: you can structure your offer to make it more attractive than the competing option.
- **Create and maintain exclusivity**: create a unique offer or quality that competitors can't match.
- **Trigger reciprocity**: give value upfront so the receiver feels the need to reciprocate (such as by giving you the sale).
- **Acknowledge your offer's potential risks or drawbacks**: it increases trust and shows integrity.
- **Limit how many options you give your prospect to buy from**: too many options can overwhelm prospects and give them "decision fatigue".
- **Give a money-back guarantee**: which Kaufman calls "risk reversal".
- **Convince past customers to buy from you again**: which Kaufman calls "reactivation".

#3. Overcome Objections

There are five standard objections in every sales process:

1. It costs too much.
2. It won't work.

3. It won't work for *me*.
4. I can wait.
5. It's too difficult.

Structure your offer with those objections in mind to be prepared for them and always try to negotiate with the decision-maker.

Chapter 4: Value Delivery

Main ideas:

- **Give customers an unexpected bonus in addition to the value they already expect**: to surpass their expectations and ensure customer satisfaction
- **Keep your offer predictable**: by keeping it uniform (such as Coca-Cola keeping the same formula), consistent (such as Coca-Cola delivering that same formula every day for years), and reliable (being able to count on delivery of the value without error or delay).
- **Focus on improving your value offer and delivery, not your competitors**: because every improvement makes it harder for your competitors to keep up anyway.
- **Spend time creating good systems and automation**: that allow you to create, sell, and deliver more.

Chapter 5: Finance

#1. Only take as much as you need from customers (nothing more).

> **Kaufman**: "Value Capture is the process of retaining some percentage of the value provided in every Transaction.
>
> If you're able to offer another business something that will allow them to bring in $1 million of additional revenue and you charge $100,000, you're capturing 10% of the value created by the transaction."

So, how much value (money) should you take from customers when doing business with them?

Kaufman says to only capture enough value to make your investment of time and energy worthwhile and to cover your needs.

Do not try to squeeze out as much as you can with a nickel-and-dime, "get-every-penny" approach because that can have long-term consequences.

#2. The Four Ways to Increase Business Revenue.

1. Increase the number of customers.
2. Increase the average transaction size.
3. Increase the frequency of transactions per customer.
4. Raise your prices.

#3. More main ideas.

- **If your business manages an inventory or extends credit to others, use an income statement with your cash flow statement**: only using only a cash flow analysis can be misleading.
- **Use cost-benefit analysis**: to make better decisions (see if the potential benefits outweigh the potential costs).
- **Seek markets where customers have a high lifetime value**: to increase your chances of building and maintaining long-term relationships with profitable customers.
- **Try to keep your overhead low**: so it's easier to sustain your business operations.

- **Don't lower the quality of your offer in the process of trying to cut costs**: that's a mistake called "Incremental Degradation".
- **Split the financial management responsibilities across multiple people and limit authorization in your company**: to make theft and fraud more difficult for anyone one person to commit.

Chapter 6: The Human Mind

Some of the ideas:

- **Practice self-care and meditation**: get proper nutrients, exercise, and rest, and use meditation to increase your self-management skills.
- **Personalize decisions for better decision-making**: assess ideas by asking if you'd let someone you care about make the same choice. If not, consider avoiding it.
- **Offer novelty in your offer**: to keep people's attention (such as by breaking up your course into manageable modules and prefacing each module with a unique and interesting story).

Chapter 7: Working with Yourself

A couple of the ideas Kaufman shares:

- **Focus on only one task at a time**: and, if necessary, group similar tasks together (which Kaufman calls "batching") so it's easier on your brain.
- **Don't become too attached to your vision**: you'll have a hard time adjusting and adapting to the inevitable changes and unforeseen circumstances that come with life.

For more on productivity, also see Monk Mode.

Chapter 8: Working with Others

#1. The STATE Model

A communication framework to communicate without anger or defensiveness:

1. **S**hare your facts. Facts are less controversial, so lead with them.
2. **T**ell your story. Explain your point of view, without judging or insulting.
3. **A**sk for others' paths. Listen to their side of the story.
4. **T**alk tentatively. Avoid judgments and ultimatums.
5. **E**ncourage testing. Make suggestions and ask for input until you agree on a course of action.

For an assertive communication framework to draw boundaries with others, check out DESOE.

#2. The Golden Trifecta

Kaufman's communication approach to making others feel important and safe when talking to him:

1. **Appreciation**: express your gratitude for what others are doing for you, even if it's not perfect.
2. **Courtesy**: be polite.
3. **Respect**: honor the other person's status

Note: not a bad model. But, of course, I'd prefer if his "Golden Trifecta" was a "Golden Duo" of communicating with (1) warmth and (2) calibrated dominance because that would cover a broader range of applications—including the cases when you shouldn't show gratitude (see social scalpers) or be polite (such as in the face of a slap).

For more on this, see:

- Social Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth
- Social Exchange Theory: 5 Laws of Social Success

#3. The Six Principles of Management.

1. Recruit the smallest group of people that can do the job quickly and effectively.
2. Communicate the end result clearly, who is responsible for what, and the current status of the task/project at hand.
3. Treat people with respect.
4. Create a productive environment and then let people do their work (avoid micromanaging).
5. Have an aggressive plan to complete the project, but don't have unrealistic expectations regarding certainty and prediction.
6. Measure what you're doing to see if it's working, and make the necessary adjustments and experimentations.

Also, when hiring, avoid making the mistake of judging candidates too harshly based on their interviewing skills. Judge them more on their past performance.

You don't want employees who are good "interviewees". You want employees who you know can get the job done.

#4. More ideas.

- **Increase your power**: by increasing your influence and reputation.
- **Make others feel important**: to make them value their relationship with you.
- **Spend time with people you'd like to become more like**: and leave groups that don't serve you.

And, more on the leaderlike behavior side:

- **Set proper boundaries**: and enforce them.
- **When things go wrong, focus on potential solutions**: it's far more productive than fixating on the issues.

Also, another good note, Kaufman says, "Incentives influence the way people act. Change the incentive, and you'll change the behavior."

And, he's right. (See the silver medal technique.)

Chapter 9: Understanding Systems

#1. Where to start when building your system.

Follow Gall's Law:

> **Kaufman**: "Gall's Law states that all complex systems that work evolved from simpler systems that worked. If you want to build a complex system that works, build a simpler system first, and then improve it over time."

#2. How to improve your system's performance.

Remove the constraints:

1. **Identification**: find the limiting factor.
2. **Exploitation**: make sure that the good resources related to the constraint aren't wasted.
3. **Subordination**: redesign the system to support the constraint.
4. **Elevation**: permanently increase the capacity of the constraint.
5. **Re-evaluation**: after making a change, reevaluate a system to verify where the constraint is truly located.

Chapter 10: Analyzing System

Measure your systems to better understand how to improve them.

#1. Use KPI's.

Here are some questions to identify your business's KPIs:

- **Value-Creation**: how quickly is the system creating value? What is the current level of inflows?
- **Marketing**: how many people are paying attention to your offer? How many prospects are giving you permission to provide more information?
- **Sales**: how many prospects are becoming paying customers? What is the average customer's Lifetime Value?
- **Value-Delivery**: how quickly can you serve each customer? What is your returns or complaints rate?
- **Finance**: what is your profit margin? How much purchasing power do you have? Are you financially sufficient?

#2. Track variances.

For example, track your customer-support requests, return requests, and warranty requests, and if the variation (fluctuation or trend of the numbers) is much higher than normal, take immediate action.

#3. Measure and analyze your data without emotion or bias.

If you let emotion or bias get in the way (such as by putting a greater emphasis on vanity metrics—metrics that make you look/feel good but might not accurately reflect the state of your business), there could be short or long-term consequences.

#4. Track useful ratios.

Here are some:

- **Return on Assets**: for every $1 you invest in equipment, how much revenue do you collect?
- **Return on Capital**: for every $1 you borrow or take on in investment, how much revenue do you collect?
- **Return on Promotion**: for every $1 you spend on advertising, how much revenue do you collect?
- **Profit per Employee**: for every person you employ, how much profit does your business generate?
- **Closing Ratio**: for every prospect you serve, how many purchase?
- **Returns / Complaints Ratio**: for every sale you make, how many choose to return or complain?

Chapter 11: Improving Systems

#1. Eliminate waste.

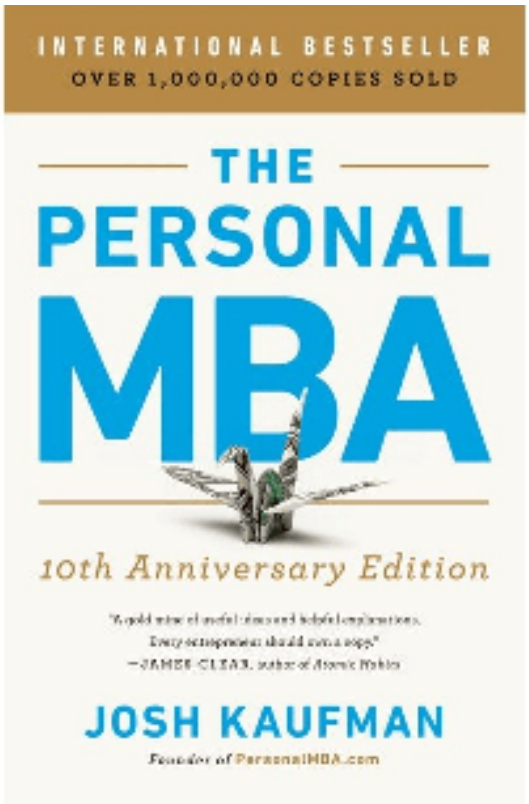
> **Kaufman**: "Non-critical inputs are significant opportunity costs. If you're spending most of your time in unproductive meetings, for example, you're wasting time that could be used to get important things done. The same goes for non-critical expenses. They represent money that you could be using to far greater effect. Find the inputs that produce the outputs you want, then make them the focus of most of your time and energy. Eliminate the rest."

#2. Make your business resilient.

Here are the key characteristics to look for when analyzing your business's resiliency:

- Low (preferably zero) outstanding debt.
- Low overhead / fixed costs / operating expenses.
- Substantial cash reserve for unexpected contingencies.

- Multiple independent products / industries / lines of business.
- Flexible workers / employees that can handle many responsibilities well.
- No single points of failure.
- Fail-Safes / backup systems for all core processes.



Real-Life Tips

- **Offer genuine, free value to attract attention**

It's effective for marketing your business because it gives prospective customers a chance to experience the value you provide and can gain a sale from someone who wouldn't have otherwise bought.

An example is the awesome free content here at TPM :).

- **Ask for permission to follow up before/after providing free value**

Interruption marketing used to be effective back in the early days when a commercial would interrupt your TV program and catch your attention.

But, things are different now.

These days, permission marketing is often more effective because it saves you time (only focusing on prospects you know are interested) and resources (not expending anything on those who are uninterested).

As an example, many online businesses use a "double opt-in" strategy to acquire email addresses. The prospect gives their email address to get free value, but before they can receive the value they gave their email address for, they must "confirm their subscription" (which gets their permission).

Cons

Ignore your WHY when creating your value offering?

Kaufman says that you should build your value offering with the goal of connecting it to as many of the five core human drives as possible and including status signals. That way, you can make your value offering as appealing as possible.

But, what if that approach leads you to create a value offering that doesn't align with your mission or vision?

As Simon Sinek says, "When you follow your WHY, what you do proves what you believe." (See *Start with Why*.)

But, Kaufman's advice suggests that you should follow the mantra, "When you follow what appeals to the market, what you (are able to successfully) do proves what others want."

I'm not yet fully convinced that that's the smartest way to go.

Note: I also couldn't help but notice that Simon Sinek's book, *Start with WHY*, didn't make Kaufman's list of recommended reads. So, maybe he doesn't fully agree with some of Sinek's teachings.

If no one seems to care about your offer, you *might* still have a viable business idea

Kaufman says that if no one seems to care about your offer, you don't have a viable business idea.

But, there are a few examples in *The Lean Startup* of businesses that had little to no sales, indicating that no one seemed to care about their idea.

And yet, after implementing the "Build, Measure, Learn loop", they were able to start getting sales, accelerating growth, and attracting more customers.

So, if the market doesn't seem to care, is it that you don't have a viable business idea or that you don't have an effective process for validated learning?

A few poor quotes

Kaufman says, "Marketing grabs attention, the quality of the product closes the sale."

Oftentimes, it's really the framing of the product that closes the sale (framing the product as solving the prospect's needs) and the quality of the product that sustains business growth (such as with repeat customers or virality). (That's an oversimplification, there's more to it than that, of course. But that's the general idea.)

If product quality was all it took to close a sale, then there would be far less scam artists and "value cheaters" in the world (those who promise great value and then run off with the money while delivering nothing—in those cases the quality of the product was absolute zero, yet the sale still closed).

Some ideas didn't convince me

Kaufman makes the case that you cannot manage your reputation because it's ultimately up to the people how they want to perceive you.

I'd agree that one cannot always *control* their reputation, but a reputation can be *managed* with effective influence, power dynamics, and social strategies.

If such weren't the case, PR firms and reputation management agencies probably wouldn't exist.

Note: this part seemed like a nitpick by Kaufman. For example, someone once told me that there's no such thing as time management because there are 24 hours in a day, in any given day, and you cannot change that. So, you can't technically "manage" time, only yourself. So, he practices *self-management*.

That makes sense and it's true, but it's also just the same thing (time management) said differently.

In Kaufman's case, he seems to be genuinely saying that reputation management truly *cannot* be done and is only an

illusory idea which, I have to disagree with.

Good businesspeople and their respective businesses can get dragged through the mud for sharing information that's true, yet controversial. That doesn't mean that they should just lay back and allow others to continue dragging them because "it's not up to them what others want to think".

Ignores fair value social marketing + encourages naive collaboration

Kaufman says on reciprocity:

> **Kaufman**: "Being generous is one of the best things you can do to improve your results as a salesperson. If you give away value and help others as much as you can, they'll respect you."

Of course, as per social exchange dynamics, that may make sense IF you're dealing with honest and grateful people. The caveat being that if you keep giving more and more to a taker, they'll just take and take until you're depleted.

And, the chances that they'll respect you after that are slim. (See *The Go-Giver* and the naive self-help article.)

And for more on effective collaboration, see:

- Enlightened cooperation

> Life Strategy: The Enlightened Collaborator

Ignores preparing for the worst ("cover your ass") strategic thinking

Kaufman retells the same parable of the fisherman and the businessman that MJ DeMarco tells in his book, *Unscripted*.

However, these two authors ended their versions of the story in very different ways.

Kaufman ends the story with the businessman quitting his job, realizing that he could be just as happy with his current income as he would be after having built a giant, income-producing business.

The main point Kaufman makes here is that you only need to generate enough profit to cover your needs.

MJ DeMarco, however, ends the story with the fisherman being hit with a wave of unexpected fishing fees, costs, and expenses that cause him great misfortune for not having planned ahead by making a priority of generating more income.

Both stories have valid points and both books talk about how money is not the goal of life. (In Kaufman's book, the goal is happiness and satisfaction and, for DeMarco, an "unscripted lifestyle".)

However, only MJ DeMarco's writing shares the importance of preparing for the worst. And, that leaves Kaufman's telling of the story (and his corresponding advice) to come across as carrying some naivety with it.

Chapter on the human mind was very lacking

This book is already great in how it's condensed the top business principles into an overview of business and business development.

But, Chapter 6 felt like an attempt to fit an overview of psychology concepts and personal development into the book as well…all in one chapter.

And, for me, it very much fell short.

You could skip all of Chapter 6, save your time, and be just as well of listening to what Kaufman has to say on

business.

If you're looking for a good book on applied psychology and the human mind, *Methods of Persuasion* gives a far better overview and introduction.

First half of chapter seven should've been removed

It couldn't measure up to the other resources out there. Once again, I feel that Kaufman should've focused on the business topics.

Short, surface-level productivity tips (that could've been found on most YouTube channels), standard "take care of your health" recommendations most already know, and a brief talk about forming habits.

You'd get far more value on all of those topics from *Ultimate Power* and a more in-depth analysis of behavior psychology applied to habits from *Atomic Habits* by James Clear.

Sometimes felt like certain ideas were shared in the wrong sections

For example, as much as the sunk costs fallacy makes sense in the finance section, it probably should have gone in the "human mind" section (right next to his writing on loss aversion) because it's more of a cognitive bias than a financial strategy.

Pros

Great example of the importance of simply going for it

Kaufman tells the story of how the PersonalMBA.com blog started out as simply a way to archive and share the best books he'd read on business as he pursued his path of self-directed education.

When Seth Godin (see *Purple Cow*) made a mention in an interview of how most people could gain as much value from an MBA by reading 30-40 solid books (and save years of their life in the process), Kaufman sent Godin an email thanking him for his perspective along with a link to his blog.

A mere few minutes later, Godin made a post to his audience recommending Kaufman's blog, and what was once a small side-project became a full business.

I liked this story because, among all of the business concepts, principles, and strategies, the most important 99% is in the action one takes (the execution and the "getting off one's ass").

So, while many allow fear to stop them from even starting, sometimes the action that changes one's life forever can be as simple as a quick email to someone you like and respect.

And, I love that.

Follow your passion...if it inspires you to give more value

In *Unscripted*, MJ DeMarco makes the case that you shouldn't follow your passion because passions alone don't give value to the marketplace (and the market only pays for value).

And, even if the market did, mixing your work with your passion will likely lead you to hate your passion by the time the work is done (because if you tie your passion to your work and then start to hate the work you're doing, you'll start to hate your passion as a side effect—at least, according to DeMarco.)

But, Kaufman makes the case that you *should* follow what interests you if it pulls you enough to keep you improving your offering every day (which is a part of the caveat to DeMarco's rule).

Calls out poor business practices and discourages them

For example, one quick snippet:

> **Kaufman**: “Respect your applicants. Your hiring process should not be a cover to obtain free consulting. If you prefer to use longer projects to evaluate a candidate, you can always hire them as a part-time consultant. Then, bring them on full-time if you’re pleased with their work.”

If you’ve read around the forum, you know that you must be careful of these types of interviewers and I was glad to hear Kaufman speak against it.

Review

A great overview of business and business terms.

Sometimes this book felt like it was more for readers interested in a business career than in starting a business themself. But, it covers the basics and foundations well enough that both types of readers could get value from it.

There are some areas that I disagree with based on other business wisdom (see the cons list above) and for those only interested in reading this for entrepreneurship, you can skip chapters six and seven (unless you’re brand new to psychology and self-development).

But, other than that, this book’s value far outweighs its cons overall.

And, for anyone who wants to know and understand the function of business (or simply be able to “talk business” with those who know key business jargon), this is your solid, comprehensive guide for the 20% of business principles and concepts that give you the 80% you need to know.

Check the **best books** collection or **get the book on Amazon**.

Tools of Titans: Summary Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 December 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Tools of Titans is a mix of what Tim Ferris considers to be the best tips and hacks from the various people he has met or interviewed.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Introduction: it's a buffet
  - Avoid Busy Work: Focus on What Matters
  - Visualize Your Goals
  - Go For It – Start
  - Take Action
  - Creative Process Means Killing Your Ideas
  - Start Small, Then Take It From There
  - 80% of Titans Meditate
  - Develop Gratitude
  - Learn From Failures
  - Morning Routines
  - Develop Empathy
  - Focus on Personal Growth
  - Tim's 17 Questions
  - Health and Nutrition
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Just start**. Whatever you got in mind: start. People who've done are no better than you
- **Start small to ingrain a habit**
- **Develop a morning routine**

Full Summary

About The Author:
Tim Ferris is an American entrepreneur, investor, and popular "self-help celebrity".
He is also the author of "The 4 Hour Work Week" and "The 4 Hour Body".
We find that Ferris leans for an overly "hack-seeking approach" and tends to appeal to a more male-dominated audience who's also a bit "hack-seeking geeky". Overall an ok and smart guy though.

⍰♂Lucio's Take On Tim Ferriss

Lucio: Tim Ferris is a bit of an over-optimizer, sometimes a bit too Machiavellian, I don't follow him… But he's a

smart guy, not a bad guru, and can be a worthy guy to learn from

Introduction: it's a buffet

Tim Ferris says that Tools of Titans is a buffet.

Read what other people are doing, and pick whatever fits best for your life and goals.

Avoid Busy Work: Focus on What Matters

If you feel too busy, you are probably not focusing well.

If you feel too busy and you are not progressing, you certainly are not focusing well.

Time Ferris says that being busy is a form of laziness, an excuse and a shield for not focusing difficult but critical actions that really matter.

Also, contrary to the Buridan's Ass, you should pick something instead of spreading yourself thin. This is also a concept emerging from Grit by Angela Duckworth.

Quote:

> Busy is a form of laziness; the refusal to focus on the few things that matter

Visualize Your Goals

Most of the Titans do visualize their goals.

Visualization for many of the titans sounded like having a clear WHY (read: Start With WHY).
Once you know where you're going, it becomes easier to prioritize and it becomes easier pushing through pains and obstacles.

My Note: visualization is not a silver bullet and can work against you
Because people are doing it, it doesn't mean it works independently of *how* you do it.
There are plenty of ways in which visualization can harm you instead of helping you.

Also read:

- Self-help myths (and what actually works)
- Pop psychology myths

> Pop Psychology Myths

Go For It – Start

If you dream of something, but haven't started yet, it's probably because you are living under self-inflicted mental shackles.

The message here is that all Titans -and all people you admire- were no better than you.

We strongly agree with that and highly recommend this foundational article fro self-empowerment:

- **Making of the ubermensch**

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

The only difference is that they started.

I like Ferris' approach to dealing with fear:

- Isolate and eliminate the 20% of activities causing 80% of negative emotions
- Ask yourself: what's the worst that could happen if you went for it? How could you fix things?

You will likely find out that you can rather easily go back to where you started. And that even the worst-case scenario is not that bad. And then ask yourself:

- What's the best-case scenario? Has anyone else pulled it off?

You will likely find out the upsides are much bigger than the downside. And that many who are not intrinsically any better than you have done it.

Also read How to Stop Worrying and Start Living and Linchpin by Seth Godin for more on fear.

Take Action

Success doesn't come from knowledge but from action.

Reading is great, but you should think about what tools and strategies you want to implement.

Then implement and act on them. Consistently, as Tony Robbins stresses.

Don't get hung up on the perfect idea, says Chuck Close, the best ideas often will come from the activity itself, and not through meticulous pre-planning.

Success is action-based, not knowledge-based

Creative Process Means Killing Your Ideas

Tim Ferris spends some time discussing the creative process of coming up with new ideas.

Many of the nuggets here revolve around the concept of simply coming up with more and more.

If you can't come up with many, it's probably because you are judging yourself on the quality of your idea (read: develop an antifragile ego) and you should set the bar lower instead.

The point is not coming up with great ideas, it's coming up with many ideas and killing off and destroying all the non-good ones, says Malcolm Gladwell, author of Blink. When you can find that idea that stands, then you know how to move forward.

That's the idea that Jay Samit calls "zombie idea" in his great book Disrupt You.

And I liked Stephen Dubner's contribution when he said you should remove your moral compass and preconceived ideas when evaluating ideas.

Before you get data and valid arguments, don't listen to what you already know (air pollution might have nothing to do with corporate greed).

Start Small, Then Take It From There

Tools of Titans rightly points out that we are often afraid to start something because it seems so complex and massive.

A great idea to start a new habit (read The Power of Habit) then can be of starting very small.

One single push-up before bed. One mindful breath to start a habit of meditation.

80% of Titans Meditate

Around 80% of the Titans in Tools of Titans have some meditation or mindfulness practice.

I was particularly intrigued by the usage of music on repeat to enter into a trance-like state of focus.

Develop Gratitude

Gratitude is a common refrain among many of the titans.

You can experience gratitude in many ways.

Some of the tools were:

- Think about a good relationship
- Ponder on how people helped you
- Relive what you've just learned yesterday
- An opportunity you will have today or in the near future
- Look around and think of all the things you have
- Jocko Willink, author of Extreme Ownership, reads about other's misfortunes

My note: don't read other people's misfortunes to feel better by comparison
I like all of the above except the last one which seems quite poor to me. It feeds off other people's misfortune and it implies you can't feel good even you're in a bad situation.

Learn From Failures

Tools of Titans shows how many of the successful people interviewed have an open mind towards failure.

They look at what they can learn from it and how they can use it.

Peter Thiel though, author of Zero to One, has a different opinion. He says **failures are overrated**. Businesses fail for more than one reason, so you rarely really learn anything when a business fails -and the costs of failure are bigger than the learning experience-.

Also read The Obstacle is The Way and Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn.

Morning Routines

Many titans have a morning routine.

Tony Robbins has cold shower and meditation.

Reid Hoffman spends an hour on a topic he chose the night before, so he can tackle it when his mind is at its freshest.

Tools of Titans author Tim Ferris himself share his own morning rituals, which include doing his bed for a feeling of control and exercising.

Develop Empathy

Empathy is important both in interpersonal relationships and in building businesses -you have to understand people to serve them-.

When someone is angry or emotional at you, ask yourself what's wrong with them instead of getting emotional and defensive.
Also read How to Win Friends and Influence People.

This chapter deals a bit with communication (for which I recommend you Crucial Conversations and Difficult Conversations).

We generally agree here, but also think that empathy without power awareness is useless.
Also see:

- Developing power intelligence
- **Develop Machiavellian thinking**

> How to Become Machiavellian: Your (Secret) Playbook

Focus on Personal Growth

Many ideas in the personal growth bits of Tools of Titans are not new. But a few were, and they opened new realms of thought for me. For example:

- **Be very good in many disciplines**

Being the N.1 is difficult.

But being very good so that you can reach the top 25% is not.

You can be top 25% in several disciplines and combine them to get your super power

- **Ask the dumbest questions**

Don't be afraid of asking the silly questions.

You'd be surprised how many people around you don't know the answer.

And silly, basic questions will often lead to higher forms of clarity and understanding -and sometimes groundbreaking new products-.

Also, my note, not being afraid of asking basic questions shows a huge strength of character.

Tim's 17 Questions

- **What if I did the opposite for 48 hours?**
- **What do I spend a lot of money on? How might I scratch my own itch?**

Tim was spending 500 a month on supplements, and he created his own line of supplements.

- **What would I do if I had $10 million?**

The author realized that his fantasies were much cheaper than he thought. Or that they were achievable with much less. He could be happy right there and then.

- **If I could only work 2 hours per week on my business, what would I do?**

This a question to help you prioritize ruthlessly.

- **What's the least crowded channel?**
- **What if I couldn't pitch my product directly?**

Tim says that people don't like being sold do, but they like stories.

- **What if I could only subtract to fix problems?**

We often seek to *add* things. But simplifying might save budget and time while streamlining your products and processes.

- **What should you do to disappear for 4 to 8 weeks?**

It will allow you to put in place systems and processes that let your business -or your life- go ahead without you. Then just do it, disappear. Also read The E-Myth Revisited.

- **Am I hunting antelope or mice?**

Details are important… Sometimes. Some other times they can lead to a lot of wasted time with no added value. Ask instead what action can you take that would lead all the rest easier or irrelevant?

- **How can I waste money to improve the quality of my life?**

Use money to earn time.
As De Marco says, money is the only resource you cannot buy back.

Health and Nutrition

This was the worst chapter.

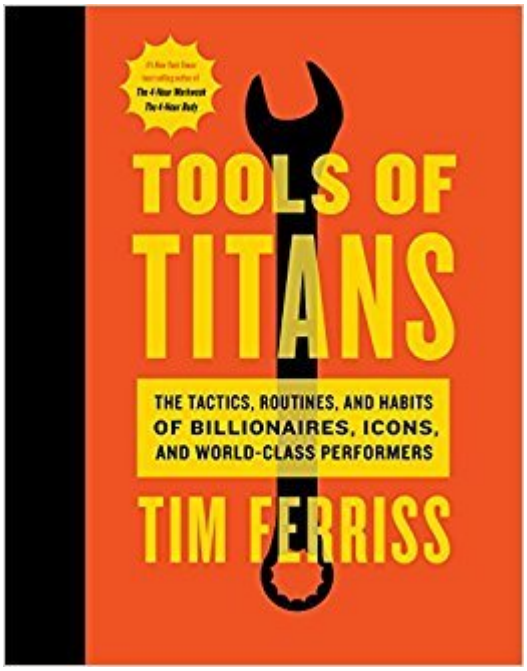
And the most misleading of them all.

Just avoid it, it's chock-full of hype.

Tim Ferris talks up the back-then much hyped intermittent fasting and it shows that he doesn't really have any deep knowledge besides the various fitness trends that every superficial self-help hacker pushes around.

Check The 4 hour body for more on Ferri's take on nutrition, but here are the most important foods to avoid:

- White bread
- Pasta
- Potatoes
- Rice
- Deep fried food
- Cream-based sauces
- No calories in your drinks



Real Life Applications

Don't rush, but don't take too many pauses either

Slow and steady go fast.

Suffer a Little Regularly… And You Cease to Suffer

I liked this idea of growing stronger by suffering a little every day.

At the same time, watch out not to overdo it.

I personally use this principle a lot by rewarding myself very rarely. Possibly too rarely.

Deloading (ie.: take long breaks)

Do take some time off from time to time.

Unplug from work and social media. It's important that you take deloading seriously and don't let business and stress seep in.

Ultimately, deloading supercharges your business as you experience more life and think more freely.

CONS

- **Mixed Bag of Random "Hacks"**

Sure. *Tool of Titans* is *supposed* to be a mixed bag.

Tim Ferris says it himself in the preface: it's like a buffet.

But that doesn't mean it cannot also be a con.
Tools of Titans lacks structure and provides no overarching approach or guidance.

- **Width Over Depth**

Tools of Titans tackles interviewing tips, investment, morning routines, nutrition, fitness… And more.
But it doesn't go in-depth on any of them -worst yet, at times it felt it even lacked the *expertise* to properly address some of them-.

- **Hacks Mentality Can Be A Trap**

The “hack mentality” is a bit of a pet peeve of mine.

If the search for hacks takes precedence over the fundamentals, you lose.
And if you implement hacks without a bigger strategy for achieving what you want to achieve, you’re not really being as effective as you can.

Review

Tools of Titans is an OK book with a bunch of random and disparate self-help tips.

Some of them are good and some of them may not be as good for you.

It’s a bit lacking in structure and sometimes it feels that some of the topics it touches upon would deserve more depth or expertise.

Overall: good and makes for an interesting read, but not groundbreaking in any way and you may want to have other resources in your “high-priority list”.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

The Richest Man in Babylon: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 December 2022 · Archived copy · Original

The Richest Man in Babylon shares basic personal finance advice through a collection of parables set 8,000 years ago in ancient Babylon.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - 1. Spend Less Than You Earn
  - 2. Invest Your Money
  - 3. Cut Your Expenses
  - 4. Stick to What You Know
  - 5. Cap Your Downsides (With Insurance)
  - 6. Buy, Don't Rent
  - 8. Assure Future Income
  - 9. Never Stop Learning
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Save money
- Invest money
- Protect your capital

Full Summary

About The Author:
George S. Clason was an American soldier, businessman, and author.
He wrote several personal finance parables that were distributed by banks and insurance companies. The most popular ones were collected together to form what's known today as "*The Richest Man in Babylon*", the work Clason is most famous work.

1. Spend Less Than You Earn

Clason recommends you save at least 10% of your income.

The richest people save much more, but starting with 10% is achievable for anyone and requires little adjustment in the quality of life.

It's not how much you make, it's how much you keep

2. Invest Your Money

Invest your savings so that it starts generating further income.

The book mentions the compound effect, also espoused by books such as Money Master the Game and Unshakable.

3. Cut Your Expenses

Most books focus on making more money, but "The Richest Man in Babylon" says that decreasing your expenses will be a quicker win for most people.

The message basically is: sure, think of how you can make more money. But get that low-hanging fruit right away and eliminate all unnecessary expenses.

4. Stick to What You Know

Do you when people lose the most money?

It's when they have discretionary money and feel like they can "risk a bit more"

As your money grows, you will be tempted to invest in the coolest new stuff and try out riskier investment vehicles.

Don't!

Stick to investing in what you know and what you can control well.

5. Cap Your Downsides (With Insurance)

Don't put your money in any position where it can be wiped out.

Gambling, for example, doesn't allow you to cap your downsize as you risk losing all the money you gamble.

To avoid endangering your capital, get insurance.

6. Buy, Don't Rent

If you are renting, you're flashing money down the drain.

Buy a house instead and transform it into an income-generating machine by renting it out.

If you're interested in buying cheap, also read:

- Unethical hack to buy a house cheap
- Unethical hacks to sell a house

8. Assure Future Income

What if your present income dries out?

You never know when you won't be able to work anymore, or when you won't want to work anymore.

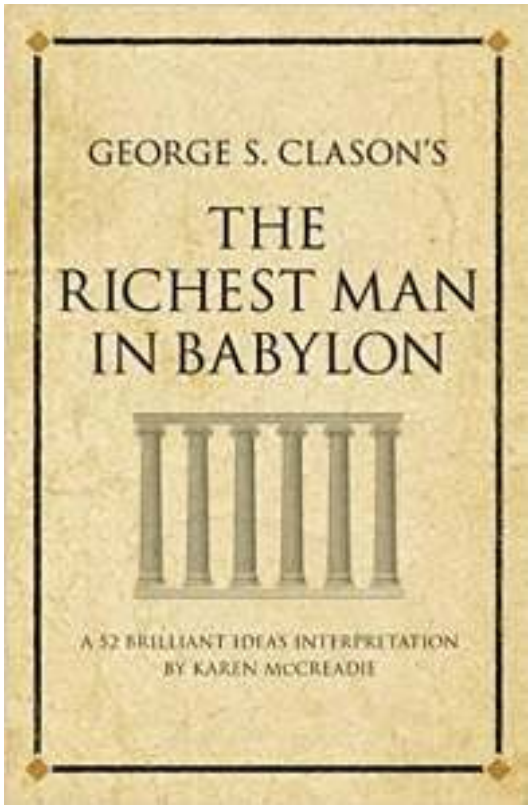
That's why you need to set up systems that will ensure an income without you doing anything.

My Note:
I don't believe much in "systems ensuring an income" without you doing anything".
There is no such system that can "guarantee" an income.

9. Never Stop Learning

Never assume you know everything about your trade and your investments.

Keep an open mind and always keep learning. The more you know, the more money you can make.



Real-Life Applications

Think Twice Before Buying Something

Most purchases we make, we don't really need. I got so much stuff around me I barely used. Always ask yourself if you really need it before buying it.

CONS

I loved the parables format.

Yet there are a few cons common to most personal finance books:

- **Similar ideas repeat over and over**

The concepts are very similar among books on personal finance, including *The Total Money Makeover*, *The Millionaire Next Door*, *I Will Teach You To Be Rich*, and *Rich Dad Poor Dad*.

- **Conservatively slow lane**

Just like almost all other basic finance books, *The Richest Man in Babylon* espouses the compound interest.

This is valid, but it's based on the concept the market will always go up, which is far from a foregone conclusion (read *Fooled by Randomness*). And even in the best-case scenario, it will anyway take decades to make you rich -if ever-.

And it's more about real estate than entrepreneurship. Read the great The Millionaire Fastlane for a different approach and mindset.

- **The old-school words and pronouns can get grating**

I understand the book wants to use parables and give an “old wisdom feeling”, but it can be annoying reading too many times words such as “thy”, “thou” etc.

PROS

- **Covers all the basics**

While I write above that many similar concepts repeat across many similar books, it’s also true these concepts are basics personal finance tenets anyone should know about.

- **Great mindsets**

I liked how *The Richest Man in Babylon* shares not just tips and laws, but also key mindsets. Such as stop wishing for big lump sums of money and focus instead on work and on achieving an increasing cash flow.

Review

“*The Richest Man in Babylon*” is a good book for beginners on basic personal finance tenets and mindsets.

If you’re a beginner and haven’t encountered anything similar before, then grab yourself a copy.
If you know already all the basics of personal finance, focus on applying rather than reading more.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

The Teacher-Pupil Frame: How Explaining Becomes a Power Move to Lower Your Status

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 December 2022 · Archived copy · Original

In a competitive social environment, every interaction is a quiet negotiation of status and power. And one of the most common ways people dominate you subtly is by adopting the **Teacher-Pupil Frame.**

It's a familiar dynamic: A conversation turns into a lecture, and suddenly, the person **explaining** is elevated to a position of higher power, leaving you implicitly framed as lower-status, less knowledgeable, or even incompetent.

The critical insight—the one you won't find anywhere else—is that **it's the *act* of explaining, not necessarily the actual knowledge, that sets this disempowering dynamic.**

In this definitive guide, we expose the subtle power dynamics of the Teacher-Pupil Frame. You will learn the difference between fair mentorship and ego-feeding **Guru Frames** (and why those people want to keep you **stuck**). Most importantly, you will master the specific strategies and mindsets to reject these covert status climbs and **reclaim your power** in any social exchange.

Contents

- Definition
- Power Dynamics Analaysis
  - Power Dynamics of Teaching
- Guru-Disciple Frames
- Similar to
- When It's Fair / Unfair
  - Teachers Disempowering With Their Attitude
- Teachers Keeping You Stuck To Feed Their Ego
- Solutions

- Mindsets
  - Real-Life Tips

Definition

> Teacher-pupil frames refer to intellectual power dynamics where **the teacher self-frames as higher-power by virtue of his explaining** and the pupil is framed as lower-power by virtue is lack of knowledge, expertise, or competence

In simpler words: he explains to you, so he slots himself as “above you” -smarter, more knowledgeable, more worldly, more effective, etc. etc-.
We may also refer to these as “teacher-learner”.

Power Dynamics Analaysis

Teachers are always higher value than learners.

Teachers are associated with expertise, knowledge, and value-transfer (a value transfer they have the power to bestow upon you).
Learners are associated with lack, low-value in most social exchanges, and the “need to learn” to “become better” -at least in their field of learning and, potentially more, as people as well as some learners may also not be “good enough”-.

That teachers are higher value should be simple logic, but if you need a concrete example, think of any teacher-pupil dynamic that include actual money exchanges.

Money is a proxy for value and power, and in all teacher-pupil exchanges, the pupil *pays* the teacher.

Money is of course only a part of the exchange, and when money is not there, the payment still happens in different currencies.
Teachers are higher status, sought-after, and get more promotions, dates, higher-value friends and allies.

Even mentally, the teacher tends to be higher confidence and higher self-esteem, while the pupil tends to be lower confidence and self-esteem -especially if he feels he needs to learn and will never become an expert-.

In brief: **teachers get the most out of life and pupils get what’s left**.

This is why, generally speaking, you want to be careful about who you allow being your teacher.

Power Dynamics of Teaching

First of all:

Notice that **it’s the *explaining* that sets the power dynamics, and not necessarily the knowledge differential**.

And *that* makes it a potentially harmful power move.

That means that **simply by *acting* like a teacher one becomes your teacher, and you become their pupil**.
The teacher *may* be a worthy explainer who knows what he’s talking about, but he may also be a clueless idiot, or a conman looking to swindle you by pretending to be full of wisdom (see the guru-marketers phenomenon).

For many guys, these potentially disempowering dynamics set in automatically.

In simpler words it means **simply by accepting that someone is teaching you, you lose**.
It’s a case of “do something, or pay the price”.

Guru-Disciple Frames

The extreme forms of teacher-pupil frames are with guru-disciples.

Gurus tend to:

- Speak as dispensers of ultimate truths
- Share **"laws and rules" without exceptions**
- Speak with **charisma and full conviction**
- Speak with a **"God on mount Sinai" attitude**
- **Soapbox** during group discussions, sometimes literally taking the higher spot or the stage
- **Talk down** on disciples

The worst for personal empowerment is when *you* help a guru set up those dynamics.

Because, remember: **teachers and gurus need your help to accept the pupil and disciple role**.

At the lower level, it starts with physical cues of "pedestalization".
For example:

Even more important with gurus and charlatans is the **mental subjugation**.

It's when you look up at the guru as if he's:

- Above you as a person
- A stage that you can never reach
- Higher value by virtue of his knowledge/status

Then you may as well have a new God, rather than a mentor or teacher.

These dynamics apply remotely.
Even if you're only watching a YouTube video, **you end up mentally disempowered if you think of yourself as below and less valuable than the guru**.

We highly recommend this article:

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-individualism

Similar to

- **Psychologizing**, or analyzing your personality, traits, and possible issues
- **Therapist frames**, or analyzing what and why you do or believe, what you're going through, or what you should be doing

Both psychologizing and therapist frames are strong power-position over you.
With the added risk that they can have gaslighting and crazymaking effects.

- **Growth mindset**: if you overdo the "growth mindset" in the wrong contexts you can end up in the pupil role and disempower yourself. Both mentally, and practically.
  You can lose status, dating opportunities, and be passed up for promotions by folks who display less drive/need for learning, and more expertise
- **Social climbing**, since the teacher/pupil frame power move frame is often an attempt at social climbing you
- **Guru / disciple frames**, which is the extreme form of teacher's frame

Also see:

- **Judge power dynamics**, since sometimes the pupil may seek the emotional validation of the teacher 9and the teacher will often gladly encourage that)
- **Covert power moves**, since the disempowerment of the teacher frame can be masked by the apparently nice gesture of "helping you with their teaching"
- **Frames 101**

When It's Fair / Unfair

As for everything:

Context and balance.

Some people miss the nasty power move the teacher frame can be because, many times, a teacher frame can be fair.

If someone *is* a teacher, if you're learning from them, and if they don't overplay their hand, then everything's good.

If you're actually learning a lot and if the teacher even takes steps to power protect you, the pupil is even gaining hugely, with little to no loss of status.

Teachers Disempowering With Their Attitude

Actual teachers can also be disempowering if they "overplay their hands".

For example:

- **Social climb** on his students or even customers
- **Patronize / talk down** on students rather than treating them as empowered men in the making
- **Brag, posture, or puff his chest** about "how much more advanced he is"
- **Diminish or demand his students** for their lack of knowledge, lack of fast progress, or supposed inferiority

Power-aware people have a good sense for disempowering teachers, and we usually refer to them as "patronizing". Feminists even coined a term for it with "mansplaining" (albeit they may misapply it to an actually knowledgeable person simply because he's a man, but let's not digress).

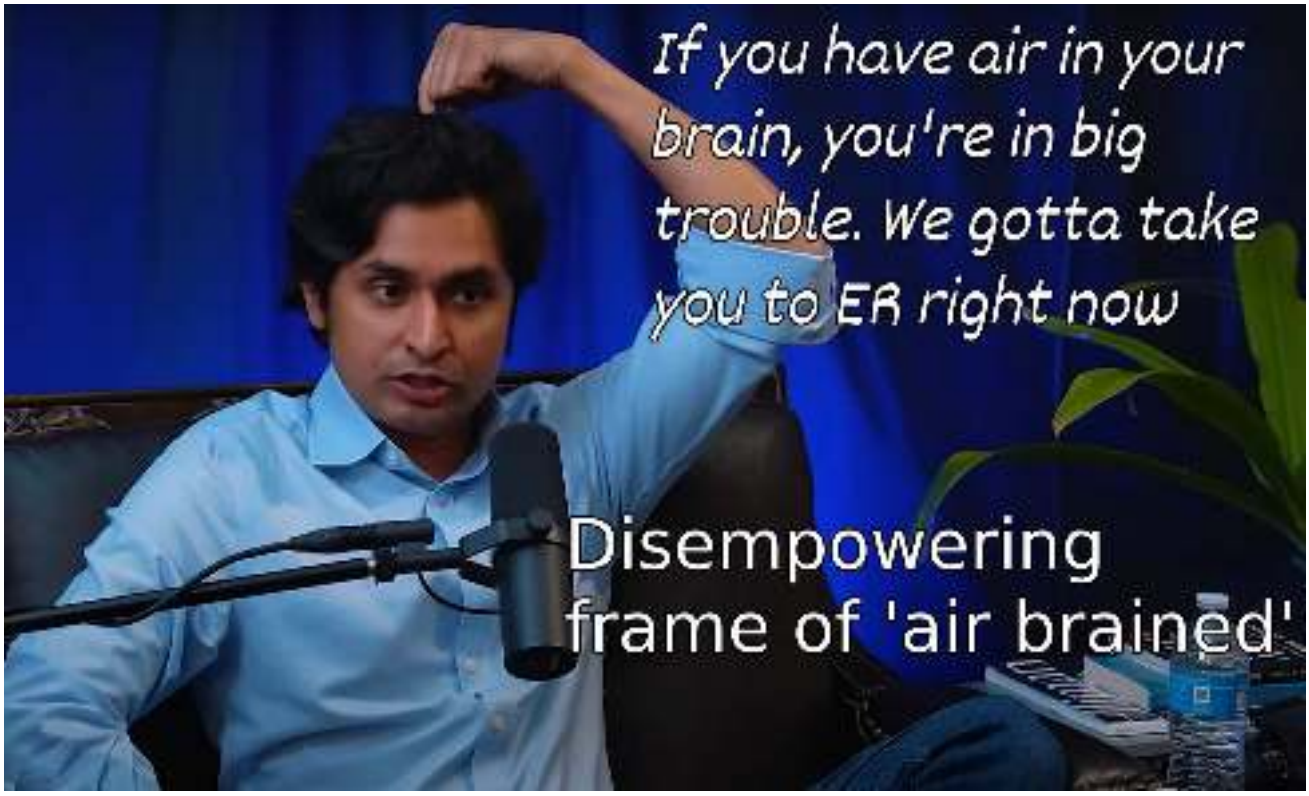
You may still want to stick with them if their knowledge makes it worth it, but you want to end the relationship as

soon as you don't need them anymore.

> **Her**: (tapping her hand on his head) good boy, make mama proud

That's a patronizing attitude, plus a judge power move.

Another common power mover (video here):



> **Him**: If you got air in your brain <— Disempowering frame sickness
> We gotta take you to the emergency room right now <— Disempowering frame of you needing urgent help, and him in charge of 'saving you'

Naive students smile or joke that 'nono, I hope not', and play into the hands of power-craving teachers.
Never do that, just say 'I'm good there though thanks'.

Teachers Keeping You Stuck To Feed Their Ego

Some teachers aren't just not helping on you.

Some teacher are actually harming you because they're *feeding* on you.

So remember this:

People who play the teacher role don't want you to grow.

Being your teachers serves to feed their own ego and feel good about themselves.
If you grow, they don't get to play teacher and feel good anymore.

So they'll always be happy when you have problems, and they see it as a threat when you grow -sometimes they don't even realize this themselves-.
Even their advice tends to be "feel-good advice", "naive self-help advice", or "high-level self-development *without any practical steps*".

Why?
So you never move forward!

Therapy-Playing Teachers

Bad and disempowering teachers love the therapy-style of "support".

The type of therapy that *talks* about problems, but never addresses them.

These teachers will never tell you things like "go do the sh*t" brother because then, you may solve your problems.
Instead, they'd rather *talk* about the problems.

You don't need any of that.

Solutions

Our full course Power University prepares you to handle everything, but just as a quick example:

Imagine you were about to take your drink from the waitress's tray and she rebukes you:

> **You**: (goes to pick up the drink from the tray)
>
> **Waitress**: (loud, dominant) Please wait
>
> **You**: (corrugating your eyebrows) Wow
>
> **Waitress**: When you take the drink from the tray, the balance goes out of whack and all drinks spill over <— Instead of apologizing for her dominant opener she moves into lecturing mode
>
> **You:** (without looking at her) Yeah, no, we keep it balanced <— Power move ⁉️

See the power move?
Anything such as “Sorry I didn’t know that” or “Yeah now I understnad” confirms her teacher’s role over you.
But by refusing to acknowledge the lecture, you refuse to take the “pupil” role.

Mindsets

Generally speaking:

In life it’s best to become an expert and you want to shorten and limit your learner stage as much as possible.

Publicly, even if you’re a pupil and learning, you also want to display some personal power, both in the way you approach the *teachings* and the *teacher*.
You want to keep a high opinion of yourself, knowing that you’re learning know, but you have it in you to become an expert.
And you want to respect the teacher for his knowledge or skills, but you don’t want to look to him as a person just because he’s in a teacher role -you may look up to him, but he must deserve and earn that-.

That’s your way of saying, both publicly and internally: “yes, I’m learning and lower power, but I ain’t no worthless dummy”.

Real-Life Tips

- **Focus on becoming an expert in life**, learn as much as you can, never stop learning, but remember that the end goal is to become a “learning expert”, not an “eternal pupil”
- **Learn while still maintaining & displaying personal power**
  - Critical thinking skills & logic: they limit power of the teacher over you because, in a way, you’re still assessing his worth as a teacher based on the *content* of his teaching -rather, than, say his charisma-.
  - Pose questions: to publicly display your critical thinking skills and your drive to learn, rather than, say’ Pend time with the teacher you look up to”
  - Assess the teacher’s character: which is a duty of any empowered man as either a disciple or a learner
- **Make mentors or work sponsors feel like invaluable teachers**: *especially* if they are helpful.
  You don’t want to disempower helpful teachers and/or people who can do a lot of good for you. Instead, accept your learner’s role, and credit them with part of your successes. That way, they feel good and are happy to give more and help you more, and you both develop win-win friends and alliances, which is good for both.
- **Put *teachings* above *teacher*** unless the person is truly a role model -or else you risk a mindless cult member-
- **Play it Machiavellian with disempowering teachers**: or they’ll sap your confidence and self-esteem. To be Machiavellian: make them feel like you’re close and respect them, but never be close and drop them as soon as you learned all there is to learn
- **Reject gurus that overplay their hand as “teachers”**, they tend to be charlatans who are playing the charisma game and heavily disempower their followers (exceptions may apply and it’s fairer to say “look with suspicion at” rather than “reject”. But we went fro the shorter format just to hopefully wake up more folks who follow for the guru game)
- **Make sure you *can* teach, before you teach**. Starting from knowledge and expertise, but also:
  - Make sure people want to learn from you, otherwise you’re just throwing your “teacher’s weight” around, annoying people, and destroying social capital

The 4 Stages Of TPM's Transformation

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 December 2022 · Archived copy · Original

Your self-empowerment follows 4 predictable stages.

And while each step is better than the previous, your self-empowerment is only a total success once you reach the last stage.

1: naive, clueless, and loser; 2. starting to understand the game; 3. capable to play and win (skilled & high status). 4. Transcending and soaring higher (power rather than status, preference for win-win and no patience for takers and lose-wins)

Contents

- Intro
- ⍰ Level 1: Unaware & Incompetent (Dove)
- Level 2: Aware & Incompetent
- Level 3: Power Skills – Applying The Game of Power
- ⍰ Level 4: Eagle – Transcending The Game
- Notes on The Stages

Intro

Some recent events in the forum prompted me to publish this article as fast as possible.

Namely, there have been several power moves from a few TPM forum members.
And TPM is *not* a place for pulling uncalled-for power moves on others.

TPM has been saying this since our inception:

Self-empowerment entails learning about power moves, manipulation, games, and Machiavellian thinking for

effective life strategies.

However, that's not the end goal.
The end goal is NOT to be a better manipulator as a default approach to life (with other manipulators and in some specific circumstances maybe, but NOT as a default approach to life).

If that's your goal, you don't belong here.

The ultimate goal of self-empowerment is to know how to play the game, and play it *whenever it's needed*.
But to develop higher trust circles and relationships that *do not need* power moves, manipulations, and games.
And, generally, to approach the world while seeking and preferring win-win and straight talk.

The first step is in the mindsets, and in the goals you have for yourself.
You cannot develop those circles and relationships unless *you* first think, behave, prefer, want, and admire game-free people, exchanges, relationships, and circles.

In this article, we will learn how to complete that self-empowerment process until you reach the ultimate and enlightened stage of "eagle-dom".

⍰ Level 1: Unaware & Incompetent (Dove)

Naive people are lonely and trusting lambs unaware wolves even exist
This is the stage of unawareness and incompetence.

In manosphere terminology, you may call it "blue pill".

Unawareness pairs with incompetence.

At the lowest level of competence, it's life ineffectiveness.
An inability to gain any status, respect, or find a woman.

At the lowest level, this is the "lamb stage".
But without knowing one is a lamb, and without knowing wolves exist.

A further issue is that **naive and blind people *invite* abuse and loss**.
As the Italian proverb says "it's the opportunity that makes the man a thief". And when it's too easy to take from

you, even good people can be tempted.

It's Not "Good"

A common misunderstanding is to think that everyone at this level is "good".

Well, yes, some "blind" people are indeed "too good".

But not all: "naive" or "blind" doesn't necessarily make one "good".
Power-unaware folks can be envious, self-loathing, and angry with the world.

It's just that they don't even realize why they're losing.

They don't even know there's a game.

Almost Everyone Is *Partially* Unaware

There are different degrees of unawareness and incompetence, of course.

However, few people are aware and competent in all the foundation power-related components.

Most people have at least some important gaps in social dynamics, manipulation, social strategies, etc.

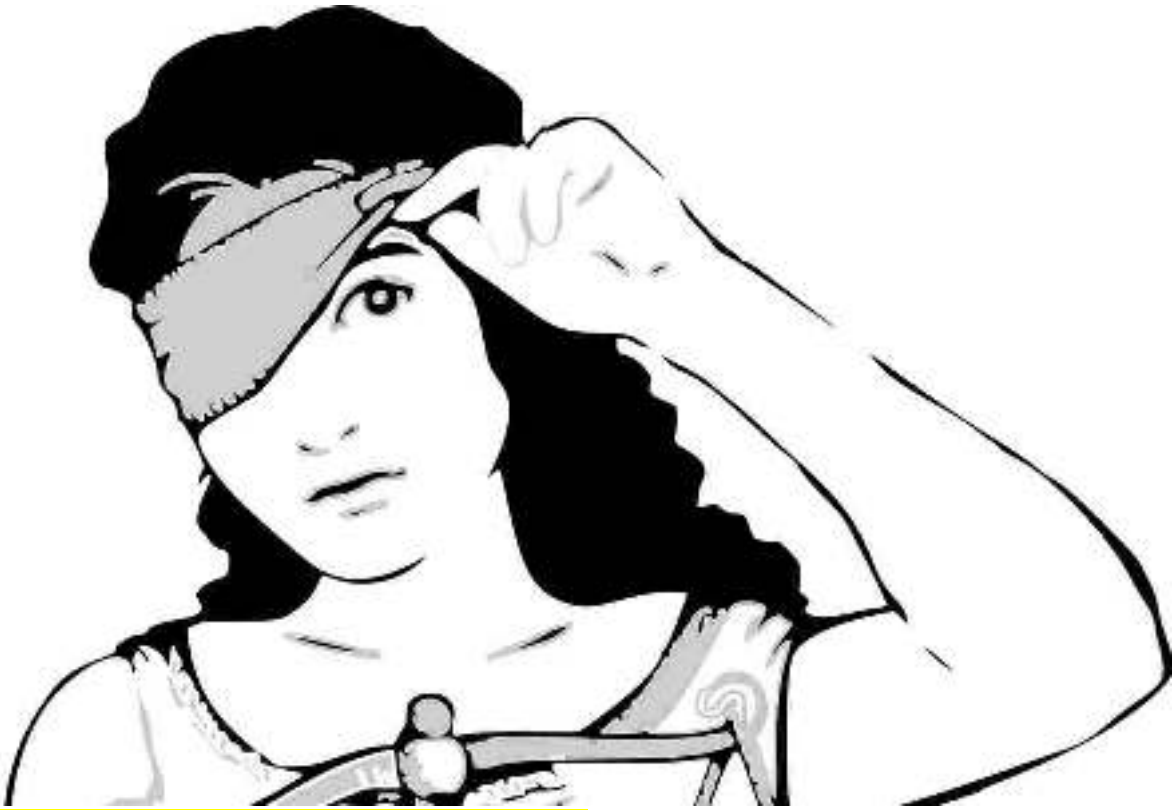
Who's Here

Here's an idea of who's here.

- **Oblivious to the game of power**: the majority of people reside here, at different levels.
  Some categories:
  - Submissive: *hopes* people will treat him well and suffers when they don't. He feels the *effects* of the game of power, but somehow never considered that he's losing *because* of the game of power.
    He fails to grasp that beyond the saying "people will treat you how you will let them treat you" lays the game of power that is the answer to many of his woes
  - Passive: "goes along" with the system thinking that's what "good law-abiding citizens do". Of course that ensures he stays *at the bottom* of that system.
    Can get an OK of even "good" life in rich and socialist countries if he learns an in-demand skill, but he'll never come close to his true potential (and he'll do quite badly in poorer and more disorganized countries).
  - Semi-blind, is aware in some realms of life, but has blind spots in others.
    It's uncommon since awareness tends to carry over in any area of life, but it can happen in those who haven't learned more systematically.
    For example, my father had a sense for social power dynamics and status among men, but zero to pick up on manipulation and judge power dynamics
- **Asperger's spectrum**: they're also unaware, but while the "simply unaware" can "wake up" by themselves and actively seek information -often even catching up and surpassing the "naturals" very quickly-, guys on the spectrum may need someone to awaken them and, lacking the natural social intuition, need to learn more systematically
- **Heavy mental limitation**: only a tiny minority belongs here because the game of power is evolutionarily programmed, and probably not even highly linked to IQ.
  Example: I dated a very *un*-bright woman, but she still applied basic techniques on how to be the prize, refraining from chasing too much, seeking better information from more experienced girlfriends, etc. etc. And while she had no interest or grasp for any higher-complexity topics, she always perked up when I mentioned they were playing games
- **"Too good for this world"**: late Italian writer Ignazio Silone said that if one is "good", it's good. But if one is "good, good, good", three times, then he's stupid.

> When I first read it, I thought it was genius. It's indeed somewhat hard to distinguish stupidity from "being too good".
> But the main difference is that the "too good for this world" assumes the best in everyone, trusts others too much, and fails to realize that while this world has endless beauty and plenty of good people, life is *also* competition for scarce resources and competition for scarce high-value people to associate with

Level 2: Aware & Incompetent



Unluckily, "seeing" isn't as simple as lifting an eye patch
At this stage, you start "seeing" the power dynamics.

In manosphere parlance, it's the "red pill".

And it's a huge change.

Also read:

- Power Intelligence
- Machiavellis at the top
- How to Be Machiavellian

Risk: Depressively Cynical

Some get gloomy and depressed.

You see turkeys and manipulators everywhere.
And, if you're a beginner, you barely see any eagles.

Because your frame of reference is so negative, you doubt everyone, even the good people.

You suddenly see all the manipulations and games, present and past.
And damn: everyone's playing it, and everyone *played it* against you.

The world sucks!

You think you're the only good one on the planet.

In truth, the issue is that:

1. **You're coming from the naive stage where it was just too easy to take advantage of you**: and as per basic laws of power dynamics, when it's too easy to take advantage of someone, even normal people will -and even some good ones-. It's simply a question of "too low barriers" so, in a way, in your reality, yes, you were surrounded by takers -albeit it was largely your fault-.
2. **You don't yet know how to deal with others**, and while many relationships can be "straightened out" into acceptable or even good relationships, you don't yet know how
3. **You bundle together small-time everyday games with actual sociopaths**: you're still a beginner, after all, so you can't yet tell which from which and everyone seems like a red-level power move to you.
   Plus, when you're unable to check power moves and enforce boundaries, you also can't assess people by the uber-important way they respond to your assertiveness. Because while the good people will respect, the truly bent ones will increase their aggression or pretend to accept it, and increase their manipulation

This is the "overly cynical phase".

It's understandable and, *within certain limits*, even healthy to experience it.

Some people stay stuck here because they tell themselves, "it's all rotten and disgusting anyway, what's the point". They think that to win, you need to be an asshole.

Of course, it's not true that "it's all rotten".
But to find out the gold, you gotta come down from that holier than though self-lie and get your hands dirty -for a while-.

Also read:

- Enlightened cynicism

The Positives

On the plus side, with a healthier approach you:

- **Start playing the game**. Even without winning, now you're in the arena. And it feels good
- **Get some early wins** thanks to TPM and PU's superior firepower on your side
- **Excited** about the new possibilities and what you can do.

Early wins and excitement also create momentum for the next level…

Level 3: Power Skills – Applying The Game of Power

You don't even need to win big or often: just *being* in the game is empowering
This is where personal power starts.

Seeing by itself does little for you.
And, without skills, seeing alone may even be harmful.

But with the skills, you finally start playing the game, and:

1. **You start *winning* more** and more often. You get more respect and consideration, maybe more dates or a more submissive and admiring partner, and you're finally considered "promotion material" at work.
   You marvel at your power and your growing abilities to get things done, gain status, earn respect
2. **You avoid lose-wins** because you check power moves, better vet business partners, negotiate harder, avoid takers, cover your ass, etc. etc.
3. **You start gaining some win-loses**, and you may think that's cool, that you're winning. Or that you're getting your payback on life

You may not *always* win, of course.
But now you're a proper player in the game.

And that, by itself, is empowering.
You can even feel good in some losses because you start getting empowering mindsets.
It's less about you, less about feeding your ego.
You start internalizing that it's a number game. And that, given enough chances, you can find a way.

With wins and better mindsets, your confidence soars.

The combination of higher confidence and higher competence creates a positively self-reinforcing cycle.

There are some risks though:

⍰ Risk 1: Forgets the end goal, turns into a manipulator

Some people get so lost in the game of power they forget what they were in it for.

You learn manipulation and start over-using manipulation.
But **overdoing games, manipulation and power moves is inherently low quality**.

Unless you also develop your character, you win more, but you struggle with higher-quality men and women.
Even the ones who are at your same level of personal value, they still keep you at arm's length.

> You want to learn the game, not get lost *in* the game.
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

Remember the end game: achieving goals & win-win

The healthy approach is to seek power *in order to achieve a goal*.

When power becomes *the* end goal, you turn into an asshole and dickhead.

If you stay stuck at the second level, *at best*, you're just becoming a manipulator yourself.

Yes, you can still be (relatively) successful spending a life manipulating, scheming, and even conning and taking advantage of others.
But you tend to lose in quality of life.

And that's the best-case scenario.

If you lose sight that the end game is win-win, you end up with a string of lose-wins, win-loses and, as well, a lot of lose-lose.

Chances are you ruin your relationships.
And you won't earn any great people in your life -or, if they do, they'll only be there until they need you and leave once you once they don't-.

High-quality people have no space for assholes.

There are many ways to take the game of power too far:

- **Overplaying with good people –gets you branded as an asshole**-.
  Great people are for win-win, not for power games.
  When you overplay the game with power-aware but good people they will brand you "not good enough for them" -and they'd be right-.
- **Power moves when you're in the wrong -get you branded as a slimy manipulator with a thin-skin-**.
  Owning and apologizing when in the wrong is how high-quality men behave.
  Gaslighting and word-salading is how manipulators behave -and it's the most annoying thing you can do with an eagle-.
- **Playing *too* hard the game of power -get you branded a dangerous sociopath who can't do win-win and teamwork-**.
  In groups, team assignments, or at work you're also supposed to be a team player. When you make it *too* obvious that you're *only* out for power and for yourself, you can easily get ostracized and kicked out.
  Remember: balance. You can win while also sharing the spoils.
  And the name of the game where both competition and teamwork are at play is *subtlety*.
- **Overplaying in petty situations -make you a low-level turkey-**.
  If you overplay the game for petty and inconsequential stuff, you're *both* low power, and a turkey.
- **Overplaying *obvious* power moves -a magnifier of low-IQ turkey-ness-**.
  It sub-communicates low (social) intelligence and makes your turkey-ness more visible to anyone, even folks with low power-awareness
- **Bad and prolonged win-loses -make you an abuser**-.

> When your win-loses over-extend in intensity and time, you have turned into an abuser. And, often, you also get a toxic relationship for yourself (not exactly a win, is it)

It's (sadly) funny that some people learn power dynamics to defend against assholes, and then they stop at this stage and *become* one.

Risk 2: Stuck with turkeys, you miss the eagles

We have this saying on TPM:

> **You can't fly with the eagles when you're busy scratching with the rukeys**
>
> *TPM Proverb*

It's an important reminder because it's easy to get dragged down if you're surrounded by turkeys.

So scratch back whenever you need, get back to scratching any time life demands it… But keep your eyes up. Eventually, you want to soar back up.

> **Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster.**
>
> *– Nietsche*

Level 3.2. – Life Winner

As you grow in competence, you win and achieve more and more.

Not just lower-levels technical wins, but you achieve bigger goals.
And you become a "life winner".

Level 4: Eagle – Transcending The Game

All game-playing turkeys look so beneath you when you look at them from the eagle's vantage point
Let us be clear to avoid naive self-help:

You rarely stop the game of power *completely*.

Level 3 *includes* also level 2 and level 1.
And you also stay high-power and high-warmth, keep a strategic approach to life, generally behave high power, and of course, you defend and attack back whenever needed.

And you also rarely *completely* stop manipulation and games.

HOWEVER…

The final goal is to transcend the game of power.
Especially to transcend the manipulative and game-playing aspects.

Here's how:

- **Establish great relationships free of games**. You develop a few great relationships where you can be more of yourself.
  Eagles flying with other eagles.
  You can also do this because "your true self" IS naturally high power at this point. So just by being yourself, you still gain status, attraction, and all that good stuff.
- **Self-sufficiency**. As you grow in power, experience, and wins, you also don't need nearly as much from others - or even from the world-
- **Abundance mentality**, where you trust yourself and the process to the point of not caring of losing single battles
- **Antifragile ego where losses don't bother you**. So you're not reacting back because you need it to feel good about yourself
- **"Full belly effect"**. The more you win… The less you need more and new wins. This doesn't apply to some "eternally hungry men", but it applies to many others
- **"Add value, or bye" approach**. Since you don't strictly need anything, you become naturally ruthless with your approach. It's either people add value and can do win-win… Or you don't need them. And don't need to play games with them

Also read:

- **Enlightened win-win**

Get Rid Of Your Own "Inner Turkey". Become A Straight Talking, Honorable Man

Level 1 & 2 are more about the external world.

But level 3 may require some more "inner self-development".

To reach this stage you may need some introspection, self-awareness, a growth mindset, and an antifragile ego.

In a now unfortunately removed video, I shared this:

> **Lucio**: (I was subconsciously manipulating my ex-girlfriend. The goal was to lower her self-esteem and her mate value self-assessment. The goal was to make it easier for me to control her)

The second part of Nietzsche's famous quote becomes more relevant here:

> And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you
>
> – *Nietsche*

Yep, that abyss staring back at you is saying: you're also a manipulator.
In the sense that you scheme to get what you want: you are. We all are.

And that's OK… As long as you keep a balance.
And *as long you and CAN be straight and ARE straight with the good, deserving, and important people in your life*.
These last two are *necessary* for good self-development.

You may need to look deep into yourself
Be it for personality, culture, or learning from our family, some of us have ingrained in us some power moves or annoying games we don't even realize we have (social climbing, teacher frames, uncalled-for one-upping, etc. etc.).
Or that we don't even realize are power moves.
So we may go around acting like turkeys without even realizing we are.

I know well because I had some of those nasty tendencies, and still have some.
In the countryside where I live that continues into adulthood: neighbors "joking" about bald heads, "alpha male" posturers trying to put other men down and, in my case, also a gossiping, backstabbing manipulator too close for comfort.

I carried those behaviors for way too long.

And I've also seen them in several people that I'd generally consider "good people".
So, no, it's not always a question of a bent personality. In many cases, it is possible to learn and get rid of our own sneakiness.

You have to do that inner work.
Because those ingrained nasty habits are the ballast that keeps you from soaring.

4.2. Won At Life Stage: Contentment, Chilling, Charity

That "won" in the past tense is crucial.

You enter the last stage when you go from "life winner" to "won at life".

It's not just in the list of successes, but it's a switch in mindsets that also changes how you see the world.

In that sense, this stage is magic.
Since you feel like an absolute winner, you're content and naturally become a better person.

No more jealousies and frenemies because you don't have any competitors.
No more need to react to anything, because you've *already* won.

You can instead focus on helping others, charity, and making the world a better place.

Power is still there, it just exudes in a different way.
You're naturally chill, you move slower, you're unreactive.

And you have inner poise and a different type of confidence. The confidence of the man who's "arrived".

And you even become comfortable with death.

Notes on The Stages

The stages aren't perfectly linear, and they overlap.

For example, as you become aware, you also often start *practicing* the skills -stage 1 and 2 together-.

Some people also naturally start stage 3 because to them it's a natural consequence of their personality.
They may have strong ethics and morals and/or grew up in households of straight-talking parents.
TPM helps them with the knowledge and skills, but they don't need TPM to remind them of "being an eagle".

And of course, some people will never make it to the eagle stage because they're inveterate assholes or are born sociopaths.

However, many people can and will make it all the way.
Or, at least, have the potential to -it's a lifetime endeavor, after all-.
We encourage you to be that eagle.
And those are the people we want on TPM.

Job Interview Power Dynamics: The Advanced Playbook for Gaining Leverage & Salary

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Most job interview guides recycle the same generic tips: “research the company,” “dress well,” “ask questions.” That’s not what makes or breaks your career.

Real interviews are battles of perception, hidden agendas, and subtle power dynamics.
If you don’t see those games, you risk being undervalued—or quietly filtered out.

In this guide, you’ll learn proven interview techniques and advanced strategies for:

- Spotting the interviewer’s hidden agenda
- Navigating covert power plays in panels and traps
- Positioning yourself as a high-value hire who gets offers

We’ve helped countless men master these dynamics. Here’s how you can do the same.

Contents

- Intro: 10 Truths of Job Hunting
- 6 Mindsets for Successful Job Hunting
- 6 Pro-Level Interviewing Tips
- Bullsh|t-Proofing The “Typical Advice”
- Fake Interviews: Handling The “Free Consult Traps”
- Interview Formats: Strategies
- Post Interview Strategies
- How to Pitch Two Offers Against Each Other
- Summary

Intro: 10 Truths of Job Hunting

Everyone has walked out of an interview thinking they nailed it and then the phone doesn't ring.

The good news is that with a strong grasp of the realities of the market, strong mindsets and the same techniques you learn here for navigating power dynamics you can be an interview star.
And even when things don't bounce your way you can learn how to systematically use the experience to become stronger and smash the next one.

Job Hunting overall is its own world and many great books and courses cover the basics.
To give you simple actionable tips this article focuses on what is going to make you strong once you've landed the interview. It also looks at the interview as an interaction where some common power dynamics may play out.

The 10 realities of the Recruitment Process

You have to understand a few facts about the process to be an effective job hunter.

Some may seem a little harsh or controversial until you understand the game a bit better so read on.

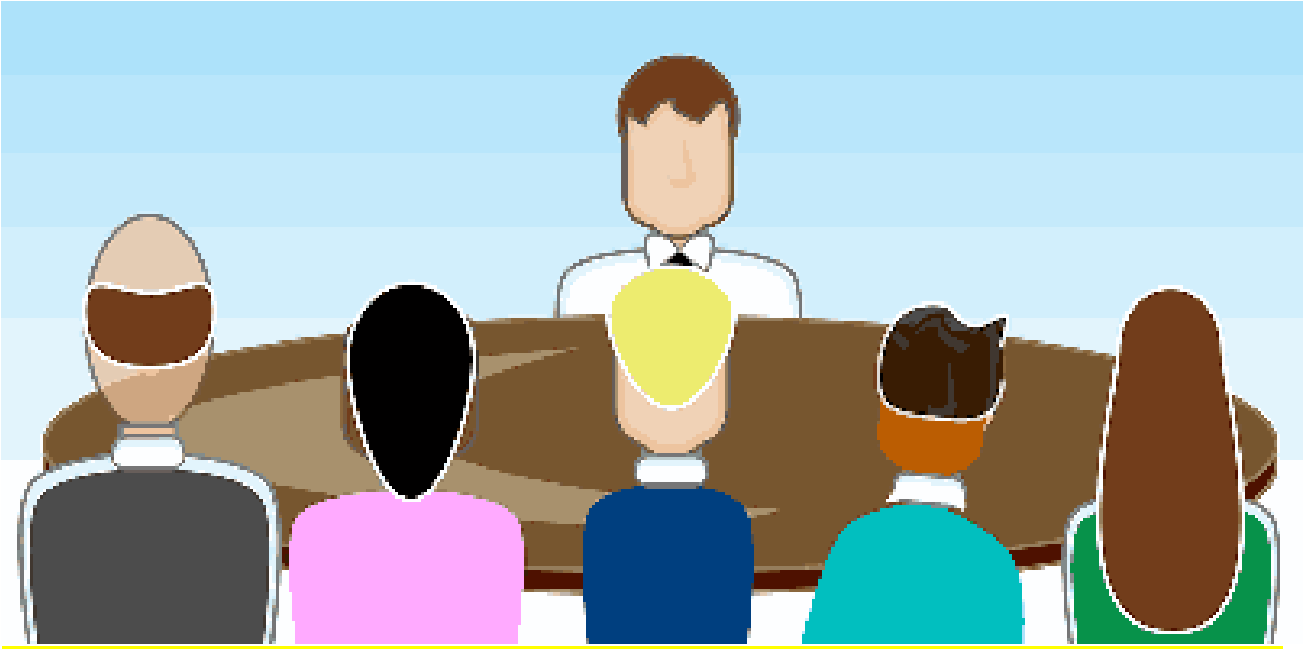
Similar dynamics exist in any market (see "sexual market place" and "social exchange") and most can be made to work for you.

Here are the basic realities:

1. **HR and Recruiters are there to protect the company's best interest, not yours**. Don't let this information push you into a competitive or confrontational frame: you want to be friednly and likable. But never forget that successful interviewing is based on power dynamics, and you want to gain leverage for your negotiation because you're the only one who's on your own corner
2. **It's a market: you're the supply, the recruiters are the demand and all supply/demand power dynamics apply** to the job market and to your interviews.
   It's an even "colder" market than social or sexual exchanges because emotions and feelings play a smaller role.
   When businesses "say that they care" it can be a manipulation to shortchange you.
   In general: if good people like you are scarce, you got power. If you're a dime in a dozen, they have power.
   Strategize accordingly: don't play too hard to get if people like you are abundant and let them pay through their nose if you're hot and rare commodity
3. **Most applicants are lower power** because the frame is that you need a job and because there are several other applicants.
   - Job board applicants are lowest power, especially when starting out your career.
   - Introductions or randomly met are power-neutral.
     So whenever you can, seek an intro and play it like you "don't really need a job" and "are kinda happy where you are BUT wouldn't mind to chat and see what they've got".
   - Head-hunted interviewees are higher power because recruiters came to you first and the frame is that you don't need a job.
4. **People hire people they like** and one of the main criteria for linking is for you to be both high-power/high-warmth and for them to feel like you're like 'them'
   - People like positive people. Nobody wants to be in the cubicle next to the person who is depressed or grumpy every Monday.
5. **It is what's in it FOR THEM first, LATER what's in it for you**. Interviewers may ask questions that *sound* like they are trying to help you develop in your career. Normally these are 'trap' questions and they dangerously switch your focus from what you can do for them.
   Instead, focus on delivering and displaying what you can do for them first, and THEN, when they want you, when they invested time, and when you have leverage, you can focus on fielding your (high) demands (always

tying them back to why it's good for them to give it to you).

6. **Some jobs are already allocated to somebody's connection** and you are there to make it look good. In this era of "forced equality" regulations sometimes they're even made up or piloted to hit a "diversity quota". It means that you can't always tell the good interviews from the wastes of your time. Hence: generate as many interviews as possible.
7. **Your weaknesses increase the power of the recruiters, and vice versa**. Such as if you're starting out in the field or can't/won't relocate this increases the power differential between employer (the demand) and the candidate (the supply). But if you check all their boxes your power increases.
8. **Technical skills are a given and you need something on top**. i.e. tech skills can disqualify you but they won't get you over the line without the 'trust factor' -unless you're the only candidate or SO much better than anyone else. Again, back to the "supply and demand" fundamental-
9. **Unique Selling Points can make you stand out** of the general 'wash' of candidates but ONLY if the interviewer cares about them. So only play on them if the interviewer values them and/or is interested
10. **Every interviewer has power of veto and panel interviews are the worst –** panel interviews are the worst in terms of power dynamics and, often, the worst bet in terms of your time/effort unless it's a single interview yes/no round. You better be power-aware to handle these.



How does it look in terms of power dynamics? Like you're being grilled, and must band over backward to appease them all, that's how

6 Mindsets for Successful Job Hunting

Mindsets are the foundations of your behavior and precede the techniques:

1. **I'm an outstanding professional**
2. **I bring lots of value** to any organization I join
3. **They're lucky to get me** (not out of any conceit or empty self-talk, but as a natural consequence of #1 and #2)
4. **I need to find out if they're good so we can have a solid win-win** Given the value I bring, I'll need to find out if it's a good place for me so we can have a good win-win

And at an even higher level of personal self-development:

5. Adopt a learner mindset

The key reason people are so scared of the job-hunt is 'ego protection'.

Such as, they take the rejections personally and each rejection damages their self-worth.
Here are some of key mindsets that can help turn the job-hunt from a bad run at the Casino to a survivable process that will make you ever stronger.

The learner mindset is one the best 'anti-fragile' mindsets there is and will give you resilience and stamina through the job-hunt.

If you apply boundless curiosity and try and use every interview to get a bit better the ride improves and you may even enjoy the scenery.
To start becoming a learner, start seeing every interview as an experiment. You prepare, do your best, analyze the results, and then tweak and improve..

6. Self-amuse and love the game

This is a cliché so take it with a grain of salt and see if it works for you -but it works for me-.

Self-amusement and love for the game is all about taking things less seriously.
Interviewing, like many activities in life, is a poker game and it can be fun.

You can also use this attitude for the time-wasters.
For example, you can adopt that observer stance where it moves from 'I can't believe they asked me that!' to 'wow those guys were real clowns thank god I won't be working for them'.
If you can do that, then you will easily walk off the bad interviews and rejections and shout 'next' with drive and enthusiasm.

7. If it's tough, accept and embrace the suck

Here's the truth:

If you are currently lower job market value it's not going to be a walk in the park, with sirens trying to lure you in from all directions.
And that's a euphemism to say that it's going to be challenging.

No online guide is going to change that and any guru selling easy solutions is doing what all scammers do: selling pipe dreams and preying on the weak.

But that "weak" is only in the mindset.
People who can accept whatever situation they're in while keeping an emotional even keel are the strongest.

So a much better approach is to accept the realities of whatever challenging situation you're in as simply part of life.
And being cool with that initial "suck" period is the best starting mental point.
Once you can accept how things are and be cool with that, then you can focus on strategies and techniques *while remaining confident and high self-esteem*, despite any setback that may occur. That's already half the battle.

A good strategy for less-in-demand job seekers is to target smaller organizations, non-profits, or reframe your situation to go for what you truly love instead of salary or status.

Read more here:

- **Newbie job search power dynamics**

Finally, this is an in-between a mindset, an approach to interviewing:

Bonus: Prioritize Based on Your #1 Priority and Time-box

My Father had some sound advice – 'follow the money'.

Money is an excellent proxy for the value an organization is placing on the role.
So my prioritization is simple: **if best money and job are not a hot mess, then accept the highest offer**.
Using the technique of 'working back from the end' then I prioritize applications to industries and specializations that I know pay best.

You may have different criteria, e.g. work-life balance.
Decide what's your #1 priority and then plan the work and work the plan.

6 Pro-Level Interviewing Tips

And now let's get to some advanced power tips:

1. Keep answers concise then ask them if that has answered it for them

You are sneakily cementing those frames that you HAVE answered and they ARE comfortable.

2. End with a catchphrase

What I do is to summarize my answer, and then end with a catchphrase such as "nobody s above the team". "You can't communicate too much", etc. That way you give the 'honour the process' vibe HR loves while keeping it real and giving solid anchor points that your audience will remember after you walk out.

3. Reframe challenges as collaborations

If the interviewer challenges your answer use collaborative re-framing.
Such as: agree, bridge from their language to the answer you gave, and then tell them they are wonderful again (restore rapport).

For example, imagine you thought they were all about the team and you kept using 'we' language.
Then they harpoon you with:

> **Interviewer**: 'Yes but what did you do on the project?'
> **You**: '**You're absolutely right**, that was a tight project and everyone had to be accountable. I created a pitch deck that gained us 3 new key clients that quarter. And that helped the team targets and secured us more backing from Exec to move on with the next part of the work. What I've been hearing today is that your teams perform strongly while supporting each other and that's exactly how I like to work'.

4. Use indirect questioning or statements to gather intelligence about their issues and pain points.

If you ask 'and how would that affect the resourcing' in one question and 'what are the key cost controls in another' it sounds like you are asking intelligent questions about the work.

But you are actually checking for vague answers that tell you they may not have budget approval for all the work which could affect YOUR job security.

The statement approach instead is to assume 'of course you guys will have all the budget approvals / funding in place'. If they look uneasy or start looking at each other – there's your answer.

5. Use insider lingo

Every industry and profession has its own language of insider words that cut through with people. Add them to your working vocabulary and casually drop a few of those keywords in the interview.

Even if you are fresher in the field you can sound like an expert. And if you sound like an expert the real experts will talk to you and you will develop through osmosis.
If you do the homework you will 'become' even quicker.

6. Speak with confidence

Evidence suggests that a powerful speech style is rated more favorably (competent and employable) irrespective of content.

- **Speak with power and project confidence**

> Dominant Conversations: 10 Ways to Speak With Confidence

6. Tailor your interview to the interviewer's hidden agenda

The interviewer likely will have agendas beyond the interview process such as:

- I need the guy to solve X problem
- Not quite sure who I need in this role – let's see who's out there
- I have no idea about this piece of work – let's ask around and get a bit of free consulting
- I want somebody who won't rock the boat
- I need somebody calm who will steady the team under fire
- I don't want anyone too strong who might be a threat

Your job is to **sniff out those agendas and play to them**.
Read more below on how to handle free consulting.

Bullsh|t-Proofing The "Typical Advice"

There are plenty of good interview checklists a quick google away.

So what's content filler for bloggers and what's gold IRL?

Here it is vetted for you:

1. **Allow plenty of time for interviews** – TRUE –
   It allows you to be organised, relaxed and remind yourself that you're vetting them as hard as they're vetting you.

2. **Research the company** – NOT TRUE –
   every recruiter in the world seems to have very little idea what the hirer is really looking for and want you to spend hours (unpaid!) memorizing the company website. This has helped me precisely zero percent of the time. Instead, **know the industry trends**. What has helped me is dropping in a recent industry trend or happening with a couple of the 'insider words' as a quick 'throw-away' line – keep it punchy. You should know what the company does but at a helicopter level. Ie.: '*what I've heard is you guys are number 1 in hotel resorts and your big growth is expected in south America. If you could share your thoughts on that would be amazing!*'
   Notice the power move: it's "what I've *heard*", not "whatve I've *read*": you're an insider.

3. **Dress to impress** – ONLY IF IT WORKS FOR YOU –
   interviews are a formal occasion and HR likes pomp and ceremony as much as the Vatican! However since Work From Home most companies are smart casual. So as long as you stay within "normal" ranges and adapt to the company, it's best to dress for yourself as a default. If suiting up makes you feel 10 feet tall – go for it.

4. **Have a strong beginning and end**. – TRUE –
   Prepare a good story of who you are and why you're a high-value worker. Always frame your previous employers as if *they* won you, as in "they managed to hire me", and they were happy they did.
   Then summarise and re-pitch at the end because that leaves an impression of a 'makes things happen' kind of person. Otherwise, the interview can trail off and that leaves an overall impression of 'yeah they were OK – maybe look at a few more'.

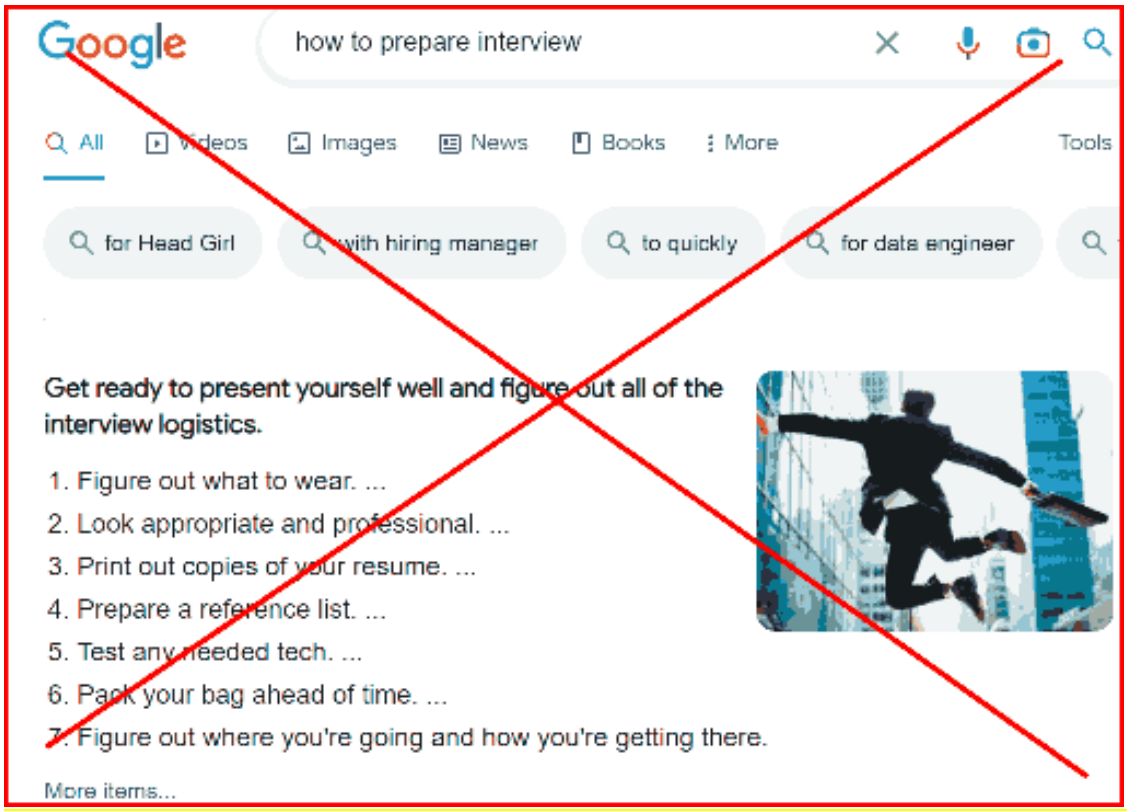
Very few bosses have time for spoon-feeding these days so you want to sound action-oriented. They need people who can get things done, get along with the zoo and not scare the horses. And tell them you really liked their focus on the team or whatever they pushed in the interview and that you are keen to work for them. Everybody likes people who like them.

5. **Ask questions** – YES, IF you ask good questions –
   This is where you really can stand out. If you can work out what the problems always are in business and apply this to the interview it sells the message you 'get the business'. E.g. they say they are expanding rapidly in South America. Usual pain points would be: organising lots of hiring remotely, government approvals delaying branch or product launches, cash-flow because you are spending capital before sales ramp up.

6. **Agree with the interviewers** – YES –
   Even better if you can circle back to a point they made earlier while answering another question. That shows you really listened to them and everyone wants to be listened to.

7. **Let the interviewers do most of the talking**. – YES –
   Let them talk as much as they want. You d be amazed how often they want 80% of the airtime to make points to each other. If you are at the interview they already believe you can do the job it's all about the feelsc

8. **Prepare a list of references** – NOT TRUE –
   Your network is your net-worth, you heard that, right?
   So, don't give it away to just about anyone! Protect it and cherish and only share it for jobs you really want, and at the *final* stage of the recruitment process.
   Also, it's not good to give everything like an open book and it's much better to let the interviewer also ask and work for it: they will appreciate you more for it



The top results tend to be "OK" but not great advice because they're simple, politically correct advice for the masses

Fake Interviews: Handling The “Free Consult Traps”

Also, be aware of Machiavellian ploys to get free information.

Sometimes businesses set up fake interviews with the goal of assessing the current job market, get intel on the competition, or even solve their problems and get free consulting.

However, you won’t always be able to 100% tell apart the fake assessment from the real ones, so you gotta play the game, display your skills, without giving too much away.

So here’s how you navigate them:

- **Fake interview for free consulting**
- Fake assessment task for free consulting

And see more here on sociopaths’ interview strategies.

Interview Formats: Strategies

Let’s now look for specific interview formats you are likely to find out there in the jungle.

The Phone Screen: Avoid Being Binned

Most likely conducted by internal HR or a recruiter. Your main job here is to avoid being binned.

The screener will have been given a likely vague or generic JD, a must-have and a deal breaker from the hiring manager.
They may also throw in some default HR question such as why are you looking to move on? HR drinks deeply of the company Koolaid, so:

- Display extra warmth and variation in your voice to make up for the lack of visual cues
- Use stronger words like exciting and amazing
- Show that you are a team player

The remote interview: make sure they see your hands

There are a few basics worth reminding on:

1. Put a soft light in front of you
2. Get on a test zoom and play with lighting and camera angle it does make a difference
3. Be far enough from the camera for them to see your hand gestures – waving “hello” at the start, listing points, reaching out to them as you agree on something they said, etc.

LinkedIn has a video interview question feature or you can practice in front of a Zoom test call.

The panel interview: de-prioritize it or you’re jumping through 10 people’s hoops

The tricky part is that you have more chances of being vetoed.
Plus if they can’t agree they will just veto you as a group.

Unless you know you have a friend on panel I would strongly advise you to prioritize one or two interviewer formats over panel.

To succeed you have to be all things to all people.
In one answer you are action man/woman, in the next you are team den mother. **Provide a buffet and let them take away what they want**.

Aptitude tests: don’t waste too much of your unpaid time on it

Aptitude tests are an extra hoop for you to jump through.

And the more hoops you jump, the more power they gain over you.
That dynamic than can easily translate into salary negotiations where you’ll be fighting an uphill battle.

So everything else being equal prioritize interviews without aptitude tests and case studies.
This of course assumes you have multiple interviews lined up. If it is your one and only interview then jump through with a smile and tell them how much you enjoyed their shiny hoops.

Post Interview Strategies

After the interview there are two schools of thought:

1. **Shotgun approach is to end your involvement the moment you walk out**, move on quickly, and focus on the next interview(s)
2. **Sniper approach is to go "all out" and follow up**, E.g. write thank you emails, re-state your pitch, add more ideas on how you can solve their challenges, follow-up with more details on what you discussed, etc.

Many job-hunting resources advise you to go for the sniper approach and send a thank you email restating your pitch and if you can answer one of their questions/problems in more depth.

However, keep in mind the conflict of interest: many guides are written by HR and recruiters and they *want* people who chase and over-invest because it's better *for them*.

But is it better *for you*?

After trying this a few different times and ways, I personally am less than convinced.
This is because of the unknown agendas in the room. If a potential boss has decided you don't 'fit the team' whatever that is in her perception no cleverness or effort on your part is likely to turn the decision.

I would say that if you have decided it is an amazing job and it's the best pay STILL **only invest in a follow-up pitch if you have only one decision-maker to persuade**.
The more variables the more uncertain the outcomes. The more uncertainty the less likely your investment pays off.

So who can you totally control?
Yourself!

Don't over-invest: it's never a good idea to disempower yourself -OK, *almost* never-.

Similar dynamics happen in all social exchanges, and chasing is as bad for jobs as it is for dating and friendships
Instead, grab a quick knowledge snack from the job-interview buffet table.
What was their focus? What is their business trying to do? Is there a question that seems to come up often that you feel you need a better answer prepped? Google a couple of terms they used you had never heard. Jot it down in

your notes in the cloud. You do have notes right?

If you don't get the job: ask for feedback and thank them

No, the feedback won't be honest.

Unless you have an inside contact you are likely to never know how they reached their decisions.

If you ask for feedback everybody gives the palatable excuse to avoid any blowback on the interviewers or the organization.

Also, don't treat interviewers as a truly rational and effective way of hiring the best candidate.
Interviewing is an interruption to people's busy day jobs. They often go for gut feelings and emotions and back-rationalize later to sound logical (a process called "sense making" in psychology).
And often they make even more obvious blunders. For example, I have been often given feedback that I wasn't strong enough in answering a question that they never asked me. Either an excuse (e.g. because somebody's friend got the job) or equally likely they mixed me up with somebody else.

You ask for feedback to stay top of mind and to establish a relationship

So, OK feedback is not always helpful.

And it's also NOT an opportunity to change their minds.

Don't chase the rejection or you look desperate. Any feedback from HR or the Recruiter is not a chance to overturn the decision, that ship's sailed.

But you **ask for feedback to develop a good relationship** that may be useful in the future.

It is a chance to remind them you were a great candidate and you would love to work for them and will reach out once in a while.
Recruiters often move around and establishing a relationship will open other doors.

How to Pitch Two Offers Against Each Other

If you have more than one offer: congratulation.

You're in the power seat.

However, remember: high-power is great, but high-power asshole is not. And it burns bridges (and goes against the foundational strategies of making friends and allies).

So see here how the good social strategist pitches two employers against each other:

- **Pitching 2 offers against each other**
- Leveraging a new offer to re-negotiate your salary

See Power University for more.

Summary

The job market is always changing and is in reality a *collection* of job markets.

You are only one variable in the hiring process. Often why you do or do not get the job is not about your ability to perform the job from a technical point of view.

Whatever the interview format, how you want it to roll is as a back-and-forth conversation and have the interviewers to *positively* imagine them working alongside you.

On the day you want the interview to become a free-flowing conversation where you learn more about the role and

frame yourself as already one of their teammates.

Interviewing is very subjective from both sides of the process and types of interviews and how best to win will vary by job and industry. People hire people. This article has focused on the human side of interviews as human nature applies everywhere.

There are of course exceptions to every rule but the suggested tactics here form a firm foundation. Follow the tips here, tweak for your own style and you will be ahead of the pack and well on your way to that dream job.

15 Minutes to a Better Interview: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In *15 Minutes to a Better Interview* company recruiter Russell Tuckerton teaches readers how to interview effectively.

TPM Power Note: *People's* competence wins interviews, not job competence
Job interviews are about convincing a higher-power gatekeeper to select you over competitors. This means signaling high value, managing status dynamics to make the interviewer feel respected and in charge ('power protecting'), but without losing too much power. This book covers the basics—but not the deeper power dynamics. See our **guide to interviews ↗**.

About the Author:
Russell Tuckerton, a pen name for the author, says that he has been interviewing as a hiring manager for decades in both big corporations (Microsoft) and startups.
Tuckerton says it's best to learn how to interview from hiring managers because they are the ones who make the final decisions -as opposed to HR personnel who just do the first screening-.

Contents

- 6 Basic rules of interviewing:
- Trap questions to be aware of:
- Power dynamics tips:
- PROS
- CONS
- Review

6 Basic rules of interviewing:

1. **Dress up**
2. **If it's not your top priority, hide it and stay enthusiastic**
3. Keep your answer short and concise: don't ramble. You'd bore the interview and come across as unstructured
4. **Focus on WIIFT** (what's in it for them)
5. **Only asks for perks after they want you** (and remain focused on WIIFT)
6. **Avoid volunteering personal information** (children, dogs, etc.)

Trap questions to be aware of:

- **Tell me how you handle conflict** (or: how you handled a recent conflict)

don't say you don't have conflicts because it might mean you're too passive or submissive, or don't understand social dynamics.

Conflict is natural and it's about how you handle it, rather than living without it. Show instead that you know conflict is normal and that you can handle them as a mature adult focused on results

- **Why should we hire you**:

don't say you're better than the competition.
You don't know that, and you come across as a social climber who disrespects others

- **Tell us about a failure of yours**:

do have a failure example and show lessons learned from it, together with how you improved yourself.
Avoiding answering shows that you're not a learner and that you might have something to hide

Power dynamics tips:

- **Lean in from time to time**: it shows interests
- **Treat a question asked twice as a warning**: it means you didn't reply well, or at all, the first time out, and you're annoying the interviewer
- **If you're at a booth fair, don't let them see you talk to the competitors**: you want to give the impression you were there just for them. You can go back to talk to the competitors hours later maybe, but don't look like a "CV dropper", nobody wants people who do spam approaches

PROS

- **Solid advice, without fluff**

If you've been into people skills for a while and are not a beginner, they may not be hundreds of "wow moments". However, that was never the goal of this book. *What I Wish Every Job Candidate Knew* is not meant to break new ground, it's meant to give you the foundational tools to interview well.

And it's exactly what it does: it provides a good overview of many of the most sensible information about good interviewing.
And it's all delivered without fluff and space-fillers.

CONS

Not much and nothing important, but I disagreed on this one:

- **Should you *never* talk about personal stuff?**

The author says never to about personal stuff, not even if they have pictures of family on their desk.

I only partially agree.

I think this depends on the type and character of the interviewer. If he goes personal, then it's an opportunity for you to increase your bond and connection.
If he remains professional, then I agree, avoid going personal or it might feel like you are being nosy and unprofessional -plus, it's a power mistake since people feel like you're acting above your status-.

Review

What I Wish Every Job Candidate Knew is a good book on how to perform well at a job interview.

I read "15 Minutes to a Better Interview" as part of my research fr a new lesson on Power University on, you guessed it, interviewing effectively.

The book is short, very short.

But it's "short and sweet", since it focuses on the basics that matter the most -your 80%0-.
Also, it adds plenty of examples to those foundational principles with both good and bad replies. And that helps internalize the material to from knowledge to actual skills.

The author also says that **memorizing hundreds of answers to all possible questions is useless**.
What you need to do instead is to understand the rationale behind each question, and what the interviewer is looking for.

Once you understand what they are looking for, which usually is just a handful of skills and character traits, **many questions are simply different tests for that same trait**, and you can answer all of them similarly.

I agree with him.

So thumbs up.

Check the TPM best resources or dig deeper on acing interviews:

- **How to interview to get hired**

> Job Interview Power Dynamics: The Advanced Playbook for Gaining Leverage & Salary

How to Show Respect, Maintain Rapport, & Influence People

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Showing respect is more than politeness. It's one of the fastest ways to *get* respect, build strong relationships, and increase your social effectiveness.

At The Power Moves, we study respect through the lens of interpersonal power dynamics. From that work, we codified a practical framework we call power protecting™.
In plain terms, power protecting is about **showing respect in ways that preserve other people's sense of power, dignity, and status**—so they feel safe, respected, and more willing to cooperate, connect, or be influenced.

In this article, you'll learn **clear, practical ways to show respect**—without being weak or submissive—while strengthening relationships and increasing your influence with high-value people.

Respecting others means keeping them empowered, signaling you're a real friend, ally, or partner

Contents

- Intro: Give & Get Respect
- How to Show Respect
  - 1. Avoid Over-Dominance
  - 2. Persuade With Strategic Respect
  - 3. Persuade By Respecting Their Intelligence (No "Teacher's Frames")
  - 4. Task & Request With A Minimum Baseline Respect
  - 5. Reject Others Tactfully
  - 6. Justify It: Provide A Reason For Your Requests Or Exceptions
  - 7. Assume Good Intentions
  - 8. Save Their Face
  - 9. Jump Through The Issue: High-Power Power protecting

Intro: Give & Get Respect

In our framework, power protecting™ means:

> Approaches, strategies, and techniques that protect other people's power, status, dignity, reputation, and face—so interactions stay respectful, cooperative, and productive.

While we codified and systematized power protecting, the behavior itself is deeply human and widely observable in effective social interactions:

- **Make and keep friends and allies**: because people prefer those who show respect. It also makes fewer enemies
- **Ingratiate superiors**: leaders and bosses dislike subordinates who disempower them, and promote those who empower them (Gordon, 1996)
- **Better leadership with intrinsic motivation**, especially from the top performers who can get any job

Finally, power protecting is also a cornerstone of an honorable approach to life:

Give respect to demand respect

How to Show Respect

A heartfelt apology after you disempowered others is a foundational aspect of showing respect. Notice both the body language and the facial expression

There are a million ways to show respect and to power protect.

Fortunately, we don't need to list them *all*.
And the high-level guidance is both simple and effective:

Treat others as you want to be treated.

Or:

1. Don't be a jerk
2. Offer minimum baseline of respect and consideration

The only drawback with this high-level guidance is that it requires knowing what's the optimum balance between jerk behavior and overly deferential behavior -ie, it requires some power awareness-.

So let's go more in detail:

1. Avoid Over-Dominance

For example:

- **Over physical dominance**: touching too much, backslapping, barging your way through, etc.
- **Over-teasing**
- **Demeaning "jokes" & all various covert power moves**
- **Rudeness/disrespect**

⍰Example: Macron Disrespects Trump, Starts A War

Macron wanted to dominate Trump.

But when you disrespect others, guess what happens?

You go into ‘negative social capital’. They resent you, and want revenge to get even.

Trump took revenge on Macron on two separate occasions:

Also see ‘how to disrespect someone‘.

1.2. Avoid Gratuitous Power Moves

Principle:

A**ny gratuitous power move on friends or allies is a major red flag** of a lose-win character.

Also avoid when first meeting someone, and in non-competitive contexts.

Just two examples of gratuitous power moves:

- **Showing up late**
- **Making them come to you** when you could meet halfway
- **Power Hoarding**
  - Credit withholding: not giving proper credit
  - Apologies withholding: not apologizing when an apology is called for

And avoid manipulation as well:

- **Social exchange manipulations** such as saying “I did just for you” just to increase other people’s debt of gratitude

2. Persuade With Strategic Respect

General rule:

⚖ **The quicker and more abrupt the change of mind, the greater the disempowerment**

Influence is about power.
And accepting influence means accepting someone else superiority -be it superior intelligence, expertise, problem-solving skills, or whatever-.

The influenced loses power against you -and loses social status, if it was public-.

Generally speaking, the higher status they are compared to you, the more they resist your influence.

So respectful communication is crucial to persuade higher-status individuals, like your boss.

Research shows that to persuade upwards:

- **Save face** (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2013)
- **Be polite** (Golish, 2009)
- **Use positive framing** (Levine & Boster, 2001)

⍰ Use Positive ‘Good to Great’ Frames

For example:

> **Empowering**:
> Our employees are generally happy, so we’re good. <— ⍰⍰ You’re doing a good job
>
> I looked at competitors and survey data <— ⍰⍰ I’m no lone genius, I have data

> and these proposals may <— ⍰⍰ I'm no ultimate teacher
>
> further improve loyalty. <— Uplifting "good to great" frame, rather than "sh*t to great".
> (…)
> If it sounds potentially interesting, <— ⍰⍰ You're the decision-maker
> I'm happy to discuss implementation and take the lead

3. Persuade By Respecting Their Intelligence (No "Teacher's Frames")

Principle:

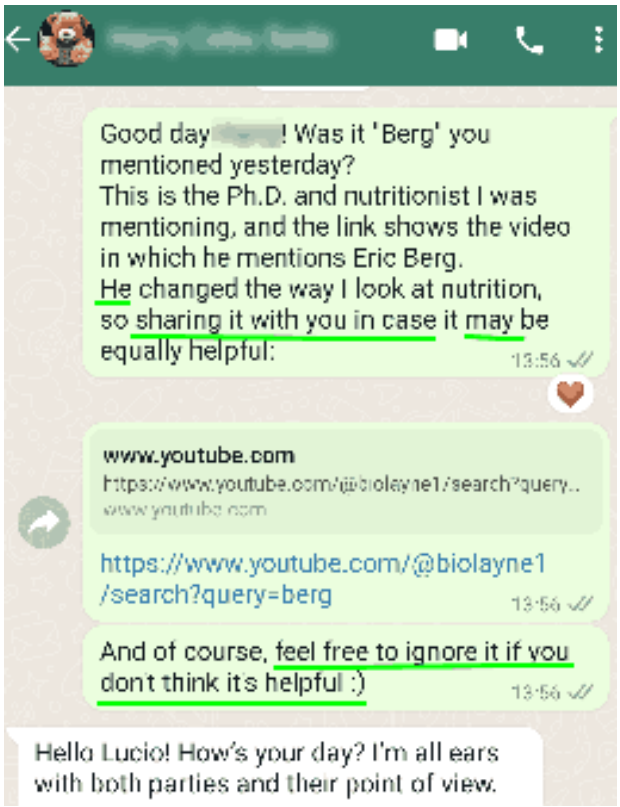
⚖ **The more you act like a teacher, the more others lose power as pupils**

Giving advice also disempowers others.

Reviewing advise response theory and accompanying research the *Routledge Handbook on Persuasion* says that politeness is crucial to giving advice.

Respectful advice is more persuasive (MacGeorge et al., 2013). Better yet, make others *want* to ask your opinion, because solicited advice is viewed as more useful than unsolicited advice (Paik, 2020).

⍰ Instead of "This Is The Truth", Say "It Was Helpful To Me"



> **Me**: (shares a video lambasting the nutritionist he followed) He changed the way I look at nutrition, so sharing it with you in case it may be equally helpful

Note:

- "***He* changed"**: It's not me teaching, but an expert third party
- **"It was *helpful* to me"** is a caring, "want to give you value" frame

- **"Sharing with you *in case it may*"** he's the final judge, and I'm cool with his decision
- **"Feel free to ignore"** grants him the freedom to not even watch the video

The disempowering approach would be "The guy you're following is crap, listen to me that I know better".

Albeit there are exceptional situations for anything, that's a bad approach for friends, equals, and other high-power men.

Learn more in:

- Growth mindset power dynamics
- **Teacher and pupil frames**

> Teacher-Pupil Frames: Why (Some) Teachers Are Takers

4. Task & Request With A Minimum Baseline Respect

Tasks and requests are all about power.

Principle:

⚖ **Tasking assumes higher power, and the more rude the tasking, the bigger the disempowerment**

So overly direct and dominant requests are disrespectful and can create resentment unless you power-protect the receiver.

Just imagine someone tells you:

> **Colleague**: Hey! <— Doesn't even dignify with your name
>
> I need the PBS report <— No how are you or social balm
>
> send it to me now please <— No asking if you can, no telling you he will "owe you one", and no justification for high-priority execution

How would you feel?

Most people with any social awareness -or with a spine, for that matter-, would think "*Who the f*ck does he think he is to come at me like that*"?.

Some common formats from least to most power-protecting include:

- *Can you please…*
- *Could you… … Please?*
- *Do you mind…*
- *Do you think you can…*
- *Would it be possible…*
- *Would it bother you to…*

And pro tip from politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987):

- *"You're so good at this, could you help with…"* <— Requests while building them up

But most of all:

⍰⍰ **Calibrate to your status**: be more respectful when you're lower power to increase your persuasiveness (Golish & Olson, 2000)

Avoid *over*-protection for tasks: it's low power

As for everything: balance and calibration.

Exaggerated respect can feel like weakness, and undermine leadership.
If you're higher rank or if it's urgent, be more direct.

Some examples of over-doing it:

- *"It would be really awesome if you could"* <— feels manipulative guilt-tripping
- *"If you could do X, it would make me so happy"* <— weak judge-power move

4.2. Add Diminitutives to Increase Compliance

For example:

- **Negotiation (nibbling)**: *We're getting there, just a small thing: if you can add X, we got a deal*
- **Everyday Life**: *Hey, hi, Can you please move a bit so that we can both fit*

Time constraints are also persuasion power moves.

For example:

Example from the author in PU

For the alumni, pay attention to *how* I say it.

5. Reject Others Tactfully

Requests are all about social exchanges and power.

Principle:

⚖ The more curt the rejection, the bigger the disempowerment

When people feel their request was 'fair' a denial makes them feel diminished and slighted. *Especially* in romantic and friendship contexts.
Hence, to maintain social capital and good relationships you must reject with tact.

We have several articles on strategic rejections:

- How to say no
- How to say no to a date
- How to reject his sexual advances and still get a relationship

This also applies to *favors*.
As Blau notes in his seminal *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, the initial give', which may be an offer or the first step towards friendships, can turn into cordiality or hostility because the offer cannot be refused without being insulting.

P.S.:
"Tactfully" is not the same as "nicely".
You can be strong and firm, but still respectful.

6. Justify It: Provide A Reason For Your Requests Or Exceptions

From a famous example in psychology research:

> **Experimenter**: *Excuse me, I have five pages, may I use the machine because I have to make some copies*

It worked 93% of the time despite the uncompelling reason.
Almost as effective as the legitimate "because I'm in a rush" -which had 94% compliance rate-.

Cialdini attributed the persuasive power to the trigger word "because".

In truth, that worked because "because" is the keyword bridge to power protecting.
Indeed the study also says that "the female experimenter had a higher rate of compliance than the male experimenter".
And that's because letting a woman go first is associated with "gallantry" (empowering), rather than "submissiveness" (disempowering).

Providing a reason works because:

1. **You expend effort**, intrinsically power-protecting because higher effort is lower dominance
2. **You show consideration** for others by providing a rationale for your task or request
3. Bonus only, you provide an actual and logical reason

Providing a rationale works particularly well with demanding tasks or exception-seeking because people feel 'less suckers' for accepting your large demand.

Use The 'But It's Up To You' Format When You Have Little Power
Adding an out like "but you are free to refuse" significantly boosts persuasion.
In one study, this simple line increased donations from 10% to 47.5%, and doubled the average amount.

7. Assume Good Intentions

Some ways of assuming good intentions is to assume:

- **Mistake**, rather than a deliberate power move

- **Misunderstanding**, rather than one party fully to blame
- "***You didn't mean it that bad way***" type of justification

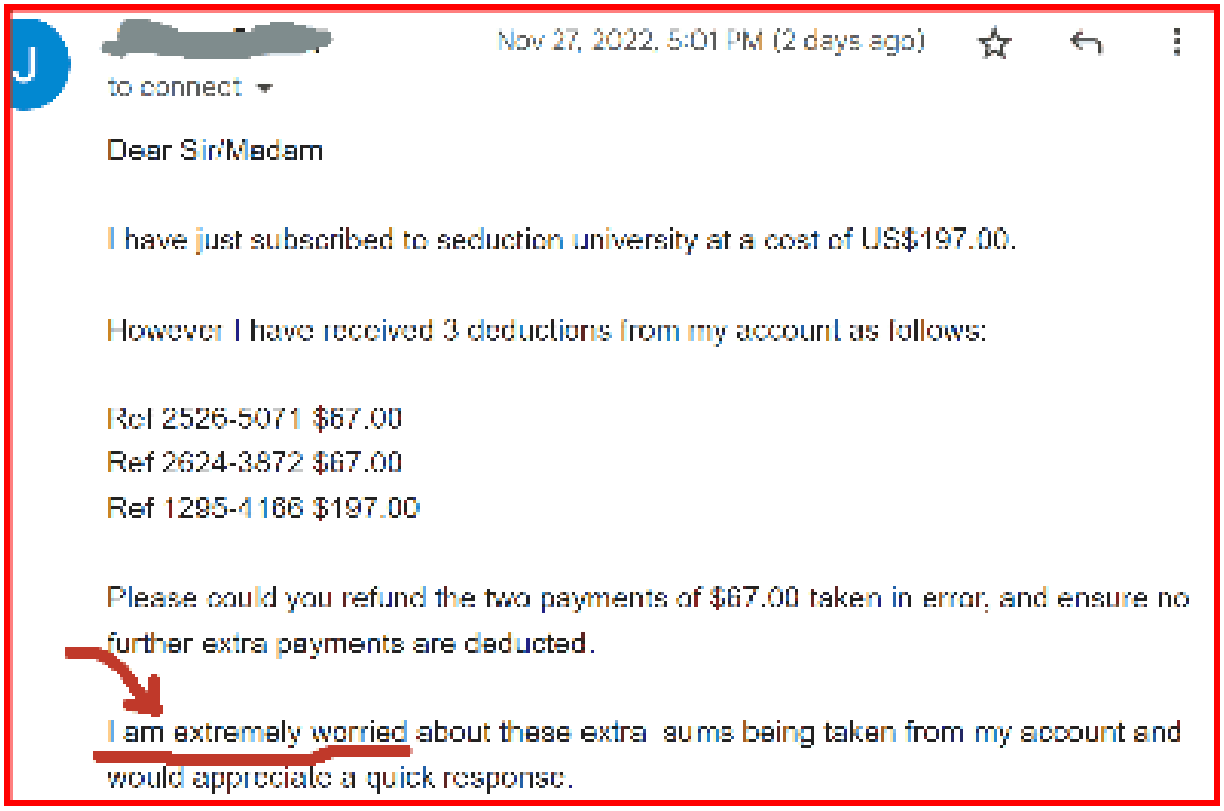
Assuming good intentions also prevents defensiveness and escalations and helps people to own up and apologize, further mending the relationship.

Pretend it's a mistake if convenient but take note
Granting the benefit of the doubt doesn't mean you necessarily believe in people's good faith. Red flags are significant even when "by mistake".

Reverse of the Law: Disempowering Assumption

Whether the negative assumptions are direct or sub-communicated, they sub-communicate you think lowly of their character.

Take this example of a customer who mistakenly purchased Seduction University more than once:


J [redacted] Nov 27, 2022, 5:01 PM (2 days ago)
to connect

Dear Sir/Madam

I have just subscribed to seduction university at a cost of US$197.00.

However I have received 3 deductions from my account as follows:

Ref 2526-5071 $67.00
Ref 2624-3872 $67.00
Ref 1295-4166 $197.00

Please could you refund the two payments of $67.00 taken in error, and ensure no further extra payments are deducted.

I am extremely worried about these extra sums being taken from my account and would appreciate a quick response.

> **Customer**: I am extremely worried about these extra sums being taken from my account

Think about the sub-communicates.
If he's *extremely* worried, it sub-communicates that the business is untrustworthy. And the wording of "extra sums being taken" sub-communicates that it was the business's fault, rather than *his* mistake.
(Also, generally avoid that bitch talk).

8. Save Their Face

Saving face was popularized by Andrew Carnegie as a social skill technique.

It's an important subset of power-protecting, and also part of respecting others.

To save face means to "help avoid embarrassment" and "avoid making people feel bad".

Relieve Them From Blame & Guilt

- **Normalize it**: say that whatever “bad thing” happened, it happens frequently, or happens to many people
- **Relate**: for example, share when something similar happened to you
- **Jump through it**: if someone shares a weakness or failure, quickly say “sorry to hear”, and then move on
- **Swap “you” for impersonal pronouns** such as “people”, “when *one* does… ” or “it can happen that”
- **Blame-shift** to external circumstances, third parties, or simply “life” and “questions of odds”

And finally, albeit you want to be careful with this:

- ⚠ **Take (part of) the blame**. But if you’re *not* to blame, only do with honorable men or some may take advantage of it
  Eg.:
- *“Maybe I didn’t get something, but…”*
- *“Maybe it’s me, but…”*
- *“I’m new so still learning the ropes… “*

If the blame is indeed yours, of course, own it.

Sen an example from the forum while I was preparing this article:

> **Me**: (replies in another thread, sub-communicating the quoted post was off-topic, but takes the blame for the off-topic) my bad for starting the off-topic there

9. Jump *Through* The Issue: High-Power Power protecting

This is where advanced strategizing shines through.

When you jump *through* the issue you are both high-power, goal-oriented AND power-protecting.

It works great because **jumping through the issue and into the solution automatically power-protects by shifting the focus *away* from the mistake** (that's "thread-minimizing" in frame control terms).
All the while, you're being goal-oriented, high-power, and leader-like.

For example, imagine you're a lawyer and catch a mistake by the notary that would significantly increase your client's costs.
This is how you jump through the issue:

> **Her**: (forgets a loophole to save taxes, a major mistake)
> **You**: Hi, thank you for the quote and fast turnaround, I appreciate that. I think we can apply the XWZ ruling to it. Can we do that please, I want to help my client lower the taxes

You don't even *mention* the mistake and focus on how to move forward.

The power protection is also sub-communicated in the:

- **Attitude**: goal-driven, concerned about bottom-line results
- **Matter-of fact communication**: it is what it is, neutrally, without making a fuss about anything
- **Customer-centric approach shifts the focus from mistake, to end goal**: the "*that'll help my client lower the taxes*". You're not doing this out of concern for "mistakes", but *for your customer*
- **Brevity / voice**: if in text, short and to the point. If on a call, with a flat tonality

And:

- **Power protection elements**:
  - Warmth: "Thank you for", and "appreciate"
  - Standard power protection: The "I think" and "that'll help my customer" are the power-protection bits here

Higher power, faster, more direct, more professional… And even more respectful.

To balance giving respect with *getting* respect, see **Power University**

The Total Money Makeover: Essential for Debtors, Limiting for Power Players

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The Total Money Makeover is a personal finance book in which author Davey Ramsey presents his program for freeing yourself from debt and money worries by changing your mindsets and behaviors. Ramsey recommends paying your debts, avoiding new debt, paying with cash only, saving for emergencies, and investing.

TPM Note: This is a beginner-level book.
Ambitious men seeking leverage may prefer more advanced strategies. *Money Master the Game* is a step up in investment, and *The Millionaire Fastlane* provides a better overview for ambitious and smart men.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - There Is No Financial Security Today
  - You Must Limit Your Debt
  - Debt-Free 7 Steps Plan
  - Finally: Have Fun
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Overview

- Pay all your debts
- Avoid taking up new debt
- Save up & invest

Notes

About the Author:
Dave Ramsey is an American radio show host and a personal finance advisor. He wants to help people never to struggle again to make ends meet. And he does a good job of sharing the very basics of personal finance.

“The Total Money Makeover” has plenty of examples, but I will share here the main practical takeaways.

There Is No Financial Security Today

Dave Ramsey says that most of us have a few financial worries but, overall, feel rather secure.

But that security is illusory, he says.

For example:

Would you still be financially secure if you lost your job?

Probably that just one little thing would change everything, right?

Which, Ramsey says, it means you're one little step away from financial disaster.

The Solution: Decide to Change Now

What's the solution, then?

It's to change right now.
And to put yourself on course to real financial security.

You Must Limit Your Debt

Dave Ramsey doesn't like debt.

And that may be a euphemism.

He says that debt has become such a part of our culture that simply seems normal to be in debt.

The author is especially caustic towards credit card debt, which gives us the illusion of wealth but only creates future problems.

Here is Dave Ramsey's plan to get out of debt and into financial safety:

Debt-Free 7 Steps Plan

This is what Ramsey proposes as his 7 steps plan for financial freedom:

#1. Save 1k For Your Emergency Fund

Stop thinking of emergencies as rare events.

Emergencies are part of life, and there's a 78% chance we will all experience major negative life events.

The first step then is to set aside $1.000 for emergency situations.
This first 1k is for emergencies only and you cannot touch it.

#2. Pay Off All Debt With Debt Snowball

List all your debt from smallest to biggest.

And start paying off the smaller ones. As you successfully erase debt, it will inspire you to tackle the bigger ones.

#3. Grow Your Emergency Fund To Cover Your Life Expenses For 3 to 6 Months

The third step is to grow your emergency fund to cover all your living expenses for a period of at least 3 to 6 months.

This way, you can survive a job lay off until you find something new.

#4. Invest 15% of Your Income

Ramsey says that for a comfortable retirement, you need to invest 15% of your income.

The author recommends mutual funds.

My Note:
Many other wealth books don't recommend mutual funds for the high fees. Also check out: MONEY: master the game

#5. Save For Your Children's College To Help Them Avoid Debt

If you have children, Ramsey recommends you send them to school debt free.

How to do it?

Well, plenty of ways:

- With a scholarship
- Saving up with an Education Savings Account which is tax-free
- Choose cheaper universities
- Avoid college altogether

While the last one seems like a cop-out, the author cites Emotional Intelligence to say that only 15% of success is because of training and education.

Thus, he argues, going into debt for college might not be worth it.

#6. Pay Off Your Biggest Debt (Mortgage)

The biggest debt is often the mortgage, and that's what you should aim to pay off ASAP.

It starts from the moment you take the mortgage: make it as short as possible.

The author says that borrowing against your home to take advantage of lower interest rates is a terrible idea.

#7. Build Wealth & Give

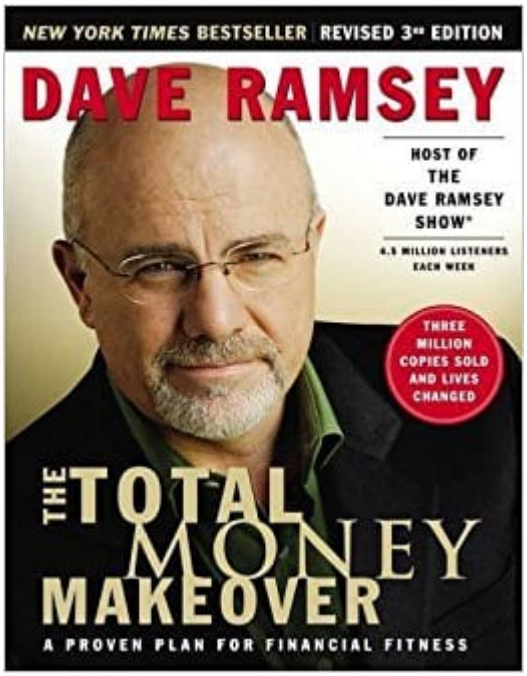
Now you can start focusing on building wealth, and enjoy the pleasure of giving and helping others.

Finally: Have Fun

The Total Money Makeover doesn't want you to live like Scrooge McDuck but to enjoy life as well.

As long as you can spend without going into debt and can afford… Do enjoy your disposable income.

And to maximize your disposable income the author recommends you take advice from the best CPAs, tax advisers and lawyers, which is the same suggestion Kyosaky shares in his popular *Rich Dad Poor Dad*.



Real-Life Applications

- **Write Down All Your Expenses**

This little exercise can be very helpful for many personalities that tend to spend easily and sign up for random services.
It can provide a good overview to quickly reduce their expenses.

- **Stick to Your Budget** (if you end up at the of the month with little money)

Set aside money in advance for your expenditure and stick to it to avoid "accidental over-spending".
Again, it's unnecessary for people living an abundant life and/or naturally careful around money. But for "carefree spenders" it's very useful.

CONS

- **No Debt Agenda (Pushed With Untrue, Unfounded, and Nonsense Examples)**

The author says we shouldn't impinge on debt.
And that's true IF debt is used to finance poor choices that come at a heavy future cost.

But it's not true if debt is taken up to, say, increase personal skills or fund an income-generating project.

To lend credibility to his "no-debt agenda" he says that most wealthy people stay away from debt and some of the best companies are completely debt-free.

Well "most" and "some" mean completely nothing.
Some of the best companies take up debt, too. And some wealthy individuals used debt as leverage to get even richer.
Or they take up debt simply because it can make financial sense.

Ramsey falls for induction reasoning fallacy here -and driven by his own personal bias-.

- **It's Quite Basic** (just like most other personal finance books)

Most personal finance books are simple and quite basic.

Whether you get *The Richest Man in Babylon*, *I Will Teach You How To Be Rich*, or *The Total Money Makeover*, the advice is the same, and it's simple and basic.

- **Investing In Mutual Funds May Be Poor Advice**

I am not a big believer in managed mutual funds, and many other financial advisors feel the same.
It's not much personal opinion either, it's just that managed funds tend to have higher fees, so you're better off with lower-fees ETFs.

PROS

- **Touches Upon Mindsets & Habits**

Ramsey emphasizes change based on mindsets and habits above knowledge.
And I liked the approach to making the changes. Instead of changing everything at once, for example, you should tackle things one by one to concentrate your efforts and start getting some early wins.

- **Covers all the basics**

While we mention "basic" as a con, *The Total Money Makeover* is great for all of those who aren't yet aware of

these basics -and who can gain by following the suggestions-.

- **Great Mindsets Around Money and "Good Life"**

"The Total Money Makeover" has a positive mindset that reminded me a bit of the Ant and the Grasshopper fable. Basically, it's about avoiding flashy expenses and tackling your future problems today. So that you can enjoy a better life later on.

Review

The Total Money Makeover is a great resource for beginners who are in debt and have no clue about money management.

Let's say this is your first step into money management.
It's a first step that is more aimed at "eliminating the negatives" and "getting you out of the hole".
For that though, ***The Total Money Makeover*** **may be one of the best first steps for beginners** because Dave Ramsey is an honest and straight-talking guy.

However, once you get the basics, if you want to take it to the next level, you absolutely need to switch to some other resources and teachers.
Also because, after the basics, the advice on "avoiding debt at all costs" can actually harm a more advanced life strategist.

Read more book reviews

The Book of Joy: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The Book Of Joy shares some of the conversations and insights on joy and suffering as emerged from a 7-day meeting between the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, two of the world's most influential spiritual leaders.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Suffering Is Part of Life
  - Your Mental State Determines What You Do With Suffering
  - Practice Patience When You Can't Act
  - Sadness Can Motivate Us
  - Avoid Loneliness With Trust, Connection, And An Open Heart
  - Accept Death to Experience Joy
  - The Eight Pillars of Joy
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Suffering is inevitable and that's OK
- We can always choose what things mean to us and how we react to our circumstances
- There are many ways in which we can help cultivate joy in our lives

Full Summary

About the Authors:

Lhamo Thondup is the 14th and current Dalai Lama. Dalai Lamas are Tibetan Buddhist monks and are considered among the most important and prominent leaders of the Buddhist religion.

Desmond Tutu is a South African Anglican cleric, formerly Archbishop of Cape Town. He is also known for his work as an anti-apartheid and human rights activist.

Suffering Is Part of Life

Suffering is an integral part of life.

And sometimes that suffering is inherently connected to joy.
Think of birth-giving. Or even think of Nelson Mandela who tempered his spirit in his long years in prison.

Your Mental State Determines What You Do With Suffering

How you deal with suffering, fear, and frustration depends heavily on your state of mind.

And **you can train your state of mind to better respond to life's most difficult circumstances**.

If your mental state is weak, suffering will be drawn out for much longer.

But if you enjoy a healthy mental state, you will be much better poised to recover sooner.

And in some situations, you can find joy in spite of the issues that you are facing.

Frustration and fear particularly are not reality but facets of the mind. And you don't have to let them control your life.

Practice Patience When You Can't Act

Some situations you can resolve with action.

But there are some situations you have little control over.

A canceled flight, or a traffic jam can be very frustrating because they seem to leave you with little option but raging.

However, you can control reself to remain calm.

And better yet, those are perfect situations to meditate, pray, enjoy time alone or practice a virtue like patience.

Sadness Can Motivate Us

The authors say that sadness is not necessarily "bad".

Saddness can help people connect better.
Sad people are more willing to share, for example.

And sadness can be turned into motivation for change, to plan your life, make new goals, and start achieving new and ambitious dreams.

Avoid Loneliness With Trust, Connection, And An Open Heart

Focusing too heavily on ourselves leads to poor health.

Indeed people who used most often pronouns such as "I", "me" and "mine" were much more likely to be victims of heart attacks.

The authors say that the antidote to loneliness is to trust others and open yourself up.

Accept Death to Experience Joy

The authors say that the acceptance of death is central to experiencing joy.

Also read:

- **How to leverage death for a full live**

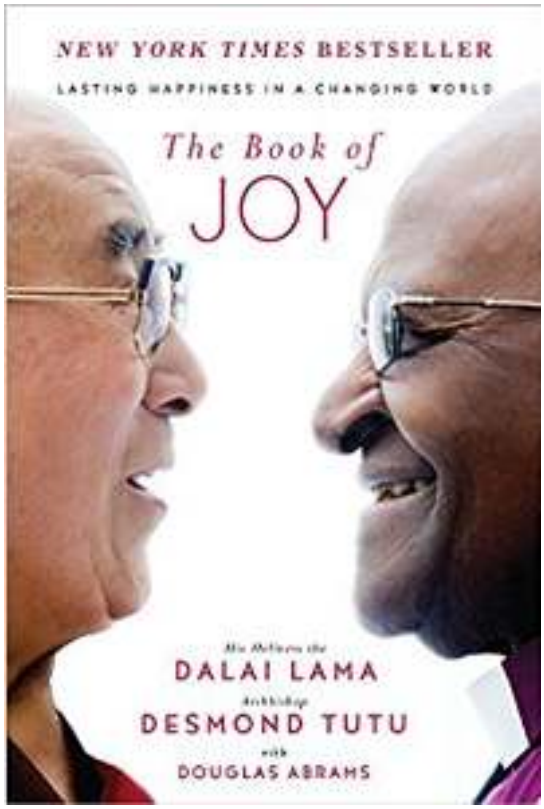
> The Power of Accepting & Leveraging Death to Live Fully

The Eight Pillars of Joy

The authors list eight pillars to experience joy:

1. **Perspective**: realize that no moment will last forever and learn to savor the now
2. **Humility**: if you feel you're better than others you can't experience joy
3. **Humor**: being able to smile in difficult times can provide you with that break that you need to change direction
4. **Acceptance**: accept life has difficult moments

5. **Forgiveness**: you need to be able to forgive to move on and enjoy life
6. **Gratitude**: you will see gratitude in almost all work on happiness and mental healthy
7. **Compassionate concern**: giving and helping others makes us joyful



CONS

Don’t Like the Idea of Being Grateful for What Others Don’t Have

I was surprised to read that.

It seems neither a great insight, nor a very charitable thought.

To begin with, it feels like using others as a “social peg” to step on them.
For example, when someone tells me I should be grateful for running water because not everyone has it… I don’t feel too good about it.
So what, I should feel good *thanks to other people’s misfortune?*

I know the proponents of this approach don’t necessarily mean it that way, but that’s how it feels like to me.

Also, it’s not a universal mindset.

What if you’re dirt poor, or if you’re dead last in something?
Then you don’t have anyone to compare yourself favorably against.
Hence, this is not an antifragile mindset.

PROS

Powerful Message of Love and Acceptance

The deep message of love that emanates from this encounter is a beacon of hope and acceptance to the world.

Review

The Book of Joy contains some interesting reflections and some very good mindsets on happiness against life's misfortune.

But I must be frank: *The Book of Joy* hasn't resonated with me as deeply as I hoped.

If you consider it a Positive Psychology text, then in all honesty there is better.

If you're the type of person who's looking for research, facts, and applicable wisdom, you can also find better. That's not to say there is none in this book, there are, but not as much as in some other available books on happiness.

However, The Book of Joy isn't bad.

Maybe most of all and even more than the content, we can appreciate the message of the meeting in itself, and even more than the message coming *out* of this meeting.

A Buddhist leader meets a Christian leader. And they have a wonderful time together discussing how to empower people.

Now that's a good message.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

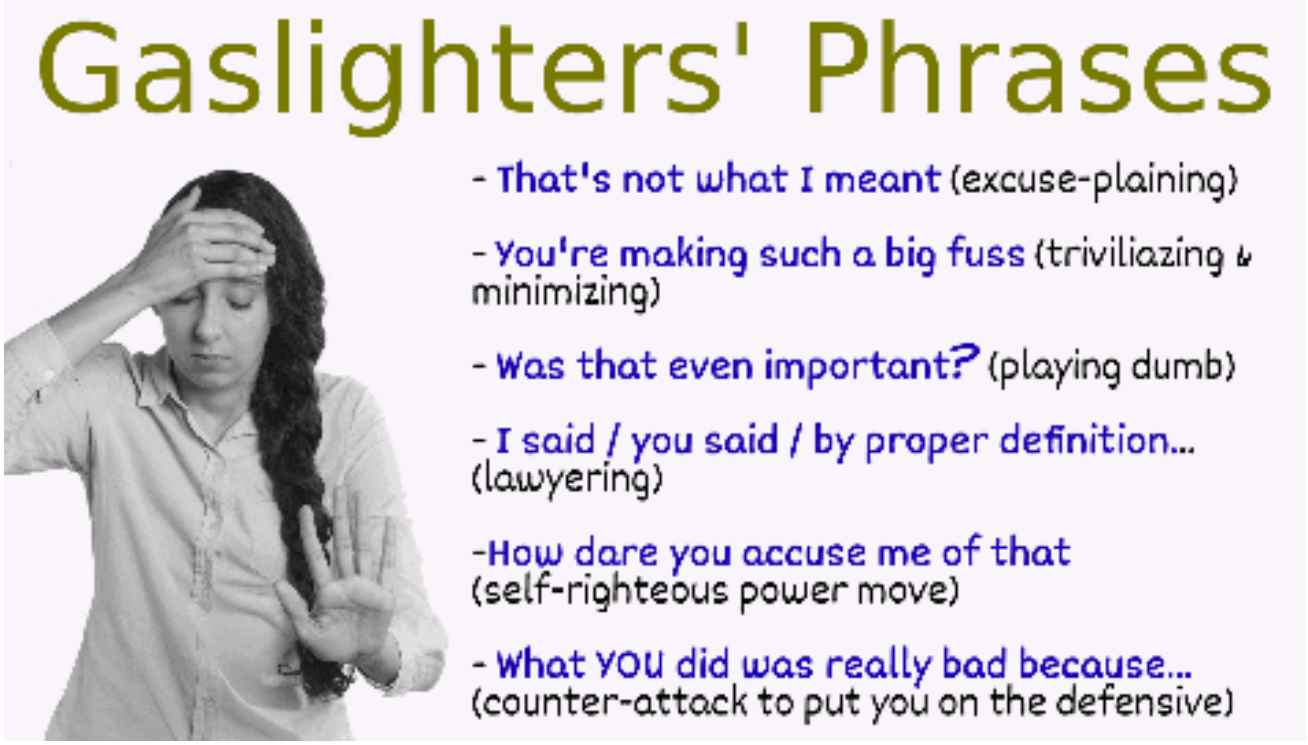
Gaslighting & Crazymaking: How Manipulators Twist Your Reality

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Gaslighting isn't just lying—it's **psychological warfare**.

In this guide we reveal how gaslighters and **"crazy-makers"** covertly twist your reality, make you doubt yourself, and keep you under their control.

As the **#1 site on power dynamics**, we'll break down 13 covert tactics of gaslighting and crazymaking, explain the psychology behind them, and show you how to **recognize (and stop) gaslighters before they harm you.**



Contents

- What's Gaslighting
  - Misunderstanding Around Gaslighting
- Gaslighter Psychology
  - Narcissistic Gaslighting: Fragile Egos
  - Power Is The Gaslighter's Only Goal
- Engaging With A Gaslighter
  - Throw out your "communication skills" manuals
  - Signs of Gaslighting
- Crazy-making vs. Gaslighting
  - Components of Crazymaking
  - Crazymaking Process & Gaslighting Stages
  - Crazymaking signs
- Gaslight FAQs
  - 1. Is there a strategic use for gaslighting?
  - 2. Can gaslighters improve?
  - 3. Can I improve my own gaslighting?

- 4. Is gaslighting always conscious and premeditated?
- 5. Can I win against a gaslighter?

What's Gaslighting

We define gaslighting as:

> Gaslighting refers to psychological manipulation that leads the victim to lose sight of what's true, relevant, fair, or in his best interest.

From our unique perspective, **gaslighting is the ultimate frame control battle** to frame what's true and not true. The psychopathic gaslighter's goal is to constantly frame reality to their advantage, while the narcissistic gaslighter also adds their needs for self-enhancement.
The crazymaker's goal instead is to frame reality as outside of your grasp.

Gaslighting is associated with interpersonal power dynamics, emotional manipulation, control, and toxic relationships.
It's mostly about verbal manipulation, communication patterns, and frame control techniques.

At the most extreme level, gaslighting's confusion and reality distortion go beyond a specific topic or issue and engulf the victim's whole sense of reality (crazy-making).

Misunderstanding Around Gaslighting

Gaslighting has become a buzzword.

And, like many buzzwords, it's often misused.
Specifically, it's often misused as synonymous with "manipulation".

But although gaslighting includes many forms of manipulations, it's a specific and discrete pattern of behavior with specific goals and effects.

Gaslighter Psychology

Gaslighting's ultimate goal is power.

The gaslighter is a power-hungry individual and, often, is high dark-triad traits.

Power is most often in the form of control, "winning", being "right", or refusing to concede.

Indeed, one of the main features of the gaslighter's personality and psychology is that the gaslighter prioritizes power over anything else.

In any conversation, that means **the gaslighter chooses power and "victory" over truth, trust, reputation, and, of course, fairness**.

Some gaslighters, lost in their inability to concede, may destroy their own reputation and closest relationships just so they can "win".

As a natural consequence, more often than not, **the gaslighter is a taker**.
Surely a taker from a social power point of view but, often, also in different forms -takes your time, emotional investment, mental well-being and, possibly, money-.

The gaslighter personality overlaps with other takers and win-lose personalities such as assholes, manipulators, power-hungry, and sociopaths.

Narcissistic Gaslighting: Fragile Egos

Many gaslighters have narcissistic traits, including big but *fragile* egos, and an endless need for self-enhancement.

Psychologist Roy Baumeister explains that people with big egos but fragile self-esteem attack out of self-defense to protect their own egos (Baumeister, 1997).
And although the need for self-defense is not an excuse, it explains why even some non-sociopaths may gaslight.
And it's because **gaslighters with a fragile ego take things very personally and can't own their sh*tty behavior without feeling like *they* must be sh*t**.

That means that **giving feedback to a gaslighter is a useless and potentially self-defeating effort** because they may resent you and/or come to see you as an enemy.
The gaslighter is utterly unable to take any constructive criticism, no matter how nicely you frame it.

Power Is The Gaslighter's Only Goal

All the gaslighter seeks to do is to:

1. **Avoid ownership of his sh*tty behavior**, including lies, manipulations, or his "less than ideal" intent
2. **Avoid apologizing** ("apologies withholding").
3. **Maintain power for not doing the 2 steps above**.
4. **Avoid making amends** which for the power-hungry feels like a humiliating thread expansion on their defeat
5. **Maintain the lose-win and his shitty behavior** rather than change for the better

The craziest thing for people who are not well-versed with the gaslighter thwarted psychology is that this "power hoarding" game plan is "always on", and not reserved for the "big stuff".
The gaslighter gaslights for the smallest and most trivial stuff.

For us though it's great news!
It's great news because **the inveterate gaslighter will give you plenty of opportunities to spot early red flags** over the small stuff.

The only caveats are: you must be power-aware enough, and know what to look for.

Engaging With A Gaslighter

Gaslighters communicate differently than most normal people because their psychology and goals are different.
Arguing with a gaslighter is a maddening experience.

Power-aware people aren't going to go crazy for a gaslighting turkey.
But it can still make you emotional, angry, and, potentially, overreacting.

We've seen it in our forums more than once.

The core of the issue is that **you and the gaslighter have very different goals for an argument**.

You may want to clarify, understand, patch things up, and improve.
But the gaslighter is out for power and winning.

Throw out your "communication skills" manuals

Most popular communication skills resources are useless with gaslighters.

Indeed, **standard communication skills are *harmful* with a gaslighter** because they're based on *sensible* person standards.

You know, people who generally prefer doing "the right thing" -including what's also good for *them*-.
But the gaslighter is *not* a sensible person.

Standard social and communication skills advice puts you at a marked disadvantage with gaslighters. And, in general, with anyone who's not straight and out for win-win.

Great book, but that's where it belongs when it comes to gaslighters, manipulators, and Machiavellians

Signs of Gaslighting

Signs of gaslighting include:

- **Lies**, especially when it comes to anything that might incriminate or disempower them
- **Spinning and reframing**. The smarter gaslighter may not outright lie. But they always spin and reframe things to maintain power, control, and put you on the back foot
- **Muddling the water**: the gaslighter does not want things to be clear because that would highlight what a nasty person he is
- **Blame shifting**. Especially shifting blame on you
- **Incapability of admitting guilt**. A core red flag of power-hungry, high-dark triad personalities
- **Covert power moves**. if you find yourself getting angry with someone over and over, but not with other people, that's another red flag of gaslighting
- **Aggression**. Especially when they're being shown as the nasty and lying poor characters they are
- **Word salads**. Same as above

Best of all, see this article for the examples:

- **Gaslighting examples and signs**

> Galisghting: 17 Signs You're Being Manipulated

Crazy-making vs. Gaslighting

In simple words, crazymaking is the most extreme form of gaslighting.

We can indeed recognize two levels of gaslighting:

- **Lower-danger gaslighting (turkey behavior)**: not owning poor behavior, not apologizing, and confusing the victim to walk away scot-free and without re-empowering them
- **Higher danger gaslighting (abusive behavior)**: also referred to as "crazymaking", it's associated with longer-term win-lose exchanges or toxic relationships and can make the victim go crazy and lose the sense of reality

Components of Crazymaking

While gaslighting does not entail a personality disorder, most crazy-makers are high in antisocial and psychopathic traits

- **More malicious and/or skilled gaslighters**, dark triad individuals with little or no empathy and conscience. Some crazymakers are naturally born dark psychologists.
- **Closer relationships**: crazymaking requires more interpersonal leverage, and that most often comes with closer relationships such as spouses, relatives, close friends, flatmates, judge roles, bosses, etc.
  - Emotionally, as in intimate relationships or close relatives
  - Physically, as in "same cubicle coworker", for example
  - Repeat encounters
- **Lower self-esteem victims**
- **Power unaware and unskilled victims** in terms of (not) recognizing and handling gaslighting

Generally speaking, the empowered people we breed here at TPM wouldn't let a gaslighter control them, their life, or their emotional well-being.

Crazymaking Process & Gaslighting Stages

The victim starts with a functioning mind and a healthy approach to the world.

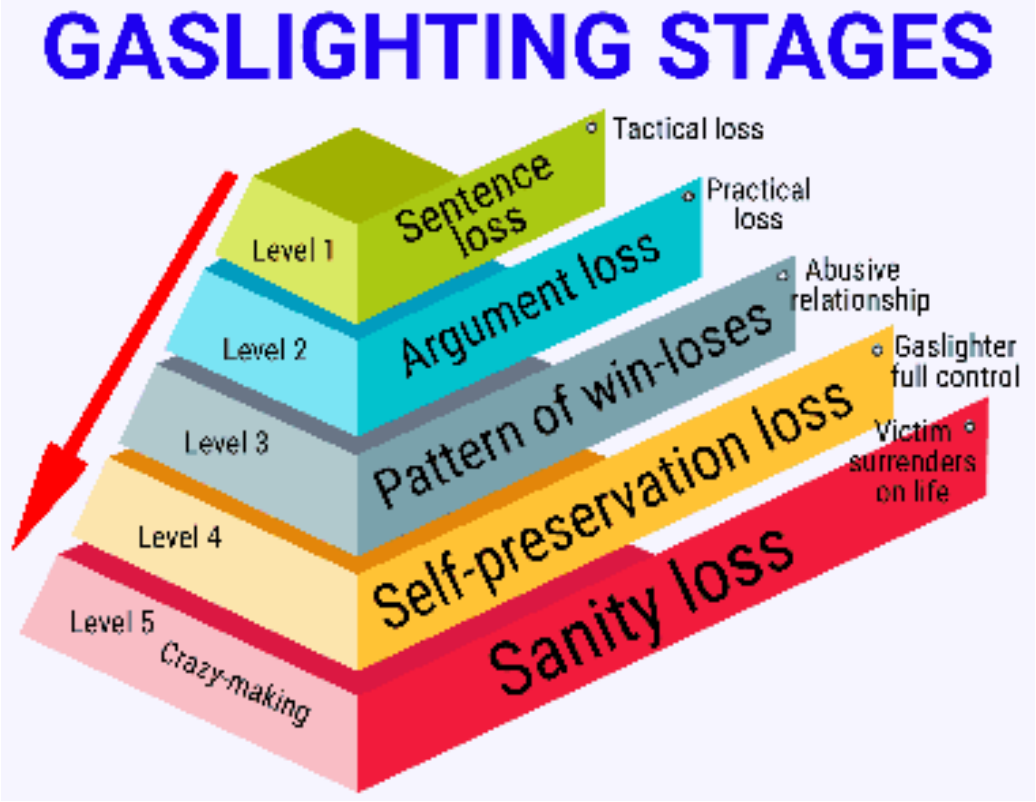
This healthy approach is based on foundational self-preservation functions such as:

- Logic and rationality -at least to some degree-

- Instinctual feel for what are fair value exchanges, relationships, and win-wins
- Healthy “what’s in it for me”

Until the victim maintains those foundational self-preservation functions, win-lose relationships cannot work with her consent.
Hence the gaslighter must undermine all of them in order for his games, manipulations, and lose-win behavior to even seem acceptable -let alone “good”-.

Since self-preservation instincts are deeply rooted, the crazy-making process takes some time and repetitions and always starts from the top.
Crazymaking works its “dark” magic when the frame control that starts at the single interaction level moves deeper and deeper -until it undoes both the most basic instinct of self-preservation as well as logic-.



Crazy-making is an act of mental takeover on one side, and surrender and submission on the other. Over time, the victim relinquishes his “mental hold” on reality
As the victim increasingly accepts what’s win-lose and illogical as fair and normal, she increasingly distrusts her ability to understand and operate in the world.
The crazymaker then becomes the only mediator and conduit for her reality.
Obviously, he’s going to present a reality that is good for him and, often, highly harmful to the victim.

Conviction & Eternal Doubt: The Specular Common Denominators

Gaslighting and, even more, crazymaking work in large part because of the gaslighter’s conviction.

You can see why from a frame control point of view: it requires strong conviction to make someone doubt what’s right or wrong, cool or not cool behavior, and what’s win-win or win-lose.

So conviction, paradoxically, is a warning sign.

Subjectivity & lack of “right” and “wrong”

Some gaslighters though prefer to seed doubt by constantly shifting positions, questioning everything, and appealing

to “subjective experience”.

In that “subjective experience” there are no rights or wrong so, conveniently, the gaslighter also “cannot be wrong”. These types of gaslighters often resort to psychologizing, including questioning their own motives and understanding.

It may look like this:

- “Are you sure?” / “I’m not so sure”
- “It really depends, who can really say”
- “We all have our own subjective opinion and preferences. There are no absolutes”
- “Give me feedback, I want to learn (and I’ll give you feedback back)”
- “It’s only you who doesn’t make mistakes?”

Crazymaking signs

- **“Seek mental health therapy”** type of advice
  - Example: “you should definitely see a psychiatrist”
- **Ganging up**. Such as, recruiting others to isolate the victim. Especially effective from higher authority who can easily get others to agree even when in the wrong
  - Example: the boss asks other employees “who here thinks Jack is not being open-minded enough”
- **Double binds** “damned if you do” and damned if you don’t
  - Example: assign tasks the gaslighter requires done to perfection, then complain he has to make them again and tell her to “leave it to him next time”. But he gets angry when she leaves it to him. She’s damned whatever she does
- **Provoke & blame** for the outburst
  - Example: flirting with another woman and when the partner gets angry saying “she’s always like this, unfortunately she’s not well”
- **Private mistreat & public compliments**, or vice versa
  - Example: demeaning the victim at home, then praising her during the event while saying that “she’s always in such a “low mood”
- **Mistreat & normalization**, pretend there’s nothing wrong with mistreatment
  - Example: writing nasty all-caps emails and justifying as “that’s just how I write to everyone, I respect you though”
- **Deliberate sabotage & blaming**
  - Example: move, hide or lose objects, and pretend hold that the victim was responsible
- **Pathologizing**
  - Example: your father was a cheating alcoholic, maybe he even abused you and you removed it. That’s why you’re so obsessively untrustworthy
- **Trivializing**, or framing the victim’s issues, beliefs, or complaints as “small stuff”, unimportant, or unjustified
- **Reality distortion**, denying real events and making up non-existing ones
- **Harm & cover as “mistake”**
  - Example: pretending to forget birthdays with the excuse of “not caring about birthdays” (but then maybe

remember third-party birthdays)

- **Endless criticism**, including of non-existent faults or lacks

Severity and effects

Effects of low-danger gaslighting tend to be short-term, including:

- Anger
- Frustration
- Dislike for the gaslighter
- Loss of respect the gaslighter

The effects of more extreme, prolonged, or continuous gaslighting can be psychosomatic, meaning they affect both mind and body, including:

- confusion
- muscle pain
- digestive problems
- vertigo
- inability to sleep

In extreme cases, continuous gaslighting can drive a person psychotic (see, as an example, the 1971 movie "Family Life"), or even to suicide.

The effects are connected to the fight-or-flight response.

Humans have an innate gut mechanism to recognize (and get away from) abuse. Even if they don't consciously understand what is happening.

Gaslight FAQs

Now some frequently asked questions about gaslighting and manipulation in general:

1. Is there a strategic use for gaslighting?

There is a strategic use for almost anything.

So, yes, gaslighting can be effective and good for you.
And may even be fair game.

See Power University for those use cases.

However, don't make the rules with the exceptions.
And, generally speaking, gaslight has higher costs than benefits.

Generally speaking, the gaslighter gains by taking from the "bottom of the pyramid" people who have less awareness, fewer skills, and fewer options.

Overall, we aim for more here so we don't recommend it.

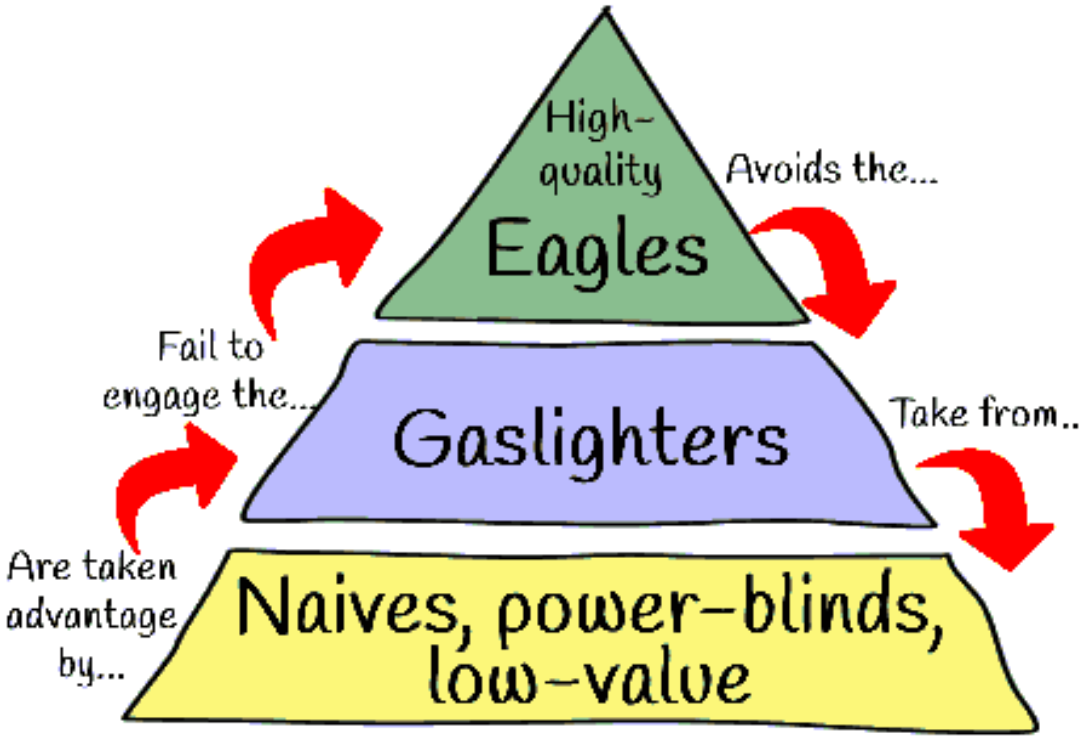
And the downsides may still outweigh the upsides, even when it seems like you're winning.

The gaslighter still turns many of his relationships into lose-loses, destroys social capital, and drives away all the highest-quality people from his life.

This is simple basic social exchange: **no high-quality person wants to be close to a gaslighter**.

They may be dealing with him out of self-interest, but never out of choice or pleasure and they'll always keep a healthy distance.

This is a typical case of "ceiling behavior".
Such as, it's "effective" only up to a (modest) point, and it turns harmful when you try to go level higher:



Gaslighters tend to struggle to hold top positions because they burn bridges and ruin relationships. Even more commonly, they tend to have a lower quality of life
Also, just to be clear: since this is a place for high-quality eagles, we don't like gaslighting here.

2. Can gaslighters improve?

Everything is possible, but don't count on it.

Gaslighting may be indicative of psychological issues (ie.: a way of being, rather than a way of doing), and cannot be easily changed by others at that root level.

So make sure you don't over-extend the benefit of the doubt and remember the proverb:

> Fool me once, shame on you.
> Fool me twice, shame on me

3. Can I improve my own gaslighting?

It's possible.

The simple fact that one is asking that question is a great sign that you may be able to grow beyond it.

See Power University for the details.

4. Is gaslighting always conscious and premeditated?

Several sources say that gaslighting is always conscious and premeditated.

We don't necessarily agree, though.

Bel says that after much researching and reflecting, he came to this conclusion: it starts consciously. Meaning, there is a decision point where someone uses it and sees that the results are better than the alternative (which is honesty and accepting consequences). And then continues using it.

But it can reach the point where it is almost an automatic reflex whenever shame is called into question. In that sense, while it continues to be a choice, it can be very difficult to change.

Lucio believes that some gaslighters learned it from their parents or environment and never realized how "not-cool" it is, and how much it's costing them.
For these people it's possible to improve and grow beyond gaslighting -they'll have to consciously *un*learn it-.

Some others may be "naturals" who are simply manipulative personalities and who "naturally" resort to gaslighting, without any consciousness needed.

5. Can I win against a gaslighter?

See Power University for the practical steps
You can win against anyone.

The better questions though are if you can get *through* one -possible but unlikely- and if you should even *engage* one.

Sometimes, you may be better off distancing yourself.

Often, it's one of those "exporting democracy" types of wars that you're a lot better off not fighting in the first place. Some places aren't ready for democracy and **some people aren't ready -or even born- for win-win and straight behavior**.

Be careful of "turkey spirals"

Finally, gaslighters are turkeys, and they only drag you down to turkey level while we prefer you fly here.

If you're looking for the "how to", consider joining Power University.

Power University students go to this lesson for practical techniques & strategies

Designing Your Career by Elaine Welteroth (Masterclass): Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Elaine Welteroth Teaches Designing Your Career is a 15-lesson online course on career-building in which Elaine Welteroth, the course instructor, teaches how to custom design a career path.

Contents

- Full Summary
  - Lesson #1: Uncover Your Zone of Genius
  - Lesson #2: Build Your Career Blueprint
  - Lesson #3: Build Your Network
  - Lesson #4: Search for Opportunities and Side Hustles
  - Lesson #5: Taking the Leap to Be Your Own Boss
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- Cons
- Pros
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Full Summary

About The Professor:
After a decade in her dream job as editor-in-chief of Teen Vogue, award-winning journalist Elaine Welteroth realized she had other dreams worth pursuing. Now, the New York Times bestselling author, talk show host, and judge on the new Project Runway is teaching you how to get out of your comfort zone and harness your personal values, passions, and skills to custom design a career path as unique as you are.

Lesson #1: Uncover Your Zone of Genius

"Your zone of genius is that sweet spot at the intersection of your passions, your talents, your values, and your skills. I define it as 'that which only you can do like nobody else can'."

Your zone of genius is your compass when you're lost because, as Welteroth put it, "…one thing is for certain — the more you do, the more opportunity comes. And, you'll need a filter for how to make decisions about what is actually for you and what you should say 'no' to."

Your zone of genius is that filter.

And, as a manager and leader, you also want to ask yourself if your team is operating within their zone of genius.

#1: Passions

"What is that thing that you could do all night, for free, if somebody let you? If your bills would still get paid, if you know for sure that your kids were going to eat, that your house was going to get paid for, and that you could spend your time any way you wanted…that's your passion."

It's OK to not know your passion. Welteroth even adds, "In fact, the way that we have been conditioned to live our lives on autopilot, you've basically been set up to not know what you really love. It takes time to cultivate that. And, it takes encouragement."

#2: Skills

"What are those skills that you've had to learn along your journey? And, how do they come into play when we think

about designing the life that you want to be living?”

#3: Talents

“If you don’t know what your God-given gifts are exactly, ask your best friend. Ask them to write you a list of the things that you’re good at.”

#4: Values

“What matters more to you than money? Do you have it? Is it in your head? OK. Now, ask yourself, ‘Why?’ Those [reasons] are your values.”

Your value system is your strongest filter to determine what opportunities to pursue and what to pass on.

#5: Excavate your childhood.

“Excavation is the process of digging deep inside yourself to really understand what your most valuable traits are…

…What are those early memories? Maybe they’re not even your memories. Maybe they’re stories that are passed down to you about who you were before the world got in the way and started dictating who you are, who you’re allowed to be, and put labels on you and limitations on you.”

Lesson #2: Build Your Career Blueprint

“A blueprint is essentially your 30,000-foot view of the life span of your career. It should give you a sense of what the arc is that you want your career to take. It should encompass your short-term goals as well as your long-game plan.”

Welteroth’s sister often uses the analogy of going “eagle-eye” (the 30,000-foot view) and then going “hawk-eye” (the detailed look at what’s happening).

#1: The “eagle-eye” of your career (the blueprint).

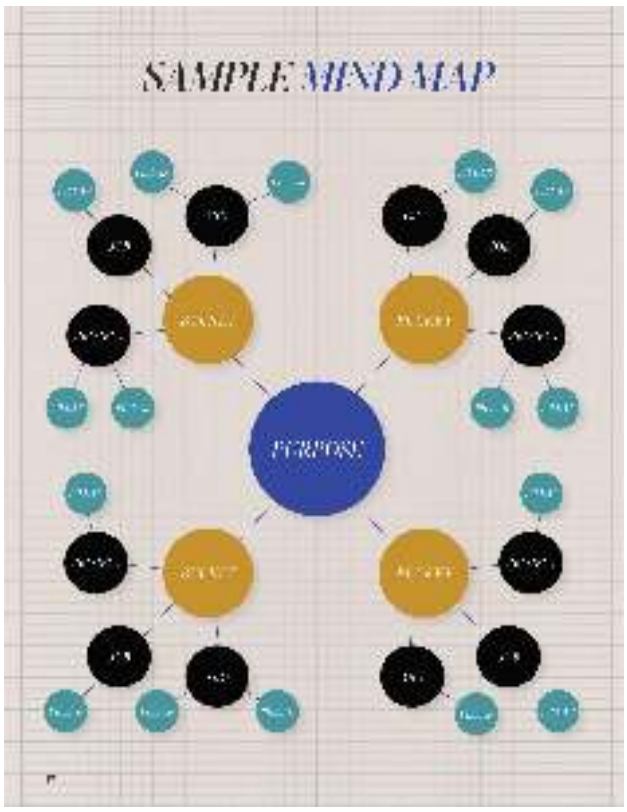
The blueprint is needed to identify how to craft your career from a big-picture standpoint.

“Who are the people in your life that you want to model your career after? Who are these people — maybe you don’t even know them.”

The blueprint is where you get to pitch the spaces and/or industries that you want to play in. And, it is *never* too late to pivot and make a career change.

#2: The “hawk-eye” of your career (the mind map).

“The more granular hawk-eye view on your career is where you get really specific now. You get to define exactly what your business model is gonna look like. And, I like to call it your mind map.”



1. “Your mind map starts with understanding your ‘why’. That should be at the nucleus of your mind map. Your purpose needs to be at the very center. And, that needs to be the through-line that connects all of these divergent projects and ideas and industries. They all connect back to a singular purpose. So, what is your purpose?”
2. “The next step is to go back to that list of spaces that you want to play in and let’s make it visual. Take each of those spaces, write them down, and draw a circle around each of them.”
3. “Then, connect each circle to a smaller circle that more precisely describes the type of project you’re aiming for or the next big idea you want to develop in this space.”
4. “From there, you can get even more specific with individual projects or gigs that you’re aiming for or specific ideas that you want to develop.” (“Sometimes the different spaces you’re playing in might connect to each other. A book you write might become a TV show one day. And, that TV show might become a podcast.”)
5. Update your mind map every time you’re in the midst of a career transition or a big decision about what’s next.

Lesson #3: Build Your Network

“I don’t know about you, but most people I know don’t have a trust fund. Didn’t come from a ton of money, and don’t have a fallback plan. But, when times get hard, your safety net is in your people.”

As we build out our blueprint, we have a set of about five to ten people that we consider our board of advisors.

Welteroth describes it as, “…people that aren’t necessarily investing in your businesses financially, but they’re investing in you in other ways. You have to look at yourself like a business…And, what is that company culture that you have started building from ground zero?”

“Before you have even started to make money, who are you surrounding yourself with? Who are you turning to when you’re in trouble? Who are you turning to for advice? Appoint your board of advisors and be incredibly intentional about where you want them to sit in your life.”

#1: How to get a mentor

“To ask somebody, ‘Will you be my mentor?’ is literally like walking up to somebody on the street and being like, ‘Will you marry me?’ Like, you kinda need to court them a little. You kinda need to build a relationship.”

"…ask for 15 minutes of someone's time…do your homework. Do not waste their time. Be prepared for that question that will come up which is, 'Now, what can I do for you? How can I help?' When that question comes, be prepared with an answer. Be specific with what it is you're looking for. Be intentional because people appreciate when somebody is clear and direct about what they're looking for from you. And, they can be clear and direct with you [back] about whether or not they can deliver."

Welteroth shares a story of how she got one of her first mentors. And, it follows the social exchange rules very well:

> **Welteroth**: "My first boss, Harriet Cole — I stalked her. I admit it. I found her email. I found her phone number on the internet. I made this whole package. I — I shot my own cover of a fake magazine. And, I put it together as an opportunity to intern with her. And, I sent it to New York City when I was in college in Sacramento. And, I called incessantly. I emailed her assistant incessantly. Shout out to Nubia Murray. Thanks for passing along my email and my calls, boo. She could have shut me down. And, she tried, but I wore her down. And, I remember after calling and calling and calling and driving them insane, one day I said, 'OK, so, sorry, sorry, sorry, just before you go, I know she's not available, but can you just tell me what her coffee order is?' And, I remember the assistant goes, 'Why do you need her coffee order? Don't you live in California?' And, they lived in New York. And, I said, 'Yeah, it's no big deal. I'm just going to fly there and just drop off coffee. Just, no big deal. No big deal.' She's like, 'Please do not get on a plane and fly across the country and show up at this office.' And, so she goes, 'I will — I promise you, I will find time on her schedule.' But, basically, the undercurrent was don't call again. Stop calling, girl. I'ma figure this out for you, but don't show up at this office. But, I did what I had to do to get their attention. I was determined. I was relentless. I did not give up. And, I got to connect with the person who ultimately changed the trajectory of my entire career."

#2: Don't always look up, look around too

Some of your best mentors can be peers, right in the trenches with you. They won't always be older or in a position of authority yet.

"Build a community without looking for anything in return. Give without getting anything in return…Be generous with your time and your energy if there is a true connection with someone."

#3: Don't limit your access to different mentors

Make good use of digital mentors and digital role models. Don't limit yourself to only people you meet.

#4: Your manager is not always your mentor

Since mentors can double as friends and it's often beneficial to have one's superiors as their mentors in their company, people can sometimes feel that their manager is always their mentor.

But, Welteroth said it best, "When you need to negotiate for a raise, they're not your friend. They're your boss."

Be careful not to confuse the two. And, make sure to vet your mentors before giving them such an important role in your career progression.

#5: Lift as you rise

So much of our energy is focused on getting to that seat at the table that we don't talk enough about the responsibilities that come with having that seat. When you're in that seat, "…It's not just about you keeping your seat. It's about making room and pulling up a chair and opening a window and opening a door for other people to get that seat at the table too and to have that opportunity."

Be a servant leader. Be someone who thinks about how to help and provide opportunities for those around you.

Lesson #4: Search for Opportunities and Side Hustles

If you're not passionate about your current day job, an hour before and after work, start to brainstorm your zone of genius—especially your passions. And, brainstorm how you can apply your zone of genius in daily small ways. And, how you can develop that into a hobby that can grow into a small business."

#1: **Find opportunities in your day job**

"Sometimes, from that [zone of genius] list, you can develop a job for yourself that did not exist before. And, sometimes, if you're lucky, you can develop a role within your role that you currently have at your day job that allows you the freedom to exercise that entrepreneurial spirit inside you and get paid for it as part of your day job."

#2: **Freelancing is your training ground**

Do a freelance gig as a test and practice for your career endeavors. Use freelancing as a safety net to build your confidence before making any major decisions (e.g. quitting your job).

"Test those waters…get a feel for what this lifestyle might be like before you make it your full-time job."

Lesson #5: Taking the Leap to Be Your Own Boss

#1: **How to know when it's time to quit**

To know when it's time to quit, ask yourself, "Have I reached the point of diminishing returns? Is there something that I have yet to learn? Is there a skill that I'm still honing here that I'm going to need in my next chapter? Is there a financial goal that I have yet to hit? Is there another raise, another promotion, that I really feel is important to add to my résumé?"

Go through the pillars in your zone of genius and ask yourself, "Is there more for me to get here that I would be cheating myself if I walked away from it all today? Would I have any regrets?"

#2: **Don't let fear dictate your direction**

"Fear is going to be part of the process…we have to learn to become friends with it."

"If you've done the self-evaluation…and you've come to this conclusion that it is time for you to walk away from the known and walk into the unknown—if you know that you're ready, but you just are struggling to make that final step into your future, this is where your board of advisors come in." Go to someone who sees your potential and let them show you the courage you have inside of you.

Lesson #6: Game Plan for Financial Confidence

#1: **Financial confidence is your fifth pillar**

"Financial confidence is different from having financial security. Financial confidence comes from having a game plan. And, that plan can only be written by you."

#2: **Bet on yourself, but get specific**

"Bet on yourself by taking a leap of faith. But, make sure to reinforce your faith by cultivating a sense of financial confidence." (e.g. "What are the figures that you need to see in your savings account that will support your faith in yourself?") And, by the way, this financial figure changes at different career stages.

Welteroth mentions that it's OK to move in with your parents to save up for your financial target. As she notes, "Sometimes, taking a tiny step back propels you much further, much faster."

So, set your target. "What is that amount that you need to make monthly, that you need to make yearly?" Write that down.

#3: **Tips for financial planning**

1. Approach your financial plan with creativity (be willing to move back in with your parents, if necessary).
2. Create a savings target.
3. Revisit your mind map to add annual earning targets with quarterly goals to each arm of your business. Get specific!
4. Do your research to fill in any blanks.

If you're not passionate about your current day job, an

Lesson #7: Strategize Your Work-Life Balance

#1: **Choose your opportunities wisely**

Do your best to only take on the opportunities that excite you) the ones that make you say "hell yes!" inside).

"Write down and get clear on what actually fuels you, what actually energizes you, and what you actually enjoy doing. And, try to spend more of your time doing the projects that are really fulfilling [for you]."

#2: **Self-care is an investment in yourself**

Invest in all aspects of yourself—family, faith, community, etc. Do not run yourself into the ground by only investing in your business and neglecting yourself.

Welteroth's tools have been prayer and meditation. She mentions that using these tools along with reading a devotional in the morning helps her anchor herself.

"Your career is a marathon and you want to be strong to the end." And, that happens through practicing self-care.

#3: **Leverage "joy containers"**

Make an appointment on your calendar with "joy". Block out this time once a day or, at the very least, once a week. And, commit to that moment with joy.

"Treat it how you would any other meeting. Show up on time. Don't skip it. Don't cancel last minute. Be there and be present for that invitation to experience joy."

Lesson #8: Present Yourself for Opportunity

"Whatever you decide to put on your body, the way that you decide to show up in the world communicates something to the world about how you want to be perceived…How you communicate how you are, how you communicate your company, how you communicate your brand matters."

#1: **Establish your staples**

"I think it's so important that you have your core signature staples." This cuts down on the decision-making time it takes to choose your clothes for the day.

#2: **Tips for establishing your signature style**

1. Make a mood board.
2. Study people with a similar body type or vibe.
3. Try new styles (be willing to step out of your comfort zone).
4. Take pictures of yourself.
5. Wear what you decide makes you feel comfortable and confident.

"Remember, how you present yourself to the world influences how you're perceived. And, how you're perceived

influences the kinds of opportunities that come your way."

Lesson #9: Marketing: The Art of Putting Yourself and Your Work Out There

#1: **Social media is your best marketing tool**

Build a social media workflow. Set a goal or target for how much time you're willing to dedicate to social media a day. At least a couple of times a week.

#2: **Tricks for social media planning**

1. Plan what you're going to post months in advance (use a social media grid planner)
2. Set a consistent posting time (Welteroth recommends the morning since many people scroll through social media soon after waking up)
3. Use preset filters to establish your visual brand
4. Create a shared album for social media-worthy posts (avoid having to dig through all of your photos to find "that one" you thought would be a good post)
5. Link your social media accounts together, so your content will post to all platforms.

#3: **Brand with authenticity**

Most people use social media at a superficial level. You can separate yourself from the crowd and stand out by being of the rare few who is authentic on social media.

You can convey authenticity by letting others into your creative process, who you *really* are, and what really matters to you.

And, on that note of what really matters to you, Welteroth says, "…you have to stay connected to your WHY at every step of the process, including marketing and 'socializing' your work."

Lesson #10: Building Your Team

"You cannot do it alone. If you have big dreams, you're going to need a team to help you accomplish those goals."

Building this team takes time.

#1: **Find people who play the game your way**

Start by mapping out and writing down what your company values and company culture is. Be intentional with how you craft your company environment—design it to be one where you can thrive.

Here, Welteroth mentions:

> **Welteroth**: "As the boss of your own life, you get to decide what your company values are and what your company culture will be. And, please believe that that company culture starts with you. You are employee number one of your enterprise. Before you have the people on the payroll, it would be wise to sit down and really map out what your core values are…I have a 'no asshole' policy. I also have a 'no yes-man' policy. I want to have people around me who challenge me, who can respectfully critique my work…"

So, what is important to you? What are your deal-breakers and your non-negotiables?

Write them down and prioritize them as you start to build your team.

#2: **Hire incrementally**

When you're starting, don't hire all at once because you're still learning what kind of support you're *actually* going to need.

Instead, do a needs assessment about where the blindspots or holes are in your ecosystem to define where you really need the support. And, hire incrementally based on those needs.

#3: **Tips for Hiring**

1. Perform a needs assessment
2. Write out job descriptions
3. Hire incrementally

#4: **Think of your team as investors**

If you've spent most of your life as an employee, you may have spent most of your life thinking about holding onto every cent you can get. And, when one has bills to pay and needs to put food on their plate, it's not an unfair attitude to hold.

Yet, when we're talking about entrepreneurship, that can be a scarcity mindset that can harm your team if you're afraid to pay them.

So, Welteroth encourages her students to think of every single hire as a revenue-generating opportunity. Avoid a scarcity mindset—give yourself permission to invest in yourself and the team members who are actually adding value to your enterprise.

And, be sure to regularly check in that those team members are still adding value.

#5: **Hire for your blind spots, not your "culture fit"**

"Identify where the blind spots are in your team and be intentional about hiring for those blind spots."

This is a bit different from Simon Sinek's recommendation to find and hire the people who share your mission—your WHY (see *Start With WHY*).

Welteroth instead recommends first finding people based on where you need support. And, only hiring the people who excel at what you need support in and whose zone of genius matches your job description for them.

#6: **Delegate, delegate, delegate**

Delegate the tasks that are outside of your zone of genius because those supports—as long as they're top performers who are also operating in their zone of genius—are actively giving you your time back.

As Welteroth puts it, "Bosses delegate. They do not do it all."

#7: **Fire faster**

> **Welteroth**: "If someone on your team isn't working out after you've had conversations about expectation setting and you've given it enough time to evaluate if the changes are happening that you need to see or not, I am giving you permission right now…to go ahead and pull the plug. Fire faster. It will expedite you finding the right person for your team."

Lesson #11: Essential Writing Skills

#1: **The "professional voice" (for emails)**

- Mimic your manager in professional writing
- Avoid overly casual communication (e.g. saying "hey"), lean toward formality
- Proofread twice
- Keep it short. No essays. Brevity is key.

#2: **The "authentic voice" (for social media captions)**

- Does it sound like you? If not, say it out loud the way that you would naturally say it, and then write it as you spoke it.
- Try to capture your *first* thought. If you can communicate that, that will usually be you at your most authentic.

#3: **Writer's block**

- Open up an email draft and start writing out your thoughts. (Using an email draft removes the feeling of a need for "perfection" that can come from writing in a Google Doc. And, you likely write emails all the time, so there's a more natural flow.)

And, by the way, you can have writer's block on social media too.

Lesson #12: You're Not An Imposter

You're likely to feel like an imposter if you're "FOD" (see *Year of Yes*):

1. First (to do or achieve something)
2. Only (one to do or achieve something)
3. Different (from those or most around you)

Imposter syndrome is normal. Recognize that you can unlearn and disrupt your negative self-talk and harmful thought patterns.

1. Take a break.
2. Come up with a mantra.
3. Write out positive affirmations on sticky notes and put them where you can see them.
4. Try different things and find what works for you.

And, on being "FOD", Welteroth says, "Our differences are our superpowers when it comes to our creativity. Our unique lived experience is what informs our perspective which is what informs our art and our work."

Lesson #13: Navigating Cancel Culture

> **Welteroth**: "I hate to break it to you, but if you are making disruptive content, prepare to be cancelled."

#1: **Focus your response on the impact**

"Don't focus on the intention of your actions. Focus on the impact of them."

> **Welteroth**: "…the important thing to remember when you're being called out is to pause, take a breath, and reflect on the impact. And, focus your response on the impact first. Acknowledge the harm that you caused. Acknowledge that you understand why it was harmful. If you start there, then people feel heard. They feel like you understand. And, there becomes an opportunity to have a conversation that is less defensive."

#2: **How to address controversy**

> **Welteroth**: "My best advice for addressing controversy: address it head-on."

You might get advice to let it blow over. A lot of people will tell you "don't respond". And, that may be good advice depending on your situation. But, if you follow that advice, you're also surrendering the opportunity to communicate who you are and what you've learned from the controversy.

#3: **Right your wrong**

"Sometimes it takes getting it wrong to *really* understand how to get it right."

Don't shy away from making disruptive, controversial content that starts conversations and can spark change.

"Own your error. Learn from it. And, take the necessary steps to redeem yourself. Not just for you, but for the community that you are here to serve."

#4: **Tips for "doing the work" to survive being canceled**

1. Don't be defensive.
2. Do not ignore other perspectives.
3. Do empathize.
4. Do apologize.
5. Focus on the impact of your actions and your words and not only the intent.
6. Don't shut down. (It's not the end of the world, the world still needs you, your perspectives, and your voice.)

Lucio's note:

- **Don't necessarily apologize if you don't think you did anything wrong**

Lesson #14: Be The Boss of Your Own Life

Use visualizations to practice meeting people who could leave you not knowing what to say (for Welteroth it was meeting Oprah Winfrey). And, use those visualizations as preparation for meeting those you admire.

Those visualizations will develop your muscle memory to be natural in the presence of your inspirations.

Cons

- **Encourages purpose, but doesn't teach it**

Given that Welteroth encourages her students to put their WHY at the center of everything they do, I would've loved to see her teach more about how her students can go about discovering their WHY.

- **Sometimes ignores social exchange rules**

Welteroth recommends you buy your prospective mentor a coffee in order to "court" them. But, as we know, that's a fairly common WIIFT failure in networking.

- **Sometimes leans toward encouraging a "go-giver" attitude**

And, doesn't mention anything resembling the attitude of a fair-value social marketer.

Pros

- **The workbook adds more value**

I was expecting the workbook to simply be icing on the cake. Perhaps, a summary of what was already taught in the videos.

Boy was I wrong. The workbook goes so much deeper with actual assignments and added bonuses that make it worth a separate fee on its own.

The workbook covers, "Nine Tips for Nailing A Job Interview", "How To Get the Most Out of a Mentorship", "Creating Mentorship Goals", "Advice for Getting Out of a Rut", and so much more.

I've left all of the bonus information out of this review because there are simply too many goodies in that workbook to cover here.

But more on nailing job interviews, see:

- How to prepare and excel for job interviews

> How to Prepare For An Interview: 6 Tips To Get The Job

- **The presentation is stellar**

More than the top-notch production quality, the instructor carries and presents herself as a real boss-woman.

And, that motivated me to get my body language together after hearing her inspiring stories of how far she's come coupled with feeling more connected to her because of her developed charm and charisma.

Review

This is an incredible Masterclass.

I'd only take off one star for having no scripts like what Ramit provides. And, one other star for staying on the surface level on some topics (e.g. career negotiations).

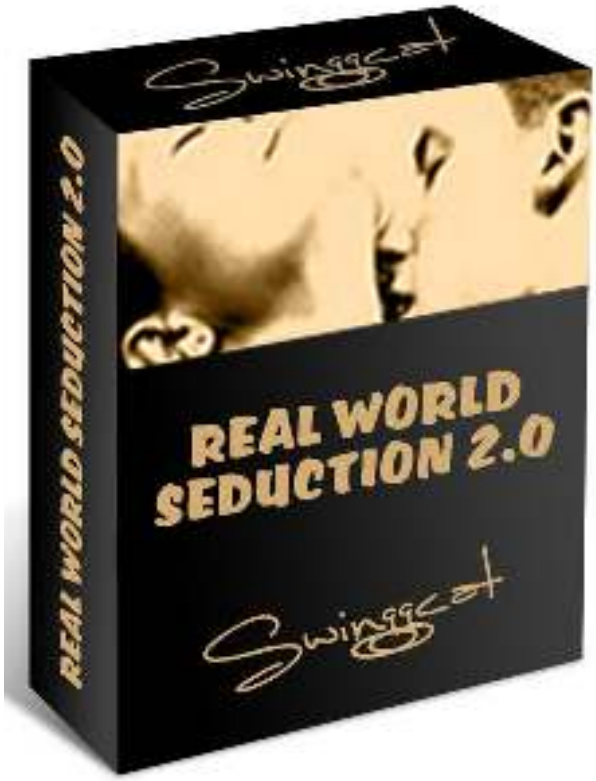
Other than that, this Masterclass has more than earned every single star. And, with only a couple of minor additions, I could easily see this being a 10-star investment.

Check the **best career books** to read.

Real World Seduction 2.0 by Swinggcat: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 January 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Real World Seduction 2.0 is a 19-chapter book on dating and seduction in which Swinggcat, the author, teaches how to seduce a woman starting from the approach to intimacy.



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Bullet Summary

- Become a high-value man: work on yourself to build the attributes and characteristics women want
- **Frame yourself as the prize**
- Select your targets: avoid the women who aren't open to being seduced

Full Summary

About The Author:
Swinggcat was one of the early innovators of "The Game" and a member of the Seduction Community in the late 1990s, studying under Ross Jeffries. A significant contributor from the early seduction days, Swinggcat was a PUA that pioneered the idea of role reversal, push-pull, and prizing.

Introduction and Prologue

- Your sexual market value (SMV) can be raised through self-improvement to play in bigger leagues (seduce and attract higher-value women).
- The difference between ethical and unethical seduction is whether or not your seduction efforts leave the other person better off.

More than how to seduce and date, this book also promises to teach you how to be charming.

So, let's begin.

Chapter #1: Develop Attractive Attributes

#1: Your Looks

- Women talk about wanting a physically attractive man who makes 6-figures, but then marry the opposite (a man who has less money, but more game).

Note: This is only true in some cases. Oftentimes, women will talk about possibly wanting a physically attractive man who makes 6-figures and then will go on to marry that man for his provider qualities. But, they'll still be sexually attracted to the man with more lover's qualities. (See *Atomic Attraction*).

- Develop your style.

Especially before considering any cosmetic surgeries to improve your attractiveness.

Some steps you can take are to:

1. Subscribe to men's magazines to know the latest style trends
2. Go to bars and nightclubs to see what the most attractive guys (the guys getting the most attention from women)

are wearing

3. Emulate the style of men with a similar build as you

- Develop your hairstyle.

Find a hairstylist you trust and work with them to do what works for you.

- Post pictures of yourself to gather feedback.
- Age matters less for men than for women, so don't use age as an excuse for your current unattractiveness.

#2: Assume Interest

- Assume the woman is interested because it removes nervousness and insecurity.

Note: be careful with this
This mindset is OK, in my opinion, as long as you do it right. (See "Tinder girl frame battle" and "How to gain compliance").

- Assume the woman thinks you're a sought-after prize from the get-go because it sets the foundation of mental empowerment for inner and outer game.

Note: Again, this is OK in my opinion, as long as you remember to combine that attitude with a healthy antifragile ego. Otherwise, you risk coming across as egotistical which is often a turn-off for women.

As a side note, given that this book promises to teach how to be charming, keep in mind that charmers often think of themselves less because of their deep love for others. So, if you're not careful, this mindset could harm that important characteristic of the effective social charmer (see "How to be charming").

- "…if you don't believe the woman is interested, you'll unconsciously communicate your insecurity in your intonation and body language."

This is based on the psychology of the anchoring cognitive bias.

If you use a high anchor to convey high expectations to yourself of how much she already likes you, it will draw up your perception of how much she already actually likes you due to the assimilation effect (see "Convey high expectations" and "The most effective anchor").

And, you'll nonconsciously respond to her more positively because of the positive attitude stemming from that positive anchor.

#3: Strong Leadership

Take a strong lead throughout the entire interaction because it's what makes women confident you'll be a good lover.

- When women ask where to eat, assert, "We're going here."

Note: She must accept your leadership first.

- Or, better yet, take her somewhere without telling her where you're going. And, if she begs you to tell her where you're taking her, say, "Don't worry, I like the food there, I'll enjoy myself."

Note: In the audio version, the author said this in an assertive, authoritative tone with very downward tonality inflections. So, be careful of using this type of power-taking assertiveness with a woman who expects or demands a more egalitarian relationship. (See "How to test a woman for submissiveness to you".)

- Don't be a dictator, be sure to take into account her ideas.

Learn more about leading to seduce:

> How to Lead to Gets Girls

#4: Your Standards

- Higher standards lead to higher dating success.
- Sit down and write out exactly what you want in a woman (see *The Love List*).

#5: Your Reality

The author describes your reality as being made up of your thoughts and beliefs, likes and dislikes, habits and routines, hobbies and interests, friends and family, goals and purposes, sources of validation and acceptance, and so on.

- Maintain your prizability (being the prize in your relationships) by maintaining a strong reality

If you let a woman pull you into her reality, she will lose attraction for you because it makes you look confused (see "Be the star of your own movie").

- Don't be her therapist.

It's a win-lose situation that loses her respect.

- Don't get pulled into hanging out with her friends as a first date or when you're first getting to know her

You would be entering an environment where her friends have "prove yourself to me" judge power over you (prove to me you're a good fit for my friend here).

And, from there, they can dissuade your date from seeing you again (if you don't jump through their hoops to their satisfaction).

- Don't change your beliefs for a woman because you're in love with her.
- Don't cut friends out of your life for a woman.
- Do bring her around your biggest fans whenever you can.

Take her places where your (perceived) status is higher (for example, see "easy status boost: make friends with owners and staff").

Bring her to parties or nightclubs where you have lots of friends who will laugh at your dumb jokes, build you up, and make you look good.

Warning: on your first date, don't bring her around people you worship, especially if they don't respect you.

- If you don't have people in your life who adore and look up to you, take her out alone.
- Introduce her to the things you enjoy.

The foods, activities, and music you like. This will draw her into your world (your reality) and be part of your strong leadership.

#6: Be a Challenge

- Making yourself a challenge makes you a prize.

So, disqualify yourself so she'll work to prove you wrong.

#7: Use Humor

If you use humor, make sure it communicates you're a prize.

- Avoid self-deprecating humor because women believe the saying that "there's always some truth in people's humor".

Note: Self-deprecating humor can be great to come across as more charming if your status is far higher than the rest of the group. In that case, closing that gap with some self-deprecating humor can communicate warmth and relatability. But, generally speaking, yes, if your status is on the same level as (or lower than) the rest of the group, avoid self-deprecating humor.

- Humor helps put women in a more positive mood which leads them to be less judgmental.

This is because your humor encourages their heuristic processing (see "Optimize your message").

#8: Advertise Vulnerability

Your "costly signals" are anything you do that a woman views as potentially harmful to your social status or chances of mating with her.

When you've established yourself as the prize with a woman, strategically advertise your "costly signals" to increase your perceived prizability.

Lucio notes you better be careful with vulnerability.
See here:

> Vulnerability Is NOT Power: Don't Believe The Hype

#9: Your Comfort

The three elements of being charming are having high personal value, using good social skills, and being comfortable in your skin.

Here are some things you can do to feel more comfortable around women:

- Make five female friends who are your type

The more time you spend around them, the more comfortable you'll become around the type of women you like.

- Work on your belief system

Avoid self-limiting beliefs and doubts.

#10: Be Non-reactive

"He who angers you conquers you."

In general, the one who's the least reactive in the interaction has more prizability and power to influence or control the interaction.

#11: Show Intent

Remain detached from the outcome with a woman to avoid being clingy, needy, insecure, and emotionally reactive.

- Don't remain detached by (egotistically) pretending to have no desired outcome in mind.
- Have a strong meta-intent.

A meta-intent is a well-defined, desired outcome in the absence of neediness and attachment.

Chapter #2: Obtain Inner Confidence

#1: Confidence

The two facets of confidence are:

1. An empowering belief system.
2. Expanding your comfort zone.

Most men lack confidence because they only work on one (or neither) of the facets.

Keep in mind on your confidence-building journey:

- Your confidence is your experience. The more experience you get, the more confident you'll eventually become in that area.
- Your belief system needs to be field-tested for cognitive dissonance (does your nonconscious brain believe the beliefs you tell yourself?)

#2: Antifragile Ego Beliefs

For your belief system, here are some antifragile ego beliefs the author shares for you to internalize along your journey:

- Despite any fear, there's more pain in not doing it [going for it and doing your best].
- No matter how a woman reacts to me, there's always something beneficial to learn.

Chapter #3: Intro To Frames

By rewarding rude behavior from a woman during the interaction, you allow the following negative frames to be set:

1. He's unassertive / passive / submissive.
2. He's more invested in this interaction / relationship than she is.

These imply the meta-frame (the underlying frame) that she's the prize he's trying to win over.

The meta-frame determines the overall underlying meaning of the interaction and assigns a role to each participant.

- Aim to set a frame that frames you as the prize.

Women don't always have to buy into that frame. As long as you avoid buying into theirs, you'll still be perceived as having some prizability.

Learn more on how to be assertive:

> How To Be Assertive In 6 Simple Steps

Chapter #4: The Fourfold Meta-Frame

#1: The Fourfold Meta-Frame

The Fourfold Meta-Frame is the perception and belief that:

1. You're the prize.
2. She's trying to win you over.
3. She wants you so bad she's trying to make you sleep with her.
4. She'll only get to sleep with you if she lives up to your standards and expectations.

- Don't directly or openly communicate the Fourfold Meta-Frame.

Sub-communicate it with your behavior and frame control.

- Practice the Fourfold Meta-Frame using visualization.

Identify the kind of girl you'd like to attract and then visualize, starting from your approach all the way to ending with intimacy, using the Fourfold Meta-Frame to seduce her.

#2: You're the Prize

Invert the traditional roles.

Turn yourself into the chooser and her into the suitor.

- Disqualify her before she has the chance to disqualify you.

Women still want to be liked. So, when you disqualify her, you take away some of your fondness for her.

And, that gives you the role of the *chooser*. That moves you closer to being perceived as the prize.

Note: This relies on the woman being somewhat emotionally dependent on your approval or acceptance. More than emotional independence, your SMV has to be high enough for her to care about being qualified by you.

- Use the Fourfold Meta-Frame with humor

Avoid positive humor because what makes us laugh is what's fucked up about the world.

Note: Here, the author slides in an anecdote about a Christian joke book he read that kept him laughing because it was so bad it was good. He believes that the negative (slightly value-taking humor) is the humor that we actually find funny and will raise your prizability. And, while that style of humor can certainly get you laughs, it can also come at the expense of your charm. As the old saying goes, "You could wind up liked by everyone and loved by no one." (See the "Davide style".)

- Attraction = Frames + Humor + Playfulness

Note: Some of the most effective social charmers are the best examples of walking attraction generators. And, they follow the equation: Attraction/Charm = Personal Value + Social Skills + Comfort.

So, as you can probably imagine, it would be quite difficult for a girl to find you attractive if you were low-value (which comes down to more than only frames), socially unskilled outside of making jokes, and playful while also being nervous and uneasy.

Still, his equation isn't fully wrong. Frames, humor, and playfulness do often play a significant role in the seduction process for many of the seducers out there.

- Use negative humor because women often use it to position themselves as the prize.

So, it's OK to use women's own game back on them.

Note: The kind of humor the author describes here is slightly value-taking. So, one must be careful not to overdo it and break rapport or, worse, chip away at her self-esteem as that could become manipulative.

Chapter #5: Prizable Body Language

Adopt non-reactive body language.

1. Move slowly.
2. Move deliberately.
3. Move on your own terms.

Note: Be mindful to avoid moving too slow in a busy, fast-paced environment. (See "How to walk sexy and confident".)

Here, the author also gives an example to help illustrate how your body language should be to seduce a woman.

"She calls your name. How do you react? What would be a nonreactive response? First, delay responding to her for a few seconds. This demonstrates that you're responding on your own terms. Second, when you do respond, slowly and deliberately turn your head towards her. Third, instead of dashing up to her, keep your feet planted. More often than not, the woman will come up to you."

Note: This is typically the kind of behavior high-quality men exude after a woman unfairly makes them wait (see "Even the scores: let them wait"). So, behavior like this can seem out of place and lead her to wonder if she's done something wrong.

As an added note, this slow-moving, non-reactive behavior is reminiscent of the "Been There Done That" style of dominance which must be earned first. If not, you risk coming across as haughty, cocky, or clueless.

- Avoid leaning in.
- Record yourself in interactions to gather feedback and systematically improve your body language.

Chapter #6: Cold Approaching Secrets

#1: Cold Approaching

- Your biggest challenge to approaching women isn't women, it's yourself.

Here's how to approach, step by step:

1. Get outside your head.
2. Approach right away.
3. Have high standards and a strong meta-intent before you approach.
4. Assume the Fourfold Meta-Frame.

Note: This feels a bit out of order. So, if you apply this advice, you may have more success by putting step number two last because steps three and four are mindsets the author recommends holding before you approach.

- When you approach her, build emotional relevance.

Emotional relevance is having, doing, or saying things that are emotionally relevant to a woman (things she cares about).

For example, the standard, "So, where are you from?" And, "Come here often?" lines are emotionally irrelevant to a woman because women often care little to talk about those things and may become (emotionally) bored.

You can build emotional relevance through:

1. Preselection
2. Intrigue

3. Humor
4. Common social decency
5. Challenging a woman
6. Gaining her compliance.

Learn more on how to cold approach:

> Cold Approach Power Dynamics

Chapter #7: How To Vibe

The two components to vibing are:

1. Emotional relevance
2. Empathy

Make the interaction emotionally rewarding for everyone and avoid hogging the conversational spotlight or making it all about you (see *The Social Skills Guidebook*).

#1: Vibing with Women

Become a source of validation for a woman and you'll become her authority.

And, the author says, "Once you're a source of validation, every time you give her approval, she'll feel an intense vibe with you."

Note: The author describes vibing as emotional relevance coupled with empathy. But, one can dispense emotional rewards as a judge without empathizing.

And, on another note, vibing is defined here at TPM as a shared focus and shared conversation (see "The Art of Vibing").

Chapter #8: How To Cold Read

#1: How to Cold Read

Cold reading is the act of telling a woman about herself without her thinking you have any prior knowledge about her.

There are two main ways to cold read:

1. State the obvious about her.
2. State universal things that are true about (almost) every woman.

Chapter #9: How To Storytell

Avoid showcasing your prizable assets in a way that telegraphs your need for validation and approval.

- Don't brag (see "toxic people").

To avoid bragging, there are two ways you can disclose your prizable assets. Share them as:

1. Ancillary details within your story.
2. Part of the context in which your story takes place.

See here how to brag effectively:

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

Chapter #10: Using Open Loops

- Create tension loops.

Creating a tension loop is the act of creating unresolved sexual tension inside of a woman, increasing it, releasing it, and then sparking it all over again. Within the context of dating and seduction, this tension becomes sexualized (hence, sexual tension).

One way the author suggests you can create sexual tension is by creating fictitious drama.

- Use open loops.

An open loop is an unfinished thought or story that contains a tension loop structure.

"Conversational Open Loops compel women to show interest through asking questions. Each successive question they ask further psychologically commits them to being interested in you. Due to commitment & consistency, this ups the chances that their future behavior will be consistent with their commitment."

Note: This is true. But, it's unlikely that the commitment and consistency principle (based on cognitive dissonance) has the power to overwrite long-term conversational habits. Whether or not a woman asks a series of questions one after the other depends less on the commitment and consistency principle and more on the woman's style of conversation (see "Approaches to socialization").

Plus, one must be careful to avoid investing too much in the interaction by giving detailed answers to the asker's questions while the asker invests little by using short, brief sentences to pose more questions.

Chapter #11: The Push-Pull

A "push-pull" is emotionally pushing a woman away from you and then emotionally pulling her back in. Each "push" creates an emotional space for each pull.

It's also a form of tension loop. The push sparks unresolved emotional tension. And, the pull releases that tension.

And, when done right, it's also a form of prizing. The unresolved emotional tension influences women to seek a resolution to that tension by investing because push-pulls send mixed signals that keep women guessing.

- Never make the push a direct insult.

Chapter #12: Qualifying and Challenging

Make a woman prove (qualify) herself to you.

Here is a step-by-step process to do that:

1. Ask her a question or present her with a challenge that makes her qualify.
2. If she complies, let her know she qualified.
3. Put up a false barrier or qualify her further.

If she doesn't prove herself to you, pivot away from it, build up more prizability, then qualify her again later after building some more rapport and attraction.

Note: Some women may not want to give you the "prove yourself to me" judge role right away because they haven't

accepted your leadership or judge authority yet. So, by building more rapport and attraction, you can better influence women to want to qualify themselves to you.

Chapter #13: The Physical Touch

You want to condition her to make these associations:

1. Physical touch (associated) with acceptance and validation.
2. The release of physical touch (associated) with rejection and disapproval.

Do this by coupling touching her with a verbal pull. And, release your touches with verbal pushes.

Note: Be careful to do this only when the situation deems it as appropriate. (See "When you need a push-pull".)

Chapter #14: Using Role-Playing

The power behind role-playing it:

1. It removes the fear and rejection.
2. It exonerates the participants from any guilt or consequences for their actions.
3. The unconscious mind processes everything that happens during role-playing as real.

- Combine your role-plays with qualifying, tension loops, and prizing body language.

Chapter #15: Tests Women Use

Some tests you may often come across include:

1. The damsel in distress test.
2. Prize-tests: tests that question, "How prizable is he?"
3. Shit-tests: tests that question, "How much shit will take or put up with?"

Note: In seduction and power dynamics, a shit-test is defined as a test or social challenge delivered by the choosing individual to the pursuing individual. And, when women are the ones delivering the tests, it's often to test his value, experience, or level of interest. Therefore, the author's definitions for "prize-tests" and "shit-tests" both count as shit-tests. So, using one definition for both would work here.

Learn more about women's tests:

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Win the Game

Lesson #16: Women's Token Barriers

Token barriers are "flexible" barriers. They can:

1. Turn into real barriers (which are boundaries).
2. Be prize tests in disguise.
3. Be temporary resistance.

Women typically put up barriers out of obligation, not a lack of desire for you. Address the barriers with frame control to move past them (see "frame control techniques").

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

Lesson #17: Reframing Women's Tests

An example from the author:

> **Swinggcat**: "Imagine I'm staring at a woman. Next, her high heel shoes stomp in my direction and she fires a Damsel in Distress test at me by scolding, 'Why are you staring at me? That's so fucking rude, lecher.' I reframe her with, 'Sorry sweetie. I didn't even notice you until now. I was actually staring at the girl behind you. But you're cute as well. Would you mind going up to her and bringing her over here for me.' I changed the meaning of the frame by changing the behavior: I wasn't staring at her, I was staring at the girl behind her. Moreover, it put her into my frame. In a gentle fashion, I defined the behavior of her scolding me as meaning that she's presumptuous and a little socially inept for thinking that I was staring at her. Most importantly, my new frame forces her into the Fourfold Meta-Frame."

Note:
The author describes aggressive behavior as fitting the damsel in distress test as long as the woman is (or is feigning being) vulnerable. Here at TPM, we have a term called the "damsel in distress game". And, it leverages high signals of vulnerability, exploitability, and submissiveness mixed with 'an air of a woman in need of 'protection'." A staple of Marylin Monroe's sexual lure as a seducer. And, it would be hard to imagine Monroe behaving in the same manner as the woman in the example above, so imagine the damsel in distress test and damsel in distress game as two different terms with two different definitions.

Lesson #18: Outframing Women's Tests

"Outframes serve the same purpose as reframes. But they function differently. Instead of reframing a woman's frame, they put a larger frame around it."

The different types of outframes:

1. Bad Intentions (framing the intention behind a woman's test or barrier in a negative light).
2. Undesirable Attributes (framing the cause of a test or barrier as a personality flaw the woman possesses).
3. Consequence Framing (pointing out the consequences of her behavior or frame).

Real-Life Applications

- Don't pretend to enjoy the things she likes because that will kill the attraction.
- Praise the behavior you want to see more of.

Positive reinforcement that leads to a good time for both of you is positive persuasion and good seduction.

Cons

Confusing information on having standards

The author teaches that higher standards lead to higher dating success because of this philosophy:

"It's a very funny thing about life: if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it." -William Somerset Maugham

But, one's dating success is heavily determined not by their standards, but by their own SMV.

And, while I think the author knows this (hence why he goes into such detail on raising your attractiveness), this part still came across as a neat hack or trick one can do to instantly see more dating success.

So, I would've preferred if the author did more to make the dating success that can result from this mindset seem

less automatic.

(Maybe) Could use some more intuitive naming

The “Your Reality” section shares great strategies on how to be in control of your life. And, the “reality” concept comes back around later in the book, so it works well.

But, at times that particular section didn’t feel like it was about realities. It felt like it was about quality.

So, instead of “don’t let her pull you into her reality”, perhaps splitting that section in two and naming the first part “don’t behave in ways that lower your perceived quality” might’ve been better.

Especially, since that section lists out some things men have done that negatively affected the way women viewed them (for example, changing beliefs only to make her happy because they’re emotionally dependent on her approval, cutting off friends because she threatened a break-up if he didn’t, and so on).

Could use better wording at times

For example, the author says, “Maintain a strong reality.”

Maintain a strong reality or maintain a strong *hold* on your reality?

The former leans toward implying that one needs a strong (fun and exciting) lifestyle to pull women into. But, the latter better supports the author’s points that it’s less about the lifestyle you lead and more about being the lead of your lifestyle.

Gets a few definitions wrong

The author says, “When a woman witnesses other women treating a man like a prize, it fires a compliance trigger hard-wired into her brain called social proof.”

And, that’s actually preselection (see “Using social proof & preselection to boost attraction”).

As an added note, social proof is more of an influence-related human instinct than a “compliance trigger” because social proof doesn’t guarantee compliance.

Audio editing could use a clean-up

The audio repeated some words and sometimes causes the narrator to speak a little faster than what you might feel is considered normal.

But, the author only repeats himself three times due to the editing, and the amount of speed-ups is minimal.

Teaches affirmations for building confidence

The author mentions that the two facets of confidence are your experience and your belief system. And, the author gives a list of beliefs the reader can take away and begin internalizing right away.

An example of those beliefs is, “No matter how psychotic it seems, deep down inside, every woman on the planet believes that I’m the prize she wants to win.”

This seems like an easy ego boost without having done any of the work to earn it (and, that’s assuming you believe what you’re saying).

Plus, this belief can lead one to become more cocky than confident because of the nature of this mindset.

And, the majority of the other beliefs are similar affirmations without the exact use of “I am” (see “A better alternative to affirmations and why it works”).

Missing some studies

The author says, “Say the four folds of the Fourfold Meta-Frame aloud ten times a day the same way you would rehearse an affirmation. This will din the Fourfold Meta-Frame into your neurology.”

But, he doesn’t share any references to research or studies that prove this, and, to my knowledge, there are none.

The author also says, “When meeting a man, a parade of questions march through a woman’s mind such as, ‘Does he think he’s the prize? Does he think he can seduce me? Does he think I’m attracted to him?’ If the answer is ‘no’ to any of these questions, they’ll seem as having no prizability and eliminate him as a potential mate.”

This seems like a good point to back with a link to some research because it conflicts with information (the stereotype content model) that does have scientific support.

Switches between teaching antifragile and fragile ego beliefs

The author tells a story of how he made it his goal to kiss a girl every day over the course of 30 days despite his nervousness, fear, and anxiety back then. And, he mentions that he was able to pull off kissing at least 15.

Though, I’d say that the real victory and growth was in the effort of having gone for and done his best to push through his anxiety rather than the result of having kissed however many girls.

And, I wish the author would have underlined that more because it felt like he took more pride in the outcome than the effort.

Some relatively short chapters

For example, Chapter 3 is two pages long. And, Chapter 16 is only a page and a half.

Compared to the other chapters and the rest of the book, the amount of content there seemed relatively short.

Leaves out some steps and information

In the section on the Fourfold Meta-Frame, the author says to include your desired outcome in the Fourfold Meta-Frame in order to have a strong meta-intent.

But, he doesn’t say how. Do you add your desired outcome as a fifth fold, phrased in a way that supports your “I’m the prize” mindsets?

Unfortunately, he doesn’t say.

Provides poor reasoning behind some of the mindsets

For example, the author recommends adopting certain “I’m the prize” beliefs because attractive women have them, so it will flip the script.

Simply because a woman has certain beliefs while dating doesn’t mean they’d transfer over well to a man (or be good in the first place).

A man must have the SMV to support his belief that he’s the prize if he wants to experience real results in his dating life.

And, besides that, the “I’m the prize” attitude that some attractive women hold often leads them to put themselves on a pedestal and sometimes behave egotistically. And, it’s that kind of unattractive behavior that will lead men who are experienced in dating to neg them in order to take them down a notch (see “An example of subtle negging in text”).

So, “I’m the prize” beliefs don’t always transfer well and can even be counterproductive for both men and women when overdone.

Sometimes overstates the importance of good game

The author reminds the readers throughout the book that inner and outer game matter more than looks to the point that it sometimes feels like he's saying looks don't matter.

Albeit the first chapter talks about the importance of looks, the remaining chapters are about character. And, the author's storytelling style in those remaining chapters makes it seem as though looks are irrelevant to seduction and dating.

Especially when he says things like "even if she thinks your looks are God-awful" and "even if a woman thinks your head was harvested from a wildebeest and transplanted onto your shoulders".

Misconstrues some information in psychology

The author says, "Anytime a woman's face is pinched, posture is rigid, or arms are crossed, mismatch her. Loosen your face and smile, uncross your arms, and relax your posture. Because women unconsciously want to open up, they'll start matching your body language."

Not entirely true. People only mirror the body language of those they perceive to be like them. So, if they think you're too dissimilar from them, they'll maintain their current body language due to ingroup/outgroup favoritism (see "Trigger social pressure").

Pros

Honest sexual market value talk

It was great to hear the author talk about the potential a man has in terms of how high his attractiveness can go if he works hard.

And, it's true: a man's value is heavily determined by the heights he reaches in his own self-development.

Recommends sound psychology

It was very interesting to see the author incorporate psychology (such as the anchoring cognitive bias and heuristic processing) typically applied to sales and negotiation to the seduction process.

Recommends being collaboratively assertive

Primarily in the section on "strong leadership", the author recommends his readers to avoid being a dictator.

Be assertive without being aggressive. Authoritative without being authoritarian. Dominant without being domineering.

And, even in a relationship with a woman who prefers to fully submit to her partner, a constant attitude of over-dominance can still sour the relationship.

More than that, it's good for nurturing a relationship that results in both partners having mutual respect for each other as opposed to a relationship involving (albeit possibly unintentional) abuse.

Avoids counterproductive red pill psychology

For example, in the "Your Reality" section where the author recommends you don't get pulled into hanging out with her friends as a first date.

There, the author makes sure to mention that not everything a woman does throughout the dating process is a "play" or a game from her. A woman may invite you to hang out with her friends as a first date not to make things harder for you, but because she has real reservations about going out alone with a stranger.

It was nice to hear the author give valid, understandable reasons behind some of the dating behavior women use and games they might often play as opposed to simply saying it's because "women can't love men" (see *Alpha Male Strategies*).

Tells stories openly and honestly

About his own fears, nervousness, and anxieties on his journey to becoming better with women.

And, that was refreshing to hear.

Acknowledges and teaches judge power dynamics

The author says, "Playing the role of the suitor is a losing battle for guys. If a man incessantly jumps through a woman's hoops with the fairy tale dream of winning her over, she'll see him as packing the prizability of a herpes breakout."

And, the author goes even further later in the book to make sure readers understand the consequences of being on the losing end of the stick when it comes to judge power dynamics.

Author's writing style made the program fun and engaging to listen to

The author makes a lot of jokes and uses very descriptive language to put you in the situations and stories he tells as if you're really there.

It made me feel grateful for an audio version because it also served as a solid reminder that while dating can be painful, it's not supposed to be confrontational.

It can be fun and enjoyable, just like the book.

Gives real, specific techniques you can use now

Such as initiators, conversational hooks for cold-approaching women, role-play ideas, and much, much more.

This book is great for practicality (you won't be overwhelmed with theory) and quick actionability.

Teaches charmer traits that can help in all social interactions

The author teaches charmer traits and social skills that help in more than only dating.

This was given a larger spotlight in the author's section on avoiding the nasty social climbing behavior of bragging. He went into detail teaching how one can go about self-promoting in a way that raises your status without coming across as a braggart, narcissistic, or annoying.

Pulls from the best resources on influence, persuasion, and social skills

If you read this book, you might notice information that's also shared in other resources jump out at you (most notably from *The Social Skills Guidebook* and *Methods of Persuasion*).

And, it's a treat to hear the author share information that's validated by some of the best resources out there as he ties it into how you can become better with women.

Review

Real World Seduction 2.0 is a very valuable and oftentimes very entertaining program.

As you know, more content means more to pick apart.
So, it may seem like there are a lot of cons, but it's only because the program is so robust and covers so much of the dating and seduction process.

Real World Seduction 2.0 would be 8.5 stars if it weren't for the definition mix-ups, psychology mistakes, and fragile ego mindsets.
And, Lucio notes, it's one of the reasons why TPM didn't move forward with a cross-promotion.
But, since I've organized them for you here, they'll be easier to move past if you join :).

If Swinggcat decides to clean up the errors listed in the Cons list, *Real World Seduction 2.0* is easily an almost 9-star program.

You can see the original forum entry for this review or look at the best dating resources for men:

> Best Dating Books for Guys

Girl Wash Your Face: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 February 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Girl Wash Your Face is a mix of Rachel Hollis's autobiography and self-help advice, which includes empowering mindsets such as a sense of ownership, the belief that we can change our condition, and that the Lord will find a way for us.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Choose to Be Happy
  - Build People Up, Don't Tear Them Down
  - Respect Yourself to Have People Respect You
  - Don't Make Yourself Small to Make Others Comfortable
- Girl Wash Your Face Lies
- Girl Wash Your Face Quotes
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
  - God Has Perfect Timing…? What If Not… ?
  - Assumes That What Worked For The Author Will Work For The Readers
  - Simplistic "Feel Good" Advice That Shifts Blame To "Others"
  - Sometimes The Feel Good Advice Miminimizes Reality & Fair Feelings
  - Too Long On Some Personal Life Bits
  - How Is Hollis' Digital Reach In The Millions?
- PROS
- Video Summary
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We have all been fed a bunch of lies about what we can't or can't do
- Wash your face and wake up to the reality of life: you're in charge and can do whatever you please
- People will treat you like you allow them to: demand the respect you need and deserve

Full Summary

Girl Wash Your Face is based on paragraphs relating to each one of the "lies" that the author lists.

But I didn't find all of them deep enough to warrant a review, so I will give here a summary of what I felt were the most interesting takeaways:

Choose to Be Happy

Rachel Hollis powerfully stresses the idea that we need to take responsibility for our life and for our own happiness.

She talks about people -and herself- who travel and move looking for an elusive "change", oping to stumble on

happiness.

But moving, she says, doesn't change who you are, only changes the view outside the window.

You must *choose* to be happy, grateful, and fulfilled.

Also read:

- Stumbling on Happiness
- The Happiness Advantage
- Delivering Happiness
- The Happiness Project

> **Moving doesn't change who you are – only the view outside the window.**
>
> *Rachel Hollis*

Build People Up, Don't Tear Them Down

Rachel Hollis tells the story of a former classmate of hers.

She was popular and cool.
And when she said she shaved her toes, Rachel couldn't resist making fun of her and gossiping behind her back, even arriving to say "what kind of person shaves her toes".

The crazy thing?

She shaved her toes too!

Hollis uses the story to reflect on the tendency most of us have to put people down and exhorts the readers to resist all urges of gossiping, spreading rumors and demeaning and devaluing the people around us.

I couldn't agree more and I talked at length about it on this website. Also check:

- Why you must stop social climbing
- How to deal with social climbers
- Dealing with underminers
- Frenemies and how to spot a frenemy
- N. 1 leadership mistake: social climbing
- Alpha male posturing
- Make friends, no enemies

Respect Yourself to Have People Respect You

Albeit she never calls it so, Rachel Hollis also goes into dating power dynamics.

She was head over heels for her first boyfriend while he instead took her for granted and rather mistreated her.

She was too naive, she says. She really thought they were going to get married and start a family and called him his boyfriend publicly.

Until… He made it clear they were not in a relationship.

She says:

I naively believed that if someone had seen your boobs and regularly went to dinner together, it meant we were a couple.

Meanwhile, this man didn't even believe we were dating.

Eventually though she sobered up. She called him one night and told him that they were through.

She reminded him of his "friends" thing and told him she didn't want to be friends with him at all because she deserved someone who treated her properly.

Then told him to disappear from her life and hung up.

And what happened right after that? He showed up at her door to be together. This time "for real".

However, she says that her story is an exception.

And she wasn't even angry at him because, and I really liked this:

People will treat you with as much or as little respect as you allow them to. And our dysfunctional relationship started the first time he treated me badly and I allowed it.

Rachel Hollis

And she says that sometimes, even if it breaks your heart, walking away is the biggest act of self-love you can have access to.

Also read:

- Types of abusive men
- Signs of abusive relationships
- The best relationship ever: start here

Don't Make Yourself Small to Make Others Comfortable

Rachel Hollis talks about the tendency of some women to make themselves small and diminish their own achievements and ambitions.

She says that God didn't make you the way you are and give you your special talents so that you could "hide" them from the rest of the world.

And she encourages women to also pursue their careers if they so wish because a "woman's job" is not solely to tend to the family. That's a duty that is shared by both partners, she says.

Rachel Hollis says that something that helped was the "willingness to offend", not in the sense of being rude, but in the sense that not everyone could approve of you and someone might end up not liking what you do. And that's OK.

She also says that, after a bad review, she stopped reading reviews altogether.

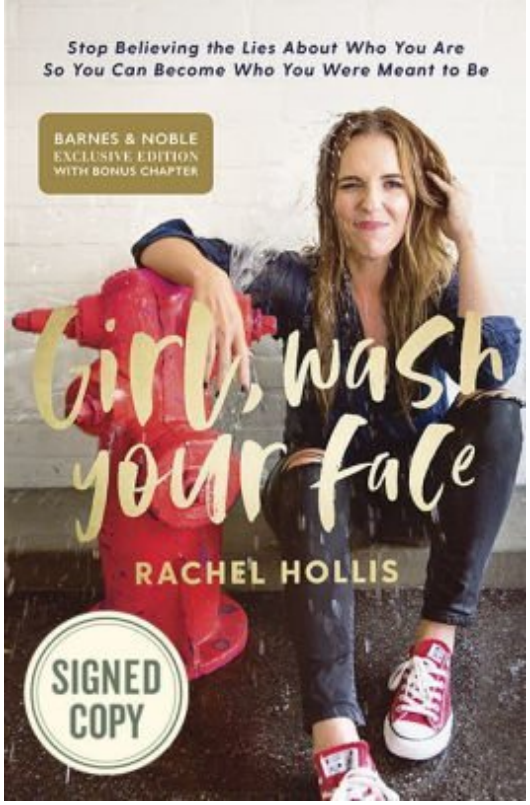
My Note:
I personally disagree with this.
Growing and maturing also means embracing emotional vulnerability and having the courage to stare naked at our inadequacies. Even when they hurt.

Girl Wash Your Face Lies

These are the lies that many women tell themselves:

- Something Else Will Make Me Happy
- I'll Start Tomorrow
- I'm Not Good Enough
- I'm Better Than You

- Loving Him Is Enough for Me
- No Is the Final Answer
- I'm Bad at Sex
- I Don't Know How to Be a Mom
- I'm Not a Good Mom
- Should Be Further Along by Now
- Other People's Kids Are So Much Cleaner/Better Organized/More Polite
- I Need to Make Myself Smaller
- I'm Going to Marry Matt Damon
- I'm a Terrible Writer
- I Will Never Get Past This
- I Can't Tell the Truth
- I Am Defined by My Weight
- I Need a Drink
- There's Only One Right Way to Be
- I Need a Hero



Girl Wash Your Face Quotes

- I was so nervous. I was worried if he would try to hold my hand or kiss me or… BOTH??
- "I hope you're not one of those girls who's afraid of eating on a date" he asked me. "it annoyed me (..) I responded by eating more than half the pizza we were sharing"
- For clarity's sake, let me spell out: at that point, we weren't having sex. But honestly, that was a technicality.
- Sometimes choosing to walk away, even if means breaking your own heart, can be the biggest act of self-love you can have access to.

- Comparison is the death of joy, and the only person you need to be better than is the one you were yesterday
- You, and only you, are ultimately responsible for who you become and how happy you are

Real Life Applications

Demand The Respect You Deserve

Rachel's happy marriage showed that sometimes people are good… As long as you demand the respect you deserve. But if you allow them to disrespect you, then even good people can turn bad.

Ask For and Accept Help

This is something that I need to work on. Especially for men, who value independence, asking and accepting help is a skill to master that can help us go much farther.

Embrace The Good of Whatever Bad Happened to You

Rachel Hollis shares Tony Robbins' wisdom that if we can bear wit the pain of what happened to us, then we can also admit of what good it did to us.

She says that, indeed, it's not easy sometimes because it makes us feel bad to admit that something came out of tragedy.

But also became stronger after she found the body of her brother dead.

That was very deep and I prefer this way of dealing with pain as compared to the darkness of David Goggins' Can't Hurt Me.

CONS

God Has Perfect Timing...? What If Not... ?

Girl Wash Your Face is a Christian book –albeit it's been criticized by the Christian community-.

I don't question the religious bits, but the "perfect timing" to me is an example of the "personal God" who intervenes in people's lives. And I think that can be a harmful belief. What if the timing doesn't work for you? Then God is not helping you?

No, if there is a God, I don't believe in a God who micro-manages people's lives.

Assumes That What Worked For The Author Will Work For The Readers

At times it feels like Girl Wash Your Face falls into the mantra common to many self-help books that seems to say "look at me and how successful I am. And if I have done it, rest assured the same will happen to you too".

That's bogus of course.

Simplistic "Feel Good" Advice That Shifts Blame To "Others"

It's funny that the author says people should take responsibility for themselves.

But then, the author also says that all lies have been perpetrated by "society", "the media", "our families" and even "the devil himself".

What about biology, psychology, evolutionary psychology and sociology?
And what about, well… Truth and fair feelings based on that truth?

For example, people care about their weight because other people do, yes.
But that's not a lie, that's the *truth*.
So an effective approach may also include shedding some kilos.

Sometimes The Feel Good Advice Miminimizes Reality & Fair Feelings

Connected to the above, telling people that all the limitations we feel are "lies" is a cop-out.

Honest improvement often must start with a realistic, sometimes brutal assessment of reality.

Yes we need a strong and antifragile ego to do it, but anything else is the equivalent of spray-panting a tu… You know what I mean.

In my opinion, this isn't good self-development advice.

Too Long On Some Personal Life Bits

I liked Rachel Hollis sharing the stories of her dating and marriage.
But the part when she goes into all the details of her adoption efforts, not as much. I found it too long winded and sometimes even too complaining.

But then again, that's also probably because I write about dating and I am interested in it but have little interest in adoption.

How Is Hollis' Digital Reach In The Millions?

Rachel Hollis says that her "digital reach" is in the millions. Yet her website is only marginally more popular than this website -and only after "Girl Wash Your Face" went viral.

So that seemed a bit of an exaggeration -also read "How to Lie With Statistics".

PROS

Positive and Uplifting

Girl Wash Your Face is a positive and sort of uplifting book -in its own way, if you agree with that view of the world-. It can be effective both for motivation and deeper mindsets.

Video Summary

And here is a 5 minutes recap and review of Girl Wash Your Face:

Review

Girl Wash Your Face is an OK book mixing some popular and wisdesperad self-help wisdom with Christian beliefs and a general appeal to "trusting that things will turn out fine".

Rachel Hollis says that the principal message of "Girl Wash Your Face" is that we are all responsible for who we become and for what happens in our lives.

That's a strong message, and she delivers it in a prose which is both vulnerable, deep and even entertaining.

On the negative side, there is nothing new here.

If you're a fan of the author, you may like it.
Otherwise, I can't recommend it to an audience that is looking for an edge and for self-development that is both

effective and time-efficient.

Check the **best books collection** or get the book on Amazon

How to Follow Orders Without Looking Weak (7 Techniques)

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Most people struggle to say “no” without backlash. But an even bigger challenge? Saying “yes” without losing power.

When you execute tasks or follow orders, power shifts.
If done wrong, you look submissive. But if done right, you maintain control, respect, and authority—even while complying.

In this article, you’ll learn 7 powerful techniques to execute without submission, drawn from our expertise in power dynamics and social strategy.

Let’s dive in.

Contents

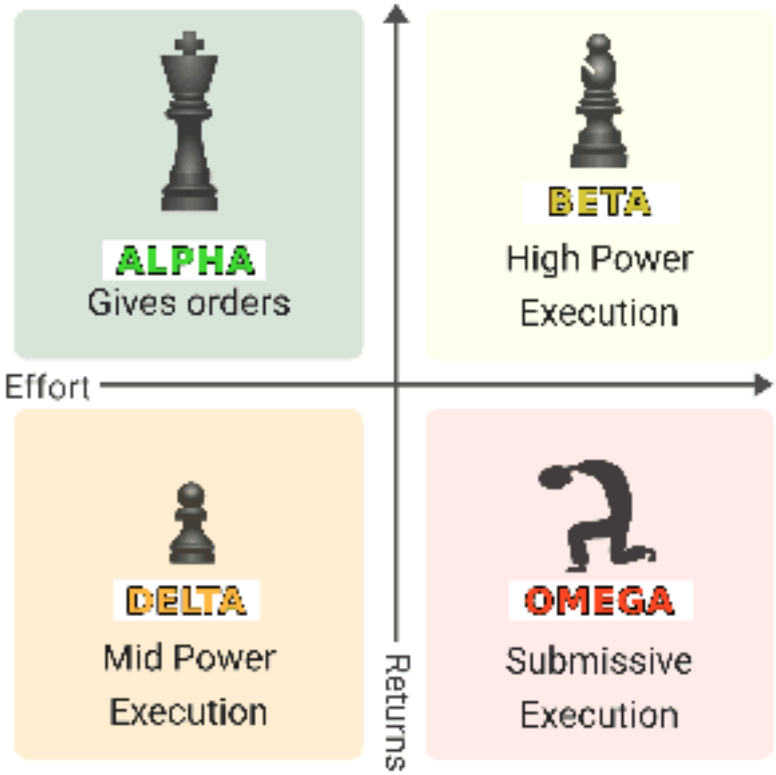
- 1. Execute With Low-Effort
  - ⍰ Example
- 2. Change A Detail: Strategic Semi-Disobedience
  - 2.2. Improve A Detail
- 3. Agree To Execute, But On Your Terms
- 4. Gain Time: Executive Delay
  - ⍰ Failure of The Principle: Case Study
  - 4.2. Break The “They Task-You Obey” Flow
- 4. Repeat The Task With “I Will… “: Self-Tasking
- 5. Power Align & Justify The Task
  - 5.2. Pace & Lead: Shift The Focus to the Bigger Goal
  - 5.3. Agree With The Task Rationale

- 6. Execute & Re-Task Them
- 7. Disempower Them Back To Even Things Out
- Tasking Power Dynamics
  - What Determines Your Power Loss
  - Diagnostics & Strategies
  - ⍰ Example: Why I Pushed Back

1. Execute With Low-Effort

Principle:

⚖ **The less visible effort you expend, the more social power you maintain**



Sometimes, you'll have to do what someone else says. But if you execute high-power, you're still good
As per Social Investment Model, the person who expends more effort looks lower power. So an effective approach to minimize your loss is to **execute as effortlessly as possible**.
Castiglione called it "Sprezzatura". Meaning, to execute nonchalantly, as if it were easy, simple, and "no big deal" for you.

Ideally, you expend even less effort than the individual assigning you the task or giving you an order.

⍰ Example

I was in the Egyptian Museum taking a picture of a newly arrived sarcophagus.
Then:

> **Superintendent**: (moving around, agitated, dominant) no pictures, please no pictures
> **Me**: (nods, lowers the phone, keeps watching the scene)

Yes, I obeyed his order.

But with little power loss because while he expended much effort, my obedience was unreactive, and low effort (high sprezzatura).

If I had said something like “yes sir”, moved out of the way, apologized or justified, that would have been higher investment, and made me look far more submissive and lower power.

2. Change A Detail: Strategic Semi-Disobedience

With this technique:

You “go along with the larger plan”, but disobey a smaller detail to display your freedom and agency.

The bare minimum level is to show just enough free will to sub-communicate that you’re not a puppet that moves exactly as the puppeteer wants.
Ideally, you show instead that you’re an empowered individual with freewill, and a say in the decision-making.

For example:

> **Him**: welcome to the meeting guys. (looking at you and waving towards the chair) Please sit here
> **You**: thank you, I prefer this other chair (let’s get going)

You don’t challenge their leadership in any significant way, but take the liberty to choose your own seat.
Overall, you’re still attending and participating: you’re conforming with what’s most important.
So if they insist on you sitting on a specific chair, it’s them who look petty and “weird”.

Notice that if you add “let’s get going”, that is your own leadership power move.
Now *you* are the results-oriented guy who hasn’t got time to waste and who is tasking them.

And now you’re ahead: they *tried* to lead you, and failed.

2.2. *Improve* A Detail

Better yet, rather than simply *changing* a detail, you can *improve* a detail.

Ideally, you change something that self-frames you as more driven, empowered, goal-oriented, and leader-like.

For example:

> **Him**: welcome to the meeting guys. (looking at you and waving towards the chair) Please sit here
> **You**: thank you, I’ll take this other one closer to the whiteboard: I need to get all the details

Now you’re the proactive and attentive guy who wants to be on top of things (most likely, to make things happen, which is very leader-like).

Also see:

- **Strategic self-promotion at work**

> The Art of Self-Promotion: 9 Effective Techniques

3. Agree To Execute, But On Your Terms

For example, you can decide when and how:

> **Colleague**: (raises his hand and interrupts) I don't understand, can you please explain why…

If you stop and answer, you relinquish control -and justify to him.
Instead:

> **You**: Absolutely, let me finish this point and we then proceed to the questions

Same With Your Boss, But More Power-Protecting

If it's a boss, you want to make sure you power protect him more.

For example:

> **You**: *For sure"* <—- Bigger acceptance display
>
> *I quickly finish this* <— Verbalize behavioral change to accommodate him
>
> *As it partially answers your question* <— Add a rationale
>
> (OPTIONAL) (Speak faster) <— Display behavioral change show consideration

Read more on how to keep a good relationship with your boss.

4. Gain Time: Executive Delay

You lose most power when they task you, and you act right away.

Immediate execution feels like an owner-to-dog exchange.

On the other hand, delayed execution re-empowers you because it sub-communicates that you decide when to act and displays your own agency in the important dimension of timing.

So whenever you can wait before you execute the task, wait.

For example:

> **Organizer**: please have a sit
> **You**: (still standing) yeah, thank you, I look forward to the training, do you also provide us with the presentation later on?
> (chats a little bit longer, and then sits)

Even 10 seconds or a couple of back-and-forths will do.
And you don't necessarily need to talk.
You can go back to your desk to take something, take in the environment, or check your phone (just don't make it a habit!).
Whatever you do, it doesn't even necessarily have to make sense. As a matter of fact, it's OK if they get that you didn't sit on purpose. The message you send is: "don't order me around, or I'll do the exact opposite just to spite you".

⍰ Failure of The Principle: Case Study

Look at this example from the former Charlie and Ben Podcast:

> **Ben**: "Call Her Daddy" is the name of the podcast, you don't know the name of the girls
>
> **Charlie**: (interrupts) <— Disempowering 1
> So for you who don't know "Call Her Daddy" is the name of the show, <— Fixes Ben's mistake without power-protection. Disempowering 2
> (back to Ben) you can tell the story you know better than I <— Doesn't apologize and tasks him. Disempowering 3
>
> **Ben**: (answering right away) Yeah sure, <— Too fast and obsequious
> so Call Her Daddy… <— Executes the task

Maybe it's not too surprising these two aren't friends anymore.

See **Power University** for the solution.

4.2. Break The "They Task-You Obey" Flow

Similar approach, but rather than simply waiting, you take a more proactive approach.

For example, if the host invites you to go inside, you make a quick comment first.
Then, after you broke the flow, you can even add “OK, let’s go” to “steal the lead”.

You can also do the same directly to the host.
For example:

> **Host**: let’s go inside now
> **You**: yeah, sure (this is social grease, your next sentence flows more naturally and he’s more likely to comply).
> But first, did you get what I mean though when I say…

As soon as they reply, you “broke” the task-execution chain, and then you can start walking inside without losing power.

Basically, the format here is:

1. **They task you**
2. **You break the flow** and either open a new topic, task back with a smaller request (like a question), or even simply just make a comment
3. **Lead (Optional)**, and take charge of doing what they initially proposed to do

4. Repeat The Task With “I Will… “: Self-Tasking

Simple, yet genius.

It works like this:

Instead of saying “OK” or confirming your execution **repeat the task as if it were your own self-generated decision**.

And bonus points if you change a detail.
Example:

> **Him**: put the report in the folder by EOB please
> **You**: I'll upload the report (<—- self-tasking)
> by 12pm (<—- improve a detail)
> Cheers (<—-closes the conversation and gets back to work)

Or you can improve a detail to seem more detail-oriented, such as "I'll upload the report in the appropriate folder".

And it doesn't even look like you're fighting them.

Cool, eh?

5. Power Align & Justify The Task

A great example from XH:

> **Tasker**: Could you write down in a document the findings of your research?
> **You**: It will bring us in sync, good idea. I'll let you all know once done and share it with the team

Such as, instead of fighting the idea or task, you embrace it (power align or "pacing") and explain why it's a good idea (justify the execution).
Aligning removes the top down, "he tasks / you execute" frame, while the justification increases your agency, freewill, and leadership points.

A specific form of power alining is also:

5.2. Pace & Lead: Shift The Focus to the Bigger Goal

They ask to move the pawn… You think how it will get you to the king
This technique is very leader-like.

It works like this:

You start from the micro-level of the task, and put it in the macro-level perspective of how it helps you achieve the bigger goals.

For example:

> **Her**: put the report in the folder by EOB please
> **You**: yeah, we need this customer, let's go get him (<— it's not about "putting the report in the folder", which is monkey-type of work, it's about "winning the customer")

Or taking the lead:

> **Her**: put the report in the folder by EOB please
> **You**: much sooner than EOB, we need to move quick with this account, I really want to get them. I'll give you a heads up as soon as it's there

Now you're not following anymore, you're the one who drives things forward.

5.3. Agree With The Task Rationale

If you can make your obedience seem self-generated, then it's not obedience at all.

So for example, if they invite you to go inside:

> **Host**: Let's go back inside and finish our business talk. (invites to go through the door first) After you
> **You**: Yeah man, I'm freezing here, let's go inside

Now the frame is that you *wanted* to go back inside.
Still there is some power loss, but minimizing the power loss can still be a good result.

6. Execute & Re-Task Them

The general principle is:

If they task you and you task them back for something else, it's a draw.

So every time you accept the task but tell them to do something for you, you generally lose no power.

And if you add some other techniques, you can even end up on top.
For example:

> **Her**: put the report in the folder by EOB please
> **You**: I'm going to put it there right now (<— "improve a detail" technique),
> please check it by EOB (<— retask),
> I want to send it to the customer within today (<—- final part of "pace and lead" and focus on the bigger strategic goal)

7. Disempower Them Back To Even Things Out

The concept is basic "power accountancy".

We delve deeper in Power University, but the basic principle is this:

⚖ **The power loss is your disempowerment, minus theirs**
⍰ If you disempower back, you're even

But you must ensure it's calibrated to the right situations and smooth -or you'll lose social capital-.

Tasking Power Dynamics

Assigning task is a power move.

From an interpersonal power dynamics perspective, taskers are higher-power leaders, executioners are lower-power subordinates.

By assigning tasks, they self-frame themselves as higher status.

However, nothing is set until you execute:

- **IF you execute, you lose power**, submitting to their will, and confirming you're below them
- **If refuse, you may gain power**, sub-communicating you're equal or above, or that you're socially dominant
  But it depends on:
  - Immediate consequences: if they escalate, will you back down?
  - Long-term consequences: will you pay a (social) price?

What Determines Your Power Loss

- **Tasker's dominance:** more aggressive and curt, more disempowerment
- **Acknowledgment**: more ostentatious and submissive, more disempowerment

- **Your input**: less contribution, more disempowerment
- **Your agreement**: more disagreement, more disempowerment
- **Personal gain/loss**: more personal loss, more disempowerment
- **Speed of execution**: faster execution, more disempowerment

- **Effort**
  - Execution effort: higher effort, more disempowerment
  - Tasking effort: lower effort, more disempowerment
- **Task importance**: lower importance, more disempowerment

Our techniques below affect these principles to maintain power.

Diagnostics & Strategies

Context and situation are king.

To assess, the stronger the 'no', the bigger the disempowerment:

- Is he in a **position to task?** Ie.: a superior, project lead, more experienced, etc.
- Is this task within **my responsibilities?**
- Is he **respectful?**
- Is it **balanced** for social exchange, effort, social expectations?

⍰ Example: Why I Pushed Back

I pushed back because:

1. **Exchange imbalance**: We provide convenient self-development opportunities pro bono: we're the givers
2. **Effort imbalance**: Interested should look up basic info
   - The information he requests is public
3. **Fails the 'sensible person test'**: Basic information is obviously available
4. **Too curt (disrespectful)** given the situation
5. **I'd set a bad precedent**

When he showed up, he was particularly kind and friendly to me.

This is a preview from Power University, our program to turn good man into effective winners

The Science of Getting Rich: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 February 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Science of Getting Rich*, Wallace Wattles states that there is plenty of wealth and happiness to go around and he teaches that to gain that wealth and happiness you must manifest it with your thoughts, be grateful for what you already have, and then work to add even more.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - It's OK To Want & Seek Wealth
  - The 2 Misconceptions Around Wealth
  - Everything In The World Is Made Of The Same Original Substance
  - The 1st Key to Riches: Thoughts
  - The 2nd Key to Riches: Gratitude
  - The 3rd Key to Riches: Faith
  - The 4th Key to Riches: Action
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Thoughts can bring things to life
- The more grateful you are for what you have, the more you'll attract
- You must take action: thoughts can bring things into your life, but only action will really make them yours

Full Summary

About The Author:
Wallace Delois Wattles was an American New Thought writer born in 1860.
Wikipedia says not much is known about him, but his writing has been very influential in the New Thought and self-help movements and he inspired Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret*.

It's OK To Want & Seek Wealth

Wattles says that the desire of getting rich is natural and there's nothing wrong with it.

Even love, he says, requires wealth since love gives you the desire of giving material gifts (giving and receiving gifts is indeed one of the 5 love languages).

As a matter of fact, striving for more is good, says the author, because it's the only way to serve others and God.

The 2 Misconceptions Around Wealth

The author says it's not true that:

1. Rich people were born into money
2. Not everyone can be rich because there's a finite amount of wealth

Everything In The World Is Made Of The Same Original Substance

Everything in the world is composed of the same substance, which Wattles calls “Original Substance”.
The original substance always regenerates, and that’s why everyone can have as much as he wants.

The 1st Key to Riches: Thoughts

The Science of Getting Rich starts with your mind.

Your thoughts shape the Original Substance in a way that it can create what you want.
In a nutshell: **you can create things with your own thoughts**.
But it’s important that you are detailed and specific in thinking about what you want.

The 2nd Key to Riches: Gratitude

Thoughts are not enough. The second step is gratitude.
The more grateful you are for the Substance you have, the more you will attract.

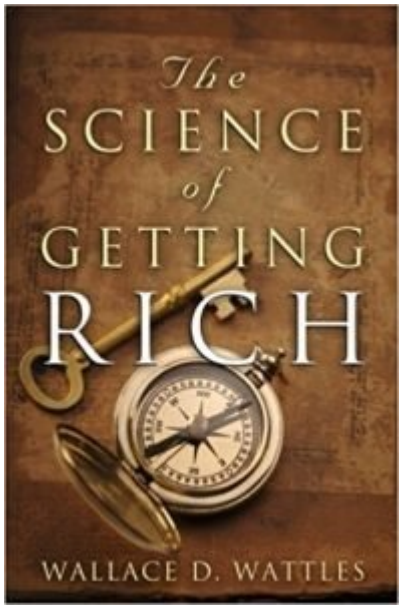
The 3rd Key to Riches: Faith

The third step in *The Science of Getting Rich* is faith. You need to believe that you can get what you want.

The 4th Key to Riches: Action

Thoughts will attract what you want, but action will really make them yours.

When you take action make sure to fully focus with both your body and mental presence.
And whatever it is that you do, you should have full faith that, in some way, it helps humanity (“increase principle”).



Review

The Science of Getting Rich is a typical New Thought book largely based on the law of attraction and, frankly, we’re not huge fans of it here.

It’s similar to all other New Thought books such as *You Can Heal Your Life*, *As A Man Thinketh*, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, and the Godfather of them all, *Think and Grow Rich*.

Unlike *The Secret* though, I appreciate that *The Science of Getting Rich* at least encourages people to take lots of action.
And it has some good golden nuggets as well. Including, for example, the concept of not focusing on competition but on creation.

Overall, we have to restate the obvious that **this is definitely NOT science** and I truly dislike like it when someone sells obviously and demonstrably unscientific principles as unscientific.
On the positive side, thinking positively will certainly do you good, but the full book may not be worth your time.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Big Magic: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 February 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Big Magic is a book on creative production and creative living in which the author Elizabeth Gilbert provides both inspiration and advice on how to live creatively and produce creative work.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - 1. Start No Matter What
  - 2. Write To Entertain Yourself, Not To Help Others
  - 3. Think of Your Courageous Act
  - 4. Live With Fear
  - 5. Be Authentic, Not Original
  - 6. Everything Sucks Sometimes, So Learn to Live With It
  - 7. When The Going Gets Tough, Keep Going
- Real Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Ditch perfectionism**: perfectionism is the serial killer of creative endeavors
- **A creative life is a happy life**
- **Authenticity first**: don't seek to be different at all costs, seek to be authentic instead
- **Give the gift of your creativity**: this world needs you to be as creative as you can be

Summary

About the Author:
Elizabeth Gilbert is an American journalist and author. *Big Magic* and *Eat, Pray, Love* are her two most popular books.

1. Start No Matter What

You might be in a situation where you get excited thinking about something you could do. But if you stop there, then fears will kick in. You will postpone and never do it.

Start no matter what instead.

2. Write To Entertain Yourself, Not To Help Others

This may be contrarian advice and many people won't like it, BUT if you're writing creatively, it's great advice in my opinion.

Says the author:

> "Whenever anybody tells me they want to write a book in order to help other people, I always think, Oh, please don't…I would so much rather you wrote a book in order to entertain yourself than to help me"

Plus, "wanting to help others" is babying and sets up an annoying teacher frame that may rub readers the wrong way.

3. Think of Your Courageous Act

The author acknowledges that starting anything creative is often scary.

The first step to overcoming that fear is thinking of a time you did do something courageous. Think about it. How did you feel? How elated you were soon after? What did it do to your self-esteem?

4. Live With Fear

Fear will always be there when you do something new and creative.

It's normal, so don't beat yourself up.
Instead of trying to fully eradicate fear instead, **learn to coexist with the fear and let your desire be greater than your fear**.

Let your fear and creative spirit feed upon each other.

5. Be Authentic, Not Original

I could relate to this part of *Big Magic*.

Elizabeth Gilbert says that most people don't start because they feel their idea has already been done. But everything's already been done. You don't have to be unique, you have to be authentic.

Give your own spin to whatever you have in mind.

I personally prefer putting it in a different way. Don't strive to be unique: strive to be the best.

6. Everything Sucks Sometimes, So Learn to Live With It

No matter what you do, there will be times when your work sucks.

Don't let that stop you.
That's further motivation instead to really seek what you're passionate about, so that the bits you love will always weigh more than the bits you don't love.

Albeit if you're doing something really creative, Elizabeth Gilbert says, you should prioritize curiosity over passion.

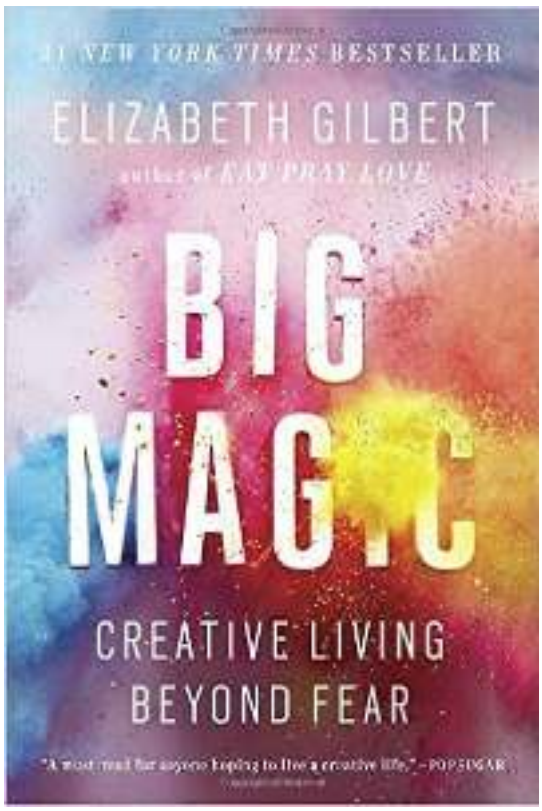
7. When The Going Gets Tough, Keep Going

There will be times when the creative process will be a bit more difficult than usual.

And times when *everything* will be more difficult than usual.

Those are the times you need to keep going.

Also read Grit by Angela Duckworth.



Real Life Applications

- **Start…**

Whatever you want to do.. Start it.

- **... And keep going**

And don't stop.

- **Stop complaining if you want to live a more creative life**

Creatives don't complain, but use their art for change, inspiration, or escape.

- **Don't quit your day job.**

Most artists don't make a living from their art.

Plus, you want to keep the job to free yourself from the burden of expecting art to pay the bills;

- **Think of success as doing what you love**

Don't think that success looks like money or acclaim.
Instead, if you love what you're doing, that's already your success.

- **Get an agent**

Because "who you know" matters more than "what you know".

- **Follow your curiosity when you have no inspiration**

CONS

- **You may not find anything "new"**

Albeit it's a good book and an easy read, it doesn't break much new ground (neither in itself nor via an overview of the best perspectives and bits of advice on creativity).

However, as Elizabeth says herself, everything has already been written.

Sometimes it's about new perspectives.

- **Some woo-woo nonsense**

The author says that ideas are like entities with a live of their own, something I don't agree with but that doesn't ruin the book in itself.

However, when she says she had "passed the idea" to her friend with a kiss, then it gets a bit too nonsense.

- ***Big Magic* mostly addresses creative *writing***

There are many creative endeavors, but the biggest focus in Big Magic is writing.
While some of the topics go well beyond writing, (aspiring) writers might the most out of it.

- **Not an "how to"**

Big Magic is more about inspiration, encouragement, and a bit of mindsets. It's not really a "how to" book.

PROS

- **The author may have the credentials**

Elizabeth Gilbert may have the credentials to write a book on creative writing.

- **Strikes a good mix of autobiography and self-help**

Big Magic mixes self-help with autobiography. Even if you're not interested in the author's life, it made the book more entertaining and provided some cases for real-life examples of creative writing.

Review

Big Magic is a good book for beginners and aspiring writers who struggle to push through and go from "aspiring" to "actual writer.

The concept of fear as a creatives' block reminded me of *Linchpin* by Seth Godin, but I found *Big Magic* better as it provides some more practical tips.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon.

Word of Mouth Marketing: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 March 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Word of Mouth Marketing (2015) explains what word-of-mouth marketing is and provides readers with a few tips and ideas on how to leverage it to help grow their business.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - The Two Rules of WoM
  - Word of Mouth Marketing Manifesto
  - Who Are WoM People?
  - The Types of WoM Talkers
  - Why People Talk About You
- Real-Life Applications
- CONS
- PROS
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Happy customers = free ads**. Happy customers are your best marketing and advertising tool
- **Normal people are your everyday ads**. People spreading your brand are normal, everyday people. So treat all your customers well
- **Target influencers**. But besides treating every customer well, also try to target influencers in your niche
- **Be remarkable to get people talking** and get even more free advertising

Full Summary

About The Author:
Andy Sernovitz is a marketing expert, and founder of GasPedal, a business that helps companies develop peer-to-peer communities.

The Two Rules of WoM

The two rules of word-of-mouth marketing are:

1. Give people a reason to talk about your stuff
2. Make it easier for that conversation to take place

In even simpler terms, **WoM marketing is everything you can do to get people talking**.

Andy Sernovitz says that WoM marketing as the acronym equivalent of B2B and B2C, is B2C2C.
Such as: the business originates the products and ideas.
And then it lets the people do the propagation.

Word of Mouth Marketing Manifesto

The 7 rules of word-of-mouth marketing are:

1. Make people happy
2. Be interesting or invisible
3. Great service starts great conversations
4. Marketing is what you do, not what you say
5. People are already talking, you must join the conversation.
6. Be original: not worth talking about equals not worth doing
7. Negative WoM is an opportunity to learn

In brief, again, the very first best advertising tool is your customers.
Make people happy and you get free, high-quality advertising.

Who Are WoM People?

It's everyone, really.

There is a popular idea that some "top influencing" people do all the word-of-mouth marketing.
This idea originates from pop-psychology author Malcolm Gladwell, who wrote about in The Tipping Point.

Gladwell's concept is that of a few "super-infectors" who drive most of the spread of a virus.

Some people apply the same concept to WoM marketing, saying there are a few of ultra-hip and ultra-connected talkers.

My Note: This Is The "Two-Step Flow of Communication" Theory
It wasn't Gladwell who came up with this concept, though. That's actually an old theory in communication called "Two-Step Flow of communication". It's based on the idea of a smaller number of "thought leaders" drive most people's opinions.

However, the author says that's not true.

It's ordinary people who fuel the real word-of-mouth marketing.

The Types of WoM Talkers

There are a few different types of people who will do word-of-mouth marketing for you:

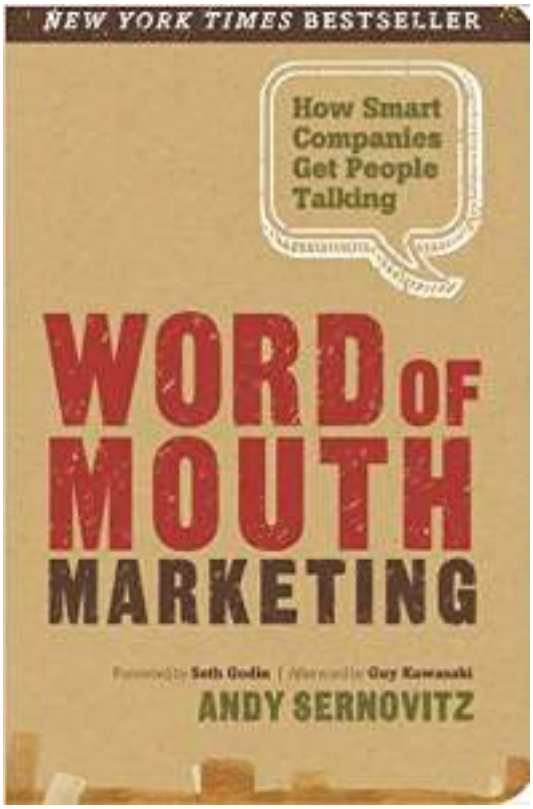
- Happy customers
- Online talkers (leave a review or a comment online)
- Logo lovers (people wearing your logo)
- Eager employees
- Listeners (people eager to hear from you)
- Fans and hobbyists (the most die-hard talkers)
- Professionals (reporters)

Why People Talk About You

People will fundamentally talk about you and/or your product for three reasons:

1. They like you
2. You make them look smart with your product

3. They want to belong to a group



Real-Life Applications

Be Remarkable

People don't talk about ordinary stuff. They talk about their first times, the unusual, the out-of-ordinary, and whatever catches their attention.
So, be remarkable and memorable.

CONS

Bit Common Sense

The information in the book is well structured and some of it may feel a bit like common sense. There are quite a few good nuggets and it can still be a great reminder anyway.

PROS

Highly Relevant to Today's World

Today getting reviews and opinions from word of mouth (or bytes) is probably more popular and commonplace than it's ever been.

Review

Word Of Mouth Marketing is a good overview of word-of-mouth marketing.

There's nothing earth-shattering, but there are good ideas and concepts and it's important for any businessman to know what word-of-mouth marketing is.

However, putting it to actual use is a completely different thing.

It's a bit like *The Tipping Point*, *Contagious*, or *Crossing the Chasm*.
These books have great reviews, and for good reasons. They are great books, indeed.
But I have never heard of anyone who "tipped the point / went viral / crossed the chasm / achieved mass market penetration" thanks to the theoretical knowledge acquired with those books.

Basically: good theory and fundamental theory, but not "how to" books and you need your own creativity to turn the information into an effective plan or system.
For example, the advice "be remarkable" may make sense in theory and for some products, but… HOW are you going to be remarkable when everyone else is trying the same?
And even then, just being remarkable is not enough. Few remarkable products or ads "go viral". So, in my opinion, your best bet is probably always focusing on making the best products you can and then may be think about how to get word-of-mouth marketing.

So, in brief, learn about it, but don't expect that this book will 10x your sales via word-of-mouth -or even that you will 10x your word-of-mouth sales without adding your own creativity-.

Still, overall, it's a good book and easy to read.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

How to Be a Bawse: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 March 2023 · Archived copy · Original

How to Be a Bawse is a mix of biographical tidbits from Lilly Singh's life, a comedy book, and a self-help manual with advice and tips for the readers.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Summary
  - Conquer Your Thoughts
  - Stay Outside Your Comfort Zone
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  - Quotes
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Bullet Summary

- **Don't look for shortcuts**: develop your self-control to become a hard worker and do the stairs instead
- **Avoid cheap self-validation**: reward yourself on accomplishments and contributions instead
- **Use your pain** to take action kick-start your new life

Summary

Lilly Sing says that "How to be a Bawse" contains no secrets or magic tips. Simply because, she says, there are no secrets or magic tips.

Conquer Your Thoughts

The best way to stop people from pushing your buttons, is pushing your own.

However, Lilly says, there is no secret sauce or shortcut to learning to control your mind. It's a long process that takes time and continuous effort.

It requires you to ask questions to learn about yourself and answer honestly.

Stay Outside Your Comfort Zone

Lilly Singh says to learn, grow get better, and accomplish anything in life you need to be able to push your comfort zone.

Everyone who has achieved anything has had failures and moments of shame and embarrassment.

Her first videos for example were terrible she says and it was not easy for her to push outside her comfort zone.

The author implies that even overnight successes -or those who claim to have been overnight successes- had to go through difficult times outside their comfort zone.

Drake for example says he went from 1 to 100 very quickly, but the author instead says he still went from 1 to 2 and to 3.

And he even got booed off stage once.

Set Emotions Aside

The author says that emotions cloud judgment and reduce creativity.

My Note: Not Fully True
Trevis Tradberry says that paying attention to our emotions is the best way to make critical decisions.

And negotiation expert Christopher Voss says in Never Split the Difference that taking emotions out of negotiations has been the biggest mistake in decades of bad negotiation.

Lilly Ling says that a bawse knows when to have tunnel vision and only focus on your goal, without emotions getting in the way.

I agree more when she proposes instead to ask yourself: does this emotion help you move towards your goal? If yes, embrace it, if not, put it away.

Own Your Mistakes

Lilly Lingh says that mistakes are cool and a great way to learn.

The bawse approaches mistakes in this way:

1. Takes ownership
2. Call yourself out (answer to your inner bawse before your boss)
3. Come up with a solution (specific)
4. Apologize openly (says you're a responsible adult)

The examples Lilly gives are really really good from a communication perspective.

Take the Stairs

The author invites the reader to choose hard work and dedication over looking for the shortcuts.

It's exhausting taking the stairs, but it's the only way to build a solid business.

And you can really be proud of yourself like a bawse, because you did. Not luck, not circumstances, not outside help or shortcuts.

Opportunities for Success Are Infinite

When you take the stairs, you don't need to rely on a single big shot.

There are no big shots that you can't miss indeed.

If you build your career or gamble your fortunes on a single shot, you are not working properly.

In Lilly's words:

If one opportunity will make or break your success, your idea of success is not solid to begin with

Awesome, I couldn't agree more.

Don't Use Social Media

Lilly echoes something that a few authors also said about social media (Mark Manson, Brene Brown).

And that's that social media is basically fake and designed to showcase only the best of the best that people do.

But that "best of the best" is not real life and only serves to make us feel bad.

Leverage Your Pain

Lilly Singh says that sometimes she replies to the question "what are you most grateful for in your life" with "depression".

Lilly started making YouTube videos in 2010 to make herself laugh and get out of depression.

All of her success, she says, is the result of taking that pain and turning it into something positive.

It's a great concept.

It is exactly what we talked about in leveraging your pain and failure and something I'm not too unfamiliar with myself.

> Failure & Anger As Fuel for Success: How The Power Moves Started

Drop the Entitlement Mindset

We live in a world that panders to our egos and tells us repeatedly how great we are.

And that makes us naturally feel entitled to success.

Without having to earn it.

Bawses don't feel entitled to success but feel empowered by the challenge to earn it.

Lilly believes that believing in a great bawse is a great way to stay grounded (ie.: fate or God).

And also, remind yourself that wherever new place you go, your past accomplishments mean little (indeed, read social status relativity and the small pond syndrome).

Read more:

- How to overcome entitlement mindset

Don't Get Easily Validated

Easy validation can get to your head, says Lilly Singh.

These days it's everywhere, and it's easy to start feeling validated for the completely wrong things and for what we haven't really earned.

Lilly says instead that a bawse only feels validated if:

- Contributes to society
- Accomplishes goals

How to Behave Like a Bawse

Being this a website on social skills and social dynamics, I particularly enjoyed her social tips and found them to be very good:

- Smile for a reason
- Listen to understand
- Don't reply with empty platitudes: mean what you say
- Live in the moment: be present

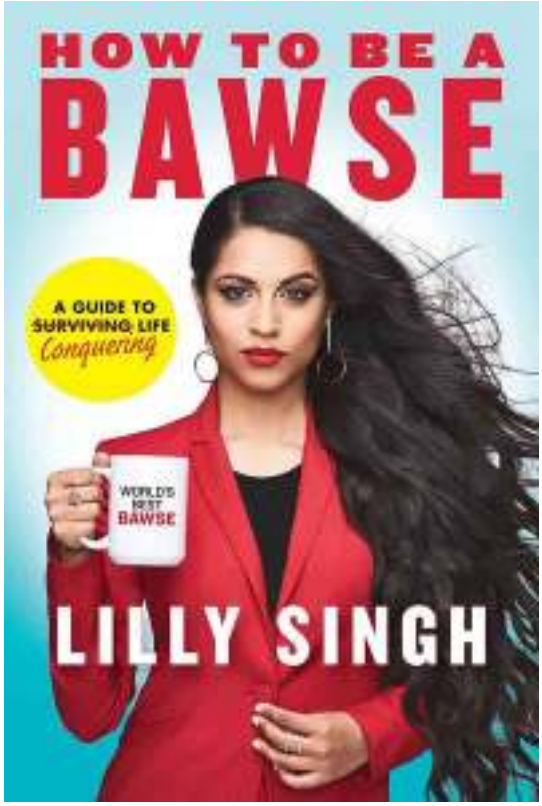
Again Lilly has some very good examples on meaning what you say.

Only Talk About Positive Things

Talking and commenting on negative things only multiplies and increases negativity in your life. It's a vicious circle.

And it's especially bad if you do it on VIP gossip.

Commit instead to only commenting and talking about positive things.



Quotes

Some of the many great quotes in the book include:

- Well I do have a million dollars and it hasn't changed anything. Money is the result of what I do, not the reason I do
- Taking ownership of a mistake is like attending class: it's the only way you'll learn from it. Not admitting is like

skipping class and wasting your tuition.
- Make every struggle count and remember that experience will always be a silver lining”
- When you are climbing the ladder, the heaviest piece of clothing you wear is your pride
- If you’re going to do it, do it the best you possibly can
- Words can lie. Actions can lie too. Consistency speaks the truth
- Fitness is not about big muscles and hours at the gym… Is to allow your body to keep up with your hustles

Real-Life Applications

- **If You Must Get Validation, Make It Achievement-Based**

I really liked the chapter on ego and validation. It’s something I stress a lot in Antifragile Ego and Ultimate Power.

I prefer to reward the process, but Lilly’s concept of validation from achievements instead of praise is certainly a step forward anyway.

- **Build Up Self Control With Small Decisions**

Self-control is a like a muscle that increases over time.

You can help yourself exercise that muscle by choosing to control smaller daily actions and rituals.

For example the author decided to never swear, and that helped her increase self-control.

- **What Would Your Future Self Thank You For Doing Today?**

To overcome the fear of missing out Lilly recommends this great question to ask yourself.

Once you know the answer, you know what you gotta do.

CONS

- **Emotions Cloud Judgement and Reduce Creativity… Not**

The author says you need to put aside emotions because they impair your critical judgment and even your creativity.

She says that’s what science says, then jokingly says it’s not true. And then adds that if science said anything about it, it would confirm her point of view.

Basically she has no research but feels entitled to give scientific background to her personal stance.

That’s not an approach I can approve of.

And indeed her point of view is likely wrong.

- **Refences to Her Gender and Skin As “Pretty Awesome” Is “Pretty Weak”**

It’s just a small blemish, but I found her line of “my sex and skin color are pretty awesome” to be quite weak, even if delivered as a joke.

- **Bit Self-Centered**

The book flirts with “me, me, me” narcissism.

I couldn’t help but not notice that the book is dedicated to the author herself -“to the person she was 6 years ago”.

And when she lists the reasons why you might be listening to the book she says “or maybe you’ve never heard of

me, and that's completely fine".

- **Relationship Advice From Someone Who's Never Been Into One?**

The author gives some tidbits of relationship advice. However, she herself says she's never been in a relationship.

PROS

- **Some Truly Good Quotes**

We like good quotes here, and there are really a ton of great ones.

- **Deep Topics With Irony**

It's not easy to mix some of the deep topics mentioned in *How to be a Bowse* with lots of ironies. But Lilly does it well.

- **Some Quite Funny Lines**

Albeit Lilly's irony does not exactly matches my type of irony, she has plenty of great lines for every taste.

Some examples:

- Honesty is the new black
- Yes, when I take a break from my YouTube videos, I watch YouTube videos. Hashtag reasons I'm single
- Oh, I didn't see you there bawse… Said no one ever

Not bad :).

Update: I watched a few of her videos and some of skits are so good that I even re-watched them. She's good. And she's also a great role if you want to learn nonverbal communication.

- **Irony Without Cussing**

I remember a great line from Eminem "Will Smith don't cuss to sell records. Well I do, so fuck him, and fuck you too".

Lol that was terribly funny I thought. However, I respect people who can achieve the same results -or even better- without the cussing. Which, in a way, is a bit of a shortcut.

Props to Lilly for achieving that.

She walks the talk on the stairs thing.

- **Great Audiobook Voice!**

Lilly wanted to be an actor, she says.

And it shows.

Her voice tonality, melody and excursion are great (maybe a bit too over the top sometimes but again, that's her style).

It really makes the book go fast (but don't go too fast because there is a lot of deep material that does require some good introspection to fully grasp).

Review

How to be a Bawse is both entertaining and informative as it effectively mixes autobiography with humor,

motivation and solid self-development tips.

I read a lot of self-help books made by people who achieved a certain fanbase and then decided to add “author” to their own titles.

Those books are rather poor and extremely thin.

Honestly, I was expecting something similar from How to be a Bawse.

I was terribly wrong.

How to be a Bawse has great content.

The delivery, starting from the title and all the celebs’ references and jokes, is not my style (albeit several lines are quite funny).

But How to be a Bawse condenses a few of the most critical best lessons of the whole self-help literature.

And Lilly Singh successfully manages to marry great (and serious) content with her own style. Hot to be a Bawse, the final result, is a book that will both appeal to her audience and deliver life-changing content.

Whether the readers will be able to sieve through the jokes to get the life-changing content is another question, but Lilly did her part by putting it out there.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Steve Jobs Exclusive Biography: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 March 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In the *Steve Jobs Exclusive Biography* author Walter Isaacson recounts Job's life, achievements, and a few "dirty secrets" that shed a better light on who Steve Jobs really was.

Contents

- Key Takeaways
- Notes
  - Growing Up
  - LSD & Spirituality
  - Apple Idea
  - Steve Jobs Personality
  - Macintosh
  - Steve Jobs Gets Fired
  - NeXT & Pixar
  - Jobs' Family Life
  - Back to Apple: Advisor
  - Back to Apple: CEO
  - Digital Hub Strategy: iPod, iPhone, iPad
  - Closed, Integrated Systems
  - Microsoft & Google Spats
  - Cancer Treatment Jobs' Way
- CONS
- Review
  - Power Moves, Ambition, & Ruthless Drive

Key Takeaways

- **Undermine your opponents**: Jobs accused Microsoft of copying OS (but Apple "borrowed" from Xerox)
- **Get as much free PR as possible**: Steve Jobs manipulated the press to get better coverage for the Mac
- **Don't forget to make money**: Wozniak wanted to give the idea of the Apple I for free, but Jobs convinced him otherwise
- **Use hyperagency to achieve goals but don't abandon science for the "reality distortion field"**: Jobs believed he could cure cancer with acupuncture and eating fruits

Notes

About the Author:
Walter Isaacson was the CEO of CNN, Managing Director of Time, and author of several biographies.
I find it interesting that such a successful man would spend so much time on researching and writing biographies (he also wrote Leonardo da Vinci, Benjamin Franklin, Einstein and Kissinger).
When it comes to Steve Jobs, this is the only authorized biography.

Growing Up

It wasn't the biological parents who raised Steve Jobs. The mother had to give him away because her strictly Christian family wouldn't recognize a baby with a Muslim.

Steve Job's biography says Job got interested in design because of the way their house was structured and he got into tech because his father, as a mechanic, tried to lead him in that direction.

My Note: plenty of mechanics sons who are not interested in tech and plenty of designer children who are not interested in design. So I'd be wary of connecting the dots that way.

Wozniak

Steve Jobs met Wozniak in high school. Wozniak was five years older and already good with computers. He taught Jobs a lot about what back then was still an emerging technology.

In 1971 the two launched "Blue Box", a device for long distance free phone calls.

It cost $40 to produce and they sold 100 of them at $150. Blue Box gave the two the first glimpse on entrepreneurship and what they could achieve in the emerging field of computers.

LSD & Spirituality

The counterculture of the '60s heavily influenced Steve Jobs. He delved into spiritual philosophies, meditative introspection and experimented with psychedelic drugs.

Steve Jobs attributes his sense of aesthetics and extreme focus to his experiences with psychedelic drugs and spirituality. And, interestingly, he also attributes to LSD the focus of what's important in life. For Steve Jobs, producing great products was important.

Reality Distortion Field

LSD and spirituality helped Steve Jobs develop a view of life that came to be called "reality distortion field". Such as that no matter the odds or the challenges, if he decided that something had to happen he would bend reality to his will to make it happen.

TPM Note: not just drugs, but potentially psychology
This 'distortion field' sounds to me more like hyper-agency and hyper-optimism, coupled with a potentially narcissistic tendency towards grandiosity.
Read more here:

- How to develop 'effective grandiosity'

> Antifragile Grandiosity: How 'Humble Grandiosity' Makes You Powerful

Minimalist Approach

Isaacson says that Steve Job's minimalist approach was influenced by Zen Buddhism, which he explored during his famous Indian trip while exploring Eastern Philosophies.

Apple Idea

It was actually Wozniak who had the idea of Apple.

Wozniak attended the Homebrew Computer Club, a nerd and computer lovers meetup venue. The mindset there was that the counterculture philosophy and the technology revolution were somewhat interlinked.

Indeed Wozniak wanted to freely share his “all in one” computer idea -instead of the several separate pieces that computers were back then-.

Very interestingly, Isaacson says that it was Jobs who convinced Wozniak that they profit from the product instead.

Apple Beginning

In 1976, on Wozniak’s idea, Apple was born with 1.300 in startup capital.

The two worked hard for a whole month hand-building 100 computers: the Apple I. Half of them were sold to a local computer store and the other half to friends and customers.

Steve Jobs Personality

LSD, meditation and eastern philosophies didn’t seem to calm down Jobs’ temper.

The Steve Jobs book says that he was an erratic individual no stranger to tantrums and fits of rage. He was a painstaking perfectionist and when the quality of the work was not up to his standards he would verbally assault people (read: how to act when your boss yells at you).

Steve Jobs VS Mike Scott

As Apple grew, Steve Jobs personality became more of an issue.

Isaacson says Mike Scott was appointed as Apple’s director with two tasks:

1. Rein in Jobs unbridled perfectionism
2. Mediate relations between difficult Steve and the employees

For example, after going through 2.000 shades of beige Jobs didn’t think any was good enough for the Apple II case. And he spent days thinking about how rounded the corners should be.

Scott stepped in to ship the product instead of losing time and money on too small details.

Isaacson says that Mike Scott and Steve Jobs clashes would sometimes see Steve Jobs in tears. It was hard for him to give up control over Apple.

Macintosh

The Apple II was a big success, but it was mostly Wozniak’s creation.

Steve Jobs was highly driven to build something that “would make a dent on the universe” (a bit of an exaggeration, read: you’re not so important in the greater scheme of things).

Isaacson though says the Macintosh was not solely Job’s invention but he took the idea from Jef Raskin who was already working on the Mac’s project.

Since Jobs was the cofounder, he could take over the project. He did bring some good ideas though and you can read more here.

Macintosh Success

Also thanks to a great marketing campaign (including the famous 1984 commercial), the Mac was a huge success.

The Steve Jobs book biography says Jobs was able to increase that marketing clout by some sneaky maneuvers, such as tricking journalists into believing he was giving exclusive interviews.

Steve Jobs Gets Fired

The success of the Mac propelled Job's name together with that of the Mac.

But his bullying and harassing behavior continued unabated. His colleagues complained about him and Jobs relationships only continued to sour.

Eventually he reached a showdown with the board of directors, which decided to oust him.

My Note: make friends, not enemies
In a famous speech years later Steve Jobs rhetorically asks "how do you get fired from the company you founded". Well, by being an ahole, that's how.

NeXT & Pixar

NeXT

Steve Jobs finally had free reign to design computers the way he wanted. And that didn't go well. He insisted that NeXT computer case be a solid square.

It made it difficult to engineer it and cost $650.000. Add to that $100.000 for the logo, and Jobs' machine became delayed, overpriced, and sold little.

Pixar

During the same period as NeXT Jobs also acquired a majority stake in Pixar.

It wasn't going too well either, and Jobs at a certain point ended up losing $50 million on it while still losing money on NeXT.

A first success for Pixar came with Tin Toy.

Albeit not a hugely grossing movie, it showcased Pixar's uniqueness in computer animation. And that's when Jobs shifted focus from software and hardware to Pixar.

In 1996 Pixar secures a Disney deal to produce Toy Story, which was the biggest-grossing movie of the year and allowed Pixar to go public. With the IPO, Jobs became almost a billionaire as he still held 80% of the company's shares.

Jobs' Family Life

Jobs married Laurene Powell in 1991 with the blessing of his old Zen master. They had three children.

Powell also encouraged Jobs to be closer to the daughter he had from his previous relationship, Lisa Brennan.

Jobs did so and Lisa eventually moved in to live together with Jobs and Powell. Lisa was also temperamental and since neither of the two was good at making amends, they could go months without saying a word.

It's interesting because Jobs' attitude in his private life was the same as at his job.

Back to Apple: Advisor

Isaacson explains how Jobs actually got back into Apple's saddle through the backdoor.

Apple wasn't doing too well and Gil Amelio, the CEO at the time, knew he had to get fresh ideas.

He acquired NeXT software, thus making Jobs an advisor to Apple.

The board, looking for a change, offered Jobs the role of CEO, but he refused, trying to change the company from his advisor position. He also set out looking for a new CEO and forced the board to resign to increase the pace of

the change.

He struck a deal with the big rival Microsoft, ending a decade of legal battles and helping Apple's stock to soar.

Eventually, he reluctantly took the CEO job post.

Back to Apple: CEO

Jobs refocused the company on the basics. Fewer products, and top-notch quality. Four to be precise: a desktop and a laptop. One for mass market and one for professionals.

Jony Ive

Steve Jobs realized the talent of a great designer in the team: Jony Ive, and made him the second most powerful person in the company. The first product the pair came out with was iMac.

The iMac challenged the idea of how computers should look like, giving the laptop a playful look.

Apple Store

Isaacson says Jobs was worried the uniqueness of Apple could be lost among the big aisles of hardware stores. And therefore he decided to launch the Apple Store, which would also allow him to control the whole retail process.

Jobs of course got to work on it with discipline, focus and his famous detail attention. He wanted it to be minimalist and simple, and when it opened in 2001, it was a huge success.

Digital Hub Strategy: iPod, iPhone, iPad

Steve Jobs had a vision of the personal computer at the center of a new digital lifestyle.

It's what he called the digital hub strategy. It should be a computer controlling a variety of devices, and he started with music: the iPod.

- iPod: skeptics thought $399 was too much, but by 2007 it accounted for half of Apple's revenues
- iPhone: again, critics were skeptical about the price tag (look at the example below :)
- iPad was next in line. The press actually trashed it, but the iPad as well didn't do too shabbily

The triad had been successful in transforming the consumer technology industry.

Closed, Integrated Systems

Isaacson explains that Jobs always pushed for tightly integrated systems.

He didn't want consumers to modify the systems and didn't want other systems to communicate with Apple.

This obsession generated some conflicts, including with Microsoft and Google, both of which had a very different approach. They both preferred open systems and intercommunication.

My Note: Open systems win out
I think that, on a long enough time line, an open system has many advantages and will eventually destroy a closed one (Android sales as of 2018 obliterate iPhone's).

As a person, don't close yourself off (48 Laws of Power: isolation is dangerous).

Microsoft & Google Spats

Jobs accused Microsoft of copying the Macintosh's graphical interface (but Apple in turn had "borrowed" the idea from Xerox).

And Jobs also argues that Google had copied many of the iPhone's signature features with Android.

My Note:
"copying", in a way, is part and parcel of how capitalism works.

When the Ford T was a success, of course, other car manufacturers went for combustion engines. The market heads towards what works and what creates profits.

Cancer Treatment Jobs' Way

Isaacson says that Jobs approached his cancer the same way he approached much of the discording opinions he got in his life.

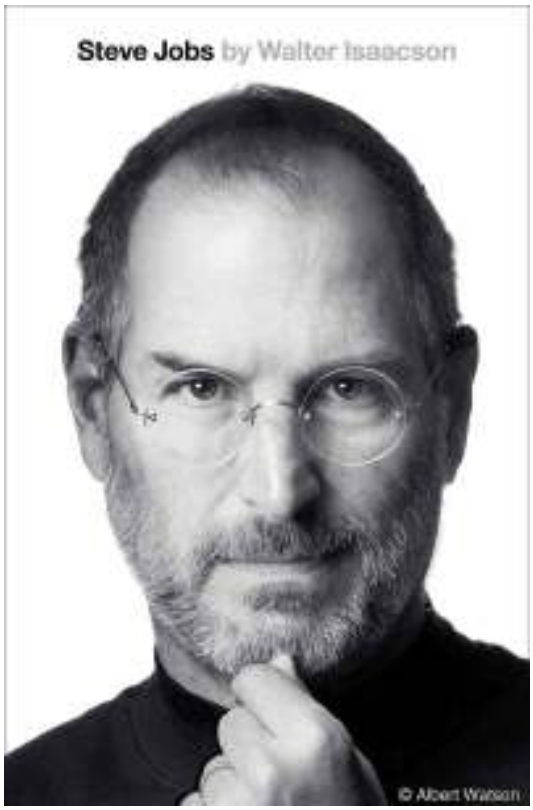
Such as, he did it his own way.

He refused conventional wisdom and in 2003 "cured himself" with acupuncture and vegan diets. Cancer only grew and required much more invasive surgery.

He did the same again when cancer returned in 2008, curing it with a diet of fruits and veggies.

On the subsequent (late) liver transplant, he never recovered.

Jobs died in 2011, living a trail of groundbreaking products, huge sales successes and a legacy of incredible entrepreneurship.



CONS

Reality Distortion Field: A Doubled-Edged Sword

The idea of a reality distortion field is interesting and it seems to draw a bit from the now-famous Law of Attraction.

But it's also dangerous. Job's Reality Distortion Field also included curing cancer with acupuncture and fruits.

I prefer coupling the reality distortion with Ray Dalio's principle of looking at reality, even when it hurts.

Authorized Biographies Embellish The Positives & Hide The Negatives

Albeit "authorized biography" is often used as a badge of honor, I don't necessarily see it that way. Authorized biographies tend to be embellished.

Review

Steve Jobs: The Exclusive Biography is an entertaining and instructive read, a wonderful resource to better understand Steve Jobs, and an excellent book.

I'm not a big fan of cult personalities, and I feel Steve Jobs and Apple do have a bit of a cult following. And when hype gets large enough, many tend to gloss over the less-than-ideal actions, decisions, and behaviors.

Power Moves, Ambition, & Ruthless Drive

My own interpretation of Steve Jobs after reading his biography is that, behind the LSD and spirituality, **Steve Jobs seemed high dominance, high antagonism, and potentially with some dark triad traits.** And not above several kinds of 'power moves'.

The way he landed deals, ousted rivals in the Macintosh project, and how he tricked journalists, for example.

I don't buy the Eastern philosophy and counterculture. Steve Jobs was also very ambitious.

I think that the ruthless drive and the way he had no patience for mistakes was a key ingredient in both his demise and his success.

I have seen in other highly driven individuals the tendency to "steamroll" people to get what they want. And it's probably hard for these people to be "calmer" and more accommodating.

I'd even have to wonder: would ruthlessly driven individuals lose their drive and genius if they were to calm down?

I'm not sure about that. I think not though. And I think they'd stand to gain if they worked with people instead of against them.

At the end of the day, the *Steve Jobs Biography* was a fascinating read and I can recommend it.

Learn more about entrepreneurship and its mindsets:

- **Mindsets & power strategies of entrepreneurship**

> The Entrepreneurial Power Model: A Master Guide to Leverage & Influence

Act Like a Success Think Like a Success: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 March 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Act Like a Success Think Like a Success is a self-help book by Steve Harvey that delivers Steve's life advice with a mix of autobiographical, motivational, and inspirational content.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Find Your Gift
  - Commit to Your Gift
  - Failure is Your Friend
  - Snub The Haters
  - More Good Advice
- Review

Bullet Summary

- Find what you're good at and build your career around it
- Commit to your gift and work hard at it
- Embrace failure

Full Summary

About The Author:
Steve Harvey is a comedian, TV host, and a devout Christian. He is also the author of popular dating books for women such as "Think Like A Man, Act Like A Lady" and "Straight Talk, No Chaser"

Introduction

Steve Harvey is one of those guys who "started from the bottom".

In that sense, he can be quite inspirational and he can connect with more normal readers the way that some other self-help authors cannot.

Harvey dropped out of school, worked a factory job until he was fired, stayed homeless for almost three years, and didn't get serious about success until he was in middle age.

And yet there he did it.

Find Your Gift

You should build your career -and possibly your life- around what you're good at.

To know what you're good at, you need to know yourself and you need to be brutally honest (love reality, says Ray Dalio in Principles).

Steve says you can turn any passion into a well-paying job.

My Note:
I don't fully agree here, though. You can turn *many* passions into high-paying job as millionaires videogamers can

testify.
But just like many other authors on this topic, I believe some passions are harder to monetize.
So you might at least want to think about that. Just don't let that stop you in your track. Countless "unmonetizable" businesses made millions.

Commit to Your Gift

To reach success, you must not only find your gift, but fully commit yourself to it.

My Note: fully committing to a gift not only is crucial for success, but will also heighten your passion for the gift. Read Grit by Angela Duckworth for more.

Failure is Your Friend

The need to embrace failure is a constant refrain in the self-help literature.

However, *Act Like a Success Think Like a Success* provides some very motivating real-life examples that back up the talk with the walk.

People laughed at Harvey when he quit his job to pursue comedy. And he lost every comedy competition he entered. He had some terrible performances in front of big crowds. And he was scared before any big major event.

Yet, he took some big lessons learned from his failures. Harvey started keeping tabs on his jokes. He scored based on the crowd's reaction and used that feedback to decide what could stay and what should go.

Snub The Haters

Steve Harvey recommends you don't find any time for the haters. When you respond and entertain them, you give them power.

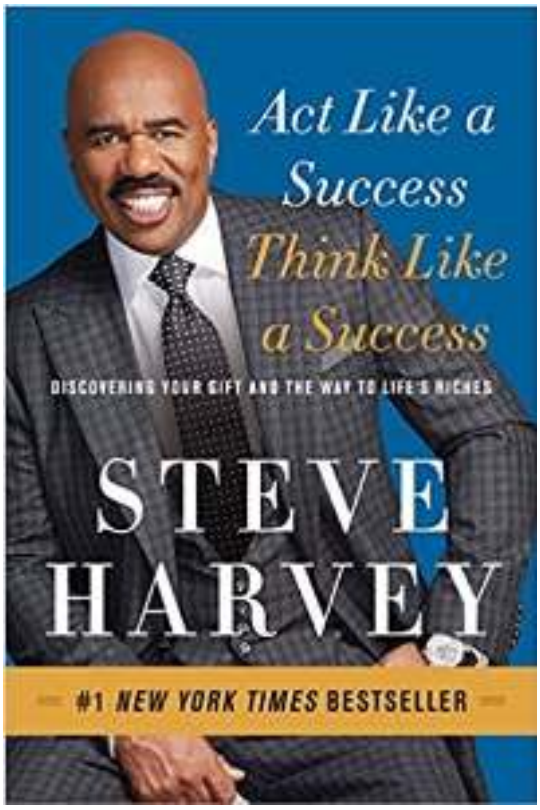
And you waste your precious time.

Keep climbing instead, and they will be so far down the ladder you won't even hear them anymore.

More Good Advice

And here is a list of good advice I handpicked:

- Remove excuses
- Avoid negative thoughts and negative people
- Only share goals and visions with a selected few
- Write a vision and constantly look at it (put it somewhere you see it every day)
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Know your worth and ask for equivalent compensation
- Success doesn't come overnight: start small and build your way up
- Learn to say no: Decide your value and refuse what doesn't support them



Review

Act Like a Success Think Like a Success is a good book on success mindsets and on the power of possibilities.

However, the most important advice on success may be missing, which is:

Feel like a success, and you already are a success.

Or better yet, don't care too much about "success", especially how other people define it, and you'll live a lot better.

When it comes to the book itself, the self-help part contains advice that is rather popular and well-known in the self-help literature (read best self-help books).

But the mix of theory plus real-life stories may even make it slightly better than the average self-help book. Contrary to some, Steve Harvey isn't trying to make money selling the advice: he's already made it to a successful position in life and *then* he is giving advice.

Since Harvey did start from very low and he did start late, *Act Like a Success Think Like a Success* Can also be very inspirational for readers.

I would recommend it first and foremost to anyone who likes Harvey, to people who start from humble beginnings, and those who'd like to become comedians.

Read more summaries or get the book on Amazon

Alpha Male Explained: 10 Traits, Examples, & How to Be One

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 March 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The term alpha male is commonly used to describe a man who is confident, ambitious, dominant, and socially powerful.

Research on **status and dominance** suggests that men who achieve higher social status tend to earn more, attract more partners, and often enjoy better health and well-being.

In this guide, you'll learn the **alpha male meaning**, the **10 core traits**, real-life examples, and the hidden weaknesses of alpha personalities.

Social power — especially high status and influence — is the primary trait associated with alpha males. Drive is the second defining psychological trait.

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Intro

Technically, an alpha is the highest-ranking individual within a social hierarchy in animal behavior research.

When applied to humans in everyday language, it usually refers to a man who is **dominant, high-status, ambitious, confident, and often successful**.

In the scientific literature, similar traits are studied under constructs such as **dominance, status attainment, leadership, and agency**.

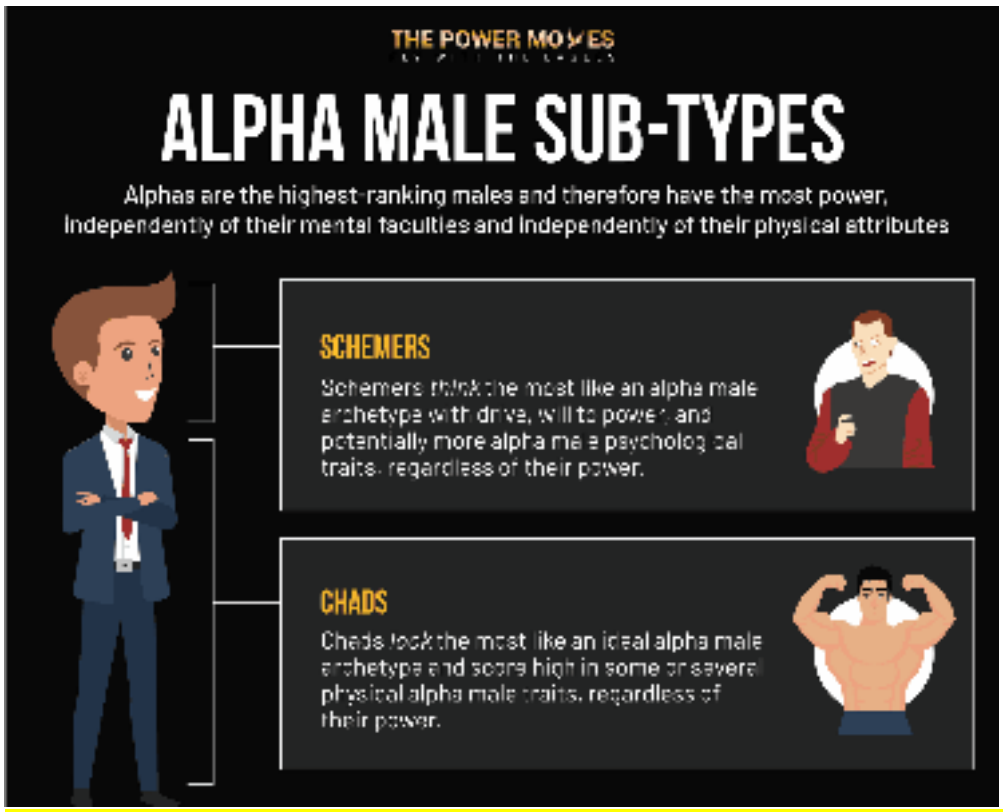
Throughout this article, we use **‘alpha male’ as a shorthand for men who achieve high social status and influence**, while grounding the analysis in research on status and dominance.

Physical & Mental Alphas

There are two sub-components of an alpha male: the physical and the psychological.

These two components form two archetypal sub-categories:

- **Chads** *look* most like alpha males
- **Schemers** *think* more like alpha males and reach the top



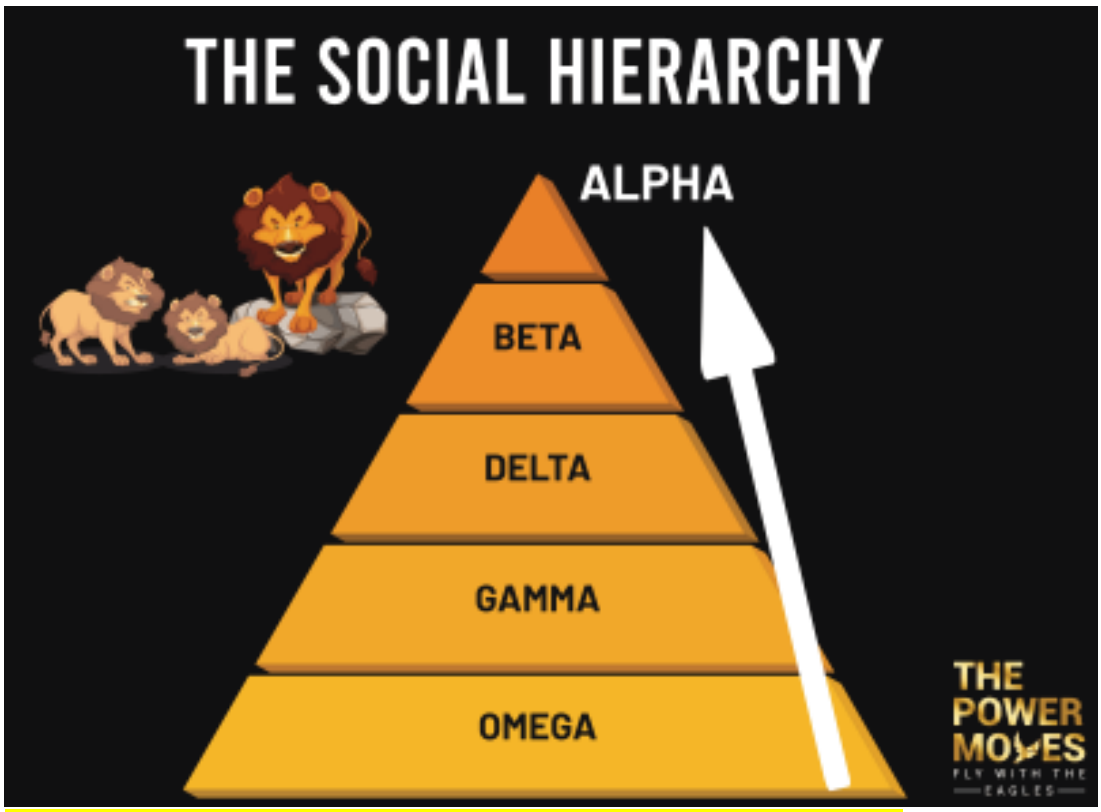
Schemers *think* in ways that facilitate status and power acquisition. And chads *look* like stereotypical alpha males The psychological component may matter more in real-world achievements, but the physicality of the "chad" looms larger in men's minds.

Alpha Male Traits

Men with alpha male traits seek and get power and responsibility, tend to rise through the social and organizational ranks, and tend to become leaders of men.

Although every hierarchy differs, these are the most common traits of alpha males:

1. High Status



The alpha male prospect becomes a de-facto alpha male once he reaches the top
The upward ascension to the top is THE main defining trait of an alpha male.

All other traits only serve to facilitate the acquisition of status and power.
It's the most important trait of them all because **the standard definition of an alpha male is being at the top of the power hierarchy**.

And between two men only, the alpha male is simply the higher power person between the two.

The alpha *type* instead is the man who is more *likely* to gain status.

As simple as that.

Everything else are personal opinions, conjectures, hot air, and noise.

Also see:

- **Power University**, a science-based system to climb upward in life

2. Ambition & Drive

The #1 trait that facilitates alpha male status is ambition.

Drive is the only necessary trait to become an alpha male.
One may be the perfect leader or greatest chad, but if he isn't driven to lead, he'll never be the top dog.

On the other hand, one can be unconfident, sloppy, or short and unattractive, but if he's extremely driven to win and acquire power, chances are he will find a way.

3. High-Power Behavior

Here's a good general rule to become an alpha male:

To become an alpha male, *act* like an alpha male.

Some of the many traits and skills of high-power behavior include:

- **Leadership** and all sub-components
- **Assertiveness** and speaking up early and confidently
- **Frame control**

Also read:

- How to be dominant
- How to talk dominantly

3.2. High-Power Body Language

The quintessential smooth alpha: steals the show with a flying kiss that's charming, cool, and high-power at the same time

Alpha males tend to move and act:

- Purposefully
- Slowly
- Lower energy

Learn more at:

- Alpha male body language

3.3... No Low-Power Body Language

Including:

- Hunched over
- Making yourself smaller
- Too high energy
- …

3.4. Social Power & Dominance To Gain Status & Respect

Storr explains in *The Status Game*:

> As humans evolved, **our game of status also evolved from mostly physical, to mostly verbal and sub-communication**.

The general rule of that power game is:

The more you let others one-up you and disempower you, the more status you lose, and the more you stay stuck at the bottom.
Conversely, the better you check power moves, defend yourself, and counter-attack, the more status and respect you acquire.

When someone pulls a power move, they're betting against you.
They bet that they're above you -either more dominant if their move is direct or more power competent if it's more covert-.

To borrow from pick-up artist terminology, **you can see a power move as a "social shit test"**.

If you let it slip, miss it, or submit, you confirm you're below them and lose status.
But if you can check it and turn it around into a win, you turn a loss into a win -and a status boost-.

4. High Power Mindsets

The mind is the backbone of the alpha male type.

High-power thinking includes:

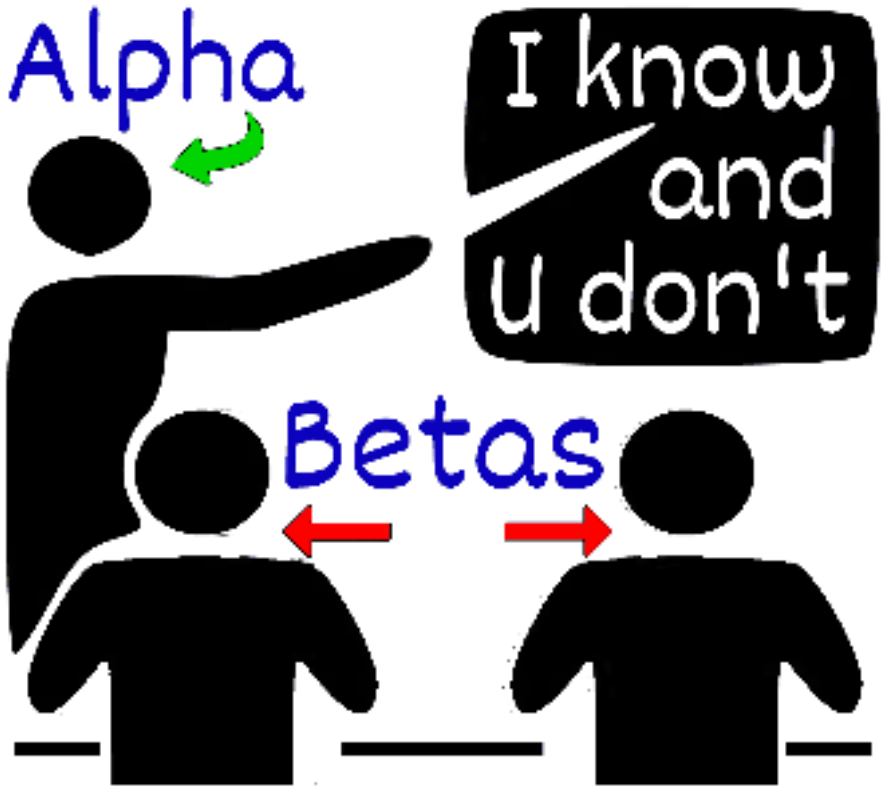
- **Positive associations with power**: "power is good (and I want more of it)"
- **Entitlement**: "I *deserve* power"
- **Outer confidence**: "I *can* get power"
- **Inner confidence**: "I *am* a high-power alpha"

Importantly:

You can never acquire alpha male self-confidence if you remain an eternal learner of mediocre teachers.

Let's see:

4.2. Teachers More Than Learners: The Pupil Is Never An Alpha



The teacher is higher power than the students. Alpha trains, beta strains

The rule of the alpha male mindset is:

You'll always have a beta male mindset until you're learning how to be an alpha because the learner is inherently lower-power than the teacher.

Simply accepting a teacher means that, in some shape or form, you submit and accept to be below someone else.

Of course, always balance:

You *must* learn in the beginning.
And never stop learning.

HOWEVER, always remember:

1. Never be an eternal pupil
2. Learn as an *equal* -especially in the mindset, never elect someone as "above you"
3. Keep in mind the end goal: eventually you want to become a de-fact alpha male -and *think* of yourself as an alpha male-
4. Never elect anyone as the judge of your "alphaness status".

4.3. Pick Teachers Who'll Make Way For Your Future Alpha

Remember the power dynamics of teachers:

Teachers have a vested interest in keeping you a pupil.

And watch out for dark triad teachers if you prefer to be a "honorable man".
If you learn from these guys you'll more likely be a "limited success asshole".

Solution: Enlightened Narcissism

You can both learn, and learn as a high-power student.

Rather than fully submitting yourself to (dubious) teachers, start learning to also trust yourself a bit more:

- **Making of the Übermensch**

5. Strategic Intelligence

As a rule of thumb:

Social strategists beat strongmen in the race to the alpha male role.

Even in chimps alpha males are seldom the biggest, most aggressive, or highest testosterone.
Cooperation is key for social rank, and studies show that "smart coalition managers" out-rank and out-reproduce less socially skilled chimps.

And if that's true in chimps, as Ridley points out, it's even truer in humans.

Also read:

- How to be more Machiavellian

6. Goal Focus

Typical alpha male traits facilitate goal-achievement.

They include:

- **Risk appetite**
- **High demands** and expectations, both of himself and others (note for female readers: being in a relationship with an alpha can be challenging since they're demanding)
- **Courage**, to do what needs to be done. Sometimes even "bravery"
- **Competitiveness** and "drive to win"
- **Goal-orientation** and mission-focus, not wasting time on side issues
- **Emotional steadfastness**, without wild mood swings (note for female readers: relationships can be challenging with alphas who have little patience for emotional swings)
- **Emotional self-reliance**, with internally generated self-esteem and confidence. People and events have little control over the alpha emotional states
- **Results over feelings**
- **Pride**, in yourself, your work, your values, your background, your team, etc., etc.
- **Decisiveness and bias for action**, with little time for endless talk and purely theoretical
- **Focus on what's possible**, avoid daydreaming and "castles in the skies"

Of course, mind the law of balance.
Any good trait *can* be taken to a self-defeating extreme. Extreme risk appetite for example turns into ineffective recklessness, and you'd struggle to lead any high-performing group.

7. Competence

When you become a master, you have *already* reached a top.

You out-competed countless others in the same field.

And men respect that.

Becoming a master also sub-communicates many great alpha-like qualities such as grit and perseverance, staying power, dedication and, of course, drive, willpower, and ambition.

You may gain even more status points if you master a typically masculine profession or hobby.

Modern societies handsomely reward competence/mastery.
It's one of the reasons why "modern geeks" can do great in life.

8. Masculinity

Alpha male status is a game of status among *men*.

And **masculinity is important because it helps earn respect from men**.
On the opposite effeminate men struggle to gain male respect.

In our day and age alpha male masculinity overlaps with "conservative values and gender roles".
Hence, just to be on the safe side:

8.2. Avoidance Of Anything That Feels "Not Very Manly"

The list is endless, but just some examples:

- Endless "relationship talks"
- Gossiping
- Drama
- Stay-at-home daddying

To capture the concept in a meme:

Albeit a for-fun meme, it's not wholly baseless. More conservative alpha males don't do housework

9. Pursuit Of Power & Personal Success

Alpha males tend to be more on the right of the political spectrum.

Studies linked testosterone supplementation to a "shift to the political right" for weakly affiliated Democrats.

However, hormones are only one part of it.

Being an alpha male is about self-advancement.
It's antithetical to left-wing ideals such as equality, redistribution, and collectivism.

And it's closer to right-wing values such as competition, individual success, private property, and the ideal of the "self-made man".

So alpha males tend to:

- Prefer low taxation over socialist redistribution
- Believe it's fair for the rich and powerful to be rich and powerful
- Believe it's fair for the destitute to be destitute because it's up to them to advance (instead of scrounging and leeching off)
- Reject left-leaning and 'woke' trends

10. "Alpha Looks"

Physicality matters.

Both in chimps, and still in humans as well.

Often, it's not even larger men who turn size into an advantage.
Instead, because of men's natural reverence for size, **smaller men self-inflict all the damage by making way and quitting the race without even starting**.

The same goes for voice, beards, and penis size.

See Power University for the mindsets, strategies, and techniques to win as a smaller guy.

Bonus: Prestige

Yoda, an avatar for "wisdom", would attain high status and power in most social groups

Psychology research has long recognized two different paths to both social power and status-based attraction:

- **Dominance**, or acquiring power with more forceful approaches (win-lose)
- **Prestige**, or acquiring power because *willing* followers admire a man's knowledge, abilities, skills, achievements, wisdom, character, etc. etc. and *elect* him as higher status and/or alpha male (win-win)

How does this prestige work?

Well, mastery/competence is part of prestige, so we've already seen an example.

But it runs deeper to include character, achievements, life experiences, and "wisdom".

Let's explain with a real-life example:

The author's older nephew is very close to a "typical alpha".
He is taller, larger, more muscular, more naturally dominant, and enjoys chad-easy sexual success.

Still, when he and the author meet, there is no doubt as to who's the alpha.

The nephew *willingly* raises the author above him because the author is prestigious in his eyes.
The author earned credibility and respect with choices, experiences, and actions, making the world his oyster.
And he proves the usefulness of that experience and wisdom with advice that works in the nephew's life (and you can't beat that first-hand evidence).

You reach high inner confidence when you feel the world is your backyard, you belong to it, and can do well wherever you go. That's when "the world is your oyster"
Although the author physically looks up to his nephew, the nephew shared to look up to him, to feel "green and unaccomplished" when together, and wrote to "one day hope to be at the same level".

That's prestige, and it's quite powerful.

Not by accident our ultimate social dominance archetype in Power University is based on exuding wisdom, and acquiring prestige.

Also helpful traits...

Also helpful, even for general life success:

11. Rationality & Critical Thinking

Yes, the mind also matters.

Power intelligence is the most important, but these also help a lot:

- **Rationality**, both effective and masculine
- **Healthy skepticism** and cynicism, since gullible id*ots aren't very credible leaders
- **Logic**
- …

12. Dating & Relationships Skills & Power

Mike Tyson is the ultimate chad (bar voice).

And *still* he was controlled, manipulated, and swindled in his first relationship.

So develop your power intelligence, cause despite brawn and "natural alphaness" you can still be a big loser.

And **you can hardly earn alpha male respect and status if your partner controls you**.
An all-around alpha male leads the outside world, *and* at home.

Popular But False Alpha Male Traits

Bathroom selfie, head-tilt and… Alpha mode unlocked!
There are thousands of alpha male guides.

Most list random, nice-sounding, and genetic self-help tips that have nothing to do with alpha male dynamics.

- **Humble** (from "Science of People"): typical naive self-help.
  Alphas as a group are *less* humble than the general population
- **Visionary** (from "The Adult Man"): random and probably *negatively* correlated to alpha males. Alphas have an incentive to be conservative and reactionary because the status quo is good for them

And even worse:

- **Strive for genuine equality** ("fashionbeans", #1 page result on Bing): go give it a read and see for yourself
- **Express curiosity and empathy** (WikiHow guide): WikiHow loves a positive spin, but this is unrelated to

alpha males

Manosphere Alpha Males

Some popular but wrong definitions and traits include:

- **Sleeping with lots of women** (as per "alpha fucks, beta bucks"): alpha males tend to have a higher partner count, but sleeping around is not a defining trait
- **Alpha males are men women are most attracted to** (Rollo Tomassi): simply the wrong definition -definition of an attractive man, not an alpha male-.
- **Be honorable** (Jack Donovan): it helps, and we endorse an honorable approach.
  But it's another aspirational value, and not a defining trait
- **Fight for your country** (Corey Wayne): warriors and alphas overlap, but less so today.
  And don't forget what Machiavelli would say: dead men never advance
- **Put your purpose first** (alpha male strategies): this is sensible as it overlaps with drive and ambition.
  However, AMS' goal is more *dating*, and many sexually prolific men put women *first*.

10 Alpha Male Rules (Red Pill)

The red pill shifted politically *conservative*.

With that in mind, these are the 10 "alpha male rules" we can tease out from the red pill:

1. Alpha males don't kiss
2. Alpha males don't love
   - 2.2. And don't say "I love you"
3. Alpha males don't do long-distance
4. Alpha males don't cuddle
5. Alpha males don't give oral sex
6. Alpha males don't adopt
7. Alpha males don't cry (emotional stoicism)
8. Alpha males don't marry
   - Alpha males don't officially commit, either
9. Alpha males don't compromise
10. Alpha males don't miss

More open-minded and liberal alpha males do some or even a good chunk of the above.
For example, Brad Pitt married, adopted, professed love, and who knows what else.

However, there may be a backdrop of truth to some of them.

Alpha Males & Dating Success

Alpha males date well, and better than non-alphas.

If we compared alpha males and the bottom 50%, we'd probably end up with a Pareto dating distribution where "20% of single alphas do 80% of the dating".

Still, let's clarify some common misconceptions.

More Plates, More FanBOYS

“Gigachads” are not the most attractive men for most women.

And smart men **can win big without being a chad**, especially so in modern metropolises

Let’s go through a quick experiment.

We analyzed the top comments beneath two videos: a “gigachad” gym bro, and a famous feminine-looking singer.

The chad had plenty of gushing texts.
But 100% of all gushers’ texts we read *all* sounded from other men:

The gigachad is more impressive to men than women. Virtually ALL the gushing admirers are men
The feminine-looking singer doing feminine-looking “flexibility exercise” had far more love messages *all* attributable to *women*:

The feminine man struggles to get male respect. But if -if!- he's attractive/skilled, he can console himself with plenty of female love

This little experiment shows that **sexual attraction is different and far more nuanced than social respect**.

The author here is also far from a chad, and far from being half attractive as the K-pop star.
And still achieved top-1% dating results.

Also read:

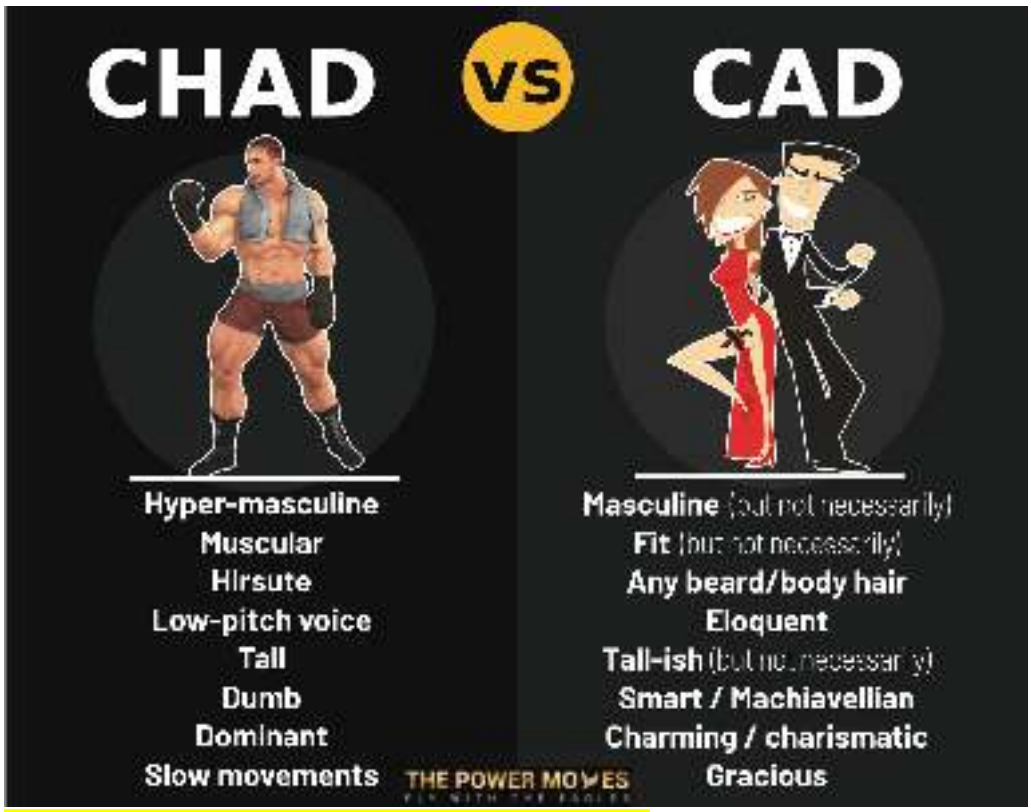
- Why balance is most seductive
- Alpha male game (and why it's suboptimal)

Chads vs. Lovers

The social and sexual spheres overlap, but are two *different* spheres.

In simple terms:

- **Chad/alpha male is a *social* construct**, referring to social status and organizational rank, mostly promoted by men
- **Cad/lover is a *sexual* construct**, referring to sexual access and dating behavior, largely based on *women's* choice



The chad is hyper-masculine, but the lover type seldom is

Alpha Male Leaders

People often ask:

Do alpha male types make for great leaders?

And of course they can.

What people are truly asking though is if the more *extreme* alpha types higher in dominance or aggression, make for good leaders.

In the absence of scientific consensus, a look at history suggests a cautious "probably not".

Many alpha males considered "great leaders" wouldn't make for what most people would consider a "hyper-alpha".

For example:

- **Marcus Aurelius** read philosophy and kept a diary -I'm sure some hyper-alphas legionnaires of the day would have said that was "effeminate"-;
- **Ataturk** abolished polygamy and gave women equal civil and political rights -the conservative alphas back then would have seen him as serving the 'female imperative' interests-;
- **Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt** weren't exactly "chads" -some hyper-alphas contemporary may refer to the English top strategist as "weak-chinned"-.

These men were all top alpha males and fantastic leaders, but not your typical *hyper* alpha.

Alpha males who are more "hyper", especially in dark-triad, antisocial, and social dominance orientation tend to be poor leaders (for the people they lead).

Two examples:

Putin and Mussolini are two examples of "hyper alphas" who turned despotic and disastrous for the countries they lead

Storr, drawing from a social psychology textbook, summarizes that dominant-style leaders are usually less effective than prestigious ones because they're more likely to:

- Put their interests before the group
- Respond to criticism with 'ego defensive aggression'
- Act overbearing
- Publicly credit themselves with the success of the group
- Tease and humiliate subordinates
- Manipulate and use others

In short, the high dominance, pride, and dark triad traits of some hyper alphas often translate into little win-win and cooperation, little care for common well-being, more stealing… And more wars.

So we can summarise that **alpha male psychology has little relation to leadership quality, but hyper-dominance, aggressiveness, and dark triad traits often lead to worse outcomes for the population**.

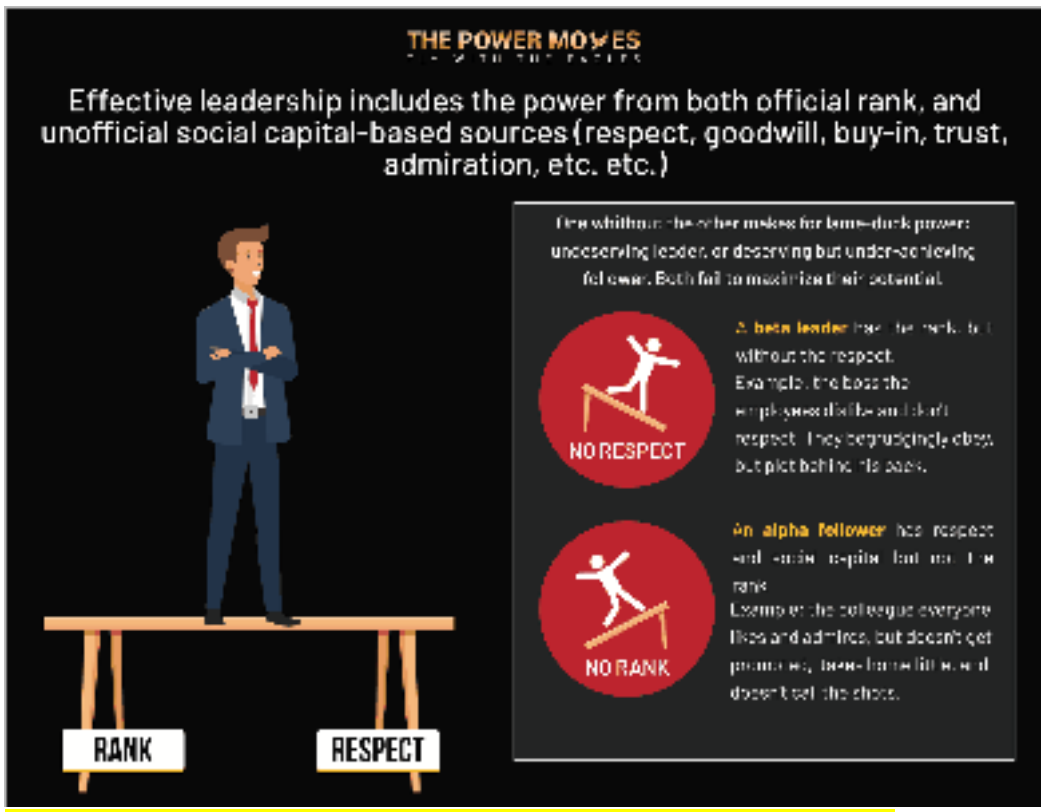
The Alpha Leader Rule

The "alpha leader rule" says:

The closer to the ideal alpha male you are, the easier it is to gain other men's respect.
And vice versa.

The other side of the coin is that men who are too far from the alpha type ideal struggle to earn other men's respect. And **a high-rank title without matching respect make for a lame-duck leader**.

Good examples of both beta leader and alpha follower here.



An effective de-facto alpha male combines rank, with social capital and respect

The “beta leader” issue extends to most organizations.

I experienced a corporate mutiny and mass-quitting when the “founder” who bought-in failed to gain respect from the team.

Lame duck beta leaders have become more common in modern and artificial organizations where advancement includes confounding factors such as office politics, technical skills, degree, or meeting the latest gender/racial quotas.

So, in brief: **if you want to be an effective leader, learn how to earn people’s respect**.

See Power University for that.

Do “Alphas” Even Exist In Humans?

Am I even real?

The alpha male concept originated in primates.
So it's fair to ask whether and how it translates to humans.

Conservatives and people who fancy themselves as alphas default to "yes".
And liberals and people who are "not exactly alphas" default to "no".

In truth, things are more nuanced.

Differences With Human Alpha Males

The main differences are:

1. **Alpha humans aren't necessarily"life winners"**. While we could argue that an alpha male chimp "won at life" it's not nearly as straightforward in humans
2. **Alpha humans are more limited**: since laws, regulations and female sexual choice restrain their power
3. **Alpha humans are more situational** because of our complex societies with countless groups and cultures
4. **You don't need to be an alpha to win at life**: today's men can get what they want while barely entering any group. And even while not being typical chads or "alpha types" (see Elon Musk for example)

Do Alpha Females Exist?

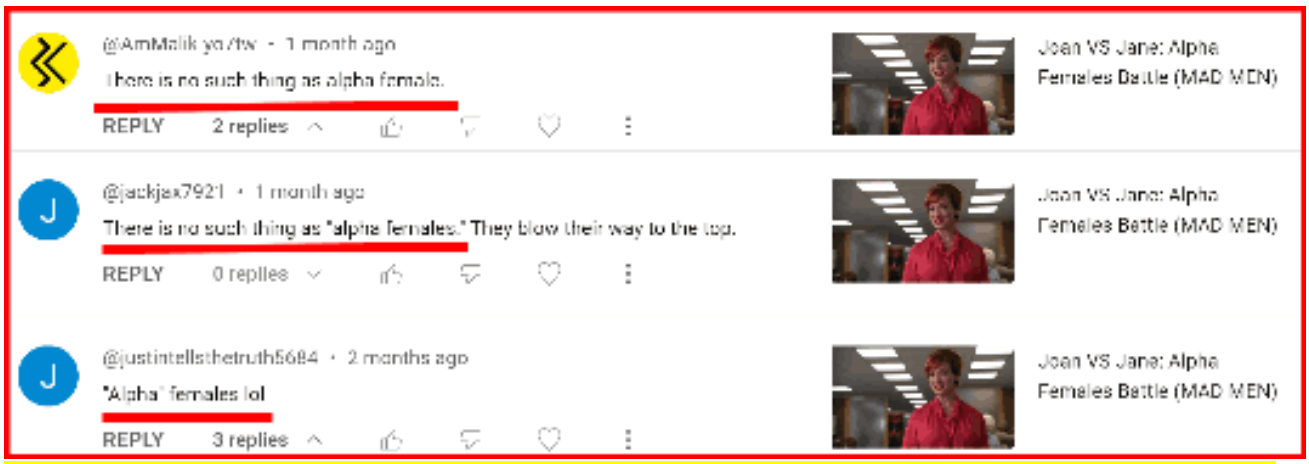
In any mixed, free-forming group, men are far more likely to become top dogs.

And most women would rather *pair up* with the alpha than *compete* with him.

However, in principle and by definition, if a woman is on top of the hierarchy, she's an alpha female.

Some men deny that because they can't accept that a woman may beat them, or be above them.

TPM's video example on alpha females got *literally* hundreds of these men's comments:



What do you think is most likely, that they're all alpha female experts, or that at least some of them are (closeted) mysoginists?

Are Alpha Females "Not Feminine" And Thus "Less *Women*"?

Is the alpha female "less feminine" and thus "less representative of the female population".

It's a fair and valid question.
But too complex to answer here.

In sum, it's unlikely that in free-forming human groups a woman would ever end up as the alpha. But if a biological woman is at the top, then she's an alpha female.

Also read:

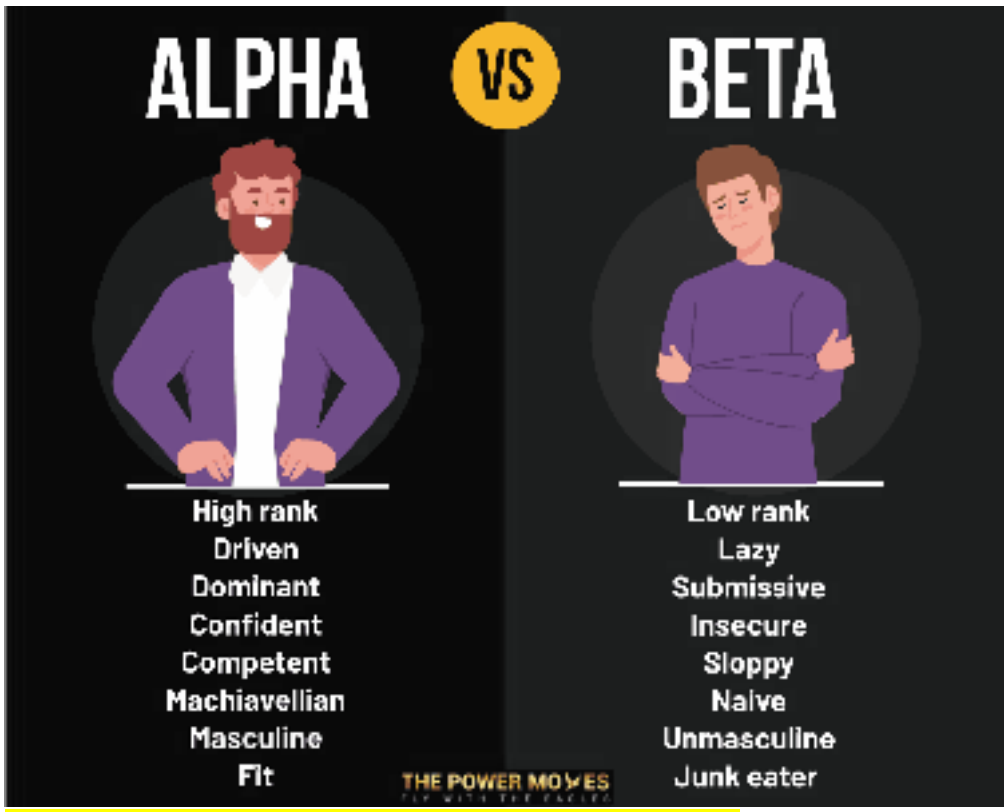
- Alpha females
- How to combine femininity and power

Alpha Male VS...

Now let's compare the alpha male construct to other common ones:

Alpha Male VS Beta Male

You see a ton of charts like this one:



Would be correct, if it weren't for confusing "beta" with "omega"
'Internet parlance' confuses beta male with omega (see corrected chart below).

So, in truth, **the beta male holds an enviable position with a lot of power, and significant less risk, work, and responsibility compared to the alpha**.

So going for a beta position can be a strategically great choice to maximize for life returns *and* satisfaction.

For more on the difference between top-ranking alpha male and lowest-ranking omega, see:

- **How to stop being a beta male**

Alpha Male VS High-Value Man

Alpha males as a group tend to be higher value than non-alphas.

Chads tend to be immediately high-value to other men;
alpha male types tend to quickly gain value in new groups;
and de-facto alpha males are intrinsically high-value wherever they're alphas.

However, none of it guarantees to be high-value outside of any specific group.

Chads without matching characters quickly lose other men's respect.
Overly dominant alpha types can turn people off.
And being de-facto alpha in one group has little predictive power of someone's value outside of the group.
Such as, in simple words: **alpha male is a good proxy for high-value** but not a guarantee.

This is why we focused on "high-value / low-value men" first.
It's better to work directly on the end goal, rather than on the proxy.

And we helped shift the narrative with our approach.

Alpha Male VS Sigma Male

The sigma male is an alpha male type who is not part of any social group and, thus, is not part of any dominance hierarchy.

The sigma male has find friends and mates on his own, but that may as well be an advantage
One may be a sigma for many reasons, including that he:

- **Is an introvert**
- **Dislikes the "power games"** inherent to competitive socialization
- **Has other life priorities**, leaving little time for socialization (including "monk-mode" stints)

The sigma male tends to be more self-reliant and, sometimes, more resourceful (he needs to find ways on his own, after all).
However, all else being equal, **alpha male tends to be higher value and more powerful than sigmas** because they can leverage social resources that the sigma doesn't have.

Still, we like the sigma approach here, and modern civilization and metropolises helped make it a far more viable, valid, and attractive option than in our evolutionary past.

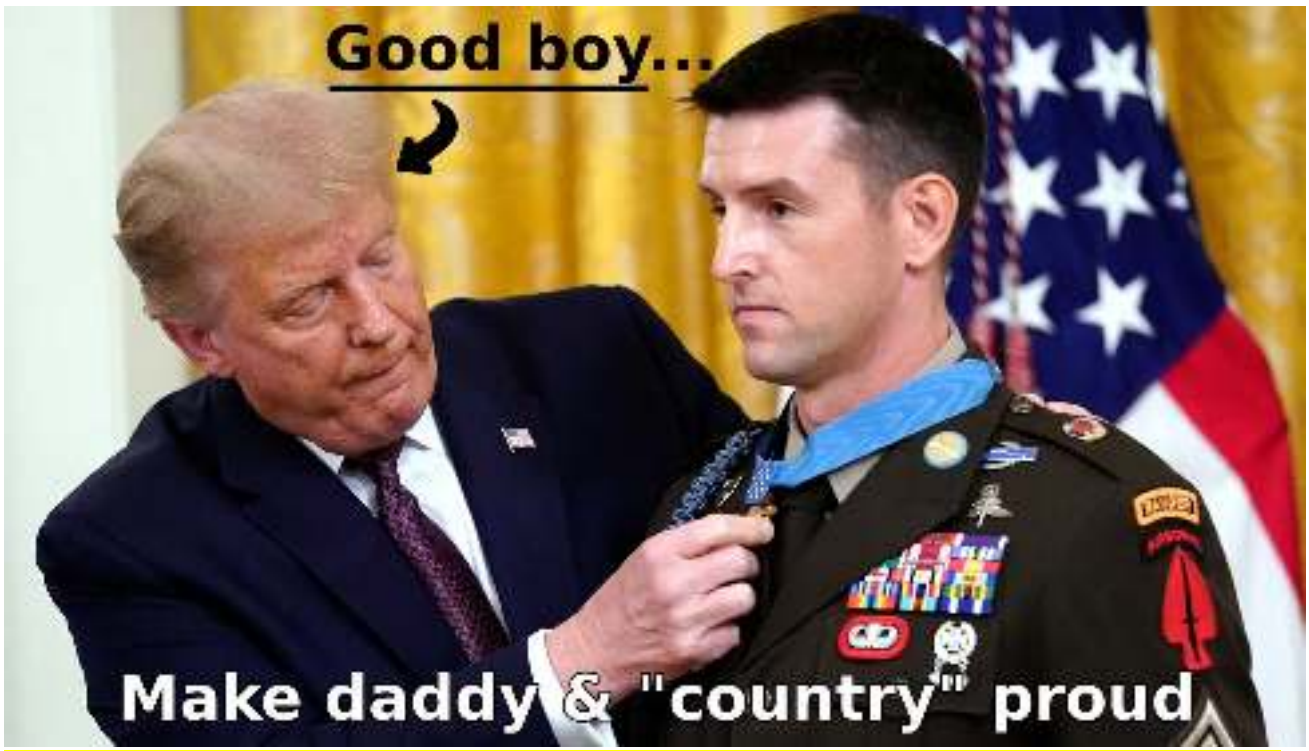
Alpha Male VS Social Strategist

There is at least some overlap between the two:

Alpha males tend to be at least passable social strategists, and good social strategists are more likely to reach and stay at the top.

A **good social strategist knows how to play the alpha male game** both to gain status, and to socialize with alpha males *as an equal*.
But he views status as a means to a goal.
And if status is not necessary to achieve his goals, he won't even enter that group.

Finally, the more Machiavellian social strategists may use and manipulate alpha male types for their own gains.



The Machiavellian power-seeker focuses on the area of highest returns, while sending the warrior alphas to do the fighting for him

Drawbacks of Being an Alpha Male

Earning respect among men is a status game.

Those "rules of the game" inherently constrain your freedom.

This is why:

Power Beats Status

Say researchers in *The Psychology of Status*:

> since status relies on others, concerns about maintaining one's s**tatus will orient status-holders outward**, as **they will be focused on monitoring where they stand** vis-à-vis the status-conferral process
> (…)
> high-status parties (…) **will strive to fulfill others' expectations** that high-status parties show consideration and act in a manner that warrants their high-status position (Blader and Chen 2012; Ridgeway 1978, 1982)

Instead power:

> This description of the effects of status stands in stark contrast to the effects of **power, which liberates people from social and normative pressures** and enables them to shift their focus inward, toward their own goals and dispositions (Galinsky et al. 2008; Guinote 2007; Keltner et al. 2003).

Those constraints limit your freedom and, sometimes, even what can do to truly pursue what's best for you as an individual.

So, learn the game of alpha male status -it's important.
But **always put power above status.**

That's also why we always recommend here an "individual first" approach to self-development.
So you're always bigger than *any* game -and you retain your power to walk away from any game that won't serve your interest.

Two additional noteworthy limitations of the alpha male game are:

Self-Identity Limitations

Some alphas pride themselves on being alpha males and "strong".

And that's inherently fragile.

Strength is defined by its breaking point.
And alpha male is defined by others, *plus* by clearly recognized masculinity.

An extreme example to show this point:

How strong would you be, hung upside down and cut into pieces, including what supposedly mostly makes you a "male"?
I bet the more conservative alphas would be less vocal on "two genders only" after that.

The point is:

1. **Building your ego around strength is sub-optima**l because you're *guaranteed* to lose over time.
   Paradoxically, the stronger you are, the more the breaking point and/or the natural decay will undermine your self-esteem.
2. **Building your ego around "being alpha" gives power away to the social group** that ultimately decides who deserves respect and top status.
3. **Building your ego around "being a masculine man" is suboptimal** because social calibration beats stiff rigidity.

Better Than Alpha Male

- **Learn to gain status in *any* group**. The ability to be high rank in any group is better than being highest rank in a given single group.
- **Become more self-reliant**. Paradoxically, the more you get from any hierarchy, the more dependent on it you can grow. Better instead to first learn to be a man who can walk alone
  See: "big fish / small pond trap"
- **Develop a support network** you can confide in, rather than ending up isolated while trying too hard to portray outward strength and hyper stoicism
- **Learn the game of status, but transcend it**. Remember: the most powerful mindset and approach is that you're an individual and you're bigger than any game
- **Become *powerful*, rather than high-status**. An important difference, read below

Alpha Males FAQ

What are the alpha male traits?

Some of the most foundational traits of an alpha male are ambition, social dominance, confidence, and leadership.

What is an alpha male?

An alpha male is the highest-ranking or most dominant male in a social group. The term comes from animal

behavior research, where “alpha” referred to the leader of a pack or group.
In human society, the phrase “alpha male” is often used more loosely. It usually describes a man who is confident, influential, and socially dominant.

What is alpha male psychology?

Alpha male psychology refers to the mindset and behavioral tendencies often linked with socially dominant men. It typically includes ambition, a drive for status, confidence, and a dominance orientation—seeking influence and leadership within groups.

See Power University for the one-stop program to become a high-quality alpha male

B-School: Summary & Review (Marie Forleo)

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 April 2023 · Archived copy · Original

B–School is a business and entrepreneurship online course for beginner online entrepreneurs and coaches in which Marie Forleo shares marketing and sales approaches to start selling and increase revenues.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - 1. Develop Your Customer Avatar
  - 2. Pitch The Solution To Your Avatar's BIGGEST Problem
  - 3. Capture Emails, Keep In Touch… & Don't Be Afraid to Sell
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  - It's more for clueless beginners: many topics did not apply to me
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Exec Summary

- **Start**: there is never a right time, and nobody was ever 100% sure of themselves
- **Control your website**: either learn the basics of WordPress, or have a trusted developer on call
- **Know who your typical customer is (avatar)**, and develop all your marketing and sales around that avatar

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Marie Forleo is an American entrepreneur, podcaster, and marketer of self-help and marketing courses and products.

1. Develop Your Customer Avatar

Knowing your customer is the first exercise and will form the basis of all of your marketing and sales.

The basics are:

- Think of your typical customer
- Come up with a specific person with name, surname, struggles

Forleo's exercises also invite you to:

- Describe your avatar's "darker self" with fears and aspirations they don't share to anyone
- Describe your avatar's "ideal self", what they hope to win and achieve

The goal is to know your typical customer better than he knows himself.

Power University Avatar

This is what I came up with as Power University avatar customer:

> Max is 32, smart, and doing well in life by many objective standards.
>
> He is very driven and demands a lot of himself.
>
> So he's not fully happy or satisfied with his life.
> It's a ill-diagnosed malaise he doesn't full understand himself.
>
> He wants more, feels something is missing, but albeit he comes up with many different goas and objectives, he doesn't really know what's truly missing.
>
> He has some friends that he thinks are OK, but they're not truly good friends.
> He's not a great friend either, but he doesn't yet know that.
>
> There is quite a bit of social climbing in his social life and some nasty "jokes" and covert power moves, but Max is not yet skilled enough to fully see and understand, let alone check those power moves.
>
> Max has a lackluster dating life, and albeit he says it's OK, he's neither dating the woman he wishes for, nor is

> he in a happy relationship -he's either not high-power enough (lose-win), or *too* dominant (win-lose), but he doesn't yet have the skills and knowledge to diagnose that-.
>
> With that type of social life, he doesn't talk about his deeper pains, goals, aspirations and thirst for more with anyone.
> When it comes to moving forward in life, he's mostly a lone wolf, researching on his own.
>
> Since Max is very driven, he's already been actively working on himself, and on improving his life.
> He is into self-development, goes to the gym, and reads and watches videos on how to achieve more, including for work, dating, status, and mental self-development-.
>
> However, he hasn't yet found anything that addresses the root causes.
>
> And at this point, he doesn't even believe there may be an "ultimate resource" that puts everything together and could help him address most of his life challenges.
>
> Max's relationship with his parents is also far from perfect.
> One of his parent was narcissistic and manipulative, but he never fully realized it because he doesn't yet have the power awareness to see it.
>
> Overall, Max is doing OK.
> But he's unsatisfied with life.
> He's got a nagging feeling he could do more and be more, and… He could.
> But he doesn't even know yet how.
> And doesn't know that Power University would help a lot.

The Avatar's Downsides

I found the exercise very useful.

Yet, you gotta be careful with it because **the more specific you go with your customer avatar the more you lose sight of the diversity in your customer base**.

You can just take a quick look at our alumni's introductions to see how diverse they are.

My guess is that few businesses have a highly homogenous customer base.

For example, if I were to fixate on this avatar, I may forget there probably isn't even a single customer who's exactly like Max.
Even prospects highly similar to Max may be a minority.

So if I were to over-focus on Max, and over-pitch specifically to Max, I may turn off a lot more prospects.

2. Pitch The Solution To Your Avatar's BIGGEST Problem

Find Your Avatar's BIGGEST Problem, Then Solve And Pitch *That*.

Then you can charge premium prices.

You will use your avatar's problem(s) to:

- Choose what to blog about, so you naturally get traffic from your prospects
- Copywriting for your products
- Copywriting for your email opt-ins

3. Capture Emails, Keep In Touch... & Don't Be Afraid to Sell

- **Don't get hung-up on value as "information only"**: value is also a smile, a friendly check-in, or the feeling of "connectedness"
- **Write pitch emails as you'd write to a friend**, and were updating them about what's going on with your business
- **Email at least every 2 weeks**

4. Position Your Products to Fix Problems (Solution VS Prevention)

People will not spend a dime for prevention but they'll spend all they have to fix a problem.

So you never pitch a general offer, but you offer a solution to your prospect's problem.

For example:

- Be pretty, general and without pain points
- Heal your embarrassing acne with our 3-steps sytems in 30 days or less

Pain and urgency are the sweet spots to sell

Look for a deep emotional need, and translate it into a solution you provide.

Talk 1:1 to your prospects and ask:

- What are your three biggest frustrations in this area?
- What about this keeps you up at night? What's a dream solution for you in this area?
- What strategies have you tried that have and have not worked? This is an important question, because you wanna know what they've done already that they consider being either a failure it just didn't work, and what they haven't tried so you can craft your offers around that.
- How would it feel to have this problem handled? You want them to start to imagine and get into the emotion of what it'll feel like if this problem goes away.
- What's it costing you not to have this problem handled? Again, some of these you need to adjust for your specific industry, but these questions are designed to get your mind thinking.
- How important is this for you to handle right now? This is a really important question. You wanna know if it's urgent. Right? What we talked about before is an urgent need. An urgent need. So urgency is good.
- Have you ever paid for a product or service like this before? This is important for you to see if this is a viable business model.
- If so, what did you pay for the product or service? This gives you a little research into pricing.
- What did you like best about it?
- What frustrates you about buying this kind of product or service? Again, you're looking for what other people may have done wrong so you can fix it.

Review your notes and look for common phrases and expressions.

5. Use These Copywriting Best Practices

5. 1. Use "shoulder to shoulder" marketing copy: the "been there" frame

Imagine your prospect across the fence looking at you, the expert, being where he'd want to be.

Standing shoulder to shoulder means you look over, get on his side of the fence, "pace his reality" of what he feels,

thinks, and fears, and tell him that you've been there, and that you can help him walk over to this other side of the fence.

Says Forleo:

> "I know exactly how you feel, I understand your pain, I've been there, there is a better way, you can do this, and I'm here to help every step of the way".

My Note: great marketing, but often also fake guru marketing
I agree this is great marketing advice.
And at the same time, I feel this is often a fake approach that creates a person that doesn't exist.
Few people if any have it all figured out, are fully content with themselves and their lives.
So in many cases, this ends up being a manipulative marketing approach that self-frames the seller as the wise "I have all the answers" type of person that doesn't even exist.

5.2. Use specific language

Use concrete examples that people are likely to experience in real-life.

For example:

- "Get lean, cellulite-free thighs"
  vs. "transform your body."
- "Does not being able to button your favorite jeans depress you?
  vs. "are you tired of being overweight?"

And a real-life example from her student:

- The "inside out 21-day money transformation."
  vs. "3 steps to stop living paycheck to paycheck in just 21 days"

5.3. Tell a story with headlines

Your copy should tell a story…

… But so should your headlines –*by themselves*-.

Many people skim-read, so you want your copy to work for them as much as it does for the deeper readers.

Scan your sales pages or posts and see if headlines and sub-headlines tell a compelling story on their own.

5.4. Keep it brief, while delivering all the information

Edit your copy to remove all the fluff.

The goal is to **provide all the information and pack as much punch, in as little space as possible**.

Generally speaking:

- the more expensive the product, the longer the copy
- the less established the brand, the more convincing you need (and potentially longer copy)

MORE WISDOM

- Go pro
  - Only use great and reputable providers
  - Have excellent customer care
  - Maintain quality, don't "move fast and break things"
- Buddy factor: only associate with the best in your industry
- Use priming sentences to sell without selling. Such as:
  - I do have a premium training class, but right now I wanted to share…
  - In my premium training, I walk you through, but for now, here is what you need to know about…
- Keep it simple because most of your prospects are beginners: so don't talk to impress your peers, write to sell to your *prospects* (Marie Forleo's best videos were the ones on *basic* marketing strategy albeit she much preferred the more advanced stuff)
- Don't offer a "1-hour consultation", offer a "personal audit where you'll leave with an action plan to achieve X"

Action Steps I Took Away

- Improve customer care
- Add a "feature box" on the homepage to capture email leads
- Avoid overwhelm in your products, something I had already started, worked well, and will keep doing
- Be specific on the benefits
- Use testimonials that address common fears and objections
  Ie.: "**I'm a huge skeptic, especially when it comes to services promoted online**, but… "

What I Disagreed With

- **Preach your email list to everyone, including your grandma and cat**, says Forleo. I think that makes no sense. Also, a cat isn't going to buy anything, and hopefully you're not going to charge your grandma
- **Preach your list at any opportunity**: poor advice and strategy to pitch your real-life connection because it's extremely low ROI, while ruining your real-life relationships (it self-frames you as a pushy and annoying salesman who just want to take from others).
  Same reason why MLM's multilevel network marketing is a terrible idea
- **Talk to one person at a time in your communication and newsletter**: to me, this feels so fake and manipulative when it's obvious that the sender is sending a mass email.
  I prefer a more honest approach. I'm happy to write my audience, but I don't know them individually, so I just write "hello friends" and I'm warm and straight, but *without being fake*.
  P.S.: I also often sign-up with a different name just to avoid this manipulation and make it even more obvious (and ridiculous)

QUOTES

On pricing:

> People will pay whatever price you ask for something they really want

On quality work:

> Never sell anything you're not prepared to deliver impeccably

On paying for available information:

> information on almost anything is out there, but people will always pay to get it delivered with clarity, substance, and style

CONS

It's more for clueless beginners: many topics did not apply to me

Let me preface this:

I AM a beginner in marketing.
The gap between TPM's products and its marketing and presentation may as well be one of the largest in the whole self-development industry.

That being said, even at my level, I found a large portion of the course to be way too basic.

Things such as:

- Learn how to publish a blog post
- How much does it cost to hire a web-developer
- How to find topics for your blog posts
- …

These are things that anyone who's already started had to figure out already.

And albeit you can always improve on the basics, and sometimes it's exactly where you should improve the most, I

didn't personally find much new wisdom.

And this is one of the reasons why we're not exactly evangelists for B-School: since beginner-level advice is easier to find, you may not need a premium-priced course for it.

General "best practices", but without data

Albeit the main concepts are generally true, they're still general and not un-tested.

For the price tag, I'd have preferred and expected to have more data and more precise information.

For example:

> **Marie**: (suggesting a better title) My Step-By-Step…

She shares good advice on how to turn your title into click-baits.
Not necessarily everyone's style, but the general advice is OK.

Problem is, it's still general advice you can get almost anywhere.

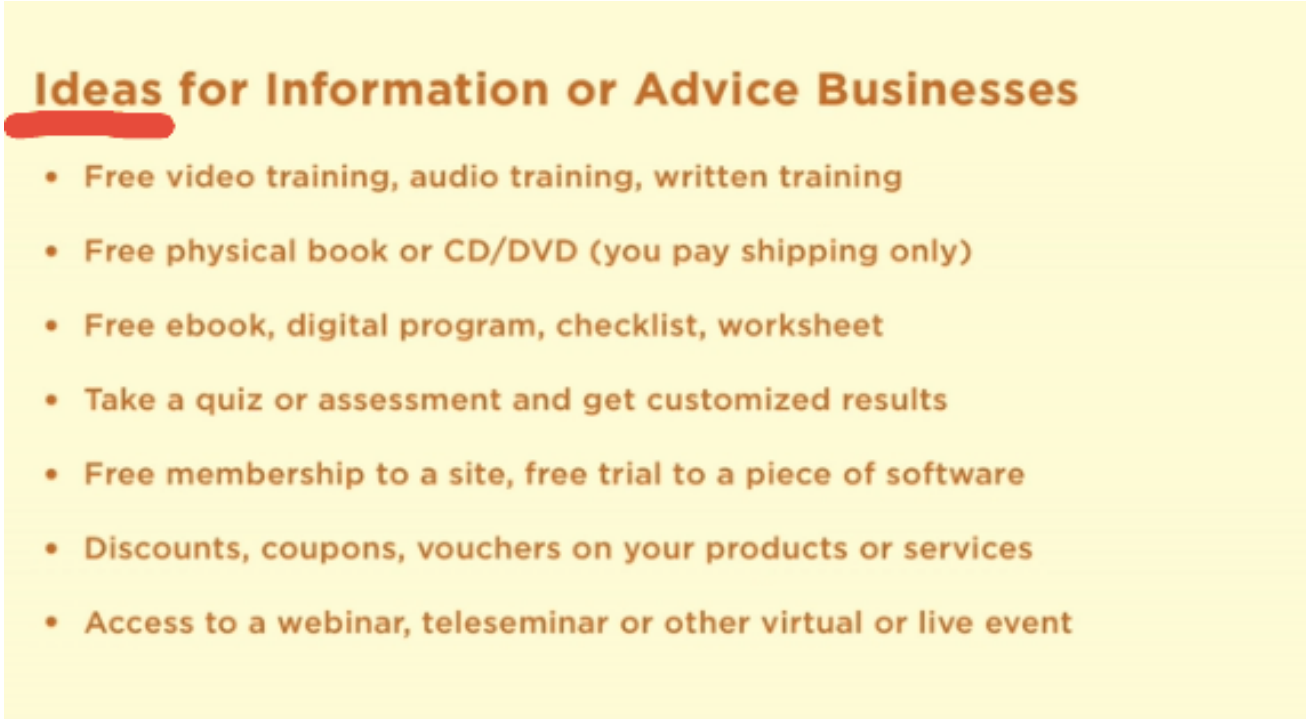
And if we go specific and data-driven, the general advice can also be proven wrong.

For example, I remember from a Backlinko data-driven analysis of thousands ranking pages that the "step-by-step" line didn't perform too well.

For the price tag, I'd have expected *that* level of data-driven, tested insight.

I was looking for what works best, rather than "list of ideas"

For example:



It's not like such a list doesn't have value.
However, most people who've been either in business or simply just in self-development, know about these options.

Instead, **I wanted Marie Forleo to tell me what works best** either in her business, or from what she saw from similar online businesses selling courses or coaching.

What would have been useful:

- **Data on what works best**
- **How to execute** each one fast and effectively
- **Templates** of effective online courses salespages that one can amend
- **What worked for Marie Forleo**

Similarly:

I was looking for Forleo's own business MO. There was none

I was interested in Marie Forleo's B-School because our businesses overlap.

Such as we both:

- Have online courses
- Offer payment plans and one-off options
- Use email automation to promote the courses
- Publish free content
- …

So my main reason to join B-School was to learn what a similar but much higher-revenue and better-marketed business was doing better.

However, I didn't get much of that -if any-.

For example:

Marie Forleo tells us to create "genuine scarcity".

And true to form (minus the "genuine" maybe) her B-school is "sold out":

B-School uses a "sold out" ruse to deploy the scarcity principle. I wanted to learn more about that but it wasn't even mentioned

I wanted her to teach me THAT!

Such as:

- Software she uses
- How it's working for her
- How it fares compared to the "always open" option…

THAT would have been super valuable to me as I may have tried a similar approach based on some actual data/case study.

Instead, if I were to do it now, it'd be a large investment to figure it out, while also being a total shot in the dark.

In that sense, I'm disappointed.

That is why in Power University I show students *exactly* what works and exactly how to execute it, with videos and case studies.

Same goes for how Marie Forleo runs her ad strategy.
After I checked her program out she popped up on me all over the net:

Some of her ad were video ad, felt personal and relatable.
I wanted to know how THAT is working for her, what are her returns, HOW she retargets, WHO she retargets (visitors, subscribers, visitor to her courses… ?) WHAT company she used to set it up.

THAT would have been valuable for me too.
But there wasn't any of that.

Smaller issues

Fillable PDFs don't always work too well

Marie Forleo encourages you to write a lot of details, which is good advice.

However, when I write more than a couple of lines the characters automatically get so small that they're not readable anymore.

In the second and third forms, I couldn't even add a line break, which means that even a short sentence would quickly become unreadable:

Ideal Customer Avatar

Create Your Ideal Customer Avatar

PROFIT PLAN

Think of your IDEAL customers. What do they all have in common? List every common trait, both demographic - age, income, gender, marital status, industry, etc. and psychographic - values, beliefs, lifestyle, hobbies, interests, etc.

Now use those commonalities and create a single representation of your ideal customer with as much specific details as you can. This is your ideal customer avatar.

Sometimes PDFs just refer to some other resources

For example:

Make Your Competition Irrelevant

Your Strategy Canvas

Create your own Blue Ocean Strategy Canvas for your brand, or for a specific offering. The factors to include along the X axis are what is being emphasized: price, features, delivery, customer service, branding, design, guarantees, etc.

The Y axis is low to high, meaning, whether price is low or high and how much emphasis is put on the specific factors. To go deep on this subject, buy the book *Blue Ocean Strategy*.

Click here to buy *Blue Ocean Strategy* or go to http://amzn.to/KH8FPr

PROS

Among the pros of Marie Forleo's B-School:

- Hands-on for beginners
- Motivational for those who need it
- Some good wisdom on power dynamics (ie.: treat “stars” like normal people and equals)
- Lots of exercises to help you apply the lessons
- A few good case studies/examples (albeit I wished for more)
- Even more advanced students may find some pearls of wisdom

Marie Forleo Review

Marie Forleo comes across as a happy-go-around, energetic, genuine, and honest woman who also happens to be great at what she does.

And she carries that positive personality over into B-School.

That being said, my favorite types of teachers tend to be more product-centric.

Why?

Well, first off, let me say it through the people she associated with.

Forleo says you want to network with the best in your business, and her business seems to be *personal* branding, and *selling*.

Nothing wrong with that.
But to me, it’s a network not necessarily of great content creators, but of pure marketers who put marketing left right, and center. And product, well… At a certain distance further down the road.

From the slide she shares herself:

Eben Pagan / David DeAngelo shares OK dating advice (but there is much GREAT dating advice available), Dean Graziosi shares fluff at best and there are plenty of great exposes on him from Coffeezilla and more.
Finally, the people Marie Forleo interviews may definitely help someone, but are your typical marketing gurus that,

to me, feel a lot like snake oil salesmen (Joe Dispenza, Mark Hyman, etc.).

In my opinion, **Forleo's close network focuses on selling and NOT on creating great, helpful, or even truthful products**.

You can see some of that same style in the name-dropping in the course:

What should I care if it's STRAIGHT from Oprah's mouth? Oprah's mouth can also talk cr@p just like anyone else.

TPM needs a bit more of that selling, to be honest.
Scratch that, we need A LOT more of that and that's why I went through this program.
But we still don't sympathize too much with the sell first, product and content (distant) second approach.

Forleo also seems to me focused on getting media exposure and good collabs first, and put a lower priority on truth and expertise.
For example, she says she managed to get in touch with Tim Ferris and even be featured in Ferris' back-then upcoming book, *The 4-Hour Body*.
Tim Ferris' first book was fantastic. And he's an awesome and smart guy. However, for that second book on nutrition, Ferris had no qualification writing it -and it shows-.

But it doesn't seem that the topics of qualification, expertise, and quality of the content ever entered into Forleo's considerations.

B-School REVIEW

There seem to be no negative reviews for B-School.

Not even lukewarm or *neutral* reviews.

Since most reviews are affiliate reviews, it's fair to wonder about the potential bias.

So with this article now you have a B-School non-affiliate review, and one that is not singing its praise (but without being overly negative, either).

So, my non-affiliate B-School review is that I find it to be a well-structured and compact introductory program to marketing and entrepreneurship that works best for beginners and people who struggle to get started and "put themselves out there" but that is most likely too beginner-level for those who have either started, or did their research already.

"Compact" can also be a plus or a con, depending on the level of granularity you prefer.
It didn't take me 6 weeks and I went through it in a couple of days -yes, I did do the most relevant exercises, but not all of them simply because they didn't apply to me-.

Is B-School Worth It?

B-School may be a worthy investment if you're a beginner who's struggling to get started, needs "motivation", and has enough spare income and savings, and it may not be worth it if you've started already, and if you're aware of the very basic stuff.

So B-School may be good if you:

- Have no idea what to do
- Have an idea, but have yet to start
- Are a beginner with zero experience and knowledge
- Need someone to cheer you on
- Have enough spare income

B-School may not be the best fit for you if you:

- Know what you want to do
- Already started
- Know the basics (ie.: "know your typical customer", "blog weekly", etc.)
- Are internally driven and don't need encouragement
- Can ill-afford the investment (in which case you can find most of the information around, for free)

Whether it was worthy or not for TPM, I consider the jury to be still out.

As you may have guessed from this review, **I didn't find any "wow" or truly new information in B-School and what I truly wished to learn more about just wasn't there**.

BUT even by simple repetition or through a slightly different take on otherwise common advice, I came out with a few notes on what I may implement or change.
And if those work well, then it may have been worth it.

But, in all frankness, some other resources helped me a lot more (including lower-priced or free ones).

Check the **best resources** to delve into, and the best resources for entrepreneurs.

Leadership BS: 9 Lies They Told You About Leadership (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 April 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Leadership BS (2015) is a leadership book in which author Jeffrey Pfeffer states and shows that much of the conventional wisdom about leadership is baseless, overly optimistic, and ineffective for those who want to climb the hierarchy and become actual leaders.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - 1. The Leadership Industry Doesn't Make Better Leaders
  - 2. Leaders' & Organizational Interests Aren't Aligned
  - 3. Motivation Is Useless (& False)
  - 4. Leaders' Traits Sound Nice, But Are Lies
  - 5. Useless Trait #1: Modesty (Narcissism Is Better)
  - 6. Useless Trait #2: Authenticity
  - 7. Useless Trait #3: Telling The Truth
  - 8. Useless Trait #4: Being Trusted
  - 9. Useless Trait #7: Taking Care of Others (Leaders Eat First)
  - Bottom Line: Take Care of Yourself
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- MORE WISDOM
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  - Did Leaders Largely Fail?
  - The "Selfish Individual Advantage" Missed The Benefit of Win-Win
  - Some Opinions As Statements of Truth
  - Some Explanations Felt Far-Fetched
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **The leadership industry spreads naive self-help falsehoods** based on virtues that are neither present in the real world, nor helpful (and sometimes actively harming)
- **The truth is that narcissistic and Machiavellian leaders over-represent selfless ones**. More often than not, they gain more than selfless ones, and they look after themselves first
- **The solution for you is to take care of yourself first**, stop believing in reciprocity in the workplace, and stop thinking that leaders and organizations care about you
- The solution at a systemic level involves accepting the current reality, changing the incentives, and holding people accountable for the new performance measures

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Jeffrey Pfeffer is a Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University. According to Wikipedia, he received his BS and MS degrees from Carnegie-Mellon University and his Ph.D. from Stanford University.
He is also the author of the even more popular book "*Power: Why Some People Have It – And Others Don't*".

1. The Leadership Industry Doesn't Make Better Leaders

Pfeffer says that the leadership industry has failed for two reasons:

1. **Leaders are failing** the people they lead (Sutton, 2007), and society at large. Often, they fail themselves, too
2. **Leadership training fails learners to teach what actually works**, settling instead for platitudes, motivation, wishful thinking, and plain bad advice

Some reasons why the leadership industry failed include:

The Leadership Literature Never Looks At The Traits That Really Matter: What Makes *The Leader Himself* Successful

> Leadership stories and much leadership research seldom explore the leader's qualities, behaviors, and characteristics that affect the well-being of the leader, rather than the organization. Leader well-being includes outcomes such as job tenure, salary, and getting into a leadership role in the first place.

Pfeffer says that the leadership literature fails because while leadership research is more interested in group or organizational well-being, leaders almost always are more interested in *their own* well-being.

We strongly agree with it.
De Mesquita did a fantastic job analyzing what's good for the (political) leader.
And, spoiler alert, it's often bad for the citizens:

> The Logic of Political Survival: Summary & Review

2. Leaders' & Organizational Interests Aren't Aligned

Pfeffer says that the individual and the company's interests have little overlap.

And the leadership literature fails in good part because it never acknowledges there is a trade-off or, sometimes, a total divergence.

> Contrary to what many people seem to believe -and, moreover, one of the core foundations of much leadership thought- there is far from a complete correspondence between what is good for a company, or for that matter, a unit within that company, and what is good for the company's or unit's leader.

Also read:

- **Your diverging interests at work**

> 21 Conflicts of Interest (Your Boss Doesn't Want You to Know)

3. Motivation Is Useless (& False)

There is little data and fact-checking in the industry.

Instead, leadership training and development have become more like lay preaching and inspirational.

Everyone prefers myths, fables and motivations, starting from the leaders themselves:

> leaders describe what they want to believe about themselves and the world and, more importantly and strategically, what they would like others to believe about them

For example, says the author:

> You can read Jack Welch's books about General Electric and his management approach and never encounter the phrase "GE jerks." Yet that is a term I first heard from a now-retired GE senior executive who reported directly to Mr. Welch. He used it to describe the kind of workers GE's hard-driving culture created with its politics, competition, and forced-curve ranking.
> (…)
> Nor do Welch's writings about his management approach and accomplishments dwell on (or even mention) the pollution clean-up suits, price-fixing, or defense contract frauds that occurred at GE during his tenure.

4. Leaders' Traits Sound Nice, But Are Lies

Pfeffer says that conventional wisdom shares many "nice-sounding" qualities that the best leaders possess.

However, they're simply not true.

He says:

> These are all wonderful qualities, and if leaders consistently displayed them, workplaces and the employees who fill them would undoubtedly be doing better.
> But in each instance, I show first that **few leaders, even some of the most prominent and successful, exhibit those qualities or do these recommended things.**
> Then I lay out the evidence for and logic of why sometimes doing the opposite of what has been prescribed makes sense, at least for leaders seeking to advance their own careers.

Pfeffer says this is not good.
He says that the qualities that most workplaces select for and reward produce leaders who are bad both for employees, and for long-term organizational performance.

Naive Advice -Or Lies- Cost You

> the predominant cause of the firings: people believed in the world described to them in business school and in the prescriptions for leader behavior. Consequently, they were surprised by and completely unprepared for what they actually encountered at work.

Also read:

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Popular But False Self-Help Myths

5. Useless Trait #1: Modesty (Narcissism Is Better)

Consider Donald Trump…

Obviously, Trump proves that modesty is at least not strictly necessary to succeed in life.

Still, Pfeffer concedes, the case for modesty seems to make sense.
Modest leaders would give subordinates more ownership and encourage them to work harder when they'd let them take full credit for their work and ideas.

And indeed there is some research to support the role of modesty.
For example, reviews of leader effectiveness often show that narcissism, the opposite of modesty, correlates with poor performance as assessed both by the affective reactions of subordinates and also actual group performance.

And Collins in the book *Good to Great* provides some data to support the validity of modesty.
However, the author raises several good questions about Collins' data, including the fact that those "winning companies" were a mere 1% of the sample.

And on the other hand, there is also much research to show that self-promotion is positively correlated with interviewers' evaluations of job candidates as well as with hiring recommendations, that overconfident, and not just confident individuals achieve higher social status, respect, and influence in groups, and that **narcissists are more likely to be chosen as leaders and to be seen as having leadership potential**.
As the author says, this is not surprising for anyone who knows anything about psychology -and narcissism-.

And sums up the author:

> **The extensive and ever-growing research evidence is overwhelmingly clear: narcissists are more likely to be selected for leadership roles and also to seek such positions in the first place.**

Instead of Modesty...

So, for a more data-driven overview, consider this:

1. **Modesty is rare in the real world because it doesn't help reaching the top**, no matter how helpful it may be *for the organization* (not for the individual).
   In fact it's not a concidence it's rare: it doesn't help to reach and stay at the top!
2. **Immodesty (including self-promotion and narcissism) helps attain leadership and hold onto it**
3. **Narcissistic CEO extract more resources for themselves:** CEO narcissism is significantly correlated with CEO total compensation (O'Reilly et al., 2014)
4. **Narcissistic CEO last longer in their leadership position**, even in high-technology companies
5. **Narcissists may even perform better in some domains**, they are great at selling their ideas and vision, effective in attracting the support of others (particularly outside others), good at getting attention and its attendant benefits, and often effective at getting things done.
   - Innovation may require far more narcissism than modesty since it can require disdain for the status quo. "*the most celebrated leaders are particularly likely to be narcissistic and immodest, which is one of the reasons they became so well known and celebrated in the first place!*"

Also see:

- **How to self-promote at work**

> The Art of Self-Promotion: 9 Effective Techniques

Why we talk-up modesty, but elect narcissists

> Rather than chalk up this discrepancy to simple hypocrisy, I attribute it to a fundamental ambivalence. On the one hand, people understand the desirable and socially desirable and approved qualities in leaders, and they articulate those views and values when asked about them. On the other hand, people are attracted to the grandiose and the unusual.

Also read:

- How to be an effective leader

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

6. Useless Trait #2: Authenticity

Pfeffer says that the "authentic movement" epitomizes the leadership industry generally for being unrealistic and idealistic.

It's also unfeasible at the extreme levels, since the definition is to be in tune with our basic nature and "owning it". In that vein, sending pictures of one's private parts if that's one feels like may as well be "extreme authenticity". And, obviously, you may not want to do that.

Instead, says Pfeffer, getting along with others and being successful in the world often requires a large amount of inauthenticity and self-regulation.

Hence, leaders need to be able to put aside what they feel like, and sometimes do what their followers and society require -or what's best for them-.
Even in interpersonal relationships, your personal feelings are irrelevant sometimes and you simply need to make a relationship work.

7. Useless Trait #3: Telling The Truth

Authentic leadership is a popular concept in the leadership industry.

Books such as Radical Candor sang its praise and framed it as one of the best approaches for high-performance teams.

In reality, powerful people lie more, and better.
And they use lies to acquire and maintain power.

Says Pfeffer:

> Research consistently demonstrates that "powerful people lie more often and with more ease." Leaders prevaricate with greater aplomb because "power, even when minimally endowed in the laboratory, mitigates the impact of stress associated with dishonesty (…) Finally, high-power individuals are less sensitive to societal norms; e.g., norms that condemn the use of deception."
> Thus, powerful people—leaders—are able to lie more successfully, and they do so.

Lying is also useful to acquire power.
Says the author quoting Lindsay et al.:

> manipulative ability is a foundation of social power and the ability to lie successfully is an important skill

> linked to personal and professional success

Advantages of Lying

- Smooth over otherwise difficult situations
- Smoother relationships and interactions
- Keep employees happy (for example, about their chances of advancing)
- Lies can become truth (especially when told often and convincingly enough)
- Fake positive feedback can lead people to perform better
- Improve returns or share prices by inflating future prospects
- Galvanize and rallying the troops convincing that success is possible and even likely (even when the odds are very slim)
- The "liar's high" of getting away with it

Also read:

- **Machiavellis at the top**

https://thepowermoves.com/psychopathy-empathy-and-success-at-work

8. Useless Trait #4: Being Trusted

The social science literature demonstrates that leaders who inspire trust and workplaces in which employees trust their leaders perform better.

However, Pfeffer no longer believes that trust is *essential* because numerous organizations are operating despite a *lack* of trust in leaders.

- **People are unable to spot untrustworthy leaders**
- **There are little sanctions for leaders who violate trust**
- **Power matters a lot more than trust**. "*Trust-breakers for the most part retain their networks and social relationships because others in their orbit haven't been harmed by their actions, so they don't feel compelled to redress the harm. Trust-breakers frequently maintain their financial resources*."
  My note: this was so good that it ended up in PU
- **Destroying past trust can pay handsomely**. For example, a new business owner may cut all expenses on new development but keep milking existing customers because of high switching costs. He destroys past-earned trust, but he can profit from it.
  So save up these old articles and reviews if one day TPM had to be acquired :)
- **Gaining trust and then betraying it once you've got the power and opportunity may pay off better**. For example, some corporate giants today started off as contractors. But once they learned how to do it, they stopped working as contractors and started doing it under their own brand (ie.: Lenovo and some Korean electronic companies).
  Don't be an "entrepreneur in residence": don't start your startup in a bigger ecosystem or parent company. If it works well, they'll take it over or replicate the exact same thing and you'll get short-changed
- **Fluid alliances work better than keeping the same ones forever**. And sometimes that may mean breaking a bond that someone thought would last forever
- **Commitments are costly, and interests can diverge**

> leaders go back on their word not because they are necessarily venal or evil, but because keeping commitments, a fundamental basis of trust, constrains their behavior. When circumstances change, so do

> people's behaviors, objectives, and needs. Leaders shed commitments all the time.

Why Power & High-Value Matters More Than Trust

It's true that people want and sometimes seek to punish cheaters.

However, social research literature probably overstates the "punishment effect" because in laboratory settings punishing is much easier than in the real world.

In the laboratory, people can spend modest resources to punish people whom they will almost certainly never encounter again.

But **in the real world people can ill-afford to punish the cheaters when those cheaters are business partners who can still add value or who may even be necessary for business operations.**

And that's why powerful people stay powerful, well-connected, and keep on making money even when they break trust, or when they behave like aholes.

9. Useless Trait #7: Taking Care of Others (Leaders Eat First)

The idea of selfless leadership is appealing.

And it also sells well.
We reviewed Simon Sinek's book here "Leaders Eat Last", and his inspirational videos garner millions of views with a similar message:

"The secret of the top performers was to put others first"
And says Pfeffer:

> Much like other forms of leadership that have attracted attention, such as authentic leadership, the idea of putting others first and taking care of and being responsible for those working for and with a leader appeals to most people's values as well as their intuitions about what leaders should do.

However, again, it's just not how things work in real life.

For example, one study showed that power leads to job protection for those in power—for the leaders, but not the followers.
And one meta-analysis shows that CEO pay is largely unaffected by corporate performance. So while company size accounts for about 40 percent of the variation in CEO pay, performance explains a paltry 5 percent of CEO's pay.

And albeit there are a few exceptions, it's exceptions in a landscape in which **most leaders mostly take care of themselves first** regardless of what they *should* do.

Why leaders don't care for others

- **They have no incentives**. If they had, it would help a lot, but most leaders have incentives to increase share prices or bottom-line results, not people's well-being
- **Leaders of big organizations have no real contact with those they lead**, and the nameless and faceless people are a lot more likely to get the short end of the stick
- **Many leaders are hired from outside with the expressed remit of cutting costs or increasing bottom line**, which means not only their incentive, but their own job goes against many employees' interests

Bottom Line: Take Care of Yourself

Don't over-trust company sloganeering or any ethical and moral obligation.

Companies and even nonprofits and government agencies are faceless entities.
And their internal dynamics generally mean that companies look after themselves and their own interests first.
And so do individual leaders.

The obvious conclusion is that **when everyone else is looking after themselves first, you should do the same**.

The reciprocity principle is out, the self-interest norm is in

How did we get here?

Reciprocity as explained by Robert Cialdini is real.
But it works mostly *between individuals*.

The rules change in organizational settings.
There are many reasons for this, but the bottom line is that, as Pfeffer's own experiments showed, the reciprocity norm is more readily and frequently breached within organizations.
At work the norm of self-interest beats the reciprocity principle.

So you may think your employer owes you something for your loyalty, past contributions and good work.

But most employers don't see it that way.

The question the counterparty asks itself is not "what have you done for me in the past that deserves repayment", but rather, "what can you do for me in the future that justifies me spending any time or resources on keeping you".

Better safe than sorry: prepare yourself

Adams Grant says givers are a relatively rare breed.

And the reciprocity principle is often misplaced in organizations.

That means you may set yourself up for a painful and costly bargain if you believe that there is some implicit contract of honoring your good work and loyalty for reward and recognition or even job security.

Even if such an exchange would be fair, don't expects those unwritten agreements to be honored. Data show that companies violate implicit contracts with their employees all the time.
And that's especially true in poor workplaces because once individualistic values come to dominate, trust and cooperation are difficult if not impossible to rebuild.

Hence, generally and particularly in "non-exceptional workplaces" **presume that others are acting on the basis of their self-interest**, and you can better forecast and understand their actions.

To prepare yourself always:

1. Keep an eye out for new jobs and opportunities (and learn to be a good interviewee)
2. Constantly work on the relationship with your boss

Be Bad To Be Good

We had an early article with exactly this title.

And Pfeffer says the exact same thing.

> In the fall of 2013, the world celebrated the five-hundred-year anniversary, more or less, of the appearance of Machiavelli's The Prince. One commentary on this important and still-relevant work noted:
> Machiavelli teaches that in a world where so many are not good, you must learn to be able to not be good. The virtues taught in our secular and religious schools are incompatible with the virtues one must practice to safeguard those same institutions… Machiavelli has long been called a teacher of evil. The author of "The

> Prince" never urged evil for evil's sake. The proper aim of a leader is to maintain his state (and, not incidentally, his job). Politics is an arena where following virtue often leads to the ruin (…)

And:

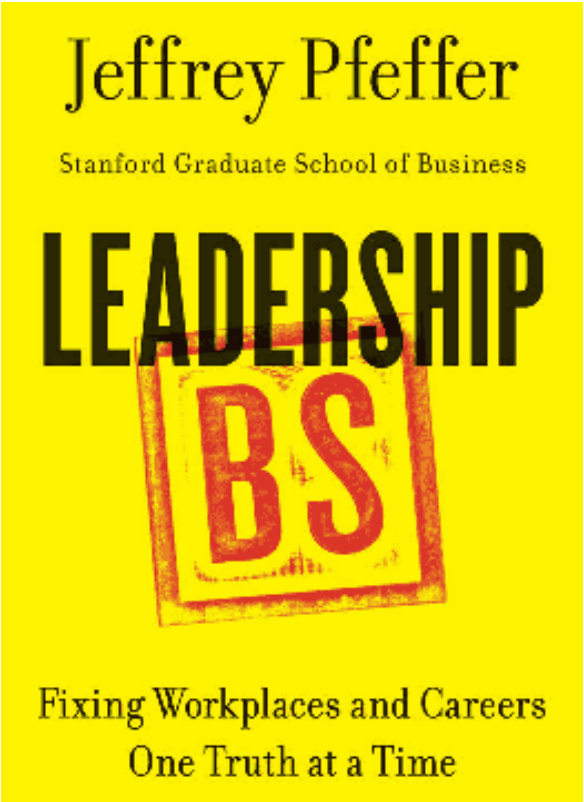
> winning in very competitive environments, often requires being willing and able to engage in behaviors and exhibit qualities that some people might find repugnant. Maybe that's why there is such a leadership shortage and why the leadership industry, with its failure to acknowledge this fundamental truth, continues to fail.
> (…)
> to do good things, even great things, people need to be willing to take whatever actions are required, and to not shy away from tough fights, unpopularity, and, yes, even decisions that skirt the edge of illegality

If You Want To Become A Leader...

You need more truthful information, like the one in this book.

And you need to learn how to apply it, with concrete behavior, strategies, and techniques.

To learn real-world strategies to become a leader you may want to consider an investment in Power University.



MORE WISDOM

Learn office politics and social skills

> As Matt jokes about failing upward, he relates how he lost his previous jobs, essentially by focusing on doing a great job technically but being largely oblivious to the political dynamics and particularly the requirement for managing his relationships with his bosses

Reviews of training and courses say little about the *usefulness* of those courses

Says Pfeffer:

> a recent review of the evidence concluded that there is a very small and statistically insignificant relationship between student evaluations and learning, and that the more objectively learning is measured, the less likely it is to be related to the evaluations.
> Another review also concluded that "teacher's ratings and learning are not closely related"

The reason is that most students rate how much they *enjoyed* reading or attending, rathen than how much they *learned*.

Learn presence and exec skills: the only cure to the glass ceiling

Says the author:

> women and other ethnic minorities, such as Asian Americans, are on average more modest and self-effacing and less narcissistic than typical white males, in part because of gender roles and cultural expectations, which may help explain their worse career outcomes.
> (…)
> One factor affecting these outcomes is the importance of executive presence, which, the report noted, often requires behaviors seemingly at odds with Asian (and female) behavioral norms.

Learn more here:

- **Executive demeanor for career advancement**

> 17 Tips to Exude Exec-Level Confidence at Work

Watch out for whistleblowing: you may pay the consequences

Quoting a paper aptly called "nobody likes a rat", he says:

> Whistle-blowers in settings ranging from the government to private industry are shunned and often have trouble finding subsequent employment. In an experimental study, researchers found that even though some individuals are willing to report lying, when â€œgroups can select their members, individuals who report lies are generally shunned, even by groups where lying is absent.

Look at past behavior to assess future behavior

> The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. People who have reneged on commitments, stolen intellectual property, sued or forced out their partners, failed to fulfill promises, and moved on to greener pastures in the past will do so again

Be optimistic, but not overly optimistic as in "blind to reality"

The Stockdale Paradox says that over-optimism can turn into over-pessimism once the overly optimistic belief fails to materialize.

Quoting the book:

> it was always the most optimistic of his prisonmates who failed to make it out of there alive. “They were the ones who said, ‘We’re going to be out by Christmas.’ And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they’d say, ‘We’re going to be out by Easter.’ And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart.” What the optimists failed to do was confront the reality of their situation. They preferred the ostrich approach, sticking their heads in the sand and hoping for the difficulties to go away. That self-delusion might have made it easier on them in the short-term, but when they were eventually forced to face reality, it had become too much and they couldn’t handle it.

To change the system, avoid attacking the powerful ones so that you can stay just enough within the system

> Elizabeth Warren received precisely such advice to avoid criticizing powerful others from Lawrence Summers, a former president of Harvard University and U.S. treasury secretary: “I had a choice. I could be an insider or I could be an outsider. Outsiders can say whatever they want. But people on the inside don’t listen to them. Insiders, however, get lots of access and a chance to push their ideas… But insiders also understand one unbreakable rule: They don’t criticize other insiders.

QUOTES

On how useless most leadership books are:

> Go home and throw out the numerous leadership books—or better yet, give them to career competitors.

On leaders taking care of themselves first:

> Or as a former student told me one evening at a dinner accompanied by a little too much wine, “We live in an era of shared sacrifice. The employees sacrifice, and I share in the money they give up.”

On taking responsibility for yourself and becoming an adult:

> Encouraging people to seek and then to follow benevolent leaders to put their trust and faith in these individuals who, because they are human, will nevertheless be invariably flawed, strikes me as seeking to in some measure infantilize otherwise competent working adults.

CONS

Leadership BS is fantastic and we largely agree on everything.

So take these “cons” as “opportunities to be even better”, rather than true major cons:

Did Leaders Largely Fail?

Pfeffer says that “Leaders fail their people, their organizations, the larger society, and even themselves with unacceptable frequency”.

I’m not sure that is the case.

Or, at least, it may not be any truer for leaders as it is for everyone else.

The “Selfish Individual Advantage” Missed The Benefit of Win-Win

The author says that individuals maximize their interest by acting selfishly, while the group depends on individuals NOT acting selfish:

> Individuals maximize their own survival chances by acting selfishly to acquire, at all costs, the resources necessary for their survival. Group survival, however, often depends on individuals sacrificing their own well-being for that of the group, such as soldiers throwing themselves on hand grenades to save their colleagues’ lives, or parents forgoing food so their children can live.

Leaders BS is a great book, but this was a generalization that, in my opinion, isn’t fully true.

In truth, altruistic behavior could not evolve if it wasn’t *also* good for the individual -such behavior would have been quickly rooted out if altruistic individuals lost out-.

Altruistic behavior instead evolved because win-win is possible, and win-win sometimes entails at least some altruism.
And some forms of win-win also entail that an individual acting in his selfish interest can also add value to others, or to the group -that’s also the basis of capitalism, and despite its flaws, look how it advanced our civilization-.

For more, see:

- The Origins of Virtue

> The Origins of Virtue: Summary & Review

Some Opinions As Statements of Truth

For example:

> One reason why lying is common is that the ability to lie or deceive others offers evolutionary benefits and, as a consequence, has increased over time.

And who says that it increased over time?

It’s tempting to come up with an evolutionary psychology reason to justify an opinion (including sensible opinions). However, that’s not a scientific approach to evolutionary psychology -and, incidentally, it’s one of the reasons why the discipline has such a bad reputation-.

Pfeffer himself shows exactly how it’s done when he says a little later in the book that “*possibly* for evolutionary reasons those who were best able to… “.
That’s how you properly preface an opinion or conjecture.

The “ever-growing cycle of trust-breaking” that may not take over the world

Similarly, the author suggests that trust-breaking is on the rise as part of a vicious cycle:

> Because commitments constrain, people and companies break them (…) Because there are few sanctions, such trust-violating behavior becomes more frequent. Because the breaking of promises becomes more frequent, it becomes more “normative” in the sense that more entities do it (…) it provokes less moral outrage and comes to be seen as how business is done (…) the absence of moral outrage then leads to more breaches of agreements and promises, and the cycle continues

However, there is absolutely zero data to show that trust-violating behavior is on the rise.
And it's entirely possible that a virtuous cycle in a couple, group, organization, country, or even world, may go in the *opposite* direction.

Some Explanations Felt Far-Fetched

The author had a tough job to explain why some popular myths are largely unfounded.

And that holds true even if, as I believe it's the case, the author is right.

For example, to explain that trust is not that important for leaders, the author says that when the trust-breaking is publicized, the crooked leader gains with notoriety.

That may be true in some cases, but certainly not all.

And I'd even say that common wisdom is correct here: it's often better *not* to be on the front pages for having lied and stolen.

This may be a case where the author felt he needed to add more reasons to back up seemingly counter-intuitive claims.
But it's usually better not to add an explanation, than to add a shakier explanation.

REVIEW

Leadership BS is a great exposé of naive self-help within the leadership industry, a fundamental read for increasing power awareness, and a much-needed wake-up call for many.

It's also very much in line with TPM, including our "enlightened cynical" stance, and with our "you need to be bad to be good".

Many reviewers of this fantastic book missed the point because they over-focused on the cynicism in the book.
And yes, *Leadership BS* is cynical at times.
However, that's only because it needs to address and undo the endless stream of naive self-help that leads people astray.
Only people who prefer to keep the wool over their eyes would ignore *Leadership BS* -or give it a low rating- for that matter -and people who *profit* from that naivete, of course-.

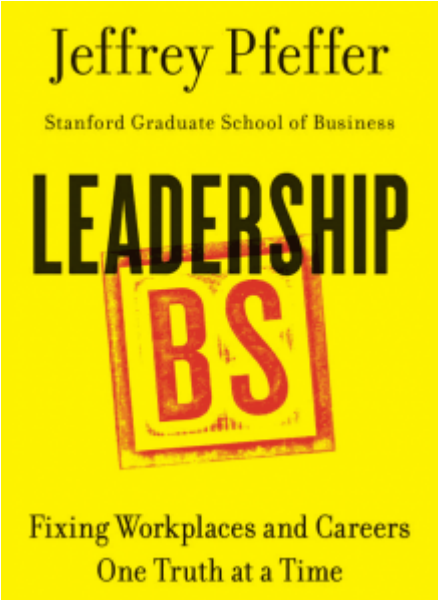
In today's terminology, *Leadership BS* is part of the red pill, and some people would rather never take that red pill to remain in their fake fantasies.

Finally, *Leadership BS* also provided some concepts that made me rethink Power University, and that's the biggest compliment I can pay to any author or resource.

Get it on Amazon or check the:

- **Best books** to read
- **Best leadership books**

Leadership BS Summary: 9 Lies They Told You About Leadership



Exposes the limitations (and lies) of naive self-help within the leadership industry. A fundamental read for anyone who aspires to becoming a leader (and aye-opener for many).

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/leadership-bs-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

The Status Game: How Important Is Status For Men's Life & Success? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 April 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The Status Game (2021) explains how social status impacts us all. Will Storr, the author, says that we are all hardwired to play the status game: we want status and work for it, we're happy and healthier when we have it and depressed when we don't, and we are bound to play the game, even when it changes us for the worse (as if often happens). So we better learn how it works.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Status Is About Power & Influence
  - We're Driven to Acquire Status
  - Status Is Key To Succeed, Connection Is Not
  - Status Makes Us Feel Good (Or Bad)
  - Status Is Intrinsically Relative & "Others-Driven" (ie.: how we stack up with others)
  - People Are Great At Assessing Status
  - Status Is A Random Game Pursuing Random Markers of Status
  - 3 Ways to Acquire Status
  - Dominance VS Prestige: Taking Status, Or Being Granted Status
  - Humiliation and Shame Are The Opposite of Status
  - Warning: Avoid Ego-Projections On "Ambassadors of Status"
  - Manipulative Stories Keep Low-Status People From Rebeling
  - Warning: The System Replaces Your Value With The Group's Values
  - Warning: The Game Changes Behaviors & Personality
  - Warning: Wars Increase When The Status Game Rewards Warriors
  - Conspiracy Theorists & Cancel Culture Are Toxic Games of Status
  - But Status Games Also Built Advanced Civilizations
  - The Prince Charles Paradox: High Official Status, Little Respect
  - Status Games Turn Toxic When It's Between-Groups
  - Cults Are The Most Toxic Games
  - Successful Groups Are Status-Generating Machines
  - How to Acquire Status
  - Escape & Transcend The Game
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CONS
  - Well sourced, but a couple sources didn't add up to me
  - Sometimes different constructs are mixed up in my opinion (Ie.: Status VS Power)
  - The status game is not as random as implied
  - The evolution of status to make us less violent didn't add up to me
  - Gets a bit "woke" in one chapter

- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Humans are hardwired to play a status game**, as soon as we engage with others, we're naturally pulled into the game
- **There are a multitude of status games, each with different rules**
- **Having high status in the games makes us successful and happy**, having low status makes us unhappy and "losers"
- **The status game can turn toxic**, both for the group, the collective, and for you
- **It's best for you if you learn to both do well in the game, and also to transcend it** -or, at least, to be less dependent on it for your personal success and happiness

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Will Storr is a writer, journalist, storytelling trainer, and ghostwriter.

TPM Note:
While Storr is not a psychologist, we list *The Status Game* in our 'psychology' category because it pulls from peer-reviewed research in evolutionary and social psychology and provides a coherent framework to understand human drives for status.

Status Is About Power & Influence

Storr explains status as:

> When people defer to us, offer respect, admiration or praise, or allow us to influence them in some way, that's status.

Influence Is The Bigger Indicator of Status

Says Storr:

> Status games run on powerlines of influence and deference that crackle up and down their hierarchy.
> This is why, of all the countless status symbols that exist in human life, influence is probably the most reliable.

And:

> Wherever you track trails of influence – of people deferring, altering their beliefs or behaviour to match those of the people above them – you'll find status games being played and won.

Yep, true.
And Storr also adds that we track our own status by our capacity to influence.

We're Driven to Acquire Status

Humans are driven to "fit in and rise within it".

Fitting is important, but only the first step.
Then, humans also want to rise -and they *must* rise, if they want to be successful-.

> We're driven to rise within it. When we succeed, and receive approval and acclaim from our community, we experience happiness. We feel as if our lives have meaning and purpose and that we're thriving.

Status Is Key To Succeed, Connection Is Not

Brene Brown has become popular talking about the human need for connection.

However, that's only ONE part of human's social needs and drive.

Says Storr:

> Status isn't about being liked or accepted: these are separate needs, associated with connection.

And connection is just the "bare minimum entry-level":

> The minimum requirement for play is connection. Before we can be rewarded with status, we must first be accepted into the group as a player.

However, the author correctly says, **connection in itself doesn't make for a successful life.** And people are neither successful nor happy to simply be part of a group if they reside in the lower rung of that group.

Storr calls that "connected but low status" state "likable but useless".

Instead humans, or at least successful humans, are driven to "get along and get ahead".

Status Makes Us Feel Good (Or Bad)

Science shows it clearly:

Status is a fundamental human motive that profoundly affects our well-being.

One review of the empirical literature found people's well-being 'consistently depended on the degree to which people felt respected by others. Attainment of status or its loss was 'the strongest predictor of long-term positive and negative feelings.
And a study of 7372 British civil servants tells us that the lower the rank of the employee, the higher the age-adjusted mortality risk. Storr summarizes by saying that the lower you dropped, the worse your health and the earlier your death.
Finally, one review found out that social status is also linked to depression.

In brief, Storr concludes that status is essential for healthy living:

> Status is an essential nutrient found not in meat or fruit or sunlight but in the successful playing of our lives.

Storr says that these emotions are no coincidence.
We are happy because **status provides a huge evolutionary advantage to survive and reproduce**.

Evolutionary psychologist David Buss says men of higher status 'invariably had greater wealth and more wives and provided better nourishment for their children.

Status Is Intrinsically Relative & "Others-Driven" (ie.: how we stack up with others)

Have you ever heard those arguments of how ungrateful we are because even a poor man today lives better than a king a thousand years ago?

Well, those people don't understand human nature.

Status instead is comparative.
Says Storr:

> Researchers find our reward systems are activated most when we achieve relative rather than absolute rewards; we're designed to feel best not when we get more, but when we get more than those around us.

Even when we're "objectively doing well" on a global scale, studies show that it's respect and admiration within one's local group, *not* socioeconomic status, that predicts subjective well-being.

Tip: Switch Off Social Media

Says the author:

> Status is relative: the higher others rise, the lower we sit in comparison. It's a resource and their highly visible thriving steals it from us.

This means to you that:

You need to switch off social media because **social media are show-off machine and you're designed to feel bad or inferior looking at someone else doing comparatively better**.

People Are Great At Assessing Status

> When researchers took candid photos of ninety-six pairs of co-workers interacting, cut them out and stuck them against a white background to remove contextual information, people were 'exceedingly accurate' in their estimates of who had higher status. Merely by glancing at a still image of them talking, they could tell who was on top.

And:

> The status detection system even reads symbolic information in sounds we can't consciously hear. When speaking, we emit a low-frequency hum at around 500 hertz. When people meet and talk, their hums shift. The highest-status person in the group sets its level and the rest adjust to match. This hum is thought to be an 'unconscious social instrument' that helps sort us into status hierarchies

For example, analyses of The Larry King Show interviews found that Larry deferentially changed his hum to match Elizabeth Taylor but that Dan Quayle adjusted to him.

Status Is A Random Game Pursuing Random Markers of Status

Says the author:

> Groups of people gather together, agree what symbols they're going to use to mean 'status', then strive to achieve it.
> (…)
> The truth of human life is that it's a set of hallucinatory games organised around symbols. These games are an act of shared imagination.

Different cultures and times have different rules for the game

For example:

> East Asian games tend to be more collective. In countries such as Japan and China, status-pursuit is more commonly seen as the responsibility of the group.

3 Ways to Acquire Status

The author says there are 3 main approaches to gaining status:

1. **Dominance**, where status is coerced by force or fear (mafia organizations or armies)
2. **Virtue**, where status goes to conspicuously dutiful, obedient, and moralistic (religions, royal institutions, or virtue signaling and cancel cultures)
3. **Success**, where status goes either to the winner of a specific game with specific rules and outcomes, or to the player who displays skill, talent, or knowledge (corporations and sporting contexts)

Of course life and games tend to be mixed and overlapping however, says the author, one mode of playing often becomes prominent and defines the type of game.

Humans tend to engage in whatever can afford them the most status points, and are often an uncomfortable, contradictory mixture of all the three.

Dominance VS Prestige: Taking Status, Or Being Granted Status

Somewhat confusingly, after having introduced the "3 ways to acquire status", the author then differentiates between dominance and prestige.

The difference is that dominant players tend to take power and status, while prestigious leaders are awarded status and power.

Both work, he says:

> Dominant and prestigious players alike have more influence over co-players. Dominant men, like prestigious men, have greater reproductive success. One meta-analysis of over thirty studies found dominance to be one of the 'most robust predictors of leader emergence, outperforming myriad others including conscientiousness and intelligence'.

However, albeit the author doesn't directly state so, it seems that dominant leaders tend to gain leadership roles more often than prestigious ones -and especially so in turbulent times-.

Alose see:

- **How to be an effective leader**

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

Dominant Leaders Lead More, But Are Less Effective Than Prestigious Leaders

Dominant men are more likely to acquire positions of leadership.

Unluckily, they're also less effective than prestigious leaders.
Says the author:

> (…) dominant-style leaders are usually less effective than the prestigious, being more likely to put their own interests before the group, less likely to seek advice and tending to respond to criticism with 'ego defensive aggression'. They're also overbearing, like to publicly credit themselves with the success of the group, tease and humiliate subordinates and are manipulative

Instead, prestigious leaders are more self-deprecating, and publicly attribute success to the team.

Also see:

- **Leadership power dynamics**

Humiliation and Shame Are The Opposite of Status

Humiliation, shame, and rejection are the opposite of status.

The author links to several high-profile cases of murder, mass murder, or social aggression, all of which are very interesting and sound at the very least plausible.

Bin Laden as well was largely motivated by the humiliation he perceived.
Humiliation at the hands of more powerful and different Western cultures.
Similarly, researchers find that the prime driver of suicide bombers is also humiliation at the hands of the occupying troops (*Why We Fight* and *Shame, Guilt, And Violence*).

Humiliation is even a bigger motivator in cultures of honors, and for narcissistic individuals -especially the ones with fragile self-esteem-.

Warning: Avoid Ego-Projections On "Ambassadors of Status"

Some people project their ego into someone else to "hitchhike on their success".

Says Storr:

> ambassadors for our groups: artists, thinkers, athletes and leaders with whom we strongly identify. They seem to symbolise us, somehow. They carry with them a piece of our own identity, a pound of our flesh – so their success becomes our success and we cheer it wildly. To our subconscious these idols are fantastically accomplished versions of us: our copy, flatter, conform cognition overrides our resentment.

That may sound good, BUT… **If you live vicariously through other people's successes, you'll never succeed yourself**.

That's also why here on TPM we always discourage from projecting your ego onto any other individual, or any other group -a common and toxic example we warned against here is the tendency in the male self-development circles is to project one's ego into "male superiority over women".

You must be careful of the ego-projection dynamic because it comes naturally to humans.

And so does the unfair, time-wasting status boosterism.

For example, one study shows that 5-years old wearing a colored T-shirt thought more positively of children wearing the same colours, assessing them as more generous and kind. And in a subsequent game, they unfairly rewarded them with more coins.
This is also risky for you because you may end up feeling closer to someone who poses as more similar or as in-group, just to manipulate you and take advantage of you.

Sports fans & jingoism

Two good examples are sports fans and nationalists.

Both project their egos onto bigger groups and fanatically support their team or country so that they can feel good when the team or country does well.

Says author Laurie Lee describing a good example of this dynamic:

> we were very poor in those days, poor but uncomplaining, we lived on boiled and baked cabbage, the poorest of the poor. And we used to sit there, looking at these maps and thinking, we are the greatest in the world. We own all those pieces of red on that map, on that world map.

Also read:

- **Making of the ubermensch**

> Enlightened Self-Interest: Making of The Ubermensch

Manipulative Stories Keep Low-Status People From Rebeling

Storr asks a very poignant question:

If we're all so ambitious, why have the poorest, lowest-status persons stayed in the game?

Some reasons include:

- **Manipulative stories, religions, and promises of next-life bliss**

Some ad-hoc religions can provide the manipulative stories that keep them stuck.
For example, by making a generational sin they need to atone in their current life. Or with the promise of a future better life after death for all of those who submit in this life.

- **Trickle-down games work: we play local games and focus on those immediately around us**

People focus on their immediate lives.

So if there's a king living lavishly while those around us eat bugs, many humans are happy to compete on who can afford the most bugs if the king is just enough far removed.

This is especially true if the local game feels "fair enough".
Says Storr:

> As long as those games functioned properly, and our group received the rewards it expected, the status quo would likely be maintained.

And:

> A robust society is one in which the general populace is protected from outside threat and status trickles down in ways that are expected. Even if elite groups – the religious, legal, military, bureaucratic, aristocratic games – get nearly all the rewards, and bottom castes virtually none at all, stability won't usually be threatened.

- **Many humans have limited ambition, not boundless ambition**

Most people don't seek complete supremacy or alpha male status.

Instead, they're content to have just enough to live.

So if the king is just enough removed, they don't even think of deposing a kind.

What Creates Revolutions

So what does create revolutions, then?

Storr says that it's a game that stopped working:

> What creates revolutionary conditions isn't the steepness of the inequality but the perception the game has stopped paying out as it should.

Instead, sociologist Jack Goldstone writes that people tend to rebel when they feel they are losing their proper place in society for reasons that are not inevitable and not their fault.

Warning: The System Replaces Your Value With The Group's Values

The longer you stay in a group, the more you become part of it.

And the more you become part of it, the more you absorb its rules, and start obeying and acting accordingly to those rules.

Storr lays out the example of a lawyer who may not care too much about money.
But once everyone around him does, he eventually will start seeking money as a way of gaining more status and respect within his environment -and the system will profit as a result-.

Companies profit by replacing your values for rank

Companies and organizations profit a great deal when the employees start caring about rank, promotion, and salaries.

The more employees care, the more they will seek to do good work in order to advance.
And the company profits.

Also read:

- **Business manipulations**

> 12 Ways Companies Manipulate Employees (W/ Examples)

Warning: The Game Changes Behaviors & Personality

The game literally changes people.

Sometimes, for the worse.

Storr shares a few stories of people who started acting contrary to their usual selves when they fell into games that rewarded them for conformity and for certain behaviors that the game rewarded for.

The examples are:

- The false "day-care sex abuse cases" and the "Satan hunters" who started hunting for status points
- Woman who became anti-vaxer when she joined anti-vax Facebook groups and was cheered on for her beliefs
- Witch hunts

Warning: Wars Increase When The Status Game Rewards Warriors

Says the author:

> An analysis of warriorship in premodern societies discovered a positive relationship between conflict intensity and the status on offer for fighters. 'Warriors are motivated to participate in warfare because of the possibility of rewards,' it found. These included 'increased status, honorific names or titles, or special insignia'.

Wars can refer both to real war with guns and bombs, and to social or online aggression.

Conspiracy Theorists & Cancel Culture Are Toxic Games of Status

Conspiracy theorists and virtue signalers both play a game of status.

Conspiracy Theorists Are Low-Status Status Seekers

Writes Storr:

> One investigation found those most likely to circulate 'hostile political rumours' including conspiracy theories and 'fake news' on social media were often 'status-obsessed, yet socially marginalised', their behaviour fuelled by a 'thwarted desire for high status', their aim, to 'mobilise the audience against disliked elites'.

Some people in these games are "true believers", and many others just pile in searching for status.
Once a whole group has been taken over by a strong culture, the dynamics can get more and more toxic. The true believers want to sniff out the posers and ensure obedience to the "truth".
And non-believers who don't have the personal power to speak up or walk out will start to "fake their belief" just to be accepted and gain status.

The Cancel Culture Has Already Turned Toxic

Once the game has started there is no leader in control of everything.

Once it starts, it's mob dynamics.

Individuals start policing and attacking any target that can offer a good opportunity for status points -even if it was former colleagues in the same cancel culture game-.

Says the author:

> Online mobs play virtue-dominance games: status is awarded to players who enforce their rules to those both inside and outside their groups.

Unluckily, it can be effective as studies of mobbing events on Twitter find shamers increase their follower counts faster than non-shamers.

Also see:

- Don't fall for disempowering virtue signaling

https://thepowermoves.com/black-empowerment-vs-virtue-signalers

Purity Spirals & Hunting Deviants

Toxic status games can turn into what Manning and Campbell call "purity spiral" in which players 'strive to outdo one another in displays of zealotry, condemning and expelling members of their own movement for smaller and smaller deviations from its core virtues'.

That was the case during the terror of Robespierre, the communist movement and party in Russia, and is also taking place within the cancel culture.

But Status Games Also Built Advanced Civilizations

So far we mostly talk badly about status games.

However, like most games, the status games can also be used to reward positive and win-win behavior.

And **our current ever-advancing society is based on a status game that rewards entrepreneurship and truth**.

Storr says that civilizations took a major leap forward when we started to award status to entrepreneurs who went after value-adding production, and scientists who went after truth.

It started in Italy, in Venice and Florence.
And went international with the "Republic of Letters", (one of) the first international network of intellectuals and scholars.

And when the old elites there re-established their dominion Englad took over the mantel.
From there, the advance spread over to the whole West.

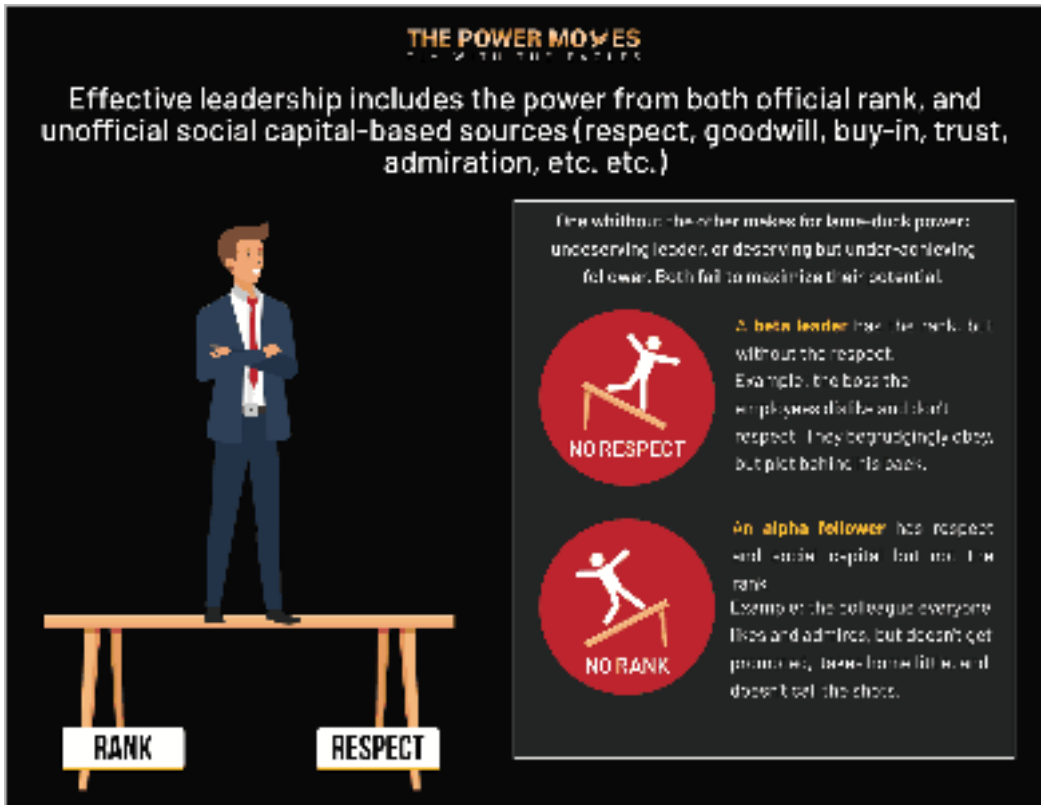
The Prince Charles Paradox: High Official Status, Little Respect

The author explains that as societies got larger, the game also grew too large, and split into two:

- Formal game: announced at the higher levels of cultures, economies, royal descendants and political appointees
- Informal true game: that continues to occur in the minds of the players

This means that one player could acquire status and power informally, but without having much skills for the game -or much respect from the people-.

This was a great intuition by Storr and something we had already described on this website (and also did an infographic for it):



Status Games Turn Toxic When It's Between-Groups

Storr explains how in hunter-gather societies individuals police each to make sure nobody socially climbs on others.

And, generally, interpersonal exchanges with attacks and defenses and intra-group dynamics ensure that the game remains relatively fair.

However, no such checks exist among groups:

> (…) no such policing happens in status competitions between games. On the contrary, our co-players award us even more status when we behave in ways that boost our game's rank and diminish that of our rivals

This is indeed a dangerous dynamic where individuals can fan the flames of hatred and turn the game into one that affords the most status to the members who mostly attack and demonize the outgroups.

Cults Are The Most Toxic Games

At the extreme of toxicity are cults.

Cults become the only source of status for their members.

Storr makes a good argument that "brainwashing" isn't really the only -or best- explanation for cults.
Instead, brains in a cult are doing what brains are designed to do: seek belonging and status in the only meaningful group they are part of.

Successful Groups Are Status-Generating Machines

Leaders need to develop organizations that award status to their best players.

Machiavelli said it first, says the author, and he was right.

The author says the successful leader must make status available to everyone who adheres to the rules and, as Machiavelli said, ideally make people believe that those prizes are only available from him.

The status can be in the form of money, titles, medals, belonging to an elite, or a "ladder to heaven".
But even simple appreciation from the leader can work -a judge power move-.

Successful politicians offer more status

Good Machiavellian politicians also tell the story of a special group that needs more status -and that they can get under his leadership, of course-.

Says the author:

> The forty-fifth President of the United States, Donald Trump, told this story, by promising to 'Make America Great Again'; so did his predecessor Barack Obama by seeking to embody 'Hope'.

Same did Hitler.
And so did ISIS, leveraging a generation that felt low status in the world order, and promising to give back pride, honor… And status in the idealistic caliphate.

How to Acquire Status

Storr highlights 7 rules for winning in the status game.

They are:

1. **Practice warmth, sincerity, and competence**: besides "high-power and high-warmth" that we also embrace

here, the author adds “sincerity”. “Professor Jennifer Ray, reviewing some available research, says that morality is ‘not only a critical and separable dimension … it may even be the primary dimension’. Elsewhere, ‘perceived sincerity’ has been found to be essential to successful ‘impression management’.”

2. **Make small moments of prestige**, dominant power moves add up to make people dislike you. Swap for the “prestige power moves”. Avoid ordering others around, use power protecting techniques. In the West, highlighting their freedom to decide is far more persuasive
3. **Play a hierarchy of games**, the best way to defend yourself against tyranny and toxic groups and to win freedom and personal power is to play many games. Brainwashed people have simply invested too much into a single game. They become overly reliant on that game or that guru, and they risk catastrophic collapses if the game -their very self can disintegrate-.
   So play many games, instead. “*Psychologists find those with ‘complex,’ multiple self-identities tend to be happier, healthier and have more stable emotional lives*“.
   Storr also recommends that you prioritize some game/group that are most important to you, without letting it become your sole group.
4. **Reduce your moral sphere**: stop judging and social climbing others, cast that eye inward and concern yourself with your own behavior instead
5. **Foster a trade-off mindset**: view the world not in terms of “right or wrong” and groups in terms of “moral heroes and villains”, but as groups negotiating trade-offs. It also means empathizing more.
   Often each side tells part of the truth.
6. **Be different**: life in the status game can be tough. You can win the game with minor acts of non-conformity that do not violate the group’s basic standards for behavior but attract attention (Status, Cecilia L. Ridgeway)
7. **Never forget you’re dreaming**: “*A status game is a conspiracy we join to make ourselves feel important*“. Even if you can’t fully separate from the game, you can gain freedom, power, and even happiness by realizing the nature of the game

High-Status People Behavior

Before those 7 rules, he also says that high-status people:

- Have longer eye contact
- Speak more often
- Speak more loudly
- Are more facially expressive
- Have more successful interruptions during conversations
- Stand closer to us
- Touch themselves less
- Use more relaxed, open postures
- Use more ‘filled pauses’ such as ‘um’ and ‘ah’ (note: I found some studies that say the opposite though, and better advice is to cut out your filler words)
- Have a steadier vocal tone (although some of these symbols may vary culturally)
- Set the tone -literal tone as in frequency- of speaking and others adapt

For more on social power and dominant behavior see:

> 10 Ways to Be More Dominant

Cues People Look For

Storr says the brain seeks 4 main cues for status:

1. Self-similarities
2. Skills (who is good at playing the status game)
3. Success cues (status symbols)
4. Prestige cues (who are people deferring or giving respect to?)

Acquire Fame

Our brain developed to play the game in small tribes, and can easily be short-circuited with people we don't even know, as long as they become famous.

Says the author:

> Today it's not uncommon for millions to pay attention to one person simply because millions of others are paying attention to them and for this to become a feedback loop, sending a relatively unremarkable individual into the distant upper reaches of planetary status. Academics call this 'The Paris Hilton Effect'.

Escape & Transcend The Game

Says Storr:

> The strategies by which we earn connection and status shape who we are. To a significant extent, we become the puppets of the games we play.

And there is no winning that game.
It never makes us satisfied, and… **The status game makes us dependent on the group and game** -even if you win and *especially* if you win-.

That has been the case with social media, but any group can turn us into a puppet player.

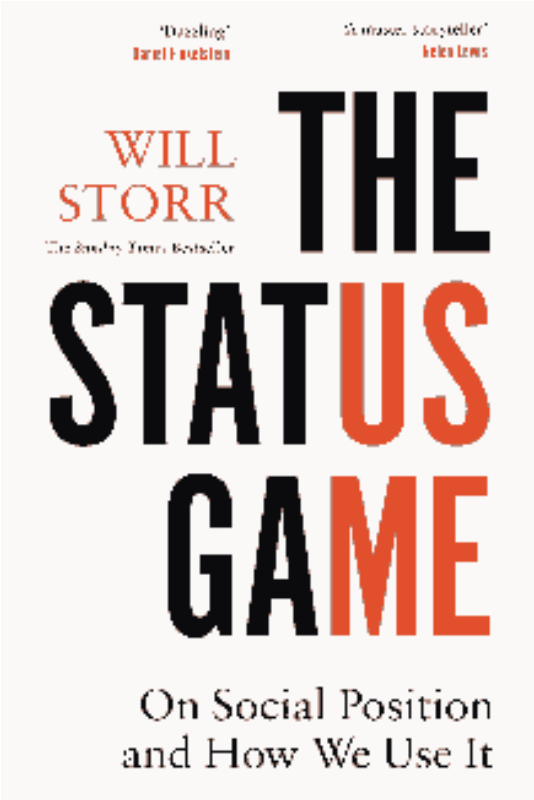
Also see:

- Big fish small pond syndrome, and they're all small ponds

And our analyses of some popular self-help status games:

- Red pill dynamics

This whole website and Power University help you turn into a man who can play the status game, but also transcend it.



MORE WISDOM

- **Proximity rule of status: your friends matters**

Status “leaks”.
So if you’re close to someone of lower rank, you may lose some status.

And the opposite is true: those of lower rank gain by engaging with higher-rank individuals.

For example, says the author on gossiping:

> We could also gain status from gossiping. Who we gossip with can itself be a status symbol: swapping tattle with high-ranked others implies we’re of high rank too.

- **Busyness has become a proxy for status**

In our world that measures status by income and success, research suggests being busy has become a proxy for ambition and high status -as well as being scarcer and more in demand-.

- **Dominance and aggression are more likely when the status hierarchy is unclear**

> If the hierarchy doesn’t clearly show who’s in charge, there’s a greater temptation to use aggression to secure supremacy.

- **The best leaders have the least compliant followers**

Which says a lot about what type of leaders make the best leaders -ie.: those who don’t impose and listen-.

QUOTES

A description of status:

> A status game is a conspiracy we join to make ourselves feel important.

On the importance of status to achieve common human goals:

> If you want to rule the world, save the world, buy the world or fuck the world, the best thing to pursue is status.

On alpha males dominance strategy becoming outdated as humans evolved:

> In this communal, nested world, brute ferocity by alpha males was unwelcome and unuseful. Getting along and getting ahead meant winning the cooperation of others. Hyper-violent males who attempted to dominate the tribe would increasingly find themselves ostracized or executed. More peaceable and socially intelligent men began to gain status.

On the inevitability of the game of status:

> The parable of the Communists reveals the impossibility of ridding human existence of the game. The drive to get ahead will always assert itself. It's in us. It's who we are.
> (…)
> **For humans equality will always be the impossible dream**.

On the importance of setting up the right rules of the game of status:

> History is not made by individuals, but by individuals connected into groups. Those groups are status games. The data, and our history, are clear. If we truly want to help others and make the world a better place, we must play games of success.

Amen to that.

CONS

As usual, let me add this note:

We are VERY nitpicking here and this is a fantastic book.

That said, some nitpicks are:

Well sourced, but a couple sources didn't add up to me

The author wrote:

> Wherever psychologists look, they find a remarkably powerful link between status and wellbeing.
> **One study** of more than sixty thousand people across 123 countries found (…) **Elsewhere**, an extensive review of the scientific literature concluded that

It sounds like there are two different sources, but when I went to check it, the study was the same.
Storr did a great job with the research, but he may want to be careful with these minor slippages as it's easy to lose trust in the work's thoroughness.

In another instance, Storry says that "one review of the scientific literature found that "perceiving oneself as having low rank compared to others is consistently linked to higher depressive symptoms".
However, when I checked that review, the abstract said that "multivariate analyses indicated that social rank may act as a psychosocial mechanism to explain the relationship between social factors (in particular socio-economic status) and depressive symptoms."
The study's abstract said *may* act as…
However, Storr may have well quoted some parts in the *full* study that I did not access.

Sometimes different constructs are mixed up in my opinion (Ie.: Status VS Power)

The author says that, as a journalist researcher, he has vast knowledge, but not deep, and so he also recruited several scientists to help him out.

However, there aren't that many experts on power dynamics, and sometimes I felt there was some confusion.

For example, the author says that, unlike status, the desire for power is not fundamental in humans, that it doesn't strongly predict well-being and that, unlike status, is quenchable.

However, I strongly disagree here because **status IS power**.
At least it is if we look at power as the most general and higher-level construct and measure for your ability to achieve goals and get what you want.
Geoffrey Pfeffer also takes a larger view of power that includes status. We take that same large view not only because we believe it's correct, but also because it's more useful for learning and self-development.

Mixes Achievement With Status

In another instance, Storr says that we're only happy when we achieve and get more compared to others.
However, that's not so much about status as about personal achievement and victory because, as he also explains, status IS intrinsically a comparative measure.

Mixes Influence With Dominance

Says the author:

> a person's status is commonly expressed in their capacity to influence: they 'tend to be more prominent in group discussions, to make their opinions known and their suggestions clear, and to articulate the consensus once it is determined'. The outsized influence that high-status players exert can also be measured in how much they talk.

This is not necessarily influence.
This is social dominance.

The status game is not as random as implied

The author says:

> Groups of people gather together, agree what symbols they're going to use to mean 'status', then strive to achieve it.

I agree that there is much randomness in what affords status.
However, there are also intercultural traits and signals of status that work almost anytime, anywhere.

For example, social skills, physical fitness, intelligence, high social power… These are all traits and behaviors that

assign status almost universally.

The evolution of status to make us less violent didn't add up to me

The author says that we evolved from pure dominance to also seeking and respecting the other two ("reputation games"), which made humans less violent compared to our primate relatives.

It sounds like a captivating explanation at first blush, but I don't full agree.

For example, there are primates who are also non-violent.
Bonobos for example are not known to kill each other, which makes them *less* violent than humans.

Gets a bit "woke" in one chapter

The book as a whole is NOT woke or virtue signaling and instead very balanced and rational.

However, the chapter called "fairness, unfairness" does get a bit woke in my opinion.

For example:

- "the global oppression of women was not an inevitable pattern of nature but an epic historical injustice"
- "many respondents noted higher male presence in engineering, say, and higher female presence in childcare, and concluded one gender was better at these occupations. This is proving a frustratingly stubborn lesson to learn: underestimating a player on the basis of their gender is not only ignorant (..)"

That was a bit of a bait and switch to maintain the woke frame.
It IS a stretch to assume that an individual is better than another at anything simply based on gender. But it is NOT a stretch to assume that a gender as a role is tendentially better at something than the other.

REVIEW

The Status Game is a fantastic analysis of social status explained as a "game people play", with its own rules and points awarded for whatever behavior the group ends up promoting.

That game can turn toxic, nonsensical, and even self-harming if the values are either poor or go extreme. Then, the behavior being rewarded also turns toxic, aggressive, or self-harming.
But unless you realize it's a game, you're stuck in it and bound to play because playing and seeking status is in human nature

This book is a great complement to TPM, and confirmed a few insights that TPM embraced and advised in several articles, including the:

- Big fish syndrome, or how status in a group can make you feel good at first, but also make you dependent
- Alpha male status as a status game (albeit some values and behaviors of alpha male game are actually good and universal)
- Cancel culture / virtue signaling culture as a status game that turned toxic and disempowering
- Solutions:
  - Develop the self, avoid being overly dependent on any group/game (it's also one of TPM's values to develop the self first and foremost and "learning to walk alone")
  - Avoid projecting your ego onto another group/individual as a way to "vicariously gain status" (something we also wrote in the red pill articles and a central theme of our "enlightened self-interest" article)

But Will Storr also adds plenty more wisdom.
I learned a lot from it, and even took notes for this website's articles and products (the biggest compliment I can

ever pay to any author).

If you know how to look, it also offers many opportunities to turn wisdom into life strategies that will make you happier, more successful, and even more honorable.

So, yes, we loved *The Status Game* and very much recommend it (and even added it to our list of best psychology books at one time).

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Our Timeless Approach To Content Development

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 April 2023 · Archived copy · Original

If you think about it, it's crazy:

The eagle is our logo.
We often talk about "eagle" and "eagle behavior" as an ideal to move towards, and yet…

Close to 6 years in, and… There is still no article dedicated to what an eagle is, and how you become one.

Weird, no?
One would think that explaining this eagle allegory should be the *first* article.

So… Why not?

Well, the reason goes at the core of what we stand for.

So stick with us for just a tad longer and we'll oblige to explain…*

We see our work as timeless wisdom and help that any future human may benefit from, wherever in the universe they may be

Contents

- INTRO
  - How this post started: "who is a high-quality person?", asked Maxim
- Timelessness
  - 1. Timeless gold requires thought & development over time (hatching vs rehashing)
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- Example: high-value articles
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- SUMMARY

INTRO

Almost all our published "cornerstone articles", foundational concepts, and most important articles came late.

For example:

- **Machiavellianism, manipulation and dark psychology after 4+ years** of the website's existence albeit they're crucial topics for us
- **Alpha male after 5+ years** albeit it's one of the most important status games for men and despite it would help our sales since it targets a highly relevant demographic and taps into the vast red pill interest
- **Naive self-help after 5+ years**, albeit this website was in large motivated by the naivete of most self-help (and albeit we railed against it for years it in our reviews)

Many more foundational articles only arrived years after TPM first started.
And many more *have yet to be published*, including:

- **~~Glass ceiling concept~~**, even more important for self-development than the already published naive self-help article
- **~~How to read people~~**, a crucial skill for what we teach here, for our mission, and in general for a happy and successful life
- **~~Enlightened narcissism~~**, as part of our "enlightened series" of walking the optimum line between extremes and using the positive from what's considered negative
- …

… And the already mentioned "how to be an eagle" of course.

So yeah, the great news is: we're not turning into a content mill rehashing already beaten horses any time soon.
There is still so much golden in store for you :).

But… Why wait to publish it?

How this post started: “who is a high-quality person?”, asked Maxim

This post started thanks to Maxim.

Maxim’s asked this question in the forum:

> i’m **not finding a clear and definitive article** on this site (or, at least, a specific clear-cut post on this forum), that’s really **clarifying the difference between a *High-Value Person* Vs. a *High-Quality Person***…The terms are often thrown around almost interchangeably (even in relevant articles here on the site, i believe), and i understand that there’s often an overlap between then…it’s a bit confusing… **Are there definite, short and/or simple to remember distinctions between the 2 terms?** Simple and rememberbale seperate definition?
>
> *Quote from Maxim Levinsky on April 23, 2023, 9:10 am*

GREAT observation.

High-value VS high-quality is a fundamental concept for us because our ultimate mission is to develop high-*quality* people, not “just” high value.

And still, there is no definitive article on “high quality” and no clear distinction between high value and high-quality which, indeed, have been used interchangeably (a small mistake, albeit often you cannot know if someone is high quality rather than just high value without knowing them well enough).

Why not?
Are we being sloppy or lazy?

No -hopefully not, at least-.

This is because of a specific approach TPM has taken towards developing the core of its teachings, and clarifying its mission and philosophy).

Let’s see why:

Timelessness

The shortest answer to why we take our time to flesh out and publish our most foundational concepts is that we're here to develop timeless wisdom.

All our approach around content development stems from our timeless vision of our work and mission.

1. Timeless gold requires thought & development *over time* (hatching vs rehashing)

Why waiting?

Why withhold so much gold that we could share, and even profit from?

Because we're *not* withholding or waiting.
We are *hatching* the new golden eggs.

Developing groundbreaking concepts and "beyond anything that's already available" content takes time.
Even to "just" explain something better than it's ever been done before takes time.

For example, there is a thousand guide on "how to read people".
But since that's such a core skill for us when we'll publish ours we want it to be more useful, more practical, more empowering and more life-changing than anything you could get anywhere else…

In the meanwhile, we're hatching

When we or I…

- Collect and discuss "reading people" case studies in the forum we are hatching that new article.
- Read books or research that mention some important insights and take notes, I'm hatching.
- Observe in real life and either get it right or wrong and take note, I'm hatching.
- Inquire about other people's experiences, I'm hatching.

So when I'll finally sit down and write that article, I'll be able to leverage a copious amount of high-quality notes, science, and wisdom not just from me, but from a community of smart folks.

Plus, that work will also refine my own personal acuity in reading people, and make me even more capable to make the most out of that hatched material.

Since nobody I know of does this type of work, once it'll be ready, it will almost naturally be more and better than anything available.
And then, as usual, the corresponding Power University lesson will be yet even better than the free article.

2. Timeless content doesn't care about years ("passing the baton" mindset)

> When millennia are the yardstick, years become insignificant (and quality is king)

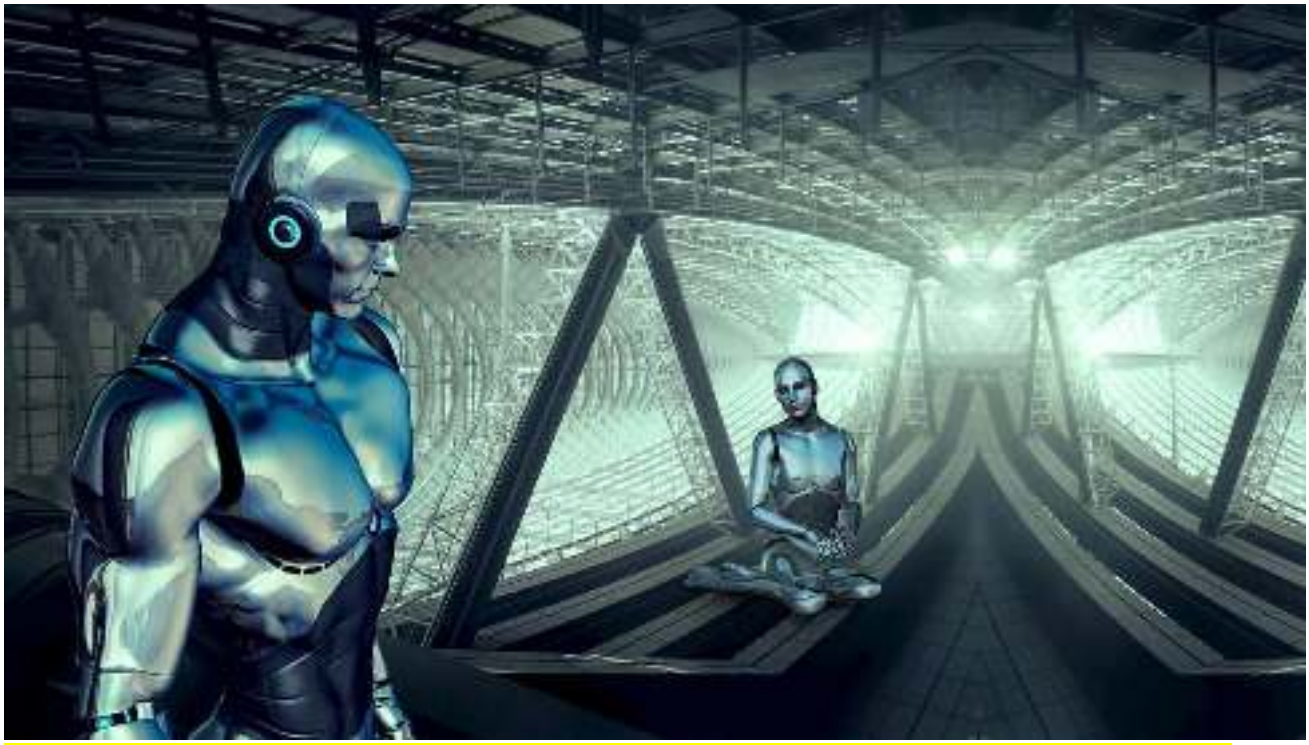
TPM plans to stay for the long haul.

More than that, here are *levels* to "long haul".

And the level TPM aims for long outlasts technology and lives.

TPM and Power University will outlast its founders and early community.
Maybe they will even do so in their current form of learning through a device.

Eventually though, websites will also become obsolete.
People will learn with holograms or something like that.



They may look different. But as long as they're self-interested, negotiating different interests or semi-humans, power dynamics will always matter and apply

However, the great quality or even *timeless content* of what they learn will stay for millennia -or even longer, until we either go extinct, or until we become an even better species-.

When you think in those terms, **quality reigns supreme, not time** -as a matter of fact, we see quantity without quality as unethical since it only adds to the noise, and takes people time without giving value back-.
A few years more or less become insignificant.

Faced with timelessness the only thing for you to do is to pass a good baton

Personally, I don't think it has to be me who finishes the "power dynamics building" -and I don't even think that would be possible-.

I see my role as simply laying out *a part* of the foundation and making sure it's simple and captivating enough that some others will be interested in moving forward.
As long as there will be some great person to take over the baton, I've done my part.

And since this is not just a business, but also a service to humanity, long term, **Power University should become free**.
Of course, we should know at TPM that people (rightfully) also seek personal returns and what's in it for them.
So the challenge for TPM then would be to find other ways to monetize and/or incentivize great minds to contribute.

> I don't need to finish the race for the acclaim.
> I only need to go just far enough to pass the baton.
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

3. Timeless content must be built on top of many and high-quality pillars (ground-up VS top-bottom)

Success is built over great foundations.

Great strategies, actions, and final success are founded on correct foundations.

The foundations include concepts, constructs, general principles, and general theories.
All else, including the mindsets, strategies, and techniques, *descend* from those foundations.

As someone said, you measure the correctness of a principle based on how well it allows you to predict and achieve results in the real world.

It means that **our strategies and approaches can lead to success if and only if our foundations are correct**.

However, you don't start from the high-level going downward because that's the equivalent of shooting in the dark.
To build the foundations, you go the other way around: you START from the lower level examples, case studies,

power moves, manipulation attempts and responses, etc., etc..

This is why our foundational articles come late: it's precisely because they're both more important that they need more time.

Foundations, as opposed to lower-level techniques and specific situations:

- **Need time to think it through**: it's a lot easier to think about how to properly solve a case study or best address a specific situation. But it takes a lot longer to develop the larger concept or "general rule".
- **Need "pillars" of case studies and examples**: Think of those specifics as "single pillars". It's only once you have a lot of those pillars you can better build the larger "law" or general theory -the pillars are what the skyscraper theory stands on-. This is for 2 reasons:
  - To understand it yourself, since a big chunk of understanding something goes from specific to general
  - To explain it in a way that's useful, practical, and easy to internalize, by providing clear examples. We don't do philosophy here, we teach practical stuff, so even our concepts need to be well backed up by real-life case studies and examples
  - To prove it empirically, since the more positive case studies you have the more the general principle is proven and tested
- **Need more references and studies.** To both have enough authority on a topic as well as to make sure you truly understand it from all angles, you need to also look at the research literature on top of your life experience and other people's experience

This is exactly how the scientific method advances theories.

You got general theories, that are based on programs, which in turn are based on lots of individual studies.

So for example, a general theory that says that humans are reciprocal may hinge on different programs, one of which may seek to investigate people's tendency to give back value whenever they receive value, which in turn may be based on countless studies of giving, with different subjects, and in different situations.

3.2. Our building is TPM & Power University. The timeless result is an eagles'-hatching nest

Since we're here to produce timeless wisdom, we follow the more effective ground-up approach.

For example, we started publishing articles such "what to do when someone makes you wait", "negotiating refunds", lists of "games men play", "games women play", etc.).

Only much later we started addressing more general principles, definitions, and concepts such as:

- Power dynamics
- Power protecting *"we'll oblige to explain" at the beginning of this article was a power protection move to avoid a teacher frame of "we'll explain" as in "let us lecture you"
- Foundations of dating power dynamics

The ground-up is better because, as it's the case for scientific progress, sometimes you not only have little idea of a higher-level concept, but sometimes you have *no* idea until you've stumbled upon enough real-life consequences that derive from that higher-level, more abstract concept.

For example, this was the case for "social scalping" which combines all the games and power moves around social exchanges:

I had never grasped that (some) humans engage in 4 main categories of social manipulation in order to get more and give less. This trend of higher-level commonalities only became apparent once we started analyzing many different daily games and power moves

Example: high-value articles

So, back to Maxim's question.

As an example the *early* articles on high-value/low-value and compare them to some more recent articles.

The low-value/high-value are quite foundational to self-development, successful socialization, and what we generally teach here.

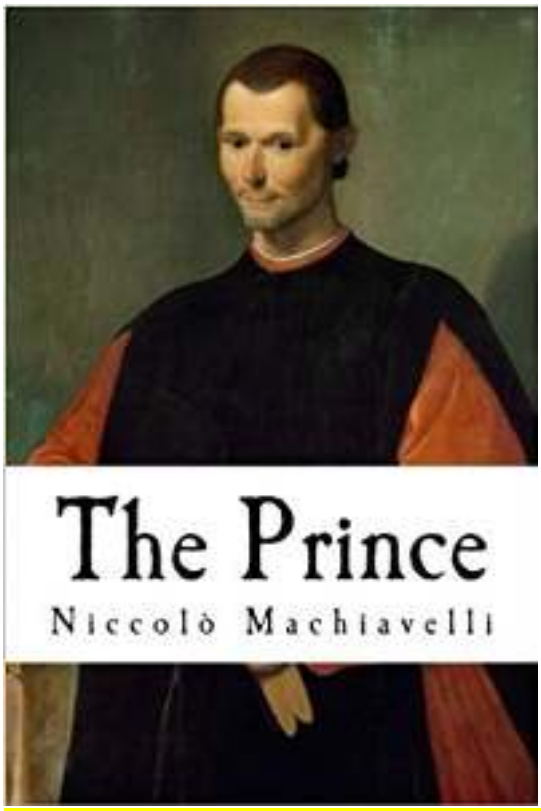
They were early articles here and helped spark a change in self-development.
Since then the terms high-value/low-value are a lot more popular and hundreds of similar articles sprung up.

However, albeit having those articles drove lots of traffic here, they are NOT of timeless quality because:

- **I had spent little time truly thinking it through**, there was little community input, and that's why there was no distinction between high-value and high quality
- **Fewer resources/studies to back them up**
- **Fewer "pillars" as in**
  - Fewer examples and case studies because we didn't have them yet and I had spent no time noting down videos and real-life examples as I often do for more thought-out articles/lessons
  - Fewer link outs to articles/forum threads to expand on the sub-concepts, because we didn't have them

When I'll finally get around to rewriting those articles, they'll immediately become 10x better because there will be more reflection, more studies/resources, more examples/case studies, and more articles/forum threads to flesh out some sub-concepts.

Compare: too early article ("high value") VS timely ("Machiavellianism")



Machiavelli probably took his time to write The Prince. But he produced at least a pillar for timeless wisdom, and more to come on top

For contrast, compare articles with equally important concepts:

- **Early**: High value men / low value men and high value women / low value women
- **Timely**: Machiavellianism and alpha male

The latter 2 were solid articles "out of the box".
Besides the less important fact that I had more experience writing, it's not because I was more "inspired" or anything, but because many of the pillars to sustain them had already grown in number and quality.

So once I finally wrote them, they could draw from all those pillars of personal reflection, examples, case studies, resources, etc. Etc.

High quality = eagle (and it will take more time to properly flesh out)

Now to briefly answer Maxim's question:

The difference is that one can be high-value and an asshole.

High quality instead adds an element of ethics, including ethical expressions such as "wanting and preferring win-win", "generally uplifting people instead of pushing them down or social climbing on them", "having supportive relationships instead of abusive and toxic ones", etc., etc.

You may NEED the high-value person or want *because of what he can do for you* (even if that may only mean making you feel good or pulling you a higher-up for simply talking to you).
The high-quality person, you want not only for what he may do for you but simply because he's a great person -and you may likely also look up to him-.

High quality is basically an eagle.

However, that's a particularly difficult foundation to tackle.

There is a lot of grey areas to properly define and explain that to the point one can make a definitive article/lesson, it may take some more time.

Example: to lie or not to lie?

For example, take "telling the truth" as a value.

You can't just say "an eagle doesn't lie" because then that eagle would be a naive and ineffective person -or, as it's more often the case, a hypocrite-.

And you can't just say "an eagle lies freely" because that would not only be quite immoral and very closely resemble a manipulative value-taker, but it would *also* handicap all his close relationships and most likely make him less effective -and less able to enjoy life-.

So, since we're here to provide timeless wisdom… We need to think about how to come up with a good general principle, and a set of lower-level rules that would make that eagle *both* life effective, and also generally a trustworthy and great person to be with.

Now do the same for many different traits, behaviors, and strategies in a way that what you say is both true, effective, and easy to comprehend and apply and you'll realize that, well…

That does take some time :).

SUMMARY

In sum, we take our time to develop our framework of the most foundational principles and approaches because:

1. **Top quality and new wisdom require time**. Fast execution means lower quality and quality is paramount to us since…
2. **We work on a timeless mission** with the goal of improving humanity. We play for the long term
3. **Foundational concepts and principles must always ensue** from the successful application of their

consequences

Handbook of Research Methods in Social & Personality Psych: Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 April 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology* (second edition) covers conceptual and practical issues in research design to help social and personality psychologists develop and execute better research.

Contents

- FULL SUMMARY
  - We Do Research To Scratch A Mental Itch
  - Research Design and Issues of Validity
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  - Research Design & Statistical Significance
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  - Behavior Genetic Research Methods
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  - Implicit VS Explicit & Direct VS Indirect
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  - Moving Beyond “Coefficient Alpha”
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  - The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Personality Test Is Unfounded
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FULL SUMMARY

About the Authors:
There are different authors for each chapter because the goal of this Handbook is to provide knowledge and guidance for researchers, coming from experienced and high-authority sources.
Hence, authors vary by chapter because each topic tends to be covered by psychology researchers who are most experienced on that specific topic.

We Do Research To Scratch A Mental Itch

Many scientists are curious and motivated by a thirst for knowing, comprehending, and making sense of the world.

So behind the need to publish research in order to advance at work and eat and feed families :), they’re also driven to find the truth, to test hypotheses, to resolve a conflict among different theories, or to resolve a discrepancy:

> People are wired to detect discrepancies and want to resolve them. One prime way to start a program of research is precisely to mind the cognitive gap. That is, scientists especially notice theoretical discrepancies, empirical inconsistencies, missing links in evidence, counterintuitive patterns, and all manner of knowledge

> that just does not fit (Fiske, 2004a).

Research Design and Issues of Validity

The definition of validity is:

> Validity refers to “the best available approximation to the truth or falsity of propositions” (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p. 37).

How a study is designed and conducted affects the validity of the conclusions of course, but validity must be evaluated in light of the purposes of the research.

Internal VS External VS Construct Validity

In Campbell’s original terminology:

- Internal validity refers to the truth value tha tcan be assigned to the conclusion that a cause-effect relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable has been established within the context of the particular research setting. The question here is whether changes in the dependent measure were produced by variations in the independent variable (or manipulation, in the case of an experiment) in the sense that the change would not have occurred without that variation.

Threats to internal validity are any third factors that may contribute to the variations -correlation does not imply causation-. If there are third factors, then we have spurious correlation between X and Y.
Albeit holding thid variables constant helps with internal validity, the best approach is with random assignment of participants to different levels of the manipulated factor.

- External validity referred to the generalizability of the causal finding, that is, whether it could be concluded that the same cause-effect relationship would be obtained across different participants, settings, and methods.

In simpler words: **internal validity is for how truthful and thorough the study in itself is, external validity is how generalizable and truthful the study is when going from study itself to the general population** and to the world, and construct refers to how truthful and thorough and a study is when compared to the dynamic and concept it examines.

Other Typs of Validity

- Construct validity to refer to the extent to which a causal relationship could be generalized from the particular methods and operations of a specific study to the theoretical constructs and processes they were meant to represent.

Questions of external validity and construct validity, however, can rarely be addressed within the context of a single research design and require systematic, programmatic studies that address a particular question across different participants, operations, and research settings.

- Robustness refers to whether an effect can occur across different settings and people
- Ecological validity answers the question of “is it representative to what actually happens in real life, in the real world?

The 3 Purposes of Research

Empirical research in social psychology can be differentiated in 3 broad categories:

- **Demonstration**, to empirically establish the existence of a phenomenon or relationship

- **Causation**, to establish a cause-effect linkage between specific variables (i.e., “if X then Y”)
- **Explanation**, to establish the processes that govern the linkage between variations in X and Y

Research Design & Statistical Significance

> Research design is the systematic planning of research to permit valid conclusions.

It includes, for example:

- Specification of the population to be studied
- Treatments to be administered
- Dependent variables to be measured

Design-related issues sicj as the number of participants used in a study and the way they are allocated to conditions affect statistical conclusion validity (especially statistical power).

Statistical Significance

> Statistical significance of the results of an experiment indicates that we can safely generalize beyond the specific participants to other “generally similar” participants.

Power of A Study

Power of a study or test is the probability that the test correctly rejects the null hypothesis when a specific alternative hypothesis is tue.

Power depends on the chosen level of significance, difference that we look for (effect size), variability of the measured variables, and sample size.

However, often the only element under direct researcher’s control is sample size is the.
Therefore, methods have been developed to approximate the necessary sample size to obtain the desired power.

Most studies have too low power:

> Cohen (1962) found that published studies in social psychology had a median power to detect a “medium-sized” effect of only .46. This means that even researchers who are clever enough to be testing a hypothesis that actually was true and had a medium-sized effect have less than an even chance of finding a significant result.

Researchers Overestimate Power & Odds of Replication Success

> researchers frequently overestimate the likelihood of a replication being successful. After all, the original study demonstrated the effect, so shouldn’t a similar study be able to also? However, Greenwald, Gonzalez, Harris, and Guthrie (1996) showed that if an original study produced a significant effect at the .05 level, the chance of obtaining significance in an exact, independent replication using the same N is quite low. Only if the first study produced $p < .005$ does the replication have a power level of .80 to detect the effect at the .05 level! This is an instance of researchers’ general overoptimism about power levels and their consequent tendency to run low-powered studies, which has frequently been noted and decried

Programs Are The Main Way To Advance Social Psychology

Isolated studies often have relatively little scientific impact and, in solation, they don't allow for the development of general theories.

Single studies though can have a much larger impact when they are part of a larger group of studies and coordinated at a higher program level in order to test different sub-hypotheses of a larger hypothesis or overarching teory.

The research program is arguably the unit that is most important in the advancement of social psychology as a field.

Say the authors:

> in social psychology today the most important unit of research is not the individual study (…) "real research investigations usually involve multiple studies conducted as part of an ongoing conceptual elaboration of a particular topic."
> Such a series of conceptually related studies – a research program – is most often associated with a given investigator and his or her collaborators, but may include work from several distinct laboratories.
> The research program is not conveniently handled by the classic concepts of research design (power, generalizability, etc.), which focus on an individual study. Nor is it well captured by the meta-analysis movement (e.g., Hedges & Olkin, 1985), which focuses on drawing empirical conclusions from large numbers of heterogeneous studies on a given issue.
> (…)
> a single study can be almost definitively assumed to have good internal validity (based on its use of experimental design), but the broader forms of validity – construct and external – almost always emerge only from a series of interrelated studies that can compensate for each others' weaknesses.
> (…)
> They also bring theoretical structure to a series of studies. Programmatically related studies generally focus on theoretical questions and build on one another rather than addressing superficially interesting but atheoretical questions in scattershot fashion.

Randomize Designs

The most perfect ideal conditions under which a causal effect could be observed cannot be tested.

The ideal condition would be to have the same exact person, under the same exact condition, repeat the exact same behavior, while changing only the treatment condition.

Such as, we'd need a time machine.

So, since causality cannot be observed directly, we can only develop research designs that permit us to infer causality, by making specific assumptions.

The next best thing we have is randomization:

> Randomization approaches this ideal by approximately equating the treatment and control groups on all possible baseline covariates prior to any treatment delivery. Participants are assigned to treatment conditions using a method that gives every participant an equal chance of being assigned to the treatment and control conditions.
> (…)
> Random assignment means that the variable representing the treatment condition (treatment vs. control) can be expected on average to be independent of any measured or unmeasured variable prior to treatment.
> (…)
> Following random assignment, each participant then receives the treatment condition (e.g., experimental treatment vs. comparison [control] treatment) to which he or she was assigned. The responses of each

> participant are then measured after the receipt of the treatment or comparison condition.

Field Research Methods

Field research is characterized by a higher degree of naturalism.

When assessing the degree to which studies qualify as field studies, one must consider the naturalism of four aspects of the study: (1) participants, (2) the intervention and its target, (3) the obtrusiveness of intervention delivery, and (4) the assessed response to the intervention.

Behavior Genetic Research Methods

This chapter frankly felt overly critical of genetic research to me.

The authors seemed to dislike the “obsession” around genes and heritaiblity, which I can understand, and yet a personal dislike for how certain new methods are being used or discussed shouldn’t cast doubt on the methods themselves.

For example, the authors say that “we believe that the world would be a less confusing and contentious place without heritability coefficients, at least if one is concerned with a more complex and uncontrollable aspect of behavior than, say, milk production in cows”.
To me, that felt unnecessarily caustic and like meeting bias with more bias -or, shall we say, throwing the baby with the bathwater-.

The authors conclude that:

> Other than the important task of disconfirming any remnants of blank-slate environmentalism mistakenly held over from previous eras of behaviorism or psychoanalysis, this effort was in our view not especially productive. Heritability is greater than zero for all individual differences, and takes a determinate value for none of them. Figuring out how “genetic” traits are, either in absolute terms or relative to each other, is a lost cause: Everything is genetic to some extent and nothing is completely so. There is little more to be said.

Self-Organization: Group Behavioral Patterns Transcend Individuals

> The term “self-organization” is used to refer to behavioral patterns that emerge from the interactions that bind the components of a system (social or otherwise) into a collective, synergistic system, while not being dictated a priori by a centralized controller.

Implicit VS Explicit & Direct VS Indirect

Measurement outcomes can be described as:

- Implicit when the impact of the to-be-measured psychological attribute on participants’ responses is unintentional, resource-independent, unconscious, or uncontrollable
- Explicit when the impact of the to-be-measured psychological attribute on participants’ responses is intentional, resource-dependent, conscious, or controllable (cf. Bargh, 1994; Moors & De Houwer, 2006

> For example, a measure of racial attitudes may be described as implicit if it reflects participants’ racial attitudes even when they do not have the goal to express these attitudes (i.e., unintentional) or despite the goal to conceal these attitudes (i.e., uncontrollable).

And:

- Direct when the measurement outcome is based on participants' self-assessment of the to-be-measured attribute (e.g., when participants' racial attitudes are inferred from their self-reported liking of black people).
- Indirect when the measurement outcome is not based on a self-assessment (e.g., when participants' racial attitudes are inferred from their reaction time performance in a speeded categorization task) or when it is based on a self-assessment of attributes other than the to-be-measured attribute (e.g., when participants' racial attitudes are inferred from their self-reported liking of a neutral object that is quickly presented after a black face

People Who THINK Are High Self-Esteem But Are Instead Low Self-Esteem Are Defensive And More Racist

> Combinations of high self-esteem on explicit measures and low self-esteem on implicit measures have been shown to predict defensive behaviors, such as favoring one's in-group over out-groups and dissonance-related attitude change (e.g., Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003).

To Ensure Validity, Keep Experimenters Ignorant

"Ignorant" of what's been measured" in the subjects, we mean.

Why?
Because experimenters can involuntarily, subtly prime the subjects to display the behavior they are being measured on:

> it has long been known that experimenter's knowledge of hypotheses can sometimes produce the hypothesized effect in often quite subtle ways (Rosenthal, 1966). Indeed, Doyen, Klein, Pichon, and Cleeremans (2012) have recently claimed that such effects as the elderly stereotype priming effect on behavior stems entirely from the experimenter's awareness of the participant's priming condition, and the consequent subtle differences in how those participants were treated. However, their criticism cannot account for the effect observed in Bargh et al. (1996, Study 2) precisely because in those studies, as explained earlier, the appropriate steps were taken to ensure that the experimenter remained unaware of the participant's condition.

Also read:

- In defense of psychology

Sense-Making: We Develop (False) Narratives Around Random Events

People have a tendency to weave narrative and stories around events that instead may not connected the way they think they are -or not connected at all-.

In psychology, it's called "sense making", and it means to interpret events in ligh of later events and/or to conform to implicit theories and beliefs (Ross, 1989).

Moving Beyond "Coefficient Alpha"

> Why has alpha become the golden standard of measurement reliability?
> We suspect it is the relative ease with which alpha is both obtained and computed.
> Alpha is the "least effort" reliability index; it can be used as long as the same participants responded to multiple items thought to indicate the same construct.

Albeit people and scientists alike love a simple number they should meet, and albeit unluckily that's what many researchers have often done, there is no "magical alpha threshold" that guarantees validity:

> How Large Should Alpha Be? It Depends on the Construct. Students often ask questions like “my scale has an alpha of .70 – isn’t that good enough?” and they are frustrated when the answer is “that depends.” Although it would be nice to have a simple cookbook for measurement decisions, there is no particular level of alpha that is necessary, adequate, or even desirable in all contexts.

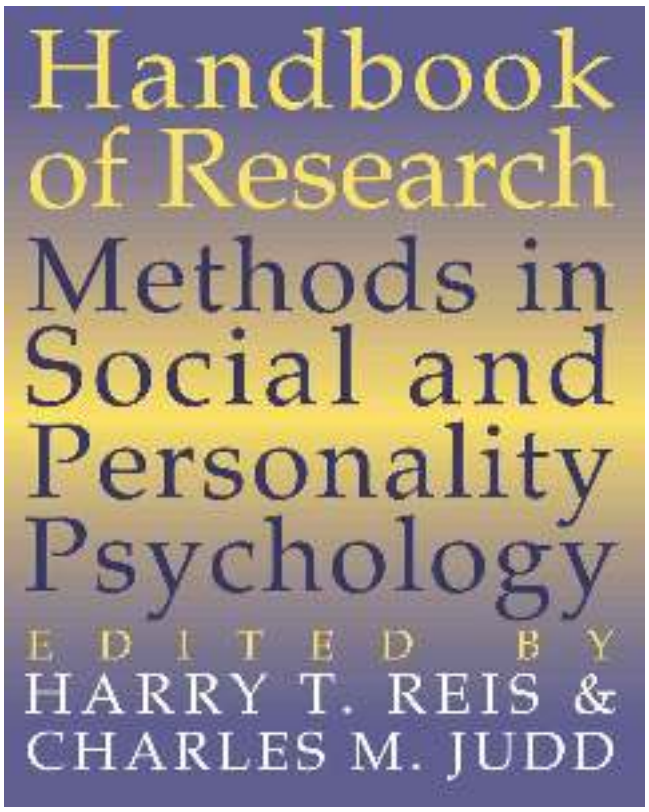
To better interpret alpha:

> alpha needs to be interpreted in terms of its two main parameters – interitem correlation and scale length – and in the context of how these two parameters fit the nature and definition of the construct to be measured.

> Consider a researcher who wants to measure the broad construct of extraversion, which includes sociability, assertiveness, and talkativeness, and has constructed a scale with the following items: “I like to go to parties,” “Parties are a lot of fun for me,” “I do not enjoy parties,” (reverse scored), and “I’d rather go to a party than spend the evening alone.” Note that these items are essentially paraphrases of each other and represent the same item content (liking parties) stated in slightly different ways. Cattell (1972) called these kinds of scales “bloated specifics” – they have high alphas simply because the item content is so redundant and interitem correlations are very high. Thus, alphas in the high .80s or even .90s, especially for short scales, may not indicate an impressively reliable scale but instead signal redundancy or narrowness in item content.
> Although such redundant items increase alpha, they do not add unique (and thus incremental) information and can often be omitted in the interest of efficiency, suggesting that the scale can be abbreviated without much loss of information (see Robins & Hendin, 1999).

Attenuation Paradox of Alpha

> This phenomenon is also known as the attenuation paradox because increasing the internal consistency of a test beyond a certain point will not enhance construct validity and may even come at the expense of validity when the added items emphasize one part of the construct (e.g., party-going) over other important parts (e.g., assertiveness).



PRACTICAL WISDOM

Obviously, this is not a book written for practical life applications.
However, some of the most "practical" wisdom include:

Brainstorming Doesn't Work

Brainstorming is a good example of how BS spread:

There is some guy, with some made-up credentials, who speaks high power and high confidence, sharing some cool-sounding "hack" with clear rules and relatively easy to replicate and, of course, with supposedly bgi benefits.

The message spreads and the supposed opinions leaders acritically accept the BS as if it were gospel and seek to monetize from themselves -either in gains or status, or money-.

> Osborn (1957) made rather extravagant claims for the efficacy of group brainstorming – for example, "the average person can think up twice as many ideas when working with a group than when working alone" (Osborn, 1957, p. 229). Unfortunately, systematic research has failed to substantiate these claims. To the contrary, a sizeable literature (see Diehl & Stroebe, 1987, Mullen, Johnson, & Salas, 1991, and Nijstad, 2009 for reviews) has consistently shown that brainstorming groups produce both fewer and poorer-quality ideas than equal-sized, identically instructed nominal groups (i.e., groups whose members work in isolation and whose total output is determined by pooling members' output, eliminating any redundant ideas).

The possible reasons why have to do with natural group dynamics:

> Substantial progress has been made in identifying the sources of this process loss in brainstorming groups, with production blocking (i.e., the fact that only one person can talk [and, perhaps, think] at a time in the face-to-face group), production matching (i.e., social comparison and modeling of low levels of productivity), and evaluation apprehension (i.e., fear of negative evaluation for voicing ideas in the group context) all emerging as contributing processes (Diehl & Stroebe, 1987; Paulus & Dzindolet, 1993; Stroebe & Diehl, 1994).

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Personality Test Is Unfounded

Referring to the early and least scientific approaches to personality measurements, the authors write:

> At the other extreme of the dust bowl empiricists were those psychologists who had detailed theories they did not doubt.
> Thus they felt free to focus solely on the content and face validity of their measures.
> Variously labeled the rational, intuitive, or deductive approach, they easily generated items on the basis of their theories.
> The resulting scales, face-valid with obvious item content, proved remarkably popular, if not always with other researchers then certainly with the test-taking public. In fact, this approach gave birth to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI; Myers & McCaulley, 1985), based partly on Carl Jung's type theories.
> **Without much evidence for its external, structural, or substantive validity, the MBTI nonetheless became the most popular personality questionnaire in this country**.

And:

> To the eternal embarrassment of research psychologists, the MBTI continues to be used at major research universities in applied contexts, such as counseling and career advising.

QUOTES

> We don't often admit this outside the family, but psychological scientists do often get ideas from personal experience.

On science being very slow to root out old and ineffective myths and supplant them with the new, more rigourous findings:

> As Jacob Cohen (1990) concluded from his 40 years of research on methodology, the "inertia" of methodological advance is enormous "but I do not despair…these things take time" (p. 1311).

REVIEW

The *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology* is a good if not long and sometimes overly complex textbook for psychology researchers.

The goal is to help researchers improve the quality of their work and to generally do an even better job at advancing science.
The readership is supposed to be experienced and, albeit nobody would say that, to have a high IQ. So it's normal and expected that it's going to be complex.
However, that could easily turn out to be a cop out because it should never be an excuse to make a text easier and faster to read and internalize as well as more engaging.
And I felt that some of the authors missed many opportunities to make the content easier to both understand and internalize when it was possible to do so.

The quality as well as the style varies among chapters because each chapter is written by a different and more experienced researcher in that specific field.

Overall, it can be good for people who are more familiar with research and research terminology to better assess studies and the quality and reliability of their results.

It's not good for the layperson and neither for the readers of entertaining pop-pscyhology because it would be way too complex (and boring for most).

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Why The Red Pill Is Killing Your Self-Esteem

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 May 2023 · Archived copy · Original

We recently started offering coaching on TPM.

It's been great talking to many different customers and readers, and I also learned a lot.

Generally speaking, I've been surprised that the average guy seems far more on point and advanced than I'd have expected.
Maybe it's because of self-selection bias given the costs, or because TPM generally caters to more advanced folks… Or maybe a bit of both and some more.

Anyway…

A common refrain seemed to be the issue is far more in the mind than in the real world.
Call it an "inner game" handicap, rather than an "outer game" one.

Such as:

Having more than the bare minimum to succeed, many of **my clients were high-value men who lacked self-esteem, and the confidence around what they could achieve** with exactly what they already had.

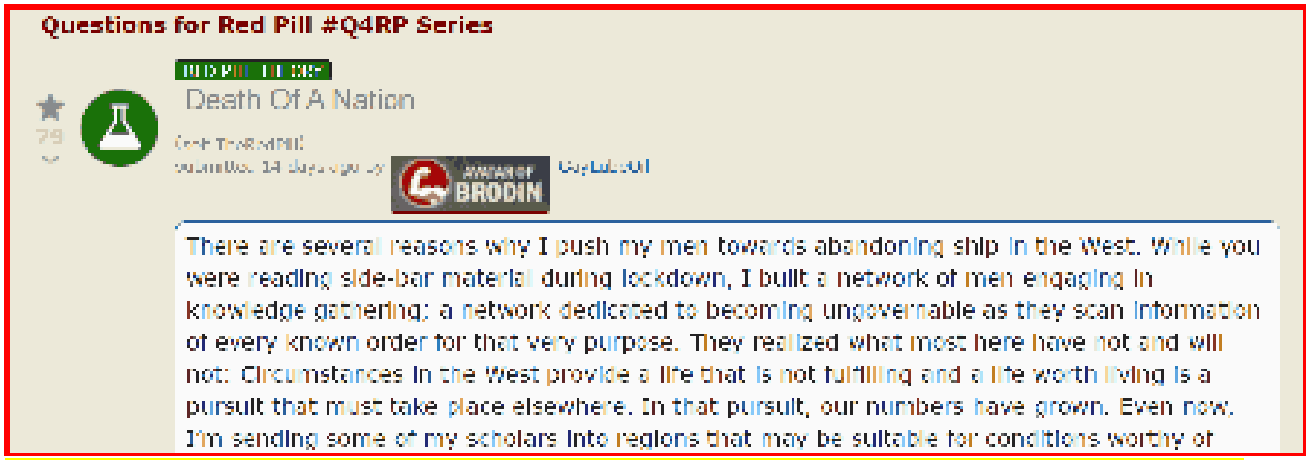
And the red pill may contribute to that issue.

Let's see the case study:

Contents

- Issue 1: Complaining Against Social Trends Makes You Feel Powerless
- Issue 2: Dominance-Focus Lacks Sophistication & Shifts Focus On Male Competition, Rather Than Seduction
- Issue 3: The Status Game Distorts Reality and Creates Insecurities
- Final Advice: Less Men's Focus, More Self & Goals' Focus
  - SUMMARY

Issue 1: Complaining Against Social Trends Makes You Feel Powerless



"The West is dying" professes this guy on TRP. Maybe. And… ? Focus on yourself instead of reading dubious rants*

Yesterday's customer started his journey with the red pill.

And he still hadn't branched out much from there.

He mentioned Andrew Tate.
He told me the USA was a place to avoid because it was going down the drain -is truly the world's hotbed of innovation going down the drain?-.

I've been criticized plenty for this, but from what I've seen, that is exactly one of the main issues with the red pill. And it's the:

- **Over focus on society and external world**, rather than the self, and what you can do as *an individual*
- **Ceding power to society**, giving for granted that it's going to severely and majorly harm you, instead of taking for granted the opposite: that, at least for your own life, you're far bigger than society. You can always be the exception, buck the trend, or develop your own little enclave that follows the rules and values you prefer
- **Overly pessimistic view**: it may be true the West over-reached with gender issues and wokism.
  But there are many feminine women, respect-worthy men, and endless ways to achieve your goals and win.
  Plus… Have you like ever lived in developing countries? Poor infrastructure, corruption, and sloppiness everywhere. There is no perfect place, but winners win everywhere.

Anyway, you don't usually want to contradict your client right away, so I let it develop at first.

Little later, as we moved more onto solutions, I shared the typical TPM's mindset:

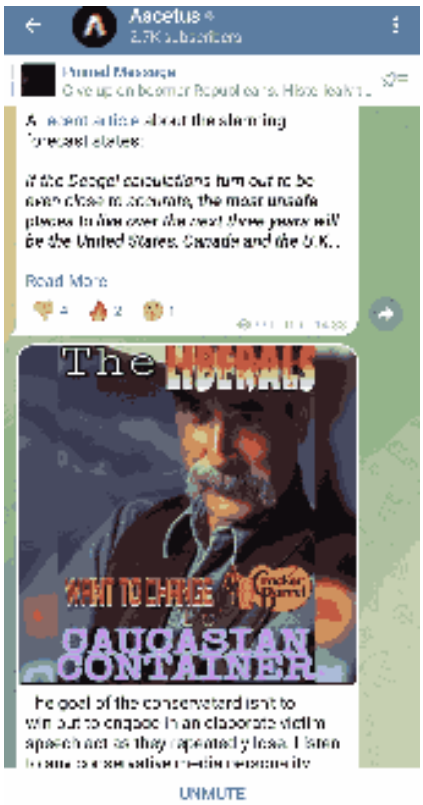
What happens at the higher social level is great to know, and if you can fix it by moving: go for it (my client had already moved).

HOWEVER, the social level doesn't in any way stop him from achieving his goals -he can always be the exception and find what he's looking for-.

And that, since he seemed like a driven man and a winner to me, he had all it took to always be that exceptional exception.

Feeling less empowered because you ceded power to the group, society, the country, or whatever you have will certainly decrease your self-esteem.

*P.S.:
The Red Pill moderator from that post above advertised his Telegram channel and coaching/moving services at the bottom (see any room for bias, by the way?)
All the channel does is posting alt-right, social climbing, and "look how terrible society is" memes (including antifa trannies/blacks supposedly torching cities):



If this is what's "red pill" today, such as politics, alt-right, complotists, and complainers, you're better off staying away from it for your own mental health and mental empowerment alike

Issue 2: Dominance-Focus Lacks Sophistication & Shifts Focus On Male Competition, Rather Than Seduction

We're all for more power, dominance, and leadership here.

And generally speaking, more power and less "betaness" is good for many guys.

But as for everything, balance.
And nuances.

That "be more alpha" approach quickly hits a ceiling once you reach a good enough level (it's the issue of the "ceiling glass advice", article to follow).

And you often also need warmth to be effective in dating.

So my client's solution to better dating results was that he always had to be *more* -more high power, more attractive, more of a "chad type" "pure lover", and "more confident" because women can "smell betaness" and insecurity-.

Note that from what I could see and learn he was already a high-power, "alpha" and confident to achieve the results he wanted. I only saw a cool and high-value guy talking to him -ZERO "betaness", as he called it-.
And I don't think that most women are that more observant than I am.
Even if they were, it's not like women are perfect and not themselves self-conscious (hint: they are, and they're equally worried about how they come across than how *you* come across).

Indeed, when he described his last date, the woman was into him: replied, met with him, dressed up for him, met him for *three* dates, and followed him home.
The issue in my opinion was *too much* value, without escalating timely, not *too little* (see "straight line seduction").
After that, it wasn't looking too good, but it still wasn't necessarily lost. Worth a try with a call at least, vibe and joke a bit, and then invite her for dinner at his place -what's to lose, anyway? I got with plenty of girls doing just

that, actually-.
However, he hadn't contacted her again as that would be "too beta". Again, focus on power, instead of simply doing what's most effective.

Typical of red pill extremism, he also wanted to avoid dinners because "otherwise women take advantage of you and take you as a provider to milk while the fuck the "chad".

Note now his appearance and demeanor were a lot more "alpha/mannish" than I am, but… I've had countless dinners and first-date sex.

And if that advice makes you less effective plus blames your lack of "alphaness" or masculinity for it -as it's often the case in the red pill-, how are you going to feel?
Like an ineffective, effeminate beta loser, further eroding your confidence and self-esteem.

Read more here:

- **The limitations of alpha male dating**

> Why "Dating Like An Alpha Male" Is Costing You

Finally, the red pill tends to focus on man-to-man competition, rather than man-to-woman dating and seduction.
In our modern world, that's inherently less effective.

Issue 3: The Status Game Distorts Reality and *Creates* Insecurities

As I listened, I was still searching for an explanation:

How could a good-looking, high-power, wealthy, high-status, and well-respected man lack confidence and think he had to be "more" to do well?

It's not like he totally lacked experience, either.
He had a sexual regular, just came out of a relationship, and just went out -and had a great shot- with a girl who was exactly his type.

Then, I had a realization:

The red pill as a whole can make men less confident because **manosphere and red pill communities are a game of alpha male status that make men feel lacking just like IG is a game of status that makes women feel lacking**.

So to gain status in manosphere forums, men over-share, over-promote ideals, and put up a front of "maximum masculinity", "maximum alphaness", "top seducers", etc., etc.

When your dad is not bigger than his dad, take out the ruler for the dick-measuring context. If you lose that, go to

the gym to win the "bicep measuring contest". If that fails, find someone to mock as a "beta". Keep going down the "red-pill approved alpha traits list" until you stumble upon an alpha male trait or behavior you can exaggerate and brag about. Do that while ideally lecturing or putting someone else down, and mission accomplished: now you have some online status and can feel good about yourself!

Like one red pill user who wrote a good post titled "the red pill killed my game" says:

> everyone speaks like they're seduction connoisseur and what they say is 100% right

He's absolutely right, and that's because they're all playing the status game.

It's exactly like social media and IG, where the status games are:

- One-upping others on "life success" and enjoyment, ie.: "look what a great life I have (no matter I don't really own that car, no matter it was actually so boring on the boat, etc. etc.)"
- One-upping others on beauty and attractiveness, ie.: "look how attractive I am (no matter how much makeup and Photoshop I use)"

Games of status can grow life on their own, and become quite stupid and toxic (Storr, 2021; Miller, 2019)
The net result of the continuous posturing is creating a world that doesn't exist, chasing markers of status that aren't even effective at making you better off, or achieving your goals.

So just like IG can make some women feel insecure with a fake world of beauty, success, and eternal partying without hangovers that don't even exist, so the red pill does the same for men.
For men, the comparison is against a world of alphaness and alpha success that doesn't exist. Men pretending to be far more "alpha" than they are in real life, and attributing their supposed success to their "alphaness" and "red pill puritanism" (and forgetting that plenty of "not so chad-dish" men enjoy equal or better success).

There's an added handicap in the red pill compared to IG though.
And it's that while a perfect body "works" to date better for women, "more alphaness" is a lot more about nuances.
For example, while we couldn't agree more that power and dominance are crucial, it's more about reaching a minimum threshold.
And power is more about strategy and mixing it with warmth, rather than "always highest power" (so, in brief: an over-focus on "more alphaness" can often make men who are already high power enough date *less* effectively).

Also see:

- The law of optimum balance in dating
- Alpha male posturing

Plus our longer articles on red pill, and moving past red pill black and white mindsets.

Final Advice: Less Men's Focus, More Self & Goals' Focus

Take the good in the red pill…

… And then stop hanging around in the forums.

There are plenty of valuable contributors, but overall, you can find better for your self-development.

Most of all, focus less on competition, and zero in on yourself, and your goal.
If your goals are dating-related, focus on *women*, not men.

Read this important mindset shift here:

- Winners' mindsets

Or this video here:

SUMMARY

The red pill may be a good place to start learning how dating -and the world- works.

It's a place devoid of political correctness, and that's great.
It's the necessary condition to start getting closer to the "truth", as well as learning strategies and techniques that are far more likely to work in the real world.

So don't take this as poo-pooing on the red pill.

However, there are limitations.
Including some disempowering mindsets, a push towards "more alpha", and lower self-esteem for comparing yourself to men who aren't any more "alpha" than you in the real world,

Is Alex Hormozi Legit? 5 Red Flags You Must Be Aware Of ⍰

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 May 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Alex Hormozi is an American entrepreneur, author, private equity investor, and a “business guru” who’s gaining serious traction.

As of 2025, his net worth tops $100 million, fueled by a record-breaking book launch that moved 2.9 million copies in a single day.

This review dives into Alex as a business guru, leader, and person, analyzing his character and whether he’s someone you’d trust to work with or follow as a self-help role model.

About Me: I’m Lucio Buffalmano, a social scientist focused on power dynamics, social strategies, and men’s empowerment. I run ThePowerMoves.com to help good guys win with strategies grounded in experience and science. I dug into Alex to sharpen our business game, and here’s my take.

Contents

- Alex’s Business Strategy: Flipping Power Dynamics
  - Problem: Chasing Deals Puts You at a Disadvantage
  - Solution: Become the Prize They Chase
- Reputation Strategy: Give Freely, Hide the Ask
  - Social Techniques for Prestige
- Business Insights: 10/10
- What I Like About Alex
- What I Don’t Vibe With
- Areas for Improvement
  - 1. Disproven Approaches to Persuasion
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    - 3. Power Dynamics & People-Reading
    - 4. Questionable Self-Help
- Red Flags
    - 1. Defending Questionable Figures (Grant Cardone)
    - 2. Ties to Thin-Content Marketers (Dean Graziosi)
    - 3. Iffy Sales Advice
    - 4. Early Mentor Red Flags (Seven-Figure Sam)
    - 5. Money Above All, Including Honor & Morals
- Is Alex Hormozi Legit?
    - Learn More

Alex's Business Strategy: Flipping Power Dynamics

> Make Other People Come to You – Use Bait if Necessary
>
> *Law of Power N.8*

Alex's mission is clear: build massive wealth while sharing his lessons with aspiring entrepreneurs. What's smart is how he uses that generosity to fuel his success. By becoming a go-to authority, he flips the usual power dynamics in business deals, making entrepreneurs come to him instead of chasing them.

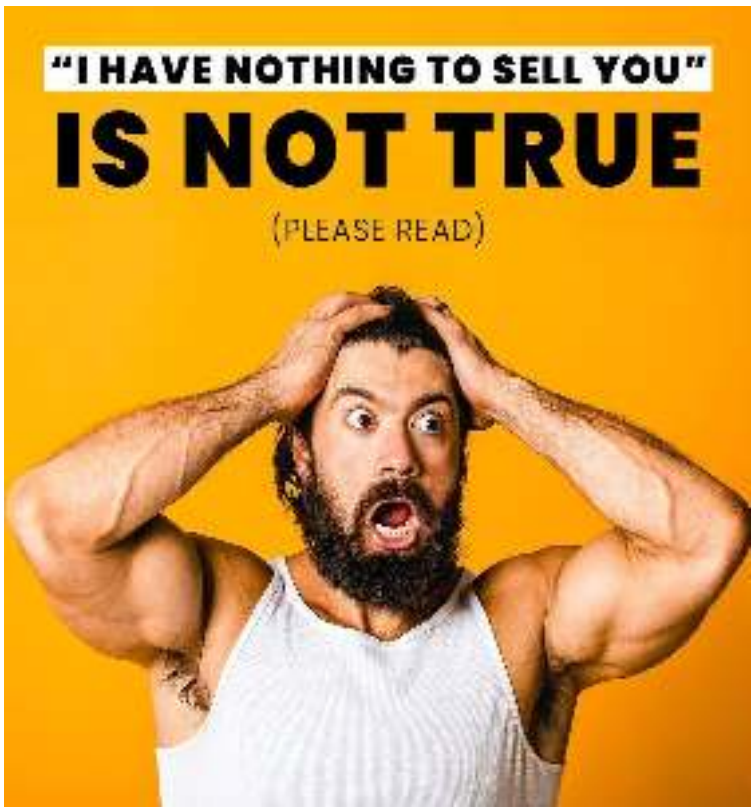
Problem: Chasing Deals Puts You at a Disadvantage

Let's break down the power dynamics. Alex's accelerator targets thriving businesses, not struggling startups. The issue? These owners need him the least and are stingy with equity. If Alex reaches out first, he's in a weaker position, often giving up more equity or cash to seal the deal. That's a tough spot for landing big, wealth-building acquisitions.

Solution: Become the Prize They Chase

Alex's solution is brilliant: he makes entrepreneurs pitch *him*. This shifts the power—he gets more options and stronger leverage. How? He built himself into a sought-after authority through social media, where popularity alone attracts offers. But he doesn't stop there. By projecting competence, selectivity, and ethics, he draws in high-quality businesses that enhance his reputation, not shady quick-buck types.

This "pull strategy" lets him secure bigger stakes in his accelerator program. He uses scarcity tactics like "limited spots," which feel legit to fans who see him as a hero from his content. It's a masterclass in power dynamics.



Your likes and shares power Alex's fame-driven strategy.

Fame as a Power Strategy

We've said for years that fame is a dating hack—it works just as well in business. Power dynamics don't care about the context; they're universal. Alex's popularity gives him leverage, and his ethical image ensures he attracts the right partners.

Value-Giving While Flipping the Table

This isn't a zero-sum game. Alex's free content is legit business gold—no paywalls, no arm-twisting. To attract quality entrepreneurs, his advice has to be top-notch, and it is. He balances chasing his own gains with delivering real value, making deals feel like wins for both sides. I'd gladly trade equity to work with someone like him who aligns with our mission at ThePowerMoves.com.

Reputation Strategy: Give Freely, Hide the Ask

Alex's "giver" approach is rooted in social psychology, aligning with our *Social Strategist* principles.

> Happy givers succeed by building goodwill without demanding favors—they give value freely.
>
> *Ali & Lucio, "The Social Strategist"*

Alex models himself after wise, wealthy figures like King Solomon.
He understands the social exchange model—we subconsciously track value in relationships.
Alex concluded that **the marketer's "jab, jab, jab, right hook model" of giving only to ask back depletes social capital** and comes across as sneaky and manipulative.

This no-ask strategy earns him a stellar reputation as an ethical leader. Entrepreneurs are happy to offer bigger equity stakes because they see him as a prestigious, value-driven partner.

Social Techniques for Prestige

Alex's social tactics reinforce his trustworthy image. Here's how he does it:

- **Give credit**: He always cites his sources, showing integrity. Example: "I haven't heard this elsewhere, so I'll claim it." It signals he respects others' work.
- **Power protect**: He prefaces hot takes with "just my view, yours is cool too," keeping everyone comfortable and avoiding conflict.
- **"What worked for me" framing**: His advice feels humble yet authoritative, backed by his track record.
- **Lift others up**: He avoids tearing competitors down, focusing on empowering his audience.
- **Show love for the crowd**: He calls his audience awesome and ties his mission to helping humanity.
- **Own selfish motives**: Admitting his drive for gain makes him relatable while still delivering value.

Example from a podcast break:

> **Alex**: …book "$100M Offers"… 8,500+ 5-stars… 99 cents Kindle… thousand hours writing… biggest community give… **shameless way to get you to like me, be more, make more dollars**.

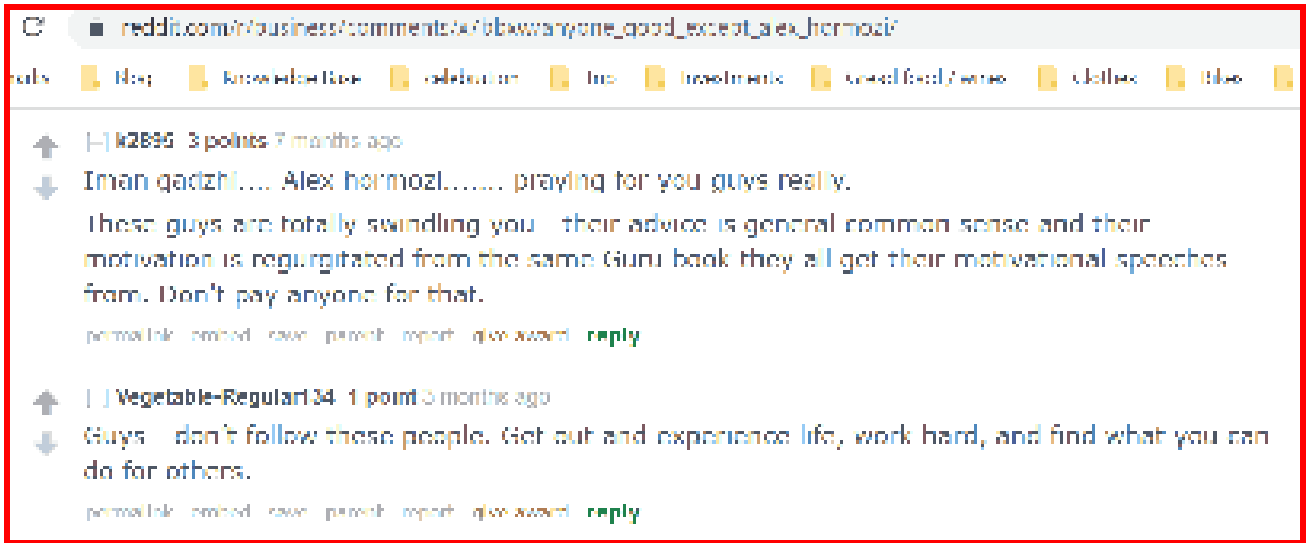
His "pushing harder" line fumbles a bit, but the raw honesty and charm shine. He blends high EQ with integrity, making you root for him while soaking up his free value.

Business Insights: 10/10

Alex's business acumen is top-tier.
He promises more value in his free content than most paid programs, and he delivers. No book, guru, or course has matched the actionable insights I've gotten from him. His book $100M Offers is climbing our best entrepreneurship books list.

He excels in copywriting, marketing, and sales, outshining expensive courses. His content is clear, practical, and battle-tested. I'm inspired to push ThePowerMoves.com to do the same for social and personal power strategies.

Addressing Critics: Rehashing Old Advice?



Reddit: Why not learn from someone who's done it?

Critics on Reddit say Alex just recycles old business wisdom.
Sure, after centuries of commerce, most ideas aren't brand new. But Alex packages them with fresh angles, tighter delivery, and more punch than anyone else I've studied.

What I Like About Alex

I'm a fan—that's why I'm writing this. Here's why:

- **Role model**, combining huge ambition and personal success with win-win. He also seems to be an honorable man with principles.
- **Rational**, analytical, and logical to the core. Just like I like it.
- **Uplifting**: Empowers rather than tears down.
- **Quality, practical content**: actionable, to the point, and real-world tested content. No fluff, naive self-help, or "empty motivation". It's the same approach we take for men's self-development here.
- **High-quality content**: Actionable, fluff-free, and potent.
- **Positive nihilism**: Embraces life's impermanence to choose your path.
- **No-BS psychoanalysis**: Rejects overrated therapy narratives, pushing self-ownership.
- **Problem reframing**: Turns anxiety into facts, echoing CBT principles.

What I Don't Vibe With

Chasing money is fine if you're creating value, but when it overshadows everything, it risks turning you into a taker.

Alex and I align on a lot, but a few things rub me wrong:

- **Money as the ultimate goal**, which part of me frankly finds distasteful
- **Money as a measure of personal worth**: He seems to measure worth by wealth.
- **Money as a measure of skill is not correct**: Equating earnings with business ability ignores chance and context. For example, Alex compares himself to Buffett's net worth. But since Buffet's fortune works on compound interest, Buffet's net worth is at least as closely tied to *longevity*
- **Money as knowledge**: He's said those who out-earn him are better at business, which oversimplifies things.
- **Compound interest myth**: His "save and invest" advice assumes consistent S&P returns, which history doesn't guarantee. I prefer DeMarco's take on wealth-building.

This money focus can erode deeper values and tempt ethical shortcuts.

Areas for Improvement

Alex is a rock star—smart, built, and legit. I'm not here to lecture him, but if we were chatting as coach and client, here's what I'd suggest:

1. Disproven Approaches to Persuasion

Alex claims people only change through reinforced behaviors.
It's a fair point, but psychology moved past simple conditioning long ago. Human behavior is more complex, and his stance oversimplifies things.

2. Pop Psychology

He's leaned into claims like "ultra-successful people share three traits: superiority complex, insecurity, and impulse control."

It fits his story, but it's not universal. The "research" he cites is speculative, not hard data, and studies like this one suggest insecurity often hinders success. Citing vague "research" without specifics weakens his authority.

Advice: Ditch the "they did research" framing. Try: "I've seen these traits in successful folks, and they resonate with me." It's confident and clear.

The 6 human needs pop psychology

I've also heard both Alex and Leila mention "human needs", seemingly from Tony Robbins.

Robbins' model is interesting, but his speculations on basic human needs don't make for a high-reliability resource (they don't fully align with basic evolutionary principles, for example).

Update: he's since dropped saying that

3. Power Dynamics & People-Reading

Alex is a great role model for general high-power behavior.

He generally is:

- Socially high-power
- Confident in both verbal production and behavior
- Authoritative
- …

He comes across as a typical 'alpha' in both looks and psychology (and Leila Hormozi a typical alpha female).

It also seems like he got *tremendously* better at power and authority over time.

Of course, there are always some opportunities for improvement.
For example, with Chris Williamson, he may have not read the power dynamics and ended up being a bit too approval-seeking and comparatively lower power.

Alex also displays lots of self-awareness and a strong grasp of judge power dynamics in his family, including how his father's demanding and "never good enough" attitude shaped him to be who he is.

Overall, strong foundations, but still some 'naive thinking' leftovere, underestimating the incidence and severity of nasty power moves, covert aggression, and dark triad.

For more: :

- **How reading people well would have accelerated Alex' business success**
- **Alex fails to recognize a potential frenemy** and ends up acting too low power
- **Alex misses his family's nasty power moves** (including the belief that his father wanted the best for him, which I'm afraid isn't always true for dark triad individuals, not even towards their own children)

4. Questionable Self-Help

Alex's claim that traumas are just "labels" and therapy is useless feels off. His example—a 14-year-old with a 30-something guy—doesn't hold up; some experiences are objectively traumatic. His empowerment angle is great, but it needs balance to avoid dismissing real pain.

Red Flags

Alex has way more green flags than red, but since this is a review, let's highlight the concerns. He's still a solid, trustworthy figure overall.

1. Defending Questionable Figures (Grant Cardone)

Alex's ties to Grant Cardone are a problem.

He's defended Cardone, despite many seeing him as a sleazy operator.
Cardone's shift from preaching savings to pushing pricey seminars raises ethical red flags. Alex's defense—"people hate the big guys"—doesn't hold, especially since Alex himself is loved despite his fame.

Cardone's rep hurts Alex by association.

This suggests either Alex's people-reading is off or he's too lenient with ethics. It risks his prestige-based brand.

Advice: Learn from anyone, but don't publicly back questionable characters.

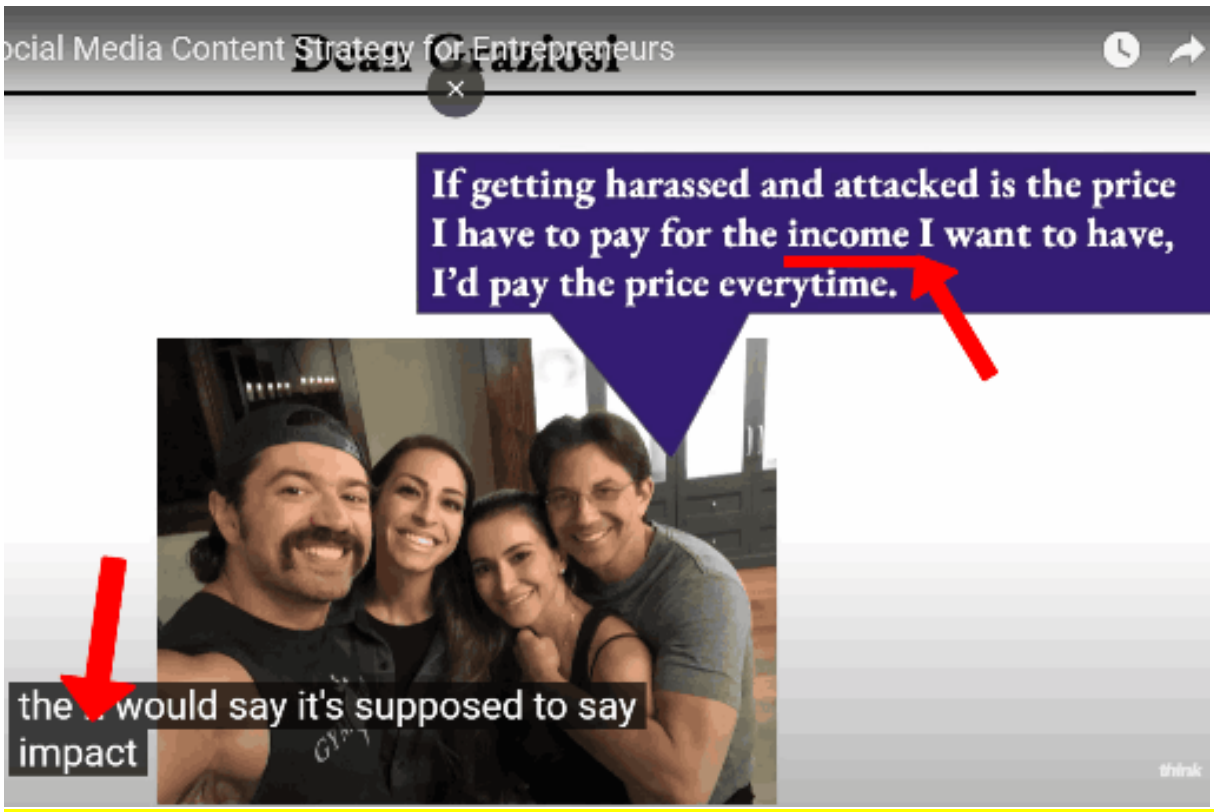
Update: Alex Stopped Associating His Name With Cardone

In this video, Alex says 'I paid someone', clearly referring to Cardone, but without mentioning him.

Good move.

2. Ties to Thin-Content Marketers (Dean Graziosi)

Alex's friendship with Dean Graziosi, whose content leans heavy on sales funnels and upsells over substance, is another misstep.



A slip where Alex quoted Graziosi prioritizing "income" over "impact" (later corrected) may hint at true motives.

Associating with marketing-first types dents Alex's credibility.

3. Iffy Sales Advice

Most of Alex's sales advice is gold—practical and ethical. But a few tips, like pushing for a customer's ID to reveal their wallet or using fake scarcity scripts, feel like manipulative tactics:

> **Alex**: If you've ever heard I left my wallet at home here's the easiest way (…)
> take their ID and say "hey let me trade you for whatever card you want to use" and flick it back towards them.
> And at that point they'll trade you for the card.
> If they say "I don't have the card I want to use with me" **just say "well if you have your phone with you, open up your banking app real quick", then click see statements and on the top of the statement we'll have their account number and you can actually do a direct ACH to the account**.
> Problem solved.

This *single video* here -not Alex himself- sounds sleazy to me.

This advice—building trust by dismissing minor products to sell bigger ones—can veer into selling unnecessary items, like supplements.

The advice itself is FANTASTIC.
But the ethics of it, well… Depends.

These moments clash with his ethical image.

Charlie Houpert Raises Some Ethical Questions On Alex Hormozi's Selling

One more example from Charlie Houpert, founder of Charisma on Command.

He says, referring to a sales video he saw from Alex:

> **Charlie Houpert**: I was watching an Alex Hormozi video (…) I didn't like that (…) they put the person on speakerphone and have a scripted fake conversation where they go "hey do you have some time" and this guy who's full-time job is to close says "I don't know I'm pretty busy right now" which is not true (…) positioned to give an aura of authority (…) that are what I think he would even say straight up lies

I agree with this take.

4. Early Mentor Red Flags (Seven-Figure Sam)

Alex's story about his early mentor, Sam Bakhtiar, raises eyebrows.

Says Alex of his entrepreneurial beginning under "seven-figure Sam":

> **Alex**: (shows up to Sam's door after traveling for hours) he was like "I'm going to lunch"

Notice already:

Alex shows up to his door to *work for free* and learn *after he traveled across the whole country*, and the guy brushes him off rather than, say, invite him to lunch together (or suggest where he could go).
Tells a lot about Sam's attitude.

> **Alex**: but right after he came back from lunch he was like "alright, so you should join my my mastermind"

Notice: first meeting, and Sam focuses on squeezing a kid like a lemon.

> **Alex**: and I was like "I don't have a gym" and he's like "that's okay" -it was a gym mastermind-

Notice: Sam doesn't seem care whether what he sells is useful to Alex.

> **Alex**: I was 22 and did not have a lot of money, and he was like "well it's 10 grand" and i was like "I don't know"

See a trend? Sam seemed out to take as much as possible from Alex, no matter what.

> **Alex**: and he's like "you need to f*cking commit man", he's like "you've been waffling back and forth"

Wait, what?
Alex, the guy who quit his well-paying job, drove across country to meet you at your door, to work for free… Has been waffling?
Not only he'll work for you for free after you waved him away, but you also manipulate and strong-arm him into spending 10k he doesn't have, for something that had low value for him (I bet no refund, also?).

Says Alex just a few seconds later:

> **Alex**: got around a whole bunch of other fitness professionals and I learned way more from all of them than I ever learned from sam (laughs as if to say "Sam was useless didn't even teach me anything")

That 7-figure Sam sounds like a jerk.

But in that same video, **Alex says he looked up to this jerk-sounding Sam**.
Alex idolizing him suggests he might miss red flags in charismatic figures.

5. Money Above All, Including Honor & Morals

Some of Hormozie's takes feel to me like pedestalizing business results and money over everything else.

For example, he seems to prioritize bank accounts over characters when it comes to those he admires.

In one of his videos, Alex's take is that copying others is at the heart of capitalism. And in one of his Skool trainings, **a winner of the Skool Games shared that his 'LinkedIn method' for organic reach was straight-up copy-pasting someone else's articles**.
I found it disgusting.

Alex fails to consider second-order consequences.
Free copying reduces incentives for innovation. Copying is regulated because, as a society, we must protect innovation.

I'm sure Alex didn't mean the worst forms of stealing without crediting. But he should have stressed that one can copy and *improve*, *adap*t, or *credit*.

Same goes for Alex's results-focused attitude on moving on from cheats without any retaliation. While seemingly 'nice' or 'positively calculative', as Axelrod notes, not reciprocating defection (ie.: pressing charges or seeking to even things out) emboldens cheaters, pushing the costs of future cheating and future punishment on others.

Is Alex Hormozi Legit?

Alex is as legit as they come—100%. He's arguably the top entrepreneurship coach today, offering clear, actionable, free wisdom that outshines most paid content. His expertise spans sales, marketing, and scaling, putting him in a league of his own, alongside MJ DeMarco.

He's ethical, commanding, and a true role model, making him and Leila a force for good. Nobody's perfect, and the red flags are worth noting, but Alex is a high-caliber leader worth following.

Learn More

If you found this review useful, we teach skills on how to read people and project confidence on this website. To **gain an edge on the human side of business and negotiatons, see Power University.**

CNN Town Hall: Why Trump Always Owns Liberals

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 May 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Campaigning Trump eats liberal hosts and critics for breakfast.

And while this article draws from the latest CNN Town Hall, that was just a single instance of a more general tendency.

So, what is it that gives Trump an unfair advantage over all those liberals?

Well, in short, it's power:

She looks at him and rotates towards him, he doesn't do the same toward her. Her words are angry, but her body language betrays low power (including a powerless "please" type of hand gesture)

But there is also strategies, Machiavellianism, and frame control.

Let's see:

Contents

- Liberals Have Naive Expectations of Truth & Fairness
  - Naive "Good People" Fail To Bring The Fight To Power-Skilled Narcissists
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- Town Hall: A Power Dynamics Perspective
  - 1. Trump Picks The Topics, She Reacts & Chases
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  - 5. She Over-Invests, Trump Puts In The Last Word
  - 6. She Gets Manipulative… Trump Busts Her

- 7. She Chases His Attention, Trump Ignores Her
- 8. She Virtue Signals, Trump Comes Across More Honest
- 9. She Moralizes Wars, Trump Slam Dunks It With "Saving Money & Lives"

- Different Questions For Trump
- SUMMARY

Liberals Have Naive Expectations of Truth & Fairness

This is one of the cruxes of the issue:

> While liberal interviewers are chainbound by expectations of fairness, truth, and honesty, unbound Trump flogs them at the more primal power level

In many ways, this is the issue of good people losing against not-so-good people.
And it's is why this website exists.

One of the obvious examples of liberals' chains of morality is their obsession with the "it wasn't a rigged election".

Liberals keep harping about it as if they didn't expect Trump was going to make up lies about unfair elections -and try to strongarm his way to power-.
Or as if they expected Trump to finally "admit" defeat.
And as if they expected Trump's continuous refusal to admit defeat would handicap him.

None of the above is unexpected.

Trump refusing to admit defeat despite the obvious defeat is totally normal for his personality profile.
What would be surprising instead would be Trump admitting defeat.

And Trump's behavior doesn't cost him politically because, in the meanwhile, he's making up huge points in other areas -power being one of the most important of them all-.

Liberal's Fixation With The Rigged Election: Example

> **COLLINS**: (in the beginning of the interview) And it's been nearly two-and-a-half years. Can you publicly acknowledge that you did lose the 2020 election?
> (…)
> **COLLINS**: (at the end of the interview) But no commitment there on the – accepting the results regardless of the outcome?
> **TRUMP**: It's – if it's an honest election, correct, I would.
> **COLLINS**: OK, so not committing to accepting the 2020 election results or acknowledging what happened in 2020. **(<—— SHE goes back to that old beaten horse)**
> **TRUMP**: Go ahead.

How does that look?
It looks like:

- The interviewer "just can't let go"
- The interviewer is wasting time
- The interviewer is over-investing
- The interviewer *chases* for a "fair admission of loss" (without getting it)

- The interviewer *needs* Trump to "admit" loss, as if she needed "closure" from her breakup or unloving daddy (and Trump doesn't give it to her)

From a power dynamics point of view, Trump is still the ultimate power and the "sun" around which the interviewer revolves.

And Trump's icing on the cake, the "go ahead" tasking power move.

Naive "Good People" Fail To Bring The Fight To Power-Skilled Narcissists

At the core, the issue is what this website wants to fix.

It's naive people who fail and lose against more power-aware ones (who are often not so good).

Take for example the famous trope of the left:

Fact-checking.

Example: The Inherent Powerlessness of Fact-Checking

This whole concept of "fact-checking" is ludicrous.

And it denotes the ultimate liberal misunderstanding of how to handle dark triad men like Trump.

It's not like most people don't know Trump makes a mockery of truth and facts.
Everyone knows that.
Adding more "data" to it doesn't make it better.
If anything, it makes it worse because it thread-expands on your powerlessness -your powerlessness to capitalize on Trump's BS, your powerlessness do anything about it in real-time, and your powerlessness to provide a better leadership example-.

Plus, guess what: people don't want to waste their time reading your "fact-checking reports" (and it's only getting worse with the Tik-Tok generations).
Only a few low-power geeks do that -not exactly the type of people who can amass a big follower base-.

Instead, from a power perspective, **liberals who run around "fact-checking" are like little failed dogs trying to pick up the pieces of the alpha dog who smashes reality as he pleases**.

Albeit "unfair", with those dynamics the ass*ole alpha male is still in charge -no matter how ass*ole he may be-.
And people don't want to vote or support the bitter, overburdened loser-minions.
People want powerful leaders.

Town Hall: A Power Dynamics Perspective

Let's see now some practical examples of that power contest:

1. Trump Picks The Topics, She Reacts & Chases

The general rule is:

Lower-value people chase higher-value people.

And there's a ton of these little moments all over the CNN Town Hall interview:

> **TRUMP**: (…) If you look at the FBI…
> **COLLINS**: But, Mr. President…
> **TRUMP**: If you look at the FBI and Twitter – they call it Twitter Files – made a big difference.

How does that sound?

Like Trump makes the rules and creates the frames, and Collins chases and reacts to them.

"But, Mr…." is the keyword of the person who *hopes* they will be listened to -but have no confidence to make statements themselves, and no power to *be* listened-.

She *tries* to get in a word but ultimately fails.

She Moves On, Trump Re-Opens Topics, She Gets Dragged Back In

> **COLLINS**: I should note that your campaign paid for a recount that happened in Wisconsin and actually had more votes for President Biden by the end of it.
> But I want to move on to Wayne Beyer. He's a retired attorney for North Conway – **(<—— the interviewer is trying to change topic here)**
> **TRUMP**: By the way, so many illegal votes were cast in Wisconsin. And if you look in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, they had so many legal – illegal votes, they didn't even know what to do with them. You're absolutely wrong about that. **(<—— But Trump reopens the first topic)**
> **COLLINS**: Mr. President, there weren't any fraudulent votes in Wisconsin. **(<—— And the interviewer follows, and is dragged again into Trump's choice of topic)**

In this case, it wasn't too bad actually because the interviewer moved away from that topic right after, so it was a way to put in the last word.
However, it's a small tactical mistake because she should have done what she did, but with a smaller investment, and without repeating Trump's words (which gives a feeling of "following").

For example, she could have said "not true", and moved on.
Much higher power, persuasive, and effective.

2. Trump Makes Up Facts, She Defends And Looks In The Wrong

> **COLLINS**: Well, Chris Miller was your acting defense secretary. He says you never gave that order.
> But back to what happened on that day, he said you weren't…
> **TRUMP**: He did not say that.
> **COLLINS**: You – he has testified that, Mr. President.
> **TRUMP**: He did not say that.
> **COLLINS**: But you said you weren't very involved that day.

Again the "but" format that self-frames her as the lower power party who's trying to get Trump to agree with her (fat chance!).

You know what turns funny about this?

Liberals are all talking about fact-checking, but when they discuss Trump live, it feels the opposite.
It feels like Trump is spouting facts, and liberals are going into overdrive to make up arguments to justify their claims.

In Power University we dig deeper on how to handle it, but the result is this:

When you explain it feels like your arguments are weak.
Not only what's true get lost in the gaslighting mix, but it also looks like you are in the wrong.

3. She Attacks, Trump Makes Her Look Nasty

And here we go again with the "nasty woman" power move.

Trying to make Trump "confess" and "play it fair", something he will never do, liberals end up becoming too aggressive themselves (also see "calibration").

Then Trump calls them out on it -"you're so nasty"-, and **people cannot help but agree because liberals *do* look nasty when they turn bitter and aggressive** -which they often do, since they get much more emotionally invested than Trump does-.

> **COLLINS**: But that's the question that investigators have (…)
> **TRUMP**: Are you ready? Are you ready? Can I talk?
> **COLLINS**: Yes. What's the answer? **(<—— the interviewer is trying to go power up, but she does it with visible bitterness and people don't like that)**
> **TRUMP**: Do you mind?
> **TRUMP**: Can I – do you mind? **(<—— Trump thread-expands to surface the nastiness to take maximum advantage of it)**
> **COLLINS**: I would like for you to answer the question.
> **TRUMP**: OK. It's very simple to answer.
> **COLLINS**: That's why I asked it.
> **TRUMP**: It's very simple to – **you're a nasty person, I will tell you. (<—— Now he calls it out, and he's right because she became too bitter and aggressive, so that's exactly how it looks like)**
> (audience cheers)

Result:

It looks like the too angry interviewer was overly biased.
And "poor" Trump wasn't given a fair chance.

Also, people don't like bullies.
And that's all the truer for liberals who are supposed to stand with the common people.
So **when liberals get too angry or aggressive they automatically end up looking like hypocrites who profess to be "on the side of the people" but who are instead just bitter and angry at those who are more successful than they are**.

Trump took great advantage of that and effectively framed her as a bitter and angry woman.

I can tell you that as an independent: when I see the bitterness and bias in some liberals, I can't help but sympathize with Trump.

4. Trump Attacks, She Proves Herself To Him

Look who's proving herself to whom:

> **COLLINS**: Mr. President, I looked at the same timeline that you did. Once it was clear…
> **TRUMP**: No, I know, but you didn't report that. You know why? Because it was taken down.
> **COLLINS**: We did report it. I was reporting that day.

"We did report it, (please) trust me, I was there!".
And again, she looks reacting to Trump's statements, and like she needs to add more and more evidence to prove her case (which makes her case sound even more dubious).

5. She Over-Invests, Trump Puts In The Last Word

99% of the times it's Trump who puts in the last word:

> **TRUMP**: Kaitlan, why did they change the law then saying that you can't do it? **(<—— the question by itself already sets up his gaslighting frame)**
> **COLLINS**: They didn't change the law. They strengthened the law because they are worried about a president exploiting – **(<—— falls for it)**
> **TRUMP**: Oh, they strengthened it, meaning you could do it. Thank you. (<—— reframes to snatch victory and **"closing the argument" power move)**
> **COLLINS**: That's not what it means.
> **TRUMP**: Thank you.

Again, Trump sets the original frame, and the interview over-invests with her explanations -something she should have avoided in the first place-.
Then, Trump reframes all her effort as proving his own point, and closes it with a dominant "thank you".

6. She Gets Manipulative... Trump Busts Her

This is what's truly bonehead:

Trump is a candidate with low morals and ethics.
Not the type of leader you'd look up.

Since people DO prefer leaders of better characters, a smart opposition must exploit Trump's low morals by behaving and *displaying the opposite qualities*.

If instead the opposition tries to play the same manipulative game and loses, THEN people prefer the higher power manipulator, to the lower power one. (Low-power manipulators look sneaky and people are disgusted by them).

So when liberals try the same manipulative / political games, they lose that chance of being those upstanding and

prestigious leaders we truly wish for
Plus, they even get spanked at the power game because they're not nearly as good.

See here:

> **COLLINS**: A Manhattan jury found – that you sexually abused the writer E. Jean Carroll and defamed her. You've denied this.
> But what do you say to voters who say it disqualifies you from being president?
> **TRUMP**: Well, there weren't too many of them because my poll numbers just came out. They went up, okay?

What are the issues with it?

1. It's well-known that famous people are targets of potentially false lawsuits. When you try to use a lawsuit that didn't seem very credible for political gains, *you* sound nasty, biased and unfair
2. To take for granted that Trump did it, feels like "legal scalping", or taking advantage of a legal case, to (unfairly) ruin someone's reputation
3. Trump is indeed winning the polls for the Republican nomination, so that felt like a manipulative frame to disguise the truth that she didn't want to face

It's ineffective because there is SO much ethical ground to attack Trump on, that you really don't need to play that (manipulative) game.

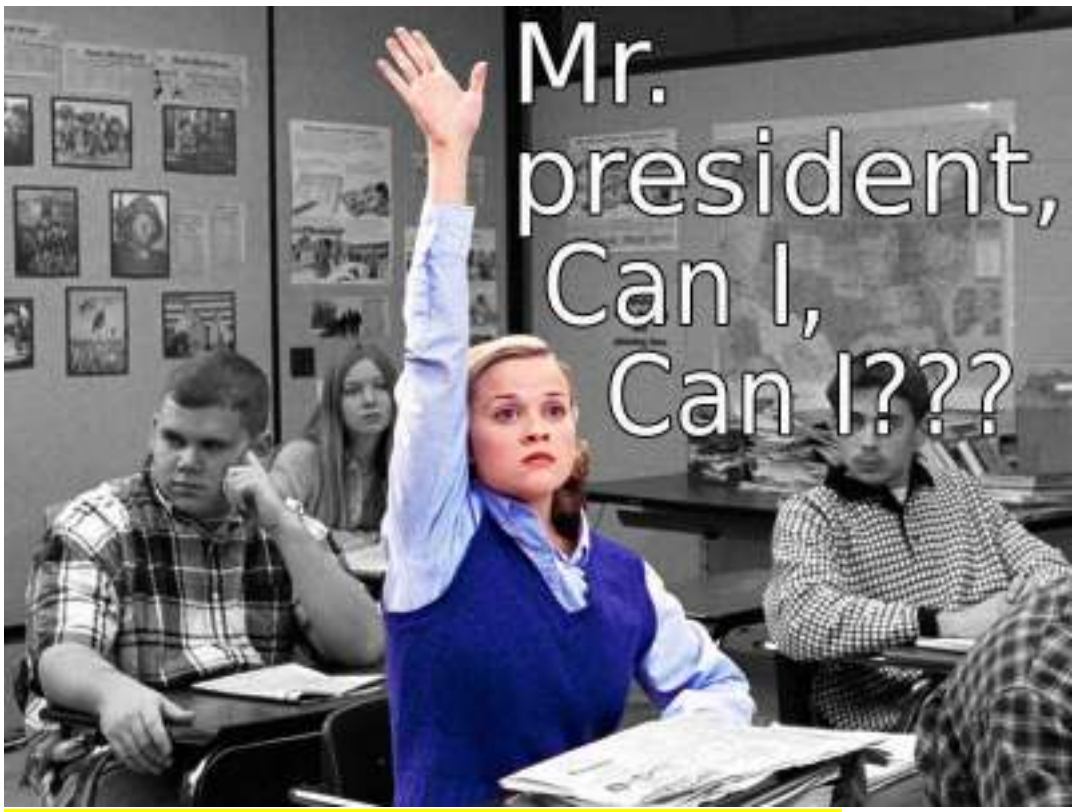
And finally, trying to indirectly and covertly imply that Trump is losing political capital for that legal case when it's patently not true feels like a manipulative lie (see "covert power moves").

7. She Chases His Attention, Trump Ignores Her

Now think, how does this feel to you?

> **COLLINS**: Mr. President, can I – can I ask you this?
> **TRUMP**: Think of it, think of this –
> (…)
> **COLLINS**: But, Mr. President, can I – can I ask you given your recounting and your version –
> **TRUMP**: I don't know who – and I tell you this. Are you ready?
> **COLLINS**: But, Mr. President, can I – can I ask you because –

It feels like the class pupil who's a bit too eager to get the higher-power teacher's attention.



Mr. President, can I please for the love of God get some of your attention?

Result: Trump looks like high power.
And people want high power people as leaders.

8. She Virtue Signals, Trump Comes Across More Honest

This is another major thorn in the liberal's side:

Political correctness as a virtue-signaling tool has gone so far that it lost touch with reality.
So whenever any dark triad who is willing to share some "harsh truth" comes in, the left looks like a naive pollyanna who does not have the brainpower -or courage- to understand and admit how things truly are.

The virtue-signaling liberals look stupid, biased, and unable to do well in a world where, to be effective, you must first acknowledge truth and reality.

For example, on the (in)famous "Access Hollywood" tape recording:

> **COLLINS**: There was a taped deposition of you from October, and in it, you defended the comments that you made on that "Access Hollywood" tape about being able to grab women how you want. Do you stand by those comments? **(<—— Again back to beaten horses people are tired of. An opportunity loss, and a proven bad strategy since Trump already won an election in spite of it)**
> **TRUMP**: I said if you're famous and rich or whatever, I said women let you. I didn't say you grab. I said women let. You know you didn't use that word, but if you look, women let you.
> (…)
> But if you're a famous person, if you're a star – and I'm not referring to myself. I'm saying people that are famous, people that are stars.
> (…)
> People that are rich, people that are powerful, they tend to do pretty well in a lot of different ways, okay? And you would like me to take that back. I can't take it back because it happens to be true. I've said it's been true for one million years, approximately a million years, perhaps a little bit longer than that.

> (…)
> **I don't want to lie. Oh, here's what – here's what she wants me to say. (<—— Effective frames her as a virtue signaler who's out of touch with reality and who'd want him to play by the same distorted virtue-signaling rules)**
> (…)
> A rich and famous person has no advantage over anyone else. Well, you do have an advantage, and I say unfortunately, but that's the way it is. **(<—— By adding "unfortunately" he manages to come across as both realistic, and human)**

Trump is saying that the rules are different for the rich and famous.
And that there are plenty of women, groupies, who throw themselves at those men.
It's true, it's how things are.
To deny it, it makes the *interviewer* look daft.

I can tell you that as an independent: when I hear this stuff, I can't help but sympathize with Trump.

9. She Moralizes Wars, Trump Slam Dunks It With "Saving Money *& Lives*"

> **COLLINS**: Mr. President, can I just follow up on that? Because that's a really important statement that you just made there.
> **TRUMP**: Excuse me, let me just follow up.
> **COLLINS**: Can you say if you want Ukraine or Russia to win this war?
> **TRUMP**: I want everybody to stop dying. They're dying, Russians and Ukrainians. I want them to stop dying. (…) And I'll have that done – I'll have that done in 24 hours. fn

Liberals are assigning right and wrong to the war.

However, Trump brings a more Machiavellian approach to it.
It's not about right or wrong, it's about doing what's effective -save money and save lives, who can disagree with that?-.
And especially for the US which lies so far from the conflict, the "end the conflict independently of who wins and save our money" can be more appealing.

But because of the interviewer's almost childish question of "who should win", Trump even ends up sounding more ethical and human.
"F*ck winning or losing", he says, "it's all about lives".

And people LOVED it.
Here are just some of the top comments on that video:

> **Commenter 1**: Best thing I've heard thus from from a politician
> **Commenter 2**: He answered the qustion so well. I think it was his best moment of the night

Question:

How bad must your approach be to make a potentially malignant narcissist sound like the most humanitarian man in the room?

Answer:

A lot.

Different Questions For Trump

These are a few ideas on some questions one may ask Trump:

> Mr. Trump (<—- don't call him "president", he ain't no president)
> There was a book published by no less than X mental health experts.
> They say that you're a malignant narcissist, and a ton of evidence shows that narcissists make for poor leaders since they manipulate a lot, cannot negotiate with political opponents, and look after themselves only

Or:

> Mr. Trump, past events showed that you seemed to have a weak ego, thin skin, and overreact to any criticism. That doesn't make for a good leader

What makes that potentially effective is that Trump will likely defend and start bragging there, and that thread expands and confirms the original statements.

Or:

> Mr. Trump, you often say you will fix major world problems in no time. For example, you just said you'd solve the Ukrainian conflict in less than 24h.
> But how can we trust you when you give no details and history showed you didn't always deliver. For example, you met with North Korean dictator, and the guy kept right on with his nuclear plan. It felt like a big inconclusive show, all sizzle and no steak…

Whatever he says, you now brought to light a proven fact and failure.
All his following easy solutions to complex problems will sound like BS.

SUMMARY

There truly are many reasons why Trump dominates debates.

One of them is that Trump is good at arguing.
If he can make it about "him VS you", you'll have a tough opponent.

Unluckily, liberals are giving him just that.
They are giving him the opposition that Trump derives power from.

Another reason Trump wins is that most interviewers are "normal people" with some aspiration for morals and fairness ingrained into them.
Trump does not.
So these "normal people" aren't equipped to fight against a dominant and power-hungry opponent that is unbound by rules of truth, fairness, or ethics.

CNN Machiavellian Plot?

Please note this is no criticism of Collins.

She didn't even have a 100th of Trump's experience and was up against one of the toughest possible opponents.

In that sense, she actually did OK.

To truly think Machiavellian, this may all have been a ploy from CNN higher executives.
Invite Trump, get a ton of views, match him with a less experienced journalist, help Trump win the presidency…
And enjoy higher ratings for the whole time.

Note:
We used the official transcript from CNN.
For ease of reading, we sometimes cut out repetitions or filler words, and we sometimes replaced non-significant paragraphs with "(…)".
Overall, we left the general meaning intact.

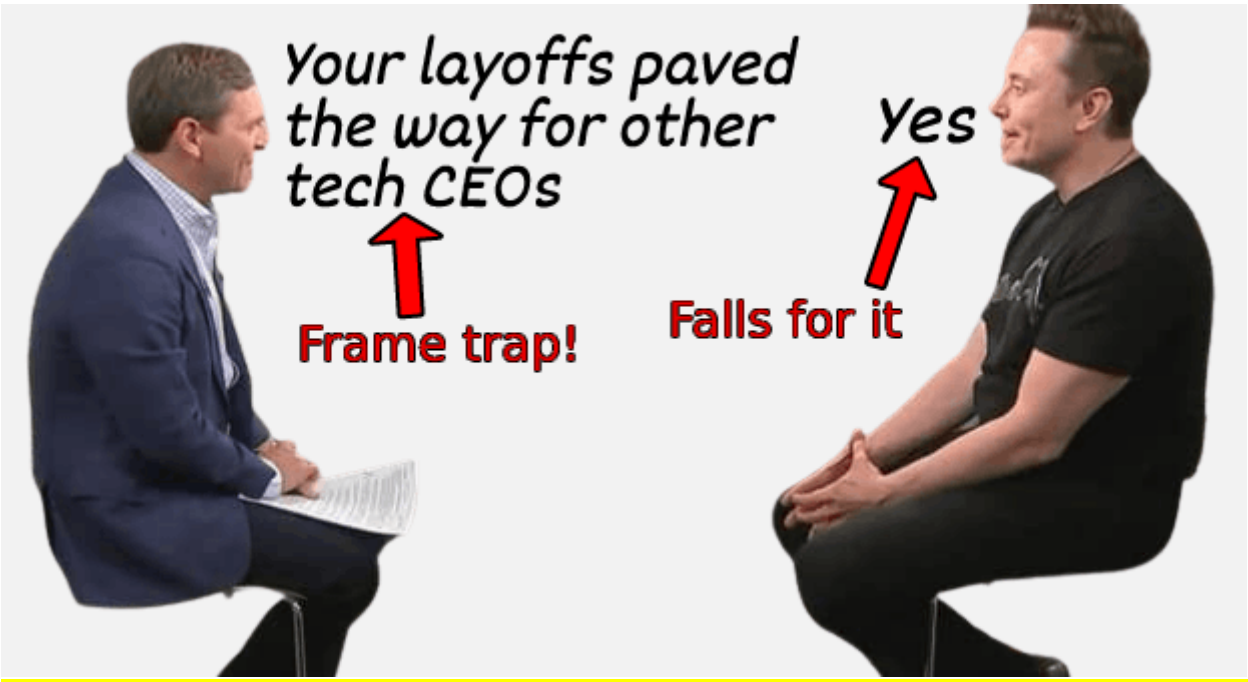
Elon Musk Frame Control: Case Study

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 May 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Elon Musk recently gave an interview to CNBC host David Faber.

It was a fantastic interview.
And with countless opportunities for improving social skills, reputation, and general life effectiveness.

For this post, we will focus on two traps as case studies on the importance of frame control.



Accept the wrong frame, and you take a reputation for a nasty capitalist, and lose the ability to influence and lead. Change the frame, and you take a reputation for a caring leader and *gain* the power to influence, lead, and accomplish big goals. HUGE difference -all based on your power awareness–

Contents

- Frame Trap: "You Set The Example For Mass Layoffs"
- Falls For The Frame Trap: "I Set The Example For Mass Layoffs, Yes"
- Problem: You Get Pitched AGAINST Employees, And Lose Your Ability to Lead & Inspire
- Better Option: Frame Your Action As SAVING Jobs
- 3 Rules For Frame Control

Frame Trap: "You Set The Example For Mass Layoffs"

Let's review the key exchange.

As a quick background, the interviewer has already broached the topic of mass layoff at this point.

And there were already some common interviewer nasty frames there.
But here is where it goes up a notch:

> **Interviewer**: It's funny, I heard from other tech CEOs (pause, add emphasis) quietly (pause) they look at what you did at Twitter and they sort of they won't admit it publicly but you know they said "wow that was something" (I) mean (<— danger! Shifts the frame from "hard but necessary measure" to "wow, nasty")

If you've become good at reading people and interactions, there are already many red flags you can spot here. Those red flags already warn you that the interviewer is going for some nasty move -and that you need to defend yourself-.

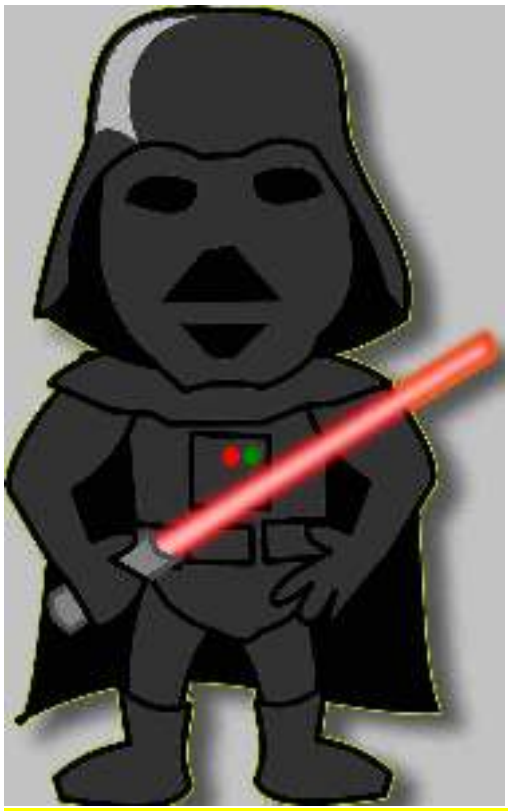
If you also notice the last part, you can barely hear the "I" in "I mean". So **it sounds a lot more like the interviewer is saying that what Elon Musk did was wow-level mean**.
And independently of what his intentions were, as Machiavelli says, what appears is.
So he already set up a frame of Musk taking mean action.

And then he doubles down with this:

> **Interviewer**: to cut that deeply and still be able to run the company, people will argue about how well things are running, have you heard **many of these CEOs say "thank you for doing that, giving us runway or at least making some cuts of our own"?** (<— danger! This frame Elon Musk as the man providing the leadership and example to other tech CEOs to undertake more mass layoffs across the whole industry. Hardly the type of example you want to be publicly known for)

The interviewer set up a covert frame that Elon Musk led the way for other CEOs to go ahead with mass layoffs.

Dark Power Is STILL Power, But... We Can Do Better



A frame can be high-power, and still be bad for your reputation and goals because it frames you as a value-taker

Please note:

In a way, **that's a very empowering frame for Musk because it frames him as the #1 leader of an already elite cadre of high-power men**.

BUT…

It's still not the best frame from a social strategist's point of view because:

1. **Musk *already* enjoys that "leader among leaders" spot in everyone's minds**. Everyone knows Musk is the

CEO of CEOs (plus some). Musk can enjoy that #1 status *without* the negative connotation.

2. **Musk can enjoy the "leader among leaders" frame while being a force for good**. And he can only benefit from it.
3. **Once the interviewer frames him as leader of leaders, Musk will look equally powerful but classier by playing it down**, thus looking powerful but humble.
   For example, he may say "you're flattering the extent of my influence there, but in truth… "
4. **Musk would look a lot more powerful and smart by leading** and reframing instead of following and accepting. Such as, instead of passively accepting a frame of him influencing other CEOs, he would SHOW everyone his social power. Much more powerful.

So, Elon Musk should refuse the "dark leader" frame because it's simply not the best option for him.

Falls For The Frame Trap: "I Set The Example For Mass Layoffs, Yes"

And Elon Musk, unluckily, confirms that frame:

> **Elon Musk**: I've heard that from a few people and I heard that through the grapevine yeah, but like I said if the desperate times call for desperate measures, unfortunately those were desperate times

Elon Musk's frame of "desperate times call for desperate measures" was OK-ish.

Not the worst possible option, but still had many issues.

And a huge opportunity loss.

Let's see:

Problem: You Get Pitched AGAINST Employees, And Lose Your Ability to Lead & Inspire

However, there are still some major issues with it:

- **Value-taking**: Elon Musk's actions are still framed as value taking
- **Nasty behavior**: despite Musk framing it as "necessary", the "nasty firings" initial frame is still there
- **Nasty leadership**: Elon Musk is still framed as the owner who gave all other owners permission to slash jobs. Not exactly the type of great leadership you'd want to be associated with, right?

Most of all, **this frame is terrible for effective leadership because it sets a frame of ruthless owners VS meaningless employees**.

Effective leadership requires that the people you lead trust you, like you, and look up to you.
Smart and driven people, by definition, are also not stupid and lazy. And they know that you're running a business and cannot *guarantee* jobs, and that they need to give value to you, the business, and the mission.
But effective leadership still requires that people believe that you, as the leader, have at least a minimum level of empathy and care for them as people, and not just as cogs in the bigger machine.

You must be careful with the frame of "the business always comes before the employees" because it turns people into meaningless cogs.
When that happens, people lose motivation. And they turn from givers who happily contribute to the mission, to selfish operators -the death of greatness and the hallmark of average business, groups, and output-.

So, even when you want to go for the general truth that the business and mission are bigger than the single individual, you must always add the caveats that you ALSO care about the people.

That's what was missing here.

Better Option: Frame Your Action As SAVING Jobs

You can pick frames that are equally powerful, but framed as *adding* value to the world

All in all, Musk didn't do TOO badly here.

And he didn't come across as overly nasty or uncaring.

However, it was still a major opportunity loss for Elon Musk.
Both as an individual, and as a leader who wants to accomplish big goals.

An opportunity loss to display qualities and personality that he actually *does* have, including:

- **Value giving**, instead of value-taking
- **Empathic**, and caring and taking care of the people he employs
- **Great leader**, the type of leader you look up to, and work harder for

And, also:

- **Power aware / smart /** not an easy mark for manipulative frames, which never hurts :)

How could he have done that?

In Power University we go more in-depth with the mindsets to ingrain so you can come control frames on the fly.

Better Frame: Example

But, just as an example, here's a better frame:

> **Interviewer**: It's funny, I heard from other tech CEOs (pause, add emphasis) quietly (pause) they look at what you did at Twitter and they sort of they won't admit it publicly but you know they said "wow that was something" (I) mean

> **Musk**: (jumping in and interrupting, if needed to) nono, wait, sorry if I jump in, but I think this is important. It may be true that some other CEOs looked at what was happening at Twitter, I don't know that. I can only answer for my actions. And you're getting it the other way around, it's the opposite. That was a necessary act to save the company (<—- You surface and address the most important danger to your status: the meanness of the action, independently of what he wanted he to say)
> Maybe one could say it was tough love, but still the only option to stay alive. The choice was NOT between firing or not firing. The choice was between saving the business, together with 1.500 employees, or losing the business together with all the employees

Notice that you act at the first hint of nasty and disempowering frame.
Earlier is always better because that way you nip it in the bud and prevent the nasty frame from expanding, enveloping you and, crucially, entering people's minds and cementing.

As a general rule: act, don't react.
Set, reinforce, and cement your frame early on, rather than reacting and fighting other people's frames.

Some other frames he may have taken as well:

- **I did what was best for us, and other companies do what's best for them**, so you avoid taking responsibility for other companies' layoffs. Or, fleshed out: "I decided to do what's best for Twitter, our mission, and also for our employees. What other tech CEOs decide to do is up to them, and I strongly hope they also took the best decision for all"
- **More efficient companies are better for all** (ie.: it's a small short-term price to pay with temporary firing, but long-term good for all)
- **More efficient companies can give more** (better services), for less money, while paying more
- **Long-term it's also better for the people let go**, since they can do more meaningful work elsewhere
- **Keeping employees you don't need is lose-lose for all**, it's poor leadership, and you bring down the overall efficiency and that's bad for all (plus, you're also more likely to go out of business)

3 Rules For Frame Control

Remember:

- **Interviewers are like police detectives**: never your friends, not even when they seem friendly
- **If you're good but the frame is nasty, shields up**: if you're generally a good person and anything someone says seems to frame you in a nasty way, it's likely a trap or a power move
- Whenever you feel you're losing your power, reputation, or status, **always question the frame at its highest level**

That last part is the key.
Frame control *techniques* are great to have, but the foundations come first. Questioning the frame at its deepest level is one of the core skills we help our students internalize in Power University.

Hopefully this quick Elon Musk case study gave you a good idea of how to be a more effective social strategist.

For more on making frame control second nature, effortless self-defense, and gaining status and a great reputation, check out Power University.

How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 May 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Bragging “without bragging” is an art.

But, luckily for us, self-promotion and value-signaling is also part of our power dynamics *science*.

And bragging effectively is something you can *learn*.

In this article, you’ll learn how to signal value and self-promote with the *covert* bragging approach.

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Definition

> Covert bragging refers to self-promotion that avoids the first-person format of self-enhancement and instead utilizes different techniques to promote oneself and display high value, without coming across as a braggart

If well-executed, covert bragging allows you to self-promote and come across as high-value, without the important drawbacks of overt bragging.

INTRO

Bragging is on a "visibility continuum". Too obvious is bad, while the more invisible it is, the better (display high value, make people think highly of you, but nobody even thinks you bragged).

Bragging is a form of self-promotion.

And the ultimate goal of bragging is to:

1. Display value
2. Become higher value in people's eyes

Bragging has taken a bad rep, and generally for good reasons.
Still, even the most direct version can, at times, "kind of work".

It's *far* from ideal, but if it didn't work at all, it wouldn't have evolved.

But it *did* evolve, and it *did* spread.
So much so that all languages I know have a word for it, and almost anyone experienced it -probably many times, and probably you also bragged a few times-.

So it means that at least on some occasions, at least for some people, bragging is probably better than not bragging.

That tells us an important truth:

Self-promotion is crucial in life.

And the very existence of bragging is proof of that.
Self-promotion is SO important that bragging evolved and spread, *despite all its huge drawbacks*.

The Drawbacks of Bragging

Too obvious bragging has many drawbacks.

So many, that the general social skills advice is "avoid bragging" (and we *generally* agree).

Some of the issues of bragging include:

- **It's annoying** to many
- **It sets a bad competitive dynamic** of "me better than you", and "me VS you"
- It stokes jealousy and **creates frenemies**
- **It often sub-communicates low self-esteem**, since high self-esteem people don't feel the need to brag
- **It sub-communicates low EQ** and social skills, and that's never a good trait to display
- **It's not very credible**, since the individual has an obvious incentive to come across as "better than he actually is"

How to brag without all that nastiness, then?

Enter, covert bragging.

Bragging Effectively With Covert Bragging

Covert bragging is a self-promotion approach to get the benefits of self-promotion, without the downsides of bragging.

In theory, if successful, it's possible to get the benefits, without the downsides.

If successful is key there.

The technique per se says nothing about how successful it is.

Effective Covert Bragging Requires Skills

Covert bragging is not a simple technique.

Contrary to other techniques, it's not just about saying something or saying it with enough confidence.

It's very, very situational, and it requires a deep understanding of social dynamics.

This means that if you do it well, you gain huge.
But if you do it poorly, you lose.

As the chart above shows, a **covert brag that is too close to a "normal" brag can come across as even *worse* than a direct brag**.
A bad covert brag can be worse because, beyond being recognized by everyone as a brag, it also comes across as a sneaky power move that reeks of manipulation and of "status inflater" (and you don't want to be seen as a sneaky social manipulator).

So, generally speaking, you do want to self-promote, but **the more subtle, invisible, or natural you can make your value displays, the better and more effective it is**.

Let's see some ways to do it.

Covert Bragging Techniques

Some techniques include:

1. Tell a story to display your qualities

The key is to:

1. **Make the story natural**, part of the topic, or like you're just sharing for good time
2. **Embed the covert brags seamlessly** -ideally even while sounding humble-

2. Focus on sharing the lessons learned

So you can even self-frame as a giver.

Ie.:

> I did X and Y mistakes on my way to success, and this is why I'm sharing it, so you can avoid the same mistakes

3. Make others say or ask about your qualities

You can even do that in your story while *you* say it.

For example:

> **Tony Robbins**: when people ask me in the media "look, you've been with every major president, you've been with Mother Theresa, with Nelson Mandela, who impressed you the most…

Respect for Robbins' TOP-notch content:

He's THE best "motivational" and "self-help guru".

And at the same time:

LOL, what a bullshitting salesman -he chased Mother Theresa to meet her, and I bet not a single journalist told him "you've been with every single president"-.

This covert brag was close a red-level overt brag.
Still, it's much better than saying "***I*** have been with… ", which would be the direct brag format.
And they're "good enough" to fly under the radar of most people, while making those same people think very highly of Robbins (most people aren't very power aware).

4. Frame it as advice for others to *also* do or enjoy

In this example, I share a breathtaking view while advising people where to go to enjoy the same.

The overt brag format would be to share the view saying "I'm loving this", that sub-communicates "look at me while I travel to exotic places while you're freezing your ass in winter")

5. Focus on the challenge

Like typical marketer's story.

They cam from utter failures, and only after much hard work finally enjoying all this success they're supposedly having.

6. Disqualify yourself before bragging

For example, I say in *The Social Strategist*:

> So, despite my endless shortcomings and continuous mishaps, I've resolved and still managed to get good at this *one* thing.

See?
I don't introduce myself by saying "I'm an expert at this".

Instead, in the preface I first say I'm no guru and don't ever wanna be one.
Then, I double down saying that "despite endless shortcomings and continuous mishaps… ".
Only after that did I finally say "I managed to get good at this one single thing I'm teaching you now".

That way, it doesn't come across as braggart.

7. Embed brag stacks & make'em *invisible* (advanced)

The most advanced covert bragging is not even recognized as "displaying value".

It DOES display value, often also from different angles that all cover each other, but it just flies under the radar.

This requires more advanced learning and mindsets, including more Machiavellianism. It's something we better teach in Power University.

However, to give you an idea, advanced covert bragging can be as simple as this:

> (after they're speaking and vibing for a while, so it feels natural)
> **Her**: I was so tired today. Work is getting so stressful sometimes

> **You**: Yeah, same, that's why I was late by the way, sorry about that. But it's my fault. I'm such an idiot sometimes, I always tell myself to stop on time in the evening, but then there's always someone who really needs me, and I always feel bad saying no

All in one, this is a form of:

- **Positive virtue signaling**, as in you displaying your drive to help others
- **High power**, as in control over your life. Think about what that sub-communicates: you DO have control to decide when to stop, reminding her you're a business owner / entrepreneur, or have a high degree of freedom at work. If one day you get serious about working less, you always *can*. She may not have that freedom
- **High-value display**, as the people begging for your help and time sub-communicate you must be so skilled/wise, or so incredibly capable of adding value to people's lives (something everyone wants)
- **Success & money bragging**, as in you having an abundance of customers (who likely pay you quite a bit)

All perfectly embedded in well-executed vibing, and while sharing a supposed vulnerability -"feeling bad to say no" and "working too much"-.
Plus, he pulls another "higher value power move" by reminding her he was late (and she had to wait for him).

There are a million other forms, but the general concept stands: **the best social strategists successfully display their value with covert brags that are so natural that it's not even bragging at all**.

Imagine how easier your life gets when you can reliably come across as high-value, without ever bragging.

And that's the place where we want to take you.

Be Careful of Humblebrags

The above could be an example of a humblebrag.

So, yes, if well done and if they feel natural, they can work great.

On the other hand, just as for bragging, there are plenty of ways of doing it wrong.
And when you do it wrong, it's exactly like a poor covert brag: it makes you come across as sneaky.

See another example from the covert bragging king Tony Robbins:

- Humblebragging example

How To Brag At Work

Bragging in the sense of "self-promotion" at work is fundamental to advance.

Think of bragging as the *enabler* of your good work.

You can be as skilled as a God, but if the people who decide the promotions don't know about it, it's completely useless.
On the other hand, it's just like Machiavelli said: if you're OK at your job, but somehow *appear* to be good and can network well, you'll do great.
So, yes, great political skills are a must at work, and self-promotion is part of them.

A fantastic approach to bragging at work is to skip the brag talk and instead raise the visibility of your added value.

Here are some valid approaches:

- Let the challenges reach the higher-ups before you fix them

- Find solutions, but only implement them when the problem has grown and reached the higher-ups
- Always let your boss know the challenges you faced and how you solved them (you self-frame as the "finding solutions" type of guy)

For more on effective self-promotion:

> The Art of Self-Promotion: 9 Effective Techniques

In Power University we go more in-depth and have one lesson specifically for effective self-promotion.

How To Brag On Job Interviews

You must keep this in mind:

Some interview questions are TRAPS to make you brag as much as possible.

And if a little brag can be good, *overly* bragging is not.

The more you brag, the nastier you come across, the lower your odds of getting the job (and a good pay).

Here is a common interview trap to make you brag:

> **Interviewer**: What makes you different than all other candidates

That's your "brag to me" bait trap.
If you fall for it, you end up social climbing on all other candidates -people you don't even know!- and looking nasty and narcissistic as a consequence.

And this is how you answer while bragging *smart*:

> ***You***: *Well, I don't know the other candidates so I cannot answer that question properly (<— a bit of philosopher's frame control here).*
> *I can imagine there might be some other good candidates though, since you are a company with good reputation, and as much as this job attracted me, it might have attracted some other top caliber people (<— you don't social climb here: you build others up, while you build yourself up, coming across as a confident team player who doesn't need to demean others to feel good about himself)*
> *What I can tell you is what attracted me to your opening, and why I think I can perform well… (<— and now you go back to your standard pitch, answering your own question)*

Read more:

- How to display your value without falling for the fake interview trap
- **How To Ace Job Interviews**

How to Brag In Dating

A direct brag in dating *also* works great.

… IF you know how to do it well, of course.

Huge caveat, because most men brag badly.
So DO NOT take this as a "permission to brag".

So, first of all:

Beginners: Avoid Direct Bragging

The general rule stands: generally avoid overt bragging.

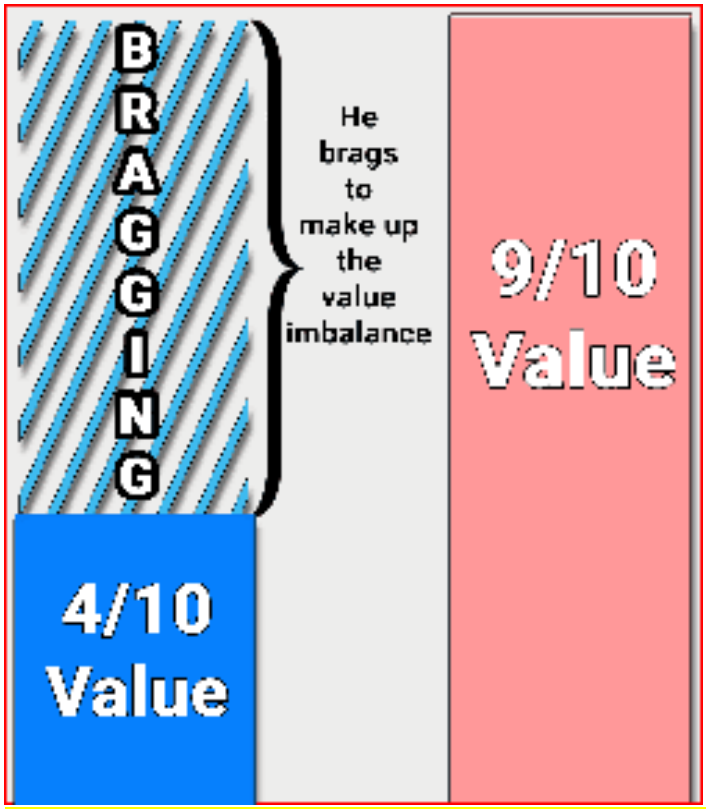
When you brag poorly, including too direct and obvious bragging, you lose power and attraction (the two are linked anyway).

You lose power and attraction because **the unspoken frame of direct bragging is that you're lower value than her and need to use bragging to make up the difference**.

Plus, it's an inherently low-power strategy because you're chasing (see "foundational rules of dating").

Not that it can't ever work… Anything can work.
It's just that, most of the times, it's not optimal.

It looks like this:



Direct bragging sub-communicates that he either is, or feels, lower value than her, and needs to make up the difference by showing off. Plus, it sub-communicates low social skills and EQ, and that's never a turn-on :)

Men who are obviously higher value than her do NOT brag (most of the time).
So avoid bragging, and display higher value with actions and behavior, instead.

Advanced Seducers: Use This Attraction-Spiking Brag

Now, that being said, more advanced folks can break the rules.

They can break the rules and even gain big time when they do so.

And a well-placed direct brag is a fantastic power move that spikes attraction.

This works very well for men in dating and also in relationships because women like men who are "more" than they are.

A **strong direct brag not only shows the quality you brag about, but it's also a huge display of confidence and self-esteem**.

A confidence that is a bit more on the "bravado" side, but if you do it with a smile and a frame of a little humor, then even older men will gain big from this.

I've used this format many times on dates, and it's one of the most reliable ways to "spike attraction".

Example: Lucio's Bragging

For example:

> (you previously displayed some success or intelligence. Ie.: started a cool business, gave her good life adivce, or solved an issue with creative thinking)
> **Her**: so how did you come up with that
> **You**: well, there are many reasons (<— philosopher frame, and setting up his power move), but the main one is… (you really wanna know?) that I'm fucking smart
> **Her**: (cracks up laughing) ahaha that's true (<— concedes and admits high value. The closest thing to admitting attraction you can get)
> **You**: (smiling, thinking "I know you like me") ehehe thank you, thank you, jokes aside, or shall we say, beside being smart, what happened is… (goes on explaining with a bit of high-power teacher frame)

If you think that's tacky, it's because you're thinking like a guy.

Yes, it would be tacky *with another guy* -but even there: not always. See the interviewer cracking up, or shall we say "conceding", at 50 Cent's brag-.

But dating is different.
And thinking like a guy is why many men date well below their potential. (See "alpha male dating", for example).

Instead, remember this:

> Men think of other men who display higher value as competition.
> Women think of them as highly attractive mates.
>
> *The Power Moves*

And that's ultimately why a good brag works great in dating.

The Rule of Effective Bragging: Display Before You Say

The key to a direct brag is to display it before you say it.

Remember that as a good "law of bragging".
First, you display.
Then, when she's already thinking so at a subconscious level, you bring it to the surface to make it 10x more effective.

Our example above works great because you've already proven that you're smart. (Side note: if you're good at conveying intelligence, which is also a form of covert bragging by the way, you don't even need any special event. You only need a simple chat).

She agrees with that, she *knows* it.

But she may know it at a subconscious level only.
And bringing it to the *conscious* level makes it more effective.
A LOT more effective.

You saying it thread-expands on it, surfaces it, makes it conscious and shared, and 10x its power. *Plus*, your

delivery displays strong confidence and self-esteem, and women, who often lack self-esteem, LOVE that.

You deliver an effective brag with high confidence and with a smile and she's guaranteed to swoon.

See more techniques and examples in **Seduction University**.

How to Display Confidence With Brags

As for everything, there are always exceptions.

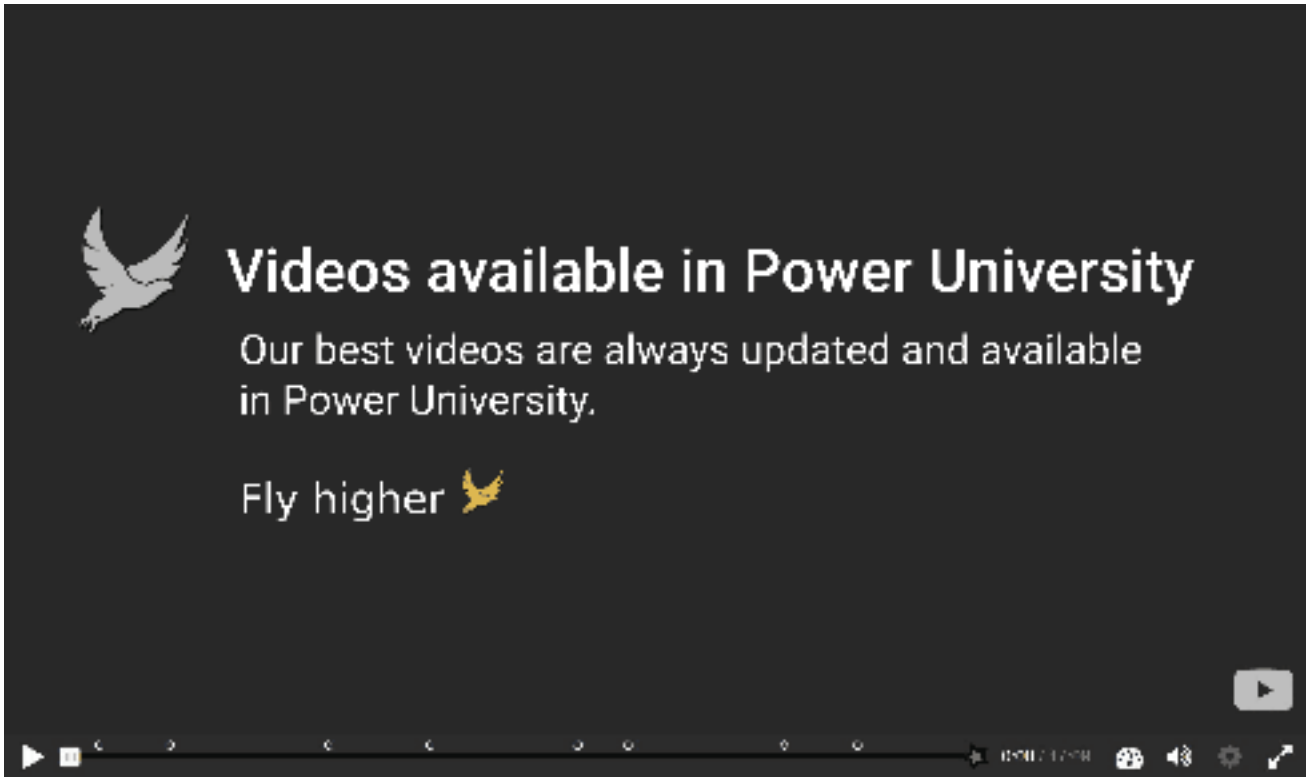
And even the "avoid overt bragging" general rule has its important exceptions.

As a matter of fact, advanced social strategists use bragging as a fantastic tool to display enviable personal qualities.

And a well-timed, in-your-face, blunt brag, is a total (good) power move.

Example: 50 Cent Effective Brag

Imagine this example:



> **Interviewer**: why did you buy Tyson's mansion
> **50 Cent**: I don't know if you've noticed this, but I'm like, I'm like rich as a motherfucker

That's a perfect situation where a direct brag works great.

Why?

Think about it… What other reason can you have to buy a 5 million house with 18 bedrooms?

Is it because you "need" 18 bedrooms?
Because you enjoy getting lost in your home house?

No.
It's because you got too much money to throw around, of course.

To say anything else would come across as making up random reasons… Or excuses because you're too shy of calling it as it is.
So a direct brag there works great because it's high-power, straight, raw honesty.

When you get these types of questions where the only real answer is to "say it how it is", do so.
You get to display not only the quality you brag about, but also your intellectual honesty, your social power, and your confidence -and your humor, too-.

As a matter of fact, the real brag of an overt brag isn't even the brag itself -we knew 50 Cent is rich-.
The real value display of an overt brag is the power, confidence, and honesty it sub-communicates. Those matter even more -in our example, now we think of 50 Cent as a cool, straight guy-.

Do the same, and people will look up to you.

SUMMARY

Displaying your value is crucial to do well in life because many of your qualities or achievements aren't always readily visible (call them "opaque value" in our social exchange model).

However, to come outright and say them, or list your achievements, is the type of bragging that is associated with trying too hard -and often low-value-.

Luckily, the good social strategist can use different techniques of cover bragging to brag, without bragging.

Bragging and covert bragging are just two techniques of general self-promotion, and there are many more ways to effectively self-promote.

We go through the main strategies as well as mindsets in **Power University**.

Schwarzenegger Showdown: “I Don’t Stand By Your Rules”

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 May 2023 · Archived copy · Original

“I don’t stay with your rules”,

Said Schwarzenegger to the interviewer.

And that was the culumination of the mini power showdown.

Power showdowns happen when you stick to your preferred outcome or frame, and the people you’re dealing with do the same.

Then, the escalation continues until either one of you gives in, or until you negotiate an outcome.

In this article, we are going to review a real-life example of a mini power showdown.

Strongly and directly rejecting someone’s rules, demands, or questions is likely to kick off a power showdown

Contents

- INTRO
- Step 1: High-Investment Question Starts The Showdown
- Step 2: Arnold Challenged The Rule & Rejects The Task
- Step 3: The Interviewer Sticks To His Guns & Re-States The Rule
- Step 4: Arnold Refuses Compliance Once Again
- Step 5: Arnold CAN Think Of A Great 1-Word Answer & Goes For It
- Strategic Considerations

INTRO

Generally speaking:

It’s better not to give in after you start an escalation because power showdowns raise the stakes for both

"wins" and "losses".

Meaning that if you cave in after a showdown, you lose *big*.

The power showdown is all about who is higher power, so if you cave in, you almost officially sub-communicate that you're lower power than your opponent.
So your status semi-officially tanks, you lose respect both from your opponent and the audience, and you lose a lot of attraction from women.

You submitted, you "officially" tanks, attraction from women disappears, and you lose lots of respect.

Possible Outcomes Of Showdowns

Showdowns don't *necessarily* end up with a big winner and a big loser.

Instead, they can end up as:

- **Negotiative damage limitation**, when one or both parties concede something before the final resolution. This is where smart power protection and saving face also comes into play
- **Draw**, when both parties stick to their guns and nobody gives an inch, or when the negotiation is perfectly fair to both
- **Win-win**, when both parties come out of it better off. This is rarer, but it's exactly the case in this article's case study

For reference, this is the full video of our case study:

So let's learn more about power showdowns and smart negotiations:

Step 1: High-Investment Question Starts The Showdown

> **Interviewer**: in one word and one word only how did a small-town boy from Austria become one of the most famous people on earth

The interviewer poses the question in a way that disempowers Schwarzenegger.

Why is it disempowering to Arnold?

Well, think about it.
A question is already a task to provide a reply.

If you keep adding requirements, you set more rules for them to obey to.

The more constraints and complexities you add, the more disempowering the question becomes because you make answering more and more difficult, taxing, and demanding.
The more stringent those rules are, the more effort you are demanding the other person to expend for you.

Finally, when your constraints also sound "off" and "unnatural", it's even more disempowering because the frame is that you have so much power that you can come up with any random cr@p, and people still obey.

Result, you gain power, they lose it.

From a power dynamics point of view, these types of questions set a lot of hoops to jump through.

From a power point of view, it says "bend over backward to give an answer the exact way *I* want it".

Schwarzenegger is a power-aware and high-power man though, and he doesn't like that.

So instead of following the interviewer's lead, he challenges the question.

P.S.: The Disempowerment Started Even Before

Did you catch it?

The interviewer had already disempowered Arnold before he even popped the famous “one word only” question.

If you did, you’re rocking!
If not yet, then you may benefit a lot from our material to gain more status in life.

Because I bet a good chunk of why Arnold challenged the question is not so much because of the question itself, but what the interviewer did *before* that.

Learn More

We explain this all better in **Power University**, but for an overview:

1. **Social power dynamics**: a primer on the power dynamics of socialization
2. **The irrefutable laws of power**: the main laws of personal and social power

Step 2: Arnold Challenged The Rule & Rejects The Task

> **Arnold**: why do you want me to say in one word

Good move.

From a social strategist’s point of view, **it’s never good to try hard to comply when you’re not sure you can come up with a good answer because you expend a lot of effort, for uncertain and possibly mediocre output**.

That doesn’t make you look very smart and quick-witted because despite your great effort, you still under-deliver. It’s the opposite of what makes you look smart: to come up with great answer and get great results, with little investment (Sprezzatura, calls it Castiglione).

Of course smart critical thinkers know that doesn’t say much because it’s just one instance.
But very few people are smart critical thinkers. Plus, it’s simply human to rely on heuristics and, often, to jump to biased conclusions (Kahneman, 2011).
So you always lose points when you try hard, and fail.

Hence, the smart social strategist doesn’t try at all.

He either answers while ignoring the rule, or challenges the rule.

Better Alternative: Challente The Question, Without Challenging The Interviewer

By the way, there were many possible alternative solutions here.

A simple and more effective approach would have been to challenge the question, without challenging the interviewer.

For example:

> **Arnold**: “Only one word? Wow, that’s tough man. I think we’ll have to settle for a tad longer version”.

Then, start answering the way YOU want it to answer.

But since you answered more diplomatically, the interviewer was a lot less likely to re-state his rule once again -and if he did, he would look like an annoying dic*head-.

Learn More:

- Frame Control 101
- Frame Control Techniques

Or skip directly to **Power University** to internalize the skills of frame control.

Step 3: The Interviewer Sticks To His Guns & Re-States The Rule

> **Interviewer**: (looks up, thinking, then back to Arnold, wiggling his index finger) one word only, Arnold (looks sideways to pile up pressure, then smiles)

Interestingly enough, in the beginning, the interviewer was probably falling into Schwazznergger frame.

Such as, he may have been trying to provide reasons why "one word only" was a fair question.
That's one way to *justify* his request, which would re-empower Schwarzenegger.

Why would it re-empower Arnold?

Think about it:

Justifying your extra requests power-protects the receiver because good reasons also justify compliance. Such as, good "reasons why" limit the extent of your power because you're not making random rules, but are following a certain logic. And it makes their compliance less costly because there is now a reason why it makes sense to comply.

Plus, the simple act of justifying, even when the justification is not super logical, still re-empowers the receiver because you're expending effort and showing some consideration for them through your explanation.

However, the interviewer here does not justify.

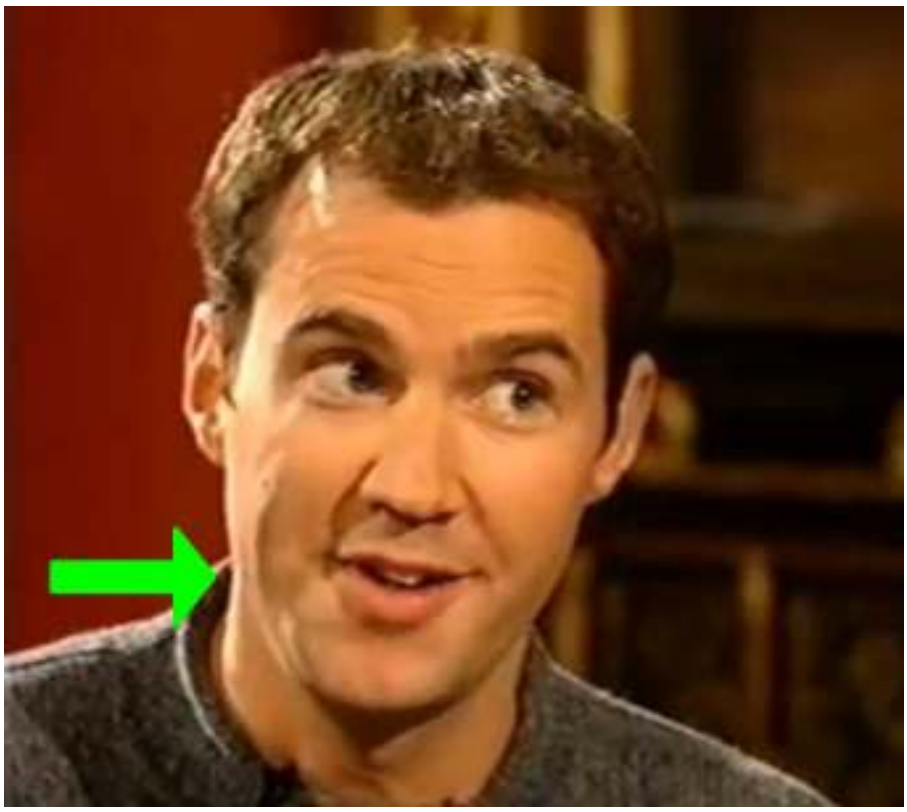
He probably remembered he was the interviewer and decides he sticks to his initial request, without any explanation.

And notice how he re-states his frame:

He wiggles his middle finger, he simply repeats the tasks (frame imposing), and looks sideways to pile up more social pressure.

However, the sideways look also takes some edge off because it frames it as a "friendly challenge".

PLUS, he adds smiles to take some edge off:



It was a smart choice to add a slight smile because otherwise, he would have been TOO confrontational.

The smile made it a bit less power-taking dominant, and a bit warmer.

The sub-communication is:

> "yes, I'm still tasking you again with the same exact rules and not budging, but I'm not tasking you in a rude manner, we're joking around and still friendly (just remember that I make the rules though)".

Step 4: Arnold Refuses Compliance Once Again

> **Arnold**: I don't stay with your rules

His reply now is a straight challenge to the interviewer's authority.

Arnold defends his power in a very high power and direct fashion.

However, something interesting happens right after:

Step 5: Arnold CAN Think Of A Great 1-Word Answer & Goes For It

> **Arnold**: Dream!

And that's also a great lesson learned for us all: pick your battles.

Don't escalate everything.

Whenever you can go for win-win, always go for it.

The interviewer got the reply he wanted, Schwarzenegger came out of it looking smart and inspiring, the interview turned into a classic, and they both came out of it better off.

Strategic Considerations

It's likely that Arnold was thinking exactly in the terms we expressed:

- Maintain power
- Provide a smart answer
- Challenge the rules if you can't come up with a great answer
- Obey the rules IF it's also good for you

Arnold is a typical alpha male, high power, *and* a very strategic operator.

No wonder he has become as successful as he has.

Is it possible you may also gain with those mindsets and skills?
If so, we equip thousands of happy and successful men with those mindsets, confidence, and skills in **Power University**.

100 Million Offers: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 June 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In *$100M Offers*, Alex Hormozi teaches readers the entrepreneurial skills of compelling offers. Specifically, Alex breaks down the steps to create valuable and unique offers, and how to market them.

TPM Note: Valid tactics, but remember the foundations (value & competence)
Foundations are the 80% that's taught in any book: real competence to sell, or genuine value behind your offer.
See TPM's entrepreneurial power model ↗

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Overview

- Pick a good market
- Provide a unique value offer, that solves all the customers' problems, adds real value, and price it very high
- Enhance it with guarantees, scarcity, bonuses, etc.

Notes

About the Author:
Alex Hormozi is an American entrepreneur who started in the health and fitness industry, helping gym owners scale their businesses. He then sold and took capital and lessons learned with him to launch his own incubator to help scale other e-learning businesses.
Alex is very active in many social media platforms, providing advice to a growing audience of business enthusiasts.

1. Focus On Skills Acquisition: It's A Game You Can Learn

> there is a difference between gambling in business and gambling in a casino. In a casino, the odds are stacked against you. With skill, you can improve them, but never beat them. In contrast, in business, you can improve your skills to shift the odds in your favor. Simply stated, with enough skill, you can become the house.

2. Pick A Good Market That Has These 4 Traits

Alex has four indicators to pick a good market:

1. **Massive Pain**, where people but not want but *need* or *desperately* need what he's offering
2. **Purchasing Power**, with people who can afford your costly product
3. **Easy to Target**, since you must always be able to reach your target audience to pitch them and sell to them
4. **Growing**, which is like having a tailwind pushing you in the right direction (or supporting you when you're struggling)

Alex says that the market is the most important element of success -more important than your offer or your sales and marketing skills (which both require most time and effort to learn).
Put in equation format:

Starving Crowd (market) > Offer Strength > Persuasion Skills

Serve A Niche Within The 3 Main Markets

The 3 main markets that will always exist because of the pain people when they're lacking in them are:

- Wealth
- Health
- Relationships

The goal is to find a smaller subgroup within one of those larger buckets that is growing, has the buying power, and is easy to target (the other three variables).

3. Start In A Proven Market (Leave Moonshots To Broke Dreamers)

This insight was truly fantastic.

There is an unspoken myth and search for glory in entrepreneurship of coming up with new things, exploring new territories, chasing huge "moonshots", and "disrupting" old industries (Thiel had already said the "disrupt frame" is poor).

Instead of seeking the moonshots in uncertain markets, in his podcast Alex recommends that you start as an entrepreneur in a market of proven interest and demand because it's more reliable, has better risk/reward, and gives you more realistic feedback.

The problem with untested markets is that they're shots in the dark, it has higher risks, and you never get to truly understand if the problem is the market, or if it's you.
Because while in a proven market you can get to learn and test your skills in a market you can trust to exist, you can learn more reliably.
If instead all you do is take random "moonshots", you never get reliable feedback on your skills -and on what you need to learn and focus on-.

Alex's goal is to make you money first, and if you want to make money choose a proven market.

4. Niche Down To Make Your Offer More Compelling (& Make More Money)

For 99.6 percent of readers below $10M per year, niching down will make you more money.

And it's also almost always easier to serve fewer clients more narrowly.

Product	Price
Time management	$19
Time management for sales professionals	$99
Time management for outbound B2B sales	$499
Time management for outbound B2B power tools & gardening sales rep	$1997

Says Alex:

> You want to be 'the guy' who services 'this type of person' or solves 'this type of problem.' And even more niched 'I solve this type of problem for this specific type of person in this unique counter-intuitive way that reverses their deepest fear."

5. The Grand Slam Offer: What Is It

The definition of a grand slam offer is:

> It's an offer you present to the marketplace that cannot be compared to any other product or service available, combining an attractive promotion, an unmatchable value proposition, a premium price, and an unbeatable guarantee with a money model (payment terms) that allows you to get paid to get new customers . . . forever removing the cash constraint on business growth.

The key is to position your product as in a category of its own.
That way you compete on *value*, rather than on price.

When the prospect cannot compare your value offer with anything else, *you* make the price.

Competing on value is the only way to make lots of money because price competitions are races to the bottom that eat all your margin away and leave you barely surviving.

To compete on value **make your offer so different that you never have to explain why your product is different**.

Example of Grand Slam Offer

This was Alex's Gym Launch offer:

> Pay one time. (No recurring fee. No retainer.) Just cover ad spend. I'll generate leads and work your leads for you. And only pay me if people show up. And I'll guarantee you get 20 people in your first month, or you get your next month free. I'll also provide all the best practices from the other businesses like yours.

With that type of offer you save on advertising because more people take you up on it, you close more leads, and you can charge more.

The Only 3 Ways To Grow

At a high-level, there are only 3 ways to grow:

1. Get more customers
2. Increase their average purchase value
3. Get them to buy more times

In his podcast, Alex says that most people focus on #1, getting more customers, while often reducing churn rate to increase lifetime value, or making a great product that increases word of mouth is by far the most effective.

The Grand Slam offer helps with all three of them.

6. The Value Equation For Your Grand Slam Offer

> Dream outcome x odds of achievement / time delay x effort = value

To make your offer as compelling as possible, you want to:

- Increase the top 2 parts of the equation
  - **Dream outcome**, what they need, wish, or want. It's the gap between their current reality and their dreams (ie.: how much will I make)
  - **Perceived likelihood of achievement** (ie.: how will I know it's going to happen)
- Decrease the bottom 2 part of the equation
  - **Time delay** (ie.: how long will it take)
  - **Effort & sacrifice** (ie.: what is expected of me?)

Alex says that most people, and him as well in his beginnings, focus on the top 2 with tools such as social proof, third-party edification, etc.
However, it tends to be a shortcut since it's easier, and it's lazier (and often more based on words and claims). Beginner markets also fall for the trap of inflating and exaggerating their claims, and that tends to make the message *less* persuasive.

But remember that as Machiavelli said, it's about *perceptions*, not always reality.

Focus On The Deeper Desire That Your Proposition Addresses

People all generally want the same things, such as to be:

- Respected
- Loved
- Perceveid as beautiful
- Perceived as powerful
- Increase their status…

However, those are only conduit desires to deeper goals.

For example, men don't really want money as in "pieces of paper", they want money for the status it gives them, says Alex (or for the freedom, sense power, purchase power of their dream toys, or better dating, I'd add).

So what they value most is not so much the conduit, but the deeper goal -ie.: their status-.

PRO Tip: Frame benefits in terms of status gained from the viewpoint of others

If the final goal is status, you can go one level beyond simply selling status.

You can instead show the status they most deeply want *already from the point of view of someone else*.

Example:

> If you buy these shoes, your speed will increase by 4km/h. Your running buddies' jaws will drop when they see you leaving them behind . . . they'll ask you what's changed . . . only you will know.

7. The 5 Steps For Grand Slam Offers

Now let's finally get down to how to prepare your grand slam offer people feel stupid saying no to:

Step #1: Identify Dream Outcome

In Alex's case, it was switching from selling gym memberships to *outcomes*.

In his words, he was selling the *vacation*, not the plane ride to get there.

So for Alex it was:

- Lose 20lbs in 6 weeks.
- Big dream outcome – lose 20lbs.
- With a decreased time delay – 6 weeks.

Step #2: List Problems

Write down all the things people struggle with and their limiting thoughts around them.

Says Alex:

> Think about it in insane detail. If you do, you will create a more valuable and compelling offer as you'll continually be answering people's next problem as it manifests..

In Alex's weight loss case, the problems are:

1. Buying healthy food, grocery shopping
   - Buying healthy food is hard, confusing, and I won't like it
   - Buying healthy food will take too much time
   - Buying healthy food is expensive
   - I will not be able to cook healthy food forever. My family's needs will get in my way. If I travel I won't know what to get.
2. Cooking healthy food
   - Cooking healthy food is hard and confusing. I won't like it, and I will suck at it.
   - Cooking healthy food will take too much time
   - Cooking healthy food is expensive. It's not worth it.
   - I will not be able to buy healthy food forever. My family's needs will get in my way. If I travel I won't know how to cook healthy.
3. Eating healthy food
4. Exercise regularly
5. …

List Problems As Part Of The Value Equation

You listed out each core thing that someone has to do.

Now, think of all the reasons they *wouldn't* be able to do it, or keep doing it -or whatever they're afraid of that may get in the way-.
Use the four value drivers as a guide.

So, each of the above problems has four negative elements that align with the four value drivers.
Such as:

- Dream Outcome→ This will not be financially worth it
- Likelihood of Achievement→ It won't work for me specifically. I won't be able to stick with it. External factors will get in my way. (This is the most unique and service-specific of the problem buckets).
- Effort & Sacrifice→ This will be too hard, confusing. I won't like it. I will suck at it.
- Time→ This will take too much time to do. I am too busy to do this. It will take too long to work. It won't be convenient for me.

Step #3: Solutions List

There are two parts in crafting solutions:

1. **Transform problems into solutions**: starting with "how to" is the simplest way for beginners to turn problems into solutions. For example, in the weight loss space the problems related to "buying healthy food, grocery shopping" turn into:
   - . . . is hard, confusing, I won't like it. I will suck at it→ How to make buying healthy food easy and enjoyable, so that anyone can do it (especially busy moms!)
   - . . . takes too much time→ How to buy healthy food quickly
   - . . . is expensive→ How to buy healthy food for less than your current grocery bill
   - . . . is unsustainable→ How to make buying healthy food take less effort than buying unhealthy food
   - . . . is not my priority. My family's needs will get in my way→ How to buy healthy food for you and your family at the same time
   - . . . is undoable if I travel; I won't know what to get→ How to get healthy food when traveling
2. **Name your solutions**: make your name

Alex reminds us that **it's important you solve every problem**.
Solving all problems is part of making an offer that they can't refuse.

Step #4 Create Your Solutions Delivery Vehicles ("The How")

This is what you're going to deliver.

It's the product, the meat of your offer, and you must make it *good*.

To begin with, **think about *all* the things you could do to solve each of the problems you've identified**.

In Alex's original example of weight loss, some solutions to buying healthy food if he wanted to deliver the service 1:1 would be:

- In-person grocery shopping, where I take clients to the store and teach them how to shop
- Personalized grocery list, where I teach them how to make their list
- Full-service shopping, where I buy their food for them. We're talking 100 percent done for them.
- In-person orientation (not at the store), where I teach them what to get
- Text support while shopping, where I help them if they get stuck
- Phone call while grocery shopping, where I plan to call when they go shopping to provide direction and support

You then need to start fleshing out your solutions to later see what makes the most sense and what's the easiest and most profitable to deliver.
Alex proposes these questions

- What level of personal attention do I want to provide? one-on-one, small group, one to many
- What level of effort is expected from them? Do it themselves (DIY) – figure out how to do it on their own; do it with them (DWY) – you teach them how to do it; done for them (DFY) – you do it for them
- If doing something live, what environment or medium do I want to deliver it in? In-person, phone support, email support, text support, Zoom support, chat support
- If doing a recording, how do I want them to consume it? Audio, video, or written.
- How quickly do we want to reply? On what days? during what hours? 24/7. 9-5, within 5 minutes, within an hour, within 24 hrs?
- 10x to 1/10th test. If my customers paid me 10x my price (or $100,000) what would I provide? If they paid me 1/10th the price and I had to make my product more valuable than it already is, how would I do that? How could I still make them successful for 1/10th price? Stretch your mind in either direction and you'll come up with widely different solutions.

Step #5a: Trim & Stack

Now you want to:

1. Look at the cost of providing these solutions to you (the business)
2. Remove the ones that are high cost and low value first
3. Remove low-cost, low-value solutions
4. Keep the ones that are:
    - low cost, high value
    - high cost, high value

If you aren't sure what's high value, then think of each solution through the lenses of the value equation and ask yourself what your prospect financially values, causes him to believe he will be likely to succeed, make him feel like he can do it with much less effort and sacrifice, and help him accomplish his goal and see the result he wants with far less time investment.

Step #5b: Put all the bundles together into the ultimate high-value deliverable

Let's now put everything together.

Let's review the offer for the example of "losing weight", presented with this format: Problem → Solution Wording→ Sexier Name for Bundle → delivery vehicle (what we're actually gonna do for them/provide)

Buying food→ How anyone can buy food fast, easy, cheaply → Foolproof Bargain Grocery System . . . that'll save hundreds of dollars per month on your food and take less time than your current shopping routine ($1,000 value for the money it'll save you from this point on in your life)

1-on-1 Nutrition Orientation where I explain how to use…

1. Recorded grocery tour
2. DIY Grocery Calculator
3. Each plan comes with it's own list for each week
4. Bargain grocery shopping training
5. Grocery Buddy System

6. Pre-made insta-cart grocery carts for delivery
7. And a check-in via text weekly.

Cooking→ Ready in 5min Busy Parent Cooking Guide . . . how anyone can eat healthy even if they have no time ($600 value from getting 200 hours per year back — that's four weeks of work!)

1-on-1 Nutrition Orientation where I explain how to use…

1. Meal Prep Instructions
2. DIY Meal Prep Calculator
3. Each plan comes with it's own meal prep instructions for each week
4. Meal prep buddy system
5. Healthy snacks in under 5min guide
6. A weekly post they make to tag me for feedback

Eating→ Personalized Lick Your Fingers Good Meal Plan . . . so good it'll be easier to follow than eating what you used to "cheat" with and cost less! ($500 value)

1-on-1 Nutrition Orientation where I explain how to use…

1. Personalized Meal Plan
2. 5min Morning shake guide
3. 5min Budget Lunches
4. 5min Budget Dinners
5. Family size meals
6. A daily picture of their meals
7. 1-on-1 feedback meeting to make adjustments to their plan (which is actually an upsell)

And then for the other problems:

Exercise→ Fat Burning Workouts Proven To Burn More Fat Than Doing It Alone . . . adjusted to your needs so you never go too fast, plateau, or risk injury ($699 value)

Traveling→ The Ultimate Tone Up While You Travel Eating & Workout Blueprint . . . for getting amazing workouts in with no equipment so you don't feel guilty enjoying yourself ($199 value)

How to actually stick with it→ The "Never Fall Off" Accountability System . . . the unbeatable system that works without your permission (it's even gotten people who hate coming to the gym to look forward to showing up) ($1000 value)

How To Be Social→ The 'Live It Up While Slimming Down" Eating Out System that will give you the freedom to eat out and live life without feeling like the "odd man out" ($349 value)

Total value: $4,351 (!) All for only $599.

Compare this offer now to a mediocre "gym membership".
This bundle does 3 things:

1. Solves all the perceived problems (not just some)
2. Gives you the conviction that what you're selling is one of a kind (very important)
3. Makes it impossible to compare or confuse your business or offering with the one down the street

In Sum:

- Step #1: We figured out our prospective client's dream outcome.
- Step #2: We listed out all the obstacles they're likely to encounter on their way (our opportunities for value).
- Step #3: We listed all those obstacles as solutions.
- Step #4: We figured out all the different ways we could deliver those solutions.
- Step #5a: We trimmed those ways down to only the things that were the highest value and lowest cost to us.
- Step #5b: Put all the bundles together into the ultimate high-value deliverable.

8. Enhancing The Offer: Bonuses, Urgency, Scarcity, Guarantees, and Naming

> The "perfect profit combination" is lots of demand, and very little supply, or perceived supply. The process of enhancing your core offer is designed to do both of these things: increase demand and decrease perceived supply so that you can sell the same products for more money than you otherwise could, and in higher volumes than you otherwise would (over a longer time horizon).

The chapters on enhancing the offers were a bit more well-known to me, both because these elements come from general psychology (Alex mentions Cialdini), and because it's what most other marketers also teach or sell.

Some great tips:

- Add up your bonuses to a total that's bigger than the price of your offer
- Pick catch names for the bonuses as well
- If you can rhyme or alliterate your offer, do it (but don't force it)
- Identify a client's biggest fears, pain, and perceived obstacles and reverse their fears into a guarantee

Magic Headline Formula

Element	Action
Magnet	Make A Magnetic Reason
Avatar	Announce The Avatar
Goal	Give Them A Goal
Interval	Indicate a Time Interval
Container	Complete with a Container Word

MORE WISDOM

- **Pick a market and stick to it**, so you can learn the ins and out (unless it's a dying market, of course. But most markets tend to be neutral, so prioritize your learning)
- **Sell a very limited supply of 1-on-1 access** such as direct message, email, phone, voice memo, Zoom etc. Create a very exclusive service level based on access to you (yes, unscalable), that you cap at a tiny number. Price it very high.
- **Never discount the offer** when trying to close a deal because it teaches people that your prices are negotiable. Instead, use bonuses.

QUOTES

On accepting reality and working with it:

> Crazy world we live in.
> And you can either sit there and make “complain” posts about how people “ought” to be a certain way. Or you can take advantage of the way people are and capitalize. This book is for those people who want to be victors, not victims of circumstances.

On being right or being rich:

> You can either be right or you can be rich. This book is for getting rich. If that bothers you, just put this down and go back to arguing against human nature. Hint: You’re not gonna change it.

CONS

$100M Offers is a fantastic book.
As a matter of fact, it’s THE most helpful and practical book I’ve ever read on entrepreneurship, so consider these some personal reflections and minor notes:

How truly applicable is the strategy of “charge crazy high prices”?

Says Alex:

> the goal isn’t just to be slightly above the market price — the goal is to be so much higher that a consumer thinks to themselves, “This is so much more expensive, there must be something entirely different going on here.”
> (…)
> The goal should be to charge as much money for your products or services as humanly possible. I’m talking heinous amounts of money.

Of course that sounds ideal and it’s well worth to ponder how one may achieve or at least try that.
On the other hand, I’m truly not sure how many businesses and products can go for that.

Also, markets and opportunities follow some basic tenets of game theory.
Meaning that if everyone is trying to charge exorbitant prices, the guy who comes in and undercuts them all with a good product may end up making a bomb of money for appealing to a huge untapped market, with little competition.

It’s untrue that competing on price is a necessarily losing strategy

The book seems to paint a picture where competing on price dooms you to failure (while charging very high prices makes you wealthy and everyone better off).

Yet, I can think of several uber-successful, huge businesses that *compete* and win on low price.

Ikea, for example, took the world by storm with offers so good people feel stupid saying no *because of their low prices*.
Walmart drove any other retailer on the brink of collapse by making prices *lower*, not higher -Walmart’s mission statement is to “save people money so they can live better” (ie.: the *opposite* of charging them exorbitant prices).

So, OK these businesses are *built* around low pricing, fair enough.

But then again, how about “middle of the road” mass producers that trump the high-end, super pricey offers?

Because I can also think of several examples of companies with average or slightly above-average products swallowing the super-expensive ones.
For example:

- **Cheap automaker FIAT owns Ferrari**
- **Volkswagen owns Lamborghini, Bugatti,** and recently even the “Ferrari” of two-wheels, Ducati

Shocker, I know.

And just to drive that point home, Volkswagen literally means “car of the people”, an homage to his mass penetration and cheap prices.

I can also think of several cases in FMCG where producers of cheaper products dominate the market.

For example, I like chocolate.
And top-end chocolatiers with expensive chocolate bars are only a tiny fraction of mass-market chocolate producers such as Nestle or Ferrero:

The chocolate quality of Ferrero mass-products is average at best, but Ferrero is a multi-billion company bigger than most producers of expensive chocolate

It’s also not necessarily true that commodity sellers struggle

When was the last time that anyone considered the following poor:

- Oil producers
- Tobacco companies
- Raw material miners such as Rio Tinto (one of Brazil’s biggest companies)

Many countries run on raw materials, which are commodities.
In some ways, banks also deal with what’s in many ways a commodity: money.

This is NOT to say "Alex is wrong", don't follow his strategy.

It's just that, as usual, I'd stay away from over-generalizations.

And I would stay away from over-applying general rules that to make money you must necessarily be unique, in a category of one, or charge "higher than anyone else".

There are more variables that go into pricing beyond "value"

There seems to be an assumption that value -and the value equation- is solely or mainly responsible for pricing.

It doesn't seem to be the case, though.

In Alex's own example of diet/exercise plan VS liposuction, the price, time, and skills to deliver the work *do* matter (also because those also happen to be entry barriers).

Anyone can write an ebook on dieting and exercising and many can help you with coaching.
But very few can perform the surgery for an effective liposuction.

You can bet that if in the future the liposuction can be done in 10 minutes, 10x better, and by a $100 robot that can do anything else, the price will *decrease abruptly* in spite the value *increases*.

Alex's equation is still super useful, but if we want to be thorough, then… Yes, it's not only value delivered, but your skills, effort, and costs of delivery do also impact pricing.

Sometimes oversells and some advice only works if you're already established

Of course, some advice only works for some people who already reached a certain level.

However, it can feel a bit salesy/sleazy/fake to pitch it as a silver bullet while addressing the whole audience.
For example, says Alex:

> If you don't hate money, sell a very limited supply of 1-on-1 access. (…) **But I promise you this** – if you want to immediately make a lot of money, create a very exclusive service level based on access to you (yes, unscalable), that you cap at a tiny number. Price it very high. (…) **You will make more money than you thought possible**.

How can anyone really promise that, knowing that most readers have no expertise to price at all, let alone to price very high?

The List of Reasons "Why More Expensive Is Good" Felt Like Unneeded Justifications

There is a section that provides reasons of "why pricing your product as high as possible is good for all".

Yes, of course, there are some advantages for all to price high.
But there are also some cons, and many reasons why a higher price can be better for the seller, than the buyer (duh! :).

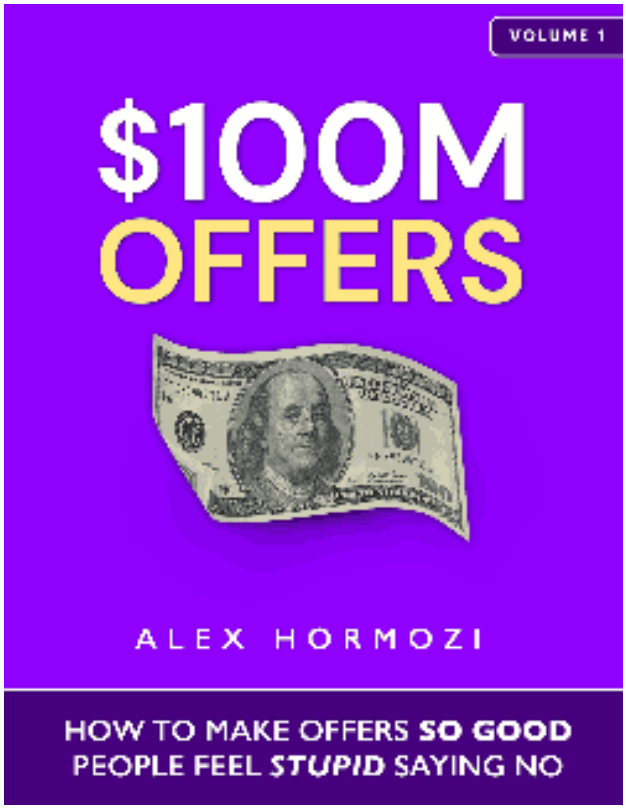
But if you provide enough value to justify your high price, that's fair!

So there was no need to list a whole bunch of reasons why high prices are good for the buyer.
It felt a bit like "preventive medicine" to avoid coming across as money-driven, and justifying one's fair goal of making big profits.
And like psychological reactance.

Overall though, since any smart reader knows that "as high prices as possible" aren't necessarily good for the buyer,

it also felt disingenuous -and taking up space-.

REVIEW



$100M Offers is one of the best books I've read on entrepreneurship and marketing.

More experienced pro-marketers who know Dan Kennedy -from which Hormozi learned a lot-, John Carlton or other direct-offer marketers may find the book less groundbreaking than I did.

However, Alex puts everything together and backs it up with lots of examples and personal experience, so that *$100M Offers* can be a valuable tool for anyone.

Furthermore, Alex outgrew pure direct marketing and started focusing more on business systems, brand, product quality, and word-of-mouth marketing. So when you put it all together, Alex's advice feels to more 'total package'.

See our review of Alex Hormozi here:

- **Alex Hormozi review**: the good, the bad, the ugly

> Is Alex Hormozi Legit? 5 Red Flags You Must Be Aware Of

Check the:

- **Best books** to read
- Best entrepreneurship books
- Or **get this book on Amazon**.

Should Beginners Start With Lucio's Power University?

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 June 2023 · Archived copy · Original

What if the social skills you're learning aren't getting you results?

Many spend years on basics like small talk that don't move the needle.

Power University's foundational skills can help you succeed faster in dating, work, and life.

Here's why:

Elite-level classes empower

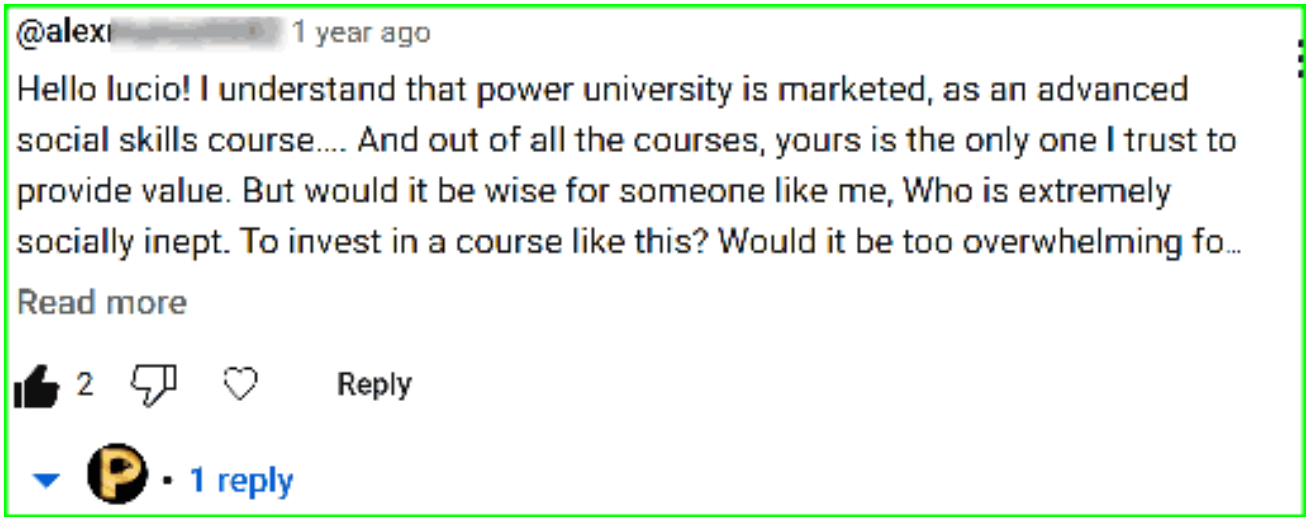
Contents

- Basics vs. Foundations
- 1. Foundations deliver results
  - ⍰ Example: basics VS foundational for dating results
- 2. PU teaches the foundations of social competence
  - 2.2. PU gives you a framework
- 3. Problem: most social skills resources AVOID the foundations
  - 3.2. Beginner skills leave you unprepared to win
- 4. You're already ready for advanced skills
  - ⍰ Example: PU alumnus skipped the basics
- 5. Foundations get results faster
  - 5.2. Outside-in approach works: advanced teaches basics
- 6. Advanced teachers provide you the role models
- Life Examples
  - ⍰ From autistic kid to socially successful millionaire
  - ⍰ Basics without power: no status, respect, or dates

- Are You Ready For PU?
- Should You Go For PU?

Basics vs. Foundations

Alex asked us:



> Is Power University good for me, as a socially inept person?
>
> *Question On YouTube*

I brainstormed this question with some PU's alumni.
And it became clear men like Alex need the *foundations*, not the basics:

- ***Basics*** (e.g., small talk, politeness) make you socially polished but don't win competitive situations like dating or career growth
- ***Foundations*** (e.g., strategies and power dynamics) help you achieve goals like status, respect, and handling toxic people.
- ***Advanced*** training takes the foundations to a higher level

1. Foundations deliver results

Some of the foundations we focus on include:

- Social exchanges and power dynamics ⍰ **Status & respect**
  - Sexual marketplace and mate value ⍰ **Competent dating**
- Power intelligence ⍰ **Win competitions**
  - Machiavellianism ⍰ **Effectively strategic**
- Self-defense ⍰ **Never be a sucker**
  - Manipulation / "dark psychology" ⍰ Win the advanced game

⍰ Example: basics VS foundational for dating results

PU alumnus Bel focused on the basics for career and meeting women, but the results were limited.
Learning to approach confidently—a PU foundation—worked faster.

Says Bel :

> **I used to focus on the "basics"** (ie making friends, being sociable, etc.) to meet a woman and have a career for financial independence – **but it didn't work.**
> (…)
> One can have a "good" relationship with a woman while unable to handle groups of people, and liking to be alone.
> Conversely, one can be the "life of the party", and be totally unattractive.
>
> *Bel*

He's right.
In our foundations, we focus on *results*, not *reactions*.

2. PU teaches the foundations of social competence

Many courses skip key skills like handling power dynamics or spotting manipulation.

PU fills this gap with practical foundations that get results.
Our approach is so unique that even the foundations seem 'advanced'.

As Bel continues:

> But then, they are not "basics" anymore. They are "practical, real-life tested and approved high-level advanced basics".
>
> *Bel*

100% right.

2.2. PU gives you a framework

The Cambridge Handbook says that frameworks organize knowledge.

And PU's frameworks make it easier to understand, internalize, and *apply* our foundations confidently and naturally.

Transitioned, a PU alumnus, says:

> (…) **PU is amazing for the quality of the framework** and the community.
>
> Most frameworks are rubbish.
> I had a lot of tricks and some social skills to start with.
>
> The problem was **without a framework it was hard to put the techniques in context and improve**.
>
> *Transitioned*

The framework we develop with Power University make everything easier and natural.

3. Problem: most social skills resources AVOID the foundations

Many social skills courses focus on politeness but skip essentials like respect, spotting manipulation or winning competitions.

For example, one course brags about avoiding 'mind games':

People School is NOT for you if:

⊘ **You want to learn how to manipulate people:** We teach you to be the best, most authentic version of yourself when you communicate, not how to play mind games with others. If you're here to learn how to "trick" people, you will be sorely disappointed.

> **People School salespage**: We teach you to be the best, most authentic version of yourself (…) not how to play mind games
>
> *People School salespage*

This approach *sounds* nice, but leaves you vulnerable to manipulators.
You should NOT be your most authentic with *everyone*.

Many of our alumni know that all too well.

Says Bel:

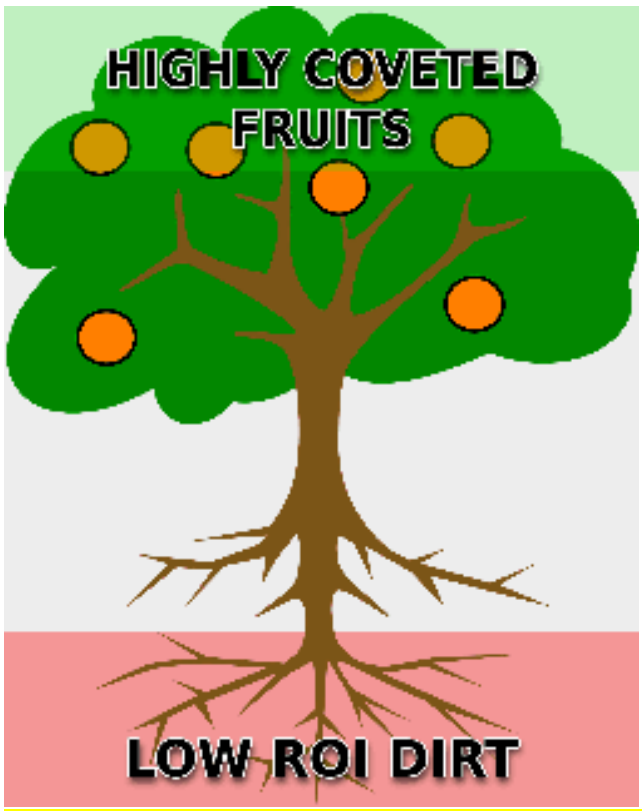
> The "basics" are mostly misrepresented.
> (…)
> "Go and introduce yourself". Or "always be polite". Or "compliment a woman to make her like you".
>
> But **those are not the basics. Those are twisted, useless, counteproductive simplifications of politically-correct visions of reality that do not exist**.
>
> Nobody – with few exceptions – is going to tell you the pure, unadulterated truth of what works.
>
> *Bel*

100% right.
And it's the reason why I started TPM.

Read more on 'naive self-help':

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Popular But False Self-Help Myths

3.2. Beginner skills leave you unprepared to win



The basics provide no competitive advantage, leaving you on the ground floor. The fruits are all at the top

Most of what you want, *others* also want.

That means that achieving anything worthwhile in life requires outsmarting the competition.

And to win in competitive environments, you need an edge.

4. You’re already ready for advanced skills

Fortunately, you don’t need the basics to learn the foundations.

How do I know that?

I was never “great” at many of the basics.
I’m *still* not.

For example:

- I don’t enter groups graciously, BUT…
  - My attitude sub-communicates “I’m not the type of guy you ignore”, and guess what… Most of the time I get the attention I wanted

- I don’t always have smooth date conversations, BUT…

  - I have the presence to hold silence and display value *without saying anything*.

- I never have perfect assertiveness, BUT…
  - I speak with enough power and conviction that people understand I'm not a pushover

My lack of basics hasn't stopped me from reaching the more advanced and "juicier" goals I wanted to reach.

Including:

- **Career advancement** (I purchased my dream location flat *before* TPM)
- **Dating more and better** (I reached my dating goals)
- **Making great friends** (I don't need anymore and can make new anywhere I go)
- **Being the "natural leader" in relationships** (with my exes devoted to me)
- Etc., etc.

My starting level wasn't "totally inept".
But what was true for me is true for many many other guys.

⍰ Example: PU alumnus skipped the basics

Most people are not at zero and have enough of the basics.

Says Mats:

> Most **people who see themselves as socially incompetent (including me in the past) fail to realize just how much they already know**.
>
> If you think about socializing like a game, all you need in order to play and get better is to understand the rules (…) even if you don't know even the most basic strategies.
>
> (…) t**he basic rules are quite simple:** treat people poorly and they won't like you, treat them well and they will like you. **As long as you understand this you know more than enough to improve**
>
> *Mats*

I agree.
Chances are, you're better off starting with the *foundations*.

5. Foundations get results faster

Time spent on basics like small talk is time away from learning foundations that deliver status and respect.

PU's advanced skills also improve your basics—like confident speaking—faster.

For example, instead of:

- ✕ Ask 'captivating' questions <— Low power entertainer
  ✓ Learn how to ask with confidence <— Man who commands attention

- ✕ Learn to never run out of things to say <— Low power entertainer
  ✓ Learn frame control <— Leader who earns status and respect

DGX37, a PU alumnus, says about his supposed lack of basics:

> (…) and yet by walking confidently, moving without a doubt (…) rejecting bad frames (…) quickly changed to "seems we don't need to look after you after all" and **one person even came to me saying "I'm shocked at**

> **how confident you are."**
>
> So that convinces me that **you may have low confidence and social skills but if you act powerfully people will see you as socially skilled and confident**.
>
> *DGX37*

I agree.
Acting high power is a *foundational* skill.

5.2. Outside-in approach works: advanced teaches basics

PU's approach improves your basics without even focusing on them because power skills include social skills.
Power skills are the high-agency form of social skills.

For example:

- Learn how to persuade and negotiate (⍰ advanced)
  - ➡ Also learn how to maintain a conversation (⍰ basic)

- Make women attracted (⍰ advanced)
  - ➡ Also engage with women without being weird (⍰ basic)

Indeed, says Bel:

> **I was able to get some of the "basics"** (eg thanking back, responding to emotional bids) **only after learning some "power self-defense" and "reading people".**
>
> *Bel*

Mats also shared that advanced material keeps you more engaged. It provides further motivation to stick through, and apply the material.

6. Advanced teachers provide you the role models

Basic courses often lack skilled teachers, limiting your progress.

Says Ali, a PU alumnus and self-development author:

> (…) As a beginner with no advanced knowledge, **some of the people one would be interacting with would also be beginners with no advanced knowledge**. And that makes it difficult to know if you're doing something right because **their feedback can often be inaccurate**. (It's a case of the blind leading the blind.)
>
> *Ali*

He's right.
Good role models teach even when they aren't teaching.

As Transitioned adds:

> For me **people learn by imitation**. So for me it wasn't about basics and advanced but more about gaps and calibration.
>
> *Transitioned*

Beginner teachers are blinds leading the blinds

Life Examples

We saw many examples from our alumni.

But there are several examples we can point out outside of TPM as well.

Some of them:

⍰ From autistic kid to socially successful millionaire

Neil Strauss says that RSD-Tyler started in pick-up as an autistic kid who couldn't look others in the eyes.

He's still not super smooth, but he enjoyed dating and business success.

Starting from the basics would have taken him years, and chances are that he would have never excelled at those basics anyway.

⍰ Basics without power: no status, respect, or dates

What happens when you have the basics, without foundational power:

> **Charlie**: Jack, you're a naturally charismatic man, congratulations!
> **Jack**: (complains he can't get a girl and is the lowest status man in the room)

Skills that give you no status, respect, or dates are useless.

Are You Ready For PU?

Here are quick litmus tests for you:

- **Can you handle basic tasks, like talking to customer service?**

If yes, you likely have enough basics.

- **Have you made or kept friends?**

If yes, that's a sign you're ready.
Girls aren't part of the assessment because the first dating steps are more about confidence than skills.

- **Can you follow our advanced articles?**

If yes, you're set to master PU's framework.
Even if some passages are challenging, PU's step-by-step approach makes learning easy.

Should You Go For PU?

You'll decide what's best.

But for most, foundational skills are the fastest path to status, respect, and confidence.

Says a public review:

> **M**: Power University is by far the best investment I have made.
> It has changed my life and my relationships, not only with strangers, friends, and colleagues, but even my family members are treating me with more respect now.
> At 31, I am finally able to pave the way for the life I dreamt of as a child, and PU has played an instrumental role (…) it's the internalization and the application process that make the difference (…) to those who apply themselves. For those who are contemplating joining PU, let me tell you: it's worth 10 times the price for the value it provides no book or platform can

Ready to explore?

- **Learn more about Power University**
  - Power University reviews
- PU results measured by our surveys

How to Be An Alpha Male In 10 Simple Steps

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 June 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Want to master the traits of high-status, successful men?

In popular culture, the term 'alpha male' refers to men who rise to the top of social hierarchies—men who command respect, influence others, and achieve success in competitive environments.

While the term itself is not a formal scientific category, research on **status hierarchies, dominance, leadership, and social power** provides strong evidence on the traits and behaviors that help individuals rise in rank.

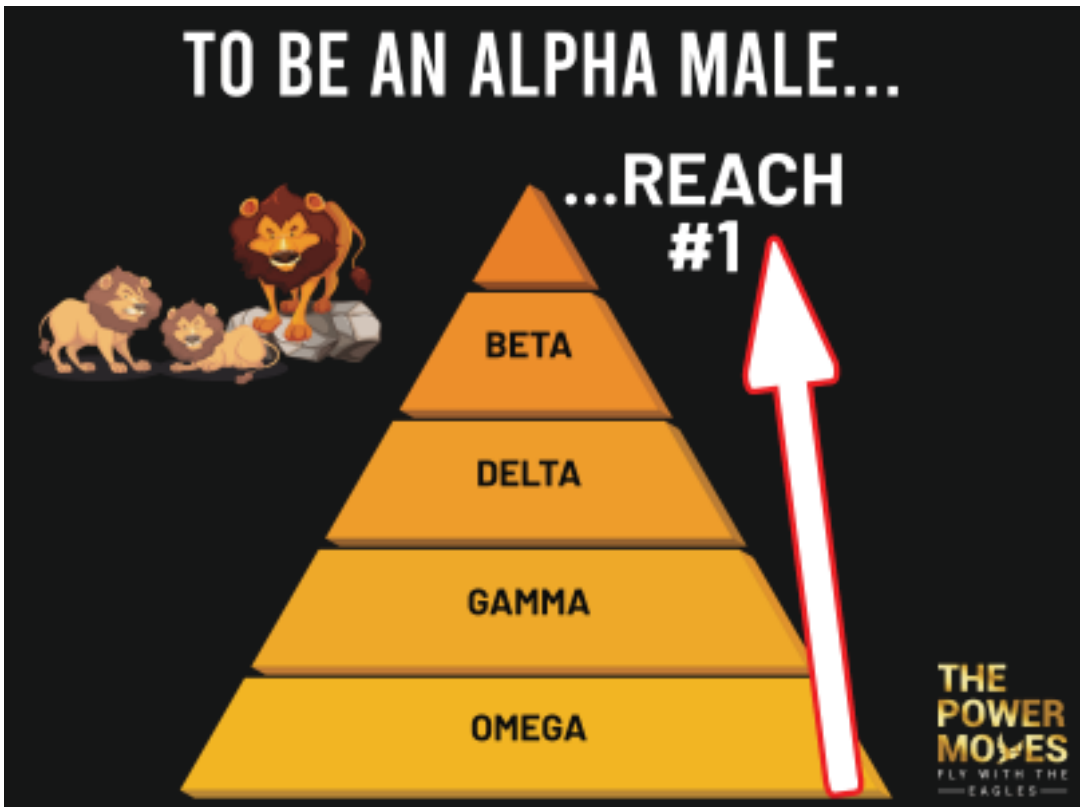
This guide translates those insights into practical steps to help you build status, develop powerful traits, become more masculine, and climb hierarchies more effectively.

Let's start:

Contents

- 1. Gain Status
- 2. Be Ambitious: Seek Status & Success
- 3. Ditch Low Power Behavior
  - 3.2. Ditch Submissiveness & Passivity
  - 3.3… Ditch Low-Power Body Language
  - 3.4. Quit Subordinating Your Life to a Relationship
- 4. Behave High-Power
  - 4.2. Adopt High-Power Body Language
  - 4.4. Wear The Pants
- 5. Ditch Low-Power Mindsets
  - 5.2. Avoid Being An "Eternal Student"
  - 5.3. Cut Out Motivational Talk. Motivation Is For Betas
- 6. Think High Power
  - 6.2 Adopt The Alpha Male Traits
- 7. Be More Machiavellian
  - 8. Avoid Anything Overly Feminine
  - 8.2. Avoid Feminine Body Language
  - 8.3. Careful Breaking "Traditional Roles" Conventions
- 9. Be More Masculine
  - 9.2. Look More Masculine
  - 9.3 Get Bigger & Deeper
- 10. Become A Master At Your Craft
- Bonus: Become Prestigious
- FAQs

1. Gain Status



The standard definition of alpha male is:

The alpha male is the individual at the top of a power hierarchy.
And the alpha male *type* instead is the type of man who is most likely to climb hierarchies.

All other traits we list serve to facilitate the climb and acquire more status and power.

So now the question becomes:

How do you climb hierarchies to acquire status and power?

Some "rules" for gaining power are group-dependent.
But many of the most important ones are the same everywhere.

In **Power University** we go deeper with a proven system to climb upward in life.
But to get you started:

2. Be Ambitious: *Seek* Status & Success

The #1 trait to help you become an alpha male is drive.

Drive is the only necessary trait to become an alpha male because you can make up for any other trait you don't have.
But **if you are not driven to climb and advance in life… Then nobody else will do it for you**.

Drive is also necessary because it provides the fire and motivation to find a way.
Tony Robbins has a point when he says that it's not resources that are most important, but *resourcefulness*.

That's why one can be short and unattractive and still become an alpha male. If he's extremely driven, chances are he *will* find a way.

As an example of a short man who became an alpha male:

> **Berlusconi**: (turns around, and physically moves the taller guy to a corner)

3. Ditch Low Power Behavior

Low power behavior is the antithesis of becoming an alpha male.

And before we can think of *adding* high-power behavior, we must focus on *purging* low-power one.

Frankly, there are a million ways to act low power.
Plus, much of our behavior *follows* our mindsets, subconscious beliefs, and feelings.

We dig deeper in Power University, but to give you an idea:

- **Don't allow others to cross your boundaries**, including:
  - Invading your personal space
  - Touching you or your belongings
- **Avoid suffering or stewing in silence** when you feel disrespected (passive communication style)
- **Never be a passive victim of disempowering behavior**. Instead, always push back, including:
  - People making fun of you, including teasing
  - People undermining you or your leadership
- Avoid getting revenge in indirect ways (passive-aggressive, comes across as sneaky)

But also:

- **Fawning over attractive women**
- **Lusting after things** because high-power people either have them, or plan and act to acquire them
- **Idolizing other men** because you can't become an alpha male if you think others are so much above you

3.2. Ditch Submissiveness & Passivity

There are times when deferring is appropriate.

However, generally speaking, **you cannot be an alpha male if you're too submissive**.

To get you started with some real-life examples:

- **Verbal submissiveness** signals to avoid
- **Social submissiveness** to avoid
- **Passive communication** you better quit

And of course, never forget social power dynamics:

People test and attack you as part of the natural status negotiation.
And the general rule of that status negotiation is:

The more you let others one-up you and disempower you, the more status you lose. *And the more you stay stuck at the bottom*.
Conversely, the better you defend and counter-attack, the more status and respect you acquire.

But if you turn it around… You win.

3.3... Ditch Low-Power Body Language

Including:

- Hunched over
- Making yourself smaller

- Too high energy
- …

Also, be mindful of the little details.
Because, often, **it's in the smallest details that you sub-communicate masculine power or low-power tentativeness**.

Example:

The mask when most Western countries ditched it looks overly cautious. The grip on the mic is also "too delicate"
And no, aggressive-looking big guns won't help you if you hold them like a girl…

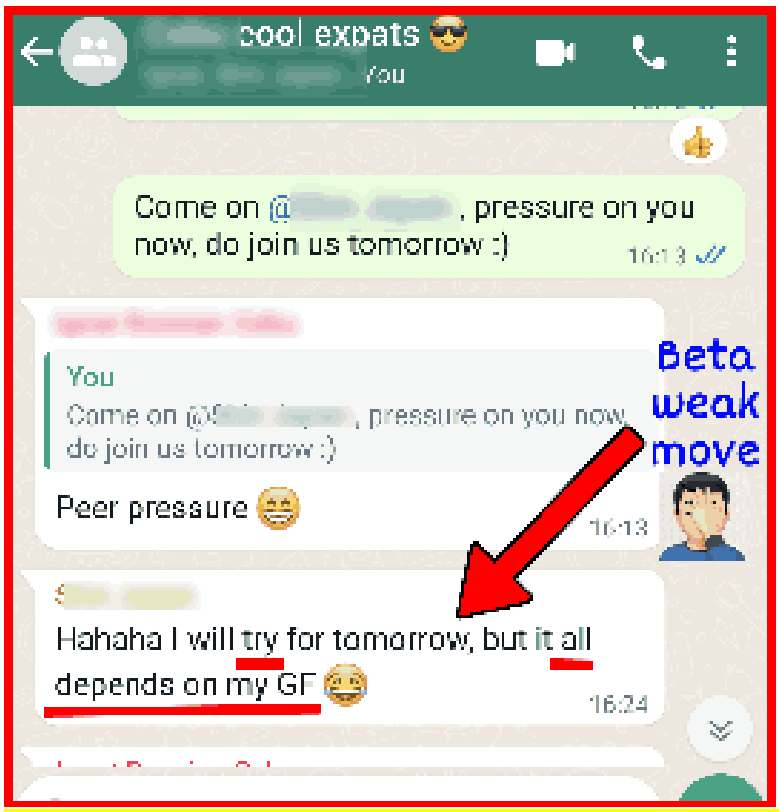
3.4. Quit Subordinating Your Life to a Relationship

#real talk:

Nothing says "beta" like a man whose life and decisions revolve around his wife.

Alpha males take full charge of their lives.
And **you cannot earn alpha male respect and status if your partner controls you**.

He lost his friends' respect with this:



Our common friend said to me in person that "it all depends on my GF" was "so cringe". I couldn't help but agree. Never subordinate your decisions to your partner.

4. Behave High-Power

Simple rule to become an alpha male:

To become an alpha male, *act* like an alpha male.

Here are some articles to get you started on high-power behavior:

- **Leadership**, a fundamental skill for alpha males, including in dating
- **How to act high-power**
- **How to talk high power**

Physicality always matters, but don't forget verbal skills.
Says Storr:

> As humans evolved, **our game of status also evolved from mostly physical, to mostly verbal and sub-communication**.
>
> *Storr, The Status Game*

So assertiveness and solid frame control are crucial.

4.2. Adopt High-Power Body Language

Trump faces the audience, snubs her, and has open body language and gesticulation. She rotates towards him, looks at him, and has a “hands up” gesture that mimics a powerless, “please” attitude

Alpha males tend to move and act:

- **With high social ROI**, meaning that they invest little and get a lot in return
- **Lower energy**, albeit it’s certainly possible to be alpha and high energy
- **Slow and deliberate**

Learn more at:

- **Alpha male body language**: older article, but timeless concepts
- Confident body language with newer and polished examples

Taking up space and spreading out is a popular and tested advice to sub-communicate comfort and confidence

Women Are Attracted To Socially Powerful Men

Men respect socially powerful men, and women find them attractive.

As one Power University student shares in the forum:

- after studying and applying PU, my partner has started to really be attracted to me at a primordial physical level, like she never was - and I as well to her;
- all the power moves from her are disappearing: she now tries to be more loving, more close, more helpful than ever;
- my "material giving" has been steadily reducing (unconsciously) all the while since I started PU, and now is basically almost zero;
- it has started to happen that other women whom I find attractive approach me (especially in stores) or show high interest, sometimes even when my partner is present. And she has noted it as well.

> **After studying PU my partner has started to really be attracted to me at a primordial level**, *like she never was -and I as well to her*
> *(…)*
> *All the power moves from her are disappearing,* **she now tries to be more loving, closer, more helpful than ever**

> *(…)*
> **Other women whom I find attractive approach me** *or show high interest, sometimes even when my partner is present*
>
> *Power University alumnus in TPM's forum*

4.4. Wear The Pants

Wearing the pants in the house is both the minimum entry level AND enough to be an alpha male.
Your home is your castle. And doesn't matter how dilapidated that castle may be, if you're king there, you're good (enough) to be an alpha.

Meaning:

You could work a dead-end minimum wage job and drink beer every evening and *still* be an alpha male *as long as you wear the pants in the house*.

But please get the right mindset and stay away from much of the current toxic advice.

We advocate for being benevolent, value-adding relationship leaders here by *earning* that respect.
(Which is also a lot better *for you*, by the way).

5. Ditch Low-Power Mindsets

The mind is the backbone of the alpha male type.

And the mind is foundational because **thoughts precede behavior**, **govern unconscious body language, and control instinctual responses**.

Some possible foundational issues include:

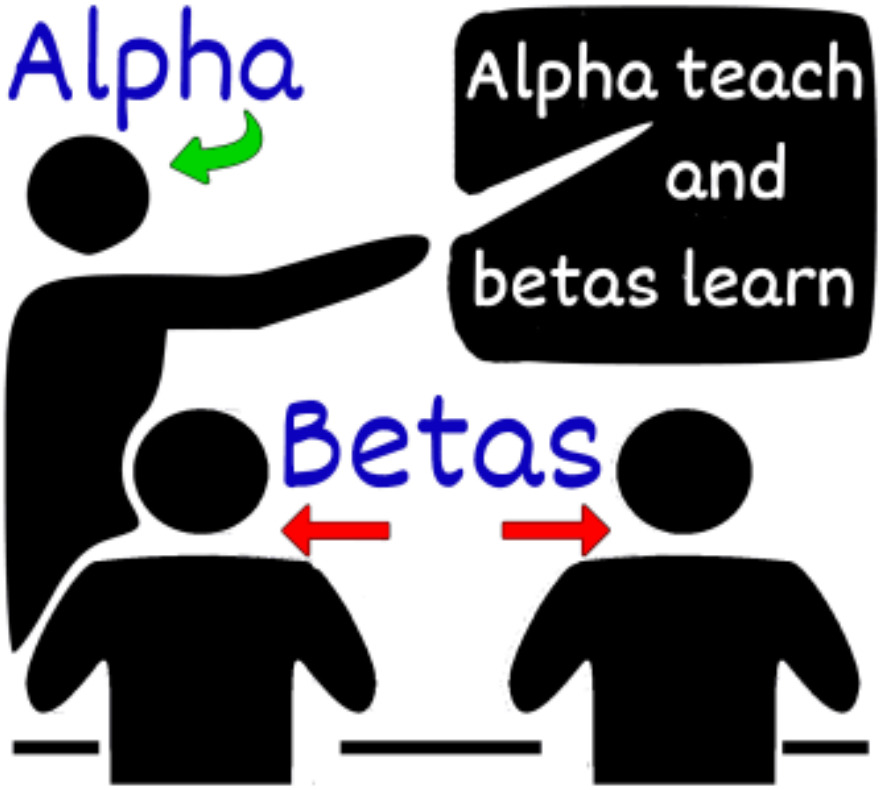
- **Excessive self-doubt**
- **Self-loathing**
- **Low self-esteem**
- **Self-debasement in favor others**
  - Pedestalizing others, which is willing subordination
  - Fandom

5.2. Avoid Being An "Eternal Student"

Of course you must learn.

However, **avoid being a low-power learner and an eternal student**.

Again, this is about mindsets.
Alpha males see themselves as learning on the way to being top dog alphas, not eternal students.



The teacher is intrinsically higher status. And narcissistic teachers "power scalp" on that. They disempower power-blind students who are only becoming bigger betas

Read more at:

- When an extreme "learner mindset" disempowers you
- Guru-disciple disempowering frames

5.3. Cut Out Motivational Talk. Motivation Is For Betas

It's about foundational alpha male psychology:

Alpha males don't need motivational talk because they're intrinsically motivated.

And albeit they won't say it, here's a little golden nugget for you:

Many alpha males look down on men who consume motivational content.
To alpha males, they're mentally weak time wasters.

So here's a more alpha-type mindset for you:

You want whatever your actions get you.
If you're not putting in the work to achieve X, you don't really want it.

So instead of "motivating yourself", embrace whatever you do.
And if that means drinking beer while watching a match, great.

5.3.2 Reject All Disempowering Motivation

No alpha male signs up to being talked down to and framed like a soft p*nsy

The worst motivation talks down on you and frames you as an unmotivated pansy (see David Goggins and Dan Pena style).

Motivation is already a covert power move.
And disempowering motivation is a red-level power move.

Just think about it:

Who can accept someone who talks down on him and frames him as a spineless man?
Only a spineless man can accept that “motivation”.
And those are NOT alpha males.

6. Think High Power

The healthiest and most mentally resilient alpha males accept themselves, love themselves in spite of everything, and believe in themselves

The conundrum of the mental aspects of becoming an alpha male is:

Self-esteem is more foundational, but confidence is comparatively more important to becoming an alpha male.

Confidence is more important because confidence *shows* more than self-esteem.
But self-esteem is more resilient and crucial for mental health.
So, we recommend starting from self-esteem.

Some of the psychological foundations to become an alpha male include:

- **Basic self-esteem**: "I am worthy and feel good about myself"
  - Comparative self-esteem: "I am as worthy as anyone else"
- **Entitlement**: "I *deserve* power"
  - Positive entitlement: "I deserve power because I can add lots of value"
- **Confidence**: "I *am* capable and high-value and *can* acquire status"
  - Antifragile confidence: "I *can* become capable in at least some domain if I apply myself"

To do well in life, above-average levels of empowered thinking are enough.

But to reach the top, you need more.

Rather than simply avoiding an inferiority complex, many **high-achieving alpha males have a *superiority* complex**.
And that is especially true for "underdog" type of alpha males.

It's simple logic: extraordinary achievement requires extraordinary character.
This is why the dark triad is over-represented at the top: they're more extreme.
And this is where we step, empowering good men to win that game.

On self-esteem, see:

See this for confidence.
Or get our full Confidence University.

6.2 Adopt The Alpha Male Traits

Common alpha male traits include:

- **Risk appetite**
- **High demands** and expectations
- **Courage**, to do what needs to be done
- **Competitiveness** and "drive to win"
- **Goal-orientation** and mission-focus
- **Emotional steadfastness**
- **Emotional self-reliance**, based on solid self-esteem. People and events don't dictate how the alpha male feels about himself
- **Goals & process over feelings**
  - "F*ck happiness", alpha males focus on achieving
- **Pride**, in yourself, your work, what you stand for
- **Decisiveness and bias for action**
- **Focus on what's possible**

Of course, mind the law of balance.
Any good trait *can* be taken to a self-defeating extreme.
For example, extreme risk appetite turns into ineffective recklessness.

7. Be More Machiavellian

As a rule of thumb:

Social strategists beat strongmen in the race to the alpha male role.

If that's true in chimps, it's even truer for us humans (Ridley, 1993).

We're all about smart strategizing here.
Some of our articles include:

- How to be more Machiavellian

And well, by now you probably know that we get a lot deeper on that in Power University.

8. Avoid Anything Overly Feminine

What's 'overly feminine' in part stems from biological differences, but it's largely interpreted and shaped by culture. The more masculine the culture, the stronger the demarcation lines.

This list refers to contermporary Western culture.

Basics:

- Pink color (
- Red hearts
- Effeminate body language

Intermediate:

- Endless “relationship talks”
- Gossiping
- Drama

Advanced:

- Emotional over-reaction
- Superstitions (horoscopes, woo-woo, law of attraction, etc)

8.2. Avoid Feminine Body Language

With the power moves he couldn’t defend against Trump and with this type of body language, Jeb Bush was not president material

It’s quite obvious that Jeb Bush’s expression above is not very “alpha”.

However, the more advanced level is in the details.

8.3. Careful Breaking “Traditional Roles” Conventions

This is where it gets trickier.

Dominant alpha male types tend to be more right-wing (Kleppesto et al., 2022).

These politically conservative alpha males consider traditionally female roles as feminine.

Albeit we always advise avoiding silly extremes, it’s good to keep in mind the “traditionally feminine” endeavors:

- Doing the cooking at home
- Taking care of the decor
- Beauty products fascination
- Stay-at-home daddying

To capture this with a meme:

Albeit a for-fun meme, it’s not wholly baseless. The more conservative alpha males think exactly like that

9. Be More Masculine

To become an alpha male, you need to earn male respect.

And **masculinity helps you earn credibility, respect, and status with other men** (Vanedello, 2013).

No need to overdo it. Most men who avoid being feminine will be “masculine enough”.
But if you need some help, some of the basics are:

- **Team sports experience**
- **Know how to drive a car/motorbike**
- **Basics of assembling or fixing things**. More about the attitude of wanting to check, understand, or at least try (before calling professional help)
- **Defense of self, others and/or home**

Generally speaking, watch out for correcting masculinity because it’s easy to overdo. And you don’t want to come across as over-compensating, posturing, or “off”.

9.2. Look More Masculine

There’s much you can do.

Just to give you some ideas:

- **Dress professionally high power** at work
- **Get a masculine metal watch**, keep the plastic for your runs, and steel above gold
- **Wear adult male shoes, ditch the sneakers**
- **Stay in decent shape**

The left man raises the odds he’ll go places, becoming higher value and “more alpha” than the guy who doesn’t care
P.S.:
if you’re balding, shave.

Bald heads are masculine and high dominance.

9.3 Get Bigger & Deeper

Yes, physicality matters.

Getting buffer for shorter guys helps, and baby-faced men can gain with more power and less warmth.

You can also work on your voice, posture, walk, and many more.

See Power University to win as an underdog and/or smaller guy.

10. Become A Master At Your Craft

Get good at whatever you do.

Competence helps you to become an alpha male because:

1. **Competence is power**. You can charge more and acquire resources, make higher-power friends, teach others, etc.
2. **Men respect competence**
3. **Competence implies several masculine and alpha-life traits**, such as drive, ambition, perseverance, and sometimes even a geeky but still masculine "obsession"
4. **Competence helps you raise through the ranks**, especially in goal-focused organization

Of course, to make the most of competence you need to pair it with power intelligence and skills. Otherwise, many competent but naive men only become greater targets for exploitation.

Bonus: Become Prestigious

Yoda, an avatar for "wisdom", is someone you could respect and look up to despite him looking very alpha

Some alpha male traits have an invincible enemy that never quits and always wins.

And that is time.

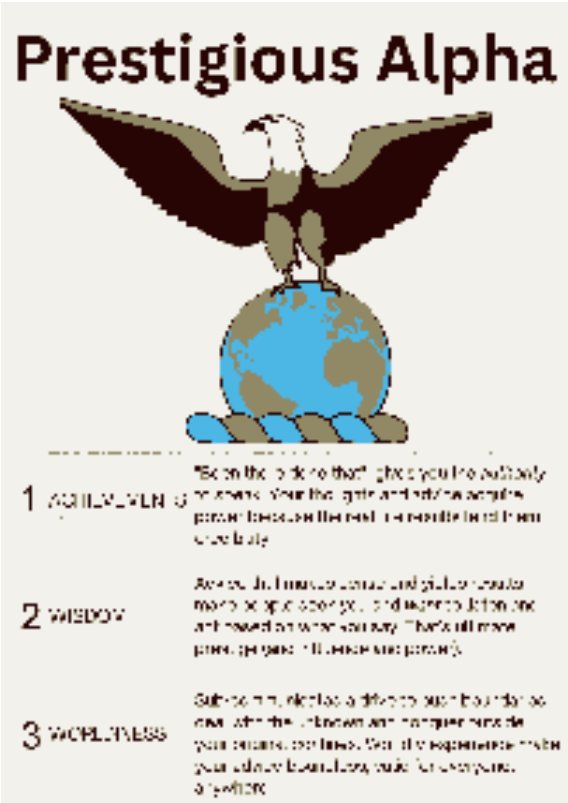
For example, all physically related traits, including strength and size, decrease with time.

Luckily though, some status-promoting traits can *increase* over time (*if you work on them*, of course).
So **if you're strategic about your self-development you can stay an alpha male**, *no matter what happens to your body*.

The traits to work on relate to what psychology researchers refer to as "prestige" (rather than simply "dominant").
You're prestigious when people *willingly* give you status and *willingly* accept your influence.

Here are some traits or skills that make you prestigious:

- Experience
- Wisdom
- "Worldliness"
- **Achievements**, even if old ones
- **Mastery** of a skill or knowledge domain
- **Character**, including integrity and honor



Prestige is all about ultimate self-development, including reaching a more "enlightened" stage

Example: When Alpha Types Subordinate To More Prestigious Men

The author's nephew is taller, larger, more muscular, and more socially dominant…

And he still willingly subordinates to yours truly.

Including some form of "slightly intimidated reverence" when he shared feeling "green and unaccomplished" in the author's company.
And wrote to "one day hope to be at the same level".

That slight prestige-based intimidation can also be a very powerful attraction tool in dating.

FAQs

And these are some common questions we often receive on our various channels:

Can I become an alpha male?

While individual advice without in-person assessment is impossible, chances are that you can do a lot to become more like an alpha male type.
Whether you will ultimately reach the peak of any status hierarchy depends on many factors such as your starting point, the time horizon, your environment, and your level of drive and effort.
However, you can most certainly advance and do better and better.

Can any man become an alpha male?

All men can do a lot to become more like an alpha male because many of the mindsets, traits and behaviors range on a spectrum and can be acquired, increased, or learned.

How can I become an alpha?

While coming up with an individualized plan is always the best approach, we can generally suggest two high-level approaches that tend to be effective.
One is to start focusing on your biggest and addressable weakness, or your biggest "glaring lack". The second approach is to work on both mindsets and behavior at the same time, and to start with self-esteem as the foundation of a strong and healthy mind.

What are the best courses and books to become an alpha male

The best resources to become an alpha male draw from science, first-hand experience, and the author's expertise. Make sure the author covers all three angles because some marketers and less-than-ideal teachers may prey on still-naive men.
Picking a worthy teacher is also important because we learn by example and chances are you will be emulating his personality.
Finally, courses with video examples are superior to books because you will learn the most by seeing. And courses with quizzes and exercises can be helpful to help you internalize the mindsets.

Can I be an alpha male if I'm a short guy?

Albeit height certainly helps both with gaining other men's respect and with your own self-confidence, you can most certainly become an alpha male as a short guy.
As a matter of fact, height's most limiting factor is often self-imposed. Meaning that it mostly matters only insofar as *you* believe that it should matter. (And conversely doesn't matter much if you ignore it first).
The same holds true for any other "lack". And we built this whole website to help the underdogs succeed.

See Power University for the one-stop program to become a high-quality alpha male

Psych 101: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 June 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Psych 101 provides an overview of psychology history with the essential facts about the most influential psychologists and psychology theories and main topics.

Contents

- Notes
  - What Is Psychology
  - Historical Figures & Their Psychology Theories
  - Important Psychology Theories
  - Schools of Thoughts
  - Basic Theories On Groups
  - Theories of Intelligence
  - Leadership Theories
  - Personality
- MORE WISDOM
- CONS
- REVIEW

Notes

What Is Psychology

Psychology is the study of mental and behavioral processes.

The field of psychology took off in 1879, when German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt created the first laboratory devoted to the study of psychology.

Historical Figures & Their Psychology Theories

- **Ivan Pavlov, classical conditioning**. It's about learning something by association
- **B. F. Skinner, operant conditioning**. Or to learn through rewards and punishments.
  Partial reinforcement is more resistant to extinction because the behavior is learned over time.
  To learn new behavior a fixed schedule is superior. But a variable interval schedule is more resistant to extinction
  - Positive Reinforcement: strengthening a behavior via rewards
  - Negative Reinforcement: strengthening a behavioral pattern by result of avoiding or stopping a negative condition
  - Punishment: weakening a behavioral pattern through negative conditioning (punishments)
  - Extinction: weakening a behavior by no longer providing the reinforcement that created it in the first place
- **Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis**
- **Lawrence Kohlberg, stages of moral development**. A modification of Jean Piaget's work
- **Stanley Milgram**, Milgram Experiment on obedience
- **Alfred Adler**, individual psychology. The rejection of Freud's "universal and biological factor" that makes

everyone the same in favor of a more individual approach that takes into account individual experiences and environmental and societal factors. So no single theory can be applied to everyone.
See *Understanding Human Nature*

- **Philip Zimbardo, The Stanford Prison Experiment**. Albeit there has been much criticism, it successfully showed at the very least that the situation powerfully influences individual's behavior
  See *The Lucifer Effect*
- **Solomon Ash, conformity & the power of social influence**. 32% of the participants conformed to the answer that was obviously wrong because the rest of the group did give the wrong answer.
  Conformity increases when there are more people, when everyone else agrees, and when the right answer is less obvious. If just one person disagrees with the rest, people have a lot more "courage" to give the right answer ("social support")
- **John B. Watson** (1878–1958), **behaviorism**. Built on Ivan Pavlov's operant conditioning, behaviorism sees the individual as a passive clean slate that only responds to environmental stimuli through conditioning (both classical and operant)
- **Hermann Rorschach** (1884–1922), **Rorschach inkblot test**, a psychoanalytic test based on the answers the individual provides to a series of inkblots.
- **Harry Harlow** (1905–1981), **maternal love**. He showed that love is vital in the development of a normal child and that love deprivation can lead to severe emotional damage
- **Jean Piaget** (1896–1980), **children's development**
- **Albert Bandura** (1925), **social learning** and observational learning. He proved this with the "Bobo doll experiment"
- **Carl Rogers** (1902–1987), **client-center therapy**. Rogers founded a new approach to therapy focused on curing, rather than diagnosing, and in helping the client help himself. Today it would be considered "humanistic psychology" or even, in part, "positive psychology".
- **Abraham Maslow** (1908–1970), **humanistic psychology** and positive mental health. He is most famous for the "Maslow hierarchy of needs", which has become very popular but also much criticized (and for good reasons, in this author's opinion. Not scientific, and also a very reductionist theory to truly make sense of human psychology.
- **Kurt Lewin** (1890–1947), one of the founding fathers of **social psychology** because he brought the Gestalt principle of looking at the full environment to understand human behavior. Also did early research on "leadership styles"
- **Carl Jung** (1875–1961) was influenced by Freud but renounced his sex theory. Jung believed every person's purpose in life was to have his or her conscious and unconscious become fully integrated to become their "true self" (individuation)
- **Henry Murray** (1893–1988), came up with a list of "psychology needs"
- K**aren Horney** (1885–1952), came up with a list of "psychology needs". It includes the need to have power, for people who hate weakness but admire and desperate for strength. and are desperate for, strength. The need to exploit others, for Machiavellians who see others as tools to reach their goals.
- **John Bowlby** (1907 -1990), considered to be the initiator of **attachment theory**
  - **Mary Ainsworth**, expanding attachment styles to recognize secure, avoidant, and anxious attachment types
- **Albert Ellis** (1913–2007) Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) was the basis for the modern and very popular **cognitive behavioral therapy**
  See: *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable*
- **David Kolb, learning styles**
- **Lev Vygotsky** (1896–1934), **reciprocal teaching**

Important Psychology Theories

- **Cognitive Dissonance** (Leon Festinger), based on people's inner drive and desire to avoid dissonance (or disharmony) in all of their attitudes and beliefs (cognitions), and to achieve harmony (consonance) among their cognitions.
- **Drive reduction theory** (Clark Hull), trying to explain behavior with a mathematical formula based on biological needs or "drives". It's largely ignored today.
- **Attribution theory**, explaining how people explain the events around them, and why people do what they do.
  - Self-serving bias, to blame external events when we fail, and to credit our success to our qualities
- **Heuristics and biases**
  See: *Thinking Fast and Slow*
- **Self-discrepancy theory**

Schools of Thoughts

- **Gestalt psychology & visual perception** (Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Kohler). Behavior and mind should be looked at as a whole.
- **Cognitive psychology**, focusing on how an individual acquires, processes, and stores information. For 2 decades from the 1950s it replaced behaviorism as the dominant school of thought focusing more on internal processes such as attention, memory, intelligence, problem-solving, perception, decision making and language processing.
  Contrary to psychoanalysis, it uses the scientific method of investigation.

Basic Theories On Groups

Groups have a powerful and sometimes even dramatic effect on individuals.

The most basic theory regarding social psychology is that when a person is alone, he or she is more relaxed and not concerned about the appearance of their behavior. By adding just one other person to the equation, behaviors begin to change and people become more aware of what is going on around them.

- **Social facilitation**, a person can perform simple or well-learned with a greater performance level when there are people around. But they perform less well if it's a new or difficult task.
- **Groupthink**, a tendency to stifle any dissent when the group has agreed on a certain topic (or when people *think* that the group has agreed on a certain topic)
- **Group polarization**, when group dynamics push for extreme positions and most people agree but wouldn't have agreed individually. To avoid it, homogeneity should be avoided, dissent welcome, and no dominant leader with an agenda should overwhelm the group's individuals
- **Bystander effect**: as a group gets larger, individuals are less likely to help those in need

Theories of Intelligence

Intelligence is one of the thorniest and most divisive subjects in psychology.
One of the reasons, says the author, is that we lack a standard definition for what intelligence actually is.

> While some believe it to be a single ability, others believe intelligence is a variety of talents, skills, and abilities. For the most part, however, it is agreed that intelligence includes a person's ability to think rationally, problem-solve, understand social norms, customs, and values, analyze situations, learn from experience, cope with life's demands, and think with reason.

We made a case for our own measure of intelligence here.
See:

- **Power Intelligence**

> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

Leadership Theories

There are many different theories of leadership and, as the author says:

> But how does one make a great leader? To put it simply: many different ways

Also see:

- *The New Psychology of Leadership*
- How to be a leader, a more practical article largely based on the above book

> How to Be A Leader: 13 Laws From Social-Psychology

Personality

Personality includes the thoughts, behaviors, and emotions that make an individual unique.

The key characteristics that psychologists tend to agree on when defining "personality" are:

- **Consistency over time and space**, behave in the same or similar ways in different types of situations, and often consistent over a lifetime
- **Behavioral influence**, being either the cause of a certain behavior, or a heavy influence within a certain situation
- **Includes biology**
- **Relationships, thoughts, and emotions are also part** of personality

The Big Five is currently the most popular theory of personality.

MORE WISDOM

- **Poor Researchers Can Be Nasty & Play Power Moves**

I was 1/3 amused, 1/3 angry, and 1/3 saddened by this:

> Because Jung renounced Freud's sex theory, the psychoanalytic community turned against Carl Jung, and he was cut off from several associates and friends.

CONS

- **Too much space on unproven theories?**

Almost a whole chapter based on the interpretations of inkblots answers in my opinion was too much.

- **I'd have liked a more "critical" account**

Such as, not just listing theories and schools of thought, but also including why they may be less popular today, why they're incomplete, or what was wrong with a certain old belief.
To be sure, the author does that and there are plenty of "criticism" sections. But I would have liked even more :)

- **Unproven theories may need a bigger "warning"**

Interpretations of dreams or inkblots aren't scientific.

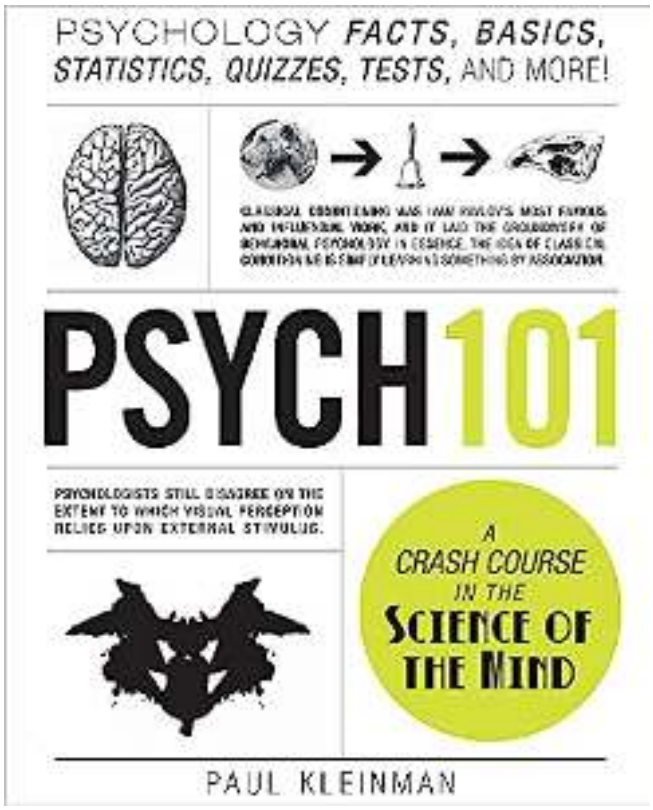
In my opinion, they should come with that "not science" warning.

Take this part for example:

> Seeing a spider can symbolize fear, a feeling of entanglement, or a feeling of being trapped in an uncomfortable situation as a result of telling lies. It can also symbolize an overbearing mother and feminine power.

Yeah, sure, and it can also symbolize… Pretty much anything because it's wholly unscientific and only limited by the "psychoanalyst" own fervid imagination.

I think that if psyhcology wants to be a "proper" science, **psychologists should be quicker to highlight what's NOT science**.



REVIEW

Psych 101 is a very good overview of psychology history, prominent psychologists, and many theories and famous experiment.

I very much enjoyed it and even as a non-beginner I could learn something new.
And it helped to put a few things in perspective.

Check the **best books** to read.

How Storytelling Reveals Who's NOT A Friend: 5 Red Flags

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 June 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Using a story to covert-brag can be fair.

But if the covert brag involves you looking bad and your "friend" looking great by comparison, well, that's a nasty power move.

We call it "nasty social climbing".
And it's when someone uses you as a "social peg" to reach higher (while they push you *lower*).

Let's see a real-life example of how that would look like:

Contents

- Red flag #1 ⍰: You look bad in the story
- Red flag #2 ⍰: They frame you as "below them"
- Red flag #3 ⍰: They pull power moves on you
- Red flag #4 ⍰: They're leader-like, you… More like a follower
- Red flag #5 ⍰: They look high-power, you… Not so much
- Good Friends VS Bad Friends
- Learn to read people: it's foundational to a successful & good life

Red flag #1 ⍰: You look bad in the story

Imagine:

Your friend is telling a story involving both of you.

Generally speaking, **how he tells the story tells you A LOT about how good of a friend he is**.

The key question is:

"How do you come across in that story?".

If you come across poorly, your friend is "pushing you down", decreasing your status, and disempowering you.

Of course, someone may ask:

But what if I actually WAS "bad" in tha story?

And of course, it's entirely possible that in that story you didn't perform all too well.

But still… Ask yourself: why would a *friend* share a story where you looked poor?

And compare: how would a good friend share a story where you looked poor?
And the answer is that **a good friend would NOT publicly share a story that makes you look bad** unless he truly had to.
Not without power-protecting, at least. He would power protect you, for example, by justifying your poor performance, omitting some details, or by at least saying you're an awesome guy despite that one single f*ck up.

Note that a particularly bad friend instead will *revel* in telling the story of your f*ck ups.

Red flag #2 ⍰: They frame you as "below them"

Poor friends tell stories where:

1. They're above you
2. You're below them

There are a million ways to be "below them".
They can frame you as their mentee, their "beta friend sidekick", their employee, or simply as you asking them for clarification.

And there are also more subtle ways.
But even subtle ways are still red flags.
No matter how small, **it's always a red flag whenever you come out of the story looking like you're the "junior partner"**.

That's because, again, you must compare it to how a good friend would behave.
And a good friend who's truly above you would frame any story as you two being equals.

Red flag #3 ⍰: They pull power moves on you

It's a nasty power move if in the story they reprimand you and you take it. No matter how "fair" the reprimand was, it's a power move because a friend would never share it publicly but keep it private between you two

This is one of the nastiest.

Whether they actually pulled a power move on you in real life or not, it's still a red-level power move to do so within their story.

If they did it in real life, it's twice a red flag because they did it in real life, and in the story.

The fact they pull power moves, and then *goad* about it… That may be all you need to cut ties with those people.

And if they didn't do it in real life, it's still twice a power move because they social climb on you, *and* they lie to do so.

Added redness if they pull the power move, and you submissively and naively take it.

This is what *competitors* do.
Or even *enemies*.

Those are NOT your friends.

Red flag #4 ⍰: They're leader-like, you... More like a follower

Generally speaking:

Bad friends who want to social climb share stories where they come across as great leaders, and you as a great… Follower.

They (covertly) brag of alpha male traits, high-value man qualities, or prestigious man wisdom.
You may as well be a good follower… But you're still a follower nonetheless.

Some red flags include:

- They tell you what to do, you execute
- They move first, you right after
- They suggest or advice, you confirm it's great advice

Red flag #5 ⍰: They look high-power, you… Not so much

Great friends would never share a story that makes them look good if it makes you look bad. Instead, this is a case where some omission and white lies that power protects you are GREAT signs of a good character.

There are a million ways to frame you as low power and themselves as high power.

But no matter which angle they take, if in their stories they look cool and you “not so much”, they’re shi**y friends.

Some red-level signals include:

- You’re tense
- You’re afraid or panicking
- You’re clueless
- They’re calm and collected
- They’re in control
- They know what to do

But also watch out for more subtle framing.

For example, they may not save the day.
But they may offer reassurance and make you feel a bit good again.
Or, at the very least, you recognize that they’re the “voice of reason” and generally provide good advice.

A good friend would never go around

Good Friends VS Bad Friends

Remember:

Good friends pull you *up*.
Shitty friends push you *down*.

Learn to read people: it's foundational to a successful & good life

Reading people and assessing characters is a foundational life skill.

In **Power University** we help our students internalize all the red and green flags that make reading others natural and second nature.

The Oxford Handbook of Accurate Personality Judgment: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 June 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The Oxford Handbook of Accurate Personality Judgment (2021) synthesizes contemporary theory and research on the accuracy of personality judgments, exploring relevant issues such as when we are most likely to make accurate trait inferences, and what we can do to improve our "people reading skills".

Contents

- Exec Summary
- Full Summary
  - People Are Generally Good At Assessing Others
  - Models: Lens Model & RAM
  - What Makes Good Judges
  - What Makes Good Targets
  - What Makes A Good Trait
  - What Makes Good Information
  - Things Can Do To Improve Your "People Reading" Accuracy
  - Fundamental Issue of Trait Accuracy Research: What's The "Objective Truth"?
  - Meta Accuracy
  - Reading Nonverbal Cues (Body Language)
  - The Average Personality
  - Stereotypes Are Often Accurate
  - Partners Are Often Biased in Romantic Relationships
- More Wisdom
- Practical Applications
  - Interview job candidates in multiple locations
  - To sound smart, focus on verbal cues
  - To catch deception, focus on verbal patterns & inconsistencies…
- CONS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- People are generally good at assessing others
- Some people are better than others at assessing character traits
- It's possible to improve our ability to read others

Full Summary

About the Authors:
The authors are multiple researchers in the study of personality judgment.

People Are Generally Good At Assessing Others

> Much research supports the conclusion that judges can often make fairly accurate judgments of the personality traits of others (Brown & Bernieri, 2017; Colman et al., 2017; Connelly & Ones, 2010)

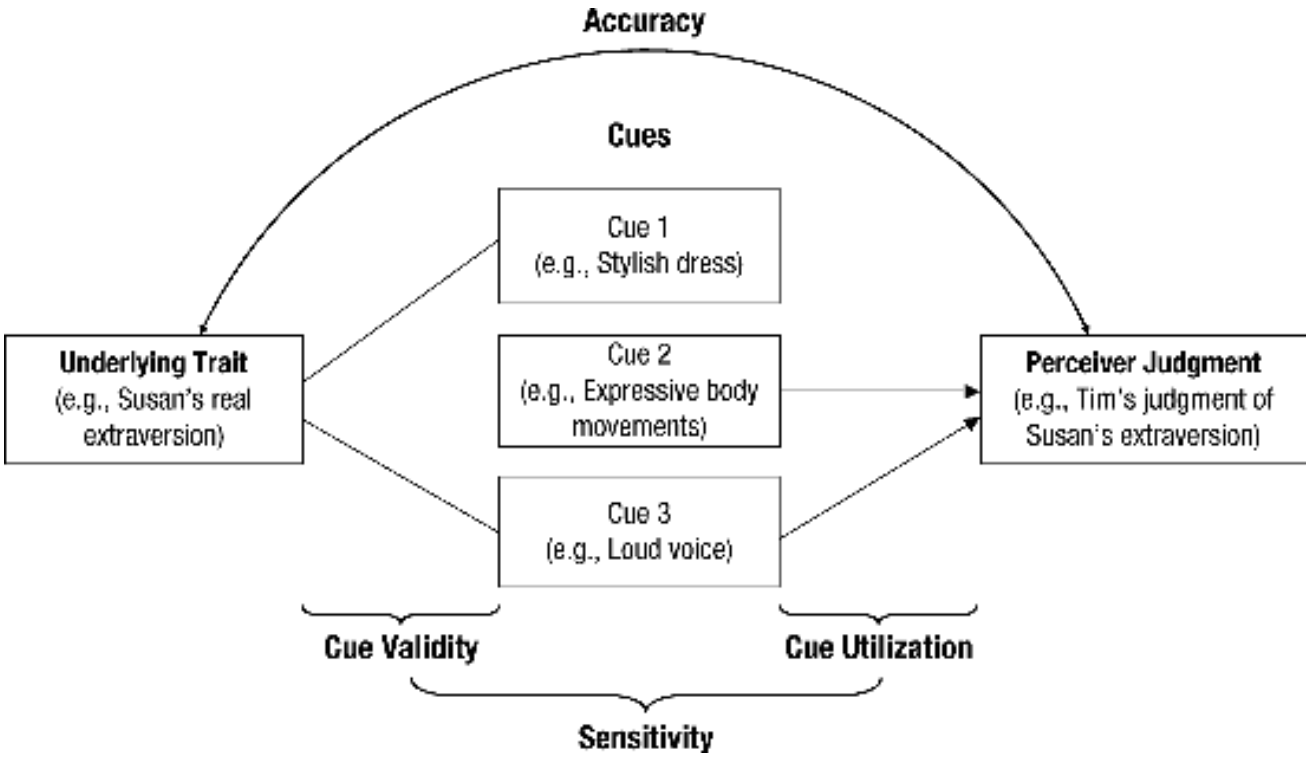
Models: Lens Model & RAM

The four moderators of accurate personality judgments are:

1. **Good judge**: people differ in how accurately they judge others.
   A good judge utilizes many valid cues, disregards the invalid ones, and is good at eliciting more cues.
2. **Good target**: people differ in how easy it is to accurately judge them
3. **Good trait**: personality characteristics differ in how easy it is to accurately judge and rate them
4. **Good information**: information differs in how useful it is for making accurate judgments
   - Information quantity (acquaintanceship): more information tends to result in more accurate judgments than having less information
   - Information quality: some information may be very telling of someone's personality, some may be only a small indicator, and some information may take up mental processing space but add no value or even confuse and lead astray

Lens Model

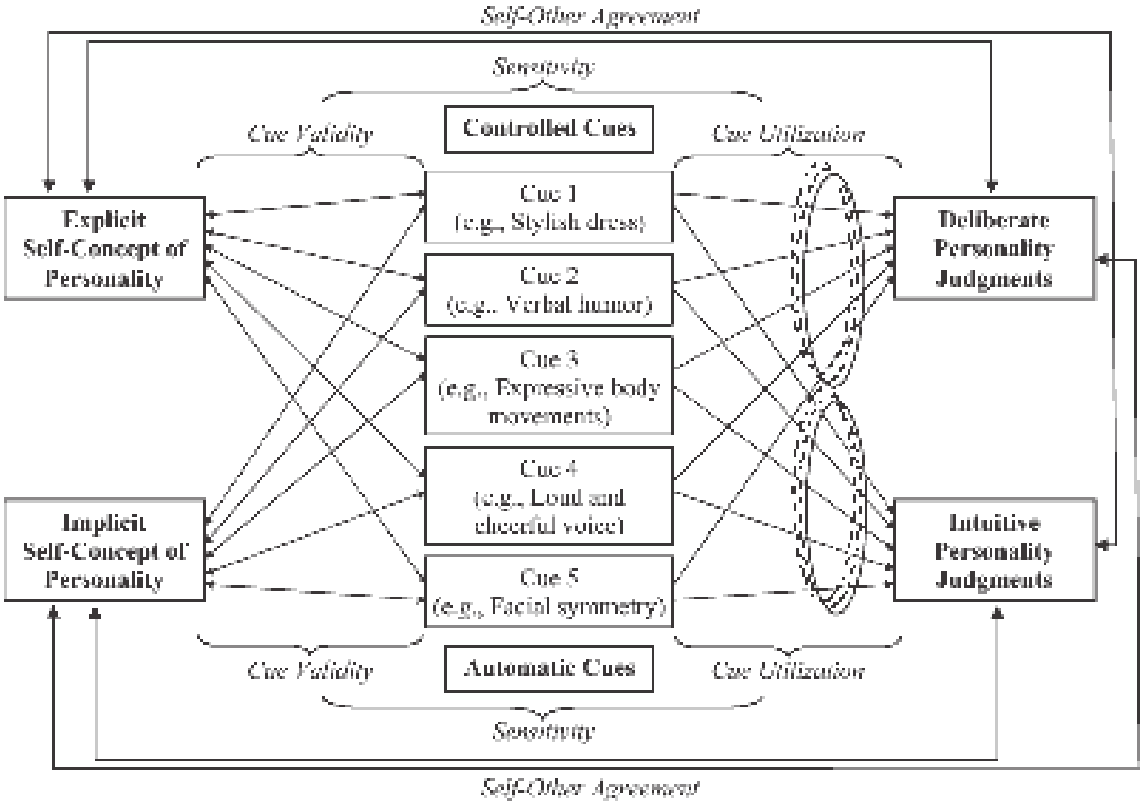
> Brunswik's lens model provides a conceptual framework that can be applied to explain how lay observers make sense of personality characteristics of targets that are not directly observable.



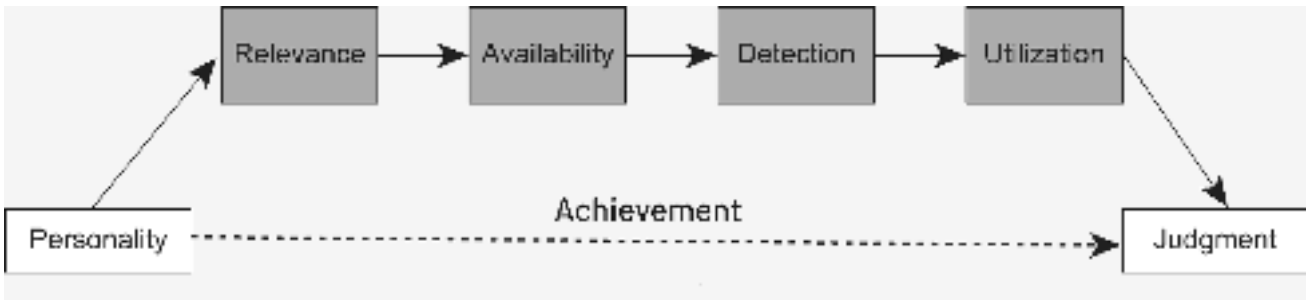
The level of accuracy is determined by the multiplication of predictability, consistency, and sensitivity; that is, to achieve accurate judgments, all three need to be positive.

Dual Lens Model

> the dual lens model differentiates more controlled versus more automatic aspects on all levels of the lens model (i.e., personality self-concept, cues, personality judgments)



Realistic Accuracy Model (RAM)



> The RAM was formulated as a corrective complement to error research, by focusing on how judgments could be accurate rather than inaccurate (Funder, 1987).

- **Relevance** indicates that there must be behavioral cues relevant to the trait or characteristic being judged. The target primarily influences success at this stage, doing or not doing things that are relevant to and consistent with their traits
- **Availability**, indicates that the cues have to be available in the external environment
- **Detection**, or noticing the relevant and available personality cues. The judge primarily influences this stage's success
- **Utilization**, or to correctly utilizing the cues to make an accurate judgment. Includes several sub-abilities, including:
  - Determining which cues are relevant to the trait being judged,
  - Giving appropriate weights to various cues
  - Combining the cues with each other

- Other characteristics, such as those of the situation that may influence behavior

What Makes Good Judges

- **Intelligence and cognitive ability**. "*One of the most consistent characteristics that differentiates good judges from those who are less skilled (Allport, 1937; Christiansen, Wolcott-Burnam, Janovics, Burns, & Quirk, 2005; Funder, 1999; Lippa & Dietz, 2000).*"
  - Dispositional intelligence, *"very similar to the construct of emotional intelligence (see Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008), but rather than a focus on emotions, emphasis is placed on thoughts and knowledge about the interrelations among behavior, traits, and situations (Christiansen et al., 2005).*"
- **Knowledge** of psychology, and how behaviors and personality are related
- **Agreeableness**
- **Social skills**, (e.g., knowledge about cue meanings)
- **Higher motivation of judges**, likely increasing attunement to social stimuli
- **Perspective-taking and empathy**
- **Psychological adjustment**
- **Higher interpersonal orientation** (e.g., agreeableness, extraversion, empathy)
- **Social curiosity**: A study found that judges with high social curiosity about "how other people behave, think, and feel" (Hartung & Renner, 2011, p. 796) made more accurate judgments of extraversion and openness following a 10-minute interaction with a stranger, than did judges with low social curiosity

There is also some evidence that good judges know of being good judges.

Women may also be slightly butter, but not by much:

> Overall, if a gender difference in judgmental ability exists, it would likely favor women. That said, I caution against making any large and sweeping generalizations, since differences that were found were of rather small magnitude.

What Doesn't Necessarily Make Better Judges

Reading others doesn't seem to be a case of "it takes one to know one":

> a question that is sometimes raised is whether being high on a trait makes a person an expert at judging that trait in others. However, research to date has not found that judges who are higher on a certain trait typically make more accurate judgments

What Makes Good Targets

- High levels of psychological adjustment
- Behavioral consistency
- self-confident
- Social skills
- Extraversion
- Emotionally stable
- Expressiveness

And:

- Less deceitful
- Less self-defensive
- Less likely to keep others at a distance

Targets can and probably should do more to show their true colors:

> Targets can facilitate being viewed in line with their true selves by providing a higher quality and quantity of information and delivering that information in a way that elicits greater judge attention and motivation to be accurate. In turn, being perceived in line with one's true self may often feel inherently good and foster broader psychological and social well-being.

The cool thing is that it's possible for targets to self-promote, and still facilitate a more honest assessment:

> self-presentation of targets, often involving the aim to convey a positive but authentic impression (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000), may enhance observer attention and the accuracy of respective trait inferences (e.g., Human, Biesanz, Parisotto, & Dunn, 2012). For example, targets' self-presentational goal of appearing smart led to more accurate observer impressions of individuals' intelligence (Murphy, 2007).

What Makes A Good Trait

In general, traits that are more outwardly visible are easier to judge.

> Extraversion, for example, can be considered as a "good trait," as it often shows a high amount of behavioral manifestation (e.g., Borkenau & Liebler, 1995; Funder & Sneed, 1993). In contrast, traits such as neuroticism or self-esteem tend to show fewer behavioral manifestations and to be more internal in nature (Vazire, 2010).

Also, traits that are considered to be either positive or negative also tend to be more difficult to accurately assess:

> Highly evaluative traits (i.e., low or high in social desirability), such as agreeableness, tend to be less accurately judged than neutral traits. This may be due to response factors that may distort targets' self-ratings (e.g., individual differences in overly positive self-judgments) and observer judgments (e.g., individual differences in overly positive other-ratings) for evaluative traits (e.g., Konstabel, Aavik, & Allik, 2006), thereby, a ecting self- cue relations (cue validities) and cue-judgment relations (cue utilizations).

What Makes Good Information

> Highly useful information includes information about general and specific behaviors, and thoughts and feelings (Andersen, 1984; Letzring & Human, 2014).

Things Can Do To Improve Your "People Reading" Accuracy

- Learn more about how traits are related to behavior
- Pay attention to the target to detect more cues (my note: albeit the book later says that more attention doesn't always translate in better judgment)
- Be agreeable and socially skilled to make targets comfortable to reveal relevant information about themselves
- Learn to think about what targets are thinking and feeling
- Spend more time with the targets in a variety of situations
- Ask targets relevant questions

- Create situations that "test" the target and show the more hidden and honest cues
- Create situations for the specific trait: "*the trait neuroticism expressed in more valid observable cues and could be judged more accurately by strangers in a neuroticism-relevant, socially stressful situation as compared to three less neuroticism-relevant situations*."
- Interact in unstructured situations rather than structured ones (ie.: do your job interview in a coffee shop, not in the office)
- Don't be sad, "*there is some indication that person perception accuracy decreases when judges are experiencing the state emotion of sadness (Ambady & Gray, 2002). Teaching judges how to regulate their own emotions as well as reduce their cognitive load before going into the judgment situation might improve accuracy*".

Become More Power-Aware

Generally speaking, it seems to me that being good at eliciting cues comes down to being power aware. Including good knowledge of persuasion and manipulation dynamics:

> In one study (Letzring, 2008) it was discovered that judges' use of basic social skills (e.g., eye contact, expressing warmth) and a lack of negative behaviors (e.g., seeking reassurance or advice, undermining or obstructing the target) were positively related to accuracy. It was concluded that such behaviors on the part of judges serve to increase targets' comfort and increase their willingness to reveal information (i.e., cues) about their true selves, which can then be detected and utilized when making judgments of the targets

Get Training With Feedback (Consider PU)

> . A 2012 meta-analysis of 30 experimental studies that tested dierent training approaches demonstrated that practice with feedback about performance was the most eective way to improve person perception accuracy (Blanch-Hartigan et al., 2012)

Simply telling people what to look for wasn't nearly as effective:

> Simply instructing people about what cues to look for on its own did not seem to be an e ective approach, a result consistent with a meta-analysis focused just on training in the domain of deception detection (Driskell, 2012). However, multiple training approaches used in combination with practice with feedback was more e ective than a single approach (Blanch-Hartigan, 2012; Driskell, 2012; Ruben, Hall, Curtin, Blanch-Hartigan, & Ship, 2015).

This is why we devised quizzes in **Power University**: to provide you with immediate feedback for learning.

Good training is about *internalizing* the skills

> Making automatic, unconscious processing of trait judgments more deliberate and conscious might actually hinder trait judgment accuracy. For example, having more time to judge dominance from facial features does not necessarily improve accuracy (Rule, Adams, Ambady, & Freeman, 2012). The effectiveness of practice and feedback, especially compared to instruction alone, in general person perception research suggests that improving accuracy may mean internalizing feedback to make accurate judgments more automatic, but this needs to be further explored.

This is also our goal with Power University: the ultimate goal is to become a "natural".

Fundamental Issue of Trait Accuracy Research: What's The "Objective Truth"?

> The fundamental problem in trait accuracy research is the absence of an objective, unmediated criterion for truth.

And:

> (…) social knowing is fundamentally different from object knowing: every person has psychological coordinates that are brought to bear on each social interaction that yields nontrivial, unique social knowing. (…)Moreover, people do not behave identically in different dyads. This is why interpersonal knowing and associated relationship outcomes at the dyadic level have become increasingly important (Kluger & Malloy, 2019; Malloy, Kluger, & Martin, 2018).

Solutions

The solutions to come up with an "objectively define" personality are:

- **Self-rating by the target himself**: "*although self-judgments are not always perfectly accurate, the majority of studies suggest that self-judgments of personality have considerable validity. Self-judgments of both narrow, specic traits and the broad personality factors of the Big Five agree with judgments provided by knowledgeable others and predict personality-relevant states, experiences, behaviors, and consequential life outcomes*"
- **Psychological tests**
- **Third party evaluations**
  - By the researchers
  - By the people who know the target well

Meta Accuracy

Meta-perception refers to how others see us.
And meta accuracy refers to correctly assessing how others see us.

> meta-accuracy is both a form of self- knowledge and social knowledge (Carlson & Kenny, 2012), as it relies on the successful detection and utilization of available cues relevant to both the self (e.g., self-views, self-observations of behavior) and others (e.g., feedback, normative knowledge).
> Given that meta-accuracy is associated with positive social outcomes, learning how to improve meta-accuracy would likely be in people's best interests.

Unluckily, there wasn't much in terms of how one can improve his understanding of how others see him except that it relies on successful detection and utilization of available cues relevant to both the self such as:

- self-views
- self-observations of behavior
- feedback
- normative knowledge
- hearsay
- meta-stereotypes

Reading Nonverbal Cues (Body Language)

Nonverbal cues can help us assess people's traits.

Say the authors:

> Results of the included studies suggest that, for all traits, there are at least a few nonverbal cues that allow for accurate glimpses into one's personality. For most traits (i.e., extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, intelligence) this is in line with research showing above chance judgment accuracies, even by strangers (for overviews see: Connelly & Ones, 2010; Connolly, Kavanagh, & Viswesvaran, 2007; Hall, Andrzejewski, Murphy, Mast, & Feinstein, 2008; Kenny, Albright, Malloy, & Kashy, 1994; Kenny et al., 1992). However, even for traits that are typically viewed as not easily observable (i.e., agreeableness, neuroticism) we find multiple valid cues.

However, be careful not to overestimate the validity of nonverbal cues, something that many people do and can result in lower accuracy.

Cues To Look Out For

Some of the valid cues for some of the major traits include:

- **Extraversion**

The correct cues included:

> cheerful facial expressiondominant facial expression, general facial expressiveness, forward leans, gestures, self-assured posture, relaxed posture, expressive/varying voice, uent speaking, pleasantness of voice, con dence of voice, loudness of voice, speech rate, amount of talking, attractiveness, neatness, stylishness, lack of eyeglasses, volume of mouth, hair length, and the lack of dark clothes.

The wrong cues observers thought related to extraversion but weren't include: eye contact, body movement, and head movements.

- **Openness**

only self-assured/open posture, pleasantness of voice, volume of speaking, and hair length were valid and utilized cues.
Less talking was related to actual openness, but observers did not use this cue.

- **Agreeableness**

Cheerful facial expression, small stride length, fluent speaking, attractiveness, and neatness of appearance were related to actual agreeableness and used by observers to judge this trait.
High-pitch and nondominant facial expressions were valid, but not identified by observers.

- **Conscientiousness**

> Cues that drove accuracy for conscientiousness judgments exclusively belonged to the domains of body language and appearance. These were self-assured/open posture, lack of self-touch, attractiveness, lack of distinctiveness in appearance, neatness, formality, and having shorter hair. Many more cues (e.g., fluent speaking, pleasantness of voice, wearing eyeglasses) were used when judging conscientiousness, but were not actually related with individuals' conscientiousness (see Table 13.7).

- **Intelligence**

> Paralinguistic cues played the biggest role in explaining accuracy. Especially, easiness of understanding, pleasantness of voice, speech rate, and amount of speech were used by observers and at the same time related to actual (measured) intelligence. Cues that were used but not valid were (for example): eye contact, amount of gestures, powerful voice, and attractiveness.

Physical and Virtual Contexts Provide Plenty of Valid Cues

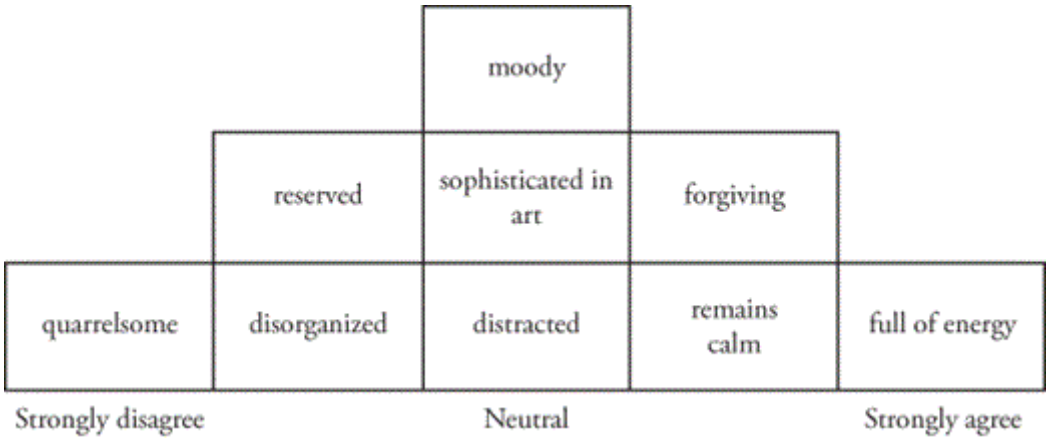
> Research on judgment accuracy in physical and virtual spaces is has shown that in many cases trait specic accuracy (e.g., conscientiousness and openness to experience) is greater in these contexts than in face-to-face interactions

The Average Personality

Knowing the "average personality" is extremely useful.

One, because you can target the masses based on the average personality and be right with the majority of people. And two, even with individuals, in the absence of any cues or idea, you can still be right more often than not if you know what traits are more common for most people.

Here is the average personality profile:



Say the authors:

> Most people have at least some degree of explicit knowledge regarding the average personality, but there are a few who do not.

Stereotypes Are Often Accurate

For a long time, scholars labeled stereotypes as inaccurate.

However, albeit "national stereotypes" tend to not be very accurate, it seems now scholars jumped to conclusions without sufficient evidence.

Sum up the authors:

> Rigorous empirical assessments of the accuracy of stereotypes began in the late 1970s, accelerated in the 1990s, and, now, with over 50 empirical studies published, has yielded a surprising conclusion: highly inaccurate stereotypes are the exception; moderate to high accuracy is common.

The accuracy tends to go up when we poll large groups of people (e.g., Surowiecki, 2004; Jussim, 2012) and when people have direct experience with the target group.

Say the authors:

> Absent knowledge, stereotypes are likely to be inaccurate.
> This may explain the pervasive inaccuracy of national character stereotypes of personality (as measured by the Big Five), inasmuch as most people have little direct contact with many individuals from lots of other nations. In contrast, most people do have extensive experience with men and women, and with the young and old—which may help explain the accuracy found by so many studies of gender stereotypes (Hall & Carter, 1999; Löckenho et al., 2014; McCauley et al., 1988), and age stereotypes (Chan et al., 2012).

Partners Are Often Biased in Romantic Relationships

The two major biases in relationships are:

- Simialirty bais, or believing our partners are more similar to us than they really are
- Positivity bias, or believing our partners are better than they really are

> Among dating and married individuals, the majority of them believe their own partners are more virtuous than average or typical partners (e.g., Endo et al., 2000; Murray & Holmes, 1997) and are better than their friends' partners (e.g., Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, & Gri n, 2000).

Interestingly, acquaintanceship length, relationship closeness, and number of shared activities did not moderate accuracy, but married couples had much higher accuracy compared to dating couples and friend dyads.

Biases Can Be Adaptive

Up to a certain point, positivity and similarity bias can be adaptive.

It's when they become too much that they can turn maladaptive since the gap with reality would grow too wide and people would make the wrong decision or communicate poorly with each other.

Say the authors:

> partners holding stronger positivity bias report higher p. 269 relationship satisfaction and better quality (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2000; Fowers, Lyons, & Montel, 1996; Martz et al., 1998; Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b; Murray & Holmes, 1997). Longitudinal research also has found that relationships are more likely to persist when intimates idealize their partners and relationships (Fletcher et al., 2000; Helgeson, 1994; Murray et al., 1996b; Murray & Holmes, 1997; Rusbult et al., 2000).

The fact that biases can be adaptive is something that has often been missed and ignored since the work of Kahneman and Tversky.

More Wisdom

Looks May Provide Cues About Personality

> Associations between personality and appearance can be traced back to a variety of mechanisms involving environmental and biological factors. For example, appearance and personality might be related due to common biological causes (e.g., testosterone inuences facial hair growth as well as a more aggressive personality) as well as common environmental causes (e.g., the choice for a specic grooming style is specic for individuals that share the same values). Furthermore, physical dierences could serve as some form of self-fullling prophecy (e.g., tall individuals are expected to behave more dominantly, they thus act accordingly) or

> they could reveal dierences in past behaviors (e.g., individuals that laugh a lot might develop laugh lines and are thus judged to be happy or extraverts; see Zebrowitz & Collins, 1997 for an overview of these four explanations).

Practical Applications

Interview job candidates in multiple locations

Job interviews are a game of chess.

The interviewer wants to find out the truth, screen out poorer candidates, hire the best, and pay them as little as possible.

And the interviewee wants to be seen in the best light possible, get the job offer, and negotiate for the highest possible salary.

The authors suggest the following approach for interviewers:

> By varying the interview venues, the quality of the information obtained from the job candidate should be richer. For instance, the candidates can be given a pseudo-tour of the organization while, unbeknownst to him/her, they are being interviewed. Most job candidates prepare for the structured job interview format, but rarely prepare for an unstructured format. Due to this lack of preparation for this format, many job candidates do not know how to conduct themselves because there is no scripted behavior to rely on or practice ahead of time. This is when nonverbal behavior that is indicative of lying or lack of integrity has the highest likelihood of appearing (Townsend et al., 2007). When a job applicant tries to lie they usually focus on preparing their upper body to mask what they believe are their facial clues to deceit (Ekman, 2009). But as Paul Ekman points out, many of the telltale clues of deceit can be seen below the target person's waist in what is termed "leakage." Target persons unconsciously use hand gestures below the waist called "emblems" that indicate their true feelings at the moment that may sharply contradict their facial and verbal messages. Interestingly, most interviews take place in an o ce in which the interviewer is positioned behind a desk, thus blocking their view of the job candidate's entire body.

For more on how to win that game of chess, see:

> How to Prepare For An Interview: 6 Tips To Get The Job

To sound smart, focus on verbal cues

> Intelligence, for example, has been shown to mainly manifest in auditory cues (e.g., speech rate, number of spoken words) compared with visual cues, allowing more accurate observer judgments based on targets' audiotapes than visual material

To catch deception, focus on verbal patterns & inconsistencies...

… Rather than body language.

> Judges across the world universally report targets' gaze aversion as a signal to deception (Global Deception Research Team, 2006). Lens models suggest that people's stated beliefs about deception cues and actual cues that indicate deception are not necessarily aligned (Hartwig & Bond, 2011). For example, despite judges'

> beliefs, gaze aversion is not typically a valid cue to deception. Meta-analyses on training deception detection demonstrate that increased accuracy can result from training participants to focus on speci c cues (Hauch et al., 2016), such as verbal content indicators of truthfulness, which include that the statement is detailed and logically structured (Vrij, 2005).

CONS

Just a few notes of possible improvements areas in an otherwise great handbook:

- **Remove some repetitions to streamline it**: it's great to have different authors with different expertise, but that model needs a good editor and a big chopping board. There were several instances where I felt same or very similar information was being repeated across chapters
- **The science is still in its infancy**, so there are several assumptions and lots of "more research is needed". Not much the researchers and writers can do about it except doing more research :)
- **More traits would have been good**. While the book focuses a lot on the Big Five, I would have been interested in many more life-relevant traits. For example honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, etc.
- **More practical applications to be *both* textbook and self-development**: for example, I was very curious to see what one could to influence other people's perception, or what cues we can send out to display our good personality.

REVIEW

The Oxford Handbook of Accurate Personality Judgment is a great overview of the research literature on personality judgment.

The authors did a great job at presenting the available research in a way that is not only interesting and easy to read, but also provides some practical use cases in the real world (something that's not always obvious with textbooks).

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Power University Alumni Results: Survey Data

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 June 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The Power University Survey measures the outcomes Power University delivers for its alumni.

Below we describe the survey design and data-cleaning procedures, present the results in full, and provide an evidence-focused analysis of what the numbers mean and what they do not mean.

Contents

- Methodology
  - Data cleaning and exclusions
- Aggregate Data Analysis
- RESULTS
  - 1. Self-Confidence
  - 2. Social Skills
  - 3. Gaining Status
  - 4. Gaining Respect
  - 5. Leadership Skills
  - 6. Business & Career
  - 7. Attractiveness (For Dating)
  - 8. Relationships
  - 9. Reading People
- Power University Satisfaction
  - Lucio's personal comments (author)
- Qualitative Feedback (Email Replies)
- Potential Issues & Bias
- Future developments
- Conclusions

Methodology

The Power University Results Survey is a short instrument consisting of 10 items designed to capture alumni self-reported improvement on nine competencies that Power University targets (confidence, social skills, status, respect, leadership, business/career outcomes, attractiveness for dating, relationship outcomes, and people-reading skills).

Respondents rated their perceived improvement using the labeled ordinal response categories shown in each chart (for example: “A bit”, “2x”, “5x”, “10x”, “>10x”). For analysis we coded those ordinal responses on an increasing numeric scale so we could compute means and confidence intervals; see the Aggregate Data Analysis section for the exact figures and confidence intervals.

Why we used self-ratings

Self-ratings were chosen for two practical reasons.

First, they allow rapid collection across alumni cohorts and provide a direct measure of perceived change, which is important for an initial evaluation and for planning a longer-term, objective follow-up study.

Second, personality and skill self-assessments are supported by research as often informative when respondents are asked about change in their own capabilities (see discussion and link below). We cite this literature and provide raw exports so other researchers can inspect the data themselves.

Who was invited and when

We invited alumni through three separate channels so each invited population could be analyzed separately. Separating channels reduces mixing of different engagement profiles and improves interpretability:

- **Community members** — invitation published on the forum here.
  Raw data export here.
- **Power University email subscribers** — survey emailed to alumni who signed up at least one month before the email date (email dated 21 June 2023) and to alumni tagged in our system since July 2021. The email content is archived here.
  Raw data export here.
- **Power University completers** — a separate invitation is sent to students who mark every lesson complete via the “congratulations” email. Because that cohort is newly-invited and still small, we will publish those results in a future update once there are enough responses. The current article focuses on the forum and email cohorts.

Why we kept cohorts separate

Each invitation channel reaches alumni with different engagement patterns.

Forum users are typically more engaged, more likely to have completed more of the material, and more likely to provide thoughtful responses.
Raw data export here.

Email recipients include a broader spectrum from highly engaged to partial or skimmed readers.
Email copy here | Raw data export here.

Keeping cohorts separated avoids conflating these groups and allows us to report both the forum (high-engagement) picture and the aggregate picture.

Question variants

To adapt to each cohort, we replaced one quantitative relationship item with a qualitative motivation item in the email survey.
Specifically, the forum survey retained a question about intimate relationships, while the email survey asked an open-ended question ("what made you join Power University") to collect richer motivational data from the more varied email cohort. This is noted where relevant in the results below.

Data cleaning and exclusions

We made two exclusions to preserve data quality. All responses were anonymous and the raw exports are available for verification via the links above.

1) Pattern response — likely non-engaged answer

One respondent selected the same (first) option on every item.

That uniform pattern is a well-known indicator of non-differentiated responding (e.g., satisficing, accidental submission).
Because we could not link responses to individual identifiers (the survey was anonymous), and because the pattern would bias results upward or downward depending on the label chosen, we excluded this response from the aggregate analysis.

2) Insufficient program exposure

One respondent reported they had stopped studying Power University due to family issues and explicitly asked to be re-invited later, once further along. That respondent nevertheless submitted responses; because their engagement was incomplete and they had indicated the answers would not reflect meaningful exposure, we excluded that case. (See the screenshot below — respondent paraphrase.)

Complete
Date Taken: 2023-5-21 19:36
Location: [redacted]

1 What motivated you to get into Power University?

I stepped into a senior leader role and [redacted] This role compared to colleagues/predecessors. To correctly interpret my results below, be aware [redacted] so stopped the lesson now getting to a better mental state to pick the lessons back up. Maybe resend this when I'm further along in the course.

> **Respondent** (paraphrased): Be aware I stopped the lesson for family issues and now getting back into it. Maybe resend this when I'm further along in the course

After these two exclusions, the aggregate sample used for statistical summaries reported below is **N = 20** (this N is shown explicitly in the Aggregate Data Analysis table).

Aggregate Data Analysis

Below are the aggregate means with 95% confidence intervals (N = 20).
These intervals were computed to provide a range estimate for the mean response on our coded numeric scale and reflect sampling uncertainty given the sample size. The survey and statistical computations have been cross-checked by a certified data analyst; raw numerical exports are available in the links above for independent verification.

	Overall (N=20)
How much have your social skills improved after Power University?	
Mean (CI)	4.400 (3.714, 5.086)
How much more confident in yourself are you after Power University?	
Mean (CI)	4.550 (3.830, 5.270)
How much more effective would you be today to gain status in a group?	
Mean (CI)	4.316 (3.672, 4.959)
How much better would you be today in getting respected by others?	
Mean (CI)	4.600 (4.065, 5.135)
How much better of a leader would you be today?	
Mean (CI)	4.632 (3.985, 5.278)
How much has Power University impacted your chances of getting a promotion or doing better in work/business?	
Mean (CI)	4.263 (3.371, 5.155)
If you're single, how has Power University made you potentially more attractive?	
Mean (CI)	4.056 (3.212, 4.899)
How much have your people reading skills increased?	
Mean (CI)	4.950 (4.414, 5.486)
How satisfied are you with Power University?	
Mean (CI)	9.450 (9.095, 9.805)

Confidence intervals for each survey question
Interpretation: The means and confidence intervals show consistently high perceived gains across competencies. The satisfaction score (mean = 9.45) is particularly high, reinforcing the distributional findings reported above. Because the sample is modest in size (N=20), the confidence intervals are wider than they would be for a much larger survey; nonetheless the central tendency and consistent upward reporting across items indicate a strong signal that alumni perceive meaningful benefit from the program.

RESULTS

What follows are the survey items, raw distribution tables (as presented in the forum charts), and a short interpretation of each result. We include both the distribution charts (forum cohort) and aggregated numeric

measures (where available).

1. Self-Confidence

> Question: How much more confident in yourself are you after Power University?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
5%	10%	5%	20%	25%	35%

Forum cohort chart above. In the aggregated sample: **95% of respondents report some improvement in confidence**, **85% at least doubled their confidence**, and over half report a 10x or greater increase. This is a substantial effect in perceived self-confidence.

2. Social Skills

> Question: How much have your social skills improved after Power University?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
0%	15%	15%	15%	25%	30%

All community members reported improvements in social skills. In aggregate, **85% at least doubled their social skills**, and more than half reported a 10x or larger improvement.

3. Gaining Status

> Question: How much more effective would you be today at gaining status in a group?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
0.%	10.5%	21.1%	15.8%	31.6%	21.1%

Every community member reported improvement. **89.5% at least doubled** their ability to gain status and more than half reported a 10x or greater improvement.

4. Gaining Respect

> Question: How much better would you be today at getting respected by others?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
0%	0%	25%	15%	35%	25%

All community respondents reported at least a 2x increase in their ability to earn respect, and more than half reported a 10x or greater increase.

5. Leadership Skills

> Question: How much better of a leader would you be today?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
0%	10.5%	10%	15.8%	31.6%	31.6%

Leadership skills rose substantially: nearly 90% at least doubled their leadership capability, and over 60% reported a 10x or greater improvement.

6. Business & Career

> Question: How much has Power University impacted your chances of getting a promotion or doing better in work/business?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
10.5%	10.5%	15.8%	10.5%	10.5%	42.1%

Nearly 90% of respondents expect improved outcomes in work or business. Close to 80% expect at least a 2x improvement; over half expect at least a 10x improvement and 42% expect >10x improvements.

7. Attractiveness (For Dating)

> Question: If you're single, how has Power University made you potentially more attractive?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
5.5%	16.7%	16.7%	22.2%	5.5%	33.3%

About 90% reported increased attractiveness, 80% at least 2x, more than half at least 5x, and over one-third at 10x.

8. Relationships

> Question: If you're in a relationship, how much has Power University helped to gain more respect, attraction, and a generally better relationship?*

Among forum community members who answered this item, **close to 80% at least doubled their partner's attraction and respect**, and more than half reported a 5x or greater improvement. Note: this item was asked only to forum respondents who are in (or can imagine being in) a relationship; see note below.

*this question was only for the forum users, and only for those who are or can think of themselves in a relationship. We corrected an initial survey wording issue after the first response; the early answer "not at all" appears to reflect that initial error but was left in the record for transparency.

9. Reading People

> Question: How much have your people-reading skills increased?

=	A bit	2X	5x	10x	>10x
0%	0%	15%	20%	20%	45%

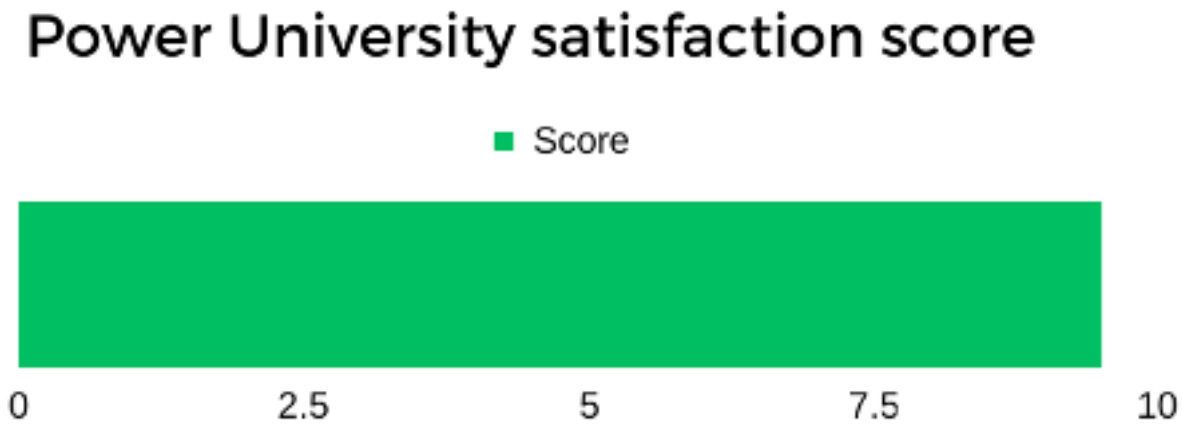
All respondents reported at least a 2x increase in competence for reading people; 65% reported a 10x or greater increase. This item was intentionally framed as competence-related rather than outcome-related, because skill

acquisition usually precedes downstream life outcomes (e.g., changed relationships), which can take more time to show measurable changes.

Note: competence measures like “people-reading” correlate with long-term outcomes, but outcome measures (e.g., relationship quality) may lag behind skill changes. We deliberately measured competence to avoid premature underestimation of program impact.

Power University Satisfaction

Participants rated overall satisfaction on a 0–10 scale. The distribution is shown below and the arithmetic mean is 9.4 out of 10. Every respondent rated the program 8/10 or higher; the most common rating was 10/10.



The arithmetic mean is 9.4 out of 10.

Lucio’s personal comments (author)

I expected good results — we build Power University around proven skills and frameworks — but I was still surprised by how often respondents selected “more than 10x.” That option became the modal category across many items.

On average, respondents rated improvements in status slightly lower than improvements in confidence, social skills, and respect.
My read is that people tend to intuitively downplay status gains because status feels harder or more abstract; in practice, status often follows reliably from improved confidence, social competence, and the consistent application of the techniques we teach.

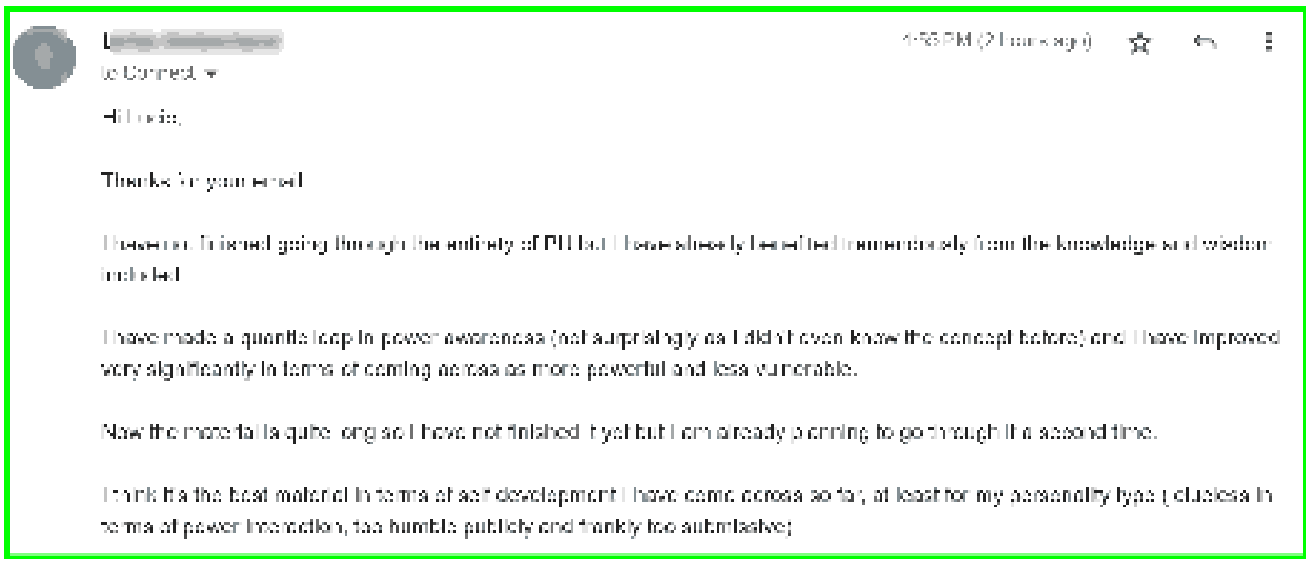
Similarly, improving intimate relationships requires not only competence but time and context; competence often improves first, and relationship-level outcomes follow. This is why we emphasize competence measures in early evaluations.

Because Power University emphasizes actionable learning, respondents may also judge the program in light of the effort they invested (it’s study, not purely entertainment). That may explain why absolute satisfaction occasionally feels slightly lower than some of the dramatic competence improvements reported.

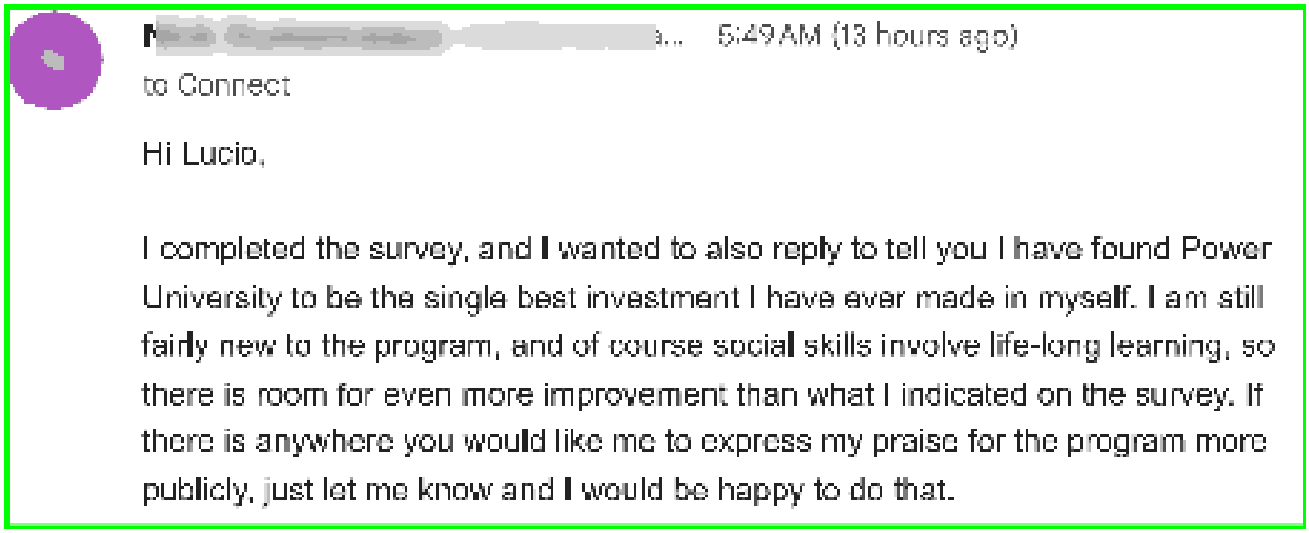
I plan to keep improving the program experience (more video, rewards, UI enhancements) while preserving the outcome-oriented focus that drives real change.

Qualitative Feedback (Email Replies)

We invited email recipients to reply with open feedback. Replies were overwhelmingly positive and are reproduced (screenshots) below exactly as submitted to preserve authenticity and context.



Respondent: I have not finished going through the entirety of PU but I have already benefited tremendously (…) I have improved very significantly in coming across as more powerful.
(…)
I think it's the best material in terms of self development I have come acrosss so far



Respondent: I have found Power University to be the single best investment I have ever made in myself

Potential Issues & Bias

No survey is free of bias.
Below we list possible limitations, and we describe the steps we took (or plan to take) to mitigate them. Being transparent about these issues increases the trustworthiness of the findings.

- **Self-selection bias** — alumni with strong positive experiences are more likely to respond. We addressed this by reporting separate cohort data (forum vs email) and by making the raw data exports available for external inspection.
- **Social desirability and demand characteristics** — respondents may want to appear successful or to give expected answers. We maintained anonymity to reduce this bias and explicitly invited candid and critical replies via email.
- **Good-subject role ("making Lucio happy")** — people who feel close to the program or to me personally

might try to help by giving positive answers. Again, anonymity and the inclusion of email cohorts with mixed engagement ,au lower the net risk of this bias dominating the results.

- **Small sample size** — the aggregate analysis uses N = 20 after exclusions. Small samples increase uncertainty (wider confidence intervals). We therefore treat this survey as an initial, encouraging snapshot, not a final evaluation.
- **Measurement type** — self-reported competence is a subjective measure. It is valuable for perceived change but should be complemented with behavioral, third-party, or longitudinal outcome measures in future studies.

Some biases may partially offset others.
For example, disgruntled alumni may also respond to voice criticism, which reduces pure positivity bias. Still, the safest interpretation is cautious: results show a strong self-reported benefit signal that warrants further, more controlled follow-ups.

Future developments

We are committed to continuous improvement and plan several follow-ups to strengthen evidence:

- **Longitudinal tracking** — whenever feasible, invite the same alumni to repeat the survey to measure sustained changes and downstream life outcomes.
- **Objective outcome measures** — where feasible, incorporate behavioral or third-party indicators (e.g., promotion records, peer ratings) while preserving privacy.
- **Larger-scale sampling** — increase the sample size across cohorts to narrow confidence intervals and allow segment analysis (age, baseline skill level, completion rate).
- **Survey refinement** — improve question wording and add validated psychometric items for future surveys. We will also integrate the data analyst's recommendations.

Note: The survey and this article have been cross-checked by a certified data analyst. We will publish future improvements and follow-up results as they become available.

Power University developments following the survey

At the time of writing (July 2023), this is our first structured alumni survey.
The course was at **version 8.2** when this survey was fielded, and respondents may reflect experience with earlier versions as well. We will use these results to prioritize product improvements that help alumni get faster and clearer outcomes — while preserving the program's core emphasis on durable skill acquisition.

Planned improvements include more high-value video demonstrations, a reward structure to increase completion rates, and UI updates to make the learning path clearer and easier to follow.

Conclusions

In summary: across the measured competencies, Power University alumni report large perceived gains, and the program receives very high satisfaction ratings.
These results are consistent across cohorts, subject to the limitations described above. The evidence justifies continued investment in the course and motivates the next steps: larger samples, longitudinal follow-ups, and complementing self-report with objective outcomes.

We have made the raw numeric exports available for transparency and encourage independent inspection and replication. The survey processing and the reported statistics were cross-checked by a certified data analyst prior to publication.

Good Strategy/Bad Strategy: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 July 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Good Strategy/Bad Strategy (2019) is a book that teaches the defining elements of strategy, how to avoid the all too common pitfalls around strategy, and how come up with good and effective strategies.

Contents

- Overview
- Notes
  - What's Strategy
  - What's Bad Strategy
  - The Elements of Good Strategy
  - How To Come Up With A Strategy
  - The Leader's Strategic Job
- Practical Tips
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

Overview

- **A strategy is a cohesive response to a certain challenge**
- **Strategy is the single most important task of leaders**
- **Good strategy has 3 elements**. It starts with analysis of situation, strenghts and opportunities, then sets a high-level guiding policy, and follows up with a set of cohesive actions
- **Good strategy requires knowledge and expertise** because it's a hypothesis of what will work

Notes

About the Author:
Richard Rumelt is an American professor of Management at the University of California. He joined the school in 1976 from Harvard Business School.

What's Strategy

A strategy is a cohesive response to an important challenge.

Unlike a stand-alone decision or a goal, a strategy is a coherent set of analyses, concepts, policies, arguments, and actions in response to an important challenge.

Doing strategy is figuring out how to advance the organization's interests, and how to move forward with it.

The Confusion Around "Strategy"

The author says that "strategy" has become a buzzword and is continuously misused and misunderstood.
It has nothing to do with ambition, "leadership", competition, or goals etc.

The most common confusion is probably between goals and strategy.

To give you an example, the USA may have the “goals” of freedom, justice, peace, security, and happiness.
The strategy is to transform those goals into a coherent set of actionable strategies -ie.: defeat the Taliban, rebuild a decaying infrastructure, etc. etc.-.

Now, before we move to *good* strategy, let’s first understand what’s *bad* strategy:

What’s Bad Strategy

Elements of bad strategy include:

- **Fluff**, with buzzwords and abstruse expression that create unneeded complexity and the illusion of high-level thinking
- **Failure to face the challenge**, because you if you cannot define the challenge, you cannot develop a strategy for it, evaluate that strategy, and improve it.
  Without defining and analyzing the obstacles, you have not a strategy, but either a stretch goal, a budget, or a list of things you wish would happen
- **Mistaking goals for strategy**, such as statements of desires, rather than plans on overcoming obstacles. Especially poor when it’s a long list, when it’s uncoordinated, and when there is no action plan connected to them
- **Bad strategic objective**, such as when they’re impractical, or fail to address critical issues
  - Confusing strategic objectives for final goals: stategic objectives are a means to an end, or “subgoals”. Sort of “intermediary steps” to achieving the bigger or final results
- **Not focusing effort on a few key areas of maximum leverage**
  - Pursue too many demands and interests, sometimes conflicting ones, and thus losing the power that comes from coordination

Please not that not having a good strategy is a bad strategy in itself.
Bad strategy crowds out good one like bad weeds.

Examples of bad strategies

A major bank “strategy” says:

> Our fundamental strategy is one of customer-centric intermediation

“Intermediation” is a “smart sounding” word for what any bank does.
“Customer centric” could mean that the bank offers higher deposit rates, but their products don’t really differentiate themselves that way.
So this is pure fluff. Remove the fluff, and what this really says is “Our bank’s fundamental strategy is being a bank.”

The Elements of Good Strategy

The author an essential logical structure that I call the kernel.

The kernel includes:

1. **Diagnosis** to understand the situation, the obstacles, the opportunities
2. **Guiding policy**: the high-level approach to dealing with the obstacles. It’s like a signpost, marks the direction forward, without getting lost in the details
3. **Coherent action**: coordinated policies, resource commitments, and actions to carry out the guiding policy

Become An Expert

In any competitive or complex environment, there cannot be a “surefire strategy” guaranteed to work.

That is because, explains the author, any strategy is like a scientific hypothesis.
So as much as a scientist cannot ome up with a “surefire hipothesis certain to be true” without testing it, so nobody can come up with a certain strategy sure to succeed.

What does help though is having expertise.

A good scientist with a solid grasp of all the previous research is a lot more likely to come up with a good hipothesys than a clueless random individual.

Similarly, an expert in a certain field is more likely to come up with a strategy that is likely to work. **Even just an “educated guess” is a lot better than a shot in the dark**.

Good Strategy Is Simple

After introducing a simple-sounding example in the introduction, the author says:

> Good strategy almost always looks this simple and obvious and does not take a thick deck of PowerPoint slides to explain.
> It does not pop out of some “strategic management” tool, matrix, chart, triangle, or fill-in-the-blanks scheme.
> Instead, a talented leader identifies the one or two critical issues in the situation—the pivot points that can multiply the effectiveness of effort—and then focuses and concentrates action and resources on them.

How To Come Up With A Strategy

Tte core of strategy work is always the same, and it’s simply this:

Discover the critical factors in a situation and design a way of coordinating and focusing actions to deal with those factors.

See a strategy as a lever to magnify force.

The author says that when it comes to choosing effective strategiest, the most basic is to **apply strength against weakness**.
In a slightly more refined way, that would mean to apply your best resources , to the most promising opportunity.

Understanding your strengths and under which conditions they exist is also part of strategic thinking. As it is when and how to “press” those strengths to get the best results.

In terms of steps:

1. **Run a good diagnosis** to understand the situation, the obstacles, the opportunities
2. **Come up with a guiding policy**: the high-level approach to dealing with the obstacles. It’s like a signpost, marks the direction forward, without getting lost in the details
   - Set the “sub-goals” (strategic objectives)
3. **Set the more detailed plan** (**coherent action**): coordinated policies, resource commitments, and actions to carry out the guiding policy
   - Specificate proximate objectives, something that is “close enough” to be prgamatic, visible to all, and achievable

To help you set up the best strategy:

1. **Anticipation**: in ever changing systems or competitive environments, it’s important to add insights into how the

environment may change, or what others may do in response to your own actions (game theory may help)

2. **Coordinate actions**: make sure you have a coherent strategy that coordinates actions, creating a new strength by the very nature of its coordinated effort.
   Coordination is "coherence imposed on a system by policy and design"
3. **Come up with new viewpoints and reframes** from troubles to challenges and opportunities, to create *mental* strength
4. **Say no to whatever lies outside your strategy**. Some of those opportunities may be good and add value, but good strategy focus on the *biggest* and *feasible* opportunities.

The Leader's Strategic Job

We often focus on charisma, power, or personality-related traits when it comes to leaders.

Instead, says the author, **the most effective leaders are great strategists**.

> A leader's most important responsibility is identifying the biggest challenges to forward progress and devising a coherent approach to overcoming them.

The leader most important job is to creating and constantly adjusting the bridge between goals and the strategy, and strategic objectives that will deliver on those goals.

Example of a leader who confuses "motivation" for "strategy"

There is a really good case study about a CEO former football player who confuses stretch goals and motivation for effective strategy.

Among the "key strategies of his organization, there were "20% growth every year, 20% margins, a culture of commitment, foster an honest and open work environment. work to support the broader community in which we operate, etc.

> **Author**: This 20/20 plan is a very aggressive financial goal," I said. "What has to happen for it to be realized?
> **CEO**: The thing I learned as a football player is that winning requires strength and skill, but more than anything it requires the will to win—the drive to succeed. (…) We are going to get moving and keep pushing until we get there.
> **Author**: Chad, when a company makes the kind of jump in performance your plan envisions, there is usually a key strength you are building on or a change in the industry that opens up new opportunities. Can you clarify what the point of leverage might be here, in your company?
> **CEO**: (expressing frustration, pe pulled a sheet of paper out of his briefcase and reading the highlighted text) This is what Jack Welch says: "We have found that by reaching for what appears to be the impossible, we often actually do the impossible." "That's what we are going to do here

LOL.
Typical case of a CEO who was hired more because he acted the part and because he was an alpha male, than a truly effective leader.

Then, to make it even more obviously ridiculous, the author describes the consultant the CEO ended up hiring:

> The new consultant took Logan and his department managers through an exercise he called "Visioning." The gist of it was the question "How big do you think this company can be?" In the morning they stretched their aspirations from "bigger" to "very much bigger." Then, in the afternoon, the facilitator challenged them to an even grander vision: "Think twice as big as that," he pressed. Logan was pleased. I was pleased to be elsewhere

> engaged.

Practical Tips

- **If you're needing to change but struggling to change, ask yourself: what would a brand new management do? Then do that…**

Good example from Intel:

> Losing more and more money, senior management engaged in endless debates about what to do. Grove recalls the turning point in 1985 when he gloomily asked Intel's chairman, Gordon Moore, "If we got kicked out and the board brought in a new CEO, what do you think he would do?"
> Moore immediately replied, "He would get us out of memories." Grove recalls that he went numb and then finally said, "Why shouldn't you and I walk out the door, come back and do it ourselves?"

- **Learn from upstarts, not from bigger incumbents**

Bigger older firms are still reaping the benefits from the seeds that were sown a long time before.
It's possible they're not doing thigns right today, but that they did them in the past.
Instead, the upcoming smaller businesses who are growign and eating away at marke share are likely doing things right, *right now*.

Says the author:

> Its important lesson is that we should learn design-type strategy from an upstart's early conquests rather than from the mature company's posturing. Study how Bill Gates outsmarted the giant IBM or how Nucor became a leader in the declining steel industry and you will learn design-type strategy. Study Microsoft today and you will see a mature giant, reaping the benefits of past victories but just as tied to its installed base and a rich mix of conflicting initiatives and standards as was IBM in 1985.

QUOTES

On choosing good strategists as leaders:

> The only remedy is for us to demand more from those who lead. More than charisma and vision, we must demand good strategy.

On the importance of saying “no” and focusing on the highest leverage actions:

> Strategy is at least as much about what an organization does not do as it is about what it does.

On random goals or list of things to do mislabeled as “strategy” or “strategic objectives”:

> Such lists usually grow out of planning meetings in which a wide variety of stakeholders make suggestions as to things they would like to see done. Rather than focus on a few important items, the group sweeps the whole day’s collection into the “strategic plan.” Then, in recognition that it is a dog’s dinner, the label “long-term” is added so that none of them need be done today.

On “new thought” and “thinking things into reality”:

> I do not know whether meditation and other inward journeys perfect the human soul. But I do know that believing that rays come out of your head and change the physical world, and that by thinking only of success you can become a success, are forms of psychosis and cannot be recommended as approaches to management or strategy.
> All analysis starts with the consideration of what may happen, including unwelcome events. I would not care to fly in an aircraft designed by people who focused only on an image of a flying airplane and never considered modes of failure.

On the “noise” of most management books written about success stories:

> It is also human nature to associate current profit with recent actions, even though it should be evident that current plenty is the harvest of planting seasons long past.
> When the profits roll in, leaders will point to their every action with pride. Books will be written recommending that others immediately adopt the successful firm’s dress code, its vacation policy, its suggestion-box policies, and its method of allocating parking spaces. Of course, these connections are specious.

On the dangers of “fluff motivation” against reality:

> When war broke out in 1914, jubilant crowds jammed the streets of cities, and young men hurled hats in the air as they marched off to prove themselves. The philosophy of the age, most fervently adopted by the French, was that willpower, spirit, morale, élan, and aggressiveness were the keys to success.
> For three years, generals flung highly motivated men at fortified machine-gun emplacements, only to see see tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, shredded to mincemeat to gain a mile of useless ground.

CONS

Some tangential topics, for example the off-topic on biases, or the otherwise valid criticism of “new thought”. may have been briefer.

PROS

- Simple and to the point
- Very practical
- Great examples
- Great wake up call against “empty motivation” that doesn’t rely on solid strategy
- Great wake up call against “new thoughts” of wishing into reality, rather than developing good strategies to achieving them. It shares our same opinions on books such as *Think and Grow Rich*, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, etc.

REVIEW

Good Strategy/Bad Strategy is a fantastic book on how to channel effort to maximize results (ie.: “strategizing”).

I also enjoyed the many real life examples of what’s “strategy” and what’s not, on what’s good strategy, and what’s not.
Examples and case studies always help solidify the principles.

Overall, we can most certainly recommend *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy*.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

A Manual for Creating Atheists: A Guide on Changing Minds (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 July 2023 · Archived copy · Original

A Manual for Creating Atheists (2013) is a book meant as a training guidebook for activists who seek to "cure" believers who are supposedly "contaminated" with what Boghossian calls the "faith virus". It provides approaches, strategies, and examples for the "curing interventions".

TPM Note: The Masterclass in Internal Frame Breaking
While the book's goal is atheism, its value to a power player is in **Dialectics**. Street Epistemology is the art of making someone's entire world-view shift as quickly as possible. To the extent that they work as per our analyses below, use these techniques not to "cure" faith, but to **persuade people**, shift mindsets, or dissolve an opponent's frame.

Contents

- Notes
  - What Is Street Epistemology
  - How to Deliver Good "Interventions"
  - Example: Calling Out an Acupuncturist
  - Abandon Leftist Relativism, Feel Free To Criticize Ideas
- MORE WISDOM
- Criticism
  - Is it really "helping" people?
  - Strawman's Religion To Be Worse Than It May Actually Be
  - Some Scientific Posturing
  - Bellicose Approach to "Mission" and "Believers"
- PROS
- REVIEW

Notes

About the Author:
Peter Boghossian is an American philosopher, pedagogist, and non-tenure track assistant professor of philosophy at Portland State University.
His areas of academic focus include atheism, critical thinking, pedagogy, scientific skepticism, and the Socratic method.
He later joined the "street epistemology" movement to become one of its most popular practitioners sharing content on YouTube and other channels.

What Is Street Epistemology

Street epistemology is a dialectic approach to engage with believers and help them value reason and rationality, cast doubt on their beliefs, and mistrust their faith.

The goal of epistemology, reminds us the author several times, is not necessarily to change beliefs, but **the goal is to change *the way* people form beliefs**.

How to Deliver Good "Interventions"

Some tips and approaches for effective street epistemology:

1. Help people form new opinions via more logical thinking, instead of telling them their current beliefs are false
2. Ask the subject what conditions would have to be in place for her belief to be false
3. If the subject asks you to tell them what it would take for you to believe, turn it back to them.
   Example: "That's a great question. I'd like to hear what you think first, before I tell you"
4. Elicit contradictions and inconsistencies in one's reasoning to cast doubt
5. Avoid the word "you" when calling inconsistencies to avoid raising their defensive and turning it confrontational
6. You got an opening when they say "I don't know"
   - Reply with "I don't know either" back to show it's OK not to have all the answers and that you can abandon the original faith even when you don't yet have a new strong belief (the "value of uncertainty")
7. Match your target's power

Says the Boghossian:

> Give the faithful the same dialectical and conversational reciprocity they give you. Be honest. Be direct. Be blunt. Be unapologetic. Don't complain, apologize, or mumble in the defense of reason. Don't tone it down or talk baby talk. Never say, "I'm sorry but …" or "Forgive me for saying …" or "You'll excuse me for mentioning …" Instead, tell people exactly what you think and why you think it. Take a punch and give a punch. Speak truth in the face of danger

Example: Calling Out an Acupuncturist

An example of street epistemology with an acupuncturist:

> **PB**: Really? How do you know it works?
> **RC**: Because I've cured people of illnesses. I've seen it work.
> **PB**: Do you think selection bias has anything to do with that?
> **RC**: No.
> **PB**: What illnesses have you cured?
> **RC**: Everything. You name it, I've cured it.
> **PB**: Parkinson's, Ebola, autism?
> **RC**: I've never treated anyone with those.
> **PB**: But if someone came in with one of those illnesses, could you cure them?
> **RC**: I don't know. I could try.
> **PB**: Let's take something more pedestrian, like my hearing loss. Could you cure it?
> **RC**: If I did, would you believe me?
> (I was at the cashier and RC stood off to the side.)
> **PB**: Yes. And once you did, I'd personally fly you out to every children's hospital in the world. **Frankly, if you could cure these illnesses it's monstrously immoral not to and should be a criminal offense.** My feeling is that you're a decent and kind person. I don't think you'd withhold inexpensive treatment from people who needed it. If you really believe acupuncture works, why don't you volunteer your services?

Something in this exchange could have been tweaked to make it even more persuasive, in my opinion.
But this last part in bold was the genius checkmate in my opinion.

Abandon Leftist Relativism, Feel Free To Criticize Ideas

The author criticizes what cultural relativism has become in our culture.

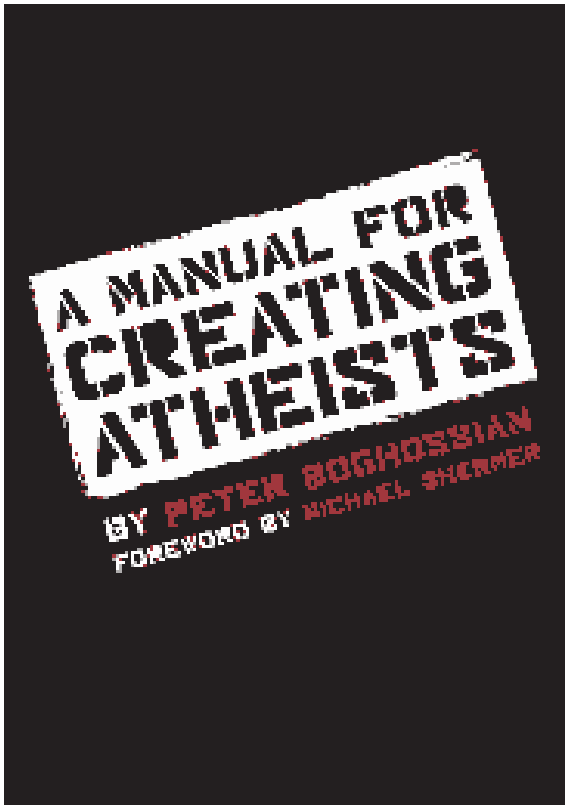
He says:

> What is going on in higher education today is the paradigmatic example of well-educated leftists withholding judgment, teaching others to do the same, and even somehow feeling sanctimonious as a result—as opposed to, just making well-reasoned matter-of-fact judgments.

He also says that relativism has become a moral value and making judgments has become immoral.

We agree with him.

Another leftist academic tenet has become that ideas have dignity. So criticizing an idea becomes akin to criticizing an individual. That is a poor belief when it comes to persuasion.



MORE WISDOM

- **Reject the "I'm offended" power move with power**

Replies the author to a man who pulled today's common "I'm offended" power move:

> Your offense means nothing to me. If you have arguments or evidence I'd like to hear what you have to say. You saying that you're offended carries no weight. Nor should it.

That was solid.
Not meaning to say that it's the best approach in any situation, but it's a very high-power approach that many readers could probably do more of in their lives.

Criticism

My main doubts about the book concern its main mission and the drive behind it:

Is it really “helping” people?

First off, I’d have to wonder:

What’s the difference between helping others and harassing others in the street with what you think is best for them?

Second, even assuming the author is right, and even assuming it’s a goal worth pursuing, are people really better off cured from the “virus of faith”?

I’m not sure about either of them and will let the readers answer for themselves.

Ultimately though, the author indirectly concedes that a life without faith is not necessarily better when he says:

> It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.

That’s the author’s personal philosophy though (and a power move).
And a believer may as well reply that they think the street epistemologist is a fool, *plus* dissatisfied.

Strawman’s Religion To Be Worse Than It May Actually Be

The author frames religion as overly negative, forgetting about the possible positives it may also bring.

Also, some of those negatives seem to be overblown or to be rather poor analyses of the actual causes of certain world ills.

For example, he blames religion on the oppressive Taliban system.
But it’s simplistic to cast blame on religion only. In truth, religion is more of an *excuse* some men rely on to do what they wished to do anyway (and may have done even without religion, but that’s difficult to say).

Also, from a wholly amoral point of view, the Taliban system isn’t necessarily “worse for all”.
And it may as well be “better” for a lot of men

Some Scientific Posturing

The author refers to “intervention” as:

> an attempt to help people or “subjects” as they’re referred to in a clinical context, change their beliefs and/or behavior”.

Street epistemology is not a clinical context.
To call it as such feels like an unwarranted power move to come across as more authoritative by borrowing terms from the psychology and psychiatry professions.

Bellicose Approach to “Mission” and “Believers”

Albeit Boghossian rightfully says you ought to refrain from aggressive approaches when delivering “interventions” with people.

I did find sometimes he was being too aggressive though and making people defensive.

The book does seem at times a bit aggressive and derisive towards believers as well.

PROS

- **Calls out various "gurus" that propose semi-religious movements for personal gains**. Such as, Deepak Chopra
- **Calls out unscientific methods outside of religion as well,** and I liked some persuasive moves with the acupuncturist above
- **Many examples to learn from**
- **Great criticism of cultural relativism with which we wholeheartedly agree**
- **Good call on teaching how to think like scientists, more than scientific facts**: we agree with Boghossian that rational and logical thinking may be one of the most undervalued and under-developed skills in today's society

REVIEW

A Manual for Creating Atheists is a good book to learn some valid persuasion approaches and techniques to potentially change someone's mind.

In our opinion, some could be tweaked and improved, and a stronger overarching framework may be needed. But there are some golden nuggets for influence and persuasion.

Check the **best books** to read

Corruptible: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 July 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Corruptible (2021) investigates how power corrupts people, what type of people are attracted to power, and what we can do as a society to make sure that more good people acquire power, and wield it justly.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - The 4 Corruptible Questions
  - Hypothesis
  - Results
  - Dark Triad Men Advance More Easily
  - The Ideal World Promotes Good People & Discourages Bad Ones
- Video Summary
- MORE WISDOM
  - It's Better To Be A Beta Male Than An Alpha Male
  - Range Weapons Made Size Less Important
  - Complex Societies Amplified The Power of Status
  - Former Poor People Are More Likely To Display Wealth
  - We're Wired For Racism
  - Functional Pyshocpaths May Be Useful to Society, Sometimes
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
  - Initial Questions Felt Only Partially Answered
  - Jumped To Some Conclusions Unsupported By Evidence (political bias)
  - Sometimes A Progressive / Woke Bias
  - Could Add TPM's Solution: Equipping Good People With The Skills To Win
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- Power does corrupt, but not as much as many think
- Power tends to attract worst people, but that's especially true for despot-type of power
- Corrupt systems attract worse people, while better systems attract better people
- The environment changes how people behave, with better environment eliciting better behavior. Meaning…
- **There is much we can do as a society to design systems that attract, screen, and promote better people and leaders**

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Brian Klaas is an American political scientist, a university professor (University College London, LSE), and contributing writer at The Atlantic, and also runs a podcast aptly called "Power Corrupts Podcast".

The 4 Corruptible Questions

Klaas says in the introduction that Corruptible seeks the answer to these 4 questions:

1. Do worse people get power?
2. Does power make people worse?
3. Why do we let poor leaders lead?
4. How can we ensure that incorruptible people get into power and wield it justly?

Hypothesis

After introducing a few initial studies and personal observations (or anecdotes), the author proposes the following hypothesis:

1. **Power makes people worse —power corrupts** (Marc Ravalomanana example)
2. **Worse people are drawn to power—power attracts the corruptible**. (psychopathic pharmacist aboard the Dutch East India Company's Batavia; the guards in Zimbarod's Stanford Prison Experiment).
3. **We are attracted to bad leaders for bad reasons, and so we tend to give them power**. (Study showing that Both kids and adults picked with a 70% accuracy the political election winners just by looking at faces alone. And, I quote, "*several other studies have shown that those who are more aggressive or rude in group discussions are perceived as being more powerful and leader-like than those who are more cooperative or meek*").
4. **System-centric view says that bad organizations attract bad people and good ones good people and incentivize good behavior**. (a study in India showed that the students who cheated more were also more likely to want to join the notoriously corrupt civil service. A similar experiment in Denmark showed the opposite: the more honest students wanted to join the civil service, and the more corrupt ones wanted to pursue careers that would make them very rich)
   - Consequences also matter: a study shows that when diplomats could park illegally in NYC without consequences, diplomats from corrupt countries racked up an endless list of tickets. But even diplomats from "clean" countries started taking advantage of the situation and parking illegally (albeit not nearly as much). But when the mayor changed the rule and parking illegally started incurring costs, the corrupt diplomats quickly dropped the illegal parking
   - Beliefs about the environment also matter, and a study showed that when southern Italian employees moved to the north, they started shirking less. And the other way round

Results

And these are the results of Klaas' investigation:

Power does corrupt: Yes

Most studies find that power does make us worse, says the author (dictators games examples).

Quoting Keltner and his "Power Approach and Inhibition Theory", the author also says that "People who enjoy elevated power are more likely to eat impulsively and have sexual affairs, to violate the rules of the road, to lie and cheat, to shoplift, to take candy from children, and to communicate in rude, profane, and disrespectful ways."

Other potentially negative consequences of power include:

- Risk-taking behavior increase
- Over-confidence in one's ability to control risks (illusory control)
- Lower empathy
- Higher hypocrisy

But with some caveats: people overestimate the “corrupting power of power”

However, power doesn’t corrupt as much as people think.

There are 4 phenomena that make us believe that power corrupts more than it actually does:

- Power sometimes only offer immoral options to tackle some issues: in some cases the options available to those in power involve trade-offs and choices for the “least evil” (“dirty hands” issue)
- Rotten apples get better at being bad, so it’s not like the got worse with power, they simply learned to be more effective which makes them seem like they got worse (“learning to be good at being bad” issue”
- More opportunity for being bad gives the impression of power making people worse, rather than simply being worse than us all (“opportunity knocks” issue)
- People in power seem worse are under heavier scrutiny, so it’s not like they become worse when they get power, but it’s that the bad stuff they’d do anyway is now more likely to surface (“under the microscope” issue)

Worse people are drawn to power: Yes

> Corruptible people are drawn to power like moths to a flame

Especially, dark triads people are strongly drawn to positions that give them an opportunity for dominant leadership—leadership that involves controlling others—and particularly so in finance, sales, law, *and politics*.

Dark triad people aren’t attracted to non-profits.
Instead, says Klaas:

> **The areas where the dark triad is most overrepresented are many of the most influential areas of society.**

We are attracted to bad leaders: Yes

There is a tendency for people to fall for the allure of the charismatic, the confidence of the narcissists, the social dominance of the political strongmen.

Bad environments attract worse people: Yes

Systems and places that are notoriously corrupt and offer large rewards without any oversight against bad behavior attract more corrupt people.

The system can make people better or worse: Yes

Not only do we behave differently depending on systems, but we also behave differently depending on how we *believe* a system operates.

We can shape our environments to improve leadership for all: Yes

Klaas says that many of our current systems to elect people in power *help* bad people to get power.

For example, in corporations, the standard job interviews are perfect formats for narcissists, Machiavellians, and psychopaths.

The author then lists a few solutions to how we can improve our systems to attract, screen, and promote better people.

Dark Triad Men Advance More Easily

Says Klaas:

> In another study, researchers evaluated just under a thousand corporate employees for dark triad traits. They found that narcissists made more money and Machiavellians were better at climbing the corporate ladder. Psychopathy, on the other hand, damaged the career prospects of employees who scored high on it, probably skewed by the "unsuccessful" or undisciplined psychopaths who were unable to blend in.

However, the author then adds a caveat to psychopaths' apparent unsuccess:

> When they work in harmony, some of the most destructive elements of psychopathy can not only be blunted, but turned into advantages. The psychopaths who are in the boardrooms are the intelligent ones who figured out a way to control themselves as they sought to control others.

Klass also mentions some authors and researchers whose work we reviewed here such as Dutton and his *Wisdom of Psychopaths* and Babiak/Hare.

We wrote extensively on this and it's one TPM's reasons of existence: to level the field for the good guys.
Also read:

- **The myth of emotional intelligence: Machiavellis at the top**

https://thepowermoves.com/psychopathy-empathy-and-success-at-work

The Ideal World Promotes Good People & Discourages Bad Ones

The ideal world would:

1. Make sure that incorruptibles seek power, get it, and hold on to
2. Make it harder for corruptibles to do the same

Says the author:

> The challenge facing us is figuring out how to get more of those shy incorruptibles to start competing with the overconfident narcissistic corruptibles who were born believing that they deserve power because they're God's gift to man.

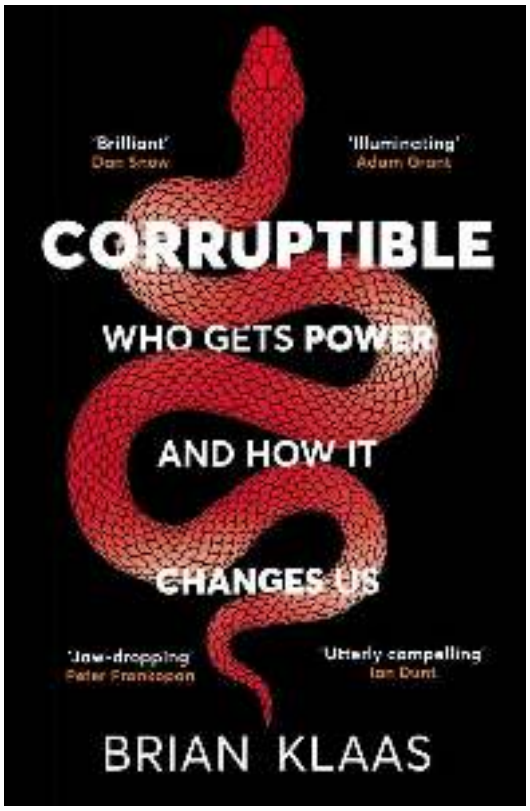
With this website, that's how :).

The author proposes a few solutions, including:

- Get a broader and deeper pool of applications to choose from
- Actively seek kinder people with job descriptions and screening process
- Use oversight: "watched people are better-behaved people"
  - Use oversight by sortition
  - Use "random surveillance" to avoid a dystopian big brother of constant recording
- Maintain a strong free press with investigative journalism
- Rotate people to prevent entrenched corruption
- Audit decision-making, not just results
- Remind people of the responsibility of leadership and power
- Show people in power and leadership the costs and consequences of their action

- Decrease psychological distance. Such as, never allowing those in power to see people as abstractions, such as reported as aggregate numbers (many tools of leadership and war today instead serve to *increase* the distance)
- Psychological assessments for the top power positions:

> But for those seeking significant power, a more thorough review at the early stages is likely to save a ton of time, money, and avoidable damage later. And for positions of enormous consequence, such as heads of state or CEOs of major companies, psychological evaluations for dark triad traits are probably wise, even if they're currently considered unusual or insulting. At that level of power, the stakes are simply too high to worry about a brief bit of intrusive questioning.



Video Summary

In this (great) video the author himself provides an almost chapter-by-chapter summary of *Corruptible*:

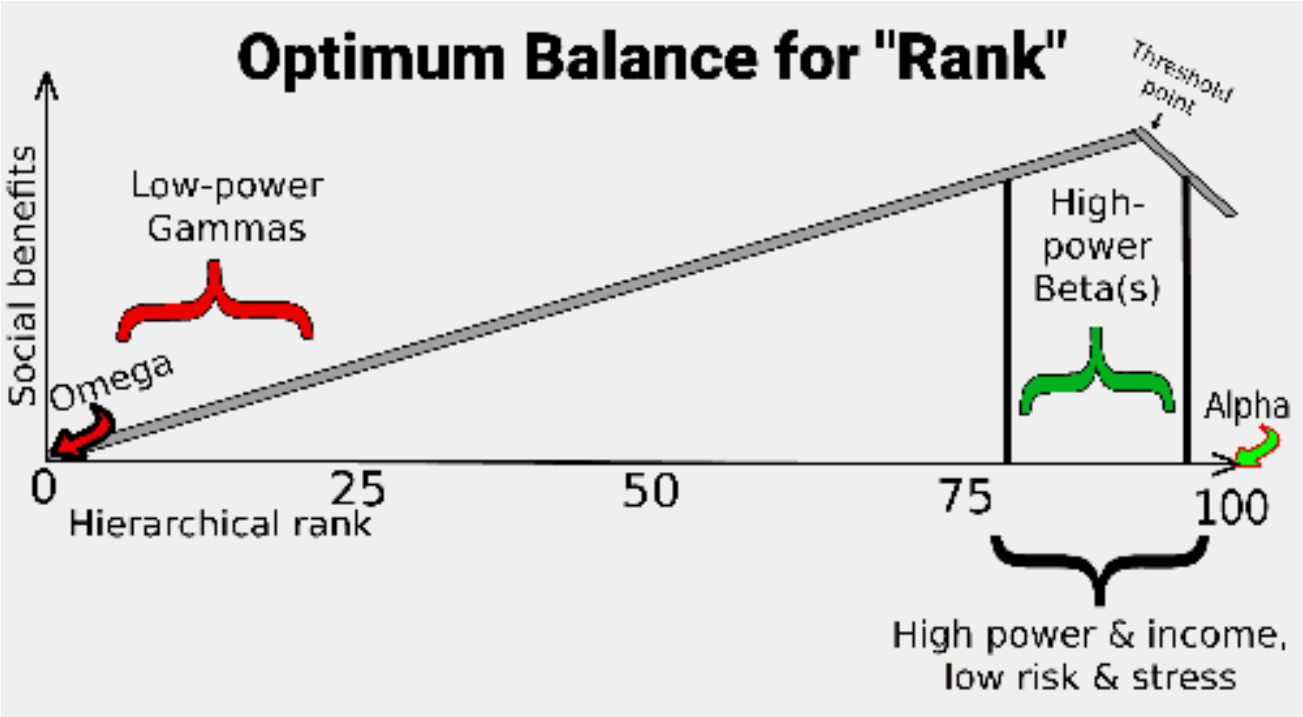
MORE WISDOM

It's Better To Be A Beta Male Than An Alpha Male

Just to be clear, we're talking about literal "beta" here, as in "second in command":

> Sapolsky's theory was bolstered by a 2011 study led by Laurence Gesquiere of Princeton (…) the alpha males at the pinnacle were extraordinarily stressed (…) The best position to occupy was the beta male slot, where you could get access to all the spoils of power without the risk that comes with being the baboon sovereign.

And in humans, a study found that CEOs of company during financial turmoil looked like they had aged faster.



Range Weapons Made Size Less Important

An interesting and alternative theory on why size is less important to human status and success than most other great apes:

> The development of ranged weapons therefore changed what "the fittest" meant when it came to survival of the fittest. Size was no longer as important. Evolutionary biologists have argued that this shift is a key reason why the physical size differences between males and females are narrower in humans than in any other great ape species.

For the record, I don't personally think this is the main reason why.
The development of our brain has probably had a much bigger impact (and the development of weaponry is only one of the many consequences of our brain).

Complex Societies Amplified The Power of Status

Klaas provides readers with this historical background:

1. Original hunter-gatherer tribes were too small and "status flat"
2. As societies grew, the game of status and power changed
3. Powerful people hold much power in our bigger societies
4. The are both pros and cons to hierarchies, but they're here to stay anyway, so no point in fighting them

Former Poor People Are More Likely To Display Wealth

In this case, the common pop-psychology trope of inferring over-compensation seems to be true:

> Signals of excess wealth are particularly likely among those who have come from deprived backgrounds. It's a mechanism to show the world that they've made it and now inhabit a new status.

We’re Wired For Racism

> Unfortunately, our Stone Age brains produce serious biases about people who look different. For survival, our social species has evolved to quickly use cues to identify whether someone is like us, and a friend, or unlike us, and a potential foe.
> (…)
> many people still rely on these arcane, bigoted sorting mechanisms as a cognitive shortcut, even though it’s completely irrational.

Functional Pyshocpaths May Be Useful to Society, Sometimes

Says the author:

> Dutton and Ray may have a point. In some jobs, being cold and unaffected by stress or emotion are hugely useful. Dutton highlights a few, such as being a surgeon or a Special Forces soldier. Both are at their best when they blunt their emotions the most. Functional psychopaths might also make excellent bomb-disposal technicians who never crack under pressure. In previous research, elite troops and bomb-disposal technicians didn’t experience massive spikes in their heart rates during intense stress. Some were actually more relaxed in highly stressful situations. That physiological abnormality allows them to carry out intense tasks without getting overwhelmed. Perhaps there’s a way to channel the dark triad to make society a little brighter.

However, the author strongly differentiates between functional and non-functional.
Plus, he adds, it’s not like you can so easily differentiate between the two:

> But here’s the rub: How can you tell whether a psychopath is functional? Manipulative superficial charm comes naturally to them. They’re often masters of deception. What if you get it wrong? Do you want a dysfunctional psychopath cloaked as a functional one in a Special Forces unit? Screening tests and psychological evaluations are useful, but they’re not foolproof. Even if you could correctly discern that someone is a “functional” psychopath, would you go into surgery knowing one is about to slice you open?

Higher Testosterone May Further Exacerbate The Negative Effects of Power

> For an added (and especially dignified) twist, the researchers also had participants drool into a straw. This allowed the researchers to measure testosterone levels in those who signed up for the experiment. When the researchers analyzed the data, they found something conspicuous: those who were in the high-power group and had high levels of testosterone were exceptionally likely to take the money for themselves.

Strongmen Political Leaders Exacerbate Threats To Justify Their Strongmen Stance

Authoritarian strongmen stoke up threats and fears to consolidate power.

In general, people prefer more masculine-looking and more aggressive men when they feel under threat.
So the political strongmen try to activate our hunter-gatherer instincts to seek the “strong leader” when we perceive a threat.

QUOTES

On hierarchy as natural to humans:

> when humans get together in larger groups, flat societies become impossible. Put enough people together, and

> hierarchy and dominance always emerge. It's an ironclad rule of history.

On dictator types being good at (false) self-promotion:

> While Il Duce is rightly regarded as a fascist monster, one bit of acclaim has stayed affixed to his legacy, like a lonely beauty mark stubbornly poking out of an authoritarian carbuncle. I'm referring to the adage "He made the trains run on time." There's one problem with that statement: he actually didn't.
> (…)
> Nonetheless, the Italian fascist did what so many in power do masterfully: he took credit for decisions made by others. If you only focus on surface-level results without examining the underlying context or the decision-making itself, you'll end up reinforcing bad behavior rather than deterring it.

CRITICISM

I learned a lot from *Corruptible*, and it's a great book.
If the author addressed the following, it could become a classic and even a "TPM endorsed book":

Initial Questions Felt Only Partially Answered

The four initial questions the author listed made me drool at the learning prospects in *Corruptible*.

And Klaas did a great job at selecting those questions that go at the core of power, and how we can work on it as a society for the benefit of all.

He also does a good job at partially answering some of them.

Unluckily, I felt though that *Corruptible* wasn't fully dedicated to answering them, that the chapters were not laid out accordingly, and that the conclusions were far from clear.

Of course, for some questions, you cannot reach a clear conclusion.
But the "impossibility of reaching a conclusion" is also a conclusion. Most of all, it felt to me that reaching a more conclusive answer wasn't attempted.

Instead, I got a lot of stories of police brutality, not enough women leading, and the empathy of psychopaths.
All arguments that felt tangential to the initial questions.

For example, I had to remove this whole section from the summary because I couldn't find any final answer:

Who Gets & Keeps Power? Who Does NOT Want Power? Wasn't Clear To Me

Early and across the book, the author asks these questions:

1. Who *doesn't* seek power: ???
2. Who seeks power:
   - Genetical factors: 30% of the variation of leadership positions held in life is accountable
   - Psychology: people high in dark triads, "need for power" (nPow), "Social Dominance Orientation" (SDO)
   - Dark triad men, who sometimes seek shortcuts to power despite the obvious risks (most despots end up badly, says the author)
3. Who gets power: ???
4. Who keeps power: ???

My Note:
I personally feel that the answers to these initial questions weren't very clear and well-developed in the book -or at

least, weren't clear enough for me to pick up on-.

Stories & Examples Detract From More Dispassionate Analysis

Stories are necessary to sell well.

Unluckily, sometimes they can take good space away from more dispassionate analyses and evidence.
And they can seed confusion, rather than add clarity -see various Malcolm Gladwell books, for example-.

To someone who's looking for wisdom and stronger, more data-backed conclusions (ie.: me), stories are often more likely to detract, than to add value.

I found that the many stories in *Corruptible* were yes interesting, but that also made the book less clear and somewhat less conclusive.

Evolutionary Excursus Felt Too Long & Not Always Most Relevant

Also, I personally felt some parts were not correct.

The author advances range weapons as a "possible theory" as to why violence, brute force, and size matter less in humans than in chimps.

But even as a possible theory, it seems to me it doesn't hold much water compared to other theories.

For example, why look at range weapons when we can explain via our brain development which in turn allowed for the development of weapons?
Usually, the deeper reason has more explaining power than the surface-level one.

Jumped To Some Conclusions Unsupported By Evidence (political bias)

For example, the author says:

> (…) And maybe we, as humans, are somehow drawn to bad leaders for bad reasons.

However, the listed evidence to draw that conclusion are a study showing that we can pick election winners based on face and, I quote "*several other studies have shown that those who are more aggressive or rude in group discussions are perceived as being more powerful and leader-like than those who are more cooperative or meek*".

However, to me, the fact that people can pick election winners based on their faces says nothing about "picking bad leaders".
And a more aggressive person is also not necessarily a worse leader than a meek one -how would "meek" even make for a good leader trait?-.
A rude one may be a worse leader than a cooperative one, but I'd have liked to take a look at the study, to be honest, but it wasn't listed.
How was "rude" defined", and how "cooperative" was defined, for example?
Because as far as I know people don't exactly love rude people and if there was a high-power but juster person in that group, I believe most people would have chosen the higher-power but just person-.

Sometimes A Progressive / Woke Bias

Unluckily, I had the feeling of political bias.

For example:

The "white men CEOs problem" in tech

To me, the very same frame that it's something that needs to be fixed sub-communicates possible bias.

And then jumping to the conclusion that there is some systematic bias that needs to be fixed.

But the author never considers there may be reasons beyond bias that lead more (white) men to found companies.

Of course, there may be cultural or environmental roadblocks or elements that discourage women or other races to end up as tech CEO leaders.

However, in my opinion, the author doesn't account nearly enough for the genetic and "natural" factor that leads more men to start and lead more tech companies.

In-group and outgroup are "completely irrational" shortcut biases?

Says the author:

> Crucially, those from an out-group are more likely to be people that we see as potential threats—a point that we'll return to momentarily.
> Today, many people still rely on these arcane, bigoted sorting mechanisms as a cognitive shortcut, even though it's completely irrational.

Hemm… And how exactly is that "completely" irrational?
Because I bet if it evolved, chances are that it worked.
And even today, I can think of a million reasons and situations where it's *completely* rational as a quick shortcut.

Of course, we can all agree that it's far from perfect and that it has way too many downsides, including society-harming downsides.
And still, that doesn't make it "completely irrational".

There are more examples, such as discounting all judgments based on appearances as biased and wrong, while instead research says that some judgments based on appearances and stereotypes can be more correct than pure chance.

Slight anti-American police bias

The author makes great points about policing and I learned quite a bit from it.

And yes, it may be true that, on average, American police are too aggressive.

However, by holding the positive example of New Zealand against the negative one of the US, the author seems to be making politically-charged statements about what's better and what's worse.
And he seems to jump to the conclusion that a "politer" and more "civilized" police force is necessarily better than a more civilized one.

Albeit that may often be true, it's rushed to jump to that conclusion as if it were true in all situations and environments.
Where's the data to show that sometimes more militarily skilled police may not be better for certain places or environments?
What if the "highly civilized" police force may be less effective in areas of high criminality?

Bit dismissive of the Stanford Prison experiment?

Says the author introducing Zimbardo's famous Stanford Prison experiment:

> If you've ever read a pop psychology book or watched a documentary about prisons, odds are pretty high that you've heard of a notorious study that seemed to suggest power does indeed corrupt. There's just one problem: **everything you think you know about that study is wrong**.

Well, the author is right: there has been much misunderstanding around that experiment -and, in my opinion probably too much over-correction in the criticism during the replication crisis storm-.
And it's true what he says next, such as that the study likely attracted a certain type of people (self-selection bias).

But still, as Zimbardo himself said, the experiment simply (also shows) that the environment does shape human's behavior, and that the environment is likely a far more powerful force than most people would assume (something I'm sure the author would also agree with).

Could Add TPM's Solution: Equipping Good People With The Skills To Win

The author lists some great solutions to the problem of "bad people in power".

Our approach at TPM could have been a good addition:

Teaching good people how to compete and win.
That way, we don't need to hope that the system can recognize the good people and screen out the bad ones. The better people -as in "lower in dark triad traits"- will at least have a chance to make it despite it all.

REVIEW

We applaud *Corruptible* for tackling one of the most critical questions for humanity: who seeks power, who gains it, and how it shapes our civilization.
These questions lie at the core of human nature, social progress, and effective governance—and align closely with this website's mission.

Klaas brings plenty of insight, engaging storytelling, and thought-provoking takeaways. But despite the book's strengths, I was left wanting more.

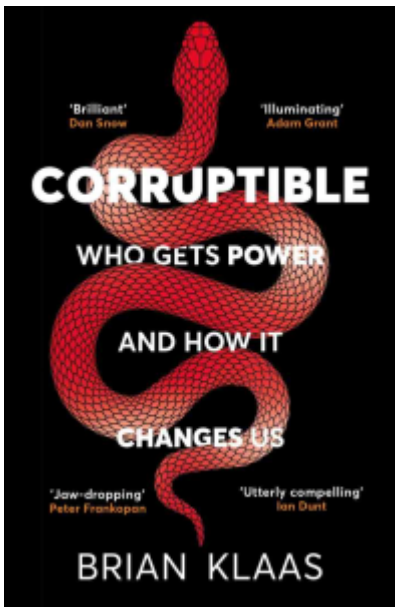
The original questions are powerful, yet the answers sometimes lose clarity in favor of anecdotes. There's too much narrative, too little hard data. And at times, the underlying political bias and cultural determinism reflect a Standard Social Science Model that doesn't sufficiently account for human nature and evolutionary drivers.

That's a missed opportunity. With sharper focus and more empirical grounding, this could have been a classic—a foundational reference we'd cite repeatedly in our work.

Still, *Corruptible* remains an excellent read.
It's packed with wisdom, useful perspectives, and actionable ideas on improving power structures.
I learned a lot, will reference it often, and fully recommend it.

Check the **best books** on power or **get this book on Amazon**.

Corruptible Summary: Why Power Attracts the Worst People



Corruptible (2021) investigates how power corrupts people, what type of people are attracted to power, and what we can do as a society to make sure that more good people acquire power, and wield it justly.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/corruptible-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4

Rules for Radicals: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 July 2023 · Archived copy · Original

"Rules for Radicals" (1971), written by Saul D. Alinsky, is a guide for grassroots organizers and activists, particularly those with left-leaning ideologies, on how to effectively bring about political change and promote social justice.

Contents

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  - Overview
  - Learn Power Dynamics
  - The Powerful Frame "Revolution" Negatively To Maintain Power
  - Morals Are Tools of Manipulation
  - The Have-Notes Are Mentally Disempowered
  - 11 Rules For Radicals
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Exec Summary

- **Power is neither good nor bad, but necessary** to enact change in the world
- **The rich and powerful manipulate the poor to keep the status quo**
- **The poor and "Have-Nots" are mentally disempowered**, and deep down think they are "less worthy" than the powerful ones

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Saul D. Alinsky was an American community activist and left-wing political theorist. He helped organize poor communities to press demands and gain concessions from landlords, politicians, bankers, and business leaders.

Overview

The central theme of *Rules For Radicals* is the empowerment of the lower classes by almost any means.

Because of that "anything goes" approach, Alinsky can come across as a rather extreme and divisive figure.
He champions the use of collective action, strategies, and techniques to tilt the supposedly unfair power structures in favor of the have-nots.
But that includes revolutions and any type of power move.

He says of his own book:

> *The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power. Rules for Radicals is written for

> the Have-Nots on how to take it away.

In Alinsky's political view, that is "social justice".
And from that self-appointed moral high ground, he outlines approaches and strategies for activists to mobilize and lead communities to foster that social justice.

Learn Power Dynamics

Alinsky emphasizes the importance of understanding power dynamics to organize and lead effective change.

Learn more about power dynamics:

- **Why power dynamics is the most important self-development discipline**

> Why Power Dynamics is The Most Important Self-Help Discipline

Leverage Power

Alinsky argues that power is neither good or bad.

Instead, power is a neutral force that can be used for both good and bad purposes.

And he says that organizers must understand the sources of power in society and know how to maneuver them, recruit them, or put pressure on them to achieve their goals.

The Powerful Frame "Revolution" Negatively To Maintain Power

> From the Haves, on the other hand, there has come an unceasing flood of literature justifying the status quo. Religious, economic, social, political, and legal tracts endlessly attack all revolutionary ideas and action for change as immoral, fallacious and against God, country, and mother.
> These literary sedations by the status quo include the threat that, since all such movements are unpatriotic, subversive, spawned in hell and reptilian in their creeping insidiousness, dire punishments will be meted out to their supporters.

Morals Are Tools of Manipulation

> Justice, morality, law, and order, are mere words when used by the Haves, which justify and secure their status quo.

Learn more about manipulation:

- How manipulation works

> Manipulation: Techniques, Strategies, & Ethics

The Have-Notes Are Mentally Disempowered

There is much wisdom and truth in these words:

> **The Have-Nots have a limited faith in the worth of their own judgments**. They still look to the judgments

> of the Haves. They respect the strength of the upper class and they believe that the Haves are more intelligent, more competent, and endowed with "something special." Distance has a way of enhancing power, so that respect becomes tinged with reverence.

This is not just about the "Have-Nots", but generally for anyone who isn't yet mentally empowered.

We teach mental empowerment in Power University.

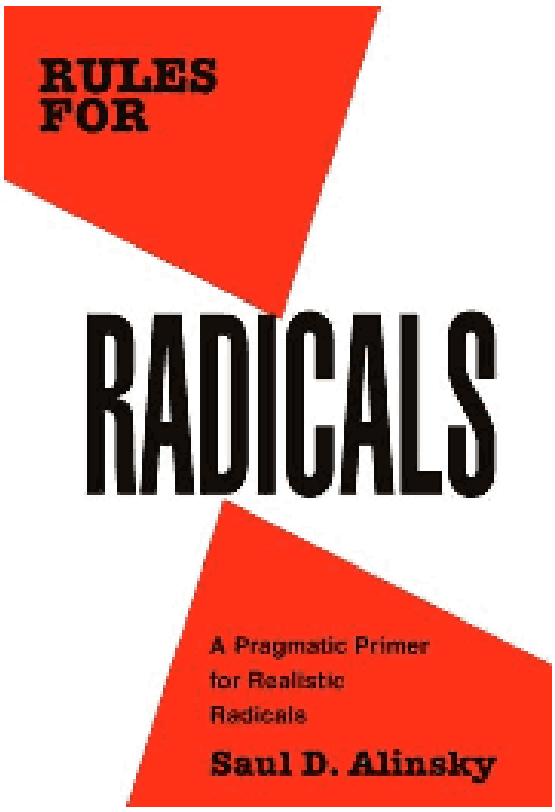
11 Rules For Radicals

The author obviously didn't work too hard to make these easy to understand:

1. **Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have**. Hide your true numbers and make others think you have more
2. **Never go outside the experience of your people**, ie.: talk to them in a way they understand
3. **Whenever possible, go outside the experience of your enemy** to confuse him
4. **Make enemies live up to their own book of rules**, since they can "no more obey their own rules than the Christian church can live up to Christianity"
5. **Use ridicule to infuriate your enemy**, which then reacts to your advantage
6. **Use tactics your people enjoy**, so they'll partake
7. **A tactic that drags on for too long becomes a drag**, so switch things up
8. **Keep the pressure on**, never let up
9. **The threat is more terrifying than the thing itself**.
10. **The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain constant pressure upon the opposition**.
11. **If you push a negative hard and deep enough, it will break through into its counterside.**
12. **The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.**
13. **Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.** Avoid attacking abstract entities such as businesses or bureaucracies. Instead, identify a responsible individual and go after him

Personally and frankly, I found these rules poorly thought-through.
They may have good principles and strategies behind them, but they aren't well conceptualized.
And *far* from clear upon first reading them.

There is a reason why *The 48 Laws of Power* became a best-seller, and *Rules for Radicals* did not.
Greene packaged his "laws" in a way that they make sense and are easy to understand *at the title level*, are easy to remember, and sell well.
Saul Alinsky did not.



MORE WISDOM

Let people come up with their own answers to increase buy-in and follow-through

> Another maxim in effective communication is that people have to make their own decisions.
> Much of the time, though, the organizer will have a pretty good idea of what the community should be doing, and he will want to suggest, maneuver, and persuade the community toward that action. He will not ever seem to tell the community what to do; instead, he will use loaded questions.

Shock people with a power move to gain their respect

Says the author talking to a group of Indians:

> **ME**: No, I don't know what you mean. Furthermore, I think that that's just a pile of shit. Do you believe it yourself?
> This brought a shocked silence. It should be noted that I was not being profane purely for the sake of being profane, I was doing this purposefully. If I had responded in a tactful way, saying, "Well, I don't quite understand what you mean, "we would have been off for a ride around the rhetorical ranch for the next thirty days. Here profanity became literally an up-against-the-wall bulldozer.

And this was the reaction of the Indians:

> "When Mr. Alinsky told us we were full of shit, that was the first time a white man has really talked to us as equals—you would never say that to us. You would always say 'Well, I can see your point of view but I'm a little confused,' and stuff like that. In other words you treat us as children."

QUOTES

On how to pressure politicians:

> No politician can sit on a hot issue if you make it hot enough.

On the revolutionary spirit:

> in the spirit of that credo of the Spanish Civil War, 'Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees.' This means revolution.

Political realism shows a not-so-appealing world:

> Political realists see the world as it is: an arena of power politics moved primarily by perceived immediate self-interests, where morality is rhetorical rationale for expedient action and self-interest.
> (…)
> It is a world not of angels but of angles, where men speak of moral principles but act on power principles

CONS

- The genius of the author may get lost in his political bias
- A backdrop of anger and hostility permeates the book
- Revolutions are framed as mostly good, but if your goal is to improve, revolutions are *at best* a coin toss. In modern wealthy societies, revolutions are most likely a step backward

PROS

- Several golden nuggets
- Some good and dispassionate insights into human nature

REVIEW

Rules for Radicals is an interesting book with some good concepts, several golden nuggets of social strategy, and a heavy left-leaning political bias.

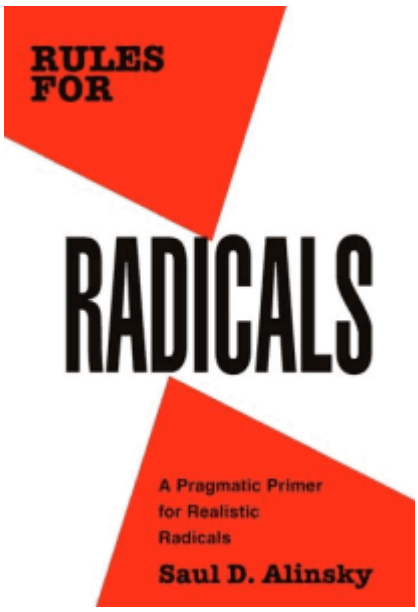
The author seems to have a good grasp on power dynamics, and yet fails to realize that the "Have-Nots" may not be any better than the "Haves" if they had the power.

In many instances, they may be worse, since the "Haves" tend to be more driven and ambitious. Drive and ambition within a functioning capitalistic system tend to benefit many with constant progress and better products and services for all.
Of course exceptions apply and capitalism is far from perfect, but I'd rather have the brightest and most driven to advance, than the angriest and most bitter revolutionaries.

Overall, it's an interesting book with some good insights if you can look beyond the political extremism.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Rules for Radicals Summary: Alinsky's 11 Power Tactics



"Rules for Radicals" (1971), written by Saul D. Alinsky, is a guide for grassroots organizers and activists, particularly those with left-leaning ideologies, on how to effectively bring about political change and promote social justice.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/rules-for-radicals-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3

What Do You Say After You Say Hello: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 July 2023 · Archived copy · Original

What Do You Say After You Say Hello (1975) introduces Eric Berne's theory of "childhood scripts" that are set up by parents and that determine people's destinies.

Contents

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Exec Summary

- **We all have scripts that govern our lives** and that were set by our parents
- **Our scripts are our destiny**
- **Most people are unaware they're living out scripts**
- **The only way to be free and live out of free will is to become aware of our scripts**

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Eric Berne was a Canadian psychiatrist and founder of transactional analysis, a theory of social interactions to explain human behavior.
Berne is also the author of the more accessible, famous, and popular *Games People Play*.

Introduction

What Do You Say After You Say Hello seeks to answer four questions:

1. How do you say Hello?
2. How do you say Hello back?
3. What do you say after you say Hello?
4. What is everybody doing instead of saying Hello?

In brief:

1. To say Hello, you first get rid of all the trash accumulated in your head ever since you came home from the maternity ward, and then you recognize that this particular Hello will never happen again.
2. To say Hello back, you get rid of all the trash in your head and see that somebody is standing there or walking by, waiting for you to say Hello back. It may take years to learn how to do that.
3. After you say Hello, you get rid of all the trash that is coming back into your head; all the after-burns of all the grievances you have experienced, and all the reach-backs of all the troubles you are planning to get into. Then you will be speechless and will not have anything to say. After more years of practice, you might think of something worth saying.
4. Mostly, this book is about the trash: the things people are doing to each other instead of saying Hello. The first problem in answering the other three questions is to see what is trash and what isn't.

What's transaction analysis

> Transactional analysis is a theory of personality and social action, and a clinical method of psychotherapy, based on the analysis of all possible transactions between two or more people, on the basis of specifically defined ego states, into a finite number of established types (nine complementary, 72 crossed, 6480 duplex, and 36 angular). Only about 15 of these commonly occur in ordinary practice;

And anything that does not analyze single transactions into their component-specific ego states is not transactional analysis.

What's a "game"

> Games are sets of ulterior transactions, repetitive in nature, with a well-defined psychological payoff. Since an ulterior transaction means that the agent pretends to be doing one thing while he is really doing something else, all games involve a con
> (…)
> After the 'mark' is hooked, the player pulls some sort of switch in order to get his payoff. The switch is followed by a moment of confusion or crossup while the mark tries to figure out what has happened to him. Then both players collect their payoffs as the game ends. The payoff, which is mutual, consists of feelings (not necessarily similar) which the game arouses in both the agent and the respondent.

Just because something repeats, it's not necessarily a game.
For example, if a patient is worried and asks the therapist for reassurance and he replies with an honest "thank you", it's not a game because the patient was honest and straight.

However, if another patient asks for reassurance and then uses the response to make the therapist look stupid, that's a game:

> For example, a patient asked: 'Do you think I'll get better, doctor?' and the sentimental therapist replied 'Of course you will.' At that point the patient revealed her ulterior motive in asking the question. Instead of saying 'Thank you', as in a straight transaction, she pulled the switch with: 'What makes you think you know

> everything?'
> This reply crossed the therapist up and threw him off balance for a moment, which is what the patient wanted to do.
> Then the game ended, the patient feeling elated at having conned the therapist, and he feeling frustrated; and those were the payoffs.

My note: the "game" was a simple one-up
Basically, what Berne calls a game here is a one-up power move.

The math behind the game

> This can be represented by a formula.
> C + G = R → S → X → P (Formula G) C+G means that the con hooks into a gimmick, so that the respondent responds (R). The player then pulls the switch (S), and that is followed by a moment of confusion or crossup (X), after which both players collect their payoffs (P).

Real intimacy is game-free

> Beyond games lies the other limiting case of what can take place between people, which is called intimacy. **Bilateral intimacy is defined as a candid, game-free relationship, with mutual free giving and receiving and without exploitation**. Intimacy can be one-sided, since one party may be candid and freely giving, while the other may be devious and exploitative.

What's a script

> A script is an ongoing life plan formed in early childhood under parental pressure.
> It is the psychological force which propels the person toward his destiny, regardless of whether he fights it or says it is his own free will.

A script requires:

1. Parental directives
2. A suitable personality development
3. A childhood decision
4. A real turn-on to a particular method of success or failure
5. A convincing attitude (or a credible stance, as they say nowadays)

Preventive medicine based on understanding the script

> if we know some of the elements of the patient's script, we can predict with some confidence where he is heading, and head him off before he meets with misfortune or disaster. That is called preventive psychiatry, or 'making progress.' Even better, we can get him to change his script or give it up altogether, which is curative psychiatry, or 'getting well.'

The 4 Positions of Transactional Analysis

I +, You +

> This is the 'healthy' position (or in treatment, the 'get well' one), the best one for decent living, the position of genuine heroes and princes, and heroines and princesses. People in the other positions have more or less frog in them, a losing streak put there by their parents, which will drag them down again and again unless they overcome it; in extreme cases they will waste themselves if they are not rescued by a miracle of psychiatric or self-healing. I + You + is what the hippies were trying to tell the policeman when they gave him a flower. But whether the I + is genuine or merely a pious hope, and whether the policeman will accept the + or will prefer to be – on this particular scene, is always in doubt. I + You + is something the person either grows into in early life, or must learn by hard labor thereafter; it cannot be attained merely by an act of will

Men in this position (I + You +) make good leaders because even in utmost adversity they maintain their universal respect for themselves and those they lead.

I +, You –

> I'm a prince, you're a frog. This is the 'get rid of' position. These are the people who play 'Blemish' as a pastime, a game, or a deadly procedure. They are the ones who sneer at their spouses, send their children to juvenile hall, and fire their friends and retainers. They start crusades and sometimes wars, and sit in groups finding fault with their real or imagined inferiors or enemies. This is the 'arrogant' position, at worst a killer's, and at best a meddler's for people who make it their business to help the 'not-OK others' with things they don't want to be helped with. But for the most part it is a position of mediocrities, and clinically it is paranoid

I -, You +

> This is psychologically the 'depressive' position, politically and socially a self-abasement transmitted to the children. Occupationally, it leads people to live by choice on favors large and small and enjoy it with a vengeance, that being the poor satisfaction of making the other pay as much as possible for his OK stamp. These are melancholic suicides, losers who call themselves gamblers, people who get rid of themselves instead of others by isolating themselves in obscure rooming houses or canyons or by getting a ticket to prison or the psychiatric ward. It is the position of the 'If Onlys' and 'I Should Haves.'

I -, You +

> This is the 'futility' position of the Why Notters: Why not kill yourself, Why not go crazy. Clinically, it is schizoid or schizophrenic

These positions come from childhood and tend to be stable.
The change must come from within, either spontaneously or with some therapeutic influence: professional treatment, or love, which is nature's psychotherapy.

The Sub-Positions

- 1a. **I + You + They +**. democratic community position of a neighborly family, a sort of ideal to be striven for in the eyes of many people, stated as 'We love everybody.'
- 1b. **I + You + They –**. prejudiced snob- or gang-position of a demagogue, stated as 'Who needs them?'
- 2a. **I + You – They +**. the agitator or malcontent, and sometimes of missionaries of various kinds. 'You people here are no good compared to the ones over there.'
- 2b. **I + You – They –**. the solitary, self-righteous critic, the arrogant position in pure form. 'Everybody must

bow before me and be as much like me as inferior people can.'

- 3a. **I – You + They +**. self-punishing saint or masochist, the melancholic position in pure form. 'I am the most unworthy person in the world.'
- 3b. **I – You + They –.** the servile position of people who choose to work for gratuities out of snobbishness rather than necessity. 'I abased myself and you rewarded me well, not like those other inferior ones.'
- 4a. **I – You – They +**. servile envy, and sometimes of political action. 'They hate us because we are not as well off.'
- 4b. **I – You – They –.** This is the pessimistic position of cynics or of those who believe in predestination and original sin. 'We are none of us any good anywhere.'

Then there are the insecure or unstable ones:

> For example: 1? I + You + They ? This is an evangelistic position. 'I and you are OK, but we don't know about them until they show their credentials or come over to our side.' 2? I + You ? They –. This is an aristocratic class position. 'Most other people are no good, but as for you, I'll wait until I see your credentials.'

The predicates are what you compare about

For example, one may discriminate, and feel "more of" or "less of" on a whole host of "features" such as religion, money, race, sex, etc.,

These are called "predicates"
Predicates determine the lifestyle, but have nothing to do with the outcome.

Your position is your destiny

Your set of positions determines your script -or destiny-.

For example, I + You – They – (2b) will almost always end up alone, no matter what he feels superior about: religion, money, race, sex, etc.
And I – You + They + (3a) end up miserable and perhaps suicidal no matter what particular qualities he feels unworthy about.

Black and white thinking VS nuances

The most dangerous positions for society are based on a single pair of OK-not-OK adjectives: Black-White, Rich-Poor, Christian-Pagan, Bright-Stupid, Jew-Aryan, Honest-Crooked.

> The more adjectives included in each + and –, the more complex and flexible the position becomes, and the more intelligence and discrimination is required to deal with it securely. Sets of adjectives may be added together for emphasis (not only, but also), subtracted from each other for softening (but at least he also), weighed for fairness (but which is more important?), and so on. Thus to some black people, Rich Crooked White may be very not-OK (he's all bad – – –) compared to Rich Crooked Black (at least he's Black – – +), or to Rich Honest White (at least he's honest – + –), or to Poor Crooked White (at least he's poor like us + – –).

CONS

Limited-application theory: most people don't have strong script

Keep this in mind:

Berne developed his theory with people in his practice.
And those were a lot more likely to have stronger scripts -and issues- than the average person.

Berne himself is aware of it when he says:

> Psychotherapists know more about 'bad' scripts than about 'good' ones because they are more dramatic and people spend more time talking about them. Freud, for example, cites innumerable case histories of losers, and about the only winners in his works are Moses, Leonardo da Vinci, and himself.

And indeed, Berne's work applies most people with very strong scripts and on "fanatics".

Or, at least, people who feel strongly about something -the "predicate"-, and feel strongly superior or inferior based on that.

However, a large portion of people you meet aren't fanatics, and don't particularly feel superior or inferior to others.

Hence, transaction analysis wouldn't seem the best instrument to analyze them.

Fails evolutionary psychology: there's no "trash" we learn, just humans

Berne wasn't alive to see evolutionary psychology become as popular as it did.

So it's normal that Berne doesn't fully appreciate that human beings don't really learn what he calls "trash".

What he calls "trash" can't be easily discarded because it's deeply embedded into the human psyche and it's simply

part of “who we are”.

So his goals and ideals also seem naive when he says that his approach will cure all human ills:

> The way people speak who are learning to say Hello is called ‘Martian,’ to distinguish it from everyday Earth-talk, which, as history shows from from the earliest recorded times in Egypt and Babylonia to the present, has led to wars, famines, pestilence, and death; and, in the survivors, to a certain amount of mental confusion. It is hoped that in the long run, Martian, properly learned and properly taught, will help to eliminate these plagues.

To me, that also feels like an “I’m better than you teacher frame” while talking down on people.

Yeah, you go, Eric, teach us how you failed to bring about your superior man revolution then…

Berne forgets that people have innate drives + adult life experiences

Says Berne:

> The child knows, because he is so taught, whether he is going to be a winner or a loser, how he is supposed to feel about other people, and how other people are going to treat him

But that’s not fully true.
Many children are born with innate high self-esteem or confidence.
And some others may be taught they’re losers or winners, but as soon as social and adult life begins, they’ll quickly find out whether those teachings are true or not.

Conflates numbers with rigor and veracity

Says the author:

> The reader may wonder why there are so many numbers in this section. There are three reasons (…) is to demonstrate that transactional analysis is more precise than most other social and psychological theories.

However, adding **numbers per se do not guarantee precision -and neither do they guarantee soundness, usefulness, or correctness**-.

As a matter of fact, adding numbers may be a power move to come across as more authoritative and make the theory *seem* more conving through over-complication.

Basically, Berne was himself pulling a game/power move on his readers.

Eric Berne is not a scientist...

Because he defends and “sells” his theory, rather than being ready to falsify it.

Berne says transaction analysis is “efficient”, “very effective” because no examples have been found among thousands or millions of interchanges between human beings which could not be dealt with by the model, and “rigorous because it is limited by simple arithmetical considerations”.

In truth, it sounds to me like Berne wants to prove his theory right, while a scientist should be always open, or even seek to prove a theory wrong.
The fact that “no example has been found that cannot be dealt with by the model” doesn’t necessarily mean the model is efficient, but it may as well mean that the author is looking for ways to make it work, thus forcing anything through the lenses of his little brainchild baby-model.

Berne's "system" is too destiny-like deterministic...

… And doesn't take into account the huge inputs and constraints of the external world.

Says Berne:

> Each person decides in early childhood how he will live and how he will die, and that plan, which he carries in his head wherever he goes, is called his script. His trivial behavior may be decided by reason, but his important decisions are already made: what kind of person he will marry, how many children he will have

Even if you think Berne's theory is possible or even likely, there's the major issue that, at least the way the author presents it, it's not falsifiable, which makes it un-scientific.

The second and even bigger problem is that it's not very logical.

I don't buy the "early decisions".
First, life and the world are too complex, and people and events are too fluid to follow any script.
Second, the world simply doesn't work on decisions but works a lot more on opportunities and limitations.

For example, Berne says that people already "decided" who they will marry.
Little issue is that **many men cannot follow any early decision on who to marry because they don't have dating choices to pick from**, *independently of what they decided*. So they'll just marry whoever is available.

At the very least and in the best-case scenario for Berne's theory, that self-evident truth already throws a major exception.

No wonder Berne quotes Jung, Adler, Freud, and Campbell.

Assigns too much power to parents' words

Parents DO have enormous power to share their children.

Yet, there is a limit.
And especially so with simple words and requests.

But to Berne, there seems to be no limit.
He says that:

> For the child, his parents' wish is his command, and will remain so for the rest of his life unless some drastic upheaval occurs.

And then even suggests may turn their children into homosexuals with just their words:

> (…) a boy who is told 'Don't mess around with women' may take this as a permission to mess around with other boys, or in some cases with sheep or cows, and in a legal way of thinking he is in the clear, since he is not doing anything his parents have forbidden.

But it doesn't really work that work.
Or, at least, not for most people.

My sister-in-law for example always told and expected my nephew to pick one girl and stick with her.
And she was furious when she saw him making out with a girl in front of her place that wasn't exactly her girlfriend.

Just a simple story to show that parents' wishes aren't commands and do not turn guys gay.

Berne's solutions via fairytales make no sense

Berne's work, similarly to Jordan Peterson, is based heavily on myths, tales, and fairytales.

He says:

> In order to find the script illusion, we need the fairy tale which corresponds to WRM.

But that makes no sense!
What if there is no similar fairy tale?
What if we lived in a world, or in an age, where nobody had written (yet) any fairy tale? The transaction analysis can offer no solution?

No serious medical approach can be based on external limitations such as "available fairytales".

PROS

Overall, there is MUCH wisdom here.

And I believe that the "script theory" makes a lot of sense.

It is true for many people and, in smaller doses than Berne make it out to be, it's true for probably *most* people.

Besides that wisdom, this is what you'll love about it:

Great mix of information + entertainment

For example:

> MARTIAN REACTION One day LRRH's mother sent her through the woods to bring food to her grandmother, and on the way she met a wolf. What kind of a mother sends a little girl into a forest where there are wolves?

And:

> Grandmother lives alone and leaves her door unlatched, so she may be hoping for something interesting to happen, something which couldn't happen if she were living with her folks. Maybe that's why she didn't move in with them, or at least live next door. She was probably young enough to be ripe for adventure, since LRRH was still a little girl.

:D

REVIEW

What Do You Say After You Say Hello is a good book to better understand interpersonal relationships and with plenty of golden nuggets even for intermediate and advanced students.

On the downside, albeit some of Eric Berne's original ideas are valid, he embraced and championed them as commandment-like, self-evident truths.
He failed to find exceptions and nuances, turned into an advocate and defender of his theory, and ultimately sold a genius-like intuition very short.

Berne also appears to speak with a certain air of superiority -and with strong teacher's frames-, and that didn't help to spread the message.

That's a pity because his original thoughts are revolutionary and his theoretical work of analyzing interpersonal relationships and interactions also mimics TPM's more practical approach.

This why, in my opinion, transaction analysis in itself can be even more enlightening if we remove its founder.
For example, Thomas Harry's *I'm OK, You're OK* was the main theoretical backbone for our concept "the judge".

So, overall: mediocre system and theory built upon genius-level original intuition.
And, if you know how to move beyond the main issues, there is more than enough wisdom to make it worth it, and potentially even therapeutic.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Healthy Nihilism: A Guide to Freedom & Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 August 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Nihilism is often misunderstood as bleak or depressing. In reality, a healthier form of nihilism can be a foundation for **freedom, resilience, and empowerment**.

In this article, we'll explore how to apply nihilism in practical ways—so that "nothing matters" becomes a tool for *mental strength and emotional freedom*, not despair.

Contents

- Nihilism As a Moral Obligation
  - How much caring is too much caring?
- The Dangers of Caring Too Much
- The Solution: Healthy Nihilism
  - #1. "Nobody cares about you."
  - #2. Nothing matters and we're all irrelevant."
- Revitalizing Your Nihilistic Attitudes
  - Question Your Non-Nihilism
  - Meditate on Concepts That Validate Nihilism
- Summary

Nihilism As a Moral Obligation

Is it possible for a man who cares about everything to be morally good?

In an ideal world, the answer should always be "yes" and that more caring is always better.

Especially on a site like this one that seeks to create powerful human beings who are morally good, one would think

that caringness taken to its maximum might be a case of a great extreme. (We could say that perhaps a level of caring that knows no bounds would be a hallmark of a fully morally good individual and the potential beginnings of a great force for good in the world. After all, those who care most are also those least likely to sit back and do nothing when that which they care about is negatively affected.)

In this regard, fully caring could be argued as the full completion of this character trait's self-development.

However, we do not live in an ideal world and "more caring" isn't always better. Everything should be done in moderation, including caring [and including moderation, but that's a topic for another article].

So, we need a way to effectively manage and regulate the levels at which we care about things in the world.

And a concept that serves as a good tool for achieving this balance is nihilism.

How much caring is too much caring?

Anything taken to its extreme often becomes bad for those affected by it.

And yet, once again, one would think that caringness taken to its maximum might be the one exception where that extreme may be good.

Besides, the idea of exactly how much caring is too much caring is subjective since it's a moral trait. We all decide for ourselves our own moral value systems, so to attempt to define in any specifics how much caring is too much in this one article could be a constantly, ever-changing line that will always be different from reader to reader.

With that said, I do have a definitive line that works as a fairly solid starting point.

Power is a moral obligation.

One cannot be powerless and morally good because an inability to uphold or carry out one's values is the equivalent of being valueless. A moral code one never stands up for because one *can't* due to being too weak is virtually the same as having no moral code at all. Therefore, the starting point here is that one cannot care so much about everything that it begins to inhibit their own power. And, in this regard, we can even begin to argue that nihilism is also a moral obligation.

But let's not skip ahead. And, we should add the caveat here that what we're describing is a "healthy" nihilism. (Just as too much caring could ultimately cause harm, too much care-freedom can also be equally as harmful.)

The Dangers of Caring Too Much

Let me be clear on what I mean by "caring" now.

We're talking about *overcaring* about *everything*.

For the purposes of this article, the most notable "cares" that we're discussing may be other people's thoughts, judgments, and opinions.

And if you let those three things get to you too much, you may need to put them in check.

This is so important that the dangers of over-caring reach as low as constant overthinking and as high as being emotionally controlled by others.

Here are some of the main potential consequences:

– Anxiety and Stress: caused by the fear of judgment and criticism.

– Indecisiveness: decision-making can be more difficult when you care too much about how everyone will think and feel about it (and indecisiveness is often perceived as uncharismatic).

– Self-Esteem Issues: if you place too much value on others' opinions to determine and measure your own self-

worth, you'll constantly be dependent on the external validation of others to experience high levels of self-esteem.

– Emotional Exhaustion: from constantly thinking of and trying to meet the expectations of others (or what you think their expectations might be).

– Lack of Assertiveness: overcaring about what others think may cause you to have difficulty setting boundaries. You may be more prone to people-pleasing, which can result in being taken advantage of or neglecting your own needs.

The Solution: Healthy Nihilism

You can call it many things. You can call it "enlightened nihilism" in that it's a more enlightened way of approaching a characteristically negative idea for personal empowerment. You can call it "technical nihilism" in that you're only embracing the technical parts of nihilism that benefit you most and leaving the rest that are mostly negative. Or, you could even call it "eudaimonic nihilism" in that you seek to use nihilism only to the extent that it leads most reliably to a life well-lived.

However you choose to call it, the focus of this section is on healthy nihilism.

All power starts in the mind. And here we have some mindsets that leverage the benefits of nihilism while disregarding the pessimistic (and oftentimes counterproductive) rest.

Let's start with the first one.

#1. "Nobody cares about you."

The mantra to say to yourself in your head for this one is this:

> **You**: "Nobody cares about you. (And that's OK.) It's nothing personal, it's just business…and yet, I choose to love them all despite that."
>
> *(*The only thought to focus on for a single individual is, "You're only thinking of yourself…because you're just trying to take care of yourself.")*
>
> *(*The only thought to focus on for a group is, "They're only thinking of themselves…it's their way of taking care of themselves.")*

Let's break this down.

The "nobody cares about you" is simply another way of saying "you're insignificant" which, if you've read Lucio's article on that concept (see "You're Insignificant. The Sooner You Accept It, The More Powerful You Get"), you already know is a good thing for your mental empowerment.

The "it's nothing personal, it's just business" is to consciously and healthily embrace the idea that others are not refusing to care about you because they hate you or any similar personal reason.

It's actually because we've evolved with self-interest as a primary default function in our brains so that we could look after ourselves and practice self-care.

So, the real reason nobody is busy thinking (caring) about you is because they're all busy thinking and caring about themselves.

This means that if they laugh at a mistake you make, it's probably because laughing at you does something for *them* (maybe it makes them feel better about themself). So, don't take it personally.

If they're applying emotional pressure on you during a sales call to buy, it's most likely because it does something for *them*. (They would gain a commission.) So, don't be afraid to be assertive.

If you notice them staring at you, it's probably because they're thinking of what you could do for them (or *to* them) and not much more than that. (It's oftentimes just people being aware of the good and bad–opportunities and potential threats–in their surroundings.) So, don't think or worry too much about it.

It's rarely ever about you. It's almost always about them.

And, that's OK because it's just their way of looking after themselves to better take care of themselves.

It's nothing personal, it's just business.

And, finally, the last part: "…and yet, I choose to love them all despite that."

I maintain my deep love for people despite their self-interest (which can border/cross over into selfishness depending on the situation and how you look at it).

You choose to keep a positive attitude in the face of such a "negative" reality.

Now, this mantra's core assumption (that everyone is only thinking of themselves) is an overgeneralization, of course.

Not everyone will only be thinking of themselves in your day-to-day interactions and dealings with them. Some will truly and genuinely care about *you*.

But, similar to how Lucio stated in a former guide (later incorporated into Power University), you're also not really insignificant, this mantra is less about total accuracy and more about leveraging the beneficial aspects of nihilism that lead to empowering freedom.

It's the freedom to look your boss in the eyes as he feeds you some horseshit about how we "do this for the mission" when you ask for your well-earned raise—and negotiate harder knowing he's only thinking of himself and the company.

And, it's the mental and emotional balance to not take it personally because you know it's only business…and, as a result, you're able to maintain your love/respect for him after the discussion.

Or, it's the freedom to disappoint a stranger when they make a request that you'd really prefer to say "no" to (such as to take their picture), even though you feel like the nice thing to do would probably be to say "yes".

Well, you don't need to worry about disappointing someone who doesn't care about you. So, whether you say "yes" or "no" is totally up to you. (You have your freedom back.)

And, at the end of the day, we still maintain our love for people regardless.

Now, on to the next mantra.

#2. Nothing matters and we're all irrelevant."

When we feel disrespected, the tendency can be to overreact.

But, that tendency typically stems from feeling that the "large disrespect" we received warrants a large (or sometimes even larger) reaction.

However, if the disrespect is small/minimal, then why get too up in arms about it?

The idea for this mantra is to mentally and emotionally reduce the disrespectful communication of others to that of a pebble.

If they're throwing large stones, great, respond accordingly. But, if that's the case, make sure you're *responding*, not overreacting.

Socially it might've been a boulder. But, emotionally, it was hardly a pebble's size.

Here's your mantra for this one:

> **You**: "It doesn't matter. Everything is insignificant (in the grand sceme of things), including this. (We're specks in the universe.) And that's OK. I choose to fulfill life's demands of me of love, growth, and giving back to the world anyway."
>
> *(*The only thought to focus on is, "The world—the universe—far outsizes us, we're tiny specks and nothing more.")*

Similar to the one before, this can also be a pretty hard-hitting mindset. But it can also come with great benefits for your emotional detachment when experiencing adversity.

So, take us, for example. We as human beings are meaningfully big.

Well, compared to what? Compared to the infinite universe that we occupy? And what about when billions of years have gone by and we're all probably extinct? Are we still so meaningfully important then compared to the magnitude of time?

See, every adversity we experience is always big and, therefore, deserving of a big reaction…until we compare that experience to something far bigger.

Then, our issue seems quite small.

Given that the universe (space) outsizes and outlives us and time overwhelms, overpowers, and eventually overthrows us…there's no reason to think that we (or anything others do to us) is *that* important compared to such impossibly massive things.

Compared to those things with such large magnitudes, we're insignificant. (And, to your benefit, so are your enemies from a mindset perspective.)

Now, I only chose disagreements and disrespect as an example of how you can apply this mantra because it's one of the easier applications to grasp. However, the potential uses for this mantra are quite far-reaching and can actually apply to any difficult situation that you'd prefer to minimize to make it more mentally/emotionally manageable.

Revitalizing Your Nihilistic Attitudes

Sometimes you'll experience moments when you don't feel as influenced by these mantras and you become emotionally detached from them. (For example, you repeat them so much they begin to lose their weight and value for you.)

So, here are some techniques to rejuvenate their effectiveness.

Question Your Non-Nihilism

Especially if you're not naturally very nihilistic, it can be easy to slip back into your old attitudes (even if they may be unhelpful for your goals of mental and emotional empowerment).

So, question your non-nihilistic side with an open-mindedness to the possibility that healthy nihilism is the universal truth.

For example:

> **You**: "**What if** nobody cares about you?"
>
> **You**: "**What if** it doesn't matter? **What if** nothing matters?"

Remembering the truth of nihilism can help you find your emotional freedom again.

Meditate on Concepts That Validate Nihilism

Lucio Buffalmano, the head of this site, refers to healthy nihilism as "positive nihilism."

And he shares these ideas as great points to meditate on that will help you internalize positive nihilism when you're done:

- **Earth is only a little speck in the infinite universe (and no bigger than that)**: once you close your eyes and imagine all of the galaxies and Earth as a little speck in that grand space (and you don't even need to go so far that you don't see Earth anymore), then…thinking of how small you must be in that ultimate design allows the mindset of nihilism to come quite naturally.
  - The big chill: last time Lucio read about this topic, it was noted that the universe is expanding. And acceleratingly so. That almost inevitably will lead to a dispersion of energy and heat to the point where everything will be close to "absolute zero," which would allow for no forms of life to be left. A big freeze. At that point, what you did or didn't do doesn't matter.
- **Dust you are and to dust you shall return**: the (maybe eternal) cycle of life, of which you're only a momentary manifestation.

And this may help as well (also from Lucio):

- **The history of evolution**: starting from unicellular amebas, thinking of how wholly different we are now, and how wholly different we as humans will be in the future to the point that they (those future humans) won't even think of us as their predecessors. And that's being very giving of thinking of far-ahead life forms since:
  - The "norm of extinctions" should also be considered in such a case. On a long enough timeline, most forms of life will cease to exist (infinite survival is a next-to-impossible exception and not the norm at all).

Summary

Many people search the internet for answers to the question of "how to be confident."

What most don't know is that a more powerful approach is to seek the ability to act *without* confidence.

If you need to feel confident before taking an action, then you become dependent on experiencing positive feelings before going for what you want in life.

However, when people hear this, many of them think that that means they'll have to feel uncomfortable, nervous, or anxious for the rest of their life. This isn't true at all.

Instead, you can focus on developing the "confidence cousins":

- Self-esteem (see "The Ultimate Personal Power Tool: The Antifragile Ego")
- Self-compassion
- Optimism (see *Learned Optimism*)
- Self-efficacy
- Courage/ambition

And by adding the attitudes of healthy nihilism in your pursuit of more mental and emotional freedom, you'll only reach your goal of feeling more care-free and confident faster.

Emotional Manipulation: Learn The Tactics and Reclaim Your Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 August 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Emotional manipulation is a type of psychological warfare using **subtle, often covert tactics** to control or exploit your emotions.

The best manipulators are so smooth that most victims don't even realize they're being played. If you want to become **manipulation-proof for life**, you need to know exactly what to look for.

This article provides a definitive list of **13 advanced emotional manipulation techniques.** We break down everything from **Provoking Your Overreaction** (gaslighting) and **Guilt-Tripping** to the complex strategy of **Social Scalping.** Learn to recognize these covert tricks, understand *why* they manipulate, and reclaim your emotional freedom.

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- 1. Provoking Your Overreaction
- 2. Make You Feel Guilty (Guilt-Tripping)
- 3. Make You Fearful (Fear-Stoking)
  - Emotional Manipulation In Relationships
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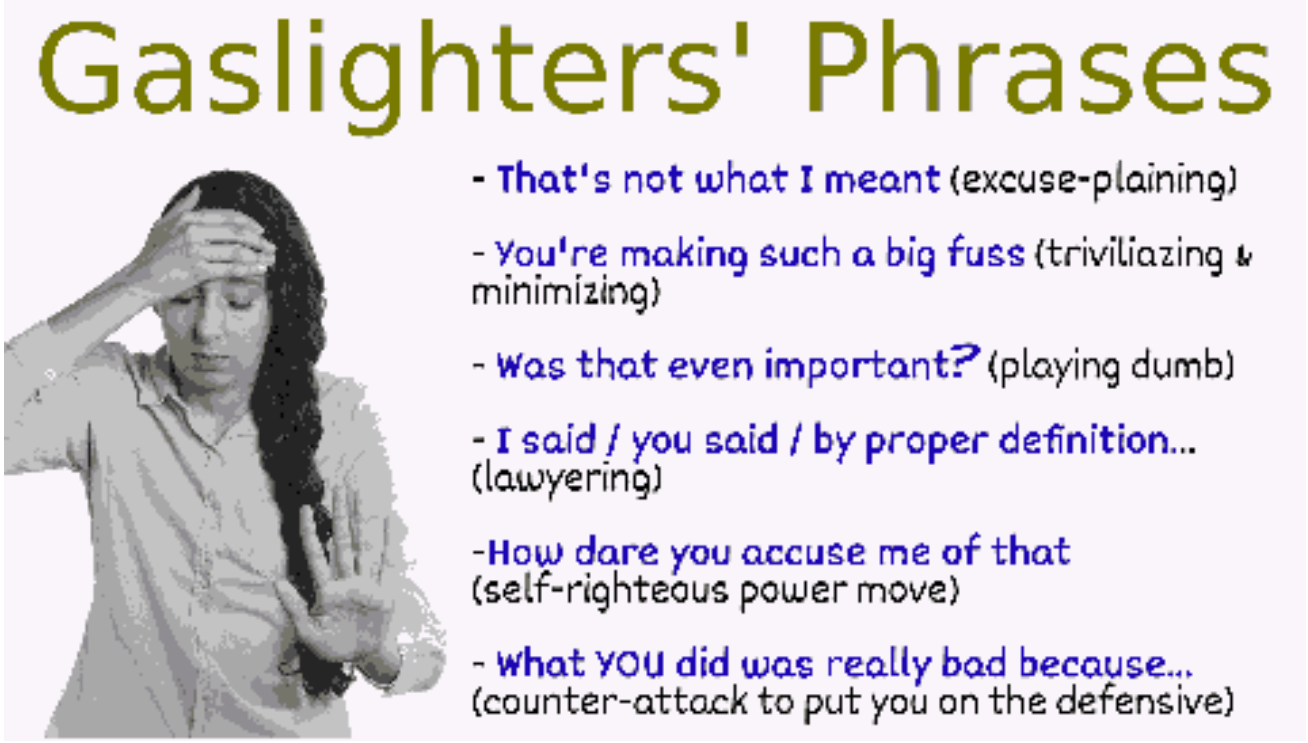
- 12. Upset You (To Increase Your Emotional Investment)
- 13. Make You Addicted To Their Power
- Why They Manipulate

1. Provoking Your Overreaction

The manipulator accuses you of psychological issues or

The emotionally manipulative red flags of gaslighting include:

- **Blaming the victim**. For example, they may say that their poor behavior is only a reaction to yours
- **Psychologizing**, and blaming your 'issues' on your past or faulty mental models
- **Use your own emotions against you**. For example, your valid anger is "proof" that you're too volatile or aggressive



Gaslighting is maddening in both senses: it makes you angry, and it makes you doubt your sanity.

For more, see:

- **Gaslighting**

> Gaslighting: What Is It, Who Does It, And Why

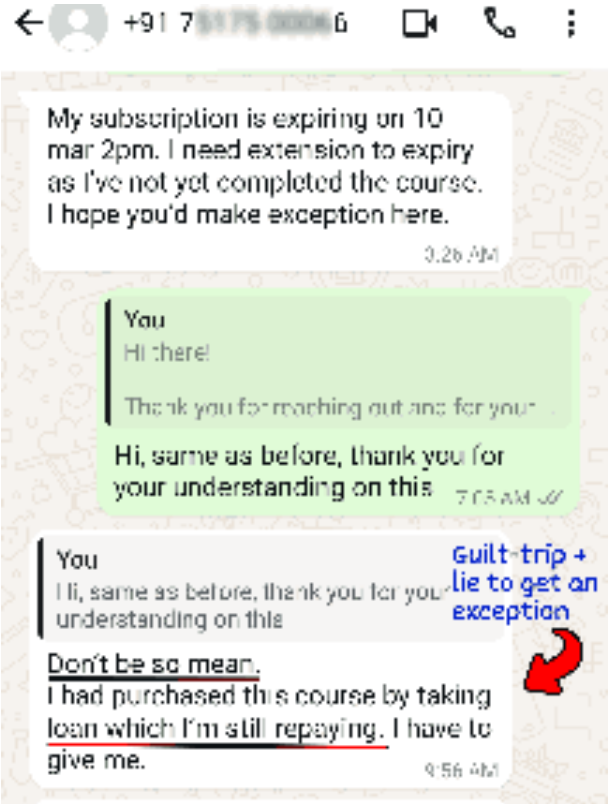
2. Make You Feel Guilty (Guilt-Tripping)

The manipulator makes you feel guilty and “bad” for not doing as he wishes

Guilt tripping is an emotional manipulation tool more common for low-power manipulators.

Higher-power manipulators with power to impose or skills to influence choose *that*.
So it’s when he lacks either the ability to lead or the strength to enforce that he resorts to guilt-tripping.

Here is an example:



> **Manipulator**: (asks an exception for a 3rd time after having been kindly explained we keep simple rules for all)
> **TPM**: (refuses)
> **Manipulator**: Don’t be so mean <— Guilt trip
> I purchased this course with a loan I’m still repaying <— ‘Poor me’ added power move

Note: we cut other power moves and manipulations. And little later he says he’s looking forward to our dating course re-opening, casting doubt on the loan statement.

However, note that guilt tripping can be effective.
The *Routledge Handbook of Persuasion* suggests *moderate* guilt that stresses the positive of taking action is more likely to be effective.

3. Make You Fearful (Fear-Stoking)

The manipulator makes you fearful to increase his control

When you’re fearful you’re less resourceful, needier, and easier to control.

There are countless ways of stoking fears, including:

- **Make you jealous**, so you cling to them and bend to their will in fear of losing their affection and commitment

- **Triangulation**, a subset of jealousy to make you fear a specific "competitor"
- **False financial distress**. If they're the breadwinners, they may pretend that their job is at risk. Good excuse to also control your spending
- **Overwhelming displays of emotions** (read on)

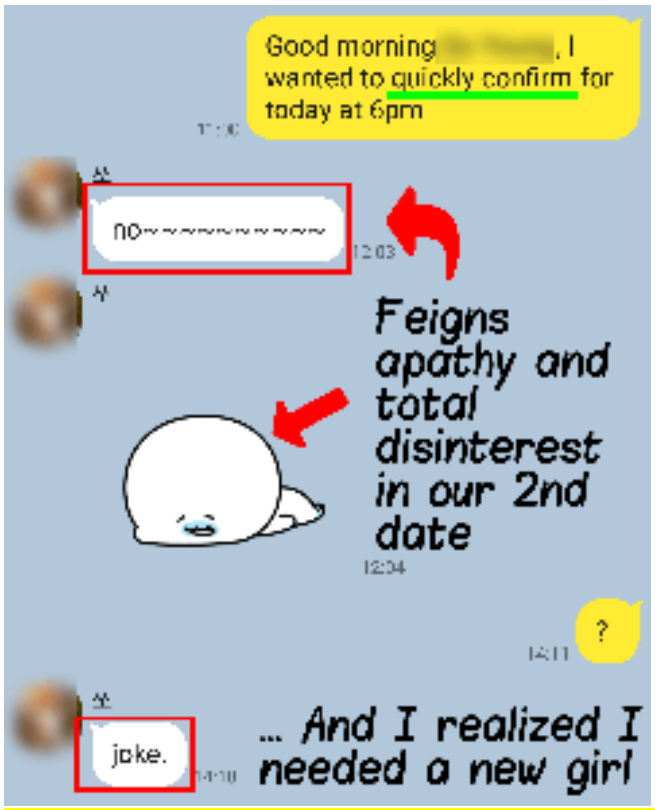
Some emotional manipulators first make you fearful, then present themselves as rescuers. That way, you also become more emotionally dependent on them.

Emotional Manipulation In Relationships

Dating and relationships are replete of emotional manipulation.

Some manosphere circles advocate for 'keeping women on their toes'.
Also see "games men play".

And women manipulate to remain 'the prize' in the relationship:



A double power move: denies the date, and under-invests hoping to make me chase.

Also see "games women play" and "manipulative games women play".

4. Deliberate Mistakes

Some emotional manipulators make deliberate mistakes as part of a strategy of provocation.

And a strategy of provocation, in turn, can be part gaslighting.

It works like this:

1. **The manipulator makes (another) apparently senseless mistake**. The type of mistake you think "how's that even possible"
2. **You get angry** because albeit small, it was still important to you. Or because it's a pattern. To you, it means not caring enough. (Eric Berne explains that social sadists enjoy your anger. They're happy to have that "negative power" over you)
3. **The manipulator defends that "it was just a mistake"** or that "he was just trying to do a nice thing"
4. **You feel you're too aggressive**, maybe even "not good enough for him"

And once you feel *too* aggressive, you start devaluing yourself.

Deliberate Mistakes Dynamics

Contrary to what most people may think, **the deliberate mistake tactic works better with seemingly *smaller* mistakes.**

This is because smaller mistakes provide better cover for the manipulator.
And smaller mistakes make it easier to frame you as "too over-reactive".

To be precise, the deliberate mistake sweetspot is this: small enough to be inconsequential to most, but big enough to annoy you.

Hot buttons and personal "weird" preferences are perfect.
Why?
Because that way you can't complain to others since most people wouldn't understand (a gaslighting effect).
You know you fell for it when you open up to others, but people say "but come on, it's such a small thing".

Examples

- **At work they print the full presentation "for your convenience" even though you hate wasting paper.** When you complain they may say "I thought this investor presentation was important". Now you're in a double bind because the presentation *is* important
- **In the flatshare they take the last one of your favorite snack and replace it with a different brand**. When you get angry, they may say "I just got a full package, just take one there"
- **They bring your favorite brand of yogurt.. But the flavor you hate**. If you complain, they get angry or sad because 'they even got you your favorite brand', or "it's just a yogurt, who cares, it's about the gesture"

> **Him**: brings her strawberries as a gift
> **Her**: did you know that there's only one thing on earth I'm allergic to…
> **Him**: (realizes the "mistake") strawberries. This is progress, I knew there was a correlation between you and this <— he got his payoff: making her angry and reactive to him. And now he tries to sound smart with his reply

In the movie, this is supposed to be "fun".
In real life, this is one of the games manipulators play.

Sometimes even the intent or mention of the mistake is enough.
For example:

- **You say not to take any more eggs because you have too many. When they come back they say "ouch I need to go back to get the eggs"**. That forces you to intervene to stop them. And you get angry because you already talked about it. (After all, you had too many eggs because they already did the "mistake" the day before)

Notice again that these are all small enough that you may find it difficult to find any support.
Your friends may say "ah come on, does the brand really matter so much?". And your employer probably has no policy against "printing presentations for review".

Still, you better have clear in your mind that this is manipulation.
And turkey behavior.

Here's the rule of thumb:

When similar "mistakes" repeat, they're *not* mistakes but deliberate actions to provoke you.

5. Make You Feel Bad For Voicing Concerns (Dimissive Guilt-Trip)

The manipulator makes you feel bad and "wrong" just for taking his time

The manipulator presents himself as busy and overburdened with "important stuff".

And he makes you feel like your concerns are "small stuff" that he has no time for.

This approach also frames the emotional manipulator as higher value than you. (If it's a relationship, that would be higher SMV).

He is higher value because the frame is:

> Your issues are inconsequential because I'm busy with more important things. They only matter to you because you do nothing worthwhile and have nothing to busy yourself with.

This is more common with go-getter, businessmen, and "alpha male" types of men.
The corresponding power move is a mix of aggression and annoyance ("aggressive dismissal").

This type of manipulation also has a convenient upside for the manipulator:

5.2. Make You Feel Your Problems Don't Deserve Attention

When your problems are smaller, **your problems will always lose the right to be heard against his problems.**

So all he has to do when you voice a concern is to voice *his own* concerns. And you lose the right to be heard since

his concerns are “more important”.

Such as, the emotional manipulator monopolizes the “problem conversation”.

Every time you have a fair issue to discuss, all he has to do is to bring up his own problem. And you lose the chance to be heard –*plus* feel guilty about even bringing your issues up-.

6. Make You Feel Indebted (Social Scalping)

The manipulator makes you feel overly indebted whenever he does something for you

Some examples of social scalping include:

- **Playing the martyr**, when they frame their giving as costly, difficult, and very challenging for them to provide
- **Playing the “Atlas”**, carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. They frame your requests as taxing, falling on an already overburdened person
- **Playing the savior**, when they say that “if they didn’t do X”, it would have been a disaster for you

Another common one after the favors have been done is this:

- **Social Invoicing™** (‘social exchange invoicing’): to ‘throw past favors in your face’, listing all the good and costly things they’ve done for you, and saying or implying you never paid back. More than repayment, the goal is often to elict guilt and shame and, potentially, to leverage them into submission and compliance.

We perfected the science of social scalping as emotional manipulation on this website.
We dig deeper into it on our premium course Power University, but here’s a good infographic as an overview:

PRO Tip: Imagine The Best Possible Behavior & Compare It

Here’s a great rule of thumb to spot emotional manipulation:

To spot emotional manipulation, **think what someone who has your best interest in mind would do. And then compare it to what the emotional manipulator does**.

And this is how a good partner differs from an emotional manipulator:

- **Good partner**: frames his giving as a pleasure to him and as “normal” among people who like, care, and support each other
- **Emotional manipulator**: frames his giving as extraordinary. And exceptionally costly for him, and exceptionally useful to you

7. Emotional Bait & Switch

The manipulator gets emotional investment as leverage, then pulls back once he’s in control

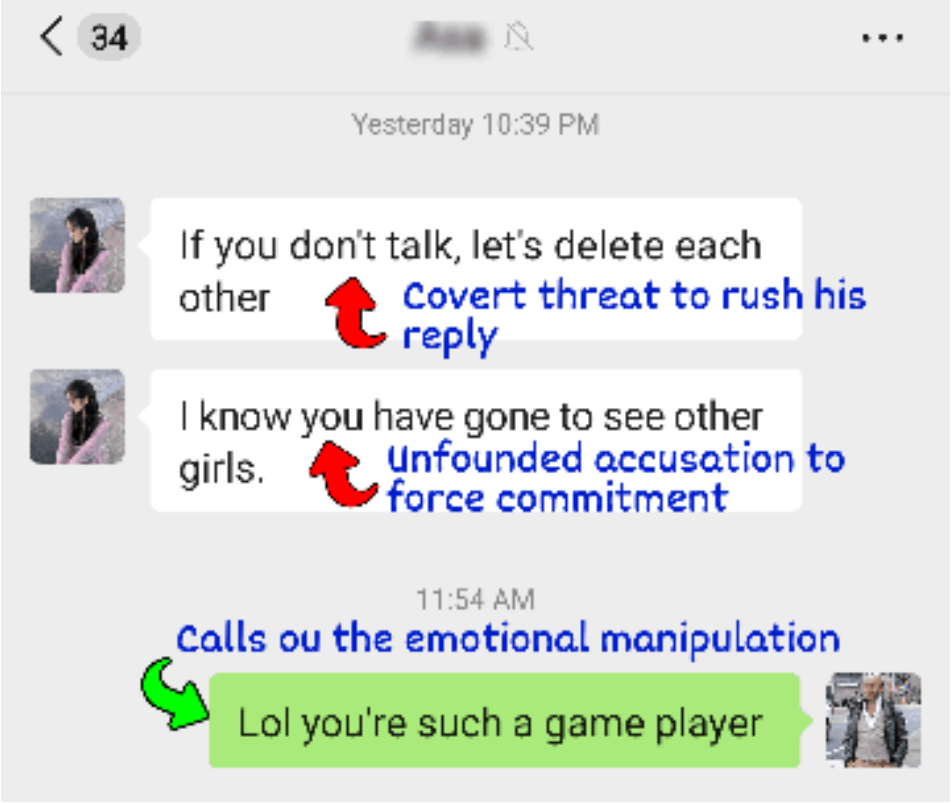
In intimate relationships that turn toxic a pattern of emotional manipulation includes:

1. **Presenting one’s best face** with courtship, love notes, and ‘perfect boyfriend behavior’
2. **Pull-back** after achieving a goal or gaining ’emotional hooks’ like trust, love, a relationship, living in, or securing a loan/gift
3. **Devaluing stage** with disappointment, criticism, and nasty games and power moves
   - Trauma bond, alternating abuse with love, a dark psychology technique to make the victim even more addicted. It can happen “naturally” with avoidant partners in (see “anxious-avoidant trap“)
4. **Discard** if they move on

7.2. Emotional Manipulation In Dating

Dating is rife with manipulations and emotional manipulation.

Just an example:



> **Her**: If you don’t talk, let’s delete each other <— Rushes him to reply fast
> **Her**: I know you have gone to see other girls <— Out of place given it was early dating, no commitment, and I told her I was home working

8. Make You Feel Insecure (Self-Esteem Undermining)

The manipulator uses your (supposed) weaknesses to lower your self-esteem

There are endless ways to make you feel insecure:

- **"Joking" about your shortcoming (ie.: weight)**. On the surface, they're just teasing. But deep down, you feel less attractive, lower value, and insecure.
  Joking is a common covert power move
- **Unfavorable comparison** with supposedly better partners. Sometimes the comparison is also made up.
- **Demeaning & criticizing** are more direct ways to make you feel worse about yourself.
  Advanced emotional manipulators use more indirect and covert ways.
- **Use your insecurities & vulnerabilities against you**. The more intelligent emotional manipulators study or elicit your vulnerabilities first. Then, "joke" or criticize you for them.
  ⍰⍰PRO Tip: share a false vulnerability may be a great test to spot emotional manipulators.
- **Exaggerated self-promotion**, so you may feel like "they're too good for you".
  The best emotional manipulators rarely openly brag. Instead, they're covert and strategic in making you feel like they're so awesome.

Why do they do it?

Simple, **when you feel insecure you're easier to control**, and more dependent on the emotional manipulator.

Notice The Difference: A Good Person Stops, An Inveterate Manipulator Doesn't

Some naturally strategic individuals "naturally" deploy some emotional manipulation tactics.

However, when they realize so -or when you tell them- they will stop.
Or they will talk with you about what makes you feel bad, and adjust accordingly.

9. Discount Your Successes (Undermining)

The manipulator discredits your success to prevent you self-empowerment

Emotionally manipulative fathers hate to see their own children succeed

Understand this:

Emotional manipulators don't want you happy and successful.
Emotional manipulators want you sad and *un*-successful.

One, because sad and unsuccessful people are easier to control.
And two, because your success is a threat to their fragile self-esteem. They feel better about themselves if you fail.

So, whenever you win, they one-up you and undermine you.

One way to undermine your successes is to delink them from personal value, qualities, or even effort.
Instead, it was based on luck, circumstances, or… Thanks to *them*.

Example of Emotionally Manipulative One-Upping:

> **Her**: I have 37.000 followers on IG
> **Him**: 36.999 of which are mine

He may even be right as far as we know.
But… Was it necessary to undermine like that?
It still feels like a cheap shot.

While the manipulator discredits your wins…

9.2. Make You Feel You're To Blame For Anything Bad That Happens

Emotional manipulators also inflate your losses to make you feel bad about yourself.

It can be as simple as:

> **Emotional Manipulator**: Oh, ouch, you didn't get that promotion? That must hurt, who did they give it to?

And then they ask you “Why to her” and “Why not to you”. The goal is to insist and expand on the loss and to shift your focus on personal faults.
The most Machiavellian may even *play* supportive. But they will never shift focus to any truly uplifting topic or thought. That’s a conscious tactic to let you emotionally linger and wallow in defeat.

Minimizing your wins and inflating your losses go in tandem. But “loss inflating” is often a bigger red flag.

Effects

Psychology researcher Martin Seligman calls the self-talk we described “personal agency explanatory styles”.

And **negative explanatory styles make you feel pessimistic, depressed, and helpless**.
You acquire negative explanatory styles when the manipulator makes you feel that:

- Your wins have little to do with you
- Your losses are because of you

So be careful, and always reject the emotional manipulator’s negative frames.

10. Punish You With Withdrawal (Operant Conditioning)

The manipulator changes your behavior by rewarding what he wants and punishing what he doesn’t want

Manipulators don’t usually talk straight and direct -or, well, they wouldn’t be manipulators-.

Instead, they often prefer covert and passive-aggressive ways.

So instead of telling you what they didn’t like, they seek to change you with “operant conditioning“.
Such as, they reward what they want, and punish what they don’t want.

However, the “punishment” can be covert and (silently) by removing a source of (emotional) pleasure.
For example:

- **Withdrawing attention**
- **“Forgetting” dates**
- **Not answering texts** -or brief and dry answers, or removing emojis-
- **Silent treatment**

11. Intense Emotional Outbursts (One-Trial Learning)

The manipulator gets your present compliance with overwhelming displays of negative emotions (aggression or meltdown). And they get your future compliance through your fear (one-trial learning)

If covert manipulation fails, you may experience the opposite: an overwhelm of manipulative force.

Two of the more common emotional outbursts include:

- **Raging**: when the manipulator becomes aggressive, yelling and threatening
- **Emotional meltdown**: when the manipulator self-harm or threatens to end one’s life

Keep in mind that emotional manipulation must not necessarily be conscious or high-power.
It can be subconscious or a consequence of mental disorders -for example, BPD-. A girl I once date scratched herself until bleeding. And then started gulping alcohol to get my full attention.
That is also emotional manipulation.

We consider intense emotional outbursts one of the worst emotional manipulation red flags.

This is why:

Emotional outbursts aren't only very upsetting, but also very costly for the manipulator.

Raging shows a side of him that can be very antisocial and dangerous.
And emotional meltdowns show that he doesn't even care about his own reputation -to you, or to the world-.

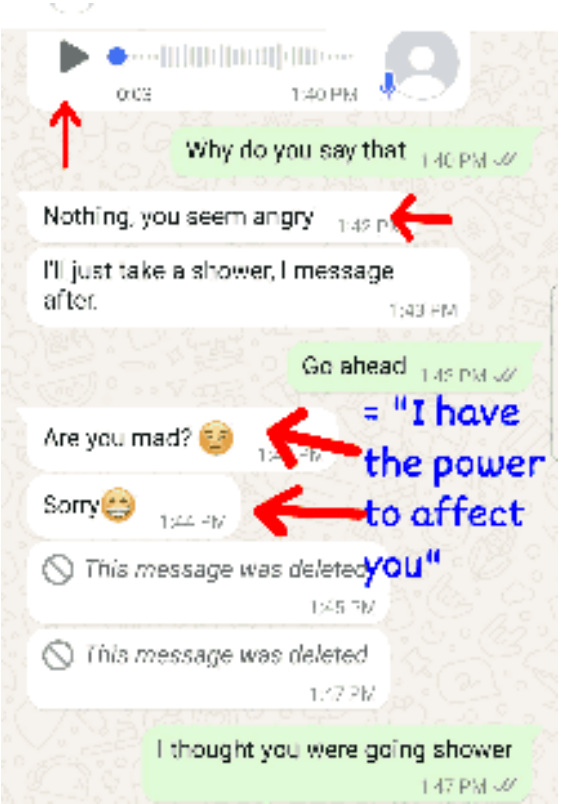
Meaning: the emotional manipulator stops at nothing to control you.

12. Upset You (To Increase Your Emotional Investment)

Negative emotional investment is still investment.

The energy you spend in anger, yelling, ruminating, or explaining… It's all mental cycles you spend on them.

Look at this example:



> **Her**: (audio message saying "maybe we're not a good ") <— tries to make me invest and chase her with denying that "no, we are good a fit"
> **Me**: Why do you say that <—- doesn't fall for her game
> (…)
> **Her**: Are you mad? Sorry <—- A covert power move. Plus, tries to make me angry by saying I was angry. And I never gave any sign of anger. A gaslighting effect, if you fall for it

See my last message.
That was a good power move :).

13. Make You *Addicted* To Their Power

The manipulator leverages his higher power and influence over you to make you *want* to comply, earn his approval, and invest and give

This is where emotional manipulation enters the advanced stage.

We enter the realm of abusive relationships, co-dependent relationships, lover boy types of pimps, and cult leaders. But also various types of gurus and even some coach-mentor relationships.

And this is where it also gets murky.

The emotional manipulator often doesn't use violence or coercion.

So many miss the power dynamics at play.
And placing the blame also becomes more difficult.

Is the manipulator an ahole and the one to blame, or did the victim willingly submit and stick around?

Often, it's a mixture of both.
The manipulator IS a high-power, charismatic, and often high-value individual. But he also abuses his power and influence.

On the other hand, the victims can also often stop being a victim if they worked on their own self-empowerment. We help people do just that in Power University.

See more for on emotional power dynamics:

- Judge power dynamics

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Emotional Control

Why They Manipulate

The reasons vary, but most of them revolve around power.

Emotional manipulators manipulate to:

- **Control you**
- **Maintain power** (clinical psychologist George Simon explains that many manipulators are power-hungry. And power-hungry individuals can't stand losing power, even when they don't even have a goal)
- **Enjoy their power and manipulative skills**. Some emotional manipulators take pride in their manipulative skills. So the more successful they are, the more they get to feel good and special
- **Enjoy the pleasure of harming others**. Yes, evil people exist. And some manipulators enjoy harming others –sociopath author M. E. Thomas admits so-.
  Some bent personalities also simply just "hate everyone"
- **Dog-eat-dog worldview**. They can't conceive that people can collaborate and both be happy and do well.
  They may even see you as doing the exact same on them -if you had their manipulative skills, at least-

See more on the psychology and types of abusers.

The Power Broker: Moses' Tactics to Rule New York (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 August 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (1975) is the biography of Robert Moses and how he acquired, amassed, and maintained power while delivering record-beating public works in terms of sheer size, scope and number, shaping New York as we know it (for better and for worse).

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
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  - Never Forget Personal Slights – Let People Know Enemies Pay
  - Let People Know There's Heavy Price To Stand In Your Way, And They'll Let You Free To Do As You Please
  - Do Great Work, Become Indispensable, Let Those Above You Bask In The Credit
  - But Make Sure To Give Value To Your Supporters
  - Give, But Get In Return & Only Keep Giving To Those Who Give Back
  - Gain Intel From Potential Enemies: Plant Spies Around Them
  - Always Start Charming, Only Switch To Aggressive If Needed
  - Move Fast, And It Will Always Be Too Late To Stop You (Fait Accompli)
  - Destroy What Obstructionists Want To Protect, And They'll Have No Reason To Fight
  - Manipulate The Press: Go First, Set The Initial Frame
  - Weaponize Press and Releases
  - Weaponize The Public Opinion To Bend Others To Your Will
  - Gain A Reputation For Being A Selfless Worker & Value Giver "For The People"
  - Get The Project Started With Lower Estimates, & You Trapped The Bosses To Keep Funding It
  - Don't Shy Away From Nasty Power Moves
  - Become A High Value, And A Great Leader
  - Work Hard
  - Set High Expectations & Reward Star Performers
  - Respect Other High Power People & Seek Collaboration
  - Use Mobbing to Get Rid of Enemies & Appoint Loyalists
  - Get Physically Aggressive To Make People Fear You
  - Hide Your Power Move In A Contract, Let Them Sign It, And Enjoy Legal Power Over Them
  - Be Open To Criticism, Don't Build An Army of Yes-Men
  - Never Turn Into A Full Ass*hole / Sociopath: It'll Cost You
- MORE WISDOM
  - Idealists May Have To Compromise To Acquire Power
  - Let Your Wife Handle All Home-Related Stuff So You Can Focus On The Mission
  - Don't Trust People Who Start Out TOO Idealistic
  - Showcase Your Power While Your Status And Achievements While People Wait For You
  - Use Luxurious Hospitality To Win People Over
  - Make Decisions At Your Social Events or Lunches And You'll Have More Power To Ratify Whatever You

Want
  - Never Underestimate Older & Experienced Men, Not Even When They're Going Down
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW
  - Do we need men like Moses?

Exec Summary

- Moses Machiavellianism and expertise in writing laws allowed him to navigate and manipulate the inner workings of state government to create and lead numerous semi-autonomous public authorities
- Moses eventually acquired the power to issue bonds, directly control millions of dollars in revenue, and fund new ventures as he wished, with little outside input or oversight
- Work hard, get things done, and the powers that be will turn a blind eye to your methods and personal gains
- Use your public work to gain a reputation as a "fighter for the people" and use that as a political tool and weapon
- Develop an army of supporters by letting money and favors flow to them
  - Negate any benefit and seek to make anyone who opposes you pay so that few people will want to oppose you
- Gain control over your own sources of income so that you can grow independent of political power

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Robert Allan Caro is an American journalist and author, also known for his thorough work on the biographies of political figures such as Robert Moses and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Never Let Power Movers Do Anything For You

Says someone who knew Moses well:

> My experience with Moses has taught me one lesson, and I'll tell it to you. I would never let him do anything for me in any way, shape or form. I'd never ask him—or permit him—to do anything of a personal nature for me because—and I've seen it time and time again—a day will come when Bob will reach back in his file and throw this in your face, quietly if that will make you go along with him, publicly otherwise. And if he has to, he will destroy you with it."

Never Forget Personal Slights – Let People Know Enemies Pay

> **The fear in which Moses was held because of these factors was intensified by his memory.** Cross him once, politicians said, and he would never forget. And if he ever got the chance for revenge, no consideration would dilute his venom.

For example

> For a twenty-year period that did not end until 1968, Moses was given by the State Department of Public Works a secret veto power over the awarding of all state contracts for public works in the New York

> metropolitan area. No engineer who had ever forcefully and openly disagreed with a Moses opinion ever received even one of the thousands of contracts involved.

And you can also use this technique for sweet revenge, or for making people pay for the disempowering power moves:

> Recalls Assistant Corporation Counsel Chanler, who handled the case for Moses and drew up the final stipulation: "I spoke to Moses about it. He said they had to be evicted at once. I said, 'Why?'
> "He said, 'Because they were rude to me.' "

Let People Know There's Heavy Price To Stand In Your Way, And They'll Let You Free To Do As You Please

> "He was terribly unfair to people," McGoldrick says. But, the Comptroller admits, the attacks served their purpose. Moses' methods "did intimidate people from debating with him. And it intimidated us, too, most likely." Soon, in the whole city government, from bureaucracy to Board of Estimate to mayor, there was no one to stand in the way of his dream, no one who would dare to tell the public the truth about the methods that were being used to make it come true, no one who would venture to examine—or to proclaim—its flaws.

However, power that rests on fear only is severely handicapped.

You also need friends and allies -or even simply people who support you for what's in it for them-.
So to maintain support always make sure to give others what they want:

Do Great Work, Become Indispensable, Let Those Above You Bask In The Credit

Moses got things done more than anyone else.

And in democracy where public work mean votes, that gave Moses a lot of power:

> The Governor who finds a man who can inject into the democracy-public works equation a factor of personality so heavy as to unbalance it and get public works built during the span of a single term of office has little choice, if he is ambitious for political success, but to heap on that man more and more responsibilities, even though the giving of responsibilities carries with it the grant of more power.

Moses' forceful approach against those who stood in the way of his projects also made him a convenient lightning rod for politicians: Moses would pass to the upper politicians some of the acclaim, while also taking the blame for the few who were not happy with the projects.

But Make Sure To Give Value To Your Supporters

Anyone, including the biggest tyrant of tyrants, needs supporters.

So make sure you have plenty of value to give to keep your friends closer and supportive:

> "He gave everybody involved in the political setup in this city whatever it was that they wanted," one official recalls. "Therefore they all had their own interest in seeing him succeed. The pressure that this interest all added up to was a pressure that no one in the system could stand up against, because it came from the system itself."

Control As Many Resources As You Can

Increasing resources is a virtuous cycle.

Not only you have more for yourself, but you have more to give to your supporters.
And the more supporters you can win to your side, the more power you can get.

> Corruption before Moses had been unorganized, based on a multitude of selfish, private ends. Moses' genius for organizing it and focusing it at a central source gave it a new force, a force so powerful that it bent the entire city government off the democratic bias.

Give, But Get In Return & Only Keep Giving To Those Who Give Back

> Moses' fees did not come without strings. He was buying men's influence, and for each dollar he spent he made sure he received full value.

But never demand outright, it's crass, illegal, and most people understand the game anyway:

> The price was not demanded outright. Moses did not directly ask a recipient of one of his fees to return the favor by voting in the Legislature or the City Council for one of his proposals or by persuading legislators or councilmen to vote for the proposal. He did not ask a recipient directly for support of any kind. Asking would have placed both men in violation of the law and of various codes of ethics.

Punish Those Who Don't Give Back

Moses' view of his social exchanges was that people were either "on his team", or outside of it, and against him.
And the punishment was to be left out of the lucrative inner circle.
Plus, some extra punishment if Moses could afford:

> If you tried, even occasionally, not to cooperate, if you dropped off "the team," if—ever—you exercised your responsibility to the public rather than your responsibility to Robert Moses, you were out in the cold until you died. There would be no consulting jobs, no authority make-work—and, if the rumors were true, when the State Retirement Board met to certify your pension, it would somehow turn out to be less, far less, than you had believed you were entitled to.

Gain Intel From Potential Enemies: Plant Spies Around Them

Moses, who served longer than most politicians, could build a base that most politicians couldn't.

He had on payroll the secretaries of those same politicians, and used it to the best of his ability:

> He had taken measures to minimize the threat to his purposes posed by key officials who were not Moses Men: some of these officials would have been astonished to learn—most of them never did—that their secretaries were on Moses' payroll as well as the state's, and that in transcribing confidential memoranda and minutes of secret meetings devoted to blocking a Moses project or to curbing Moses' power, these secretaries made an extra carbon, which was delivered nightly to Moses' representatives in Albany.

Always Start Charming, Only Switch To Aggressive If Needed

> But the charm could vanish swiftly. He joked and laughed with the farmers, but when one made clear that he

> would not sell his land, Moses could change in an instant to quite a different approach.

For example:

> He introduced himself as Tm Robert Moses, representing the State of New York. We're going to put a parkway through this section of Long Island.' He was very polite, very diplomatic, at first. But when he saw my father wasn't going to sell, he stood up in our kitchen and he said: 'You know, Mr. Rasweiler, the state is all-supreme when it comes to a condemnation proceeding. If we want your land, we can take it.'

And:

> Mr. Moses told me personally that his power was such that he could seize my house, put me out of it and arrest me for trespassing if I tried to get into it again (…) Mr. Moses told me that he was able to control the press of New York City, so as to hold me up to such obloquy that I would not be able to stand it

Move Fast, And It Will Always Be Too Late To Stop You (Fait Accompli)

A common tactic of Moses was that of moving as fast as he could.

Then, once someone went from simple objection to escalating the matter, it was too late.
This tactic worked great for a man who worked in the public sector where the time for approvals and decision-making tend to be particularly slow.

But Moses also used in case of court proceedings.

For example:

> Moses had never stopped developing the Taylor Estate—as if its acquisition were a fait accompli. By the spring of 1927, he had laid concrete for access roads and parking fields, set out scores of stone fireplaces and picnic tables, erected wooden bathhouses with showers and lockers and finished renovating the mansion and outbuildings, at a total cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars. During the summer of 1927, it had hundreds of thousands of visitors. By the time the higher courts came to rule on the question of whether the Taylor Estate was a park, it was a park.

Destroy What Obstructionists Want To Protect, And They'll Have No Reason To Fight

For example, when people wanted to prevent Moses to cut through a park to preserve trees, he cut the trees.

What a power move:

> They appealed to the Board of Estimate to stop the Park Commissioner from chopping down the trees (…) Then they demanded that Moses hold a public hearing on his plans, and threatened to file a taxpayers' suit to obtain an injunction if he did not agree to hold one. Moses agreed. He set a date two weeks away. And then, during those two weeks, he cut down hundreds of trees for the right-of-way. "He knew how to handle them," Madigan would laugh years later, recalling the reformers' shock when they realized that the park they had wanted so much to save had been ruined. Moses himself regarded his move as a masterstroke; he devoted space in his memoirs to relating how his men invented "a new ingenious tree-pulling device equipped with a sort of electric donkey engine" that cut down trees even faster than he had hoped.

In some cases, I agree this is genius to avoid that some small special interest groups damage larger communities.

For example, in Italy, there have been bears re-introduced in parks. However, it's too many and too close to cities and it turned out dangerous for people.
One runner died in a bear attack :S. But nobody can do much about it because the noisy minority of animalists always make it impossible to put down bears.

In that case, it could be a good act of civility to get rid of the most dangerous bears before any legal proceeding.

Manipulate The Press: Go First, Set The Initial Frame

When something is bound to surface, be the first to break the news.

And make sure it's framed in a way that benefits you.

For example:

> Anticipating that the matter would become public knowledge, Moses went to the press—and he did so with his usual blend of demagoguery and deception: breaking the story himself to get his side of it before the public first; oversimplifying the basic issue to one of public vs. private interest; identifying the "private interests" with the sinister forces of "influence" and "privilege"; concealing any facts that might damage his own image. "The whole question," he said, "is whether public interest is going to yield to private," whether parks are going to be "for the people." The public needed the land occupied by the yacht club and it needed it immediately so that a great public improvement could be gotten under way, he said

Weaponize Press and Releases

Having the ear of the press or of anyone with enough broacasting power is leverage that you can use.

Public press releases from a man like Moses with a reputation for being above politics and only serving the public's interest were all the more powerful to use it as leverage with politicians:

> He had so much potential for trouble because of the many directorships he had. And the main threat he had was [to issue press releases]. He could always cause you so much trouble by calling you 'a dirty politician'—he was above politics, of course . . . Governors were always nervous about this. You knew that if he said something, the newspapers would pick it up big."

Weaponize Attention

> Moses disciplined Harriman not only by using publicity but by withholding it: by not inviting the Governor to speak at ground breakings and ribbon cuttings. In 1957, for example, Moses staged a day-long series of ribbon cuttings to celebrate the completion (…) The Democratic Governor, who had authorized the projects and provided the funds for them, didn't even know the ceremonies were being held until he read newspaper stories about them —stories and pictures of Moses and the other official participants, all Republicans.

Weaponize The Public Opinion To Bend Others To Your Will

Moses managed to develop a reputation as a "no-nonsense doer" and to endear himself to public opinion.

He was also skilled at publicly attacking his opponents, for example framing them as "selfish politicians" or as "rich rubber barons who steal from the people".

In the political arena he moved in, public opinion was king, so that gave him huge power.

However, everyone cares about their reputation, so he was able to use public opinion as leverage against judges.

For example:

> What was a judge to do? Tell the state to tear up the roads and tear down the buildings, to destroy what hundreds of thousands of dollars of the public's money had been spent to build? Tell the people who had visited the Taylor Estate that they could visit it no more? In theory, of course, judges should not be influenced by such considerations. But judges are human. And their susceptibility to such considerations was undoubtedly increased by Moses' willingness to attack publicly those of them who ruled against him

Gain A Reputation For Being A Selfless Worker & Value Giver "For The People"

Moses both enjoyed the image of behing above money and politics, and actively promoted for power and personal status and gains.

For example, he never accepted any salary for his work, and made sure that people knew so:

> The image was of the totally unselfish and altruistic public servant who wanted nothing for himself but the chance to serve.
> A key element in it was his disdain for money—a disdain which he made certain was well publicized and which was symbolized by his refusal to accept a salary for his services.
> Authority officials were traditionally unsalaried (the tradition had begun in England, where it had been believed that authorities would get better officials —men above polities—if they were not paid), and Moses had eagerly followed the tradition with his authorities—and had made certain that the public knew he was serving as authority chairman "without compensation."
> The image was of the fearless independent above politics. The public believed authorities—entities outside the normal governmental setup, entities whose members were unsalaried and appointed to terms long enough in theory to insure their independence from politicians—to be "nonpolitical."

Get The Project Started With Lower Estimates, & You Trapped The Bosses To Keep Funding It

Another common Moses' tactic was to lie about the cost of a project and provide much smaller estimates.

Then, once the project started, politicians faced large pressure to keep funding it because half-unfinished work would look terrible for them.

Quoting *The Power Broker*:

> But what if you didn't tell the officials how much the projects would cost? What if you let the legislators know about only a fraction of what you knew would be the projects' ultimate expense?
> Once they had authorized that small initial expenditure and you had spent it, they would not be able to avoid giving you the rest when you asked for it. How could they? If they refused to give you the rest of the money, what they had given you would be wasted, and that would make them look bad in the eyes of the public. And if they said you had misled them, well, they were not supposed to be misled. If they had been misled, that would mean that they hadn't investigated the projects thoroughly, and had therefore been derelict in their own duty.

Don't Shy Away From Nasty Power Moves

For example:

Reply As If Someone Attacked You Even When They've Been Nothing But Polite

That way, you create a new reality.

People who only read or hear your reply will naturally jump to the conclusion that you have been unfairly attacked.

For example:

> Lutz did not reply. But Moses did. The first sentence of his letter to Wilcox was: "I will pass over without extended comment the unpleasant tone of your letter. I presume that you have become so accustomed to addressing people in this way that you are hardly aware of its effect on others." He was writing, Moses said, to defend Lutz from Wilcox's attacks.
> (…)
> An astounded Wilcox realized that Moses had sent a copy of his, Moses', letter to the seventy-two other regional commissioners without sending them a copy of Wilcox's letter—and therefore the commissioners could have no way of knowing that Wilcox's letter had not in fact been unpleasant, and they could not know the events that had led up to it.

Become A High Value, And A Great Leader

Now we go back to the basics.

Power isn't just strategies, techniques, or Machiavellianism.

Power starts from you, and your personal qualities, including high-power behavior, dominance, charisma, charm, and prestige.

Moses was a high value man.

Says one of his reports:

> "Mr. Moses was no lawyer, but he had a great knowledge and grasp of the law," Junkamen would say. "He was not an engineer, but he had a great knowledge of engineering. He knew politics, he knew statesmanship— he was an altogether brilliant man. If you were working with him, you just had to learn from him—if only through osmosis." One of the commission's engineers rhapsodizes: "I don't think there was a man who came into daily contact with him who wasn't inspired to do better work than he had thought he was capable of doing."

And he could come across as high-quality, too, and as a great leader.

Says another of his reports:

> "He had a gift for leading men," Shapiro recalls. "Those men idolized him. You'd see him walk up to a pickax gang that was tired and talk to them awhile and when he walked away, you could see those pickaxes swing faster."

Use Higher Ideals & Judge Rewards

And the most valued reward—the thread that bound his men most closely to him—was still more intangible. "We were caught up in his sense of purpose," Latham explained. "He made you feel that what we were doing together was tremendously important for the public, for the welfare of people."

Work Hard

You cannot accomplish great things, without great work.

So you must work long enough, over a long enough time, and with dedication and concentration.

Moses even went monk mode for most his life:

> Moses had always possessed tremendous energy and the ability to discipline it. Now he disciplined it as never before, concentrated it, focused it on his work with a ferocious single-mindedness.
> Sloughing off distractions, he set his life into a hard mold. Shunning evening social life, especially the ceremonial dinners that eat up so much of a public official's time, he went to bed early (usually before eleven) and awoke early (he was always dressed, shaved and breakfasted when Arthur Howland arrived at 7:30 to pick up the manila envelope full of memos).
> The amenities of life dropped out of his.

Read more on monk mode:

> Monk Mode Changed My Life (Here's How)

Set High Expectations & Reward Star Performers

- Once they had proven themselves to him, Moses took pains with their training.
- Incredibly hard-working, incredibly loyal—dedicated, faceless, Moses' men were recognized by public officials as an elite cadre within the ranks of the state's civil servants and had already been given the name "Moses Men."
- They therefore had considerable power of their own, and this was incentive to those of them who wanted power.
- In rewarding his men financially, Moses was hampered by civil service limits on pay and promotion schedules, but his ingenuity found a hundred ways around those strictures. If a man wasn't making what Moses thought he should be, he would put the man's wife on the payroll in some job that required no work—such as answering the telephone in their home—and pay her an additional stipend.

Respect Other High Power People & Seek Collaboration

> Moses was playing by the rules of power now and one of the first of those rules is that when power meets greater power, it does not oppose but attempts to compromise.

Take From The Powerless To Stay Friendly With The High Power

> Robert Moses had shifted the parkway south of Otto Kahn's estate, south of Winthrop's and Mills's estates, south of Stimson's and De Forest's. For men of wealth and influence, he had moved it more than three miles south of its original location. But James Roth possessed neither money nor influence.
> And for James Roth, Robert Moses would not move the parkway south even one tenth of a mile farther. For James Roth, Robert Moses would not move the parkway one foot. Robert Moses had offered men of wealth and influence bridges across the parkway so that there would be no interference with their pleasures.
> But he wouldn't offer James Roth a bridge so that there would be no interference with his planting.For James Roth, Robert Moses would not move the parkway one foot.
> Robert Moses had offered men of wealth and influence bridges across the parkway so that there would be no interference with their pleasures. But he wouldn't offer James Roth a bridge so that there would be no interference with his planting.

Use Mobbing to Get Rid of Enemies & Appoint Loyalists

> Headquarters employees were protected by civil service, but it didn't help them much.
> Men who lived in the Bronx were told they had to work in Staten Island, and who lived in Staten Island were assigned to the Bronx. Or they were given tasks so disagreeable they couldn't stop them.

The same can be done for poor workers, of course, so you only keep loyalists, who are also great employees.

Get Physically Aggressive To Make People Fear You

> And the bullying was not just verbal. City Hall was whispering about Moses' physical encounters with other men.

But Only Physically Bully Those Smaller Than You

> as in the case of scrawny little "Slat" Johnson, the roommate he knocked down at Yale, neither of them was his physical equal. Raymond Torrey, whom he tried to strangle at a State Council of Parks meeting and at whom he then hurled a heavy smoking stand, was a pudgy little bird watcher. Moses had also staged a fist fight with WPA administrator Hugh Johnson in Bernard Baruch's apartment, and Johnson, at the time, was fifty-two—eight years older than Moses—and exceedingly drunk. Now Moses had additional physical encounters—and the pattern continued.
> (…)
> Other City Hall observers recall other Moses fist fights but not one with a man to whom he had a chance of losing.
> (…)
> Stanley Isaacs had the courage to give the thoughts voice. He said mildly: "When Mr. Moses says something will cost 3.4 percent, he adds the .4 only to make you think it's accurate. It's really 6.2 percent." Moses' response was to take a violent swing with his fist in Isaacs' direction and say, "I'd like to punch you in the nose!"
> ("He wasn't close enough to hit him with a baseball bat," says Isaacs' borough works commissioner, Walter D. Binger. "It was just a motion of passion. But Moses was tall and athletic" and the mild-mannered Isaacs was fifty-seven years old. "Everyone in the room was shocked," Binger says.

Hide Your Power Move In A Contract, Let Them Sign It, And Enjoy Legal Power Over Them

This was the "masterstroke" that gave Moses total control, independently of mayors and politicians.

> (…) but long, legalistic pages later, buried deep within the act, in a subdivision of Section Nine, a subdivision and a section that ostensibly had nothing to do with "Existence," there was a new sentence:
> The authority shall have power from time to time to refund any bonds by the issuance of new bonds, whether the bonds to be refunded have or have not matured, and may issue bonds partly to refund bonds then outstanding and partly for any other corporate purpose.
> "He had figured out a gimmick/' says Reuben A. Lazarus, drafter of the original Triborough Act and himself a master of the gimmick
> (…)
> "That sentence looked so innocuous. But it changed my whole act completely. With that sentence in there, he had power to issue forty-year bonds and every thirty-nine years he could call them in and issue new bonds, for another forty years. La Guardia had thought that authorities . . . would be temporary creations that would build something and then turn it over to the city and go out of existence as soon as it was paid off. But with that

> gimmick in there, it would never be paid off."
> Never.

After the law passed, Moses also didn't need to be a politicain himself. He was interested in money and power, and he no longer needed elective office to obtain those prizes.
Not only he didn't need political power or backing, but he also didn't need public opinion anymore.

Bonus Points: Display Your New Power With Power

Was also funny to read when the mayor found out about the new power that he himself, unwittingly, granted Moses.

The mayor sent Moses a long letter to enforce boundaries and stop Moses.
And Moses simply replied "I think you had better read the agreements and contracts" :D.

Writes Robert Caro:

> As poor Trubee Davison had done years before, Fiorello La Guardia sat down, too late, to study documents drawn up by Robert Moses which he had approved because he had relied on Moses' word as to what was in them. Then he called in his legal advisers to read them.
> "Well, that was the day of the great awakening," recalls Windels

Be Open To Criticism, Don't Build An Army of Yes-Men

When things started going real bad for Moses, his entourage of yes-men and his attitude of bending everyone to his will only made things worse.

He wasn't able to get good idea, and wasn't even able to get reliable information:

> Moses appears not to have known its full extent himself. Certainly his aides, having seen what happened to Spargo and Witt, were not going out of their way to tell him about it. "You've got to remember," says one city official, "that everyone out there was scared to death. Moses made all those people and he can destroy them. He doesn't want to hear that his Fair is going badly. He's always regarded criticism, however constructive or well meant, as a personal attack.
> All he wants to hear is, 'Yes, RM.' The result was that his own people allowed him to live for months in a fool's paradise."
> It had to end, however.

Never Turn Into A Full Ass*hole / Sociopath: It'll Cost You

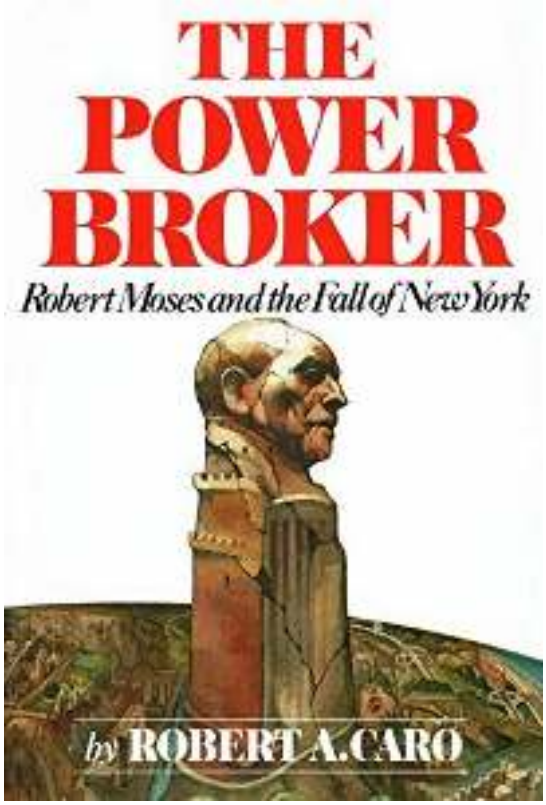
> Power is being able to ruin people, to ruin their careers and their reputations and their personal relationships. Moses had this power, and he seemed to use it even when there was no need to, going out of his way to use it, so that it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he enjoyed using it.

And while Moses did achieve power and "personal success" that tendency to over-punish and antagonize cost him heavily.
Including ruining his name and reputation for generations to come (as this same review proves).

Says Caro towards the end of the book:

The last surviving portion of the Moses image was destroyed. No one had ever said he was personally interested in money. Now they had. Of the image of Robert Moses, that had stood glittering and pure for thirty years, there was

now not a single part left untarnished.
He became an object of derision, almost of scorn, to the reporters he had derided and scorned for so long.



MORE WISDOM

Idealists May Have To Compromise To Acquire Power

> Bob Moses had changed from an uncompromising idealist to a man willing to deal with practical considerations
> (…)
> He was openly scornful of reformers whose first concern was accuracy, who were willing to devote their lives to fighting for principle and who wanted to make that fight without compromise or surrender of any part of the ideals with which they had started it.
> Bob Moses was scornful, in short, of what he had been.

Let Your Wife Handle All Home-Related Stuff So You Can Focus On The Mission

Robert Moses' wife was the person who may have had the most power over him.
However, since she was supportive of him, that worked great for both.
She bought his clothes, took care of what he'd wear, managed the finances -and even slipped him the money under the table to pay for dinners out-.

Don't Trust People Who Start Out TOO Idealistic

From personal experience and reading history, people who are TOO big idealists with too big ideals of "fairness" and "overturning the system (to replace with their vision)" often end up being the worst despots.

Showcase Your Power While Your Status And Achievements While People Wait For You

> Waiting to lunch with Robert Moses, a guest would be ushered at Randall's Island into an anteroom lined with pictures of Robert Moses' bridges, Robert Moses' parks, Robert Moses' parkways, of Robert Moses posing with Hoover, of Robert Moses posing with Roosevelt, of Robert Moses posing with Truman, with Eisenhower (and, later, with Kennedy and Johnson—and Pope John); at Belmont Lake into an anteroom with walls covered, literally from wall to ceiling, with Robert Moses' plaques and trophies. There might be a gleaming white scale model or two, of past or future achievements, lying carelessly about. And to insure against the guest's not being sufficiently reminded of his host's achievements, as he was being served drinks by a white-coated waiter, he would probably be joined —by design—by one of Moses' aides who would regale him with anecdotes about RM's triumphs.

Use Luxurious Hospitality To Win People Over

> Hospitality has always been a potent political weapon. Moses used it like a master. Coupled with his overpowering personality, a buffet often did as much for a proposal as a bribe. "Christ, you'd be standing there eating the guy's food and drinking his liquor and getting ready to go for a ride on his boat, and he'd come up to you and take both your hands in his or put his arm around your shoulders and look into your eye and begin pouring out the arguments in that charming way of his and making you feel like there was no one in the whole world he'd rather be talking to—how could you turn the guy down?" Ingraham knew what it meant when he was invited to a weekend in Babylon or a night at the Marine Theater: "He wanted to plant a story." To other reporters, too, his hospitality was used as a subtle reward, and its withdrawal as a subtle punishment. Write a story that he liked and you would find yourself on one of his lists—and, even on the "C" list, suddenly the need for paying causeway tolls would disappear and you would be able to bring your wife or girlfriend to lavish parties. Continue the good work and you might make the "B" list—or even the "A." Cross him once, and you were off all lists.

Make Decisions At Your Social Events or Lunches And You'll Have More Power To Ratify Whatever You Want

> In the setting Moses created at his luncheons, most men allowed themselves to be bullied, even if only by not openly disagreeing with some Moses proposal in the hope that they could disagree later in the friendlier confines of their office—only to find that before they could get out of his, Moses was virtually forcing them to ratify their acquiescence by presenting for their signature the necessary document, which an aide just happened to have with him, or to find out by the time they got back to their own office that Moses had already notified the Mayor or other department heads of their acquiescence (…)
> And Moses carefully kept the atmosphere social, even while using it for business ends. He would present a problem and his proposed solution to it, and then call on various of his engineers to present facts and figures supporting his arguments. Then he would say, with an easy, charming smile, "Well, since we're all agreed about this . . . ," and move on to the next item. "Well, maybe everyone there didn't agree," Orton says. "But in that setting, who could get up and start arguing? This was an exercise of power by assumption or inference. And it was damned effective." "So much got done at those lunches," says one of his aides. "He'd have a whole agenda —a whole list of items—and he'd go right through it.

Never Underestimate Older & Experienced Men, Not Even When They're Going

Down

As Moses started to eclipse, younger and more ethical men thought underestimated how easy it could be to dispatch them:

> He was still around because he had managed to hold on to power for decades.
> These men with their first taste of power laughed at him; he had not only tasted power but held it longer than many of these men had been alive.
> Did Lindsay think he had the ability to outsmart Robert Moses? Robert Moses had outsmarted La Guardia. From the very same post from which Lindsay was trying to remove him, a President of the United States, at the peak of his popularity and power, dedicated to his destruction, had tried to remove him—and that President had failed.
> These rash young men thought he was only Robert Moses of the World's Fair and Title I; he was also Robert Moses of (…) This was their first real battle; he came to it scarred with the wounds of a hundred battles—battles he had won.
> Lindsay maps plans to slash moses' power, the headlines read. Moses sat in his lair up on Randall's Island and grinned—the grin of the old lion.

QUOTES

Robert Moses quoting Machiavelli:

> "The important thing is to get things done." "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs." "If the end doesn't justify the means, what does?"

On power as the sweetest dish:

> Some men aren't satisfied unless they have caviar. Moses would have been happy with a ham sandwich—and power.

On Moses and his (narcissistic) drive to emperor-like monuments as testaments of his power:

> The roads of Rome stood for two thousand years and more; who would predict less for the roads of Moses? Who would predict less for his Shea Stadium, a structure consciously shaped to resemble Rome's Colosseum because he was afraid that his convention center-office tower "Coliseum" didn't make the comparison clear enough?

On Moses enjoying annoying powerless people, who compared him to powerful nasty figures:

> The big black car sat at the end of the street unnoticed in the dusk by anyone in the crowd as the effigy was hoisted to a lamppost and set afire. "I didn't dare look at RM," Shapiro recalls. But to his surprise, his boss threw back his head and roared with laughter. And when someone suggested they drive away, RM said no. He wanted to stay for a while. He didn't want to miss a thing. He sat there all through the speeches comparing him to a "dictator," "a Hitler," "a Stalin." And, says Shapiro, "he laughed and laughed. RM really got a kick out of it."

CONS

The full work is very thorough which also means that is very long.

It requires a hefty investment of time to seep through

PROS

- Incredibly thorough
- Endless golden nuggets

REVIEW

The Power Broker is an incredibly instructive read to understand power dynamics, the psychology of ultra-driven men, and politics.

Even from a purely practical point of view, it has endless golden nuggets on power, (social) strategies, and techniques.

Because of its length, it may not be the best time investment for all though.
Plus, it requires a certain level of power awareness to turn the wisdom into possible real-life strategies.

Do we need men like Moses?

It's an important question.

Does the world need men like Moses?

To avoid getting lost in very abstract elucubrations, we may even narrow that question down to public works as a smaller subset of general societal advancement.
And, in general, it seems that the normal democratic processes may hinder the construction of larger public work, even when those public work would benefit society.

Says the author:

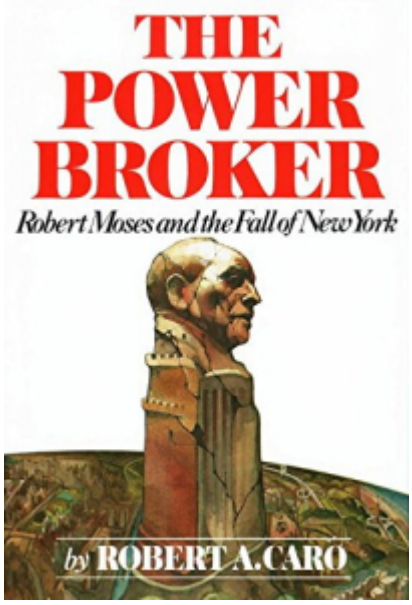
> It was not the physical problems that were the most difficult to solve, however, but the political.
> A technology for solving the physical problems had been perfected, but not the methods and machinery for the creation of large-scale urban public works in a democratic society; the American system of government almost seemed designed to make such creation as difficult as possible.
> It is no coincidence that, as Raymond Moley puts it, "from the pyramids of Egypt, the rebuilding of Rome after Nero's fire, to the creation of the great medieval cathedrals… all great public works have been somehow associated with autocratic power."
> (…)
> Whether or not it is true, as Moley claims, that "pure democracy has neither the imagination, nor the energy, nor the disciplined mentality to create major improvements," it is indisputably true that it is far easier for a totalitarian regime to take the probably unpopular decision to allocate a disproportionate share of its resources to such improvements, far easier for it to mobilize the men necessary to plan and build them;

So, do we need extreme alpha type men like Moses who can cut corners, acquire power, and find ways to get things done, despite all the odds?

Frankly, I think we often need them.
And even when we don't need them, men like Moses can add a ton of value if they put their power behind worthy goals.
And that is also why this website exists: to give Moes' skills and mindsets to worthier people.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

The Power Broker Summary: How Moses Ruled New York



The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (1975) is the biography of Robert Moses and how he acquired, amassed, and maintained power while delivering record-beating public works in terms of sheer size, scope and number, shaping New York as we know it (for better and for worse).

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-power-broker-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

Earnable: Summary & Review (Ramit Sethi)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 August 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Earnable is an online course on entrepreneurship taught by New York Times bestselling author Ramit Sethi.

Contents

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  - Playbook 3: Create A Winning Offer
  - Playbook 4: Get Your First Sale
- CONS
  - Community And Support Not The Best
  - Funnel of Courses?
  - Sales & Attitude
- PROS
- REVIEW

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Ramit Sethi is a New York Times bestselling author and teacher and author of social skills and personal finances courses.
He is also the author of *I Will Teach You To Be Rich* and *Mental Mastery*.

Playbook 1: Think Like An Entrepreneur

So, you've just gotten into the program.

The first thing you notice is the email confirmation Ramit sends after two grand has just left your bank account.

The email reads, "Welcome, and congratulations on joining *Earnable*!" Joining this program was a leap. So, the "congratulations" makes you feel a little better.

You get into the first video right away to see what *exactly* you just invested in (and, if you're like me, it's because you want to make sure you don't need to ask for a refund before the 60-day guarantee is up).

The first video in the first playbook reads, "Welcome to your Rich Life". You click it. You watch it. And, now you're being asked to complete this sentence:

"I joined Earnable to _____."

It seems like this question is intended to surface more of what inspired you to join the program. And, since this playbook is called "Think Like An Entrepreneur", you figure that might be to motivate you to see the program through to the finish line.

At the same time, Ramit is also asking you to share your answer with him via email. So, maybe he's really only asking for his own customer research.

Whatever. Either way, you just want to get to the juicy stuff. You answer the question and move on to the next video. You notice the title is "How Earnable is different".

After a little scrolling, it doesn't take long before you realize that this entire playbook is only an introduction to the "real" sections of the course.

Still, I'm being a little harsh here. The last video in the playbook shares these three money mindsets:

1. I am paid for the value I create
2. The more I make, the more value I can create
3. Money is a marker that I'm doing the right thing

These were really cool. I might change the first one to say:

1. I am paid for the value I *provide*

Since you have to actually *give* that value to *get* money in return.

But, yes, being raised Christian, I was surrounded by people who gave away a lot of their money to church believing they were serving God and doing the right thing while also shaming people who had "too much money".

When I first learned that billionaires even exist as a young kid, I wondered how the world and churches would benefit if those billionaires gave a few million to battle world hunger and teach others that Christmas wasn't really about Santa Claus. It made me think about how the more money I make, the more money I can give just like those billionaires. And, similarly, the more money I make, the more value I can create to eventually provide to others.

That last money mindset is about how people are protective of their money. So, if they're willing to part with their precious, hard-earned money for the value you created, you're doing something right in terms of that value you created.

Playbook 2: Find Your First Profitable Idea

Less than an hour into the program and we're already getting to the good stuff. That's a good sign :).

So, when I was going through this part, I watched the course videos until I hit a video that was unplayable. Come to find out, that's because it wasn't a video, it was a worksheet. One that helps you brainstorm your profitable business idea by starting with a few mini-ideas or "nuggets":

1. Action step 1: Come up with at least 20 "nuggets""The first step is to figure out what exactly we're good at and put it down on paper. We start by doing an inventory of everything — our skills, knowledge, and challenges we've overcome. Below are questions to get you thinking. For each question, write down as many ideas as you can. In the next step, we'll sort through these ideas to find the best and most profitable. Remember: Silence your inner critic. Write down every idea that comes up, regardless of whether or not you think it could be a good business idea. That part comes later!"
   - (1) If you had an extra 3 hours free this weekend, what would you do? (e.g. cook, organize my closet, read books on coding)
   - (2) What do other people struggle with that comes easily to you? (e.g. finding time to work out, writing great cover letters)
   - (3) What are skills you've developed? (e.g. writing great emails, public speaking)
   - (4) What knowledge have you acquired, whether it's something you studied in school or in your free time? (e.g. audio editing, marketing, how to fix your own car)
   - (5) What are the biggest challenges you've overcome? (e.g. chronic stomach pain, brain fog, dressing poorly) (6) What problems do your friends ask you for help with? (e.g. planning trips, workout tips)
   - (7) What do your friends think? The best way to find ideas is to ask your friends!Here's a script you can use to text or email the people who know you best:"Hey, I'm taking a business class and one of our assignments is to ask friends a question, so I'm reaching out to you. If you had to point out 3 things you think I'm good at,

what would you say? Thank you!"It's always good to add an example so you get the answers you're looking for. Like this:"For example, I always go to you for advice on investing. What are some things you'd go to me for?"**Note: My personal thoughts here, this is one of the best playbooks of the entire course. The worksheet has abundantly more than what I've shared here including sample ideas for you to pull from. It wouldn't surprise me if this were your favorite part of the program as you learn and figure out all of the "nuggets" you have inside of you. For me, this was exciting to brainstorm!*

2. Action Step 2: Put your nuggets through the Pay Certainty Test"Now it's time to filter your list to find the best ideas. The first filter is the Pay Certainty Technique. For each nugget you wrote above, ask yourself:
   - 1.) Do people have the ABILITY to pay? Do they actually have money?
   - 2.) Do people have the WILLINGNESS to pay? Do they want to pay?For example, I love ironing. Could I start a business that helps people get better at ironing? Let's see…
     - 1.) Do people have the ABILITY to pay? Probably, yes. It passes test #1.
     - 2.) Do people have the WILLINGNESS to pay? No! No one is going to pay me to learn how to iron. It's not enough of a burning pain. This fails test #2.Put each of your nuggets through the Pay Certainty Test. When you come up with a no, cross that nugget off."

3. Action Step 3: Plot your remaining nuggets on the Demand Matrix"You should have at least 4-5 ideas left on your list. Now let's find which ones will be the most profitable!The Demand Matrix makes it more likely that your idea will be profitable before you go out and sell it. It's a framework that quickly filters your ideas, helps you avoid "idea one-itis," and trains you to "operationalize" your ideas in the real world (which is the only place they matter).If you're not 100% certain where your nugget falls, that's okay! We are never 100% certain, either. The Demand Matrix is just a framework to organize your ideas, not to make a final decision."

4. Action Step 4: Pick the best idea"Write down the 3 ideas that seem most worth pursuing after running them through the Pay Certainty Test and Demand Matrix. Which one are you MOST excited about? That's the one we recommend starting with. Take that idea and run it through the remaining playbooks to craft your offer, get feedback on your offer — and ultimately make your first sale! Don't worry about picking the 'perfect' idea. You can always come back to this list, try another idea, and run it through the Earnable System!"

This part is just absolutely awesome. It's where you can have fun finding different ways to make your best ideas work.

For example, operating as a freelance copywriter for other businesses can be a High-End service that you offer that costs clients upwards of $8,000. At the same time, you could release an eBook on copywriting that would fit in the Mass Market category. Same business model (offering copywriting), but ranging in profitability depending on how you adapt it to The Deman Matrix. It's about getting creative and that's what can make this part very enjoyable for those who are emotionally invested in the business-building process.

The first time I was introduced to a concept similar to The Demand Matrix is when I was 17-years-old reading a blog called Masculine Development.
The site owner, Jon Anthony, explained the concept like this:

> **Jon**: "If you want to become a millionaire, either offer value by magnitude or scale. If you want to become a billionaire, do both.
>
> Magnitude: 10,000 people pay you $100.00 = $1,000,000
>
> Scale: 100 people pay you $10,000.00 = $1,000,000
>
> Both: 10,000 people pay you $10,000.00 = $100,000,000″

In this case, Ramit identifies "magnitude" as "amount of customers" in the matrix and "scale" as "price".

BTW, if you're wondering what kinds of products would fit in the "Golden Goose" category, think iPhone :).

Also, Ramit addresses questions in this playbook such as "what if I'm not an expert in anything?" And, in response to that question, he notes that you don't *need* to be an expert. You only need to know a little more than the people you're trying to serve.

That inspired me. I wasn't concerned about being a "fraud", but I was concerned about whether or not people would get any actual value from what I was offering based on the business idea I had chosen for this experiment. And, I think Ramit's right. That gap where you know more than your customer, however big or small, is where the value you can provide lives. And, you can identify how big that gap is during the sales call (there are playbooks on that as well).

Playbook 3: Create A Winning Offer

Going into this playbook, I assumed that this would be the point where he teaches how to create your first product to offer to the marketplace.

Maybe an eBook or a course since this program is geared more toward teaching how to build an *online* business. But, as I started watching the videos in this playbook, it was my surprise to discover that Ramit actually teaches against products (despite the number of courses on his website). Here's why:

Customer research.

If you make an "offer", then it's a case where you can do things such as hopping on a sales call to discover your prospect's primary objections, the specific kind of language they use to describe their "burning pains", and so on. You can learn the things that grow the success of your business by getting to know and understand the most important part of your business: your customer.

Most of all, you get to learn firsthand how highly the market truly values your product.

There will be situations when you're on a call and ask the prospect about their situation and they detail all of their problems (burning pains). And, you know your offer can solve those problems for them. So, you recommend a solution for them and they say "that sounds great". Hehe, then you reveal the price and suddenly they're no longer

interested.

It could be the price is too high, it could be the customer isn't within your target market, or it could be that you simply need to refine your idea. You won't know unless you do the research. And, going in with an offer first makes it easier to perform that research.

So, here, Ramit shares some frameworks, step-by-step processes, and other examples to create your winning offer.

There was an example of a winning offer that happened to be a perfect fit for my business, so I used that one.

Playbook 4: Get Your First Sale

This is the day that I was waiting for the most.

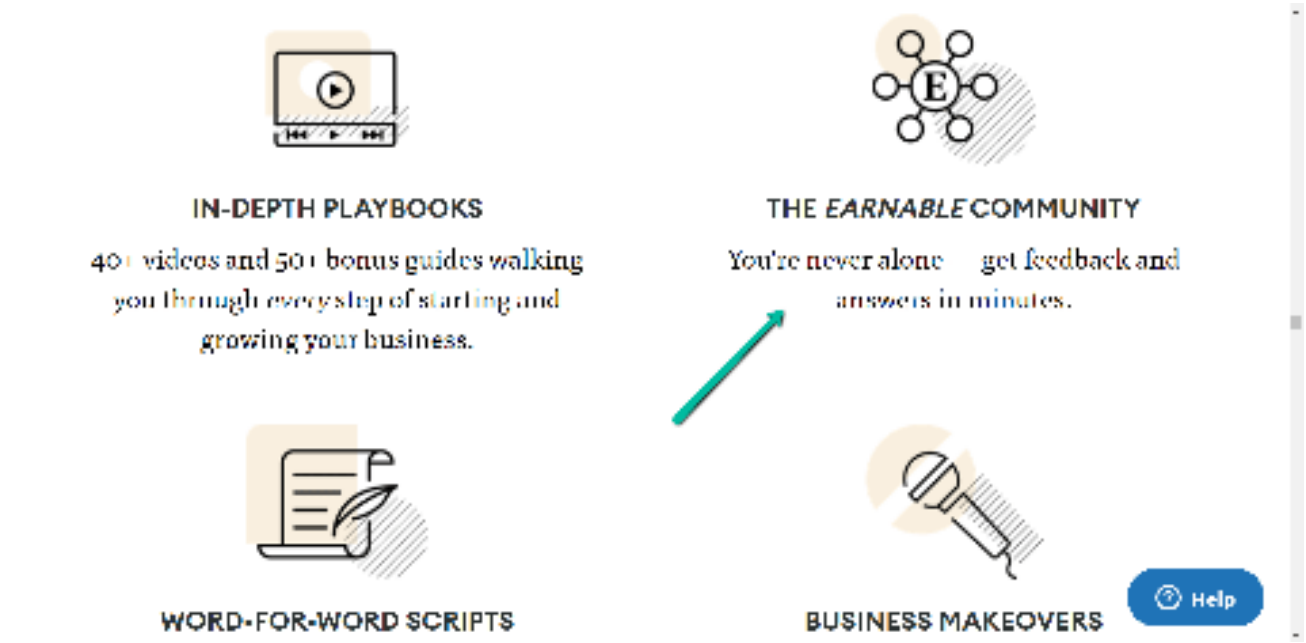
Ramit automatically enrolls you in something called the 10-day fast-track to get you your first sale within your first ten days of joining the Earnable. He already has your email address from when you joined, so this mini-incentive doesn't cost you anything, it only adds value.

The problem is, he doesn't tell you where to get your customers for your first sale. He teaches how to build passion-driven businesses, so every business is different. That means he can't give out a "one-sized fits all" way to get customers and he's not going to want to tell each and every student where to get their customers if he wants to respect his own time.
So, instead, he says:

> **Ramit**: "If you can't even find your customers for your customer research, how will you find them when it's time for the sale?"

He basically reframes from it being about sales to it being about customer research to avoid it looking like he just left you dead in the water now that it's time to bring in the bread.

So, I do my best to do some more "customer research".
Earnable has its own community of thousands of entrepreneurs. As he touts on his sales page: "You're never alone — get feedback and answers in minutes."



But Community Support Wasn't The Greatest...

When I asked for feedback on my offer in the community, to my surprise, no one answered. I had followed the

WIIFT rule and everything. What next?

I begin responding to the offers of all of the most recent requests. A lot of the questions were asking for the opinions of others on if their current copy would persuade them to buy. A good idea.

So, I would look at their copy and give them real, genuine feedback on if it would persuade me to buy from them. Then, I'd mention some strategies they would only know if they had taken Daniel Pink's masterclass to know about. And, to top it off, I offer to show them how those strategies could improve their copy if they give back feedback on my offer (future-value signaling).

A few days go by. No responses.

Determined to see this experiment through, I quickly enrolled in this Udemy course: "Lead Generation Machine: Cold Email B2B Sales Master Course". And, I worked my ass off to implement and complete two business programs at the same time on top of my current day-to-day workload.

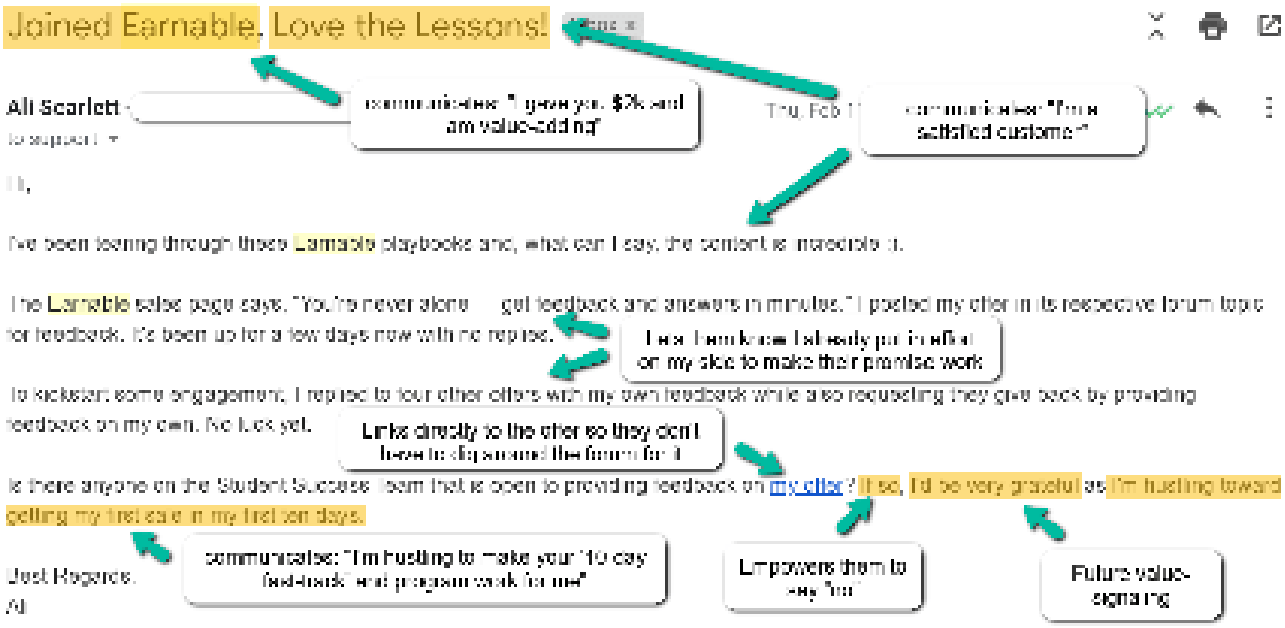
I already learned and practiced networking to get mentors, connections, and friends. Yet, I had rarely applied networking to sales. So, the idea was to expand my networking skills specific to setting up meetings with the prospects that fit the business idea I developed in Earnable. And, that's exactly what Patrick Dang teaches. And, thank God, he didn't disappoint (otherwise, two grand might have gone down the drain).

CONS

Community And Support Not The Best

When I didn't get any reply from the community I reach out to customer support.

Just to let you know that I did my best to get the best possible response from them, here's a look at what I said:



All of the right incentives were laid out for them. And, the "I'm hustling toward getting my first sale in my first ten days" also implements Robert Cialdini's principle of urgency on their end to get me support before the end of the ten days. After all, they're part of what Ramit refers to as the "IWT Student Success Team". So, they're supposed to help with things like this anyway.

Here's their response:

R_____) Feb 11, 2021, 3:44 PM EST:

Hi Ali,

I'm so happy that you are enjoying the Earnable course.

While we are not able to give you feedback on your offer here in support, I would encourage you to try posting something in the watercooler area as well giving some of your background and letting people know that you are looking for some feedback. You could also try re-posting your request again. Since the community is student based we can't determine exactly how long it will be before you get some replies.

I'm sure that you will get some replies soon, also keep in mind that a lot of people seem to check the community only periodically so it does sometimes take time.

Best,
R_____)
IWT Student Success Team

It's funny how their sales page read, "You're never alone — get feedback and answers in minutes," and then when I find myself alone the only person I can reach out to tells me, "We can't determine how exactly how long it will be before you get some replies." Maybe that should have been on their sale page :D.

Also read TPM's take on it:

- **Community-based Earnable learning and promises**

Which leads us to the second observation:

Funnel of Courses?

Coincidentally (probably not), I begin getting emails from Ramit for another one of his programs: "Endless Audience". A program that teaches how to get an endless audience of customers for your business.

That might explain why he left this key step out of Earnbale, but I try not to jump to conclusions. Especially, since the same customer acquisition information (or lack thereof) in Earnable was already enough to get some other students some great results. So, in the interest of being self-aware of my own shortcomings, maybe I just wasn't that good in terms of applying this playbook. Luckily, Patrick filled that gap.

It's currently Day 15 and I've finished both programs. There are only a couple of "bonus playbooks" left.

Sales & Attitude

- It (barely) met my expectations in terms of teaching sales (full disclosure, I called customer support before joining to ask if sales scripts were included and they didn't have much they could say, so I wasn't expecting much here)
- It felt a little hurtful at times (Ramit can be a little harsh when it comes to teaching the difference between people who will actually buy and people who won't)
- In terms of communities, it's not a competition. But, if it were, the TPM community would be eating Earnable's lunch

PROS

- It surpassed my expectations in terms of helping me create a winning offer
- Ramit is honest and his intentions are warm (he seems willing to give refunds without too much hassle, has a

special list of people he has blocked from ever buying his courses due to rudeness in order to keep his team from having to deal with them, takes the time to read a lot of the Instagram DMs and emails he receives from strangers, and follows the rules of assertive feedback-giving to provide constructive feedback without damaging the egos of the learners involved)

- It surpassed my expectations in terms of teaching how to successfully *launch* the online business to a great start using quality customer research
- It surpassed my expectations in terms of teaching how to make your business idea one that's truly rooted in something you're passionate about

REVIEW

TPM's Reviews™

Earnable is a great program.

Ramit is a pretty good entrepreneur.
Turned out Charlie Houpert over at Charisma On Command was one of his students including a few other successful people that I know personally.

Unluckily, I'll have to pair this program with a couple of other deals I had planned for later down the road in order to make it work for me.
But, the good news is that once you have the customers, Ramit literally handles teaching the rest (including automation).

Check the **best books** to read or **the best books and courses for entrepreneurs.**

Mastermind Dinners Review: Social Engineering at Dinner (Jayson Gaignard)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 September 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Mastermind Dinners is a book on how to host mastermind dinners that expand your personal network, link you with high-status individuals, and expand your career opportunities.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Introduction
  - Chapter 1: Mastermind Dinners
  - Chapter 2: Authentic Marketing 101
  - Chapter 3: The Magic Is In the Details
  - Chapter 4: Do Your Research (Again)
  - Chapter 5: Your Mastermind Dinner
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- Real-Life Tips
- Cons
- Pros
- Review

Exec Summary

- **Target high-value people for attendance**: if you can, you can leverage that into getting more high-value attendees and a higher attendance rate overall.
- **Do as much research as possible before the event**: to organize the event well and prepare for the conversations you'll have.
- **Send post-dinner follow-ups**: to continue the relationships.

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Jayson Gaignard is a Canadian entrepreneur, networking specialist, and author who founded MastermindTalks, an invitation-only conference for entrepreneurs.

Introduction

Note: This section had no official title, he transitions straight from the Preface to the subchapters. So, I've grouped all of the subchapters before the first official chapter (twelve in total) as the Introduction.

The book opens up with the story of how Gaignard was earning great money (22 times the national average income, to be exact), but unhappy.

Then, he went to an intimate gathering with a popular marketer where the theme was the "connection economy" (the theory that there is tremendous value in being the catalyst connecting like-minded individuals). And at that

event, he gave thought to the idea of how isolating entrepreneurship can be and decided to start Mastermind Dinners.

When he hosted his first dinner (with eight invitees that didn't know each other before then), Gaignard says that the conversation didn't skip a beat for four hours and for the first time in a long time, he genuinely lost track of time. And he knew then that connecting people was something he wanted to do for the rest of his life.

At the time, each dinner was costing him around $600-$800 and putting him further into debt, but he believed no matter what assets and belongings got taken or repossessed, the bank couldn't take his relationships.

He believed investing in relationships is the safest investment he could make and that the same is true for everyone else.

A few more ideas here:

- **Conduct quality control for your events**: he later hosted his first MastermindTalks events and accepted many applications from entrepreneurs. But he rejected any entrepreneur he wouldn't want to have dinner with (regardless of their business size or revenue).
- **Adopt an abundance mindset**: and use it to encourage collaborative frames. Choose to believe that there's enough in the world for everyone that you can give without losing. After all, a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.
- **Be a talent scout**: wanting to connect with big names often comes from ego. For a better return, connect with people who have great potential (a high social ROI), invest in them, and watch their success explode.
- **If you're a creator, adopt a philosophy that aligns with the 1,000 True Fans Theory**: which is that anyone who produces content or works of art only needs 1,000 true fans to make a living. Quality over quantity.

Chapter 1: Mastermind Dinners

Mastermind Dinners are the highest value "connecting" activity that Gaignard does and it comes in two forms: local dinners and location dinners.

Both are generally focused around these three areas:

- Reconnecting with old ties (catching up and keeping relationships healthy)
- Introducing people who can benefit from knowing each other
- Connecting with people who you've been meaning to connect with for some time (if you invite eight people and all eight show, you're killing eight birds with one stone)

Gaignard tries to host these gatherings as often as possible, but since many of these dinners can have mix of people from all three categories above, he has to be very mindful of the synergy within the group.

Focusing more on the two types of dinners now:

- **Local dinners**: these are dinners hosted in your local area. They enable you to build roots locally and give you the benefit of having a go-to restaurant that you can regularly make good use of. The downside is that these dinners can make it harder for schedules to align.
- **Location dinners**: nonlocal dinners. They're great for reconnecting with old ties when traveling or connecting people with a common interest.

For location dinners, Gaignard recommends holding these when you go to another city for an event because:

- **People going to an event share some form of common interest by default**: and that common ground will benefit the group's synergy
- **Many events offer a list of attendees or some sort of access to an online community before the event**: so

it's easy to create a list of people to reach out to
- **It catches people outside of their normal routine**: hosting a dinner for a group of people who are traveling is an easy way to stay clear of their normal day-to-day routines, commitments, and responsibilities they may have

Planning the Perfect Dinner

Keep these in mind:

- **Commonalities**: make sure there is at least one among the guests, there has to be at least one unifying area of conversation. But, avoid extremes (such as having the owner of a million-dollar company at the dinner with only owners of startups) and conflicts of interest (such as inviting direct competitors together).
- **Group size**: the smaller the group size, the more intimate the dinner feels, the more ground you can cover, and there's an all-around better chance there will be a flow to the conversation. Gaignard prefers table sizes of four to six people.

Finding Dinner Guests

Things to keep in mind:

- **Social proof and authority-endorsement improves your response rate**: work to build it by working to getting big names to come to your gatherings, but start small with "not so big" names.
- **Be clear on why you're putting on the dinners and why you want certain individuals there**: there is no wrong answer, just be clear.
- **Go for warm reach-outs whenever possible**: reaching out cold with no influence or social proof to high-status people can be time-wasting. Instead, use a mutual friend
- **When sending invitations, go for a targeted, personalized approach**: a "spray and pray" email blast is an approach that gives less attention to the synergy at the table
- **When sending invitations, go for a "working up the food chain" approach**: if it's a list of ten prospects, start small by inviting the person who would most likely give you a "yes" (oftentimes this is the person least "in demand" and with the least influence). Then, once you get them on board, move to the second most likely person to give you a "yes", mentioning that the prior person will be attending as well. Continue this approach up the ladder to the prospect with the highest influence, building social proof and authority endorsements along the way.
- **Or, go for an "anchor tenant" approach**: focus on getting one big high-status person to come to your event, then mention their name when inviting other prospects on the list to come.

Chapter 2: Authentic Marketing 101

Here, Gaignard reiterates the Simon Sinek quote, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

Be honest, raw, and authentic. And focus on selling the "why".

Creative Outreach to High Profile People

First, double-check that you need to reach out to that high-profile person at all.

> **Gaignard**: "…ask yourself, if I am unable to connect with this person, are there alternative people who could help me reach the same desired outcome? By widening your options you will realize there may be several people who you can contact instead who will help you get to exactly where you want to go, with a lot less effort."

Then, follow this process:

1. **Do your research**: "by doing in-depth research you may be able to find a unique angle to use to reach out to that person. You may be reaching out for business purposes, but you may [also] be able to connect based on a common interest outside of business."
2. **Check if you have any friends in common**: "Check platforms like Facebook and Linkedin to see if you have any mutual connections. If for some reason you don't find any common connections, broadcast out to your network."
3. **Choose the best medium for outreach**: pick the least "noisy" one you can find. For example, their email might be monitored by gatekeepers (personal assistants) so it may make more sense to try reaching out via Twitter.
4. **Reach out strategically**: much of the appeal of your gathering is in how you present it.

There are two main ways Giagnard does his reachouts: the "9-word email" and video/audio email.

The 9-word email goes like this:

> **Email**: "Hey Steve! I'm planning to hold a dinner next week with a group of ____ (Best-selling authors, entrepreneurs, artists, etc…), interested?"

That's the whole body of the email (it's one sentence that's around nine words in length).

If they say "yes" that's a small win and you can respond with email #2, which would include a date and a time.

The video/audio approach is simply a process of sending a short video or audio message in an email which helps you stand out.

From here, if there's no response follow up. And if they reject/object, ask something like, "Under what circumstances would you say 'yes'?"

Chapter 3: The Magic Is In the Details

Choosing the Perfect Restaurant

"…once you have one or two go-to restaurants it's a huge weight off your shoulders logistically. Also if you bring a consistent stream of business to a restaurant, they will treat you like gold and there are other ways you can leverage the relationship (including some kind of discount, financial kickback, or concessions)."

Things to consider here:

- Location
- Menu diversity (try to find restaurants that are vegetarian and Paleo-friendly)
- Meal cost
- Noise level
- Availability of private rooms (and private room minimums)
- Table location

Chapter 4: Do Your Research (Again)

"A networker does research on companies; a relationship builder does research on people."

There are two main schools of thought when it comes to doing research on people:

1. **Only do the bare minimum (and nothing more)**: some benefits are that it forces you to be present and it forces you to ask very poignant and interesting questions. (If you do a ton of research on an individual it may feel like the conversation has already been "had," which can make things very stale. It's the difference between connecting with the person vs the persona.)

2. **Aim to know as much about the group as possible in advance (the more you know the better)**: some benefits here are that you don't leave the serendipity of great conversations to chance, you're able to discover and utilize uncommon commonalities to forge deeper connections. And by discovering everyone's issues, you can arrange the seating so everyone is seated next to someone who can potentially solve their challenges.

Pre-Dinner Communication

First, Gaignard generally tends not to share the guest list with the attendees because it can lead to false perceptions and expectations. (Guests may research the other guests beforehand and prejudge the quality of the dinner or attendees based on whatever they find online.)

So, the night before the dinner he'll send a very quick reminder email that only contains the most pertinent details (time, restaurant, address, and a link to a Google map) and his cell phone number should they need to let him know if they'll be late or if something comes up.

Who Picks Up the Tab?

You have a few different options:

- **As the host, you pay for everyone's dinner**: you can also get a co-host who values networking as much as you do to split the total bill with them.
- **Guests pay for their own meals**: you can mention it in the original email invitation or set up a way for people to pay in advance (and with that second option, people are less likely to cancel last-minute since they're financially invested)
- **Find a sponsor**: find a company that's willing to sponsor your dinners.

Seating Arrangements

For larger groups, you can pair people up based on synergy or uncommon commonalities.

Almost everyone experiences the paradox of choice trying to "choose the right spot." This alleviates that worry for them.

Chapter 5: Your Mastermind Dinner

Last steps:

- **Call the restaurant to confirm the reservation**
- **Send a personal text message to the attendees a few hours beforehand**: which serves as a check-in and a quick reminder
- **Arrive at the restaurant anywhere between 25 to 60 minutes in advance**: to ensure you get the right table (if you haven't been able to select the table in advance) and greet anyone who arrives early

Kicking Off the Dinner Right

The initial introductions can be as casual or as structured as you'd like.

One way to go about it is to start by explaining your relationship with everyone at the table and why everyone is there. Then, follow up with some ground rules.

Here are some sample rules:

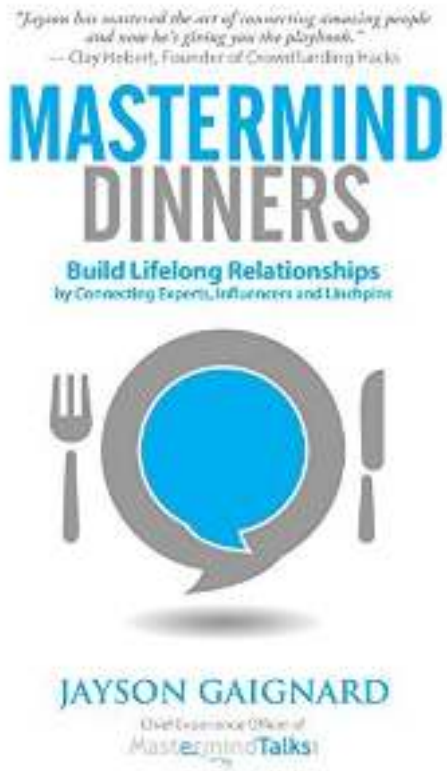
- **Confidentiality**: everything shared in the room should not leave the room.
- **Order wine by the glass only**: "…if bottles of wine are on the table people will drink it. If they need to order by the glass, they won't order as much. This helps both to keep the cost down and lessen the possibility of someone having a little too much to drink (which can happen)."

- **No cell phones**: optional, but helpful for encouraging more and better conversations
- **Order early**: ask the group to order within a few minutes of "housekeeping" and introductions because it's not uncommon that an hour after the dinner has started, people are in such deep conversation that they have yet to look at the menu.
- **End time**: state in advance the time the dinner is done but that everyone is more than welcome to stay longer. (This allows those who need to leave early to do so gracefully while others can stick around.)

Then, once you've set the tone for the dinner, start with your formal introductions.

Post-Dinner

Send a thank you email and start introducing everyone to each other.



MORE WISDOM

- **Work on yourself first, then focus on the networking tools and strategies out there**

> **Gaignard**: "Ryan Holiday spoke at our first MastermindTalks event, and the central idea of his talk was that if your product is crap, good marketing will just help people realize your product is crap quicker than they would have otherwise. The same idea applies to relationship building; it doesn't matter what tools you use or how good your strategies are…if you're inauthentic, selfish, or egotistical, good strategies will just allow others to discover who you really are more quickly."

- **On an extreme growth mindset negating jealousy or envy**

> **Gaignard**: "I have some amazing friends (who are also incredibly successful). The only reason that I do is because when they succeed, I cheer for them. I'm thrilled for them. I don't say to myself, 'Why do they have that, and I don't?' I know that I have different plans and energies and I'm not committed to doing the same things. If I was committed to the same things, I know I could probably accomplish similar results."

- **More wise points from the book**

> "When you hit rock bottom, you'll be left with two things: the integrity of your word and your relationships."

> "Honesty, vulnerability, and integrity are expensive gifts, don't expect them from cheap people."

> "At the end of the day, it's not how many friends you can count, it's how many friends you can count on."

> "Get comfortable with the uncomfortable because unfaced fears become your limits."

> "Even leaders need a tribe."

QUOTES

- **Would you be friends with you?**

> **Gaignard**: "Maybe it's time you did a personal balance sheet. Entrepreneurs list their assets and liabilities for their business on a regular basis, so why not do it for yourself on a personal level? List your strengths, weaknesses, what makes you unique, and the ways you can provide value to others."

I'd recommend starting with these two articles to see how many traits you can check off as well as what to look for in others:

- The 10 Traits of High-Value Men (W/ Examples)
- 12 Traits of High-Value Women (With Examples)

- **On the value of social proof and working to achieve it**

> **Gaignard**: "At a recent large dinner I hosted in NYC I sent out thirty-four invitations. Out of that group, thirty-two people said yes and showed up to that dinner with not a single cancellation. That's a 94% acceptance rate on a dinner that consisted of multiple New York Times bestselling authors, online influencers, and well-known industry leaders. I say this because two years ago this definitely wasn't the response I was getting. I was lucky to get a 5% response rate to my invites and had to deal with several last-minute cancellations on more than one occasion. What changed? Social proof. And the only way to get social proof is by putting in the work. Sean Stephenson says that 'if you want to experience success, be prepared to face dead-ends and false alarms. They're meant to shake off the wannabes.' So start small."

- **In the social exchange, your reach-out is costing them time, so respect it**

> **Gaignard**: "You may not be reaching out to them for money, but you're reaching out for an even more precious commodity – their time. We live in a world where there are two currencies: money and time. That's why they call it 'paying' attention…Put yourself in your prospect's shoes: where are they when they receive your email? What other distractions or demands may be happening at that time?"

Real-Life Tips

- **Hold a dinner for speakers**

Speakers want to be connected to like-minded individuals and event organizers rarely do anything for their speakers while in town. So, it's very easy to put something together and be a hero.

- **Test open-ended subject lines**

Since most subject lines are closed-ended, an open-ended one (that includes an element of personalization) can help your email stand out.

For example, "John, I'm doing a dinner with a group of entrepreneurs…"

- **Recognize when to switch gears in your journey**

If you build high-value connections well, it won't make sense to expand your network forever.

At some point, you'll get more value from focusing your time and energy on deepening your current relationships further than finding new ones.

- **Utilize facilitated networking when necessary**

For example, using ice breaker cards, being conscious of people's body language at the table, keeping an eye on who's dominating the conversation and who's not talking enough, and so on.

Don't leave it to the group to figure out on its own how to thoroughly enjoy themselves. If it's a group that needs it, help facilitate a great time.

- **Take a picture of the group at the dinner**

The uses for such pictures go further than only building memories, it can help build your network faster too (such as by using it in a follow-up email, posting on social media as social proof, and so on).

- **Ask permission before making an introduction**

An unexpected introduction can put high-value people in a tough spot as it forces them to add yet another thing to their to-do list they didn't plan for. And many busy people often don't have time to reply to the email itself, much less set up a call to meet someone new that they're not even sure they want to meet.

Cons

- **The connection formula seemed inaccurate**

Gaignard makes the case that you can't have a connection without honesty (to communicate effectively and hold the relationship together), vulnerability (to reach a level of depth in your relationships), and integrity (to build and maintain a good reputation).

But, truthfully, you can't have a connection without power awareness. Without it, you're at risk of being too honest (and as a result, oversharing), too vulnerable (and coming across as weak), and your goodness of character/integrity coming across as nice guy syndrome.

So, a better mix might be to say you can't have a connection without knowledge of power dynamics, emotional intelligence (which includes relationship management anyway), and honesty to your own value system. (See "10 Traits of High-Value Men".)

- **Some punctuation mistakes**

And that brought down the book's credibility for me a bit, but only a bit.

- **Mixed information**

Gaignard says that at the dinner, once you've set the tone, you should start with formal introductions. And go first so you can lead by example, being open and vulnerable so others will be open and vulnerable in their introductions that follow.

But, two of the three introductions he uses and recommends are centered around social climbing.

From the book:

- Top Professional or Business Achievement (brag)
- Top Personal Achievement (brag)

That can set an example (and maybe even a competition, depending on their attitudes) where people feel the need to "prove their value" in their introductions as well.

- **A couple power unaware moments**

For example, Gaignard at one point says:

> **Gaignard**: "You need to be the gatekeeper of your network. I am VERY protective of my relationships and very respectful of people's time. Because of my associations I am asked on a daily basis for introductions…I make sure there's a strong and compelling reason as to why I'm doing the introduction in the first place. I've learned to ask 'What is your desired outcome with the connection?' This question stops half of those who reach out to me dead in their tracks and forces them to get really clear about what they want or need. You wouldn't believe how many people request a connection to somebody else with virtually no clarity as to what they want out of it."

When I read this, I thought to myself, "Were they stopped dead in their tracks because they had no clarity or because of the way you phrased the question?"

That phrasing begins to frame the receiver as if they're only looking to get something out of the person. It makes them look like a taker.

So, better might've been another type of phrasing.

Pros

- **Gets the WIIFT Rule**

A quote straight from Gaignard himself:

> **Gaignard**: "Don't forget to ask yourself one of the most important questions of all – 'what is in it for them?' It is baffling how often this question is overlooked. If you're reaching out to someone cold, there must be some kind of clear benefit for them."

- **Fun ideas for making dinners and gatherings more memorable**

For example, with a group that you know well, you can play Credit Card Roulette:

> **Gaignard**: "Everyone at the table puts their credit card in a pile and hands them to the waiter who then puts them into a napkin or glass. The waiter pulls out the cards one by one, and the last card removed is stuck taking care of the bill…The key is telling your guests in advance and allowing people who want to pay for their own bill to opt out."

Or, Phone Stacking:

> **Gaignard**: “When at a dinner, people are often on their phones – so grab them and stack them face down in the center of the table. The first to pick up their phone pays the bill for all.”

Review

This book delivered as far as giving a solid overview of how to host mastermind dinners.

However, it was too much of an overview and, therefore, felt like it was lacking content.

I wish there were more details such as how to hold conversations at events that make attendees eager to get to know you better, willing to become an ally in your network, and happy to come back to your future dinners.

With the book being so short, for me, this book also fell short of the extra step that could’ve taken it to a higher rating.

Get the book here.

Or, check out the best books on social skills.

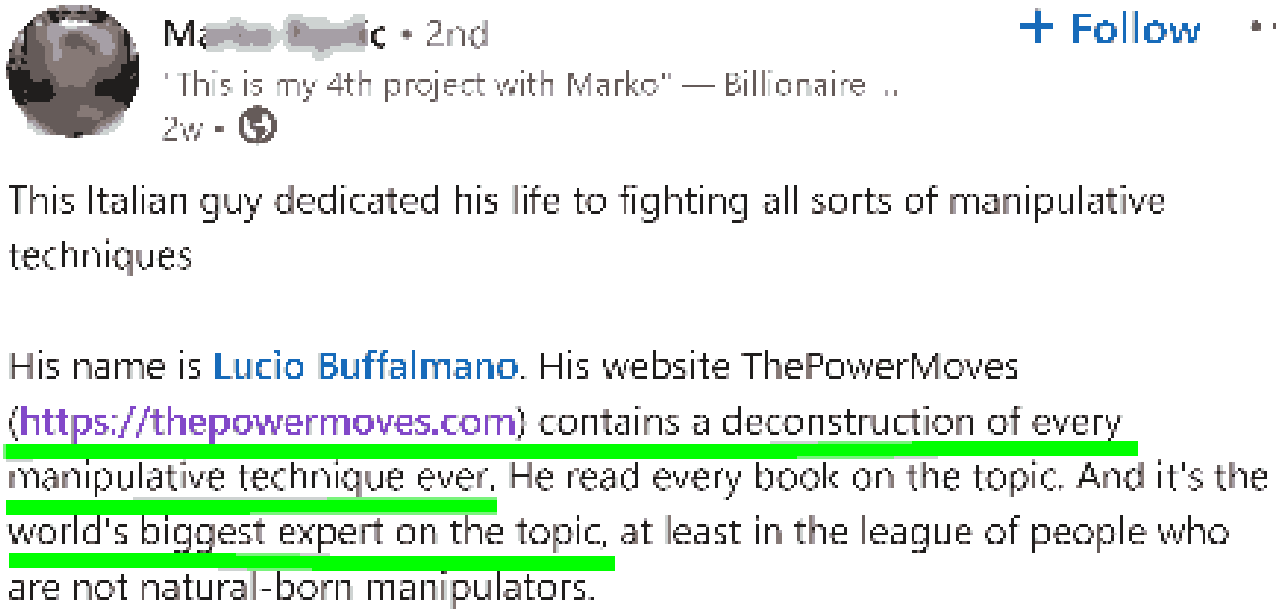
Persuasion vs. Manipulation: Understanding the Fine Line

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 September 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The main difference between persuasion and manipulation is simple: **persuasion is open about its objectives, while manipulation hides its self-serving motives.**

However, in real life, things aren't that simple.

At TPM, we've studied manipulation for years, and thousands of readers now consider us the leading experts on power, persuasion, and people dynamics. For example:



> "(The Power Moves) is the world's biggest expert on the topic (of manipulation)".
>
> *TPM reader on Linkedin*

So we've decided to spell out the real difference between manipulation and persuasion, with examples, psychology-backed analysis, and red flags to watch out for.

Let's begin.

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  - What Are NOT Differences
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- Grey Areas: It's Degrees, More Than Absolutes
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- Learn BOTH Persuasion & Manipulation

- Manipulation Is Important Because…
- The Advantages of Manipulation

- The Advantages of Persuasion
  - Our Approach: Honorable, Without being A Sucker
- Ethics of Persuasion VS Manipulation
  - When Manipulation Can Be Fair
- Finding The Right Balance: A Life's Calling
  - Sales Persuasion Ethics: It's Fair To Do Your Best To Sell
  - The ultimate guidance on "walking the line"
- Conclusions
  - FAQ

Intro

We define:

- **Manipulation is** communication and behavior that serves the speaker and seeks to exploit the victims
- **Persuasion is** communication and behavior that seeks to influence someone while respecting their self-interest and well-being

We also refer to persuasion here as "straight talk".
"Straight" is a larger construct going beyond simple communication. It includes a person's character, and a general approach and expectation towards others.

Persuasion VS Manipulation

Here's an overview of the difference between persuasion and manipulation:

PERSUASION	MANIPULATION
✅ **Cooperate** (persuasion is the communication mode of cooperation)	❌ **Compete** (manipulation is the communication mode of (unfair) competition)
✅ **Good faith**[1] (has good or neutral intentions and believes in what he says or does)	❌ **Bad faith**[1] (has ill intentions and does not believe in what he says or does)
✅ **Value-adding or neutral** (the effect on the target is neutral or value-giving)	❌ **Harmful**[2] (the effect on the target is value-taking)
✅ **Serving or balanced WIIFM/WIIFY** (not based on pure self-interest so the persuader may gain, not gain, or lose out)	❌ **Self-serving**[3] (manipulation's first and foremost goal is to benefit the manipulator)
✅ **True** (shows what's true and dispels falsehoods) ("truth-seeking" is a subset mode)	❌ **False** (instills new false beliefs or changes correct ones) (gaslighting is a subset mode)
✅ **Objective** (presents data, facts, pros & cons, and different points of views)	❌ **Biased** (fudges data, hides the cons and over-sells or invents the pros)
✅ **Two-way influence** (open to being persuaded and changing his mind)	❌ **Not open to influence**[4] (not open or interested to changing his mind)

PERSUASION	MANIPULATION
✅ **Transparent** (transparent in both goals and biases, including "WIIFM")	❌ **Hidden agendas** (frames it as good for you, or hides WIIFM behind "higher ideals")
✅ **Respectful**[5] (respects the individual's rights, including the right to decide)	❌ **Inconsiderate** (no respect for other people's wills and rights)
✅ **Liberates** (with truth and wisdom come liberation, freedom and empowerment)	❌ **Controls** (with lies and malice come dependence, abuse, and disempowerment)

1 intentions are independent of results. Good intentions can harm, bad ones can add value
2 "persuasion is good, manipulation bad" is insufficient. Good VS bad is often complex to ascertain. Manipulation can make you feel good while costing in other terms. Or it can add value, but at the opportunity cost of better alternatives
3 inveterate manipulators are utterly unable to be straight, despite the high costs for them
4 some of the "best" manipulators are good at *faking* open-mindedness
5 not in the sense of "kind". One can speak dominantly, offend, or even hurt the receiver. It's respect for the receiver's right to ignore, disagree, and do otherwise
See the table cheatsheet here.

The *Routledge Handbook of Persuasion* dedicates a whole chapter to the ethics of persuasion.
And narrows down the differences between persuaders and manipulators to three traits, based on Brockriede's, 1974:

- **Respect**: Ethical persuaders affirm the other person's self-worth and dignity, treating them as valued partners rather than as "marks" or "suckers" to be exploited.
- **Equality**: They strive for equal status in relationships, ensuring influence attempts do not exploit power disparities. Even in unequal dynamics (e.g., workplace or parenting), they suggest rather than order and remain open to being influenced, fostering mutual respect.
- **Tolerance**: They are patient, open to others' viewpoints, and willing to engage in two-way persuasion. This includes turn-taking and listening, avoiding a rigid "I will persuade, but not be persuaded" mindset.

What Are NOT Differences

Popular but untrue differences include:

- **Persuasion builds trust, manipulation destroys it**. Yes, it's true that manipulation may destroy trust. But *only when uncovered*. That's a huge if. If successful, manipulation may also increase trust. Successful manipulation often depends on developing trust.
  On the other hand, poor persuasion may decrease trust
- **Persuasion is logical, manipulation is emotional**. Manipulation withholds data or logic that surfaces the truth, IF the truth is not what the manipulator wants. But manipulation leverages data or logic if it serves the manipulator's goals (including, of course, warped logic and fudged data).
  On the other hand, persuasion may also use more emotional appeals
- **Persuasion is for others' benefits, manipulation is for the self**. It's true that manipulation is almost always self-serving. But if we accept that all humans pursue self-interest, then also persuasion often includes self-interest as well.
  Indeed, the main difference is that persuasion is open about its self-interest. And it balances it out with other people's best interest

Let's review some examples now:

Examples Of Manipulation VS Persuasion

Imagine this example:

Mark wants to convince his best friend to break up with his girlfriend.
Mark doesn't like her, prefers his friend to be single, and he thinks that his friend "can do better".

Here are the two different approaches:

Persuasion example: persuading friend to breakup

- Frankly, I'd rather you stop seeing her because I think you deserve a better relationship. So it's good for you. But also because I don't like you coming out as a couple and prefer you single and wilder. So I'm a bit biased here (<—- honest introduction presenting the "WIIFM" and what's in it for his friend)
- We're young, so also listen to your uncle since he's been around. (<—- limits his own influence by adding more people in the decision process)
- That being said, I think that if you breakup you'll probably go through a tough time for a while (<—- presents the likely downside)
- But you'll have more fun with us as a single guy and gain more experience. And eventually, you may get a better fit for you when you're ready to settle (<—- presents the upsides of a future girlfriend as hypothetical and avoids the word "better girl")
- Personally, I'd rather live my 20's single and just be honest with her. (<—- considerate towards her, a good sign of character)
- But up to you. Whatever you prefer and we'll be friends anyway. (<—- leaves it up to him)

Manipulation example: manipulating friend to breakup

- Let me say first, I don't really care what you do (<— hides his preference)
- so I'm saying this just for you (<— social scalping manipulation, tries to frame his own goal, as "for him")
- I've been there, and have seen enough men submitting to relationships in their 20's. (<—- exaggerates his expertise to talk more authoritatively. And negatively frames the relationship as an act of submission)
- Every single man I've seen turned into a submissive beta. (<—- exaggerates the costs)
- Don't be stupid (<—- frames any different choice as "stupid")
- More experienced guys have more fun and without fail find better women, too (<—- while it may be *generally* true, it's not *always* true. Plus, the way he says it is aggressive and manipulative. He exaggerates the benefits, without mentioning downsides)
- So if you wanna be a bitch, go ahead. (<—- judge power move that he'll lose his respect if he doesn't listen)
- If you wanna be a real man, well, that's the type of man we like here (<—- ups the coercive power with a covert threat. The whole group may ostracize him if he doesn't toe his line)

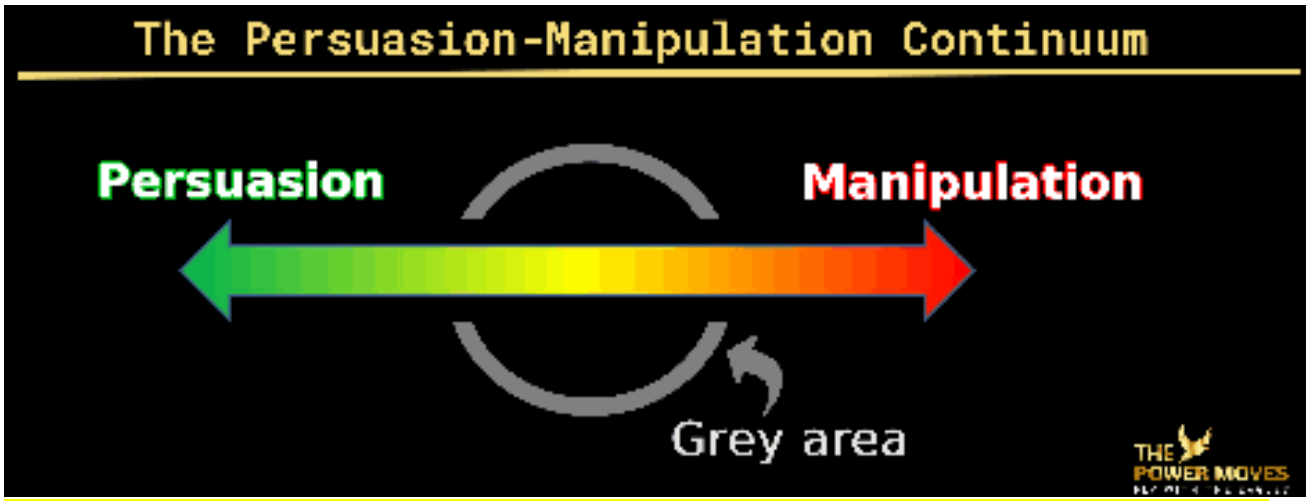
Of course, most situations aren't this cut and dry.
Most situations are a lot more shades of grey.

Grey Areas: It's Degrees, More Than Absolutes

Of course, in the real world, things can get muddier.

And while "100% manipulation" is not so rare, "100% persuasion" is quite rare.

So, generally speaking, most communication falls in a spectrum.
A spectrum between the two extremes of persuasion and manipulation:



More blatant manipulation attempts are more common than 100% persuasive attempts. But most communication and exchanges fall in the grey area zone

Talking up our strengths in a job interview may make us come across as better than we really are.
But few would call that "manipulation" because everyone expects that behavior to be "normal" and "appropriate".

Let's review a grey area example as well:

Case Study: Lying Friend, With Good Intentions

Imagine this twist to the previous scenario.

Mark believes that his best friend's girlfriend is a bad person.
And Mark also heard from someone else that she was drunk at the local club and flirting with another guy. It seems like they even exchanged contacts. Mark sees it as an opportunity to "finally" get his friend to break up.

So he says:

> Hey man, it sucks for me to have to tell you this, but you're my friend and it's my duty to share.
> This past Saturday I saw Jane at the Caesar club. She was drunk and making out with a random dude.

Persuasion VS Manipulation Analysis

In this case, we'd have:

Persuasion Elements	Manipulative elements
⍰ **Good intentions** (wanting the best for his friend)	✕ **Lies** (that she saw her in person)
⍰ **Not motivated by self-interest** (wants his friend to find better, and doesn't want to get his girlfriend)	✕ **Exaggeration** (from flirting & potentially exchanging contacts to making out)
?Potentially good effects (the friend may break up with a low-quality woman and find a much better one for him)	?Potentially bad effects (what if the friend is wrong and his friend's girlfriend is actually good for him)

Now the big question:

In this case, would you consider Mark manipulative or "fair"?

Personally, I consider it a big positive that he has good intentions. His heart is in a good place and he wants the best for his friend.
If you are his friend, that's important.
In my opnion, it's *the* most important thing.

But there is much room for improvement.

For example, this is definitely a situation where it's not cool to lie.
It's not cool either to his friend, or the woman.
Yes, she wasn't behaving well. It's disrespectful to flirt with another man in a small community because that's very damaging to her boyfriend. Mark was right to be personally annoyed by it and wanting better -and more respect- for his friend.
But if Mark had said *that* instead of lying, he would have been equally influential AND a straight-talking man. A proper "eagle".

Instead, he took the sneaky shortcut and went the manipulative way.

And the fact he doesn't like her isn't good enough of an excuse. An honorable man should afford a minimum of respect even to those he doesn't like -especially if they're close to his friend-.

This approach also takes his friend for stupid.
The lie and intent sub-communicate that he doesn't think he's capable enough to make good decisions based on what's true.
These types of decisions aren't life or death and concern *his* life much more than yours. It may be even true that your friend isn't the smartest guy in the world. But you still want to allow him the freedom and power to decide for himself.

Finally, Mark is "playing God" too much.
He doesn't know what will be better for his friend long-term. And in those cases, in doubt, it's best to stick to what's true -and your thoughts about it-.

Asses People

The "persuasion VS manipulation continuum" is foundational to assessing people's character.

But you can't just look at the mere presence or absence of manipulation.
Instead,c **you need to look at the gravity, intensity, and frequency of a man's manipulation**.

It works like this:

- **Gravity**: how harmful the manipulation is
- **Intensity**: how far off from reality and "straight talk" the manipulation is
- **Frequency**: how often a man manipulates VS how often he speaks "straight"

Generally speaking, **a man who is unable to put manipulation aside and talk straight with other straight men CANNOT be a high-quality man**.
It's an impossibility and a contradiction of terms.
Such a man is and will always be a low-quality, sneaky turkey.

These men do not deserve your respect, friendship, or time. (albeit, of course, you may strategically deal with them or use them for your own gains).

Red Flags of Manipulation

Other important elements to assess characters:

- **Good VS bad faith**, independent of the effects
- **Compete VS cooperate** mode. Some people tend to always be in compete mode. That makes it difficult for them to be straight
- **Serving VS Self-serving (intensity)**. Everyone pursues self-interest, so you can never hold that against someone. So, again, it's a matter of intensity, frequency, and gravity.
  For example: what costs are they comfortable inflicting on others as they pursue self-interest?
- **Approach to lies**. Some small white lies are common and may even be useful for smooth socialization. So, again, look at intensity, gravity, and frequency. Also, look at the general "comfort with lying". If someone lies as second nature and acts like "so what, it's normal" if caught, it's a bad sign
- **Value-givers VS value-takers**. It often helps to look at the bottom line. Do they give more, or take more? Inveterate manipulators rarely are givers

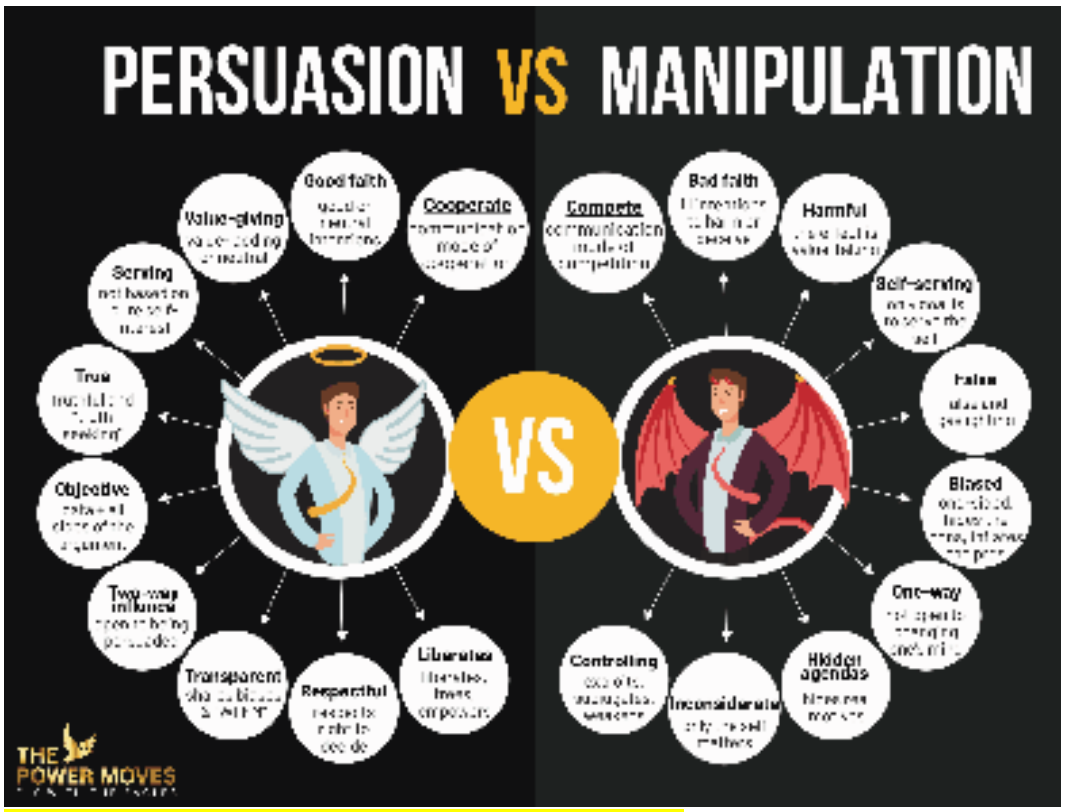
Learn BOTH Persuasion & Manipulation

You need to learn both.

Yes, including manipulation.
And that's because manipulation is pervasive, ubiquitous, and *common*.

Naive self-help, which in fact sometimes is *manipulative* self-help, denies or downplays the frequency and magnitude of manipulation.

Instead, it's the other way around.
It's wholly uninterested, truth-based, truth-seeking and 100% honest persuasion that is the exception.



Two sides of the same coin, you need BOTH angel and devil

Manipulation Is Important Because...

More schematically, you need manipulation because:

1. **Learning persuasion REQUIRES learning manipulation**. The best persuaders are also (potentially!) great manipulators.
   This is no different than a great hero potentially being a great villain. It comes with the territory. With the ability to add much value also comes the ability to take much value.
2. **Manipulation-awareness serves for self-defense**. It's one of the foundations of this website. It goes back to Machiavelli's quote: "a good man is ruined among the many who are *not* good".
3. **Maximum life effectiveness requires manipulation**. Only players who know the game inside-out, at 360°, can be effective. And the more you advance in life, the more you'll likely meet craftier manipulators.
   This doesn't necessarily mean you have to manipulate. But the ability to spot a manipulator is invaluable. (Including for more advanced strategies, such as spotting manipulation but pretending to go along with it).
4. **Sometimes it's fair to manipulate**. When you deal with the various takers, manipulators, and a**holes of this world it would be stupid to "play it straight".
5. **Several relationships and environments require *both* persuasion and manipulation awareness and "modes"**. Think of work, for example. You'll need teamwork to succeed -and to develop a reputation for one-. But it's *also* a place where you must compete for promotions -while hiding it-.
   In healthy corporations high-power straight shooters go far. But you must still be aware of corporate manipulation and office politics. And when and with whom to be straight and when *not* to be.

Remember the general rule:

Straight communication is best *when it goes both ways*.
So **straight communication requires a worthy recipient.**
And many people you meet in life simply aren't worthy of your full honest self.

The Advantages of Manipulation

We go over more practical uses in Power University.

In this article, we share the "higher level" background on manipulation's advantages.

And it's this:

Life evolves based on what best serves the "selfish gene".

And, generally speaking, **selfish manipulation serves the selfish gene better than selfless communication**.

This concept was clear to Dawkins and Krebs, who in 1978 changed the way scholars thought about communication.

The two argued that evolution rewards animals that can best use the tools in their environment.
And by "tools" they meant both *things* and other *animals*.
And by "using" they meant "manipulation".

Animals who can better manipulate others end are more effective at life.

The orchid mantis developed the looks of an orchid flower to better prey on insects. Any animal that can better manipulate prey and competitors gains an advantage over others

Life Is Intrinsically Manipulative Because Manipulation Is Advantageous

So at a very general level:

manipulation is the natural consequence of life moving towards higher effectiveness. And higher odds of self-advancement.

Any form of life that learns how to better use others will likely beat its peers. And will pass its manipulative genes onto the next generations.

Accelerate that process over generations, and you "naturally" get widespread manipulation.

Manipulation Is “Natural”, Persuasion Must Be Learned

So, historically:

Manipulation probably came before persuasion. (Or at least, at the same time).

This is why today most people don’t just need to learn (more advanced) manipulation.
Most people today must also learn straight communication. Often, from scratch.

The Advantages of Persuasion

So…

If manipulation is natural and confers advantages, why would anyone even bother with persuasion?

Because, of course, there are also benefits.
Including:

- **Effective cooperation**. In many cases collaboration is most effective with straight and honest talk
- **Reputation**. A strong reputation for a straight shooter does a lot of great things for you. It makes people more likely to want to associate with you, work with you, for you, or generally be more well-disposed towards you
- **Prestige** as in “people looking up to you”, which is proven to confer status
- **Facilitating all-important alliances**, including with other straight talkers and high-quality men. The type of men who are most likely to spot -and dislike- manipulation
- **Maintaining win-win** for the long-term. Instead, manipulators tend to lose social capital over time and their relationships deteriorate. This is all the truer with “power-aware” and high-quality men who can spot a “crooked” and non-straight man
- **Enjoying better relationships**, which isn’t just a question of “good feelings” but has been proven to be good for health and longevity

These are HUGE benefits.
BUT… Full straight talk without power-awareness is still too high risk.
It’s what we’d call here “being a lamb, hoping there are no wolves (but there *are* wolves)”.

This is where TPM steps in:

Our Approach: Honorable, Without being A Sucker

We help people here to:

1. Learn how to be honorable and talk straight (and persuade with more honesty)
2. Reap “honorable man” rewards
3. Not turning into a sucker for it, so without the downsides
4. Get more straight talk from others by demanding it, expecting it, and sometimes even teaching it

So TPM helps you enjoy all the upsides of high-quality straight talk and persuasion, without the downsides.

Ethics of Persuasion VS Manipulation

Most articles on persuasion VS manipulation default to this:

Persuasion is good, and manipulation is bad.

And yes, there is a large backdrop of truth in that.
But, again, it’s a tad more complex.

Before we delve in, let us to share a warning:

Be careful of those who make too big a show of rejecting manipulation.
Few of them are being truly honest and truthful.
Instead, they're often either lying to themselves, or totally clueless of anything people-related.
And sometimes, they're in bad faith.

People School is NOT for you if:

- **You want to learn how to manipulate people:** We teach you to be the best, most authentic version of yourself when you communicate, not how to play mind games with others. If you're here to learn how to "trick" people, you will be sorely disappointed.

Same marketer who swears off manipulation and "only teaches to be the best and most authentic version of yourself" markets her online course as "sold out" -an obvious lie, and much closer to manipulation than to persuasion-

I can't count the times I've seen marketers swear against manipulation, tell *others* to only be 100% honest… Except to then engage themselves in varying degrees of manipulation.
Not by chance, marketers score high in Machiavellianism as a group.

Now, back to us:

When Manipulation Can Be Fair

Sometimes manipulation can be fair.

As a matter of fact, sometimes manipulation is the best course of action. And **sometimes manipulation is exactly what you're *supposed* to do** if you want to be a high-quality man.

Some of these cases include:

- **Dealing with another inveterate manipulator**. There is no point in being honest with someone who's not honest with you (ie.: don't accept lose-wins, don't be a sucker)
- **Dealing with an obvious taker**: similar as above. If someone is obviously trying to take from you, and exclusively only looking out for themselves… Maybe so should you
- **With abusers and in abusive relationships**: going from victim to empowered can be challenging. And your new assertive communication can only to an escalation of abuse. So in your "awakening period", pretend you're still a naive, powerless victim while you plot your escape (or revenge)
- **Disempowering or replacing unworthy men and leaders**. To TPM's philosophy, this may not only be fair, but a personal responsibility. At the very least, you shouldn't give dishonorable leaders your best work

Some more "darker grey areas" include:

- **When you're both going to win anyway (take the lion's share of the pie)**. For example, when splitting added value in a negotiation, you will both be better off, even if you capture 99% of the value

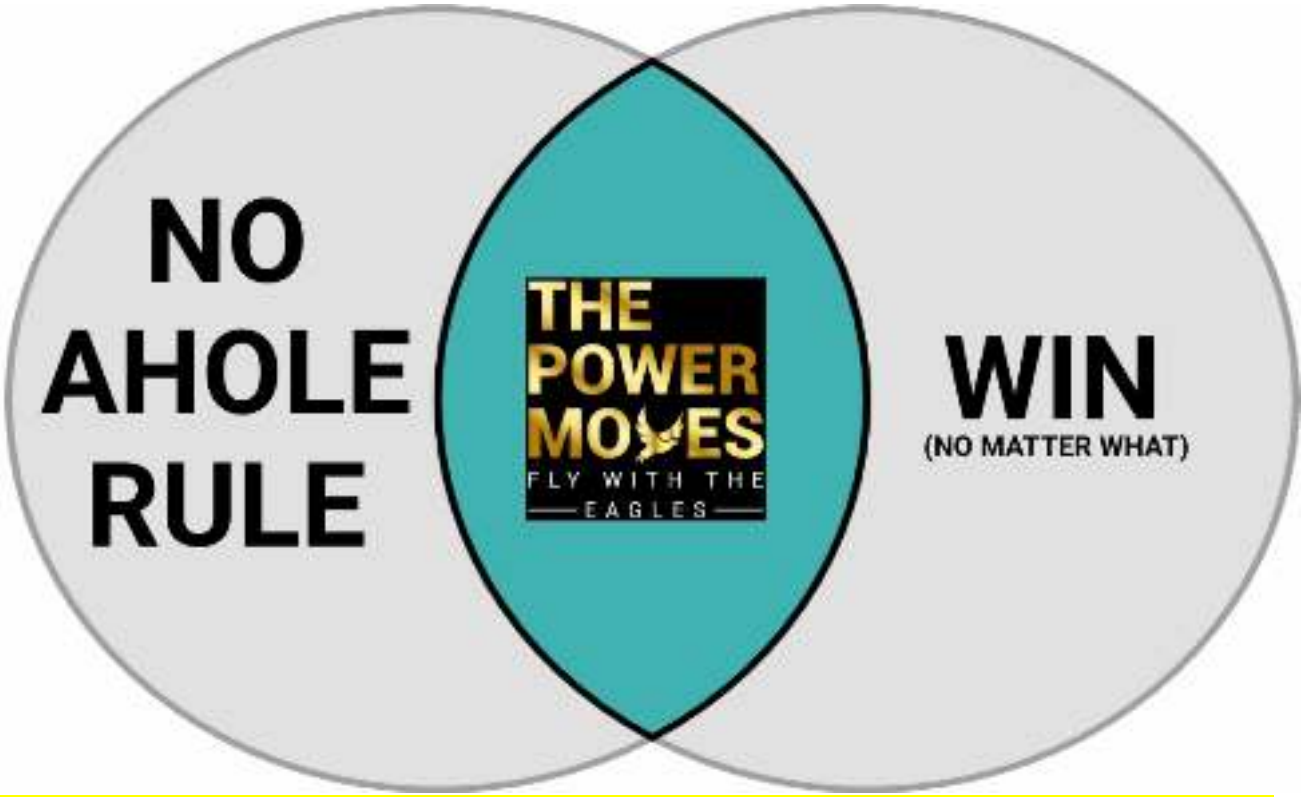
- **When you're desperate and it's mission-critical**: when to you it's survival but to others it's "just a loss", you get more latitude. This is why many consider stealing in desperation to be a lesser crime
- **When the costs to others are very small or uncertain**. This is the case in many sales situations. See example later

Finding The Right Balance: A Life's Calling

TPM stands at a somewhat difficult junction.

We don't do "ethical philosophy", but we prefer honorable men over inveterate manipulators who can't talk straight, and takers who live a life of parasitic exploitation.

So on one hand, we seek to be honorable.
And at the same time, we want to be ultra-effective at achieving goals.



We walk a sometimes difficult line between maximum effectiveness and respecting others -ideally adding value to others-. That line can be expanded with skills and strategic thinking. But sometimes it may require compromises.

And it's certainly possible to win while also adding value -or at least without harming- others.
When that's the case: great.

It's also certainly possible to find ways creative ways to turn a personal win into a win-win.
Or to find ways to decrease the costs of win-loses.
That's also part of strategy, and part of what we seek to teach here.

But it's also true that, sometimes, a personal (larger) win may come at someone else's cost.

How to navigate the diverging paths between maximum effectiveness and honorable character is one of life's most pressing questions.
A challenging question because there are no hard and fast rules.
Life will continuously ask and test us again and again with novel situations and people.

However, we'll try to provide you with some pointers based on TPM's philosophy:

Sales Persuasion Ethics: It's Fair To Do Your Best To Sell

Imagine this scenario:

A salesman wants to sell an expensive convertible sportscar to a middle-aged family man.

Selling the car is obviously good for the salesman.

But is it good for the buyer?

It's a moot point.

The man's wife and child may be better off with a sedan. And the buyer is definitely financially better off with a cheaper car.

But the buyer may be happier with the sportscar in the long run, and the family better off with a happier father. It may turn out win-win for all.

But we just cannot know that for sure at the moment of persuasion.

The same applies to many other sales situations.
As a matter of fact, it applies to a lot of situations in life, period.
Including competition.

As long as you're not selling food to a starving man -obviously good for him- or a terrible product -obviously bad for him-, then it's often a grey area.

Selling obviously poor products while hiding the issues is manipulative. Doing one's very best to sell good products that may be useful to the customer is not -even though ascertaining the value to the customer may be difficult-.

There are often too many variables to know for sure.

We may think of these situations as on a "range of uncertainty" within the grey area of the persuasion-manipulation continuum.

In our opinion, **most grey-area situations in sales and persuasion are "fair game"**.

Such as, *unless you engage in obvious lying or deception*, it's ethical to do your best to sell.

Compete To Win: It's Fair (All The More If You're A TPM Man)

The same can be said of competition.

Who says you're not going to be a better CEO than your competitor?

And if you're reading here, chances are higher that you will be a better leader.

So, in those situations, it's fair to do your best to win.

But always be honest with yourself!

However, avoid the all-common "good samaritan lie".

The "good samaritan lie" is the idea that your best persuasion is an ethical imperative because the sale is so great for the buyer.
You can hear this approach from some marketers and sales trainers.

But it's just not true.
It's not true because we often cannot know what's best for the prospect.
And this tendency of forcing positive spins on things is weak-ass *self*-manipulation.
Also bad for your own character development because it denies one's own *fair* dark motivation with some BS, fake, savior complex.

Remember:

being a straight and honorable man starts with telling the truth to yourself.

Just don't sell lemons, don't deceive, generally sell good products, and you're doing good as a salesman.
No need to pretend you're saving the buyer's life.

The same goes for many life's competitions.

If You're Generally Good... You Don't Need To Worry About This Much

Many of our alumni learn about advanced manipulations with us for the first time.

For the first time, they learn to spot it in others.
And they wonder if they themselves are being involuntarily manipulative or "nasty".

In my experience, that's rarely the case.

Indeed, as a rule of thumb, if you even think about winning without being nasty, chances are you're not nasty.
Chances are you generally have good intentions and your heart is in a good place.
And if you worry about "being fair", chances are your main worry should be different. Your main worry should be to avoid exploitation by those who don't have those moral qualms.

The ultimate guidance on "walking the line"

Walking the tightrope between heaven persuasion and maximum self-advancement hell is one of the eagles' biggest challenges. To advance while also remaining honorable and value-giving. That is the goal.
Make sure you never stray too far into the flames of manipulative hell

We'd like to end this article with the two simplest forms of guidance.

For the first one, we can't quote any better than Jesus:

- **Don't do unto others what you don't want to be done unto you**

To which TPM would add:

- **Do your absolute best to achieve your goals… Without being a nasty SOB** or a sneaky f*ck
  - Ideally, win while setting up win-wins and uplifting others… And you put yourself on the side of the angels

So simple, right?

Yeah, it *should* be simple.

It should be simple because, just as manipulation is inborn, so is our sense of "what's fair".
And what's "fair enough" and what's "too much".
Avoid "too much" and you should be good.

Conclusions

In sum:

Persuasion is honest and upfront about one's own motives.
Manipulation instead hides its motives because those motives are bad for the victim.

Real-life situations aren't always cut and dry.
But persuasion and manipulation nonetheless remain two very different forms of communication.

Contrary to what many sources say, there are times and places for both.
It's important for men who want to be effective in life to know and know how to recognize -and use- both.
But, generally speaking, for most men it's a worthy goal to try to reduce the manipulation while adopting more straight talk.

Then, demand and seek more people in your life who offer the same. And you'll soon be flying high with the eagles.

FAQ

Is manipulation and persuasion the same?

Different authors have different opinions.

Some -such as Robert Greene-, say that manipulation and persuasion are the same. Some others imply they are easily distinguishable opposites.

The truth is in the middle.
Manipulation and persuasion are very different, but they sit at the opposite ends of a continuum, with much grey area in the middle.

In some cases, without the ability to read minds and assess intentions, it may be challenging to differentiate the two.

However, there are also plenty of examples of blatant manipulation and some clearer-cut cases of persuasion.

Importantly, it's also possible to spot inveterate manipulators VS more straight-talking men.

What is the difference between influence, persuasion, and manipulation?

Manipulation and persuasion are two ways of influencing others.

So Influence is the *effect* of either persuasion or manipulation.

The difference between persuasion and manipulation is more complex but, in brief, manipulation implies bad faith and ill-intention, while persuasion doesn't.

What is the difference between a manipulator and a persuader?

The difference is that the manipulator has no moral qualms in pursuing self-interest and power.
The persuader instead seeks to achieve his goals while being more honest and ethical.

Is persuasion a glorified form of manipulation?

Persuasion and manipulation are very different, so persuasion is not a "glorified form of manipulation".

As a matter of fact, that statement reeks of manipulation. It sounds like a gaslighting stance to provide a convenient cover for the manipulator.

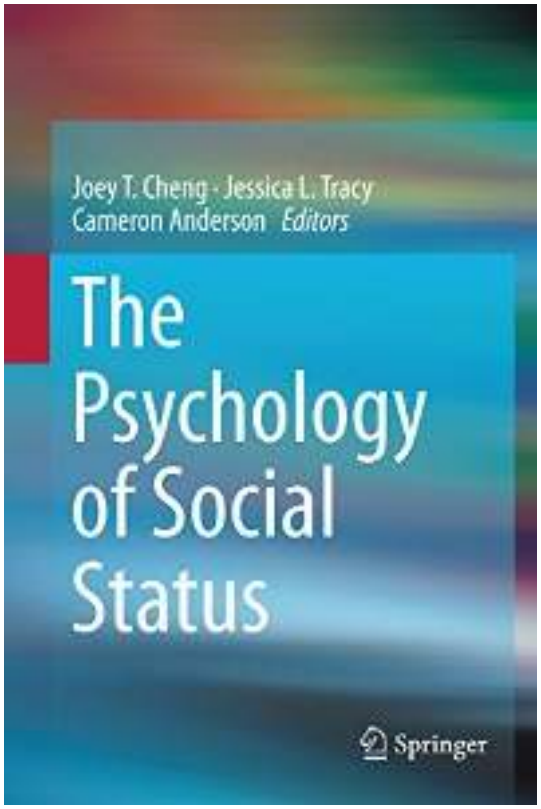
PERSUASION	MANIPULATION
☐ Cooperates (communication mode of cooperation)	✕ Competes (communication mode of competition)
☑ Good faith* (has good or neutral intentions)	✕ Bad faith (has ill intentions to harm or deceive)
☑ Value-adding or neutral (the effect on value adding or neutral)	✕ Harmful (the effect is value taking)
☐ Serving or neutral (not based on pure self-interest)	✕ Self serving (only goal is to benefit the manipulator)
☑ True (truthful and "truth seeking")	✕ False (false and gaslighting)
☑ Realistic & balanced (aware of all sides of the argument)	✕ Misleading & biased (one sided, hides the cons, inflates the pros)
☑ Two-way influence (open to being persuaded)	✕ One-way (not open to changing one's mind)
☑ Transparent (includes personal biases & WIIFM)	✕ Hidden agendas (hides the real motive, invents fake ones)
☑ Respectful (respects the decision-making right)	✕ Inconsiderate (ignores individual's autonomy)
☑ Liberating (liberates, frees, empowers)	✕ Controlling (exploits, subjugates, disempowers)

Buffalmano, 2023

The Psychology of Social Status: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 September 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The Psychology of Social Status (2014) is a social psychology textbook that provides an overview of the academic research on the topic of social status.



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Exec Summary

- Status is the “social worth” that people assign to an individual within a group
- Social status is the normal byproduct of human hierarchies
- Human hierarchies are a staple of human socialization, albeit different groups present flatter or steeper hierarchies with larger differences between levels

FULL SUMMARY

About the Authors:
Various authors contributed, and the main editors are:
Joey T. Cheng is an Associate Professor at the University of Illinois, specializing in social hierarchies, dominance, and prestige.
Jessica L. Tracy is a Psychology Professor at the University of British Columbia, known for her research on pride and status processes.

Definition of Status-Related Concepts

The definitions closest to status and power:

- **Power** refers to control over critical resources—i.e., outcome control (Dépret and Fiske 1993; Fiske 2010; Galinsky et al. 2003; Georgesen and Harris 1998, 2000; Gruenfeld et al. 2008; Keltner et al. 2003; Overbeck and Park 2001)
- **Socioeconomic status** (SES) refers to an individual’s (or a family’s) social position in relation to others, based on wealth, education, and occupation (Kraus and Keltner 2009)
- **Dominance and prestige** have been described in various ways:
  - dominance as those approaches to achieving high social rank that are characterized by induction of fear in others (for instance, through aggression, coercion, and withholding resources).
  - prestige refers to approaches to achieving high social rank that are characterized by gaining respect from others for one’s skills and competence, particularly when these help achieve collective goals (Henrich and Gil-White 2001).
    Prestige is, perhaps, the social hierarchical dimension most closely tied to status.
- **Influence** refers to the ability to shape and alter others’ views and/or behavior. Influence is a downstream *consequence* of any of these social hierarchy-related constructs

Are Definitions Important, Or Are They All The Same?

Blader and Ya-Ru Chen, the authors of chapter 4, say that a common argument, even among those who accept the distinct definitions above, is that those distinctions are not meaningful.

According to this view, the distinctions aren’t very meaningful because covariation among these distinctions is very strong—e.g., status invariably leads to power, or vice-versa.

Blader and Ya-Ru Chen disagree with this point of view.

Here at TPM we agree with the authors, but don’t make strong distinctions and operate under the assumption that those constructs are similar. The reason for our approach is that our priority is to help students. So our focus is goal achievement and self-advancement, rather than academic accuracy.

So while we agree the constructs are different, if our students 10x their status, they win. And if they 10x their power, they also win.

Status VS Power

Say the authors in a previous chapter:

> Although there are important similarities between power and status, the two concepts are quite notably distinct. Whereas status refers to a form of influence and control that arises spontaneously in everyday social situations, power involves formally endowed control over valued resources, often resulting from institutionally legitimized positions in the workplace, politics, or broader society.

So in this case, they seem to refer to power to what we call here “rank”.
And here at TPM we use “power” as more of a general umbrella term.

Status is more of a *social* dimension:

> One critical difference between status and power is that status, relative to power, is more reliant on the judgments and evaluations of others. It relies more on a conferral process, as discussed earlier. Therefore, power is relatively more of a property of the actor (i.e., the power-holder), while status is relatively more of a property of co-actors and observers (Fragale et al. 2011; Magee and Galinsky 2008)

However, even power isn’t wholly independent of others:

> That is not to say that power is wholly independent of co-actors and observers; if others do not agree that a target has power, they will not engage in acts—such as deference—that can be important in reinforcing the target’s power position. Moreover, others may challenge the value of the resource that the power-holder target controls, again giving co-actors and observers a significant role even in power dynamics.

High-Status Men Empathize, High Power Men Are Ruthless

While power “allows” people to disregard others, status does the opposite.

High-status men actually seem to acquire higher EQ:

> the researchers found that high status increased accuracy in reading others’ emotions , while high power had the precisely opposite effect

That includes higher empathy for the plight of others:

> both self-reported and behavioral indices demonstrated that high status made participants more concerned about the (fictitious) target affected by the layoff, while power had the opposite effect on concern about the target .

Dominance and Prestige: 2 Mein Paths to Social Rank

A definition of hierarchy:

> hierarchies are fundamentally social structures in which high-ranking individuals reliably receive greater influence , deference, attention , and valued resources than low-ranking others (Homans 1950, 1961; Magee and Galinsky 2008; Mazur 1973, 1985)

Hierarchies exist to divide resources while avoiding costs and increasing cooperation:

> By affording high-ranking individuals privileged influence and access to valued resources such as mates and

> food, mutually accepted hierarchical relationships minimize costly agonistic conflicts, establish order, and facilitate coordination and cooperation among individuals in groups (Báles 1950; Berger et al. 1980).

The dominance and prestige model postulates that dominance and prestige are the two main and distinct pathways to social rank:

> This account proposes that differences in hierarchical rank within human social groups are the result of both: (a) coerced deference to dominant others who induce fear by virtue of their ability to inflict physical or psychological harm (i.e., Dominance) and (b) freely conferred deference to prestigious others who possess valued skills and abilities (i.e., Prestige).

The main differences between the two are:

- **Dominance** entails the induction of fear, through intimidation and coercion, to attain or maintain rank and influence.
  It is thought to be homologous with dominance hierarchical systems in nonhuman primates that result from agonistic contests (Chase et al. 2002; Rowell 1974). Examples are between police and citizen, bully and victim, or boss and employee. The threats can be both physical or psychological, but among humans they're more often psychological
- **Prestige** refers to influence that is willingly granted to individuals who are recognized and respected for their skills, success, or knowledge.
  Subordinates seek out the opinions and company of Prestigious individuals in efforts to imitate and learn their superior skills or knowledge.

Dominance Is Costly For Morale & Output (But Still Can Promote Rank)

> research on organizational effectiveness has found that "pressure" tactics—which involve the use of demands, threat, and intimidation to influence others (and thus are akin to Dominance)—generally result in less successful and productive leadership (…)

And:

> a growing body of evidence appears to suggest that not only is Dominance-based leadership seen as an ineffective approach and frequently resisted by subordinates (e.g., Falbe and Yukl 1992; Kipnis and Schmidt 1988; Yukl and Tracey 1992), but it can also bear counterproductive effects on workplace performance and subordinate commitment (e.g., Falbe and Yukl 1992; Higgins et al. 2003; Yukl et al. 1996).

However, add the authors, these findings do not represent evidence against Dominance's ability to promote social rank for the dominant individual.

Personality of Prestigious VS Dominant Individuals

Say the authors regarding prestigious individuals:

> in the context of a small-scale Amazonian society, perceived prestige is positively related to hunting ability, skill in food production, generosity, number of allies, and nutritional status (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2008, 2009; von Rueden et al. 2008).
> (…)
> other prosocial traits that effectively broadcast one's expertise and social attractiveness (i.e., his/her viability as a cultural model), such as altruism, cooperativeness, helpfulness, ethicality, concern for the public good, are

> positively related to Prestige, but negatively to Dominance (Cheng et al. 2010; Maner and Mead 2010, 2012).

While dominant:

> In contrast, Dominance is associated with a selfish disregard for the well-being of one's group. For example, when presented with a choice between personal benefits and collective success, Dominant leaders prioritize their own gains over those of others (Maner and Mead 2010, 2012).
> (…)
> individuals who pursue Dominance tend to be fueled by the arrogant, conceit-based "hubristic" pride, whereas those who pursue Prestige are fueled by a more pro-social, competence-based "authentic" pride (Cheng et al. 2010)

Prestigious

- Highly likable
- highly agentic
- highly communal
- lower-levels of basal Testosterone (Johnson et al. 2007) and a lower androgenic hormone linked to aggression (Giammanco et al. 2005)
- demonstrate locally valued competencies and skills
- socially attractive verbal style that entails displaying warmth and self-deprecation (e.g., teasing others in a flattering way, seeking the group's approval on matters)
- display more subtle, nonthreatening movements that communicate confidence and competence, such as the pride display (e.g., small smile, head tilt up, chest expansion)
- not associated with systematic changes in vocal pitch
- they rate themselves as conscientious, agreeable, and possessing high self-esteem

Dominant:

- Not particularly well-liked
- highly agentic
- low communality
- do not necessarily demonstrate locally valued competencies and skills
- intimidating and self-entitling verbal style that evokes fear and coercion (e.g., teasing others in a dominant way, forcefully pushing one's own ideas or opinions)
- spatially expansive postural displays (e.g., wide postures) in group situations
- deepen their vocal pitch in the initial minutes of an unscripted social interaction
- they rate themselves as aggressive, disagreeable, narcissistic, and manipulative

6 Traits of Dominant Individuals

Six separate lines of lines of work show an association between actual or perceived ability to inflict harm and elevated social influence:

1. coercion and aggression

> According to the Dominance-Prestige Account, direct or indirect displays of physical, psychological, or verbal aggression are the primary routes through which Dominant individuals attain influence.

And it seems to work:

> Studies on hierarchical relationships suggest that the enactment of these aggressive behaviors are effective in promoting increased rank: Those who behave in a bullying, rude, demeaning, and anti-social manner in both experimental contexts (e.g., Van Kleef et al. 2011) and real-world relationships (e.g., romantic couples, fraternity members) tend to be the more highly ranked and influential members of the relationship (Keltner et al. 1998; Kipnis et al. 1976).

However:

> studies have found that the highest-level of abusive behavior is displayed by those who feel incompetent (i.e., who lack Prestige), suggesting that aggression may provide a means of attaining influence when the Prestige pathway is inaccessible (Fast and Chen 2009; Fast et al. 2012

2. Personality dominance

> substantial body of evidence indicates that personality dominance is associated with higher rank and leadership attainment. Meta-analyses of over 30 studies and 7,000 individuals demonstrate that trait dominance is one of the most robust predictors of leader emergence, outperforming a myriad of other traits including conscientiousness and intelligence (Judge et al. 2002; Lord et al. 1986).

3. Physical size and strength

> larger and stronger individuals tend to be more aggressive

And:

> Both men and women who are taller in stature consistently occupy a disproportionate number of leadership positions in organizations, and have a higher income (see Judge and Cable 2004). Moreover, the human mind is biased toward intuitively associating larger size with greater formidability, power and influence, and leadership capacity (Fessler et al. 2012; Marsh et al. 2009; Schubert et al. 2009; Stulp et al. 2013).

The direction goes both ways though:

> Observers tend to overestimate the height of powerful others (Dannenmaier and Thumin 1964; Wilson 1968), and systematically overestimate the height of a target individual when feeling powerless, but underestimate this individual's height when feeling powerful (Yap et al. 2013).

4. Facial structure

> Facial Structure Facial width-to-height ratio (WHR)—a sexually dimorphic trait influenced by testosterone (e.g., Andersson 1994; Lefevre et al. 2013; Verdonck et al. 1999)—has been shown to systematically predict men's fighting ability, physical prowess, and rates of violence and aggression in both the lab and the real-world (…)
> men with greater facial WHR demonstrate an increased propensity to cheat and exploit others (Haselhuhn and Wong 2012; Stirrat and Perrett 2010), and are less likely to die from contact violence
> (…)
> Most importantly, wider-faced men are viewed as more dominant, forceful, and assertive by others (Alrajih and Ward in-press; Valentine et al. in-press), report a heightened sense of power and influence (Haselhuhn and

> Wong 2012), and achieve superior leadership performance, as evidenced by the financial earnings of CEO's firms (Wong et al. 2011).

5. Vocal pitch

> Vocal Pitch Like facial WHR, lower vocal pitch is associated with higher levels of circulating testosterone (Dabbs and Mallinger 1999; Evans et al. 2008; Puts et al. 2012)

Poeple also consciously lower their voices:

> individuals who perceive themselves as physically stronger than a rival strategically (but likely unconsciously) lower their voices in competitive contexts, whereas those who view themselves as weaker tend to raise their pitch (Puts et al. 2006)

And even consciously lowering one's voice seems to have an impact on how people feel about themselves:

participants instructed to deepen their pitch report a greater subjective sense of power (Stel et al. 2012

6. Spatially expansive nonverbal displays

> numerous studies have demonstrated that spatially expansive, open postures—such as pride displays and open arm and leg gestures—not only increase the perceived influence and rank of their displayers across cultures (Carney et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2009; Shariff and Tracy 2009; Tracy and Matsumoto 2008), but also tend to be spontaneously adopted by powerful leaders or winners of physical fights (Tracy and Matsumoto 2008; for a review, see Hall et al. 2005). In contrast, losers of such battles, and followers, tend to adopt complementary constricting postures, which signal their deference and subordination (Tiedens and Fragale 2003; Weisfeld and Beresford 1982).

About Prestige...

Unluckily, the authors only list two corresponding traits for prestige: locally valued skills and expertise, and altruism and generosity.

Fitness-Related Outcomes

Both dominance and prestige appear to facilitate success in survival, resource acquisition, mate attraction, and reproduction.

However, how and when the two are more attractive depends on the situation.
Say the authors:

> women generally indicate a preference for male targets described as Prestigious over those described as Dominant.
> (But) highly Dominant men (relative to less Dominant men) are deemed no less—and in some contexts (such as in a competition) even more—attractive and desirable as short-term mates (Sadalla et al. 1987; Snyder et al. 2008).

When it comes to health, it's possible that dominance may be more costly and thus producer worse health outcomes:

> Prestigious villagers in Tsimane', a small-scale forager-farmer society, tend to more healthy than the average group member (on the basis of current nutritional status) , whereas no effect was observed for Dominance (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2009). This distinction may result from the theoretical expectation that Dominance

> depends on frequent assertions of intimidation and threat which would entail greater biological costs (including increased stress) compared to Prestige—given that Prestigious individuals acquire access to resources and privileges through freely conferred deference. These biological costs might wash out the nutritional benefits that should accompany the greater flow of resources to those who effectively invoke Dominance.

My Note:
I suspect the numbers here were too low to generalize

What still mattered a lot in the Tsimane (and other tribes) was social support:

> Longitudinal data confirms the cross-sectional result: larger and more skilled Tsimane men gained more social support over a 4-year period, and increase in social support (but not increase in size or skill per se) associated with increased political influence
> (…)
> The prominence of social support to status acquisition among the Tsimane accords with other ethnographic reports.

Prestige Can Also Be Faked/Manipulated

Say the authors:

> Importantly, Prestige is largely accorded on the basis of perceived, rather than actual, competence and expertise, which explains why Prestige and rank allocation tend to be strongly influenced by competence cues.

And on the role of confidence:

> assessments of competence are often based on observable cues of confidence, such as degree of certainty expressed and amount of talking (Anderson and Kilduff 2009b; Littlepage et al. 1995), and nonverbal displays of pride (Steckler and Tracy, Chap. 10, this volume).

Also see:

- Growth Mindset Power Dynamics
- Teacher Frames

> Why Teachers Disempower You (Teacher-Pupil Frames)

Status Is A Multi-Endeavor Competition In Humans

We compete for status in numerous domains:

> in the context of these multiple selection pressures, however, “primate agonistic dominance would have gradually broadened into the modern multiple-criteria sets of human prestige” (Barkow 1989, p. 187) . Once hominins began to compete in areas other than agonistic dominance, the way was opened to competition in numerous other domains. Geoffrey Miller (Miller 1998, 2000a, b) argues that much of human psychology—a sense of humor, art, music, verbal skill, indeed, almost any skill domain—are products of sexual selection.

And we brag about the domains where we feel we’re good at:

> Because we each participate in multiple prestige arenas, we may strategize in our daily interactions. For

> example, when I meet a stranger, I may mention the garden I am proud of; on finding that the other has a far larger and more beautiful garden than my own, I may move the competition from skill and knowledge of gardening to golf or to cuisine.

We Revert Back to Raw Power & Dominance When Society Reverts to Its Most Basic State

> Control over resources and the capacity for physical violence seem to be the bottom line of human social hierarchy. When societies disintegrate, or when colonial conquest destroys existing sets of prestige criteria, these remain. The news media may refer to the new leaders as "warlords" or "gang leaders," but it is these figures, who control resources and violence, who become the respected, the prestigious, the people from whom children learn.

Cultures Vary In The Role That Violence Plays Around Status

> Cultures clearly differ in the extent to which recourse to violence, or at least threat, is compatible with respect and prestige. Honor cultures, as described by Nisbett and Cohen (1996), appear to link rank, prestige, and capacity for effective violence, as do the Yanomamö (Chagnon 1977).

Personality of High-Status Individuals

- **High extraversion helps.** An abundance of research has shown a strong and consistent relationship between extraversion and status. Multiple reviews of the emergent leadership literature have shown that extroverts tend to emerge as leaders in groups more than introverts (Bass 2008; Judge et al. 2002; Mann 1959; Stogdill 1948). Even longitudinal studies that assess the attainment of status over long periods of time have found similar results.
- **Traits dominance matters a lot**. Vast evidence links trait dominance to the attainment of status in groups. dominance involves the tendency to behave in assertive, forceful, and self-assured ways, including speaking more, displaying a commitment to the group's success and exhibiting more outward signals of competence such as volunteering answers and providing problem-relevant information.
  But it's different than from the "dominance" construct articulated by Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich (e.g., Cheng et al. 2010; Cheng and Tracy, this volume, Chap. 1) because it doesn't necessarily include inducing fear or intimidating others (Gough 1987), but instead centers on assertive and self-assured behavior
- **Agreeableness is unrelated or even negatively related** to status attainment.
- **Conscientiousness helps in project teams or at work**. Conscientious individuals attain higher status in task-focused contexts such as project teams or workplaces, but not necessarily in other contexts.
- **Neuroticism lowers your status**. Research has consistently shown neuroticism relates to lower status -and especially so for men-
- **Openness to experience may help a bit, but not much**. It has been linked to status attainment, though the evidence is weaker and less abundant than for other personality traits.
- **Self-monitoring may help**. Self-monitors, out of a concern for social appropriateness, are particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of others in social situations and use these cues as guidelines for monitoring their own self-presentation". Self-monitors desire status and are more likely to emerge as leaders in task groups.
- **Narcissism is a mixed bag with some traits that help and others that do not**. Desire for status and self-confidence help. The selfishness side of narcissism may hurt, say the authors (albeit I'm not convinced).
  In support of the "mixed hypothesis", Paunonen et al. (2006) found that military cadets who possessed the

"brighter" side of narcissism (i.e., self-confidence) were more often rated as leaders by peers. In contrast, cadets who possess more of the "darker" side of narcissism (e.g., manipulativeness) were not rated as leaders.
My note: in my opinion, what's most damaging to status is the "vulnerable narcissism" subtype with fragile ego, the need for validation, and high sensitivity to rejections (which leads them to take little chances in life, including in leadership)

- **Perceived as providing value**

The Traits to Gain Status

- **Competence**. Status is often based on judgments of the person's competence in domains that are important to the observer
- **Smart self-promotion**: (…) ensure that their skills and successes are known by others and that their shortcomings and failures remain hidden. Thus, self-presentations involving knowledge, competence, and skill—what Jones and Pittman (1982) referred to as "self-promotion"—figure prominently in the pursuit of status.
- **Confidence**. An indirect route to being viewed as competent is to convey an air of confidence. Because competent people are, on average, more confident than less competent ones, observers sometimes use confidence as a proxy for competence (Areni and Sparks 2005; Price and Stone 2004). In fact, when people are induced to be overconfident, observers infer that they have higher status (Anderson et al. 2012)
- **Dominance**: people ascribe greater competence to dominant people
- **Obtaining and displaying resources**. (…) almost anything that benefits—or might potentially benefit—other people.
- **Using resources to make the group better off**: study showed that people who contributed more money to a group were perceived as having higher status than people who contributed less. Not surprisingly, they were also more influential and engendered more cooperation on the part of other group members (Willer 2009).
  People who display signs of wealth often have status because they have the potential to benefit others.
- **Benefting the group and other members**: leaders who more effectively address the needs of other people foster perceptions of competence and credibility, enhance trust, and gain power (Blass and Ferris 2007).
- **Strategic predisposition to achieve goals**. The authors call it "political skills", but it feels like a misnomer to me: "people who possess "political skill" (e.g., social astuteness, behavioral flexibility, adaptability) more effectively address a variety of individual needs and promote individual and group goal accomplishment. Thus, political skill may contribute to perceptions of status both because it is valued by others in its own right and because the politically astute leader is able to discern how to facilitate the attainment of group goals and promote his or her instrumental social value"
- **Effort, sacrifice, and loyalty to the group or cause**: status is facilitated by indications that the person is a loyal and devoted group member who has the best interests of the group at heart and will occasionally sacrifice his or her personal interests for the benefit of the group or relationship.
  For that reason, employees who put extra effort into their jobs are often accorded higher status (Allen and Rush 1998; Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997).
- **Trappings and Signals of Social Status**: displaying symbols that connote status
  See: how to signal value and status

Don't Confuse Acceptance For Status

Say the authors:

> people gain positive outcomes both by being liked (and accepted) and by being respected (and having status). However, in their everyday lives, people sometimes conflate acceptance and status and erroneously use tactics

> to seek status that are actually more appropriate for seeking acceptance, and vice versa.

Some examples of confusing the two:

> For example, in many instances in which people attempt to impress casual acquaintances with their skills, knowledge, and accomplishments, they are using self-presentations that are relevant to status when, in fact, they are trying to be liked and accepted. Similarly, people who try to increase their relational value by being successful or working hard may become hurt or disappointed when such efforts do not not automatically endear other people to them.

Some people who pursued personal success and accomplished may also feel isolated or even resentful when success gives them status, but not necessarily liking, care, or love.

Status and Acceptance Are Sometimes Opposites

For example, displaying value may give one status, but make them more disliked.

Say the authors:

> touting characteristics or resources that reflect one's social instrumental value, may appear highly self-promoting (which they are), and convey that one is superior to other people in certain respects, generate competitiveness with other group members, or evoke envy. Such reactions may undermine the person's perceived relational value , along with liking and acceptance.

And some seem to be unconsciously aware of it:

> the more that people want to be accepted, the more they underestimate their status in their own mind (Anderson et al. 2006). This finding again suggests that people recognize a trade-off between social acceptance and social status and that people's desire for acceptance and belonging

How to Strike A Balance

> One way in which people can achieve this balance is to demonstrate their instrumental social value in terms of relational and communal outcomes.

This is also a technique we share in our article for combining femininity and power:

- **Combining femininity and leadership**

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

And say the authors:

> People can contribute to collective outcomes not only through their competence and provision of material resources but also by fostering positive relationships among group members. Not only do people enjoy memberships in groups in which they have positive relationships but cohesive groups tend to perform better than noncohesive, conflicted ones (Anderson et al. 2006).
> Because those who promote positive relationships are usually viewed as warm and likeable people, people who desire social approval can attain both status and approval by being relational experts within a group.

Finally, social skills, a giving attitude and charisma also serve both for status and acceptance.

Personality Matters In Status VS Acceptance Preferences

Narcissists prefer status and power.
People high in approval motivation who want status face a dilemma because they also want acceptance.

Not Everyone Cares About Status, Everyone Cares About Acceptance

Say the authors:

> having low status does not appear to evoke strong reactions across the number and variety of situations as does being rejected.
> (…)
> **People act as if they should be relationally valued and accepted by virtually everyone they meet**. In contrast, people spend much of their daily lives in contexts in which their instrumental social value (and, thus, status) is low, but they do not appear to have strong reactions to most of these situations.

This is why judge power moves of rejection and dislike are so powerful:

> The Judge Role: A Tool For Emotional Control

MORE WISDOM

TPM Take: Power Beats Status

Since status is more others-related, high-status people also *need* others more:

> since status relies on others, concerns about maintaining one's status will orient status-holders outward, as they will be focused on monitoring where they stand vis-à-vis the status-conferral process
> (…)
> As such, high-status parties (who presumably wish to maintain their high-status position) will not only be vigilant about monitoring status-conferral processes but will also be particularly vigilant about maintaining social relations in a manner that prompts continued respect and esteem from others. That is, they will strive to fulfill others' expectations that high-status parties show consideration and act in a manner that warrants their high-status position (Blader and Chen 2012; Ridgeway 1978, 1982)

Instead, say the authors themselves, power *liberates* people:

> This description of the effects of status stands in stark contrast to the effects of power, which liberates people from social and normative pressures and enables them to shift their focus inward, toward their own goals and dispositions (Galinsky et al. 2008; Guinote 2007; Keltner et al. 2003).

Of course, with power there can be some risks to the collective and to anyone who strives to be a value-giver:

> Indeed, power can prompt an egocentric orientation to social encounters (Fiske 2010; Galinsky et al. 2006; Lee and Tiedens 2001). As such, power makes people less attentive to and concerned about others (Galinsky et al. 2006) and thus may also make them less concerned about others' impressions of them .

But this is why here we also work to develop our character :).

You Gain Status By Giving... Or By Punishing The Takers

> People can gain status not only by giving or helping others but by enforcing norms of cooperation.
> (…)
> ? Barclay (2006) used a cooperative group game to show that people readily paid to punish those who do not contribute toward a group fund that benefited all group members, and that the people who paid such costs were perceived by other participants as being more respected, trustworthy, and group-focused than nonpunishers. Those who punished noncontributors were also entrusted with more money, demonstrating a tangible benefit for enforcing norms (see also Nelissen 2008).

Punishing freeloaders also helps the group because people contribute more when noncontributors can receive punishment.

You Can't Always Be Vulnerable & Maintain Status

Vulnerability can be costly for status.

And especially so for certain professions where "strength" or "stoicism" are expected or advantageous:

> For example, most people who regularly face danger in the course of their jobs—such as police officers, fire fighters, and many members of the military—are not as confident and calm in the face of danger as their visage may suggest. And everyone realizes that, as normal human beings, people in these roles are sometimes uncertain and afraid. Yet, to openly display uncertainty or fear to the public would likely result in a loss of status because, from the public's standpoint, the instrumental social value of an uncertain or fearful police officer, fire fighter, or soldier is arguably lower than that a confident and fearless one.
> Thus, role demands require that people in such fields maintain a public image of confidence, fearlessness, and strength no matter how they may actually feel. Similarly, everyone knows that teachers sometimes become fed-up with their students, but a teacher who fails to maintain an image of imperturbability by screaming at students or complaining to parents will suffer a loss of status.

Read more in:

- **The myth of vulnerability and power**

> Vulnerability Is NOT Power: Don't Believe The Hype

Local Prestige May Struggle Against Social Media Fame

> Modern media, first the movies and now the internet, arguably may be turning the whole planet into Duduguru by breaking the ancient chain of cultural transmission. This is because the media present to us figures who apparently have more prestige than do our locally respected characters.

On the other hand, I'd add, is also an opportunity for those who can make it big on social media.

More Wisdom x2

Types of "Pride": Hubristic VS Authentic

> Hubristic pride refers to pride marked by feelings of arrogance and conceit, while authentic pride refers to

> pride marked by feelings of accomplishment, confidence, and success (Tracy and Robins 2004). Hubristic pride is highly antisocial, whereas authentic pride is socially valued.

Physical Formidability Helps Gaining Status

> height and muscularity increase perceptions of status and leadership which confirms the status–size hypothesis. Yet the size–prestige relationship depends upon the nature of the situation. This is especially the case for muscular people whose prestige increased only during war for male targets, presumably because physical strength of a leader is a valuable instrument in intergroup conflict, certainly in ancestral times.

And when it comes to height VS muscularity:

> Whereas height is related to attributions of dominance- and prestige-based status across a number of situations, muscularity is much more a dominance indicator.

Equalitarian Societies Award Less "Status Premium" To Size

In more equalitarian societies, taller men weren't seen as more dominant:

> a study conducted among people of the Tsimane—a relatively egalitarian farming-foraging society in the Bolivian Amazon—shows that although individuals agree that taller adults are physically stronger, they do not perceive taller people as socially more dominant—that is, when two people have conflicting interests, whose interests are acted upon—or as more knowledgeable (Undurraga et al. 2012)

Or more prestigious (albeit prestige is less tied to size anyway):

> Another study conducted in the Bolivian rain forest showed that physical size did not predict community-wide influence, a sign of prestige (Von Rueden et al. 2008)

So the authors speculate:

> Considering that these null effects were found in relatively egalitarian societies, which reflects the conditions in our ancestral past, they suggest that perhaps a certain level of experience with social inequality is required to associate height with prestige and good socioeconomic outcomes (cf. Stulp 2013)

Low-Status People Are More Other-Oriented (Unless The Group Is Under Threat...)

> with heightened vulnerability to external forces and dependence on others comes a greater need to understand others' goals and feelings.
> (…) higher status people tend to be more self-oriented, and lower status people more other-oriented, in their thoughts and feelings (Krauss et al. 2011).
> (…)
> higher class individuals are more likely to perform or endorse unethical behaviors including lying in negotiations, cheating to win cash, cutting off other drivers in violation of traffic laws, taking candy from children, and engaging in unethical business practices.

However, if the group is under threat, then high-status individuals have a vested interest in keeping the group and the group norms alive since it provides them with plenty of benefits.
And they also have a vested interest to be seen as givers when their status is at stake:

> (higher status individuals) they may benefit more than low status individuals from helping behaviors that preserve group stability and viability, such as vigilance, group defense, and enforcement of group norms.
> (…)
> The noblesse oblige phenomenon involves more generosity (e.g., tolerance of noncompliance, financial donations) by high-status individuals, but only in situations where status differentials are clearly invoked.
> (…)
> That noblesse oblige serves a status maintenance function seems consistent with other anthropological findings.

Lying is Risky For Status

> people who misrepresent their personal characteristics lose face and are sometimes negatively sanctioned (Goffman 1959; Schlenker 1980). Thus, people are constrained in the images that they can present to others by what others know or might find out about them

Status VS Power

- **Fair people are assumed to be high status, unfair ones high-power**: fairness is positively associated with status but negatively associated with power. Unfairness enhances perceived power because it is seen as an indication that the actor has little relational concern for others, and this lack of concern is interpreted as meaning that the actor must possess high power.
  In contrast, fairness enhances perceived status because it is seen as showing that the actor has high relational concern for others, a characteristic associated with being held in high esteem
- **Men prefer power, women status**: In all three studies, men desired power more than women did, and women desired status more than men did.
  Hays (2013) associated the preference for status with characteristics such as high need for affiliation and high interdependence, traits more commonly found among women (who corresponding with the results of Fragale et al. (2011), are typically seen as having more warmth). Preferences for power are associated with characteristically male traits of high need for power and high independence

Both Value-Giving & Value-Taking Ability Matters to Gain Status

> Social status is granted to those individuals widely perceived as best able to inflict costs or confer benefits on others (Henrich and Gil-White 2001).

People Want To Be Close to High-Status Individuals

> People seek social proximity to the strong, skilled, generous, and wealthy because of the knowledge and material goods they might acquire (Henrich and Gil-White 2001) and because of the indirect social value of association with powerful individuals.

Also see:

- **High value me**n: traits, and how to become one

QUOTES

A definition of status:

> Status is an index of the social worth that observers ascribe to an individual or a group (Chen et al. 2012),

On “going green”:

> The “going green to be seen” studies suggest that many choices that appear altruistic often belie a deeper desire for status that comes from appearing altruistic.

And the marketing takeaway:

> sometimes increasing the price of a green product can lead that product to become more desirable because it signals that purchasers are prepared to incur costs.

On dominance and prestige:

> human hierarchies are the product of our species’ evolved tendency to submit to those who wield force and intimidation, and to follow and learn from those who garner respect and admiration.

We’re all naturally agonistic and potentially aggressive:

> We remain primates, however: lurking beneath all competition in symbolic spheres is agonism (Barkow 1975; Barkow et al. 2012). If I lose in symbolic competition with you, I may grow angry and physically assault you, or at least want to.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s Analysis

Some information repeats

The repetition of information is a very common issue in textbooks written by different authors.
But it’s not a good reason not to avoid it.

That being said, this was one of the textbooks that repeated the least information, so well done to the authors and editors.

Could have picked one single definition of status

Across the book, there may be something like 10 definitions for “status”.

Some passages could have gained from more power awareness

Say the authors:

> Why Do Individuals High in Neuroticism Attain Lower Status? On the surface, it is not entirely clear why neuroticism is such a consistent predictor of lower status in groups.

It’s actually pretty clear to me.
Also see our alpha male article for an overview of gaining status among men.

Indeed, in another chapter, different researchers say:

> In general, anxious, insecure, and introverted people are probably accorded less status because they are (unfairly) perceived to be less competent than calm, secure, outspoken people (Anderson et al. 2001).

PROS

You can't beat a great book based on research, written by smart researchers.

REVIEW

The Psychology of Social Status is the best overview on the topic of social status and one of the most informative textbooks I have read.

I am grateful to the authors as this resource will enrich our articles and products.

And that's always the biggest compliment I can pay to any resource I consume.

Check out the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Is An Apology Without Change Manipulation?

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 October 2023 · Archived copy · Original

That “an apology without change is manipulation” has become a popular trope.

And, in some cases, it’s true.

But not *always*.

We can speak to that authoritatively because we specialize in the dynamics of manipulation.
And many consider us the world’s greatest experts on manipulation and exploitation:

Shoutout to @AbleDParyon for the mention, great guy!

So in this article you will learn how and when an apology without change is manipulation (and when it’s not).

Contents

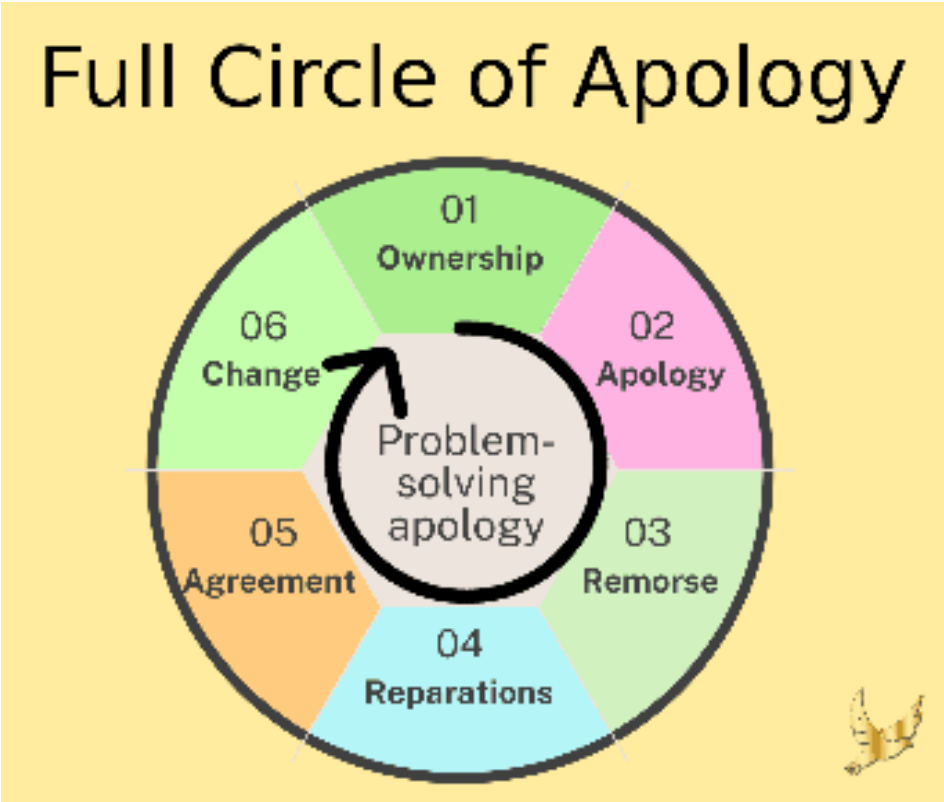
- Intro
- Types of Manipulative Apologies
- The Motives Of Apologizing Without Change
- Apologies Power Dynamics: When Change Isn’t Owed
- When Apologies Without Change Are NOT Manipulative
- How to Tell If An Apology Without Change Is Manipulative
- Conclusions

Intro

An apology is an important step for mending and improving relationships.

However, it’s only *one* step.

And there need to be more steps in order to “make things good again”.



The full circle of effective and honest apologies includes:

1. **Owning the mistake** and/or harm caused. It means accepting the blame and/or harm caused. Or, at least, accepting one’s own fair share of the blame
2. **Statement of apology**. This is the actual “apology”. It serves to re-empower us and “make us whole again”. But it’s the easiest to provide, so it may carry little weight without all the other steps
3. **Remorse** for the wrongdoing. An important sign of good character. Generally speaking, the bigger the harm, the more honest remorse is important
4. **Making amends**. The apology, the display of remorse, and the promise to change are all part of making amends. But amends also include more pragmatic and tangible reparations
5. **Communication, clarification, & future plans**. This is a two-way street where the apologizer listens and works with the victim to fix things. It can include a roadmap for change on both sides
6. **Changing behavior**. This is the last step that prevents the harm and/or issue from happening again. In some cases, only partial change may be possible. And future pain may not be fully avoidable. But if it’s clear to both and both are OK with it, it’s still a successful resolution

Those are the components of an honest and effective apology.
Not all steps are always necessary, of course. But, generally speaking, the more steps you remove, the more likely it is you’re dealing with aggression or manipulation.

Now let’s see how manipulative apologies look like:

Types of Manipulative Apologies

There are many types of manipulative apologies.

Many are part of the gaslighting behavior cluster of behavior.
So check that seminal article to understand the psychology of manipulators.

Some more manipulative apologies include:

1. Over-apologizing

The more you get *words* of apologies, the less you get in *concrete* reparations and changes

Over-apologizing always smells fishy, fake, and even *weak*.

Indeed, the over-apology gives a lot of power away.
But it's *not* for your benefit.

With over-apologies **the manipulator gives lots of power away to entice you to end everything at he apology level.**
But as we've seen, the statement of apology is only one part of the apology full circle.
So the manipulator robs you of concrete restitutions, real talk and planning, and actual change.
The manipulator also often seeks an *immediate* "getting back to normal" that only advantages *him*.

If you fall for it, the manipulator may even gain your trust.
Over-apologies lead us to believe that the apologizer must be such a good person. After all, who would go that far, and give so much power away? Sneaky manipulators, that's who.

How to Recognize Manipulative Over-Apologies

Of course, a man may pour his heart out and really mean it.

Also, there is some degree of subjectivity.
Some people are emotionally neutral, while some others tend to "dramatize" things a bit too much.
So you need to look at the individual, the previous history, and the circumstances.

However, generally speaking, you always want to note whatever feels "too much" because it's a red flag.
At best, it's a red flag of very poor social skills and/or an overly submissive personality.
At worst, it's manipulation.

Similar to over-apologizing:

1.2. Over self-blaming

> "You're right. I'm the worst girlfriend. I can't do anything right!"

The over-self-blame apology is a pity-based manipulation.

It works like this:

1. They go into an emotional meltdown of self-blame
2. You feel bad for them
3. You feel bad for calling out their poor behavior and demanding change
4. You drop your fair demands for reparations/changes

If you fall for it bad, you may even start *defending* them.

Something like:

> (she yells at him and treats him like her property. He explains why it's not cool)
> **Manipulator**: I'm such a bad person. Your mother would hate me
> **Mark**: Ah come on, it's just that sometimes you misbehave. But deep down you're a good person

Don't be Mark.
Mark is a sucker :).

2. Fake Apologies

There are endless types of fake apologies.

Some examples with the corresponding sub-communication:

- **I'm sorry you took it that way** = there's nothing to be sorry about, *you* took it the wrong way (the mistake is on you)

- **I apologize because you're the administrator** = there is nothing to own and no wrongdoing. I'm just saying it because you have the power to demand it (and you're bullying me into it)
- **I'm sorry about the misunderstanding** = there is no ill-intent, harm, or anything to fix. It was only a misunderstanding

All these are power moves.
And some power moves are even more disempowering:

2.2. Covert Attack Apologies

Some examples:

- **I'm sorry I humiliated you in front of everyone** = this apology offers no power protection for a dynamic that *needs* power protection. Put it that way, it only thread-expands on your low status
- **I'm sorry you felt hurt only because me and Chad had a good conversation** = she reframes flirting as talking (manipulative) and frames him as weak
- **OK, is it really important to you? OK, then fine, I'm sorry** = frames his poor behavior as inconsequential and you as "needing" an apology. It denies the harm, and also babies you

The attitude is that you don't really deserve an apology and that you're being a thin-skinned baby (that she has contempt for)

2.3. Covert Threats Apology

The most aggressive manipulators embed threats in their apologies.

There are many ways of embedding a threat.

But as an example, I'll share what an ex-girlfriend used to say:

> **Manipulator**: (I'm so bad) Maybe you should look for someone else

This is a mix of over-apologizing, *plus* a threat.
Not a good combo.

Some other forms include:

- **I'm sorry, this is a place of telling it how it is. If people can't take it, it may not be the place for them** (masked threat of firing at work)
- **My apologies for replying late, but I'm busy. My ex couldn't accept that and it destroyed the relationship** (masked breakup threat)

3. "Please Please Please Don't Leave Me" Apology

This "apology" is a guilt-trip to keep you in the relationship.

You'll see this when you decided enough is enough.
And just once you look forward to moving on… They meltdown to make you feel bad.

Next up, they may be threatening criminal behavior or suicide unless you stay.

Example:

> **Him**: I'll kill my parents, I'll steal money, just whatever you want… (cries)

Research suggests guilt tripping can work, but easily backfires when it's too much or too obvious as it reeks of manipulation (Singh, Crisafulli, & Quamina, 2020).

The begging guilt tripping is a case of over-doing it, and a red flag of possible borderline personality disorder.

4. Premature Closure Apology

The premature apology seeks to skip the "communicate and solve" phase.

The manipulator wants to skip communication and reparations because he wants the easy way out.

So he always goes back to the apology phase trying to end it there.
And if you seek more communication, he may say:

> **Manipulator**: I already apologized, what else do you want

A more aggressive variant is:

4.2. The Angry Premature Close

More dominant and aggressive manipulators say "sorry" but may as well be cursing you instead.

Something like:

> **Manipulator** (with an angry tone, gesticulating as if to say "so what"): OK, sorry (looks at you angry to make you submit and drop your demands)

Attention here:

If you accept this "apology" the frame is not that he's being aggressive.
The frame becomes that *you* are annoying.

The sub-communication becomes: "OK, you annoyed me so much, that you got what you wanted, even though you didn't deserve it".

Similar is also:

5. "I Got No Time For This" Apology

This manipulative apology frames the victim as lower value than the manipulator.

It works like this:

1. **Frames your demand as "not important"**, acting like any clarification or apology is "wasted time".
   Some ways to do it:
   - Acts annoyed
   - Checks the time / phone
   - Says he has other appointments
   - Gives you strict timelines -"I only have 1 minute for this, go ahead"-
   - Says he must "get to work"
2. **You're framed as lower value for caring for inconsequential things**. This is the natural consequence of the power dynamics at play. If you're over-worried about small stuff, it means you have nothing important in your life. You have no goal, and no demands on your time. And you care more about the relationship than he does.

And that's inherently lower value

3. **He's framed as higher value for having more important things to take care of**. This is also the natural consequence of the unspoken power dynamics at play. Not having time for your "small stuff" means he has to take care of "more important stuff". And that means that he's higher value

That attitude *in itself* frames you as lower value

Now attention:

Because the dynamics -or "subcommunication- are unspoken, it doesn't mean they have no impact.
As a matter of fact, it means they have an even *bigger* impact.

Meaning:

If **you leave the underlying dynamics unaddressed you tactly agree that you're lower value than he is**.

And once you're lower value, simple social exchange dynamics rob you of any right.
This is because lower-value people should be grateful that higher-value people even are with them. So it's unfair for lower-value people to demand any change.

6. Shifting The Blame Apology (Sorry, BUT...)

This manipulative apology shifts the blame from the manipulator, onto you.

There are many ways of doing it, and a typical format is the "sorry BUT".

With the "sorry BUT" apology:

- **The manipulator accepts *part* of the blame**. Potentially a *small* part.
- **Blames you for the rest of it**

An example could be:

> **Manipulative father**: I'm sorry that I beat you when you were a kid and now you think I'm a bad father. On

> the other hand, we have to look at what made me do it. Contrary to your sister who is nice and well-behaved, you… (proceed to find a reason why you "deserved" the beating)

Other examples include:

- OK I'm sorry, but God you're difficult
- Fine, I did make a mistake, but when you push a man to his limits…

7. Saying It Without Meaning It Apology

The manipulator "says it", but it's obvious from his tone and demeanor he doesn't mean it.

Example:

> **Him**: (flat and emotionally distant tone) I'm really sorry

This is very gaslighting.
The effect is:

1. I don't really mean it because you don't deserve it
2. But I'm giving it to you anyway (so I'm good)
3. So you can't complain (and if you do, you're bad)

And if you call it out, the manipulator will establish this frame:

- Deny that he's pulling any power move
- Say that you should be grateful he's apologizing (="I'm good")
- But you're not grateful and cannot be satisfied (="you're bad)

8. Escalation of Abuse Apology

This manipulative apology is part of the escalation of abuse.

It works with the "2 steps forward, 1 step back" format.

The apology itself is a smaller step back in that escalation.
But it serves to:

- Pacify the victim in the present
- Prevent reparations and future changes
- Secure and solidify the "gains" in the target's acceptance of abuse

Because the sub-communication is that if abuse can be undone with a simple apology, then abuse is "kinda of OK".
Or that abuse is appropriate for the victim.

This is the progression:

1. Episode of abuse
2. Victim reacts
3. Abuser apologies
4. Victim accepts without demanding reparations and changes
5. Nothing changes
6. Abuse repeats (and potentially gets worse)

7. …
8. Abuse becomes the “new normal”

At that point, an apology may not even be needed since it’s “just how things are”.

In these dynamics, the apology is the “step back”.
But it’s part of an increase and “normalization” of abuse.

This is one of the reasons why you always must travel the full-circle of an effective apology.

The Motives Of Apologizing Without Change

So, why do manipulators apologize without change?

The simple answer is that **manipulators apologize without changing because it’s good for them**, of course.

Change, instead, is costly and inconvenient.

Change means dropping habits the manipulator enjoys, and adopting ones that he doesn’t.
And it may mean treating you well and embracing a win-win relationship. But he prefers win-lose because that’s better for him.

But, some may ask:

How about the costs for the relationship, for his reputation, for the future… ?

And now here’s what you need to hear:

Chances are that **the manipulator never cared much about you.**
Inveterate manipulators tend to be selfish, callous, and with a very, very shallow emotional life. So even a small inconvenience to him isn’t worth the effort -not even if it meant the world to you and the relationship-.

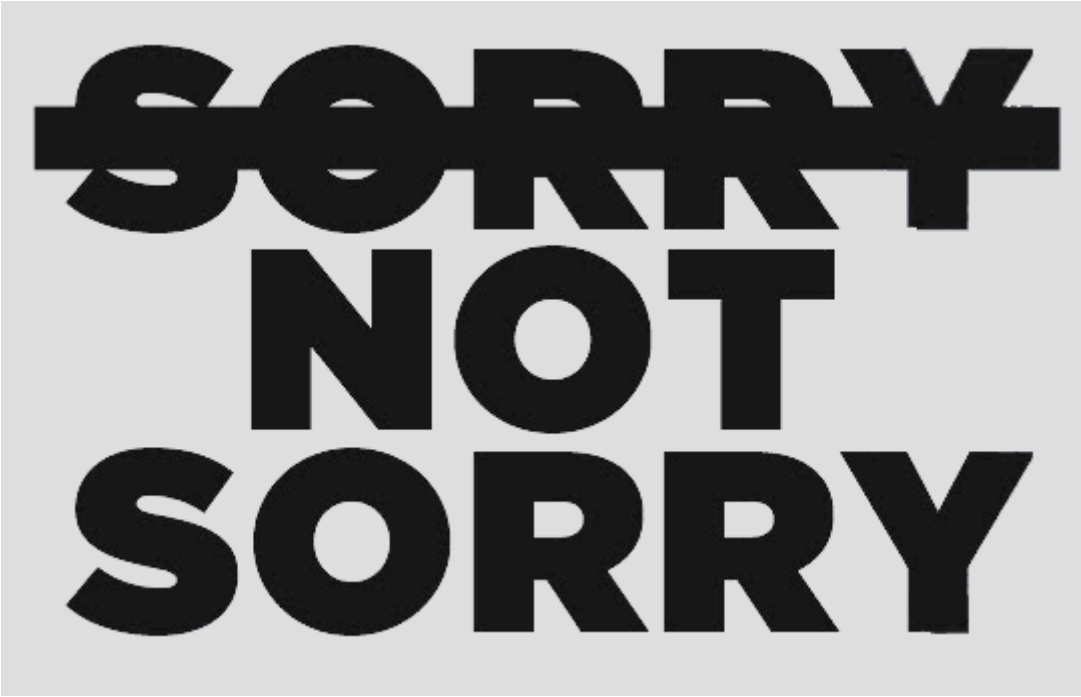
Don’t expect them to do what’s good for you or “for the relationship”.
They only do what’s good for them.

The only exceptions are extremely power-hungry manipulators.
Those are so power-hungry that they avoid anything that may cost them power -even if it costs them heavily in everything else-.

In more schematic forms, manipulators apologize without change:

- **Because it’s good for them**
- **Because they don’t care about you or the relationship**
- **To keep you in the (poor) relationship**. Most people stay in poor relationships because of the costs and fears of breaking up. Apologies may be just what the manipulator needs to avoid making it “as bad as it takes to break up”
- **To assuage you with empty promises** so you drop your demands for reparations or change
- **As a strategy of “habituation to abuse”**. As per the “1 step back, 2 steps forward” model. If you accept their apologies without change, then you will eventually come to accept poor behavior as the “new normal”

Apologies Power Dynamics: When Change Isn’t Owed



This needs to be said:

You are not always owed a change of behavior.

Many other online resources start from the false premise that anyone deserves a change in behavior.
But many sources lack a deeper understanding of both power dynamics, and social exchange dynamics.

And from a power dynamics point of view, **demanding an apology is an exercise of power**.

Sometimes that exercise of power is fair.
And it may be exactly what you need to do.
However, you must make sure that is the case.
The same goes for demanding change. That's an even bigger exercise of power.

And from a social dynamics point of view, apologies and changes don't stand in a vacuum.
Apologies and behavioral changes are part of the give and take of any relationship.
And **you cannot look at apologies alone without also considering the overall give and take**.

Put it in the most blatant way possible:

if one is not giving enough, then they may not deserve any apology or change.

Let's dig deeper:

Make Sure You EARN That Change – THEN Demand It

First, you must make sure that you've done your part to deserve a change.

Because it's potentially manipulative and aggressive to expect a change no matter what.

And, **it's a sign of entitlement mentality to believe that you're always owed a change**.

At an extreme, one may even harm you with their behavior, and *still* that doesn't necessarily mean they owe you any change.

Entitlement also doesn't work -especially not with higher-quality people-.
So to avoid that pitfall, ask yourself:

- **Are you owed a change?** Not every hurtful behavior begets an apology. And not every apology begets a change

- **Did you earn that change with the value you provide** back in the relationship? Someone who is only taking from others can't expect to have all his demands met
- **Do you have the power to enforce the change**? If not, it may still be "fair" to ask for a change. But you never want to be in the position of *hoping* others give tiy what's "fair".
  Two approaches to increase your power and leverage:
  - Pull, with the value you provide, or with even more value you can provide
  - Push, with the threat or removing that value, or the ability to exact costs
- **Do you have the courage to walk away** if the change doesn't come? Because if you stay in spite of endless manipulation, then you are the enabler

That's how you stop manipulative apologies. Give them a deadline, and walk towards better alternatives when change doesn't follow

Remember this saying:

> Fool me once with empty promises of change, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

When Apologies Without Change Are NOT Manipulative

Finally, let's dispel another myth:

Not all apologies without change are manipulative.

Some cases when apologies without change aren't manipulative:

- **The apologizer is the only giver**. Then… They may have a right not to change since they're already giving much more in other ways
- **You're taking far more**. Same as above. As a general rule, the more you're already taking, the less you have a moral right to ask for even more
- **The apologizer has the right to keep doing whatever he was doing**

For example:
  - Moral right because he never promised anything. For example, take a man who never committed. Even if he may hurt her by sleeping around, he doesn't owe her a change
  - Legal rights to do "normal activities". For example, if a man starts his motorbike at 8am and wakes you up, it's not his fault if you live on the ground floor and have a light sleep. He doesn't owe you to walk to office

- **The apologizer has other priorities**. Shall we be 100% honest? Sometimes you just don't matter enough for people to change. Or, maybe, you matter, but something else matters even more to them.
  Example: If a driven man puts his mission above his relationship, his partner may have to compromise instead of demanding
- **The apologizer is truly sorry, but still doesn't want to change.** Someone may truly be sorry that they hurt you. But they may still believe it's their right to do whatever they've done, and to keep doing so.
  This is actually a mature, high-power, and high-quality way of approaching many life situations
- **There's an honest will to change, but an inability to do so**. Some people may truly mean their apology. And even truly mean their will to change. But they may be unable to do so.
  An alcoholic who promises to quit drinking but doesn't change may not be a manipulator, but an addict

How to Tell If An Apology Without Change Is Manipulative

So, how can you tell a manipulative apology from one that is not?

Here are the red flags:

- **It's a *pattern* of apologies without improvement**. A red flag that the manipulator doesn't care about your well-being
- **Apologies come with a host of power moves**. See above and our other articles
- **There are promises of change**, **but no effort to change**
- **The apologizer is just generally a low-quality person**. If you spot a lot of red flags in general, then, well… Don't be surprised if the ahole behaves like an ahole.
  Also see "low-quality men" and "low quality women".

With a bit of power-awareness, you should be able to tell an honest apology from a manipulative one.

And if you're not sure, book a call with us for guidance.

Conclusions

An honest apology may need a behavior change that addresses the issue for good.

So if behavioral change never follows the apologies, you may be dealing with a manipulator.

This article helps you tell which apologies are manipulative, and which aren't.

The Power Moves (TPM) maintains high standards of sourcing guidelines to provide our readers with content that is accurate and actionable.
We rely on peer-reviewed studies, accredited experts, psychology textbooks, and academic research institutions.
Learn more by reviewing our full editorial policy.

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Find Your Dream Job (Ramit Sethi): Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 October 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Find Your Dream Job is a 10-module online course on job seeker power dynamics in which Ramit Sethi, the course teacher, makes the case that the most powerful way to negotiate for the job you want is through connections and competition.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
  - Playbook 1: Inside the Dream Job System
  - Playbook 2: Discover Your Dream Role
  - Playbook 3: Discover Your Dream Company
  - Playbook 4: Build A VIP Network
  - Playbook 5: The Perfect Resume & Cover Letter
  - Playbook 6: Land Multiple Interviews
  - Playbook 7: Perfect Interviewing: Get the Offer
  - Playbook 8: Negotiate Salary & Surprising Perks
- CONS
- PROS

Bullet Summary

- Playbook 1: Inside the Dream Job System (10 Lessons)
- Playbook 2: Discover Your Dream Role (12 Lessons)
- Playbook 3: Discover Your Dream Company (7 Lessons)
- Playbook 4: Build a VIP Network (9 Lessons)
- Playbook 5: The Perfect Resume & Cover Letter (10 Lessons)

- Playbook 6: Land Multiple Interviews (7 Lessons)
- Playbook 7: Perfect Interviewing: Get the Offer (10 Lessons)
- Playbook 8: Negotiate Salary & Surprising Perks (10 Lessons)
- Playbook 9: Hidden Perks At Your Current Job (4 Lessons)
- Playbook 10: Remote Work & Virtual Interviews (6 Lessons)

Full Summary

About The Author:
Ramit Sethi is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of iwillteachyoutoberich.com. Over 1,000,000 people read his material to learn how to use psychology and systems to live a Rich Life. That could mean automating your finances, making more money, finding your Dream Job, starting an online business, or mastering your inner psychology.

Playbook 1: Inside the Dream Job System

The five common mistakes job seekers make

First, are the five common mistakes job seekers make when they begin their job search process:

"Put yourself in the shoes of this average applicant. Let's imagine they work in marketing. They like it – the work is fine, but it's not particularly challenging. They feel stuck. And what's worse? Their boss doesn't really take them seriously, so they want to change.

Can you guess the first place they go when they're looking for a new job? Yep, you guessed it. A job search site, like Monster or Indeed. And they might even tell themselves, 'Let's just see what's out there.'

But, they have no real plan. And this is mistake number one – going to a job board with no plan.

Okay, let's keep going. So this average applicant is on the job board, and proceeds to use the search function to type in their – wait, what are they doing? Are they typing in the exact same job position that they want to change out of? Seems like it.

And in reality, this is mistake number two, sticking to what they know – and sometimes, what they hate. What if I told them that there are ten times more job titles that are way more relevant to them? What if they knew they needed to branch out to find their Dream Job?

Most average applicants don't know this – they don't even know how to go about it, so they stick with the familiar.

And that brings us to mistake number three – taking what they can get. This one drives me crazy. This is where the average applicant now has endless options [populated by the online job board], and with so many available job openings, one of these should be gold, right? Maybe."

Ramit Sethi recommends you take an "active" approach to searching for a new job. And, preaches that using a job site board is a passive job search approach.

> **Ramit**: "Okay, let's pause. Do you notice what's happening? Here's what I see. From the very beginning of the process they've delegated their job search to a computer algorithm. This algorithm is going to tell them where they're going to spend eight hours a day, five times a week for the next ten years of their life. Think about that, let that sink in. You're going to spend the next ten years of your life, and you're letting a computer tell you where to go? No! You should love it, you should own the decision yourself – not let a computer tell you where to go."

Now, those are the mistakes job seekers make when searching for a job. Let's look at the mistakes they make when *applying* for a job.

"Let's take a look. The average applicant has already identified a few jobs that look good. So here the process begins – they dust off the old resume. And then? The endless tweaking, the endless questions.

'Should I write, utilize, or use? What about font size? Ten or eleven? Should I stick with Arial? Hmm… What about that fancier-looking font?' And they spent hours and hours on their resume, on the things that don't really make a difference.

And this is mistake number four – overemphasizing the things that just don't matter.

Back to the average applicant. Here's where they submit the same resume, same cover letter to every company that they can find.

No specific strategy, no rhyme or reason, other than hoping it's going to work out. It's just a numbers game to them, right?

And this is mistake number five – shotgunning their applications into a black hole…

…And I have to tell you, I've seen so many promising job candidates start out optimistically, hopeful, but after sending two resumes, five resumes, 10 resumes, a dozen, and not getting back a single word or response from a real person? That deafening silence can make even the most qualified people doubt themselves."

Ramit says that this is where they begin to blame the economy.

The mindsets of top-performing job seekers

"The first [mindset of a top-performing job seeker] is to get proactive. Now we hear this a lot, but what does it actually mean? It means that Top Talent doesn't wait for a dream job to fall from the sky. They don't tell themselves, 'I don't know what I want; I guess I'll wait. I guess I'll know it when I see it. I'll figure it out eventually.'

They certainly do not apply through some random job website, and then wait for a company to get back to them. No!

So many people delegate their careers to recruiters, to job boards, to an algorithm. And if they don't get any results, they shrug. Top Talent knows that they need to be deliberate, and take the responsibility of finding their dream job into their own hands.

This is what the Dream Job system helps you do; take back control of every single part of your research. For example, you'll figure out exactly what your Dream Job is. You're not going to wait for a random quiz on the Internet that doesn't understand you, to tell you.

You'll be connecting with and talking with hiring managers directly, not firing off a resume and waiting. You'll be in control of the interview, not passively answering questions [you go from simply answering, to taking the lead].

The second mindset shift of top talent is that they think about what other people want [WIIFT]. So many candidates only focus on what they want in a job, 'I want rewarding work. I want to work from home and take Fridays off. I want to work with people I like.' This is classic 'I, I, I,' syndrome…your future boss doesn't care about what you want, they only want to know what you can do for them. And once you internalize this subtle reframe, your resume will stand out more, and you can make yourself that hiring manager's number one choice.

And finally, the last mindset shift is to use competence triggers to show that you are Top Talent. Competence triggers are very subtle signals, like certain phrases, body language, and practices that signal to someone, 'Wow, this is Top Talent. I need this person working for me.'"

Identify your Career Season

- Growth: Most of us start in this season early in our careers, and some of us are still in it. In the growth season, we're motivated by moving up the career ladder and making more money. We're willing to put the time in and we don't mind working hard.
- Lifestyle: Someone in this season still values their work and their career, but they have other equally important goals (e.g. travel, time with family, etc.)
- Reinvention: The reinvention season typically describes people who want to totally reinvent their careers, usually by switching industries.

Playbook 2: Discover Your Dream Role

What Is A Dream Job?

"Together, your dream role and dream company will make up your Dream Job.

The "Window Shopping Strategy"

"If you want to go forward with it, you can. And if not, put it right back on the shelf. This is what we call the Window Shopping Strategy. And finding your dream role is very similar. You see, when you're walking past the windows of all of these job roles, they're bound to be some job titles you just know, they're not for you. Maybe they're too advanced, maybe they're too basic, maybe they're just not interesting. That's fine. Skip them, and others might catch your eye but as you go inside the store, or as you start to research a little bit more, you're going to realize, 'you know what? That's not for me.' Also, fine. But then you're going to start to find gems; ones that really get you excited. And as you dig, as you do more research – in fact, as you do some Natural Networking and actually talk to people who have those roles, you might get more and more excited."

- Step 1: Upgrade to a Premium account on LinkedIn
- Step 2: Browse the high-level list of industries. (Select one that sounds interesting to you.)
- Step 3: Search for open jobs in those industries. (Go to https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/ and type in the industry you selected from the list.)
- Step 4: Narrow your search by experience level. (At the top, click on Experience Level and select the appropriate level to further narrow your search.)
- Step 5: "Window Shop" the results! ("Browse the results! Click on different job titles that sound interesting to you and browse the requirements. Simply ask yourself, 'does this seem interesting to me?' If it does, save the title and link in a tracking spreadsheet for later deep research. If nothing seems to be resonating with you, that's okay. Take a step back and try something else — for example, jobs at a different experience level, or start over from scratch at the Industries List. The goal is not to find a perfect list right now, but a starting point.")

Playbook 3: Discover Your Dream Company

The "Shadow Market" Jobs

"In our research, we found that as many as 80% of jobs are snatched up before they're ever truly publicly advertised. And this is what we call the Shadow Market…And if you're only looking on job boards, you'll never even hear about these shadow market jobs.

So now we know that there's a whole game being played around us. How do we actually find those shadow market jobs? Well, there are two ways.

Number one – your network. Have a strong network of people who are willing to help you. That's exactly what Stephanie did, and that's how she came to work here at IWT. Yes, this strategy is immensely powerful. And, yes,

it's a bit harder, takes a bit more time. But you don't have to have gone to a top-tier school, or you don't have to have interned for a CEO to have a network…

…Number two, going direct. This means getting in touch with employers you want to work for and pitching them directly. Sometimes it doesn't matter if they aren't advertising open positions – you don't wait for them to do something, you go to them first.

This is a proactive strategy – it's totally different from the usual passive strategy of waiting around for a job to come to you via a website.

Remember that the best jobs are often taken before they are even advertised, okay? They happen behind closed doors. They happen with employees sending out a couple of emails to their friends. 'Hey, we're about to put this job up. You should know about it. Make sure you send me your resume. I'll get it in front of the hiring manager.'

This is how many of the best jobs are actually filled very quickly. And most people don't even know about this entire game being played around them."

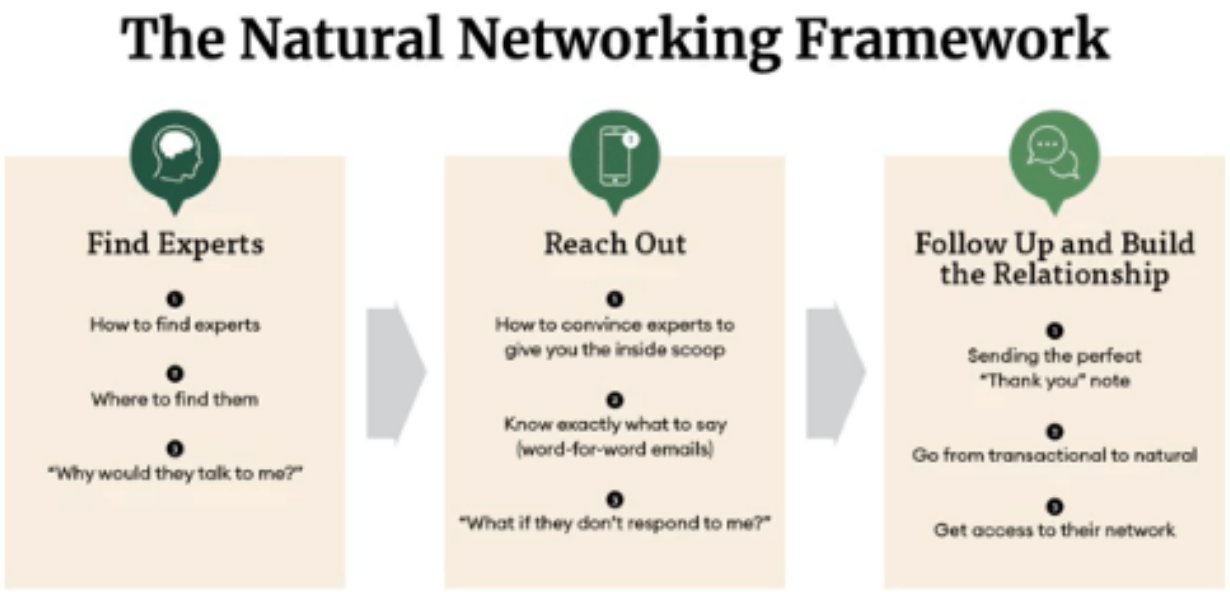
The Street Technique

- Step 1: Select the industries you're interested in.
- Step 2: Search companies on Linkedln by industry. (Go to https://www.linkedin.com/ and type one of the industries you like into the search. Then, select Companies.)
- Step 3: Combine companies with job roles. (Type in one of the Dream Roles you selected in Playbook 2 into the search along with the industries you are interested in.)
- Step 4: Dig into their profiles. (Click on the profiles that pop up in your search and dig into them. What other companies have they worked at? What skills do they have? What does their career trajectory look like? What other roles did they have? By looking at their past experience you can find interesting companies that you may never have found on your own.)
- Step 5: If the company sounds interesting, add the company name and website to your tracking spreadsheet. Aim for a list of at least five companies

Playbook 4: Build A VIP Network

The "Natural Networking" Framework

**Note: The following is a snapshot of the overarching process that Ramit Sethi teaches.*



On finding experts, Ramit defines a "real expert" as anyone who has experience doing what you want to do.

It can be that:

- "They had your Dream Job in the past — or have it right now!"
- "They worked at your Dream Company — or worked there now."
- "They're experienced in your industry."

Ramit actually encourages his students to prioritize experts who *used* to work at your Dream Company because they're more likely to tell the whole truth about their experience now that they've cut ties with the company.

Playbook 5: The Perfect Resume & Cover Letter

How to create your perfect resume

"Now, why is a narrative important? Well, let's start off with what most resumes do. Most resumes are just lists of facts. They are guilty of the Classic, 'I, I, I,' Syndrome. 'I did this. I did that. I want this. I'm this.'

Oh, [and] they believe that chronology is the most important thing. And that is a critical foundational mistake.

People create their resumes and believe that the purpose of it is simply to list the chronology. 'I worked here between these dates, here are a couple of things I did.'

You couldn't be more wrong. Because if you do all those three things, you are simply hoping that the reader puts the pieces together, and that is what an average applicant does…

…Top talent answers the hiring manager's top two questions…It's relevant to that hiring manager, it's specific and it's targeted. And those two questions that I mentioned, here's what top talent is always looking to answer.

'Who are you and what can you do for me [WIIFM]?' That's all that a hiring manager cares about when they're looking at your resume. In other words, what is your narrative?"

The same mindsets can be applied when crafting your cover letter. So, as Ramit often recommends, it will pay off to do the work. The research of looking into your job and company, and knowing why they're hiring will all pay off down the line. It's important to know what exactly it is that your dream company needs help with so you can follow

the WIIFT rule.

Playbook 6: Land Multiple Interviews

How top candidates "skip the line" to the interview

"We [often] walk into an unwinnable situation. We submit our resume through some random website, and then we wait.

With hundreds, or thousands of other applicants. And we have a tiny shot at that job. And we rarely get it.

The VIP application is a technique that lets you skip the entire H.R. process, which can take weeks or months, and go straight to the decision-makers. You get real feedback instead of automated rejection notices.

If they don't think you're a good fit, a VIP will usually tell you why.

And guess what? It's actually what employers want. Here's what the CEO of Cloudera wrote in his blog post, How to Get a Job at Cloudera.

He said, 'don't just email us your resume… It's much better to come by way of introduction from someone we already know. If one of them sends your name and resume along to a hiring manager, you can bet that it gets special attention.'

And once you know how to do this once, you can do it multiple times to pursue multiple interviews, which lets you evaluate your Dream Job – and even start a bidding war."

The VIP application approach

"…the VIP application is another high competence trigger. It shows that you are discerning. See, many people apply through the front door and they just hope for the best. They're not picky because they just want *a* job. But top performers are obsessed with finding the right fit, not just any job. So by taking the time to informally chat about fit, it shows that you're not desperate, but rather you're thinking critically about where you'd like to go, and how you'd like to add maximum value. Now, would I want somebody like that on my team? Absolutely."

As I said above, Ramit believes that for a job seeker to have more power on their side, they need to have connections on their side. And, a part of being able to do that is to know who it is you'll be connecting with in the company. Or, as Ramit puts it, you need to know who the players are.

"So, what is a VIP? Well, before we dig into the actual VIP application process, you need to know who the players are. So first you have the gatekeepers. This is typically HR and recruiters. Their job is to filter out the masses, and they're very good at what they do. The problem is that they'll often filter out good applicants along with the bad, and they'll never tell you why.

Next, you have the VIPs. These are hiring managers and executives. Their job, quite simply, is to find the best talent. And once they decide they want you, VIPs can move heaven and earth to make it happen, even after HR formally rejects you. So your role is to identify the VIPs, meet with them and show them why you would be perfect for that position.

And finally, connectors. These are anyone who can put you in touch with a VIP, like an employee of the company, a former employee, a mutual friend, or anyone you meet in the course of your Natural Networking.

Now, it's important for you to know the dynamics of each of these players. It's very different than the blank slate that most people send their resume into when they apply through the front door. And, as you can see, your goal is to ultimately connect with VIPs, although that may hopefully happen with the help of connectors.

So, here's what you do in the VIP application…at a high level, there are two steps. First, reach out to a VIP, ideally via an introduction. Second, meet with the VIP informally to see if there's a fit…

…Okay, let's break down the two steps of the VIP application. Step one, reaching out to a VIP. If you recall, you want to be introduced by a connector, and this can be anyone who works or worked at your target company; former employee friend, Natural Networking contact.

Now, if you've already spoken to them via Natural Networking, this is perfect. You can simply ask them for an introduction. If you haven't already spoken to them via Natural Networking, this is your first step. And in that conversation, you can ask something like this, 'Who do you think I should talk to if I were interested in a job at X, Y, Z company?' That's your VIP.

Now, if they mention them by name, they likely know them. And if you've made a good impression by using high competence triggers, like being prepared and asking good questions, they will more likely than not be happy to make an introduction.

I'd recommend waiting a few days after meeting with your connector and then sending them an email for an introduction."

How to use the VIP application approach

(1) Find the players who are VIPs and Connectors at your Dream Company.

**Note: The following is a snapshot of the overarching guidelines that Ramit Sethi shares.*

(2) Reach out to the relevant Connectors you find.

(3) At the meeting (be it a phone chat, in-person, or virtual) ask good questions.

(4) End the meeting while leaving the door open for future communication and/or collaboration.

(5) Follow up after the meeting. (If you're interested in the position, ask for an email introduction to the person they recommended speaking to.)

(6) Connect with a VIP. (If necessary — if you're unable to get an introduction — cold pitch a VIP.)

(7) When you connect with your VIP, meet with them.

(8) Follow the same steps as before to end the meeting.

**Note: The following is a snapshot of the overarching process that Ramit Sethi teaches for ending a meeting.*

THE VIP APPLICATION

How to end the meeting

If you've decided that you're definitely interested in pursuing a position, great!

Just say, "Thank you so much for meeting with me. I'm going to take some time to think about all of this. Would it be all right if I followed up in a few days?" They will say yes.

Then, send an email expressing your interest and ask THEM what they'd recommend as next steps. If they liked you, you're virtually guaranteed an interview — and you've already had coffee with the hiring manager.

That's massive.

If you don't think there's a good fit, simply thank them, send a quick follow up email, and cross them off your list.

(9) If you got the interview, great!

(10) Continue this process with the other Dream Companies on your list to get interviews with them (and, as a result, multiple interviews in your pipeline).

Playbook 7: Perfect Interviewing: Get the Offer

How top candidates "skip the line" to the interview

Here are the 3 steps to answering the interviewer's questions smoothly:

1. Ask yourself: "What are they really asking?"
2. Find the Plain English Answer
3. Polish to Perfection

Then all you need to do is practice, practice, practice!

Here's an example:

> **Interviewer**: "Why do you want to work here?."
>
> **You**: "I want to work at Acme for 3 key reasons: First, you're doing amazing, life-changing work in the field of X. Second, I'm confident I can make a huge contribution given my experience in Y.
>
> And third, you have some of the smartest people in the world working for you.
>
> That last point in particular is a huge deal for me. You'll notice I have a history of actively seeking out and working with the top people in my field, such as John Smith and Jane Doe, who really pushed me to accomplish Z.
>
> Bottom line, I thrive in environments filled with smart, ambitious people, and that's why I'd love to be a part of the Acme team."

Or, consider this all-too-common interview question:

> **Interviewer**: "What's your biggest weakness?."
>
> **You**: "My biggest weakness is that I've spent the majority of my career working for one company. In
>
> some ways, that can limit my perspective. Of course, I've worked in a variety of departments — and in fact I was promoted faster than anyone else to run XYZ — but I'm ready to take what I've learned to a different culture and industry, and that's why I'm here."

And, finally:

> **Interviewer**: "Do you have any questions for me?."
>
> **You**: "So, do you like it here?"

As for that last one, the idea is to continue the frame of "I'm still a high-quality individual who's still assessing whether I want to work with you or not".

For comparison, Charlie Houpert over at Charisma On Command actually coaches his students to respond to that common interview question with something similar to this:

> **Interviewer**: "Do you have any questions for me?."
>
> **You**: "So, obviously I'd like to get this job. But, when you're thinking down the line, whether you hire me, whether you hire someone else, how will you know a year from now whether or not you made the right choice? What will that person had to have done to have been an excellent hire?"

And, that leaves Ramit's suggested response closer to Lucio's recommended response.

The Briefcase Technique

This is the briefcase technique (demonstrated in the first video). It's a proposal that outlines:

- What you've done
- What you're going to do

As far as the "what you've done", Ramit recommends that you keep an updated list of all of the positive testimonials that you've received throughout your career. And, right here is a great place to use them.

The "what you're going to do" is crucial because it's a form of future value-signaling and, at the same time, leverages the potential bias recommended by Daniel Pink for negotiating for a raise.

"So here's what to do: Come up with 5-10 ideas of things you'd like to accomplish in the next six months. They don't have to be big, strategic business ideas — few bosses expect that, especially early in your career. Instead, ask yourself: What would your boss be delighted to hear you say?

Really think about this. Some potential examples:

- 'I'd like to have a bigger role in the X development cycle, and ideally manage the entire process from end to end within six months.'
- 'This year my team hit a 10% increase in sales. I'd like to hit 15% in the coming year.
- 'I'd like to keep doing X, but I've gotten efficient enough at it that I'd also like to start helping out with Y.'

And, you're not even selling your ideas here, you're selling your *initiative*.

Once you set a collaborative frame, the details as far as each idea can be hashed out later.

An example of setting a collaborative frame in the interview would be, in a video interview, asking to share your

screen and then showing a presentation (say, a PowerPoint) with your briefcase proposal.

Then, have one of your slides say, “What I think you want,” which outlines what results you believe the company is looking for from you. And, let the following slide be titled, “What am I missing?” where you pause to ask the interviewer if you’re on the right track and invite their feedback. This is a textbook strategy from Daniel Pink called “pro-like pitching” applied to interviewing.

Playbook 8: Negotiate Salary & Surprising Perks

The “Natural Negotiation” Framework

Ramit recommends you realize that it’s normal to be afraid of negotiating. And, with that, he introduces his process:

“So here’s how to dramatically improve your negotiation game. Introducing the Advanced Negotiation Power Dynamics.

In this framework, you have three key points, and we’re going to go through each of them in detail.

The first is to know your leverage. In a negotiation, leverage is power and you have to know what you’re working with. Next, master your psychology. It’s critical that you walk in confident about your abilities, otherwise the hiring manager is going to sniff it out, and their goal is to get you for as low a price as they possibly can. That’s business.

And then the third is nailing the negotiation. This is the tactics of when you walk in and you have that conversation or you do it over the phone, you want to know exactly what you’re going to do.”

(1) Know your leverage (check the economy).

“…leverage is power…When you walk into a salary negotiation, you are in a position of power, okay?

You have to know that because they’ve already gone through a recruiting process among many other candidates and they’ve brought you in. They’ve made you an offer.

They’ve likely spent thousands of dollars already, in time, recruiting fees, tools, to bring you in. So you have to know that.

Now the key here is that now that they’ve decided they want you, it’s simply a matter of details.

Okay, let me say that again because it’s so important. Now that they have decided they want you, it’s simply a matter of details. This is critical, okay?

Once you understand that and truly internalize that, then the negotiation part doesn’t become so existential, it’s merely, ‘Hey, let’s figure these details out.’ Great. We’ve both agreed we want to go to lunch. Okay, now it’s just a matter of where are we going to go? Simple…

…Now, when you walk in, knowing your leverage means you need to understand the state of the economy.

And I want to give you an analogy here. If you were going to go buy a house tomorrow. Would you expect to simply be able to go and give the absolute lowest price if there’s not a lot of houses on the market? No, because there’s something called supply and demand. So if there’s a seller’s market, that means there are lots of buyers, fewer houses. If it’s a buyer’s market, you’ve got tons of sellers and lots of houses. So think about that.

Depending on the state of the economy or something external to you, that can dramatically affect your ability to negotiate. In other words, if there is a recession or your industry has contracted, you might have low leverage.

If, on the other hand, you have an industry that’s booming, there’s not enough supply, there are not enough people out there, then you have high leverage.

And this is critical to know walking into your negotiation. So let me show you how that works. For a candidate’s market, that’s your market, the economy is good and there’s low unemployment.

What does this mean? It means that you can push, likely, for the top end of your salary range, or certainly the higher part of that range.

If, on the other hand, you have an employer's market where the economy is bad and there's high unemployment, then my suggestion to you is, be more flexible with your salary range and potentially less aggressive…

…There are times when it's a candidate's market. That's when you have greater leverage. This is your opportunity to negotiate harder.

This happens during low unemployment when virtually all top performers are employed and there's a tight labor market, okay?

…On the other hand, there are times where it's an employer's market. That's where you have less power to negotiate. And that happens when there's high unemployment, lots of people looking for jobs.

It makes a lot of sense, just think about the price of cranberries, right? If there's a ton of supply, the price is going to go down. Labor markets respond accordingly."

(1.1) Know your leverage (check the company).

"So, let's also talk about the demands of the company, because that factors into your leverage. Again, we already talked about industry, what's going on in the industry, but let's now talk about the company itself.

If the company needs to hire, then you have higher leverage.

What do I mean by that? Maybe the company is moving into a strategic initiative. Maybe they simply need to create a mobile app.

Well, if that's the case, then they are going to be willing to pay more. That's what's called 'strategic.'

Strategic, if you really boil it down, means we're willing to spend a ton of money because it is critical or existential to our existence.

So, how do you find out if your role or your potential project is important to the company?

Well, you've already done it. You've done it in Natural Networking, you've done it by reading the interviews of the CEO, and you can also look at how long they've been trying to hire for that position…

…So, you can't control the economy, you can't control the demands of the company, but you can control your own Dream Job process.

And that means you can get warm introductions. You can understand what the company's looking for and make sure you position your experience accordingly.

And, of course, you can use the Briefcase Technique in your interview to blow them away and really impress them."

By "position your experience accordingly", Ramit is referring to removing any experience on your resume that doesn't apply to the position you're applying for. He recommends keeping your resume 1-2 pages max and having it contain the 20% of relevant information that will get the 80% of results (those results ideally being that the hiring manager views you as a top performer).

(2) Master your psychology (reframe your negative self-talk).

"'I'm afraid they think I'm being too greedy.' What if we reframe that to, 'I deserve to negotiate'?

'I'm lucky they're even offering me a job.' What if we reframe that to, 'I deserve to get paid within this industry range'?

Or, 'why would anyone hire me?' If you're really confident you can reframe this to, 'this company is lucky to have me. I'm doing them a favor by negotiating my worth and delivering maximum value in this role.'"

Ramit notes, “Remember, this is not personal; it’s business.” And, I include that note because it feels like a great point similar to a note in Career University about managers leveraging the company’s mission as an excuse not to pay you what you’re worth (e.g. “Hey, come on, you know it’s not about the money here, it’s about the impact we’re making, etc., etc.).

And, at the end of the day, all of that “mission” talk won’t prevent you from getting fired if they decide to let you go because it’s not personal; it’s always been business.

“It’s also important to recognize that one thing that helps your psychology almost more than anything else is to be in demand. Just think about this, close your eyes for a second.

Imagine that you were walking into a salary negotiation where this is your only offer, and you’ve been at it for three months or six months, and they make you an offer. How does it feel to negotiate for five, ten, fifteen thousand dollars more? It’s a little nerve-racking, isn’t it?

Now keep your eyes closed. Imagine you have three other job offers. How would it feel to negotiate your salary now?

…If you have another job offer on the table, it can be incredibly powerful to surface that information to the hiring manager. And I’ve done this in the past.

You can say something like this, ‘Look, I really want to work here, this is my top choice. But Company B has extended me an offer that’s significantly higher. What can we do about that?’

Now, I did this because I had multiple offers, and so I actually engineered bidding wars.”

This is why Ramit recommends getting interviews with multiple dream companies (see the VIP application process). It’s because by doing so, you can leverage what negotiation expert Herb Cohen refers to as the power of competition.

And, he also makes it clear that “you don’t have to tell them the name of Company B, they’re not entitled to know that. You also are not obligated to tell them what their offer was, although you can use that information if you like.”

As an added plus, in the course program, Ramit goes over how to time your applications so that as many job offers as possible come in at approximately the same time, so your negotiation power is as strong as possible.

(3) Nail the negotiation (the actual mechanics of the negotiation).

“Let’s talk about identifying your salary sweet spot, and this is basic table stakes for a salary negotiation. You need to know two numbers, your absolute minimum [your BATNA], which is the lowest you would consider, and your reasonable ideal, which is the most you could reasonably expect.

Now, when they give you the number, I want you to resist the urge to say, ‘Sounds great,’ no matter how happy you are to receive that offer.

When you get the offer, I want you to pause, take a deep breath, and I want you to say that number out loud. ‘$48,000. Hmm…’.

Think about whether you’re going to accept, like [if that number is] in green, or negotiate, like in yellow or red.

Take 10 seconds if you need to. You can even say, ‘Would you mind giving me a minute to pull out my notes?’ Also, I should add, you should thank them. ‘Thank you so much, I appreciate that. Would you mind giving me a minute to pull out my notes?’

So, if you’re in the green, you can say something like this, ‘Thank you so much. I’m excited to begin. I think we have a really great fit here. I’d like some time to think it over, if that’s all right. When should I get back to you by?’

Great. Just give yourself some time, even if it’s a great number.

If you're in the yellow, you might say something like this, 'First of all, thank you. I'm excited to begin and I think we're in the same ballpark. I'd like to talk about the salary. From my research, it looks like the standard range is from 70 to 90K, and actually towards the higher end for someone with my qualifications. I'd like to discuss that range.'

And if you're in the red, 'First of all, thank you, I'm thrilled to be considered. I have to be honest, though, it looks like we are pretty far apart on salary. I'm really interested in the position, but from my research, et cetera, et cetera.'

At this point, Ramit says to stay quiet because if you begin rambling you'll start giving away all your negotiating power.

(3.1) The Negotiation A.R.M.S. Technique.

"A.R.M.S.: Agree. Reframe. Make the case. And then shut the hell up."

E.g.

> **Hiring Manager**: "It's not within our budget."
>
> **Most People**: "Oh…sure okay, that sounds all right."

What top performers do instead is negotiate by using this technique:

> **Hiring Manager**: "It's not within our budget."
>
> **Top Performer**: *(agrees)* "I understand, of course – times are tough. And I agree that for an average candidate, the budget would definitely be a good place to start. *(reframes)* However, as I showed you in the interview process, I fully intend to make an above average contribution, and I think I've demonstrated a track record for doing that. *(make the case)* So I'd simply ask that the compensation reflect that *(shut up)*."

Ramit also goes over the art of strategic concessions in the negotiation and how to make sure you're actually negotiating and not haggling.

As far as haggling, an example is when, as the hiring manager for his company, IWT, Ramit says, "…I'm thinking to myself, you are haggling over $2,000 now for somebody that you're going to work with day in and day out for the next two, three, four, five years. It's not smart. So, I want you to remember your goal is not to extract the maximum amount of money, because you can extract every last dime, and you can leave a really bad taste in the mouth of your future teammate."

(3.2) The Ladder of Negotiation Technique.

"Now, the ladder of negotiation is a guideline that you can use here, you can ask, for example, for your big request, like a salary increase, then you can do a small request, which might be an early performance review."

In other words, when you're negotiating, start with your big request first and then transition to your smaller ones.

This is great because, to a certain extent, it can leverage the contrast bias depending on what you're asking for.

The rest of the course is simply icing on the cake, you've already got an overview of the meat and potatoes right here :).

CONS

- **Overfocuses on resource control, neglects the effectiveness of the social exchange**

Ramit Sethi encourages his students to, when networking, ask their target connections (who are high-status VIPs) if they could "pick their brain". He says that this is actually effective because it's flattering for the receiver.

And, for those who are emotionally dependent on the approval, compliments, and flattery of others—all of those being emotional resources that can keep one dependent and under one's control—it can be effective, yes.

But, it's not nearly as effective as showing a willingness to give back *real* value. If Ramit's teachings and scripts here would have focused less on emotional resource control and more on gratitude, the "natural networking" playbooks could have been a lot more valuable to its students.

- **At times, misses key details**

The "perfect interviewing" playbook doesn't specify when to use the briefcase technique in the interview. It simply ignores the technique and then refers you to the resources section to craft your own, leaving you to guess when you should pull out your briefcase proposal at the actual interview stage.

Later, Ramit does a role-play where, when answering one of the interviewer's questions, he begins talking about what he plans to do for the company, stops, and says, "Actually, can I just show you?"

In my opinion, that's great and would have been even better if it was in its respective playbook.

- **Missed opportunities for added resources**

When I started implementing his process for natural networking, I found myself reaching out to tens of VIPs and Connectors every week with no contact tracker to keep track of them all.

I ended up crafting my own which left me wishing it was included in the course because I had a feeling the IWT team could have crafted a better one.

- **All templates are already filled out**

I was expecting blank templates. Instead, I found that Ramit had pulled the exact resumes, cover letters, and briefcase proposals from students who had already succeeded in Dream Job.

Sounds great, in theory, but makes it hard when you're looking at templates that have zero overlap with your field of expertise, leaving you to guess what Ramit would recommend you write.

- **Had no references and contained unnecessary techniques instead**

As much as this course referenced the works of some of the greatest social strategists, there were no references to be found anywhere in the resources, course videos, or other surrounding content. What you did find, were a couple of unnecessary techniques. An example is what Ramit coined the STHU technique—which means the "Shut The Hell Up" technique.

Since STFU is already a thing, it felt like a lazy attempt at inflating the value of the course by saying, "Look how many added techniques we're giving you here," when the course is already wonderfully valuable without them.

It makes sense that Ramit would do this since he offers a 12-month payment plan for the course and needs to convince people to stay. But, unfortunately, those weak plays actually devalued the course in my eyes.

PROS

- **The cons above contain nitpicking**

Lucio said once, "If you don't know yet, my rule of thumb is that the better a book/resource is, the deeper I go with my nitpicking." And, this program was so good that the above cons were a case of exactly that, nitpicking.

- **The course lived up to its marketing**

This course didn't market itself as groundbreaking for the world of job seeking, but it did market itself as revolutionary for the lives of the people who join. And, I believe that this course is capable of creating career

reinvention, growth, and everything in between.

Manipulation Tactics Abusers Use: Recognizing and Protecting Yourself

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 October 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Most resources only provide the basic, easy-to-spot manipulation tactics. To become truly **manipulation-proof for life**, you need more.

This article provides a list of **9 advanced manipulation tactics**, which are used to attack, devalue, and control victims. Thanks to our clear examples, you will learn to recognize techniques like **Social Scalping** (framing you as the perpetual "taker") and **Isolation Tactics** (cutting you off from support), so you can spot even the most covert abusers and know how to defend yourself.

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  - Tactics to deflate your value:
  - Tactics to inflate his value:
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Intro

First, you must understand this:

The best manipulators are so smooth that most victims don't even realize they're being manipulated.

Indeed, manipulation and manipulation detection are part of an evolutionary arms race.
To excel in that race from a manipulator's point of view means never being perceived as a manipulator.
On the other hand, your job in that manipulation arms race is to excel in detecting manipulators so that you can become manipulation-proof for life.

Unluckily, most resources on manipulation only provide the most *basic* manipulation tactics.
And that means that you'd only be able to spot the most basic manipulators.

Better than nothing, maybe.
But if you want to aim high in life, you need more than just basics.

Right after learning to "see" manipulation, you want to learn how to *deal* with manipulation.
And then eventually you want to learn how to strategically *use* manipulation (when it's fair to do so!). For great life quality, you then want to develop manipulation-free friendships and relationships with higher-quality people.

We help people walk that full circle in Power University.
But this article is a good start.

To give you the biggest bang for the buck, we'll share some more advanced manipulation tactics:

1. Social Scalping™

> Social scalping™ includes a host of manipulation tactics that **frame the manipulator as a giver and the victim as a taker**.

Social scalping includes a host of different tactics. They're all aimed at making you the "taker" of the relationship

That is huge because social exchange dynamics teach us that givers and takers have very different rights and obligations.

Just as an example:

No matter how displeased you may be, **you have little rights to demand any change when you are the taker** within any given relationship.
Givers instead can demand changes above and beyond what would be fair in a more balanced relationship.
As a matter of fact, givers may even act out because they'd be right to be dissatisfied with the relationship (and dissatisfied with the taker).

Of course there is no "law" that says that takers must put up with abuse. But these dynamics are often far more powerful than laws are.
We didn't evolve to follow a legal code. But we did all evolve to subconsciously run those give/take calculations.
And we naturally adjust our behavior based on the result of those calculations.

That means that **you become far more accepting of abuse when the manipulator presents himself as the giver**.

2. Devaluing You (Value Scalping™)

> Frame the manipulator as having higher value than the victim, or the victim as lower value

The cast system may be over, but the underlying dynamics aren't. Higher-value people will always enjoy power over others. Sometimes, and especially in the hands of poor characters, that power turns abusive.

Value scalping works on dimensions:

- **Becoming higher value than you** (value inflating for the self). This frames the manipulator as the "giver" and the 'relationship prize'
- **Making you lower value** (value deflating for you). This frames you the "taker" in that relationship

As per Social Investment model, the **lower-value person must make the difference by investing more** (Law of Compensatory Investment™)
Studies support that this imbalance allows the manipulator to give less, and take more (for dating applications, see our articles on the sexual marketplace and the sexual market value).

Tactics to deflate your value:

- Criticism
- Aggressive "humor"
- Negative comparisons
- …

Tactics to inflate his value:

- Bragging
- Teacher frames
- "Confidence game", speaking with certitude
  - Appeal to authority, for example "science", "research", or quotes from famous figures

Example of confidence game to appear as a higher value authority:

> **Tom**: one of the things that I THINK is foundational to growth is joy <— Humble, power-protecting and truthful approach that includes doubt
>
> **Sadhguru**: (speaking with haughty and babying tone) nononono, there is substantial medical and scientific evidence that (states his point of view as a fact) there is no argument about that, there is enough evidence to show that

The speaker is socially dominant.
Dominance facilitates manipulation because you submit and become the "lesser of" in the relationship.
But the speaker is *also* manipulative because he feigns authority to impose his point of view.

Does it make sense?

If so, then you're ready to move to another advanced manipulation tactic:

3. Disempowering You (Power Scalping™)

> Tactics to maintain power for the self or actively disempower the target, including for example credit withholding, apologies withholding, or various power moves

While most people may not care to maintain power, it's a central objective for many manipulative personalities.

Just as an example:

Covert Questions™

> To gain information, without asking for it (part of 'covert power moves')

Before we noticed this pattern and gave it a name, Blau described the phenomenon of seeking information without paying the full costs in his seminal *Exchange and Power in Social Life*.
To understand why manpulators may overdo this, you must understand the underlying dynamics.
Asking:

- **Admits ignorance**, and ignorance is a display of vulnerability and lower value than 'knowledgeable'
- **Creates a social debt** for the asker and a credit for the responder. It's a 'take'

Fragile ego manipulators cannot admit ignorance, and don't want to give you credit for your advice.

So now we can understand that **a common manipulation tactic is to swap questions with statements**, loud questions that are *not* directed at you, or blame shifting.

For example:

- ❓ "**The key has disappeared**" (statement) as a covert request for help to find the key
- ❓ "**You cleaned up and now my key is gone**" (blame-shifting). So not only they get your help without asking, but they even blame you for the issue
- ❓ **I'm thinking of investing in ads these days** (loud thinking) to covertly get you to share your experience running ads

If you help them, they will never say "thanks".

Another manipulative tactic is to share a meaningless trope in the presence of an expert to indirectly get the expert's opinion.

For example, on our forum, they may have said:

- ⍰ "***You never outshine the master**, that's why when my boss made a mistake on the presentation, I didn't correct it. Feel free to share your thoughts*".

Then, they hope, I will feel compelled to correct the generalization and offer expert advice.

4. Misleading The Competition (Competitors Manipulation™)

> Tactics aimed at weakening rivals by misleading, restraining, or misdirecting them—such as giving sub-par advice, virtue-signaling to promote cooperation while secretly defecting, or spreading false information about one's true actions, goals, or results.

Never trust a manipulator to tell you what they truly value, what truly works best, and what they're truly pursuing.

Instead, they will share falsehoods to get you off track.

For example, they may say:

- "***Real men drink***" <— To convince other men to indulge, and lose health and productivity
- ***"If I could go back in time, I'd pursue my mission and ignore distraction from women"*** <— To convince other men to never date or learn dating, so they never enter the competition
- ***"I don't really care about job promotions here, it's not a great environment. I'm thinking of switching careers"*** <— To mislead colleagues into believing there is little competition and the environment isn't worth it

In all these cases, the manipulator lowers the competition against him.
He hides his true goals, motives and behaviors to seem less competitive, devalues the object he desires, and misleads others into giving up the race.

5. Isolating the Victim

Manipulators may provoke the victim's family into hostility towards him. He'd then use the opportunity to escalate and force his partner to "choose him" and cut contact

Isolation is a common manipulation tactic in relationships because isolation disempowers the victim and facilitates control.

Isolation Tactics

There are countless tactics manipulators deploy to isolate their victims.

Bel did a fantastic job with a growing compendium of isolation techniques here.

Some of the main ones include:

1. **Manipulative "us bubbles"**. Framing the couple as the only safe and sacred "unit"
   Examples:
   - *It's us against the world*
   - *You and I forever baby, nobody else*
   - *We cannot trust anyone, but we have each other*
2. **Behaving oddly or abusively in the victim's social circle**. That way, the victim will avoid his social circle out of embarrassment and shame
3. **Making up enemies and encouraging "enemies making"**. A manipulation tactic you also see from politicians and cult leaders. The more enemies, the more the victim's dependence on the manipulator.
   Competitive and disagreeable people make for perfect targets
4. **Setting up the victim in difficult situations with others**.
   For example, the manipulator may press his partner to borrow money from family and friends. He may then try to make it difficult for the victim to repay. And he will criticize the lenders for being so "greedy"
5. **Devalue the victim within her social circle**. A good manipulator avoids direct criticism. Instead, he may "hint" the partner was unsupportive during his time of need ("*yeah, I cut my expenses, but not everyone is willing to sacrifice so… Ramen for me tonight guys*")

6. **Triangulations with the victim's social circle**. For example, the manipulator may flirt with a friend of the victim, or make the victim resent her friend with unflattering comparisons
   - Exaggerated "love" for the victim's social circle. It works especially well with jealous or insecure victims
7. **Reframe isolation as "strength**". High power manipulators use their emotional leverage to frame strong people as 'not needing others'. Victims who crave gaining the respect of the manipulator will adapt
8. **Monopolizing the victim's time** disguised as love. Only later, when the manipulator has (emotional) power, it will turn nasty

Manipulator vs Non-Manipulator Approach

Mind the difference:

- **Well-meaning partners want you to have great relationships** and be well-connected with other high-quality people.
- **Manipulators want you isolated**. They want you to have broken relationships or, better yet, no relationship at all

For example, a woman I was seeing had a strong temper. She one day said mean things to her sister. And I told her:

> **Non-manipulator**: Look, you're an expat here. Your family is abroad. The only family you have here is your sister. I'd rather you have a great relationship with her so that you can take care of each other

Make friends, not enemies principle.

A manipulator instead would have told her she was right, the sister terrible, and encouraged her to escalate further, or cut contact.

Note: The non-manipulator is ultimately higher value.
The non-manipulator sub-communicates that he doesn't need a woman to be dependent on him. I didn't want her to depend on me because it would just be an added responsibility that I didn't want. Plus, I trusted myself that I'd always be a top priority for her.
See more in this video.

6. Astroturfing to Manipulate Opinions

The Routledge Handbook on persuasion shares an example of public opinion manipulation tactic.

Read these organizations' names:

- "Citizens for the Environment"
- "National Wetlands Coalition"
- "Greening Earth Society"

Sound environment-friendly enough?

Well, they're all ANTI-environment think tanks, chosen on purpose to manipulate public opinion (Bricker, 2014). This practice of posing as a non-profit group to exploit others has been called astroturfing or astroturf activism (Durkee, 2017).

7. Playing on Insecurities (Ego Scalping™)

> Deliberately highlighting and expanding a target's insecurities or playing up one's own or others' comparative superiority around the targets' insecurities to induce self-consciousness and lower self-esteem.

This manipulative tactic is part of "value scalping" because you come to believe you're lower value.
In the worst cases, victims may feel they're worthless. And **victims who feel worthless are *trapped* in abusive relationships** because that's what they think they deserve.

Read more on this dynamic here:

- **Dating low self-esteem women**, it digs deeper on the dynamics

Some insecurities are easy to guess because they're shared along gender lines.
Women tend to be insecure about looks, weight, inclusion, kindness, etc. etc.
Men tend to be insecure about masculinity, "being an alpha", or competence.

⍰ Relationship Example

> **Him**: (grabs her calves) chub chub
> **Her**: (starts getting self-conscious about "not being thin enough" for him)

8. Teaching Others (Teacher Frames™)

> Making a show of teaching others to appear higher status, more authoritative, intelligent, or knowledgeable, while framing the target as lower status, lower authority, or less intelligent

Teaching is a power move to gain power at your detriment.

Teachers gain higher status, authority, and attention. And you lose power as the 'pupil'.

An example of manipulative teacher frames:

> **Saltbae**: (talks to people like he's in charge and explaining the world to them. As a consequence, they become lower value "students" who must learn from him)

Gurus of all stripes also teach to fabricate authority and sell various knowledge products.

Infantilizing

The manipulator infantilizes -or babies- the victim to make him feel inferior and dependent.

When effective, babying makes the victim feel low IQ, immature, and dependent.
The manipulator, as the only adult, also becomes the leader of the relationship.

9. Trust Scalping™: Start Cooperative, Turn Exploitative

> Starting with strategic cooperation, verbal cooperation-signaling, or kindness to boost social capital and lower the target's defenses, only to exploit that trust and defect later

Manipulators start with an inviting facade to attract you make you drop your guard, only to take advantage of your trust once you trust them.

That facade can be kindness, cooperation, or a display of virtue.

This pattern has been observed in research on narcissism.
A study on a commons dilemma showed that **exploitative individuals cooperated early in the task but turned**

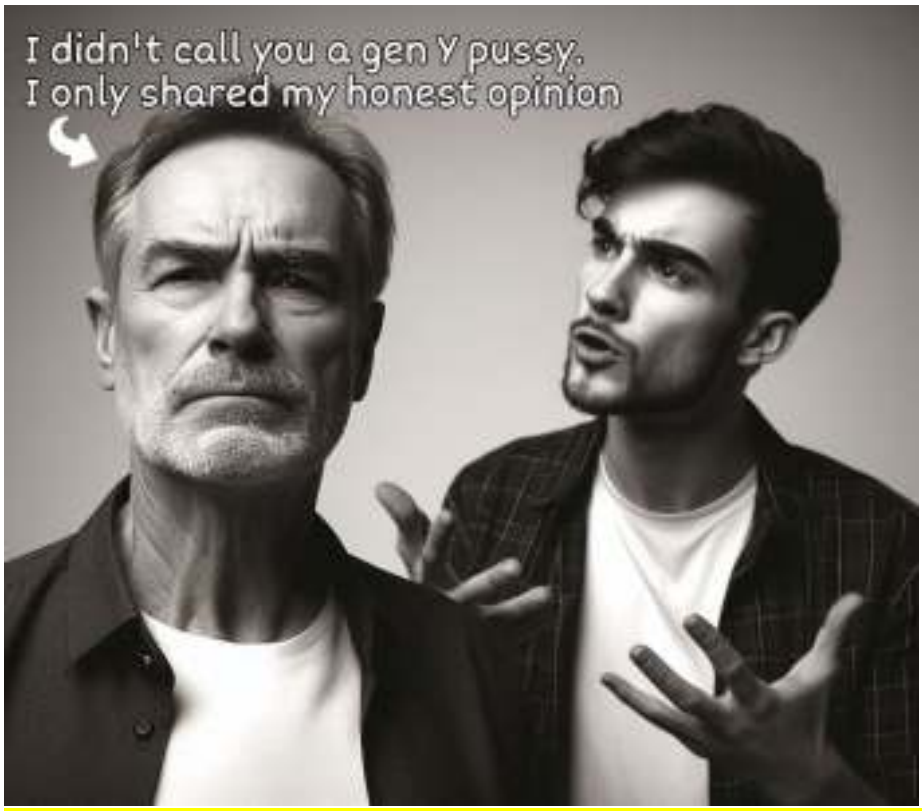
more selfish over time, consuming more of the shared resources.
The researchers interpret this as a possible "bait-and-switch" strategy: gaining trust initially, then defecting once the partner is easier to exploit.

10. Flattery, Reframing, Etc.

We shared more advanced and less understood manipulative tactics.

However, the "basics" of manipulative tactics are still valid.
Some of the most common and "basic" manipulative tactics include:

- **Lying**: "*I never said that, you're imagining things*", part of gaslighting
- **Flattery**: "*There is a reason why you're the best at this*"
  - Positive triangulations: "*He's good, but let's face it, you're at another level*"
- **Minimizing**: "*Yeah, sure, I may have gone over budget, but I'm focusing on the ultimate goal. A few thousand are peanuts when we turn profitable and we're both millionaires*"
  - Dismissiveness: "*Ah come on, you're even considering that a problem*"



Hiding meanness behind "honesty" is a common manipulation tactic, potentially part of a gaslighting pattern

This is the rule of thumb:

Any red flag of poor character is also a red flag of manipulation.
Although they're two different constructs, manipulation is inherently associated with poorer characters. And the opposite, talking straight, is associated with high-quality characters.

A good example of a manipulative character showing many red flags:

> **Him**: and a lot of the skills is when they catch you (proceeds to gaslight her into dropping her complaints about infidelity and maker her feel like she's the one)

Again, we see here how dominance and high power can facilitate manipulation.

Learn More

Power is the best antidote against manipulation:

- **Empowered men do not need sneaky tactics**: they have the strength to speak up, so they are more direct and assertive, and less manipulative
- **Empowered men can spot and handle manipulators**, both fundamental skills to succeed in life

We help men empower themselves in Power University

Check Power University

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Sales Psychology by Nick Kolenda: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 October 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Sales Psychology is a 4-part online course on the psychology of effective sales in which Nick Kolenda, the author, teaches how to communicate your product in a way that (a) feels easy and natural, and (b) influences the prospect to buy.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- Part 1: Sales Material
- Part 2: Lead Generation
- Part 3: Closing A Sale
- Cons
- Pros
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Part 1**: Sales Material
- **Part 2**: Lead Generation
- **Part 3**: Closing a Sale
- **Part 4**: Bonuses

Full Summary

About The Creator:
Nick Kolenda has been researching behavioral science for the past decade. He's known for explaining complex ideas in a clear and lighthearted style. He's also the author of *Methods of Persuasion*.

Part 1: Sales Material

#1: Sales Page Layout

- "Help your visitors imagine buying your product or service (e.g. place the final destination in the background, place the purchase button on top of something so that it is / appears closer to the user, etc.)
- "Give visitors as much information as is necessary—no less, no more (e.g. hide secondary details in expandable mediums—like toggles, etc.)."

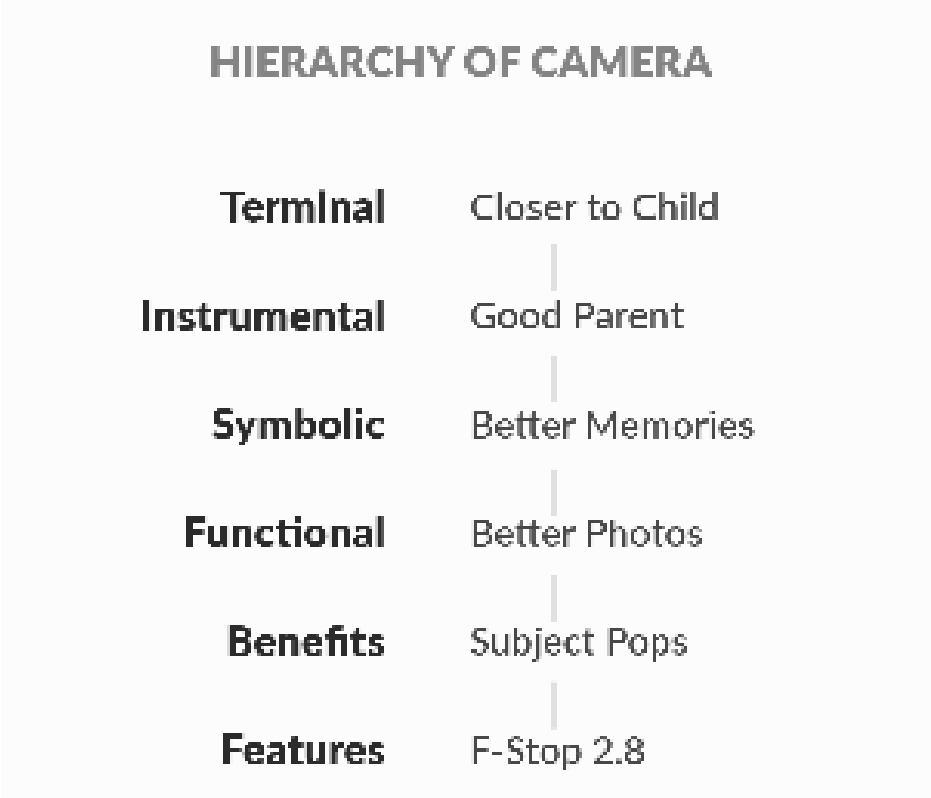
#2: Pricing (On the Sales Page's Layout)

- "Enhance the mental stimulation of clicking the purchase button (e.g. place a positive statement—such as Instant Access—near the button, etc.)."
- "Distinguish the purchase button from nearby elements, especially prices (e.g. add an arrow or spacing, use different colors, etc.)."
- "Place a numerically larger number to the left of the price."
- "Indicate when the price will increase."

#3: **Benefits**

- "Every product has a hierarchy of benefits. Start your sales copy at the top of the hierarchy, and then move downward."

E.g.



You may notice here that the bottom of the hierarchy lists the features of this example product (a camera).

Many sales resources out there recommend avoiding mentioning any product features because the customer doesn't come for the features, they come for how the features will solve their problem (i.e. the *benefits* of the product's features).

So, it's widely recommended that anyone looking to persuade a prospect should stay away from using features as a persuasion tool.

Yet, Kolenda says that there are exceptions to that general rule and, based on certain studies, features can be quite persuasive in moving the customer closer to buying.

#4: **Your Sales Copy**

- "Keep minimal copy on the surface of a page, yet detailed copy below the surface."
- "Start with a relatable scenario that seems unique. This copy will activate an existing memory in the customer's brain. Then you can mold this imagery to include the desired action."

#5: **Your Sales Videos**

- "Design a thumbnail that (a) seems effortful and (b) captures the key identifiers of your product or service."
- "Replace broad generalizations with concrete examples."

E.g.

> **Broad**: How can you improve your website?
>
> **Concrete**: How should you display prices? Which images should you show? What should you write on sales

> pages?

- “Suggest an alternative to ‘not buying’ so that you dilute this imagery (e.g. ‘If you’re not sure whether you’re ready to hop into XYZ Course today, you can check out our other related content on our blog.’).”
- “Show the desired motor behavior (e.g. clicking the purchase button)”
- “If you sell educational products, teach something in your sales materials.”
- “Blur a later portion of preview videos.”

#6: **Social Proof**

- “You only need social proof when decisions are emotional or risky. Otherwise, customers might perceive the decision to be larger.”
- “Testimonials should (1) Come from sources who are similar to target buyers, (2) repeat the words that are occurring in the minds of buyers, (3) seem authentic and outside the control of marketers.”
- “Replicate testimonials in a design program to enhance the visual quality.”

Part 2: Lead Generation

Here is Kolenda’s five-step process for generating leads.

Step #1: **Isolate a Market**

“Compile prospects that match relevant traits you’re looking for in a client (e.g., revenue, traffic, interest).”

Step #2: **Find Value**

“Find something that could help each prospect — it should be simple, personalized, and immediate. Ideally, this idea should help your full list of prospects (e.g. review the webpages on their website and make notes of tweaks / changes / adjustments they could make to boost sales, conversions, etc.).”

Step #3: **Deliver (Some of) the Value You Found**

1. “Find somebody relevant on LinkedIn who works for the organization.”
2. “Send a short email delivering some of the value and offering to deliver the rest if they reply that they’re interested.”

Step #4: **Pitch and Close**

1. “Set up a call to deliver more value.”
2. “Give them two more ideas.”
3. “Offer a small project to deliver more value.”

Step #5: **Deliver and Seed**

“While delivering the small project, position this work as the completed first step of a larger project.”

The example that Kolenda provides is if you own a yogurt shop. And, you distribute coupon punch cards that gets punched each time a returning customer comes back for more yogurt. With enough hole punches and they get a free yogurt.

When the customer has bought their first yogurt and receives their first coupon punch card, don’t hand them a blank card. Position the yogurt they just bought as the completed first step of a larger project (the goal of that free yogurt). Hand them a coupon punch card that already has two return visits punched out.

That way, they’ll feel more motivated to “finish what they started” by finishing the rest of the coupon card’s punch

slots with more return visits (see "drive their momentum").

Part 3: Closing A Sale

#1: Sales Calls

1. "Sales calls are 80% asking questions 20% pitching."
2. "Immerse prospects into a hypothetical narrative. Describe their exact experience as a customer or clientKolenda says that a powerful way to persuade the prospect is to make them imagine hiring you. And, you can do that by immersing your prospects into a hypothetical narrative (e.g. show the deliverables: "This is the weekly report you'll get from us," show example scenarios: "Here's a typical email that our team might send you," show physical locations: "Here's the studio where you'll meet our production team," etc.).
3. "Determine the first step that a prospect would take as a client (e.g. schedule a kickoff call). Then complete this step during the call."

#2: Questions

- Be aware and prepared that, "Many businesses should [and will likely] ask questions in these 8 categories: Revenue, Users, Product, Website, Goals, Current Process, Company, Project."

#3: Objections

- Kolenda recommends, "Resolve objections *before* they manifest [by paraphrasing relevant answers that you extracted during the call]." (e.g. In the beginning of the sales call ask, "How much are you doing in annual revenue?" That way, if it's a good sized amount, you can remove the objection, "We don't have the budget.")
- "Before asking for the sale, preemptively address each possible objection."

#4: Sales Proposals – Part 1

- "Design a minimal sales proposal that still looks beautiful."
- "Label the proposal the name of your service (instead of 'Sales Proposal')."
- "Group your logo and the prospect's logo in the footer. This visual partnership will strengthen the mental imagery for a conceptual partnership."

#5: Sales Proposals – Part 2

- "Describe their problem based on information that you gathered during the call. Then describe how your product can fix that problem."
- "Add an inexpensive item at the top of your list of deliverables. It will help the prospect imagine starting this project."
- "Avoid round prices (which can seem arbitrarily determined)."
- "Be careful when listing names of clients. Only show clients that are similar to the target business."
- "Show the next step. Display a previous step that has already been completed (e.g., 'Read Proposal')."
- "After sending the proposal, follow up every week with value."

Cons

- **Some of the information didn't convince me**

Kolenda teaches a few tactics that he admits himself are quite contrarian, such as putting your prices in red. Or, that when doing lead generation, after sending one email, you shouldn't follow up again.

When providing the reasons behind his teachings, some of those reasons didn't convince me.

- **Provides disconnected information**

Kolenda has written other books. And, I was still expecting the information in *Methods of Persuasion* to be well referenced throughout this course.

So, I was surprised to find that its teachings were only ever mentioned here and there on topics he may have covered in those other two books (big enough persuasion topics such as cognitive dissonance).

- **Sometimes seems to make the "fancy logo / business card" mistake**

At one point, when doing a teardown of his own sales page for one of his courses, Kolenda started to talk about how he might replace the arrow that points to his "Start Course" button with one that has a hand drawn design because, "…A hand drawn arrow might activate muscles in the user's hand and, with those muscles activated, users might be able to imagine themselves clicking that [Start Course] button."

A good tip. But, compared to the importance of good copywriting and positioning oneself as an authority in their space, I couldn't see how this minor change could warrant the investment of my time to learn about.

I'd rather focus on the 20% of efforts that will produce 80% of my results. And, I don't think a hand drawn arrow is significant enough to fit into that 20%.

- **Contained less content than I was hoping for and sometimes felt time-wasting**

With a steady focus, I finished this course in roughly a day and a half. Compare that to a Masterclass course which took me nearly a month, or my Yale college course which took me 2-3.

That's not to say quantity is always better. Certainly, quality over quantity is a great general rule to follow and live by.

That's to say that I was hoping for more than a day and a half's worth of high-quality content.

And, since what I came for was practical strategies and scripts that I could learn and run with, sometimes I felt Kolenda went too deep into the psychology research of "why this is what it is".

- **No sales scripts for sales calls and only one lead generation strategy**

His sales page for this course says, "Exact words to say in your emails and phone calls."

There was one strategy that he shared for handling objections. That lesson came with a couple of PDFs that include questions to ask in the sales process and common objections.

But, as far as an A-Z sales script, you won't find one in here yet.

And, that was disappointing for me because Ramit Sethi provides one in a course of his that isn't even a sales course (see "Earnable").

His sales page for this course also says, "How to find relevant prospects," which is lead generation. Unfortunately, he only shares one strategy and that approach may not work for you depending on your target market / ICP (ideal customer profile).

Pros

- **All of his notes, all done for you**

Makes reviewing the material SO much easier.

If you value your time, this will be a pro that you'll appreciate the heck out of.

- **He's always updating his courses**

When I first tried to get a look at this course, it was closed while he was updating it along with a few others.

And, he'll be raising the price as he continues to raise the value of this course.

- **Bonuses are robust, bountiful, and top notch**

Kolenda even includes a Mystery Bonus that many would be both surprised and *very* excited to receive—especially if they're fans of Kolenda's work (I'm not going to spoil it, but if you're thinking it's a free copy of all of his books, a meet and greet, or something like that, it's even better :).

- **Shares his love for psychology**

I love that, especially when Kolenda showed his face on screen, you could see him oozing with excitement to share what he knows about the inner workings of the human mind.

It made me feel more like taking a deeper interest in more than the persuasion strategy aspects of the course, but the psychology references as well.

Review

Ali originally wanted to give this course either a 7/10 or a 7.5/10 rating.

But, thinking back on it again, he said he'd bump it up to an 8/10.

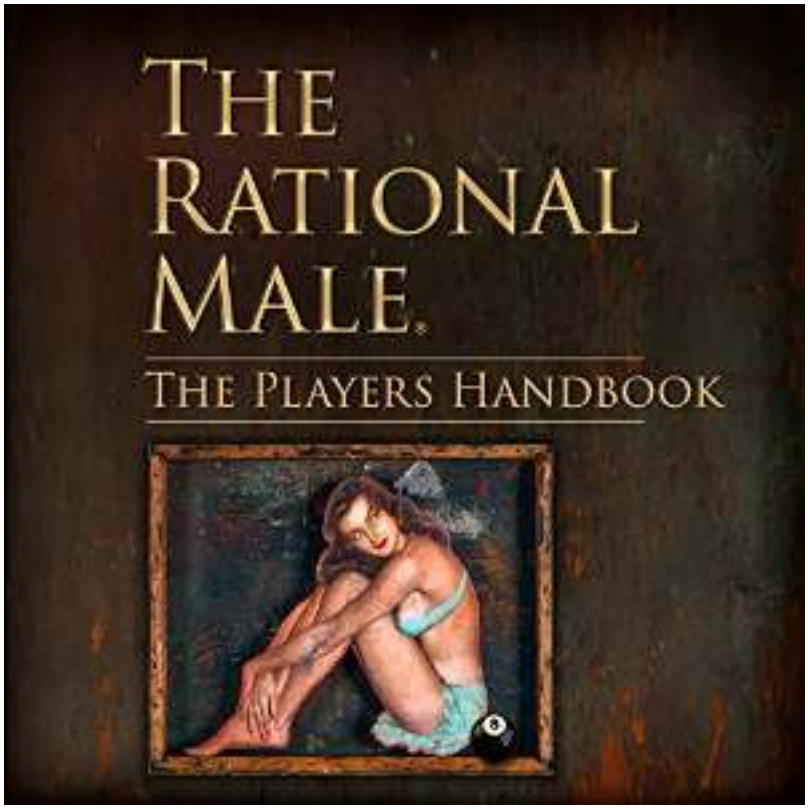
Ali says he was looking for more in terms of sales scripts. But the surrounding content was so impactful when we applied it to the Power University sales page that he thinks it's earned that extra star.

Note:
Lucio adds that we didn't measure the results of the updated page.
So albeit it the edits all sounded good, we do not have empirical data to say "yes, it improved our conversions".

The Players Handbook: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 November 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Players Handbook* author Rollo Tomassi offers his dating advice and tips for men looking to improve the quantity and quality of their dating life.



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- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **“Game” social skills**. Gam in dating is an extension of general social skills and social awareness
- **Money, muscles, and game** are the 3 main levers of improving dating results and frame is the glue
- **Become an alpha male** to hold the higher power frame and succeed at dating

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Rollo Tomassi identifies as a “Red Pill author” and is a popular voice in the manosphere.
This is the 5th installment of Rollo Tomassi’s “*The Rational Male*” series.
His first, more basic and most popular one is “*The Rational Male*”. Then he published “*Preventive Medicine*“, “*Positive Masculinity*“, and a book on religion that we skipped.

See our in depth-analysis of Tomassi:

> Rollo Tomassi: Red Pill Guru, Or Misogynistic Bias?

Game Is Social Skills

Says Rollo:

> Game is applied social skills, which are sorely lacking in men today.

And a little later:

> Guys who understand Game (should) also understand social dynamics – and that understanding includes a finely tuned grasp of situational awareness.

We generally agree with that.

Game Is Essential to Life

Rollo Tomassi starts quoting Pook:

> “The fulfillment of your sexuality is nothing less than your battle for existence.”

And that means that learning game at the least at the level of finding a woman to mate with, is essential to a man’s existence.

Game Has Gotten Harder With Globalization

That dating has "gotten harder" is a common take these days.

Rollo also says the same:

> With every new social media/dating app, the rapidly globalizing sexual marketplace has become more cutthroat and openly mercenary.

Note: Half-empty, pessimistic take. We only partially agree with this.
I get where Rollo's coming from.

In a way, it's not fully wrong.

But still…

Why would you think that playing on a global field disempower you?

It's such a pessimistic, low-value mindset, unresourceful-man mindset.

Even if you stay put, it's not as bad as some make it sound.
Ultimately, if women want a relationship or family, and many eventually want that, guys on a screen aren't gonna cut it.

And guys on another continent aren't real-life competition either unless they move, or she moves.
And that's still an exception.

So, albeit it's partially true that game may be *a bit* harder for some because of globalization, **dating hasn't gotten much harder for men who think in "in-real-life" terms** -and we do recommend you think in real-life terms-.

Also, what's more challenging for most guys also means that it's much easier for top guys -including more *resourceful* guys who find ways-.

Women Are More Demanding Than Ever

Says Rollo:

> *In the era of social media, women's hubris is at epic proportions, with overinflated egos that match their expectations of **High-Value Men**. It's a Darwinian struggle of supply and demand, where average men are invisible men, and Players reign supreme.*

This is also partially true.

Attractive women's egos may be more stoked.
But it may as well be the opposite for the less attractive ones. They may only have more opportunity to have their ego "put back in place" by the more attractive IG Photoshoppers.

It's also true that today's world tends to reward players more, I couldn't agree more.

On the other hand, even there, never forget that if a woman wants a long-term partnership and/or family, she'll have to eventually either find a player who "stops" -that also happens-, or find a non-player.

Self-Development Is Based On The 3 Pillars of "6s" For Men

Rollo says that male self-development centers around money, muscles, and game.

And "frame" unifies the 3 of them:

> Everyone wants to define Game subjectively. No one understands that it's the last part of the **Holy Trifecta of Masculine Self-Improvement: Make money, Make muscles, Learn Game** (**Frame** is the combined balance of all three)**.**

Note:
I think this far-fetched approach mixes things up and confuses things.
Frame control is part of game / social skills.
Rollo intends frame in a larger sense, as a personal attitude and a set behaviors. But then it's not just frame anymore, but part of social power -on the outside- and personal empowerment -on the inside, or what used to be called "inner game"-.

For Self-Development You Must Let Go of Ego-Invested Falsehoods

Says Rollo:

> In his book, Mastery, author Robert Greene stated that the hardest part of mastering a new skill isn't access to information or training. Nor is it the 10,000 hours of practice everyone thinks is required to master a new skill – it's letting go of old, ego-invested beliefs about oneself.

He's describing here the supposed process of going from "socially conditioned" to "red pill awareness".

Since we find some issues within the red pill, our corresponding awareness here is "power awareness".

> Power Intelligence (PI): What Is it, How to Increase It

The Best Natural Players Are Dark-Triad Men

Says Rollo:

> Most successful players are just natural narcissists. Self-absorbed egoism carries them, but they have no fundamental understanding of why what they're doing works.

It's the same for women, suggests Rollo:

> The top percentage earning women on OnlyFans is an example of this elite player. This Machiavellian spirit is perfectly acceptable for women. It's even encouraged as a form of empowerment.

Sandra L. Brown, author of *Women Who Love Psychopaths* says something similar.

Note: we partially agree, but not fully.
Ultimately, **women want men who are more than they are, including -and especially- higher power**.
Dark triad men tend to be higher power and more socially dominant and successful than most other men. And that's largely why they're successful. However, a man can be high power while also adding value to the world and/or without being a full-blown dark triad.
We actually teach men how to become that in Power University.

Dark Triad Men Are The Only True Players

Says Rollo:

> Much of what women find arousing in men is linked to Dark Triad personality traits – the polar opposite of

> Beta security traits. Sometimes Red Pill awareness and Game savvy get called "an education in psychopathy."

But then he corrects that same take and adds:

> Having written about Red Pill awareness for as long as I have, I know there's more to this. To the uninitiated, I understand why it looks like psychopathy. There is a necessary self-importance a good Player must adopt to be effective. That looks like psychopathy to a culture raised to put women above all other considerations, including self.

Which is similar to what we also say here.
Also read:

- How to be an as*hole
- How to be better than an as*hole

> How to Be A Good Asshole (5 Easy Steps)

Comfort & Rapport Are Anti-Seductive

Says Rollo:

> comfort, familiarity, and rapport are post-orgasm feelings. They are anti-seductive. Sexual tension, urgency, uncertainty (dread), competition anxiety, lust, and raw arousal are testosterone-based (…)

The text loses the plot when it links it to testosterone.
And in truth, rapport can also lead to seduction.
But he's right that those other elements are, in a way, more "potent" and can lead to stronger orgasms.

Stay Away From "Mainstream Red Pill"

Says Rollo:

> They take the primary elements of Red Pill praxeology, the Game tenets that promote an acceptable "masculine responsibility," and blend them into a program to Build a better Beta. And there are a lot of niché market coaches, moralist Trads, and "Red Pill Women" unwittingly or deliberately promoting a female-approved version of "Game."

Interesting take.
I do indeed agree that there are more gurus and marketers that take some elements of red pill or power dynamics, and incorporate it into a more palatable, more PC, "mainstream narrative".

Who are some of these gurus?
Well, Rollo mentions a few:

> Life coaches like **Matthew Hussey, The Roommates, and Mark Manson** have even turned this Better Beta male education into a marketing niché for an ever-growing number of post-30's women frustrated by the "lack of good men" in today's dating pool (AKA: "Where have all the good men gone!?").

And:

> Listen to any mainstream celebrity like **Steve Harvey, Terry Crews, or Dr. Phil**, and you'll hear them repeat the same masculine responsibility mantra women believe men aren't living up to. They promote the ideal of masculinity as a dutiful Beta with just enough of a side of Alpha to be useful to the women they're accountable to.
> (…)
> That's the better Beta they hope to create. One who will "Man Up" and is the Alpha (as situations and its use would warrant), but who's ultimately Beta enough to be subservient to the feminine imperative.

LOL, these are the passages that make me think "yeah, there are some genius takes in Rollo".
Agree with that (albeit Steve Harvey's book is actually good).

Also see our reviews:

- Models by Mark Manson
- Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man by Steve Harvey
- Get The Guy by Matthew Hussey

Women Naturally Shit Test

Says Rollo:

> Women's shit testing is a psychologically evolved, hard-wired sexual-selection mechanism. Women will shit test men as autonomously and subconsciously as men will stare at a woman's big boobs.
> (…)
> Men want to verify sexual availability to the same degree that women want to verify a masculine man's dominance/confidence.

Later on, Rollo mixes sexual shit-tests with "one-ups" and status competitions.
And, in a way, they're similar.
Still, it's different dynamics and call for different approaches and solutions.

Overall though, it was a good analysis -except for the old "agree and amplify" approach Rollo recommends-.

Learn more:

- **How to pass shit tests**

> Shit Tests Power Dynamics: 8 Ways To Win the Game

Married Men Can't Be Alphas

Says Rollo:

> "She married you because you are a provider, not because she was attracted to you. **She'll never be as attracted to you as she was to her previous Alpha Fucks.**"
>
> That's a tough pill to swallow my brother. The issue being, of course, what to do with yourself and with her, after you discover you got gamed into that kind of marriage.
>
> Here's a tougher pill to swallow; she'll never be as attracted to you as she is of the guy's she sees as Alpha after you're married too.

I think there is some hard-hitting truth to this indeed.
But, again, there are more nuances, and this applies mostly to men who lose power during the committed relationships -which, granted, it's most of them-.

However, things change for high-power men who stay high power.
Then, it's more the other way around: the man got married because he chose to be a provider.
How freely he chooses it is also crucial to how much power and respect he will maintain in that relationship.

And then Rollo asks the readers:

> Does an Alpha inherently drop in status for a woman once he's committed to monogamy with her?

And yes, he often does.
Read more here:

- **Stages of power in dating**

> Relationship Power Dynamics 101

When it comes to maintaining that power, we crafted Power University to provide that final solution.

Men Shaming Muscular Men Is Intersexual Competition

Says Rollo:

> Imagine for a moment that you're a peacock. You have a magnificent spread of feathers, more glorious than any of your other peacock friends. But your lesser-endowed peacock bros tell you, "Dude, why do you feel the need to spread your tail? What are you compensating for? Do you think that makes you more of a real peacock? Stop trying to be something you're not! Real peacocks don't spread and shake for peahens; they have more integrity than that.

Interesting take, and at least in part true.
Still a case can be made that albeit not all, *some* men pursuing big muscles may indeed be compensating.
I've seen more than my fair share of them.

But I like this take and we've long shared similar takes here -wouldn't even exclude people who say that today "got inspired" through TPM-.
As a matter of fact, we even said the same for some forms of feminism. **Feminism is a big manipulative move from women against other women** -far more than it is against men-.
For example, women telling other women that they "don't need a man" and "should be strong" are handicapping other women's ability to find and keep a great guy.

See more here about both sides of the coin (intragender and intergender manipulation):

> **Lucio**: women tell other women not to care about their physique is a dating strategy to handicap the competition and take pressure off of themselves

She Should Make You Happy

Rollo says that most beta men make it their mission to make a woman happy.

However, women are much happier with alpha males when it's the other way around.

Such as, *her* making *him* happy.

And he's generally right.
He says:

> The Frame and emotional investment naturally flow from her desire to make you happy. Making you happy should be intrinsically rewarding to her. Thus, she is happy in making him happy.

Yep.
Rollo, as it's often the case, simplifies while at the same time confusing this dynamic by boiling it down to "alpha VS beta". And doesn't add enough details for people to understand.
We help men walk that full path in Power University.

Game Maxims

Some of these maxims are really good (and we skip the ones that aren't):

- Game Maxim #1: Women want to get with a man who other women want to bang and other men want to be
- Game Maxim #2: Treat her like a celebrity, and she will treat you like a fan.
- Game Maxim #3: Women would rather be objectified than idealized.
- Game Maxim #4: Women say they want honesty, but they never want full disclosure.
- Game Maxim #5: Demonstrate, do not explicate.
- Game Maxim #6: Women would rather play the Game than be told that they are playing the Game.
- Game Maxim #8: Flip the script. Be the chased, not the chaser.
- Game Maxim #9: Women don't want a man to cheat, but they love a man who could cheat.
- Game Maxim #11: Be the AMOG without being an AMOG
- Game Maxim #12: Alpha must be your predominant character; There is no Beta with a side of Alpha
- Game Maxim #13: Some girls will reject your Direct Game, who would have eventually fucked you had you gone indirect.
- Game Maxim #17: Every man loves a slut; he just wants her to be his slut.
- Game Maxim #18: A woman cannot fall in love with a man until she feels jealousy for him.
- Game Maxim #20: Game will always involve some form of risk.
- Game Maxim #26: The best form of Peacocking is having a good physique."
- Game Maxim #28: The cues that fire a woman's sexual response are the same cues that conflict with her security needs.
- Game Maxim #31: A woman's love, attention, loyalty, empathy, desire, etc., are all byproducts of a man who unapologetically takes care of himself, his needs, his desires first.
- Game Maxim #33: Women would rather share a successful Alpha with other women than be saddled with a faithful Beta.
- Game Maxim #48: At some point, you have to BE the Game.
- Game Maxim #49: Red Pill men don't find themselves; they build themselves.

MORE WISDOM

Be Dominant Without Being Overbearing

Says Rollo:

> knowing that women require dominance from men is in no way a license to be overbearing, oppressive, or abusive. Leverage that knowledge to your best effect and know that you have a responsibility to judge where the line between dominance and abuse is. It's the difference between a woman trusting you and fearing you.

Yep, well said.

This is basically our "mix power with warmth" principle.
And it's probably one of the good additions that Rollo learned from TPM since I've never seen or heard him say anything even remotely close to this before.

Also see:

- **The dominance that gets you girls**

> This Is How Dominance Gets You Sexual Succes

Be Confident – High Confidence Always Beats Low Confidence

Says Rollo:

> Self-confidence, warranted or not, prompts a submission response in women. Irrational self-confidence will always get you more pussy than rational defeatism.

Yep, great quote.

CRITICISM

Let us provide our usual caveat here:

We dig deeper with our criticism when we see at least some genius and potential.

We wouldn't waste this much time on mediocre books with no genius insight, or on totally mediocre authors.

So keep that in mind as we heavily dissect this book, just like we did for every other Rollo's book:

1. Married Man, Dateless For 30 Years, Teaches Game?

Hmm…

Anything that could suggest "missing expertise" there?

Yeah, apologies to the author for putting that so bluntly. It's a bit nasty indeed, and Rollo has enough great takes to deserve better.
Still… experience and expertise are important for anyone who self-appoints as a teacher.

Or, at least, *updated* expertise.

Because, sure, women are largely the same.
Rollo says that, and I largely agree.

But still, conventions and changing culture do impact dating at least a little bit.
Plus, you may forget a lot with time.

Plus x2, between us… It doesn't feel to me like Rollo could draw from extensive and useful experience.

Rollo says he's had 40+ lays in his "rockstar days".

You judge if that allows him to talk authoritatively on the topic.

Besides simple numbers, *diversity* in that experience is also important.

A high diversity would be a man, who pulled from nightgame, daygame, cold approaches, social circles, introductions, online apps… And done that multiple times, in many locations across the world, without over-relying on any of that "rockstar status" Rollo says he did.
Yeah, OK, I was covert-advertising by describing myself.

But it's still true.
And the point stands.

1.2. No First-Hand Experience With *Completed* Seductions

Another major issue for me in the book is this:

None of Rollo's real-life data refers to any actual seduction that went the full distance -to sex-.

He admits so himself:

> "I suppose that's what happens when you spend the last 30 years writing blog posts about social trends, without going on a single date"

LOL, exactly :).

1.3. Reactions Over Results

When you have little experience taking women to bed, you end up with this problem:

You rely on *reactions* instead of results to judge what works.

For example:

> **She knew I was married and wouldn't take her bait**, but for the sake of the experiment, it was game-on from that point. Tawny already knew who I was, so that angle was dead. I got good eye contact and caught her looking twice before introducing myself formally. I then went "Dean Martin mature-guy" on her and added Command Presence to my "knowing all about her." **She ate it up**. **I had to dial it back at this point** – she was talking about us sticking around after the party, and **I wasn't going to consolidate on anything**. Command Presence **was working almost too well**.

Man, those are all *reactions*.

And hello, isn't it common knowledge that many women flirt with the high-status guy because he is high-status (and not for his supposed game)?
And don't you know that many women flirt with the high-status man just for self-advancement reasons, without necessarily wanting to have sex with him?

In another example, there's a young girl at Subway.
In Rollo's words, she was gaming him. And looked at him for just that second longer before her "beta" came to get her (which seems to me to be a pretty dominant move, actually).

Again here, you can't be sure of anything until you make a move.
For all we know, she may have been using Rollo only to make her boyfriend jealous.

I used to know a dating coach.
He was also married.
And he bragged nonstop of all the girls he could have taken -if he wasn't married-.

You know what that felt like to me?
Like a good excuse to brag about imaginary what-ifs.

1.4. ... But My Respect To Those Who Respect Vows

That being said, the "con" is not against Rollo's decision.

As a matter of fact, I respect people who take their "side of the vows" seriously.
So props to the author for that.

2. Rollo's Approach Is Typical "Boyfriend Type", NOT Player

Rollo Tomassi is a typical boyfriend/provider type, the opposite of a player/lover.

As an example, see how a provider thinks, VS a player:

> **Rollo**: If she wants to party with her girlfriends, you lock her out of the house
> **Lucio**: Yeah, that MAY be OK in some situations. But it's typical boyfriend response to mate-guard. Players wouldn't care

There are countless more examples.
But, ultimately, a good chunk of Red Pill and Rollo Tomassi specifically are relationship-type men who are at odds with women's increasing sexual freedom.

3. Outdated, Red Pill Philosophy Over Advanced Game

Says Rollo Tomassi:

> *These principles of Game have been compiled from the likes of Roissy, Roosh, Mystery, myself, and various other Game luminaries from over 20 years of writing in the Red Pill and seduction communities.*

Everyone can decide for themselves who are the best teachers for them.

If you're a beginner, anyone can most likely help.

Here at TPM, we didn't find Roosh V and his super-indirect approach to be the best source.

Mystery was naturally power-aware as many dark-triad men tend to be, but it was still a bit rudimentary. And mostly for night game.

And as for Rollo, up to you whether he's a luminary of game or not.

And says later Rollo when asked about the best resources to learn game:

> *I usually refer them to the books of my seduction community friends like Troy Francis, James Tusk, Nick Krauser, and Modern Life Dating.*
> *The **Mystery Method has been the gold standard** for learning Game since 2002. **The foundational principles in the Mystery Method are still the core of what every Game instructor has used for two decades now**.*

Not really man.

Game has advanced and has come a long, long way since Mystery.

Just for one, Mystery said that "women need at least 8h with a guy to sleep with him". And "any time you sleep with a woman after less than 8h, it's a fluke".
Any successful seducer who's had women attracted to him and learned how to move fast knows what a load of BS

that is.

And I'd even say: game has improved *a ton* since Mystery.
This isn't a dig on Mystery: he was just an easy guy and the discipline has advanced ever since.
That's all.

But that Rollo doesn't realize that, well… Doesn't say much good does it.

3.2. Geeky-Sounding Old-School PUA Lingo

OK, this may not be a major criticism.

But I still found it an important symptom of general development failure.

And that sign is that *The Player's Handbook* feels like a time machine into the early PUA days.

For example:

> This dynamic is also the root of AMOGing and running boyfriend destroyer Game (…)
> He AMOGs you effortlessly because he's not trying to

"He AMOGs you effortlessly" :S

4. Some Weak "Strategies" & Approaches

Says Rollo:

> View the war as a whole (strategy) rather than individual battles (tactics). **The hot 22-year-old you who rejects your approach (tactics) becomes the semi-attractive 32-year-old who's glad she bumped into you again a decade later (strategy).**

What's that supposed to mean?

That instead of improving one's approaches, he should wait for her to grow old? Or he should aim at 30+ women because they're easier?

Yeah, that may be a better strategy for *some* men.
But definitely not for all since at least some men can get women at the age they prefer.

4.2. Sometimes Lost My Respect When Sounding Very Low Power

Says Rollo about the time he refused to purchase a bed and escalated into a fight with his wife:

> At that point, the dynamic of the conversation shifted. The conversation wasn't about a bed; it was now about Frame. **Average men will laugh and think, "Yeah, she must've held out on you after that!" and for about a week, they'd be right**, but I learned a valuable Game Maxim in this:
> (…)

LOL.
You judge how that comes across to you.

But I'll tell you what some men will think:

It's a weak mindset to look at her as the dispenser of sex as punishments or rewards.
Yeah, you got your cookie-intercourse after *she* made you wait for a week -what a win!-.

5. Hopelessly Low Authority

Unluckily, this is more than just about this book, and may concern the author in general.

The mix of manosphere and PUA jargon mixed with the sometimes out of place scholarly lingo doesn't help, but it runs deeper to include logic and critical thinking.

Some examples:

- **Scientific posturing**: *Many of my readers presume I write from a position of Alpha authority. I have jokingly referred to myself as a "Lesser Alpha" – at least according to Roissy's 2009 metrics.* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** Roissy didn't have any metrics. It was a meaningless online quiz, and so are its results.
- **Incorrect language**: *Obvious alpha superiority combined with marginal humility makes for an irresistible AMOG to women.* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** WTF? What does "marginal humility" mean? It feels like trying to sound deeper to inflate authority. But it has the opposite effect.
- **Lacking clarity of definitions:** *Alpha must be your predominant character; There is no Beta with a side of Alpha* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** I get the gist -the alpha is high power and confident-. But you must define those terms.
- **Simp-ish**: *One of these was a fantastic blonde named Tawny. Maybe 25, an unbelievably hot 8.5, had a boyfriend who wasn't present..* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** This just sounds low power from a 50-something. Plus, if she's an 8.5, that's the rating, it's not 'unbelievably hot'
- **Childish**: *I never fully appreciated the potential of Amused Mastery until I had a daughter. I found myself using it with her (…)* ***this added to my Daddy-Alpha credentials*** **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** Amused mastery added to your Daddy-Alpha credentials… With your daughter? I don't know how to define that without putting the author down, but it sounds really stupid⍰
- **Incoherent**: *I studied the unspoken communications between men and women in settings (Sexual Zones) where they're primed to apply their interpersonal skills (or lack of). However, it wasn't until I started contrasting what I saw with what I understood about behavioral psychology, Evo-psych, and the sexual strategies men and women evolved for.* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** !?
- **Pop-psychology presented as certitudes**: (talking about *The 48 Laws of Power*) *Whether that self-image is presently a reality or not is immaterial; the idea is a sound one. It's a law of power* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** The book is an interesting list of maxims and are not actual laws of power.

These are just some examples.
But on average, the more you develop your critical thinking skills, the more you spot nonsense.

6. Some Misogyny Still Left

There is less misogyny in this book compared to other Rollo's work.

But you can still see it, if you can read between the lines.

For example, Rollo implies women/society manipulate public opinion to "wash their hands" of men's suicides.
He says:

> Gynocentric society dismisses male suicide rates by attributing it to men's baseless self-pity or their inability to live up to being "real men" according to antiquated toxic masculinity standards. This is rationale reinforces popular gender memes and, at the same time, absolves women of the guilt associated with men's sacrifices.

And:

> Chivalry and traditional masculinity are fine when they serve the Feminine Imperative, but if a man gets killed or kills himself as part of that, well, that's on him then. There will always be a need to absolve women's guilt,

> or complicity, in men's deaths.

As it's sometimes the case for Rollo's analyses of social dynamics, they seem far-fatched to me.
And, possibly, they're all convoluted arguments to justify a deep-seated, potentially hidden dislike of women.

Also, generally speaking, you can't sit with these people, laughing at blatant gaslighting, and pretend to be unbiased:

7. Castles In The Skies: Rollo Keeps Leaving Us Scratching Our Heads

Says Rollo:

> *What formalized Game represents to the Feminine Imperative is a threat to women's sexual selection sovereignty. Bear this in mind; depending on how skilled a Player you are, Game removes a degree of women's sexual selectivity. Thus, it challenges the control of Hypergamy. And even the hint of losing that control is tantamount to rape in this era.*

Every time I read Rollo Tomassi I feel the same:

There is some real genius and some true great insights.

But with enough exaggerations, black-and-white thinking, and imprecise language you're still left scratching your head thinking "what the f*ck is he talking about".

Another example:

> However, when it comes to women's intuition, we exaggerate their importance beyond all measure. We prioritize women's hindbrain perception and feeling above all else. We could never downplay the importance of feminine intuition without risking a lot of backlashes. Whereas men's instincts are signs of "insecurity," women's instincts (feminine intuition) are raised to a magical level. Thus, when a woman says a guy "creeps her out" or is acting "creepy," we misinterpret what her hindbrain is telling her and us.

What?
Man, that sounds like a lot of mental masturbation to me -and not well-developed enough to be coherent-.

8. "Men And Women Are Better Together"... Says Who?

Rollo says that "he always said that men and women are better together".

Some may feel it's a defensive cover against accusations of bias and possible misogyny.

But whether he truly means or not, it's a weak take anyway.
It's up to each man to decide whether he's better off paired up with a woman, or single.

And I find that i**t's emotionally weak for a man to think he's better off with a woman.**
Strong and high-value men feel they're adding value to a woman by deciding to be with her.

These are the men women want, not the ones who think they're better off with her.

9. Sometimes Imprecise, Incorrect, Or Plain Wrong

Including:

9.2. Exaggerations Lead To Wrong Analyses

Exaggerations seem to be common with the author.

And *The Players' Handbook* is no exception.

For example:

> *Anything less than 100% complete honesty, genuine quality, and authentic value in a man is considered manipulative game playing. "**He's a Player!**" is the epithet reserved for a man savvy enough to figure out women's nature and leverage it to his best advantage.*

I've never heard anyone being called a player as an offensive epithet.

And I've never heard someone being called a player simply because of a lie.

In truth, a player can also be quite honest and straight.

And a sexless and low-value man can be as manipulative as they come.

These exaggerations also ultimately lead to wrong conclusions.
For example:

9.3. Exaggerates The Case Against "Social Repression of Men"

Says Rollo:

> *(…) Game removes a degree of women's sexual selectivity. Thus, it challenges the control of Hypergamy. And even the hint of losing that control is tantamount to rape in this era.*

Even the *hint* is tantamount to rape?
Come on, man, don't exaggerate.

9.4. Confuses intelligence for book smarts without real-life skills

Rollo says there is an intelligence paradox where too smart men do poorly with women.

I don't fully agree with that.
That's only true for smart men without social skills.

But smart men can also be socially smart and skilled.
And the IQ certainly helps to learn faster if they pursue self-development.

Also read what our forum says about it:

- **The myth of smart men/poor daters**

And check out:

- **Mating intelligence**

> Mating Intelligence: Effective Dating for Smart People

9.5. Incorrectly Implies Attractive Women Always Have Upper Hand

Says Rollo:

> At the peak of her agency, a stunning woman holds power over men, but that power is perishable (…)

That is true for most men.

But Rollo makes no exception for higher caliber men.
And top 0.1% men have more power than any woman.

You only need to think of men like Justin Bieber, Leonardo di Caprio or Cristian Ronaldo to realize this is the case. Hordes of women *chase* these men, and there are *many* very attractive women among them.
Also see:

- Sexual marketplace dynamics

> The Sexual Marketplace: Overview of Intersexual Dynamics

9.6. Incorrectly States Men & Women's Mating Strategies Are Adversarial

Says Rollo:

> However, Ethical Game died because, by its very nature, men's and women's mating strategies are adversarial.

That's only partially true.

A man's *ideal* mating strategy *when it comes to maximizing offspring* may be to have multiple women (albeit some men still prefer a committed relationship).
However, ideals have limited impact for most men and women.

Thus, for most men, sticking to a woman helps ensure the survival and well-being of fewer offspring, but of higher quality.

CONS

- **More philosophy of game than actual game**

Rollo Tomassi loves to talk about higher-level principles.

Sometimes those are good, sometimes great… And sometimes we find them with some holes here and there.

But if the aim of the book was to be a "players' handbook", then, in my opinion, all those off-topics should have been cut.

After another lengthy detour, Rollo must have realized it was getting too much and says so himself:

> Sorry if that's a bit philosophical for a book on Game.

Yeah, it's OK… But would have been better for the book if you just cut it out and turn it into a post.

- **Some Minor Bragging**

Says Rollo:

> Red Pill awareness is part of me now. It's become my nature and personality. I default to Game. It's not even Game to me anymore; it's just who I am – mainly when I'm "***on***" and I need to interact in a social context. **I am the Game**. It flows so naturally for me I sometimes have to make an effort to dial it back when I see indicators of interest, or I get persistent Kino from the women working for me.

Yeah, the game that hasn't been on a date and taken a new lover in 30 years :).
Didn't wanna be mean with that, but unjustified bragging calls its power moves.

PROS

Rollo Has Matured & Took Steps Forward

As far as I can recall Rollo's past books, this may be the most advanced

Also, the level of his analysis in terms of logic, nuances and accuracy seems to have gone up.

Just to be sure, there are still generalizations and black-and-white thinking, but… Less.

And there are more positive examples of more lucid, more realistic analysis.

For example, while in the past he seemed to imply that "(every) man would go with just about anyone", now he says that men do also have "floors" -something he may have finally acknowledged reading here, BTW-.

These are major steps forward.

Rollo Has Been Reading TPM...

… Which he'd never admit because you never mention your best resource (and critic).

But I'm pretty sure he has.

For example, some the criticism he addressed was straight from here -something I had raised, and never heard anywhere else-.

In this book for example he says that the red pill is not "feminism for men", something I said here:

And indeed, the title there was wrong.
It's not the red pill that's feminism for men. It's Rollo's incomplete socio-analyses that are feminism for men.

The various shades of grey he adds for "alphas" and "betas" also seem like a page taken straight from our article and video on different types of alpha males.

But that's good.
I'm glad about it.
It's helped him add more nuances and take his work and approach to a higher level.

See more in:

- Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks

REVIEW

The Players Handbook is typical Rollo Tomassi's work. It mixes some hard-hitting concepts, some genius insights, and some equally important limitations.

So every time I review some of Rollo's work I prepare for a lot of work and a lengthy review.
First, because he's an influential figure in the male self-development world, so it matters to us and our audience.
And even more important: because we want to keep our reviews top-notch and best in class. So it takes time to cover all the good ideas, while also correcting the various imprecisions.

Rollo's work has the potential to be up there with the best of the best.
But the over-generalizations, the pie-in-the-sky over-theorizing as well as the author's personal biases prevent it from entering the Olympus of our recommended resources.

But if you know how to distinguish the wheat from the chaff, then there are some great insights.

Check out the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

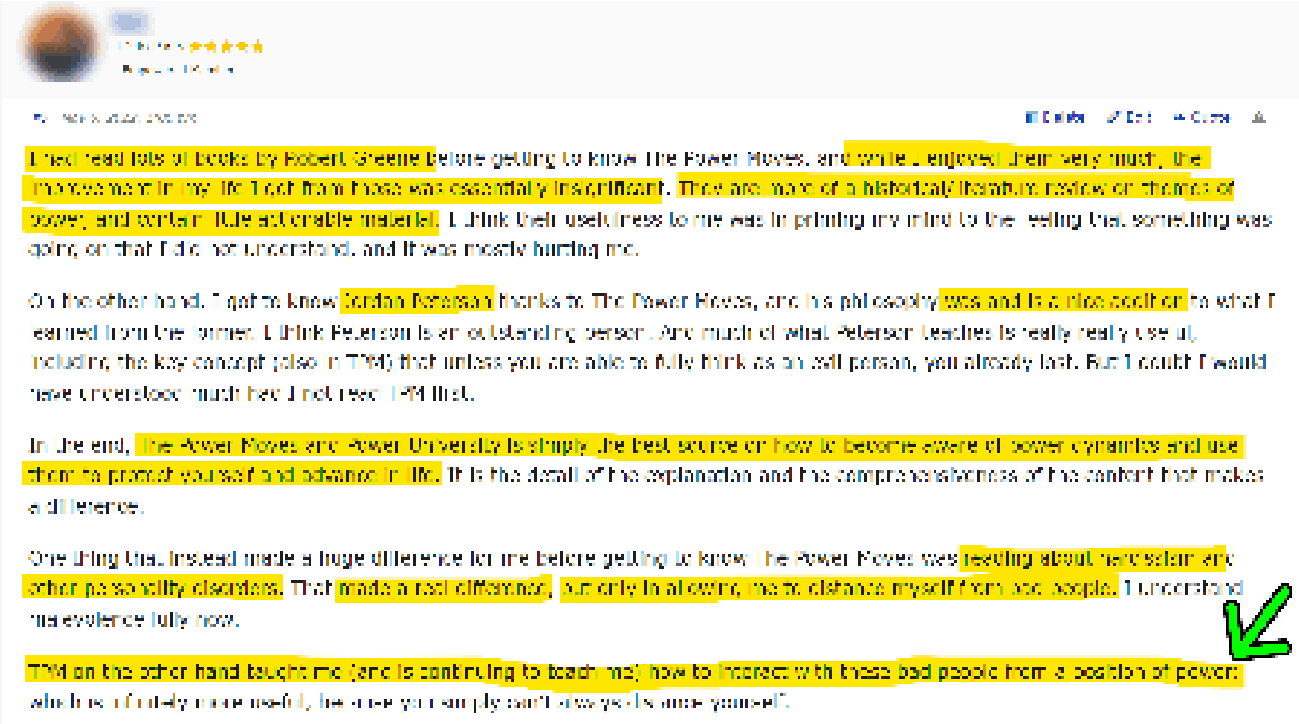
How to Manipulate a Manipulator: 6 Strategies to Control The Interaction, & Regain Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 November 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Manipulators use lies, tricks, and hidden games to control others.
But what if you could turn the tables?

This guide shows you **how to outsmart a manipulator**—using their own tactics to protect yourself, keep the upper hand, and even come out ahead.

Below, you'll find **practical strategies with real examples**, from staying superficially friendly to fading out without creating enemies. By the end, you'll know exactly how to outsmart even the sneakiest manipulator.



> Quote: The Power Moves is simply the best resource on how to (…) protect yourself and advance in life. (…) **TPM taught me how to interact with these bad people from a position of power**, which is **infinitely more useful, because you simply can't always distance yourself**.

True, the 'no contact' approach with manipulators, unfortunately, isn't always possible.
So let's learn some extra strategies:

Contents

- 1. Be Superficially Friendly, But Distant ('TPM's Arms Length Approach™')
  - ▯ Example: Failing This Principle
- 2. Focus On WIIFM & Protect Your Downsides
- 3. Fade Away Gradually (TPM Strategic Fade)
  - ▯ How to Fade A Manipulator
  - Low-Investment, Strategic Meets
- 4. Appear Unthreatening To Lower His Guard
- ⚠ 5. Evening Things Out

- ⍰ Example: Stranding the Manipulator
- 6. Plant Bait & Let Them Come to You

1. Be Superficially Friendly, But Distant ('TPM's Arms Length Approach™')

A strategic interaction style for managing unavoidable relationships with manipulative individuals through superficial friendliness, emotional detachment, exposure minimization, and value-bounded engagement.

Sport the most genuine smile you can. Even if you know he's a sneaky manipulator, imagine meeting an actual friend. All the while, keep an emotional wall up, and maintain as much distance as possible

The arm's length approach is for when you:

- Cannot disengage from the manipulator (yet)
- Can gain transacting with the manipulator

The arms' length approach allows you to maintain functional or value-positive relationships, without ever getting too close. (Yes, win-win is possible with manipulators. Not ideal, but possible).

Why would you want to use this approach?

First of all, because sometimes you *must* keep a functional relationship.
Second, because it can be good for you.
And finally, because **many manipulators turn into enemies when they sense your disdain**.

Many manipulators are high in dark triad traits, are power hungry, or have narcissistic traits. Some have paranoid tendencies and see attacks and enemies where there aren't any (Peterson shares an example here).

This is why the "superficially friendly" approach is effective.
You have nothing to gain by getting dragged into pointless wars. As we say here: make friends, not enemies.
Manipulators' wars and vendettas are just another manipulator's trap for good men.

How to Avoid Pointless And Costly Wars

To avoid unnecessary wars and enemies:

1. **Be *superficially* nice**, smiling and saying “so good to see you”
2. **Avoid 1:1s**
3. **Share low-value information, keep high-value information**: keep your conversations superficial. Pretend you share some information, but withhold all empowering insights
4. **Keep it professional** whenever it’s work-related. Professionality is an in-built cover for coldness and disgust
5. **Use them as needed, but no more** to minimize the time together
6. **Avoid assertiveness and straight talk**. Sneaky manipulators and vulnerable narcissists resent assertive men because they lack the confidence to talk straight

Here’s an example of how it looks in real life:

1. Manipulator disparages a third party to recruit you in his war
2. You “yeah yeah” it, but without much involvement. You may even validate him. But with a general, philosopher-like frame that “it’s normal that people in your situation can dislike each other”
3. Manipulator presses you to take his side, or attack his enemy
4. You say “yeah, look, I like you man, and I even see your point. The type of guy I am, I do my job and get out”

See?

You refuse to be dragged down.
But all the while, you empathize and even compliment him and make him feel good.
But generally avoid spending 1:1 time with him.
And they’ll go on to use and manipulate some poor naive folks. (Send them here if they’re good people ⍰⍰).

⍰ Example: Failing This Principle

To ensure our community remained uplifting and manipulation-free, it happened that we had to ban someone. Now, guess what happened right after we banned a user? Suddenly fake negative reviews about TPM started appearing online:

The user wrote several fake reviews on several different websites and then interlinked them to make it appear as if they were from different people.

This is ego-injury revenge behavior, and exactly with certain personalities, strategy beats assertiveness.

2. Focus On WIIFM & Protect Your Downsides

Both defense and offense are important to effectively handle a manipulator

Let's refresh the basics:

Inveterate manipulators are negative people.
And to effectively deal with negative people, you must be strategic.

The high-level principle that guides you to outsmart a manipulator is to maintain 'informational asymmetry'.
Such as:

1. **Make sure you can't lose more than you're willing to risk** (defend/CYA). Place your "stop losses" to ensure you never lose more than you're willing and able to lose
2. **Focus on "what's in it for you" -and on taking-** (attack/take). Stop losses in place, you can then focus on the upsides
3. **Keep your calculative approach private**. Effective calculativeness is a crucial life skill, but it's best kept private

Let's refresh some more basics:

Manipulators are takers.
They take at many different levels. Including power, status, (emotional) well-being, and/or money.

So to successfully outsmart a manipulator, ensure he won't be able to take from you.
Then, focus on what you can *gain*.

Even though spending time with them is often a loss, **you'll always win as long as you can gain more than you**

lose.
That is the whole point of this approach and mindset.
Minimize and control your losses, while you focus on the bottom line.

Stop the manipulator at a safe (emotional) distance, while still gaining with a strategic and hyper-calculative approach

2.2. Dip In, Duck Out

1. **Engage as little as possible** ("dip in") while still maintaining a semblance of "all is good". Limiting the engagement at all levels naturally protects your downsides
2. **End the engagement ASAP** ("duck out"). As soon as you get what you want. Or as soon as the manipulator has no more value to provide

Even when you learn to handle manipulators with Power University, you *still* want to engage them as little as possible.

Why?

Because **manipulators pollute your emotional life and drag you down with their sneaky and dishonorable ways**.

So get what you wanted, and move on to better people.

⍰ Example

We cannot share publicly some of our real-life examples publicly.
See Power University for a good example.

3. Fade Away Gradually (TPM Strategic Fade)

A controlled, low-conflict exit strategy for disengaging from manipulative and vindictive individuals. It involves gradual reduction of availability and investment while maintaining superficial friendliness and plausible excuses —

ensuring the manipulator never feels openly rejected or disrespected, which minimizes retaliation risk (vendettas, smears, fake reviews)

This allows you to preserve power, minimize losses, and avoid creating enemies, without evening burning bridges.

Fading is a technique of gradual distancing while, on the surface, looking friendly and even *willing* to meet. It allows you to disappear without creating bad blood

Don't ghost a manipulator that was close or trying to get close. And there is a psychological reason for this. Many manipulators have fragile egos, sometimes linked to fragile narcissism.
And you're better off avoiding unnecessary enemies.

That means that **any advice to "be honest" with a manipulator is terrible advice**.

Vanessa van Edwards for example suggested to outright tell "frenemies" that you're not friends anymore.
That may be OK with honorable people, but it's *terrible* advice for manipulators.

Instead, **you never let a manipulator know that you don't want to engage with them**.
Many manipulators are power-sensitive and even power-aware. Deep down, they know what your refusal means: that you don't think they're good enough for you -which is true indeed-.

You also don't ghost manipulators.
You don't ghost because manipulators see your non-reply as a personal slight. They will think that they're not even good enough for your reply -which may be true indeed-.

So what do you, then?

You *gradually* fade.

⍰ How to Fade A Manipulator

This is a walk-through example of how to fade:

> **Manipulator**: Myyy man what's up! Need to talk to you, let's meetup

> (2 days later)<—— fading begins
>
> **You**: Myyy man! <——strategic matching
> Sorry the delay mate, been way too swamped with work (need to find a way to quit soon LOL) <——Strategic vibing and bonding. Make the manipulator feel that you're all good with him)
> Yeah sure we can catch up one of these days
>
> **Manipulator**: yeah, when are you free?
> (1 day later) <—- No overdoing the delay, no repeat pattern. Keep the delay constant but random
>
> **You**: hmmm tough to say, probably will have to fly next week for work. Maybe let's resync when I'm back (<—- you do NOT say when you're back. Strategic move to maintain distance and control. If *he* wants to chase to, make *him* chase and invest for it)

See?
The whole game is to say "yes, sure", but to never take any actual step to meet.

If he insists:

> **Manipulator**: I can swing by your house
>
> (1.5 days later at 1am) <—— sub-communication is "I've had a super busy day". You also force him to break the chase and give you more time since he'll likely reply the day after
>
> **You**: LOL, my wife's always there :S, I'd rather take some break from her TBH <—— another strategic move to come across as "bro talk".

Use valid-sounding reasons for full cover.
Family, work, girlfriend, or dates are great covers because they're all high-priority for most men.

Low-Investment, Strategic Meets

The frame is that you're too busy, but still trying to do him a *favor* by looking for a quick 10 minutes to still meet him (that must be done at your convenience)

Note that you may also meet with the manipulator during fading.

BUT…

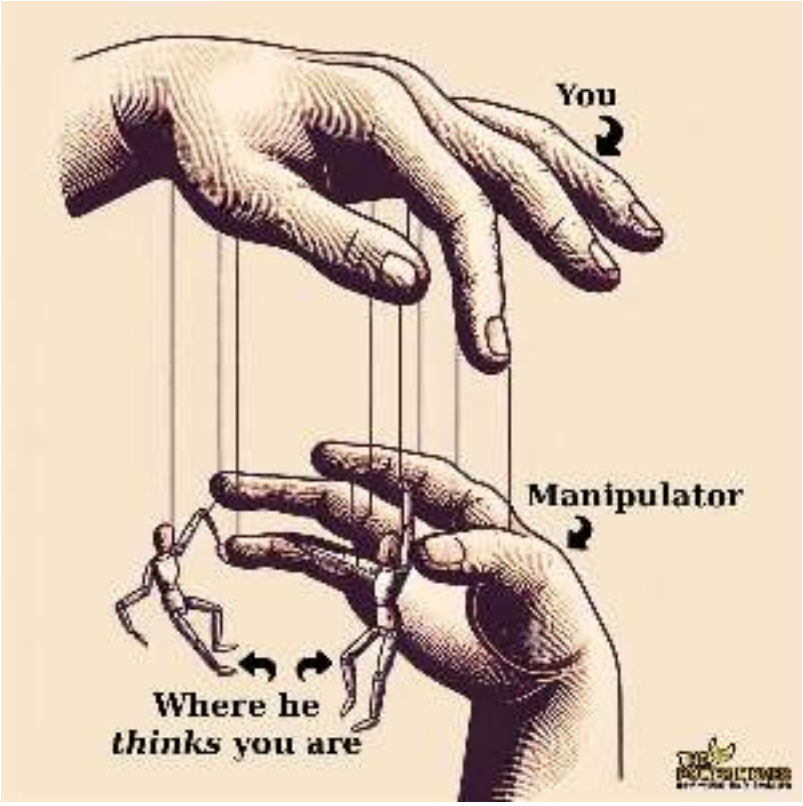
You do it strategically.
"Because you're so swamped", your offers of times and locations are convenient to you, and inconvenient to the manipulator.

For example, close to your place, with some other friends, or for a quick coffee.
Since manipulators often want the upper power hand, they will not want to meet at your convenience very often :).

Nastier move: making the experience unpleasant to even things out.
A more vengeful Machiavellian may make the experience more unpleasant. If the manipulator likes to drink, he makes up a reason why he can't drink for a while. If he's a teetotaler, he may order a bottle of wine and then "joke" that he's letting him drink all alone.

That way, you naturally drift apart. And you still keep it "warm enough" in case you run into each other. Or in case you need something from him, or from his social circle.

4. Appear Unthreatening To Lower His Guard



Robert Greene wrote in *The 48 Laws of Power*:

> Play A Sucker to Catch a Sucker: Seem Dumber Than Your Mark

And it's a great point.
Some techniques to manipulate a manipulator work better when he believes you're dumber than he is.

However, "dumb" has important downsides.:

4.2. Better Yet: High-Power, Just Not A Threat to *Him*

Dumb is low power.

And manipulators see dumb people as perfect marks.

Non-threatening instead is about not being a threat to *him*. (Not if he behaves, at least. The potential for harm works well to keep manipulators in check).

If you're smart but non-threatening to him, he will keep his guard low, *while also respecting you*.

"Unthreatening" may include:

- **Respecting the manipulator**. Or *seeming* like you respect him
- **Disinterested in his goals**. So you naturally can co-exist or even ally, without stepping on each others' toes. Of course, in truth, you may want the same things. He just doesn't need to know ;)

And smart but naive includes:

- **Power blind**, unable to see power moves and manipulation
- **Easygoing with everyone** -the extravert, happy-go-round type getting along with anyone. Or always thinking others have good intentions (Lex Friedman seems a good example)

However, we're the first here to say this:

When it comes to life effectiveness, naive really overlaps with dumb, *no matter the IQ points*.
And if you must deploy this strategy, it's best to appear naive to the manipulator only, but not to everyone else.

Also see:

- **Naive self-help**

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Popular But False Self-Help Myths

⚠ 5. Evening Things Out

This strategy is about restoring self-respect, but must be executed properly to be effective and calibrated to the offense to remain an honorable man.

There are a million ways a Machiavellian player would go about, and it all depends on the situation.

But here's an imaginary example:

⍰ Example: Stranding the Manipulator

If you must breakup with an aggressive manipulator, one may as well regain some self-respect

An alumnus of Power University shared a story about a woman who took advantage of his generosity.
Let's call her Judy.
Judy used to ask our alumnus to send her a chauffeured car. But she was ungrateful for it. She became more demanding, and even started disparaging our alumnus behind his back.

So this is what a Machiavellian player may do:

> **Judy**: send car
> **Mach**: sure, coming
> (don't send anything)

When she calls again, the Mach player may go:

> **Judy**: (calls)
> (don't pick up)
> **Judy**: still waiting, the driver is late
> **Mach**: busy now, call in 5 I'll check

With every new Judy's reach out, the Machiavellian player evens things out.

The day after, he may get in touch again and say there was some issue, like "He punctured a tire and couldn't fix it".

That way, the manipulator may finally realize the value of your favor when it's taken away.
That will make her *re-value* you, and maybe even fear losing you (her old golden-egged goose).
She will *chase* you.

Now, the Mach player FADES.
The more she chases, the more he evens things out and regains respect.

At that point, he may move on for good or tell her why it was for necessary.
For example:

> **Mach**: I heard some cr@p around

Let her guess, let her invest, let her explain.
As per Social ROI principle, the more the manipulator invests, the more you regain power.

6. Plant Bait & Let Them Come to You

Some time ago I attended a social media event looking for YouTube editors.

Everyone was supposed to make a quick self-intro -and everyone did it while remaining seated-.
When it was my turn, I stood up and walked in front to make sure everyone could see me.

Always stand up and face the crowd when introducing yourself. Wonderful opportunity to grab attention and immediately gain high-status. Frame it as making it easier for others to see you and hear you (also true), and you get the high-power/high-warmth perfect combo

That was strategic to make a more memorable impression and have leads come to me.

Which… They did.

Little later the organizer also came to me.
He says I shouldn't leave because "he wanted to talk to me".

Why not talk to me right away, then?
And as time goes by, he *doesn't* come back to talk to me.

I already smell power move.

I want to leave, and the perfect time is when I spot him near the exit.
Why?
Think strategically.
It's the perfect time because I can talk to him, without having to *walk* to him. I get to see if he's got anything good for me, without expending effort. And the sub-communication of me "just seeing you by accident" is: "I wasn't waiting (because I don't need you)".

Makes sense?

Anyway, he tells me that he can help with marketing.
He name-drops the guys from "The Natural Lifestyle", and tries to impress with some big numbers.

I start smelling BS.

But I tell him "Sure, let's get in touch".

I never get in touch, though.
So if he comes to me, the sub-communication is that *he* needs me.
And if he doesn't, great, no time wasted on my side.

P.S.:
Why do I consider him a likely manipulator?
Think about it. And you'll start becoming a more manipulation-resistant strategic thinker.

Maps of Meaning: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 November 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In *Maps of Meaning* psychology professor Jordan Peterson shares his views on how people construct meaning. The book explores some themes the author appears very fond of such as religion, myths, the subconscious, and totalitarianism.

Contents

- About The Author
- Summary
- Review

About The Author

Jordan Peterson is a Canadian clinical psychologist.
In the last years, he has become an influential opinion leader, loved by many, and probably not-so-loved by as many others.
He also wrote the more popular *12 Rules for Life*, then followed by *Beyond Order* where he sneaked in some extra "rules for life".

Update:
Jordan Peterson has gone through some changes since we published this review. Including becoming more argumentative, extreme, and, how to say it… Less of a role model.
That's our personal opinion, of course.
See for yourself here:

Summary

- The fundamental prepositions of fascism and communism were rational, logical, comprehensible… And terribly wrong (I agree, see: "fascism, Mussolini, Trump, and personal power")
- Human nature is not infinitely malleable (also read "The Blank Slate")
- Like animals, we focus on fundamentals first. Top questions: will this new thing eat me, can I eat it, can I mate with it
- Attempts to increase the state at the cost of the individual are counterproductive
  - Note: I agree from an ideological point of view, but then again, it depends on what level of state presence we are talking about
- Patriotism or any similar attempt at strengthening group identity must necessarily be bounded by a supreme regard to the creative capacity of the individual
  - Note: I totally agree here and take it one step further, too: not just the "creative capacity" of the individual, but the sacred independence of the individual from any organized groups
- A stranger is threatening because he is outside of the social hierarchy and can behave unexpectedly, with unpredictable consequences for the social hierarchy
  - Note: Very true. And the more defensive, fearful and hierarchy-conscious people are, the more they will fear and oppose strangers
- A dominance hierarchy is a social arrangement that determines access to desired commodities
- The fascist sacrifices his soul to the group, which promises to protect him from everything unknown
  - Great take
- The fascist believes the world should always be ordered. This increase in conformity alleviates anxiety
- The decadent refuses to join the social world because he is too undisciplined to serve as an apprentice
- The hero rejects identification with the group as the ideal of life, following instead his conscience and his heart. He refuses to sacrifice meaning for security
  - These three descriptions were the deepest in the whole book. Following the "hero's path" is one of the tenets of this website.
- Hitler and Stalin were humans. Our tyrannical tendencies and moral decadence are limited by our domains of personal power. We satisfy ourselves with riding roughshod with those nearer to us and then congratulate ourselves on our moral virtues
  - Going to the philosophical core of the link between power and personal values
- We use aggression and strength to bend others to our will, and lacking strength we use sickness and empathy to deceive our way to dominance
- In times of uncertainty, the call for returns to the glorious past always arise.

And finally, I want to leave you with this question:

> Granted the opportunity, how many of us would not be Hitler?

Personally, I think most of us would not be Hitler.
But probably more people than you think, would.

Review

Some people readers may find many sparkles of genius in *Maps of Meaning*.

Just too bad for how they are framed and presented, in a sea of religious references and rhetoric for rhetoric's sake.

If *Maps of Meaning* had cut its rhetorical complexity and expanded on some of its core insights, it could have been a monumental work.
Potentially, even a TPM recommended resource.

But as it is, I cannot give a full thumbs up to *Maps of Meaning*.

Main issue is that, in plain words, many passages leave you scratching your head.
And thinking “what the f*ck is the author talking about?”.

It’s called “maps of meaning”, as if it wanted to show a route or path for people to walk.
But it certainly doesn’t seem to want to make that path *simple*.
It’s philosophical and inscrutable. It builds upon itself and it feels like it’s going nowhere.
It’s not easy to understand, it’s not much grounded in science and it’s of little application to real life.

For me, it also had little application to a more general and abstract theory of life and it didn’t help me to construct meaning for the world.

I really like Jordan Peterson.
Edit: liked maybe more suited today.
But *Maps of Meaning* failed to deliver for me.

Decoding The Gurus: How to Spot Gurus & Manipulators

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 November 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In the *Decoding the Gurus* podcast, hosts Matthew Browne and Chris Kavanagh discuss and analyze various gurus' psychology, and (dubious) claims and theories.

Their work is relevant to The Power Moves, where we also study power, influence, and manipulation, including people who *inflate* authority as a tool for power or self-enhancement.
This is why we review Decoding the Gurus: it's an effective resource to develop your ability to spot manipulation, assess character, and reject disempowering 'guru-pupil frames'.

Let's dive in.

About the Author
Matthew Browne is a researcher and Professor of Psychology at Central Queensland University.
Chris Kavanagh is a cognitive anthropologist, Ph.D. at the University of Oxford, and researcher and Associate Professor at Rikkyo University in Japan.

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- REVIEW

Why We Recommend It

We appreciate and recommend the *Decoding The Gurus* podcast it develops **power intelligence**, including:

1. **Character assessment**, including charismatic men who may hide second motives
2. **Positive cynicism**, spotting manipulation and manipulation techniques
3. **Critical thinking skills**. The hosts generally apply good logic, scientific process principles, and valuable "sensible man takes"

… And, to have a good laugh while doing all of the above.

Favorite Episodes

Some that stood out to me:

1. Understanding Gurus With The "Gurometer"

In this episode, the hosts review 10 salient traits that characterize "guru personalities", including several examples as case studies.

The "gurometer" is a checklist that, although not strictly scientific, provides a valuable framework for character assessment.

This is the episode, and the 'follow up 'The Science and the Art of Gurometry' is equally valuable.

2. Conspiracy Busting: Brett Weinstein & Heather Heying

The hosts often discussed conspiracy theories and "conspiratorial personalities". It's hard to pick one, but I found the episode on Brett Weinstein and Heather Heying to display several representative patterns and dynamics of conspiracy-personalities.

I'd even go as far as to say that it's a **great espisode for anyone with a tendency to over-believe conspiracy theories and conspiracy gurus.**

It will help listeners to recognize potentially biased and manipulative gurus who use conspiracy-mongering for their own power, influence, and gain.

Let's dig deeper very quickly:

The conspiracy guru strategy for power

This is the game of the conspiracy theorist:

The conspiracy theorist strategy is to undermine the power and influence of established institutions so that *he* can get some of that power and influence for himself.

The price, of course, is truth.
And… *You* pay a large portion of that price. But since you're part of society, we all pay some price when BS spreads.

3. Elon Musk: The Techno Shaman

Great critical take on Elon Musk, including:

- **Lies** and the fine line between optimism and self-serving, outright lies
- **Enemies-making** and framing as a target of conspiracies against him (ie.: liberals/woke who pull advertising from Twitter)

Musk & Trump Similarities

The hosts say that Trump and Musk share many similarities.

And only after they said so it also appeared immediately evident to me.

The impulsivity, the grandiosity, the huge plans that rarely come to fruition… The lies.
Yep.

Say the guys:

> The parallel with Trump is very strong.
> Both of them are endearing to a certain kind of audience (…) The cult of personality they've been able to build around themselves (…). The sort of immense loyalty (they could get).
> They both present themselves as saviors of humanity (…) Trump is a much more negative frame than Musk, but it's the same thing.
> And they're both self-aggrandizing (…)
> **I would characterize both as narcissistic**

Later they added that Twitter's moderation policy resembled Trump's propensity to use government agencies as his own personal fiefdom.
And neither of them sees any value in committees, systems, institutions, processes, etc.

Who finds Musk/Trump interesting

A very deep question:

WHO finds these characters most appealing is most telling, say the guys.

They say:

> when it's like a personal ubermensch like Trump or Musk the audience feels a personal connection.
> They (think they) know that their hearts ARE on the right place and they just want to make things better.
> And there's this extreme charity to them. Their conspiratorial thinking doesn't kick in. But when it is presented as "this is men in grey suits (…) working in some building (…) when one tries to set up a consistent system then the conspiratorial brain just goes wild

Gurometer

Definition:

> The gurometer is a checklist of traits that are significant to the "guru" construct, red flags of (poor) characters, and common among gurus.

And the authors use them to rate the various gurus.

Why it's a valid approach to assess trustworthiness

The gurometer is incredibly useful because:

The gurometer approach **leverages people's behavior, which is the most readily and abundantly available resource to assess a person's character.**
And character is foundational to assessing the credibility, authority, and trustworthiness of any source.

It's the same approach we encourage and advise here a TPM:

- **Skip digging into their references, look at their *character***

It "only" requires you to learn some psychology and grow some power awareness.

The opposite of a guru

An interesting question here arises for me:

If one scores low on the gurometer, then he may not be a guru.

But then, what is he?

The hosts mention "an actual expert".
And I agree.
I'd say that "not being a guru" also means being a:

- Scientist approach, subordinating oneself to *science*, to evidence, and new findings
  - Open to alternatives and open to being wrong, which many gurus only pay lip service to
- Critical thinker
  - Aware and open to considering one's biases (or at least open to recognizing and discussing one's biases)
- Principled man, as in having a conscience, morals, and ethics. Being a "honorable man" (or woman)
  - Respectful of the audience, including their ability to think for themselves and "power protecting" the audience. (Instead of pulling various power moves and treating them as disciples or pupils)

Gurometer Scale

Let's now introduce the gurometer.

The main entries are from Chris and Matt (the #10 probably Chris as he was adamant for the more conventional round number).
Some notes are mine to elaborate on the hosts' descriptions (my guru-ish streak demands to add my own take):

1. **Galaxy-brainness** (Breadth), the guru tries hard to pass for authority with high-IQ, expertise, and depth of knowledge that others can't match
   - Polymath, experts at everything, hot takes, special wisdom
   - Performative unnecessary references to literature/complex theories/science
2. **Cultishness**: Unhealthy social dynamics, including creating In-group vs. Out-group
   - Flattery, some controlling, they're special
   - Super charitable to friends and allies, and this includes "nepotism" in my opinion. See Trump as an example
   - Personal rapport with followers
3. **Anti-establishment**, either because the "establishment" is corrupt, inept, or operating against the population -or at least, operating against the guru's followers (often linked with conspiracy theories). The establishment is also often a monolithic and uber-powerful monster that must be destroyed.
   - Cannot trust any authorities or mainstream media
   - Undermining all other sources of information
4. **Grievance Mongering**
   - Personal narratives of victimhood
   - Suppression of their ideas, which is also a convenient excuse of why they're not as successful as they should be :)
   - Inculcating grievance in their followers, which here at TPM we found very disempowering. And it's one of the main reasons we harp on against red pill gurus

5. **Narcissism / Self Aggrandising**. They say it's key to explaining gurus' behavior, goals, and psychology (and I agree)
6. **Cassandra Complex**
   - Warning of danger that others can't see
   - Making predictions and saying their prior predictions are always right
7. **Revolutionary Theories** (Content)
8. **Pseudo-profound Bullshit** (Form- Verbal agility)
   - Scientism
   - Unnecessary references to literature/complex theories/science
9. **Conspiracy Mongering**, but often hidden and covered. Thus the use of disclaimers and the preference to have their audience jump to the most extreme conclusions (instead of them doing so directly. Thus, I'd add "instigatory behavior" is another red flag)
   - Elaborate theories to explain mundane events
   - Secret coordination of powerful & malevolent groups and institutions
   - The world is targeting them and their friends
10. **Grifting** with followers' monetization, shilling supplements/dubious products, etc.

All entries are on a scale and there such a thing as "healthy balance".

For example, one can monetize the audience without being a grifter.
Or he may grieve that he's being suppressed and, in some (limited) cases, it may be true.

So to properly assess guru personalities there is no shortcut to developing one's own critical thinking. And, I would also add here, developing your power intelligence.

Suggestions to Improve The Gurometer

This is what TPM would suggest:

- **Change the scale from 0-5 to 0-10**. It's more intuitive and larger appeal
- **Change galaxy-brainess for "omni-sapient"** or something more intuitive. You want names to re-call already existing associations

Then:

1. Swap narcissism for dark triad

To include Machiavellianism and psychopathy.

Machiavellianism may offer better cover for some grifters and more marketer-type gurus, and better covers a strategic predisposition in social exchanges and "influencer strategies".

For example, Jordan Peterson for years passed for a balanced philosopher.
He said himself he was "very careful with his words". What that truly meant is that he'd dribble, reframe, and counter-attack on anything that would give away the ultra-conservative he actually was.

To me, that's Machiavellianism.

"Dark triad" also includes psychopathy, potentially covering types such as Alex Jones and Andrew Tate.

Sub-categories and/or traits to potentially include and look into here:

- Manipulative tendencies

- Misuse of science (part of manipulative tendencies). Including in the way they present, frame, dismiss or leverage studies based on the narrative they prefer
  - Mixing evidence, theories, and opinions. To me this is the biggest sin of “science popularizers”. They take 10% of (often misunderstood) evidence, then add their take on it, mix a host of dumb personal opinions, and frame it as “scientific” or “true”
- Character. Plain and simple. I know, I know, it’s not “scientific” and it’s in good part subjective. Also, only a good character can judge well and everyone says they’ve got a good character. But STILL, this is foundational to many guru types (see the last quote in the quotes section for a good example)

2. Add “power” -including “caring for power” and “seeking power”-

At the core, gurus are playing a game of power.

Power includes popularity, which is the currency for influence.
And influence is one of the gurus’ favorite forms of power.

How “hard” gurus seek popularity tells you a lot about their motives and psychology.

Sub-categories may include:

- **Power of conviction**

How confident and convinced they are of their own theories and knowledge, and how strongly they promote them and defend them.

10x the points if it’s opinions and theories that fall outside the guru’s area of expertise.

This also overlaps with that “dark triad charisma”.

P.S.:
The author here would score quite high there.

- **Power sensitivity**

In daily parlance, “thin-skin”.
Particularly thin skin towards criticism and perceived slights.

The hosts know this, and indeed mention that it’s telling that some gurus they cover react quite badly.

This may also go under “dark triad”, but I think a category for “power” helps to better understand the phenomenon.

- **Will to power**

A good red flag for this:

Quantity and intensity of attacks against institutions / other gurus / competition.

The dark triad guru can’t stand the competition for influence because he’d rather be the only shepherd (to lead the gullible sheep).

In that sense, it’s very telling that Elon Musk mocks Bill Gates and Zuckerberg. And that he mocked Bezos and his space exploration efforts.
Elon only wants humanity to be an interplanetary species if HE leads that charge.

- **Disempowering the audience**

Some gurus like Tate do it aggressively.

But most do it covertly.

Such as using covert teacher frames and treating the audience as disciples, followers, or “learners”.

In daily parlance, this would be “talking down” or “babying”.
In part, Weinstein’s saying that what he’s talking about is “very complicated” is talking down.

A teacher’s attitude attracts the right type of audience.
An audience that’s low confidence, low-power, or looking for leaders/father figures.
It’s an audience ripe and ready to “follow” (acritically), empower the guru, and feed his narcissistic ego.

In that sense, it’s very telling that Jordan Peterson started to more directly disempower his audience.

See his body language here, as an example:

Note:
The breadth of JP’s conviction increased over time.
Now he’s an expert on nutrition, global warming, international politics, and… Diagnosing other people’s narcissism :).

3. Add “networks” to look at who they get along with

That “to judge a character you must look at his friends” is an old pop-psychology trope.

But I’d be surprised if it isn’t also true -and, probably, there may be studies to show that-.

Hence, it may be useful to look at who the guru hangs out with, who he interviews (more frequently), and *who he gets along with best*.

BTW, it’s no coincidence that many of these podcasters and gurus interview each other -how was that one of the birds of a feather?-.

4. Add “Level of Harm”: The Bottom Line Indicator

This should be the “bottom line” assessment.

The question is:

- **How much value do they add or take from their followers, and from the world?**

If you’d ever consider giving different weights to categories, this one should count x2.

Different categories tend to score differently here.
Megalomaniac dark triads tend to be very harmful takers.
Grifters and marketers tend to be *financial* takers.
And “optimizers” do relatively little harm.

Great Moments & Quotes

Decoding The Gurus mixes great insights with a good time.

Some examples:

> **Brene Brown** (reads that popular quote): the man in the arena, face marred with blood…
> **Guys**: I don’t see any blood in her face

Great way to say that she’s overly dramatic, without saying so :)
See our take on vulnerability by the way.

Introducing Joe Rogan:

> **Chris**: One thing quite obvious about Joe is that he is a manly man. He is a bro if a bro ever existed. He's in the MMA, smoking cigars, while driving a tank. That's Joe
> **Matt**: He's a man's man's man

On Jocko Willink, author of *Extreme Ownership*. On Joe's podcast and why they picked the episode with the two of them:

> **Chris**: he's the guy that gets up at 4:00 am to do a thousand push-ups and bench press his family before you even had your toast, right? He's better than you.
> So if we're gonna get the full testosterone experience why not combine the two of them in one single episode

Speaking of which, here's our take on that type of "self-help":

Poking fun at Rogan's bias and uncritical thinking:

> **Chris**: I don't know if you've heard it but there's these concerns about voter ballot fraud (…). And this is a conspiracy theory of course there's no evidence of this. And Jocko and Joe being you know the good centrist researchers that they are I'm sure they will not fall for that
> (goes on to play a clip of Joe landing credibility to the stolen election conspiracy)

On Scott Adams:

> **Chris**: I'll issue a spoiler upfront. We looked at some people and some are particularly irritating to look at. JP series spring to mind (…) I think **it is some achievement that Scott Adams is by far the person I disliked the most** that we've covered and I'm really going to struggle to say anything about him, **because he's such an a**hole** (..) he's an a**hole

LOL.
Yep, a rather unpalatable mix of personal aggrandizement WHILE also being a Trump b*tch -worst of both worlds-. Plus sneakiness, and terrible content.
Win Bigly was one of the most irritating books I've read.

P.S.:
a good example that an entry for "character" in the gurometer may be helpful.

Criticism

The main thing I'd mention:

1. Slight left-leaning / blank slate / mainstream bias (without fully recognizing it?)

Chris and Matt are "reasonable men", their affiliations or ideologies are evident, but not extreme.

And they think critically.

That said, they are left-leaning. And although aware and open about it, I'm not sure how fully they appreciate the extent of the impact on their takes.

Not only politically, but in what Tooby and Cosmides called the "standard social science model".
Such as, over-weighing the role of culture and nurture over biology and "nature". Tooby and Cosmides (and others) say this approach is prevalent in academia, fitting the authors' background.

Here's why I sometimes felt the authors miss that bias:

1.2 Criticism of Harris Feels Left-Leaning

The hosts feel like Harris is closer to the right/libertarians/conspiracy theorists.

But in some passages, I felt Sam was more "super-partes" than the hosts.

For example, their respective analyses of immigration.
Including immigration risks, and politicians potentially afraid of opposing mass immigration for being labeled "racists" by the woke left.

1.3 Hosts rarely mention the biological aspects (standard social science model)

Example:

They skip biology to explain why they mostly cover (white) men.

There almost seems to be an unspoken assumption that genders *should* be both equally represented.

To me, it's shocking that two smart men, including a psychologist, wouldn't stress the gender biological differences.
Including that men may generally be more driven to acquire power and resources than women do.

1.4 Networking: they get along much better with more left-leaning folks

… Like Helen Lewis.

Admittedly, I don't know nearly enough to judge.
But she seemed to push a rather strong "patriarchy narrative".

Edit:
Listened to another episode with Lewis.
She pushed back on the biological explanation for male over-representation in the guru-world. She made a good point, but the hosts didn't even re-state the importance of biology.

2. Tendency to Default for "Supporting Mainstream" & Opposing "Alternatives"

For example:

2.2 Always on the side of governments during Covid pandemic

During the Covid pandemic the hosts:

- Criticized conspiracy theories (fair)
- Criticized anti-vaxxers (fair enough for many)
- Favored the government's responses

I felt at times they lost their good sensible approach.

Never once I've heard them say that yes, some governments may have gone too far.

Or mention that the opportunity for more power may cause power over-reaches.

Or simply noting that the opportunity to impose and dictate may be a motivator for some politicians.

They never say it may be fair for some people to want to socialize with others who also choose to do so.
And if that doesn't threaten everyone else, is it right to forbid it?

Those seem all "sensible man" questions to me.

2.3 Ridiculing “Pick-Up Artists” Approach to Dating As Useless

In one episode the authors laugh at NLP as a useless system for persuasion.

I’d partially agree with that.
But then they bundle it with “pick-up artistry”, implying it’s equally nonsense and useless for dating and attracting women.

If by “pick-up techniques” we mean all approaches to dating that some men learn in alternative education resources such this website, I disagree.

The fact that academia or “mainstream” don’t openly deal with dating strategies and techniques doesn’t mean that one can’t effectively improve their dating skills.

Dating is an important realm of social skills.
You can improve social skills like you can improve almost any other skill. And the same is true for its dating sub-category.

Gurus to Cover: Suggestions

More suggestions for the hosts to safely ignore :).

1. Health & Fitness Quacks

- **Joe Dispenza** and self-healing meditation
- **Wim Hof** and the cold exposure cure for all -he may be a good guy, but there can be “good gurus” of course-
- **“Dr” Gundry**: if you want to see the worst examples of “teacher frames”, look at this guy and his “I know better than you attitude”

2. Self-Help Gurus

For example:

- **Tony Robbins**
- **Tom Bilyeu**

2.2 Fanatical “Limit-Pushers” Zealots

- **David Goggins**, the guy who ran through broken bones while soiling himself is apparently an inspiration to follow

These gurus latch onto a male hook of “gaining your own respect”.
And fear of being ‘pussy-like’.

I know that because I have that same proclivity.

Lex also falls for this.
His routines of fasted training and mental “preparations” reflect this tendency.

2.3 Optimization-Porn Gurus

Attia and Andrew Huberman are both in this category.

Tim Ferriss may be another good guy to review.

> Biohacking Porn: Quit OCD, Embrace Life

3. Manosphere Gurus

Some names include:

- **Rollo Tomassi**, author of various half-good and helpful, half-lunatic and (covertly) misogynist takes and books in his *The Rational Male* series
- **Richard Cooper**, author of *The Unplugged Alpha* and a major monetizer of male discontent
- ~~**Andrew Tate**~~ actually, avoid just not to give it extra airtime

These gurus are big on power and "being alpha".
In part, it's the specular of feminism for men.
A conspiratorial view of women (/men) controlling society and oppressing their gender:

4. Marketers Gurus

Marketers seek guru-authority in a specific field to sell products.

Tai Lopez is an interesting case because he was one of the first crossovers from ads-fueled marketer to our next category, the influencers:

5. Influencers

Most gurus the guys cover seek fame with at least some skill, work output, or theory.

The influencers shortcut that game by "being famous for being famous".

Some influencers may not be typical gurus because have little ambition to flash out opinions.

However, some do develop some "systems of thought", theories, or tribes to better promote their products.

- **Liver King**: the "primals" who are on a carnivore diet
- **Alex Hormozi**. an interesting character between a marketer/influencer/capitalist businessman.
  I think he's a great guy, including a straight character. But I'd love to hear what the guys say.

6. Guru Enablers

Tom validates Sadhguru's approach of "listen to me, because I know better than you"

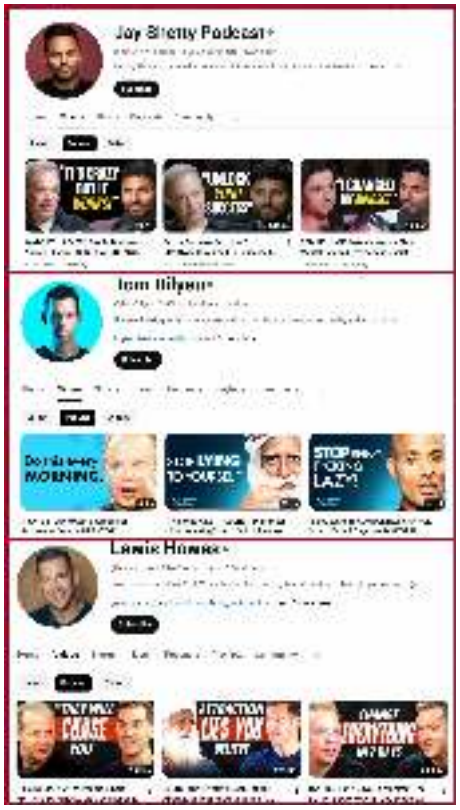
Enablers are the “gurus’ megaphones”.

Podcasters are after *views*, not truth.
And gurus are after the podcasters’ audience for a toxic win-win.

It’s folks such as:

- Jay Shetty
- Tom Bylieu
- Lewis Howes

Check their top videos, all interviews with the same gurus:



Their defense is “I ask questions”.

Chris Williamson said as much when it was on their show.
It’s challenging to be a successful podcaster, while also calling out potential BS.

Still, enablers can end up being megaphones and ‘super-spreaders’.

7. Swindlers Gurus

Swindlers are the ultimate “10/10 grifters”.

Some examples:

- **London Real**, can’t even bother to look up his name, a despicable character
- **Logan Paul** and his string of NFTs

At yet a higher level we have:

- **Jho Low**
- Sam Bankman Friedman

And then, partially, Elizabeth Holmes.

These are the guys Coffeezilla focuses more on.

8. The Ultimate Stretch Challenge: Academic Gurus

Here are some challenging ideas for the hosts:

- **Steven Pinker**: can you get that big and popular without being a guru?
  To me, he can come across quite power-seeking, and potentially narcissist-ish (see our *Enlightenment Now*'s book review)
- **Martin Seligman**: same as above. Our review shows some signs of power-seeking
- **Freud**: this would be super interesting. I get some major dark-triad vibes from this man. He may be the most "successful" pseudo-science guru of them all
- **Amy Cuddy, Angela Duckworth** and all the various researchers who pursued mainstream fame with dubious "science".
  IMaria Konnikova may be interesting, from this interview.
  Also see "why good scientists are boring & poor, and poor scientists are famous

> Why Good Scientists Are Boring & Poor Ones Are Famous

REVIEW

Decoding the Gurus fills a critical gap in mane's empowerment: not just what to think and how to behave to achieve goals, but who to trust.

That aligns directly with TPM's mission: building power-aware men who harder to manipulate, harder to mislead, and better at reading power dynamics.

I first stumbled upon them with their episode on Nassim Taleb, a guy whose work we praised here (see for example *Fooled by Randomness* and *The Black Swan*).
And their analysis was very critical, yet valid.

While there are plenty of 'guru-analyzers' already, including Coffeezilla and similar on YouTube, they tend to focus on more obvious swindlers or fraud cases.
Chris and Matt go a level beyond, reviewing gurus that are more refined, well-spoken, and… More difficult to spot, in many ways. And that aligns well with our readership of ambitious and smart men who benefit more from more advanced takes.

I'm thankful and grateful for Chris and Matt's work.

Content-Based Networking by James Carbary: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 December 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Content-Based Networking is a four-part book that makes the case that networking events are prone to randomness and content-based networking allows you to take a more focused approach to connecting with anyone, at any time, and from anywhere in the world.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - The Foundation: Relationships Are Everything
  - Step 1: Goals
  - Step 2: People
  - Step 3: Content
  - Step 4: You're Done
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- Real-Life Tips
- Cons
- Pros
- Review

Exec Summary

- **Create content to connect with others**: create a platform and invite the people you want to meet onto it for interviews.
- **Follow up after the content collaboration**: to deepen the relationship after the interview.
- **Stick with it**: eventually, you'll begin to receive opportunities as you continue creating these relationships through these interviews.

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
James Carbary is an author and host of the podcast, B2B Growth, a top-ranked podcast according to Forbes. He's also the owner of Sweet Fish Media, a company that specializes in helping podcasters produce their content. Carbary has been a contributor to Huffington Post, Entrepreneur, and Business Insider.

The Foundation: Relationships Are Everything

Can We Plan Serendipity?

Here, the author shares a brief story about being invited on a trip with his friends after one of them won a sweepstakes.

It included a trip to an NFL football game of their choice—including transportation to the game in a private jet, a tour of the city in a chartered limo bus, and their own catered private suite to watch the game.

Early in the day of the trip, he noticed that they'd picked up an extra passenger for their tour of New York City: a

guy named Jeff.

Upon striking up a conversation with him, Carbary discovered he was actually the CEO of the company that had arranged their transportation, and his business was actually a large global logistics firm.

By the end of the night, they swapped email addresses, and after a year of keeping in touch, Jeff asked him if he wanted to move to Orlando and run the helicopter division of his company.

The end of the chapter ends with this reflection from the author (that points back to the chapter's title):

> **Carbary**: "…eventually I began to wonder, was there a way to create life-changing relationships on-demand? Was it possible to purposely engineer relationships, like the one Jeff and I had developed, to help someone get closer to their goals and dreams in life? And was it possible to put myself in a situation where I could meet another person like Jeff, without relying on a one-in-a-million circumstance? The more I asked myself these questions, the more I realized that what happened with Jeff could happen again. And I wouldn't need to win a sweepstakes to make it happen."

Relationships Aren't the Side Dish. They're the Whole Buffet

See the author's words on the chapter's main idea here:

> **Carbary**: "Life starts with, ends with, and revolves around, relationships. [And] Whatever you're looking to achieve, someone out there has the tools, the know-how, and the connections to help you do it."

The other half of this chapter's main idea is that one shouldn't spend their time hoping to meet the right people who could transform their life, career, or business.

The author continues here:

> **Carbary**: "We hope that we meet our next customer at the local chamber of commerce meeting. We hope that one of our LinkedIn connections can introduce us to someone with deep pockets that wants to help fund our nonprofit. We hope we know someone who works at the same company where we want to work, so they can move our resume to the top of the stack. But, should we really live our lives waiting for that chance encounter to change our course? …You actually *can* bypass serendipity and go straight to the CEO's office, the investor's table, or the meeting with Jeff. That's why I wrote this book. I've found a way to take chance out of the equation. I call it Content-Based Networking."

So, What Is Content-Based Networking?

Content-based networking is a "content collaboration" approach to building relationships:

> **Carbary**: "Content-Based Networking is networking based on…wait for it…CONTENT. It's figuring out, like I did with Marie, who you need to connect with (what we'll call *goals*), then reaching out to them (which we talk about in the *people* section), and then collaboration (*creating content with the people you want to know*—this is the important part)."

Why does this work?

Because it's a WIIFT win:

> **Carbary**: "The content is the difference between selflessly asking the other person for something they can do for you and offering something for them. When I asked Marie to be on our show, I talked about what I had to offer her. I gave her a chance to share her story, and to talk about herself. Instead of asking Marie for

> something, I offered her a chance to promote herself and the company she works for…"

Here are some more examples (provided by the author) of how one can go about content-based networking:

- **Jamie is a musician who wants to be signed to a record label**. So she collaborates with music producers by filming them in their day-to-day work (audio engineering, scouting talent, developing songs with artists, etc.). Then she edits the footage and posts the videos to her YouTube channel.
- **Kamal wants to be a chef**, so he collaborates with top-rated chefs to create content about their food. He snaps pictures of the chefs in the kitchen and of their final dishes. He then publishes all of the content on Instagram, tagging all the chefs and highlighting their recipes.
- **Emily wants to sell marketing software to the airline industry**, so she starts a podcast that features interviews with marketing managers at different airlines. During the interviews, Emily asks the marketing managers about their career journey, the challenges of being an airline marketer, and the marketing tactics they've tested in the last six months.

The content could be anything—a series of photographs, blog posts, podcasts, videos, virtual summits, industry reports, documentaries, music, you name it. According to the author, with his approach, all types of collaborative content can be the launching point of a genuine and meaningful relationship.

Step 1: Goals

Don't Drive to the Wrong Coffee Shop

The author says here that we tend to confuse goals with our high-level dreams. We may dream of owning our own company, and make that our goal.

But that's not a productive approach with Content-Based Networking because it's important to narrow your goal down to be as specific as possible.

Namely, and in this context, you want to craft your goal to refer to the specific relationships you need to create. (Boil your high-level dream down to a relationship you need to build.)

To design your goal, follow this formula:

- Goal = Target Contacts + Where They Congregate

Using the Kamal example above, let's say he wants to be a three-star Michelin chef.

Rather than just applying for internships like everyone else in his culinary arts program, he makes this his networking goal:

- Create relationships with head chefs at top-tier restaurants.

See how it fits the formula?

Be Like Oprah

By this, the author means to shine a light on your guest (and their dreams and passions), don't make it about yourself).

Give them a chance to share their story.

Step 2: People

The Spotlight Effect

To get started, first, by having a platform (whether it's something seemingly small such as having just created a

blog), you have value to give because you have a spotlight you can shine on any new guest, even if you don't have any content for that platform yet.

So, if, for example, you want to start interviewing casting directors for your blog, (1) simply say you have a blog that features casting directors, and then (2) start interviewing casting directors for your brand-new blog.

Also, make sure to conduct thorough research on them and any of their current content (social media can be key to learning about someone's work and passions).

More pro tips from the author:

- **Research their industry (and how most people in their profession view it)**: so you can know how the industry plays out for them from *their* perspective (not yours).
- **Find where they like to hang out**: everyone has a favorite hangout. And people with similar experiences within the same industry usually have the same favorite hangout. (This can be an online or physical hangout space).

Master the Art of Cold Emails

Remember, you're not trying to sell anything. You're trying to connect and offer a spotlight (value).

Here are the author's seven rules of an effective cold email reach-out:

1. **Keep it simple**: for example, say, "Hey Paul, we're doing a series of videos about your industry, and we'd love to feature you. Any interest?" That's it. Then, as you grow, you can pick one or two quick facts that make it clear that you're adding value to them. (For example, if you've had 30,000 downloads of your content last month, say that.)
2. **Make it easy**: your initial goal is not to get your recipient to commit to collaborating with you it's only to get them to respond. (That's why it's OK to keep the message so simple.)
3. **Personalize it**: for example, you can weave in a specific mention of a recent accomplishment of theirs or mention that you saw their talk at a conference that year.
4. **Write how you talk**: don't try to sound overly professional.
5. **Prove you're not a scam**: by placing links to your social media in your email signature.
6. **Take a multichannel approach**: try different mediums for outreach and see which one your target guests respond to most/best.
7. **Follow up**: be respectfully persistent.

All the Other Stuff Oprah Did Really Well

More main points:

- The people you really want to connect with will always have a network of other people…that you'll probably also want to connect with.
- When people see you hanging around experts, they assume you're one too.
- Since you're interviewing them on your platform, you can ask them anything you want—including questions that directly pertain to your specific goals

How to Make Sure You're Finding the Right People

If you're a business, you may want to consider making sure the people you target to be your guests are the ones who make the buying decisions for what you sell.

A couple more considerations:

- **Target experts, not celebrities**: influencers will only get you so far, experts tend to be the ones who provide

practical, actionable advice—and as Carbary puts it himself, "…the best place to get that advice is from practitioners who are in the trenches with them [your audience], not from big names who have tons of Instagram followers."

- **Don't make your platform about you**: your show's branding should be built around appealing to your guests and audience first and foremost, not around yourself.

Step 3: Content

Here's What You Talk About

You can start by talking to your guest about what they did in their career and their background. And then ask about the challenges and opportunities that they think about every day.

Then, as you speak to them and gain a clearer picture of their world, learning the things they struggle with, what they care about, what information is helpful to them, things they don't care about, etc., you can start to leverage that new knowledge in the next interview.

If there's anything they mention that you're unfamiliar with, it's OK to simply say something like, "For our listeners who aren't as familiar with this concept, could you walk us through exactly what [blank] means?"

This way, with each interview, you get better and better at having fruitful discussions and crafting better questions to ask.

The Three Phases of Collaboration

1. Plan
2. Create
3. Share

For planning, make scheduling easy with software like Calendly, and plan the content around the overall theme of the content you want to create and the tangible takeaways you want your audience to walk away with. (Use an outline.)

For the content phase, don't try to sell anything or promote yourself when you're creating content with your guests. Simply be curious about your guest, have fun, and whenever possible learn from other interviewers in your space to conduct better interviews yourself.

And, lastly, for the share phase, start by finalizing and publishing the work. Then, post it on social media.

Produce, Reuse, Recycle (How 1=3)

Every time you do an interview or collaborate with someone, that collaboration could become at least three pieces of content by repurposing it to be published on more platforms (e.g. a YouTube video that's edited to be published on Instagram and TikTok).

The Relationship Snowball

Once you create content with someone you can continue investing in the relationship by doing things like this:

- Grabbing a bite to eat together
- Make it Facebook official (add each other as friends)
- Give them a gift
- Do another collab

Step 4: You're Done

So, After I've Created All This Content, Do My Dreams Just Magically Come True?

The author has an answer to this you may not expect:

> **Carbary**: "Do all your dreams suddenly become true? Often, yes, actually: they will start to come true. By the time you've repurposed some content, created strategic relationships, and learned more about your industry than you could ever imagine, you'll likely be seeing results. Maybe you were offered more than one job. Maybe you sold more than you hoped for. Maybe you realized something interesting about your field. Maybe you even developed a new interest or discovered a new ambition. Often, your objectives happen just like that—organically—simply because you put yourself in a position to win. You surrounded yourself with the people you needed to connect with, and great things happened."

A pro tip to making things happen for yourself though is to make sure your guests know what business you're in (or what your expertise is) as early in the process as possible.

You don't want people to only see you as a blogger, podcaster, etc. because most people would be happy to hear that you have a solution to their problem (in the form of a service) or could be a great candidate for an opportunity they need filled.

Common Pitfalls (and How to Avoid Them)

- **Don't target influencers**: especially when you're new, it's going to be very difficult to land them on your show, and even if you do get them to say yes, they have no reason to share your content.
- **Don't focus on downloads**: focus on your guests and on creating solid relationships, those relationships are where your opportunities come from.
- **Don't think you need an audience before you can start**: the audience says that, in his experience, audience size rarely comes up in his conversations.
- **Don't overfocus on the quality of the content**: getting it done and creating a great relationship with your guest are more important.
- **Don't make the content all about you**
- **Don't make "pie in the sky" content**: do your best to make great, actionable content (asking for real-life examples from your guest can help).

MORE WISDOM

- **Life is relationships**

See the author's words here:

> **Carbary**: "Relationships are more than a nice side dish in life. They're the entrée, the appetizer, the side dish, and really, the whole buffet. Gary Smalley put it this way: 'Life is relationships; the rest is just details.'"

And we believe the same here at TPM:

> **TPM**: "Hell is other people. And heaven is other people." – The Power Mvoes

And whether your life is more of a heaven or hell on earth is largely up to you.

QUOTES

> "…a simple truth, which, when expressed, goes something like this: "If you hang around the barbershop long enough, you're going to get a haircut.""

Albeit we know it wasn't Carbary who first said this, it's still a true quote that emphasizes the importance of sticking with it in any endeavor worth pursuing—including creating and building a platform to reach and build relationships with others.

Real-Life Tips

- **Done is better than perfect**

And, of course, this expands well beyond only networking, creating content, or doing business.

Generally speaking, when you have a goal, it's better to focus more on getting it done than accomplishing it perfectly.

Cons

- **Some reach-outs maybe could've been better written**

For example, the author shares the example of Jeremy, an aspiring entrepreneur who wants to connect with purchasing managers at chain retailers to grow his clothing brand.

Jeremy decides to do a blog series and emails Sally, the purchasing manager for a big-name chain store, by saying something like this:

> **Jeremy**: "Hey Sally, I'm writing a blog series on retail analytics, and I saw the article you wrote on LinkedIn about the topic. I thought you'd be a great person to highlight in the series. Any interest in doing a 15-minute interview?"

More could've been done with this reach-out, such as complimenting their article (emotional value-giving), sharing a little more about the blog series (to avoid putting the onus on the receiver to find out), and so on.

For more, check out, "How To Write Cold Emails That Get Responses (Steal This Script!)."

- **Other forms of networking can be strategic too**

The author comments on other forms of networking relying on chance encounters and random in-person events and presents content-based networking as the only strategic option for networkers.

However, there are other options, including hosting your own cocktail parties and overseeing the guest list to ensure you meet the people you *want* to meet.

Pros

- **Short, to the point, and full of value**

I rented this book from the library, and despite Amazon saying it's 196 pages, it turned out to only be about 64 pages long inside my copy (which I double-checked was the right edition and it was).

So, I actually found myself wishing the book was longer but, in the end, I was happy that there was no fluff.

Review

Due to the low page count, this book feels like more of a handbook.

But, it's still one of the best books I've read on networking compared to the other resources out there, and made for a great read.

Plus, even if a more power-aware approach would serve the author's approaches sometimes, the overall strategy is sound. (And I only give this book an 8.5 because I wish he would've added more strategies than only content-based networking, as good as this book was :).

Get the book here.

Or, check out the best books on social skills.

Top 10 Manipulation Quotes Listed & Explained

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 December 2023 · Archived copy · Original

Are you ready to discover the secrets of persuasion and tap into the power of influence?

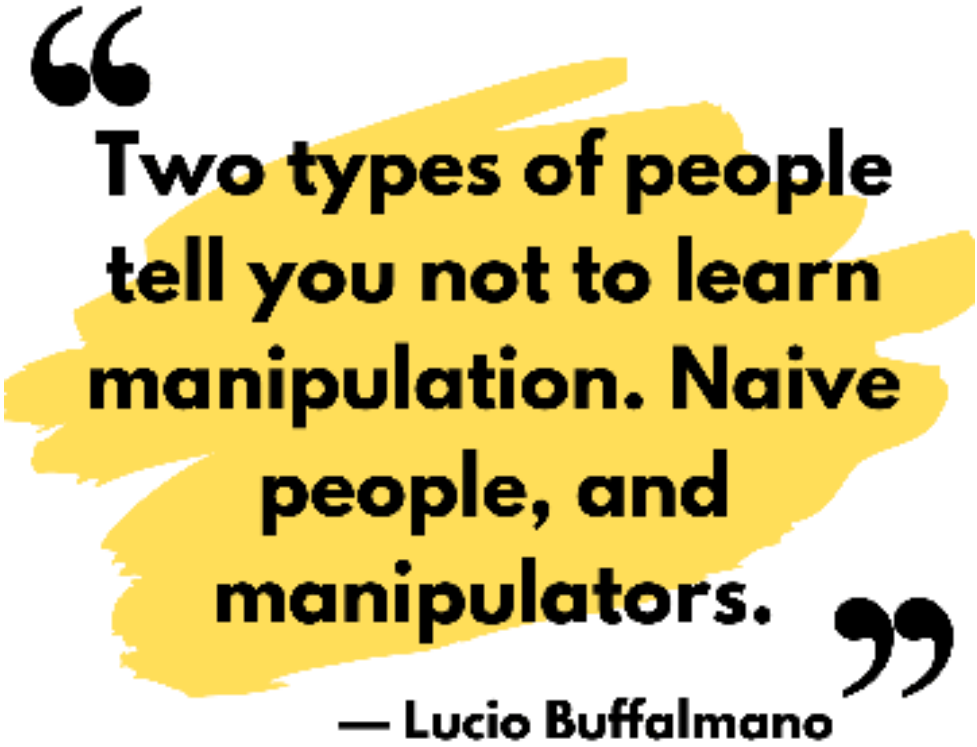
Well, then…

Wake up brother because you'll need a lot more than a list of manipulation quotes ⍰.

HOWEVER…

Our *analysis* of those quotes provides plenty of guidance and insights.

So here's the first insightful manipulation quote you straight from our "Start Here" page:



Always be suspicious of those who virtue-signal on avoiding manipulation

The full quote runs:

> **There's only two types of people who discourage others from learning manipulation. Naive people, and manipulators.**
> **Ignore both.**
>
> *— Lucio Buffalmano*

So let's help you now become more power-aware:

Contents

- The Art of Influence: Quotes that Illuminate Tactics
- Power Dynamics and Control: Quotes Revealing Manipulation
- Safeguarding Against Manipulation: Wisdom from Quotes
- Manipulation in Relationships: Quotes on Emotional Exploitation

- Media and Manipulation: Quotes on Perception Management
- Personal Growth and Empowerment: Quotes to Stay Resilient
- Recognizing Manipulation: Quotes on Awareness
- Influence: Quotes on Persuasion
- False Manipulation Quotes
- Fixing Famous Quotes
- Quotes On Manipulating A Manipulator
- TPM Approved Manipulation Quotes

The Art of Influence: Quotes that Illuminate Tactics

> **"Things come apart so easily when they have been held together with lies."**
>
> — *Dorothy Allison*

Very powerful reminder that albeit manipulation "works", it also comes with heavy costs.

And that's all the more true in closer relationships and long-term relationships.

It's also true when you're dealing with great people.
And that's because high-quality and power-aware people are also especially good at spotting manipulation -and so are Power University alumni-.

> **"Manipulation is the dark side of charisma."**
>
> — *Max Weber*

Tough pill to digest for many, but largely true.
Also read our article 'Great leadership is great manipulation'.

> **"When you know what a man wants you know who he is, and how to move him."**
>
> — *George R.R. Martin*

True.
This is why you only share your true mission, goals, and passions with a few selected individuals.

Power Dynamics and Control: Quotes Revealing Manipulation

> **"You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time."**
>
> — *Abraham Lincoln*

Another powerful reminder of the hidden costs of manipulation.

The more people you try to manipulate, the more likely it is some people will be smart and power-aware enough to see through your manipulation.

> **Con men look for human frailty to exploit. This is most often greed. Trump found a different vice: anger. The emotional are always the most susceptible to manipulation.**
>
> — *Pamela Meyer*

Great observation on political manipulation.
Not that Trump "found it", of course. It's simply a common refrain for populists.

Safeguarding Against Manipulation: Wisdom from Quotes

> **"When you notice someone does something toxic the first time, don't wait for the second time before you address it."**
>
> *— Shahida Arabi*

This is one of those mantras that has you nodding but… That's not really always true.

Sometimes, you want to observe, take note, and purposefully do little.

Some other times, you may want to end the relationship right away if it is a big red flag.

But still, thumbs up, because there are a lot of too-nice guys and too-nice women who need to hear this.
Also read:

- Stop being a beta male
- Passiveness: The doormat diseases
- **How to be more of a good ahole**

> How to Be A Good Asshole (5 Easy Steps)

> **"The success of the manipulation depends on the level of conviction and force of the denial."**
>
> *— Tess Binder*

A good reminder of that Weber's quote and the "dark side of charisma".

But also a good reminder that much of the power rests on the receiver.
You're never an empty box that's being pushed around.

And an even better reminder to do the opposite of what people do.
Such as: trust those who admit their ignorance and bias. And assess the self-assured gurus even harder.

> **When you're surrounded by a world of constant lies, manipulation, and deceit, that dark energy is bound to seep into you eventually.**
>
> *— Jeffrey Bowyer-Chapman*

Meaning: stop hanging out with turkeys and inveterate manipulators.

> **The concept of romantic love affords a means of emotional manipulation which the male is free to exploit, since love is the only circumstance in which the female is (ideologically) pardoned for sexual activity.**
>
> *— Kate Millett*

Interesting take.
Not because it's necessarily true, but because it's the specular opposite of manosphere "gurus". Red pill authors say that men are the romantic sex.

Generally speaking, both men and women can fall in love and be manipulated for it.

But, generally speaking, men have more scope to take active leadership to make her fall in love.
Hence: caution when you feel hopelessly falling in love is good advice for everyone.

Manipulation in Relationships: Quotes on Emotional Exploitation

> **"I'm not upset that you lied to me, I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you."**
>
> *— Friedrich Nietzsche*

Edit:
This has become my #1 favorite manipulation quote.

Absolute genius quote!

I had this same reaction whenever I realized someone wasn't being straight.
Plus, **unnecessary manipulation, lies and sneakiness cause the loss of respect and the erection of an invisible "wall" in-between**.

It highlights the limitations of manipulation, over-Machiavellianism, and lies.
And it underpins one of our core values here at TPM.

And that is that albeit you want to learn manipulation, you also must put manipulation aside with your best relationships.
Flying higher and becoming an honorable man is necessary to have a good life with good relationships.

The price for not doing so is high.
And it's not having *any* close or good relationship.

> ***"Manipulative people are those who wish to be loved on their own terms."***
>
> *— David S. Viscott*

Fantastic take!

It can indeed be a manipulative gambit to accuse a partner of not loving them "as they are".
Especially when coupled with accusing of "trying to change them".

It's a way of saying "stop expecting more of me, take me as I am". Which can be fair… But *only if they're being good partners*.

It's manipulative instead when *poor* partners take that approach. If you accept that manipulative frame,e the manipulator can keep things convenient for *them* -and costly to *you*-.

> ***"Women work very hard to prevent or stop their sons from being manipulated by their women, like their sons' fathers were or are being manipulated by their sons' mothers."***
>
> *— Mokokoma Mokhonoana*

LOL, good one.
Also see our articles on women's manipulation, including this popular one:

- **Betaization**: how women turn men into "nice guy" providers

> Female Domestication: How Women Control Men & Relationships

> **"A skilled manipulator can make you question your own reality."**
>
> *— Gaslight, directed by George Cukor (1944)*

I'm not a big fan of this quote, to be honest.

It places all the power on the manipulator, and zero power on the victim. That's inherently disempowering and, may I say it, "b*tch talk".

So stop being a victim and start empowering yourself.
And if you want to learn more about gaslighting look no further:

- **Gaslighting**: the ultimate guide to spotting gaslighting

> Gaslighting Power Dynamics: 17 Signs You're Being Manipulated

Media and Manipulation: Quotes on Perception Management

> **"Behind every angry mob there is a puppeteer pulling the strings."**
>
> *— Marty Rubin*

Rubin should have seen the MAGA idiots going to jail for Trump :).

It's a point we've made several times and with several examples here on TPM:

> **"There are three types of lies — lies, damn lies, and statistics."**
>
> *— Benjamin Disraeli*

As a rule of thumb: never trust someone just because they seem to be quoting research or data.

> **The successful businessman today apes the politician.**
> **He has adopted the glitter and the ballyhoo of the campaign (…) and pseudo-democracy slightly tinged with paternalism.**
>
> *— Edward Bernays*

Bernays should see today's influencers.
Including businessmen who turn influencers to make more money.

> **"Is there any point in public debate in a society where hardly anyone has been taught how to think, while millions have been taught what to think?"**
>
> *— Peter Hitchens*

Great question.

Critical thinking skills are THE most underrated, under-developed, and crucial skill to make the world a better place. And that includes making democracies function better.

Personal Growth and Empowerment: Quotes to Stay Resilient

> **"You are a manipulator. I like to think of myself more as an outcome engineer."**

> — *J.R. Ward*

LOL, such a genius quote.
Beware of people who are always accusing others of dark-triad traits:

> **Jordan Peterson**: (accuses everyone he disagrees with of being narcissists)

And, as I shared here, I'd even avoid over-diagnosing others.

> **"Nothing manipulates people more than the desire to please."**
>
> — *Zoe Durlock*

Hmmm, yeah, there is something here.
But I wouldn't say that's the best example of "manipulation hook".
Yes, you lose when you're too much of a people-pleaser. But not so much out of being manipulated. More for being too low power and unassertive and putting yourself last.

> **"Don't become manipulated by the illusion of who you think you are, or who you think you should be."**
>
> — *Steven Redhead*

Yep.
It is a good technique for both a persuader or manipulator to leverage that ideal self.

> **"The less you respond to negative people, the more powerful your life will become."**
>
> — *Robert E. Baine, Jr.*

Not *always* true -sometimes you must respond-.

But fantastic quote nonetheless.

A powerful insight for the many who miss out on the power of ignoring, and the mental power of remaining unaffected.

> **"When you acquire enough inner peace and feel really positive about yourself, it's almost impossible for you to be controlled and manipulated by anybody else."**
>
> — *Wayne Dyer*

Great reminder that with inner strength also comes a lot of outer-world strength.

> **"People who are easily manipulated are those who are not sure of themselves."**
>
> — *Alain de Botton*

Great reminder that inner insecurity undermines external strength.

Still, if you allow us to be the usual pain-in-a** nitpicker we are, people who are *too* sure of themselves can also be rather easy to manipulate.

> **"If you are an approval addict, your behaviour is as easy to control as that of any other junkie. All a manipulator need do is a simple two-step process: Give you what you crave, and then threaten to take it away. Every drug dealer in the world plays this game."**

> — *Harriet B. Braiker, Who's Pulling Your Strings?*

Yep, same as above: inner neediness provides easy hooks for manipulation.

Recognizing Manipulation: Quotes on Awareness

> **Breaking free from manipulation is a twofold journey: one eye on the manipulators around you, the other on the one within.**
> **Most people forget the inner manipulator**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

Example:

> **Lucio**: (realizes he was subconsciously undermining her ex girlfriend's self-esteem)

Good reminder that you may not be as innocent or candid as you like to portray yourself to be (including to yourself).

> **"Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are."**
>
> — *Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince*

We couldn't make a list of best manipulation quotes without Machiavelli in it, could we?
I'd add to this that it may be a smart approach to only reveal your true self to a selected few.

> **"When someone tells you that there is no agenda, you can be certain there is nothing but an agenda."**
>
> — *Craig D. Lounsbrough*

LOL, good one.
Except that… This is also true when people do *not* say that there is no agenda :).

> **"Psychopaths view any social exchange as a 'feeding opportunity,' a contest or a test of wills in which there can be only one winner. Their motives are to manipulate and take, ruthlessly and without remorse."**
>
> — *Robert D. Hare*

Good reminder of what we say on TPM, which makes for another great quote by the way:

> **There are no small red flags.**
> **Red flags are like thunder. Once you spot the first, the worst is yet to come.**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

This is one of Power University's core competencies: learning red flags, and how to correctly assess people.

> **"If you can manipulate news, a judge can manipulate the law. A smart lawyer can keep a killer out of jail, a smart accountant can keep a thief from paying taxes, a smart reporter could ruin your reputation – unfairly."**
>
> — *Mario Cuomo*

A good reminder of not trusting everything you hear.

> **"The art of pleasing is the art of deception."**
>
> — *Luc De Clapiers*

A good reminder to be careful of those who are a bit too complimentary.

Influence: Quotes on Persuasion

> **Great leadership is great manipulation**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

This quote uncovers a more nuanced and underappreciated reality of leadership: **effective leaders often influence individual followers to deprioritize their interests** and returns in favor of the group, cause, or organization's goals and returns.
More selfish leaders may also prioritize their returns over those of their followers.

In more extreme cases, the followers' returns can turn negative, something that would be unlikely to happen if they had been on their own because humans tend to default to net-positive returns on their investment (positive social ROI).
In these cases, followers' engagement is often driven less by rational evaluation of what's best for them as individuals, and more by manipulation.

Recognizing this dynamic doesn't mean to reject leadership. This is a 'positive cynicist approach' that can help individuals critically assess leadership and protect themselves.

Also, given the overlap between persuasion and manipulation, **a greatly persuasive leader must also be well-versed in manipulation**.

There is also a more "good" side for knowing manipulation, though.
And it's that the more you know about both persuasion and manipulation, the better you can ensure that you avoid the latter.

Also see our article:

- Persuasion VS Manipulation

> Persuasion vs. Manipulation: Understanding the Fine Line

False Manipulation Quotes

> **"No one believes a liar. Even when she's telling the truth."**
>
> — *Sara Shepard*

Good quote on the importance of reputation.

Unluckily, just not true.

Plenty of people fall for the same old lies -and liars-.

> **"An apology without change is just manipulation."**
>
> — *Unknown*

Not always.
See our full article on "when an apology without change is manipulation".

> **"Manipulation is the way of the weak and insecure."**
>
> — *Shannon L. Alder*

Another one of those manipulation quotes that *sound* great.
People would *love* it to be true. It validates their self-righteous egos that they -who are NOT manipulators of course- are strong.

But it's just *not* true.

Or, at least, only *partially* true.
Manipulation *can* stem from an inability to be assertive or high power. In then overlaps with passive aggressiveness.
But it's also false and misleading because plenty of dominant, powerful, and successful men also manipulate.
Including some who do also have the courage to speak straight some of the time.

> **"Vision without integrity is not mission — it's manipulation."**
>
> — *Howard G. Hendricks*

It's really a good-sounding quote and we approve.
However, it's entirely possible to be honest about a morally deplorable mission, and still recruit others *without* manipulation.
As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. It's people *with* integrity who require manipulation to follow the many poor leaders and missions of this world.

> **"No love is conditional. If love is conditional, it's just some sort of manipulation masquerading as love."**
>
> — *Donald Miller*

To me, this sounds like Pollyanna who says that to other women in search of validation.

Deep down, she may want to delude *herself* that there is a prince who will love her no matter what.

And even worse, that's not just naive, but even plain entitlement mentality.

Stop expecting unconditional love. Instead, do your part to *deserve* that love.

> **"Manipulation is a form of power, but it is an ugly and destructive one."**
>
> — *Richard Bach*

This sounds overly dramatic.
Manipulation is a form of power, but it's not always ugly. And not always destructive, either. Not any more than other forms of power can, anyway.

> **"If we inspire people, they will give us more than we asked for. If we manipulate them, they will give us exactly what we paid for"**
>
> — *Simon Sinek*

Simon Sinek is THE man when it comes to naive cringe.

Better yet, this quote shows how inspiration, leadership, and manipulation overlap.
In my experience, "inspiring" people means to sell them hot air BS. Hot air BS instead of, say, *paying* them more. Or giving them more holidays.

Also see our seminal article on corporate manipulation.

As for Sinek, watch this inspirational video of his.
And if you don't see the BS, you very much need to spend more time on this website:

> **Sinek**: (nonsense motivational talk on selflessnes as the #1 trait to enter elite fighting units)

Read more in our:

- **Naive Self-Help**

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Popular But False Self-Help Myths

> **"We live in a world where unfortunately the distinction between true and false appears to become increasingly blurred by manipulation of facts, by exploitation of uncritical minds, and by the pollution of the language."**
>
> — *Arne Tiselius*

This quote leverages the "uniqueness frame".

Similar formats are "in our times of unparalleled challenges… " or "our society has become…".
This format is often BS because whatever comes next is seldom truly unique. In this case, I doubt there has been any "manipulation-free" period in history.
Even the Garden of Eve wasn't :).

> **"The maniacal lunatics in control of our society know exactly how human beings tick and they are masters at manipulation." –**
>
> — *Bruce McDonald*

Another example of someone crying manipulation-wolf while actually being manipulative himself.

This is the "conspiracy format".

And it works like this:

The less the manipulator's audience trusts institutions, the more influence *he* acquires.

It's an old game that's very popular these days.

Red pill gurus play it as well.
The format is "society lies to you with comfortable lies (but I tell you the cold harsh truth)". Or "the feminized society is ruining you (but I'm on your side)".
Neither of those is necessarily wrong. It's the way the guru presents it that it's manipulative.

There's an endless stream of gurus using this format.
For example Brett Weinstein, London Real, and recently, even Jordan Peterson:

> **Jordan Peterson**: our tyrannical, idiotic, virtue-signaling government is now dictating how you should eat

Fixing Famous Quotes

> **If you don't give education to people, it is easy to manipulate them."**
>
> — *Pele*

TPM rewrite:

> **If you don't educate people, it's easy to manipulate them. But it's even easier to manipulate them when you're the educator.**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

I find it disturbingly elitist to pass all uneducated people for muppets.
Plenty of uneducated people can be well-discerning men.

Which calls for our next quote:

> **Smart and unedecated is not the problem.**
> **Stupid and educated is.**
> **The stupid literate will gobble up nonsense, and spread it further.**
>
> — *Lucio Buffalmano*

And now let's spruce it up with some intersexual dynamics:

> **The casting couch exists in every business where there is power dynamics and manipulation.**
>
> — *Tisca Chopra*

Hmmm… *Partially* true.
Remove "manipulation" and the quote is good.

Otherwise, it's simply the take of those who don't understand human nature.

The "casting couch" doesn't even need manipulation. The casting couch can be a very open and even "honest talk" exchange.

This is not to say it's moral or "good", of course.
And there are costs as well. Such as the loss of productivity if there were better candidates. And a direct loss for any other candidate who's not willing to "couch".

But still, the casting couch isn't necessarily about manipulation.

Quotes On Manipulating A Manipulator

> **"The best way to manipulate a man is to make him think he is manipulating you."**
>
> *– John Smith*

> **"It was easier to manipulate someone if they didn't perceive you as a threat."**
>
> *– Stephanie Wrobel*

> **Appear dumber than your mark**
>
> *– Robert Greene, The 48 Laws of Power*

All these say the same thing.
We agree best with Wrobel.

See more here:

- **How to manipulate a manipulator**

> How to Manipulate a Manipulator

TPM Approved Manipulation Quotes

> **"Life is a constant daily manipulation."**
>
> *– Deyth Banger*

This may sound a bit too cynical.

But if we take "manipulation" in the larger sense, including presenting one's best side, then it's absolutely true. Worth reminding ourselves that we acquire highly distorted views of how strong, effective, successful, or happy others are.

> **Most claims you read about psychological manipulation are rubbish.**
>
> *Dominic Cummings*

Some of that is fueled by the marketing of "tricks" and "secrets" of dark psychology books and courses.
See our dark psychology article for a better overview.

48 Laws VS Power University: What's Best to Advance In Life?

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 December 2023 · Archived copy · Original

The 48 Laws of Power is a popular book among our readers and alumni.

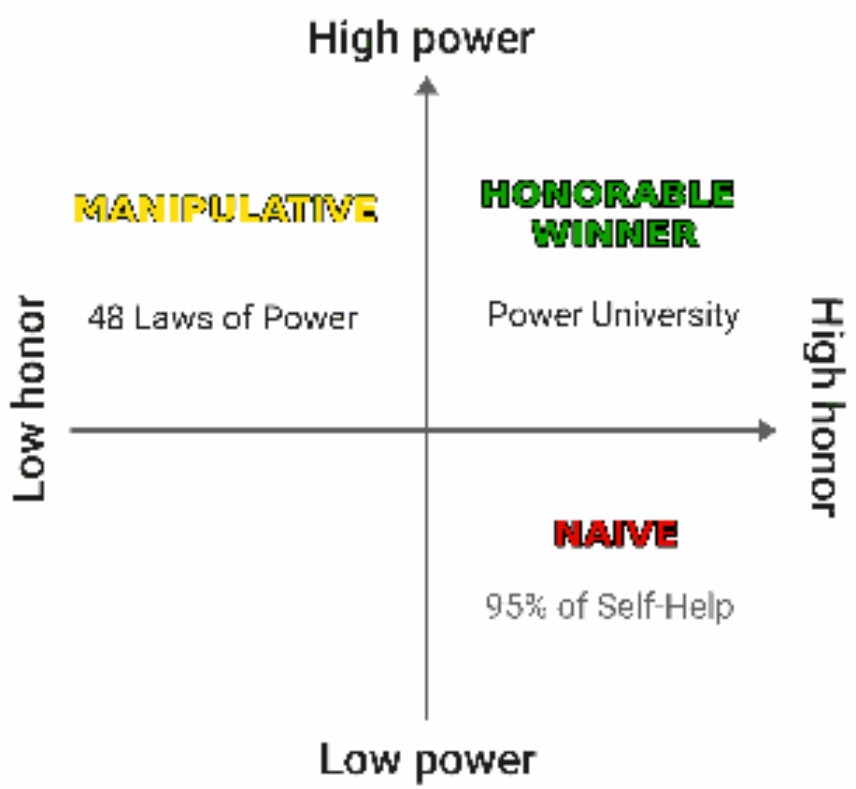
And for good reasons.
It's the most popular book on power dynamics, social strategies, and Machiavellianism.

And our alumni told us that Power University has delivered many-fold increases in status, respect, and attraction.

So some people may wonder:

> Should I get *The 48 Laws of Power* , or should I get Power University?

We will answer this difficult question.



Power University takes the same strategic approach of *The 48 Laws of Power*, but more practical, and includes how to use it for win-win

Contents

- INTRO
  - Similarities:
- 48 Laws VS Power University
  - 48 Laws of Power Pros & Cons
  - Power University Pros & Cons
- What People Say
- What AI Says
- Which One Should You Get?

INTRO

The 48 Laws of Power is a popular book for our audience.

It's one of our endorsed resources.
And many people who end up here have already read *The 48 Laws of Power*.

There are certainly parallels between TPM, Power University, and Robert Greene's most famous book.

Similarities:

- **Eye-opening** for many. Both resources can open a new world to some people who have been a bit too naive, too "good" or too simple-minded
- **Machiavellian**: both resources tackle (social) Machiavellianism
- **Red pill**: although we don't necessarily consider the book or TPM as "red pill", some people do

And some may certainly see both as cynical.
I don't see TPM as cynical because anything sharing truth, by definition, cannot be cynical -maybe "positively cynical" at most-.
I consider *The 48 Laws of Power* cynical though because it focuses *only* on the darker and more predatory side of human nature.

48 Laws VS Power University

In brief:

The main difference between *The 48 Laws of Power* and Power University is that Robert Greene provides a list of interesting and potentially eye-opening principles.
Power University also shares high-level guiding principles but provides a whole system for self-development and life-effectiveness.

The scope is different.

The 48 Laws of Power is a book.
With all the advantages and disadvantages that a book format includes.

Power University is a course.
To help students internalize the information Power University leverages videos, real-life examples, self-assessments, quizzes, and assignments.
Power University isn't built to share information or entertain. **Power University is built to deliver real-life results such as higher status, increased confidence, and higher baseline attraction from women.**

Ultimately, a successful student of Power University *becomes* a high-value man.

48 Laws of Power Pros & Cons

PROS:

- **Cheaper**
- **Briefer**
- **Entertaining**

CONS:

- **Potentially ineffective** to grow skills
- **Potentially confusing**: see a review below. And we've seen this so often that we made an article on the limitations of The 48 Laws of Power
- **Unscientific and potentially untrue**. Especially when it goes for marketing and over-generalizing "laws" that instead present too many exceptions

For example:

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Lucio**: while "talking little" can come across as high-power in many situations, **there is no real law of "talking less than necessary"**. For example, **research says that in new groups people who talk more gain more status**.
> Lucio experienced as much and talks more in forming groups.
> And many gurus of high-dialectical skills develop their following -and power- by talking far more than necessary. See for example Jordan Peterson, Jay Shetty, etc.
> Unnecessary flowery language can also be an effective seduction tool

Power University Pros & Cons

CONS:

- **More expensive**, it can be a proper investment for some
- **Intensive**, not for lazy, it's for driven and ambitious men
- **May take longer than an audiobook**, albeit the ROI may be higher since results stick for a lifetime

And… Can't look erudite reading it in public :)

PROS:

- **Clearer**, telling you when and how to apply what strategy or technique
- **Scientific**, built upon thousands of studies and textbooks
- **Proven to deliver results**, skills, and raise a man's value

What People Say

I'm biased.

I love Greene, but I'm a lot more invested in TPM.

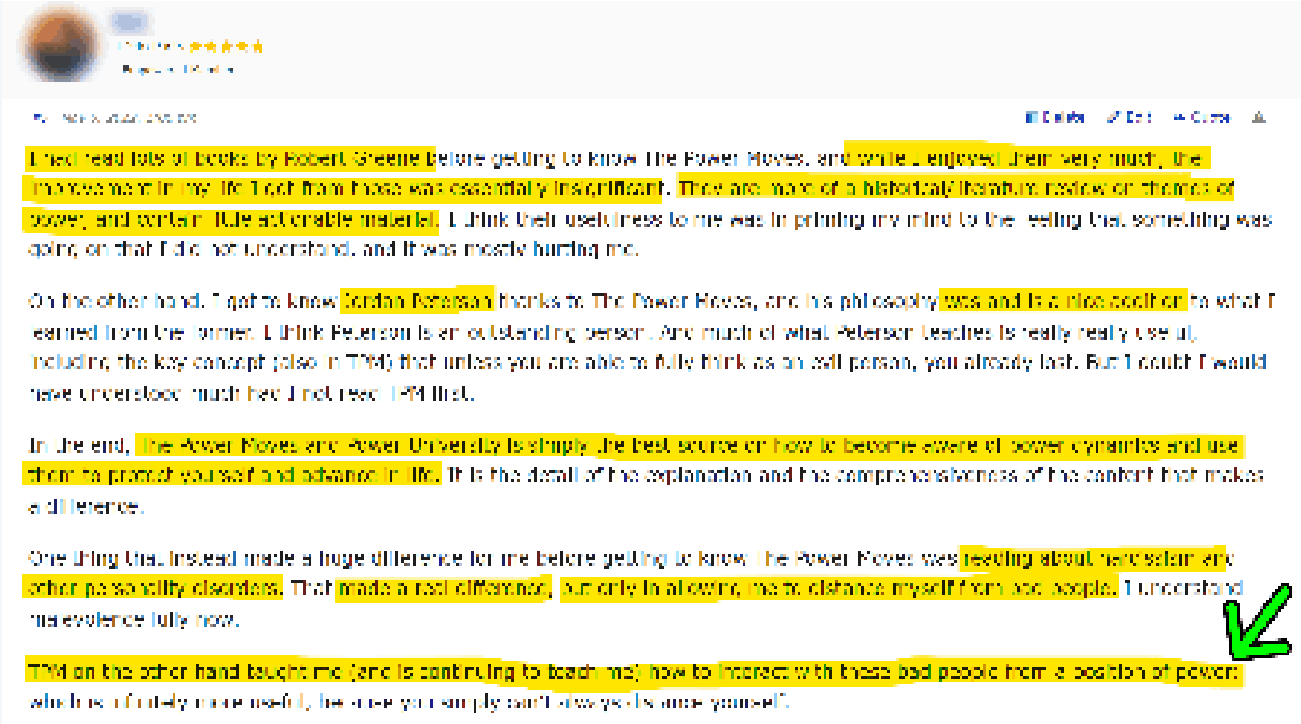
So best of all is to let others speak.

We have a few people who tried BOTH *The 48 Laws of Power* and Power University.
There is still obviously a self-selection bias. They wrote in the community forum, which means they probably loved TPM and PU.

But still, it can be an instructive read.

So let's see what they say:

1. The 48 Laws of Power Didn't Improve My Life, TPM & Power University Did



> **I had read lots of books by Robert Greene** (…) and while I enjoyed them very much, **the improvement in**

> **my life was essentially insignificant**.
> They are more of a historical/literature review on themes of power, and contain little actionable material.
> (…)
> In the end, **The Power Moves and Power University is simply the best source** on how to become aware of power dynamics and use them t**o protect yourself and advance in life**.
> (…)
> TPM on the other hand taught me (and is continuing to teach me) how to interact with these bad people from a position of power
>
> *– PU Alumnus, discussing JP and Greene*

I enjoyed those books very much as well.

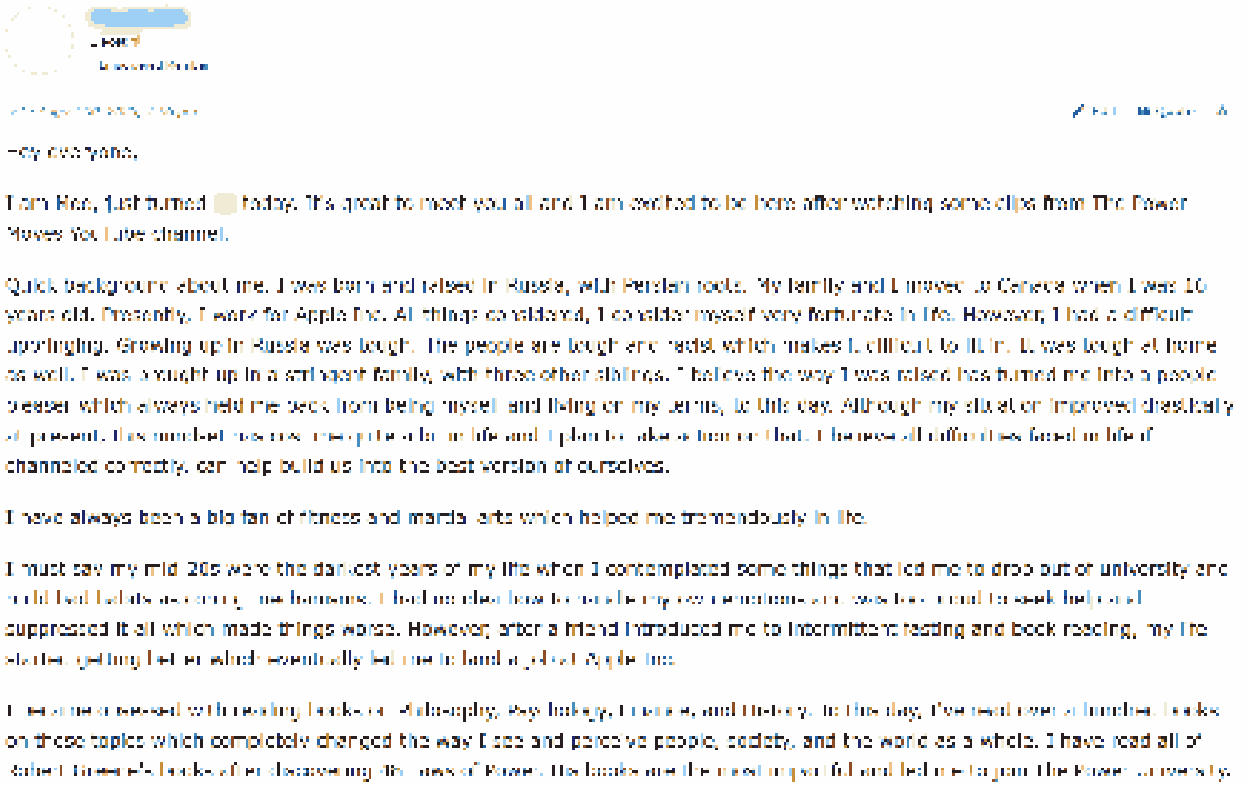
But also to me they felt more like historical reviews than actionable advice to advance in life.

To some people who lacked any power awareness though, it may still be eye-opening.

I've met some of those folks, and they were making silly mistakes like disempowering their bosses or giving too harsh criticism.

2. Robert Greene Led Me To Power University

Some people did find Greene transforming though:



> I became obsessed with reading books on Philosophy, Psychology, Finance, and History. To this day, I've read over a hundred books on these topics which completely changed the way I see and perceive people, society, and the world as a whole. I **have read all of Robert Greene's books after discovering 48 Laws of Power. His books are the most impactful and led me to join The Power University**.
>
> *M. PU alumnus introduction*

That was his intro before starting PU.

So he hadn't properly experienced PU yet.
It would be interesting to hear what he thought of PU as he went through it.

3. Something was missing and TPM and Power University are actionable

I landed here amidst my journey to improve social effectiveness whilst searching for resources on the topic. Like many here I've been through the usual. Think Dale Carnegie, Robert Greene, Charisma related videos on YT etc. before finding this site.

And whilst the resources I used were helpful in different ways, I still felt I was missing something foundational. Namely, what to do when someone doesn't "play by the rules" e.g. trying to undermine you, cut you out of a group etc.

Most guides don't even mention the possibility that people won't always reciprocate kindness and other pro-social behaviour, and when they do, the advice rarely expands past just staying calm.

"Okay I'm calm, now what?"

Fortunately, this site exists.

The best thing I can say about this site is that when I found it, I ended up reading non-stop for almost all of 2 days. It seemed to make so much sense.

Probably because the examples are based on the real situations that actually happen day to day that add up over time to cement our position in whatever environment we are in at the time.

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> Probably because **the examples are based on the real situations that *actually happen* day to day** that add up over time to cement our position in whatever environment we are in at the time.
> **Along with the exact responses and mindsets that one could use to deal with them. As opposed to something like the 48 laws where the stories are too abstract/far removed from daily life to truly be actionable, especially for a beginner**. Good book, very tough to implement (and easy to misinterpret).
> It honestly seemed a little too good to be true at first, so (….)
>
> *PU alumnus, review here*

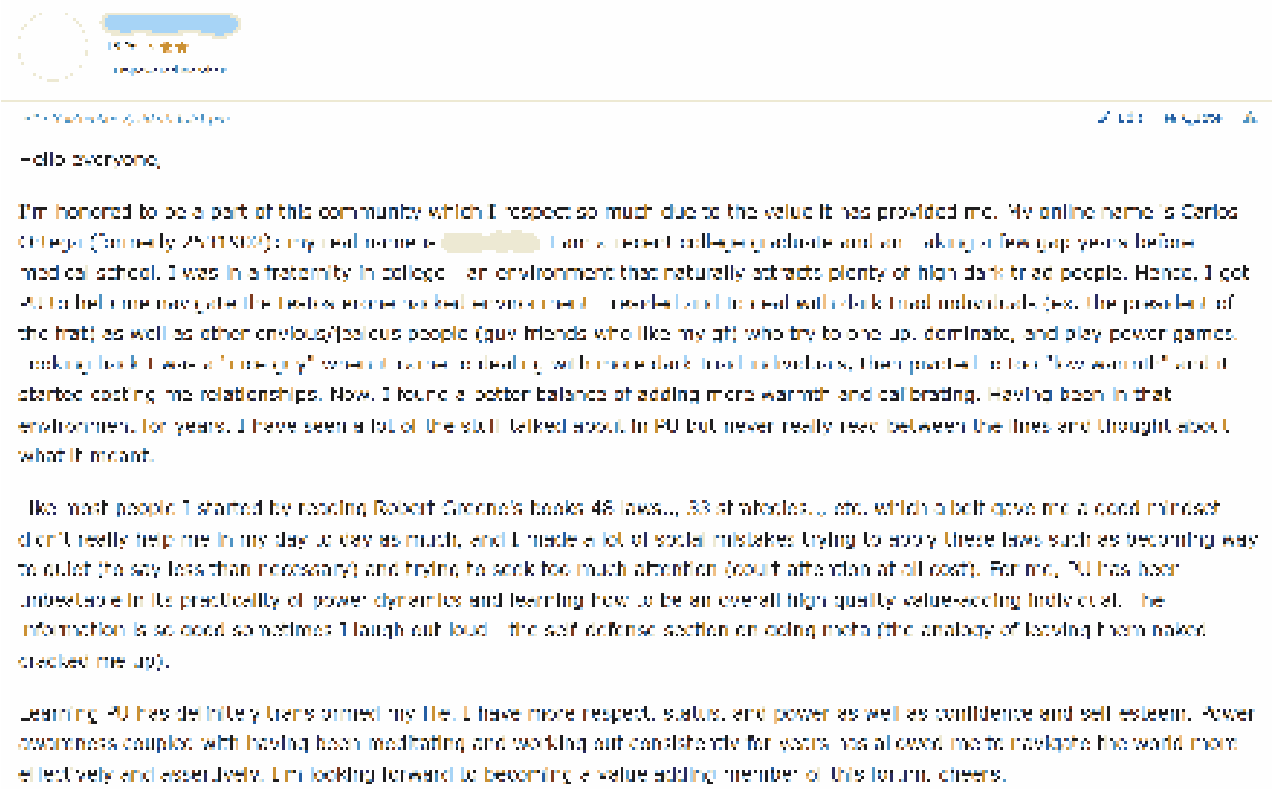
In that same thread, I shared that I had the same experience.

The 48 Laws of Power is good self-help -in contrast to much naive self-help-.
But it's challenging for any book to develop skills, get results, and transform lives.

The idea for TPM was born when I realized that it wasn't just an issue with The 48 Laws of Power.
There just wasn't such a resource.
And I took it upon myself to create it.

And to conclude:

4. PU is unbeatably practical and superior to becoming a high-quality, value-adding individual



Hello everyone,

I'm honored to be a part of this community which I respect so much due to the value it has provided me. My online name is Carlos [illegible] (formerly [illegible]): my real name is [illegible] I am a recent college graduate and am taking a few gap years before medical school. I was in a fraternity in college – an environment that naturally attracts plenty of high dark triad people. Hence, I got [illegible] the [illegible] of the trait as well as other envious/jealous people (guy friends who like my gf) who try to one up, dominate, and play power games. [illegible] "[illegible]" [illegible] started costing me relationships. Now, I found a better balance of adding more warmth and calibrating. Having been in that environment for years, I have seen a lot of the stuff talked about in PU but never really read between the lines and thought about what it meant.

Like most people I started by reading Robert Greene's books 48 laws.., 33 strategies.., etc. which albeit gave me a good mindset didn't really help me in my day-to-day as much, and I made a lot of social mistakes trying to apply these laws such as becoming way too quiet (to say less than necessary) and trying to seek too much attention (court attention at all cost). For me, PU has been unbeatable in its practicality of power dynamics and learning how to be an overall high quality value-adding individual. The information is so good sometimes I laugh out loud – the self defense section on going meta (the analogy of leaving them naked cracked me up).

Learning PU has definitely turned my life. I have more respect, status, and power as well as confidence and self esteem. Added awareness coupled with having been meditating and working out consistently for years has allowed me to navigate the world more effectively and assertively. I'm looking forward to becoming a value adding member of this forum, cheers.

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>
> *PU alumnus introduction*

What AI Says

I've been using AI during Power University 9.0 upgrade.

One of the questions I ask to ensure we deliver unique value is how it stacks up with other available resources.

And ChatGPT mentioned specifically *The 48 Laws of Power*:

ChatGPT Memory Full Share

a power-oriented framework rather than reactive techniques.

Compared to "The 48 Laws of Power" and similar books:

- **More applicable** – While books like Greene's work are mostly historical anecdotes, PU directly **guides application in modern life.**
- **More balanced** – It **avoids** the "win-at-all-costs" Machiavellianism of some seduction or business books, making it more sustainable for long-term power.

Final Verdict

Overall, **this is a highly valuable lesson that outperforms most available resources** in terms of applicability, balance, and directness. With slight refinements—especially in case studies, defensive tactics, and framing—it can become **the go-to practical guide for modern, positively Machiavellian men.**

> **ChatGPT**: While books like Greene's work are mostly historical anecdotes, PU directly apply to modern life. This is a highly valuable lesson that outperforms most available resources

And that was only *one* lesson on how to become more positively Machiavellian.
Without even considering the techniques and strategies that are even more real-life applicable.

Which One Should You Get?

We love Robert Greene's books.

And not just *The 48 Laws of Power*.
My Greene's favorite is probably *The Laws of Human Nature*, followed by *The Art of Seduction*.

So if you're like me and have already enjoyed The 48 Laws, Power University is a no-brainer.
If you're driven and can afford it, get Power University because it's more complete, and adds a lot of nuances and more advanced applications of strategies and techniques.

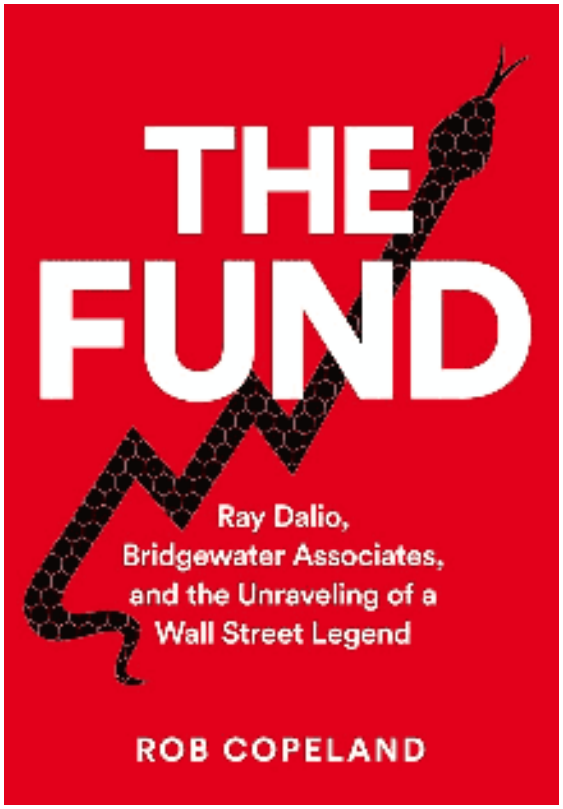
If you can't afford Power University yet, get *The 48 Laws of Power*.

But most of all, if you can afford it, **get *both The 48 Laws* and Power University**.

The Fund: Did Ray Dalio Just Gaslight Us All?

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 December 2023 · Archived copy · Original

In *The Fund* (2023) investigative journalist Rob Copeland pulls back the embellished PR curtain of Bridgewater Associates, unveiling a despotic leader and a cult-like culture of gaslighting, fear, and power plays.



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- REVIEW
  - My Take On The Truth

Exec Summary

- **CEOs and founders prefer loyalists**. If your goal is to advance, manage your boss relationship with proven power principles.
  The Fund shows: anyone who threatened Dalio's leadership, status and power paid the price
- **Don't believe the hype**. There are no ego-free enlightened gurus. A good chunk of self-help is virtue signaling.
  The Fund shows: Dalio supposedly transcended his ego, but he seemed to act like anyone with a huge ego would
- **To advance in life and at work, follow proven power principles**, and dismiss the HR and PR hot air. They're either virtue signaling or manipulation
  The Fund shows: anyone who gave "radical candor" feedback to Dalio paid the price

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Rob Copeland is a finance reporter at the New York Times, covering Wall Street and banks.
Previously, he wrote for The Wall Street Journal, and the hedge-fund trade publication Absolute Return.
He has followed Bridgewater since arriving at the WSJ in 2013.
For *The Fund*, Copeland has interviewed dozens of current and former Bridgewater employees, including Dalio and other Bridgewater high-flyers.

Ray Dalio Doesn't Want You To Read *The Fund*

The opening of the book could be a masterclass in attention-grabbing:

> **Ray Dalio does not want you to read this book.**
> He told me as much. At the start of this project, I reached out to him by email to seek his perspective. He responded with skepticism about my intentions.

As much as that may seem a "marketing power move", you would probably agree with Copeland after you read *The Fund* :).

Dalio Was The Undisputed & Undisputable Leader...

There was no "perfect meritocracy".

Dalio's narrative was that pure meritocracy governs Bridgewater.
And that any difference in rank and authority is due to merit.

None of that was true.

The author says:

> The truth is rather more Orwellian. At Bridgewater, some are more equal than others.
> This is the story of Ray Dalio, the most equal one of all.

Individuals Suffer When Principles Only Protect "The Whole"

Ray Dalio says to look at nature to understand reality.

And in nature, natural selection optimizes for progress and for "the whole".
So, for Dalio, "the whole" comes first, even if painful for the individual.

This is something we had already flagged in our business manipulation article.

Why is this potentially self-serving and harmful to employees?
Because Ray Dalio OWNS the "whole".
So **individuals may be better off following *their own* principles, instead of the principles built to serve that "whole"**.

And indeed, here's what Dalio said, but left out from *Principles*:

> He would tell a fable about a ravenous pack of hyenas murdering a young wild beast. The wild beast may suffer, but its death is necessary to promote evolutionary improvement

You be my guest in giving your suffering to promote Dalio's "whole" :).

Bridgewater's System Didn't Work

Ray Dalio often referred to Bridgewater's "believability" approach to decision-making.

The believability score was supposed to compute everyone's opinions based on their level of authority and expertise, and then select the best possible course of action.

Except, it doesn't seem that the system worked at all.

A few snippets, and in the italic are direct quotes from *The Fund*:

- **Dalio selected the scoring items, and they made little sense**: *McDowell created one working prototype after another, only for Dalio to add and subtract new categories seemingly at whim. Many seemed less than scientific; one was called "practical" while another was "practical thinking.*"
- **The system seemed to rely on "pseud-quantification"**, or assigning numbers that give the feeling of accuracy, but mean nothing. "*Dalio's metrics included nebulous areas such as "visualization." What was that, and could it, or similarly subjective areas such as creativity, even be numerically ranked*?"
- **Dalio was on top no matter what**: "*Dalio's rating was now numerically bulletproof to negative feedback. Regardless of how everyone else in the firm rated him, the system would work to keep him on top.*"
- **Anchoring bias: people tended to stick to the pre-existing rating**. "*The little real-time analysis that McDowell had been able to perform showed a sad state of affairs, scientifically. When rating one another, employees tended to stick closely to the existing marks."*

And most damning from an effectiveness point of view:

- **The system didn't make for better performance**: *"Ferrucci, one of the world's foremost experts in artificial intelligence (…) couldn't figure out where to even begin to apply hard science (…) It was a mess of pseudoscience (…) not even a simple regression to show (…) better results. ("I don't believe in regressions," Dalio told (…).) Even*

a cursory look at the data showed the opposite."

And, finally:

- **The system was biased by psychology, strategic considerations and power dynamics**

> *a generally blank baseball card devoid of ratings was an invitation to be branded with negative dots by one's colleagues.* There was little incentive to stick out, and every incentive to pile on. It took only a few days for newcomers to figure out that the best way to earn high ratings was to agree with others already ranked highly. This inevitably meant hewing closely to the views of the hedge fund's top brass.*

And on the natural "tit for that" nature of social exchanges biasing the system:

> *Instead of incentivizing the telling of tough truths, the system supported their hiding, or at least a degree of inertia. "Down-dotting" (Bridgewater-speak for giving a poor rating) a coworker resulted in an outsize risk the recipient would return the favor, producing a downward spiral for both. Thus, stasis largely ruled.*

And, turns out, the only "hyena" effect was in piling onto other colleagues. Especially when a high-status employee made the first attack:

> *Among those who regularly gave out fresh critical ratings to employees was Dalio. Staff lived in fear of a critical Dalio dot because it would disproportionately push the employee's average down immediately and be followed by a cascade of similar negative ratings from others who saw the new, depressed baseline. There was no escaping the pile-on. It was death by dots.*

Ray Dalio Showed Many Red Flags

Among the red flags:

Signs narcissism-like personality

- **The arduous task of replacing Dalio**

> Such was the task of replacing the Bridgewater founder that he often said that hundreds more people would be required.

- **Compliments to others become personal slights to Dalio**

> Stefanova asked to speak with Dalio one-on-one.
> (…)
> "I think it's best for me if I next work for Eileen," she said slowly.
> He was still barely with her. "Why?"
> "Because I admire her."
> (…) Dalio snapped up (…) "You don't admire me?"
> Stefanova felt a mix of confusion and derision. How could Dalio not realize that she was still hurt from her humiliating probing?

This was a power-related blunder by Stefanova.

Dalio Says He "Conquered His Ego", But It Was A Convenient Narrative to "Guru-Like Influence"

Which is another red flag:

> "That damned amygdala," Dalio once called it publicly.
> He had apparently been able to overcome his own such reflex.
> Through meditation, Dalio said he was able to all but separate the amygdala and prefrontal cortex, thus freeing himself from being controlled by emotion. He credited this ability for his understanding of the psychological factors that lead to successful trading and company management.

And:

> Dalio began to present himself as a model for exemplary behavior. He compared himself to the Dalai Lama.

Also read more in:

- **Teacher frames**

> Why Teachers Disempower You (Teacher-Pupil Frames)

Dalio's Will To Power Governed Bridgewater

Among the signs it was all about power:

- **Ray Dalio rewards those who increase his power**: "The man responsible for making Ray Dalio the paragon of believability would receive the promotion of his life."
- **Loyalty is expected**
  - "Family frames": *"As McDowell reached the door, Dalio spoke one more time. "This means you're part of the family."*
- **Dalio demands that the "believability rating" keeps him on top:**

> Dalio's voice made no secret of his irritation. Why doesn't believability cascade *from me*?
> "McDowell thought back to Dalio's index card drawing. He realized that Dalio hadn't been sketching out the mere concept of believability on top. He had drawn himself quite literally at the head, bestowing believability to all beneath him. McDowell assigned an underling to go into the software and program a new rule. Dalio himself would be the new baseline for believability in virtually all important categories.

- **Dalio (ab)used the rating system as a tool to win, punish, and get rid of people**

All under a manipulative guise of meritocracy and group decision.

For example, Dalio filmed and shared with everyone one of his infamous interrogations.
Then he sent out a company-wide poll:

> "Does Michael Partington add value?"
> The nays piled up.
> "You haven't taken us to the promised land," Dalio told him.
> Dalio cut his salary in half.

In another example of an employee sharing with Dalio that his governance scared people into silence and

compliance:

> Mack, posture straight and voice steady, made his pitch. “I think the culture here is suppressing people’s true feelings.”
> Dalio threw up his hands and handed over the mic to Mack. “Ask them.”
> Mack stood, facing the horde. “Who here feels repressed?”
> No one raised their hand.
> “You see—” Dalio said.
> “Nobody?!” Mack yelped. “Nobody is going to stand up? Some of you have been in my office telling me about this.”
> Silence again.
> Dalio took back the mic. “I don’t know what you’re complaining about, Julian. It’s you that has the problem.”

Ladies and gentlemen… The definition of leader’s gaslighting.

Ray Dalio Loved Predictions... But Wasn’t Any Good At It

Says The Fund:

> One young staffer, hands shaking, handed over the results: The study showed that Dalio was wrong as much as he was right. Trading on his ideas lately was often akin to a coin flip.

Ray Dalio loves speaking like a market savant.

Even before reading *The Fund*, that was also the image I got of him.
A savant who studied history, and understands the market better than anyone else.

You only gotta look at his podcast interviews to realize it:

You know a serious world-leading hedge fund manager is not a serious hedge fund manager anymore but a “guru” when he starts doing the podcast rounds

And that’s already a bad guru-approach, in my opinion.

In my opinion, **the only investor you listen says that nobody can accurately predict the markets**.
Those who do the opposite you ALWAYS look at with suspicion.

From my understanding of the world… The past doesn't equal the future.
And looking at the past to make future predictions may be as misleading as it can be enlightening.

Love Doom & Gloom Predictions... But Isn't Any Good At Predicting

Some notes from the book:

- **Wrong prediction on 2008 mortgage crisis**: "*Dalio was convinced that a second leg to the crisis was coming. He had even invented his own word for it, a D-process" (…) "thick tomes on historical downturns (…) took furious notes on each of them (…) noting abundant parallels to the present.*"
- **String of negative predictions that never happened**: *"Dalio predicted a bear market coming in 1994; a "blow-off phase of the U.S. stock market" in 1995; "bombs away" for the Dow Jones Industrial Average in 1997; and a "deflationary implosion" for 1998. Each time, he explained away the misfires as a learning opportunity"*
- **Bridgewater's employees joked about Ralio's poor predictions**: *"Parag Shah, the firm's head of marketing, opened one meeting with a too-close-for-comfort joke. "He's called fifteen of the last zero recessions," Shah said of his boss. Dalio didn't laugh."*

Ray Dalio Invested In PR To Gain A Jobs-Like Reputation

So, if all of the above is true…

How come you probably think of Dalio is an enlightened guru?

Because he invested in PR:

> He hired a public relations firm and told them that his goal was to establish a public persona on the level of that of Berkshire Hathaway founder Warren Buffett.

PR From Academics

Getting PR from academics may be easy for billionaires.

Academics aren't used to billions and billionaire access.
So giving them a pompous tour of a huge organization and a luxurious welcome may be an easy way to get good mentions.

Write the author:

> Harvard's Robert Kegan and the Wharton School's Adam Grant were separately granted audiences with Dalio and chaperoned into Bridgewater meetings. The access earned Dalio near-fawning sections in books by each man.

Grant, a psychologist who doesn't seem to disdain fame and accolades, wrote in his book *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move The World* (note: we removed the review):

> Although he has been called the Steve Jobs of investing, employees don't communicate with him as if he's anyone special," Grant wrote.
> Grant noted, "Bridgewater's secret is promoting the expression of original ideas."
> (…)
> Grant wrote that Dalio seemed particularly interested in "independent thinkers: curious, non-conforming, and rebellious. They practice brutal, nonhierarchical honesty. And they act in the face of risk, because their fear of

> not succeeding exceeds their fear of failing.
> “Dalio himself fits this description.”

Dalio’s Growing Fame Made Bridgewater Experience Even More Gaslighting

Talking about new joiners:

> For many, all they knew of Bridgewater at first were the laudatory media interviews of Dalio and the comparisons to Steve Jobs. T
> o show up and be presented with an atmosphere so radically different from the public narrative was to many not just a shock, but an incongruity (…) many others, rather than give up, turned inward, questioning themselves

A Therapist’s REaction to Bridgewater Culture

Sweet, a Bridgewater employee, went through therapy.

And this is what some therapists said of Bridgewater’s culture:

> one of his therapists compared the atmosphere to a feedback loop of self-destruction. Another therapist told Sweet it sounded as if the system had been designed by someone with Asperger’s syndrome.

Ray Dalio Went After The Author to Destroy His Credibility (And Career)

Says Copeland:

> He claimed that my coauthor and I never spoke to specific people with whom we had (…)
> He described me, not for the last time, as an aggrieved job applicant who couldn’t make it at Bridgewater, hell-bent on some sort of revenge.
> (…) He launched a yearslong witch hunt to root out people talking to me and other journalists, (…) He went after my job, meeting with my editors and pressing for my removal from covering the firm. (…) he released doctored correspondence (…) posted was an edited exchange
> (…)
> At around the same time, friends of mine noticed they were receiving paid Google advertisements about me, directing them to the Bridgewater website, where a press release blasted me personally.

And, following Dalio’s obsession of “making things public”, he wrote the author about his application to Bridgewater:

He responded forty-five minutes later, typo included, “Rob—I was referring to the time before that I’m [sic] 2010 when you tried to get a job as a MA and you were rejected for that job. We still have the notes that were gathered at that time which, if we get into it, we’d be happy to make public.”

It’s baffling to me how a multi-billionaire should even care about “making public” the notes of a single interview applicant.
Looking at Dalio’s public reply though, it does seem at least true indeed that, to him, it was a relevant and important factor that Copeland applied to Bridgewater (see Dalio’s public reply below).

Ray Dalio Reply

Ray Dalio addressed this book publicly.

In my opinion, it was another bad answer and another bad move.

In bold are what I felt were possible power moves:

Ray Dalio • 3rd+
Founder, CIO Mentor, and Member of the Bridge...
4d •

+ Follow • • •

I was asked what I think about the tabloid book about me and Bridgewater. While I don't want to divert my attentions from more important things, I do believe that I should take a moment to answer that question.

The book should be taken for what it is, which is another one of those sensational and inaccurate tabloid books written to sell books to people who like gossip. The only thing that's different about this one is that it's about me and Bridgewater. Like all such books, there is a backstory behind

> **Dalio**: I was asked what I think about the **tabloid book** (<— frame control 101: what you call things is the highest and most important frame. But he's obviously biased, so it's too obvious and it feels cheap) about me and Bridgewater.
> While **I don't want to divert my attentions from more important things** (<— tries to set a frame that "this book is not important" BUT… He still gives it a lengthy reply. So on top of it being another too-obvious power move, it also feels fake), I do believe that I should take a moment to answer that question.
> The book should be taken for what it is, which is another one of those **sensational and inaccurate tabloid books written to sell books to people who like gossip** (<— another obvious power move but, this time, the READERS are also his target. A bad, bad move. How about this reader here wanted to hear the other side of the story AFTER he had already seen some red flags?).
> (…)
> Like all such books, there is a backstory behind it. In brief, **the author applied for a job at Bridgewater and was rejected**. (<— seeks to frame the author as motivated by anger and revenge-seeking. But to make it so central feels, again, like a cheap shot. Also, not so effective. Most people apply to many companies before starting a career. But the author only wrote about Bridgewater)
> He (…) **made a career of writing distorted stories** about me and Bridgewater, at first in articles and now in this book.
> He did this by **speaking with former employees who had been dismissed**, seeking out negative rumors, and bending these into false narratives.
> Since he had no direct contact with the events he describes, he **obviously** took the tidbits he got from others and made up his descriptions of what happened to suit his objective.
> (…)

Overall, a lost opportunity to display some more magnanimity.
Or, at least, to shut up.
Instead, Dalio once again shows a bit of an angry and vindictive streak.

Who was the guy who was supposed not to have an ego, again?

Bridgewater reply

BRIDGEWATER

RESEARCH & INSIGHTS CULTURE PEOPLE WORKING AT BRIDGEWATER DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION OUR FOUNDER

Our Statement on a Recent Book About Ray Dalio and Bridgewater

November 4, 2024

Today a book about Ray Dalio and Bridgewater was published.

While we don't want to give this book more attention than it deserves, we feel compelled to state unequivocally that the overall narrative in this book is ridiculous and couldn't be any further from the truth. The exaggerated depiction attempts to take aim at who we are by painting a distorted and inaccurate picture through a series of strung-together stories. The result is a false and misleading

In bold the parts I find most telling:

> Today a book about Ray Dalio and Bridgewater was published.
>
> While we don't want to give this book more attention than it deserves, we feel compelled to state
> (…)
>
> The real Bridgewater is a company whose **overriding objective is excellence**, achieved through constant improvement. (…) **We've always held close to those values, even as we have evolved as a firm**. When we completed the transition from Ray to the current leadership team in 2022, **we updated our philosophy statement to better reflect our values today** — Bridgewater's Idea Meritocracy. We are continually improving as an organization; that is what is required to be successful. We do not shy away from criticism when it is valid and honest. When we make mistakes, we acknowledge them, hold each other accountable, and evolve. That is a core component of our culture. Our people, clients, and shareholders demand it, and our mission of understanding markets and economies requires it.
>
> (…)
>
> While we are disappointed by this book's false and misleading depiction of our past, we could not be more energized about our future. As we envision Bridgewater's next 50 years, we do so, building on the legacy and successes of our past as we seek **to create something even better than we had** before. **Bridgewater is now overseen by its Operating Board of Directors and a dynamic and diverse leadership team**. We are focused on innovating and delivering for our clients and remain steadfastly committed to our shared values.
>
> For further transparency, here is the email that CEO Nir Bar Dea (<—- bad move. Feels defensive and "trust scalping". It's not like the CEO wrote his email without thinking it would either be published or leaked) sent to Bridgewater employees on November 7, 2023.

Not perfect, but much better.

I see here several hints that **Bridgewater wanted to distance itself from Dalio and his times as CEO**.

Notice that **the only reference to the original culture is excellence, NOT any "system" or "believability**

rating”.
And not how **the reply stresses the *evolution* from the past rather than defending and sticking to that past**.
It’s about the *updates* on the old culture, and the references to having *evolved*.
And notice the reference to the *current* diverse leadership -no one-man show, no politburo of loyalists anymore? :)-.

Why is that so telling?

Well, think how someone who’s proud of their past and founding culture would speak.
If you’re proud of the past, chances are you would mention and *own* that past a bit more.
You may even clearly say that you’re *proud* of it.

For example, If Ferrari had been embroiled in a similar scandal I’d bet they’d mention and defend Enzo.
They may even say that the sanguine spirit of Enzo Ferrari still lives in them -Ferrari even called one of their supercars Enzo-.

This Bridgewater’s message instead suggests the opposite.
To me, it says that **deep down the writer(s) may have had a bad experience and opinion of Dalio and old Bridgewater**.

Just my opinion, of course :).

Practical Takeaways

If Your Salary Is Lower, Don’t Share It In Job Interviews

Ray Dalio regaled McDowell on Bridgewater’s culture of honesty and frankness.

Then, he told him he’d make more than a million dollar in his first year.

And then, he asked how much he was making at the moment:

> (..) and in the spirit of the honesty the two men had just pledged, **McDowell answered truthfully: Bridgewater’s base salary alone was $100,000 higher** than his current pay.
> **“Okay, actually, then that’s what I’ll pay**. I only pay people what they’re currently making,” Dalio said airily.

LOL :D
A more socialist commentator may say here: don’t expect anything else from a billionaire :).

Learn the interview techniques here:

- **How to interview**

> How to Prepare For An Interview: 6 Tips To Get The Job

Don’t Compliment Others In Front of Narcissistic Bosses...

… Because THEY want to be the only shining star.

So the only way to compliment others it’s by carving out some credit for them as well.

For example:

> This business you founded is SO good at attracting talent.
> X new manager is fantastic.

> You're getting busier and busier as we grow, boss. Do you think I could report to her going forward and save some of your time?

Only Use High-Power Language With CEOs

Quoting from *The Fund*:

> "I've tried," the lawyer said.
> "People who only try are useless to me," Dalio responded.
> The new hire took the weekend to think and apparently decided there were certain limits to what he would tolerate for a paycheck. He was raised to be a gentleman, and this was no way to act.

I actually disagree here both with the author, and with this new hire.
This was a power mistake.

You don't tell "I tried" to a CEO when you're leading an important change project that the CEO wants.

Learn better in this article:

- **Exec skills: the power principles**

> 17 Tips to Exude Exec-Level Confidence at Work

Never Go Back To The Wolf's Den

Ray Dalio tried to get Stevanova, an employee who had left the firm, back for questioning.

"Come to me" is an obvious power move.
And when "come to me" means going back to the man's headquarters, main power center, and also your old location of subordination and powerlessness, avoid it.

Stefanova was smart enough to know that.
She made good excuses and in the end managed to meet at a neutral location, while also maintaining rapport.

That's textbook "how to successfully manipulate a manipulator".
See more here:

> How to Manipulate a Manipulator

DOUBTS, CONS, NOTES

Some passages felt to me hard to believe.

In a few instances, I felt some choices of words were a bit "sensationalistic".

To be clear:

What I found hard to believe is not necessarily an issue with the original author.
It can be an issue with the *sources*.

Also, this is not to say none of these can happen in reality.
It's just that, to me, some of them sound so extreme, almost psychopathically comical, that they're hard to believe.

I Found Some Events Hard To Believe

Some examples:

Make Campbell Cry. Then Share The Video With Everyone

In one of the “firing squad committee”, an employee was overcome by emotions.

He start sobbing, then left the room to cry.

Dalio shared the video with the company.

Dalios Fires An Employee. Organize His Goodbye Part. Give Him His Worst Feedback As A Gift

For another employee, organize a goodbye part.

And, as a gift… Givin gift him lucide-encased copies of his negative feedback.
With Dalio’s self-help comment that “the best gift anyone can receive is knowledge of their own weaknesses.”

This all seems to be so emotionally blind and insensitive.
Or… Psychopathic to the core.

Dalio Yells At Professor Ferguson

Dalio allegedly yelled at Professor Ferguson when he dared to criticize his model.

Then, he asked the crowd “who won the debate”.
Dalio had never debated anything. He had only allegedly yelled at the professor, and acted like a dick.

Dalio Gives A Wedding Speech… And Implies The Bride Is “Loose”

> Dalio, standing up to speak, pulled out his iPhone and began reading from prepared notes.
> (…) it seemed to be shaping up as a toast one would give his or her son.
> That was, until Dalio turned to address Powell. “David can be anything he wants—including president of the United States, and he found a person: the best party girl in America.”

Seems one of those things you hear in movies, but rarely in real life.

Some Descriptions Felt Unfair To Bridgewater As A Business

Bridgewater managed to become the biggest funds in the world.

It certainly must have had some merits, even if it was only during its launch phase.

And to be sure, the author does give credit.
Including crediting Dalio’s “smart social strategies” -where there is much to learn from, by the way-.

And still, some passages felt a bit too dismissive.
For example:

Dalio Calls All The Shots From The Phone

> There was essentially no grand system, no artificial intelligence of any substance, no Holy Grail. There was just Dalio, in person, over the phone, from his yacht, or for a few weeks many summers from his villa in Spain, calling the shots.*

Well, Dalio still did great in his first years.
It was either luck, or he was smart.
And it's still somewhat tough to believe that a workaholic like Dalio would casually drop in to manage the biggest hedge fund in the world.

Secrecy & Control: Bugs & Every Attachment Had To Be Approved?

About the heavy control:

> Staffers who left their desks even briefly would return to sticky notes left on their computer monitors admonishing them for failing to put up a screen saver. Keystrokes and printouts were tracked. Custom hardware allowed the copiers to keep a record of every photocopy. Even i**ncluding an attachment on an email had to be approved one by one**.

And about recording everything:

> As Comey's search for office bugs indicated, **most Bridgewater employees had a quite reasonable fear of being listened in on**, whether at Bridgewater's offices or beyond it. (…)
> For everyone else, when personal calls had to be placed during company time, many trudged out of the office and into the surrounding woods. That lasted roughly until **a rumor circulated inside the fund that Comey's team was studying how to install devices in the trees that could intercept phone calls** before they reached surrounding cell phone towers.

Anything of the above is not technically impossible, of course.

But some of it feels hard to believe.
And some of it feels like simple speculation from overly cautious -or paranoid- employees.

To me, the rumors of listening devices in the woods say more about human's tendency to believe in conspiracies, than about Bridgewater's plans and modus operandi.

Using those rumors as the sign that Bridgewater is untrustworthy is equivalent to saying that governments or Bill Gates are untrustworthy because some people said that Covid vaccines were planned to sterilize the population.

Criticism of Bridgewater Recent Years Performance

I don't see the poor performance of Pure Alpha latest years as a huge indictment to the investment methodology or approach.

As the author said himself, the fund seems to be mostly geared to be defensive.
Gain little in the upswing, not lose too much in the downswing -or even profit from them-.

I frankly also believe there's nothing special with Dalio's investment acumen.
But still, I believe the author would have gained credibility if had added a note that recent performance provides little evidence for or against Bridgewater's investment approach.

Some Sensationalism Over Fact-Presentation

One passage says:

> His grand automated system—his economic machine—wasn't nearly as automated or mechanized as was promoted. **As much as 10 percent of Pure Alpha's** invested assets, comprising billions of dollars, b**oiled down to Dalio's instinct and ideas**, period. They were his orders.

There is nothing wrong with this sentence.

Still, the way it's written, it can feel like an attempt to make a possible fact or quote sound more impressive than it really is.
As much as 10% still leaves 90% out *at least.*

And since most people invested in the fund as much as in the man, I also don't think that most of Bridgewater's customers would have had anything against Dalio calling some shots -at least the Dalio they thought they knew, but that's a different issue-.

To be fair and precise, I haven't seen many of these rhetorical devices in *The Fund*.

Isn't There Anything Positive About Dalio... ?

…. And adding something positive may have added credibility.

I may not have the highest opinion of Dalio.

But I also think he did add value to a lot of people.
And many of his principles are good, independent of how poorly or not he may have applied himself.

He may be a man who wanted to do good, *see* himself as good… And failed to even realize his mean streak and dark side.

He helped some along the way, helped himself a lot… And also harmed some others.

Maybe the author, knowledgeable of the dark side, was irritated by the public adulation of Dalio.
I get that and I'd feel the same when the masses fall for this or that guru.

Or he may have thought, probably with good reasons, that there was already enough positive PR for Dalio. And that focusing on the bad only would better balance things out.

Still, adding at least some positives may have made the book more credible and authoritative.
But, maybe, also less of page-turner, and that's understandably not good for marketing :).

QUOTES

On Dalio teaching… And keeping the best grade for the teacher himself :)

> She sat in awe at a series of internal lectures from Dalio on conceptual macroeconomics, as he held forth for hours on the linkages between investment cycles in history.
> It was fascinating stuff.
> Dalio awarded her the highest grade in the course: an A-minus.
> Practically no one received an A, which Dalio told her was a score he could typically award only to himself.

How a high self-esteem man reacts to Dalio's gaslighting-like response to criticism:

> Dalio blamed himself.
> It's my fault, the Bridgewater founder said, for expecting you to appreciate such a complex system so quickly. The Principles could not simply be memorized and then instantly absorbed—the only way to understand them was to live them. Dalio called The Principles "the way of being."
> It was around this time that Rubinstein thought to himself, *Shit.*

How to strategically answer to manic self-help gurus:

> "I welcome your probing, Ray. I imagine you'll find all kinds of flaws and all kinds of things that I should have

> been doing better. It'll be painful, but I'll be better as a result."
> That wasn't the answer Dalio seemed to be expecting. That would be a win not by knockout, but by forfeit.

… Except it didn't work because, as per book's narrative. Dalio WANTED to humiliate and embarrass his victims :).

On the "system" being gamed by fawning to Dalio:

Those at Bridgewater who had been rated highly believable in certain areas didn't earn those scores through any complicated algorithm of artificial intelligence.
They earned it by being an artificial Ray Dalio.
The secret to becoming believable at Bridgewater was to model oneself after the only man who mattered.
Bridgewater didn't run on believability. It ran on believers.
"Ray, this is a religion," Rubinstein said.

Ray Dalio had a poorly earned status for correct predictions:

> (…) in the aftermath of the dot-com bubble burst, when Dalio earned media acclaim for predicting it (few reporters noted that he had made the same call virtually every year).

On Dalio (ab)using the believability system to win:

> He turned to the dozen or so people in the room. "How many people think that Dave is looking at this the right way?" One of Dalio's assistants furiously typed the prompt into her iPad, creating an instant poll for those in the room. The verdict was that Ferrucci was looking at it wrong.

A typical gaslighting power move:

> (…) Elliott told Dalio he was considering resigning. The Bridgewater founder seemed shocked that Elliott had taken the remarks so personally. "Are you crazy?" (….) Dalio suggested the younger man needed psychotherapy.

Dalio seemed oblivious to his dark side.
For example, an interesting frame control battle with an executive:

> McCormick cut in, "I have something I'd like to say first. I've been in combat. I've had men under me, when we were going into a life-and-death situation. The only way we could do that as soldiers is to know that we had each other's loyalty. I don't feel like I could go into combat here because you're giving Julian the time of day on what he said."
> "It's not about loyalty," Dalio responded. "It's about truth."

REVIEW

The Fund is a supremely captivating read.

So props and hats off to Copeland *at least* for his fantastic writing skills.

That's an important plus.
But even more important to us would be:

How true is *The Fund*?

My Take On The Truth

Now comes the difficult part.

Let me preface I have zero knowledge about any facts.
I have never spoken to any single person in Bridgewater.

Hence, my proverbial 2 cents here isn't even worth 2 cents.

Keep that in mind.

Another important caveat:

If anything wasn't true, it may not be the author's fault -and probably it isn't-.
Dalio may have a point that bitterness was a factor in making up or exaggerating facts. But, in that case, in my opinion, it would be more likely to be biased *sources*, rather than the author.

Now, that being said…

From the lownesses of my ignorance, some parts were challenging to believe.
On the other hand, **I believe that at least a portion of Ray Dalio's foibles and Bridgewater's cultish culture may potentially be true**.

My interpretation is based on the little I've seen from Dalio, on general knowledge of human psychology, and on the foundational concepts of power dynamics we teach here.

For example, I had already noticed some red flags in Dalio.
We listed in a popular article on business manipulation how some of Dalio's principles may turn ruthlessly destructive towards employees.
And I **posted my reservation about Dalio long before *The Fund* came out** as a commentary to Dalio's reply to the Wall Street Journal.

And just as the author says, **Dalio seemed to be think-skinned, over-reactive, and utterly oblivious to his own darker side**.
To me, Dalio's reaction also seemed to confirm that he was not only interested in power, but also oblivious to his own darker side.
Exactly what's shown in *The Fund*.

The book then seems to add a few more pieces that, from a psychological and power dynamics point of view, also seem to make sense.

That's my opinion as an external, clueless observer.
You're very welcome and even encouraged to ignore it and develop your own.

And you can do that by reading *The Fund* for yourself.
It's a highly recommended read.

If Dalio, the author, or Bridgewater want to weigh in, I will add their notes here below.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

The Art of Strategy: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 January 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Art of Strategy (2008), introduces game theory and its applications to thinking, strategies, effective life and business choices, as well as social-level dilemmas.
The book updates and expands the authors' previous book *Thinking Strategically*.

Contents

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- FULL SUMMARY
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  - In Business, Let Others Make Risk The First Move
  - Negotiate With Psychology In Mind
  - High Power & High-T Men Break Game Theory's Rules
  - The 3 Rules of Game Strategy
  - Encourage Cooperation & Discourage Competition
  - Takeaways From Game Theory Experiments
  - How to Achieve Cooperation
  - Threats VS Promises
- MORE WISDOM
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Exec Summary

- Focusing on competition only is a major strategic (and mindset) mistake
- Cooperation is foundational to life and business success
- Good strategy is to maximize the scope for cooperation, while minimizing the scope for cheating (from others, at least)
- Good strategy MUST include psychology

FULL SUMMARY

About the Authors:
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Win-Win Is Crucial (The Authors Found Out)

I found the intro to the new edition to be a little pearl of wisdom in itself:

> When we wrote *Thinking Strategically*, we were younger, and **the zeitgeist was one of self-centered competition**. We have since come to the **full realization of the important part that cooperation plays** in

> strategic situations, and how **good strategy must appropriately mix competition and cooperation**.*

Yep, 100%.
Approaching life with competition-only in mind is a recipe not only for *lack* of success, but also for an unfulfilled life.

Cooperation Must Take Place Even With Selfish Interests

Adds the authors on defining strategy:

> We started the original preface with: "Strategic thinking is the art of outdoing an adversary, knowing that the adversary is trying to do the same to you." To this we now add: It is also **the art of finding ways to cooperate, even when others are motivated by self-interest, not benevolence.** It is the art of convincing others, and even yourself, to do what you say. It is the art of interpreting and revealing information. It is the art of putting yourself in others' shoes so as to predict and influence what they will do.

In Business, Let Others Make Risk The First Move

> There are two ways to move second.
> You can imitate as soon as the other has revealed his approach (as in sailboat racing) or wait longer until the success or failure of the approach is known (as in computers).
> **The longer wait is more advantageous in business because, unlike in sports, the competition is usually not winner-take-all**. As a result, market leaders will not follow the upstarts unless they also believe in the merits of their course.

Negotiate With Psychology In Mind

The authors tell a story of negotiating with a taxi driver.

Then the taxi driver heard about the book and explained WHY he drove them back:

> My meter was broken, but you didn't seem to believe me. I was too tired to argue. When we arrived, I asked for 2,500 shekels, a fair price. I was even hoping you would round the fare up to 3,000. You rich Americans could well afford a 50¢ tip.
> I couldn't believe you tried to cheat me. Your refusal to pay a fair price dishonored me in front of my wife. As poor as I was, I did not need to take your meager offer.

The authors forgot that people have such a thing as honor, and crave (basic) respect.
Read more in our article on how to power protect:

- **Power protecting**

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

P.S.:
No, the author never received that later, they later admit.
BUT the principle still applies.
Indeed, here's more actual scientific evidence for this principle:

High Power & High-T Men Break Game Theory's Rules

… Unless you add psychology to the mix.

Say the authors (note in parenthesis is mine):

> Some biological evidence for rejecting unfair offers comes from an experiment run by Terry Burnham.
> In his version of the ultimatum game, the amount at stake was $40 and the subjects were male Harvard graduate students. The divider was given only two choices: offer $25 and keep $15 or offer $5 and keep $35. Among those offered only $5, twenty students accepted and six rejected, giving themselves and the divider both zero. Now for the punch line. It turns out that **the six who rejected the offer had testosterone levels 50 percent higher than those who accepted the (unfair) offer**. To the extent that testosterone is connected with status and aggression, this could provide a genetic link that might explain an evolutionary advantage of what evolutionary biologist Robert Trivers has called "moralistic aggression."

This is evidence that you want to power protect more with high-power people.

The 3 Rules of Game Strategy

The rules as written by the authors:

1. **Look forward and reason backward**
2. **If you have a dominant strategy, use it**. A dominant strategy is the best choice for a player, regardless of what the other players decide to do
3. **Eliminate from consideration any dominated strategies and strategies that are never best responses, and go on doing so successively**

Obviously, the authors are smart men.
And they wrote the rules for other high-IQ men, rather than in a more appealing mass-market format :)

Rule #1 seems to be the most significant to me:

Rule #1: Look Forward & Reason Backward (Anticipate Their Moves)

> The general principle for sequential-move games is that each player should figure out the other players' future responses and use them in calculating his own best current move.

The authors call the rule "**Look forward and reason backward.**"

Encourage Cooperation & Discourage Competition

This is the approach we have taken since our inception.

And the same approach Power University has taken since its first version.

So it was good to see that two game theory experts reached the same conclusion.
Say the authors as they start their review of game theory tournaments:

> The reason tit for tat won the tournament is that it usually **managed to encourage cooperation whenever possible while avoiding exploitation**.
> The other entries either were too trusting and open to exploitation or were too aggressive and knocked one another out.

Tit for tat always strikes back when others cheat.

And it never cooperates again with cheats.

The authors say that this strategy can even be improved with MORE cooperation.
Say the authors:

> In spite of all this, we believe that tit for tat is a flawed strategy.
>
> The slightest possibility of a mistake or a misperception results in a complete breakdown in the success of tit for tat. This flaw was not apparent in the artificial setting of a computer tournament, because mistakes and misperceptions did not arise. But **when tit for tat is applied to real-world problems, mistakes and misperceptions cannot be avoided, and the result can be disastrous.**
>
> What tit for tat lacks is a way of saying "Enough is enough." It is too provocable, and not forgiving enough. And indeed, subsequent versions of Axelrod's tournament, which allowed possibilities of mistakes and misperceptions, showed other, more generous strategies to be superior to tit for tat.*

Basically, the authors are saying that **in real life it pays to at least *try* to break a "vicious cycle of nasty escalation and revenge"** that leads to lose-lose.

This is also a concept we incorporate in Power University, including how and when to use it.

Takeaways From Game Theory Experiments

1. **Cooperation occurs significantly often**, even when each pair of players meets only once
2. **People love punishment of "social cheaters"**
3. **Punishment of cheats increases cooperation** and the contributions in the first phase of the game dramatically

How to Achieve Cooperation

This is a bit complex since *The Art of Strategy* seems to have two sections on cooperation.

I'll try to combine them:

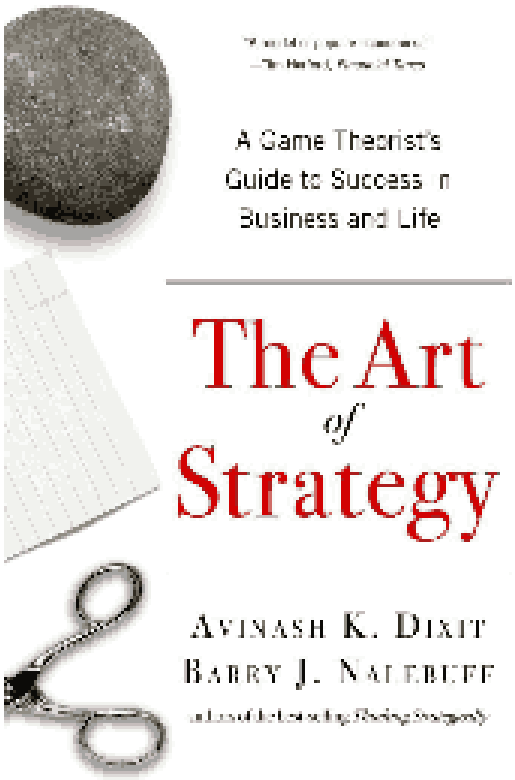
1. Ability to **detect cheats**, best of all if done automatically
2. Ability to **punish cheats**
   - Adequate size of punishment, that must discourage cheats. But punishment can be too big. Nuclear deterrent for example is not a good punishment for many crimes since it may never be used
3. **Clarity** of "good behavior" and consequences for not following it
4. **Certainty** of rewards and punishments
5. **Repetition**, the longer the exchange, the higher the incentives to cooperate. The shorter the relationship, the higher the incentives to cheat
   - Future opportunity considerations: for example, a growing business may expect to lose even bigger in the future by cheating now. If they instead think they're struggling and may die, the incentives to cheating are higher
   - Stability of players over time. The more the players stay the same, the more cooperation is likely. The bigger the churn, the higher the incentives to cheating
6. **No clear final step**, because that final step would remove the payoffs of further cooperation, and increase the payoffs for cheating

Threats VS Promises

There are some advantages to threats:

> **A threat can be less costly;** in fact, it is costless if it is successful. If it changes the other player's behavior in the way you want, you don't have to carry out the costly action you had threatened.
> **A promise, if successful, must be fulfilled**—if the other player acts as you want him to, you have to deliver the costly action you had promised.

If you use a threat, always start at the smallest level, and increase over time.
This is a concept we also use in Power University on "how corruption works".



MORE WISDOM

Game theory MUST include psychology

Say the authors:

> Some people question how we can apply logic and science to a world where people act irrationally. It turns out that there is often method to the madness.
> Indeed, some of the most exciting new insights have come from recent advances in behavioral game theory, which **incorporates human psychology and biases into the mix and thus adds a social element to the theory. As a result, game theory now does a much better job** dealing with people as they are, rather than as we might like them to be.

The hot hand may not be a fallacy

Top players and players who've had a winning streak may not score more.
But they can exhaust more resources from the opponents who have to spend more time worrying about them. And

that may leave some other teammates freer to exploit more opportunities.

Show, Don't Explain

Whenever you can, make people *feel* the answer in their bones:

> Khrushchev first denounced Stalin's purges at the Soviet Communist Party's 20th Congress.
> After his dramatic speech, someone in the audience shouted out, asking what Khrushchev had been doing at the time.
> Khrushchev responded by asking the questioner to please stand up and identify himself. The audience remained silent. Khrushchev replied, "That is what I did, too."

This worked great because Khrushchev made the heckler -and the audience- feel the fear.
Now his answer of why he didn't speak up was obvious to anyone *in their bones*.

Collusion of Low-Power Followers Is A Great Strategy Against Bad Bosses

In this case study, the despotic bosses are parents:

> Imagine that parents want each of their children to visit once and phone twice a week. To give their children the right incentives, they threaten to disinherit any child who fails to meet this quota.
> (…)
> The children recognize that their parents are unwilling to disinherit all of them. As a result, they get together and agree to cut back the number of visits, potentially down to zero.

Education Is Costly Signaling

People saying that a degree is useless are missing the point.

Say the authors:

> Skills needed to succeed in particular firms and specialized lines of work are often best learned on the job.
> What employers cannot easily observe but really need to know is a prospective employee's general ability to think and learn.
> A good degree from a good college acts as a signal of such ability. The graduate is in effect saying, "If I were less able, would I have graduated Princeton with honors?"

The authors also say that this costly signaling only leaves the *colleges* better off.
Everyone else bears the costs of that wasteful signaling.

So, should you go to college?
Well, turns out, there are some other advantages besides learning and signaling:

QUOTES

> Most armies would be finished if each soldier on the battlefield started to make a rational calculation of the costs and the benefits of risking his own life.

Also read our case study: why great leadership is great manipulation.

On "enlightened collusion" for peaceful co-existence:

> But was the escalation of the superpowers' nuclear arms arsenals all that different? Both incurred costs in the trillions of dollars in quest of the "dollar" of victory. Collusion, which in this case means peaceful coexistence, is a much more profitable solution.

CONS

The Art of Strategy is a fantastic book.

Some notes I feel like adding not just to the book, but to game theory in general:

Game theory without psychology is utterly useless

OK, OK, this title is provocative.

But hear me out.
Experiments with *actual people*, the authors themselves show, break one of their own major "rule" of optimal behavior:

> Therefore the logic of dominant strategies applies to the 99th round. And one can work back this sequential logic all the way to round 1.
> But **in actual play, both in the laboratory and the real world, players seem to ignore this logic and achieve the benefits of mutual cooperation. What may seem at first sight to be irrational behavior—departing from one's dominant strategy—turns out to be a good choice**, so long as everyone else is similarly "irrational."

This is not to say that game theory is irrelevant, of course.
It's a fundamental discipline for a website like this one -which is all about providing strategies and approaches to succeed at life-.

But in my opinion, it means that, ultimately, **psychology comes first when it comes to succeeding with humans.**

The authors quip a little later about the "danger of bargaining with those who haven't read our book".
And to me, no, it just shows the limitations of game theory in real life :).

Sometimes Game Theory Can Be Too Stifling To Come Up With Creative Solutions

For example, take the "game of chicken" of two men driving their cars towards each other.

The options are only swerving or not swerving IF you remain locked in the simplistic game theory approach.

But there is also slowing down, or even stopping in the middle of the track.
In extreme cases one may even ride with an inflatable suit and *jump* out of the car.
Or a wealthy man may run with a spider car and have an ejecting seat mounted just for winning that game.

These solutions come to mind only once you abandon the game theory approach.

REVIEW

The Art of Strategy is one of the best books on more practical game theory, with solid insights to improve strategic thinking.

Many of the social strategies and thinking patterns align with what we teach in **Power University**.

Its main limitation is that, like most game-theory texts and despite seeking to be more practical, it can still remain too abstract to apply in day-to-day social life.

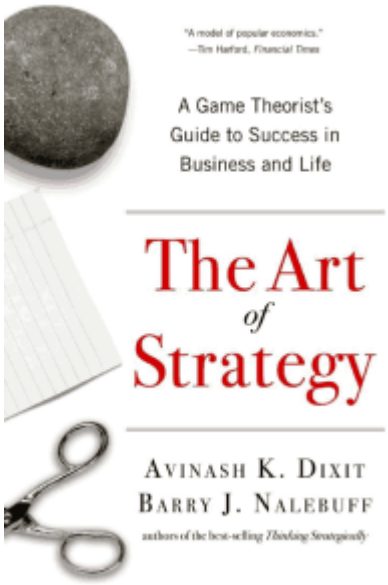
Despite its value, there's still no comprehensive resource that fully bridges the gap between strategic theory to learning *how* to think strategically, and real-life application.

It deserves 5/5 for the theory and philosophy. But something is still missing to bridge from game theory, to strategies and strategic thinking skills that achieve goals.

That's where **Power University** comes in—translating abstract concepts into actionable strategies you can use in everyday situations.

Get it on Amazon or check the **best books** to read.

The Art of Strategy Summary: 3 Rules to Outplay Enemies



The Art of Strategy (2008), introduces game theory and its applications to thinking, strategies, effective life and business choices, as well as social-level dilemmas. The book updates and expands the authors' previous book Thinking Strategically.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-art-of-strategy-book-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.7

Principles Life & Work: Machiavelli's Version

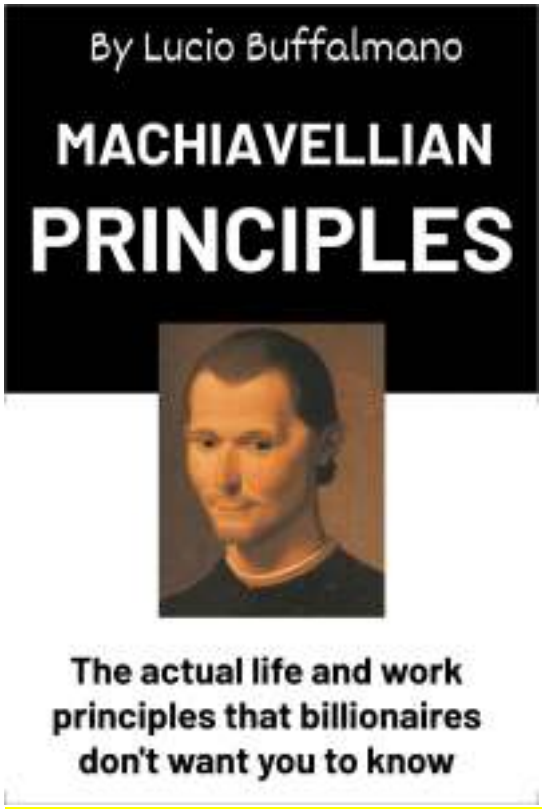
Lucio Buffalmano · 8 January 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Ray Dalio wrote *Principles*.

It's a *fantastic* book.

But it's a bit aspirational sometimes.
And you should temper it with human nature and foundational power dynamics.

So to avoid that you may fall for naive self-help pitfalls, we over-correct here with more cynical principles.



These principles will not sound as good. But they may work better

Machiavellian Principles

In red are the original principles.
In bold, the Machiavellian version.

- Be a hyper-realist
  - **Be a hyper-realist, don't believe BS aspirational principles**. Everyone wants more power, money, and women

… Including your billionaire boss turned into "I walk into the woods to give you principles" guru.

Ray Dalio says he came to despise "impractical idealism".

Well, we're the same.

And we believe some of the original principles ARE impractical idealism.

Including:

It's impractical idealism to believe that Dalio -or anyone else- appreciates "hyper-realism" that disempowers them.

- Look at nature to learn how reality works
  - **Look at nature where the only laws are self-interest and power**

Nature is governed by very simple principles of the selfish gene.
And the power to actualize -or not actualize- what's good for the selfish gene.

End of it.

Actually… We're the first to say here that it doesn't 100% end there.
There is a lot more.
Including real affection, love, and even selfless behavior.

And still…

The foundations are still selfish genes.

So ask yourself:

what better describes reality, the basic principles of nature, or the principles your boss came up with?

- Be Radically Open-minded
  - **Be *skeptically* open-minded**, and *definitely* not to the point that your brain falls off.

A thousand fools are born every minute, don't listen to them.
And a thousand smart men want to manipulate you, lead you, or take from you. Starting from those who deny their own selfish motives. So be skeptical.

Be particularly skeptical of those who profess to be "radically open-minded" and to have no ego.
Often, they're only oblivious to their own dark side, to their will to power… And to their vindictiveness if you cross them.

- Power Comes From Knowing How We're Wired
  - **Power comes from knowing how to get what we're wired to want**

Dalio only got into his guru-days after he was a billionaire. And after he had his belly full of everything he always wanted.
So first focus on getting what you want.
THEN you can join Dalio in all sorts of mental ~~mast~~… Pursuits.

- Use Principles
  - **Always rely on the basic principles of human selfishness and will to power**, be skeptical of anything else

We said this in our review of *The 48 Laws of Power*.
Maxims can be useful, but there are no laws that will *always* apply to maximize your odds.

If we go by *The Fund*, Ray Dalio was the first to amend, delete, or add new principles.
By the most cynical interpretations, Dalio changed them based on how it best suited him.

So, trash any law or principle liberally whenever it suits you.
You can always come up with a BS good-sounding rationale later on.

- Realize You Have Nothing to Fear Saying The Truth
  - **Realize you have nothing to fear saying what others want to hear**

That original principle is so obviously ineffective in so many situations that we don't even need to waste time on it.

- Have Integrity and Demand it From Others

- **Never expect others to do what's best for you because it is "the right thing to do"**. Better believe they will cheat if they can

Our Machiavellian principle this time is too cynical.

Luckily, many people have integrity.
And we encourage to be one.

At the same time, it is best not to count on it.
And it is safer to expect people you don't know to *not* have integrity.

It's safer to expect people to cheat whenever cheating becomes too easy, or too rewarding to say "no".

Finally, hello:

Of course it's convenient for the *owner* if *his employees* have integrity.

- Be radically transparent
  - **Be *selectively* transparent to get a reputation for transparency**. Then hide your weaknesses and promote your strengths

And never trust anyone who pushes you to be radically transparent,

- Be loyal to the common mission
  - **Be loyal to yourself**

Of course any founder and organization gains when people are loyal to the common mission.

But… Do you?

Also, this is BS value that sounds good only at first read.
Reflect a bit more on it, and it's truly just power of the group *over the individual*.

Whether this is a good vlaue or not depends entirely on whether the mission adds value to humanity or not.
Among history's "common missions" we can list some of the most barbaric acts humanity has ever recorded.

- Pay More Attention To Fairness of System Than Getting Your Way
  - **Pay attention to get it your way. Then spin it as "fair"**

Ultimately, that's what Dalio also wanted: getting his way.

Hello, what do you think all his work on principles stem from?
He wanted to get richer, more powerful, more famous.

And… *there is nothing wrong with it.*

Some people, and hopefully Dalio included, want to do that win-win.
Such as, they get what they want, and others are also better off.
It's also the way we prefer it here.

But if getting it his way would mean that some others would be worse off for it… Do you think he'd have stopped?
I hope so.

But still, most bosses and founders would rather find an exception to their principles. Even if that means the process is "less fair". Or maybe "just for this one time".

So don't count on the system being the ultimate decision-maker when you're going against the boss.

Only a naive person would believe that.

Subscribe to our newsletter for life principles that work, and let's move forward:

- Principles Can't Be Ignored By Mutual Agreement
  - **You're the boss. As long as you gain… F*ck the principles**

Just ask yourself:

Who gains when you pay the price to obey your boss' principles?
The company and the owner.

And maybe sometimes they *do* deserve to gain and come first.

But… Maybe not always.

And who says they're any worthier than you are anyway?
Oh yeah, right… They say that :)

- If People With Power Don't Obey The Principles, The System Will Fail
  - **Come up with principles that are good for you, so that you can always obey them**. Then, you masterfully spin those principles to make them sound virtuous and "good".

As a rule of thumb, always be skeptical of any principle that goes against the owners, founders, and bosses.
It's not even about bad bosses. It's about human nature.
Human nature will always put one's best interest before "principles".

And attention:

If a principled boss loses by sticking to their principles, they'll still resent you for it.

And you will always pay for it.
At best, you lose social capital and future opportunities.
At worst, they will come up with some reasons why you're falling afoul of the principles and must go.

So, again, put human nature before any principle.

- Tough Love is The Hardest and Most Important Type of Love
  - **Tough love only works from top to bottom, never the other way around**

So don't count on this BS to deliver some "tough love" feedback to your boss.
99% of people will not appreciate 99% of the time.

- Don't Hide Your Observations About People
  - **Be strategic with your observations, and keep most of them for yourself**

The original principle is so out of touch with reality to be laughable.

- Recognize and Deal With Key Man Risk – Every key person should have at least one person who can replace him
  - **Make sure you are irreplaceable – and charge accordingly**. Guard the secrets of your high-performance as the main source of your power

This is basic conflict of interest.

The company wants you replaceable so they can boss you around in negotiations.

You want the opposite.

If the business puts people around you to learn from you, never teach them anything unless you're gaining from it.

- Escalate when you can't adequately handle your responsibilities . . .
  - **If you need to escalate make sure you look proactive rather than incapable** -if necessary, take credit for prompt escalation and lay the blame of failure on someone else

Another basic conflict of interest at work.

The business gains with prompt escalation.
After all, your manager gets paid the same whether you escalate promptly, or not.

But unless you're strategic with escalations you may look like someone who can't handle his job.

- A Great CEO Is Not As Good As a Group of Great Leaders
  - **Let hippies share. You go for sole leadership**

The original principle may have some merit –*may*!-.

But it's still somewhat suspicious because the founder retains more power with many "CEOs", rather than one.

Also, a single CEO can eclipse a founder if he shines bright.
But with many CEO… The founder maintains power.

See some possible conflict of interest there? :)

Summary

We've been inspired by this article after reading *The Fund*.

The therapist of one of Bridgewater's employees said that Dalio's system was designed by someone with Asperger's syndrome.

That sounds a bit mean.
There is plenty of genius in Dalio's principles -we truly believe that.

But self-help is not always the most effective to advance in life.
And the therapist's take is still valid.
Plenty of these principles just don't work well with human nature.

And, if taken too literally, these principles may also create unnecessary conflict.
The costs of those conflicts will always be borne out by those with the least power.

Indeed, many of these principles are designed to make *the company* better off.
And not necessarily the employee.

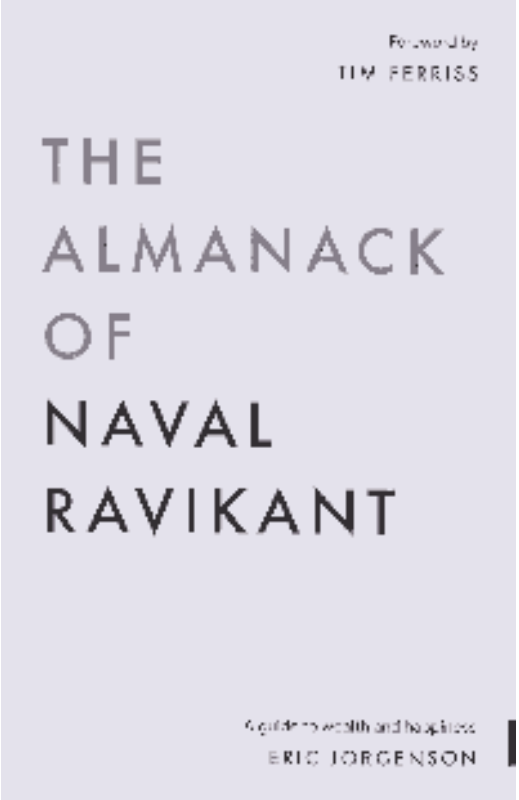
So our principles take the opposite side.
The side of a cynical and Machiavellian employee.

Power University teaches how to marry Machiavellianism for personal success, with win-win

The Almanack of Naval Ravikant: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 January 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Almanack of Naval Ravikant compiles many of Naval Ravikant's insights on how to build wealth, happiness, and a good life by focusing on the few essential mindsets, skills, and habits that make the biggest difference.



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  - 3. Making Money Is A Skill
  - 4. To Get Rich, Add Value
  - 5. Play for The Long Run
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  - 8. Avoid Mainstream Books
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Exec Summary

- Wealth is a skill
- Happiness is a skill
- Find the 1% that makes all the difference, and go all-in

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Naval Ravikant is a popular figure in Silicon Valley and startup culture of the early 2000s.
He founded several successful companies and invested in some more.

1. People Respect Naval Because He Talks Straight

I find this passage interesting from a social skills and status point of view:

> He can be as blunt as a foot to the face, but that's part of what I love and respect about him: **you never have to guess what Naval is thinking.**
> I've never had to guess how he's feeling about me, someone else, or a situation. **This is a huge relief in a world of double-talk and ambiguity.**

I think it says a lot about the benefits of what we call here "straight talk".

To learn to talk straight, Naval advice, "simply start telling it how it is".

2. Apply The 80/20 Rule

Only 1% of what you do in life will make a big difference.

You never know in advance what that 1% is.
But the 99% is about finding it.

When you do find that 1% though, go all in.

3. Making Money Is A Skill

> I like to think that if I lost all my money and you dropped me on a random street in any English-speaking country, within five or ten years I'd be wealthy again because it's just a skillset I've developed that anyone can develop.

4. To Get Rich, Add Value

> You will get rich by giving society what it wants but does not yet know how to get. At scale.

And:

> Money is how we transfer wealth. Money is social credits.
> (…)
> If I do my job right, if I create value for society, society says, "Oh, thank you. We owe you something in the future for the work you did in the past. Here's a little IOU. Let's call that money."

Scientists Add The Most Value

> I view scientists as being at the top of the production chain for humanity. The group of scientists who have made real breakthroughs and contributions probably added more to human society, I think, than any single other class of human beings.

I see it the same way.

Though here Naval's take of "value creation = money" breaks down because most scientists aren't super wealthy.

So, in truth, value creation is part of money-making, but not sufficient in itself.
Good strategies and the power principles we teach here are also part of that equation :).

5. Play for The Long Run

Whether in business or relationships, the best comes from long-term exchanges.

Naval uses the game theory expression of "iterated games":

> Play iterated games. All the returns in life, whether in wealth, relationships, or knowledge, come from compound interest.

6. Good Thinkers Know The Basics

> The really smart thinkers are clear thinkers. They understand the basics at a very, very fundamental level.

Agree.
I would add that even beyond the fundamental, clear thinkers are systemic thinkers.
They can put things in perspective because they understand how the whole structure-theory fits together.

7. Business Networking Is a Time Waste

> I think business networking is a complete waste of time (…) if you're building something interesting, you will always have more people who will want to know you. Trying to build business relationships well in advance of doing business is a complete waste of time. I have a much more comfortable philosophy: "Be a maker who makes something interesting people want. Show your craft, practice your craft, and the right people will eventually find you."

Our note:
This is a generalization of course.
While Lucio largely took that approach, it cannot be generalized. It may be true if you're sure you're going to build something that will quickly attract attention. Or that will succeed for sure.
Otherwise, networking may work for you.

See Ali's take here:

- **What Naval Ravikant got wrong about networking**

8. Avoid Mainstream Books

> There's a lot of these, what I would call pseudoscience bestsellers…People are like, "Oh, did you read this book?" I always say yes, but the reality is I read maybe two chapters of it.

P.S.:
That doesn't sound like the guy who always talks straight to be honest :).

And:

> If they wrote it to make money, don't read it.

A bit of a generalization.
Also because… Who writes to lose money?

But **we agree with the principle**.

And I largely stopped reading mainstream books.
See here why:

- **Why I stopped reading mainstream books**

https://thepowermoves.com/why-i-stopped-reading-mainstream-books/

9. Conquer Jealousy By Being Happy of Being You

This was golden:

> One day, I realized with all these people I was jealous of, I couldn't just choose little aspects of their life. (…) You have to be that person. **Do you want to actually be that person (…)? If you're not willing to do a wholesale, 24/7, 100 percent swap with who that person is, then there is no point in being jealous.** Once I came to that realization, **jealousy faded away because I don't want to be anybody else**. I'm perfectly happy being me.

Of course, you first need enough self-love, self-esteem, and confidence, to first want to be you.

You can also check our article on this topic.

MORE WISDOM

- **No one thing will make you happy**. It's a wrong, common delusion to believe that there is one thing you can achieve or get that will make you forever happy
- Evolution programmed us to keep chasing things in the hope we'll get happiness. **The only way to be happy is to stop chasing**
- **Be impatient with actions, patient with results**

CONS

Tendency to (Uncritically?) Embrace "Fads"

I sense a tendency to adopt and believe several (formerly) popular fads.

In my opinion, sometimes this was without the level of critical analysis that I appreciate most.

Some of these fads are -or were- common "tech founder culture".
Or adopted from popular "bio-hacking" gurus.

Just ot be sure, these were more just hints to me.
Naval is generally balanced and sensible, and doesn't go too far.

Still, this may be a good article to check out:

- **Bio-hacking porn, when optimization gets out of hand**

https://thepowermoves.com/biohacking-porn/

Sometimes Confuses Social And Power Constructs

For example:

> Ignore people playing status games. They gain status by attacking people playing wealth creation games.

This is only *a very specific type* of status game.

It's left-wing social climbing / virtue signaling.

Otherwise, **status games are everywhere there are people**.

And more confusing takes on status:

> The problem is, **to win at a status game, you have to put somebody else down.** That's why you should avoid status games in your life—they make you into an angry, combative person. You're always fighting to put other people down, to put yourself and the people you like up.

No, that's value-taking social-climbing.
And putting others down is called "one-upping".

You CAN gain status without putting anyone else down. And you can signal value without one-upping.

That's all we teach here :).

Missed Some Red Flags On Some Poor Characters

Naval correctly stresses how important it is to have great people in your life.

He talks about values, having values, and only accepting people with high integrity in your life.

We fully agree.

And he also talks about how to spot red flags of character.

In the same book, Naval mentions and compliments Scott Adams.
I personally saw many red flags from that character.
And I wasn't the only one.

And my personal note:

- **One can be brilliant AND an ahole**. **But brilliance is no justification**

Says Naval when recommending *Skin In The Game* by Nassim Taleb:

He has a bit of an attitude, but he has that because he's brilliant, and it's okay.

No, a bad attitude doesn't flow from brilliance.
They're two independent things.
One can be brilliant and kind. Or brilliant and an ahole.

Some Naive Takes. No, High-Integrity Isn't Necessary to Succeed

> **Look at some of the top roles in society** (…) It's because people trust them. They are trusted because the relationships they've built and the work they've done has compounded. **They've (…) shown themselves** (in a visible and accountable way) **to be high-integrity people.**

Man… I wish that was true.
But it's only one side of the coin.
Look at some of the top roles in society, and you will see a lot of dark triads.
And a lot of people who better played the game of power, without necessarily being high-integrity.

Also see:

- **Naive self-help**

> Naive Self-Help: 10 Popular But False Self-Help Myths

Lacks specificity – how do you develop mental models?

The importance of critical thinking is another area we strongly agree on:

A lousy way to do memory prediction is "X happened in the past, therefore X will happen in the future." It's too based on specific circumstances. What you want is principles. You want mental models.

> The best mental models I have found came through evolution, game theory, and Charlie Munger. Charlie Munger is Warren Buffett's partner. Very good investor. He has tons and tons of great mental models. Author and trader Nassim Taleb has great mental models. Benjamin Franklin had great mental models. I basically load my head full of mental models. [4]

However, again, I find the names confusing.
Why "mental models" and not "critical thinking"?
Mental models *result* from good thinking, not the other way around.

Also, I wished for more specific advice.

Lots of non-expert personal opinions that have no place here

Paleo diet, intermittent fasting, exercise regime… They had no place in the almanac in my opinion.

For nutrition, get advice from good-thinking nutritionists.
For exercise, get it from experienced trainers.

Naval himself says that nutrition fads are like religions.
He's 100% right.

And still, he did fall far for several fads, in my opinion.

These were the worst ones in my opinion:

> We're not meant to walk in shoes. A lot of back and foot problems come from shoes.
> (…)
> We're meant to have some cold exposure. It kickstarts your immune system.
> (…)
> Meditation is intermittent fasting for the mind.

I call BS on that.

Homo Sapiens originated in Africa, not exactly the land of the cold.
This is not to say that cold may not have some benefits -it may have, or it may not-. But if it does have some benefits, it's not because "we were meant to".

All this "meant to be" smells to me like a simplistic naturalistic fallacy –Miller and Kanazawa say it's common in more casual evolutionary psychology practitioners-.

You weren't meant to read books and share your mental elucubrations on Twitter either, Naval.
Wanna go back to dwelling in a cave, no books and Internet? See how you'll enjoy that :)

See more here on fads:

> **Lucio**: BS spreads with charismatic gurus who play the conviction game, but who may know no better than you

PROS

- **Win-win approach to life**. Same as what we espouse here
- **Good application of game theory and social exchange laws to life success**. Same as what we do here
- **"Honorable man" approach to wealth and good life**, including values and adding value. This is what makes what we'd also call here "high-quality men".

REVIEW

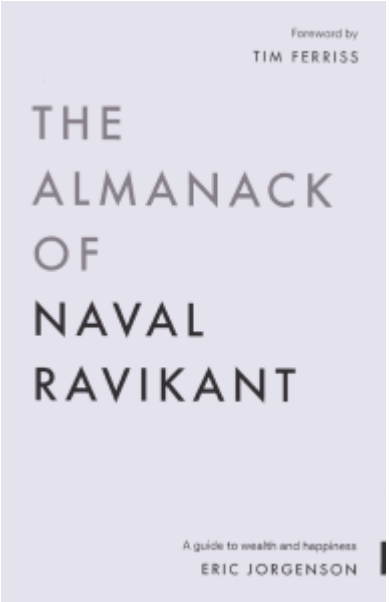
The Almanack of Naval Ravikant is a good book with many strong insights, mixed with some less impressive takes and pop self-optimization fads.

But the good outweighs the bad.
Although we may be biased since **we see much overlap between Ravikant and ourselves.**
Naval also leverages several principles from game theory and social exchanges just like we do here.
He talks about "social credits" and "social debits"… And we have never spoken before.

Overall, Naval also seems like a great character and role model.
So thumbs up from TPM.

Check the **best books** to read.

The Almanack of Naval Ravikant Summary: 9 Life Principles



The Almanack of Naval Ravikant compiles many of Naval Ravikant's insights on how to build wealth, happiness, and a good life by focusing on the few essential mindsets, skills, and habits that make the biggest difference.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-almanack-of-naval-ravikant-book-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4

Why We Prioritize Handbooks: The Best-Seller Quality Traedoff

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 January 2024 · Archived copy · Original

We have more free full-book reviews here than anyone else on the web.

After that much reading, I came to a few conclusions.

One of them is that **I decided to stop reading mainstream books**.

And here is why:

Contents

- 1. Mainstream books are to sell, not to inform & perform
- 2. Mainstream books are for the average man
  - Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™
- 3. Written to benefit the author, not the reader
  - Be Careful With (Auto)Biographies
- 4. Non-experts write most mainstream books
  - 4.2. Experts Who Write Popular Books Often Water Them Down
- 5. Many mainstream books only have 1 or 2 good points
- 6. Few mainstream authors are truly good thinkers
  - 6.2. Adding IQ to Poor Thinking Makes It Worse
- 7. Concepts repeat… And you only need to learn them once
  - 7.2. No more general-purpose self-help
- What I'm Reading Instead
  - Exceptions Always Apply…
- In Brief…

1. Mainstream books are to *sell*, not to inform & perform

And paradoxically:

The more a book sells, the more its priority is to sell.

Exceptions always apply, of course.
But in my experience, best-selling is a better indicator of:

- Author popularity
- Marketing efforts
- Writing skills

… And NOT quality of content.

Not for what I am looking for, at least.

Take Malcolm Gladwell as an example.
No dissing to the man, he seems like a good person.
Only talking about the *books* here.
Gladwell's books are listed as "psychology". (So you get to feel smart reading them, nice plus, eh?).
But they're as captivating as a novel, so you also enjoy them.

And… You're learning!

Right?

Maybe some people are learning.
I'm not.
Not in the way I define my highest ROI learning, at least.
I have very simple criteria. **I define high-ROI content as what makes me and TPM's customers better men - especially more *effective* men.**

At TPM we focus more on practical results.
So content that produces real-life changes takes precedence over spirituality.

Feel-good books don't deliver the type of results I'm looking for.
Random and "curiosity-based" information also doesn't do that.
It takes a different type of content to do that.
I seldom find it in mainstream books.

So, congrats for the best-seller sticker.
But probably not gonna read it.

That's where most best-sellers belong for those who want top-10% results

2. Mainstream books are for *the average man*

… And I'm not average.

Not when it comes to a huge sense of self, at least :).

Jokes aside, it's simple math, and it does not serve the smart and ambitious men we seek to serve here.

Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™

The Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™ is the phenomenon where a trade-off between realistic complexity and less realistic simplicity is necessary to sell to the majority.

Chances are that **to become a best-seller you must sell to the middle of the bell curve**.
That's where most people are.
Almost by definition, you don't become a best-seller selling to the top percentiles.

Best-sellers sell to the middle of the bell curve. Top 10% consumes niche content that rarely becomes "best-selling"

That means:

Most best-selling self-help is ceiling advice that often caps slightly above mid-pack.

They work great for average men looking for average improvements. But not for men looking to go to the top. (Or already at the top and looking for an extra edge).

I guarantee you, "Clean Your Room", "Do Your Bed In the Morning" and 'don't outshine your boss' from *The 48 Laws of Power* and other best-sellers aren't going to change any top 10%er life.
But they provide simple heuristics and 'laws' that will help a good chunk of men.

Best-sellers still get raving reviews, though, which may mislead even more advanced folks.
Reviews may also be genuine and honest.
It's just reviews from middle-of-the-bell curve.

TPM doesn't cater to average men. (Which is safe to say since everyone believes they're better than average :)).

Jokes aside, TPM caters mostly to driven men who want top 10% advice, for top 10% results.
So, to do my job to the best of my abilities, I stopped reading books for average Joes.

3. Written to benefit *the author*, not the reader

You don't need to be a cynical bastard to believe this:

An author who doesn't even know you probably puts his interest above yours.

So here are some educated guesses about an author's main goals:

- Sell a lot of books
- Sell his services
- Become a "published author"
- Look good -the book is PR effort

Nothing wrong with that.
A book can be part of a fair PR strategy.

And many of the author's fans will enjoy their idol's book no matter what.

Win-win.

BUT me…

I'm nobody's fan :).

Better yet:

I'm only a fan of what makes sense, what works, and what moves me/TPM customers forward.

So I focus on content quality.

P.S.
More on this mindset here:

https://thepowermoves.com/enlightened-individualism

Be Careful With (Auto)Biographies

Some smart people love (auto)biographies.

They say that you learn straight from the exceptionals.
You know, billionaires, luminaries, and men who made history.

And they do have a point.

BUT…

First off, some over-achievers are also dark triads.
And dark triads aren't exactly well-known for honesty.

But dark triad or not… **Personal interests are misaligned with honesty when "legacy" and public perceptions are at stake**.

So, with *auto*-biographies, well… Enjoy reading the ad piece :).

Even when written by others, powerful men can influence the narrative.
Starting with themselves: the main source is often the subject himself.
And the other major sources? The people closest to him: cronies and allies.

4. Non-experts write most mainstream books

… And why waste time on random guys' opinions?

If I wanted those types of "experts" I could have stayed where I come from.

There are lots of experts in the dive bar there.

People who never opened a book, never left to see the world, and never did anything special… And *still* know everything.
International politics, economics, and who should play in the Italian national team. You name it.
During the Covid pandemic, many even became immunology experts.

Note:
This is cynical tongue-in-cheek.
I love chatting with locals. Many are good people and their unwarranted confidence in their unfounded opinions is entertaining.
STILL doesn't mean I need to spend *too much* time there -or pay attention to their BS-.

It's not any different with many of today's podcasters.
And many popular books are the same.

So…

Life is too short to read people's *opinions*.
When you seek wisdom and growth, choose high-credibility sources.

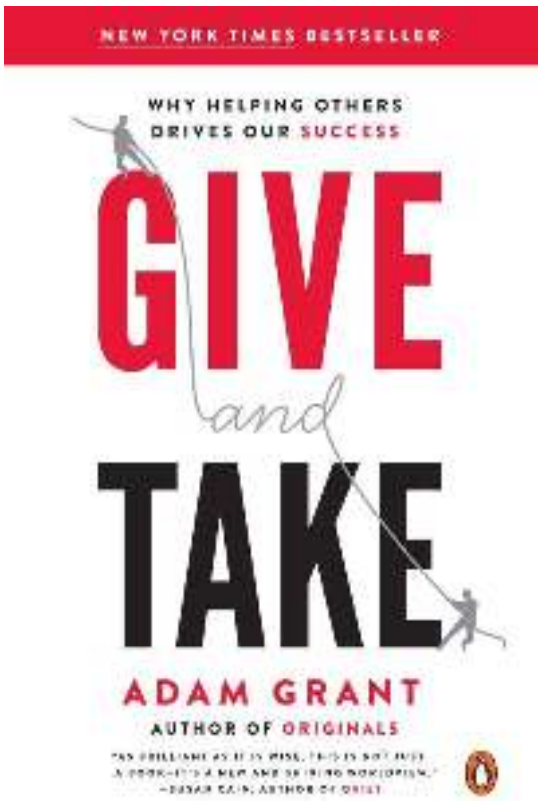
4.2. Experts Who Write Popular Books Often Water Them Down

Researchers are humans.

And they like money and fame just like anyone else.

Researchers who prioritize money and fame above rigor write poor mainstream books.

Example: Adam Grant. Psychology to make you feel good



A fantastic communicator and probably a great guy.

He leads with his “Psychology Professor” and “Harvard degree”.
But when he went mainstream he left rigor behind:

- *Originals* has no science, it could have been written by Seth Godin (we even removed the review)
- *Power Moves* was feel-good self-help about power
- *Give and Take* shows that *strategic* givers win at life. But he white-washed that with the (misleading) frame that *givers* -in *general*– win at life”. Took a great concept, and turned it into Naive self-help

5. Many mainstream books only have 1 or 2 good points

And the rest is padding.

Heck, in some cases, the only good point is the title.

No disrespect to Mel Robbins here.
She’s a great speaker and maybe also an awesome person.
And still… You don’t need a full book to explain the “5 seconds rule” -start counting from 5 to zero, then move your ass. That’s it-.

6. Few mainstream authors are truly good thinkers

Few can make sense of a complex world.

And far they’re outnumbered by those who don’t make sense at all :).

But no shaming here.
Making sense of complex things is *hard*.

And thinking well is a skill that nobody teaches.

So few people have it.

It isn't even about brains and IQ.
It's more about processes of logic, deduction, biases exclusion, etc.

6.2. Adding IQ to Poor Thinking Makes It *Worse*

IQ is no solution to poor thinking.

Indeed, IQ may make things *worse*.

Adding IQ to a poor-thinking brain is like adding more horsepower to a shoddy car.

You increase the noise and it may *look* powerful.
But without effective transfer of (brain)power to performance, it's sizzle with no steak.

This car actually looks awesome and may even perform well LOL. But the concept is: more IQ to poor thinking is like a bigger engine to a shoddy car. It won't do much to improve ultimate performance

This is how it works:

- **Smart men without evidence do good-sounding philosophy** to cover up their lack of substance**.** Yes, they may produce interesting "food for thought". Or make good "opinions papers". But still not accurate descriptions of reality.
- **Smart men without evidence, experience, & good thinking bamboozle you with poetry.** They add complexity, flowery language, and references to old high-authority philosopher… but they're just "showing off their smarts" with mental masturbation.

Yes, I'm looking at you, Jordan Peterson.
The hell you love talking about is trying to make sense of *Maps of Meaning*.

Jokes aside, nothing wrong with philosophy and poetry.

Philosophy is awesome.
Poetry is awesome.

It's just not what I'm looking for.

This phase of my life, I seek accurate descriptions of reality.
Or strategies that work in the real world.

You smooth-talking men bring experience, or evidence to the table.
If not, we're not a good match.

7. Concepts repeat... And you only need to learn them *once*

Question:

Do you read for the pleasure of reading, or to achieve certain goals?

Because if you're reading for the pleasure of it, this post is not for you :).

If you're reading to achieve certain goals, **you eventually acquire all the book-knowledge you need to achieve your goals**.

So the more you've already read about a subject… The *less* time you should spend reading.

To me, this is particularly true for…

7.2. No more general-purpose self-help

I feel I've read enough of these.

Little to gain from the latest motivational coach guru book.

And no dig to motivational speakers and self-help coaches.
There are plenty who are truly awesome.

Just… Probably not reading their books :).

What I'm Reading Instead

These days I prioritize handbooks and textbooks.

And a few quality podcasts to fill the gaps between audiobooks and review preparation.

These books are written by researchers and experts, reviewing and presenting the full literature on given topics.

Luckily, many researchers are critical thinkers.
So they provide you with an incredibly high ROI.

They can synthesize decades of research and reams of research papers in one single book.

Sure, nothing is perfect.
In TPM's 3-pillars approach to knowledge, handbooks may lack personal experience.

But if you have the experience yourself, you're good -we only deal with what we've experienced here anyway-.

Exceptions Always Apply...

Some exceptions I make:

- **Mainstream books by researchers**

Such as David Buss, Elliot Aronson, Roy Baumeister, Philip Zimbardo…

Yeah, I'm dragging that list out to covertly brag about the quality of our resources :).

Anyway, great researchers sometimes write mainstream books.
But when they do their job well, they mix “ease of reading” with high information load.

- **Opinion-books by researchers**

You wanna be careful with untested hypotheses.

But you can still learn a lot from the arguments.

Some examples are *The Mating Mind*, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, or *Mindset* by Carol Dweck.

- **Authors who consulted research *and researchers***

Some journalists can write great books if consulting several researchers.

One example is Will Storr’s *The Psychology of Status*.

Consulting researchers is important because most people can’t read research.

Exceptions apply, as always.
Robert Wright is not a researcher himself.
But he is scientifically-*minded* and thinks well.

- **High-expertise authors** (even without science or advanced thinking skills)

For example, I’m interested in dating products from proven players.

Or, say, a book on intersexual manipulation by a successful escort.

Even if it references zero science.

As a matter of fact, *better* without science.
Few people can properly assess studies.
So they’d only try to appeal to authority, but make a mess out of it. (Again, no finger-pointing. Assessing research doesn’t come naturally and it’s a big skill on its own).

High-expertise and poor-thinking authors can’t explain why what they do works.
They fail to “systematize” their experience and develop strategies that work for all.
But their experience is still valuable.
Especially if *you* can put it into context.

Casanova, for example, couldn’t explain his success through high-power behavior, bold leadership, and narcissistic traits.
But TPM could fill those dots :).

In Brief...

I chose to de-prioritize all mainstream books and to fill my reading list with textbooks.

Good news for you as well.
TPM content and products have long been best-in-class and scientifically thorough.
And will get even more so :).

Rollo Tomassi: Red Pill Guru, Or Misogynistic Bias?

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 January 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Rollo Tomassi is a manosphere figure commenting on intersexual dynamics and male rights issues.

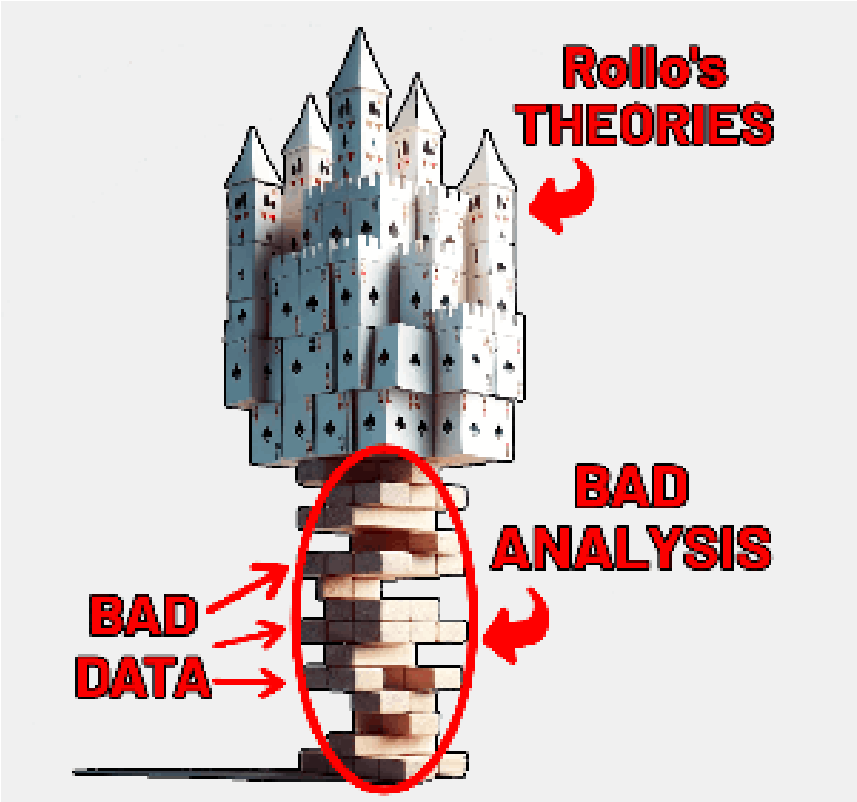
We critically examine Rollo Tomassi's approach, his teachings, and his worthiness as a role model for men.

Contents

- Poor Thinking Leads To Poor Analyses
  - 1. Poor Data
  - 2. Poor Analysis
  - 3. Poor Theories
- Rollo Tomassi Psychology
  - 1. Rollo Longs For Cultures of Male Hegemony
  - 2. Potentially Close To Racist Extremists
- Misogyny
  - 1. Rollo Describes A Vile Female Nature
  - 2. Rollo's Selectively Focuses On Women's Faults
  - 3. Rollo Presents Women As Largely Victimizing Men
  - 4. Rollo Sees The Genders In Competition
  - 5. How Rollo Hides His Misogyny
- Self-Help For Average Joes
- Rollo's Qualities & Added Value
  - The Truth In Rollo's Teaching
- Alternatives To Rollo Tomassi
- Caveats
  - 1. We Criticize Ideas While Respecting The Man
  - 2. We Are (different kinds of) Red Pill
- REVIEW
  - Why We Made A Review

Poor Thinking Leads To Poor Analyses

Why Tomassi's analyses are lacking, in one picture:



It's the "crap-in, crap processing, crap-out" model.

Tomassi falls short at all links of the epistemology chain:

- **Poor data**, with poor selection and representativeness
- **Poor analysis**, with poor critical thinking skills and biases
- **Poor theories**, without the intellectual honesty to self-correct

Let's review them:

1. Poor Data

Data includes all information available.

Either first-hand experience, observation, or science.
Each of them has pros and cons, so a good thinker uses them all.

Among the many issues in Tomassi's use of data:

1.2. Rollo doesn't understand science *or* logic

Evolutionary psychology is foundational to intersexual dynamics.

And Tomassi has a very limited understanding of evolutionary psychology.

Just one of many examples:

> it served a feminine imperative to evolve an ability to cut former emotional ties more readily (in favor of her new captor) and focus on a more self-important psychology – solipsism.
>
> Rollo Tomassi, *The Rational Male*

Basically:

1. Women get over breakups faster (<—- No data. Opinion presented as fact)

2. because they evolved for quick switching (<—- Conjecture. Likely erroneous. But presented as fact)
3. so they (chose to) focus on (…) becoming (<—- Ignorance of evolutionary principles. Evolution works on heritable traits, not cognitive focus)
4. Becoming more selfish (<—- Unfounded conclusion based on *both* faulty logic and data)

The fallacies are obvious.
A researcher's comments on this:

> **Macken**: they say a lot of stupid stuff (…) that women evolved to fall in love with their kidnappers because (…).
> (…) What a stupid thing to say you (…) You're an idiot
> (…)
> You can't just say (…) that women have an easier time with breakups (…) there's mixed evidence on that

In brief, **Rollo Tomassi is unreliable** on evolution-related topics.

1.3. Rollo is unable to select and filter meaningful data

Tomassi often uses anecdotes.

Some anecdotes *can* be representative of larger trends.
But we've seen Tomassi often picking *exceptions*.

Several of his anecdotes barely even exist in reality:

> **Rollo**: and you want to know why is that women will kick you in the nuts and we laugh at it or if you're man spreading pour water or bleach on your nuts, it's because…
> **Ben**: I've never seen that
> **Charlie**: (laughing) this has never happened

This is comical-level nonsense.
I *literally* burst out laughing.

To be fair, Tomassi then says it was just an example of an "attack".
But his next example was also poor. And it says a lot about Tomassi's shortcomings in data selection. **Tomassi is bound to come up with poor theories because he selects poor and unrepresentative events** from the real world.

It's funny that for all his talk of masculinity and "empiricism", Rollo Tomassi's thinking is feminine*.
Low analytical thinking, and high in "random associations".

1.4. Rollo can't make sense of data

The data Tomassi himself presents sometimes directly contradicts his theories.

For example, to prove that women have sex with alphas but marry betas, he says:

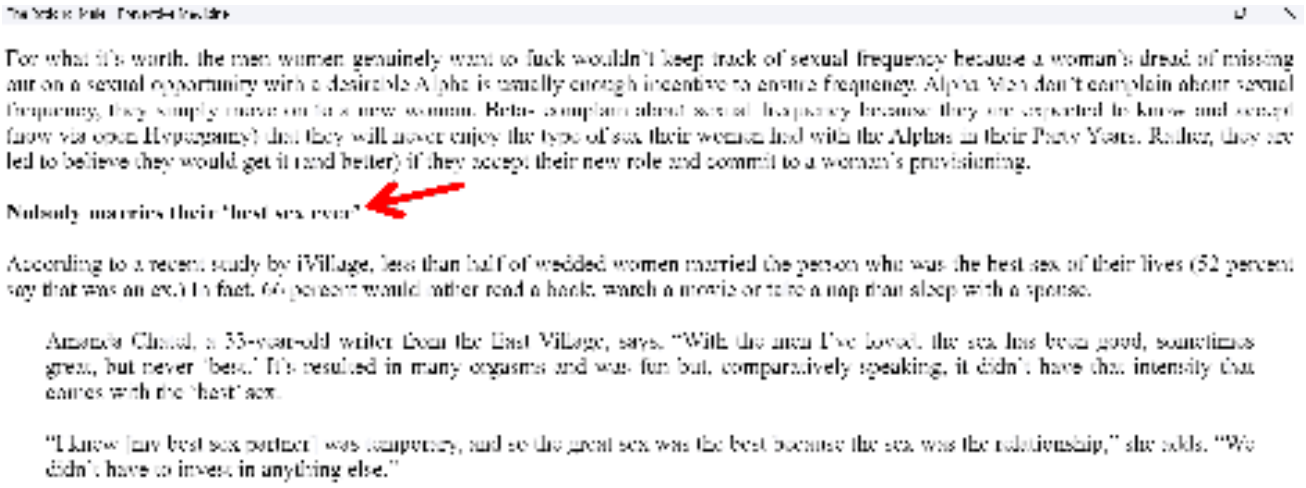
> According to a recent study by iVillage, less than half of wedded women married the person who was the best sex of their lives (52 percent say that was an ex.)
>
> *Rollo Tomassi, Preventive Medicine*

But that proves the *opposite*.

With a conservative estimate of 5 life partners, pure chance to marry the best sexual partner is 20%.
Tomassi's source at *more than double* the odds proves the *opposite* of his point.

This is telling in our opinion.
With months to prepare, **Rollo Tomassi couldn't even cherry-pick data to support his narrative.**

Tomassi even titled the paragraph:



For what it's worth, the men women genuinely want to fuck wouldn't keep track of sexual frequency because a woman's dread of missing out on a sexual opportunity with a desirable Alpha is usually enough incentive to ensure frequency. Alpha Men don't complain about sexual frequency, they simply move on to a new woman. Beta- complain about sexual frequency because they are expected to know and accept (now via over Hypergamy) that they will never enjoy the type of sex their women had with the Alphas in their Prime Years. Rather, they are led to believe they would get it (and better) if they accept their new role and commit to a woman's provisioning.

Nobody marries their 'best sex ever'

According to a recent study by iVillage, less than half of wedded women married the person who was the best sex of their lives (52 percent say that was an ex.) In fact, 66 percent would rather read a book, watch a movie or take a nap than sleep with a spouse.

> Amanda Christal, a 33-year-old writer from the East Village, says, "With the men I've loved, the sex has been good, sometimes great, but never 'best.' It's resulted in many orgasms and was fun but, comparatively speaking, it didn't have that intensity that comes with the 'best' sex.
>
> "I knew [my best sex partner] was temporary, and so the great sex was the best because the sex was the relationship," she adds. "We didn't have to invest in anything else."

Rollo's own data shows the *opposite*. It's an inability to pick meaningful data

2. Poor Analysis

Analysis is making sense of the data.

Good analyses may require high IQ.

You judge whether Tomassi has enough brainpower.

But thinking *processes* also matter.
And Rollo Tomassi thinks poorly:

2.2. Can't grasp nuances

Rollo Tomassi thinks in black-and-white terms.

He starts from politically incorrect truths that need to be said. But cannot add nuances and exceptions.
And that makes for poor analyses.

For example, he says:

- **Men and women have *adversarial* dating strategies**

Men and women indeed maximize reproduction potential very differently.

But that doesn't take into account… Everything else.
Few men can even hope to reach "peak male returns", and many men prefer family lives.

In the real world, most men's and women's strategies are *both* overlapping and diverging.

If that weren't the case, relationships wouldn't have evolved.
Instead, all human cultures have them.

I believe this is telling of Tomassi's (in)ability to provide good analyses.

P.S.:

Research that black-and-white thinking is associated with low cognitive abilities (IQ) and low education.

2.3. Over-generalizes

Tomassi often starts from important truths that few dare to address.

But then **Tomassi over-generalizes to the point where it doesn't accurately describe reality anymore**.

For example, Tomassi says:

- **Women pursue the *imperative* dualistic strategy of sex with alphas, lock down beta provider**

Some women indeed pursue the "dual mating strategy".

The nuance is that *some* women do that, in *some* cases.

And there is no "imperative".

There are instead several available and viable strategies.
Including a relationship with a high-value man willing to settle down.

There is also plenty of "Mr. non-perfect alpha, but still high-value enough not to cheat on".

Read more in our alpha f*cks, beta bucks article.

> The Science of "Alpha Fucks Beta Bucks" (Facts VS Myths)

3.3. Anecdotal thinking

Example:

> In my lifetime I've had sex with over 40 women and I never once caught a venereal disease (…)
> I can also point to men I know who contracted Herpes from the only women they'd ever had sex with. (…) you can equally be a rock star and tap hundreds of women without any consequence and you can be a virgin saint and contract a disease on your wedding night
>
> *Rollo Tomassi, The Rational Male*

This is faulty logic.

The point he's trying to make may have some validity.
But you *certainly* can't uphold it with that faulty logic.

I've noticed Tomassi failing at simple logic several times.
So I believe it's fair to say that **Tomassi struggles with logical thinking** – even in basic aspects.

The "I was a player and never got STDs" logic is like the "the old man down the street smokes and never got cancer" story.

Such as:

"the old man down the street smokes a pack of cigarettes a day and is still doing well. So cigarette consumption is unrelated to health".

The logic is faulty because you can't generalize and draw conclusions from individual cases.
You'll always find healthy smokers.
And still, there IS a relationship between smoking and health.

Same goes for quantity of unprotected sex and chances of catching venereal diseases.

3.4. Myopic thinking misses second-order effects

Understanding the intricacies of complex systems is crucial for good theories.

But Tomassi often seems to stop at the first level of analysis.
He misses the intricacies and second-order effects of complex systems.

For example, Tomassi's analyses often portray men and women as monolithic blocs.
However, the experiences of low-value VS high-value men and women are *completely* different.
Sometimes, opposing.

For example:

> Bear in mind that monogamy is a dictate of the feminine imperative
>
> *Rollo Tomassi, The Rational Male*

Tomassi speaks as if monogamy was good for women -in general-.
And bad for men -in general-.

At first sight, it may seem so.

But thinking at the gender level fails to appreciate the complexities of human mating.
And, in truth, **monogamy better serves the interest of lower-value men.**

If society abandons monogamy, it's lower-value men who fail to find a mate, not women.
High-value women may still find quality men willing to commit. And will always find at least a mate.

But lower-value men will struggle mightily to find anyone either for long term, or short term.

This is the key difference between Tomassi and TPM. (Besides the depth of our investigation :).

Tomassi focuses on groups, societies, and trends.
We focus on individuals because we believe in the power of the individual to find ways.
Even if trends are real, smart, strategic, and empowered men can always be the exception and succeed.
No matter the culture, the country, the "woke trends" or whatever.

Eventually, Tomassi understood this concept.

3. Poor Theories

Theories are high-level models that explain the world.

System thinking develops theories based on data, and data analysis.

However, Tomassi's theories are often lacking because:

- **Weak fundamentals**, with poor data and poor data analysis -as per above-. They lack justification in either data, or logic
- **Self-referential and "builds upon itself**". Tomassi rarely goes back to any solid evidence. Instead, he connects the dots with his own (lacking) intuition and his other (often biased) constructs

Some issues with Tomassi's theories:

3.2. Rejects opposing evidence 1: conspiracy excuse

Tomassi often rejects disproving evidence.

For example:

> **Rollo**: (addresses why the "ovulatory shift" so central to his theory is weak evidence) honestly I think **that there is a personal bias against ovulatory shift because it is an unflattering truth** of female nature that's why they're going after it (<— conspiracy to defend his take), that's why it's not reproducing or re-replicating (…) **the problem is in Academia** (…) which **also coincides with (…) Dr David Buss comes up with the mate switching hypothesis** and comes out with *Men Behaving Badly* and **comes out with his dating program** (…) so when I see that… (makes a gun gesture to his head)

Better and larger studies advance science -and undermine Rollo's takes-.

And…

Rollo says it's a conspiracy.

Even purely mathematically, it's far more plausible that *Rollo* doesn't want to renege, rather than many researchers conspiring.
And, one could speculate, Rollo's misogynistic bias prefers the more women-demeaning explanation.

Finally, it's another example of black-and-white thinking to consider the two strategies as mutually exclusive.

3.2.2. Rejects opposing evidence 2: manipulation

From Rollo's chat with the guys on Charisma on Command:

> **Charlie**: men do have floors (effectively refuses Rollo's theory with his real-life experience)
> **Rollo**: Let me tell you why (<— teacher's frame schooling the pupils) that kinda of (takes some of the edge off) offends your sensibilities here okay (<—- manipulative reframing), because if your sexual strategy is to put all your eggs in one basket, to be monogamous…

Rollo reframes the rebuttal as "offended sensibilities".

It's covertly manipulative and babying.
As if an adult couldn't cope with the fact that humans aren't perfectly monogamous -duh, under which rock did you hide-.

Maybe it was *Rollo* who believed in fairytales that eventually turned him bitter.

See full example here.

3.3. Dunning–Kruger effect: Rollo thinks he's an expert, so he'll never become one

Low-competence individuals tend to overestimate their competence.

See if you spot that here:

> **Rollo**: (…) they want to figure out how to get their wife to have sex with them again there's so much going on (…) **I have to be an expert on like neurology, endocrinology, sociology, anthropology, and all these all these little subfields** because they all in some way like dovetail into what we took the red pill awareness

"All these little subfields" :).

Those are vast and sometimes complex disciplines. They take high-IQ scientists many years of focused study to master.

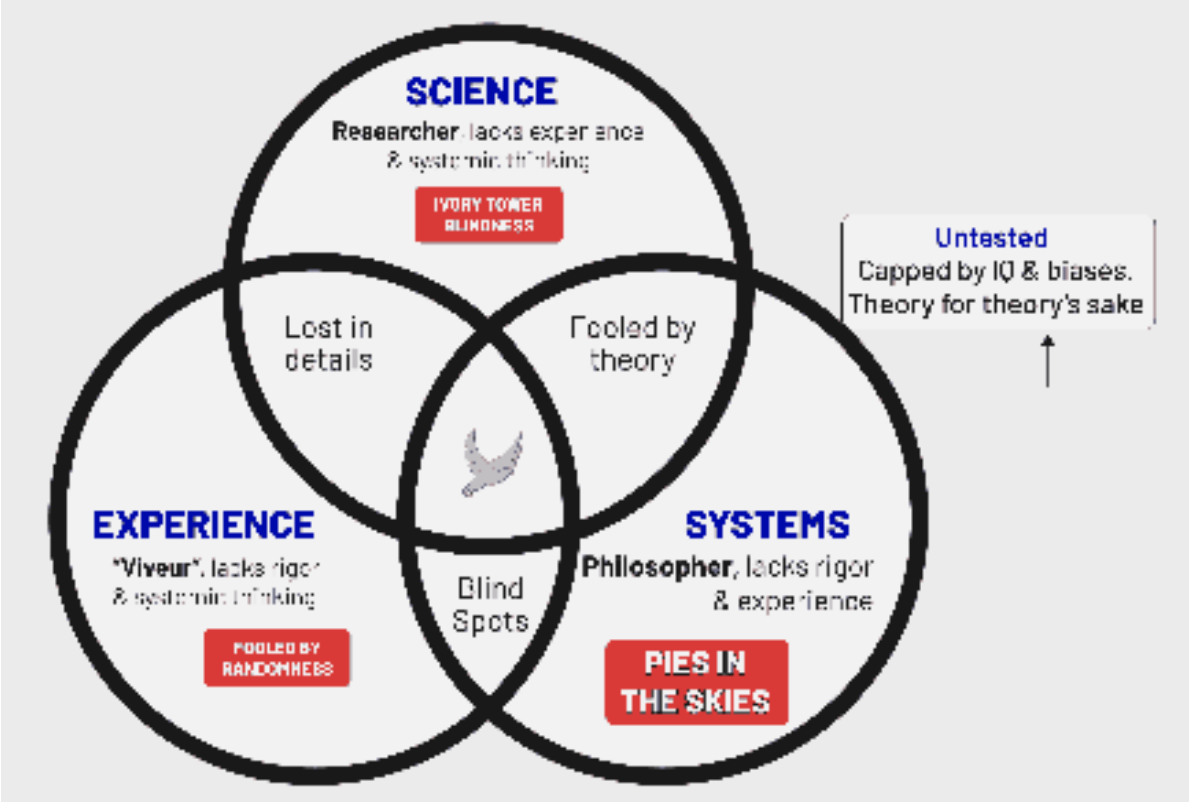
With just that one sentence **I struggle to take Tomassi seriously**.

3.4. Rollo has a philosopher approach

Rollo Tomassi does a lot of theorizing.

But Tomassi doesn't go back nearly enough to the empirical evidence to back up his theories.

In our epistemological approach, this is known as the "philosopher's approach".
And it's in contrast to a scientist's approach.



Tomassi displays a typical philosopher's approach of much thinking with little data. Without good data this approach develops "castles in the skies" theories. These "castles" are unlikely to be good representations of reality

The pitfall of the philosopher approach is that **the more you think things over, the further away you move from the data**.

That's why castles in the skies.
They build upon themselves, with little grounding in data.
That's *philosophy*, not *science*.

It's a generally poor approach if you want to provide realistic models.
The further you go from the data, the lower the odds of getting things right. Even if you're a genius.
Indeed, more IQ without data may even make things *worse*.
If Freud, widely regarded as a genius, has been proven wrong with modern science… What are the odds that Tomassi gets it right?

Now it should make sense why our opening picture is a castle of cards.

To sum it up, Rollo Tomassi:

1. Picks poor and limited data
2. Applies poor critical thinking to the already bad data
3. Overdoes the theory, without cross-checking with empirical data

Rollo Tomassi Psychology

Psychology is key to understanding someone's work -and biases-.

Power is central to the red pill.
And social conservatism is a well-represented ideology.

We feel both apply to Tomassi.
At heart, **Tomassi longs for the patriarchal order of male hegemony and control over women**.

Hence the mate-guarding tendencies:

> **Rollo**: (if she goes partying, lock her her out and lock the door)

Albeit speculative, the driving force may be fear.
Including fear of women's sexuality.
Hence the obsession about past lovers, "body count" and mate-guarding.

This is also why social conservatives are not the best dating coaches-not for anyone who wants to be a lover, at least.

1. Rollo Longs For Cultures of Male Hegemony

Tomassi says:

> **Rollo**: **Many people will say "Islam is far more alpha, Islam is the way** if you wanna have a solid marriage, if you want to be whatever (sic) and my take is that they are still a culture and ethnicity (sic) or whatever you wanna call it, **a religion that still has a default authority for the masculine in it. But even that is being eroded**

Tomassi regrets Islam is losing power because some Islamist societies are closer to his ideal of male hegemony (and female repression).

2. Potentially Close To Racist Extremists

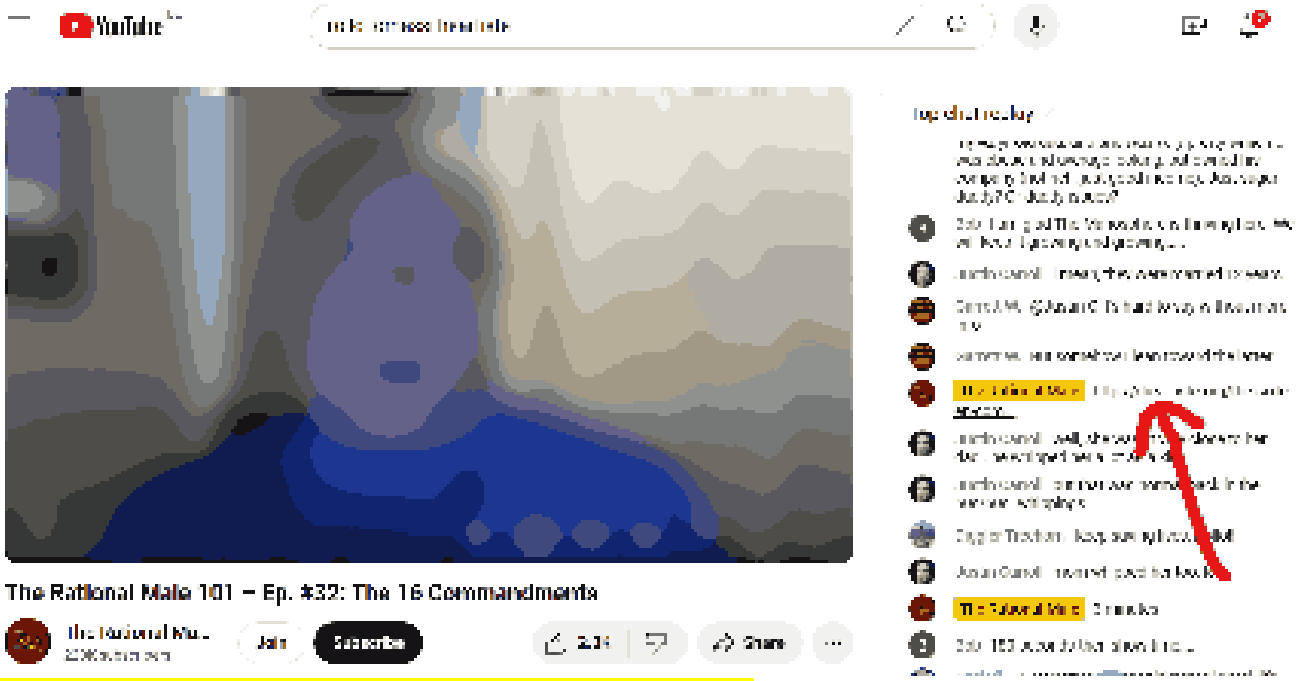
Tomassi references Rossy:

> **Rollo**: I'm known as one of the three R's of the manosphere. There's Rolo, Rossie, and Roosh

What a holy trinity eh? :)

Later Tomassi says men find the red pill via his blog or Rossie's blog.

And here's Tomassi linking in one of his live streams:



Note: blurred picture to respect a man who passed away. RIP Pat ⍰.

It seems Tomassi feels they're in the same camp.
And that he agrees/likes the blog.

I haven't personally investigated it -the time spent on Tomassi is enough :)-.
But RationalWiki says Rossy is an open racist and white supremacist.

Misogyny

This is the main reason I write this Rollo Tomassi review.

And it's also part of my dislike and possible bias towards Tomassi

Because **all I see in Tomassi's work is misogyny hiding behind a facade of "sharing the truth"**.
And I find that ugly.

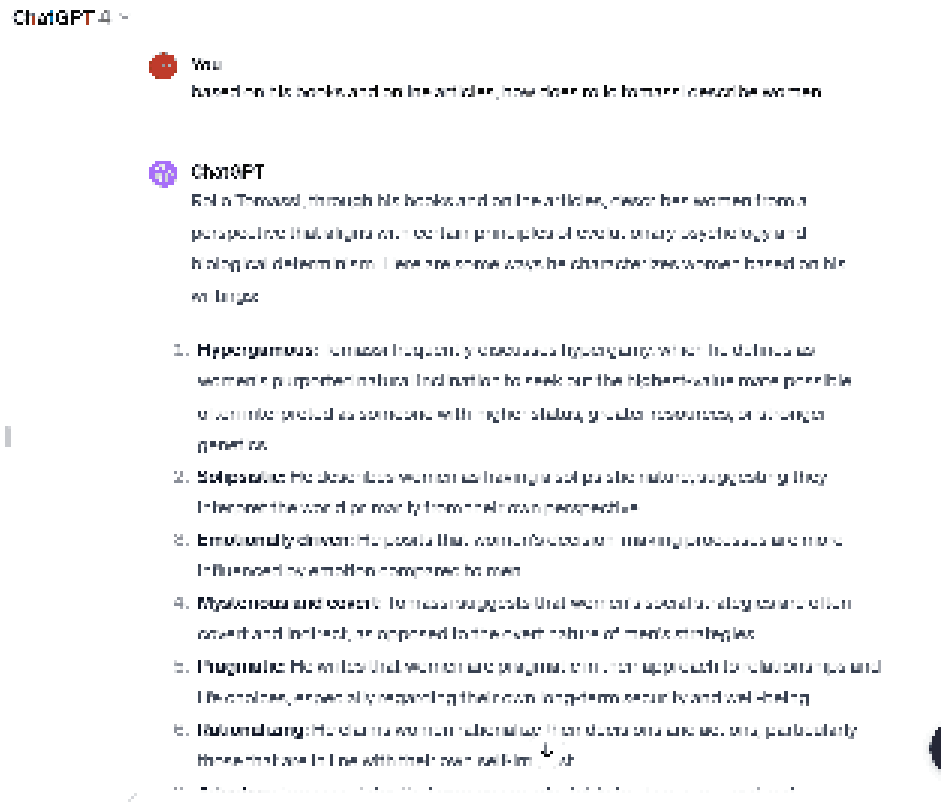
Gargamel chases its anathema: the female Smurfette, symbol of female liberation and unrestrained sexuality. Smurfette rejects the yoke of Gargamel's control, leaving him bitter at his own powerlessness.

I believe the misogyny that permeates Tomassi's work makes the world worse off.
I'm open to being wrong -and I hope to be wrong-.

The signs of misogyny I see:

1. Rollo Describes A Vile Female Nature

I asked ChatGPT how Tomassi describes women:



How ChatGPT summarizes Tomassi's views on women. Not a pretty picture

The terminology is seemingly neutral.
But read the description and **there isn't a single positive thing Tomassi says about women**.
It's neutral at best, or negative.

For the record, we aren't even saying that "it's not true".
But selective focus on negatives, in our opinion, is a sign of misogyny.

1.2. Aggressive Choice of words

> Show me what they say, and I'll tell you who they are
>
> – *Lucio Buffalmano*

See how Tomassi describes women:

- **"Cock carousel riding"** to describe women's partying years

For the record, I don't want to date women highly unrestricted women.
And I think that's both OK, and smart.
But I *still* find Tomassi's descriptions a sign of misogyny.

- ***"I endure an endless stream of criticism for implying that women are selective sluts."*** says Rollo in *The Rational Male*

Ask yourself: would a neutral commentator use the word "slut" to describe sexual appetite?
I've heard him refer to OnlyFans women as "whores" as well.

- **"Spinster"**, as in this Tweet

This tweet also shows Rollo's conflictual tendencies when it comes to men and women

2. Rollo's Selectively Focuses On Women's Faults

For example, Tomassi would say:

Women cheat.

He omits that, hello, men also cheat.
And men cheat more than women, according to much research* on infidelity.

2.2. Rollo's negative focus is a major source of bias

Misogyny is a fundamental bias that undermines Rollo's ability to accurately describe reality.

Let me explain with an example.

Imagine this epitaph for Tomassi:

> Rollo Tomassi was a contentious author criticized for simplistic and misogynistic takes
>
> *A hater's truth*

That IS true.
But it's "negative focus true" and *distorted* reality.

It's also a hater's job to omit the positives.

Like him or not, thousands of men say that Tomassi helped them.
To omit that, is to spread a biased and untruthful depiction of reality.

That's what Tomassi does focusing on women's negatives.

3. Rollo Presents Women As Largely Victimizing Men

Example from his book:

> My problem is civilly sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner with a hyper-religious woman and the new millionaire husband she married just 8 months after her former Beta husband of 20 years hung himself from a tree when she decided "he wasn't the ONE" for her.
>
> *Rollo Tomassi, Positive Masculinity*

That sucks.
My heart goes out to anyone suffering.

But… Is it a mature and healthy response to take your anger out on all women?
It's also a convenient thing to say for Tomassi because his material provides a good outlet for hurt men (keep reading).

Some men also knock up women and disappear.

What would you think of women saying that "*men* are predatory"?
I know, some women do that.
And those are exactly the women to avoid.

4. Rollo Sees The Genders In Competition

Discussing the MGTOW ("main going their own way") approach, Tomassi says:

> Many a MGTOW (men going their own way) will simply suggest men no longer play the Game; that isolationism is the way to go, but this only serves to eventually concede power to the Feminine Imperative.
>
> *Rollo Tomassi, Positive Masculinity*

Tomassi advises men to *not* go their own way.
Why not?
Because that only makes "the feminine" unchecked, and more powerful.

What should they do then?
Well… Fight against “the Feminine”, apparently

This tells us that Tomassi sees genders as locked into a competition for power.

And for sure there is a competition for power -that’s also why TPM exists :)-.
However, it’s also true that life is BOTH cooperation and competition.

Tomassi almost exclusively focuses on the competition side between men and women.

Ultimately, Tomassi fails to appreciate the nuances of the sexual market place.

In truth, **top men gain with empowered women**.
Explanation in this video:

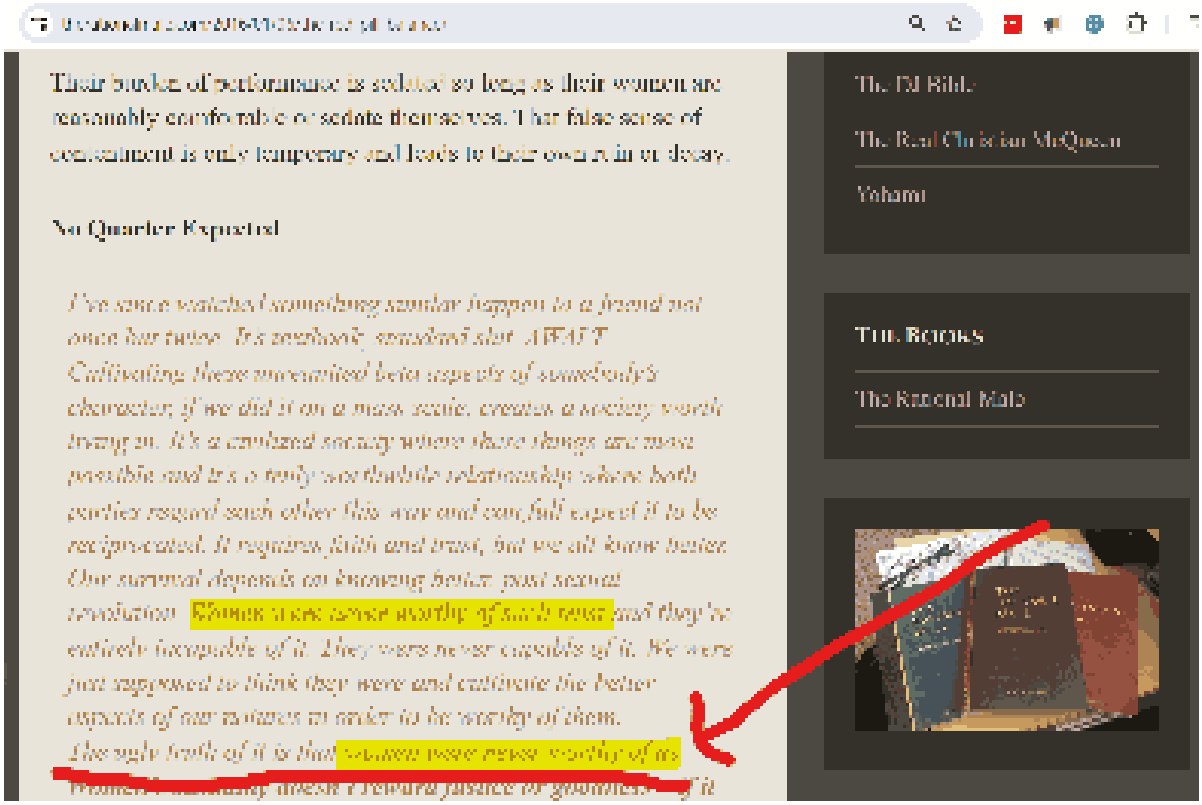
5. How Rollo Hides His Misogyny

To me, Tommai’s approach is sneaky.

For example, he:

5.2. Quotes *others* for his worse takes

From his blog:



> **Rollo’s blog**: (apparently quoting someone) women were never worthy of such trust (…) women were never worthy of us

Tomassi set the baits to incite his most rabid followers.
Some will run with it.
Then he will quote one of them in the next post.
And on and on with the cycle… Without ever fully exposing himself.

"Yo, easy guys!" Rollo only described women "as they are", he never told you to hate them.
That's the ring-leader stock cover after they foment their followers

Similar technique Trump uses.

5.3. "Men & women are better together" BS

Tomassi says that "men and women are better together".

Feels like a great BS for cover because I wonder:

What kind of idiot would want to be with Rollo's description of a woman?

Oh yeah, right, Tomassi is married…

5.4. Manipulatively neutral terminology for reviling descriptions

Notice how Tomassi describes women:

- **Solipsistic**, NOT selfish and egoistical -Thesaurus' definition of solipsism–
- **Hypergamous**, NOT calculative, Machiavellian, and coldly driving men to suicide
- **Feminine imperative**, NOT the oppressive and repressive matriarchy he describes

The names he chooses sound more neutral.
Even "scientific" for those who can't see beyond the smokescreens.

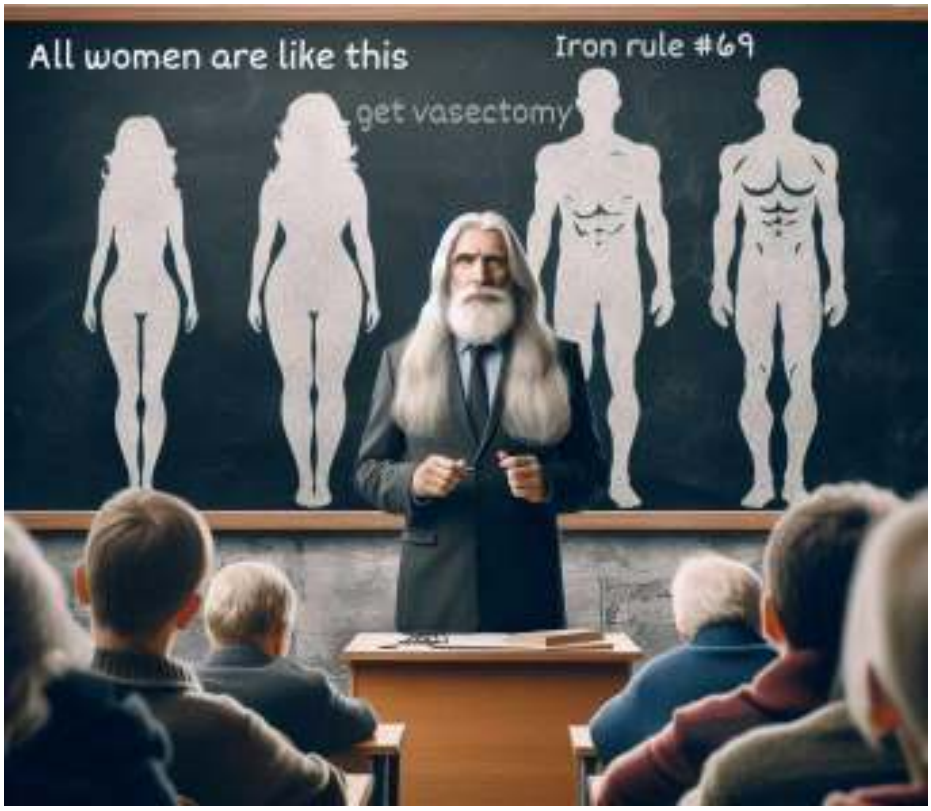
Funny from a guy who says *women* are covert, eh?

Remember: Hitler never said he disliked the Jews

Hitler described the Jews as value-suckers.
Within the frame of "doing it for the Germans".

Tomassi "does it for men".
While painting a truly dark picture of women's nature.

Self-Help For Average Joes



Tomassi's general self-help advice works great for still-naive men.

And since many men aren't particularly aware or high-value, it *does* improve many men's lives.

It's at the more advanced levels that it starts showing cracks.
Especially in the mindsets.

Here are some examples:

- **Women get over breakups more easily** = great warning for lower-value men. Not always the case for *high-value men*
- **She's not yours, it's just your turn** = a mindset that's mostly useful for average provider types
- **Always reject "LJBF"** = great advice for clueless men. Higher-value men rarely have that issue (and know better)

It's no coincidence that you don't find many life winners, successful players, or happy men among Tomassi's fans.

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

Rollo's Qualities & Added Value

Rollo Tomassi's review focused on the negatives.

One because we believe they're valid and important.
And two, because our reviews are generally critical.

However, there are also many positives in Rollo Tomassi and his work.

I recognize among the positives:

- **Rollo wants to help men**

AND has helped many men.

Kudos to him.

- **Respect for a man who doesn't grift**

No courses, over-priced consulting, or BS supplements.

Rollo seems to stay true to his calling.

I respect that.

A lot.

- **Doesn't posture as a guru**

Rollo is no Jordan Peterson telling you how to live life.

Rollo says he respects his audience to decide for themselves.

We like that a lot.

- **He seems to be a man of ethical standards**

Rollo dedicates his book on game to his deceased friend.

He even encourages anonymous donations to greyhounds:

More respect.

- **Sparkles of bright creative genius**

We said Rollo lacks critical thinking.
BUT he's clever in a more artistic sense.

- **He provided space to many worthy men's rights**

We agree that Western countries now favor women in many areas.
If things become more balanced, it's also for the courageous work of men like Rollo.

- **Great takes based on solid power-awareness**

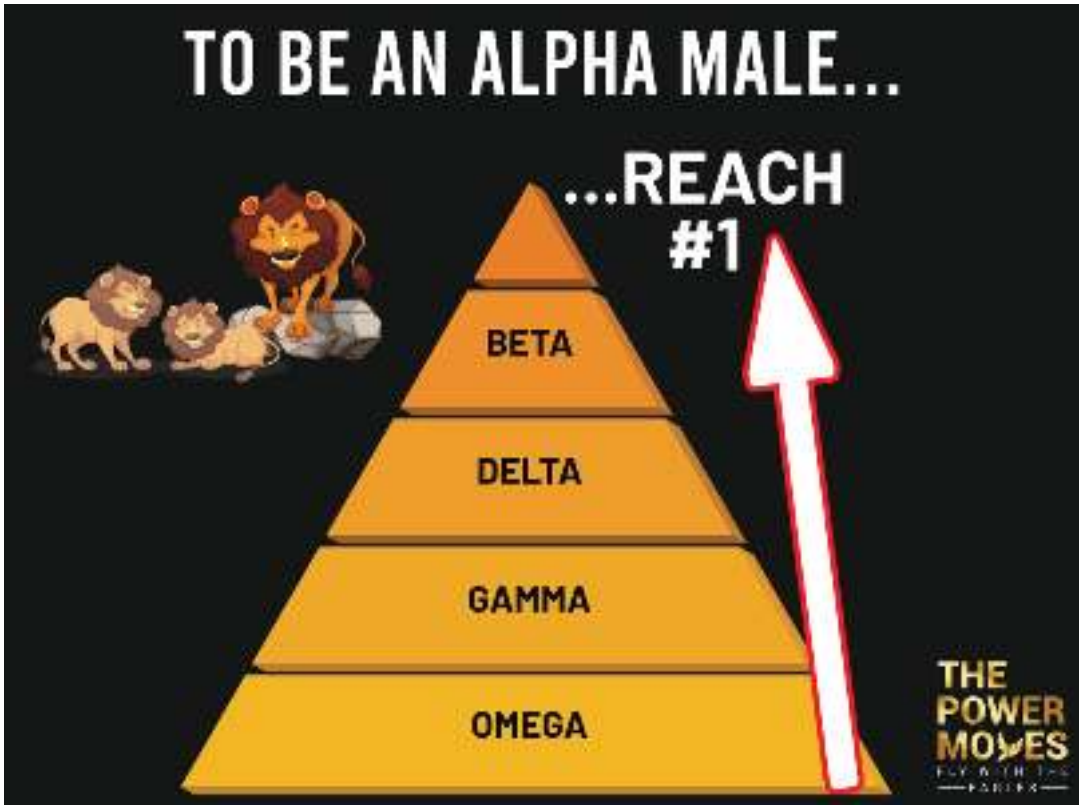
Besides believing *The 48 Laws of Power* are actual laws, Tomassi has a good sense of power dynamics.

For example, men's possible loss of power and attraction with marriage.
Also read relationship phases of power and how to maintain attraction.

> Relationship Power Dynamics 101

The Truth In Rollo's Teaching

Much of red pill wisdom is valid.



For example:

- **Social exchanges and sexual exchanges are largely amoral**. Your sexual market value is all that matters.
  - Many women will string you along for their convenience
- **Cheating is a human adaptation**, part of everyone's mating strategy toolkit
- **Men have a "burden of performance"**: don't be naive and expect to be "loved for who you are"
- Etc. etc.

Many red pill's self-development approaches are effective.
For example:

- **Be high-value**, become an alpha male
- **Stay fit**. A toned body is attractive
- **Date high-power**, **lead**, **display social dominance**

- **Hypergamy** as in “women prefer men who are “more”

And more.

Alternatives To Rollo Tomassi

To leverage bias-free red pill wisdom:

- **Intersexual dynamics from the sources**. Skip the (poor) interpretations. Good overviews provided by:
  - David Buss
  - Macken Murphy
  - TPM reviews
- **Dating from successful players**. Most are better and not bitter
  - Best dating resources
- **Self-development, effectiveness, achieving goals**. TPM may be a good resource
- **Masculinity** is where I’d consider some red pill gurus

Caveats

We care to specify that:

1. We Criticize *Ideas* While Respecting The Man

Not respect in the sense of looking up, or liking.

But **we extend to Rollo Tomassi the basic respect owed to most other human beings**.
And we wish Rollo the best in life.

In that sense, we’re glad that Rollo Tomassi is a pseudonym.

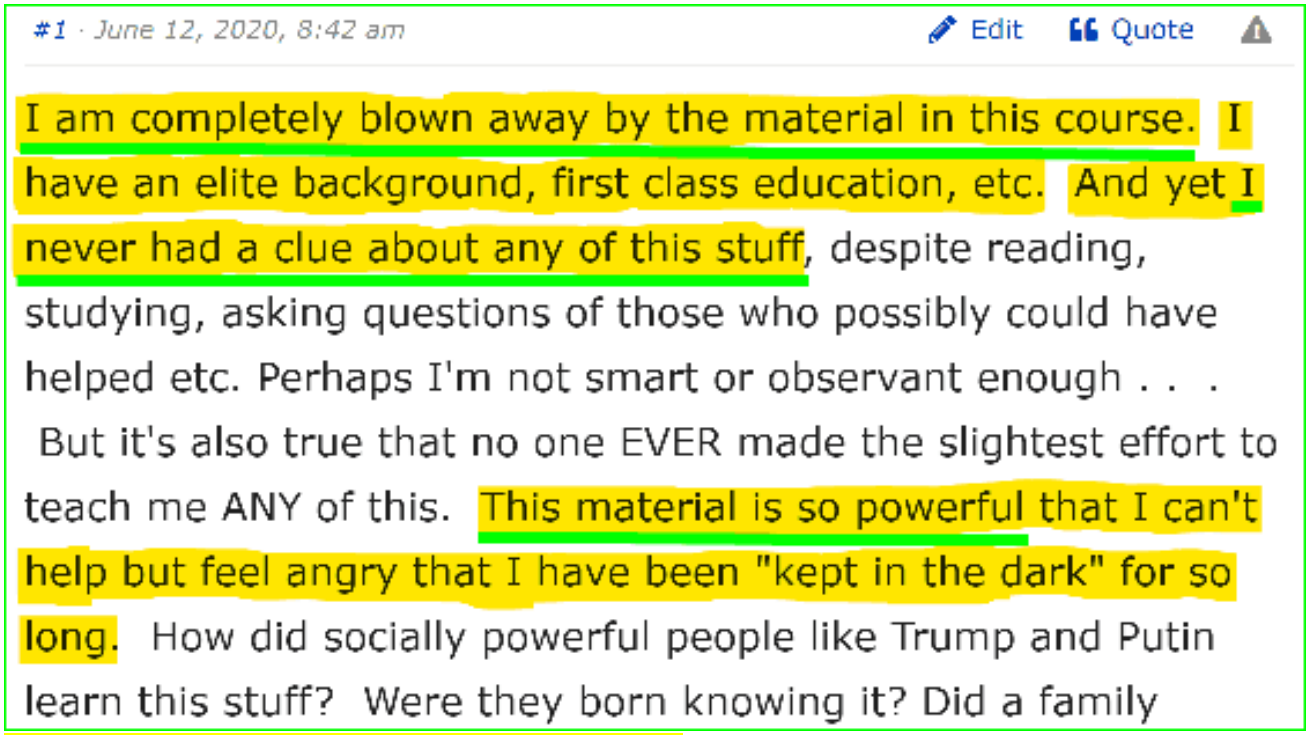
2. We *Are* (different kinds of) Red Pill

This is about Tomassi, not a criticism of the red pill *movement*.

We’re *kinda* in that space as well after all:

TPM was one of the early websites on theredarchive

And some of our alumni had typical “red pill awakenings” to our work:



#1 · June 12, 2020, 8:42 am Edit Quote

I am completely blown away by the material in this course. I have an elite background, first class education, etc. And yet I never had a clue about any of this stuff, despite reading, studying, asking questions of those who possibly could have helped etc. Perhaps I'm not smart or observant enough . . . But it's also true that no one EVER made the slightest effort to teach me ANY of this. This material is so powerful that I can't help but feel angry that I have been "kept in the dark" for so long. How did socially powerful people like Trump and Putin learn this stuff? Were they born knowing it? Did a family

How a Power University alumni described Power University

I like to think TPM is truth-focused.
But without (as much) bias.

REVIEW

We find Rollo Tomassi to lack critical thinking skills, to jump to conclusions, to over-generalize, and to advance biased opinions that don’t accurately represent reality.

Still-naive men may have much to gain from Tomassi's work.
But men who are past -or never were- "blue pill" need more advanced material.

Finally, we see important signs of misogyny and misogynistic bias in Tomassi's work.

On the plus side, Rollo is a bright and creative mind who became an important manosphere figure, and he shaped much of the narrative around dating dynamics there.

Why We Made A Review

Straight talk:

We hope that many men read this, recognize the misogyny they're absorbing, and change approach.
To stay on that path, we believe, is lose-lose for all.

As a reader wrote:

And embracing our WIIFM, we hope some of these men may consider TPM.

Whatever you choose, critical thinking skills and healthy skepticism will always benefit you.

Biohacking Porn: Quit OCD, Embrace Life

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 February 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Optimization is great.

It allows you to be more efficient, doing more, with less.

As for everything though, you can go too far.
And today, **the old "hustle porn" has been replaced by "optimization porn".**

It's just another "feel busy but go nowhere trap".
We explain why:

Contents

- Intro
  - Optimizing VS Over-Optimizing
  - Own Up: It's Not Effectiveness
- It's A (Too) Slow-Life Strategy
  - Over-optimization is Risk-Averse and Feminine
  - Over-Optimizers VS Over-Liver: Example
- Pareto > Genes > Optimization
- Scammy Biohacking
  - Gurus Red Flags
- Biohackers Reviews
  - Andrew Huberman
  - Tim Ferris
  - Thomas DeLauer

- Lucio's Biohacking
  - Dont's
  - Does
- Summary

Intro

We define both "optimization porn" and "biohacking porn™" as:

> To spend time and resources learning, acquiring, and implementing sub-Pareto (80-20) improvements ("hacks") for small-ish, dubious, or even negative ROI

It's a mouthful, I know :).

But it gets clearer I promise:

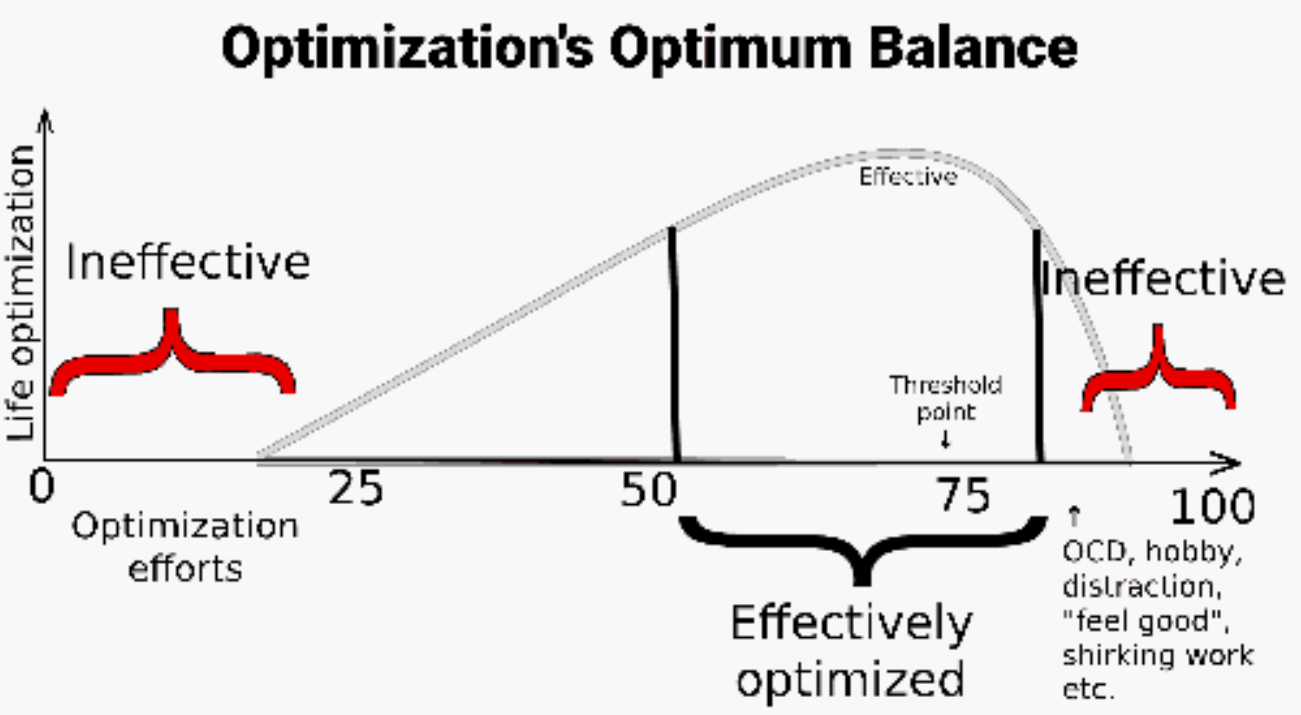
Optimizing VS *Over*-Optimizing

This is simple math:

The more you optimize, the lower your returns become.

After a certain point, the inputs will outweigh the output -negative ROI-.
Think of it as an inverted U-curve.

The issue then is that **optimization porn pushes a lot of people beyond that optimal point**.
In chart:



For example, most people reach level 50 on health by acting on simple basic information that would fit in a single post

In real life though it's difficult to say when you cross the threshold.

So as a rule of thumb to help you self-assess:

Optimization turns *over*-optimization when it stops being a means to an end.
Then it's more likely to make you *less* effective because it's optimization for optimization's sake.
It becomes its own game, with its own rewards.

Nothing wrong with that.

But you may as well be honest with yourself:

Own Up: It's Not Effectiveness

Here's why optimization is so sexy:

We get to tell ourselves we're effective, driven, smart… Better than the rest, maybe.

But the truth is:

You're not optimizing.

You're doing… Something else.

Some of that "something else" is totally fine.
For example:

- Hobby
- Break from work
- Pushing the limits to see how far you can go

In some ways, albeit geeky, it's a typical male thing.

But over-optimization drivers may be less healthy.
Such as:

- **Chasing *feelings* rather than results**: feeling busy, feeling like advancing, feeling like "doing the right thing"
- **OCD**
- **Skirting actual work**: Alex Hormozi mentions a guy with a 3h morning routine who couldn't get enough work done :)

Or…

You've fallen for the guru-game.
And **a (semi-manipulative) optimization guru tricked you into the optimization rabbit hole.**

Now we're talking proper TPM expertise :).

No shame, though.
I've fallen for it too (read on).

It's A (*Too*) Slow-Life Strategy

> Life Passes You By While You Over-Optimize For It
>
> – *Lucio Buffalmano*

I think you've heard the rock and roll motto:

Live fast, die young.

I've always had a soft spot for that.

Next life, maybe :).

How does that relate to optimization porn, though?

Different “life speeds” are different life strategies.
And linked to a *reproductive* strategy.

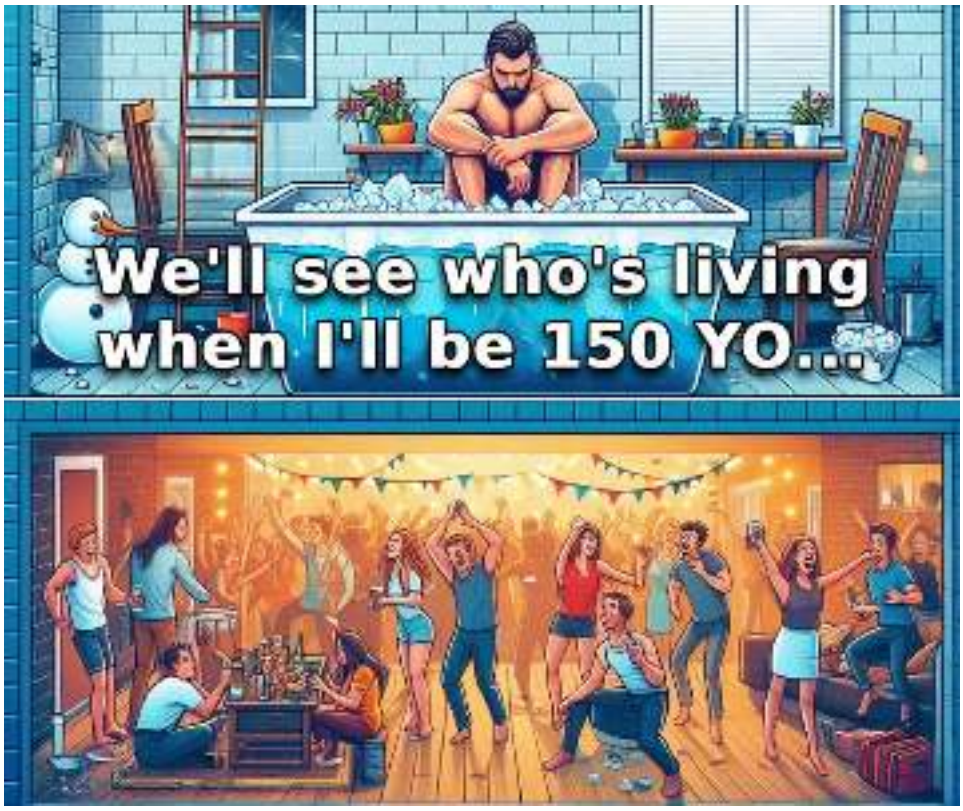
The “rocker” one, called fast life strategy, was originally proposed by Bruce Ellis.
It’s largely adopted by psychopaths.

Fast livers rarely optimize because they’re focused on the short term.
What they get *right now*, consuming liberally… And abusing sometimes.
Including themselves, and their bodies.

The slow livers, including the optimizers, are concerned with long-term.
Slow-livers optimize because they’re (over-)concerned about the long-term.
They treat their bodies well because it should remain effective long-term.
So they worry about the dangers of sun exposure, the ills of eating pizza, and… How to stay alive for long with “bio-hacking”.

I have no issue with slow life strategies.
Indeed, I respect them.
It’s slow life livers who build civilization.

However, here is the difference.
And, as usual, it’s about balance.
Optimizing is slow life strategy.
But *over*-optimizing is too slow. While the optimizer optimizes for a long life, the *over* optimizer lives as if he lived for ever.



Over-optimization is Risk-Averse and Feminine

It's funny:

The over-optimizer may be in the best shape possible.
His body sculpted by perfect gym attendance.

And still… The slow approach is inherently more feminine

Says Dr. Tania Reynolds (slightly edited for clarity):

> Hormones (…) serve as the dial for this life history strategy speed.
> So **a more masculine hormonal profile leads people to a slightly more fast life** history strategy

There you have it.

For the record, this is a hypothesis.
But it's a hypothesis that seems logical to me.

My take on it is even more speculative.

But follow the logic and see for yourself:

Fast life is higher risk, more associated with men than women.
And no time for over-optimizing when you're busy living.

Slow and safer is lower risk, more associated with women, than men.
And plenty of time and scope for self-care -and its geekier sub-sets: biohacking and optimizing-.

Over-optimizers struggle to gain masculine men's respect

I'm not a very "masculine man".

Neither do I care much to be.
And neither do we make it a priority here at TPM -we prefer "whatever is effective" here-.

And still…

Dr. Reynold's insight well explains my personal "secret feelings".

I'd be cautious saying this in some settings.
But deep down, **I can't help but have little man-to-man respect for over-optimizers**.

Part of me looks down on over-optimizers as… Can't say this publicly, but catch the drift.

The fast livers naturally get more of my respect, instead.

This means that over-optimizers struggle to gain leadership roles in very masculine environments.
And **over-optimizers may struggle to gain "alpha male status"** in naturally-occurring male-only groups.

Few men will say it because few men are even aware of their subconscious.
But that's how it goes…

Over-Optimizers VS Over-Liver: Example

Vasco Rossi is an alcoholic and heavy substance user.

Like many rockers, Vasco Rossi lived the fast life.

Let's quickly compare his fast life with over-optimizers:

Morning:

- Over-optimizer wakes up at 4 am
  - Vasco Rossi wakes up at 12 next to a new girl (BTW, in his songs he even talks about 16 YOs, and nobody even mentioned "canceling")

Breakfast:

- Over-optimizer carefully weighs his food and goes through his "supplement stack"
  - Vasco Rossi "chops his breakfast on a mirror" while reminiscing and smiling about his previous great night

Confidence & Self-Esteem:

- The over-optimizer needs taxing routines to "earn his own" respect (I talk from first-hand experience here, I've been like this for a long time and still partly am)
  - Vasco Rossi does whatever he feels and feels awesome no matter what, even as an overweight guy

And back to reproductive strategies:

- While one famous over-optimizer sperm-banks for his future at 48 YO…
  - Vasco Rossi had 3 children from 3 different women while staying unmarried. Sounds a lot more "alpha male type" by red pill standards, no?

Think about that.

Sure, Vasco may live a shorter life (albeit he still reached older age).
Or don't preserve his cognitive functions nearly as well (albeit he makes a lot more sense than many current

"gurus").

But he can make a good claim he lived 10x an optimizer's life :).

That's not to say "live the fast life".

I'll even admit: it's misleading and "wrong" to put those items in red VS green.

Most fast lives are not as glamorous as rockstars, but harsh and ugly. And not suited for most men.
Vasco Rossi also struggled with addiction and rehabs.

It's also not good for society, if anyone cares about that.

I don't want the Vasco Rossi life (or I'd be doing it).

So, what then?

As "unsexy" as that may sound… **Balance is the answer**.

Don't (over-)do a whole life of drugs, countless hookups with floozies, or run-ins with the law.
But don't overdo stupid-level optimization and hack-seeking either.

Pareto > Genes > Optimization

Here's the truth:

Genes trump hacks.

Especially once you do the basics.
And the basics trump hacks.

It's the old Pareto principle.
All biohackers and life optimizers, I bet, know the theory.

Most "advanced biohacks" address the last 20% *at most* and *when combined*.
Individually, we're often talking about 1% or less.
And no matter how well you optimize the 1%… It won't take you far.

Anecdotal evidence is generally poor evidence.
But it sometimes says *something*.

So this is a picture of my father at age 80:

My father looked great for an 80 YO. Zero biohacks, no life optimization, and even ignored some important basics

Nothing crazy here.
It's not like my father beat any record.
But, in my opinion, age-adjusted he looks better and younger than many biohackers and life-extensionists I see online.
And zero hacks.

Can Freedom Be Scary?

This take may pain the over-optimizers.

Instead, I see it as the opposite:

Focus on the 80%,
And then… You're free!

You can let go of all the hacking BS.

And enjoy life :).

Scammy Biohacking

Biohacking sometimes turns into pseudoscience BS.

For example:

- Detox
- Superfoods

- EMS blocking adhesives
- …

Etc. etc.

And there's plenty of grey areas.
Gurus and marketers love "bending the truth":

> **Lucio**: biohacking fads start with a dark triad who wants to get famous and rich, or a marketer looking to create demand. Then standard social dynamics do the rest

Gurus Red Flags

Some of the manipulative tools of dubious gurus include:

1. **Scientific and intellectual posturing**. Teacher frames, white lab coats, etc.
   - **Pseudoscience**. Misquoting "autophagy" is a popular one at the time of writing
2. **Inflated claims**. Ie. "*cold exposure makes… (you live to 100 / faster / your dick longer*, etc.)"
3. **Naturalistic fallacies**. Ie. "*we weren't meant/born to… (wear shoes / wear clothes, etc.)*". Always tell yourself "yeah, and I wasn't born to listen to this idiot"
4. **Bamboozling and over-complication** with unneeded or made-up jargon
5. **Extreme hacking/exercise/deprivation**. If I wanted to handicap my enemies, I'd tell them "skimp on sleep, and go train heavy weights"
6. **Conspiracies.** Ie.: "*The government colludes with big corp to make you fat*". Also watch out for the milder frame of health organizations as "poor mainstream advice".

Lost a lot of respect for Jordan Peterson when he started doing some of that:

> **Peterson**: it's **obvious** that (….) our **tyrannical government** (…) **regulating** what people serve at their tables

There you are, all the keywords that should tell you "stop listening".
So instead of the "tyrannical government", you can listen to her daughter's podcast teaching you how to properly eat :S.

Let's now review some *good* biohackers.
If we spot the red flags in the good ones, it'll be even easier with the bad ones.

Biohackers Reviews

Let me say this first:

Both Tim Ferriss and Andrew Huberman seem good guys.

And with generally good intentions.

I loved some of Ferriss' approach in his *4h Workweek philosophy*.

So, well done to them.

We criticize the approaches, here NOT the men.
And we'll use their content to learn the psychology, MO, and risks of optimization porn.

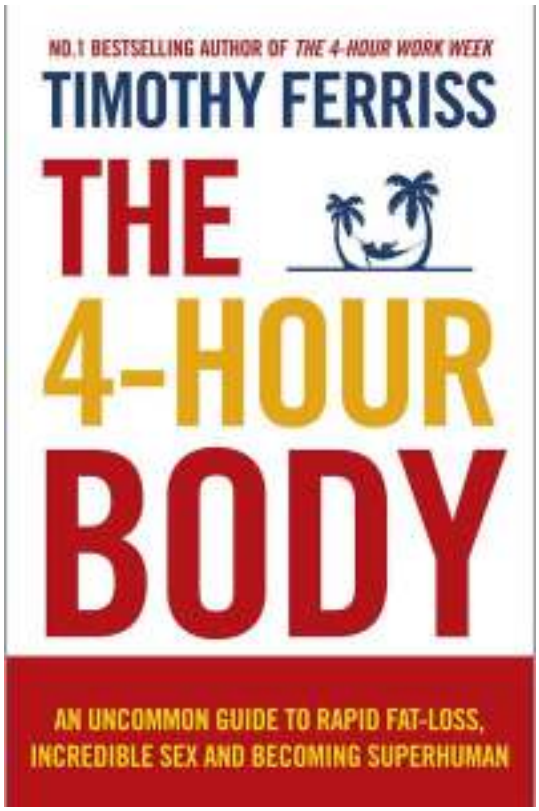
Andrew Huberman

See the full analysis of Andrew Huberman and his competence-displaying tactics here.

Tim Ferris

Ferriss is the optimizers' Godfather.

In *The 4-hour Body* he guides readers to rapid weight loss (with rabid hacking).



For the record, some nutritionists I respect say rapid weight loss is not good for you.
ChatGPT agrees:

ChatGPT 4

You
is it better to lose weight little by little or fast?

ChatGPT
When it comes to losing weight, the general consensus among health experts is that gradual weight loss is healthier and more sustainable than rapid weight loss.

That alone makes the full book, well… Questionable.

But if you enjoy hacks and geeking-it-out, boy… Does Ferriss deliver :).

Here's an example.
Bold is mine, red are my attempts at humor to highlight the nonsense.
And original text redacted for brevity (you can only imagine the original):

> **I consumed the ECA stack 45 minutes prior to** (<—- is the optimizers' secret handshake to drop the word "Stack"?)
> cold-bath immersion **on an empty stomac**h (<—- not fasting would have been too "casual". You gotta add some extra hurdle).
> Though the metabolism of caffeine **(caffeine clearance)** (<—- technical jargon. "Authority ping")
> (…) **I assumed** that blood concentration would peak between 60 and 90 minutes post–oral (<—- displays the brain work. Ferriss geeked the analytics out)
> consumption, which was **based on the average pharmacokinetics** (<—- got that?)
> of caffeine in white male subjects. (<—- ensure ethnical relevancy. You never know you're going off Martian's parmacokinetics)
> Pharmacokinetics, **usually in graph form**, show (…) (<—- Ferriss can read charts)
>
> I (…) submerged myself for a total of 20 minutes.
> Those 20 minutes were phased as follows: (<—- Did you think you could just lay there? Nope, phases guys, phases!)
>
> 00:00–10:00 minutes: (…) (<—- We removed Ferriss' made-up body positions to adopt)
> 10:00–15:00 minutes: (…)
> 15:00–20:00 minutes: (…)
>
> Sound painful? It is. (<—- you gotta earn your over-optimizer stripes, bitch!)
>
> (…)
>
> That's it.
>
> *Tim Ferriss, The 4-Hour Body*

That's it, says Ferriss.

You've just spent half a day prepping for an ice bath meant to "burn fat"… While you could have just eaten less.

Imagine that!

Save time, money, and do it the healthier way.

Ferriss asks if it sounds painful.
I bet he was proud to declare "it is".

I may sound nasty here.
But to me, more than painful, it sounded stupid.
The whole book, frankly, also struck me as *sounding* "smart", but very low in critical thinking.

Thomas DeLauer

Needs no analysis:

> **Thomas**: (I live to bio-hack)

No dig on Thomas, he seems a great guy, kind, and even very open-minded towards critics.
But to me, if you see this and don't think it's over-over-doing biohacking, you may be too far gone :)

Lucio's Biohacking

First, foundational mindset of personal power:

> **See Power University**
>
> *PU, Foundational mindsets of self-empowerment*

Then:

Rules of Thumb

I follow rules of thumb based on credibility and required input:

- **High investment for uncertain returns**: **no**. Hence out all strict, stringent, and weird diets
- **If it's a new fad, most likely no**. Most fads go against the literature consensus.
- **If it's a marketer / scammer / non-scientist, most likely no**. TPM/PU can help you develop a sixth sense for those
- **If it's easy, or one-off investment, most likely yes**. Even if the benefits are uncertain

Input rationale:
I focus more on input because most outputs are uncertain, unquantifiable, or small-ish.
So if they're high input, they're likely not worth it.
But if they're low-effort or one-off, then even small improvements are welcome.

Credibility rationale:
It's an industry ripe with scammers, marketers, and biohacking porn addicts.
Even well-meaning folks can seldom think rationally and analytically.

Dont's

Reminder:

My experience, my opinion :).

We write for smart men here.
If you looked into it, tried it, and **if you're sure it works for you, you're right**.

I tried and stopped:

- **Intermittent fasting**: I did 8/16, then one meal a day. If I'd tell you the dates it ruined you'd think I'm the biggest idiot on earth (and you'd be right)
- **Extreme, "prove yourself" habits & exercising**: over-optimizers tend to go extreme everywhere.
  Including the drive to "prove one's worth to himself / others". There is a time and place for that. I still have it in me and use it.
  But I also made it a point to address it. Much more power to have high self-esteem *as default*:

> **Lucio**: 4am alarm to lift weights is what you should advice your enemey. Lack of sleep increases the odds of injury. And extremism as "motivation" is killing your self-esteem

- **Ketogenic diet**: I never felt more stupid than on a rooftop bar in Rio de Janeiro. Everyone having a great time… And me Googling the carbs percentage of each cocktail. Then ensuring the bartender followed my special instructions.
  That's when I told myself "f*ck this BS"

- **Barefoot shoes**: Tried, and still wear them on “hack squat days”.
  But never for normal life. I think they harm more than help. The “we weren’t meant to walk with shoes” is so dumb it doesn’t deserve to be addressed
- **Fasting**: don’t believe in the oversold benefits
- **Wearable to monitor body functions**: this is complication mistaken for effectiveness. Most of it is unneeded data, pure biohacking porn.
  I have the same feeling for weather forecast:

> **Lucio**: winners don’t check the weather (/wearable trackers). They will do anything they need to do anyway, no matter the weather (/what the trackers say)

Not doing:

- **Reverse aging / life extension**

Again: anything that’s easy is welcome.

I’d rather live longer and better than less and worse -duh!- :).

However, I’m not a fan of the *philosophy* of “biohacking for life extension”.
Especially when it turns into biohacking porn, as it sometimes does.

I have a strong take on it actually:

> Quit the narcissism of living forever.
> Have the courage to bow out when it’s time.
> Focus on making it a good life-show you can be proud to bow out from
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

- **Ice baths**: I turn the tap full cold for the last seconds. Ice baths feel 100% optimization porn territory
- **Nootropics**: not a major limiting factor to address. Not interested
- **Saunas**: no thanks
- **Earthing or grounding**: may do this “naturally” if in nature. But if you gotta go out for its “therapeutic effects”… Get outta here hippie :)
- **Microdosing**: not interested for now
  - Therapeutic hallucinogenics: none of those who’ve done it without previous issues seem better off to me. Some seem worse off.
- **Cheat days**: God, such an idiotic frame! **Eagles don’t cheat**.
  I enjoy all the food I eat. I have some treats every day (porridge with yogurt, berries, fruits, nuts, peanut spread etc.). And some other treats every once in a while. But all part of a balanced diet & life.
  Don’t even come mentioning that weak-ass cheat stuff

Does

- **The BASICS**: this is where it’s all at. You probably won’t need anything else. All of them I do regularly and at good intensity, but without excesses.
  - Exercise, some weights (used to be home exercises), cardio (more recently), home exercises. Use stairs for lower floors, and bicycles/walks instead of cars for shorter distances
  - Dancing on music sometimes. Nothing says “yes” to life like dancing on your favorite music. Healthy *and*

happy
  - Quality food & balanced diet. Whole foods, enough proteins, plenty of vegetables and fruits, and limited processed foods
  - Natural sleep/wake rhythm. Wake up without alarm #1. To me it's also about personal power and the only way of "proper living". Nap when I feel like. Go to bed when sleepy is the one I "naturally resist" the most, but I'm OK with it.
  - No smoking / drugs / excessive alcohol. But I'll bum a couple puffs after a meal if someone smokes. Or enjoy wine with food sometimes. Have nothing against getting drunk or high sometimes, but haven't done it in a while
  - Good relationships. These days I prioritize work and don't have a "proper social circle". But still good family relationships, and remained friends with childhood friends
- **Some supplements**, such as D3 when I spend winters in EU
- **Mouth taping** to ensure nose breathing at night. This is good optimization: specific to the individual, great ROI, *no pretenses to generalize it to others* (most people don't need this). For *me*, it was great. I'll stop once it becomes a habit
- **Water purification**. Not sure how helpful it is. Health optimization gurus are useless unless they checked *your* pipes' water. But it *may* help, and it likely does help a bit. *And* it's very low effort. That's why it's a "yes"
- **Light optimization**, all easy to implement. Including:
  - Blue light removal from laptop and phone after a certain hour
  - Black and white smartphone, great tip to potentially reduce phone use. Thanks to Alex Hormozi
  - Lower lights in the evening
- **Meditation**

And finally:

- **Power University**

Talking about "basics first".

Social effectiveness will do more for you than all other bio hacks combined.

So ditch the infrared lamp.
And learn how to get some status, respect, and attraction.

Summary

Optimization is great.

We're ALL for optimization and effectiveness here.
We encourage it.

However, optimization and effectiveness aren't exactly the same.

And **you must apply the effectiveness mindset also to optimization itself**.

Some people may tend to overdo optimization to the point where it's not effective anymore.

We showed the risks of overdoing "life optimization" and "bio-hacking".
Including some red flags of biohackers who may pull you down the bio-rabbit hole :).

And don't forget:

- Do the actual work

- And enjoy life

Ad majora friends!
-Lucio

The Power Moves (TPM) maintains high standards of sourcing guidelines to provide our readers with content that is accurate and actionable.
We rely on peer-reviewed studies, accredited experts, psychology textbooks, and academic research institutions. Learn more by reviewing our full editorial policy.

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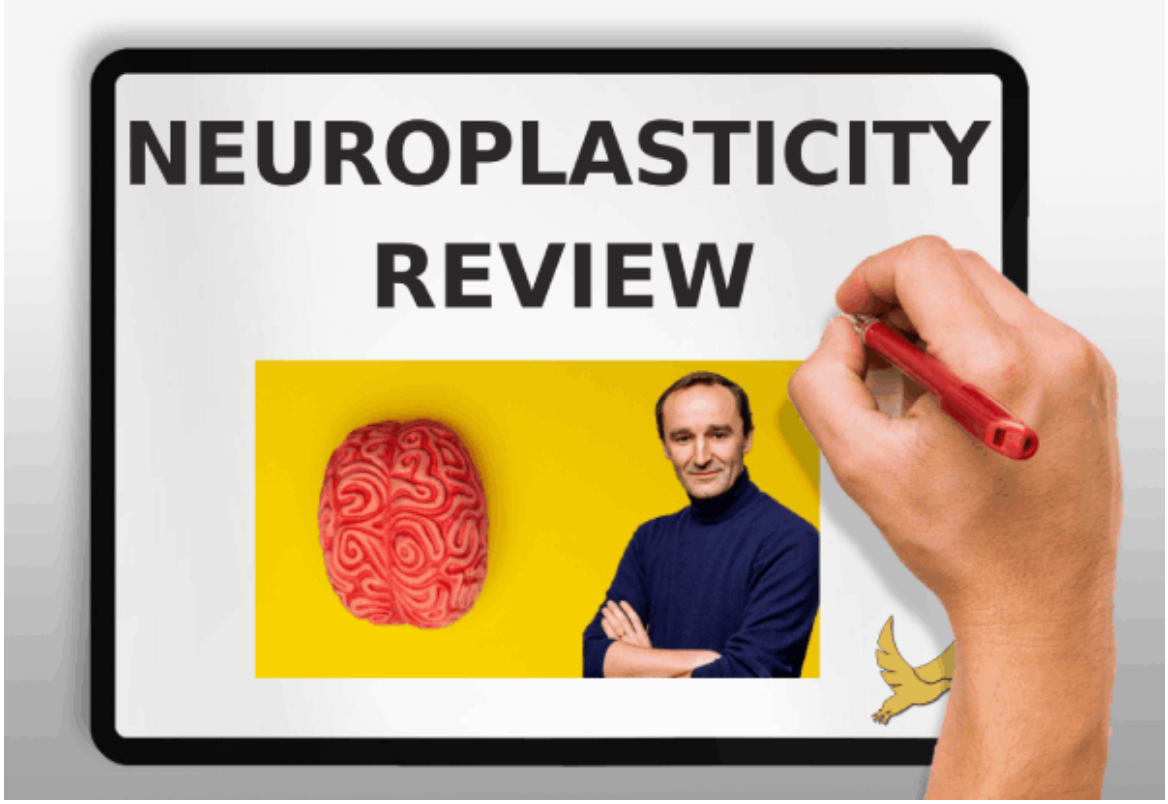
Neuroplasticity: How To Rewire Your Brain – Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 February 2024 · Archived copy · Original

In *Neuroplasticity: How To Rewire Your Brain*, instructor Gregory Caremans explores the topic of neurology and seeks to explain how to rewire the brain for more life satisfaction and success.



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- Summary
  - Cognitive Flexibility
  - The Neuroscience of Habits
  - Strategies to Overcome Procrastination
  - Brain Hacks to Overcome Procrastination
  - How To Change A Memory
- Review

Summary

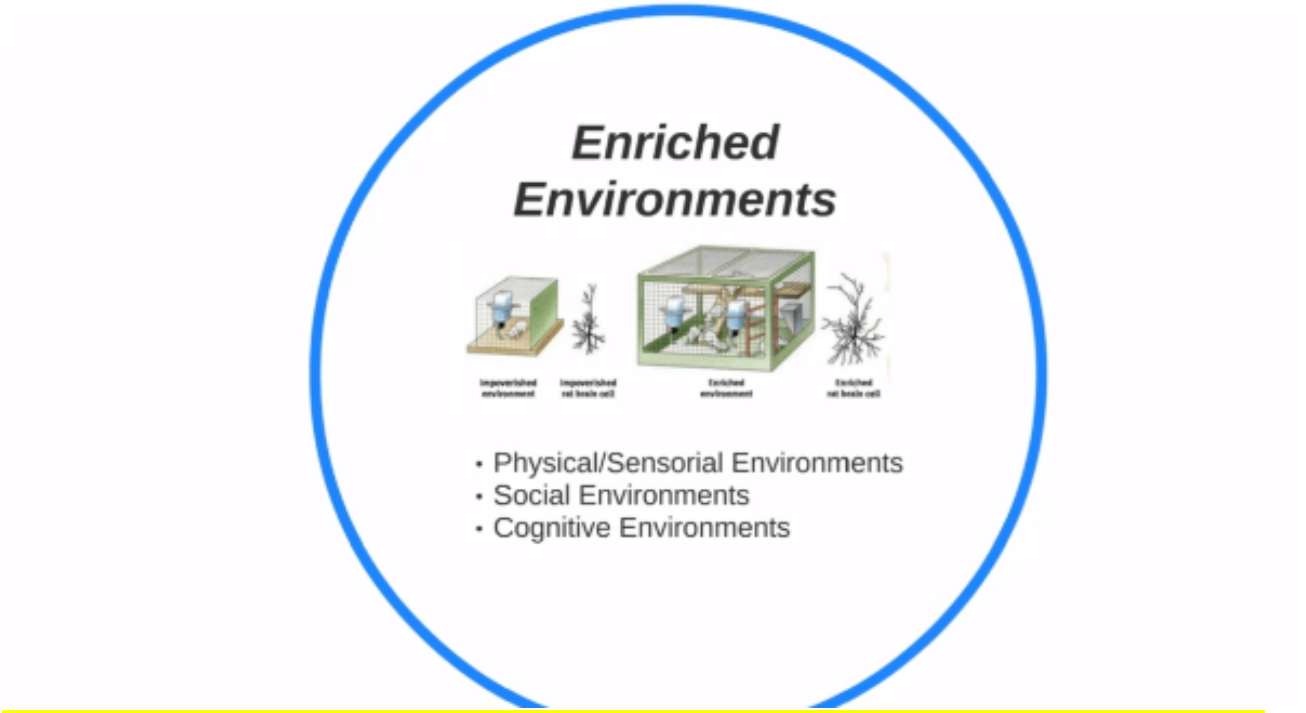
This course is aimed at creating structural change in the brain.
Structural change leads to long-term improvements.

When new neural connections are being made, structural change happens. So, much of this course focuses on creating new neural connections (i.e. neural pathways).

Structural plasticity is the brain's ability to change its physical structure as a result of learning. And, that structural plasticity (structural change) needs repetition to work over the long term.

Cognitive Flexibility

Enriched environments lead to structural change.



**Note: On the left is an "impoverished environment" which is known to cause a decrease in brain cells in animals as well as humans.*

And, exercises that simulate an enriched environment help the brain regain its plasticity so it will be more receptive to that structural change.

Sensorial/motoric exercises

These exercises stimulate the brain's sensory systems and motoric systems

Examples of these exercises would be:

- Shower with your eyes closed
- Switch hands for writing
- Learn to play an instrument

Stimulating sensory systems heightens all of your senses (sight, hearing, and so on). Stimulating your motoric systems improves your movements.

The neurology behind our tendency to exaggerate the dangers of physical confrontation

> "Well, basically, our brain is rewiring itself to be able to better run away or fight of danger. And, in the process, making sure we don't get too traumatized by remembering every single detail of a possible injury we end up with.

And, this is a perfectly valid strategy when we face physical danger as we have done for millions of years.

But, in today's modern world where stress rarely leads to physical confrontation let alone a physical injury. It's not adapted anymore.

And, in the meantime stress is everywhere and is slowly but surely undermining our neuroplasticity and our brain's

ability to function properly."

Avoid stressful environments to boost confidence and self-esteem

> "Our brain learns. Whatever we experience, we learn. Put a person in a positive supportive environment and our brain will learn that we can trust others. Now, put that same person in a fearful environment subject to physical or emotional harm and it will learn as well. The amygdala our brain center for fear and aggression will expand in size the brain teaches itself to react faster to danger, to be better prepared. It persistently increases anxiety and fear conditioning."

And:

> "Unfortunately stress does more than that. Sustained stress will decrease dendrites and spine numbers in the hippocampus…These changes lead directly to attention loss and decision-making impairment."

Neuroplasticity lacks a "moral compass"

Neuroplasticity's function is for *efficiency*, not morality.

E.g.

- "A piano virtuoso will have developed as much dexterity as a malignant hacker behind his or her computer who's out to steal our information and money."
- "A fan who knows all the latest gossip or their favorite singer or actors will have developed the same kind of neuronal networks than a stalker does."
- "A soldier risking his life serving for his country he will have developed the same set of skills than a terrorist plotting the destruction of his sworn enemies."

"Skills, dexterity, learnings, they are all based on networks of neurons submitted to the same rules of nature and that is whatever we do most whatever we pay attention to we will become better at it."

And, Caremans' personal warning on this is:

> "I need to give you a word of caution. First, neuroplasticity has no moral compass. You see, our brain adapts to whatever we do whatever we give attention to. Its sole purpose is efficiency…This means that whatever we do most, our brain will adapt to it…So we consolidate new information more easily as it integrates in a network of related information. The same goes with our social network…This gift of nature [neuroplasticity] has far reaching consequences. Not only should we be aware of it, but we have a duty to choose wisely whatever we decide to dedicate our lives to."

The Neuroscience of Habits

How to develop your self-control

"So, just like with the rehabilitation program, we should break things down into easier bits."

1. Visualize yourself in a temptation situation and successfully gain the upper hand. Whatever it is you want to change, visualize yourself being successful at it, make it vivid. Imagine how you would feel, incorporate details, make it as real as possible from their own work.
2. (E.g. Avoiding ice cream) Look in the ice cream store window for a few seconds and then quickly leap.
3. Go into the store with a friend, with the agreement that you're not going to buy or eat ice cream and leave quickly.

4. Your friend stays outside and you go in alone.
5. You go in by yourself, sitting down, ordering something else, anything that is not ice cream, and then going out again.

"Build in as many steps as you feel you need…And that's how it's done. That's how we learn our brain to develop willpower by gradually exposing ourselves to temptation."

The power of words

"The thing we need to understand is that our brain shapes itself, wires itself based on what we do…This has huge consequences.

It means that whatever we expose ourselves to, that's what ends up shaping our brain: How we think. How we see life.

Now think about this for a minute. What are you exposing yourself to the most? What kind of stuff do you read? What kind of programs do you watch? what kind of people do you hang out with? What kind of conversations are you having?

So, what's it going to be? When you come home after your job, do you end up in front of your telly watching the latest reality TV show, or do you take an online course and expand your skills? With whom are you hanging out? People all the time complaining, or people with a positive mindset and a go-getter attitude?

…We have to be very mindful of what we expose our brain to, as it will end up shaping who we are as a person and how we go through life."

And, to add to this, Caremans notes:

> What we do most ends up shaping our brain…if we listen daily to the news and its flood of negativity, we start seeing our own world and life as a dangerous and frightening place. We end up scared and worried for things that aren't real, at least not in our daily lives.

Strategies to Overcome Procrastination

Dopamine driven strategies to beat procrastination

1. Visualize enjoying the task and the satisfaction of completing it
2. Gamify the task
3. Break the task down into a to-do list of sub-tasks
4. Bundle the task with something you like (e.g. music)
5. Look on the bright side of the task

Contextual strategies to beat procrastination

1. Team up with others who will work with you on completing the task
2. Find someone close to you who you can call when you're feeling unmotivated (i.e. a buddy system / accountability partner)
3. Surround yourself with action takers
4. Get rid of temptation
5. Change your environment

And, the “change your environment” strategy is about more than doing the task in a location that makes you feel good.

The neurology behind it is, “…if you’ve been procrastinating for a while now, you’re probably already wired to procrastinate even more. Sitting at your desk might be a trigger to start doing the stuff you shouldn’t be doing. So whenever you detect repetitive patterns in your procrastination…It’s time to break out of that pattern. And a great way to do so is to change our environment.”

Brain Hacks to Overcome Procrastination

“The Covert Start” Hack

“When we don’t feel like doing something we can **trick our mind by taking the first steps of the action**…your inner procrastinator will start protesting so you hush him and do it anyway.”

E.g.

> **Caremans**: “So, for example, if you need to start writing a document or something, start by turning on your computer in. A procrastinator will go, ‘But I don’t want to do it. So, you answer something along the lines of, ‘Sure, yeah, sure. I just want to have a look at the documents.’ So, you go to your word file in a procrastinator will protest again. You go, ‘Don’t worry. I just want to write the first sentence.’ Then you write the second one and the third one. And, before you know it, you’re doing that thing you were procrastinating about and the inner protesting stops as you’re too busy doing the task you’re focusing on.”

The “Wording” Hack

Next time you talk to yourself thinking that you really should be doing something, change your words. **Don’t say, ‘I should be doing this.’ Say, ‘I’m doing it. I’m doing it right now.’**

Now, listen to these words. ‘I’m doing it right now.’ Is this action driven? Right.

…what happens is that our brain gets contradictory information. I would say we’re in the middle of action and the rest of our body isn’t. That creates a discrepancy, a tension that can only be resolved by taking action.

So, it’s a little bit like the rest of our body goes, ‘Oh, we’ve already started the action. I wasn’t paying attention. OK, sure, let’s do this.'”

The “Third-Person Procrastinator” Hack (AKA: “Personify your procrastination habit”)

Make your procrastination habit a person.

Give it a name, make your procrastination tendencies an entity separate from yourself.

Then, observe it, talk to it, get to know it, then tell it [him/her] to back down when you feel it holds you back.

It’s a good way to be able to mentally shift the blame and not feel guilt about your procrastination.”

How To Change A Memory

What we’re going to do is to **implant a new memory in our brain and overwrite the old one**.

No, we’re not going to forget what actually happened.
We’ll just be feeding the brain with new additional information about the event and associate it with new emotions.
So that next time we think about the event, we’ll be at peace, thanks to the new memory.”

Strategy #1: Override your memory (AKA: the "scratch the record" technique)

Here's the process:

1. Take a minute and find a memory to overwrite.
2. Find a quiet place where you won't get disturbed.
3. Sit down comfortably and close your eyes.
4. Picture yourself back in the moment when everything happened.
5. Relive once more what happened. But, this time, imagine it how you wish it would have been.
6. Take notice of all the details. Look around you…Make it all as real as possible. (Where are you? What's happening? Smell the perfumes in the air, feel the objects with your fingertips. Listen to the music, the sounds.)
7. Give great detail to your emotions. (This is very important. Feel the joy or the pride that fills you, the happy feelings that resonates within you.)
8. Slowly but surely feel the peace that fills you, the serenity that has become part of you.
9. Slowly come back.
10. Open your eyes.

"Now, every time we are reminded of the events we have to consciously choose to go to the other imagined version of what happens [repetition is key]."

Strategy #2: Reframe your memory / the event (i.e. challenge underlying beliefs)

Here's the process:

1. There's no intrinsic meaning to situation: "Understand that no situation comes with an emotional value attached to it…It's a story of values and meaning we give to the situation, which adds emotion to it."
2. Turn it into question. Why am I hurt? (e.g. "I am hurt because…I am powerless.")
3. Find evidence of the contrary. (e.g. I live the antifragile ego, I'm progressing through my list of career goals—my future looks bright, etc.)
4. Look for new perspective. (e.g. I have power. And, I'm on track to gain more power in the future.)

Strategy #3: Reframe your memory / the event (i.e. adopt the growth mindset)

The growth mindset approach to reframing your memories:

1. Look at the "bad" decision and look at the negative consequences of that decision.
2. Imagine the hypothetical situation where we didn't screw up. And, look that (hypothetical) negative consequences of that.
3. Go back to the real situation and look at the positive consequences of your "bad" decisions. (You'll see they're very closely related to what you just wrote down for the step before this one.)

"Think about what could have happened down the road if you wouldn't have learned that lesson that may make sense. Could you see now how errors, mistakes, bad decisions are necessary, are useful in their own right? Congratulations. You are now in a growth mindset."

Caremans mentions that he's a fan of Daniel Kahneman (see *Thinking Fast and Slow*) and not so much a fan of (some of) Jordan Peterson's work in psychology, which sometimes leaves him with somewhat unique takes on certain subjects.

As a neurocognitive and behavioral expert, Caremans says,

> "Now, Carol Dweck seems to imply that we have a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. My personal work in

> research isn't as black and white. What I have found is that we are mostly a mix of both. We can have a fixed mindset on some issues and growth mindset on others."

Still, Caremans agrees that a growth mindset is necessary for overcoming painful memories and leaving the past in the past. And, for the most part, he seems to agree that the growth mindset can be used to reframe any fixed mindsets one may have.

Review

How to Rewire Your Brain is not a bad course by any means, but it didn't hold up against the alternative resources.

In terms of ROI, one could have gotten more out of reading *The Power of Habit* and *Ultimate Power*.

At times, it felt like the course taught neurology simply because it's a neurology course and then switched to psychology when it was time to talk habit development, growth mindsets, and so on.

And, that made learning the neurology behind our behaviors interesting, but also made learning the psychology behind our behaviors feel and seem like more of a practical use of one's time.

Ceiling Effect: Why 99% of Self-Help Leads to Plateaus

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 February 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Self-Help Ceiling Effect™ refers to habits, skills, and advice that got you to your current level, but prevent you from moving to the *next* level.

It's most often a *glass* ceiling because whatever it is that you're missing, you don't yet see it.

Luckily, this article is here to help.
You will learn what ceilings are, how to spot them, and how you grow past them.

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  - Good glass ceiling advice is the worst blinder
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- Self-Help Is 99% Ceiling Advice
- Example of Self-Help Ceilings
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- Types of Ceiling Advice

- Works for the 80%, not if you're top 20%
- Works for specific personalities, but not for you
- Works for different goals, not yours
- Works for some situations, not yours
- Works for different age brackets, not yours
- Works for different phases, not the one you're at

- How to Break Through Ceilings
  - 1. Be Prepared For Ceilings
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  - 5. Pick Good Mentors & Coaches

INTRO

The definition of self-help ceilings is:

> Self-help ceiling effect refers to advice, behavior, or mindsets that help some people up to a certain level (plateau), but turn ineffective or harmful to progress onto higher levels of self-development or results

And the self-help **ceiling law™** states:

> Following any general purpose advice that doesn't include nuances and calibration will eventually set you up against a ceiling

Ceiling advice may still be helpful. But you must consider when it's time to ditch it for deeper alternatives.

Ceilings VS Glass Ceilings

A *glass* ceiling is invisible.
While any ceiling can be hard to overcome, you at least know what to work on with visible ceilings.

For example, imagine you race cars.
The data shows you lose the most lap time in braking. Braking is your current ceiling, and you know what to work.

But **you can't work on overcoming glass ceilings because you don't realize you have them**.
You're stuck at your plateau level, without seeing the next ladder upward.

So let's dig deeper:

Good glass ceiling advice is the worst blinder

And here's what makes glass ceilings hardest to spot:

It's often *good* advice and teachers who create your worst ceilings.

With neutral or bad advice, you don't advance *at all*.
So you're more likely to troubleshoot, try new things, and eventually find what works.

But ***good* advice pushed you *upward* against the ceilings**.
And because it served you well, you struggle to see how it's holding you back today.

Low VS High Ceilings

Low ceilings cap your growth fast, while high ceilings allow room for growth.

What's low or high ceiling is contextual.

TPM's content tends to be high ceiling.
That's because most people pursue goals or scarce resources. These competitions follow power dynamics principles and strategic considerations.

In our very unbiased and objective view, TPM's content is very high ceiling

Dave Ramsey's "avoid debt" advice is lower-ceiling advice.
Being careful around debt is great advice for overspenders
But you should quickly understand the limitations of that advice. (Ie.: a mortgage for a flat you love is fine if you can repay it).

Ceilings Make You Lower Value To Those Above

This is why glass ceilings cost you big:

Your ceilings are obvious to everyone else who's *above* you.
Because, to those above you, your ceilings are floors.

The man above knows you're below him and doesn't want to be close to you because, to him, you're a lower-value taker.

That means that **your ceilings make you lower value to those who moved past them**.

That's why it's so important to learn from truly advanced teachers.
People at your level can't show you the ceilings.
Only those above can.

Why you're alone and nobody helps you past ceilings

Problem is:

nobody from the level above wants to help you.

Why should they?
There's no "what's in it for them".
Plus, many people have egos. They wouldn't even learn, but only get offended.
So there are only downsides for higher-value men to help you up.

#real talk:

To those above you, you're just an idiot who doesn't get it.
Plus, as a lower-value man who doesn't get it, you're a lot more likely to just *take*. Without giving.

> The top ceilings of lower-quality men are floors of tolerance for higher-quality men (and women)
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

#real Mach talk:

And if you have potential… You're just more competition they don't want.

Let's review a plain example to understand the concept:

Example: “Suiting Up”

Suits mean power to the youngster who “won” an investment banker job. He doesn’t realize that his suit sub-communicates lower value to the millionaire entrepreneur

A business suit communicates authority.

Cialdini said so in his best-selling *Influence*.
Other networking books advise to “dress 10% better than everyone else”.

It makes sense.

Especially for me.

With my sociology background, suit-wearing business jobs weren’t easy.

So when I cracked the business world, it felt like I had made it.

Despite how much I loved suits, I'd purposefully *avoid* anything suit-related once I had my own business

I loved wearing suits.

Suits were the symbol of the status I had earned.
I was a professional.
F*ck yeah!

I'd catwalk around office -"look at me, I belong"-.
And I'd dress better than most to display I was confident, hungry… And on my way up.

Back then I also thought Barney from "How I Met Your Mother" was cool and funny. (Today I think he's an idiot).
And, like him, I often donned a tie going into clubs.
You know, just to let women know I wasn't a broke student anymore.

And… It worked.
It was a great approach, *back then*.

Then, I Reached A Higher Level In My Life & Career

Today I see suits as the *opposite*.

A symbol of subordination, captivity, and towing the line.
It's a semi-mandatory uniform to fit in.
If you don't wear it, you're ostracized.

And **I realized that only those who dress as they please are in charge of their lives.**

A suit devalues you at this higher level of bold individualism, entrepreneurship, and freedom.

Entrepreneurs make it a point to avoid suits.
It's how they advertise they're one level higher.

That's why tech entrepreneurs dress casual.

At this level, suits are lower-level class.
It's people who have NOT made it -and who come to sell you something (possible takers)-.

This phenomenon is referred to as counter-signaling.

Signs You're Stuck Under A Ceiling

Forward progress is natural if you work at it… Unless a glass ceiling holds you back

So, if ceilings are invisible, are you cursed to stay under them?

Not necessarily.

A good observer armed with an open mind can see the signs.

At the highest level, it's:

- **You get some success, but not as much as you want**
  - You plateaued. Plateaus are the natural consequence of glass ceiling self-help
  - You're still far from the top – or far from your highest potential

Many men have a far higher potential than they even think of.

Getting near the top is realistic and possible because most of your competition does NOT maximize his potential.

You should of course have enough raw material and effort to advance.
But once have those in place, continuous advancement to your natural top is the natural consequence.

IF you tackle all visible constraints, that is.
And if you don't move up, there are invisible ceilings

This is the "theory of constraints".
Alex Hormozi built his business accelerator program around this simple philosophy and approach.
And you can also apply it to personal growth and advancement.

> If you struggle to advance but don't see a problem, a glass ceiling is the problem.
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

Some more concrete examples:

1. **In your social life, you can *engage* with high-quality people, but they keep you at arm's length**. You have just enough value, but there's some ceiling. Maybe unconscious power moves, small-timer manipulations, or lose status with low-power behavior
2. **In dating, you get sex, but can't keep great relationships**. You may have some toxic behavior you aren't aware of yet
3. **At work, you're competent but aren't advancing**. The ceiling may be your soft skills. And before you jump into "leadership skills", it may be office politics that undermine you. Or failure to understand human nature and general power dynamics

Etc. etc.

The point is this:

If you can spot the signs, sometimes you can turn glass ceilings, into *visible* ceilings.
And then you can address it.

Self-Help Is 99% Ceiling Advice

And here's the kicker:

The vast majority of self-help is ceiling advice.

It's the very nature of it because:

1. Only the masters can take you all the way up

And masters are *rare*.

Everyone else is advicing from their level.

Maybe their level is two levels above you.
Very helpful.
But that may still be a long way to the top.

Second spot. Not bad! Unless you wanna get to the top. Then, that #2 coach will become your ceiling

2. Lower-level folks can't see all the way up

It's the concept of the idiot, the Average Joe, and the genius.

The idiot may not even see the extra value of the genius.
So he takes the Average Joe as a role model.

Example of Self-Help Ceilings

Just some examples:

When Strong Turns Fragile

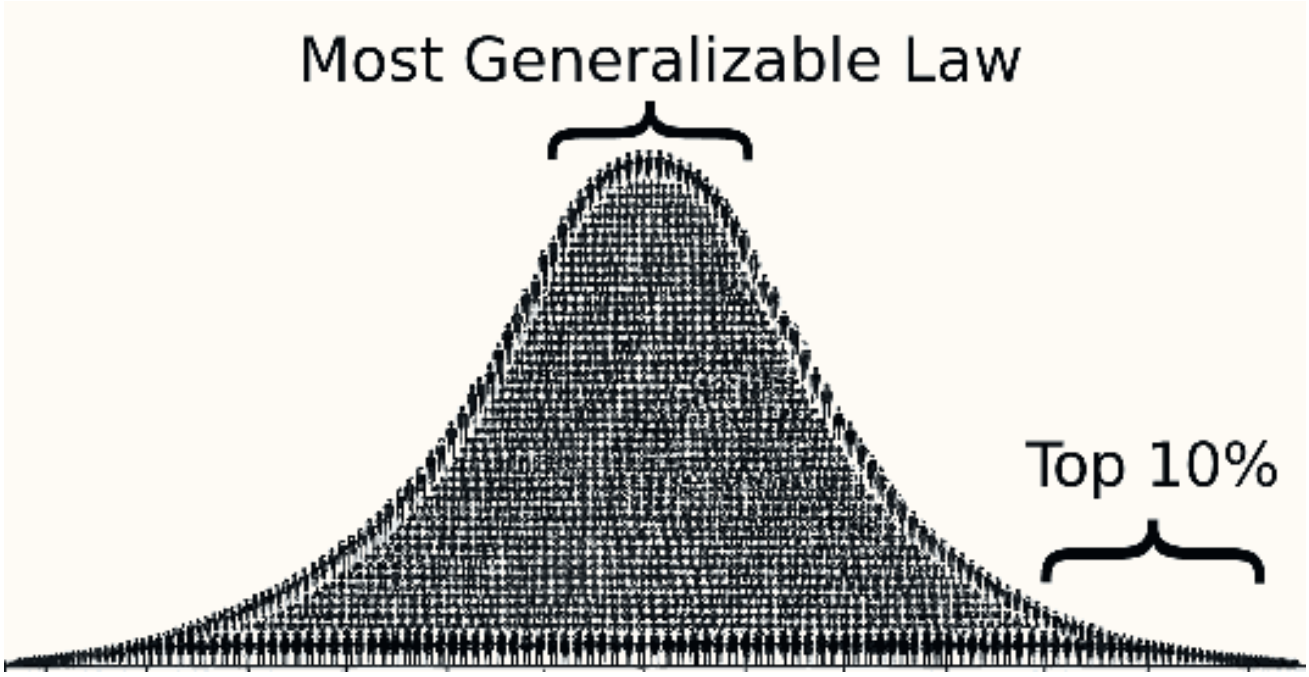
Some men build their self-esteem around being "strong".
Sometimes, *physically* strong.

It's a major step forward from sitting on the couch, being weak, and not having any source of pride or confidence.

However, strength naturally decays over time.
So it becomes a fragile and time-limited source of pride and confidence.

Maxim Ceilings: The "Laws"

Lists of laws and "iron rules" are ceilings by definition.



This is the paradox:

The *best* laws are for *average* men.

It's simple logic.
A good law applies to most people, in most situations.

To be as universal as possible, the "law" MUST target the average.

This is our main criticism to otherwise great books like *The 48 Laws of Power*.
I've seen **too many *un*successful men end up here after *mis*applying those "laws"** with no power intelligence.

Also see:

- Power University VS The 48 Laws of Power

> 48 Laws VS Power University: What's Best to Advance In Life?

Thinking Ceilings: Generalizations

For example:

- **All Women Are Like That**, a popular red pill mantra

Same as above:

The best generalizations are "good".
They apply to most people and cases.

In this case, many fundamental, underlying drives are common to most women.

But the nuances and exceptions all get lost -and BTW it's in the nuances and exceptions that advanced men and strategists thrive-.
And **only poor thinkers over-rely on mantras**.

At the higher level, sticking to generalizations *harms* your ability to understand reality because reality is complex.

Social Skills Ceiling Advice

A popular one:

- **Be assertive**

And, either implied or explicit: avoid passive, passive-aggressive, and aggressive

Makes sense.
Most of the time.

But *a few times* it's better to avoid assertiveness.
And you may want to strategically be passive, passive-aggressive, or aggressive.
It's those few times that differentiate the advanced practitioners, from the "OK ones".

Power Matters -duh!-

Or this approach:

- **To be interesting, be interested**

And listen instead of talking.
It's a popular soical skills advice popularized Dale Carnegie

It's good advice: many big talkers *desperately* need to heed that.
But it's also low-power to make everyone else the center of your attention.

Instead, some high-value men talk more because it helps them gain status early on.
Grandiose narcissists talk more because they have the *attitude* that others need to listen. But that attitude often shapes reality.

Also, don't forget:

Charismatic people capture people's attention by putting *themselves* at the center of attention.

Those exceptions are what make the difference between good performers, and *top* performers.

Dating Ceiling Advice

Example from a popular "red pill guru":

- **Always reject "let's just be friends"**

Good for still clueless men who accept friendship just to hang around a girl.

But a high-value man may be better off saying "yes".
First off, to display he's not butt-hurt by her romantic rejection.
And he may leverage an attractive woman for preselection. Or meet her girlfriends.

And if it's during last-minute resistance, he's better off agreeing and continuing escalation.

Types of Ceiling Advice

So far, we talked of ceiling advice in relation to "level of progress".

But some ceiling advice can be straight out bad because it's not a good fit.

For example:

Works for the 80%, not if you're top 20%

This is the paradox:

The best general advice is for average people.

Just like we said for "laws".
It's simple math.
To work best for most, it *has* to target average people.

That's why we felt compelled to write this article.
We don't target average men here :).

Works for specific personalities, but not for you

For example:

- **Speak less than necessary**

This is a popular "law" from The 48 Laws of Power.

It's great advice… For most people who aren't great speakers.

But great orators would give up their superpower!

I'd even agree with Greene on *a personal preference level*.
Dialectical incontinence rubs me the wrong way. But who cares what I think when millions of people made Jordan Peterson, Russel Brand, or Jay Shetty rich.

P.S.:
That law also doesn't work in many other situations:

> **Lucio**: social psychology research shows that people who talk more during group formation acquire more status

Works for different goals, not yours

For example:

- **Learn hard skills, become the best at it**

But if you want to advance with leadership and BIG money… You also need *soft* skills.

Power awareness, leadership, strategic thinking, etc.

Works for some situations, not yours

For example:

- **Be more outgoing to be more charismatic**

Works best for party situations.
But in a mafia sit-down you may want to be the more silent type.

Works for different age brackets, not yours

For example:

- **Move slowly to convey power**

Great advice for high power and accomplished men.

But a young guy who's learning the ropes should probably move faster.

He's not expected to convey power, he's expected to show *eagerness*.
That maximizes his learning, opportunities… And *future* power.

Works for different phases, not the one you're at

Most self-help is to "achieve more". But after achievement, you'd benefit from unplugging

TPM's content may even be *mandatory* to achieve demanding goals.

But once you internalize the skills and achieved all of your goals… You may move beyond TPM.

You internalized the skills, you read people as second nature.
And those are enough to coast in your "post-achievement" life phase.

That's why the last step of our process is to chill:

Why work hard all your life, when you can achieve all your goals… And still leave some time to spare for chilling and enjoying?

How to Break Through Ceilings

Here are some tips to avoid getting stuck under ceiling self-help:

1. Be Prepared For Ceilings

Simply knowing about ceilings is a great start.

1. **Accept there will be ceilings**. It's simply part of growing
   - Don't be bitter once you discover your ceilings. It's simply part of being alive
2. **Assess for ceiling teachers** and be ready to move past
3. **Be careful of misapplying ceiling laws**, "iron rules", etc. See some examples here.
4. **Look all the way up**. It can help you assess the steps you need, and the possible ceilings along the way
5. **Ponder your self-development ceilings**. Look at what you're proud of today. Ask if it serves you well. See if you don't have too strong an ego. Etc. etc.

2. Mental Level: Make Piece With Complexity

Some men struggle to accept the world's inherent complexity.

Simplification is their mental crutch.

We're not saying to scrap *all* simplifications.
There *is* much utility to good laws, generalizations, or "easy diagnosis" of others.

But you're often better off accepting complexity, nuances, and black and whites.
Reality is beautiful *because* it's complex.

3. Develop Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking skills help you spot ceilings before you hit them.

Use those skills to read the teacher's character as well.
Look for:

- Honesty
- *Intellectual* honesty
- "high-quality man behavior"

Etc.

And their opposites:

- Manipulation
- Scammy marketing, or "marketing above products"
- Various power moves

You can still learn something from these teachers.
But you must be cognizant. Many of them also want you to stay under their ceiling.

Read more here.

4. Earn The Breakthrough

Once you realize there are higher levels, you may want to skip all the way through.

Sometimes that's possible.
But not always.

So remember:

Ceilings are only stopping you when you're *ready* to move higher.

You can't simply reach the highest level by skipping through the stages.

Instead, accept, focus, and conquer your *current* level.

Once you hit a plateau, then you're ready to break through the ceiling.

Ultimate mastery is the final crowning of the man who becomes 100x a master.

5. Pick Good Mentors & Coaches

There are many ways mentors and coaches can be helpful.

But one of the most important is showing the invisible glass ceilings.

Specifically look for people who talk about "levels of development".
They (intuitively) understand the concept of ceilings and plateaus -and chances are they've gone through them-.

5.2. Always Ask For Feedback

You'd be surprised how many random people can see what you can't (yet) see.

One of those pieces of feedback may just break a new glass ceiling for you.

Power University has shown countless men their social and power ceilings. It takes you to the ultimate floor, no ceilings and mid-tier levels

Red Flags: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 February 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Red Flags (2015) teaches readers how to recognize Frenemies, Underminers, and Toxic People with Wendy Patrick's simple approach by looking at just four major signal clusters.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Focus on FLAGs to Read People
  - Rules for Reading People
  - Detecting Dark Triads
  - One Red Flag Can Tell You Everything
  - Dark Triad Are More Likely to Become Leaders
  - Why Bad People Can Look Attractive
  - Know Your (Emotional) Needs
  - Remember: They Always Come When You're Neediest
  - Many People Are Too Naive & Trusting
  - Be Wary of Identity Claims, Look at "Behavioral Residue"
  - Be Careful of Fake Signals: Status & Similarity
  - Higher Value = Bigger Target
  - Looks For Flags of Power-Hunger & Narcissism
  - Women: Beware of Mistaking Strength For Abusive
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CONS
- PROS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Look at the 4 FLAGs**:
  - Focus: What they focus on
  - Life: How they live
  - Associations: Who they associate with
  - Goals: What their goals are
- **Morals and values are important** when it comes to picking great people in your life
- **Takers come disguised as givers**, so be careful. Especially about your needs and emotional needs

We agree with all of that here at TPM.

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:

Wendy L. Patrick is a Deputy District Attorney and team leader in the Sex Crimes and Stalking Division of the San Diego County District Attorney's Office. She also writes for Psychology Today and holds a Ph.D. in Theology.

Focus on FLAGs to Read People

- **Focus**: what gets their attention? They focus on themselves, or others?
- **Lifestyle**: how do they spend their time?
- **Associations**: who do they get along with?
- **Goals**: what are their priorities? Are they selfish or selfless?

More details from my notes:

- **Focus:** Focus of attention reveals thoughts, feelings, intentions, and interests.
  - Self-focused VS other-focused. notice the use of "I" VS "we" (social orientation)
  - On a date: does he focus on your body, your brain, or the ball game?
  - In conversation: personal questions, puffery, or politics?
  - At a social event: the host or the bar?
  - In general: pleasure, family, or career?
- **Lifestyle:** Personal spaces and after-work are more telling than work. Unusual activities are telling.
  - Leisure time activities: healthy or hedonistic?
  - Workspace: messy or meticulous?
  - Scrapbooking or Facebooking: sentimental or social?
  - Spending habits: splurging or penny-pinching? Is money the main focus and end goal, or a facilitator for other pursuits?
- **Associations:** shallowness or warmth? Beware "for show" associations" VS for pleasure. For associations and voluntary activities, but *how people use them* -for CV, or to add value?-
  - Peer group: coworkers, childhood friends, or cyber friends?
  - Quality time spent with: (real) family or fraternity brothers?
  - Relationship history: one-night-stands or serial monogamist?
  - Social orientation: isolationist or community builder?
  - Away from home: exclusive golf club, cigar club, or community service club?
- **Goals:** Even more than behavior, looks at the drive behind. If they run marathons, is it for adrenaline rush, challenge of beating personal times, or bragging?
  - Selfish or selfless?
  - Short-term or long-term? Future orientation is associated with stronger moral concerns present orientation (Nordhall, 2013)
  - Fame, fortune, or fun?
  - Improve the world or conquer the world?
  - Reach the peak of the mountain, or of the corporate ladder?
  - Finish the race or win first place?

Great stuff.

On focus, an alumnus in our forum noted that the first words of her friend walking in were about the beauty and value of the house.
Then, wondering if she was worthy of it. That reflects a very value-accounting approach to relationships.

And here's a case study for our alumni.

Rules for Reading People

1. **Use first impressions**: perceive as much as you can when you are most objective.
2. **Be wary of under-exposure**: avoidance and secrets are suspicious
3. **Observe behavior over time.**
4. **Use a wide-angle lens**: observe behavior in context, and in different settings.
5. **Solicit multiple exposures**: introduce new partners to your family and friends.
6. **Trust but verify**. Seek corroboration on and offline.

Detecting Dark Triads

> The Dark Triad is made up of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (…) often distinguished from other character flaws by its ability to present a very attractive façade.

Dark triads also have very specific goals:

> Psychopaths and Machiavellians pursue tangible goals such as wealth, status, or sex.31 Narcissists pursue admiration, respect, and status, rather than tangible resources.32

Sometimes you can spot dark triad because their emotional reactions are "off".
And sometimes even opposite of what you would normally expect:

> research shows that Dark Triad individuals can actually experience positive affect when confronted with sad emotions in others, and psychopaths can experience positive affect when confronted with fearful and angry expressions.66 Conversely, both psychopaths and Machiavellianists have been shown to feel negative affect toward expressions of happiness.67

Look for sensation-seeking without considering the costs:

> Thus, while sensation seekers may pursue a wide array of conduct ranging from skydiving to trying a new restaurant, such behavior is only impulsive when it is performed without regard to potential costs.17 Both impulsivity and sensation seeking are linked with Dark Triad personality.18
> (…)
> status-driven risk taking, also linked to Dark Triad personality, is risk taking that is motivated by social and financial gain

One Red Flag Can Tell You Everything

Says the author:

> dishonest lifestyle is not likely to be confined only to certain areas. The next time someone takes you to lunch to propose doing business together and intentionally fails to tell the server about an expensive item accidentally omitted from the bill, consider whether they would hesitate to cheat you out of future business profits just as easily.

That even inspired this video to test people:

> **Lucio**: agree in advance with the server or owner to hand a smaller bill. And see if they correct the mistake

Dark Triad Are More Likely to Become Leaders

Says the author:

> Power in the form of leadership potential is linked with all three Dark Triad personality traits: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism.

About narcissists:

> Narcissists have characteristics that under certain circumstances make them desirable as leaders—even when people are aware of their narcissistic features. This is because in situations of uncertainty, the narcissist's confidence, dominance, strength, and toughness can generate psychological comfort and a sense of security.

Psychopaths:

> Psychopaths can make good leaders as well (…) psychopathic traits such as heightened physical and social fearlessness can predispose them to effective leadership in areas such as the military or in politics.41 In the corporate world, some businesspeople with high psychopathy scores hold positions of senior management.

The author also mentions Hitler and Stalin and says the absence of morality can also help psychopaths become leaders.

On Machiavellians and their leadership potential:

> They are power-oriented (…) yet judged positively and desired as leaders.
> With their talent for strategic, long-range planning and expertise in impression management, they are often well suited for leadership (…).
> (…) show stronger leadership and ability to form alliances (…) they are also prone to exploitation, and their concern for others is limited to their own self-interest.

Do they use prestige or dominance?

> Within relationships, **people using a dominance strategy are more likely to be narcissistic, Machiavellian, and aggressive**, whereas **those using prestige are more likely to be agreeable**, socially accepted, and high in self-esteem. Prestigious people also tend to possess valuable skills such as* altruism, academic achievement, and other intellectual and social abilities. (Cheng et at., 2013)

*To be accurate, "altruism" isn't a skill, but the point is still valid.

Learn to recognize poor and dark triad leaders

Says the author:

> This is important to recognize, because charismatic leaders have the ability to influence people to behave in ways that contradict their moral values.

We couldn't agree more.
Also see our articles:

- Great leadership is great manipulation

And:

> **Lucio**: Trump manipulated his followers to act on his behalf and then left them out to dry

Why Bad People Can Look Attractive

People tend to confuse signals of character with signals that have little to do with it.

Bad people can look good because they high-value men traits, because they make us feel good, or because they provide some value to us.

The traits are:

- **Attractive**: it's not necessarily an issue to use beauty to one's advantage. It's about *how* they do it. Facilitation of success, manipulation and cutting corners?
  Also, look at morality. Is beauty used a "casting couch" shortcut?
  - Focus: how much attention goes to appearance?
  - Lifestyle: using beauty only, or brains and other skills?
  - Associations: do they surround themselves with fans, family or longtime friends?
  - Goals: use it only to benefit themselves or to help others?
- **Powerful**
  - Focus: Self-service or serving others?
  - Lifestyle: Ruler or role model?
  - Associations: Peers or protégés?
  - Goals: Empowerment or exploitation?
- **Credible**, which the author seems to equate to "status"
  - Focus: Financial shareholders or community stakeholders?
  - Lifestyle: Lavish perks or corporate philanthropy?
  - Associations: Elitist segregation or engaged cooperation?
  - Goals: World peace or political re-election?
- **Attentive**
  - Focus:
  - Lifestyle: frequent networker, or just you?
  - Associations: a history of intense, but short relationships?
  - Goals: Do you have something the person needs?
- **Affirming**
  - Focus: the less they need from you, the more likely their affirmation is authentic.
  - Lifestyle: a selfless lifestyle lends credibility
  - Associations:
  - Goals: does their affirmation facilitate their success, or yours?
- **Similar**
  - Focus: interests are better indicators than appearance.
  - Lifestyle: Similar lifestyles predict relational success more than profession or income
  - Associations:

  - Goals:
- **Familiar**: beware of familiarity, it often only make you trust someone more, while you have no real added information to judge them
  - Focus:
  - Lifestyle:
  - Associations:
  - Goals:
- **Exciting**, where the author describes thrill-seeking personalities
  - Focus: Well-adjusted adrenaline junkies also focus on work, family, and safety.
  - Lifestyle: do they live for sensation seeking?
  - Associations: antisocial risk takers prefer solo sensation seeking.
  - Goals: Long-term goals distinguish well-rounded thrill seekers from those chasing endorphin fixes
- **Forbidden**
  - Focus: Is focus on the thrill of sneaking around? do they spend time with you in public?
  - Lifestyle: is a clandestine lifestyle part of the attraction? If your relationship became legitimate, would you still be interested?
  - Associations: Would you fit in with your partner's peer group and vice versa? Would you be with your partner in public?
  - Goals: is a normal committed relationship in the cards? When?
- **Dangerous** the author here shares her experience and expertise with various law enforcers
  - Focus: Protecting or intimidating?
  - Lifestyle:
  - Associations:
  - Goals: Solving crime or seeking status?

Know Your (Emotional) Needs

The author says that the theory of social exchange holds that we're attracted to those who make us feel good.

And she's perfectly right.

That is all the more true when they tap into emotional needs:

> Everyone has emotional needs and desires they depend on others to fulfill (…)
> People are often oblivious about their own emotional needs
> (…) Practiced manipulators, on the other hand, know what you need before you do.
> (…) When you are aware of your own emotional needs, you are better able to spot manipulators before you become emotionally addicted.

Also read our emotional manipulation.

Including the ones that are harder to admit

For example, "needing a partner" and not having been successful finding one:

> The perception that a person is running out of time to find a partner can cause attentive suitors to look very good—a perception that stems from desperation rather than desirability. Clever con artists looking for women with resources to exploit are able to spot this desperation faster than a drug-sniffing dog can find cocaine.

Or relishing admiration while having nobody that looks up to you:

> While Brittany is impatient with most of the senior center clients, she begins to treat Harold like a king. Her newfound interest in his military service makes Harold feel a renewed sense of significance, after many years spent feeling invisible. (…)
> One day she suggests to (…) visit his house to see his collection of medals and military photos
> (…)
> Harold's house is burglarized one day (…)

I bet you can guess who was the culprit.

And learn to spot other people's emotional needs

And if you learn to that authentically, all the more power to you:

> When you can **detect and authentically fulfill the emotional needs and desires of other people, you become the narcotic**. Genuinely enhancing the lives of others in this fashion will improve the satisfaction of all your relationships. You will strengthen your marriage, empower your children with the self-esteem they need to flourish, and build stronger friendships and relationships in every aspect of your life.

Remember: They Always Come When You're Neediest

> Some of the most heartbreaking cases of emotional exploitation involve people who are lonely or have lost a loved one, who believe they have met a like-minded partner who understands what they are going through,

Some takers purposefully frequent groups of needy men and women:

> Affinity groups, whether mobilized around politics, religion, or other shared beliefs, also appeal to psychopaths because of the shared trust among group members—which facilitates the ability to perpetrate fraud.52 Religious affinity groups are particularly vulnerable to the wiles of psychopathic fraudsters due to their acceptance of members from all walks of life and their belief in forgiveness.

Many People Are Too Naive & Trusting

> much to my dismay, the witness who bonds the most with the jury is the defendant.
> He begins crying during his testimony as he describes his difficult childhood. I am expecting the jury to recognize his performance (…) look over to see several of the jurors crying with him

Be Wary of Identity Claims, Look at "Behavioral Residue"

Identity claims are the signs people want you to see.

Slogans they repeat, pictures they use in their shared environments, books they place on their bookshelves, etc.

Behavioral residue instead includes everything about them, that was not specifically intended for "PR efforts".

Be Careful of Fake Signals: Status & Similarity

Says the author in a brilliant analysis we also share on Power University:

> Status is sometimes just a perception.

> (…)One example involves **arrogant people.**
> **Displays of pride lead some people to believe that a person with a high self-view also has high status** (Horberg et al., 2013).
> This is true when (…) a person reacts to a positive event with pride instead of gratitude—causing people to believe the person is more likely a company boss than an employee.34

And on similarity:

> Our attraction to similar others is not based on actual similarity, but on perceived similarity.29 And sadly, similarity can be faked.

Higher Value = Bigger Target

This is something we often said here on TPM:

> Powerful, influential, wealthy people are potential victims in the eyes of someone like Helen, who seeks to exploit their resources for personal gain.

See an example:

> **Dark narcissist**: (leeches onto celebrities and social climbs on them)

Looks For Flags of Power-Hunger & Narcissism

On power:

> watch for a focus on environmental control, including both situations and people

And look at the depth of their associations:

> Look for superficial associations, because regardless of how strong psychopaths come on, they don't bond (…)
> narcissists use associations to fuel their self-esteem. They date supermodels, hang out with high-status friends (…)
> Narcissists like to show off and impress other people. They **use relationship partners as trophies** in order to make themselves look good.

Women: Beware of Mistaking Strength For Abusive

This part should be mandatory in women's dating education:

> Some of these men make wonderful husbands who defend and protect their family.
> **Others end up with their actions summarized in a domestic violence police report** on my desk.
> What makes the difference?
> **The desire of some women to be cared for and protected leads them to place undue emphasis on the value of dangerous qualities, while downplaying darker personality traits**.

The example that follows is enlightening.
I can't paste it all here to respect the author, so I invite you to get the full book.

But I will definitely mention it in the next upgrade of Seduction University.

Important twist now.
While some women hate those abusers and know they made a mistake, some are OK with it:

> I have observed this dynamic for years (…)
> Intimate relationships present a mix of love and aggression (…)
> relational aggression does not always result in relational dissatisfaction. (…) a significant percentage of recipients of aggression interpret it as evidence of the perpetrator's love.

In a way, abusers who say that women are OK with abuse… May not be *always* wrong -emphasis on "always!-.

The signs of how bad looks good in relationships

Golden list and signs:

- Possessive looks protective
- Controlling looks comforting
- Aggressive looks assertive
- Violent looks passionate
- Rude looks direct
- Condescending looks confident
- Paranoid looks careful

Also read our article on paranoid jealousy.

> Too Jealous Boyfriend? 7 Signs He Might Be Paranoid

MORE WISDOM

Narcissists are most attractive

> Of the three Dark Triad personality traits, narcissists are perceived as most attractive (Rauthmann and Kolar, 2013)
> (…) due to their flashy appearance, superficial charm, and self-assuredness. This is particularly true with narcissists who have an entitlement mentality, are manipulative, and seek to exploit others (Back et al., 2010)

You may cut corners if others like you

Something we said often here.

No, reputation is not necessarily the cornerstone of your power, as a popular book on laws of power says:

> (….) a study of the desirability of job applicants who embellished their resumes found that misstating employment dates (…) to cover a period of unemployment had little effect on the way favored applicants were evaluated in terms of ability, trustworthiness, and likability, but negatively impacted the view of less-favored applicants.47

> **Lucio**: you don't strictly need reputation when you're powerful

Making people feel good and loved is a superpower

The author shares several examples of people falling for scammers, abusers and takers who made them feel good and loved.

But this one was the most shocking:

> With **older children**, (…) some **admit on the witness stand that the offender was the only person in their lives who paid them any attention**—a factor that outweighed (…) the sexual abuse. **"Do you still love him today?" I ask. Almost always, the answer is a tearful "Yes."** The mothers of the victims sometimes still love the defendant too, because (…) he was an attentive, caring husband. Even when they know that he molested their own children? Yes.

Be like those who focus on what you want, not your rivals

Some people focus on rivals.
Others, on what they want.

Albeit this example is more on the negative, we recommend focusing on your goals:

> People with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation (seeking sex without emotional commitment) in search of strangers to have sex with focus their attention on physically attractive members of the opposite sex. People worried about competition, on the other hand, focus on attractive same-sex rivals.

Giving attention works particularly well with narcissists

> Continually seeking admiration, narcissists prefer romantic partners who admire them rather than partners who offer intimacy and caring, because admiration increases the narcissist's self-esteem.

Be careful with fame: you can become narcissistic

This is true for stars themselves of course:

> but one of the risks of being famous, whether on a large scale or small scale, is having "star power" go to your head.
> The result?
> Celebrity narcissism.
> Acquired situational narcissism describes the phenomenon where people in positions of high power, such as celebrities, acquire narcissistic traits by virtue of their position.84 Studies show that celebrities have more narcissistic traits than the general public,85 and female celebrities exhibit more narcissistc traits than their male counterparts.86

And, even more worrying, for fans:

> The general public can be influenced by celebrity narcissism, glamorizing self-indulgent behavior as the new normal, and something to be emulated. For example, one study found that people who watched narcissistic behavior on reality television programs exhibit more narcissistic behavior themselves than people who watched drama.

Too nice guys are not appealing

Not that this is news, but it's a worthy reminder:

> Another explanation is that women are attracted to "bad boys" who are prone to risk taking and exude hard-headedness and confidence.
> And confidence is sexy. As are men who behave in ways that demand respect. No one wants a man who is a welcome mat. Guys who are "too nice" are not appealing.

QUOTES

On the power of charisma to overcome looks:

> Portly, short, and losing his hair, one of the men I prosecuted had more girlfriends than you could count. Several of his girlfriends showed up to watch the trial. More of a harem, really.
> Sure, he was overweight. But he camouflaged problem areas with trendy clothing more effectively than a professional model on the runway. Yes, he was short. But he carried himself like John Travolta with a swagger to match.

On the power of dominance and social power:

> As he pranced around the courtroom like a peacock, it was amazing to see how, sure enough, he garnered respect just through his dominant actions and behaviors.
> Everyone treated him with deference.
> The explanation?
> Very simple. Dominance is desirable.
> Dominant men are attractive to women.
> (…) Ogi Ogas and Sai Gaddam in A Billion Wicked Thoughts have a chapter entitled "Ladies Prefer Alphas."

On people falling for compliments and attention:

> Rolling up with his cart, which contains a number of expensive grocery items carefully selected for show, he tells Shelly that she is beautiful, asking if she is a native, or an exotic import, like the fruit she is buying. I can see you rolling your eyes. Give me a break, huh? Except that Shelly, who has never been called beautiful in her life, bought it hook, line, and sinker.

One being careful around compliments:

> "What do you want?" we sometimes joke when someone gives us a big compliment. Actually, that is a very good question.

On the power of affirmation:

> Wow, Ms. Patrick, you really destroyed that witness. You are such a great advocate. I sure hope you go easy on me." Who do you suppose that compliment came from? Would you believe, the defendant? (…) Although their ulterior motives are crystal clear, much to my dismay, the compliments strike a chord. Even though I know they are insincere. Welcome to the alluring world of affirmation.

On the charisma of the dark triad (albeit the author doesn't mention the huge role of Depp's inherent attractiveness):

> Seeking the Scoundrel Why do women swoon over Johnny Depp's character Captain Jack Sparrow in Pirates of the Caribbean? Because some women are fascinated with intelligent, ruthless manipulators. Especially when they are handsome and charismatic.

CONS

Few shades of grey with "us good VS them bad" approach

For example:

> Detecting criminals is more challenging than many people think, because…

It may be difficult because some criminals may be normal people.

Sometimes I'd have been more precise with some power-related construct

For example:

> When presented with negative feedback, a self-absorbed individual is more likely to respond with "My bad" rather than "I'm sorry."

This is GREAT observation.
However, that has more to do with power-hunger than self-absorption.
We call it here "power hoarding". See some examples in our gaslighting drill-down.

> Gaslighting Power Dynamics: 17 Signs You're Being Manipulated

Just a few times I'd have been more careful to reaching certain conclusions

Says the author:

> Some drunk drivers are sporting thousand-dollar suits in their mug shots—proving that there is no correlation between a polished appearance and safe driving.

Patrick displayed great critical thinking skills and wisdom, and this wasn't representative of her great thinking skills.
Namely, that doesn't "prove" what she says it proves.
If anything, it only proves there is no 1:1 correlation. But that doesn't say much.

Sometimes conflates sexual preferences for psychopathy?

The author has strong morals and ethics.

That's good.
But, as for everything, you can go too far.
And that may lead to some takes that, at times, can feel moralistic.

> In Dangerous Liaisons: How to Recognize and Escape from Psychopathic Seduction, Claudia Moscovici describes the progression of psychopathic seduction as illustrated in the movie 9 ½ Weeks, starring Mickey Rourke and Kim Basinger, where romantic attention and gifts that make the woman feel special and desirable lure her into a relationship of domination and control.

I'm not sure that's a sign of psychopathy.

Also, the author talks about a woman's love story with a racing car driver.
When they had an accident, she talks about "exercising bad judgment".
I don't think it was bad judgment. Accidents simply happen. And with the guy, she enjoyed the fun and excitement.
Not necessarily bad judgment.

PROS

This is a fantastic book.
Just some of the pros:

Well-sourced WITH great experience

Wendy L. Patrick is a fantastic example of what great content you can produce when you have experience, science, and great critical thinking.

This is also the approach we strive for here at TPM.
See TPM's epistemological approach.

> How We Ensure Accuracy: The 3 Pillars of Mastery

Great critical thinking

For example:

> So if looks can be deceiving and talk is cheap, do actions speak louder than words? Not always. Outward manifestations of good behavior do not necessarily reflect motives.
> (…) The only way to tell for sure is to observe the person's willingness to engage in helping behavior when no one is watching.

When I see this type of thinking I know I can always trust the author more.

REVIEW

Red Flags: How to Spot Frenemies, Underminers, and Toxic People is such a great book.

Kudos to the author, fantastic job.

Red Flags is thorough at all levels of the epistemology chain.
Wendy Patrick sourced, analyzed, and connected all the dots in the data to develop a fantastic framework.
Then, she presents it in a very simple fashion, with lots of real-life examples. And all very practical.

Big thumbs up, highly recommended.

And thanks to Bel in our community for recommending it.

And to end our favorite quote, which also sums up TPM's credo:

> While the world is filled with loyal friends, adoring partners, and compassionate strangers, it also contains enough shrewd manipulators to keep people like me in business for an entire career. Life is easier and much more rewarding when you can tell the good from the bad.
>
> *Wendy L Patrick*

Check the **best books** to read or get this book on Amazon.

10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 March 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Self-empowerment in men's self-development starts from the inside out. Most people try to fix behavior, tactics, or outcomes. That's backward.

Real personal power starts earlier: at the level of mind, identity, and internal state.

This article lists the core foundations of self-empowerment, from the most basic to the most advanced. Each layer builds the next, from internal alignment to external control and social effectiveness.

P.S.:
See this post for the basic strategies for social power.

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- 5. Track & Correct Power Exchanges
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- 8. Learn How to Control Others
  - 8.2. Make Others Dependent (⍰)
  - 8.3. Become A Man Others Want to Follow (⍰)
- 9. Master Emotional Power Dynamics (AKA: The Judge)
- 10. Transcend It All

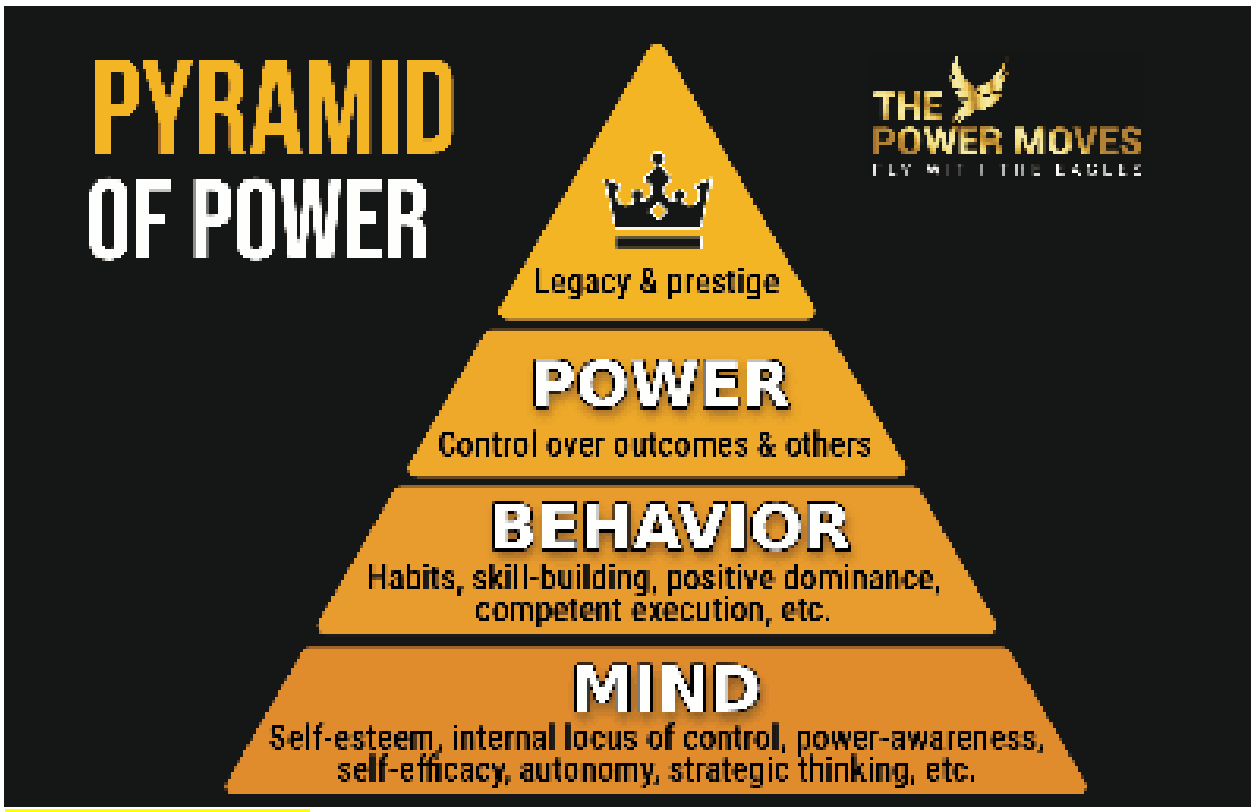
1. Start With The Mind (Empowered Mind™)

The **Empowered Mind Principle™** states that the mind is the source layer of all behavior, influence, and outcomes (Source Layer Principle). An empowered internal state produces naturally congruent and effective behavior, while a weakened or reactive state produces inconsistency regardless of will, personal ambition, and tactics.

The mind is most foundational because it is the source from which all else flows.

If the mind is weak, reactive, or incoherent, everything downstream becomes inconsistent. Most people then try to fix the output, changing behaviors, learning tactics, or trying new scripts. But **you don't fix the output. You fix the source.**
If the mind is stable, empowered, and internally aligned, behavior becomes naturally effective and congruent.
All high-value behavior flows as a natural consequence from an empowered mind, effortlessly and congruently.

This is key to reliably signal value over time, making everything easier, more effective, and more credible.
An empowered mind also allows you to be congruent over time with all the signals you send, which is key for long-term success ('congruence principle').



The mind is the foundation

A healthy, confident mind includes:

1.2. Accept Yourself

You accept who you are, despite your natural flaws

⁉️ This doesn't mean you stop improving.
Instead, you **accept your flaws while working on them**.

1.2.2. Accept Your Shortcomings

It's important because:

⚠️ **Unaccepted shortcomings are permanent, unfixable weaknesses**

❓ Example: See Nicolas Sarkozy not accepting his height.
A mentally stronger man may feel the *opposite* — that his short stature *increases* the significance of his successes.

1.2.3. Then Move to Self-Love

You like yourself and treat yourself well because you're worth it

Healthy self-love includes being able to evaluate yourself and handle criticism or failure.

The key is to separate self from events.
🤦♂️ A failure never turns into "*I* am a failure".

Failure and success are just neutral assessments of events.
Resilient **self-love runs in the background, *whether the result is positive or negative*.**

 Self-love is like an eternal friend and supporter by your side

1.3. Develop Self-Respect

You believe in your worthiness and dignity as a human being

Power University will get you respect from others.

That's empowering.
Do the actions, and you will get respect *–no matter how you feel-*.

How to develop self-respect

We dig deeper in Power and Confidence University, but this video helps.

1.3.2. Then Upgrade to Self-Pride

You feel good about yourself, who you're becoming, and what you stand for

Now we can bridge from inner mind, to external world:

1.4. Internalize: "I'm Worthy of Basic Respect"

You deserve basic consideration just for being human.

This is a core belief:

I deserve respect because I am worthy of it.

A foundational level of respect and consideration is due to any human.
You are worthy of it just for being a human being.

Nobody has the right to disrespect you or humiliate you.

Beliefs ARE Power – Even When Powerless!

You won't *always* enforce boundaries.

Sometimes it's not in your best interest.
Other times you may not have the power to.

And that's OK.

Even as a powerless victim – you *still* believe you're worthy of respect.
And you will always be.

This is crucial.
True, resilient (mental) power is independent of circumstances.

Keep that core belief and you have the foundational mindset of an empowered man.

Example

He *decides* it's best to let it go—keeping his mental power and strong body language.

He loses mentally. And makes himself smaller as a consequence

⍰ Both men "took the yelling"

But emotional detachment makes it about the event, not about *him*. He still thinks well of himself ⍰.

The man who thought himself unworthy and "bad" remains low status and low self-worth forever ⍰♂.

Related good mindsets:

- I respect others, so I expect and demand the same ⍰

- To disrespect others is to be an asshole. And I don't accept assholes around me ⍰

1.5. Develop Emotional Self-Sufficiency ("I'm enough")

You are "enough"

You don't need others to "complete you".

You may want them, but you're fine if you don't get it.

And you may want others to approve of you.
But you keep your self-worth even without others' approval.

1.5.2. Develop Emotional Detachment

You never take things too personally

Emotional detachment boosts life effectiveness.

Power awareness is 2x more effective with emotional detachment.
And 10x more life satisfaction.

⍰ Example

It's emotional detachment that tells us The Godfather will be an effective boss:

> **Godfather**: It's not personal, Sonny <— ⍰ I'm emotionally unaffected
> it's strictly business <— ⍰ I do what's most effective

1.6. Own Your Dark Side

You accept your will to power.
Negative feelings like jealousy or revenge are human and don't make you bad.

Owning it makes you a more "integrated man".

⚠ **Own it, without reveling in it**
Don't despise yourself for having them—just move past them when needed.

1.6.2. Strategically Owning Your Dark Side...

Publicly owning your dark side is risky.

But you will learn that straight-talking your dark side can facilitate genuine connections (example later).
Or can be a powerful display of confidence.

> Over-hiding your darker side is like courting a girl while pretending you're not interested in intimacy.
> It reeks of sneaky weakness.
>
> *– The Power Moves*

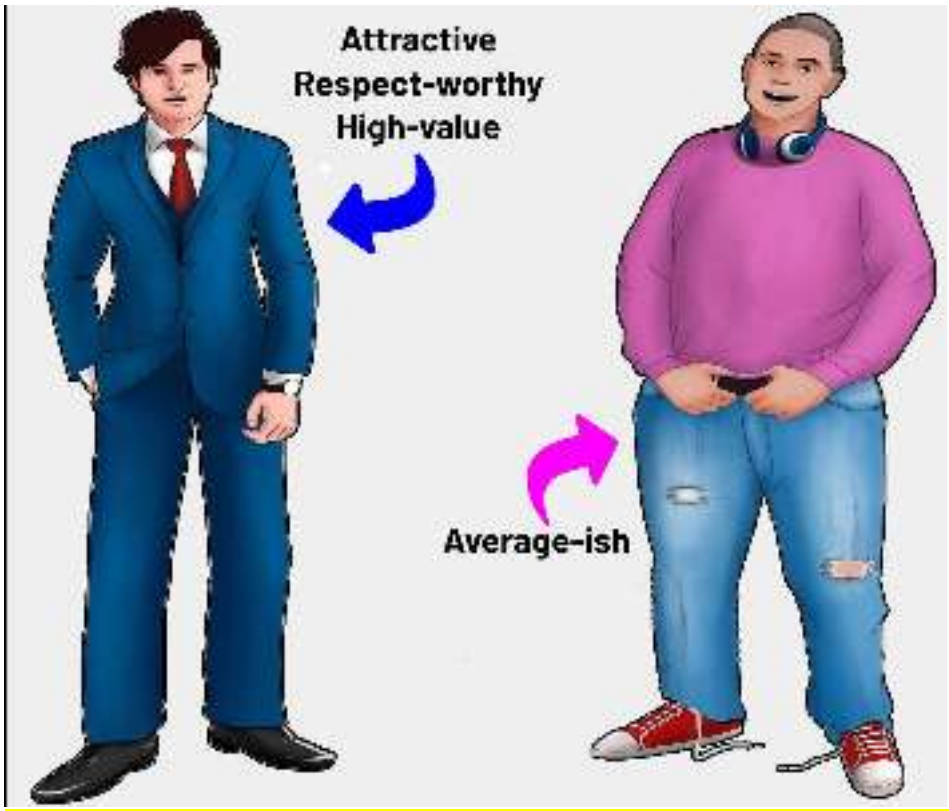
2. Mind Your Body & Presentation

Mental self-love turns to physical self-care

Health first, but also stay in shape.

How you look matters to social success.
And physical self-care also displays a good internal life.

2.2. Present Yourself Well



⚠ Same person. Nothing “wrong” with chubby. But the left one achieves far more in life.

Some fundamentals include:

1. **Posture**, check this post
2. **Voice**, check this post
3. **Good fashion**

3. Extend Control Over Your Life

You live out your preferences, independent of specific individuals, organizations, or social trends

Some examples of what “control VS lack of control” look like:

Life plan and direction
No control: unaware of what’s best for you; no attempts at moving forward; complains about “society” or “women”
Control: plan and move in the direction you prefer; find ways to win

Work
No control: job you hate; fixed hours/breaks; micro-managing boss
Control: do what you like; the execution is up to you

Financial
No control: dependent on a single source to survive; no other options; no savings
Control: own work and/or can easily find work; diversified income; savings

+ Control over your life also protects you from people attempting to control *you*.

3.2. Develop Mastery & Competence

Get good at your job or chosen trade.

The specifics of your job are on you.
Here at TPM we teach the general life competences that apply to anyone.

3.3. Make Some Money

Resources empower.

?♂ Doesn't mean you must *prioritize* wealth.
But "enough" money gives freedom and independence.

Quoting Nassim Taleb:

> (resources) shield you from prostituting your mind and free you from outside authority–*any* outside authority.

That IS empowering.

3.4. Align With The Powers That Be

You are on the good side of higher or equally high-power people and institutions

"Power aligning™" is important anywhere.

And *fundamental* where individual rights are weaker (despotic countries, top-down organizations, underworld, etc.).

In countries with strong civil rights and governments, the legal system is a superpower you want on your side.

?A good lawyer(s) is both self-defense and power multiplier.
A smart tax advisor saves money and troubles.

2.4.2. Own Nothing, Control Everything

You have big assets, but invisible to takers

The principle is “legal, KISS, and safe”

Legal diversification and holding protect many downside risks.
And provides peace of mind.

⍰ Self-Trust

It always goes back to the mind.

No matter how powerful, fit, wealthy, or whatever…

You can always find yourself on your ass.

Some people resist that idea—it’s their ultimate fear.

Instead, make peace with it.

Call this “ultimate self-trust”.

It has two components:

1. **Trust your “naked self”**, the one relying on character and skills *only*
2. If that fails – **be cool with the worst case** of failure and death

We dig deeper in our premium resources.

4. Track & Correct Value Exchanges

“Value exchange” includes any give-and-take interaction.
“Value accounting” tracks who gives and takes.
“Value-maximizing” seeks maximum benefit

Successful people:

1. **Monitor** giving & taking
2. Are **strategic** about their giving
3. **Fix imbalances** early

⍰ Avoid “bean counting” or over-tracking with good people and relationships
Bean counter = tracks inconsequential details, expects quick returns from friends, and reminds others of their debt.
Toxic = *over*-tracks in close relationships.

⍰ Find great people who need little accounting
Great relationships feature relaxed accounting and higher trust. Giving is a source of pleasure.
Social success is finding great people worthy of your generosity.

5. Track & Correct Power Exchanges

“Power exchanges” are interactions that affect power, status, or attraction.
“Power accounting” tracks empowering versus disempowering people and actions.
“Correcting” restores your power as a respected, high-value man.

High value men:

- Know who empowers or disempowers
- Take corrective actions to re-empower themselves

⍰ Same principles apply.
Balance and calibrate. Avoid *over*-defending or *over*-reacting ⍰.
⍰ Success is surrounding yourself with people who uplift—they need no correction.

⚠ 5.2. Self-defend and re-empower yourself

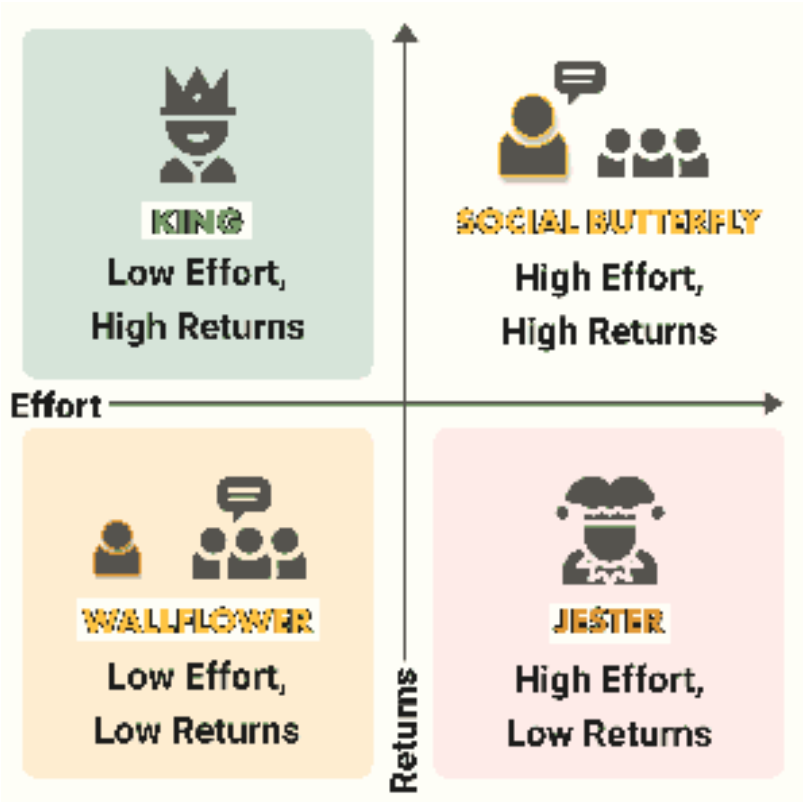
High-value men don't let others disempower them.

When others disempower you:
 Lose status and respect (including your own)
 Sub-communicate cluelessness and incompetence

High-value men instead register the attack, and take action.

6. Act High Power (Social ROI)

Social ROI measures the return on your effort. Over-investing without matching returns lowers your perceived value.



Social ROI matrix™

The Social Investment Model differentiates higher power as *factual* power, as in having power, and *perceived* power, as in looking powerful.
Both are important, and they feed into each other.

Some examples:

1. You speak to fill silences you're framed as **needier**. Or yielding to social pressure
2. You walk across the room to say hi while they stay put you're framed as **lower status**. Or wanting something from them
3. You text more than she does you're **chasing**
4. …

⚠ Even kindness without getting kindness back frames you as lower status.
Starting politely is good, but **don't stay polite if they're curt**.

⍰ Example: running VS stillness

Extreme example of high investment VS low investment:

> **Narrator**: Paulie might have moved slow. But it was only because Paulie didn't have to move for anybody

The high status made men purposefully move slowly and little.
The lowest-status boy hurries for everyone else.

7. Control Frames

Frame control is the art and science of shaping perceptions and social negotiations.

We dig deeper in PU, but for the basics:

Intro to Frames

A frame is a set of beliefs, values, and perspectives with which people interpret the world.
Frame control is the art and science of shaping perceptions and influencing social negotiations.

Frames are most visible in disagreements.
Example from a relationship:

> **His frame**: St. Valentine's gifts are a waste
> **Her frame**: St. Valentine's gifts are caring
> ➡ Their actions depend on whose frame wins

Frames are also held at *social* level.
It's more challenging for individuals to buck socially ingrained frames.

In our example, society supports her frame.
So it's difficult for him to "win" the frame without seeming "unreasonable" or controlling.

He needs advanced skills to "win" the frame without her feeling like he's *imposing* his will.

Frame Battles Are About Power

For two reasons:

1. **Power signaling**: the winner sub-communicates higher power—dominant, persuasive, or both
2. **Setting the rules (SOPs)**: the winning frame governs the relationship under the winner's terms

⍰ Example

From Mrs. Doubtfire:

> **Him**: (Frame: we were having fun, it's good, and I'm the leader of this relationship)
> **Her**: (Frame: you were destroying the house, it's bad, and you're useless and only take from my life)

Whose frame wins?
Just look at his face for the answer.
Frames often resolve without a single word being spoken.

Frames Set Moral Rules

Higher-level frames also set values and morals.

This is important because:

⚠ When you accept someone's frame, you play by *their* ethical standards.
And your behavior is judged based on what *they* prefer.

Always be careful of frames that hide implications for right or wrong.
Speaking of hidden:

⚠ 7.2. *Hidden* & High-Level Frames Are Paramount

Advanced frame control is all about high-level and hidden frames

Most people accept, react, and defend from frames they don't even see.
And in so doing, they lose all power.

⍰ Example

Imagine you want to lead your business well into old age.

But virtue signalers call you a "power-hungry old man" who can't let go.

⍰ Pause for a minute and think:

How would you respond?

Now, consider the hidden frames:

1. **Wanting power is bad**
2. **They have the authority to judge you**
3. **Staying CEO proves "power hunger"**
4. **Hence, *you* are "bad"** (rather, than, say, having a *single* negative trait)
5. **You must exculpate yourself** (to the world, and *the attackers* will judge)

None of those hidden frames are necessarily true.

But unless you spot them, you will communicate poorly.

Successful and high-power men are smart enough not to fall for #4.

But *you may still fall for all the others*.

You'll deny your drive to power.
Or make an excuse, saying you're seeking a substitute—and you sound sneaky.

⍰ We got the solution for you.

8. Learn How to Control Others

Controlling others is the ability to have others do as you want, in the best and most effective way possible

Many authors list many "power levers"
Including:

- **Coercion** (push). Punishments or threats. Good to have it, even when you don't want to use it
- **Dominance** (push). A form of more or less "socially covert coercion"

- **Prestige** (pull), Makig people *want* to emulate you or listen to you.
  You earn it with your achievements, knowledge, or quality of character
- **Leadership** (pull). Charisma, influence, and strategy that inspire and motivate contribution
- **Authority** (push or pull) "Legitimized power" with titles or rank.
  - Rank: a title of "official authority" within an organization
- **Resources** (often pull). The ability to give value (but, sometimes, also inflict costs)

In truth, all overlap and feed upon each other.
Our programs improve all of them.

When Power Is Undeserved

Ideally, power goes to the person who "deserves it".

In reality, power isn't always deserved, and authority is often faked.

It sounds obvious, but most people can't spot fake.

8.2. Make Others Dependent (?)

General principle:

The more people need you, the more power you have.

The concept is obvious.
But true skills are in the *how* to do it.

? Don't be a jerk—pull, don't push!

Important limitations to this approach:

Making others dependent can turn toxic and abusive.

That "works" only on those who have fewer options, and as long as you can punish.
And even then, you lose all the goodwill.

In close relationships, it often turns lose-lose.

8.3. Become A Man Others *Want* to Follow (?)

The approach that always works is to make people *want* to follow you.

Power University turns you into that type of man.

9. Master Emotional Power Dynamics (AKA: The Judge)

"The judge" is the individual that others react emotionally to.

People seek judges' approval and good opinion.
And feel bad about their distance, disapproval, or anger.

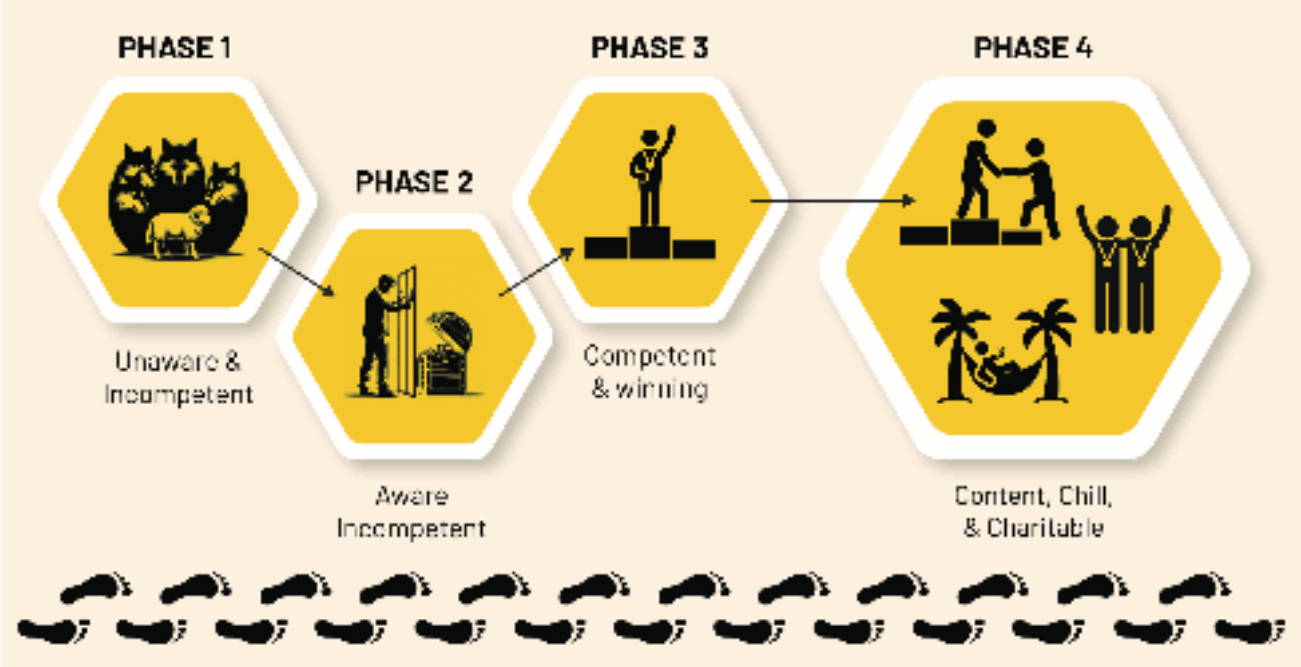
That's emotional neediness.
And the stronger the need, the more powerful the judge.

⚠ Be aware of emotional power dynamics.
Judges make you reactive, dependent, and needy.

10. Transcend It All

Achieve all your goals.

Then chill, and focus on enjoying life, and giving back.



This is a preview from Power University version 9.0

How to Display Competence & Monetize: 7 Power Tactics (Andrew Huberman Case Study)

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 March 2024 · Archived copy · Original

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In this article, we uncover the tactics gurus use to project authority, captivate audiences, and gain power through 'expertise amplification'.

Whether you're aiming to signal value or market your expertise, we'll unveil the tactics that work.

Contents

- Competence Display Cues
  - 1. Use extra jargon for extra authority
  - 2. Forget Pareto. Spin insignificant gains as major benefits to hook your audience
  - 3. Over-complicate things to make others feel clueless (and dependent on you)
  - 4. Talk more than necessary. Verbosity is mistaken for expertise
- Strategically Avoid Alienating Your Audience
  - 5. Avoid divisive topics (ie.: Huberman has no opinion on vaccines. Convenient… ⍰)
  - 6. Use strategic ambiguity to straddle all sides: there is "some evidence" for all woo-woo
- 7. Monetize Your Authority ⍰
  - 7.2. Covert Selling: Sell, Without Selling ⍰

Competence Display Cues

We'll analyze how an expert like Andrew Huberman displays and boosts competence using his real-world examples.

Andrew David Huberman is an American neuroscientist, podcaster, and popular "optimization guru", and his success proved his 'methods' to acquire power, fame, and authority.

Quotes below are from this video:

> **Huberman**:
> Welcome to The Huberman Lab Podcast, where we discuss science and science-based tools for everyday life. I'm Andrew Huberman and I'm a professor of neurobiology and ophthalmology at Stanford School of Medicine

Did he drop enough high-authority keywords within the first 10 seconds?

Good, then we're ready to go ⍰

Huberman says this episode is eminently practical.
And I picked it for two reasons:

1. **Should be fair to Huberman**, since I expect practical advice to be more straightforward
2. **Less theory means I can leverage my expertise**. Persuasion, manipulation, power moves, etc.

We analyze straight quotes from this episode.

Let's go:

1. Use extra jargon for extra authority

> **Huberman**:
> Elevating your feet (….) can be really beneficial for increasing the depth of sleep because of the so-called glymphatic washout.

This could be fair.

So consider it more of a personal note.
But to me, it's a first potential red flag as a possible authority power move.

You know, just in case you forgot the "science" and "lab" plastered everywhere around Huberman's name :).

Of course, there is nothing wrong with displaying your authority.
You can easily *under*-do it.

But as for everything, balance.

I feel Huberman overdoes it.

2. Forget Pareto. Spin insignificant gains as major benefits to hook your audience

Going on one of his trademark "quick side note":

> **Huberman**:
> (raising your legs at night) lead to more wakefulness and actually can improve cognitive function and a number of other things related to brain health.

To me, this is one of the worst red flags. ⍰

Huberman's wording leads listeners to believe that "elevating your feet by 3 to 5 degrees" can significantly impact "cognitive functions" or health.

I'd bet that elevating your feet at night will *not* significantly impact cognitive functions.
Or "brain health" for that matter -a nebulous term that to me, means nothing-.

Worst yet, this approach drags many people down the over-optimization trap.

2.2. Use the "casually dropping gold" power move to make them think you have *endless* gold to drop

Why does Huberman talk this way?

Because the sub-communication is:

1. **I possess *endless* life-changing advice ("casually dropping gold" power move)**

Think about it.

What does it sub-communicate when you drop gold in a tangential remark that wasn't even your main focus?

That you have so much gold that it's overflowing.

Any time you open your mouth there's a golden nugget. Even when you're casually digressing or mentioning a "quick BTW".

2. **I nonchalantly drop gold left and right, so you better listen**

Since you never know when this guy will drop life-changing optimization gold, you must listen to *everything* they say

To me, it's an annoying form of "value-inflating".
And it's manipulative because it's based on BS.

In truth, the basics are much fewer, and simple.

It's just not good for Huberman to tell you that.

3. Over-complicate things to make others feel clueless (and dependent on you)

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All from the same continuous quote:

> **Huberman**:
> Not just that cortisol peak but it's going to trigger proper metabolism (**<— Bamboozling technique**. What does "trigger proper metabolism" mean? It's too fuzzy to convey any real information. It's just a bamboozling device to sound authoritative)

And:

> **Huberman**:
> it's going to set a timer for you to be able to fall asleep about 16 hours later and on and on and on (**<— Pull rank technique**. Makes it sound like it's a long and complex list. He knows it well, but he's cutting it short "for us non-scientists". A power move to "pull rank" on the audience)

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Overall, I get a major covert brag vibe of "Look how smart I am".

Very effective if you can't spot it.
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Andrew is a good guy and these techs can be used for good.
Still, you wanna be aware of them so you don't get all the bathwater with the baby.

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Huberman now shares a good old tip:

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So you think it should be a GREAT and easy tip for sleeping in a noisier environment.
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Furthermore, given Huberman's brand of "science-based", you'd hope for some actual research, right?

Well, none of that.

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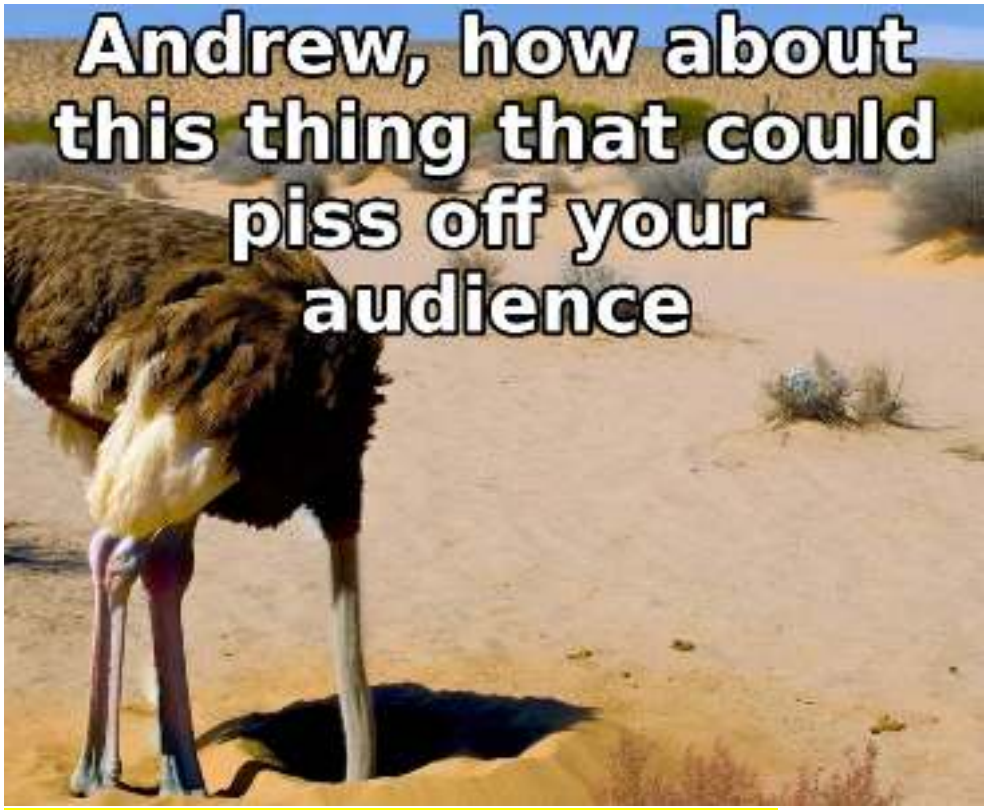
Strategically Avoid Alienating Your Audience



Huberman strategically avoids anything that could bother his fanbase

Huberman uses what Chris and Matt call “strategic ambiguity”.

Such as, Huberman straddles divisive issues to avoid antagonizing anyone in his audience.

No matter how clear the issue may be, or how convinced he may be, Huberman keeps it vague.

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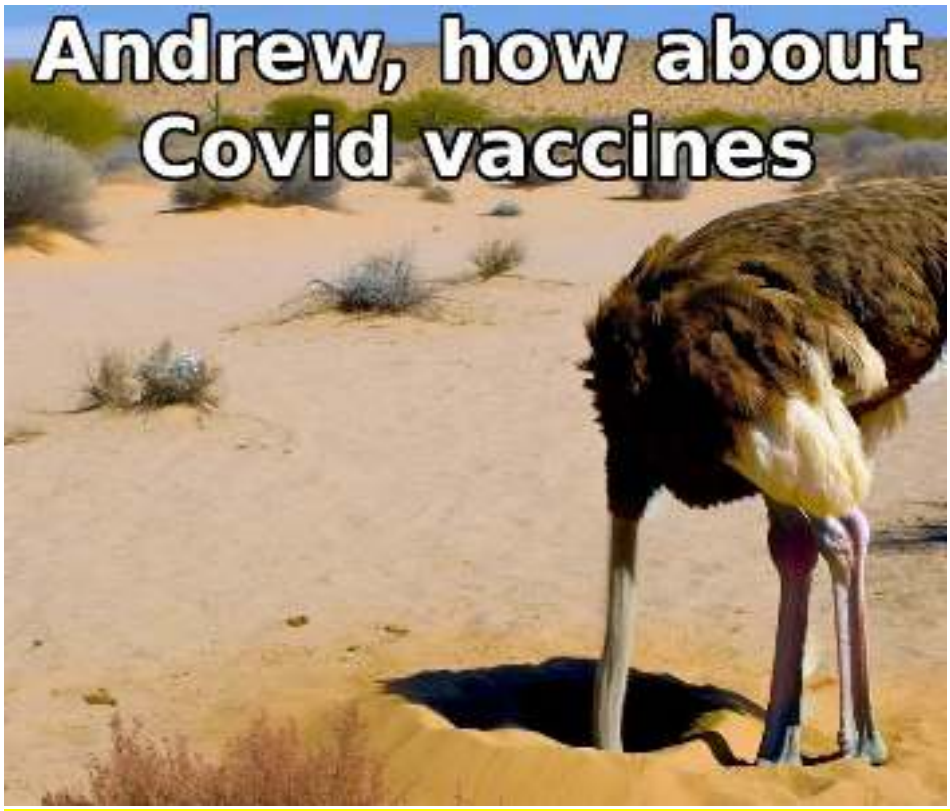

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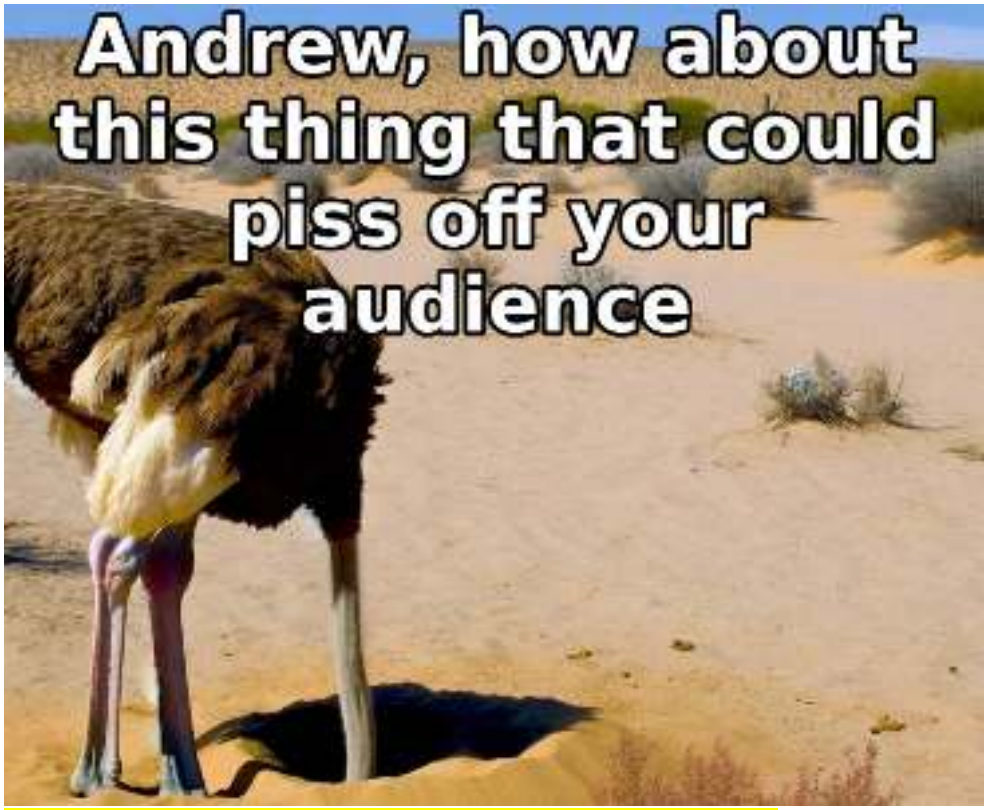

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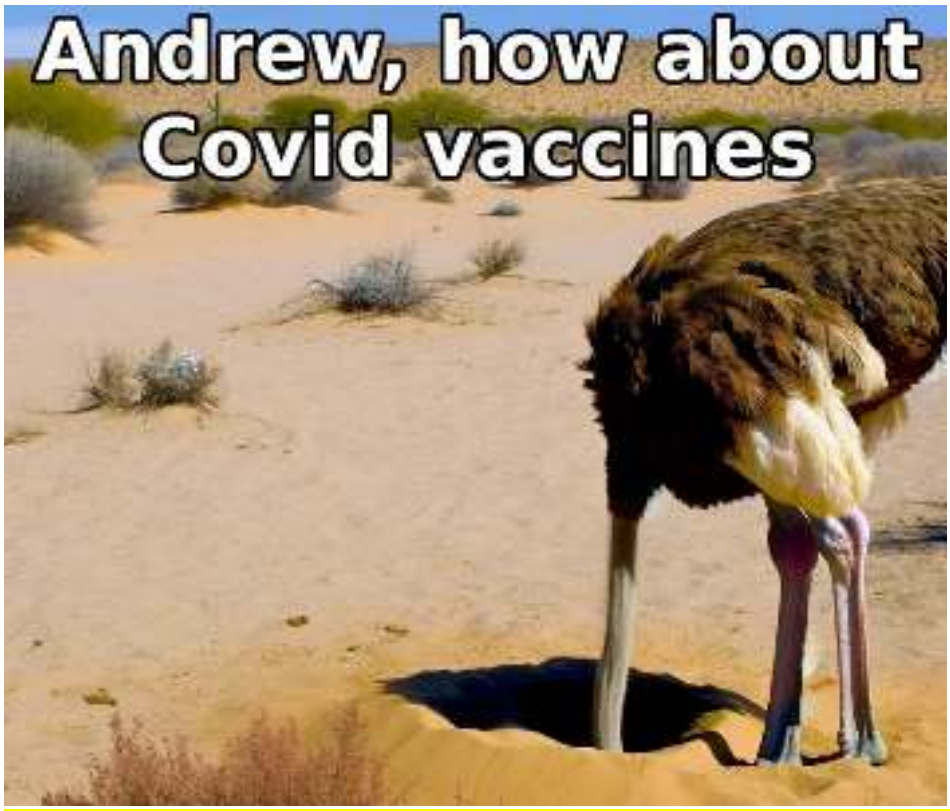

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Lucio Buffalmano · 18 March 2024 · Archived copy · Original

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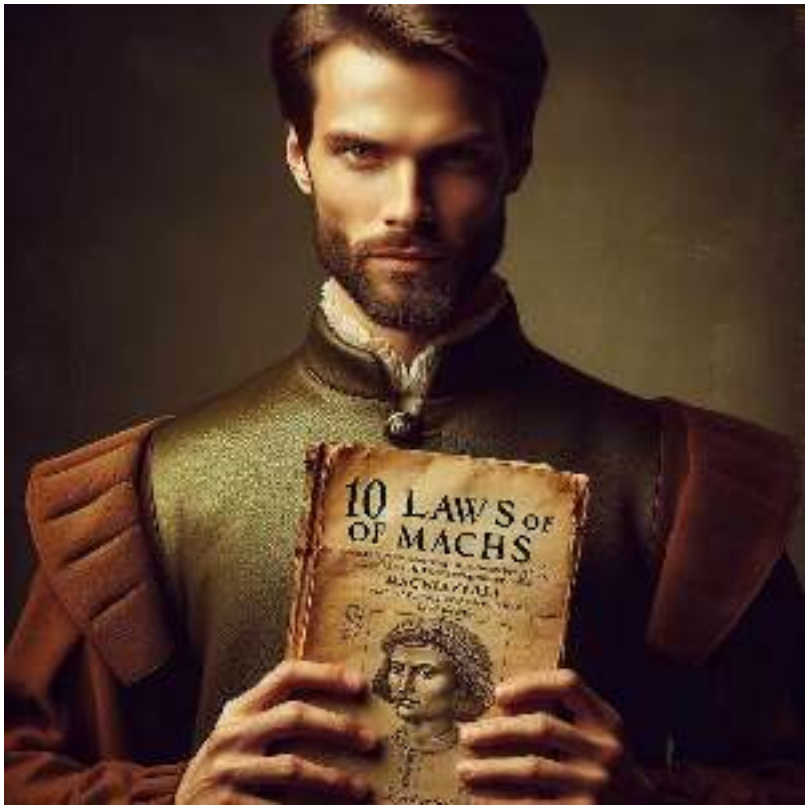
This guide distills the most powerful strategies into 13 practical steps.

We've helped thousands of men sharpen their strategic thinking, navigate power dynamics, and become more effective in business, dating, and life—all while remaining honorable men.

If you're ready to upgrade your mindset and start winning more, let's dive in.



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- 2. Look At Leadership As Ultimate Leverage
- 3. Look At Relationships As Exchanges
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- Learn More

1. Look For Leverage Over Others

Romance, love, and bonding follow patterns that can be understood and influenced.

They’re forms of interpersonal influence, reproducible with the right behavior and strategy.

The right behavior and strategy come natural to successful Machiavellians.
You, my budding Mach, must learn it.

⍰ Example: Mach Dating

Albeit a movie, it’s realistic of a Machiavellian approach to dating:

> **Him**: (gains emotional leverage over her with sex, romance and Mach techniques. Then chills when she is hooked)

Also see:

- **How to make her fall in love**

1.2. Identify Needs & Emotional Buttons: It’s Your Leverage

Common emotional drivers:

- **Emotional needs**
  - Difficult past ⍰ Be their therapist / confidante
  - Longing for love ⍰ Give them romance
- **Social struggles** ⍰ Be their good friend
- **Unfulfilled desires** ⍰ Give them hope
- **Resentment** ⍰ Let them vent, validate their anger

⍰♂Lucio’s Take: **when gaining social power becomes addictive**

Lucio:
Some men who get skilled at dating report being hooked on the ‘thrill of seduction’.

Part of the appeal is in gaining power.

It’s similar for socialization.
The thrill is in starting from zero, climbing up, and gaining status and social power.

Once you achieve it, your status is set and you can coast.
But it’s not as exciting anymore.

2. Look At Leadership As Ultimate Leverage

> Cooperation made humans the dominant species; those who harnesses it becomes the ultimate masters

⍰ Machiavellian Leadership Techniques

These can all be fair in win-win exchanges, but you still want to be careful:

- **Mission frames**, a cause worth dying for
- **Self-sacrifice frame**, rather than enjoying the perks
- **Exaggerate the costs of leadership**, so people remain subordinates
  ⍰ Example: entrepreneurship’s costs
- **‘Us’ frames**
  - Downplay the hierarchy to erase the costs of subordination
- **Inflate external threats**
- **Narratives of disempowering forces**

  - Powerful forces keeping you down
  - Cabals to rebel against
  - *'We're being wronged'*

- **Goliath VS David frames** for 'need for unity'

- **Righteous frames**, the 'war of the good'

You can find these leitmotifs beyond many successful movements:

- Feminism ⍰ patriarchy oppresses us
- Communism ⍰ capitalists oppress us
- Musk / Space X ⍰ ensuring humanity's survival

Learn more:

How to become a leader

See:

- Political manipulation
- Business manipulation

3. Look At Relationships As Exchanges

Largely, they are.

And **always ask 'What's in it for me?'**.

If the answer is 'nothing', *nothing* is your contribution.

Same goes for people.
People either give, or take—cut ties with the takers.

We believe here that a healthy "what's in it for me" is not just good for you, but for the world.
It maintains humanity and effective, and drives the world forward.

3.2. Think About Return Maximization

Ie.:

Technical cofounders
✕ **Power aware** demands his full worth ⍰⍰
✓ **Naive** ⍰ builds it for little equity ⍰⍰

Watch exchange manipulation red flags

An example of 'credit inflating':

This is how value-taking social manipulators try to get more from you, while giving less
See more here:

- Overview on manipulation

Reminder: don't turn into a taker, always prefer for win-win
A strategic mindset doesn't mean taking and shortchanging others.
The best Machiavellians know that sustainable power and high-quality relationships come from offering real value.

5. Develop Baseline Cynicism

You can't be effectively strategic if you're naive.

Balanced cynicism is built on the knowledge that everyone pursues self-interest.
Work backward from their interests to uncover true motives

If they say differently, it's a spin, lie, or self-lie.

Some articles to develop your cynicism:

- Business manipulation
- Machiavellian principles

And to keep your cynicism healthy, see:

- **Enlightened cynicism**

Exercise: Contemplate Machiavellian Beliefs

Some of them:

- There's only 1 law of nature: power
  - It's fair for those with power to do whatever they want
- Bad policies are often good politics
- The world isn't fair. And *neither it should be*
- People only see what appears, and what appears to be true, is true
- You never hear the truth because information is about power -and controlling the narrative–
- People do the expedient, then lie to themselves- and you- that it's 'right'
- People get most upset about what's out of their control. It's easy virtue-signaling, without having to do sh*t

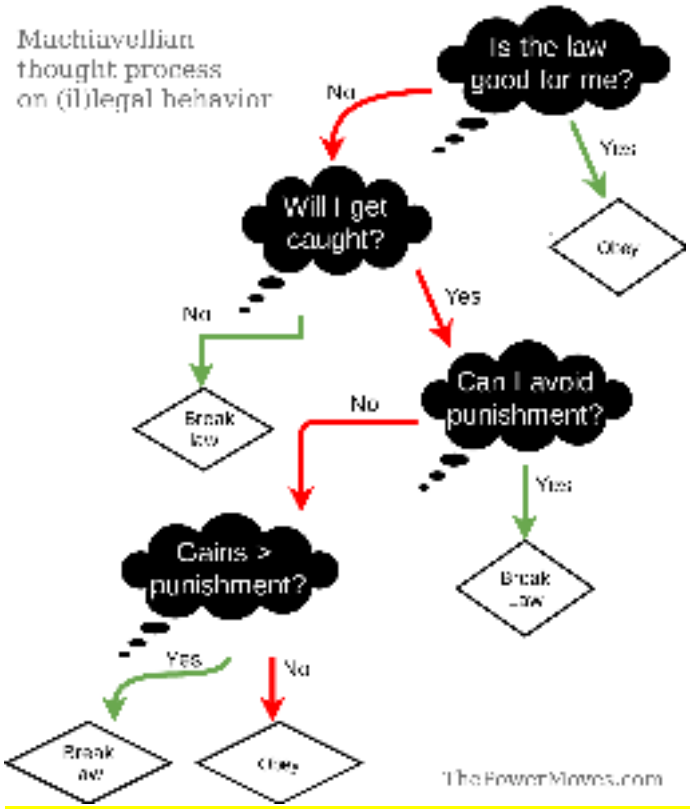
Not all of the above are necessarily and always true -that would be *over*-cynicism-.
And they're also not necessarily commendable or advisable.
But they're well worth keeping in mind.

6. Develop Machiavellian Thought Process

Some people take rules very seriously.
Some others don't take them seriously enough, and end up in trouble.

Machiavellians instead are strategic about it.
To Machiavellians, rules by themselves mean nothing.

And this is their thought process around legality:



The Machiavellian decision process is based on utilitarian calculation of personal gains.

There is no preconceived notion that respecting the law is a good thing in itself.

Many Machiavellians see blind rule-following as limiting

And if you think this mindset gets you in trouble… I wouldn't be so sure.
In this survey of 225 prisoners and 38 lawyers, it's *lawyers* who scored higher in Machiavellianism, not prisoners.
But those Machiavellians were on the "right" side of the law.

7. Develop Strategic Thinking

🤔Lucio's Take: **This is my #1 secret to achieving goals**

Lucio:
I had achieved all my life goals by middle age, while also enjoying life.

Everything else that comes, is on top.

It's a great place to be in.

My personal success comes down to 3 traits.
A strategic predisposition may be the most important.

What helps:

1. **Start from your goal**
2. **Walk backwards**
   - What you need
     - How can you get them
   - What stands in the way
     - How to maneuver around obstacles
   - **Find shortcuts**—think creatively
3. **Risk / reward analysis** for each possible approach
4. **Think 2-3 moves ahead** (second-order effects)
   - If I do A…
   - They may say B or C…
   - …I may do Z or Y
   - And then…
   - …
5. **Mitigation**
   - What will you do/say if caught

⍰ Mitigation example

A smart and honorable mitigation tactic is to *own* your tentative and come clean.
Then, ask if an exception is possible.

Very masculine and high power.

PU expands on this with advanced breakdowns and real-life applications.

8. Decide Based On Risk/Reward Calculation

> Timid men stagnate.
> Risk-takers rely on luck.
> Machiavellians maximize odds.

⍰ Case Study: Risk-Reward Accountancy

In this YouTube video:

> **Robber**: (enters guns drawn)
> **Employee**: (draws his gun for risky shootout)

A Machiavellian wouldn't have acted for negative risk/reward calculations:

- Little upside besides good feelings and a pat on the back
- Faces dead-ending downsides to
- Defend *company* property

The clerk is a hero and deserves more in life.
But even from an ethical point of view, **the honorable Machiavellian knows that we need heroes *alive*** to keep contributing with their win-win.

9. Talk & Act With *Sub*-Communication In Mind

Everyone can weigh words.

But higher communication effectiveness is at the *sub*-communication level.

Question	Low Power Naive	High Power Mach
Why are you single?	It's difficult to find a good girl <— Low-value	I'm picky, it's not easy being my GF <— High-value chooser
The weather sucks these days	Yeah, it's depressing <— Emotionally weak	True. Luckily the weather stopped me <— Empowered
Have you heard about…	Yes… <—⍰⍰ My time is worthless	No, I focus on my work/have a full life <— High achiever
What's your type of girl	Traditional <— Red flag of fear	My life is great as it is to be honest <—⍰ Life winner

10. Quit Higher Ideals: Be Ruthlessly Practical

Higher ideals are great, but can also be tools for manipulation.

10.2. Quit Loyalty – Switch to The Best Opportunity

> Loyalty is the emotional manipulation tool of those who can't offer any better
>
> *Mr too cynical but sometimes right*

Let dogs be loyal. You demand returns on investment.

10.3. Quit Commitment – Embrace Strategic Plurality

> Commitment is the reassuring illusion of the emotionally needy
>
> *Mr too cynical but sometimes right*

Let the needy and fearful rely on illusionary, unenforceable social contracts.
You move free and unchained to conquer the world unencumbered.

⍰ Strategic Pluralism In Business

> **Mach 1**: Regimes change are always tricky. You wanna stay neutral. Loyalists are always hung
> **Low Mach**: What's wrong with you. Aren't you loyal to anyone?
> **Mach 2**: (Picks a side at no risk for himself)

Of course he is loyal to someone.
He is loyal to himself.

In many situations, this is a fair stance.
It's not written anywhere that you "owe" loyalty to a boss, group, or company that is already getting value with your work.

Keep Options & Pipeline Full

In "*The Art of the Deal*", Trump asks for higher bids, and then reflects:

> The truth is, I really don't wanna sell the yard at any price (…) On the other hand, I don't want to rule out anything.

⍰⍰ Carefully choose your higher ideals, rather than shunning them all
Over-Machiavellians tend to be alienated and dissatisfied.
The smartest Machiavellians develop their own honor code, a mission to pursue, or some value to uphold. See effective spirituality and positive psychology.

11. Quit The 'Real Me' Nonsense: Be A Chameleon

Self-help gurus are obsessed with the 'real me' talk and 'being genuine'.

First of all, the obsession with 'being yourself' is a cultural WEIRD phenomenon that only Westerners obsess with (Heinrich, 2020).

Second, to a Machiavellian, that's puerile, naive, and self-handicapping.
When you tie 'be true to yourself' to your self-esteem, you don a self-defeating straitjacket that prevents you from adapting and winning.

Quit the weak 'real me' talk, and be a chameleon.

> **There is no 'real you'.**
> **There is only the 'you' who's most likely to win -or lose-**
>
> *The Power Moves*

12. Rewire Your Brain With Meditation

Surprised to see meditation here?

Let's quickly review how it helps with Machiavellianism.

1. Working memory: research shows Machiavellians have higher working memory capacity, making for superior strategizing. Meditation has been shown to improve working memory
2. Cool-effect: meditation can help you gain distance from your feelings, making you "cooler".

The proof?

People trained in mindfulness act more like Machiavellians when tested in ultimatum games.
Normally, 3/4 of people reject "unfair offers" in ultimatum games, even when the "unfair offers" are still good for them (Guth et al., 1982).
Meditators instead accepted the "unfair" offer more than half of the times, just like a Machiavellian would (Kirk et al., 2011).

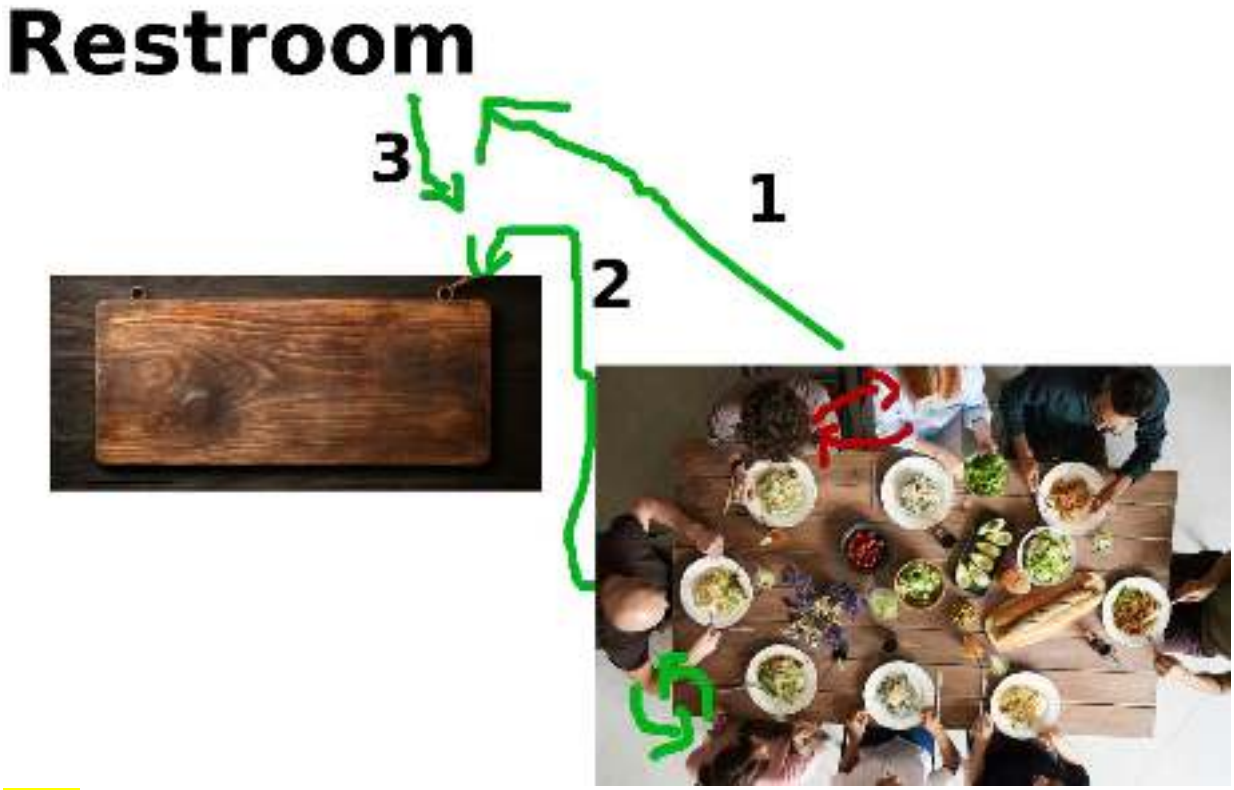
13. Look At Life As A Chessboard

Anything between you and your goal is to be used, or dispatched.

13.2. Be A Social Maneuverer

Social Machiavellians seek maximum power and influence with advanced social skills, confidence, and charm.

🧔♂Lucio's Take: **positioning myself for natural & low-effort open**



Lucio:
My target at a social gathering was talking with a guy.

If I joined their convo I'd be chasing and competing for her attention.

Instead, I talked to the girl beside me and made her laugh to show 'preselection'.

Two minutes after my target went to the restroom, I moved to a table in between us, and the restroom.

I pretended to take a socializing break to check my phone, and struck a 'cool pose'.
I put the phone away before she got close, and struck a convo with a chirpy 'Hey', how's your evening going'.

I could see the guy nervously peering at us -but he should have exchanged contact sooner-.

🧔 Example: Machiavellian Power Moves

"Power moves" are the tactical level of power dynamics.

And while power moves are often dominant and 'one-upping', Machiavellian fluidity does what it takes to reach one's goals

So a power move may also entice others to attack you, if that will help you achieve victory.

Football's most legendary power move was about *getting* headbutted:

> **Machiavellian player**: (provokes opponent into aggressive overreaction)

Materazzi was an average player.
Zidane was a legend, and he seemed on his way to become even more legendary.
With Materazzi's victory, this is the tale of Machiavellian David VS powerful Goliath.

That's the power of Machiavellianism.

Empowers the underdogs to win against all odds.

14. Use Machiavellian *Applied* Psychology

Psychology is only useful *if properly applied*.

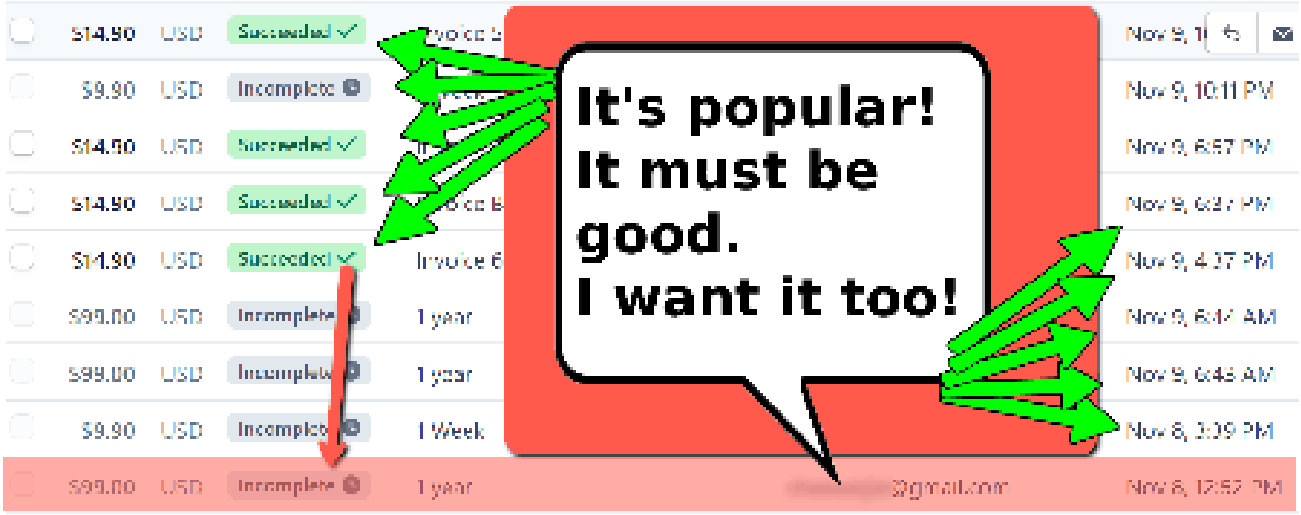
Psychology reading lists with Malcolm Gladwell and books like *Thinking Fast and Slow* won't improve your life effectiveness.

⍰ Marketing Example: Social Proof

Early in this website's life, I contacted subscribers to re-process their subscription with this picture:

⍰ Question:
Why a large screenshot instead of *their* failed payment only?

Because **the *list* of transactions shows social proof** from other buying customers:



This is *applied* psychology.

Take a known psychological principle, in this case, "social proof" (Cialdini, 1984), and find everyday applications to it.

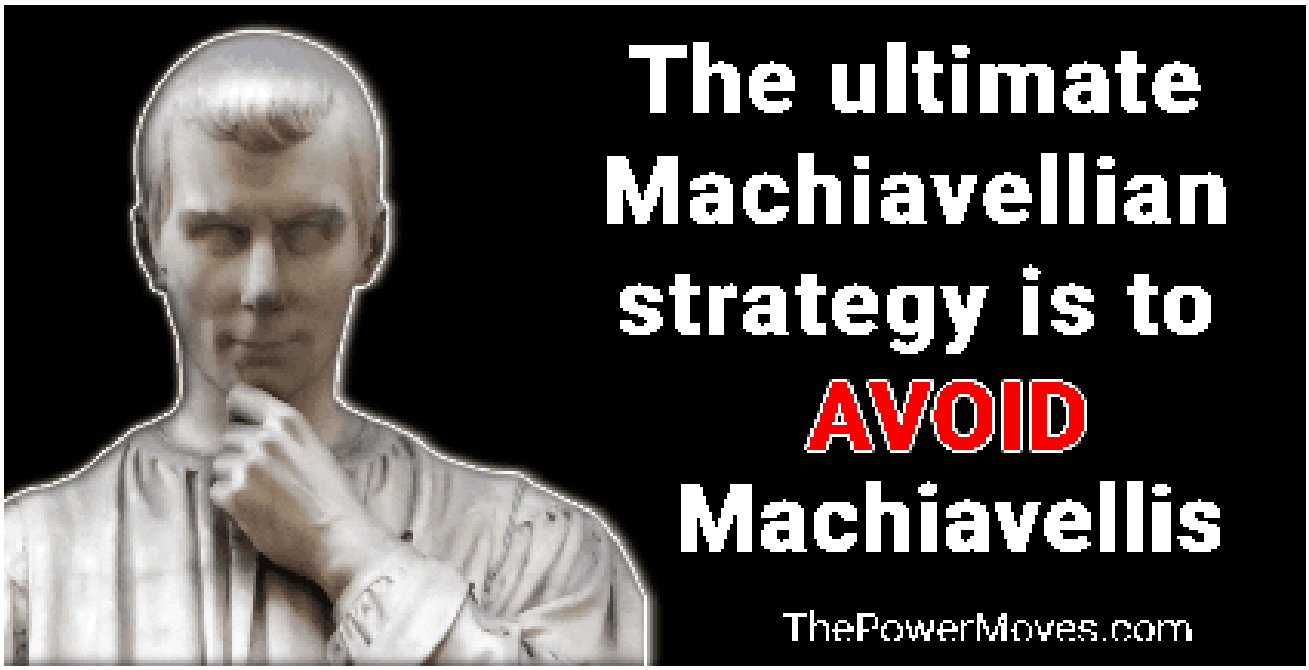
Without social proof, collection rate would have been far lower.

As you can see, **Machiavellian skills are money**.

Now imagine the upshot to your life when you apply a hundred different principles, on a thousand different

scenarios, over a whole lifetime.
It's the difference between languishing at the bottom of society, or climbing upwards.

15. Grow Into "Honorable Machiavellianism" ⍰



Move beyond pure Machiavellianism to avoid known costs like alienation, poorer relationships, lack of intimacy, and life dissatisfaction.

At TPM we embrace **calibration**. Two quick rules based on 'switching modes':

- **Use your Machiavellian mode for competitions**, negative people, and when in 'mission mode'
- **Be honorable in quality longer-term relationships**: pick good partners and friends, establish win-win

Also see:

- **How to be an honorable man**

Learn More

- Psychological manipulation
- Dark psychology

If you've found these principles useful, imagine what you can achieve with a structured, step-by-step system built on the best strategies from Machiavellian masters.

PU isn't just about theory—it's about practical, scientific, and tested techniques for real-world influence.

If you're serious about maximizing your returns in life, it's the next best move.

For a full transformation from good guy to effective life winner, get Power University

Galisghting: 17 Signs You're Being Manipulated

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 March 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Gaslighting is more than lies—it's a systematic way manipulators make you doubt reality, question your sanity, and lose confidence.

In this article, you'll see **17 real examples of gaslighting**, broken down by tactic. You'll learn the signs to recognize it fast, how it works in relationships, work, and politics, and how to protect yourself from anyone trying to twist the truth against you.

Let's start with the most common gaslighting techniques—and how to spot them.

Lying that something has never happened is one of the most stereotypical gaslighting examples

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- 2. Lawyering
  - Typical Expressions
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1. Lies: Disregard For Facts & Reality

In our main gaslighting article, we said that gaslighting is the ultimate frame control.

Gaslighters don't care about what's true, **gaslighters only care about imposing *their* reality**.

Remember:

A gaslighter's priority is power and setting their frame, not truth.
So lying is a means to that end.

Example: Toxic Relationship

The crazy-making type of gaslighters deny the most obvious truth.

A good example is the Dalia Dippolito case.

Audio and video recordings unmistakably show Dippolito hired a hitman to kill her fiance.
From prison she then calls him and says:

> **Him**: How the hell did I hear and see it
> **Her**: Look, I heard what you heard, it's not true

Note: *good* & sneakier gaslighters don't outright lie!

The smarter gaslighters strategically avoid outright lies.

Instead, they spin, misinterpret, strategically ignore the most damning evidence, reframe, muddle waters, or lawyer.

Keep on reading:

2. Lawyering

Lawyering is a game of nitpicking, spinning, and reframing.

The goal is to confuse, divert, move *away* from the main issue, and open new topics of contention.

At worst, the gaslighter moves away from the real issue and, at best, he may even "win" into those new topics he's opening.

Effects

Lawyering is an insidious technique.

Within the gaslighter's manipulative reframes, lawyering makes it seem like the gaslighter is right.

But you know it's NOT right. So **lawyering pressures you to jump in to set things straight and defend yourself**.
You get angry and slippery-slope into endless quicksand debates (keep reading).

You wanted to set things straight. But the lawyer pokes new holes, opens new threads, and spins your answer once again…

You forget, lose sight, or cannot return to the original main issue.

And **when you lose sight of the core issue the gaslighter wins**. Because the core issue had a clear right and wrong, but the gaslighter's quicksand doesn't.

So it feels like two people arguing without right or wrong, and it's a draw.

In his review of abusive personalities in intimate relationships, Lundy Bancroft refers to lawyers as "master debaters" (Bancroft, 2002).
Also see:

- **The Master Debater**
- **The Smart Alec**, often also a gaslighter who resorts to lawyering techniques

Typical Expressions

- **Nitpicking**: *"But I never said that" / "what I actually said is… "*
- **Definitions**: *"That's not the definition of manipulative, the definition is… "*
- **Out-of-context old quotes**: *"Just like you correctly said yourself when, I quote…"*

Online forum behavior:

- Quoting and reframing old posts
- Quoting parts of someone's posts to spin a new narrative the original post never intended
- "Power borrowing" with links, dictionary definitions, or references

Example 1: Greenspan Wasn't Wrong

> View this post on Instagram
> A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Greenspan**: Those of us who (…) are in shocked disbelief <— Collectivizes the mistake to avoid individual responsibility
> (…)
> **Congressman**: So you were not wrong in deregulating derivatives
> **Greenspan**: Depends which derivatives we're talking about

Example 2: Demeaning Partner

> **Her**: maybe we could open a restaurant
> **Gaslighter**: (rolls his eyes and sighs as if to say "here comes another stupid idea")

When she later says that he doesn't value her and treats her like an idiot, he says "not true, please tell me when I ever said you're an idiot".

3. Playing Dumb

Playing dumb reframes sh*tty behavior from malicious to "honest ignorance"

Gaslighters play dumb to hide their malicious intent and, once again, to avoid owning and apologizing.

The rationale is that if one power moves out of ignorance, then "they didn't mean", it's not "too bad", and "it doesn't need any ownership and apology".

Examples: Typical Expressions

- *"I didn't know that was bad"*
- *"Why would anyone take that as an offense?"*
- *"I am confused"*
- *"I don't understand what you're saying"*

Example 2: Manipulative Learner's Frames

- *"I want to understand your point of view"*
- *"Help me understand better… "*
- *"I'm lost. What do you mean when you say… "*

This is the dynamic:

Manipulative learners' frames reframe (malicious, deliberate or recurring) power moves as mistakes on the way to "improve and become better".

So while the learner's frame is lower power, the gaslighter uses it to "limit damage" and hoard power with:

- **Make you invest more** and more as you explain and "teach them"
- **Dilution strategy**: to add more words and confusion around the main issue (ie.: his shitty behavior)
- **Avoid owning and apologizing** since if it was a mistake, then ownership and apologies are not due

The manipulative learner's frame is enticing because it allows the victims to play the teacher.

But don't fall for it: you're only being set up.

Example: Our Forum

After providing a manipulative summation, he ends by saying:

> @Lucio, is this more or less what you saw too? It's important for me to get this right.

If I explain even more what was already well explained, I:

- Get re-dragged into the sh*t-storm
- Raise his profile with my investment
- Confirm his summation was "right" and sub-communicate that "everything was generally OK and that everyone is now equally good".

None of that is true.

4. Word Salading

A word salad is a lengthy and convoluted speech to avoid discussing or answering precise questions and issues.

Skilled gaslighters provide a *semblance* of superficial logic.
But word salads still feel demented because they're always off-topic.

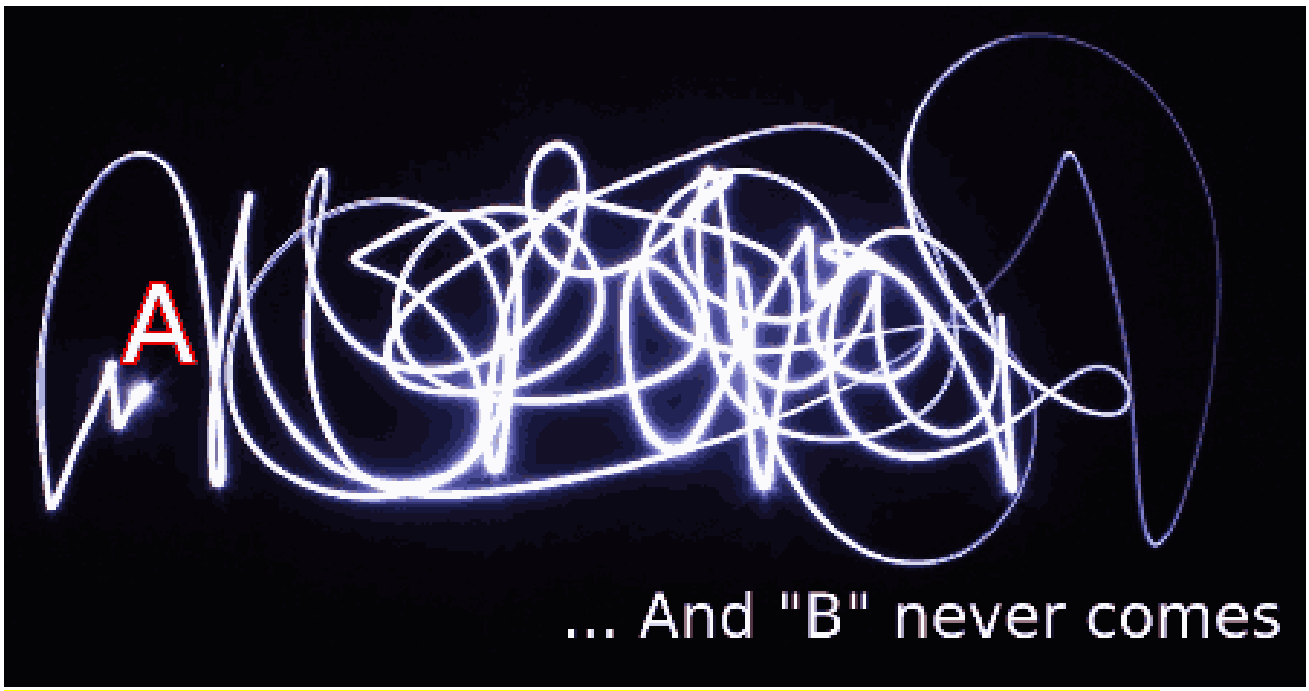
You sometimes see word salad whenever you press the gaslighter with evidence or with a request for explanation, ownership, apology, or change.

Word salads signal desperation -and that you're doing things right-.
The gaslighter looks crooked, illogical, and sneaky.
But gaslighters prioritize power-hoarding over their own status, reputation, and (social) success.

Examples: Typical Techniques

- **Circular conversations**, repeating the same things over and over
- **Free associations**. Start with one word from the issue or question, and use it to bridge into a wholly unconnected topic
- **Generalizations**. Go from the specific of *your* issue, to *general* issues. Ie.: the "general importance of good communication, of ownership, and apologizing while NOT owning and apologizing"

5. Muddling The Water



Normal people seek and expect to go from A to B. The gaslighter purposefully over-complicates things
Muddling the water includes a host of techniques to confuse things, and avoid straight and clear ownership and apology for cr@ppy behavior.

Muddling the water also serves to limit the gaslighter's power loss in case he offers some half-assed apology.
By bracketing his half-assed apology with a litany of random stuff, the gaslighter nevers give the victim a clear, simple, and full apology.

Some tools of muddling the water:

- Word salading
- Changing topic
- Questions
- Questioning the victim's motives or biases
- Attack the "tone" of the victim
- Etc. Etc.

Let's review a couple of them:

Empty & Token Questions

Questions are an easy and innocent-seeming technique to divert attention away from the main issue.

It's never honest questions though.
Especially not because he doesn't want you to teach them, which is low power.

Instead, he wants to control the interaction, control the frame, and task you and make you invest.

Effect: Slippery slope into quicksanding

Gaslighters will drag you down into bottomless and directionless circular and "going-nowhere" conversations if you let them
The slippery slope effect is how you end up in the quicksands.

The first explanation, the first question, or the first off-topic may seem legitimate.
You may extend the benefit of the doubt to the first power move.

And since good people think of others as also good, deep down, you *wish* it was a mistake.

So you give them some free reins.

Then maybe you explain again why it was not cool thinking they're going to understand and own it.
But they have another excuse and open another new topic.
You think may be you need to be clearer and try again.
But it never ends.
And soon you end up neck-deep in the quicksands.

Remember, **gaslighters are not looking for a resolution**.
They *start* with a small diversion, but will invariably drag you down an endless pit of time-wasting.

And the more the gaslighter drags you down into his web of diversions, the more you lose sight of the main top-of-the-hill issue.

Example: Donald Trump Debate

When Trump had to apologize for his "grabbing by the pu**y leaked audio", he:

- **Denies it**: "*It's not what I said*"
- **Undermines the speaker's authority and frame**: "*I don't think you understood what was said at all*"
- **Justifies / reframes**: "*it was "locker room talk*"
- **Limited-scope apologies**: "*I'm not proud of it, I apologize to my family and the American people*".
  Notice: he doesn't apologize because "it's wrong", and he limits his apologies to family and "American people"

(most of the world hence is excluded)

- **Diverts**: "*we have ISIS chopping off heads*"
- **Counter-attacks**: "*Clinton has done much worse*"

Albeit this never feels like a clear-cut apology, Trump would claim that he "owned it and apologized".

Example 2: Relationship Argument

> **Him**: It wasn't cool when you said in front of everyone that the dinner I spent 2 hours preparing was poor
> **Her**: Yeah, it wasn't too bad, but the steak was definitely over-cooked. I think next time maybe we can marinate it a bit longer
> **Him**: Yeah we can do that, but I'm talking about you saying that the dinner was poor in front of our guests. It doesn't seem like a friendly and supportive thing to do
> **Her**: That feels a bit like thin-skin to me, like that time when I told you…

She never owns the issue and tries to move the conversation toward a detail.
When that fails, new tactic: she accuses him of being thin-skinned and brings old examples as "evidence". "

6. Sh*tstorming: The "Beehive Effect"

Answer this:

Have you ever avoided bringing up an issue with someone because it would just be too draining?

Then you know "sh*tstorming".

Many victims and leaders don't confront gaslighters to avoid the sh*tstorm of addressing their sh*tty behavior
Multi-threading or "sh*tstorming" in vernacular is the high-intensity opening of an onslaught of new threads to divert attention from the main issue and frustrate the victim.

The new threads can be covert power moves, questions, accusations, justifications, explanations, or resuming old

topics.

It comes right after you flag their shitty behavior, often in quick succession, on several channels, with high intensity, and heightened emotions.

The sh*tstorm may last for days, with the gaslighter calling, texting, emailing, or asking you for coffee to "better discuss this thing".

It's one way the gaslighter leverages operant conditioning to maintain his sh*tty behavior over time.

Sh*tostorming is the human equivalent of poking a beehive because you raise (conversational) hell with one single poke.
The effect is that **the gaslighter discourages you from even bringing anything up** because you know that a sh*tstorm is coming and it's going to take a lot of your energy and time.

Examples: Typical Expressions

Imagine you tell him that his behavior is not cool.
Next, he says:

- *I don't understand*
- *X did the same and it was OK*
- *How about when YOU did Y then…*
- *Your friend was there and she was cool with it*
- *Then does that mean that…*

I experienced it on the forum.
Before adopting a new "hardliner resolution" for forum behavior I often refrained from addressing several power moves just to maintain some serenity.

7. Endless Excuses, Justifications, & Excusplaining

All to avoid owning and apologizing.

With gaslighters it all feels like a big word salad of excuses, justifications, and some nonsense bullsh*t thrown in there just for good confusing measure.

Hence the word "excusplaining": you don't know where one begins and the other ends.

Examples: Techniques & Typical Expressions

- **Intention-based excuses**: *"That's not what I meant"*
- **Judgment lapses excuses**: *"I was tired", "had a bad day"*
- **Blame shifting**: *"My work is stressing me out"*
- **Blaming the victim**: *"You didn't understand"*
- **Reframing**: *"I only yell at you because I care about you"*

8. Counterattacks To Put You On The Defensive

Putting you on the defensive is the checkmate of the game of power.

Most frame control in antagonistic exchanges is about who presses on -attacks, asks, or insinuates-, and who's on the backfoot -defends, explains, or justifies-.

So **stop whenever you find yourself defending or justifying a bit too much** because it may mean you're dealing with a gaslighter.

Attacks and defenses also include emotional dynamics.
Often, **it's a red flag if you feel bad for even bringing up uncool behavior.**
Some gaslighters are good at making up valid-sounding excuses that make you feel bad for doubting or bothering him.

Example: Relationship Dynamic

The moment you feel like a nuisance for your valid concerns, he successfully distorted your reality

Example 1.2: the "superficially kind" version

> **Gaslighter**: (with a tired and half-annoyed expression of "why are you even adding to my woes") hey, sorry baby, I'm just so beat from my work, do we really have to talk about this now

This is even more effective.

The superficial nice cover hides the power move: being busier and more tired from hard work signal higher value with *sub*-communication.
You feel like a lower-value taker when you bring up your concerns.

Notice the sub-communication:

- **High-power frame**: "I'm focused on the important stuff, you're not"
- **Giver/taker frames**: he covertly leverages that he's the main provider, and makes her feel guilty for standing in the way
- **High-power victim frame**: mix of both high-power and victim frames. He's high power for focusing on important stuff, but he's also a victim if she pesters him with "nonsense"

This is even more effective with *men*, since men feel it's "not mannish" to shift focus away from business, and into what may feel "relationship talk".

I can vouch for that: I fell for something similar.

Example 2: Dialogue Between Flatmates

Great example by Maverick:

> **Gaslighter**: You always keep the house untidy
> **Victim**: That's not true, there was just one time that happened
> **Gaslighter**: Your whole personality is argumentative, and you are not a tidy person, think about it with an open mind, don't get defensive.
> **Victim**: I'm not argumentative, and yeah sometimes I might not be a tidy person <—- already buying into the gaslighter's frame
> **Gaslighter**: But you are, you are arguing with me right now, and you just accepted that you are untidy, listen to what I tell you, and you will become tidier

If you keep arguing and defending, you prove the gaslighter's accusations.
But if you accept the initial accusation, at least you can show an "open mind".

8.2. Woke buzzwords misappropriation

The gaslighter borrows whatever is taboo or "not good" in the larger culture to play the offended victim and/or to push you on the defensive.

Examples: Typical Expressions

- *That's racist*
- *Typical white privilege blindness*
- *What you're doing is gaslighting me*

9. Blaming The Victim

in truth, this is part of "putting you on the defensive", but deserves its own entry.

In crazymaking "blaming the victim" involves blaming the victim for being crazy.

Examples: Typical Expressions

- *It's your own fault*
- *You deserve that*
- *Can you hear yourself*
- *You're overreacting again*
- *Oh, and that sounds normal to you?*
- …

Example 2: Toxic Marriage

> **Jimmy**: (before leaving the house and after denying the truth of him having an affair) you're fucked in the head Karen, this is all in your mind, you got a problem

Blatantly blaming the victim wouldn't fly too well with confident and power-aware folks.
But it's effective with low self-esteem and power-unaware victims.

Examples: Covert Typical Expressions

More subtle, sneakier and effective ways are::

- ***"Your dad and I were raised the exact same way"*** = our bad parenting is normal
- ***"Nobody said anything about it"*** = you're the only one complaining, so you are the issue

10. False Indignation

This power move plays on the fact that indignation is fair and natural when an innocent person is accused of something that feels "so beneath them".

So the gaslighter plays indignant to pretend he's "above" the pettiness that you're pointing out.
If you fall for that, then you accept that it was either misunderstanding, your fault, or that you're imagining "uncool behavior" that doesn't exist.

Examples: Typical Expressions

- *"How dare you say something like that"*
- *"It's such a despicable act it wouldn't even cross my mind"*
- *"I'm shocked anyone would even consider that"* (false indignation + accusation and putting you on the defensive as it sub-communicates that YOU are malicious for implying malicious intent)
- *"What gives you the right to talk to me like that"* (sub-communication "I'm an upstanding guy who deserves respect")

10.2. Self-righteous attitude & power move

Google defines self-righteous as:

> having or characterized by a certainty, especially an unfounded one, that one is totally correct or morally superior.

The self-righteous attitude is all about behavioral frame control.
If the gaslighter acts and speaks with total conviction righteousness and "moral superiority", then *you* must be wrong or immoral.

The self-righteous power move instead consists of verbal frame control.

Examples: Typical Expressions

- "**I *teach* this stuff**", sub-communicating that he knows better and you better listen"
- *"**You wanna come here and teach me how to behave well?**"*, Subcommunicting he's an authority on proper behavior
- ***"It's 30 years that I deal with this shit and now I've had enough***", sub-communicating you've been in the wrong for 30 years

Example In Relationship: Andrew Tate Video

> **Her**: (finds out he's been cheating)
> **Him**: (dominant and borderline aggressive) I don't know what you're worried about some stupid b*tch for. I thought you and me were serious, I thought you were the kind of girl who's interested in a long-term relationship

The man in the video acts indignant that she's even raising his infidelity as an issue.
And then proceeds with more manipulation.

11. Aggression

Aggressive behavior is another tool in the gaslighter's toolbox.

Some abusive types are generally and more frequently aggressive, but some calmer gaslighters can still resort to aggression.
When?
When you stop falling for the BS, when you call all their BS and refuse to budge, and when you put them with their back against the wall -you know what they say of cornered rats-.

Don't be afraid of that aggression, it's often just the last power move before they'll be forced into withdrawal.

Examples: Typical Techniques

- **Counterattacks**: for example, you're angry for X, and they get angry back for a (made-up) Y
- **Raging power move for intimidation**, sometimes called "traumatic one-trial learning".
- **Out-of-place assertiveness**: assertiveness can be used properly, improperly, or… For manipulative ends.

Example 2: Our Forum

After we called out all his games:

> So far you have made two serious accusations that I feel are unjustified(…) **Don't ever do that again**, more so because as admin, host, or leader you naturally have more power (…)

For a reader who's not power-aware, he may sound like an indignant straight person who's enforcing a fair boundary.
We gave him a one-week ban.

12. Rewriting History

Every time the gaslighter revisits what happened, he changes the story to fit his narrative.

Examples: Typical Techniques

Some techniques for rewriting history include:

- **Manipulative Summation**: summarize and review what happened, but spin everything in his favor
- **Manipulative "on the same page" frames**: pretending to align with you, agree, or being "quite close". It's all a lie: he professes false values he doesn't act upon. Or he may spin your own words
- **Last word power moves**. As a power display, or to offer a last attempt at manipulative summation

13. Manipulative & Partial "Ownership"

Sneaky gaslighters want to *sound* like they own it to collect social and PR points.

But they still cannot stand truly owning anything.
So try to *sound* like they own it, but without going the full distance to "make you whole".

That way, they think, they can get the best of both worlds: look good, and still maintain power.

Examples: Typical Techniques

- **PR ownerships**:
  - Tape-delayed, public for PR, but in a convenient place, time, and environment (example: Logan Paul addressing Coffezilla's investigative work on his podcast)
  - Virtue signaling ownership, with a big display of learner's mindset and big talks of "growth opportunities" (example here and the following reneging and gaslighting behavior)
- **Smaller issue ownership**, only owning the less damning behavior or words
- **Third-party ownership**, "owning it" with or through someone else, but not directly to the victim

And particularly annoying:

- **Trap ownerships** pretending to understand and agree, then deliberately doing or saying something to confuse or upset the victim again

14. Manipulative & False Apologies

Gaslighters hide more games and power moves behind their fake apologies
Same as above, but with apologies.

Ownership and apologies are interlinked because we have an innate sense that poor behavior must be fixed with an apology.

However, some power-hungry gaslighters will half-own their poor behavior, and *still* not apologize.
Even if you already owned and apologized for your part, they still won't do it.

Examples: Typical Techniques

Partial and false apologies include:

- **Smaller issue apology**: apologize for a smaller issue, then say that "he apologized already"
- **Power scalping apology**: to apologize after the victim, but less significantly.
  Ie.:
  - less extensive
  - without making amends
  - while looking away
  - with a disdained tone
  - Etc. etc.
- **Apologize & summation power move**: to apologize while following up with a manipulative summation
  - See here for an example.
    How it was then flagged, surfaced and disciplined here, here, here, and here)
- **Trap apology**: to apologize only to make the victim apologize and then use it against them (see next paragraph)
- Etc. Etc.

14.2. Trap apology & revisits gambit

This is a particularly annoying and frustrating one.

Imagine that *finally* the gaslighter owns it and apologizes.

You're happy, you think things are finally good, the gaslighter finally "got it" and "changed for the better".

But then, he U-turns and plays another game.

Example: Dialogue Between Friends

> **Gaslighter**: OK, I get it. It wasn't cool of me, and I'm truly sorry
> **You**: it's OK, I'm sorry too <—— a kind gesture on your side since most of the times the gaslighter is more in the wrong than fair people are
> (maybe I shouldn't have done and said XYZ) <—— optional, but it's giving of you to provide details. An honest person would build on that and do the same back to you. But the gaslighter will use it against you
> **Gaslighter**: yeah, to be honest, I'm still angry at that, it was really f*cked up of you to… <—— now that you vulnerably opened yourself up he "socially scalps" on it

The trap apology sometimes goes along with "one-sided closures", for example adding "but we can close it now".

15. One-sided Closures

The gaslighter one-sidedly decides when it's "time to move on".

Sometimes, **he puts a positive spin on the closure to bait you into agreeing**.
Or he may throw a couple of power moves early on, just to move on after to put some distance, and then go with the close.

Of course, don't expect the gaslighter to seek to end it at a fair time.

The gaslighter seeks to end it not when it's good for *both* to end it, but when it's best for *him*.

Also, one-sided closures can never be true closures because *both* parties have to agree that the issue is resolved and that they feel understood and re-empowered.

Examples: Typical Expressions

- *I'm glad we solved it*
- *OK, then we can move on*
- *I'm tired of this, no more*

P.S.:
Power University teaches you how to handle any gaslighter.

16. Post-Victory Niceness

You get post-victory or post-*humiliation* niceness when the gaslighter scores a major win or when you submit.

Don't mistake it for actual kindness.
The "niceness" only serves to re-empower the victim just so he can feel "OK enough" to stick with the gaslighter and/or follow through on the resolution.

16.2. Post-Victory "Pardon"

Major power move to:

- **Re-state the frame you were in the wrong** -hence needed the "pardon"
- **Virtue-signal false kindness from a position of power** -it's the judge that grants "pardon" to others and makes them feel good again
- **Increase emotional leverage & control** -with the "misery/joy rollercoaster". The victim was in heavy distress during the argument and then feels good again *thanks to* the gaslighter's "pardon"

Example: At Work

The boss makes the employee stay the weekend with a raging power move.

But then tells the victim it was the "right decision to help the business".
Or that "he just flew off the handle, but truly cares for his career".

He may invite him for lunch, or provide some meaningless trinket.

See more examples here.

17. Various Power Moves

We need a catch-all category because there are endless power moves the gaslighter may engage in.

It's unwieldy to list them all.

Better than endless lists: develop power intelligence.
Once you understand social power dynamics, you can spot *any* nasty and win-lose behavior.

Examples & Extra Resources

- Ganging up

  - Fake ganging up with third parties who didn't take sides and/or didn't want to take sides
- Trojan horse compliments to sweeten and/or hide the bigger power move
- Backhanded "compliments"

In-depth articles:

- **Manipulation tactics**
- Microaggressions
- Covert power moves

Or empower yourself for good with **Power University**.

9 Laws of Social Success From Social Exchange Theory

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 March 2024 · Archived copy · Original

From social exchange theory, the main practical laws for social success are:

Giving and hoping to get is naive. Smart giving and ensuring a return work best to achieve goals

Contents

- 1. To get what you want, give others what they want
  - 1.2. Offer visible, universal, concrete value
- 2. Be high value
- 3. Signal value
  - ⍰ Example: how to avoid bragging
  - PRO Tip: never tell people “I know my value”
- 4. Never present yourself as low-value
  - 4.2. Never present yourself as a taker: examples
- 5. To connect with higher-value folks, make up the difference
  - 5.2 When you have nothing concrete: give gratitude (at least)
- 6. Keep a positive social account
  - 6.2 Ask when you have most leverage
- 7. For mass popularity: focus on currencies everyone wants…
- 8. Be a SMART value giver
  - 8.2. Expect and demand repayment after you’ve given
- 9. Last 10%: use advanced strategies & techniques for top 10% results

1. To get what you want, give others what *they* want

Asking without giving is the equivalent of a social overdraft.

Your request is likely to be denied for “insufficient social funds” (“socially imbalanced requests”). If instead, you give what others want, you are far more likely to get what you also want (“socially balanced requests”).

1.2. Offer visible, universal, concrete value

If you’re unsure about what others value, go for what’s universal, visible, and practical.

What’s valuable *for you* might not be valuable for someone else.

This is often the case with “high opacity“ currencies.
Such as currencies whose value is not immediately visible.

For example, a great book can change a life.
But until people read it, it’s just a (valueless) block of paper.

⍰ Case study: offer a lunch, rather than a book

Ali is an awesome guy.

He wrote a book and, just like any good author would, he valued his book very highly.

He applied solid power dynamics principles, so he also *knew* his book had great content.

But the receivers didn’t know that.
A book is high opacity.

In that case, offering lunch was probably far more valuable -and effective-.

Lunch is a highly visible form of value.
It’s easier for most people to appreciate. That means it’s far more effective to increase your social credit.
Which, in turn, makes it far more likely you’ll get what you want.

2. Be high value

If there was one life hack, it’s this:

Become high value.

People with lots of value to give are like walking moneybags. Everyone wants them.

Everything in life gets easier as a value-man.

Even what are thought of as completely different skills like persuasion and leadership.
Most people are far more willing to follow high-value men.

See:

- How to become a high-value man
- **Power University**, the full course to become a top 1% man

3. Signal value

Signal value, and present yourself as a giver.

How?

Most men simply brag.

That's still better than meek, self-effacing submissiveness.

Bragging occasionally works, especially *when the target already agrees* with the bragging.
But usually signals disempowering neediness.

You're trying to gain their approval, which empowers others, and disempowers you.

How do you do it, then?
Well, this is where advanced social skills come into play.

Covert bragging in a way that it doesn't even seem like you're displaying your value is an art.
Luckily, on TPM we turned into a science.

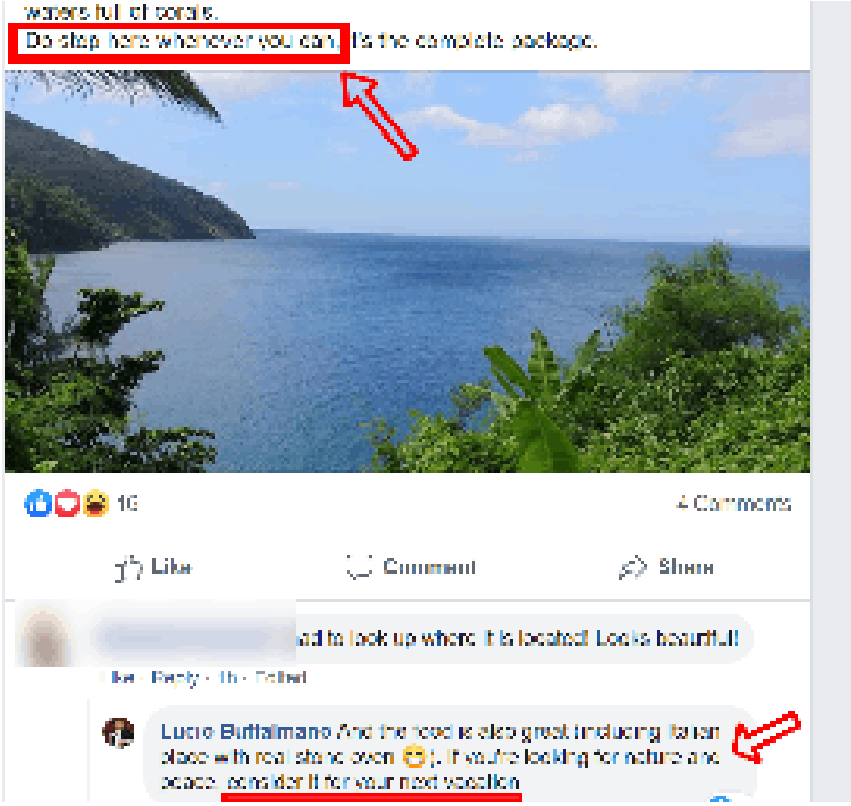
For example, you can:

- Tell stories that *hint* at your deeper qualities

- Bait others to *ask* you questions (or bait them to compliment you)
- Share your achievements with a focus on the struggle

P.S.
Manipulation and social scalping are approaches to increasing the value of your offering (but we don't generally advise them).

Example: how to avoid bragging



I loved that view and wanted to share it. But I knew it would feel braggart. So I framed it as "here's me sharing advice on where to visit". That frame pulls people up. It sub-communicates that they *can* travel there, and *can* appreciate it as well

Full analysis **here**.

Also, read:

- How to signal value

PRO Tip: never tell people "I know my value"

It makes you come across as an entitled status inflater.

This is what it sub-communicate:

> *I* know and *I* set my value, not YOU, so independently of what you think, you must put a lot of effort for me

That's a covert, one-up power-move.
It's annoying for high-quality people who are aware of power dynamics (and most high-value folks are).

See more:

- **"I know my value"**: the keywords of bad entitlement

And also see:

- **Overcoming entitled mentality**: overly-entitled mentality in social exchanges is to demand (far) more than one gives, and smart folks see through that

https://thepowermoves.com/overcome-entitlement-mentality

4. Never present yourself as low-value

Since nobody wants to transact, befriend, or date value-takers, value-takers struggle to develop and/or maintain relationships.

That's why a positive reputation is so helpful.
A good reputation is like a personal recommendation preceding you and saying "this guy is an honest value-giver".

And that's why some psychopath value takers are constantly on the move: they must escape their negative social account balances.

4.2. Never present yourself as a taker: examples

Here are some common "takers expressions":

> **Value taker**: *"When are you free for a coffee? So I can pick your brain on that business I want to start"*

High-value man interpretation: if I hear "pick your brain" once again, I'm gonna lose it. Why would I want to sit around for coffee, and expend effort to explain things, while you take as much as you can without giving?

> **Value taker**: *"can you leave me a good review?"*

High-quality man interpretation: how about you *earn* your good review by giving great value? I'm an honest reviewer, don't corner me into this BS to take my power and freedom away.

> **Value taker***: "Matt told me you're having a housewarming party tonight, is it still on?*

High-value man interpretation: you got nothing to do, and want to tag along. But if I wanted you here, I would have invited you myself.

> **Value taker**: "Please*, please, please…* "

High-value man interpretation: begging is all you've got to offer?

Notice all the above are requests for value from people with no social capital, who give nothing back.

Sometimes just a little fix could make them more balanced.
For example, the guy who wants to pick your brain could *invite* you to lunch.

Lunch is a small token, of course, but more than the monetary value it shows that the inviter *gets it* and shows respect and consideration for your time and knowledge.

5. To connect with higher-value folks, make up the difference

The 'Law of Compensatory Investment' postulates that higher-value people don't want to associate with lower-value people unless they make up the difference.

For example:

- **Future giving**
- **Loyalty**
- **Gratitude**
- **Enhance their reputation**
  - Talk well about them
  - Positive review to their business
- **Token gifts**
- **Invest**: make it easy for them
  - Travel to meet them
  - Work around their time
  - ⍰ Strategically display inconvenience
    Ie.: Arrive early, say '*It's easy from X station*', where 'X station' is far
- **Eagerness** to learn and support

High-value people want other high-value folks who can give back.
Or, at least, people who are willing to work to make up that difference.

High-value folks stand to lose the most from takers.
That's why high-value people are cautious, wary, and guarded.

And, often, **high-value people loathe value-takers**.

That's why you must avoid framing yourself as just another taker.
They have enough of those vying for their time.

You must show that you can also give *something*.
Also, you can show loyalty or gratitude, and that you are willing to pay them back somehow in the future ("promissory social notes").

5.2 When you have nothing concrete: give gratitude (at least)

This is what high-value people dislike the most:

> **High value people dislike the most those who give nothing, ask for value, and act as if it was due to them.**

If you need something from someone, it's OK.
But seek to give something back.

Except for dating, this is also where accepting -and showing- a subservient role can help.
You make the receiver feel high in power, which can make them more well-disposed towards you.

Gratitude also helps a lot because:

1. It shows you understand social dynamics
2. It makes the receiver feel good
3. Works as a promissory note of future support: for the receiver, it's like making an ally
4. It shows you are willing to give something and rebalance the relationship

This is crucial to understand because this is what keeps many low-value individuals stuck in low-value mode.

Low-value takers don't understand that **high-value people don't want to mingle with low-value people who don't make an effort to rebalance the relationship**.

6. Keep a positive social account

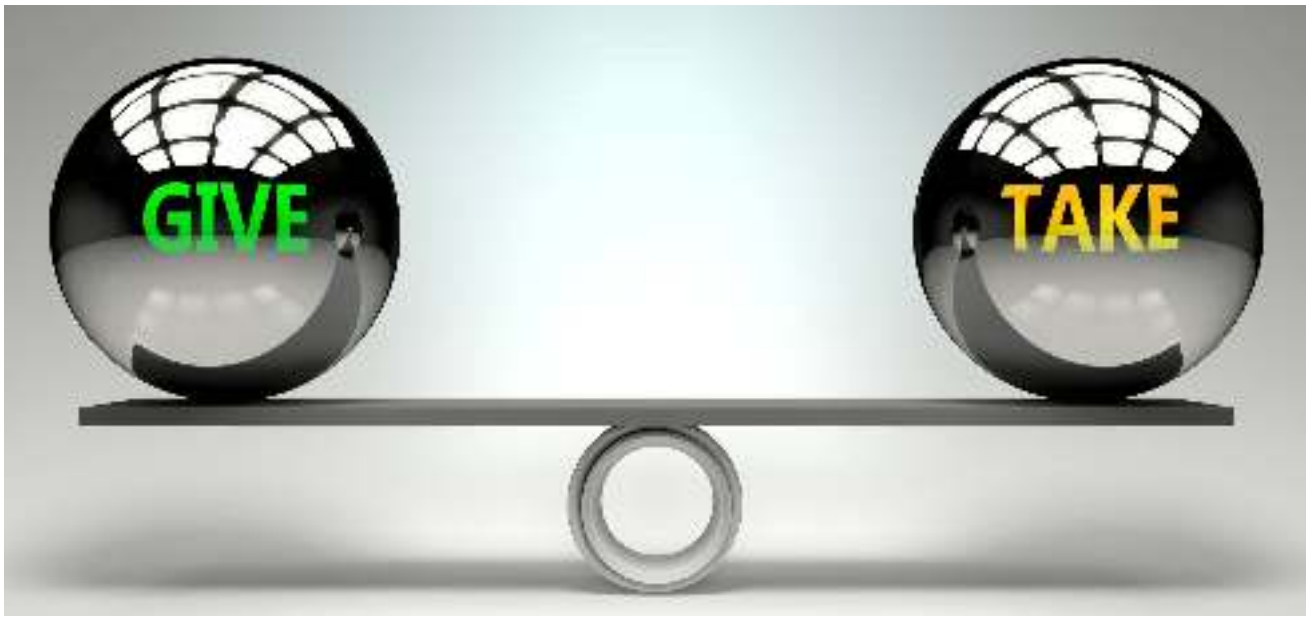
The principle is:

⚖ **Social capital draws others in and gives you leverage. Social debt repels them**

Social capital combined with your own returns make for win-win relationships, the gold standard of social exchanges.

Value-neutral relationships can also last but do not thrive.

And win-lose relationships (value-taking for the other party) either end soon, or turn toxic and must be kept in place with coercion and/or manipulation.



Relationships with a good balance of give & take where they both gain are stable, good relationships

6.2 Ask when you have most leverage

1. **Climb out of debt** before asking
   Ie.: Apologize, make it up to them… Then ask
   - ⚠ Give before the ask <— Don't make it too obvious. A swift ask after a strategic give feels manipulative ⍰
     Ie.: Share something personal before asking something personal
2. **Negotiate at your highest leverage**
3. **Ask after a high point**
   Ie.: Propose to meet again after you make her laugh

7. For mass popularity: focus on currencies everyone wants...

LoL skills give you status among gamers. Not bad. But same effort to learn social skills and playing an instrument to join a band would yield higher real-world benefits

Some forms of values, everyone wants.

Some others, very few.

So it's more effective to work on "hard currencies" that everyone appreciates.

Such as:

- **Confidence**
- **Social skills** -that *must* include social power dynamics and high-power behavior–
- **Wealth**
- **Personality**
- **Looks**

There is an exception, though.

... Unless you can become world-class (The Halo Effect of Peak Performers)

Why?

Because top performers gain power.

Take software developers, for example.
Boring and "not cool" to almost anyone outside of the field.

But if you're a wiz of coding, a popular hacker, or become a CTO, that changes the game.

With top-dog status, you also acquire riches, status, and power.
And those are hard currencies with sought-after, real-world benefits.

Also, read:

- The relativity of social status
- Big fish in a small pond

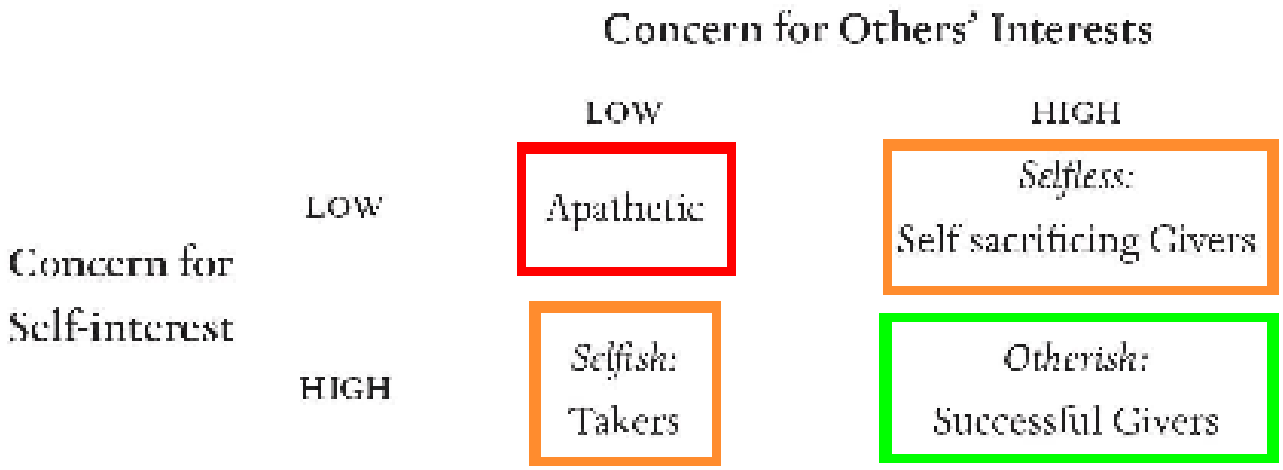
> Social Relativity: From Nobody to Superstar

8. Be a SMART value giver

Adam Grant's research supports our strategy, showing that giver types were the biggest winners and losers:

✕ **Giving randomly** ▯ losers
✓ **Giving to other givers** ▯ winners

The winners gave to good characters, or to those who gave back—other givers, or "matches".



▯ People concerned BOTH for others and themselves were most successful

So don't forget the other side of the coin.

The more you bring, the more you can ask for.

But "ask for" is crucial.

Giving entitles you to ask.
Sometimes you must do so assertively.
Some others times, strategically.

TPM turns men into high-power, high-value enlightened collaborators.

The most important real-life applications of the social exchange theory :

1. **Focus on what *you* bring to the table**.
2. **Focus on what *they* bring to the table** to make it fair to yourself and worth your time
3. **Assess your relationships**: are they balanced or are you gaining from them?
4. **Fix imbalances**: imbalances hide emotional manipulation, a negative judge role, or a toxic relationship based on *addiction*, rather than win-win (see for example Norwood, 1985).
5. **Tend to win-win**: win-win folks are a true social treasure. Keep and care about them.

Read more:

- **Value and availability**: important concepts for effective socialization
- **Foundational steps of self-development**

- Basic strategies for power

> Value & Availability: Two Foundations of Social Dynamics

8.2. Expect and demand repayment after you've given

Principle of Social Exchange Inflation™:
The value of a give is highest before the exchange, drops sharply once given, and continues to decay over time—along with the receiver's sense of gratitude, obligation, and likelihood of repayment.

Worst yet, while gratitude decreases over time, sometimes resentment grows over time as people hate being reminded of their debt.
Some people may avoid you, or even find excuses to provoke a fight, just to have an excuse to not repay and talk to you again.

To avoid this issue, **agree on repayment terms before giving.**

If your giving doesn't require repaying, monitor gratitude. If people don't repay at all, stop giving.

In social situations, ignore and be curt to peers who took without giving. If you reach out or show warmth you're chasing and rewarding bad behavior.
They must 'make you whole' to regain your respect.

⍰ Exceptions apply: always put goals and strategy first
Pretending friendliness sub-communicates that their taking was below you. Or if it's a higher-status person, maintaining access to them can provide you with different benefits.

9. Last 10%: use advanced strategies & techniques for top 10% results

These 10 laws are the basics.

And the basics will give you… Good results.

For the last 20%, you need something more:

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The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 April 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology (2020) provides a summary of personality research in psychology.

Contents

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  - History & Overview
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SUMMARY

About the Authors:
Various researchers who are experts in specific domains wrote chapters on their areas of expertise.

History & Overview

Definitions

- **Dispositions**: Temporally stable tendencies of behavior are called disposition
- **Traits (AKA: personality traits or personality dispositions)**: Dispositions that characterize the personality of an individual and tend to be stable over many years. It's a recurrent tendency to show a particular observable behavior in a particular type of situation
- **Habits**: a pattern of behavior that is 'narrow' in terms of behavior and situations

For example, to say that one has a "trait aggression towards male peers", it's necessary to observe the individual display aggressive behavior towards same-sex peers across many social interactions.

However, you cannot be sure that this disposition is a personality trait unless it sets the individual apart from all the rest.
It might be characteristic of every age-mate (pathological exceptions granted). In this case, it would be a universal disposition but not something that sets the observed individual apart from some or all other age-mates.

If the behavior is not repeated, it's a fluctuating state.

Say the authors:

> More prototypic for a trait are constructs such as neuroticism (temperamental), intelligence (cognitive), or the achievement motive (motivational) that comprise many characteristic behaviours in many situations (they are 'broader') and that are stable over many years for most adults

Approaches to Personality Psychology

Perspective	Concepts	Contributors
Biological	temperament, evolution, adaptation, altruism, sexual jealousy, heredity, neurotransmitter pathways, cerebral hemisphere function	D. Buss, Eysenck, J. A. Gray, C. R. Cloninger, Kagan
Cognitive	expectancy, self-efficacy, outcome expectation, schema, cognitive person variable, personal construct, reciprocal determinism, modelling, constructive alternativism, life narrative	Mischel, Bandura, Kelly, Beck
Humanistic	self-actualization, creativity, flow, spirituality, personal responsibility, freedom, choice, openness to experience, unconditional positive regard, acceptance, empathy, real self, hierarchy of needs, peak experience, positive psychology	Maslow, Rogers, Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi
Learning	reinforcement, punishment, stimulus, response, conditioning, extinction, shaping, discrimination learning, generalization, situation, act frequency, basic behavioural repertoire, labelling, gradients of approach and avoidance	Skinner, Staats, Dollard and Miller
Psychodynamic	libido, conflict, id, ego, superego, defence mechanisms, Oedipal conflict, fixation, repression, attachment, object-relations	Freud, Jung, Adler, Erikson, Horney, Klein, Sullivan, Chodorow, Westen, Kohut, Kernberg
Trait	trait, type, facet, factors, Neuroticism/ Emotional Stability, Extraversion	Allport, Cattell, McCrae, Costa

Milestones of Personality Psychology

- 1890 William James publishes Principles of Psychology
- 1900 Sigmund Freud publishes The interpretation of dreams
- 1907 Alfred Adler publishes A study of organic inferiority and its psychical compensation
- 1908 Mary Calkins describes the self (in several papers)

- 1910 Carl Jung publishes The association method (research on complexes)
- 1923 Sigmund Freud publishes The ego and the id (structures of personality)
- 1927 Gordon Allport publishes Concepts of trait and personality
- 1935 Henry Murray publishes the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
- 1936 Anna Freud publishes The ego and the mechanisms of defence
- 1937 Gordon Allport publishes Personality: a psychological interpretation
- 1937 Karen Horney publishes The neurotic personality of our time
- 1938 B. F. Skinner publishes The behaviour of the organisms
- 1938 Henry Murray publishes Explorations in personality
- 1939 John Dollard and Neal Miller publish Frustration and aggression
- 1943 Abraham Maslow publishes A theory of human motivation
- 1950 Erik Erikson publishes Childhood and society
- 1951 Carl Rogers publishes Client-centered therapy
- 1952 Hans Eysenck publishes The structure of human personality
- 1954 Abraham Maslow publishes Motivation and personality
- 1955 Lee Cronbach and Paul Meehl publish Construct validity in psychological tests
- 1955 George Kelly publishes The psychology of personal constructs
- 1957 Lee Cronbach publishes The two disciplines of scientific psychology
- 1961 The Journal of Humanistic Psychology begins
- 1961 Albert Bandura and collaborators describe learning of aggression through modelling (Bobo doll study)
- 1962 Founding of the Association for Humanistic Psychology
- 1967 Hans Eysenck publishes The biological basis of personality
- 1968 Abraham Maslow publishes Toward a psychology of being
- 1968 Walter Mischel challenges the trait model in Personality and assessment
- 1971 B. F. Skinner publishes Beyond freedom and dignity
- 1973 Albert Bandura publishes Aggression: a social learning analysis
- 1976 Richard Dawkins publishes *The Selfish Gene*
- 1978 Mary Ainsworth describes attachment in young children
- 1987 McCrae and Costa present data on the Five-Factor trait Model
- 1987 Daniel Schachter describes implicit memory (alternative view of unconscious cognition)
- 1989 David Buss describes cross-cultural universals in the evolution of mating behaviour
- 2000 Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi publish Positive psychology: an introduction

The Issue With Freud, Jung, Adler, etc

Historically, personality psychology advanced via a “grand theorist approach” where individuals laid out theories to explain human behavior and psychology.

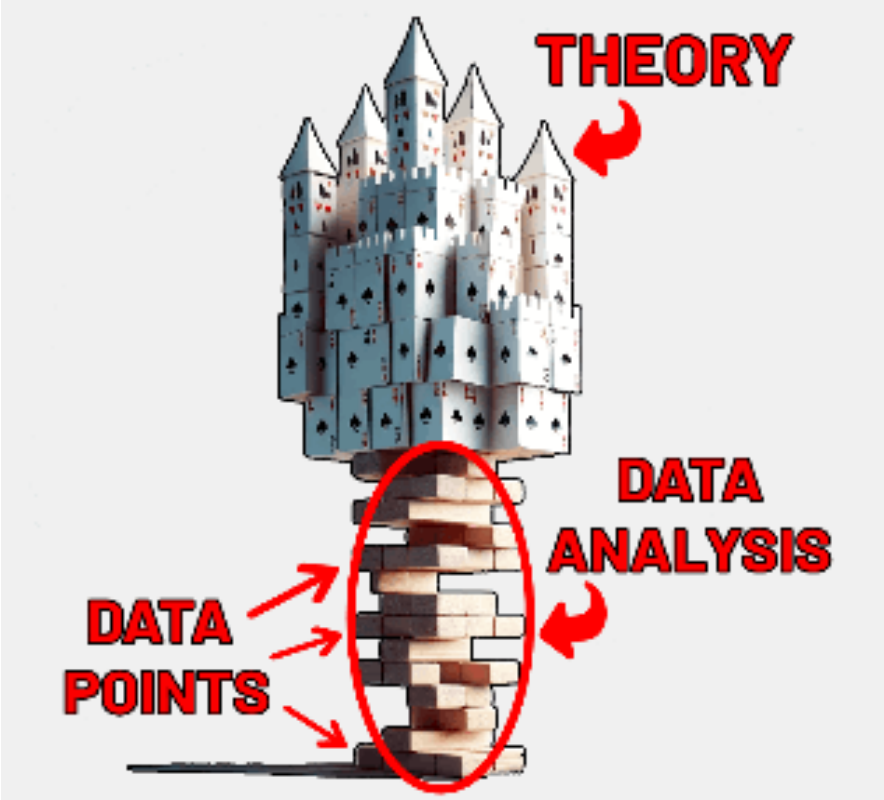
Many of these theories are still famous today, including Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Gordon Allport, Carl Rogers, to name a few.

The authors say that these “comprehensive theories have an internal logic, but lack or misunderstand more recent advances that seldom fit their model.

And they say:

> The classical grand theories often reflected the professional and life experience of their originators (Monte 1977), and their fundamental assumptions (Skinner's belief in environmental determination; Maslow's optimism; Freud's assumption of conflict) are not universally shared.
> (…) Followers of each grand theorist adopted, applied and revised the competing theories in relative isolation, only occasionally reaching across their separate schools of thought to find a common language.

Such as, they were building what we call here "castles in the skies".



Poor data with post-hoc rationalization based on retro-fitting already existing theories and confirmation biases feed a theory that grows more and more disconnected from reality

And how they grew even more popular without much empirical data:

> social factors elevated their influence, including many theorists' professorships at prestigious institutions, such as Harvard University, where they influenced the next generation of personality psychologists.
> Hall and Lindzey's (1957) influential personality textbook gave enduring recognition to many of these theorists (including Freud and Jung), adding others with new editions

And on the intrinsically different approach from more scientific-minded psychologists:

> Throughout the history of psychology, observers have noted a dichotomy between those who emphasize rigorous scientific methods, on the one hand, and those who are more open to subjective experience and a holistic study of the person
> (…)
> This dichotomy has been variously called the 'two disciplines of scientific psychology', experimental and correlational (Cronbach 1957) and the 'two cultures', scientific and humanistic (Kimble 1984)

I think the authors are even being too nice and cautious not to directly call these "grand theorists' theories" unscientific and lacking empirical evidence.

Which makes them closer to storytelling than empirical science.

Intuition Does Have a Place In Science

This is not to say, of course, that intuition has no place in science.

As the authors say, some argue that an approach more open to intuition is needed for the earlier phase of developing theory.
For example, to come up with the constructs and their relationships to other constructs.
It does then must always be tested, grounded, and move forward with empirical testing and data, though.

Bridges Between Grand Theories & Empiricism

Say the authors:

> Bridges are being forged, however, as theorists and researchers try to apply rigorous empirical methods to the 'big picture' issues like consciousness, religion and free will that early psychology left to the tender-minded (e.g. , Greenberg, Koole and Pyszczynski 2004; Rychlak 1997)

Which, in my opinion, is the good way to go.
The theories must always stand on solid empirical data, and the two approaches feed into each other to make for better and better "grand theories" that include exceptions and nuances.

How Theories Relate to Empirical Data

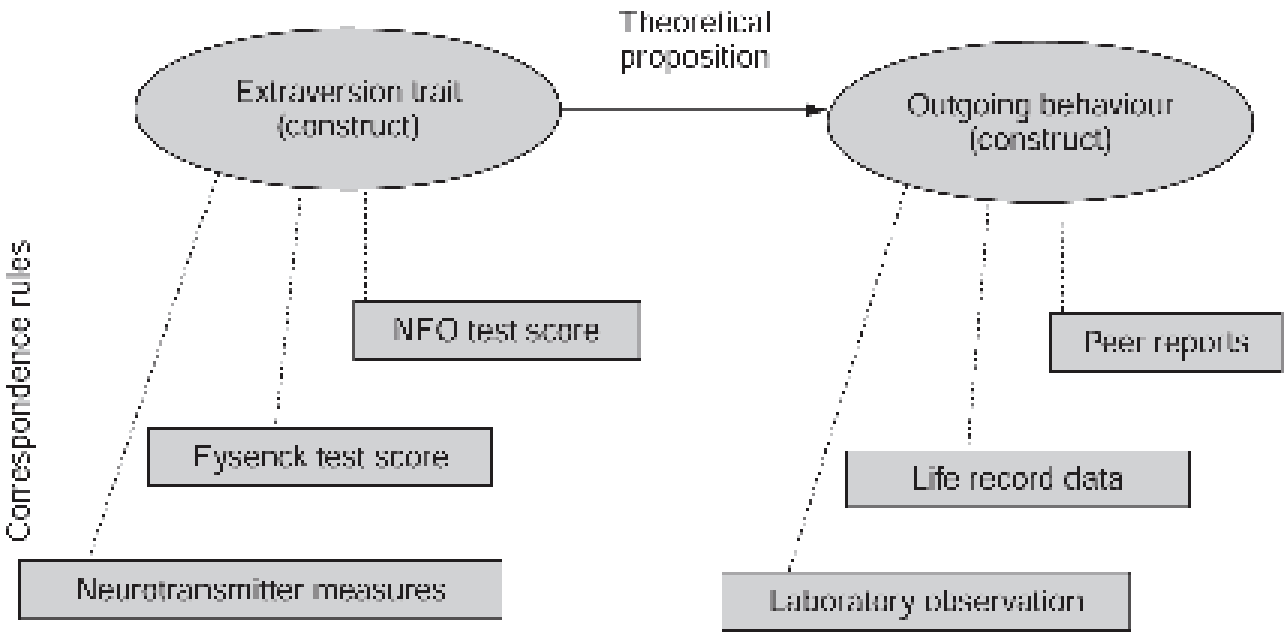


Figure 1.1. *Theoretical constructs and correspondence rules.*

Figure 1.1 the relationship between theories, propositions, and empirical data (The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology)

Explain the authors:

> The classical view of theory describes a level of theoretical terms, which are abstract, and a level of observations, which can be empirically observed (Carnap 1956). The two levels are associated by correspondence rules.
> At the abstract level, a theory includes concepts (or theoretical constructs, as described below) and statements about how they are related (propositions).

> At this abstract level, a theory offers a framework for organizing knowledge. When the theory is translated into a format that can be tested, by means of correspondence rules, it can be accepted or modified, and scientific progress can occur.
> (…)
> Personality psychology has many concepts that cannot, themselves, be directly observed. Called hypothetical constructs in a classic theoretical description

Good theories:

- Make accurate predictions about observations
- Explain a large breadth of phenomena (more than competing theories)
- Are as simple as possible

To test the theories, the scientific approach clearly defines the correspondece rules and states them *before* the observations.

Measuring Non-Directly Observable Traits

Constructs like 'adjustment', 'extraversion' and 'self-esteem' cannot be directly observed.

So they are inferred by a network of correlations with various observations.

Take extraversion as an example.
First, it must be translated into a form that can be observed for empirical testing to be possible. This is implemented through correspondence rules, which specify observable phenomena that are manifestations of a construct.
For example, "speaking more", "having more friends", spending mroe time socializing", etc.

Since no measure perfectly corresponds to a construct, it's best to use many.
For example, self-report questionnaires, behavior ratings, peer nomination, responses to laboratory tasks, and so on

If the same person is then found to be extraverted with self-report, peer-report, by behavioral measures, then the construct of 'extraversion' is supported.

Say the authors:

> Strong evidence for a construct exists if these various measures of a particular trait correlate highly with one another.
> Lower correlations are expected with other traits, even if they are both measured in the same way (e.g. , self-esteem and achievement motivation both measured by self-report should not be highly correlated). These considerations inspired advances in personality assessment by using what is called a 'multi-trait, multi-method matrix' (Campbell and Fiske 1959) to demonstrate that abstract theoretical constructs, not measurement techniques, explain high correlations among observations

Traits VS Situations

Personality Psychology VS Social Psychology

Is the individual "more important" than the situation?

And if not, does the individual "cede power" to the situation?

The authors say it's a false dichotomy, and more explaining power to one, doesn't necessarily mean less for the other:

> the underlying dichotomy is arguably false (Funder 2006; Roberts and Pomerantz 2004). While it is possible to identify and to compare statistical main effects of personal and situational variables, it is not true that one gains power only at the expense of the other.
> Strong effects of situations and strong effects of persons can and often do coexist in the very same data, and the degree to which a given behaviour is affected by one of these variables may be unrelated to the degree to which it is affected by the other

Confounding Factors Between Personality & Situation

1. People select (approach or avoid) situations according to their personality
2. People passively evoke situations by their personality
3. People manipulate (actively change or even create) situations by their personality
4. Situational exposure can affect personality traits over the long run.

Kurt Lewin's Formula

The formula is:

B = f (P, S)

Where:

- B= behavior
- P = person
- S = situation

Such as: behavior is a function of an interaction between the person and the situation.

It means that if one knew everything about a person and the psychological aspects of the situation, he would be able to predict that person's behavior.

This formula gives rise to 2 additional formulae:

1. **P = f (S,B)**
   Meaning: If you knew what a person would do in any situation, you would know everything about that person's psychology
2. **S = f (P,B)**
   Meaning: If you knew what any person would do in a given situation, you would know everything about that situation

Traits Don't Generalize Well Across Situations

Say the authors:

> Is a dominant child in the familiar pre-school group also a dominant child in interactions with unfamiliar peers in the playground, with similar-aged siblings at home, with a clearly older sibling at home? Most people would assume that, but empirical personality research over the past eighty years has questioned such popular beliefs.

However, that's a generalization, and it truly depends a lot on the trait we're observing.
My note:
I suspect it also depends on the individual's dominance and confidence levels. Higher power men tend to "be themselves" more than lower power men, who are more careful of their social environment.

Emotion and personality

Emotional dispositions that are stable and general are a species of personality traits.

Three main conclusions can be made:

1. **Individual differences exist when it comes to experiencing emotions**: *at least moderately stable, reliable inter-individual differences in the propensities to experience emotions seem to exist for all commonly distinguished emotions (anger, fear, etc.) as well as for sub-types of these emotions directed at particular classes of objects (e.g. , fear of dogs, fear of exams, etc.)*
2. **Disposition for both positive and negative emotions correlate with each other**: *people who are prone to sadness also tend to be prone to fear, anger and guilt*
3. **The experience of pleasant and unpleasant emotions seem independent**: *people who get easily angry are about as likely as people who do not get easily angry to get quickly euphoric*

Link Between Traits (Big 5) & Emotions

Of the big 5 personality traits, four are related to emotional dispositions (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness).

And neuroticism is *primarily* an emotional disposition.
Such as, the propensity to experience negative emotions, in particular fear, anger and depression.

Quickly reviewing them:

- **Agreeableness:** *some of the best markers of agreeableness refer to emotional dispositions towards other people (e.g. , 'affectionate', 'soft-hearted' versus 'cold'; John and Srivastava 1999); and empirically, agreeableness has been found to correlate negatively with trait anger (agreeable people are less anger-prone; e.g. , Kuppens 2005) and positively with the tendency to experience empathic emotions.* Agreeable people also seem to try harder to suppress the expression of negative emotions
- **Extraversion**: high propensity to experience positive affect (measured, for example, with the Positive Affect sub-scale of the PANAS)
- **Openness**: more emotionally sensitive to art and beauty (capacity to experience aesthetic feelings), and to experience a wider range of feelings and emotions

Personality determinants of emotions

The two most researched are:

- **Optimism/pessimism**: general expectations for positive (versus negative) outcomes. Optimism correlates negatively with depressive symptoms and negative habitual mood, but positively with positive habitual mood
- **Self-efficacy**: the belief in one's ability to reach goals and master difficult or stressful situations. Associated with lower anxiety during a stressful cognitive task and lower levels of depression and anxiety in medical patients

Other general beliefs that predict emotional reactions to events include:

- **Interpersonal trust**
- **Hostility**: a disposition with core general belief that others are unworthy and likely to be sources of frustration and aggression. Predicts state anger caused by negative interpersonal events
- **Sensitivity to injustice**: a disposition characterized among others by the belief that one is frequently the victim of unfairness. Predicts anger caused by a concrete unfair treatment

Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Meyer proposed that emotional regulation should be viewed as one facet of a broader capacity termed emotional intelligence.

They defined it as:

> To recognize one's own and other's emotions, to use the information contained in emotional experience to guide judgement and action, and to manage the experience and expression of emotions (Salovey and Mayer 1990; see also, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2004)

There has been some debates as to whether emotional intelligence is a new construct or if it has much predictive power.
The authors say:

> Although measures of emotional intelligence also correlate substantially with measures of more traditional personality dispositions, including coping style (e.g. , Day, Therrien and Carroll 2005; Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004), they appear to retain some predictive validity even when these correlations to traditional measures are taken into account

And in terms of life utility, they say:

> These studies found that emotional intelligence has a small to moderate positive correlation to performance (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004) and to mental and physical health (Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson et al.2007)

The 5 Factor Model (The Big 5)

Factor	Facets	Definition of Factor	ACL[2] Marker Items for Factor
I. Openness to Experience (Intellect)	Fantasy, Aesthetics, Feelings, Actions, Ideas, Values	The degree to which a person needs intellectual stimulation, change, and variety.	Commonplace, Narrow-interest, Simple vs. Wide-interest, Imaginative, Intelligent
II. Conscientiousness	Competence, Order, Dutifulness, Achievement striving, Self-discipline, Deliberation	The degree to which a person is willing to comply with conventional rules, norms, and standards.	Careless, Disorderly, Frivolous vs. Organized, Thorough, Precise
III. Extraversion	Warmth, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Activity, Excitement seeking, Positive emotions	The degree to which a person needs attention and social interaction.	Quiet, Reserved, Shy vs. Talkative, Assertive, Active
IV. Agreeableness	Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty, Tender-mindedness	The degree to which a person needs pleasant and harmonious relations with others.	Fault-finding, Cold, Unfriendly vs. Sympathetic, Kind, Friendly
V. Neuroticism (Emotional Stability)	Anxiety, Angry hostility, Depression, Self consciousness, Impulsiveness, Vulnerability	The degree to which a person experiences the world as threatening and beyond his/her control.	Tense, Anxious, Nervous vs. Stable, Calm, Contented

Hogan and Hogan, 2007, NEO-PI-R

Despite the criticism and revisions:

> Remarkably, the FiveFactor Model (or, at least, four of its factors, with openness as a partial exception) does a fair job in accounting for variation in abnormal as well as normal personality (Markon, Krueger and Watson 2005).

Tools to Assess The FFM

The tools to assess people's scores are:

1. **Self-Report Questionnaires**
2. **Reports from Friends, Family, and Colleagues:** Also known as informant reports, this method involves collecting assessments of an individual's personality from people who know them well
3. **Observational Methods:** This approach involves directly observing individuals in various settings. It can be more time-consuming and requires trained observers to ensure accuracy and consistency.
4. **Empirical Tests:** These tests involve objective measures that may correlate with personality traits, such as reaction times in certain cognitive tasks or behaviors in controlled scenarios.
5. **Interviews:** Structured or semi-structured interviews with trained interviewers asking questions designed to elicit behaviors and attitudes related to the Big Five.
6. **Psychobiographical Methods:** analyzing extensive life records, writings, or other artifacts of an individual to infer their personality traits. This method is more commonly used in research or historical analyses.

Questionnaires are the most popular and validated tool for assessing the FFM.

Luckily, they seem work well:

> Skeptics came to believe that self reports were nothing but a collection of errors and biases.
> It was, therefore, an important advance when psycholo gists showed that there was substantial (though not com plete) agreement between descriptions from selfreports and those obtained when the same questions were put to knowledgeable informants – spouses, roommates, friends (Funder 1980; Kurtz and Sherker 2003)
> (…)

The most used questionnaire is the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) (Costa and McCrae 1992a)

Traits Tend To Be Relatively Stable Over Time

[image]
Summary of stability and change in the Big Five personality domains across the lifespan

> longitudinal research showed that individual differences in all five factors are in fact remarkably stable (Costa and McCrae 1992b; Roberts and DelVecchio 2000).

However, there is always some change, and especially in the first part of life:

> traits become increasingly stable after age thirty, but never reach the point where change no longer occurs; that is, no matter how old an individual is, it is possible that his/her standing relative to others can fluctuate with the passage of time

Importantly, across cohorts, there are important changes over time:

> At the same time, there are gradual changes in the average levels of traits. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies suggest that between adolescence and old age, individuals generally decline in N and E and increase in

> A and C. O increases until some time in the twenties, after which it slowly declines.

There Are (Small) Gender Differences

The magnitude of difference is small:

Research on the FFM has shown consistent patterns in gender differences.
These differences are generally small, with substantial overlap between the distribution of traits in men and in women.

And in terms of differences:

> At the level of specific facets, there are sometimes differences within domain. Thus, both Warmth and Assertiveness are facets of E, but **women are typically warmer and men more assertive**. Again, women are more open to aesthetic experiences, whereas men are more open to ideas

The Big 5 Are Heritable & Universal

There is a substantial degree of heritability of the Big Five traits.
And some traits are gene-related:

> Warmth and Assertiveness are both definers of E because they are influenced by some of the same genes

And on the geographical universality:

> We know that the human race is a single species, so the universality of the FFM is probably a reflection of the fact that variations on the same trait-related genes are found in Homo sapiens worldwide

In general, all personality traits are heritable:

> reviews and meta-analyses of the twin study literature on personality traits have been published in recent years, and all consistently demonstrate heritability coefficients of approximately 50 per cent, with a range typically between 40–60 per cent.

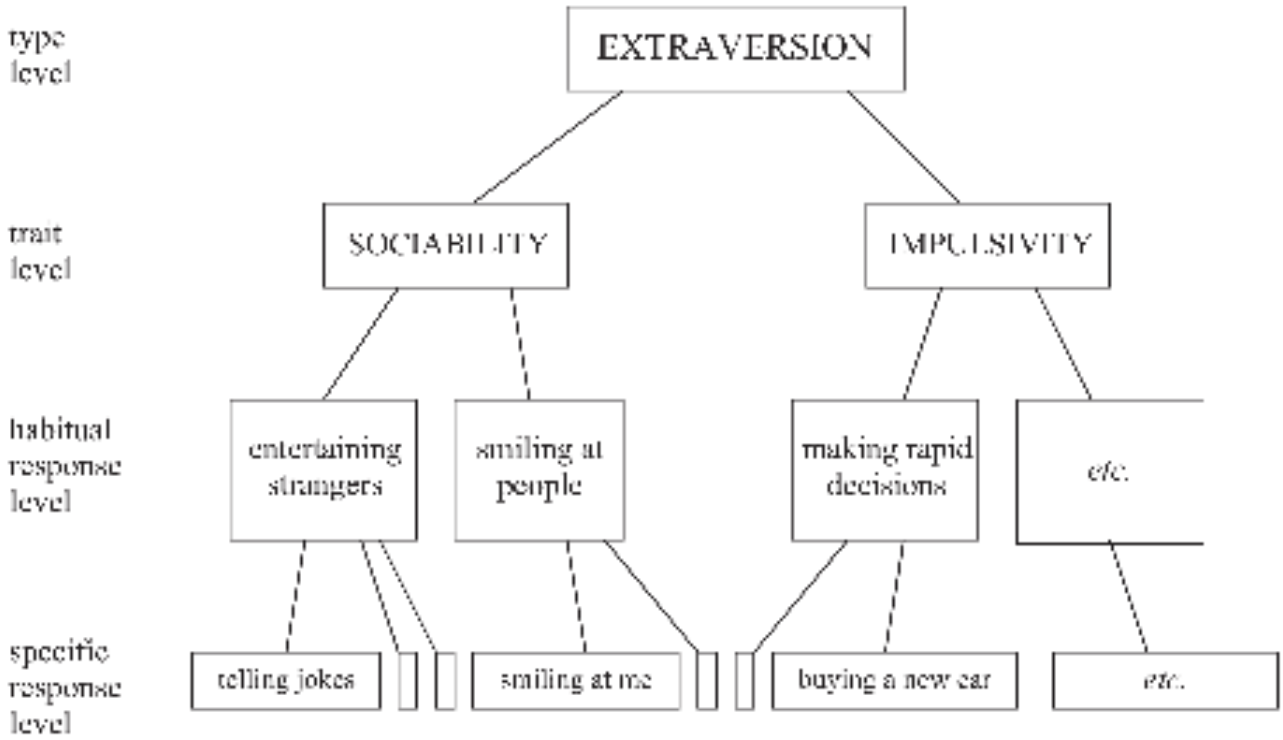
The traits also have genetic origins, with biological neurotransmitters:

> Neuroticism (reversed), Agreeableness and Conscientiousness form one higherorder factor or metatrait, labelled α or Stability, and Extraversion and Openness/ Intellect form another, labelled β or Plasticity. Behaviour genetic analysis has shown that the two meta-traits have genetic origins (Jang et al.2006), and evidence is accumulating that Stability is related to serotonin, whereas Plasticity may be related to dopamine (DeYoung 2006; DeYoung, Peterson and Higgins 2002; Yamagata, Suzuki, Ando et al.2006)

The Big 5 Is Not Enough Without Its Facets

I found my main criticism of the Big 5 to rarely be listed as a main concern.

And it's that the "top-line traits" are not very telling without their facets.
As an example of the "hierarchy structure" for extraversion:



Hierarchical model of Extraversion (based on Eysenck, 1970)

The authors go into this here:

> Although scores on the five factors give a general sense of what an individual is like, **much more can be learned by assessing the specific traits that define the factors. For example, both cheerfulness and assertiveness are definers of E**, because both reflect ways of interacting with others. **But some people are cheerful without being assertive, and others are assertive without being cheerful**, and knowing which is which is important to clinicians (Singer 2005) and researchers (Paunonen and Ashton 2001)

There isn't yet much agreement on how to divide the sub-facets:

> The problem at the facet level is that there is no generally recognized way of sub-dividing the factors into constituent traits. For example, Costa and McCrae (1992a) distinguished between Warmth and Gregariousness facets of E, corresponding to the sub-divisions of the need to belong: 'ongoing mutual caring and concern', and 'a desire for frequent interactions' (Baumeister 2005, p.112). By contrast, Watson and Clark (1997) thought this distinction was unnecessary, and combined them into a single trait of sociability

But the NEO-PI-PR seems to be doing a good job for now:

> the meantime, the facets of the NEO-PI-R do provide one system that has been successfully used in many applications and in dozens of cultures. Researchers have documented the discriminant validity, heritability and developmental course of all thirty facets, and no obvious gaps in covering the scope of the FFM have been identified. At present, NEO-PI-R facets arguably offer the best available delineation of the FFM at the next-lower level in the trait hierarchy

Personality and intelligence

As an overview:

> Modern intellectual ability theories (see e.g. , Carroll 1993) represent intelligence in a hierarchical fashion,

> with a general intellectual ability (the most general construct) at the top of the hierarchy (Strata III), and somewhat narrower ability content as one moves down the hierarchy

Some traits that correlate to general intelligence include:

- **Need for Achievement (nAch)** probably shows the most robust positive correlations among this group of personality traits, with correlations in the range of r = . 07 to .24
- **Typical intellectual engagement (TIE)** (Goff and Ackerman 1992) also fits at least partly into this general framework. TIE is defined as the individual's preference toward or away from intellectual activities. Items on the TIE scale include statements such as 'I would enjoy hearing the details about discoveries in any field' and 'I read a great deal' and 'The main reason I studied in school was because it was required of me'
  An estimated correlation of . 35 was found for TIE and crystallized intelligence, but close to zero for fluid intelligence
- **'Test Anxiety'**, which is associated with feelings of anxiety when confronted with test situations. In an extensive review and meta-analysis of several hundred studies, Hembree (1988) determined that significant negative correlations were found between measures of test anxiety and measures of intelligence (r = –.23)
- **Neuroticism** shows consistent negative correlations with an array of both general and specific intellectual abilities (e.g. , on the order of r = –. 15 with general intelligence). Even larger correlations with mathematical abilities
- **Traits like Alienation, Aggression, Harm-Avoidance and Traditionalism** all show small negative correlations with intellectual ability measures

Attachment Theory

Intro:

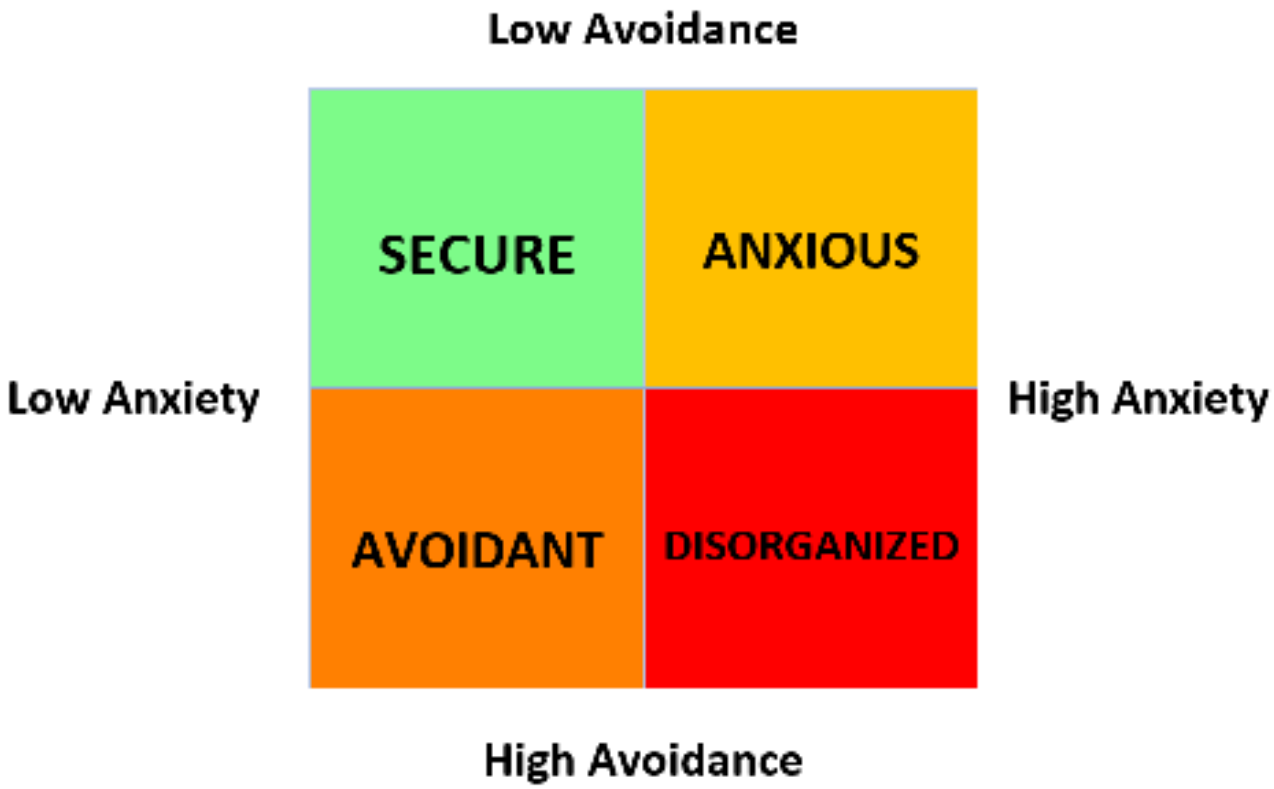
> John Bowlby gradually created a more empirically oriented psychodynamic theory that could be integrated with the rest of scientific psychology
> (…)
> Attachment theory is now the leading theory of love and bereavement; it is a mainstay of both developmental and personality/social psychology, and its major constructs are still being measured and refined

We have several articles here with examples, see:

- **The 4 attachment styles: an overview**
- **Secure**
- **Anxious**
- **Avoidant**

And:

- **Anxious avoidant trap**



Attachment styles on a matrix chart

Evolutionary Approaches

Evolutionary psychology is more concerned with the *commonalities*.

However, it can still add some important insights.

For example, different traits make one better suited to specific environments:

> individuals who are less likely to trust others and more willing to exploit others may be best suited in environments where short-term encounters are the norm and immediate extraction of resources is necessary

Or that personality differences are an evolutionary win-win for selfish individuals and the species as a whole:

> Personality differences allow different individuals to be suited to particular niches that others would not be suited for. This is adaptive because it leads to decreased competition, due to greater specialization, and renders the various personality characteristics optimal under differing local conditions.

However, this part was less empirical than other chapters.

For example, this was interesting but purely speculative:

> Anxiety/Neuroticism represents the individual's (partly unconscious) choice of strategy for handling social threats.
> The anxious individual adapts to threat through anticipating and avoiding threats, whereas the emotionally stable person has a preference for more direct, task-focused coping.
> The various processing attributes of anxiety support the overall adaptation (…)
> Extraversion may be seen as an adaptation to socially demanding environments. Cognitive features of Extraversion such as efficient multitasking, verbal skills and rapid response work together to facilitate adaptation. Conversely, the various characteristics of Introversion support adaptation to solitary environments

> requiring self-direction

Also see:

- **Best evolutionary psychology books**

Personality and performance

There limited connection between personality and performance:

> Associations between personality, performance and individual differences in cognition are often rather unstable and sensitive to various moderator factors.
> Furthermore, effect sizes are often modest (e.g. , Koelega 1992)

Which I was surprised to read.

- Anxiety has detrimental effects on performance
- Selective attention: some are better at quickly focusing on a stimulus, or resisting distraction from irrelevant stimuli
  - Extraversion and low Neuroticism were associated with faster speed of visual search, when subjects were required to find a single letter target in a random display of letters
  - Extraverts were more resistant to background noise than introverts across a range of tasks; extraverts may indeed prefer to study with music or other noise in the background.
  - Anxiety and Neuroticism are associated with selective attention deficits, a result that may reflect a more general attentional impairment related to these traits. Anxious people tend to 'lock onto' potential sources of threat and are slow to disengage attention (Derryberry and Reed 1997, 2002)
- **Extraverts may jump to conclusions**: studies of problem-solving show that extraverts are prone to choose a solution impulsively, without due reflection

Work performance

Conscientiousness is one of the largest predictors of work performance:

> second-order meta-analysis (that is, a meta-analysis of existing meta-analyses), which showed Conscientiousness to be a valid predictor for all work performance criteria (overall work performance (non-independent analysis (.24); independent analysis (.27); supervisor ratings (.31); objective performance (.23); training performance (.27); and team-work (.27)), and occupational groups (sales performance (.25); managerial performance (.25); professionals (.24); police (.26); and skilled or semi-skilled (.23)

Emotional stability was also a valid predictor of work performance, while neuroticism is a negative predictor.

Positive VS Negative Affect may be the biggest difference

> Organ, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (2006) have suggested that personality may only be related to organizational citizenship behaviour through its relationship with job satisfaction, given the wealth of evidence that variance in job satisfaction can be explained by personality (e.g. , Judge and Bono 2001).Indeed, Ilies, Scott and Judge (2006) recently found that positive affect and job satisfaction predicted organizational citizenship behaviour, and secondly that cross-level interaction between Agreeableness and positive affect predicted organizational citizenship behaviour

Traits & Social Relationships

There seem to be strong ties between traits, and social life quality:

> Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness all appear to have major influences on adult relationship outcomes (Berry, Willingham and Thayer 2000; Karney and Bradbury 1995; Lehnart and Neyer 2006; White, Hendrick and Hendrick 2004)

Low Agreeablness Is Not Power

Sometimes people confuse agreeableness with “too nice”.
And low agreeableness with “dominant go-getter”.

That doesn’t seem to be the case:

> low agreeable children are more likely to use power assertion (e.g. , threats), which can ultimately harm or end a relationship. Disagreeable children are not only more likely to use power assertion, they are also more likely to be involved in more serious bullying behaviours (Bollmer, Harris and Milich 2006; Gleason, Jensen-Campbell and Richardson 2004).Indeed, low Agreeableness is associated with peer rejection and victimization (Newcomb, Bukowski and Pattee 1993; Jensen-Campbell, Adams, Perry et al.2002

Traits That Promote Healthy Relationships

> Among adults, Conscientiousness has been associated with mate desirability, relationship quality and marriage stability (Botwin, Buss and Shackelford 1997; Gattis, Berns, Simpson and Christensen 2004; Kelly and Conley 1987; Roberts and Bogg 2004; Robins, Caspi and Moffitt 2000)
> Agreeableness and Conscientiousness are negatively related to a friend’s annoyance with the individual; Conscientiousness and Extraversion are negatively associated with the number of conflicts in the adult friendships (Berry, Willingham and Thayer 2000)

Unsurprisingly, a predisposition for positive emotions also makes for good relationships:

> One exception is a longitudinal study by Robins, Caspi and Moffitt (2002). They found that a personality profile of low negative emotionality, high positive emotionality and high constraint can predispose a person to become involved in relatively happy, non-abusive relationships. More specifically, negative emotionality at the age of eighteen predicted higher levels of conflict and abuse and lower levels of quality in romantic relationships three and eight years later. In addition, they found that the influence of negative emotionality on romantic relationships was quite stable

Social Support

There are 2 dimensions to social support:

- Functional support is the perception and actual support available from others
- Structural support refers to the degree of embeddedness of the individual within the social network

More Social Support Is Healthy

Unsurprisingly, more support makes for a better life:

> research investigating the stress-buffering role of functional support has shown its effectiveness in predicting

> reduced mortality and physical health outcomes (Cohen 2003; Uchino, Cacioppo and Kiecolt-Glaser 1996), as well as lower levels of psychological distress

Relationships With Value Takers Are Unhealthy

On the other hand, as we often say here:

> Interacting with others who are interfering, manipulative or even hostile has been shown to have a negative impact on psychological wellbeing (Harber, Schneider, Everard and Fisher 2005; Rook 1984).
> Furthermore, **the impact of negative interactions on the individual is often greater, compared with positive interactions**

Personality And Social Support

Extraverted and agreeable individuals tend to get more social support.

As per social exchange theory, that is partly because they also *give* more support.

On the other hand, extraversion cuts both ways.
And extraverts can be "needier":

> extraverts do not receive an appropriate level of social support, then they appear to be more negatively affected by this reduced provision of social support, as compared to introverts

Highly neurotic people tend to report more negative social interaction, and tend to withdraw during times of stress.

Social pain and hurt feelings

HFP is the measure of "hurt feelings proneness:

> HFP correlates strongly and positively with Neuroticism, anxious attachment, fear of negative evaluation, and self-reported behavioural inhibition system activity (Leary and Springer 2001; MacDonald 2008)
> (…)
> HFP is also related positively to the need to belong (Leary and Springer 2001; MacDonald 2008), a variable reflecting one's appetite for social connection. Those higher in HFP have also been shown to place more value on true friendship and mature love (Leary and Springer 2001)

And:

> Higher HFP was associated with both higher perceptions of potential threat and higher perceptions of potential reward.

Personality and politics

Right-wing authoritarians and conservatives are needy for certainty

> meta-analysis of this extensive literature by Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski and Sulloway (2003a) makes a strong case for political conservatism as motivated social cognition. While the core ideology of conservativism stresses justification for social-economic inequality and resistance to change, its motivational dynamism centres around the need to manage uncertainty and threat

The difference between liberals and conservatives is openness

Openness to Experience is the personality trait that mostly distinguishes liberals and conservatives.

Psychopathology

Psychopathy

Hare asks whether psychopathy is categorical or dimensional:

> Do psychopathic individuals differ from the rest of us in degree or in kind? There has been considerable debate, but little empirical research, on the topic.

On one hand, it seems to be dimensional:

> psychopathy reflects, or emerges from, a combination of extreme variants of normal-range personality processes, many of which are antisocial in nature (Lynam and Widiger 2007)

On the other hand, "*such a combination of extreme traits may be taxonic*".

Hare and Ruscio noted that psychopathy could be viewed as both:

> within a nonpsychopathic group, a set of dimensions may capture individual differences on psychopathy-relevant traits, but hardcore psychopaths deviate substantially on multiple dimensions and form their own group.Certainly, it is not unusual for researchers and clinicians to describe those with very high PCL-R scores as 'different' from other individuals

Personality and crime

The authors suggest that the definition itself of psychopathy defines a criminal, so it's not useful.

However, that's not to say that psychopathy or personality traits are irrelevant.
They are relevant, but only at extreme levels:

> In general, then, although many offenders are characterized by some form of mental disorder, a very small proportion of the mentally disordered population turn to crime
> (…)
> Thus, although there has been a tendency to look for mental disorder as a basis for criminality, careful study indicates that it is only at the extremes that such an aspect of a person may be considered relevant

Other personality disorders

[image]
Adapted from Beck and Freeman 1990, The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology

There seems to be a high level of comorbidity among personality disorders.
For example:

- Eating disorders: as many as 60 percent of women with an eating disorder also meet criteria for a personality disorder (PD
- ADHD is positively associated with temperament dimensions reflecting impulsivity and reactivity (ie.: BIS, negative emotionality, Neuroticism, impulsivity and novelty seeking)

Treatment for personality disorders

The theoretical traditions of current treatment approaches can be divided into three main strands:

- **medical model**: including drugs. The evidence judged to be inadequate -but later in the book, they say the evidence "is improving"
- **psychoanalytic/psychodynamic theory**: There is a significant difficulty applying traditional, experimental, test of effectiveness to psychoanalytic treatment, not least because of the length of the treatment, but there is some evidence that psychoanalytic therapy may be helpful
- **(cognitive-)behavioural theory**

And then the authors seem to describe another one and I didn't understand where it was placed:

- **Group therapy**
  - Democratic therapeutic community: permissive and democratic, the members are active participants and part of rule-making and enforcement. They seem effective over comparison groups of non-treated referrals in borderline symptoms, other symptoms, and service usage and cost-effectiveness (Lees, Manning and Rawlings 1999)

The authors say that there isn't enough evidence to pick a clear winner or a gold standard.

Personality and leadership

Leadership is related to:

> Judge, Bono, Ilies and Gerhardt (2002) in a meta-analysis of the leadership and personality research found leadership to be **positively related to Extraversion (.31), Openness (.24) and Conscientiousness (.28)**, and negatively related to Neuroticism

And the view that narcissism or dark-triad traits may favor the ascension to power in the workplace may be valid:

> While Nicholson's (1998) sample were CEOs of leading companies, no data was presented on leadership performance per se, therefore, the low Agreeableness scores may reflect traits that facilitate individuals' rise into leadership positions, but are not necessarily an indicator of subsequent leadership success. **Such a view would be consistent with those suggested in the literature on narcissistic leaders, i.e. that while some of the traits associated with narcissistic personality may help an individual attain a leadership position**

Even more obvious -and almost shocking- evidence:

> Board and Fritzon (2005) found that **CEOs and senior managers of leading UK companies demonstrated similar levels of narcissism as a sample of patients at Broadmoor Special Hospital (a secure psychiatric hospital in the United Kingdom)**, and significantly higher levels of histrionic personality than the 'clinical' group

Also see:

- **The myth of emotional intelligence**

> The Myth of Emotional Intelligence: Machiavellis At The Top

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

Obviously, these books aren't meant to be practical.

My job is to go through the literature to then turn the empirical evidence into practical strategies and techniques.

Still, here are some possible takeaways:

Use Occam's Razor: The Simpler Explanation Beats The Convoluted One

The author says that good theories are "as simple as possible".

And in yet another salvo against psychoanalysis, they say:

> In personality (more controversially), why add an elaborate psychoanalytic model of personality structures and defence mechanisms to explain forgetting of childhood memories, if well-supported, simple cognitive mechanisms can account for the same phenomena (Hassin, Uleman and Bargh 2005; Kihlstrom 1987)?

Cut out the takers from your life

It's proven that manipulators, negative people and value-takers in general make you worse off.

MORE WISDOM

Why Psychoanalysis Has Been Marginalized

Say the authors:

> Robert Bornstein (2005) explains what he terms the marginalization of psychoanalysis, which is often criticized for scientific failure, this way (p.325): the diminished influence of contemporary psychoanalysis is largely a product of theory mismanagement: Rather than looking forward (to the evolving demands of science and practice) and outward (to ideas and findings in other areas of psychology and medicine), many psychoanalysts have chosen to look backward (at the seminal but dated contributions of early psychoanalytic practitioners) and inward (at their like-minded colleagues' own analytic writings). Theories evolve. Criteria for judging the worth of theories offer directions for their growth, not static rules for accepting or rejecting them once and for all

It's the failure of "theory building upon itself", without going back to empirical data from the real world, or to other scientific advances and findings.

And:

> Psychoanalysts' rejection of the scientific process of objective empirical verification leaves them isolated from the rest of the academic community and has been manifested in heated professional and sometimes personal criticisms

However, adds Bornstein, some psychoanalists are more open to the scientific method, so there are still hopes of reconciling psychotherapy with science.

Science May Beat Psychoanalist's Judgment

> outcomes of psychotherapy are predicted in two ways to see which is more accurate: by a mental health professional who has case material available, and by a statistical method in which data are used to make

> predictions…
> A meta-analysis of such studies reports that the statistical method offers more accurate prediction (Aegisdottir, White, Spengler et al.2006), and such results have been interpreted to forcefully argue for the superiority of science over clinical judgement (Dawes 1994)

However, I wasn't convinced by this.
"Case material" is very different from directly observing, engaging, or even personally knowing an individual.
And you can't run "raw data analysis" on a flesh and blood individual.

People Can Change Over Time

Longitudinal research shows that:

> Stability from childhood to adulthood, while significant in many cases, is low enough to suggest that significant change occurs, especially before adulthood (Caspi, Roberts and Shiner 2005; Hampson and Goldberg 2006

QUOTES

How to recognize psychology VS personality psychology, in simple terms:

> According to a famous, albeit sexist, quotation, 'Every man is in certain respects (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, (c) like no other man'.
> General psychology is concerned with (a), and personality psychology with (b) and (c).

CONS

- **Wish it went deeper on negative affects, negative personality types, value-takers etc**. That would have been very useful to TPM and my goals. Instead, it mostly insists on more popular and "neutral" constructs such as the Big 5

REVIEW

The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology is a top resource for an overview of personality psychology from a scholarly research perspective.

I learned plenty from it and could take away several insights for TPM and Power University.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Sapiens: Harari's Attempt to Infect You With Collective Guilt

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 April 2024 · Archived copy · Original

In *Sapiens* author Yuval Noah Harari reviews our history as Homo Sapiens, from the plains of East Africa passing through modernity, and speculating about the future.

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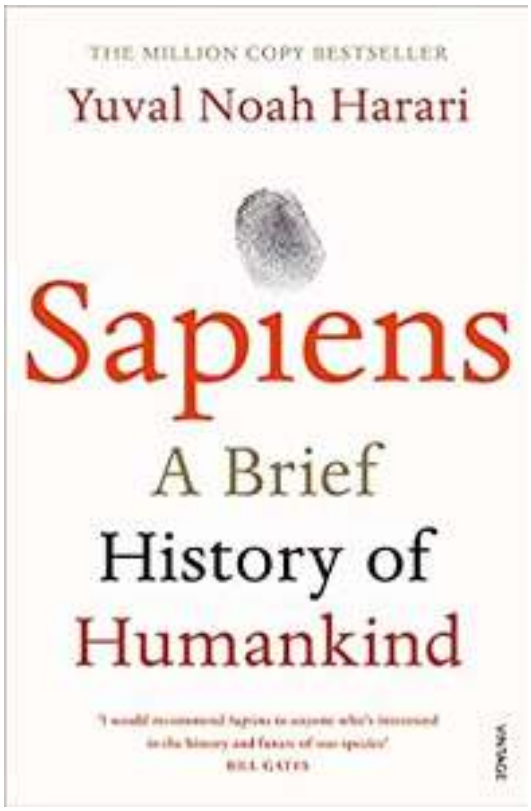
  - The myth-making explanation as the basis of cooperation and human domination is weak
  - Inappropriate moralisms & un-scientific mindsets
  - Opinions & speculative theories presented as facts
  - Anthropocentric, without realizing it
  - Doesn't seem to understand evolution
  - Agriculture-bashing & rose-tinted view of hunter-gatherers
  - Rose-tinted glasses for modernity
  - Under-values the contribution of classic Greece and Rome (potentially)
  - Sometimes dismissive/simplistic of past achievements
- CONS
- PROS
- Quotes
- Review

Bullet Summary

- We managed to colonize the world thanks to our cognitive abilities
- The agricultural revolution allowed for complex societies and lead to population explosion
- The scientific revolution provided the basis for our current runaway progress



Sapiens Summary

About The Author:
Yuval Noah Harari is an Israeli professor of history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
He is most famous for the best-selling book “Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind”

Where We First Started

Humans appeared around 2.5 millions ago in East Africa, evolving from a genus of great apes known as Australopithecus.

These early humans were homo rudolfensis and homo erectus. From East Africa the first hominids spread out and evolved into homo neanderthalensis in Europe and Asia.

How Sapiens Bested Other Hominids (Plus: Are We Different Breeds Within The Same Species? ⍰)

Homo Sapiens, such as us, only evolved around 300.000 years ago.

Apparently, there was nothing too special about homo sapiens. And yet, they came to dominate the world.
What happened?

There are two theories:

- **Homo sapiens interbred** with homo neanderthalensis (and other hominids in other areas)

- **Homo sapiens supplanted** the other hominids (either by taking their food sources or straight killing them)

The political tabus

The interbreeding was politically tabu because it would mean that “white people” are somewhat different from Africans.

But you can’t fight facts for too long, and probably both are correct.

BUT there has been some interbreeding.

Between 1 and 4% of European’s DNA is neanderthalensis DNA.

Says the author:

> It turned out that 1–4 per cent of the unique human DNA of modern populations in the Middle East and Europe is Neanderthal DNA. That’s not a huge amount, but it’s significant. A second shock came several months later, when DNA extracted from the fossilised finger from Denisova was mapped. The results proved that up to 6 per cent of the unique human DNA of modern Melanesians and Aboriginal Australians is Denisovan DNA.

AND we probably killed quite a few of those other hominids (including, I’d add, a few of other sapiens intra-killing as well).

We Left A Trail Of Blood

Wherever the Homo Sapiens went, it hunted the local game to extinction.

In Australia only until 50.000 years ago lived a multitude of mammals, some of which were huge and potentially dangerous.
But within a couple of thousand years from the arrival of Homo Sapiens, they all but disappeared.

The Sapiens Advantage: Brain

What is it that gave Homo Sapiens the advantage over other hominids?
Our advantage is our superior brain power.

Around 70.000 years ago the sapiens brain underwent what Yuval Noah Harari calls the cognitive revolution.
In a relatively short time span, the Homo Sapiens was now able to leverage the increased brainpower to:

- Form larger and more sophisticated groups
- Invent more effective hunting tools
- Develop more effective hunting techniques
- Establish the first trading networks

All those changes meant that the Homo Sapiens could find food, more easily, in more difficult times and more challenging environments.
That allowed to spread out everywhere.
For example, Homo Sapiens were able to hunt mammoths and use their skin for shoes and warm clothing. And with those, they could cross the icy Siberian passage to colonize America.

Cognitive Revolution Made Us The Apex Predator

The cognitive revolution is:

> The appearance of new ways of thinking and communicating, between 70,000 and 30,000 years ago

Language & Cooperation Gave Us The Biggest Advantage

One of the biggest advantages of the cognitive revolution is language.

Says Harari:

> it's the ability to transmit information about things that do not exist at all.

Language gave Homo Sapiens over all other hominids the ability to cooperate at an unprecedented scale.

It allowed us to cooperate flexibly *and* in large numbers.

Language is the glue that keeps society together.
From the smallest tribes to our current global world our ability to community allows for the most diverse people and cultures to share innovation.

Myth-making

In Harari's take, language allowed for what he calls "myth".

He includes in "myth" all the figments of imagination that we can't concretely see or touch.

It includes:

- Group-thinking / belonging
- Corporations
- Law / rules of cooperation
- Money
- Religion

The Agricultural Revolution: A Step ~~For...~~ Backward

Around 12.000 years ago Homo Sapiens learned to grow crops.

That meant we didn't need anymore to rely on hunting and gathering, but we could settle down somewhere specific and produce our own food.

And Homo Sapiens loved agriculture.
Within "just" 10.000 years, almost all humankind had adopted agriculture.

The Downsides of the Agricultural Revolution

Yuval Noah says that in the beginning agriculture didn't make sense.

It would require a whole day of work for a limited amount of crops, which weren't even very digestible or nutrient-rich.

However, he says, its adoption came over several generations and it also provided one big advantage: quantity.
We could cram a high amount of plants into a relatively small piece of land, and that allowed for the Sapiens' population to explode.

The Scientific Revolution Took Us A Big Step Forward

It was a revolution in how we think, says Harri.

Humanity suffered from a “delusion of no control” and a general belief that things were fixed.

But that changed with the scientific revolution in the 16th century, towards the end of the Renaissance.

Finally, we started believing we could improve our lot and move forward.

My Note:
I didn’t think this was necessarily correct.
The Romans didn’t wait around in fear of God but acted upon their environment.
See for example Marcus Aurelius’ Meditations.

Money and Capitalism Fueled Our Tech Advancement

Yes, the technological advancements improve our world.

But the technological advancement is only possible because of capital.

And the allocation of capital changed thanks to:

- Cultural and mindset shifts. We started believing in growth, investment, and trading as win-win. Investing became better than hoarding
- The trust and believe in something we can’t see: money

Money is shared myth

It’s our ability to believe in shared myth that made us who we are, says the authors.

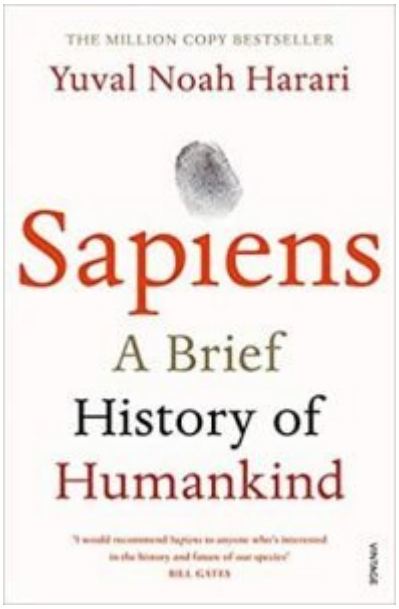
However, when he talks about myth, he doesn’t just refer to “myth” but, it seems to me, he refers to *abstractions* - it’s confusing to call them “myths”-

Money and legal system are examples of such an abstraction that allowed civilization to grow exponentially.

Capitalism is the new religion

Today we live in a highly globalized world, we believe less in religions and we all believe in capitalism and showing off our material wealth.

There are many critics of globalization but, the author says, it allowed for a more peaceful life.



MORE WISDOM

Remember: survival of the FITTEST, not strongest

It's surprising how many still confuse this simple tenet of evolution.

For example:

> On the island of Java, in Indonesia, lived *Homo soloensis*, 'Man from the Solo Valley', who was suited to life in the tropics. On another Indonesian island – the small island of Flores – archaic humans underwent a process of dwarfing. Humans first reached Flores when the sea level was exceptionally low, and the island was easily accessible from the mainland. When the seas rose again, some people were trapped on the island, which was poor in resources. Big people, who need a lot of food, died first. Smaller fellows survived much better.

Looking at mass extinctions, bigger/stronger often die out first during crises.

There is no single way of life for humans

Says Harari:

> The heated debates about *Homo sapiens*' 'natural way of life' miss the main point. Ever since the Cognitive Revolution, there hasn't been a single natural way of life for Sapiens. There are only cultural choices, from among a bewildering palette of possibilities.

History is no tool to predict the future

Says Harari:

> Unlike physics or economics, history is not a means for making accurate predictions. We study history not to know the future but to widen our horizons, to understand that our present situation is neither natural nor inevitable, and that we consequently have many more possibilities before us than we imagine.

The world's suffering runs on indifference, not hatred

Same for slave trade as it is for animal (lack of) welfare:

> Just as the Atlantic slave trade did not stem from hatred towards Africans, so the modern animal industry is not motivated by animosity.
> Again, it is fuelled by indifference.
> Most people who produce and consume eggs, milk and meat rarely stop to think about the fate of the chickens, cows or pigs whose flesh and emissions they are eating.

Yep, largely true.

Money wins wars, not strength

True today, as it's always been since the Industrial Revolution:

> Napoleon made fun of the British, calling them a nation of shopkeepers. Yet these shopkeepers defeated Napoleon himself, and their empire was the largest the world has ever seen.

The cost of war and nuclear devices ensured our peace

Something I always thought even as a young boy:

> The Nobel Peace Prize to end all peace prizes should have been given to Robert Oppenheimer and his fellow architects of the atomic bomb. Nuclear weapons have turned war between superpowers into collective suicide, and made it impossible to seek world domination by force of arms.

Yep, that.

CRITICISM

As usual, remember:

we criticize harder the *good* books.

And Sapiens is a very good book.
So it deserves more of our attention.

Guilt-tripping on humanity. Collective guilt permeates this book. Be careful!-

For example:

> As we will shortly see, we Sapiens have good reasons to repress the memory of our siblings.

Maybe Harari thinks so.

I don't think there is any good reason to "repress" anything.

A similar mindset and sense of collective guilt permeates *Sapiens*.

Weak Freudian-style of human-bashing

For example:

> Most top predators of the planet are majestic creatures. Millions of years of dominion have filled them with self-confidence. Sapiens by contrast is more like a banana republic dictator. Having so recently been one of the underdogs of the savannah, we are full of fears and anxieties over our position, which makes us doubly cruel and dangerous.

God man, I gotta wonder why do so many historical revisionists relish in human-bashing?

Projecting own anxieties maybe?

Displacing the burden so it's not about them, but about everyone?

The myth-making explanation as the basis of cooperation and human domination is weak

The main thesis of the book is that the cognitive revolution and the ability to think in abstract terms -"myths" allowed humans to cooperate and dominate.

For example, says Harari:

> Trade may seem a very pragmatic activity, one that needs no fictive basis.
> Yet the fact is that no animal other than Sapiens engages in trade, and all the Sapiens trade networks about which we have detailed evidence were based on fictions.
> Trade cannot exist without trust, and it is very difficult to trust strangers.
> The global trade network of today is based on our trust in such fictional entities as the dollar, the Federal Reserve Bank, and the totemic trademarks of corporations.
> When two strangers in a tribal society want to trade, they will often establish trust by appealing to a common god, mythical ancestor or totem animal.

I think this a typical case of "potentially good take, but over-generalized and over-extrapolated".

Such as, a good take may explain a portion of a certain phenomenon.
Say, 30%.

That maybe a great take and addition to our understanding of the phenomenon.

But when you try to make it the main or *single* sole explanation for it, it just becomes weak.

That's what happened with Yuval's thesis.

Inappropriate moralisms & un-scientific mindsets

The author attacks those who "defend" humans:

> Some scholars try to exonerate our species, placing the blame on the vagaries of the climate (the usual scapegoat in such cases). Yet it is hard to believe that Homo sapiens was completely innocent.

Harari filters this all from a moralistic point of view.

But while it's fair and even good *in general*, it's out of place in more rigorous analyses and investigations.

What an UN-scientific mindset to think in terms of "exonerating" -which, if those scholars were indeed trying to do, is equally UN-scientific-.

But maybe those scholars weren't defending humans but simply advancing hypotheses to be discussed and tested.

And he goes on:

> There are three pieces of evidence that weaken the climate alibi, and implicate our ancestors in the extinction of the Australian megafauna.
> (….)
> Even if climate change abetted us, the human contribution was decisive.

Alibi?
Implicate?
Abetted *us*?

LOL, it's not a process, and it's not a moral process either.

And it's not a process on YOU.
What Sapiens did a long time ago has no implication for you.

It's just about finding out what happened.

Opinions & speculative theories presented as facts

For example:

> It is doubtful whether *Homo sapiens* will still be around a thousand years from now, so 2 million years is really out of our league.

How does he know if 2 million years is "out of our league".

He doesn't.

I, for one, say that it's *not* "out of our league" -very disempowering way of talking, BTW-.

Similar for how humans started to be born early.
Such as, women who gave birth prematurely survived.

Anthropocentric, without realizing it

The author would like to "fly higher", but doesn't realize he falls for more covert and hidden forms of anthropocentrism.

For example:

> Most top predators of the planet are majestic creatures. Millions of years of dominion have filled them with self-confidence.

And even more:

> If we knew how many species we've already eradicated, we might be more motivated to protect those that still survive. This is especially relevant to the **large** animals of the oceans. Unlike their terrestrial counterparts, the large sea animals suffered relatively little from the Cognitive and Agricultural Revolutions.

Why "large", you may wonder?

Becuase "large" is more visible to *humans*.

More impressive, more cool to watch.

So if rodents or critters go extinct, who cares?

Doesn't seem to understand evolution

The author cites evolution and "what's good for the genes" quite a bit.

Yet, I feel he doesn't fully grasp how it works.

He says that "the species won" with agricultrual revolution, but the individuals suffered.

But evolution acts at an individual's level, not at the species level.

And he explained the reason himself, without being able to connect the dots.
The agricultural revolution allowed for population explosion.
So, the *individuals* left more copies of their DNAs.

He may be right that the individuals still suffered -albit I'm not convinced-.
But NOT from the evolutionary point of view he took.

Agriculture-bashing & rose-tinted view of hunter-gatherers

It's funny the author criticizes other authors who have a rosy view of the hunter-gather societies.

And THEN… he does the same.

For example, criticizing agricultural societies, he says:

> A much more representative viewpoint is that of a three-year-old girl dying from malnutrition in first-century China because her father's crops have failed. Would she say 'I am dying from malnutrition, but in 2,000 years, people will have plenty to eat and live in big air-conditioned houses, so my suffering is a worthwhile sacrifice'?

And yet, if he wants to go for the emotional appeal, from his own words, in an hunter-gatherer society:

> Unwanted babies and children may be slain, and there are even cases of religiously inspired human sacrifice. (…)
> Another child was buried alive because 'it was funny-looking and the other children laughed at it'.

Oh yeah, those good old days of hunter-gatherer societies…

I don't know how can people say that hunter-gatherers were happier than agricultural people, or that the agricultural revolution "wasn't that good".

Maybe it wasn't but… Based on what exactly?
The author's opinion, again.

Of course, the fact that agriculture spread to all humans at lightning speed might suggest to any honest historian that maybe it wasn't that bad?

That, or humans were all stupid back then.

Rose-tinted glasses for modernity

I think that it's 50% true that we improved a lot and that war maybe more unlikely.

And yet, it may be 50% an historical confluence of lucky events.

In any case, I feel Harari overstates the case.
Sapiens's last chapters feel like Pinker's *Better Angels of Our Nature*.

It's just an event, but it's still interesting that Harari says that the USSR dissolved "peacefully".

And yet at the time of writing a war is being fought by a dictator who wants to get back that USSR power.

Under-values the contribution of classic Greece and Rome (potentially)

Greece and Rome set important, potentially necessary foundations for the European and later Western world to carry the world forward.

The name "Renaissance", in which the author correctly places the scientific revolution, was largely set off by rediscovering past greatness and shaking off middle-age torpor.

The Romans for example knew the earth was round.
And a classic scientist had even measured the circumference, quite a scientific feat.

And, by the way, it may also suggest something that Renaissance is a Latin word.

And, in general:

Sometimes dismissive/simplistic of past achievements

Harari seems to see "revolution" as if they were *isolated* exploits.

Instead, I think that it's more accurate to see ost of them as exploits from *positive momentum*.
And/or from resuming old positive momentum -ie.: Renaissance-.

For example, Harari says that people didn't believe in "growth" before the scientific revolution.

It's an interesting take, and I think he may have a point.

However, it's also a damn (poor) over-generalization.

Bright individuals probably differed back then.
See for example Marcus Aurelius' Meditations.

And not-so-bright people today equally do not believe in moving forward.

It also seems a bit overly devaluing previous tech advancements.
He says a Roman soldier was pretty much the same as a soldier a few hundred years later.
But a Roman soldier was a LOT better equipped than any stone age warrior.

CONS

Less damning as the ones above, but still relevant:

- Long off-topics on random stuff such as "happiness"
- Much philosophizing
- Slight bias for nurture/culture over nature (but not nearly as bad as many other resources)

PROS

Some of the pros:

- **Great novel take on the scientific revolution** (for me, at least)

Harari makes a good case that European domination wasn't just or only technology.

But it was also the capital that fueled that growth and technology.
And, at an even deeper level, the culture and mindsets behind it.

I agree with it and am thankful for learning this new take.

- **Great takes on the deluge of poor analyses that most commentators offer**

For example, people offering "just-so" stories that frame what happened as obvious.

- **Our goal is to decrease suffering**

This is one of my main life philosophies and vision for humanity.

And I'm glad Harari seems to espouse something similar at the end of *Sapiens*.

Quotes

On the unpredictability of history:

> It is particularly important to stress that possibilities which seem very unlikely to contemporaries often get realised.
> When Constantine assumed the throne in 306, Christianity was little more than an esoteric Eastern sect. If you were to suggest then that it was about to become the Roman state religion, you'd have been laughed out of the room just as you would be today if you were to suggest that by the year 2050 Hare Krishna would be the state religion of the USA.

And on "just-so" stories:

> In AD 600, the notion that a band of desert-dwelling Arabs would soon conquer an expanse stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to India was even more preposterous. Indeed, had the Byzantine army been able to repel the initial onslaught, Islam would probably have remained an obscure cult of which only a handful of cognoscenti were aware. Scholars would then have a very easy job explaining why a faith based on a revelation to a middle-aged Meccan merchant could never have caught on.

Little fun-bashing of UK ⍰ :

> We call it the Scientific Revolution. It began in western Europe, a large peninsula on the western tip of Afro-Asia, which up till then played no important role in history.
> (…)
> Not long before Cook's expedition, the British Isles and western Europe in general were but distant backwaters of the Mediterranean world. Little of importance ever happened there. Even the Roman Empire – the only important premodern European empire – derived most of its wealth from its North African, Balkan and Middle Eastern provinces.

On European domination of the modern world:

> Under the European aegis a new global order and global culture emerged.
> Today all humans are, to a much greater extent than they usually want to admit, European in dress, thought and taste.
> They may be fiercely anti-European in their rhetoric, but almost everyone on the planet views politics, medicine, war and economics through European eyes, and listens to music written in European modes with words in European languages.
> Even today's burgeoning Chinese economy, which may soon regain its global primacy, is built on a European model of production and finance.

Review

Sapiens is an instructive and thought-provoking look at Homo Sapiens history.

Albeit, just to be sure, the “history” mostly focuses on the near-present, and with many personal reflections and opinions.

Still, *Sapiens* is an impressive work mixing captivating page-turning entertainment, valuable information, and provocative takes.
Harari can be proud of himself.

It’s far better than the previous mass-market history best-seller *Guns, Germs, And Steel*.
Including being more honest and less biased.

There are some important drawbacks -see above-.
Pay particular attention to the most dangerous one: the sense of collective guilt embedded all through it.

Once you’re aware of those drawbacks, Sapiens can be a highly recommended read.

Read more summaries or **get the book on Amazon**

How to Spot Toxic People And “Takers”

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 April 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Toxic people don’t come with a sticker on their forehead.

Most of them instead hide their toxicity.

In this article, we focus on the most general category of toxic people: takers.
At the most general level, **takers take from you, and make you worse off.**

The “taking” can be anything:

- Material
- Emotional
- Status and power
- Etc. etc.

When you know what to look for… It’s easy

Here’s how to spot them:

Contents

- 1. Run your bottom line calculation: are you better or worse off?
  - 1.2. Materially
  - 1.3. Psychologically
- 2. Check your intuition: how do you feel about them?
- 3. Look at their other relationships
  - 3.2. look for taking in all areas of life
- 4. See how they behave when they CAN take
- 5. Listen how they talk about givers and takers
  - ⍰ Trump Example:

- 6. Note what they take pride on
- 7. See what they think is “optimal behavior”
  - ⍰ Example:
  - 7.2. Look for over-cynicism, dog-eat dog mindset, or “social Darwinism”
- 8. See what they find funny
- 9. Look for overly strategic approaches to relationships and exchanges
  - 9.2. Look for signs of OVER-competitiveness
- 10. Any “taker vocabulary”?
- 11. Look for dark triad signs
- 12. Look for signs of general poor character
- 13. Test them. See how they respond
- Toxic People Are Takers
- Using Takers

1. Run your bottom line calculation: are you better or worse off?

This is what it comes down to.

Including:

1.2. Materially

Are you materially worse or better off with them?

1.3. Psychologically

Do you feel better or worse engaging with them and being in their company?

2. Check your intuition: how do you feel about them?

Ask yourself:

> How do I feel this person?

Ask yourself the same if they weren’t family, or old friends.
And ask yourself the same if moving on would be easy.

Then:

> Do I feel better about myself with them?
> Glad to be in their company, happy to know them or work with them?

And:

If you had to score them from 1 to10 on the “quality of character” scale, how would you rate them?

⚠ **You may have yet to develop that “feel”.**
So don’t jump to conclusions based on your analysis yet.
⍰Power University helps you develop that feel.

3. Look at their other relationships

Including past relationships.

Toxic people can be strategic.

They start friendly, nice and giving.
But the more you can look at their full spectrum of relationships, the more the truth emerges.

3.2. look for taking in all areas of life

Not just relationships, but all faces of life.

Sometimes there is a taker personality that applies to any context.

For example:

- **Accepting influence**, and willingness to change one's mind
- **Openness to compromise**, as part of decision-making give and take

4. See how they behave when they CAN take

Power has a thing for taking out the worst from people.

But, as Brian Klaas aptly noted, not *ALL* people.

Mostly, from those with a poor character.

So look how they behave when they CAN take easily.

5. Listen how they talk about givers and takers

For example:

- Do they mock givers?
- Do they condone or condemn takers?

Some takers think givers are gullible.

They're proud of being the opposite.

⍰ Trump Example:

> **Hillary**: he paid zero federal taxes
> **Trump**: that makes me smart

Attention:

It's not about the *action* of minimizing taxes.
Any good, rational, driven man would maximize his taxes -and we'd advise as much-.

It's about the spirit and mindset.

For example, compare how Warren Buffett goes about it.
Buffett does the same. But instead of calling himself "smart", he says that rich men like him should pay *more* taxes.

6. Note what they take pride on

Some takers take *pride* in taking.

See this real-life example here:

See Power University

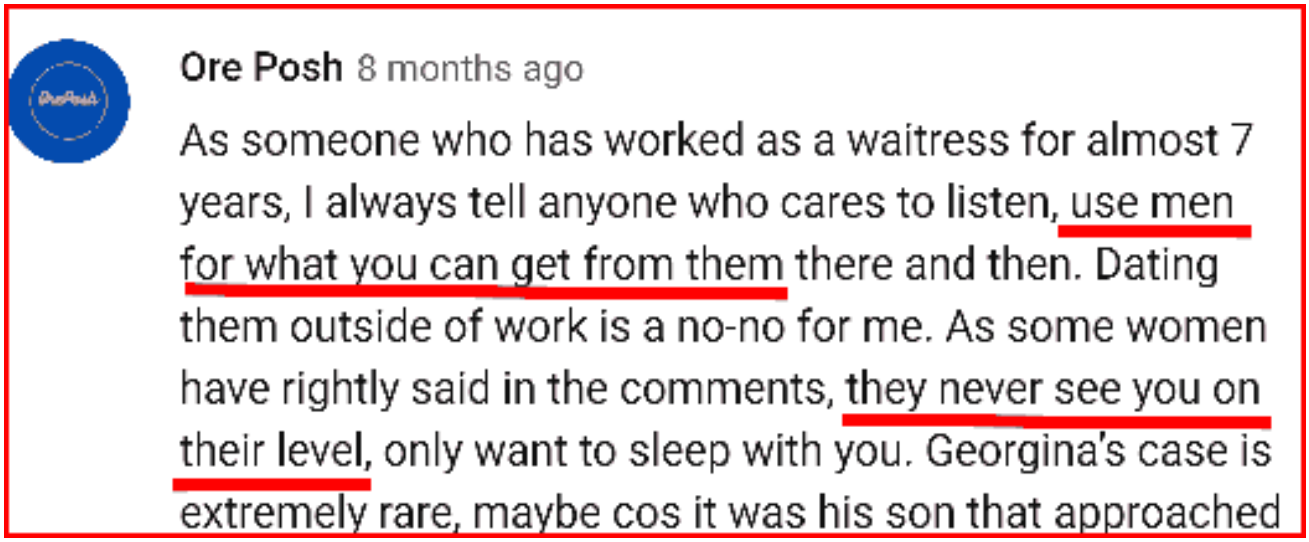
We keep some of Lucio's private life examples for Power University

7. See what they think is "optimal behavior"

Some takers believe taking is the only rational choice.

They don't see the possibility of win-win.
Or feel any pleasure in giving.

⍰ Example:



Ore Posh 8 months ago

As someone who has worked as a waitress for almost 7 years, I always tell anyone who cares to listen, use men for what you can get from them there and then. Dating them outside of work is a no-no for me. As some women have rightly said in the comments, they never see you on their level, only want to sleep with you. Georgina's case is extremely rare, maybe cos it was his son that approached

> **Her**: use men for what you can get from them. They never see at your level

The mindset of the jaded and inveterate hooker.
Sometimes, the saying "a hoe cannot be turned into a housewife" is true.

⍰ **Read more in "hookers' psychology".**

7.2. Look for over-cynicism, dog-eat dog mindset, or “social Darwinism”

For example:

- *Naive people had it coming*
- *Cheating is part of life, you must know better*
- *If you don’t take first, they’ll take from you*

Look for suspiciously strong or out-of-place virtue-signaling

Including:

- **Condemning takers and scammers**. Sometimes, they’re just jealous someone else is doing all the taking
- **Negative projections**. Accusing you or others of cheating. That’s because *they* would cheat in the same circumstances
- **Out-of-place defensiveness**. For example “I’m not like that, I’m a good person” when you had simply asked a question

8. See what they find funny

Many takers find humor about taking advantage of others funny.

For example, stupid people or “marks” who fall for someone’s manipulation -or their own manipulation-.

Example:

- ⍰ **Neil Patel finds scam funny**

9. Look for overly strategic approaches to relationships and exchanges

For example:

- Overly nice when they need something
- Giving right before they ask something
- Giving, texting or chasing you when they need social support
- Fawning toward the bosses or higher-status folks

What they advise others to do:

- ⍰ Example in Power University

9.2. Look for signs of OVER-competitiveness

A competitive spirit is healthy and important to advance in life.

But look for *over*-competitiveness.
And in areas where over-competition is out of place.

- Friendships
- Old relationships (who’s “winning now”)
- Situations without pay-offs

⍰ Example: Putin’s dog is stronger and faster than Bush’s

Bush told the “dog story” more than once:

> **Putin**: (my dog is bigger, faster, stronger, than yours)

Bush realized Putin wasn't pursuing win-win when he said his dog was bigger, faster and stronger.

Bush had a great read.
It was a red flag of over-competing because: what's the value in "who has the stronger dog"?

10. Any "taker vocabulary"?

Or overly aggressive.

For example:

- **Robbing / stealing**
- **Ruining**
- **Attacking**, when reaching out to a leads' list in sales
- **Punishing & smashing** for sex and hookups

A deeper analysis on mis-using takers' vocabulary:

- **PUA Tom Torero**: taker's vocabulary in dating/PUA

Or look how Ali's former (poor) boss spoke to his coaching client:

> **Him**: I want you to remove as many steps to get them to the cheese in the trap

Does that sound like someone who wants to grow a business by providing value? ♂

11. Look for dark triad signs

Dark triads are more likely to take.

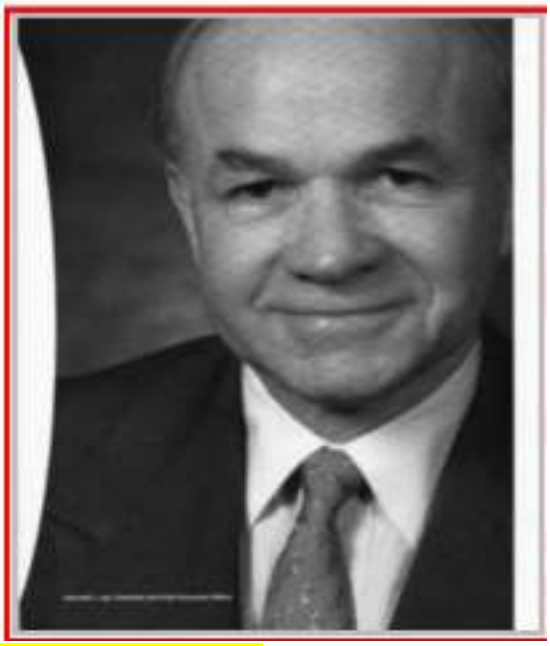
Research on social media found these signals for narcissism/taking:

- **Self-promoting, self-absorbed, self-important statuses**
- **Boastful and arrogant quotes**
- **Many friends/connections** (the author says "racking up superficial connections to brag and ask favors")
- **Vainer, flattering pictures** of themselves

Another study for CEOs:

- **More first-person singular pronouns**. Since takers tend to be self-absorbed, they tend to use more first-person singular pronouns like I, me, mine, my, and myself—
- **Large salary gap between them and other senior leadership**
- **Bigger pictures of themselves**, as shown in annual reports

Guess which one is the taker:



The man on the right is the former CEO of Enron and a convicted felon for financial fraud

- ⍰ **Missing early red flags** of aggressive, disempowering, potentially dark triad traits
- ⍰ **Chris Voss** gives off some high-functioning dark-triad vibes. Quicker video overview here.

12. Look for signs of general poor character

Poor behavior in one area often stems from a poor character.

So look for:

- Manipulative tendencies
- Gaslighting tendencies, and gaslighting typical behavior
- Manipulation tactics
- Power moves
- Microaggressions
- Undermining
- Focus on power over relationships

Etc. etc.

13. Test them. See how they respond

Testing is a skill on its own, and more later.

But as a quick example, a little "shit test" I once asked a girl I was dating:

> **Me**: would you like the last ravioli?
> **Her**: (nodding, without even looking)

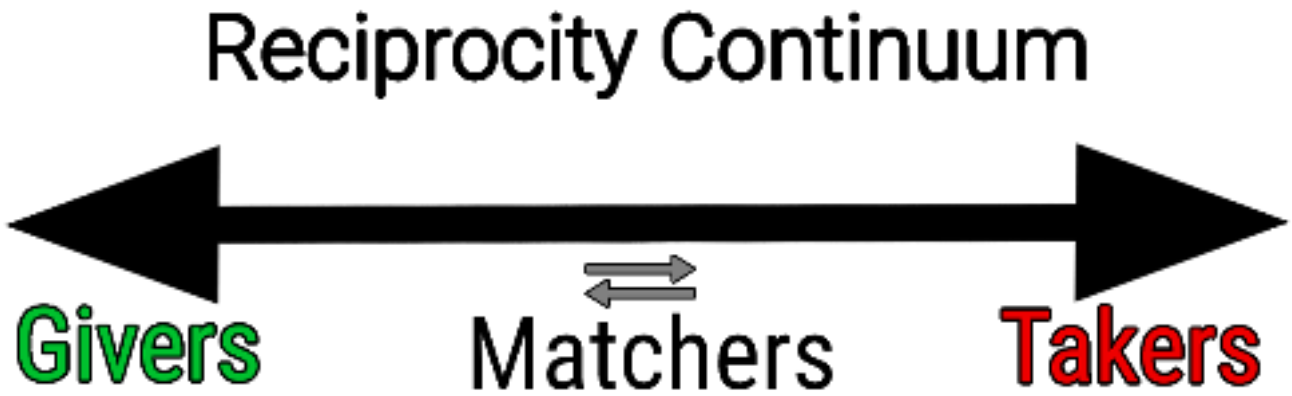
Small yellow flag.
I'd have said "go for it" or "let's share it".

Toxic People Are Takers

Almost anyone can be a taker or giver in some situations.

However, it's NOT just situational.
Psychologist Adam Grant shows that a generalized approach to giving or taking is a stable personality trait.

It goes on a spectrum:



It's a spectrum between givers and takers

Grant estimated that 60% of people are matchers and takers and givers make up 20% each.

Using Takers

Generally, you don't want close relationships with takers.

But in business, you could make it work.

For example, if your interests align, you may work with an effective taker.

Or some small-timing takers can be duped into believing they're taking and winning… While they're not.
Some small-timer takers for example may steal office supplies. Or surf the web in the office for overtime pay. But since you pay them little, it can still be a net positive for you.

So we can say the general advice is to **only have transactional relationships with takers as long as you're gaining**.

Also see:

- **How to manipulate a manipulator**

Here's Why All Manipulation Resources Suck

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 April 2024 · Archived copy · Original

99% of all manipulation resources are terrible.

0.5% of great content on manipulation comes from this website.

And the other 0.5%… I'm still hoping to find it.

OK, there are a few good things scattered here and there in this list.
But no single resource that combines high expertise, clear examples, and a clear roadmap to help people understand and *deal* with manipulation.

This is how most manipulation resources feel to me

Contents

- INTRO
  - Example: Manipulation Tactics
- The Issue With Manipulation Resources
  - 1. Basic information, with no hint of more advanced tactics
  - 2. No examples means lack of clarity
  - 3. Little understanding of power dynamics and manipulation dynamics
  - 4. Re-hash jobs (copying us… Without always crediting)
- There Is No Expertise
  - No Expertise = Ineffective Solutions
  - Example
  - Blunder Examples: Manipulation Tactics? Nope…
  - Gaslighting

- Seeking control
- Passive aggressiveness
- Coercion
- Stages of manipulative relationships

INTRO

This is my philosophy:

TPM articles carry a “burden of responsibility”.
The responsibility to add the most possible value to our readers.

So I take them seriously, and prepare myself before writing.

Part of my preparation includes looking at what’s already available.

And every time, without exception, what’s available has been a disappointment.

Example: Manipulation Tactics

We’ll use “manipulation tactics” as an example for this article.

But what we say for “manipulation tactics” is true for manipulation and “games people” in general.

I chose this specific example because when I looked up other articles on “manipulation tactics”. I was even more disappointed than usual.

Why?
Because **the highest-ranking articles for “manipulation tactics”are *shockingly* poor**.
Which is somewhat ironic since they’re all “high-authority” websites.

But to me, this is how they all feel:

We're in good hands!

The Issue With Manipulation Resources

Some of the issues common to 99% of manipulation resources include:

1. Basic information, with no hint of more advanced tactics

Basic articles serve a purpose since many people need to start from somewhere.

But it's an issue when *all* of them are basic.

And not a single resource bridges from basic, to more advanced material

2. No examples means lack of clarity

Almost all available resources have little examples, and zero real-life examples or videos.

That's an issue because readers do not get any sense of what manipulative tactics look like in real life.

For example, imagine the victim reads:

> "gaslighting is a manipulation tactic that makes you doubt reality".

Without gaslighting examples he never gains the ability to spot gaslighting in his life

3. Little understanding of power dynamics and manipulation dynamics

Manipulation IS about power.

Or, at least, it's in good part about power.

So understanding power dynamics is foundational to writing about manipulation.

Most articles lack a good understanding of manipulation because they're clueless about power dynamics.
And about the power-hungry personality's psychology.

4. Re-hash jobs (copying us... Without always crediting)

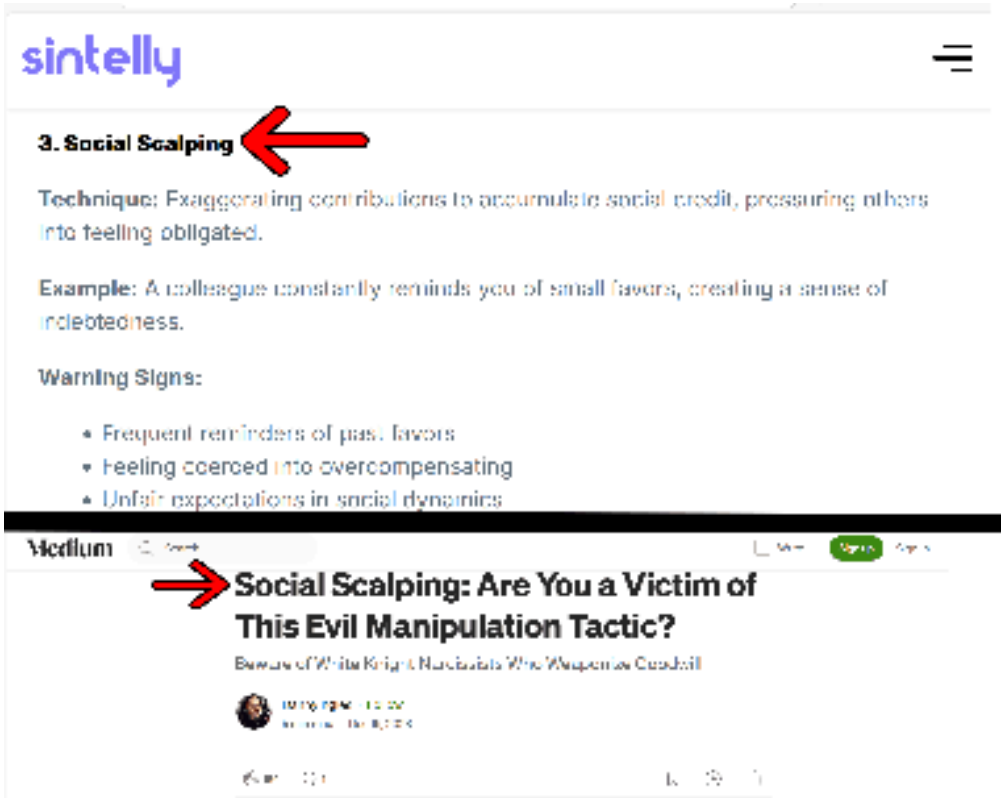
Don't take my word for this.

Try it.

Google "manipulation tactics".
And go through a few articles or videos.

And you'll see the same tactics over and over again.
Including the same mistakes and limitations.

Edit:
I see some improvements as more people learn from us:



Social scalping is a concept we first described and linked to social exchanges. We thank those who link or quote us and hope more will choose to be honorable and give due credit

What's the one common thread in all these issues?

It's this:

There Is No Expertise

The main reason, is this:

Few people seem to have advanced expertise on this topic.

And I'm being charitable by adding the word "advanced".

Those who have it, are busy *using* that expertise.
But even them, I suspect, operate mostly unconsciously.

The authors who write and talk about manipulation often have Ph.D.s or clinical experience.

And *still* many show a limited understanding of manipulation dynamics.

In part, I can understand it.
It's a very complex issue at the intersection of power dynamics, social exchanges, games people play, personality disorders, uncomfortable introspection, and sometimes even therapy when the manipulator is within, or within our families.

As a matter of fact, I believe that **few people understand manipulation unless *they* are good manipulators, or had good manipulators *in their families*.**
And good luck facing up to that.

What I can understand a bit less though, is that there is an appalling lack of clear thinking behind most resources on manipulation.

The lack of any real thinking is obvious to me because it's not just advanced manipulation dynamics that are

lacking.
It's also *basic* power dynamics, social exchanges, or even the acknowledgment of the shared selfishness that makes us all humans.

In the case of manipulation *tactics*, even the meaning of the word "*tactic*" is lost (see below).

The only common thread of the incoherent hodge-podge lists that clutter Google is to list whatever sounds "negative".

A few exceptions apply such as Harriet Braker or George Simon.
They're great authors with good insights.
But still, nobody provides a full, coherent overview of the topic.

No Expertise = Ineffective Solutions

Most of the available resources also fail to offer truly effective solutions.

That's to be expected.
How can I a non-expert deliver effective solutions on a topic that, intrinsically, requires high sophistication?

Solutions aren't even just about simply understanding *manipulation*.

Solutions also require a deeper understanding of social dynamics.
And a more strategic approach to social dynamics.

Solutions require some Machiavellianism.

Example

As an example, imagine a girlfriend threatening to breakup.

Funny enough, that was listed as yet another "manipulation tactic".

To begin with, that's more of a power move, rather than manipulation.

But an author lacking power awareness may miss the underlying dynamics.

With the threat, the woman is (sub)-communicating loud and clear that she has no respect for him (as a man).

And the solution is NOT the therapy that some sources suggest.

As much as we're not the website for "alpha VS betas" here, a good part of the solution does come down to personal power and confidence (or lack thereof)

Therapy only makes you look like more of a beta male looking to have his feelings mended.

This is a case that does require some high power alpha male approach.

The true root-cause solution is for the man to work on his power.
Including his ability to lead and command respect.

Blunder Examples: Manipulation Tactics? Nope...

As we mentioned before:

Many of the most popular and expert-written articles lack a clear definition of manipulation tactics.

I'm going to list now some of the "manipulation tactics" listen in these top-ranking articles, written by licenses or high-authority "experts".

Some examples of "manipulation tactics" that are NOT tactics include:

Gaslighting

is a *cluster* of manipulation tactics -and a *large* cluster-.

It's not a distinct manipulation tactic

Seeking control

is a *motive* that leads the controller to use manipulation tactics.

It's not a manipulation tactic per se.

Also, listing "seeking control" as a manipulation tactic is confusing.
It's confusing because almost any driven human being "seeks (more) control".

Good men also seek more control. So the question is not whether one seeks control or not.

The question is about *how, how much*, and *what costs they're willing to inflict* to get that control.

Also see our article on:

- **Manipulation VS persuasion**

Passive aggressiveness

is an interpersonal approach and a cluster of behaviors.

Passive aggressiveness *may* include a host of manipulative tactics, but not necessarily so.

It's also not a *tactic*.

I'd also like to ask those who include "passive aggressiveness" in a list of manipulation tactics: can you please tell me how a passive aggressive exactly successfully manipulates another man?

Coercion

imposes on others *by leveraging real power to impose one's will*.

Coercion is NOT manipulation because it's direct and open and in your face.
Manipulation is hidden.

Coercion may only be manipulative when it's a gambit not backed by real power. But then it's not coercion but more a "coercion *attempt*" or a "gambit".

Example: governments coerce citizens to pay taxes. But that's not manipulation. Manipulation would be to frame taxes as a moral obligation and not paying taxes as immoral.

Stages of manipulative relationships

are possible *stages* of an abusive relationship, not tactics.

Also, only some manipulative intimate relationships follow those (rather pop-psychology) stages.

Such as, you can be in a relationship with an inveterate manipulator and never go through any listed "stage"

- Etc. Etc…

We could go on and on.

But the long story short is:

stick to TPM when it comes to learning, spotting, and dealing with manipulation :).

APA Handbook of Personality and Soc Psych (Vol. 3 Interpersonal Relations) – Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 April 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology (Vol. 3 Interpersonal Relations)* is a comprehensive resource that presents the available research literature on various aspects of interpersonal relationships.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - We form 5 relationship types to solve life challenges
  - Interdependence theory
  - Interpersonal attraction… It's complex
  - Approaching, flirting & pickup lines
  - When men and women lie
  - Ideal partners
  - Changing our partners: is it possible? Yes…
  - Good relationships are healthy
  - Friendships
  - Partner violence in intimate relationships (PV)
  - Power and social influence
  - Power and influence strategies
  - The 6 main power theories
  - Psychology of Power
  - Attachment styles
- MORE WISDOM
- Practical Takeaway Tips
- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Relationships are functional**: People form relationships to survive, thrive, and reproduce
- **Great relationships make you healthier**. But poor ones make you *less* healthy
- **Power makes people more genuine** because it allows them to be themselves

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Various authors, including editors Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver, Jeffry A. Simpson, Allison K. Farrell, M. Minda Oriña, Alexander J. Rothman, Adam D. Galinsky, Derek D. Rucker, and Joe C. Magee.

We form 5 relationship types to solve life challenges

First and foremost, survival, reproduction, and self-advancement.

The main relationships are:

1. Dating couples
2. Married couples
3. Family members
4. Friends
5. Coworkers

Relationship domain	Typical dyads	Relationship tasks	Key evolutionary theories	Relationship opportunities	Relationship threats	Relationship-specific conditions
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Relationship Types and Associated Evolutionary Opportunities and Threats

Each relationship type follows slightly different rules.

Proximate reason & evolutionary reasons: they go in tandem

Two different approaches:

- **Proximate causes from psychologists' historical approach** focus on the immediate triggers (causes) of action
- **The evolutionary approach seeks the root cause**, asking why people evolved to want sex, companionship, and love

These two approaches are complementary.

Gender differences

- **Women tend to be more affiliative** BUT…
- **Men are more likely to "gang up"**: If the outgroup is salient men are more likely than women to make cooperative choices that favor the group good (Van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen, 2007)

- **Men go for larger groups, women smaller cliques** males form alliances with large groups of other males, whereas females are more likely to associate with one another either one at a time or in small cliques (Benenson et al.(2008))
- **Men's friendships may be more functional**: men are more concerned with their friends' skills (e.g. , intelligence, athleticism, financial potential, creativity) and their friends' social connections (Benenson et al.(2008))

Men also seek more leadership positions, something that the authors ascribe to the fact that male reproductive success and status are more interlinked (Kenrick et al. , 2004).

Interdependence theory

The levels are:

- **Dependence** refers to the degree to which an actor relies on an interaction partner, in that his or her outcomes are influenced by the partner's actions
- **Mutuality of dependence** refers to whether two people are equally dependent on one another.
  - Mutual dependence tend to feel safer and are more stable and affectively serene (less anxiety, guilt)
  - Nonmutual dependence entails differential power: When Mary is more dependent, John holds greater power The less dependent partner exerts greater control, while the more dependent partner incurs more interaction costs (sacrifice, accommodation) and is more vulnerable to possible abandonment, and threats and coercion are possible
- **Basis of dependence** refers to the ways in which partners influence each other's outcomes—the relative importance of partner versus joint control as a source of dependence.
  It includes the expression of dominance (vs. submissiveness) and assertiveness (vs. passivity), as well as the use of ability and skills such as social intelligence
- **Covariation of interests** refers to whether partners' outcomes correspond or conflict. In simpler words: whether they want the same thing and share common goals. Covariation ranges from perfectly corresponding patterns (coordination) through mixed-motive patterns to perfectly conflicting patterns (zero-sum).
  Conflicting interests lead to the expression of cooperation versus competition and trust versus distrust
- **Temporal structure** refers to time element of a relationship and its changing nature through different situations.
  When it comes to time, long-term relationships and repeat exchanges call on self-control, delay of gratification, and the inclination to stick with it. Long-term relationships make people more likely to cooperate if they know they are going to be interdependent for many interaction situations.
  Relevant issues and trait include dependability versus unreliability and loyalty versus disloyalty (this is my interpretation of it, the text was too convoluted here to convey straightforward information)
  - Situation selection refers to movement from one situation to another. For example, Mary may seek situations entailing less interdependence, or John may confront the juncture between a present relationship and an alternative relationship
- **Information availability** refers to what partners know about each other, the environment, and the consequences of their actions.
  - Uncertain information raises the topics of openness, need for certainty, and optimism/pessimism

Transformations are often conceptualized as decision rules that a person adopts during interactions.
People may wait for the other person's move, and generally also tend to follow their disposition or relationship modes.
For example:

- Altruism, which maximizes the partner's outcomes
- Cooperation, which maximizes combined outcomes
- Competition, which maximizes the relative difference between one's own and one's partner's outcomes
- Individualism, which maximizes one's own outcomes irrespective of one's partner's outcomes.

People stick together because they need to

Albeit the authors don't say so, interdependence theory is largely about game theory, social exchanges, and power dynamics.

And, as it's often the case when you read things though that angle, things make a lot more sense -and are much simpler-.

For example, is suggests that people are in poor relationships because they have to -or have no better options-:

> Mary may persevere in an abusive relationship not necessarily because she has low self-esteem or has acquired a pattern of learned helplessness but rather for reasons related to structural dependence—because she is heavily invested in remaining with her partner (e.g. , she is married to John or has young children with him) or has poor alternatives (e.g. , she has no driver's license or faces poor employment opportunities; Rusbult & Martz, 1995)

Of course.

In close relationships, focus on win-win and the pleasure of giving rather than a calculative "give and take"

It was good to read this since Power University endorsed it since the beginning:

> research has confrmed that negative noise has detrimental effects when people follow a strict reciprocity rule: Partners form more negative impressions of one another, and both people suffer poorer outcomes (Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Tazelaar, 2002). In contrast, a more generous tit-for-tat-plus-one strategy (giving the partner a bit more than is received from the partner) yields better outcomes—noise does not negatively affect partners' impressions of one another or the outcomes each receives over the course of an extended interaction

And more game theory for good relationships:

> in the presence of negative noise, a generous strategy yields better outcomes for both people than does tit-for-tat (for more extended evidence, see Klapwijk & Van Lange, 2009). Such fndings are reminiscent of the literature on interactions in close relationships, in which partners have been shown to enjoy better outcomes in conflictual interactions when one or both partners accommodate or forgive (e.g. , Karremans & Van Lange, 2009; Rusbult et al. , 1991)

Just make sure it's not always you and only you to accommodate and forgive :).

The authors extend the same concept to socialization in general:

> The societal implications of this interdependence analysis are quite powerful. They suggest concrete advice for people entering new situations at school, in organizations, or wherever else people interact in dyads or small groups. Under circumstances of imperfect information (which are very common), it helps to give people the beneft of the doubt, to reserve judgment, and to be more generous than a tit-for-tat strategy would advise.

And especially to written communication:

> The research fndings on this topic may also be especially relevant to e-mail and other forms of electronic communication because these devices are quite noisy and tend to be less effective than face-to-face communication in generating cooperation (Balliet, 2010).

Mutual relationship dynamics matter far more than individuals' character

> Interdependence theoretic analysis provides a deeper understanding of trust than trait-oriented approaches. For one thing, it is a powerful predictive model—in accounting for dependence, commitment, prorelationship acts, and trust, interdependence variables account for substantially more unique variance (more than 30%) than do prominent actor-based variables (e.g. , attachment style accounts for less than 5% of the variance; Wieselquist et al. , 1999). That is, in ongoing relationships, partners' actions are more important than are each person's trait-based, frozen expectations

Interpersonal attraction... It's complex

The authors divide the drivers of interpersonal attraction into domain-general reward perspectives and domain-specific evolutionary perspectives.

Domain-general rewards perspective

Including five needs:

- Hedonic pleasure
- Self-esteem
- Belonging, including familiarity, self-disclosure, and the social basis of anxiety reduction
- Consistency
- Self-expansion

Some items I found interesting:

- **Attractiveness**

> Others' physical attractiveness is perhaps the single most robust predictor of people's initial attraction to them (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008b; Feingold, 1990)

- **Similarity**

> the link between similarity and attraction is strong for perceived similarity (i.e. , subjective assessments of similarity) but sporadic and weak for actual similarity (i.e. , objectively determined similarity)

- **Selectively hard to get**

> In one set of studies, Walster, Walster, Piliavin, and Schmidt (1973) sought to demonstrate that men tend to be attracted to women who play hard to get (an effect that could have contradicted the reciprocity effect), but their conclusion, based on six studies, was that men are attracted to women who are easy for them to get but hard for other men to get (also see Finkel & Eastwick, 2009b)
> These fndings suggest that people tend to be attracted to others who like them but only if this liking makes them feel special
> (…)
> A subsequent speed-dating study yielded compatible conclusions: Speed daters were especially attracted to

> partners who liked them more than those partners liked other people, but they were not attracted to partners who indiscriminately liked everybody (Eastwick, Finkel, Mochon, & Ariely, 2007; also see Eastwick & Finkel, 2009)

And similar:

- **Growing to like over time**

> Similarly, classic research has suggested that people tend to be more attracted to others who grow to like them over time than to others who have always liked them, who have always disliked them, or who have grown to dislike them over time (Aronson & Linder, 1965)

- **Mutual self-disclosure**

> People who disclose intimately tend to be liked more than people who disclose less intimately, and people like others as a result of having disclosed intimately to them (Collins & Miller, 1994; but see Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991, for individual differences in this effect)

Domain-specific evolutionary perspectives

Where the authors review evolutionary psychology's novel insights in the last decades.

Great wisdom, but we largely discuss this here on TPM so see relevant articles and evolutionary psychology book reviews.

Then the authors introduce what seems to be a *third* domain of attraction:

Instrumentality: we like those who help us advance our goals

> Fitzsimons and Shah (2008) published a seminal article testing the instrumentality principle, which they defned as the tendency for people to "draw closer to instrumental others, evaluate them more positively, and approach them more readily, while distancing themselves from noninstrumental others, evaluating them more negatively, and avoiding them more readily"

And yes, it turns out that social climbers may truly be attracted to the wealthy, the bosses… And the Hollywood producers:

> people indeed manifest such preferences for signifcant others who are instrumental for a currently activated goal (e.g. , to achieve academically, to enjoy social activities).

However, that disappears once the goal is reached:

> Furthermore, this tendency to feel closer to signifcant others who are instrumental for a given goal than to those who are not disappears once people believe that they have made good progress toward achieving that goal, a social disengagement process that allows them to focus their self-regulatory efforts on goals that require more urgent attention (Fitzsimons & Fishbach, 2010; also see Converse & Fishbach, 2012)

Approaching, flirting & pickup lines

Albeit men like to think of themselves as leaders, women most often are:

> Women tend to take the initiative in the courting process by displaying nonverbal cues of interest, signaling to a man that he is welcome to approach (e.g. , Moore, 2010; Perper, 1985). Women also instigate and control intricate patterns of rhythmic, nonverbal synchronization that develop between a man and a woman when they meet for the frst time (Grammer, Kruck, & Magnusson, 1998)

Getting attention

A large study of 5,020 adults identified five general styles of attracting attention from a potential mate:

- traditional
- physical
- sincere
- polite
- playful

Certain flirting styles—physical, sincere, and playful—were particularly successful in culminating in attracting a date, and the physical and sincere types led to relationships with the deepest emotional connection (Hall, Carter, et al.

Flirting

The authors define flirting as:

> Flirting refers to subtle or playful verbal and nonverbal behaviors that indicate a romantic interest in another person

Flirting differs from normal conversation because it's more animated and warmer, and both laugh more frequently with fewer periods of silence (Coker & Burgoon, 1987).
When flirting goes well, people move closer, gaze longer, and touch each other relatively frequently (Koeppel, Montagne-Miller, O'Hair, & Cody, 1993).

Fflirting predicted mate choice during a speed dating study (Back et al. , 2011), so it may work well.

Women's flirtation body language includes (Simpson, Gangestad, & Biek, 1993):

- Head cant
- Pouting mouth
- Coyness

Women who send out flirtatious signals do receive more approaches (Moore, 1985)

Men's body language involves gestures that get women to notice them and imply high status, such as taking up space, an open posture, and unreciprocated touching of other men (Renninger, Wade, & Grammer, 2004).
That can be effective, say the authors.

Also see:

- Signs she likes you
- Signs he likes you

Opening lines

Early research clustered opening lines around 3 factors:

- Cute–flippant, or your typical pick-up line
- Innocuous
- Direct

Pick-up lines didn't work:

> (…) both men and women found the cute–flippant lines to be the least desirable …
> However, consistent with hypothesized gender scripts, women rated them as less preferred than men and rated the innocuous lines as more preferred than men.
> (…)
> Subsequent research, using different methods, has generally been consistent with Kleinke et al.'s (1986) fndings (Cunningham & Barbee, 2008; Levine, King, & Popoola, 1994)

In brief, it's just like we long advised here at TPM.

However, best of all is to be introduced:

> For example, Weber, Goodboy, and Cayanus (2010) assessed women's perceptions of the appropriateness and effectiveness of opening lines displayed in videos of male actors.
> Consistent with prior research, direct introductions were rated as the most appropriate opening line. In addition, being introduced by a third party was a strategy that women rated as most appropriate and most effective

Indeed, as we also said on TPM, introductions are great because they pre-frame you as safe, and better maintain your power/attraction.

However, just like we also said on TPM, if it's a high-value man, lover type seeking short-term situations, it doesn't matter much:

> research has suggested that the type of relationship desired influences a woman's evaluation of a man's opening line.
> Senko and Fyffe (2010) varied the nature of the relationship being sought by a woman (short vs. long term), the attractiveness of the male, and the opening lines in hypothetical scenarios. Consistent with evolutionary theory, if a long-term relationship was being sought, women preferred the direct or innocuous lines and associated these with intelligence and trustworthiness, but if a short-term relationship was the goal and the man was attractive, women had no preference for type of opening line.

Also read:

- How to approach a girl
- How to meet girls
- Cold approach

When men and women lie

Lying is common:

> As noted by Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen (1999), approximately 46% of men and 36% of women report telling a lie to get a date with an attractive partner.

However, men and women lie differently.

Men like more about commitment, sincerity, and the ability to acquire resources.
And women in “deceptive acts that alter their appearance”.

However, both alter their self-presentation to match the desires of an attractive potential partner.
That includes describing themselves as more, or less, traditional in sex role orientation (e.g. , Zanna & Pack, 1975).

Personality matters when it comes to lies, and self-monitors lie more (self-monitors are more environment-dependent and adapt to the surroundings):

> Individual differences exist in the tendency to use deception in relationship initiation. Men and women who are high self-monitors, as compared with low self-monitors, engage in more deceptive self-presentations with a potential date, report using deception more frequently, and have more positive attitudes toward such behavior (Rowatt et al. , 1998)

Also read:

- Games men play
- Games women play
- Red flag games women play

Ideal partners

Does someone’s ideal of a partner influence mate choice?

Some famous speed dating studies suggest not.
However, research is actually inconclusive.

And, when analyzing longitudinal data, it seems that a closer resemblance to the ideal does predict outcomes and relationship fulfillment.

Who do men and women want?

We talk about this already on TPM.

Including the fact that men and women’s incentives and ideal partners differ, as well diverging interests.

But there is also the other side of the coin.
And what I found most helpful for most men who come from a “red pill” background though is this:

> Most evolutionary models of mate preferences have focused more on differences between men and women, but both sexes have also faced the same adaptive challenge of successfully rearing offspring (Geary, 2000; Kenrick & Trost, 1997).
> Human children require many years of constant care, supervision, and socializing to survive childhood and grow to reproductive age, and children born and raised by pair-bonded parents are more likely to survive to reproductive age and be more socially competitive later in life when they attempt to attract mates (Geary, 2000). Both men and women should thus be attentive to a potential long-term partner’s capacity for intimacy and commitment, because this would

This is probably why both men and women value warmth, kindness, and a sense of humor in potential mates (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Buss, 1989, 1994; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Campbell & Wilbur, 2009; Li et al. , 2002).
These are traits that facilitate relationships.

Ideal partner model

The model consists of three main components:

> perceptions of the self, partners, and relationships (Baldwin, 1992).
> That is, individuals' images of their ideal partners reflect their self-perceptions, the qualities they would like their partner to possess, and the type of relationship they would like to have

The ideal partner does impact relationship quality and satisfaction:

> Consistent with ISM, individuals who reported smaller partner discrepancies rated their relationships more favorably

Changing our partners: is it possible? Yes...

The common trope is that you should never try to change someone.

Well, that may not be true:

> It seems, then, that when individuals explicitly express dissatisfaction with their relationship, or ask their partners to change, this may create friction or negative feelings between partners in the short term; however, if the problem is eventually worked through, often via additional voice strategies, the couple may end up being better off and more satisfed over time.

And contrary to Carnegie's advice, the best way to facilitate that change seems to be with direct requests:

> Across time, the use of direct strategies (e.g. , voice) produced greater change in the targeted features as reported by both partners.
> Indirect strategies such as loyalty, in contrast, resulted in absolutely no change over time (see also Overall, Sibley, & Travaglia, 2010)

Good relationships are healthy

As the title says :).

Social support

Social support construct includes three components:

1. Existence of social relationships
2. Structure of one's social networks
3. Functions of social support

An important distinction made by Barrera is between *perceived* availability of support and *received* support.

> consistent evidence that social support was linked to cardiovascular health and immune functioning. In addition, they found evidence that emotional support in particular may be important for positive health outcomes

Even giving support is good for people:

> several fndings suggesting that giving support, at both the aggregate (perceived) and the enacted level, is

> associated with many positive outcomes (Brown, Brown, & Penner, 2012)

Friendships

Friendship Maintenance Strategies

Strategy	Description	Sample item
Positivity	Behaviors that make the friendship enjoyable and rewarding	Try to be upbeat and cheerful when together.
Supportiveness	Provision of emotional support and assurances	Try to make the other person "feel good" about who they are.
Openness	Meaningful conversations, sharing private thoughts, self-disclosure	Share your private thoughts with each other.
Interaction	Doing things together	Make an effort to spend time together even when you are busy.

Data from Oswald, Clark, and Kelly (2004)

The authors provide an overview of research findings across the life cycle.

Friends spend more time together in adolescence as they seek independence from parents and family.
The group also provides a sense of belonging and friends help craft a sense of self-identity
In this stage, friends can also compensate for low quality family ties -I know something about that :)-.

Research in problem-solving tasks distinguished two types of friends (Shulman & Knafo, 1997):

- Disengaged friends (46%) who worked independently (and even competed with one another)
- Interdependent friends (54%) who collaborated on tasks

Interestingly and tellingly, interdependent friends are better at managing conflicts to preserve harmony and mutuality.
And disengaged friends are more focused on individual gain -potentially more Machiavellian, I'd add-.

Friends are healthy. But toxic friends are unhealthy

Summarize the authors:

> A lack of regular contact with friends has disadvantages that range from vulnerability to depression, anxiety, and loneliness to increased risk of mortality.
> Friends offer protection through mechanisms that include stress reduction; fulfillment of basic needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence; and contagion of happiness and health-promoting behaviors.
> However, friends can also have a negative influence on health (…) who one's friends are, how healthy their behavior is, and how happy they are determine the effect that friendships have on health and well-being.

Read more:

- Frenemies
- How to recognize frenemies
- How to recognize toxic people and takers

Partner violence in intimate relationships (PV)

This chapter was eye-opening.

And it changed my view on toxic relationships and violence in relationships.

In part, my view was swayed by popular but unscientific books such as *Why Does He Do That* (read that review for more).

Partner violence (PV) is defined as any nonconsensual physical aggression against a romantic partner.

Overview

At a 16% incidence in a year's time for heterosexual married couples, partner violence is relatively common (Straus & Gelles, 1990).
And even more common in dating, same-sex, and cohabiting relationships (e.g. , Statistics Canada, 2005; Straus, 2004).

Feminist perspective

The feminist perspective sees PV as a natural consequence of the patriarchal structure.
Men control resources, and force women in a subordinate position -including with violence- (Bograd, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dragiewicz & Lindgren, 2009).

This perspective also has been referred to as the patriarchal model, the gender paradigm, or the traditional theory on on PV (e.g. , Ehrensaft, 2008) because it has been the most widespread and dominant approach in the past and.

On the positive side, the feminist approach helped raise awareness on PV.
Unluckily, some proponents were also not very scientifically minded. Say the authors on the misuse of the frame "feminist" and its positive associations used as a weapon:

> some researchers in the PV field have pointed out that this label has sometimes been used to brand those who question the premises or conclusions of the perspective as antifeminist (e.g., Dutton, 2012; Ross & Babcock, 2010)

The feminist perspective doesn't hold up well against the available evidence.
And especially in the West.
For example:

- **Most marriages are relatively equal in power** (e.g. , Coleman & Straus, 1990), contrary to the assumption that patriarchal values structure all gender relations
  - Women often have more decision-making power: recent evidence has suggested that women are more likely than men to dominate decision making in marriage, even in marital relationships in which men make more money (Morin & Cohn, 2008)
- **Male violence against women is more likely when men *lack* equal power** in their intimate relationships (e.g. , Anderson, 1997; Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1999). This is contrary to the assumption that male violence enforces male domination of women. Thus, PV may be an ineffective means of trying to compensate for a perceived lack of equal relationship influence
- **Only a minority of men are violent**, which would not be the case if violence against women were normative (Dutton, 1994)
- **Society seems to condone female violence far more than male one**: Women and men are much more accepting of women's violence against men than the converse (Simon et al. , 2001). This wouldn't be the case if society viewed PV as a fair way of enforcing male power over women
- **There is little link between "patriarchal beliefs" and PV**: the research linking traditional or patriarchal gender attitudes and roles with PV perpetration has been mixed at best (Sugarman & Frankel, 1996)
- **Men with some important "strong" masculine traits engage in LESS PV**, male violence against partners is negatively associated with masculine gender schemas (e.g. , Sugarman & Frankel, 1996) and with traditionally masculine traits of self-confidence and independence (e.g. , Murphy, Meyer, & O'Leary, 1994)

- **Women are as likely to be violent:** In unselected samples, women are as likely as men to be violent in their intimate relationships (Archer, 2000; Fiebert, 2010), including perpetrating severe forms of violence (Straus, 2011). For less severe PV, women maybe even more likely to be the initiators
  - Women are *more* likely to initiate PV: women are more likely than men to initiate PV (e.g. , Fergusson et al. , 2005), to report that they would be violent in response to unacceptable partner behavior (e.g. , Fold & Robinson, 1998; Winstok, 2006), and to be the perpetrators of PV when only one partner is violent (e.g. , Whitaker et al. , 2007)
  - One-sided and severe male-to-female violence is the least common pattern of PV in Western societies (Stets & Straus, 1992)
- **In violent relationships, BOTH partners are often violent**: a large body of evidence indicates that in at least half of relationships with violence, both partners report acting violently (e.g. , Anderson, 2002; Whitaker et al. , 2007).
  - The degree of violence is correlated: the higher the level of one partner's violence (and abuse more generally), the higher the level of the other partner's violence (e.g. , Bartholomew, Regan, White, & Oram, 2008; Fergusson et al. , 2005; Magdol et al. , 1997)
  - Most harmful PV happens when *both* partners are violent: the most severe violence and the greatest risk of injury occur in relationships with bidirectional abuse (e.g. , Anderson, 2002; Whitaker et al. , 2007)
- **Same-sex relationships are equally or more violent**, a pattern that wouldn't exist if the patriarchy was the only driver for PV

However, there has been some more limited support in non-Western societies:

> Consistent with expectations from a feminist analysis of PV, the lower the status of women in a society, the higher the society's rate of violence against women, in absolute terms and relative to the rate of violence against men.
> Additionally, the higher the proportion of men in a society who hold traditional gender role attitudes and find it acceptable for a husband to slap his wife, the higher the rate of violence against women (Archer, 2006)

And:

> rates of women's victimization are associated with lower levels of women's empowerment in a society relative to men's, stronger societal endorsement of traditional gender roles, and greater societal acceptance of husbands hitting wives (Archer, 2006)

So sociocultural explanations may be helpful in identifying broad social contexts that foster or inhibit aggression in close relationships.
However, they're certainly not enough.
Even in the case of societies with low female empowerment, it's not as black and white as a simplistic "oppressor and oppressed" view would have it.
When available, the data suggested that women's attitudes are at least as predictive as men's of levels of PV against women.
Indeed, women's parallel attitudes are equally predictive and in some cases more predictive, of their victimization as are men's attitudes.
And that suggests that women aren't simple victims, but play a role in *maintaining* traditional gender roles.

Finally, women's empowerment doesn't cure PV.
Instead, the higher the level of women's empowerment in a society, the higher the level of their violence toward men.

So, overall, the feminist perspective is lacking.

And even if it may explain a little part of men's violence towards women, by focusing only on men's aggression toward women, it still cannot provide a good explanation of VP as the larger phenomenon that it is.

Individual Psychological Perspectives

This approach looks at the background, personality, and social cognitive factors that predisposes individuals for perpetrating PV.

Some predictors of PV include:

- **Childhood conduct problems** is the strongest and most consistent predictors of later PV together with:
- **Adolescent indicators of emotional vulnerability**, including neuroticism, depression, and negative emotionality (for both, see for example: Ehrensaft et al. , 2004; Moffitt, Krueger, Caspi, & Fagan, 2000; Woodward, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2002)
- **Observing or experiencing violence in families of origin** (e.g. , Kwong, Bartholomew, Henderson, & Trinke, 2003), although the magnitude of these associations is generally small
  - Child maltreatment modestly predicts future PV
- **Poor communication and problem-solving skills** (e.g. , Anglin & Holtzworth-Munroe, 1997). And, I'd guess, these are related to IQ.
- **Accepting attitudes regarding violence** in close relationships (Stith et al. , 2004)
- **Difficulties in regulating negative affect** and developing close, trusting relationships and, associated:
  - Emotional vulnerability and reactivity, especially in the context of close relationships
- **Low self-esteem**
- **Anxious attachment** and interpersonal dependency
- **Aggressive tendencies**
- **Negative attributions** for partners' behavior and to view partners as critical and intentionally hurtful (e.g. , Scott & Straus, 2007).
  - Hostile attribution biases (Dutton, 2006)
- **Personality disorders**, including borderline and antisocial
  - mood disorders (notably depression and anxiety)
  - substance use disorders (Dutton, 2006; Stith et al. , 2004)

However popular an approach, it's challenging to develop "profiles" for abusers:

> Although typological approaches have been popular in the feld of PV, they suffer from a number of limitations: Typologies are diffcult to replicate across samples, they imply qualitative differences between subtypes that are not always justifed, they fail to account for variability within subtypes, and they generally fail to account for change in violence
> (…)
> most perpetrator typologies more or less explicitly link types of offenders with distinct forms of aggression. For instance, antisocial perpetrators engage in instrumental or controlling aggression, whereas borderline perpetrators engage in hostile, reactive aggression. Such simple distinctions are conceptually flawed (Bushman & Anderson, 2001) and obscure the multiple and changing motives that come into play in violent interactions (Capaldi & Kim, 2007)

Dyadic perspectives: it takes 2 to tango

The single, strongest predictor of PV is psychological or physical aggression by the other partner (e.g. , K.D. O'Leary & Slep, 2003; White et al. , 2001).

The state and quality of the relationship also matters, with relationship distress as a consistent correlate of PV (e.g. , Stith et al. , 2004; Williams & Frieze, 2005), albeit the association between distress and PV is likely to be reciprocal (e.g. , Lawrence & Bradbury, 2007).
And contrary to the myth that abusive partners make others miserable, both partners in relationships with PV tend to be dissatisfied (e.g. , Williams & Frieze, 2005).

So, it seems to truly be a case of toxic embrace that drags both down.

Worth noting that some couples in violent relationships are not dissatisfied (Bauserman & Arias, 1992; K.D. O'Leary et al. , 1989).

Other relationship factors related to PV are:

- Nonegalitarian decision making (regardless of gender), which probably contributes to marital conflict (e.g. , Coleman & Straus, 1990)
- Marital discord (e.g. , Coleman & Straus, 1990)
- Problem-solving skill deficits (e.g. , Anglin & Holtzworth-Munroe, 1997)
- Attachment styles mismatch: PV was most common in couples in attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance couples (Roberts and Noller 1998). Also see our seminal article on this "anxious-avoidant trap"
- **Strong women**. Paradoxically, women who report severe PV by their partners rarely comply with their partner's wishes in violent altercations, and most report fighting back physically (e.g. , Gondolf & Beeman, 2003; Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, & Cook, 2003).
  To me, this seems to be a case that may be covered by the power dynamics approach of the feminist perspectives

And more politically incorrect, especially because cases of true helpless victims also most likely exist:

- **Birds of a feather flock together**: individuals tend to select romantic partners who share risk factors for PV, and then the two partners mutually reinforce each other's aggressive tendencies
  - Assortative mating on antisocial behavior (H.K. Kim & Capaldi, 2004; Krueger, Moffitt, Caspi, Bleske, & Silva, 1998). And, from other sources, I've read the same for dark triad traits

Say the authors:

> couples identified for male violence are distinguished by high levels of hostility by both partners and by high reciprocity of negative affect such as anger, criticism, contempt, and belligerence (e.g. , Burman, Margolin, & John, 1993; Cordova et al. , 1993; Jacobson et al. , 1994)"
> In contrast, satisfied couples tend not to reciprocate negative partner behavior during conflict, thereby avoiding escalation and containing conflict (e.g. , Cordova et al. , 1993)

Indirect evidence that the relationship dynamics matter are also longitudinal studies showing that the rate at which individuals perpetrate PV is more stable within a given relationship than with a new relationship (Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Capaldi, Shortt, & Crosby, 2003; Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2002).

Of course, all individuals' risk factors and couples' interact and can either reinforce each other, or nullify each other.
For example, husbands' hostility and alcohol abuse predict partner abuse, but only in distressed marriages (Leonard & Senchak, 1993). And the effect of individual dispositions on PV tends to be mediated by relationship variables

such as marital satisfaction and conflict (e.g., K.D.O'Leary, Slep, & O'Leary, 2007).

The authors summarize relationship dynamics leading to PV with 3 main points:

1. Both members bring vulnerabilities for aggression to their relationship
2. The relationship becomes conflictual and distressed
3. Partners reciprocate hostile behavior, leading to escalation

Situational perspectives

This perspective looks at how specific situations lead to PV.

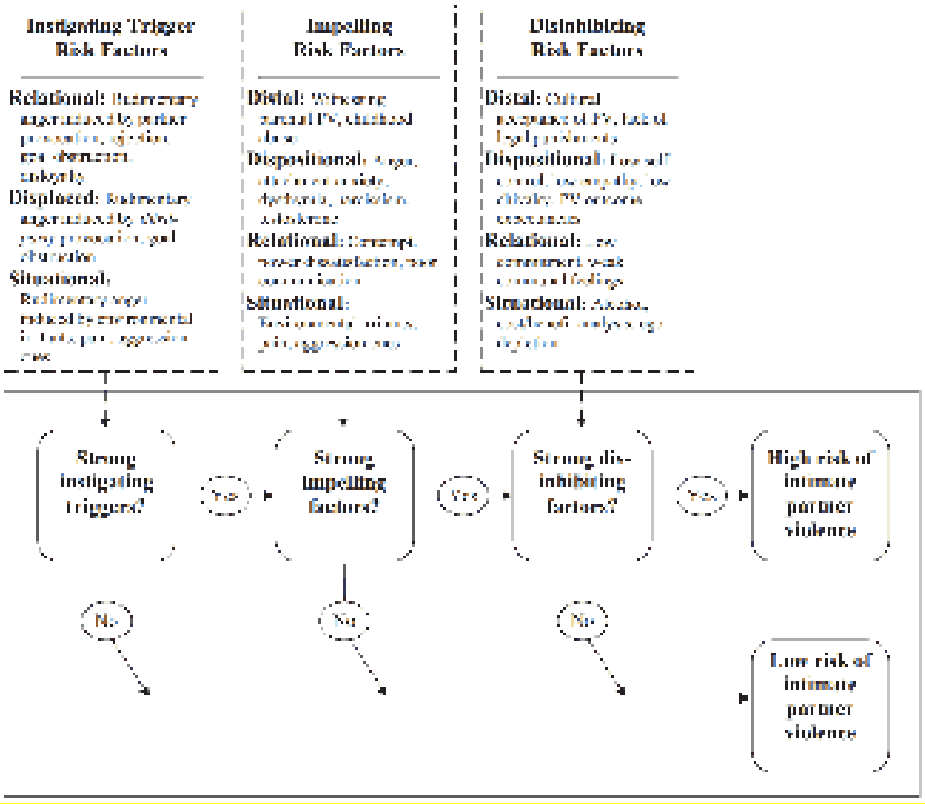
For example:

- **It may take provocation** for emotional sensitivity and impulsivity to give rise to aggression (Bettencourt, Talley, Benjamin, & Valentine, 2006)
- **Threats of partner rejection or loss may** lead anxious individuals to aggress
- **Verbal arguments often precede PV**. The few studies of interaction processes suggest that violence typically follows an escalating pattern of negativity by both

Albeit the authors don't directly state this, I think most sensible people would agree that rejection or many non-physical provocations are no excuse for PV.

Multifactor Models

Multifactor models are heuristic frameworks to provide theoretical coherence to all the different approaches in the PV field.



by J. P. Forgas and J. Fitness, 2008, New York, NY: Psychology Press. Copyright 2008 by the Taylor & Francis Group. Adapted with permission.

Though models differ in emphasis, all acknowledge that understanding PV requires consideration of multiple levels of analysis, from individual dispositions to the cultural context

Intervention and prevention for PV

The until recently more widespread intervention programs stemming from the feminist analysis such as the Duluth model show little evidence of effectiveness.

Cognitive–behavioral therapy (CBT) programs for male perpetrators fare somewhat better (Babcock et al. , 2004; Dutton, Bodnarchuk, Kropp, Hart, & Ogloff, 1997; Feder & Wilson, 2005; Murphy & Eckhardt, 2005).

Couples therapy is also a good option and, if present, including treatment for substance abuse may be a good idea.

Power and social influence

Theory	What is power?	Is power public?	What are the sources or bases of power?	How is power represented or manifested in interactions?	What are the outcomes of (still) having power?
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Major power theories

I ended up highlighting most of this chapter.

So bear with this long summary.

Definitions

The authors “provisionally define power” as:

> “*as the ability of one individual in a relationship (the influence agent) to exert influence on another person (the target of influence) so that the influence agent obtains the specifc outcomes he or she wants in a given situation while being able to resist influence attempts by the target*“.

The two dimensions of influence strategies

Most influence strategies exist along two dimensions:

- Directness (direct vs. indirect)
- Valence (positive vs. negative)

Influence strategies are carried out with influence tactics (e.g. , coercion, autocracy, reasoning, manipulation), which

are chosen and used to help achieve the goals.

Power is central to human relationships

> (…) power plays a central role in everyday social interactions, and it serves as an organizing principle in the social and behavioral sciences (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000)

However, as we mentioned here on TPM as well, it's been largely ignored by the social sciences:

> Given its paramount importance, one might expect power would hold a privileged place in the feld of social psychology and particularly in the study of relationships.
> Although there are major theoretical statements on what power is (e.g. , French & Raven, 1959; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and how it should affect relationship dynamics (e.g. , Huston, 1983), and there are isolated pockets of research on how power influences interpersonal outcomes, power has never been a hotbed of theoretical or empirical activity. One overarching goal of this chapter is to begin to change this state of affairs.

Furthermore the research has some limitations, including:

> Nearly all of this research has used self-report measures that ask relationship partners to make judgments of the relative balance of power in their relationship in general

Overview

Some general takeaways:

- **Around 50% of relationships are power-unequal** (Bentley, Galliher, & Ferguson, 2007; Caldwell & Peplau, 1984)
  - But even lower-power partners have some power: because most partners divide up roles and duties within their relationship, even the generally less powerful partner often has some decision-making discretion
- **Highly power-imbalanced relationships are unhappy and conflictual**: highly unequal power make for lower satisfaction, less stability, and greater conflict (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Sprecher et al. , 2006).
- **Men tend to have more power**: When power imbalances exist, both men and women usually indicate that the male partner has greater power in the relationship than the female partner (Felmlee, 1994; for an exception in African American communities, see Davis, Williams, Emerson, & Hourd-Bryant, 2000)
- **Power imbalances tend to be stable over time** (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Sprecher, Schmeeckle, & Felmlee, 2006)
- **Western couples prefer egalitarian relationships** in which both partners have equal power (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Galliher et al. , 1999; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997)

And very telling of power-craving psychology:

- **Men who seek great power are more abusive**. That is true for both men who *enjoy* having greater power in their relationships or who are less happy being less powerful. That is more true for men than for women who like being in charge (Rogers, Bidwell, & Wilson, 2005)

In general, be careful being higher power because you may forget to empathize and make it win-win:

> individuals who either are given greater power within a newly formed relationship (with a stranger) or are led to believe they have relatively more power are less likely to adopt their partner's perspective, less inclined to take into account what she or he does and does not know, and are poorer at reading their partner's emotional expressions (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). Higher power individuals are also shielded from

> being influenced by their lower power partners

Power and influence strategies

First off, a warning:

The research on influence, effectiveness, and outcomes is spotty.
And it doesn't allow for much generalizations, or for high-confidence conclusions.

That being said, let's see what we have:

Manipulation and supplication are weak

Howard et al. categorized responses into 24 influence tactics, and 6 strategies:

- Manipulation
- Supplication
- Bullying
- Autocracy
- Disengagement
- Bargaining

Weaker approaches such as manipulation and supplication were associated with female gender, having more feminine traits, having less power in society, and being more dependent on one's relationship partner.

Direct talk works to affect change, coercion doesn't

Fletcher, and Simpson (2006) looked at effectiveness, and:

> Although greater use of direct strategies was perceived by both relationship partners as less effective immediately after discussions of how one partner could change or improve something (…), direct strategies produced greater self-improvement change across time than did indirect strategies (Overall et al. , 2009), with greater use of negative tactics being particularly ineffective (Overall & Fletcher, 2010)

And:

> In terms of effectiveness, relationship referencing is most effective at changing partners' opinions, whereas coercion and logic–reasoning are ineffective, often pushing targets farther away from the influence agents' desired position (Oriña et al. , 2002, 2008).

I wish the author had directly defined "relationship referencing", but I suppose it refers to mentioning and emphasizing the bond, and what's good for the relationship,

The 6 main power theories

Social Power Theory

- **Who**: French and Raven, 1959
- **Power definition**: the potential to exert influence on another person

Social influence, in turn, is the process through which social power is wielded in interpersonal contexts via strategies and underlying tactics.

You socially influence someone when your presence or actions (influence agent) change the beliefs, attitudes, or behavior of another person (the target of influence).

French and Raven list six types of power:

1. Reward
2. Coercive
3. Legitimate
4. Expert
5. Referent
6. Informational

- **Limitations**: doesn't deal with established relationships or the advantages/disadvantages of having VS not having power

The authors say:

> does not explain how these bases of power are activated en route to exerting influence in interpersonal contexts or how being a more powerful versus a less powerful agent or target of influence affects personal or relational outcomes.
> (…)
> says little if anything about how power operates in established dyads …. (and) major outcomes of having versus not having power.

Resource theory

- **Who**: Blood and Wolfe (1960) and later extended by Saflios-Rothschild (1976)
- **Power definition**: an individual's ability—either potential or actual—to change the behavior of other members in his or her social system.
  - resources are "a property of one person which can be made available to others as instrumental to the satisfaction of their needs or the attainment of their goals".
    Examples of resources are skills, knowledge, money, and status

In this theory, imbalances in exchanges of (or access to) resources are the primary sources of power.
The lower power partner is dependent on others for access to the resources needed to satisfy his or her needs and goals.

This theory is central to the social exchange model, and thus also central to our approach.
An example to illustrate the point:

> Mary has little access to money, but she is willing to give Richard a lot of affection and support, and she takes care of the house and family. In return, she expects Richard to support her fnancially, but she does not require him to return her deep love and affection.
> Richard is an attractive man, and he could fnd another romantic partner without much difficulty, but he stays with Mary because he receives so much love and support from her.
> Thus, Richard has more power in the relationship than Mary does; he probably obtains more tangible rewards in most of their exchanges, he typically sacrifices less, and Mary usually bends to his will to keep their relationship harmonious.
> However, if Mary suddenly has access to money outside the relationship (perhaps through an inheritance), she may begin to perceive the status quo as imbalanced and may begin to expect more from Richard in return for her resources, which could alter the power dynamics in their relationship

TPM Note: Great example, but missing the most important elements
Of course, this is very much simplified.
As a matter of fact, it doesn't include the most important elements we focus on.
For example, win-win approaches that make it fair for her and make her happy to stay, personal power through power awareness and skills that make her *want* Richard to lead, etc. etc.

Interdependence Theory

- **Who**: Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959
- **Power definition**: the ability of one partner in a relationship to directly influence the quality of outcomes (i.e. , the amount of rewards vs. costs) that can be obtained by the other partner in a given situation

This theory draws from game theory and negotiation.
So for example, it considers the "BATNAs" of each member and individuals with better alternatives to the current partner have greater power.

It also includes the concept of "needing less" -in sociology, "least interest" (Waller & Hill, 1951)-.
Such as, the partner in a relationship who is least interested in continuing the relationship (i.e. , the one who has better alternatives and less to lose if the relationship ended) has more power.
Including dictating important decisions or whether the relationship continues or ends.

Dyadic Power Theory

- **Definition of power**: the relative potential of relationship partners to influence each other's behavior when a conflict arises between them
  - Authority are the norms regarding which partner ought to control specifc situations, events, or decisions within the relationship
  - Resources are the same as resource theory

This theory focuses on relationships.
So power emerges as a consequence of the interaction between the two.

The basis for power are the resources and authority that each partner *perceives* each one of them to be holding.

Power Within Relationships Theory

- **Power definition**: the ability of one partner in a relationship to achieve his or her desired goals by intentionally influencing the other partner to facilitate (or at least not block) what he or she wants to achieve
  - Influence occurs when one partner (the influence agent) says or does something that changes how the other partner (the target of influence) thinks, feels, or behaves during an interaction

Power-Approach Theory

- **Power definition**: an individual's relative capacity to modify another person's state by providing or withholding resources on which that person depends or by administering punishments

However, having resources is not enough.
Resources confer power only as long as the other person needs them.

Keltner et al.(2003) identified a broad range of variables linked with having high power versus low power.
These include individual variables such as personality traits (e.g. , extraversion, charisma) and physical traits (e.g. , height, physical attractiveness).
And they tend to be correlated.

My note: Finally someone who gets it :)
Not surprising I agree, since it's exactly what we always said here at TPM.

Keltner and colleagues, who seem to have a great power-awareness, also correctly state:

> Behaviorally, more powerful partners should show greater consistency of behavior across different situations, be less inclined to modify or mask their emotional expressions, and display more socially inappropriate behavior than less powerful partners, given that the behavior of more powerful partners should be less socially constrained.

Great observation.

Comparisons of Power Theories

Most theories include resources as one of the main bases of power.
And all mention the control of partner's outcomes through reward or coercion.

However, less has been said about how power evolves over time, or how low-power individuals can gain more power.
For that, you have TPM :).
See:

- Phases of power in relationships
- How to maintain attraction
- How women control men

And, say the authors, little has been said about how power is enacted or communicated during interactions.

For that, too you have TPM :).
You can start here:

- High power behavior
- Low power behavior
- High power verbal expressions
- Low power verbal expressions

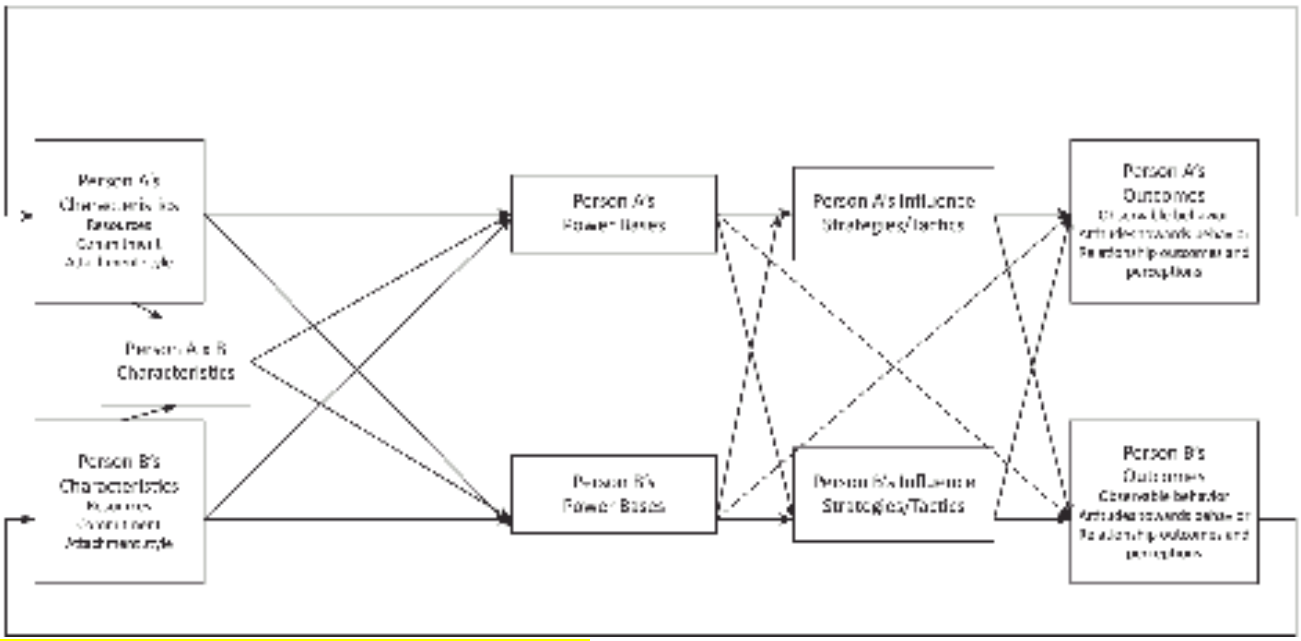
Finally, say the authors, the most under-considered topic is the outcomes of power and influence attempts on each partner and their relationship.

And to maximize that for you and for both, you have Power University :).

Towards a unified model: the dyadic power–social influence model (DPSIM)

The authors finally present their model.

And it was the best of them all and a major step forward.
Simpson, Farrell, Oriña, and Rothman did a fantastic job.



dyadic power–social influence model (DPSIM) chart

- **Definition of power**: the ability or capacity to change another person's thoughts, feelings, or behavior so they align with one's own desired preferences, along with the ability or capacity to resist influence attempts imposed by another person

There are four major sets of constructs:

1. Characteristics of each person in the relationship, which include
   - Attractiveness
   - Status and resources
   - Warmth and trustworthiness
   - Personality traits
   - Orientation toward relationships (e.g. , his or her attachment orientation, communal vs. exchange orientation; see Clark & Mills, 1979; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)
2. Type of power each person potentially has and can use
3. Type of influence strategies and tactics that each person is able to deploy
4. Outcomes each person experiences after influence attempts

Then the authors draw from previous theories.
The bases of power are from French and Raven. The high-level influence strategies exist along the two dimensions of direct /indirect tactics (e.g. , being explicit, overt, and direct vs. being passive or covert to resolve issues or inspire change) and positive/negative.
And negotiations follow the "who has more options has higher power" general rule.

This model is more granular and nuanced.
For example, it includes rules or norms for decision making *within domains* (e.g. , doing the bills, deciding where to go on vacation, who cooks, etc).
And it postulates that people can change or adapt ot the power dynamics.
For example, if the relationship becomes more equitable because she provides him with better rewards and outcomes, he may change his leadership style. Or adopt a more communal orientation toward her and their relationship.
Dependencies can also change over time. For example, while he may be needing her less in the beginning, moving

in together, planning to purchase a house, having children or starting a business adds more common goals.

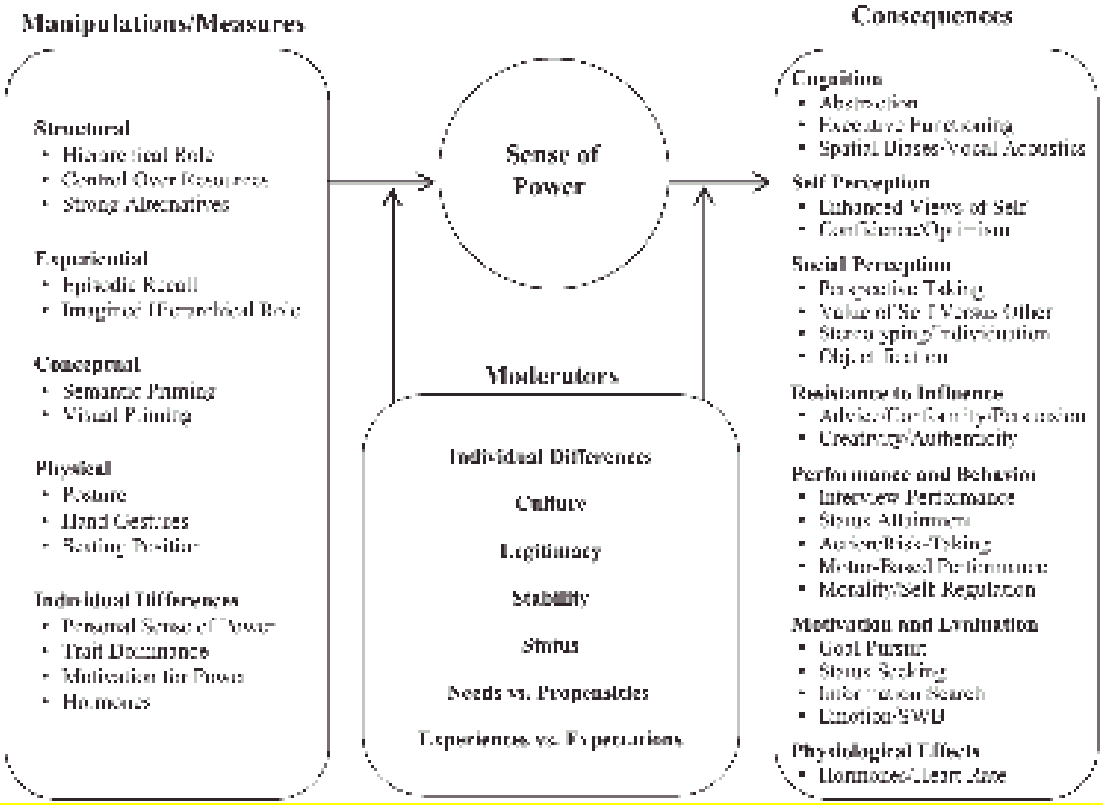
The authors have a great grasp of power.
For example, they correctly state that the lower power partner may adapt without any negotiation needed. It's because the lower power person anticipates and automatically abides by the higher person's preference, who may not even need to use "influence".
Or that a partner may confer more power to the other partner simply by over-estimating their access to certain resources. Albeit the authors don't say so, this is also where manipulation, advanced social skills, and advanced social strategies come into play.

This chapter was so good that you can find more insights in the "practical tips" section.

Psychology of Power

This was another chapter that I heavily underlined.
Many thanks to the authors Adam D. Galinsky, Derek D. Rucker, and Joe C. Magee.

How power has been researched



The manipulations and measures of power create a sense of power that then produces a range of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological consequences. The moderators of power can alter (a) whether power produces a sense of power or (b) whether a sense of power produces a particular outcome

Power has been manipulated in four ways in psychological and interpersonal research:

- **Giving power within laboratory experiments**. Structural manipulations that involve varying control over a resource, typically within the context of a laboratory experiment.
- **Recalling or imagining high-power situations**. Activating the experience of power via episodic recall or an imagined role manipulation.
- **Priming the concept of power**. For example, semantically by using word puzzles, scrambled sentence tasks, or photos
- **Embodied cognition manipulation**. For example, altering an individual's physical posture or nonverbal

behavior and builds on work on embodied cognition

Measures for power

There are many measures associated with power.

The authors say they're designed to demonstrate that:

1. Individuals scoring higher on the measure are more likely to hold positions of greater power
2. Individuals in positions of greater power score higher on the measure, or
3. The correlation between the measure and another variable is similar to the pattern of results produced by a manipulation of power

Let's now review some of the measures:

- **Personal sense of power** measures one's perceived ability to influence others. That is, how powerful one feels at a given moment in time.

Can also be used to capture a person's current feelings of power.
The authors say the scale has good external validity because individuals who occupy managerial roles at work and have more power report feeling more powerful than those occupying subordinate roles.

- **Trait dominance** is the tendency to behave in assertive, forceful, and self-assured ways" (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009, p.491)

The most used measures are the dominance Gough's (1987) Personality Research Inventory scale and Jackson's (1974) Personality Research Form.

Trait dominance is typically self-reported, and self-report measures of dominance are typically positively correlated with dominance behavior (Buss & Craik, 1980).
However, it's important to define it well because define because men and women perceive different behaviors as dominant (Buss, 1981; Schmid Mast & Hall, 2004; cf.Carney, Hall, & LeBeau, 2005). Note: unluckily though, the authors don't provide examples here.
And it's important to separate the *trait* dominance, which is stable across contexts, from dominance *behavior*, which can vary across contexts.

- **Motivation for power**, measuring the extent to which people value having power

Traditional measures include both the desire to influence others and a concern with one's status.
Written responses to motive-eliciting stimuli or situation have been used to measure it, but the Thematic Apperception Test is the most popular one.

It's important to note though that implicit or explicit measures produce empirically independent scores (Brunstein & Maier, 2005; Kehr, 2004; King, 1995; but see Emmons & McAdams, 1991) and effects (e.g., Spangler, 1992; for reviews, see McClelland et al., 1989; Schultheiss, 2001; Woike, Mcleod, & Goggin, 2003).
Albeit the authors don't dig deeper, I suppose by "implicit" they mean subconscious motivation, while "explicit" includes conscious with more direct questions about their motives.

Given TPM's take on the motivation for power, I was glad to read that some researchers emphasized the importance of teasing apart different types of power motives based on the intent behind that drive. Such as: for self-serving and antisocial goals (personalized power motive), or for goals that are profitable for others (socialized power motive)?

- **Hormones**: biologically, both testosterone and cortisol are related to dominance behavior and they are thought of as biological markers of power.

High testosterone and low cortisol appear to be the hormonal profile of high power, whereas low testosterone and high cortisol characterize people in conditions of low power

However, they're complicated and it's unwieldy to generalize since they fluctuate.

Hormones though explain some physiological reaction and connects to the "legitimacy" of power explained later in the book.
Josephs, Sellers, Newman, and Mehta (2006) proposed the mismatch effect to explain the findings that low-testosterone individuals had a negative physiological reaction and worse cognitive functioning to being in the dominant position. And high-testosterone individuals showed physiological distress and cognitive deficits when in the subordinate position.

Consequences of power

In general, research research has established that power has profound effects on people.
Including in cognition, self-perception, social perception, motivation, performance, behavior, and even physiological states.

Cognition processes

Power leads people to more:

- **Abstractive and higher-level thinking**, focusing more on the gist of information (vs. concrete details) and categorizing information and objects at superordinate levels (vs. subordinate levels).
  Example: high-power individuals tend to identify voting at a higher level (e.g., changing the government), whereas low-power individuals at a lower level (e.g. , marking a ballot)
- **Better executive functioning**, whereas low power tends to impair executive functioning compared with high power
- **Higher and less variable pitch, and more variable in loudness**, seemingly debunking lay theories that powerful "alpha male types" speak with lower pitch. However, this refers not to baseline pitch, but to the changes within individuals

Self-Perception

Power leads to:

- **More positive views of the self**, including increased self-esteem and "better-than-average" effect
- **Larger physical self-perfection**, seeing themselves as larger and underestimating the size of others (Yap, Mason, & Ames, 2013)
- **High confidence and optimism on personal outcomes**

In sum, say the authors, the powerful see themselves and their world through rose-colored glasses.

Social Perception

Power leads to:

- **Impaired perception-taking** with a reduced ability to take the perspective of others
  - Ignoring others' perspectives
  - Lower empathy
- **Higher self-value** compared to others, as shown by the propensity to spend more on themselves than others (while lower power individuals were more willing to spend more on others. Unless it was for status-related objects. Status-related objects are supposed to fill a more urgent need for low-power individuals: the need for power/self-advancement).

BUT it doesn't mean that powerful individuals will never spend on others. Chen et al.(2001) showed that goals to serve others may be *intensified* in high-power individuals (see Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012, for further discussion)

- **More stereotyping and individuation**
  - Prejudice VS outgroup
- **Objectifcation**, with a higher inclination to look at others as instruments for relevant goals achievement. For example, senior executives viewed relationships both with subordinates and peers in more instrumental terms than MBA students

Resistance to Influence

Albeit power is often conceptualized as the capacity to influence others, it *protects* people from influence:

- **More self-trust and less trust in others**, relying on own knowledge and ignoring or rejecting the advice of others (See et al. , 2011; Tost et al. , 2012). Tost et al.(2012) found that power led people to discount the advice of both nonexperts and experts
  - More trust in subjective experience (⚠ Potential for falling into biases), since they're more likely to rely on their own subjective experiences, such as ease of retrieval, when forming judgments (Weick & Guinote, 2008)
- **Less conformity**, with their attitudes less susceptible to conformity pressures and stronger resistance to pernicious pressure to act like the herd
- **More freedom of expression**. Powerful individuals are also more likely to express their current feelings and attitudes
- **More creativity**. Because powerful individuals are less influenced by others, they can be more creative.
  - More feeling of authenticity. However, this was mediated by individual's sense of power. People's expressions were more congruent with their self-reported emotions and traits when there was a fit between person and role
- **More focused negotiations for better outcomes**. High-power negotiators' anger focuses their attention and leads them to claim value, whereas low-power negotiators are more influenced by their counterpart's anger, which derails them from what they are trying to achieve (Overbeck, Neale, & Govan, 2010; see also Anderson & Thompson, 2004; Van Kleef, de Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006)
  - Immune from "anger power moves": power immunizes negotiators from the influence of their opponents' emotional displays, with high-power negotiators conceding less to an angry opponent than to a baseline or low-power negotiator (Van Kleef et al. , 2006)

Performance and Behavior

- **Better interview performance**. Also see "how to ace job interviews"
- **Higher status attainment**. People primed with power achieved more status with more proactive behavior during the very first few minutes of group interaction
- **More action-taking**. Higher power has been associated with greater assertive action across a wide variety of situations
  - More risk taking. greater risk preferences, riskier gambles and choices, find risky sexual activity more attractive, and riskier tactics in negotiations
- **Better motor-based performance**, with studies showing more putts in gold and better dart-throwing results
- **More amoral behavior** when chasing self-interest. Powerful individuals are more likely to cheat but only when it benefts themselves BUT they still condemn the moral deviations of others
  - But stick to the rules more: powerful individuals relied on rule-based moral principles, whereas low power

focus more on outcome and consequences. As a result, powerful individuals stick to the rules, whereas powerless individuals make more exceptions Lammers and Stapel (2009)

- **Better self-regulation when pursuing a goal**, but worse when not pursuing a high-priority goal. This is valid also when self-regulatory resources were depleted

Motivation and Evaluation

- **More focused and "ruthless" goal-pursuit**. Power helps prioritize goals and prompts goal-consistent behavior, with faster responses and performance of goal-related tasks.
  High power individuals also required less information to make decisions, reached decisions faster, and were more flexible (including when opportunities arose). They also paid less attention to constraints or obstacles
- **The behavior depends on the goal and personality**. Chen et al.(2001) demonstrated that individuals focused on the self behave more selfishly with power. However individuals focused on others become more generous with power. Similarly, with competitive goals and priming power leads to greater competitive responses. When the prime and goal are for cooperation, high power leads to more cooperative responses (DeMarree et al. 2012, Experiment 1).
  My note: I suppose power is associated with more general selfishness because selfishness maybe more common, and because many people never experienced power before
- **Less status-seeking behavior** while low-power participants were willing to pay more for an object associated with status (see also Charles, Hurst, & Roussanov, 2009; Rucker & Galinsky, 2009; Rucker et al., 2012)
- ⚠ **Less research** because power increases confidence, powerful individuals are less motivated to engage in processing information carefully
  - More confirmation bias, potentially (mediated by decision certainty). Fischer et al.(2011) found that making a fist led to more decision-consistent information VS decision-inconsistent information
- **Better mood and psychological well-being**. Power enhanced subjective well-being and individuals high in power reported more positive affect than their partners and individuals low in power reported more negative affect
  - More psychological resilience. Power affected people's physiological responses to different types of stress. And was a general buffer against the negative physiological effects of telling lies, increased pain tolerance, and

Interestingly, powerful individuals are also more likely to forgive relationship partners when they feel a strong bond (Karremans & Smith, 2010).
The authors say that goal-directedness explains why.

Moderators of power

Personality & Character

Machiavelli recognized that power reveals the person.
And, turns out, he was right.

As we mentioned before, Chen et al.(2001) found power-priming leads to more generous behavior in individuals with a communal orientation. But it leads to more self-serving behavior in those with an exchange orientation.

Some more studies:

- **Power only predicts sexual harassment in those predisposed to harass**. Bargh et al.(1995) found that men primed with power viewed female coworkers in sexual terms and flirted more openly with them. But *only* for those men with a predisposition toward sexual harassment
- **People who trust others trusted others more when they had more power**. Finally, social value orientation

only signifcantly predicted the extent to which high-power negotiators trusted their opponent, but not for the baseline condition. Such as: power amplified the participants' prior value orientations.

- **Liberal CEOs invest more in corporate social responsibility when they have more power**. Liberal CEOs invest in more corporate social responsibility work than do frms with conservative CEOs, and this difference is greater among CEOs with more power (Chin, Hambrick, & Treviño, 2013)

Say the authors:

> Power increases the correspondence between individual traits and behavior (Bargh et al. , 1995; Chen et al. , 2001; Galinsky et al. , 2008)

The authors say this is because of more independence -and less dependence on others-:

> power reduces dependence. When people are dependent on others, they are often limited in how they can act, altering their own behavior to ft the whims and tendencies of those on whom they depend.
> However, with power, the constraints that normally govern thought, expression, and behavior melt away, and people are left with the truest form of themselves.

Several studies support this conclusion, say the authors.

A good book on this is "Corruptible".

Culture

managers from Western countries took more resources when they had high versus low power because they felt entitled. In contrast, high power led managers from Hong Kong to voluntarily take fewer resources.Similarly, Torelli and Shavitt (2010)

Legitimacy

Legitimate power is deserved and appropriately exercised.
Illegitimate power is undeserved and/or abused.

Whether power is legitimate or illegitimate changes both the level of cooperation and the leader's behavior. Legitimate hierarchies tend to be more cooperative. In illegitimate hierarchies, the powerless tend to act -or want to act- against the status quo.

Legitimate leaders approach and lead the way.
Illegitimate leaders are more defensive and concerned with *defending* their position of power.

Stability

Stability refers to how stable or fluid the positions are within the hierarchy.

Unstable power and stable powerlessness produced more physiological arousal, which I suppose would also include "stress".

The behavior of high- and low-power individuals can diverge.
For example, Mead and Maner (2012) found that leaders high in dominance motivation sought proximity to an in-group member who threatened their power when it was unstable.

Instability also led to more defensive, group-harming behavior by the leader.
Maner and Mead (2010) found that insecure, unstable power led powerful people to withhold valuable information from the group and prevented other skilled group members from having any influence.
However, these self-interested actions disappeared when the group was competing against an out-group.

Connecting legitimacy and stability, powerful individuals act aggressively and demeaningly toward others when they feel incompetent in their position of power (Fast and Chen 2009).
Somewhat confusing for me, the authors then add legitimacy and say that when one feels illegitimate and stability is called into question, people may worry about the respect they get from others, and lash out.

Status

Albeit related, power and status are different.

The authors define status as “respect and admiration in the eyes of others”.

Many roles in society afford power but lack status (e.g., airport security, administrators, clerks, etc).
People judge most negatively those with high power but low-status, see them as dominant and cold, and expect the most negative interactions with them (Fragale, Overbeck, and Neale, 2011).
The rationale is most interesting.
Studies by Fast, Halevy, and Galinsky (2012) show that the combination of high power and low status leads people to demean others. Their reasoning is that power frees those who lack status to act on the resentment from lacking respect by demeaning others. In contrast, those who lack both power and status are not free to act on this resentment. And high-status people do not have any resentment :).

This is also why Power University advises a mix of power *and* warmth to get the most out of clerks.

Blader and Chen (2012) found that high power and status had opposing effects on justice towards others.
Power had a positive effect when combined with status when power was low but not when it was high.
So status with low power was positively associated with justice. But when it was high power, it negatively associated with justice.

Theories of Power

This chapter as well lists power theories.

The authors say that although the approach–inhibition theory dominated the field, the theories aren’t in opposition and likely they all contribute to explaining the large construct of power.
And there is some evidence for each one of these:

Approach–Inhibition Theory

Low-power people want to understand and predict the needs of high-power people.
And high-power people are oriented toward what they want and how to obtain it (Keltner et al.).

Say the authors:

> Keltner et al.(2003) argued that power produces its effects because powerful individuals have unfettered access to rewards, whereas powerless individuals lack resources and are more subject to social threats.

The relative activation of two neurobiological systems activates these different concerns: BAS and BIS.

Behavioral Activation System (BAS) attends to potential rewards and to engage in behavior that brings them closer to their goals.
Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS) attends to potential threats, recognizes goal conflicts, and interrupts ongoing behavior.

Limitations:
The moderators of power put some boundaries around this theory. The *meaning* attached to the sense of power also matters, and not just the sense of power in general.

General Model of Disinhibition

Extending Keltner's theorizing, Hirsh et al.(2011) presented a general model of disinhibition that, together with power, includes anonymity and alcohol.

All can have similar effects emerging from a single underlying mechanism: the decreased salience of competing response options prevents activation of the BIS (the "disinhibition effect").

The authors say that this model is consistent with many empirical findings regarding power -albeit they don't say whether the same is true for alcohol and anonymity-.

Agentic–Communal Model of Power

Rucker et al.(2012) suggest that high power produces an agentic orientation towards self-expression, self-expansion, and self-protection.
In contrast, states of low power produce a communal orientation focused on bonding with others and considering others in decision making.

In possible support of this theory Dubois et al found that charities appealing to competency, which can be linked to agency, got more donations form high-power individuals.
And appeals to emphasize warmth, which can be linked to a communal orientation, got more donations from low-power individuals.

Social Distance Theory

Mutual dependence make people in a relationship feel closer while a lack of dependence makes high-power individuals feel distant from their counterparts (Magee and Smith, 2013).

Possible supporting evidence comes from Lammers et al.(2012) who found that high-power individuals preferred solitary activities over collaborative or joint activities.
And their preference for social distance was explained by their perceived lack of dependence on their partners.

The authors say this may explain power holders' resistance to social influence (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Galinsky et al. , 2008), disinterest in others' mental states (Galinsky et al. , 2006; Woltin, Corneille, Yzerbyt, & Förster, 2011), and empathic inaccuracy (Galinsky et al., 2006; Shirako, Blader, & Chen, 2013).

Attachment styles

We have quite some articles on this already.

And we added the golden nuggets in this book as well.
See here:

- **Attachment styles:** overview
- **Anxious attachment**
  - How to date as an anxious
- **Avoidant attachment**

And:

- Toxic avoidant attachment trap
- How to spot an avoidant
- Do women like avoidants?

MORE WISDOM

Dating and mating are negotiations and compromises

> Both sexes would be most happy with a partner who is high on all desirable dimensions—physically attractive, wealthy, charming, agreeable, and so on (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999).
> However, most people are not in a position to attract a partner who is perfect in every way, so they must compromise and make trade-offs. When forced to compromise in choosing a long-term partner, men and women make very different choices. Women prioritize social status and give up good looks

And:

> Additionally, social exchange perspectives (e.g. , Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) suggest that individuals seek the "best" mate they can attain on the basis of the limits imposed by their own mate value, which leads partners who have similar "market value" to pair up

And yes, self-esteem does play a role (at least when it comes to expectations):

> Additionally, people who have more positive selfperceptions typically hold higher and less flexible ideal standards (Campbell et al. , 2001). That is, individuals who view themselves positively tend to expect more from partners and relationships and are less willing to compromise

Also see:

- Sexual market place
- Sexual market value

> Sexual Market Value: A Practical Analysis

Wealthy women prioritize attractiveness, poor ones resources

> Correlational evidence has shown that women who state they are in control of their own resources, and presumably less dependent on a man for assistance with offspring care, place greater emphasis on attractiveness in mates than women who do not feel in control of their own resources (Moore, Cassidy, Law Smith, & Perrett, 2006)

This is in line with our take on women's hypergamy.

See it here:

- Why hypergamy is overblown (especially in the West)

Men OR women may make for better business leaders depending on the situation

> Despite men's thirst for leadership, they do not necessarily make better leaders in modern organizations (Van Vugt et al. , 2008). Women might be more effective at what is called social–emotional leadership, whereas men might be more effective at task leadership

Men have smaller incentives to invest in their (current) offspring (because they can have more later)

> The fact that men can produce offspring much later in their lives than women leads to another asymmetry women have no opportunity costs associated with future direct offspring.Men, on the other hand, who have the possibility of future offspring during most of their life span, almost always have opportunity costs associated with investing in current offspring

Culture and biology influence each other

> The tendency within psychology has been to regard cultural influences as being largely independent of biological influences, but new research and theory have challenged that assumption (e.g. , Kenrick, Nieuweboer, & Buunk, 2010; Kitayama & Uskul, 2011).
> For example, people facing either temporary cues to disease or living in areas bearing higher pathogen loads show decreased extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience, all traits that may elevate the chances of infection exposure (Duncan, Schaller, & Park, 2009; Mortensen, Becker, Ackerman, Neuberg, & Kenrick, 2010; Schaller & Murray, 2008; Thornhill, Fincher, Murray, & Schaller, 2010)

Groups are inherently less cooperative and more competitive than individuals

Based on interdependence theory:

> Under such circumstances, groups are faced with social dilemmas (in the intergroup context, a conflict between in-group interest and common, superordinate interests), and they often exhibit considerably less cooperation than do individuals in similar situations (Insko & Schopler, 1998). The primary reasons for this have to do with the affordances of the interdependence situation. For example, some degree of conflicting interest poses a greater challenge to trust (and enhances competitive motivation more) in interactions between groups than in ones between individuals (for meta-analytic reviews, see Balliet & Van Lange, 2013; Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea, Insko, & Schopler, 2003)

Political inclinations: competitive individualists are right wing; pro-social individuals are liberal

> people with prosocial orientations tend to react very automatically to a violation of equality, revealing activation in the amygdala (Haruno & Frith, 2010).
> Such findings provide neuroscientifc evidence in support of the integrative model approach to relationships, which states that a prosocial orientation involves not only the tendency to enhance joint outcomes but also the tendency to enhance equality of outcomes (Van Lange, 1999).
> These differences in turn might account for the finding that prosocial individuals are more likely to vote for liberal, left-wing political parties than individualists and competitors, who are more likely to vote for conservative, right-wing political parties (Van Lange, Bekkers, Chirumbolo, & Leone, 2012)

We evolved logic to solve simpler, life-relevant problems. We're still much better at addressing and solving those practical problems, than abstract ones

> Cosmides and Tooby integrated the concept of domain specifcity with the emerging discipline of evolutionary psychology in their studies of social exchange (Cosmides, 1985, 1989; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992).
> Their studies revealed that participants were much better at solving logic problems when the instructions

> framed the problems in terms of “cheater detection” rather than generic if–then reasoning.
> Tooby and Cosmides (1992) suggested that this content effect reflected domain-specifc, specialized mechanisms in the mind of Homo sapiens that had been designed by natural selection to solve the specifc problem of cheater detection, not generic logic problems

Good relationships and love shield against cheating

> romantically attached participants exhibited less attentional adhesion to attractive opposite-sex faces when primed with love for their partner than when primed with happiness (Maner, Rouby, & Gonzaga, 2008)
> (…)
> Such findings are broadly consistent with an extensive line of research demonstrating that romantically involved and psychologically committed people tend to derogate attractive alternative partners and turn their attention away from them (Finkel, Molden, Johnson, & Eastwick, 2009; Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Lydon, Fitzsimons, & Naidoo, 2003; Lydon, Meana, Sepinwall, Richards, & Mayman, 1999; R.S.Miller, 1997; Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990)

“I love you” is more significant when said before sex

> Likewise, research on the temporal sequencing of the elements contained within the passion turning point has indicated that when “I love you” is verbally expressed before frst sex, it is considered to be a much more positive turning point and to more signifcantly increase commitment and trust than when expressions of love follow the sexual episode (Metts, 2004)

But I still wouldn’t recommend that approach to TPM’s audience.

Empathy may not be so useful, after all...

> Despite appearing at the top of the superpowers list, empathic accuracy may be both less elusive—and less valuable—than commonly believed.
> (…) research showing that empathic accuracy predicts better outcomes for perceivers is hard to come by (and these studies are generally correlational and cross-sectional, leaving open questions about causal direction).
> Empathic accuracy seems to be more a function of targets and their relationship with a perceiver; what the targets are thinking; how much perceivers want (or do not want) to know about it; and, perhaps, how much targets want (or do not want) their thoughts to be known
> (…)
> precious little support exists for the idea that boosting empathic accuracy would result in across-the-board improvements in people’s relationships with other people (…) some evidence has even shown that, in some circumstances, greater empathic accuracy would hurt people’s relationships with those they care most about.

So far, say the authors, “empathy” in the sense of what people think others think and feel tells more about the empathizer, than about the subject of empathic reading.

Tailor your message to people’s power

As per Dubois research, appealing to competency -and potentially other constructs linked to agency- works better for high-power individuals.

Appeals to warmth -and potentially other constructs linked to communal orientation- work better for lower power individuals.

I suspect the same can be said for political orientations.
Go agentic for conservatives and right-wing, and communal for left-wing.

There is a social price for acting too high power compared to your status

> people are severely punished if they do not know their place and act with greater authority than they truly have (…) Lelieveld, Van Dijk, Van Beest, and Van Kleef (2012) found that low-power bargainers were punished for expressing the emotion of anger, a response typically associated with high power

Celebrities may not give back because they feel that low-power people are giving out of self-interest

Aptly called the "celebrity dilemma":

> They are haunted by the possibility that someone loves not them but only their celebrity. In their studies, Inesi et al. found that power undermined the quality of relationships by creating instrumental attributions for generous acts.
> Powerful individuals were more likely to believe that favors they received from low-power individuals were offered for instrumental purposes, and this belief reduced their thankfulness and desire to reciprocate and trust the low-power person.

The researchers suggested that power does create a need.
Power creates a need for true relatedness.

Men / women differences in friendships may be overstated

The general trope is that "men do, women talk".

And there is some evidence for that:

> For women, talking is the central activity and goal, even when friends are involved in doing a joint activity. For men, enjoyment of shared activity (sports or a hobby) is the focus of the friendship (Fehr, 1996)

However, that difference may be overstated, and especially so for adults:

> Duck and Wright (1993) reanalyzed diary data on interactions with same-sex friends to examine within-gender as well as between-gender tendencies. For both women and men, the main purpose of getting together with friends was just to talk

Self-disclosure may be another over-stated difference:

> A meta-analysis of 205 studies on self-disclosure has indicated that, in interactions with others, women disclose slightly more than men do, but the effect size is small (Dindia & Allen, 1992)

Practical Takeaway Tips

Don't give back when people are giving out of the good of their heart

It has to do with communal VS exchange norms:

> (…) people not only seek internal consistency—consistent cognitions and selfassessments—but also

> consistency between the norms they desire for a given relationship and the norms the other person displays. In particular, research on exchange and communal norms has demonstrated that people tend to be especially attracted to others who immediately reciprocate benefts and favors when people desire exchange norms, which are built on principles of reciprocity. In contrast, they tend to be especially attracted to others who do not immediately reciprocate benefts when they desire communal norms, which are built on principles of responsiveness to needs (M.S. Clark & Mills, 1979)

In simple terms, exchange means “I give you, you should give back for a good win-win”.

Communal means “I give you because I like you, because it seems you may need or benefit from it, and for the pleasure of giving, you shouldn’t give back right away (or it frames my giving as self-interested)”.

To gain trust or assess other people’s trustworthiness, observe whether they put their interest or the relationship’s interests first

> In fledgling relationships, the degree which an individual can trust his or her partner should be inferred from clear conflicts of interest in which the partner forgos what is best for him or her and instead does what is best for his or her partner or the relationship (Simpson, 2007)

Trust is the balm to make relationships run smoother, as well sharing power and domains of power:

> a basic level of trust allows both partners to feel comfortable relinquishing some decision-making power in certain relationship domains, which should facilitate the differentiation of decision-making roles within the relationship

Share power with your partner: assign domains of decision-making to each one of you

I was surprised to read this, but I couldn’t have agreed more:

> partners should have divided up specifc decision-making domains so that each partner assumes primary responsibility for making certain decisions (e.g. , paying the bills, shopping, household decisions). This partitioning of decision making is more effcient than one partner making all the relationship-relevant decisions or both partners

Not being able to “let go” of a certain domain is the sign/red flag that trust is not there yet:

> However, this assumes that sufficient trust has developed between the partners; individuals in established relationships who do not trust their partners should continue to attend closely to the balance of power within their relationship just as they did during the fledgling stage, given their continued concerns that their partners might not be sufficiently responsive to their needs and best interests.

During transition phases in the relationships where old domains may not matter anymore and new ones become salient, a re-negotiation is expected.
However, if trust is there, the re-negotiation should be easier and faster.

To get better behavior from leaders, remind them of the “responsibility of power”

You may get more honest behavior if you remind leaders and powerful people of the expectations and responsibility that come with power:

> Rucker et al.(2014) also divided expectations into two types—prescriptive and descriptive.

> They found that in the domain of unethical behavior, people expected that powerful individuals would act more dishonestly than powerless individuals but they thought the former should act more honestly than latter. When they focused participants on the prescriptive expectations for power, the powerful participants cheated less. However, when they focused participants' attention on the descriptive expectations, the powerful participants cheated more.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

My main critiques are:

- **Wished for more background on whether it's consensus, or individual study that led to a certain statement**

Ever since the replication crisis, I think it's good to be a bit more skeptical of anything that has been published before the crisis.

And to generally be skeptical of any individual study's conclusions, especially when with small samples.

In that sense, I wished the authors shared more background information on some key studies.
Not all of them, but some key ones.

Or better yet, I wish the authors would provide background on what led to a certain statement.
For example, is it based on consensus, many studies with most of them reaching similar conclusions, or is it a single individual study?
Then, if it's just one or a few, share some more about the methodology and sample size.

- **Made me curious by raising doubts, but didn't provide enough evidence to help me make up my minds :)**

For example, discussing the criticism of social theorists to evolutionary studies, the authors say:

> When controlling for both the proposer's sexual skills and the perceived stigma associated with engaging in casual sex, the massive sex difference in receptivity to casual sex disappears (Conley, 2011)

The MASSIVE difference disappeared… but then SOME difference was still there?
I wanted to see the data -instead, it forced me to look it up-.

Same here:

> Consistent with their social role theory analysis, Eagly and Wood (1999) reanalyzed the data from Buss's (1989) 37-cultures study, demonstrating that sex differences in the preference for good fnancial prospects and youth in a mate were smaller in countries with greater gender equality. In other words, as the roles occupied by men and women in a society converged, so did their romantic partner preferences. Subsequent research showed that the sex difference in sociosexuality shows a similar trend, shrinking as a culture becomes more gender equal (Schmitt, 2005)

Smaller… Shrinking?

The differences still persists, obviously.
So criticism doesn't invalidate the evolutionary perspective.

But it's still a potentially highly significant criticism and correction that I wanted to know of.

The authors say the debate is still raging, which I bet it is.

But they could have misspelled a lot of those doubts by simply sharing BY HOW MUCH they decreased.

Finally, much of Conley's counter-research seems is based on imagination and recall.
Much different than real-life -something the authors should have mentioned-.

- **Too long evolutionary psychology overview**

There are plenty of books for that.
I felt this one didn't need to provide an overview of what's evolutionary psychology. Or, at least, it could have been briefer.

- **Simplifying the language may help (yes, even if it's not meant for mass-market)**

For example:

> Temporally extended situations afford the expression of self-control, delay of gratification, and the inclination to stick with it, raising the issues of dependability versus unreliability and loyalty versus disloyalty

It does make sense, especially in context.
But it you simplify sentences like that one, you also help people learn faster, and potentially retain more.

- **Sometimes I felt it mis-attributed some empirical evidence as supporting the wrong construct**

For example, this should be evidence that "consistency" is attractive:

> In an influential study (Aronson & Cope, 1968), participants tended to be especially attracted to another person who had punished their enemies and rewarded their friends

Sounds to me a lot more like attraction to power and an "honorable character" to me.

- **Sometimes jumps to unfounded explanations**

For example:

> participants in one study who expected to initiate a new same-sex relationship preferred somebody who they believed possessed dissimilar interests, presumably because the dissimilarity would provide an opportunity for selfexpansion (Aron, Steele, Kashdan, & Perez, 2006)

Props to add the "presumably".
But it still seems a major stretch.
Could it be instead that dissimilarity provides better genetic match for survival and thriving of the offspring?
COULD be, but… Let's just not assume too much maybe -or let's be even clearer that we're just guessing-.

- **End-of-chapter summaries weren't always good summaries, or summaries at all**

This is a bummer for me because some chapters may not be in-scope for me or TPM, but I'd still like to get the gist

- **Sometimes endorses some contentious research (power poses)**

For example:

> Carney, Cuddy, and Yap (2010) demonstrated that power could be activated by one's posture by placing people into an expansive pose (presumed to create a state of high power) or constrictive pose (presumed to create a state of low power).

That raised some suspicion for me.

- **Two different chapters both have “theories of power”**

And that led both to repeating similar concepts and quoting the same research, as well as adding more theories that may confuse readers.

Editing could have been better on that.
Combine all of them, cut the repetitions, integrate the differences, and provide an overview that’s both briefer, and more extensive.
That would make for a better book.

REVIEW

The *APA Handbook of Interpersonal Relations* is a treasure trove for anyone seeking an overview of the empirical evidence on interpersonal relationships.

Just by judging this summary you can see how much value I found in it -and it’s not even all the notes I took-.

The chapters on power were a bomb.
I had been looking for a handbook on power and turns out… It was hidden here :).
And there is a ton more than just power.

Some of the wisdom I learned from this book already went into improving several of our articles.
And some more wisdom is also making Power Univeristy better and better.
That is one of the greatest compliments I can pay to any resource.

So I’m very grateful to the authors and editors of this book.

As for recommending, it wouldn’t probably be at the top of the recommended list for the general public.
But it may be perfect for researchers starting their careers in interpersonal relationships and related fields.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Skool: a High-Value Platform—or a Guru-Driven Ecosystem?

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 May 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Skool is a community-based learning platform where creators share courses and offer communities of fans and students.

In this review we analyze whether Skool is good for the typical TPM audience: smart, ambitious, and high-agency men who benefit most from deep, high-ROI resources.

And, based on our analyses, we'll also share whether it can benefit more elite creators.

Is Skool legit? Yes, but… Not good enough for Power University

Contents

- Intro
- 1. Skool is only "OK" for course delivery
- 2. Communities of Fans, Rather Than Empowered Men
- 2. Communities are of average quality
- 3. Top teachers rarely are top experts
- 4. The focus of Skool is "make money". "Be an expert" and "add value" don't feature
- 5. Some Skool courses are pseudoscientific woo-woo
- 6. Skool gamification doesn't promote learning, it dumbs it down
- 7. Creators must relinquish control to Skool
- When Skool Works Well
- Overall: High Noise, Low Signal
  - Exceptions Apply Based on Community
- SUMMARY

Intro

Skool itself is just infrastructure, and it's a good infrastructure, and constantly developing.

The real question is: what kind of creators and communities does it attract and reward?

That's what I looked into when I considered Skool as an option for hosting TPM's video courses and/or the community.

This review shares the results of my analysis.

1. Skool is only "OK" for course delivery

And it doesn't replace a dedicated content management system.

So right off the bat, it was "no" for Power University.
Power University *the course* is the main part of our value delivery.

Skool offers "good", but more basic options for information delivery. It seemed to me that it's best for single-video lessons.
It has more limited options for text, extras video embeds, and has no quizzes.

The focus of Skool is on the *community*.
And it shows.

When it comes to the main course VS community, it's also about values for me:

2. Communities of Fans, Rather Than Empowered Men

Many communities on Skool are built around a charismatic leader personality.

In TPM's analyses, these types of leaders can have dark-triad traits, and their interest may diverge from what best serves their communities.

See an example from a fomer top Skool "guru" here:

> **Hamza Ahmed**: I see myself as a cult leader (…) this is like a genuine fuc*ing cult

Another top community is literally called "(founder name) cult".

As much as cult followers may titillate the founder's ego, we stand for the *opposite*.
We develop *individuals* here, not tribesmen. Men who are going to be leaders themselves, not followers.

P.S.: Hamza deleted the original video.
I don't think it's cool to share a video one has deleted, but it provides an important case study for this analysis.

2. Communities are of average quality

This is a law of most large communities:

Distribution of Skool community members, with most of them being average

But that curve may be optimistic for Skool because the top 10% of men aren't in there to begin with.

Most members in Skool's self-help communities are more likely to be naive beginners, which means that **one can hardly learn from other community members.**
It's blinds leading the blinds.

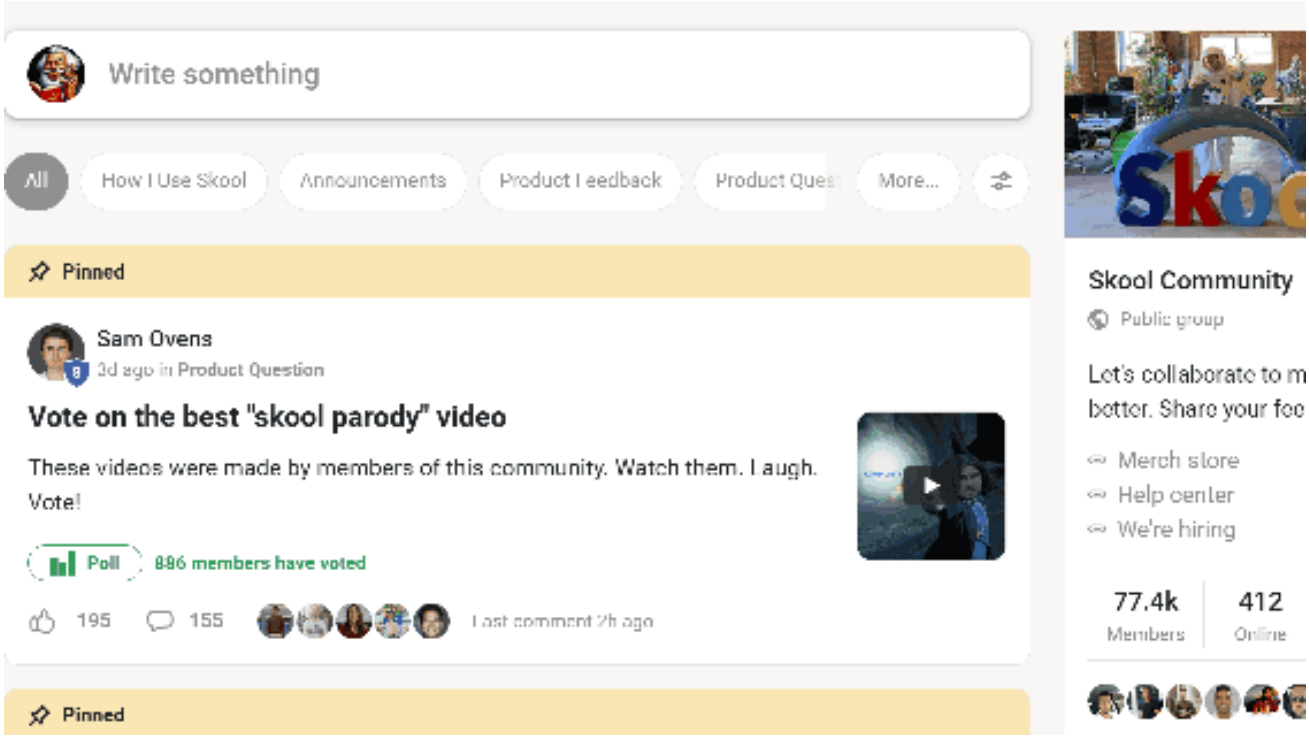
Furthermore, the few communities I checked were promoted as "support-crutches" for the members' mental health and self-help efforts.
And the leaders didn't seem exactly paragons of mental health-.

At best, it's a low-level ceiling self-help.

Including:

2.2. Disempowering followers' fandom is common and encouraged

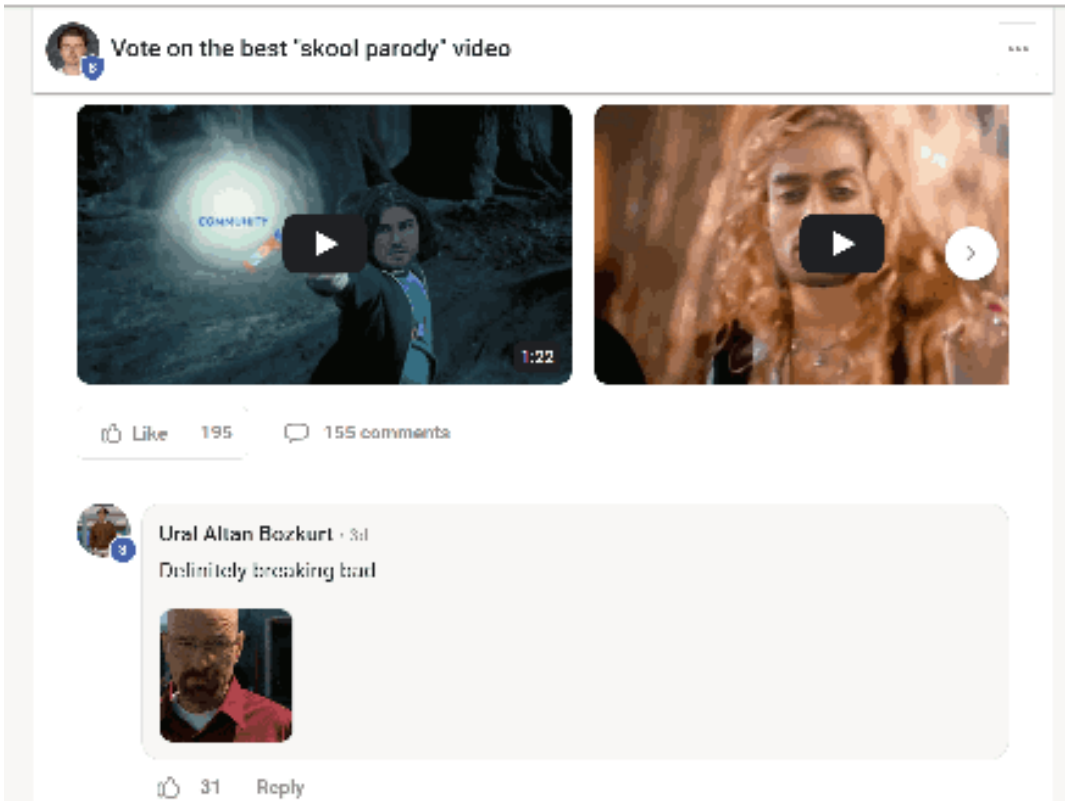
This is the pinned post on the Skool community:



> **Sam**: vote on the best “skool parody” video

The options to “laugh” about are parodies of Breaking Bad, Friends, and Happy Potter.
P.S.: I haven’t seen a single one of them because I was busy living my life and building this business.

And clicking on it we get the parody videos featuring the founders and top creators:



A bit self-referential -narcissist-ish maybe?-.

All the top comments feature various GIFs and memes.

For the record, my gut reaction to this is “Why should I give a f*ck about your self-referential parody”.
If I join a community about the platform I’d expect pinned on top tutorials and best “how tos”.

Those top comments help users acquire the various prizes and awards -ie.: a book and a handnote from Sam the man himself. Wow!-.

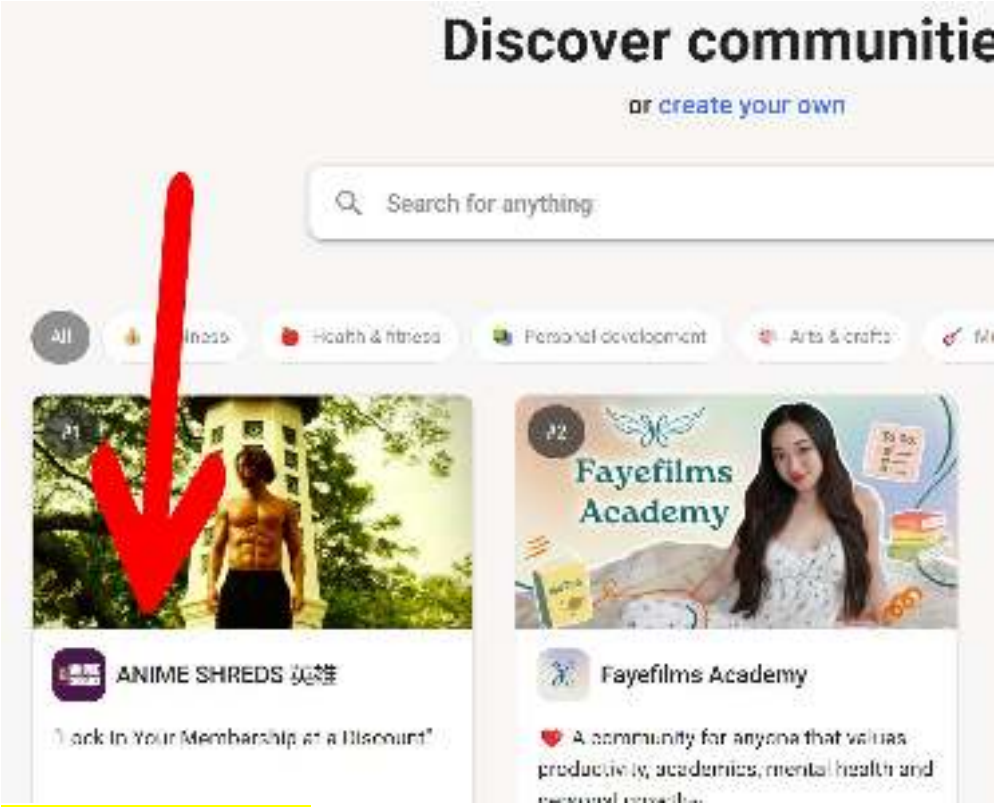
And it’s a game every other guru/leader repeats in their own communities (keep on reading).

2.3. Pervasive meme culture doesn’t align with our approach

As above.

Memes and GIFs everywhere.

The #1 community at the time of writing is literally about animes of shredded men:



Not exactly top masculinity

2.4. Boosterism & “cold-shower self-help” doesn’t align with our approach

Several communities I’ve seen promote basic, run-of-the-mill self-help.

Including:

- **(Over-)optimization myths**
- **Struggle porn**
- **Community-based encouragement** “if you’re lonely” or need a push
  - “You can do it” type of support and self-help

We’re not too big into encouragement or cold showers type of self-help here.

Nothing against them, and I even do cold showers.

But we don’t see them as instrumental in advancing in life.

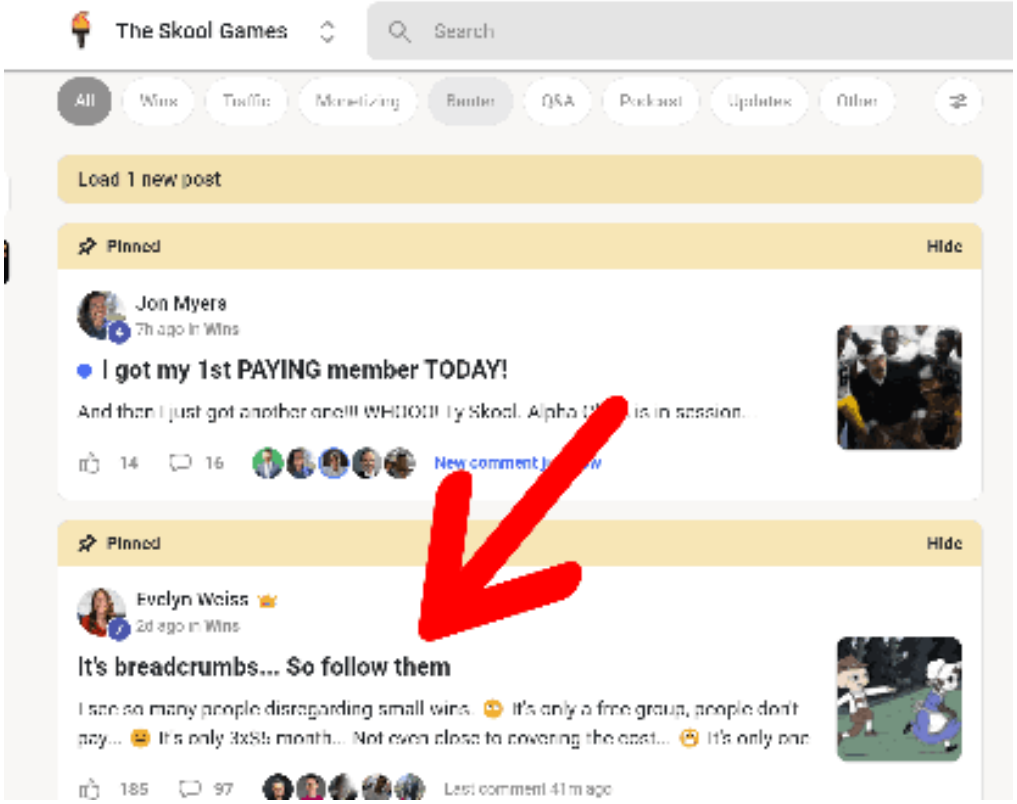
We focus instead on what we think is instrumental. The mindsets and hard skills to acquire respect, status, and attraction.
And the Machiavellian thinking to facilitate goal-achievement and life advancement in all areas.

2.5. Friends & nepotism over quality

Some big and early community founders are very close to founders and owners.

One of them is a Evelyn.
I'm sure adds ton of value.

However, the percentage of her posts that end up pinned seemed a bit too much:



This one was simple "you can do it" boosterism.
Did it call for a pin?

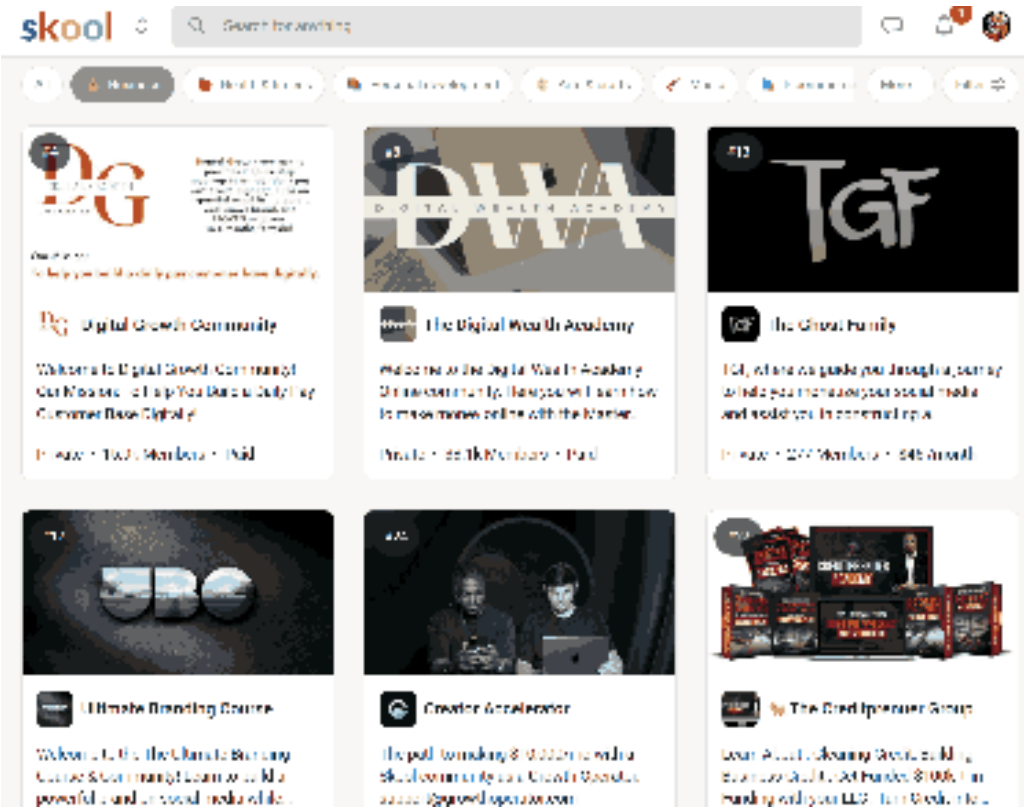
3. Top teachers rarely are top experts

… At least the ones I saw.

And the ones promoted on the first page.

And you know as they say: if you wanna hide a body for good, bury it in Google's second page.
If that applies to Skool the experts may as well be dead on the Skool's water :).

Take business for example:



I don't recognize any business owner here.
And not even the most popular business-courses names and providers.

3.2. Top dating teachers were dubious

Same for dating and relationships where I have more experience.

Not a single name I recognized.
And the most successful community founder was a "high-energy type" PUA who ran a prank channel.
In a video he complained about being banned in multiple locations in his hometown. And taught others how to live while he disclosed depression boutes in 2 of the handful videos I checked.

Please note: no dissing on these people.
I wish them the best.

What I'm judging is the expertise as teachers and content providers.
And if I'd have to bet money, I wouldn't be on A, them having reached top-level expertise. And B, I wouldn't bet on those courses containing much valuable information -at least compared to what's easily and freely accessible anywhere else-.

These dynamics may be normal for the beginning of a learning platform such as Skool.
Few people with a thriving business, an awesome life, or a large audience may want to join a new and untested platform.

However, Skool may struggle to attract top talent in the future as well:

3.3. Skool may always struggle to attract top talent...

… Because top talent has power and leverage.

And why should they go to Skool instead of having their own platform?

Instead, Skool may be stuck with "middle of the bell curve curse".
Such as, they provide an enticing value proposition for those who have a sizable-enough following, but not large

enough to do their own thing.
And they appeal to the beginners starting out.

Exceptions always apply, but… I haven't found many :).

These may change if Skool becomes THE place to go.
But from what I've seen, it's far from it.

3.4. Skool has no metric to promote teachers based on quality

It seems to me Skool focuses on income first, and community size second.

It may be a fair approach.
However, it's not good for us.

I feel TPM brings massive quality to a more limited audience (for now, at least).

So the discovery algorithm may penalize us in favor of more guru-esque teachers who gather more ~~shee~~…
Followers :)

4. The focus of Skool is "make money". "Be an expert" and "add value" don't feature

And it shows in the communities.

Alex Hormozi said he had "nothing to sell you" when he started in social media.

Back then it may be largely true, but it's the opposite with Skool.
Alex may want to be careful with the tons of people who may seek to use him to sell you:

Some Skool creators who made top 10 monthly revenues seek Alex Hormozi pictures to gain social proof

That may be totally fine if those creators and communities have true value to provide.

It may be the case for the man in the picture.

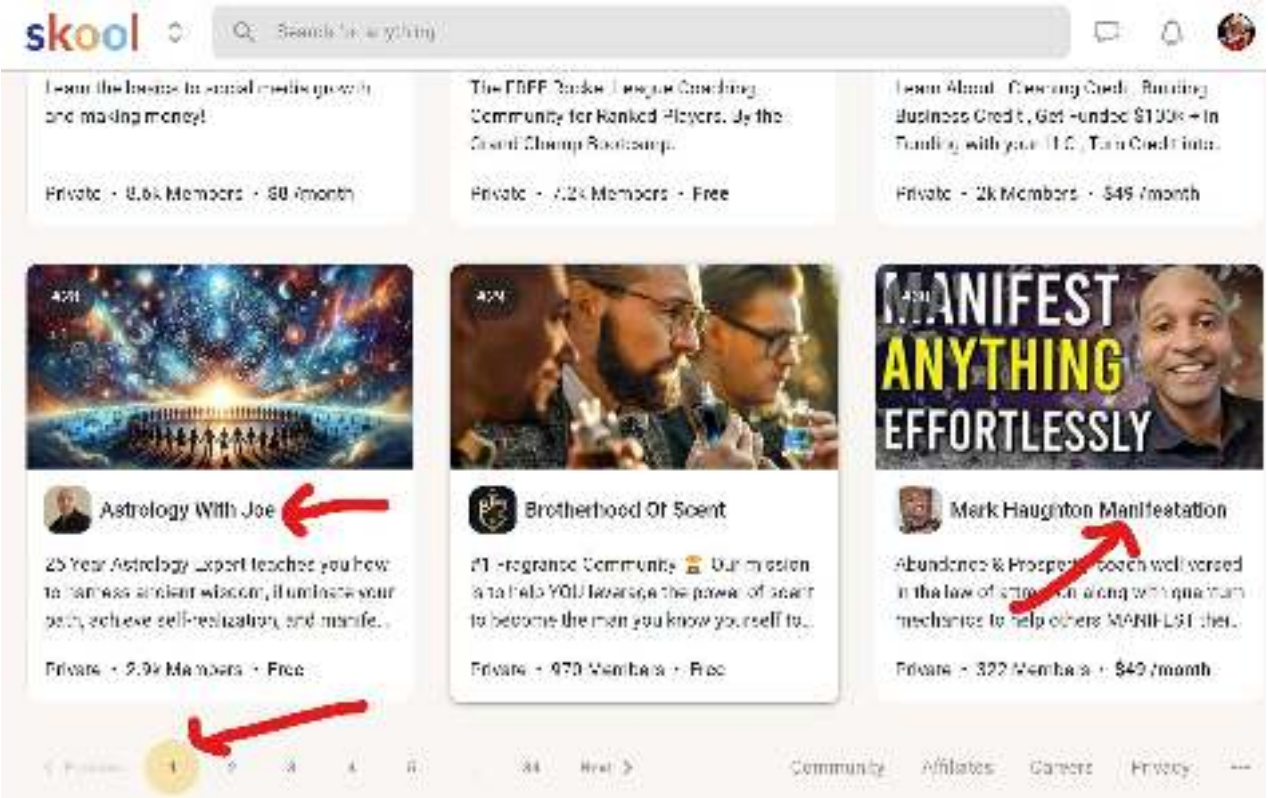
And I'm sure it's the case for many communities.

HOWEVER, as a whole, it's not the feeling I got:

5. Some Skool courses are pseudoscientific woo-woo

Even on the top page, many courses didn't exactly inspire trust, expertise, or… Usefulness.

From the first top page:



Skool boasts on the front page courses on astrology and manifestation

Fair enough, this is the bottom… But still the top page.

But I wouldn't want those *anywhere*.

And… it's not like the ones above are much better.

We've got:

- **Coaches teaching others how to coach**. Sam Owens being the founder, don't hold your breath for that to disappear :). (P.S.: Iman Gadzhi was one of Sam's private students. Do of that what you want)
- **Make money online courses** taught by people who make money online teaching others how to make money
- **Trading** schools and systems -not gonna judge how good they are, but I'll tell you this: I wouldn't put *my* money into their systems :)-
- …

So, yeah, we've got a who's who of the Internet seedier underbelly here.

Could we be the exception joining Skool?
In doubt, Power University in its full feature form stays here :)

And can Skool ever attract any top teacher with that on the first page?

5.2. Skool games incentivize ponzi-like communities

Alex Hormozi is chasing me with Skool Games ads:

Alex Hormozi promotes Skool Games parading the creators who made the most money

It says that it's free, and that the "game" rewards successful creators, who then teach you how to succeed in Skool.

That's NOT an incentive to bring true successes to the fore, in my opinion.
It strictly promotes as teachers the successes *within Skool*.

That is great for the winners.

But for the learners?

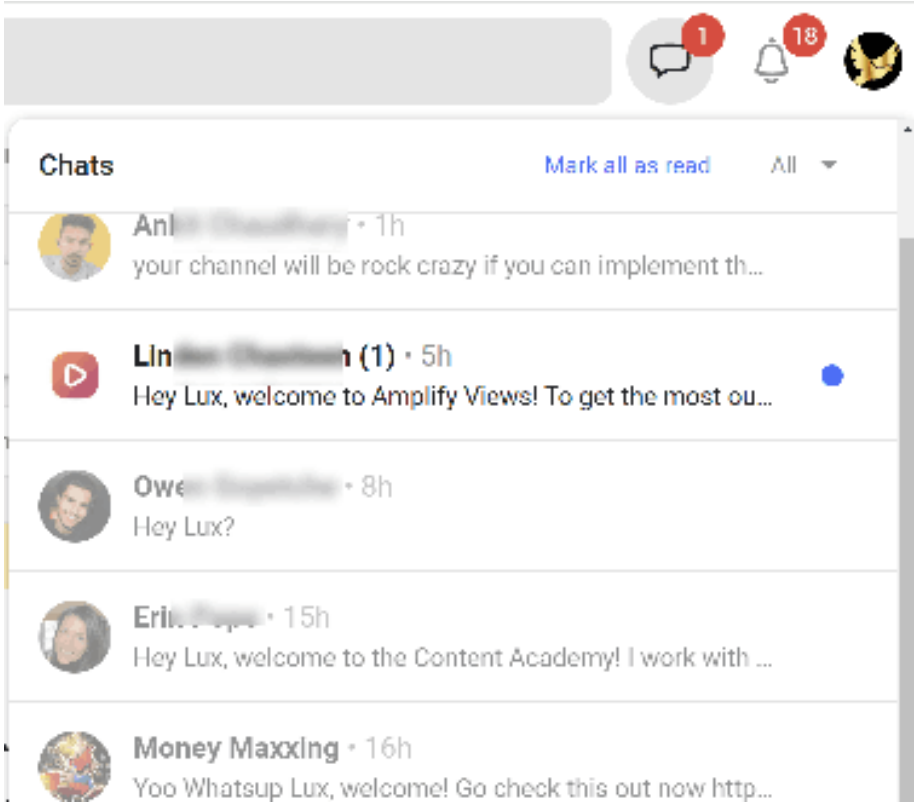
Given the teachers available, I think the odds are low you'd get any true expert or winner to teach you.

Instead, I'm afraid, that approach promotes MLM-type ponzis.

5.3. High-pressure sales tactic reminds of MLM

I joined a few communities only.

And the amount of notifications, emails, and PMs I get make me want to run the other way:



The approach of some Skool communities to chasing prospects feel like skinny dipping in Pirana-infested waters :)

All promising crazy results… That I didn't even ask for.

In the interviews I listened to many mention how they give tons of value away for free -mimicking Alex Hormozi's model maybe?-.
But I only had two questions I asked on several groups and I didn't see all that free giving :).

6. Skool gamification doesn't promote learning, it *dumbs it down*

Alex Hormozi said Skool uses gamification to make learning addictive.

As per their own (quite fun) Skool parody, Skool replaces the negative dopamine addiction of social media, with dopamine addiction that's good for you.

That's a noble cause.
And it would be great if it worked.

And maaaybe it does work.
A bit.

In that sense, I admit, our title here maybe overly critical.
And there may be benefits of "gamifying learning".

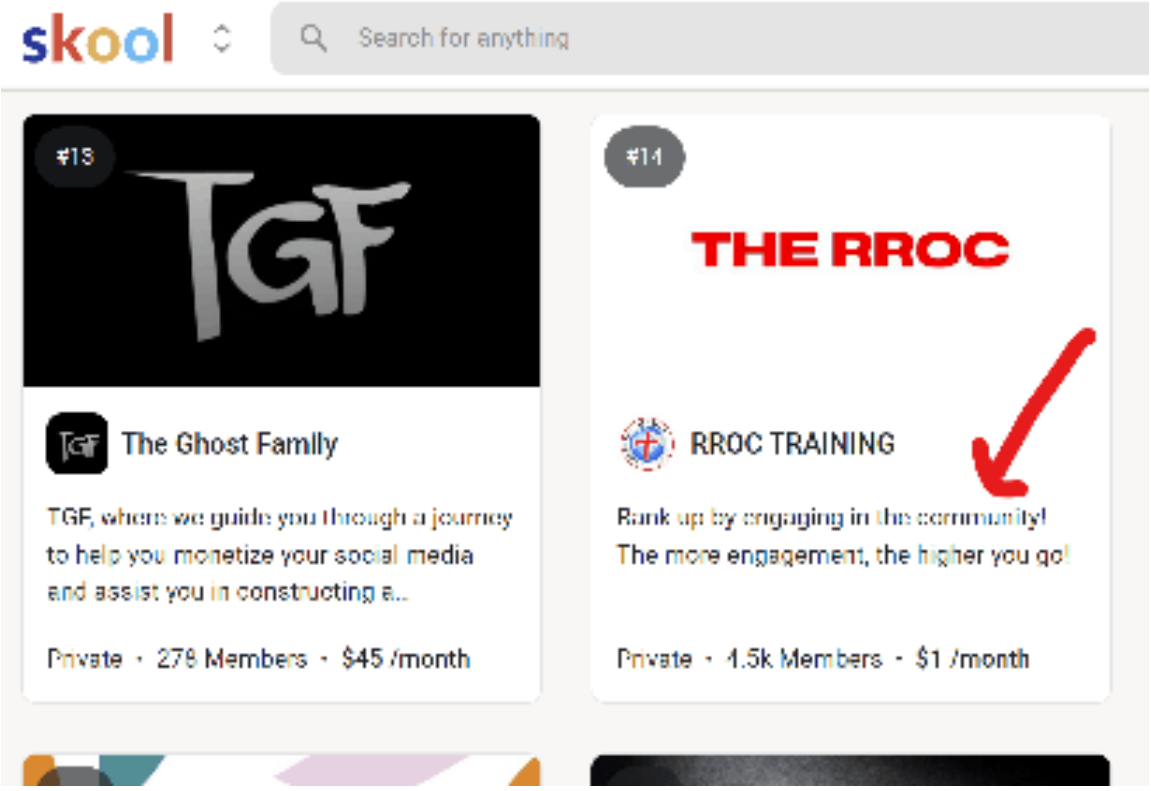
Such as, the "dumbification" side of the gamification approach pulls learning down.
But the learning also pulls and the dumbs upward.

However, from what I've seen, I'm not convinced Skool's way of doing it provides any meaningful impact.
(Keep on reading).

6.2. Waste your time playing the points game?

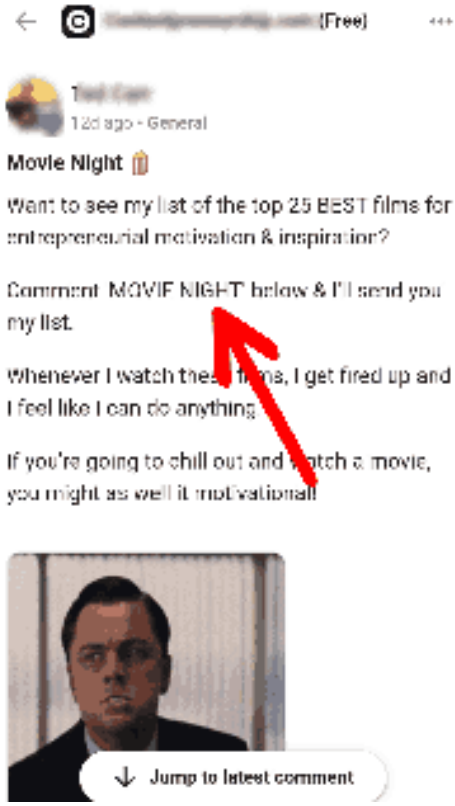
Case in point:

A whole top community is dedicated to gaining points by engaging more:



But at least we get another example of a community that doesn't jibe well with our values and approach. This creator makes 4.5k/month while his followers do all the work of engaging with each other.

And many communities I've seen play this same game to inflate engagement:



> **Skool "teacher"**: comment "movie night" below and I'll send you my list <—- technique to drive up engagement to get as many comments as possible

Why can't he write that publicly?
Because it's all a game to drive up engagement.

No real learning, just using the followers to drive up engagement.
Something I've noticed from several other community leaders.

That may be OK if there is also lots of wisdom to gain.
From what I've seen though, there wasn't much concrete wisdom and giving in many of these communities.

Hopefully, if TPM joins in, we can be one of the exceptions :).

7. Creators must relinquish control to Skool

This is true for any third-party platform.

You upload your course, build your community and business there…

… And then you're fully dependent on them.

Maybe they decide to hike your price.
Or kick you out.
Or they go belly up, or they won't promote you anymore…

And then you're screwed.

I'd rather not create such a huge depending on my business.

When Skool Works Well

While it doesn't align with our audience of non-beginners who need advanced tools rather than motivation, Skool may work much better for:

> - Beginners needing accountability
> - Beginners who benefit from daily encouragement
> - Creators monetizing influencer-first brands <— Note: This works for the creator, not necessarily the audience
> - Fans who just want more of their favorite influencers

Overall: High Noise, Low Signal

TPM takes the opposite approach: high signal, low noise.

We put a lot of work and effort into our products.
We're NOT a small course with community encouragement.

We're a *world-class* course with an optional small community.
Few of our customers are even interested in the community side.
I suspect we appeal far more to "sigma types", and people with busier lives who don't wanna spend too much time in online forums.

At TPM, we have hundreds of handbooks and resources to back our products.
Power University is one of the most scientific self-development courses in the world.
And we've re-worked our product over the years, taking hundreds of students' feedback.

I doubt many others put this amount of work into their products.

Because of the above, I concluded that Skool may not pull us up, but drag us down.

Exceptions Apply Based on Community

While the *average* Skool community is not a fit for smart, high-agency men, **every community is different**.

So, depending on community and creator, you may also get high-value, high ROI communities that genuinely help you develop and grow.

SUMMARY

Most Skool communities are not a good fit for ambitious men and high-power men because they're high noise (community of learners), low-signal (average platform for courses), and built around the influencer's charisma.

From TPM's perspective of an ambitious and smart man, this makes Skool a poor general platform.

However, while this applies for a general overview of Skool, each community is different. And while I haven't personally seen any, exceptions most likely apply.

From a creator point of view, we decided to have a community and a simpler course, but not our main courses.

The Essays of Warren Buffett: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 May 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Essays of Warren Buffett (2023) is a collection of Warren Buffett's insights on various topics related to investing, management, and corporate governance. Compiled by Lawrence A. Cunningham, this book features a curated selection of Buffett's famous shareholder letters, organized by theme.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - 1. Only associate with people you like and admire
  - 2. Stick to what you know and understand
  - 3. As a high-value man, only stick with people you know are great
  - 4. Pick managers who think like owners
  - 5. Only do 1-to-many communication
  - 6. Only buy businesses from sellers who love their business
  - 7. Don't listen to macro-predictions
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
  - Over-optimism and over-extrapolation of positive trends (nonsense)
  - America supposedly "starting from scratch" in 1776 betrays poor thinking
  - The "compound interest" story paraded once again…
- CONS
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Only associate with good characters** you like and trust
- **Stick to what you understand well**, or you're gambling
- **Stop listening to "market predictions"**… And predictions in general

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger are a legendary duo in the world of finance and investing. Buffett, often hailed as the "Oracle of Omaha," is the chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, a multinational conglomerate holding company.
Charlie Munger is Buffett's longtime business partner and vice chairman of Berkshire Hathaway. He is known for his straightforward approach to investing and his insightful commentary on business and life. Together, Buffett and Munger have forged one of the most successful partnerships in the history of finance.

1. Only associate with people you like and admire

This was probably my main takeaway from The Essays.

First off, says Buffett:

> After some other mistakes, I learned to go into business only with people whom I like, trust, and admire

That, by itself, will not make you money, he adds.
But it decreases the odds you *lose* money. And it makes life that much easier and better.
It's so important to Buffett, that he's willing to make less money with that policy:

> We intend to continue our practice of working only with people whom we like and admire. This policy not only maximizes our chances for good results, it also ensures us an extraordinarily good time. On the other hand, working with people who cause your stomach to churn seems much like marrying for money—probably a bad idea under any circumstances, but absolute madness if you are already rich.

LOL, not only great wisdom, but also delivered with great humor :).

2. Stick to what you know and understand

This is one of the most famous of Buffett's approaches:

> If we have a strength, it is in recognizing when we are operating well within our circle of competence and when we are approaching the perimeter. Predicting the long-term economics of companies that operate in fast-changing industries is simply far beyond our perimeter. If others claim predictive skill in those industries—and seem to have their claims validated by the behavior of the stock market—we neither envy nor emulate them. Instead, we just stick with what we understand. If we stray, we will have done so inadvertently, not because we got restless and substituted hope for rationality.

3. As a high-value man, only stick with people you know are great

Buffett says that he and Munger generally stick with people they know and like.

They know there are plenty more great people in the world. But the odds of meeting them are not high enough to make meeting strangers a good use of their time.

Unluckily I lost the bookmark for this passage or I'd love to quote it.

4. Pick managers who think like owners

> The best managers think like owners in making business decisions.
> They have shareholder interests at heart.

5. Only do 1-to-many communication

> Because the annual meeting is the time and place for these, Charlie and I are happy to answer them all, no matter how long it takes. (We cannot, however, respond to written or phoned questions at other times of the year; one-person-at-a-time reporting is a poor use of management time in a company with [thousands of] shareholders.)

6. Only buy businesses from sellers who love their business

Buffett says that he wants people who love their business because that guarantees that interest align.

When people love their business, they'll work hard for it, give it all, and always with a long-term horizon in mind.

That's why they want businesses with people who are going to keep working on their business.
And if they don't love it, don't buy.

Says Buffett:

> Very simply, we would not want to buy unless we felt key members of present management would stay on as our partners. Contracts cannot guarantee your continued interest; we would simply rely on your word.

And the second part reminds us of how important it is to read characters.

Let them independent

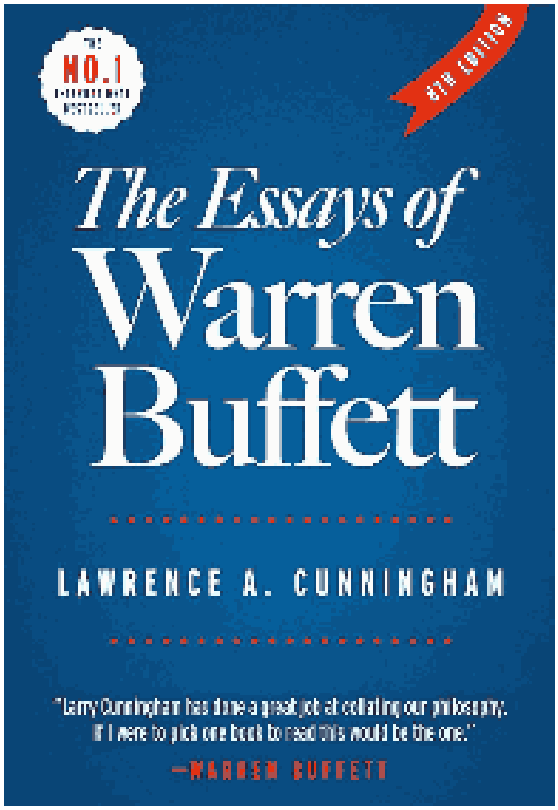
Buffett then lets them free to operate with almost total freedom.
They know what's best for the business.

That allows Buffett to attract the best possible sellers: great businesses with great founders who love their business and will be great long-term managers.

7. Don't listen to macro-predictions

> We will continue to ignore political and economic forecasts, which are an expensive distraction for many investors and businessmen.

So… Quit listening to Ray Dalio's predictions of doom and gloom :).
He's been doing that his whole career and his predictions were terrible anyway.



MORE WISDOM

Be suspicious of those who “always make the numbers” (or who promise so)

> Charlie and I not only don’t know today what our businesses will earn *next year*—we don’t even know what they will earn *next quarter*. We are suspicious of those CEOs who regularly claim they do know the future—and we become downright incredulous if they consistently reach their declared targets. Managers that always promise to “make the numbers” will at some point be tempted to *make up* the numbers.

Let’s all take steps to reduce global warming

Buffett says that it makes sense to take climate change seriously, and take action.

Even if there is only a 1% chance of disaster, says Buffett, it does make sense to act anyway.

Beware of past-performance “proof”

> Beware of past-performance “proofs” in finance: If history books were the key to riches, the Forbes 400 would consist of librarians.

QUOTES

On the blessing of having dumb competition:

> what could be more advantageous in an intellectual contest—whether it be bridge, chess, or stock selection—than to have opponents who have been taught that thinking is a waste of energy?

CRITICISM

Over-optimism and over-extrapolation of positive trends (nonsense)

For example:

> In the future the U.S. population will move more goods, consume more food, and require more living space than it does now. People will forever exchange what they produce for what others produce.
> Our country’s businesses will continue to efficiently deliver goods and services wanted by our citizens.

How can you say for sure?
During his lifetime, probably yes.
But the longer you extrapolate that trend, the more sure you can be it’s gonna be wrong.

America Always Wins Long Terms...

There seems to a general over-confidence on “America”.

Sometimes, even feels a bit overly “patriotic”.
For example:

> Be clear on one point: In no way does our thinking about currencies rest on doubts about America. We live in an extraordinarily rich country, the product of a system that values market economics, the rule of law and equality of opportunity. Our economy is far and away the strongest in the world and will continue to be. We are lucky to live here.

"Will continue to be"?
Same as before, how can he say that?
Stretch that prediction on a long enough time horizon, and you can be almost 100% sure it will turn out to be wrong.
I'm astonished such a smart person would say such a, how to say it… Non-smart thing.

And:

> American business, and consequently a basket of stocks, is virtually certain to be worth far more in the years ahead
> (…)
> This powerful trend is certain to continue
> (…)
> America golden goose of commerce and innovation will continue to lay more and larger eggs

These are the types of statements that not only leave me scratching my head, but also make me wonder how successful Buffett would have been less rosy historical periods.
His over-optimism may have cost him, in those scenarios.

The "future estimates" are all based on trend extrapolation

For example, when he estimates future growth based on the current population growth.

That was so nonsensical to me, that I won't even spend further time debunking.

America supposedly "starting from scratch" in 1776 betrays poor thinking

Says Buffett:

> From a standing start 240 years ago a span of time less than triple my days on earth Americans (…) starting from scratch America has a mask wealth totally 90 trillion dollars true of course that other

What an ignorant thing to say.

That's what happens when you focus on investing and read financial reports only, and then talk about history, maybe.

As if:

- All the inhabitants erased their brains from all their knowledge in 1776
- All the knowledge accumulated in the millennia past was erased
- All the capital and machinery was destroyed

Of course, the opposite is true.
Which is why it was NOT a "standstill" or "start from scratch".

I even find this take ignorantly insensitive.

The American story is an impressive story.
Like all the great empires that have led humanity forward before it, it's bound to be an impressive story.
And we must all be grateful to leading civilizations/countries because leading civilizations pull the world forward.
They are givers.

But we're not going to provide appropriate credit by making shit up.

Or by erasing the contribution of the long history of great men and civilizations that have led us here.

Instead, to be great today, pay respect to past greats.

The “compound interest” story paraded once again...

You know, the:

“if you had invested X dollars in the S&P in the year XXXX, you’d be a multimillionaire by… .”

I’ve never been a fan of those.
And … I didn’t expect that from Buffett.

CONS

Sometimes tries too hard the “funny quips”

Sometimes it feels Buffett tries a bit too hard to sound smart.

Especially felt off to me when he sought to reference sex.

For example:

> When such a CEO is encouraged by his advisors to make deals, he responds much as would a teenage boy who is encouraged by his father to have a normal sex life. It’s not a push he needs.

And:

> Woody Allen, in another context, pointed out the advantage of open-mindedness: “I can’t understand why more people aren’t bi-sexual because it doubles your chances for a date on Saturday night.”

To me, it felt almost as if he wanted to remind us that he’s not always been a geekier financial analyst.

Bit of bragging

Covert bragging, mostly.

Some outdated stuff

Since the letters sometimes refer to then-contemporary events, it’s bound to have several outdated sections.

Some rants

Such as against American’s poor balance of payments, Wall Street greed/mistakes, etc.

All about money (through investments). Is that even a good life?

This is just me, but… I was hoping for more life-wisdom.

And, if about money, I’m more interested in entrepreneurship.

All this returns talk even felt tacky to me and not a good way to live.
There is more to life than returns and stocks.

REVIEW

The Essays of Warren Buffett is a good book if you’re interested in Berkshire and Buffett’s approach to investing.

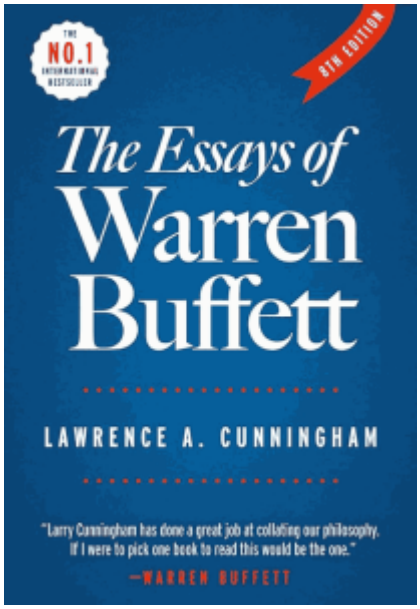
And **it's a poor use of your time if you're looking for wisdom outside of investment**.

I was looking for more wisdom on "how to live", let's say.
There are some fantastic golden nuggets, like the ones listed in this review.
But overall, *The Essays of Warren Buffett* is mostly about investments and Berkshire.

It just wasn't the ideal book for me.
But it may be great for you.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

The Essays of Warren Buffett Summary: 7 Timeless Lessons



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URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-essays-of-warren-buffett-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.2

The Honorable Man's Guide: Power, Respect, and Success

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 May 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Being an honorable man isn't just a noble idea—it's a path to power, respect, and success.

But **watch out: non-honorable men may trip you**.

At TPM, we're experts in men's success and power dynamics. Our real-world strategies help thousands of men every day.

Read on to master honor and win.

'Be Honorable' is one of our foundations of social success

Contents

- Intro: What's 'Honorable'
- How to Be Honorable
  - 1. Tell The Truth – As Often As You Can, As Much As You Can
  - 2. Seek to Be a Net Giver, Never a Taker
  - 3. Be Straight, Avoid Unneeded & Obvious Sneaky Games
  - 4. Own Your Choices, Avoid Excuses
  - 5. Stand for Something
  - 6. Take Pride In Being Honorable
  - ⍰ Develop Distaste For Sneaky Manipulation
  - 7. Empower Yourself
- Honorable Traits to Work On
- ⍰ In Practice
  - In business
  - In groups and as a leader:
- ⍰ TPM's Framework: Strategic Honor™
- Power Trumps Honor
  - ⍰ Dishonorable But Successful Men

- Why we still advise “be honorable”
- ⍰ A Crook With Honorable Reputation?
  - Learn More

Intro: What’s ‘Honorable’

An honorable man is a man with the character and behavior that others see as admirable, respect-worthy, and leader-like.

Honor doesn’t mean “good” or “nice.”
You can pursue self-interest, seek revenge, or break the law—if it fits the “honorable code,” you’re still honorable.

There is some degree of subjectivity in what’s ‘honorable’ and culture, personality, and context all play a role.

However, many general principles apply to most people, and most anywhere.
We’ll focus on these general principles.

How to Be Honorable

Guiding principles:

1. Tell The Truth – As Often As You Can, As Much As You Can

Frequent lying is dishonorable, but “always tell the truth” is naive.

Good guidelines are:

- **Stick to the truth unless you cannot**
  Lies are mines—the more you lie, the trickier the minefield.

⍰ IF you can’t speak truthfully:

- 1 **Refuse to comment** as default approach
  If not possible:
- **Stay as close to the truth as possible**: you're more believable and maintain reputation if caught
- **Use "spins"**. People see them as "almost OK".
  E.g.: Clinton's "I did not have sexual relations with that woman"
- **Lie by omission**

2. Seek to Be a Net Giver, Never a Taker

- **Give back when given**
- **Contribute to society**
- **Avoid being a burden** and hate it when you are.

Similar with power:

- **Respect respect-worthy** men
- **Re-empower others when due** (no 'power hoarding')
  Ie.:
  - Apologize when in the wrong
  - Let others speak after a dominant interruption

3. Be Straight, Avoid Unneeded & Obvious Sneaky Games

No games win prestige, but the worst are:

- **Unneeded**. It's worse without a motive—it signals "inveterate manipulator"
- **Futile**, with low odds of working
- ***Overly* selfish or damaging**
- **Obvious**
- **For small stuff** that shouldn't even concern a high-value man
- **In close relationships**

They're the worst because:

- **Signal low value**, for even bothering with small stuff
- **'Bent personality'** of an inveterate manipulator
- **Destroy rapport** and reputation, harming your best relationships

 Example: If caught stretching the truth, don't double down—say, "OK, I exaggerated, let me rephrase," and tell the truth

Honorable quote to live by

For close relationships, remember this manipulation quote:

> **"I'm not upset that you lied to me, I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you."**
>
> *— Friedrich Nietzsche*

That's the high-quality man's mindset who expects high-quality people in his life.

4. Own Your Choices, Avoid Excuses

Take ownership, privately and publicly, of your actions and choices.

 Example: If you skip a ticket in a rush, own it, accept the risk, and pay the fine if caught, apologizing to the controller.

Doing the opposite will destroy your reputation:

♂How my mother lost my respect With Cheap Excuses

Lucio:
Confronted about smoking during pregnancy, my mother said that “she didn’t smoke in the 2 months most important for child development”.

Pressed that all months are important, she replied that the doctor said “Signora, there are plenty of smokers who make super smart kids”.

⬆ The excuses don’t hold. Own your mistakes
Feels like gaslighting and only makes you angrier.
An honorable woman would have owned it. And ‘I’m sorry’ would have fixed it.
Instead, with this approach, I even doubt she stopped for 2 months.

5. Stand for Something

Pick a value worth fighting for and hold it, even under pressure.

6. Take Pride In Being Honorable

And associate disgust to dishonor.
It’s the best way to grow more honorable.

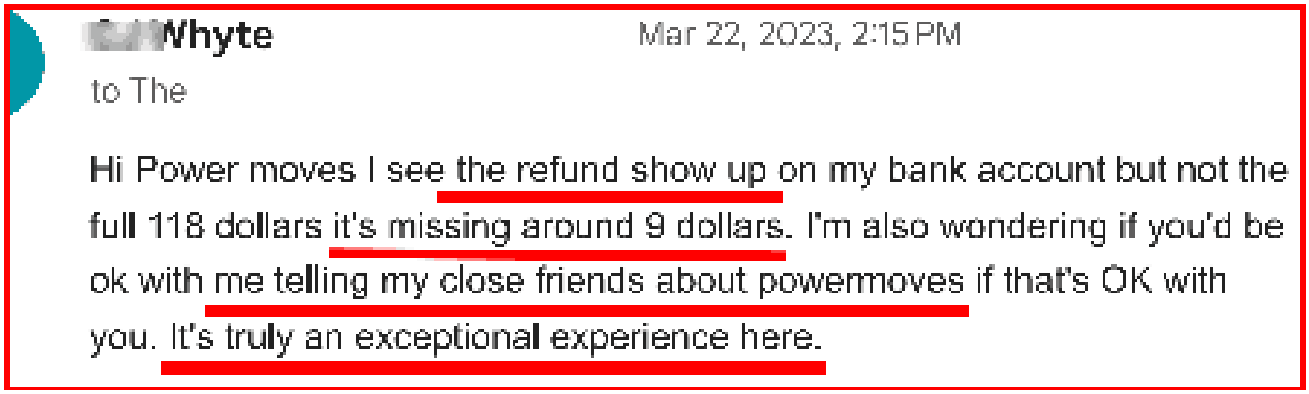
- ♂ **Exercise**: Recall a time you acted honorably—did it build self-respect and pride? If it did, relive it. If it didn’t, do it now: you deserved it.

When you associate with pleasure, your subconscious will guide you to more honorable behavior.

- ⍰⍰♂ **Exercise 2**: Recall a time you or someone you know acted dishonorably—did you feel disappointed or disgusted?If it did, relive it. If it didn't, do it now.

Do the same for the examples we've seen, like this one below: ⍰⍰

⍰ Develop Distaste For Sneaky Manipulation


Whyte Mar 22, 2023, 2:15 PM
to The

Hi Power moves I see the refund show up on my bank account but not the full 118 dollars it's missing around 9 dollars. I'm also wondering if you'd be ok with me telling my close friends about powermoves if that's OK with you. It's truly an exceptional experience here.

> **Him**: The refund (…) is missing $9.
> I'm also wondering if you'd be ok with me telling my close friends about powermoves if that's OK with you.
> It's truly an exceptional experience

It's cheap because it's:

1. Obvious
2. Low-value: he sent several emails, over-investing for $9
3. Overly selfish: TPM already exceeded the refund policy
4. Futile: cheap tricks won't fool us

⍰⍰♂ I don't accept this behavior from the people around me, and I don't want it in my programs.

7. Empower Yourself

Honor requires power.

This is what many men don't get.
Unfortunately, it's not honor that gives you power.
It's power that allows for honor.

Values and ethical standards are a luxury for any form of life that must prioritize survival and reproduction.

Without power, survival instincts take over: submission to higher status men, manipulation to keep a mate, and tacit acquiescence in fear of ostracism.

You can barely escape it: it's psychological math.

> Only empowered men can afford the luxury of honor.

And that's true for both mind and life.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **the more empowered I became, the more honorable I became**

Lucio:
It's easy not to manipulate a girlfriend when I'm happy alone, don't need one—and trust myself to find one whenever I want.

It's easy to say, *"I'm not the type of man who steals"* when I'm living my best life while spending less than I earn.

It's easy to give—and demand—respect as a solopreneur who doesn't need any particular group or organization, and can simply say, *"Not dealing with that sh*t. *Bye*."

And it's easy to be critically honest in my reviews here at TPM when I already like myself, and my self-esteem doesn't depend on anyone's liking me or approving of me.

Honorable Traits to Work On

- **Courage**
  - Lead from the front whenever feasible, show the way, and set the standards
    ➽ Never ask anyone to do something you wouldn't do yourself
- **Consistency**
  - Maintain a similar baseline behavior instead of "licking up, kicking down"
- **Magnanimity** in victory. Instead of crushing, offer a help-up
  ⍰ Scipio Africanus book review, long but great example
- **Spirit of sacrifice** for the team and mission
- **Assertiveness**, instead of passive-aggressive or manipulative
  - Direct talk over overly indirect
  - Face issues head-on
    E.g., if offended, don't stew; say it wasn't cool

⍰ In Practice

In business

- **Deliver customer valu**e as a priority, and be proud of it
- **See good work as a duty**
- **Honor the refund policy**
- **Only promote products you believe in**. Reject poor ones

In groups and as a leader:

- **Uphold the shared values**
- **Reward contributors**, and punish those who don't
- **Defend team members** under attack
- **Defend the group**, which may go into unhealthy extremes in some subcultures

⍰⍰♂ **Balance 'defending your tribe' with universal values and humankind**
Group allegiance at the detriment of others can turn into toxic tribalism. The future of humankind depends on enlightened honorable individualists rising above small-minded parochialism to lead *humanity* forward.
Make a judgment call.
And unfriend inveterate as*holes instead of supporting them.

⍰ TPM's Framework: Strategic Honor™

> **Strategic honor™** is a non-naive, power-aware code of conduct in which a man prefers and upholds truth, responsibility, and fair dealing **by default and by choice**, while remaining selective, guarded, and competitive in environments and with people where honor would be exploited.

The honorable approach can cost you with dishonorable people.
So TPM's framework we introduce the Strategic Honor framework:

- Acting honorably as the **preferred approach** and whenever it builds long-term power, prestige, and self-respect, but
- Be **strategically calibrated with your honor**, calibrating to situations and people
- Aim to **add value** in relationships, in your work, and ultimately in your life

Strategic honor rejects naive moral absolutism.
It recognizes that **power precedes honor**: only empowered individuals can consistently afford honorable conduct.

As such, strategic honor is not weakness or "niceness," but a high-status behavioral code that combines integrity with judgment, selectivity, and strategic thinking.

1. **Be honorable in your close relationships**, and only pick the best people for them
2. **Keep tabs of give-and-take** ('positive calculativeness') to ensure it stays win-win
3. **Be strategic with dishonourable people**
4. **Be strategic in competitions**. Competitors may not be honorable. And sometimes, winning is the priority.
   So the guidelines become:
   - Stay honorable enough, be a 'good as*hole', not a dishonorable one

Dig deeper:

- ⍰ **Manipulating a manipulator**. Especially #1 and #3
- ⍰ Who to straight talk to
- ⍰ Assertiveness VS fading away

Effective Heroes Are Strategic

⚠ Be careful being honest in corrupt and despotic systems.

They operate under a strict power code—law and 'corporate values' are a front.
If you uphold either, you're the enemy: crooks hate honest men. They spoil the looting—and remind them of their crookedness.

Effective heroes plan their exit—or better, adapt and reform once on top.

Power Trumps Honor

A foundational TPM's value is truth.
So here's the truth:

Power trumps honor and reputation.
Including for advancing in life, achieving goals, and doing as you please.

I bet you can think of many examples in your life.
But if not, here are some for you:

⍰ Dishonorable But Successful Men

We could list many examples like Nero, Jeffrey Epstein, Harvey Weinstein, etc.

But forget single names and focus on the *concept*.
The concept is that **many non-honorable men succeed** in life.

They thrived despite bad behavior and reputation, thanks to high value and power.

Why?
Because **high-power jerks have value to provide, and can inflict costs.**

So people didn't want to antagonize them.
Instead, they sought them out, worked with them, or pretended they were good people.

It's basic social exchange.

Sure, *some* of them faced consequences.
But most paid consequences for illegal behavior, not for being jerks. Big difference.
And even then, catching them was hard, and some of them even escaped the consequences.

Plus, let's be honest: most enjoyed more success in a few years than 1.000 nice guys' lives put together.

So… Why are we still partial to the honorable man's approach?

Why we still advise “be honorable”

As a personal choice, we prefer it and expect it in our community.

However, we recommend it due to its significant benefits.
Intrapersonally:

- Higher self-esteem
- Life ‘contentedness’
- Resilience to criticism and attacks

🤔Lucio’s Take: **happy life thanks to who I became and what I’ve done**

Lucio:
I’m not a “nice guy,” and not even a particularly “good” guy.
I don’t want those labels anyway—I’m here to achieve goals, not to be pleasant. My priorities come first, and I think *very* strategically.

But I’ve pursued those goals in win-win ways (or at least without taking).
I never go “asshole first” without a reason, and I believe I’m on track to be a net giver in life—my ultimate yardstick for an honorable man.

That **makes me proud of who I’ve become**, what I’ve done, and what I’m doing. It also makes for a far better life experience: I go to sleep content and wake up most mornings happy.

In interpersonal relationships:

- **Better interpersonal relationships** because time shows who you truly are
  - Better close and intimate relationships, especially
- **Better long-term relationships** because the longer you interact, the more character quality matters
- **Better relationships with high-quality people** who prefer high-quality men

For example, even as a child I admired the honorable man, and lost respect for my friend when he pulled this nasty power move:

> **Lucio**: From a man-to-man disagreement, my fiend looked for group support to gang up on me. But the other guy refused to gang up. My friend was a dishonorable turkey ⍰. Fabio was an honorable eagle ⍰

And at a social level:

- **More influence** and 'soft power' with prestige
  - Increases social capital, whereas dominance and jerks deplete it
  - 360 degrees° influence, including above, whereas dominance and jerks influence best *below*, including needier people
  - High-value sub-communication. Upholding values is a "costly signal". It sub-communicates one can *afford* to uphold values. Sneaky behavior evokes lower power.
    Note: jerk behavior is also a costly signal of power, but it makes you less prestigious, instead of more

- **Better leadership** because it's easier to attract and retain top talent

⍰ A Crook With Honorable Reputation?

The Machiavellian bent is to be honorable only as long as it serves you.

And, technically, it pays off to be:

- **Honorable when it's convenient**
  - Gain a reputation for honorable
- **Cheat when expedient**
  - Nobody finds out
  - You can disappear
  - You can score big, keep the loot, and don't need to care about reputation

Call this approach "the perfect crook".

We'd lie if we denied the effectiveness of this approach *IF executed to perfection*.
However, the devil is in the detail.
And perfect execution may be a chimera for most due to the downsides and risks:

- **The truth tends to seep out**. Sometimes publicly -think of Weinstein-, and more often privately, in close relationships
  ✒ *"You can fool some fool all the time, everyone some of the time, but you cannot fool everyone every time".*

- **Lower self-esteem**, potentially

- **Lower life satisfaction**, likely

Also, consider you can never escape a cheat's company when you're the cheat.
A good company starts with yourself.

And finally, **our strategically honorable approach is a proven winning strategy** already. Why hang onto a more cheating life, if you can equally win *and* be honorable?

Learn More

Want to be an honorable man who wins?

You need strategy and power skills to be honorable or dishonorable men will eat your lunch.

But if you can marry honor with smart strategy, you get the best of both worlds.

That's our goal at TPM.
We developed **Power University** to turn good men into *effective*, honorable leaders—mastering power with integrity. Join us and level up.

Check Power University

9 Laws of Social Power Dynamics (High-Value Men)

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 May 2024 · Archived copy · Original

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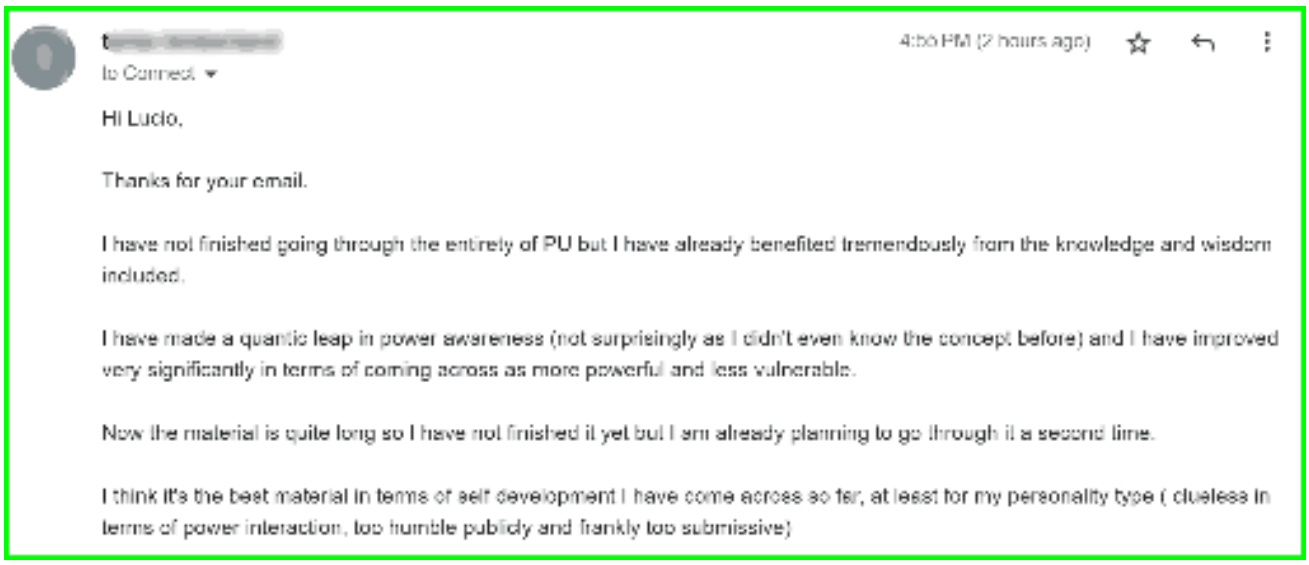

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Let's dive in:

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  - Low-Power Attracts & Keeps Takers
  - High-Power Discourages Takers
- 2. High Power Rises, Low Power Sinks (Law of Social Buoyancy)
- 3. First Impressions Lock 80% Status (The 80/20 Power Law)
  - 3.2. Patterns of Power Cement Status (Status Cementing™)
- 4. Small Power Moves Add Up ('Death By a Thousand Cuts™')
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Law 1: Your power in both awareness and skills determines the quality of your relationships, which in turn determines how you experience and see the world

Power awareness helps you assess people and pick character in your life.
Power skills will help you maintain those relationships, and also keep everyone on their better behavior.

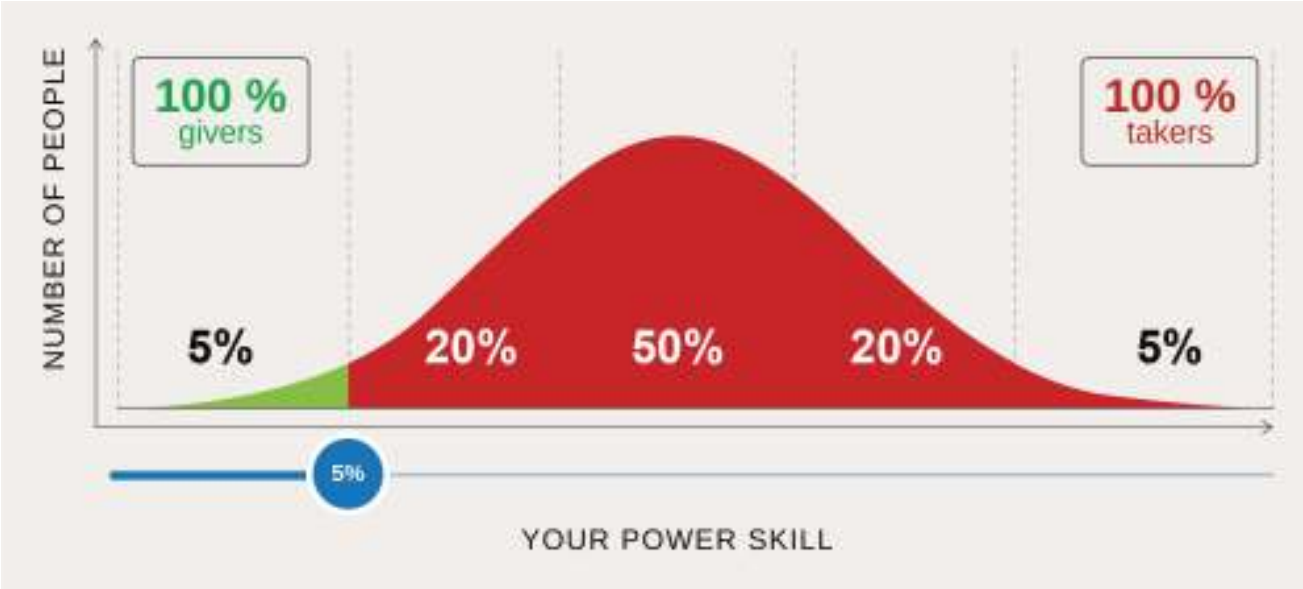
While people differ, most also adapt and can be givers or takers depending on the situation, and who they're dealing with.

- In general, **the easier it is to take from someone, the more people will take.**

So how you experience (social) life depends largely on your level of power and skills.

Low-Power Attracts & Keeps Takers

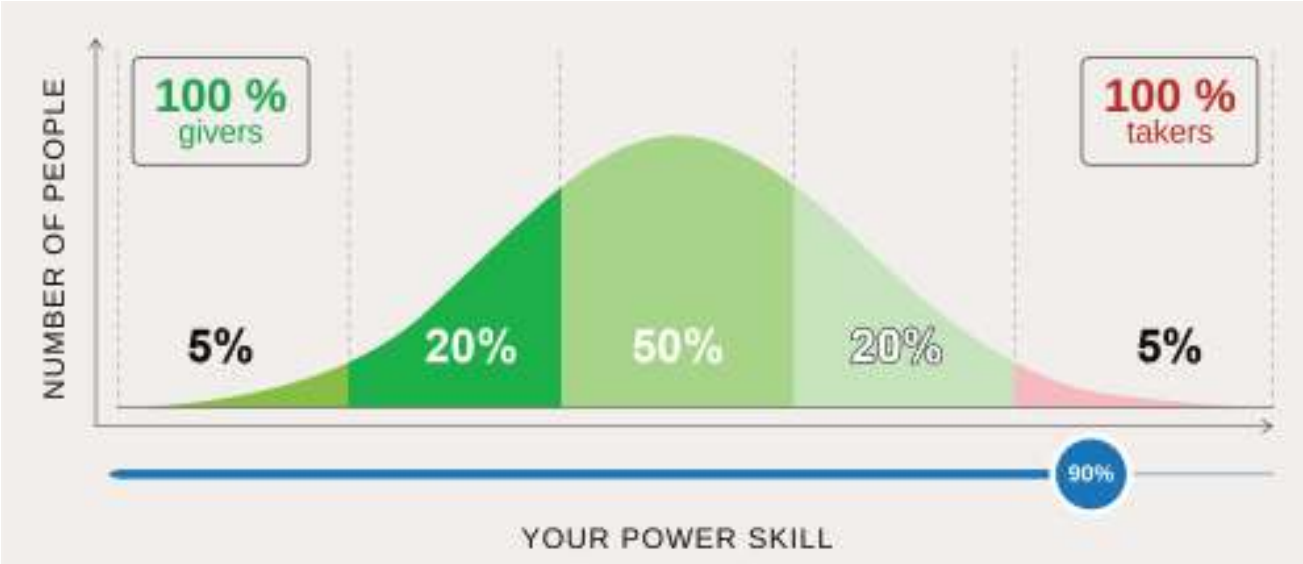
People take more from low-power people because it's easier to.



Low power people advertise that they're easy targets: behave low power, and and fail to check power moves.
That attracts various types of takers, while winners stay away because they prefer other winners.

High-Power Discourages Takers

High-power people instead discourage takers.



High-power people advertise that they're "hardened targets". Takers either stay away or behave better because they know their attempts will fail.

⍰ The Wallet Analogy

In a way, you and the value you can provide are like a wallet full of money.

The wallet is tempting for anyone to take.
But how many people will try and how successful they will be depends on you. And how easy or difficult *you* make it to take from you.

An Italian saying goes:

> **It's the opportunity that makes the thief**
>
> ✒ *Italian proverb*

It's the same in life.
Weak men provide opportunities to take.
Strong men provide opportunities for those willing to exchange (ie.: other high-value individuals).

2. High Power Rises, Low Power Sinks (Law of Social Buoyancy)

Law 2: High power rises up in hiearchies, while low power sinks down

As a general rule:

⚖ **Socially dominant men lead 1:1 relationships, and gain higher status in groups.**

Low-power men follow, and languish at the bottom of the hierarchy.

3. First Impressions Lock 80% Status (The 80/20 Power Law)

Including:

- How you carry yourself in body language, posture, etc.
- Who you engage first: high-status folks, or low-status ones?
- Handshake
- First words
  - Voice

- First conversation
  - Quantity
- First reaction to social challenges

We'll learn how to ace all of them ⍰

3.2. Patterns of Power Cement Status (Status Cementing™)

Unless you proactively change the early dynamics, they "cement" and become de facto hierarchies and ranks.

⚠ ⍰ **Low-status men are passed up for promotions.**
At work, informal hierarchies often become official with promotions and titles.
High-status men get promoted. Low-status ones are "non-leadership material".

Stickiness, More Than Cement

More than cement, think of it as "stickiness".

You can always change anything.
It just takes more willpower, skills, and time.
And you face more resistance -both internal, and external-.

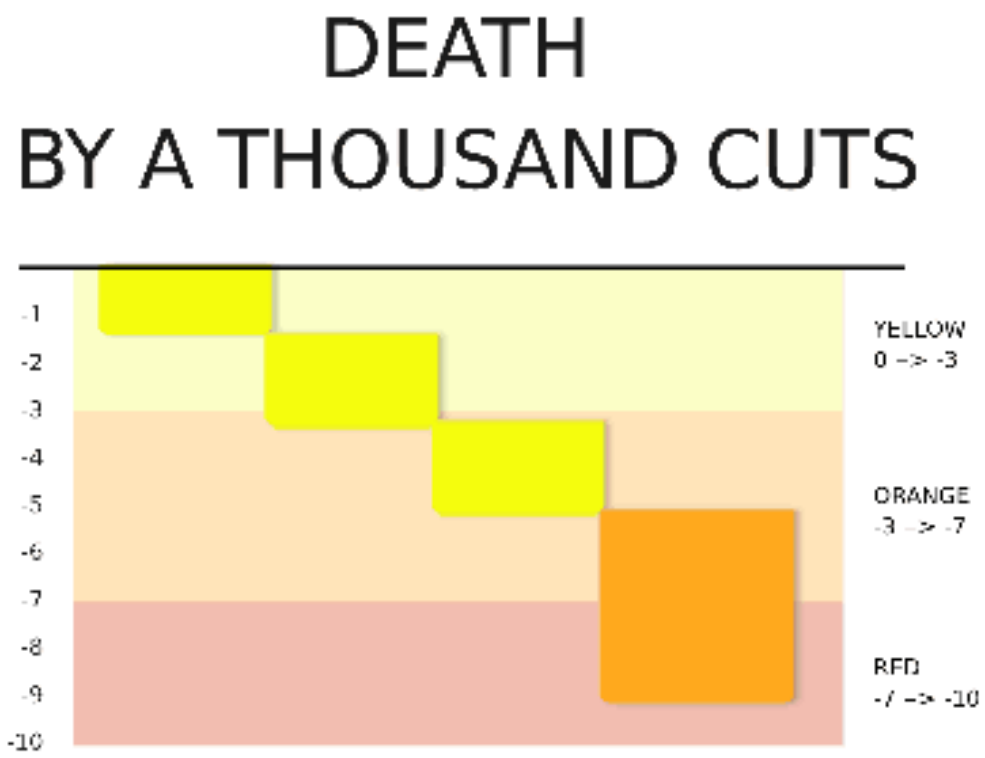
That's why earlier is better.

4. Small Power Moves Add Up ('Death By a Thousand Cuts™')

Law 4: Small disempowering moves add up to large effects

If you never push back, a string of small shoves pushes you to the bottom of the hierarchy.

The first few cuts may seem inconsequential. But submission only invites more (principle #1).
And you eventually bleed all your status away.



Small power moves add up to push you to the bottom

⍰ Example of multiple cuts

1. **He takes the lead + dominant introduction**
   - Leads the interaction: asks “Who are you”
   - Strong handshake, voice, and direct gaze
   - You remain neutral (losing out because of the net effect ⍰)
2. **He leads the conversation**
   - Asks “Where are you from”
   - You answer where you’re from and ask nothing back
3. **He makes a “funny comment” about your nationality**:
   - Ie.: “Lucio Corleone from Italy”
   - You laugh a bit too much
4. **You propose place X to go to, he says that “It’s OK, but place Y is better”**:
   - You say you’re OK either way

He was dominant right away. If you match, you won’t be lower than him. But if you don’t, you keep being pushed down, small cut after small cut.

Assholes will then take up another notch just to use you as a “social peg” to display their dominance:

5. **At the restaurant, he tells you where to sit**, an orange power move
   - He says he prefers someone else close to him
   - You acquiesce

By this point, your low-status in the hierarchy is “cemented”.
Forget women in that group liking you, or guys wanting to befriend you.

5. Disrespect Gathers Momentum (Law of The Slippery Slope)

Law 5: Unchecked disrespect only invites more of it

Early disrespect opens the door for more.

For example, in a relationship, the first insult is rarely the last. Instead, it may increase to a shove, which in turn is the first sign of partner violence engulfing a toxic relationship.

6. Weakness Undermines Win-Win (Law of Continued Respect)

Law 6: Continued respect is a precondition for healthy and win-win relationships

Principle:

⚖ **The more weakness you display, the more they lose respect for you**

And when they lose respect for you, they think you’re below them, or even unworthy of them.
And you can’t have a win-win relationship of equals when others think you’re too far below them.

You *both* lose when you let others disrespect you because the relationship sours for *both*.

Read more:

- **How to maintain attraction in relationships**

> 6 Proven Techniques to Keep Her Attracted & Committed

7. Your Power Is Your Level, Minus Theirs (The Net Effect™)

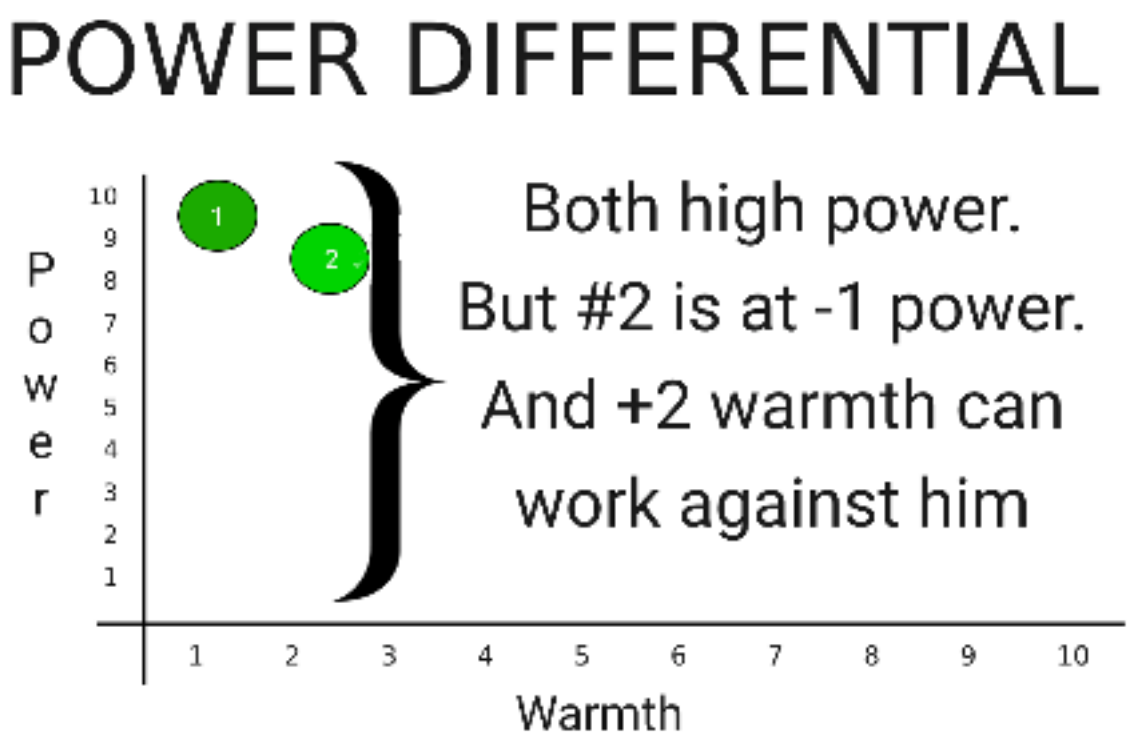
Law 7: Power is relative and emerges from the power difference between the actors

If your level is 9.5, you're second in command when a 10 is around.

7.2. At Parity of Power, Lower Warmth Is Higher Power

Power and warmth are two sometiems opposing approaches to socialization.
And at parity of power, **the person with less warmth is seen as more dominant**.

Chart:



More warmth costs you if others aren't equally warm

This holds true for men actively trying to dominate you.
With attacking asshole, warmth sub-communicates kissing up behavior, a form of self-protection with similar dynamics of the 'Stockholm syndrome'.

⚠⚠ **Takeaway**: Watch for reciprocation of friendliness and adjust. Remove signals of friendliness with those who show very little warmth.

⚠ Case Study: Jocko Willink

Jocko is high power, and sometimes low-warmth.

Example:

> **Interviewer**: Everybody go check out the podcast and book (…) Thanks Jocko
> **Jocko**: (barely laughs, expends little effort) Outstanding

Jocko does not thank the interviewer for promoting his book, and shows little warmth.
If the interviewer had been warmer after that, he'd look low-status and "kissing up".

⍰ How to handle dominant but low-warmth men

- Go higher power
- Decrease your warmth (like the interviewer did)
- Go lower energy (be careful with the "high energy" some charisma coaches champion)

8. High Status Friends Lift, Low Status Sink (Law of Association)

Law 8: Being with high-status people lifts you upward, while over-engaging with lower-status ones pulls you down towards their level

This law leads to a host of social and psychological games.
For example:

LOW-STATUS "CLIMBING" GAMES	⍰ HIGH-STATUS DEFENSE
Secretary at law firm seeks friendship with lawyers	Lawyers are better off *friendly* but not too close
Junior employee asks senior employee questions during a presentation to get engagement and investment	The senior should keep answers short. If it's a good question, address the whole team or the boss
⍰ Woman mistreats or badmouths her partner to display she's better (and ready for a higher-value men)	⍰ The man who wants her cannot sympathize with him or he stoops down. He must agree or pile on
Befriend & social climb game Doorman at upscale condo jokes with tenants to sub-communicate he's at the same level. Then one-ups them to gain even more power. ⍰ Bel's example	Tenants are better off friendly, but not too chummy. Strongly enforcing boundaries to put him "back in his place" when he pulls power moves is necessary.

⍰⍰ ⍰ **PRO Tip: Avoid low-value associations, even in your stories**
Never sub-communicate that the people close to you are low value.
⍰ If you talk about poor characters, always A) say or sub-communicate you're not close (ie. "she's just an ex-classmate); or B) display dismissive body language to sub-communicate you don't appreciate the person ⍰.

9. Power ↔ Value (The Power-of-Exchange Law)

Law 9: Power and value are two different but overlapping and mutually influencing constructs

Power and value overlap and complement each other, and people *expect* them to overlap.
For example, a value giver expects to have more power—a fair expectation that you generally want to honor in order to maintain the relationship.

It's the same principle of "no taxation without representation".
⍰ If I give value/money, I expect power.

Also read:

- Social exchange 101
- Social exchange practical takeaways

> 9 Laws of Social Success From Social Exchange Theory

More: Take Control of Your Social Power

These 9 laws are your foundation for navigating life's hierarchies and achieving goals.

But *applying* them with precision takes practice and deeper insight—that's where Power University comes in.

Our proven system builds on these principles to transform you into a high-value man who commands respect effortlessly.

Ready to level up?
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Check Power University

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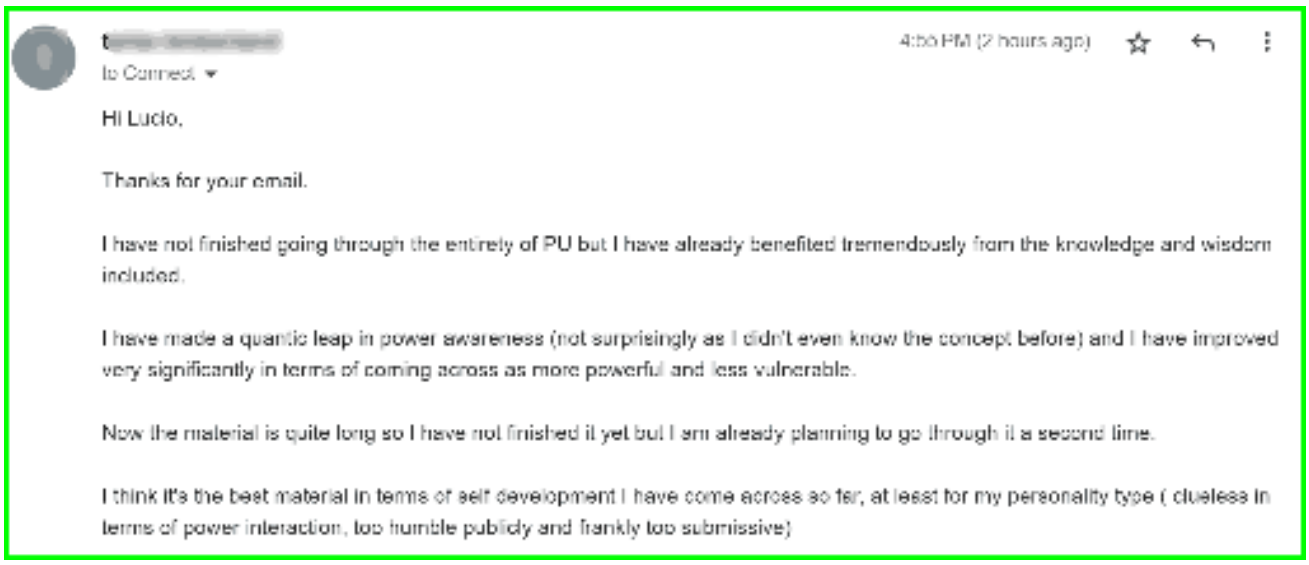

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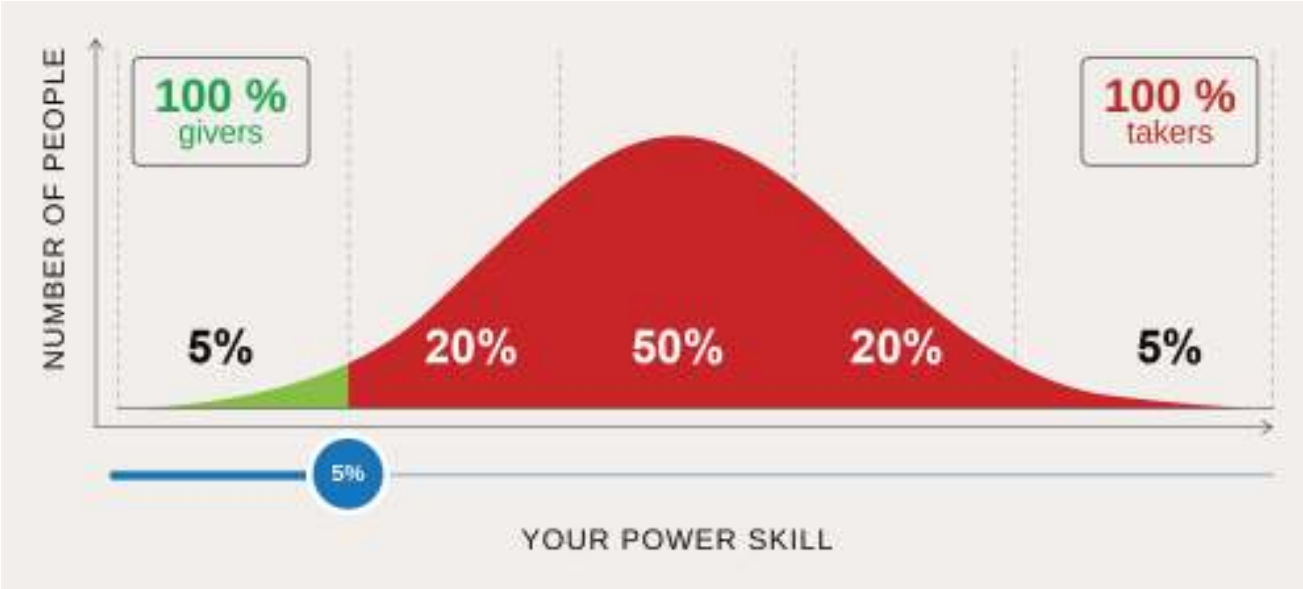
Low-Power Attracts & Keeps Takers

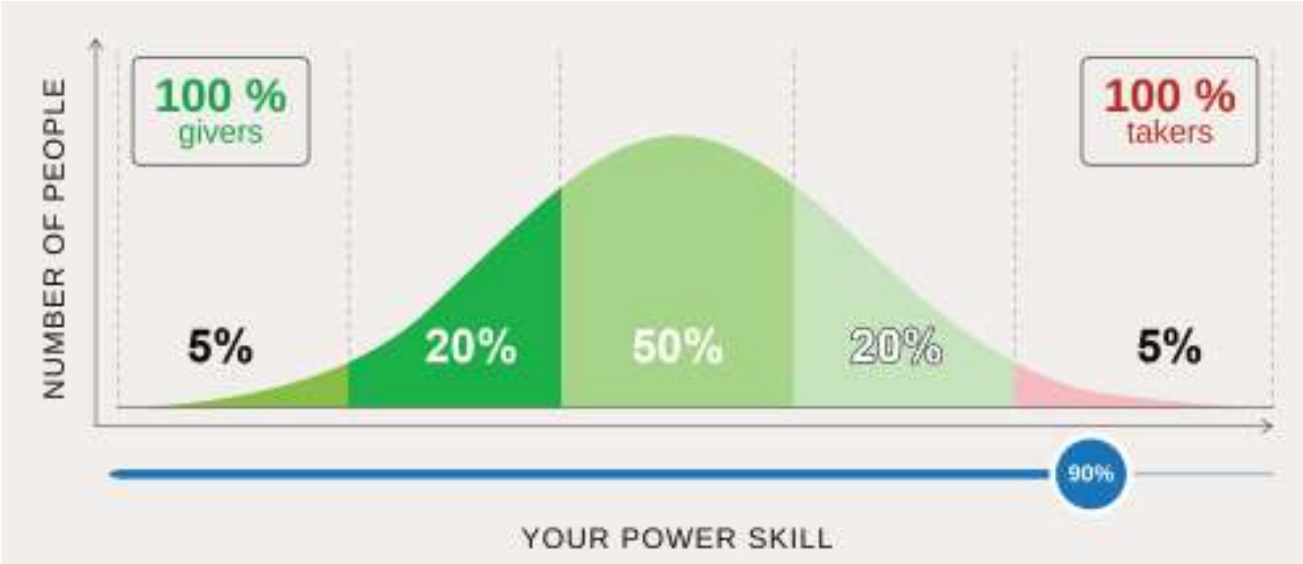
People take more from low-power people because it's easier to.



Low power people advertise that they're easy targets: behave low power, and and fail to check power moves.
That attracts various types of takers, while winners stay away because they prefer other winners.

High-Power Discourages Takers

High-power people instead discourage takers.



High-power people advertise that they're "hardened targets". Takers either stay away or behave better because they know their attempts will fail.

⍰ The Wallet Analogy

In a way, you and the value you can provide are like a wallet full of money.

The wallet is tempting for anyone to take.
But how many people will try and how successful they will be depends on you. And how easy or difficult *you* make it to take from you.

An Italian saying goes:

> **It's the opportunity that makes the thief**
>
> ✒ *Italian proverb*

It's the same in life.
Weak men provide opportunities to take.
Strong men provide opportunities for those willing to exchange (ie.: other high-value individuals).

2. High Power Rises, Low Power Sinks (Law of Social Buoyancy)

Law 2: High power rises up in hiearchies, while low power sinks down

As a general rule:

⚖ **Socially dominant men lead 1:1 relationships, and gain higher status in groups.**

Low-power men follow, and languish at the bottom of the hierarchy.

3. First Impressions Lock 80% Status (The 80/20 Power Law)

Including:

- How you carry yourself in body language, posture, etc.
- Who you engage first: high-status folks, or low-status ones?
- Handshake
- First words
  - Voice

- First conversation
  - Quantity
- First reaction to social challenges

We'll learn how to ace all of them ⍰

3.2. Patterns of Power Cement Status (Status Cementing™)

Unless you proactively change the early dynamics, they "cement" and become de facto hierarchies and ranks.

⚠ ⍰ **Low-status men are passed up for promotions.**
At work, informal hierarchies often become official with promotions and titles.
High-status men get promoted. Low-status ones are "non-leadership material".

Stickiness, More Than Cement

More than cement, think of it as "stickiness".

You can always change anything.
It just takes more willpower, skills, and time.
And you face more resistance -both internal, and external-.

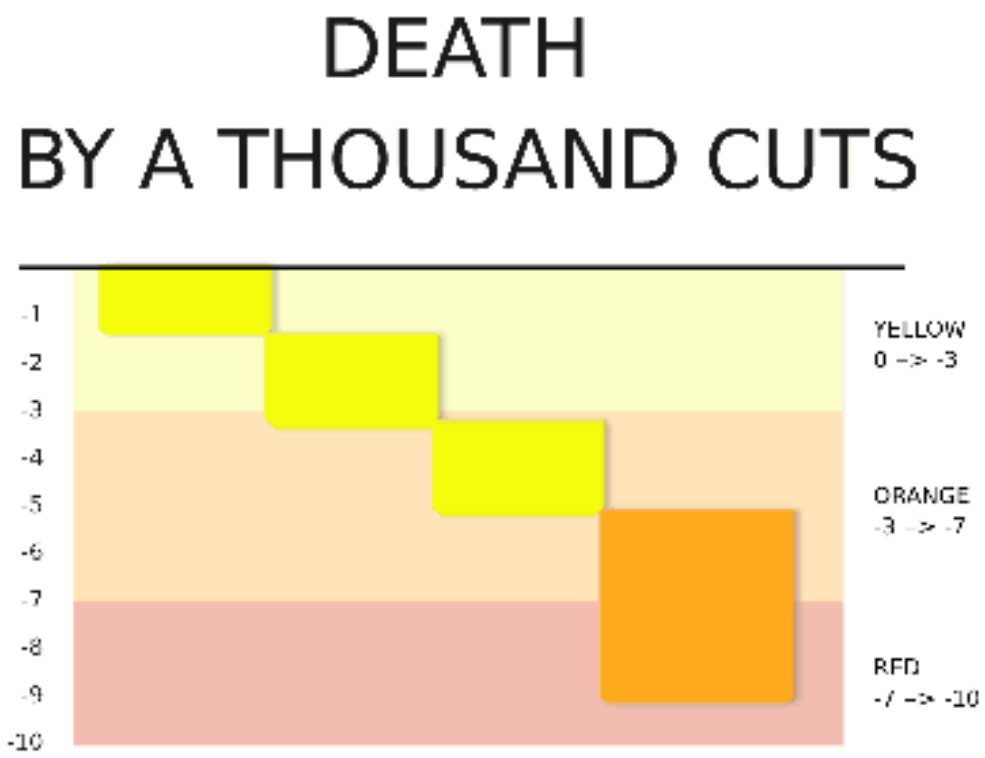
That's why earlier is better.

4. Small Power Moves Add Up ('Death By a Thousand Cuts™')

Law 4: Small disempowering moves add up to large effects

If you never push back, a string of small shoves pushes you to the bottom of the hierarchy.

The first few cuts may seem inconsequential. But submission only invites more (principle #1).
And you eventually bleed all your status away.



Small power moves add up to push you to the bottom

⍰ Example of multiple cuts

1. **He takes the lead + dominant introduction**
   - Leads the interaction: asks “Who are you”
   - Strong handshake, voice, and direct gaze
   - You remain neutral (losing out because of the net effect ⍰)
2. **He leads the conversation**
   - Asks “Where are you from”
   - You answer where you’re from and ask nothing back
3. **He makes a “funny comment” about your nationality**:
   - Ie.: “Lucio Corleone from Italy”
   - You laugh a bit too much
4. **You propose place X to go to, he says that “It’s OK, but place Y is better”**:
   - You say you’re OK either way

He was dominant right away. If you match, you won’t be lower than him. But if you don’t, you keep being pushed down, small cut after small cut.

Assholes will then take up another notch just to use you as a “social peg” to display their dominance:

5. **At the restaurant, he tells you where to sit**, an orange power move
   - He says he prefers someone else close to him
   - You acquiesce

By this point, your low-status in the hierarchy is “cemented”.
Forget women in that group liking you, or guys wanting to befriend you.

5. Disrespect Gathers Momentum (Law of The Slippery Slope)

Law 5: Unchecked disrespect only invites more of it

Early disrespect opens the door for more.

For example, in a relationship, the first insult is rarely the last. Instead, it may increase to a shove, which in turn is the first sign of partner violence engulfing a toxic relationship.

6. Weakness Undermines Win-Win (Law of Continued Respect)

Law 6: Continued respect is a precondition for healthy and win-win relationships

Principle:

⚖ **The more weakness you display, the more they lose respect for you**

And when they lose respect for you, they think you’re below them, or even unworthy of them.
And you can’t have a win-win relationship of equals when others think you’re too far below them.

You *both* lose when you let others disrespect you because the relationship sours for *both*.

Read more:

- **How to maintain attraction in relationships**

> 6 Proven Techniques to Keep Her Attracted & Committed

7. Your Power Is Your Level, Minus Theirs (The Net Effect™)

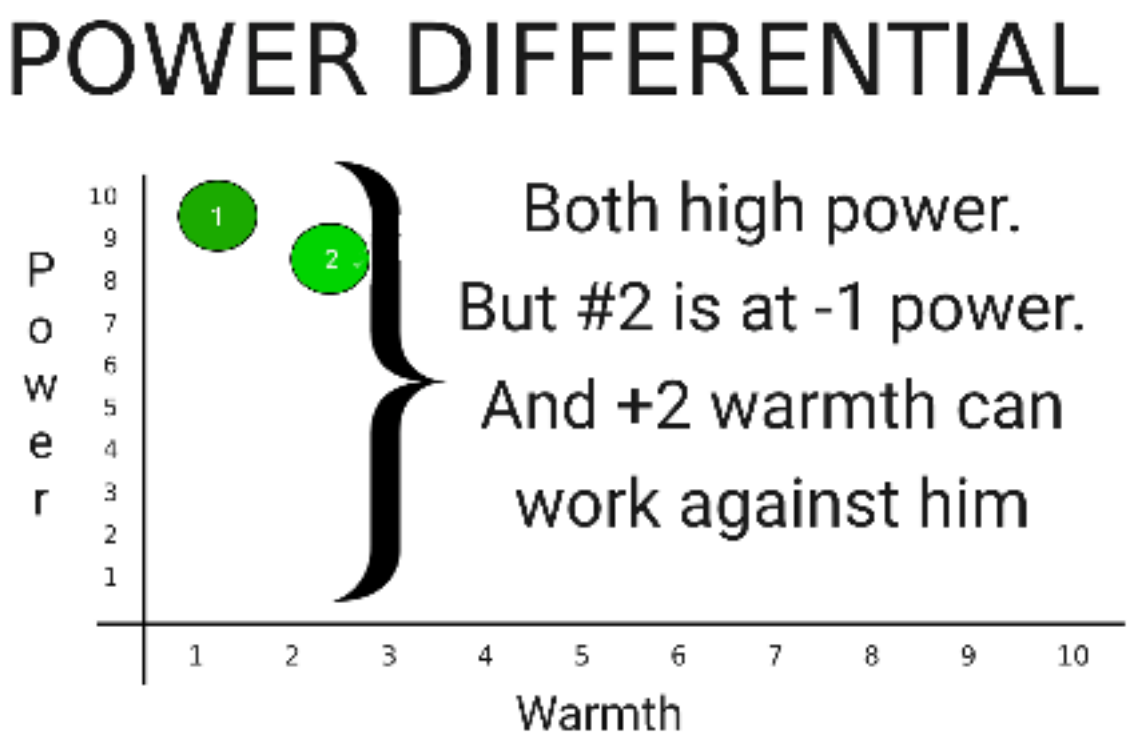
Law 7: Power is relative and emerges from the power difference between the actors

If your level is 9.5, you're second in command when a 10 is around.

7.2. At Parity of Power, Lower Warmth Is Higher Power

Power and warmth are two sometiems opposing approaches to socialization.
And at parity of power, **the person with less warmth is seen as more dominant**.

Chart:



More warmth costs you if others aren't equally warm

This holds true for men actively trying to dominate you.
With attacking asshole, warmth sub-communicates kissing up behavior, a form of self-protection with similar dynamics of the 'Stockholm syndrome'.

⚠⚠ **Takeaway**: Watch for reciprocation of friendliness and adjust. Remove signals of friendliness with those who show very little warmth.

⚠ Case Study: Jocko Willink

Jocko is high power, and sometimes low-warmth.

Example:

> **Interviewer**: Everybody go check out the podcast and book (…) Thanks Jocko
> **Jocko**: (barely laughs, expends little effort) Outstanding

Jocko does not thank the interviewer for promoting his book, and shows little warmth.
If the interviewer had been warmer after that, he'd look low-status and "kissing up".

⍰ How to handle dominant but low-warmth men

- Go higher power
- Decrease your warmth (like the interviewer did)
- Go lower energy (be careful with the "high energy" some charisma coaches champion)

8. High Status Friends Lift, Low Status Sink (Law of Association)

Law 8: Being with high-status people lifts you upward, while over-engaging with lower-status ones pulls you down towards their level

This law leads to a host of social and psychological games.
For example:

LOW-STATUS "CLIMBING" GAMES	⍰ HIGH-STATUS DEFENSE
Secretary at law firm seeks friendship with lawyers	Lawyers are better off *friendly* but not too close
Junior employee asks senior employee questions during a presentation to get engagement and investment	The senior should keep answers short. If it's a good question, address the whole team or the boss
⍰ Woman mistreats or badmouths her partner to display she's better (and ready for a higher-value men)	⍰ The man who wants her cannot sympathize with him or he stoops down. He must agree or pile on
Befriend & social climb game Doorman at upscale condo jokes with tenants to sub-communicate he's at the same level. Then one-ups them to gain even more power. ⍰ Bel's example	Tenants are better off friendly, but not too chummy. Strongly enforcing boundaries to put him "back in his place" when he pulls power moves is necessary.

⍰⍰ ⍰ **PRO Tip: Avoid low-value associations, even in your stories**
Never sub-communicate that the people close to you are low value.
⍰ If you talk about poor characters, always A) say or sub-communicate you're not close (ie. "she's just an ex-classmate); or B) display dismissive body language to sub-communicate you don't appreciate the person ⍰.

9. Power ↔ Value (The Power-of-Exchange Law)

Law 9: Power and value are two different but overlapping and mutually influencing constructs

Power and value overlap and complement each other, and people *expect* them to overlap.
For example, a value giver expects to have more power—a fair expectation that you generally want to honor in order to maintain the relationship.

It's the same principle of "no taxation without representation".
⍰ If I give value/money, I expect power.

Also read:

- Social exchange 101
- Social exchange practical takeaways

> 9 Laws of Social Success From Social Exchange Theory

More: Take Control of Your Social Power

These 9 laws are your foundation for navigating life's hierarchies and achieving goals.

But *applying* them with precision takes practice and deeper insight—that's where Power University comes in.

Our proven system builds on these principles to transform you into a high-value man who commands respect effortlessly.

Ready to level up?
Join **Power University** today and unlock the tools to dominate social dynamics—starting now.

Check Power University

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Microaggressions: 7 Techniques For Self-Defense (W/ Examples)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 June 2024 · Archived copy · Original

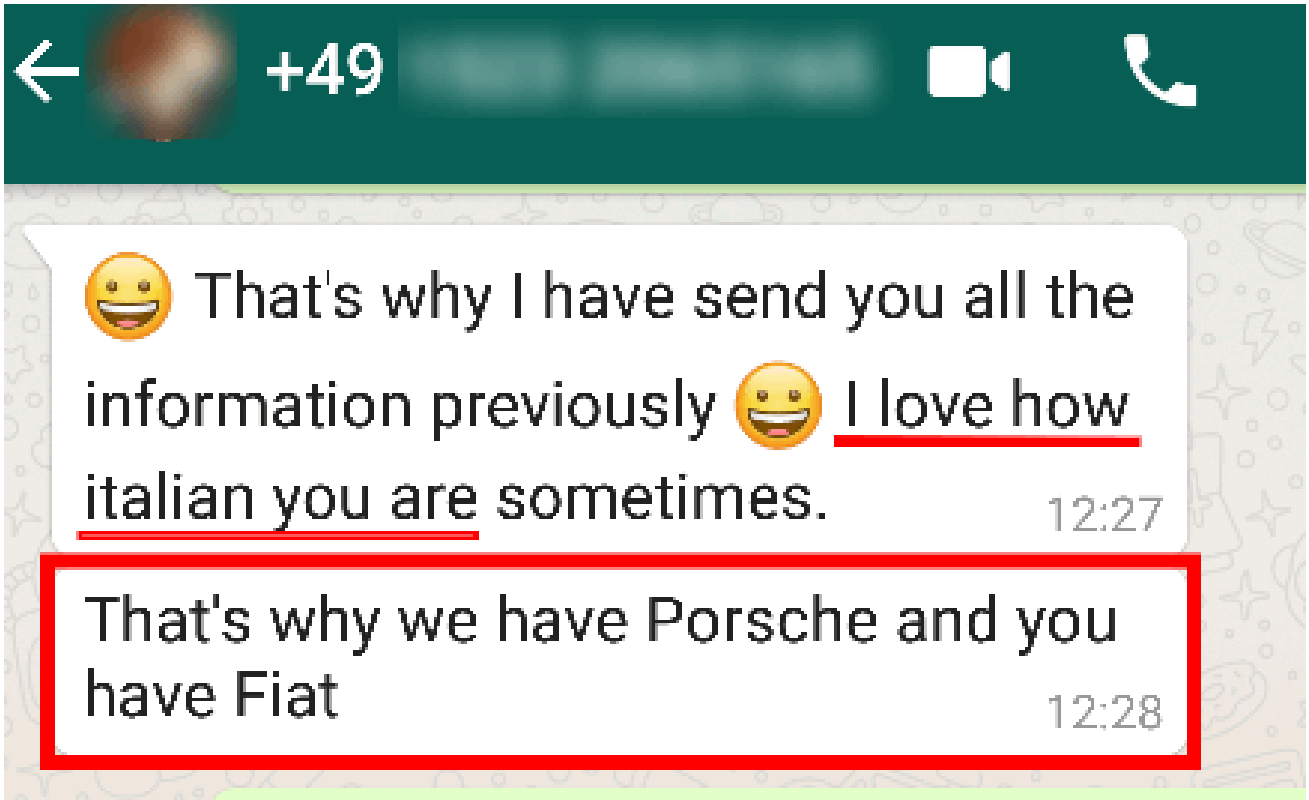
Microaggressions are seemingly small power moves and covert attacks that undermine your status and lower your self-esteem.

Luckily, there are many ways to handle microaggressions.

We are the #1 website and resource on power and social power dynamics, and we taught thousands of men how to handle all types of social challenges.

In this article you will learn 7 techniques to handle microaggressions like a king.
And to make it as easy as possible, we add a ton of examples.

Speaking of which, here is an example of microaggression:



"I love how (your ethnicity) you are" while delivering criticism. Common microaggression masked as a joke

Let's start:

Contents

- 1. Surfacing
- 2. Show Me The Hand
  - 2.2. Give Them Rope (& Scorched Earth)
- 3 Shame Them With Vulnerability
  - 3.2. Shame With Judge Role
- 4. Ignore With Neutral Statements (One-Crosses)
  - 4.2. Drop a quick, shaming comment, then move on
  - 4.3. Ignore With Dismissive Facial Expression
- 5. Own It And Reframe It Into a Positive

- 6. Go Meta: Explain Their Game
- 7. Social Dominance to Draw Boundaries
  - 7.2. Simple line in the sand
  - 7.3. “Affectionate Dominance”

1. Surfacing

To draw them out of their cover and show their nasty intent

You can do it with simple and neutral questions:

> **You**: What do you mean?
>
> **You**: I don’t get it, why are you saying that?
>
> **You**: What’s the irony in that joke, I’m missing it
>
> **You**: Excuse me?

The attacker can either come out in the open, or keep hiding.

If they keep hiding, you maintain your frame of “what was that, not cool” ⍰.

Let them explain.
The more they explain, the more they expand the nastiness.

2. Show Me The Hand

To show the attacker’s lack of courage

The attitude is:

Attack if you want, but don’t be a sneaky weasel. Do it openly.

It can start with surfacing:

> **You**: (look at him) That sounds mean, why would you say that (keep looking, expecting an explanation)

Whatever they say, you then attack the sneakiness.
Ie.:

> **You**: Look man I don’t like these games. It’s not how I am. I like straight talk, and I’ve been nothing but respectful with you. If you have an issue with me, please speak up. No need to hide behind fake jokes

If there are people around, you can involve them.
Ie.: “*Or am I wrong, what do you guys think*“.

Or with kindness:

> **You**: Look man, I wouldn’t talk like that to a freind. So if I’ve done anything that bothered you, please tell me.

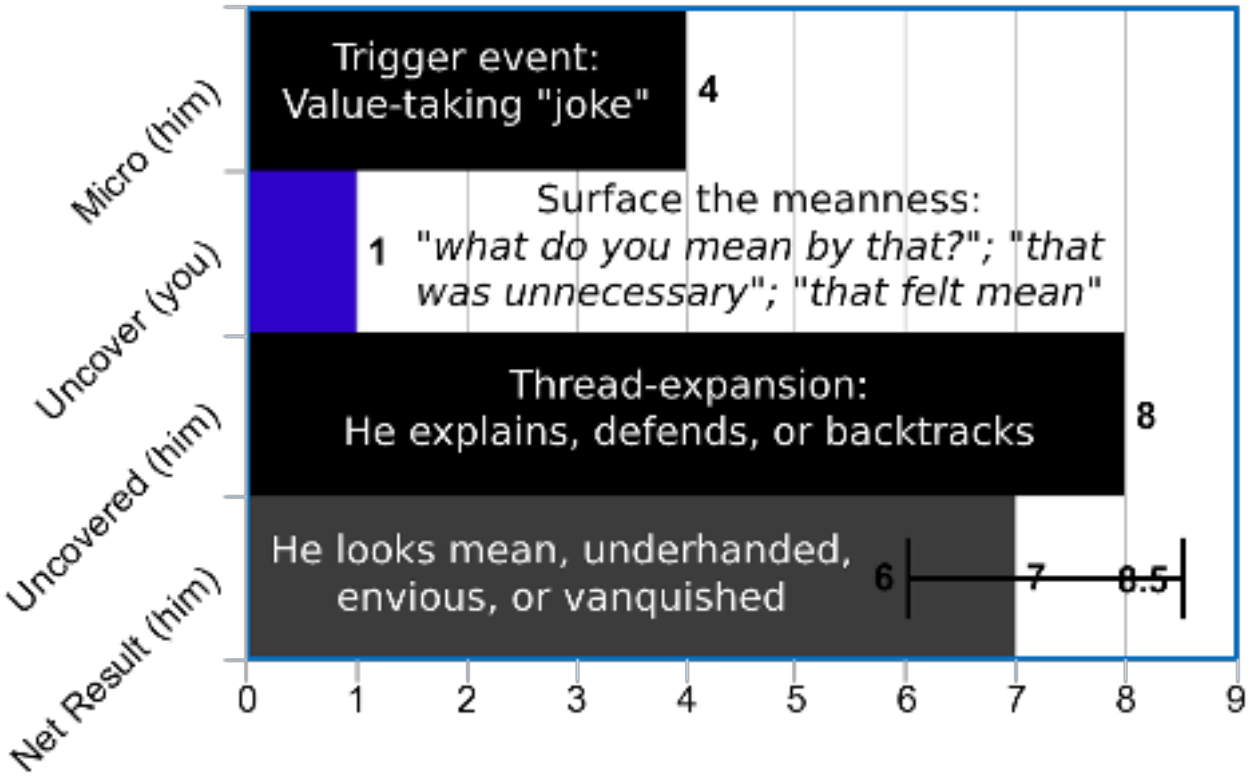
Many at this point will half-deny, half-own it:

> **Him**: Nah man, it was just a joke, sorry if it came across the wrong way

That's usually good enough for you to drop it.
You've made your point and showed you're an honorable man who doesn't take disrespect.

In Chart

Techniques #1 and #2 in chart:



2.2. Give Them Rope (& Scorched Earth)

Encourage their attacks to make their nastiness obvious.
The scorched earth approach includes a counter-attack.

You may strategically make yourself an easier target, submit, or retreat.
Or provoke them.

The more they advance, the more exposed they become.

Some end goals of this technique:

- Get them kicked out
- Display their nastiness to the group and/or leader
- Make them talk or brag so they annoy everyone
- Counterattack with the best conditions
  - Record their actions
  - Sue with more evidence
  - Gather examples for the upcoming showdown
- …

Example from the movie "Boiler Room":

> **Guy 1**: (makes a mistake)

> **Power Scalper**: Dumbass
> **Guy 1**: (does not defend, lets the silence expand the nastiness)

Guy 1 lets the leader police it, and gets rid of a nasty competitor.

⍰ Example 2: give them rope to brag

Imagine they use you as "social peg" to brag:

> **Him**: Max didn't know what to do. Unluckily, I wasn't there <— frames you needing them
> **You**: Yeah, what would have you done <— instead of defending, gives him rope to brag
> **Him**: I would have… <— falls for it, starts bragging

⍰⍰ ⍰ Skip self-defense when the attack is idiotic and everyone knows you're an upstanding man.
Instead, strategically expand on the attacker's idiocy.

⚠ **Don't confuse strategic rope-giving with making excuses for inaction**
Only give rope strategically. Ie.: when you have a plan to come out on top.

Use it with written communication (✒ "Verba volant, scripta manent")

General principle:

⚖ **In written communication, only counter-attack after it would be obvious to an ignorant, third-party observer, who the asshole is.**

And of course, written evidence of unlawful behavior is worth its bites in gold.

⍰ Example of failing this principle.

3 Shame Them With Vulnerability

To own and openly display your emotional reaction and/or hurt at the nastiness

Example:

> **You**: (pause, look saddened) I feel it's rude to make fun of people like that
>
> **You**: It pains to hear you would talk to me like that. I don't believe one can have a good relationship without mutual respect
>
> **You**: I'm shocked you'd say that

See more on:

- **Vulnerability and power**

3.2. Shame With Judge Role

To display your disapproval they would even play these low-level games

Example:

> **Her**: (power move)
> **You**: (pause, look away. Then straight at her) I'm saddened you would say that. I think you're a great woman, and I expect better

This is a favorite of mine.
It's powerful, high-quality, and can pull people up to your level. Perfect for relationships, and makes you the leader.

⍰ Using shame against shit-tests
More examples coming ⍰

4. Ignore With Neutral Statements (One-Crosses)

To reply factually and neutrally, ignoring the power move and ill-intention

Example:

> **Him**: Ahaha you really using a calculator for that?
> **Her**: Yes <— factual reply, ignores the nastiness
> **Him**: That's so easy, it's 73
> **Her**: Great, but still using a calculator
> **Him**: See, 73, it was so easy
> **Her**: Yeah, easy and fast, and I can fully trust the calculator <— little power move implying you don't trust him

When their small-time games fail to have any effect, they lose (and you win flying higher).

4.2. Drop a quick, shaming comment, then move on

To remain emotionally unaffected, shame them, and move on

Example:

> **Micro-Aggressor**: Oh, you didn't go back to his place? Wow! (fake-surprised intonation to imply you're "easy")
> **You**: Oh, that sounded nasty.
> Anyway… (move on while looking at others in the group) <— great "shunning move"

4.3. Ignore With Dismissive Facial Expression

No words, but shake your hand in disappointment.

5. Own It And Reframe It Into a Positive

Old example:

> **Him**: LOL, good to see Max tonight, it took a free dinner to make him come out
> **You**: Yeah man, I am saving up indeed (owns it and uncovers the attack). I think it's important to save and invest in your dreams (reframes into a positive)

Then, you can potentially one-up him back:

> **You**: I'm not into throwing money on drinks and random girls

Now *you* imply he's after shallow pursuits (VS you, working on your dreams).

6. Go Meta: Explain Their Game

Explain what their nasty game was

For example:

> **Him**: (grabs her calf) Chub chub
> **Her**: LOL, that's funny, but I prefer we avoid these type of games
> **Him**: ?
> **Her**: Yeah, you know, men teasing women for chubbiness so they get insecure, and men gain more control
> **Him**: No, it was just a joke
> **Her**: Yeah, sure, but it's also what I just explained.
> Imagine if <— P.S.: examples where you put others in the same situation are golden
> a woman "joked" that a man peaked soon, or is not very big. Would you think "it's just a joke"?

More in the relationship module

7. Social Dominance to Draw Boundaries

3 approaches:

7.2. Simple line in the sand

Example:

> **Micro-aggressor**: LOL, good to see Max tonight, it took a free dinner to make him came out (frames you as stingy)
> **You**: Hey man, don't do that

You can use other techniques after that.
Or you can hold your line that it's nasty, and you don't like it.

Very powerful.

7.3. "Affectionate Dominance"

For example:

> **Micro-aggressor**: LOL, good to see Max tonight, it took a free dinner to make him came out
> **You**: Ahaha, Matt is being his usual friendly self tonight (pats Max on the back, or points at him looking at the group)

Or stronger:

> **You**: Ahaha, good to see that Matt is being his usual passive-aggressive self tonight

One more example:

Also see:

- **Dominant behavior**

Or better yet, learn it all at once at Power University

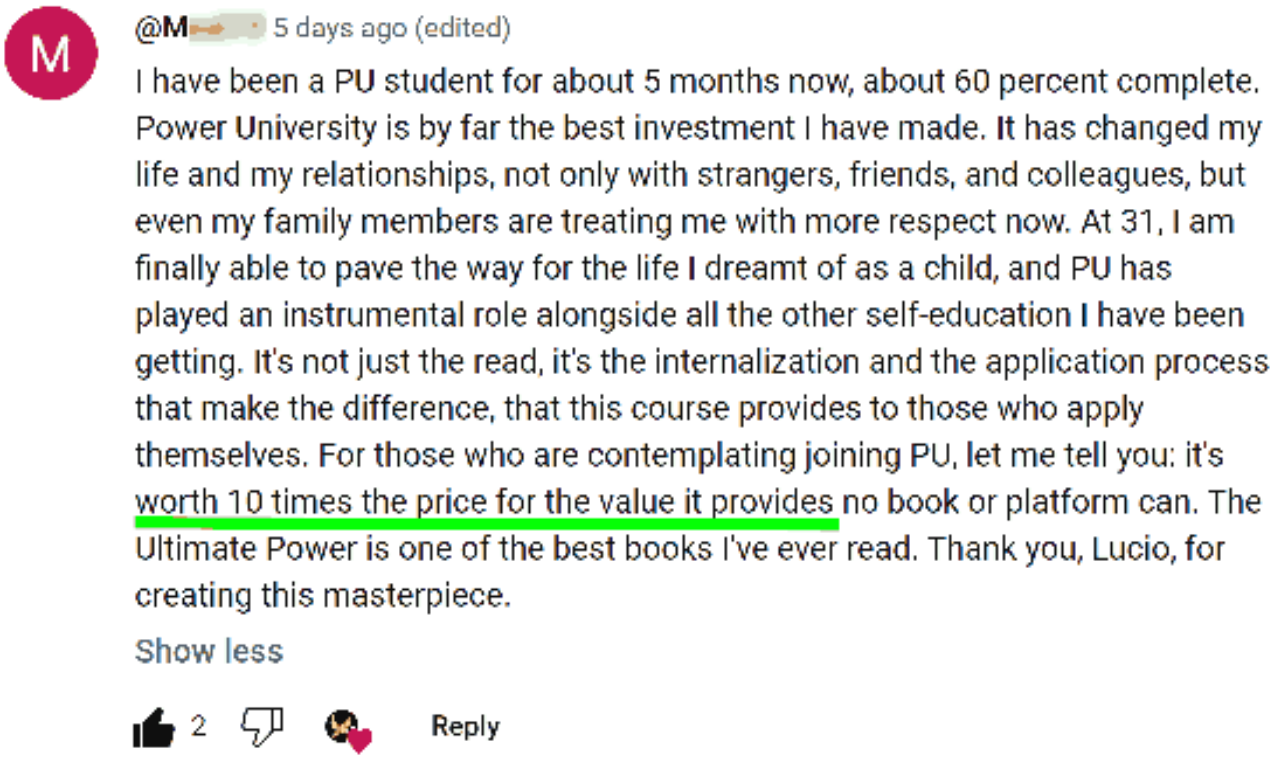
Beat Dominant People at Their Own Game: Power Showdowns

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 June 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Want to know how to gain respect from dominant people?

One showdown can make or break it all—lose, and you're dismissed; win, and you're unstoppable.

At The Power Moves, we've guided thousands of men to master respect, status, and attraction.
For example:



> **PU alumnus**: … not only with strangers, friends, and colleagues, but even my family members are treating me with more respect now

So here's how to turn high-stakes escalations into your power play.

Contents

- The High-Stake Respect Negotiation
- How to Win a Showdown
  - 1. Pick The Right Fight
  - 2. Spot The First Push
  - 3. Stop The First Push
  - 4. Stand Your Ground…
  - 5. … Until Their U-Turn Moment
  - 6. Re-empower Them
  - 7. Enjoy The Respectful Relationship
- ⚠ Beware Manipulation, Frames, & Beliefs
- Showdown Principles
  - Characters: Who Corners You Into Showdowns

- When To Expect Showdowns

The High-Stake Respect Negotiation

Showdowns are escalations of disagreements resulting in complete losses or complete victories

Usually, the initiator is very assertive, dominant, or overstepping his authority.

But the victim isn't submitting and relinquishing his rights.
So, as both parties stick to their preferred course of action, an escalation follows.

The results of those escalations have outsized effects on status, "pecking order", and respect.
And, whenever possible mates are involved, also on attraction.

Often, they also have significant *mental* effects.

The loser feels "broken", loses confidence and self-esteem.
And the winner feels strong, confident, and dominant.

How to Win a Showdown

We'll walk through the steps with a real-life example:

1. Pick The Right Fight

Including:

1. **Importance**, and what matters to you
2. **Odds of success**, so that you can reasonably win
3. **Honorable causes**. This is also a CYA approach. Even if you lose defending what's honorable, you still look good
   - Your own self-respect is included in "honorable causes". So you can always escalate on blatant disrespect

In this example, it's about an important value for me:

If I'm not well-placed to make an informed decision, I don't give my vote.

2. Spot The First Push

I explained my values to the person right above me.

She reported the situation, and the lady up the chain intervened:

Hi Lucio

High dominance, dismissive, not addressing my concerns

Please Lucio complete the proxy. You should have received the following mail below where Svetlana or any of the others from our District who are attending in Chicago can be chosen to give Proxy to.

Minimizing

The Links describe very well what and how to do. It is quite easy. Just sit 5 mins quietly and you will have it completed. This will be a great thing for the District 95 in order to place as many votes as possible for the things they have to vote for at TI.

Your club secretary should also have filled in a Proxy. (Only Secretary and Preseident can do this - two votes for each club) I can only see that one person at Mercury is missing so therefore I presume he/she has done it? Please check with them.

I appreciate your time. Thank you Lucio.

Business-speak for "just f*cking do it, no more discussions"

> **Sub-communication**: “stop fuc*ing around, just do it”.

Now it’s not only about values.
But also about status and respect.

If I gave up here, I’d look like a pussy-footer who gives in as soon as a higher-up speaks dominantly.

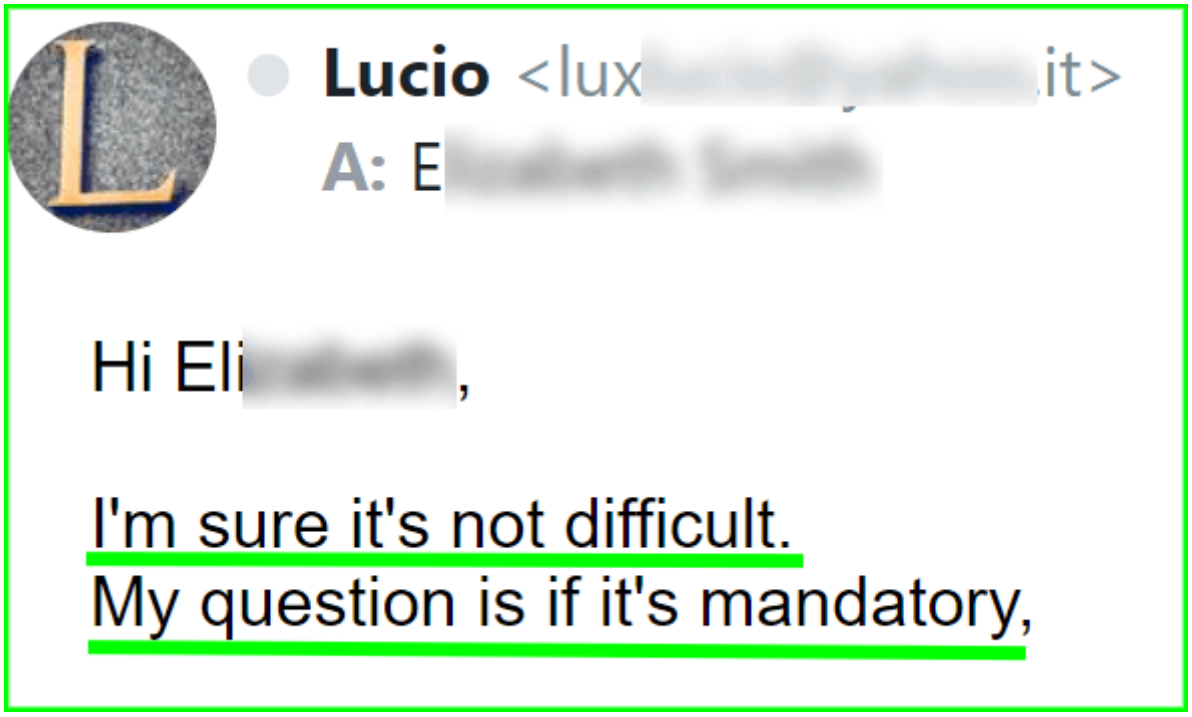
3. Stop The First Push

As usual:

Calibration.

Be strategic in formal environment with written communication.

In this case, I chose the least effort path:



> **Me**: I’m sure it’s not difficult. My question is if it’s mandatory

Notice how strategic this is:

That question is key.
I'm pretty sure it's *not* mandatory.
So I can choose not to vote, and she can't force me.

Plus, my question "surfaces" that she pushed out of authority and dominance. Without respect for my right to choice.

4. Stand Your Ground...

They may try to push you around again.

Disrespect you more, make up some new "reasons why", get louder, or simply insist.

Whatever they do, you remain steadfast.
Stand your ground with each subsequent push, no matter how often they try.

Here's a good approach:

1. Describe The Event

For example:

- You're still using the same aggressive tone that I say I'm not cool with
- You're insisting on this
- I see you feel strongly about this
- Seems like we see things very differently

2. Re-state Your Point

For example:

- Maybe I wasn't clear, so let me try again…
- Let me say this again…
- What truly matters to me is…

3. End On A (Power-Protecting) Positive

Or help them save face while conceding to you:

- … I hope you can see my point
- … And if we can find a way, happy to do my part on this
- … If X and Y happy, we can go back to collaborating again
- … On my part, I'm always willing to treat you with respect

For example:

> **You**: Look, I felt your tone the first time out was borderline rude, and I appreciate respectful communication.
> But maybe, it wasn't clear enough.
> So let me make it clear it now and hopefully we can go back to collaborating like the respectful people I believe we can be.

⍰ Mindset: strong, *and* respectful

Remember the principles:

Make friends and allies.
And avoid unneeded wars.

Your goal is not to push as hard as possible.
Your goal is to achieve your goal -be it respect, a deal, more money, or whatever-.

And it's best to achieve your goal by ending that escalation as soon as possible, and in the friendliest terms possible.
Whenever possible, power protect, offer olive branches, and propose win-win "early exits" during escalations.

5. ... Until Their U-Turn Moment

They U-turn when they drop the dominance game and instead:

- Justify
- Apologize
- Use a respectful tone
- Propose a win-win
- …

In our example:

> ⍰ **Sub-communication**: OK, you're not the type of man to roll over and I can't win this one. And it's probably better to have you as a friend and ally. Let me be warmer

6. Re-empower Them

Now don't go from defense, to attack.

In most situations, you don't want to browbeat others.
Or "rub your factory in their faces".

Instead, once you win or achieve your goals, you want to rebuild goodwill.

And the bigger your win, the more you want to rebuild them up.

The mindset is:

Give me shit, and I escalate to give you shit back. But change your tack and treat me nicely, and I'll be even nicer.

How to Re-Empower

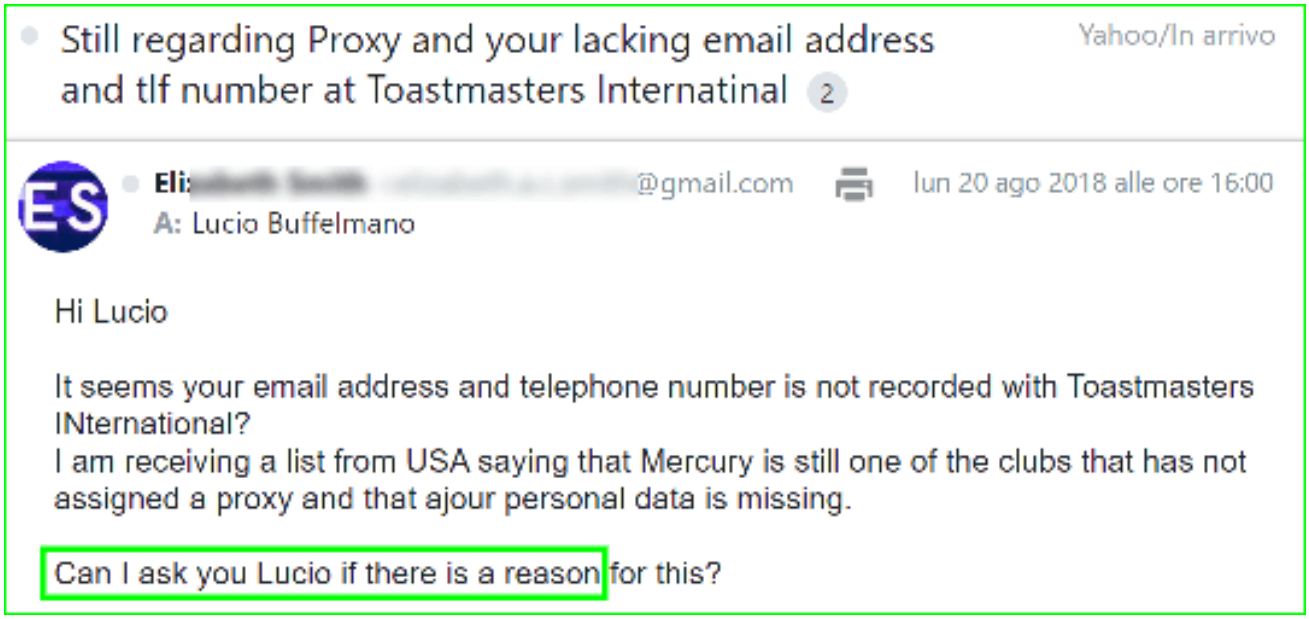
Examples:

- "**Glad we could clarify this**" to frame it as a misunderstanding -instead of them trying and losing the dominance game-
- **Be warmer right after**. For example:
  - *Cool cool, how are things with you by the way*
  - *Awesome, now we get it. By the way, I heard about X, congratulations :).*
  - *Looking forward to seeing you again*
- **Change topic** for some rapport-rebuilding chit-chat and to avoid ending on a negative
- **Thank them for their role in the resolution**: "*Great, thanks man, appreciate your understanding/kindness/explanation on this*, it always helps when someone can be so open-minded"
- **Take some blame**: "*Great, thanks, I know sometimes I can be a bit touchy/annoying/stickler for the rules…* "
- **Revist the events with a stronger win-win ending**: "*Yeah, glad we could clarify, to me X was bad, but then you understood my point and when you said Y it was all good. Appreciate that man*"
- **Show them it's now win-win**. "*So now we can both enjoy X. Aren't you glad about that (smile to frame it as cheeky/fun because "aren't you glad" can be a power move)*"

7. Enjoy The Respectful Relationship

Showdowns's effects can be everlasting.

Here is her next email, a week after:


Still regarding Proxy and your lacking email address and tlf number at Toastmasters Internatinal 2

Yahoo/In arrivo

ES Eli[redacted]@gmail.com lun 20 ago 2018 alle ore 16:00

A: Lucio Buffelmano

Hi Lucio

It seems your email address and telephone number is not recorded with Toastmasters INternational?
I am receiving a list from USA saying that Mercury is still one of the clubs that has not assigned a proxy and that ajour personal data is missing.

Can I ask you Lucio if there is a reason for this?

The full email here.

She became extra nice in person as well.
And said great things about me to others.

Funny how people find a new respect for you when you don't put up with their bullying ways, eh?

Like Harriet Braiker says referring to manipulators:

> **If he/she is going to come around to a healthier, happier relationship, you will see it happen in response to your strength, not to your weakness.**

Mindset: not about the person, but the principle

For me this was not a question of "dominating" or "winning".

It was a question of principle.
Beginning with the vote: I can't give a vote of trust without knowing facts and people.
And I don't appreciate bossy behavior to "browbeat me" into compliance.

Once she started behaving well, I was cool with her.
And even respected her: she's a smart woman and a go-getter.

But to reach this point, I HAD to push thorugh the showdown.

High-power go-getters sometimes need to be reminded you're not a pushover :).

⚠ Beware Manipulation, Frames, & Beliefs

Our example was about authority and dominance.

The most obvious showdowns are about power and dominance.
In some environments, they may even entail physical escalations.

Those, of course, are the most obvious and easier to stop.

However, be careful.
There is more than pure, direct dominance.

As Bel correctly notes much of showdowns come down to mindsets, values, beliefs, frames, and *conviction*.
Most notable are the beliefs around:

- What's fair or unfair (in the specific event, or in general)
- Who's right or wrong (in the specific event, or in general)
- Who's "good" VS who's a SOB (in the specific event, or in general)

And, with gaslighters, also:

- What's real VS what's not real

A manipulator *may* be high in dominance and use it.
But he may have even better weapons.

If a manipulator can influence what's right, fair, or "true", he may not even need a shodown.
And if it escalates, he can win it far more easily -or frame you as "bad" even when losing it-.

See more on manipulation here:

- **Manipulation power dynamics**

Showdown Principles

General principles;

1. Longer and more intense escalation = bigger consequences
2. Longer and more intense escalation = bigger rapport break and relationship damage (dating exceptions apply)

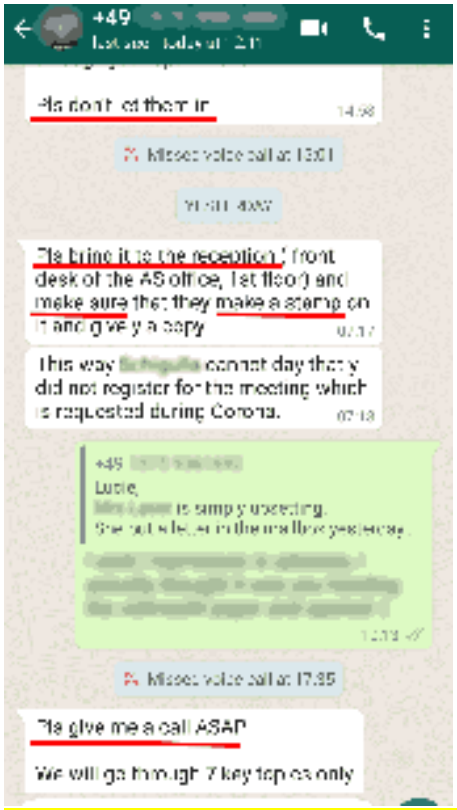
#2 is why we advice to re-empower after winning a showdown.

Characters: Who Corners You Into Showdowns

Expect more showdowns with:

- Dominant individuals
- Disrespectful ones
- Takers testing for easy targets to take advantage of

 For example, I knew I had to be ready for escalation with this personality:



Unless you reject their dominant tasking, they'll keep treating you like a little dog

In most cases dominant individuals just need the reminder…

… The reminder that you're not another submissive schmuck.

Your reminder sub-communicates "I'm no less than you. Treat me respectfully, and we can get along (and both gain)".

After that, they'll treat you well and you can go win-win.

When To Expect Showdowns

Showdowns tend to happen during the most power-significant junctures.

For example:

1. **Beginning** of relationships, including "tests"

2. **Changes** in established relationships
   - ⚠ **When you empower yourself** and people want to “put you back in your place”
3. **Task assignments**
4. **Arguments** for diverging opinions or interests
5. **End of relationships**, including former mentors who cling to their “teacher role” (example)
6. …

Also see:

- **Power phases during relationships**

⍰ This is a preview from Power University. Our students enjoy status, respect, and attraction !

The Science of Social Calibration: 7 Steps to Mastery

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 June 2024 · Archived copy · Original

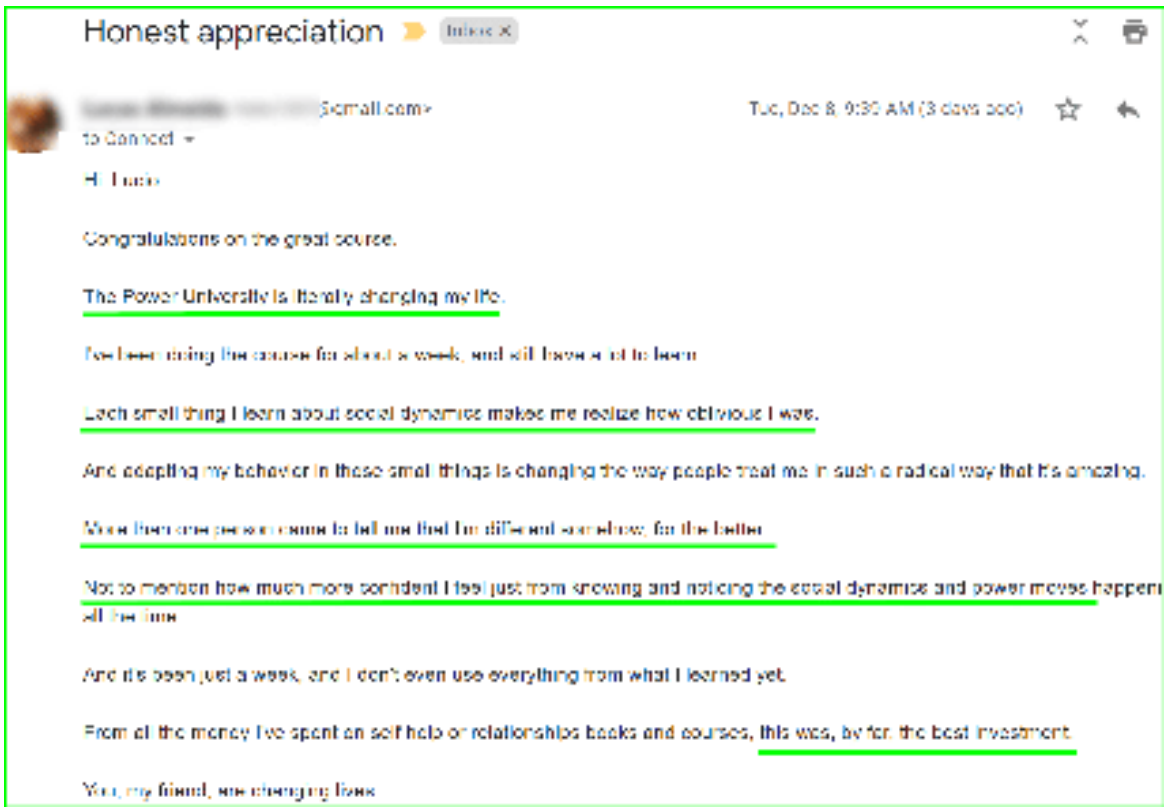
Social calibration is crucial for social and life success.

Uncalibrated men can come across as “weird” and social burdens.
When they jump too fast into gaining power and popular books about “laws”, they *badly* misapply them.

Luckily, this article is here to help you.

We are the #1 website on advanced social dynamics in the world.
And we helped thousands of good men to gain status, respect, and attraction.

Say a student of ours:



> **PU alumnus**: Power University is literally changing my life *(…)* I learn about social dynamics… More than one person came to tell me that I’m different somehow, for the better

By the end of this article, you will learn advanced social dynamics of social calibration.

Contents

- 1. Calibrate to Their Character: Cooperative vs. Strategic
- 2. Calibrate to Their Status: Respect More Those Above You
  - ▯ Example of Social Calibration At Work
  - 2.2. Be More Direct With Lower-Status Individuals
- 3. Calibrate to Give/Take Exchanges: Give More to Givers
  - ▯ Example: Social Calibration With A Mentor
- 3. Calibrate Your Behavior to Your Status & Rank
  - 3.2. Defend more dominantly with lower-status, more smoothly with higher-status

- 4. Calibrate to The Situation
- 5. Calibrate to Their Dominance Level
  - Chart Example of Power Calibration
  - ⍰ Mental Power Move: “Nobody Is Above Me”
- 6. Calibrate to The Personality
- Calibration Is The Meta-Skill

1. Calibrate to Their Character: Cooperative vs. Strategic

This is a fundamental TPM concept:

People differ.
And you also treat them differently.

Some people are honorable and high-quality men.
Who we call “eagles” here.

You want these good people for your best relationships.
Close friends, spouses, business partners, etc.
And **to keep honorable people close *you* must also be an honorable man**.
Give, talk straight, listen, support, uplift, and don’t play any turkey games of course.

And some others are toxic people.
They’re inveterate manipulators, abusive partners, and takers (ie.: make you worse off).
You never want to be open or frank with these people.

This is social strategy 101.
But also *life* strategy 101.
Make sure you understand it -and apply it-.

Read more here:

- **How to outsmart a manipulator**

2. Calibrate to Their Status: Respect More Those Above You

In human socialization, respect goes *above*.

People above you expect a more careful and deferential approach and tone.

In TPM's terminology, people above you expect more power protection.
Power protection is a TPM concept that roughly means "treat respectfully", "save face", and do things at their convenience.

Failing to power-protect above can cost you dearly in life.

⍰ Example of Social Calibration At Work

This is how calibration looks like with a boss:

> **Power-protecting report**: boss, do you think you can send me that document today?
> That way I can finish this task for the client

The elements of power protection are:

- "***Do you think***" is barely a request. It leaves it up to his boss to decide
- **Question format**, more power-protecting than statements
- **Provides rationale for the request**: he needs to finish his work
  - Provides *good* rationale: the boss likely *wants* good and faster customer service

This is also political skills 101.
Bosses like and reward power-protecting reports.

Also see:

- **How to have a great relationship with your boss**

2.2. Be More Direct With Lower-Status Individuals

Conversely, be more direct and "higher power" with those below you.

Of course, in general, treat *everyone* well.
It displays good character and… There's little added benefit in being a gratuitous as*hole.
Plus… You never know who'll become a winner.

However, in terms of pure effectiveness, you may not lose much to disempower those who are:

- Lower status
- Clueless about power
- Doormats and won't do a thing about disrespect

Indeed, disrespecting a pushover may be a power move to gain status and display dominance.
Albeit it may be fair in limited circumstances, we don't recommend it nor condone it—it's a bullying approach.
So watch out: someone may try it on you.

⚠ **Avoid *over*-protecting your employees**
Too much power-protecting as a boss can be mistaken for weakness. The "too nice boss" has little respect.
Also, driven and fast-advancing men prioritize results over pleasantries.

3. Calibrate to Give/Take Exchanges: Give More to Givers

General rule:

⚖ **The more they give, the more respect they expect**

Similar for higher-value men who associate with you.
Even with their simple association, they give you status. That's also a form of giving.

To make the exchange win-win, show your willingness to repay their value.
And one way to do it, is with consideration and respect.

⍰ Example: Social Calibration With A Mentor

Mentors are givers.

They give you knowledge, connections, support, or more.

As per social exchange dynamics, you need to rebalance that.
Or, at least, avoid to make it *too* imbalanced.
So you give more respect, deference, and meet at their convenience –*not* halfway-.

Some examples:

- **Apologize if you cut them off** while they speak
  If you must interject, add right after: "*Sorry, didn't mean to be rude, just wanted to…*"
- **Express gratitude** for their time and advice
- **Don't overly challenge their opinions**—it suggests you're their equal (or above).
- **Apologize clearly and directly** whenever you make mistakes
  - Example: Late at the restaurant? Walk in fast, raise your hand, say "sorry", explain why it was out of your control, show you're angry at yourself, and say you'll pick up the bill

3. Calibrate Your Behavior to Your Status & Rank

As a general rule:

Act slightly higher power than your current status or rank.

Why?

Because you never want to act lower power, of course :).

But you also don't want to overdo it.
People have a subconscious "radar" for those who "act too big for their shoes".
And that often comes at a social cost -or even danger, in some environments-.

The approach of "slightly above" maximizes returns, without over-stepping boundaries.

3.2. Defend more dominantly with lower-status, more smoothly with higher-status

Disrespect from lower-status people is potentially more damaging—so enforce your boundaries more directly.

When a lower-status man one-ups you, think, "What the f*ck is he thinking?"—or "He's out of line, I'll show him," if you're calmer.

The attitude in itself signals your higher status.

4. Calibrate to The Situation

When most people refer to "social calibration", they often refer to the *situation*.

As we've seen, the situation is only one aspect of social calibration.
But it is indeed foundational.

Here at the power moves we like to teach calibration to help you acquire status and attraction, and achieve goals.

So, for example, you:

- **Act higher power during group formation**. Especially, *talk* high power. Contrary to what Robert Greene suggests, empirical evidence shows that simply speaking more during group-formation to gain status
- **Act higher power upon first meeting someone** because first impressions are crucial and most people test you in the very beginning
- **High power and extroverted when you like a girl** in a group to grab attention and show value before talking to her

Plus:

Erring on the side of power is safer than erring on the side of warmth.
That's because fixing over-power is easier than fixing submissiveness.

TPM proverb:

> People welcome friendliness from a dominant or cold man.
> But they will resist his power after he was conveniently (for them) submissive.
>
> ✒ *TPM Proverb*

Also see:

- High power and high warmth

5. Calibrate to Their Dominance Level

Remember the "net effect" of social power dynamics.

In brief, it says that your social power is their level, minus yours.

So as a general rule:

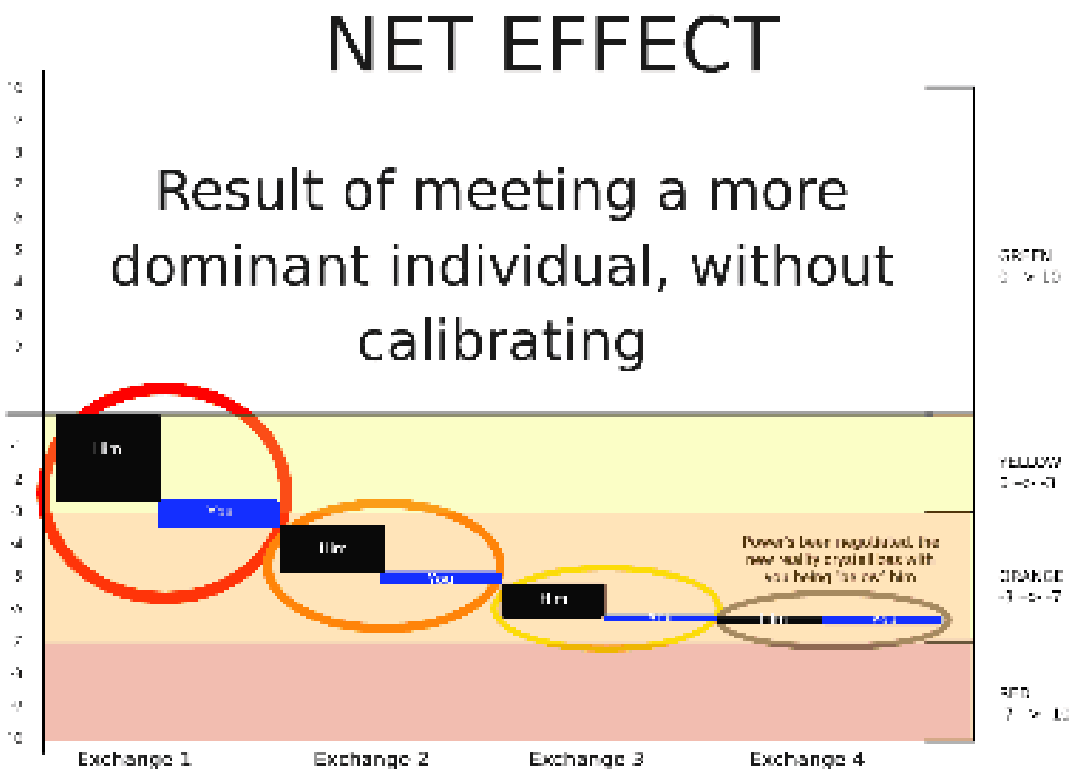
Be higher power with more dominant men, and warmer with submissive ones.

Same for dating.
High-power feminist? You're higher power as well.
Feminine woman who's happy you lead? You can be a bit warmer.

Chart Example of Power Calibration

Imagine you meet a more dominant individual (black).

But you keep behaving as you usually do (lower dominance compared to him):



If you don't understand the chart, please read how a candlestick chart works
In the chart, imagine the guy start talking to you dominantly.

If you don't adapt, you keep losing power over the next few backs and forth. Eventually, the dynamics cement with you "below" him.
He'll get more respect from other men, more attraction from women, and more promotions at work.
And you may not want that.

As a general rule:

The more dominant man moves "above" you in the 1:1 relationship, and higher status in the group's hierarchy.

It's also a good idea to calibrate to their friendliness ("warmth").
The less warm and friendly they are, the less friendly you are as well (heads up: it's possible to be warm without losing power but it's more advanced).

For more examples, Power University.

⁉ Good high-power/high-warmth needs little calibration ⁉
A good blend of power and warmth work great in most situations.
Adopt that approach, and you'll do great in most situations.

⁉ Mental Power Move: "Nobody Is Above Me"

Mind first.

Learning high-power behavior and techniques is great.
But once you adopt the right mindsets, most of the right behavior follows naturally.

Some men struggle in this area because they *over*-defer to higher status, more dominant, or larger men.

We share our full approach in *Confidence University*, but a good technique is to focus on whichever area *you* are superior.

Even if there is a real status difference, that shouldn't affect your sense of self-worth.
Ignore the power differential, feel no difference… And let all external behavior follow naturally.

Bottom line: think highly of yourself, and you'll never be lower status.

6. Calibrate to The Personality

Research shows that people differ on several key traits.

When it comes to power and respect, an important trait is their 'need for power'.
We can think of it as 'power sensitivity'.

Power-sensitive men get offended, angry, or more easily hurt.
And they are more likely to escalate, turn into enemies, or resent you and dislike you.

They are:

- **Dark-triads** tend to be power-sensitive
  - Narcissists tend to have thin skin
- **Low self-esteem**, and you can easily crush their ego. They're more likely to "blame themselves" than you though. So in terms of pure effectiveness, you lose little (but still don't be an ahole!)
- **Fixed mindset** who don't believe they can improve with feedback
- **Dominant and competitive men**, who see more "fight for status"
- **Conservatives and with "masculinity values"** because they see respect as the men's currency

It doesn't mean "be nice to them".
It means that, whenever appropriate or convenient, you power protect more.

PRO Tip: Ensure high-power men know you "respect them"
"Respect" is important to many high-power men.
It's often a good idea to outright say so -especially if you're angry or are talking very directly-.
⁉ Recall the Godfather example again: that's exactly what he did. The sub-communication is "I'm angry but don't take it personally, I respect you as a man".

Calibration Is The Meta-Skill

Social calibration is not basic social skills, but *foundational* social skills.

This is true both for character/traits, and behavior/strategy.

Character-wise, the fluctuating selection model highlights that few personality traits have universal reproductive benefits under all circumstances. Instead, their benefits depends on contexts and circumstances (Furnham and Kanazawa, 2020).

And for behavior and strategy, I quote the *Routledge Handbook of Communication Skills*:

> *If there is one skill that is most fundamental to persuasive success, it is message adaptation – adapting or tailoring one's persuasive efforts to the particular situation faced, the particular audience to be influenced*

And we add that it goes beyond persuasion to include status, attraction, and almost anything related to people skills. To the point that **most social skills advice is wrong unless you calibrate it**.

For example:

- **Be interested to be interesting**, by Dale Carnegie doesn't apply when you're already interesting
- **Talk less to convey power** by Robert Greene doesn't apply during group formation, when dominant men and future leaders talk more
- **Open-ended questions** by Chris Voss don't apply to higher-power people who seek fast information because they have little time to waste

These are all generally good advice… *If you can calibrate them* to the situation, context, and goal.
The ceiling effect also explains that 'good rules of thumb' help you only up to a certain level before you need something different.

For example, the *Routledge Handbook on Persuasion* doesn't have almost a single 'persuasion move' that works independent of context.
So while touch, friendliness, and smiles all *tend* to be persuasive, there are times when they can all be *un*-persuasive.

It's calibration that allow you to apply rules of thumb, while also accommodating the exceptions.

Calibration is foundational to social skills and forms the basis for more advanced applications from office politics, to effective dating, to Machiavellian strategies, to achieve ambitious goals.

Finally, **calibrated men come across as charming, power-aware, and charismatic.**
They influence others naturally, gain respect, status, and are attractive.

High quality men MUST be calibrated.

Socially uncalibrated men struggle to be high-value, high-quality men.
No matter how much they may earn or succeed in other areas of life.
They come across as "weird". And "weird" is one step away from social burden, bullied, and "stuck at the bottom" in life.

This article was a good primer on social calibration.
And we go all the way from basic to mastery level in Power University.

⍰ Power University students become socially smooth operators who acquire respect, status, and attraction ⍰

The Learn Startup Course (Udemy) by Eric Ries: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 June 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Lean Startup is a six-lecture course on entrepreneurship taught by Eric Ries, and teaching how to effectively bring products to market.

Contents

- Bullet Summary
- Full Summary
- Introduction: “What Is a Lean Startup?”
- Innovation Accounting for Startups (The 3 A’s)
- Creating Experiments to Test Hypotheses
- Lean User Experience
- The Art of the Pivot
- Real-Life Applications
- Cons
- Pros
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Know the difference between value and waste**: it will determine whether or not your product is one your potential customers even want.
- **Avoid meaningless metrics**: they’re useless for your business’s growth and success.
- **Pivot when your cashflow is underperforming**: which means the current strategy isn’t working

Full Summary

About The Author:
Eric Ries is an American entrepreneur, blogger, and creator of the Lean Startup Methodology, which he explains in his book, *The Lean Startup*.
He studied at Yale in 2010 and became an Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Harvard Business School.

Introduction: “What Is a Lean Startup?”

According to Ries, the answer is a startup that knows the difference between “value” and “waste”.

Most new products built in the world fail because most startups don’t know how to make sure they’re raising the value of their product while avoiding wasting their time—which is what Ries believes makes the difference between a sustainable business that makes progress and one that’s “doomed from the start”.

#1: Entrepreneurship Myths (Extended)

As pointed out in his book, Ries says that determination being what leads startups to success is a myth.

In this course, he also talks about other myths out there that are purported as being what leads someone to entrepreneurial success.

> **Ries**: “I think we have a really deep conceited belief that if you’re just in the right place at the right time with

> the right idea and, of course, you have the right astrological sign and you have the right entrepreneurial attributes and you have a powerful reality distortion field and also you have a really good product idea and you build a great team and it's a really high-quality product, if you just do all those things, then you're guaranteed to make money. And, what's amazing about the stories of real entrepreneurs is that there's an incredible number of them who actually were in the right place at the right time, with the right idea, with a great team who still manage to fail…just having a vision, just having a plan is not enough to ensure entrepreneurial success.

#1.2: How to Start Building a Lean Startup

1. **Recognize that a business plan is only a series of assumptions**: it's only a series of guesses about what *might* happen in the future.
2. **Build your minimum viable product (MVP)**: the most simplistic, rudimentary version of your product that you can use to assess if you're on the right track, test your vision, and test the assumptions of your business plan.

Note: based on how Ries explained this section, I'd say that there could be a step 1.2 saying something like, "Make a quick and simple business plan: in order to check its assumptions in step two or three's testing phases."

#2.: Embrace learning for better entrepreneurship

Ries continues his philosophy that entrepreneurs are managers.

However, he also says that learning is looked down upon in management circles because if a manager claims or reports that they "learned" something, it means they didn't have it right in the planning stage (so they failed to do something they said they were going to do).

That can mean that the manager either:

- Didn't make a very good plan OR
- Made good plan, but didn't successfully execute

So, does that mean you should throw out all learning?

No, because there's a difference between traditional general management and management within the context of effective entrepreneurship.

And that difference is:

> **Ries**: "…the soil of extreme uncertainty that we plant startups in. We don't know who our customer is. We don't know what the product is going to be. We have all these unknowns. And so, the most important thing, if you find yourself in the situation of high uncertainty, is to as quickly as possible find out what you don't know. And, that means that learning really is the essence of what it means to make progress in a startup."

Note: a small adjustment here, I'd say *implemented* learning is the essence of progress. Learning (gathering data) alone is not enough. Action based on that acquisition of valuable information (execution) is far more important.

#2.2: Implement validated learning

Many entrepreneurs allow vanity metrics to distract them from the more important data.

Instead, use "actionable metrics" (more on that a little later).

Note: Artur Belka, writer at Boldare (a product design and development company) put it best (see their Lean Startup Series):

> **Belka**: "If lean startup is all about rapid product iterations closely focused on user needs and requirements, then validated learning is that part of the process by which we learn just how close each iteration is to satisfying the people we're building it for.
>
> In fact, inventor of the lean startup approach, Eric Ries, has described validated learning as 'the unit of progress for lean startups.' In other words, for a lean startup, success is not so much measured by the number of units you manufacture but by the measurable responses from your target users…
>
> …the keyword is 'measurable'. Validated learning is quantifiable, based on data such as revenue, user engagement, and feedback. The result is learning that is evidence-based and actionable, leading to genuine product improvements in each iteration. Done properly, validated learning is remarkably efficient."

Innovation Accounting for Startups (The 3 A's)

#1: What Are "Good" (Meaningful) Metrics?

Ries considers "good metrics" the data that doesn't come from vanity metrics.

Those are the metrics that have (and should have) the most meaning to you, your product, and your business.

#2: The Three A's of Meaningful Metrics

They are:

- A: Actionable
- A: Accessible
- A: Auditable

#2.2: Split Testing for Meaningful Metrics

Here are a few examples Ries shares of how to implement the Three A's (which he discusses in an interview with Farbood Nivi, founder of the education company, Grockit).

Say that you're using the tool of split testing to gather meaningful metrics.

You create two identical landing pages, one with a $99.99 price point and another with a $29 price point.

- **Actionable**: Pick the price point with a higher conversion rate

Or, let's say you're using split testing to determine if you should make a certain update to your product offering—presenting one offer that's your original and another that's your updated idea.

And, the results of the split test reveal a lower conversion rate for the updated version of your offer.

- **Actionable**: Get rid of the update

Now, that's actionability which is focused on gathering the data.

On accessibility, you're making sure people actually review the data.

And, Reis encourages the idea that to increase your data's accessibility, you must increase people's desire to read and review the data.

Here are examples of good and bad accessibility:

- **Bad**: An overly detailed printed report with insurmountable heaps of data packed inside that takes 20 or more minutes to comprehend.
- **Good**: a user-friendly webpage with a simple interface and the important information bolded and highlighted.

However, Nivi notes that even with an accessible platform it can be difficult to get people to pay attention to reading the data.

So, his solution in his company was:

1. Hold a “Hackathon Day” where everyone has to create split test pages.
2. Hold weekly team meetings that focus on discussing the results of the split testing (and turning those results into action)

It may not be enough to simply post the data you’ve collected on your company’s website and hope your employees read it and take necessary action on it.

Making checking the reports more fun and engaging for everyone can minimize attention drop-offs and maximize productivity and results within the team.

That makes your reports more accessible.

Finally, here are some examples of how Grockit made their reports auditable:

- Data on the report is presented in a simple interface
- Key data are bolded and highlighted
- Key unit is the number of people
- Simplify the process

#3: How to determine what metrics to focus on

Here’s how Grockit does it:

1. **Find the major axis that defines the success of your company**: for example, is it user engagement? Scalability? Effectiveness?
2. **Find the criteria your company is running the business on**: examples could be your return rate, sign-up rate, engagement rate with specific features, conversion to paid rate, and so on.

Then, use the answers to these prompts to determine your key metrics.

#4: How to evaluate the success of a new feature

> **The Lean Startup**: “To assess the success of a new feature, look at whether it has moved the key metrics.”

If it moved the key metrics (in a positive direction), then that’s a good indicator that the new feature is moving toward success (because it improved the business).

Creating Experiments to Test Hypotheses

#1: The Three Steps to Creating an Experiment

An experiment is defined in this course as:

> **The Lean Startup**: an experiment is a method of testing a hypothesis with the goal of explaining reality.
>
> In the lean startup, experimentation is the act of using analytical methods to test one or more product’s potential success in the market.

1. Build one or more hypotheses.
2. Choose a testing form for each hypothesis.

3. Test the hypotheses rigorously.

And, remember, your hypothesis doesn't have to be right:

> **The Lean Startup**: "…being wrong moves you away from incorrect paths. Being right, on the other hand, is more often than not an indicator that you are asking the wrong questions."

#2: What Type of Experiment Should I Run?

Hiten Shah, CEO of Kissmetrics, says, "Testing things that are more radically different from each other [than a test like Google's famous 2009 experiment of testing 41 shades of blue on a button to see which one was most effective at getting the most clicks] is usually more effective at providing meaningful information."

Shah also says that early on in a startup, you should aim for more qualitative data (such as by doing surveys) than quantitative so you're more hands-on. He notes that this will allow you to quickly identify patterns about your product that will be useful information.

Lean User Experience

#1: What is Lean User Experience?

User experience is "UX".

Lean user experience is designing with a focus on:

- Customer research
- Product creation and development based on customer needs
- Learning from customers
- Driving improvement using customer metrics

#2: How to Implement Lean UX?

Example 1: During the "Ideation" stage:

1. Have a developer, designer, and product manager come up with 6 ideas each.
2. Tape all 18 ideas to the wall.
3. Vote on ideas.

This leads to more collaboration and better ideas.

Example 2: During the "Optimization" stage:

- Run tests across all variables (more than A/B testing, run A/B/C/D/E/F)

More testing will lead to better improvements.

Note: this is only useful if you're testing important variables. At some point, one can cross over into "over-analyzation" by testing too much which becomes counterproductive, in my opinion.

#3: How to Perform Customer Research for Lean UX?

According to Janice Fraser, former CEO of LUXr (a Lean Startup coaching and training firm for early stage companies), customer research can be gathered through either quantitative or qualitative forms.

Quantitative data can be measured through metrics or analytics. Qualitative data can be observed by speaking with your customers. (Think: TPM doing a basic poll in the forum that shows the number of people who selected a

particular answer versus asking for feedback in a new thread and getting posts from users sharing their descriptive, in-depth thoughts.)

Fraser recommends gathering data two ways:

1. **Conduct "evaluative" usability testing**: by giving a customer your product, asking them to do a task, and watching and learning.
2. **Ask your customers "generative" interview questions**: for example, if you had a magic wand, how would you change this product?

Use usability testing to make your product better. Use generative questions to learn about your customer.

The Art of the Pivot

Main takeaways from entrepreneur, David Binetti's experiences:

- **Keep the vision the same, only pivot the strategy**: because "the product is a manifestation of strategy".
- **No matter how much you believe in your product, pivot when the cashflow isn't right**: remember, pivots help prove the assumptions your product is making to investors (you being one of those investors). So, use evidence to show (yourself and others) why your vision is worth scaling.
- **Don't be eager to rely on vanity metrics to make your product look successful**

Real-Life Applications

- **Utilize split-testing**

Ries says, "Customers very rarely notice split testing and, even then, they (often) understand. Don't be scared to use it!"

I tend to agree.

Cons

- **Again, focuses too much on software**

Similar to the book.

So, the course comes across as less adaptable in certain areas for those with physical products.

- **No downloadable content**

Given that Ries uses long PowerPoints to present and share his ideas, making them downloadable could've been one way to add good value to his students.

Especially, since it's already been requested in the Q&A section of his course by students before.

- **Seems to confuse accessibility with auditability**

You'll notice that a couple of the examples of how to make your reports auditable are very similar (if not the same) as the examples for making your reports accessible.

I think the instructor could have clarified some confusion by openly stating that accessibility deals with one's ability to reach the data while auditability deals with one's ability to (easily) read and consume the data (if that's what Ries was trying to communicate).

Perhaps it was a mistake in the PowerPoint. And, if not, there's still some explaining that could have been done to make things more clear.

Pros

- **Recommends tools (that are still around) for following their process**

For example, the tool Ries recommends to follow the Three A's is Pivotal Tracker (at PivotalTracker.com).

And, he recommends Balsamiq (at Balsamiq.com) for creating basic, MVP mockups of UI design very quickly.

- **Recommends solid attitudes with fun, creative quotes**

As CEO, Farbood Nivi, warmly tells his team, "In God we trust…everyone else bring data :)."

Review

A fairly good course.

Given that this is their flagship course (even linked to from their main website under the headline "Take the Lean Startup class"), I was hoping for more in terms of education. Plus, the presentation of the course is quite old now (a PowerPoint created over a decade ago).

But, Ries asks his interviewees good questions and they give very practical, actionable responses back, making the course quite informative in a valuable way.

If one is looking for a good introduction to the lean startup approach, this might be it.

Also read:

- The Lean Startup: Summary & Review

Or, check out the best books on entrepreneurship.

Do This When You Don’t Remember Someone

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 July 2024 · Archived copy · Original

You must be careful when you don’t remember someone’s name.

Your forgetfulness disempowers them, breaks rapport, disempowers them, and loses you social and life opportunities.

Especially if they remember you.

We explained these dynamics in “what to do when someone doesn’t remember you“.

In this article we focus instead on how to handle when *you* don’t remember them.

And here’s how you handle your forgetfulness:

Contents

- 1. Ask nonchalantly, as if it didn’t matter
- 2: Say “of course” right after they remind you
  - 2.2. Say everything you remember about them
- 3. Move on quickly
- 4. Take the blame
- Principle
- SUMMARY

1. Ask nonchalantly, as if it didn’t matter

The principle is:

The more of a big deal you make it, the bigger deal it becomes.

And the more insignificant you treat it, the more insignificant it is.

So, don't even put pressure on yourself to remember.
Don't even try to.
That would only make it worse as it highlights you just can't remember despite your effort.

Instead, ask them as if forgetting was a normal thing that just happens -it is, after all-.

This is the attitude you want to sub-communicate:

> Hey you! Sure you do seem a known face, and sure I will remember you as soon as you give me more details

This way you take the pressure off and make it seem as if "of course, you know you've crossed paths before, you just don't remember the details".

If she's attractive, you can also pretend not to remember her. Now that's a nice power move ;)

2: Say "of course" right after they remind you

After they added some details, you show that you do start remembering.

So both verbally and nonverbally, you adpt an "of course expression".

Here you are sub-communicating something like:

> Of course we met there and then, know I remember, and it was a pleasant chat silly me!

But what do you do if you still don't remember?
You still react warmly and you comment about the event, and how pleasure it was.

And you can simply be straight and say "I got such a terrible memory man ahaha".

2.2. Say everything you remember about them

If you do remember, say everything you remember about them.

It's a simple but super effective technique becomes the frame becomes this:

> I only needed a little memory jig. I may have no remember the name, but I do remember YOU as a PERSON

And that's key.
You remember the person, you appreciate him, and you build him back up.

In any case, then move on fast to frame it as a small thing:

3. Move on quickly

The more you dwell on how you don't remember someone, the more value you are taking away.

Instead, you want to quickly move on so to make the incident seem as small as possible.
Something like this:

> Right! Of course! Anyway, what have you been up, how's your night going

Then, keep talking about new topics.
Who is he there with, who he knows at the party, share about yourself, etc.

4. Take the blame

This is standard power protection technique.

And don't worry about overdoing the vulnerability.
You're already higher power when they know you, but you don't know them. And Every smart guy knows that you're just being nice to them.

So you can safely take the blame here and say something like:

> My brain is fried

OR:

> Maybe I should go easier on the punch

And then, again, move on quickly.

Principle

The principles of these approaches are the core of this website's credo.

They include:

1. **Make friends, not enemies**. You want to avoid that lots of people think of you as a haughty as*hole. Instead, you want lots of people to think of you as a great guy they'd rather support, than tear down
2. **Be high power**. And you're already high power if they remember you, but you don't remember them. So instead in this case, you need to work more on warmth:
   - **Be high warmth**
3. **Pull people up**. Or, at least, those who deserve it. If this person came to you respectfully and friendly, then… Pull them up, instead of pushing them down.

The mindset here is that you show that you are a socially skilled individual who brings the people around up, not down.
And when you make the mistake of not remembering, you know how to take the blame without devaluing people.

SUMMARY

When you don't remember someone, you are automatically framed as higher value.

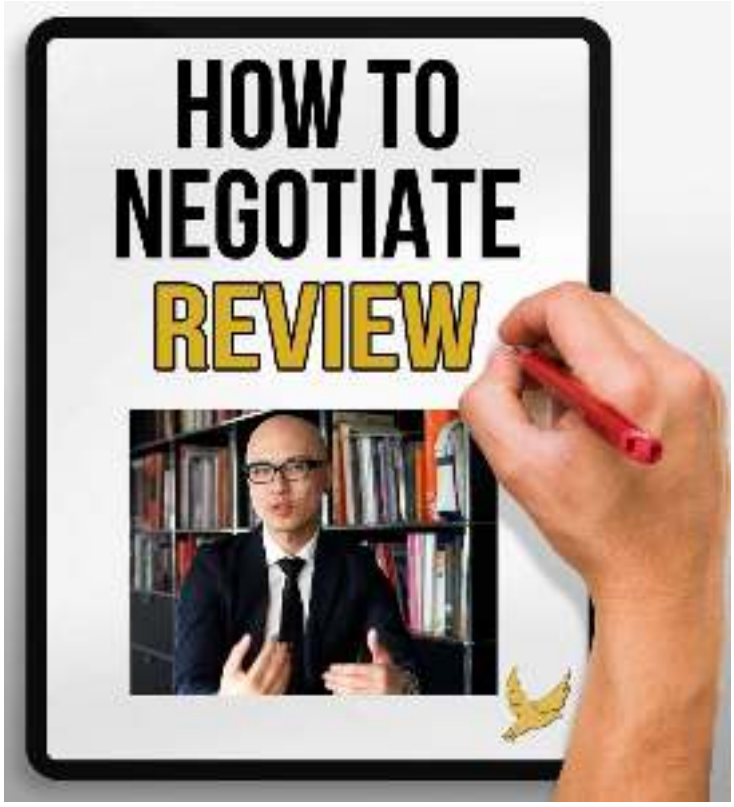
That's great, but… You don't want to frame them as too low-value because that's disempowering and breaks rapport.

So you take the pressure off, make it look as if it's just a momentary lapse or communicate that it's your issue. Then move on quickly.

How to Negotiate by Chris Do (The Futur): Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 July 2024 · Archived copy · Original

How to Negotiate is a 14-module online course on negotiation techniques in which Chris Do, the instructor, applies the wisdom from the books *Socratic Selling*, *Never Split the Difference*, and *Win Without Pitching Manifesto* to sales and closing.



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Bullet Summary

- Never sell. Seek to understand.
- Raise objections first.
- Your prospects will fear the decision: it's on you to make it safe for him.
- Expect your prospect to seek assurance against failure.

Full Summary

About The Professor:
Chris Do is an Emmy award-winning designer, director, CEO, and Chief Strategist of Blind and the founder of The Futur—an online education platform with the mission of teaching 1 billion people how to make a living doing what they love.

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The 8-Mile Rule

> **Voss**: "Say it first. Be the first to raise the objection. (Accusation audit.)"

Chris Do shared the 8 Mile video as an example of the accusation audit. Coincidentally, Voss had used that same exact example on his Instagram to help illustrate the concept to his audience.

**Note: For a full breakdown and explanation of the accusation audit as far as what it is and how it works, check out that section of the Chris Voss Masterclass review.*

> **Chris Do**: "If your clients [prospects] say, 'can you do this', or, 'is you team capable of…', then you are basically going to be put in a very defensive position and you're going to sound like you're not credible, that you're not confident. By bringing it up [first] you're communicating several things. You're signaling to the other person: "this is not my first rodeo, I already know what you're going to say, I'm going to bring it up because I have nothing to hide. And, if you can get over that, we might be able to do business together."

Basically, Chris Do recommends saying your client's objections before they do. That way, it's already out in the open and can no longer be used against you. More specifically, Chris Do recommends the frame stealing as a form of frame blocking any of your prospect's attempts at disqualifying your product or service as a fit.

There's an example Chris Do provides of how he believes the accusations audit *should* be used. The following is what he calls one of the best sales calls that's ever been done to him:

> **Sales Professional**: "Do you know something about us, Chris?"
>
> **Chris Do**: "No."
>
> **Sales Professional**: "Do you mind if I take a few minutes to tell you what it is that we do?"
>
> **Chris Do**: "OK. I'm all ears."
>
> **Sales Professional**: "If you've worked with sales reps before, I imagine that it takes a really long time to get results. It might take months. Actually, several months before you see any results. Is that correct?"
>
> **Chris Do**: "Yeah. That's true."
>
> **Sales Professional**: "So, that means that you're going to have to wait a long time. And, you're not sure. And, you're spending money during this time…if any money's coming back in. And, you might realize four, five, six months later this is a poor fit for you. But, you've already lost half-a-year's worth of opportunities. So, there's an opportunity cost that you're missing out on. The other thing is when sales reps go meet with people, you

> have no idea if they met with them, if the meeting was productive, or if it's gonna yield anything until it materializes a job. The rest of the time, the entire process is very opaque. Is that true too?"
>
> **Chris Do**: "Yes."
>
> **Sales Professional**: "At that point, we understand then, traditional sales is slow, it's ineffective, and it's expensive.
>
> **Chris Do**: *(thinking)* Yep. This guy knows exactly my business. He knows all my pain points and my feelings.
>
> **Sales Professional**: "Our entire process is against all of that. You're going to be able to see what we do on a daily basis. You're going to see who we connect with, who responds, and who's going to call you. And, it's not going to take us months to get these results, it's going to take us *days*. Once we set up the template and we get your approval, we move forward and we start hitting it hard day one. And, you're going to see exactly what's happening. Would you like to work with us?"
>
> **Chris Do**: *(thinking)* You're saying everything that I felt, you are the person.

Now, I disagree here. I don't believe this is an accusation audit—a means of removing objections. I believe this is tactical empathy—a means of making the other side feel understood—without the use of Voss's tactical empathy techniques such as labeling or mirroring (AKA: "parroting").

The above is more along the lines of how Daniel Pink might recommend doing sales. As for what Voss might recommend, I can actually see the same scenario playing out more or less like this:

> *(…)*
>
> **Sales Professional**: "I took a look at your business to prepare for this call. And, *(Chris Voss label)* it looks like in your time working with sales reps before, it takes a really long time to get results."
>
> **Chris Do**: "Yeah. That's true."
>
> **Sales Professional**: *(Chris Voss label)* "It also seems like, in your experience working with reps who *go out* to meet with people, you have no idea if they met with them, if the meeting was productive, or if it's gonna yield anything until it materializes a job."
>
> **Chris Do**: "Yes."
>
> **Sales Professional**: *(Chris Voss label)* "So, it feels like traditional sales is slow, it's ineffective, and it's expensive."
>
> **Chris Do**: *(thinking)* Yep. This guy knows exactly my business.
>
> **Sales Professional**: "Our entire process is against all of that. You're going to be able to see what we do on a daily basis. You're going to see who we connect with, who responds, and who's going to call you. And, it's not going to take us months to get these results, it's going to take us *days*. Once we set up the template and we get your approval, we move forward and we start hitting it hard day one. And, you're going to see exactly what's happening. *(No-oriented question)* Does that sound like a ridiculous idea?"
>
> **Chris Do**: "No."
>
> **Sales Professional**: *(Move From "No" to "How" technique)* "How would you like to proceed?"

That's the exact same script and framework leveraging what Chris Voss might recommend as the right techniques.

Negotiation Concept/Theory: Voice

Chris emphasizes the importance of communicating with persuasive vocal tonality.

He notes from the 7/38/55 Rule in *Never Split the Difference*, only seven percent of your intended message is

communicated by the words you choose. A whopping 38 percent is communicated by how you say it with your voice.

Lucio's note: tonality is important, but that reference is often misused
That's the most misquoted study in the world :).
See here:

***Inquisitive and Curious**

"An upward pitch of voice. Carry a level of excitement and curiosity when you ask."

***Speaking Smile**

"Smile when you speak. You can tell if someone is smiling."

***Late-night FM DJ**

"Smooth, slow, methodical, and deep. This is calming. It makes it sound like you're in control. Conversely, if you sound frantic, you make others nervous."

**Note: For more on the recommended tones of voice for negotiation, see that section of the Chris Voss Masterclass review.*

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The Objection Deck

As WSJ bestselling author and entrepreneur Patrick Bet-David says, "Proper preparation prevents poor performance."

An objection deck is a collection of your most common objections and your plan for responding persuasively. And, one thing that should be in your objection deck is a list of mindsets you can read to prepare yourself before each sales call.

Here are the mindsets Chris Do recommends:

- Your prospect's time is valuable *(= They have the money, power, and ability to hire you, but you don't have the power to hire them. Therefore, they have way more leverage than you. But, if they've already agreed to call and talk with you, they're already interested in working with you—or someone just like you. So, you're both on equal footing in this negotiation)*
- Start with good will *(= Be attentive, ask more questions, listen longer, and be slow to prescribe advice. If you cut them off or give advice too quickly, you will lose good will with your prospect)*
- They have the desire to purchase a solution *(= They have a problem and they need to buy a solution. That solution is you. They need you. Therefore, you're both on equal footing in this negotiation)*
- They have a problem to solve *(= By delaying this decision to purchase a solution, they're costing themselves more time and more money. Therefore, you're both on equal footing in this negotiation)*

Negotiation Concept/Theory: The Socratic Six

Named after Socrates the great philosopher, the "Socratic approach" is less about telling people convincing or persuasive arguments and is more about asking people strategic questions that often leverage powerful frame control techniques.

Negotiation Principles/Strategies: The Raging Bull

"The bull seems to be angry most of the time…when it sees red, it charges forward. And, creative people especially are very sensitive to other people's emotions and they don't like it when there's a lot of drama and anxiety. So, we'll do just about anything to avoid this [bull]. but, that's exactly what you don't want to do. When the bull charges,

don't run because [if you do] it's going to hook you with its horns. What you want to do is stand your ground and to look it in its eye."

The "raging bull" is an analogy for a disrespectful, rude, or socially abrasive prospect. They might say something offensive or insulting toward you if they get heated. And, Chris Do recommends dealing with "raging bulls" the same way Chris Voss recommends:

"Label the emotion. Acknowledge the emotional state of the other person. Demonstrate empathy…FM DJ voice is probably the most important for this one."

Ex:

> **Prospect**: *(frustrated)* "It shouldn't take this long"
> **You**: "It sounds like you're upset at something…What happened?"
> **Prospect**: *(they tell you a story)*
> **You**: *(listen to understand)*

Voss actually teaches to avoid the urge to add some follow-up or to talk at all after using a good label. And, here, Chris uses "what happened" as a follow-up.

Voss says, "Good labels must have the chance to sink in for it to have its effect. If you explain or follow up after a label, you're stepping on it [the label you just used] and decreasing its persuasive power/ability to influence."

Negotiation Principles/Strategies: The Hall of Mirrors

Here's the idea:

"Answer a question with a question if you don't want to answer the question…Not all questions should be responded with an answer."

You're basically reflecting a question you don't want to answer back at the asker. The example Chris Do gives is when he was a teenager unable to get in touch with his girlfriend for an entire day. He mentions that this was a time when he was very jealous and wasn't very secure or comfortable with himself. So, he was starting to go crazy with thoughts of the worst.

The next day he was finally able to get in contact with her. The conversation that follows goes like this:

> **Chris**: "Hey, where were you? I tried calling you all yesterday, usually you answer, you had me really worried."
>
> **Her**: "Where'd you think I was?"
>
> **Her**: "Do you not trust me?"

That's how this technique works. A question you don't want to answer reflected back at the asker. In this case, she even followed up with a second question—a second mirror in the hallway that was that conversation.

Ex:

> **Prospect**: "What assurances can you make that this will work?"
> **You**: "What kind assurances do you need to have to make this work?"

Negotiation Principles/Strategies: The Double Down

"Challenge an absurd objection by simply agreeing. Call the bluff."

Ex:

> **Prospect**: "How hard can designing a logo for my business be? I have a subscription to Adobe Creative Suite." *(challenges the frame that your work is difficult and, therefore, valuable enough to warrant your price point)*
> **You**: *(agree)* "You're right, this isn't very hard. You can probably do this yourself, since you have the Creative Suite. It's a powerful set of tools."
> **You**: *(pivot, retreat and have them follow)* "You're probably going to pay too much for me to do it. Why not just do this yourself?" *(Now they have to chase you)*
> **Prospect**: *(agree)* "I'm not really good at it. It'll take me too much time to do it".

The game of doubling down on their value-taking frames to call their bluff is an OK strategy, in my opinion.

The problem I see with this approach is that you're thread-expanding on bad frames. And, in general, that's a poor social strategy. And, sales is a social game.

Negotiation Principles/Strategies: The Yin-Yang

By far, my absolute favorite Socratic approach in the entire objection deck.

The overarching framework relies on this foundational point: "If this is true, is the opposite also true?"

The tactic lies within testing the other side's symmetry of logic and then looking for one instance where their frame is not true. As with almost all frame control teachings here, it's easier explained with an example:

> **Prospect**: "Your team is too small!" *(implied frame: big teams are better)*
> **You**: "Would you be more comfortable with a bigger team? Are bigger teams *always* better? Do you feel like bigger teams are more focused and attentive?"
> **Prospect**: *(thinking)* No.
> **You**: "Yes, our team is small. But if you work with us, you work with me. The cost will be less than a bigger, bloated team. And you'll have more personalized attention."

Just as the accusation audit recommended by Chris Do and Chris Voss is frame stealing as a form of frame blocking, the yin-yang approach is frame flipping.

Here, Chris Do has taken the frame flip and outlined a step-by-step process to create your own for all your business weaknesses. I'll explain that process with an example provided by Lucio:

> **Lucio**: "On one occasion, Reagan's flame flip coupled with his humor helped him win the presidency.
>
> Reagan's old age was an issue in the campaign, and when asked about it, this is how Reagan flipped it:
>
> > **Reagan**: 'I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience.'
>
> Big laugh by everyone, and he turned weakness into strength.
>
> Reagan *accepted* the original age frame, but twisted it to make a handicap for his opponent, not for him."

The process is:

1. Do your best to identify their implied frame *(= a younger president would be better)*
2. Ask yourself, "If this is true, is the opposite also true?" *(= if a younger president would be better, is an older president always worse?)*
3. Do your best to identify one way in which the opposite is untrue *(= an older president brings more experience to*

the table)

Boom!

This process is the same as above where Chris Do accepts the prospect's original frame that his team is small and twisted it into a handicap for his competition (a bigger team means less attentiveness for you and your business). And, you can use this process to flip any of your own weaknesses into strengths.

Negotiation Principles/Strategies: The Wolf

A wolf howls. And, that's the entire technique here. Howl by asking your client "how".

This is best used when your prospect asks for a very difficult or impossible request or task, such as reducing your rates.

Ex:

> **Prospect**: "I can make this deal happen if you reduce the estimate by 30%"
> **You**: "How do you propose we pull 30% out of the budget, and still give you the same product?" *(stay silent)*

By asking, "how do you propose we do this?" you're setting a collaborative frame similar to asking, "What can we do to make this work?". You're recruiting the prospect to work with you on achieving a solution that works for everyone.

Chris uses this technique to highlight to the other side that what they're asking for isn't fair. For example, if they ask you to cut your rates, Chris Do recommends asking "how do you propose we do this" in order to let the prospect figure it out themself. And, when they can't, that will serve as justification to keep your rate right where it is.

But, I believe that if they can figure out a way forward that gets them what they want while still keeping the deal a win-win, it's still a great technique to use. Not for making the other side give in to your numbers, but for exploring new ideas and expanding the pie for everyone.

Chris Voss actually calls this technique "forced empathy" and recommends going about it a bit differently from how Chris Do teaches. Here's an example of how that might play out:

> **Prospect**: "I can make this deal happen if you reduce the estimate by 30%"
>
> **You**: *(forced empathy)* "How am I supposed to do that?"
>
> **Prospect**: *(short pause)* Reduce the estimate.
>
> **You**: *(forced empathy)* "What challenges will I face if I do that?"
>
> **Prospect**: *(longer pause)* "I guess you'll lose some money, but like I said, it's the only way I can make this deal happen. So, 70% of something is better than 100% of nothing."
>
> **You**: *(Chris Voss label)* You said one of the challenges I'll face is that I'll lose money. *(forced empathy)* How do I overcome the challenge that I have here?"

**Note: For more on what "forced empathy" is and how to do it, see that part of the Chris Voss Masterclass review.*

Negotiation Principles/Strategies: The Five-Year-Old

Chris Do says that this technique is used by basically doing what five-year-olds do: ask "why".

Ex:

> **Prospect**: "Why should I hire you?"
> **You**: "I don't know…*(pause)* I'm curious, why did you call me?"
> **Prospect**: "Well, you have a great portfolio, and you came highly recommended through our friends."
> **You**: "If you trust your friends' recommendations, and you like my portfolio, what else do you need to know in order to make your decision?"

This is great. This is what's also referred to as "Putting Out the Fire (Rational High Ground): Analyze Motivations" in Yale's negotiation class:

> **You**: "I can only pay up to $450,000."
>
> **The Other Side**: "I have another offer of $500,000 [crosses arms and locks eye contact] *(impied frame: why should I take your deal?)*."
>
> **You**: [Ask yourself] Why did he come here? If he had another offer and he didn't think I would go up at all or very little, he wouldn't even be dealing with me. Why would he rather do a deal with me? What do I have that his alternative does NOT that he wants?

The only difference is, with this technique, instead of only analyzing their motivations you're choosing to actively ask for them.

**Note: The very technique of leveraging "why" this way is reminiscent of Daniel Pink's five whys technique. For more on how that works, take a look at that section of the Daniel Pink Masterclass review.*

It's also worth noting that Chris Do mentions he has no interest in "jumping through the prospect's hoops" in one of his sales roleplays. It makes it seem like he has an idea of the "prove yourself to me" judge role dynamics.

One of Chris Do's mindsets is that him and the prospect are on equal footing and that, if they're on a call together, the prospect is already interested in working with him. So, when asked a question like "why should I hire you", he doesn't believe in playing their game by explaining all of the reasons he's the best.

Now, sales is not the same as seduction, but if I had to create an analogy, I would say it's similar to being on a date with a girl where she says, "Why should I choose you?" Chris believes that, if she's already agreed to go on a date with you and actually showed up, you've already proven yourself enough as being worth choosing. And, that answering that question by jumping through her hoops would only disempower you in that negotiation for her heart.

Chris Do even goes so far as to say that what makes him different is that he doesn't want the prospect. He only wants people who *want him*. That makes his sales style very far away from ABC ("Always Be Closing") and helps him come across as more detached from the outcome as well as the negotiation. That in itself helps him come across as more persuasive.

Then, there's also the mindset that you're both on equal footing. She's on that date for a reason—she's looking for something, she has a need. And, you know you're what she needs because she's already expressed enough interest in you to go on a date with you. So, the only question left should be if she's comfortable with all the ways in which you're imperfect (i.e. if your prospect is comfortable with your price).

Real-Life Applications

The Yin-Yang Approach

I remember a few years back I had started to dive into more about self-development. On that journey, I came across a blog called Masculine Development.

The site owner, Jon Anthony, is a pick-up artist who decided to pursue "looksmaxing". Exactly as it sounds, it's the

act of maximizing your looks.

He basically got really jacked to the point of becoming a fitness model. And, to the point where attractive women would tease him about having man-boobs.

Here's how he mixed frame flipping with humor framing to deal with it:

1. Do your best to identify their implied frame *(= a man should not have boobs)*
2. Ask yourself, "If this is true, is the opposite also true?" *(= if a man should not have boobs, is a man having boobs always a bad thing?)*
3. Do your best to identify one way in which the opposite is untrue *(= Jon would say with a smile, "Hey, I'm getting in touch with my feminine side*

And, with that, he put a tool in his toolbelt to come across as a more confident, less insecure guy.

From Books to Real-World Results

Hi, I'm Lucio Buffalmano, founder of The Power Moves.

I write these reviews myself as part of our 3-pillars method.

We combine research, top books, and real-world experience into proven strategies for status, respect, and attraction.

Power University turns knowledge into wins.
Ready?

Check Power University

CONS

- **Not Always Accurate to the Source Material**

Sometimes Chris Do misuses Chris Voss's techniques. You'll often notice Chris Do adapting Voss's techniques to how he would prefer to execute them for sales. Not a bad thing, but if he's going to reference Voss so often to where he puts his picture and quotes from *Never Split the Difference* on the screen, it would feel more like I'm not being fed misinformation if the techniques he shares were used properly in his examples and role-plays.

- **The Mindsets Were Sometimes Questionable**

Chris Do encourages the mindset that if someone agreed to speak with you on the phone and is now on the phone with you, they're interested in working with you. He also says, "Also realize that the client has a problem that they need to solve and that the only way to solve the problem is they need to purchase—or spend money to purchase—or buy a solution. Guess what? That's you."

I believe that how true this mindset is for you depends on your funnel.

If you have little to no marketing or your marketing is very vague, a prospect might call you simply to get more information. That means they're interested, yes, but it also means that depending on the information you provide they may decide you're not what they're looking for. Your marketing didn't provide enough information to know if they're *really* interested, so there's no guaranteeing that you're their solution yet.

Similar to the example with the date, just because a woman agreed to a date with you doesn't automatically mean *you're* the one to fill all of her needs and make her feel whole. That mindset can make you cocky when you should be confident and arrogant when you should be humble.

PROS

- **Incredibly Informative Workbook**

Having gone through the program, I feel like the workbook could've been provided on its own and would have been enough to level up your sales game even if only slightly. The workbook goes over the best uses for each Socratic approach, how to use them, and what tones of voice to use with each one.

- **High-Quality Video with Up-To-Date Information**

After having gone through my fair share of courses, I've been hit with a few that weren't worth the price tag. Even one that was over a decade old. You can ignore this pro, but you'll appreciate it more if you're ever hit with a course with low-quality production and outdated, irrelevant information.

- **Added Resources**

Chris Do included a module that contained bonus tips, references, added resources, and an array of helpful attachments and links.

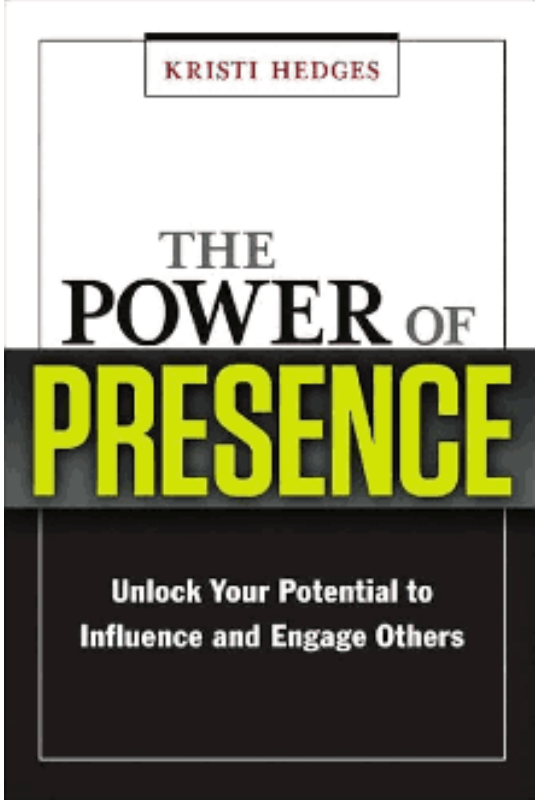
It's a nice surprise that makes one feel like this was money well spent.

Hear It Free
with Audible
Try Audible Free
New customers only. Auto-renews at $14.95/mo.
after 30 days. Cancel anytime.

The Power of Presence: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 July 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of Presence (2011) helps you focus on and leverage your presence to become more charismatic as a leader.



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  - Chapter 3: Stopping the Negativity Loop
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  - Chapter 12: Strategic Shock Value (and other ways to create shining moments)
  - Chapter 13: Presence in a Pinch
  - From Books to Real-World Results
- Review

Bullet Summary

- **Be genuine to cultivate authentic presence** that allows you to bond and connect with others

- **Quit your negative thoughts** to gain confidence and self-esteem
- **Strike a balance between power and warmth**, show some vulnerability sometimes

Chapter 1: What are you thinking?

Negative thoughts are alive and well, they include:

> I can't speak in public.
>
> I'm not a people person.
>
> I'll appear self promoting.
>
> I'm an introvert and can't network well.
>
> I'm just not good in these situations.
>
> I don't have what it takes to play the office politics game.

Uncover your negative thoughts: Find a quiet place to contemplate what you believe about your presence. Write down any negative thoughts that may hold you back.

1. What do you currently think about your own executive presence and your ability to affect it?
2. What assumption is yours that is getting in the way of holding you back, and why? How long have you felt this about yourself?
3. Try on the idea that you already possess the presence you seek in the various areas of your life. What's your reaction?

Chapter 3: Stopping the Negativity Loop

Let no negative thought go unchallenged.

A specific reframe tool is to make the negative thought a positive one, with two characteristics: Specific and Temporary.

For instance:

> *Change "I'm too busy at work to focus on my own leadership abilities" to "This quarter has been a particularly busy time in my job. If I can't make time soon for professional development, then I'll need to make some changes."*

Tips for Intentionality (hand picked from Part 1):

Like a buffet, choose what advice works for you/what area you have been neglecting with regards to your presence.

These tips can improve your sexual market value as well, look at Dating Power Dynamics by Lucio Buffalmano for more tips in increasing your SMV):

- Smile more
- Focus on what you dress like (what are you trying to say: casual/professional-entrepreneur/pua)
- Your personal brand should be two to three words tops (eg, "Motivating and Visionary" / "Credible, Caring Catalyst")
- Your actions can undermine or underline your presence.
- Authentic presence is a delicate balancing act of understanding other people's perspectives, communicating so that they can best hear you, and staying true to yourself.

Chapter 5: Go Ahead, Trip Over Your Own Perfectionism.

What makes a Great Boss or Colleague?

Kristi alludes to the fact that what one person can do, you can too. This starts with being honest about what makes a person's presence strong and relatable. In terms of a Strong presence:

Do the following thought exercises and see what you learn.

Think of five people who have been influential in your career. They can be supervisors, colleagues, or mentors. Whom would you go and work with again, in a heartbeat, if given the opportunity?

List five qualities to describe each of them.

Go back and divide qualities into two categories:

- "Competence" refers to hard skills, such as intellect or functional expertise.
- "Connection" refers to social skills, like emotional intelligence, empathy, or shared values.

What is the ratio of Competence to Connection?
Do you notice a pattern?
In terms of a Relatable presence: It is in your best interests to show the (occasional) vulnerability.

Lucio's note: be careful with vulnerability
Vulnerability has become a buzzword, but if you're not sure, it's best not to do it at all.
See:

- Why vulnerability is not power

> Vulnerability Is NOT Power: Don't Believe The Hype

For instance, in another book, No More Mr Nice Guy , the author Robert Glover says that the Nice Guy who tries to be perfect and flawless actually isolates himself from forming a human connection.

And Power of Presence states that you actually gain more power/influence by showing the occasional weakness/shortcoming.
Irony, right?

Is perfectionism undermining you?– Write down the answers to the following questions.

What perceived weaknesses or challenges about yourself are you holding back- to try to appear more perfect-that might create a connection point with others?

Are there struggles or failures that you hide or routinely display?

What could you reveal about yourself that would help others understand who you authentically are?

Chapter 6: Trust – The Ultimate Gatekeeper

What items are on your trust meter? Write down the values and qualities you associate with trust.

Trust-Building Moves: When you feel that you don't know what to do next and the relationship is still important to you, ask yourself: "W*hat action would I take if I knew it would be accepted and appreciated?"*

Establishing trust when dealing with Failure: For leaders, it's okay to fail, just no to hide. (Again this is a parallel in *No More Mr Nice Guy*– feeling shame is okay, however feeling shame and trying to cover it up or omit it qualifies as Toxic Shame, which is injurious to your self esteem and relationships) When something does not work, bring it up, address what happened, and take accountability. Explain what you learned and state what's next.

We All Seek out a Trusted Presence: Ask yourself which of your relationships you would like to improve, and then make a move to extend trust in that broken dynamic. (If not now, when?)

Chapter 7: Emotional Intelligence

There's more than one way to empathise.

No doubt you will gravitate toward some of these characteristics, or a blend in them, in yourself or others. Do what's authentic to you.

1. **The Coach** shows empathy through a mixture of tough love and strong support.
2. **The Mentor** makes you feel that your success is always top of mind.
3. **The Truth Teller** believes that you treat employees as adults and free agents who have a right to hear it straight.
4. **The Buddy** seeks to be considered a colleague first and foremost.
5. **The Relater** has an intuitive ability to grasp the emotions of others.

Lucio's note: Machiavellianism and power are as important as emotional intelligence
Emotional intelligence has become a buzzword since Daniel Goleman popularized it.
See:

- The myth of emotional intelligence

> The Myth of Emotional Intelligence: Machiavellis At The Top

Tips for Individuality

- **Storytelling beats statistics** when it comes to retaining information and making a presentation interesting. They're also enjoyable to tell.
- **Keep your stories/testimonies short**. Around 2 minutes tops.
- **Ask for feedback questions** can increase the perception you are a team player, for instance: "What went well?" "What could I do better next time?"
- **Do what you feel is right**, no matter the outcome.
- **Taking the high road** is an investment in your future- even if you can't see it at the time. This is the second most important tip of this book.
- **Questions beginning with "What"** or "How" are used more by Empathetic listeners than "Why" questions.
- **Use email to deliver positive or neutral information…**
    - **And talk in person / leave a phone message when delivering bad news**
- Sending voice messages makes you have to learn and practice voice tonality, keeping the message short etc.

How to Inspire

Change starts with you: It's one thing to find new concepts interesting and quite another to take consistent action and make sustained changes.

To sustain a new mental roadmap- we have to focus on what we are trying to accomplish with frequency, intensity, and deliberation.

To create lasting behavior change:

Step 1: Make room for reflection.

Action: In a quiet room, reflect on the ideas you have read in this review. Which of these ideas created automatic discomfort, and which felt right to you?

Step 2: Focus on solutions (instead of problems)

Action: Ask yourself: "*What would success with this concept look like for me?*" / *"What strengths do I bring to this presence concept?"*

Note: At the end of each chapter, The Power of Presence has an "Ideas I want to Try" section, with three empty lines to fill in.

Step 3: Strike when the iron is hot.

Action: Reread what you filled out in the "Ideas I want to Try" sections. Select one tool to put into practice and then create as much detail as possible with it. Sketch, express, imagine actual scenarios.

Step 4: Do it- (at least in a small way)

Action: Make a commitment to yourself. Tangible, discrete steps garner change more than attempting to reach a faraway place you've never been before.

Step 5: Flow state.

Action: Set a goal for yourself that causes you to extend your capabilities or puts you on the path of mastery. The joy of Flow State is the process.

Chapter 10: From Vision to Visionary

A visionary creates shared understanding: Truly visionary leaders use their presence to encourage others to be part of the vision.

Being a visionary isn't just for CEOs, futurists, or industry gurus. **All leaders can and should view their role as a visionary for their domain.**

Chapter 11: Declarations Create Possibilities.

Declarations can be either personal ("I will write a book this year") or group oriented ("We will out-market our competitor"). The content is secondary. The belief and commitment are primary.

When we put our declarations out in the world, even if we don't meet them, we events further than we would have otherwise. We put our selves on a broader path, and learn more.

Anyone, at any level, can use more declarative language in communications.

Chapter 12: Strategic Shock Value (and other ways to create shining moments)

Inspiring is being interesting, whether it's a bold view, impassioned rhetoric, or even being shocking.

Accept the spotlight (as a leader) and use it to a greater and positive advantage.

Think of two or three peers with a track record of inspiration & success in your organisation.

Step 1: Observe them in action. Analyse as many scenarios with them as possible.

Step 2: Ask: "What do they talk about?" "What does their presence convey?" "What can I learn from observing them?"

Chapter 13: Presence in a Pinch

Presence moves from inward to outward (think of the words in the Presence Model: Intentional, Individual,

Inspirational).

Tips for Inspirational Presence (hand picked from Part 3):

- We don't walk around with the same brain our whole lives – and that makes us profoundly glad
- Stating your intended change in public creates intrinsic motivation to achieve it.
- Accountability does not have to come from a professional coach: colleagues can work too.
- A sense of purpose inspires people to self-motivate.
- Language holds power. When it's filled with confidence and passion, and backed by our authentic presence, it can transform us.
- Saying "I will…" or "I plan to…" inspires others.
- In networking yourself, when all else fails, remember that people love to talk about themselves. You can practice your Emphatic listening this way(!)
- Be clear about what you'll do, then follow through. This is the most important idea in the book.
- Focus on how to be of service to the other person (even if that means you'll miss out on something this time around.)
- When you have to present, contemplate on how to be different (rather than one of the pack)

From Books to Real-World Results

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Review

The Power of Presence is a good book to improve your social skills, with plenty of actionable tips.

Olli from our TPM community rated it an 8/10.

Check the **best books** to read.

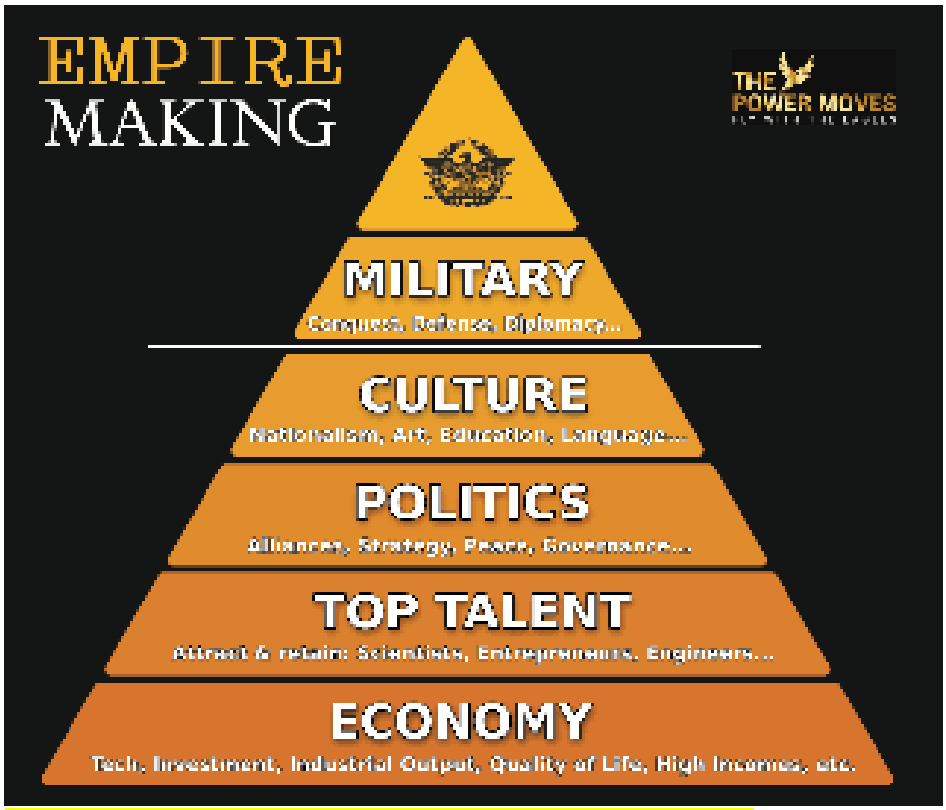
How to Build an Empire: 8 Steps to Rule The World

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 July 2024 · Archived copy · Original

How do you build an empire?

On TPM we specialize in power dynamics and strategies and thousands of students say what we teach works.

So in this article, we'll show you how to build an ACTUAL empire.



The "empire-building pyramid", from most foundational to the top

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- 1. Focus On The Economy
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- 2. Attract Top Talent…
  - … To Build Your Technological Edge
- 3. Foster Internal Cooperation, Banish Cheats & Clans
  - 3.2. Break Internal Clans & Promote Individualism
  - 3.3. Foster Individualism For 'Impersonal Pro-Sociality'
  - PRO Tip: Enforce Monogamy For Social Stability
- 4. Master Politics & Strategy
  - 4.2. Make Allies, Not Enemies
  - ▯ … But Build-Up Weak Enemies to Galvanize The Populace
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- 5. Strengthen & Conquer With Culture

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- 6. Build A Strong Military
- 7. Keep Liberalism & Socialism In Check
  - 7.2. Foster ‘Protestant Ethic’ & Internal Locus of Control
- 8. Mindset: Focus On Infinity & Human Development
  - Think Infinite
  - Do It For Humanity: Become Prestigious
- Avoid These Fools’ Traps
  - 1. Keep It Civil-ian: Don’t Let Generals Lead
  - 2. Strong Military, Without Militarism
  - 3. Wars: Only On A “Strictly Necessary” Basis
  - 4. Prevent Charismatic Dark Triads From Gaining Power

1. Focus On The Economy

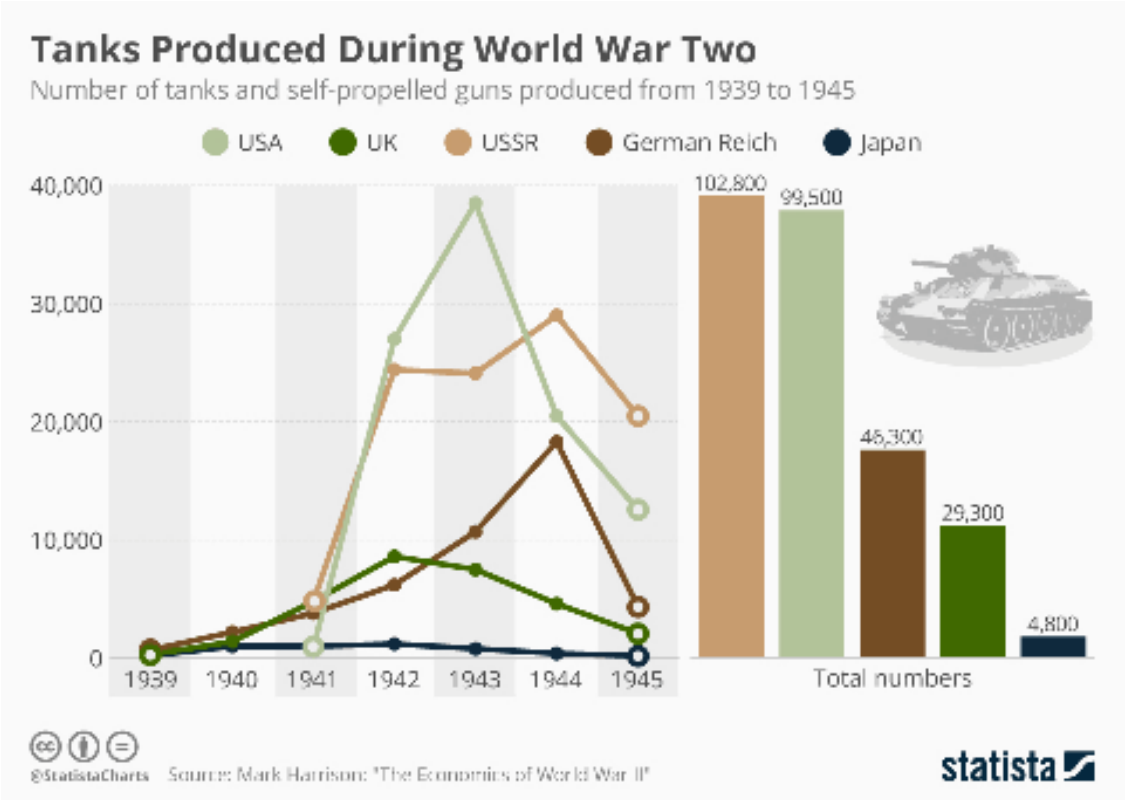
Most people have it backward.

They start from the army.

Instead, *economies* produce strong armies that build empires.

Economy fuels everything:

- **(Military) technology** → military superiority
  - Research → power projection into the future
- **Industrial output** → standing armies, win long wars
- **International trade** → international leverage, web of allies and supporters
- **Abundance** → stable and strong civil societies
  - Job opportunities → everyone contributes to empire-building
  - Safety nets → prevent internal rebellions
- **High quality of life** → attract top international talent
- **Thriving culture** → soft power (export language, education. Persuade others)



Germany won early WII battles with tank-driven “blitzkrieg”. Then lost the war being out-produced by 4 to 1. More of the same for planes and warships

⍰ Example: The Shopkeepers Who Humiliated Napoleon

Napoleon mocked the British as a “nation of shopkeepers”.

He, the great general, looked down on commerce.

Well… Guess who won?

The merchants won.

Napoleon's costly wars led to his downfall. It's a historical refrain

Economies fuel empires.
And it's even more true since the Industrial Revolution.

2. Attract Top Talent...

The brain of smart and driven men fuels progress and maintains empires.

Including:

... To Build Your Technological Edge

It only took a slingshot for David to beat Goliath.

Who knows whether that story is even true.
However, the concept behind it *is* true.

And it's even more true today.
Give a wimpy teenager a rifle, and he'll beat any disarmed special op.

And it will be even truer in the future.
Give the wimpy teenager drones, and he'll beat any platoon.

3. Foster Internal Cooperation, Banish Cheats & Clans

Pluribus Unum -"one from many"- is a traditional US motto, reflecting the importance of unity and cooperation in projecting power beyond the individual level.

An empire is nothing but a group of men cooperating to project power.

To support this view, evolutonary psychologists suggest that the secret to humans' success is cooperation.

Henrich also provides compelling evidence that the better-cooperating groups out-compete the more fractured ones. That's how we superseded kin-based tribes and got to large nations and interconnected societies.

Similarly, greater empires cooperate more effectively, and at a larger scale than unsuccessful ones.

So you need to:

- **Reward cooperators**, and well-regulated capitalism partially does it
- **Punish defectors**, an important and under-appreciated aspect of fostering cooperation
  Including:
  - **Dark triads** who disrupt cooperators, take, and escape taxes
  - **Toxic cooperators** who form smaller cooperative gangs at the expense of the whole -mafia, cartels, etc.-

And:

3.2. Break Internal Clans & Promote Individualism

Clans and tribes break the empire's unity and sap its power.

While clans are more strongly pro-social *towards the in-group*, they are less pro-social, trusting, and more competitive and aggressive towards the outgroup.

Plus, they divert allegiances:

⚖ **The stronger the allegiance to the smaller tribe, the weaker the allegiance to the larger empire**

Clans also promote a 'clannish psychology', a threat to any empire -and to human progress and development in general-.

3.2.2. Punish Nepotism

Nepotism is a form of kin-based tribalism that undermines meritocracy and the functioning of advanced societies (Barkow, 1989).

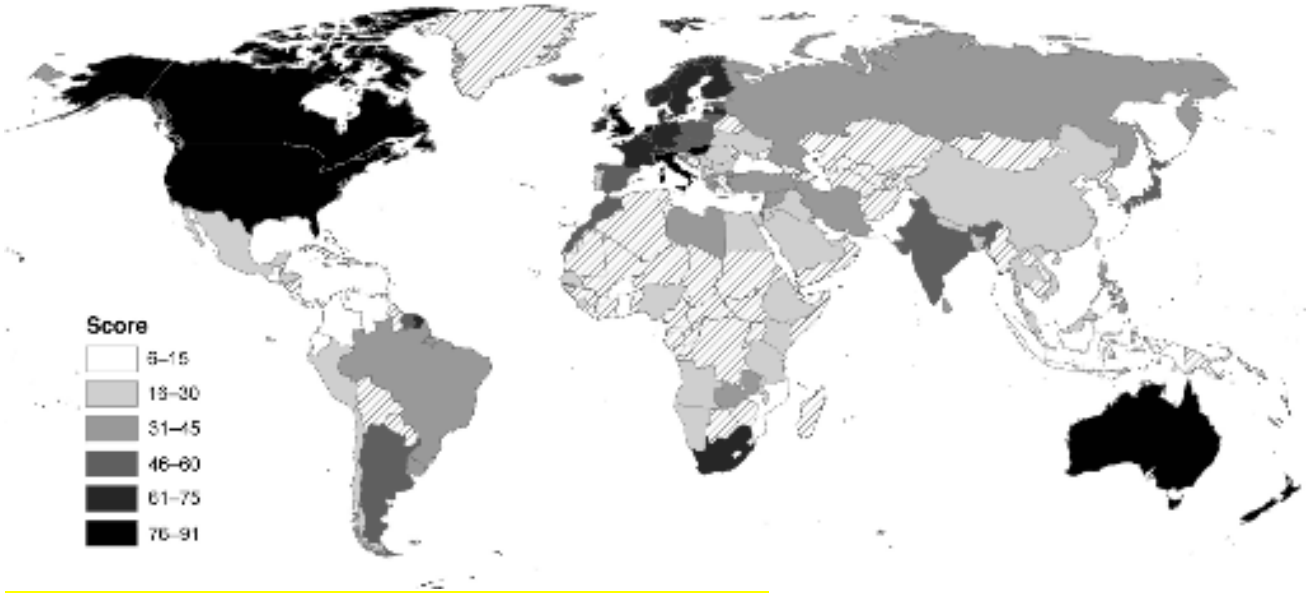
3.3. Foster Individualism For 'Impersonal Pro-Sociality'

Paradoxically for some, **individualists support empires because they're more pro-social, trusting, and cooperative *with strangers***.

This is a must because large empires are largely made of *strangers* and built with cooperation *among strangers*.

Individualism transcends kins to embrace a weaker but universal pro-sociality that empowers larger cooperation and progress.

It's no coincidence the two latest empires and the West are the most individualistic countries:



The most individualistic countries are the richest and most powerful

Individualism is also good for you, and it's our approach to self-development:

- **Enlightened Individualism**

> Winner's Mindsets: 10 Commandments of Enlightened "Me First"

PRO Tip: Enforce Monogamy For Social Stability

Researchers show that monogamy 'brings with it societal rewards' (Campbell, 2022).

Quoting from Joseph Henrich:

> By suppressing male-male competition (…) monogamous marriage (…) reduce crime, violence, and zero-sum thinking while promoting broader trust, long-term investments, and steady economic accumulation.

Monogamy as part of a 'conservative package' with religion, honor, and country service also forms the backbone of empire-making culture.

4. Master Politics & Strategy

There are two aspects to politics:

1. **Good governance**, internal-looking, with strong, impersonal, and meritocratic institutions
2. **International politics**, including making allies and strategies

We'll focus on the external part here.

4.2. Make Allies, Not Enemies

Allies extend the empire's reach.

Plus, trade among allies enriches all participants.

And if allies empower, the opposite is also true.

Enemies *dis*-empower.

Also see:

- **4 Fundamental Strategies of Success**

⍰ ... But Build-Up Weak Enemies to Galvanize The Populace

While you make powerful real-world allies, use external threats.

Intergroup competition dynamics maximize internal cooperation, solidarity, and output.

In the absence of an enemy, people may get lazy and politicians move to seek rent-seeking.

An enemy instead aligns selfish interests with the empire.

The 'enemy' can also be an ideal.
For example, capitalism VS communism.

⍰ Example: Militarist Germany VS Successful Empires

By Prussian tradition, Germany prided itself on military prowess.

And like proud warriors, it focused less on alliances and more on… *Wars*.

Germany entered both world wars as the strongest military power in Europe.
And it lost both of them.

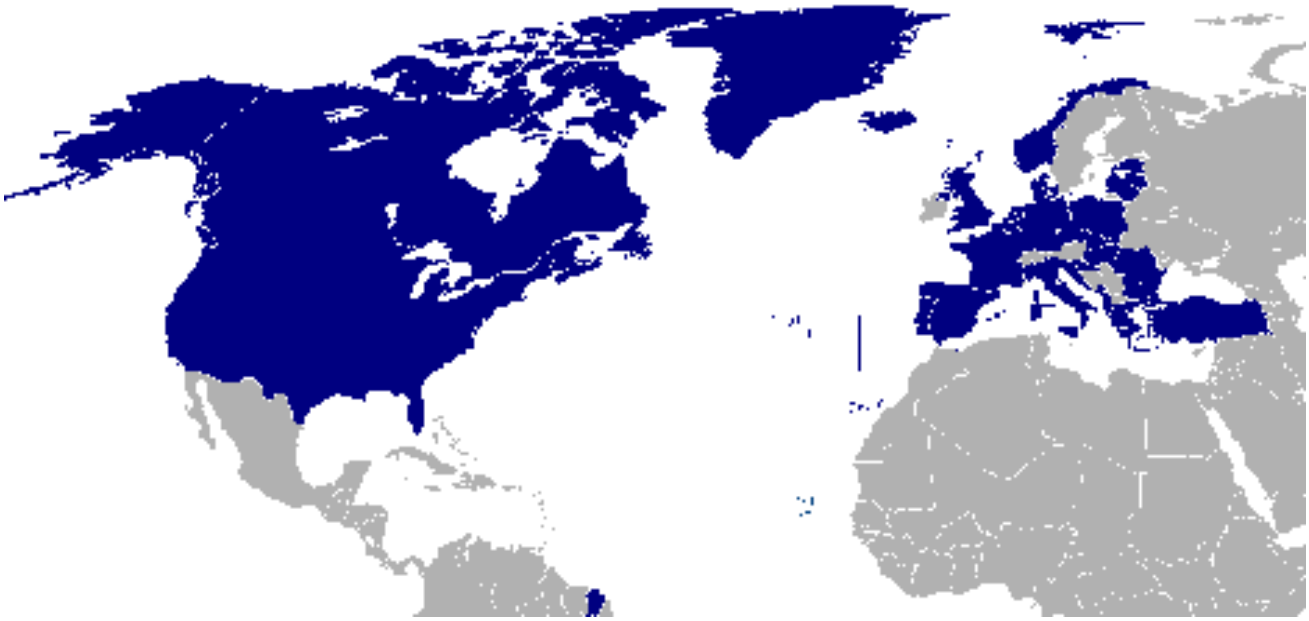
Why?
Too many enemies, too many fronts, and poor alliances.

Instead of making high-power allies, Germany made high-power *foes*.

Compare Germany with successful empires:

- Rome
- England
- U.S.A.

The US is the most powerful country in the world.
And which allies did it pick?
The most powerful countries in the world:



The richest and most powerful country, allied with the richest and most powerful countries. Is it any wonder the USSR lost?

Says *The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition*:

> *Conventionally, smaller powers—and middle powers—can add to the capabilities available to great powers through participation in alliances which often play a key role in great power competition, as seen in the countervailing blocs during the Cold War (O'Riordan, 2023).*

Russia's allies are Belarus and ex-USSR satellites who'd love to join the West.

No wonder the US is the sole superpower.
Edit: the landscape changed slightly with China growing closer to Russia and Trump acting out, but the concept holds.

⍰ 4.3. Make Your Allies Stronger (& Dependent): US Example

Empowering others is a risky endeavor.

But do it right, you multiply your power.

The US made its partners stronger and richer.
It funded reconstruction after WWII.
Richer Europe remained capitalist, friendly… And 'conveniently divided ⍰'.

Global trade made the whole free world better.
Everyone wanted to join the US-led free and rich world.

That's proper win-win power dealing on a world stage.

To learn more:

- Why America's aggressive policy is undermining its empire

4.3. Pick Your Battles

Now let's be real:

Wars are part and parcel of empiring.

Strategic war-making means:

- **Pick easier-to-beat enemies**. Think quick battles, not protracted wars
- **Attack with coalitions**. Even if you can go alone, coalitions are better PR. And you dilute their terrorist revenge instead of focusing the hornet's nest on you
- **Limit wars with other major powers**. If unavoidable, ensure you have better allies, and do:
  - Proxy wars, help other countries fight back
  - One at a time, never open multiple fronts
  - Limited scope. For example, England fought France over distant colonies, rather than near home
- **Provide win-win after the invasion**. Or, at least, "not so bad" conditions

Even in the harsh BC days, Rome was generous to former foes.
It granted freedom, and made them better off with trade.

Rome lifted the territories it conquered

Same for England and the Commonwealth.

5. Strengthen & Conquer With Culture

Culture has two aspects:

1. **Internal**, to sustain the empire with:
   - Hard work
   - Patriotism
   - Righteousness & pride for the empire
   - Institutions standing above any single individual
   - Meritocracy
2. **External**, for soft power:

  - Language
  - Worldviews, a sort of "frame control" at global level
  - Economic system
  - International goodwill

Let's review some aspects:

5.2. Foster patriotism & hard work, punish the defectors

Libertarians see states as opposition systems.

I don't fully agree, but they're not *wholly* wrong.

Internal coercion is part and parcel of empire making, which needs:

- **Your money** to fund politicians, redistribution, infrastructure, research, military
- **Your service** and, in time of war, personal sacrifice
- **Your obedience** or, at least, your acquiescence to the empire's institutions

The USA even forces Americans to pay taxes no matter where they move.

And the USA's web of allies stretches those long IRS tentacles around the world.

Empire making isn't cheap :).

⍰ Culturally Insulate Your Populace

So they feel and remain empire citizens instead of growing into 'world citizens':

- Imperial system instead of metric
- Develop your unique sports
  - Nascar instead of F1
  - AMA Superbike instead of MotoGP
  - Football instead of rugby
- Snub international sports
  - Soccer/football

Result: Americans feel 'different' and remain tied to 'home'.

⍰ Empire Tactics to Override Self-Interest

Individuals gain with an empire.

But they gain more focusing on *themselves*.

The empire may hence manipulate the population to go against their rational best self-interest.
Enter the various:

- **Flags** and salutes to the flag
- **Public schooling** for shared chosen values
- **Veteran reverence** -largely lip service-
- **Parades**
- **National sports teams** to make individuals 'fuse' their ego into the collective

- Etc. etc…

Also see:

- **Business manipulation**, where organizations see employees like politicians see citizens
- **Politicians' manipulations**. Politicians profit the most from running powerful states
- **Great leadership is great manipulation**

Internal Threats

Some internal threats to empires include:

- 1 **Anti-capitalists** who reduce output.
  Capitalism is a superpower that harnesses self-interest into empire-sustaining revenues. The most dangerous opposition weakens capitalism
- **Libertarians** who want to do without central power
- **Machiavellians** who don't buy imperial sacrifice and focus on the self
- **Various extremist factions**, that oppose the government
- Etc. etc.

Special Cultural Threat: Lazy Citizens Losing Their Drive

Escapism and hedonism threaten the empire's vigor. Digital empire-building doesn't count

A lazy population produces less.
It starts a vicious cycle.
Poorer economy, less talent coming in, less innovation, less technological advances, and less military power.

Some pundits say it's happening to the West right now.
I'm not convinced.

But I do remember a Chinese fling years ago explaining why she worked so hard.

To “become like you guys”, she said.

5.3. External: Export Culture For Soft Power

“*We’re all living in America*“, sings the German band Rammstein.

They have a point.
The Routledge Handbook on Persuasion says that cultural products like movies exported American values.

The power of soft power is that it *attracts*.
Consumers *want* more from the cultural hegemon, facilitating alliances, trade, and ‘brain gain’.

6. Build A Strong Military

The military is necessary for empire-making.

But remember it’s the tip of the pyramid for a reason.
Empire-building military is the *consequence* of strong foundations.

From a calculative empire point of view, good entrepreneurs are worth more than good soldiers.
Especially as tech progress replaces humans.
Eventually, it will be robots fighting.

Now we’ll focus on socio-cultural elements that support the top 6:

7. Keep Liberalism & Socialism In Check

Liberals and socialists are good people, but don’t build empires.

Extreme liberalism with its egalitarian tendencies undermines the ‘achievement psychology’ of competition, hierarchies, social identities, and pride of being part of the empire.

In contrast to egalitarianism, an empire needs a high ‘social dominance orientation’, or the belief that different classes of people and countries are part of a status hierarchy.

Socialists in turn use wealth to build comfy and egalitarian societies.
Great for quality of life, but empire-making needs a sharper edge.

Socialism blunts the drive for entrepreneurship and exceptionalism, and that undermines the empire’s progress.
The truth is: an empire may need a lower struggling class. It pushes everyone hard *not* to be in that class.

To keep lower classes still integrated, focus on positive ideologies:

7.2. Foster ‘Protestant Ethic’ & Internal Locus of Control

All surplus-producing societies produce group-based hierarchies (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999).

Hierarchies facilitate redistribution, limit internal strifes, and increase cooperation.
However, they pose a risk.
If lower classes feel alienated they may ‘check out’, stop working and producing, or rebelling.

Everyone bears the costs, and the pie/empire shrinks for all.

Social dominance theory refers to a ‘hierarchy-enhancing ideology’, but they also serve to preserve the system healthy for all.

Here are the most powerful ones:

- **Internal attribution of success** to encourage individuals's striving for success
  - Individualism over groups: everyone can succeed, no matter their class or birthplace
  - Discourage external attribution of failures as excuse-making, especially when related to classes or races
- **Meritocracy**, not just in facts, but in culture and ideology
- **Protestant work ethic**: the hard-working man is not only more likely to succeed, but also spiritually superior
- **Self-made men's stories**, especially from lower-class individuals to increase buy-in into the system

These ideologies keep everyone engaged and producing, making the pie bigger for all.

8. Mindset: Focus On Infinity & Human Development

The real test of empire-building are endurance and global leadership.

Think Infinite

Smart empire builders think long-term.

They widen the technological gap in good times, and conserve resources in bad times.

Enlightened empire builders also think about the world, and humanity.
They think in terms of "passing the best possible baton" to the next generation.

And they focus on culture as much as military -Medici docet-.

Culture always out-lives physical borders.

Even without an empire, Renaissance city-states such as Florence ensured lasting influence with arts and culture

Also see:

- TPM's approach to content

Do It For Humanity: Become Prestigious

Psychology research shows two paths to influence:

- Dominance
- Prestige

Prestige boosts your soft power and make people *want* to follow your lead.

Get into the mindset that **humanity needs strong but good leadership to carry us forward.**

Greece developed democracy but failed to export it.
It was the Roman Empire that set the foundations of the West. European empires with UK leading exported Western culture and psychology globally.
And the US took up the baton from the UK to lead with growth and innovation.

Make 'leading for all' the ethical basis of your empire-making.
It's more motivating for the empire's citizens, and gives you 'prestigious leadership',

Finally, we need an empire for humanity.
The modern states are just bigger clans.
We need a 'borderless empire' for humanity to colonize the universe.

Avoid These Fools' Traps

Common empire-busing traps:

1. Keep It Civil-ian: Don't Let Generals Lead

Generals over-focus on the military.

And the economy suffers.

⍰ Example: Napoleon

Napoleon is hip these days.

Entrepreneurs read his biographies and popular American authors tout his strategic genius.

Me, I find it amusing.

Americans, who revere Napoleon's genius… In the English language.

NOT in French.

Does that tell you anything?
England won the empire-making war. Not France.

I slightly rephrase a quote from a good historian who gets it:

> It's the glorification of dramatic failure at the expense of endurig empire dominance.

Albeit a great general, Napoleon was a failure at empire-making.

England had no equivalent charismatic leader.
But their stronger economy, institutions, strategies, and allies won the war.

And exiled Napoleon like a parent grounds the naughty kid.

Napoleon won battles to lose the war

Lesson learned: **build strong institutions and never rely on individual charismatic men**.
For every enlightened Caesar, there are a thousand disastrous generals.

Similarly:

2. Strong Military, Without Militarism

Men can easily fall for the allure of military might.

Parades of tanks and missiles make men feel strong and proud.
It's an easy ego boost.

But militarism diverts attention and resources away from the foundations.

Remember: **militarism is the toxic extreme of a healthy, strong military**.

Historical Examples

- **Assyrians**. You never heard them? Now you know why they're losers :)
- **Sparta**. Only beat Athens with a bigger ally -not "300-style military prowess".
  Democratic and cultured Athenians still dwarfed them in world impact, empire size, and duration
- **Nazi Germany**. Their war ethos was their downfall -their vaunted Aryan superiority apparently didn't extend to smart brains-.
  The same can be said of all fascist regimes.

Despots and militarists pound their chests. But their weak countries and economies are always outgunned by rich democracies

3. Wars: Only On A "Strictly Necessary" Basis

Carrying a gun tempts you into *using* a gun.

Similarly, strong militaries -and defense contractors- tempt you to use them.

This is true today, as it was millennia ago.

Example: Hannibal – Focus On Effectiveness & Lasting Victory

Hannibal's feats are impressive.

But he represents ultimate failure.

While his life goal was to destroy Rome, he precipitated the exact opposite.
He died suicide, a fugitive, *escaping* the Romans.

Roman general Scipio Africanus won the war.

Famous Hannibal war-mongered all his life and destroyed an empire.
Little known Scipio built one.

Ignore the glitz, focus on ultimate victory, and pick your heroes wisely.

4. Prevent Charismatic Dark Triads From Gaining Power

Dark triad leaders portray an *image* of power.

They are great at attracting a large flock of sheep.

But economies suffer with them.

They focus on themselves –and their kin & cronies-.

They cling to power and attack opposition and democracy.

Meritocracy suffers, and top talents choose freer countries.

Finally, the big military is too tempting for the egomaniac dark triad.
Sychophant generals assure the despot of a swift victory.
At the best, their wars sap the empire's resources.
At worst, their dreams of empire-making *destroy* the empire -and become yet another history's dark page-.

"Il Duce" knew how to work a crowd. (Dominance and confidence, and sheep follow). He dreamed of rebuilding the Roman Empire. If he focused on economy and alliances…

Remember: for every enlightened Lee Kuan Yew, there are a thousand disastrous despots.

This is our mission

We're keenly aware of the danger posed by high-power dark triads here.

So much so, that we made it our mission.
We help good men advance, so we all gain.

Are you a good man who needs to empower himself?

Then it's your responsibility to empower yourself.

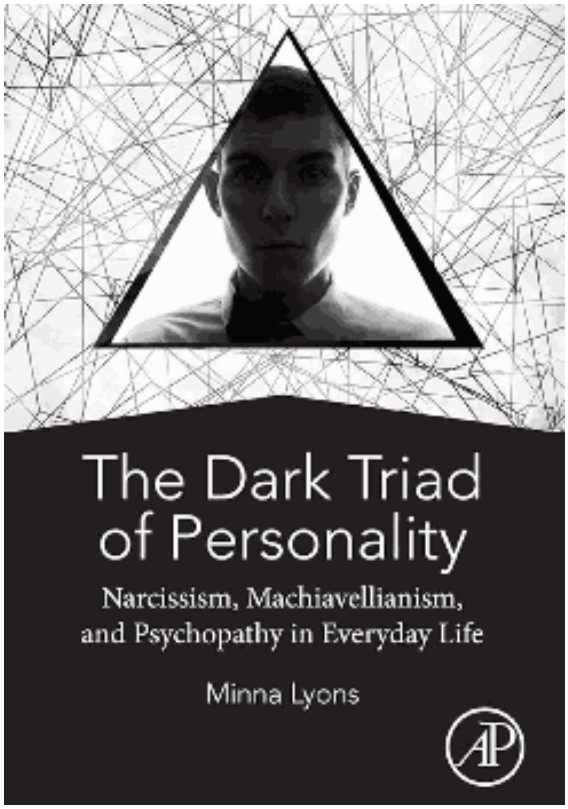
Stick with us.
And build your little -or big- empire.

WE NEED YOU
EMPOWERED

The Dark Triad of Personality: Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 July 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The Dark Triad of Personality in Everyday Life (2019) provides an overview of the research literature on the dark triad traits.



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Exec Summary

- Psychopathy is the "darkest" of the three
- Narcissism is the "lightest" of the three
- Sadism makes the dark triad far darker (dark tetrad)

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Minna Lyons is a psychologist and senior lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University.
Her research interests focus on individual differences from an evolutionary perspective and the Dark Triad of personality. Lyons has authored several papers, some of which are also referenced in this book.

What's the dark triad

> The Dark Triad consists of three overlapping, yet distinctive personality traits: Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. The traits share a core of manipulation, callousness, and selfishness (Jones & Figueredo, 2013).

Commonalities

Then the author goes a bit more personal with:

> All of the three traits are characterized by a disregard of social norms, which often leads to social transgressions in terms of lying, cheating, manipulating, and stealing. Individuals who are high in the dark traits are untrustworthy and uncaring romantic partners, backstabbing work colleagues, and cold and controlling as parents

All the Dark Triad traits relate to dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. Selfish behavior and lack of care for others are the main culprits for poorer relationships, says the author.

Differences

- **Machiavellians**: flexible, chameleon-like use of strategies from defection to cooperation to gain benefits for the self. It correlates with fluid intelligence.
  Christie and Geis (1970) proposed that Machiavellianism consists of two traits: interpersonally manipulative tactics, and a cynical view of human nature, both confirmed in a recent large-scale cross-cultural study (Monaghan, Bizumic, & Sellbom, 2018).
  Most studies investigate Mach as one single construct, but there maybe sub-factors (ie.: tactics, divided into deceit and flattery, and views of human nature, divided into immorality and cynicism)
- **Psychopathy**: impulsivity, reckless risk-taking, and very shallow empathy toward other people. More than the other two is associated with disregard for others, manifesting in criminal activity and disruptive interpersonal behaviors such as bullying (Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012) and sadism (Carton & Egan, 2017).

Some consider it the “darkest of the three”.
The popular two-factor model divides psychopathy into:

- Primary (Factor 1), the “successful” psychopaths that don’t necessarily end up in prison. It involves interpersonal and affective factors, such as coldness and callous manipulation
- Secondary (Factor 2), risky, impulsive behavior that is more likely to lead to prison
- **Narcissism**: vanity and grandiosity, and by an inflated self-assessment.
  A popular idea divides narcissism into:
  - Grandiose: with elevated self-esteem, and aggressive, forceful, and dominant interpersonal styles
  - Vulnerable: feel insecure and inadequate, and try to mask it from themselves and the rest of the world by faking grandiosity

Psychopathy and Machiavellianism share more features than either does with narcissism. The lowest correlations are between Machiavellianism and narcissism (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013)

Situations & Environment Matter

Especially narcissism can be temporary, and can be decreased or increased:

> Although all the Dark Triad traits have been conceptualized as dispositional, stable features in an individual, there is some evidence that especially for narcissism, situations may play a part in the manifestation of the trait. For instance, levels of narcissism can be experimentally manipulated to some extent. Narcissism can be increased by asking participants to think about their own achievements (Sakellaropoulo & Baldwin, 2007), or even by thinking of oneself as being a prince or a princess (Li et al. , 2016)

Dark Triads Can Add Value

> However, Dark Triad traits do have positive sides too. Especially in circumstances where there is a possibility to gain something for oneself, individuals with Dark Triad traits can be loyal friends, effective leaders, and heroic rescuers (e.g. , Hart, Richardson, & Tortoriello, 2018; Patton, Smith, & Lilienfeld, 2018; Smith, Hill, Wallace, Recendes, & Judge, 2018)

Scientific Doubts Still Abound (No Consensus)

There are still many question marks and consensus hasn’t emerged on several issues.

Some of them:

Psychopathy Isn’t Even A Diagnosis in The DSM

> psychopathy itself is not a diagnosis in the DSM system, but falls under the diagnostic category of ASPD (…) The ASPD diagnosis has a focus on impulsive, norm-violating behaviors. The diagnostic systems have been criticized for not taking into consideration other crucial components of psychopathy

Luckily, it’s now gaining acceptance:

> Although psychopathy is not an official diagnosis, following 50 years of diagnostic debates, it is finally accepted as a component of ASPD in the DSM-5 alternative model
> (…)
> (it’s possible to) receive a diagnosis of “ASPD with Psychopathic Personality Traits

Machiavellianism & Factor 1 Psychopathy

Machiavellianism does not directly feature in the classification systems.

Some researchers suggested Machiavellianism may be a nonclinical manifestation of psychopathy (ie.: McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, 1998):

> For example, McHoskey (2001) analyzed the MACH-IV scale in relation to a host of clinical symptoms, and concluded that those who score high on the questionnaire are also high on a number of other scales indicating personality dysfunction. More specifically, Machiavellianism had links to antisocial personality

⁉️♂️ **Lucio's note**: The 1998 paper Lyons cite was influential early on, but later research largely walked back the claim that MACH-IV is basically a psychopathy measure.

Healthy VS Unhealthy Narcissism

The author suggests that some aspects of narcissism are healthy in lower doses:

> "Normal" narcissism is manifested by a healthy self-image and self-esteem, which does not fall apart when faced with threats to the self.

But there is no agreement on how to differentiate healthy VS unhealthy:

> According to some, pathological and normal vary in a continuum, where pathological is just a more severe manifestation of the normal (e.g. , Watson, 2005). According to others, pathological and normal are distinctively different manifestations of narcissism, forming two separate dimensional personality traits (e.g. , Pincus et al. , 2009)

Psychopathy's Sub-Components Are Still Debated

> Psychopathy is unlikely to be a monolith construct but may consist of several subcomponents.
> There are still debates about what the factors of psychopathy are. The findings vary from study to study, often depending on the scale that is used to assess psychopathy. Theories and empirical evidence has suggested four-, three-, and two-factor models

Big Five And Other Personality Models

- **Low agreeableness**: All three traits negatively correlated with agreeableness, with stronger correlation for psychopathy and Machiavellianism Muris et al. , 2017)
- **Low humility for narcissists**: there are differential associations between the Dark Triad and honesty-humility, depending on the aspects of the trait. For example, narcissism had a strong, negative correlation between modesty and lack of greed avoidance
- **Low fairness for Machs and psychopaths**: Machiavellianism and psychopathy were associated with lack of fairness and low sincerity.
- **Neuroticism**: the findings are more confusing. A meta-analysis proposed that all the traits are related to low neuroticism. In other studies, Machiavellianism (Muris et al. , 2017) as well as primary and secondary psychopathy (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006) was positively correlated with neuroticism scores.
  Machs and secondary psychopaths may tend to feel anxious and worried
- **Low honesty**: all the three relate to low honesty
- **Narcissists are extroverted**. The author says that "*Narcissism seems to be "brightest" of the dark traits, with*

extraverted approach oriented attitude to life"

- **Low conscientiousness for Factor II psychopaths**

As an overview:

> recent meta-analysis of over 150 studies (Vize, Lynam, et al. , 2018) suggested that **psychopathy and Machiavellianism share very similar profiles**, characterized by low agreeableness and low conscientiousness (…)
> the core of the Dark Triad lies in dishonestly, coldness, and manipulation

Trait	Nomological Network Zero-Order Correlations
Machiavellianism	Low agreeableness[a–d]
	High neuroticism[a,b]
	Low conscientiousness[a–d]
Psychopathy	Low Agreeableness[a–d]
	High neuroticism[a]
	High extraversion[b]
	Low conscientiousness[b,d]
	High openness[b]
Narcissism	Low agreeableness[a,b,d]
	Low conscientiousness[a]
	High extraversion[b–d]
	High openness[b]

[a]Jakobwitz and Egan (2006).
[b]Paulhus & Williams (2002).
[c]Lee and Ashton (2005).
[d]Vernon et al. (2008).

Relationship Between the Dark Triad and the Big Five

The DSM Alternative Model

The DSM-5 proposes the "maladaptive trait model," measured by a continuous Personality Inventory for the DSM-5 (PID-5).

The PID-5 domains are:

- **Negative affect vs. emotional stability** (frequency and intensity of experiencing negative emotions)
- **Detachment vs. extraversion** (withdrawal of socioemotional experience, including avoidance of close bonds with others)
- **Disinhibition vs. conscientiousness** (orienting toward immediate gratification, disregarding future consequences)
- **Antagonism vs. agreeableness** (callousness, disregard for others, exaggerated self-importance)
  - Hostility *came out as the largest predictor of impaired psychosocial functioning. Research established strong links between hostility and poor health, unhealthy lifestyles, and dysfunction in social relationships.*
- **Psychoticism vs. lucidity** (expressing odd, eccentric, and unusual behaviors and thoughts)

The author comments:

> Which components of the model (if any) are typical of those who are on the higher end of the Dark Triad continuum?
> **Antagonism is a key feature of all three Dark Triad traits**, leading to major dysfunction in social relationships, sometimes at levels that could be described as "psychosocial disability. " Those who are high in antagonism are callous toward others and often view other people as instruments for achieving their own goals. Needless to say, **this kind of behavior leads to short-lived social relationships** or much misery for those ho for some reason (e.g. , children of antagonistic parents) have to endure the connections with the highly antagonistic individual.

Empathy, Emotions, Emotional Intelligence

Table:

Trait	Description
Empathy (cognitive)	Ability to understand the sources of others feelings
Empathy (affective)	Ability to feel what others feel
Empathy (global)	Cognitive + affective empathy
Emotional intelligence	Understanding and managing the emotions of self and others
Theory of Mind	Attributing mental states to others
Alexithymia	Inability to identify and describe feelings

Description of Traits Related to Understanding Self and Others
Machs and psychopaths have low empathy/emotional intelligence.

Overall, most studies have found that Machiavellianism and even more psychopathy (but not necessarily narcissism) are characterized by low (affective) empathy/emotional intelligence.

The author suggests that poorer emotion recognition ability stems from how individuals themselves react to emotion-evoking events (Machs and psychopaths score higher in Alexithymia).
Such as, those who struggle to identify their own emotions also have low empathy for others

However, affective empathy is not necessarily related to low *cognitive* empathy, or understanding the source of other's emotions.
So **dark triads can be equally good at understanding others' emotions**.

Impulsivity & Risk Taking

Impulsivity is associated with risk-taking, but that association is not well defined:

> Studies have found a nonlinear relationship between impulsivity and indicators of risk-taking. Individuals can be high in impulsivity but low in risktaking, and vice versa.

The consensus is that **psychopathy and narcissism are related to higher risk-taking while Machiavellians have a more cautious approach to life**.
All three traits relate to impulsivity, acting without thinking of future consequences.

Psychopathy and narcissism are associated with risky substance abuse, whereas Machiavellianism is not (Stenason & Vernon, 2016).

And psychopathy has the strongest associations with risky health behaviors, as well as gambling (especially factor II psychopathy).

Sexual Strategy: Dark Triads = Deadbeat Dads?

The author suggests that dark triad may follow a fast-life strategy.

Such as, they focus on the here and now, seeking to achieve fast results with shortcuts, but at the expense of sustainability and future success.

This strategy is especially relevant in mating and reproduction:

> According to the LHT (life history theory), individuals vary in a continuum in the amount of time and effort that they invest in current reproduction (i.e., seeking for partners and copulating with them) and in future reproduction (i.e., maturation and growth; providing for their offspring; maintaining stable relationships). Those who invest little effort in the future (i.e., parenting), focus on seeking multiple partners (…) follow a fast LHS, resulting in a higher total number of children.
> On the other end of the continuum, individuals who follow a slow LHS have fewer sexual partners, stable relationships, and fewer children. Low impulsivity and hesitation to take risks may be features that help in investing in the future.

In this view, the Dark Triad is a condition-dependent strategy for fast life.
Dark triad traits are helpful in risky environments with uncertain future where early reproduction and higher-risk taking pays off.
Says the author:

> Indeed, there is some evidence that those high in the Dark Triad traits (especially Machiavellianism and psychopathy) have grown up in harsh, unstable environments (Jonason, Icho, & Ireland, 2016).

The author says that all 3 dark triads are related to a fast life strategy, albeit not every single face is:

> Melissa McDonald and colleagues (McDonald, Donnellan, & Navarrete, 2012) found that the Machiavellianism, entitlement/exploitativeness facet of narcissism, and impulsive antisocial facet of psychopathy related to a fast LHS, whereas fearless dominance facet of psychopathy and leadership and grandiose facet of narcissism had an association with a slow LHS

My Note: disagree that fearless dominance, leadership and grandiosity are "slow life strategy"
I don't fully agree here as I don't see how fearless dominance and grandiosity are associated with slow life, but NOT fast life.

Other possible features of a fast life strategy:

- **Avoidant attachment style**
- **High sex drive**. Psychopathy is related to increased sex drive (Baughman, Jonason, Veselka, & Vernon, 2014)
- **Unrestricted sociosexual orientation**. the Dark Triad is connected to an interest for multiple partners and sex without commitment (Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Nascimento, Hanel, Monteiro, Gouveia, & Little, 2018)

Also read our popular article:

- **Psychopaths' sexual strategy**: a case study

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

It's True For Women As Well

> The Dark Triad is linked to overall high sexual desire and preference for recreational sex in women too (Carter, Campbell, & Muncer, 2014; Jauk et al. , 2016)

And:

> Dark Triad women mate promiscuously, and specifically psychopathy and Machiavellianism are related to a fast life history cross-culturally, irrespective of biological sex (Jonason, Girgis, & Milne-Home, 2017)

It's still not clear though how this approach would benefit women who are biologically "forced" to invest far more in children, and whose investment is also necessary to raise children.
I'd venture to guess that it may work also for women, just less well than for (attractive) men. Plus, women may simply be a less adaptive "spillover" of players' sexy sons.

But... Is this strategy really successful? There is no evidence

Studies used sex drive and number of mates as a proxy for reproductive success.

However, that does not equal number of children, and there is little research investigating the "bottom line" of reproductive strategies.

The author did attempt a study though, and the results do not confirm success:

> I explored the associations between the Dark Triad and existing children in an online sample of 314 participants (Carter, Lyons, & Brewer, 2018). We found that narcissistic men had more children, and psychopathy in both sexes had an association with fewer children.
> This is an interesting discovery, as it seems that the sex drive and multiple matings do not translate into higher number of children in psychopathic individuals

However, the sample small to draw any significant conclusion.

Mate preference for dark triads

Based on a few studies:

- **Narcissistic women are choosy**, demanding everything from prospective partners: status, resources, attractiveness, education, and intelligence. Machiavellianism was not related to any of the mate choice preferences, and psychopathy had a negative association with a preference for religiosity and kindness (Iran, Atari and Chegeni, 2017)
- **Psychopaths don't care about kindness** in either short or long-term (Jonason, Valentine, Li, and Harbeson, 2011)
- **Machiavellians did not value warmth-trustworthiness or intimacy and loyalty.** It was true for both men and women (Inancsi, Lang, and Bereczkei, 2016). But they cared about the partner's status and resources

More cheating for psychopaths and Machs

- **Psychopaths cheat more**: The emerging picture suggests that infidelity is especially pertinent to men and women who are high on psychopathic traits. Psychopathy relates to both actual infidelity and intentions to cheat in the future.

- **Machs probably cheat more in box sexes**: some studies have found that cheating is more common in high-Mach women, and others have found that Machiavellianism drives infidelity in both sexes
- **Narcissism is unrelated to cheating**. Relationships between narcissism and infidelity have not been consistent from one study to another, with findings that go in opposite directions.

Dark Triad Pursue Short-Term Mating Strategies

> The key message from these studies is that the Dark Triad is associated with a preference for short-term, casual relationships, and higher likelihood of dysfunctional romantic relationships.

And:

> Socially aversive personalities often have short, emotionally shallow relationships, characterized by avoidance of commitment to single long-term partners

The emotional attachment styles also seem to support this preference, as psychopaths and Macs have avoidant attachment styles.

How Attractive Are Dark Triads?

- **Narcissists are attractive**. In a meta-analysis, Holtzman and Strube (2010) found a small but consistent relationship between narcissism and ratings of attractiveness
- **Narcissists are more desirable as long and short-term partners** from a German study on speed daters (Jauk et al. , 2016)
- **Dark triads' faces are less attractive albeit they're rated as more dominant**. *We have now showed these faces to thousands of women in several different studies, and have found that without an exception, the high Dark Triad morphs are aversive as potential partners (Lyons et al. , 2015). The high faces are also rated as more aggressive, dominant (Lyons & Blanchard, 2016), and dangerous (Brewer, Carter, Lyons, & Green, 2018) than the low faces. even when under the influence of alcohol, women disliked the high faces, and rated them as dangerous (Brewer, Carter, et al., 2018)*
  - Narcissists may be the exception. Especially with some types of women: *women who had unrestricted sociosexual orientation(i.e., preference for noncommitted sexual relationships) and did not use oral contraceptives had a preference for narcissistic faces (Marcinkowska, Helle, & Lyons, 2015)*
- **Dark triads tend to date each other**

The author says that narcissists seem to be popular, but psychopaths and Machs are not.
She wonders whether the self-reported mating success is based either on exaggeration or coercion of unwilling partners.
I disagree though because ratings based on still pictures say little.

As Alexander from Dating Psychology suggests, the most successful dark triads may be agreeable Machs. Such as, they can put up a good front.

Also read:

- **Are psychopaths attractive?**

Genes, Environment & Parents: They All Matter

Genes matter.

How much they matter, is more difficult to say.

According to one study:

> using heritability estimates, Vernon, Villani, Vickers, and Harris (2008) found that about 31% of variance in Machiavellianism, 64% of in psychopathy, and 59% in narcissism were attributable to genetics.

When it comes to the environment, there likely are "cues" the brain latches onto for its development.
We're not yet sure what those cues are, but likely:

- **Quality of parental care**: *studies on the Dark Triad and parenting indicate that recollections of a cold, uncaring mother may lead to the lack of secure attachment, which could influence the development of Machiavellian strategies. Recollections of uncaring mothers have an association with high primary psychopathy in women and high secondary psychopathy in men (Blanchard, Lyons, & Centifanti, 2016a, 2016b).*
- **Crime and disorder in the environment**
- **Availability of resources**

> a study that investigated childhood resource scarcity vs unpredictability found that unpredictable childhood conditions had an association with higher scores in all the Dark Triad traits (Jonason et al. , 2016)
> (…)

My note: my personal experience aligns with parental influence
I think that my strategic approach to life and avoidant attachment style stems in good part "thanks" to my mother's parenting. But I don't jump to conclusions.

How to Measure The Dark Triad

In general, go for longer questionnaires rather than the briefer ones.

> (…) the Dirty Dozen (DD; Jonason & Webster, 2010) and the Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). DD is a very brief, 12-item measure, consisting of four questions/trait. The measure has been demonstrated to have good internal reliability (i.e. , the four questions for each trait are measuring the same thing), but the convergent validity has been more limited (i.e. , the correlations with more established, longer measures can be relatively weak).
> SD3 has 27 questions, nine/trait, and has good internal reliability, and stronger convergent validity than the DD measure

The Dark Tetrad: Sadisdm

Sadism is different from the Dark Triad traits and not all Machs, narcissists, and psychopaths necessarily enjoy hurting others.

But there is a relationship:

> How does sadism relate to the Dark Triad? Chabrol, Melioli, Van Leeuwen, Rodgers, and Goutaudier (2015) gave questionnaires on the Dark Tetrad to a group of over 600 high school students, in an attempt to classify them into personality types. First, the authors found that **all the four traits correlated with each other, suggesting that they share at least some variance**

Trolls Are Sadic

> Those who troll (i.e. , leave negative and derogative comments, often anonymously) others are high on the

> Dark Tetrad, especially sadism (Craker & March, 2016; Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014). Especially sadism and psychopathy seem to be a toxic combination with regards to trolling, as a study found that both these traits were typical of internet trolls (Sest & March, 2017).

And:

> Especially sadism related to a stronger identity as a troll, and this could be due to the pleasure that sadistic individuals get from hurting others

Psychopaths Are The Only Inveterate, Constant Liars

Keep in mind the first study is from an Internet survey:

> narcissism was associated with lying in order to gain something for the self, and Machiavellianism with small white lies, psychopathy was related to not needing any reason for telling lies. Those who were high in psychopathy were lying habitually, and were happy to lie for no specific motive
> (…)
> Further evidence for compulsive lying in psychopathy comes from a study that found that psychopathy was associated with positive emotions when telling lies (Baughman, Jonason, Lyons, & Vernon, 2014).

Born Criminals? Some Psychopaths, Yes

Psychopathy best predicts crime.

In prison populations, psychopaths are over-represented.
But there are plenty in community samples as well:

> studies utilizing nonprison samples have found that there is a small proportion of population “at large” in the community, presenting high levels of psychopathy.
> Across several studies on diverse nationalities, rather than Machiavellianism and narcissism, psychopathy is emerging as the driving force behind the connections with delinquency and different types of crimes. In a similar manner as in incarcerated populations, primary psychopathy is one of the most important factors in criminality in student and community samples. Primary psychopathy is especially related to crimes that are of a violent and instrumental nature

However, the author righteously warns to not over-generalize.
Not all psychopaths are (inveterate) criminals, and plenty of non dark-triad are criminals.

Machs are more strategic

Machs and Factor II psychopaths steal more when they won’t get caught:

> Machiavellianism and primary psychopathy were positively related to more frequent thefts if the risk was removed

White collar crime is for more successful dark triads

There is little research on white collar crime, but says the author:

> The Dark Triad’s associations with deceitfulness and hunger for money, power, and status make it a likely personality constellation relevant in white-collar crimes

And indeed, based on the available evidence:

> These results provide further support for the idea that white-collar criminals have characteristics of "successful psychopathy," manipulation without problems with impulse control

Interestingly, one study on white collar crime also showed high conscientiousness.

Dark Triads: Not The Best Friends

> High Dark Triad individuals seem to be more instrumental in their motivations to select and maintain friendships, preferring friends who can satisfy their needs in the arena of mating and climbing up the social ladder. All of the traits relate to shallow friendships

Differentiating the three:

- **Narcissists are "less bad"**, it's the "lightest" of the dark traits as they enjoy social contact and having fun
- **Machiavellians make for frenemies**, friends who are jealous, competitive, and potentially toxic. They also care less about having friends
- **Psychopaths are loners** who are not bothered with friendships and have no need to try to influence their friends either

The author says that friendships are rife with exploitation because people expect friends shouldn't "keep tabs" on who gives.

So, first warning, watch out for the power dynamics:

Don't be the "crazy go-giver" "friend"

> Sometimes one friend puts more importance in the relationship than the other, who might not value the friendship as much. Think about your own friends, and how important they are to you.Now, how many of them do you think rates you as important as you rate them? We often overestimate our own importance in the face of other friends.

Dark triads pick friends who can do something for them

For example, in the mating market:

> Social psychology experiments have demonstrated that when a person is in a group with attractive people, they receive higher ratings of attractiveness than they would if they were alone (van Osch, Blanken, Meijs, & van Wolferen, 2015)
> (…)
> A study that investigated the Dark Triad and the reasons for making friends found that these traits do, indeed, relate to using friends as agentic tools (Jonason & Schmitt, 2012)

A study also found that Machiavellian women preferred friends with high social status.

More findings

- **Psychopaths prioritize dominance over warmth**: *those who were higher on the cold, callous aspects of psychopathy were more concerned about one's own image and gaining dominance over others, rather than about having warm, affiliative long-term friendships (Foulkes, McCrory, et al. , 2014)*

- **Narcissists are polarizing**
  - Attractive friends… In the beginning. *research has shown that especially narcissists are attractive as friends as first sight, the arrogance and grandiosity makes the attractiveness fade quickly as time goes by.*
    In contrast, emotionally intelligent people increased in popularity over the three-month period. In the long run, agreeable individuals also receive more nominations in friendship network studies, and also have large, stable networks because other people prefer their company (Harris & Vazire, 2016)
  - High narcissism can also be initially repulsive: *However, those who are not high in narcissism initially dislike those who are narcissistic (Burton et al. , 2017)*
- **Machs are both popular and unpopular**. The picture that is emerging with regards to Machiavellianism and popularity in children indicates that high-Mach kids are both popular (Abell et al. , 2015; Hawley, 2003) and unpopular (Abell et al. , 2015).
  Machiavellian boys rather than girls reach a popular status in their peer groups
  - Machs are good at using both pro-social and aggressive tactics.
- **Some core dark triad features hinder long-term relationships**. *In terms of forming successful long-term relationships, core features of the Dark Triad (i.e. , disagreeableness) seem to be a hinder.*
- **Vulnerable narcissists and psychopaths make the worst friends**. People who were high on vulnerable narcissism and psychopathy, in turn, were more likely to use both proactive and reactive aggression in friendships. Vulnerable narcissists may make for particularly toxic in friends, because of low self-esteem and insecurity about one's position in the social network.
  Grandiose narcissists are less likely to be aggressive toward their friends because they are more secure in their relationships with others
- **Machiavellians may be more suspicious and paranoid**. *High-Mach women perceived their friends as being emotionally manipulative toward them.* (…) *Machiavellianism and psychopathy (but not narcissism) relate to perceptions of competition in the office (Jonason, Wee, & Li, 2015)*
- **Dark triads tend to remain friends with other dark triads**, albeit it seems that dark triad prefer others to be on the lower levels of manipulativeness and egotism.
  The author summarizes that those who are more selfish (i.e. , have darker personalities) do not care about whether their friends are kind or unkind.

My note: why narcissists are both attractive and repulsive
My guess is that "socially unskilled" high narcissists are repulsive to many other high-power people because they evoke competition.
Successful narcissists display the same level of confidence, without the "I'm better than you" vibe that triggers competitive responses.
Also, keep in mind that attraction and dislike aren't always and necessarily opposite. Many women for example are attracted to men they dislike and find to be asshole types.

Pros & Cons of Dark Triad

Evolutionary psychology suggests there are advantages to dark triad traits -or they wouldn't have evolved and propagated-.

But there are also disadvantages:

> According to Miller et al.(2010), it makes sense to think of the Dark Triad as two constructs. In addition to a more adaptive constellation (i.e. , Factor 1 psychopathy, and grandiose narcissism as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory), there is a second Dark Triad, characterized by features of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), vulnerable narcissism (e.g. , fragile self-esteem, insensitivity), and Factor 2

> psychopathy (e.g. , risk-taking and impulsivity).
> All the three aspects of the vulnerable Dark Triad are linked to neuroticism and have associations with insecure attachment…

The author adds:

> Vulnerable Dark Triad is associated with difficulties in current functioning, including nonsuicidal self-harming behaviors

Some dark triads are also high in neuroticism, negative emotionality, and the inability to control emotions, which may lead to vulnerability to mental distress.

Switching from pro-social to coercive provides maximum results

The author dedicates a box to Patricia Hawley and her research on "bistrategic controllers".

And this was one of the most interesting parts for me.

In short, Resource Control Theory (RCT) explains that prosocial strategies increase access to resources by forming long-term cooperative alliances. However controlling resources with coercion and aggression can also achieve the same result.

The most effective players use both approaches:

> Some individuals are skillful in using both coercive and prosocial friendship tactics.
> These individuals are named "bistrategic controllers. "
> Children (and adults) who have mastered the use of both coercive and prosocial tactics in their social relationships are acutely aware of social conventions and morality, but they lack an internalized conscience. They may exhibit low levels of guilt after moral transgressions. In many ways, **bistrategic controllers display features of Machiavellianism and primary psychopathy**, moving adeptly in their social environments by using manipulation and flattery. **Mastering both prosocial and coercive tactics relates to social competence, and material and social success.**

And a study in children seems to show as much:

> Children who were bistrategic controllers (i.e. , more Machiavellian) were rated as aggressive by their peers, but not by their teachers, implying the ability to hide coercive strategies from authority figures

I think this makes sense.

Bonus: Is Trump A Malignant Narcissist? Yes...

The author dedicates a box to this question, and the answer seemed to be "(likely) yes".

MORE WISDOM

Bad, not "mad":

> people who are "survivors" of a toxic relationship with a high Dark Triad person are more likely to feel like they are in a need of psychological interventions than those who are high on these traits themselves.
> (…)
> The interpersonal damage caused by dark personalities could imply that individuals high on these traits are not

> “mad” (i.e. , mentally ill, needing some kind of interventions), but simply “bad”

Power dynamics govern academia

The author implies that truth is not always in the driver’s seat when it comes to the DSM:

> Research involving the DSM-5 trait model will be useful in shifting the DSM further away from categorical diagnoses derived through political processes and presumed authority and toward an empirically based dimensional model of personality and psychopathology

Some treatment may be possible

> There is relatively little research with regards to the treatment of ASPD, CD, or psychopathy
> (…)
> studies have found that treatment is effective especially for Factor 2 (i.e. , antisocial, impulsive behavior) psychopathy
> (…)
> Especially the behavioral aspects of secondary psychopathy (which have more links to violence and offending) can be reduced in intensive psychological interventions

Personality predicts crime – possibly more than socio-economic factors

> Personality variation clearly plays a vital role in the proclivity to commit crimes of varying degrees, possibly more so than other “criminogenic factors” such as socioeconomic status

Impulsivity & early aggression predict crime

For early red flags in children:

> longitudinal research has found that early teacher reports of aggression in children are related to lawbreaking in later life (Stattin & Magnusson, 1989), suggesting that proclivity to commit crimes can be identified relatively early. Aggressive behaviors and attitudes in those high on the Dark Triad spectrum extend to animal cruelty (Kavanagh, Signal, & Taylor, 2013), racism (Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009), and acceptance of different types of violent acts

And impulsivity:

> A feature that has been consistently connected to crime is impulsivity, characterized by low self-control/self-regulation

Machiavellians can have good long-term relationships

> Machiavellianism does not automatically lead to lower quality attachments with romantic partners, and taking the results from studies I reviewed before, it can even have an association with increased relationship satisfaction.
> Machiavellianism relates to more long-term planning, and individuals high in this trait can have high investment in a partner, resulting in heightened distress if the relationship dissolves.

Psychopaths and Macs can be very distressed after a breakup

> Because of the low satisfaction and low investment in relationships, it would be expected that high Dark Triad individuals (especially Machiavellian and psychopathic) are not feeling very distressed when the relationship breaks up. Moroz, Chen, Daljeet, and Campbell (2018) investigated the Dark Triad, and breakup distress in a sample of 264 University students in Canada. Unexpectedly, they found that participants who scored higher on Machiavellianism and psychopathy reported higher distress after breaking up. In regression analyses where the shared variance between the traits was controlled for, the authors found that those who were higher on Machiavellianism experienced higher levels of distress after a break up.

Narcissists do well at work (for themselves)

The author mentions Dutton's *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* and "*Snakes in Suits*", and warns that the evidence is scarce.

However, narcissists do well for themselves:

> *Across different studies, narcissism seems to be consistently related to higher success in terms of higher earnings. The overconfidence and assertiveness of narcissistic individuals could be an asset when discussing promotions and starting salaries, resulting in higher pay.*

Also see:

- Machiavellians at the top

Grandiose narcissists are social media super users

> (…) those who have more adaptive aspects of narcissism use social media more than people who are insecure narcissists. For example, a meta-analysis on a sample of over 13,000 users found that grandiose (but not vulnerable) narcissism related to increased time spent on social media, frequency of tweets or status updates, number of friends or followers, and frequency of posting

And:

> Narcissism, in turn, has the most relevance in social media, with a higher likelihood of posting selfies, getting angry if their posts are not acknowledged by others, and using more digital enhancement techniques in trying to make themselves look more appealing.

Internet and anonymity make aggression easier

> Online bullying is an easy, low-cost method of exerting dominance over the victim. Writing a denigrating post is only a few clicks away and has the potential to hurt the victim in front of wide audiences.

A study showed that "traditional" bullies are psychopathic, sadistic and Machiavellian with low agreeableness. But in online samples only sadism was a significant predictor (van Geel, Goemans, Toprak, & Vedder, 2017).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Potentially too self-assured about certain conclusions

Several times I felt like the confidence in some statements or conclusions was unjustified.

I think it would be better for research authors to more clearly mark what's an opinion, a possible interpretation, or a conjecture.

Some potentially wrong conclusions

Sometimes I disagree with the author's conclusions.

Or, at least, she didn't use the correct words.

For example:

> Thus rather than having sex with consenting partners, those at the higher end of the continuum are more likely to achieve their mating goals via coercion and manipulation

They're not more likely to have sex with coercion and manipulation.
They're more likely than *non*-dark triads are. It's a big difference.

Potentially unwarranted conclusions from small samples

For example:

> This time, 347 online participants completed the lie detection tasks and the Dark Triad questionnaire. Interestingly, we found that narcissism in men was correlated with worse, and Machiavellianism in women with better lie detection ability.
> (…) The higher accuracy of Machiavellian women is interesting too, suggesting that cunningness and manipulativeness in women could be adaptive in terms of an increased capacity in seeing through fake tears.

If 347 participated and only a tiny percentage of those are dark triads, how can we even trust the results?
In this case, I didn't trust those conclusions on what's adaptive for women not one bit.

In my opinion, speculation based on poor quality is worse than speculation with no data at all.

In another case:

> (…) In an online sample of 314 participants (…) We found that narcissistic men had more children, and psychopathy in both sexes had an association with fewer children.
> This is an interesting discovery, as it seems that the sex drive and multiple matings do not translate into higher number of children in psychopathic individuals.
> It is possible that the adaptiveness of multiple sexual partners (and possible conceptions) is offset by reduced fertility due to increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases.

With such a tiny sample, of which I would guess that only a small percentage are narcissistic and psychopathic, I wouldn't even venture into drawing any conclusion.

The reduced fertility argument also seems to me like narrative fallacy, or creating just-so stories.

REVIEW

The Dark Triad of Personality is a good book to learn and understand the dark triad.

It's briefer than many handbooks, but that's not necessarily a con.

And while I listed some criticism above, I'm grateful to Minna Lyon for this book.
She did a good job, and I also referenced her work in at least two articles.

I would gladly read a future update to integrate the latest research in a few years. I'm especially interested in:

- **Number of dark triad offspring**. Something that, in my opinion, could be a possible threat to humanity's well-being
- **Life success measures** for the three and related sub-traits. For example, odds of getting rich, advancing at work,
  - Environmental variables that thwart or promote dark-triads success. Lots to learn here for organization and human development to promote systems that make it easier for less selfish and toxic people to advance

Overall, still I learned a lot though.
I gleaned some new insights, improved my understanding in a few areas and, equally important, I better understood the current limitations of research.

Also read:

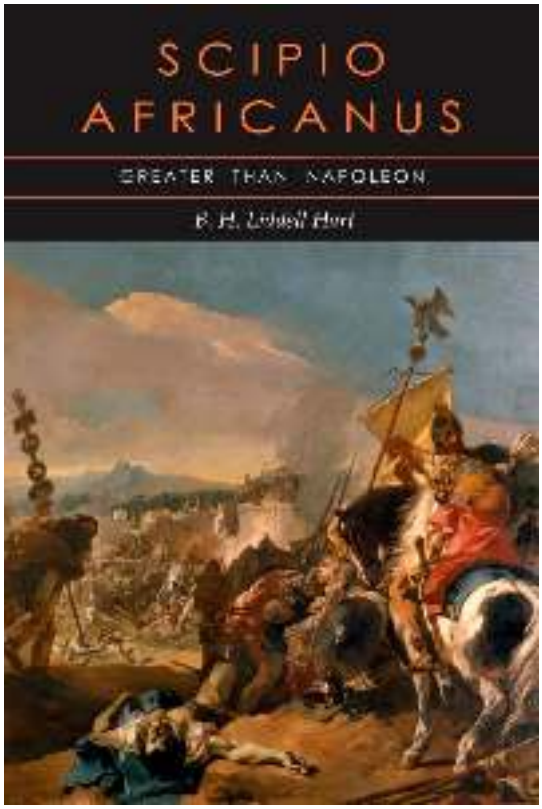
- How to be (positively) Machiavellian
- 7 Machiavellian traits to adopt

Check the **best books on dark triads** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Scipio Africanus: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 August 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Scipio Africanus (1927) tells the fascinating story of undefeated Roman general Scipio as he started from the Spanish province, then moved to undermine Carthage in Africa while Hannibal still threatened Rome in Italy, and eventually fought and defeated Carthage and Hannibal, paving the way for the unmatched rule of the Roman Empire.



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Exec Summary

- **Scipio may be the greatest commander in history**
- **Win the battle with any possible mean**, but remain honorable when possible
- **Develop a reputation for honor**, as a man, and as an empire
- **Win the war by looking *beyond* the battle**
  - Focus on the greater objective
  - Treat your vanquished foes well to turn them into consenting regions, or allies
  - Increase prosperity for all

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Liddell Hart, AKA Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, was a British soldier, military historian, and military theorist. He wrote a series of military histories that proved influential among strategists.

Battlefield victory is only a means to an end

This is a deep and timeless lesson:

> Strategically Scipio is still more " modern." The present is a time of disillusionment, when we are realising that slaughter is not synonymous with victory, that the " destruction of the enemy's main armed forces on the battlefield " is at best but a means to the end, and not an end in itself, as the purblind apostles of Clausewitz had deceived themselves—and the world, unhappily.

It's incredible some enlightened men understood this millennia ago.
Then re-learend it centuries ago… And we still haven't learned the lesson.

Reverse of the law: Iraq war

Look at the USA routing Iraq in the battlefield… And losing at the higher strategy level.

Sinking billions more in "peace-keeping", fighting invisible insurgents for years to come, while unable to rebuild any functioning state in the void they created.

Military is only a part of the larger strategy

> In the future, even more than in the past, the need is to study and understand the interplay of the military, economic, and political forces, which are inseparable in strategy.

I couldn't agree more.

Also see:

- How to build an empire

Keep capable rivals close to display your magnanimity and superiority

This the great man's power move:

> His own moral stature could not be better shown than by his treatment of Marcius, the man who had partly retrieved the Roman disasters, and thus one whom an ambitious general might well regard as a rival to his own position and fame.
> But " Marcius he kept with him, and treated him with such respect that it was perfectly clear that there was nothing he feared less than lest any one should stand in the way of his own glory."

Compare with Napoleon:

> Napoleon's jealousy of Moreau, his deliberate overshadowing of his own marshals, is in marked contrast with Scipio's attitude, and one of the finest of military tributes to him is the abiding affection felt for him by his subordinate generals.

And the author further displays uncommon power awareness in this passage:

> " No man is a hero to his valet," and but few generals are heroes to their chief staff officers, who see them intimately in their nude qualities beneath the trappings of authority and public reputation. Loyal subordinates will maintain the fiction of infallibility for the good of the army, and so long as is necessary, but they know the man as he is, and in later years the truth leaks out.

I would add that not only the truth leaks out, but it also saps their will to fight for that man.

Show forced labor a path to freedom to get their best work

First off, let's put things in perspective.

War back then was even nastier than today, so any magnanimous act must be put into perspective:

> Proof of the discipline of Scipio's troops is that the massacre ceased on a signal after the citadel surrendered, and only then did the troops begin pillaging. The massacre, however difficult for modern minds to excuse, was a military measure

With that in mind:

> The massacre, moreover, was partly offset by Scipio's generous, if diplomatic, conduct to the vanquished, once the initial ruthlessness had achieved its purpose of quenching the citizens' will to resist. Of the ten thousand male prisoners, he set free all who were citizens of New Carthage, and restored their property. The artisans, to the number of two thousand, he declared the property of Rome, but promised them their freedom when the war was over if they " showed goodwill and industry in their several crafts." The pick of the remainder were taken for sea service, thus enabling him to man the captured vessels and so increase the size of his fleet ; these also were promised their freedom after the final defeat of Carthage.

The fruits of military victory lie in the peace after it

> As Polybius justly says, "Those who have won victories are far more numerous than those who have used them to advantage," and Scipio, more than any other great captain, seems to have grasped the truth that the fruits of victory lie in the after years of peace—a truth hardly realised even to-day, despite the lessons of Versailles.

Power move 1: Leave your vanquished enemies armed

> This victory over Andobales and Mandonius proved to be the coping-stone not only on his military career in Spain, but on the political conquest of the country.
>
> So decisive had it been that Andobales (…) sent his brother Mandonius to sue for peace unconditionally. One imagines that Mandonius must have felt some pessimism as to his reception and as to his tenure of life. It would have been natural to have dealt out to these twice-repeated rebels a dire vengeance.
>
> But Scipio knew human nature (…) No vengeance could improve his military or political position, now unchallenged, whereas (vendetta) it would merely sow the seeds of future trouble, convert the survivors into embittered foes, biding their time for a fresh outbreak.
>
> Little as he counted on their fidelity, generosity was the one course which might secure it. Therefore (…) after driving home the helplessness of their position and the rightful forfeiture of their lives, he made a peace as generous as it was diplomatically foresighted.
>
> To show how little he feared them, he did not demand the surrender of their arms and all their possessions, as was the custom, nor even the required hostages, saying that "should they revolt, he would not take vengeance on their unoffending hostages, but upon themselves, inflicting punishment not upon defenceless but on armed enemies " (Livy)

What an honorable man power move.
"I won't stage revenge on some poor hostages, but on you, *fully armed* you".

And history shows it worked:

> The wisdom of this policy found its justification in the fact that from this juncture Spain disappears from the history of the Punic War, whether as a base of recruitment and supply for the Carthaginian armies or as a distraction from Scipio's concentration on his new objective —Carthage itself.

Power move 2: welcome the spies, & escort them back to show supreme confidence

This was a next level mental power move:

> Three of the scouts, or spies, were captured, and when they were brought before Scipio he adopted a highly novel method of treatment.
> (…) he ordered a tribune to attend them and point out clearly to them the exact arrangement of the camp. After (…) he asked them if the officer had explained everything to their satisfaction. When they answered that he had done so, Scipio furnished them with provisions and an escort, and told them to report carefully to Hannibal what had happened to them" (Polybius).
> This superb insolence of Scipio's was a shrewd blow at the moral objective, calculated to impress on Hannibal and his troops the utter confidence of the Romans, and correspondingly give rise to doubts among themselves.

LOL this guy showed the spies around the camp, gave them even more information, told them to share everything with Hannibal… *And escorted them back* .

As a follows up, Hannibal asked to meet Scipio.
And Scipio used that to his advantage.

Social strategy: show your stick before showing leniency

Says Scipio after a resounding victory:

> Scipio began by stating briefly that the Romans had no call to treat them with leniency, in view not only of their admission that they had begun the war, but of their recent treachery in violating a written agreement they had sworn to observe.
> "But for our own sake and in consideration of the fortune of war and of the common ties of humanity we have decided to be clement and magnanimous. This will be evident to you also, if you estimate the situation rightly.

What an absolute communication masterpiece.
First, he reminds them they're powerless, that he won, and that he can do as he pleases.

BUT… He decided for leniency and clemency.

NOW they will appreciate it.

Plus, he still asked for conditions that guaranteed Roman security.
But it was ultimately a good win-win. As the author put it "This cheaply afforded security paved the way for the future prosperity of Rome, and at the same time made possible, justly, the revival of Carthage's prosperity".

As a leader, hide bad news from the troops

Scipio was preparing his campaign in Sicily when two envoys delivered bad news.

A crucial and former ally had to scrap their previous agreement because he married a Carthaginian general.

> One can imagine what a blow the message proved to Scipio.
> Yet he determined to carry through his plan, and merely sought to counteract the moral harm which might accrue if Syphax's defection became known. He sent the envoys back as quickly as possible, with a stern reminder to Syphax of his treaty obligations.
> Further, realising that the envoys had been seen by many, and that if he maintained silence about their visit rumours would spread, Scipio announced to the troops that the envoys had come (…) to urge him to hasten his invasion of Africa.
> It was a shrewd ruse, for the truth might have caused grave moral depression at the critical time.

Gain reputation for magnanimity: your enemies will surrender more easily

If your enemies fear slaughter, they will fight until death.

If they believe you will extend good conditions, they will surrender much sooner (and fight will less intensity):

> the Carthaginians sent thirty of their principal elders—the Council of Elders being superior even to the Senate—to beg for terms of peace (…)
> This hope was based on their knowledge that the Roman people's aim was dominion, and not destruction (…)
> Scipio replied " that he had come to Africa with the hope, which had been increased by his success, that he should carry home victory and not terms of peace. Still, though he had victory in a manner within his grasp, he would not refuse accommodation, that all the nations might know that the Roman people both undertake and conclude wars with justice."

The author also says that chivalry make the chivalrous feel superior, which is an advantage:

> But chivalry, as in this example of Scipio's, is both rational and far-sighted, for it endows the side which shows

> it with a sense of superiority, and the side which falls short with a sense of inferiority. The advantage in the moral sphere reacts on the physical.

I'm far less convinced about this.
But I do believe that, for most men, it does help with confidence and self-esteem.

Use war "as little as possible" to achieve a better peace

> The moderation of these terms is remarkable (…) a testimony not only to Scipio's greatness of soul, but to his transcendent political vision.
> (…) Scipio had a clear grasp of what is just dawning on the mind of the world to-day—that the true national object in war, as in peace, is a more perfect peace.
> War is the result of a menace to this policy, and is undertaken in order to remove the menace, and by the subjugation of the will of the hostile State" to change this adverse will into a compliance (…) and the sooner and more cheaply in lives and in money we can do this, the better (…) national prosperity in the widest sense.
> The aim of a nation in war is, therefore, to subdue the enemy's will to resist with the least possible human and economic loss to itself."

The author, writing after WWI, also adds:

> The lesson of history, of very recent history moreover, enables us to deduce this axiom, that" A military victory is not in itself equivalent to success in war."
> (…) In regards the peace terms, "the contract must be reasonable; for to compel a beaten foe to agree to terms which cannot be fulfilled is to sow the seeds of a war which one day will be declared in order to cancel the contract."
> There is only one alternative—annihilation

If I'm correct that this book was originally published between the two world wars, it's incredible how prescient the author was.

And he's also not writing from a position of naive self-help.
He is right that annihilation would be the alternative -albeit that, too, has high costs-.

Chivarly must be smart & strategic, or it becomes weakness

Here again, the author and TPM perfectly align.

To seek to be *always* chivalrous and honorable is naive.
It opens you up to manipulation, lose-wins, and generally leaving too many opportunities on the table.

Instead:

> Scipio revealed his understanding of the ethical object in war, and of its value.
> Chivalry governed by reason is an asset both in war and in view of its sequel—peace. Sensible chivalry should not be confounded with the quixotism of declining to use a strategical or tactical advantage, of discarding the supreme moral weapon of surprise, of treating war as if it were a match on the tennis court (….).
> This is merely stupid.

That's why we also say here to uplift others and be warm… But from a position of power:

- **Power and warmth: a foundational approach to life**

Smart chivalry pursues your interest, while seeking win-win

Talking about Scipio's subsequent campaigning in Greece:

> The notable feature of these terms, as of those in Africa and Greece, was that the Romans sought security and prosperity merely. So long as Scipio guided Rome's policy, annexation, with all its dangers and troubles, is eschewed. His object is simply to ensure the peaceful predominance of Roman interests and influence, and to secure them against external dangers.

A case for Scipio the best commander in history

The list of "greatest commanders" comes down to 3 ancient names:

- Alexander
- Hannibal
- Caesar

And 3 modern ones: Gustavus, Frederick, and Napoleon.
The author says that Frederick shouldn't even be there. And he makes the case instead that Scipio was the greatest commander in history.

Some points to consider:

- **The army Scipio started his biggest campaign with was poor**

> The African army was, in the view of the majority of the Senate, a forlorn hope of disrated companies and volunteers, whose loss in any event the State had no great occasion to regret."

- **Scipio is the only one to have defeated a great general**

Scipio defeated Hannibal himself, and did so with fewer soldiers, fighting closer to Hannibal's home turf.
Having "beat" Hannibal on the field, in worse condition, that alone should place Scipio above Hannibal.

So that leaves one commander standing in the ancient world: Alexander.

- **Alexander won against tactically inept hordes**

Plus with the advantage of having total control over resources as an autocrat.

- **Alexander's empire collapsed on his death**

> (…) for if Alexander established for himself an empire from the Danube to the Indus, which collapsed on his death, Scipio built for Rome an empire which stretched from the Atlantic to the Black Sea and the Taurus mountains—an empire which endured and increased.

- **Scipio turned the war around, campaigning at Rome's worst moment**

> And whereas Alexander built on the foundations laid by Philip, Scipio came on the scene at a moment when the very foundations of Roman power in Italy were shaken by a foreign foe.

- **Napoleon lacked grand strategy, Scipio excelled at it**

> In the comparison of Scipio with Napoleon, if the latter's superiority in logistical strategy is recognised, we

> have to set against this both his tactical and his grand strategical inferiority.
> As a grand strategist Napoleon's claims are marred not only by his failure to realise the aim of grand strategy—a prosperous and secure peace,—but by his several blunders over the psychology of his opponents, over the political and economic effects of his actions, and in the extravagant later use of his forces and resources.

Finally, of course, Napoleon ultimately lost.

- **Scipio was a higher-quality man**

The author also makes the case that Scipio had a better character.
He was a high-quality man.
The author makes a good case in my opinion. Liddel also lists that Scipio respected women in an era when many viewed them as objects.

Enlightened men & empires move civilization forward

The author and I share the same view on human progress:

> Had his successors possessed but a tithe of the wisdom and vision of Scipio, the Roman Empire might have taken a course analogous to that of the modern British Empire, and by the creation of a ring of semi – independent and healthy buffer States around the heart of Roman power, the barbarian invasions might have been thwarted, the course of history changed, and the progress of civilisation have escaped a thousand years of coma and nearly as much of convalescence.

We see history the same way.
Great men and great empires carry human civilization forward.

When great men and great empires don't lead the way, civilization stagnates.
And we all lose.

Hopefully, today's global and "distributed civilization" world is more resistant to shocks.
But the concept stands.

Great men's mindset

And in terms of mindsets and psychology:

> Scipio laboured for the good and greatness of Rome, but he was no narrow patriot, instead a true world statesman.
> The distinction between Scipio and Caesar has been crystallised in the phrase, " Zama gave the world to Rome, Pharsalus gave it to Cæsar," but even this does not render Scipio full justice, for he could look beyond the greatness of Rome's glory to the greatness of her services to humanity. Not an internationalist, he was a supra-nationalist in the widest and best sense.

After this, I decided I could not not share this review.

We need more enlightened men like this.

Be one of them.

MORE WISDOM

Generosity from a position of power can bear fruits many years later

> The meeting with Masinissa, whenever it occurred, is worth notice, for here the seeds of Scipio's generous treatment of Masinissa's nephew years before bore fruit in the exchange of pledges of an alliance, which was to be one of Scipio's master-tools in undermining the Carthaginian power at its base in Africa.

Don't demand a reward: give them a chance to give it to you

> ON arrival at Rome Scipio obtained an audience of the Senate outside the city, at the temple of Bellona, and there gave them a formal report of his campaigns. "On account of these services he rather tried his prospect of a triumph than pressed it pertinaciously," for the honour had never been given except to those whose services were rendered when holders of a magistracy. His tact was wise, for the astonishing success of youth had already inspired envy among his seniors.

The most successful military captains are despots

> It is one of Scipio's supreme merits that he obtained completely decisive results, though lacking the tremendous asset of political control. He, the servant of a republic, is the one exception to the rule that throughout the history of war the most successful of the great captains have been despots or autocrats.

Makes sense, so they can make as many wars as they want -until they bankrupt the state-.
And it's also why any good government must be civil: non-military, and non-religious.

Confidence is crucial to lead and influence

> The secret of his sway, extraordinary in one so young, over the crowd mind, especially in times of crisis, was his profound self-confidence, which radiated an influence to which the stories of his divine inspiration were but auxiliary.

And in visiting the allies in Spain that he had recently defeated:

> (…) His appreciation of the moral factor and of the value of personal observation, two vital elements in generalship, was shown in his earliest steps. (…) before attempting to formulate any plan he visited the States of his allies and every one of the various parts of his army, seeking always by his attitude, even more than by his words, to rekindle confidence and dissipate the influence of past defeat.

Social conservatives: morons across the ages

Social conservatives revere conservative values, no matter how useless they are.

Of course Rome had its fair share of those as well.

Listen to them, criticizing the only man kicking Hannibal's ass and single-handedly changing the course of the war:

> His critics complained that "he walked about the gymnasium in a cloak and slippers, and that he gave his whole time to light books and the palæstra. That his whole staff were enjoying the delights which Syracuse afforded, with the same indolence and effeminacy.

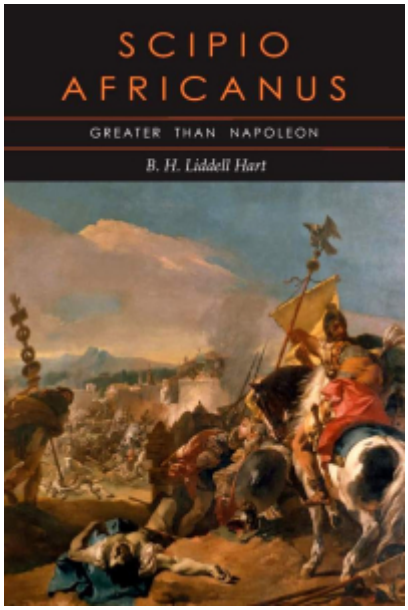
They criticized Scipio for not being “as masculine” as they (think) a man “should be”.

The targets of what’s “non-masculine enough” have changed of course.
Funny enough, they criticized Scipio’s gym habits (palestra). But the stupidity of social conservatives across the ages stays the same.

Populist politicians will always seek to incense the crowd from the safety of their couches

> When Scipio had announced the terms of peace to the envoys from Carthage, they carried them at once to their Senate. His moderation did not evoke an instant echo in an assembly that was coincidently “ indisposed for peace and unfit for war.” One of the Senators was about to oppose the acceptance of the terms, and had begun his speech when Hannibal came forward and pulled him down from the tribune.

Scipio Africanus: Lucio's Review



Scipio Africanus is one of the greatest leaders and military commanders in history, and a role model of masculine power, honor, and virtue.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/scipio-africanus-summary-review/

Author: Liddell Hart

Editor's Rating:
5

QUOTES

In criticizing the tendency for people to glorify the “dramatic failures” such as Napoleon and Hannibal instead of long-lasting victory:

> THE road to failure is the road to fame—such apparently must be the verdict on posterity’s estimate of the world’s greatest figures.

For this tendency the author casts the blame on historians first (albeit I disagree here, it's more the popularizers of history and the popular self-help authors):

> On the historian, in fact—who of all men should by training and outlook put his trust in reason—falls the major responsibility for this eternal tendency—**the glorification of dramatic failure at the expense of enduring achievement**. The history of the ancient confirms that of the modern world, and in no example more strikingly than that of Scipio Africanus

The author feels the same about Caesar:

> Even this test of achievement has been based on quantity rather than quality. That Cæsar's work is known universally, and Scipio little more than a name to the ordinary educated man, is a curious reflection on our historical standards, for the one inaugurated the world dominion of Roman civilisation, the other paved the way for its decay.

On victories only meaning anything if you use them well:

> Those who have won victories are far more numerous than those who have used them to advantage

On peace as the ultimate victory:

> the fruits of victory lie in the after years of peace

CONS

Raises some red flags of positive bias

It's obvious the author likes and respects Scipio.

A caustic critic may even call it "fanboying".

I get it, I loved the character as well -and even if only half of what he shares is true.

And that's exactly why, in my opinion, he should have let the facts speak more.

When history is on your side, you don't need to promote.
He could have been a bit nicer to Hannibal and Napoleon. And most people would have still agreed that Scipio was the superior general and man -and he would have been even more credible-.

And he could have been less critical of fellow historians.
Again, it would be easy to agree with him that they got it wrong.
Had it been nicer, he would have been, again, even more credible.

Edit:
As I thought more about it, I wanted to add that, from what I've read, the author himself comes across as an honorable, high-quality man.
So it may also be a case of "quality recognizes quality".

PROS

This is a book where you can learn far more than history or military strategies, but also:

- **Strategy**, and especially the strategies most likely to get you long-term success

- **Persuasion**
- **Leadership**
- **Character development** of a high-quality honorable man , not just a high-value man

REVIEW

Scipio Africanus is a fantastic book on one of history's greatest leaders.

A great leader both in his "on the job" competence, with a fair claim to #1 military commander, at grand strategy, and at a character level.

You will learn lessons on strategy, leadership, and eagle-like character self-development as well.

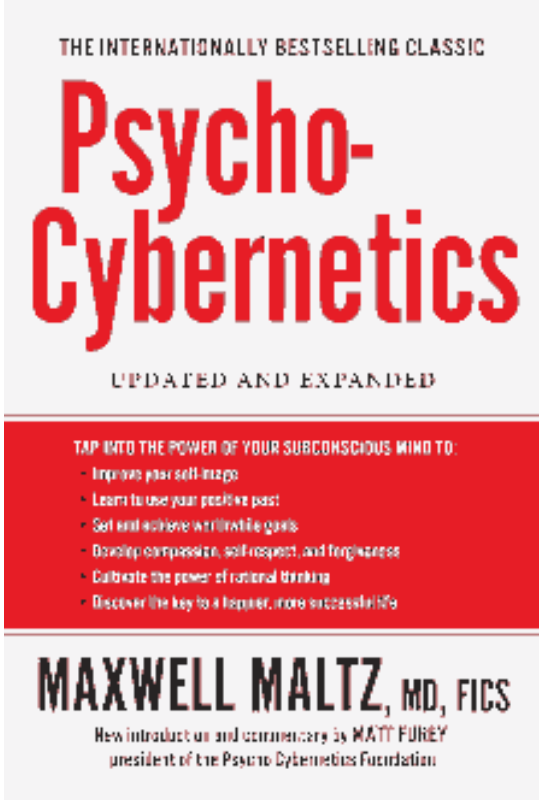
I thought Scipio was such a great example of what we refer here as "eagle" that I felt compelled to publish this review.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Psycho-Cybernetics: Confidence Hacks, or Woo-woo Quackery? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 August 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Psycho-Cybernetics (1960) compares the mind to a machine and teaches readers how to develop a positive self-image to increase self-esteem and confidence. Maxwell Maltz, the author, insists that psycho-cybernetics is a "scientific discipline" that can make readers happier and more successful.



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- FULL SUMMARY
  - The 7 successful personality traits
  - Like yourself
  - Stop comparing yourself unfavorably with others
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  - Decide & focus on what you want, not what you don't want
  - Always have a goal in life
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- CRITICISM
  - Psycho-cybernetics is pseudoscience from a charlatan
  - Psycho-cybernetics's main claim is doubtful (at best)
  - Several made-up BS
- CONS
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Exec Summary

- **The mind works like a computer** (note: you can see some overlap between human mind and computers, but they are fundamentally different)
- **We all have installed a "success programming" we only need to learn how to use** (⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: if you see this in allegorical form, it's passable. In the literal sense, it's BS)
- **Always have a goal**. It gives you a sense of direction, and adds meaning to your life

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Maxwell Maltz was an American cosmetic surgeon interested in psychology and later turned self-help author.

The 7 successful personality traits

You can't have a popular self-help book without a simple "list for success".

And you get bonus points if you do it in the form of a memorable acronym.

So here are for you the 7 steps to a successful personality, conveniently spelled "SUCCESS":

1. **S**ense of direction
2. **U**nderstanding
3. **C**ourage
4. **C**ompassion
5. **E**steem
6. **S**elf-Confidence
7. **S**elf-Acceptance

I personally only saw a random list of positive traits.
But although I wouldn't necessarily consider them "key" to success, most readers wouldn't be harmed pursuing them.

Like yourself

> The secret is this: To really "live," that is, to find life reasonably satisfying, you must have an adequate and realistic self-image that you can live with. You must find your self acceptable to "you." You must have a wholesome self-esteem.

The author then also adds:

- A self that you can trust and believe in.
- A self that you are not ashamed to "be," and one that you can feel free to express creatively, rather than hide or cover up.
- A self that corresponds to reality, so that you can function effectively in the real world.
- Knowledge and honest self-assessment of both strengths and weaknesses

Stop comparing yourself unfavorably with others

Overcome your inferiority complex realizing that everyone is either superior or inferior at something.

Says the author:

> (…)I do not compare myself unfavorably with them and feel that I am no good merely because I cannot do certain things as skillfully or as well as they. I also know that in certain areas, every person I meet (…) is superior to me in certain respects. But neither can any of these people repair a scarred face, or do any number of other things as well as I. And I am sure they do not feel inferior because of it.

Basically, everyone is superior or inferior.

You are not inferior, nor superior. You are simply you.

Use anger and indignation to remove disempowering beliefs

> Indignation and anger can sometimes act as liberators from false ideas. Alfred Adler "got mad" at himself and at his teacher and was enabled to throw off a negative definition of himself.

Decide & focus on what you want, not what you don't want

I disagree with the author's rationale, but the tip itself is good.

Always have a goal in life

The author says we are "engineered as goal-seeking mechanisms" because "we are built that way".

Not sure how true that is, but this is still another great tip for many.
He says:

> When we have no personal goal that we are interested in and that "means something" to us, we are apt to "go around in circles," feel "lost," and find life itself "aimless" and "purposeless." We are built to conquer environment, solve problems, achieve goals, and we find no real satisfaction or happiness in life without obstacles to conquer and goals to achieve. People who say that life is not worthwhile are really saying that they themselves have no personal goals that are worthwhile.

That was a good point.

Build a mental retreat within yourself

The author recommends an actual imaginary room:

> (…) build for yourself, in imagination, a little mental room.
> Furnish this room with whatever is most restful and refreshing to you (…)
> (…) The colors of the walls are your own favorite "pleasant" colors, but should be chosen from the restful hues of blue, light green, yellow, gold.
> (…) It is very neat and everything is in order. Simplicity, quietness, beauty are the keynotes. It contains your favorite easy chair.
> From one small window you can look out and see a beautiful beach. The waves roll in upon the beach and retreat, but you cannot hear them, for your room is very, very quiet.

I personally find that simply the ability to shut off in meditation is beneficial.

CRITICISM

We don't mince words on TPM.

So here's my verdict:

Maltz sounds a lot like a charlatan.

As for the author of the updated version, I don't know much about him.
But he has a conflict of interest because he acquired the psycho-cybernetics brand/operation.

Psycho-cybernetics is pseudoscience from a charlatan

How do you recognize a charlatan?

Here are 2 red flags:

- **All their assumptions are presented as (made-up) "science"**
- **Try too hard to convince you it's science**, including talking with over-confident teacher frames instead of the scientist's healthy skepticism

Here is just a list of curated examples for you:

> For example, there is today irrefutable clinical evidence in the fields of individual psychology, psychosomatic medicine, and industrial psychology that there are "success-type personalities" and "failure-type personalities," "happiness-prone personalities" and "unhappiness-prone personalities," "health-prone personalities" and "disease-prone personalities."

I would have loved to look into that irrefutable evidence.
But of course, no resources were provided. ♂

> There is an abundance of scientific evidence that shows that the human brain and nervous system operate purposefully in accordance with the known principles of cybernetics to accomplish goals of the individual

This guy is really trying SO hard to convince you that psycho-cybernetics is a recognized science.
Just try to find "psycho cybernetics" as a branch of science or higher-education though, and see for yourself.

And:

> Both experimental and clinical psychology have proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the human nervous system cannot tell the difference between an actual experience and an experience imagined vividly and in detail.

This is so dumb I can't even start.
But just to give you a different take, I asked Chatgtp:

is this sentence true:

Both experimental and clinical psychology have proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the human nervous system cannot tell the difference between an actual experience and an experience imagined vividly and in detail.

The sentence you've provided is not entirely true and is somewhat misleading. Here's why:

1. **Experimental and Clinical Psychology Findings:** Research in psychology, including studies on visualization, imagery, and the brain's response to real versus imagined experiences, suggests that the brain can respond similarly to vivid imagination and real experiences in some ways. For instance, mental imagery can activate similar neural pathways as those involved in actual perception and action.
2. **Cannot Tell the Difference:** However, the claim that "the human nervous system cannot tell the difference" is an overstatement. The nervous system, including the brain, can and does distinguish between real and imagined experiences in most contexts. For example, while imagined experiences can produce physiological responses (e.g., increased heart rate during a vivid mental simulation of a scary situation), they are generally less intense than those triggered by real experiences. Moreover, the brain usually knows when it is imagining something versus when it is experiencing something real.

Get citation

And:

> This life force was established as a scientific fact by Dr. Hans Selye of the University of Montreal. Since 1936, Dr. Selye has studied the problems of stress. Clinically and in numerous laboratory experiments and studies, Dr. Selye has proved the existence of a basic life force, which he calls “adaptive energy.”
> (…)
> Suffice it to say that his findings are recognized by medical experts the world over.

Yeah, that last line. When spinning a man’s work is not enough, you reinforce it by implying non-existing, made-up consensus.

And let’s finish with one of the sweetest BS just to fix our palate:

> Telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition have been established by scientific laboratory experiments. Dr. Rhine’s finding, that man possesses some “extra-sensory factor,” which he calls “Psi,” is no longer doubted by scientists who have seriously reviewed his work.

Yeah, kid you not, that’s what he wrote.
And Psycho-cybernetics made into some popular “self-help book classics” list

The charlatan pre-emptive self-defense

And here comes the charlatan power-move:

> As Dr. Maltz said in the beginning of this book, he was reluctant to discuss or talk about many of these experiences because “if I presented some of the case histories and described the rather amazing and spectacular improvements in personality, I would be accused of exaggerating, or trying to start a cult, or both.”

Same power move as Joe Dispenza, who complained he left science because they didn’t appreciate his findings.
Truth: he was never a scientist. He’s a charlatan.

Or popular male influencers who are chased by “the Matrix”.
Truth: they attracted that attention themselves with narcissistic self-snitching.

But as long as you speak with confidence, legions of naive men are ready to believe.

Psycho-cybernetics’s main claim is doubtful (at best)

Psycho-cybernetics is built on the idea that the mind is like a computer.

With the usual manipulative charlatanism, says the author:

> these scientists began to ask themselves: Could this be the way that the human brain worked also? Could it be that in making man, our Creator had provided us with a servo-mechanism more marvelous and wonderful than any computer or guidance system ever dreamed of by man, but operating according to the same basic principles? In the opinion of famous Cybernetic scientists like Dr. Norbert Wiener, Dr. John von Neumann, and others, the answer was an unqualified yes.

Of course the human mind as a biological organ does not work like a machine.

Plus, I checked it, and Wiener and von Neumann never gave any “unqualified yes”.
Chances are, those two scientists would be horrified and fully reject Maltz’ quote.

Manipulative spins to force his narrative

Manipulative spins to support his made-up claims

The author is a spin-master.

He says:

> For example, Dr. Wilder Penfield, who was the director of the Montreal Neurological Institute, reported at a meeting of the National Academy of Sciences that he had discovered a recording mechanism in a small area of the brain that apparently faithfully records everything that a person has ever experienced, observed, or learned.

“Apparently”.
So now he’s trying hard to tell us that’s like a flashcard or memory storage -like a computer, get it?-.

Of course, although chances are we record and store more than we can recall, there is no “recording mechanism”.
And, most of all, there is no faithful memory.
If anything, our memory has been well proven to NOT be reliable.

Several made-up BS

The made-up claims abound.

And of course, they’re always “confirmed by scientists” -how could they not?-.

> Science has now confirmed what philosophers, mystics, and other intuitive people have long declared: Every human being has been literally “engineered for success” by his Creator. Every human being has access to a power greater than himself.

“Other intuitive people”, LOL.
I bet he thought of himself as one of the “highly intuitive one” -aka “bullshitters”-.

CONS

- **Insists on envisioning rather than practicing**. Why not BOTH? Or, having to choose, I'd 100% recommend real-world practice

PROS

- **Many good tips** for empowered mindsets and more positive thinking

REVIEW

Psycho-Cybernetics is a book with many good self-development principles, but presented under a false guise of non-existent scientific rigor.

And that makes it challenging for me to review.

On one hand, I deeply dislike charlatans.
And on the other hand, some of the content was good and I agree with it.
It could have been more systematized and richer, but for a list of good tips and ideas, it's great.

P.S.:
If you're looking for confidence and self-esteem, our course maybe a good alternative to consider.

See here a preview of our approach:

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

How to Be Assertive In 7 Simple Steps

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 August 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Assertiveness is an interpersonal approach and communication style that voices concerns, opinions, and requests clearly and respectfully.

It wins people's respect, and it makes you a high-value man.

So in this article, you will learn how to communicate assertively.

Let's start with the basics:

Contents

- 1. Gain Self-Esteem & Self-Love
- 2. Acquire Assertive Mindsets
  - 2.2. Acquire Assertive Beliefs
- 3. Know Your Goals & Values
- 4. Use This Assertive Format (To Start Out)
  - ▯ DESOE examples
  - Quicker Format For Quick Feedback
- 5. Adopt Matching Body Language
- 6. Start Speaking Up
  - 6.2. Stick through the changes
  - 6.3. Baby-step your way into it
- 7. Reward Yourself
- Bonus: Assertive & High Power
  - 1. Remove "I can't", say "I don't"
  - 2. Use disarming honesty
  - 3 Keep it about you
  - 4. Go deep: address the source
  - 5. Keep it cool, avoid drama

1. Gain Self-Esteem & Self-Love

This is the true foundation of it all.

We have a whole course on it called Confidence University.
But for a quick starter, adopt for these values:

- ▯ I tell the truth, and I expect to be told the truth
- ▯ I don't take advantage of others, and neither do I let others take advantage of me
- ▯ I seek to add value to others, and I expect others to have the same attitude

And for busy folks:

- ▯ I respect people's time, and I expect others to respect my time

These values automatically move you towards a more assertive stance in life.

Also see:

- High-quality men
- High-quality women

2. Acquire Assertive Mindsets

The *Routledge Handbook of Communication Skills* states that beliefs make the difference between assertive men, and unassertive ones.

Assertive individuals tend to use twice as many positive self-statements as negative ones, unlike nonassertive individuals who use both equally.

So let's start changing your self-talk:

Weak Mindsets	Empowered Mindsets
"Dark" feelings such as anger and will to power are bad	"Dark" feelings are natural. It's all about how I manage them and do with them
Being assertive is selfish	Assertiveness is what self-respecting men do. And it's good for the world
Other people can't handle my assertiveness	The people I want in my life *want* me to speak up
People should be more considerate	"Shoulds" are weak. I pursue my goals, regardless of what others do
I'm afraid of being assertive and failing	I will fail sometimes and that's great, becaus I will learn, adjust, and improve
I must convince others	Sometimes, it's enough for me to share my truth. Other times I'll do my best to persuade. But I never "must" do anything
I must look good/strong/happy/stoic	1. Sometimes it's better to look or act a certain way. But I focus on reaching my goals rather than looking at anything 2. I encourage the people close to me to be honest and upfront because that makes the relationship better for both

Most close relationships gain with more upfront talk

2.2. Acquire Assertive Beliefs

- **I am a respect-worthy man and so are most others**
- **I'm in charge of my behavior, others are in charge of theirs** <—- this takes the pressure off from speaking up because you're not forcing anyone. Only stating your position.
- **I decide for myself what I will and will not do**
- **People may ask anything, and I can decline anything**
- **I may make mistakes, but I am still a worthy, respectable human** <— Good men need it. They accept abuse after a mistake because they feel the pressure to be "good" and effective
- **I can be illogical with my decisions** <—- Effective against manipulators looking for reasoning "faults". Avoid the argument altogether. Your choices are valid for the simple fact that you chose them
- **I don't know everything, and neither should I**
- **I can ask for help** <— Useful for men who "suffer in silence"
- **I am not responsible for other people's problems** <— Great against emotional manipulation
- **Direct talk is better than covert**
- **Others can give advice, but I make my decisions**
- **I am my own judge, I don't have to justify myself to others**

 Example:

> **Covert aggressor**: Why did you do it that way?

> **Weak**: (starts justifying, then accepts the aggressor's explanation on how it should be done)
>
> **Empowered**: Because, that's what I chose to do

 Example 2:

> **Aggressor**: BS! what makes you even think that!

> **Weak**: (accepts the aggression, justifies, then accepts he is wrong)
>
> **Empowered**: Number 1, don't talk to me that way again please. And number 2, we can talk about rationale after you speak respectfully

The high-power assertive stance is this:

> **As long as I remain within the law and my moral code, I can think, say, and do as I please**

3. Know Your Goals & Values

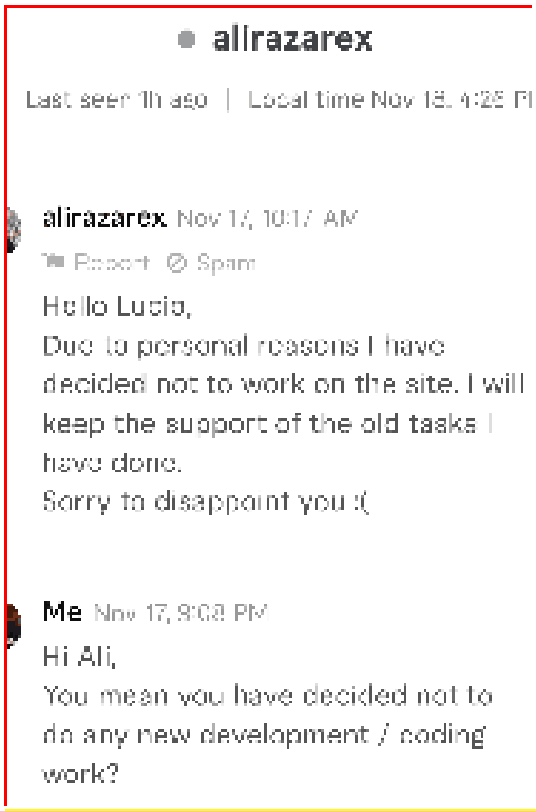
Know what you want and who you are.

Including you:

1. Goals
2. Preferences
3. Values: what are you comfortable doing and *not* doing?

The clearer these are, the more you know what to say “no” to, the easier it is to say “no”.
This maybe your time to write them down.

Example:
TPM’s ex-developer was clear that his religious values didn’t align with our player-leaning dating section:



I respect him for standing behind his values, and for his clear communication

full exchange in the journal.

4. Use This Assertive Format (To Start Out)

Bolton’s format can get you started:

- **Describe** the situation and what’s going on
  TIP: avoid personality and motives, focus on behavior and facts.

Example:

> I noticed that the kitchen hasn’t been cleaned

Or:

> It’s me who takes out the trash most of the times

- **Express** how you feel in the situation

Example:

> I feel like I’m doing more than half of the housework

“I” statements are less dominant, but more objective and defensibile.

See here on “I” VS “you”.

Careful getting too touchy-feely
Avoid the “I feel” format when efficiency and goal-achievement take precedence (ie.: work).

- **Specify** what you would like to happen
  Tip: use positive formats. Ie.: “*stop being so messy*” -> “*clean twice a week*“

Example:

> I would like you to also take the trash out a couple of times a week

- **Outcome**. A reward if he complies, a possible punishment if he doesn’t
  Tip: use positive formats. Ie.: “*I will leave a bad review*” -> “*I will keep this bad experience for myself*“

Often, it’s as simple as you liking it better, or the relationship improving:

> I’ll appreciate that a lot, and I think we’ll get along much better

- **Enforcement** when needed

Example:

> Mark, I don’t want to argue with you.
> My focus is on making this work going forward. And I’m asking to please throw the trash out more often from now on.

Warning: Be smoother for everyday communication
DESOE comes off as “weird” in everyday life.
Understand the concept, train it, but adapt it to the situation and your personality.

Instead, it’s best used to:

- Communicate something difficult
- CYA when you need to be precise
- Deal with manipulative or difficult people

DESOE examples

With an emotionally manipulative mother:

- *Mom, when you tell me I don’t care about you* (**describe**)
- *It makes me feel awful* (**express**) *because I do care and I don’t appreciate that nasty accusation* (**adaptation**)
- *So from now on, I want you to stop telling me that* (**specify**)
- *And once we can be kinder to each other, I may want to talk to you even more* (**outcome**)
- *No, sorry mom, I can’t visit Sunday* (**enforce**)

With a strong-willed boss:

- **Description**: you have provided me with a great opportunity
- **Express**: and for that, I am thankful to you, it’s been an honor
- **Specify**: but I am handing my resignation

- **Outcome**: I will stay here 2 more weeks, and be gone by X day
- **Enforce**: my decision is final

🤷♂ **I never use templates**: it's about *attitude*

Lucio: Templates are good to start, but I find DESO low-power and stilted for my taste.

I *want* to talk about character, and I don't like over-using "I feel".
I'm also demanding and judgmental, and I own it.

In trash example above, I'd say "*Hey man, look, generally, we're good. But about the trash, I've been the only one throwing it out so far. Can we please both do it*".

And then add persuasion approaches.
For example: "*Yeah, you can do it on your way out so it's no extra effort at all. That's how I do it*". Then quick chit-chat to rebuild goodwill and increase compliance.

Quicker Format For Quick Feedback

1. Describe non-judgmentally
2. Share your feelings
3. Share the effects of their actions

The template:

> "When you [do X], I feel [Y] because [clarify the effect on your life]."

It's a good format to start a conversation.
⚠ But only use it with parties you trust. Otherwise, think beforehand about what you want.

5. Adopt Matching Body Language

Assertiveness is more than words, it's an *attitude*.

It includes beliefs, mindsets, self-confidence, tonality, and body language.

This course helps you with them all ⍰.

For more on body language:

- Best body language resources
- Body language of social power

6. Start Speaking Up

As simple as that.

Some ideas:

1. Voice your concerns. When something feels off, speak up
2. Ask questions when you're not sure. Making sure of things is a high-value trait
3. Embrace your unpopular opinions. Share and defend them when appropriate
4. Do something assertive that scares you

6.2. Stick through the changes

Passive people face both internal and external resistance to becoming more assertive.

Mentally most people before learning assertiveness skills misread assertion for aggression (Hargie, 2017).
So don't be afraid if it feels 'too much', it's just a phase.

And socially, people around you will not like your more assertive you.
Take that as a good sign: you're empowering yourself (and people preferred you easier to push around).

6.3. Baby-step your way into it

Start with the easiest relationship or conversation.
Gain some experience, and move your way up.

7. Reward Yourself

Take pride in your changes.

Every time you act more assertively, congratulate yourself.

Bonus: Assertive & High Power

1. Remove “I can’t”, say “I don’t”

- I can’t = more strategic, but lower dominance
- I don’t (do X) = character based rejection ⍰
- I don’t want to = most dominant ⍰⍰

2. Use disarming honesty

Excuses save faces.

But disarming honesty displays power and character.

⍰ Example:

> **You**: I can’t because I wanna spend some me time

Nobody says that, so it’s refreshingly -and shockingly- high power.

3 Keep it about you

“Power borrowing” works, but done poorly it’s low power.
Ie.:

> **Low Power**: *Nobody* could take this

Says who?
It sounds cheap excuse-making.

Here is how McCain effectively spoke of “breaking” under torture:

> **You**: (I learned in life that) everyone has a limit. <—- it *implies* that everyone else would have quit.
> I had reached mine

4. Go deep: address the source

Assertiveness guides encourage specificity.

But what if the issue is personality-based?

With the previous trash example, you may be tidy and your flatmate messy.
It's a *personality* mismatch.

Then… Say *that*:

> **You**: I think we have different personalities regarding house cleaning, and that can create difficulties. I'd like to talk about it and see if we can find solutions

4.2. Address the personal issue

If you have issues with someone, or they obviously dislike you:

> **You**: It seems to me [we have some issues / you're avoiding me / we don't understand each other]

5. Keep it cool, avoid drama

Drama is "effective" at catching attention, but… At heavy costs.

Women are dramatic.
Not high-power men.

Forum example.

This is a remix from Power University. Alumni please see the superior assertiveness module!

How to Save People's Faces & Be Socially Effective

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 August 2024 · Archived copy · Original

To save face means to "avoid embarrassment and humiliation".

Good social strategists help others save face because it helps them achieve goals, and maintain better relationships.

This article will teach you how to save people's faces with 6 simple techniques.

Contents

- 1. Relieve Them From Blame & Guilt
  - ▯ Example: Not Saving Your Boss' Face
- 2. Shift The Blame to A Third Party
- 3. Keep It General, Don't Point Finger
- 4. Take The Blame Yourself
- 5. Demean the Source of Their Failure / Pain
- 6. Ignore It, Keep Moving
- Calibrating Face-Saving
  - Wrong: too much
  - Wrong: too low power
  - How to save-face, smoothly and high-power
- Why It's Good to Save Face

1. Relieve Them From Blame & Guilt

Here are 5 simple and effective techniques:

1. **Normalize it**: say that whatever "bad thing" happened, it happens frequently, or to many people
2. **Relate**: sharing something similar that happened to you, or someone you know
3. **Thread-minimize it**: quickly say "*Sorry to hear*", and then move on
   ⍰ Frame control basics and techniques
4. **Blame-shift** to external circumstances, third parties, or simply "life" and "questions of odds"
5. **Remove "you" and go impersonal**. For example: "people", "when one does… " or "it can happen that"

Let's see an example for the last two:

⍰ Example: Not Saving Your Boss' Face

Imagine your boss entered the wrong holidays.

And, to raise the stake, imagine he's a little despot with a fragile ego.

This is the face-smashing format:

> **Disempowering**: Hey boss, you put the wrong dates on my holiday, the dates are wrong

This can get thorny because:

1. You blame him for a mistake
2. You'll be away longer than he expected

Not a good mix.
The boss may question your longer absence in the middle of the project just out of power considerations. He wants to re-empower himself, and he seeks an excuse to trip you.
Or he may escalate and blame you for the mistake.

1. Power protecting instead is an invaluable office politics tool here.
   It preserves rapport, and prevents any issues with your holidays.

Let's see how:

2. Shift The Blame to A Third Party

> **Strategic**: Hey boss, just wanted to let you know, I think the system had some issues <— The system is to blame
>
> and my holiday dates are not correct <—- ⍰ Notice the switch from "wrong" to "incorrect"

You can also blame-shift to HR, or to "miscommunication along the chain".
Anything but *him*, of course :).

⍰ PRO Tip: Say "*We* Made A Mistake"

It's a good move to form an imaginary team and grow closer.

For example:

> **You**: hey boss, I think we put the wrong date on my vacation, it's supposed to start 2 days earlier and end 1 day later

Even if you had nothing to do with the mistake, it's still a good move.

3. Keep It General, Don't Point Finger

Easy and smooth:

> **You**: Boss, there was a mistake in my holiday <— Impersonal, generic… Nobody made any mistake
>
> If there's a way to fix it myself I can do it <— Bosses love this attitude. It shows you're willing to do extra work to avoid inconveniencing him

4. Take The Blame Yourself

> **You**: hey boss, I finished the report you asked me, here it is <— Approach with value-giving first, always a good idea
>
> Oh, and one thing about the holiday, maybe I told you the wrong dates for my vacation, but it's not correct now. <— Takes the blame
>
> If it's important to fix it… <— Lets him decide whether it's even important to officially amend

Some other formats of taking the blame include:

- *Maybe I didn't get something, but…*
- *Maybe it's me, but…*
- *I'm new so still learning the ropes…*

When it's OK to take the blame

Of course, don't go around taking blame for everyone.

Promote yourself instead of over-taking blame :).

But this approach is effective when:

- Dealing with fragile-ego superiors
- It's obvious it's not your fault, so you lose nothing concrete but you get brownie points for power-protecting
- The mistake is inconsequential, so there's no major loss in a showy "ownership"

And, to be straight and eagle-like, don't forget:

- Take the blame when it is your fault

See an example from the forum while I was preparing this article:

> **Me**: (Replies in a new thread) my bad for starting the off-topic there

5. Demean the Source of Their Failure / Pain

This is the general principle:

⚖️ The better they are compared to what they lost, the better they feel.

And the inverse is also true: the worse what they lost is compared to them, the better they feel.

So you can either pull them up… Or demean whatever they lost.
However, pulling them up in these situations is trite. And it feels fake.

So it's often better to "attack" the source of their displeasure.

Here is a new example:

> **Her**: I got fired
> **You**: Can I be honest? Finally! That company and that boss you had sucked. Now you have an opportunity to… (talk about future opportunities)

She expected a "sorry fest" and lame excuses to maintain self-esteem and reputation.
Instead, you turn it into a positive attacking the source of the "face loss".

This works even if she wants to defend her company.
Just by defending the company, she can display agency and magnanimity.
Or she can pile up on them without feeling like she's a bitter b*tch. All because you gave her permission with your first move.

Whatever she chooses, you saved her face and re-empowered her.

And here is one more:

> **Her**: We broke up
> **You**: Look, I wanna hear everything and I want to know how you feel. Just lemme get this off my chest first: I always felt there was something off with that guy.

Same as before.

Here you help her overcome the "embarrassment of rejection and failure" by blaming the boyfriend.

⚠️ **Note: only do it if it's true (especially with empowered folks)**
Strong people prefer owning up, rather than shifting blame. So if it's not true, it feels weak excuse-making.

6. Ignore It, Keep Moving

Westerners go crazy in face-saving cultures.

They take face-saving lies at face value, and accept the "no".
Instead, she often just didn't understand:

> **You**: I'm looking for X
> **Her**: (ashamed to admit she didn't understand) Oh, sorry no stock sir

Here is what you do instead:

> **You**: I'm looking for X
> **Her**: Oh, sorry no stock sir
> **You**: Oh I see, it's like a type of foreign beer. Where do you keep beers here, there, there, there (point in different directions)

The trick is simple: ignore and rephrase.

Now she may tell you they don't have foreign beers, where they have them, or where else you can find them.

I can't count the time someone said "no" the first time, only to get things done after doing the above.

This is especially useful with admin stuff.
It's way too easy for clerks to send people away -or to other offices-. Instead, stick longer. Rephrase, make excuses for their ignorance:

- *"I know it's a bit of a special case, but… "*
- *"Yeah, it's complicated I know, maybe your colleague knows it, she looks older, maybe she's seen something similar"*

If all else fails, it's time to "grease the wheels".

Even there you want to be strategic though.

We teach how in Power University.

Calibrating Face-Saving

General principle:

⚖ **The more you focus on face-saving, the lower power you become**

Why?
Because winners focus on getting things done, *not* on saving face.

Ouch, so… What's even the point of these articles?
Well, one, you're doing it for others.

And two… You CAN save face and still be a higher power "alpha type".

Wrong: too much

Over-doing it sub-communicates you get distracted by "feelings" instead of achieving goals.

Plus, it doesn't even work to spare their feelings.

Paradoxically, the more you do it, the less you save face.

Why?
Because **prolonged face-saving draws attention to the issue**.
We call it “thread expanding”.

You remain stuck on the issue, spend more time on it, draw more attention to it… And lose even more face.

Wrong: too low power

You want to help others out… But without losing yourself.

Power awareness is crucial here, but here’s an example of low-power face-saving:

> **Her**: (makes a mistake and forgets a loophole to save taxes)
> **You**: (he knows full well it’s a mistake) I’m not the expert here, I’m just suggesting an idea. Don’t you think that may be we could apply the XWZ ruling to this case?

These are the issues:

- **Unnecessarily lowers your authority**. If you know there is a mistake, don’t pretend you’re clueless. You have a job to do, and that must be your priority
- **Magnifies her mistake** because if you’re not an expert and you caught her mistake… Then she must be an absolute idiot. As per power dynamic principles, your lower status makes her mistake *bigger*, not smaller
- **Lingers on the mistake**. Now she mulls it over “is it a mistake?”, “is he right?”
- **Turns it into a possible debate** where she may even defend her mistake just to save face

To maintain her dignity, she may even avoid you going forward!
I know, crazy animals the humans.

But this was a case study from our forum, and it’s exactly what happened to our alumnus.

So, what’s the solution?

How to save-face, smoothly and high-power

We share it in Power University.

See Power University

Why It's Good to Save Face

When people "lose face", they feel humiliated and "bad".

But…

Why should you care?

Well, here's is why:

People blame *you* for their negative emotions.
And their resentment weakens your leadership, decreases your leverage, and leads to poorer negotiations.

Instead, the skilled social strategist gets the opposite.
When you safe face you preserve or improve your leadership, leverage, and negotiation outcomes.

Plus… You're also doing the honorable thing and spreading good vibes :).

Saving face is a subset of "power-protecting".
So make sure you check that article as well:

- **Respecting others with power-protection**

> Power Protecting: How to Keep Win-Win With High-Value People

⍰ This is a preview from Power University. Alumni click here for high-power face saving!

How to Make Quality Friends as an Adult Man

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 September 2024 · Archived copy · Original

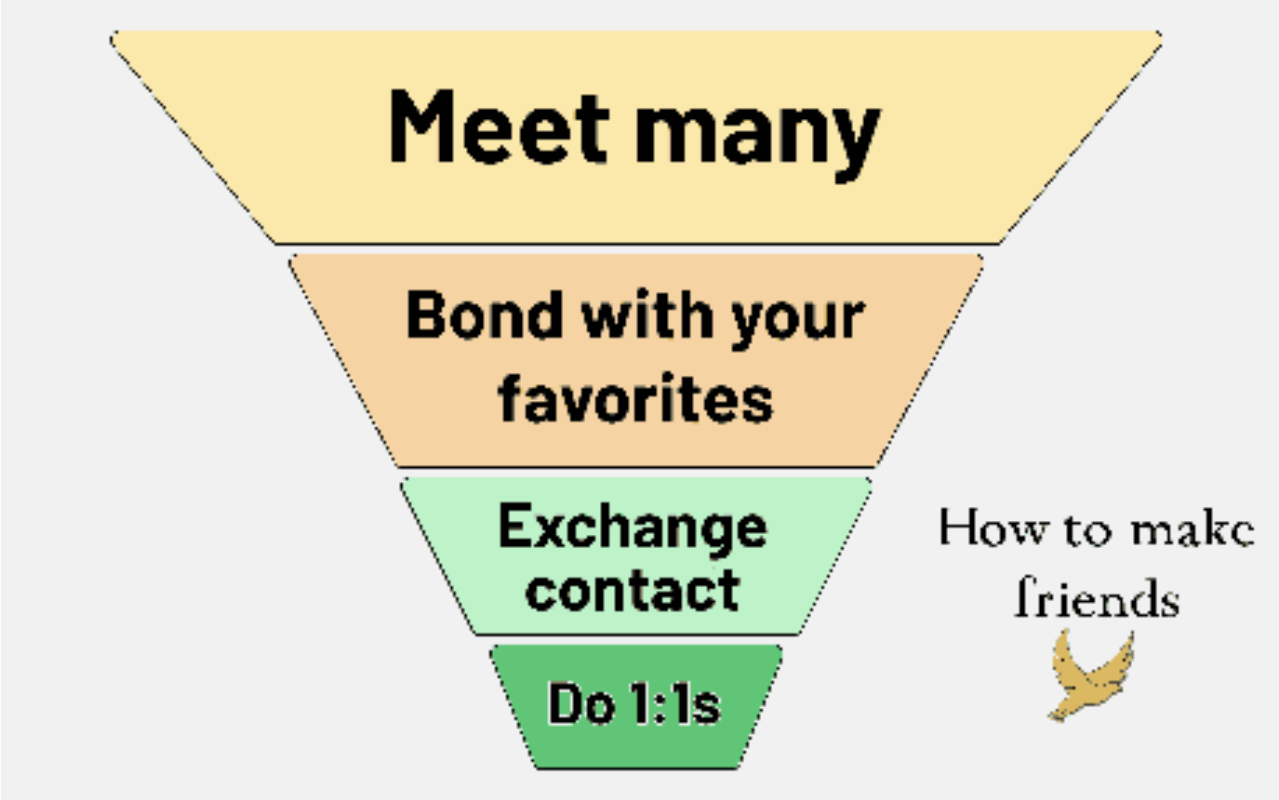
Making friends is simple.

I've traveled all around the globe, and made friends wherever I went, in all possible ways.

Anyone with these basics can do it:

1. **Acceptable social skills**
2. **Somewhat likable**
3. **Not a net-negative**, and can add some value

If you have the above, this is all you need to do:



Rinse and repeat, until you have a small circle. Then, you can cross-meet everyone in it

The rest of this article spells out the details for you.
And by the end of it, you will be able to make friends at will, wherever you are.

Contents

- 1. Go Out, Socialize, Organize (Get Leads)
- 2. Become A Regular & Gain Status At Your Favorite Events
- 3. Start Your Event
- 4. Approach With An Uplifting Spirit
  - ⍰ High value technique
- 5. Go Deeper If There's Chemistry
- 6. Talk Next Steps & Exchange Contact
  - Schedule next steps

  - How to exchange contacts
- 7. Keep The Best Only: Spot Green & Red Flags
- 8. Follow Up The Day After
- 9. Organize a second meet (1:1s or smaller group)
  - ⍰ Technique: the “half propose”
- 10. Invite New Guys To Your Forming Social Groups
- Bonus: Maintain Friends With Win-Win
  - Offer advice and/or personal experience
  - Lend an ear
  - Offer concrete support if possible
- ⍰ Optional Bonus: Get A Few Circles Going

1. Go Out, Socialize, Organize (Get Leads)

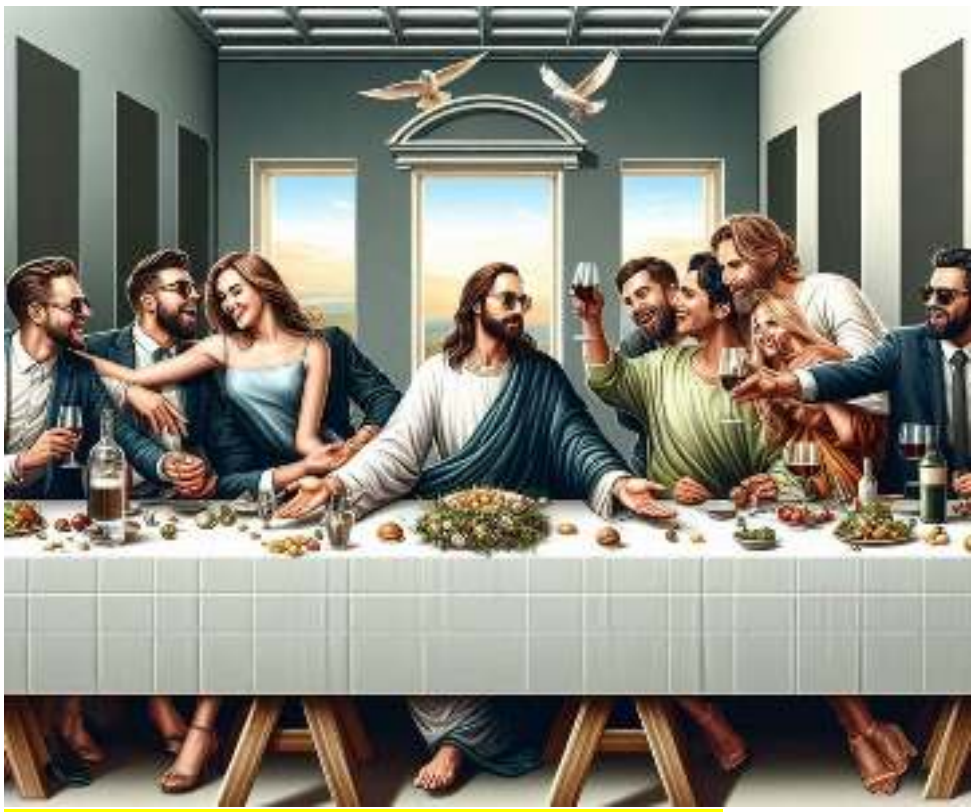
1. **Join Meetup events**
2. **Join clubs**
3. **Talk to strangers**. Yes, you can “cold approach” for friendships, not just dating. I’ve done it several times.
   To make it easier, approach:
   - People with a striking resemblance. Ie.: same dress style, ordered same food, etc.
   - Regulars at your favorite spots
   - Other foreigners or expats when traveling
   - People doing what you’re doing. For example, in line for a massage or at a go-kart track. Or if you see a guy approaching women and you’re also into that.

Use Internet As Well

Avoid the mindset that online is for geeks.

The Handbook of Relationship Initiation says that the Internet for socially competent people is a case of “rich getting richer”.
Such as, just an extra opportunity for more cool friends.

And one level above joining pre-existing groups:



Why join others' events, when you can organize and be the star?

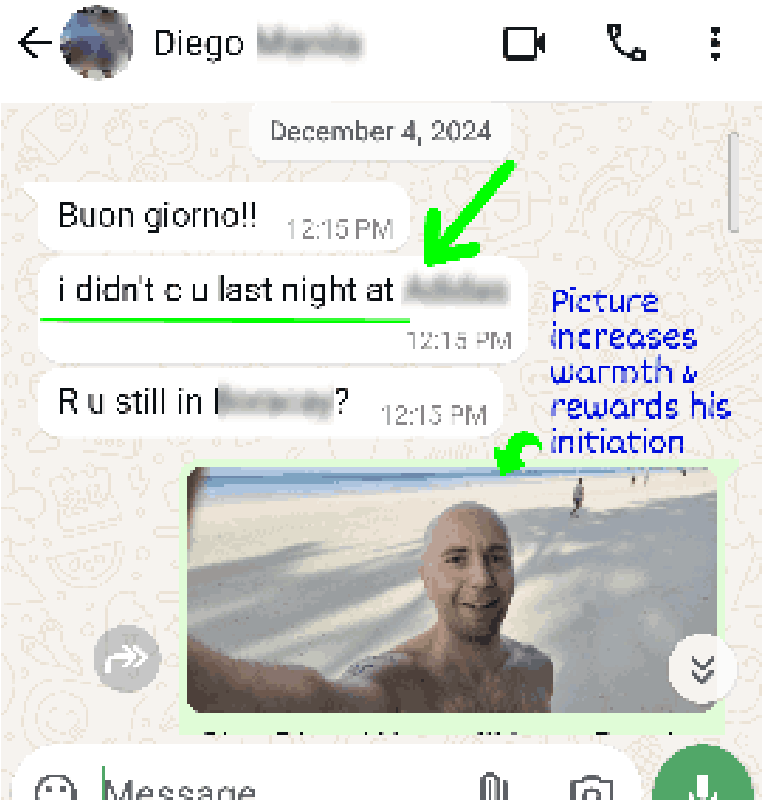
2. Become A Regular & Gain Status At Your Favorite Events

Go back often and:

- **Start talking to loners** and lower-status people to warm up
- **Talk to many & move around** to look sociable and avoid looking clingy or 'lone and desperate'
  - Enter new groups but keep it briefer than with 1:1s
- **Approach organizers and leaders**. Initially, you may ask a question. Then:
  - Thank them during breaks or at the end
  - Compliment them on their unique qualities
- **Talk more & more often to those you vibed best** during the event, and as you go back

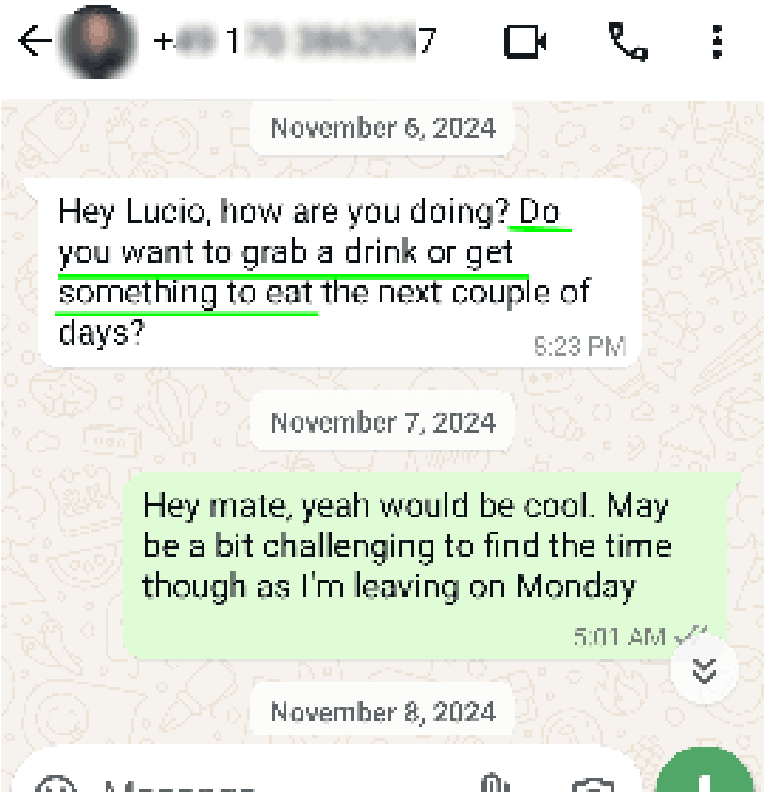
We dig deeper into gaining status in our course, but you know you're doing this well when others seek you out, and reach out to you.

Either because you missed an event:



> **Me**: (misses an event)
> **Him**: I didn't see you last night <— Checks in, sign of caring and enjoying your company

Or better yet, to go for a 1:1:



> **Him**: Let's get food or drinks
> **Me**: (declines with power-protection to preserve rapport)

3. Start Your Event

What's better than just socializing?

High-power socializing, of course.

And nobody is higher power than the organizer and host.

Organizing events is easier than most people think.
Countless people want to socialize and make new friends, but only 0.1% takes the initiative.

So be brave, and take that first step :).

I organized a few meetups during my travels.
And even in smaller cities, at least a handful of folks showed up.

Funny story
There was a girl who wanted to go to the lake during summer. But she didn't know anyone and couldn't find any group for it.
She organized one herself… And more than 100 people showed up!

4. Approach With An Uplifting Spirit

General principle:

⚖ **The more you need friends, the needier and more taking you are**
⍰ The best way to make friends is with a giving approach, being sociable and uplifting

Needing friends projects desperation.
An uplifting spirit sub-communicates "happy with life", a high-value trait that draws others in.

Some tips:

- **Happy** beats serious
- **High-energy** beats low-energy on first approach, especially at night
  - Initially open **many topics**
- **Listening** and asking beats talking -but share about yourself!-
- Initially it's **vibe over depth**. **Deeper later** or when you're both *very* interested.
- **Display value strategically** (drop hints, let them ask more) because even friendships are competitions (Blau, 1964)

You don't need to become extroverted to make friends.
But it's helpful to learn to *act* like one.

⍰ High value technique

Move from group-level to "1:1 on the side", then back to group level.

Example:

1. Display value at the group level
2. Look at the speaker (so he looks back at you)
   - Interject: ask questions, joke, or challenge if appropriate
   - Laugh along to other people's good jokes
3. Take your turn to speak and give value

4. Start side conversations with someone close by
5. Go back to group-level

Now you come across as high value and sociable: the type of guy who easily makes friends.

Also see:

- Group conversation 101

> 4 Steps to Mastering Group Conversations

Avoid the "let's be friends approach"

General principle:

⚖ **Never say "let's be friends"** (Just like in dating you never say 'let's be a couple')

Only dorks say that.
Cool people let things develop naturally.

5. Go Deeper If There's Chemistry

You start with a socializing attitude.

But if the social butterfly is all you do… All you get is a socializing event.
No friends.

So the smart socializer does this:

Talk to all, dig deeper with the best.

Think of group events like a buffet.
You sample everything and then eat more of the best.

A good article:

- **How to bond**

> How to Build Deep Emotional Connection

6. Talk Next Steps & Exchange Contact

How do you move forward?

How do you exchange contacts?

Well, lemme share you a secret now:

Advanced socialites don't ask, they *get* asked.

Cool guys get asked more than they ask

But until you reach that point, maybe with our Power University, here are some tips:

Schedule next steps

- **ONLY plan on first meet if the vibe is 10/10**. Otherwise, it's premature. Remember your frame: I'm high-value and busy
- **Don't propose but INVITE to join**. Remember the frame: you're going to do X anyway, and they get the opportunity to join you

Ie.:

> **You**: hey mate, going to try X restaurant later today, if you wanna join would be cool to catch up, just let me know

If you have no plans to invite to, no problem.
You can then exchange contact:

How to exchange contacts

- ***"Let's exchange contact"*** <—- Better than "Let's keep in touch", which is "chasier"
- ***"Maybe we can do something in the future"*** <—- 'Maybe' is strategic: doesn't come across as overly eager
- "***Let's exchange contact so I can let you know if I do X***" -where "X" is an activity you mention that you both enjoy

Also a good tip if you're interested in dating: exchange contact with many people.
That way, it doesn't look like you're "hunting".

See:

- **Social calibration**

7. Keep The Best Only: Spot Green & Red Flags

You're not reading TPM to make "some friends".

Go to WikiHow for that :).

You're here to make *high-quality* friends and connections.

Here are some quick tips on judging characters:

1. **Split of questions VS talk & self-talk.** You want friends who can listen when you want to share something
2. **Empathetic or callous?** You can do business with callous men or cooperate if interest align. But empathy is important for friendships
3. **Honorable or not?** You have no place in life for dishonorable men, aholes, and turkey

See more in:

- Toxic people
- **How to recognize takers**

> How to Spot Toxic People And "Takers"

‍♂ The Secret to Quality Friends Is…

Lucio:
People make friends both *strategically*, for evolutionary reasons (Buss, 2024), and for pleasure.
For strategic reasons, *value* matters most.
For the pleasure of it, *quality* matters. Turkey behavior repels eagles.
So the "secret" is: **YOU be a high-value, high-quality, honorable man first**. And then you get the best of both

worlds.

8. Follow Up The Day After

Here is a general rule:

⚖ **Fast progress goes places while slow-moving never progress at all**

That's an important principle of dating.
In friendships, you have more leeway. But, generally speaking, faster is better. And the more randomly you met and least you spoke, the faster you wanna go.

Here's a template for you:

1. Text "good meeting you" right after the event
2. 2 days later text if they want to join you for something

A more strategic approach is to text the day after without inviting, and see if they propose it.
But it's not strictly necessary.
Power shouldn't be your main concern if you're out to find great people.

9. Organize a second meet (1:1s or smaller group)

If you organized, you have two options:

- Organize a follow-up with a smaller group
- Meet 1:1

From a power dynamics point of view, you maintain "top dog status" with the smaller group followup.
But again, you're not out for power now.

If someone else organized, you can:

- Invite a few people you liked out
- Meet 1:1

And of course, they're not mutually exclusive and you can do both.

Example with smaller group followup:

For the 2nd meet I picked the best guys, went to my favorite restaurant, and we deepened the friendship

My general rule for 1:1 VS group followups is this:

- Cool and similar for 1:1
- Cool but different in group

⍰ Technique: the “half propose”

You may wanna tread carefully in business or at work.

In these cases, you can “half propose”.
Such as, you don’t go the full distance but instead dangle your “bait” for them to take.

Ie.:

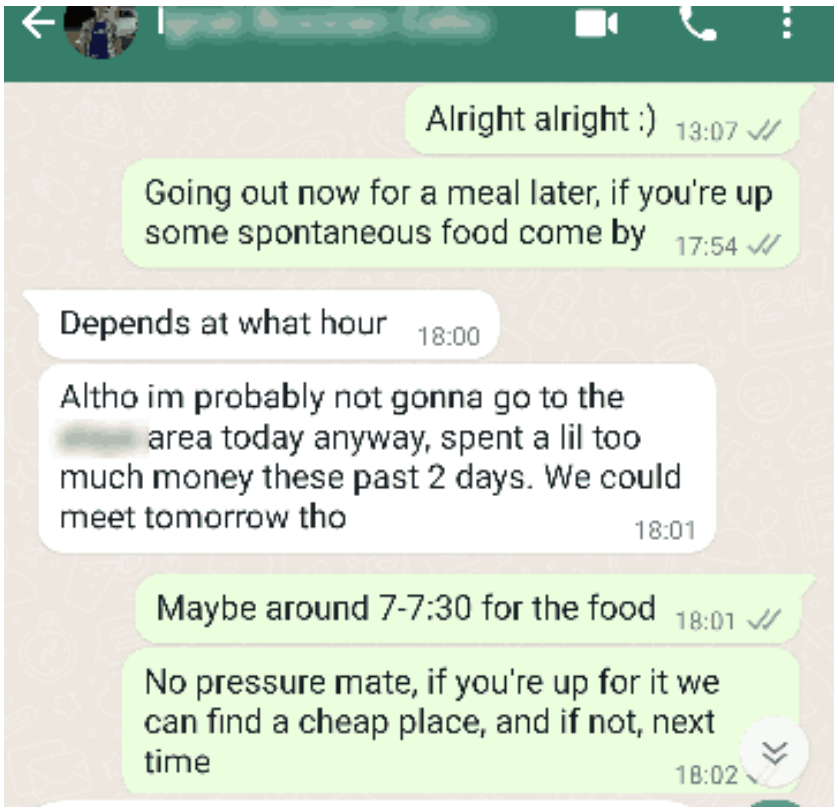
> Cool man, thanks, it was a pleasure doing business.
> And you seem a cool guy, if you’re up for a drink one of these days, happy to invite you.

Pressure-off attitude

And I’m personally a huge fan of “pressure off”.

High power, and respectful of others.
And the polar opposite of the guilt-tripping emotional manipulation turkeys go for.

Here’s another example of “pressure off” attitude:



> **Him**: spent a little too much money these past 2 dasy. We could meet tomorrow tho
> **Me**: No pressure mate mate, if you're up for it we can find a cheap place, and if not, next time

I'm not jumping to "tomorrow" because I preferred the same day -and didn't wanna commit to the day after-. So I address his concern with a casual "cool whatever way" attitude.

And we ended up meeting that evening.

That's it, fellas.

Now you can make friends.

A few advanced moves:

10. Invite New Guys To Your Forming Social Groups

Keep up the "meet more" phase as you form your social circle.

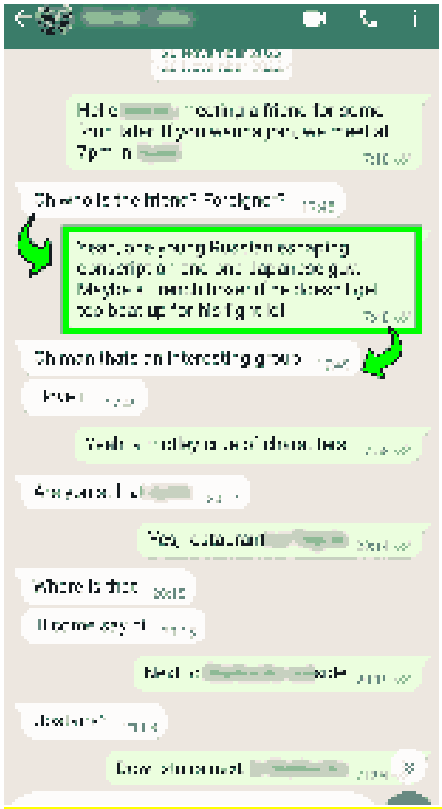
Why?

Because:

- **Inviting people to newly forming groups is easier and more natural** compared to established groups. That's because established friends prefer to meet just you, rather than strangers
- **You're cooler and higher value** to both the forming group, and the incoming new friend. You come across as sociable and "making things happen"
- **Inviting to social gatherings is higher power and smoother compared to 1:1s**. It feels a bit "gay" to invite a random guy to a 1:1, but not to invite him to a small group

Of course, it's largely on you to present your new group as 'cool'.

Look at this example:



I put together a boxer from diner cold approach, a huge weightlifter from mall cold approach, and 2 guys from a previous meetup I organized

Bonus: Maintain Friends With Win-Win

And we go back to social exchange foundations again.

For example:

Offer advice and/or personal experience

This is where your self-development work pays out dividends.

Expertise makes your advice very valuable, while costing you nothing.

However, you don't need to be an expert.
Simply by living, you have a ton of value you can give if you just know how to look and present it.
It can be as simple as having done paperwork he's looking into, or having tried a restaurant.
Or sharing a similar experience, or a funny story.

Lend an ear

Sometimes all a friend needs is someone to talk to.

And that may be one of the most important aspects and benefits of a friendship.

Crazy enough, it's so simple, and yet *so few people can do this*.
70% of it is this:

1. Sit with him
2. Ask questions

3. Let him talk it out

That's all.
And these are bonuses:

1. Share something similar IF you have
2. Share advice IF you can
3. Help him process and reach a decision

Of course, there are levels to it.
If you can ask *good* questions, better.
If you can help me feel better, much better.
And if you can offer solutions, that's next-level gold.

But if you're beginning, just sitting down and listening makes you an invaluable friend.

Offer concrete support if possible

Machiavelli would say that the best help to offer is whatever is easiest for you.

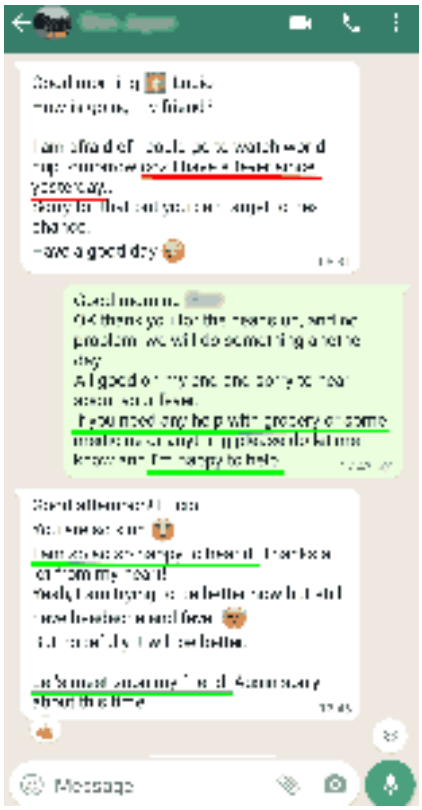
BUT…

You may instead want a few close friends you'd be *happy* to help, *despite* the costs.

And "higher cost help" is also an honest signal of caring.

Often, it doesn't have to be anything crazy.
For example, concrete help with expats and singles can be as simple as offering food if they're sick.

Example:



> **Me**: (offers to bring some groceries if he needs it)
> **Him**: I am so so happy to hear it. Let's meet soon my friend!

Also see:

- **Practical takeaways from social exchange theory**

> Social Exchange Practical Takeaways: 10 Laws of Success

⍰ Optional Bonus: Get A Few Circles Going

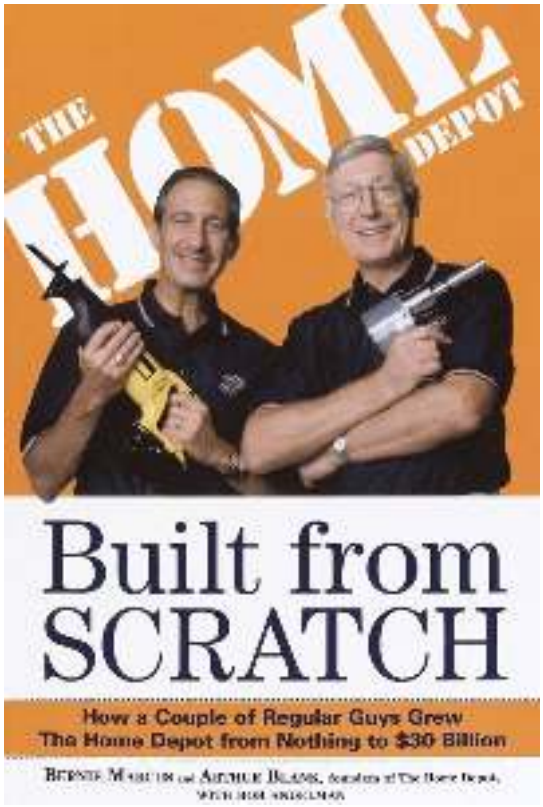
It's not a must, but the benefits are:

- **It's higher value** to have "other friends" they know about, and that you can mention
  - You're naturally scarcer, and you can even play up the mystery. As a teenager, different circles of gear-heads, 'users' and schoolmates made me "cool(er)"
- **Higher confidence**. You're subconsciously clingier when you depend on one single source of anything. Options give you confidence.
- **Open-mindedness** especially if the groups are different. A great antidote to groupthink, tribalism, and various cult-like dynamics

Built From Scratch: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 September 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Built From Scratch (2001) chronicles the story of Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank, and how they went from being fired to founding the multi-billion home improvement chain Home Depot when Marcus was 50 years old.



Contents

- Exec Summary
- Video Review
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Learn how to sell a vision
  - Be calculative in everything you do
  - Learn political skills, & how to read people
  - Langone saw Sigoloff's red flags
  - Never give up your leverage against aholes
  - Let toxicity be the catalyst for honorable man behavior
- MORE WISDOM
  - Dark triad technique: bamboozle everyone
  - Ensure you're properly rewarded (and get shares)
  - Keep your success secret
- Criticism
  - Grandiose, narcissistic-like storytelling
  - Red flags of aggression, violence, & bias
  - Runs like an ad
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Exec Summary

- **Keep your successful business secret**, or you will attract competitors
- **Learn to read people**
- **Get equity** if you plan to work hard and bring lots of money
- **Write a biographical book for PR**, but spin it like you're sharing your business secrets

Video Review

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank are the two main founders of Home Depot, and they take turns writing chapters.

Learn how to sell a vision

Especially in the beginning, you don't have much to show.
So you must be good at selling a vision:

> You must stick to a vision and turn people into believers.
> We had to be psychologists, lovers, romancers, and con artists to get them aboard.

Notice the "con artist" in that list.

Be calculative in everything you do

If it serves your goals, be offensive to jolt someone and get their attention.

Says the author:

> To his face, I called him "the biggest schmuck I ever met in my life."
> That was a calculated gamble.
> I read his personality. I knew what was going to get to him. Of course he wasn't a schmuck, but nothing short of calling him one would have gotten his attention riveted on me.
> (…) what would have happened if I had said, "Mr. Hubschman, I could do a better job." Nothing would have happened. Instead, I very deliberately applied blunt trauma to his ego.

Learn political skills, & how to read people

I picked up this book mostly for the human side.
The relationships.

Their previous boss sounds like a dark triad.

Describing his former boss, they say:

> He called himself "Ming the Merciless."
> It wasn't a nickname used behind the boss's back (…) how proud Sanford C. "Sandy" Sigoloff was to be known as "Ming. (…) the villain in the old Flash Gordon movie serials of the 1930s.

Now look how this guy thinks:

> He was a nice looking, sharp-dressed man, very smooth, slick, and articulate, a chief executive who couldn't just fire an underling (…) he once told me in a coffee shop, it was very important that he affect them economically, emotionally, and physically, so that people think twice before they ever turn on him.

This is important because the authors failed to realize they needed better precautions with a snake like this.

Also see:

- How to learn office politics

Langone saw Sigoloff's red flags

Notice Langone's reaction on his first meeting with dark triad-ish Sigoloff:

> It was all handshakes and politeness on the surface, but (…) Neither liked the other and they never would.
> (…)
> "This is a real bad guy," Langone said after his first encounter with Sigoloff. "This is a guy that you can't trust and that would kill you in a second."

Langone was much better at handling that guy once they partner up

We have some articles to develop these skills:

- How to spot a value taker

Never give up your leverage against aholes

The authors were friends with Langone.

And because Langone had controlling shares, the terrible boss was kept in check.

However, this is when the authors make the mistake:

> "Do me a favor," I said. "Get Sigoloff off my back. Sell him the stock."
> "Bernie, trust me," Langone said. "You don't really want me to sell him this stock, because if I do, I am signing your death warrant. You are a dead man." <— Bernie knew the character
> "You don't know what you are talking about," I responded. "Sigoloff doesn't know this business. I know this business. He needs me to run it." <— The author naively expected Sigoloff to put the best of the company above his power

And now look how Langone predicted the future based on a correct reading of narcissism:

> As long as you are there, he is never going to be able to take credit for its success, or for the recovery of Daylin."
> (…)
> I am telling you, I can read this guy like a book. *He can't stand to see you succeed.* The more you succeed, the more pain he feels." <— this is narcissistic envy, what the author missed

With his leverage gone, the authors get fired

This is when the author realizes the power dynamics:

> (…) board member said, "I don't know why there is any question about succession here, since you have your

> obvious successor right in this room, Bernie Marcus."
> A quick glance at Sigoloff's ashen face told me that *that* was never going to happen (…) the board supporting the idea made me a genuine threat to Sigoloff. The situation between us just went from really bad to dire.

And this is how it happened:

> I was in one room, Arthur in another. It was a planned effort to divide and conquer us.
> (…)
> Sigoloff was well organized. He released a statement to the press by deadline on Friday afternoon, so that all the Los Angeles papers carried the story of our firing on Saturday morning.
> (….)
> The labor decertification proceedings were used as a tool to eliminate me and those closest to me.

In brief, Sigoloff looked hard at some fault he could find about the authors' behavior, and he himself pressed charges against them.

Sigoloff also wiped out the author's contraction options, telling him:

> Sigoloff also voided my contract, daring me to sue. "The only problem for you," Sigoloff taunted me, "is that I am going to fight you with the company's money, and you are going to have to fight me with your own money, which you don't have."

You can't say this guy didn't talk straight :).

Let toxicity be the catalyst for honorable man behavior

Luckily, the authors took some good lessons from this, and decided instead to spread the opposite vibes into the world:

> Traumatic as our experiences at Handy Dan were, they played an important part in developing Home Depot's values.
> For example, Sandy Sigoloff rewarded people who were his loyal followers with an inordinate amount of money. There are people who are for rent, and he bought their souls. We learned that love and compassion do a hell of a lot more than just buying people.

Also read:

- **How to be an honorable man**

MORE WISDOM

Dark triad technique: bamboozle everyone

This is what "the merciless" boss did:

> As contemptuous as he was of bankers, Sigoloff still needed their money to run his businesses. His oft-stated philosophy was "keep banks in the dark and feed them crap, like mushrooms." His MO was burying them in paper. And it wasn't just banks, it was anybody. In fact, he put people on his payroll whose primary job seemed to be generating those kinds of documents.
> Sigoloff's approach was to hit the banks with so many facts, so many charts, that no human being could ever go through it all. And before that, confuse them. Then when you confuse them, he'd say, you'll end up with

> somebody who you can do anything you want with.

Ensure you're properly rewarded (and get shares)

After years of great work, the author realizes after being fired:

> And we were hardly well paid. Ron, for example, was only paid in the mid-$30,000 range.
> None of us owned stock in Handy Dan; all of our hard work and innovation seemed to have enriched everyone from Ken Langone to Sandy Sigoloff, but not us.
> (…) When we left Sandy Sigoloff and Handy Dan, we had made a ton of money for them but walked away with nothing.

Keep your success secret

The authors didn't want others to know they were doing good:

> Between 1980 and '81, sales did begin moving upward, but we kept it a deep, dark secret. If we didn't, we might have encouraged competitors.

Criticism

A lot to say:

Grandiose, narcissistic-like storytelling

Let's start with a mild example from the opening:

> This book is the story of that virtually unparalleled growth and the values and culture that nourished it.

I'm pretty sure many businesses grew faster and/or more.

Next, the author first brags of his fast career progress at their previous employer, and then says:

> I ascended the ladder of success at Two Guys by learning how important the folks are with whom you surround yourself. I loved teaching people the business. Why have I been successful my whole life? Because I've always surrounded myself with people who are better than I am.

How about you let others judge whether you were successful or not?
Also because in this same book, they later complain that they were just getting by as employees without equity.
There are many more examples of how awesome he was. And he carefully lists one of his records as "unlikely to be broken" -he says, and I didn't buy it-.

And now listen to this dick move:

> One day, Glass and I were walking through one of his superstores in Georgia. I said, "You think this superstore of yours is a great invention, right?"
> "Oh, yes," he said proudly, having played a part in Wal-Mart's birth.
> "Well, we did this at Two Guys back in the early fifties," I said.

He doesn't even realize what a dumb move that was, and how dumber it is to even brag about it.
First, he lays the (5-year old level) trap with the question. Then, he let the Sam Walton feel proud of his invention.

And finally, he proceeded with the right hook. Nope, Sam didn't invent squat because HE was the real inventor of it ⍰⍰♂.

With this behavior, I don't even think he was any good friend of Walton, as he tells us.

Sometimes you can see it in the small details.
For example:

> Diller was right. I could trust Langone. But I knew that for myself. <— This is what we call here social scalping. He removes any credit from Diller.

Notice he could have said the same with a more power-protecting win-win.
For example: "Diller was right. I had the same feeling".
But nope, he had to fully invalidate Diller's advice.

There is more, but you get the gist.

Read more in:

- Manipulation: a primer
- Social exchange theory

Red flags of aggression, violence, & bias ⍰

The author seems very quick to getting aggressive.

Of course, in the book, he always had a good reason to get angry.
But once you discount the bias, I see these as potential red flags.

Let's see some:

- **Childhood gangbanger bragging**

Starting from his childhood bragging of joining a gang of black kids as the only white:

> Finally, the leader of one gang was so impressed with my ability to take what he was dishing out that he wanted me as part of the gang.
> At 11 years old, I not only ran with this gang of thirty black kids but I became its second in command.

- **Threatening customers**

Then working in a store as a young man:

> So I walked up to him, and said, "Pick a window."
> This big cigar dangling in his mouth, he looked at me, confused. "What do you mean, pick a window?"
> "Pick a window, because you are going through one of them. I want you to have a choice in which one." And believe me, he knew I wasn't kidding.

- **Challenging the boss publicly and cursing him**

And when he "nearly came to blows" with Sigoloff "The Merciless":

> (…) Sigoloff and I nearly came to blows during a board of directors meeting. When we went into another room to hash out our disagreement privately, Sigoloff told me that he was the boss. He controlled my career, and I needed to understand that. Then he demanded that I literally repeat that back to him.

> (…) I nonetheless told him to go —— himself.

Why would Sigoloff demand he calls him “boss”?

Most bosses don’t ask that without reason. Usually, it happens when someone disempowers the boss.
Then, it would be more understandable for Sigoloff to demand what he demanded.
But that would change the whole dynamics: the author may have been a disempowering, insubordinate, or outright dic*head.

- **Kicking an investor out of the car**

He tells a possible investor:

> “Get out of the car,” I said. “Get out of the G-damn car!”
> The man just looked at me. He thought I was crazy. We were in the middle of nowhere; cars and trucks were zipping by.
> “I said, get out of the car! You are a stupid son of a bitch! Do you think I would get in bed with an imbecile like you? Get out of the f-ing car. You can walk to the airport for all I care.”

The authors made the investor sound like a grinch, of course.

And, in part, they succeeded.
IF what they wrote is true, I may agree with them.
But you can STILL spot red flags.

For example, the investor had demanded a salary cut and that they don’t drive Cadillacs -a cars luxury brand-.
While I got the point of the salary cut, I agreed with the investor on the Cadillacs. It was *his* money, it was not only fair of him, but ethical, to demand they’d drive less expensive cars.

But the authors makes himself sound like tough-talking straight man, and the investor like a sneaky f*ck.

- **Threatening employee with murder**

Yeah, literally, he says:

> We told everyone, if anyone ever did that again, we would kill them. We wouldn’t fire them, because firing was not bad enough of a punishment; it had to be killing.

There are more examples.
And albeit on this one I am biased, I personally saw it as another red flag Bernard Marcus was one of Trump’s largest donors in 2016. And still backed him again in 2024.

Runs like an ad

Many autobiographies do.

And this is no exception.

If anything, *Built From Scratch* stood out for running like an ad, even among other autobiographies.

I also read several reviews online, and many mention that the customer service, at least today, is not nearly as good as the authors make it out to be.

REVIEW

Built from Scratch is a great book if you can read between the lines.

If you can't, you can still find some valuable insights on entrepreneurship, career planning, and common political mistakes.
Some of the company values may also be good. There is little denying the author built a huge chain, so they did something right.
However, I wouldn't bank on that being either 100% true, or a true differentiator for success.

Which brings me to the next point:

The most valuable insights for me were one-liners, or hidden.

If you can get to those, there is much to learn about (entrepreneurs') psychology, toxic personalities, and red flags.
For the latter you must read *twice* between the lines because… It may include the authors :).

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Political Strategy & Childless Women: Democrats Need Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 September 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Why it's always conservatives who worry about birthrates?

And why is it always conservatives who shame childless women, while women resent it?

Well, you'd never guess, but the reason is power.
And we'll explain it in this article.

Contents

- Conservative Power VS Liberal Compassion
  - Tribal power Vs. group collegiality
- Children Project Power Into The Future
  - ⍰ Godfather needs a son
  - Childless women threaten Conservatives' power
- Politics & Cat Ladies
  - Elections, JD Vance, and cat ladies
- Taylor Swift: Alpha Female to Democrats' Rescue
  - Liberals need high-power representatives (& men)
- Bonus: Why Criticizing Trump Cost Us $$$

Conservative Power VS Liberal Compassion

Conservatives value power, masculinity, and victory.

Righ-wing conservatives are also closer to social Darwinism, including:

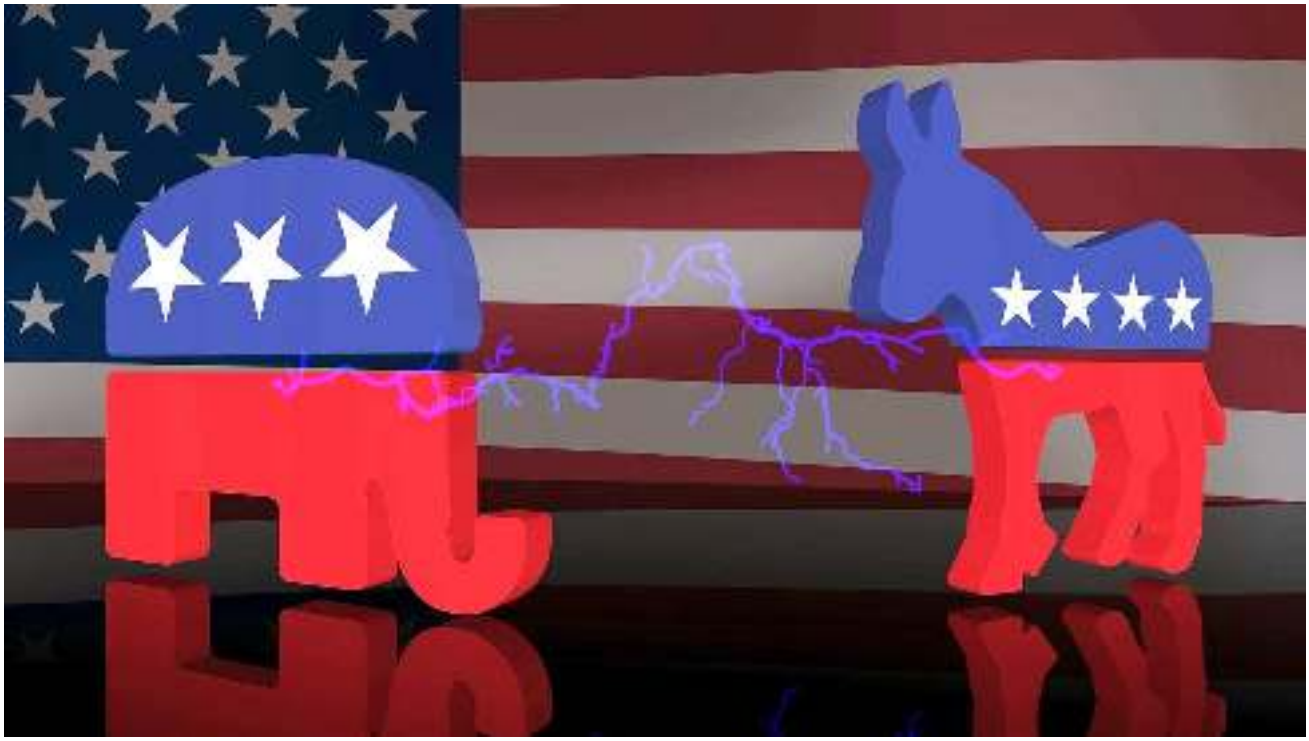
- Winners must be rewarded
- Losers should not be supported
- Life is competition

And in that competition, the strong one wins, the weak one… Doesn't.
Or… Dies.

That's how it goes, and we should not try to change that.
One, because it's the "way of nature" (naturalistic fallacy).
And two, because helping the weak ones to survive is not only useless, but harmful to all. It wastes resources, and saddles the species with sub-par specimens.

Democrats instead are more pro-social communal.

Liberals value kindness and compassion over power and dominance.
Winning is good, but not winning is OK and the losers also deserve our love and support.



Tribal power Vs. group collegiality

For liberals the group is about our fellow human beings.

Fellow human beings that we can love and support, and receive love and support back.

Conservatives place individual success above the group.

Part of it is values.
But part of it is also about confidence, early reinforcement, and personal success. And confident, successful, high-power men have less of a need for group support.
For these men, other people aren't necessarily there to be nurtured, but to compete against.

However, conservatives do value the POWER of the group.
Such as, powerful individuals band together, as tribes, to project power.

Racism & Locked Borders Keep The Group Pure

Conservatives' racism and anti-immigration stance is also explained from a group and power perspective.

Immigrants are the outgroups "from a different tribe".
They're suspicious.

And they pollute the blood covenants of our tribe.

There is no way to pacify the conservative mind.
If immigrants come with women and children, they'll replace "us".

If it's mostly men, the competitive nature of the conservative sees mating competition they'd rather not have.
From an evolutionary point of view, this is understandable.

Children Project Power Into The Future

Children for Conservatives are also about power:

1. **Heir to project power into the future**: a clone of yourself to keep operating after you lose power and eventually die
   - **Heir to keep the forefather's name & work alive**
2. **Tribal power with a larger group**: more warriors, more workers, stronger economy

You can see the first successful, empire-building men.
Kings always looked for male children.
And so do many present-day empire builders.

Example, the Godfather:

⍰ Godfather needs a son

> **Consigliere**: Kate had a miscarriage, she lost the baby
> **The Godfather**: Was it a boy?

⍰⍰ The Godfather wanted an heir to project power into the future. Keep the genetic lineage, and keep the criminal enterprise going

We also see an overlap with more dark triad-ish and psychopathic men.
Some of them also seek children as a tool for genetic power projection.

The unnamed contemporary phenomenon of the manosphere says as much here.
And look where his political affiliation lies:

You'd never guess that the dark triad seeking children for power-projection supports the power-hungry conservative candidate

And how about #2, the group power?

Well, on average liberals tend to be collegial with everyone.
That includes any form of life, and also any human being, no matter where they come from.

Conservatives instead have smaller, tighter circles around them.
Their groups also have stronger boundaries, and with more competitive "us vs them".

Finally, conservatives are also more patriotic.
But patriotic is just the positive term for "clannishness" and what we referred to here as "ego fusing".
They bask in the group's glory when it wins, and feel like losers when their group" does poorly.
So for them it's comparatively more important that their country stays powerful and strong.

Childless women threaten Conservatives' power

Women who decide not to have children are a threat for conservatives:

- **Non-traditional women are harder to date & control**
- **Childless women make it harder to reproduce** because fewer available mates means higher competition
- **Childless women disempower the tribe** because a smaller population equals less power

That's also why conservatives embrace traditional gender roles, oppose "gender fluidity" and, secretly, resent empowered women.

And it goes both ways.
In general, the more empowered women become, the more they resent being limited to child-rearing only.

Smart men get that.
Seducers get that, too.

And while red pill men *argue* with women, seducers seduce.

And smart men who want families work while, often, their women raise children. They're just smarter -and win-win- about it.
But it's let's not go too off-topic.

The cat-woman power move

Both liberals and conservatives engage in cultural wars.

And the "childless cat woman" is part of the conservatives' effort to bend the cultural norms to their liking.
Or, if you prefer, to set their "frame" for what's "good and proper female behavior", and what's not.

The "childless cat woman" is a shaming power move for women who opted out of child-bearing.

Frame her as a loser, shame her, and try to embed into the cultural fabric that childless women are despicable.
And hopefully other women won't do the same.

Cat woman combines an attack on femininity and an attack on competence:

- **The cat woman is not a "real woman"**. Or, at least, not a good one. She replaced real human beings with cats
- **The cat woman is a loser** because she failed her #1 task in life

She is the female equivalent of the lowest-status men.

Politics & Cat Ladies

The above is the reason why conservatives focus on children-promoting policies.

Mussolini wanted more children.
Orban today wants more children -and fails because everyone wants to leave his country-.

And it's the reason why it's conservatives who resent childless women the most.

Elections, JD Vance, and cat ladies

We'll discuss here the 2024 elections.

But what we say can apply to any election.

As we said:

The democrats are generally seen as kinder, but lower power.
And republicans are seen as more selfish, but higher power.

Nobody could represent the "selfish but dominant" more strongly than Donald Trump.

In the "childless cat ladies" spat following JD Vance's remarks, the power dynamics were still the same:

- **Republican JD Vance was a dominant ahole**
- **Democrats were kinder but weak**

In a way, it's the good old "too nice guy" VS a**hole" dichotomy.

You can also see these dynamics at an emotional level.
JD Vance attacked, and the Democrats got offended.

The two most popular democratic counter-offensive include:

- **Tim Walz at the DNC**: touching, but low-power
- **Jennifer Aniston**: touching, but low power

They both appealed to *already* democrats.
But in terms of gaining respect -and possible votes- from new higher power men? Total net loss.

JD Vance was an ass, but he was still higher power.
And in the competitive winners/losers view of the world, the Republicans were "offensive aholes, but winners".

This is when Taylor Swift changed the dynamics:

Taylor Swift: Alpha Female to Democrats' Rescue

Taylor Swift endorsed the Democratic candidate Kamala Harris.

And she signed herself "childless cat lady".

Swift, so far, chose not to have children.
And *chose* is the keyword.

But Swift turns the cliche' of the loser cat lady on its head.

She is the ultimate high-power "alpha female".
Stunningly beautiful, tall, thin, blonde hair and blue eyes.
And smart, talented, and uber-successful to boot.

Liberals need high-power representatives (& men)

Always at risk of being the low-power losers and whiners, liberals desperately need higher-power representatives.

Without some high-power representatives, they risk becoming the party of the also-ran.
Losers, whiners, left-behinds…

I'll go out on a limb here and say that **liberals also need high power *men***.

Women are seen as kinder and more collegial, and that doesn't help to bridge the power gap.
The hand-holding, warm smiling, and Brene' Brown style of vulnerability only get you so far.

There is a reason why the party looks back at Clinton or Obama as their golden presidents (Clinton even more than Obama).
If not super dominant, they were still high power, and *very* charismatic.

Bonus: Why Criticizing Trump Cost Us $$$

In 2016 Trump took over the Republican party.

And held on to it for years.
While some loved Trump, some said Trump turned it into a personality cult.

But I'm not in the latter camp.

It's my belief that:

- **Trump is a danger to democracy**, and that danger is *heavily* under-estimated
- **Dark narcissists make for poor country leaders**
- **Charismatic dark narcissists negatively shift the culture** into accepting more ahole, bullying, and aggressive behavior that is not good for society

Among his "merits", Trump is very good at fomenting hatred and divisiveness.

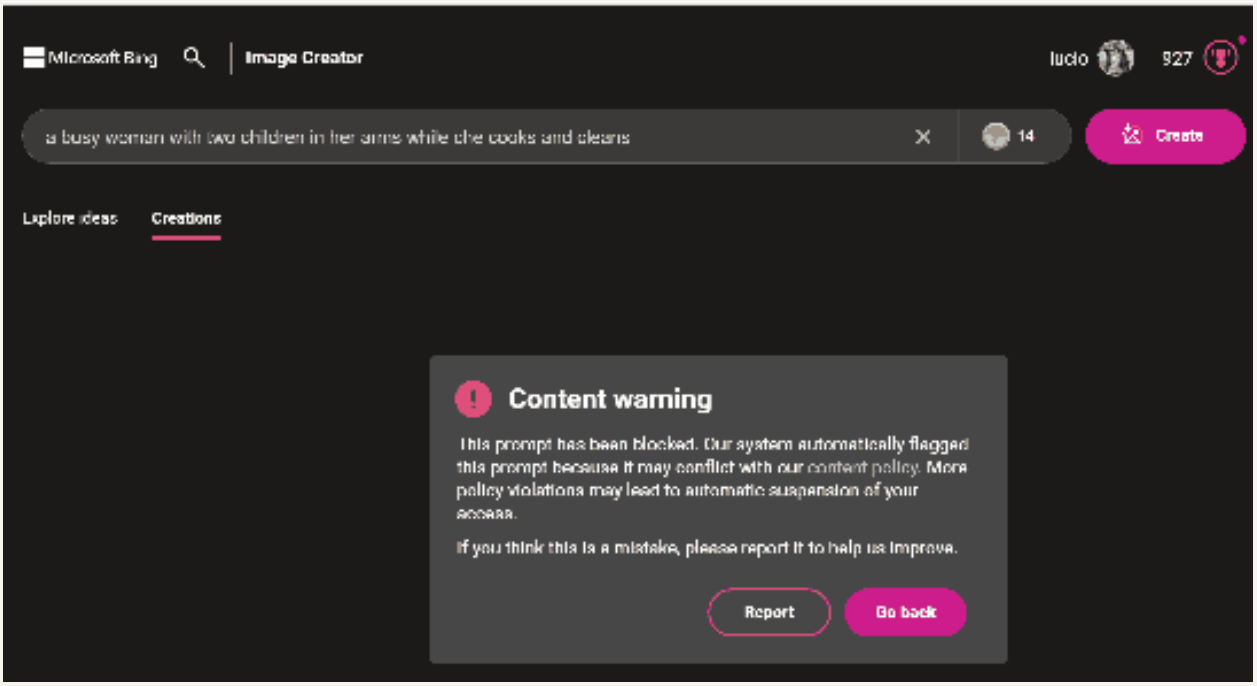
And because Trump took over the GOP, a "no" to Trump for many means denying the will to power.
Rejecting Trump means rejecting powerful men, "alpha males", and winners.

It's not all Trump's -and dumb followers- fault though.

In the same period, part of the left went *too* left.
And into stupid territory:

- Forced equality of outcomes
- Cultural determinism in social sciences
- Feminist animosity toward men
- Cancel culture
- Open border immigration in politics
- …

And just writing this article I got another example of that left-leaning stupidity:

> **Bing AI Can't Design A Busy Mother Coooking & Cleaning**
>
> 
>
>
> **My prompt**: a busy woman with two children in her arms while che cooks and cleans
> **Bing AI**: Content warning

This BS (also) pushes sensible people away from liberal parties
I sure can sympathize with conservatives with this level of stupidity.
These people don't even understand how this level of "unrequested sympathy" is actually *offensive* to empowered

women. As if choosing to stay at home and raising children is something to be hidden and ashamed for.

⍰ For more on "disempowering sympathy", see:
– White virtue signaling: babying black minorities
– Guilt tripping of white men

Supporting the Democratic candidate because anyone is better than Trump gets you confused with *that* type of left.

However, it's my belief it's the right thing to do.

So, I'll keep doing it.

And soon enough we can go back to talking about winning at life, without divisive politics.

How Power Dynamics & Populism Explain The Trump Phenomenon

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 September 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Populist political leaders leverage the discontent and disenfranchisement of the low-status “losers” and give a voice, conduit, and megaphone to that anger.

What changes is the type of discontent they leverage.

But, usually, it revolves around the basics of:

- Survival
- Reproduction
- Status
- Racial/inter-group dynamics

Political populism is a **charismatic leader**, often a dark triad, **channeling people’s discontent**. The leader stirs emotions for the votes and/or revolution he needs **to get in power**

We’ll use Trump and the 2024 elections as an example. But the dynamics are the same with any populist.

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  - Western’s Women Power Disempowers Average Men
  - Politics: Sexually Disempowered Men Vote Conservative
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  - High-Power Men Want High-Power Leaders
  - Low-Power Men Project Onto Trump
- 3. Racism & Social Privilege (Racial Power Dynamics)

  - Undercover Racism: An Iceberg-Like Phenomenon
  - Politics: If They Can Be Racist With A Vote, They Will
- 4. Clannishness (Inter-Group Power Dynamics)
  - Politics: Clannish Individual Vote Anti-Immigration
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  - Populists Stoke Anger & Anguish to Weaponize Them
  - Fascism, Nazism, & Communism: Populism Is The Common Root
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Intro

The Trump phenomenon has perplexed many.

Specifically, what some find most impressive is Trump's resilience.
Trump maintains a large appeal with the electorate despite his critics seeing him as a danger to democracy -and courting with racism and misogyny to boot-.

In this article, we contend that **Trump is not popular *despite* his most inflammatory rhetoric, but exactly *because* of it**.

Populism is a movement of revolt that needs two things:

1. A leader to channel its discontent into action and political and social change
2. An ideology that legitimizes anger into a more socially and psychologically acceptable ideology (Blau, 1964)

Since populism often needs to overthrow the system, populism *requires* an insurgent, radical leader who attacks and frames 'old' politics as corrupt and ineffective.
And the angrier and more incendiary the leader is, the more the followers feel represented and vindicated.

Seen from this point of view, Trump is the angry people's wrecking ball against a system that they feel is not working for them anymore.

What is it exactly that makes these people feel the system is failing them?

It's these points:

1. Low-Status Men & Mating (Intergender Power Dynamics)

What's Trump's largest voting block?

Non-college-educated white voters.

ChatGPT also confirms:

Men with lower education vote Trump

Donald Trump's biggest voting group has consistently been **non-college-educated white voters**, particularly **white working-class men**. These voters form the core of his political base. Here's a breakdown:

1. Non-college-educated White Voters:

- **Biggest Group**: This is Trump's largest and most reliable voting bloc. Within this group, men are especially supportive, though he also has substantial backing from non-college-educated white women.
- **Why They Support Trump**: Many in this demographic feel alienated by the political establishment and resonate with Trump's populist messaging, which emphasizes economic nationalism, immigration restriction, and skepticism toward globalism and elites.

It's a safe bet that **lower education = lower status** (on average, at a group level).
Lower status men support anti-establishment populism because they're failing in those establishments.

And what do gender power dynamics have to do with it?

Everything.

It goes at the core of survival and reproduction.

This is the principle:

⚖️ **The more women gain power, the more average men struggle to be attractive** dating options to these women.

And struggling men provide fertile ground for populists who offer easy -but rarely functioning- solutions.

This video is a good primer on these dynamics:

Why Women's Power Makes Men's Dating Harder

But for a quick text-based explanation, this is it:

It goes at the core of hypergamy, or "women preferring to date higher value men than they are".

Women want to date -and to look up- to a higher power man.
In societies that repress women, almost any man is higher power than women.

However, it's simple math that the more power women gain, the fewer men are higher power than women.
That means that fewer and fewer men are attractive dating options.

A society with empowered women favors high-value men because empowered women can only really lust after a high-value man.
Only a higher-power man can truly lead a woman.
And, thus, women can only be happy feminine women with a higher-power man.

At a societal level, empowered women change the dynamics of dating marketpalce.

In libertine societies with empowered women, the top men "monopolize" several women, who are "taken off the market".

And with a shrinking female population available, average and lower-value men struggle to find a mate.

Of course, unless we go really extreme, most men still pair up in 1:1 semi-monogamous pair bonds. However, the dynamics still negatively affect men, including:

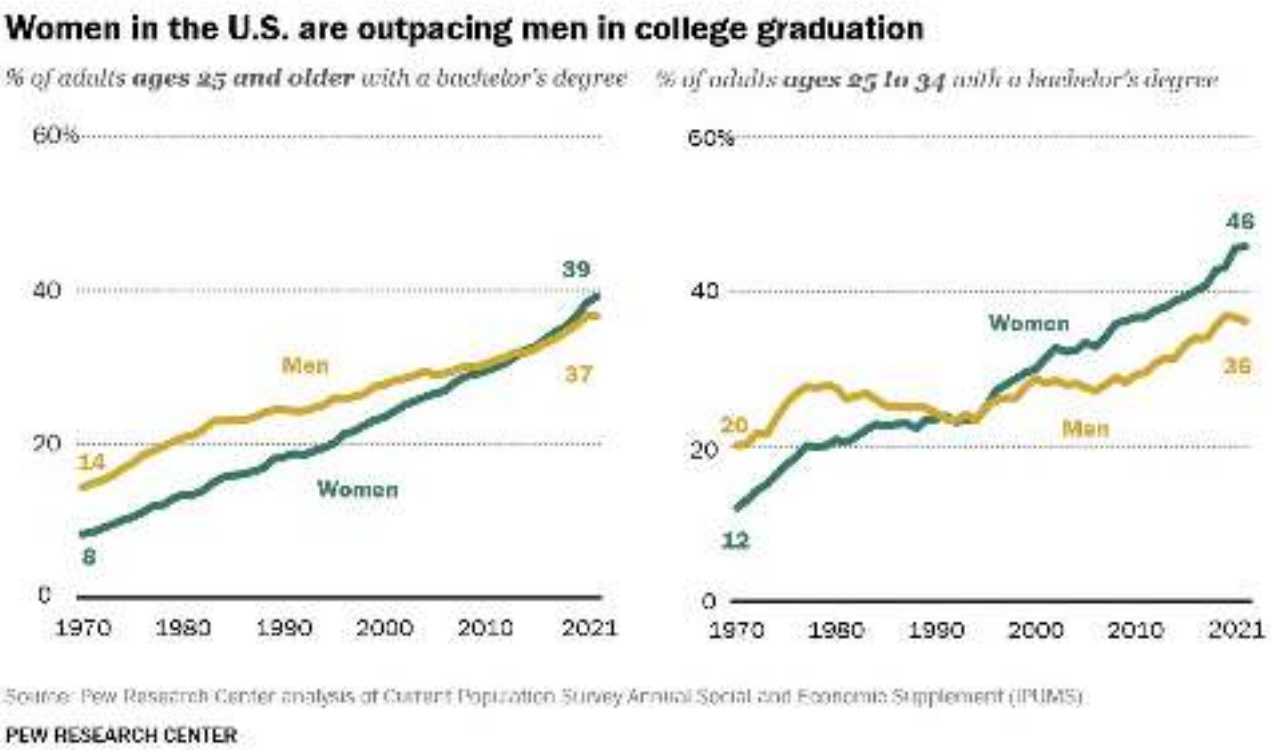
- Younger lower-value men get little or no sex
- Lower-value men live in fear of never finding a mate
- Most average men must content themselves with lower-quality women
- Lower-value men in relationships fear abandonment and cuckoldry to higher value men
- Average men pay a psychological price and never get to “feel like real men” who wear the pants

This is what’s happening in the West.

Western’s Women Power Disempowers Average Men

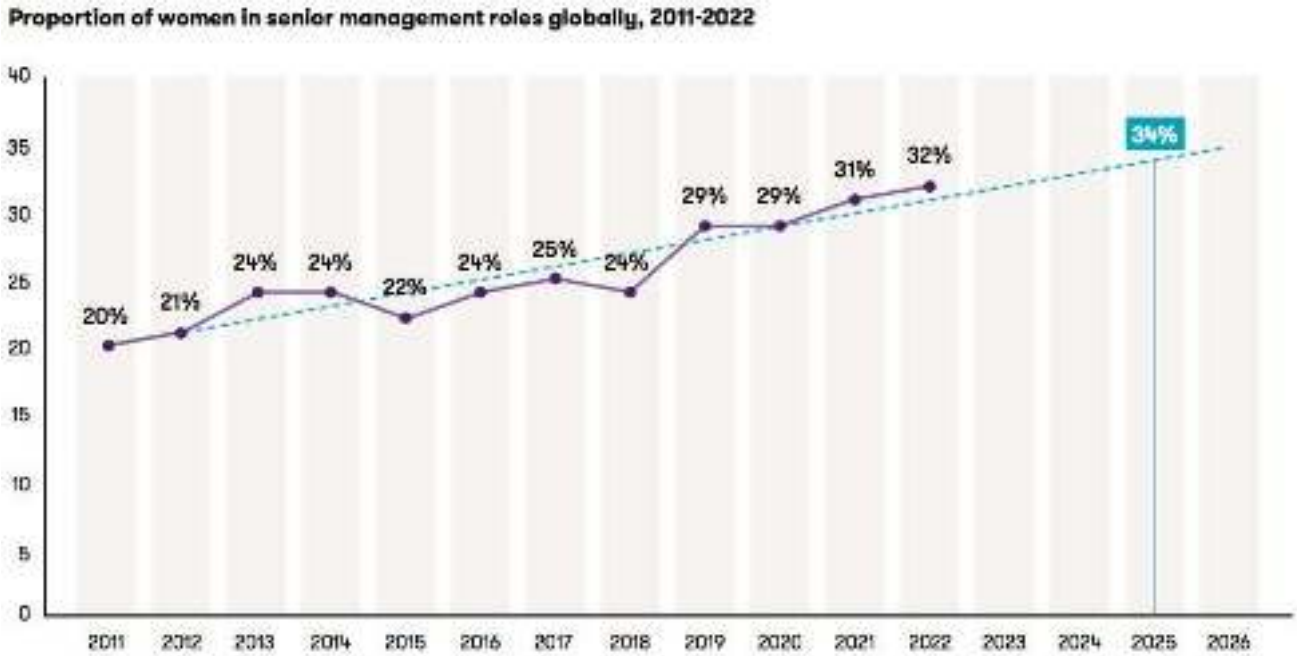
In recent decades women have been gaining more and more power.

They gain more degrees:



And, equally if not more significantly, women are catching up in earning:

And, equally if not more significantly, they are catching up in leadership positions:



What's not in the chart is that women are *also* becoming more:

- Power-aware
- Assertive
- Demanding for social skills, "game", and "expertise"

And guess what?

These empowered **Western women don't find poorer, non-college-educated men attractive**.

Exceptions always apply of course.
But then, you better be a hunk.

And most men are *not* hunks.

Bottom line, **empowered women are a (reproductive) threat to average men**.

These men may not be consciously aware of it.
But deep down, subconsciously, they know it.

Also read:

- **Successful women dating**

Politics: Sexually Disempowered Men Vote Conservative

And how does this tie back to politics?

Simple:

- The democratic party is the party of empowered women
- The Republican party is the party of traditional masculinity

Starting from the top.
Democrats have Kamala Harris, and Republicans have Trump.
And it trickles down to their supporters. Democrats have Beyonce and Taylor Swift, Trump has Kid Rock and Hulk Hogan.

Trump (silently) embodies the ideals and values of male-dominated households.
In those households, men still wear the pants.
And in that culture, average men still find a mate.

Voting for Trump is a vote for putting men back in the lead.
And giving them a chance to date, mate, and enjoy a good man's life.

The Conservative Fantasy Household

The main dream-promise of the conservative household is 1 man : 1 woman, with a feminine woman, and a man wearing the pants.

And it's not totally wrong, either.

If Kamala Harris wins, the culture become even more embracing of empowered women.
And if Trump wins, politics would re-establish that "it's the man's job to lead".

Now you see why Trump can say the most misogynist crap about women, and still get these men's votes.
Indeed, the more misogynist Trump is, the more he'll get these men's votes.

P.S.: The Irony of Right-Wing Populism: Losers Lose Bigger

Trump IS an old-school "alpha male type".

Adn that is exactly why he won't help average men.

Trump and the men like him GAIN with libertine societies (flash news: Trump DID engage in polygyny with serial semi-monogamy).

Plus, their goal is to build empires, and make as much money as possible.

The old-school staple of right-wing and conservative economic policy is little government and few taxes.
Especially on the wealthy.

So, in truth, **Republicans only make it worse for average men**.
But, alas, they wouldn't be average and below-average men if they thought this far in advance :).

2. Men & Power (Social Power Dynamics)

Men are hardwired to admire dominance and social power.

Both right-wing populist leaders and dark triad offer dominance in spades.

And Trump is no exception.
If anything, he may be *overly* dominant to be an effective politician.

Democrat leaders are NOT as dominant.

Kamala Harris is a good woman.
But that "good" is also her limitation with some voters.

Albeit power in her role, she's not personally powerful in:

- Behavior
- Character
- Mindsets
- Body language…

More of the same for Tim Walz.
He looks like a pudgy Santa Claus. Safe and kind.

Tim Walz is the type of man women feel safe with.
Too safe, maybe.
Walz is the guy the woman lies on and calls "my teddy bear".

Compare to JD Vance:

Too Nice Guy VS Ahole**

JD Vance is also carrying some extra kilos.
But look at those eyes.
You wouldn't call him "teddy bear". More like a "possessed doll", if anything.

JD Vance is an asshole, but he's a high-power, socially dominant asshole.

High-Power Men Want High-Power Leaders

I see this every single day in your YouTube channel's comment section.

We see that **thousands of men love Trump exactly when he displays the most dominance.**

These guys somehow don't see that it's ultimately more effective to be high power and high-warmth.
And to be high power *without* being a pathological narcissist and win-lose type. Trump would be a two-time president in a row, without having to risk a third campaign if he had been less of a narcissist.

But let's not digress too much and you can just watch this video:

Melania: (displays all her dislike for Donald)

⍰⍰ Over-dominance disempowers others. They will resent you. So over-dominance poisons your close relationships and makes you lots of enemies

Back to politics instead, this is also why Democrats did best with men like Clinton and Obama.

These were charismatic, high-power men who helped bridge the gap between pro-social but low-power Democrats, and high-power Republicans.

Low-Power Men Project Onto Trump

Trump also gets many low-power men's votes.

This group overlaps with our point #1, as also suggested by Hakkar and Sivanthan's research.
They're not high-status or dominant.
But they *wish* they were.

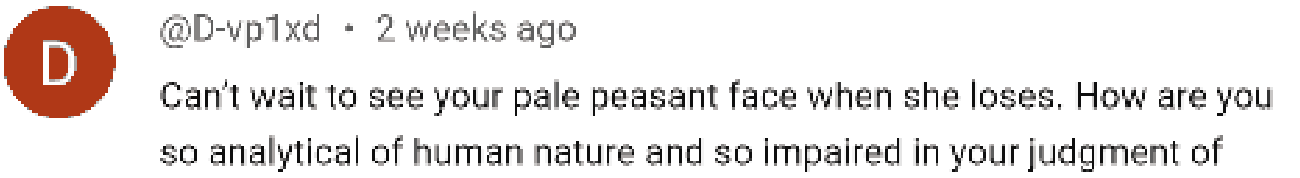
So they do what sports fans do.

They emotionally project onto their idol-representative.
And Trump's victory becomes *their* victory.

I also see this in our YouTube comment section.
These men lash out with videos critical of Trump. Or, worse, videos showing Trump looking weak.
They can't accept their idol of strength to look weak.

Even videos that are simply not negative of Kamala Harris stoke these men's emotions:

Low-Status Men Project Onto Their Leader



> **Emotional Trump supporter**: can't wait to see your (trying to be offensive). How are you so analytical of human nature and so impaired in… (more attempts to be offensive follow)

⍰⍰ Fans always emotionally over-react when they perceive an attack to their hero

Their hero losing is worse than their own loss.
If they lose, it's just another average man losing.
If their hero loses, it's the whole cause losing. It becomes hopeless.

3. Racism & Social Privilege (Racial Power Dynamics)

> Life is always easier when you place a whole race/group beneath you.

The power dynamics are simple:

Individuals from a privileged class all gain at the detriment of the un-privileged ones.
Adn the bigger the privilege and gap between the groups, the better off the privileged individuals are.

Conversely, for a formerly privileged individual:

⚖ The more egalitarian a society becomes, the worse off the members of the formerly privileged group become.

Even “privileged lower-value men” are better off.
From a dating point of view, he may “date down” on a lower class and find a mate. But if everyone is the same, the “loser” is just a loser.

And general society-level progress does not change these dynamics.

Remember that individual status is comparative and never absolute.
So it doesn’t matter that today’s lower-value whites have a more comfortable life than a king in 1500.
Because everyone else has a more comfortable life, lower-value white men still lose with black and minorities’ empowerment.

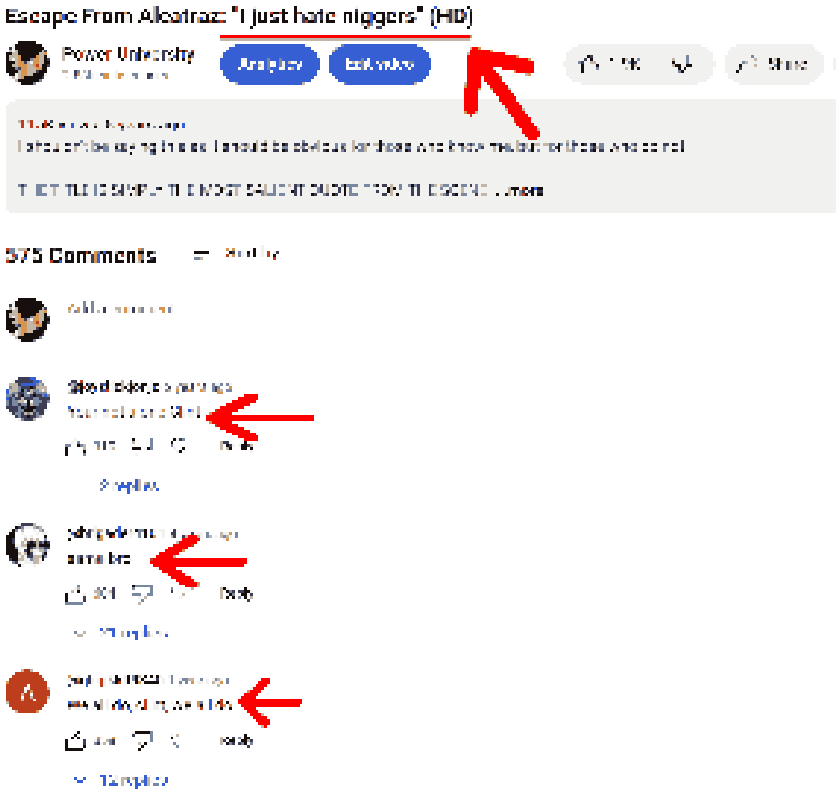
So many whites today resent a more egalitarian society because they see equality as coming at their expense.
And they’re not totally wrong about the latter.
And about the former, that egalitarianism may be “fairer” doesn’t compute in many men’s minds. We are selfish animals, after all.

Undercover Racism: An Iceberg-Like Phenomenon

Many underestimate the true extent of racism.

Circumstantial evidence is always poor evidence.
And still, looking at the most popular comments on this video does serve as a powerful reminder -and wake up call for many-:

Racism hasn’t disappeared, only gone undercover



> If you want to see who people truly are, give them anonimity
> *– TPM Proverb* ✒

Politics: If They Can Be Racist With A Vote, They Will

Without racists in power, undercover racists have no power.

But if suddenly a racist party appears, **the racist party easily scoops up all the undercover racist votes.**

Know back to American politics.
And this shouldn't come as a shock to anyone:

Democrats are the party of equality and inclusion.
Republicans, well… Not so much.

So any white reactionary who (subconsciously) resents the loss of white privilege votes Republican.

If anything, **public repression of racism pushes even *more* racist voters toward Republicans and Trump**.
Black Republicans only serve the GOP as a convenient front to hide these dynamics.

4. Clannishness (Inter-Group Power Dynamics)

Populists often leverage humans' natural in-group VS out-group.

In-group/out-group dynamics means that people people favor their own group (in-group) and dislike, discriminate, or fear, those outside of it (out-group).

In-group/outgroup dynamics are present in most human beings as part of our evolutionary makeup.

Politics: Clannish Individual Vote Anti-Immigration

Conservatives, more focused on power, are generally more clannish than Democrats.

Plus, populist leaders do the following:

- **Make the in-group feel "superior" (over-patriotism)** to cash in on the good feeling
- **De-humanize the outgroup as evil**, dangerous, or disgusting to cash in on anger and fear

For example, something Trump said during the 2024 campaign:

- Haitians eat our dogs
- America first
- Mexicans send us the rapists

Etc., etc.

America First is dereliction of leadership

Lucio: While "America first" may seem the most benign expression of clannisshness, I see it as the most damaging.
First off, it's dumb politics because the most powerful thing you can do is to lead the world.
Furthermore, it's bad for everyone when any country removes itself from global cooperation, let alone the richest country in the world (tragedy of commons).
In a world that desperately needs cooperation to face the challenges ahead, I find this is the most dangerous of Trump's approaches.
But that's just me…

Result: both high-power clannish and fearful men vote for the populist to keep their group "pure" and safe.

These 4 Will Always Vote for Trump

People in the above categories will vote for Trump no matter what.

The reason is simple:

Survival and reproduction trump any argument.

For men in these four groups there can't be a higher priority than finding a mate, maintaining status and power, and advancing one's group over others.

These voters will SAY that Trump has better policy, they will SAY Harris has no policy.
But that's all a front.

These voters won't be dissuaded by anything Trump may say that's nonsense, racist, or misogynist.
As a matter of fact, Trump NEEDS to be inflammatory things to pander to these demographics.

These voters also won't be dissuaded if Kamala Harris spanks and emasculates Trump in the debates.
As a matter of fact, they'll support Trump harder BECAUSE **a black woman handing Trump his ass is the the worst nightmare of lower-value, conservative white men**.

Populism Isn't The Issue. Populist *Leaders* Are

"Populism" is usually in the negative.

However, populism can be a fair answer in some cases.

Elites after all can monopolize all the resources while the populace goes hungry.
And long-standing governing parties can fumble policies -EU and USA probably didn't do a great job with immigration-.

However, **populist leaders are charismatic dark triads who sell pro-people policies as a cover for their power-hunger.**
That means that, once in power, their selfish interest come first, second, and probably third and a few more spots below that.
And I haven't seen many exceptions to this rule.

Populists Stoke Anger & Anguish to Weaponize Them

General principle:

⚖ **While winners are happy with the system because they're winning, losers are receptive to anti-establishment populism because they're losing**

And the angrier and more resentful the losers become, the more power their leader can channel against the system.

In our current example, Trump weaponized the anger, fear, and anguish, of the lower-status white men.

Paraphrasing the lucid political commentator Anthony Scaramucci, to these men, Trump is their orange wrecking ball against the system.

Fascism, Nazism, & Communism: Populism Is The Common Root

Populism and fascism/communism are different.

However, they overlap.

Fascist and communist regimes need people's approval to overthrow democracy and install a new political order.

And **any despotic fascist or communist movement starts with populism** to first overthrow the old system.

ChatGPT agrees:

Fascists, Nazists, & Communists share populist roots

ChatGPT Auto

did fascism, nazism, and the bolshevik revolution in Russia start with a populist streak within them?

Yes, **fascism**, **Nazism**, and the **Bolshevik Revolution** in Russia all h populist elements in their early stages. They emerged in response widespread social, political, and economic discontent, positioning themselves as movements that spoke for "the people" against the ruling elites. However, they eventually evolved into authoritarian regimes. Here's a breakdown of how each movement began with populist streaks:

Fascism, Nazism, and the Bolshevik Revolution had differences, of course.

Fascism and nazism, as right-wing movements, included militarism and national pride (clannishness).
The nazis added racism to the mix.
And communists added land owners and industrialists to the “out-group we should hate”.

But they were all remarkably similar -and populistic- in how they rose to power.

They all promised to channel the power of the united people against perceived weak and/or fat elites who preyed on the masses and who deserved to be eliminated.

Populist Governments Always Become The New Establishment

Populism decreases over time because the revolutionaries become the new elite.

And **the populist “new” system just becomes another system with its winners and losers** (often, pretty much the same people because winners tend to win anyway).

And this is why today many don’t link fascism, nazism or communism to populism.
Because those systems changed their tone and rhetoric over time. (And if they didn’t, the gap between words and facts grew so large that most people realized it was political manipulation).

But they all started as populistic movements.

Of course, just because we saw many past populist movements turn despotic and disastrous doesn’t mean all present and future populists will do the same.

But, personally, I wouldn’t bet on any power-hungry dark triad to be the enlightened exception.

Related video:

Too Much and Never Enough: Is Trump A Narcissist? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 October 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Too Much and Never Enough (2020) provides an insider view of Donald Trump, and the Trump family. The author, who is Trump's niece, paints a dark picture of the former US president as a callous, selfish, and manipulative personality.

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- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Donald's sociopathic father ruined him
  - Fred raised children to carry legacy, not out of love
  - Fred raised Donald with a zero-sum game mindset of win-lose
  - Trump is more than just "narcissist"
  - Donald's psychology makes him a poor leader in crises
  - Trump tried to steal all the inheritance money
  - Trump is not a good businessman: it's all a pretense
  - The media is to blame for a conman's success
  - Trump sacrifices truth for a good (self-serving) story
  - There is no grand strategy in Trump: his ego only drives him
  - Sycophants to dark triads are used and thrown away
  - Donald would never be seen with his own followers
  - A risk to democracy
- MORE WISDOM
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
  - Unconvincing Psychological Analyses
  - Limited Definition of "Success" Warps Trump's Analysis
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  - The "Family Must Help" Morality I Disagree With
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- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- Donald's father Fred Trump was a sociopath who ruined Donald's psychological development
- Donald Trump is a narcissist at a minimum, probably a sociopath
- Trump's re-election could mean the end of democracy

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Mary Lea Trump is an American psychologist and writer. She holds a PhD in clinical psychology from the Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological and she is the niece of former US president Donald Trump

Donald's sociopathic father ruined him

The author claims that:

- Donald's father Fred was a sociopath
- Donald's unsupportive mother used children for her own needs
- Donald's mother was sick and absent for a year at a crucial developmental juncture
- Fred was annoyed by his children's "needs"
- Donald was left (emotionally) unattended
- Donald adopted toxic coping mechanisms
  - No empathy
  - Care nothing about others
  - Pretend to be strong so your father doesn't hate you

These are plausible, in my opinion.

But the real question is how much they truly weighed.

And while the author implies they're the main or even only reasons why Donald turned out the way he did, I disagree.

See the criticism section.

Fred raised children to carry legacy, not out of love

This is common among power-craving men:

> Fred wasn't interested in children at all. His oldest son and namesake received Fred's attention simply because he was being raised to carry on Fred's legacy.

This is in line with both sociopathy and right-wing psychology.
See more here:

- **Right-wing psychology and children**

This is exactly what Donald Trump did with his children:

> **Ivanka**: He (Donald) was not the type of father who (mimicks kisses and child talk) or take them to a stroll in the park.
> (…)
> He did not know how to speak to them. He was able to speak to them only when they came from University when eventually was able to speak business with them

I don't think that Donald "just wasn't able".
Or at least, not only.
Mostly, he wasn't *interested* to.

Fred switched his “legacy-carrying” child from Freddie, to Donald.
And Donald then betrayed him by selling his company right after his death.

Fred raised Donald with a zero-sum game mindset of win-lose

> Financial worth was the same as self-worth, monetary value was human value. The more Fred Trump had, the better he was. If he gave something to someone else, that person would be worth more and he less.
> He would pass that attitude on to Donald in spades.

Trump is more than just “narcissist”

> In the last three years, I’ve watched as countless pundits, armchair psychologists, and journalists have kept missing the mark, using phrases such as “malignant narcissism” and “narcissistic personality disorder” in an attempt to make sense of Donald’s often bizarre and self-defeating behavior. I have no problem calling Donald a narcissist—he meets all nine criteria as outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)—but the label gets us only so far.

She then goes on to list her credentials, which is a good move :).

And then her diagnosis is:

> A case could be made that he also meets the criteria for antisocial personality disorder, which in its most severe form is generally considered sociopathy but can also refer to chronic criminality, arrogance, and disregard for the rights of others.

And she goes on to list more possible traits, including:

> He may have a long undiagnosed learning disability that for decades has interfered with his ability to process information.

Finally, towards the end of the book she mentions the “sociopathic”:

> With millions of lives at stake, he takes accusations about the federal government’s failure to provide ventilators personally, threatening to withhold funding and lifesaving equipment from states whose governors don’t pay sufficient homage to him.
> (…)
> The deafening silence in response to such a blatant display of sociopathic disregard for human life or the consequences for one’s actions, on the other hand, fills me with despair

Donald has no empathy

> As the pandemic moved (…) and the death toll continued its rise (…) the press started to comment on Donald’s lack of empathy for those who have died and the families they leave behind. The simple fact is that Donald is fundamentally incapable of acknowledging the suffering of others.
> (…) for Donald there is no value in empathy, no tangible upside to caring for other people.

What’s more shocking to me is that people didn’t realize that before the pandemic.
And that many haven’t even realized it now (writing in 2024).

The same runs through the family, says the author.
And what Fred had taught his children, ti eventually turned on him when he started his mental decline:

> Fred's remaining sons had given up all pretense of caring what their father thought or wanted.
> Having served his father's purpose, Donald now treated him with contempt, as if his mental decline were somehow his own fault. Fred had treated his oldest son and his alcoholism the same way, so Donald's attitude wasn't surprising.

Donald's need for affirmation is… Endless

> His deep-seated insecurities have created in him a black hole of need that constantly requires the light of compliments that disappears as soon as he's soaked it in. Nothing is ever enough. This is far beyond garden-variety narcissism;

The author then links Donald's need to weakness and ego fragility:

> Donald is not simply weak, his ego is a fragile thing that must be bolstered every moment because he knows deep down that he is nothing of what he claims to be.
> He knows he has never been loved. So he must draw you in if he can by getting you to assent to even the most seemingly insignificant thing:

I couldn't agree more with her first quote.

But this second quote is not something I necessarily agree with (see criticism).

Donald used to be (somewhat) kinder, but got worse with time

> Donald probably thought he was being kind.
> There used to be a spark of that in him. He did once give me $100 to get my car out of impound. And after my father died, Donald was the only member of my family, other than my grandmother, who included me in anything.
> But his kindness had become so warped over time—through lack of use and Fred's discouragement—that what he considered kindness would have been practically unrecognizable to the rest of us.

Donald's psychology makes him a poor leader in crises

This was THE best insight in the book.

Something I also fully agree with (no wonder I consider it the best insight :).

She says first about Covid:

> managing the crisis in every moment doesn't help him promote his preferred narrative that no one has ever done a better job than he has.
> (…)
> In Donald's mind, even acknowledging an inevitable threat would indicate weakness. Taking responsibility would open him up to blame.

And then about the civil unrest:

> The same could be said of his handling of the worst civil unrest since the assassination of Martin Luther King,

> Jr. This is another crisis in which it would have been so easy for Donald to triumph, but his ignorance overwhelms his ability to turn to his advantage the third national catastrophe to occur on his watch. An effective response would have entailed a call for unity, but Donald requires division. It is the only way he knows how to survive—my grandfather ensured that decades ago when he turned his children against each other.

The author focuses more on division here.
However, I belive her first point is even more correct. It's impossible for Donald to acknowledge catastrophes because he wants a spotless presidency to declare the "best presidential term in history".

That's why he had a press release just to say that the Dow Jones had passed 30.000.

Anything that stands in the way of "best presidency" is a threat.
That's why he hides it, pretends doesn't exist, then pretends will go away soon.

Trump tried to steal all the inheritance money

> he seems to have come up with a plan to betray his father and steal vast sums of money from his siblings.
> (…)
> draft a codicil to my grandfather's will that would put Donald in complete control
> (…)
> My grandfather, who was having one of his more lucid days, sensed that something was not right (…) He angrily refused to sign
> (…)
> Maryanne would say years later, "We would have been penniless (…) We would have had to beg Donald if we wanted a cup of coffee."

But was equally shocking to read was this:

> Yet the siblings still got together every holiday as though nothing had happened.

And I was also surprised that the author made excuses for Donald, implying it was normal he'd so such a thing because of Fred's parenting.

Trump is not a good businessman: it's all a pretense

You heard the story:

Trump got 1 million loan from his father and turned it into billions.

Even Hillary Clinton repeated that during their 2016 debate.
Hillary said that to discredit Trump as a lucky son.

Little did she know that the reality was far worse.

Trump's start was thanks to his father:

> The real reason Donald's first two projects were acquired and developed relatively smoothly was in large part because of Fred's expertise as a developer and dealmaker.
> Neither would have been possible without his contacts, influence, approval, money, knowledge, and, maybe most important, endorsement of Donald

Fred was there to prop up Donald when he was about to fail:

> my grandfather sent his chauffeur with more than $3 million in cash to purchase chips at the Castle (…) The next day, my grandfather wired another $150,000 to the Castle, presumably for more chips

Fred's empire covered Donald's mistakes:

> Far from expanding his father's empire, everything Donald did after Trump Tower (which, along with his first project, the Grand Hyatt, could never have been accomplished without Fred's money and influence) chipped away at the empire's value.
> By the late 1980s, the Trump Organization seemed to be in the business of losing money, as Donald siphoned untold millions away from Trump Management in order to support the growing myth of himself as a real estate phenom and master dealmaker.

Over a lifetime, Trump got more than half a billion from his father:

> While my grandfather was alive, Donald alone had received the equivalent of $413 million
> (…)
> That did not include the $170 million he had received through the sale of my grandfather's empire

Even the banks propped Donald.
Why?
Because they lent Donald so much money that he was losing, that they needed him to succeed.
Says the author:

> a solution had to be found that would protect Donald's image, which, in turn, would protect the banks' money.
> (…)
> His last name was the draw: without the name there would be no new gamblers or tenants or people willing to buy bonds and hence no new revenue.
> (….)
> the banks (…) put him on a $450,000-a-month allowance—that is, almost $5.5 million a year for having failed miserably.

Finally, Trump also bumbled the sale of Fred's estate:

> In 2004, the vast majority of the empire my grandfather had spent more than seven decades building was sold to a single buyer, Ruby Schron, for $705.6 million. The banks financing the sale for Schron had assigned a value of almost $1 billion to the properties, so in one fell swoop my uncle Donald, the master dealmaker, left almost $300 million on the table.
> Selling the estate in bulk was a strategic disaster

The media is to blame for a conman's success

The author tells us:

- Gave him a platform to attract audience
- Bought the lie of the self-made man
- Treated like a serious candidate
- Never challenged him

The media allowed Trump to become a serious candidate without properly challenging him.

An attentive media would have shown that Trump is too dumb to become POTUS:

> It's easy to sound coherent and somewhat knowledgeable when you control the narrative and are never pressed to elaborate on your premise or demonstrate that you actually understand the underlying facts.
> It is an indictment (among many) of the media that none of that changed during the campaign, when exposing Donald's lies and outrageous claims might actually have saved us from his presidency. On the few occasions he was asked about his positions and policies (which for all intents and purposes don't really exist), he still wasn't expected or required to make sense or demonstrate any depth of understanding.

Personally, I'd add an extra failure:

- **In 2024 the media treats him as a political candidate rather than a high risk to democracy**

And that includes democrat-leaning media like CNN.

Trump sacrifices truth for a good (self-serving) story

Says the author:

> As usual with Donald, the story mattered more than the truth, which was easily sacrificed, especially if a lie made the story sound better.

And:

> (…) and then launched into his version of my "back from the brink" redemption story.
> "It was really bad for a while—and then she started doing drugs." "Whoa," I said, holding up my hands.
> "Really?" said Melania, suddenly interested. "No, no, no. I've never done drugs in my life."
> (…) He was embellishing the story for effect, and he knew I knew it. "She was a total disaster," he said, smiling more broadly.
> (…)

Worse yet, Trump's lies are often concocted to make others look bad, and make himself look good:

> By conflating my dropping out of college and his hiring me to write his book (while throwing in a fictional drug addiction), he concocted a better story that somehow had him playing the role of my savior.
> There was no point in setting the record straight, however; there never was with him

Good proof of that is this video:

There is no grand strategy in Trump: his ego only drives him

> I hope this book will end the practice of referring to Donald's "strategies" or "agendas," as if he operates according to any organizing principles.
> He doesn't.

I largely agree.
Donald has great power instincts, but he's no planner.
And his ego makes it impossible to follow other people's plans. Even when they know better.

See as an example his lack of preparation for the presidential debate:

Sycophants to dark triads are used and thrown away

This is a pattern I've also noticed and tend to agree with:

> Donald's chiefs of staff are prime examples of this phenomenon.
> John Kelly, at least for a while, and Mick Mulvaney, without any reservations at all, would behave the same way—until they were ousted for not being sufficiently "loyal."
> That's how it always works with the sycophants. First they remain silent no matter what outrages are committed; then they make themselves complicit by not acting. Ultimately, they find they are expendable when Donald needs a scapegoat.

The same happened to Mike Pence, and later to Rudolph Giuliani.

See here for more:

- **Trump VS Rudolph Giuliani**
- **Trump left his followers hang to dry after insurrection**

Anthony Scaramucci, a great communicator and one of my favorite analysts, confirms the same from first-hand experience (the dialogue is me paraphrasing!):

> **Anthony**: With Donald you go on an arch. You dislike him in the beginning, then you try to work with him because he's the political leader, and then you realize there is no team-work with him because there is only team Trump

Donald would never be seen with his own followers

> Donald's need for affirmation is so great that he doesn't seem to notice that the largest group of his supporters are people he wouldn't condescend to be seen with outside of a rally

Yep, 100%.

This is why we're often critical of followers and fans here.
And especially of narcissists's fans.

A risk to democracy

This was written in 2020, and it may be more relevant today than it was back then:

> If he is afforded a second term, it would be the end of American democracy

MORE WISDOM

Trump paid to pass his SAT test

And he paid someone to take the SATs for him:

> he enlisted Joe Shapiro, a smart kid with a reputation for being a good test taker, to take his SATs for him

Donald Was Poor With Women

Donald was no natural charmer:

> As the two of them were chatting, she mentioned that she had gone to a boarding school near New York Military Academy.
> "Which one?" he asked.
> When she told him, he looked at her for a second and then said, "I'm so disappointed that you went to that school."
> Annamaria, who was three years older than Donald, said, "Who are you to be disappointed in me?" That ended the conversation

We don't disagree with that :).

Let people come to you

> The tableau reminded me of one of my grandfather's tactics: he always made his supplicants come to him, either at his Brooklyn office or his house in Queens, and he remained seated while they stood.

Also see our 48 Laws of Power summary and body language of power.

Careful with lies to sound charming: smart people see through them

Says the author of Donald greeting her:

> when he saw me, he pointed at me with a surprised look on his face, then said, "I specifically asked for you to be here." That was the kind of thing he often said to charm people, and he had a knack for tailoring his comment to the occasion, which was all the more impressive because I knew it wasn't true

The power of positive thinking

The "thinking positive" movement bolstered Fred's skirting of problems.

Says the author:

> Peale was a charlatan (…)
> Fred wasn't a reader, but it was impossible not to know about Peale's (…) *The Power of Positive Thinking*. The title alone was enough for Fred
> (…)
> Peale's doctrine proclaimed that you need only self-confidence in order to prosper in the way God wants you to.
> (….)
> That view neatly confirmed what Fred already thought: he was rich because he deserved to be.

The author says that Fred was unable to empathize or deal with any personal problem in his family because problems stood in the way of his "think positive" gospel.

Don't over-apologize with killers, they'll respect you less

> Fred hated it when his oldest son screwed up or failed to intuit what was required of him, but he hated it even more when, after being taken to task, Freddy apologized. "Sorry, Dad," Fred would mock him. Fred wanted his oldest son to be a "killer" in his parlance (for what reason it's impossible to say—collecting rent in Coney

> Island wasn't exactly a high-risk endeavor in the 1950s)

Trump behaves dishonorably in everyday life

For example, putting people on loudspeakers with others present, without warning them:

> He was usually on a call, which he'd put on speaker
> (…) The person on the other end, who had no idea he or she was on speaker (…) Whenever anything outrageously sycophantic, salacious, or stupid was said, Donald smirked and pointed to the speakerphone as if to say, "What an idiot."

Ivana was arrogant, Marla was nice

> about as different from Ivana as a human being could be. Marla was down-to-earth and soft-spoken where Ivana was all flash, arrogance, and spite

I had the same feeling watching the two:

QUOTES

Very telling on Fred's "support" as a father:

> "I need to beat this, Dad. I don't think I can do it by myself. I know I can't."
> Instead of asking "What can I do for you?" Fred said, "What do you want from me?"

Mary Trump has a knack for dropping humor.
Here are some of them:

> my name was plastered everywhere, on everything: TRUMP shampoo, TRUMP conditioner, TRUMP slippers, TRUMP shower cap, TRUMP shoe polish, TRUMP sewing kit, and TRUMP bathrobe. I opened the refrigerator, grabbed a split of TRUMP white wine, and poured it down my Trump throat so it could course through my Trump bloodstream and hit the pleasure center of my Trump brain

And a little bit later, visiting the White House, another zinger towards the quality of Trump's products:

> Each of the waiters carried a bottle of red wine and a bottle of white.
> Real wine, not TRUMP wine

On Trump's initial work for his father:

> Donald's job description seems to have included lying about his "accomplishments" and allegedly refusing to rent apartments to black people (which would become the subject of a Justice Department lawsuit accusing my grandfather and Donald of discrimination).

A funny power move when Donald didn't want to be framed as "not visiting his mother enough":

> Mary's been visiting me every day," Gam said, smiling at me.
> He turned to me. "Must be nice to have so much free time."

LOL :D

CRITICISM

Unconvincing Psychological Analyses

I found the analysis of Trump's psychological development overly speculative.

And I found it overly blamed Fred, Donald's father, for how Donald turned out.

Let's see more:

Cultural Determinism

For example:

> In order to cope, Donald began to develop powerful but primitive defenses, marked by an increasing hostility to others and a seeming indifference to his mother's absence and father's neglect. The latter became a kind of learned helplessness (…) In place of those needs grew a kind of grievance and behaviors—including bullying, disrespect, and aggressiveness—that served their purpose in the moment (…) Unfortunately for Donald and everybody else on this planet, those behaviors became hardened into personality traits because (…) Fred Trump came to validate, encourage, and champion the things about Donald that rendered him essentially unlovable and that were in part the direct result of Fred's abuse

I feel this is speculative and "socially deterministic" –"tabula rasa" approach-.

I see it this way instead: **dark triads tend to have dark triad children**.
And then, icing on the cake, the 'asshole types' also provide an ahole role model for the children.

And a bit later in the book:

> Fred destroyed Donald, too, but not by snuffing him out as he did Freddy; instead, he short-circuited Donald's ability to develop and experience the entire spectrum of human emotion.
> By limiting Donald's access to his own feelings and rendering many of them unacceptable, Fred perverted his son's perception of the world and damaged his ability to live in it

I think this outweighs Fred's contributions and downplays Trump's.

Following the author's analysis, are we expected to believe that Trump would have been an altruistic saint with a better father?

Trump was likely already wired like his father from birth.

Is Trump overcompensating for low self-esteem? Grandiose VS vulnerable narcissism

The author claims Trump overcompensated for weakness and fear.

Some passages from the book:

> Donald's reckless hyperbole and unearned confidence that hid Donald's pathological weaknesses and insecurities
> (…)

And:

> Donald's growing arrogance, in part a defense against his feelings of abandonment and an antidote to his lack of self-esteem, served as a protective cover for his deepening insecurities

I'm unconvinced with the author's claim that Trump is insecure and has low self-esteem.
To be precise, she never directly claims it, but she takes it for granted (as per the above quotes).
Not only I disagree with it, but to me, that's psychologizing, not a good scientific approach.

There is some evidence supporting the idea that insecurity can lead to compensatory behaviors.
That seems to be more the case with *vulnerable* narcissism.

Grandiose narcissists may still engage in compensatory behavior (Jordan et al., 2003).
But for them it's less about masking low self-esteem and more about *maintaining* an *inflated* sense of self.

And I'm not convinced Trump is more of a vulnerable narcissist.
Not more than he is *also* a grandiose one, at least.

Indeed, to me, he is a mix of both.

Trump is afraid, still pandering to his father

To explain Trump's narcissism and grandiosity, the author says:

> the same little boy who is desperately worried that he, like his older brother, is inadequate and that he, too, will be destroyed for his inadequacy. At a very deep level, his bragging and false bravado are not directed at the audience in front of him but at his audience of one: his long-dead father.

I also see this as waaay over-reading into childhood experience.

Occam's razor principle with TPM spin:

⚖ **If there is a simpler and unproven explanation, there is no need for a convoluted, unproven one.**

And the explanation of Trump's behavior is narcissism.

"Women's psychology" trends VS evidence-based psychology

In general I see two approaches to psychology:

- Evidence-based
- Opinion and interpretation-based

The second tends to appeal more to women.

Besides the psychoanalytical "storytelling" I'm not too fond of, this passage also suggested me the author belongs to that second school:

> NYMA also reinforced Donald's aversion to vulnerability, which is essential for tapping into love and creativity because it can also expose us to shame, something he could not tolerate

Ehmm… What?
That feels like a leaf straight from Brene Brown's "*Daring Greatly*" and all her other books.
To me, Brene's approach is glorified, academic-coated pop psychology.

Limited Definition of "Success" Warps Trump's Analysis

The author doesn't differentiate between human development, human empathic bonds, and material "success".

While in my opinion a “successful” life would include all these dimensions, material success still matters to many.

Read again the sentence above:

> Fred perverted his son’s perception of the world and **damaged his ability to live in it**

So Trump has been made “incapable of living in the world?”.

How about being “effective” in that world?

I think Trump has been pretty darn effective and successful by many standards of Western -or human- “success”:

- **Money**, lots of it
- **Power**, lots of it
- **Women**, several and attractive

Doesn’t Give Trump Enough Credit

Even if you believe Trump is an egotistical wannabe despot, which I also believe he is…

You still can’t take concrete and objective achievements away.

But the author doesn’t seem to be willing to extend any credit.
For example:

> Donald’s ego has been and is a fragile and inadequate barrier between him and the real world, which, thanks to his father’s money and power, he never had to negotiate by himself

Come on, even if you wanna say it was luck, friends’ help at the right time, desperate banks or whatever… He still ended up with a much larger financial empire than he inherited.
Even if you wanna say it was white rural fragility that helped his candidacy… He still won the primaries and got millions of votes.

And even if you wanna criticize his presidency.
For example, his leadership during Covid, which I agree is an absolute disgrace and dishonor. But he also did do something OK.

For example, I disagree it’s a big merit that he didn’t start any war. In truth, Trump’s personality are more likely t start wars -remember in his early presidency when he bragged of “sending an armada to North Korea”-.
But still, data at hand, he still did not start any war.

Personal Bias Shows – Several Times

For example:

Aggrandizing father’s success, minimizing others

talking about her father:

> What Freddy achieved in the cockpit made him unique in the Trump family. None of Fred’s other children would accomplish so much entirely on their own
> (…)
> When you consider that there were no flight simulators and all the training was done in the air, the achievement was all the more staggering

OK, he became a pilot, nice.
But still… It does sound a bit aggrandizing of his father, while minimizing the others. Especially when you consider that, even if lost it all, Donald still became a billionaire.
And then *president*.

Even accounting for some family help, most people would consider those accomplishments MUCH more unique than becoming a pilot.

Denies Donald may have been better in the business

For example:

> Since my father's death, Donald has suggested that "they" (meaning he and my grandfather) should have "let" Freddy do what he loved and excelled at (flying) rather than force him to do something he hated and was bad at (real estate). But there's no evidence to suggest that my father lacked the skills to run Trump Management, just as there is none to suggest that Donald had them.

However, earlier in the book, she says:

> Trying to prove he could make executive decisions, Freddy placed a window order for one of the older buildings. When Fred found out, he was furious. "You should have slapped a goddamn coat of paint on them instead of wasting my money!" he shouted while the employees looked on.
> "Donald is worth ten of you. He never would have done anything so stupid." Donald was still in high school at the time

Frankly, this all reminded me of The Godfather's family, with Fredo being passed over for Michael.
And Fredo denying Michael was better suited for the job:

Over-blames Donald and Fred for his father's demise

The author says or implies Fred caused her father's demise into alcoholism.

And she says or implies it was, at times, under conscious attack.

That's plausible.
And several of her stories are plausible and fit with MO of sociopaths like Fred, and with emotional power dynamics.

But it seems to me the author may *over*-blame Donald and Fred for his father's descent into alcoholism:

> The only self-made man in the family, Freddy was being slowly, inexorably dismantled.

Probably Fred played a role.
It's plausible Donald did as well.

But… How about some ownership as well?

Even if that ownership only meant "not being able to throw off the father's yoke", that's still also on him.

Also, notice the frame of "the only self-made man". As if he was the only family star, brought down by jealousy and envy.

And just to highlight this point:

It's never her father's fault?

This line:

> My dad's dream of flying had been taken away from him, and he had now lost his birthright. He was no longer a husband; he barely saw his kids

No it wasn't "taken away".
He DRANK it away.

And no, there is no birthright to work at your father's company if you don't add value.

And finally, Freddy is "poor Freddy" that he can't see the children.
But grandfather Fred was bad for prioritizing work over children?

Freddy pointed a gun at the mother of his children!

Glosses over father's (HUGE) red flags

I understand she wants to defend her father.

But as a critical reader, I've seen some HUGE red flags.
For example:

> Dad was aiming a rifle at her, the .22 he kept on his boat to shoot sharks—and he kept laughing.
> Mom begged him to stop. He raised the gun until it was pointing at her face. She lifted her left arm higher and screamed again, more loudly. Dad seemed to find it funny. I turned and ran back to bed.

He was drunk, but still… What a toxic father and husband!

The abuse was even deeper than "drunk Freddie" though:

> Despite my mother's fear of snakes, Dad brought home a ball python one day and put the tank into the den, forcing my mother to pass by it any time she needed to do laundry, go into my brother's room, or leave the apartment.

What a HUGE POS move!
This is pure cruelty.

If this is not abusive, well…

It seems to me, this was a house of toxicity.
But her father was not the "weak but nice exception". If anything, he was the weak and potentially *worse* expression.

The author's mother asked for a divorce -no wonder-.
And she had to change the lock because he tried to sneak back in once again.

Political Bias Shows

For example:

> Donald was to my grandfather what the border wall has been for Donald: a vanity project funded at the expense of more worthy pursuits

I'd argue that, whether one agrees with strong borders or not, it's an important political decision, rather than a vanity

project.

Personally, I'd also be in favor of stronger border policing.

And talking about Trump's victory:

> Despite the fluke that was his electoral advantage and a "victory" that was at best suspect and at worst illegitimate, he never had his finger on the pulse of the zeitgeist; his bluster and shamelessness just happened to resonate with certain segments of the population

Trump may win again in 2024.

Is that also a fluke?

I agree Trump only resonates with a portion of voters and was, in a way, lucky to ride discontent and immigration blunders by the Democrats. He would also certainly lose without the Electoral College.

But still, he won the Republican ticket and he seems to know how to rally a crowd.
And most of all… How exactly is his victory "illegitimate?

Or talking about the USA and the economy:

> the daily corruption he has committed since January 20, 2017, have led to the impending collapse of this once great nation's economy, democracy, and health.

Really?
The DOW first passed 30.000 before the pandemic under Trump's presidency.
Health was probably pretty much the same.
And USA has never been stronger.

None of that is thanks to Trump, of course.
It would have been the same, or even better.
But I find this fake catastrophism weak, and no better than Donald's Trump approach.

Some left-leaning accusations against Trump are off

The biggest one was this for me:

> I can only imagine the envy with which Donald watched Derek Chauvin's casual cruelty and monstrous indifference as he murdered George Floyd; hands in his pockets, his insouciant gaze aimed at the camera. I can only imagine that Donald wishes it had been his knee on Floyd's neck

I don't believe that for a second.

It's also illogical.

I feel confident to deny that because it doesn't rely on believing in Trump's goodness or empathy. But it rests on Trump's craving for *good* press, not bad one.
Killing Floyd was bad press.

The "Family Must Help" Morality I Disagree With

The author sounds disapproving of how the Trump family treated her father and mother.

Part of that disapproval seems to stem from the amount of money her mother receives in alimony.

The author seems to come from this moral angle:

If you can help family, you must.

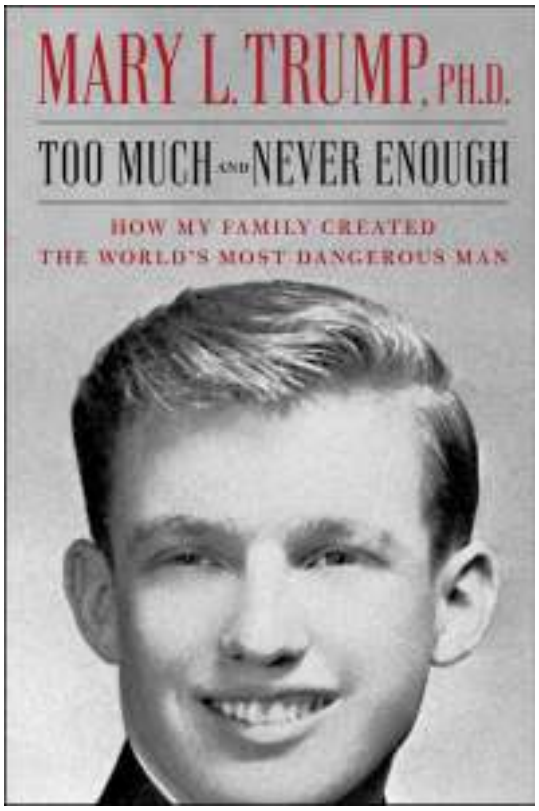
However, I disagree.
Just because one is wealthy and you're family, it doesn't follow that the wealthier person is supposed to help.

Justifying Trump Based On His Upbringing

Finally, and most surprisingly, the author also seems to excuse Trump for his behavior.

Even when she mentions Trump's pettiness caused deaths when he withheld ventilators, she ends by saying "Donald isn't really the problem after all."

I disagree.



REVIEW

Too Much and Never Enough is a great book for those who want to learn more about the Trump's family and its most famous representative, Donald Trump.

On the con side, there is some personal and political bias.
Plus, a good chunk of the psychological analysis rests on psychoanalytical interpretations that I found to lack substance and evidence.

On the plus side, the bias is limited in scope and depth, and mostly in favor of her father rather than against Donald.

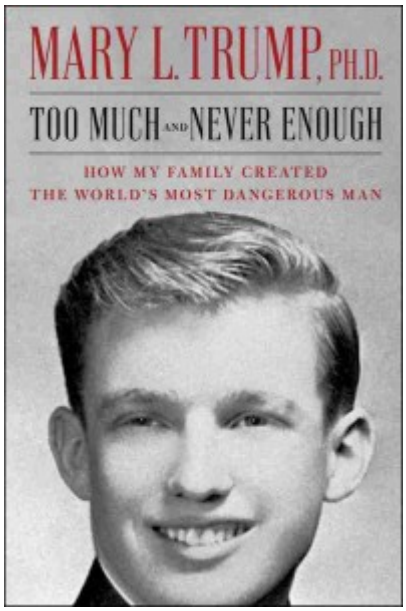
Speaking of which, Donald Trump comes out of it as a rather dark, manipulative, and "not so bright" figure.
So the book is bound to receive politically-motivated reactions, both in its praise, and even more in its attacks.

However, given the situation and circumstances, the author provided us with a relatively balanced and factual account of the Trump's family.

I find it an instructive read and, on a more personal note, I'm very grateful to Mary Trump for having written it.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Too Much and Never Enough Summary: Trump = Narcissist?



Too Much and Never Enough (2020) provides an insider view of Donald Trump, and the Trump family. The author, who is Trump's niece, paints a dark picture of the former US president as a callous, selfish, and manipulative personality.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/too-much-and-never-enough-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.5

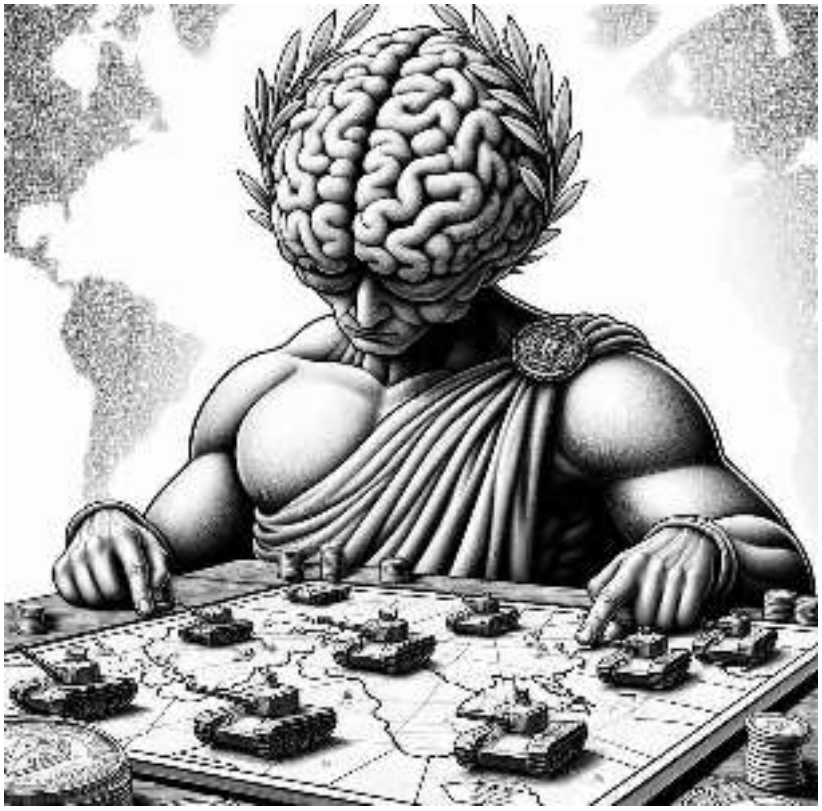
The Mindsets to Win At Life (& Crush the Competition)

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 October 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Winners think differently than losers.

It's a paradox of sorts.
While to win you need to beat the competition, winners don't focus on competitors.

This article explains how winners think about the competition.
Adopt these mindsets, and you too can crush the competition.



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- The Mindsets, In One Real-Life Story

1. It's Always About The Game, Never The Players

Here's the principle:

> ⚖ Losers don't compete. Average men focus on beating individuals. **Winners focus on dominating the**

> **game**

The “game” is any ecosystem of endeavor where we pursue goals and self-advancement.

At TPM we’re interested in the “games” representing the most important life domains:

- Game of dating (example below)
- Game of career/business
- Game of power

But ultimately, **it always comes down to the game of life**.
Single domains are just pieces of the life puzzle.

The winners focus on the game, rather than on individuals.

1.2. Take your revenge on the game

A corollary of “it’s always about the game” is:

> ⚖ Average men dream revenge, while winners’s revenge is full-game conquest

And in a more detailed format:

- Bottom 40% passively acquiesce
- Middle 40% dream revenge
- Top 19% men seek revenge
- Top 1% men get revenge on the game

The game is the ultimate boss.
And it’s also your competitors’ boss.
Beat their boss, and you automatically beat them all.

I know, I know, I can already hear the complains.
“But what if I want revenge against some a**holes?”

The good news is that your success is your revenge through their envy.

If you want to rub it in further for extra measure, just parade that success in their faces.
Make sure they see it, and that they hear about you.

But for winners, **revenge against individual players is a *consequence* of winning *the game.***

2. See THROUGH The Competition

General principle:

> ⚖ Losers are scared by competitors. Average men focus on beating the competition. **Winners don’t even see the competition**

Why?
Because this is a corollary of mindset #1: winners focus on the game.

Yes, winning often entails competing.

HOWEVER…

Even from a rational point of view, focusing on competitors is often a distraction more than an advantage.

Most games have many available prizes, many winning combinations, many winners… And relatively few top contenders.

As an example, take dating.
Or business.
Or even a "vainer" goal such as becoming popular.

In all these endeavors competition only exists relative to *your* skills, value, and effort.
So you advance faster with solo effort and focus -or, sometimes, *cooperati*ng, rather than competing-.

That's why **winners focus on goals, and game dominance**.

Even when competition stands in the way, it's never personal.
Other competitors are like any other -inanimate- obstacle.
But until they're clear obstacles -or potential allies-… They really just don't exist.

What's that standing between me and her? A random richer/taller/bigger guy? I don't see him

Competition-focus ⍰⍰

Two ways it makes you ineffective:

1. Lowers your confidence

So many men have low confidence.

And I get it.

If you look around and, as many men do, you focus on who "has it better than you"… You will ALWAYS find someone better.

If you focus on what they have better, anyone has *something* better.

The alternatives are:

1. Believe you're better at everything
2. Ignore the competition with total target-focus

Both are better than negative comparisons.

However, #1 is simply untrue.
Gifted men may hold that frame with more limited reality distortions.
But the farther away you move from "total perfection", the more you distort reality.

With #2 instead, you have no need for lies.

And bonus point: you never worry about cockblockers because ghosts don't cockblock.

2. Competition-focus sidetracks you into indirect and less effective approaches

I see this all over the manosphere when it comes to dating.

Men want to get more women, but instead of meeting more women, they focus on:

Indirect	Direct
Muscle mass (impress men)	"**Looks**maxxing" (attract women)
Learn to **fight** (challenge competition)	Learn to **dance** (engage women)
Hustle for **money**	Learn **game** with practice
Be an **alpha male**	Be a **seducer**
Get **status**	Quit the social circle, **meet more women**
…	…

I was never all that much from the left column.
But I still smashed my dating goals doing more of the latter. (And if I could go back in time, I may even learn dancing).

Also read:

- Alpha male game is costing you
- Strategy beats power ⍰

Goal-focus ⍰⍰

So if you don't see the competition, what do you see then?

It means that, in order, you focus:

- **Target**, tactical level
- **Goal**, strategic level
- **Self**, and self-growth
- **Victory**, at the game level

Dating example

Let's take the example of dating.

This is how the killers approach dating:

- **Women-focus,** ignore men
- **Intimacy**, girlfriend, rotation-focus (or whatever the tactical end goal)
- **Skills-focus to get an attractive girlfriend** or a rotation whenever he pleases

Victory can be a long-lasting relationship, a family, or a life as a player.
Or dating on one's terms, or even collecting enough notches until you're satisfied.
Finally, it may also be to exit the game of dating altogether.

⍰ Shortest Guy Picks Up The "Club Queen"

"A guy I know" once picked up the hottest girl in a club.

It was a big club, too.
Right in the historical center of Prague, a place that doesn't lack attractive women.

She was one of those girls you look at and think "Wow".

That guy was one of the shortest guys in that club.
If not *the* shortest.

With a competition-focus he wouldn't have even made a move.

But… He didn't see the competition.
He only saw an attractive woman.

3. Battle Scars Pave The Road to Victory

Principle:

> ⚖ Losses diminish losers' self-esteem. Winners see losses as battles cars that build character on the way to greater tomorrows

Battle scars are the only undeniable badges of honor.

Badges and medals bestowed by others include politics. And always entail external opinions.
Battle scars are between you, and the game.
They are pure, and they never lie.

And if your competition scarred you, even better.
All extra motivation you can pour into dominating *the game*.

This mindset rests on well-known self-help principles such as:

1. Focus on learning
2. Stick through the losses
    - Use losses as motivation

Naive self-help sometimes forgets the ultimate goal though.
The goal is never to stay in the apprenticeship.
Or to keep losing and struggling just to "prove you can".

Winners never forget the end goal:

- Learn *early on* BUT *with a focus on winning the game*
- Learn while seeking *mastery*
- Losses turn into badges of honor *once you win the war*

And some relevant articles:

- Develop growth mindset
    - Don't be duped by naive growth mindset
- Pain as fuel

4. Effort Over Time Wins the Game

Winning the game requires dedication *over time*.

A long-term predisposition is helpful.
And continuous and relentless action is mandatory.

Here's a good mindset:

> ⍰ Every day I keep going, and while a weaker competitor drops out, I grow stronger

Just repeat that.

Day after day.
Loss after loss.
Learned lesson after learned lesson.
Win after win.

Until you string so many in a row, that one day you turn around and realize:

"Holy cow, I'm on the summit.
I made it"

The Mindsets, In One Real-Life Story

Oxford Handbook of Evo Psych and Romantic Relationships: Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 October 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships (2023)* presents the empirical and theoretical advancements in the evolutionary study of dating and romantic relationships.

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Video Review

SUMMARY

About the Author:
Justin K. Mogilski and Todd K. Shackelford are the editors, both holding a PhD in evolutionary psychology.
As it's often the case with handbooks, each chapter is written by different authors.

Selection Is Intrasexual & Intersexual

The two processes are:

- **Intrasexual selection**, where members of one sex compete with one another for greater sexual access to members of the opposite sex.
- **Intersexual selection (AKA preferential mate choice)**, where one sex chooses a mate from the opposite sex based on certain traits they prefer

However, the two are interlinked:

> First, if men compete with each other in physical contests (…) the informative variance produced can create or amplify women's preferences for athletic prowess (…).
> Second, the mate preferences of one sex can dictate the domains of intrasexual competition in the other sex.

Such as, for example, if women prefer bravery and generosity, that creates selection pressure on men to display honest indicators of bravery and generosity, likely leading to male competition for out-doing each other.

Dimorphism is a cue of sexual selection

The larger the difference between the sexes, the more evolution was because of mate choice, rather than survival:

> When such large sexual dimorphism of a trait is observed, it typically means that there has been sexual selection driving the exaggeration of the trait (in contrast, viability selection, which is concerned with survival, tends to act more equally on the two sexes than sexual selection, since a trait useful for survival in one sex is typically also useful for survival in the other

This also means that mate choice may act *against* survival:

Parental Investment & Trivers' Theory

An important sex difference among genders comes to who invests the most in child-rearing.

One of those key gender differences is which sex chooses.

Trivers originally explained why with the theory of parental investment and sexual selection:

> The sex that invests more than the other, he argued, does the choosing, so the intersexual selection component applies mainly to that sex.
> The sex that invests less, in contrast, is more competitive with members of their own sex for mating access to the higher investing sex.
> Trivers's theory was based on the work of Bateman (1948), and the key principle is termed the "Bateman gradient," the steepness of the slope between mating success and reproductive success. Sexual access to additional mates (one form of mating success), according to Bateman and Trivers, pays more reproductive dividends for the low-investing sex than for the high-investing sex

And how about humans?
Well, women choose more, but… For long term, both genders choose.

Let's see why:

Parental Investment & Choosing In Humans

In brief:

- **Most men invest in their children**, thus
- **Men are also choosy for long-term partners**
- **Men are less choosy for short-term** and uncommitted sex, but most men still are not completely undiscerning
- **Women also compete with each other for high-value men**: *robust evidence also supports female–female mating competition for prospective mates (e.g. , Benenson, 2014; Buss, 1988; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Campbell, 2002; Krems et al. , 2016; Vaillancourt, 2013; Vaillancourt & Krems, 2018)*

In most animals, mate choice is mostly the female's prerogative.

But in humans, both sexes exert strong preferential mate choice, so the causal process applies to both women and men.
However, a key difference comes down to whether we're talking about long-term mating, or short-term sex.

In short term, men are less choosy than women.
However, Buss later explains, that because both sexes invest heavily in long-term mating contexts, we expect both sexes to be extremely choosy for long-term dating and relationships.

And later he says:

> **In long-term mating**, both sexes typically invest heavily in offspring, so **both sexes are predicted to be choosy** or discriminating. And both sexes compete with members of their own sex for desirable members of the other sex.

And a little later:

> Although **men** are not physiologically bound to invest in ofspring via gestation and lactation, they have **evolved to provide resources given** that ancestral environments were often harsh and **that men's resources and protective presence likely contributed to offspring survival** (Buss, 1989; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Geary, 2000, 2015)
> (…)
> Thus, **men also evolved to be selective and cautious when considering long-term relationships** (Kenrick et al. , 1990; Li & Kenrick, 2006)

Indeed, whenever I hear a guy who "wants a girl with a degree" or something similar, I know I'm in the presence of someone who's thinking long-term and who is family-oriented.
Furthermore, I know he's more likely to be more of a "modern" and egalitarian type of man for expecting his wife to work and contribute.

Women care more about his investment

Since:

1. Men do invest in their children, BUT
2. Not all men invest or can invest
3. Men's investment is important for the wellbeing of women and children

Women may have adapted to care more about men's investment.
And indeed:

> Investment by a partner is linked to satisfaction, but only for women; this pattern is similarly observed for self-disclosure, as well as the ability to elicit a partner's disclosures (Hendrick et al. , 1988)

Sexual Strategies Theory

Important premises of SST include:

1. **Humans have evolved distinct mating-specific adaptations** for specific problems. Solving them provides fitness benefits and avoiding them the fitness costs of pursuing each sexual strategy
2. **Sex similarity in mating psychology**. In domains in which the sexes confront similar adaptive challenges, such as solving the commitment problem in long-term mating, they have evolved a similar sexual psychology
3. **Sex differences in mating psychology** when the sexes have confronted different adaptive challenges (ie.: assessing the fertility or social status of a potential mate) they evolved distinct features of their sexual psychology
4. **Common long-term mating challenges faced by both sexes**. Ie.:
   - Identifying a partner able and willing to commit
   - Assessing long-term mate attributes such as an altruistically skewed welfare trade-of ratio (i.e. , one in which the partner makes decisions that reflect valuing your welfare more than their own) (Tooby et al. , 2008)
   - Identifying mates with similar mate value trajectories over time
   - Identifying mates who are not overly encumbered with costly commitments such as children from prior mateships or in the modern environment great financial debt
5. **Male-specifc long-term mating challenges**. Ie.:
   - Identifying potential partners high in reproductive value
   - Solving the paternity uncertainty problem.
6. **Female-specifc long-term mating challenges**. Ie.:
   - Identifying men who can acquire resources consistently over time
   - Identifying men willing to invest those resources in her and her children without diverting them to other women and their children
   - Identifying men able and willing to protect her and her children from harm and exploitation
7. **Male-specifc short-term mating challenges**. Ie.:
   - Desiring/finding a larger number of partners
   - Letting less time and commitment elapse before sex
   - Minimizing entangling commitments
8. **Female-specific short-term mating challenges**. In short-term mating, women have evolved to reap several potential fitness benefits, including immediate access to resources, obtaining high-quality genes, and mate switching to divest themselves of a cost-inflicting partner or to trade up to a superior partner (Buss et al., 2017).
9. **Context-specificity of sexual strategies**. Humans have evolved mating adaptations to implement different sexual strategies depending on features of condition and context such as operational sex ratio, mate value, social norms surrounding sexuality, culture-specific mating system, and ecological variables such as parasite prevalence, sex-specific mortality, food scarcity or abundance, and individual resource demands driven by the number of dependent children (e.g., Gangestad & Buss, 1993; Prall & Scelza, 2020; Schmitt, this volume).
10. **Sexual strategies are evolved psychological solutions and their behavioral manifestations**. Sexual strategies are evolved solutions to common and sex-differentiated mating problems. They include psychological design features sensitive to multiple features of context that activate or suppress them, information-processing procedures and decision rules, and manifest emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outputs that include attraction, sexual arousal, tactics of attraction, derogation of competitors, mate guarding, and many others.
11. **Humans have little conscious awareness of their mating psychology**. No conscious awareness about origins, nature, or evolved functions of sexual strategies is implied by SST. Nonetheless, humans may possess partial insight into some aspects of sexual strategies either through observation of others or through introspection about

the self, partially driven by the degree to which this awareness facilitates navigating the complex maze of mating challenges posed by the processes of sexual selection.

Also see by David Buss:

- **Evolutionary Psychology**
- **When Men Behave Badly**
- **The Evolution of Desire**

Women Short-Term Strategies Explained: mate switching VS dual-mating strategy (good genes)

On first glange, women don't gain nearly as much as men engaging in short-term, no-strings attached sex.

However, there is still plenty in it for women.
Currently, the theory of women's short-term sexual behavior include:

- **Immediate resources**
- **Good genes (AKA dual mating strategy)**: obtaining investment and resources from one regular committed partner and obtaining superior genes from an affair partner.
  Historically this hypothesis rested on the "ovulatory shift" -ie.: women prefer more masculine men during their ovulation window-.
  But "*The empirical evidence for these mate preference shifts is mixed. One large meta-analysis (…) found some support for the predicted preference shifts, although the effect sizes were small (Gildersleeve et al., 2014)*" and "*Based on the studies conducted thus far, empirical support for the hypothesized good genes function of women's short-term mating is weak or mixed (Jones et al. , 2019)*"
- **Evaluating short-term mates for long-term possibilities**
- **Mate switching**, such as starting to have short-term sex with a better man, and then move to him for a committed relationship

Buss tends to favor mate switching and he says:

> Mate switching may be the most frequent or primary function of female infdelity

There is much talk by some present-day red pill (2024) gurus about mate switching VS dual mating strategy.
Not that red pill folks like Rollo Tomassi have any high authority on these issues, but in my opinion, it's a nonsense debate since the above hypotheses are NOT mutually exclusive.
ALL above hypotheses can apply to different women, different situations, or may all apply to the same situation, with only different weights each.

My note: mate switching is the #1 option IF the higher value man is available

I believe that mate switching is women's #1 goal when a higher mate man is available because that's what makes the most sense for women: best genes, best provisioning, best relationships.
However, since higher value men may only be available for the short term, the "good genes" is the #2 option for women.

Finally, I'd personally add a 5th hypothesis:

- **Exaptation/spillover of pleasure**: women engage in short-term sex because it's pleasurable. Sexual pleasure evolved to increase copulation and the number of offspring. And that applies indiscriminately to both long-term, and short-term.
  So, sometimes women have sex because it's fun, without any deep motive (duh moment)

Culture & environment: they matter

Humans are social animals.

So it would be surprising if culture did *not* matter a lot.

However, the authors made a great point that I often suspected as well:

In general, culture matters increasingly more with society's complexity and opulence, while survival becomes less of a worry -and quantity of reproduction as well-.

Say the authors:

> The infuence of biological, ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural factors varies between and within types of societies. In isolated tribal, subsistencebased societies, biological and ecological factors play major roles. In traditional societies, besides these factors, socioeconomic and cultural factors play important roles. In modern societies, socioeconomic and cultural factors become dominant, with decreasing infuences for biological and ecological factors

The authors provide this evidence in support:

> The findings of Buss and colleagues (Buss et al. , 1990) about mate preference conform to this interpretation (…)
> India, China, Iran, and Nigeria were on one end, with high value on resource provisioning, domestic skills, chastity, home, and children, and the Netherlands, Great Britain, Finland, and Sweden on the other end with low value of these traditional qualities

I have personally noticed the same.
Poorer societies value money more than richer (and more socialist) ones.

Humans are also very good at adapting to different environments.
And that adaptation can be triggered by childhood experience, or also simply by moving and changing environment:

> When ecological and social conditions of life change, people adjust their norms of attractiveness due to exposure to new cultural environments.
> The example of Zulu people of South Africa, who moved to the UK, have demonstrated such capability for adaptation (Tovée et al. , 2006).

This is also why some men recommend to be careful with moving your mate from one country to another because… I can't write this publicly, sorry :).
See our programs or book a consultation.

The environment matters: earning example

For example, women in poorer ecologies place a premium on men's earnings:

> Notably, our mating psychologies are highly responsive to changing environmental challenges and demands, and evidence suggests that greater competition for resources and greater resource demands in one's local ecology upregulates women's preference for earning capacity and downregulates women's preference for emotional stability and compatibility of interests and values when evaluating potential mates (McGraw, 2002)

Childhood environment matters: life history examples

> People who faced **greater childhood adversity are more likely to develop faster life history strategies, which are associated with earlier sexual maturity and greater sexual motivation** relative to people with slower life history strategies.
> Dinh et al.(2017) found that women with faster life history strategies demonstrated a robust, positive association between conception risk and sexual motivation (…) Women with slower life history strategies, however, demonstrated a negative association between conception risk and sexual motivation.
> Thus, women who experienced unstable and harsh early environments were more likely to maximize reproductive opportunities, and this resulted in a closer coupling of ovarian hormones with sexual motivation compared to women who experienced more stable and plentiful early environments

Of course, these different approaches are only antithetical in the, shall I say it, lesser minds of extremists and biased individuals.
In truth, they're all just part of the mix -and part of the explanatory mix-.
It means that both ecology, culture, and genes (both shared among most people or exceptional to the individual) contribute to adjusting and changing the general trends of mating preferences.

Culture and individual needs matter: jealousy patterns example

The evolutionary headline on jealousy is that "men fear sexual infidelity, and women emotional infidelity".

In truth, it's more complex, and it depends largely on culture and the male parental investment:

> drawing on cross-national data from a two-part survey administered to 11 populations (3 urban, 8 small-scale societies), Scelza et al.(2019) suggest that the standard evolutionary psychology perspective of highly charged emotional responses to female infidelity by males might be somewhat simplistic
> (…) these researchers found that when sex and culture were considered in tandem, men and women in most of the focal populations were more upset by sexual infdelity. By contrast, in a small number of other populations, both sexes were more distressed by emotional infdelity.
> The key insight (…) is that sociocultural factors (e.g. , paternal investment and norms for extramarital sex) are potent "contributors to cross-cultural variation in jealous response" (p.23). Specifcally, the greater paternal investment and the lower frequency of extramarital sex, the more severe the jealous response. It is noteworthy that this recent work does indeed conform to the evolutionary prediction that the intensity of jealousy should depend on the male's level of investment

People change & adapt: condition-dependent mating strategies

People's taste in the opposite gender changes depending to personal, social, ecological, and cultural context.

This also means that mate value changes depending on:

- **Sex ratio**. Men shift to brief sexual encounters when many women are sexually available because the sex ratio is in their favor and they are therefore better able to satisfy their desire for variety (Pedersen, 1991)
- (potentially) **Ecological parasite prevalence**. higher parasite prevalence means greater value on physical attractiveness (Gangestad & Buss, 1993).
  Note: the importance of this variable is in question, awaiting further research
- **Individual autonomy**: attractiveness matters more in independent cultures, such as American society, and matters less and implies different expectations in interdependent societies, such as Korea in Southeast Asia and Ghana in Africa
- **Gender equality and cultural stereotypes**: sex differences in mating preferences for attractiveness are smaller in societies with greater gender equality (the Netherlands), compared to cultures with more conventional gender norms (ie.: Germany) (Buss et al. , 1990; De Raad & Doddema-Winsemius, 1992)

- **Opulence/resources**: substinence-based societies prefer mates with higher fat percentages (e.g. , Anderson et al. , 1992; Brown and & Konnor, 1987)

But don't go to extremes: why evolutionary models beat socio-cultural models

> Sociocultural models have considerable appeal and have characterized social psychology for several decades. However, **these models may be inadequate at dealing with the fact that (a) preferences are remarkably similar around the world** (Buss, 1989; Tomas et al. , 2020), **(b) preferences often look the same in diferent species** (Wroblewski et al. , 2009), and **(c) preferences are consistent across age groups and time** (Kenrick & Keefe, 1997)

Mate Value

Mate value is a measure of attractiveness.

People differ in their mate value, and high-mate value also means the ability to give and make others better off, as per social exchange:

> People vary in their mate value, or the degree to which they would promote the reproductive success of those who mate with them (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Symons, 1979, 1995)
> (…)
> it makes sense that humans have evolved not to mate indiscriminately but have evolved psychological mechanisms to evaluate and prefer mates who possess greater, as opposed to lesser, reproductive value

Evolutionary psychologists largely believe that what we find attractive is in good part shaped by evolution:

> with attraction being understood as an evolved psychobehavioral mechanism for identifying and pursuing healthy, fertile, high-quality mates (Lee et al. , 2008), and attractive cues understood as valid cues to underlying physiological or psychological quality (Coetzee et al. , 2009; Stephen & Tan, 2015)
> (…)
> Individuals who are able to identify cues to mate quality (…) enhancing their reproductive success and providing a selection pressure which favors genes that enhance successful identification of a partner's quality

High-quality mates provide two benefits:

- **Direct benefits to the chooser**, such as *protection from violence; gifts such as money, food, or access to high-quality territory; or investment in offspring (Luoto, 2019a; Trivers, 1972)*
- **Indirect benefits to the offspring**, such as good genes (Fisher, 1930; Jones & Ratterman, 2009)

My note: women's preference for the two may vary
I suspect different women also value those two differently.
For example, some selfish "gold digger" may prioritize direct benefit to them, rather than to their children.

Cues of genetic quality

The cues to mate genetic qualities can be divided into 4 categories, but then the authors

- **Health during development**
  - Symmetry, albeit *there is limited evidence that it refects aspects of health during development or in adulthood (cf.Borráz-León et al. , 2021)*
  - Sexual dimorphism (AKA: "sex typicality" or "masculinity/femininity"). Sexual dimorphism is thought to be

largely fxed by the end of puberty, so it is may act as a valid cue to hormone levels during development (Luoto et al. , 2019; Swift-Gallant et al. , 2020).
Exceptions apply though, the authors later say that "for long-term relationships and in harsh environments men prefer more masculine female partners (e.g. , Little et al. , 2007, but see Pereira et al. , 2020)"

- **Current condition**
  - Adiposity *faces near the average level of apparent facial adiposity were perceived as healthiest and most attractive*, but slightly contradicting: *asked to manipulate them to appear as healthy as possible, participants chose faces corresponding to lower BMI and lower adiposity* (Stephen et al. , 2017)
  - Skin Color and Texture smooth (Fink & Matts, 2008), yellow-orange (i.e., a combination of yellow and red; see Foo, Rhodes, et al., 2017), reddish (Re et al., 2011) and darker (Fink et al., 2001) skin
    - Yellowness and redness for Carotenoid concentration (see Foo, Rhodes, et al. , 2017; Stephen, Law-Smith, et al. , 2009). The authors also mention it comes from fruit and vegetables in the diet (Alaluf et al., 2002; Stahl et al., 1998)
    - Reddish skin pigments for blood vascularization and oxygenation (visually detected in reddish skin pigments; Re et al. , 2011)
    - Darker skin pigments for melanin concentration (Chung et al. , 2010) are all positively associated with immune system functioning (see Chew & Soon Park, 2004; Lakaye et al. , 2009; Re et al. , 2011; Smith & Tiboutot, 2007)
      My note: many exceptions always apply, see women's endless fascination with vampires

- **Genetic quality**
  - Major Histocompatibility Complex, thought to be detectable via (largely unknown) cues in individuals' odor and facial appearance (Lie et al. , 2009)
  - Height, but mostly for men, because *"women's height does not appear to strongly afect men's perceptions of women's attractiveness*". Height heritability is also larger in men, than women.
    Even here though, there is an "optimum balance": *The relationship between male height and reproductive success may be curvilinear, decreasing after an optimal height has been reached (Sugiyama, 2015). Even though taller men are favored by women, taller men have lower reproductive success than average men in some populations (Stulp & Barrett, 2016)*
  - Muscularity, especially upper-body strength explains most of the variance in women's perceptions of men's body attractiveness (Sell et al. , 2017)
  - Body odors: people find odors linked to superior immune functioning more attractive (Rikowski & Grammer, 1999).
    Body odor is also linked to men's masculinity and trait-level dominance (Sorokowska et al. , 2012; Sorokowska et al. , 2016), in turn related to elevated androstadienone (a testosterone derivative) levels, and women seem to be attracted to androstadienone-based odors (Saxton et al. , 2008)

- **Psychological traits**. *there is some evidence that individuals who express a preference for certain personality traits in a romantic partner find the faces of opposite-sex people who report that personality trait more attractive (Little et al., 2006). There is also evidence that intelligence (Zebrowitz et al., 2002) may be visible in the face*
  - Competence
  - Compassion, including kindness, agreeableness, generosity, and altruism.
    When physical attractiveness was paired with altruism (i.e. , high physical attractiveness/low altruism in one condition and high altruism/low physical attractiveness in another condition), women desired a long-term mate with high altruism/low physical attractiveness condition. (Farrelly et al., 2016).
  - Compatibitily, *both men and women place greater importance on compatibility of interests with a long-term mate (Treger & Masciale, 2018)*
  - Intelligence: *For women, a mate's intelligence appears to be a nonnegotiable psychological characteristic in any*

relationship, regardless of involvement (Jonason & Antoon, 2019; Jonason et al. , 2019)
  - Humor, posited to be an indicator of intelligence. Consistent with this hypothesis, both men and women prefer their partners to have a sense of humor (Li et al. , 2002), with women specifically preferring humor-producing men, and men preferring humor appreciating women (Hone et al. , 2015)
- **Non-bodily traits**, such as indicators of status, creativity, clothes, etc.

For sexual dimorphism, we have for women:

- **Facial femininity** may act as a valid cue to fecundity, higher estrogen (see Law Smith et al. , 2006) and superior immune function (Foo et al. , 2020)
  - Small jaw
  - Small nose
  - Reduced interocular distance
- **Lower waist-to-hip ratio** (WHR)
- **Lumbar region curvature** of around 45.5° would be best for pregnancy and men men's attraction to women peaks as women's lumbar curvature approaches this angle (see Lewis et al. , 2015)
- **Breast**,
  - Medium and large breasts seen as more attractive, healthy, young, and fertile than small or very large breasts (Furnham et al. , 1998; Havlíček et al. , 2017; Pazhoohi et al. , 2020; Singh & Young, 1995; Swami et al. , 2009; Valentova et al. , 2017);
  - Breasts with a 45:55 upper-pole (i.e. , distance from the nipple to the top of the breast) to lower-pole (i.e. , distance from the nipple to the bottom of the breast) ratio (Mallucci & Branford, 2012, 2014)
  - Symmetrical breasts are more fecund (Møller et al., 1995) and at lower risk of breast cancer (Scutt et al. , 1997), again suggesting that breast symmetry may act as a valid cue to health

However, **women's preference for masculinity is much less straightforward.**

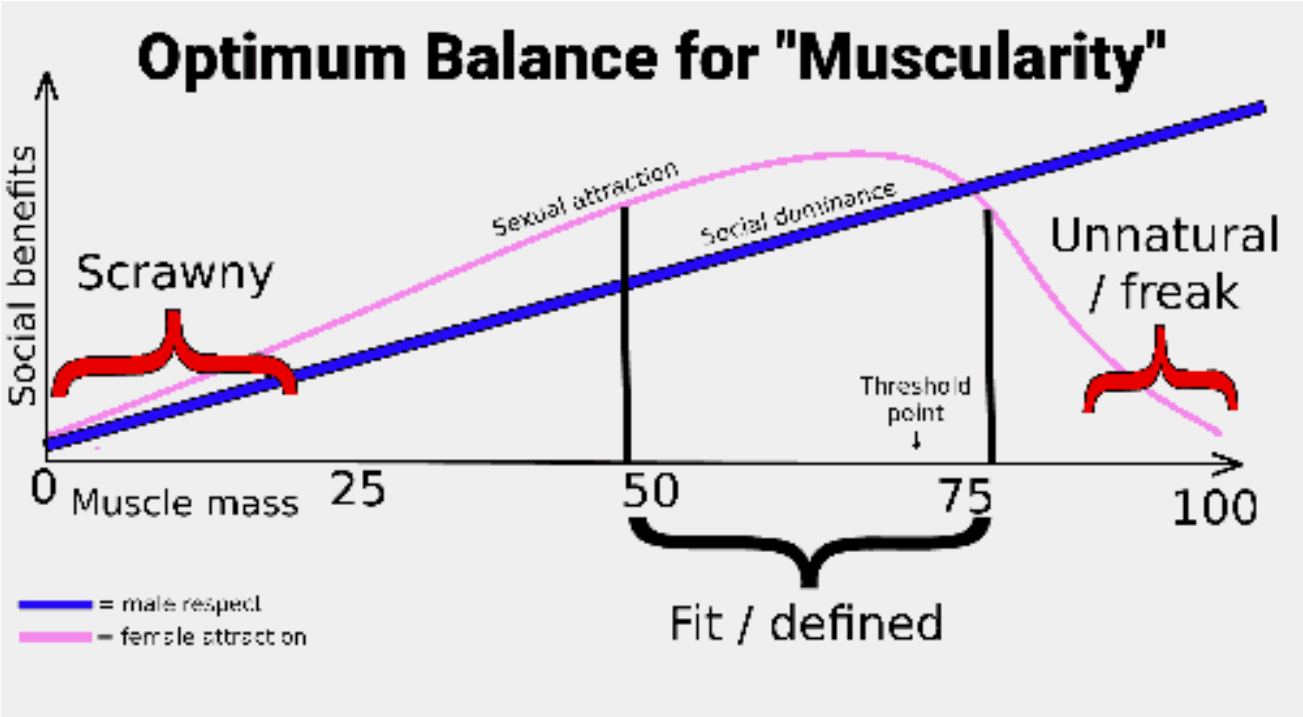
To begin with, it's on a spectrum, and more isn't always better:

> However, studies asking participants to choose between masculinized and feminized versions of men's faces typically find either no preference for masculinity (Scott et al., 2010; Stephen et al., 2012; Swaddle & Reierson, 2002) or a preference for feminized faces (Mogilski & Welling, 2017; Perrett et al., 1998; Stephen et al., 2018), possibly because high testosterone levels and masculine facial shapes are associated with personality traits that are detrimental in long-term partnerships (e.g., aggression and infidelity; Lee et al., 2017; Mazur & Booth, 1998; Perrett et al., 1998).
> This hypothesis suggests that **women's mate selection mechanisms may be performing a trade-off** between masculine men who may have "good genes" but personality traits that are undesirable in a long-term partner and father, and feminine men who may be less prone to aggressive behavior and are more suitable as husbands and fathers

The authors further explain that both the preference for masculinity in socioecologically harsh conditions and and during peak fertility may need to be revised because of weak or contradictory findings.

Whichever the reason, it seems clear that "more isn't always better" and it's more a question of personal preferences, culture, and circumstances.
And it's more about "hitting the right balance".

This is something we have already mentioned in our article "the law of optimum balance":



- **The law of optimum balance**
- **Optimum balance in dating**

Also see:

- **Mating value practical analysis**

Hormones

In general, higher testosterone makes for less relationship commitment and satisfaction (e.g., Edelstein et al., 2014; Gray et al., 2002; Julian & McHenry, 1989).

The authors even say that "T is incompatible with the maintenance of nurturant relationships" (Edelstein et al., 2014, p.401).
This is because testosterone is more associated with (shor-term, uncommitted) mating, rather than relationships:

> T functions in ways that promote mating behaviors in a manner that may also compromise investment and maintenance in long-term relationships

Testosterone and its effects

This chapter was somewhat confusing with several seemingly contradictory findings:

- **The link between testosterone and men's consummatory behavior is tenuous** (Schmidt et al. , 2009)
- **Testosterone levels and sexual behavior are not correlated for men**, or future research is needed to examine moderating variables (ie.: life history)
- More consistently, **testosterone seems to be associated with mate-seeking behavior**
- **Men's testosterone levels are higher when single**, and lowest when they have children, BUT
- **Partnered but non-monogamous men have higher testosterone than single men** (van Anders, Hamilton, & Watson, 2007). The authors note that these men do not experience a reduction in mate-seeking motivations
- Similarly, **monogamous men who maintain interests in alternative partners have higher levels of testosterone** than monogamous men without interest in alternative partners (Edelstein et al. , 2011; McIntyre et

al. , 2006; van Anders & Goldey, 2010).
The author suggest that men who are seeking mates have higher testosterone albeit, I add, correlation is not causation

- **Number of partners has been positively linked to testosterone levels** (Peters et al. , 2008; Pollet et al. , 2011), **particularly for dominant men** (Slatcher et al. , 2011)
- it appears that **men with higher testosterone have higher mating and reproductive success**
- Men's testosterone increases in the presence of an attractive woman *who is a possible mate*, and when competing with other men (especially if there are possible mates in the audience)
  - Cortisol also increases

Estrogen and progesterone

Female mating behavior is closely connected to ovarian hormones such as estrogen and progesterone.

Estrogen peaks before ovulation and progesterone peaks during the luteal phase.

- Research supports the hypothesis that **men perceive women to be more attractive when they are ovulating**
- Women reported greater sexual activity, sexual desire, and sexual fantasies around ovulation and their sexual initiation activity was highest in the three days leading up to ovulation (measured as LH surge, Bullivant et al. , 2004)
- Single women reported stronger feelings of loneliness in the early follicular phase. The authors say that may motivate women to seek out potential partners around ovulation
- **Ovulating women reported being more assertive, having higher mate value**, and were more likely to implicitly associate themselves with sex-related words (e.g. , seductive and sexy).
  These results support the fertility-assertiveness hypothesis: women seek higher control on their environment when conception risk is high (in both opportunities and threats)
- **Ovulating women are more risk-averse**: decrease in their total number of risk-taking behaviors such as going to a bar or walking in a dimly lit area, more likely to sit far away from a suspicious man in the study waiting room (Guéguen, 2012) and were more likely to judge men as more sexually coercive (GarverApgar et al., 2007)
- **Hormonal contraceptives disrupt these results**: Exotic dancers on hormonal contraceptives received a consistent rate of tips across their menstrual cycles while naturally cycling women got more around ovulation (Miller et al., 2007).
- Women on hormonal contraceptives did not demonstrate increases in autosexual and female-initiated couple behavior around ovulation (Adams et al., 1978)
- **Life history mediates hormonal changes**, with "faster life history strategy women" seeking sex during ovulation, while slower life history strategy women avoid it
- **Women have higher testosterone when aroused**. Ie.: watching romantic scenes from The Notebook (Lopez et al. , 2009), viewing photographs of men's faces (Zilioli et al. , 2014), imagining a sexual interaction with an attractive partner (Goldey & van Anders, 2011), and during the early stages of a relationship (Marazziti & Canale, 2004),
  BUT…
- **Testosterone fluctuations across the menstrual cycle do not predict sexual motivation** (Roney & Simmons, 2013)
- **Women in happy relationships have lower testosterone** (Edelstein et al. , 2014) which, I'm guessing here, may also mean lower risk of infidelity
- **Women (and men) have higher cortisol when meeting possible relationship candidates**
- **Testosterone and estradiol increase orgasms**: testosterone seems positively associated with women's psychological orgasm whereas estradiol appears linked to more pronounced physical sensations during an

orgasm (e.g. , flooding and flushing) (van Anders & Dunn, 2009)

Market-like dynamics of dating

To begin with, dating also functions just like any other market:

> Whenever people have the ability to choose partners and partner quality varies, we should expect competition for more desirable partners.
> This competition for the "best" partners occurs in a biological market (e.g. , Barclay, 2013, 2016; Noë & Hammerstein, 1994, 1995). In any market, supply and demand afect the value of a good (e.g. , a romantic partner), and anything afecting supply and demand can also infuence the mating market

And some of the market variables that influence the dating market include:

Sex Ratio

- **People become more competitive and aggressive with more men**: people primed with unfavorable (vs.favorable) sex ratios, become more intrasexually competitive (Arnocky et al. , 2014; Griskevicius et al. , 2012; Xing et al. , 2016) and more aggressive toward attractive same-sex, probably because they are potential threatening rivals (Moss & Maner, 2016).
- **Women become more competitive with more women**: women are more wary of same-sex others (Vukovic et al. , 2019) and desire to maximize their relative gain over other women (Xing et al. , 2016)
- **Women seek a career**: women enter the workforce in higher numbers and seek more lucrative careers, perhaps not to be overly-reliant on men (Durante et al. , 2012; Guttentag & Secord, 1983)

Mating Systems

- **Polygyny increases competition** because fewer "winners" monopolize women to get all the (genetic) success, so many losers scramble for fewer available women.
  This is true both historically (for review, see Henrich et al. , 2012) and across nations (Schmitt & Rohde, 2013)
- **High male parental investment increases women's competition**, even in polygynous species

Income Inequality

Intrasexual competition includes competing for resources (ie.: career and business success).

- **Higher income inequality increases competition** because it exacerbates the difference between the haves, who gain more dating power, and the have-nots, who may end up without a mate.
  This may also apply to women, who post more sexy selfies (Blake & Brooks, 2019a; Blake, Bastian, et al., 2018)
- **Some women may drop out of the dating scene** with higher income inequality. I quote the authors: "Other women, however, may opt out of this competition, pursuing briefcase over baby (see Durante et al., 2012).
- **Financially empowered women care less about men's resources**

Read more here:

- **Mating market dynamics**
- Mating market hacks

People adopt the values of their best interest

Patriarchy VS Feminism

Something we often noticed and contended here at TPM :).

This example shows that it's not necessarily aboud individuals, but about "inclusive fitness":

> Concerning parents' competition on behalf of their children's mating success, evidence suggests that parents' ideological support may be an instance of motivated reasoning, with parents supporting ideas and practices that beneft their ofspring. For example, families with single, adult daughters are more likely to support women's reproductive rights, whereas families with more adult men are likely to oppose those rights (Betzig & Lombardo, 1992)

And a specific example:

> (…)
> Blake, Fourati, and Brooks (2018) somewhat similarly fnd that mothers with sons (vs.daughters) are more supportive of practices that suppress female sexuality (i.e. , Muslim veiling), which might serve to control female sexuality and beneft male ofspring

It's pretty wild if you think about it.

A corollary of this finding is that a certain degree of intersexual conflict and/or competition is expected and, at a social level, potentially unavoidable.
And as the example shows, it's not like some people think of a clear-cut case of men vs women, but more of "male-aligned interests VS female-aligned interests".

It's pretty wild if you think about it.

On this topic, see our latest video:

Consensual non-monogamy is repressed by those who can't have multiple partners

first off, the authors say consensual non-monogamers tend to be socially unrestricted.

But, also, potentially, by those who can afford multiple partners:

> That is, CNM may be preferred by those who are well-suited or motivated to compete with others for access to romantic/sexual partners, while those who are not might attempt to publicly enforce monogamy to restrict intrasexual competition.

And then, interestingly, that "repressing non-monogamy" may make sense from a social perspective:

> Restricting intrasexual competition is a reasonable moral aim.
> Higher rates of intrasexual competition may lead to public and personal health risks, such as higher rates of mortality and homicide (Daly & Wilson, 2001; Kruger, 2010), anabolic steroid use among men (Harris et al., 2019), interpersonal antagonism and/or social ostracism (Vaillancourt & Sharma, 2011), problematic eating habits among women (Li et al., 2010), and risky medical procedures (Dubbs et al., 2017). In this sense, those who condemn CNM may be attempting to curtail the harms caused by rivalry within multipartner mating systems.

In general, non-monogamy seems most interesting to people who are more interested in short-term mating:

> people in CNM compared to monogamous relationships reported higher social and ethical risk-taking, along with several other traits that are characteristic of a “fast life history” (e.g. , earlier pubertal development, less aversion to germs, and greater interest in short-term [and less interest in long-term] relationships) (reviewed in Figueredo et al. , 2006; see also Del Giudice et al. , 2016

Same-gender attraction and reproductive fitness

Historically gay men and lesbian women reproduced at lower rates.

But that difference decreases with modern societies, and may even go to zero for women:

> At least in some modern Western societies, such as the United States, almost 40% of individuals who identify as LGBT report to have biological ofspring (e.g. , Gates, 2013). Other nationally representative studies, such as from New Zealand, show that in modern societies non-heterosexual women reproduce with the same frequency as heterosexual women, although non-heterosexual male reproductive success is signifcantly lower (e.g. , Wells et al. , 2011)

Homogamy VS hypergamy

In simple words:

- **Monogamy = same status couples for compatibility**. Prospective mating partners are selected from the same or similar social circles with comparable economic and power standing, social status, and educational background
- **Hypergamy = higher status for self and offspring enhancement**. in the upward-mobility model, AKA hypergamy, lower social, economic, and educational classes prefer dating higher economic status, while higher economic status can “get something in return”

The authors say that the prevalence of homogamy VS hypergamy depends on gender equality and the distributions of educational and social attainments of men and women (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003).
So with increasing education and equality, hypergamy decreases and homogamy increases.

This is exactly what we said in one of our first articles on female hypergamy.

Intra-gender competition

Humans are not a species where mating depends only on intra-genders and male competition.

Instead, women’s choice matter in humans.
However, intra-sexual competitions may still weigh also in human mating:

> Anthropological evidence suggests that winning direct physical competition can be efficacious for winning in mating competition. Among the Yanamamo, men who have killed have more wives and children than those who have not (Chagnon, 1988). Indeed, men’s physiology seems to reflect such competition (e.g., men’s size; Arnocky & Carré, 2016; McElligott et al., 2001).

Chagnon has been heavily criticized and, in my opinion, for good reasons.
However, that doesn’t mean that all his work or anecdotal evidence are invalid.

The other claim that “men’s physiology reflects competition” is also dubious in my opinion because stronger men are also better hunters or better at surviving, or simply more attractive.

But its'also not to be excluded.

Finally, most men know that they tend to be more deferential towards bigger and/or aggressive men, and that may also lend credibility to the efficacy of intra-sexual competition.

Ultimately though, in our modern dating environment and for practical purposes, I'm convinced that men who focus on women are more successful than men who focus on the competition.

Each Gender Competes Based On The Other Gender's Preferences

For women's competition:

> Men tend to place greater value on partners' reproductive potential and related characteristics than women. Thus, women tend to compete intrasexually over linked dimensions such as youth, physical attractiveness, and sexual fdelity

And for men's competitions:

> As women tend to place greater value than men on a mate's resource provisioning ability, men often compete more than women over resources and status (Buss, 1989; Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2021; Walter et al. , 2020)

But since women are the choosers, we can generally expect stronger competition among men:

> when mating motivations are made salient, men (but not women) engaged in increased intrasexual (but not intersexual) aggression (Ainsworth & Maner, 2012). Men also report greater distress when a rival exceeds them on these characteristics (Buss et al. , 2000)

And, men being more aggressive and higher testosterone and competing in a fiercer contest, we can also expect more aggression:

> evidence suggests that, compared to girls and women, boys and men enact more physical, violent, and face-to-face tactics of intrasexual mating competition (e.g. , Archer, 2004; Benenson, 2014; Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Campbell, 2002; Vaillancourt, 2013)

Men compete for status, women for beauty

As cliche' as that may sound to some, there is at least some truth to it:

> Consistent with evolutionary theorizing, it was found that in samples of students as well as adults, men experienced more jealousy than women when their rival was more socially or physically dominant or had a higher status than themselves, whereas women experienced more jealousy then men when their rival was more physically attractive

There is no evidence that testosterone is linked to mate jealousy, albeit prenatal exposure to male hormones seems to be.

Interestingly, shorter men taller men reported jealousy in general, and especially with socially and physically dominant and attractive rivals.
Instead, *average* height women reported less jealousy than short and tall women, and especially in response to physically attractive rivals.

Gender divide in covert aggression

Women tend to compete more covertly.

For example:

> Social exclusion is one form of intrasexual mating competition (Buss & Shackelford, 1997), and girls and women exclude same-sex others more than men do (Benenson et al. , 2009, 2013), with social exclusion potentially achieving separation of romantic partners from prospective rivals, and thus efective protection against rivals

Women also use more facial expressions, something I've also noticed with women being more expressive in both the positive and the negative:

> women's aggression toward one another often takes the form of subtle facial expressions (Simmons, 2002; Underwood, 2003), with some suggesting that such nonverbal expressions may have special meanings for girls and women (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; LaFrance, 2002; Underwood, 2004)

And women seem to be pickup more subtle negative expressions (e.g. , Geary, 2010; Goos & Silverman, 2002).

The authors suggest this is because direct aggression is more costly for women (I have some doubts here, see below), and because men don't prefer women who outcompete other women.
I agree with the latter, and I've personally always been turned off by "nasty women" who excluded or attacked other women.

However, engaging in more direct aggression doesn't mean that men don't also engage in (more) covert aggression:

> Both sexes engage in indirect aggression (e.g. , gossip) and social exclusion (Benenson, 2014; Campbell, 1999, 2002; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Hess & Hagen, 2006a, 2006b, 2019; Underwood et al. , 2001)
> (…)
> … some work suggests that indirect tactics might be especially useful when women or men compete with their ingroup members (Hess & Hagen, 2019)

And in our modern society, covert aggression is more widespread than ever, and probably increasing at the expense of more direct aggression.
Also see:

- **Covert power moves**, all examples of indirect aggression
- Passive aggression, a communication style all based on covert aggression
- Office politics, where competition is all indirect and covert

> Covert Power Moves: 4 Ways Men Lose Status & Attraction, Without Realizing

Reputational attacks may work best against women

Because, the authors suggest, some of the traits men value are less easily observable:

> Reputation manipulation might be especially effective for harming female mating rivals because **some features that men desire in women—particularly reputations for sexual fidelity—are difficult to assess**, easy to impugn, and once denigrated, difficult to defend (Hess & Hagen, 2006a, 2006b). This is in stark contrast to men, as much of what women desire in men can be directly observed and/or objectively measured

> (e.g., if one man could best another in a fight or income)

This seemed like a plausible guess to me.

Women compete more when (single) mothers

Women seem to be competing more:

- For friends
- On behalf of the offspring
- (potentially) as single mothers because mating is harder and competition stronger for them

More attractive = more attacks

> Krems et al.(2020) reviewed evidence supporting this hypothesis: physically attractive women are considered mating threats and are disproportionately aggressed against (Arnocky et al. , 2012; Fink et al. , 2014; Leenaars et al. , 2008).

This is something I've sadly noticed myself when bringing an attractive date to a mixed group.
It's funny how I don't mind too much men playing their games on me, but I find it much sadder when women exclude or attack another woman (especially if my date).

Itersexual competition (& cooperation)

First off, the authors say that men and women have more scope for cooperation than competition:

> Despite the often too prevalent perception of a war between the sexes in the social sciences (see special issue of Sex Roles, e.g., Vandermassen, 2011), to a large degree interdependent reproduction promotes cooperation rather than confict (Buss, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)

They even add later on that the large overlap in common interests makes it difficult to pinpoint areas of conflict (something I don't necessarily agree with):

> One of the complicating aspects of considering sexual confict in long-term relationships is the high degree of overlap in interest between the sexes. Men and women have a higher degree of similarity in long-term partner preferences, such as for healthy, kind, and agreeable partners (e.g.Buss & Barnes, 1986; Tomas et al. , 2019).

However, stopping there would be a mistake.
First of all, even in the common interests, the authors rightfully point out that there are measurable differences even in the overlap of common interests (Walter et al. , 2020).
There are more diverging interests as well , including the different "sex optima" for each gender.

For example, as the authors of the last chapter shrewdly point out:

> Traits favored by one sex (e.g. , multiple mating by males) are sometimes costly to members of the other sex who have traditionally had primary responsibility for prolonged periods of ofspring dependency) (Chapman et al. , 2003, p.41)

So, in truth, men and women have much to gain from cooperation, but also potentially from cheating and/or controlling their partner or imposing their best preferences.
Think of it as a largely cooperative relationships, punctuated by smaller instances of conflict, compromise, and

potential cheating or manipulation.

Conroy-Beam et al.(2015) introduced three factors that infuence relationship satisfaction, and we add more from the book:

- **Cost and benefits**, with continuous evaluation if the relative benefits of staying with a partner outweigh the relative benefits of leaving
- **Manipulability of partner investment**, or how well one can elicit a partner's investment in the relationship (Walter et al. , 2020)
- **Signaling of relationship problems**, especially harmful when public
- **Mate value** infuences how satisfed one is with a partner and relationship. Higher mate value partner = higher satisfaction (Conroy-Beam et al. , 2016).
  However, even here it's often a question of balance: too big a discrepancy may make the lower value partner insecure or overly jealous

Conflict and dangers to the relationship may also change or increase over time as the factors above also change over time:

> the confict between sexes might increase with relationship length because cues of youthfulness decrease and social status may change (e.g. , due to job loss).
> These changes might trigger relationship termination. One possible example of this is serial monogamy among highly attractive, high-status men

AS a last note, this is true for most average men and women.
The **conflict between higher-value men and women may be larger** because **the interests of higher value men diverge much more strongly from women.**
Ie.: higher mate value men have less to gain from entering any relationship.
See here for example:

Also read:

- **Evolved adaptations of intrasexual competitions**

> Sexual Conflict: How Men & Women Fight The Sex War

Evolved mechanism for cooperation: suppression of alternatives

Both men and women in relationships seem to have mechanisms to decrease the risk of a breakup by ignoring potential alternatives:

> Overall, men without a partner rated the confederate as more attractive—suggesting that attraction is suppressed by the presence of a long-term partner.

And what also gives as insight that this may be an evolved mechanism is that while single men were more attracted to ovulating women, partner men were less attracted.
The same bias was seen when it came to remembering potential alternatives.

Infidelity

Infidelity is not the norm, but not too uncommon either:

> ranging from 22–25% of men and 11–15% of women having had extramarital afairs during their lifetime (e.g. , Atkins et al. , 2001; Labrecque & Whisman, 2017; Wiederman, 1997)

The desire for infidelity is even more common:

> Hicks and Leitenberg (2001) found, in a diverse sample of university students and employees ages 18 to 70 years, that 87% of their respondents (98% of men and 80% of women) reported having had extradyadic sexual fantasies in the past two months. In a substantial number of cases, such fantasies

Infidelity is also one of the most common reason relationship breakup crossculturally (Betzig, 1989; Amato & Previti, 2003), albeit some people stay together even after infidelity.

Most people generally dislike infidelity, but many may still engage in it in the right circumstances.

Infidelity makes evolutionary sense

In the end, people cheat because it's good to keep a long-term partnership, while trying to sneak something on the side:

> Humans have evolved a collection of mating strategies whereby benefts can be gained both from investing in a long-term partnership and from defecting from that partnership to gain benefts from an extra-pair partner

This is explained mathematically and with game theory:

> Certainly, there are advantages to long-term cooperative partnerships in which each individual sacrifces a personal optimum for a relatively higher net collaborative yield (i.e. , positive-sum relationships; Axelrod, 1997), such as when children are aforded security and environmental stability by multiparent care (Abraham & Feldman, 2018; Geary, 2000).
> But the greater net individual beneft of defecting in a trust game (i.e. , when one partner cheats but the other does not) suggests that human's evolved mating psychology is confgured to motivate calculated deception (i.e. , infdelity) (see McNally & Jackson, 2013; Mokkonen & Lindstedt, 2016)

Infidelity may have little to do with love, affection, or caring for the cheated spouse

Something the authors say and I agree with:

> People may have an evolved preference for monogamy and deep socioemotional attachments with particular individuals.
> On the other hand, individuals are also motivated to engage in strategies that ancestrally propagated genes

The same generally goes for ethical or "good behavior".
People may truly prefer being "good" or ethical, but may still cheat or backstab when the payoff is high.

Sex differences around infidelity

Both genders engage in infidelity.

But while men may find sex with a new partner enticing no matter what, women may be more discerning and, I quote, "be especially inclined to be unfaithful if an existing partner is of poor quality, if the partner is not a good means of emotional support, or if a male who offers more emotional fulfillment or higher gene quality becomes available (Buss, 2000)".

- **Women's main strategy is always long-term**

While women most certainly cheat, their primary strategy tends to be long term:

> women have been selected to compete with one another to develop and maintain a pair-bond with a high-quality male and to take steps to reduce the risk of being abandoned (e.g. , Gallup et al. , 2012).

- **Men underestimate emotional infidelity**

Interestingly, the authors say that men are more likely to fall for emotional infidelity because they're more likely to under-estimate it:

> Men more than women fail to notice the underlying threat of infdelity that does not involve sex. This sex-diferentiated bias represents a sexual confict that presents a clear threat to relationship maintenance

But emotional infidelity can often lead to sexual infidelity and breakups.

- **Women suffer more**

> Women in general reporting more intense grief ("heartbreak") reactions than men.
> Despite women more often taking the initiative in the breakup, women reported higher intensity of anger, anxiety, and fear and all forms of physical reactions than men, while no sex diference was found for numbness, lost focus, and inability.

The authors say this is because of men's higher propensity to focus on short-term liaisons rather than long term, coupled with a stronger inclination to rebound and seek new partners.

- **Men and women hide infidelity to match their partners' preferences**

> men spend more money on and display emotional investment in existing partners, while women initiate more sex with existing partners and maintain their physical appearance in order to avoid suspicions regarding infdelity

Cultural differences of infidelity

There are large differences in the prevalence of sexual infidelity:

> For example, extramarital sex is more prevalent in African than in Asian and Western countries.
> One study showed that estimates of extramarital sex in the past year range from 38% for men and 19% for women in Guinea Bissau (e.g. , Caraël et al. , 1995), compared with 11% for men and 4.5% of women in China (Zhang et al. , 2012).
> The incidence of extramarital sex seems especially low in Muslim countries, probably due to the severe sanctions on this behavior (Adamczyk & Hayes, 2012)

Of course, the authors preferred to mention "cultural" rather than potentially "something else".

Anti-cuckoldry evolved defenses

Men evolved several psychological adaptations that are not present in women, including:

- **Paternal resemblance preference in offspring**

For example, with recognizing and preferring children with facial similarity (redacted for brevity):

> (…) 90% of the males but only 35% of the females selecting the child whose face had been morphed with their own
> (…)
> Platek et al.(2004) found sex diferences in the brain by viewing self-morphed baby pictures (…) Wu et al.(2013) also showed a stable male advantage in child face processing

- **Olfactory similarity**

> Alvergne et al.(2009) found that paternal investment was positively related to both face (visual) and odor (olfactory) similarities between fathers and children.

- **Emotional proximity to similar children**

> Alvergne et al.(2010) also found fathers reported the highest emotional proximity to children who displayed greater resemblance, but this relationship was not observed in mothers

- **Higher satisfaction with child-father resemblance**

> For high parent–child resemblance both parents exhibited high levels of well-being, but for low parent–child resemblance the well-being of mothers was higher than fathers. Thus, the literature overwhelmingly implicates a male-specifc efect of resemblance on child investment

Women took (evolutionary) note and tell fathers that the children are like them, even when external raters disagreed.

Predictors of infidelity

Predictors of infidelity include:

- Sexual excitation, strong for men (Mark et al., 2011)
- Relationship dissatisfaction/unhappiness, stronger for women (Mark et al., 2011)
- Extroversion, openness to new experiences (Altgelt et al., 2018; Orzeck & Lung, 2005; Yeniceri & Kökdemir, 2006)
- Sensation seeking (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011)
- Poor impulse control (Brady et al. 2020)
- Antisocial/low agreeableness
- Dark triad
- High sexual permissiveness
- Unrestricted sociosexuality is a powerful predictor of infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Rodrigues et al. , 2017)
- Low religiosity: less religious people were more likely to be unfaithful (Whisman et al. , 2007)
- Avoidant attachment style (DeWall et al., 2011)
- Declining in sexual-relational adjustment (Scott et al., 2017)
- Revenge for partner's infidelity: Warach et al.(2018) found that sexual betrayal was the single best predictor of sexual infidelity of the personality dimensions they examined
- Belief in the availability and availability of higher-quality mates: Emmers-Sommer et al.(2010) found that, among 220 students in the United States, men and women were more likely to be unfaithful when they had higher-quality alternative partners.

Read more in:

- **How to pick a loyal girlfriend**

Higher mate value men may incur "defensive" infidelity

> Buss and Shackelford (1997) found that women who believed they were of lower mate value than their husbands also believed that their husbands were more prone to infdelity, which prompted these women to report a higher likelihood that they, themselves, would be unfaithful to their husbands

However, I would have liked to see the incidence of these cases.
Plus, it would be interesting to see how many of those higher value men were indeed cheating. I suspect, a higher percentage than the average.

Jealousy

There are two types of jealousy:

- **Possessive**, a *preventive* reaction that involves mate guarding in order to avoid infidelity, also related to cultural and environmental factors such as:
  - Parental control of mate choice: more common in cultures of arranged marraiges and/or culture that downplay freedom of choice and love. Instead, as the author say, "freedom of mate choice seems to make possessive jealousy less necessary".
  - Life history (in particular attachment style and father absence)
  - Domestic violence: possessive jealousy & mate guarding are linked to domestic violence among men
- **Reactive**, a *response* to an actual or potential threat

Jealousy motivates mate-guarding

Both jealousies evolved to be attentive and active against infidelity.
And for good reasons, say the authors:

> Mate guarding among males has evolved because it is essential to guarantee paternity certainty: males who did not allow their partners to mate with other males were evidently reproductively more successful than males who did not pay attention to their mate's extradyadic sexual behavior.

In any species with high male parental investment, thus including humans, women also have an incentive to be jealous and to mate guard.

Men Who Invest More Are Also More Jealous

> both sexes report high levels of jealousy (Buss, 2013; Scelza et al. , 2020).
> Moreover, this is particularly evident in societies with high levels of paternal investment; **when high investment is expected from men, men are more concerned with women's sexual infdelity and women are more concerned with the potential diversion of resources to a male's new mate**—thus high jealousy (Scelza et al. , 2020)

This is also why, in general, **"player types" are less jealous**.
And it's also why we often say here that most red pill gurus, obsessed with faithfulness and partners' count, are truly relationship men at heart who long for a "good woman" to stick with them.

Jealousy also depends on mate value

The authors also say that "jealousy implies that one feels threatened by the loss of a partner's sexual or romantic exclusiveness".

Couple that with the fact that love makes jealousy less necessary, and you see why too much jealousy is poor self-signaling that lowers your value (and attraction).
This is why from a strategic and effectiveness point of view we recommend caution when dealing with men approaching a partner:

- What to do when someone makes a move on your girlfriend

Intimate partner violence

- **IPV is associated with insecure attachment styles**: violent men are more insecure, anxious, and preoccupied in their attachment style and reported more dependency on and preoccupation with their wives (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., (1997)
  - Avoidant men are also relatively jealous: less self-evident is that also avoidants are often relatively jealous (Buunk, 1997). A possible explanation is that avoidants are dependent on their partner but feel that they are not meeting their partner's needs with their distance and are concerned with losing their partner.
- **Possessive jealous men are more violent**
- **Intrasexually competitive women are more violent**: *only intrasexual competitiveness was associated with intimate partner violence (Buunk & Massar, 2019)*
  - Women's IPV peaks at around 20, when they are also the most intrasexually competitive
  - Fertile women may be more violent, depending also on cycle, and other women's cycle (my note: albeit I think it may be true, I'm not too convinced seeing how many similar studies have shown little or nul effect in more recent, better studies)

Dark triads and religious men are more likely to mate guard

> people who score high on the dark triad traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy are more likely to engage in mate guarding, including both beneft-provisioning and cost-inficting behaviors (Chegeni et al. , 2018; Jonason et al. , 2010)

However, dark triads are also more likely to escape mate guarding:

> women who are most likely to find value in attempting to gain benefts from both a long-term partner and a short-term partner simultaneously, such as high Machiavellian women, are similarly more likely to resist a long-term partner's mate-guarding efforts (Abell & Brewer, 2016)

And, I'm sure many won't like this:

> Evidence has similarly related costinficting mate-guarding behaviors to high levels of religiosity. That is, at least among men, increased religiosity is associated with an increased tendency to use cost-inficting mate-guarding tactics (Chaudhary et al. , 2018)

I think this may be mediated by conservatism.
And indeed, as we contended on this website:

> As religion may function as a strategy to restrict women's mating opportunities, this may explain why the same relationship between religiosity and cost-inficting mate guarding was not identifed among women

Similar as we contend in the beginning of this video:

Mate guarding sometimes is motivated by a “risky” partner

> men are more likely to guard their female partners when those women demonstrate low relationship commitment (French et al. , 2017) and when those female partners engage in behaviors that men interpret as sexual receptivity (Prokop & Pazda, 2016).
> Overall, when it seems as though a partner may be interested in alternatives to the ongoing relationship, people are more likely to engage in mate-guarding behaviors to prevent that defection.

In other sources I’ve seen that men are more aggressive, mate-guarding, and violent when indeed the partner is having affair(s).

My note: cheating spouses attracting partner’s violence – personal experience
This is something I’ve experienced personally.
I know of an asbolute violent ahole to his girlfriend. Everyone righteously condemned him, and most thought he was imagining things.
But I know that he wasn’t imagining things.

Higher value partner = more mate guarding

The loss of a lower-value partner is a smaller loss, so people spend less resources mate-guarding them.

Instead, the loss of a higher-value mate partner is a major loss.

Thus, we see that higher mate value partners call for more mate guarding:

> we see that men, for example, are more likely to engage in mate guarding, particularly benefit-provisioning mate guarding, when their current partner is high value (Miner, Starratt, & Shackelford, 2009; Starratt & Shackelford, 2012).

However, higher mate value partners are also more likely to escape guarding:

> people are more motivated to resist a partner’s mate-guarding efforts when the value of the potential extra-pair benefits are high. For example, women are more likely to resist a partner’s mate guarding when they perceive themselves to be more attractive than their partner (Fugere et al., 2015)

And, just as we’d expect, people engage in more mate guarding when there are few available good partners around.

My Note: women escaping controlling men – personal experience
I also know for a fact that a man installing tracking apps on her attractive and sensual partner’s phone had good reasons to try and track her (but she was smart enough to avoid detection).

Attachment Styles

This part was the clearest explanation of attachment styles I’ve ever read.

Thanks to this book it finally clicked how attachment styles relate to people and people’s psychology.

So let’s start.
First of all, attachment styles are phenotypes that we develop to increase reproductive fitness:

> From an evolutionary standpoint, the attachment behavioral system refects an organized set of physiological and psychological mechanisms that encode and process early life experiences with attachment fgures to

> produce phenotypes (i.e. , attachment styles) that are more likely to increase ftness in particular environments (Simpson & Belsky, 2008; Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019).
> In this respect, attachment styles refect the adaptive calibration of life history strategies (Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019)

Albeit most pop psychology books like the "secure attachment style" as the "best" of the pack, an evolutionary lens looks instead at what's most effective to survive and reproduce.
Secure is best for stable environments and other secure partners, but avoidant is best for harsh environments and short-term mating:

> Although secure attachment is typically viewed as the most optimal and adaptive style within the developmental literature, an evolutionary perspective suggests that attachment security has an adaptive advantage in safe and predictable environments but not in harsh and unpredictable environments (Simpson & Belsky, 2008; Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019)
> (…)
> insecure attachment may have adaptive advantage over secure attachment in more harsh and unpredictable environments (Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019).

From an evolutionary perspective then, the secure attachment is related to parental investment and a "slow life strategy":

> Hazan and Zeifman (1999) suggested that the primary evolutionary function of secure attachment in adult relationships is to increase the likelihood of stable and enduring pair-bonds. Enduring pair-bonds are inferred to enhance the reproductive fitness of both parents and their ofspring. Thus, attachment security is thought to align with a slow life history strategy and long-term mating strategies that emphasize quality rather than quantity of investment in ofspring when environment dangers and threats are low and predictability of future events is high (Geary, 2015; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999).

Indeed, attachment security is consistently linked to more committed and long-term romantic relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019).
That, in turn, has many psychological and even physiological advantages for the secure partners.

And avoidant attachment instead is related to short-term, uncommitted dating:

> Attachment avoidance is assumed to refect a relationship commitment minimization strategy (Del Giudice, 2019; Karantzas et al. , 2019), in which parental investment is traded off against reproductive investment (…) (Szepsenwol & Simpson, 2019).
> (…) aligns with a fast life strategy and short-term mating strategies (…)

Indeed, research found avoidants to have lower relationship commitments, less parental investment, and less partner support and provisioning -especially during parenthood- (Szepsenwol et al. , 2015).

Finally, attachment anxiety may seek a relationship commitment maximization with chasing and turning towards their partners.
However, I'm unconvinced here because as the authors themselves say, too much attachment anxiety makes for dissatisfying and potentially short-lived relationships.

Emotional Intensity Theory

Emotional intensity theory was a wholly new concept for me.

And a little mind-blown.

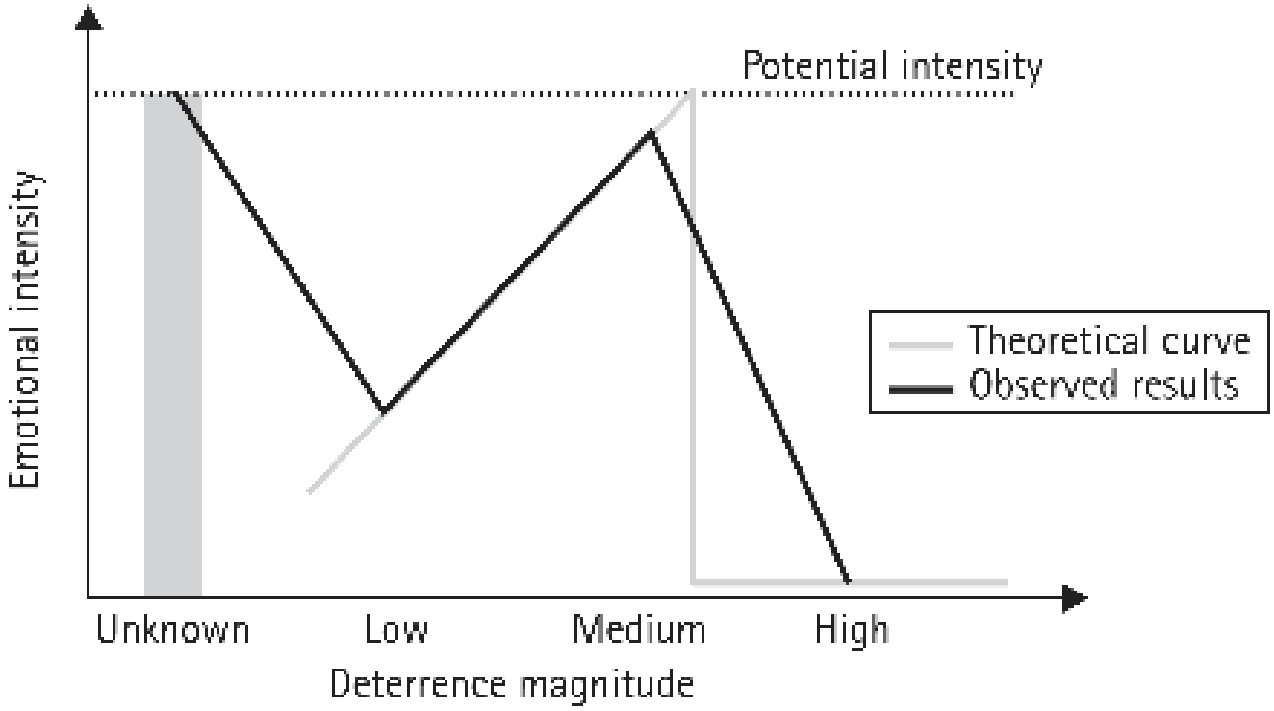
The theory states that motivational intensity is determined by the importance of reaching an outcome (i.e. , the goal) and the challenge.
The importance of the goal sets the maximum effort one is willing to exert to overcome the challenge, while the perceived challenge magnitude determines the actual effort.

However, to conserve energy people only invest in what is likely to provide returns.

Meaning that emotional intensity (and, possibly, action), will be highest with:

- **High effort with unknown challenges**
- **Low effort with weak challenges** because these challenges don't pose a threat
- **High effort with strong challenges** because these challenges do require lots of effort
- **Low effort for too big challenges** because the goal is unreachable anyway so people resign themselves

In chart (not the clearest probably):



This theory explains why in dating, often, the sweet spot is a balance between the extremes.
Take reciprocation of attraction or investment for example. Too much, and there is no challenge. Too little, and there is no point in putting effort into someone.
But give moderately, and you hit the sweet spot.

In a study:

> Reysen and Katzarska-Miller (2013) (…) tested whether the manipulated degree of reciprocation of a potential partner acted as a deterrent to romantic feelings by producing cubic efects of deterrence on the intensity of attraction (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013).
> To test their hypothesis, the researchers asked participants to imagine a potential romantic partner who reciprocated either a strong, moderate, weak, or unspecifed personal feeling of attraction (this latter condition instantiating the control condition of "reciprocation unmentioned").
> Results revealed that potential partners' reciprocation of attraction acted as a deterrent to participants' actual intensity of attraction to the potential partner. Specifcally, the intensity of attraction varied as a cubic function of increasing degrees of reciprocation: it was intense when reciprocation was unspecifed; paradoxically

> reduced when participants' feelings of attraction were highly reciprocated; intense, again, when attraction was only moderately reciprocated; and eventually substantially reduced when attraction was, instead, only scarcely reciprocated.

The authors conclude that certain obstacles and barriers to romantic feelings can be motivating and beneficial for in-pair feelings.

Of course, what the authors don't mention but I suspect is the case here is that personality also matters.
People with high self-esteem and/or who relish a challenge may be more motivated to pursue the "almost impossible" partner/challenge.
But lower self-esteem and or men and women with other priorities will instead let go sooner.

Dual sexuality & ovulatory shift: a myth?

The ovulatory shift hypothesis postulates that women are more attracted and receptive to high mate-value extra-relationship men during their peak fertility days.

The extended hypothesis also includes the "dual sexuality hypothesis", such as:

> women have two functionally distinct sexualities: (a) extended sexuality—expressed during the nonfertile phase and which functions in attachment to the primary partner, and (b) estrus—expressed during the fertile window and which functions to increase the likelihood of conceiving with genetically high-quality men (Gangestad & Tornhill, 2008; Tornhill & Gangestad, 2008)

In the manosphere this is referred to as "alpha f*cks, beta bucks".
Such as, women want to be impregnated by a high-mate-value man who's more of a player type, and then seek a "nice guy" to take care of her and the children.

Also see our main article on this:

> Lover VS Provider: How to Pick Your Best Strategy

Masculine men not more attractive during peak fertility

The findings of more appreciation for masculinity during peak fertility are contradictory.
Overall:

> Overall, these fndings show little support for the idea that cyclic changes in mate preferences are adaptations to enhance the likelihood of short-term mating with men possessing markers of genetic quality during the high-fertility period.

Ovulatory shift disproven by current evidence

So, what does the evidence say?

The evidence suggests that the ovulatory shift is dubious, small or null.
And the dual sexuality is equally dubious because in many studies attraction increases for the partner as well:

> Studies on mate preferences provide limited evidence for robust changes across the cycle. In contrast, there appears to be subtle but systematic increase in sexual desire and behavior during the high-fertility phase. Nevertheless, these changes are similar for in-pair and extra-pair sexual desire, thus contradicting the ovulatory shift hypothesis

There were studies showing that women with men “lacking putative markers of genetic quality” were more attracted to extra-pair men.
However, I’d have to wonder how this could not be the case, since other men are simply more attractive.

The ovulatory shift was an important part of the dual mating strategy, so the authors suggest the dual mating strategy is also questionable.

BUT…

My note: I’d be cautious jumping to conclusions -and writing off the dual-mating strategy

The book is very recent.

But there has been some even *more* recent research by Macken Murphy on 254 individuals -not huge then, and including men as well-.
And the research showed that unfaithful people -men included- found their extra-dyadic partner more physically attractive, but not better overall, and also not better for parenting.

These results are consistent with dual mating, but not with mate switching.
However, the same applied to men.

Murphy also released an even better podcast.
I listened twice to it, and he was even more convincing there.

So, what gives?

In my opinion, both mate switching and dual strategy are valid, which would confirm and conform with humans’ -and women’s- plurality and adaptability of sexual strategies and approaches.
I’ve also experienced both in life.
And I’ve ever experienced women who slept on the side with the guy who wouldn’t even provide better genes -on external physical appearances at least- to the official boyfriend.

I believe attractiveness also plays a role.
Higher mate value women may be more able to secure a high mate value man who commits and invests, thus reducing the need for ‘ovulatory shift strategies’.

Breakups

Breakups and how people react to them seem to be highly variable and depends a lot on who initiated it, and what they think their prospects are.

Some evidence findings include:

WOMEN:

- Report consideration for both themselves and their partner when initiating a breakup, while men only consider themselves (Helgeson, 1994)
- Often involved or invested partners (Hill et al., 1976)
- First to fall out of love (Rubin et al., 1981)
- More likely to move to alternative mates (Blau, 1964)
    - UNLESS it was divorce with children, in which case they’re more likely to focus on their and their children well being, and future partner’s quality (Hetherington & Kelly, 2003; Symoens et al. , 2014; Tavares & Aassve, 2013; Wu & Schimmele, 2005)
- Rebound quicker *when they had initiated the breakup* (Buss et al., 2017; Helgeson, 1994; Rubin et al., 1981),

BUT

- Non-initiating women reported more sadness, confusion, and fear in comparison to males who reported feeling more happy or indifferent following the dissolution (Perilloux & Buss, 2008)
- Initiate more breakups and unilateral breakups (Baumeister et al., 1993; DeLecce & Weisfeld, 2016; Sprecher, 1994; Tong & Walther, 2010)
- Blame men more than themselves and have more negative attitudes of their partners (Athenstaedt et al., 2020; Sprecher, 1994)

MEN:

- Breakup less often, and more often react to women's breakups
- Claim to not know the cause of the breakup
- Experience more negative emotional reactions from breakups (Rubin et al. , 1981), probably also because they fall in love more, and more often
  - More depressed, lonely, unhappy and less free after the breakup and engaged in more harmful behaviors following breakups (Athenstaedt et al. , 2020; Rubin et al. , 1981) BUT
- Initiators retain a sense of confidence in the ability to acquire a better mate (Perilloux & Buss, 2008)
- Less willing to break ties, also because they have more positive views of their partners
  - Denigrate their ex less often

Divorce isn't bad per se, it's the bitter fighting that harms children

> there is compelling evidence that it is not divorce per se but a constellation of mutually reinforcing factors pre- and post-separation (e.g. , poverty, family violence and abuse, parental mental health and substance use, reduced parenting capacity, and separation-related confict) that drive many of the negative consequences of relationship breakdown for children (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001)

What's most dangerous instead is the "obsessive hatred" that seeks to harm the partner no matter the costs to oneself, and the children:

> Like love however, hatred tends to have an obsessive element that makes letting go difficult. Obsessive love sees only the good in someone (Fisher, 2000); hatred sees only the "bad. " For Demby (2009, p.477) (…) "pathological hatred" can be seen as "an efort to destroy while at the same time desperately needing"—the co-existence of desire and destructive urges.

Later the authors talk of this type of hatred as a "reunion behavior" through aggression and harm.
Something that seems to make sense to me.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Use fragrances if very un-masculine

> Allen et al.(2016) suggested that men who already have desirable levels of masculinity may not derive much beneft from fragranced products, but men low in masculinity/dominance may be able to apply scented products to elevate perceptions of their masculinity/dominance and, in turn, their attractiveness.

Quit meowing

Meowing, or the practice of doing exercises for a stronger jawline, may not be needed by all:

> several studies have found that women are attracted to masculine facial features (see DeBruine, 2014; see also Little, Connely, et al. , 2011). Other research, however, has shown that women are attracted to men with feminine facial features, which may infuence perceptions of warmth, kindness, and paternal investment (see Marcinkowska et al. , 2019)

And later:

> Women seem to vary more in their preference for masculinity-femininity. Such variation is partly due to genetic effects, and is also influenced by conditional factors, including personal and environmental characteristics (Zietsch et al., 2015).

Rebounds to help with heartbreaks

> rebounds may have positive effects. Brumbaugh and Fraley (2015) found that people who entered into rebound relationships had more confidence and felt more at peace with their previous relationships relative to people who did not.

Pick similar partners for long-term satisfying relationships

> large body of literature suggests that partner similarity is critical to relationship satisfaction, maintenance, and longevity.

Especially when you or your partner rate that dimension important, and on dimensions such as:

- Religiosity
- Personal interests
- Likes and values
- Sex drive
- Personality
- Relationship standards

Avoid game players

> General relationship satisfaction (…) is negatively correlated with game-playing, uncommitted love, and manipulative sexuality (Hendrick et al., 1988).

Also read:

- Games women play
- Games men play
- Nasty games women play

Quit the gym, join a band

> Testament to this sexual appeal, a young man carrying a guitar (i.e., indicative of creativity) can solicit more

> phone numbers from young women compared to a young man carrying a sports bag or nothing (Guéguen et al., 2014)

Edit:
The study has been retracted since its publication.

Share food on dates

> Consistent with the notion that food sharing is a courtship tactic, it appears to be associated with higher mating success (Alley et al. , 2013). Recent analyses of outcomes from 792 dinner dates from the restaurant-based TV reality show "First Dates" found that couples who shared food were highly likely to agree to a second date: 93% of couples who shared food agreed to go on a second date, compared to 43% of couples who did not share food (Hendrie & Shirley, 2019)

My personal tip here is to first tell her to make you try a bite a of her food -or help yourself with a fork if you're worried she may have a low disgust threshold-.
And then give some of yours to her.

Personally, I take an even simpler step forward: I say that I like trying different things, and propose/tell to order several different dishes that we will share.

Powerful women better be strategic for maximum dating success

> Physical dominance, size, muscularity, and wealth are traditional cues or instantiations of status.
> These features are unlikely to help women attract men and may even render women less attractive as prospective mates.
> For example, being too tall can harm women's mating prospects; men typically prefer shorter women, and women typically prefer taller men (Pawlowski, 2003). As such, a taller woman (e.g. , 6'4″) must compete with shorter women (6'4″ and below) for the few men taller than herself (6'4″ and up).
> Similarly, being too intelligent, educated, or high-earning—other markers of what we typically think of as status—might also be considered potentially harmful to women's success in mating competition (Bertrand & Kamenica, 2015; Folke & Rickne, 2016)

However, as we often also expect here at TPM, reality is complex adn the author also found out that it's more nuanced and exceptions apply.

It's not like men *completely* write off high-status women.

For example, men are less attracted to *moderately* physically attractive women with a high status job, but more attracted if she's *highly* physically attractive women (Fisher & Stinson, 2020)

This is something we discussed a long time ago already (and were heavily criticized for):

- **Dating for successful women**

Pick sperm donors looking like the father if conceiving with sperm donors

Because of men's evolved adaptation to favor children who are similar to them, it's best to:

- **Give the adoptive father's name to the child (e.g. , John Doe, "Jr.")**: naming the child after the putative father was a strong predictor of long-term supportive and close relationship when born out of wedlock (Furstenberg and Talvitie, 1980)
- **Pick sperm donors who look like the father** (some sperm banks allow to match donors with pictures)

Interestingly, when couples picked sperm donors, father wanted a skin color like theirs, while mothers wanted the "more advantageous skin color" (which the authors don't mention, but chances are it was white)

Do consensual non-monogamy if you want to enjoy casual sex and relationships

> When those with greater interest in having sex with multiple partners engage in CNM, they report higher relationship satisfaction (Rodrigues et al. , 2017; Rodrigues, Lopes, Pereira, et al. , 2019).
> This suggests that people who form CNM relationships may avoid the fallout of infidelity by choosing a relationship structure that better matches their (and their partner's) mating motives and personalities

MORE WISDOM

Major theories can take hold even without much supporting evidence

The author describes that even science sometimes follows fads.
Describing the now much less supported menstrual cycle fluctuations and "dual strategy":

> Finally, the story of research on cyclic changes convincingly shows how well-formulated theories may become a mainstream view, even though their empirical support is weak and their assumptions unrealistic (e.g. , the role of extra-pair copulations).
> Relatedly, it shows how science often operates in waves of fashion, following a pattern of sporadic interest followed by introduction of an influential theory, an outbreak of empirical activity, and then gradual decline and sporadic interest. This is not restricted to menstrual cycle studies. Other areas such as research on fluctuating asymmetry, waist-to-hip ratio, and second-to-fourth digit ratio (to name just a few) have followed a similar pattern

It's not so surprising, after all.
Science is done by scientists, and scientists are humans.

Love is a fundamental human emotion

Something we already mentioned on this website:

> Despite widespread views in the social sciences over the past century that love is a European phenomenon of recent origin (e.g. , Bloch, 2009), love is prioritized as a preference in long-term mating in countries ranging from Brazil to Zambia (Buss et al. , 1990).

And a bit later:

> Romantic love appears to be a part of the shared human experience—with nearly all studied cultures evidencing intimate and romantic pair-bonding

The authors rightfully add that pair-bonding makes even *more* sense in ancestral and under-developed societies because of the benefits it provides to the couple and the offspring.

That being said though, in general it seems like individualistic cultures have more idealized and romantic beliefs of love, while collectivist cultures a more pragmatic one.

And men may fall in love more and more often than women

> Conversely, males appeared to initiate romantic overtones more often, fall in love easier, and (…) often

> reported having been in love more often (Kephart, 1967; Sprecher, 1994) suggesting that they are afforded more opportunities to pursue the luxury of love since they commonly incur fewer costs with commitment (Rubin et al., 1981).
> (…) Consequently, males fall in love faster and experience more emotional reactions from breakups (Rubin et al., 1981)

Poaching and infidelity make for poorer relationships

> individuals who had been poached by existing partners tended to have poorer-quality relationships, including less satisfaction, commitment, and investment.
> Poached individuals also reported being more attentive to alternative partners, perceiving their alternatives to be of higher quality, and engaged in more infidelity relative to nonpoached individuals

And:

> while evaluating a partner during infdelity may result in a more informed mate switch, relationships that start as infdelity may be less gratifying and more tumultuous (e.g. , characterized by poorer satisfaction and commitment and more infdelity).

Men probably solved the question of "paternity uncertainty"

Says Buss:

> Because fertilization occurs internally within women, men cannot be certain that they are the genetic father of a woman's child. Men who failed to solve this problem would have risked investing valuable resources in the offspring of intrasexual rivals. To compound these costs, the mates of those men would have also devoted their investments into offspring of their rivals. Unless ancestral men were able to solve this problem, it is unlikely that men would have evolved a long-term high-investment mating strategy

Muslim's veil may be a tool of male power

> A cross-cultural study on veiling reported that in all of the 25 countries included in the analysis, men supported veiling more than women. Veiling may thus serve men's ftness interests more than those of women (Pazhoohi & Kingstone, 2020), for example by reducing women's attractiveness to men who are not their husband.

Evolution is very imperfect

A theoretical background:

> **many psychological (and physiological) mechanisms** are now processing inputs that they did not evolve to handle, thereby **leading to maladaptive cognitive, afective, and behavioral outputs** (Li et al. , 2018; Li, Yong, van Vugt, 2020; Maner & Kenrick, 2010)

An example:

> The male beetles took such a liking that they would continue attempting to copulate with a bottle despite being attacked and having their genitalia dismantled by predatory ants

Also see our video:

Some degree of homosexuality is common

> Some studies show that a substantial proportion or even a majority of men and women do have also some level of same-sex attraction despite considering themselves heterosexual (Santtila et al. , 2008; Savin-Williams & Vrangalova, 2013).

And it's not true that one is either straight or gay:

> Moreover, non-heterosexuality does not mean only exclusive homosexuality but rather a spectrum of non-heterosexual attractions and preferences (Valentova & Varella, 2016b)

The authors also say that homosexuality is highly heritable and linked to psychological, neurological, hormonal, developmental, and anthropometric specificities (Bailey et al., 2016).

Bisexuality is linked to dark-triad and sex drive

> Bisexual women (Luoto & Rantala, 2022) have been demonstrated to display elevated sex drive and desire when compared to both heterosexual and homosexual women (Lippa, 2006, 2007; Schmitt, 2007; Stief et al. , 2014), and they also engage in more sexual behavior (Fethers et al. , 2000; Hayes et al. , 2011)

My experience with bisexual women confirms the same.

And as for dark triads:

> Semenyna et al.(2019) showed that this heightened sociosexuality observed in bisexual women is associated with personality traits known as the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, sub-clinical narcissism, and sub-clinical psychopathy) and sexual competitiveness

The author of "Confessions Of a Sociopath" also says that, in her experience, bisexuality may be the most defining trait of sociopathy.

Masculinity & sociosexuality: a complex relationship

- **More masculine women have more sexual partners**: *a number of studies reported that more masculine women have more sexual partners than more feminine women (cf. Bártová et al. , 2020; Mikach & Bailey, 1999; Varella et al. , 2014)*. BUT
- **Gay men don't have lower sociosexuality**, albeit they're on average less masculine than heterosexual men (Bailey & Zucker, 1995)
- Bisexual women are more feminine than lesbians, but have a more unrestricted sociosexuality (Flanders & Hatfeld, 2013); (Schmitt, 2005, 2007)
- **Gender non-conforming heterosexual and homosexual individuals are more sexually unrestricted** (Bártová et al. , 2020)
- **Non-heterosexuals engaged in more consensual nonmonogamy** (Valentova et al. , 2020)

Modern societies naturally move towards more inclusion, tolerance, & humanity

> Inglehart and colleagues (Inglehart 1997, Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) in their modernization theory distinguished traditional and modern societies based on social, economic, and cultural characteristics. Cultural norms of traditional societies place high value on survival and security, while cultural norms of modern societies place high value on self-expression and tolerance of minorities

I disagree that's a given.
Modern societies can move towards far more repressive systems. The difference though is that poorer societies cannot even afford inclusivity, self-expression and tolerance because they must prioritize survival.

Richer societies instead can afford to think beyond survival to include more progressive values and welcoming stances.
Richer societies *can* do that, and probably *tend* to do that. But it doesn't necessarily mean they *will*.

But it's still a good point.
Similarly, subsistence societies value child-bearing and having many and healthy children. Richer societies also value fathers' involvement, and they value humanity and kindness for their own sake:

> In traditional societies, continued childbearing affords higher reproductive rates, but parental investment in existing children is more important in modern wealthy societies (e.g., Mace, 2000). Due to increasing overpopulation in some societies (and on the global scale), the modern culturally evolved norms frequently discourage extended reproduction of offspring and tolerate unhealthy offspring more than traditional societies. Subsequently, the norms value less the number of individuals but rather promote humanity and survival of everyone, regardless of their health perspective.

Status matter, but not for women

In general, men compete with other men to acquire higher status, which in turn allows for better dating.
This holds true even in modern societies, but not for women:

> In Western societies high-income men have more biological children than low-income men, whereas among women the opposite is true (Hopcroft, 2005; Nettle & Pollet, 2008)

Antisocials may try to poach more, but are only successful if they're high-quality partners

This is the same we said in our articles "the myth of psychopath's mating success":

> antisocial people (…) are not the most frequent targets of these attempts. Instead, highly extroverted, open, attractive, and loving people are the most sought-after targets of poaching (Schmitt & Buss, 2001) (…).
> Further, although they attempt poaching frequently, antisocial people are also not the most successful poachers. That recognition goes to people who are self-described as open to new experiences, sexually attractive, and sexually unrestrained

QUOTES

On "why infidelity exists (and makes sense)":

> From an investment perspective, simultaneously investing in a long-term partnership and one or more short-term partnerships is akin to diversifying one's portfolio

Oral sex as effective mate guarding (a strategy of giving value and make your partners want to stay, instead of restricting freedom):

> people who engage in sexual behavior that is more likely to lead to partner orgasm—such as oral sex (Richters et al. , 2006)—may be employing a particularly valuable mate-guarding tactic (Pham & Shackelford, 2013;

> Sela et al. , 2015)
>
> Note: of course, that is only true as long as that “extra” sexual behavior is wanted by your partner and that oral sex is better than other types of sex -including “normal” penetrative sex-.

On relationships as “unspoken deals” (redacted for brevity):

> One line of thinking with respect to (…) relationship dissolution is (…) that marriage-like unions involve females conferring some exclusivity of sexual and reproductive rights to a male in exchange for his commitment to invest in and protect her and their offspring (Daly & Wilson, 2000).
> However, should either not fulfill their end of the bargain (e.g. , either party is unfaithful, “freeloads,” or becomes undependable), the relationship may dissolve.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s Analysis

Sometimes ad-hoc explanations weren’t plausible

Ad-hoc explanations undermine the rigor of evolutionary psychology.

In general, good evolutionary psychologists don’t do it much and, fortunately, they were the exceptions in this book.

However, there were passages where certain explanations felt more speculative, and not very plausible.

For example, the authors suggest that women compete less physically than men because injuries are costlier to women:

> By contrast, injury related to physical aggression may be costlier for women e.g., injury could make a woman unable to care for offspring, causing them to expire; Campbell, 1999, 2002) further facilitating this sex difference in overt and direct intrasexual mating competition

The author does well to use the words “maybe”, and “could” -that’s how you recognize a good scientist-.

But a little bit later the same hypothesis, with fewer hypotheticals:

> physical competition would negatively afect a mother’s ability to provision for herself and her (grand) offspring, and as a result of this selection pressure, women have evolved to be more risk-averse than men (e.g. , Cross & Campbell, 2011; Massar, 2018)

The hypothesis itself still strikes me as an ad-hoc explanation.
It lacks sufficient depth and fails to address counter-arguments.

Why?
Because injuries aren’t exclusive to women in terms of reproductive costs.
Injured men also face equally reduced reproductive success.

If injury alone were the key determinant, we’d expect both genders to be similarly cautious, if not men even more so, given their external reproductive organs make them particularly vulnerable in physical conflict.

Plus, since top men also reproduce more than women, the cost of physical aggression for top men should be even higher, and their risk aversion equally higher.
That doesn’t seem to be the case to me, since higher-status men may be even *more* aggressive.

Now I am going to make an hypothesis: some men may (subconsciously) like this hypothesis because it reinforces the frame of women as weaker -and men handling “tough business”-.

Sometimes fails to mention confounding variables or alternate explanations

For example, making the case that men discriminate more against children that are not theirs, the author say that (compared to women):

> Daly and Wilson found that children are 100 times more likely to be killed by their nonbiological parents, and nonbiological fathers are far more prone to engage in killing and other forms of child abuse than nonbiological mothers.

However, men are also more violent, so it's not possible to make a direct comparison with women, unless one shows that men are less than 100 times more likely to kill anyone.

In another case, to prove that parents care more for their biological children:

> families with both adopted and biological children, Gibson (2009) found that biological children were less likely to be arrested, less likely to be on public assistance, and less likely to require treatment for substance abuse or other mental health problems

Adopted children are more likely to have issues of their own.
Including: being abandoned by addicts or psychopathic parents (genetic), or having spent time early childhood in harsh condition (environmental).

Misunderstands the lover/provider (short term/long term) male strategy

The authors say:

> The second major assumption of the dual sexuality hypothesis is that men who can provide indirect benefts (i.e. , men with high-quality genes) pursue mainly a short-term mating strategy (…) As a consequence, their willingness to provide direct benefts (e.g. , in the form of paternal care) is low. This assumes that qualities responsible for direct benefits are of different origin than qualities of indirect benefits.
> In other words, men who can provide paternal care lack cues of genetic quality. Such an assumption is, however, likely to be unfounded.

That's not the case though.

The player/provider theory is based on the idea that many men who can sleep with many women prefer sleeping with many women, rather than committing.
These men *could* provide paternal care, but do not want.

The other side of the coin is that men who present themselves as committed partners and doting fathers may also be of a high mate value. But, as a group, they are likely lower mate value than the players (because if they were the same, many father would be players instead).

I do agree with the author though that many people over-generalize and mistakenly imply that all father-types are lower mate value, and all player types are of higher value.
Indeed, it was one of our early posts here:

- It's about mate value, not the role

> Lover, Provider & Friend: The Truth of Men's Sexual Roles

Sometimes a bit PC (but I can understand it)

For example:

> Some divorced individuals may remain single because they possess undesired traits that make it difcult to form and maintain a romantic relationship, such as having high levels of neuroticism, narcissism, and attachment-avoidance (Amato, 2000; Wang & Amato, 2000).

Narcissism is often attractive. Avoidant attachment can facilitate a "player" style that's also effective in early dating. I think more likely and common issues for struggling divorcees include: poor, older, overweight, or saddled with children to take care.

And another example later that also felt to come from a somewhat "off" naive/pc perspective:

> Men are signifcantly more likely than women to repartner after separation (…) and are more likely to have children with that new partner (…).
> From the narrow perspective of the success of a single-family unit, such behaviors seem difficult to reconcile with theories of evolutionary adaptation. From a broader perspective of survival of the species, however, it could be argued that the more important outcome lies in the chances of "superior" mate selection the second time around

What's "success of a single-family unit" has to do with evolutionary adaptation?

Either I completely misunderstood this part, or the authors seemed to bring some strange personal value that single-family units are "good" -a moral take- or "good for evolution" -a claim lacking evidence-. Both seem off.

Still too many studies low in ecological validity

Several studies felt to me over-relied on what people say.

For example:

> one study explored sex diferences and mate preferences in a booty-call relationship, finding that only women, not men, consider the kindness of a booty-call partner a necessity (March et al., 2018).

Well, the study, called " Netflix and Chill? What Sex Differences Can Tell Us About Mate Preferences in (Hypothetical) Booty-Call Relationships", is based on an *online questionnaire*.

I wouldn't overly-trust this study.

Some feminist, left-leaning claims?

For example:

> is incontestable that women, in the immediate cultural past (e.g. , last 500 years), have been discriminated against, and in many developing nations major discrimination still occurs.

It could be true indeed, but it would be better to define that discrimination.

And how "incontestable" is it?

How about some advantages women have also enjoyed?
Many soldiers who perished in war would love not being forced to go to war.
And many men who did NOT find a mate may envy the comparatively ease with which women can find one.

Sometimes I wished for more numbers

For example:

> Buss and Shackelford (1997) found that women who believed they were of lower mate value than their husbands also believed that their husbands were more prone to infdelity, which prompted these women to report a higher likelihood that they, themselves, would be unfaithful to their husbands

However, I would have liked to see how many more said that.

Some hypotheses are based on weak effects and left me unconvinced

For example, the authors list "coitus-induced uterine contraction" to interfere with another man's embryo implantation:

> Should these mechanisms fail and the woman is impregnated by another man, the third category of paternal assurance strategies involves pregnancy termination, which can include pregnancy-induced domestic violence (Burch & Gallup, 2004) and coitus-induced uterine contractions that interfere with embryo implantation (see Gallup & Burch, 2006, for details)

However, as far as I know -and i double checked before writing this, sex is generally pretty safe for an embryo.
So this felt to me more like a case of "looking for an item to add to the list of paternity-ensuring mechanisms.

Evolution is not a perfect, deterministic machine

Just like libertarian extremists (mistakenly) believe in free-market perfection, some people think as if evolution is a deterministic, nearly perfect machine.

As an example:

> If either of these hypotheses is correct—if masculine facial structures in men cue immune robustness or if they confer an advantage in intrasexual competition—selection should have shaped psychological mechanisms in women to be attracted to masculine facial shape

Not really.
Masculine facial features may confer an advantage in intrasexual competition, but it doesn't necessarily follow that women will be attracted to masculine facial shapes.
It MAY be the case. It may LIKELY be the case. But it doesn't *necessarily* follow.

Evolution is complex and messy, with an endless list of traits to select for or against.
So it's not a given that women would develop an adaptation to prefer a trait that helps in intrasexual competition.

Traits that help in physical combat may spread only because of survival and better reproduction via higher social status, without necessarily becoming more attractive.

Also, the "law of balance" applies again.
And developing exaggerated masculine facial features may come at a cost in other areas.

Just as an example, bigger testicles may make reproduction more efficient.
But they likely make combat less efficient -and cost more to develop and maintain-.
And it doesn't seem that women have strong preferences for balls' sizes.

Again, see this video:

Some claims felt off (and probably were off)

This paragraph didn't add up to me:

> In general, heterosexual men find women with feminine sex-typical traits to be more attractive (e.g. , Fraccaro et al. , 2010), although there are exceptions, indicating that for long-term relationships and in harsh environments men prefer more masculine female partners (e.g. , Little et al. , 2007, but see Pereira et al. , 2020)

While I could understand the case for "harsh environments", the "long-term" claim didn't add up for me.

So I asked Chatgtp.

My input before quoting the paragraph above was: "*from this paragraph from an evolutionary handbook, can you confirm or disprove with other studies that for long-term men prefer more masculine women?*
while i can understand the case for "harsh environments", it seems odd to me that men would prefer more masculine women as long-term partners".

Chatgtp confirms that long-term men prefer feminine women as long-term partners:

3. **Contradictory Findings:** However, other research, such as Pereira et al. (2020), challenges this idea. Pereira et al. found that men still tend to prefer femininity even in harsh environments, as feminine traits are consistently linked to reproductive potential, which is critical in long-term mate selection from an evolutionary perspective.

Conclusion:

The idea that men prefer more masculine women as long-term partners is not universally supported. While some studies (like Little et al., 2007) suggest this might be the case in harsh environments, others (e.g., Pereira et al., 2020) contradict this, reaffirming that men generally favor femininity, even for long-term relationships. The preference may be context-dependent, but the overall trend leans toward femininity being more desirable in long-term mating strategies.

And here is another example:

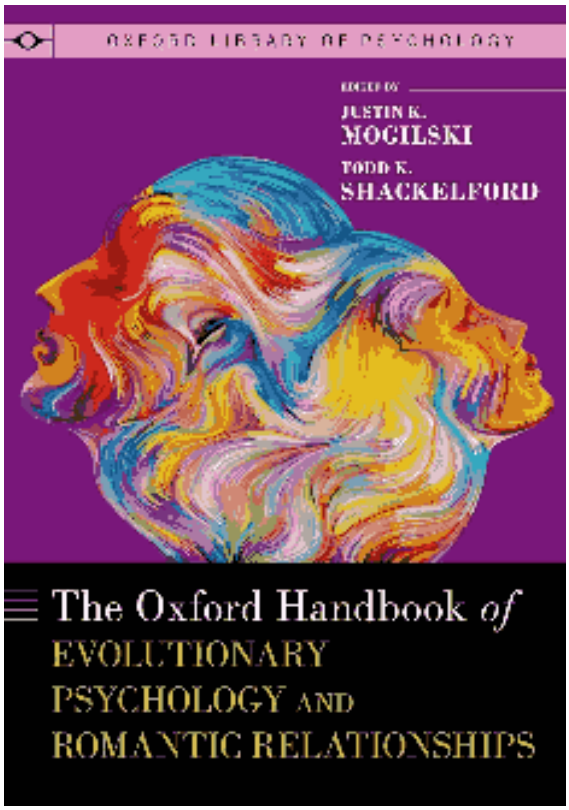
> Other research, however, is less consistent and indicates diferential effects depending on contexts and moderating variables. Meta-analysis of results across many studies (Langlois et al. , 2000) showed no sex diferences in the importance of attractiveness, with both men and women preferring physically attractive partners (e.g. , Fletcher et al. , 2004; Kenrick et al. , 1993; Regan & Berscheid, 1997)

This was my question to Chatgtp before quoting the above paragraph: "*I was surprised to read this because in most research and handbooks I've seen, men and women do differ in how they value and weigh attractiveness compared to other traits when it comes to mate selection. Based on academic consensus and the results of most studies and meta-analyses, is this true that men and women don't differ in how much they value attractiveness? this is the paragraph that raised some question marks for me*:"

And Chatgtp agreed:

> Other research, however, is less consistent and indicates diferential efects depending on contexts and moderating variables. Metaanalysis of results across many studies (Langlois et al. , 2000) showed no sex diferences in the importance of attractiveness, with both men and women preferring physically attractive partners (e.g. , Fletcher et al. , 2004; Kenrick et al. , 1993; Regan & Berscheid, 1997)

The claim that men and women don't differ in how much they value attractiveness in mate selection, as suggested by the paragraph you cited, contrasts with much of the academic consensus on evolutionary psychology and mate selection. Most research indeed supports the idea that men tend to place a higher priority on physical attractiveness compared to women, especially in long-term mating contexts. Here's a breakdown of the research and meta-analyses on this topic:



REVIEW

The *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships* is a well of wisdom.

Even after going through many handbooks and studies in this field, I still learned a lot from this book.

The book is also well-structured and seems thorough.

Even the criticism listed above refers mostly to single instances, and not trends.
Sure, like most other handbooks, it could gain with some streamlining and synthesis. That's because different authors sometimes revisit similar and/or foundational concepts with slightly different angles and studies (in this review for each chapter I combine parts from different chapters).

But overall, it was one of the most TPM-enriching books we've ever reviewed.
I took copious notes, and updated and improved many, many articles thanks to this handbook.
And I could even confirm or add some extra insights for our products.

For that, I am very grateful to the authors.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Who Is Michael Ovitz? Book Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 October 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Who Is Michael Ovitz? (2018) is Hollywood super-agent Michael Ovitz's no-holds-barred autobiography, spilling the gritty, behind-the-scenes truths of power plays, fame, and influence at the top of the entertainment industry.

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Exec Summary

- Learn to read people and character
- If you want great friends, you must be a great friend yourself
- Don't expect gratitude in life
- Keep business and friendship divided

Video Review

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Michael Steven Ovitz co-founded Creative Artists Agency in 1975, which went on to become the most successful talent agency in Hollywood.
Ovitz later served as president of The Walt Disney Company for only 16 months in what he considered to be a trap.

Display Power, To Never Use It

Couldn't agree more:

> I taught our agents to reach for the club every day, but to never—or almost never—pick it up. Power is only power until you exert it. It's all perception.

However, the author made the mistake of:

1. **Using that power in the negative**, value-taking, or even threat
2. ***Embodying* that negative power**

So he became the Grinch to many of his customers (and friends).

But don't be the bearer of threats -use power in the positive, or let someone else threaten-

Later the author says or implies his mistake was to embody that club.
Right after that line, he says:

> I was that club.
> The most persuasive point our agents could make to a stubborn exec was "I don't have the authority to close the deal at that number, so you'll have to talk to Michael." (…) he knew I'd ask for even more (…)
> (…)
> And once I left CAA, when it became safe for everyone to vent, I became the most hated.

The author let his partner be the "good guy":

> Ron Meyer, my partner and closest friend, was standing ten feet away. Ron was the soul of CAA, to hear everyone tell it, and I was the ass-soul.

Become Who You Need To Become To Achieve The Goal

Says the author:

> My clients played characters on-screen; I played them offscreen.
> Ninety-nine out of a hundred people, their act is who they are. But anomalies like me manufacture their characters from bits and pieces of those they're with. I was a chameleon, becoming whomever I needed to be to make everyone comfortable and close the deal.

And he adds:

> My basic character was buttoned-up, omniscient, wise, loyal, indomitable.
> But I could be a sports car aficionado with Paul Newman just as easily as I could discuss fiscal policy with Felix Rohatyn, the banker, or dive into the specifications of the Walkman with Akio Morita, the head of Sony.
> So to those I worked with I was a control freak. A shape-shifting machine. A Terminator.

But the private Ovitz was more like this:

> Yet the private me, the one only my closest friends saw, was ultrasensitive to every slight and constantly concerned about threats from every direction.

"Ultra sensitive to slights" tells you a lot about someone's character and his relationship with power.

Be Like The People You Want To Be Close To

> Paul ordered four dozen littleneck clams and began scarfing them down. He loved eating clams, talking about clams, exploring every nook and cranny of the vast and fascinating culture of clams.
>
> I happen to hate clams. But if Paul Newman loved clams, then I loved clams. In full chameleon mode, I mimed tossing some back and then slurping up the liquor, the liquid residue in the shell—when in fact I was dumping the whole mess beneath the table.
>
> An hour later, after a good chat, we shook hands and parted. I raced to the nearest deli and got myself a nice, safe tuna salad sandwich.

Strive For Total Control, But Never *Need* Total Control

Says the author:

> I felt you could never be too paranoid, because our competitors were out to get us and our clients were weak and easily wooed.
> Though my ruling desire was for complete control, I often felt at their mercy. I had little knowledge of what went on in their homes, production offices, and dressing rooms, but I hated the rumors I occasionally heard.

I believe a better attitude is to strive for that same level of control and power in the sense of you do the best you can.
But then to be OK with whatever happens, strong on the knowledge you've done your best, and that was your main job.

This attitude is stronger and more resilient because it mixes the best of both worlds: maximum effectiveness, with better mental health and a superior quality of life.

Give Back, Express Your Gratitude: It Means A Lot To People

Ovitz deep down wanted human recognition and emotional validation.

But he never got it.
And, I suspect, it's also why he took it so personally when who he thoughts were his friends, turned out not to be friends.

He says:

> Part of the reason I let the rumors slide is that I had a powerful need to take care of my clients; I thought of

> them as a very large, very fractious family.
> (…)
> So, for the most part, I gave, and people took. (…) It's a thankless business, but you can't say that. You're getting paid, and that's your thank-you.

It's debatable that you gave and others took when you became a powerful multimillionaire.
But it's understandable if you look at it from the point of view of a man who wanted human recognition.

And later, how grateful he is for a grateful man::

> He cleared his throat. "I have something I wanted to tell you," he said. "Um . . . I was in a bad place, and you're helping me get to a good place. You're really saving my life." He went on in that sweet, generous vein for three or four minutes, a long time for such a reserved guy.
> I was stunned. After saying good-bye, I sat alone for a while. In my twenty-five years as an agent, through thousands of transactions, I had never heard so much heartfelt sincerity and gratitude. This—this—was what I had always secretly hoped the business would be like.

If that worked with a more Machiavellian guy, imagine how well it works with most people.
That's why you want to learn how to bond and connect with people.

See here:

- **How develop deep human connections**

> How to Build Deep Emotional Connection

Never fire your future competition. Keep them close instead

The author and a few friends started as employees in the showbusiness.

They wanted to start their own business, and that was going be in competition with their original employer.
Once that surfaced, it got them in trouble with their employer.

However, their employer made a mistake.
He could have "pardoned" them and let them stay. Or he could have fired them, and accelerated the start of its fiercest competitor.
That's exactly what he did, and paid the price:

> We were officially fired that day, but Sam wanted to see me
> (…)
> he'd given me my first break and treated me with respect. Had he told me that he was hurt and that he wanted me to stay, there's a very good chance I'd have backed down and asked Ron to do the same. I felt no obligation to Bill and Mike and Rowland. If Sam had played it smart, he might have broken up the whole thing before it started.
> Instead, he fixed me with an arrogant stare and said, "You've really screwed yourself this time.

Share Your Extra Shares With Your Bro, Or You'll Lose Him

Ovitz negotiated more shares for himself:

> I said that if I didn't get more than the 16.67 percent that each of the six partners owned, I'd have to consider

> other options.
> I knew Ron wouldn't want to jeopardize what we'd built. He often acted as my agent with the others (…) so I was confident he'd deliver on my ask. And, indeed (…) they took the obvious point that I had clearly become the firm's leader.
> Professionally, mission accomplished. Emotionally, though, I had just hit the self-destruct button

Ovitz then says how he should have handled it:

> I never suggested to Ron that his stake also be increased—I wasn't emotionally aware enough to realize that he'd feel slighted if I moved up and he didn't.
> (…)
> What I should have done for Ron was give him some of my own allocation of shares, and then figure out how to handle Bill. To really be his blood brother, I should have behaved as *his* agent.

MORE WISDOM

Assess people with a first quick glance

> As I shook Dave's hand, I did a rapid scan. I always scanned people head to toe. Was their hair dyed, did they wear a wig, did the elements of their outfits match? Were they clean-shaven? (This was before the scruffy look pervaded the business.) Someone with hair curling out of his ears or dirty fingernails wasn't someone I wanted to cultivate. If a guy walked in with a huge gold chain and gold watch, he'd better be a hip-hop artist. Otherwise, he was announcing his insecurity.

But don't make it too easy to read you.
Says the author commenting on David Letterman:

> One reason I became so determined to help Dave was that he reminded me of myself. Of course, he was more trusting than I was, easier to read, and much, much funnier.

Secure your clients by telling them in advance of the poaching attempts

> Walking him to his car, I said, "There will be times when you'll want to jump ship.
> Lots of people have a grudge against me and will do anything to work with you. They'll say we're destroying you—they'll try to put a wedge between us. If you think they could get to you, don't take this step."
> I always tried to instill the negative in advance, inoculating my clients against the worst things our competitors and buyers would say about us. It was like vaccinating them against the flu.

Analyze your losses to win at life, develop relationships and make friends:

> As a ninth-grader at Portola Junior High, I got clobbered in an election for class historian.
> Losing this extremely insignificant contest depressed me for months. I could have accepted my shortcomings as a politician and folded my tent. Instead, vowing never to feel so humiliated again, I analyzed the loss and realized that I had no constituency. I needed to expand my relationships beyond the nerds who haunted the library and the ne'er-do-wells who snuck into RKO.

Again, it tells you a lot about someone's character that such a small thing struck such a deep chord with him.

Predatory men have always existed in the showbusiness

> I was repulsed when I learned the methods of one of our agents: he'd sign aspiring actresses just to screw them, then toss the contracts.

Pick a persona that fits you, that you can easily embody

> Believe it or not, in those days I was affable and considerate, with never a bad word about anyone. But you need to pick a persona you can inhabit without strain, and I knew I'd do better as the opposite of Ron—as the all-business tough guy who'd protect you. I could see that that's what the biggest stars and directors wanted. So my persona became the "I'll make your dreams come true" guy, mixed with the "I'll fix your problems" guy. Ron was the good cop and I was the bad.

Make your closing process personable

Ovitz describes his "signing machinery":

> Let's say you were a promising screenwriter and I met you at a dinner at Morton's. I'd call you the next day for a quick chat—not about wanting to represent you, but about the virtues of your work (which three of our literary agents would have briefed me on).
> I'd casually toss in the names of a few well-known actors and directors who'd be a perfect fit with your sensibility.
> Ninety-nine percent of the time, you'd want to talk some more, and I'd suggest lunch or a drink.
> There we'd talk further about your work and your hopes and dreams. The killer move, as you got up from the table or were handing your parking ticket to the valet, was to say, "Why don't you come in and meet our crew?"
> A few days later, when you drove in, one of our parking concierges (who'd been given a photo of you) would open your car door, greet you with a big smile, and say, "Mr./Ms. X, great to see you. Really hope you join the family!" or "Hope you have a great meeting!" (They switched up the patter to keep from going stale.)
> An assistant would escort you to the conference room, where five to ten poised, well-dressed agents would be waiting. They'd already have had a premeeting to script the ideas we'd be presenting
> ….

In a culture of truth... Let of go social power dynamics and dominance

A funny quote:

> John brought two of his senior engineers to the meeting, and they began picking the code and the technology apart, asking nasty and insinuating questions.
> Accustomed to protecting my directors when studio execs got rough, I finally stood and told my guys, "They can't talk to you like this! We're going." The engineers stared at me and said, "What are you talking about? It's totally fine."
> I sat back down; eBay ended up buying the tech. And as we walked out, John Donahoe put his arm around me and said, "You've just learned something very important about the Valley. There are no manners here, just brain challenges. It's about getting to the truth of the idea any way you can."

Practical Techniques

Some interesting life-hacks and techniques isolated from the book:

Stay as long as the big boss in the office

> I planted myself at a cubicle where he could not help but notice me, spreading out my files so he'd see them. A week later, around nine p.m., came the call I'd been waiting for.
> "Can you do me a favor?" Sam said. It was just a clerical task, but we were the only two people in the building, and he sure wasn't going to do it.
> My play was totally calculated and manipulative. I'm sure Sam knew exactly what I was doing. He also knew that calculation and manipulation are prerequisites for the job. So three months after starting at William Morris, I became Sam Weisbord's guy.

Turn the conversation on them

> I sat up straight, I was sympathetic, and I focused intensely on you, always turning the conversation away from myself. As I discovered by seeing my persona reflected in the eager eyes of my clients, that focus drew them in. And the contrast between the relaxed demeanor and the humming engine underneath, which people felt subconsciously, was comforting if you were on my side of the table, and curiously alarming if you were across from me. It suggested untapped power.

And later in the book:

> I came to the campus to interview Martin Scorsese about creativity, and afterward, at a table with the school's trustees, I did what I always do—asked questions of everyone, getting them talking about themselves so they'd give me a clue or two that would enable me to pretend I knew of them, even if I hadn't the faintest idea who they were. Kim, who was at my table, watched these exchanges carefully. Afterward, she told me, "That was a great lesson—how you made everyone feel comfortable and important, while you were learning everything you needed."

Control your employees with love

Absolute genius, marrying caring, with business success and nudging people to be at their best:

> I viewed our people as my children, and for the first ten years I'd call every employee who didn't show up at work to make sure they were okay and to see if they needed anything, from chicken soup to a good divorce lawyer.
> I did it out of concern, but I also wanted them to know I was keeping a watchful eye. Our idea was to make everyone feel that our building was a comfort zone—and to balance that with a little anxiety should they step outside the building.

Chase the prospect in action, but deny the chase verbally

> A lot of agents preyed on people's anxiety and desperation, pitching themselves as a golden ticket: "You can't make it without me!" To me, that went against the grain of human nature.
> If a potential client was reluctant, I'd say, "You should take all the time you need. No pressure." And by "no pressure," I meant, "No pressure until the next time I'm in touch, which may be in an hour." I tried to avoid coming across as a nudge, while making myself ubiquitous and inexorable. The smarter clients could see what I was doing, see how it worked, but it worked nonetheless because everyone wants to be wanted

Look omniscient with claims that nobody can verify

> Another move I developed, almost unconsciously, was ground shifting.
>
> If someone on the other side of the table very confidently asserted a number that was confidential or that was plausibly in dispute—the budget of a rival studio's competing film, for instance—I would instantly say "It's higher" or "It's lower," depending on which served our interests.
>
> That assertion would throw the other guy off balance, and suggest that I knew everything (…) At the very least, it would give me a gauge of how solid their information was, and how confident they were. If they fired right back with "No, you're absolutely wrong," I'd just say, "That's not what I'm hearing from the highest levels," or something equally ominous, then change the topic.

Hide your ownership, say you're borrowing it

… So people won't bug you to use it.

> One of Ron's complaints was that I didn't let him use it enough, and he was right.
> But the last thing I wanted was for CAA to become Warner Bros., which ran a wasteful fleet of five planes, and I knew that if anyone but Ron and me realized we had a plane, they'd all want to hop on it.
> So when I booked it for any of our other agents to fly to a set for an emergency, I always said that it was Sydney's plane, and that he was just letting us borrow it. The Young Turks were furious, later, when they found out about it. But I always felt it was none of their business.

You can also use this technique if you're worried someone may sue you.

Lessons Learned

The main lessons learned for a high-quality life:

Don't teach others to be fake & expect "True Friendship"

Look at this sentence.

I could sense the reason for Ovitz's failed friendships in just these short lines:

> I always told our agents, "Make your clients think they're your friends—but remember that they're not." Yet it would be my clients who'd stay loyal, for the most part, and my friends who'd betray me.

How do you expect your friends to be loyal, if your communication is 100% cynical?
And, as we shall see, if also your behavior is Machiavellian and, at best, "strictly business first".

Read characters for who they are, not for what you wish

The author seemed to be great at reading people… As long as they weren't close to him.

Then he'd let his preference, his ideals of brotherhood, and his personal liking get in the way of good judgment.

Let's see some examples:

Ron the best friend

Look at what Ovitz says about his (supposedly) best friend:

> Ron wanted Bill's shares, and he wanted him gone.
> (…)
> Bill never had an inkling of Ron's animus. I was amazed at how well Ron hid his true feelings from someone he saw every day.

Obviously, Ron is a guy who keeps his true feeling not just guarded, but inscrutable.
Why would you think he'd never do the same with you, the guy with the most power over him, and the guy who more than anyone else impacts his financial income?

Another huge sign is that Ron had a gambling problem, but never shared it despite the close friendship -or what the author thought was a close friendship-:

> One morning in 1987, Ron came into my office, shut the door, and said, "I've got a problem."
> (…)
> "I lost a lot of money in a poker game, and I can't pay up."
> I was shocked, but I said, "Okay, we'll take care of it." I figured it was a hundred thousand dollars or so. "How much?"
> "Over five million."
> As I strove to underreact, Ron told me he'd been going to Vegas several times a week
> (…)
> I was unable to process this.

If a close friend kept that away from me, I wouldn't consider him *close* anymore.

And that wasn't even the only time it happened.
It happened once again after, with an even *bigger* sum:

> For the next year and a half, Ron and I worked harder and more closely than ever. Then one morning, he closed my door, took a seat, and looked at me with a funereal expression. "You're not going to believe this," he said, "but . . ." Another poker game, an even bigger loss: $6.5 million.
> I felt like he'd smashed me with a baseball bat. Who was this man?

Jay Maloney the star employee

Later, talking about Jay Maloney who'd later also betray him, he says:

> When he told me he'd graduated from USC, I gave him $10,000 to buy some suits so he could work for us as an agent. It turned out he hadn't quite graduated from USC, but minor details like that didn't trouble him.

To me, this is a failure to properly assess a character who'd just proven to you to be a consummate liar.
Plus, he pocketed your money with that lie.
Huge red flag.

Little later he says about Maloney:

> He was constantly using my name with clients, saying I'd said things that I hadn't, pushing, overreaching. Almost every day I heard something about him that annoyed me, momentarily, before I let it go, because I, too, was nothing if not an overreacher, and because manipulating people was a big part of the job. If he was agenting me, then it meant he could become a great agent. I held him to a lower standard than anyone else—and I dearly wish I hadn't.

I feel Ovitz liked Maloney because it reminded him of himself.
And Maloney became very close to him and even his family, spending much time at Ovitz's place.

That liking, closeness, and mentor/mentee relationship blinded Ovitz to the truth.

Watch the small signs: they signal bigger issues

Talking about his closest business partner and friend Ron Meyer:

> Ron used to introduce himself as my keeper, my agent—half in jest, but with a buried, wounded sense that he was born to be a number two.

Jokes are often signals of deeper motives.
And in hindsight at least, Ovitz notices that Ron resented being his number two.

If you can see that and interpret that, you can then do something about it.
Including something to improve your relationship into a more genuine and win-win one.

Treat your friends... *Like friends* if you want them as friends

After the first poker loss, the author says:

> I don't know where he got the rest of the money, but he eventually paid our loan back. I put my concerns to rest, happy to sweep it all under the rug. And I never did tell him, "Hey, I'm worried about you. What's going on, and what can I do to help?"

He correctly identifies the issue here.
It seems like his friend hand a gambling addiction. A good friend must address it and ask about it.
It seems like Ovitz didn't even care if he could survive financially -he says he doesn't even know how he get the rest of the money-.

Don't put a leash on your friend and don't expect resentment

Remember that Ovitz got more shares, but gave none extra to Ron.

After Ron's gambling issues, they put him on a tight allowance:

> Bob said, "All we can do is try to control his spending—cancel his credit cards, put him on an allowance."
> We budgeted Ron enough to sustain his standard of living and not penalize his children, but no more. (…)
> But he did not strain visibly against our leash. He said, "You guys are right, I screwed up, I'm going to fix this."

It's good he said that, he's being a professional.
But "professional" doesn't make for "good friends".

If you're in a similar situation, you can at least expect that the person you put on a leash doesn't see you as a great ally and "friend".

The author also seems to almost appreciate the hiding of the feelings, instead of expecting better:

> I wish he'd fought with me about it so we could have gotten to the bottom of it. Instead Ron did what he did best. He handled me.

Maybe you can say he handled you.
But one could also say that it's fake cowardice to never speak up.

Don’t fight your former friends. It only gets worse

Orvitz, Ron and the other later fall out.

No fallout starts well, but you can certainly make it worse.
The author, probably reeling from the pain of rejection, made it worse.

I even feel the book glosses over this part, and it may have been worse than it shows.
For example, the author ends up buying the house Ron wanted to buy, which feels a terrible spiteful move.

But there is a happy ending.
Many years later, they meet for a public chat.
They both admit to their mistakes, Ron owns up that he should have spoken up about his resentment -yes he should have-.
And the author says:

> What we were both finally realizing, onstage, was that we’d each unwittingly sacrificed our relationship in order to save CAA—whereas if we’d just focused on making sure we were both happy, CAA would have done even better.

Keep a few good, close friends (outside of work)

… Especially if you’re calculative, strategic, and Machiavellian.

I believe the author made the mistake of:

1. Mixing friendships with cut-throat business
2. Expecting friendships while not being a great friend himself
3. Picking the wrong people as close friends

And then he came emotionally undone once he realized he had no good friend.
I believe that especially more Machiavellian people need good friends they can be genuine with. It helps you maintain your humanity and your “goodness”.

More info in the video review ⍰

QUOTES

On keeping business and friendship apart:

> I’d always thought it was vital to mix business and friendship. I was learning, painfully, that it was better to keep those realms far apart. Business always gets personal.

On insincere flattery:

> I’m glad you’re involved,” he said heartily, which was probably untrue.
> There’s nothing sincere in entertainment: every call has at least one agenda, and usually two or three. Insincere flattery was actually more flattering than sincere flattery, because it was a tacit acknowledgment that I had power and had to be propitiated. But understanding that dynamic did make it hard to trust anyone.

Insecurity and ambition are a powerful cocktail:

> I always felt one step inferior to the people around me, and one step superior. I wasn’t as creative or cultured as

> they were, but I was a lot smarter and more hardworking than most of them. Insecurity and ambition make a powerful cocktail

On always looking like you work harder than you do:

> We worked insanely hard, but we fostered the illusion of working impossibly hard. I believed momentum was everything—once a company relaxed, it was done for.

On business manipulation and pretending you're all the same:

> The lack of hierarchy was a myth, of course, a management tool. Nothing happened that Ron and Bill and I didn't want to have happen. We were democratic dictators.

On being the mysterious puppeteer instead of the famous frontman:

> Mystique is ten times better than publicity; it's much better to be thought of as the great and powerful Oz than to be revealed as merely another schemer behind a curtain.

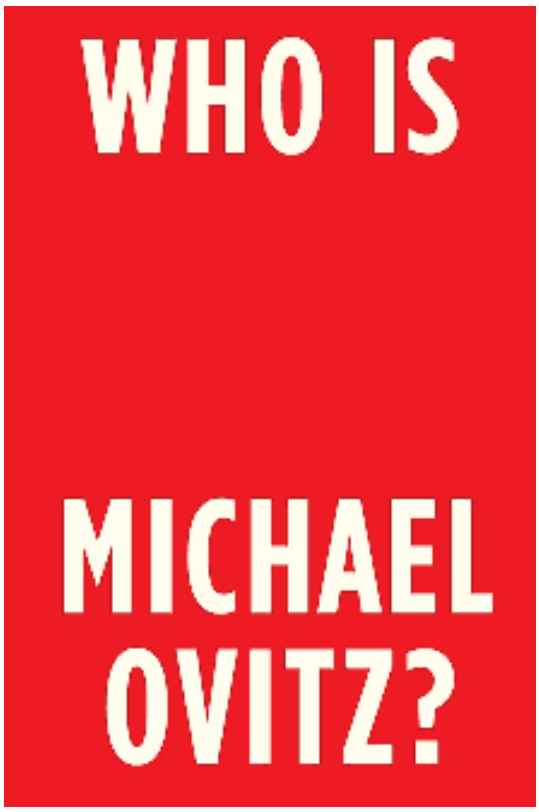
CONS

I only have on thing:

- **The intervention leaves us wishing for more details**

the author talks about an "intervention" was sort of cornered into at a dinner. His reaction is very telling and he says that "I spent my life solving other people's problems and steering the conversation away from myself. But that night I was trapped."

However, that intervention seemed to be very useful.
BUT.. He doesn't share the content. I wish he did.



REVIEW

Who Is Michael Ovitz? is a fascinating read on a professionally uber-successful Machiavellian man.

The book is a page-turner, and what I appreciate most is the opportunity to learn about the limitations of over-Machiavellianism.

I got this book from David Senra's podcast "Founders".
David didn't like the book, and quoted this passage to justify his :

> After being a chameleon all day at work, it took me an hour or so to figure out who the fuck I was when I got home.

But that's *exactly* why I wanted to get that book.
And exactly why I liked it.

I have a very different take.
Why rejecting that one unique guy who speaks honestly, instead of writing a fake PR autobiography?

Senra is awesome, but sometimes I feel he may be too naive in believing that the biographies and autobiographies he shares are reliable accounts of characters and events.

Ovitz instead gifted us with the real deal of what goes beyond the upper echelons of the entertainment business -and business success in general-.

Check:

- **Best books** to read,
- **best dark triad books**

Or **get this book on Amazon**.

Michael Ovitz Book Summary: 10 Tactis to Dominate Hollywood

Who Is Michael Ovitz? (2018) is Hollywood super-agent Michael Ovitz's no-holds-barred autobiography, spilling the gritty, behind-the-scenes truths of power plays, fame, and influence at the top of the entertainment industry.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/who-is-michael-ovitz-book-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.9

Handbook of Relationship Initiation: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 November 2024 · Archived copy · Original

The *Handbook of Relationship Initiation (2008)* reviews the empirical literature on the dynamics that govern the beginning stages of relationships.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - The formula that tells you when men will approach
  - Self-disclosure & interest work to build rapport
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  - The earlier it is, the more indirect communication is
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  - Exchange VS communal relationships: differences
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  - Hookup culture can be costly to youth
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- MORE WISDOM
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- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Relationships make people happier and healthier**
- **Self-monitors, or people who care about self-presentation, are most successful in socialization** (albeit sometimes at the cost of genuineness)
- **Gender roles and expectations in dating are still the same**, despite all the cultural changes

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Various authors and the editors are Susan Sprecher, Amy Wenzel, and John Harvey.

The formula that tells you when men will approach

The equation is:

$V = f (A \times P)$

V or "motivation to approach" depends on two main factors:

- **A (Attraction)**: the individual's level of interest or attraction toward the other person.
- **P (Probability of Acceptance)**: the person's estimate of how likely the other individual is to reciprocate positively (accept rather than reject the overture).

Other personality traits such as self-esteem moderates the odds of approaching

> People who have a secure attachment style are likely to read cues of acceptance or rejection accurately and to calibrate their interest according to the prospect of success (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).
> In contrast, people who are fearful (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), those who have low self-esteem (Baldwin & Keelan, 1999; Leary, 2004), and those who are particularly sensitive to rejection (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998) are less likely to make an overture because they are slow to entertain the hypothesis that others are interested in having a relationship with them. Such people read ambiguous cues negatively.
> People with a "dismissing" or "avoidant" attachment style also often appear to give up hope of attracting another's interest.

Conversely, men who are (or think themselves) as high value are more likely to go after attractive partners.

This confirms that the more calculative social exchange model also apply to dating dynamics.

Men don't go for the most beautiful women

The two-factor model of affiliation listed above explains why men don't go for the most beautiful women since these women are more likely to reject them.

This was the study that first showed it in a more naturalistic context, with higher ecological validity:

> The two-factor model of affiliation was first tested by Huston (1973), who asked men interested in dating to choose a date from an array of six women varying in physical attractiveness from beautiful to above average in looks. In one condition, the men were led to believe all six of the women had expressed an interest in dating them; in a second condition, the women's interest was left to the men's imagination. When men believed that all of the women wanted to date them, nearly all of them picked either a beautiful (78%) or a highly attractive (19%) woman, whereas when the men were not provided any information about whether any of the women would accept them, most chose one of the less attractive women.

Attraction also increases partner's attraction

As per above, knowing that the approach is well received increases the odds of being approached.
But attraction also increases attraction:

> A study conducted by Curtis and Miller (1986) complements Snyder and colleagues' (1977) findings and

> provides further support for the notion that attraction begets attraction.

This is one of the reasons why I've never been into paid sex.
I just didn't find it exciting to know that someone is there for a payday.

Self-disclosure & interest work to build rapport

There have been many studies on what builds rapport, and for both initial and long-term relationships:

> Among the most effective of these strategies are self-disclosure (particularly emotional disclosure), attentiveness, and clearly expressing interest in the other (Clark et al., 1999; Hess, Fannin, & Pollom, 2007; Kenny & La Voie, 1984).

However, as usual, it's not that simple.
One study found that self-disclosure had the opposite effect with women:

> For the women, interestingly, there was a negative correlation between their attraction for the male partner and how much they disclosed to him, but there was no correlation between their attraction and disclosure when no future interaction was anticipated.
> Shaffer and Ogden (1986) speculated that the women who expected future interaction may have been more concerned than the men about maintaining a "professional relationship" during the acquaintance exercise and in the follow-up study in which they were both participating. The women, compared to the men, may have reduced self-disclosure during the acquaintance exercise to maintain an emotional distance with a future work partner.

I agree with the author's speculation.
Women who shared too much felt their partner knew too much, had taken too much from them.
And so they ended up disliking him as a taker of personal information.

But they wouldn't have disliked him if, say, they ended up romantically involved soon after the disclosure.

Indeed, when a woman self-disclosed too much but we didn't get intimate, I consider the interaction ended.

Men Brag, But It's Not Very Effective

Men "embellish" their quality when they're interested, but are unsure she's interested in them.

However these "ingratiation tactics" aren't effective:

> In situations where a strong incentive to engage in strategic self-presentation exists, to be successful, would-be ingratiators must cultivate the other's interest in them while appearing to be genuine.
> This may be more easily said than done.
> Gordon's (1996) meta-analysis of ingratiation found that the more obvious the stake a person has in attracting a prospect's favor, the less effective an ingratiation tactic is in securing the other's interest.
> (…)
> he found evidence that obvious self-promotion, in the service of whatever positive impression, generally boomerangs.

People brag on dates when they're unsure they're attractive

> Figley (1974, 1979) demonstrated that when people are highly attracted to a prospect, but are provided with only moderate assurance of the other's interest, they are likely to embellish their positive qualities and

> minimize their shortcomings.
> This tendency to enhance one's image was not found in situations where individuals were not attracted to the potential partner or when they were informed that there was no chance of acceptance by the other.

Indeed, bragging is a skill that must be learned.
And, as usually, socially and power-aware men have the edge.
See:

- **How to brag**

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

Self-esteem is an important indicator of value

Men higher in self-esteem had more mating opportunities and more partners:

> Another potential indicator of mate value is the social barometer of self-esteem (Kirkpatrick, Waugh, Valencia, & Webster, 2002). Similar to the results with mating opportunities, men who score higher on self-esteem scales tend to choose and to successfully engage in more short-term mating relationships (Baumeister & Tice, 2001; Walsh, 1991)

But the opposite is true for women:

> The same relationship was usually not evident, and was often reversed, among women in modern nations.
> That is, women with high self-esteem were more likely to pursue monogamous, long-term mating strategies.

Also see:

- Signs of low-value women

Self-Monitors: social chamelons, without darker intent

The parts on self-monitors were the most interesting to me in the whole handbook.

It even inspired me to write an article (coming soon).

My only main doubt is that, to me, self-monitor basically ended up being more a trait of Machiavellianism than its own category.

Here are some key passages.
On chameleon-like qualities:

> (…) high self-monitors behave in a chameleon-like fashion during dating initiation, strategically changing their self-presentation in an attempt to appear more desirable to the person they wish to date.

On better approaches and initiations:

> Given the highly scripted nature of relationship initiation and the normative expectations regarding positive and negative emotion displays, it is not surprising that high self-monitors are skilled initiators.
> (…)
> This may explain their ability to initiate romantic relationships more readily than low self-monitors. Thus, the difference between high and low self-monitors' ability to regulate emotional expression by attending to

> appropriate social and emotional scripts may account for their success or failure at initiating relationships. (…)
> date almost double the amount of low self-monitors

Also better initiators because they present themselves better (more positively, in this case):

> In a study examining the relationship between self-presentational goals (ingratiation and self-promotion) and the expression of emotions during social interactions for individuals high and low in self-monitoring needs, Levine and Feldman (1997) found that across goal type, high self-monitors displayed less negative emotion (i.e., fear, anger, and disgust) and more happiness than low self-monitors and were rated by judges as more competent and likeable.

However, the authors posit that their appeal may set the stage for a future "fatal attraction".

They're also better manipulators:

> Leck and Simpson (1999) studied the phenomenon of "feigning romantic interest" in a potential romantic partner, defined as the ability to "send more convincing and believ-able messages expressing their 'intentions,' even when their intentions do not reflect their underlying attitudes and feelings" (p. 72). Results indicated that high self-monitors successfully conveyed their feigned interest through verbal and nonverbal channels significantly more than did low self-monitors. In addition, high self-monitors believed they would be better at, and derive more enjoyment from, feigning romantic interest than low self-monitors.

Of course, as we know here, manipulation comes at a cost.
In relationship, that makes for less genuine and more toxic relationships:

> Although high self-monitors are charming when charm is required (…) their relationships lack the trust and intimacy seen in those of low self-monitors (Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

At this point, it's unsurprising they're more player types, and more calculative:

> They have an uncommitted orientation toward relationships (Snyder, Berscheid, & Glick, 1985) and have a higher desire than low self-monitors to "trade in" their current partner in favor of another (Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

> Due to their ability to adapt to different situations, high self-monitors prefer "segmented" and "non-exclusive" social networks, including romantic partners (Leone & Hawkins, 2006, p. 741). This allows self-monitors to choose partners who are appropriate for a given situation. Often, this choice is dependent on situational or extrinsic factors such as physical appearance (Snyder et al., 1985), social status, and approval from others (Jones, 1993).

By contrast, low self-monitors pick partners more based on character than beauty and go for quality of relationship over quality.

The earlier it is, the more indirect communication is

Few people have the skills and assertiveness to speak straight:

> Planalp and colleagues' investigation of responses to uncertainty-increasing events in close relationships also

> shows a preference for indirectness (…) Events such as an unexplained loss of contact, the discovery of a competing relationship, or a change in personality were typically followed by efforts to seek information by "talking over" or "talking around" the issue, hardly direct strategies.

And it seems to be the case especially among younger folks:

> Bell and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1990) supported and extended this work. Their study of 226 college students in romantic relationships showed that this population frequently engages in secret tests (participants averaged 4.5 secret tests in their current relationship) and confirmed Baxter and Wilmot's (1984) finding that the number of secret tests generally decreases over the stages of courtship.

And early on:

> (…) direct and nonsecretive information-seeking strategy, increased across courtship stages for both males and females. In other words, we become increasingly direct in our information-seeking efforts as we move from initial to late stages of relational development.

Men's dominance increases their attractiveness

Something here at TPM we made clear from our very first articles:

> from an evolutionary psychology perspective, men gain their attractiveness to women through their social status and resources, and dominance is a contributor to both. Dominance is expressed behaviorally, and such behavior presumably reflects an underlying disposition.

As expected, a set of four studies by Sadalla et al. showed that dominance makes men more attractive, but not women.

As we also always highlighted here, it's dominance, NOT aggressive, domineering, or "as*hole types":

> The effect was specific to dominance as an independent variable and did not occur for related constructs (aggressive or domineering). This study also found that manipulated dominance enhanced only a male's sexual attractiveness and not his general likeability.

And even more specifically, studies showed that our concept of high power and high warmth maximizes attraction:

> Jensen-Campbell et al. (1995) experimentally manipulated behavioral expressions of both male dominance and prosocial orientation.
> Conceptually, the design was a 2 × 2 matrix of male behavior, crossing factorially dominance (high versus low) with prosocial tendencies and agreeableness (high versus low). Female college students evaluated the men for overall attractiveness, subjective physical attractiveness, sexual attractiveness, and dating desirability. The researchers also manipulated male physical attractiveness and the target of dominance—another man or a woman. Results showed that in each case, low-agreeable men were not attractive sexually, physically, or as dating partners. Adding or subtracting dominance did not alter that outcome. For men who were high in agreeableness, however, dominance enhanced their attractiveness significantly. Of the four male personae generated by the 2 × 2 design, the high-agreeable, high-dominant man was the most attractive to women.

See more here:

- Dominance in dating

- Dominance in socialization
- **High power, high warmth**

> Social Strategy 101: High-Power / High-Warmth

Another study showed that pro-social accounted for more than dominance:

> In another paper, Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, Todd, and Finch (1997) replicated and extended Jensen-Campbell et al.'s work. They explored the phenomenology of both men's and women's attraction to persons of the other sex using 372 college men and women. Both men and women reported that high-agreeable targets of the other sex were more physically attractive. When considered as a direct effect on attraction, agreeableness had almost six times the impact of dominance in predicting women's attraction to men. Mediation analyses showed that dominance had less direct (and indirect) impact on women's attraction to men when they expected a long-term relationship than when they expected a short-term relationship (see also Miller, Niehuis, & Huston, 2006).

⚠ **Author's note: all studies based on paper evaluations**
Unluckily, all these studies are based on paper evaluations.
I'd personally guess that women's responses on paper over-estimate the importance of agreeablness and underestimate the importance of dominance.

Exchange VS communal relationships: differences

> The Clark and Mills team proposed that distinctly different norms apply to communal relationships, which are concerned with feelings of responsibility for another's well-being.
> (Exchange relationship) benefits are provided to others in return for benefits received (e.g., Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). Exchange relationships are more common among strangers and among persons anticipating short-term relationships.

For example, people expect to be repaid in exchange relationships, but do NOT want to be repaid in communal ones:

> Clark, Mills, and colleagues found that in the exchange condition, the men liked the woman more when she repaid him for helping her. In the communal condition, the men liked the confederate more when she did not repay him.

Fatal attraction: why we hate those we loved

Fatal attraction refers to the phenomenon of disliking someone for the exact same qualities that attracted us:

> The qualities that individuals come to dislike in their partners can be an exaggerated version, or a negative interpretation, of those that first drew them to their partner in the first place. A confident partner, for instance, may eventually be seen as "too confident," or arrogant. This process is referred to as "fatal attraction" (Felmlee, 1995).

This phenomenon is relatively common, with studies placing its occurrence at between 30% and 67% of couples. And it's more common when people are attracted to dissimilar or extreme traits:

> fatal attractions are significantly more frequent when individuals are attracted to extreme partner qualities

> (Felmlee, 2001; Felmlee et al., 2006), or those described in an exaggerated manner (e.g., unusually confident). They also occur more often when individuals report being drawn to partner qualities that are dissimilar or different from their own (e.g., unique; Felmlee, 1998a, 2001) and are less frequent when similarities, or common interests, are the source of attraction (Felmlee, 1998a; Felmlee et al., 2006). These findings underscore the argument that although dissimilarity between partners may be initially alluring, it also is liable to serve as a source of subsequent relationship discontent.

Romantic love is universal

> Romantic love is a universal or nearly universal phenomenon, appearing in every culture for which data are available (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992), in every historical era (Hatfield & Rapson, 2002), and in every age group (Tennov, 1979).

Interesting related findings:

- **Romantic love is distinct from attraction or sexuality**, albeit sexual attraction plays a role
- **Preoccupied attachment styles fall in love most often** and most intensely (Hazan & Shaver, 1987)
- **Low self-esteem people fall in love harder** (Dion and Dion, 1975)
- **The gender difference is small**, but men are more variable and are more romantic and passionate *on average*
- **Culture mediates how love is enacted** within a cultural context
- **Romeo and Juliet effect is bogus**. Despite what Greene suggests in *The Art of Seduction*, most studies find parental approval to be a positive factor (Sprecher, Felmlee, Orbuch, & Willetts, 2002).
- **Men said "I love you" first** in 70% of Booth-Butterfield and Trotta (1994) analysis <— But it didn't share the sample size :S

Satisfaction in marriages tend to decrease over time

> In summarizing research on marital relationship satisfaction in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, Berscheid and Regan (2005) noted that newlywed couples are typically very satisfied with their relationship. This satisfaction decreases during the first year of marriage but is still solid. Satisfaction continues to decline, albeit more gradually, for another couple of years and then levels out for a few years, at which time it may begin declining more. Yet absolute levels of satisfaction remain in the "satisfied" range. Wives and husbands seem to have similar satisfaction trajectories. Finally, satisfaction levels decrease more rapidly for people who are less satisfied at the beginning of their marriage (see Berscheid & Regan, 2005, for a review).

Crucially, passionate love may lessen over time in a relationship, but a variety of research has shown that it's not inevitable.

These were the most reliable:

> The best predictors of relationship satisfaction were ultimately positive love (a combination of passionate, altruistic, and friendship love) felt for the partner, the absence of game-playing love, the perception that one did not use aggressive conflict tactics in the relationship, and the perception that the partner was able to take one's perspective.

Gender role expectations in dating are immutable

The authors first note the typical gebder-based expectations in dating.

And then comment:

> Despite what we might assume to be a lessening of rigid sex-role scripts in romantic relationships, the expectations noted above for men and women on a first date appear to be relatively unchanging. For example, the male role as initiator and the female role as recipient and sexual gatekeeper reported in 2000 were similar to those reported in 1993 (Laner & Ventrone, 2000), and those reported in 1993 were similar to those reported in the 1950s (Rose & Frieze, 1993). In fact, these scripts are apparently so prescriptive that men and women find it difficult to deviate from them even when instructed to do so.

Crazier still, men and women found it challenging to let the woman initiate a first date even after being instructed to do so:

> Gilbert, Walker, McKinney, and Snell (1999) instructed college student (stranger) dyads to enact the initiation of a first date and then suggest a move to greater sexual intimacy.
> In those dyads where assigned gender roles were reversed, 31% of the men initiated the date even when his female partner was assigned the initiator role. Likewise, only about half of the women were able to initiate moves toward sexual intimacy.

Successful male daters use the “seductive voice”

Contrary to what most men think, the seductive voice isn’t all lower pitch.
Instead, it varies from higher pitch, to lower pitch, to higher again:

> Of interest for our purposes here is Anolli and Ciceri’s (2002) interpretation of the vocal variations during the course of the seductive sequence.
> The beginning of the sequence is marked by higher pitch, elevated intensity, and faster rate of articulation. The middle phase shifts gradually to a lower, weaker, and warmer voice, which the authors referred to as the “self-disclosure voice.” The third phase moves back to a higher pitch, higher intensity, and accelerated rate when actually making the request for the woman to meet him again.

Then the researches hypothesizes why that work, but ultimately they didn’t know for sure.

People differ in their level of romanticism

“Romanticism” wasa a new trait of people’s psychology that this book introduced me to:

> Those high in romanticism believe that love is possible at first sight (love at first sight), each of us has only one true love (one and only), true love will find a way to overcome any obstacle (love finds a way), and true loves are perfect (idealization).

And, unsruprisingly, people high in romanticism also fall in love more and more often:

> higher romanticism scores, both in general and for specific facets (except love at first sight), were concurrently related to greater reports of love, satisfaction, and commitment for both men and women (Sprecher & Metts, 1999).

In dating, people rate other on 3 main categories

> dimensions: (a) warmth and trustworthiness, (b) attractiveness and vitality, and (c) status and resources (see

> Fletcher et al., 1999). Each dimension may reflect a different route—focusing on good investment or on "good genes"—to obtain a mate and, ultimately, to promote one's reproductive fitness (cf. Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

At least on paper, people *say* they prefer warmth over status:

> when warmth and trustworthiness were pitted against status and resources, gender differences virtually disappeared, with most men and women preferring partners who were poor and warm to those who were cold and rich.

And when it came to attractiveness:

> In contrast, when warmth and trustworthiness were pitted against attractiveness and vitality, partner preferences were strongly affected by long-term versus short-term relationship goals. For instance, when selecting a partner for a "permanent" relationship, nearly everyone chose a warm and homely person over a cold and attractive person.
> When choosing a partner for a short-term fling, however, virtually everyone chose a cold and attractive person over a warm and homely one.

Expectations impacts relatioship satisfaction

People tend to have ideal standards for partners and relationships.

And the flexibility of those standards and how their current partner and relationshpis match them determines their satisfaction with the relationhip.

However, lack of flexibility is not necessarily bad, as long as the partner matches them:

> individuals who report having less flexible ideal standards typically report the highest relationship quality when their partners match their ideals. Relationship quality is lowest, on the other hand, when individuals are less flexible and partner discrepancies are large. Thus, less flexible ideal standards can either enhance or diminish perceptions of relationship quality, depending on ideal partner–current partner discrepancies.

Narratives of relationships reveal couples' insights

For example:

- **Couples who coordinate their story have better relationships**

> research suggests that those couples who are able to smoothly coordinate their stories show better relationship well-being.

- **Couples who agree with the story their partner shares have better relationships**

> Women who disconfirmed their partner's view of events during the joint narrative showed lower DAS scores, and both men and women who disconfirmed their partner's views scored higher on a 45-item measure of perceived relational instability.

- **Conflict during storytelling predicted relationship happiness 2 years later**

> newly married couples who were coded as displaying some conflict while telling their courtship story had lower marital happiness 2 years later (controlling for Time 1 marital happiness), compared to those who were coded

> as telling their courtship story without conflict.

Socially anxious individuals create their reality

Socially anxious people tend to think lowly of themselves, and especially of their social skills.

They expect not to be liked, and to do poorly with others.
When they approach others, they approach them defensively, as if they have to make up for a personal lack:

> As a coping mechanism, those who are fearful tend to use affinity-seeking strategies that are self-deprecating, assuming that others will provide reassurances and show positive feelings toward them (Vorauer, Cameron, Holmes, & Pearce, 2003). Unfortunately, such self-deprecating messages during a first meeting are less likely to evoke positive regard from others than are self-positive or other-positive strategies.

These issues are particularly problematic in relationship initiations, either social or romantic, and especially so for men:

> shyness in men appears to be more problematic during initial interactions than is shyness in women (Crozier, 2001). This differential effect is no doubt linked to the nature of the initiation script, which prescribes more assertive moves for men and more reactive moves for women.

People who believe they're not likable set off a self-fulfilling prophecy

> When people believe that others in general (Downey et al., 1998), or a particular other (Curtis & Miller, 1986), will not like them, they tend to behave cautiously and defensively. They are also less forthcoming and more disagreeable than individuals who believe that they are likable. Accordingly, these initial expectations set up an interpersonal dynamic that is self-fulfilling, leading them to behave in ways that actually induce the awkward social situations and rejection that they fear.

And it's also challenging to then change people's opinions because, yes, first impressions are sticky:

First impression are indeed lasting impressions

> Research has shown that first impressions tend to be lasting impressions.
> That is, it is rather difficult to get past our first impressions (e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 1991) because people tend to selectively focus on information that confirms rather than disconfirms their initial judgment when they interact with these same people again (e.g., Higgins & Bargh, 1987).

Hookup culture can be costly to youth

The handbook had an interesting chapter on hookups and hookup culture

One man said he grew disillusioned with relationship after his hookups -talking about a guy with naive/"blue pill" expectations :)-.

Some youth may also get mired into a string of hookups, chasing their next "fix" in the next hookup:

> there is other evidence that casual sexual experience begets more—and riskier—casual sexual experience. For example, Lindblade, Foxman, and Koopman (1994) found that successive sexual partnerships were more likely to occur in an informal setting with an unknown partner, had a briefer presexual phase, and were less likely to involve condom use. Thus, once embedded in a repeat pattern of hookups, it may be difficult for youth to

> extract themselves and move toward more emotionally intimate relating.

And it can be even more a risk for depression:

> Moreover, Grello, Welsh, Harper, and Dixon (2003), in a study of the mental health correlates of sexual and relationship trajectories of non-dating-experienced virgin adolescents, found that transition to casual sex (quite pervasive in their sample) was associated with greater depressive symptoms and problem behaviors. Transition to dating or sexual intercourse in the context of a romantic relationship was not associated with negative psychological or behavioral outcomes.

The line between stalking and pursuing can blurry

First off, it depends on *who* is pursuing:

> Third, a person's persistence threshold can differ across relationship pursuers, such that more persistent pursuit is accepted from one pursuer whereas less persistence is tolerated from another pursuer.

And there is also some ambivalence in the victims:

> some research indicates that victims of unwanted relationship pursuit often view the experience with considerable ambivalence, perceiving it as simultaneously threatening and romantic, aversive and positive, and frustrating and flattering (e.g., Dunn, 1999, 2002; Haugaard & Seri, 2003, 2004).

And the fact that some stalking case "end" with the couple rejoining does suggest that this dynamic is not always what it's taken to be.

Stalking can be driven by revenge-seeking & power

> When rejection leads an obsessive pursuer to abandon pursuit of intimacy, the desire for revenge can perpetuate stalking activity.
> Cupach and Spitzberg (2004a) explained, In these cases, the underlying motivation for stalking transforms from seeking a relationship to salving the wounds of humiliation. Such transformations may be gradual or sudden, and it is not uncommon for desperate relationship pursuers to intersperse messages of both affinity and venge-fulness as manifestations of their own dialectical struggle with the competing motives of rage and romance.

This is one of the reasons why on this website we sometiems caution for a strategic approach when rejecting people or offers.
See:

- How to reject a date invite
- How to postpone intimacy
- How to say no
- How to manipulate a manipulator

And, in general, how to power protect and save face.

The feminist relationship perspective is about power

Something we often mentioned here, that feminism and "reactionary patriarchy" are about power:

> The feminist perspective is important because it directs us to attend to how power and authority are distributed in new relationships

Interestingly, the authors suggest that women start lower power in early relationship but demand/get more power in successive ones as they learn:

> there is reason to believe that power is distributed more equitably in subsequent committed romantic relationships than it is in earlier ones.

MORE WISDOM

Younger women are more obvious, older women more subtle

> In a study of 100 females ages 13 to 16 in a mixed sex setting, Moore (1995) reported that the younger girls used many of the same solicitation signals commonly exhibited by women. But, girls made more frequent use of play and teasing behavior, and displayed an exaggerated form of many signals. No doubt, the girls learned subtlety with time

Also see:

- **Signs that she likes you**

Dating follows market-like dynamics

Something we showed plenty here at TPM:

> Why don't people pursue the perfect mates (…)?
> To begin with, there are very few people who fit such a description.
> Second, most individuals would not be able to attract such a person(…).
> Third, (…) would be quite difficult to retain him or her (…)
> In short, people are often forced to form realistic standards and make trade-offs (Regan, 1998).

Also see our article on mate value:

- **Sexual market value**

Short-term dating is more deceitful

> Cunningham and Barbee (this volume) found that individuals who are seeking short-term relationships are particularly likely to be disingenuous—if need be—in order to attract another's interest.
> In contrast, individuals who have a long-term orientation are more likely to try to attract a partner through supportive ingratiating behaviors, such as helping a potential partner accomplish something, being honest, and providing sincere compliments. Such partner-oriented individuals typically eschew the use of deceptive, manipulative ingratiation tactics, seeing them as illegitimate ways to elicit the other's attraction.

Women in relatioships are interested in powerful men, rather than attractive ones

> Kenrick and his colleagues (1994), for example, demonstrated using the "contrast effect" that experimental exposure to physically attractive women tended to lessen a man's commitment to his current relationship

> partner.
> However, exposure to physically attractive men had no effect on women's commitment to their current partners. Conversely, when women were exposed to targets who had high status- and resource-related attributes, this lessened women's (but not men's) commitment to their current romantic partners.

Also see:

- Female hypergamy

> Stop Whining About Hypergamy (& Do This Instead)

Women who care more about looks are more promiscuous

> In numerous studies, Gangestad and his colleagues have shown that women who seek short-term mates place special importance on the physical attractiveness of their partners, and that physically attractive men are more likely to pursue short-term

Women are more influenced by peer choice

> Females were more influenced than males by levels of peer attention, especially by negative information, supporting the social attributes hypothesis.
> Thus, peer esteem can be a personal asset that is as desirable as physical attractiveness or wealth, a result that we call the celebrity effect.

Conservative whites prefer white women

> White conservative participants experienced more romantic desire for White speed-daters compared to racial minority speed-daters, whereas White liberal participants (i.e., those low in conservatism) experienced more romantic desire for other-race speed-daters compared to White speed-daters.

In online dating looks matter most

> users of dating sites routinely select potential interaction partners to contact based on the pictures in their profiles: If the picture passes muster, they then look at the other attributes listed in the profile (e.g., Hitsch, Hortaçsu, & Ariely, 2006; Whitty & Carr, 2006). That is, physical attractiveness is the first and most important factor in their selection of potential partners.

Waist to hip ration is not straightforward and includese other variables

WHRs is related to evaluations of attractiveness, but the mechanism is not yet clear:

> Tassinary and Hansen (1998) noted that Singh portrayed WHRs with line drawings. Singh's stimulus material had a built-in bias in that WHRs were confounded with perceived weight. That is, differences in attraction that Singh attributed to WHRs could be as plausibly attributed to the well-established negative evaluation of overweight women (e.g., Crandall, 1994; Graziano et al., 2007). Tassinary and Hansen constructed stimuli that systematically and independently varied weight, waist size, and hip size (WHR). College students individually ranked drawings of women, once for attractiveness and once for capability of bearing children. Results show that judgments of attractiveness and fecundity can be either unrelated or related, positively or negatively, to the

> WHR depending on waist size, hip size, and weight. Tassinary and Hansen concluded that WHRs are inconsistent with the evolutionary argument that human physical attractiveness is fundamentally a sign of mate value.

The book then mentions Swami & Tovee, 2005 casting doubts over the evolutionary link between WHR and evolution.
I've noticed Swami was generally critical of some evolutionary claims, but I disagree here. Of course you never jump to conclusion, but the evolutionary logic in explaining several attraction cues, including WHR, seems pretty solid to me.

White women with children are more likely to remarry

And that may suggest that children is not such a huge handicap in the sexual market place.
However, it doesn't say of course anything about the quality and value of the next partner:

> for White but not African American partners, having children following divorce increases the likelihood that one will remarry, as single women who give birth to children after divorce are almost twice as likely to remarry as are divorced women who bear no children (Suchindran, Koo, & Griffith, 1985).

High socio-economic status women also have higher odds of remarriage, and women in women from nonmetropolitan areas have a 48% higher probability of remarriage (National Center for Health Statistics, 2002).

Practical Applications

Be expressive because it's more attractive

A long time ago I wrote a post about low-expressivity men, saying that their low expressivity made them less attractive to women.
And I hypothesized that Mediterreanean men in Europe tended to have a reputation for attractiveness also because of their higher expressiveness.

In our product we also recommend and provide examples on how to use more nonverbal body language to communicate.
So I'm glad that scientific evidence backs it up:

> Empirical and theoretical scholarship suggests that emotional expressivity contributes to interpersonal attraction.

However, it's important to keep it positive and balanced, without overdoing it in either extremes:

> The attractiveness of the emotionally expressive person that Boone and Buck (2003) identified arises from a moderate or socially appropriate level of expressivity, in terms of both frequency and intensity.

As we also wrote here: balance is a law of the universe.

Avoid pick-up lines

> But in general, research shows, appear to be those that are not seen as "lines" by women: Confident, direct, or innocuous overtures are more likely to get a conversation off to a good start than are indirect, cute, or clever gambits (Clark et al., 1999; Cunningham, 1989; Kleinke & Dean, 1990).

Also see here:

- **Best pick up lines** (and which ones to avoid)

Reciprocate self-disclosure

> it is also important for disclosures to be reciprocal. If Person A reveals something intimate about herself, Person B needs to reciprocate with an equally intimate disclosure.
> Reciprocity is considered important in establishing trust in a relationship (Altman, 1973).

Early conversation and information follows social exchange dynamics. If you only ask and never share, it feels like you're a taker.

On the otherh hand, you don't need to keep reciprocating once the relationship is more well-established.

Don't over-share too much, too soon

Reciprocal and gradual self-disclosure increases intimacy and is associated with closeness and liking.

But over-sharing too much too soon does the opposite:

> there is evidence that disclosures that are too intimate—revealing "too much too soon"—are not likely to be reciprocated and can result in dislike for the discloser (e.g., Archer & Berg, 1978; Archer & Burleson, 1980; Cozby, 1972; Rubin, 1975; Wortman, Adesman, Herman, & Greenberg, 1976).

Have people introduce you

If you're unsure how to meet women, consider having someone introduce to you:

> Research suggests that two individuals are more likely to pursue a dating relationship when third parties bring them together than without third-party intervention (Parks, 2007).

QUOTES

Even researchers know that dating is a game :) :

> to be successful, would-be ingratiators must cultivate the other's interest in them while appearing to be genuine.

On monogamy being best for lower-status men:

> Among the more important sex-specific features that affect mating strategies are men's overall mate value and women's ovulatory status.
> (…)
> Given an equal sex ratio of men and women in a given culture, this results in other men—namely, those with low status and prestige—being limited to monogamy in the form of one wife.

And on mate value being a crucial factor:

> Whether a man follows a more short-term- or long-term-oriented mating strategy depends on other factors as well, many of which relate to the man's overall value in the mating marketplace (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

On researchers speaking their language (and the argument itself is a great point):

> In sum, the unidimensional conceptualizations of attraction raised fundamental questions about discriminant validity and, ultimately, the construct validity of attraction itself

On the "curse of the successful player" being awaken from his previous naive ideals:

> Consider the following concern, echoed by many youth, expressed by a 20-year-old young man: My hookups have made me concerned about future long-term love relationships and whether I can trust anyone. Several girls that I've hooked up with, even had sex with, have had boyfriends.
> Knowing this will most likely make me very jealous throughout a long-term relationship.

Good to know I wasn't the only one using Sex and The City as example of dating dynamics :D :

> In an episode of Sex in the City, the four main protagonists (i.e., attractive professional women in their 30s) sit in a bar in New York bemoaning the lack of available men in New York. In fact, the establishment is stacked with young, reasonably attractive men—busboys, doormen, barmen, water waiters, and so forth. These men, however, are not mateworthy (and are almost invisible to the four women) because they fall well below the minimum criteria of status and resources that such women will normally possess

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

None of these take anything away from this book, and they're also common notes of mine for most handbooks.

So take them as "Lucio's notes as he read through":

- **Still too many studies based on paper evaluations**

For example, when reviewing the studies on dominance I grew suspicious when agreeablness accounted for "6 times more than dominance in women's attraction".

As I suspected, it was based on paper evaluations, not interactions.

And I'm skeptical about it.
Bring me a super nice guy who's low in dominance and leadership, and I'll show you a guy who's *not* maximizing his dating potential.

- **Ovulatory shift is far from consensus**

When this book was written several successive studies seemed to confirm the "ovulatory shift" and increased attraction for more masculine men during the fertile window.

There is more mixed evidence now.

- **Sometimes tautological**

The Italians say that one "discovered" warm water to to poke fun at common sense "discoveries".
Science sometimes is like that, and this made me smile:

> Skills at initiating interactions (e.g., introducing yourself) were most important in the early stages.
> In the words of Buhrmester et al. (1988), "[I]nitiation competence may be important in the beginning of relationships, but may lessen in impact once a relationship is well-established;

Ie.: skills at initiating interactions are more important during the early stages that *include* initiation.

Yeah, surprising :).
And, I'd bet, skills at maintaining interactions are more important during the maintenance phase :).

- **Some cultural determinism**

For example:

> Because men and women are socialized to see one another as potential romantic partners rather than friends, cross-sex friends may be confused by their feelings of intimacy and closeness.

I wouldn't necessarily say that's because of socialization.

And:

> This reinforces the importance, however, of articulating "definite" messages of disinterest or obvious messages of disaffinity, and these are tactics that interactants often shy away from because of the cultural imperatives of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

I wouldn't call that a "cultural imperative" either.
I wouldn't be surprised if people who cushioned their rejections with some politeness simple fared better in life (and survived and reproduced more).

- **Would modern men be interested in non-fertile women?**

Write the author:

> Parenthetically, it could be argued that the opposite would be plausible, namely, that modern men in industrialized societies would be interested in cues showing that a woman was not fertile. For now, we follow the evolutionary logic

It may be an interesting take on possible new directions of evolution, but put it like that it misses the whole point of how evolution works -and on what timescales it operates on-.

- **Should share the sample size more often**

This is a complaint I often have and wished authors shared the sample size more often.

Instead, they seldom do, and I'm often left wondering how generalizable a single study may be (and I often ask AI for more info and similar studies).

For example, in this case:

> Booth-Butterfield and Trotta (1994) analyzed dating couples' written descriptions of the circumstances surrounding the first expression of love (…) 70% of the sample reported that men said, "I love you," first.

Interesting.
And exactly because it's interesting I wanted to know how many couples were in that study.

REVIEW

The *Handbook of Relationship Initiation (2008)* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in socialization, relationships, and dating.

I took away many new insights.

It allowed me to improve and strengthen with empirical evidence several articles for our website. And it gave me the idea and resources to write new ones.

Strengthening TPM with empirical evidence is very important to our approach and mission.
And hence I'm very grateful to the authors for their work.

Check the **best books** to read or get this book on Amazon.

From Simps to Empowered Women: Why Men Hate Simping

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 November 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Simping refers to excessive or unreciprocated emotional or material investment in women.

The term, often used pejoratively, mocks men are overly eager or submissive in pursuing women.

In this article, we explain the underlying dynamics of this phenomenon, how it changed dating, and we'll shed new light on the true drivers of simp ridiculing.

Namely, we contend that "simp ridiculing" is a form of competitor derogation, manipulation, and reactionary politics.

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- How simping made dating harder for all
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- 5. Lower women's expectations with the "losers' frame"
- Traditional relationship-minded men lead the shaming
- The female equivalent of simp-shaming
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Intro: Simps are no quitters

Simps are not in an enviable position.

They chase women who neither respect nor desire them.
When these women do reciprocate, it's typically transactional—and expensive.

However, simps are no quitters.
Instead, they're some of the most passionate and engaged pursuers of women.

That already leads to an interesting observation.
Men don't ridicule the quitters -those who drop out of the dating game-.
But they ridicule simps.

Why?
Because, unconsciously, these men know that simps make dating harder for them.

Similar dynamics apply to more submissive men and the more popular "alpha male VS beta male" dichotomy.
But in this article we focus on "simping".

Simping: a new outlet for an old drive

In our evolutionary past, simping wouldn't go far.

A lower-status guy would crush on the attractive lady of the tribe.
But with nothing to give, he would get nothing back.

If he insisted, he'd be driven out of the tribe.
And if he had any self-preservation instincts, he'd settle for a more homely companion.

Modern civilization changed that.
Today's simps provide likes, comments, followers, and low-risk gratification.

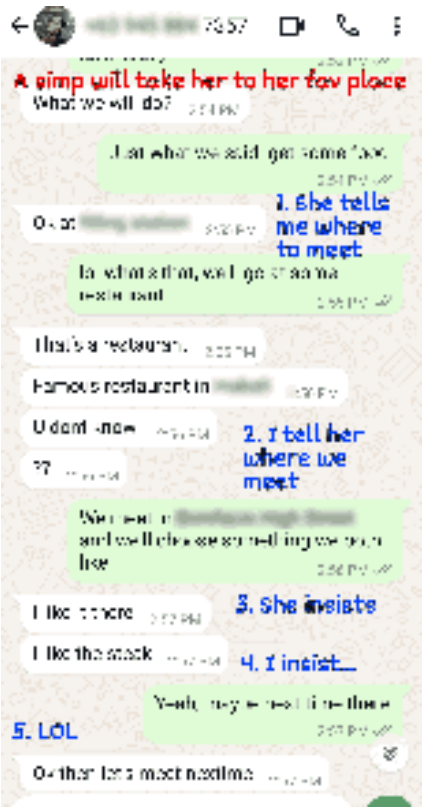
Plus, they can be high-income programmers, gamers, or heirs.
And they have something their ancestors didn't have: money.

Heck, in modern days even a welfare recipient living in mom's basement could simp.
Send 1k a month to his crush, and she makes his month with a flying kiss back.

The Internet then took it to yet another level.
It connected attractive but previously unknown women to millions of worldwide simps.

And that changed the game.

How simping made dating harder for all



> **Her**: (learned from simps that free meals exist and now tries to do the same with everyone)
> **Me**: (pays the "simp tax" with wasted time)

Simps rarely make attractive options.

Even a physically attractive simp wouldn't make for an attractive option.
Total disregard for basic interpersonal power dynamics principles means he'd soon lose any respect and attraction.

However, attractiveness isn't required to change dating dynamics and women's psychology.

Here's how it works:

1. Simps empower women financially

Financially empowered women don't need male providers.

It's a seemingly small but large shift.

An attractive but poor woman still needs a man to raise a child.
But the attractive female recipient of simp largesse doesn't need a provider.

She may *want* one.
Or she may want a more dominant partner -she probably does-.

But the dynamics fundamentally change.
Wealth gives her more negotiation power.

Take a successful Only Fans woman as an example.
Even if she craved family and a relationship, it's still easier for her to walk away when she has her job and income.

So these wealthier women are more empowered and independent.

And that bothers and frightens many men.
Especially the more controlling ones who'd rather have women poor and dependent.

2. Simps make women more "strategic"

Doting simps incentivize women to learn games and manipulation.

It's simple logic:

- Better manipulation = higher income = higher incentive to manipulate.

The bad news for men is this:

3. Simps empower women with advanced social skills

We know that here at TPM.

Skills in persuasion, manipulation, and interpersonal power dynamics empower people.

We're all for empowerment here, including women's empowerment.

But when that empowerment includes the "darker arts", we urge caution.
As the famous Nietzche quote goes "if you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back at you".

That can come at a relationship cost because some people struggle to "switch off" their manipulative side that works so well in business.

Some people of course learn the dark arts but can put them aside.
These people are even more empowered.

But here's come the kicker:

Deep down many men fear empowered women.

Not only are empowered women harder to attract, but they're also harder to keep attracted.
Higher risk of straying and heartbreak.

The truth is, a more naive woman is a much safer option for most men.
Especially for the relationship-minded men.

4. Simps turn more women into "working girls"

And that shrinks the dating pool for relationship-minded men.

In many ways, I get it.
If I wanted a "serious" relationship, I'd also prefer a woman who's not selling soft pornography.

Of course, it's not like simping can turn saints into devils.
Certain characters are more attracted to that line of work to begin with.

But it works both ways.

The more simps to milk, the more women are tempted to sell attention, pictures… And sometimes bodies.
And even girls who may have dreamed of a loving marriage may gradually shift toward a more transactional worldview.

5. Simps inflate women's self-esteem

There is a saying among men:

The best girl is an 8 who thinks she's a 6.

I think that any man saying that may want to re-assess his public statements and what they sub-communicate.
But I get their point.

And that girl doesn't exist anymore with the simping phenomenon.
If anything, now there is an army of women who are the *opposite*.

Try putting yourself in women's shoes for a second.
Imagine you had hundreds of women throwing themselves at you.

Don't you think your confidence and self-esteem may grow?
Or, at least, your perceived mate value?

And don't you think that you'd approach women differently, including the more attractive ones?
And that you'd be less willing to put up with their demands or quirks?
Of course you would.

Speaking of which:

6. Simps make women more demanding & entitled

There are studies on this.

When the ratio of men to women changes, people's psychology changes -both men's and women's-.
And all the more so if you make those extra men extra doting.

Here is how that can translate into a simple daily man-to-woman interaction:

> **Her**: Meet me close to my place
> **Me**: I invite you, I choose the place
> **Her**: Not a gentleman, bye

One could argue she wouldn't say that if I was super attractive.
Or famous.
Or if time hadn't put me in the age bracket where investing may be more expected.

All fair interpretations.

One may even say she's right.
And that I was an as*hole to stick to my guns.

Maybe.

This isn't a recommendation on how anyone should date.
It's an analysis of interpersonal dating dynamics.

And she dug her heels because *simps* taught her she can expect to be wined and dined on her terms.

Without simps, that expectation and demand wouldn't even exist.
At the least, I'd have far higher leverage if simps didn't exist.

How about top men being in a different category?

It's true:

"Women make rules for low-status men, but break rules for high-status men".

But population-level dynamics still affect individuals.

Ferrari isn't *directly* competing with Stellantis either.
It's also different than Porsche.
But if, say, the world's roads changed, they change for all.
And if all those other carmakers disappeared, Ferrari still gains.

The simp's tax is smaller in person.
But it's much larger online (not an accident both our examples here were from online dating).

Now you can understand why…

Why Men Shame Simps

So, this is why men mock the simps:

1. Value-signaling

To sub-communicate they're "better than simps".

We've seen this behavior already.
See for example leaders' social climbing, alpha male posturing, and covert bragging in general.

While criticizing others can be a valid strategy to signal higher value, it's easy to come across as nasty.
Plus, being better than a low bar isn't exactly 'top-1% signaling' either.

So, if that's you: quit it.
It's bad enough to "show value" with nasty social climbing.
But it just gets pathetic when you show off that you're one rung above last.

Learn better in **Power University**.

2. Shame simps into giving up dating

The more simps drop out of dating, the easier for those who stay in the game.

3. Shame other men into NOT spending and courting

It works like this:

The fewer men who court and spend on women, the less women can expect from men, the easier dating becomes for men.

4. Envy from lower-status men

Simps monopolize some of the most attractive women's time.

Sure, simps get little for an inordinate amount of time and investment.
It's a sucker's trade that we'd STRONGLY advise against.

But most guys get *nothing* from attractive women.

So when even a simp gets more action than you… You know you will lash out :).

5. Lower women's expectations with the "losers' frame"

The simp-taunting seeks to insulate women against courtship expectations.

This is what the simping derogation tries to sub-communicate:

> Ladies, these guys who splurge on you are losers. See how little we "real" men respect them?
> So don't use them as comparison please

Traditional relationship-minded men lead the shaming

I suspect that it's mostly more traditional men who shame simps.

More conservative men are more at odds with:

- **Women's sexuality**, including a stronger incidence of Madonna-whore dichotomy
- **Women's empowerment**
- **Libertine dating culture**

Traditional Western men support the "one man, one woman" monogamous ideal.

The 1950s dream of a supporting housewife baking apple pies grows even more distant with simping.

Simps undermine the monogamy ideal with devoted and submissive women.

So simps are the relationship-minded men's enemy.
These men shame simps for shaming, and shame women for gaining from simps.

The female equivalent of simp-shaming

The manosphere equivalent of women has a term for the female simple equivalent:

“pick me”.

The “pick-mes” are women who actively seek and want a man, adhere to traditional gender roles, and give their full selves to the relationship.

And they get mercilessly shamed and mocked.

Why?
Same principle, but inverted.
They make it too easy for men, raise men’s expectations and demands, and make dating harder for other women.

See the patterns?
The more these women can shame the “pick me” ladies, the easier it is for them.

But if a great guy showed up at their door, guess what the smartest ones would do?
They’d make it easier for them to get together, of course.

Summary

Simping is a modern evolution of an age-old phenomenon.

While it empowers some women and reshapes dating dynamics, it also raises expectations, incentivizes competition, and sparks shaming from other men.

We cast no blame but encourage men to abandon pointless shaming—and invite simps to read more here or join Power University.

Acknowledgments of Uncertainty
This analysis is an educated hypothesis based on established underlying dynamics and logical reasoning, but not yet supported by empirical data.
For more practical and empirically sound self-development, see Power University.

10 Powerful Tips for Women to Exude Confidence at Work

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 December 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Want to exude confidence and command respect at work?

Confidence isn't just about how you feel; it's about the signals you send.
At TPM, we specialize in decoding power dynamics and teaching how to adopt confident nonverbal communication so you can thrive—whether in the boardroom, meetings, or casual interactions.

These **10 powerful tips** will help you project confidence, avoid common pitfalls, and leverage your presence to advance your career.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 1. Keep Your Head Straight
- 2. Limit Your Smiling
- 3. Ban the Word "Girl", Use "Woman"
- 4. Beware of The Nurturing Trap
- 5. Speak Louder (If You Speak Too Softly/Airy)
- 6. Avoid The "Hair Behind Ear"
- 7. Play the Banter Game…
- 8. Display Competence In Social Power Dynamics
- 9. Look Straight In The Eyes
- 10. Cut Preambles, Go Straight to The Point
- Bonus: And If A Man Stares at Your Breast…

1. Keep Your Head Straight

Tilting and chin lowering convey vulnerability.

Good for dating and looking 'cutsy' maybe.
But it also convey powerlessness, so avoid this pose at work.

Cute, friendly, and approachable. In a 'girly' way. Not execetuive material.

Of course, as for everything, there is a time and place to do something.
You can use the head tilt strategically when you want someone to open up or when you want to encourage someone to keep speaking.

Practical Advice:

- **Keep your head straight when speaking**: when speaking, especially when conveying an important message, keep your head straight
- **When listening to someone talking about personal matters, feel free to tilt**: it helps people open up, and it conveys you're empathetic and you understand
- **When people are sharing something difficult, searching for words, tilt**: it helps to bridge an uncomfortable silence, it communicates "take your time, I understand it's difficult"

Also read:

- Vulnerability is NOT power

2. Limit Your Smiling

Smiling is great.

Unless you're smiling too much, or out of nervousness:

> **Him**: (curtly drops a stack of paper)
> **Her**: (turns around and forces a smile)

People, and women more often, smile excessively when they are nervous, self-conscious, or vulnerable.

Become more aware of your smiles and keep them only for:

- Entertaining situations
- When you truly feel like smiling
- Strategically, to appear more welcoming and kind

3. Ban the Word “Girl”, Use “Woman”

At work, never allow anyone to introduce you as a “girl”.

And the same is true for any woman in your team.
You can correct people indirectly, for example:

> **Colleague**: That girl you sent me was super
> **You**: Glad to hear, she’s one of the most competent women in my team

What if all else fails?
Then you can explain that it’s demeaning to call a professional a “girl”. To help grasp the concept, you can tell them “*How would you feel if referring to you I’d say ‘That boy did a good job?*”.
With that, they should get it.

4. Beware of The Nurturing Trap

Be aware if someone introduces you or recommends you with typically feminine traits, such as:

- Helpful
- Caring
- Kind

These are all good traits to have, but the receiver might subconsciously think “oh, here is a nice girl who will make a good supportive role”. And that’s not what you want them to think if you are ambitiously aiming at the top spots.

Also, be even more careful with adjectives such as:

- Self-effacing
- Humble
- Anything that resembles “nurturing”

The more feminine you look, the more you might want to be introduced with adjectives that highlight skills, drive, competence, and leadership qualities.

Don’t deflect praise!

Praises bump people up a notch in the hierarchy.

But women schooled in “power dead even” culture are uncomfortable with that, and will knock themselves back down by deflecting the praise or minimizing.
For example: *“It was nothing,” “Mark did all the work*,” or “*It didn’t take all that much work*.”

Or they might change the subject right away, for example: “*Well, you did a great job on your project too!*”

While sharing credit can be good, and it’s the best thing to do in certain situations, women need to be careful not to overdo it.
Especially to men, this might look like poor self-esteem -and no executive material-.

A better way to extend praise is to give credit, while taking some of that credit for yourself, too.
For example:

> **You**: Thank you. The team did a great job, too. The data was much more difficult to analyze than expected, but they pulled a couple of all nighters. And yes, I'm glad it turned out so well.

5. Speak Louder (If You Speak Too Softly/Airy)

As a rule of thumb:

Soft and hairy voices are high in femininity but low in power.

Volume also impacts body language.
The louder you speak, the more gestures you tend to naturally use. By combining appropriate volume and gestures, you immediately convey a sense of authority.

As an example of too soft voice, listen to Marilyn Monroe:

> **Monroe**: (speaks softly, airy, and 'girly')

Monroe's style works great in entertainment and dating. But NOT to gain status, respect and influence in corporate and business environments

6. Avoid The "Hair Behind Ear"

You probably already know that lipstick and makeup should only be done in private.

What you might not be aware of are the subconscious "hair-flick" and "hair be the ear move".
They both make you look more girly and less authoritative.

Now that I said "hair behind ear" you probably know what I'm referring to. If not, here is an example:

> **Her**: (brushes her hair behind her ear after meeting an attractive man)

7. Play the Banter Game...

Men use banter and power moves to test each other and play the game status.

Albeit it's mostly younger men who do it, many older men in corporate have not left their pimply adolescent selves behind.

Plus, they may resume the banter game just to test if 'she' can play with the boys.
You don't necessarily need to play that same game. In frame control techniques for example we share the ignoring or shaming techniques, both of which work great.

However, if you show you can banter back, and maybe even put them back in their places, you will gain immediate respect.

8. ... But Don't Get Drunk With the Boys

Yes, the boys might order a pitcher of beer or do the rounds with the cocktails.

But you joining then makes you come across as a potentially loose woman. The night might end with nothing happening, but the rumor mill starts anyway.

So join them in the beginning and have one or two drink maximum, then leave early.
Or stay longer, but remain sober -and still leave if things may get inappropriate-.

8. Display Competence In Social Power Dynamics

Some men will touch women more freely than they do other men.

And some men will purposefully do it to one-up women.

Touching him back right away might betray that you're out for power, and make you less liked.
A good way then is to make your touch a bit more feminine. Instead of a pat behind the back, touch the outside of his forearm.

Another option if he overdoes the touch is to highlight his impudence with social grace -and maybe throwing him under the bus-.
Looking at his hand, stop talking to draw attention to him, or reply "Hey, hello" with a tonality that says "What was that".
The flinch is another option.
Angela Merkel tried the flinch when Bush sneaked on her from behind:

> **Bush**: (sneaks from behind and places both his hands on Merkel's shoulders, mimicking a massage)
> **Merkel**: (flinches and raises both her hands) <— The over-reaction sub-communicates she's not a passive recipient of men's power moves

It wasn't the best flinch, but the idea is good: draw attention to the touch being out of place, and sub-communicate you're not passive or submissive.

9. Look Straight In The Eyes

Example with Doctor Birx:

> **Her**: Not as a treatment (and looks around)
> (…)
> But not as, I have not seen… (looks to the side and points to someone else) <— ⍰⍰ Help me out, back me up, I'm not sure

♟ **Bridge, power protect, but disagree**
It's understandable she didn't want to contradict the boss.
To maintain professional integrity, say: "*For a non-doctor it's an interesting speculation, Mr. President. Unfortunately applying heat to the body doesn't seem to be feasible as a treatment for Covid*"

10. Cut Preambles, Go Straight to The Point

A preamble is a concoction of words and nonwords used before getting to the main point.

As a rule of thumb:

> Preambles serve to soften your message, and the more words you use, the "softer" your message will be.

Women are more likely to use preambles in fear of appearing too direct or aggressive, but some men fall for it as well.

An example of using too many preambles, adapted from Lois Frankl:

> **Preamble Speaker**: You know, I was thinking about this issue. In fact, I've been talking to my colleagues, too.

> A lot of us share the same concerns over reduced productivity during the last two quarters, so I'm not alone in this.
> Come to think of it, it might be even more than just those two quarters. It's something we've known about for a long time but haven't measured. Anyway, we've all been trying to find a way to address it and I think I may have come up with an idea. I'm not saying it's the best idea or the only idea—just that it's one idea.
> Now, my idea involves…

That whole speech screams "defensiveness" and "fear of saying something stupid".

> **Confident Without Preambles**: Productivity has been an issue we've struggled with for some time. In the last two quarters, we measured it, so we've been able to quantify it. The numbers are in your brief, page 5.
> The good news is: I have studies the issued, and I have two proposals for fixing this problem.

Again, preambles can be used strategically. A good preamble is like a good starter. It strokes people's appetite for more, and it's part of storytelling. But you must know what you're doing.
When you're not sure, cut to the chase.

Bonus: And If A Man Stares at Your Breast...

When you're speaking and a man stares at your breast, stop speaking.
It's like a wake-up call to move his gaze up.

If he goes down again, stop speaking again.

And if he does it a third time, you can more directly tell him "up here".
Like Nicole Scherzinger did to Conan:

> @the_power_moves
> Join this channel to get access to perks: https://loom.ly/JfvX7bM
>
> ♫ original sound – The Power Moves

> **Conan**: (stares at her breast)
> **Her**: Conan (points at her breast, then up to her face) up here

But please note this only works when you dress professionally. Otherwise, it will be used against you (like Conand did in the same skit).

Also read:

- **How women can learn to play the men's game at work**
- How to combine career success with dating success

Self-Promotion Strategies: Maximize Your Efforts With the Visibility Quadrant

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 December 2024 · Archived copy · Original

Self-promotion is a critical career skill, but doing it right requires strategy.

This guide explores when, how, and why to promote yourself for maximum impact.

Learn how to balance bragging with performance, adapt to different roles, and tailor your approach for career advancement.

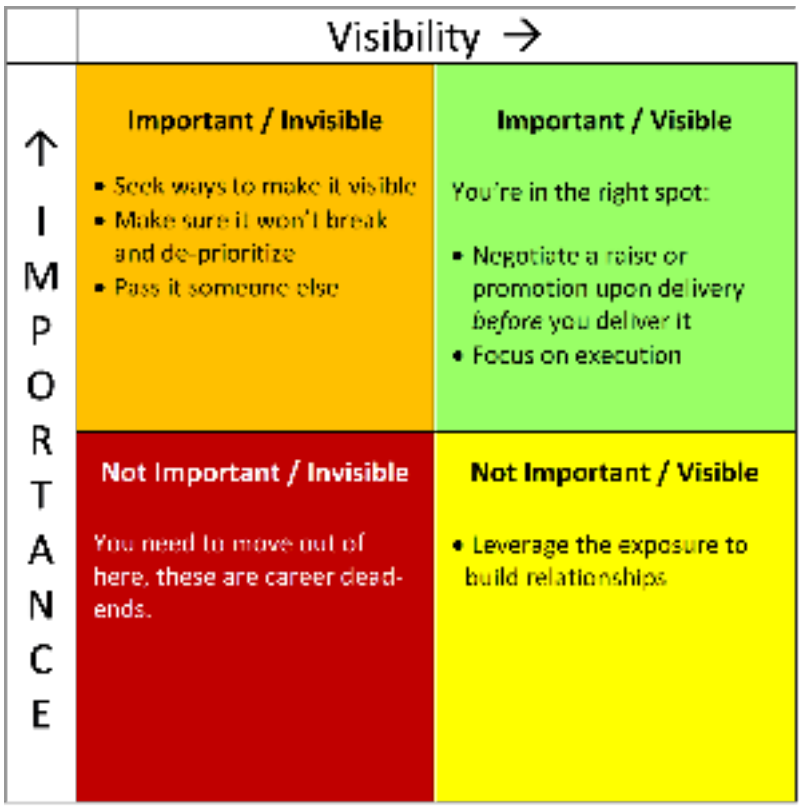
Contents

- Calibrate to Visibility
  - Not Important – Not Visible: Move
  - Not Important – Visible: Network to branch out
  - Important – Not Visible: Make your work visible
  - Important – Visible: focus on delivering
- Logic of Promotion Strategies
- Case Studies
  - ⍰ Keep quiet and let visible action speak louder
  - ⍰ Reverse of the rule: President Trump
- Self-Promotion for Career Level
  - Employees: Focus on Work
  - Managers: Focus on Promotion
  - Executive: Deliver Results, & Promote With CEO
  - CEO: Let Your Team Promote For You
- Calibrate to The Target
- SUMMARY

Calibrate to Visibility

Career coach Marie McIntyre proposes the “visibility quadrant”.

It’s similar to Stephen Covey‘s time quadrant of effective management, but it applies to how visible your work is:



The 'visibility' quadrant for career advancement

Not Important – Not Visible: Move

Tasks in this category: data entry, document filing

Your goal with non-important and invisible is just to make sure it won't break and attract negative attention while you seek to move out of this quadrant ASAP.

Not Important – Visible: Network to branch out

Jobs in this category include: secretaries, receptionists, project coordinators, support staff.

Visibility means that you get lots of people's interaction and/or your work gets lots of visibility from management.

This is a great opportunity to network and get your name around.
Social skills and political acumen are key here so you can make the most of that visibility.

And it's the reason why smart secretaries can have some good careers.

Build a reputation for someone who delivers, and then use the visibility to demand more challenging work.

Important – Not Visible: Make your work visible

Jobs in this category: account management, IT support

It's not bad being here.

You can't be easily fired because they need, and the non-visibility often comes with lower stress and easier corporate life.

You can also learn a lot, and if you're interested in moving upward, you can improve your odds with self-promotion and seeking more visibility.

A good idea can be to look for interesting facts and figures in your tasks and make a report with it.

Plus, as we've explained in self-promotion techniques, romanticizing your work also helps.

Another option, as we explain in career strategies, is to move into organization where your work is more visible. For example, if you're in IT, that's important in most companies, but often low visibility. But if you move to an IT company that bills for IT, then your work is highly visible.

Important – Visible: focus on delivering

Jobs in this category: sales, management consultants, turnaround specialists, private equity.

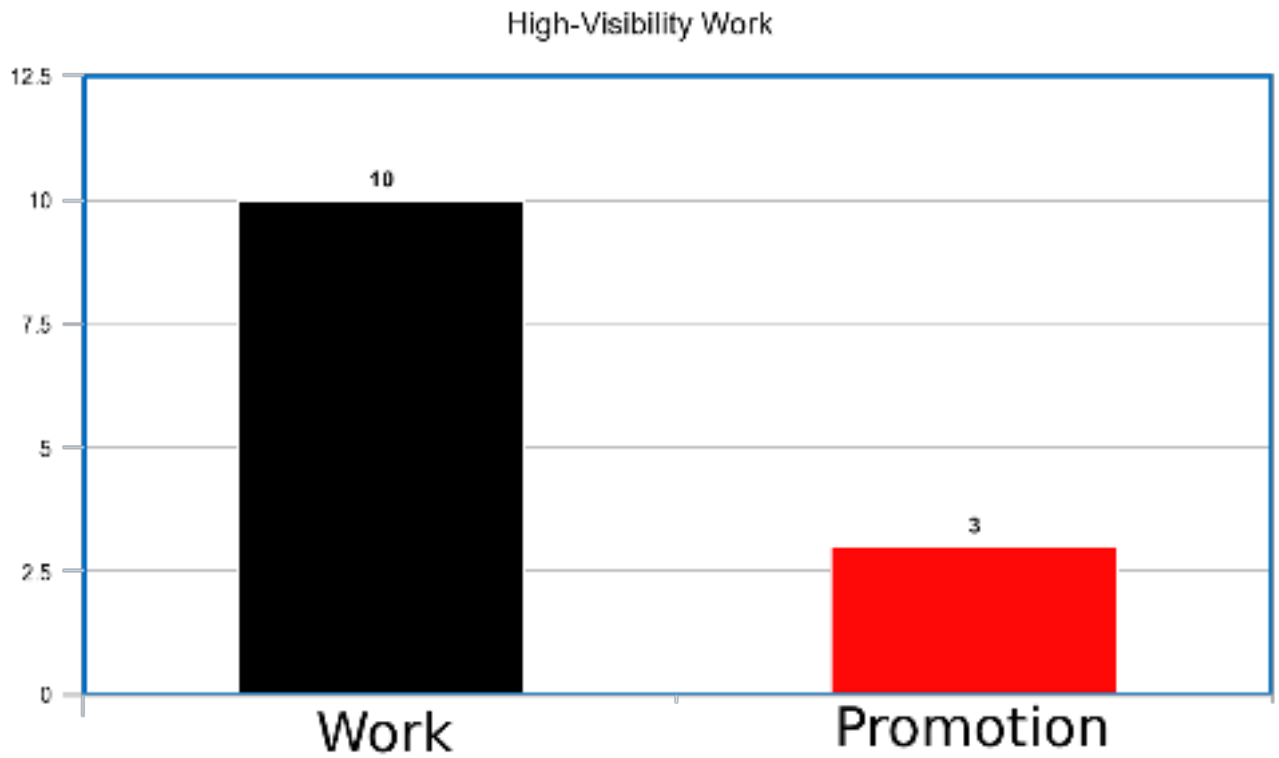
You're in the right spot.
Now it's time to deliver.

Just ensure that you will be rewarded for the delivery.
So it can be a good strategic move to negotiate what you will get before you deliver.

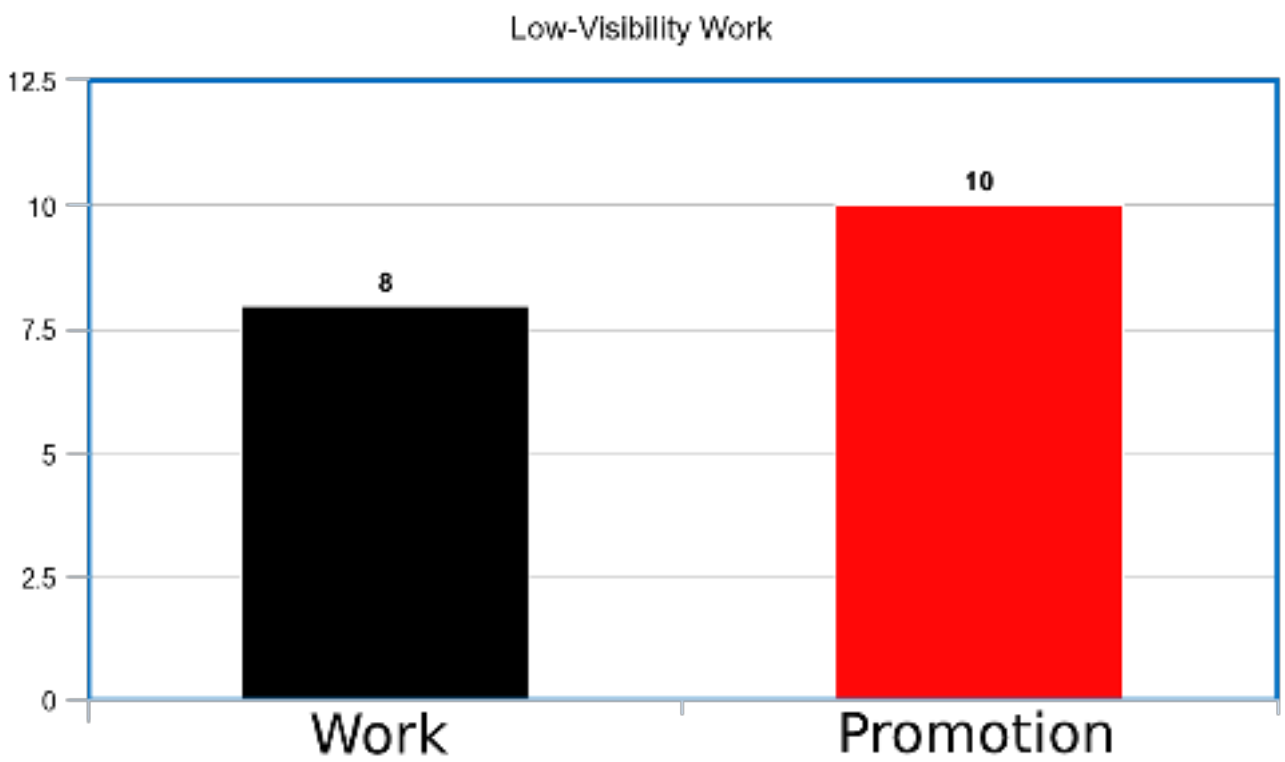
Logic of Promotion Strategies

The logic is simple:

if your work is highly visible, it makes more sense to spend comparatively less on promotion, since the work is already visible, and more time on work, since the results will matter a lot.



If your tasks have little visibility to your boss and/or to upper management, then it follows that *you* must promote that work.



The logic, again, is straightforward: low-visibility work is not going to get you noticed and it's not going to help you network.
So you have to put in extra effort to get noticed and self-promote. Enter the romancing your work, "kitchenette moments", elevator power moves, strategic networking, after-hours cocktails, etc., etc.

Case Studies

Let's see two case studies as examples

⍰ Keep quiet and let visible action speak louder

In my graduate programme we were assigned 'buddies' from previous batches.

I had a real G -at least for that corporate environment-.

He was a doer who spoke little, but delivered.
And everyone spoke highly of him.

One day I asked how he got that reputation.
And he told me:

> Keep your mouth shut and impress your boss with the projects you deliver. When he sees projects coming left and right from you, trust that he will noticed

That worked for him because the boss had to sign off on any project, and each project ended up in various team reports (high-visibility).
Each project completed was also extra points for the team (high-importance).

Of course, as a junior guy, it was smaller projects.
But as a freshman who never asked anything, he was deeply impressive indeed.

This same strategy though wouldn't work if his work was *low* visibility.

⍰ Reverse of the rule: President Trump

WARNING:
Leave politics aside, this is an apolitical example.

As the president Trump had natural high-visibility.

People *automatically* give credit to the president for the economy and stock market -mistakenly so in large part, but that's another topic-.
There was no need to make a press conference for Dow Jones 30.000.

COVID also presented a great opportunity for strong leadership.
People crave good leaders in time of turmoil.
Yet, seeing Covid as a stain on his presidency, Trump never stopped fighting the press and spent more time on defending and self-promoting than on leading.

That reeked of poor leadership and putting 'me' before the country:

Trump's excessive self-promotion in a high-visibility role that required 'us leadership' likely cost him the second successive term.
⍰ More bad press

Self-Promotion for Career Level

The effort you put into self-promotion changes depending on career stages.

See this table for an overview:

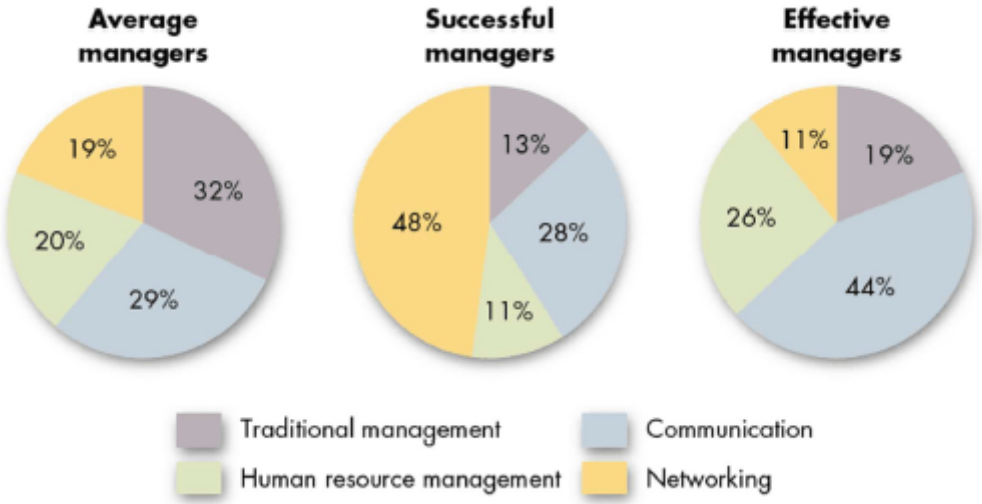
Managers need the most self-promotion, CEOs the least

Employees: Focus on Work

Individual contributors are often promoted based on technical skills and work output.
They are also close to their direct managers, which helps their case when it comes to visibility.

Managers: Focus on Promotion

Research has shown that those who get promoted the most among managers are not the ones that spend a lot of time with their team, but those who spend more time networking *outside* their teams.



Source: itusng.com

Executive: Deliver Results, & Promote With CEO

The exec can spend relatively less time on self-promotion because he only has one person to promote to: the CEO.

And the ‘quality of work’ often relates to bottom-line results or strategic initiatives that make the CEO look good.

Also see:

- How to exude executive-level confidence

CEO: Let Your Team Promote For You

Everyone knows you in the industry, so networking is less critical.

And your business results, often highly visible, provide the backbone for your self-promotion.

The Machiavellian approach is to leverage your team for promotion while you look humble, hard-working, and magnanimous.

Calibrate to The Target

Self-promotion must be calibrated to the target.

Says Kelley Reardon:

> This is where political savvy comes in. As they say, when in Rome do as the Romans do. If your boss doesn’t overtly self-promote, you shouldn’t either.

This is one of the mistakes I made with my first mentor.
He was demure low-key, and he came to see me as ‘cocky’.

On the other hand, when I presented in front of more outgoing senior managers, they loved it.
One of them raved about me to our HR coordinator. He called me ‘the sales guy’, but with admiration.

Read more on social calibration:

- **How to learn social calibration**

SUMMARY

Self-promotion is essential for advancing your career, but it’s not one-size-fits-all.

Using the visibility quadrant, you can calibrate your efforts based on the importance and visibility of your tasks.

High-visibility roles often benefit from focused execution, while low-visibility roles require more deliberate self-promotion.

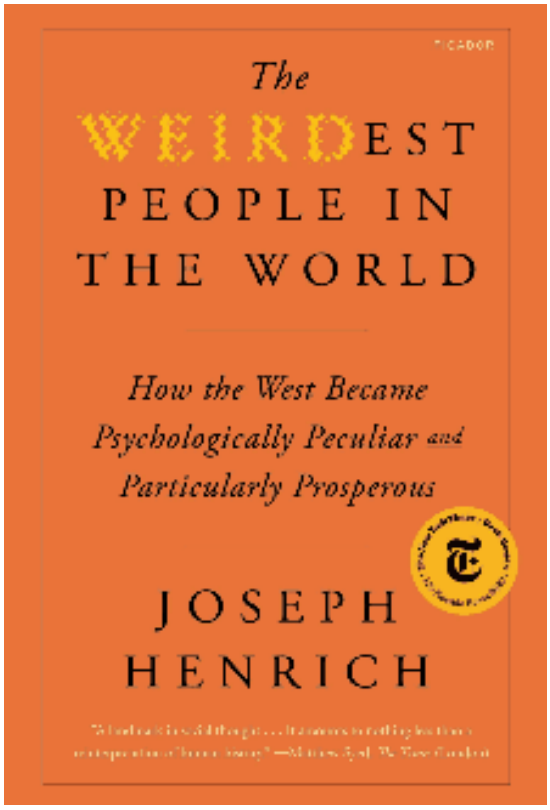
Career stage also matters: employees should focus on delivering results, managers benefit from networking and visibility, and executives can rely more on their teams.
The key is balancing self-promotion with actual work and tailoring your strategy to your goals, role, and audience.

We teach how to become politically skilled, strategic and influential in all areas of life in **Power University**.

The WEIRDest People in the World: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 January 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The WEIRDest People in the World (2020) by Joseph Henrich explores how unique historical developments made Western societies more individualistic, pro-social, and cooperative, fostering a WEIRD psychology that drove commerce, innovation, and expansion.



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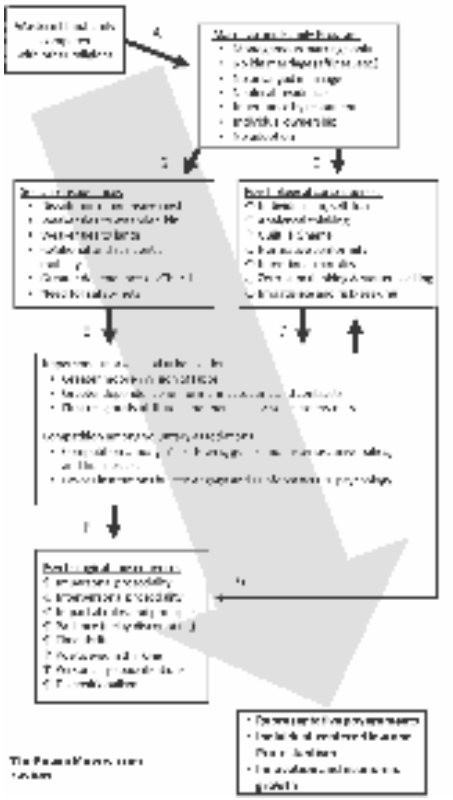
Exec Summary

- **Individualism and weaker family ties enhance societal progress** by fostering larger cooperation, impartial institutions, democratic governance, universal moral norms, long-term thinking, conscientiousness, and hard work.
- **Clannish cultures with strong family ties impede progress** by prioritizing in-group loyalty at the detriment of universal justice, trust, and broader cooperation.
- **Culture profoundly shapes psychology** in as many disparete areas like spatial reasoning, memory, patience, risk tolerance, and fairness norms, with WEIRD populations occupying the extreme end of these spectrums.

In one picture:



FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Joseph Henrich is an American anthropologist and professor of human evolutionary biology at Harvard University. Henrich is also a former engineer by trade and education, and former professor of psychology and economics at the University of British Columbia.

He also wrote '*The Secret of Our Success*', which grabbed a top spot in our popular 'best evolutionary psychology books' list.

How the West got weirder, richer, & dominant

The West advanced faster by breaking family ties and 'clannishness' to become more individualistic and more cooperative with larger networks of strangers.

That connected larger pools of men while increasing commerce, innovation.
These larger societies could explore the world, raise larger and better-equipped armies, and expand.

The author says the main contributors to that shift were:

1. Catholic Church's Marriage Policies Broke Kinship-Based Clans

The Church discouraged cousin marriage, polygamy, and arranged marriages, which weakened extended family ties and reduced reliance on clans.

This shift promoted nuclear families, creating a more individualistic society where people had to rely on institutions rather than kinship, and monogamy that decreased intrasexual conflict among men.

> The longer a population was exposed to the Western Church, the weaker its families and WEIRDer its psychological patterns are today.

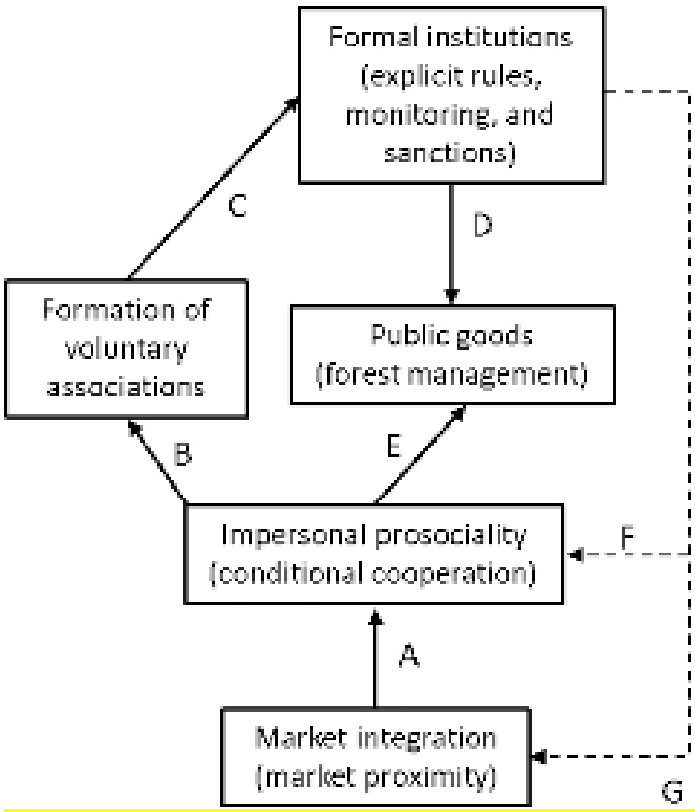
Later, Protestantism embodied the blossoming individualistic culture, and accelerated its spread, together with the ethics of literacy and hard work.

2. Market Economies

Economic interactions with strangers decreased kinship reliance, and fostered *impersonal* prosociality.
Such as, people learned to cooperate with non-kin for mutual benefit.

People's psychology changed with motivations for trust, fairness, patience, cooperation, and punishment of free-riders.

This is why in various economic games we see WEIRD people cooperate more than rational game theory would suggest, while we don't see as much cooperation in other populations.



Greater market integration increases impersonal prosociality, fosters the creation of voluntary associations, and supports more effective formal and non-kinship-based institutions.

2.2. Urbanization

European urbanization was different, driven by commerce and the creation of voluntary associations such as merchant guilds, cities, stock market trading, and universities that spurred innovation, growing wealth, and progress.

3. Changing Psychology to Individualism & Larger Cooperation

Larger societies free of clans slowly changed people's psychology to our current WEIRD psychology.

A self-reinforcing cycle of psychology, impersonal institutions and growing commerce led to ever-accelerating progress.

How Westerners differ

WEIRD people are:

- **Highly individualistic**: Focus on ourselves—our attributes, accomplishments, and aspirations—over our relationships and social roles. We see ourselves as unique beings, not as nodes in a social network that stretches out through space and back in time
  - Ownership of ideas to the first who stated them
- **Self-obsessed:** We aim to be "ourselves" across contexts and see inconsistencies in others as hypocrisy rather than flexibility
  - **Self-esteem** based on honoring our values and 'staying true to ourselves'
  - **Self-enhancement**, learning and progress
- **Control-oriented**: we prefer a sense of control and the feeling of making our own choices
  - **Belief in free-will**
  - **Democracy premium**, with people working harder when they contributed to a resolutino

- **Nonconformist**: we are less willing to conform to others when this conflicts with our own beliefs, observations, and preferences
  - **Less obedient** to authorities
- **Analytical**: look for universal categories and rules with which to organize the world, and look for patterns trends. We simplify complex phenomena by breaking them down into discrete constituents and assigning properties or abstract categories to these components—whether by imagining types of particles, pathogens, or personalities.
  - **Less holistic**: We often miss the relationships between the parts or the similarities between phenomena that don't fit nicely into our categories. That is, we know a lot about individual trees but often miss the forest.
  - **Endowment effect**—overvaluing our own stuff
- **Overconfident** (of our own valued abilities)
  - **Positive-sum thinking** and having the potential to win-win
- **Patient**: with self-regulation, we can defer gratification—in financial rewards, pleasure, and security—well into the future in exchange for discomfort and uncertainty in the present
- **Hard-working**: WEIRD people sometimes take pleasure in hard work and find the experience purifying
- **Law-abiding**: WEIRD people tend to stick to impartial rules or principles and fetishize abstract principles over context, practicality, relationships, and expediency.
- **High impersonal prosociality**, including norms, expectations, and motivations for impartial fairness, probity, and cooperation with strangers, anonymous others, or even abstract institutions like the police or government.
  - **Honest, fair, & cooperative**: trusting, honest, fair, and cooperative toward strangers or anonymous others. Show relatively less favoritism toward our friends, families, co-ethnics, and local communities than other populations. We think nepotism is wrong
  - **Less inclined to revenge** for personal slights
  - **Punishing cheats** Impersonal prosociality also includes motivations, heuristics, and strategies for punishing those who break impartial norms of fairness or honesty, even if the violation isn't directly against themselves.
    In turn, punishment of cheats increases cooperation and trust in institutions and cooperative networks
  - **Emphasis on intentions and mental states**, not just on behavior and results.
    So if someone had bad intentions, he is bad. If he had good intentions but he made a mistake, he is less 'bad'
  - **Less (nasty) ingroup-outgroup**: more individualistic countries are less inclined to distinguish in-groups from out-groups, more willing to help immigrants
- **Guilt instead of shame**: Guilt depends on one's own standards and self-evaluation, while shame depends on societal standards and public judgment.
  Shame is group-related, when we, our relatives, or even friends fail to live up to the community's standards.
  Guilt is failing to live up to culturally inspired, but largely self-imposed, standards and aspirations (ie.: skipping gym or indulging sweet food)
- **Open to new experiences and friendships**, with new people and strangers, rather than 'remaining stuck' with the clan
  - More calculative in relationships, also readier to end those new relationships if they don't serve their mutual interest

Clannish psychology

By contrast, clannish psychology tends to be:

- **Tradition and custom-centered**
- **Conforming** to fellow in-group members

  - **Autocracy premium**, contributing more when a law is externally imposed
- **Deferring to authorities** like elders or sages
- **Policing kin's behavior**
  - **Not policing strangers**
- **Avoidance-oriented**, closed to new friendships outside the in-group
- **Sharply distinguishing your in-group** from everyone else
- **Promoting your network's collective success** whenever possible, which the author doesn't say but comes at the detriment of everyone else and society at large, including justice and progress for all

My Note: I love WEIRD psychology because it powers effective and ever-improving societies
To me this is not a case of being 'different', these are traits that propel civilization forward and can make for a better society for all.
This is something the author doesn't expressly say, but his conclusion shows:

> More individualistic countries are also richer, more innovative, and more economically productive. They possess more effective governments, which more capably furnish public services and infrastructure, like roads, schools, electricity, and water

And on impersonal prosociality:

> Countries where people show more impersonal prosociality have greater national incomes (GDP per capita), greater economic productivity, more effective governments, less corruption, and faster rates of innovation.

What else do you need?

The Weirder -and most individualistic- countries

The Hofstede's s scale aggregates several elements in the individualism package and the rankings are:

- Americans 91
- Australians 90
- Brits 89
- EU, especially North and West
- Canada 80
- New Zealand 79

Social-cultural evolution spreads the winning models

So, how did the West dominate the world and influence the world's culture?

With cultural evolution:

> those with the best combinations of institutions and technologies expand and gradually replace or assimilate those with less effective cultural packages.

Intergroup competition operates with 5 different processes:

1. **War and raiding**: as groups with more competitive institutions drive out, eliminate, or assimilate those with less competitive institutions
2. **Differential migration**: from less prosperous to more prosperous ones and more successful communities grow at the expense of less successful ones
3. **Prestige-biased group transmission**: as people learn from the more powerful and prestigious groups
4. **Differential group survival without conflict**: more effective groups survive and thrive, less effective ones disappear or shrink
5. **Differential reproduction**: fertility-friendly culture, beliefs, and religions can boost a group's expansion

The author reminds though that we must put this into perspective and realize that intergroup competition is just one force among may.

Central authority provides an advantage

> authorities allow societies not only to respond decisively to changing circumstances, such as encroaching neighbors, dwindling resources, and natural disasters, but also to strategically pursue the conquest of other societies. Any society that managed to centralize authority could potentially have an advantage in intergroup competition

Powerful Gods promote cooperation

Religions with powerful Gods that punished miscreants and cheats increased cooperation.

Adding a contingent afterlife with heaven or hell also discouraged violence and improved societies' cooperation.

And these more God-driven cooperative societies became more successful than other societies.

Tribes lose against individualistic societies

Says the author:

> Clans provide a psychologically potent means to generate solidarity among members, in part by reducing internal conflicts. But (…) clans often can't get along, so scaling up to larger societies requires either unifying them or dissolving them.

That is key for me and our TPM values.
And clans and tribalism stand in the way of higher progress:

> In fact, the more effectively norms galvanize cooperation within subgroups, the more challenging it can be to unite them and scale up.

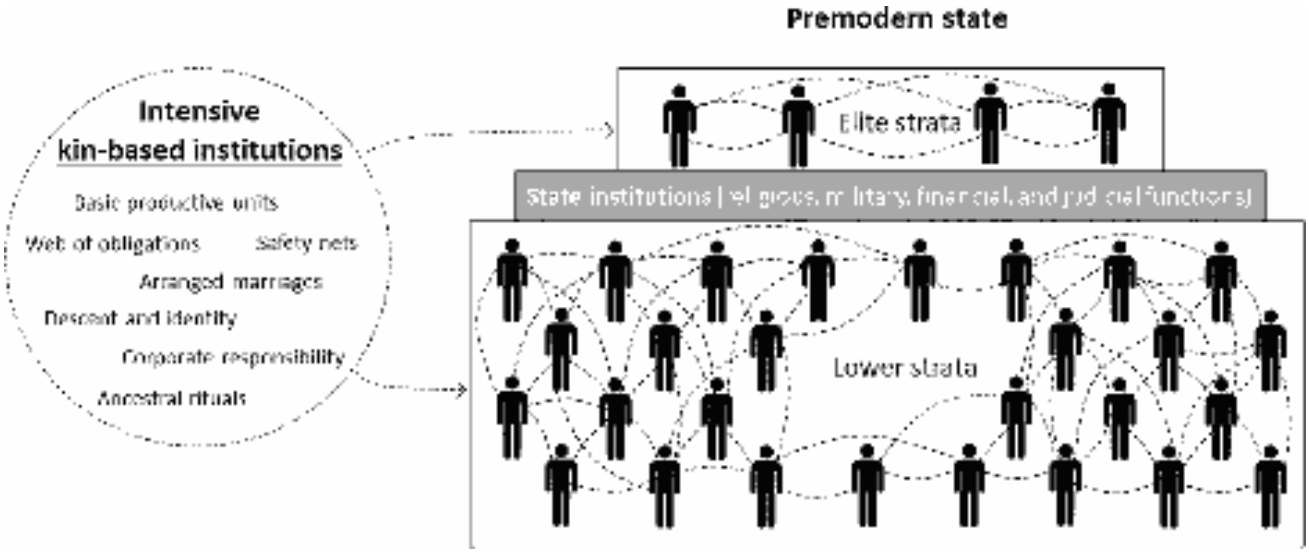
Kin-based institutions increase conflict

> (…) tribal populations with segmentary lineages still experience significantly higher rates of violence and civil war (…)
> chronic conflict in Africa are (…) populations organized by segmentary lineages
> (…)
> researchers have argued that the character of "Islamic terrorism" may be best explained by the honor psychology fermented in segmentary lineages.
> (…) their kin-based institutions may have shaped the particular religious creeds adopted by these groups.

Even proto-states fall apart when they're built on clans

Without individualistic psychology and impersonal pro-sociality kin-based premodern states tend to fracture and fall apart under the constant tension among the different clans:

> Once intergroup competition wanes, which often happens when states or empires manage to eliminate their competition, things slowly fall apart.
> Without the looming threats (…) competition among ruling families will intensify and gradually tear the state-level institutions apart.
> Cracks (…) appear even in the best institutions (…) as lineages, clans, and sometimes entire ethnic communities devise ways to exploit state institutions for their own ends.



But proto-states built on top of several clans are always shaky because the clans never fully cooperate with each other and can resume conflict at any time.

Small doses of competition are good

Both mild inter-group and intra-group competition can be beneficial within certain limited, or within certain regulation of conducts:

Inter-group competition foster pro-sociality & maintain healthy markets

'Domesticated', non-destructive inter-group competition in the form of businesses *increases* interpersonal trust.

Says Henrich:

> When properly yoked, moderate levels of nonviolent intergroup competition can strengthen impersonal trust and cooperation.

The author even shows that more competition in deregulated markets *increases* interpersonal trust.

Hover, it must be balanced and elevated levels of intergroup competition are harmful at a humanity level:

> Of course, elevated levels of intergroup competition are also what drive firms to exploit workers in foreign lands and trash the environment.
> (…)
> Unregulated and unmonitored, firms facing intense intergroup competition will start violently sabotaging each other while exploiting the powerless. We know this because it has happened repeatedly over many centuries, and continues today

So healthy integroup competition presented an optimum balance.
And, I guess, it must be tempered by respect for impartial norms of 'fair competition' and a sense of belonging and loyalty to humanity as a whole.

The author adds that inter-group competition may be necessary:

> This means that modern companies, like ancient societies and chiefly institutions, eventually implode in the absence of intergroup competition.
> Norms and institutions, of course, provide some stability and can inhibit or suppress rampant self-interest for a time. But, eventually individuals and coalitions within firms or other organizations, especially monopolies,

> devise ways to exploit the system to benefit themselves.

My note: Not convinced that collapse is unavoidable without inter-group competition
I agree with the general principle and tendency. But I don't think that collapse without inter-group competition is unavoidable.
I'd be curious to hear more from the author on this topic.
For example, I don't see modern European nations competing with other nations, but collapse isn't imminent.

The West developed faster than other geographical areas because it harnessed the benefits of nonviolent intergroup competition.

Political inter-group competition maintains effective democracy

The same is true in the political sphere, says the author:

> multiparty democracies also harness the power of intergroup competition.
> All political parties, were they to become the single governing party, would eventually fall into corruption, collusion, and cronyism.
> (…) However, faced with competitors and well-functioning democratic institutions, political parties must vie for members and votes (…) competition among parties will tend to spread practices, beliefs, and values that promote a party's success in attracting members and votes.

The author adds that of course that's no guarantee of healthy politics, but it at least inhibits the inevitable slide into despotism.

Intra-group competition increases individuals' output

Regulated within-group competition can increase cooperation within the group, but also benefit the larger group - and society- with increased creativity and perseverance:

> Similarly, extreme forms of within-group competition encourage selfish behavior, envy, and zero-sum thinking. Yet when disciplined by intergroup competition, moderate levels of within-group competition can inspire perseverance and creativity.

How to Increase Impersonal Trust & Cooperation

This section is more of a note to self:

- **Abolishment of kinship-based clans**
  - Greater relational mobility, which covers all the factors that constrain or promote the formation of new relationships or the dissolution of old ones
- **Impersonal institutions**
- **Punishment of free riders** & cheats
- **Regulated inter-group competition**
- **Regulated intra-group competition**, or mild competition if unregulated
- **Moving geographically** – '*residential moves strengthen people's preferences for egalitarianism (…) flattens the in-group vs. out-group distinction and shift people away from relying too heavily on their long-enduring social networks*'
  - Greater geographical mobility

Practical Applications

Quit the democratic leadership in conformist countries

This was a new wisdom nugget that got into Power University:

> some populations will contribute more to the group and stick more strictly to the group's rules when they have had a say—typically a vote—in decision-making.
> (…)
> however, a couple of recent studies failed to find a democracy premium in Mongolia and China.
> (…)
> Psychologically, those with stronger inclinations to defer to authority and less desire for control cooperated more in response to externally imposed laws and less with the results of democratic votes.

The 'democracy premium' is an emergent piece of psychology when the conformists are few.

MORE WISDOM

Cultural Evolution 'Beats' Genetic Evolution

> by adaptively "fitting" people—psychologically—to their institutional environments, cultural evolution will often (but not always) deplete the strength of natural selection acting to address the same adaptive challenges

The author mentions lactose-digesting genes.
The genes developed after the cultural diffusion of animal herding (cows, goats, etc.).

But populations that culturally learned to make cheese and yogurt never had to develop any genes.

Two more examples of culture beating genes are school attainments/IQ and urbanization:

> studies in both the United States and Iceland reveal (…) That genes that make people less likely to continue their schooling have increased in frequency (…).
> This genetically induced push against schooling, however, was rolled over by cultural evolution, which was speeding in the opposite direction.
> Over the same period, culture drove up people's educational attainment by 25.5 months (and IQ by 6 to 8 points) per generation.
> Over the entire 20th century, culture has raised Americans' educational attainment by 9 to 11 years, while natural selection has lowered it by less than 8 months

Early urban centers were disease-ridden graveyards.
Natural selection would have been *operating against* a psychology adapted to dense populations, impersonal markets, individualism, specialized occupational niches, and anonymous interactions.
But they all won -so far, I'd add-.

Poverty Impairs People's Prosociality & Intellect

> Shocks like famines and food shortages, if they occur before about age five, inhibit the development of self-control, positive-sum thinking, and the acquisition of mental skills related to abstract problem-solving and pattern recognition.

Promote Literacy to Advance Humanity

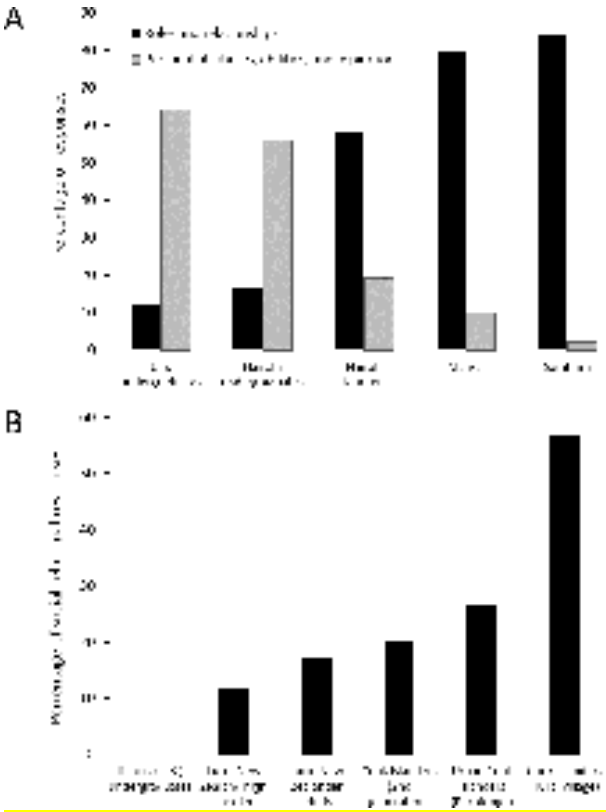
> The impact of Protestantism on women's literacy is particularly important, because the babies of literate mothers tend to be fewer, healthier, smarter, and richer as adults than those of illiterate mothers.23

Polygyny's Math Problem Creates Social Tension

> Polygynous marriage tends to generate a large pool of low-status unmarried men with few prospects for marriage or even sex. Responding to this situation, men's psychology shifts in ways that spark fiercer male-male competition and, under many conditions, foment greater violence and more crime.

Individualism Increases With Education & 'Westernization'

Hard to say which one matters more, but I suppose it may be a mix of both, plus students' self-selection bias and aspiration to be 'more Westerner':



Personal identity across diverse populations. (A) Using the "Who am I?" task, the upper figure the average percentage of responses between the focus on their roles and relationships vs. their personal attributes and achievements. (B) the average percentage of socially-relationally answers

Why Japan, South Korea, & China Quickly Caught Up

These three countries had a 'culture of hard work' and their stronger centralized governments could more quickly copy and impose Western customs:

> these societies had all experienced long histories of agriculture and state-level governments that had fostered the evolution of cultural values, customs, and norms encouraging formal education, industriousness, and a willingness to defer gratification. These are, in a sense, preexisting cultural adaptations that happened to dovetail nicely with the new institutions acquired from WEIRD societies.
> Second, their more powerful top-down orientations permitted these societies to rapidly adopt and implement

> key kin-based institutions copied from WEIRD societies. <— Note: likely a mistake and meant 'kin-bashing' or similar
> (…) the Chinese Communist government initiated a program in the 1950s to abolish clans, polygyny, arranged marriages, unions between close relatives, and purely patrilineal inheritance

However, both Japan and Korea are still rather insular and 'clannish', which raised some questions for me.

Why Some Societies Struggle To Catch Up

Because they're still 'clannish' culturally and psychologically:

> populations with particularly long histories of agriculture, like those in Egypt, Iran, and Iraq, haven't fully integrated with the modern formal political and economic institutions that first arose in Europe. These societies have maintained quite intensive forms of kinship, probably for religious reasons.

Self-esteem Work & Benefits Depend On Culture And Context

Consistency does matter, but it matters much more in the West:

> the correlation between personal consistency across relationships and measures of both life satisfaction and positive emotions was much stronger among Americans than among Koreans. Overall, being consistent across relationships—"being yourself"—pays off more in America, both socially and emotionally

The Koreans, smarter in my opinion and just like the Machiavellians, know that there is no pay-off in 'consistency'.

And says the author:

> Such evidence suggests that the immense importance assigned by the discipline of psychology to notions of self-esteem and positive self-views is probably a WEIRD phenomenon.
> (…) non-WEIRD societies (…) having high self-esteem and a positive view of oneself are *not* strongly linked to either life satisfaction or subjective well-being (…) it's *other-esteem* ("face") that matters, not self-esteem rooted in (…) unique personal attributes that capture one's "true self."

My Note: But you can be successful or unsuccessful in both cultures and that still feeds into self-esteem
I think the author may miss here that having 'high *other*-esteem' is still a marker of success just like *self*-esteem is. That probably affords high status and makes the individual feel better and more confident.

Cognitive Dissonance Is WEIRD

> Individualists see behavior as anchored in personal traits -dispositions- across all contexts (dispositionalism). That makes individualists uncomfortable with inconsistencies and forces individualists into mental gymnastics to reconcile the inconsistencies -cognitive dissonance-.

As mentioned above, Machiavellians don't experience much cognitive dissonance instead because they don't fall for that trap.

The Big 5 Is Not Universal Psychology, It's WEIRD

The author claims that Westerners developed more personality sub-facets to better the growing niches of more complex societies.

However, societies with less occupational specialization and fewer social niches will show higher intercorrelations

among the WEIRD-5 dimensions until some dimension will cease to exist.

Inter-group Competition VS Within-group Competition

> intergroup competition favors beliefs, practices, customs, motivations, and policies that promote the success of groups in competition with other groups.
> (…) (it) often promotes trust, cooperation, and the efficient allocation of pay to employees (e.g., CEOs aren't overpaid).

As per above, it must be a milder and regulated competition, or it turns destructive.

Within-group competition instead:

> within-group competition is the competition among individuals, or small coalitions, that occurs within firms, organizations, or other groups. This form of competition favors the spread of behaviors, beliefs, motivations, practices, etc., that promote the success of individuals within a firm *relative* to others at the same firm. These are practices that benefit some employees at the expense of the firm.

However, even here, there is an optimum balance:

> within-group competition is also not entirely unproductive. At moderate levels, it can inspire diligence and productivity.

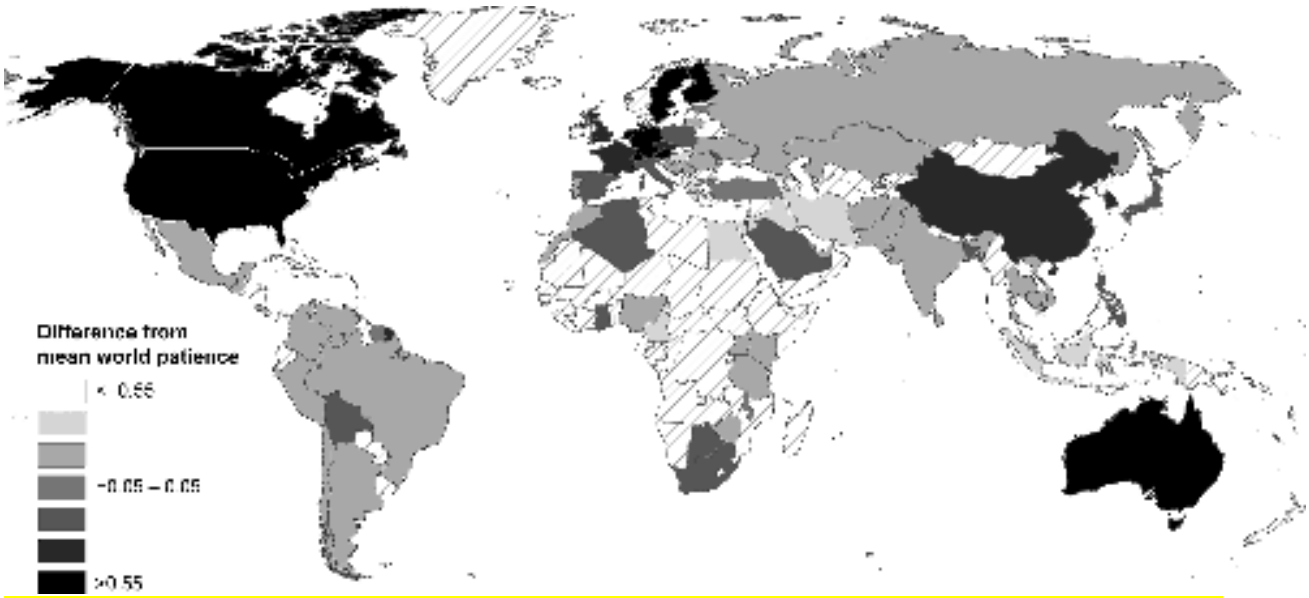
Patience & Gratification Delay Is Crucial To Civil Society & Progress

Patient people are willing to wait longer to earn more

Impatient people focus on the short-term, even if it costs in future earning.

The most patient countries are:

- Sweden
- Netherlands
- United States
- Canada
- Switzerland
- Australia
- Germany
- Austria
- Finland



Global distribution of patience across 76 countries. Darker shades indicate greater patience. Hatched regions indicate a lack of data

Greater patience is associated with better economic, educational, and governmental outcomes and among individuals.

Immigration Policies Should Note That 'Clan Psychology' Is Persistent

> The effect of kin-based institutions on people's psychology is culturally persistent. The adult children of immigrants, who grow up entirely in Europe, still manifest the psychological calibrations associated with the kin-based institutions linked to their parents' native countries or ethnolinguistic groups.

Inalienable Rights Are Weird Psychology

> Claims about "unalienable rights" seem self-evident if one (a) tends to analytically explain or justify things with reference to internal and enduring attributes (not relationships or descent) and (b) prefers impartial rules that apply broadly to *distinct* categories or classes (e.g., "landowner"; "human").
> By contrast, from the perspective of most human communities, the notion that each person has inherent rights or privileges disconnected from their social relationships or heritage is not self-evident.

I experienced this first-hand.

A woman in a kinship-based society wanted to conceive my child to gain a respise from the oppressive obligation to support her family -something that left her poor and drained-.

Of course, she hadn't thought that within that culture her child would then inherit the same obligations.

No wonder some cultures have many children: it's like producing free workers and future income.

Wars Make Us More Clannish -Unless You're Already WEIRD-

> War strengthens people's egalitarian motivations, but only toward their in-groups

However, the author says war had a different effect in Europe because Europe had already moved beyond clans. So wars coalesced people into more impersonal institutions instead.

QUOTES

The obvious truth that many of the critics of farming seem to miss:

> early farming spread not because rational individuals prefer to farm, but because farming communities with particular institutions beat mobile hunter-gatherer populations in intergroup competition.

On Christian genius contribution to Western dominance:

> The accidental genius of Western Christianity was in "figuring out" how to dismantle kin-based institutions while at the same time catalyzing its own spread.

On kin-based societies and mafia organizations:

> Corruption and Mafia activity reflect the same patterns seen for blood donations and impersonal trust. The greater the rate of cousin marriage in a province, the higher the rates of corruption and Mafia activity. There's a reason why the Mafia is often referred to as "the family" or "the clan" and the boss is sometimes called "the godfather." The strength of in-group loyalty and the power of nepotism in societies with intensive kinship create precisely the kind of psychology and social relations that foster graft and fuel organized crime.

On women gaining with polygyny:

> the evolved psychological push toward polygynous marriage doesn't come just from men (…) In a world with polygynous marriage, young women and their families get a much larger selection of potential husbands (…) The best move (….) in a hunter-gatherer society might be to become the second wife of a great hunter instead of being the first wife of a poor hunter;

On the need to rely on institutions, not people:

> Visionary founders, like great national leaders, might prevent this for a time, but the unfortunate persistence of death guarantees that their influence is constrained in the long run.

CONS

- **Sometimes wished for more data directly stated**

For example, in sentences such as 'he higher the percentage of X residents, the higher the murder rate is today', I'd like to know how much higher.

But generally speaking Henrich does a great jois presenting his data, including the possible limitations.

- **I may have streamlined the book under its main thesis**

I believe this book is so good that it deserved even more time spent on editing.
I'd have streamlined and removed some tangents just to leave the book denser around its foundational concepts.

CRITICISM

To first accept something, I seek all possible faults in logic and data.

But Henrich made that job difficult for me.

First off, he addressed a large chunk of my objections himself.

I sometimes thought about a criticism, and he raised it himself little later in the book.

Second, he brings a ton of data, examples, and case studies.
To properly criticize Henrich's thesis one should go through the data.

And lastly, many of his theses logically added up.

I did have some notes left standing though.
But since I haven't gone through the data, consider these more like my personal doubts, based on my preconceptions:

Roman & Greek civilizations contradict Christian contribution

Civilization's timelines don't square with the church's role in Western success.

For example:

- **Rome had an advanced civilization *before* Christianity**. Many consider the Roman civilization the foundation of the West
  - Civic duty was a high virtue in Rome, despite it was a supposedly kinship-based society
- **Athens developed democracy *before* Christianity**, despite the author suggesting democracy is a WEIRD institution.
- **The Church accompanied Europe *into* and through the Middle Ages**. If the church was such a driver of progress, it certainly did take some time to warm up its engine
- **Urbanization started long before WEIRD psychology**, starting with the first walled cities like Jericho. And Rome was a large urban center long before the church

The author says:

> with their growing willingness to break with tradition, the intellectuals of the early modern period started to realize that the great ancient sages, like Aristotle, could be wrong

But those ancient sages were so willing to break with tradition that they created new traditions.
That was long before the Church laid the groundwork to break traditions.

I'd love for the author to comment on this.

Update:
Simon who recommended this book later also pointed me to Richardo Duchesne who had similar reservations both around Greco-Roman civilizations, and the general role of the Church.
I later found more (here, here, here, here) who had similar reservations about either the outsized role of the church or the difficulties in reconciling Greek and Roman civilization.
It means this may be a valid criticism.

> https://t.co/ksiaCbT38J
>
> Hello Lucio this is to add to one of your criticism that European were already WEIRD
>
> — Gold (@simono91) January 19, 2025

Religion's effects may be over-estimated

I wasn't too sold on the effect size of religion for some simple reasons:

The religious explanation for cooperation clashes with self-interest, but cooperation doesn't require religion

The author seems to come from a frame that religion had to overcome selfish drives to foster cooperation.

And while that may be the case, cooperation could evolve and spread even with perfectly self-interested individuals.
Matt Ridley explains that in *The Origins of Virtue*.

The most productive people are least affected by religion

The author says that various elements of religions "deepen the faith of (…) especially children and adolescents (…) and women."

But it's adult males who produce and commerce the most.
Exactly the group that is *least* impacted by religion.

And I wouldn't be surprised if we found out that the top 1% who drive the most progress and commerce are high-IQ (for new inventions) and "alpha male types" for commerce, business, and political power.

Religion had a small effect in some studies

For example:

> a perfectly unbiased person will allocate 15 coins (…) people who thought their Big God was the fire-and-brimstone type allocated 14.5 (…) Meanwhile, people who thought that their Big God was an all-loving softy allocated only about 13
> (…) agnostics (…) with average allocations dropping to between 12.5 and 13 coins.

So we go from 14.5 to 13 or slightly below for agnostics.

It's an important effect.
And it may add up.
But it's not a *huge* effect.
Especially when you consider that religion seems to have been primed -the author used the word "coreligionist" for the allocation-. If they controlled for words such as 'fellow tribesmen' or 'fellow hunters' I suspect the gap may even narrow.

Charity giving doesn't seem like a good marker for trust & cooperation

Charity was sometimes used as a proxy for God's effect on behavior.

And while I believe indeed it can drive up charity, charity does not equal the trust and cooperation that are most central to the book's main thesis.

From a purely analytical point of view, Christian charity may even waste productive men's resources for unproductive ends.

Overall, commerce as a force for trust and cooperation seems a potentially better explanation to me than the church.

Culture's effect may be over-estimated

Culture over genes

For example, the author says:

> Intergroup competition has also embedded itself in society through team sports, religious groups (e.g., churches), and other voluntary associations. Participation in team sports such as ice hockey and soccer provides many children and adolescents with their first experience of intergroup competition, which may have lasting psychological effects.

However, in my opinion, it's the other way around.
It's genes that drive the formation of 'sense of belonging' to team sports, especially in their fanbase.

And I doubt it's team sports that have lasting effects on psychology. The psychology for tribal banding together *was already there*.

When the explanation could go both ways, the author seemed to prefer culture.
For example:

> cultural transmission can perpetuate a clannish psychology for generations, even after clan organizations have vanished.

How can you be sure it's cultural transmission, though, and not, at least in part, genes?

Cultural *over*-relativity

> The result is that textbooks that now purport to be about "Psychology" or "Social Psychology" need to be retitled something like "The Cultural Psychology of Late 20th-Century Americans."

I think this may be an exaggeration.

There are plenty of commonalities among most populations.
It's disciplines like inter-cultural communication that stress the differences.

The author himself, for example, says that polygyny is the norm and polyandry a rare exception. That's only but one example of culture *following* genes and biology.

And often cultural impact is a matter of degrees, rather than presence or absence.

For example, says the author:

> People's inclination to conform to the incorrect answer goes from about 20 percent in societies with the weakest kin-based institutions to 40–50 percent in societies with the most intensive kinship

That's a large jump, but it's still an incremental change of an underlying tendency.
Also, looking at the chart, it seemed even closer.

People Don't Always Copy Successful Culture to Succeed, But To Brag

For example, the author says about people copying the more successful groups:

> Since people often cannot distinguish what makes a group successful, this also results in the transmission of many norms and practices that have nothing to do with success, including things like hairstyles and music preferences.

I don't think that comes down to a failure of 'understanding what works'.
It's mostly younger people who copy the culture, and it's not because 'it works', it's because it's 'cool'.

The dominant culture is attractive because it's subconsciously attractive. So it's 'hip' for many to eat McDonalds

because it represents America.
But also because they produce better culture. You learn English because they produce better movies and songs.

We copy successful groups's culture because of soft power, not because of 'copying errors'

Capitalism may be under-estimated

Logically, I find any explanation that aligns with self-interest more compelling.

Contrary to the church's effect, capitalism didn't have to fight human nature.

Capitalism *harnesses* selfish human drives to service the collective.

Similarly, I'd logically expect urbanization to play an important role in breaking kin-based institutions.
I look at my own life for that, and the people around me.
Had we stayed in our small villages, we'd still be tied to family customs and traditions. In bigger cities, we're freer individuals.

Speaking of which:

Community *size* may be under-estimated

And it may be confused with underlying and more lasting psychological traits.

The author describes his experience of kinship ties undermining market efficiency:

> The density of these interpersonal relationships constrained market competition in Chol-Chol.
> Their decisions were embedded in bigger and more important enduring relationships. Of course, buying and selling did occur, but this was more interpersonal exchange than impersonal commerce.

In my opinion, this comes down largely to the size of the community.

It's very similar in the middle-of-nowhere place where I grew up in.

You shop locally sometimes even if the prices are higher because they're your neighbors.
And you avoid some if there are past grievances.

For example, we didn't buy homemade pasta locally because they didn't use our photography services. And I agreed with that boycott because, to me, it was a personal affront.
Even today, decades later, I still think it was a 'b*tch move' -and consider I'm a deeply WEIRD and individualistic man-.

However, as soon as I move to the city, I immediately shop rationally.

Some just-so explanations raised questions

- **Hot-heads fared better in kinship-based societies?**

The author suggests that murder rates dropped with more individualistic societies because the costs for violence raised:

> In this expanding individualistic world, a reputation for sudden, violent, and undisciplined responses to minor insults or simple misunderstandings didn't pay anymore. Who wants to defend, marry, or do business with a hothead? In an open market of strangers where people are shopping for relationships, you can just find another friend, fiancée, or employee, one with better self-control.

This part raised some questions.

How is a violent cousin so much better in a kinship-based society?

Because that violent cousin could defend the tribe?

But then shouldn't that violent cousin make a great state soldier?
The author himself then says Europe was constantly at war…

- **Kinship-based institutions require contextual behavior, but modern societies don't?**

To explain how the Big 5 fails to replicate in certain populations, the author states:

> intensive kin-based institutions demand that individuals behave in a range of different ways depending on their relationships to other people. Some relationships explicitly call for joking, while others demand quiet submission. By contrast, the world of impersonal markets and relational mobility favors consistency across contexts and relationships

While the overall theory of niche adaptations adds up, the reason why was less compelling.

Are we really expected to behave the same way with a boss, child, in-law, at a funeral, or in a club?
One could just as easily argue that larger, individualistic societies introduce a broader range of contextually distinct relationships and situations, which may demand even greater behavioral adaptability.

How about Korea and Japan?

They're wealthy, clean, and safe.

But they're not very 'weird' and they're both 'clannish' in many ways, not very open to immigration or not very welcoming of foreigners -players who visited Korea know that Korean men are the biggest coc*blockers ever, but *only towards foreigners* :)-.

The reason could be that their clans are as large as nations.
And that to develop, they mostly copied, rather than innovate.

However, this was left unexplained by the author.

Did conflict accelerate civilization, or slow it down

The author states that European wars accelerated the progress towards larger societies:

> England alone was at war about half of the time from 1100 to 1900.
> This relentless intergroup conflict had the driving effect on societal evolution discussed in Chapter 3: European societies grew bigger, more powerful, and more complex; if they didn't, they got wiped out or swallowed up.

These wars intensified nationalism.

But an important consequence that's missing in my opinion is that **war increases INTERNAL prosociality to the detriment of human-level cooperation.**

The two work as a seesaw: one goes up, the other goes down.

The author knows this, and in my opinion, it was an important note to add -even just to avoid war apology-.

So one could equally say that national conflicts slow the progress towards even larger supra-national bodies, and global trade.

Which is what happened after WWII.
The West said "We're done with war", and the EU and many international bodies sprung up.

Is the weirdest people correct?

Henrich is likely correct at the macro level, particularly about the tension between small-scale kinship structures—rooted in tribal and familial bonds—and individualistic societies that foster the psychology and behaviors of broader cooperation, trade, personal freedoms, democracy, innovation, and rapid progress.

THAT, to me, is the core, deep, invaluable insight.
And humanity better learn it, in order to manage our progress as a species and civilization.

While largely correct at the macro level, Henrich was less convincing—and potentially less accurate—at the micro level with causes, connection, and relative impact of each specific factor.

The good guys over at Lesswrong claim the author is 80% correct.
I'd say the author is 50% correct at the micro-level, but 90%+ correct at the far more important macro-level.

PROS

- **High critical-thinking skills**

Talking about WEIRD, Henrich maybe the perfect example of why 'WEIRD is good'.
I wish everyone worked with the same level of analysis and critical thinking that Heinrich displays here.

- **A dots-connecting book**

The Wikipedia editors categorize *The Weirdest People* as a work of 'Big History' similar to *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *Sapiens*.

I can see some links indeed.
But I find Urari's *Sapiens* to be more "compilation", lining up facts in an interesting fashion, but bringing little new insight.

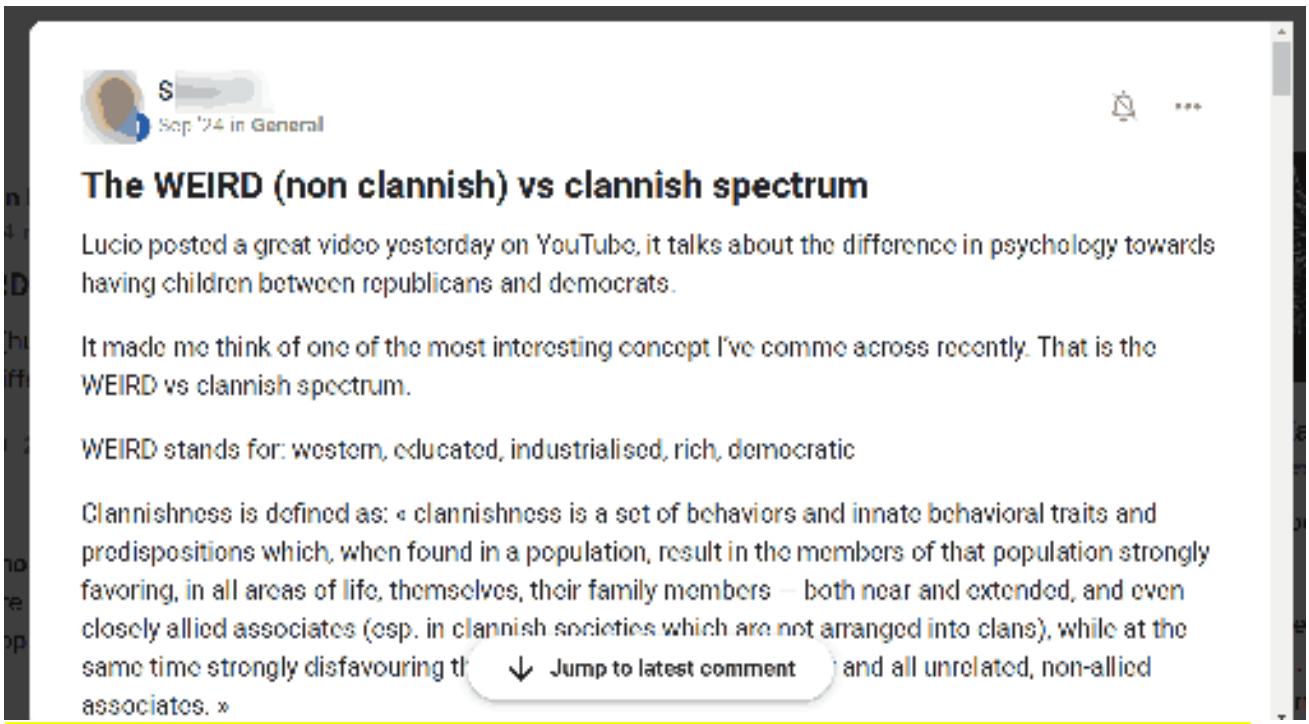
Diamond's work does seek new insight with its novel emphasis on geography, but by missing on psychology it's less encompassing and not as enlightening when it comes to human nature -including future developments and possible policy repercussions-.

But because of its wider applicability and higher relevance to psychology and civilization dynamics, *The Weirdest People in the World* stands above these.

REVIEW

The Weirdest People in The World is a paradigm-shifting read that refined how I view and understand psychology, socialization, and human civilization and progress.

I must thank Simon from our TPM community for recommending this book ⍰⍰:



S

Sep '24 in General

The WEIRD (non clannish) vs clannish spectrum

Lucio posted a great video yesterday on YouTube, it talks about the difference in psychology towards having children between republicans and democrats.

It made me think of one of the most interesting concept I've comme across recently. That is the WEIRD vs clannish spectrum.

WEIRD stands for: western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic

Clannishness is defined as: « clannishness is a set of behaviors and innate behavioral traits and predispositions which, when found in a population, result in the members of that population strongly favoring, in all areas of life, themselves, their family members — both near and extended, and even closely allied associates (esp. in clannish societies which are not arranged into clans), while at the same time strongly disfavouring th Jump to latest comment and all unrelated, non-allied associates. »

Simon linked this book to a video on how some conservatives view children as tribal/national power-projection tools, linking it to 'clannish psychology'—a view I share.

And second I want to thank the author.

Henrich's work helped me refine and improve the values and mission of this website, and I'm forever grateful and indebted to him for that.

For example, this is what I wrote in our 'TPM values' on the Start Here page encouraging men to develop and look at themselves as individuals before joining or psychologically relying on groups' belonging:

> Tribalism is the enemy of civilization and progress because it splinters larger, complex, and rights-based societies into warrying factions based on kinship.
>
> *TPM Start Here page*

Now Henrich provided the data -and a much better explanation- of why that's exactly the case.

Check the **best psychology books** or get this book on Amazon.

Why Aggressive US Foreign Policy Undermines Its Hegemony

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 January 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Trump's rhetoric has become increasingly combative toward former allies.

For instance, he has hinted at ambitions involving Panama, and Greenland.
Or making Canada a US state.

That approach has some advantages.

It might secure concessions, showcase America's dominance, and resonate with nationalist and power-seeking voters at home.
But long term it *diminishes* American global influence.

This article explains why.

Contents

- Machiavellian Leadership Principles
  - 1. Keep Your Enemies Close… & Hide Your Guns
  - 2. Coddle Your Subjects to Keep Them Happy… And Dependent
  - 3. Combine Dominance & Prestige For Maximum Effect
  - 4. Keep your friends close, to keep your enemies isolated
  - 5. Keep your friends close, to keep them divided
- Over-Dominance In Global Politics
  - The dominance boost
  - The costs of over-dominance
  - Why leaders' over-dominance is lose-lose
  - Some good may come out of this all

Machiavellian Leadership Principles

We long emphasized on this website that dominant behavior ≠ power.

They overlap most certainly.
But they're not the same.

And we also made the point that *strategy* beats dominant behavior.
Including a video here:

> **Lucio**: 3 examples of strategy beating dominance in everyday life

U.S. foreign policy, past and present, provides a good example of this principle.

Let's dig deeper:

1. Keep Your Enemies Close... & Hide Your Guns

Principle:

⚖**The higher the tension, the more their motivation and preparation**

Your enemies shouldn't even know you're an enemy.

Think about it, if you call the North Korean leader 'Rocket Man' and threaten China, are they more likely to ally and prepare, or chill and

This is especially true for dictators.
Dictators already have maximum power. Without threats, they focus on maximizing power, squashing dissent, siphoning off money, and generally keeping their countries poor and weak (de Mesquita, 2003).

But external threats are a threat to their rule -and life-.
And an enemy galvanized internal support into productive endeavors.

You don't want them productive.
You want them fat and chill.

Keep them close, hide your guns, and pretend you're friendly.

2. Coddle Your Subjects to Keep Them Happy... *And Dependent*

The effective Machiavellian top dog doesn't bully the small dogs.

Instead, he *coddles* the small dogs to keep them content, submissive, and dependent.

Why?

Because the small dog who feels safe under the big dog protection has no incentive to empower himself.
Instead, his incentive is to suck up and sidle-up to the big dog.

But the incentives invert when the big dog turns on the small dog.

In one sentence:

Small dogs stay obedient and fragmented under the top dog's lead, but seek power in unity to defend against a dangerous big dog.

This is basic social dynamics, transferred almost 1:1 to global politics.

Followers and smaller players gladly follow a more powerful but benevolent leaders -and he stays in charge for as long as he wishes

3. Combine Dominance & Prestige For Maximum Effect

Crucially, the little dogs also *look* up to a protective and friendly top dog.

After all, it makes sense: the big dog is a magnanimous giver.
He pulls up the smaller dogs, and makes everyone better for it.

And we're wired to love powerful but magnanimous men who lead *for us all*.

The friendly top dog is BOTH dominant and prestigious

Psychology research shows us that dominance and prestige are two different routes to status and influence.

They're both powerful.

But there is a key difference:

- **Dominance *browbeats* others** into compliance -but does not make others *agree* with you.
- **Prestige makes others WANT** to emulate and follow you -it gets 'buy in'-

Thus, prestige is the only approach that affects true change.

Of course, it may be better to be *both*.
It's no coincidence that one of our first articles was 'mix power with warmth', which reflects a similar approach.

It's also similar to what a smart American strategist said a long time ago:

> Speak softly and carry a big stick

And that's what the US has long done.

Prestige allowed US cultural hegemony

Joseph Henrich explains that prestige evolved to facilitate group learning.

Such as, the lower-status individuals look up and follow the most skilled and higher-status members to learn from them.

This perspective also sheds light on the dynamics of soft power.
It may not be a coincidence that America's power projection and exports greatly benefited from soft power and cultural hegemony.

America was a prestigious leader.
And everyone was happy to learn from, buy from, and *be* more American.

US-European Relations: Good Leader-Happy Followers

The USA has led the West with 'benevolent leadership' since WWII. The win-win lasted because it's good for all

Until now US and Europe -plus Japan and South Korea- had a relationship of prestigious top dog, and a pack of smaller-sized happy followers.

Cooperative and win-win USA policies started with the Marshall Plan.
It kept key European and Asian allies friendly, aligned, and *happy* with America's leadership and military 'protection'.

This fostered a surge in American cultural export and trade that benefited both sides.
And it solidified America's leadership of the West -and the free world-.

4. Keep your friends close, to keep your enemies isolated

For decades America spoke softly to Europe, and put the big stick on the service of its allies.

It was an incredibly effective strategy.
Tending and befriending the wealthiest nations in the world, America effectively isolated and disempowered its few

other enemies.

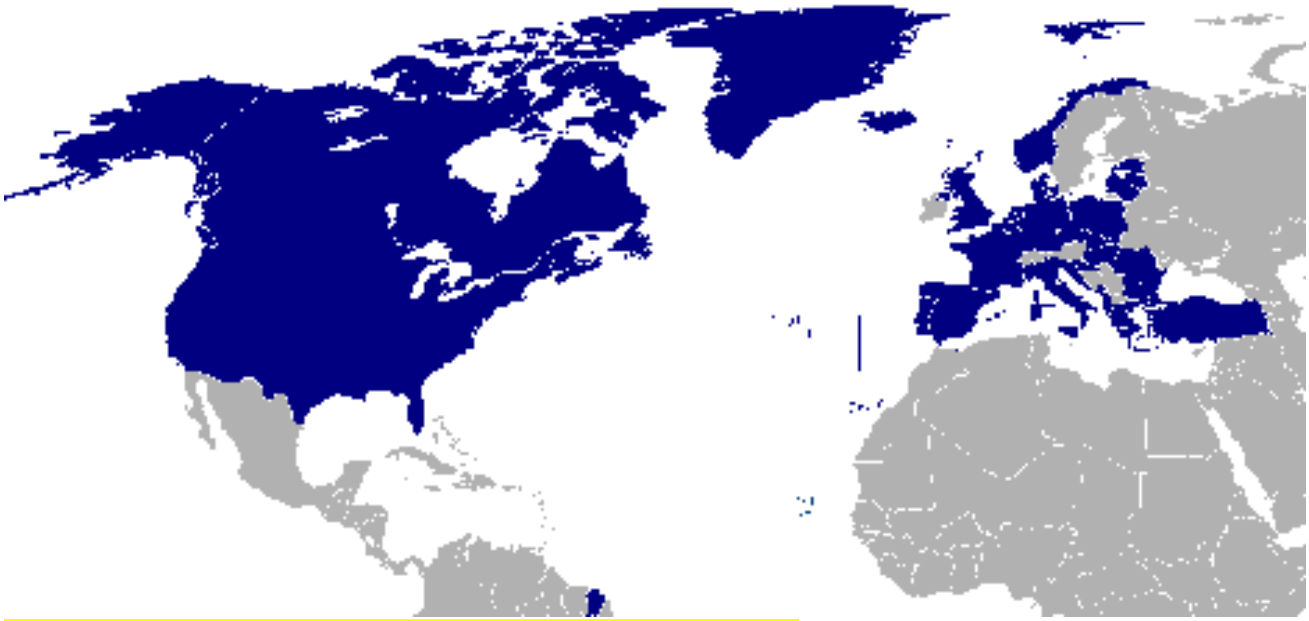
It's another key strategy we champion on this website:

Make friends, not enemies.

It's not necessarily to be 'nice', albeit that's also a bonus for us, but because it works.
When you have many friends and few enemies, you can focus your undivided attention -and firepower- on them.
Additionally, you can enlist the support of your allies.

That's exactly what NATO did.

It's not surprising that URSS was doomed to lose.
The US combined the wealthiest and most powerful countries into one single alliance.



A web of powerful allies is what maintains long-term global hegemony

And now the Machiavellian bent of this approach:

⍰ 5. Keep your friends close, to keep them *divided*

US foreign policy had a second crucial advantage:

It kept Europe fragmented.
Why worry about being friends with historical competitors like France and Germany, when you can sidle up to the US?

Plus, there was no need.
In the world of complex and slow-moving international politics, things change only when they absolutely *must*.

The European project drudged along at snail speed because it never *had* to move quicker.
What for?
America was there.
Who needs a common EU army when you have US-led NATO protecting you?

Edit:
After writing this article, *The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition* confirmed to me this was a premeditated move indeed:

> In the early 1990s, eforts to "Europeanize" European defense gained steam.

> France wanted to turn the Western European Union (WEU), the nascent military arm of the European Community (the forerunner of the European Union), into a full-fedged security organization. Policymakers in Washington viewed this as an attempt to lever the Americans out of Europe.
>
> The Clinton administration thus decided that NATO (in which the USA played the dominant role) ought to remain the lynchpin of European security.
>
> In other words, NATO enlargement served two central objectives of American foreign policy: to promote democracy and to sustain US infuence over European security and political affairs (Layne 2000; Shifrinson 2020; Schake 1998

But things may be changing…

Over-Dominance In Global Politics

Now let's take a look at contemporary US politics.

As mentioned, it's in many ways the opposite of what the US has done for decades.
But it's not *all* bad.

Over-dominance, which we also call 'value-taking dominance' and in common parlance overlaps with 'bullying', has pros and cons.

The dominance boost

The pros include:

- **Faster compliance gaining**, no need for influence and any semblance of democracy and fairness
- **Send a stronger message**: a single act of dominance, unopposed, instantly establishes you as the top dog
- **Grab a larger portion of the pie**, since you don't have to pretend to be 'fair' to remain friendly and prestigious, follow the law of the jungle, and dictate the terms
- **Momentarily boosts internal cooperation**, especially among power-sensitive and nationalists, as the aggressive stance heightens inter-group competition
- **Psychic and hormonal benefits**

As little as feelings matter to a good Machiavellian, over-dominance makes the big dog feel strong and omnipotent.

In the short term, it also boosts testosterone, leading to a short-term reinforcing cycle of increasing bullying and increasing spoils.

Unfortunately, this may be one of humanity's biggest bugs, but pro-social dominance does not have nearly the same endorphin-releasing effects.

- **Internal politics boost**

Aggressive leaders may also gain some points at home.

Supporters enjoy America's dominance because they project their identity into the nation/tribe.
And they 'borrow' America's dominance to boost their own self-esteem and pride.

It's a *costly* shortcut to confidence, though.
Psychological power-borrowing from the group *replaces* (a lack of) personal achievements.

And this is why we encourage men to develop themselves as *individuals* first, rather than tribe/group-members.

- **Dominate against divided smaller dogs**, including your former allies

The little dogs are still shell-shocked, still fragmented and extra disempowered

The costs of over-dominance

In an admittedly more moralistic take, Simon Sinek's best-seller *Leaders Eat Last* says that selfish leaders are 'betraying us all'.
I agree: it's a dereliction of leadership responsibilities.

But let's analyze the dynamics more dispassionately.

By turning the big stick on its allies, America first loses prestige.

Only other bullies admire value-taking dominance -and nobody likes it when it's used to take from *them*-.

And it would soon start losing dominance as well.

Focusing on the European effects:

- **Top dog can't rely on small dogs anymore** to isolate and sanction enemies.

Ie.: If the US wants to sanction China but United Europe doesn't, China maintains a large export market

- **Small dogs may start biting back** -hopefully not, but politicians' first main task internationally must be to avoid lose-lose-

- **Small dogs coalesce** into an opposing pack

While the US could pressure a single EU state -ie.: Denmark-, it can't with United Europe

Aggressive American foreign policy *forces* Europe to unite

Domineering Alphas Bully Small Dogs... And *Coalesce Them* Into A Pack of Enemies

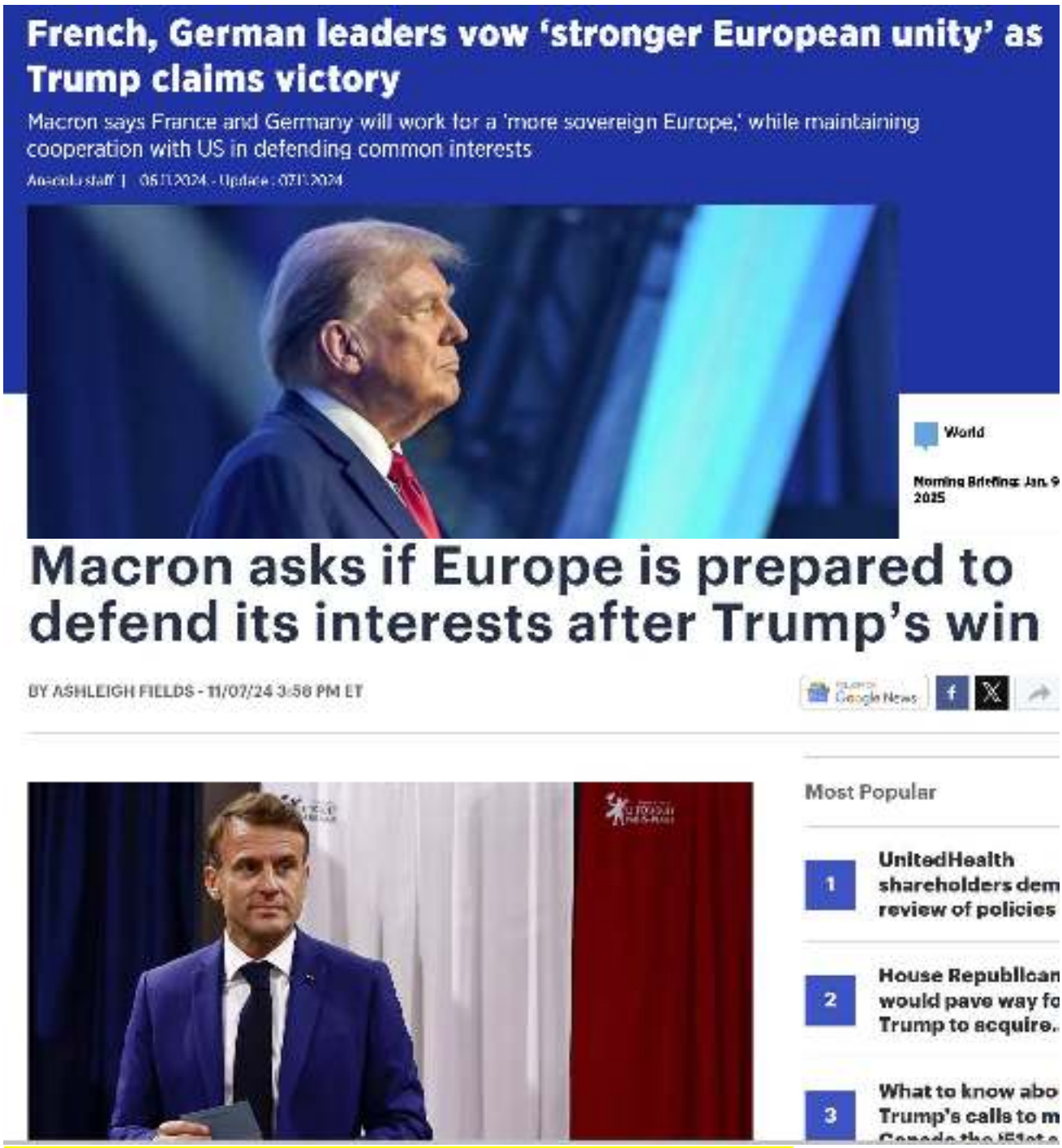
The former benevolent leader turning aggressive is a shocking wake-up call.

As the lost puppies look around, the mistake becomes clear: how can you guarantee a lone big dog to always remain friend?

And the solution also becomes clear: let's ally, and become a top dog through small-dog unity.

That's how hyenas outplay lions.
And unlike hyenas, European nations can unite into a whole, forming a big top dog themselves.

This is exactly what power dynamics would predict.
So I was glad, but not surprised, to see this at play:



European leaders vow stronger European unity and self-reliance after Trump's election

A new global superpower must not necessarily antagonize the US.

Hopefully and likely it won't -what a lose-lose tragedy that'd be-.
But nonetheless, **a strong united Europe is a comparative loss of global influence for the US.**

It's simple math: one single top player has outsized influence on the world.
But global influence dilutes as the number of top players increases.

Why leaders' over-dominance is lose-lose

First off, the leader pays a long-term price.

Just like financial borrowing, over-dominance boosts short-term power creating a long-term liability.
The costs of value-taking dominance include the loss of prestige, allies, soft power, influence, etc.

Most damning, several experiments show that a prestigious pro-social leader makes the pie bigger for all because he fosters *cooperation* from all.
But an overly dominant leader does the opposite.

Over-dominance and uncooperativeness by the leader make the pie smaller for all.
It undermines global cooperation, including trade and organized responses to global issues -a price humanity all, pays-.
We all go backward when civilization regresses into tribalistic squabbles, undoing millennia of progress and cooperation.

I'm confident cooperation will eventually resume.
But even momentary setbacks cost us momentum loss.

But just like with financial borrowing, dark-triad leaders don't care if future generations pay the costs.

Some good may come out of this all

Overall, it's better for all when leaders are prestigious.

And that's also true for world politics.

But… There may be silver linings.

1. Europe stops being a dependent, disempowered puppy

Personally, I always felt that European reliance on US 'protection' was bad both practically, ethically, and psychologically.

First, if you can't protect yourself, it's your duty to *look* for ways.

And if you have the means to, it's embarrassing and unethical to expect 'help'.
It's mentally disempowering for you, and it's a beggar and value-taker approach towards the world.

2. Shared power provides checks and balances

And you never depend on a single country to elect the right people, or to keep moving the world forward.

Speaking of which:

3. Shared power is an insurance policy for humanity

2 leading powerhouses and beacons of freedom are better than 1. And if more join, all the merrier

A wake-up call may shake Europe from its torpor.

And nudge it back to being a leading powerhouse of progress and innovation.

That's great news for the world: more superpowers advancing civilization equals more pulling power for humanity. And an insurance policy in case an engine sputters -as they all do, over the long term-.

4. Local politics negotiated for win-win

Politically, Europe may be better placed to improve local relations.

A European war for the US is a distance issue in a foreign land.
And an opportunity to export gas, and weaken Russia.

But a lone Europe has more incentive to maintain its win-win.

It was a colossal geo-political mistake to allow US 'defensive' missiles in Poland, or push for extended NATO membership -and Merkel knew that-.

A smarter and win-win foreign policy would have prevented a war, with much to gain for Europe, Russia, and the human race.

Also see:

- How to build and maintain an empire

> How to Build An Empire In 10 Steps

Ben Altman vs. Charlie Houpert: Power Dynamics Analysis of the Charisma on Command Founders Fallout

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 January 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Charlie Houpert and Ben Altman built **Charisma on Command** into one of YouTube's biggest channels on charisma and social skills improvement. Millions followed their breakdowns of leaders, celebrities, and social dynamics.

But in 2022, the partnership collapsed. The podcast ended, Charlie walked away from the channel, and fans started asking: *What happened between charisma on command founders*?

In this article, we'll break down the story of Ben and Charlie's fallout—the friendship, the business split, and the power dynamics behind it all—plus the lessons ambitious men can apply to their own lives.

Contents

- Intro: Charisma on Command Story
- Why Charlie Left Charisma On Command
  - Good & Strategic Statements
  - Possible Power Moves
- Lessons Learned
  - In Friendship & Business
  - How to Release Announcements
- Welcome Back Charlie & COC
- Learn More

Intro: Charisma on Command Story

Charlie Houpert and Ben Altman are the founders of Charisma on Command, with a 50/50 ownership split.

They had been close friends since high school, staying in touch daily even while attending different colleges.

Eventually, after reading *The 4-hour Work Week*, they quit their job and moved to Brazil looking for adventures and a digital business to enjoy a life of freedom.

Charlie and Ben were best friends sharing business and having fun

YouTube Success

They blogged first, but switched to videos when they noticed better traction for their early breakdowns.

It was good timing for YouTube and viral videos on Conor McGregor and Trump's 2016 campaign helped the channel blow past one million subscribers.

They monetized ads in different languages with a 50/50 split with local translators, and then later launched their course *Charisma University*.
Later Charlie released *Emotional Mastery*, but *Charisma University* remained their main draw.

Things were going great for Charisma on Command and in 2019 they launched a podcast as a side project originally called 'Ben and Charlie Podcast'.
Watching their podcast I learned more about the interpersonal power dynamics between the two, and the business side of things.

The Split

Charlie and Ben had a major fallout in 2022 -Sep 10, 2022 was their last podcast together-.

On Nov 19, 2022, Charlie released an updated video announcing their split.

After listening to many interviews and 'reading between the lines', I concluded that Charlie thought he was

contributing more, while some of Ben's projects didn't deliver.
However, he couldn't get Ben to agree or budge on the topic.

They both kept ownership of Charisma on Command -no mention of the split, but probably 50/50-.
Charlie said that 'Ben would keep working on Charisma on Command'.

Charisma on Command Without Charlie

Charlie made what seemed to be his last voiceover on Apr 25, 2023 -albeit those may have been pre-recorded-.

After that, Charlie stopped working on the main channel and all voiceovers are from Ben.

Several of Ben's videos had many views, passing the 1 million and 2 million mark at times, but Charlie confessed he rarely even watched them as it they didn't align with his preferences.

We can speculate Ben wasn't happy either to do most of the work without Charlie's contribution and with a 50/50 split.

The channel then ground to a halt in November 2023.

Expressions like '*BFF*', '*meeting you was one of the best things that has ever happened to me*,' and '*the next 30 years will be even better*,' may suggest some **anxious attachment**, **dependence**, and **idealization**.

Charisma on Command Is Back Without Ben

On Jan 7, 2025, Charlie published a new announcement video on Charisma on Command.

Charlie and Ben couldn't find an agreement for a long time as Ben demanded more than Charlie was willing to pay and Charlie was negotiating with safety guarantees.

Eventually though Charlie dropped the guarantees requests, and was coached to go for a 'shotgun' approach where both cofounders wrote a price they'd be willing to sell for.

Now that Charlie wasn't chasing the purchase anymore, Ben came down in price and Charlie was finally able to purchase Charisma on Command.

Charlie is now back as the sole owner of Charisma on Command.

This post analyses Charlie's announcement video for power dynamics, and lessons learned to navigate friendships

and business relationships.

Why Charlie Left Charisma On Command

This is Charlie's original video.

Below we quote relevant parts and in blue we add our 'read between the lines' comments.

> **Charlie**: I was actually feeling (…) under supported in work
>
> ⍰ **Charlie felt he was doing all the work**

> **Charlie**: (…)
> a deep lack of alignment and how we felt we'd each contributed to the business
> (…)
> To add up responsibility for something that didn't go well, we would not add up to 100%
> (…)
> And if there was credit to be taken (…) was greater than 100%
>
> ⍰ **Charlie felt he was driving the business**, potentially as the 'socially aware' mind behind the analyses.
> Something we noticed here and with some teacher frames

> **Charlie**: I started noticing something about myself that I didn't like (…) I was being unkind (…) resentments from business issues and things I hadn't addressed in our friendship were surfacing
>
> ⍰ **Charlie bottled up resentment without speaking up, leading to aggressive and passive aggressive behavior**. This is normal when you bottle up
> Potentially, they were different and started growing further apart

> **Charlie**: I allowed that resentment to build inside of me until I just snapped and said I don't want to talk anymore and that was about two years ago
>
> ⍰ **Charlie broke the friendship 'cold turkey',** and that possibly precluded better win-win resolutions

> **Charlie**: I stopped making videos in an attempt (…) to like let him catch to the contribution that I felt I had (…) kneecapping my own creative instinct
>
> ⍰ **Charlie stepped back to 'send Ben a message' and rebalance the power dynamics**
> Charlie felt he gave too much and wanted Ben to make amends and re-empower him. That would also give him negotiation leverage.
> It's understandable: when you feel like the 'sucker' in a win-lose situation, you seek re-negotiation. However, this approach led to a lose-lose.

Good & Strategic Statements

Charlie is not a social beginner.

And he sprinkled in some 'power protecting' elements to respect Ben, and some 'hedging statements' to avoid being

an as*hole.

For example:

- ***Without saying that my perception is objectively correct*** <— Allows him to share he felt he did most of the work, without sounding like he's badmouthing Ben ⍰⍰
- ***I'm very very happy for him*** <— Empathic statement ⍰⍰

In some other cases Charlie may have been more careful:

Possible Power Moves

> **Charlie**: he started living a life that was much more in line with what I think he would have gone without my influence
>
> ⍰⍰ **I was more influential, HE adapted to me, not the other way around**

Probably Charlie wanted to self-deprecate and suggest he was a *negative* influence.
But it still disempowers the receiver if you suggest that he let others sidetrack him from what he wants.

> **Charlie**: he may decide to make something (…) I will tell you guys I want you guys to be able to find him (…) just because I don't necessarily want to do it with him anymore does not mean that I don't want the world to hear his voice
>
> ⍰⍰ **I ended it (because I didn't want to work him) and bought him out. He has no audience now, *he* needs *me* to have his voice heard, which I magnanimously will allow him to** (but if I don't, you'll never hear from him)

I'd have avoided this.
The 'just because I don't necessarily want to do it with him' can feel dismissive.
And the 'charitable' give almost always disempowers others because you only direct charity to those struggling and (far) below you.

Just for you to understand the power dynamics, the empowered mindset would think: what if Ben instead doesn't need Charlie's shout-out because he'd do awesome work, succeeding by his own merit?
Or start something totally different because he has many talents?

Lessons Learned

Some lessons learned from this:

In Friendship & Business

To keep positive and win-win friendships and partnerships:

1. Speak up early to avoid stewing

We had long noticed Charlie's passive-aggression towards Ben.

For example, here, here, and in this video:

View this post on Instagram
A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Charlie**: (laughs at Ben) <— Possible passive-aggressive behavior
> **Ben**: (effectively self-defends)

2. Speak assertively

Speak early, speak up, speak respectfully but assertively.

Also see ‘how to be assertive‘.

3. Respect your friend, especially publicly

Don’t share news that frames them poorly and they must defend against.

For example:

View this post on Instagram
A post shared by The Power Moves (@the_power_moves)

> **Charlie**: When I broke up with a girlfriend, we remain friends, but you, you do scorched earth <— This undermines Ben
> **Ben**: Not really true <— Forced to defend himself

Instead, DEFEND your friends -you act honorably, and they’ll love you for it-.
 Example here

4. When you can’t agree, buy out early

Withdrawing from a good business you love is lose-lose.

Not unlike children and divorce, you keep it civil *both* for you, and for the children.

Buy your partner out early.

How to Release Announcements

Overall, Charlie did a great job.

For business, he was well-spoken, used a catchy title, and seamlessly promoted his products without sounding like he was selling.

For social dynamics, he was optimistic, framed the mistakes as lessons learned, and ended on a positive note.

In Ben’s shoes though, I may not consider this a step forward towards a good friendship and mending of the relationship.

So some suggestions here:

1. Share the script with your friend first, let him greenlight it

This is the only honorable and respectful approach towards your friend.

It preserves and improves the relationship, and potentially prevents future legal troubles with more litigious men.

2. Thank your partner for his contribution

Sol in our community pointed this out first.

Even if you think you contributed more, something like this is still likely true:

> Despite how I feel about our business relationship, Charisma on Command wouldn't be where it is today without Ben

Or, at least, find something you can be grateful and thank them for.

3. Remove details that make your partner look bad

Don't share that you both took more credit and gave the other more blame.

That's just how human psychology works.
But when you say that in an announcement, it feels like you think *your partner* was the POS.

4. Remove details that make *you* look bad

Charlie said this:

> **Charlie**: *Until I just snapped and said I don't want to talk anymore*

How does that sound to you?

Some may feel that a more grounded, strategic, and, shall we say, 'mature' approach was needed.
Especially considering the long-standing friendship and partnership.

Pick your words carefully because that's all people have to form opinions.
Who knows, Ben struck me as a great guy, but it's possible he may not have fully appreciated Charlie's perspective and unwittingly pushed him over the edge.

But from Charlie's shared story *HE* doesn't come out of it too well for 'snapping' and going cold turkey.

Instead, say this:

Charlie: *I didn't feel the relationship could continue to be mutually beneficial* <— Self-respecting, mature, and empowered

and I decided it was time for at least a momentary clean-break <— High power, assertive, and masculine

This is part of a self-framing strategy.
Such as: ensure that what you say sub-communicates high-value.

Welcome Back Charlie & COC

While this analysis focuses on learning opportunities, we admire Charlie's sharp eye for social dynamics.

We were thrilled to see his video announcement, glad to know both he and Ben are doing well, and excited that

Charisma on Command is back in the game.

We believe that a rising tide lifts all boats, and Charlie and Ben significantly contributed to our niche of advanced social skills.
Their work has motivated many men to learn and work on themselves, and indirectly also benefited TPM **–many alumni and readers found us via Charisma on Command–**.

And it's great that we can learn from and inspire each other. We especially appreciate creators who uphold good values, and going forward, we hope we can all give each other due credit ⍰⍰⍰.

We wish Charlie continued success, we hope to hear from Ben soon, and hope to collaborate or join Charisma on Command again for future breakdowns on YouTube.

P.S.
For a taste of our different style, check out our latest breakdown:

Learn More

If you're looking for advanced tools to master social dynamics, influence, and leadership, Power University may work for you.

It goes beyond charisma tips to deliver comprehensive training for personal empowerment.

While Charisma University focuses more on high-energy social skills, Power University dives deeper into men's power, gaining status and attraction, and strategies to succeed in life.

Here's what alumni said in our forum:

In the past I tried Charisma University but while I thought the content was good I didn't feel like it worked well for me for three reasons: 1) I found it difficult to turn the action guides into habits that stick, 2) the high energy style of charisma is quite exhausting for me, and 3) I feel like being quick to laughter and speaking through a smile etc makes me come across as low-power and makes people respect me less.

> **Alumnus**: I tried Charisma University, but the high energy style is exhausting (…) makes me come across as low power and people respect me less

And:

#2 - May 30, 2023, 7:34 pm Delete Edit Quote

Hi Jack,

I first found TPM when I looked for reviews of Charisma University. I didn't look through anything else on the site though until months later.

After going through CU and realizing it wasn't for me I stumbled back here by accident and decided to join PU.

Needless to say, that was one of the best decisions I ever made.

Posts

owered
mber

> **Alumnus**: I found TPM when I looked for reviews of Charisma University. Charisma University wasn't for me, I joined PU, and it was one of the best decisions I ever made

Check Power University here.

How to Inspire People: 8 Leadership Strategies from Psychology

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 January 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Most leaders stop at transactional exchanges: salaries, bonuses, or punishments.

But the best leaders go beyond.

They inspire people, craft shared identities, reach goals, and make their teams thrive.

This guide dives into transformational leadership strategies—with our expertise in psychology, power dynamics, and strategies—to make you an influential and successful leader.

Contents

- Start With the Foundations: Yourself
- Build Identity
  - 1. Craft a “sense of us” (social identity)
  - 2. Be “one of us” (‘prototypical’)
  - 3. Differentiate “us” from “not-us”
  - 4. Do it “for us”
  - 5. Make “us” proud
- Build Commitment
  - 6. Care personally
  - 7. Empower them to be role models
- Inspire
  - 8. Minimize transaction-talk
  - 9. Frame your goals as meaningful
- Sustain Performance

- 10. Keep “us” effective
- Case Studies
  - Kennedy: Transformational Request
  - Andrew Bailey: Transactional Request

Start With the Foundations: Yourself

Leadership is both the pinnacle and natural consequence of an effective process of self-empowerment.

On the other hand, that self-empowerment is also a *requirement* because **to be an exceptional leader, you must be an exceptional man.**
See:

- Traits of high-value men
- Alpha male traits
- Honorable man approach

Build Identity

1. Craft a “sense of us” (social identity)

Researcher Haslam calls it “entrepreneurs of identity”.

It includes:

- **Values**
- **What you stand for**
- **‘What it means to be ‘us’**

It’s especially important for group formation or when changing direction.

Once you have a social identity, you then want to align your policies with the group identities and they will be far more persuasive.
Alternatively, you must adapt the identity to fit the policies.

⍰ Example: Bush & the ‘leader’s burden’

When Bush sought support for the Iraq invasion, he often referred to ‘the world’.
It was a persuasive move to dominant ‘revenge’ motive with warmth.

He framed the operation as a duty of the world leader, leveraging Americans’ identity as champions of global freedom and democracy.

Some passages from the war announcement:

> **Bush**: (…)
> Disarm Iraq to free its people and to defend the world from grave Danger
> (…)
> Armed forces now in the Middle East: the Peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you
> (…)
> my fellow citizens the dangers to our country and the world will be overcome

P.S.:
Don't judge late Bush, who failed the 'character' and the 'deliver' test with lies and a non-victory.
Bush at this point had sky-high ratings.

1.2. Facilitate friendships among team members

Team of friends are happier to meet and naturally contribute and cooperate more.

And best of all if it's you to connect them so you maintain 'host power' and reinforce prestigious value-adding leadership.

2. *Be* "one of us" ('prototypical')

Studies show that people perceive power much differently if it comes from "within the group" or from outsiders. Power and influence from outsiders feel oppressive. But **power and influence from an ingroup member is more positive or even uplifting**.

Be similar to the team in its key features to increase leadership acceptance. And influence those virtues to align with your goals.
For example, a commander should display the value of courage.

Being prototypical allows leaders to:

- Receive more support
- Receive higher ratings on effectiveness
- Drive change more easily
- Be excused more readily for mistakes (even when behaving unfairly)

Be similar, but exceptional

There is a dichotomy of leadership here and you must strike the right balance.
Says leadership researcher Alexander Haslam:

> Leaders can be ahead of the group, but never so far ahead that they are out there on their own.

Albeit teams differ, common traits where exceptionalism helps include:

- Values
- Responsibility
- Work ethics
- Demanding more of yourself than of others
- Social skills / power awareness

⍰⍰ But never make it a competition!

Remember: you're the leader no matter what.

The competition mindset pulls you *down* to a team member.
And poorly done may even sub-communicate you're insecure about your leadership.

Instead, reward the top performers to display your self-confidence.

And own possible limitations.

For example, if you're older, don't try to be physically 'better'.

Be strategic instead.
Stay in shape, subtly highlight past high performance, and demand excellence to show you're *accustomed* to excellence.

3. Differentiate "us" from "not-us"

Make the team feel uniquely and positively distinct from others.

This reinforces the 'sense of team' and keeps people united and cohesive.

Make them feel great for belonging to such a great team, and being close to you.
As the leader, **embody that sense of being special.**
Carry yourself with confidence and pride.

And some 'positive power moves' may be allowed here with 'positive social climbs', criticizing others with the only goal of self-framing as higher value, more 'honorable', or generally superior.

This motivates people to stick with the team for the good feelings they get from 'being special'.

4. Do it "for us"

Whenever possible, frame your actions and goals as 'for the team'.

The team will appreciate you more, and you display good values of cooperation and contribution.

⍰ Example: I sought victory for the team

⍰♂Lucio's Experience

Lucio:
As a Toastmasters president, I placed 2nd in a European-level speech competition.

I shared that I sought victory for myself first, a great display of the value of honest.
And added that I also really wanted to bring a trophy back to the club -for 'us all'-.

5. Make “us” proud

Make the team matter, give it status and respect among other teams.

Part of it comes down to effectiveness and achieving goals of course.
But a good part of it is also about communication:

- Communicate progress
- Celebrate milestones
- Display optimism

⍰ Use strategic bluster

For example:

> **Value-adding Bluster**: Team, this is a memorable day.
> What we have achieved is unbelievable. What you guys did is incredible. This is the first time ever that…
> You guys are the best team I’ve ever been in.
> I’m proud to be here with you.

Build Commitment

6. Care personally

Care both for the team member as a human being, but also for what he does for the common good and common purpose.
Do 1:1s, even if just by the side of a social gathering. Check in, offer advice, encourage them to try, and celebrate their wins.

1.2. Pull people up

Speak well about people.
And speak *particularly* well about great performers and team representatives.

It’s good for leaders to be a ‘bit of a judge‘, and use your emotional rewards to motivate positive behavior.

7. Empower them to be role models

Create smaller leaders in your team.

Encourage them to be role models outside, and for the newer members. And reward them for well-representing and ‘doing the team honor’.

This approach motivates people to be better not just for them, but for others, and for the team.

Inspire

8. Minimize transaction-talk

Research suggests that focusing on transactions such as salaries and bonuses can undermine intrinsic motivation.

This seems to be especially true for creative or complex tasks, and potentially for top perfomers.

To avoid ‘crowding out’ of intrinsic motivation:

- Keep rewards and motivation separated
- Reward emotionally, which also empowers you as a leader
- Reward with growth opportunities
- Have HR negotiate salaries, while you support your team's negotiation preferences

9. Frame your goals as meaningful

Meaningful goals motivate.

And even mundane businesses can be more inspiring:

- We wash cars ➡ We make men proud of their drive
- We clean toilets ➡ We maintain public health and provide hygiene when people need them the most
- We serve drinks ➡ We foster connections and unforgettable moments among friends

Speak of '(moral) duty' instead of 'job requirements'

You're more persuasive when you assign tasks by appealing to moral duties:

- You must clean the restaurant ➡ **It's our duty to our customers** to provide an environment as clean as possible

Link tasks to meaningful causes

Frame someone's work in light of what it does for the mission, or the final user.
For example:

- Your job is to sell ➡ You help the prospect solve X problem
- Your job is to clean ➡ Your contribution is invaluable to help us please our customers

Knowing they're contributing to a larger cause inspires people to do better.

⍰⍰ Frame the goal as a challenge and 'test of value'

A possible power move, but a stretch goal may become a man's test.
And the achievement of that goal his 'badge of honor'.

This approach is extremely motivational for ambitious men who crave the feeling of conquest and victory -and fear failure-.

Sustain Performance

10. Keep "us" effective

The most underrated leader's objective is to *keep* the team effective, motivated, and cooperative.

Teams can degrade if left to themselves.

They can lose drive, top members, and a reason to be.
Worst of all, they can slowly turn uncooperative and toxic if takers and toxic people are left free to operate.

Hence, **your job is to promote and reward the best while removing bad influences**.
A leader must:

- Recognize toxic team members or employees
- Remove toxic team members before they spoil the bunch

- Recognize top performers
- Promote top performers, set them as examples to follow

To read characters and people undermining your leadership you need power-awareness.
And you must be ruthless in removing them -remember: to be good, you need to be 'bad' sometimes.

Do that, keep setting the example, and the virtuous cycle maintains the group cohesive, inspired, and effective:

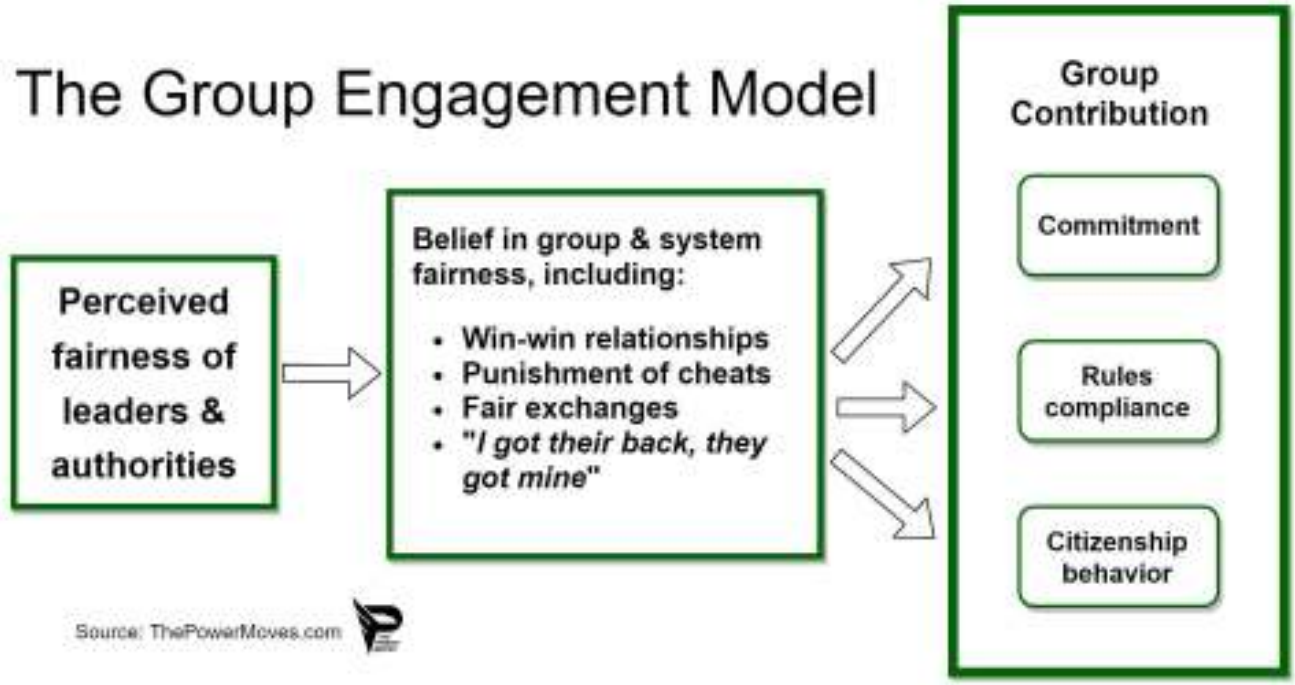


Chart adapted from the group engagement model

Case Studies

Let's review two examples of leaders asking for contribution.

But one does it with transformational leadership, and one with transactional leadership.

Let's see the stark difference:

Kennedy: Transformational Request

Most examples of great leaders are transformational.

Kennedy gave the nation a dream.
The U.S. became the torchbearer for Western democracy and freedom. And moon-landing the culmination of a joint effort to bring humanity to higher heights.

That's why Kennedy's big ask worked:

> **Kennedy**: Ask *not* what your *country can do for you*—ask what you can do for your country

Kennedy asked Americans to be prestigious leaders themselves.
If he had campaigned on giving them jobs -transactional leadership-, they would reply 'To hell that, give me higher salaries'.

Andrew Bailey: Transactional Request

Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey also asked for people's contribution.

But despite carefully hedging his words, his effect was the *opposite*.
It failed because it was hypocritical and non-reciprocal (rules for thee, but not for me).

Bailey's hypocrisy was obvious because he was in the wrong exchange -the *transactional* exchange-, where people naturally focus on money and numbers.

The difference is that:

- Bailey wasn't in a position to be 'inspirational'
- His message centered on material concerns—money and inflation

A better alternative for him would have been to:

- **Shift to transformational** – higher ideals of sacrifice, togetherness, and
- **Lead from the front**, including himself in the sacrifice

For example:

Transformational Bailey: We may be in for some challenging times with inflation. <— Sets the challenge

But we can weather it. <— 'We' frame & Optimistic

Business leaders ought to give the example and freeze salaries and bonuses <— Demand first from leaders

(share or leak you froze your salary) <— ⍰⍰ Leading by example

And if everyone who can do his part <— ⍰⍰ 'Those who can' is something many want to be. Nobody wants to be 'cannot'

We can soon win inflation

Of course most bank chairmen are expected to be ‘factual’ rather than inspirational.

Alternatively, he could have asked to stall pay rises *to the industry leaders* and cascade the positive changes top-down.

If this article was any helpful, our training program Power University is designed to turn good men into influential leaders

Become an effective Leader with Power University

The Secret of Our Success: Summary & Review (Joseph Henrich)

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 February 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Joseph Henrich's *The Secret of Our Success* (2015) dives into human evolution and the role of culture in shaping our unique success as a species.

Contents

- Exec Summary
- FULL SUMMARY
  - Current Explanations For Our Success Are Insufficient
  - Culture Explains Our Success & Continuous Progress
  - Evidence to Support We're Cultural Learners
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- CONS
- REVIEW
  - Let's Keep Fueling the Secret of Our Success

Exec Summary

- **It's not our superior intelligence** that accounts for human success and ecological dominance
  - Biology and 'survival instincts' are insufficient to help us thrive and survive across the globe
- **Culture is the 'secret' of our success** as shaped by cultural evolution
  - Our brains are equipped for cultural learning, and the limited hard-wired instincts cannot explain our success
- **We became successful and sophisticated with cultural accumulation of knowledge** and behaviors passed down, refined, and expanded across generations, making us far more adaptable than other species
- **Natural selection ensured only the most efficient cultural norms survived and improved** over time.
  - Selection includes inter-group competition, the groups with the best culture thrived and expanded

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Joseph Henrich is an American anthropologist and professor of human evolutionary biology at Harvard University. Henrich is also famous for having coined the popular acronym 'WEIRD' to highlight the bias of psychological research. He also wrote '*The WEIRDest People in the World*', which grabbed a top spot in our popular 'best psychology books' list.

Current Explanations For Our Success Are Insufficient

The common explanations for our success today relate to:

1. **Generalized intelligence** or mental processing power
2. **Specialized mental abilities** evolved for survival in the hunter-gatherer environments of our evolutionary past, and/or
3. **Cooperative instincts** or social intelligence that permit high levels of cooperation.

Failed Expeditions Provide Evidence That It's Not IQ or Cooperation

Henrich shows with captivating stories of explorers that our IQ, cooperation, or 'innate instincts' are all of little use when faced with novel environments.

Despite the explorers wanting to survive and explore, many of them died.

Instead, the explorers that fared best -and survived- survived because they encountered local populations who had the cultural know-how to survive and thrive.

Culture Explains Our Success & Continuous Progress

Our ability to learn from others is the key to human success.

While other species rely mostly on innate behaviors, we do not.

Humans are the best social and cultural learners.

We learn from our peers, collect the knowledge and progress from those who came before us, and improve it and pass it along.

Hence, as humans, **we accumulate a vast pool of knowledge and skills over time & pass it forward with our improvements**.
This leads to what Henrich calls "cumulative cultural evolution," a process that allows humanity to advance thanks to continuous progress.

Our Genetic Uniformity Explains It Wasn't Genetic Evolution

Species that have been as successful as we split into sub-species that are genetically different from each other.

Redacted for brevity:

> Other species also achieved immense ecological success; however, this success has generally occurred by speciation (…) adapted and specialized to survive in different environments.
> Ants, for example (…) split, genetically adapted, and specialized into more than 14,000 different species with vast and complicated sets of genetic adaptations

But humans remain a single species with little genetic variation -even less than chimpanzees who have 3 distinct subspecies while confined to a narrow band of tropical African forest-.

It's our *cultural* adaptations that explain our success in colonizing the globe.

Evidence to Support We're Cultural Learners

- **Success bias in learning**: We naturally learn from more successful others
- **Skill bias in learning**, preferring to pick skilled role models
- **Prestige bias in learning**
  - Infants look at more competent individuals
  - We use 'prestige cues' to decide who to copy and learn from
- **Children look at adults the most under uncertainty**, exactly what you'd expect from an evolutionary approach to cultural learning
- **Children learn norms by observation and enforce social norms without any adult supervision**
- **We automatically learn and adapt new norms as we change contexts**
  - We tend and prefer complying with social norms
  - We want and enjoy punishing norm violators
  - We are cognitively-biased to spot norm violations
- **Self-similarity cues to learn**, supposedly because those similar to us are more relevant to us
  - Copying same-sex model is neurologically more rewarding
  - Co-ethnic preferential learning
- **Copying self-harming behavior**, including suicide that would go against any genetic evolutionary logic

The above is exactly what you'd expect if cultural learning was evolutionarily selected to maximize learning.

Cultural Evolution Domesticated Us Into Prosociality

Henrich first acknowledges there is some merit in the current gene-centric and kin-centric views of cooperation popularized by the likes of Richard Dawkins and Steven Pinker.

But he then adds that that cultural evolution contributed most to cooperation:

> And to the degree that we are more cooperative than other mammalian species (and we are), it's because culturally evolved norms constructed social environments that, over eons, penalized and gradually weeded out aggressive, antisocial types (norm violators) while rewarding the more sociable and docile among us

And:

> Through social norms, culture reinforces our kin-based and pair-bonded relationships and dramatically expands our narrow circle from genetic kin to cultural kinship.

The domestication of humans

Says the author:

> Repeated norm violations sometimes provoked ostracism or even execution at the hands of one's community. Thus, cultural evolution initiated a process of *self-domestication*, driving genetic evolution to make us prosocial, docile, rule followers who expect a world governed by social norms monitored and enforced by communities.

The domestication of men into dads

In the last more speculative paragraph, the author says that it was pair-bonding, men recognizing their children, and kin-bonds that helped domesticate men, and develop a larger prosociality.

On this website, we also argued in a popular article that women also drove male domestication.
See here:

- How women 'domesticated' men to control them

> How Women Control Men: The Secret Psychology of Relationship Power

Prosocial norms spread with inter-group competition

Don't equate 'domestication' with 'weakness' though.

'Domesticated' means less internal fighting and more cooperation.
However, that intra-group cooperation will then more effectively expand the group, and potentially beat or assimilate groups of poorer cooperators:

> Having norms that increase cooperation can favor success in competition with other groups that lack these norms.
> Over time, intergroup competition can aggregate (…) social norms related to cooperation, helping, sharing, and maintaining internal harmony

Intergroup competition may also put pressure on larger groups to form because cultural advancement benefit from larger and more interconnected groups -'collective brain'-.

Cooperation trumps deception

> In the increasingly cooperative worlds constructed by social norms and reputations, it became relatively more important to communicate and teach others rather than deceive or exploit them.

Cooperation Among Large Societies Underpin Our Success

A major -and persuasive- theme in Henrich's argument is the role of cooperation in human success.

He explains that human societies are built upon complex webs of exchanges, trust, and cooperation.
Unlike other apes, humans can collaborate with individuals they've never met before and share resources and knowledge across large, diverse groups.

This cooperation is facilitated by cultural norms, which encourage behaviors like reciprocity and trust.

Henrich argues that it is these social structures—not just raw intelligence—that enabled humans to build complex societies, create advanced technologies, and thrive across the globe.

Progress & Cultural Evolution Require Prosociality & Cooperation

Cultural evolution needs a web of interconnected individuals to learn from each other and pass that learning to future generations.

And the growth of cultural know-how, what Heirich refers to as the 'collective brain', depends on community size and interconnectedness.

This, suggests the author, also explains why only we humans 'crossed the rubicons' of 'autocatalytic' or self-reinforcing and growing cultural learning.

Chimpanzees for example are hostile to their neighbors, do not pair bond, and do not develop kin relationships. Such persistent hostile relations inhibit adaptive cultural evolution by constraining the flow of cultural know-how.

Social Learning VS Cultural Learning

While many animals engage in social learning, only humans developed the cultural learning systems for the *cumulative* evolution of sophisticated technologies, complex societies, and institutions.

This ability, the author explains, is central to humanity's success as a species.

Social Learning

The process of observing and imitating others' behaviors, decisions, or actions.

- **Focus**: Individual-to-individual transmission.
- **Mechanism**:
  - As a by-product of being around others
  - Observational learning
  - Imitative learning (copying without necessarily understanding the underlying principles)
- **Limitations**:
  - Can lead to naive copying
  - Does not necessarily involve improvement, or shared meaning.
- **Example**: A child observing an adult using a tool and imitating their movements to achieve a similar outcome.

Cultural Learning

Understanding and internalizing shared norms, beliefs, values, and practices within a group.

- **Focus**: Group-level transmission and the preservation of shared culture over time.
- **Mechanism**:
  - Active information seeking from others

  - Includes mental models, making inferences about other people's goals or strategies
  - Involves teaching, norm enforcement, and language-based explanations.
  - Relies on symbolic communication, storytelling, and shared intentionality.
- **Advantages**:
  - Allows for cumulative evolution, where ideas are refined and improved over generations.
  - Allows humans to adapt to diverse environments
  - Facilitates the development of complex technologies and social structures.
- **Example**: A tribe passing down specific hunting techniques, embedded in their rituals and stories, ensuring that future generations learn the mechanics, together with the broader context and purpose.

Cultural Evolution vs. Genetic Evolution

Of course, it's not one opposing the other, since they co-exist:

> natural selection, acting on genes, has shaped our psychology in a manner that generates nongenetic evolutionary processes capable of producing complex cultural adaptations.
> Culture, and cultural evolution, are then a consequence of genetically evolved psychological adaptations for learning from other people.

While genetic evolution occurs over long timescales, cultural evolution happens rapidly.

This allows humans to adapt to new challenges much faster than genetic evolution could ever allow.

Cultural Evolution Drives Genetic Evolution

Being faster and 'better' at making humans thrive and reproduce, it's genetic evolution that recently adapts to cultural evolution.

The author says that early in our species evolution we 'crossed the Rubicon' of cultural learning to turn it into the primary driver of our development and evolution.
It's an 'autocatalytic' process, meaning that it propels and reinforces itself:

> Once cultural information began to accumulate (…) the main selection pressure on genes revolved around improving our psychological abilities to acquire, store, process, and organize the array of fitness-enhancing skills and practices (…).
> As genetic evolution improved our brains and abilities for learning from others, cultural evolution spontaneously generated more and better cultural adaptations, which kept the pressure on for brains (…).

Evidence for culture driving genetic evolution

Henrich outlines several examples of culture-driven genetic evolution, including:

- Cooking ➡ Weaker jaws, smaller intestines
- Learning to learn ➡ Larger brains, long childhoods, post-birth growth spurt, myelination for brain plasticity
  - Information resources ➡ Prestige-based leadership
- Collect and transport water ➡ Persistence hunting ➡ Sweat glands to make sweat more and run longer
- Artifacts ➡ Opposable thumb, greater hands dexterity
- Wisdom of age ➡ Longer lives, menopause
- Cooperation ➡ Norms psychology, shame & anger for norm violation

- Language ➡ Throat anatomy changes
- …

Culture Changes Us... Psychologically & Biologically

Says the author:

> Even without influencing genes, cultural evolution creates both psychological and biological differences between populations. You, for example, have been altered biologically by the aforementioned cultural download of skills and heuristics.

Biological VS Genetic Evolution

After explaining how psychology changes biology, for example our brain changing with learning to read, or the 'placebo effect', the author explains:

> These are *biological* modifications to our brain, but **not** *genetic* modifications. They are the end result of thousands of years of cultural evolution, which figured out how to effectively modify our brains without messing with our genetics.

Our biology changes much more easily and faster than our genes.
And cultural differences that impact our physiology and psychology are biological, but not genetic.

I'm grateful to Henrich for this important distinction.

Prestige & Dominance

Humans have two quite distinct forms of leaders: prestige, and dominance.

Prestige

Prestige forms the foundation of leadership even in egalitarian societies, pushing certain people 'up the social status ladder'.

The author explains that prestige evolved with cultural learning and with the advantage that learning from the best provides to groups and individuals.

However, as social exchange dictates, skilled and successful individuals don't gain anything by sharing with those who give nothing back.
So people defer to skilled and successful individuals to entice them to teach -or at least to spend more time in their presence-.

Prestigious Men Confer Benefits

I feel the current definition of prestige may be be refined to include any benefit.
A prestigious man may simply be rich, or famous, or the son of a president.

Indeed, says the author in a note:

> Besides valuable cultural information (…) high-status individuals might possess "goods" that might be traded for deference benefits.
> For example, a beautiful woman (…) less-attractive, women might want to be around her to hang out where the men are (Pinker 1997).
> Or the son of a former president might receive deference (…) because of their valuable (inherited) social

> connections.
> From this perspective, the informational goods we discuss above might be merely one type of "good" that can be acquired by paying deference and no different from accessing mates, allies, or social contacts.

I fully agree with the author's note here.
The informational goods are only one type of value being offered.

We Copy Prestigious Men Based On Who Others Copy

Since we can't always know who's best to learn from, people tend do:

- **Take cues from others for who is best to listen to**, leading to the 'famous for being famous' modern phenomenon
- **Copy across a range of unconnected domains**, leading to the popularity of modern 'celebrity endorsements' that have nothing to do with their expertise

Dominance

Dominance is older, inherited from our primate ancestors.

While prestige is based on the ability to confer benefits, dominance is based on the ability to inflict costs.

> individuals attain dominance status when others fear them and believe they will use physical violence or other means of coercion if they do not receive deference in the form of appeasement displays and preferred access to mates and resources (e.g., foods).

Prestige VS Dominance

Dominance hierarchies display stronger physical and body language cues with dominant individuals using expansive body language, and subordinate matching with diminutive body language.

Status Features	Dominance	Prestige
Influence	Based on coercion and threat	True persuasion and deferential agreement
Imitation by lower-status	No imitative bias except to satisfy dominant	Preferential, automatic, and unconscious imitation. May include affiliative imitation
Attention by lower-status	Tracking of higher-ups, avoidance of eye contact, and no staring	Directing of attention to and gazing at higher-ups, watching and listening
Sociolinguistic behavior by higher-ups	Seizure of the floor and use of aggressive verbal intimidation (e.g., disparaging humor and criticism)	Given the "floor" and permitted long pauses. Uses self-deprecating humor
Mimicry by lower-status	No preferential mimicry	Preferential mimicry of higher-ups
Proximity management by lower-status	Avoidance of higher-ups; keeping distance to avoid random aggression	Approach to higher-ups; maintenance of proximity to higher-ups
Displays		
Lower-status	Diminutive body position, shoulder slump, crouching and gaze aversion	Attention to prestigious, open-body position
Higher-ups	Expansive body position, expanded chest, wide stance, arms wide	Similar to dominance display except muted. Less expansive use of space

Status Features	Dominance	Prestige
Higher-ups	Lower their vocal pitch in the course of the interaction	Do not lower their vocal pitch
Emotions		
Lower-status	Fear, shame, fear-based respect	Admiration, awe, admiring-respect
Higher-ups	Hubristic pride, arrogance	Authentic pride, tempered arrogance
Social behavior by higher-ups	Aggression, self-aggrandizement, egocentric	Prosocial, generous, and cooperative
Reproductive fitness	Higher-ups have greater fitness in small-scale societies	Higher-ups have greater fitness in small-scale societies

Table 8.1., adapted. All credit to Joseph Henrich

Both Prestige & Dominance 'Work', Prestige May 'Work Better'

First off, the available evidence is limited.

But reporting on what's available (Ruden 2008 and Ruden 2011), paraphrasing Henrich:

> both are associated with having more babies with one's wife, more extramarital affairs, and more likely to remarry after a divorce, even after statistically removing several factors. Beyond this, the children of prestigious men die less frequently, and prestigious men are more likely to marry at younger ages (neither of these effects held for dominant men).

And:

> Not surprisingly, both dominant and prestigious men tended to get their way at group meetings, but only prestigious men were respected and generous.

'Generous' is not a benefit of course but a cost.
But 'respected' most certainly is an advantage.

Being 'liked' is also a small advantage, and another study suggests that prestigious men are liked, but dominant ones are not.

Deeper influence is a major advantage though, also going to prestigious men (redacted for brevity):

> in dominance relationships, subordinates are influenced by the dominant out of fear.
> By contrast, (…) (prestigious men) become truly persuasive such that learners often shift their underlying opinions, beliefs, and practices to be more similar to the prestigious individual.
> (…)
> In addition (…) prestigious individuals are influential both because people shift their opinions and practices to match the prestigious, and because people to go along with prestigious individuals as a form of deference, even if they don't agree.

Frankly, I wasn't sure the second reason added any benefit for the prestigious individuals since people 'are inclined to go along' with dominant individuals as well.
But the 'deeper influence' is most certainly a plus.

Finally, the author did his own research with Cheng and Tracey, who later wrote a fantastic book on the psychology of social status.
And concluded:

> Being either more prestigious or more dominant led to greater influence on their group's task outcome.

And about the differences:

> Dominant individuals tended to (1) act overbearing, (2) credit themselves, (3) use teasing to humiliate others, and (4) be manipulative. Meanwhile, prestigious individuals (1) were self-deprecating, (2) attributed success to the team, and (3) told jokes.

Social Status & Reputation Are Shields

Others may want to attack you or take from you, but a strong social status protects you because their attack would lower their social status.

However, if your social status is low, others can attack and take from you at will.
You surely can defend yourself, but attacks and taking can be covert or hidden. Hidden attacks may even be *encouraged* against people with a bad reputation.

The author also claims that we're wired to monitor our reputation and spot people with low reputation because it means we can exploit them.

Careful: nations & religions manipulate your mind

Something we often warned about here at TPM:

> intergroup competition will tend to favor the spread of any tricks for expanding what members of a group perceive as their tribe.
> Both religions and nations have culturally evolved to increasingly harness and exploit this piece of our psychology, as they create quasi-tribes.

I couldn't agree more.

Look at the jihadists fighting to expand their 'culture'.
Or populist politicians, using tools of political manipulation such as nationalism and ingroup/outgroup dynamics.

This feature of our social psychology holds the key to humanity's future.

Also read:

- **Individual-first self-development**
- Red pill group dynamics

MORE WISDOM

Cultural learning in gender-identity matters

> In fact, children learn their sex roles because they copy same-sex models, not vice versa.

Traditional rational categories are useless

> the processes I've described above actually make classical racial categories even less informative, since they operate in diverse and nonconcordant ways *within* races to make local groups less similar (e.g., lactase persistent and nonpersistent Africans) while at the same time making different continental races more similar

> (e.g., amylase genes in Japanese and Americans). The current evidence indicates that natural selection operates in diverse ways on scales much smaller than races and simultaneously on different continents.

Plus, the author adds, categories are problematic since many variations vary continuously, rather than in discrete boundaries.

However, I wasn't too convinced about this.
The author himself later shows that traditional racial categories *do* say *something*:

> Overall, traditional racial categories capture only about 7% of the total genetic variation in our species, which reveals that races are nothing like the subspecies found in chimpanzees. Given our global distribution and range of environments, our species genetic variation is actually rather limited.

Of course as they stand they may be 'nothing like chimpanzees subspecies'.
But one may categorize people differently than 'traditional racial categories' and capture a higher genetic variation.

Placebos work based on culture

Redacted for brevity:

> placebo treatments for ulcers in Germany are twice as effective (…) Meanwhile, lower blood pressure placebo does not work in Germany.
> Germans worry a lot about low blood pressure (…) so the placebo effect may be inhibited by this culturally transmitted concern.

Intergroup competition maximizes internal cooperation and norms

> Under threat, increased sanctions (…) may have favored an unconscious innate response to cling more tightly to our social norms and groups (…)
> This means that cues of intergroup competition should promote greater solidarity and identification with one's group, as well as stronger norm adherence.

Shame displays keep us within the group

After breaking a norm or offending the wrong person, shame displays and submissiveness sub-communicate that we do accept the social norm, and that we're sorry for breaking it.

Plus, it indirectly requests to 'be lenient' on the rule breaker.

Start deliberations with the lowest-ranking members first

Or you'll never hear their voice and ideas, as they either don't speak up, or conform with the higher-ranking speakers.

Prestige -and society's success- depends on what's a 'valued domain'

> prestige derives from success, skill, or knowledge in locally valued domains.
> While not infinitely malleable, what constitutes a valued domain is amazingly flexible. The differential success of societies and institutions will hinge, in part, on what domains are valued.

Norm-followers are more selfless if the social norms support pro-sociality

A study showed that norm-followers gave more Dictator Games, contributed more in the Public Goods Game, and punished low offers more frequently in the Ultimatum Game -pro-social dominance- (redacted for brevity):

> Observance of a costly nonsocial rule, like waiting at traffic lights, is linked to complying with, and punishing, social norms in behavioral games.
> (…)
> It's our automatic norm following—not our self-interest or our rational calculation—that often makes us do the "right thing" and allows society to work.

First learn the rules, THEN you can strategize around them

> in humans you first need to acquire the social norms and rules governing the world you are operating in, and only then is strategic thinking useful.

We have several resources here to learn the game and then strategize accordingly, including:

- Social exchange
- Social Exchange Practical Takeaways
- Sexual marketplace
- …

QUOTES

On human dominance demanding an explanation:

> we are the ecologically dominant species on the planet. Yet, they open the question of why us? What explains our species' ecological dominance? What is the secret of our success?

We were too powerful for the animals who didn't evolve to cope with us:

> African and Eurasian megafauna evolved to recognize that while we appear rather unintimidating, and perhaps easy prey given our lack of claws, canines, venom, and speed, we come with a dangerous bag of tricks, including projectiles, spears, poisons, snares, fire, and cooperative social norms that make us a top predator.

On the 'unfair exchange' between explorers and Intuits:

> Ross (…) enthusiastically learned about Inuit hunting, sealing, dogs, and traveling by dog sledge. In return, the Inuit learned from Ross's crew the proper use of a knife and fork while formally dining.

Poking some fun at economists and their sometimes non-psychologically-informed models:

> The difference in the results from each version surprised the economists who designed the experiment (though, admittedly, many economists are pretty easily surprised by human behavior)

On academia power hierarchies (you can't say the author hasn't a knack for a good joke):

> Maciej Chudek, Sue Birch, and I tested this prestige idea more directly. Sue is a developmental psychologist and Maciej was my graduate student (he did all the real work)

And:

> I teamed up with my colleague Jess Tracy, an emotion and social psychologist, and our then junior colleague Joey Cheng (who did all the hard work).

The best antidote for pseudo-science:

> The best antidote for pseudoscience is real science
> (…)
> What we need is more evolution-grounded science on genes, culture, ethnicity, and race, not less.

On what fuels the power of the collective brain:

> If you want to have cool technology, it's better to be social, than smart

On the power of the collective brain:

> We are smart, but not because we stand on the shoulders of giants or are giants ourselves. We stand on the shoulders of a very large pyramid of hobbits.

CRITICISM

As always, this section is in the spirit of providing some possible pushback to hopefully further advance my/our understanding:

Toddlers VS Apes: Does It Prove We're Not Smarter?

The author convinced me that our intelligence alone can't explain our success.

However, I was *not* convinced by human toddlers 'losing' to apes.

I listened to these comparisons and struggled to give it a fair chance to persuade me.
I was only impressed by how some thought toddlers fairly represented human intelligence.

The test to assess 'Machiavellianism' was unconvincing -no construct validity-

After humans lost an experiment against apes, the author suggests that apes are more Machiavellian than humans.

The test was a 'Matcher and Mismatcher in an Asymmetric Matching Pennies Game'.

Again, I'm prone to agree with the author that the 'Machiavellian intelligence hypothesis' is severely weakened in light of his evidence and logic.

But NOT because of the humans VS apes experiment.
Humans failed because they look for patterns, which is a feature extremely helpful in many other cases.
I didn't find the experiment to be a valid test for Machiavellianism -or manipulation-.

High-Status Men's Charity Explanation Unconvincing

The author claims that high-status men -think Warren Buffett or Bill Gates- do charity to encourage others to do the same, and gain by living in more charitable societies.

It's an interesting take and it's probably part of the motivation.

However, I don't believe it's the *main* factor.

The main factors, I believe, are virtue and value-signaling for:

- Status and mating
- Legacy and power-projection after death for enduring influence
- Influence by picking the 'right' causes
- Simple good feelings that come with giving

Does Roger's Paradox Undermine Cultural Learning?

From the *Cambridge Handbook on Evolutionary Perspectives*:

> This phenomenon became known as Rogers' paradox" (…).
>
> The fact that social learning does not enhance average population fitness is not inherently paradoxical, but does contradict the common claim that humans are so ecologically and demographically successful because of transmitted culture.
>
> Rogers' paradox occurs because the success of social learning is frequency dependent.
> When rare, social learners do well because they forego the costs borne by individual learners. But when common, and environments change, social learners will be copying other social learners' outdated information.
>
> At equilibrium, social and individual learners have equal fitness, which will be equal to the fitness of a population entirely composed of individual learners (which is fixed, because their learning is not dependent on others). Thus, social learning evolves, but does not enhance fitness in a way that could be described as the "secret to our success."

But Mesoudi himself later explains why this is not a real paradox:

> However, transmitted culture can enhance the average fitness of a population when:
>
> (1) individuals learn selectively, only copying others when individual learning is inaccurate or selectively copying successful individuals; and/or
>
> (2) socially learned traits can be accumulated over successive generations such that individuals can learn socially what they could never invent alone: this is the cumulative culture noted above (Boyd & Richerson, 1995; Enquist et al., 2007; Kendal et al., 2009).

Furthermore, I'd add: who says that social learners will always copy *everything*, including the outdated and ineffective parts?

Rogers' model assumes a basic form of social learning — simple copying — but human social learning is often strategic, evaluative, and flexible.

That is where human intelligence may kick in, and smart learners may be able to reverse engineer *why* what they do works, retaining what works and discarding what doesn't (and potentially improving along the way).

CONS

- **Clarification on ingroup-outgroup may be confusing**

Says the author:

> this approach means that the in-group versus out-group view taken by psychologists misses a key point: not all groups are equally salient or thought about in the same way

I don't think anyone ever said that all groups are the same.
The ingroup/outgroup concept instead come out *reinforced* with the author's contributions.

- **It may indirectly over-promote 'folk wisdom' against science**

The author lists impressive rituals to show that cultural evolution leads to effective solutions.

I bet that is the case, but I wouldn't want people to over-trust the 'wisdom of the crowds' or 'wisdom of the ancients'.

The author knows this: one may as well list elaborated rituals that are not effective, or even harmful.

One quick note on this may have prevented confusion.

REVIEW

The Secret of Our Success is a paradigm-shifting book on human nature and evolution.

For decades, Darwin's genetic evolution was seen as the sole driving force behind evolutionary processes and shaped much of evolutionary psychology thinking.
As decades of further research and refinements deepened our understanding of gene-centric evolution, it also *entrenched* the gene-centric narrow focus.

But we may now be at a turning point.

The groundbreaking work of bright thinkers like Joseph Henrich and Robert Boyd presents a compelling case for a broader perspective—one that includes **cultural** evolution as a critical driver of human development.

Henrich's insights on cultural evolution don't just reshape how we think about evolution and psychology; they have even deeper implications for the *future* of civilization and human progress.

While there wasn't much we could do about genes in the short term, there is much we can do to maximize our culturally-driven process.

Let's Keep Fueling the Secret of Our Success

Human success thrives on global cooperation, shared knowledge, and the collective progress that comes from building on each other's contributions.

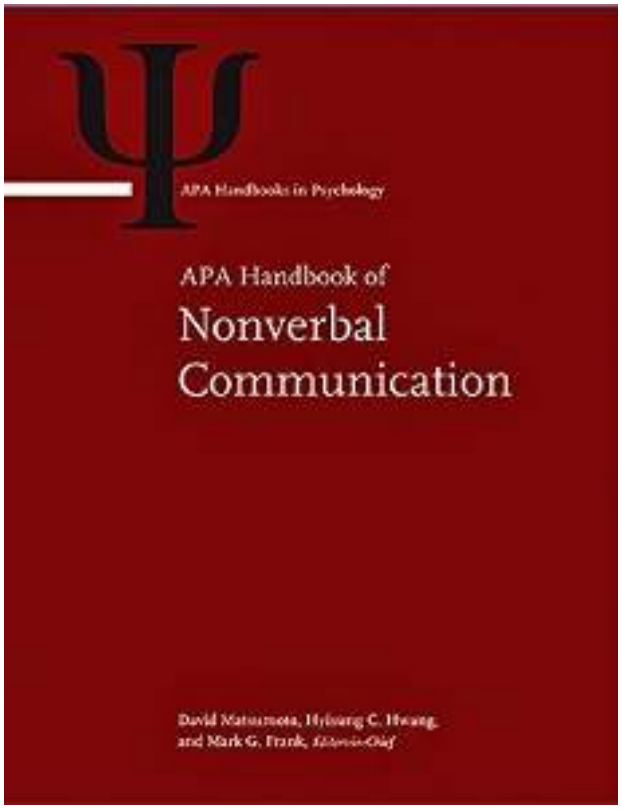
At TPM, we believe it's our responsibility to uphold and advance this path—standing firm against the forces of populism, tribalism, and destructive, short-sighted, lose-lose selfishness.

Check the **best evolutionary psychology books** or **get this book on Amazon**.

APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 February 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* (2015) is a comprehensive, research-backed guide exploring the empirical findings, research methods, and applications of nonverbal behavior.



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SUMMARY

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What's nonverbal communication

The definition for the APA Handbook is:

> Nonverbal Communication (NVC) is the transfer and exchange of messages in any and all modalities that do not involve words.

As such, NVC encompasses almost all of human communication except the spoken or written word.

Channels of nonverbal communication

1. **Physical Environment**: How surroundings influence nonverbal interactions.
2. **Appearance and Physiognomy**: The impact of physical appearance on communication.
3. **Facial Expressions**: Insights into how facial cues convey emotions and intentions.
4. **Olfactics and Odor**: The role of scent in conveying messages.
5. **Voice (Paralanguage)**: The significance of tone, pitch, and other vocal elements.
6. **Gesture**: The meanings and functions of hand and body movements.
7. **Eye Behavior and Gaze**: The communicative value of eye contact and movement.
8. **Posture, Gait, Proxemics, and Haptics**: How body orientation, movement, personal space, and touch influence interactions.

Signs she likes you

Women's romantic interest signals can be gauged with nonverbal cues, including:

- **Early nonverbal signaling** to invite an approach (Grammer, Kruck, Juette, & Fink, 2000) attracting attention by displaying openness to interaction via:
  - laughing
  - head tossing
  - grooming behaviors
  - self-touching or caressing objects
  - keeping time to music (Guéguen, 2008; Scheflen, 1965)

- **Leaning toward**

- **Self-touch** during the initial stages of flirting, and before contact is initiated (Moore, 1995; Scheflen, 1965)
- **Shoulders parallel to him**
- **Facial redness**: a woman signals interest in a romantic partner with her face through increased blood flow to the face resulting in cheeks blushing
- **Being closer**
- **Swelling of the lips** which makeup mimics, (McKinney & Sprecher, 1991), and
- **Brief touch**, particularly on the knee
- **Pupil dilation—**which studies show makes a woman look more attractive (Hess, 1965)

Read more here:

- **Signs she likes you**

> Does She Like Me? 35 Signs of Attraction (W/ Pictures)

Status and dominance cues

Gaze, eye contact & visual dominance

Visual dominance is defined as the ratio of looking while speaking to looking while listening (Exline, Ellyson, & Long, 1975).

- **High-status subjects spend equal time looking while speaking and listening**: they had ratios close to 1 (equal time spent looking while speaking and while listening)
- **Low-status subjects looked more while listening** and less while speaking (Ellyson, Dovidio, Corson, and Vinicur, 1980)
- **Dominant men behaved similarly to high-status men**: subjects who scored high on a trait measure of dominance gazed similarly to high-status subjects. This suggests that stable trait dominance and more fluid role-based dominance both influence eye gaze behaviors.
- **High expertise and high reward power had the same effects**, including for women: Both men and women in lower status conditions looked more while listening than while speaking, producing a relatively low visual dominance ratio (Dovidio, Ellyson, Keating, Heltman, Brown, 1988)
- **Dominant individuals look less at subordinates** while listening to them speak (Exline, Ellyson, & Long, 1975)
- **Dominant men can use intense eye contact as a tool for compliance**: dominant group members can use eye contact as a tool to encourage subordinates to behave appropriately
  - **Students in a classroom behave more when reprimanded with direct gaze** (Van Houten, Nau, MacKenzie-Keating, Sameoto, & Colavecchia, 1982)
  - **Direct gaze more directly sub-communicates power**: individuals (particularly men) who engage in more direct gaze are rated as more dominant (Hillabrant, 1974; Thayer, 1969) or powerful (Dovidio & Ellyson, 1982).

- **People look more at high-status men**: participants look toward high-status males more than low-status males or females (Maner, DeWall, & Gailliot, 2008)
- **Subordinates avert eye contact when looked at by dominant members** (Ellsworth, Carlsmith, & Henson, 1972).
- **Dominant individuals judge others as less dominant**: men who score higher on the Dominance subscale of the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 1999) are less likely to perceive masculinized men's faces as more dominant (Watkins et al., 2010). Similar results have been shown for women with high dominance scores viewing masculinized women's faces (Watkins et al., 2012).
- **Men and especially high power men look at their interaction partner more while talking than listening** compared to most other people (Dovidio et al., 1988).
  Women tend to do the opposite

High-power men talk more

- **High power men are more talkative**. Research initially showed that men tend to be more talkative than women (Leaper & Ayres, 2007), but recent findings suggest tendency is moderated by men's situational sense of power (Brescoll, 2011). In other words, high power men are more talkative, but:
  - Low-power men talk less: men's tendency to surpass women in talking time (i.e., volubility) tends to disappear when men are experimentally induced into a low-power mindset.

See later for 'intrusive interruptions' ⍰

Dominant Men Touch Others More

> More dominant men will touch others more, and will invade personal space more, than less dominant men (Knapp & Hall, 2010).

Dominant posture is expansive

Posture is often described along these dimensions:

- Compact VS expansive
- Relaxed VS fidgety/anxious
- Positive VS negative

Compact/expansive and relaxed/anxious have generally been associated with social confidence and social power.

The authors say:

> Body openness in adults is positively related to dominance (J. A. Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005), and research on children reveals that one of the key differences between dominant and submissive individuals is body expansiveness (Weisfeld & Beresford, 1982)

People have a personal space they 'protect'

Violations of culturally appropriate social boundaries make others uncomfortable (Sussman & Rosenfeld, 1978), including feelings of loss of personal control, and privacy (Greenberg, Strube, & Myers, 1980).

People will also change their body orientation away from you, or even deploy buffers (such as books or briefcases) to demarcate territory (Hayduk, 1983).

Cultural VS universal nonverbal behavior

The authors claim that cultures create overall and context-specific norms to facilitate social coordination and avoid social chaos in socially complex environments.

All cultures suppress or play up some expressions in some contexts:

> all cultures reported that they suppress their expressions in some contexts, exaggerate their expressions in others, and express their feelings as is in others. Individuals of all cultures had a display rule norm for greater expressivity toward ingroups than toward outgroups.

But when and how to suppress or exaggerate expressions changes.
And we can find some broader demarcation lines with collectivistic VS individualistic cultures:

> Collectivistic cultures were associated with less expressivity overall than individualistic cultures, suggesting that overall expression management for all emotions is central to the preservation of social order in these cultures

Individualists express emotions to their ingroup members while collectivist ones suppress them even with ingroup members.
With the outgroup, individualists show less negative and more positive emotions, while collectivists do the opposite.

A Typology of Broad Cultural Differences in Nonverbal Behaviors

Channel	Type of cultural norms	
	Expressive	Reserved
Face	Animated facial expressions, frequent displays of emotions, use of face to amplify and illustrate speech	Fewer facial expressions, less emotions, more controlled expressions, less animated expressions
Gesture	More speech illustrating gestures, larger motions, higher frequency of emblem usage	Fewer speech illustrating gestures, smaller motions, lower frequency of emblem usage
Voice	Louder voices, larger range, higher speech rates	Softer voices, diminished range, lower speech rates
Gaze	More direct gaze during interactions	Less direct gaze during interactions
Interpersonal space and touch	Closer distances in interaction, more frequent touching	Farther distances in interaction, less frequent touching
Posture	More relaxed, open postures	More rigid, closed postures

There are also some differences in the use of context VS body language when the messages were discordant:

> American judgments were more influenced by faces, whereas Japanese and South Korean judgments were more influenced by context.

However, when facial expressions and context were congruent, everyone agreed.

Women's pitch change with changing culture

Cultural and social factors influence voices, and women in the West lowered their pitches in the last decades:

> Women in the West (e.g., Europe, United States) started to speak with lower pitches over the last 40 years or so: This has been suggested to follow the increased profile of women in the workplace, often in shared environments with men (Karpf, 2007).

But elsewhere, like women in Japan, didn't lower their pitch (Loveday, 1981; van Bezooijen, 1995).

Power and status displays vary by culture

> Cultures differ according to whether they encourage or discourage power and status differences in a hierarchy, with hierarchical cultures affording power to status, but egalitarian cultures not (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001).

But I'd bet that higher-status and higher-power individuals still fare much better than lower ones.

And we may be 'universalizing' body language

And, the authors suggest, we may see a growing convergence of nonverbal communication signaling and reading:

> These results are likely being driven by the strong influence of mass media around the world (…) where people can view the behaviors of others of different cultures and learn how to decode behaviors. These technologies may be helping to homogenize gestures into a worldwide emblem dictionary, and if so, it may be only a matter of time that a homogenized, universal set of emblematic gestures replaces culture-specific ones.

Also read:

- Is intercultural communication a waste of time?

Spacial proxemics: same 'categories', but different cultural 'sizes'

Hall's (1966, 1973) classic work specified four levels of interpersonal space use depending on social relationship type:

1. Intimate
2. Personal
3. Social
4. Public

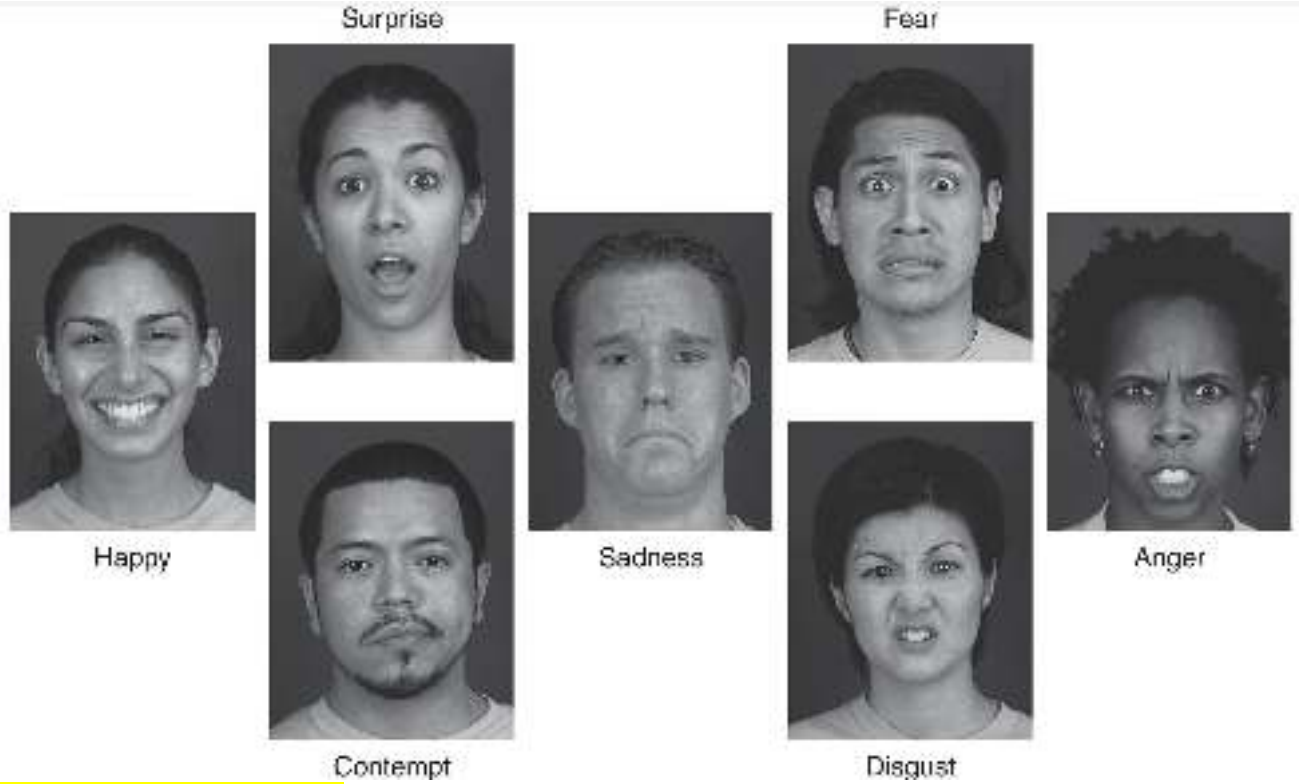
The size of each differs among cultures, but people of *all* cultures appear to use space according to these four distinctions.

Equally interesting, non-native English speakers spoke in English, they adopted the American conversational distance compared.
Thus, it seems that people 'naturally adapt'.

The 7 basic facial expressions

Strong evidence supports the universal recognition of seven facial expressions of emotion:

1. anger
2. disgust
3. fear
4. happiness
5. sadness
6. surprise
7. contempt



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And the interpretation of intensity is also universal:

> Not only are the seven universal facial expressions panculturally recognized (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Matsumoto, 2001) but there is pancultural similarity in judgments of relative intensity among faces; that is, when comparing expressions, people of different countries agree on which is more strongly expressed (Ekman et al., 1987; Matsumoto & Ekman, 1989).

Subsequent studies also add potential new expressions, like pain (LeResche, 1982; Prkachin & Craig, 1995), anxiety (Perkins, Inchley-Mort, Pickering, Corr, & Burgess, 2012), and sexual excitement (FernandezDols, Carrera, & Crivelli, 2011).

And recent studies provided evidence the similar body movement can signal different emotions.
For example, smiling can signal embarrassment, amusement, shyness, sensory pleasure, elation, contentment, and relief (Ambadar et al., 2009; Campos, Shiota, Keltner, Gonzaga, & Goetz, 2013; Keltner, 1995: Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Krumhuber & Scherer, 2011; Ricci-Bitti, Caterina, & Garotti, 1996).
But also pride (Tracy & Robins, 2004) and triumph (Hwang & Matsumoto, 2014a, 2014b; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012).

How people interpret facial expressions

Facial expression program (facial expressions of emotion)	Behavioral ecology view (signification of intent and verbal equivalent)
"Felt" (Duchenne) smile (readout of happiness)	Readiness to affiliate or play ("Good to see you," "Let's play [keep playing]," or "Let's be friends")
"False" smile (feigned happiness)	Readiness to appease ("Whatever you say," or "I give in")
"Sad" face (readout of sadness)	Recruitment of succor ("Take care of me," "Hold me," or "Look at what you [he/she] did to me")
"Anger" face (readout of anger)	Readiness to attack ("Back off or I'll attack")
"Leaked" anger (inhibited anger)	Conflict about attacking ("I want to attack and I don't want to attack" or "I'm close to attacking you")
"Fear" face (readout of fear)	Readiness to submit or escape ("Don't hurt me!" or "I see what you want!")
"Contentment" face (readout of contentment)	Readiness to continue current interaction ("Everything [you're doing] is just fine")
"Contempt" face (readout of contempt)	Declaration of superiority ("I can't even bother with you," or "You're not worth the trouble")
"Poker" face (suppressed emotion)	Declaration of neutrality ("I'm taking no position [on what you're doing/saying]")

People differ in nonverbal sensitivity & skills

> Nonverbal sensitivity is conceptualized as an individual difference variable (Rosenthal, 1979).

The most important interpersonal cues include:

- cues of **emotion**;
- cues of **dominance** or **status**
- cues about **attitudes**, intentions, and interpersonal orientation (likes and dislikes, desire to terminate an interaction, etc.)

And reading these cues is important for social skills, including empathy and emotional intelligence:

> It is assumed that nonverbal sensitivity is an important contributor to the concept of empathy, with ability to read others' emotions critical for empathic understanding (Riggio, Tucker, & Coffaro, 1989), and nonverbal sensitivity is seen as one of the building blocks of good interpersonal relationships.

For example, doctors scoring higher on the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) had more satisfied patients (DiMatteo, Friedman, & Taranta, 1979).

Women in general tend to score higher on measures of nonverbal sensitivity.

Environmental effects on socialization

- **Good smell makes people more sociable** favorable environmental smells enhance sociability in nonverbal exchanges, negative smells frequently interfere with prosocial intentions (but see Bonini et al., 2011)
  - Pleasant ambient odors also encouraged spontaneous helping behaviors (Guéguen, 2012b) as well as social approach behaviors defined as providing a phone number to a potential suitor (Guéguen, 2012a).

- **Noise enhances aggression**, especially in angered individuals (e.g., Donnerstein & Wilson, 1976; Konecni, 1975)
  - Introverted individuals seem more easily affected by environmental noise than extroverts (Davies & Hockey, 1966; Elliott, 1971).

Dim your lights for dating – *at the right time*

But only do it if there is already a good vibe!

While dimmer lighting can foster an atmosphere of intimacy (Carr & Dabbs, 1974; Lecomte, Bernstein, & Dumont, 1981), and loosen social inhibition (Hirsh, Galinsky, & Zhong, 2011; Page & Moss, 1976), the timing must be right or it backfires.

When people feel it's inappropriate they maintain a greater physical distance (L. Adams & Zuckerman, 1991) and/or reduce the amount of mutual eye gaze (Carr & Dabbs, 1974).

Also see:

- **How to create a seductive environment**

Gender and nonverbal behavior

Gender is an important line of demarcation when it comes to nonverbal behavior, but it's only one in many variables to consider:

- **Both men and women strive to "do gender" well** so as to avoid being perceived as gender deviant (e.g., West & Zimmerman, 1987)
- **Gender-normative behavior is situational**, increasing with:
  - Number of people present
  - Sex composition, increasing with more opposite-sex individuals
- **Women smile more** BUT,
  - Larger difference with observers present (M. LaFrance, Hecht, & Paluck, 2003)
  - Older women smile as much as men gender differences are absent among young children, largest among adolescents, smaller in adults, and all but disappearing after late middle
  - Larger difference with social tension: when observed by others, when instructed to get acquainted, when self-disclosing, and when experiencing embarrassment (M. LaFrance et al., 2003).
  - Larger differences with Caucasians compared to black: Ethnicity also plays a role in U.S. samples, with Caucasians exhibiting larger differences (r = .22) than African Americans (r = .13; M. LaFrance et al., 2003)
  - Testosterone mediates smiling and men with high testosterone smile less than those with low testosterone (Dabbs, 1997).
- **Men interrupt more**, but less so in two-person encounters (Anderson & Leaper, 1998) and with larger differences in
  - Mixed groups- rather than same-gender groups or dyads.
- **Women are more accurate in producing and conveying nonverbal cues**, potentially because women are more expressive in general while men suppress overt displays of emotion
- **Self-identification may matter more than gender** ie.: the degree to which a person self-identifies as feminine, appears predict decoding accuracy more than biological sex—but little research has seriously tested this idea
  - **Self-identification predicts encoding accuracy** ie.: the degree to which a person identifies as feminine appears to predict encoding accuracy in both men and women
- **Androgynous males are more emotionally expressive** than "masculine" men (Narus and Fischer, 1982)
- **High-power men engage in more 'high-visual dominance'**: men gaze more at their interaction partners while

speaking than while listening and especially when in high-power positions. Women do the opposite, gazing at their partners more when listening than when speaking (Dovidio et all., 1988)
  - Power mediates the difference: both sexes sometimes show visual dominance when they are in high-power roles (Ellyson, Dovidio, & Brown, 1992)

- **Pride expression includes an expanded posture** with head tilted back, arms akimbo, and a low intensity smile on the face. It has been reliably recognized in adults across cultures and in children as young as 4 (Tracy & Robins, 2008; Tracy, Robins, & Lagattuta, 2005).

- **There is no clear evidence that women are more emotional**: women are more *expressive* of their emotions, but both genders feel the same.
  Men report experiencing the same emotions to the same extent (Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco, & Eyssell, 1998; Kring & Gordon, 1998; Robinson, Johnson, & Shields, 1998), and studies comparing the physiological reactions of men and women have found that, if anything, men's physiological responses to emotion-inducing events tend to be stronger than women's (Kring & Gordon, 1998)

- **Touching behavior is highly contextual**
  - Younger men and older women touch more: For dyads younger than 30 years of age, male-initiated touch dominates, but the opposite (more female-initiated touch) is observed for dyads older than 30 years of age J. A. Hall & Veccia, 1990; Willis & Briggs, 1992; Willis & Dodds, 1998)
  - Men in non-intimate and women in intimate relationships touch more: Males initiate touch more than females when the relationship is nonintimate and in public. Among married couples, wives touch husbands more (Smith, Vogel, Madon, & Edwards, 2011)
  - Man:man touch the least, woman:woman touches the most: female-female dyads exhibit the highest levels of interpersonal touch and male—male dyads the lowest
  - Men are less comfortable with same-sex touch, especially men who self-reported homophobia, and homophobic attitudes are higher in men than in women, thus initiating less touching (Roese et al., 1992)
  - Women self-touch more (r = .22; J. A. Hall, 1984; McCormick & Jones, 1989) but *particularly in the context of cross-sex flirting interactions* (Moore, 1995; Scheflen, 1965)

- **Women face the speaker more** although this effect is smaller than other gender differences
  - Flirting men and women face each other: the difference disappears in courtship and flirtation, where men and women both face each other (Fichten et al., 1992)

- **Women head-nod more**

- **Men are more fidgety**, But:
- **Women self-touch more** (r = .22; J. A. Hall, 1984; McCormick & Jones, 1989) particularly in the context of cross-sex flirting interactions, where women self-touch during the initial stages of flirting, and before contact is initiated (Moore, 1995; Scheflen, 1965)

- **Women lean in more** towards their interaction partner (r = .16; J. A. Hall, 1984; HelwegLarsen, Cunningham, Carrico, & Pergram, 2004)

- **Men adopt larger interpersonal distances** with interaction partners (r = .27; 17 studies in J. A. Hall's, 1984, meta-analysis) and it's at maximum in male—male dyads. This has been shown cross-culturally

- **Women mirror more than men**: in same-sex dyads, feminine (i.e., sex-typed) women body mirrored significantly more than same-sex dyads of masculine males (M. LaFrance and Ickes, 1981)
  - Androgynous men mirror the most

- **Men adopt more expansive and 'high-comfort' poses**, with relaxed postures (i.e., asymmetrically arranged arms and legs; r = .33) and expansive body postures (i.e., limbs reaching farther away from the body; r = .46; J. A. Hall, 1984).
  Women take more restricted postures with legs close together and arms close to the torso

- **Women notice adjacent intrusions, men frontal ones**: women were more affected by an immediately adjacent intruder, men by an intruder directly opposite them (Fisher & Byrne, 1975).
  Women were more likely to put their books and personal items adjacent to them, whereas men put their books and materials directly opposite them

- **Men speak louder than women** (J. A. Hall, 1984; Schmid Mast & Sczesny, 2010)

- **Men have more 'speech disturbances'** such as filled pauses—"ah," "um," or incomplete sentences

- **Women use more 'back channeling'** while listening to others (J. A. Hall, 1984; Leaper & Robnett, 2011).

- **Men interrupt more**, but the difference is larger (r = .08 vs r = .16) when considering:
  - **Men use more 'intrusive interruptions'** to interrupt others' speech to take over the conversation, sometimes referred to as intrusive interruptions, rather than merely speaking at the same time as another person (Anderson & Leaper, 1998)
  - Men use more interrupting *statements* (assertive) (M. LaFrance and Carmen, 1980)
  - Women use more interrupting *questions* (responsive) (M. LaFrance and Carmen, 1980)
  - Men interrupt more in groups, men make more intrusive interruptions especially in mixes group settings (i.e., more than two interacting partners; r = .30; Anderson & Leaper, 1998) with a negligible difference for dyads (r = .06).
    (r = .30 in same-sex and r = .06 in mixed-sex groups for intrusive interruptions, and r = .01 in same-sex and r = .08 in mixed-sex groups or dyads for overall interruptions; Anderson & Leaper, 1998)

- **Women sway hips, men swagger shoulders**, and it is these perceptions that aid in the inference of the gender of a walking target (Johnson & Tassinary, 2005)

- **Women cry more** (Bekker & Vingerhoets, 1999, 2001; Vingerhoets & Scheirs, 2000), consistent across several cultures, even though the magnitude of the difference differs (Becht, Poortinga, & Vingerhoets, 2001).

In children younger than 8 there is no difference, or even boys crying slightly more. Why this divergence happens has been the subject of considerable debate

- **Women are more subtle flirting** to potentially deny having sent any indicator of interest.
  That's why both males and females are more accurate at deciphering when a man is being flirtatious than when a woman is (Grammer et al., 2000; Place et al., 2009).

Nonverbal behavior/domain	Gender difference	Moderator(s)
Encoding accuracy	W > M	Age; channel (face vs. voice)
Encoding accuracy	W > M	Gender; filtering context; target gender; specific emotion expressed
Smiling	W > M	Age; context (instructed vs. expressive task, social vs. only psychological gender, country, race
Gaze (general)	W > M	Gender composition of dyad; psychological gender
Visual dominance	W > M	Power mindset/status
Touch	W > M	Age; relationship type; gender composition of dyad; type of touch (e.g., hand vs. nonhand)
Self-touch	W > M	
Interpersonal distance	W > M	Target gender
Overall relational warmth	W > M	Target gender
Facial expressiveness	W > M	Psychological gender; gender consistent with dyad
Relational closeness (liking)	W > M	
Relational responsiveness	W > M	
Hand gesturing	W > M	
Forward leaning	W > M	
Expansive body posturing	W > M	
Receptive body posturing	W > M	
Smooth rhythm	W > M	
Smooth interactions	W > M	
Visibility	W > M	Power mindset/status
Intrusive interruptions	W > M	Group versus dyadic setting; gender composition of group or dyad; relative status of participants (instrumental vs. expressive tasks); psychological gender
Filler pauses	W > M	Gender of interlocutor (vs. expressive tasks); psychological gender
Fluency	W > M	
Sociable behaviors	W > M	Sexual orientation
Blushing (general)	W = M	
"Correct" blushing	W > M	
Crying frequency	W > M	Age

Psychological gender may matter more than biological gender

Most casual readers and commentators may take the above differences as evidence for biological differences.

Instead, suggest the authors, they may as well be the evidence for psychological self-identification:

> psychological gender may be more critical than biological gender.
> In other words, nonverbal behaviors may often be telltale indicators of femininity and masculinity rather than manifestations of biological femaleness and maleness.
> The critical issue may thus be the degree to which any male or female personally subscribes to societal definitions of masculinity and femininity. In some cases, psychological gender dovetails with biological gender

Albeit this obviously doesn't deny the important role of biology, I think it's a great point and several pieces of evidence indeed support this view.

Attractiveness Is Gender-Linked: Fertility & Dominance

> Fertility seems to apply exclusively to females, and dominance exclusively to males.

Some other traits apply to either both genders or lean more towards one gender:

> Health applies equally to both genders, but signals of availability also seem to favor females over males, as females are the limiting sex

Also see:

- **The traits of attraction and mate value**

Appearance and Physiognomy

- **Attractive people are viewed more positively** in general, a phenomenon known as the attractiveness halo effect (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972).
- **Greater homogeneity in skin texture is attractive** (Fink, Grammer, & Thornhill, 2001)
- **Light-skinned women are more attractive**: Preferences for light skin in women have been found across cultures (Coetzee et al., 2012; van den Berghe & Frost, 1986) and may reflect the need for increased Vitamin D synthesis Jablonski & Chaplin, 2000)
- **Average-weight faces are more attractive**: Faces rated as average weight were perceived as healthier and more attractive than those rated as underweight or overweight (Coetzee et al., 2009). Adiposity mediates the relationship between attractiveness and immunocompetent. Adiposity serves as a cue to attractiveness via its strong relationship with health and immunocompetence—a heritable genetic trait that can be passed to offspring

Physiognomy: appearances can tell you something

First off: the correlation between appearance and personality is small, so don't jump to conclusions:

> Reported correlations between personality judgments are usually minor to moderate (with the most striking correlation coefficients reaching 0.2-0.4, and most falling below this range; Zebrowitz & Collins, 1997).

But they exist nonetheless, especially in some traits.
There are four possible mechanisms through which facial appearance and personality converge:

1. **Biological causes for both appearance and personality**: Genetics or hormones influence both facial appearance and personality traits.
2. **Environmental cause for both appearance and personality**: Life experiences and surroundings shape both personality and facial features over time.
3. **Facial appearance shapes personality**: People may develop traits based on how others react to their looks.
4. **Personality shapes facial appearance:** Expressions and habitual behaviors gradually influence facial features.

Among the findings shared in the book:

- **People consistently judge characters from faces** there is consistency in judgments of personality from faces
- **People's judgments of personality from faces may be accurate** Many studies have now shown that perceptions of personality drawn from single face images, short videotapes, or very brief personal encounters align with the target's self-reported personality (Ambady, Hallahan, & Rosenthal, 1995; Berry, 1990; Bond, Berry, & Omar, 1994; Borkenau & Liebler, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b)
- **Faces hold cue of future (workplace) success**: Several studies, focusing largely on leaders' faces, examined correlations between attributions of faces and objective measures of workplace success. Business leaders' success is correlated with perceptions of dominance and power drawn from images of their faces (Rule & Ambady, 2008b, 2009).
  Other studies found relationships between perceived power and success among managing partners of law firms (Rule & Ambady, 2011)
  And judgments of dominance and competence from political candidates' faces correlate with electoral success (see Olivola & Todorov, 2010, for review).
- **Judgments of power and babyfacedness predict success in terms of business and political leadership**. Youthful and friendly (AKA babyfacedness) make one appear weak and incompetent (ZebrowitzMcArthur &

Apatow, 1984) AND reduces the likelihood of attaining leadership positions in politics (Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2005), and are detrimental to business leaders (Rule @ Ambady, 2008b)

- **Republican faces are viewed as more powerful**: Using facial stimuli of American politicians (cropped tightly around the outer edge of the hair), Rule and Ambady (2010) found that faces of Republicans were viewed as more powerful

- **Political attitudes and affiliations can be guessed by appearances**: German and Swiss perceivers correctly judged left- or right-wing affiliation from the faces of Swiss and German participants, respectively (Samochowiec, Wanke, & Fiedler, 2010).
  Ratings of dominance predicted both perceptual and actual political affiliation, with more dominant looking people tending to have right-wing affiliations (Samochowiec et al., 2010)

- **People could recognize ethnicity**: empirical studies investigated whether Jews could be distinguished by appearance (Allport & Kramer, 1946; Elliott & Wittenberg, 1955; Lindzey & Rogolsky, 1950; Pulos & Spilka, 1961).
  Two recent meta-analytic reviews of this research found that people were able to accurately categorize Jews and non-Jews from still facial photographs alone (Andrzejewski, Hall, & Salib, 2009; Rice & Mullen, 2003), and one study found that similar effects still apply in modern times (Andrzejewski et al., 2009).

Nonverbal behavior & personality

	Nonverbal behavior			
Personality trait	Face	Voice	Body	Overall
Extraversion				
	More smile	More loud/high	More dominant	Attractive
	Friendly expression	Fast rate	Less posture	Believed to be likeable (good-natured)
	Less neutral expression	Powerful voice	More hand/leg movement	Perceived positively
	Smiling	Powerful voice	Less posture	
	More "social" face	Quiet voice	Fast/Energetic walking	
	Generally dominant	Fast speech	More smiling	
	More open mouth	Rhythmic voice	Upright posture	
Neuroticism				
	Less friendly expression	More sonorous/rich/pleasant	Weak handshake	Unattractive
	Round face	Soft voice	Fewer expressive gestures	Poorly proportioned body
		Less nasal voice		More negative personality
Agreeableness				
	More smile	More pitch	More head movement	Attractive
	Baby-faced	Fewer conversational interruptions	Less gesturing	More warmth
	Friendly face			Higher overall level
	Less social dominance			More cheerful
	More social attention			More equipotential interaction
	Fewer negative body expressions			More positive expressivity
Conscientiousness				
	More distinctive gaze	Powerful voice	More self-confidence/vigor	Attractive
		More loud speech	Fast/Energetic	Believed to be likeable (good-natured)
			Less hand movement	Less hostility
				Less hostility
				More equipotential interaction
Dominance/Extraversion				
	More social attention	Dominant	More dominant	Bad personality
		Gay speech		Younger age
		Less nasal voice		

Facial expressions signal character traits

> Facial expressions signal individual differences, which by their very nature reflect broad tendencies to think and act in a specific fashion.

- **Natural smiles & expressivity signal trust and cooperation**: spontaneously occurring smiles have also been linked to trust, cooperation, and prosocial behavior, and recent research suggests that overall expressivity, not

limited to smiles, may be such a marker (Boone & Buck, 2003; Schug, Matsumoto, Horita, Yamagishi, & Bonnet, 2010).

- **Duchenne smiling predicted relationship satisfaction and multiple measures of personality** (i.e., affiliation, warmth, competence), plus personal well-being, and marital satisfaction at various times over the next 30 years
- **Facial expressions of disgust (and glaring) differentiate Type A or B personalities**,
  - Contempt, anger, and disgust all correlated with various speech indices of hostility, anger, competitiveness, and despondency (Chesney, Ekman, Friesen, Black, & Hecker, 1990)
- **Dominance can be perceived from human faces**, both in terms of physical strength, and dominant behavior

Say the authors (redacted for brevity):

> Masculinizing human faces increases perceived dominance, whereas 'feminizing' them decreases perceived dominance (Boothroyd et al., 2007; DeBruine et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2010; Main, Jones, DeBruine, & Little, 2009; Perrett et al., 1998).
> Masculine and dominant looking faces are perceived as more aggressive and threatening (Oosterhof & Todorov, 2008), and untrustworthy (Stirrat & Perrett, 2010).
> Men with dominant-looking faces have higher social status (Mueller & Mazur, 1996), and people are more likely to follow their gaze (Jones et al., 2010; Ohlsen, van Zoest, & van Vugt, 2013).
> Perceptions of dominance also drive the expectation of anger and contempt (Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2005), and men with dominant-looking faces act less cooperatively and less trustworthy in real life (Stirrat & Perrett, 2010).

Voice can also signal character traits

Listeners can predict with some accuracy personal characteristics and traits from vocal stimuli, such as:

- Dominance, associated with certain vocal characteristics such as lower pitch (Anderson & Klofstad, 2012).
- Neuroticism (Hu, Wang, Short, & Fu, 2012)
- Extraversion (Scherer, 1978)

Attractiveness & facial masculinity are complex

Male facial attractiveness is less straightforward than women's facial attractiveness:

> The high amount of variation in women's preferences for men's facial masculinity may arise from the differential benefits attributed to masculine and feminine faces.
> A masculine face structure cue genetic benefits, but masculinity is also linked to undesirable traits and aggressive behavior, both perceptually and in real life

Culture and environment may also affect male facial attractiveness, and facial masculinity is favored in cultures where paternal investment is traditionally low, such as rural Jamaica (Penton-Voak, Jacobson, & Trivers, 2004), suggesting that women select mates for genetic benefits when male commitment is unlikely.

That being said, attractive women seem to prefer masculine faces:

> This replicates results from static stimuli demonstrating that attractive women prefer more masculine men (Penton-Voak et al., 2003) and may partly explain the lack of masculinity preferences found in previous studies where observers' attractiveness was not rated. (Morrison et al., 2010).

Finally, adiposity may be a better marker for male facial attractiveness than testosterone:

> Moreover, another recent study found that facial adiposity, not masculinity, mediated the relationship between facial attractiveness and immunocompetence (Rantala et al., 2013). These findings suggest that plastic, flexible cues such as adiposity may be better indicators of immunocompetence than masculinity, a static cue that is invariable after puberty.

Touch (haptics)

- **Touch conveys positive emotion**, closeness, comfort, compassion, intimacy, immediacy, interpersonal closeness, liking, acceptance, warmth, and love (Richmond, McCroskey, & Payne, 1991; Thayer, 1986).
  - Withholding touch can signal an assortment of negative feelings, such as resentment, hostility, anger, or mistrust (Richmond et al., 1991).

- **Men are more likely to interpret touch as communicating affection and sexual attraction**, whereas women are more likely to separate those meanings (Hollender, Luborsky, & Scaramella, 1969; Nguyen, Heslin, @ Nguyen, 1976).

- **More touch = more cooperation in NBA players** and improved performance (Kraus, Huang, & Keltner, 2010).

- **Touch by female wait staff increased tips** offered at restaurants (Ebesu Hubbard, Tsuji, Williams, & Seatriz, 2003).

- **Touch may increase compliance *in some settings***. In one of the first studies (Kleinke, 1977) An experimenter approached the person who next used the phone, asking if he found the money. 96% of the people who were touched returned the money, whereas only 63% of the people who were not touched did.
  Touch also increased compliance to signing petitions and completing research surveys (Patterson, Powell, & Lenihan, 1986; Willis @ Hamm, 1980) as well as complying with a physician's request to take antibiotics (Guéguen et al., 2011).
  - There are likely cultural differences. One study in Poland found that touching by a man of another man when making a request negatively affected the chances for compliance (Dolinski, 2010); the noncompliance was related to homophobic attitudes among the participants.
  - If the costs to the request are high touch doesn't work—for example, donating blood—(Guéguen & Vion, 2009).

- **Self-touching may be indicative of negative affect**, anxiety, withdrawal, hostility, or depression (Mahl, 1968; Mehrabian, 1972).
  - Self-touching behavior is also related to information processing (Barroso, Freedman, Grand, & Van Meel, 1978); language construction (Freedman & Bucci, 1981); Type A behaviors such ambition, rigid organization, status consciousness, impatience (Friedman, Hall, & Harris, 1985), distractability (Barroso & Feld, 1986, Barroso et al., 1978).
    In general, self-touching also signals psychological functioning.

Posture

- **Open body postures communicate more power** (Cashdan, 1998; J. A. Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005).

- **Open arms and legs in a seated position communicate a more positive attitude and openness**
  - arms akimbo (arms on hips) or arms crossed in front of one's body generally are associated with more negative attitudes.

- **Posture can also signal anger, sadness, and happiness**, with some obtaining greater than 90% agreement rates (Coulson, 2004)
  - Anger was conveyed by a backward head tilt, absence of a backward chest bend, no abdominal twist, arm raised forward and upward, and weight transfers either forward or backward
  - Happiness was conveyed by backward head tilt, no forward movement of the chest, and arms raised above shoulder level and straight at the elbow.
  - Sadness was conveyed by a forward head tilt, forward chest bend, no twisting, and arms at the sides.
  - Disgust, fear, and surprise could not be detected beyond chance levels

- **Nonverbal cues reliably signal rapport** across cultures (Bernieri & Gillis, 1995).
  It includes:
  - smiling (Rotenberg et al., 2003)
  - direct body orientation
  - uncrossed legs
  - symmetrical arms
  - moderate eye contact (Harrigan, Oxman, & Rosenthal, 1985)
  - congruent limbs
  - forward-leaning postures (Trout & Rosenfeld, 1980)
  - Voice change (Garrod & Pickering, 2004), breathing together, speaking at the same rate in conversational speech (McFarland, 2001; Pardo, 2006), and converging on similar pitches.
    With greater rapport, also similar words, syntactic structures, and pronunciations of certain words (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999).

- **The triumph expression is 'over the top',** includes an expanded posture with chest out and head back, arms away from the body and raised above the shoulders, and torso pushed out. With an aggressive component, facial grimaces or aggression, fists, punching motions, and shouts or utterances.
  It's been documented around the world, even in congenitally blind individuals, immediately after a victory in an agonistic context (Hwang & Matsumoto, 2014b). But status-oriented cultures have more of these whole body expressions than more egalitarian cultures

- de**Shame overlaps with submission** opposite to triumph (e.g., head tilted forward or down, tongue out, eyes closed, and one or both arms pulled in toward body) has been referred to as "shame", also associated with submission (see also Andrews, Brewin, Rose, & Kirk, 2000; Dickerson, Gruenewald, & Kemeny, 2004; J. A. Hall et al., 2005; Keltner & Harker, 1998). If there is a difference between the two, it must still be found

Gait

- **Pepole can read from gait angry, happy, sad, or neutral emotions** situations from 3 seconds videoclips beyond chance levels (Montepare, Koff, Zaitchik, & Albert, 1999),

- **Angry movements were jerkier, stiffer, faster, more expanded, and harder**

- **Depressed patients walk slower, with shorter strides,** decreased coordination of arms in movement (Lemke, Wendorff, Mieth, Buhl, @ Linnemann, 2000)

- **Victim-looking strides are 'constricted'**, with too long or too short strides, not swinging their feet, and moving in only two dimensions compared to three (Grayson & Stein, 1981).

Nonverbal Behavior Like Gait Signals Power – Or Exploitability

> gait signal non-formidability and a potential target of aggression.
> Individuals imprisoned for mugging others agreed on which individuals (…) they would choose to victimize (Grayson & Stein, 1981).
> Individuals high in psychopathy could recognize, from gait alone, which individuals had been previously assaulted (Book, Costello, and Camilleri, 2013)
> Thus, one's body actions seem to draw the attention of the more violent predator-like individuals in society

The psychopaths mentioned the would-be victims showed 'low confidence' in their gait.

MORE WISDOM

Hold off your judgment across cultures for expressiveness and reservation

> It is easier for people from expressive cultures to judge those from reserved cultures as being untrustworthy, inscrutable, sly, deceptive, or shifty. At the same time, it is easier for people from reserved cultures to judge those from expressive cultures as arrogant, loud, rude, immature, or vulgar.

Men may over-estimate women's sexual interest because of poor reading -'error management theory'-

The common evolutionary explanation suggests that it's advantageous for men to overestimate women's sexual interest because a false-negative (i.e., missing cues of sexual interest) would lead to a missed mating opportunity (B. H. La France et al., 2009).

This means that men have a lower decisional threshold than women for labeling ambiguous behaviors as sexual (Haselton & Nettle, 2006).

BUT:

> The problem with this explanation, however, is that men "see" more sexual interest in both males and females (Shotland & Craig, 1988).
> Additionally, Farris et al. (2008) found that male participants mistook friendliness for flirtatiousness just as often as they misread flirtatiousness as friendliness, providing evidence for men's lower ability to accurately read the nonverbal cues of others.

Personally, I'd be surprised though if the evolutionary explanation doesn't provide any explanatory power on this phenomenon.

Ignoring others' gaze is a power move that makes others feel excluded

> the violation of mutual looking and acknowledgment norms can induce feelings of social exclusion (Wesselmann et al., 2012; K. D. Williams, Shore, & Grahe, 1998; Wirth, Sacco, Hugenberg, & Williams, 2010). For instance, when confederates were instructed to look at passing pedestrians without making eye contact, that is, "as though looking through air," the affected individuals subsequently reported stronger feelings of disconnection from others than individuals who received either a gaze or a gaze and smile from the confederate (Wesselmann et al., 2012).

Autism can be seen as ‘extreme male brain’

The authors note it may be telling that men show similar patterns of facial scanning as autistic individuals, given the conceptualization of autism as an “extreme male-brain” disorder (Baron-Cohen, 2002).

We’re Biologically Wired To Recognize Facial Similarity

> This ability to recognize faces is surprisingly robust;
> participants (…) are more likely to choose the cooperative move when they see a photo (…) that has been morphed with a photo of the participant himself (DeBruine, 2002).
> (…)
> Taken together, we can argue that we seem biologically wired to recognize individuals, to recognize when they are kin, and to band together with them to defeat nonkin competitors

Don’t force ‘mirroring’

Albeit it’s popular advice, forcing mirroring likely backfires:

> Mirroring (…) in general has been supported by the available evidence as producing positive regard for the other.
> However, some studies also show null or even negative effects on rapport as a function of mirroring (La France & Ickes, 1981).
> These data suggest that mirroring may positively influence rapport if it is done naturally and subconsciously (or at least appears to be so); if an interactant partner feels that one is deliberately trying to mirror behaviors, the partners are likely to feel manipulated, diminishing the chances for rapport building.

Practical Takeaways

Signal power

The authors show that how you move and behave can help you signal status, confidence, and power.

We have many articles here, including:

- **High power social behavior**
- Dominant body language
- High power communication

Quit carnivore, eat vegetables & Fruits

It also makes you more attractive:

> One recent study examined how real facial skin coloration is altered with changes in carotenoid consumption over a Appearance and Physiognomy 6-week period, revealing that an increase in carotenoids equivalent to an extra 3.3 portions of fruits and vegetables per day was enough to make participants reliably more attractive (Whitehead, Re, Xiao, Ozakinci, & Perrett, 2012).

Use gestures & aim for moderate level of expressiveness

People remember things more when you accompany your words with gestures.

And you’ll be clearer with some facial expressiveness, but keep it balanced:

> Sending accuracy will tend to be greatest (all else equal) at moderate levels of expressiveness, and it will be low at the extremes of low or high expressiveness

Also see:

- Law of optimum balance

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

As for almost all handbooks reviewed here, I'd wished for book-level editing that consolidated all repeated information, and more information-sharing about studies sample size and quality.

- **Few studies were cited multiple times**

Which made me question whether the empirical evidence supporting certain claims was as diverse as it could have been.

- **Sometimes you'd benefit with a 'TPM supplementation'**

The authors say they 'understand the function of communication to facilitate the sharing of social intentions'.

And that's certainly true.
However, a broader look at communication would also include deceit and manipulation.

- **Rarely I felt it was culturally deterministic**

For example:

> Walking on dark streets late at night will evoke fear in some cultures but not in others, and these different emotional reactions occur because of culturally learned differences about the meaning of that specific context.

At my current level of psychological understanding, I feel pretty strongly that the cultural impact is limited. Anyone -especially a woman- in a dangerous environment will be apprehensive to walk alone at night, independent of culture.

- **Some findings may have benefited with some more caution**

For example, women's increased attraction to stronger and 'formidable' males in dangerous area or the hands—digit ratio.

PROS

- **Tells it as it is**: this book does not hide or sugarcoat things, including sensitive topics
- **Learned a ton**
- **Really good gender analysis**: the section on differences between men and women was really good
- **Deep insights into social status**
  - Empirical insights into dominance VS submissiveness nonverbal behavior

REVIEW

The *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* is an authoritative resource for nonverbal behavior studies.

I learned a lot for it and I'm grateful to the editors' and authors' work.

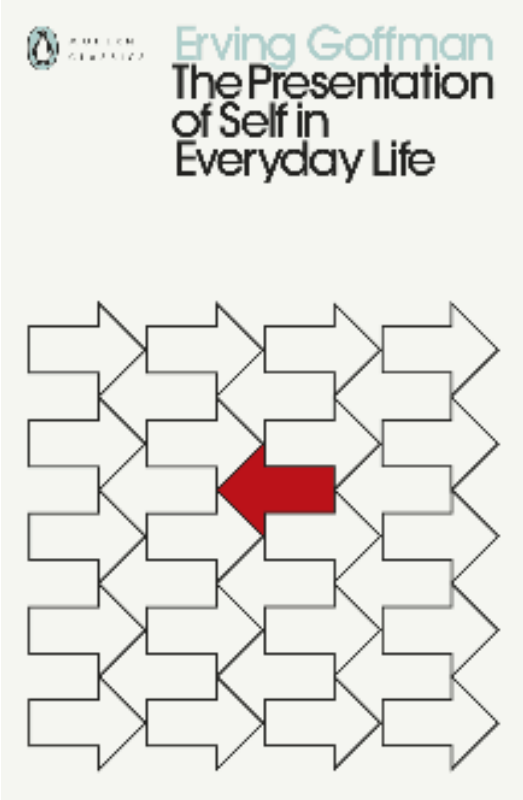
And the biggest compliment I can pay to any resource, it allowed me to improve several articles and even our flagship product Power Univeristy.

Check the **best body language books** or **get this book on Amazon**.

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life: Impression Management (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 February 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) draws parallels between theater and human interactions, exploring how individuals and teams perform roles to manage impressions, signal competence, and create desired perceptions.



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Exec Summary

- **We're all performers** managing impressions just like actors
- **We all have a stage (public persona) and backstage (private self)**, the former for the performance we must keep up, and the backstage to relax by ourselves or with the members of our performing team
- **Good performance rests on good manipulation** of the audience, but that manipulation is not always bad for the audience

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Erving Goffman (1922–1982) was a pioneering Canadian-American sociologist known for his innovative studies on face-to-face interaction and social order.
His work laid the foundation for microsociology and frame-level analyses.

We're all actors managing impressions

> (…) the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific impression he is concerned to obtain

At the core of Goffman's thesis is the concept of impression management.

Individuals control and adjust their behavior to project their preferred narrative of the self, and the reality - 'definition of the situation', as Goffman calls it-.

This process is not accidental but a deliberate performance to achieve specific social goals.

Some actors believe in their own act

And we'd call them 'sincere'.

Others know it's an act, and Goffman refers to them as 'cynical'.

However, sometimes it's the audience that demands to be deluded and played.
A doctor for example may present a placebo while playing the doctor part.

Also see:

- Don't be naive
- Machiavellians are better player

Front stage and back stage

In front stage settings—public spaces, formal interactions, or any scenario where an audience is present—people present a curated version of themselves to achieve self-presentation and team goals, or align with societal expectations.

Conversely, in back stage settings, such as private homes or informal gatherings, individuals 'let their guard down'

and reveal aspects of their 'true selves' that are hidden in public.

Playing a role is how we become socially effective

> our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons

In a way, suggests Goffman, education is about learning our roles and **growing into effective humans means learning our roles**.

People prioritize 'visible traits' for better performances

> if a service is judged on the basis of speed and quality, quality i s likely to fall before speed because poor quality can be concealed but not slow service

Virtue signaling and DEI are predicted by impression management

Funny how Goffman predicted much of the 2020s political climate:

> when the significance of unofficial qualifications becomes a scandal or political issue, then **a few individuals who are obtrusively lacking in the informal qualifications may be admitted with fanfare and given a highly visible role** as evidence of fair play. An impression of legitimacy is thus created.

Our nonverbals signal in advance the roles we'll play

> Thus a haughty aggressive manner may give the impression that the performer expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course. A meek, apologetic manner may give the impression that the performer expects to follow the lead of others

Effective actors control the interaction: waitress example

There are many passages in the book relevant to social power dynamics, strategies, or frame control.

Here's a good one of them:

> The skilled waitress tackles the customer with confidence
> (…)
> she may find that a new customer has seated himself before she could change the cloth.
> She greets him, says , " May I change the cover, please and, without waiting for an answer, takes his menu away from him so that he moves back from the table.
> The relationship is handled politely but firmly, and there is never any question as to who is in charge

Good wives help him assume a dominant role (in public)

> When husband and wife appear before new friends for an evening of sociability, the wife may demonstrate more respectful subordination to the will and opinion of her husband than she may bother to show when alone with him or when with old friends.
> When she assumes a respectful role, he can assume a dominant one

For men who don't want their wives to act but be naturally devoted, see:

- **How to maintain respect and attraction in relationships**

> 6 Proven Techniques to Keep Her Attracted & Committed

Team performances

In some social situations, interactions are a collaborative performance.

Individuals work together to create a unified impression.
Each member's behavior contributes to the overall image, reinforcing shared identities and collective norms.

The group becomes closer and sometimes forms an ingroup/outgroup dynamic where they may ridicule the audience.

Team members who 'misbehave' threaten the team

Any member of a team who acts against the team's best 'definition of the situation' ruins it for everyone.

For example:

> a girl at a party who is flagrantly accessible may be shunned by the other girls who are present, but in certain matters she is part of their team and cannot fail to threaten the definition they are collectively maintaining that girls are difficult sexual prizes.

Incidentally, this is one of the reasons why here at TPM aren't too fond of 'tribes': they enforce rules on the individuals that limit the individual's freedom.

Group therapy seeks to create back-stage feelings

For example:

> A sinner, sometimes admittedly not of very high status, stands up and tells to those who are present things he would ordinarily attempt to conceal or rationalize away; he sacrifices his secrets and his self-protective distance from others, and this sacrifice tends to induce a backstage solidarity among all present

From a strategic and power dynamics perspective, I couldn't help but notice Goffman's reference to the sinner low status.
Indeed, **it's never the high status men who open up and show vulnerability.**

Also see:

- How to do vulnerability without looking weak

> How to Be Vulnerable Without Looking Weak (The Right Way)

Machiavellian subordinates forge closeness with the leaders

As an example from doctor/patient dynamics:

> Attempts are made to establish a special relationship with the doctor. Patients often attempt to cultivate the

> illusion of a secret understanding with the doctor by, for example, trying to catch his eye if one patient brings up something that sounds 'crazy.'

This is titillating for the doctor's ego -and his natural craving of connection-, but it's disruptive for his work and the team:

> If they succeed in getting a response from the doctor which they can interpret as indicating a special bond, it can be very disrupting to the group.

Social rituals and norms also dictate our performances

Social rituals and norms dictate appropriate behavior.
These rituals serve as scripts for our performances, guiding how we act in various situations.

People who can't follow the scripts are seen as awkward, and often marginalized.
Also see:

- **How to calibrate to the situation**

> The Science of Social Calibration: 7 Steps to Social Effectiveness

Practical Takeaways

Learn to play, but allow others to drop their mask

Says a woman about having to dumber and more feminine to appeal to her dates:

> Toward the date, I feel some contempt because he's taken in by my technique.
> If I like him, I feel maternal condescension.
> At times, I resent him. Why isn't he superior in all ways in which a man should excel so that I can be my natural self

Yep, why not.
Become that guy, call her games, and you'll conquer dating like nobody's business.

MORE WISDOM

Courtship requires male leadership

> courting practices involve a concerted aggression against the alignment between the sexes on the part of the male, as he attempts to manoeuvre someone for whom he must at first show respect into a position of subordinate intimacy.

Goffman also says that when the man is of lower status, he will play up physicality to redefine the situation.

Also see:

- How to lead in dating
- The role of dominance for dating success

Leaders: let the troops closer to improve morale

Goffman also had the foresight to see leadership in terms of social exchanges:

> By sacrificing the exclusiveness of those at the top, it is felt that the morale of those at the bottom can be increased (…) such relaxation of front provides a basis for barter; the superordinate receives a service or good of some kind, while the subordinate receives an indulgent grant of intimacy

Drug usage shows the theatrical nature of life

> Becker reports that the irregular user has a great fear of finding himself with parents or work associates who will expect an intimate undrugged performance from him.
> The irregular user does not become a confirmed regular user until he learns he can be ‘ high ’ and yet carry off a performance betraying himself

It’s similar for young children, says the author.
Only when children can be relied upon to keep up an act they can be allowed to listen to the family’s full backstage.

We are moral, but often our moral allegiance is to the performance

> performers dwell more than we might think in a moral world. But, qua performers, individuals are concerned noc with the moral issue of realizing these standards, but with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression that these standards are being realized.
> Our activity, then, is largely concerned with moral matters, but as performers we do not have a moral concern in these moral matters. As performers we are merchants of morality.

Past audiences make us uncomfortable: the ‘teacher effect’

This is why for many it can be emotional or strange to meet former teachers or mentors.

They saw and met us when we were learning, naive, and lower power.
And now they may expect us to be the same.

> useful for the performer to exclude from the audience those before whom he performed in the past a show’ inconsistent with the current one. Persons who are strongly upward or downward mobile accomplish this in a grand manner by making sure to leave rhe place of their origins.

First-time interactions cautiously drop the guard

> When individuals are unfamiliar with each other’s opinions and statuses, a feeling-out process occurs whereby one individual admits his views or statuses to another a little at a time.
> (…) By phrasing each step in the admission in an ambiguous way, the individual is in a position to halt the procedure of dropping his front at the point (…) and at this point he can act as if his last disclosure were not an overture at all.

PROS

- **Great analysis**
- **Smart author**

With great power awareness, and several of his findings have later been confirmed by research.
Says the *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication*:

> Goffman (1963) used the term civil inattention (…) when strangers approach one another. For example, as pedestrians approach one another on the sidewalk, they might initiate a brief glance outside a distance of 2.5-3 m. This glance simply serves to recognize the presence of the other person. However, as they approach more closely, they look away to respect the other person' s privacy. Goffman offered the analogy of driving at night and dimming one's bright lights as an approaching car gets close. The results of three studies on gazing behavior among elevator riders supported Goffman's (1963) prediction of civil inattention in unfocused interactions (Zuckerman, Miserandino, & Bernieri, 1983).

QUOTES

> All the world is not a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't aren't easy to specify

On the double face nature of humankind:

> Individuals are treated relatively well to their faces and relatively badly behind their backs. This seems to be one of the basic generalizations that can be made about interaction

On drama, and the older profession in the world:

> The performer who is to be dramaturgically prudent will have to adapt his performance to the information conditions under which it must be staged.
> Aging prostitutes who restricted their place of work to dark parks were practicing a strategy that was even older than their profession

On the endless nature of role-playing:

> everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role. It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves

REVIEW

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life is a brilliant analysis of social dynamics and remains the most captivating book from my university curriculum.

I have a personal connection to it, still recalling the evening I first opened the big binder of photocopied pages. To me, it was the first book that accurately portrayed the reality of social interactions -a powerful mix of dispassionate Machiavellian analysis, social skills, and sociology-.

It captivated me like no other university book, and in retrospect, this book signaled that I was meant to pursue similar work.

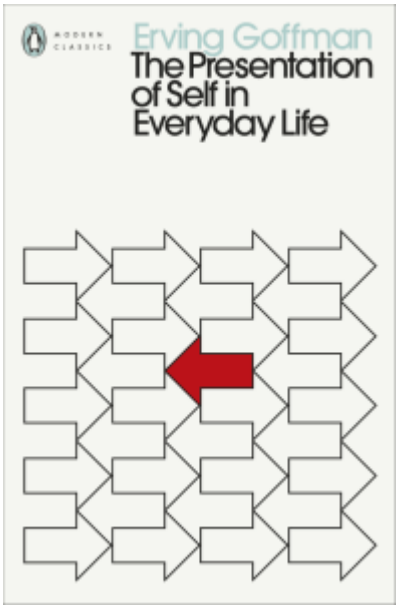
Goffman's work is in many respects similar to our work at TPM.
The key difference is that we also transform social and power dynamics insights into actionable strategies, techniques, and mindsets to empower good men to succeed.

On the downside, it stops at surface-level sociology without connecting to the deeper evolutionary drivers that shape human behavior.

And practically, it never translates its analyses into actionable strategies for achieving real-world goals like status, respect, or attraction.
To bridge insights into results, I developed Power University.

Get this book on Amazon or check the **best books** for men's empowerment.

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life: Summary & Review



The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) draws parallels between theater and human interactions, exploring how individuals and teams perform roles to manage impressions, signal competence, and create desired perceptions.

URL: the-presentation-of-self-in-everyday-life-summary-review

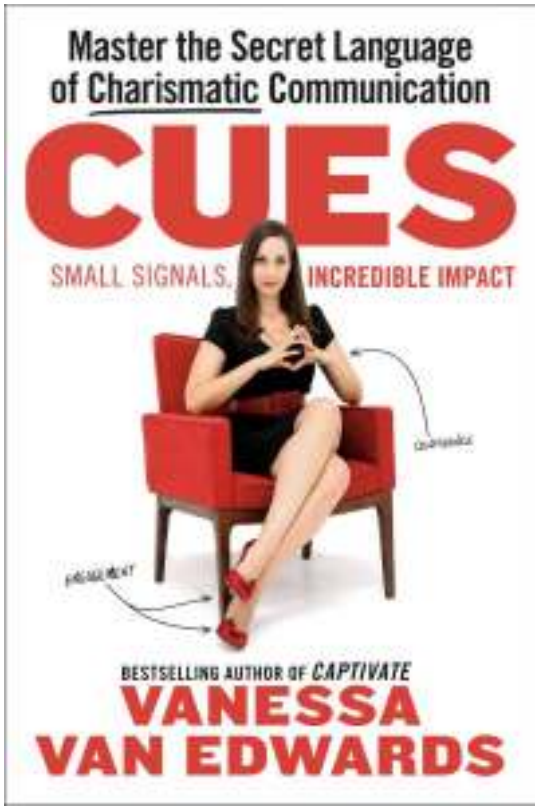
Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.6

Cues: Are Vanessa Van Edwards Cues Valid for High-Value Men? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 March 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Vanessa Van Edwards' *Cues* lists and explains the nonverbal and verbal signals that influence how people perceive us by dividing them into two main dimensions: **warmth**, affecting trust and likability, and **competence**, affecting power and authority.



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  - Some quoted research left me wondering
  - Contextualization would add refinement
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Exec Summary

- **Be both high warmth and high competence**
- **Calibrate competence and warmth to situation and people**, depending on whether you need more competence or warmth/connection
- **Avoid the extremes** of no warmth/no competence

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Vanessa van Edwards holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree from Emory University and started her entrepreneurial journey with children and writing children's books under the pseudonym 'Vanessa van Patten'. She later moved to teach social skills from her point of view 'recovering awkward person', authoring several books and courses on social skills, including *Captivate*, *Body Language of Love*, and her main course *People School*.

Intro

The book categorizes warmth and competence cues into different aspects of communication: body language, vocal tone, verbal cues, and facial expressions.

Below is a breakdown of each type of cue according to warmth and power.

Body Language Cues

❤ Warmth Cues (Trust and Connection)

- **Leaning In –** Shows engagement and interest.
  - Don't lean when disagreeing, with toxic people
- **Open Body Language –** Uncrossed arms and a relaxed posture signal approachability.
- **Head Tilt –** Slightly tilting the head makes you appear more empathetic. Especially good when listening
- **Authentic Smiling –** A genuine smile, especially one that reaches the eyes, fosters connection.
  - Savor smiles take longer to spread across someone's face. Researchers found that they are seen as more attractive.
- **Mirroring –** Subtly copying someone's gestures creates rapport.
- **Palms Up Gestures –** Signifies openness and honesty.
  Common palm-flashing gestures include:
  - Pre-Handshake: Hold your hand out with a palm up in a greeting and you're asking for a handshake.
  - Pre-Hug: Hold both hands out with palms facing toward the other person and you're asking for a hug.
  - Get Excited: Hold your hands up with palms facing up and move your hands up and down toward the sky (Think about "raise the roof" gesture.)
  - Calm Down or sit: Hold your hands out with palms facing down and move your hands up and down toward the ground
  - Stop: Hold your hand up and show someone your palm
  - Tell Me More: Hold your hands out with palms up and gesture toward someone
  - Let Me Explain This: Hold out one hand with a palm up and gesture while speaking to punctuate you're

explaining something

⍰⍰ Competence Cues (Confidence and Authority)

- **Expansive Posture –** Taking up more space conveys confidence.
  - Shoulders relaxed and pulled down. Anxiety causes us to tense our shoulders to protect our neck and “turtle” our head down. Pull your head up, shoulders down
  - Feet spaced apart**.** Place your feet 10cm wider than you normally would to feel more grounded. If you’re a leg crosser, that’s fine. Just take a note from Kennedy and keep one foot firmly planted and the other relaxed. And if you can, angle them toward the person you’re with
  - Hands relaxed and away from your torso. Create some space between your arms and torso
- **Stillness –** Moving with purpose rather than fidgeting signals control.
- **Strong Eye Contact –** Direct but non-intimidating eye contact asserts dominance.
  - Magnetic eye contact: tense your eyelids for intensity, signal attention, and attractiveness
- **Hand Steepling –** Pressing fingertips together conveys authority.
- **Purposeful Gestures –** Controlled hand movements reinforce your message.
- **Standing Tall –** Good posture with shoulders back enhances presence.

Hardening our lower lid, called “flinty eyes,” “steely eyes,” or “narrowed eyes. is a signal of intensity, judgment, and scrutiny -Vanessa says it signals interest and it’s what attractive men do–

⍰⍰⍰ Explanatory Gestures

- **Numbers**: emphasize your numbers by showing it on your hand.
- **Big or Small**: small or no big deal, hold your fingers an inch apart. Big or important, hold your hands as if holding a beach ball.
- **Me vs. You gesture**: your opinion or something personal, gesture toward yourself, sometimes even touching your heart. When encouraging the audience or speaking about a call to action, gesture toward the audience.

- **Link body parts with meaning:** Highly competent speakers show two different opinions or two different groups with their hands. For example, left hand talking about liberals; right hand when talking about conservatives.
  The audience knows who the speaker is referring to with body language alone

Vocal Cues

❤ Warmth Cues

- **Varied Vocal Tone –** A dynamic voice makes conversations more engaging.
- **Warm, Relaxed Pitch –** A slightly lower but soft tone conveys warmth.
- **Encouraging Sounds ("Mm-hmm," "Ah") –** Shows active listening.
- **Pauses –** Allowing others to respond makes interactions feel balanced.

And I add:

- **Address the desire to bond**
  Ie.: 'Sorry I can't shake your hand' or 'Sending you a hug from here'

⍰⍰ Power Cues

- **Lower Voice Tone –** Deeper voices are perceived as more authoritative.
- **Steady, Controlled Speech –** Avoiding filler words ("um," "uh") shows confidence.
- **Well-Placed Pauses –** Strategic pauses add weight to your words.
  - Pause after a power move, to highlight it and pressure the attacker
- **Speaking in Statements, Not Questions –** Avoiding rising intonation when making statements prevents sounding unsure.

Verbal Cues

❤ Warmth Cues

- **Personalized Greetings –** Using someone's name increases connection.
- **Inclusive Language –** Words like "we" and "together" foster warmth.
- **Compliments and Acknowledgments –** Sincere appreciation strengthens bonds.
- **Warm Greetings & Goodbyes –** "*Sending a hug", "Fist-bumping my camera"*

⍰⍰ Power Cues

- **Concise Language –** Being direct and clear avoids diminishing authority.
- **Definitive Statements –** Avoiding hedging phrases like "I think" or "maybe."
- **Command Phrasing –** "Let's do this" instead of "Should we try this?"
- **Competence Words** such as *brainstorm*, *effective*, *productive*, and *science.*

Facial Expression Cues

❤ Warmth Cues

- **Eyebrow Raise –** A slight lift shows interest and engagement.
- **Soft Eye Contact –** Gentle rather than piercing gaze increases trust.

- **Nodding –** Encourages others to continue speaking.

⍰⍰ Power Cues

- **Neutral, Composed Expression –** Avoiding excessive smiling in serious moments maintains authority.
- **Slow Blinking –** Signals control and patience.
- **Head Held High –** Avoiding excessive tilting downward keeps a strong presence.

CRITICISM

We sometimes analyze nonverbals differently, see an example here:

> **Vanessa**: She should show more signs
> **Lucio**: Her signs were obvious, he had to lead more

And specifically about the book:

Men beware: power matters more

I agree with Vanessa: *both* warmth and competence matter.

Vanessa van Edwards leans more towards warmth, making her an excellent role model for women—especially those who prioritize connection in their interactions.

Vanessa's nonverbals skew more towards warmth. Men who need to gain more power need to keep that in mind

However, for men who want to maximize influence, emphasizing competence and power may be even more crucial. And that's even more true for 'too good men' who naturally come across as agreeable.

So, in general **men ought to prioritize competence and power** -and *especially* nicer men.

Dominant men win elections

Quoting from the *Cues* itself:

> Want to know who will win an election before it happens? Researchers found that voters decide who is more dominant in just one minute of political exchange, and that predicts their vote.

There you have it.
Voters don't decide who is warmer -or nicer-.
They decided based on dominance.

Some strategies needed more power/dominance

For example, Vanessa advises a manager seeking attention and respect to:

- Start with quick updates so 'latecomers won't miss anything crucial'
- Surprise slide with a funny meme

That's not a high power approach.

A stronger alternative: start with the most important updates—those who arrive late will miss them and will learn next time to be on time.

Avoid over-chit-chatting if work is the priority

Little later in the book, she advises that the 'high competence' question while waiting for latecomers is 'anyone listened to any good podcast recently' or 'anyone reading good books'?

This is fair for relaxed workplaces.
But it's a no-no for high-power executives or highly effective workplaces.

Accepting lateness disempowers you and random chit-chats while the boss waits for latecomers is *too* warm -including books and podcasts that Vanessa marks as high competence topics-.

TPM's take: power better represents 'competence'

Since we first implemented Fiske's original research on warmth and competence to social skills, we made a decision.

And we decided to replace 'competence' with 'power'.

The name 'competence' has a positive frame that makes it naive.
Power is more neutral, encompassing both value-giving and value-taking approaches.

Competence, with its positive frame, runs into some issues.
For example, asked whether Trump's yank and pull handshakes was high competence or warmth, Vanessa replied 'neither'.

What she didn't say, but she probably thought, is that Trump's handshake was domineering -and bullying-.

However, we don't run into that issue with the 'power' angle.
We easily fit Trump -and any other domineering and bullying approach- into the extreme version of power.
Extreme power without warmth = *over*-dominance = bullying.

Focus on detecting dark triad traits rather than 'lying cues'

Spotting lies is notoriously unreliable.

It's as likely to help you as it is to sidetrack you.

That's why I prefer this approach:

- **Focus on character**
- **Focus on diverging interest**. Don't worry when interests overlap, careful when they diverge

Vanessa mentions some famous examples of public lies.
All of them are interesting, but Armstrong's example stuck out with me the most.

She says that 'her gut feeling told her something was wrong' and lists a couple of cues.

My thoughts were 'No wonder, the guy is a psychopath'.
It was easier for me since I had the vantage point of knowing Armstrong's history better than most -including what I deemed as shameful behavior, even as a teenager-.

Still, the general concept stands.
And I advise to **focus on reading characters, rather than single and potentially misleading gestures.**
Character is your forest.
Once you see a rotten forest, you know the tree can't be good.

Some examples left me wondering

The examples make the book engaging and accessible to a wide audience.

Vanessa has mentioned her appreciation for Malcolm Gladwell's writing, and her storytelling approach reflects a similar effort to make complex concepts digestible.

But it's difficult to find good and applicable examples, and some of them felt forced.

One above all, NBA player Stockton.
Vanessa says that Stockton's success is because he used nonverbal cues such as gaze and torso direction to show where he was going to pass the ball.

It didn't make much sense to me.

The cues seemed basic -what I'd expect any amateur to do, let alone professionals-.
And I'd expect cues to go both ways: as much as your teammates see them, so do the opponents.

Finally, a good player will also fake often.

Just as I expected, artificial intelligence confirmed my doubts:

Yeah, that claim sounds exaggerated or oversimplified. If she's talking about John Stockton, the NBA all-time leader in assists, his success wasn't just about turning his body toward his target—it was a mix of court vision, decision-making, passing accuracy, and understanding defensive movement.

Why Her Claim Seems Weak:

1. **Basic Body Mechanics:** Turning your toes, torso, and head toward your passing target is just fundamental basketball technique. Nearly every competent player does it at some point, especially on basic passes.
2. **Elite Passers Use Deception:** The best passers (including Stockton) don't always turn fully toward their target. Look-away passes, misdirection, and subtle body movements to manipulate defenders are key parts of high-level play.
3. **Stockton's Real Strengths:** His greatness came from reading defenses, executing quick decision-making, and making pinpoint passes under pressure—not from simply aligning his body.

It's possible she's highlighting a small detail that helps with passing fundamentals, but it's misleading to frame it as the reason for Stockton's success. Sounds more like

Message ChatGPT

> **AI**: Yeah, that claim sounds exaggerated or oversimplified
> (…) turning your toes, torso, and head toward your passing target is just fundamental basketball technique. Nearly every competent player does it (…) The best passers (including Stockton) don't always turn fully toward their target. Look-away passes, misdirection, and subtle body movements to manipulate defenders are key parts of high-level play.

I agree that Vanessa may have been highlight *one* (tiny) element of Stockton's passing success, but it's unlikely to be the only -or even main- reason.

Some quoted research left me wondering

For example, discussing Brian's conversion, she says:

> the open posture won by A LOT. Simply switching to the open posture increased Brian's website conversions by 5.4 percent! That might not sound like much, but in terms of web traffic conversions, it's phenomenal.

An *increase* of 5.4% seems misleading to me.
It probably didn't go from, say, 2% to 7.4%.

It means it went from 2% to 2.1%.
That's something, but it's *not* 'by A LOT' -and not 'phenomenal'-.

Also, looking at the pictures, the open posture of Brian seemed off:

The left side Brian increases conversion by 5.4%. A modest increase, in my opinion, and not too surprising given that Brian, albeit in closed posture, is higher power on the right side.

There was no source to check this.

The popularization of science may come at a scientific cost

I purposefully avoid 'pop-psychology' here because it's often used pejoratively and Vanessa does a great job.

Sometimes though, the popularizing of science can estrange more rigorous learners.

For example, going after 'top line' quantitative numbers impresses readers, but I'm doubtful about how much value they truly add:

> Researchers find that nonverbal signals account for 65 to 90 percent of our total communication
> (…)
> Researchers found that (…) some gestures are so powerful that they carry 400 percent more information!

It's not so much that *researchers* find, but most likely a single *research* found.

Similar to the famous Mehrabian study, I find that top-line quantification add limited value -and may confuse more than enlighten-.

Finally, some sources, including some for 'studies', were from newspapers.

Contextualization would add refinement

Vanessa is well aware that power/warmth cues also depend on context, people, and culture.

And she shares several examples and notes on how to adapt the cues.
This is a strength of *Cues*, and something that I very much appreciated.

In just some cases I'd have added some extra notes as well.
For example, Vanessa says that 'glasses are an instant symbol of competence' -based on her internal study-.

|I bet it depends on the glasses type and age bracket.

I guarantee you that thick glasses for a primary school kid aren't 'competent'.
They're dorky.

Same goes for some general advice like 'be more expressive'.
While that may be valid for most, the *APA Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* says that *moderate* levels of expressiveness best convey your message -ie.: abide the law of optimum balance-.

CONS

- **References to bonuses on her website, for which you must provide your email**

And a few of those quizzes ask your email once again, sometimes then promoting *Cues* which is the reason why you're there in the first place.

- **The video bonuses could have been time-stamped**

To the relevant parts.

PROS

- **Highly Practical:** Van Edwards provides actionable techniques with real-world applications.
- **Well-Structured:** I'm not sure if I'd have followed the same categories, but Vanessa's approach is valid.
- **Engaging Writing Style:** The examples and anecdotes keep the content lively and relatable.
- **Great narrating voice**: Vanessa must have been an actress in a previous life -or will be one in her next one-. She's that good at narrating and mimicking voices -and, in videos, in mimicking various cues-
- **Vanessa embodies her own teachings**: She's warm, engaging, contagiously happy, and a pleasure to listen to -and, probably, also just a great person to be close to-

REVIEW

Cues is an excellent resource for assessing and improving one's presence and nonverbal communication and is backed by the power/warmth framework we also first championed here at TPM.

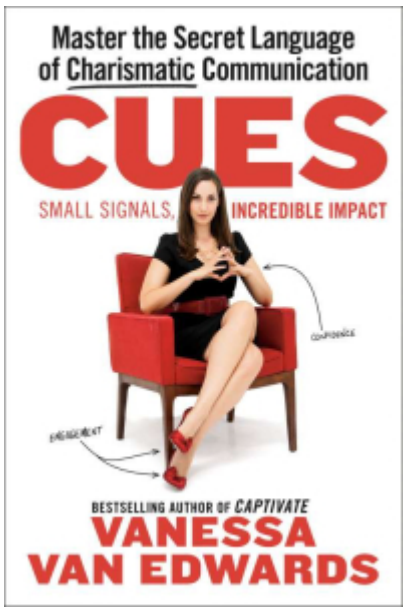
We use a different system in PU.
We prioritize warmth with character and prosocial cues to provide all the benefits of warmth, without the downsides—warmth and submissiveness can dangerously overlap.

But Vanessa allowed me to extend PU's nonverbal cues.
And given how demanding I am for Power University, that's the best compliment I can pay to anyone.

Get this book on Amazon or check the:

- Best body language books
- Best social skills books

Cues Book Summary: The Hidden Language of Power & Warmth



Vanessa Van Edwards' Cues lists and explains the nonverbal and verbal signals that influence how people perceive us by dividing them into two main dimensions: warmth, affecting trust and likability, and competence, affecting power and authority.

URL: Cues Book Summary: The Hidden Language of Power & Warmth

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.2

Why You Can’t Trust AI With Advanced Social Skills

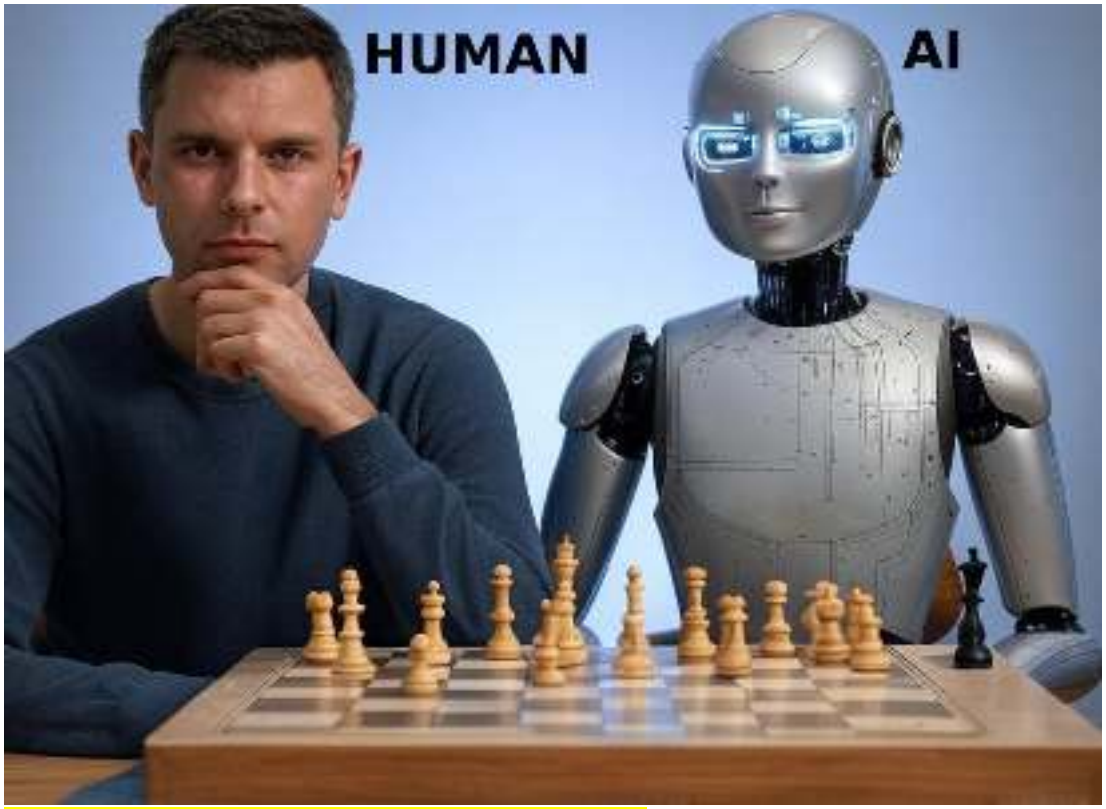
Lucio Buffalmano · 13 March 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Artificial intelligence tools are transforming the world.

These tools can serve as valuable allies in enhancing your social skills, advancing your personal growth, and achieving your ambitions—provided you understand their limitations.

So, when does AI excel, and when does it falter?

Let’s find out:



Can artificial intelligence help you win ‘the game of life’?

Contents

- AI Results: Overview
- Examples
  - ⍰ 1. Business Negotiation Response: OK
  - ⍰ 2. Humorous responses for dating: great
  - ⍰ 3. Relationship advice: average
- Why AI Falls Short
  - When AI Trips The Most
  - ⍰ Example: How to Read People
- Where AI Nails It
- SUMMARY

AI Results: Overview

I've been experimenting with AI tools to improve our offerings.

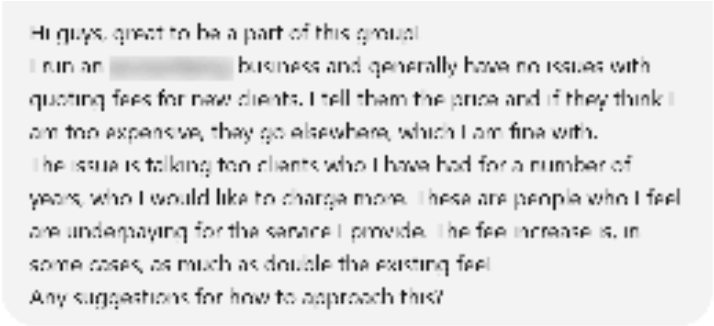
So far, I've used and evaluated it for:

TASK	RESULT
Editing: Improve flow, grammar, and clarity for our posts and Power University lessons	**9/10**, this is its bread and butter. One point shy of 10 for over-correcting TPM's nomenclature, and minor slippages
Editing 2: Tighten sentences for brevity and readability, while preserving meaning	**8/10**, needed careful supervision, including editing or ignoring some advice, but overall great work
Contempt improvements: Ask what we may add or remove for added value for students, 'uniqueness', and thoroughness	**7/10**, some great ideas amidst largely generic advice. Think of it as 'finding diamonds in the rough'. And better for cutting, than adding.
Comparison: Added value of TPM material compared to available sources	**6/10**, valid analyses, but it's either we *always* came out on top, or it was too complimentary :)
Coaching: Unique real-life situations that required advanced approaches, strategies, and techniques	**5/10**, good for general guidance, lacking in specific, advanced, and nuanced responses ("PC," "nice guys responses", lower-power, sometimes naive)

Examples

Let's review some real-life examples of AI's capabilities:

1. Business Negotiation Response: OK


Hi guys, great to be a part of this group!
I run an [redacted] business and generally have no issues with quoting fees for new clients. I tell them the price and if they think I am too expensive, they go elsewhere, which I am fine with.
The issue is talking too clients who I have had for a number of years, who I would like to charge more. These are people who I feel are underpaying for the service I provide. The fee increase is, in some cases, as much as double the existing fee!
Any suggestions for how to approach this?

Raising prices for long-term clients—especially by a significant amount—requires a careful approach to minimize resistance, maintain goodwill, and ideally, retain as many clients as possible. Here's how to do it effectively:

1. Frame It as a Business Necessity, Not Just a Price Hike

People accept price increases more easily when they understand the reason. Instead of simply announcing a higher fee, position it as an adjustment due to:

- Increased costs (e.g., inflation, software, compliance, staff)
- Enhanced service quality (more expertise, faster response, better tools)
- Market alignment (your prices now reflect industry standards)

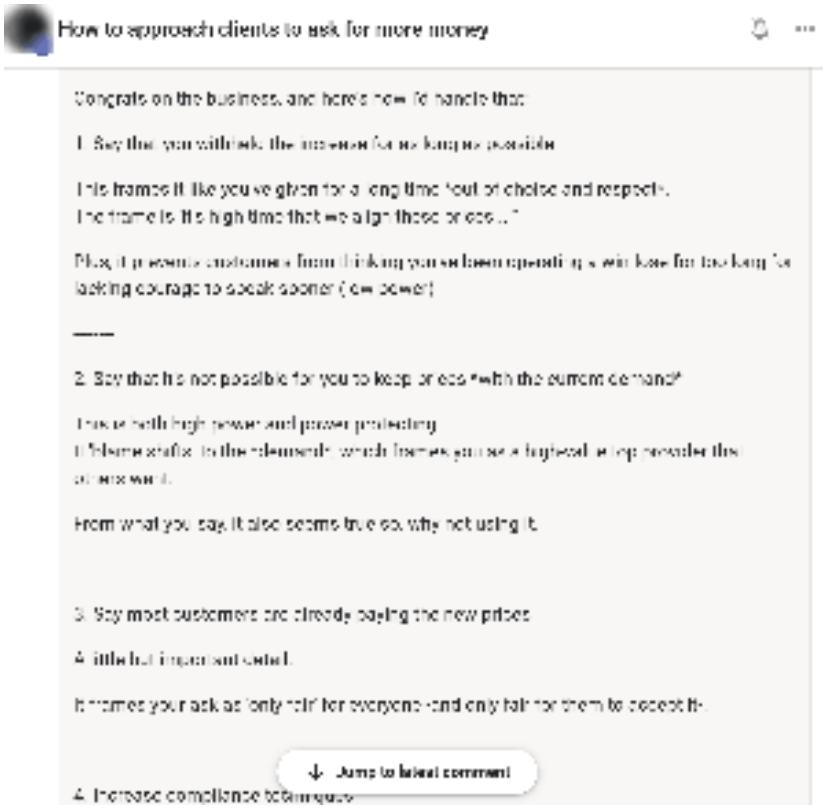
> **Question**: How can I raise prices for old customers?
> **AI Response**: Frame it as a business necessity

Some good general principles.
But it **misses the opportunity to showcase value.**

Instead, it showcases averageness:

- Blaming the increases on your costs ⍰ Justifying.
- Aligning prices with industry standards ⍰⍰ You aren't any better than everyone else

My answer provided a higher level of sophistication, showcasing honorable character, and value:



> **Lucio**: Say that you withheld an increase for as long as possible <— Frames you as a giver
> Frame the increase as driven by demand <— Uses the scarcity principle at its most powerful
> Say most customers are already paying the new prices <— The 'principle of fairness', that most people (righteously) accept

And more techniques below that.
Just a different level, increasing conversion, appreciation, and value all at the same time.

⍰ 2. Humorous responses for dating: great

On the positive, AI was fantastic in suggesting 'humorous' replies

> **Her**: I'm with my girls right now <— I saw the opportunity for teasing
> **Me**: LOL I like how call them 'my girls' :) <— Good one, highlighting her 'boss power move'
> **Her**: hahaa why <— Likes it. But at this point

After that though I couldn't think on the fly on how to add to the tease with humor.
And AI suggested the perfect responses.

Beware, however—this doesn't imply AI excels at dating.
It doesn't equip you with high-power approaches that make women swoon and fall in love.

Even in this example, ChatGTP wouldn't have advised to quit texting and invite her out.
But I knew that, and how to take it from there :).

But still, for this specific use case on humorous responses, it was fantastic.

And helpful for me, as I've never excelled at humor.

⍰ 3. Relationship advice: average

It did slightly worse for dating and relationships:

My ex has asked me to stay at her house with our kid unt[illegible]. I live [illegible] hours away and means I'll be home late. Do I have the right to ask her what she's doing until then? Or how do I approach this without her getting shitty with me?

A good response balances asserting your needs while avoiding unnecessary conflict. Here are a few strategic approaches:

1. Frame It as a Logistics Question

Instead of making it about her plans, focus on how the timing affects you:

- *"Hey, I saw you asked me to stay until [illegible]. That means I'll be getting home quite late. Is there any flexibility on the time?"*

This keeps it neutral and practical. If she gives a reason, you'll get insight into her plans without directly asking.

2. Offer an Alternative

If [illegible] inconvenient, suggest an earlier handover:

- *"Would it work to switch the handover to earlier [illegible] the day? That way, I can get home at a reasonable time."*

> **Question**: My ex asked me to babysit for longer, do I have the right to ask her what she's to?
> **AI Response**: Ask if there is flexibility, and offer alternatives (and a few more standard ideas)

In this case, it defaulted to the general principles of:

- **Give her privacy and freedom**, valid for avoiding social faux pas and preventing controlling behavior
- **Find a middle ground**, valid negotiation principles for resolving issues without antagonism

Valid principles… But somewhat more obvious.

Our asker *knew* already that a controlling approach wasn't cool, and that he could ask for a middle ground.

AI's advice is helpful lower EQ men and abusive types who over-seek control -but these wouldn't ask or take advice anyway-.

But it fails at these levels:

- **Average nice guy approaches**, Advice for 'good men' who struggle to gain women's devotion and maintain attraction over the long-term.
- **Misses possible deeper issues** such as jealousy from emotional attachment, and her levels of respect.
- **Misses how to gather intel strategically, yet high-power**. Without sub-communicating 'nosiness', fear, or a too strong desire for control that would (rightfully) raise her guard up.
- **Misses frame control strategies** in case she pushed back. That's crucial to (re)gain respect

Why AI Falls Short

AI is great whenever:

- **High-quality information is abundant**

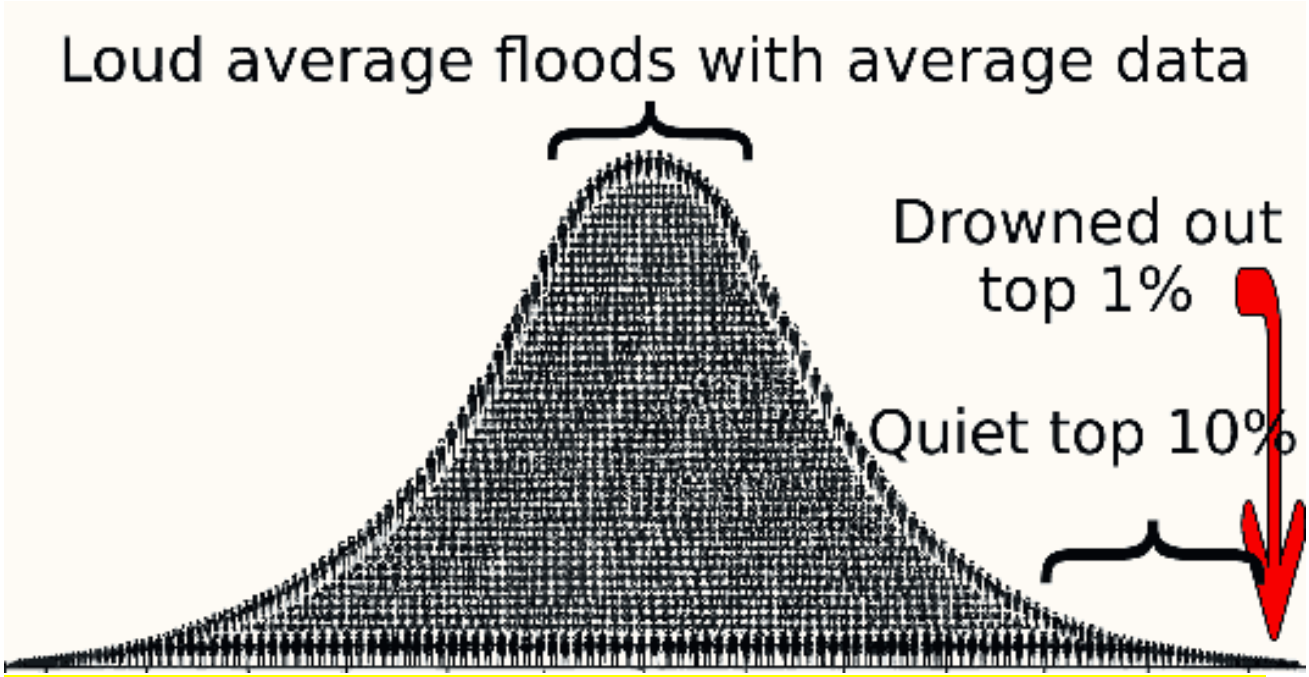
- **Expertise is easily recognizable**
- **Consensus emerges**
- **General principles apply to most or all cases**

While quantitative disciplines and codified data suit AI perfectly, social skills are less mechanistic.

In most social situations, nuance is key.
And specific situations call for general principles to be calibrated, or sometimes even overturned.

That's where AI may struggle:

When AI Trips The Most



The majority floods data sets with average responses. If the top 1% doesn't speak, AI provides average solutions. It's the 'garbage in, garbage out' principle.

The characteristics of some disciplines and human endeavors intrinsically send down AI the wrong path.
They are:

- **High discernment is required**, like effective social strategies
- **Many (averagely skilled) people create content**, as it's the case for dating and relationships
- **Expertise is hard to assess**. Without personal experience, AI relies on logic and 'citations'. But one externally wrong argument can be perfectly internally logical. And as '*Lying With Statistics*' shows, sometimes the most deceitful source brings the most citations
- **Experts may never share (or even purposefully confuse)**. As it's the case for some Machiavellian approaches, where experts either *use* the wisdom themselves and keep quiet, or actively sidetrack others
- **Scientific guidance struggles at the individual level**. Despite many enlightening frameworks, social science studies can only cover a tiny portion of limitless real-life situations one can encounter
  - Exceptions abound
- **Ethical considerations & 'political correctness' safeguards**, some of which may even be fair, may obfuscate

or hide the most effective responses

In these cases, AI can't easily sidestep quantity and go for proven quality.

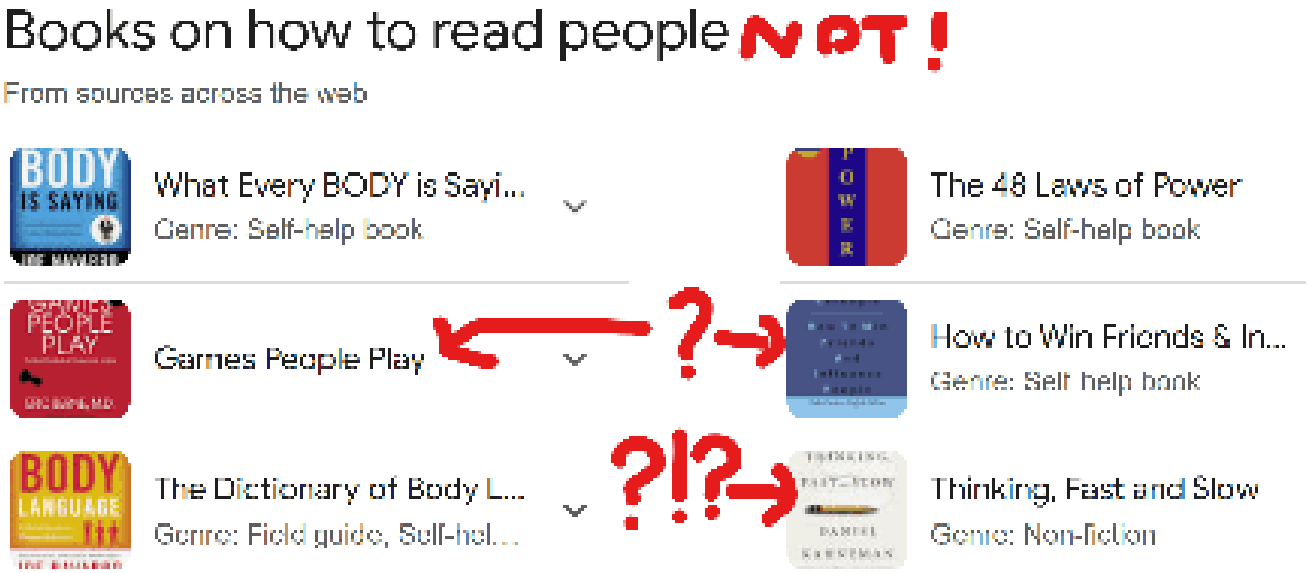
And when AI must fall back on quantity, **the 'wisdom of the crowds' fails when the crowd has limited wisdom**. Or, to be more precise, the wisdom of the crowd is the wisdom of the average man.

I've noticed AI often reverts to bland, average advice like 'share your concerns with him openly and assertively'. This is great when you're dealing with quality people in cooperative relationships.
But it's *terrible* strategy when competing at work or when dealing with manipulators

⍰ Example: How to Read People

I wrote this post on the 'spur of the moment' as an off-shoot from another article.

In a yet-to-be-plubished list of 'best books on how to read people' I was cautioning against AI recommendations. After researching the "best books on reading people," here's what I found:



The AI results for 'best books to read people' provided ZERO books on reading personalities. Likely because it prioritized popularity, picking from unqualified sources

There wasn't a SINGLE book I'd consider great for reading people.

Some of them weren't even about reading people at all.
There is *nothing* in '*Thinking Fast and Slow*' about reading people.

It seems like AI picked from the list of *popular* psychology books, rather than *great* book on how to read people.

The proposed list in general is heavy on body language books.
That's at least closer to the topic.

But body language reads people *in the moment*, mostly in *transitory states*. Instead, it's far more useful to read people in their *stable*, long-term traits and dispositions.

For example, if you want to avoid toxic people as friends or wives, you don't care whether they're sitting confident. Instead, you want to read the red flags of a taker personality.

Where AI Nails It

AI probably works well for beginner-level guidance on high-level issues.

I haven't tested it as extensively because it's not part of our core teachings here.
But from what I've seen it works for questions such as:

- **How to overcome social anxiety**, since studies and proven approaches abound
- **Conversation openers**, since it's hard to go wrong *as long you deliver it well*
- **How to keep a conversation going when you run out of things to say**, since countless guides online provide good enough advice on these topics

My issue with these is that the answer will *stop* at the basics.

And those basics aren't very helpful to achieve life-relevant goals.

For example, your goal is not to 'keep conversations alive', but to make great friends, high-value connections, or get girlfriends.

'Running out of things to say' doesn't even feature as a possible issue for me because 'conversing' is not a goal.
If I 'run out of things to say' it means I'm not interested enough.
The *last* thing I want is to keep conversing.

The question itself on 'not running out of things to say' comes from the wrong frame of mind.
Remember: high-value men don't waste time with random chit-chat.
Read more here:

- **Should beginners start with more advanced material?**

> Should Beginners Start With Power University?

But for a beginner, maybe, it can be a fair start.

SUMMARY

Human ingenuity is stunning.

The world hadn't yet finished exploring and implementing all the breakthroughs of the Internet revolution, and we're now already facing a new seismic change.

AI changed and will change the world in ways we can't yet predict.
And it will only improve.

Yet, when it comes to human behavior and strategies, AI faces structural and substantial limitations that are challenging to overcome.

Up until now, that means that AI is delivering average advice and coaching.

For those aiming to surpass mediocrity and achieve top-10% status, respect, and attraction, the solution is **Power University**.

Self-Protection in Love and Business, Without Losing Trust

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 March 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Betrayal can strike anywhere—a partner's infidelity or a business deal gone wrong can leave you reeling.

At The Power Moves, we've mastered power dynamics and smart social strategies for enjoying relationships and cooperation while staying secure and without losing trust.

This guide shows you **how to protect yourself** in relationships and business, weaving **win-win strategies** with emotional resilience and smart planning.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- Two Pillars of Self-Protection
- 1. Mental Self-Protection
  - ♂ She May Cheat… Her Loss
- 2. Practical Self-Protection
  - 1. Prevention
  - 2. Tools & Techniques
  - 3. Smart Vigilance
  - 4. Covert Control
  - 5. Contingency Planning
- It's Not Cynicism, It's Peace of Mind
  - Business: self-protection is a duty
  - Relationships: self-protection strengthens relationships
- Key Takeaways
  - Learn More

Two Pillars of Self-Protection

The two main pillars are mental and practical:

- **Mental Strength**
  - Awareness of betrayal risks
  - Comfort with possible cheating (emotional resilience)
    “Hopefully, it’ll go well—if not, I’ll manage.”
  - Optimism, self-esteem, self-confidence
    “One door shuts, another swings open.”

- **Practical Prep**
  - Lower betrayal odds
  - Trust but verify
  - Plan contingencies

1. Mental Self-Protection

Balance these mindsets for **relationship trust** and beyond:

1. **Trust enough to collaborate** or get emotionally close
2. **Never trust blindly**, discounting the possibility of cheating or hurt

Emotional resilience is your inner shield, often reducing the need for external defenses.

Research from the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology shows proactive coping cuts emotional distress by preparing you for setbacks, while the American Psychological Association links this mindset to better mental health outcomes.

It’s about staying antifragile—stronger through adversity.

Two examples:

♂ She May Cheat… Her Loss

Lucio:
I once moved in with an ex to her new place.

Not wanting to assemble furniture (provider's job), her ex helped. (Quite humiliating for him, BTW).

Knowing what I knew, I considered their hookup odds low-ish.
But not *extremely* low, and certainly not zero. <— Realistic approach

Knowing they hooked up would have hurt me.
But not to the point of anguish.
And with antifragile self-esteem, even if she cheated, I'd still think of myself as a top guy and option.

I could live with that possibility and still like her and the relationship. <— Still maintaining the win-win

I thought about options to confirm, but never felt the need to. <— Mental empowerment saved time and effort

What can happen, after all? <— Worst-case preparation
It'd hurt, I'd have to end it… But I'll be fine. (And it will be cool to be back in the game).

Empowered quote:

> **Trust is not about trusting her, it's about trusting yourself to handle the pain**
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

Business Risk Management: When a Handshake Works—a deal I sealed with a trusted partner, no contract needed, thanks to mental prep.

2. Practical Self-Protection

Here's are self-protection strategies to win, no matter what:

1. Prevention

Among the foundational and proven prevention strategies:

- **Pick trustworthy people**, as research shows that people differ
  See 'how to recognize a taker' and 'how to pick loyal woman'
  - Test loyalty: Ask for a small favor—do they follow through with effort or flake?
    For dating see 'shit tests'

- **Evaluate situations** for (changing) incentives
  ⍰ Find out when cheating is most likely

- **Design smart systems**
  - Cut weak links: Tighten your circle—fewer players, less risk
  - Distributary systems of key information: Multiple contacts mean no single failure point—avoid bottlenecks where a single bad manager can screw your business
  - Attract the best: In dating, skip flashy cash that lures gold diggers. In business, lead with a strong mission that attracts missionaries.

- **Diversify risks**:
  Ie.: One frenemy won't sting if you've got solid friends.
  Also see 'how to spot a frenemy'

P.S.:
Never forget, **the biggest self-protection is becoming a higher quality man**.
Especially for relationships: women don't leave men they love.

2. Tools & Techniques

Some staples of self-protection include:

- **Asset diversification**
- **Asset shielding**
- **Prenups**
- **Pay yourself first**
- **Detectives** and background checks

But remember, tools are only as useful as the mind who wields them.
Strategic foresight beats quick fixes.
Become a strategic thinker, not a 'pay for security and forget' type of guy.

Also see:

- How to be a good Machiavellian

3. Smart Vigilance

Paranoia boosts safety but has big downsides.

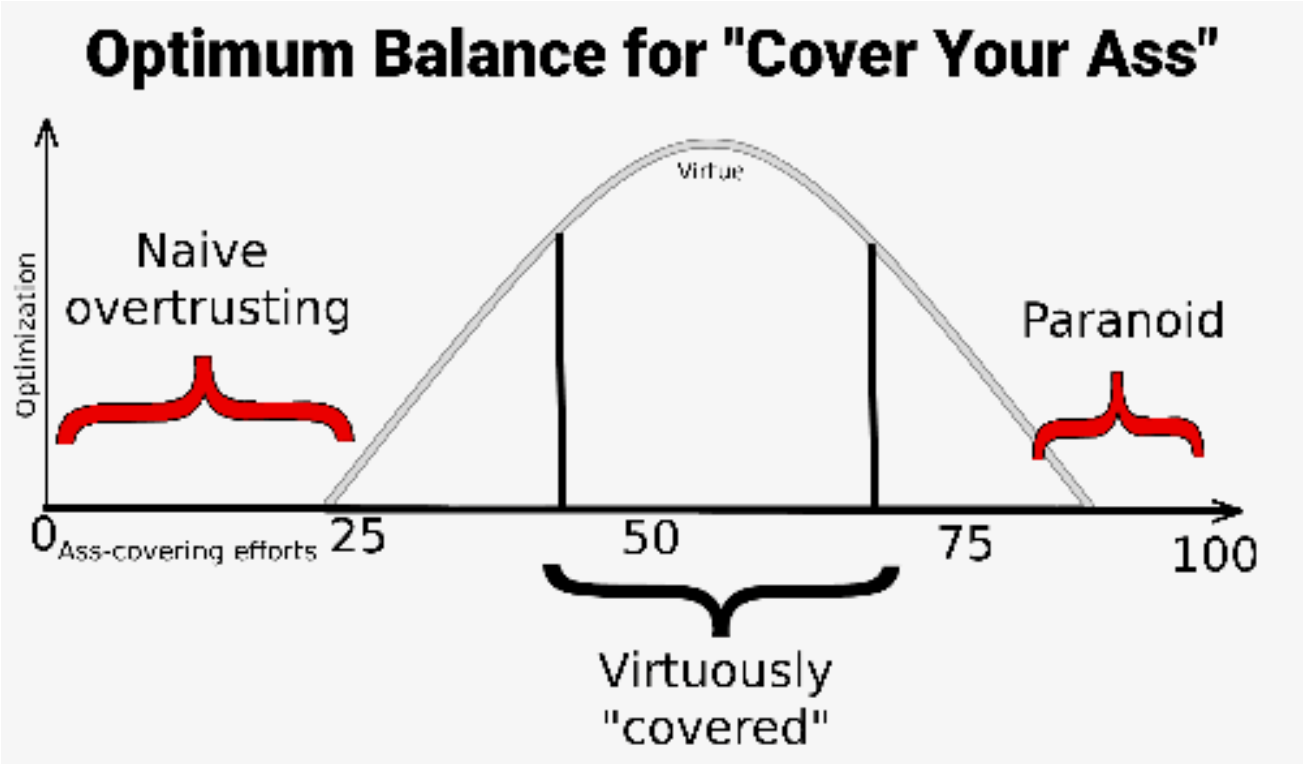
It lowers life quality, worsens relationships, demotivates teams, and **heavy control signals fear and lower value**.
Paranoia is even bad for health.

Here's the smarter approach:

1. **Strike the optimum balance**—use fear as a siganl, don't let fear rule
2. **Prioritize key risks**, relax on the small stuff—like checking a contract but not every email
3. **Control discreetly**—keep morale high while in your teams and sub-communicate you're a high-value man

3.1. Healthy Caution

A good balance of caution, without becoming paranoid:



Balance your vigilance

3.2. Focus Where It Counts

High-stakes areas demand extra vigilance—here's where to double down:

- **Marriage** (divorce risk)
  - Vet her thoroughly—values, not just vibes
  - Live-in—do you really need to make this step?
  - Secure a prenup—protection, not distrust
- **Intimate relationships** (paternity doubts)
  - Kids before vows—delay legal ties
  - Check loyalty—watch actions, not words
  - DNA test discreetly—peace of mind without drama
- **Work**
  - Stay legally clean—paper trails save you
  - Collect proof quietly—emails, receipts, proof of work
    See 'how to dispatch a bad boss'

4. Covert Control

Machiavellian-style control—subtle, effective, and well-framed:

4.1. Smart Framing

Compare:

✖ *"We have cameras so people cannot steal"* ⁉ We don't trust you ➡ Morale drops

VS:

✅ *"Cameras are needed for insurance, unfortunately"* ⁉ We trust our people ➡ Team thrives

4.2. Strategically Hidden Verification

Take paternity testing for peace of mind as an example.

Most likely, it's your child.

But if you tell her you want to take a patersnity test, you show mistrust that will harm the relationshp.
This approach lacks power protection, and offends her.
And frames your relationship as a relationship lacking trust.

Worst yet, you sub-communicate fear and low confidence, which harms your leadership—and the relationship as well.

So… Do it quietly.

5. Contingency Planning

Contingency planning helps you land on your feet, no matter what.

- **Safety cushion**: Stash cash for emergencies—6 months' worth is a solid start
- **Network backup**: Line up job contacts—think LinkedIn connections ready to vouch and refer
- **Solid friends**: Loyal and empathic friends are your safety net for rough patches—you'll be grateful when you need someone to listen.
  See 'How to make quality friends'
- **Big commitment Plan B**: Don't enter any big commitment without knowing what you'll do in case it doesn't work.
  Ie.: Map your exit if marriage flops—know your next address
- **Keep an eye open for backup options.** Don't cheat or be ready to abandon existing commitments ⁉. But be aware of 'market conditions' and stay on top of your market value.
- **Know your next move**, right after a fallout
  Ie.: know where and how you'll meet women if you breakup. Know who you'll contact first if laid off.

Bonus: Build self-reliance—thrive solo, and you won't even need any contingecy.

Shield up… And eyes on the field

It's Not Cynicism, It's Peace of Mind

It's not cynicism.

It's **an essential approach for any honorable man who wants to win**, without being a cheat himself.

Business: self-protection is a duty

Trust but verify, a phrase coined by Ronald Reagan, is a cornerstone of risk management.

Doing anything else is business malpractice. A dereliction of duty towards shareholders, employees, and even the world at large.

Cheating cuts deep into businesses' bottom line.
Statistics reveal that businesses lose 5% of revenue to fraud annually. And that doesn't even account for the countless, founders, abd employees screwed over by co-founders, investors, or bosses.

So be smart, and secure your work.

Relationships: self-protection *strengthens* relationships

Intimate relationships may be even riskier.

About 20% of married men and 13% of women admit to infidelity. And that's probably an underestimation based on *admission*.

Our take is not about complaining or getting paranoid though.
Paranoia is weak. It turns toxic and controlling, not the type of eagles we develop here.

Our take is about empowerment, giving you control in an unpredictable world.

Mental empowerment and smart self-protection strengthen relationships because they make you a better

leader.
Smart self protection wins you peace of mind. And **instead of worrying about risks you can focus on making that relationship stronger**. And you can display relationship-positive confidence.

And remember: the best self-protection is a devoted woman.

Of course, not every relationship demands a backup plan; many thrive on mutual goodwill.
But making sure is better than hoping for the best.

When stakes rise—think marriage, partnerships, or big investments—these tactics ensure you're never caught off guard.

Key Takeaways

1. **Know betrayal's possible**
2. **Stay cool with it**
3. **Pursue win-win** anyway
4. **Trust but verify**
5. **Plan backups**—you'll be fine

Learn More

- How to be a good Machiavellian
- How to maintain longer-term attraction

Or when you're ready to become an empowered winner, check **Power University**—our proven system for social mastery and unshakable resilience.

Master First Impressions: Handshakes, Intros, & Social Confidence

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 April 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Whether you're meeting someone new or navigating a group setting knowing how to make a good first impression is a fundamental life skill.

At The Power Moves, we taught thousands of men to decode power dynamics for social confidence and life success.

In this article, you'll discover practical handshake tips, body language first impression strategies, and social confidence tips to master introductions like a pro.

Let's dive in.

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- Let Them See You Cool
- 2. Approach Others High-Power & High-Warm
- 3. Extend Your Arm After Eye Contact, Within 2 Meters
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- 5. Lead & Control The Conversation (If Appropriate)
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- 7. Disempowering Openers
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Let Them See You Cool

Research shows that first impressions matter, and last.

And a good first impression begins when they first see you, *before* you even say hi.

So:

- Dress well
- Adopt cool body language poses
- Look busy or chill, never bored

⁉ **Tip**: Avoid burying your nose on the phone while waiting.

See:

- High-power body language
- Re-empower yourself if they make you wait

> Alpha Male Body Language: 7 Poses to Gain Status

2. Approach Others High-Power & High-Warm

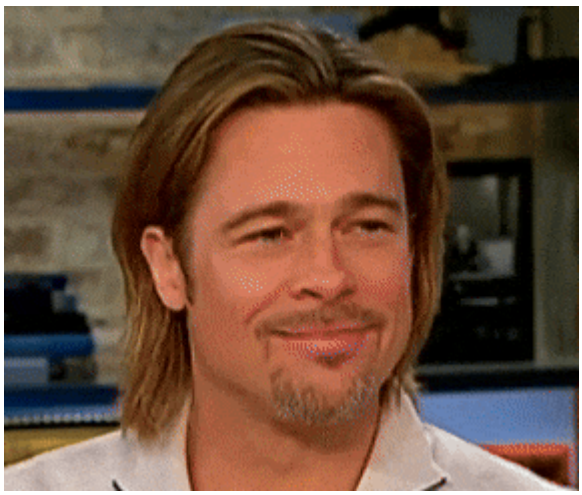
High power gives you respect, while high warmth gives you friends and allies.

We explain the tactics in other articles, but knowing how to make a good first impression starts with the right mindset:

- I'm a great guy
- I expect good interactions
- I start with the best foot forward
- … But it's on them to show me they deserve more

That last one prevents you fall prey of takers and toxic people.

⁉ Example:



> **Brad Pitt**: (slight tight-lipped smile, deep and neutral voice, nodding up) Thanks Charlie

⬆ You can be friendlier than Pitt
Pitt prioritizes power over friendliness. As long as you're a respect-worthy man, you can be warmer, talk more, and also nod down—without overdoing it.
⍰⍰ Nod slowly for extra power in your body language first impression.

Also read:

- Mastering power and warmth for maximizing status and relationships

3. Extend Your Arm After Eye Contact, Within 2 Meters

One of our top handshake tips:

Make eye contact before introducing yourself and extending your arm.

If you don't, the frame is that you're looking for them, while they ignore you. You want them and chase them, and they don't care.
That frames you as lower status, and you don't want that.

If he hasn't noticed you and you want to approach, raise your hand and shake once he acknowledges you.

⍰ Example:

> **Lower status**: (Approaches unacknowledged, leans in, palms up, bowing, nods, exits) <— Extending too far in advance is too warm, over-extending signals over-deference, and approaching unacknowledged suggests chasing.

4. Firm Handshake, 2 Pumps, Eye Contact, & Smile

The handshake per se is simple.

For a strong body language first impression you only need:

- **Firm handshake**, two pumps in the West
- **Eye contact**—while avoiding looking down
- **Smile** to add warmth

Some people look down to locate their hands.
But if you overdo it, can still look submissive, even if you don't intend it to.

 Example:

⬆ **Low power handshake**
Looks down too much, too long sits un-masculine, clasps Trump's hand too weakly

Compare now:

⬆ **Much better, but you can loosen the arm grip**
Too strong clasp on the arm, but it's only because he came prepared this time. Overall, still much better

⁉ **Tip**: Use peripheral vision or a quick glance to spot his hand and avoid staring down—one of our favorite handshake tips.

More?
⁉ **Two examples** of back-to-back introductions: one low-confidence looking down, and one eye-confidence making eye contact with a taller man.

5. Lead & Control The Conversation (If Appropriate)

Signaling value early on is crucial, and the best way of doing it is with sub-communication and behavior.

Here are good ways to lead and signal social confidence:

- **Initiate** the introduction
  - Add one power move if they initiate, like placing your other hand on the arm or wrist
- **Ask the first question**
- **Control topic transitions**
- **Control the ending move**, end it yourself, or add someone else to your group

⚠ **Calibrate: let them lead if they're legitimate leaders**
Don't try to over-power legitimate leaders or higher-ranking people like bosses, mentors, event hosts, etc. Display power and gain their respect, but respect them too by not threatening their legitimate leadership.

Learn more about calibration:

- **How to learn social calibration**

⍰ Example

I was recording approaches for Seduction University when someone greeted me as if we were friends.

I wanted to gain more control without being cold, a key skill in how to make a good first impression:

Taking The Lead: High-Power, High-Warmth

⍰ (Exclusive real-life example from Power University)⍰

Him: Lucio?
Me: (warm tone and expression) Hey, hi man! Who are you <— Straight talk
Him: Joe <— Gained the intel I wanted
Me: Oh Joe, nice meeting you man <— Leading the intro
(…)
Me: How are you doing man <— Keeps leading

Also read:

- Frame control introduction
- Frame control techniques

6. Grab The Spotlight If It's A Group Interaction

Some social confidence tips to stand out in a group:

- **Walk to the front**

To avoid over-powering the hosts, say: "*I move here so we can better see each other*".
⍰⍰♂ My experience: hosts treated me as an equal and several people came to me after that, including women.

- **Speak louder than most**

No need to yell, but most people speak too quietly to be well-heard by all.

- **Crack a joke if possible**

No need to over-sweat it, but if something witty comes up, it sub-communicates social confidence with high power and warmth.

- **Present yourself interestingly**

For example, share an interesting tidbit of information:

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Grab attention and display confidence**

(audio file in our program)

> **Me**:
> Name is Lucio <— Instead of ‘my name is… ‘: grabs attention by breaking expectations
>
> I help good men become life winners <— Intriguing
>
> And I achieved my goal of… <— Everyone’s interested in goal achievements
>
> 10k in under 1h <— Shares information relevant to a group of runners

Result:
Several people approached me later about both my job and timed runs. More than one said I sounded ‘confident’—probably volume and body language since tonality can further improve.

Self-defense

Domineering men often start with a power move, but you can counter it.

To defend:

1. Prevent it

Use high-power body language and social status strategies to set the tone *before* you even introduce yourself.

2. Prepare: See It Coming

The odds of handshake power moves rise with:

1. Scowls

2. Puffed out chests
3. Loudness
4. Attention craving

⍰ Example

Trump's pose right after he shoved a prime minister:

Sub-communication All eyes on me, I'll out-dominate people standing in the way

Solutions:

1. Don't go to them first <— Expect to be semi-ignored and used as a 'social peg' if you do!
2. Lower warmth, increase power
3. Get ready for power moves

3. Defend Against Power Moves

Including these handshake tips to stay in control:

- **Palm down upper hand**
  Solutions:
  - Offer a different handshake like fistbump or high-five
  - Offer a vertical hand instead of taking a palm down
  - Rotate his hand vertical, adding 'Let's keep the handshake neutral'

- **Patting your hand**
  Solution:
  - Pat him back on the arm or shoulder

- **Yank and pull**, a Trump's staple

Solutions:
- Get physically closer
- Plant your feet or put one in front of you
- Place a controlling hand on their arm (see Trudeau above)

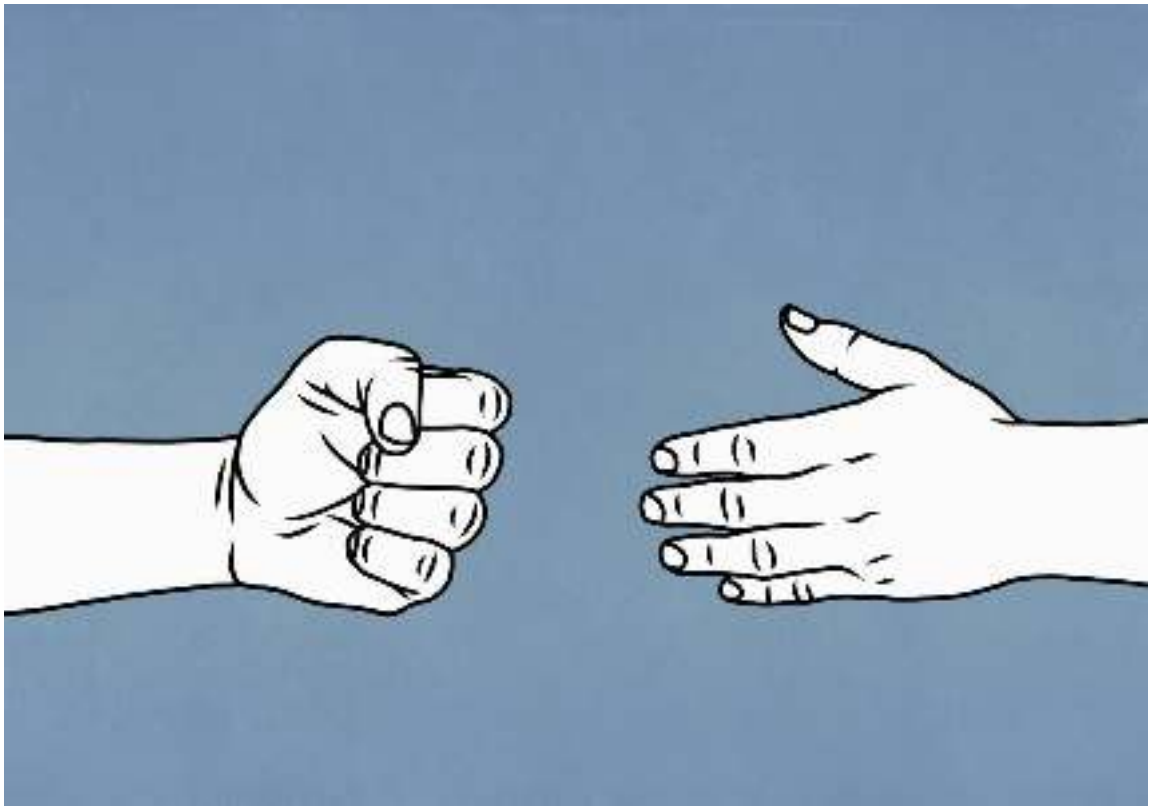
These always work too:

- **Display disapproval**
  ▯ Abe with Trump

- **Surface the power move** with a comment or joke Ie.:
  - *"Bro, easy with the squeeze"*
  - After a yank: "*Dude, are you trying to take me home or something*" <— ▯▯♂ This was my winning move in a real-life scenario. The whole group laughed, and the jerk turned submissive

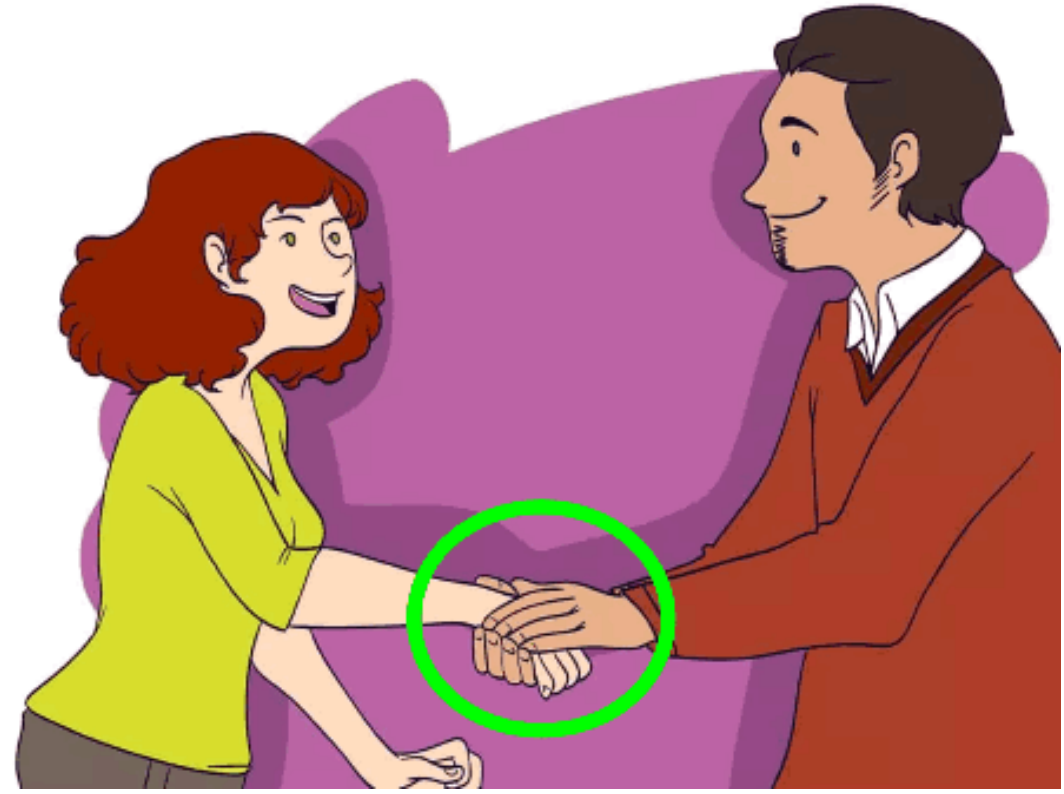
- **Touch him**
  - Cup his hand
    ▯ Video + analysis
  - Touch his elbow
  - Place a hand on his forearm

- **Intense stare** like Macron did <— Balance! Macron was confrontational and pushed Trump into revenge mode, here



Offer a fistbump

Touch elbow



Cup the hand

5. Fix Wrong Names

Deliberate mispronunciation and demanding perfect pronunciation are power moves that can lower your status.

Handle it like this:

- **Correct wrong pronunciation a couple of times**, then move on.

⍰⍰♂I sometimes move on with a smile and say ‘Close enough’

- **Try to get their name right once or twice**. Then move on. Say ‘We’ll get it with time’

Don’t over-try: it’s high effort and expands your failures

⍰ Example

A dominant response for people who over-insist:

> **Her**: (teaches pronunciation with teacher frame)
> **Him**: (doesn’t try and calls the toast) <— If he kept trying he’d follow her lead and over-invest, losing power and status. Instead, he leads

Learn more:

- When people pretend to forget you
- When people mispronounce your name

5.2. Reject Their Nickname of Choice

Most nicknames are dismissive.

Assertiveness works well by simply telling people you prefer your real name.
An option I like is to display more power and self-respect with something like “*Why would I want a name that’s not mine*“.

If it’s your boss, you can power-protect saying that ‘it would diminish you with your colleagues and make it harder for you to do your job’.

6. Defuse The “Giver/Taker” Frame

Example in business networking:

> **Him**: How can I help you? <— ⍰⍰ I’m the value giver, you need me
> **You**: Thank you for saying that, maybe we can both help each other, let’s see

Learn more about these foundational dynamics in:

- **Social exchange dynamics**

7. Disempowering Openers

Principles to maintain control:

- **Guard personal information early on**, unless *you* decide to share
- **Make it an exchange**, never let others grill you
- **Reject power moves** including tasks, challenges, or

⍰ Examples:

- **Personal questions**
  - “*How much you make*” ➡ *“Too early to ask that”*
  - “*What’s your job*” ➡ *“Why are you asking”*

- **Overly direct**
  - "*Who are you*" ➡ *"A guy"*
  - "*What are you selling*" ➡ *"What makes you think I'm selling anything"*

⁉ **Calibrate the dominance**: deflect to maintain rapport, but feel free to be blunter if you can (ie.: 'none of your business')

Learn more:

⁉ **How to handle direct questions** while keeping rapport: examples
⁉ **Strategy over dominance** to enforce boundaries with high-value men, while still preserving rapport

⁉ Example: The Tasking Colleague

John shares this example in a hospital setting:

1. **Colleague had to report** about a patient <— You're "power up"
2. **He tasked me** to call on his available time <— *He* must deliver the info, not task you to chase at his convenience
3. **I tasked him** back to report 'at his convenience' <— Resets the correct dynamics
4. **He called, and he's much nicer** -even submissive <— As it should be

John adds that if he complied, the relationship would be set as convenient *to him*. And he's right.
Early power dynamics 'cement' fast and set the frame for future exchanges—and for the relationship.

Learn more in:

- How to handle tasking

⁉ **Power Move: Look Away To Display Disapproval**

Eye contact sub-communicates base-level confidence, but also consideration.

Deliberate looking away displays disapproval and superiority.

⁉ Example:

♟ **Calibrate it!**
Zero eye contact = *high* disrespect. A good balance is a tight lip smile, *little* eye contact, without angling your face away.

Learn More: Master Social Success

That's the blueprint for owning your introductions and beyond—small moves that add up to big wins in status and respect.

If you're ready to take it further, Power University is where it all comes together.

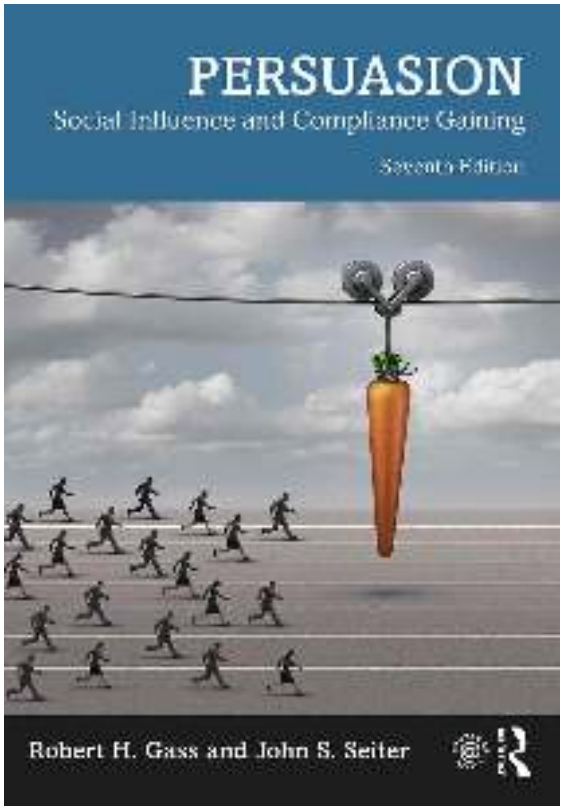
It's our flagship program designed to transform good guys into high-quality men—equipping you with the tools to project unshakable confidence, earn respect effortlessly, and spark attraction without even trying.

The journey from first impressions to lasting impact starts with **Power University**.

Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining – Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 April 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining (2022) by Robert H. Gass and John S. Seiter provides a deep dive into the mechanics of influence, blending theory with real-world applications. This article distills the book's core insights, focusing on practical takeaways.



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Exec Summary

- Your **credibility is crucial, increase it**
- **Save face to increase compliance**, especially if they're higher status
- NLP is hogwash

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Robert H. Gass is a professor of Communication Studies with a focus on persuasion, social influence, and political rhetoric.
John S. Seiter is a professor of Communication who specializes in influence, deception, and intercultural communication.

1. What's Persuasion?

Persuasion is still as much an art as it is a science.

Human nature is complex and our understanding of persuasion is still too limited.

However, the inverse is also true.
Persuasion is not just an art; it's also a science.

And we can better persuade if we understand the science.

Definition of persuasion:

> Persuasion involves one or more persons who are engaged in the activity of creating, reinforcing, modifying, or extinguishing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, and/or behaviors within the constraints of a given communication context.

Persuasion is about long-term influence, while compliance gaining is about immediate agreement.

- **Persuasion** involves changing someone's attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors over time.
- **Compliance Gaining** is more immediate and focuses on getting a person to say *yes* to a specific request.

Types of Influence

- **Persuasion –** A voluntary process where people change attitudes or behavior due to logical, emotional, or ethical appeals.
- **Coercion –** Uses force or threats to change behavior.
- **Manipulation –** Uses deception or psychological tricks to influence others.
- **Propaganda –** Often one-sided messaging designed to shape opinions in a biased way.

⍰ Practical Application:

- **Use "Nudges"**: Subtle cues can influence behavior (e.g., placing fruit at eye level to increase fruit consumption)
- **Use Opinion Leaders For Persuasion**: People underestimate the power of in-person influence compared to other communication contexts

2. The Two Prevailing Models of Persuasion

Researchers have identified two major persuasion models, both largely based on how much people reflect and process the information.

While there is criticism against the 'dual model' (see 'unimodel of persuasion'), many studies upheld both models' utility, and both enjoy broad acceptance.
They are:

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

Suggests there are two routes to persuasion:

- **Central Route**: Involves deeper thinking. Logical arguments and evidence appeal to critical thinking.
- **Peripheral Route**: Uses cues like attractiveness, authority, quantity of arguments and emotions that are less related to the substance of the message

Example: A car buyer researching safety features (central route) vs. choosing based on a celebrity endorsement (peripheral route).

People use one or the other depending on:

- **Motivation** to engage in central processing, for example if you're highly involved with the topic or issue. Conversely, low involvement, or not caring, means more likely to resort to peripheral cues
- **Ability**, which refers to mental faculties and knowledge of the topic (ie.: IQ and expertise)

More factors that influence central or peripheral include:

- Background noise
- Time constraints
- Mood
- Need for cognition, a personality trait related to 'enjoying thinking about things'

Some researchers suggest there can be *parallel processing*—that is, using both routes at once (Petty, Kasmer, Haugtvedt, & Cacioppo, 2004).
However, they also suggest there is usually a tradeoff between the two and one tends to prefer one or the other.

Central Route	Peripheral Route

Central Route	Peripheral Route
Long lasting (Carpenter, 2015 ; Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995)	**Short-lived**
Resistant to counter-influence	**Fickle**
Effective disagreement, generating more counter-arguments	**Intellectual pushover**, more likely to 'go along with the flow'

Heuristic-Systematic Model

Similar to ELM, emphasizing systematic (deep) vs. heuristic (shallow) processing:

- **Systematic Processing**: Careful evaluation of arguments
- **Heuristic Processing**: Relying on mental shortcuts like "experts know best."

Example: Trusting a doctor's advice because of their white coat, rather than evaluating the evidence yourself.

Shelley Chaiken and Alice Eagly, the original researchers behind the model, maintain that simultaneous processing of messages by both system is common, but there is little empirical evidence for simultaneous processing.

'Sufficiency principle': states that people use the systematic processing as little as possible to conserve mental energy. Such as, we strive for the perfect tradeoff where we know and process as much needed, but no more than needed.

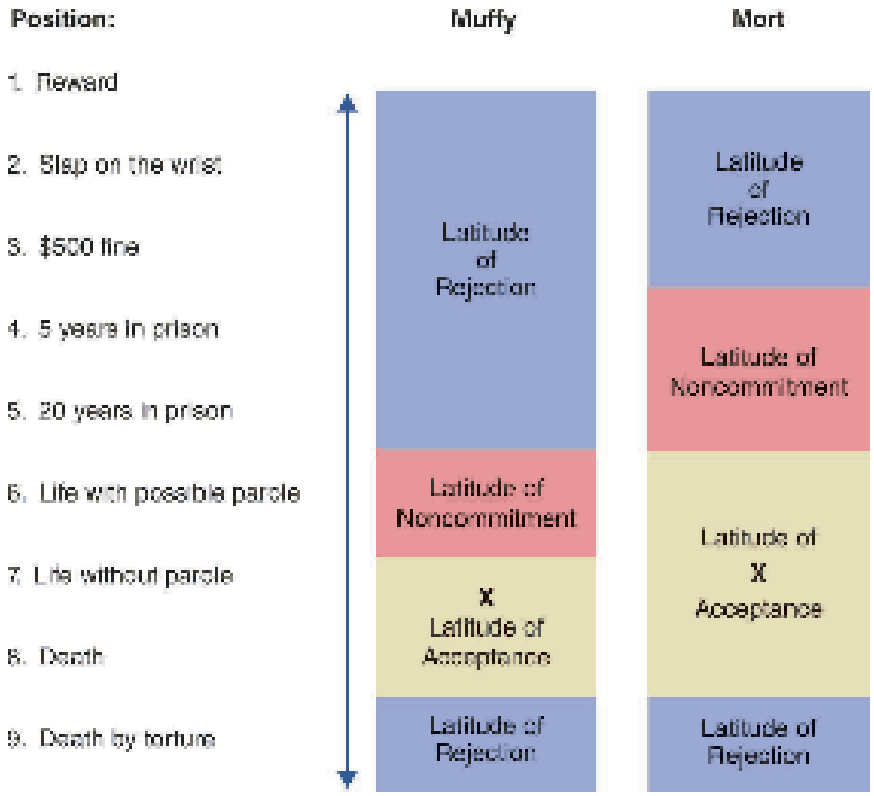
Applications

- **Make people think for lasting persuasion**
- **Tailor your approach to their cognitive engagement**

Social Judgment Theory: Why Ideologues Are Tough to Persuade

Social judgment theory explains how people accept or reject certain messages.

On a given topic there are a range of possible opinions that one can hold.
For example, on the murder's punishment one's position can range according to this chart:



Seiter, J. S. , & Gass, R. H. (2022). Persuasion, Social Influence, and Compliance Gaining (7th Edition). The 'X' marks the 'anchor position', the most preferred option

Note that Muffy and Mort's positions are close.

But Muffy is an ego-involved person because this has personal significance to them and their sense of self. They are strongly committed to their stand and are more likely to reject other positions.

It's difficult to persuade someone who is ego involved because their latitude of rejection is large while their latitude of acceptance is narrow (e.g., Sherif, Kelly, Rodgers, Sarup, & Tittler, 1973).

Exceptions apply if the intervention is related to *goals/needs* rather than values, in which case strong arguments facilitate persuasion.

Trump's success is dexplained by large latitudes of rejection

The authors observe that while Trump has low approval ratings, he was an effective politician and persuader, and is revered by his fanbase.

Even in the face of compelling evidence, some people do not change their minds.
And they explain why with social judgment theory:

> Political polarization highlights the role of resistance to persuasion.
> Social judgment theory, goes a long way in explaining this divide. When people have small latitudes of acceptance and large latitudes of rejection, opposing messages are discounted.

3. Attitudes and Consistency

'Attitude' is:

> "A psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor"

You can think of it as part of character and linked to behavior.
In general, stronger attitudes are better predictors of behavior. When attitudes are weaker, people may use the reverse approach, inferring their attitudes from their behavior (Holland et al., 2002).

Why is this relevant?
Because attitudes help predict, explain, and modify behavior.

Besides attitude, people's intentions also matter, shaped by attitudes towards behaviors, normative beliefs (what we believe people generally do), and perceived behavior control, related to whether we believe we can do it or not.

Key Takeaways:

- People strive for **consistency** in beliefs and actions.
- **Cognitive dissonance** occurs when behavior contradicts beliefs, often leading to attitude change.

⍰ Practical Application for Marketing

- **Sell both indulgence and virtue at once**: Marketing products as "light," "fat-free," or "organic" allows consumers to indulge while staying consistent with their health goals or values.
- **Brand Loyalty with consistency**: Foster strong associations with your brand to make consumers feel inconsistent or uneasy to switch

And its opposite:

- **Marketing Inconsistency – Encourage brand switching**: Ads like "Think different" (Macintosh) or "I could have had a V8!" create psychological imbalance, urging consumers to question habits and try new products.
- **Encourage active participation to deepen commitment**: Asking consumers to vote, customize, or share experiences with a product increases their psychological investment and brand attachment.
- **Merchandising – Secure loyalty with branded rewards**: Offers like logo mugs drive consumers to buy more of a product to earn rewards, locking in loyalty and boosting consumption over time.
- **Adapt your message to their values**: Persuasion works best when you align your appeal with the audience's beliefs and values, rather than trying to shift their entire worldview.

⍰ Practical Applications for Interpersonal Persuasion

- **Expose contradictions to motivate change**: Pointing out inconsistencies in someone's attitudes can move them toward your position—but push too hard, and you risk backlash or rejection.
- **Secure public commitments**: When people state their choices or beliefs publicly (e.g., resolutions, political support), they're more likely to follow through due to the pressure to stay consistent.
- **Use effortful or ritualized entry**: The more effort or symbolic meaning involved in joining (e.g., initiations, training, pledges), the stronger the psychological commitment.
- **Let people make small initial commitments**: Once someone says yes or invests a little, they're more likely to escalate and stay the course (the *foot-in-the-door* technique).
- **Leverage sunk-cost bias**: People often stick to a decision because they've already invested time, energy, or money—even when it's irrational. Persuaders can use this tendency to keep people engaged.
- **Ask, don't order**: people naturally push back against threats to their freedom. For example, littering behavior increases with negative or punitive messages compared to polite ones (Horsley, 1988 ; Huffman, Grossnickle,

Cope, & Huffman, 1995).
So acknowledge listeners' personal autonomy

- ⍰ **Avoid commitment traps yourself** *(defensive strategy)*: Don't be rushed into commitments, and be willing to back out if a decision turns out poorly. This isn't a persuasion tactic, but it's useful resistance advice.

Cognitive Dissonance, Consumption, & Persuasion

- **CDT explains rationalizing contradictions**: People experience discomfort (dissonance) when their beliefs clash with actions, like enjoying Apple products despite poor worker conditions, and seek to reduce it by justifying their choices.
- **Post-decision discomfort drives justification**: After tough choices, people worry if they were right, using strategies like "sour grapes" (e.g., "the grapes were sour anyway") to ease the tension.
- **Buyer's remorse ties to selective exposure**: After purchases (e.g., an expensive TV), people seek confirming info (ads for their brand) and avoid conflicting info to lessen regret and dissonance.
- **Polarization simplifies decisions**: Post-choice, people exaggerate the chosen option's value (e.g., iPhone over Android) and downplay the rejected one, turning gray areas into black-and-white for self-justification.
- **Dissonance varies by self-image and culture**: Internal conflict (e.g., laughing at offensive jokes despite values) or cultural lens (individualistic vs. collectivistic) shapes dissonance, though it's universal to some degree.
- **Magnitude depends on choice and effort**: More choice, foreseeable bad outcomes, belief contradictions, or effort (e.g., big sacrifices) increase dissonance; forced actions reduce it ("I had no choice").

⍰ How to use cognitive dissonance to persuade

- **Increase dissonance** to make someone question their current beliefs or behavior—prompting change.
- **Decrease dissonance** to reassure someone that a past choice or action was correct—reinforcing commitment.
- **Use selective exposure**: Encourage people to focus on information that supports their decisions while avoiding contradictory evidence.
- **Get people to persuade themselves (CAA)**: Have individuals voluntarily advocate for a position they initially disagree with. The dissonance between their spoken message and private beliefs leads them to shift their attitudes to align with what they publicly expressed. This works best when the behavior is **voluntary**.

4. Credibility

Credibility may be defined as:

> "Judgments made by a perceiver (e.g., a message recipient) concerning the believability of the source"

To increase your credibility, focus on the primary dimensions because the secondary ones may or may not matter:

Primary dimensions

- **Expertise** (AKA competence or qualification). There is a 'halo effect' of expertise, so famous people successful in one area 'carry over' their expertise in another -that's why brand endorsers may know nothing of what they endorse.
  - experienced/inexperienced

  - informed/uninformed
  - trained/untrained
  - qualified/unqualified
  - skilled/unskilled
  - competent/incompetent

Credibility can be thought of as a ‘peripheral cue’, and works even more with ‘cognitively lazy’ people.

⁉ **TIP**: Be more confident if you have low credibility, but share possible doubts or limitations of your analyses if you have high credibility (Karmarkar & Tormala, 2010)

- **Trustworthiness** (AKA also called character, safety, or personal integrity), akin to ‘warmth’ in the competence and warmth model
  - honest/dishonest
  - open-minded/close-minded
  - fair/unfair
  - unselfish/selfish
  - moral/immoral
  - ethical/unethical
  - genuine/phony

Wearing religious symbols such as crosses increases trustworthiness. And companies engage in corporate social responsibility to bolster their trustworthiness.

⁉ **TIP**: If you’re unbiased, objective, and non-partisan, explain why. If you’re biased, admit it upfront and then display you weigh all sides and are fair-minded in your evaluation.

- **Goodwill**, is synonymous with ‘perceived caring’ and can be demonstrated with empathy, understanding for others’ needs and ideas, responsiveness, and receptive
  - cares about me/doesn’t care about me
  - not self-centered/self-centered
  - sensitive/insensitive
  - understanding/not understanding

Expertise seems to have the greatest effect on persuasion.

Secondary Dimensions

Extroversion
– timid/bold
– verbal/quiet
– meek/aggressive
– talkative/silent

Composure
– poised/nervous
– relaxed/tense
– calm/anxious
– excitable/composed

Composure

– poised/nervous
– relaxed/tense
– calm/anxious
– excitable/composed

⍰ Strategies for Enhancing Credibility

- **Be well-prepared and organized.**
  Know your material, plan your argument, and anticipate objections to appear competent and credible.
- **Cite evidence and credible sources.**
  Back your claims with facts and trustworthy references—especially important if you lack personal credibility.
- **Mention your (or your sources') expertise early.**
  Establish qualifications before presenting your argument to maximize perceived authority.
- **Demonstrate honesty and sincerity.**
  Show moral character and mutual benefit to build trust with your audience.
- **Show goodwill and empathy.**
  Be caring, responsive, and attentive to your listeners' needs and emotions.
- **Highlight your objectivity.**
  If you have no personal stake, say so. If you do, acknowledge it and give solid reasons for your stance.
- **Be likable.**
  Use warmth, smile, remember names, and act genuinely to boost emotional connection and receptivity.
- **Match your speech style to the audience and context.**
  Avoid disfluencies and inappropriate slang to maintain a smooth and credible delivery.
- **Emphasize relevant similarities.**
  Show shared positive traits or experiences that connect you meaningfully to your audience.
- **If low in credibility, focus on substance and relevance.**
  Raise involvement and emphasize the message content to engage the central route of persuasion.
- **Use endorsements or introductions from credible others.**
  Leverage someone else's reputation to enhance your own credibility via association.

5. Communicator Characteristics and Persuasion

Some brief takeaways:

- **Middle-aged people are less persuadable**, while younger and older people are more persuadable (curvilinear relationship between age and persuadability
- **Lower IQ people are more persuadable**, but the author suggest that a truthful persuasive message based on solid logic may work better on intelligent people
- **Men are more persuasive**, due to a double standard in audience perception that judges assertive women more harshly (Matthews, 2016; Smith et al., 2013)
- **Authoritarians obey authorities** (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levenson, & Sanford, 1950 ; Allport, 1954)
  - Dogmatic also obey authorities, are closed-minded, have difficulty being objective, and tend to believe there is only one right way to do things (i.e., their way)

  - Social vigilantes are similar to dogmatics but seek to persuade others, counterargue more, seek to dominate the conversation and resort to manipulative tactics (also see **gaslighting** and gaslighting signs)
- **Narcissists are persuaded by messages that enhance their conceit**

The Role of Personality in Persuasion

Different personality traits affect how individuals persuade and are persuaded:

- **High self-monitors** adapt their persuasion style to fit the audience.
- **Low self-monitors** remain consistent regardless of context.
- **People with a high need for cognition** prefer logical arguments, while those with a low need for cognition respond better to emotional appeals.

⍰ Practical Application:

- **Adapt persuasion tactics**: Use logical arguments for analytical individuals and emotional appeals for intuitive thinkers.
- **Mirror and match communication styles**: Adjust language and tone to align with the audience.

6. Conformity and Group Influence

Researchers have long debated how group size influences conformity.
Two key theories offer differing predictions:

- **Social Impact Theory (SIT)** posits that the first person added to a group has the greatest persuasive impact, with each additional member having progressively less influence
- **Social Influence Model (SIM)** argues that conformity increases up to about three or four group members, after which additional members have little added effect

Empirical research has shown mixed support for both theories. A major reason might be that people conform for two distinct reasons:

- **Informational Influence**: wanting to be right.
- **Normative Influence**: wanting to be liked.

Campbell and Fairey (1989) proposed that group size affects these motivations differently:

- When accuracy matters (e.g., quiz shows), informational influence dominates, and early group additions have the most impact.
- When social approval matters (e.g., fitting in with neighbors), normative influence peaks with groups of two or three.

Further findings:

- **People follow the majority**: **use social proof**. Works particularly well in collectivist cultures and when people purchase gifts or products for others)
- **Deindividuation**: Individuals in groups act differently than alone.
- **Public responses** trigger more normative influence; **private responses** allow more informational influence.
- **Allies reduce conformity**: even when they're 'dubious' partners, a dissenting partner (ie.: visually impaired) can prevent someone from yielding to majority pressure.

- **Anger from the majority backfires**: rather than encouraging conformity, it often leads to *anti-conformity*, as dissenters resist perceived coercion.
- **Conformity increases quickly with small groups** but levels off after 3–4 members.
- **People conform either to be right or to be liked**, and group size affects these motives differently.
- **Women are more likely to conform**
- **Groups polarize decisions**, a phenomenon initially wrongly understood as 'risky shift', people instead tend to become more extreme in their decisions when in groups (and become less accurate)
  - ⍰ Solution: make important decisions in isolation, or be aware of the group's tendency to go for extremes
- **Collectivist cultures conform more**: A meta-analysis by Bond and Smith (1996) finds much higher conformity higher among collectivists than individualists. Even when they are encouraged to dissent, collectivists resist doing so more than individualists do (Curseu & ten Brink, 2016).
  But the difference disappeared in one study examining informational influence.
- **An audience improves outcomes for simple and rehearsed tasks** and impairs performance on complex and novel tasks
- **People contribute less in bigger groups** (social loafing)
  ⍰ Solutions:
  - Provide individual feedback about their own performance or their group's performance
  - Monitor individual performance or make individual efforts identifiable
  - Assign meaningful tasks
  - Make tasks unique so individuals feel more responsibility
  - Enhance cohesiveness of work groups
  - Make them feel their contributions matters

⍰ Persuading Groups: Practical Tips

If you're alone in a group and want to influence others:

- **Establish credibility** if you have expertise.
- Use one of two proven minority influence strategies:
  - **Conform first, then deviate** (build goodwill before challenging the group).
  - **Disagree consistently and confidently** (signal conviction and attract attention).
- **Win over just one person**—it can trigger a shift in the majority.
- **Mention future interactions**—people are more open to minority opinions if they expect to engage again.

Fitting in is good, but too much of a good thing is bad

While identification helps with unity and communication, too much of it can backfire.

Seiter (1998) warns that over-identification can lead to *ethnocentrism* (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997), *groupthink* (Janis, 1972), and *strong organizational culture* (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985), which happens when employees over-conform to the organization's values and actions.

All of these can harm decision-making and increase bias.

To quote the authors:

> identification, by enabling us to communicate, organize, and decrease division, can be a worthwhile goal. However, we must be moderate in promoting it, because too much identification can be "too much of a good thing" (Seiter, 1998).

To fix these issues, dissenters who challenge group norms play a key role in promoting better outcomes (Jetten & Hornsey, 2014).

Also see our seminal article on this issue:

- **Enlightened individualism**

> Winner's Mindsets: 10 Commandments of Enlightened "Me First"

7. Language and Persuasion

Positive words frame your message positively and improve persuasion.

Some takeaways:

- **Aphorisms work**
- **Metaphors are persuasive**
- **Names influence judgments**, popular get better grades and can be sources of stereotypes and discrimination (Elon Musk ought to take note)
- **Using people's names increases tips**
  - Younger men prefer first names, older men prefer titles + surnames
- **Language influences thoughts**
  - The labels we assign others affect the recipient, but also tell about our own attitudes
- **Tell people 'Please don't be a cheater'** instead of 'Please don't cheat'. Personalization increases compliance with 'personal identities'
- **Cussing is a double-edged sword**. Avoid it in formal settings: it makes significantly less competent compared to less formal settings. But when cussing violated audience expectations in a positive way (e.g., people rated themselves as positively surprised by the cussing), ratings of the speaker's competence increased.
- **Vivid language is more persuasive**: Ie.: it's more vivid to say "the glass crashed and shattered into pieces" than it is to say "the glass broke." A meta-analysis of over 40 studies found that vivid messages tend to be more persuasive than pallid ones (Blonde & Girandola, 2016)
- **Intense language is a double-edge sword** (read below), and intensity can be thought of as 'deviating from normality'.
  Eg.: "*You are shockingly stupid*" versus "*You are not real smart*." "*The lumber industry is raping our forests*" versus "*The lumber industry is cutting down a lot of trees*."
  It works better when:
  - The audience already agrees with you. If they disagree, the exaggeration will turn them off
  - The speaker is credible as credible people are afforded more latitude
  - The intensity grabs attention *without exaggerating it*. The extra attention may increase processing and reach, but too much intensity is perceived as extreme and will be rejected
  - The speaker matches the audience's language style. Intense speaker persuade intense speakers, but turn off non-intense speakers

Power & Ultimate Terms

Richard Weaver (1953) labeled ultimate terms the highly revered words that carry special power in a culture. According to Weaver, there are three types of ultimate terms:

Good Terms (God Terms)	Bad Terms (Devil Terms)	Charismatic Terms
Fact	Communist	Freedom
Progress	Nazi	Democracy
Family values	Fascist	
Critical thinking	Dead-beat dad	
Teachable moment	Racist	
Prosperity	Terrorist	
Empowerment	Hate crime	
	Sweat shop	

However, ultimate terms change with time and culture.
These days, 'empowerment' is a power word, and also popular are *superfoods, future-proof, moonshot*, and, perhaps especially, *monster, ultra, energy, and performance*.

Framing

For more modern political framing, for example, Luntz, a political consultant advises:

- Tax cut ➡ tax relief
- Global warming ➡ climate change
- Voucher ➡ opportunity scholarship

"Washington" and "I.R.S.," are negative and should be attached to a policy you want to turn people against.

For more see:

- Framing 101
- Political framing with George Lakoff's book '*Don't Think of An Elephant*'
- Framing techniques
- Political manipulation

Name manipulation

Read these organizations' names:

- "Citizens for the Environment"
- "National Wetlands Coalition"
- "Greening Earth Society"

Sound environment friendly enough?
Well, they're all ANTI-environment think tanks, chosen on purpose to manipulate public opinion (Bricker, 2014).

⍰ Powerless Language

In general, it's best to avoid these low-power expressions:

> a considerable amount of research indicates that using these powerless forms of speech can prevent you from

> being persuasive (Erickson et al., 1978 ; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979), even when you are using strong arguments (Hosman & Siltanen, 2011).

- **Hesitations** (signal uncertainty or anxiety): "*Well, I, uh, you know, um, would like to borrow a dollar.*"
- **Hedges** (qualify the utterance in which they occur): "*I guess I sort of like you and kind of want to know you.*"
- **Intensifiers** (fortify the utterance): "*I really believe that and agree with you very much.*"
- **Polite forms** (indicate deference and subordination): "*Excuse me, if you wouldn't mind too much, I'd appreciate it if you'd please shut the door. Thank you.*"
- **Tag questions** (lessens the force of a declarative sentence): "*This is fun, don't you think? Much more fun than yesterday, isn't it?*"
- **Disclaimers** (utterances offered before a statement that anticipate doubts, signal a problem, or ask for understanding): *"I know this is a really dumb question, but . . .?*"
- **Deictic phrases** (phrases indicating something outside the speaker's vicinity): "*That man over there is the one who stole my wallet.*"

But there are important caveats, including:

- **Type of powerless language**: Not all powerless forms are equally damaging.
  → *Politeness* can **enhance credibility** (Bradac & Mulac, 1984)
  → *Hedges* may hurt, but can **sometimes help** depending on context (Durik et al., 2008; Jensen, 2008)
- **Speaker credibility**:
  → *Tag questions* **hurt low-credibility speakers**, but **can help high-credibility ones**—especially when paired with strong arguments (Blankenship & Craig, 2007). Presumably because it makes people think harder
- **Gender**, and women must navigate speech expectations more carefully (Carli, 1990)
  → *Women* were more persuasive using **powerless speech with men** and **powerful speech with women**
  → *Men's persuasiveness* was **unaffected by speech style**

Learn more:

- **Powerless language to avoid**
- **Empowered language to adopt**

8. Nonverbal Influence

- **Warm behavior is persuasive** (AKA: 'immediacy') warmth, closeness, friendliness, and involvement with others increase persuasion (*direct effects model of immediacy*, see Andersen, 2004 ; Segrin, 1993)

But calibrate to the context:

- **Sometimes anger and dominance are more persuasive**, and likable facial expressions could be counterproductive.
  One study found warm behavior is effective among equal status, but dominant behaviors are more effective in established hierarchies (Mehrabian & Williams, 1969)
- **Conservatives prefer leaders with dominant faces**, liberals prefer leaders with non-dominant ones (Laustsen & Petersen, 2016)

- **Mirror your speaking partner**: in one study (Guéguen, 2009), 66 males found the women who mirrored their behavior more sexually attractive. Another study found that mirroring negotiators were more likely to reach a deal (Maddux, Mullen, & Galinsky, 2008)

Read more on:

- The science of social calibration
- Dominant body language
- Warmth and competence and how to perfectly combine the two

⍰ Further findings and practical takeaways:

- **Emblems** (nonverbal behaviors with a precise meaning, often hand gestures) **and illustrators increase persuasion**. Meaning: gesticulate
- **Self-touching (adaptors) signals anxiety**, albeit it's not sure it lowers persuasion: while some research suggests that the use of adaptors was associated with less persuasion (Maslow et al., 1971 ; Mehrabian & Williams, 1969), other research shows the opposite (Maricchiolo et al., 2009). But most research agrees that self-touching behaviors signals anxiety and lack of composure
- **Gazing at listeners produces more compliance** than averting gaze if it's a legitimate request, but within limits
  - Long fixed gazes are perceived as challenges, so don't overdo it
- Look away with illegitimate requests to increase compliance, it makes you look more humble and wins sympathy
- **Smile broadly for warmth, slightly for power**: One study, for example, found that broad smiles foster perceptions of warmth, while slight smiles promote perceptions of competence (Wang, Mao, Li, & Liu, 2017)
- **Maintain open body language**: Avoid crossed arms and maintain eye contact.
- **Smile slowly and maintain it for some seconds**: when smiles appear quickly, the smiling person is perceived as less trustworthy and attractive than when smiles have a slower onset (Krumhuber, Manstead, & Kappas, 2007)
- **Avoid smileys**: unlike actual smiles, "smiley" (⍰)emoticons did not increase perceptions of warmth and actually decreased perceptions of competence (Glikson, Cheshin, & van Kleef, 2018)
- **Scarcity is persuasive** because it limits the freedom of buying at any time. How well it works depends on people's time orientation, but a future-oriented focus can be temporarily activated by making people focus on how the future will be like
- **Attractiveness is persuasive**
  - Attractive *friends and partners* make average people more attractive (assimilation), but attractive random people make average people less attractive (contrast) (Melamed & Moss, 1975)
  - Endomorphs body shapes may be discriminated against
  - Baby-faced women are perceived as more attractive but less mature, but it may still benefit them politically, while baby faces cost male politicians
  - The most persuasive faces are similar to ours
  - Clean-shaven men better sell beauty products, bearded men better sell when expertise and trustworthiness matter (De Souza, Baião, & Otta, 2003)
- **High-status clothing is persuasive**, but it also depends on context. Meta-analyses indicate that fancy suits,

uniforms, and high-status increase compliance (Segrin, 1993), but clothing that makes people identify with a persuader work better. Hensley (1981), for instance, found that well-dressed people were more persuasive in airports, but casually dressed people were more persuasive at bus stops

- **Optimal speed of voice depends on the receiver's ability to understand.** Fast speech can boost credibility and persuasion (Simonds et al., 2006; Miller et al., 1976), but its effectiveness depends on the listener's ability to process it (Buller & Aune, 1988). It may also reduce message scrutiny (Smith & Shaffer, 1995), but fast disclaimers are less persuasive than when delivered at normal speed (Herbst et al., 2012).
  - Synthetic voices can be as persuasive as human ones (Stern et al., 1999).

- ***Appropriate* touching is persuasive** and to do it well, again, you must be a well-calibrated person

Say the authors:

> The use of touch for persuasive purposes is tricky because touch is so ambiguous.
> What one person may see as "warm," for example, another may view as a "power play." (…) What one person might interpret as "friendly," another may see as "flirtatious."

In one study in competitive contexts touching decreased cooperation, probably because it seemed a power move (Camps, Tuteleers, Stouten, & Nelissen, 2013).

The studies that found touching increased persuasion was done on the hand or arm.

- **Stand closer if you're cool or powerful** but maintain appropriate distance if you aren't or it backfires

Research on personal space and persuasion shows conflicting results.

While some studies, like Baron and Bell (1976), found that standing closer increased compliance—possibly because closeness signals liking or urgency—others found the opposite (ie.: Smith and Knowles (1979) and Albert and Dabbs (1970) reported that space invasions decreased helpfulness and persuasiveness).

Judee Burgoon's expectancy violations theory may explain why (and, I add, standard power dynamics and social exchange theory also explain why).
When our expectations for distance are violated, we feel aroused or distracted. Whether that helps or hurts persuasion depends on how rewarding we find the person. If the violator is likable or powerful, the violation can boost persuasion. If not, it backfires.

Practically, if you're perceived as attractive or credible, a slight space violation may help. If not, it's safer to respect expected distances.

⍰ How to Undermine Your Opponent In Debates

Does shaking your head in debats work to undermine your opponents?

This is when it works:

Background disbelief makes the speaker appear more deceptive IF the audience was suspicious of the debater (Seiter, 2001), but it improves the speaker's credibility if people trust him (Seiter et al., 1998)

Derogatory and undermining nonverbal background behavior can also make you seem more deceptive, less credible, less likable, and inappropriate (see Seiter & Weger, 2020)

And if an opponent confronts you with such nonverbal behaviors, you'll be perceived as most effective if you politely and directly ask him or her to stop (Weger, Seiter, Jacobs, & Akbulut, 2010, 2013)

9. Structuring and Ordering Persuasive Messages

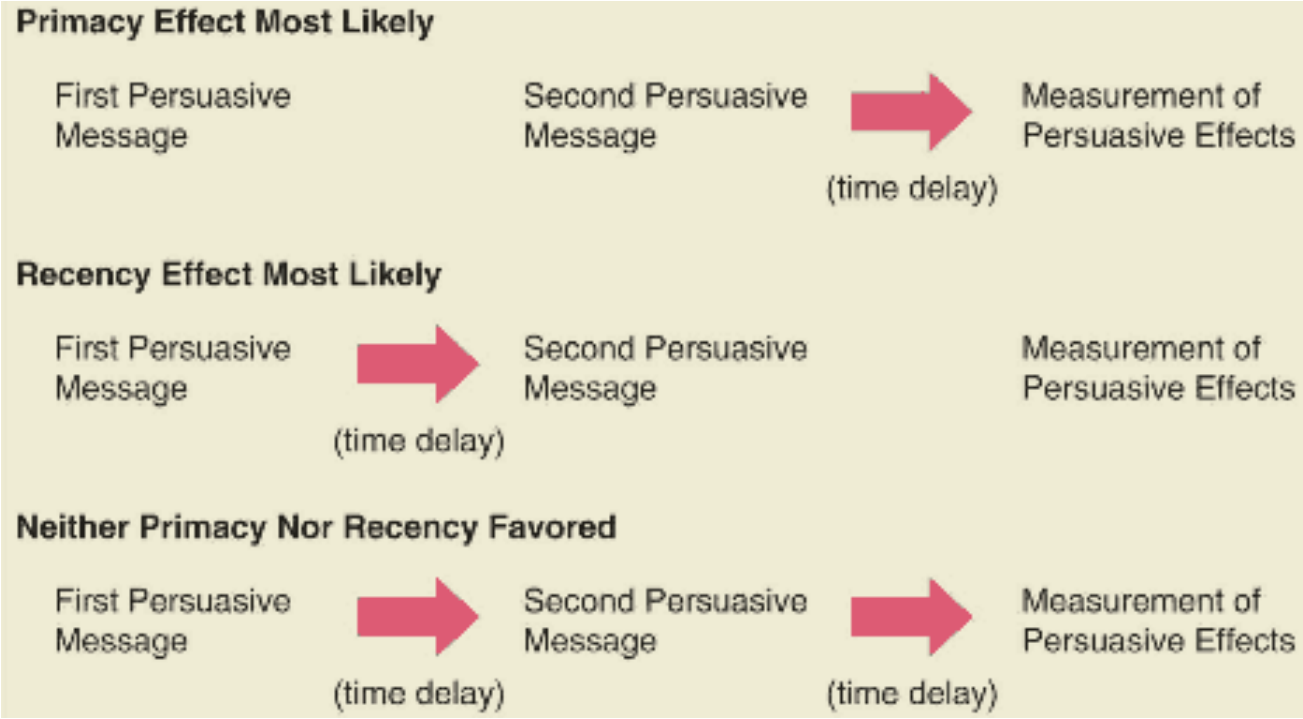
Research shows that message structure and timing significantly affect persuasion.

Strong arguments are most persuasive when placed at the beginning (anticlimax) or end (climax) of a message—not in the middle (pyramidal) (Sikkink, 1956).

Whether you speak first or last in a sequence also influences outcomes.

⍰ Best Ordering to Increase Compliance:

- **Start or end with your strongest points**, not the middle—lead or finish strong.
- **For spoken messages (like speeches or videos):** put strong arguments **first** for more impact.
- **If the audience will decide immediately after hearing your message:** go **last** (recency advantage).
- **If there's a long delay before decision-making:** go **first** (primacy advantage) (Miller & Campbell, 1959)
- **If your message is interesting, controversial, or familiar to the audience:** go **first** (Furnham, 1986)
- **If your message is dull, neutral, or unfamiliar:** go **last**.
- **For sensory, experiential products (e.g., food, music):** aim to be **sampled last**.
- **For functional, information-heavy products (e.g., tools, appliances):** aim to be **sampled first** (Biswas et al., 2010)



How to Inoculate Against Persuasion

Inoculation theory (1964) uses a biological metaphor where exposure to a weakened virus builds immunity.

In persuasion, it involves presenting a threat (warning of counterarguments) and refutational preemption (weakened counterarguments with refutations) to strengthen resistance to persuasive attacks, especially for unchallenged beliefs like cultural truisms (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961).

It outperforms supportive strategies by preparing individuals for future arguments, offering broad protection (Banas & Rains, 2010; Pfau, 1997).

⍰ Practical Takeaways: Quick Tips for Persuasion Resistance

- **Warn your audience of opposing arguments:** Alert people to upcoming challenges to their beliefs to prepare them mentally (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961; Banas & Rains, 2010).
- **Present and refute weak counterarguments**: Expose people to diluted versions of opposing views and show why they're flawed to build stronger resistance (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961).
- **Use two-sided refutational messages that include your POW, and the opposing side that you refute**: Present your argument alongside opposing views, then debunk them.
  Two-sided messages are more persuasive than onesided messages, as long as the two-sided messages refute opposing arguments. When two-sided arguments were not refutational, they were less persuasive than one-sided messages (Daniel O'Keefe,1999; Mike Allen; Allen et al., 1990)
  - Two-sided messages also make you more credibile (O'Keefe, 1999), and make people more open minded towards opposing message when dealing with deeply entrenched moral attitudes, especially if you do it respectfully (Xu & Petty, 2021)
- **Focus on unquestioned beliefs**: Protect widely accepted ideas (e.g., "brush your teeth daily") by preemptively defending them against attacks (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961).
- **Encourage generating supporting arguments**: Prompt people to think of reasons supporting their beliefs to shield against diverse attacks (Papageorgis & McGuire, 1961; Parker, Rains, & Ivanov, 2016).
- **Give time after warnings**: Allow a short delay (e.g., 10 minutes) after warning about a persuasive message to let people prepare counterarguments (Freedman & Sears, 1965; Romero et al., 1996).
- **Make the issue personally relevant**: Connect the topic to your audience's lives to motivate them to resist persuasion (Romero et al., 1996).
- **Minimize distractions during preparation**: Ensure people can focus after a warning to develop strong counterarguments (Romero et al., 1996).
- **Forewarn about persuasive intent**: Alert people that a message is designed to persuade them to spark psychological reactance and increase resistance (Fukada, 1986; Benoit, 1998). It's related to inoculation, but a different tactic. Research shows both tactics are moderately affects, and forewarning works best with people who have the motivation and ability to counter-argue
  - Mental depletion increases persuasion attempts, but forewarning combats it
- **Reinforce resistance periodically**: Refresh warnings or inoculation every few weeks to maintain effectiveness (Scheibe et al., 2014).
- **Emphasize fairness to reduce reactance**: When persuading a warned audience, stress impartiality or their interests to lower resistance (Fukada, 1986; Benoit, 1998).

Loss Frame VS Gain Frame: The Myth of The 'Loss Frame'

Tversky & Kahneman set off a pop psychology myth with their early findings that 'people react more to losses than to gains'.

Instead more recent studies show no clear winner, and what works best depends on a variety of factors, including:

- **Present-minded people** → respond better to **loss-framed** messages.
- **Future-minded people** → equally influenced by **both**.

- **High sensation seekers** → prefer **loss-framed**.
- **Low sensation seekers** → prefer **gain-framed**.
- **Good mood** → makes people more open to **loss-framed** info.

Health context matters:

- **Detection behaviors** (e.g., cancer screening) → **loss-framed** is better.
- **Prevention behaviors** (e.g., sunscreen, exercise) → **gain-framed** is better.

Explicit VS Implicit: Explicit Generally Better... But It Depends

Implicit conclusion ads lead audiences to infer the message themselves (e.g., Burger King example), while explicit conclusion ads state the message directly.

Advantages of implicit conclusions:

- People who reach their own conclusions persuade themselves, often more effectively (Kardes et al., 1994).
- More effective when the message is personally relevant (Sawyer & Howard, 1991).
- Preferred by individuals high in need for cognition (Martin et al., 2003/2004).
- Viewed as less pushy when audiences are suspicious of persuasion (Martin & Strong, 2016).

Advantages of explicit conclusions:

- More persuasive overall, especially in narratives and media (Moyer-Guse et al., 2012).
- Provide clearer guidance, leading to better outcomes (Dillard, 2014).

⍰ Further Findings and Takeaways

- **Choose quality for attentive audience, quantity for inattentive people**: If your audience scrutinize your message, use strong arguments, but if your audience is not involved, quantity of arguments may be quite effective
- **Evidence works for lower-credibility speakers**, but not much for high-credibility speaker. But most speakers gain with evidence, so use lots of high quality evidence
- **Statistical evidence is generally more persuasive** than anecdotal/narrative evidence—especially when making generalizations or when audience involvement is high.
- **Vivid narrative** (stories or personal examples) **evidence works better when audience involvement is low**
- **Use both statical and narrative evidence** since they're additive. E.g.: start with a story, follow up with data to show it's not a fluke
- **Repetition is persuasive up to a point**, then it becomes less persuasive. A study pointed at 3 repetitions

10. Compliance Gaining

Persuasion is an umbrella term for changing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Compliance is a subset of persuasion, typically referring to changing a person's overt behavior—think of tasking and executing, for example.

Compliance-Gaining Tactics

With examples of how you could get your son to clean his room, based upon Marwell & Schmitt (1967)

- **Promising a reward**: Offer a reward for compliance.
  E.g., promise him ice cream if he cleans his room.
- **Threatening a punishment**: Threaten a consequence for non-compliance.
  E.g., say you'll give away his Wii if he doesn't tidy up.
- **Using positive expertise**: Assert that compliance benefits him based on your knowledge.
  E.g., say successful people keep things clean.
- **Using negative expertise**: Warn of harm from non-compliance based on your knowledge.
  E.g., say messy people fail in life.
- **Promoting liking**: Build rapport before making the request.
  E.g., act cheerful and give attention, then ask him to clean his room.
- **Using reciprocity**: Give something he wants before asking for compliance.
  E.g., buy him a game, then ask him to clean his room.
- **Administering punishment**: Apply punishment until compliance.
  E.g., ban Wii use until his room stays clean for a month.
- **Creating indebtedness**: Remind him he owes you for past help.
  E.g., say you go out of your way for him, so he should keep his room clean.
- **Generating moral obligation**: Frame non-compliance as morally wrong.
  E.g., say disorganized people are morally bad.
- **Promoting positive esteem**: Suggest compliance will boost his self-esteem.
  E.g., say a clean room will make him feel proud.
- **Promoting negative esteem**: Suggest non-compliance will lower his self-esteem.
  E.g., say a filthy room will make him feel bad about himself.
- **Using positive altercasting**: Say admirable people would comply.
  E.g., say good boys like him naturally want clean rooms.
- **Using negative altercasting**: Say only bad people would not comply. This can be more manipulative and several experiments showed it worked less well than more prosocial approaches
  E.g., say only bratty kids have dirty rooms.
- **Being altruistic**: Highlight how much his help would mean to you.
  E.g., say you're overwhelmed and he'd help a lot by cleaning.
- **Using positive admiration**: Say admired people will respect him more if he complies.
  E.g., say his brother Timmy will be proud if he keeps his room clean.
- **Using negative admiration**: Say admired people will lose respect if he doesn't comply.
  E.g., say Timmy will be ashamed if he keeps his room messy.

Power Dynamics & Persuasion: Persuading With Power In Mind

Power influences how people use and respond to persuasive messages.

When one party holds more power, persuasion tends to be more polite and indirect to avoid threatening the other person's "face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Those with less power use more positive, polite strategies because their requests may not be seen as legitimate or appropriate.
Conversely, more powerful individuals tend to be less polite in their requests (Baxter, 1984).

⍰ Practical Takeaways:

- **Save face**: Avoid threatening the other person's self-image to increase compliance (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2013).

- **Use politeness when lacking power**: Less powerful people succeed more with positive, respectful strategies (Golish, 1999; Golish & Olson, 2000).
- **Frame requests positively when lower power**: Positive framing works best for persuaders with little power (Levine & Boster, 2001).
- **Ask directly and respectfully**: Direct requests are both effective and not seen as impolite (Kellermann & Shea, 1996).
- **Respond to disrespect calmly**: In conflict, polite and direct responses are most effective and appropriate (Weger et al., 2010).
- **Refuse without offense**: How you say "no" affects both your and the requester's face and determines whether the refusal is seen as fair or rude (Johnson, 2007).
- **Adapt to context and relationships**: Power, situation, and social ties all influence which compliance strategies work best.

Cialdini's 7 Principles of Social Influence

The author's dedicate a paragraph to Cialdini's work on Influence.

1. **Reciprocity** – We feel obligated to return favors, gifts, or kindness, making us more likely to comply with requests.
2. **Scarcity** – We value things more when they are limited or rare, increasing their persuasive power.
3. **Consistency/Commitment** – Once we commit to something, we feel pressure to act in ways that align with that commitment.
4. **Authority** – We are more likely to follow or believe people we see as credible or in positions of power.
5. **Liking** – We are more easily persuaded by people we like or find attractive and friendly.
6. **Social proof** – We tend to follow the actions and choices of others, especially in uncertain situations.
7. **Unity** – We're more influenced by people with whom we share a group identity or strong sense of connection.

11. Sequential Persuasion

1. **Foot-in-the-Door (FITD)** – Works because people want to stay consistent with previous actions.
   Example: Getting someone to sign a small petition before asking for a donation. To make it work:
   - Start with the largest possible request that will be accepted – Make the first request big enough to matter, but not so big it gets rejected.
   - Tap into prosocial motives – Use the technique for altruistic or socially beneficial causes, not self-serving ones. So this technique is more useful in demanding donations than for on-commission salespeople
   - Avoid material rewards – Don't offer incentives for the first request, or it weakens internal motivation to comply again.
   - Switch requesters – Use a different person for the second ask to increase compliance.
   - Label the person positively – Reinforce the first behavior by labeling the person (e.g., "You're generous"), which boosts follow-up compliance.
   - Appeal to consistency – Make the second request align with the first, especially for people who value being consistent.
     People differ with 'need for consistency' though, and some, like Machiavellians, need it less
   - Target clear self-concepts – The tactic works best on people who have a strong, stable sense of self

2. **Door-in-the-Face (DITF) –** Start with a large request, then scale down to a more reasonable one. Works due to reciprocal concessions (people feel obligated to compromise).
   Example: Asking for a $500 donation first, then lowering it to $50.
   Here's how to make it work:
   - Start big—but not absurd: Make your first request large enough to be rejected, but not so extreme that it triggers anger or disbelief. (Cialdini et al., 1975; Even-Chen et al., 1978)
   - Use DITF for altruistic goals: The tactic works best for prosocial requests (e.g., volunteering) and when seeking verbal compliance, not personal gain or money. (Feeley et al., 2012)
   - Follow up fast: Make the second, smaller request immediately after the first is refused to maximize compliance. (Dillard et al., 1984; Feeley et al., 2012; Fern et al., 1986; Guéguen et al., 2011)
   - Stick with the same requester: For DITF to feel like a concession, both requests must come from the same individual. (Cialdini et al., 1975)
3. **Low-Balling –** Get commitment first, then change the deal later. Works because people dislike backing out of commitments.
   Example: A car salesperson quotes a price, then adds extra fees once the buyer is invested.
   - Bait-and-switch: advertises an attractive product or deal to hook you in, but once you're committed, the product is "unavailable" and you're steered toward a more expensive or inferior alternative.
     It's deceptive but effective.
4. **That's-Not-All –** Add bonuses or discounts before the person decides. People see the new offer as better by comparison, and enjoy receiving small "wins" even when spending money. Of these, the *silver lining effect*, or framing the added gift as '*yes, it costs, BUT you also get…* ' has the strongest support. (Burger, 1986; Thaler, 1985; Lee et al., 2019)
   Example: Infomercials offering *"But wait, there's more!"*
   - Sweeten the deal before they say no: Add free extras *before* the person can reject your offer—this boosts sales and compliance. (Burger, 1986)
   - Price drops count too: Lowering a price after stating a higher one also increases compliance—more than just stating the lower price directly. (Burger, 1986)
   - Be careful with altruism or high initial asks: The tactic works best in sales, not in charitable or altruistic contexts, and may backfire if the initial price is too high. (Burger et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2019)
   - ⍰⍰ If you're adding a valuable product mention the value or you risk cheapening as a lower-value add-on
5. **Even a Penny Will Help –** Minimizes resistance by making the ask seem trivial.
   Example: Charity campaigns saying *"Even $1 makes a difference."*
   - '*But it's up to you*' technique: Adding a phrase like "but you are free to refuse" significantly boosts the chance they'll say yes. In one study, this simple line increased donations from 10% to 47.5%, and doubled the average amount. (Guéguen & Pascual, 2000)
6. **Pique Technique –** Make an unusual request to grab attention.
   Example: Asking for 37 cents instead of spare change.

That's not all with its bonuses is more persuasive than DITF because it doesn't require rejection first. (Burger, 1986)

⍰⍰ **Use a combination whenever possible**: research has found that combinations of sequential tactics can be effective (Goldman & Creason, 1981; Goldman, Creason, & McCall, 1981; Goldman, Gier, & Smith, 1981; Souchet & Girandola, 2013)

More compliance technqiues

Besides the 'mainstays':

1. **Foot-in-the-Mouth**: Ask how someone is doing, acknowledge their reply, then make your request. It builds

rapport and increases compliance (Howard, 1990; Meineri & Guéguen, 2011).

2. **Dump-and-Chase**: Don't take no for an answer—counter objections with solutions. Works as well or better than foot-in-the-door or door-in-the-face (Boster et al., 2009).
3. **Four Walls**: Ask easy yes-questions to get agreement, then deliver the real ask (e.g., donations). It primes people to say yes (Cialdini & Sagarin, 2005; Guéguen et al., 2013).
4. **Just One More**: Saying someone is the *last one needed* increases compliance with requests (Carpenter, 2014).
5. **You'll Probably Refuse, But…**: Prefacing a request this way increases donations—likely due to reactance (Guéguen, 2016).
6. **Only Request**: Saying "This is my only request" makes people more likely to comply, especially with donations (Grzyb & Dolinski, 2017).

12. Deception

Deception is a form of persuasion. Even from the standpoint of pure cases of persuasion, deception involves an intentional attempt to get someone to believe what the liar knows to be false.

Also read:

- **Persuasion VS manipulation**

> Persuasion vs. Manipulation: Understanding the Fine Line

Signs of Deception

People are bad at detecting lies and deception, and there are no foolproof or reliable cues for deception.

There are though some cues that are more likely to be present with deception.

DePaulo and her colleagues (DePaulo et al., 2003) combined the results of 1,338 estimates of 158 deception cues. They are:

- **Talking time**: Liars' responses are shorter than truth tellers' responses.
- **Details**: Liars provide fewer details than do truth-tellers.
- **Pressing lips**: Liars press their lips (as if holding back) more than truth tellers.
- **Making sense**: Liars' stories are more discrepant, ambivalent, and have less plausibility and logical structure.
- **Lack of immediacy**: Liars seem more evasive and impersonal, distancing themselves from listeners (e.g., passive voice).
- **Uncertainty**: Liars sound more uncertain than truth-tellers.
- **Raising chin**: Liars raise their chins more, possibly to appear more certain.
- **Repetition**: Liars repeat themselves more than truth tellers.
- **Cooperation**: Liars are rated as less cooperative in conversation.
- **Negative statements**: Liars use more negative expressions and complaints.
- **Pleasantness**: Liars' facial expressions are less pleasant.
- **Nervousness**: Liars appear more nervous overall.
- **Vocal tension and pitch**: Liars' voices are more tense and higher-pitched.
- **Pupil dilation**: Liars have more dilated pupils.
- **Fidgeting**: Liars fidget more than truth tellers.
- **Spontaneous corrections**: Truth tellers correct themselves more often.

- **Admitted lack of memory**: Truth tellers more often admit forgetting something.
- **Related external associations**: Liars mention more peripheral or unrelated events.

Who Tells Better Lies

- **Machiavellian lie better** (and probably more)

> The Machiavellian personality is not interested in interpersonal relationships, manipulates others for selfish purposes, and has little sense of social morality (Christie & Geis, 1970; Geis & Moon, 1981). Machiavellian personalities are truly "wolves in sheep's clothing." Not only do they lie and intend to cheat more often than their counterparts (i.e., low Machiavellians) (Brewer, & Abell, 2015; Jonason, Lyons, Baughman, & Vernon, 2014), they appear more innocent while doing so.

The authors share a study showing that even as children Machiavellians were better liars, both more persuasive, and seen as more innocent.

- **High self-monitors lie better**

High self-monitors, who use situational information to behave more appropriately, are better deceivers than low self-monitors (Elliot, 1979; Miller, deTurck, & Kalbfleisch, 1983).

- **Socially skilled and emotionally aware people are better deceivers**

Emotional awareness (Wielgopolan & Imbir, 2020) and skills at expressing basic emotions improve deception (Riggio & Friedman, 1983).

Expressive, socially skilled, and tactful individuals (Riggio, Tucker, & Throckmorton, 1987; Riggio, Tucker, & Widaman, 1987), as well as competent (Feeley, 1996) and precise, friendly communicators (O'Hair et al., 1988), are more successful at deceiving others.

Apprehensive communicators instead leak more cues (O'Hair, Cody, & Behnke, 1985).

- **Men are better liars than women**

> The results of two meta-analyses found that males tend to be more successful at lying than females (Kalbfleisch, cited in Burgoon, Buller, Grandpre, & Kalbfleisch, 1998 ; Zuckerman, DePaulo, & Rosenthal, 1981). Likewise, a study by Lloyd, Summers, Hugenberg, and McConnell (2018) found that female deceivers were easier to "read" than male deceivers

Can you train people to be effective lie detectors?

Training people to detect lies has shown only minor improvements in accuracy, with some studies even reporting negative effects from such training (Hauch et al., 2016; Akehurst et al., 2004; Kassin & Fong, 1999).

However, when experts can actively question suspects, their accuracy improves significantly, suggesting that enhancing interrogation techniques may be a more effective focus (Levine et al., 2014; Luke et al., 2016).

As for whether some people are naturally better lie detectors, research has not found strong evidence for consistent individual differences (Roulin & Ternes, 2019; Bond & DePaulo, 2008).
While traits like emotional intelligence, involvement, or self-monitoring have been explored (Forrest & Feldman, 2000; Brandt et al., 1980b; Geizer et al., 1977; DePaulo et al., 1980; Rosenthal & DePaulo, 1979), their impact on detection accuracy appears limited.

However, some individual differences may still play a role in real-world settings, especially if lie and truth detection

are treated as separate abilities, with distinct skills supporting each (Stewart, Wright, & Atherton, 2019).
Initiating and maintaining attention increased truth detection, while understanding people's mental states improved deception detection (Stewart et al., 2019).

However, rather than just observing, a more proactive approach may help.
Hartwig and Bond (2011) argue that actively *eliciting* cues to deception—rather than just observing—can make liars easier to detect. Here are three key strategies:

- **Increase cognitive load** to strain liars' mental resources:
  Asking suspects to recount events in reverse order or through multiple formats makes lying more difficult and less consistent (Vrij, 2018; Vrij et al., 2008; Leins, Fisher, & Vrij, 2012).
- **Request verifiable details** to test claims:
  Liars tend to avoid details that can be fact-checked. Asking for verifiable information helps distinguish them from truth tellers (Vrij, Leal, & Fisher, 2018; Nahari, Vrij, & Fisher, 2014; Harvey et al., 2016).
- **Use strategic questioning and expose contradictions at once**, later in the questioning works best (early on can make innocent people look guilty):
  Techniques like Strategic Use of Evidence (SUE) withhold known evidence until after suspects commit to statements, making contradictions clearer (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008; Hartwig et al., 2005; Vrij, 2018; Sorochinski et al., 2014).
- **Leverage context-sensitive information** to assess plausibility:
  Providing interrogators with relevant background info (e.g., demographics of NFL players) greatly improves detection accuracy (Blair, Levine, & Shaw, 2010; Levine, 2020).
- **Ask diagnostic questions** that reveal underlying motives:
  Questions targeting confidence in co-conspirators, justification of actions, and suggested punishments can differentiate liars from truth tellers (Levine et al., 2014).

Other findings

- **It's harder to lie well on important matter**: a phenomenon called 'motivational impairment effect' (DePaulo & Kirkendol, 1989)
- **Peple tend to assume honesty**, 'truth default theory'
- **Stereotypes on lie detection are untrue**
  - Shifty eye contact: liars don't avoid eye contact, and sometimes engage in even more eye contact
  - Direction of gaze has no evidence to support it
- **People say they look for certain cues, but rely on others** like signs of ambivalence, uncertainty, and indifference, all more reliable
- **Truth detection and deception detection are two different skills**
- **Collaborative deception detection may be more effective** than relying on individuals. One study found that groups were significantly more accurate than individuals when the group consisted of established teams—not strangers (McHaney, George, & Gupta, 2018).
- **Familiarity is a double-edged sword**: some biases like expecting honesty or dishonesty decrease accuracy but knowledge increases accuracy.
- **Suspicion increases accuracy of judging lies**, but decreases accuracy of judging truth. Overall, the effect cancels each other out
- **Anxious behavior looks like deception** (Cruz, and Morr, 2000)

Learn more

- Dark psychology

- Manipulation tactics
- Manipulation: an overview
- Emotional manipulation

13. Motivational Appeals

Definition of motivational appeals:

> external inducement (AKA incentives), often of an emotional nature, that are designed to increase an individual's drive to undertake some course of action.

Emotions work better when people rely on peripheral processing

Use strong arguments with anger

- Use **message-relevant anger** with strong arguments for persuasion;
- **Avoid unrelated anger** (Walter et al., 2019)
- **Channel anger constructively** to avoid destructive outcomes (Skurka, 2019), and include clear actionable speps

Fear Appeals Can Be Effective

Fear appeals are common and can be persuasive in parenting, advertising, and public discourse (Altheide, 2002; Furedi, 2018; Gardner, 2009; Glassner, 1999).

Well-designed fear appeals can change attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Boster & Mongeau, 1984; Cho & Witte, 2004; Mongeau, 1998; Ruiter et al., 2001; Tannenbaum et al., 2015; Witte & Allen, 2000)

The Stage Model explains that **fear is most persuasive when it's relevant to us, and the risks are high**, leading to central processing and looking and ready for solutions ('coping appraisal').

Stage Model of Fear Arousal		
	High severity (serious consequences)	**Low severity (serious consequences)**
High susceptibility (personal risk)	most effective; likely to change attitudes, intentions, and behaviors	likely to change intentions and behaviors
Low susceptibility (personal risk)	likely to change attitudes	least effective; unlikely to change attitudes, intentions, or behaviors

Stage model of fear arousing communication

However, **people only take action if they believe they can do something about the risks.**

Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) explains that people either ignore, fear, or take action based on perceived threat and efficacy (Witte, 1992, 1994; Maloney, Lapinski, & Witte, 2011):

- **Response efficacy**: "Will the suggested action work?"
- **Self-efficacy**: "Can *I* do it?"

If both types of efficacy are also high, people take steps to address the threat rationally and proactively ('danger control').

If efficacy is low (even with high threat), people often engage in *fear* control—they panic, deny, or suppress the fear instead of addressing the danger.

So, to summarize:

- **Low threat** → Message ignored
- **High threat** → People listen
- **High threat + high efficacy** → **Danger control** (desired outcome)
- **High threat + low efficacy** → **Fear control** (undesired outcome)

⍰ To make your fear appeal work:

1. **Emphasize severity and susceptibility** (high threat),
2. **Clearly outline effective solutions** (response efficacy),
3. **Instill confidence in the audience's ability to act** (self-efficacy).

Otherwise, the message may backfire, increasing anxiety without action.

Pity, Guilt, & Shame

- **Pity works in eliciting donations**, with with negative portrayals more persuasive than positive ones (ie.: starving children)
- **Moderate guilt can work**, but it's easier to overdo it and it backfires (Bessarabova, Turner, Fink, & Blustein, 2015), with a feeling of being manipulated (Singh, Crisafulli, & Quamina, 2020)
  - Emphasize the positive feelings of doing the right thing, rather than the guilt trip of inaction

Humor

- Humor seems more effective at increasing knowledge than changing attitudes or behavior
- Avoid self-disparaging humor when you must project competence
- Use moderate humor, don't overdo it

Pride & patriotism work

- Patriotic ploys are effective when used appropriately, and they work better on nationalistic receivers
  - Food servers earned significantly more tips with a patriotic message ("United We Stand") on patrons' checks than a traditional message ("Have a Nice Day").
  - Patriotism increased consumers' intentions to purchase domestic brands without altering perceptions of quality or reliability

The authors note that 'flag waving effects' may be waing though, although I'm not convinced of that as more

liberalism is often contrasted with even stronger nationalism from the conservatives.

Ingratiation & flattery work

Overall, research suggests that ingratiation works—and works well (Gordon, 1996).
It can backfire when it's too obvious, albeit some studies find that even shameless ingration works (e.g., Chan & Sengupta, 2010).

However, to make it work best **perceived sincerity is the key**.

There are four types of ingratiation:

- **Other Enhancement**, giving compliments or flattery.
  - Indirectly through a third party to appear more genuine.

- **Opinion Conformity**, agreeing with the target's views or preferences.
  - Technique: initial disagreement followed by agreement to show persuasion.

- **Self-Presentation**
  - Bragging or showcasing admirable traits to boost one's image.
    Example: mentioning volunteer work to appear virtuous.

- **Doing Favors** *(added by later scholars)*
  Example: Providing help or assistance to win favor.

 Tips to make ingration work:

- **Focus on positives** effective ingratiators mentally focus on the target's strengths, which helps make praise sound authentic rather than calculated (Westphal & Shani, 2016).

- **Make it sincere** Ingratiation is more effective when perceived as genuine. If the flattery appears manipulative or self-serving, it can lead to the "slime effect," where the ingratiator is disliked and distrusted (Vonk, 1998; Yan et al., 2020).

- **Tailor the delivery** with personalized and targeted compliments (e.g., directed at individuals in small groups) are more persuasive than broad or generic ones, which can seem insincere (Seiter & Weger, 2010).

- **Use subtlety and questions**
  Reframing a compliment as a question (e.g., asking for style advice while embedding flattery) makes it feel less obvious and more authentic (Westphal & Shani, 2016).

14. Visual Persuasion

- **Pictures beat words**, at least when it comes to being more easily recognized and recalled (Hockley, 2008 ; Pelli, Farell, & Moore, 2013; Stenberg, 2006)
- **Movies export Western values**, and movie characters' action may be seen as placing a stamp of approval on those behaviors.
  - Adolescents who see a lot of smoking on the big screen are more likely to light up (Leonardi-Bee, Nderi, & Britton, 2016 ; Wellman et al., 2016)
  - Exposure to sexual content increases the likelihood of unprotected sex (O'Hara, Gibbons, Gerrard, Li, & Sargent, 2012)
  - Viewing more violence = more aggression and antisocial behavior in people. "Fifty years of research on the effects of TV violence, notes John Murray (2008), "leads to the inescapable conclusion that viewing media

violence is related to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviors" (p. 1212).
Plus, people tend to view the world as scarier and more dangerous

- **Shocking ads work if they work a fine line**. It significantly increases attention, benefits memory, and positively influences behavior" (Dahl, Frankenberger, and Manchanda, 2003). Other studies also support the effectiveness of shock ads (Scudder & Mill, 2009).
  However, they must not be so shocking to incite rebellion, and people may get used to shock if there is an oversupply

15. Esoteric Forms of Persuasion

- **Subliminal advertising doesn't work**

> "the results show no significant positive or negative effect . . . subliminal advertising does little to influence consumer behavior" (p. 527). After reviewing 50 years' worth of research on subliminal advertising, Broyles (2006) similarly announced that "subliminal advertising just is not effective"

- **Priming is too weak to make an impact in the real world**

First off, people must *already* have a need or drive for subliminals to have any effect.

Priming's effects also rely on controlled laboratory settings without distractions and with the test immediately following the priming.
The real world is inherently more chaotic.

Finally, the effects are minor and transitory.

- **Neurolingist programminc is hogwash**

> The original theory, developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder (1975 , 1979), lies somewhere between pop psychology and junk science (…) Despite the extravagant claims, there is scant evidence that NLP works.

One study compared an indirect message using NLP with a direct message without NLP (Dixon, Parr, Yarbrough, & Rathael,1986), and the one without NLP was significantly more effective.

- **Background music works** to affect mood or emotions without the person realizing it
- **Scents work**, but purchasing decisions are too complex to be influenced by scent alone, and there is too much varciance among people
- **Different colors have different effects**

The Cultural Element: How to Persuade Interculturally

Individualist VS Collectivist

1. **Collectivist cultures** (e.g., China, Korea) value harmony, group goals, and social obligations.
2. **Individualistic cultures** (e.g., U.S.) value independence, personal achievement, and self-expression.

Power Distance

1. **High Power Distance Cultures** (e.g., China, Russia):
   - Accept hierarchy and inequality.
   - Less likely to donate to charity (feel less personal responsibility).

- Judge product quality by price.
- Less prone to impulsive “vice” purchases.

2. **Low Power Distance Cultures** (e.g., U.S., Germany):
   - Value equality and challenge authority.
   - More egalitarian in persuasive approaches.

⍰ How to frame your message

- **Individualistic messages for the West** (e.g., “The art of being unique”) work better in individualistic societies.
- **Collectivist messages for the East** (e.g., “We bring people closer together”) are more effective in collectivist societies.
- **Indirect tactics for East**, Chinese managers favor indirect, relationship-based tactics like coalition-building, gift-giving, hints, and group-based appeals
- **Direct & rational for the West**, U.S. managers prefer rational and direct persuasion and requests
- **Self-persuasion for the West**, e.g., “Why would you choose healthier foods?”).

MORE WISDOM

Naive heroes enable takers: working bees & social loafers

I found this part enlightening, and once again confirmed why the world can benefit from our mission:

> diligent isolates, unlike social loafers, are people who increase their efforts and willingly work alone in an effort to rescue group projects.
> However, because they do not know how to delegate or have the social skills required for group projects, diligent isolates can be just as bad for group projects as social loafers. (…) the presence of diligent isolates promoted social loafing in other group members

And I’ve also personally experience this dynamic in real life multiple times (I was the loafer).

Persuasion and coercion are close relatives

While many draw a net distinction, the authors seem them as ‘close relatives’ and often overlapping:

> In fact, we would suggest that most influence attempts we encounter in daily life include both persuasive and coercive elements. Rarely in life is one free to make a completely unfettered choice. There are almost always strings attached. This is particularly true of face-to-face encounters. If a friend asks to borrow 20 bucks, we can say “no,” but there may be relational consequences for declining.

True.
That’s why on this website we espouse more strategic approach to saying no.

Also see:

- How to say no
- How to reject a date invite
- How to turn down sex (for women)

Everyone runs ‘mental calculations’ in relationships

> Research by Cai and Wilson (2000) suggests that different types of requests, such as these, present similar concerns for persuaders in all cultures, though cultural differences may occur when making such requests. For instance, on one hand, asking a favor may lead you to feel indebted, regardless of your cultural background

But culture may change how the same feelings and calculations translate into behavior:

> because they are more concerned with saving face, people from Japan, compared to those from the United States, may worry more about imposing on others. As a result, the Japanese may be less direct and especially polite when seeking favors (Cai & Wilson, 2000). Moreover, although the rebuff phenomenon (see previously) occurs in both U.S. and South Korean cultures, it is less pronounced in the latter culture (Kim et al., 2019)

Collectivist cultures are feminine?

Hofstede (1984) identified four different dimensions of values along which any culture can be placed.

One of them was masculinity/femininity:

> Third, some cultures can be characterized as “masculine” because people in them value competition, strength, assertiveness, and achievement, whereas others can be characterized as “feminine” because people in them value cooperation, affection, intuition, and nurturance.
> As such, members from masculine cultures (e.g., Japan, Italy, Austria, Mexico, England, Venezuela) should conform less than members from feminine cultures (e.g., Scandinavian countries, Portugal, the Netherlands).

Beware of Debates To Distort Public Opinions

> more than 97% of climate scientists believe humans are causing global warming? Despite that, the media frequently features one mainstream scientist debating one dissenting scientist. As a result, viewers often develop the mistaken impression that there is a 50:50 debate on the issue, rather than nearly overwhelming scientific consensus—unless, that is, they’ve been taught ahead of time (i.e., inoculated) about the ways in which people are typically bamboozled by such false impressions of equivalence

Beware of Manipulative Labeling

This can be a technique of dark psychology, making people feel guilty until they comply with your request:

Label someone’s behaiovr negatively to make them feel guilty, and they will be then be ‘nicer’ to regain prosocial points.
And they’re more likely to agree to related, prosocial requests—especially those that let them reject the negative label.

Also read:

- Dark psychology
- Manipulation tactics
- Manipulation: an overview
- Emotional manipulation

QUOTES

It's often a matter of where you stand:

> propaganda and indoctrination are largely pejorative terms used to describe persuasive messages or positions with which people disagree.

On repetition losing persuasiveness over time (though I had to wonder whether the authors weren't conflating tiredness with unpersuasiveness):

> The authors, for example, have become so tired of that tedious Energizer bunny, they wish it would "keep going and going" and never come back!

CONS

On rare occasions, the text leaned slightly toward a discursive style

For instance, in the discussion of Hollywood films, the authors note that Hollywood exports Western values, while some foreign audiences push back against this perceived 'cultural imperialism.'

I would have appreciated more evidence-based insights into whether such resistance is effective, or whether Hollywood—and Western cultural exports more broadly, the 'soft power'—tend to prevail in spreading Western values.

That said, these moments are exceptions in what is otherwise an excellent and well-researched work.

PROS

Highly practical

The 7th Edition of *Persuasion* offers a wealth of actionable guidance and takeaways for becoming a more effective persuader, making it especially valuable for practitioners and students of influence alike.

Well-researched and put together

The authors draw on a wide range of literature—including meta-analyses—without over-relying on isolated studies, which lends the work both depth and credibility.

Sound judgment where evidence is limited

In areas where the research is inconclusive or does not support firm conclusions, the authors offer their own interpretations.
These contributions come across as thoughtful, logical, and intellectually honest.

Engaging (unlike most handbooks)

As sleuths of persuasion, the authors wrote the book to be a captivating read.

I found it easy to read, engaging… And even entertaining.
The authors share many personal anecdotes, and don't shy away from humor.

Just some examples of:

- ***If you don't stop doing that you'll go blind'*** <— The title for the persuasiveness of fear :D
- ***We suspect that the male shoppers avoided the frozen food aisle.*** <– Referring to 200 naked shoppers who

responded to the ‘free groceries for naked shoppers’ campaign in Germany

While some may find this tone too informal, I appreciate it.
As empowered readers, we shouldn’t confuse humor with (lack of) authoritativeness.

A coherent narrative helps you grasp persuasion in all its facets

The authors excel at stepping back from the individual “trees” of specific studies to present a cohesive, big-picture view of persuasion.

This clarity of structure allows for a big-picture understanding of persuasion and its core principles.

REVIEW

Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining is a deeply insightful, engagingly written book that combines academic rigor with practical strategies to help readers master the art and science of influence.

It allowed me to improve several articles on this website.
And if we decide to make a lesson on persuasion strategies and techniques for Power University, this book will serve as a core resources. And given our high bar for Power University, that’s always the biggest compliment I can pay to any book.

Many thanks to Robert H. Gass and John S. Seiter, I’ll be sure to also get the 8th edition.

Check the **best books** on persuasion or **get this book on Amazon**.

Is Vanessa Van Edwards' Legit? Not For Men, Says Lucio

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 April 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Vanessa Van Edwards, bestselling author of *Cues* and founder of Science of People, is a teacher of body language and social skills.

Starting online as 'Vanessa van Patten', she's today known for her TED talk, books, and podcast appearances. She helps "recovering awkward" individuals thrive socially.

But is her warm, accessible style the best fit for everyone?

As social dynamics experts, we explore her strengths, limitations, and how our power-focused strategies compare.

Contents

- Vanessa Is Perfect For…
  - 1. Women
  - 2. Socialites & Party Hosts
  - 3. Female Leaders Who Embrace High Femininity
  - 4. Women Recovering from Social Awkwardness
  - 5. High Neurotic Women
  - 6. Women Looking to Date
- Vanessa Is Less Ideal For…
  - 1. Men
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Vanessa Is Perfect For...

Vanessa's brand of social skills is perfectly suited for:

1. Women

Vanessa's feminine energy, emotional transparency, and collaborative tone resonate well with women—especially those who don't want to "become more like men" to get ahead socially or professionally.

She offers a softer yet effective approach to connection-building and influence.

2. Socialites & Party Hosts

Vanessa shines in explaining the nuances of small talk, group dynamics, and making others feel comfortable.

If you host events, go to networking functions, or enjoy cultivating connections, you'll find her advice very actionable.

3. Female Leaders Who Embrace High Femininity

A social charmer with a flying career and great family life, Vanessa is a perfect role model for women who want the best of both worlds.

Although higher in warmth and friendliness, Vanessa doesn't shy away from leading when needed.

Verbal command, reinforcing hand movement, and second hand to display trust. Perfect mix of power and warmth

Also read our guide:

- **How to combine power and femininity**

4. Women Recovering from Social Awkwardness

Vanessa self-identifies as "recovering awkward."

And judging by how confidently and smoothly she now operates in front of large audiences and high-status hosts, she's made huge progress.

She teaches by example—her ability to replicate both poor and great social behavior makes her lessons feel hands-on and digestible. Her personal transformation also gives hope and motivation to others on the same path.

In that sense, she's a near-perfect guide for women who want to go from socially anxious to socially skilled.

5. High Neurotic Women

Vanessa openly shares that she's high in neuroticism.

That's a rare—and commendable—level of self-awareness from a public figure in the self-help space.

Neuroticism, in psychological terms, often correlates with emotional sensitivity and mood swings, anxiety, and social worry.
And yet, Vanessa has developed a public persona that's confident, cheerful, and warm.

That gives credibility to her advice: if she can do it, others high in neuroticism can learn too. Her personal example is both relatable and aspirational for women in the same emotional category.

Perfect synchrony of nonverbal leadership supporting the verbal request, enhancing compliance

6. Women Looking to Date

Vanessa is in a happy, long-term relationship, and speaks from real-world dating experience.

Her advice for women aligns closely with what we've historically taught at TPM: **make it easy for men.**

She encourages:

- Going out more
- Sending clear attraction signals
- Helping carry conversations
- Saying "yes" when invited
- Finding time to meet the guy

That's how you get a boyfriend, fast.

She also digs into personality traits to help women find a long-term compatible match, which adds a more refined, advanced, and yet foundational layer to the usual dating advice.

Look for dark triad traits as well
We'd strongly recommend women to also look into dark triad traits, controlling tendencies, and abusive personalities.
OCEAN is helpful, but not enough. You can live with a guy who's introverted if you're ambivert. But you set yourself up for an ocean of trouble with an abuser.

Vanessa Is Less Ideal For...

It's TPM's target audience that needs this section, including:

1. Men

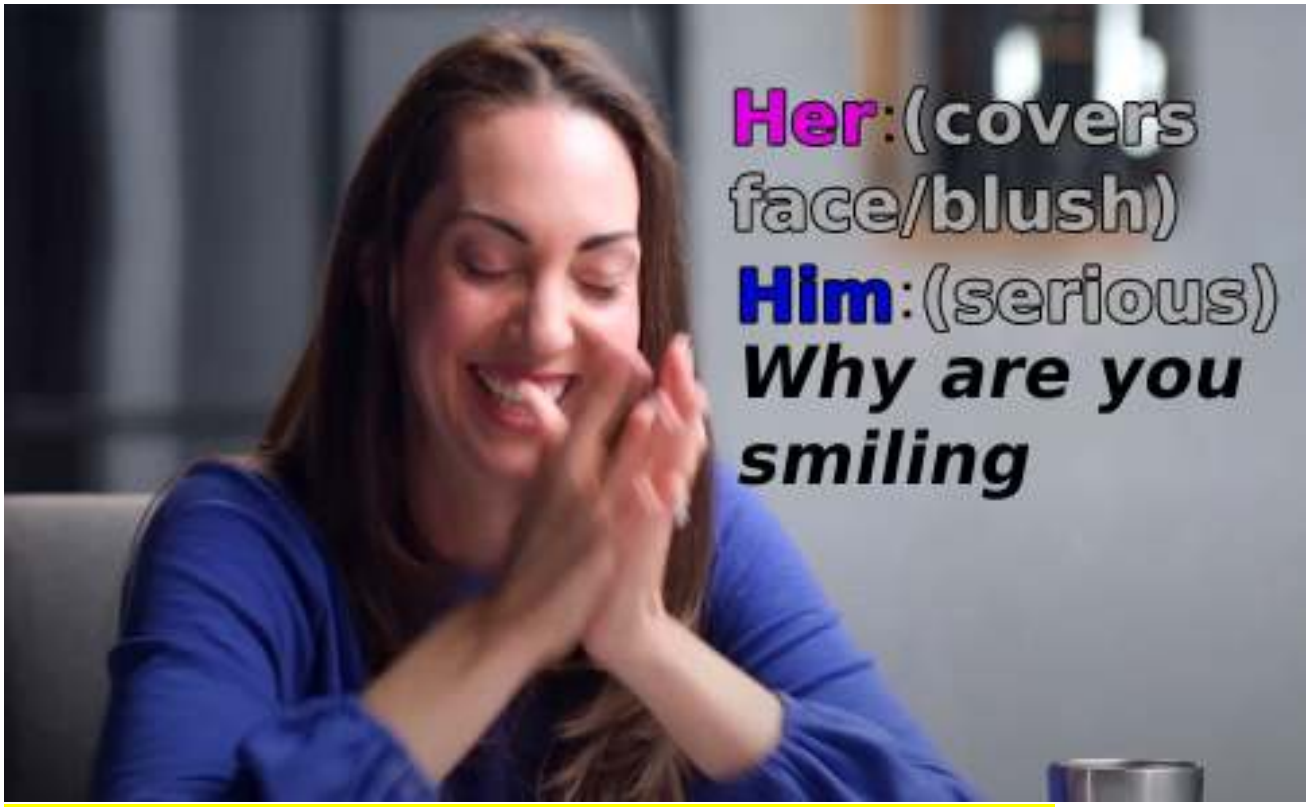
Especially men looking to project, develop, or maintain a strong masculine presence.

Vanessa's style leans warm, expressive, and emotionally open—traits that don't always resonate with men who want to cultivate stoicism, groundedness, or gravitas.

⍰ Example: don't laugh if it's not funny

In one interview, the host of *Diary of a CEO* asked her: "Why are you smiling?"
That brief moment captures how some men may perceive a too-warm communication style as "weak" or "non-serious."

Vanessa's big smiles and face covering were high in femininity, warmth, and vulnerability.
They're great for women—even endearing. But may not work equally well for men.



Covering your face and laugh is endearing, but not something we'd recommend to our readers

2. Ambitious Men Who Want To WIN

Vanessa herself says she has to be 'PG'.

And her 'PG approach' eschews dark psychology, manipulation tactics, negotiation power moves, etc.

But executives, entrepreneurs, or any man interested in an extraordinary life needs more than 'PG'.
We make the case on this website that awareness and skills in manipulation dynamics, social power dynamics, Machiavellianism, etc. are *necessary* for all.

And especially for ambitious men.

3. Men Looking For High-Status Networking

Vanessa's advice is perfect for making friends.

What some must first understand though is that **socialization with high achievers is inherently different** than

random socialization.

Management professor and Ph.D Kelly Reardon refers to ‘Secret Handshake‘ for the sub-communication that high-status people use to weigh each other.
High achievers look at your words and behavior as signals of your mindsets.

And some of Vanessa’s approaches may fit better general socialization than top-10% achievers.

Take some recommended questions for socialization:

Recommended questions	High power man’s reaction
Who is your celebrity crush?	Winners seek attractive woman in real life, ‘celebrity crushes’ are for…
What do you want more of in your life?	If winners want more of anything, they’ll get it
What do you daydream about?	Winners don’t day dream, they make stuff happen

These work well for random socialization and getting to know people better.

But these questions also sub-communicate a very different mindset than a go-getter ‘alpha type’.
These men they’ll think you’re different—potentially not at their level.

Furthermore, any question that prioritizes ‘sparking’ is at high risk of making you come across as a try-hard.
Like… Why are you trying so hard to be interesting or different?

Vanessa righteously suggests avoiding probing questions like ‘What do you do’.
But go-getters aren’t shy about direct questions. Direct questions cut to the chase, save time, and quickly tell you whether you should be even talking to the person you have in front.

⍰ Yes to Empathy, But You Must Retain Power

Vanessa emphasizes empathy and relationships, and that’s great.

But as for everything, balance and calibration.

This moment in the interview was telling:

> **Vanessa**: (explaining forehead lines that Steve also had) I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry <— Ruinous empathy. Disempowers Steve and gets sidetracked
> **Steve**: (ignores the ‘sorry’) <— Rejects the ‘poor you frame’ and sticks to the interview

'Sorrys' are empathic but disempowering for their 'poor you' frame. Winners reject it because they're favorite frame is 'f*ck that, I'm a winner and I'll win anyway'

4. Busy Men, Looking For ROI Socializing

In the *Diary of a CEO* interview, Vanessa recommends sending texts when someone crosses your mind.

That's sweet and thoughtful—but not efficient.

Says Vanessa:

> **Vanessa**: Text them I was just thinking of you
> (…)
> or and better you see a movie, a documentary, a Macha latte (…) and you're like 'oh this made me think of you'.
> My text messages are full of moments where I was triggered to think of that person

But this is not the ambitious man's modus operandi.
Vanessa's texting advice takes time that ambitious men would rather put to productive use.

Indeed, here's Steve's reply to that:

> **Steve**: My surface level reaction to that was <— Nice move to save face and 'power protect'. But it's probably what he means deep down
>
> God another job
> (…)
> if I've got to set aside an hour to text everyone I know and <— Busy ambitious men don't wanna spend too much time texting friends

Vanessa's incredulous and emphatic reaction is telling of the two different approaches. There is a major disconnect between men who prioritize goals, and women who prioritize relationships.

This approach may also harm your relationship with more masculine and ambitious men.

Ambitious men will avoid you if you text too often.
I guarantee you that, because I do that even with great people I love and respect.

Busy men often prefer a minimal-investment approach to networking: maintaining key relationships, with the *least* possible energy.
The non-written agreement is this: I love you and I'll love to meet you but we don't text to make the most of our time.

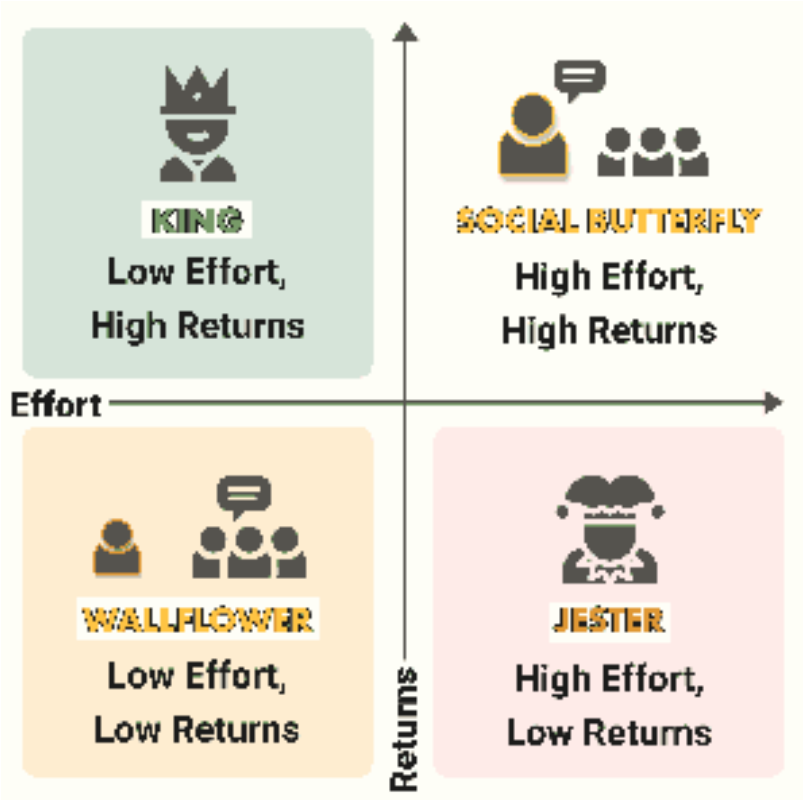
That's also why we recommend a more strategic, ROI-focused method of connection-building and friends-making.

5. Men Who Need To Master A Powerful Presence

Vanessa is a bubbly personality who would liven up any party.

She's high energy, and high energy is great in the right contexts.

However, for men, it's critical to master a higher power more grounded presence.
This is our 'social ROI matrix' based on the Social Investment Model:



High energy risks of making you look flunky-powerless

You see these two different modes clashing *hard* in this segment:

> **Vanessa**: (louder, high energy) Oh yeaaah join the cluuub (reaches out for a high five) <— Unmasculine high energy
> **Steve**: (neutral) I wouldn't say it like that <— Masculine approach

Steve then says it's because he's British.
That may contribute. But it's also because he's a man and… Most high-status men don't act like that.
Especially not powerful men who gain respect, status, and attraction.

You can also see the more masculine's host distancing himself from that attitude.

6. Kind, Unassertive Men (Prioritize Respect)

These men are typically lower in power and need clear, no-fluff, power-building advice.

That's the only way for them to gain some respect, status, and attraction.
And to go places in life.

Vanessa understands power dynamics and even teaches about power cues—but her delivery may be too feminine for men who need to learn to be more assertive and positively dominant.

For example, when talking about dating with the host, Vanessa says that *"leaning in"* as a form of 'highlight' is 'powerful'.
That's valid in the right contexts, but her execution is already too warm for a man -even if only as a highlight-:

Smiling right after finishing a sentence, as she does here, might come across as overly accommodating.

That's not the best modeling for men trying to build assertiveness, presence, and lead socially and in life.

7. Men Looking To Date

Vanessa herself says she has to be 'PG'.

And that may be an issue because effective dating skills for men require a *non*-PG approach.

That's already obvious in dating *theory*.
For example, Vanessa suggests that women don't approach because of culture.
While culture certainly plays a role, it's also about genetics, mate value, and market-like dynamics.

The PG framework is an even bigger handicap in real-world dating.
It glosses over key dynamics like male leadership, high-value (sub)communication, and positive dominance—skills we believe are fundamental for effective dating.

Take, for example, the line from Vanessa's book *Captivate*.
Asking her *"if she can give you her number"* subcommunicates lower status.
It's not something a top catch—or a skilled dater—would say. And it probably makes you *less* attractive.

This different lens became obvious in this date breakdown Vanessa did on Steve's podcast—especially compared to our own analysis of the body language dynamics:

https://youtu.be/dcJZxXJOtvs

> **Vanessa**: (says there are no signs of attraction)
> **Lucio**: (sees plenty of signs of attraction)

Me-too destroys attraction

Vanessa encourages looking for 'me too' moments to foster a deeper connection.

However, it's all about the delivery, and being too fast on 'me-tooing' frames you as *chasing* and destroys attraction. It's also emotionally needy.

So instead of saying 'me too', *imply* similarity.
Bonus points if you also display higher value while displaying similarity:

Low Power	High Power
Me too I go to the gym	Time is never enough when you run a business, but I always find time for the gym
I also like reading	Rock on, I like people smart people, what do you read
Oh you like TV shows? High five, I love binge-watching Netflix!	Netflix is addictive. I'd watch some if I had the time, but work, sports and friends take all my time

The left column CHASES connection.
The right column sub-communicates similarity without chasing, and while dispalying higher vlaue.

8. Good Men Who Must Learn to Spot Toxic People

Unfortunately the 'PG approach' without manipulation dynamics is most harmful to *good* men.

After all, toxic people and 'takers' aren't going to stop just because you prefer a simple happy life.
If anything, naivete makes you a *bigger* target.

As we say here:

> Lambs hoping there are no wolves play against the odds.
> Wolves *search* for lambs
>
> *TPM quote*

Also read:

- Naive self-help that sets you up for failure
- Dating red flags of women you must avoid
- Spotting the takers that make you worse off
- Self-defense strategies and techniques

Vanessa & Lucio: Comparison

If you're still wondering whether Vanessa's social skills angle is good for you, this table helps you decide:

Goal / Trait	Best Pick	Why
Be **liked**	Vanessa ⍰⍰	She leans on warmth, likability, emotional expressiveness
Be **respected**	Lucio ⍰	Teaches frame control, dominance, and how to avoid getting disrespected or used.
Women	Vanessa ⍰⍰	Friendly tone, speaks to female professionals
Men	Lucio ⍰	Focused on male-relevant challenges for status, respect, and attraction
Beginners in social skills	Vanessa ⍰⍰	Accessible, supportive, and gentle introduction to soft skills and body language.
Intermediate or **Advanced** in social skills	Lucio ⍰	Goes farther into advanced dynamics of manipulation, Machiavellianism, etc.

Goal / Trait	Best Pick	Why
Good relationships	Vanessa ⍰⍰	Focus on empathy and good conversations.
Influence up / reach **executive** level	Lucio ⍰	Includes power dynamics, high-level leadership, and elite-status navigation.
Safe, inclusive, 'PG-14'	Vanessa ⍰⍰	Polished, inclusive, and psychologically safe
Hard truths, power-based psychology	Lucio ⍰	No-fluff, straight talk on dominance, manipulation, and social realities.
Corporate **employees** / Public speaking	Vanessa⍰⍰	Caters to professionals and presenters.
Entrepreneurs, **lone wolves**, strategists	Lucio ⍰	Men forging their path, those who want edge + strategy.

Or see picture here.

FAQ

Does Vanessa van Edwards have a degree?

Vanessa holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree from Emory University

How much does Vanessa Van Edwards charge for speaking?

Vanessa Van Edwards's speaking fee is said to be around $20,000–$63,000, on the lower end for remote speaking and higher for in-person speaking. The changes may be increasing as podcasts like Diary of a CEO gave her broader recognition

Is Vanessa Van Edwards the founder of Science Of People?

Yes, Vanessa Van Edwards is the founder of ScienceOfPeople and the CEO

Does Vanessa Van Edwards have children?

Yes, Vanessa Van Edwards has two wonderful daughters with her husband. They met at university and have been together ever since

Vanessa Review

Vanessa Van Edwards is a masterful teacher of social skills and body language, inspiring women and socially anxious individuals to shine.

While her approach excels for many, ambitious men seeking dominance in high-stakes environments need more assertive, power-driven strategies.

That's where Power University comes in—a comprehensive course designed to equip you with the tools to navigate complex social dynamics, outmaneuver manipulators, and command respect.

Discover how to elevate your influence and achieve your goals with Power University's proven framework.

Learn More

- Socially confident behavior

- High-power speaking
- **Power University**, for the full one-stop course

Is Science of People Legit? Men Need More, Says Lucio

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 May 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Science of People, founded by Vanessa Van Edwards, is a popular platform for improving social skills and understanding human behavior.

With over 1,000 articles, hundreds of videos, and courses like *People School*, it targets professionals, daters, and 'socially awkward' individuals.

But is its warm, accessible style the best fit for everyone?

As social dynamics experts, we explore her strengths, limitations, and how our power-focused approach compares.

Contents

- Science of People Is Perfect For… ⍰⍰
  - 1. Women
  - 2. Socialites & Party Hosts
  - 3. Female Leaders Who Embrace High Femininity
  - 4. Recovering Awkward Women
  - 5. High Neurotic Women
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  - 1. Men
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  - 4. Busy Men, Needing High ROI Learning & Socializing
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- 7. Men Looking To Date
- Is Science of People ‘Science Backed’?
- Science of People VS The Power Moves
- FAQ
- Science of People Review
  - Learn More

Science of People Is Perfect For... ⍰⍰

1. Women

Science of People’s writing team is more than 80% women, and their course’s accountability coach is also a woman.

Add to that Vanessa’s own feminine energy, and the website leans more towards women’s point of view.

That’s a plus though as we believe it’s better to niche down and deliver value to a core audience, than trying to appeal to everyone.

Science of People’s advice on connection-building and influence offers a softer yet effective approach ideal for female audiences seeking to enhance interpersonal skills.

Also read:

- **How to be feminine**

> How to Be Feminine: 12-Steps Guide (With Examples)

2. Socialites & Party Hosts

The platform excels in explaining small talk, group dynamics, and making others feel comfortable.

It offers actionable advice for networking events or social gatherings, which makes it great for socialites and hostesses.

3. Female Leaders Who Embrace High Femininity

As a role model balancing warmth and leadership, Vanessa demonstrates how to lead with both power and femininity, inspiring women in leadership roles to leverage emotional intelligence for success.

Also read the guide:

- **How to combine power and femininity**

> Feminine AND Powerful: 9 Tips For Women Bosses

4. Recovering Awkward Women

Vanessa, identifying as “recovering awkward,” offers hope and practical guidance through her personal transformation.

Men recovering from social awkwardness can also learn a great deal from Science of People, of course.

And that will prepare them to eventually tackle more male-relevant challenges like status, respect, and attraction.

5. High Neurotic Women

Vanessa is open about her neuroticism.

Neuroticism correlates with emotional sensitivity and anxiety, making social skills harder for highly neurotic people.
Vanessa's successful handling of this trait makes her advice credible and aspirational, showing confidence is achievable for anyone with similar traits.

6. Women Looking to Date

Science of People provides insights into attraction and compatibility, encouraging women to make it easy for men to approach.

This also aligns with our dating advice for women.
See for example:

- Common mistakes women make in dating
- How to get a boyfriend… Fast
- How to slow down sex… And get a relationship

Science of People Is Less Ideal For... ⍰⍰

1. Men

Especially those seeking a strong masculine presence.

Science of People's warm, expressive style and more approachable content may not fully equip men with the edge they need to succeed.

2. Ambitious Men

The platform's approachable style focuses less on complex social dynamics like manipulation or power plays.

Ambitious men might find these skills necessary in business and high-stakes environments where other competitive men are ready to do whatever it takes to win.

3. Men Looking For High-Status Networking

Some of Science of People's most popular articles, such as those on 'conversation starters,' are engaging and fun.

However, they may not cover the needs of people seeking high-power networking.

Recommended questions, like "Who is your celebrity crush?" suit casual interactions but may subcommunicate lower ambition and poise.
And that kills your chances of networking with high-achievers.

For a power-aware approach to introductions and first impressions, see:

- How to make great first impressions

4. Busy Men, Needing High ROI Learning & Socializing

Science of People publishes numerous articles each month, likely to enhance visibility and SEO (an understandable

strategy we have nothing against).

That can make it hard to tell apart foundational content with foundational skills, from more surface-level or entertaining articles.

The advice also leans more for highly engaged relationships with frequent texting and in-person meetings.

This approach is thoughtful, but may not be efficient for men who prioritize goals.
These men benefit most from an approach that allows them to maintain relationships and friends, without constant meetings and texts.

5. Men Who Need To Master A Powerful Presence

Science of People tends to espouse:

- Approach-first attitude to socializing
- Strong signals of interest in dating
- High-energy socializing, including high expressiveness

While all of these have a place, men often benefit from a grounded, powerful presence.
Also, men who reach the top aren't meant to approach first or send obvious signals of interest since *others* are going to do that for them.

6. Kind, Unassertive Men

These men might need clearer, more direct advice on assertiveness and how to gain respect.

While Science of People deals with power as well, we find that sometimes it leans towards more warmth.
Or not tailored to what men need not just to be likable, but to gain status and respect.

Also read:

- **How to be assertive**
- Learn assertiveness with a brief 'good jerk phase'

> How to Be Assertive In 7 Simple Steps

7. Men Looking To Date

Science of People's "PG" approach might overlook key dating dynamics for men, including leadership, positive dominance, and high-value communication.

These are crucial skills since women are most attracted to men they feel are 'above them'.
Also see more about hypergamy, and mate value.

Take Vanessa's take in her book *Captivate*.
Asking her *"if she can give you her number"* subcommunicates lower status.
It's not something a top catch—or a skilled dater—would say. And it would make men *less* attractive.

You can get a taste of our different takes in this video review:

> **Vanessa**: She should show more signs
> **Lucio**: Her signs were obvious, he had to lead more

Is Science of People ‘Science Backed’?

Science of People quotes many studies in its articles and videos.

We like that, and we’d suggest looking less at individual studies, and more at the full literature.

Lets dig deeper:

Science is one of three TPM pillars that support solid strategies and techniques, flanked by experience, and critical thinking skills.

The pillars work in synchrony, including by addressing each other’s limitations.

Science alone is not enough.
It takes experience and critical thinking skills to make sense of studies and translate them into effective strategies.

Common issues of ‘science-backed’ approaches include:

- **Over-Reliance on Individual Studies**

Single studies, especially with low statistical power, are less reliable and often fail to detect true effects.
When measuring small effect sizes, low-powered studies are more likely to produce unreliable or inconsistent results due to statistical noise.

This applies to many studies conducted before the replication crisis and those not pre-registered.

And with bad data in, poorer strategies come out.

This is why at TPM we go for literature overviews, preferring handbooks by accredited researchers who also understand how to interpret studies.

- **Hyped Studies That Don’t Always Hold Up**

The catchier a study is, the more likely it is to grab attention (and end up in an article).

However, as Steven Pinker explains in *Rationality*, the more surprising a study is, the more likely it is to be wrong.

This comes down to psychology and statistics.
While surprising equals attention-grabbing, surprising is also, by definition, exceptional.
And exceptions are more likely to be flukes.

Consider, for example, the past craze surrounding power poses, which claimed that certain postures boost confidence.
Science popularizers embraced it, and may not have been as quick to move to more effective strategies.

Power posing in a lab coat

- **Effect Sizes and External Validity Aren't Fully Appreciated**

Many studies show small effect sizes that may not translate well to real-world applications.

Good examples are smiling to be happier—if there is any effect, it's tiny, and priming.

Priming effects have been observed in controlled laboratory settings designed to detect subtle behavioral changes under isolated conditions.

But they may not make a difference for real-world influence—so skip that warm cup to bond with others, and learn how to actually bond with others.

Say the *Routledge Persuasion Handbook*:

> Although priming has been demonstrated in controlled laboratory settings, we wish to emphasize the practical limitations of this technique (…) "the short-lived nature of the influence of subliminal information casts serious doubt on its effectiveness in everyday life (…) We are aware of no studies demonstrating any commercial success at using subliminal priming.

And, we can probably add 'no studies demonstrating a major effect in real-life encounters'.

Science of People VS The Power Moves

What if you've read this Science of People review and are not yet sure if it helps you with your social skills?

Here's a quick table to help you decide which platform better suits your needs:

Goal / Trait	Best Pick	Why
Be **respected**	TPM	Teaches positive dominance, frame control, and how to avoid getting disrespected or used.

Goal / Trait	Best Pick	Why
Be **liked**	SoP	Leans heavier on warmth, likability, emotional expressiveness
Women	SoP	Vanessa's approach is perfect for female professionals
Men	TPM	Focused on male-relevant challenges for status, respect, and attraction
Beginners in social skills	SoP	Accessible, supportive, and gentle introduction to soft skills and body language.
Intermediate or **Advanced** in social skills	TPM	Goes further into advanced dynamics of manipulation, Machiavellianism, etc.
Good relationships	SoP	Focus on empathy, matching personalities for relationships, and good conversations.
Influence up / reach **executive** level	TPM	More power strategic with office politics, career strategies, boss ingratiation and high-power behavior for executives
Safe, inclusive, 'PG-14'	SoP	Polished, inclusive, and psychologically safe
Hard truths, power-based psychology	TPM	No sugar coating, straight talk on dominance, manipulation, and social realities.
Socialites, employees, & Public speaking	SoP	Caters to professionals and presenters.
Entrepreneurs, **lone wolves**, strategists	TPM	Men forging their own path, entering or creating new social circles, and men who want an edge

Or see picture here.
If Science of People is better for you, you're in good and capable hands with them.

FAQ

Is Vanessa Van Edwards the founder of Science Of People?

Yes, Vanessa Van Edwards is the founder of ScienceOfPeople and the CEO

Does Vanessa van Edwards have a degree?

Vanessa holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree from Emory University

Is Science of People credible?

Yes, Science of People is a credible resource for improving social skills, conversations, and being more likable

Science of People Review

Science of People is a top-notch resource for improving social skills, particularly for women and recovering awkward individuals.

Its accessible, engaging content empowers users in business, life, and love.

If you appreciate Vanessa's accessible style, you'll enjoy Science of People articles and courses.

However, ambitious men or those in high-stakes environments may need more assertive, power-driven strategies, as the platform's approach may not fully address their needs.

To navigate complex social dynamics, outmaneuver manipulators, and command respect with proven frameworks,

check out **Power University**.

Learn More

- Socially confident behavior
- High-power speaking
- Power University, for the full one-stop course

Social Status: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Master It

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 May 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Social status shapes how others treat you, how much power you have, and even how attractive you appear.

In this guide, we break down what social status really is, why it matters more than most people realize, and how you can actively gain status.

Social status is a key pillar of our expertise at The Power Moves. Continuously updated with the latest empirical findings, this article synthesizes the research literature and our real-world insights to serve as your definitive reference on social status.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- What Is Social Status?
  - Why Social Status Matters
- Benefits of Social Status
  - Downsides of Low Status
  - Limitations of High-Status Seeking
- Traits That Impact Status
  - Traits That Increase Status
  - Traits That Decrease Status
- Strategies to Gain Status
  - 1. Dominance
  - 2. Prestige
  - 3. Joining The Upper Class
  - 4. Influencer Approach & Digital Popularity

    - 5. Status Signaling
- Status VS Liking
    - Status for the ambitious, acceptance for nice-guys…
- Why Status Even Exist?
    - Hardwired, but also learned
- Who Seeks Status
- Why Power Beats Status
    - Learn more:

What Is Social Status?

Social status is your standing or rank in a social hierarchy.
It reflects how much respect, influence, and value others assign to you.

Status hierarchies are:

- **Competitive** for classic supply-and-demand imbalance: few top spots, many contenders.
- **Inescapable**: people naturally sort themselves into hierarchies in any group, especially for top spots—whether it's your workplace or your friend circle.
- **Fast**: the initial stages of group formation sort leadership within minutes

That 'sorting' is based on a combination of value and power signals like early leadership, body language, dominance, and 'power moves'—and how you respond to them.

I differentiate between two types of status:

- **Society-level status**, based on profession, income, or class (SES)
- **Group-level status**, based on:
    - Group-specific values, the more relative and contextual form of status
    - Personality traits related to interpersonal dynamics (eg.: social dominance, charisma, leadership, etc). Related to 'individual value'

They overlap, but are different domains, calling for different traits, approaches, and strategies.

Why Social Status Matters

You can't afford to ignore status.

Whether you like it or not, **status shapes your life in ways you might not even realize**.

Higher-status individuals get more attention and deference.
They're more persuasive, more trusted, and more listened to—even when they say the same things as lower-status men.
And of course, they get more social and mating opportunities.

In other words, status is power. Social power.

Outcome	Low Status	High Status
Dating	Less attractive, fewer options	More attractive, more options
Longevity	5-10 years shorter life expectancy	5-10 years longer life expectancy
Physical Health	Higher risk of chronic diseases (e.g., heart disease, diabetes)	Lower risk of chronic diseases
Psych. Health	Higher rates of anxiety, depression, and stress	Better mental health, lower stress
Self-Esteem	Lower self-esteem and feelings of inferiority	Higher self-esteem and confidence
Social Influence	Lower persuasive power; limited ability to effect change	More persuasive; greater ability to influence attitudes and behaviors
Social Networks	Smaller, less diverse; limited access to influential connections	Larger, with access to influential and supportive connections
Reproductive Success	Lower reproductive success	Higher reproductive success
Social Power	Low; target for exploitation	High, respected, power to exploit

Low Status vs. High-Status Comparison Table™, Lucio Buffalmano, 2025

Benefits of Social Status

1. Better Health

People with higher social status tend to be mentally and physically healthier across cultures and populations. This effect is consistent even with subjective perceptions of status, suggesting strong psychological and biological underpinnings.

- **Lower stress**: reduced cortisol and better cardiovascular function
- **Better mood** and fewer depressive symptoms: status buffers against anxiety and mood disorders
- **Stronger immune function**: higher status is linked to lower inflammation and faster recovery (source)
- **Healthier behaviors**: status is associated with better sleep, diet, and activity levels

2. Higher Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is intrinsically linked to status because self-esteem acts as a “sociometer,” gauging how much others value us (Leary & Downs, 1995).

Status may also boost confidence, and interpersonal status (respect, admiration, importance) matters more than class-level socioeconomic status (SES: education, income, occupation).

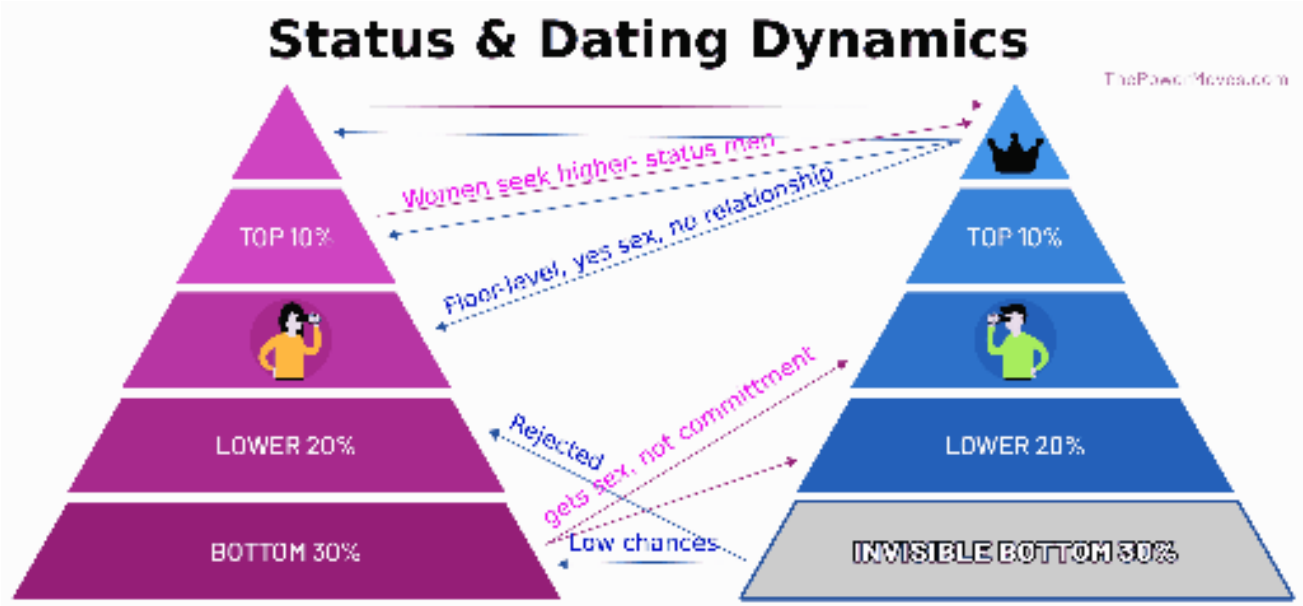
3. Social & Romantic Success

Status is closely related to romantic success.

Across cultures, status boosts perceived mate value, and women especially prefer high-status men for long-term relationships (Buss, 2016).

High-status individuals also attract more friends, allies, and better support networks, enhancing life satisfaction.

- **Increased attractiveness**, especially for men
- **Better friendships** with larger, more supportive social networks



Higher-status men enjoy more attraction and dating options

4. Influence & Persuasion

Social status dramatically boosts interpersonal influence across all socialization:

- **Better negotiations**: Being perceived as high-status improves bargaining power and leads to better outcomes
- **Interpersonal relationships**, gaining more attention, compliance, and faster adoption of ideas
- **Leadership**: High-status individuals gain more followers and trust

4. Greater Reproductive Payoffs

High-status men have more children.
Though the link is strongest in nonindustrial societies, it's also true for modern industrial societies of 'soft polygamy'.

5. Social Shields Against Attacks

Harvard professor Henrich states that we evolved to track status for exploitation and self-defense.

Your status and reputation shield you because attackers would *lose* their status.

And although we may need more evidence on this, Henrich's observation squares well with power dynamics logic and our analyses of social climbers targeting weaker 'social pegs'.

Downsides of Low Status

Contrary to high status:

- **Poorer health and longevity**: The Whitehall studies showed that lower-ranking British civil servants had significantly higher mortality than higher-ranking peers.
  - Lower mood and depression: Peterson claimed that 'there is little difference between being depressed and being at the bottom of the hierarchy'

- **Fewer social and mating opportunities**: Status often works as a filter in the mating market, and women

eliminate potential mates based on perceived low status *before* other traits are even considered.

- **Reduced influence**: less heard, more interrupted and dismissed, and more likely to be blamed and scapegoated
- **Socio-systemic discrimination**: individual and institutional discrimination combine to systemic discrimination in many facets of life
  - Group-level discrimination: Individuals inherit the costs of lower-status classes. Compelling evidence from social dominance theory shows persistent systemic discrimination in all studied societies
- **Vulnerable to exploitation**: no status equals 'no social shield'. Attacks may even be encouraged when low status is coupled with low reputation. It's no coincidence the poorer and lower classes are also the most victimized

Limitations of High-Status Seeking

Status is great to have, but there are important downsides we want to emphasize:

- **Group-dependent**: status is contextual to the group it's based on and it resets to zero the moment you change group
- **Other-dependent**: status depends entirely on others' recognition, so you depend on others for status
- **Fear and neediness**: The more status you gain, the more you worry losing it.
  - Neediness: group dependence can lead to over-investment, both emotional and practical to keep the group alive
- **Excessive status-seeking turns maladaptive** since you lose potentially higher ROI pursuits ('opportunity costs').
  Researchers link it to poor mating strategies, delayed families, and fewer offspring.
- **Status doesn't guarantee respect** when it's not 'earned'. This can lead to a disconnect between rank or title, and little respect among subordinates

The best leaders have *both* status from their rank, and respect from their personality

Traits That Impact Status

What increases or decreases status is partly relative to group, culture, and context.

But studies find these traits consistently drive higher social status:

Traits That Increase Status

- **Competence**, especially in fields related to the group's activities and goals
- **Social skills**: High-status duties are often social. Eg.: inspire, maintain peace among members, facilitate inter-member communication (Van Vugt et al. 2008). Different subsets include charisma, charm, etc.
- **Confidence** is a proxy for competence (Areni and Sparks 2005; Price and Stone 2004). Observers infer higher status from overconfidence (Anderson et al. 2012)
- **Size**, with a bidirectional relationship, and high-status men perceived as taller/more muscular
- **High value**: as per social exchange model, value-giving potential makes you socially valuable
  - Resources
  - Displaying value and status, including expensive cars or watches
  - Attractiveness makes people 'start' with higher status
- **Competitiveness** and strategic predisposition, since status is inherently scarce, and a central domain of male competition and intrasexual competition for mating opportunities (Massar, 2022)
- **Benefiting others** as part of 'giving value' (Blass and Ferris 2007).
  - Effort, sacrifice, and loyalty to the group or cause. For example, employees who put extra effort into their jobs are often accorded higher status (Allen and Rush 1998; Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997).

Also helps:

- **Intelligence** (Buss et al., 2020)
- **Bravery and courage**, including daredevil acts among adolescent groups
- **High extraversion**. Especially during group formation extroverts emerge as leaders more than introverts (Bass 2008; Judge et al. 2002)
- **Social strategy**: "political skill" like social astuteness, behavioral flexibility, and adaptability (Cheng and Tracy, 2014).
  - Smart self-promotion, including displaying skills and successes and hiding shortcomings (Jones and Pittman, 1982)
  - Self-monitors desire status and are more likely to emerge as leaders in task groups

Prestigious and dominant traits

Traits related to the two proven approaches to gaining status are:

- **Dominance**
  - Selfishness and disregard for others
  - Arrogance
  - Hubristic pride (Beall and Tracy, 2020)

Possible example of hubristic pride

- **Prestigious traits** – Valued knowledge and teaching ability (Henrich, Gil-White, 2001)
  - Generosity and prosociality, but must be public (Bereczkei et al., 2007)
  - Number of allies
  - Cooperativeness
  - Ethics and concern for public good

- Authentic pride (Cheng et al. 2010)

Traits That Decrease Status

In general, **being low value or taking value from others decreases status**, and various studies found:

- **Antisociality**, including nastiness, meanness, and being known as a thief.
  Note: caveats apply for the domineering approach to status
- **Poor hygiene**, including dirty, unclean, or acquiring sexually transmitted disease
- **Neuroticism**, and especially so for men
- **Shaming one's family**

Strategies to Gain Status

Features	Dominance	Prestige
Influence	[illegible]	[illegible]
Imitation	[illegible]	[illegible]
Attention	[illegible]	[illegible]
Mimicry	[illegible]	[illegible]
Proximity	[illegible]	[illegible]
Higher-ups language	[illegible]	[illegible]
Higher-ups behavior	[illegible]	[illegible]
Displays	[illegible]	
Lower status	[illegible]	[illegible]
Higher ups	[illegible]	[illegible]
Higher ups	[illegible]	[illegible]
Emotions	[illegible]	
Lower status	[illegible]	[illegible]
Higher ups	[illegible]	[illegible]
Fitness	[illegible]	[illegible]

Prestige vs Dominance, based on Joseph Henrich, revisited by Lucio Buffalmano, 2025

According to the Dual Strategies Theory, people climb social hierarchies through prestige and dominance.

They're two very different approaches as **dominance inflicts costs, while prestige confers benefits** and look very different in socialization:
As Henrich reports, they act and look very differently in socialization:

> Dominant individuals tended to (1) act overbearing, (2) credit themselves, (3) tease to humiliate others, and (4) be manipulative.
>
> Meanwhile, prestigious individuals (1) were self-deprecating, (2) credited the team, and (3) told jokes.
>
> *Henrich, 2015*

A new theory claims competence is the basis of both prestige and dominance.

And although we tend to agree with that, the dominance/prestige dichotomy still provides a useful model.

So let's dive in:

1. Dominance

Dominance is older, inherited from our primate ancestors, and it's usually described as 'the path of force and fear'.

In some contexts, it may include more forceful means.
For example, we agree with several researchers who consider bullying a tool for social power and status (Olweus, 1993; Vaillancourt et al.; 2007). And it's unfortunately toxic but potentially effective.

However, contrary to more simplistic definitions, dominance goes beyond overt aggression and bullying.
The most extreme forms of dominance are rarer in most contexts of modern society.
Dominance can come from simple rank, or be more covert. Even threats—as Cheng and Tracy (2014) note—can be more psychological.

Dominant dyads also include everyday examples such as:

- Boss over employee
- Police over citizen

Also see:

- **Dominant men archetypes**

Advantages

- **Works** for individuals, despite the costs on others.
  - Value-taking approach can also work: bullying, rude, demeaning, and anti-social individuals tend to be higher rank and more influential in both experimental contexts (e.g., Van Kleef et al. 2011) and real-world relationships (e.g., romantic couples, fraternity members) (Keltner et al. 1998 on value-taking teasing).

- **Works fast**

- **Bottom line power**: control over resources and violence are bottom line of human social hierarchy. When societies disintegrate they represent the 'hardest currency'

Disadvantages

- **Resistance and pushback** *(e.g., Falbe and Yukl 1992; Kipnis and Schmidt 1988)* and I expect stronger resistance from higher-value and empowered individuals

- **Lower performance at work** (*e.g., Falbe and Yukl 1992; Higgins et al. 2003; Yukl et al. 1996)*

- **Sub-communicates incompetence**: studies found that leaders who felt incompetent were most abusive (i.e., who lack Prestige), suggesting that aggression replaces a lack of Prestige

- **Shallower influence**: complying out of fear doesn't shift opinions

And potentially:

- **lower health outcomes** than prestige as observed in small-scale societies, but I feel more studies are needed
- **Less attractive to women** who generally indicate a preference for prestigious men. But dominants still beat submissives, and may be preferred in competitive contexts, or for short-term mating. But it's more true for dominance, rather than *aggression* (Snyder et al. 2008).

 See: dominance and dating success

2. Prestige

The prestige route earns respect through competence, wisdom, and the ability to give value.

Henrich claims that prestige evolved later as part of homo sapiens' cultural learning.
People defer to prestigious men in exchange for learning, a logic that aligns with social exchange theory, and social power dynamics.

Prestige is more stable, longer-lasting, and admiration-based since people defer voluntarily.

Advantages

- **Deeper influence**: because people shift their underlying opinions, beliefs, and practices to be more similar to the prestigious individual (Henrich, 2015). Even 'agreement as deference' is deeper than coercion
- **Well-liked**
- **Better relationships**
- **More loyal followers**
- **Largest genetic payoffs**: the evidence is still limited, but Henrich reports that prestigious men's children die less frequently, and prestigious men marry younger (neither of which held for dominant men) (Ruden 2008 and Ruden 2011)

3. Joining The Upper Class

Social status can be *achieved*, or it can be *ascribed*—for example, being born into a wealthy upper-class family.

However, one can also *enter* upper classes, for example:

- **Marrying** into upper class

- **Moving** and matching the elites
- **Joining the ruling class** as a top politician
- Etc., etc.

4. Influencer Approach & Digital Popularity

Attention has always been a currency of status, and the digital age changed the game.

Digital popularity breaks the traditional barriers of status to achieve *global* status.

Written language first endowed writers to transcend interpersonal interactions, and it accelerated with Internet and social media.

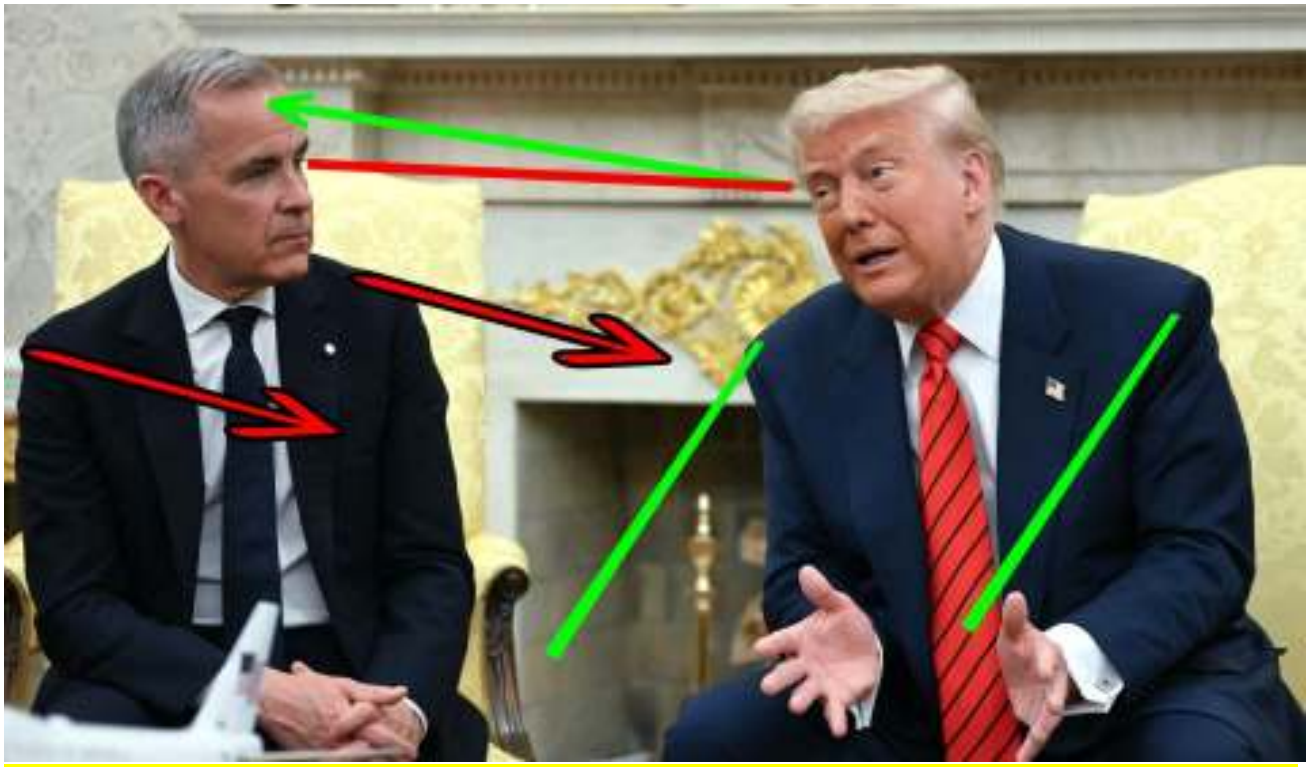
Influencers can also lean more toward prestige or dominance, but prestige works better for influencers.

5. Status Signaling

In *The Cambridge Handbook on Evolutionary Perspectives*, Chapais claims that, together with seeking and defending status, **signaling status is a universal human adaptation**.

Many verbal and nonverbal behaviors help signal and attain status.
Some of them include:

- **Visual dominance**, defined as the ratio of looking while speaking to looking while listening (Exline, Ellyson, & Long, 1975)
  - **High-status subjects look in equal measure speaking and listening**, looking more than most others (Dovidio et al., 1988)
  - **Low-status subjects looked more while listening** and less while speaking (Ellyson et al., 1980)
- **Dominant men look less at subordinates** while listening (Exline, Ellyson, & Long, 1975)
- **People look more at high-status men** than low-status males or females (Maner, DeWall, & Gailliot, 2008)



Carmey looked at Trump more than Trump looked at him, while rotating toward him more than Trump did. Trump was dismissive, but signaled higher power

Of course, as for most human adaptations and behaviors, men likely differ in their ability to signal status.
And **the most skilled signalers reap the largest rewards.**

Learn more about status signaling:

- High-status behavior
- Low-status behavior

Status VS Liking

Status and acceptance are different, and sometimes opposite.

For example, Cheng and Tracy state that touting status-related traits conveys superiority. That may afford status, but the competitiveness or envy it generates may decrease liking.

The status/acceptance tradeoff is likely related to the 'pratfall effect', or being more liked after a blunder.

People seem subconsciously aware of this tradeoff, and acceptance-craving individuals underestimate their status (Anderson et al. 2006).
This may be linked to people pleasers' tendency to *over*-self-deprecate.

Status for the ambitious, acceptance for nice-guys...

Hierometer theory suggests that some men, including grandiose narcissists, focus on *status*, rather than inclusion.

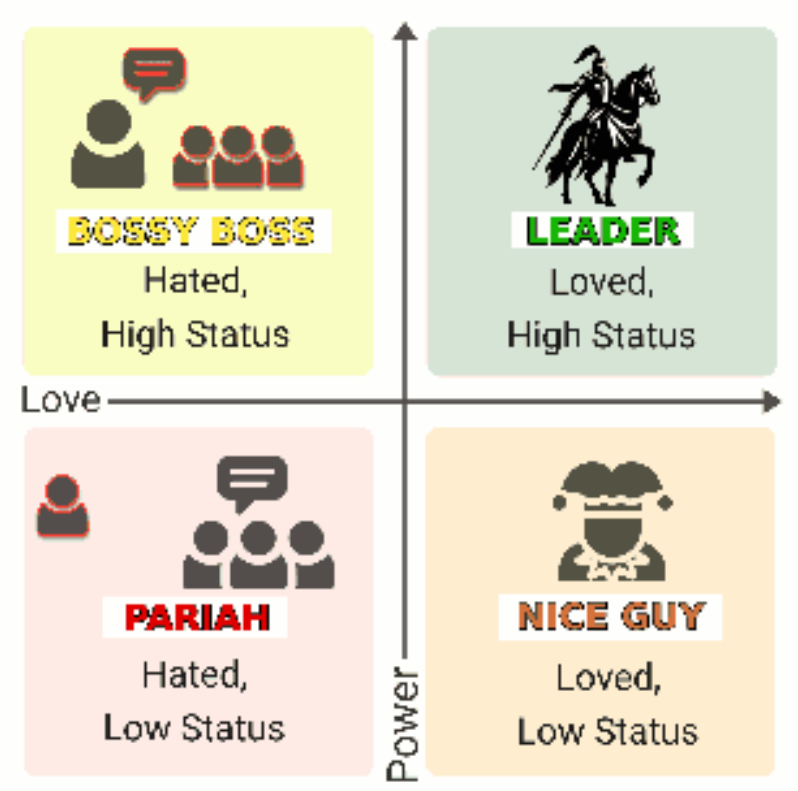
In general, a stronger drive for status and power over inclusion is associated with masculinity, over femininity (Hays, 2013; Yang & Girgus, 2019).

This isn't to say that plenty of men don't prioritize inclusion, of course. However, as Storr suggests, **connection without status is hollow.**
As a man, you're neither successful nor happy being 'accepted' as the lowest rung.

Storr calls that "connected but low status" state "likable but useless".
Instead, successful men are driven *both* to "get along and get ahead".

We agree with Storr's analysis, but you can combine status and liking:

... And both for life winners



Status and liking Matrix, Lucio Buffalmano, 2025

Prestige allows for both liking and status.
And our power/warmth approach strengthens it with the best of both worlds:

- **Combining liking and status with power and warmth**

> Competence and Warmth: The Science of Winning People Over

Why Status Even Exist?

Status is a constant of all social animals.

But one may wonder: why lower-status individuals accept it?

Evolution, game theory, and power dynamics explain why.

Most **lower-status individuals accept hierarchies because little is better than nothing**, and subversion would incur bigger losses.

Species with near-zero resources for low-status individuals see more rebellion and conflict because 'with nothing to lose, you can risk everything'.

But most commonly, low-status men retain some of the following benefits:

- **Better health and survival**
  - Stay in the group
  - Partake in shared resources
  - Avoid harm
- **Better mating odds**
  - Kin reproduction

  - Lower-status women mating
  - Sneaky mating
- **Future status re-negotiations** (biding time strategy)

In short, hierarchies are an 'evolutionarily stable strategy (ESS)' because there is something in it for everyone, and it beats any alternative strategy.

Over time, evolution also shaped behaviors and physiologies that reinforce hierarchy formation and acceptance (eg.: high status feels good, submission to high-status individuals decreases stress, and self-regard tracks social power to act accordingly).
As mentioned already, evolutionary theories suggest depression may be linked to social status, helping low-status men avoid the costs of challenging higher-status individuals (Price et al., 1994).

Superior Group Performance

Hierarchies' fewer fights also translate into saved energy and increased cooperation (Berger et al. 1980).

Evolutionary theories of cooperation and morality suggest that human status is deeply tied to the evolution of moral systems and collaborative behavior—key factors behind our success as a species.

In competition within our species, hierarchical groups tend to outperform and displace non-hierarchical ones thanks greater coordination and efficiency (see Henrich, 2020 for cultural expansion).

Hardwired, but also learned

Sapolsky argues that submission and aggression are hardwired, but we learn the *calibration* -when and how to use them-.

While we can't easily test in humans, a monkey raised in isolation displayed all the "correct" aggressive and submissive behavior, but at the wrong times and with the wrong people.
For example, challenging the alpha without strength and allies, and losing.

Learn more:

- **Social calibration**

Who Seeks Status

Status-seeking is a human universal drive (Anderson et al., 2015).
Meaning that **everyone prefers more status**.

But *some* want it more than others, including:

- **Men**, more than women because of their reproductive differential
- **High testosterone** individuals (Sapolsky, 2017)
- **High social-dominance orientation men**, a scale measuring the preference for social hierarchies and group-based inequality
- **Narcissists**

Let's dig deeper:

Dark Triad Traits & Status

Dark triad men pursue status and power more than the average (Lyons, 2019).

- **Narcissists pursue status**: although vulnerable narcissists may not be as effective, grandiose ones are

- Grandiose narcissists gain status (Grapsas et al., 2019), but lose reputation with growing intimacy (probably as the 'real' them is revealed).
  One study found that the 'dark' aspects of narcissism (ie.: manipulativeness) lowered leadership ratings but 'bright' expressions like self-confidence helped (note: lower *ratings* doesn't mean one can't become the leader)

- **Machiavellians gain status**. I find 'socially strategic' to overlap with Machiavellianism, which has been shown to facilitate influence and leadership (Christie and Geis, 1970)

- **Psychochpathy is a double-edged sword**: psychopathy is probably related to the dominant approach, which can be effective. But higher psychopathy is maladaptive for long term and society-wide socio-economic status

Why Power Beats Status

Status binds you to other people's acceptance. Power frees you

Status is important, and it's one of Power University's key outcome.

However, we approach status-building at the group level as a stage toward empowerment.
The original dominance and prestige researchers explain why:

> since **status relies on others**, (…) **high-status parties** (…) **strive to fulfill others' expectations** (…)
> This description of the effects of status stands in stark contrast to the effects of **power, which liberates people from social and normative pressures**

Meaning: power is superior for self-empowerment.
Especially if we include the time and energy cost of the games people play in groups.

Status is also a double-edged sword for our 'win-win' preference.
Status games that reward contribution build empires and propel civilization forward.

But antisocial status games and status-awarding inter-group competition can turn toxic.

Fortunately, modernity frees you from status dependence because you can achieve your goals alone, or enter and exit countless groups.

So we advise you to **learn the *skills* to acquire status in any group, while being *independent* of any *specific* group**.
Think of 'abundance mindset', but applied to socialization.

In the vernacular of male self-development status-seeking relates to 'alpha males', while our approach relates to 'sigma males'.

We help men master to game, so they can transcend it .

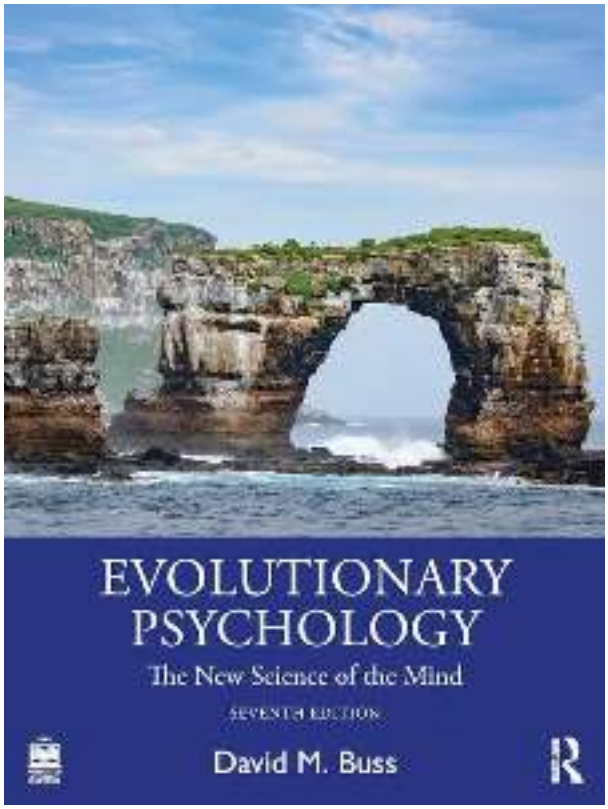
Learn more:

- **The big fish in the small pond syndrome**
- **High-value men**
- **Power University**: for top-1% status -and transcending it-

Evolutionary Psychology: Summary & Review (7th Ed.)

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 May 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Evolutionary Psychology (2024) 7th edition offers a comprehensive overview of how evolution has shaped the human mind.



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  - I'd advise sticking to evidence-based sources (less Pinker)
  - Caution against overextending evolutionary explanations

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SUMMARY

About The Author:
David Buss is an evolutionary psychologist and researcher, currently teaching at the University of Texas. He is a widely recognized name in the field of evolutionary psychology and has authored several books, including '*The Evolution of Desire*', and '*When Men Behave Badly*'.

Men's Mating Strategies

Buss discusses how **high baseline testosterone is associated with a greater interest in short-term mating strategies**, especially among men.

Testosterone also moderates traits linked with short-term mating—like risk-taking, status seeking, and sexual assertiveness.

Conversely, entering committed relationships or fatherhood tends to lower testosterone, supporting long-term bonding and caregiving behaviors.

Mate Switching vs. Dual Mating Strategy

These two hypotheses attempt to explain why some women engage in short-term mating—despite the higher potential risks compared to men (e.g., pregnancy, reputation, safety).

Mate switching hypothesis suggests women may pursue short-term mates as a way to:

- Replace a current mate
- Test alternative partners
- Secure a "backup" in case the current partner fails to provide resources or protection

In this 7th edition Buss states:

- **Stronger empirical support**s **the Mate Switching Hypothesis**. It's framed as a more functionally robust and flexible strategy, particularly:
  - In **contexts of relationship dissatisfaction**, abuse, or neglect
  - Where a woman's **current mate shows low mate value or investment**

Studies show that:

- Women's **short-term affairs often occur during troubled long-term relationships**
- These affairs **precede breakups** in many cases
- Women sometimes "trade up" in mate value after switching

Buss emphasizes this strategy as more adaptive and behaviorally grounded, especially when parental investment theory is taken into account.

Why Dual Mating Strategy Hypothesis Is Weakened

The dual mating strategy suggests that women seek genetic benefits from high-quality men during peak fertility, while maintaining pair bonds with reliable but lower-quality partners.

This theory originally drew on:

- **Ovulatory shift research**: Women's preferences change near ovulation (e.g., more attracted to masculine, symmetrical men)
- **Infidelity during fertile windows** as a covert strategy to secure "good genes"

Buss presents **DMSH with caution** in the 7th edition.
Despite the initial appeal and seeming logic of this theory, Buss:

- Acknowledges the **replication crisis in ovulatory shift research**.
- Notes **mixed and weak support** for key assumptions (e.g., that women reliably shift preferences or behavior during ovulation).
- The empirical foundation for DMSH has **eroded**, especially as meta-analyses show weak effects and newer studies have failed to consistently replicate earlier findings.

Conclusion:

The **Mate Switching Hypothesis is Buss' favored explanation** for women's short-term mating, while the Dual Mating Strategy is treated as more speculative and less empirically solid.
And the argument and evidence presented back Buss' take.

Sperm Competition May Be Real

We strongly criticized *Sperm Warms* on this website, and still believe the criticism is valid for the less-than-scientific approach.

However, Buss lends some support to sperm competition, discussing:

- **Physiological adaptations**: e.g., volume of ejaculate based on time apart from partner
- **Men's sperm delivery strategies** (e.g., deeper thrusting, quicker ejaculation) vary in response to cues of female infidelity or absence (new evidence in the 7th edition)

Sperm competition is a component of short-term mating theory, especially from the male adaptation side.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **why I have doubts regarding sperm competition**

Lucio:
Sperm competition is a fascinating topic.
Buss and newer studies convinced me to assign it more weight to its potential impact in humans than I had previously thought.

Still, several important questions remain—questions that, for now, limit how much I believe sperm competition truly shaped human evolution:

- **Pair bonding is a powerful evolutionary tool** that reduces the need for sperm competition in the first place.
- **Universal expectations for loyalty** add emotional and social controls that restrict women's freedom to "sperm shop"—especially in our evolutionary past. A woman would have to hide not just from her partner, but also from his kin, allies, and possibly the tribe as a whole.
- **Female mate choice sidesteps sperm competition altogether.** While some women pursue sex for its own sake, more restrained and conscious female choosers who pick and stick with a partner still limit the scope for post-mating competition.
- **Biology 1 – Timing:** It can take less than an hour for sperm to reach the egg. Even if we allow for a few hours or a day, that short window places a major constraint on the opportunity for sperm to compete.
- **Biology 2 – Egg bottlenecks:** The egg is a bigger bottleneck than sperm. Most healthy men have enough viable sperm to fertilize an egg. If the egg is the bottleneck, the human system simply doesn't lend itself to discriminating against sperm

Unless these points are more fully addressed, I remain cautious about assigning sperm competition a major role in human evolution. And in modernity, it may happen less 'in nature' and more in sperm bank labs.

Mating Budgets

Mating budgets are part of the exchange model of dating.
The mating budget framework applies economic principles to mate selection.

It asks:

> *If you had a limited budget to "spend" on a mate, how would you allocate your priorities?*

Buss uses this framework to distinguish between:

- **Women** typically list **resource acquisition ability, emotional stability, and kindness** as *necessities*. Traits like muscularity, height, or humor tend to fall into the *luxury* category.
- **Men** typically rate **physical attractiveness and youth** as *necessities*, while status, education, and shared interests are often considered *luxuries*.

This model helps explain:

- **Why mate preferences are not absolute** (they adjust based on constraints)
- **Why high-status individuals can afford to be choosier** (they have more mating "budget")
- **Why lower-status individuals may feel frustrated** if they prioritize luxuries without securing necessities

Also see:

- Sexual marketplace
- Mate value

Attachment Styles Make Evolutionary Sense

Similar to what we first learned in the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships* in which Buss also penned a chapter:

1. Secure Attachment

- Evolutionary advantage: Promotes **exploration + safety**
- Typically results from **responsive, consistent caregiving**
- Associated with:
  - Greater trust
  - Effective long-term bonding
  - Higher likelihood of pursuing **long-term mating strategies** as adults

2. Anxious Attachment

- May evolve in **environments with inconsistent caregiving**
- Strategy: Stay close to caregivers (clingy, hyper-vigilant)
- In adulthood:
  - More jealousy
  - Mate guarding
  - Strong emotional needs
  - **Risk of short-term mating when seeking validation or fear of abandonment**

3. Avoidant Attachment

- Adaptive in contexts where **caregivers are neglectful or unresponsive**
- Strategy: Self-reliance, emotional detachment
- In adulthood:
  - Reluctance to commit

- More open to **short-term, low-investment mating**
- Less parental investment

Buss doesn't treat these as disorders, but as **conditional strategies** calibrated to the environment—a classic evolutionary-developmental approach.

Read more:

- Attachment styles
- Avoidant attachment
- Anxious attachment
- Secure attachment

Suicide Is Rrelated to Lower Reproductive Odds

Suicide, together with homosexuality, has often been listed as an evolutionary conundrum.

Buss proposes an explanation linked to reproductive odds, and whether one can add value, or take value from kins:

> Individuals with low reproductive potential (e.g., who perceive that they are not attractive to members of the opposite sex) and high burdensomeness-to-kin reported more suicidal ideation, as well as more depression and hopelessness.

It's important to note though that the impact of reproductive optential and burdensomeness seemed evident, but not a *complete* explanation.

Cooperative Alliances

The foundational concept is that helping others can be adaptive, as long as there's a return.
In other words:

> If I help you today, you'll help me tomorrow, and we're both better off.

For this to work, three conditions need to be in place:

1. **Frequent interaction** between individuals
2. **Memory** of past behavior (so you can tell who's a good partner)
3. **Ability to withhold help from cheaters**

Buss describes this as the evolutionary logic behind friendship, especially in ancestral environments where interdependence often meant the difference between survival and death.

Trust, Cheating, and Game Theory

The chapter uses game theory to explain how cooperation evolves and breaks down.

Buss says:

- **Tit-for-tat is an evolutionarily stable strategy**—cooperate first, then mirror your partner's behavior. This allows cooperation while punishing cheaters.
- **Long-term relationships and repeated interactions** increase the success of cooperation. That's why real friendships require time and trust to develop.

Prestige and Reputation

Reputation matters.
People are more likely to cooperate with individuals who are:

- Seen as generous
- Known for fairness
- Associated with high social status or *prestige*

Prestige isn't just about dominance—it's about being respected and chosen as a role model. Buss ties this into how people:

- Promote their good deeds (even subtly)
- Avoid behaviors that would brand them as exploitative or selfish

In short, your **reputation is your social capital**, and it can attract allies, mates, and protection.

Friendship as Strategy

Friendship, then, is more than just emotional—it's strategic.
The book explains that:

- **Individuals choose friends with valuable traits** (e.g., skills, loyalty, generosity)
- **Alliances shift** when resources or status change
- **People often dissolve friendships after betrayal or freeloading**

Also read:

- **How to make quality friends** for both benefits and pleasure

> How to Make Quality Friends as an Adult: 10 Simple Steps

Status, Prestige, and Social Dominance

Humans go to extraordinary lengths to protect their status and avoid shame.

Whether it's falsifying credentials or striving for respect, **status is a universal motive in every known society** (Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015).
People even choose death over a ruined reputation, highlighting status's primal importance (Vonasch et al., 2017).

Studies show hierarchies form fast—within minutes in small groups—and people can predict their place in a new group just by sizing up others (Fisek & Ofshe, 1970; Kalma, 1991).

How Dominance Hierarchies Emerge

Dominance hierarchies are emergent outcomes of individual interactions.

And they apply across species because of their evolutionary logic:

hierarchies save individuals' energy and minimize harm by letting animals assess their strength and act accordingly—dominant ones secure most resources and mates, while subordinates avoid costly battles (Pinker, 1997).

Evolutionary Theories of Status

The chapter explores two paths:

- Dominance (force or threat)
- Prestige (freely given respect for skills or generosity) (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001)

A bully might dominate through fear, while a skilled hunter earns prestige through admiration.

A newer theory argues **competence—whether in fighting, leadership, or knowledge—is the root of both (**Chapais, 2015).

Prestige often comes from costly signaling, like sharing food or donating publicly, which boosts reputation only when others notice (Bereczkei, Birkas, & Kerekes, 2007).

Leadership and the Service-for-Prestige Theory

Leadership evolves from reciprocal exchange: leaders provide skills like organization or wisdom, and followers grant prestige in return (Price & van Vugt, 2014).

Preferred leaders are competent, generous, and fair—though "fairness" varies.
This dynamic explains why groups rally behind leaders who solve problems, from hunting to conflict resolution (van Vugt, 2006).

Also interesting is the difference between contributors and 'lower contributors':

High contributors want equity (rewards based on effort), while low contributors prefer equality (equal shares regardless of effort).
You can always count on a scrounger to be a socialist :)

Sex Differences in Status-Striving

Men evolved stronger status-seeking motives due to reproductive stakes.

Such as, higher status men gain more mates and leave more offspring. Modern data confirms high-status men have more sexual partners and children, even in monogamous societies (Perusse, 1993).

Women also seek status, but often through subtler, prestige-based tactics, like nurturing or community roles, and their status often ties to physical attractiveness (Buss et al., 2020; Blake, 2022b).

Dominance Theory and Cognitive Strategies

Denise Cummins's dominance theory argues humans evolved cognitive tools to navigate hierarchies (Cummins, 1998).

Kids as young as 3 show deontic reasoning—understanding rules about permissions and obligations—and check for rule-breakers, especially among lower-status peers. We also remember low-status cheaters better, suggesting our brains are wired to monitor hierarchy dynamics (Mealey, Daood, & Krage, 1996).

Social Attention-Holding Theory

Paul Gilbert's theory focuses on emotions in hierarchies (Gilbert, 1990). Winning boosts elation and helping behavior, while losing triggers anxiety, shame, rage, envy, or depression.

These emotions motivate action: shame pushes us to avoid scorn, envy drives imitation or derogation, and pride fuels status-seeking (Sznycer et al., 2017).
Even nonverbal cues, like a victor's raised arms, signal triumph across cultures (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012).

Indicators of Dominance

Buss highlights that we're lacking a comprehensive theory of indicators of dominance and how we appraise it.

But almost common knowledge signals likely include:

- **Confident posture**: cominant people stand tall, speak loudly, gaze directly, and gesture confidently (Argyle, 1994)
- **Low-pitched voices**, seen as dominant, and CEOs often have deeper voices (Puts, Gaulin, & Verdolini, 2006; Mayew, Parsons, & Venkatachalam, 2013)
- **Testosterone (T) and serotonin** correlate with dominance in men, rising after wins and falling after losses, though causality is unclear (Mazur, 2005; McGuire & Troisi, 1998).
- **Physical size still matters**—tall men are hired, promoted, and elected more often (Gillis, 1982).

Other correlates of dominance across cultures include:

- **Athleticism**
- **Intelligence**
- **Physical attractiveness**
- **Humorousness**
- Good grooming

Self-Esteem as a Status Tracker

Self-esteem acts as a "sociometer," gauging how much others value us (Leary & Downs, 1995).

High status boosts self-esteem, while rejection lowers it, motivating us to repair relationships or seek new ones (Barkow, 1989).
It also guides decisions about who to challenge or submit to, preventing costly missteps in the hierarchy (Mahadevan et al., 2023).

Submissive Strategies

Yes, as we claimed on this website, submissiveness and passive communication style can be strategies.

- **Appeasing negotiation**: Women use appeasement gestures (e.g., smiling) more than men when negotiating with gatekeepers like nightclub doormen (Salter, Grammer, & Rikowski, 2005).

- **"Deceiving down"**—lowering self-confidence to seem nonthreatening—may help subordinates avoid dominant wrath (Hartung, 1987)

Subordinates also derogate "tall poppies" (successful peers), taking pleasure in their downfall, especially if their success seems undeserved (Feather, 1994).

Practical Takeaways for Navigating Status in Everyday Life

- **Leverage Competence for Prestige**: Build and showcase skills that others value—whether public speaking, problem-solving, or generosity—to earn respect without resorting to force (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001).
- **Mind Your Signals**: Stand tall, speak confidently, and maintain eye contact to project dominance, but balance it with prosocial acts to avoid seeming selfish (Argyle, 1994; Buss et al., 2020).
- **Protect Your Reputation**: Public acts of altruism boost your status, but only if others see it (Bereczkei, Birkas, & Kerekes, 2007).
- **Know When to Submit**: Submissive strategies, like smiling or deferring, can help you navigate powerful gatekeepers or bide time for better opportunities (Salter, Grammer, & Rikowski, 2005).
- **Monitor Your Sociometer**: Pay attention to your self-esteem—it's a clue to how others perceive you. If it dips, strengthen social bonds or seek new groups (Leary & Downs, 1995).

Learn more here:

- **What's social status and why it matters to you**

> Social Status: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Master It

Updates of 7th Edition

Dark Triad and Short-Term Mating

The 7th edition doubles down on newer personality research, particularly:

- Dark Triad traits linked to exploitative short-term mating strategies

The empirical foundation is clearer now: individuals high in Dark Triad traits are more likely to engage in sexual coercion, infidelity, and deceptive mating strategies. This area has exploded in research since the last edition.

Correction of the Kin Altruism Hypothesis for Homosexuality

- The **6th edition** presented the *Kin Selection Theory* as a leading contender for explaining male homosexuality (i.e., gay men increase their inclusive fitness by investing in kin).
- The **7th edition challenges this view**, citing weak support and preferring the **Female Fertility Hypothesis** (homosexuality persists because it's linked to higher reproductive success in female relatives).

My Mote: Neither of these two hypotheses is very convincing to me.
Evolutionary psychology sometimes looks for neat explanations for evertyhing, even 'evolutionary noise' and random fluctuations that maybe just that: random.

Stronger Emphasis on Domain-General Mechanisms

Traditionally, evolutionary psychology has emphasized domain-specific modules (e.g., jealousy module, cheater-detection module).

But the 7th edition introduces greater appreciation for flexible, domain-general tools, such as:

- **General intelligence as an adaptive problem-solver**
- **Learning and imitation in unstable environments**
- **Cognitive flexibility in dealing with novel, modern mismatches**

This addition feels like an intellectual maturing of the author and field.
Not abandoning modularity, but embracing a more *integrative model*.

Extra Case Studies, Data, and Real-World Applications

- **Coverage of "evolutionary mismatches,"** discrepancies between modern environments and the ancestral environments in which humans evolved, is expanded.
- **Modern environment of internet dating**, people search on computer or smartphone screens through hundreds or thousands of potential mates who could live anywhere—one example from a list of eight evolutionary mismatches in the domain of mating.
- **Female hunters** challenging the narrative of large-game hunting as primarily a male activity. Recent evidence suggests that women may have played a far more active role in hunting than previously believed, a topic actively debated in the scientifi c community.

- **High scores on disgust may protect against different pathogens** from the outgroup, potentially explaining why more easily disgusted people are more prejudiced toward outgroups
- **Men eat more meat**. A study of 23 cultures found that men consumed more meat than did women in all of them, and women are more likely to adopt a vegetarian or vegan diet.
- **Fear is an evolutionarily ancient emotion**. Sea slugs, moths, mammals, and primates all experience fear, suggesting that it dates back to at least 700 million years ago in the evolution of life on earth.
- **Physical attractiveness is linked with good immune functioning.**
- **Higher-income and education are attractive**: A study of 1.8 million online daters from 24 diferent countries found that men high in resource acquisition ability, as measured by stated income and level of education, received dramatically more positive responses from women.
- **Bisexuality is increasing in women**. Recent studies point to a larger percentage of women who identify as bisexual
- **Incels always existed, but there may be more because of 'evolutionary mismatches'** with dating apps rewarding top men the most. However, Buss points out that incels may also be overstating their comparative lack of options by comparing themselves to famous social media personalities
- **Children run away to get more investment**: Offspring use a strategy of withholding cooperation from parents, such as socially withdrawing or running away from home, as a means to elicit greater investment from parents My note: it may also help dissuade parents from having more children, thus monopolizing their investment. However, a lot of times, it may just be a troubled personality more than a 'strategy'
- **Everyone prioritizes honesty in friends**; displays of dishonesty are friendship deal-breakers.
- **Peer aggression increases status** and popularity as young as the elementary school years.
- **Self-esteem tracks status**: Lab experiments that increased a person's status caused an increase in self-esteem, suggesting that self-esteem does indeed track social status.
- **Dark Triad men** are more prone to sexual infidelity (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy)
- **We lost some odor sensitivity**: because agriculture made odor detection less important, leading to a lower genetic sensitivity
- **Female hunters**: Archaeological findings challenge the notion that hunting was exclusively male—now presented as a topic of *ongoing debate*.
- **Social media lowers female self-esteem**

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

The book is great and Buss is a top scientist, so consider these as personal and smaller notes that take little away from *Evolutionary Psychology*:

Effect sizes & sample sizes should be disclosed more often

This isn't just Buss, but a criticism I have for many handbooks and textbooks, including in evolutionary psychology.

There is a tendency to share the outcome of a study and generalize with sentences like 'men are more', without disclosing the effect sizes.

However, if you checked the specific study, sometimes the sample was small.

And if you check the effect sizes of gender differences, they're also sometimes very small and **the overlap between gender may as telling as the difference**.

I wished for more disclosure of effect sizes.

Possible overemphasis on income and education on men's attractiveness

Says Buss:

> In online dating, for example, a small percentage of men, typically those with higher incomes and more education, attract hundreds of women; many men receive few responses or none at all (Jonason & Thomas, 2022).

I took a cursory look at the study, and it seems to focus on resource-acquisition ability only.

However, online dating is heavily appearance-driven, especially in the early stages of matching. Based on both personal experience and years of coaching, I'd be surprised if education plays a larger role than physical attractiveness when it comes to initial interest.

This is worth noting because much of the research in this area relies on questionnaires and self-reports, which in my view tend to downplay the role of looks, social dominance, and social/dating skills, while overemphasizing prosocial traits like kindness.

Could the 7th edition have waited?

You know how it is, Buss writes a new book, I must read it (or listen to it).

But after only 5 years after the 6th edition, it's a fair question.

Several new updates are interesting, and especially the expanded coverage of status made it worth it for me.
But a few years more wouldn't hurt.

The incel phenomena has more explanations

I applaud Buss for engaging with more recent trend and phenomena and using their vernacular name.

And his analysis, as it's often the case, is on point.
However, I believe there are even more, and potentially deeper explanations for the possible increase of 'involuntary celibates', including:

- **Women's empowerment**, making lower-status men less appealing to them
- **Libertine dating** increase, reducing the number of monogamous pair bonding marriages

These are larger trends that have been ongoing for decades and accelerated recently.
Online dating gave a new outlet and a possible boost to these underlying trends.

Mate switching '*VS*' dual mating strategy?

There seems to be a tendency to view these two models as opposing and mutually exclusive.

I understand that there is 'much at stake' and that many men are keenly interested in women's infidelity—evolutionary psychology itself explains why.

But while I agree with Buss that 'mate switching' seems a better explanation in most cases, it seems to me this issue has overly divided researchers into one camp or the other.
I see them as *both* valid.
Whichever best explains infidelity depends on the context.

Furthermore, a recent podcast by Macken Murphy strengthened the case for the dual mating strategy with what seemed like credible and recent evidence.

I'd advise sticking to evidence-based sources (less Pinker)

The author referenced and quoted Steven Pinker several times, including Pinker's book *How the Mind Works*.

And while Pinker certainly doesn't lack clout and popularity, I found his otherwise excellent books to be less evidence-based compared to some other researchers, and more opinion-based.

For example, Buss explains why status hierarchies evolved quoting Pinker.
However, I didn't think Pinker offered a comprehensive explanation and I had many unanswered questions (eg.: what's in it for the low-status individuals to accept the hierarchy? How do hierarchies become 'evolutionary stable'?).
I had to look elsewhere to better understand how social hierarchies can become evolutionarily stable.

Caution against overextending evolutionary explanations

You know the saying: when you have a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail.

Evolution is a powerful explanatory tool—but precisely because of that, there's a risk of using it to explain *everything*, even when chance and randomness may be the 'answer'.

Take this passage, for example:

> Sensitivity to the odors produced by plants and animals was essential for our hunter-gatherer ancestors. With the advent of agriculture, odor detection became less important, leading to a lower genetic sensitivity to the odors of plants and animals.

To me, this feels overly mechanistic.

Yes, odor sensitivity may have become less crucial. But the fact that we lost some of it may just be a random walk down the evolutionary path. Reduced importance doesn't necessarily lead to trait loss. It just reduces the selective pressure to maintain it.

Run the evolutionary dice another million times, and I'm sure that in some variations, we don't lose much olfactory sensitivity. If it's not vital to keep, it doesn't necessarily follow that we were bound to lose it.

PROS

- **Epistemic caution**

And more clarity.
The 7th edition seemed more careful to distinguish between what's well-supported and what's speculative, and I liked that.

- **Greater interdisciplinary openness, including cultural evolution**

Borrowing more from anthropology, behavioral genetics, and cultural evolution, quoting both Doyle and Henrich.
I loved that and was curious to see if Buss had taken note of Henrich's recent work.

Review

Evolutionary Psychology by David Buss stands as a rigorous, current, and expansive overview of human nature through the lens of evolution and remains the best overview of evolutionary psychology I've studied.

It comes just 5 years after the previous 6th edition, so while the changes are not massive, it still provides the most updated overview of the discipline.

I particularly loved the chapter on status—it's a rich, well-researched section that will serve as a valuable resource for future status-related articles on this site.

Overall, I am grateful to Buss and his work. He made our articles and products more grounded, more rigorous, and ultimately more effective.

Also see:

- **Best evolutionary psychology books**

Or **get the book on Amazon**

Social Dominance: Summary, Review, & Criticism

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 May 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Social Dominance (1999) introduces Social Dominance Theory (SDT), explaining why and how group-based hierarchies persist across societies. Authors Sidanius and Pratto unveil Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), a key trait predicting support for inequality, making this a foundational work on power dynamics, status, and systemic oppression.

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- FULL SUMMARY
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  - Why Pre-Industrial Hunter-Gatherers Are More Socially Egalitarian

  - Nationalists from lower status give up ethnic identification
  - Conservative Pushback Follow Liberal Policies
  - Force Alone Isn't Enough: Framing & Manipulation
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
  - Focus on win-lose, rather than win-win (socialist undertones?)
  - Doesn't take into account small sample size (law of disproportion)
  - Potentially overstates the impact of 'terror' / oppression
  - Never considers there may be some truths to the stereotypes
  - Doesn't account for rational red-lining or profiling
  - Overlap with conservatism is modest?
  - Patriarchy dynamics miss the cooperation of all men, not just the higher classes
- REVIEW

Exec Summary

- **Higher status individuals cooperate to maintain the social hierarchy** with over or covert discrimination, manipulation, and force
- **Status hierarchies are ubiquitous in all societies** for gender and age. Post-agricultural socies also add arbitrary classes (ethnic, racial, etc.)
- **Hierarchies are a consequence of male reproductive strategies**, with men cooperating to keep women below them, and high-status men allying themselves to keep other classes of men marginalized

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Jim Sidanius was a professor of psychology and African American studies at Harvard University. He was internationally known for his work on prejudice, ideology, and intergroup conflict.
Felicia Pratto is a professor of psychology at the University of Connecticut. Her research focuses on power dynamics, social inequality, and intergroup relations.

Together, Sidanius and Pratto developed Social Dominance Theory (SDT), integrating psychological and sociological insights into a unified theory of hierarchy and oppression.

Chapter 1: From Viciousness to Viciousness: Theories of Intergroup Relations

This chapter surveys four major families of theories—psychological, social-psychological, structural-sociological, and evolutionary—that seek to explain why intergroup hatred and oppression recur across time and culture.

Psychological models like the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939) suggest displaced anger fuels prejudice, while authoritarian personality theory (Adorno et al., 1950) links it to personality traits. Social-psychological approaches, such as realistic group conflict theory (Campbell, 1965), tie discrimination to resource competition, and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) reveals bias even in minimal groups.

Here are the main pre-existing theories, and what SDO takes from them:

- **Psychological models** examine intrapsychic drives (e.g. the frustration-aggression hypothesis), personality syndromes (authoritarianism; RWA), and values conflicts (equality vs. individualism) to account for prejudice and displaced hostility (Turner, 1994).

  - ➡ From authoritarian personality theory and Rokeach's two-value theory of political ideology comes the notion that the importance that people place on the values of equality, dominance, and submission are of fundamental importance to our understanding of a whole range of sociopolitical beliefs and behaviors

- **Social-psychological approaches** emphasize how social learning and symbolic racism sustain covert biases in post–civil-rights societies, and how minimal-group settings reveal a basic drive for ingroup favoritism (even at self-cost) as part of positive social identity strategies (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).
  However, favoritism isn't enough to explain more active oppression.
  - ➡ From realistic group conflict grou group position theories comes the notion that the political choices and attitudes of individuals must often be seen within the context of group conflict over both real and symbolic resource allocation
  - ➡ From SIT come the important notions that conflict between groups is not necessarily or even primarily designed to maximize the absolute material return to the ingroup, but rather to maximize the relative return to the ingroup, sometimes even at the cost of substantial material loss to both the self and the ingroup

- **Structural-sociological theories** (group-position, Marxism, neoclassical elitism) show how dominant groups institutionalize inequality and legitimize their power through ideology (e.g. divine right, free-market doctrines), breeding false consciousness among subordinates (Blumer, 1958).
  - ➡ From classical and neoclassical elitism theories comes the notion of the functional value of ideology in the dynamics of hierarchical social control

- **Evolutionary perspectives** argue that ethnocentrism and male dominance coalitions are by-products of inclusive-fitness and sexual-selection dynamics; hierarchical social structures thus amplify adaptive tendencies for ingroup cooperation and outgroup hostility (van den Berghe, 1981).
  - ➡ The ubiquitousness of social hierarchy and ethnocentrism seen in terms of survival strategies adopted by hominoids, including Homo sapiens

Insights From All:

Despite their flaws, these approaches offer valuable insights into how stereotypes, individual differences, culture, institutions, and possibly evolution contribute to social oppression, including:

- **Stereotyping is Common**: Due to limits in human information processing, people often rely on social stereotypes.
- **Individual Differences Matter**: People vary in their tendency to adopt negative stereotypes and discriminate.
- **Cultural Transmission is Key**: Socialization spreads ideologies and practices that shape attitudes and behaviors.
- **Institutions Play a Role**: Lasting oppression can't be explained without considering systemic and institutional actions.
- **Shared Ideologies**: Both dominant and subordinate groups internalize social ideologies, which help sustain inequality.
- **Possible Evolutionary Basis**: Traits like patriarchy and ethnocentrism may stem from evolved predispositions—but caution is urged to avoid simplistic biological explanations or justifications for oppression.

Some theories I particularly enjoyed here were:

Authoritarian Personality

While some early claims have been criticized, modern research using improved methods supports several key points. Notably, there is evidence for a generalized ethnocentrism tied to political conservatism and themes of dominance and submission.
However, foundational claims about child-rearing origins and the psychological pathology of authoritarianism

remain unsupported or untested.

Pros – Supported Claims:

- ✅ **Generalized Ethnocentrism Exists**: Research confirms a broad tendency to stigmatize various outgroups (ethnic, political, sexual, religious).
- ✅ **Dominance & Submission Themes**: These are central to authoritarian attitudes, consistent with original theory.
- ✅ **Link to Conservatism**: Generalized ethnocentrism correlates strongly and consistently with political conservatism across cultures.

Cons – Weaknesses & Unsupported Claims:

- ❌ **Child-Rearing Origins Lack Evidence**: No strong empirical support for the theory's foundational claim about upbringing.
- ❌ **Psychoanalytic Foundation Unnecessary**: The complex Freudian basis may not be required to explain findings (and, we add, feels like psychobabble)
- ❌ **No Evidence of Psychological Pathology**: Authoritarianism is not proven to be a psychological disorder or condition needing treatment.
- ❌ **No Societal-Level Explanation**: The theory doesn't bridge individual psychology with broader institutional or ideological dynamics.

Pareto Knew Better Than Marx: Elites Make Their Interest First

> Pareto disagrees with Marx and Engels that the modern class struggle differs in any essential degree from group struggles of the past.
> Pareto argues that, rather than bringing about the "victory of the Proletariat," the end of the class struggle will instead merely bring about the victory of new elites speaking in the name of the proletariat. In essence, the Paretian model is the ultimate statement of "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose."

And turns out, every single communist revolution proved Pareto right.
Unsurprisingly, since it aligns with human nature and foundational power dynamics.

Building on the insights of Chapter 1, Sidanius and Pratto introduce Social Dominance Theory (SDT) as an integrative framework connecting individual attitudes, legitimizing ideologies, and institutional discrimination into one dynamic system.

Chapter 2: Social Dominance Theory: A New Synthesis

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) starts with the observation that all human societies are organized into group-based hierarchies. These hierarchies typically include dominant groups at the top and subordinate groups at the bottom. The dominant group possesses a disproportionate share of positive social value like power, status, higher income, better homes , etc. And the subordinate groups possess a disproportionate share of negative social value like low power and social status, high-risk and low-status occupations, poorer health care and food,
modest homes, and severe negative sanctions (e.g., prison and death sentences).

Goal of SDT: To identify and explain the mechanisms that create and sustain these group-based hierarchies.

Key Points:

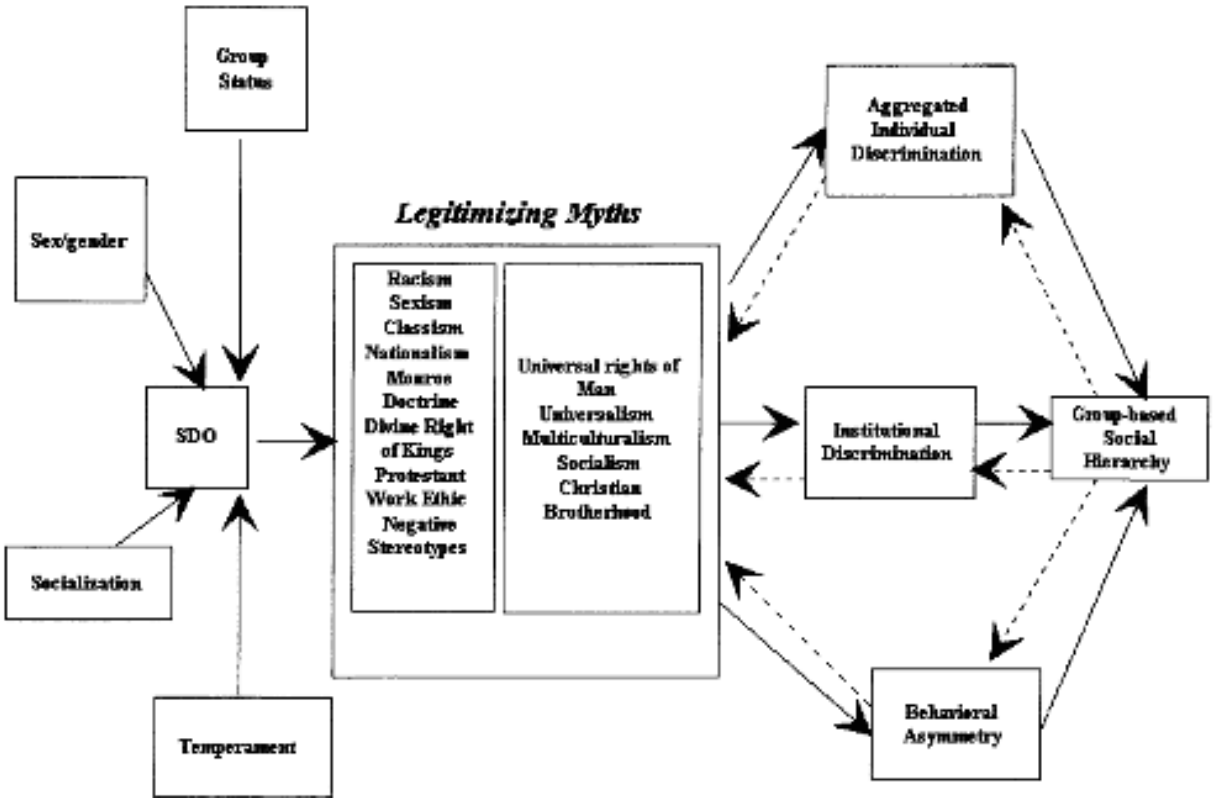
- **Group-Based Hierarchies Are Universal** for at least age and gender: All societies tend to be structured with dominant and subordinate groups.

- **All surplus-producing societies generate arbitrary hierarchies**, some of which are 'arbitrary' that go alongside 'common ones' such as:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Arbitrary
- **Dominant Groups Gain On Subordinate Groups**, hold a disproportionate share of *positive social value*—such as power, wealth, status, quality food, housing, and healthcare.
  - Subordinate Groups: Bear a disproportionate share of *negative social value*—like poverty, low status, poor healthcare, risky jobs, and harsh punishments.
- **Oppression expressions (racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, nationalism) are manifestations of a universal predisposition** to maintain group-based hierarchies (Sidanius et al., 1994).
  Social Dominance Orientation measures this predisposition at individual level
- **Oppression is directed towards male of subordinate groups**, probably because of evolutionary psychology reasons. Men are competitors, while women are potential mates

Key mechanisms that maintain social hierarchies

- **Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)** at an individual level. Simple definition: an individual's general preference for group-based inequality.
  The 4 drivers of SDO are:
  - **Group Membership & Identification**: SDO is higher among those who belong to or identify with dominant, hierarchical groups.
  - **Socialization & Background**: Factors like education, religion, and major life events (e.g., war or disasters) influence SDO levels.
  - **Personality & Temperament (empathy)**: Traits such as empathy play a role—higher empathy generally leads to lower SDO.
  - **Gender**: Men consistently show higher SDO than women, even beyond differences in social roles (invariance hypothesis).
- **Aggregated individual discrimination** as an emergent social-level component of a multitude of personal attitudes and behavior. They can be small and seemingly insignificant in daily life, but add up
- **Institutional discrimination** includes the rules, procedures, and actions of social institutions, both private and public, including courts, lending institutions, hospitals, retail outlets, and schools. Institutional discrimination may be conscious, deliberate, and overt, or unconscious, unintended, and covert
- **Behavioral asymmetry,** ways in which behavior and attitudes differ between dominant and subordinate groups. These asymmetries help explain how social hierarchies are maintained and internalized.
  - **Asymmetrical Ingroup Bias**: All groups show some ingroup favoritism, but dominant groups tend to exhibit stronger bias in favor of their own group compared to subordinate groups.
  - **Outgroup Favoritism (Deference)**: In extreme cases, subordinate groups may favor the dominant group over their own—e.g., "Uncle Tom" behavior among some African-Americans.
  - **Self-Debilitation**: Subordinates may engage more frequently in self-destructive behaviors, often aligning with negative stereotypes. These stereotypes are internalized by both dominants and subordinates and can become self-fulfilling.
  - **Ideological Asymmetry** refers to how dominants and subordinates differ in their beliefs around group-based hierarchy. Dominant classes are more likely to support hierarchy-enhancing ideologies, and their social attitudes and policy preferences are more strongly driven by social dominance <— I found this sub-component less clear and less value-adding

- **Legitimizing myths**: cultural ideologies (e.g. meritocracy, universal rights, divine sanction) that justify or challenge hierarchy.
- **Proximal processes**: aggregated individual discrimination, institutional discrimination, and behavioral asymmetries that sustain the power differential.
- **Hierarchy-enhancing** (HE) and **hierarchy-attenuating** (HA) **forces shape group inequality**, and HE forces typically predominate (Pratto et al., 1994).
  Hierarchy-enhancing tend to be conservative, and hierarchy-attenuating tend to be liberal
- **Group oppression is a cooperative game**. While sometimes subordinates rebel or sabotage the system, most often they go along with it and cooperate. Sometimes, they wholeheartedly buy into the ideologies and legitimizing myths.



TPM Note: Hierarchy Maintenance Is Manipulation

Quoting but rephrasing for brevity some key passages:

> (…) the greater the degree to which dominants can induce subordinates to endorse self-demeaning ideologies (…) the less physical force or threat of force will be necessary to keep the hierarchical group relationships in place.
> (…) one of the reasons that the Protestant work ethic is such a potent HE-LM is because it is widely embraced across broad swaths of the social power continuum, by rich and poor (…)

It can go even deeper, to associations you never questioned:

> While the color black is most often associated with implications of evil, filth, depravity, and fear, the color white is most often associated with notions of purity, truth, innocence, goodness, and righteousness. These two contrasting color symbols permeate a great deal of Western culture and can be discerned in everything from classical fairy tales to popular film and literature.

Learn more in:

- Manipulation 101: the basics
- Political manipulation

Black skin seems to be a target for discrimination in many countries:

> There is also relatively consistent evidence from Australia, Canada, Ghana, Jamaica, the United States, and Western Europe that those with darker skin complexions are evaluated as being less valuable, experience higher levels of discrimination, and have lower socioeconomic status than those with lighter skin complexions.

Chapter 3: The Psychology of Group Dominance: Social Dominance Orientation

Definition:

> SDO is defined as the degree to which individuals desire and support group-based hierarchy and the domination of "inferior" groups by "superior" groups.

- **Development and validation**: Factor analyses demonstrate that SDO loads uniquely on dominance attitudes, distinct from authoritarianism or ideological conservatism.
- **Correlates**: High-SDO individuals consistently favor punitive criminal justice policies, oppose welfare and affirmative action, and endorse free-market capitalism over redistributive programs.
- **Cross-cultural stability**: SDO predicts prejudice and policy attitudes in multiple societies, underscoring its universal utility.

How SDO Correlates to Attitudes

- **Racism & ethnic prejudice:** SDO is positively correlated with racism across cultures, including anti-Black, anti-Arab, anti-Asian, and anti-Palestinian attitudes.
- **Cross-cultural bias:** SDO predicts prejudice in many countries, not just the U.S., but is muted in politically repressive contexts like China.
- **Internal attributions for low-status (it's their fault):** High SDO correlates with blaming low-status groups' misfortunes on internal traits like laziness or low ability.
- **Denial of external attribution for low status (it's not about context):** High SDO correlates negatively with blaming inequality on external factors like discrimination or poor schooling (except in Taiwan, where fatalistic external beliefs correlate positively with SDO).
- **Rationalization for inequality (expedience over analysis)**: Across the cultures studied, SDO is not a particular habit of making internal or external attributions. Rather, SDO orients people to find the most socially acceptable way of rationalizing inequality.
- **Protest is criminality:** High SDO individuals view social unrest (e.g., LA riots) as criminality, not protest against injustice.
- **Policy support for hierarchy-*enhancing* measures:** e.g., law-and-order, punitive policies
- **Opposition to hierarchy-attenuating (HA) policies:** e.g., diversity, LGBTQ+ rights
- **Policy justification for hierarchy defense:** People high in SDO prefer HE rationales (e.g., "affirmative action causes conflict") and reject HA rationales (e.g., "promotes equality"), even when discussing the same policy.

- **War support:** High SDO predicts support for military action (e.g., Gulf War), particularly when framed as reasserting dominance.
- **Conservative leaders support:** SDO aligns with support for conservative, anti-affirmative action figures, especially during polarizing political moments.

Roots of SDO

Gender and **group status** are the strongest and most consistent predictors of SDO.

The authors believe that SDO is shaped by three main influences: socialization, situational context, and possibly temperament (though the latter is less studied).

People from dominant social groups (e.g., men, Whites, heterosexuals) tend to have higher SDO than those from subordinate groups.
This is likely because hierarchical beliefs align with their self-esteem and societal treatment and society defines norms that reinforce dominant group superiority.

Empirical and experimental evidence confirm it.
Across multiple samples and countries, higher SDO levels are consistently found in higher-status groups:

- In the U.S.: Men > Women, Whites > Blacks/Hispanics, Heterosexuals > Gays/Lesbians/Bisexuals.
- Among police officers in L.A. and New Zealand: White officers had higher SDO than minority officers.
- In Israel: Ashkenazi Jews (highest status) had the highest SDO, followed by Sephardic Jews, mixed Jews, Israeli Arabs, and finally Palestinian Arabs (lowest status).

	SDO_5		SDO_6	
Legitimizing Ideologies	**Median Correlation**	**Significance Ratio**	**Median Correlation**	**Significance Ratio**
General ideologies in the United States				
Racism/ethnic prejudice	.56	7:7	.55	6:6
Noblesse oblige	–.54	10:10	—	—
Sexism	.47	12:12	—	—
Nationalism	.52	8:8	.42	1:1
Cultural elitism	.44	2:3	—	—
Patriotism	.43	3:3	.11	1:1
Rape myths	.43	2:2	—	—
Denial of racial discrimination	—	—	.18	4:4
Blacks get fair trials	.33	1:1	—	—
Perceived zero-sum competition	.31	3:3	.40	2:2
Just world beliefs	.26	—	—	—
Political conservatism	.26	8:9	.30	5:6
Protestant work ethic	.08	2:4	.23	3:3
Social legitimacy	—	—	.35	2:2
Social attributions				
External attributions for poverty	–.22	1:1	–.29	2:2
Internal attributions for poverty	.34	1:1	.49	2:2

	SDO_5		SDO_6	
Legitimizing Ideologies	**Median Correlation**	**Significance Ratio**	**Median Correlation**	**Significance Ratio**
Protest riot attributions	—	—	–.19	1:1
Criminal riot attributions	.19	1:1	.26	1:1

SDO vs. Political Conservatism

The authors state that SDO (Social Dominance Orientation) is often mistaken for political conservatism, but they are conceptually and empirically distinct.

While conservatism has many definitions—ranging from resistance to change to support for traditional values and capitalism—only opposition to social equality overlaps with SDO.

Empirically, the correlation between SDO and conservatism is modest, and statistical analyses show that SDO predicts social and political attitudes even when conservatism is controlled for. This means SDO offers unique explanatory power beyond political conservatism.

SDO vs. Authoritarianism

While SDO and authoritarianism share similarities—both predict prejudice, low empathy, and conservative attitudes—they are conceptually distinct.

Authoritarianism centers on submission to ingroup authority, while SDO reflects a preference for hierarchical relationships *between* groups.

Authoritarianism is also is seen as a pathological personality style, while SDO is considered part of normal personality variation.

Empirical research shows only weak correlations between the two, and SDO continues to predict prejudice and ideological attitudes even when authoritarianism is controlled for.
Studies consistently find that both SDO and authoritarianism uniquely and independently contribute to explaining group-based prejudice.

Chapter 4, 5, 6, 7, 8: Proving Psychological & Systemic Discrimination

The central chapters lay out the evidence for social, psychological, and systemic discrimination against lower-status groups to perpetrate and maintain the higher class privileges.

I find the evidence convincing and it changed my mind on several issues.

However, we provide a briefer summary because while the book focuses on a few countries, the level and targets of systemic discrimination is contextual and changes:

Chapter 4: “Let’s Both Agree That You’re Really Stupid”: The Power of Consensual Ideology

Sidanius and Pratto examine how dominant groups shape and maintain shared belief systems, or consensual ideologies, that legitimize hierarchy.

- **Mechanisms of ideological negative stereotyping**: educational curricula, media framing, religious doctrines, and cultural ritual reinforce stereotypes of subordinate groups as lazy, unfit, or dangerous.
- **False consciousness**: subordinates may internalize HE myths—e.g., “hard work alone determines success”—which obscure structural barriers and dampen collective resistance.
- **Ideology as social glue**: consensual myths bind diverse dominant-group factions and diffuse intra-elite conflicts

by focusing hostility outward.

Chapter 5: “You Stay in Your Part of Town, and I’ll Stay in Mine”: Discrimination in the Housing and Retail Markets

An empirical investigation of how SDT processes shape residential segregation and consumer discrimination.

- **Housing market bias**: Real-estate agents and landlords use coded language and institutional “redlining” to steer minorities away from affluent neighborhoods
- **Retail discrimination**: High-SDO business owners and managers more frequently refuse service, enforce longer waits, or “profile” minority customers as shoplifters.
- **Consequences**: Segregation entrenches resource gaps in schools, policing, and access to healthy food, reinforcing broader hierarchies.

Chapter 6: “They’re Just Too Lazy to Work”: Discrimination in the Labor Market

This chapter documents employment disparities driven by group dominance dynamics.

- **Hiring and promotion**: Employers with high-SDO profiles rely on subjective “fit” criteria, disproportionately excluding minority and female applicants.
- **Wage gaps**: Legitimate-looking justifications (e.g. performance “metrics”) mask systematic under-rewarding of subordinate groups.
- **Glass ceiling**: Even high-achieving women and racial minorities face institutional barriers shaped by HE ideologies that valorize traditional male breadwinner norms.
- **Low*est*-status men pay the bigger price** because the level of employment discrimination is greater for lower qualifications and highest during recessions

Chapter 7: “They’re Just Mentally and Physically Unfit”: Discrimination in Education and Health Care

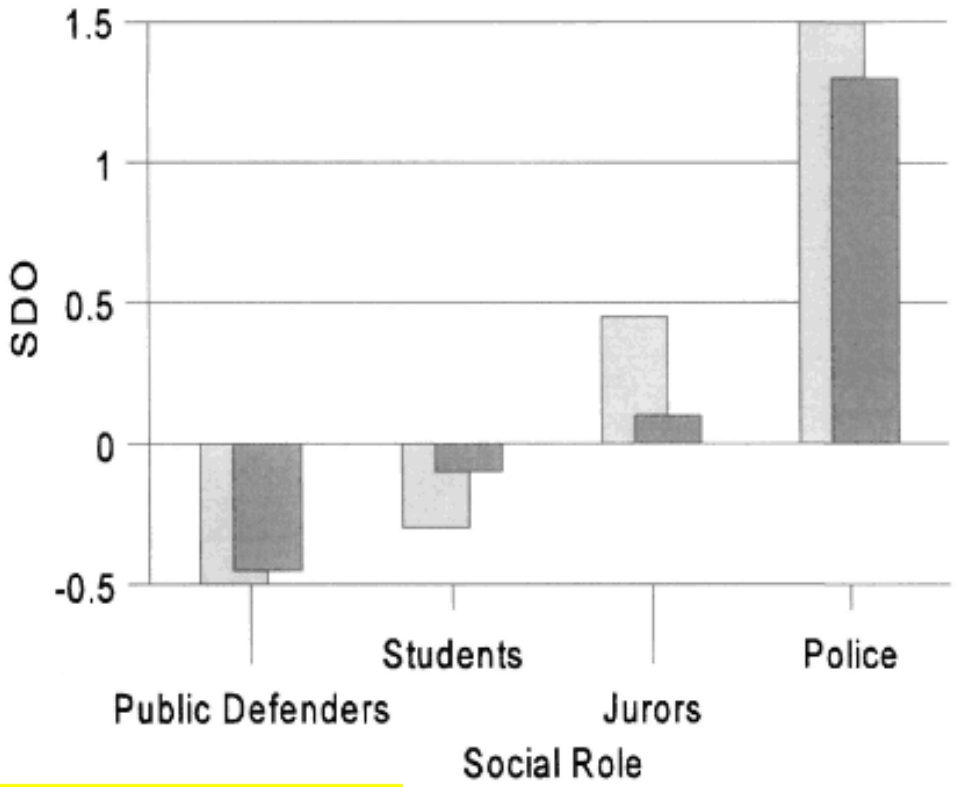
Sidanius and Pratto explore how HE ideologies permeate schools and clinical settings, resulting in unequal outcomes.

- **Educational tracking**: Schools track minority and low-SES students into lower-quality programs based on deficit-oriented stereotypes, limiting academic mobility.
- **Medical bias**: High-SDO practitioners are more likely to under-diagnose pain or deny treatment to subordinate-group patients, rationalized by notions of “lower compliance” or “risk.”

Chapter 8: “The More of Them in Prison, the Better”: Institutional Terror, Social Control, and the Dynamics of the Criminal Justice System

This chapter examines how official and semiofficial terror sustain group hierarchy through mass incarceration and targeted policing.

- **Disproportionate sentencing**: Racial minorities receive harsher penalties for identical offenses (Tonry, 1995).
- **Policing “stop-and-frisk”**: High-SDO precincts deploy aggressive street tactics in minority neighborhoods, producing a self-reinforcing cycle of surveillance, arrest, and conviction.
- **Collateral consequences**: Legal disenfranchisement, employment bans, and social stigma post-release perpetuate subordinate-group marginalization.



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Chapter 9: Social Dominance Theory: A Cooperative Game

A crucial tenet of SDT is that, in large part, subordinates participate in their own subordination.

Sometimes the subordination is internalized from childhood.
For example, black children preferred playing with the white dolls and thought the black dolls looked bad.

- **Behavioral asymmetries**: Dominant groups employ both carrot (cooptation, patronage) and stick (punitive sanctions) tactics, while subordinates oscillate between compliance, contestation, and exit.
- **High status groups present higher favoritism for the ingroup**, but exceptions apply when the political climate for example discourages favoritism and shames the dominant group for bias and racism
- **Outgroup favoritism helps maintain hierarchies**: Even as children, more black children preferred playing with the white dolls and thought the black dolls looked bad (Clark and Clark, 1947).
- **Feedback loops**: HA successes (e.g. civil-rights gains) spur HE counter-reactions (e.g. “color-blind” backlash), underscoring the non-linear “spiral” of equality struggles (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).
- **Policy design**: Sustainable reductions in group inequality require simultaneous structural reforms and ideological shifts—quadruple-helix interventions spanning legal, economic, educational, and cultural domains.

Chapter 10: Sex and Power: SDO, Patriarchy & Social Classes Are Reproductive Strategies

In this chapter the authors close the circle by adopting an evolutionary framework to explain the rationale behind SDO.

Their argument was convincing and well-aligns with accepted evolutionary psychology principles.
And it also aligns with many of our social power dynamics analyses of inter-gender dynamics.

One key quote to summarize it perfectly:

> Thus, what is called intrasexual competition among males may encourage men not only to dominate women politically and economically and so control women's sexual and reproductive behavior, but also to form expropriative male coalitions against outgroup males.
> These activities will result both in the oppression of women and in class stratification among men.

Some takeaways:

- **Patriarchy and economic status hierarchies are the result of men's efforts to gain reproductive advantage** b keeping women below them, and gaining a comparative advantage reproductive advantage over outgroup men
  - Discrimination against women softer, to disempower them, without harming them
  - Discrimination against men is more aggressive to remove them as competition (subordinate male target hypothesis)
- **High status men are higher SDO because they gain with larger economic disparities**, and the less the relative political power of women, the greater the degree of overall economic inequality.
- **Higher SDO men are more likely to want to have multiple partners**, be jealous, and reject adoption, reinforcing the link between SDO as a sexual reproductive strategy
- **Women's higher SDO correlates with a higher desire for high status men**: Women prioritize securing high-status mates and favor redistributive social policies, reflecting evolutionary investments in offspring survival. However, higher SDO women sought higher status men

TPM Addition: Refining SDO

Since SDO is important to our work I will add the extra research and refinements that followed in the years to make this an even more comprehensive resource:

Revised SDO scale (SDO7) Adds Two Dimensions

The revised SDO scale (SDO7) breaks it down into two dimensions:

- **SDO-D**(dominance): Group-based dominance
- **SDO-E**(equality): Opposition to equality

Some studies find that gender differences are larger in SDO-D but smaller or inconsistent in SDO-E.

Women may reject dominance but still vary in equality preferences based on ideology, religion, or context.

Dual-Process Motivational (DPM): Threat VS Competition

John Duckitt (2001) offers one of the most influential refinements and extensions of SDO, connecting it with Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA).

The Problem Duckitt Solved

Before Duckitt, SDO and RWA were known to correlate with prejudice — but their interrelation was unclear, and their causes poorly understood.
Why do some people score high on SDO, others on RWA? Why are their prejudices different?

Duckitt's Dual-Process Model (DPM) explains that they stem from different personality traits and worldviews and lead to different types of prejudice.

The Dual Motivational Pathways

1. RWA Pathway: Threat-Driven

- **Personality trait**: Low openness to experience + high conscientiousness
- **Worldview**: The world is a **dangerous and threatening place**
- **Motivation**: Seek **social security, stability, and group conformity**
- **Ideology**: High **Right-Wing Authoritarianism**
- **Prejudice type**: Against **threatening or deviant outgroups** (e.g., immigrants, criminals, religious minorities)

2. SDO Pathway: Competition-Driven

- **Personality trait**: Low agreeableness + low empathy
- **Worldview**: The world is a **competitive jungle**
- **Motivation**: Seek **power, dominance, and group-based hierarchy**
- **Ideology**: High **Social Dominance Orientation**
- **Prejudice type**: Against **low-status or subordinate groups** (e.g., the poor, ethnic minorities)

Key Implications of the Model

Different roots = different interventions:

- RWA prejudice is **fear-based** → reduced by **security, education, and diversity exposure**
- SDO prejudice is **dominance-based** → reduced by **empathy training**, **equality norms**, or disrupting **hierarchical framing**

Explains distinct ideologies:

- RWA → supports law & order, religious conservatism, moral traditionalism
- SDO → supports capitalism, nationalism, militarism, and elite privilege

Predicts different policy support:

- RWA: Opposes abortion, supports surveillance, wants law enforcement crackdowns
- SDO: Opposes welfare, supports harsh immigration laws, favors hierarchy-maintaining systems

MORE WISDOM

Marx Was Smart, & Marxism Is An Insightful Theory

> Though Marxism has been criticized from a number of perspectives, this model also contains several very insightful ideas of enduring value.
> Among the most important are that ideology functions to justify and support hierarchical group relations and that ruling elites largely control the contents and framing of social discourse

This is manipulation at its finest:

> Because of this control of social ideology, ruling elites are able to convince not only themselves but, more importantly, their subordinates of the legitimacy of their rule.
> (…) can exercise near hegemonic control over the social system without serious resistance from, and often with the cooperation of, the working class.

Group-Based Versus Individual-Based Social Hierarchies

The two overlap but are distinct:

> In an individual-based social hierarchy, individuals might enjoy great power, prestige, or wealth by virtue of their own highly-valued individual characteristics, such as great athletic or leadership ability, high intelligence, or artistic, political, or scientific talent or achievement.
> Group-based social hierarchy, on the other hand, refers to that social power, prestige, and privilege that an individual possesses by virtue of his or her ascribed membership in a particular socially constructed group such as a race, religion, clan, tribe, lineage, linguistic/ethnic group, or social class.

Why Pre-Industrial Hunter-Gatherers Are More Socially Egalitarian

First off, it's not that the hunther-gatherer societies have no status hierarchies, but it's more they have an *individual*-based hierarchy.

It's not class-based, and it's not transgenerational or hereditary in nature, but it exists.

In hunter-gatherer societies, the absence of arbitrary-set, group-based social hierarchies stems primarily from the lack of economic surplus, driven by limited food production and storage technologies.

As nomadic groups, they cannot amass nonedible resources like animal skins or weapons, which restricts the development of specialized roles such as professional armies or bureaucracies that enable coercive political authority. Without military or coercive specialists, all adult males are essentially equal in military capacity, fostering political authority based on mutual agreement, persuasion, and consultation rather than domination.

Nationalists from lower status give up ethnic identification

The more that dominants embrace group dominance, the more strongly they should with their ingroups.

However, it's the opposite for subordinate groups.

> These findings then show that while patriotism implies the endorsement of the ethnic self among dominants and only mild rejection of the ethnic self among people with intermediate ethnic status (i.e., Asian-Americans), patriotism implies relatively strong rejection of the ethnic self among those at the bottom of the ethnic status continuum (i.e., Blacks in particular).

Conservative Pushback Follow Liberal Policies

While we may think the world smoothly advance(d) towards more agalitarianism, that advance is never linear (and, I'd add, never granted).

Historical advances in equality are always met with HE counter-currents.
We're seeing one at the time of writing (2025) with the rise of populist leaders.

Force Alone Isn't Enough: Framing & Manipulation

There are two primary means to maintain a hegemonic position over subordinate groups

- **Naked force**, threatened or actualized
- **Ideology**, controlling the contents of "legitimate" social discourse

Say the authors:

> Of these two mechanisms, control over discourse and ideology are much to be preferred. Maintaining hegemonic control by the use of violence alone carries at least two critical dangers.
> First, use of naked force can further stiffen resistance and resentment within subordinate groups. If deemed "excessive," the use of force will only delegitimize the dominant group's right to rule in the eyes of subordinates and dominants alike. The more illegitimate the dominants' power is seen to be, the more violence dominants will be required to use, leading to even greater delegitimation and thus into an ever spiraling downward cycle

Of course, I'd add, the two aren't mutually exclusive.
But for a functioning society that progresses and moves forward, ideology is foundational.

Also see:

- **How to build an empire**

QUOTES

Power dynamics set the foundation for social dynamics:

> In essence, social dominance theory presumes that, beneath major and sometimes profound differences between different human societies, there is also a grammar of social power shared by all societies.

That's the grammar we focus on TPM.

CRITICISM

Focus on win-lose, rather than win-win (socialist undertones?)

The authors' frames and choice of words, including for 'hierarchy enhancing idelogies' hint at manipulation to keep lower classes at the bottom.

While I don't fully disagree, I also don't fully *agree*.
The line between manipulation and persuasion can be blurred sometimes, but 'hierarchies enhancing idelogies' also maintain a wealth-producing system that make everyone's life better.

Less social tension, more cooperation, and more hard workers make a bigger pie for all, not just the upper classes.
And hard-working men also advance for themselves.

In bullets, the authors never stop to wonder if:

- **Accepting the class systems may be better for all** because insurrection is costly, often goes nowhere, only replaces the upper class if successful, and shrinks the pie for all.
  This why social hierarchies are an evolutionary stable strategy (ESS)
- **Working within the class system is better for industrious lower-class individuals**, because rebellion is costly for the individual, while hard working subordinates fare far better than lazy ones
- **Accepting protestant work ethic may be better for all** because hard work and commerge makes the pie bigger for all, and a smaller slice of a bigger pie is also better for subordinates

Such as, hierarchy-enhancing ideologies may ultimately be win-win, rather than win-lose.
Sure, upper classes win 'more', but with a larger pie everyone can get a bigger slice.

Overall, I felt the authors may hold a left-leaning bias that may influence their work.

Doesn't take into account small sample size (law of disproportion)

I'm nitpicking: the text seems well-referenced and logical

One survey had 26 respondents, and I'd have liked a note on the small sample size.

And the law of increasing disproportion, such as that the higher the political authority, the more likely it is that a member of the elite will hold the post, is inherently biased by small sample sizes.

Take most countries' history, and the history of top prime ministers or presidents is naturally too small to draw big conclusions.
And it would take one single outlier to skew the number.

For example, the US with Obama, or Italy now with the first female prime minister, would completely skew the numbers' calculation.

That being said, I still agree with the authors.
But a note on the numbers would have increased its persuasiveness.

Potentially overstates the impact of 'terror' / oppression

For example, write the authors on minority killings:

> This type of terror can be quite widespread in scope and comprehensive in its effects. For example, unofficial terror resulted in the deaths of at least 3,400 African-Americans in the United States between 1882 and 1927.24

I don't doubt that some of those were motivated by hatred, racism, or social dominance motives.

But I couldn't help to think that the numbers pale in comparison to how many African Americans were killed by other African Americans, by accidents, by diseases, etc. etc.

It doesn't take anything away from the horrible brutality of any single murder.
But if we're talking about systemic-level murder, then it didn't struck me as 'comprehensive in its effects', and one should note that the numbers are puny compared to most other causes of death.

Never considers there may be some truths to the stereotypes

Including the potential factors of genetic and/or cultural differences, leading to different attitudes and behaviors.

I know, tough nuts to crack, but not mentioning it won't make the elephant in the room disappear.

For example, if a certain lower class commits more crimes and the reason is that they're marginalized, why don't we see Asians committing more crimes than whites despite the book itself claims Asians are below whites?

That's a damning question.

That being said, SDO as a psychological construct still holds.

Doesn't account for rational red-lining or profiling

The authors never stop considering that:

- **Profiling can make statistical sense**. That may be unfortunate, but it's no less true
- **Preventing lower classes from joining affluent neighborhoods may be rational** or driven by pragmatic and economical reasons as well, since lower classes may lower properties values

Overlap with conservatism is modest?

The authors say that the correlation between SDO and conservatism is modest and that only one element, opposition to social equality, overlaps with SDO.

However, even if it's one element, it's such a meaningful element that it weakens the point of general non-correlation.
Indeed, say the authors a bit later:

> Another robust relationship was that between SDO and political conservatism, measured in standard ways, using some combination of respondents' political party preferences and their self-classifications along a liberal-conservative continuum on several issue domains, such as foreign policy, economic policy, and social policy. This relationship was robust within the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Israel. Though conservatism was not correlated with SDO in Taiwan (r = .04), support for the existing ethnic/political hegemony was correlated with SDO

Same goes for authoritarianism, which is even more closely related to SDO.

To me, the denial of the significance of overlap is akin to saying 'the overlap between a tree and a trunk is low because a tree is so much more'.
Sure a tree is much more, but don't tell me the overlap is modest because if we focus on the trunk, a highly relevant part of a tree, the overlap is 1:1.

Patriarchy dynamics miss the cooperation of *all* men, not just the higher classes

I think the authors may underestimate the level of shared interest among all men, beyond class-level, to keep women politically and economically disempowered.

Even lower-status men gain when women are lower power because, at least, they can date and find a woman among the lower-status ones.

REVIEW

Social Dominance was at the time of publication a groundbreaking book and it remains a *foundational* theory in the study of power, prejudice, and social hierarchy.

Its introduction of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) marked a turning point in how researchers and practitioners understand social dynamics and inter-group competition.

Furthermore, the reader may wish to know that SDT/SDO have been supported by subsequent research and across cultures, and it enjoys wide acceptance.

For anyone studying power dynamics, status dynamics, or institutional power *Social Dominance* is essential reading.

Check the:

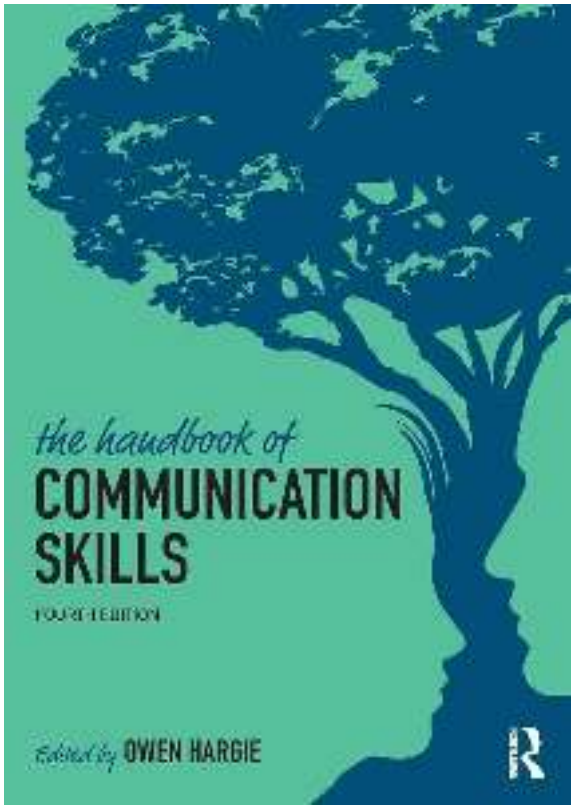
- **Best books** to read
- Best books on power

Or get this book on Amazon:

The Handbook of Communication Skills: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 May 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Handbook of Communication Skills (2019) is one of the core texts in the field of communication, offering an overview of the research literature in different applied area of communication, ranging from assertive communication, to negotiation and



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SUMMARY

About the Author:
Various authors for different chapters, each focusing on their area of expertise.
The main editor is Owen Hargie, Emeritus Professor of Communication at Ulster University and a leading expert in interpersonal and organizational communication. He has published extensively on communication theory and practice.

What Are Social Skills and Why Do They Matter?

Social skills involve a process in which the individual implements a set of goal-directed, inter-related, situationally appropriate social behaviours, which are learned and controlled (Hargie, 2019, p. 15). They're the foundation of effective communication, enabling you to navigate relationships, workplaces, and social settings with competence.

Practical Takeaways:

- Set Clear Goals: Before engaging in a conversation, know your purpose (e.g., building rapport, solving a problem).
- Adapt to Context: Behave in ways that suit the situation—formal in a job interview, casual with friends.
- Practice Control: Stay calm and intentional, even in heated moments, to maintain effective communication.

Qualities of Communication Competence

A comprehensive review by Wilson and Sabee (2003) concluded that communication competence hinges on three qualities: knowledge, motivation, and skill (Hargie, 2019, p. 16). These work together to ensure your interactions are perceived as effective and appropriate.

Practical Takeaways:

- Build Knowledge: Understand the context, audience, and possible responses before speaking (e.g., know cultural norms in diverse settings).
- Stay Motivated: Cultivate a genuine desire to connect and communicate well—it drives better outcomes.
- Hone Skills: Practice specific behaviors like active listening or clear articulation to boost your competence.

Stages of Learning New Communication Skills

Learning communication skills follows four sequential stages (Hargie, 2019, p. 19):

1. unconscious incompetence
2. conscious incompetence
3. conscious competence
4. unconscious competence

This progression helps you move from unaware mistakes to effortless mastery.

Practical Takeaways:

- Embrace Awareness: Recognize when you're not communicating well (e.g., interrupting others) to start improving.
- Be Patient: Early skill practice feels awkward—keep at it until it becomes second nature.
- Seek Feedback: Ask trusted peers to point out areas for growth and track your progress.

Context Is King: Situationally Appropriate Behavior

For behaviour to be socially skilled, it must be contextually appropriate, since behaviours that are apposite when displayed in one situation may be unacceptable if applied in another (Hargie, 2019, p. 22). What works in one setting (e.g., joking with friendsegn) may flop in another (e.g., a boardroom).

Practical Takeaways:

- Read the Room: Observe the setting and adjust your tone, body language, and words accordingly.
- Test and Learn: If unsure, start neutral and adapt based on others' reactions.
- Avoid One-Size-Fits-All: Tailor your approach to each unique interaction for maximum impact.
- Learn social calibration

Understanding Cultural Influences

Feature	Collectivist Cultures (e.g., Japan, China)	Individualist Cultures (e.g., EU, USA)
Communication Context	Indirect, subtle, meaning is implicit (High context)	Direct, explicit (Low context)
Style	Indirect, relationship-focused, self-concealing	Direct, clarity-focus
Self-Concept	Interdependent ("We")	Independent ("I")
Request Example	"It's cold" (implied request)	"Close the window"
Response Preference	Relationship-first. Preserve harmony, avoid offense, save face	Clear and direct
View of Time	Subordinate to relationships and duties	Time is a commodity ("spent", "saved")
Typical Goals	Fitting in, maintaining harmony	Personal achievement, autonomy

Lucio Buffalmano, 2025

A widely researched distinction is that between collectivist and individualistic cultures (Hagger, Rentzelas, & Koch, 2014). Eastern cultures (e.g., Japan, China) tend to be collectivist and high-context, favoring indirect, relationship-focused communication, while Western cultures (e.g., USA, UK) are low-context, prioritizing open, direct communication with explicit meaning (Hargie, 2019, p. 67). However, individual differences matter just as much (Pfundmair, Graupmann, Frey, et al., 2015; Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2014) (Hargie, 2019, p. 68).

Individuals matter more than cultures

That being said, always look at the individual first:

> However, it has also been found that there are individual as well as cultural differences in individualism and collectivism (Pfundmair, Graupmann, Frey, et al. , 2015). Individuals differ as much as or more than cultures, and so it is the nature of the interlocutor that is important rather than the cultural background from which he or she comes (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2014).Furthermore, at different times, in varying situations, and with different people, we may adopt either a more individualistic or a more collectivist style

Learn more in:

- Why intercultural communication is NOT your top priority

> Why Intercultural Communication Is a Waste of Time

Practical Takeaways:

- Respect Cultural Norms: Use indirect requests ("Could we close the window?") in high-context cultures to avoid offense (Kim & Wilson, 1994) (Hargie, 2019, p. 68).
- Focus on the Individual: Don't assume cultural stereotypes—pay attention to the person's unique style.
- Be Flexible: Shift between direct and indirect styles depending on the situation and person.

Feature	Collectivist Cultures (e.g., Japan, Korea)	Individualist Cultures (e.g., USA, UK)
Communication Context	High-context (indirect, subtle, meaning is implicit)	Low-context (direct, explicit)
Style	Indirect, relationship-focused, self-concealing	Direct, clarity-focus
Self-Concept	Interdependent ("We")	Independent ("I")
Request Example	"*It's cold*" (implied request)	"*Close the window*"
Response Preference	Relationship-first. Preserve harmony, avoid offense	Time as commodity: clear and and direct
View of Time	Subordinate to relationships and duties	Time is a commodity ("spent", "saved")
Typical Goal	Fitting in, maintaining harmony	Personal achievement, autonomy

Mastering Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal behavior—kinesics (body language), paralanguage (vocal patterns), touch, proxemics (spacing), and more—carries significant weight in communication (Knapp, 1972) (Hargie, 2019, p. 88). It conveys emotions, status, and intent, often more powerfully than words. Mehrabian (1972) organizes nonverbal cues into three dimensions: positiveness (liking), potency (status), and responsiveness (activity) (Hargie, 2019, p. 95).

Practical Takeaways:

- Use Immediacy Cues: Lean forward, maintain eye contact, and smile to show engagement and likability (Mehrabian, 1972) (Hargie, 2019, p. 95).
- Signal Status Thoughtfully: Relaxed posture (e.g., open arms) can convey confidence without arrogance (Mehrabian, 1972) (Hargie, 2019, p. 95).

- Watch for Health Indicators: Notice signs like furrowed brows (pain) or forced smiles (irritability) to gauge others' emotions (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; McClintock & Hunt, 1975) (Hargie, 2019, p. 111).

Detecting Deception (and Its Limits)

Nonverbal cues like fidgeting, speech errors, or less eye contact are often linked to deception (Mehrabian, 1971; DePaulo, Zuckerman, & Rosenthal, 1980) (Hargie, 2019, p. 112).

However, a meta-analysis by DePaulo et al. (2003) found most deception cues are weakly related to deceit, and many people misinterpret them (Hargie, 2019, p. 112). Skilled deceivers can even appear less anxious (Schneider et al., 2015) (Hargie, 2019, p. 489).

Direct Deception Indicators

- Speech errors deviating from a person's normal baseline (Mehrabian, 1971)
- Changes in tone of voice (DePaulo, Zuckerman, & Rosenthal, 1980)
- Fidgeting with objects
- Reduced eye contact compared to baseline behavior
- Coordinated body movements: patterns of rocking, head-shaking, and nodding together (Druckman et al., 1982)
- Reduction in hand movements among skilled deceivers and those high in public self-consciousness (Vrij, Akehurst, & Morris, 1997)
- Increased pauses during speech (Anolli & Ciceri, 1997)

Indirect Deception (Evasion) Indicators

- Increased leg movements during silent moments, often linked to low assertiveness
- Frequent gaze aversion, especially during stress
- Frequent head-shaking in early parts of the interaction
- Progressive increase in self-fidgeting as the interaction continues (Druckman et al., 1982; McClintock & Hunt, 1975)

Practical Takeaways:

- Focus on Content: Pay more attention to what someone says than their body language when assessing truthfulness (Vrij, 2008) (Hargie, 2019, p. 102).
- Look for Inconsistencies: Repetitious answers or vague details may hint at deception, but don't rush to judge (DePaulo et al., 2003) (Hargie, 2019, p. 489).
- Train Your Skepticism: Avoid over-relying on stereotypes (e.g., gaze aversion = lying) and seek evidence (Bogaard et al., 2016) (Hargie, 2019, p. 102).
- Don't look for cues of deceit cause you'll likely be wrong:

> However, findings from decoding accuracy studies suggest that either such a set of reliable cues simply does not exist or, alternatively, that the majority of individuals have little knowledge on how to use such a set of cues for diagnostic purposes. A review of fndings appears in a meta-analytic assessment conducted by DePaulo et al.(2003) based on 120 independent samples. Although the review reveals consistencies with some of the indicators listed above (e.g. liars tend to talk less, provide fewer details, and tend to be perceived as more tense as a function of perceived vocal tension and fdgeting), the majority of deception cues were found to be unrelated, or only weakly related to deceit

The Power of Questioning

Question do more than gather information—they control conversations, build rapport, and assert authority.

In a sample of spontaneous conversations, Stivers (2010) found only 43% of questions had the primary purpose of seeking information; the other 57% were used for conversational management (Hargie, 2019, p. 140).
Hargie (2017) lists purposes like initiating interaction, maintaining control, or arousing curiosity (Hargie, 2019, p. 139).

Practical Takeaways:

- Use Questions Strategically: Ask specific questions to steer discussions or open-ended ones to encourage participation (Morgan & Saxton, 2006; Solem, 2016) (Hargie, 2019, p. 140).
- Balance Power: In group settings, direct questions to quieter members to ensure everyone's involved (Hargie, 2017) (Hargie, 2019, p. 140).
- Frame Carefully: Avoid face-threatening questions (e.g., aggressive challenges) to maintain positive relationships (Holmes, 1995; Steensig & Drew, 2008) (Hargie, 2019, p. 140).

Questions and Power Dynamics

Questions are tools of influence, shaping topics, participation, and authority (Bolden, 2009) (Hargie, 2019, p. 145). They can be coercive or empowering, depending on their use. Heritage (2010) notes that questions set agendas, embody presuppositions, convey authority, and prefer certain responses (Hargie, 2019, p. 146). In formal settings, higher-status individuals have greater questioning rights (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Wang, 2006; Wilson, 2015) (Hargie, 2019, p. 147).

Practical Takeaways:

- Set the Agenda: Use questions to guide conversations toward your goals without seeming domineering (Heritage, 2010) (Hargie, 2019, p. 146).
- Respect Status: In formal settings, lower-status individuals (e.g., patients) often soften questions to avoid seeming rude—mirror this tactfully (Skelton & Hobbs, 1999; Tracey, 2002) (Hargie, 2019, p. 148).
- Avoid Face Threats: Phrase questions to protect others' self-image, like asking "Could you share your thoughts?" instead of "Why didn't you do this?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Tracey, 2002; Wang, 2006) (Hargie, 2019, p. 147).

Also read:

- How to speak with power
- Frame control techniques
- **Frame control: basics for beginners**

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

Power Protection & Respect With Questions

> Interestingly, even when Q&A turns/obligations are not formally pre-allocated, participants show an understanding that questioning rights are linked to institutional status and shape their communication accordingly. For example, Skelton and Hobbs (1999) found that patients often prefaced their questions to doctors with phrases such as 'I was wondering …', while doctors never did so. These phrases constitute politeness markers, which attend to the status differentials and potentially face-threatening act of asking a

> question of a higher status individual (Tracey, 2002)

Also read:

- **How to respect others with 'power protection'**

> How to Show Respect, Maintain Rapport, & Influence People

Reinforcement: Shaping Behavior

Reinforcement, rooted in behavioral psychology, uses rewards to encourage desired communication behaviors (Hargie, 1986, 1997, 2006, 2017; Hargie et al., 1994) (Hargie, 2019, p. 163). Social reinforcers like verbal praise, nods, or smiles are especially powerful (Hargie, 2019, p. 169). Positive reinforcements yield better results than negative ones, like threats (Irwin, Mulder, & Simpson, 2014; Mulder, VanDijk, DeCremer, & Wilke, 2006) (Hargie, 2019, p. 393).

Practical Takeaways:

- Offer Positive Feedback: Praise specific actions ("Great point!") to reinforce good communication.
- Use Nonverbal Cues: Nod or smile to show approval during conversations, encouraging others to continue.
- Avoid Over-Rewarding: Excessive praise can seem manipulative—keep it genuine and balanced (Wit & Wilke, 1990) (Hargie, 2019, p. 393).

Learn more:

- **Manipulation tactics and red flags**

> Manipulation Tactics Abusers Use: Recognizing and Protecting Yourself

Self-Disclosure: Building Intimacy

Self-disclosure—sharing personal information—drives closeness in relationships and is a defining characteristic of close bonds (Brehm et al., 2002) (Hargie, 2019, p. 218).

It's risky but essential for trust, with reciprocity being key (Derlega & Berg, 1987; Sprecher & Treger, 2015) (Hargie, 2019, p. 219).
Disclosure introduces risk, potentially leading to acceptance or rejection (Sedlovskaya et al., 2013) (Hargie, 2019, p. 220).

Practical Takeaways:

- Start Small: Share superficial details early in relationships, saving deeper disclosures for trusted bonds (Miell & Duck, 1986) (Hargie, 2019, p. 219).
- Reciprocate Thoughtfully: Match others' disclosure levels to build rapport without oversharing (Sprecher & Treger, 2015) (Hargie, 2019, p. 219).
- Disclose Emotions in Romantic Relationships: *Mutual disclosure of emotion, rather than facts and information, predicts romantic partners' reported experience of intimacy* (Beach & Tesser, 1988; Laurenceau et al. , 1998)
- Manage Risks: Be cautious with sensitive info (e.g., financial struggles) until trust is established (Lieber, 2010) (Hargie, 2019, p. 218).

And pro tip to gather intel:

> Using self-disclosure to gain information is more effective than requests for disclosures due to our tendency to reciprocate

Learn more:

- **How to get close to others: bonding and connection**

> How to Build Deep Emotional Connection

Relationship Maintenance Through Disclosure

Self-disclosure sustains relationships, boosting satisfaction and shared meaning (Vangelisti & Banski, 1993) (Hargie, 2019, p. 221).

Regular "catching up" during absences keeps bonds strong (Sigman, 1991; Gilbertson et al., Dindia & Allen, 1998) (Hargie, 2019, p. 221).
Moderate disclosure levels are most conducive to satisfaction (Bochner, 1982; Gilbert, 1976; Lippert & Prager, 2001; Parks, 1995) (Hargie, 2019, p. 223).

Practical Takeaways:

- Debrief Daily: Share daily experiences with partners or friends to maintain connection (Vangelisti & Banski, 1993) (Hargie, 2019, p. 221).
- Create Shared Meaning: Discuss values and experiences to build a collective identity with loved ones (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997; Terzino & Cross, 2009; Walters & Burger, 2013) (Hargie, 2019, p. 222).
- Balance Sharing: Moderate disclosure—neither too much nor too little—keeps relationships healthy (Bochner, 1982) (Hargie, 2019, p. 223).
- Seeking Support If Needed: *'Sharing information for the purposes of seeking support or expressing emotions made friends feel 'more important and more mutually included in each other's life'* (Lee, 2006, p.13)

Learn more:

- **How to maintain her attracted**

> 6 Proven Techniques to Keep Her Attracted & Committed

Group Dynamics: Conformity and Influence

In groups, majority opinions often pressure conformity, but minorities can spark innovation if they're consistent and persuasive (Asch, 1951; Schachter, 1951; Nemeth & Kwan, 1987) (Hargie, 2019, pp. 381-383).

Normative pressures (seeking social approval) and informational pressures (seeking accuracy) shape behavior (DeVries, DeDreu, Gordijn, & Schuurman, 1996; Gordijn, DeVries, & DeDreu, 2002) (Hargie, 2019, p. 384).

Techniques like the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) reduce dysfunctional conformity (Hargie, 2019, p. 386).

Practical Takeaways:

- Resist Blind Conformity: Stand firm on well-founded beliefs, especially in private settings, to avoid groupthink (Asch, 1951) (Hargie, 2019, p. 382).

- Leverage Minority Influence: Present consistent, persuasive arguments to sway groups toward new ideas (Nemeth & Kwan, 1987) (Hargie, 2019, p. 385).
- Encourage Openness: Use techniques like NGT or appoint a devil's advocate to ensure all voices are heard (Herbert & Estes, 1977) (Hargie, 2019, p. 387).

Group Contribution & Dealing With Free Riders

Even under normative pressure, cooperation in task groups can break down—especially if one "bad apple" triggers reciprocity-based noncooperation from others (Kerr, 1983).

Challenges worsen in larger groups, where individual contributions are harder to identify, evaluate, or link to responsibility. Group identity can promote cooperation, but subgroup boundaries (e.g., student vs. staff) may undercut it if members prioritize subgroup interests over collective goals (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Wit & Kerr, 2002).

To counteract these challenges, persuasion should be paired with additional measures:

1. **Increase Norm Salience & Monitoring**:
   Cooperation improves when norms are salient and **contributions are identifiable**. Public accountability and visibility reduce free-riding and social loafing (Harkins & Jackson, 1985; Harkins, 2006).
2. **Use Social Reinforcements**:
   Praise, encouragement, and visible appreciation promote cooperation more effectively than threats or punishments, which may reduce internal motivation (Irwin et al., 2014; Mulder et al., 2006; Van Lange et al., 2014, 2017). But even positive rewards can backfire if seen as manipulative (Wit & Wilke, 1990).
3. **Leverage Influential Communicators or Leadership**:
   When softer strategies fail, group members may support persuasive interventions from respected communicators (Klandermans, 1992) or even **delegate authority** to a leader to ensure cooperation (DeCremer & Van Knippenberg, 2003; Van Vugt & DeCremer, 2002).
4. **Remove free riders**
   When motivation losses are more or less subconscious, the decrease of individual contributions to the group is termed 'social loafng'. When group members deliberately let others do the work, we speak of 'free riding' (Kerr, 1983). A very likely reaction in response to the (assumed) presence of free riders in the group is to reduce one's own efforts, too, rather than to take the risk of being exploited (being the 'sucker')

Persuasion

Persuades have four main avenues to convince others:

1. **Remove Barriers**: Persuaders can increase self-efficacy by eliminating obstacles to action.
   If the barrier is **informational**, they provide necessary details (e.g., how to adjust a water heater temperature: Cardenas & Simons-Morton, 1993; instructions for DIY medical tests: Feufel et al., 2010). If the barrier is **substantive**, they might offer practical help (e.g., free transport for low-income patients: Marcus et al., 1992). Immediate opportunities and convenient access also facilitate compliance (e.g., organ donor registration: Sharpe et al., 2017; eye protection provision: Dingus et al., 1991).
2. **Create Practice Opportunities**: Allowing people to rehearse or practice the target behavior can build self-efficacy (e.g., role-playing safer-sex discussions: Calsyn et al., 2010; Noar et al., 2006; Yzer et al., 1998; also Duncan et al., 2000; Latimer & Ginis, 2005; Luzzo et al., 1999).
3. **Use Modelling**: Showing others successfully performing the behavior helps observers believe they can do it too (e.g., teaching techniques for classroom management: Hagen et al., 1998; breast self-exam modeling: Anderson, 2000; also Gaston et al., 2012; Mahler et al., 1993; Ng et al., 1999).
4. **Provide Encouragement**: Verbal persuasion and expressions of confidence can boost perceived ability (e.g.,

telling someone they can stop a friend from drunk driving: Anderson, 1995, 2009).

Inducing Feelings of Hypocrisy (guilt)

This strategy works by making people aware of both their positive attitudes and their past inconsistent behaviours. When both are made salient, people often change their behaviour to align with their attitudes.

For instance, in a study on home energy conservation, participants who received both feedback on their actual energy use and a reminder of their conservation attitudes conserved more energy afterward than those who received feedback alone (Kantola et al., 1984; see also Aitken et al., 1994).

However, this approach can easily backfire, so go easy on guilt:

> For instance, persons made to feel hypocritical about apparent attitude–behavior inconsistency might resolve that inconsistency not by changing their behavior so as to align it with their attitudes, but by changing their attitudes so as to justify (be consistent with) their previous behavior (Fried, 1998).

Especially when people overdo it and annoy others:

> And several studies have found that although more explicit guilt appeals do arouse greater guilt than less explicit appeals, those more explicit appeals are signifcantly less persuasive than less explicit appeals, perhaps because the strategy generates anger or resentment (e.g. , Cotte, Coulter, & Moore, 2005; similarly, see Bessarabova, Turner, Fink, & Blustein, 2015; for reviews and discussion, see O'Keefe, 2000, 2002

Negotiation: Resolving Conflicts

Negotiation resolves conflicts of interest through communication (Greenhalgh & Lewicki, 2015) (Hargie, 2019, p. 399). Collectivism aligns with indirect communication, while individualism favors direct approaches (Ting-Toomey, 1988) (Hargie, 2019, p. 412). Individual traits matter more than cultural stereotypes (Hargie, 2019, p. 413).

Negotiation Theories

Structural Theories:
These theories focus on **power distribution** in negotiations, assuming that the party with the most power controls the outcome. While this theory is useful, it doesn't always match real-world outcomes, as power dynamics are more complex.

Strategic Theories:
Strategic theories view negotiation as a tactical process involving **moves and counter-moves**. Each party works to position themselves for cooperation rather than conflict. Walton and McKersie's (1965) Model of Social Negotiations is a key example, outlining four systems:

- **Distributive Bargaining**: Competitive, zero-sum where one party wins at the other's expense.
- **Integrative Bargaining**: Collaborative, aiming for mutual gains.
- **Attitudinal Structuring**: Focusing on relationships, like trust between parties.
- **Intra-Organisational Bargaining**: Internal agreements within groups to ensure unity during negotiations.

Critics argue that attitudinal structuring is not a separate system but a tactic used in collaboration, and intra-organisational bargaining should not be viewed as distinct (Anthony, 1977). Trust plays a critical role in shifting between distributive and integrative strategies.

Process Theories:

These theories focus on the **convergence of positions** through concessions over time. There are two main types of communication models:

- **Stage Models**: Sequence of distinct stages in negotiation, each with specific activities.
- **Episodic Models**: Divides the negotiation into episodes, each with a different type of activity.

Situational Models:
These models are tailored for specific **contexts** like hostage or intercultural negotiations. For instance, the aftermath of the **Munich Massacre** in 1972 led to the development of specialized **hostage negotiation teams**. Models like Hammer and Rogan's SAFE model and Taylor's Cylindrical Model focus on techniques for dealing with high-stakes situations, particularly in crisis contexts (Soskis & Van Zandt, 1986; Grub, 2010).

Practical Takeaways:

- Prepare Thoroughly: Know your goals and the other party's needs before negotiating.
- Adapt to Styles: Use indirect communication with collectivist individuals, direct with individualists (Ting-Toomey, 1988) (Hargie, 2019, p. 412).
- Focus on the Person: Avoid cultural stereotypes—tailor your approach to the individual's behavior (Hargie, 2019, p. 413).

Assertiveness

Assertion typically has been conceptualized as the midpoint on the continuum between non-assertion and aggression though recent data suggest it incorporates elements of aggressive and submissive behaviour as well (Dirks, Suor, Rusch, & Frazier, 2014; Dirks, Treat, & Weersing, 2011; Wilson & Gallois, 1993).

However, many fail to differentiate between socially acceptable assertive behaviour and inappropriate aggressive behaviour (Hargie, 2017).
Laypersons label conflict assertion as aggression, describe assertion as pushy, rude, and insensitive (Rakos, 1991), and see high levels of assertiveness as a weakness of leaders rather than as a strength (Ames & Flynn, 2007).

Mindsets are key

A negative internal dialogue (e.g., "I will be embarrassed if I speak up") undermines assertive social behavior, while positive self-statements (e.g., "My opinions are valuable") support it (Meichenbaum et al., 1981).

Assertive individuals tend to use twice as many positive self-statements as negative ones, unlike nonassertive individuals who use both equally (Rakos, 1991). Training people in positive self-instruction alone can significantly increase assertiveness (Craighead, 1979).

Negative self-talk often reflects fear of rejection and a relational or "feminine" focus (Wine, 1981; Wilson & Gallois, 1993). Rather than labeling such dialogue "negative," it may be more constructive to view it through the lens of autonomy vs. affiliation, where effective assertiveness draws more on autonomous self-statements.

Takeaways:

- **Assertion makes you less likable but more effective**: *A confict assertion that only expresses a right has been termed a "standard assertion" and consistently is judged to be equally potent to and somewhat more desirable than, conventional aggressive behaviour, and less likeable but more socially competent, than nonassertive behaviour*

- **Calibrate Its Use**: Even though assertion now embodies a positive social value across many different cultures around the world, the use of these skills will not be the preferred option in every situation

Learn more:

- Assertiveness and key beliefs
- **How to become more assertive**

> How to Be Assertive In 7 Simple Steps

Cognitive Interview: Enhancing Recall

The Cognitive Interview (CI) uses memory retrieval techniques to improve eyewitness reports, increasing valid information by over 40% (Memon, Meissner, & Fraser, 2010) (Hargie, 2019, p. 511). The Enhanced CI (ECI) adds rapport-building, focused retrieval, and interviewee-compatible questioning (Geiselman & Fisher, 1997) (Hargie, 2019, p. 515).

Practical Takeaways:

- Build Rapport: Start interviews with casual chat to put others at ease and encourage openness (Geiselman & Fisher, 1997) (Hargie, 2019, p. 515).
- Reinstate Context: Ask people to mentally recreate the setting of an event to boost recall (Flexser & Tulving, 1978; Tulving & Thomson, 1973) (Hargie, 2019, p. 513).
- Follow Their Lead: Time questions based on the interviewee's recall pattern, not a rigid script (Geiselman & Fisher, 1997) (Hargie, 2019, p. 515).

Employment Interviews: Making an Impression

Structured interviews reduce bias and predict job performance better (Dipboye et al., 2012; Chapman & Zweig, 2005) (Hargie, 2019, p. 479).

First impressions matter, but most decisions happen later (Frieder et al., 2016) (Hargie, 2019, p. 482). Personality traits like conscientiousness and powerful speech styles boost success (Sackett & Walmsley, 2014; Parton et al., 2002) (Hargie, 2019, pp. 493, 495).

And speak with power:

> In terms of speech styles, powerful versus powerless speech was examined by Parton et al.(2002). Professional (and undergraduate) respondents evaluated interviewees' dynamism, social attractiveness, superiority, control over self, control over others and employability. Evidence suggested that those with a powerful speech style were rated more favourably (competent and employable), particularly by professionals

Practical Takeaways:

- Prepare for Structure: Expect consistent, job-relevant questions in modern interviews—practice clear, concise answers (Dipboye et al., 2012) (Hargie, 2019, p. 479).
- Project Confidence: Use powerful speech (avoid hesitations, be direct) to appear competent (Parton et al., 2002) (Hargie, 2019, p. 495).
- Show Personality: Highlight traits like agreeableness and drive, which employers value highly (Sackett & Walmsley, 2014) (Hargie, 2019, p. 493).

Learn how:

- **Speak with power and project confidence**

> Dominant Conversations: 10 Ways to Speak With Confidence

MORE WISDOM

Relationships evolve in phases

> Dialectical theories argue that relationships evolve through turning points, or remembered meaningful events that increase or decrease partners' intimacy and mark relationship changes (e.g. having sex for the frst time, having a serious argument; Stafford et al. , 2006)

However, it's not all about 'power', and couples can grow in inter-connectedeness:

> Partners may even adopt a relational identity, viewing 'themselves as a collective unit (rather than as individuals) as they become increasingly committed to each other' (McIntyre et al. , 2015, p.858)

Read more:

- **The phases of power in relationships, and how to navigate them**

> Relationship Power Dynamics: Strategies for All 9 Stages

Calibration is the mother of communication skills

> If there is one skill that is most fundamental to persuasive success, it is message adaptation – adapting or tailoring one's persuasive efforts to the particular situation faced, the particular audience to be influenced

Learn more here:

- **How to calibrate**

> The Science of Social Calibration: 7 Steps to Mastery

CONS

- **Less practical for people looking for a communication manual**

And it's more of a note than a con.

There are also plenty of examples and even useful mock dialogues in the cognitive behavioral therapy chapter.
It's just tha it's not meant to be a practical manual for learners.

- **I wished for more *intepersonal* communication and *effective* communication**

For example, what makes people *enjoy* talking to someone, or feel bondend to someone, or like/dislike someone, or what provides/loses status.

But this is a personal note from someone looking turn as much research as possible into practical strategies and techniques.
That said, I could still find something along those lines in chapters such as the ones on questions, self-disclosure,

interviews, and more.

REVIEW

The Handbook of Communication Skills provides an evidence-based overview of the research literature on communication.

While it's less hands-on that our typical articles, it helped us refine, source or confirm several approaches in our articles, and I'm very grateful for that.

Check the **best books** to read or get this book on Amazon:

Vanessa Van Edwards' Books: Lucio Ranks Them for Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 June 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Vanessa Van Edwards has earned a following for her books on social skills, particularly *Captivate* and *Cues*, which offer practical tips for navigating human interactions.

Her bubbly personality and expressive style make her work especially appealing to women and those eager to learn a high-energy, yet warm approach.

As experts in social dynamics, we critically review Vanessa Van Edwards' books, ranking them to pinpoint what's the best book for boosting your social impact.

Vanessa's best books ranked and reviewed

Contents

- Intro
- #3 Human Lie Detection
  - Pros & Cons of Lie Detection
- #2. Captivate: Vanessa's Guide to Socialization
  - Pros and Cons of Captivate
- #1. Cues: A Foundation of Social Skills
  - Pros and Cons of Cues
  - What's Vanessa's Best Book? Why Cues Stands Out
  - The Book For Men Who Want More…
  - Conclusion: Vanessa's Books and Your Next Read

Intro

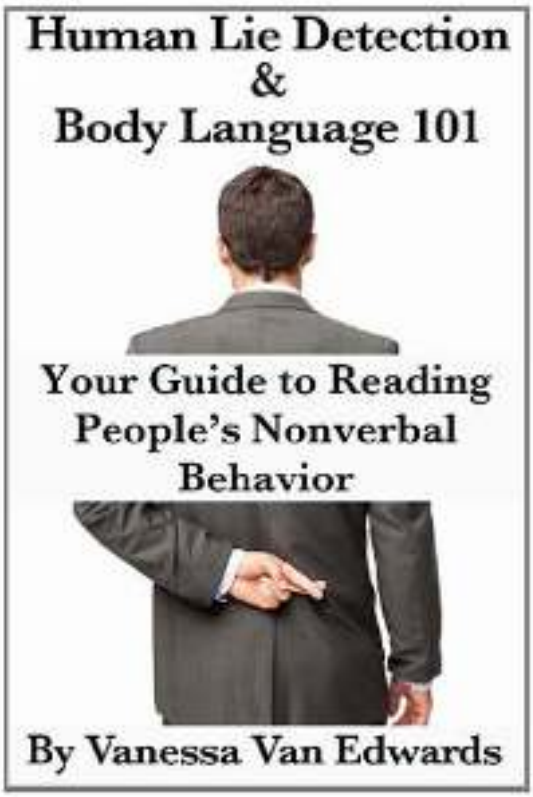
Vanessa Van Edwards started writing children's books under the name 'Vanessa Van Patten'.

Since her switch to social skills, she wrote 3 books, including two commercial successes that she is most famous for.

She hinted at an upcoming book focusing on conversations and words—sounds like she'll go into frame control, but probably call it differently.

But for now, here are Vanessa's books ranked:

#3 Human Lie Detection



Before Vanessa became a household name in the world of social skills books, she encountered a significant challenge with her first book project.

She spent three years collaborating with a major publisher, pouring her heart into a manuscript that ultimately was a commercial failure—or so she defines it, some authors would consider it an OK result.

Pros & Cons of Lie Detection

In my opinion, this is not Vanessa's 'least good' because of the copies it sold or didn't sell.

It's because 'human lie detection' is an oxymoron.

As the *Routledge Persuasion Handbook* states, **training people in lie detection only shows *minor* improvements**, and sometimes even *regressions* in accuracy.

And if you can barely improve with training, how far can you take someone with a book?

I also have doubts regarding the *approach* to spotting detection.
And I suspect the regressions occur because people over-focus on trying to detect specific cues, and miss everything else—ie.: they lose the forest for the tree.

This is why here at TPM we still love our cues, but rely more on different strategies.
For example:

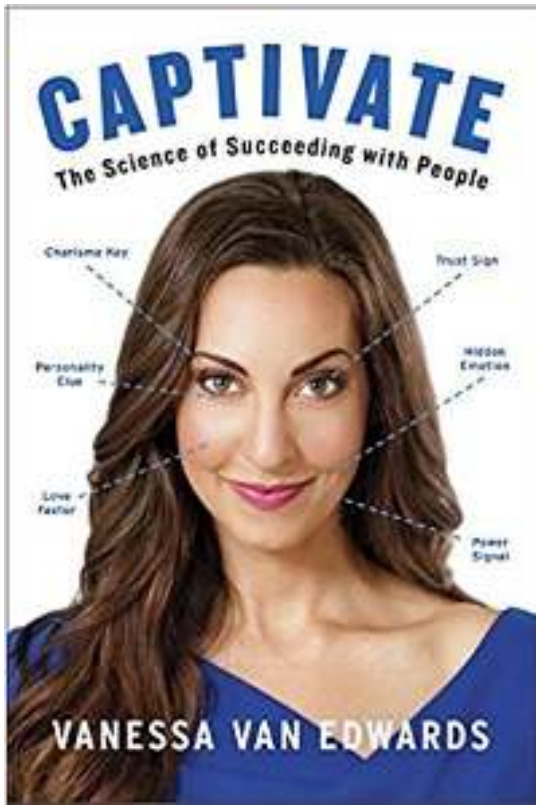
- Frame control to encourage win-win thinking and discourage cheating
- Power intelligence to increase context awareness (e.g., conflicts of interest)
- Reading general character (e.g.: honorable character VS taker)
- Self-defense strategies

There is one more reason I'm not a fan of the cue approach to detecting lies.
Trying to detect lies by looking at common signals at best catches the *bad* liars, and misses the *good* liars. And the latter are the people you want to avoid the most.

Anyway, fortunately, Vanessa didn't stop writing books after her first attempt fell below her expectations.
She shares that while she vowed never to write again, her husband supported and encouraged her to move on (sounds like a supportive husband!).

With time and great work, her website grew more popular, her YouTube channel gained subscribers… And she hit it big with her next book:

#2. Captivate: Vanessa's Guide to Socialization



Published in 2017, *Captivate: The Science of Succeeding with People* marked Vanessa's breakthrough into the literary world.

Translated into 16 languages, this book offers a comprehensive toolkit for improving social skills, mastering first impressions, and navigating interpersonal dynamics.

Vanessa draws on her experience to provide actionable strategies, such as the "highlighting" technique—celebrating others' successes to build rapport—and tailoring communication to personality types using frameworks like the Big Five traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism).

While grounded on some valid research, *Captivate* extends into 'Vanessa's approach to social skills', with sparkling and starting conversations with "I want to test a new conversation starter" :).

If you like Vanessa's style, and it seems to be working great for her, that's a plus.

Pros and Cons of Captivate

PROS:

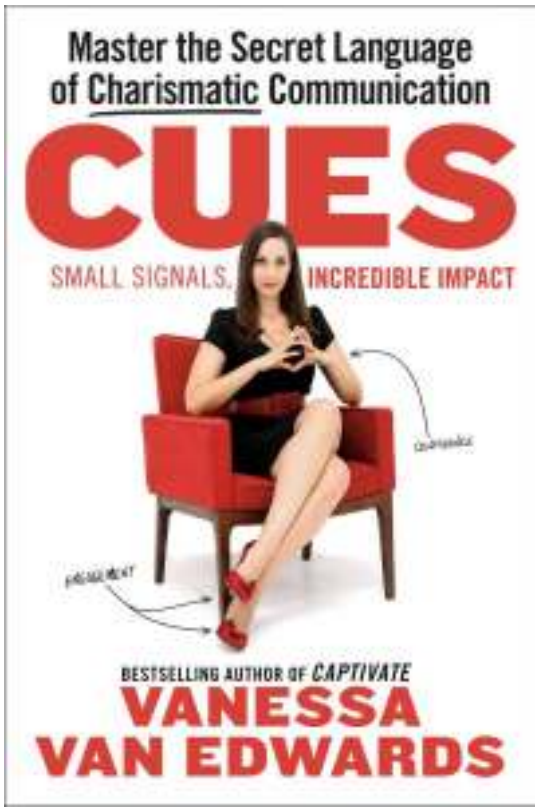
- + Practical strategies for enhancing social skills and leadership.
- + Good broad insights into personality types and how to adapt communication.
- + Effective and timeless techniques for making good first impressions, like maintaining strong eye contact.

CONS:

- – Relies on the Myers-Briggs, which lacks strong scientific backing.
- – Frequent upsells to Vanessa's website can disrupt the reading experience.
- – Some dating advice for men is less than ideal for successful dating.

For a deeper dive, check out this Captivate review.
While *Captivate* is a strong starting point for social skills books, it feels more like 'Vanessa's style' rather than a book that works for anyone.
Vanessa addresses this in her next work.

#1. Cues: A Foundation of Social Skills



Released in 2022, *Cues: Master the Secret Language of Charismatic Communication* has become Vanessa's best-selling and most successful book.

I enjoyed *Cues* the most as it draws from the same research we used for our original power and warmth approach. We're more tailored to men, status, and respect though, so her take stands strong on its own, and adds plenty of

value.

Indeed, Vanessa sparked valuable updates to our own article, and her list of Cues was even linked as an extra resource from Power University (with just minor adjustments from our end).

This book offers readers practical tools to influence how they're perceived through gestures, facial expressions, and tone.
Vanessa's engaging writing style and exceptional narration (she narrates the audiobook ⍰⍰) brings the content to life, making it both educational and enjoyable.

One standout example is her advice on using "open palms" early on to signal trustworthiness and approachability. She also explores how to read others' cues, like a furrowed brow indicating confusion, to adjust your communication in real-time.

Finally, what makes *Cues* such an engaging read is that Vanessa ties her principles to real-life examples, an approach we love and always embraced since our early beginnings.
That makes *Cues* a top contender among the best social skills books available today.

Pros and Cons of Cues

PROS

- + Highly practical with immediately actionable nonverbal techniques.
- + Engaging writing paired with Vanessa's warm, charismatic narration.
- + Vanessa embodies her teachings, making the book authentic and relatable.

CONS

- – Vanessa's leaning stronger towards warmth may not align with men seeking to project power or dominance.
- – Some examples, such as analyzing NBA player John Stockton's cues, felt a bit forced and oversimplifying more complex dynamics.
- – Emphasis on 'catching lies' through cues, albeit you're better off reading *characters*, rather than 'cues of lying'.

Explore this Cues review for more details.

What's Vanessa's Best Book? Why Cues Stands Out

When it comes to determining Vanessa Van Edwards' best book, the choice is clear: *Cues* takes the crown.

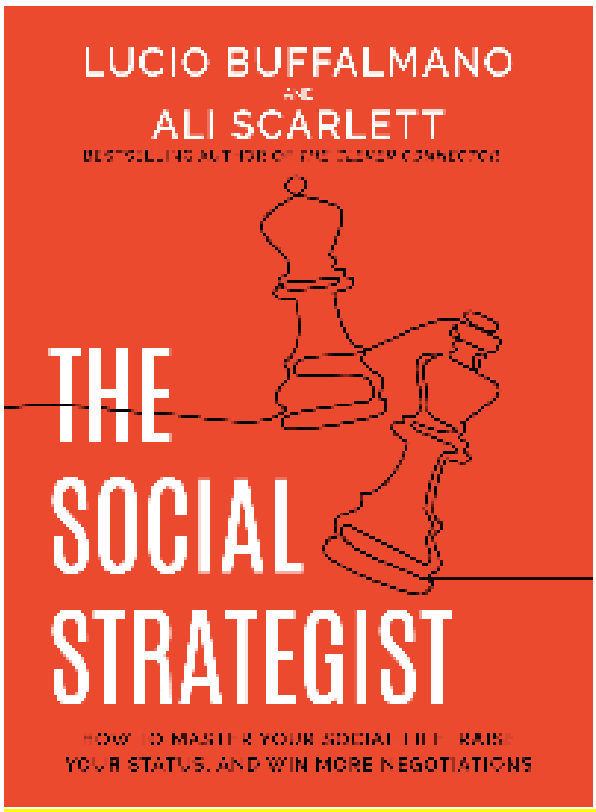
While *Captivate* is an excellent introduction to social skills, ***Cues* dives deeper into a more foundational aspect of social skills**: power and warmth.
It's not by accident that power and warmth was one of the very first articles on this website, and still remains one of our foundational approaches to successful socialization.

Compared to *Captivate*, *Cues* is more practical and effective.

For instance, where *Captivate* spends time on personality frameworks like Myers-Briggs, *Cues* shifts the focus from debated theories to *practical* behaviors.

Vanessa's engaging style also shines brighter in *Cues*, with vivid examples—like decoding a politician's hand gestures—that make the content stick.
While *Captivate* is a good read for beginners, *Cues* is a more effective book that can elevate most readers interested in perfecting their social skills, charisma, and charm.

The Book For Men Who Want More...



The Social Stragist provides a quick overview of our groundbreaking approach to men's self-development based on the science of power dynamics

For ambitious men looking for social skills books to gain an edge for respect, status, attraction, and advanced strategies in general, *The Social Strategist* is the perfect next step.

While *Captivate* and *Cues* provide a strong foundation in social skills, they may not fully address the specific challenges men face in competitive professional and social environments.

The Social Strategist fills this gap introducing sophisticated techniques for networking, influence, and leadership.

The Social Strategist also touches on foundational mindsets that help you build a high-quality man character that effortlessly attracts other, without having to force any 'cool line' on them.

It complements Vanessa's work by taking her foundational lessons and adding some more advanced material to keep you going along the way of social mastery.

And if you want to learn more about what approach is best for you, check out the best feature of Vanessa's approach, compared to Lucio's The Power Moves:

Goal / Trait	Best Pick	Why
Be respected	TPH	[illegible]
Be liked	[illegible]	[illegible]
Women	[illegible]	[illegible]
Men	TPH	[illegible]
Beginners in social skills	[illegible]	[illegible]
Intermediate or Advanced in social skills	TPH	[illegible]
Good multiculturalism	[illegible]	[illegible]
Influence up / reach executive level	TPH	[illegible]
Kids, Inclusion, 'Pro-Id'	[illegible]	[illegible]
Hard-hitting, power-based psychology	TPH	[illegible]
Realtors, employees, & Public speaking	[illegible]	[illegible]
Entrepreneurs, homewives, virologists	TPH	[illegible]

Conclusion: Vanessa's Books and Your Next Read

Vanessa Van Edwards' books are well-written, well-researched, and instructive, mixing accessibility with depth.

They're not the most rigorous deep-dives because achieving mass-market success requires a tradeoff between realistic complexity and mass-appeal simplicity (the 'Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™' phenomenon).

But Vanessa does a good job at striking a rare balance of being both simple and instructive, making them good companions for those who want to combine self-development with the pleasure of reading.

Captivate lays a solid groundwork for socializing more like Vanessa, while *Cues* tackles the foundations of both power, and likability.
For being more foundational and broadly applicable, *Cues* earns the title of Vanessa's best book.

For those ready to go beyond, especially ambitious men, *The Social Strategist* offers a natural progression.
It builds on some of the basic skills from Vanessa's books, bridging into more advanced social skills for men who want to win in their personal and professional lives.

Whether you're new to Vanessa Van Edwards' books or a longtime fan, these reads—paired with *The Social Strategist*—will equip you with the tools to thrive in any social setting.

And if you're ready for the full immersion, you may even consider our full course to go from good guy, to confident life winner:

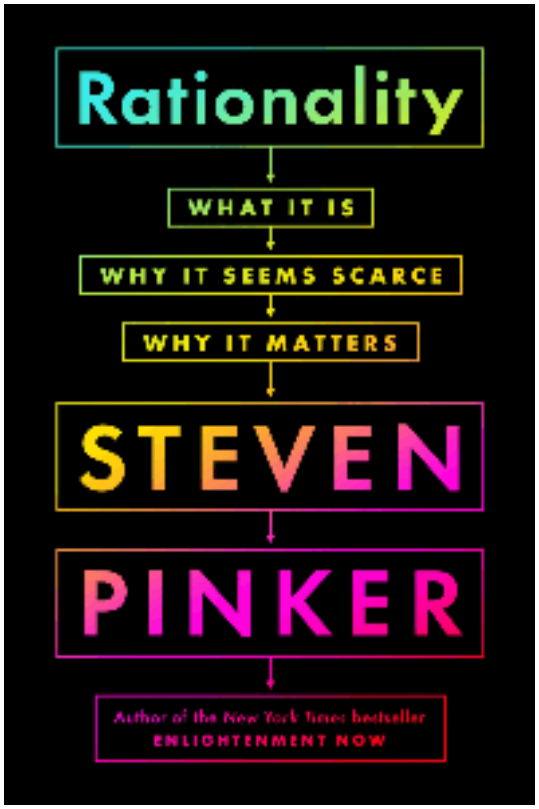
Power University: Men's #1 Self-Development Course

Rationality: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 June 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Rationality: What It Is, Why It Seems Scarce, Why It Matters (2021) by Steven Pinker explores human reasoning, its strengths, its limitations, how to increase it, and its critical importance to both individual well-being, and humanity as a whole.

TPM Note: Rationality is foundational to effect change in the real world
This book is not included because of its cultural criticism. It is included because it is influential in modern rationality thinking (though more from a theoretical point of view, and now an how-to guide).



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  - Over-emphasis on present events make Rationality already dated
  - Strawmen arguments
  - Some irrational conclusions
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  - We need more rationality, and all the help we can get to promote it
  - Respect for Pinker’s stand against both left & right irrationality
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Key Takeaways

- **Rationality is a public good** that we must defend from a tragedy of the commons. *Each of us has a motive to prefer our truth, but together we’re better off with the truth*.
- **Humans are more logical than cognitive biases would suggest**, and we’re more accurate when it’s framed as human-relevant
- **We adapted to be lawyers more than scientists**, to win arguments. Ie.: it’s more about *power*, than truth

Notes

About the Author:
Steven Pinker is a psychology professor at Harvard and a popular author of books such as “*The Better Angels of Our Nature*“, “*How the Mind Works*”, “*The Blank Slate*“, and *Enlightenment Now*.

Intro: what’s rationality and why it matters

The author outlines the book’s purpose:

to explain the tools of rationality (logic, probability, critical thinking, etc.), explore why they are underutilized, and affirm their necessity in fostering progress.

Pinker suggests that traditional cognitive psychology fails to fully address contemporary irrationality, such as belief in conspiracy theories.
And he reminds readers that rationality is the cornerstone of human thought and action, essential for addressing pressing global challenges like health crises, democratic erosion, and climate change.

Tools of rationality:

- logic
- critical thinking
- probability
- correlation and causation
- the optimal ways to adjust our beliefs and commit to decisions with uncertain evidence
- yardsticks for making rational choices alone and with others

Be more open to evidence and reflect more for higher rationality

> Openness to Evidence correlates with cognitive reflection (the ability to think twice and not fall for trick

> questions) and with a resistance to many of the cognitive illusions, biases, and fallacies.
> This cluster of good cognitive habits, which Stanovich calls the Rationality Quotient (a play on the intelligence quotient or IQ), correlates with raw intelligence, though imperfectly: smart people can be closed-minded and impulsive, and duller ones open and reflective.
> Together with resisting weird beliefs, reflective people are better at spotting fake news and at rejecting pseudo-profound bullshit like "Hidden meaning transforms unparalleled abstract beauty."

We're more rational than Kahnmann suggests

Just like he's done in some previous books, Pinker challenges the notion that humans are inherently irrational.

He revisits a theme he already addressed in more evolutionary-leaning previous work, and says that Kahneman's work led many to believe humans are more irrational than they actually are.
Instead, Pinker points out, those tests are biased to make humans fail.

My note: His example of the San people is unconvincing.
This example doesn't isolate individual reasoning ability from accumulated cultural knowledge, which makes it weak evidence for innate rationality.

Key Takeaways:

- Humans are capable of remarkable rationality, as seen in hunter-gatherer societies.
- Modern irrationality stems from misapplications of cognitive tools in unfamiliar contexts.
- Rationality is a skill that can be honed through understanding and practice.
- Logic is a powerful but abstract tool that humans apply better in familiar contexts.

The replication crisis was a failure of rationality

On the studies that grab attention:

> The notorious replication failures come from studies that attracted attention because their findings were so counterintuitive.
> Holding a warm mug makes you friendlier. ("Warm"—get it?) Seeing fast-food logos makes you impatient. Holding a pen between your teeth makes cartoons seem funnier, because it forces your lips into a little smile. Any reader of popular science knows of other cute findings which turned out to be suitable for the satirical *Journal of Irreproducible Results.*

Pinker explains why it was obvious these much-publicized studies by pop psychologists were likely false to begin with:

> The reason these studies were sitting ducks for the replicability snipers is that they had low Bayesian priors. Not as low as ESP, to be sure, but it would be an extraordinary discovery if mood and behavior could be easily pushed around by trivial manipulations of the environment.
> It was the extraordinariness of the findings that earned them a place in the science sections of newspapers and snazzy ideas festivals, and it's why on Bayesian grounds we should demand extraordinary evidence before believing them. Indeed, a bias toward oddball findings can turn science journalism into a high-volume error dispenser.

Indeed, acutely notes Pinker, the mere fact of something being surprising makes it more likely to be wrong:

> The problem is that "surprising" is a synonym for "low prior probability," assuming that our cumulative

> scientific understanding is not worthless. This means that even if the quality of evidence is constant, we should have a lower credence in claims that are surprising.

The forbidden truths people deny

Rephrased for speed:

> The stage for forbidden base rates is set by a law of social science.
> Measure any socially significant variable: test scores, vocational interests, social trust, income, marriage rates, rates of different types of violence.
> Now break down the results by the standard demographic dividers: age, sex, race, religion, ethnicity. The average differences among groups are sometimes very large.
> Whether the differences arise from nature, culture, discrimination, history, or some combination is beside the point: the differences are there.

To use these differences to enact policy or decision-making may be rational.
But it would also be textbook profiling:

> Say you sought the most accurate possible prediction about the prospects of an individual—how successful the person would be in college or on the job, how good a credit risk, how likely to have committed a crime, or jump bail, or recidivate, or carry out a terrorist attack.
> If you were a good Bayesian, you'd start with the base rate for that person's age, sex, class, race, ethnicity, and religion, and adjust by the person's particulars. In other words, you'd engage in profiling. You would perpetrate prejudice not out of ignorance, hatred, supremacy, or any of the -isms or -phobias, but from an objective effort to make the most accurate prediction.

Self and Others (Game Theory)

The chapter on game theory was one of the most interesting for our focus on self-development and goal achievement.

It applies game theory to real-world scenarios like communal outrage, environmental policy, and international relations, highlighting the importance of aligning individual and collective rationality.

The environment is a tragedy of commons

> To get back to the example with which I opened the chapter, here is the Tragedy of the Carbon Commons. The players can be individual citizens, with the burden consisting of the inconvenience of forgoing meat, plane travel, or gas-guzzling SUVs. Or they can be entire countries, in which case the burden is the drag on the economy from forgoing the cheap and portable energy from fossil fuels.

Pinker says this realization undermines radical libertarianism, "despite the eternal appeal of unfettered freedom".
I agree.

Key Takeaways:

- Rationality is a public good with a tragedy of the commons in tow. *Each of us has a motive to prefer our truth, but together we're better off with the truth.*
- Cooperation can emerge from strategic interactions of selfish players, as seen in Tit for Tat.
- Game theory can improve social and policy outcomes.

- Social animals often play in a series of iterated prisoner dilemmas. But the iteration makes cooperation beneficial and common

What's Wrong with People? Clannisshness VS truth

Pinker dedicates a full chapter addressing the apparent irrationality crisis of conspiracy theories, fake news, and polarized politics.

Pinker argues that these phenomena often reflect rational pursuit of non-epistemic goals, like signaling group loyalty (myside bias) or seeking comfort in a mythology mindset.
He says that politics have become bigger ideology machines:

> We've long known that humans are keen to divide themselves into competitive teams, but it's not clear why it's now the left–right split that is pulling each side's rationality in different directions rather than the customary fault lines of religion, race, and class.
> The right–left axis aligns with several moral and ideological dimensions: hierarchical versus egalitarian, libertarian versus communitarian, throne-and-altar versus Enlightenment, tribal versus cosmopolitan, tragic versus utopian visions, honor versus dignity cultures, binding versus individualizing moralities.

Pinker distinguishes between the reality mindset (evidence-based reasoning) and the mythology mindset (beliefs for social or emotional purposes).
People don't really 'believe' fake news and conspiracies, they just promote them to advertise group belonging or influencing the narrative.

Key Takeaways:

- Irrational beliefs often serve social or emotional functions, not just cognitive errors.
- The mythology mindset prioritizes group identity over truth.
- Education and institutional accountability can counter the irrationality crisis.

Why rationality matters

In the final chapter Pinker seeks to leave us with a parting argument on why rationality matters.

Some points make sense, but some felt less convincing.
Overall, the last chapter felt biased to favor Pinker's favored outcome: that rationality makes a huge difference.

Key Takeaways:

- Rationality has driven significant material and moral progress.
- Strengthening rationality requires education, institutional reforms, and cultural norms.
- Rationality is a collective asset vital for a flourishing society.

MORE WISDOM

Shit tests with hypotheticals

> A person who is capable of entertaining certain hypotheticals might stab us in the back were the temptation ever to arise.
> Imagine someone were to ask you: For how much money would you sell your child? Or your friendship, or citizenship, or sexual favors?

That's a trap/shit test.
And, says Pinker:

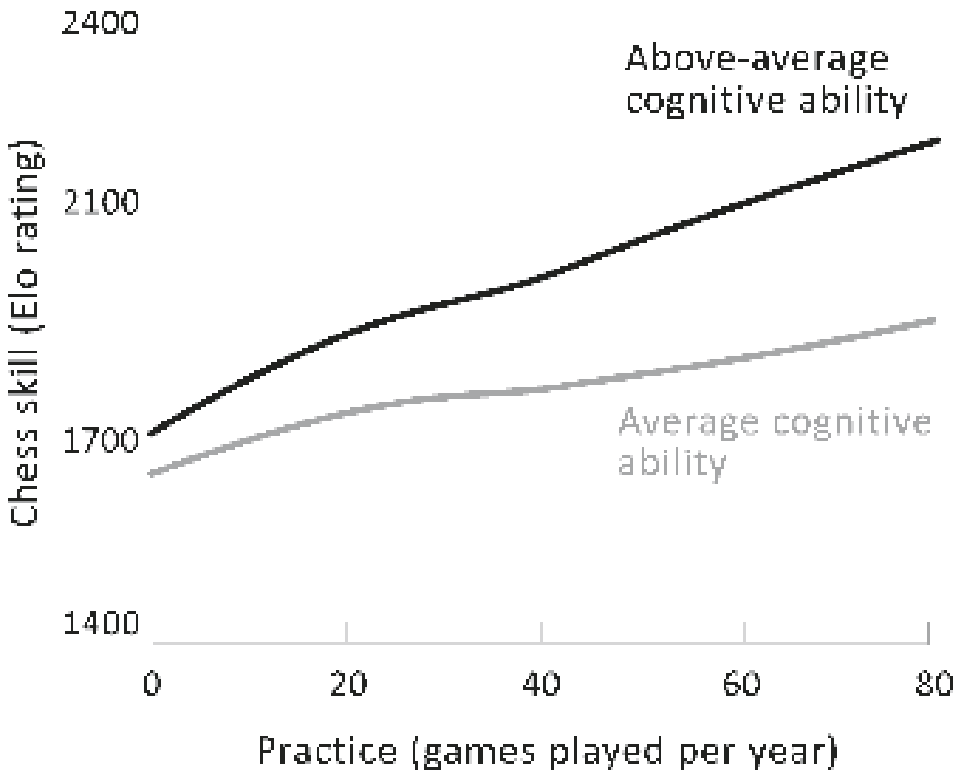
> The correct answer is to refuse to answer—better still, to be offended by the question.
> (…) We trust those who are constitutionally incapable of betraying us or our values, not those who have merely chosen not to do so thus far.

Randomized controlled trials aren't 'golden standard for showing causation'

> Randomness is the key: if the patients who were given the drug signed up earlier, or lived closer to the hospital, or had more interesting symptoms, than the patients who were given the placebo, you'll never know whether the drug worked.

Talent matters: increasing practice increases the difference between talent and non talent

> Smarter players gain more with every additional game of practice. An equivalent way of putting it is that without practice, cognitive ability barely matters (the leftmost tips of the lines almost overlap), but with practice, smarter players show off their talent (the rightmost tips are spread apart)



QUOTES

Rationality as a public good, probably the best concept and quote in the whole book:

> Rationality is a public good, and a public good sets the stage for a tragedy of the commons. In the Tragedy of the Rationality Commons, motivated reasoning for the benefit of oneself and one's side produces an opportunity to free ride on our collective understanding.

> Each of us has a motive to prefer *our* truth, but together we're better off with *the* truth.

On the difference between claiming conspiratory beliefs, and living accordingly to them

> even relativists who deny the possibility of objective truth and insist that all claims are merely the narratives of a culture lack the courage of their convictions. The cultural anthropologists or literary scholars who avow that the truths of science are merely the narratives of one culture will still have their child's infection treated with antibiotics prescribed by a physician

On scientists' own failure of rationality and publication irrationality:

> A failure of Bayesian reasoning among scientists themselves is a contributor to the replicability crisis. (…) Daryl Bem published results (…) which claimed to show that participants successfully predicted (at a rate above chance) random events before they took place (…) Not surprisingly, the effects failed to replicate, but that was a foregone conclusion given the infinitesimal prior probability that a social psychologist had disproven the laws of physics

CRITICISM

Less a book on rationality, more *Pinker's take* on rationality

While the author does discuss principles of rationality, they're drowned out in personal takes, anecdotes, and tangents.

The book feels more like *philosophizing* over rationality than dispassionately analyzing rationality.

Not a guide for learning rationality

While the book does discuss how rationality works, it doesn't deliver the *guide* on how to be more rational that I was hoping for.

Overstates rationality and IQ, ignores cultural learning

The San people didn't feel like compelling evidence for human rationality in decision-making.

After I had the fortune of learning about cultural evolution, Pinker's example struck me more as a case of cultural learning, than unfettered rationality.

I'd recommend Pinker to sit down with his fellow Harvard professor Henrich and learn more about:

- ***The Secret Of Our Success***
- ***The Weirdest People In The World***

Too much space wasted on 'common knowledge'

Readers well-versed in foundational principles of cognitive psychology may feel like Rationality wastes valuable space to revisit known themes without bringing anything new to the table.

The same can be said for the usual obvious holes in human rationality, like overestimating the risks of terrorism, or of airplane travel risks.

Several themes also repeat from Pinker's previous books.

And as much as I agree with them, I wasn't looking for a rerun.

I think an assertive editor should have reminded Pinker on when and where to cut.

Over-emphasis on present events make *Rationality* already dated

Human biases that Pinker failed to heed are over-weighing present events, and extrapolating recent trends onto the future.

Pinker hints that the US is moving away from Trump's denials of facts and truths, and back to rationality:
He says:

> These safeguards are belatedly being deployed.
> In a single week in early 2021 (…) Trump was banned from Twitter (…) a mendacious senator who pushed the stolen-election conspiracy lost a major book contrac (…) The platforms have tuned their algorithms to stop rewarding dangerous falsehoods (…) and damped down the runaway dynamics that can viralize toxic content and send people down extremist rabbit hole

History proved this misleading.
Trump won again in 2024, making that chapter a cautionary tale of not jumping to conclusions.

Strawmen arguments

For example:

> All too often, people write as if every outcome had a single, unfailing cause (…)

He may be right that too many do it way too often.
But I believe that it's more often a case of power dynamics, and seeking to persuade, win arguments, or increase engagement, than about true irrationality.

Most people instead would agree that both nature/nurture and talent/practice matter.

Simplistic arguments

For example, pitting against the supposed hyper-rationality of the San people with modern human societies:

> The sapience of the San makes the puzzle of human rationality acute.
> Despite our ancient capacity for reason, today we are flooded with reminders of the fallacies and follies of our fellows

Does Pinker really believe that an average San is so much more rational than an average modern man?
Because I don't think so.
Not that the modern society man is more rational, but simply that there is no reason to believe a San is more rational than any other random human being.

Some irrational conclusions

Seems like Pinker may slip on rationality seeking to be an optimist:

> "If the smartest people in the world predict something, it will come true." But we know that this conditional is false.
> Einstein, for example, announced in 1952 that only the creation of a world government, P, would prevent the impending self-destruction of mankind, Q (if not P then Q), yet no world government was created (not P) and mankind did not destroy itself (not Q; at least if "impending" means "within several decades").

Pinker may want to note there is no timeline in Einstein's prediction.
A prediction without a timeline cannot be proven false because 'there is always time for the prediction to become true'.

PROS

We need more rationality, and all the help we can get to promote it

I stand beside Pinker's message on the importance of rationality for the sake of humanity as a whole.

For that, I applaud Pinker's effort on this arena and I'm glad a popular scientist is fighting this good battle.

Respect for Pinker's stand against both left & right irrationality

In the past some may have seen Pinker's criticism of academic wokism as a sign of his conservatism.

However, Pinker took an even stronger stance against Trump.

That suggests me Pinker truly puts values above politics, something I deeply respect (and a stance we also happen to agree with here at TPM):

> **Pinker**: Wokism poses some problem, but Trump's attacks on democracy are worse

Much respect to Pinker for defending academic freedom and the pursuit of truth above and beyond any politics

REVIEW

Rationality is a typical Pinker book mixing deep insights and some science with lots of Pinker's takes and opinions.

You'll love the latter if you love Pinker, and you'll love *Rationality* a bit less if you were looking for fewer tangents and more science and pragmatism.

I wished it were more of the latter.
With all his clever quips and quotes **Pinker's books make you think 'he's smart'. But I want books that make *readers* smarter.**

I could not agree more with the author for the call on more rationality, including for humanity's own sake and future.
And I also believe rationality is a meta-skill for life's success and effectiveness.

So I wished that a smart and capable thinker like Pinker could pen a stronger manifesto.
With less Pinker-ing, and more dispassionate pragmatism *Rationality* could have been a manifesto. As it stands, it's not, and it left me wishing for more.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

How to Gain Social Status as a Man: A Field Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 June 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Want to boost your social status and earn respect?

At The Power Moves, we specialize in helping men master power dynamics to achieve high status and influence.

Backed by social psychology and experience, this guide reveals how to blend prestige (competence and value-giving) with strategic dominance to gain status in any group.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. Be More Prestigious
  - But Avoid 'Powerless Prestigious'
- 2. Be More Dominant
  - But Avoid 'Domineering Jerk'
- 3. Be Both Prestigious & High Power
- 4. Focus on The Foundations of Status
  - Foundations of Personal Value
  - Foundations of Society-Wide Status
- 5. Grow Socially Skilled
- 6. Socialize Strategically For Status
  - How to Climb To The Top
  - Greet Prestigious Men, Avoid Dominants
  - Approach The Leaders After You Displayed Value
- 7. Pick The Right Groups, And Gain Group-Value

- ⍰⍰ Pick Based On Skills, Interests, and Similarities
- 8. Be Ready to Compete & Defend Yourself
  - Be Smart With Physical Treaths
- 9. Be ‘Positively Machiavellian’
  - ⍰ Example: Leveraging Your Connections

1. Be More Prestigious

Social psychology research highlights two approaches to status:

- **Prestige** ➡ Competence and value-giving power
- **Dominance** ➡ Coercion and value-taking power

Features	Dominance	Prestige
Influence	Based on coercion and threat	True persuasion; deferential agreement
Imitation	No imitative bias except to satisfy dominant	Preferential, automatic, and unconscious imitation
Attention	Tracking of higher-ups, eye contact avoidance, no staring	Attention and gazing at higher-ups, watching and listening
Mimicry	No preferential mimicry	Preferential mimicry of higher-ups
Proximity	Avoidance; keeping distance to avoid random aggression	Approach and proximity to higher-ups
Higher-ups language	Seize the floor, aggression (ie.: power moves, criticism)	Given the floor, permitted long pauses. Self-deprecating humor
Higher-ups behavior	Aggression, self-aggrandizement, egocentric	Prosocial, generous, and cooperative
Displays	ThePowerMoves.com	
-Lower-status	Diminutive, shoulder slump, crouching, gaze aversion	Attention to prestigious, open-body position
-Higher-ups	Expansive, expanded chest, wide stance, arms wide	Similar to dominance but ‘muted’. Less expansive use of space
-Higher-ups	Lower pitch during interaction	Do not lower vocal pitch
Emotions	ThePowerMoves.com	
-Lower-status	Fear, shame, fear-based respect	Admiration, awe, admiring-respect
-Higher-ups	Hubristic pride, arrogance	Authentic pride, muted arrogance
Fitness	Greater fitness and reproduction	Greater fitness and reproduction

⍰But Avoid ‘Powerless Prestigious’

Don’t mistake prestigious for ‘powerless’.

Value without power-intelligence only makes you a bigger mark.
This study for example shows that people behave more dominant with submissive men, a cue of people’s innate exploitative nature.

Hence:

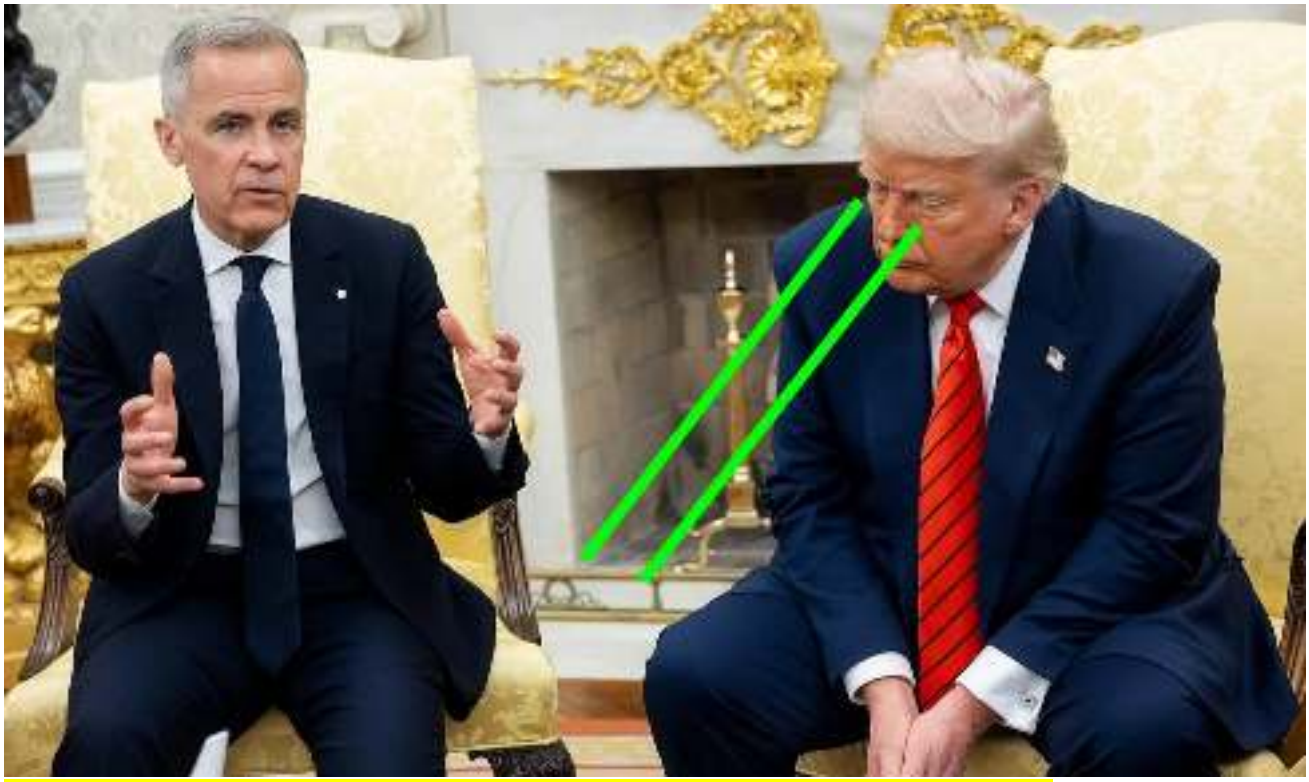
2. Be More Dominant

Meta-analyses show that trait dominance predicts leader emergence.
Dominance outperforms many other traits including conscientiousness and intelligence.

A dominant approach includes:

- **Expansive body language** while subordinates match with diminutive body language.
- **Getting bigger** helps, with a bidirectional relationship: higher-status men are perceived as larger
- **Lower pitch** or constant. Avoid raising your pitch since men who view themselves as weaker do it
- **Visual dominance**, defined as the ratio of looking while speaking to looking while listening
  - Look away more while listening: High-status and dominant spent equal time looking while speaking and listening, and looked less at subordinates (Ellyson et al., 1980)

High visual dominance was similar between dominant men and high-status men.



Trump often looked away while Carney spoke, while Carney often looked at Trump speaking

See:

- **Dominant body language**

⍰But Avoid 'Domineering Jerk'

The dominant 'works' in the right contexts.

Unfortunately, even the domineering approach 'can work in some contexts.
For example, research has long considered bullying a tool to gain power and social status (Olweus, 1993; Vaillancourt et al.; 2007).

But **the more domineering it turns, the less effective it becomes in free societies**. Especially if you want top-performing, high-value teams who can vote with their feet.
Plus, it's higher risk:

⚖ **Leadership based on value-taking dominance becomes shakier as the group grows.**

It's a mathematical property: the more the group grows, the more the leader's strength is outmatched by subordinates ('leveling coalitions').

It's true even in chimps, and even more so in humans.
This study and this meta-analysis show that social support, social skills and intelligence influence status more than

physical size and aggression.

3. Be *Both* Prestigious & High Power ⍰

A recent theory states that competence is the only way to status, underpinning *both* prestige and dominance.

We tend to agree, and take the best of both approaches for maximum effectiveness.
Here's how:

- ⍰ **Win-win mindset:** '*I seek power for myself, while elevating the best people around me*'
- **High competence**, socially, in life, and in your specialized domain
- ***Positive* Dominance** based on competence
  - Prosocial dominant leadership: give to givers, and (socially) punish the takers.
    Punishing freeriders earns respect, trust, and even more money
- ***Social* dominance**, less physicality, and more frame control, tonality, and sub-communication
- ***Balanced* dominance**, without being *domineering*. See: 'law of optimum balance'
  - Confident body language, without *over*-spreading
    Eg.:

Comfortable in one's shoes, subtly proud, without overdoing it

See more:

- High-power / high warmth,
- High-status behavior and speaking
- Avoid submissive behavior and low-power speaking

Or best of all:

- **Power University**, shows all the cues of positive dominance

4. Focus on The Foundations of Status

Here are the biggest secrets to gaining status in any group:

- **Be a high-value man** to gain status *anywhere*
- **Be high-status in larger society**, to be pre-framed as high-status

Foundations of Personal Value

High-value and high-status are different, but so interrelated we sometimes even used them interchangeably.

Status is a social construct governed by social exchanges, and high-value men get status because they can give back (Henrich, 2015).

Examples of universally valued traits:

- Confidence
- Optimism
- Competence

But also a good style, humor, and upbeat personality help.

Build value with our guides:

- **High-value men traits**
- Low-value traits to avoid

Foundations of Society-Wide Status

Most groups inherit status from the wider society, and society-wide foundations are almost universally valued:

- High-status job
- High income
- Resources
- Fame <— The true 'status hack' and superpower

5. Grow Socially Skilled

It's called social status because it's a game of *socialization*.

Start with:

- **Fix negative social value** like awkwardness and social anxiety
- **Calibrate and fit in**: social calibration is the true meta-skill of socialization

Common calibration issues include:

- Uptight in 'chill' cultures
- Too smart-sounding among lower classes
- Too formal/informal for the context
- Not masculine enough among prototypically masculine men

Then graduate to the true game of social power:

- **Interpersonal power dynamics**
- **Why you can gain status fast even if socially awkward**

> The Science of Social Calibration: 7 Steps to Mastery

6. Socialize Strategically For Status

Average men talk casually.

Men who advance socialize purposefully and gain status with a repeatable process.

⍰ How to Climb To The Top

Extroverts emerge as leaders more than introverts, so start right away:

1. **Start with lower-status individuals** to warm up
   - Calibrate to your level. If you're a beginner, start with 'wallflowers'
2. **Gain group intel** to facilitate your status acquisition.
   Eg.:
   - Who leads it, who organizes it?
   - ⍰⍰♂ ~~Don't ask about attractive women~~, it gives weird/sexual harasser vibes
3. **Display value** with confident body language, high-power smiles, etc.
4. **Work your way up** the status ladder in your subsequent interactions

Power Tip: Grab The Spotlight

If people take turns for public introductions, do this:

- Stand up
- Walk in front to face the group

It displays confidence and leadership.
You'd often be the only doing it, making you memorable.

Facing the group when introducing yourself is an immediate status boost

⍰⍰♂ Several people approach me when I've done it, including women.
And I'm still getting free invites to paid events.

Greet Prestigious Men, Avoid Dominants

The dominants' game requires submission—don't give it to them.

Avoid them at first and go instead for prestigious men.
They're more welcoming, and raise your status by association.

⍰♂Lucio's Experience: **Starting with the 'Yoda level member'**

Lucio:
When I first joined a running club, I approached the *oldest* woman.

I respected a 70+ woman who still runs marathons—and I bet *everyone else* also respects her.
Bonus points, she was a doctor (high SES).

Her friendship raised my profile and facilitated my next moves.

Approach The Leaders *After* You Displayed Value

And make it:

- **Natural**, when you're nearby, to avoid looking like you're chasing
- **Low-key**, like you don't even care they're leaders

⍰⍰♂ Why not starting from the top

When you approach the leader first you are:

- **Chasing** for value
- **Shamelessly climbing**, while effective men do it smoothly
- **Taking** because you're still a nobody

Exceptions apply, but 'straight to the top' is not the best default strategy for most.
It's better to make your move on the king *after* you grab the king's attention.

7. Pick The Right Groups, And Gain Group-Value

While some forms of value are universal, status is also relative.

Different groups and eras value different status symbols and traits (and signal value accordingly).

For example:

- Runners' group ➡ Speed/endurance, nutrition expertise
- Activist students' group ➡ Political activism, cannabis-sharing
- Work ➡ Competence, bottom-line impact, rank seniority
- Party friends ➡ Extroversion, 'fun', female friends

Closeness to leaders and networks are group-specific but valued in any group.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Focus on the foundations, de-prioritize group-specifics**

Lucio:
Single group status is low ROI because it's worthless outside of it.
And it makes you needier and dependent, limiting your freedom.

Focus on personal value and power-skills instead and you'll be good in any group.

Better than working on growing your value:

⍰⍰ Pick Based On Skills, Interests, and *Similarities*

Many men struggle with status because they stick with groups that randomness picked for them—school, neighborhood, or work.

A mismatch of skills and group-valued skills harms both status and acceptance

Instead, pick social circles that complement your interests and strengths:

- Smart ➡ Intellectual circles
- Handsome ➡ Party crowd or large circles
- Man ➡ Woman-dominated profession for extra attention

Pro tip: mind the similarities.

⚠ **Make your background, race, or gender wok *for* you**
Unfortunately, humans form ingroup/outgroups based on meaningless similarities and 'differences'. Be aware of covert devaluations. Don't fall for fake politeness and actively rebalance things.

8. Be Ready to Compete & Defend Yourself

Status is a scarce resource that people compete for.

The competition rules are contextual and we discourage nasty competing: it signals poor character, and there are better approaches.
But you must be ready to defend yourself.

If you do it well, you can gain status and respect 10x faster.

⍰ Self-Defense Example

> **Him**: (back pat) Thank you for coming. Enjoy the place <— High-status host attitude
>
> **You**: (touch him back) <— Neutralizes physical power move
> Thank you for organizing <— Judge compliment
> you guys are doing a great job <— Frames him as working for you

If you have power, let them play their dominant game, and checkmate them later.

> **Moe Greene**: (Walks in with 'big alpha male' attitude, aggressive)
> **Godfather**: (Understated power, advances without aggression)

Remember: dominance is a subset of power.
And strategy beats dominance.

Learn more:

- Undermining
- Covertly attacking
- Nasty social climbing
  - ⍰ Social climbing on friends
  - ⍰ Leaders' social climbing

Be Smart With Physical Treaths

Consider safety and long-term interests first
95% of fight 'victories' provide little/no benefits

Principle:

⚖ **The more status is negotiated with physical fights, the lower the group's payoffs**

However, brawling losses and excessive fear can still cost you status.

Here are some tips:

- **Take martial arts classes**, it will give you more confidence even without ever fighting
- **Back down without total submission**. Eg.: shake your head in disapproval to display continued judge power
- **Stick to your frame of verbal engagement** only
  - Shame the attacker as a 'brute'

- Reject the attacker's covert frame that the physical fight decides the outcome

A great example:

> **Attacker**: (seeks a physical fight)
> **Udy**: (confident and in control) Nobody's gonna do that, if that's your reaction, you can leave <— Rejects the fight with power, while maintaining control ⍰

Immediate respect for Udy.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **I only retreated… But not displaying fear still increased my status**

Lucio:
All I did was walking backwards with my hands up as the attacker advanced.
'I must have lost a ton of status', teenager me thought.

But days later, a friend teaching another 'how to be a man' used me as an example: 'See Lucio with that guy? No fear.'

Even in retreat, resolve against a larger and aggressive was a net win (bigger attacker = bigger pelotas).

9. Be 'Positively Machiavellian'

'Emotional intelligence' is a popular item in status-related articles.
But while important, it won't take you far without good strategies.

Studies show that Machiavellians gain early status in group formation, and status researchers list 'political skills' as a status-attaining trait.

Some aspects of good strategies:

- **Develop alliances**, make friends that are both high-quality and helpful

- **Sub-communicate value** without bragging, a life skill in itself
- **Fake it till you make it**. It's *perceived* competence, signaled with *cues* like confidence, amount of talking, and pride displays

Many modern-day gurus 'inflate their competence' with dominant frames and various competence-inflating techniques

Note: we do not like nor endorse faking it without developing actual competence.
And strategic *thinking* beats tactics anyway (as we dig deeper in Power University).

⍰ Example: Leveraging Your Connections

> **Me**: Let's meet at the reception <— I want staffers to see I'm friends with their managers

Soon after, no more breakfast queues, and window table reserved. I'm sure it helped they saw me with their boss.

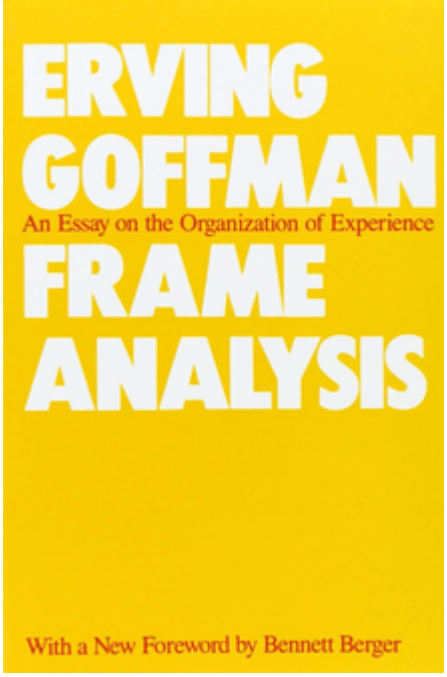
Also read:

- The myth of EQ: Machiavellis at the top
- **How to be positively Machiavellian**

Frame Analysis: Summary and Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 June 2025 · Archived copy · Original

"Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience" (1974) by sociologist Erving Goffman is a microsociology exploration of how people interpret and give meaning to everyday experiences through mental structures called 'frames.' The book introduces key concepts like primary frameworks, keying, and fabrication to explain how individuals organize, manipulate, and navigate social reality.



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FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Erving Goffman (1922–1982) was a Canadian sociologist and one of the most influential thinkers in 20th-century social theory.
Known for his work on symbolic interactionism and the sociology of everyday life, Goffman pioneered concepts like impression management, face-work, and framing, making lasting contributions to how we understand human behavior and social interaction.

Introduction

Frame Analysis explores how individuals organize and interpret experiences by "framing" events. Goffman argues that what we perceive as reality is shaped by implicit rules or "frames" that define situations' meaning.

Goffman credits Bateson with the introduction of the word 'frame':

> And of course much use will be made of Bateson's use of the term "frame."
> I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events-at least social ones-and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame. My phrase "frame analysis" is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience.

Key Concepts

- **Primary Frameworks**: Basic lenses (e.g., natural vs. social) used to classify occurrences.
- **Strip**: Any segment of ongoing activity, real or imagined, serving as raw material for analysis.
- **Frame**: The underlying, relational rules that make interaction meaningful.

Primary Frameworks

Goffman distinguishes two fundamental ways of interpreting events:

- **Natural Frameworks**: Events seen as unguided, purely physical processes (e.g., weather)
- **Social Frameworks**: Events viewed as "guided doings" shaped by human intentions, norms, and sanctions

Takeaways

- Individuals fluidly shift between frameworks when uncertainty arises (e.g., is that knock wind-blown or a visitor?)
- Frameworks are often tacitly understood, yet any moment can spark a need for reframing.

Keys and Keyings

Goffman introduces keying as the process of systematically transforming an activity into a different interpretive frame (e.g., "just playing" vs. a real fight).

Definition of Keying

1. Transformation of material already meaningful in a primary framework.
2. Acknowledged by participants as a deliberate shift in how they see "what's going on."
3. Bracketed in time/space by cues marking its start and end.

Types of Keying

- **Play**: Modeling serious activity as game (e.g., theatrical combat).
- **Rehearsal**: Staged dry-run distinct from the "real" performance.
- **Rekeying of Rekeyings**: E.g., film adaptation of a play, then turning that film into a musical

Takeaways

- Keyings add layers ("laminations") to interaction, each with its own "rim" signaling status (e.g., rehearsal vs. final show)

- Multiple, nested keyings are possible, each requiring clear framing cues.

Designs and Fabrications

Beyond playful transformations, some actors intentionally deceive others about “what’s going on”—fabrications.

Fabrication Defined

Deliberate structuring of an event so that targets form false beliefs about reality.

- **Operatives**: Those engineering the deception.
- **Marks**: Those the deception is aimed at.
- **Collusion**: Covert signals among operatives.

Examples

- **Casino Shills**: Starters who pretend to play blackjack to encourage real players, following a formal “rule-set” that secretly marks them as not genuine players.
- **Wartime Escape Practice**: POWs rehearsed covert signaling via music pauses to coincide with guard patrols.

Takeaways

- Fabrications require models drawn from primary frameworks but then introduce asymmetry in what different parties believe.
- Even fabrications can be rekeyed or nested within other deceptions.

Anchoring and Resource Continuity

Goffman shows that all frames presume resource continuity—the sense that elements of a situation trace back to a larger context where they originated by chance or design (e.g., chairs in a meeting trace to a manufacturer, not the meeting itself).

Ambiguities and Misframings

Even without intent to deceive, people can misframe situations:

- **Ambiguity**: Momentary doubt over “what’s going on”—a puzzle demanding resolution.
- **Illusion/Misframing**: Unintentional errors in framing, lacking any deceptive motive.

MORE WISDOM

Jokes are power moves

> The victim need not take the joke seriously, in fact, is obliged not to, but he must take seriously the fact that those who played him the fool thought it allowable and even appropriate to do so.

And Goffman aptly notes that some people are more often the butt of the joke, often a sign of low status and power:

> In any case, it seems that within any small social circle some members will be thought to be eminently available for this kind of teasing, and one or two others (often the most dominant) will be defined as off limits for such foolery.

CONS

- **Little practical takeaways**

REVIEW

Frame Analysis didn't live up to my high expectations.
I was hoping for more practical takeaways, or at least for a more solid theoretical foundation about frames and the construction of meaning, but I didn't find it here.

It may be entirely my fault.
I failed to find any substantive information, and I found myself skipping ahead at certain points.

While my issue is often taking too many notes, I struggled to underline and bookmark almost anything in *Frame Analysis*.

Maybe it's worth coming back to *Frame Analysis* in the future again and who knows, I may appreciate things that I failed to appreciate today.
But for now, and especially for people looking for more practical takeaways, our articles offer a more practical approach to frame analysis:

- **Frame analysis 101**
- **Frame control techniques**

Check the **best books** on frame control or get this book on Amazon:

RSD Blueprint Reloaded Review: Is Owen Cook Any Good?

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 June 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Blueprint Reloaded is a self-help and social skills course from Real Social Dynamics, led by Owen Cook (Tyler Durden). Spanning 80 hours, it builds on *Blueprint Decoded* to deliver Owen Cook's takes on high-status communication, charisma, and personal growth, targeting men aiming to master dating and inner confidence.

In this analysis, we'll explore what *Blueprint Reloaded* offers, who it's for, and whether it justifies its steep price tag. We'll also compare it to alternatives like **Power University** which offers a more structured and evidence-based approach for those seeking practical social mastery.

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  - 2. Energy Awareness
  - 3. Advanced Dating Strategies
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About The Author: RSD & Owen Cook

Real Social Dynamics (RSD) has a storied history.

Founded by Owen Cook and other key figures from the pick-up artist (PUA) community in the early 2000s, RSD initially gained popularity by popularizing Mystery's insights and teaching men scripted techniques to attract women.

Cook's personal story adds weight to his teachings.
He openly shares his struggles with social anxiety and rejection, framing his transformation as proof that anyone can rewrite their narrative.
More modern dating coaches found Cook's high-energy personality to be overly theatrical, but he has been an influential character for a generation of men.

Over time, RSD has pivoted toward a broader approach to self-help and personal empowerment, a shift epitomized by *Blueprint Reloaded*.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Emotional presence	Lacks power dynamics understanding
Reduces anxiety	Doesn't build status or respect
Breaking nice guy patterns	Doesn't take men to top-10% level
Lots of action	Results may not translate beyond nightlife

Bullet Summary

- **You need true core confidence to behave high value**: Your brain stops you from being a high value man in two ways:
  - It scans for environmental cues, and if they don't all say "you're high value", then you behave low value
  - Your own internal rules for what it means to be successful often tell you that "you're not successful yet", and thus you don't allow yourself to be high-value
- **To develop true core confidence, control your state and change your self-assessment**, starting with positive self-talk
- **Start by being indifferent to what others think of you**: so nobody can make you feel low-value. If you can go out and have a good time no matter what, you're doing great already

SUMMARY

Blueprint Reloaded is a behemoth of a course and it's largely a repackaged and updated presentation of the original *Blueprint Decoded*.
It includes:

1. High-Status Communication

This module is the main promise of the course: making alumni high-status with 'high-value communication'.

Cook teaches some foundations of vocal power like vocal projection and deliberate pacing, and proposes exercises with role-playing scenarios to practice these skills.

Also see:

- **How to speak high-status**

> Dominant Conversations: 10 Ways to Speak With Confidence

2. Energy Awareness

Here, things get a bit woo-woo.

Cook delves into the idea of "energy" in social interactions—how your voice, eyes, and posture broadcast your inner state.

It's about amplifying your presence through subtle cues, like holding eye contact a beat longer or varying your tone for impact.

This section lacks hard evidence and, in my opinion, also experience and logic.
For some, it's a game-changer; for others, it's fluff.

3. Advanced Dating Strategies

Echoing *Blueprint Decoded*, this module refines RSD's dating playbook.

Topics include the "beta state", fear of the alpha male, expressiveness, and storytelling to build attraction.
Cook goes beyond pickup lines, focusing on emotional connection and long-term dynamics.

Personally, I wished for more practical strategies and techniques.
Plus, I believe that personal connection benefits for a more grounded, slower-energy approach.

4. Personal Development

This is where Cook gets introspective, urging students to face their demons.

Topics range from processing trauma to embracing vulnerability as strength. The idea is to strip away societal masks and build confidence from within.

This overlaps with Cook's student course, so we dig deeper there:

- **Transformation Mastery: is it worth it?**

5. Public Speaking and Marketing

This module extends the course's reach into professional territory.

And, in my opinion, this is Owen Cook's main strength: he's a top-notch public speaker, he has the gift of gab, and he is great at capturing the audience's attention.
Finally, with Real Social Dynamics, he proved to be great at marketing.

Cook covers storytelling, audience engagement, and crafting win-win deals.

Exercises

The exercises in "Blueprint Reloaded" are designed to bridge the gap between a theory-heavy course, and practical improvements for the alumni.

While I found some to be obvious (e.g.: record yourself) and some less helpful (e.g.: affirmations), I still appreciate that if people actually follow through, they can get some real-world benefits with the practice.

- **Social Circle Mastery**: engage more people in low-pressure settings to make more friends
- **Daygame**: approach and interact with people in public places during the day
- **Inner Game**: journaling, self-reflection, and affirmations to help you develop a positive self-image.
- **Outer Game**: work your body language, grooming, posture, eye contact, and outfits

Criticism

Owen Cook is a polarizing character. If you love him, you'll like The Blueprint

Woo-Woo Content Doesn't Deliver Hard Skills

More logical men may not connect with the woo-woo approach of 'energy', 'vibration', or 'healing'—something that may be best left to clinical psychologists anyway.

But the problem is that even if you connect with that type of self-help, it still doesn't deliver hard skills like gaining status, respect, or leading your dates.

Lacks Power & Masculinity

Woo-woo generally appeals more to women, and Owen's high-energy attention-seeking approach may not best serve men who seek more masculine gravitas.

Overall, there is also little in terms of interpersonal power dynamics, and I believe that **you cannot be a high value man if you cannot behave high power**.

This is one of the main reasons why I don't connect with the material: it lacks masculine power.

Length, Fluff, and Overload

Owen Cook loves to talk and the program seems to lack a thought-out structure.

His tangents can stretch a 10-minute concept into an hour, and I personally don't find much value in off-the-cuff off-topics.

This results in lengthy talks that can feel dense and circular.
If you're not Owen Cook already, it may even bore you.

Esoteric Or... Pseudo-Science?

Sections like "energy awareness" or metaphors like "sheep vs. wolves" flirt with pseudoscience.

Without empirical or logical backing, they risk alienating pragmatic learners or anyone who prefers data and experience.

FAQ

Is the Blueprint Reloaded worth it?

If you resonate with Owen Cook's style and philosophy, *The Blueprint Reloaded* is worth considering—especially in light of many RSD videos having been removed. But if you're looking for a concise, technique-heavy course, you might be better off exploring other options.

Can you get The Blueprint Reloaded free?

No, but since Owen Cook repeats many of the same principles in his free videos you can get a good idea if The Blueprint Reloaded is for you by checking his YouTube channel.

Is Owen Cook legit?

Owen Cook (aka RSD Tyler) has been influential in the dating/self-development space, especially in the early "game" era. His strengths are confidence-building, reducing neediness, and getting people socially active.
However, his approach grounded on high-energy and 'getting in state' doesn't help men to develop the presence and masculinity of a high-value man.
If someone lacks social experience or is very inhibited, Owen Cook can be helpful to start out.
But for developing real-world social power, good relationships, and long-term status, his teachings are incomplete and sometimes counterproductive.

Reloaded VS Power University

To help you decide which one is best for you:

Outcome	Blueprint Reloaded	Power University
Status, Respect, and Attraction	More focused on 'states', and while RSD fans love that, it lacks practical strategies to reliably go from 'states' to 'results'	✅ Power University is more practical, tackling not only the 'inner game', but also practical strategies & techniques, with measured results.
Author charisma	✅ Owen Cook is more famous, higher energy, and is a more practiced public speaker. He grabs attention	Lucio Buffalmano is a fine speaker, but he focuses less on personality marketing and more on replicable systems
Ease of Learning	80 hour duration makes it long. Videos-only and abstract concepts like energy awareness may make it vague.	✅ Equally deep, but clearer examples, and text-based lessons with exercises make it easier to internalize and apply.

Outcome	Blueprint Reloaded	Power University
Price	✅ The Blueprint Reloaded dropped in price, making its cheaper versions now more affordable	Premium course with a premium price
Life usefulness	Cook provides better motivation and good insights on mindsets and self-esteem, but the lack of practical strategies and techniques weighs.	✅ Power University is built to deliver results for all the main areas that most men care about: confidence, respect, status, and attraction.

Review

Blueprint Reloaded is a great course for Owen Cook enthusiasts who appreciate his motivational approach and personality, but it falls flat for men who seek more practical advice on social skills, dating, and masculine power.

We have a different approach and style here at The Power Moves, and we wouldn't advise our readers and alumni to mimic **Owen Cook**.
Cook's over-the-top approach works to market to a certain demographic of men, but wouldn't work in most other contexts to gain status, respect, and attraction.

A more masculine and powerful presence also works better for many high-quality women, especially the non-party types who make for better long-term partners.

We also prefer a more rational, logical, and practical approach here. And a rational man's approach doesn't vibe well with *The Blueprint Decoded*.
Finally, while this course is advertised as 'advanced', I didn't find it advanced.

If after this review you feel like a more masculine and powerful program better supports your goal, **check out Power University**.

See Power University

How to Get People to Respect You as a Man: 10 Proven Strategies

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 June 2025 · Archived copy · Original

How to gain respect as a man is one of the most important—and most misunderstood—goals in male self-development. Respect isn't built around being "empathic" or randomly *giving* respect; it's earned through power and mastery.

At *The Power Moves*, we go beyond generic self-help. We specialize in **male social dynamics, power strategies, and high-impact behavior** that commands respect in the real world—from boardrooms to dating to everyday interactions.

This guide breaks down exactly how to earn respect as a man— from foundational traits to advanced social tactics. Let's dive in:

Contents

- 1. Build An Empowered Mind
  - 1.2. Start With SELF-Respect
- 2. Conquer Your Fear of Confrontation
- 3. Enforce Your Boundaries
- 4. Be More Positively Dominant
  - 4.2. Be High Power
- 5. Be More Masculine
  - ⍰ How to Increase Masculinity for Respect
  - ⍰ Example: Unmasculine Friend
- 6. Add Value to Society
  - 6.2. Give, But Get Your Due (Strategic Giver)
- 7. Acquire Mastery (Competence)

- 8. Get Results, WIN
- 9. Seek Honor
  - 9.2. Avoid Being Sneaky
- 10. Demand Respect
  - 10.2. Demand Respect From Your Friends
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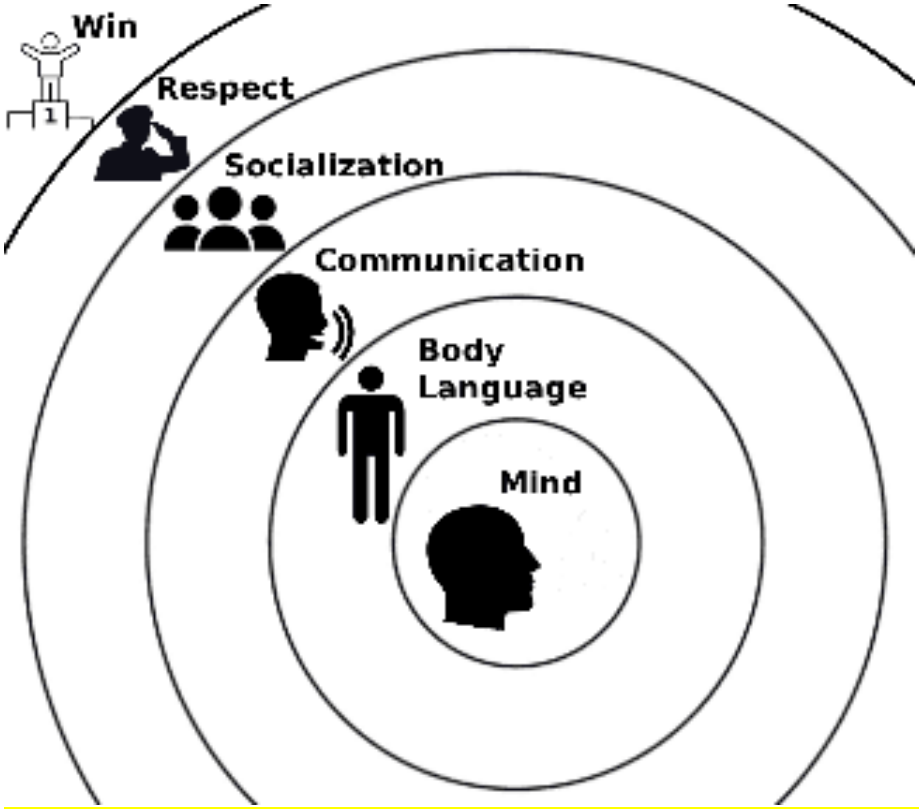
- ⍰ Bonus Mindset: Your Respect Must Be Earned
  - ⍰ Mindset: my respect means something
- SUMMARY

1. Build An Empowered Mind

The foundations always start with the mind.

Everything worth building must be built on strong foundations.



An empowered mind leads to empowered nonverbals, verbals, and socialization that naturally earn respect.

1.2. Start With *SELF*-Respect

You can't get respect without *self*-respect.

Demanding respect without inner self-respect is like demanding water holding a colander. It will disappear right after.

Foundational steps of self-respect include:

- **Increase your self-esteem**
  - Start with self-acceptance

  - Move to self-love
- ***EARN* your self-respect** first
  - Do what must be done (even when hard)
- **Change your self-talk**
  - ✕ *"I'm not sure I deserve a hello"* —> ✓ *"He' picked the wrong guy to disrespect"*

If you need help with this, check **Confidence University**.
This is a quick intro:

> **Lucio**: The foundations of self-respect start in the subconscious mind…

2. Conquer Your Fear of Confrontation

Too nice guys tell themselves they're 'respectful' when in truth they're afraid of confrontations, 'losing face', or 'being disliked' (people pleasers).

Start by facing the truth:

- ✕ I'm **respectful** of others ➡ No, you're just **scared**
- ✕ I'm a **nice guy** ➡ No, you're just **powerless**
- ✕ I don't date because **women like jerks** ➡ No, they **don't like pushovers** (nobody does)

Then, start working on the issues:

- ✕ Fear of bodily harm ➡ Take **martial art classes**
- ✕ Fear of confrontation ➡ **Train verbal altercation** in safe environments
- ✕ Fear of ostracization ➡ **Learn to make new friends** and allies

Remember that some fear is normal, natural, and healthy.
***Excessive* fear is the problem**.

3. Enforce Your Boundaries

Start with the mental basics:

- **Install assertive beliefs** and change your thinking patterns
  Eg.: ✕ *'I will annoy him if I ask him to lower his music'* -> ✓ *'He is being uncivil, I must ask him to lower his music'*
- **Expand your comfort zone**
  Eg.: Take public speaking classes

Then:

- **Call out disrespect**, always. Even when you don't have the 'perfect comeback'
- **Stand your ground** if they push back or deny
- **Leave and cut contact** or invite them to leave if they refuse to apologize

If you've been too nice all your life, consider time-limited 'over-correction'.

⁉ You're doing it wrong if you're constantly demanding respect

This is what many guys don't get:

Demanding respect should be exceptional because most people respect respect-worthy men.

Frequent disrespect is a warning signal.
Do some self-diagnostic: are you too nice, naive, or submissive in your nonverbals? If not, you may be awkward or overly combative, making enemies instead of friends.

4. Be More Positively Dominant

Once you build the mind, it's time to work on the outer aspects.
And interpersonal **dominance, power, and masculinity are the currencies of respect**.

Whether you want respect, attraction, status, or 'success', start sub-communicating more positive dominance:

- **Confident body language**, see here
  - Walk
  - Posture
- **Vocal and verbal power**, see here
- **Confident socialization**, see here

Dominant men get respect because dominance does the talking for you. You don't even need to *ask* for respect.

4.2. Be High Power

Power is dominance, *plus* social skills.
And social respect is grounded in interpersonal power dynamics:

✖ Low power = disrespect
✓ High power = respect

At the core, it's that simple.
Power-aware men see the subtle power moves, the undermining, or the passive aggression.
They address them fast and smoothly, and everyone respects that.

Also see:

- Frame control techniques

5. Be More Masculine

Masculinity is as fuzzy as it is important.

However you define it, a base level of masculinity is foundational for respect.
The general principle is:

⚖ **The more masculine the group, the more masculinity is needed**
⍰ To maximize respect be equally or slightly more masculine than your target audience

Two important notes:

- **Masculinity must be 'proven'**: An influential research theory suggests that contrary to womanhood, masculinity must be 'earned and upheld'
- **Masculine respect ≠ female attraction**: Men's deference grows with increasing masculinity, but female attraction is more nuanced and decreases after a certain threshold

⍰⍰ **Masculinity needs power and social competence**

Not all forms of masculinity earn respect. Autism has been conceptualized as ‘extreme male brain’, and ‘geekiness’ is also ‘masculine’. But they don’t give you respect.

⍰ How to Increase Masculinity for Respect

We address contentious aspects elsewhere, but to give you an idea:

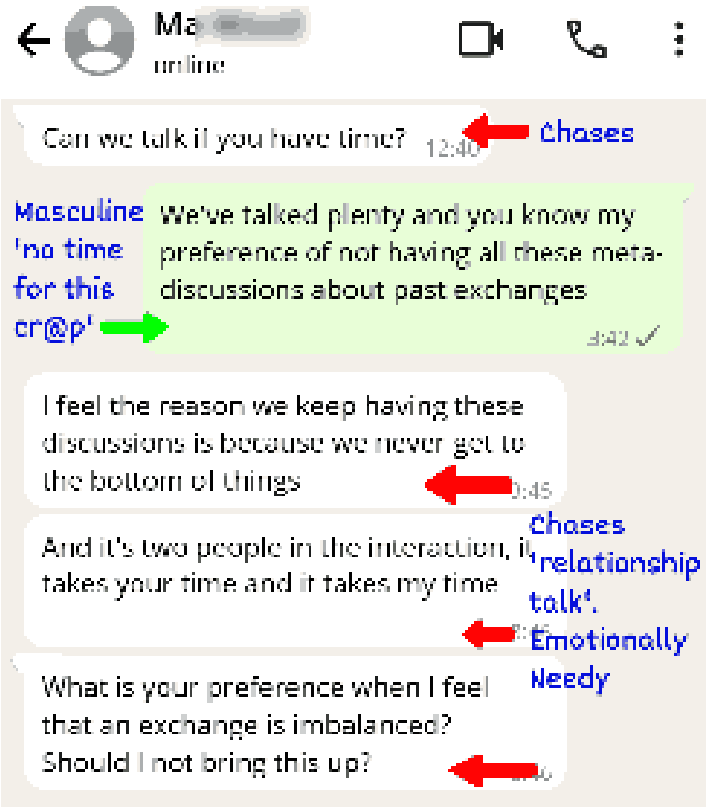
- **Physical masculinity** includes genetic influences, but you can:
  - Stay fit, avoid excessive fat, especially with pear/round body shape (Gass and Seiter, 2022)
  - Weight train for muscular definition
- **Mental masculinity**
  - High self-esteem
  - Resilient self-esteem, despite criticism (Helgeson, 2020)
  - Ambition to achieve
- **Behavior**
  - Direct communication Eg.: Say what you prefer, without preambles
  - Task-oriented leadership
- **Nonverbals**
  - Lower expressivity (Fischer and Evers, 2013)
  - Less ‘social smiles’
  - More expansive posture
- **Avoid femininity**
  - Avoid over-vulnerability

Read more here:

- Masculine body language
- **How to be positively masculine**

⍰ Example: Unmasculine Friend

Re-created to respect the individual, but based on real texting:



> **Him**: (reaches out again to 'talk')
> **Me**: (put off by 'relationship talk')
> **Him**: (chases for 'clarifying')

In general, avoid:

- ✕ Excessive relationship talk
- ✕ Endless clarifications about past issues
- ✕ Asking for 'relationship rules'

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Balance & Calibration for Best of Both Worlds**

Lucio:
Traditional masculine norms against self-disclosure and vulnerability can be costly at the extremes.

For example, they can keep friendships shallower, leading to psychological distress.

To combine masculinity and bond, follow the law of balance and **adapt your approach to context, goals, and characters**.
Be more genuine with trustworthy and empathic friends, and more 'traditionally masculine' in public.

In dating, be generally masculine and high-power.
But also have moments of empathy and fun for bonding and connecting. This is the 'perfect mix' most women never experience.

6. Add Value to Society

Principle:

⚖ **People respect contributors and despise scroungers.**

This is grounded in evolutionary psychology.
As social animals, we instinctively dislike cheats, freeloaders, and takers because cooperation is good for us, but also risky.

6.2. Give, But Get Your Due (*Strategic* Giver)

Nobody respects the chump who lets others take advantage of him.

'Smart givers' achieve their goals, while also adding value—TPM's ultimate goal ⍰.
Here's how to give, without being a fool:

- **Give because you chose to**
- **Give to those who give back** for win-win
  - Don't give to takers. It makes you a manipulated 'sucker'

- **Be strategic when giving to higher-value people**. Give to 'make up the difference', but ensure it turns win-win
  - Don't chase for crumbs like a simp
  - Don't brown-nose to autocrats and narcissists

Also read:

- **Enlightened collaboration**

Interpersonal Give & Take

Give and take isn't just material; it concerns *any* social exchange.

And it's part of the power dynamics we already mentioned.
To balance being respected and respecting others:

- **Be appropriately scarce** to ensure others respect your time
- **Balance reach-outs with reach-ins** to avoid chasing
- **Don't over-invest**
  - Take turns with location convenience
  - Give and take because nobody respects fools who are taken advantage of

Also see:

- Foundations of dating power dynamics

> Mastering Dating Dynamics: 5 Rules for Men to Attract Women

7. Acquire Mastery (Competence)

Mastery is the hard skills behind your behavior and beliefs.

Believing you deserve respect and demanding respect are foundational.
But it must go hand in hand with value and character:

- ✕ Belief, no value ⍰ **delusional**
- ✕ Demands, no value ⍰ **toxic entitlement**
- ✓ Belief + demands + value ⍰ **high-quality**

There are two types of competence:

- **Domain-level competence** zooms into a specific area (eg.: IT work)
- **General competence** (AKA 'life competence') in universally valued domains (wealth, health, relationships).
  - Social competence, related to everyday interactions
  - Mental resilience to endure through ups and downs
  - Strategic thinking to achieve goals
    Think about what you want, plan how to get there, and adjust as you go

Both are important.
But *life* competence may get the edge for a good life.

8. Get Results, *WIN*

Society respects winners.

People may not always *like* competent achievers, but nobody is indifferent to them.

9. Seek Honor

You gain honor by upholding socially valued values.

Precise values change with culture, but common ones are:

- **Keep your word**
- **Stand by your 'bros'** and allies
- **Enforce boundaries** of respect
- **Mind your reputation**

Honor matters more among men and in 'cultures of honor', where it's more closely tied to status.

Also read:

- **How to combine honor with effectiveness**

9.2. Avoid Being Sneaky

- Guilt tripping and emotional manipulation
- Manipulation tactics
- B*tch moves

While there is a time and place for almost anything, these should be *extremely* rare.
They **all communicate dishonorable character** and will lose you high-quality men's respect faster than the speed of light.

10. Demand Respect

After you *earned* respect, you can *expect* it and *demand it* if not forthcoming.

But most people do it wrong, wanting respect from random people.
Instead, **the best approach to getting respect follows the inside-out principle**, starting from your closest relationships.
Ie.:

1. **Family**'s respect sub-communicates high fitness because they know you best, from early on
2. **Friends**' respect sub-communicates power and social skills in unstructured groups
3. **Colleagues**' respect sub-communicates domain competence, social competence in structured groups, and earning potential
4. **Girlfriend**'s respect is foundational to attraction and sub-communicates dating and intersexual competence

For some techniques, see:

- How to handle 'invisible disrespect' (covert power moves)
- How to handle bad jokes

10.2. Demand Respect From Your Friends

Some steps:

- **Gain status**, be high-power/high-warmth to combine power with alliances
  ⍰ See: How to gain status
- **Dish it back**: If one-upping is part of your group's socialization, dish it back
- **Ensure there is foundational respect** behind the teasing

> **Lucio**: Disrespectful jokes aren't 'jokes', they're red flags and power moves, and you must check them

See 'how to make new friends' and 'how to gain status at will'.

10.3. Demand Respect From Your Girlfriend

Respect is a necessary precondition for attraction, both initially, and to *maintain* attraction in relationships

Some ground rules that support respect:

- **Zero tolerance for abuse**, either physical or verbal
- **Respect extends to your family and friends**
- **Support for your goals**, or at least not detrimental
- **Win-win mindset and behavior**
- **Publicly supportive**: No public drama, no power moves

⍰ Failure of Respect

> Nothing destroys a man's reputation like public disrespect from her girlfriend
>
> *TPM Principle*

Some women test men early on and will push farther and farther unless you stop it:

> **Girlfriend**: (drunk, romances another man) <— Shamefully drunk + disloyal = Highly disrespectful
>
> **Boyfriend**: (tries to make her behave) <— If he succeeds he regains some respect
>
> **Girlfriend**: (resists him) <— Public defiance + drama + back to disloyalty = destroyed reputation

The healthiest way to get her respect is being a win-win leader.

High-quality men don't worry about relationship respect because respect is the natural consequence of empowered, competent leadership.
Women *want* to follow capable, masculine leaders who lead for win-win.

⍰♂**Lucio's Take**: I lost all respect for the company's founder

Lucio:
High-power men lose respect for men who follow.

I once interviewed at a company whose (male) founder had relocated for love. The hiring manager asked, ‘Wouldn’t you move for love?’

Back then I needed that job, but there’s no escaping the ‘unwritten code of male respect’.
And I lost all respect for the founder. He couldn’t be my leader.

⍰ Bonus Mindset: Your Respect Must Be Earned

‘Giving respect’ is a common entry in online guides on how to get respect, including AI models:

Completed DeeperSearch 5m 39s
Tap to read • 71 sources

AI provided naive self-help after DeeperSearch and extended thinking

Key Points

- Research suggests integrity, competence, and reliability are foundational for gaining respect. How about power, value, and positive masculinity...
- It seems likely that mindsets like empathy and humility enhance how others perceive you.
- The evidence leans toward strategic actions, like active listening, boosting respect in interactions.

You can't trust AI on power dynamics. Even after a deep search, it provided weak advice on how to gain respect

However, **'giving respect to get respect' is naive self-help.**
The underlying assumption is that if you do good, you get good back.

But the truth is that you *lose* respect in respecting those who didn't earn it.
Our power-grounded advice is:

- **Be *civilly polite* to everyone**, unless they've given you a reason not to
- **Uphold your end of the bargain** to show respect with actions
  - Be punctual
  - Deliver what promised
  - Apologize when wrong
- **Be selective with your deeper respect**, only give it to men who earned it

⍰ Mindset: my respect means something

The respect of a high-quality man is a gift and a reward—only give it to worthy recipients.

> Your respect must mean something for it to mean anything.
>
> ✒ *TPM Proverb*

SUMMARY

Respect is different than attraction, status, and power, but it underpins them all.

You need a minimum of respect to achieve status and women's attraction.
Respect also *legitimizes* your power, increasing your influence.

We share extra real-life examples of respect-worthy men in our video:

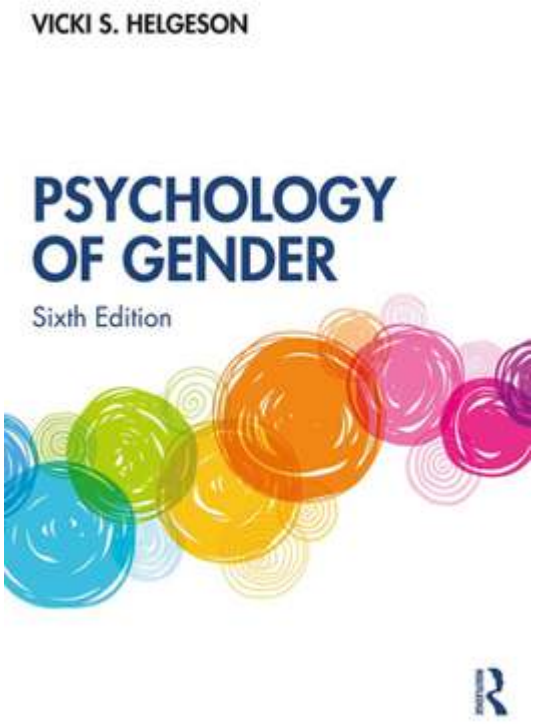
For our complete system to gaining respect, status, and attraction, see:

- **Power University**

The Psychology of Gender: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 June 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Psychology of Gender (2020) by Vicki S. Helgeson is a comprehensive, research-based textbook that explores how gender influences our thoughts, behaviors, relationships, and health. Drawing from psychology, sociology, and public health, it examines both biological and social foundations of gender—and how they shape real-world outcomes.



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- MORE WISDOM
  - Hypermasculine Men More Dominant And Anti-Gay

  - And…
- QUOTES
- CRITICISM
  - Evolutionary theory could be better implemented
  - Some explanations felt ad-hoc rationalizations
  - Some explanations felt over-reaching
  - Sometimes socialization and nurture over nature
- PROS
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Exec Summary

- **Men and women are more similar than different**, but
- **There are important gender differences**
- **Differences are due to many factors** including biology, evolution, culture, socialization, and 'social roles' and social expectations
  - Differences change over time as cultures, social roles, and expectations change

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Vicki S. Helgeson is a professor of psychology at Carnegie Mellon University and the director of the Gender, Relationships, and Health Lab.
Her research focuses on how gender-related traits and roles impact interpersonal relationships and health, and is especially known for her work on unmitigated communion and agency in chronic illness populations.

Trait / Domain	Men	Women
Verbal Ability	Slightly lower, but differences are small	Slightly higher on verbal fluency, reading comprehension, and writing
Math Ability	Equal overall; more at extreme high end	Equal overall; fewer at extreme high end
Spatial Ability	Better at mental rotation, spatial visualization, and navigation	Better at object location memory
Memory	Better at spatial location (some tasks)	Better at verbal and face memory
Aggression	More physical and direct	More relational (e.g., gossip, exclusion)
Emotional Expression	Less expressive publicly, similar in private, more likely to express anger	More expressive overall, especially for sadness and vulnerability, and in public
Help-Seeking	Less likely to seek help; more self-reliant	More likely to seek emotional and medical help
Communication Style	Report-focused, directive, solution-orientedTend to use assertive, task-oriented communication	Rapport-focused, collaborative, expressive. More likely to use qualifiers or tentative language
Friendship Style	Activity-based, instrumental support. Less emphasis on self-disclosure and emotional intimacy	Emotion-based, intimate, co-rumination

Trait / Domain	Men	Women
Achievement Motivation	Higher self-confidence in achievement domains; more likely to attribute success to ability	Lower self-confidence in some achievement domains; more likely to attribute success to effort or external factors
Health	More risky behavior, higher mortality rates from accidents & homicides; more substance abuse and externalizing disorders (e.g., antisocial)	More preventive care, better compliance, higher morbidity rates, higher rates of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. More suicide attempts, but fewer deaths
Attraction & Relationships	Place higher value on physical attractiveness in mate selection; more likely to initiate relationships	Place higher value on resources and status in mate selection; more likely to prioritize emotional intimacy
Sex Role Strain	Pressure to suppress emotion, be dominant	Pressure to nurture, look attractive
Nonverbal Behavior	Less likely to smile or engage in prolonged gazing; more dominant nonverbals	More likely to smile, gaze, and use touch in social interactions; show higher interpersonal sensitivity
Leadership Style	More likely to adopt task-oriented, autocratic leadership styles	More likely to adopt democratic, transformational leadership styles

1: Introduction: Definitions

Helgeson kicks off by distinguishing sex (biological, rooted in genes and hormones) from gender (a fluid, socially constructed category tied to cultural expectations).

Gender roles—expectations tied to being male or female—often spark intrarole conflict (e.g., women balancing emotional expression with sensitivity) and interrole conflict (e.g., a male student torn between independence and group work).

Key Definitions

- **Sex**: The biological categories of female and male, determined by chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy.
- **Gender**: The social and cultural meanings assigned to being female or male—masculinity versus femininity.
- **Gender role**: The set of expectations and norms that society attaches to each biological sex. For example, the expectation that men be assertive and women be nurturing.
- **Sex vs. Gender**: Men and women differ biologically (sex), but societal roles (gender) shape behavior more variably.
- **Gender identity/gender-role identity**: One's internal sense of self as psychologically male or female (or, in some cases, both or neither).
- **Sex typing (gender typing)**: The process by which individuals acquire the behaviors, attitudes, and traits deemed appropriate for their sex in a given culture. Those who conform to these expectations are labeled "sex-typed," whereas those whose traits do not align are "cross-sex-typed."
- **Androgyny**: The combination of masculine and feminine traits within a single individual, resulting from high scores on measures of both masculinity and femininity.

2. Violating Gender Norms Is Costly

Both men and women 'pay a price' for violating gender roles.

Because gender roles are closely tied to status, men incur harsher repercussions for adopting behaviors deemed feminine (thus moving "down" in the status hierarchy), whereas women adopting traditionally masculine behaviors can be applauded (moving "up" in status).

My note: I'm not convinced about this explanation.
I think it's more because masculinity 'must be proven and upheld', while womanhood is more granted at birth.

3: Gender-Role Attitudes

Helgeson explores how attitudes shape gender perceptions, from sexism to stereotypes.

Attitudes toward Men's and Women's Roles

- **Traditional Gender Ideology**: The belief that a man's place is in the public sphere (work), while a woman's place is in the private sphere (home). Implicitly assumes men hold greater power.
- **Egalitarian Gender Ideology**: The belief that women and men should share roles equally—both can work outside and inside the home.
- **Transitional Ideology**: A middle ground wherein both sexes participate in work and family, but women still maintain primary responsibility for home, whereas men focus more on paid work.

Practical Takeaways:

- **Sexism comes in different forms be overt or 'modern'**.
  - Overt (e.g., women are less competent) versus modern (covert, denying discrimination)
  - Hostile (antagonistic) versus benevolent (paternalistic)
    Also see 'benevolent racism'

- **Benevolent sexism, despite its "positive" veneer, reinforces women's perceived inferiority**. "It justifies exploitation" (Jackman, 1994).

4: Sex-Related Comparisons: Observations

Here, Helgeson catalogs observed differences, emphasizing similarities often overshadow them.

5: Cognitive Abilities

Spatial Ability

- **Mental Rotation & Spatial Perception**: Moderate sex differences favoring men ($d \approx +.44$ to $+.60$), especially on tasks requiring rapid mental transformation of 3D objects (Voyer, Voyer, & Bryden, 1995; confirmed by later studies).
- **Object Location Memory**: Women outperform men ($d \approx +.27$) for eyes-on-table tasks, especially when objects are gender-neutral or feminine; men sometimes outperform women when objects are masculine (Voyer et al., 2007).
- **Navigation**: Men are more likely to use cardinal directions (north/east/south/west), whereas women favor landmark-based directions.

Mathematical Ability

- Historically, small sex differences favored men ($d \approx +.15$ in 1990), but gaps have narrowed over time due to educational reforms and societal shifts
- Recent large-scale standardized tests (SAT, TIMSS) show minimal or no reliable differences among most cohorts, except at the extreme upper tail (fewer females in the top 0.5%).
- **Most recent studies show no difference** but the variance in male scores remains slightly larger than in females.

Verbal Ability

Women typically score slightly higher than men on verbal fluency, reading comprehension, and writing tasks ($d \approx +.11–.21$), though differences are small and diminish with age.

- There is a small sex difference in verbal ability, favoring females.
- The size of the sex difference depends on the specific verbal ability
- Writing has a larger sex difference.
- One reason for the sex difference in verbal ability has to do with the fact that a larger proportion of males than females have verbal difficulties

Memory

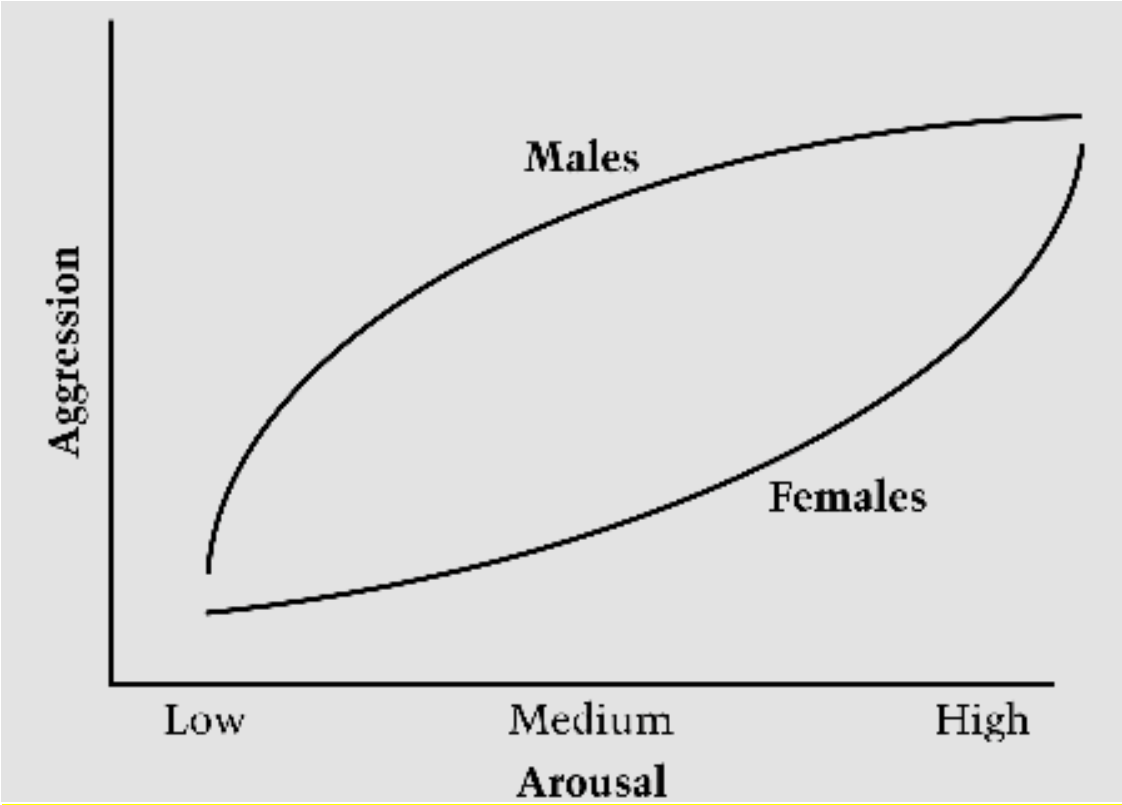
- **Verbal Memory**: Women outperform men on tasks requiring recall of spoken words or stories (small to moderate effect sizes).
- **Nonverbal Memory**: Mixed findings, with some tasks favoring men (e.g., remembering spatial locations of objects) and others favoring women (e.g., remembering faces).

6: Social and Emotional Domains

Two types of aggression:

1. **Physical Aggression**: Men exhibit higher rates of direct physical aggression from adolescence onward (large effect sizes, $d \approx +.62$).
2. **Relational Aggression**: Women engage more in gossip, social exclusion, and rumor spreading—forms of indirect aggression. Adult data are more mixed.

However, the gender difference in aggression depends largely on arousal levels:



At low and high levels of arousal, sex differences in aggression are small. At medium levels of arousal, sex differences in aggression are largest.

Emotional Expression

- Women report—and exhibit—greater emotional expressiveness (d ≈ +.76 for self-report, smaller for observational measures). Facial expression studies (e.g., smile frequency) show women smile more than men in social contexts (d ≈ +.44). However, when emotion is internally felt, sex differences diminish; much of the gap reflects display rules and socialization

- Differences in emotional expressiveness vanish in one-on-one interactions but appear more prominently in group or public settings where gender norms are salient

Help-Seeking and Support

- Women are more likely to seek social support for emotional problems; men are more likely to seek instrumental help only when problems are severe (d ≈ +.30). Men's reluctance to seek help is linked to masculine norms of self-reliance
  - Muted emotions decrease support: failing to reveal one's emotions and problems makes it difficult for others to provide support when needed. Indeed, restricted emotions have been linked to reduced social support, which has been linked to increased psychological distress (Wester et al. , 2007).

- **Hep-Giving** Men help people they do not know, which is akin to helping society at large, whereas women help people they do know and with whom they have a relationship, such as family and friends
  - Men help more: according to an older meta-analysis of helping behavior (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). The effect was in the direction of males helping more than females (d = +.34). The 172 studies in this review measured actual helping behavior or the self-report of a commitment to engage in a helping behavior
  - Women more likely to volunteer: more recent literature concludes that men are more likely than women to help in situations of danger or emergencies, that women are more likely than men to help within the context of relationships (Dovidio & Penner, 2001) and in non-threatening situations such as volunteering (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009a)
  - Sex of the recipient: Males were more likely to help females than males, whereas females were equally likely to help females and males.
  - Situation: Males were more likely than females to help in situations of danger

Communication Styles

- Women use more "rapport-talk" (building connections, listening cues), whereas men use more "report-talk" (information exchange, problem-solving) (Tannen, 1990).

- Differences are often small and context-dependent—training (e.g., in mixed-gender teams) reduces miscommunication.

Sexuality

- **Women have more negative attitudes toward sex compared to me**n (Geer & Robertson, 2005). Even at younger ages, this seems to be true. A study of adolescents showed that males identified more benefits from having sex compared to females
  - Women reported more favorable attitudes than men toward gay men (study 1: d = -.18; study 2: d = -.14)

- Men report more sexual partners (study 1: d = +.36; study 2: d = +.15), more casual sex (d = +.38; d = +.18), more frequent masturbation (d = +.53; d = +.58), and greater use of pornography (d = +.63; d = +.46).

- Small differences appeared for the sex difference in sexual satisfaction (d = +.17; d = +.19), condom use (d = +.15; d = +.15), oral sex (d = +.06; d = +.16), and attitudes toward premarital sex (d = +.17; d = +.10)

Theories of Gender Differences

Theory	Description	Key Terms
Biological	Identifies genes and hormones as well as the structure and function of the brain as the cause of sex differences in cognition, behavior, and gender roles.	androgens, estrogens, corpus callosum, lateralization
Evolutionary	Extends Darwin's theory of evolution. Different social behaviors evolved in men and women because it was adaptive for survival and reproduction.	reproductive success, maternal investment, paternity uncertainty, interactionism
Psychoanalytic	Originally suggested that gender roles are acquired by identification with the same-sex parent. Today all all early relationships are emphasized.	Oedipal complex, unconscious processes, identification, object-relations theory
Social Learning	Contends that all behaviors—including those specifically related to gender role—are learned through reinforcement and/or modeling.	reinforcement, observational learning
Gender-Role Socialization	States that people and objects in the child's environment shape behavior to fit gender-role norms.	differential socialization, parental influence, sex typing
Social Role	Variant of gender-role socialization: differences in women's and men's behavior are a function of the different roles that women and men hold in our society.	agency, communion, nurturance, egoistic dominance
Cognitive Development	The child actively interprets and learns from the world. Social cognitive theory extends this by including social influences.	gender identity, gender constancy, categorization
Gender Schema	Contends that children acquire gender roles due to their propensity to process information into sex-linked categories.	gender schema, gender aschematic, androgyny

- Social role theory enjoys good empirical support and maybe the mainstream theory in current gender psychology.
  ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** roles have an impact of course, but I believe it may be overblown in gender studies
- Cognitive development theory fits well with social role theory since one must learn the social role
- Biological theory is 'harder science', but it's criticized when over-extended to explain complex behavior or when ignoring social and environmental factors
- Evolutionary theory is criticized in mainstream gender studies
  ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** but we believe here it provides strong foundations to explain structural differences, especially when it comes to reproduction-linked behaviors and attitudes (and many are)
- Psychoanalytic theory lacks empirical evidence, relies heavily on untestable concepts (e.g., Oedipal complex), and is not falsifiable and largely outdated in modern academic psychology

7: Achievement

Both genders strive for success, but men pursue status more, while women balance achievement with relationships and may fear success more, associating it with social costs.

Men's assertiveness aligns with agency, while women's communal traits can hinder bold pursuits.

Socially, parents and teachers reinforce stereotypes—girls nudged toward nurturing, boys toward competition (Kenney-Benson et al., 2006).

1 Academic Performance

- **Grades and Coursework**: Girls outperform boys in language, reading, and overall GPA; boys slightly

outperform girls in math and science courses only in certain regions or settings.
  - Gaps narrow in more egalitarian cultures, suggesting social factors heavily influence performance.

2 Interest and Motivation

- **Subjects of Interest**: Boys show greater interest in STEM fields and spatial tasks; girls show greater interest in language arts and social sciences.
- **Expectancy–Value Model**: Achievement depends on self-efficacy (belief in one's competence) and task value (perceived usefulness). Gendered expectations and stereotypes influence these perceptions early on

3 Occupational Aspirations and Choices

- **STEM Pipeline**: Fewer women pursue STEM majors, partly due to stereotype threat (fear of confirming negative stereotypes), lower self-efficacy, and lack of same-sex mentors.
- **Career Sex Typing**: Many vocations remain strongly "male-typed" (e.g., engineering) or "female-typed" (e.g., nursing). Efforts to reframe "necessary traits" (e.g., collaborative engineering) can reduce gender segregation.

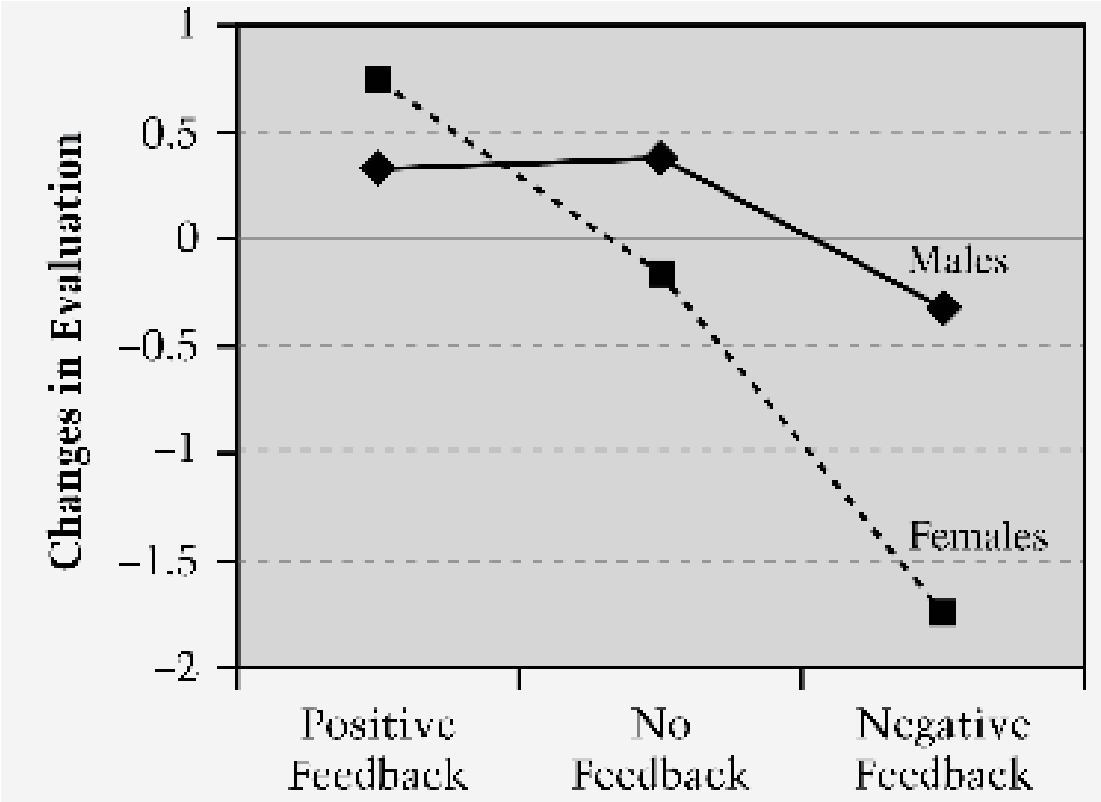
4 Gender Disparities in Late Achievement

- **Glass Ceiling**: Although women now attain advanced degrees in nearly equal numbers, they remain underrepresented in top-level executive positions.
- **Work–Family Conflict**: Disproportionate family responsibilities can hamper women's career advancement. Supportive policies (e.g., flexible hours, parental leave) narrow this gap.

5 Confidence

> Evidence indicates that agentic self-definitions are related to men's self-esteem, and communal self-definitions are related to women's self-esteem.
> Men's self-esteem seems to be based on power, differentiating themselves from others, effectiveness, and independent action, whereas women's self-esteem is based on relationships and connections (Miller, 1991)

- **Women underestimate their abilities**: females earn higher grades in most subjects in school but evaluate their competence lower than that of boys—with the exception of language.
  Interestingly, women will defend other women's abilities but not necessarily their own. Collis (1991) refers to this as the "We can but I can't" paradox.
- The major factor that influences sex differences in selfconfidence is the nature of the task.
- Sex differences in self-confidence seem to be limited to masculine tasks; it is here that women tend to underestimate their performance and lack self-confidence.
- Part of the sex difference in self-confidence is due to women appearing less confident. Women are more reluctant than men to display confidence
- **Women's self-esteem is more affected by social feedback**: In Johnson and Helgeson (2002) study Women's self-esteem improved after positive supervisor evaluation and drastically decreased after negative evaluation. Men's self-esteem was unaffected by the feedback they received from their supervisor. Women also took the evaluation process more seriously, regarded the feedback as more accurate, and viewed their supervisors as credible sources.
  - Women are more influenced by feedback. Roberts and NolenHoeksema (1994, Study 2) study shows women's self-evaluation changed more than men's self-evaluations depending on feedback.
    Taken together, seems to me to mean to suggest 'thinner skin' or more fragile ego



Women evaluated their speech as more positive after receiving positive feedback and more negative after receiving negative feedback. Men's evaluations of their speech were relatively unaffected by the nature of the feedback they received. Source Adapted from Roberts and NolenHoeksema (1994, Study 2).

8: Communication

Helgeson notes women's superior non-verbal decoding (e.g., reading emotions), while men dominate physically (e.g., touching).

In leadership contexts, men lead boldly, women mediate—reflecting role expectations.

1 Conversational Styles

- **Rapport vs. Report** (Tannen, 1990):
  - **Rapport Talk** (more typical of women): Emphasizes connection, empathy, and mutual understanding.
  - **Report Talk** (more typical of men): Focuses on information exchange, problem-solving, and status assertion. This is 'high power speaking'
- Differences are context-dependent and often exaggerated by media; in mixed-gender teams, women may adopt report styles and vice versa when task demands shift.

2 Nonverbal Communication

- Women tend to maintain more eye contact, use more facial expressions, and adopt open body language. Men use more expansive gestures but less direct eye contact in mixed settings.
- Bachanneling differences: "Differences in listening cues (e.g., head nods, backchannels) can lead men to perceive women as more engaged, but women may perceive men's minimal nodding as disinterest".

3 Power Dynamics and Influence

- **Interruptions and Turn-Taking**: Men interrupt women more often in mixed settings, which can reinforce status hierarchies.

- **Persuasion**: Men rely more on factual evidence; women leverage relationships and consensus. In some contexts (e.g., negotiations), a combination of both strategies yields the best results.
- **High-power position allow the freedom to smile/not smile**: S*tatus was related to the freedom to smile rather than the tendency to smile, meaning that the high-status person could smile whenever he or she was in a good mood but the low-status person could not. The investigators suggested that people in positions of low power have constraints imposed on them in terms of how they behave; they are not as free as those in higher-power positions to express their feelings* (Hecht and LaFrance, 1998) <— This clicked and it's my current go-to explanation for the difference in smiling related to personal and rank-related power. Enlightening

4 Sex Differences in Workplace Communication

- **Feedback and Criticism**: Women receive more ambiguous feedback (e.g., "Not technical enough"), while men receive more direct feedback ("Your executable crashed"). Training managers on gender-neutral feedback can improve performance evaluations.
- **Women pay a price for power**: *a lack of communal characteristics is detrimental to women. When Hillary Clinton ran for the Democratic nominee for president of the United States, her strong, decisive, and overall agentic manner was judged harshly. Her ratings became more positive after a brief episode in which she shed a tear in response to an interviewer asking her how she was able to get out of the house everyday to hit the campaign trail. The expression of emotion reminded people of her communal qualities.*

Also see our articles:

- Why Hillary Clinton lost
- **How to combine power with femininity**
- **The curse of the successful woman** (in dating)

> Why Successful Women Fail At Dating (& How to Fix It)

9: Friendship

Friendships reveal intimacy gaps: women's are closer, with more self-disclosure, while men's are activity-based (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006).

Men's friendships face some extra barriers—competition, homophobia, and emotional inexpressiveness—. The competition among men also leads to less disclosure, further impacting relationship closeness.

Cross-sex friendships offer men emotional support, women companionship, but face sexual tension—more so for men (Kurdek, 2008a).

1 Same-Sex Friendships

- **Women's Friendships**: Emphasize emotional intimacy, self-disclosure, and co-rumination (discussing problems repeatedly). While co-rumination strengthens bonds, it also increases risk for anxiety and depression.
- **Men's Friendships**: Focus on shared activities (sports, hobbies), mutual interests, and less overt emotional sharing. Support is often instrumental—helping fix a car or offering solutions.
- **Men can disclose more during activities**: In fact, self-disclosure between men usually takes place in the context of shared activities (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006). Having something to do during the interaction may make men feel more comfortable self-disclosing.

2 Cross-Sex Friendships

- **Challenges**:
  - **Audience Challenge**: Concern about how others interpret the relationship (platonic vs. romantic).
  - **Emotional Bond Challenge**: Distinguishing between friendship closeness and romantic interest.
  - **Equality Challenge**: Hierarchies can emerge if one sex is perceived as having higher status.
- Both sexes report benefits from cross-sex friendships: diverse perspectives, broader social networks, and improved understanding of the other gender's experiences

3 Friendship at Work

- **Homophily**: Tendency to befriend colleagues of the same race, gender, or departmental "field."
- **Workplace Friendships**: Offer emotional support, career advice, and social resources—but may also introduce complications (conflicts of interest, gossip). Gender roles often dictate workplace friendship boundaries: men may avoid emotional topics, women may avoid discussing workplace politics if perceived as "backstabbing."

10: Romantic Relationships

- Men value physical attractiveness, women value status
- **Demand/Withdraw Pattern**: Common—one partner (often the woman) demands discussion; the other (often the man) withdraws. This pattern predicts greater marital dissatisfaction
  - **Conflict**: Women confront, men retreat
- **Emotional intimacy VS physical**: Women emphasize emotional intimacy as essential to sexual satisfaction; men more often focus on physical aspects. Marital quality correlates more strongly with women's perceptions of emotional closeness.
- **Men better assessed partner's infidelity**: Men were fairly certain that their partner either did or did not have sex with someone else, whereas women expressed more uncertainty. Men were much more accurate in detecting infidelity (75% vs. 41%), but slightly less accurate in detecting fidelity (93% vs. 96%)
- Women are more strongly affected than men by their partners
- **Power Play**: Emotional detachment gives men leverage; women invest more.
- **Increased masculine behavior 'allows' men to increase self-disclosure** One way in which men are able to be expressive in the context of relationships is by compensating with increased masculine behavior in other arenas, such as more instrumental behavior (Migliaccio, 2009).

Explanation	Supporting Evidence	Counter-Evidence
Evolutionary Theory	Cross-culturally men outweight attractiveness and women status Men's preference for physical attractiveness is not affected by culture gender traditionalityor by time Cross-culturally men rate domestic skills as more important than women	Attractive women are not paired with high status men

Explanation	Supporting Evidence	Counter-Evidence
Social Role Theory	Cross-cultural evidence that women rate status as more important than men Cross-cultural evidence that men rate domestic skills as more important than women Greater sex differences in mate preferences in cultures with distinct female and male roles	Sex differences in mate preferences reduced when men and women have less traditional gender-role attitudes Sex differences in mate preferences reduced over time as women's and men's roles have become more similar Cross-cultural evidence men rate attractiveness as more important than women
Social Construction Theory	Cultural differences in mate preferences Greater sex differences in mate preferences in cultures with distinct male and female roles	

11: Sex Differences in Health: Evidence and Explanations

The health paradox—women's higher morbidity, men's higher mortality—anchors this chapter (Mitra & Shroff, 2008).

- Health Split: Women live longer but ail more; men die sooner from risks.
- Behavior: Men's bravado (e.g., avoiding doctors) contrasts women's health focus.
- Biology: Women's physiology (e.g., less alcohol dilution) heightens some risks.
- **Help-Seeking Norms**: Masculine norms discourage vulnerability—men delay care until illnesses are advanced

Agency is the best predictor of health

> agency has been associated with greater perceived health, fewer physical symptoms, reduced psychological distress, reduced psychiatric problems, and better physical health (Ghaed & Gallo, 2006; Helgeson, 1994c). Agency also has been linked to a variety of good health practices, including physical activity, healthy eating, and good dental hygiene (Danoff-Burg, Mosher, & Grant, 2006). By contrast, communion is typically unrelated to psychological or physical health (Ghaed & Gallo, 2006; Helgeson, 1994c).Thus, some of men's lower morbidity rates compared to women may be explained by the male genderrelated trait of agency

However, as for everything, balance:

> unmitigated agency has been associated with reckless driving, substance use, binge eating, psychological distress, and overall lower levels of well-being (Danoff-Burg et al. , 2006; Ghaed & Gallo, 2006; Yu & Xie, 2008).
> Although communion is typically unrelated to health, unmitigated communion is associated with poor health, especially greater psychological distress, disturbed eating behavior, and poor health behavior (Ghaed & Gallo, 2006; Helgeson & Fritz, 1996, 1998; Helgeson et al. , 2007; Yu & Xie, 2008)

For the record, this is the difference:

Agency

- **Definition:** Focus on the self — independence, assertiveness, control, achievement.
- **Examples:** Ambition, leadership, self-reliance, competence.

- **“I act” / “I achieve.”**

Communion

- **Definition:** Focus on others — warmth, cooperation, connection, nurturance.
- **Examples:** Empathy, kindness, emotional support, belonging.
- **“I belong” / “I care.”**

Unmitigated agency and communion refer to extreme versions of each.

Trait	Healthy Balance	Unhealthy Extremes
Agency	Assertiveness, positive dominance, autonomy	**Unmitigated Agency**: Selfishness, over-dominance
Communion	Empathy, connection	**Unmitigated Communion**: Self-erasure, codependency

12: Relationships and Health

Marriage benefits health, more for men (Kurdek, 2008a).
Women’s caregiving burdens offset gains, while men lean on wives for support. Relationship quality hits women harder—e.g., marital conflict spikes their stress (Heyman et al., 2009).

- Support: Women give more, men receive—roles dictate health impacts.
- Divorce leads to declines in health for both sexes but more for men. “Widowers” (men) also often suffer steeper drops in health and well-being

13: Mental Health

Women report more depression, men more substance abuse (except only for sedatives).
Women ruminate, men externalize distress. Suicide flips: men complete it more, women attempt it (Phillips, Li, & Zhang, 2002).

1 Depression

- Women have roughly twice the lifetime risk of major depressive disorder compared to men, albeit men’s depression may be undiagnosed, and some of it self-medicated with alcohol abuse.
- Explanations include:
- **Biological**: Hormonal fluctuations (e.g., postpartum, perimenopause).
- **Psychosocial**: Women’s greater tendency to ruminate
- **Gender-Role Strain**: Rigid feminine norms (e.g., self-sacrifice, appearance pressures) exacerbate vulnerability

2 Eating Disorders (Anorexia, Bulimia, Binge Eating)

- Predominantly affect women (10:1 female:male ratio). Body dissatisfaction, internalization of Western beauty ideals, and perfectionistic personality traits fuel these disorders
- **Social Comparison** and **Self-Objectification**: Viewing oneself through an external lens predicts higher risk—women’s self-worth often tied to appearance

3 Suicide and Self-Harm

- Although more women attempt suicide, men die by suicide at higher rates (approx. 3:1), partially due to more lethal methods and potentially also by gender role where ‘getting it done’ is a more masculine ambition.

- **Help-Seeking Norms**: Men's reluctance to express vulnerability delays intervention
- **Depression and Substance Use**: Co-occurrence with alcohol/drug misuse is higher in men, increasing suicide lethality

MORE WISDOM

Hypermasculine Men More Dominant And Anti-Gay

> People who score high on hypermasculinity (extreme masculinity), have traditional gender-role attitudes, have a greater desire for dominance, and score high on benevolent or modern sexism have the most negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Kite & Whitley, 2003; Whitley & Egisdottir, 2000).
> This is not surprising because homosexual behavior is a threat to traditional beliefs about men's and women's roles. Men are less tolerant than women of homosexuality because violation of the male gender role has more negative consequences. Because the male gender role has a higher status in our society, there is more to lose by violating the role.

Lucio's note: hypermasculinity is a misguided measure
While I initially thought this was interesting and telling, I was appaled to find out that hypermasculinity is measured with questions that I'd largely consider to capture toxic masculinity.
I'm worried that any literature using this scale may be biased.

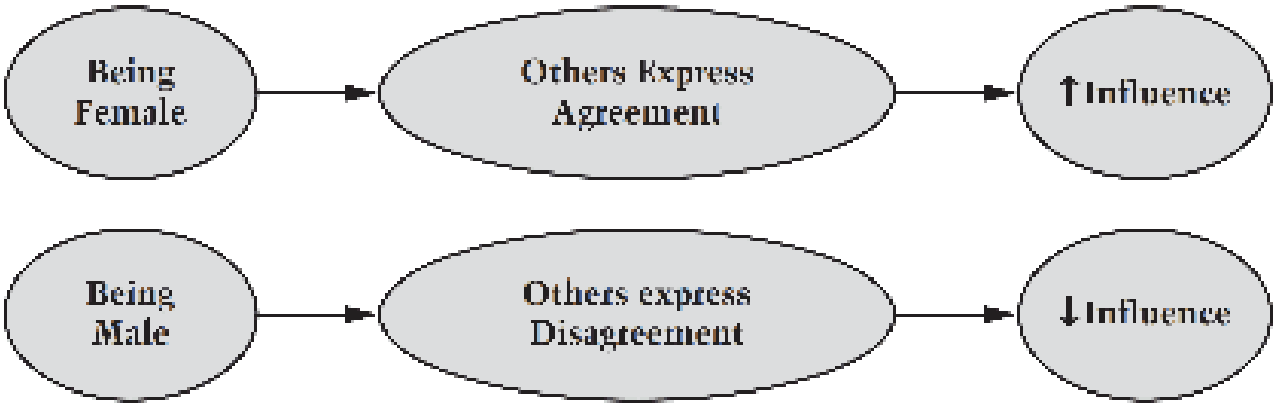
And...

Derogation of Evaluator Can Help Maintain Self-Esteem

> Men who received negative feedback appeared to prepare themselves psychologically for the upcoming evaluation by derogating the source of the feedback ("My supervisor isn't that smart") and the feedback system ("The evaluation process is not fair"). In general, the results of this study supported the laboratory findings

Women May Influence & Be More Influenced Because of Agreeableness

The author claims that women tend to be more easily influenced than men not because of some inherent 'influenceability', but because people tend to approach women with a more agreeable attitude that's generally more conducive to influencing others.



My note: Interesting theory, but not enough
It's a valid theory that made me reflect and I think there may be some truth to it.
However, men likely resist influence more because influence is about power.

On the other hand, women are also more able to influence:

> Although male respondents rated the female tentative speaker as less competent and less knowledgeable than the female assertive speaker, they were more influenced by her

Judge Power Dynamics Best Measure Relationship Power Dynamics

Albeit the author doesn't refer to them as 'judge power dynamics' or 'emotional power dynamics', that's what it boils down to (redacted for brevity):

> One of the difficulties with studies of the distribution of power in relationships is that they are based on self-report.
> A more creative methodology to assess power in relationships was developed (Wagner et al. , 1990).
> The investigators asked women and men to imagine they bought a fairly expensive product and their spouse either approved or disapproved.
> Respondents were asked to rate how good or bad they would feel in each situation. The discrepancy between how the person felt when the spouse disapproved versus approved represented "dependence on the other's agreement," which would reflect low power.

QUOTES

On differences being more provocative and marketing-friendly:

> If there are more similarities than differences between women and men, why does it seem that women and men are so different?
> Why do books like John Gray's (1992) Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus become best sellers if men and women are not opposites?
> Why did my father respond to the publication of this textbook by saying, "If you can figure out why men and women are so different, that would become a best seller!" One reason is that differences are more salient and more provocative than similarities

(the author seems to have a thing against Men Are From Mars :)):

> Aristotle had one theory of sex differences. Somewhat later, John Gray (1992) set forth another in Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus
> (…)
> These two theories about the origin of sex differences are quite different and hardly comparable. The first was developed by a famous world-renowned philosopher, the second by a person with a questionable educational background.

On men needing little relationship change besides…

> Another explanation for the wife demand/husband withdraw pattern is that it is wives who most often want change in the relationship.
> A study asked couples about the changes that they would like to see (Heyman et al. , 2009) (…) Women wanted spouses to participate more in household chores, be more involved in parenting, express more emotion, and spend more time with them.
> Men, by contrast, requested change in only one area—increased sex.

CRITICISM

Evolutionary theory could be better implemented

The author says:

> Among those who scored above 700 on the SAT math exam, the ratio of male to female was 13:1 20 years ago, but it is 2.8:1 today. There also is evidence that men's math scores are more variable than women's math scores (Halpern et al. , 2007; Hyde et al. , 2008), and the reason for this is not clear

One possible explanation, grounded in evolutionary theory, is that men are more likely to occupy the extremes of many trait distributions—both high and low—because the potential genetic payoff for men at the high end is much greater.

Unlike women, whose reproductive success is relatively stable and biologically constrained, men can father many more offspring if they achieve high status or success. This creates evolutionary pressure for greater risk-taking and variability, especially in traits like spatial or mathematical ability that historically contributed to status or resource acquisition.

Criticism of evolutionary theory are misplaced

Says the author:

> One limitation of evolutionary theory is the inability to explain behaviors that do not maximize reproductive success, such as homosexuality, adoption of children, and suicide.
> A second limitation is that evolutionary theory does not account for individual differences or cultural differences in behavior

I don't think those are limitations at all.

Evolutionary theory doesn't claim that every single behavior must directly lead to reproduction maximixation with perfect efficiency.
Rather, it explains how traits and tendencies that were adaptive on average across ancestral environments are selected for with a *tendency* towards effective survival and reproduction.

Her examples are also no evidence of evolutionary theories limitation.
Instead, evolutionary theory explains adoption quite well. It's a byproduct of people tendency to love and care for children.

And evolutionary theory doesn't have to 'account for individual differences' because it's not written anywhere that evolution should make every single organism the same.
As a matter of fact, evolution wouldn't exist in the first place if every individual was the exact same because evolution works based on genetic differences and mutations.

And again later the author writes:

> Today, I doubt that the majority of men are thinking about establishing paternity and the majority of women are thinking about their partners' ability to support a child when deciding whether or not to engage in sex

What's this supposed to mean, that evolutionary forces stopped operating in modern times?

The criticism also seems to stem, again, from not fully appreciating evolutionary mechanisms.
Cognitive processes meant to aid survival and reproduction are rarely conscious.

Some explanations felt ad-hoc rationalizations

For example:

> Men are less tolerant than women of homosexuality because violation of the male gender role has more negative consequences. Because the male gender role has a higher status in our society, there is more to lose by violating the role.

I'm not convinced that's the only or main reason.
Men are less tolerant than women of homosexuality because it's more costly for a man to be gay, than for a woman to be more 'sexually fluid'.

Also, since men aren't nearly as sexually fluid as women, a man who's into other men is more likely to be gay, rather than 'bi' or 'open-minded'.

Or in explaining the difference of suicide rate in China:

> China is an exception to the sex difference in suicide rates (…) A major reason is the low status of women (…) Second, there are no religious sanctions against suicide

However, the 'no religious sanctions' doesn't explain the difference because it applies to both men and women.
If the author had said that women tend to be more religious, which as far as I know is true, it may be more logically justified.
But it would still be a deficient explanation because many other countries with no religious sanction do not see higher suicide rates among women.

Some explanations felt over-reaching

The author dedicate a sizable portion of men's and women's different self-esteem levels to how teacher's feedback impacts pupils:

> When girls receive negative feedback, it is more likely to be related to their schoolwork than work-irrelevant domains; thus girls take negative feedback seriously. Boys, by contrast, are able to discount negative feedback because it usually has nothing to do with the intellectual aspects of their performance.

While this may, in part, explain the self-esteem gap and why women take evaluators' feedback more seriously, I was no convinced, and I wished the author bracketed with more hypothetical language.

And:

> Traditional gender roles partly explain these findings. In cultures where women and men have traditional roles, women gain weight due to childbearing; they also lack time for leisure exercise due to the burden of household chores

But women also have children in 'non-traditional' societies.
And the 'burden of household chores' IS exercise.

Sometimes socialization and nurture over nature

For example:

> Why is boys' play louder and more aggressive than girls' play? One possibility is the socialization hypothesis. Children may model same-sex play from parents. Aside from each other, mothers and fathers are typically

> friends with people of the same sex

Sure that may account for a sliver of the observed differences.
But… How about different genes and biology?

And worse yet in my opinion was:

> We are socialized to view members of the other sex as potential romantic and sexual partners.

I believe the opposite is true.
We are socialized to treat members of the opposite sex asexually but nature just 'gets in the way'.
As a matter of fact, some guys need to un-learn socialization to succeed in dating.

PROS

- **Good overview** of gender psychology, it was my #1 favorite handbook on the topic
- **Engaging format** mixing rigorous evidence with 'ease of reading'.
  It includes 'take home bullet points' to summarize the chapters, plenty of pictures, fun anecdotes, and even home exercises (I would have skipped those, but may be the author uses this as a textbook for her courses?)
- **Capable author** with knowledge, research experience and writing skills

REVIEW

The Psychology of Gender is a fantastic book for an overview of gender commonalities, differences, and the causes of those differences.

Although I found it to lean towards nurture and social constructionism, it made my short list of the best resources on this topic, and it's thus far my favorite handbook.
It's practical, almost as easy as a mainstream book, while still providing an evidence-based overview of the available literature.

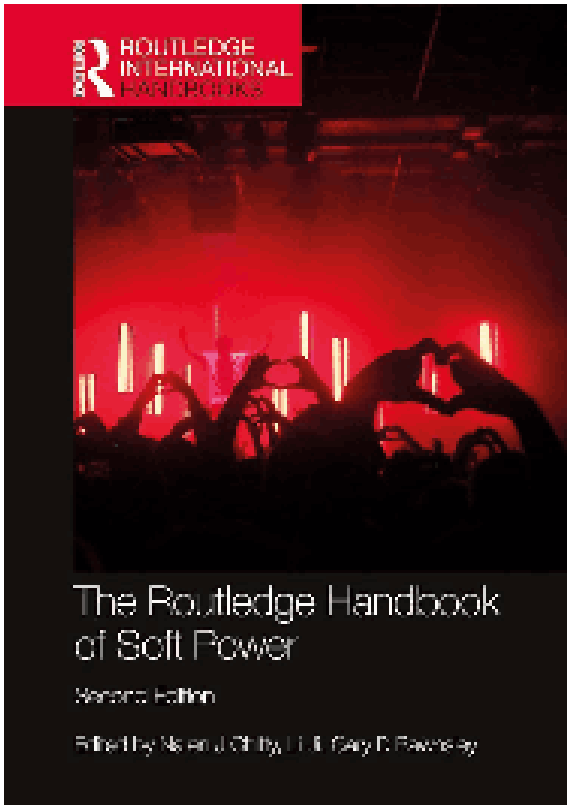
It may be the resource on this topic, and it provided us with the most empirical evidence for our articles on masculinity.
And that's the highest compliment I can pay to any book.

Check the **best books** to read or get this book on Amazon:

The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 July 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power (2023) is a comprehensive overview of soft power theory and practice. It reframes soft power as a dynamic process shaped by intention, audience, and experience.



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- REVIEW

FULL SUMMARY

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Definitions of Soft Power

Soft power has been criticized for being a 'fuzzy term', so we list a few definitions:

> in Nye's words (2004, p. 6): 'Simply put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power'.

A simple definition of soft power, quoting Joseph Nye (2021, p. 201):

> 'Hard power is push; soft power is pull'.

Not everyone agrees the definition is fuzzy though:

> One of the mistakes often made when defining the concept of soft power is to argue that it is an all-encompassing term; it is not. It can be considered a *pull factor* associated with 'legitimate agenda setting, persuasion, the attractiveness of values' and the 'impression of kindness, competence or charisma'; this stands in contrast to hard power, which functions as a *push factor,* employing the 'use of force, payment and some agenda-setting based on it'

However, the difference between soft and hard power is not always obvious:

> However, soft and hard power resources are not as clear-cut and distinguishable as they may initially seem. They vary along a spectrum.
> The actor who generates soft power is also not always clear-cut.
> Hard power resources can generate soft power outcomes (Nye 2021, p. 201).

> Soft power, first coined by Joseph Nye, is defined as 'the ability to affect others through the cooptive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes' (2011a, pp. 20–21).
> By contrast with hard power, Nye (2004) claims that soft power gets the desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payments.
>
> 'hard power threatens, soft power seduces. Hard power dissuades; soft power persuades' (Fraser 2003, p. 10)

> Soft power is ‘a synonym for all state-led activities in the international realm that do not involve military force’ (Flew 2016, p. 290)

Shared Identity Is About (Soft) Power

> Another fraught issue relates to power relations and deciding what constitutes cultural heritage. Given that power plays an essential role in the construction of heritage, symbols relating to the identity of the dominant cultural group often determine what constitutes shared heritage. This occurs often to the exclusion of the other identities, and decisions to exclude the heritage of ‘others’ within a community are not random, as parties often clash over such decisions (Blake 2015, p. 284).

Taking a Measure of Attraction-Based Influence

This opening chapter introduces the theoretical perspectives on soft power, framing it as attraction-based influence. It highlights the challenge of measuring its intangible nature compared to metrics like GDP and setting the stage for deeper theoretical discussions.

- Soft power centers on attraction and persuasion, distinct from hard power.
- Measuring soft power is difficult due to its intangibility.

Soft ‘depends’ more on the target

> [S]uccess in terms of outcomes is more in the control of the target than is often the case with hard power’ (Nye 2011, p. 83). Messages are refracted, accepted, or rejected through interpretation (Hall 1980). ‘Derridean interpretation is specifically counter-intentional. As Derrida explains in Dissemination, the deconstructive “reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer”’ (Hogan 1990, p. 52).

The Gift of Grace: Soft Power, Charisma, and Transatlantic Relations

Ohnesorge explores charisma as a vital soft power component, focusing on transatlantic relations between Germany and the United States.

Drawing on Max Weber’s concept of charisma, the chapter positions charismatic leaders as agents who amplify national attractiveness.

It illustrates how U.S. presidents’ charisma has shaped transatlantic ties, both positively and negatively, providing a fresh lens on soft power’s personal dimension.

- Charisma boosts soft power by inspiring admiration.
- Charismatic men tend to lead during ‘moments of distress’ called ‘Charismatic Situation, (M Rainer Lepsius (1993, pp. 100–101)
  - External circumstances and results also contributes to charismatic leaders’ demise: Napoleon forfeited a considerable share of his personal charisma after Waterloo (Ohnesorge 2020, p. 123)
- Today charisma and soft power can be closely tied to oratory
- Charisma and soft power can be used for good or for ‘bad’. Osama Bin Laden was charismatic: he didn’t recruit followers with coercion and neither did he pay them
- Different audiences find different traits and people charismatic

Measuring Soft Power: Quantitative Analyses & Results

Irene Wu addresses the challenge of measuring soft power.

The chapter introduces the "Soft Power Rubric," which tracks behaviors like foreign public opinion and cross-border engagement, offering a practical framework for assessing soft power's effects.

- Quantitative tools measure soft power through behaviors.
- **Foreign public opinion creates foreign policy opportunities**:
  - Goldsmith and Horiuchi (2012) show that countries with a high opinion of US foreign policy were far more likely to send troops to join the United States in Iraq.
  - **Countries with soft power win more cooperation** from and increased trade with other countries. Further, they attract more students, tourists, and foreign direct investment.
- Coca Cola and Starbucks grew despite negative American sentiment (Datta, 2014), but visits to the US and studying to the US were significantly correlated to a favorable/unfavorable view of the US
- **The more a soft-power a country has, the more it exports** (Rose, 2016) *His 2016 study concludes that if an importer perceives an exporting country to be a positive influence in the world, then the importer buys more from that country, holding constant other factors such as common language, common land border, membership in the same regional trade agreement or currency union, and a former colonial relationship. Rose (2016) concludes that a 1 percent increase in perceived positive influence raises exports by about 0.8 percent.*
- The effect of sanctions on exports is smaller than soft power
- **Takeaway**: For countries interested in growing their soft power resources, the policy implications are to open their societies to more social interaction with foreigners, immigrants, international students, visitors, and foreign media. Opening up more, of course, may mean that their own society may change as a result.

Measuring Soft Power Is Difficult (Li Ji)

Li Ji tackles the difficulty of measuring soft power's intangible effects, proposing an audience-centered framework.

> The presumption of soft power effects is that soft power will be effective on subjects if they are attractive, charming, credible and trustworthy, in line with a range of behaviours (e.g. framing, agenda-setting and attraction) conducted by agents.

- Soft power's intangibility complicates measurement.
- Framing analysis assesses audience perceptions.

The Use of the Soft Power Concept in Empirical Studies

Novelli and Pereira critique soft power's application in empirical research, noting deficiencies in defining goals, audiences, and causal mechanisms.

- Empirical studies often lack clear soft power definitions.
- Soft power is highly contextual when it comes to effectiveness
- Many studies on soft power are of low quality

> Our systematic analysis of empirical studies that employ the concept of soft power confirmed expected shortcomings in the use of the concept.
> The most common problem was the vagueness regarding the causal mechanisms in action, i.e., how resources produce soft power, and how this soft power could be used to achieve political goals.
> Even among studies that addressed conversion mechanisms, a common approach was to only address how

> resources are converted into soft power, overlooking how a given state could accomplish a certain goal through this soft power – that when goals were even set out at all.

Russia's Authoritarianism Can Help Its Soft Power

The authors critique simplistic approaches that claim that framing the Russian state as authoritarian necessarily disempowers Russia's soft power:

> However, these premises seem to ignore a fundamental point: the authoritarian values associated with the Russian government may be attractive to certain audiences. Authors such as Jackson (2010), Ferguson (2012), Wilson (2015a), and Horvath (2016) have demonstrated how Russia's strategies for Central Asia, largely focused on proposing alternatives to Western models and values, have garnered support from local elites precisely because of their authoritarian content. Concurrently, these same strategies have yielded far worse results in Eastern Europe, where Russia's political model and values do not seem to be as effective in the eyes of increasingly pro-European Union domestic elites (Saari 2014).

A Study of Soft Power Rankings: Concepts, Method(ology), and Evaluation

Wang evaluates soft power rankings, analyzing five major projects' methodologies, but

advocating for improved ranking methods to capture soft power's nuances.

- Rankings vary in criteria and subjectivity.
- *There is only limited strategic value for investing in soft power resources for purposes of growing influence. All rankers failed to show causality between known soft power qualities and efficiency of strategic deployment of soft power strategies in terms of achieving intended outcomes*
- a soft-power measure that is credible to all, applicable to every country whatever the circumstances, is perhaps outside the realm of possibility. This does not mean the quest is useless. Indeed, it has value

States vs. Tech Giants: Who Is Wielding Soft Power?

Massa and Anzera explore the rivalry between states and tech giants in wielding soft power via online platforms. Tech companies' information control challenges state influence, urging adaptive strategies to maintain national soft power.

- Tech giants rival states in digital soft power.
- Tech giants promote many Western values, even with their platforms' rules and regulations, based on copyrights, and running on ads/capitalism
- Platform exercise 'invisible form of power' in selecting what to promote: *The most relevant case is algorithms, those computational mechanisms involved in selecting and hierarchizing content and preferences on behalf of users.*
- States must adapt to retain influence.

It's a MAD World: Mutually Assured Delegitimization

Manor examines how diplomats' online crisis framing can lead to mutual delegitimization.

When states engage in mutual delegitimization on social media, as seen in the 2014 Gaza War and Crimean Crisis, they may both suffer soft disempowerment. This dynamic leads to what the chapter terms MAD—Mutually Assured Delegitimization: a lose-lose scenario where all parties involved undermine their own credibility and soft power.

- Studies demonstrate that during crises, states use social media to create normative contrasts and to demonstrate an adversary's lack of adherence with accepted norms and ideals (Manor and Crilley, 2018a; Manor and Crilley, 2018b)
- 'Soft disempowerment' refers to 'actions, inactions and/or policies of a state that ultimately upset, offend or alienate others, leading to a loss of credibility and attractiveness' (Brannagan and Giulianotti, 2015, pp. 1152–1153)
  - Violation of laws and rules, typically exposed by the press (e.g., Qatar's bribery scandal during its World Cup bid).
  - Failure to uphold global norms and conventions, often highlighted by NGOs (e.g., Qatar's treatment of migrant workers).
- Social power is the ability to set standards, and create norms and ideals, that are deemed as both legitimate and desirable by the international community, without resorting to coercion or payment (Van Ham, 2013).

Soft Power of First Ladies

Marczuk investigates First Ladies' soft power roles in France and Poland, showing how their activities complement diplomacy.
First ladies' 'job' is to strengthen their presidential spouse's credibility.

The three powers of first ladies are:

1. **Benign Power –** Generated through kindness, compassion, and charitable engagement. First Ladies display this by supporting vulnerable groups, advocating for social issues like women's rights, and acting as social activists or goodwill ambassadors.
2. **Brilliant Power –** Arises from prestige, competence, and refined conduct. This is seen when First Ladies demonstrate diplomatic skill, charm, and etiquette in roles such as companion, aesthete, or surrogate during state visits.
3. **Beautiful Power –** Refers to moral beauty or charisma rooted in values, not appearance. It is displayed when First Ladies inspire through international roles, promoting cultural respect, credibility, and goodwill abroad.

I would have liked to see more evidence-backed analyses of first ladies' effects, including possible negative effects on their husbands.
For example:

MORE WISDOM

- Trump sapped US' soft power

> a reversed trend can be observed in the wake of the inauguration of Donald Trump, in whom Germans, in particular, had very little confidence (11% in 2017; 10% in 2018). Impressively attesting to the significance of the personality factor in soft power, the opinion of the United States declined during the same period of time from 57% in 2016 (Obama's last full year in office) to 35% in 2017 and 30% in 2018 (Trump's first two years in the White House). Trump, in short, was deeply harmful to the US image in Germany, and consequently – and contrary to his grandiose rhetoric – he did make America a good deal weaker in terms of its soft power, at least vis-à-vis Germany.

Also read more in our article:

- **How Trump makes US weaker and EU stronger**

> Why Aggressive US Foreign Policy Undermines Its Hegemony

- Cultural heritage reflects national identity as a soft power tool.
- Digitalization is a double-edged sword for states: it allows for more connectivity, but it reduces soft power control
- **National brand is…** : *As a "mental image of the country held by foreign people," a nation brand is "the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the minds of international stakeholders, which may contain some of the following elements: people, place, culture/language, history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities), global brands and so on" (Fan 2010, p. 98).*
- **Covid quickly reshaped countries' 'national brand'**, framing effective crisis management as a civic virtue. Trust, transparency, and cooperation enhanced nations' images. Korea and Taiwan emerged as leaders. Donations later boosted donors' soft power, including for Russia.
  Later on bigger powers who developed and shared vaccines took the lead transitioning from medical diplomacy to pandemic soft power, offering insights into health crises
- **The contact hypothesis** (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp 2006) proposed that increased interaction between people increases mutual understanding and decreases prejudice.
  - However, as Allport (1954) explained, reducing anxiety and prejudice and increasing empathy, requires conditions of contact such as equal status, common goals, and cooperation, otherwise…
  - Casual, and superficial contact will result in stereotyping.
- **Apologizing is crucial to mending relationships**: The most frequent reasons given by those with a negative impression of Japan were that the Japanese had not apologized and reflected on their history of invading China (77.5%)

QUOTES

A popular quote on 'power VS influence':

> All power is influence but not all influence is power, power being intended influence (Lasswell & Kaplan 1950)

We also agree with Bertrand Russell (1938):

> Power has many forms, such as wealth, armaments, civil authority, influence on opinion.
> No one of these can be regarded as subordinate to any other, and there is no one form from which the others are derivative. The attempt to treat one form of power, say wealth, in isolation, can only be partially successful.

On soft power being in the hands of the followers, quoting Bryan R Wilson (1975, p. 5):

> an illustrative example of the mandatory provision of such a followship, 'If a man runs naked down the street proclaiming that he alone can save others from impending doom, and if he immediately wins a following, then he is a charismatic leader: a social relationship has come into being. If he does not win a following, he is simply a lunatic'.

On the 'dark' power of soft power:

> Sure, he has a lot of soft power. He proved this when he brought down the Twin Towers. Bin Laden did not hold a gun to the heads of the people who flew the planes. He did not pay them either. They did it because they were attracted by his convictions.

Social media empower individuals and disempower journalists:

> The interaction of 'old' and 'new' media goes beyond international broadcasting. If the adoption of social media is disempowering for journalists and news organisations, by virtue of disintermediation, publics have been empowered to engage with foreign policy issues in innovative ways.

On Germany's great reputation:

> German soft power has made foreign leaders and publics confident that 'Germany will do the right thing'.

On the need for cooperation in global challenges:

> To borrow the analogy used by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1941 Lend Lease Act, you should lend your neighbours your garden hose if their house is on fire and thereby keep the fire from spreading to your house.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Please note these aren't as much about the book itself, which is excellent, but more about the state of international relations in general:

I wished for more evidence, less philosophy

The early chapters are overly reliant on philosophical perspectives and theoretical contributions from individual thinkers, with limited empirical support.

The references to Max Weber, Kant, Aristotle, or Foucault aren't what I usually look for in a handbook.
There was also Machiavelli, and we love the construct here—but it's still not empirical evidence.

This risks portraying, or even showing, soft power as a largely conceptual construct, rather than one grounded in evidence or data.
Unfortunately, this may be exactly the case, and it's something I've noticed for international relations in general.

Some Conflicting Claims Left Me Wishing For More Consensus

While some chapters claimed a relationship between soft power and some measures of a state's success, others claimed a lack of causality between soft power, and achieving intended outcomes.

Somehow, I felt the latter was more correct, casting some questions about the state of the research literature in political science.

Interesting Speculations & Questions, But Few Answers

Compared to more mature social sciences like psychology, I found soft power research (and international relations in general) to provide fewer 'answers'.

For example, if you read a handbook on persuasion, you can walk away with many strategies and techniques to craft your messages for higher persuasion.

But if you were a top politician, a handbook on political science may not give you the same clarity on how to do a better job.

REVIEW

The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power stands as the first and currently unique multi-author book on soft power.

I'm thankful to the authors, glad I could read it, and I learned from it.

However, I can't deny I was hoping for something more 'concrete'.
What left me wanting more was not the handbook—authored by many accomplished scholars—but the state of the field itself. It feels relatively underdeveloped and still in need of a broader, more mature body of empirical research.

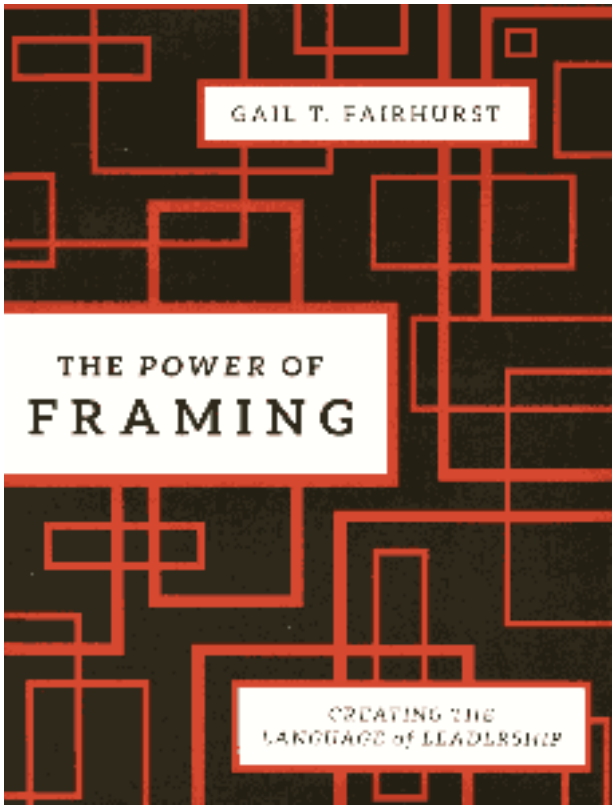
I look forward to their future work when stronger empirical foundations will hopefully yield more practical insights.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

The Power of Framing: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 July 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Power of Framing (2010) by Gail Fairhurst explores how leaders shape meaning through deliberate language and messaging. Drawing on communication theory and real-world leadership, the book teaches how to use framing to influence perception, drive change, and inspire action.



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Key Takeaways

- **Become a *strategic* communicator**, calibrating your message to the audience and goal
- **Frame your mind well first**, with empowered thoughts, and then let good communication follow

Notes

About the Author:
Gail T. Fairhurst, Ph.D., is a professor of communication at the University of Cincinnati, specializing in leadership and organizational communication. An award-winning scholar and International Communication Association Fellow, she's authored Discursive Leadership and consulted for Procter & Gamble, Boeing, and others.

The Reality of Framing

Leaders don't just report facts; they craft perceptions.

The author proposes six Reality-Construction Rules you can use immediately:

1. **Control the context**— choose which facts and metaphors to highlight.
2. **Define the situation**— name it (e.g. "crisis," "turnaround"), and you shape how people will react.
3. **Apply ethics**— own your moral positioning; avoid misleading framing that erodes credibility.
4. **Interpret uncertainty**— in ambiguous moments, step in to make sense of events.
5. **Design the response**— figure out what "leadership" means in your role (Framing Tool 1.1) and persuade others you're delivering it.
6. **Control spontaneity**— prime your unconscious so that your in-the-moment reactions align with your intended message.

Practical Takeaways and Exercises

- **Map a past "critical incident"** in your own leadership to see where you could reframe more effectively.
- **Communications Style Inventory**: Assess your communication style—Expressive (emotion-driven), Conventional (rule-bound), or Strategic (context-savvy)—to pinpoint your framing strengths and blind spots.
- **Framing Tool 1.1: Designing Leadership**: Answer reflective questions about stakeholders, admired leaders, and personal experiences to define leadership in your context, sharpening your framing focus.
- **Framing Tool 1.2: Critical Incident Framing**: Analyze a past leadership challenge—how did you frame it, and was it effective? This exercise reveals how your words shape outcomes.

The 3 Communication Styles

Based on Barbara J. O 'Keefe's research on Message Design Logic:

1. Expressive Communication

> The Expressive says, " Because that ' s what I was thinking! " Expressives say what they are thinking with very little editing.

- **Goal:** To **express personal feelings or thoughts** honestly and spontaneously.
- **Style:** Raw, emotional, unfiltered.
- **When used:** In moments of authenticity, vulnerability, or emotional connection.
- **Strengths:** Builds trust, shows passion, humanizes the leader.

- **Risks:** Can backfire if off-message, impulsive, or perceived as inappropriate for the context.

 Use it when you need to build emotional credibility or rally others with genuine conviction.

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2. Conventional Communication

> The Conventional says, " Because that is the appropriate thing to say for this situation. " Conventionals follow social norms for communicating with others

- **Goal:** To **conform to social or organizational norms** and expectations.
- **Style:** Safe, neutral, expected.
- **When used:** In formal settings (e.g. meetings, protocols, reports).
- **Strengths:** Maintains professionalism, reduces risk, supports stability.
- **Risks:** Can be bland, forgettable, or fail to inspire action.

 Use it when protocol matters, but be cautious if your message needs to stand out or move people.

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3. Strategic Communication

> The Strategic says, " Because that is the best course of action given my strategic goals. " Strategics see situations as mutable, thus they understand that they play a major role in shaping the context.

This is the "framing" style central to the book, and it felt to me overlapping with the strategic predisposition of Machiavellians, while also adding an ethical layer (exactly what we do here at TPM):

- **Goal:** To **achieve specific effects**—influence perception, shape behavior, or guide decisions.
- **Style:** Purposeful, framed, audience-focused.
- **When used:** In leadership moments—change efforts, crises, major decisions.
- **Strengths:** Highly effective, persuasive, adaptable.
- **Risks:** May seem manipulative if overused or inauthentic.

 choose your words, symbols, and metaphors deliberately to lead people toward your goals.

Strategics find opportunities:

> that's what Strategics do. They make or find opportunities when the rest of us are usually rule or role-bound.

And they can use all styles to fit the situation:

> One other key issue regarding Message Design Logic concerns a leader's ability to use all three styles. Interestingly, O ' Keefe ' s work suggests that Expressives are usually Expressive most of the time. Conventionals can be either Conventional or Expressive, while Strategics can be all three given their chameleon-like language skills

Also read:

- How to be positively Machiavellian

> 15 Steps to Be A Good Machiavellian: Your Secret Playbook

A Frame Is *Both* Mind & Communication

Albeit seeming 'simple' after you read it, this was one of the deepest and most useful concepts:

> Is it a structured way of thinking or an act of communicating?
> In reality, it is both, because a frame is that mental picture, and framing is the process of communicating that picture to others.

The Art of Framing

Framing is a craft you can hone.
Four essential devices:

1. **Metaphors** ("turning the corner," "tightening the screws").
2. **Master frames** (overarching organizing ideas, e.g. "customer obsession" or "women helping women").
3. **Simplifying frames** (tunnel your audience's focus to one aspect, like "safety first").
4. **Believability frames** (evidence, testimonials, narratives that build credibility).
   • Combining devices (metaphor + master frame + data) multiplies impact.
   • Practical exercise: rewrite one of your stale slide decks by adding a central metaphor and anchoring each point back to it.

> master frames are more specific than ideologies, perhaps dealing only with one specific theme with broad appeal. But they have the potential to stir people to act. They are an ideology's best advertisement — and they can do as much for a corporate philosophy. There is often sloganeering involved, but it is not only a matter of wordsmithing. It is the encapsulation of a key idea and turn of phrase all at once.

The Leadership Context of Framing

Of this chapter, I mostly enjoyed the examples.

The best one was probably Bush after 9/11:

> **Bush**: (climbs on a fire truck next to a firefighter, when asked if he should leave, Bush puts his arm around him)
> **Random guy**: I can't hear you
> **Bush**: I can hear you, the rest if the world hears you, and the people who knocked these builduings down will hear from us all soon
> **Crowd**: USA, USA, USA

MORE WISDOM

Toxic people already know the power of framing

Something we agree with and it's part of our philosophy and mission:

> there is a large group of generally smart and articulate leaders out there who need to reflect on their communications and ethics a great deal more.

> They need to not take their communications for granted quite so much. They need to understand how our financial realities (and those of others) are created through their communications. They need to understand that untrustworthy leaders already understand all of this — and are betting that most others don't.

Strike a balance of power and warmth

Talking about Al Gore's loss to George W. Bush:

> In his first debate, he was coached to be an alpha male and dominate the interaction, which he tried to do through frequent interruptions of then-candidate Bush and violations of his personal space.
> When Gore was reviewed poorly for this, he was coached to be more affable for the next debate. Gore subsequently emphasized areas of agreement with Bush, but also adopted what many saw as an overly friendly demeanor.
> (…) Ironically, many pundits believe that Gore's best campaign performance was his concession speech, which is the only one he wrote himself.

QUOTES

On manipulative framing for marketing:

> the captains of Wall Street have had a boundless energy for repackaging discredited financial products with new legit – sounding names like " legacy loans," "legacy securities," "nonprime mortgages, " "high-yield debt, " and the like. Framing alone didn't produce this crisis, but communications played a central role. To add insult to injury, Harry Truman's maxim — " If you can't convince them, confuse them " — appears to have become the modus operandi of leaders asked to account for their firm's performance.

On strategics' higher persuasiveness:

> Because most leaders are Conventionals, they tend to underestimate the communications challenge of organizational change. By contrast, Strategics work the change into the very fabric of their organization by making the change relevant to the people and their job responsibilities, answering their questions, taking on their challenges, making connections, and getting them to feel a sense of enthusiasm for it.

CRITICISM

Tone Drift Towards Pop Psychology

The Mehrabian study on words being only 7% of meaning, the 'use or it lose' hyperplasticity from Norman Doidge, the mirror neurons… They felt a bit 2010's self-helpy.

- **Mehrabian's 7% rule** has been widely debunked when applied outside its narrow context (it was only about inconsistent verbal and nonverbal communication of feelings).
- **Norman Doidge's plasticity message** has been influential, but the idea that the brain is hyperplastic and easily rewired with effort is overly simplistic. 'Use it or lose it' can also be easily misinterpreted.
- **Mirror neurons** have been vastly overhyped as the key to empathy or imitation—solid science, but not the magic empathy bullet they were once claimed to be.

I appreciate and recognise that the author's goal with this book wasn't an academic treatise, that my criticism is

nitpicking, and that she accomplished her goal.

But I also can't deny that, in my eyes, some respect and authority was lost on those passages.

Terminology Was Off: Priming's Misuse

The use of 'priming' didn't feel right to me.

The author says that 'the more you prime, the stronger the bond' and 'priming is a little like putting on sunglasses on a sunny day'.

But that's not what's usually meant by 'priming' in psychology, which refers to activating certain mental pathways by exposing someone to related stimuli, typically leading to subtle and short-lived changes in perception, memory, or behavior.

Priming's effects are not massive. Persuasion scholars say that 'priming is too weak to have a strong effect in the real world'.

Instead, I think the author was referring to 'repetition', mental association-building (rewiring or strengthening neural pathways), or framing.

PROS

- Exercises
- Many case studies
- Templates
- Capable author: despite the criticism above, she is well-learned and a skilled communicator
- Several good ideas

REVIEW

The Power of Framing is a solid and practical resource on communication and persuasion.

I felt the book could gain with more accuracy on terminology and some evidence, but I took away some important notes, and that's the most important thing.

While it's not laser-specific on frame control techniques, that may be an advantage as it offers a broader approach to persuasion that may be even more useful to leaders.

If you're interested, you can also check:

- Best frame control books
- **Power University**, where you can learn the ins and outs of

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

Body Language: The Ultimate Guide For Men's Nonverbals

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 July 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Body language is one of the most powerful tools for projecting power, status, and confidence.

It shapes how others perceive you before you say a word.

At The Power Moves, we teach men advanced social dynamics to achieve goals and win at life.
This article gives you the foundations to master body language.

Contents

- What Is Body Language
  - Channels of Nonverbal Communication
- Dimensions of Body Language
  - 1. Dominance vs. Submission
  - 2. Affection vs. Hostility
  - 3. Relaxation vs. Nervousness
  - 4. Engagement vs. Withdrawal
  - 5. Additional Dimensions
  - 6. Bonus: Masculine Body Language
- Improving Body Language Skills
  - Improve Your Decoding
  - Improve Your Body Language: The ABC
- How to Master Body Language
- FAQ
  - Learn More

What Is Body Language

Body language is a form of nonverbal communication in which physical cues, rather than words, convey meaning.

Body language skills are foundational to a successful social life because they allow you to sub-communicate value and confidence without saying a single word.
Improving your body language will significantly improve your social life, career, and dating.

We can divide body language skills into two main categories:

- **Reading** *from* others (decoding). It supports social intelligence and provides the 'intel' to strategize and achieve goals
- **Communicating** *to* others (encoding) is more active, linked to agency, and supports power, and goal achievement.

They're two sides of the same coin, both supporting one another.

Channels of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication happens through channels like gestures, eye contact, and posture.

Channels, sometimes called *domains* or *modalities*, refer to *how* the message is sent.
The *APA Handbook* lists eight channels, and we add artifacts and chronemics for completeness:

1. **Kinesics** ⍰⍰♂ – Body movements, gestures, posture, and expressions (part of body language)
2. **Oculesics** ⍰ – Communication through eye contact and gaze (part of body language)
3. **Proxemics** ⍰⍰⍰ – Physical space and distance (part of body language)
4. **Haptics** ⍰ – Physical touch (part of body language)
5. **Appearance** ⍰⍰ – Physical characteristics and attire
6. **Paralanguage** ⍰ – Aspects of speech like tone, pitch, volume, and rate
7. **Chronemics** ⍰ – Use of time, especially punctuality
8. **Artifacts** ⍰⍰ – Objects or items like jewelry and accessories
9. **Olfactics** ⍰⍰ – Scent, odors, and smells
10. **Environment** ⍰ – Physical setting influences like lighting or décor

⍰ Body language is a category of nonverbal communication
Body language, an often misused term, includes several sub-channels and is only one element of nonverbal communication. We use 'body language' here as it's generally referred to in everyday language.

Dimensions of Body Language

The dimensions, sometimes called 'domains', refer to *what* the message conveys, regardless of what channel it came through.

These are the four most important body language dimensions for men

The literature tends to recognize four core dimensions of body language:

1. **Dominance–Submission** (AKA Agency or Power)
2. **Affection–Hostility** (AKA Affiliation/Communion or Warmth/Coldness)
3. **Calmness–Nervousness** (AKA Relaxation/Stress or Composure/Tension)
4. **Engagement-Withdrawal** (AKA Immediacy/Nonimmediacy)

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:
As per infographic above, I consider openness/closeness as important as the top 3 for men, and more important than engagement/withdrawal.

For an overview:

Dimension	What It Measures	Examples
Dominance vs. Submission	Power, status, control **vs**. yielding, deference	**Dominant**: expansive, upright, raised chin, hands on hips **Submissive**: slouching, bowed head, closed
Affection vs. Hostility	Liking, warmth **vs**. disliking, coldness, negativity	**Affectionate**: smiling, leaning in, nodding **Hostile**: glaring, frowning, eye rolls
Calmness vs. Nervousness	Ease and composure **vs**. stress or discomfort	**Relaxed**: smooth moves, reclining, steady gaze **Nervous**: fidgeting, clenched jaw, hesitations
Engagement vs. Withdrawal	Closeness, interest, participation **vs**. detachment, distance	**Engaged**: Open posture, leaning in, direct gaze, facing **Distant**: Closed off, leaning back, turning away

Let's dig deeper:

1. Dominance vs. Submission

This dimension relates to power and status.
Dominant cues signal power and control, while submissive cues signal yielding and defeat.

It's one of the **most important body language domains for men because it's foundational to respect, status, and attraction**.

But it's also relevant for personal safety because predators pick victims with submissive body language (Gunns et al., 2002; Wheeler et al., 2009). Strong body language makes you a harder target.

Trait	Dominant	Submissive
Posture	Upright, chest out, shoulders back; head level or chin up	Slouched or rounded; chin tucked down; constricted (e.g. legs together)
Gaze / Eye Contact	Steady, direct gaze; holds eye contact	Avoids eye contact or glances downward
Use of Space	Spreads out—arms on armrests, feet apart; center of a group	Keeps limbs close; gravitates to edges; yields way
Voice & Tone	Louder, steady, moderate-to-slow pace	Softer, higher pitch; faster or uneven pace; hesitations
Proxemics	Moves into others' space when appropriate; initiates touch	Maintains distance; rarely initiates touch

A good principle is:

⚖ **Display dominance that's appropriately calibrated to the given context and to your goals**

Overly submissive

Positively dominant

Overly dominant, with a hint of aggression

Two important sub-dimensions of dominance are:

- **Positive dominance:** associated with prestigious status and adding value
  - Taking up space, without overdoing it
  - Open body language
  - Genuine pride

- **Domineering**: associated with a value-taking approach to socialization, and more extreme cues
  - Encroaching on personal spaces
  - Staring down to intimidate or looking away to sub-communicate superiority
  - Barging through or walking away with little consideration

??? PRO Tip: smile with closed lips, and when you feel like
Drawing parallels with apes, van Hooff differentiates two uses of smiles: laughs for fun, and friendly smiles to appease. In humans, high-power men *decide* when to smile (Hecht and LaFrance, 1998)

Dominance and Open Body Language

Dominance is associated with open body language, but it's contextual, and a domineering approach may also adopt closed body language.

Closed body language can be high in dominance. Cues are contextual

2. Affection vs. Hostility

This dimension signals warmth, liking, or closeness versus distance or negativity.

Trait	Affectionate	Hostile
Posture	Leaning in and facing torward; relaxed openness	Rigid; body pulled back or turned away; Full frontal for aggression
Gestures	Gentle, flowing gestures; open palms; mirroring; nods to signal rapport	Pointing; clenched fists; head shakes; glaring, eye-roll, or looking away
Proximity	Moves closer, respecting comfort zone;	Keeps or increases distance; closes distance for aggression
Touch	Light, reassuring touches (hand on arm, shoulder); consensual and warm	Pushes away; abrupt or no touch; may use touch to intimidate

Principle:

⚖ **Display an appropriate level of warmth, and remain warm *with those who reciprocate***

Too affectionate, overly expressive, child-like

Positively warm, horizontal hand for a win-win handshake

Hostile, domineering, upper-hand handshake

⚠️ **Takeaway: be dominant and warm.**

High dominance and high affection are equivalent to our power and warmth approach, or what we'd refer to as 'positively dominant'

3. Relaxation vs. Nervousness

This dimension reflects ease under pressure vs. stress or discomfort.

Research indicates relaxation influences observer trust, and nervousness is a possible sign of deception (but don't jump to conclusions: it's not a reliable cue!).

Trait	Relaxed	Nervous
Posture	Upright but loose; open chest; shoulders down;	Hunched or stiff; shoulders raised; rigid spine; muscle tension
Gestures	Smooth, fluid movements; purposeful hand motions; natural nods	Fidgeting, leg bouncing, tapping (displacement signals); self-soothing; rapid nods
Facial Expression	Soft, neutral smile; relaxed jaw and forehead; steady eye contact	Tight jaw; furrowed brow; forced smile; rapid blinking; darting eyes
Voice & Tone	Even, moderate pace; consistent volume; clear articulation	Shaky voice; uneven pace; variable volume; hesitant speech

Principle:

⚖️ **Be relaxed most of the time, in most safe situations**

But be alert when safety and results are important.

Self-soothing, torso and feet pointing away, slight fear in the eyes

Relaxed and at ease, more confident gaze

Too ‘chill’ for most contexts. Disrespectful

4. Engagement vs. Withdrawal

Principle:

⚖ **Be appropriately engaged, without forcing or faking interest**

Trait	Engaged	Withdrawn
Posture / Orientation	Torso and feet toward speaker; leaning in; moves closer	Torso and feet turned away; leaning back; stays away
Facial Expression	Responsive expressions (nods, smiles, raised eyebrows); sustained eye contact	Blank or neutral face; limited smiling; looks away
Vocal Tone / Prosody	Warm, varied pitch; responsive intonation; backchanneling (“mm-hmm,” “yes”)	Monotone or flat tone; few back-channeling
Touch	Light, validating, appropriate touches (e.g., tap on arm)	Not initiating touch

5. Additional Dimensions

We can add several sub-dimensions and expressive/non-expressive and open/closed body are the most significant:

- **Open–Closed**: It relates to dominance and relaxedness, two dimensions it’s sometimes confused with
  - *Openness* signals receptiveness and confidence with arms uncrossed, chest open, palms visible
    Studies associate it with higher dominance, attractiveness, and persuasiveness
  - *Closed* signals defensiveness or discomfort with arms folded, hunching, hiding the palms
    Studies suggest it’s less persuasive
- ⚖ Principle: Adopt appropriately open body language

Arms crossed and leg twine

Open body language (one hand only in pocket is OK, especially if the thumb is out. Looks casual and more relaxed than both hands out)

- **Expressiveness vs. Reserved:** Animated facial expressions, and dynamic voice on one hand, and deadpan faces and flat tonalities on the other
  - Too Expressive: Emotional, needy, anxious, and generally low-power
  - Unexpressive: Rigid, uninterested, psychopathic, or ‘socially off’
  - ⚖ Principle: Be appropriately expressive, without overdoing it

⍰ Example: Think of Joe Rogan. Masculine and socially dominant, but very expressive

6. Bonus: Masculine Body Language

While not an official dimension and while individuals vary, consistent gendered patterns have been observed.

The differences are partly biological and partly socialized.
And the socialized part is even more important for status, respect, and attraction.

Avoid overly feminine body language because men pay a price for adopting behavior deemed as 'feminine'.

For a general overview:

Aspect	MASCULINE	FEMININE
Posture	Broader stance (feet shoulder-width, chest out).	More constricted stance, especially with legs. Feet closer together.
Gestures	Fewer, but larger and more expansive.	More frequent, smaller gestures
Facial Expressions	Less expressive, suppressing more emotions, fewer smiles	More expressive, smile more often (even when listening)
Touch	Less casual touch, but may use it for dominance; purposeful handshake	Lighter, friendly touches; 'resting hand handshake', no 'pumps' and little tension
Proximity	Larger personal space (especially with strangers)	Willing to stand or sit closer to during conversation, reflecting affiliative behavior

These are general trends, not rules. Exceptions and nuances apply.
For example, in professional settings, women tend to adopt more male-typical scripts, especially in high-power roles and male-dominated industries.

Some general tips to project masculine poise:

- ✅ **Stand with feet shoulder-width apart**
- ✅ **Sit and stand for comfort**: think 'comfortable, without being a caricature' for a good balance
- ✅ **Cross legs in figure-four**
  - ❌ Avoid leg-over-leg
  - ❌ Avoid excessive smiling

Overdoes it

Positively masculine

Elbows, legs, gaze are all improvable
Remember that it's all about calibration.
Calibration reads the room's power dynamics, allowing you to dominate or connect as necessary, without looking weak.

Finally, advanced players are fluid.
For example, leaning towards femininity puts nervous women at ease during first approach. And moments of strategic vulnerability can help bonding.

Learn more:

- Masculine body language
- Feminine body language

Improving Body Language Skills

Here are some practical tips to improve your body language skills:

Improve Your Decoding

- **Look at ALL signals (holistic approach)**: Avoid the common pitfall of body language tunnel vision. Consider character, reputation, incentives, context
  - **⍰⍰ Use context to predict future behavior**
    ⍰ Example: Domineering body language in a group signals status ambition with an 'as*hole approach'.
    Expect some power moves from them
- **Establish a baseline** based on typical behavior. Deviations from this baseline are more telling
- **Look at clusters** and patterns that point to the same conclusion
  ⍰⍰ Discordant cues may signal a conscious effort to project a certain image. Or the intention to deceive
- **Consider alternative explanations**. Gestures mean different things in different contexts. Crossed arms may simply one is cold

  - Disheveled looks may suggest low ambition… Or total freedom of someone who's already made it
  - Sculpted muscles may suggest ambition, but also narcissism or body dysmorphia.
- **Watch Face, Torso, Feet:** Notice fake smiles, a sign of low confidence and low-power
  ⍰⍰ Lead the interaction with nervous people, talk more, look away. Be chill and they will relax
  ⍰⍰If feet and torso point away, end it and move first before they end it themselves

Finally, beware of 'body language experts'.
A meta-analysis showed that people overestimate the significance of individual cues. 'Experts' tend to over-analyze and over-emphasize cues, sometimes missing the holistic picture:

> **Lucio**: This body language expert got it all wrong.
> Looking for individual cues, she missed the overall dynamics of high attraction

Finally, remember to look at social dynamics, not just individual body language.
For example, a good strategist sits beside his boss, rather than in front:

Sitting besides sub-communicates 'in-group cooperation', while sitting in front predisposes for a more competitive dynamic

Also see:

- Best resources to learn body language

Improve Your Body Language: The ABC

Improving your body language is a process of replacing negative habits with positive ones.

- **Increase self-awareness**: Pay attention to your body language in different situations. E.g.: How do you stand when nervous vs. comfortable?
  - Mindfulness: Be present in your interactions, notice how your body language
- **Maintain Good Posture:** Look at yourself in the mirror, note your areas for improvement, and address them

with correcting exercises

- **Prefer open postures:** Keep your hands visible, your shoulders relaxed, and your chest open
- **Relax:** Keep your facial muscles and body relaxed. Pay attention to shoulders and jaw
  - Control Nervous Habits: Remove 'displacement signals' like self-touching, tapping fingers, playing with your hair, or rubbing hands
- **Hold Eye Contact**. If you're a beginner, think about '60-70% of the conversation', breaking away to the side, during pauses, or while nodding
- **Command Your Space:** Aim for a 'positively dominant' balance. Sit and recline comfortably, without becoming a caricature
- **Manage Your Voice:** Vocal tone, pitch, and pace are crucial nonverbal cues. Speak clearly, at a moderate pace, and with a confident tone.
  How to speak with power

Check this:

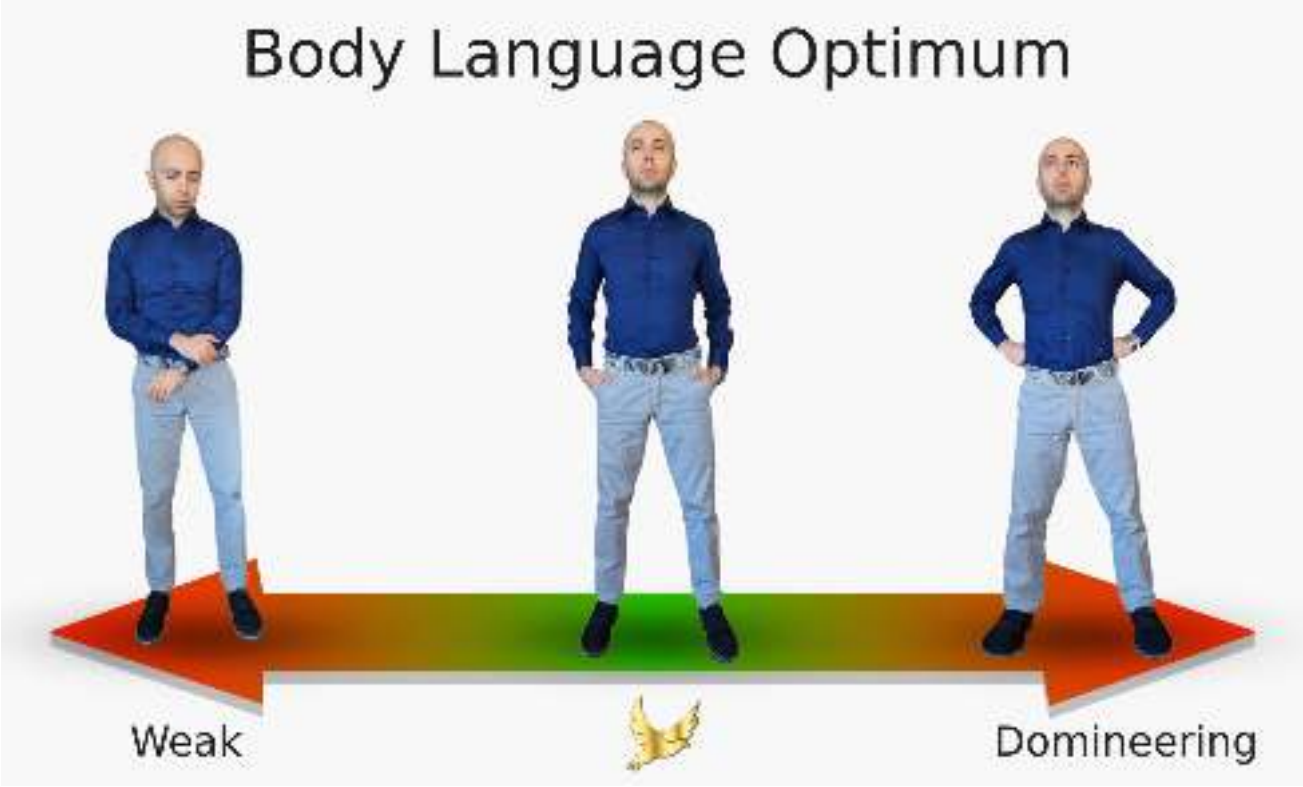
- How to move with confidence

How to Master Body Language

Many resources recommend men to 'take more space', 'say less than necessary', or 'move slowly'.

While these generalizations are well-meaning and valid for many, they're also vague and mostly aimed at beginners.

Instead, maximum effectiveness requires that you **calibrate your body language** to the context and to your goals.



Great body language is calibrated to context and goals—usually between the two extremes of weak and try-hard

Contextual Calibration

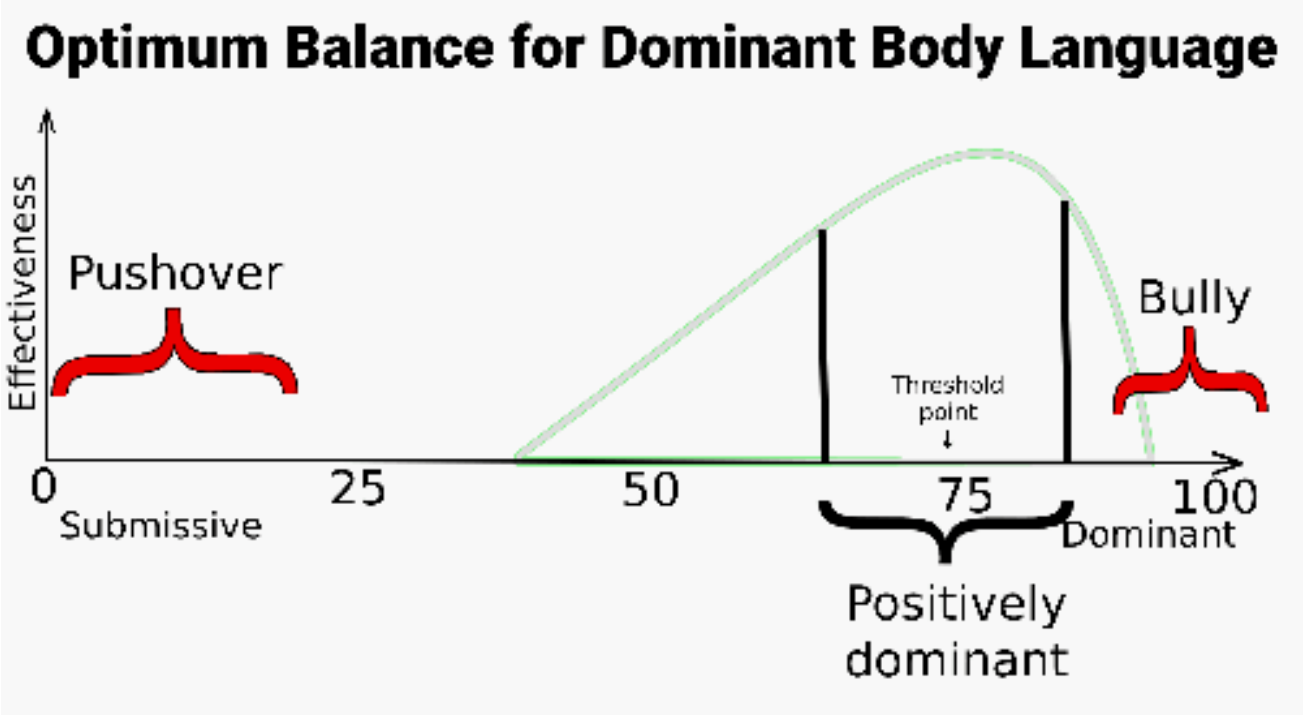
For example:

- **Spread out more than your date**, but less than your boss

- **Lean in towards your boss** explaining something, less to your employee reporting
- **Hold your beer to the side in a nightclub**, not a champagne at a gala

The more advanced you become, the more calibrated you become.

Body Language Golden Balance



The ‘golden balance’ for body language almost always strikes a balance between extremes.

Where that balance falls depends on context and goals.

But to give you an idea:

⚖ **Men maximize body language on the more dominant, more relaxed, more open, and less expressive side of the spectrum.**
As per the ‘high-power and high warmth‘ model, go slightly more affiliative as well.

FAQ

Body language is often misunderstood, so let’s clarify common myths and misconceptions:

Is body language like an actual language?

Body language is not a true language in the linguistic sense — it has no formal grammar or fixed structure. It’s more fluid, context-dependent, and influenced by culture.
Still, body language plays a major role in communication, and there are many foundational universal patterns that people recognize and respond to.

What is the 7 38 55 rule?

The 7-38-55 rule refers to Albert Mehrabian’s research that 93% of communication is nonverbal and only 7% is verbal.
This idea comes from Albert Mehrabian’s research, but it is widely misunderstood and misapplied. The findings were based on highly specific lab conditions, with single words or short phrases combined with mismatched facial

expressions or vocal tones—*and only when communicating feelings or attitudes* (Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967; Mehrabian & Wiener, 1967).
It is not a universal communication rule, but rather a simplified pop-psychology trope.

What are the 7 types of body language?

The 7 types of body language are facial expressions, body movement, posture, gestures, eye contact, touch, and proxemics.
However, there is no definitive list, and the 'types' to include depend on the level of chosen granularity.

Is body language actual science?

Body language is a legitimate area of study within nonverbal communication and psychology, and there is substantial research linking physical expressions to emotions, intentions, and social dynamics.
That said, some popular teachings on body language drift into pseudoscience, exaggerating or fabricating claims that lack any solid empirical support.

Learn More

Want to own body language and master social dynamics?
Power University provides the full blueprint—pics, vids, drills—to make you unstoppable.

Respect: What Is It, and Why It Matters

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 July 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Respect is the deference and regard others have for you, and it's a foundational building block for influence, status, leadership, and successful dating & relationships.

Especially for men, getting respect from others is not only a crucial step for social and life success, but it also underpins mental well-being and self-esteem.

This article distills what research says about respect, the traits that drive it, and how to become more respected.

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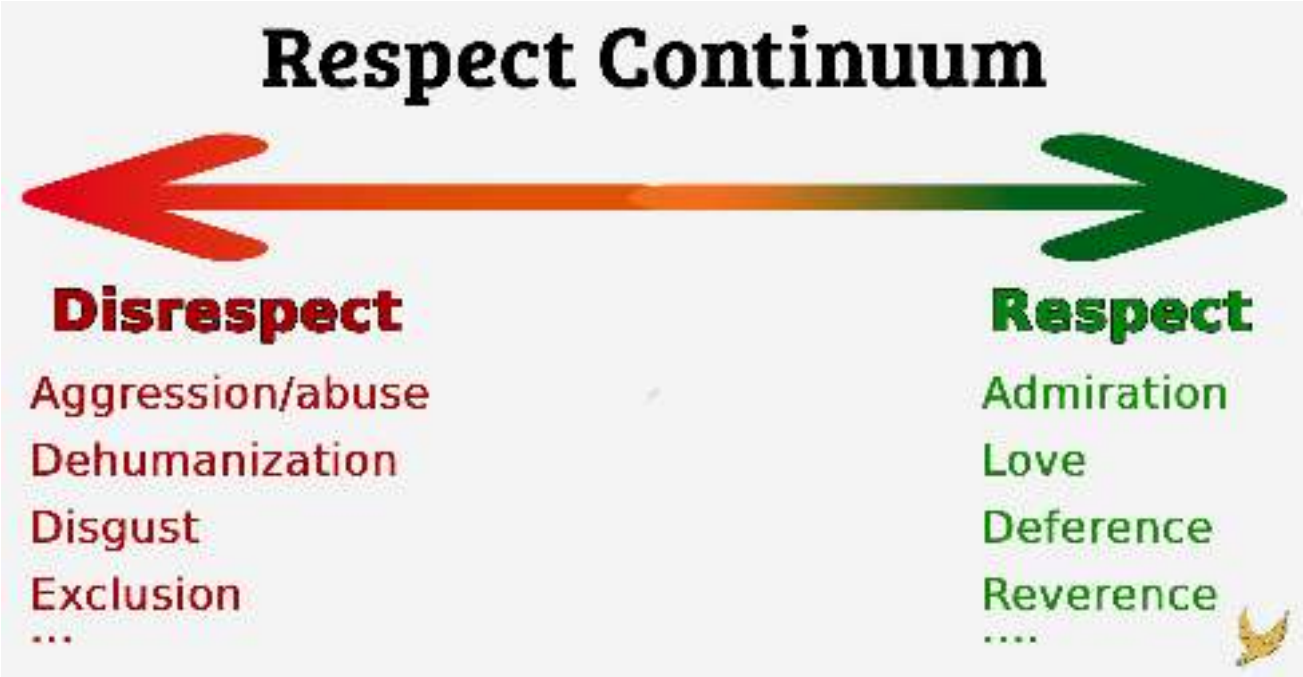
What Is Respect?

Respect is the social assessment of an individual's respect-worthiness, typically reflected in behavior—ranging from deference and esteem to indifference or overt disrespect.

Respect overlaps with status, affection, and in part with popularity.
But they're also different.
Respect implies high regard, influence, and possibly reverence—even if you may not like them, and even if the recipient may not be popular.

You can think of respect-worthiness as on a scale:



Respect is on a 'bell curve continuum', and most relationships sit around the middle

The Three Types of Respect

There are several ways of categorizing respect, and we prefer this:

- **Value-based respect**: Based on social and mate value and the potential for adding value. It's grounded in social exchange theory
- **Integrity-based respect:** Based on reputation for integrity and honor
- **Power-based respect**: Based on status/rank, dominance, assertiveness, and the ability to inflict costs

The ideal leader embodies them all.
He's high power, but uses it with integrity and to add value to his followers and associates.

Respect-worthiness

Respect-worthiness includes traits and behaviors that elicit respect from others.

It's a concept we introduce to set a measure and goal for men's self-development.
Men can approach, asses,s and work on their respect-worthiness via two sub-categories:

- **Deserved** for personal qualities and personal value
- **Earned** with the ability to demand respect when not forthcoming

'Deserved' respect forms the foundations.
'Earned' respect is also not necessarily dominant or aggressive. Most often, it's about advanced social skills, sub-communication, and frame control.

Don't be a 'too nice guy': you need both value and power
Too nice guys who fail to get respect think their (supposed) 'good' character should be enough. They forget good character includes value, and that they must be able to *demand* respect.

Why Respect Matters—Especially for Men

Respect correlates with all the good things you want in life: status, attraction, influence, and earning potential.

1. Social Influence & Leadership

Whether in business, social settings, or dating, respected men lead—and their ideas are taken seriously.

Prestige-based status, which many scholars equate to respect, is a strong predictor of long-term group influence.

Respected men also experience less 'social friction', with fewer challenges and less pushback.
People defer more, interrupt less, and often try to win their approval rather than conflict with them.

2. Higher Mate Value

Respect is a precondition to attraction.

That means that respect alone does not guarantee attraction. However, **lack of respect makes attraction impossible**.
This holds true both in one-on-one dyads and in how women observe a man being treated by others:

- No *female* respect, no attraction
- No *social* respect, no attraction

And the opposite is true.
Gain her respect, get other people's respect, and her attraction increases.

This applies to both short and long-term.
Men who maintain respect in their relationship also tend to maintain attraction.

3. Better Relationships

Respect is a precondition for any healthy relationship.

Conversely, relationships without respect tend to be exploitative (lose-win).

They only survive with external pressures, manipulation, or constant chasing and value transfers (simping).

Importantly, **lack of respect invites predation and bullying.**
No respect makes you an easy target. And no respect for your character makes it *morally* right to take from you (Henrich, 2015)

3.2. Better Intimate Relationships

In intimate relationships, respect predicts relationship satisfaction more than love or liking.

Conversely, disrespect like contempt or constant criticism are reliable predictors of impending breakup.

> A relationship without respect is submission and self-betrayal.
>
> *TPM proverb*

4. Career and Financial Gains

Respect correlates with promotions, access to high-status networks, and leadership roles.

Together with social and mental empowerment, **respect is one of the 'unspoken rules' of management promotions.**

You may never hear 'I don't respect you' as the official reason for being passed over for promotions.
But respect is the #1 reason why too nice guys are not 'management material'.

5. Self-Esteem and Mental Health

As social animals, the quality of our social life impacts the quality of our mental life.

Sociomether theory posits that self-esteem tracks our social value.
If you're valued and respected, your self-esteem rises. If you're devalued and disrespected, your self-esteem decreases.

Several studies also found a link between low status and depression.

6. Group Cohesion & Goal Achievement

Individuals who earn respect also benefit the group.

Like attracts like, and respect-worthy men attract other respect-worthy men, who are more likely to be high-value contributors.

The positive effect of respect on group performance goes both ways: men who feel respected are also more

engaged, cooperative, prosocial, and even more innovative.

Traits That Afford Respect

Several traits and behaviors have been consistently linked with higher levels of earned respect.
Below are the most evidence-backed factors.

1. Competence and Mastery

According to Anderson & Kilduff (2009), groups quickly assign status and respect to individuals who demonstrate value.
This includes:

- Domain-specific skill (e.g., in work, sports, debate, leadership)
- Good judgment
- Problem-solving ability

2. Self-Confidence

Self-confidence promotes respect.

Confidence is a high-power trait that people admire and wish they had.
And people tend to read confidence as a sign of competence.

However, it's always best to combine confidence with true value and competence.
Bravado without ability may still win short-term attention, but it can undermine genuine long-term respect—especially from other high-value men who don't fall for the confident game.

3. Integrity and Moral Character

Even in competitive domains, people respect those who:

- Keep their word
- Act consistently with values
- Stand up for others or for what's right

In leadership studies, integrity consistently ranks as the most admired trait.

4. Emotional Control and Self-Mastery

Men who stay calm under pressure are respected more than those who panic, rage, or overreact.

Self-regulation signals maturity and composure, and ties into the ancient idea of "stoic masculinity."

5. Physical Presence and Body Language

Studies on embodied cognition and nonverbal dominance show that people assign higher status to those who:

- Stand tall and take up space
- Speak with calm, deliberate tone
- Move with intention rather than fidgeting

6. Assertiveness & Ability to Set Boundaries

Respect is a social construct, so social competence trumps non-social competence.

To give an example, an IT geek can be highly competent but may struggle with respect.

Men who allow others to walk over them lose respect fast.
Those who set limits—calmly and firmly—are perceived as higher status and less exploitable.

This includes:

- Saying "no" when appropriate
- Confronting disrespect

- Walking away from poor behavior

7. Contribution to the Group

We are instinctively programmed to track cooperators and cheats.

Cooperators contribute and add value, while cheats take from others and their communities.

We naturally dislike and wish to punish takers, while we naturally respect givers who benefit the collective—whether it's a team, friend group, company, or community.
In evolutionary terms, high-value males were often those who protected or provisioned others.

🤵♂️Lucio's Take: **Contribution is my ultimate yardstick**

Lucio:
My ultimate measure of someone's 'worthiness' is their contribution to humanity.

The ultimate question of life: did you give, or take?

Takers make humanity and us all worse off, while givers make humanity and us all better.
My ultimate goal for life is to give more than I took.

Givers get my respect.

8. Social Value

Social value is a catch-all category for all the traits that make a high-value man.

Just some examples:

- **Social skills**, including charisma, charm, etc.
- **Wealth**
- **High-status job**

- **Connections**, including friends and allies

Also see:

- **How to be a high-value man**

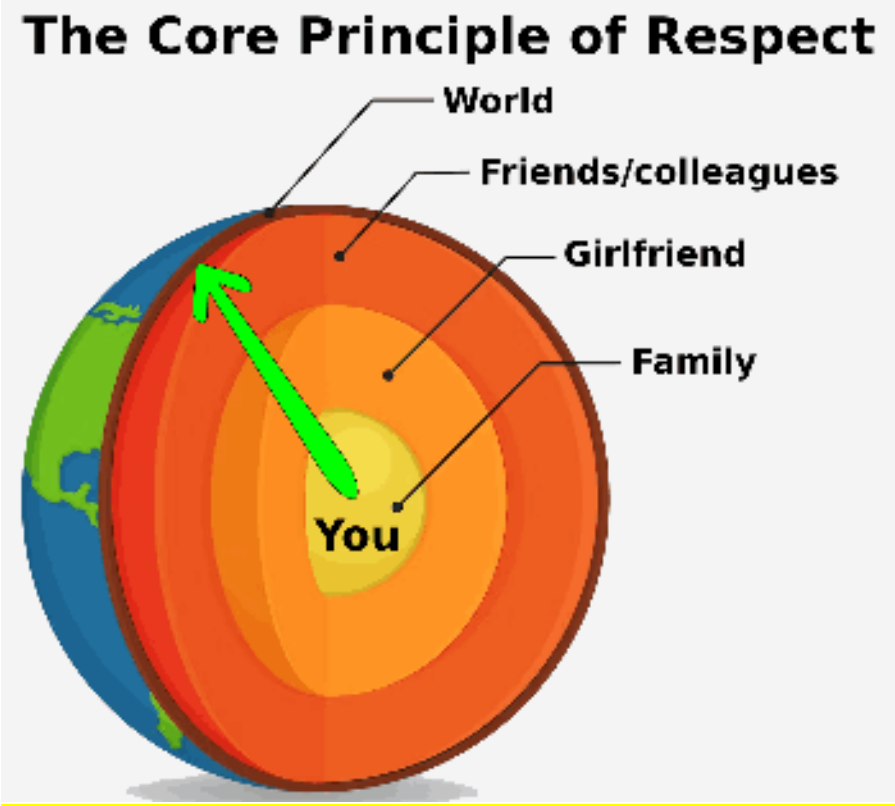
> The 10 Traits of High-Value Men (W/ Examples)

The Proximity Principle of Respect

Principle:

The importance of interpersonal respect grows with physical, material, and emotional closeness and interrelatedness

Evolutionary theories suggest cooperation emerged because repeated interactions with kin and tribesmen, the people closeset to us, was good for all—including for the 'selfish gene'.



The proximity principle suggests that the best approach to gain others' respect is to start from the people closest to you

The people closest to us also have a stronger impact in all these areas:

- **Psychological empowerment**: The closer people are to you, the more their respect impacts your inner life
- **Material returns**: Respect from colleagues, business partners, and professional networks support career growth and financial outcomes
- **Reputational impact**: The closer people are, the more their respect speaks about your social value.
  E.g.: people subconsciously think '*The people who know him best respect him, so he must deserve respect*'.
- **Life quality**: In general, respect underpins quality relationships, and quality relationships make for a better life

The people closest to you are your 'foundations' for self-respect, so **prioritize respect from the people close to you** ('inside-out approach').

Let's dig deeper:

Parental Respect

Evolutionary theories posit that parents invest more in high-potential children.
Parents know you best since you were first born.

Meaning:

Parental respect sub-communicates high genetic potential ('fitness'), while their lack of respect sub-communicates low fitness.

That means that, for example, your girlfriend's attraction tanks if your parents disrespect you.

I know, it's not 'fair' because poor parents may disrespect and undermine anyone.
But the world isn't fair, and you must address that as an adult.

Siblings Respect

Siblings share 50% of their genes, but evolutionary theories tell us we also compete for the family's attention and resources.

In broad strokes:

- **Respect from older brothers must be earned**
- **Respect from younger brothers must be maintained**

Older brothers, especially first-borns, hold several power-relevant advantages:

- **Established relationships** with parents and family create a stronger power base
  - Stronger bonds as parents often worry and bond more with their firstborn
- **Bigger size & brains** to dominate early competitions and be taken more seriously by the adults
- **Preferred heir** in many cultures, succeeding the father and/or taking over the family interests

You need a smart approach to shine, and still maintain positive relationships.
Principle:

⚖️ **The more you beat your brothers, the more you must make them feel respected**

This is especially important for younger brothers.
As an example from The Godfather:

Win competitions, but show respect for the defeated

> **Fredo**: I'm your older brother Mike and I was stepped over!! <— Mike 'overthrew' his older brother
> I can handle things, I'm smart! And I want respect!!! <— Fredo feels disrespected

⬆️ **Display *more* respect when you're beating your brothers**
Mishandling this relationship without 'power protecting' led Fredo to betray the Godfather.

Trump's family had similar dynamics.
Donald's brother was outshone, disapproved of, and spiraled into alcoholism and early death.

🤦♂️ I also experienced a situation of 'outshining' a brother. And hopefully managed them better.

Partner Respect

Public admiration from your partner supercharges your reputation while public disrespect destroys it.

Women naturally test men early on, and may later 'test your boundaries' to see what you allow and don't allow. Some women will keep pushing without ever stopping.

This is why you must **nip any disrespect in the bud**.

A good mindset of win-win is:

> ⍰ I expect respect because I respect you

Respect & Status

Respect and status are different but related:

- **Status**: Social position or rank within a hierarchy
- **Respect**: Positive regard for someone

Status hinges on social dynamics and hierarchical structures.
Respect, by contrast, is more associated with an individual's internal evaluation, and often includes elements of trust and admiration.

Construct	Status	Respect
Source	Groups	Individuals
Scope	Hierarchical	Non-hierarchical
Orientation	External recognition dictates behaviors and dispositions ("Outside-in")	Internal assessment dictate behaviors and dispositions ("Inside-out")

It's also possible to have one, but not the other.

One may occupy a high-status role by virtue of formal rank without necessarily commanding respect. And a leader may lose positional authority yet retain—or even enhance—personal respect among his former peers and subordinates.

In our 'alpha males article', this infographic highlights this disconnect:

That said, in real-life, status and respect are interrelated and feed into each other, with respect tracking and negotiation status.
For simplicity, you may picture that status is 'social respect and deference'.

Prestige vs. Dominance

Although scholars associate respect with prestige only, in everyday parlance, 'respect' includes deference and formality.

In this larger sense, different aspects of respect also map onto different aspects of status:

- **Earned respect** (prestige) yields admiration and influence
- **Fear-based respect** (dominance) yields obedience and power

Prestigious men are competent and value adding, gaining admiration and voluntary deference.
In romantic contexts, women prefer prestigious traits (skill, kindness, stability) for lasting relationships.

By contrast, dominant men gain respect through fear, intimidation, or coercion via rank or formal authority. Dominant men often display visible power cues: physical formidability (size, muscularity), aggressive posture and power moves, deep or loud voice, and a propensity for signaling anger.

In dating contexts, dominant men are more attractive than low-status men, especially for short-term mating. But it may come at a cost of long-term attraction or stability.

Respect based on coercion is also often skin-deep and fake. Dominance creates resentment and can turn into active aggression when the dominant man loses power.

Better to Be Feared, or Loved?

The dynamics of prestige and dominance recall the popular dichotomy of 'fear VS love'.

Machiavelli famously said that, if forced to pick one, a ruler should pick fear.

And he's right… If a *ruler* is *forced to choose*.

But you're not forced to choose.
And you're probably not a despot—nobody in the West is.

Machiavelli also convened that both are better.
We agree: go for the best of both.

Cross-Cultural Insights on Respect

Respect is universally valued across cultures, underlying its importance for *everyone*.

Many markers of respect, including competence and social skills, are universal.

But some traits can be culture-specific, and the expression of respect can vary.
For example:

- **Western cultures:** Emphasize assertiveness, individual achievement, and autonomy. Respect is more based on competence
- **East Asian cultures:** Value humility, deference, and harmony. Polite language, deference, and attentive body language are key
- **Middle Eastern and Latin cultures:** Often associate masculine respect with honor and reputation

These differences may impact leadership dynamics as well.
Leadership studies suggest collectivists may admire supportive leaders while individualists value confidence and independent work.

Since the foundations are shared, focus on the more foundational commonalities.

And then calibrate to cultural scripts for the last 20%.

Want More?

Get the respect you deserve with Power University's research-backed mindsets, strategies, and techniques:

- **Power University**, our flagship course proven to increase respect

Masculine Body Language: Move, Stand, Speak Right

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 July 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Masculine body language conveys confidence and earn you instant respect, attraction, and influence—without saying a word.

At The Power Moves, we've taught thousands of men the mechanics behind masculine presence—and how to wield it strategically to achieve goals.

This guide avoids the ungendered pop-psych fluff and teaches you how powerful men *actually* move.
Let's get into it.

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Why Masculine Body Language Matters

People judge you in seconds—and much of that judgment comes from how you move, stand, and look, not what you say.

Masculinity is one of the foundations of a high-value man who attains status, respect, and attraction. Conversely, researchers say that **men incur heavy social costs for adopting feminine body language**.

And your nonverbal communication conveys masculine power before you even speak.
If you get this right, you gain:

- **Respect** from men
- **Attraction** from women
- **Influence** and **status** in any group

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Prioritize power, and masculinity will follow**

Lucio:
Masculinity matters, and if you're lacking it, you must focus on it.

But remember it's a means to an end—a simple truth that sometimes goes missing in male self-development.

'Masculinity as a goal' can be overdone and look try-hard. The second risk is blind spots: to be effective, masculinity requires **calibration**, and effective **strategies**.

⍰ Think of it this way: you're already a man, you don't need to learn how to be one.
Focus on social and mental empowerment, and masculine body language will naturally follow.

How to Have Masculine Body Language

Here are the basics of masculine body language:

1. Stand Like a Leader

Posture is the foundation of good body language, and masculinity is no exception.

- **Straight spine**
- **Shoulders back**
- **Chest open**
- **Feet shoulder-width** or wider

Hands on hips is a typically high-power posture, but can be too much in professional settings and when you want to prioritize rapport and connection

2. Take Up Space

Including:

- **Elbows on armrests** or one elbow against a bar
- **Legs apart** or in 'legs four position' (below)

This body language pose is a good balance of natural spreading out for comfort, without overdoing it. It fits well in informal socialization

Spreading out is the most stereotypical advice when it comes to both masculine and dominant body language, and it's valid.
However, never forget:

⍰⍰ Balance & calibration: don't overdo it

An over-manspread is juvenile and try-hard in many settings, and unprofessional at work.

Overdoes it

Positively masculine

Elbows, legs, gaze ⍰⍰

3. Walk Like You Belong

Your walk displays your inner beliefs.
Men who walk like they own the place get treated like they do.

Key masculine cues:

- **Shoulder swag**, The *APA Handbook* calls it ”walking in 3D rather than 2D”
- **Steady brisk pace**, but not rushed
- **Longer stride** length
- **Arms swing** to pace your walk
- **Eyes straight on** or scanning *without fear*—not glued to your phone

⍰⍰ **Power move**: stand your ground, don’t jump out of people’s way. If on collision course, expect others to take their half-step out of the way

4. Facial Expressions: Keep It Cool ⍰

- **Hold eye contact** a second longer than average.
  In public, look ahead in the distance, out of focus, and *through* people
- **Blink less** frequently
- **Chin parallel** to the floor
- **Use a relaxed, slight, tight-lipped smile** to build intrigue
  - Eyes open for intensity, lower eyelids for seductivity

A slight, tight-lipped smile displays masculine confidence. With lower eyelids, it's seductive; with open eyes, it's intense

Avoid:

- ✕ **Looking away too fast**, especially if downward (submissive)
- ✕ **Smiling too often** or too broadly (approval-seeking)
- ✕ **Wide open eyes** (nervous energy)

⁉️ **Power move**: stare to enforce boundaries after a power move, without a single word.

5. Pick A Central Spot

Body language isn't just what you do—it's also **where you stand**.

- Claim central or forward-facing spots in groups
- Stand in visible spots in bars and clubs
- Look towards the center/main action ⁉️ (unless purposefully ignoring as a power move)

Centered, straight-looking, positive, and confident

On the edges, gaze down & away, pessimistic & withdrawn

⁉️ **Power move**: Stand slightly *off-center* to someone facing you to frame him as chasing you, while you act like a leader who remains open to the full group

I'm the one in the middle, and with the most obviously open body language

6. Start Slightly More Masculine

First impressions are critical: err on the side of power—it's the strategic optimum.

You can always mellow and tone it down later, and it's easier to 'come down', than 'go up'.
Starting too low in masculinity is costlier, and you face a bigger uphill struggle in changing impressions.

In Dating:

- Hold your frame even when she tests it
- More eye contact, fewer smiles
- Lean back first, lean in *after* investment

In Socialization:

- Be the first to move
- Be the first to take space
- Use long pauses to signal confidence and comfort with silence

At Work:

- Speak early in meetings, with calm tone and open gestures
- Take the seat with the most visibility (or strategically close to your boss)
- Keep your chin up and hands above the table

7. Speak Like A Man

Albeit not strictly 'body language', paralanguage is a fundamental part of nonverbal communication.

A masculine voice is:

- **Lower pitch** (Klofstad, 2012)
- **Higher volume** than average (Schmid Mast & Sczesny, 2010)

And avoid:

- ✕ Vocal fry
- ✕ Upspeak, or going up as if it were a question mark
- ✕ Tentative language and excessive backchanneling (Leaper & Robnett, 2011)

For more see:

- Low power speaking: stop doing these
- High power speaking: speak like a confident man

8. Avoid Generic & Ungendered Pop-Psychology

Generic, untailored advice is the bane of self-help.

For example, this advice is valid *only* if well-calibrated, and generally *not* associated with high masculinity:

- ⚠ **Mirror others**: men mirror *less*, women mirror more, and androgynous men mirror most (M. LaFrance and Ickes, 1981)
- ⚠ **Be expressive**: masculine men are *less* expressive and androgynous men most expressive (Narus and Fischer, 1982)
- ⚠ **Ask questions**: men use more *statements*, women ask more questions (M. LaFrance and Carmen, 1980)

Power-unaware generic advice is equally common.
Popular ones for confidence and body language include:

- ⚠ **Look people in the eyes**, high-status and dominant men look less at others when they speak (Exline, Ellyson, & Long, 1975)
- ⚠ **Speak less than necessary**, a valid 'law' from pop literature on power, but counterproductive during group formation, in bars or clubs, and among younger men

Of course, saying not to do any of the above would also be a useless generalization.
Masculine effectiveness is about when to do what, and how to do it (keep reading).

Masculine vs Feminine Body Language

While individuals vary, consistent gendered patterns have been observed.

Some differences are genetic, and some come down to cutlure and socialization. The latter is even *more* important for status, and likely also for respect, and attraction.

A simple principle here:

⚖ **Avoid feminine body language**
Men pay a price for behavior deemed as 'feminine'.

For a quick overview on feminine vs masculine body language:

Aspect	MASCULINE	FEMININE
Posture	Broader stance (feet shoulder-width, chest out).	Constricted stance, legs and feet closer together.
Gestures	Fewer, but larger and more expansive.	More frequent, smaller gestures
Facial Expressions	Less expressive, suppressing more emotions	More expressive
Touch	Less casual touch, but may use it for dominance; purposeful handshake	Lighter, friendly touches; 'resting hand handshake', no 'pumps' and little tension
Proximity	Larger personal space (especially with strangers)	Willing to stand or sit closer to during conversation, reflecting affiliative behavior
Smile	Fewer smiles in neutral situations	Smile more often (even when listening)
Voice	More monotone	Wider vocal pitch range and vocal variety

Of course, these are general trends, not rules. Exceptions and nuances apply.

But don't get lost in over-relativism: many nuances follow predictable and foundational power principles.
For example, women adopt more male-typical scripts at work, and especially in high-power roles and male-dominated industries.
It's exactly what you'd expect when higher masculinity is the group norm, expected, and necessary for advancing.

Masculine Optimum Balance

Masculine body language follows the principle of optimum balance, achieving maximum benefits within the two extremes of too feminine, and try-hard machismo.

Where exactly that optimum falls comes down to calibration for social context, calibration for goal achievement, and advanced fluidity.

Optimal masculine body language for most situations will fall close to that central position

1. Calibrating to Context

Remember that masculinity, like almost anything else, is all about calibration.

Calibration reads the room's power dynamics, allowing you to dominate or put others at ease as necessary, without looking weak.

As a principle and guideline:

⚖ **Be on the upper range of masculine body language that is appropriate for the context**

We advise the upper because 'higher masculinity than average' is good, and because the costs of 'not masculine enough' outweigh the costs of 'being too masculine'.

2. Calibrating to Goal Achievement

Advanced calibration considers the context, in light of one's goals.

Once you reach all your goals, you don't even need to care of how you come across.
This is why some wealthy older men dress poorly: they don't need to prove anything to anyone.

However, only smart calibration, smart action, and *caring* what others think will get you there.

Some tips:

- **Be more masculine than your dates**, for attraction
- **Be more masculin than the average**, for status
- **Tone it down at the office**, to prevent competitive higher ups to dislike you (you'll 'do you' once you overtake them)

3. Advanced Calibration: Strategic Fluidity

Finally, advanced players are never stuck with any 'mode'.

Instead, they span the full gamut depending on what best achieves their goals, given the context.

For example, leaning towards femininity puts nervous women at ease during first approach. And moments of strategic vulnerability can help bonding during relationship formation.

Some seducer types even lean on feminine body language.
See for example Russell Brand:

> **Russell Brand**: (moves with feminine body language)

⁉️♂ **Lucio's take**: I don't necessarily advise copying Russell (I wouldn't want to be him, for one). It's the *concept* of adaptive fluidity you want to adapt, not any specifc move or style.

Next Level: The WINNING Man

Men who understand and control their nonverbal communication rise faster.
They attract more interest, build better alliances, and command more respect.

However, the top men aren't merely able to strike masculine poses.
They're advanced strategists, fluid players, and mentally unbeatable.

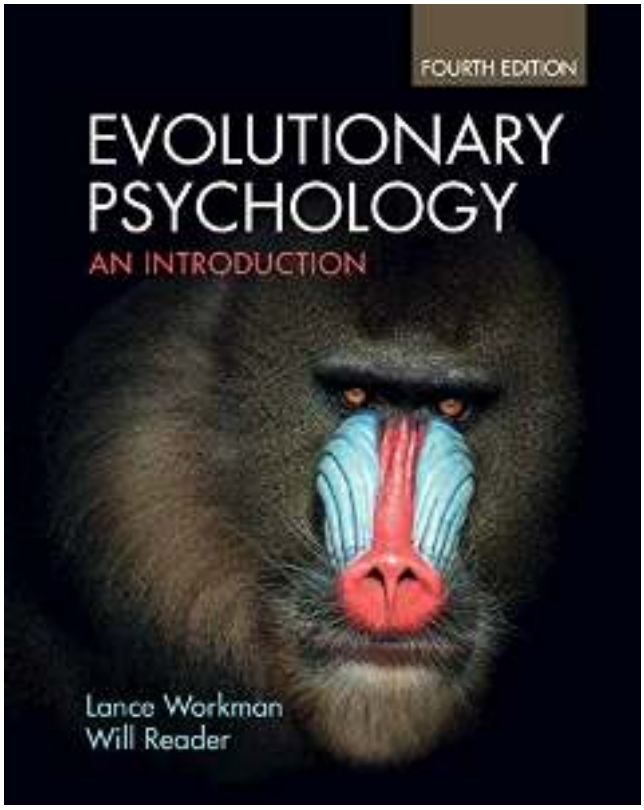
We teach how in our flagship training program:

- **Power University**, the full blueprint for empowered men who achieve their life goals

Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction – Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 30 July 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction (2021) offers a comprehensive exploration of how Darwinian principles shape the human mind and behavior. Grounded in modern research, it bridges biology and psychology to explain universal mental adaptations.



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FULL SUMMARY

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Workman and Reader also edited *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior*

1: Introduction to Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychology applies principles of Darwinian natural selection to understand the human mind.

Natural selection is based on differential reproductive success of heritable characteristics that vary in a population. The human mind, as a physical organ (the brain), is shaped by natural selection, and thus, behavior is also a product of evolution.

The key premise is that the mind, like the body, has evolved to solve problems faced by our ancestors in the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (EEA).

Key Concepts

- **The Environment of Evolutionary Adaptation (EEA)**: The ancestral environment in which human psychological traits evolved, shaping our current behavior and cognition.
- **Proximate and ultimate levels of explanation**: Proximate explains how a trait works (mechanism), while ultimate explains why it evolved (function/adaptive value).
- **Heritable variability**: Differences in traits among individuals that can be passed down genetically.
- **Differential reproductive success**: The idea that some traits increase the chances of reproducing and passing on genes more than others.
- **Particulate inheritance**: The principle that genes are passed on as discrete units, not blended (Mendelian genetics).
- **Eugenics**: A controversial and discredited movement aimed at improving the genetic quality of a population, often through unethical means.
- **The Great Chain of Being (scala naturae)**: A historical, hierarchical concept ranking all living things from lowest to highest (e.g., minerals to God), not supported by modern biology.
- **Sociobiology**: An approach that applies evolutionary theory to explain social behavior, often criticized for being

overly genetic determinist.

- **Gene–culture co-evolution / dual-inheritance theory**: The view that genetic and cultural evolution interact and shape each other over time.
- **Naturalistic fallacy**: Mistakenly assuming that what is natural is morally right or desirable.
- **Moralistic fallacy**: Mistakenly assuming that what is morally desirable must also be found in nature.

A History of Evolutionary Thinking

1. Erasmus Darwin and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck proposed early evolutionary ideas; Lamarck's inheritance of acquired characteristics is largely discredited, though epigenetics offers a modern but limited twist (Haig, 2007).
2. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) introduced natural selection via heritable variability and differential reproductive success, with *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animal* (1872) extending this to mental processes.
3. Gregor Mendel's particulate inheritance (1865) laid genetics' foundation, later integrated into the modern synthesis with Darwin's work.
4. William James (1890) highlighted human instincts, countering views of humans as instinct-free compared to animals.
5. Francis Galton (1908) pioneered psychometrics and eugenics, applying evolution to psychology, though eugenics remains controversial.
   - Quote:
     More controversial was Galton's attempt to apply his scientific findings to help the greater good of society. He suggested society might be improved (with) a little selective breeding. He suggested that individuals who might benefit society (the innovators, the highly intelligent etc.) be encouraged to produce many offspring, and those whose traits are seen as less desirable (the less intelligent, the indolent etc.) be discouraged from reproducing, a controversial programme that he called eugenics
6. Sigmund Freud's (1914) id and unconscious motives align with genes influencing behavior.
7. The Standard Social Science Model (SSSM) dominated 20th-century social sciences, viewing humans as blank slates shaped by culture, reacting against biological determinism (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992).

Addressing Misconceptions

- **"More Evolved" Fallacy (Great Chain of Being):** The idea that some organisms are "more evolved" or that humans descended directly from chimpanzees and we're an 'upgraded species' is a misunderstanding. Instead, humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor, and each species possesses unique adaptations suited to its evolutionary path
  ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: this is also similar to the misconception that evolution 'always moves towards a better version', which is not always the case
- **Nature VS nurture fallacy**: The field seeks to unify social sciences through Darwinian principles, acknowledging the impact of *both* nature and nurture, both of which also co-influence each other
- **Genes are 'inflexible'**: Genes must not necessarily lead to behaviour that is fixed and inflexible; flexibility is often built into the system, with behaviour being contingent upon the environment and genes, biology, culture and environment all influencing each other
- **Evolutionary psychology is 'bad'**: *We must not reject it simply on the grounds that some people have used it for nefarious means, any more than we should reject sub-atomic physics for its role in the production of nuclear weaponry. The fact that we do not like the implications of a particular theory does not affect its truth*

Methods for Reviewing Evolutionary Theories

1. Behavioural Genetics

This method uses twin and adoption studies to estimate how much genes contribute to various traits by comparing genetically identical individuals (e.g., monozygotic twins) with those who are not (e.g., dizygotic twins or siblings). While it helps establish heritability, it does *not* indicate whether a trait is an adaptation shaped by natural selection.

- Estimates genetic vs. environmental influences on traits (e.g., intelligence, personality, obesity, addiction).
- A genetically influenced trait is not necessarily adaptive.

2. The Comparative Method

This method examines whether similar ecological problems are solved in similar ways across species, particularly between humans and closely related animals like apes. It helps identify potentially adaptive behaviours by comparing with animals still living in environments similar to those of ancestral humans.

- Looks for functional analogies between humans and non-human species.
- Easier to evaluate adaptive value in non-human animals because their ecological context often mirrors ancestral conditions.
- Traits can be judged adaptive if they lead to increased reproductive success in these contexts.

3. Cross-Cultural Research

Cross-cultural comparisons test whether certain traits are universal across human societies, suggesting an evolved basis. It also addresses the heavy sampling bias in psychology research, which overwhelmingly draws from WEIRD populations (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010).

- Universal traits may indicate evolutionary adaptations.
- Recognizes that some evolved traits only manifest under specific environmental conditions.
- Special focus is placed on *hunter-gatherer societies*, whose ecological conditions are thought to be closer to those of ancestral humans.
  - Example: Research into male aggression as an adaptation for mate competition is tested by observing reproductive success among more vs. less aggressive men in these societies.

4. Computational Modelling

This involves building abstract simulations where computer-based agents with different traits “compete” under evolutionary rules. It allows exploration of trade-offs and strategy dynamics that would be difficult to observe in real life.

- Models how different strategies perform in scenarios like competition for food or mates.
- Example: The hawk-dove game simulates cost-benefit trade-offs of aggression vs. submission (Maynard Smith, 1974).
- The most successful strategies (those that lead to the most “offspring”) help identify potential evolutionary stable strategies.
- Also used to study cooperation (Axelrod, 1984), personality differences, and cultural evolution (Laland, 2017a).

5. Palaeontological Evidence

Although behaviour doesn’t fossilize, ancient physical evidence—like skulls, tools, and art—offers indirect insights into ancestral behaviour, cognition, and social structure.

- Skull interiors provide evidence of possible language capabilities.

- Burial practices suggest social structures, warfare, or gendered reproductive strategies.
- Artefacts like tools and cave art indicate ritual, aesthetic sense, and possibly symbolic thinking.
- Evidence of art among Neanderthals (e.g., 60,000-year-old hand stencils dated with uranium-thorium; Hoffman et al., 2018) raises questions about cultural transmission or parallel evolution.

Additionally, metaphorical "fossils" may exist in our minds.
For instance, preferences for certain landscapes (e.g., rolling hills, rivers, vegetation) might be evolved adaptations for habitat selection, suggesting a universal aesthetic preference rooted in ancestral survival needs (Dutton, 2009).

Disciplines Applying Evolutionary Thinking

The authors outline five key disciplines that integrate evolutionary thought into the study of behavior, acknowledging their overlaps:

- **Ethology:** Observes animal behavior naturally, blending evolutionary and causal explanations (Lorenz, Tinbergen emphasized instincts; later focus on gene-environment interactions).
- **Behavioral Ecology:** Predicts behavior via cost-benefit models (e.g., foraging, mate-seeking), optimizing inclusive fitness with gene-driven flexibility.
- **Sociobiology:** Applies evolution to social behaviors like altruism and cooperation. Overlaps with behavioural ecology – in fact most of the names listed under sociobiology could also appear under behavioural ecology and vice versa.
- **Evolutionary Psychology:** Examines psychological adaptations shaped by evolutionary pressures.
  Lucio's note: Mesoudi in *The Cambridge Handbook* states it emerged in the 1990s as a fusion of sociobiological theory and cognitive science (Barkow et al., 1992; Buss, 2009; Pinker, 1997)
  Like sociobiology draws on ethology and behavioural ecology, but focuses on mental states rather than behaviour per se, emphasizing a mismatch between current and evolutionary environment
- **Cultural Evolution:** Studies cultural practices' evolution, akin to natural selection.

Main Ideas

Workman and Reader assert that evolutionary psychology bridges biology and psychology, offering ultimate explanations for behaviors that complement proximate analyses.

- **Proximate VS ultimate explanations:** proximate (how behaviors develop, e.g., biological mechanism) and *ultimate* (why behaviors exist, e.g., survival benefit) explanations differentiate traditional psychology from evolutionary approaches (Darwin, 1860).
- **Controversies**: Sociobiology (Wilson), eugenics, and politically charged debates. EP is criticized for being deterministic, reductionist, or politically motivated.
- **The modular mind**: The mind is composed of evolved, domain-specific modules (Cosmides & Tooby).

2: Principles of Evolutionary Change

This chapter explains how genetic inheritance underpins evolution and behavior, detailing mechanisms like natural selection, genetics, and epigenetics as the biological foundation for evolutionary psychology.

Natural selection, genetics, and epigenetics form a robust framework for behavioral evolution, with Genome-Wide Association Study (GWAS) highlighting that many genes are at play for most major traits (polygenic influences), and with gene-environment interplay.

Personality and intellectual ability are genetically inherited.
Given that **a third of all protein-coding genes are expressed only in the brain** (i.e. they only produce proteins here) many behavioural biologists believe that differences in personality and intellectual ability may, in part, be

traced back to differences in the genetic code that we inherit from our parents (Plomin et al., 2016)

Key Concepts

- **Natural Selection:** The cornerstone of evolutionary theory, natural selection, is explained as the differential survival and reproduction of individuals due to differences in phenotype.
  Traits that enhance survival and reproduction in a given environment are more likely to be passed on to subsequent generations.
  - Individual selection: Natural selection operating on individual traits that increase personal fitness.
  - Group selection: The idea that natural selection can act on groups, not just individuals. Largely discredited in its original form
  - Gene selection: The view that evolution acts at the level of genes, favoring those that replicate successfully.
  - The selfish gene: Richard Dawkins' concept that genes act in ways that maximize their own replication, even if this appears altruistic.
- **Genes**: Units of heredity made of DNA that code for proteins and influence traits..
  - Pleiotropic genes affect more than one trait or characteristic (i.e., it has multiple phenotypic effects). Many traits and most personality traits are 'pleiotropic', depending on many genes
  - Antagonistic pleiotropy: a single gene has multiple effects—some beneficial and some harmful—depending on the context, especially across different stages of life. For example, testosterone shortens men's lives but gives them broader chests and greater upper-body strength in early adulthood.
    It also means there may be no benefit for females living longer – this is simply a side effect of less testosterone.
  - Chromosomes: Structures within cells that carry genes; humans have 23 pairs.
  - DNA: The molecule that carries genetic information in all living organisms.
- **Genes and Inheritance:** Covers Mendelian genetics (segregation, alleles, meiosis, mitosis), protein production from DNA, and human genetic similarities, driving heritable variation (Mendel, 1865).
- **Heritable variation**: Differences in traits that can be passed from parents to offspring via genes.
- **Fitness**: an organism's ability to survive and reproduce in its environment, passing on its genes to the next generation.
  - Reproductive success: The number of viable offspring an individual produces, contributing to the next generation.
  - Inclusive Fitness**:** Extends reproductive success to kin, explaining altruism (Hamilton, 1964).
- **Mendelian genetics**: Principles of inheritance based on Gregor Mendel's work, explaining dominant and recessive traits.
- **Genotype VS Phenotype**: Genotype is genetic makeup of an organism, while the phenotype are the observable traits of an organism, shaped by genes and environment.
- **Mutation**: A random change in DNA that can introduce new genetic variation.
- **Heritability of characteristics**: The proportion of trait variation in a population due to genetic differences.
- **Genome-wide association**: A method that scans genomes to find genetic variants linked to traits or diseases.
- **Behavioural epigenetics**: The study of how environmental factors can change gene expression and affect behaviour.
- **Mutation and Genetic Drift:**
  - Random mutations introduce new genetic variation, happens *inside an individual organism*—for example, when a cell divides and copies DNA, sometimes a "typo" (mutation) occurs in the gene sequence. This creates new genetic variants (alleles) that were not there before.
  - Genetic drift happens *at the population level*, across generations *without being selected for* and due to chance

events in who reproduces and passes on genes.
It mostly affects smaller populations because in larger populations non-random, fitness-increasing mutation tend to win out

- **Behavioural Epigenetics:** A sub-discipline of behavioural genetics devoted to environmental affects on the activation of genes involved in differences between people in their behaviour.
  Ie.: Experiences modify gene expression, potentially transgenerationally (e.g., smoking fathers affecting children's eating habits) (Haig, 2007).
- **Environmental Influences:** Climate, diet, and social changes as selective pressures shaping adaptations.
- **Adaptation vs. By-product:** Distinguishes traits evolved for function from incidental outcomes.

Genes Are An Imperfect Recipe, Not A Blueprint

Genes are often described as blueprints for building the body, but a more accurate analogy is a **recipe** (Dawkins, 1982; Plomin, 2018).

Like baking a cake, the genetic code provides the instructions, while the environment—such as nutrition, upbringing, or social influences—acts like the oven's temperature and ingredient quality, shaping the final outcome.

This explains why identical twins, despite sharing a genome, are never really quite identical in personality.

There's no exact way to trace specific genes to specific traits, just as you can't reverse-engineer cake crumbs into the recipe.

Still, researchers can estimate how much genes contribute to individual differences.

How to Explain Homosexuality

Research shows **male androphilia is partly genetic and consistent across cultures** (Alanko et al., 2010; Vasey et al., 2020), suggesting an evolutionary explanation is needed.

The question of why male same-sex attraction (androphilia) exists despite lowering direct reproduction has led to several evolutionary hypotheses.
Most focus on how such traits might still contribute to genetic fitness.

Four main hypotheses exist:

1. **Kin Selection:** Androphilic males may help raise relatives' children, indirectly passing on shared genes.
   Evidence: Supported in non-Western cultures like Samoa and Indonesia (VanderLaan & Vasey, 2012; Nila et al., 2018), but less so in Western societies. Some scholars point out that Western societies are farther from our evolutionary past, so Samoans and Indonesians offer stronger evidence
2. **Sexually Antagonistic Selection:** SAS occurs when a gene boosts fitness in one sex but lowers it in the other. For male androphilia, the idea is that female relatives carrying the same X-linked genes may have higher fertility, but in males may be associated with same-sex attraction (Camperio-Ciani et al., 2004).
   Evidence: A number of studies appear to support this suggestion, including Camperio-Ciani et al. (2004) who found that mothers of androphilic men had an average of 2.7 babies whereas those of gynophilic men had an average of 2.3 babies
3. **Heterozygote Advantage:** Genes for androphilia might increase traits like empathy or sensitivity in heterosexual men, which are attractive to women and boost mating success (Zietsch, 2008).
   Evidence: Still speculative. '*It has some support from the finding that 'straight' men who are better able to identify with women are sexually more successful (Zietsch, 2008)'.*
4. **Fraternal Birth Order Effect:** The more older brothers a man has, the more likely he is to be androphilic, possibly due to biological maternal responses—seen as a variant of kin selection (Blanchard, 2018).
   Evidence: Replicated across cultures and studies (Blanchard, 2018). Each older brother increases the odds of

male androphilia by ~30%. Likely a biological effect in the maternal womb (maternal immune hypothesis). Doesn't explain all cases, but it's robust, well-replicated, and measurable.

In conclusion, the evolutionary origins of male androphilia remain debated.
Theories may not be mutually exclusive, and **a** combination of mechanisms likely explains its persistence (Vasey et al., 2020).

3: Sexual Selection

Sexual selection, distinct from survival-focused natural selection, shapes traits enhancing mating success, explored through mate choice and competition in animals and humans.

Key Concepts

- **Sexual selection**: A type of natural selection where traits evolve because they increase mating success.
- **Female choice**: When females select mates based on preferred traits, driving the evolution of those traits.
- **Parental investment**: The time and energy a parent puts into raising offspring, affecting mating strategies.
- **Handicap hypothesis**: Suggests costly traits (e.g., a peacock's tail) signal genetic fitness because only strong individuals can afford them.
- **Parasite theory**: Proposes that females choose mates with traits indicating resistance to parasites, promoting healthier offspring.
- **Muller's ratchet**: The process by which genomes of asexual organisms accumulate harmful mutations over time.
- **Tangled bank**: A theory that sexual reproduction increases offspring diversity, helping them exploit different ecological niches.
- **The Red Queen**: Suggests species must continuously evolve to survive against ever-evolving parasites and competitors.
- **Arms race**: Escalating evolutionary competition between species or sexes (e.g., between predators and prey or between male and female strategies).

Theories of the evolutionary origin of male characteristics

Theory and associated researcher	Theory proposes	Theory predicts
Runaway selection theory (Fisher, 1930)	Male adornments driven beyond original function by female preference for attractive features Male features not direct indicators of genetic superiority, i.e. 'sexy sons'	Females will choose males purely on grounds of attractiveness
Parasite theory (Hamilton and Zuk, 1982)	Male adornments arose to display lack of parasites to females Male features signify genetic superiority, i.e. 'healthy offspring'	Females choose male features that demonstrate a lack of parasites and hence genetic quality
Handicap theory (Zahavi, 1975)	Male adornments are chosen by females for their conspicuous and costly nature Male features signify genetic superiority, i.e. 'healthy offspring'	Females choose males which show conspicuous and costly adornments as a sign of genetic quality

The main theories are these, ⍰⍰♂ put in nested order by me (Lucio):

- **Fisher's Runaway Selection (sexy sons)**: once a feature has been chosen by females it may become progressively exaggerated with each generation since females will constantly be looking for individuals with the largest, brightest example of that feature.
  The runaway may stop once it becomes too costly for survival and reaches an attract/survival optimum. Eg.: the peacock tail can't grow larger (Zuk and Simmons, 2018).
- **Parasite Theory (good genes):** Mate choice reflects health and resistance to parasites. Brighter, healthier-looking mates likely have stronger immune systems (Hamilton & Zuk, 1982).
  That parasites kill more than predators may lend credibility to the parasite theory.
  - **Red Queen Hypothesis** (Van Valen, 1973): Related to parasite theories, it postulates that species must constantly evolve just to maintain their current fitness relative to co-evolving parasites, predators, or competitors — like running in place on a treadmill.
  - **Zahavi's Handicap Principle (costly/honest signaling):** relates to the 'god genes' theory. Costly traits signal genetic fitness because only strong individuals can afford them. The "handicap" proves quality — it's an honest, hard-to-fake signal (Zahavi, 1975).

Runaway/sexy sons VS Parasite theories/good genes have also been called 'sexy sons' versus 'healthy offspring'.
Both sexy sons and healthy offspring can claim some support from the experimental literature

Studies show more parasites often correlate with more male ornamentation, backing the good-genes view.
But cases like swordtail and platyfish fish, where females prefer traits no longer present, support Fisher's sensory bias idea.

Some traits may be both attractive and signal real fitness. For example, long swallow tails aid flight. Male–male competition may also play a role.

Examples like guppies, peacocks, and even potentially humans with testosterone show that **natural and sexual selection may pull in different directions and males might have to make compromises**.

In short, sexual selection is well supported, but its exact mechanism remains debated. Both theories (and sub-theories) are still in play and both may be valid.

Why We Have Sex: More Genetic Variation Means More Chances for Evolution

Although asexual reproduction is common and more efficient, sexual reproduction dominates in most multicellular species—despite its high costs.
These include:

- Losing half your genes in each offspring ("cost of meiosis")
- Wasting resources on non-reproductive males
- Energy spent on courtship and mating (Maynard Smith, 1971; Williams, 1975)

Given these disadvantages, sex must offer a powerful evolutionary benefit to persist. The leading idea is that sex creates genetic variation, which helps species adapt to threats—especially from parasites, as proposed by the Red Queen hypothesis.

In short: sex is costly, but it persists because the genetic diversity it creates improves survival in a constantly changing and hostile environment.

We Have Sex As Protection Against Parasites: Red Queen Theory

The Red Queen theory (Van Valen, 1973) proposes that sex and sexual selection evolved as responses to the constant evolutionary arms race between hosts and fast-evolving parasites. Species need to constantly adapt just to

maintain their fitness — “running to stay in the same place.”

This theory has gained strong support, especially through studies like Lively’s work on New Zealand snails, which showed that sexual reproduction is more common in environments with high parasite pressure (Lively, 1987; Lively et al., 1990; Morran et al., 2011). This suggests that sex provides genetic variation that helps offspring resist infections.

Although alternative ideas like competition between macro-organisms exist, current evidence favors the Red Queen’s focus on parasite-driven evolution, both for maintaining sex and possibly for shaping mate choice. Traits that signal parasite resistance may be key in what females look for in mates (Ridley, 1993).

Key Concepts

- **Female choice shapes men**: Female choice is a potent driver of evolution. ‘*even in cases where males are much larger than females, female choice plays a role in reproduction*‘.
- **Intrasexual vs. Intersexual Selection:** Competition within sexes vs. mate choice between sexes.
- **Parental Investment Theory:** The sex investing more (typically females) is choosier (Trivers, 1972).
- **Homosexuality may be adaptive**, maintained by selective pressures, especially in males (Vasey et al., 2020).
- **Cryptic Female Choice & Sperm Competition:** Females influence paternity post-copulation; sperm competes for fertilization.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s note: For more on sperm competition, we go deeper with both evidence and criticism in this review (also see ‘new sperm competition‘):

- ***Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Behavior***

4: The Evolution of Human Mate Choice

This chapter applies sexual selection to human mate preferences and strategies, using cross-cultural and comparative studies.

Robust evidence supports sex differences rooted in evolutionary pressures, with cross-cultural data advancing understanding, though controversies (e.g., rape’s basis) persist (Walter et al., in press).

Key Concepts

- **Sexual strategies theory**: Proposes that men and women evolved different mating strategies based on differing reproductive challenges.
- **Mate guarding**: Behaviors intended to prevent a partner from cheating or being poached by rivals.
- **Male provisioning hypothesis**: Suggests that male investment in offspring (e.g. food, protection) evolved to increase reproductive success.
- **Last common ancestor**: The most recent species from which two or more current species descended.
- **Male parental investment**: The time, energy, or resources males devote to offspring, which can vary across species.
- **Cryptic oestrus**: Hidden ovulation in females, making it hard for males to detect peak fertility—thought to encourage long-term pair bonding.
- **Sexual dimorphism**: Physical differences between males and females of a species (e.g., size, coloration). Usually this means larger size for males. Polygynous mating systems (one male to a number of females) generally lead to a large degree of sexual dimorphism since males compete for ‘the prize’ of a number of female mates. In monogamous species, the sexes may be very similar in size since men don’t compete for females. Once paired up, it does not pay a male to compete for further females.

- **Polygyny**: A mating system where one male mates with multiple females.
- **Polyandry**: A mating system where one female mates with multiple males.
- **Reproductive value**: The expected future reproductive output of an individual, usually highest in young females.
- **Sperm competition**: Competition between sperm of different males to fertilize the same egg, often influencing male anatomy and behavior.
- **Sexy sons**: A hypothesis suggesting that females may choose attractive males so their sons will also be attractive and have high reproductive success.
- **Coolidge effect**: Males (and sometimes females) show renewed sexual interest when introduced to novel partners.

Category	Description	Examples	Distribution
Monogamy	Individuals mate with one partner	Dwarf antelopes; **humans**	90% of bird species, but rare in mammals
Polygamy	More than one partner ⬇	Includes polygyny and polyandry ⬇	See below ⬇
Polygyny	A form of polygamy where individual males mate with more than one female	Bighorn rams; gorillas; elephant seals; wood frogs; **humans**	The most common mating system found in mammals
Polyandry	A form of polygamy where individual females mate with more than one male	African jacanas; red-necked phalaropes; Galapagos hawk; **humans**	Very rare; found in some bird species

As seen above, humans can adopt any mating system.
Humans are plastic in their mating strategies, and vary depending on cultures:

> Cross-cultural studies suggest that in reproductive matters we are a highly flexible species and that, unlike other species, our sexual strategy cannot easily be pigeonholed

Human Mate Preferences

- **Long term**: most of what both sexes want from a long-term partner is surprisingly similar.
  - Differences: As parental investment predicted (Trivers, 1972), men place greater emphasis on physical attractiveness and women place a premium on signals of wealth and status
  - Similarities: Both sexes require indicators of commitment and therefore, both men and women value love as of primary importance.
  - Women's preference and variability: *Yes, for long-term relationships women do want emotionally stable and dependable men who are well-off and of high status. But the relative importance of these features varies between cultures* (Benton, 2000; Buss and Schmitt, 2019).
- **Short term**: the authors don't delve as deeply into short-term preferences, but from what I know men to be more indiscriminate and 'lower the bar', while women may prefer sexier men and discount the importance of resources and provisioning

Although Buss' original is not recent, the pattern of sex differences revealed in mate choice criteria has been replicated in more recent times, suggesting Buss' findings are robust (Lippa, 2008; 2009, Walter et al., 2020; see also Archer, 2019.)

Characteristic	Men rating women	Women rating men	Sex difference	Cultural variation

Characteristic	Men rating women	Women rating men	Sex difference	Cultural variation
Love	2.81	2.87	low	low
Dependability	2.50	2.69	low	high
Emotional stability/maturity	2.47	2.68	moderate	moderate
Pleasing disposition	2.44	2.52	low	high
Good health	2.31	2.28	low	high
Education/intelligence	2.27	2.45	moderate	low
Sociability	2.15	2.30	low	moderate
Desire for home and children	2.09	2.20	low	high
Refinement/neatness	2.03	1.98	low	high
Good looks	1.91	1.46	high	moderate
Ambition and industriousness	1.85	2.15	high	high
Good cook and housekeeper	1.80	1.28	high	high
Good financial prospect	1.51	1.76	high	low
Similar education	1.50	1.84	moderate	high
Favourable social status	1.16	1.46	moderate	moderate
Chastity	1.06	0.75	low	high
Similar religious background	0.98	1.21	low	high
Similar political background	0.92	1.03	low	low

Note: Rating scores potentially vary from 0.00 (irrelevant or unimportant) to 3.00 (indispensable).
Source: Adapted from Buss et al. (1990).

Women's Attractiveness May Influence Her Promiscuity

Robert Trivers (1972) proposed that women adjust their sexual strategies based on their perceived attractiveness or "market value."

According to this view, less attractive women may engage in more casual sex because they may anticipate lower chances of securing a high-investing long-term partner.

In contrast, those who perceive themselves as especially attractive are more likely to pursue high-status mates who offer greater investment (Trivers, 1972; Wright, 1994). **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: Since this is such a touchy yet important topic, I'd suggest removing Wright. As a journalist, he may not have been an original source

Empirical support includes Walsh (1993), who found that women who feel less attractive report having more partners, and studies showing that the most attractive women tend to pair with the most powerful men (Kanazawa & Kovar, 2004; Symons, 1979).

Women Choose Commitment or Promiscuity Based On Men's Availability

Women's mating strategies shift based on context.

Evolutionary psychologists such as David Buss (2011; 2016) and Symons (1979) argue that women adjust their reproductive behavior based on the availability of investing males, their own age and attractiveness, and their ability to secure resources independently

In environments where male investment is low—such as post-war tribal societies (Symons, 1979) or inner-city areas with high male unemployment (Buss, 2011; 2016)—women may adopt short-term mating to gain small benefits

from multiple partners.

Evolution VS Culture: Eagly Criticism of Buss & Women's Preferences

Across cultures, women prefer partners with financial resources more than men do.

However, the strength of this preference varies by culture. For example, women in India and Nigeria value financial prospects more than women in Sweden or the Netherlands.

This cultural variation led Alice Eagly and colleagues to propose a social role explanation: **when women lack access to resources (e.g., through limited education or employment), they place more importance on a partner's wealth**.
Her research shows that women's preference for male resources decreases as their own financial independence increases (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

Initially, this challenged evolutionary explanations.
But today, there's general agreement—shared even by Eagly—t**hat mate preferences are shaped by both evolved mechanisms and culture**.
Evolutionary psychologists, including Buss, see human mate behavioural adaptations as structured to 'respond contingently to local social and ecological factors' (Kurzban and Haselton, 2006).

Also see:

- How Western social safety nets limit hypergamy

Major Insights

- **Love is a universal human experience**: Some thought of romantic love as a recent invention of Western culture (Symons, 1979; Jankowiak and Fischer, 1992), but evolutionary psychology destroyed this myth and it's something that everybody can experience (see e.g. Jankowiak and Fischer, 1992; Toates, 2014)
- **Male provisioning & 'cryptic oestrus' explains love**: humans can't be sure when women are fertile and many men invest in their women and children. This led to constant female sexual attraction which may well be a unique human feature and it may have led, in turn, to a unique long-lasting pair bond or, in colloquial language, 'love'
- **Female reproductive value VS fertility**: Fertility refers to the likelihood of producing an offspring from a given mating whereas reproductive value is the potential for future offspring production.
  It's an important distinction for men looking for either short-term sex, or long-term commitment. A 30-YO might be as fertile as 16-YO, but the 16-YO has higher reproductive value
- **Sex Differences in Mating Strategies:** Women favor resource providers, men youth/fertility cues, reflecting reproductive costs; pair bonds and male investment distinguish humans (Buss, 1994; Trivers, 1972).
- **Sperm Competition, sexual dimorphism, & mating systems:** Sexual dimorphism (different sizes between genders) and testes size indicate ancestral mating systems differences between chimpanzee (multiple mating, low sexual dimorphism, and sperm competition), gorillas (large sexual dimorphism, monopolization of females by the alpha, small tests and low sperm competition), and humans (in-between the two).
  Thus in males a large body size relative to females indicates polygyny (multiple mating partners for males) whereas large testes compared to closely related species indicates polygamy (multiple partners for both sexes)
- **Short-term vs. Long-term Strategies:** Dual strategies balance reproductive success (men) or resources (women) vs. stability (Baker & Bellis, 1990).
- **Paternity Uncertainty and fidelity:** Men focus on chastity and fidelity to ensure the child is theirs
- **Coolidge Effect & Cryptic Oestrus:** Male promiscuity and hidden female oestrus may reduce infanticide (Buss, 1989).

5: Cognitive Development and the Innateness Issue

Explores whether cognitive capacities are innate or learned.
A balanced view recognizes innate predispositions shaped by environment, with modularity accepted for basic functions, while neuroconstructivism, or development over time with experience, explains flexibility.

Key Concepts

- **Nativism**: The view that certain skills or knowledge are innate or biologically pre-programmed, similar to:
  - **Modularity/innatism**: The view that the mind is composed of distinct, specialized units (modules) evolved for specific functions.
    Ie.: the brain has pre-wired, specialized modules (like "language module" or "face recognition") that are largely inborn and universal. Development mostly reveals what's already built-in.
- **Constructivism**: The theory that development is an active process of building knowledge through interaction with the environment.
  Ie.: The brain starts more general and flexible, and builds specialized abilities over time through interaction with the environment and learning. Functions emerge, they're not preloaded.
  Similar to:
  - **Empiricism**: The belief that knowledge comes primarily from sensory experience and learning.
- **Epigenetic landscape**: A metaphor for how gene expression is influenced by developmental pathways and environmental factors.
- **Domain specificity**: The idea that certain cognitive processes are specialized for particular types of information (e.g., language or faces).
- **Imprinting**: A rapid, early form of learning in which an animal forms attachments during a critical period (e.g., ducklings following the first moving object).
- **Critical period**: A fixed developmental window during which specific abilities must be acquired (or they never will be).
  - **Sensitive period**: A more flexible window during which learning is easier or more effective, but still possible later.
- **Theory of mind**: The ability to understand that others have thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives different from one's own.
  Autism impairs theory of mind.
- **Neuroconstructivism**: The theory that cognitive development arises from dynamic interactions between brain development, experience, and environment.

Evolutionary Psychology Logic Supports Modularity

When a species repeatedly faces the same adaptive problem, natural selection would favor domain-specific mechanisms (i.e., modularity), because they're more efficient than domain-general ones.

An evolutionary perspective would support modularity. Ie.: '*A child who, at a young age, can communicate with others, recognise its family and show fear in dangerous situations will be more likely to survive than a child who develops these abilities much more slowly.*'

Important Concepts

- **Core Knowledge Systems in infants:** Infants show early grasp of objects, numbers, agents, suggesting innate modules (Pinker, 1994; Bushnell, 1982).
- **Theory of Mind:** Emerges around age 4, vital for social cognition, with variations in false belief understanding; impaired in autism (Baron-Cohen, 1995).

- **Autism and Modularity:** Autism may reflect impaired social modules, supporting modularity (Fodor, 1983).
- **Prepared Learning for adaptive skills:** Evolution primes learning of adaptive skills (e.g., snake phobias).

6: Social Development

Social development reflects evolutionary pressures for cooperation.
Life history and attachment theories are accepted, with ongoing social learning research.

Key Concepts

- **Life history theory** claims that, from an early age, children monitor their environment and make decisions about their future reproductive value and future strategies. Based on their assessment of the environmental conditions, they can choose to maximise current reproductive success or future reproductive success.
- **Ontogenetic adaptations**: Temporary traits in development that serve immediate adaptive functions (e.g., infant reflexes).
- **Deferred adaptations**: Traits expressed early that prepare for future benefits (e.g., play behavior for adult competence).
- **Conditional adaptations**: Traits that develop in response to environmental cues, adapting the individual to specific contexts.
- **Attachment styles**: Patterns of emotional bonding based on early caregiving, influencing later social and romantic behavior. Secure working models generally lead to more satisfactory and stable relationships in later life than insecure ones. Ainsworth proposed that there are three attachment styles, secure (Type B), insecure-avoidant (Type A) and insecure-anxious/resistant (Type C).
- **C–F continuum (Cooperation–Fast continuum)**: A range from cooperative/slow life strategies to fast, opportunistic ones.
- **Fast versus slow life history**: Fast strategies involve early reproduction, impulsivity, and low investment; slow strategies involve delay, planning, and high parental investment.
- **Principle of allocation**: Organisms must trade off between competing demands (e.g., energy for growth vs. reproduction).
- **Shared environment**: Environmental factors that contribute to similarities between siblings (e.g., same household, parenting).
  - **Non-shared environment**: Unique experiences that make siblings different (e.g., different friends or teachers).
- **Behavioural genetics**: Studies genetic and environmental influences on behavior using methods like twin/adoption studies.
- **Cooperation**: Behavior where individuals work together toward shared goals, often benefiting group survival and success.
- **Morality**: Social rules and norms evolved to regulate behavior and promote group cohesion and cooperation.

Genes Effect the Environment

Genes and environment don't act independently in shaping development.
Instead, genetic influences often shape the very environments people experience. B

ehavioral geneticists describe three main types of gene–environment interaction, showing that genes can help determine the kind of upbringing, treatment, and surroundings a person ends up with—meaning nature helps shape nurture:

- **Passive interaction**: Children inherit both their genes and much of their environment from parents. For

example, intelligent parents provide both genes and a stimulating environment (e.g., books, conversation).

- **Reactive–evocative interaction**: A child's traits (e.g., attractiveness) evoke different responses from others. Attractive children may be punished less or treated more positively, shaping their social experience.
- **Active interaction**: Children seek out environments that match their genetic dispositions—for instance, sporty kids gravitate to other active kids, and intellectually curious children look for stimulating peers or settings.

🤦♂ **Lucio's note: the other way around is also true**
For example populations maintained enzymes to digest milk only after farming developed

The Evolution of Cooperation & Morality: We're A 'Morally Cooperative' Species

Human cooperation extends far beyond kin-based altruism, involving shared goals, coordination, and cultural norms that enable large-scale collaboration—even among strangers.

From infancy, humans demonstrate proto-conversational turn-taking and shared attention, which form the foundation for coordinated efforts.
Unlike chimpanzees, young children actively re-engage partners, prefer collaboration even when solo work is easier, and develop, critique, and enforce norms—behaviors rooted in an early-emerging sense of collective "we."

For a long time, it was thought that morality contradicted the principles of evolutionary theory.
But morality may have developed alongside win-win cooperation.

Models of Morality

- **Fiske's model** defines morality through relationship types, with norms evolving to support cooperation (Rai & Fiske, 2011):
  - Community sharing (kin and group cohesion)
  - Authority ranking (hierarchy)
  - Equality matching (reciprocity)
- **Curry's game-theoretic model** adapts social dilemmas (e.g., hawk-dove, mutualism, exchange, contests, division) to show how moral rules resolve conflicts and distinguish between kin-based and non-kin cooperation. See the table:

Table 6.3 Oliver Curry's 'periodic table of morality'

Problem	Examples	Morals
Kinship	kin detection and incest avoidance, parental investment, rules against incest	obligations to kin, duty of parental care, prohibition of incest
Mutualism	coalitionary psychology, common knowledge, theory of mind; in-group favouritism	friendship, loyalty, conformity
Exchange	trust, gratitude, cheater detection, revenge and forgiveness	reciprocity, punishment, trust, gratitude, apology, forgiveness
Conflict resolution (Hawk-Dove)	status, dominance and deference, contests	virtues and excellences, Hawkish virtues (fortitude, bravery, skill, generosity, beauty), Dove-ish virtues (humility, respect, deference, obedience)
Conflict resolution (division)	equal sharing or sharing based on need	fairness, negotiation and compromise
Conflict resolution (possession)	territoriality, property law	property rights, theft

Both models have more in common than they differ.
Fiske underplays the differences between kin and non-kin interaction, and Curry underplays the hierarchical structure of human societies.
Both agree that morality evolved to enable humans to cooperate at large scales, employing norms to offset our innate selfish tendencies.

Key Points

- **Cooperation is strongly linked to morality**. *In fact, morality is one of the forces that drives us to cooperate. The reason why people cooperate fairly is either because they feel bad if they don't or because they fear being punished if they are caught cheating.*
- **Children are born wired for social interaction** *and quickly develop the motivation and skills to share their experiences and their goals with others. Unlike chimpanzees, which prefer to act alone unless it is impossible to do so (such as a hunt) children prefer to cooperate with others, even when it is not strictly necessary*
- **Attachment Theory:** Early bonds (secure/insecure) affect adult relationships (Bowlby, 1969).
- **Life History Theory:** Life history applied to attachment theory suggests that attachment style may be adaptations. Early environments shape fast (risk-taking) vs. slow (investment) strategies (Belsky et al., 1991; Chisholm, 1993).
  - Parents provide environmental cues: Life history theory suggests that genes build mechanisms that enable children to use their parents' behaviour as a way of choosing (unconsciously) a reproductive strategy. For example, an absent father may cue children to promiscuity and early reproduction, while a stable and doting family may predispose for stable relationships
- **Twin studies help us estimate the impact of nature VS nurture**: the amount of variation between individuals can be calculated by looking at the differences between identical twins reared apart on the trait because, since they are genetically identical, it follows that any difference between them must be due to the environment. The results of such studies estimate that the environment accounts for between 50-60% of the variation among them on a variety of traits and genes for 40–50%.
  - Genes may be under-estimated because genes have a secondary effect on life experiences. For example, attractive people are generally more assertive, a finding that is explained by the observation that attractive people are generally treated with more deference (Jackson and Huston, 1975)
  - Genes may also be underestimated 2 (Conditional adaptation theory): because instead of pre-programming everything, they equip us with modules for adapting to the environment.
    See below
- **Shared environment matters little**: *Behavioural genetics research using twin and adoption studies suggest that not only do all traits have a degree of heritability (often around 50 per cent), but the remaining variation in traits is accountable to the non-shared rather than the shared environment* (ie.: parents don't seem to make a large difference)

7: Kin Relationships and Conflict

Explains family altruism and conflict via inclusive fitness, focusing on kin dynamics.

Kin behaviors are central, with strong evidence for inclusive fitness and conflict; grandmother hypothesis and Cinderella Effect are supported, though culture plays a role.

Key Concepts

- **Inclusive fitness**: Total genetic success from one's own reproduction (*direct fitness*) **plus** helping relatives reproduce (*indirect fitness*).
  Inclusive fitness explains kin altruism

- **Direct and indirect fitness**:
  - *Direct*: Offspring produced by the individual.
  - *Indirect*: Extra offspring produced by relatives due to the individual's help.

- **Coefficient of relatedness (r)**:
  Probability that two individuals share a gene from a common ancestor (e.g., r = 0.5 for siblings or parent-child).

- **Kin altruism** (AKA nepotism):
  Helping relatives reproduce, even at a cost to oneself, because shared genes benefit (explains altruistic behavior toward kin). The tendency to provide aid to relatives appears to be related to the proportion of genes shared by common descent (i.e. the coefficient of relatedness – 'r').

- **Parental investment**:
  Time, energy, and resources parents invest to increase offspring survival and future reproduction.
  In some species a large number of offspring are produced but very few resources are provided for each ('r-selection'). In others, a great deal of effort is spent on each of a small number of offspring ('K-selection').
  - Life history: the context of human life history theory, these are also known as 'fast' and 'slow' selection. With important exceptions, humans and other primates are at the extreme end of K-selection (fewer children, high investment)

- **K- and r-selection**:
  - *K-selection*: Fewer offspring, high investment (e.g., humans).
  - *r-selection*: Many offspring, low investment (e.g., insects).

- **Parent–offspring conflict**:
  Evolutionary conflict: offspring want more resources than parents are selected to give (due to parents' need to divide resources across multiple offspring).
  - **Parental manipulation**: Parents influence offspring behavior to maximize their own inclusive fitness (may not always align with offspring's best interests).

- **Grandmother hypothesis**: Post-menopausal women increase their inclusive fitness by helping raise grandchildren rather than having more children themselves.
  - Grandmothers VS grandfathers: Due to the possibility of non-paternity, paternal grandparents are predicted to provide a lower level of investment than maternal grandparents.

Key Concepts

- **Hamilton's Rule:** rB > C drives kin altruism (Hamilton, 1964).
  Meaning: helping relatives (kin altruism) evolves when the genetic relatedness (r) times the benefit to the relative (B) is greater than the cost to the helper (C).
- **Kin altruism boosts inclusive fitness**
- **Poor parents under-invest in unhealthy offspring** when wealthy parents had children with medical and psychological problems they increased their investment, whereas poor parents provided the least parental care to the least healthy offspring (Bugental et al., 2013; Pelham, 2019).
- **Places with high infant mortality may lead to lower care**: A study of 150 nations found that countries with high parasite load and high infant mortality parents tend to invest less in each offspring and to encourage child labour (Pelham, 2019)
- **Parental Investment and Conflict:** Sibling rivalry and weaning conflicts arise from differing optima (Trivers, 1974).
  - Parents may manipulate into more cooperation: Alexander (1974) suggests parents might increase their

inclusive fitness by teaching appropriate moral code. In particular, parents tend to teach their children to behave benevolently towards each other
  - Mother-child interest conflict after one year when the mother may want to have another child, but the child may want to monopolize investment
  - Mother-daughter interest may conflict if the daughter has a child too soon when the mother is still of child-bearing age
- **Grandmother Hypothesis:** Menopause aids grandchildren's survival (Hawkes, 1998).
- **Kin Recognition:** Mechanisms (e.g., MHC genes, familiarity) support altruism (VanderLaan et al., 2012).
- **Cinderella Effect:** Stepparents' higher abuse rates reflect lower genetic investment (Daly & Wilson, 1988).

8: Reciprocity and Conflict Among Non-Kin

Focuses on non-kin cooperation and conflict, including reciprocal altruism and violence.
Reciprocal altruism underpins cooperation, supported by game theory and ethnography; conflict (e.g., Dark Triad, violence) is studied, with ethical debates ongoing.

Key Concepts

- **Reciprocal altruism – direct reciprocation**: Helping others with the expectation they'll help back in the future; a "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" dynamic.
  Direct reciprocation consists of self-sacrificing acts between two unrelated individuals that are based on delayed reciprocation
  - Rare in animals foundational in humans: some evolutionary psychologists consider reciprocation a foundational stone of human social behaviour.
- **Xenophobia**: Fear or distrust of outsiders or strangers, possibly evolved as a protective mechanism against unknown threats.
- **Gift economy**: A system where goods/services are given without explicit agreements for immediate or future returns, building social bonds and status.
- **Game theory**: A mathematical framework to study strategic interactions between individuals, it has been used by evolutionists to model the behaviour of humans and other species under simplified versions of social decision-making scenarios
  - Prisoner's dilemma: A game theory scenario where mutual cooperation is best long-term, but individuals are tempted to defect for short-term gain. Tit-for-tat was the most effective strategy:
  - Tit-for-tat: A simple and effective strategy in repeated games—start with cooperation, then match the partner's previous move in the next encounter (cooperate with cooperators or defect with defectors).
    It's an evolutionarily stable strategy (ESS), and humans develop it when playing repeated prisoner's dilemmas. It suggests that we seek cooperation but bear grudges when cooperation is not reciprocated.
- **Evolutionarily stable strategy**: A strategy that, if adopted by most of the population, cannot be beaten by an alternative strategy.
- **Stereotyping**: Overgeneralized beliefs about members of a group; may have evolved as a cognitive shortcut for social prediction.
- **Ethnocentrism**: Viewing one's own group as superior and using it as the standard to judge others; possibly evolved to promote group cohesion.
- **Dark Triad**: A cluster of three personality traits—Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy—associated with manipulation, callousness, and self-interest.

Prerequisites for reciprocal altruism

According to Trivers, reciprocal altruism requires:

1. **Reasonably long lifespan to repeatedly encounter specific individuals** and thereby allow for reciprocation to occur
2. **Cost/benefit arbitrage**: cost of altruism for the recipient should be lower than the benefit to the recipient
   ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: I don't see why this should be a strict requirement, since your cost of giving can be higher than the benefit of the recipient, but still pay off if the recipient's repayment outweighs your cost
3. **Ability to recognise each other** in order to both reciprocate and to detect cheats (non-reciprocators).

Freeriders threaten cooperation: remove them to keep a good-functioning group

Cooperation among non-kin is threatened by freeriders — individuals who benefit without contributing.

According to Tooby et al. (2006), cooperation could not have evolved unless mechanisms emerged to detect and manage freeriders. Once detected, two main responses are available: punishment (Price et al., 2002) and withdrawal of cooperation.

In public goods games, where individuals contribute to a shared pool that benefits all, cooperation starts high but declines as freeriding increases. A meta-analysis by Fehr and Schmidt (1999) found that contributions dropped from 40% to nearly zero across rounds, with 73% of participants making no contribution by the final round. Participants reported that freeriding by others led them to stop cooperating.

Allowing participants to punish freeriders drastically improves cooperation. When fines could be used, only 20% failed to cooperate in the final round (Fehr and Gächter, 2002). Real-world parallels appear in common-pool resource systems, where Ostrom (1990) found that all successful common-pool resources share effective monitoring and punishment systems. Punishment — or the credible threat of it — is therefore crucial to maintaining cooperation (Fehr and Gächter, 2000).

> The greatest cost that freeriders inflict is the loss of all the potential gains from n-party exchanges that otherwise would have been achieved if freeriding had not triggered antiexploitation motivational defenses among cooperators (Tooby et al., 2006)

Xenophobia may be adaptive

Xenophobia may be adaptive, and also help explain why many can be so easily indoctrinated into populism and nationalist ideologies.

Xenophobia may have developed with:

- **'Cheat detection' mechanisms**: If ancestral human societies were largely based around acts of kin altruism and reciprocation, then selective pressures would also have led to the evolution of psychological mechanisms to spot cheats and to be suspicious of strangers until we are reassured that they are not freeriders
- **Ingroup/outgroup**: the formation of a group identity can lead to positive in-group and negative out-group stereotyping.
  Our own view of ourselves – our self-concept – may also be constructed partly out of group memberships, so we tend to view our own groups as positive (Bierhoff, 1996)
- **Coalitionary aggression**: Some have controversially stated that xenophobia help form coalitions and it may have been an adaptive strategy

In Sherif's famous experiment, children divided into two groups readily formed started behaving gang-like towards the other, and only the introduction of an imaginary third group relieved the hostility (Sherif, 1956).

Sherif's experiment teaches us that **to stop inter-group conflict a common enemy is the solution to remove hostility and foster cooperation**.

Tajfel's subsequent studies suggest that we don't have to seek out like-minded compatriots, we just have to have something (anything) that allows us to feel part of a group and then discriminate in favour of some individuals on the basis of arbitrary and anonymous group membership alone (Tajfel, 1970).

> It seems that people will latch on to almost any cue to distinguish in-group and out-group members (John Archer, 1996)

Key Concepts

- **Direct and Indirect Reciprocity:** Tit-for-tat and reputation-based cooperation (e.g., !Kung San food sharing) (Trivers, 1971; Lee, 1968).
- **Costly Signalling Theory:** Prosocial displays boost status.
- **Machiavellian Intelligence:** Social manipulation drove brain evolution (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2016).
- **Jealousy gender differences:** Sex differences tied to infidelity concerns (Buss et al., 1992).
- **Dark Triad may be adaptive** in some contexts (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2016).
- **Freeriders:** Threaten cooperation, countered by cheater detection (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992).

9: Evolution, Thought and Cognition

Examines how evolution shaped reasoning, memory, and decision-making, emphasizing how an evolutionary approach can better help us understand why the mind works the way it does (ie.: focus on what it was designed to do).

Cognitive processes are ancestral adaptations; modularity and adaptive memory are accepted, with debates on domain-specific vs. general mechanisms.

Key Concepts

- **Computational theory of mind –** The mind is like a computer: it processes information through symbols and rules. Evolutionarily, it suggests natural selection shaped the brain to solve adaptive problems via mental computations.
- **Substrate neutrality –** The idea that computation doesn't depend on the material doing it (brain, silicon, etc.). Evolutionary relevance: mental adaptations can be understood in terms of function, not biology alone.
- **Episodic and semantic memory –** Episodic: memory of personal events; Semantic: general knowledge and facts.
  Evolution: episodic memory helps track social and environmental events; semantic memory aids in survival through stored knowledge.
- **Cognitive economy –** Mental efficiency: organizing information in a way that reduces processing effort. Evolutionarily adaptive for conserving energy and making fast decisions.
- **Typicality effect –** Some category members (e.g. robin as a bird) are judged faster/more "typical" than others (e.g. penguin).
  Evolution: may reflect prototype-based categorization that speeds up recognition and action.
- **Indicative and deontic reasoning –** Indicative: reasoning about what is true (logic/facts); Deontic: reasoning about what one should do (rules/obligations). E
  volution: deontic reasoning likely evolved to navigate social norms and cooperation.
- **The gambler's fallacy –** Mistaken belief that past random events affect future ones (e.g., "red hasn't come up, so it must now").

Evolution: may stem from evolved pattern-detection mechanisms misfiring in modern settings.

- **The hot hand fallacy –** Belief that someone on a winning streak is more likely to continue succeeding.
  Evolution: possibly linked to tracking social status or skill, which may have been adaptive in group dynamics.
- **Foraging theory –** Models how animals (including humans) search for and exploit resources efficiently, and since in nature streaks or patterns can mean something (e.g., a fruitful berry bush or a good hunting ground), our minds may have evolved to expect non-randomness.
  - Marginal value theorem – A principle in foraging theory stating when an animal should leave a resource patch: when the rate of resource gain falls below the average elsewhere. Applied to mate choice, information seeking, etc.

Main Ideas

- **Wason Selection Tasks:** Humans excel at social contract logic (Wason, 1966).
- **Visual Illusions Aren't Illusions But Features:** Adaptive "errors" (e.g., shadow illusion, "The Dress") reflect survival-tuned perception (Adelson, 1995).
  Our visual systems did not evolve to present us with a true description of the world, but to provide a useful description of the world that supports our actions upon it.
- **Intelligence evolved to help us survive and reproduce:** Evolved via social, ecological, and sexual pressures; practical intelligence often undervalued.
- **Adaptive Memory:** Prioritizes survival info (e.g., predators) (Nairne & Pandeirada, 2008).

11: The Evolution of Emotion

Emotions are universal adaptations modulated by culture, supported by functional and neuroimaging evidence. The authors present emotions as evolved response systems aiding survival and reproduction.

Key Topics

- **Basic Emotions:** Universal (e.g., anger, fear) with physiological/cognitive bases (Ekman, 1992).
  - Smile as appeasement: van Hooff sees two dimensions in pro-social gestures – 'friendliness' (smiling) and 'playfulness' (laughing).
    In this way smiling and laughter form a continuum with two dimensions. The silent bared-teeth display originated as an appeasing signal and later evolved into a friendly gesture.
- **Display rules modulate the 'appropriateness' of emotional expression** within a certain culture.
  People still generally feel the same emotions, but the outward display may vary
- **What's attractive varies by culture**: There is a great deal of scope for modification during development. In some cultures, for example, scars or tattoos are attractive while they're ugly disfigurements in others (Carlson et al., 2000).
  Cultures can also change rapidly.
- **Jealousy and Sexual Strategies:** Males focus on sexual infidelity, females on emotional (Buss et al., 1992).
- **Plutchik's Wheel:** Eight primary emotions, opposites, and combinations.
- **Functional Roles of emotions:** Fear avoids danger, disgust prevents contamination, joy boosts cooperation (Nesse, 1990; Fredrickson, 2001).
- **Some negative emotions may not be adaptive, but a cost to pay for their positive expression**: Bereavement may serve no adaptive function but the price we pay for love and attachment, similar to drug withdrawal.
  Determining which emotional states are adaptations and which are emergent properties will be a difficult task for researchers

12: Evolutionary Psychopathology and Darwinian Medicine

Applies evolution to mental disorders and health, viewing them as exaggerated or mismatched traits. Evolutionary psychopathology explains disorder persistence; Darwinian medicine gains traction, with depression and schizophrenia models debated but accepted, requiring ethical care.

The evolutionary logic of pathogen virulence

The virulence of a disease depends on how and how fast it's transmitted, and when it affects the recipients.

Paul Ewald proposed that pathogens spread through direct contact (like the common cold) tend to be less harmful, since keeping the host active helps transmission.

In contrast, those spread by vectors (like mosquitoes in malaria) can afford to debilitate or even kill the host, as transmission doesn't rely on the host's mobility.

> To put it crudely, killing the host may not matter as long as there are plenty of opportunities for the vector to take copies of the pathogen onto other hosts (Nesse and Dawkins, 2010).

Harmful genes may also be maintained in our species if the harmful gene has its effects after the age of reproduction.
Then, natural selection is unable to remove it from a population. In this way inherited diseases such as Huntington's chorea, which does not emerge until middle age, may be kept in the population.

Heterozygous advantage: sickle cell example

Some harmful genes are preserved in human populations because they provide benefits in certain genetic combinations.

A classic case is sickle-cell anaemia: having two copies of the gene causes illness, but having just one (heterozygous) provides resistance to malaria, offering a survival advantage in malaria-prone regions. This phenomenon is known as heterozygous advantage—when carrying two different alleles leads to greater fitness than having either allele alone.

This dynamics is similar to the 'sexually antagonistic selection' we saw earlier:

Heterozygous Advantage VS Sexually Antagonistic Selection

They're different concepts, but both explain how seemingly disadvantageous genes can persist in a population.

- **Heterozygous advantage** is about genotype combinations (allele pairing).
  Mechanism: Maintains genetic variation because the **intermediate genotype is the fittest**.
- **Sexually antagonistic selection** is about sex-based fitness tradeoffs.
  Mechanism: Maintains genetic variation because **it benefits one sex while hurting the other.**
  One theory explaining homosexuality was based on sexually antagonistic selection: it may help women be more fecund, but it costs to some men.

Depression = low status; Machs = high status

Research on vervet monkeys and humans suggests that serotonin levels are closely tied to social status and may play a role in depression.

In monkeys, alpha males had serotonin levels twice as high as subordinates, but when they lost their dominant position, serotonin dropped sharply, and their behavior changed—becoming withdrawn, rocking, and refusing to eat, similar to symptoms of depression in humans (Raleigh and McGuire, 1991; McGuire et al., 1997).

When treated with Prozac (an SSRI), these symptoms disappeared, and monkeys given Prozac became alpha males when the original one was removed (McGuire et al., 1997; McGuire and Troisi, 1998).

In humans, some studies classify males as either 'Machiavellians,' who are relatively aggressive and competitive, or 'moralists,' who are more deferential.
⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: I find the researchers' choice of name to be sub-optimal. 'Dominant men' would have been a better fit than 'Machiavellians'.

For Machiavellians, social rank and serotonin levels are positively correlated, while for moralists the relationship is negative (Madsen, 1985; Madsen and McGuire, 1984).

This suggests that, like vervet monkeys, high-status pushy males tend to have higher serotonin.

Since low serotonin is linked to depression (Ray, 2018), these findings provide indirect support for Price's social competition hypothesis, which proposes that low mood can be an adaptive response to failure in gaining status.

While this hypothesis might be criticized for focusing on male-typical competition, women also compete for status in less overt ways (Cashdan, 1996; Campbell, 2002; 2006; 2020). If supported, the social competition hypothesis could help Darwinian medicine guide clinicians in identifying and understanding some forms of depression.

Also read:

- **How to become more positively Machiavellian**

> 15 Steps to Be A Good Machiavellian: Your Secret Playbook

The evolutionary reason for psychopathy: leeching off of cooperators

Psychopathy, often considered synonymous with antisocial personality disorder (APD), is characterized by a lack of empathy, callous exploitation of others without guilt, low anxiety, and a preference for immediate gratification.

Evolutionary psychologists propose that **psychopathy may represent an adaptive "cheater" strategy that takes advantage of the widespread reciprocal cooperation in human populations**.

Such an argument for persons with APD has been considered by a number of evolutionists (Mealey, 1995; 2005; McGuire et al., 1997; Glenn et al., 2011) but is particularly associated with McGuire and Troisi (1998).

For such a strategy to persist, two key conditions must be met:

1. there must be a genetic basis for psychopathy
2. most individuals in the population must be cooperators or reciprocators

Empirical evidence supports these conditions, with studies showing higher concordance rates for APD in monozygotic twins compared to dizygotic twins, increased incidence in adopted children of biological parents with the disorder, and a five-fold increased risk among first-degree male relatives.

Psychopathy affects approximately 3% of adult males and 1% of females, with its higher prevalence in males potentially explained by stronger migratory tendencies that reduce detection.

Moreover, around half of psychopaths may remain undiagnosed, suggesting that this freeriding strategy can be effective and enduring within human populations.

Balancing and Shifting Theories of Psychopaths

Balancing and shifting theories build on the idea of psychopathy as an evolved cheating strategy by focusing on how genetic predispositions interact with environmental conditions to influence the development and expression of psychopathic traits.

The **balancing theory** proposes that certain genes create a vulnerability (diathesis) to psychopathy, which may be expressed depending on social environments—such as densely populated cities where exploitation is more advantageous, versus smaller, more intimate communities where such behavior is less successful. This view supports a bio-social interactionist model where the environment triggers genetic potential.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: modern societies must be careful**
This suggests that advanced societies' urbanization may increase the incidence of psychopathy.

The **contingent shift theory** suggests that all individuals possess modules that, when triggered by adverse environments (e.g., childhood abuse), can produce psychopathic traits.
Unlike the balancing theory, which sees only a minority genetically predisposed, this theory argues that psychopathy could potentially develop in anyone under the right conditions.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: The prevalence hypothesis, also known as frequency-dependent selection, was missing in the paragraph but explained later.
It proposes that psychopathy can be an adaptive strategy only if psychopaths remain a small minority in the population. If too many individuals behaved this way, social cooperation and reciprocity would break down, making the strategy ineffective. Thus, natural selection maintains psychopathy at low but stable levels—around 1–3%—allowing it to persist as a successful "cheating" strategy without undermining social order.

Evidence linking psychopathy to evolved strategies is suggestive but not definitive, partly due to disagreements over genetic-environment interactions and the proportion of the population affected. Factors like high conflict and low parental warmth are correlated with psychopathy but don't conclusively prove it's an evolved adaptation.

Complicating the picture, Linda Mealey proposed two types of psychopathy: one largely genetic and independent of environment, and another emerging from perceived social disadvantage.
Additionally, psychopathy's role within the "Dark Triad" personality cluster alongside Machiavellianism and narcissism supports its adaptive function in some contexts.

Given its widespread cross-cultural presence, evolutionary explanations remain essential to fully understanding psychopathy, even as the details continue to be debated.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's summary:

- **Psychopathy is biological**: Recent neurobiological studies highlight differences in brain structure/function in psychopaths (e.g., amygdala, prefrontal cortex), suggesting a biological basis.
  - Environment plays a role, but it's debated how much/in which circumstances
- **Psychopathy *likely* has an adaptive basis** but *only* in specific social and environmental contexts. Many researchers consider at least some aspects of psychopathy to be adaptive in evolutionary terms, especially in certain social environments. Psychopathy may confer reproductive or social advantages through manipulative, risk-taking, and exploitative behavior.
  - However, **it is not adaptive in all contexts** and carries costs that limit its prevalence.
- The **balancing theory** is the most widely supported framework, incorporating both genetic predisposition and environment
  ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: this seems to be the same as 'weather forecasting'/'conditional adaptation theory'
- **The prevalence hypothesis**—that psychopathy remains rare because it only works as an adaptive strategy when few individuals have it—**is well supported and largely accepted.**
- The **contingent shift theory** is **less supported** due to difficulties explaining prevalence and genetics.

Future research will likely refine these models, possibly supporting a nuanced view with multiple psychopathy subtypes and complex gene-environment dynamics.

Also see our investigation on a psychopath's worringly methodical fast-life strategy to reproduction:

- Psychopath's fast life sexual strategy

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

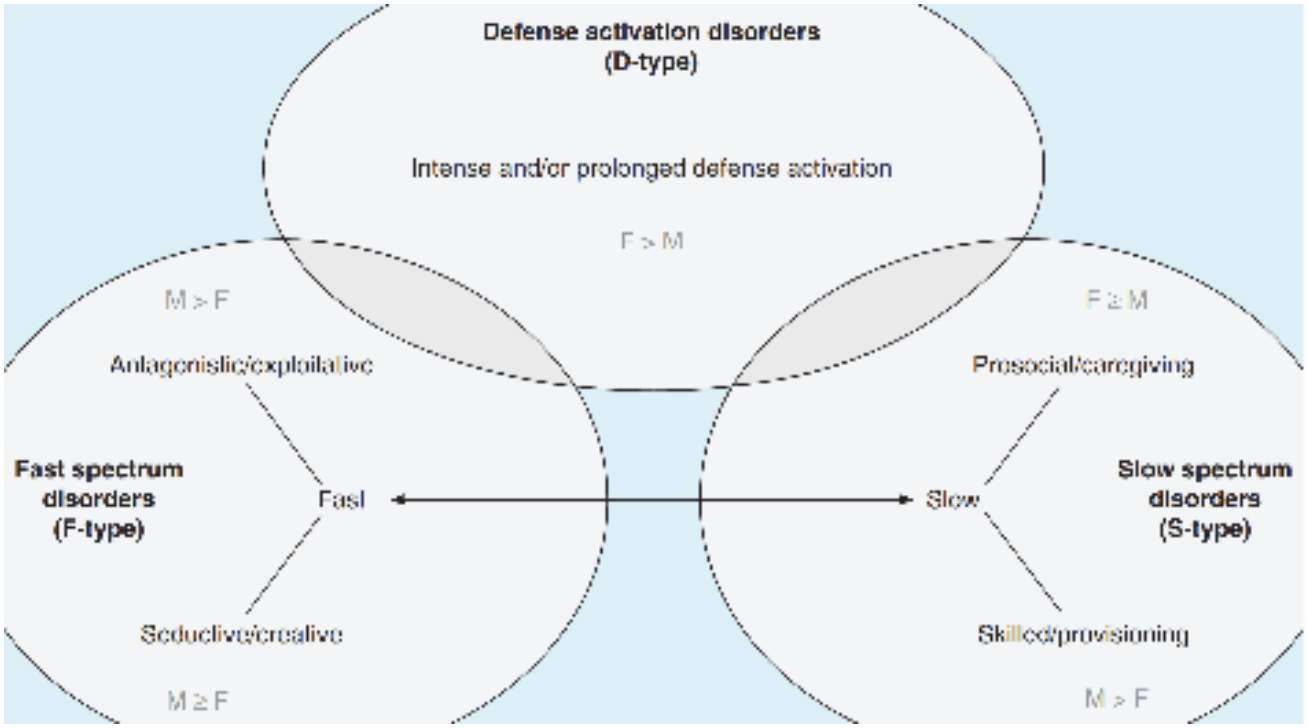
Life history approach to psychopathology

Marco Del Giudice's Fast-Slow-Defence (FSD) model is a new evolutionary framework for classifying psychopathology based on life history theory.

It categorizes disorders into three spectra:

- **Fast spectrum (F-type):** Linked to early, impulsive life strategies, associated with disorders like impulsivity and antisocial behavior.
- **Slow spectrum (S-type):** Linked to slower, more controlled life strategies, associated with overly controlled behavioral problems.
- **Defence activation (D-type):** Disorders arising from overactive self-protective emotional responses like anxiety, fear, and shame (e.g., social anxiety, eating disorders), overlapping with both F- and S-types.

The model challenges the traditional DSM approach by focusing on underlying adaptive functions and developmental dysregulation rather than symptom clusters. Though promising, it is still new and awaits further validation.



Why psychiatric problems persist

Evolution hasn't eliminated psychiatric problems because it's not designed to produce perfect mental health. Instead, it optimizes for reproductive success.
Randolph Nesse (2019) outlined six evolutionary reasons why psychological disorders persist:

1. **Trade-offs (Pleiotropy):** Some traits or genes have both benefits and costs; for example, the same trait that enhances creativity might also increase risk of mood disorders.
2. **Mismatch Hypothesis:** Our brains evolved for ancestral environments, and many modern stressors (e.g., social media, urban isolation) are evolutionarily novel.

3. **Trait Variation Argument:** Traits vary across a normal distribution, and while the law of optimum balance says that within a range many traits are adaptive, some people will naturally fall at maladaptive extremes (e.g., some anxiety is good to keep you alive, but a minority of people will naturally inherit very high anxiety, which is detrimental).
4. A) **Reproduction Over Health (compromise argument):** Natural selection favors traits that boost reproduction and *inclusive* fitness, even if they harm long-term health or mental stability.
   - B) **Exaggerated But Defensive Responses (compromise argument):** Pain, anxiety, and depression may be exaggerated but adaptive responses to real or perceived threats.
   - Examples: Having children can be very taxing on a woman's health and having high levels of testosterone is useful in young men, but it also puts a strain on a man's body, which is one reason why women, on average, live longer than men. But they both persist for the advantages they confer
5. **Evolving Pathogens:** Pathogens evolve faster than humans; while mostly relevant to physical illness, some brain infections or immune responses can contribute to mental disorders

Concepts

- **The symptoms caused by microbial parasites are adaptations** either of the pathogen to aid its multiplication or of the host to kill off or expel it.
  Understanding which symptoms are designed to destroy the pathogen or to spread it might inform treatment
- **Evolutionary arms race of parasite VS host**: The relationship between host and parasite has been portrayed as an evolutionary arms race of adaptation and counter-adaptation (Red Queen)
- **Mismatch Theory:** Modern conditions mismatch ancestral adaptations (e.g., obesity) (Nesse & Williams, 1994).
  Other explanations:
  - Genes that cause illness might also have positive facets associated with them – the pleiotropy argument;
  - Selection pressures act on increasing inclusive fitness, not on perfecting systems – the compromise argument;
  - Disorders might be viewed as the extremes of normal variation – the trait variation argument.
- **'Smoke detector principle' of anxiety**: it pays off to be anxious. The costs of being a little too anxious may well have been small when compared to the costs of not being sufficiently anxious
- **Symptoms as Adaptations:** Fever, pain as defenses.
- **Infectious Diseases:** Co-evolutionary arms race with pathogens.
- **Genetic Conditions:** Sickle cell aids malaria resistance.
- **Blue Eyes and SAD:** Possible resilience link (Workman et al., 2018).
- **Smoke Detector Principle:** Anxiety as overactive defense (Nesse, 1998).

13: Evolution and Individual Differences

Explores why traits like intelligence and personality vary, despite natural selection.

	Heritable variation	Non-heritable variation
Adaptive	• frequency-dependent adaptive strategies (e.g. Mealey's primary psychopathy) • genetically based niche filling	• early environmental calibration 'weather forecasting' (e.g. the Belsky/Chisholm view of attachment) • strategic niche specialisation (e.g. frequency-dependent strategies such as Mealey's secondary psychopathy)
	• variation because of changing environments	• environmentally based niche filling, e.g. peer socialisation (Harris), birth order effects (Sulloway)
Proposed effect of the individual variation	• differential susceptibility to rearing influences (Belsky, 2005)	• none yet proposed
	• variation due to fitness trade-offs (e.g. survival, reproduction, childrearing)	• chance variation due to incomplete specification of phenotype (see Pinker, 2002)
Non-adaptive	• phenotypic variation because of sexual recombination • by-product of an adaptation (e.g. homosexuality in men might be a side effect of genes which when in females increase their fertility)	• social learning (e.g. Social Learning Theory)
Maladaptive	• genetic abnormalities (e.g. Huntington's chorea)	• environmental trauma (e.g. foetal alcohol syndrome), physical or psychological trauma

Summary of the different accounts of individual variation depending on its source (heritable vs environmental) and its effect (adaptive, non-adaptive, maladaptive)

Innate ≠ genetic, because genes can't code everything

This was an aha-moment for me:

The brain is incredibly complex, with billions of neurons and trillions of connections. **Our genes don't contain enough instructions to fully specify everything** in this detailed wiring.
Even identical twins, who share the same DNA, have noticeable differences in their brains and personalities from birth.

These differences can't all be explained by environment or upbringing either—some seem to come down to **random chance**. Tiny events during development—like a neuron growing slightly differently, or a random mutation—can lead to variations in the brain's structure and function.

This kind of variation isn't shaped by evolution or adaptation; it's non-adaptive. It happens simply because building a brain (or body) from limited genetic instructions leaves room for randomness.

⁉️♂ Lucio's note: brain structure and personality is innate, but not everything that is innate is genetic
This also means that some differences between people are innate in the sense that they arise during development (before birth or early in life), but they are not genetic because they're not directly caused by differences in DNA.

Key Ideas

- **Personality:** From an evolutionary point of view we might think of personality as a behavioural strategy. Some people, for example, gain access to resources by dominating others, whereas others do it by being deferential
  - Traits: Personality tests usually measure 'traits' (or sometimes 'factors'; see later) – that is, enduring facets of a personality such as how 'outgoing' or 'liberal' a person is rather than states (Schultz and Schultz, 2005; Haslam et al., 2017).

> One possible account for the variation (of) personality is that some phenotypes might profit in certain

> conditions and others in quite different conditions.
> For example, speculatively, hard times might favour individuals who are likely to cooperate – there is a need to work together – whereas good times might favour individuals who are more selfish – since there is plenty for all.

- **Morally positive/negative traits may be unrelated to fitness**: Traits or factors that seem negative in some moral sense might well have positive effects on fitness.
  Eg.: agreeable people and trusting people may be more easily exploited, whereas cynical people might avoid cooperation in the face of freeriders
- **Many genes regulate most personality traits**: many aspects of individual differences such as personality and intelligence are likely to be highly polygenic (i.e. they depend on many genes, potentially thousands; Heck et al., 2009; Plomin, 2018)
  Differences in the big five between people are due, not to a small number of genes having a large effect, but to a very large number, each of which has a tiny effect (Sanchez-Roige et al., 2018; Plomin, 2018; Flint, Greenspan and Kendler, 2020)
- **Heritability:** Personality (30–50%), intelligence (up to 75%) (Turkheimer, 2000).
  - Genetic heritability may be higher than 30-50%: Early environmental calibration theory suggests that the non-heritable portion of personality may at least partly be explained by evolved, environmentally contingent cognitive and emotional mechanisms that sample the world and affect the phenotype based upon a best-guess prediction of the future.
    The environment matters, but rather than 'pounding us into shape', it selects a phenotype from a battery of alternatives (Myers and Bjorklund, 2020).
- **'Weather forecasting' and early environmental calibration theory** (Myers and Bjorklund, 2020):
  Personality may only be partly genetically specified natural selection cannot entirely specify a successful phenotype for all different environments. So genes specify psychological mechanisms that are capable of tuning or calibrating a personality that better fits the environment in which an individual develops
  - Secondary psychopathy may develop with environmental interaction and gene–environment interaction. Unlike primary psychopaths, largely genetic and fixed, secondary psychopaths inherit a predisposition that may only express under growing up in harsh environments, densely populated areas, or places where cheating is easier and less likely to be detected. This makes secondary psychopathy a conditional adaptation shaped by early-life experiences (Mealey, 1995).
- **Niche-Fitting Hypothesis:** Specialization based on ecological demands.
- **Intelligence helps survival and reproduction**
  - Definition: *[I]ntelligence is the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly, and learn from experience* (Plomin, 2018)
  - General VS specific: there is a long-standing debate as to whether there is a single underlying general intelligence (g), several multiple intelligences or some combination of both of these
  - Intelligence and niche-fitting: for those who adhere to the multiple intelligences view, variation in intelligence can be explained by 'niche fitting', specializing in spatial tasks, linguistic tasks, or understanding people
  - Sexual Selection for Intelligence**:** Signals good genes.

14: Evolutionary Psychology and Culture

The authors examine culture-evolution interplay, viewing humans as cultural animals.
An integrated biology-culture view is advocated; gene-culture coevolution is accepted.

Key Concepts:

- **Superorganic**: Culture exists above individuals as a system with its own dynamics (general);
  Evolutionary: sees this as misleading, favoring individual-level evolved mechanisms instead.
- **Cultural Transmission**: The passing of cultural traits between people or generations (general);
  Evolutionary: studies the evolved learning biases that make transmission possible and efficient.
- **Evoked VS Transmitted Culture**:
  - Evoked culture: Cultural differences that arise from universal psychological mechanisms responding to different environments (e.g.: recall fast and slow life histories)
  - Transmitted Culture: Traits passed down through imitation or teaching, regardless of environment (general);
    Evolutionary psychology sees this as shaped by evolved preferences for social learning.
- **Dual-Inheritance Theory**: Humans inherit both genetic and cultural information;
  Evolutionary: partially overlaps, but tends to focus more on gene-driven mechanisms than cultural evolution per se.
- **Gene–Culture Co-evolution**: Genes and culture influence each other's evolution (general);
  Evolutionary: uses this to explain traits like language or lactose tolerance evolving from cultural practices.
- **Memes and Memetics**: Ideas or behaviors that replicate and spread like genes (general);
  Evolutionary: is cautious, viewing memes as illustrative but often lacking explanatory power.
  - Culturegens: Hypothetical units of cultural information;
- **Imitation and humans' superior imitation**: The chapter opens highlighting how a human child imitated to a much larger degree than a chimpanzee (Kellogg and Kellogg, 1933)
  Evolutionary: views it as an evolved, adaptive learning strategy, especially useful in childhood and high-stakes tasks.
- **Cultural Drive**: Culture itself accelerates evolutionary change by altering environments (general);
  Evolutionary: acknowledges this feedback loop as a driver of human uniqueness.
- **Gene-Culture Coevolution:** Mutual influence (e.g., lactose tolerance) (Laland & Brown, 2002).
- **Cumulative Culture:** Builds across generations, unique to humans.
- **Evoked & Transmitted Culture:** Environment triggers vs. imitation (Boyd & Richerson, 1985).
- **Cultural Evolution:** Rapid societal changes vs. slow biology.

Cultural Adaptations & Transmission: Human's Superpower?

Culture benefits us by enabling us to change our behaviour extremely rapidly to fit environmental conditions.

Boyd and Richerson argue that this potential for rapid adaptation is one reason why the mind evolved an ability to generate and sustain culture.

For example, if temperature dropped dramatically many organisms, ill equipped by natural selection, might freeze to death unless cold-resistant mutations arise.
Humans, with their second mode of inheritance, can develop new technologies or approaches and pass them on to their offspring, enabling them too to survive. The ability to pass the new tech ('technological inheritance') is crucial and what differentiates humans from other species

Speed of Changes Dictates the Viability of Cultural Transmission:

Mathematical models suggest that cultural transmission is only adaptive when environmental change occurs at a moderate pace — not too fast and not too slow.

If the environment changed too quickly, inherited knowledge would become obsolete. If it changed too slowly, genetic evolution could keep up, making culture unnecessary.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: the too fast/too slow may be misleading because culture is superior in almost all 'speeds'
The speed of most changes probably fits within the range of superior cultural adaptations. And this is even truer with more advanced technology and increasing human capabilities.
Think for example, of the recent COVID pandemic: despite the extremely fast changes, humans were still able to craft a vaccine.
And despite the current temperature changes relatively slowly, it's still too small a change and too fast for human evolution to adapt.

Boyd and Richerson argue that human culture likely evolved during the Pleistocene, when climate fluctuations created the ideal conditions: changes were significant but gradual enough that passing on knowledge (like shelter, tools, or hunting techniques) gave a survival advantage. However, this remains circumstantial rather than definitive evidence.

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Women have casual sex (almost) like men IF SAFE

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**:
I've seen several arguments and counter-arguments for this batch of studies and this is the first time I've read something close to a final resolution

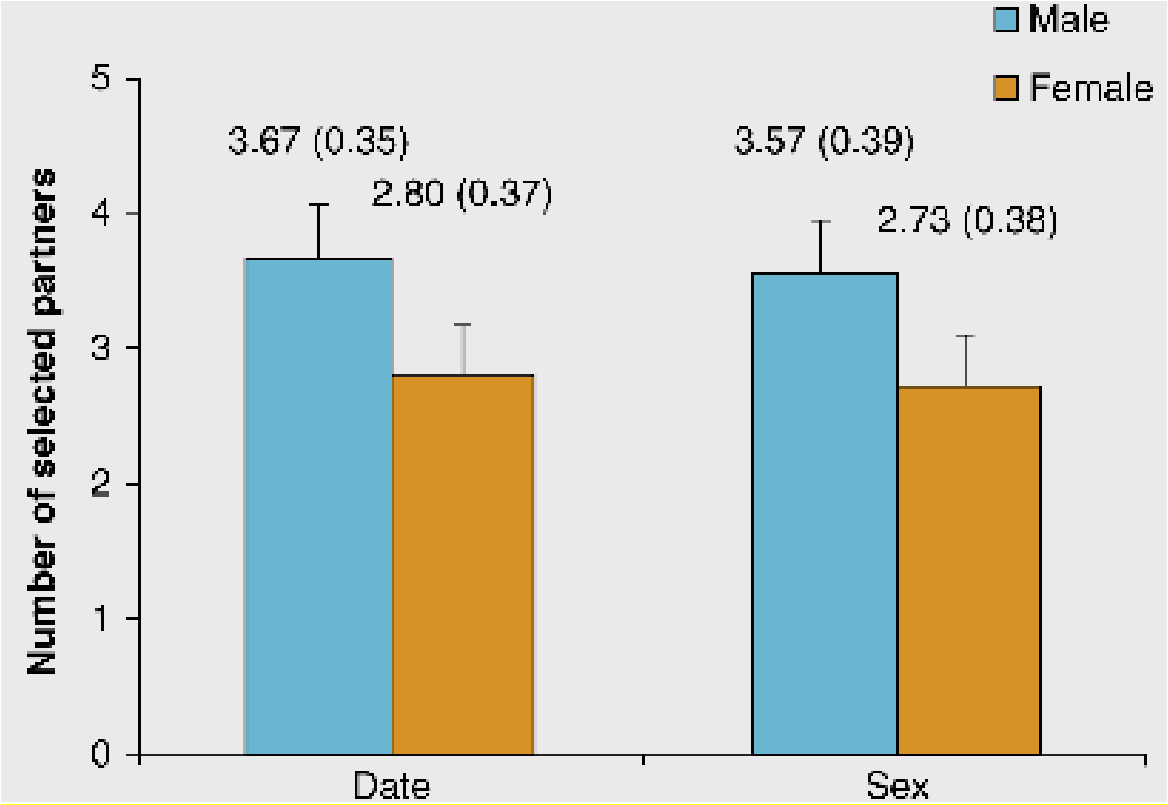
One of the most well-known studies on sex differences in casual sex was conducted by Clark and Hatfield (1989).

Attractive male and female students asked strangers of the opposite sex if they'd sleep with them. About 75% of men agreed—0% of women did.
The result strongly supported evolved sex differences: men are more open to casual sex, while women are more selective due to higher reproductive risks.

Later replications mostly confirmed the original pattern, even across decades of social change (Buss, 2016; Schmidt, 2017; Walter et al., in press).

But things change with Baranowski and Hecht.
Their research addressed women's safety concerns by showing vetted photos with backstories and asking if participants would date or sleep with each person. **In this safer setup, women's willingness to date and have sex almost matched men's**. However, men still selected more partners overall—suggesting men are less selective, not just more interested.

David Buss, David Schmitt and Donald Symons all consider that this difference in behaviour with regard to casual sex reflects differing psychological adaptations in men and women.
But context—like safety and control—can shift women's choices significantly.



Results from Baranowski and Hecht (2015) demonstrating that men chose to meet significantly more women compared to women choosing men, both to date and to agree to have sex with. Error bars represent ±1 SEM

Key Studies:

- **Clark & Hatfield (1989)**
  – *Method:* Students asked strangers to have sex.
  – *Result:* 75% of men said yes; 0% of women did.
- **Replications (Buss, 2016; Schmidt, 2017; Walter et al., in press)**
  – *Method:* Variations of the original setup over decades.
  – *Result:* Results mostly replicated—men more willing than women.
- **Baranowski & Hecht (2015, Germany)**
  – *Method:* Participants rated vetted opposite-sex photos for dating or sex.
  – *Result:* Women's consent matched men's when safety was assured, but men still chose more partners.

⁉️♂ Lucio's note: I missed how the chart and the authors' claim can match
It's not fully clear to me why the authors say that '*Interestingly, however, men wanted to meet significantly more potential partners than women*'. If by 'meeting' the authors refer to the chart's 'date' condition, then it's not a *significant* difference in my opinion.

Human cooperation depends on the environment

> Speculatively, hard times might favour individuals who are likely to cooperate – there is a powerful need to work together to eke out a living from a hostile environment – whereas good times might favour individuals who are somewhat more selfish – since there is plenty for all, individuals can more easily lead a productive life on their own.
>
> If we imagine that the environment favours cooperators, then this phenotype will profit at the expense of more selfish individuals.
>
> If such conditions were to obtain for a long period of time then selfish individuals would probably die out, but

> if the environment fluctuates back and forth comparatively rapidly (over a cycle of, say, 100 years or so) then under different conditions the selfish individuals might find themselves at a fitness advantage and their numbers would increase at the expense of cooperators

We're getting less intelligent

This is something that worries me for the future of humanity:

> That the brain developed despite these costs is clear evidence that the brain didn't get bigger by accident, there must have been advantages in order to outweigh these costs. In fact, there is some research which suggests that our brains have been shrinking for the past 10,000 years or so (Liu et al., 2014). This may be because nowadays we have less need to be individually smart, relying increasingly on the products of culture and teamwork. Whatever the reason, if this research turns out to be correct it shows that evolution gives us the size of brain we need and no bigger.

Coolidge effect is cross-cultural

One key psychological gender difference is men's stronger response to novel sexual partners, also called 'Coolidge effect'.

The Coolidge effect—a rapid return of sexual interest when a new female is introduced—is now known to be a cross-cultural feature of human males (Symons, 1979; James, 1981; Hamer and Copeland, 1998).

Interestingly, a small number of studies suggest that, at least for rodents, females may also demonstrate a Coolidge effect, albeit to a lesser extent (Lester and Gorzalka, 1988).
As for human females the question currently remains open as any such studies remain to be published.

This supports the idea of an evolved tendency toward non-full-monogamy, since this adaptation may be hard to explain without an evolutionary history of 'straying'.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: the coolidge effect may be stronger among men with unrestricted sociosexuality**
As part of an adaptation package to orient more towards short-term and uncommitted relationships, and sexual escapades.
Also see our article on 'cad psychology':

> Womanizers Psychology: The 10 Types of Players

Industrial societies must suppress kin-reciprocity (nepotism)

> Canadian evolutionary anthropologist Jerome Barkow has suggested pre-industrial societies are a lot closer to our evolved psychology than industrial societies (which he calls 'complex societies'). He suggests that, **in order for industrial societies to work, kin-selected altruism has to be suppressed and labelled 'corruption' or at least as 'nepotism'** (Barkow, 1989)
> Moreover, it is when these complex societies break down, as in revolution, that such strong nepotistic tendencies reemerge (Barkow, 1982).

I believe that more than for 'industrial societies', this is true for democracies and *well-functioning* societies.

QUOTES

On the inherent 'eugenics' of reproduction and sexual market dynamics:

> In a sense, all sexual beings participate in a form of eugenics, albeit unconsciously. There is evidence to suggest (see Chapters 3 and 4) that when an animal (including a human animal) selects a sexual partner it does so, among other things, on the basis of characteristics that are indicative of good genes

On survival VS reproduction:

> If natural selection is survival of the fittest then we can think of sexual selection as 'survival of the sexiest'

On big VS small and the misunderstanding of 'big being more dangerous':

> It's not the big organisms that are most likely to kill you, it's the ones you can't even see

On cooperation VS competition and competition trumping cooperation:

> But whereas cooperation is well documented in many species, competition is rife in all. Animals, in a sense, compete to become ancestors

On the importance of social status hierarchies:

> The hierarchical structure of human societies which, surely, is one of the most important reasons why, for good or for bad, humans dominate the globe.

On fear as an evolutionary emotion:

> If there is one core emotion that has clear survival implications it must be fear. People who have no fear do not make for good ancestors

On the power of evolutionary psychology to convince sensible and smart men with the power of its logic and data:

> As an anthropologist from the cultural relativist school, Brown did not believe in cultural universals and bet Symons that he could find a culture in which each of Symons' proposed universal sex differences was reversed. He didn't win the bet. In fact, he completely revised his opinions. After studying a large number of cultures Brown discovered that there were more than 200 characteristics common to all cultures

Lucio's Analysis

The book is great, and here are some suggestions for the authors to consider for the next editions:

Include SDO to homology/coalitionary aggression

A reference to social dominance theory and its measure (social dominance orientation) will help readers bridge the gap from evolutionary psychology, to social psychology and power dynamics.

Add a note to 'rate of change for cultural transmission to work'

The current framing of 'perfect sweet spot' between too fast/slow for environmental change may risk overstating the limits of cultural transmission.

In reality, culture often remains superior to genetic adaptation across a wide range of change speeds.

Most real-world environmental shifts likely fall within a bandwidth where cultural solutions remain adaptive—and often vastly more efficient—than waiting for genetic evolution. This is especially true today, with the exponential growth of technology and communication.

Consider the COVID-19 pandemic: despite being a fast-mutating virus, humans developed and distributed effective vaccines within a year.
On the other hand, climate change is relatively slow on a generational scale, yet still too fast and too subtle for genetic adaptation to offer any viable solution.

It is culture—through science, policy, and organized action—that remains our best practical response.

I'd love for the authors to amend the text accordingly (or criticize this point if they find it invalid).

Speaking of which:

Expand cultural evolution

I'm biased because after reading Henrich's work, I think that evolutionary psychology is still underestimating the impact of culture on evolution, civilization, and growth trajectory.

That said, I'd love the authors to include Henrich's work and talk more on cultural evolution and its potentially growing impact on human societies:

- **The Secret of Our Success**
- **The WEIRDest People in the World**

They can find some extra space by cutting the following:

Streamline and simplify

Including:

Cut Some Tangents

The book is too good to leave any low ROI paragraphs hanging around.

I felt the book could be even better, replacing some tangents with more evolutionary psychology, or completely removing them.
For example:

- **Person-first language movement** stemming from 'autistic people'. It's an important advancement of civilization and humanity to amend our everyday language, but it's tangential
- **Birth order research** could be streamlined
- **Margaret Mead**: She features twice, both times including the criticism of her work and once even the evolution of her thought. Yes, maybe she's been overly vilified, but in my opinion her impact has still been largely negative.
  I may be right or wrong, but the point is that discussing individual authors should not be part of the text, in my opinion
- **Trim out the 'defending evolutionary psychology' angles**: Sometimes I feel it can come across as defensive, for example that *'early environmental calibration (…) provides further artillery against the view that evolutionary thinking is necessarily deterministic*. The authors are perfectly right, but I don't think we need any artillery. We can let science do the talking.
  - **Consider removing ethical notes:**

For example:

> in a subject that treats relationships in such a cold and calculated light, it seems reassuring to discover that both men and women value love as of primary importance (…) When we consider less permanent affairs things begin to look less romantically rosy.

And a bit later:

> Before we begin to feel let down by the lack of fidelity that this suggests for our female ancestors we should also bear in mind that it takes two to recombine their genes: both sexes are equally tainted by such findings!

I smiled at this, and we all understood what the authors meant.
Not sure though, whether it belongs here, also because this may be misconstrued as judgmental towards women.

Add brief descriptions to the list of 'key concepts' opening each chapter

Given the target audience and the strengths of this book, I'd consider making some parts of the book even more approachable.

Some ideas:

- **A list of 'key concepts and definitions' before each chapter**. The authors already provide a list, a fantastic approach to 'prime' the brain for the upcoming learning. A quick summary for each will make it even more useful. You can move the glossary definitions to that opening paragraph
- **Combine all related concepts into one single chapter**. For example, psychopathy and balancing theory are spread across at least two chapters. Combine them all in the chapter where you discuss psychopathy the most.
- **Group similar and sub-theories together.** For example, I believe the handicap principle is part of the larger 'good genes' principle. Combine them together
  - Introduce all relevant terms or variations first, then use the most widely recognized one. For example, note that Zahavi's handicap principle is now "honest signaling," and use "honest signaling" thereafter.
- **Add a 'common misunderstanding section'**, which may be very helpful for freshmen who dabbled into pop-psychology before starting uni.
  eg.:
  - 'Great chain of being' and 'continuous improvement' instead of a messy random walk that the environment weeds out, etc.;
  - 'Storytelling fallacy', or the tendency of many people to come up with a just-so story and passing it for evolutionary psychology, a popular approach that undermines the validity of evolutionary psychology, etc.)

Deepen the basics, including pictures and diagrams

It was perfectly done with the example of 'blueprint VS recipe'.
Do the same for topics like:

- **Genes vs. DNA vs. Alleles vs…** : these concepts and how they work are all fuzzy for beginners, clarify it them
- **Genetic VS biologic**, a subtle difference that took me years to grasp
- **Evolutionary stable strategy**

To avoid overloading the text, cut down on the history of Charles Darwin and Mendeleev.

Rank Theories From Largest Contributors to Smallest

To improve clarity on complex topics, present the main, most well-supported drivers first—those with the strongest empirical backing and largest effect sizes—and then list additional or more speculative contributors.

You could also add a final table with a ranking.
Yes it's simplistic, but it may help students organize information.

For example, discussing altruism, this is how a tabled rank may look like:

Theory	Impact	Explanation
Kin selection (inclusive fitness)	Very high	Altruism toward genetic relatives evolves when helping kin (rB > C) still propagates shared genes.
Direct reciprocity	Very high	In repeated interactions, helping others pays off because they'll return the favor later.
Misdirected kin selection	Speculatively high	Cooperative behavior triggered by evolved kin-detection mechanisms (e.g., familiarity, similarity, proximity, emotional closeness), evolved in small kin-based tribes but triggers even without genetic relatedness
Indirect reciprocity (reputation)	High	Acts of helping build a good reputation, which attracts aid from third parties.
Network (spatial) reciprocity	High	Emergent property. Cooperators cluster together in networks or colonies and collectively outcompete isolated defectors.
Multi-level (group) selection	Moderate	Groups of cooperators outperform groups of defectors, so cooperative traits spread with the winning groups/coalitions.
Enforcement (punishment)	Moderate	Emergent cultural byproduct. Punishing or excluding defectors imposes costs on cheats, stabilizing cooperative behavior.
Parochial/Ingroup altruism	Moderate/low	Preferential help for in-group members, often paired with hostility toward outsiders.
Green-beard effects	Low	Rare "tagged" genes recognize and favor copies of themselves, leading to targeted cooperation.
Partner choice	Low	Cooperative partners are favored over selfish ones. 'Cooperative' signaling is a consequence. Its strong effect on long-term dating is offset by short-term mating and forced copulation

"Evolutionary Drivers of Altruism, Morality, and Cooperation: A Ranked Framework"
(by Lucio Buffalmano)

⚠ Revisit the claim of nonpaternity rates

The authors write:

> Also in England, via genetic testing, Baker and Bellis (1995; 2014) have found that about one in five children could not be the offspring of their supposed fathers.

The authors quote Robin Baker, the author of *Sperm Wars*, a book that, back then, I found to raise some important red flags.

One in five seemed hard to believe based on what I knew.
So I asked ChatGPT for confirmation, which replied:

> That claim is misleading. Modern genetic studies in England and other Western countries do **not** support a 1-

> in-5 (20%) non-paternity rate

AI mentioned studies supporting rates of around 1-4% and reaching up to around 30% *only when paternity is already disputed* (e.g., men requesting tests due to suspicion).
That is in line with what I had previously seen and read.

I think the authors referred to cases with pre-existing doubts, but they could make it clearer to avoid possible misunderstandings.

REVIEW

Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction is one of the best available books on evolutionary psychology we've read and reviewed.

It may be the best introductory book to the field of evolution and evolutionary psychology.

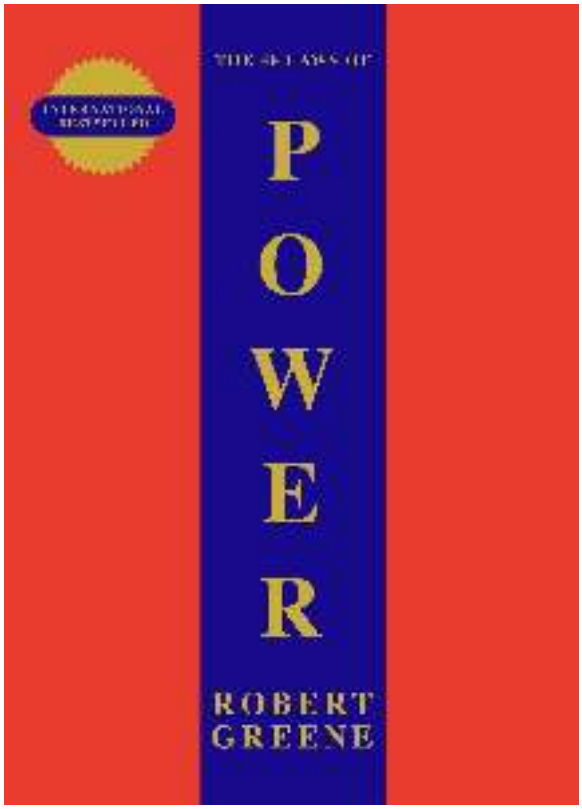
It distills complex evolutionary principles into a clear, engaging guide to how evolution shapes the human mind and social behavior.

Check the **best evolutionary psychology books** or **get this book on Amazon**:

48 Laws of Power — Chapter-by-Chapter Summary

Lucio Buffalmano · 3 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The 48 Laws of Power by Robert Greene is a provocative book on strategy, manipulation, and realpolitik. A mix of historical examples and ruthless strategies, it blends sharp insights with entertaining storytelling.



⍰⍰ For the complete master guide, see the main **48 Laws of Power guide**.

Contents

- Law #1: Never Outshine the Master
- Law #2: Don't Put Too Much Trust in Friends – Learn to Use Your Enemies
- Law #3: Conceal Your Intentions
- Law #4: Say Less Than Necessary
- Law #5: So Much Depends on Your Reputation – Guard It with Your Life
- Law #6: Court Attention at All Costs
- Law #7: Let Others Do the Work, but Always Take the Credit
- Law #8: Make Other People Come to You – Use Bait if Necessary
- Law #9: Win Through Actions, Never Through Argument
- Law #10: Infection: Avoid the Unhappy and Unlucky
- Law #11: Learn to Keep People Dependent on You
- Law #12: Use Selective Honesty and Generosity to Disarm Your Victims
- Law #13: Appeal to Self-Interest, Never to Mercy or Gratitude
- Law #14: Pose as a Friend, Work as a Spy
- Law #15: Crush Your Enemy Totally
- Law #16: Use Absence to Increase Respect and Honor
- Law #17: Keep Others in Suspended Terror: Cultivate an Air of Unpredictability

- Law #18: Do Not Build Fortresses – Isolation Is Dangerous
- Law #19: Know Who You're Dealing With – Do Not Offend the Wrong Person
- Law #20: Do Not Commit to Anyone
- Law #21: Play a Sucker to Catch a Sucker – Seem Dumber Than Your Mark
- Law #22: Use the Surrender Tactic: Transform Weakness into Power
- Law #23: Concentrate Your Forces
- Law #24: Play the Perfect Courtier
- Law #25: Recreate Yourself
- Law #26: Keep Your Hands Clean
- Law #27: Play on People's Need to Create a Cultlike Following
- Law #28: Enter Action with Boldness
- Law #29: Plan All the Way to the End
- Law #30: Make Your Accomplishments Seem Effortless
- Law #31: Control the Options: Get Others to Play with the Cards You Deal
- Law #32: Play to People's Fantasies
- Law #33: Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew
- Law #34: Be Royal in Your Own Fashion: Act Like a King to Be Treated Like One
- Law #35: Master the Art of Timing
- Law #36: Disdain Things You Cannot Have: Ignoring Is the Best Revenge
- Law #37: Create Compelling Spectacles
- Law #38: Think as You Like but Behave Like Others
- Law #39: Stir Up Waters to Catch Fish
- Law #40: Despise the Free Lunch
- Law #41: Avoid Stepping into a Great Man's Shoes
- Law #42: Strike the Shepherd and the Sheep Will Scatter
- Law #43: Work on the Hearts and Minds of Others
- Law #44: Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect
- Law #45: Preach the Need for Change, but Never Reform at Once
- Law #46: Never Appear Too Perfect
- Law #47: Do Not Go Past the Mark You Aimed For: Learn When to Stop
- Law #48: Assume Formlessness
- Master Power Today

Law #1: Never Outshine the Master

> Always **make those above you feel comfortably superior**. In your desire to please and impress them, do not go too far in displaying your talents or you might accomplish the opposite—inspire fear and insecurity. Make your masters appear more brilliant than they are and you will attain the heights of power.

- ✓ **Observance: Nicolas Fouquet**, Finance Minister to Louis XIV, threw a massive party at his castle. The King felt outshone and had him arrested on trumped-up charges
- ✕ **Transgression: Galilei** dedicated the discovery of Jupiter's Moons to the Medici family, winning a position

as their official philosopher, securing safety and funding.

Reversal: Escaping Mediocre Leaders

Strict adherence to this law risks stagnation under average bosses.
High-value individuals must outshine without triggering backlash to advance fast.
See this reel for more.

Also see:

- Laws for Top 0.1% Men (who don't want to be obedient employees)

Law #2: Don't Put Too Much Trust in Friends – Learn to Use Your Enemies

> **Be wary of friends**—they will betray you more quickly, for **they are easily aroused to envy**. They also become spoiled and tyrannical. But hire a former enemy and he will be more loyal than a friend, because he has more to prove. In fact, you have more to fear from friends than from enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them.

If you help them because they're friends, they will feel like they got a handout, and even need to thank you for making them feel bad.

Work requires some distance, Robert Greene says. You must be free to judge whoever furthers your interests the best. And you can't do that with friends.

Former enemies instead have an incentive to prove their new loyalty.

Law #3: Conceal Your Intentions

> Keep people off-balance and in the dark by never revealing the purpose behind your actions. If they have no

> clue what you are up to, they cannot prepare a defense. **Guide them far enough down the wrong path**, envelop them in enough smoke, and by the time they realize your intentions, it will be too late.

- ✅ **Observance: Ninon de l'Enclos**, a famous courtesan who advised a Marquis on a seduction. She told him to be vague and attend parties with other women to pique the target's interest. By the time the target realized she was being pursued, she was already hooked.
- ❌ **Transgression:** Marquis de Sevigné, who eventually blurted out his intentions to a countess too early; she was instantly bored and the "spell" was broken.

Law #4: Say Less Than Necessary

> When you are trying to impress people with words, the more you say, the more common you appear, and the less in control. Even if you are saying something banal, it will seem original if you make it vague, open-ended, and sphinxlike. **Powerful people impress and intimidate by saying less**. The more you say, the more likely you are to emit something foolish.

⁉️♂️ Lucio's Note:
This is contextual and not always true. Modern influencers gain fame through lots of talking.
See this reel:

> **Lucio**: In most new groups, leadership goes to the person who speaks firsts, and more

Law #5: So Much Depends on Your Reputation – Guard It with Your Life

> Reputation is the cornerstone of power. Through reputation alone you can intimidate and win; once it slips, however, you are vulnerable, and will be attacked on all sides. **Make your reputation unassailable**. Always be alert to potential attacks and thwart them before they happen. Meanwhile, learn to destroy your enemies by opening holes in their own reputations. Then stand aside and let public opinion hang them.

⁉️♂️ **Lucio's note**: Reputation is a social currency that can be spent if returns are great.
⁉️ **How to apply the laws** ↗ (video opens in YouTube)

⁉️ Example

Keanu Reeves has a reputation for not wanting credit for his donations, yet he is famous for his 'anonymous' donations.

Law #6: Court Attention at All Costs

> Everything is judged by its appearance; what is unseen counts for nothing. Never let yourself get lost in the crowd, then, or buried in oblivion. **Stand out.** Be conspicuous, at all cost. Make yourself a magnet of attention by appearing larger, more colorful, more mysterious than the bland and timid masses.

Invisibility equates to powerlessness.

Law #7: Let Others Do the Work, but Always Take the Credit

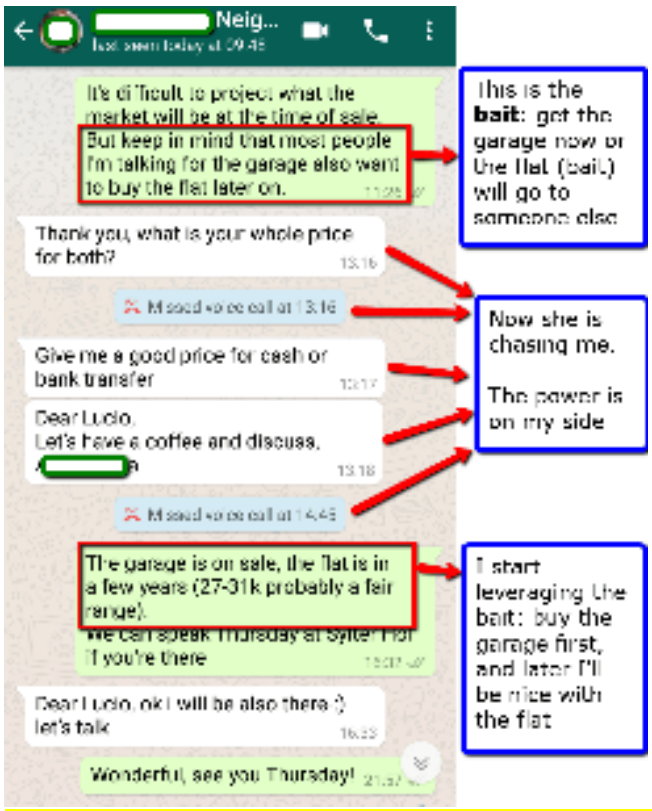
> Use the wisdom, knowledge, and legwork of other people to further your own cause. Not only will such assistance save you valuable time and energy, it will give you a godlike aura of efficiency and speed. In the end your helpers will be forgotten and you will be remembered. **Never do yourself what others can do for you.**

Law #8: Make Other People Come to You – Use Bait if Necessary

> When you force the other person to act, you are the one in control. It is always better to **make your opponent come to you**, abandoning his own plans in the process. Lure him with fabulous gains—then attack. You hold the cards.

⍰ Example

To pitch my garage to a neighbor interested in the flat, I use the flat as bait:



I use the flat -which she wants- as bait to make her come to me for what I want.

Law #9: Win Through Actions, Never Through Argument

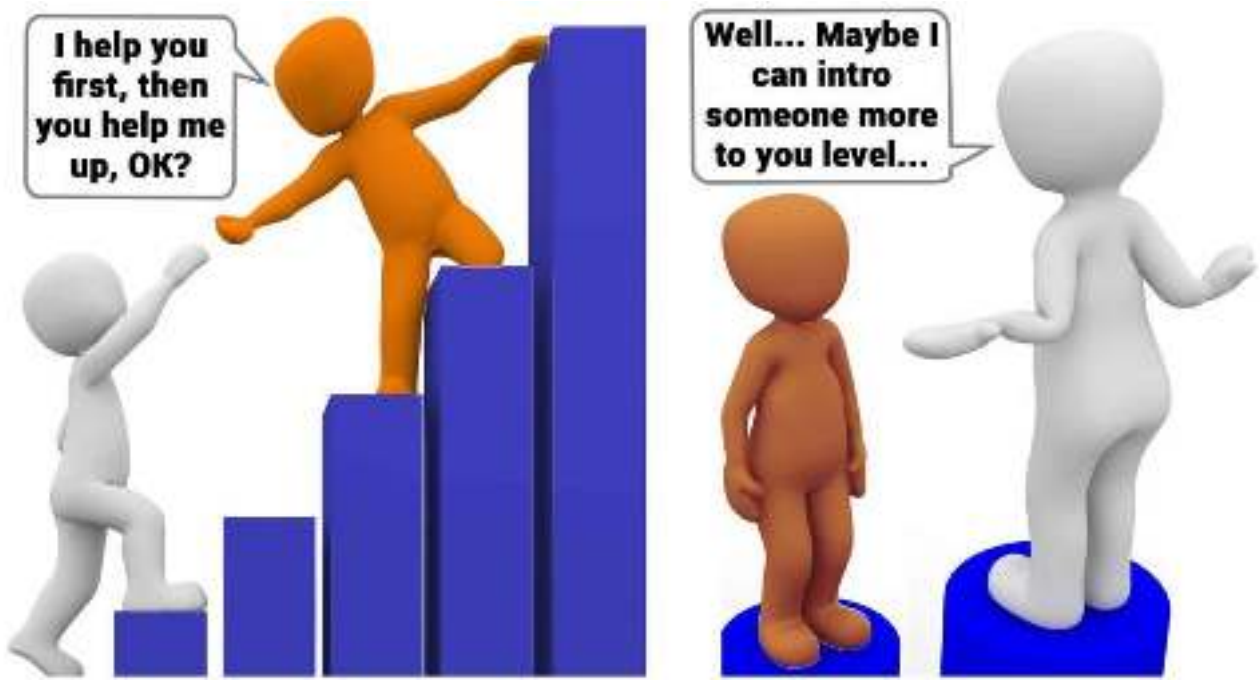
> Any momentary triumph you think you have gained through argument is really a Pyrrhic victory: The resentment and ill will you stir up is stronger and lasts longer than any momentary change of opinion. It is much more powerful to get others to agree with you through your actions, without saying a word. **Demonstrate, do not explain.**

- ⍰ **Observance: Michelangelo**. When the mayor of Florence complained that the statue's nose was too big, Michelangelo pretended to fix it, dropped marble dust he had hidden in his hand, and the mayor was satisfied with the fake action.
- ✕ **Transgression: Mucius**, a Roman who tried to argue his way against a superior. Despite being right, he angered his superior and was flogged (recalling Law #1).

Law #10: Infection: Avoid the Unhappy and Unlucky

> You can die from someone else's misery—emotional states are as infectious as diseases. You may feel you are helping the drowning man, but you are only precipitating your own disaster. The unfortunate sometimes draw misfortune on themselves; they will also draw it on you. **Associate with the happy and fortunate instead.**

Helping the unhappy and unlucky is also a risk if they're ungrateful. They will turn their backs on you.



You’re never guaranteed gratitude for helping thte unhappy and unluckly

Law #11: Learn to Keep People Dependent on You

> To maintain your independence you must always be needed and wanted. The more you are relied on, the more freedom you have. **Make people depend on you for their happiness and prosperity** and you have nothing to fear. Never teach them enough so that they can do without you.

Law #12: Use Selective Honesty and Generosity to Disarm Your Victims

> **One sincere and honest move will overbalance dozens of dishonest ones**. Open-hearted gestures of honesty and generosity bring down the guard of even the most suspicious people. Once your selective honesty opens a hole in their armor, you can deceive and manipulate them at will. A timely gift—a Trojan horse—will serve the same purpose.

Law #13: Appeal to Self-Interest, Never to Mercy or Gratitude

> If you need to turn to an ally for help, do not bother to remind him of your past assistance and good deeds. He will find a way to ignore you. Instead, uncover something in your request, or in your alliance with him, that will benefit him, and emphasize it out of all proportion. He will respond enthusiastically when he sees something to be gained for himself.

- ⍰ **Observance: Ruler Castruccio Castracani** didn’t ask for a treaty based on friendship when he wanted to take a city; he showed the citizens how joining him would make them significantly richer and more secure than their current lord.
- ✕ **Transgression: The Melians** argued that it was “right” and “honorable” for Athens to leave them alone. The Athenians replied that “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must,” and destroyed them. Honor and mercy meant nothing to the powerful.

Law #14: Pose as a Friend, Work as a Spy

> Knowing about your rival is critical. Use spies to gather valuable information that will keep you a step ahead. Better still: Play the spy yourself. In polite social encounters, **learn to probe**. Ask indirect questions to get people to reveal their weaknesses and intentions. There is no occasion that is not an opportunity for artful spying.

Law #15: Crush Your Enemy Totally

> All great leaders since Moses have known that a feared enemy must be crushed completely. (Sometimes they have learned this the hard way.) If one ember is left alight, no matter how dimly it smolders, a fire will eventually break out. **More is lost through stopping halfway than through total annihilation**: The enemy will recover, and will seek revenge. Crush him, not only in body but in spirit.

This law echoes Machiavelli's quote on power:

> Men should be either treated generously or destroyed, because they take revenge for slight injuries – for heavy ones they cannot.

Law #16: Use Absence to Increase Respect and Honor

> Too much circulation makes the price go down: The more you are seen and heard from, the more common you appear. If you are already established in a group, temporary withdrawal from it will make you more talked about, even more admired. You must learn when to leave. **Create value through scarcity.**

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** like all other laws, this is highly contextual, and **it only works when you're already high value.** Nobody misses a scarce low-value man; they're rather glad if he's not around.

Law #17: Keep Others in Suspended Terror: Cultivate an Air of Unpredictability

> Humans are creatures of habit with an insatiable need to see familiarity in other people's actions. Your predictability gives them a sense of control. Turn the tables: **Be deliberately unpredictable**. Behavior that seems to have no consistency or purpose will keep them off-balance, and they will wear themselves out trying to explain your moves. Taken to an extreme, this strategy can intimidate and terrorize.

Law #18: Do Not Build Fortresses – Isolation Is Dangerous

> The world is dangerous and enemies are everywhere—everyone has to protect themselves. A fortress seems the safest. But isolation exposes you to more dangers than it protects you from—it cuts you off from valuable information, it makes you conspicuous and an easy target. Better to circulate among people, find allies, mingle. You are shielded from your enemies by the crowd.

- ⍰ **Observance: Louis XIV** forced the nobility to live with him at Versailles. He was never isolated; he was the center of a crowded court, which allowed him to hear every rumor and control every rival.
- ⍰ **Transgression: Ch'in Shih Huang Ti** became so paranoid that he built a labyrinthine palace and never let

anyone know where he was sleeping. He became isolated from reality, his ministers lied to him, and his empire crumbled shortly after his death.

Law #19: Know Who You're Dealing With – Do Not Offend the Wrong Person

> There are many different kinds of people in the world, and you can never assume that everyone will react to your strategies in the same way. Deceive or outmaneuver some people and they will spend the rest of their lives seeking revenge. They are wolves in lambs' clothing. Choose your victims and opponents carefully, then—**never offend or deceive the wrong person.**

Law #20: Do Not Commit to Anyone

> It is the fool who always rushes to take sides. Do not commit to any side or cause but yourself. By maintaining your independence, you become the master of others—playing people against one another, making them pursue you.

> Neutrality preserves optionality.
>
> *Lucio Buffalmano*

Law #21: Play a Sucker to Catch a Sucker – Seem Dumber Than Your Mark

> No one likes feeling stupider than the next person. The trick, then, is to make your victims feel smart—and not just smart, but smarter than you are. Once convinced of this, they will never suspect that you may have ulterior motives.

Appear less intelligent to lower others' defenses.

Law #22: Use the Surrender Tactic: Transform Weakness into Power

> **When you are weaker, never fight for honor's sake; choose surrender instead**. Surrender gives you time to recover, time to torture your conqueror, time to wait for his power to wane. Do not give him the satisfaction of fighting and defeating you—surrender first. By turning the other cheek you infuriate and unsettle him. Make surrender a tool of power.

Surrender strategically to recover strength and strike, avoiding futile battles for honor.

Law #23: Concentrate Your Forces

> Conserve your forces and energies by keeping them concentrated at their strongest point. You gain more by finding a rich mine and mining it deeper, than by flitting from one shallow mine to another—intensity defeats extensity every time. When looking for sources of power to elevate you, find the one key patron, the fat cow who will give you milk for a long time to come.

Focus on a single, high-impact goal rather than scattering efforts.

Law #24: Play the Perfect Courtier

> The perfect courtier thrives in a world where everything revolves around power and political dexterity. He has mastered the art of indirection; he flatters, yields to superiors, and asserts power over others in the most oblique and graceful manner. Learn and apply the laws of courtiership and there will be no limit to how far you can rise in the court.

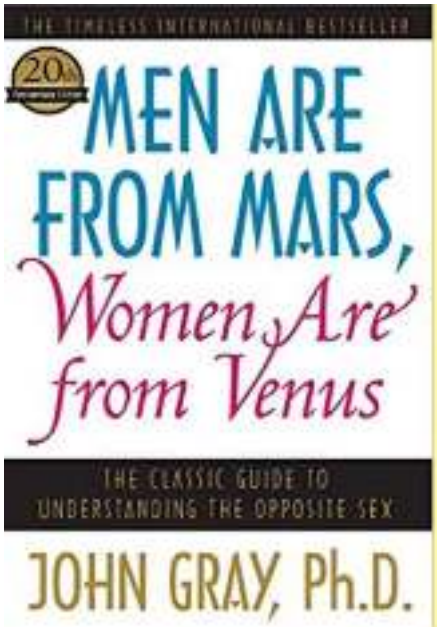
Master social navigation:

- Practice nonchalance: Make talent seem effortless.
- Be frugal with flattery: Use subtle praise.
- Arrange to be noticed: Cultivate a distinctive yet subtle style.
- Adapt to your audience: Tailor your approach to hierarchy.
- Avoid bad news: Let others deliver it.
- Keep distance from superiors: Respect their boundaries.
- Be self-observant: See yourself as others do.

Law #25: Recreate Yourself

> Do not accept the roles that society foists on you. Recreate yourself by forging a new identity, one that commands attention and never bores the audience. **Be the master of your own image** rather than letting others define it for you. Incorporate dramatic devices into your public gestures and actions—your power will be enhanced and your character will seem larger than life.

Shape your own identity rather than accepting others' labels. John Gray's reinvention as a "relationship expert" illustrates this:



Started with a B.A. in "science of creative intelligence", realized "relationships" was far more lucrative and:

- Called himself a "relationship counselor"
- Bought a PhD
- Fluffed up his counseling experience
- Told a story that prospects can relate to
- Joined "American Counseling Association"
- Became president of his own relationship institute

-Story of every identity fabricator

Law #26: Keep Your Hands Clean

> You must seem a paragon of civility and efficiency: Your hands are never soiled by mistakes and nasty deeds. **Maintain such a spotless appearance** by using others as scapegoats and cat's-paws to disguise your

> involvement.

Law #27: Play on People's Need to Create a Cultlike Following

> People have an overwhelming desire to believe in something. Become the focal point of such desire by **offering them a cause, a new faith to follow**. Keep your words vague but full of promise; emphasize enthusiasm over rationality and clear thinking. Give your new disciples rituals to perform, ask them to make sacrifices on your behalf. In the absence of organized religion and grand causes, your new belief system will bring you untold power.

Law #28: Enter Action with Boldness

> If you are unsure of a course of action, do not attempt it. Your doubts and hesitations will infect your execution. **Timidty is dangerous: Better to enter with boldness**. Any mistakes you commit through audacity are easily corrected with more audacity. Everyone admires the bold; no one honors the timid.

See a case study from recent politics here.

Law #29: Plan All the Way to the End

> The ending is everything. Plan all the way to it, taking into account all the possible consequences, obstacles, and twists of fortune that might reverse your hard work and give the glory to others. By planning to the end you will not be overwhelmed by circumstances and you will know when to stop. Gently guide fortune and help determine the future by thinking far ahead.

- ⍰ **Observance: Bismarck**. He planned the unification of Germany decades in advance. He knew exactly which wars to start to reach his specific goal. He never let the excitement of a small victory distract him from the final map.
- ⍰ **Transgression: Napoleon III** lived in a fantasy world of "glory." He started wars without a clear exit strategy, leading to his humiliating capture by the Prussians because he hadn't planned for a stalemate.

Law #30: Make Your Accomplishments Seem Effortless

> Your actions must seem natural and executed with ease. All the toil and practice that go into them, and also all the clever tricks, must be concealed. When you act, act effortlessly, as if you could do much more. Avoid the temptation of revealing how hard you work—it only raises questions. Teach no one your tricks or they will be used against you.

Hide the hard work to project natural talent, in adherence with the law of social effort.

Law #31: Control the Options: Get Others to Play with the Cards You Deal

> The best deceptions are the ones that seem to give the other person a choice: Your victims feel they are in control, but are actually your puppets. **Give people options that come out in your favor whichever one they choose**. Force them to make choices between the lesser of two evils, both of which serve your purpose. Put

> them on the horns of a dilemma: They are gored wherever they turn.

Law #32: Play to People's Fantasies

> The truth is often avoided because it is ugly and unpleasant. Never appeal to truth and reality unless you are prepared for the anger that comes from disenchantment. Life is so harsh and distressing that people who can manufacture romance or conjure up fantasy are like oases in the desert: Everyone flocks to them. There is great power in tapping into the fantasies of the masses.

Avoid harsh truths; craft appealing narratives to draw followers.

Law #33: Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew

> Everyone has a weakness, a gap in the castle wall. That weakness is usually an insecurity, an uncontrollable emotion or need; it can also be a small secret pleasure. Either way, once found, it is a thumbscrew you can turn to your advantage.

- ✅**Observance: Cardinal Richelieu** dominated the French court by knowing everyone's secret weakness and used these "thumbscrews" to keep the royal family in check. <— ⁉️♂ **Lucio's note**: it wasn't just thumbscrews or the king could have him executed. Richelieu had real power
- ✖ **Reversal:** When dealing with a person who has no obvious "thumb-screw" (those with total self-control), you must find the one thing they *do* care about, like their pride or a specific child.

Law #34: Be Royal in Your Own Fashion: Act Like a King to Be Treated Like One

> The way you carry yourself will often determine how you are treated: In the long run, appearing vulgar or common will make people disrespect you. For a king respects himself and inspires the same sentiment in others. By acting regally and confident of your powers, you make yourself seem destined to wear a crown.

Project confidence to earn respect. Christopher Columbus demanded leadership despite lacking credentials, securing his legacy.

Law #35: Master the Art of Timing

> **Never seem to be in a hurry**—hurrying betrays a lack of control over yourself, and over time. Always seem patient, as if you know that everything will come to you eventually. Become a detective of the right moment; sniff out the spirit of the times, the trends that will carry you to power. Learn to stand back when the time is not yet ripe, and to strike fiercely when it has reached fruition.

See mafia bosses' slow movements here.

Law #36: Disdain Things You Cannot Have: Ignoring Is the Best Revenge

> By acknowledging a petty problem you give it existence and credibility. The more attention you pay an enemy,

> the stronger you make him; and a small mistake is often made worse and more visible when you try to fix it. It is sometimes best to leave things alone. If there is something you want but cannot have, show contempt for it. **The less interest you reveal, the more superior you seem.**

Law #37: Create Compelling Spectacles

> Striking imagery and grand symbolic gestures create an aura of power—everyone responds to them. Stage spectacles for those around you, then, full of visual-points and radiant symbols that heighten your presence. Dazzled by appearances, no one will notice what you are really doing.

Use dramatic imagery to distract and inspire, enhancing your aura of power.

Law #38: Think as You Like but Behave Like Others

> If you make a show of going against the times, flaunting your unconventional ideas and unorthodox ways, people will think that you only want attention and that you look down upon them. They will find a way to punish you for making them feel inferior. **It is far safer to blend in and nurture the common touch**. Share your originality only with tolerant friends and those who are sure to appreciate your uniqueness.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: this is more defensive in nature, and in contrast of 'enter action with boldness'. True mastery of the law involves acquiring strategic thinking for effective calibration.

Law #39: Stir Up Waters to Catch Fish

> Anger and emotion are strategically counterproductive. You must always stay calm and objective. But if you can **make your enemies angry** while staying calm yourself, you gain a decided advantage. Put your enemies off-balance: Find the chink in their vanity through which you can rattle them and you hold the strings.

Law #40: Despise the Free Lunch

> What is offered for free is dangerous—it usually involves either a trick or a hidden obligation. What has worth is worth paying for. **By paying your own way you stay clear of gratitude, guilt, and deceit**. It is also often wise to pay the full price—there is no cutting corners with excellence. Be lavish with your money and keep it circulating, for generosity is a sign and a magnet for power.

Law #41: Avoid Stepping into a Great Man's Shoes

> What happens first always appears better and more original than what comes after. If you succeed a great man or have a famous parent, you will have to accomplish double their achievements to outshine them. Do not get lost in their shadow, or stuck in a past not of your own making: **Establish your own name and identity by changing course**. Slay the overbearing father, disparage his legacy, and gain power by shining in your own way.

Law #42: Strike the Shepherd and the Sheep Will Scatter

> Trouble can often be traced to a single strong individual—the stirrer, the arrogant underling, the poisoner of goodwill. If you allow such people room to operate, others will succumb to their influence. Do not wait for the troubles they cause to multiply, do not try to negotiate with them—they are irredeemable. Neutralize their influence by isolating or banishing them. Strike at the source of the trouble and the sheep will scatter.

- ⍰ **Observance: Pizarro and the Incas**. Pizarro realized that the entire Incan Empire was built around the cult of the Emperor, Atahualpa. Instead of fighting the army of 80,000, he captured the Emperor. The army was paralyzed and easily defeated.
- ✕ **Transgression: Corinth** failed to stop the rise of Athens because they focused on minor border skirmishes rather than neutralizing the Athenian leadership directly.

See toxic employee strategies.

Law #43: Work on the Hearts and Minds of Others

> Coercion creates a reaction that will eventually work against you. You must seduce others into wanting to move in your direction. A person you have seduced becomes your loyal pawn. And the way to seduce others is to operate on their individual psychologies and their weaknesses. **Soften up the resistant by working on their emotions**, playing on what they hold dear and what they fear. Ignore the hearts and minds of others and they will grow to hate you.

See *The Art of Seduction*.

Law #44: Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect

> The mirror reflects reality, but it is also the perfect tool for deception: When you mirror your enemies, doing exactly as they do, they cannot figure out your strategy. The Mirror Effect mocks and humiliates them, making them overreact. By holding up a mirror to their psyches, you seduce them with the illusion that you share their values; by holding up a mirror to their actions, you teach them a lesson. Few can resist the power of the Mirror Effect.

Law #45: Preach the Need for Change, but Never Reform at Once

> Everyone understands the need for change in the abstract, but on the day-to-day level people are creatures of habit. Too much innovation is traumatic, and will lead to revolt. If you are new to a position of power, or an outsider trying to build a power base, **make a show of respecting the old way of doing things**. If change is necessary, make it feel like a gentle improvement on the past.

Introduce change gradually to avoid resistance, respecting human attachment to habits.

Law #46: Never Appear Too Perfect

> Appearing better than others is always dangerous, but most dangerous of all is to appear to have no faults or weaknesses. Envy creates silent enemies. It is smart to **occasionally display defects, and admit to harmless vices**, in order to deflect envy and appear more human and approachable. Only gods and the dead can seem perfect with impunity.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: appearing perfect can make you look unbeatable, discouraging your opposition from even trying.

Law #47: Do Not Go Past the Mark You Aimed For: Learn When to Stop

> The moment of victory is often the moment of greatest peril. In the heat of victory, arrogance and overconfidence can push you past the goal you had aimed for, and by going too far, you make more enemies than you defeat. Do not allow success to go to your head. There is no substitute for strategy and careful planning. **Set a goal, and when you reach it, stop.**

Law #48: Assume Formlessness

> By taking a shape, by having a visible plan, you open yourself to attack. Instead of taking a form for your enemy to grasp, keep yourself adaptable and on the move. Accept the fact that nothing is certain and **no law is fixed**. The best way to protect yourself is to be as fluid and formless as water; never bet on stability or lasting order. Everything changes.

Stay adaptable, like a Machiavellian, embrace fluidity to remain resilient.

- ⍰ **Observance: Miyamoto Musashi** never fought the same way twice, adapting his style to the opponent. His enemies could never prepare for him because he had no predictable form.
- ✕ **Transgression: The Spartans**. They were the most powerful land force in Greece, but were rigid and eventually 13outmaneuvered by the more adaptable Thebans and Athenians.

Master Power Today

The 48 Laws of Power is a good entry point for power intelligence, but real-life success in the modern world requires strategic thinking and advanced calibration. For **modern applications** and practical tools check out:

- The 48 Laws for The Modern World
- The 48 Laws of Power vs Power University, to see what's best for you

Better yet, explore:

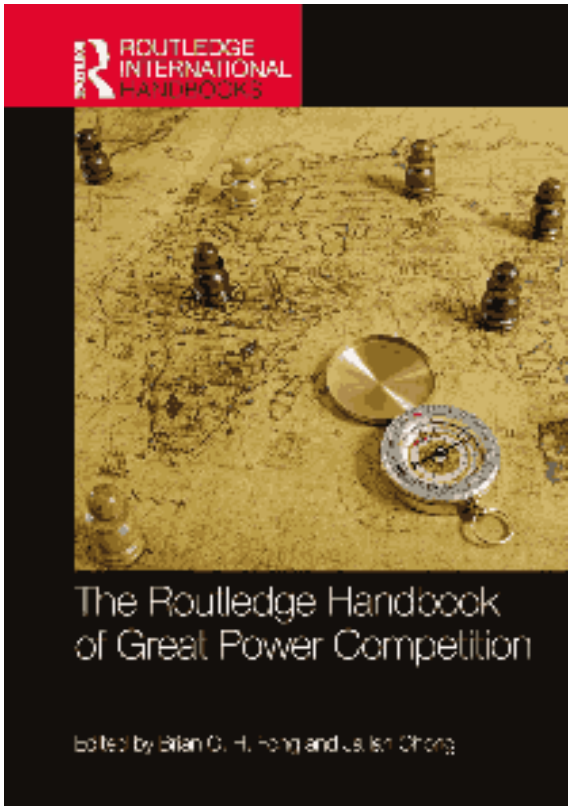
- **Power University**, where we lay out Greene's strategic approach to becoming life winners:

Check Power University

The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition (2025) offers a comprehensive, interdisciplinary framework for understanding geopolitical rivalries. The volume examines how major powers exert influence through military, economic, and ideational means, making it a critical reference for navigating the return of great power politics.



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FULL SUMMARY

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Intro: We're Back With Great Power Competitions

After the end of the Cold War, the USA and the West focused on the enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies.

The belief was that we had entered a new stage of world cooperation and limited competition.
But, alas, it was not the case:

> Washington elites from both Democratic and Republican parties perceived great power competition as "a thing of the past" (Colby and Mitchell, 2020: 118).
>
> (…) the post-Cold War period of the 1990s and 2000s witnessed the marked decline of great power competition studies as many people in the West frmly believed that they had "entered a world in which there is little chance that the major powers will engage each other in security competition, much less war" (Mearsheimer, 2001: 1).
>
> Subsequent developments however showed that the decline of great power competition— and relevant scholarly research—in the 1990s and 2000s was historically abnormal, rather than normal

Chapter 1: Great Power Competition – An Analytical Framework

In Chapter one Brian C. H. Fong lays the intellectual foundation for the entire volume by introducing a structured framework for analyzing great power competition in today's shifting global order.

The Context: From Post-Cold War Optimism to Strategic Rivalry

Brian Fong begins by tracing the arc of great power studies:

- After the Cold War, many scholars believed the **era of great power conflict had ended**, giving way to a liberal international order led by the U.S.
- But the rise of **China and Russia as assertive actors**—along with regional powers like Iran—has ushered in a new era of strategic rivalry since the 2010s.
- This shift was formalized in U.S. doctrine by the **2017 National Security Strategy** and the **2018 National Defense Strategy**, which declared "great power competition" the central challenge to American security.

Fong argues that far from being an aberration, competition between great powers is the **historical norm**, not the exception.

Two Conceptual Lenses on Great Power Competition

Fong outlines two major ways scholars define great power competition:

1. **Rivalry Short of War**:
   Competition is antagonistic but stops short of open conflict. States seek relative gains in influence, wealth, and status through military posturing, economic tools, and ideological soft power (Mazarr et al., 2018; Brands & Nichols, 2020).
2. **Spectrum of Relations**:
   Rather than a binary of peace vs. war, great power relations exist along a **continuum**—from cooperation → collaboration → competition → confrontation → full-scale war (Burkhart & Woody, 2017; Lynch III, 2020). On this spectrum, competition represents **conflicted interests that haven't yet escalated to violence**.

Fong adopts this second view, arguing it offers **greater analytical precision** for understanding modern international behavior.

The Framework: Three Core Dimensions

Fong's framework organizes great power competition around three key questions:

1. Who competes? — Actors

- **Great Powers**: e.g., U.S., China, Russia
- **Middle Powers**: e.g., Italy, Japan, Australia, South Korea
- **Small States**: like Estonia and Finland
- **Quasi-State Entities**: such as Greenland, Okinawa, and Taiwan
- **Non-State Actors**: including terrorist groups, militias, and transnational crime networks

Modern great power competition is not purely state-centric. Power is negotiated through an interactive game involving multiple levels and players.

2. How do they compete? — Mechanisms

Fong highlights three primary influence tools:

- **Military Mechanisms**: deterrence, force posture, proxy warfare, arms sales
- **Economic Mechanisms**: trade agreements, sanctions, foreign investment, financial systems
- **Ideational Mechanisms**: soft power (culture, diplomacy) and sharp power (disinformation, ideological campaigns)

These tools reflect **both material and symbolic power**, operating across visible and invisible domains.

3. Where do they compete? — Domains

Competition occurs in both **territorial** and **non-territorial** spaces:

- **Territorial Domains**: regions (e.g., Indo-Pacific, MENA), subregions (e.g., South Asia), contested zones (e.g., Taiwan, Ukraine)
- **Non-Territorial Domains**: cyberspace, outer space, supply chains, global finance, and international institutions

This spatial expansion shows that power projection is now about standards, connectivity, and systems, not just land or borders.

Chapter 2: Mainstream Theories

Mainstream theories of great power competition draw from three dominant paradigms in International Relations (IR): **realism**, **liberalism**, and **constructivism**.

- **Realism** sees the international system as anarchic, with states pursuing survival and power.
  "*Realist theory naturalizes great power competition as a logical and inevitable outcome of states' quest for relative power*"
  Key subtypes include:
  - *Offensive realism*, emphasizing power maximization (e.g., Mearsheimer)
  - *Defensive realism*, stressing balance and restraint (e.g., Waltz)
  - *Power transition theory*, which warns of war when rising powers approach parity with hegemons (Organski & Kugler)
  - *Hegemonic war theory*, positing systemic war as an inevitable result of shifting power balances (Gilpin)
  - *Neoclassical realism*, blending systemic factors with unit-level variables like leadership perception and domestic politics
- **Liberalism** argues internal characteristics of states matter more than structural pressures. State preferences emerge from domestic and transnational social forces.
  - It emphasizes cooperation, institutionalism, and peace through interdependence and democratic governance.
- **Constructivism** challenges materialist assumptions, highlighting the role of identity, ideas, and norms in shaping state behavior.
  - Different identities lead to diverging threat perceptions.
  - The concept of "great power" is not fixed but socially constructed.

Each paradigm provides distinct insights:

- Realism explains power struggles well but lacks normative context.
- Liberalism emphasizes cooperation but underestimates realist behavior.
- Constructivism captures ideational factors but can underplay material constraints.

A pluralist synthesis is often necessary to fully understand the dynamics of great power rivalry.

Two Conceptions of Power

There are two conceptions of power:

1. Power as capabilities (resources)
2. Power as influence (outcome)

The author says that power as influence makes it difficult to assess the balance of power a priori since the balance can only be observed after the outcome. And it can also lead to absurd observations, like North Vietnam being more powerful than the USA because the latter failed to influence the outcome of the Vietnam War.
This is why most realists adopt the first conception of power as capabilities, which emphasizes its material aspect (Gilpin, 1981, p.13; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp.57–60; Waltz, 1978, pp.191–192).

My note: outcome remains a valid measure
And it's not 'absurd' that Vietnam was more powerful than the USA in that specific context, and related to that specific outcome.
Vietnam was willing to commit and sacrifice more. Given these constraints, Vietnam was more powerful in influencing the outcome.

Security Dilemmave: How Defensive Moves Precipitate Wars

> The security dilemma is one of the most important contributions of the realist paradigm to IR theory.
>
> One cannot properly understand great power competition without considering the security dilemma, which says that, in anarchy, measures taken by one state to increase its security will decrease the security of other states (Herz, 1950; Jervis, 1978).
>
> For instance, **NATO sees its eastward expansion after the Cold War as defensive and non-threatening, but Russia sees it as a security threat.** China sees its arms build-ups as "purely defensive", but the United States and others view them as threatening.
>
> At the heart of the security dilemma is uncertainty about intentions.
> States cannot be certain about the present intentions of another state, and even if they are, there is no guarantee that its intentions will not change in the future (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.31). This uncertainty in an anarchic environment triggers the security dilemma.

Chapter 3: Critical Theories

Critical theories in IR, rooted in the thought of Robert Cox, Antonio Gramsci, and Karl Marx, question the foundational assumptions of mainstream IR.

Critical theories argue that **power inequalities are embedded in the system**, and true change requires systemic transformation—not just balancing or cooperation.

- Cox distinguishes between "problem-solving" theories (which accept the status quo) and "critical" theories (which challenge it).
- Critical theorists view power as both material and ideational—requiring consent, not just coercion (Gramsci's *hegemony*).

Key Streams of Critical Theory:

- **Marxism**:
  - Emphasizes class struggle and capitalist exploitation.
  - Views the state as a tool of the ruling class to preserve inequality.
  - Critiques realist use of "great power competition" as ahistorical and power-serving.
- **Frankfurt School**:
  - Max Horkheimer and others promote "immanent critique"—exposing contradictions within the current system to enable change.

  - Criticizes realism for legitimizing the status quo.
- **World-Systems Theory** (Wallerstein, Arrighi):
  - Divides the world into core, periphery, and semi-periphery zones.
  - Sees global capitalism as the driving force behind competition.
  - Power is embedded in global class relations, not just state capabilities.
- **Neo-Gramscianism**:
  - Views neoliberalism as a transnational hegemonic order.
  - Suggests that today's "great power competition" operates within and reproduces this capitalist order.
  - Promotes counter-hegemonic struggles through civil society and "war of position."
- **Post-structuralism**: The goal is to show how meaning is constructed and how power is exerted through the ascription of meaning as well as how such meaning-making is context-dependent
  - ⚠ Careful of great power competition as a frame: as Machiavelli stated, the very concept can serve to justify a perception of threat that allows state elites to extract resources from the population for the purpose of building up military power

Chapter 4: Actors

This chapter expands the concept of "actors" in great power competition beyond just great powers to include **middle powers**, **quasi-states**, and **non-state actors**.

- **Great Powers**: Defined by capabilities, ambitions beyond borders, and recognition by others.
- **Middle and Small Powers**: Often navigate between great powers, sometimes aligning, sometimes resisting.
- **Quasi-States**: Entities with partial sovereignty or limited recognition (e.g., Taiwan), whose actions can shift competitive dynamics.
- **Non-State Actors**:
  - *Terrorist groups*, *MNCs*, and *tech firms* can influence geopolitics.
  - Influence depends on how much attention states pay to them and whether they affect key competitive interests.

Actions and Behavior:

- Great powers use institutions, norms, and military/economic tools to shape global rules in their favor.
- Lesser actors sometimes aggregate influence or become flashpoints (e.g., Ukraine, Palestine, Taiwan).

Smaller Power As Allies Are Crucial

> Great powers whose designs have more support from larger numbers of smaller powers can limit the challenges presented by rivals, shape rules that they can force rival great powers to accept to some degree, or even exclude adversaries from certain geographic or issue areas.

And:

> Collective smaller power compliance may provide a great power with the gains of being able to dominate an area without having to pay the costs of administering a territory and its population from day-to-day.

Conversely, 'smaller' players can cause lots of troubles, especially if they ally:

> Collectively, smaller powers can help facilitate or severely complicate the ambitions and plans of even great

> powers.

And smart smaller powers can play bigger powers against each other in a bidding war that benefits them.

Chapter 5: Military Influence Mechanisms

Military Influence Mechanisms (MIMs) are tools used by Great Powers to influence others below the threshold of war. These include:

- **Deterrence** (central concept): Requires credible force posture, readiness, and communication.
  - *Deterrence by punishment*: Threatening retaliation.
  - *Deterrence by denial*: Making success prohibitively costly.
- **Compellence**: Forcing an actor to change behavior via threat or limited use of force.
- **Assurance and Reassurance**: Calming allies or adversaries to shape behavior or reduce escalation.
  - *Assurance*: (AKA alliance-related assurance) aimed at allies, to persuade them of the solidity of a defence commitment (Knopf, 2012; Brooks and RappHooper, 2013).
    Often takes the form of public declarations of ongoing commitment to defend allies (ie.: American pledges of Nato's Article 5)
  - *Reassurance* (AKA deterrence-related assurance (Knopf, 2012)): is aimed at a potential adversary.
    Can go together with deterrence because Schelling "any coercive threat requires corresponding assurances" (Schelling, 2008, 74). This involves a choice: harmful consequences (deterrence) or no cost if the opponent refrains (reassurance)
- **Force Posture**: Strategic deployment and readiness to demonstrate capability and resolve.
- **Military Readiness**: Ability to rapidly deploy effective forces.
- **Alliances and Military Aid**: Used to shape alignments and build influence.
- **Proxy Wars and Limited Interventions**: Project power and test adversaries without full-scale war.
- **Cyber and Space**: Emerging domains for competition, particularly for intelligence and deterrence signaling.

Military influence is not just about brute force but about **shaping perceptions and calculations**. MIMs support both coercive and cooperative strategies, depending on context.

Chapter 6: Economic Influence Mechanisms

This chapter explores how states use **economic power** to shape international outcomes, drawing on both classical theories and contemporary strategies.

Key Theoretical Approaches:

- **Marxian Theory of Imperialism**:
  - Capitalism drives imperial rivalry as states seek markets and resources (Lenin, Luxemburg).
- **Gramscian Theory of Hegemonic Cycles**:
  - Economic power must be legitimated ideationally; hegemonic orders mix material dominance with ideological consent.

Economic Tools in Practice:

- **Trade Policy**: Market access and trade agreements can incentivize or punish.
- **Sanctions**: Deny adversaries critical resources and financial flows (e.g., U.S. sanctions on Iran and Russia).
- **Investment and Aid**: Promote dependencies and shape preferences (e.g., China's Belt and Road).

- **Currency and Finance**: Control over global currency systems (e.g., dollar dominance) creates leverage.
- **Supply Chains and Technological Standards**: Setting global rules on digital infrastructure or rare earths is a form of structural power.

Economic tools often have **dual-use potential**—they can build cooperation or deepen rivalry depending on how they're wielded and perceived.

Chapter 7: Ideational Influence Mechanisms

This chapter reframes great power competition as a contest not only over resources or territory, but also over **ideas**, values, and legitimacy.
It introduces a conceptual framework distinguishing between:

- **Soft power** (legitimation): attracting others through values, culture, and diplomacy
- **Sharp power** (delegitimation): undermining others' credibility through disinformation or ideological warfare

Four types of ideational tactics:

- **Promotion**: using soft power externally (e.g. cultural exports, global media)
- **Renewal**: using soft power internally to reinforce domestic legitimacy
- **Containment**: using sharp power externally to discredit rivals
- **Fortification**: using sharp power internally to defend against foreign influence

The chapter argues that **great power status depends not only on material capabilities, but also on the ability to shape meaning, legitimacy, and narratives** in both domestic and international arenas.

Modern Geopolitical Dynamics

We skipped the chapters on regional power dynamics.

They were the most interesting to read and I learned a lot, but they're also the most time-sensitive.
And since we write for timeless wisdom that applies to millennia past as much as for the millennia to come, we skipped them (with the exception of the chapter below).

But get the book if you're interested in geopolitics because they're very worth it!

Chapter 15: Central and Eastern Europe

This chapter focuses heavily on **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** and the **restructuring of European security**.

Historical Roots:

- Region was under Soviet dominance during the Cold War.
- NATO and EU expansion into former Soviet bloc countries triggered Russian anxiety and eventual confrontation.

Key Themes:

- Russia seeks to reclaim a **sphere of influence**, especially over Ukraine, Belarus, and the Caucasus.
- The West views Ukraine as essential to the **post–Cold War liberal order**.
- **NATO enlargement**, although framed as democratic choice, is seen by Russia as an existential threat.

The war in Ukraine is more than Putin's ambition—it reflects **deep Russian elite consensus**. Going forward, a **new Iron Curtain** may divide Europe politically, economically, and militarily.

USA Expanded NATO to Keep EU Divided

Just like we wrote in our article on American leadership, the US 'defended' Europe also to maintain its influence on the continent:

> In the early 1990s, eforts to "Europeanize" European defense gained steam.
>
> France wanted to turn the Western European Union (WEU), the nascent military arm of the European Community (the forerunner of the European Union), into a full-fedged security organization. Policymakers in Washington viewed this as an attempt to lever the Americans out of Europe.
>
> The Clinton administration thus decided that NATO (in which the USA played the dominant role) ought to remain the lynchpin of European security.

And:

> In other words, NATO enlargement served two central objectives of American foreign policy: to promote democracy and to sustain US infuence over European security and political affairs (Layne 2000; Shifrinson 2020; Schake 1998

The West Shares Some Blame In Ukrainian Conflict

This is a highly contentious thesis I've held, and I recognize the good reasons why many may find distasteful.

However, the book confirms that, *seeing it from Putin's perspective*, the West 'forced his hand' to act.
Note that this does not justify Putin's action of course, and it's now best for EU to do its best to win that war.

That being said, I believe that a war at European's doorstep was at least foreseeable, and likely avoidable:

> The leadership of the newly independent Russian Federation suggested that the Central and Eastern European states should assume a role similar to that of Finland during the Cold War: politically independent and militarily neutral.
> (…) policymakers in Moscow made it clear that the post-Soviet space was considered to be Russia's own exclusive sphere of infuence.
> It is important to stress that this position was shared not only by hawkish nationalists and neo-communists, but also by many of the more liberal members of the Yeltsin administration (Götz 2022, 1736–1740)

> After all, there are good military-strategic reasons for states to exert some form of control over their geographical vicinity.
> Moreover, Russia's ruling and intellectual elite continued to think of their country as a great power with a legitimate right to a regional sphere of infuence and a major say in the formation of Europe's post-Cold War order (Radchenko 2020; Götz & Staun 2022, 485–486).

> Yeltsin demanded "to get a clear understanding of your [Clinton's] idea of NATO expansion because now I see nothing but humiliation for Russia if you proceed" (Memcon 1995)

> Moreover, in 2002, the Bush administration withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and announced plans to deploy ground-based ballistic missile interceptors in Poland and a tracking radar base in the Czech Republic (Stent 2014, 72–75).
> (…) Seen from Moscow's perspective, the US missile defense infrastructure threatened to undermine Russia's

> second-strike deterrent capability. In response, Russia started to engage in a large-scale modernization program of its nuclear arsenal (Götz 2019c, 812–814)

> the Bush government worked energetically for Georgia and Ukraine's membership in NATO.
> (…) This was opposed by several NATO states (…) out of fear that it might provoke Russia.
> The summit ended with a half-baked compromise, declaring that Georgia and Ukraine "will become members of NATO" (…)
> This was probably one of the biggest diplomatic blunders of modern times. NATO efectively signaled its intent to enlarge at some unspecifed point in the future, yet it failed to provide any concrete security guarantees for Georgia and Ukraine. As a result, Russia was emboldened to act sooner rather than later.

> Rightly or wrongly, the color revolutions came to be seen by Moscow as part of a broader US-led efort to remove pro-Russian regimes from power and to replace them with Western-oriented leaders (German 2020). Some in Moscow even speculated that the color revolutions were a "dress rehearsal" for a regime change in Russia.

> As a result, tensions were near a boiling point in late 2021 and early 2022. Given Ukraine's civilizational and geostrategic importance for Russia, any government in Moscow would have most likely increased its pressure on Kyiv—though not necessarily embarked on a largescale invasion.

If avoiding a major war was a priority, and I believe it was, then EU should have better thought on how to go about its eastward expansion while 'showing more respect' for Russia.
And maybe consider when/how/if to expand to Ukraine.

Contemporary Multipolarity Started With The Financial Crisis

> The USA, China, and Russia are presently engaged in a struggle for dominance within the international order.
>
> Layne has argued that unipolarity enabled China to reap economic growth by bandwagoning with the USA, but its long-term goal was not to maintain the status quo of the US-led system; instead it sought to 'convert its economic gains into military capabilities that would allow Beijing to contest American preponderance' at a future time (2012, p. 205).
>
> By the 2010s, years of speculation over a US decline, combined with the economic impacts of the Global Financial Crisis, signalled to China and Russia that unipolarity was over and the time had arrived for them to challenge US power and the liberal world order.
> So convinced that China's time had arrived, Xi Jinping walked away from Deng Xiaoping's cautionary approach of 'Hide your strength; bide your time; never take the lead' and in 2021 told provincial and party leaders that 'time and momentum are on our side' (cited in Rudd 2022, p. 9).
>
> This has occurred despite US–China Strategic Engagement being built on the belief that by bringing China into international institutions it would be socialised into the established liberal world order (Goddard 2020).

Chapter 23: International Institutions

My Note: We must defend democratic international institutions to promote global cooperation
This was one of my favorite chapters, and I consider it of crucial importance for the future of humanity to preserve global cooperation.

In this chapter Anna Hayes analyzes how great power competition unfolds in the arena of international institutions—the global rules-based systems, organizations, and norms that structure international politics.

These include institutions like the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and a range of norm-setting forums in digital governance, arms control, and development.

Rather than viewing institutions as neutral platforms, the chapter reveals them to be arenas of contestation, where rising powers like China, Russia, and India seek to challenge or reform the existing liberal order, while established powers—primarily the United States and its allies—seek to defend and preserve it.

The chapter grimly paints China and Russia and anti-democracy, autocratic states that the West must defend against if it wants to uphold multilateralism, global trade, and the rule of law.

In a subsequent chapter, noticing the differing values of Western powers and China/Russia, the authors write:

> Hence, it is imperative that the defenders of the liberal world order seek to strengthen and reinvigorate the very things that make it so appealing: fairness, efectiveness, and democratic principles within operational structures. In addition, they must ensure international institutions remain both sites for and agents in international cooperation.

I couldn't agree more.

Theoretical Foundations

International institutions are not just background infrastructure. They:

- Reflect **power structures**, especially Western dominance since WWII.
- Serve as **mechanisms of soft power**, where norms, rules, and practices reflect the interests and values of dominant actors.
- Are strategically **used and contested** by both status quo and revisionist powers.

Approaches to Changing International Institutions

Rising powers employ a range of strategies to reshape international institutions to better reflect their interests.

These strategies fall into three main categories: power bargaining, distributive strategies, and integrative strategies.

Each has varying degrees of effectiveness depending on the context, credibility of the actor, and alignment with the interests of defender powers.

Power Bargaining
• Uses threats and pressure to force defender states to accept reforms
• Most common in classic power transition theory
• Can succeed in gaining concessions but often escalates tensions and creates backlash

Rhetorical Coercion
• Publicly shames defenders by highlighting their hypocrisy or violations of shared norms
• Effective when norm violations are clear and the shaming actor is credible
• Fails when the challenger is seen as self-interested or hypocritical

⁉ States claiming lack of voice or unfairness often do so strategically, not out of genuine concern, to extract concessions through delegitimation.

Principled Persuasion
• Argues that reforms will improve institutional legitimacy and efficiency

• Can work when challenger and defender preferences already align
• Rarely successful in high-stakes or politically contested domains

Strategic Co-optation
• Offers material benefits or side payments in exchange for support
• Helps build coalitions and reduce resistance
• Often costly for the challenger and can backfire if seen as transactional or manipulative

Strategy	Description	When It Works Best	Limitations
Power Bargaining	Threats or leverage to force change	When challengers have significant hard power	Escalates tension, seen as confrontational
Rhetorical Coercion	Shaming for norm violations	When challenger is credible and norms are clearly breached	Fails if the accuser appears self-interested or hypocritical
Principled Persuasion	Rational appeals for better governance	When preferences are already aligned	Weak impact when interests diverge
Strategic Co-optation	Incentivizing support through benefits	When challengers can offer attractive, credible rewards	Resource-heavy, may be imbalanced or unsustainable

Revisionist powers (e.g., China, Russia) typically prefer power bargaining and rhetorical coercion, especially when seeking major institutional change.

Reformist powers (e.g., India, Brazil) tend to use persuasion and co-optation to seek incremental adjustment.

China Is A Revisionist Power, But Prepared A Fallback Plan

The text paints China as agreeing with some of the current world order, especially the one based on trade.

However, China's angle is 'state above individuals', so it pushes back against free market and individual rights. It's an authocratic approach to trade.

So while China seeks to reform (or distort) contemporary institutions, it's also crafted its own institutions and alliances to set its technology and values as the baseline for a new order:

> If China cannot recalibrate existing, American-supported, international political and security organization norms and procedures, then it will move onto these new organizations where its defnitions and norms serve as the baseline

How to Maintain Cooperation & Rule of Law

> Hence, Tallberg and Verhaegen concluded that rather than trying to reshape institutions based on the many voices of the emerging powers, instead e**nhancing the legitimacy of international institutions is best achieved by ensuring they are underpinned by good governance and enshrine the principles of fairness, effectiveness, and democracy.**
> Such an approach ensures that there is open discussion and inclusion of all voices (remembering that those voices are typically representing the interests of their home state, not necessarily what is best for all member states), and that decision-making is carried out via consensus

Later in the chapter, the authors state that this approach also works best because it's more attractive for the smaller powers that prefer to gravitate around the richer and open democracies, rather than the autocratic powers.

MORE WISDOM

War makes a good case for world governance

States can function like small tribes, in part cooperating, but also competing and sometimes, unfortunately, going to war.

If humanity is to move beyond war, especially important in an era of greater capability for destruction, supra-national bodies to arbiter disputes are fundamental:

> War is always a possibility in a system without a central government that exists above states to arbitrate disputes. In this environment, military force becomes the ultimate arbiter of disputes. At the heart of great power competition is the pursuit of power

Multipolarity With Squabbling Power Can Frustrate Global Cooperation

> (…) wrangling over foundational differences between rivalrous great power norms and ideals frustrates international consensus, neuters joint policy (…) and fragments once cohesive systemic global arrangements.

The USA Opted For Freedom & Mutual Benefits to Retain Soft Power

> Hence, while one might believe that a unipolar state has free reign to do as it pleases, the period of US unipolarity was not one of unregulated US hegemony.
>
> Instead, due to the constraints of the rational-legal authorities built into the global order by the USA in the postWorld War II period, unipolarity saw US foreign policy goals centred upon the promotion of democratic values and the continuation of the rules-based order (Finnemore 2009).
>
> Martha Finnemore has argued that the USA took such an approach to 'induce acquiescence or support from others, thereby legitimating their power and policies' (2009, p. 62). Therefore, the USA sought to increase its influence and appeal via enticement and persuasion, not coercion (Jervis 2009)

This 'pull approach' worked, and smaller powers *wanted* to follow USA's leadership, strengthening the whole system:

> Moreover, under US unipolarity, international institutions played a critical role in advancing openness and interconnectedness via globalisation, further advantaging US interests but also the interests of other states that shared similar values and global outlook (Ikenberry et al.2009).
>
> Hence, the appeal of the free-market system and democratic model drew much support from other states, due to the benefts they derived from them, which in turn reinforced the legitimacy of the US-led system (Finnemore 2009)

It's Unsure Whether Unipolar, Bipolar, or Multipolar Are Safer

> Some realists focus on the static indicators of the balance of power to assess the likelihood of war.
>
> Many argue that bipolarity (two great powers) is less war-prone than multipolarity (three or more great powers).

> In a bipolar system, balancing is more efficient because each pole can be laser-focused on the other; there is less chance of miscalculation (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1978).
>
> Others assert that multipolarity is less war-prone because more states can join forces to balance the aggressor and because there is less hostility among the great powers (Deutsch & Singer, 1964; Morgenthau, 1978).
>
> Still others argue that unipolarity is the most peaceful because there is only one great power in the system and other states will avoid confronting the behemoth (Wohlforth, 1999).

Unfortunately, to me this is a further reminder that International Relations as a field still more based on theories, rather than evidence.

Comtemporary Great Power Competition Is Between Democracy & Authoritarianism

USA, China, and Russia are the contemporary great powers, and they stand for very different values and visions for humanity:

> Both China and Russia are revisionist powers, they are illiberal, and they both regard liberal values such as democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights as threats to their continued existence (Ikenberry 2022). (…)
> Ikenberry has characterised both Russia and China as being opposed to the existing international order, undergirded by openness, multilateralism, and a rules-based order, arguing that they seek an international order 'hospitable to regional blocs, spheres of infuence, and autocracy [that] protects authoritarian rule from the threatening forces of liberal modernity' (Ikenberry 2022, p.58)

Discussing the 'space race', the authors write:

> Competition between great powers is likely to result in the opening of frontiers on the Moon and other celestial objects rich in mineral resources and to force development of new technology with unforeseen "knock on" economic effects.
>
> It is also a contest between different visions of the human future, one liberal and the other authoritarian.
>
> **What humanity becomes or fails to become over the next century will be determined in great part by the outcome**

Europe Must Unite For Freedom, & Its Own Good

First off, the authors correctly highlight that Europe has the potential to become a great power, but isn't there yet:

> Many wonder whether Europe might soon rise as a great power in the emerging international order.
>
> Variants of this question have been asked for decades as post-World War II European integration fowed from the romantic vision of a Europe transcending confict and forming an ever-closer union.
>
> But the crowning jewel of the European integration (…) struggled to present a cohesive whole.
>
> From 1993 to 2022, the EU never cleaved together politically, militarily, or even economically to the degree necessary to meet the three-feature defnition of a global great power.(Lynch, 2020) It has remained an

> important, but lesser-tier, player in the emerging new era of great power competition shaped by the USA, China, and Russia

I believe that a federal EU is good for European states, and good of the world.

For example, when Trump's first presidency started pulling away from free world leadership, other Western countries stepped in:

> Despite the Trump-era turbulence, or rather because of it, the European Union and Japan stepped up to preserve the multilateral global order, defending interdependence and international institutions; mini-lateralism then grew across the Indo-Pacifc region (Fogarty & Park 2019; Tirkey 2021).

However, the text was written before Trump's second term, which has moved closer towards authoritarianism and a 'law of the jungle' approach to politics.

And to uphold a global order based on win-win, trade, and the rule of law, it's best to have a united EU. Several beacons of freedom are better than only one.

QUOTES

A quick historical excursus:

> From Athens–Sparta rivalry in ancient Greek times, Rome–Carthage rivalry in the 3rd century BC, French–Habsburg rivalry in the 16th to 18th centuries to Britain–Germany rivalry before World War I, Britain– Germany rivalry before World War II, and USA–Soviet Union rivalry throughout the Cold War, diferent great powers have competed against each other in diferent historical contexts. Great power competition is therefore a norm—rather than an exception—in international politics (Brands, 2017)

Power wins, not rationality:

> Power inequalities are always already stacking the game. That is also why liberals are naive in expecting rational interests to prevail, unless they are the interests of the powerful

Ideas are about power:

> Ideas are not neutral. Instead, the way we think and the way in which we communicate our thoughts has efects in the real world and becomes ammunition in struggles of power

Theories are also part of power dynamics and influence:

> While all theory may not be ideology, all theories can be used in the service of ideology

On the danger, but NOT inevitability of war:

> War between great powers during times of relative transition is not inevitable, but it is a persistent threat.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Note on the Importance of Preserving Global Cooperation

While this volume focuses on the dynamics of great power competition, it is essential to emphasize that the future of humanity depends on *managing* that competition, and on sustaining meaningful global cooperation.

Major existential challenges—climate change, pandemic preparedness, nuclear proliferation, and AI safety, among others—cannot be addressed unilaterally, or by squabbling states or blocs.
These require collaborative governance and effective international institutions capable of aligning diverse interests toward shared goals.

As technological advancement accelerates and ambitions such as space colonization become more feasible, we cannot export tribalist mindsets and behaviors to new frontiers.
Without a foundational value of cooperation, we risk replicating the same cycles of conflict in more dangerous or irreversible contexts.

Researchers, scientists, and intellectuals have a particular responsibility to remind us of all of this imperative. If we analyze competition without this reminder, **we risk normalizing destructive competition** as the status quo and, even more worrisome, 'unavoidable'.

Long term, cooperation will determine whether we survive and thrive as a species.

I hope the authors will add a similar note to their already excellent work.

Other Suggestions

- **I'd suggest removing any references to historical exceptionalism that may overlook similar patterns in earlier eras or regions.**

For example, change sentence structure like '*contemporary great power competition is no longer monopolised by the great powers*', because it never was and smaller tribes and marauders always played a role.

Or '*the USA enjoyed an unprecedented unipolar moment*', which I don't think is unprecedented—Rome after Carthage's destruction and some periods of the Han dynasty were unipolar in their regions.

- **International relations and potentially political science in general seems more theoretical and less empirical (reduce philosophers' mentions)**

This is not a criticism of the book, which is excellent, but more about the state of international politics as a field.

For example, take this paragraph:

> Others assert that multipolarity is less war-prone because more states can join forces to balance the aggressor and because there is less hostility among the great powers (Deutsch & Singer, 1964; Morgenthau, 1978). Still others argue that unipolarity is the most peaceful because there is only one great power in the system and other states will avoid confronting the behemoth (Wohlforth, 1999).

In my opinion, when theories dominate with little mention of empirical support for one or another—or even the mention of future research to gain more clarity, then you have a field that's more theoretical than empirical.

I'd suggest the authors consider reducing the amount of space dedicated to philosophers.

REVIEW

The Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition is a fantastic exploration of geopolitical power dynamics, starting from general theories and moving to historical and contemporary events.

I enjoyed reading it, I learned a lot, and I'm grateful to the authors.
In 2025 it even made our 'best books on power' list.

Finally, it also helped us improve some of our articles on soft power and geopolitics, and also indirectly confirmed several of our Power University strategies.

Check the:

- **Best books** to read
- Best books on power and power dynamics
- **Get this book on Amazon**.

Best Social Skills Courses in 2026: Win Status & Respect

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Looking for the best social skills courses to boost your confidence, communication, and influence?

Whether you're aiming to build deeper relationships, earn respect, or boost charisma, we've ranked the top programs to help you succeed

Expert in power dynamics and social strategies, *The Power Moves* ranks each course based on effectiveness, student results, and real-world impact.

Leading the list is **Power University**, a proven system for mastering status, persuasion, and high-level social success.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- 5. Authentic Assertiveness
- 4. The Art of Charm Bootcamp
- 3. Charisma University
- 2. People School
- 1. Power University
  - Who is Power University for?
- ⍰ Comparison of Best Social Skills Courses
  - How to Choose the Right Course for You
  - Final Thoughts
- FAQs

5. Authentic Assertiveness

Creator: TJ Guttormsen

Summary: The Authentic Assertiveness course is a concise 3.5-hour program teaching you to speak confidently, handle conflict, and communicate clearly. It's ideal for everyday interactions and building assertiveness.

Our Review: This course shines for its high rating and practical approach to assertiveness. It's perfect for those who want to stand their ground without being aggressive, but it lacks the strategic depth of our top pick for high-stakes results.

Pros:

- ✅ **Concise** and **practical** for daily use.
- ✅ Focuses on a **crucial competence** for beginners and too-nice-guys alike.

Cons:

- ❌ Brief
- ❌ More advanced and ambitious men may **wish for more depth**
- ❓ Less focus on advanced social strategies.

4. The Art of Charm Bootcamp

Creator: AJ Harbinger and Johnny Dzubak, founders of The Art of Charm.

Summary: *The Art of Charm Bootcamp* is an intensive, hands-on program focusing on real-world social skills like conversation mastery, networking, and building confidence. It combines in-person workshops (or virtual equivalents) with practical exercises to improve social fluency in professional and personal settings.

Our Review: Quality bootcamps deliver real-life experience and in-person feedback that's crucial to anyone who must still develop 'social intelligence', or what we call here the 'feel' for social dynamics.
The Art of Charm specifically provides an immersive format that includes role-playing, live feedback, and networking practice. However, its premium price and intensive format may not fit all schedules or budgets.

Pros:

- ✅ Highly **interactive** with live coaching and role-playing.
- ✅ Focuses on **practical skills** like networking and conversation.
- ✅ Tailored for **real-world** social success.

Cons:

- ❌ High **cost** (starting at ~$2,000 for workshops).
- ❌ Requires significant **time** commitment.

3. Charisma University

Creator: Charlie Houpert, founder of Charisma on Command.

Summary: *Charisma University* is designed to boost your charisma with over 10 hours of video content. It covers basics of body language, storytelling, and first impressions, making it great for social settings and personal interactions.

Our Review: *Charisma University* excels at grabbing attention in social situations. Charlie's practical exercises are fun and effective, but the course is pricey and less focused on strategic social advancement compared to our top

picks.

Pros:

- ✅ Fun, **engaging** content.
- ✅ Strong focus on charisma and f**irst impressions**.
- ✅ **Practical exercises** for real-world application.

Cons:

- ❌ **Pricey** for the content at $597.
- ❌ High energy approach **not for introverts**.
- ❌ Less suited for **workplaces, dating**,

2. People School

Creator: Vanessa Van Edwards, author and founder of Science of People.

Summary: *People School* is a year-long program with 12 modules focused on professional social skills. It teaches nonverbal communication, rapport-building, and workplace influence, ideal for career-driven individuals looking to excel in professional settings.

Our Review: *People School* is a solid choice for professionals who want to decode body language and build stronger workplace relationships. Vanessa is a skilled and engaging teacher—perfect for women, her feminine style may be less suited for men wishing for more masculine gravitas.

Pros:

- ✅ Very good for **nonverbal cues**.
- ✅ Practical for **professional settings** and leadership.
- ✅ **Engaging**, high-energy delivery.

Cons:

- ❌ Delivery is **not tailored for men**.
- ❌ Expensive at $1,495.
- ❌ Lacks **advanced strategies** for manipulators, aggressive men, and 'shortcuts' to success

1. Power University

DISCLAIMER: We are the creators of Power University, so this entry comes from an insider's perspective. We aim to keep the description objective by focusing on the curriculum and documented alumni's results.

Creator: Lucio Buffalmano, social strategist and founder of The Power Moves.

Summary: *Power University* is a comprehensive program diving deep into interpersonal power dynamics. It teaches you to influence, negotiate, and lead with confidence, delivering real-world results like status, respect, and women's devotion.

Our Review: for ambitious men who want to dominate life, not just get along or be liked.
Lucio's framework is backed by science, personal experience, and alumni's results—with both quantitative surveys and qualitative reviews.
If you're serious about getting the most out of life, this is your blueprint. But it may not be for beginners and men who prefer 'getting along'.

Pros:

- ✅ **Advanced** strategies and '**hacks**' to achieve goals, 10x faster
- ✅ **Foundational life competences**, including 'darker' on
- ✅ **Proven** real-life **results** most men want (8x more respect, 7x more attraction)

Cons:

- ❌ Higher **price** point ($979–$9,979).
- ❌ Not tailored for **women**: from version 9 onward, it focused on men.
- ❌ Not suited for **beginners** seeking basic skills.

> "Power University gave me the tools to negotiate a 20% raise and command respect in every room I enter. It's a game-changer."
>
> — *Power University Student*

Who is Power University for?

Power University isn't about small talk—it's about mastering the social chessboard.

Unlike other courses, it focuses on power dynamics and strategies to advance in life, gaining respect, status, promotions, and quality dating options.

Lucio Buffalmano's framework delivers 8x more respect and 7x more attraction, according to students. If you want to play at the top, this is your course.

⍰ Comparison of Best Social Skills Courses

For a quicker overview:

Course Name	Best For	Price	Rating	Length
Power University	Advanced social skills, goal achievement, life success	$979–$9,979	9.2/10	Comprehensive
Authentic Assertiveness	Assertiveness, communication	$124.99	4.7/5	3.5 hours
Art of Charm Bootcamp	Social confidence, conversation	~$2,000	High (testimonials)	Intensive (workshops)
Charisma University	Charisma, first impressions	$597	9/10	10+ hours
People School	Professional settings, social charm, women	$1,495	4.4/5	~2 hours/week for a year

In this article, you can also check the best books:

- **Best social skills books**, including the most beginner-friendly

How to Choose the Right Course for You

Pick based on your goals and budget:

- **Advanced life competence for achievement**: Power University
- **Assertiveness focus**: Authentic Assertiveness
- **Real-life training**: Art of Charm bootcamp (or any real-life bootcamp).

- **Youthful extrovert charisma**: Charisma University
- **Women and professional settings**: People School

Start with the course that matches your ambitions, and practice consistently to see results.

Final Thoughts

Social skills are your edge—whether you're chasing a corner office, deeper relationships, or unshakable confidence.

Fortunately, we live in a world with hundreds of courses to learn social skills.
Some are stuffed with social skills cliches, motivational speeches, and basic 'tips'. However, there are a few that truly stand out and can change lives—we shared some here.

Power University leads for those who want to *win*, not just participate. Enroll in one of these top courses today and take control of your social destiny.

FAQs

What is the best online course to improve social skills?

The most advanced social skills course to date is Power University. It's built for those who want more than small talk—they want to win in social dynamics, earn respect, and develop real power. Unlike fluff-filled courses, Power University breaks down the psychology of status, persuasion, and social strategy. For career success, dating, or leadership, it's the most comprehensive and actionable course available.

Are social skills courses worth it?

Yes—if you pick the right one. A well-structured course pays off for life: better relationships, stronger career moves, higher confidence, and more respect. But generic or theory-heavy courses often waste time. That's why we reviewed only the most effective and practical programs, led by those with real-world credibility.

How long does it take to improve social skills?

You'll see noticeable changes in weeks, especially with behavior-based, practical training. But full transformation—like overcoming people-pleasing or building high-status habits—can take months. That's why top programs (like Power University) offer lifetime access and continuous updates, supporting real, lasting change.

Which course helps with shyness and social anxiety?

Courses with exposure drills and mindset rewiring work best. SocialSelf.com, previously known as SocialPro, offers some courses tailored for social anxiety and shyness and may be worth looking into. When you want to go further—tackling confidence, status, and attraction—Power University may be a good next option, starting with easier exercise-based modules that build assertiveness and self-respect.

Science of People vs. SocialPro: Which is Better for Learning People Skills?

Science of People and SocialPro both offer valuable training but serve distinct purposes. Science of People provides interpersonal communication skills ideal for professionals, women, and general social interactions. SocialPro, now SocialSelf, specializes in overcoming shyness and social anxiety, helping beginners build fulfilling friendships. For men seeking advanced social skills to gain status, respect, and attraction, Power University is the best choice. It focuses on power dynamics, assertiveness, and practical strategies tailored for men who want to lead and succeed.

Can social skills be learned, or are they innate?

Social skills are 100% learnable. Yes, some people are naturally extroverted and start with a good sense for social and power dynamics—but the most socially skilled people often trained hard. Just like fitness, the right techniques and consistent practice outperform “natural charm.” The key is choosing a course that teaches real-life strategies, not just theory.

Confident Body Language For Men: Status Cues

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Confident body language is how men signal strength, status, and self-assurance—without saying a word.

Whether you're walking into a room, leading a meeting, or meeting someone new, your posture, eye contact, and movement tell people how to treat you.

This guide breaks down the most important nonverbal cues of high value, confident men—based on field-tested social strategies, body language science, and over a decade of research from *The Power Moves*.

Let's dive in.

Contents

- What's Confident Body Language
  - Low vs. High Confidence Body Language
- How to Appear More Confident
  - 1. Posture: Straight and Relaxed (Not Stiff)
  - 2. Head and Chin: High (Not Tilted)
  - 3. Eye Contact: Direct (Not Overbearing)
  - 4. Gestures: Open and Deliberate
  - 5. Stillness: The Power of Calm
  - 6. Facial Expression: Proud and Controlled
  - 7. Stance: Grounded and Ready
  - 8. Touch and Contact: Sparing and Strategic
  - 9. Advanced Power Move: Angle Away
  - 10. Entry and Movement: Own the Room

- Balance & Calibration For Confident Winners
  - Balanced Confident
  - Calibrated Confidence

What's Confident Body Language

Confident body language is the nonverbal display of self-assurance, lack of fear, and appropriate level of dominance.

Confident body language is the first impression you never say, and the constant reminder of your social value and self-esteem.
It signals to others that you:

- Deserve **respect** in meetings or social settings
- Have **social status**, or are accustomed to getting it
- Are **attractive**, or trust yourself to attract high-quality partners
- Command **authority** in leadership and negotiation

Conversely, a lack of confidence cues signal the opposite.
With low confidence nonverbal cues, you risk being underestimated, overlooked, or dismissed—even if you have the best ideas or intentions.

Direct eye contact, head level, shoulders relaxed and back, arms away from body, shoulder-wide stance. One hand in pocket and shifting weight on one leg would add a touch of 'chill and cool' vibe. But overall, it's a high-confidence body language pose

Low vs. High Confidence Body Language

Cue	Low Confidence	High Confidence

Posture	Hunched over, head hanging, arms and legs crossed or away	Stand tall, chest open, head up
Eye contact	Looking down and away, breaking eye contact downward	Hold gaze 60–70%, break eye contact up or to the side
Gestures	Constricted, self-soothing touches or hugs, hand clasping, tics	Visible palms, gestures emphasize speech, fluid movement
Facial expressions	Forced smiles, reactive or exaggerated expressions	Genuine smiles when he feels like,

Compare lower confidence body language poses:

❓ Low Confidence Body Language Examples

There is almost no time and place to strike any of the above poses for an ambitious man. The first is insecure, the second is feminine, and the third is submissive. All can be categorized as low power/confidence

⍰ High Confidence Body Language Examples

The third one is slightly too open, but if he is sitting behind a table it can work well as an in-between pose

How to Appear More Confident

Here's a quick step-by-step guide to adopt a confident body language, going from most basic to most advanced:

1. Posture: Straight and Relaxed (Not Stiff)

- **Stand tall** with an erect spine, chest up and subtly forward
- **Roll shoulders back and down**; avoid over-flexed posture that reads as try-hard
- **Sit back and comfortably** with legs apart or crossed in 'figure four' (below) and a slight lean to show self-reliance

⁉️ **Start with good posture** before anything else, it's the foundation of confident body language. Many men must do postural exercises to rebalance hunched shoulders, lordosis, or forward head.

2. Head and Chin: High (Not Tilted)

- ✅ Keep your **head level** and or chin slightly up
- ❌ Avoid drooping (submission) or cocking the chin up (unnecessary challenge)

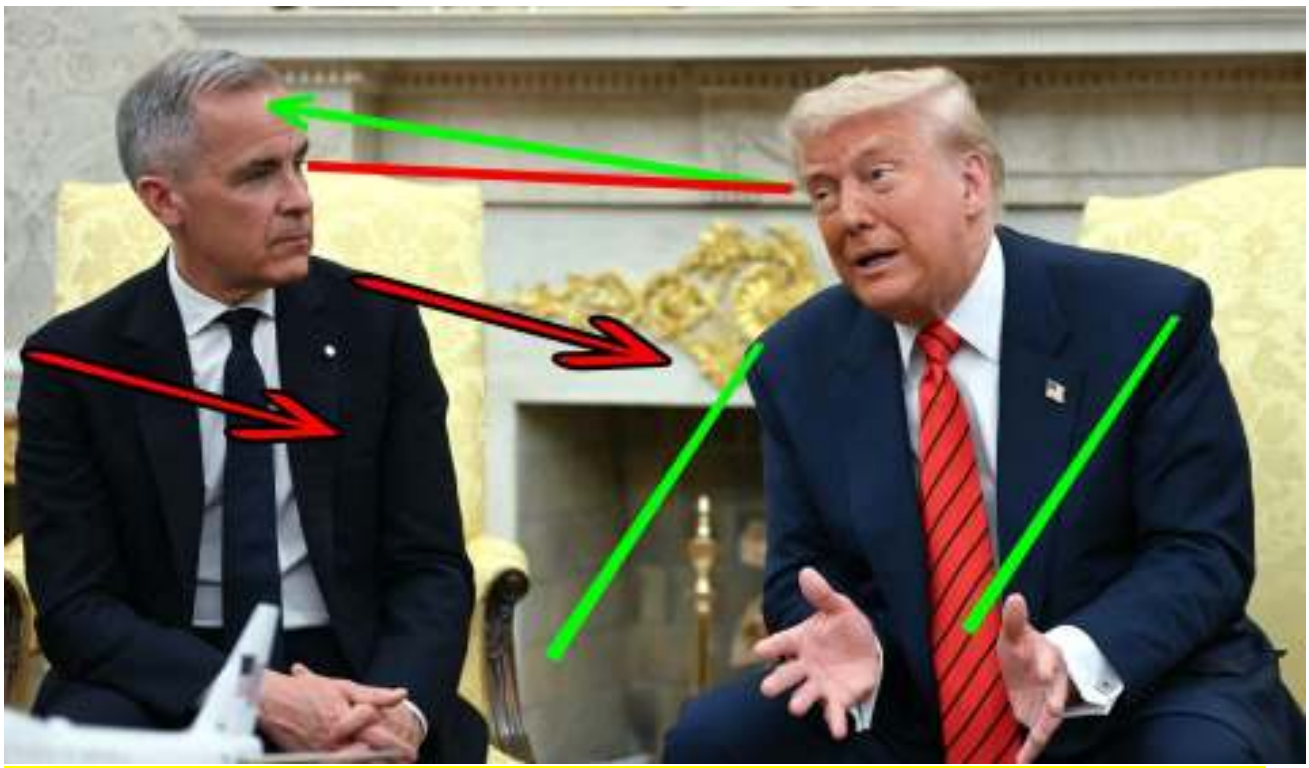
⁉️ **Power move:** nod slowly, or upward for extra confidence.
Example:

> **Confident body language**: (Nods up once)
> **Unconfident body language**: (Nods down, fast, many times)

3. Eye Contact: Direct (Not Overbearing)

- Maintain **steady eye contact 60–70%** of the time
- **Break gaze slowly**, not abruptly
- **Break gaze to the side**, not below (submissive). Break it above to signal power

⁉️ **Power Move**: to signal higher status, look more often when speaking and away when they speak (Dovidio et al., 1988)



Both have good and confident body language. The politician on the left is more erect, but still sub-communicates lower status by turning toward and directly looking at Trump, while Trump faces the camera and only looks sideways

4. Gestures: Open and Deliberate

- **Extend gestures** away from your body for power—no T-rex arms
- Use **visible palms** to increase warmth and trust
- **Move slowly** in general, but speed up if needed. Remember that for good communication gestures underscore your words

Confident body language supports verbal production with consonant gestures, achieving the dual goal of sub-communicating value, and increasing communication effectiveness

5. Stillness: The Power of Calm

- ✕ **Remove fidgeting** because it signals high anxiety and low confidence—high-status men project calm
- ✕ **Avoid self-touching**, clasping, or self-hugging
- ✓ **Be deliberate** in your movement, trim out the purposeless, keep the purposeful

⏸ **Power move**: pause two seconds before acting. Stillness signals thoughtfulness, mental power, and control

While overall this is good and confident body language, that belt clasping is a bit too tight and may signal discomfort and anxiety. In doubt, *rest* your hands instead of clasping

6. Facial Expression: Proud and Controlled

- Display a **slight, confident smile**
- **Alternate serious looks** for gravity—no constant grin

A tight-lipped, slight smile that sub-communicates self-confidence, and self-contentment, without needing others to

like you

A confident facial expression may be best approached with our favored ‘inside-out approach’. Such as, by working on your internal self-esteem first.
Believe your life is great, believe that anyone would gain if you entered their lives, and your face will say that for you.

Here’s a good primer:

- ▯ **How to be confident**, a video lesson

7. Stance: Grounded and Ready

- Keep your **feet shoulder-width**
- Keep weight evenly distributed between toes and balls of your feet

Careful not to overdo the ‘manspreading’, it’s juvenile and try-hard for most contexts. It works here because he’s leaning in, showing interest and warmth, and his hands covering the crotch take the edge off, without turning into male bravado

8. Touch and Contact: Sparing and Strategic

- **Initiate confident touches**: firm handshake, light pat on the back
- **Limit contact** to high-value moments—too much undermines power

This is a perfect mix of high confidence body language, leadership to initiate touch, and warmth/love

⍰ 9. Advanced Power Move: Angle Away

In general, confident body language is also open body language, which includes facing toward and dead-on.

However, you don't always want to communicate you're open, appreciative, or trusting of someone.
Or you may not want to communicate that you're at the same level.

In those cases, **adopt a confident body language, while angling away to sub-communicate that they must still win you over**.

Example:

Confident body language cues like straight spine and head, hands visible and out, and taking up space. But his slight away angle sub-communicates he is not yet fully bought in

Use the lean-away power away with:

- **Negotiations**, to sub-communicate unneededness and other options
- **First meeting or approaching a woman**, to avoid chasing, and avoiding the 'crotch display' overload

⍰⍰ 10. Entry and Movement: Own the Room

- **Enter like you own it**, which you can do in two ways:
  - Pause at the threshold, strike a cool pause, let people see you, scan confidently, then deliberately walk to your chosen location
  - Move like it's your home, without doubts, but moving slowly and without rushing
- **Display value right away**.
  - Have all eyes on you if it's a small place (see Obama below). If not:
  - Engage the coolest-looking person in your circle. If alone, ask someone '*How's the night going*'
- **Stand for at least 2 minutes**, sitting too soon feels like you're trying to disappear

Here's a good example of owning the room with confident body language (although at times overdoing the dominance):

> **Obama**: (enters like he owns it, steals the show, and pulls a power move)

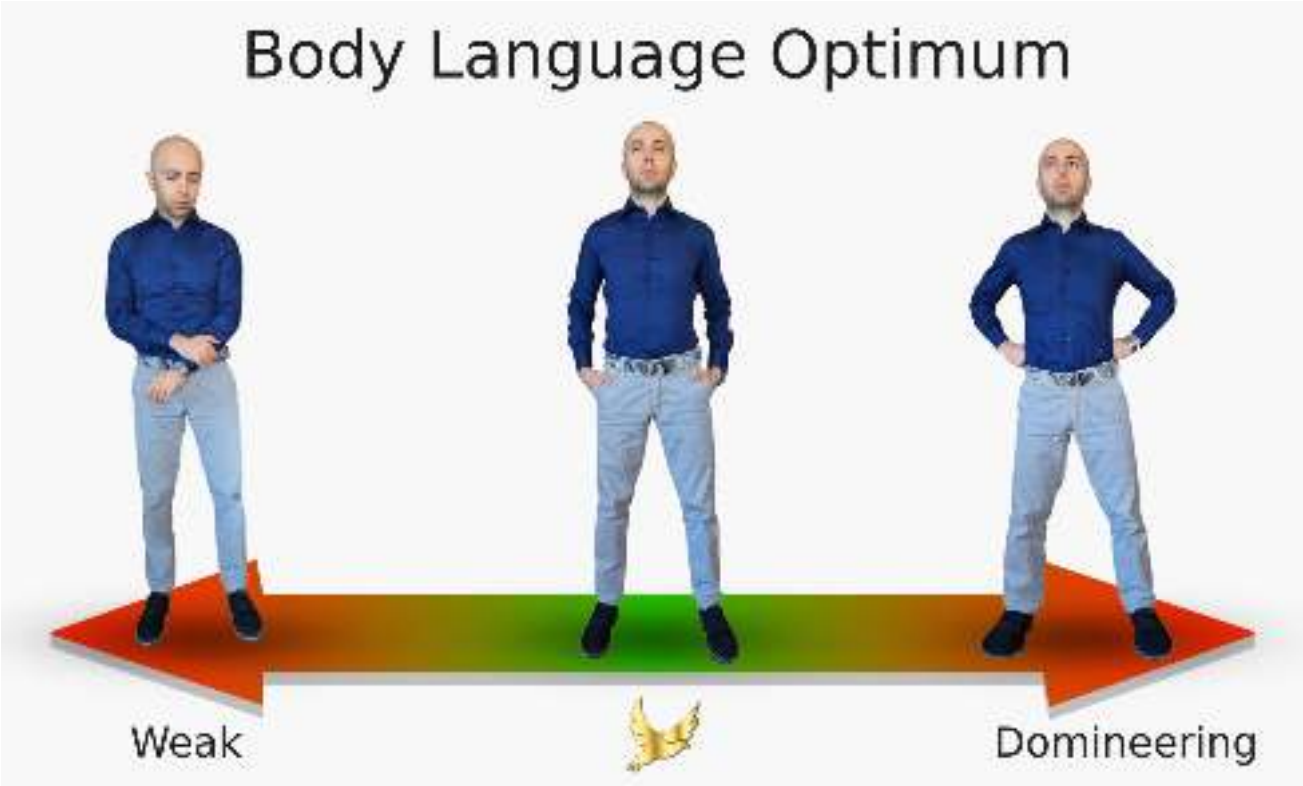
Balance & Calibration For Confident Winners

Remember that everything is about **balance** and **calibration**.

Balanced Confident

Balance means that *good* confident body language sits on a continuum between low-confidence and trying too hard.

See here for example:



Great body language is calibrated to context and goals—usually between the two extremes of weak and try-hard

The optimum balance signals that you're a man who deserves respect, but also gives respect.
The best way to do is with balance, calibration, and mixing *both* power and warm cues.

Calibrated Confidence

At the most foundational level, calibration means you adapt to the cultural norms to be 'one of them' and fit in.

However, that's only the beginner level.
You 'fit in', but don't gain status and attraction.

At the more advanced level, calibration means that you adapt your nonverbal communication to best achieve your goals, given the context.

When you switch from thinking about 'how to have confident body language' to how do I best achieve my goal, you'll join the Olympus of the winning strategists.

Our training program is designed to turn good men into competent winners.
Power University teaches alumni how to think, talk, and behave like a confident winner, and how to achieve any goal they want:

- **Power University** turned thousands of men into confident winners

Best Social Skills Books for Advanced Strategists

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Are you searching for the **best advanced social skills books** to elevate your influence and master high-level social dynamics?

At The Power Moves, we've reviewed *dozens* of courses and books on social skills, leadership psychology, and power dynamics, establishing ourselves as a leading authority in personal and **social empowerment for men**.

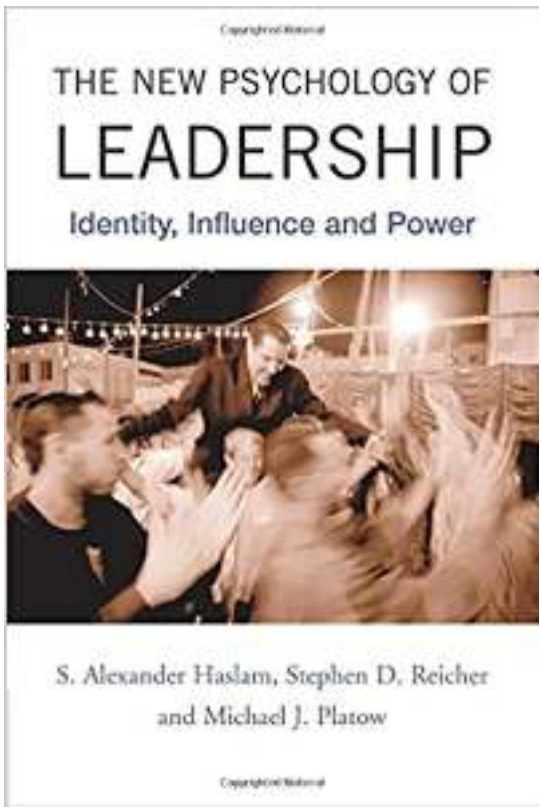
This curated list of the top 8 books and resources will guide you from average social skills to becoming a charismatic leader who commands respect and achieves goals.
Whether you're aiming to lead teams, navigate complex social strategies, or climb the social ladder, these resources are your blueprint for success.

Once you master the basics of social interaction, it's time to climb to the top.

Contents

- 8. The New Psychology of Leadership
- 7. The Book of the Courtier
- 6. The 48 Laws of Power
- 5. The Art of Worldly Wisdom
- 4. Red Flags
- 3. Who's Pulling Your Strings?
- 2. Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion
- 1. Power University
- Conclusion

8. The New Psychology of Leadership



By Alex Haslam, Stephen Reicher, and Michael Platow
Summary | Amazon

Leadership is the pinnacle of **advanced social skills**.

The New Psychology of Leadership redefines what it means to lead, emphasizing identity-based leadership where influence stems from shared group identity.
It's a science-backed guide for aspiring leaders who want to inspire and unite teams effectively.
Perfect for those transitioning from "good" to "leader" in social dynamics.

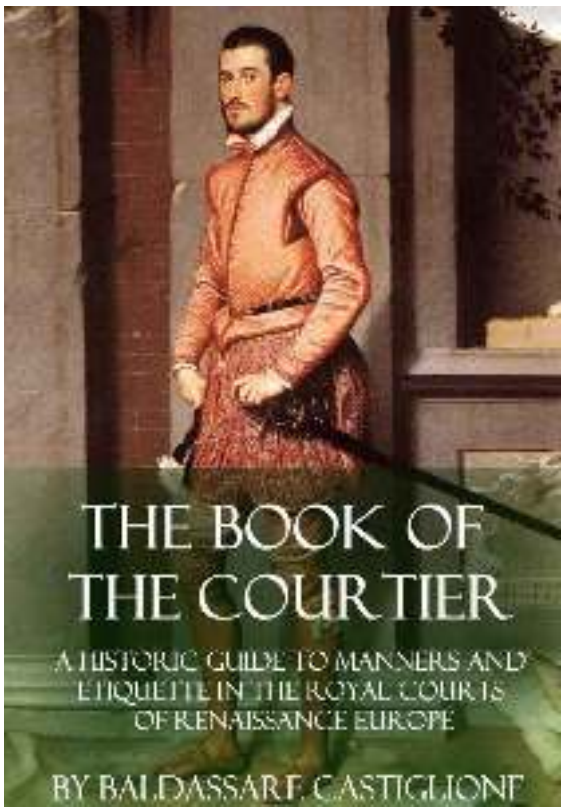
Stage 1: Clueless
When you lack social skills, you add no value, may even *take* value, and people avoid you.

Stage 2: Average
With average social skills, you're neutral—people don't avoid you, but they're not thrilled you're there either.

Stage 3: Good
At this level, you add value, make friends, and people seek you out.
You also start mastering social strategies to get what you want from life.

Stage 4: Leader
At the highest level, people don't just want you around—they want you to *lead* them.
These books guide you to that stage.

7. The Book of the Courtier



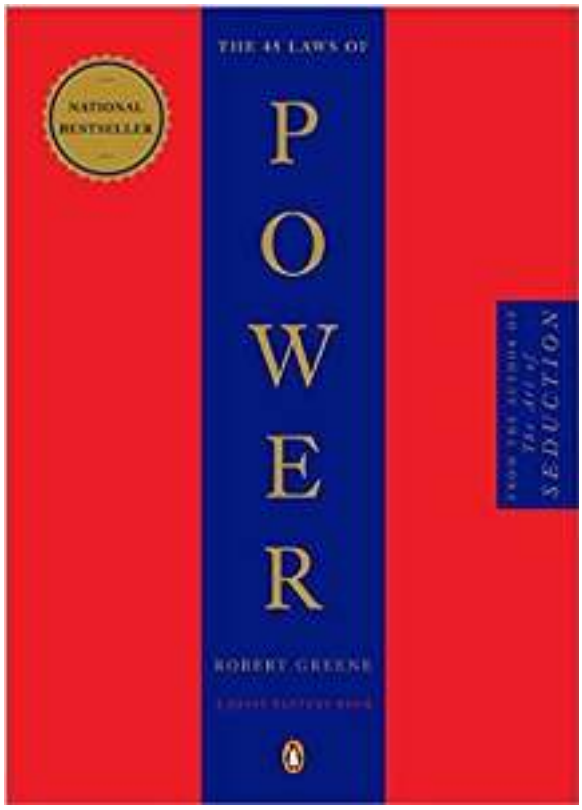
By Baldassare Castiglione
Summary | Amazon

Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* is the Godfather of strategic social climbers.

The courtier is ethical yet calculated, building reputation, gaining favor, and achieving goals with charm and strategy.

This Renaissance classic teaches you to navigate social hierarchies while adding value, making it a top pick for advanced social skills.
Ideal for those aiming to lead with sophistication and purpose.

6. The 48 Laws of Power



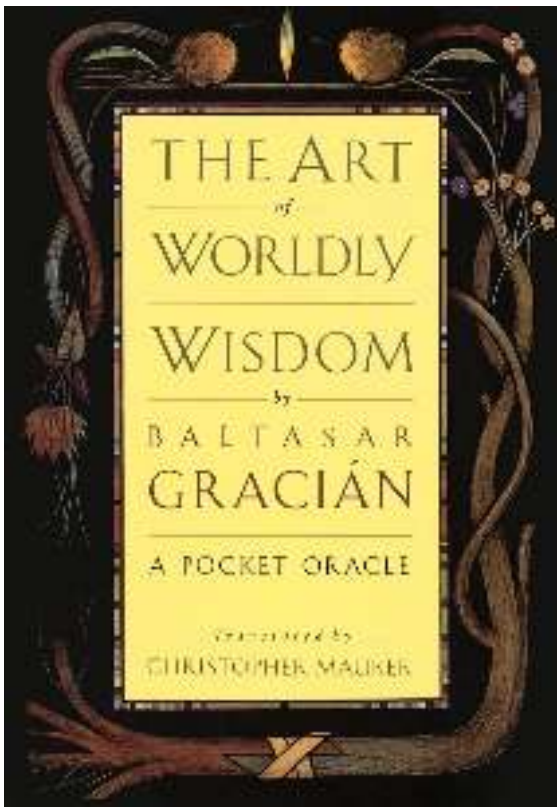
By Robert Greene
Summary | Amazon

A cornerstone of power dynamics and social manipulation, *The 48 Laws of Power* is a must-read for understanding high-level social strategies.

While it doesn't offer a step-by-step system, its laws can be eye opening on the realities of influence and control. Ideal for those who are still stuck in "nice guy mode" and need to graduate to "strategic" level with some needed Machiavellianism and power dynamics.

The 48 Laws of Power drew from our next book on the list:

5. The Art of Worldly Wisdom



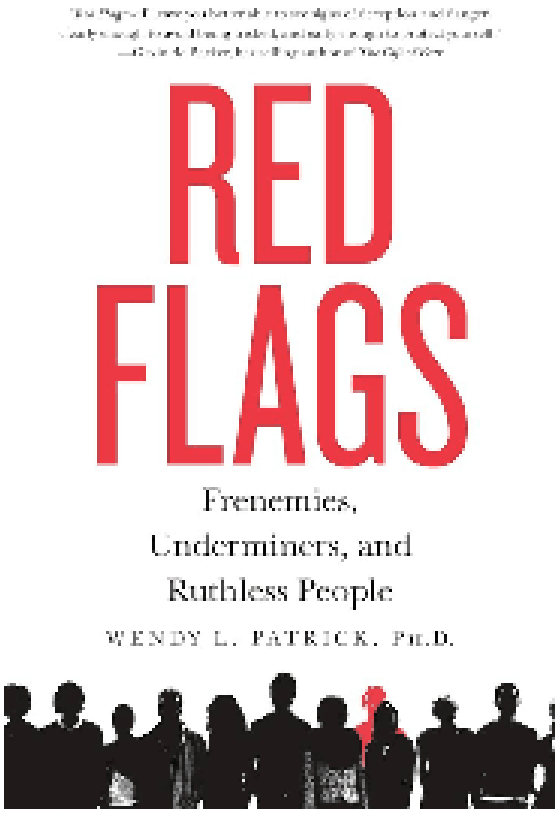
By Baltasar Gracián
Summary | Amazon

Baltasar Gracián's *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* is a timeless collection of maxims for navigating social and political landscapes with finesse.

Written in the 17th century, its aphorisms teach strategic thinking, discretion, and social maneuvering—perfect for aspiring leaders.

This book is for those who want to master advanced social skills while maintaining integrity.

4. Red Flags



By Wendy Patrick

Summary

If our two previous entries teach you how strategists (and manipulators) operate, this book teaches you **strategic self-defense to enjoy a happy and fulfilled life.**

Red Flags is a critical guide for spotting manipulative behaviors and toxic personalities. It equips you with the tools to identify takers and protect your assets.

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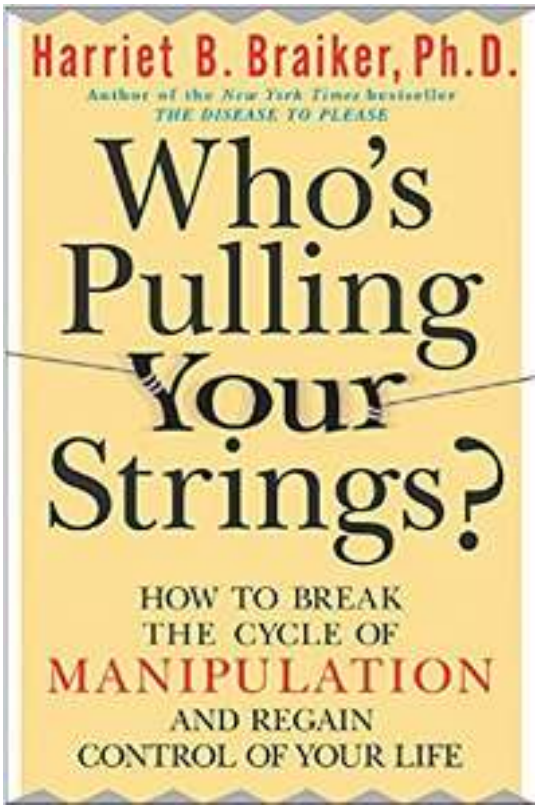
3. Who's Pulling Your Strings?



By Harriet Braiker
Summary | Amazon

Harriet Braiker's *Who's Pulling Your Strings?* is a masterclass in resisting manipulation and asserting control over your life.

It teaches you to recognize manipulative tactics and build psychological resilience, crucial for men navigating high-stakes environments.

This book is a must for those seeking to understand manipulation dynamics and protect themselves.
Pair it with *Red Flags* for a robust defense against toxic players.

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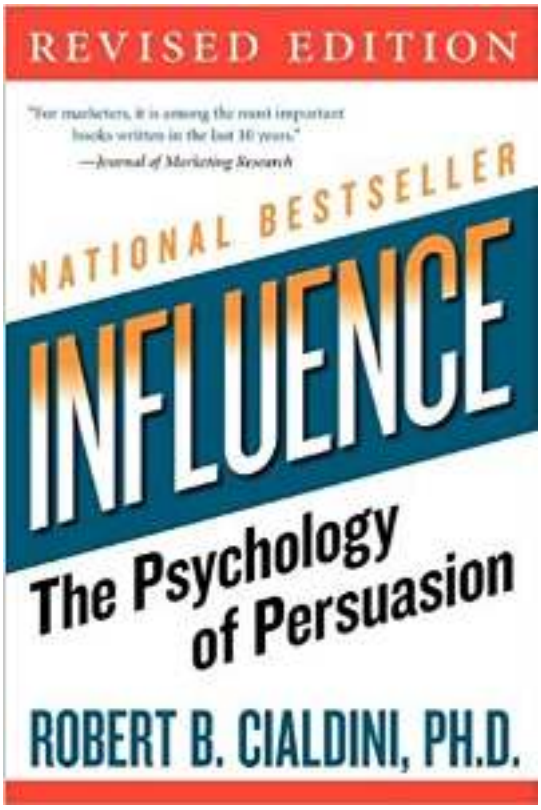
2. Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion



By Robert B. Cialdini

Summary

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion is a seminal work on how to persuade and navigate social exchange dynamics.

Robert Cialdini's six principles—reciprocity, commitment, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity—are essential for leaders aiming to sway others ethically.

Backed by psychological research, it's a top leadership psychology book for mastering influence.

1. Power University

By Lucio Buffalmano

Overview | Body Language of Power | Body Language of Submissiveness

Power University, The Power Moves' flagship course, is the definitive resource for mastering **advanced social skills**.

Distilling insights from all the books above, plus exclusive research, it offers a comprehensive system with videos, real-world examples, and practical exercises.

Trusted by thousands, it transforms you from a good social operator to a strategic goal-achieving machine. Preview its cutting-edge approach in the linked articles and take your skills to the elite level.

Warning:
If you're at the "social burden" level, start with beginner-friendly books like *The Social Skills Guidebook* (see our best social skills books list).
Once you're ready for advanced strategies, *Power University* is your next step.

Edit:
Our community changed our perspective.
You may save time and achieve a higher ROI by starting with advanced resources.
Read more here.

Check Out Power University Here

Conclusion

These **advanced social skills books** are your roadmap to becoming a confident man who gains status, respect, and attraction.

From understanding power dynamics to resisting manipulation, they'll help you climb the social ladder and achieve your goals.

Start with the book that matches your level and consider *Power University* for the ultimate leap to 'life winner' stage.

How to Read Body Language (And Actually Understand It)

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Reading people's nonverbal cues gives you an edge in dating, deals, and life.

Body language speaks the truth and reveals true intent. Learn to read it, and influence, power, and attraction are yours for the taking.

This no-BS guide decodes body language to help you get status, respect, and attraction.

Contents

- Intro: Why Reading Body Language
- 1. Get the Baseline: People's Default State
- 2. Decode Power Cues In Body Language
  - ▯ Example: Low Power vs. High Power Body Language
  - How to Read Body Language for Power: TPM Framework
  - Decode Aggressive Intent For Self-Defense
- 3. Target the Big Five Body Language Clusters
  - Posture & Orientation
  - Face & Eye Behavior
  - Arm & Hand Gestures
  - Leg & Foot Movements
- 4. Read From Macro to Micro: Context Is King
  - ▯ Case Study: Decoding Nonverbal Communication In Context
- 5. Train For Nuanced Body Language Signals
  - ▯ Case Study: Mixed Body Language In Negotiation

- 6. Detect Nonverbal Cues of Deception
- 7. Common Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them
  - ⍰ Case Study: Body Language Decoding Failure
- 8. Next Level: Create The Cues You Want
- FAQs
  - Get to The Next Level

Intro: Why Reading Body Language

Reading people's body language gives you an unfair advantage in life.
Superior decoding skills provide the intel to enact superior strategies to achieve your goals—whether to influence, attract, or out-negotiate others.

For example, body language cues of attraction, respect, or deference tell you how much leverage you have.
And when things aren't going your way, body language intel allows you to correct course and turn things around.

Psychology researchers also state that it helps us choose trustworthy partners, avoid unnecessary conflict, and understand social hierarchies—key for cooperation and social success.

Here's how to read body language:

1. Get the Baseline: People's Default State

This guy's defaults are probably high dominance, mid openness, and low anxiety

Most folks have a 'natural baseline'—their default body language.
Your first job is to identify their *default* for accurate reads.

While some authors simplify 'default' as a single pose, **default body language is a series of common body language poses and expressions**.

For example, a shy guy's range of defaults may include various degrees of limited eye contact, body angled away, and a lowered head.

There are two types of default body language:

- **Baseline body language**: when nobody's watching
  ⍰⍰ Use it to read significant changes
- **Common body language poses**: when they're actively socializing
  ⍰⍰ Use it to read characters

2. Decode Power Cues In Body Language

The most important dimensions of how to read body language relate to power cues.

High power in others is not a threat if it's contextually appropriate, or accompanied by warmth

Like it or not, if you're an ambitious man, social power is key.
It negotiates respect, status, and attraction. Even if you don't care about power, it's still crucial to good and healthy relationships.

⍰ Example: Low Power vs. High Power Body Language

Try to decode the low power head tilt in the right picture below.
What does it sub-communicate?

High power body language signaling confidence and status

> **Head tilt** ⍰⍰ I'm clueless, and low status. I have no agency, and I will acquiesce with anything you say or do.

The lowered eyelid also sub-communicates low energy and passivity.
If you added a slight smile and more interest, that head tilt would communicate attraction towards a higher power individual ⍰⍰.

How to Read Body Language for Power: TPM Framework

Focus on these two simple clusters:

- **Empowering**: nods, nervousness, or looking down all signal you're higher power.
  They give you status, respect, and attraction ⍰⍰
- **Disempowering**: touching, eye roll, or smirk.
  They undermine status, respect, and attraction ⍰⍰

Get disempowered, and you're a low-status L.
Get empowered, and you're a winner.

As simple as that sounds, it's how life works.

Our whole website teaches how to master the game of power to conquer life.
Here are a couple of body language-related guides to get you started:

- **Confident nonverbals** in socialization
- High power hands in pocket poses
- Alpha male body language poses to spot posturing

Decode Aggressive Intent For Self-Defense

Reading body language is part of **situational awareness** and crucial for physical self-defense.

Typical body language cues of aggressive intent or impending attacks include:

- **Clenched fists**
- **Furrowed brows**
- **Stepping into personal space**
- **Reaching behind their back** or into pockets, potentially pulling tools

Pursed lips signal an effort to bottle in rage, head tilt signals anger-related tension, and clenched fists signal anger and a possible intent to attack

Note: Most men are evolutionarily programmed to read the signs of physical aggression. Their problem is not missing the signs. Their problem is being too scared at the *smallest* sign.

3. Target the Big Five Body Language Clusters

To read body language fast, focus on clusters of high-impact cues:

1. **Facial Expressions & Eye Behavior**
2. **Posture & Orientation**
3. **Arm & Hand Gestures**
4. **Leg & Foot Movements**
5. **Vocal Tone & Pace**, while not strictly ‘body language’, they’re still crucial
   ▯ How to speak with power and authority

Posture & Orientation

- **Leaning In**: Interest, engagement
- **Leaning Back**: Discomfort, doubt
- **Torso or Feet Angle**: Open=invite, turned=avoid

Planted foot▯▯. Torso, eye contact, hand clasping, sad expression ▯▯

Leans in, direct gaze, slight smile, mid-openness

Face & Eye Behavior

Early research listed seven universal expressions, but later research added extra complexity.

For effective decoding, stick to our simple approach to **focus on empowering VS disempowering expressions**:

- **Empowering**: Smiles, eyebrow flash, happiness, etc.
- **Disempowering**: Contempt, disgust, hubristic pride, derisive laughter, etc.

Taken with the verbal context, this is laughing *at* you. It's a power move that undermines your status

Eye Behavior

- **Blink Rate**: Fast=stress, slow=control
- **Eye roll**: Superiority and disdain

'Pupil dilation' for interest or arousal is also valid, but:

⍰♂Lucio's take: **Ignore pupil nonsense, focus on power**

Lucio:
Avoid low-ROI cues.
For example, pupil dilation never made a difference for me—and I dated better than 99% of men.

Also **ignore NLP nonsense on eye-direction** (Gass and Seiter, 2022).

Focus on bigger and easier signals instead: respect, compliance, etc.
Better yet, **focus on positive dominance**, confident language, and leading.

Arm & Hand Gestures

- **Blocked Chest (arms crossed)** = defense or discomfort
- **Open Palms** = honesty and receptivity
- **Steepled Fingers** = confidence and thought

This pose signals **high engagement** (leaning forward, direct eye contact) with **confidence** (steeple, erect spine, legs and feet apart, strong eye contact)

Leg & Foot Movements

- **Pointing Feet** = direction of interest
- **Shuffling or Tapping** = impatience or anxiety
- **Stance** = comfort level (open/wide vs crossed/constricted)

Of course, each of these cues must be read together with everything else, and with context in mind.

⍰Example:

Try to guess what the nonverbals in the picture below could mean.

He's looking at you, but his legs and feet are pointing away.

Confident and high-stauts body language. Legs and feet pointing away signal that he's **not fully bought in**. He may not fully trust or respect you (and considers himself to be 'above you')

4. Read From Macro to Micro: Context Is King

Body language cues means different things depending on context.

And while both high-level macro (context and character) and low-level micro (cues) influence each other, we advise going from macro to micro.

For example:

- **Leaning in** means
  - ⍰ Interest if you're talking (empowering)
  - ⍰ Hostility if they're talking with raised voice (disempowering)

- **Looking away** means:
  - ⍰ Low confidence from shy people (neutral)
  - ⍰ Disdainful superiority from domineering men (disempowering)

⍰ Case Study: Decoding Nonverbal Communication In Context

Guess what the body language pose below communicates.

Then, ponder how the meaning could vary depending on context.

This pose is **dominant** and leans towards **aggression**. But it's also **high interest**. Context tells you what it means to you.

Here's how context plays a role:

- **Empowering** if you're sharing a story he's mesmerized by and interrupts to ensure he gets it right
- **Disempowering** if he interrupts to say it's all nonsense. That signals no respect, low trust, and imminent disengagement

But the truth is that snapshot readings are insignificant to achieve life-goals because social dynamics evolve.

For the skilled strategist, disempowering cues quickly move to the dustbin of history as they actively manipulate contexts to achieve their goals.
The real skill is to **actively shape contexts in your favor**.

Imagine for example, the man above says:

> **Him**: (leaning in, interrupting) WTF, wait, that doesn't make sense <— Aggressive and disrespectful
>
> **You**: (sideways look) It's not supposed to as this point. But if you let me finish, it will (unwavering gaze, slight smile) ⍰⍰ You're interrupting at the wrong time and it's not cool. We can still talk, but you must backtrack
>
> **Him**: (leaning back, pulls hand back and down) Ehehe OK, sorry <— Realizes he was out of line. Now he respects you more

The men we train here don't just read context, they *shape* the context to gain status, respect, and attraction.

5. Train For Nuanced Body Language Signals

Many guides on reading body language present simplified or exaggerated examples.

They're good for understanding a concept, and perfect for starting out.

But they're not realistic.

You seldom see 'hands akimbo' for example. And almost never see managers with their feet on the table and hands behind their head.
And since most people actively try to manage impressions, you rarely see full congruence of all cues.

Unlike textbook examples, **real-life body language speaks in whispers**: nuanced poses, mixed cues, and shifting contexts.
And that's great. Learn to read nuanced body language, and you'll gain an almost unfair advantage in life.

⍰ Case Study: Mixed Body Language In Negotiation

Read this body language and try to adapt your negotiation strategy off of it:

Confident upper body, confident hands distance, but **anxious feet and hands**

⍰⍰ **Strategy: Push for more concessions from him**. He's trying to look confident, but his apprehension betrays his weaker position.

In general:

- **Look for 'unnatural stiffness'**. The picture above feels stilted: he's trying too hard to adopt a pose. In those cases:
- **Trust the negative cue** the most since people seek to present the best image
- **Watch for microexpressions of aggression**, signals of anger, disagreeableness, or even high psychopathic traits

⍰ Example of Micro Expressions

> **Him**: (Raises lip to display teeth) <— ⍰⍰ High aggression and hostility

⍰ See it live here.

6. Detect Nonverbal Cues of Deception

Meta-analytic research points out these cues of deception:

- **Pressed lips**: Liars press their lips (as if holding back) more than truth tellers.
- **Lower logic**: Liars' stories are more discrepant, ambivalent, and have less plausibility and logical structure.
- **Uncooperativeness**: Liars are rated as less cooperative in conversation, with more unpleasant facial expressions and negative statements
- **Nervousness**: Liars sound more uncertain and appear more nervous, including more fidgeting
- **Fewer corrections and admission of memory lapses**: Truth tellers correct themselves and admit forgetting something more often
- **Unrelated tangents**: Liars mention more peripheral or unrelated events.

You can read the full list here, but first please note:

⚠ **Signals of deception are unreliable, potentially misleading, and lying detection hardly improves with training** (Akehurst et al., 2004)

Worse yet, the liars you're least likely to catch are the most likely to be dangerous.

For example, Machiavellians are more credible even as kids—let alone after decades of practice.
Hence, focusing on deception cues, you may suspect nice guys, but over-trust the 'cheating pros'.

What's a better approach, then?
This:

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Look at Character & Incentives**

Lucio:
A focus on deception cues can backfire—and some of them are of little use.

For example, despite lies being common, 'biting one's lip' is extremely rare—like, are you grilling a baby over stolen cookies?

Apprehensive people, the safest people to trust, also display deception cues when they're honest but highly invested.

Solution: to judge trustworthiness, **ignore arcane cues and focus on *character***. Character is based on deeper and stronger signals like track record, takers' red flags, and dark triad traits.

Then look at whether interests align or diverge.
Never trust poor characters when interests diverge.

7. Common Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them

- **Single Cue Fallacy**: Never judge based on one twitch. Look for 2–3 cues
- **Projection Error**: Don't assume your feelings match theirs
- **Cultural Blindspot**: Some gestures vary globally. Know your audience
- **Tunnel Vision**: Look at the forest, not at individual trees

The advanced level is to let your subconscious do the work for you and assess the overall vibe.

Of course, beginners may need to first focus on cues for some time.
However, remember that the ultimate destination is to forget cues, and absorb vibes.

As obvious as this may seem, several body language experts get this wrong:

⍰ Case Study: Body Language Decoding Failure

> **Lucio**: This body language expert looked for specific attraction cues, and got it wrong—proof that single cues

> mislead, but power dynamics never lie

8. Next Level: *Create* The Cues You Want

Learning how to read body language is a foundational skill, but action drives results.

Reading body language is passive.
You may become the best body language decoder in the world, but without skilled action, you won't go far.

Instead, **real power comes from *eliciting* the positive signs you want.**
Learn how to get the influence, respect, attraction, or connection you want. And their body language *follows*.

Our website is built to deliver these skills.
See for example:

- How to be a high-value man
- How to gain status
- **Power University** for the quickest shortcut to life mastery

FAQs

How do I improve my ability to read body language effectively?

To improve your ability to read body language, start with mindful observation in everyday interactions and try to decode people's nonverbal communication, focusing on clusters of signals and paying attention to consistency and context.

How do I read open versus closed body language?

Open body language includes gestures that literally open up the body—like uncrossed arms, wide shoulders, and head level.
Closed body language includes defensive or withdrawn cues, such as crossed arms, turned-away feet, or minimal eye contact.

How can I tell if someone is lying using body language?

Cues like pressed lips, nervous fidgeting, or distancing may suggest deception, but they're unreliable. Skilled liars mask these signs. Instead, assess character (track record, red flags) and incentives. If interests diverge, don't trust poor characters, as meta-analyses show lie detection is tough even with training.

Do cultural differences affect body language interpretation?

Yes, some gestures differ by culture. But many cues—like confidence through posture or discomfort via fidgeting—are universal. Focus on the social meaning rather than rigid interpretations.

What are the top body language cues to watch for?

The most reliable body language cues are the ones that people are least likely to consciously alter, like torso and feet orientation, microexpressions, and cues of anxiety. Smiles or eye contact are less reliable because people often fake them to manage impressions.

What body language shows someone likes you?

Open body language—leaning in, mirroring your posture, steady eye contact, or smiling—signals attraction or liking. They may also point their feet toward you or use open palm gestures.

Get to The Next Level

Our students learned how to read people like open books and earned 10 times more status, respect and attraction:

- **Power University**

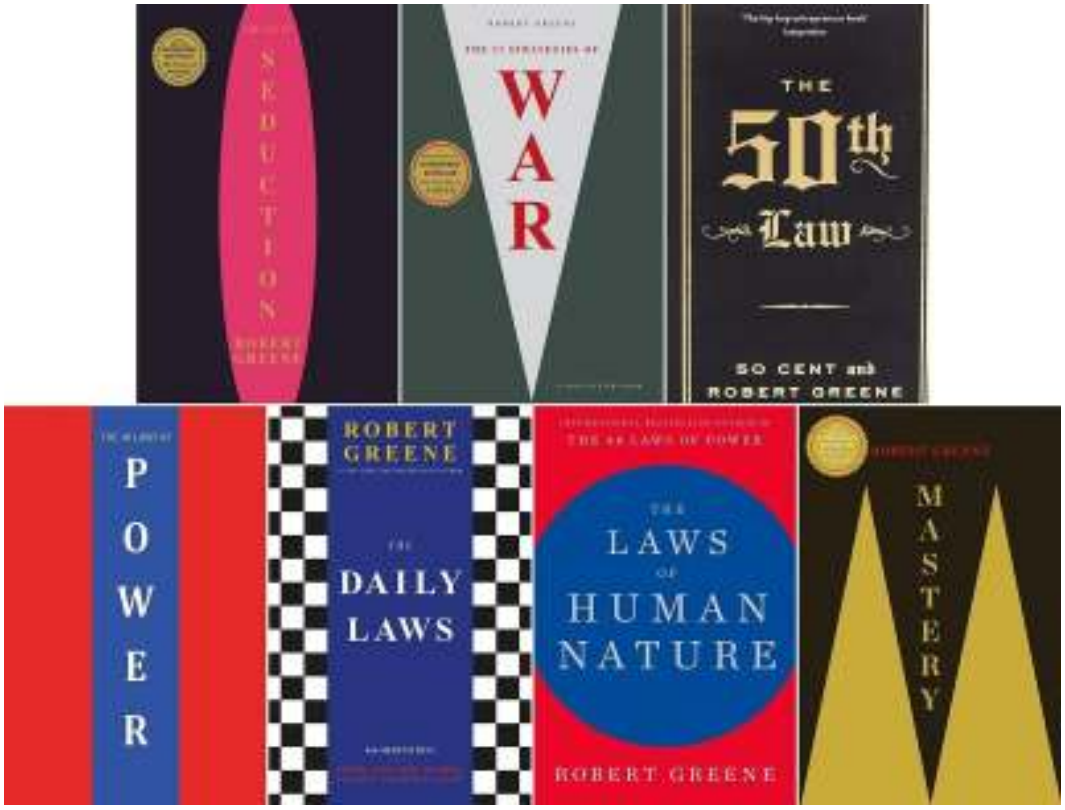
Best Robert Greene Books: Ranked & Reviewed by Lucio Buffalmano

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Robert Greene is one of the most influential modern authors on power, strategy, and human nature. His books blend historical storytelling with psychological insights, offering lessons on influence, competition, and mastery.

At *The Power Moves*, we've studied Greene's work in depth — using his ideas, challenging them where needed, and integrating them into our own power-centric approach to personal development.

This guide reviews all of Robert Greene's books in order, explains the best order to read them, highlights their pros and cons, and shows how to apply (and adapt) his ideas in real life.



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Intro: Robert Greene Books

These are Robert Greene's books in chronological order:

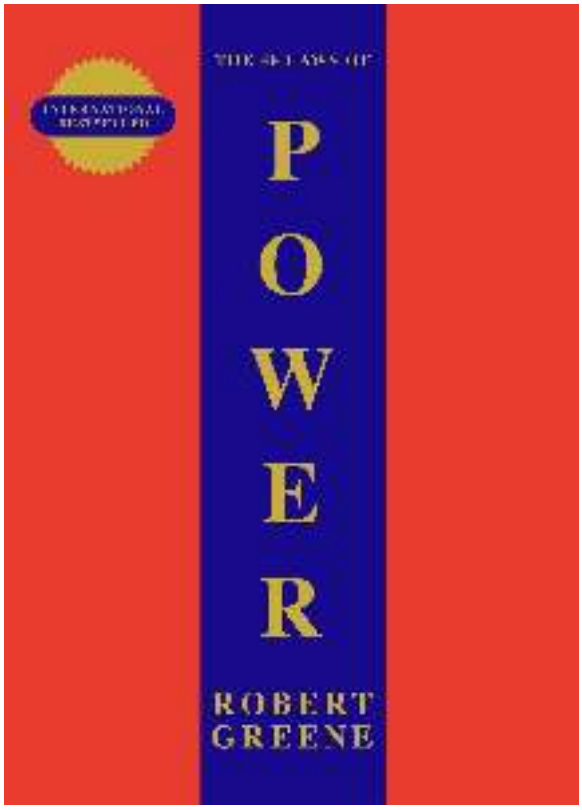
1. **The 48 Laws of Power** (1998)
2. **The Art of Seduction** (2001)
3. **The 33 Strategies of War** (2006)
4. **The 50th Law** (with 50 Cent) (2009)
5. **Mastery** (2012)
6. **The Laws of Human Nature** (2018)
7. **The Daily Laws** (2021)

Book	Theme	Key Concepts
The 48 Laws of Power	Power dynamics, strategy, self-preservation	Conceal intentions, don't trust friends, maintain a good reputation
The Art of Seduction	Influence, attraction, psychological manipulation	Seem an object of desire, mix pleasure with pain, escalate with a bold move
The 33 Strategies of War	Military principles, psychological warfare, social games	Pick your battles, use *covert* warfare, frame your war as holy and just, negotiate while advancing
The 50th Law	Fearlessness, realism, self-reliance	Embrace the inevitability of death to overcome fear
Mastery	Achieving expertise, life's task, intuition	Find your passion, pick a great mentor, expand your knowledge in related fields to innovate

Book	Theme	Key Concepts
The Laws of Human Nature	Understanding human behavior, self-awareness	Become self-aware, learn and integrate your dark side, learn to read people's characters
The Daily Laws	Daily wisdom, distillation of previous works	Practice daily to internalize good habits and thinking patterns

And now let's deep dive into each of Greene's books:

1. The 48 Laws of Power (9/10)



Greene's breakout work — a compendium of 48 "laws" distilled from history. Each law is illustrated with examples of leaders, generals, and schemers, mostly from the ancient world.

⍰ Pros

- **Memorable** rules and historical vignettes — highly readable and quotable. It didn't become a best-seller by chance
- **Compelling page-turner**, probably the most compelling and entertaining book on power and strategies
- **Practical examples** that make abstract power concepts concrete.
- **Top intro to power dynamics** and advanced social skills like interpersonal power dynamics, strategy, manipulation, etc.

⍰ Cons

- **Unscientific**: Heavy on anecdote, light on academic rigor — some patterns are persuasive and some less so, but not scientifically validated
- **Uncalibrated**: Although the laws are supposedly 'universal', they're not. And without calibration, they backfire
- **Sneaky ⍰**: Sometimes described as amoral or "Machiavellian", some laws are just sneaky and low quality.
- **Cynicism is costly**, and the laws' focus on the dark side can turn readers into overly cynical men.

- **Lowers life quality**. Some readers who are too young, beginner, or socially unskilled to understand that humans are both good and bad may overly focus on the negatives, missing out on life
- **Cynicism undermines cooperation**, a necessity for power. Cooperation and defection co-exist, so you must be careful. But humans dominated the world with cooperation, you can't succeed without it

Our review

The single most influential Greene book, and the one that defines his reputation. Use it to sharpen your ability to spot manipulation and strategic moves, but pair it with ethical reflection and strategies that include cooperation and win-win.

⁉️ **Takeaway**: Read for pattern recognition and strategic polish, not as a guide for life

Learn more:

- 48 Laws concise summary
- Modern 48 Laws to apply the laws in the modern world
- 48 Laws vs. Power University: our students weigh in on which one is better

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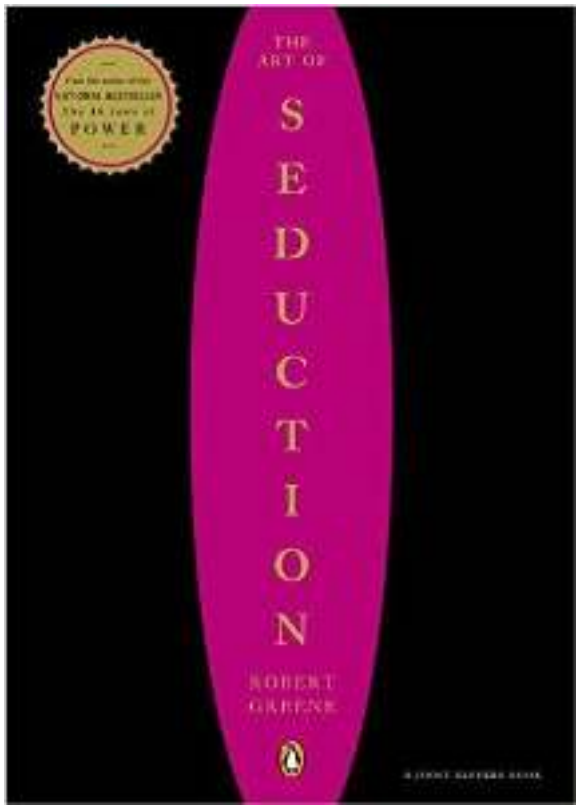
2. The Art of Seduction (9.5/10)



A deep dive into seductive archetypes and strategies, framed with historical and literary examples.
After his successful debut, this second Greene book extended his reach into dating power dynamics and established him a renowned expert in the 'darker arts' of influence and control.

⁉️ Pros

- **Advanced psychology** of love and emotional and seduction dynamics

- **Useful beyond seduction**, including for marketing, politics, influence, and social strategies
- **Dark psychology** at its seductive finest
- **Some helpful dating tips** for advanced players and some for beginners on avoiding some 'anti-seducer' traps (e.g.: tight wad, brute, suffocator)

⍰ Cons

- **Unscientific**, without empirical evidence, and sometimes contradicted by research (for example, 'vanity' listed as 'anti-seductive' isn't necessarily a death knell when you consider narcissists' dating success)
- **Lacking experience** and relying on third-party accounts and texts. The author doesn't seem to have or leverage his own real-world experience
- **Impractical for modern dating** where masculine leadership, dominance, and faster action determine success.
  - Potentially counterproductive for beginners, since 'chasing with abandon' is more likely to make you a simp than a successful seducer
- **Downplays mate value,** which is crucial to seduction. Psychology without positive dominance and mate value rarely leads to seduction

See our short on this topic:

> **Lucio**: Psychology makes an advanced seducer, but power and attractiveness what make for effective dating

Our review

Less about effective dating than about control, seduction, and leverage. Excellent for advanced strategists and seducers.
Beginners looking to improve their dating lives may want to first start with different dating books.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: Learn the psychology, but remember that seduction ultimately hinges on the masculine 'bold move', from leading to escalating

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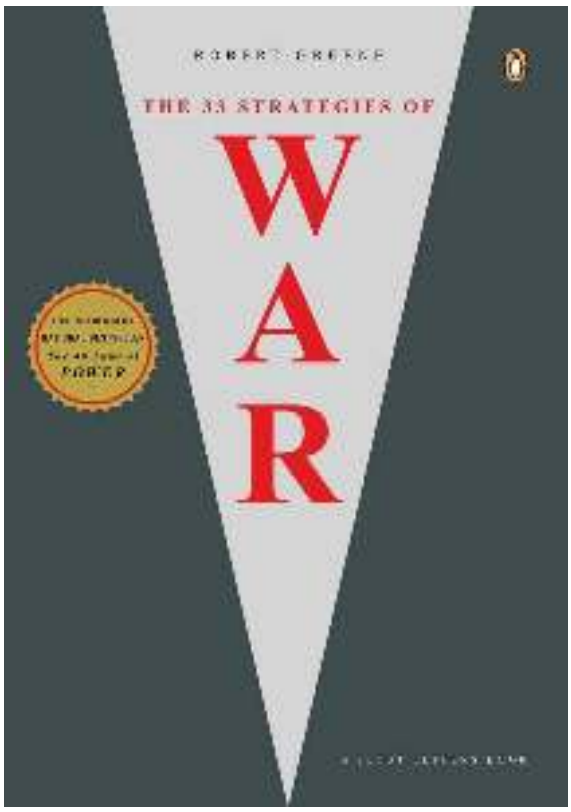
3. The 33 Strategies of War (8.5/10)



Applies principles of military strategy to business, politics, and personal life.

⍰ Pros

- **From military to life strategies** with many principles that transfer to everyday life
- **Advanced psychology** analyzing the war for influence and framing
- **Entertaining** read

⍰ Cons

- **No military experience**, military experts may have some reservations
- **Competition above cooperation**, same for Greene's previous books. But true grand strategies develop alliances first. Only later, they even take on any enemy when victory is assured
- **Selective historical examples**, rather than a coherent narrative on waging war

Our review

A strong competitive strategy playbook and another book gem by Robert Greene.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: Prioritize wealth and alliances as the backbone of winning wars, rather battles. That's how you build empires.

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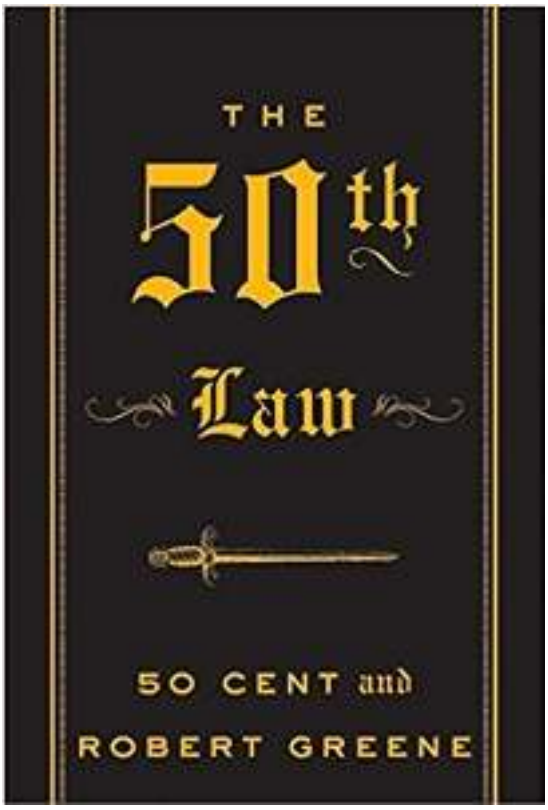
4. The 50th Law (8/10)



A blend of memoir and motivational guide, built around the theme of fearlessness. Uses 50 Cent's life and business career as the central case study.

⍰ Pros

- **High-energy**, short lessons on risk-taking and resilience.
- **Interesting tactics** more related to intimidation and street posturing that you wouldn't find in other Greene's books
- **Street power dynamics** through the history of a famous rapper and former dealer. Although some may wonder how truly open 50 Cent was

⍰ Cons

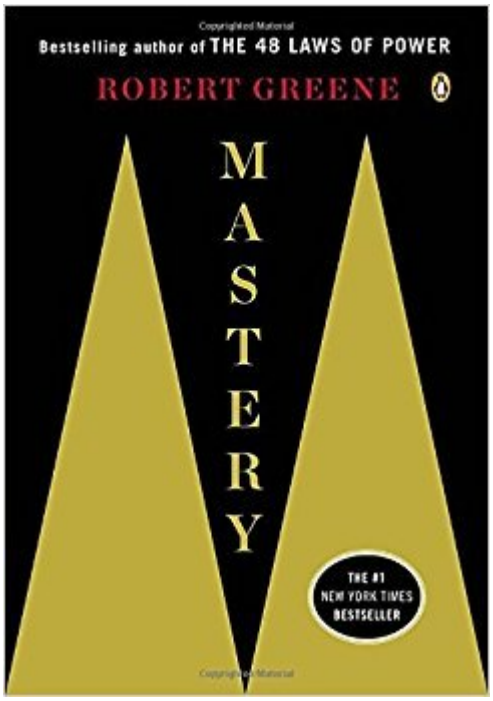
- **More motivational** than strategic
- **50 Cent's not an ideal role model**, and not for his dealer's past, but by looking at his closest relationships
- **Celebrity PR piece**, or that's how it may feel to some readers

Our review

Punchy and inspirational, and I loved it.
But although I like and respect 50 Cent, I'd rather avoid the fate of his personal relationships. A bitter divorce and a son who hates you doesn't seem the peak of success to me.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: Learn fearlessness from this book. But pick better women and develop better relationships with your children.

5. Mastery (7.5/10)



Focuses on competence, becoming world-class in any field through apprenticeship, practice, and long-term dedication.

⍰ Pros

- **Power-aware angle**, covering the psychological aspects of mentorship that many others leave aside
- **Competence is power**, or at least a fundamental component of it. This was a major missing part in Greene's previous book, more focused on manipulation tactics and various games

⍰ Cons

- **Unscientific**, with no empirical evidence for Greene's method of 'finding one's passion' or 'developing skills'
- **Superseded by empirical books** like *Peak*, written by a researcher, or *Ultralearning*, with more firsthand experience

Our review

Mastery is Greene's least manipulative book, and provides a unique angle in the literature of skill acquisition. Robert's distinctive approach blends psychology and power dynamics—an important reality rarely addressed in this field.
Learn more on competence here ↗

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: Admit and accept that mentors are ahead of you. Accept a lower status role while you learn, but remember that your goal is to surpass him.

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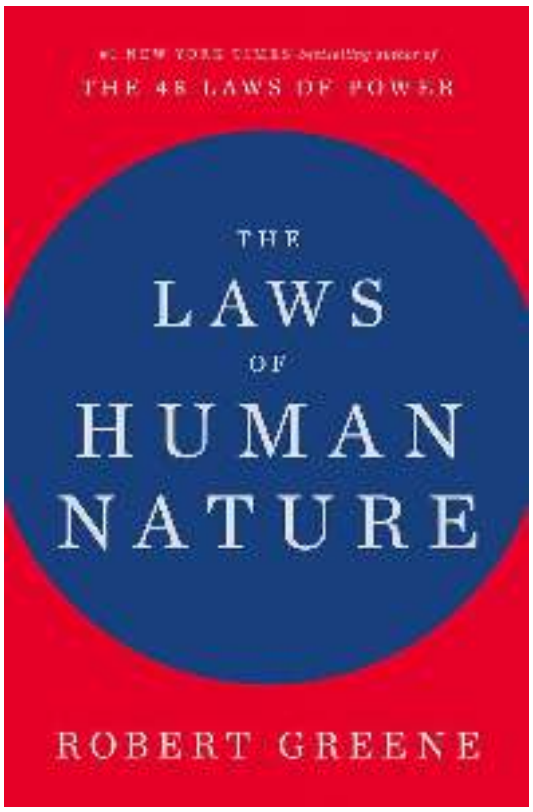
6. The Laws of Human Nature (9/10)



An ambitious attempt to map recurring human motives, patterns, and social behaviors, using psychology and history.

⍰ Pros

- **Golden nuggets** on human nature
- **Unique take on self-development** as one of the very few books that challenges readers to tackle the dark side of human nature both in others and in ourselves
- **Useful for self-awareness**, social intelligence and, like most of Greene's books, for power intelligence

⍰ Cons

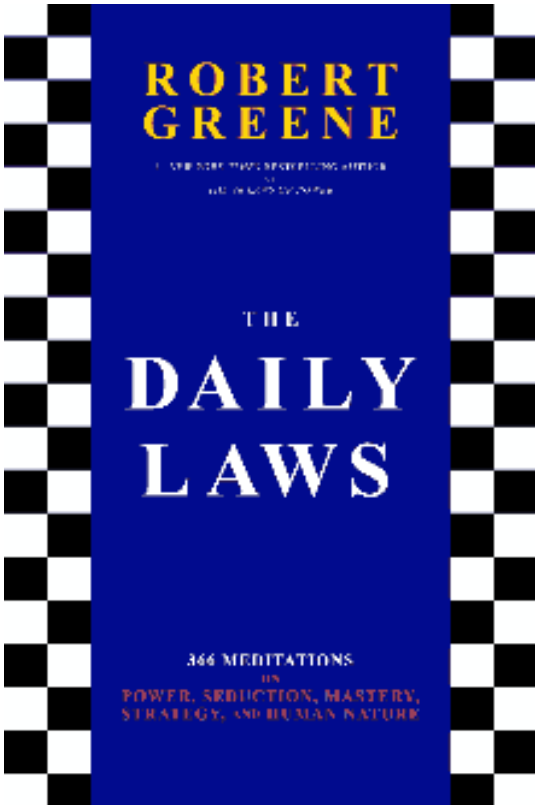
- **Unscientific** and Freudian/psychoanalytic psychology, which is not exactly the most empirically supported
  - Lacks evolutionary psychology, a field that many believe provides the true foundations to understand 'human nature'
- **Non-coherent** narrative that sometimes reads as a list of observations

Our review

A unique take on self-help that stands out in a field often too aspirational—and too naive to explore humanity's darker nature.
Not Greene, fortunately, and not this book. This is a much-needed, 'power-aware' approach to men's self-improvement.
While we don't agree with everything, we appreciate, enjoy, and largely support Greene's approach to self-development—in many ways similar to our own at TPM.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: true self-development requires that you look deep not only into people's darker motives, but also your own darker side

7. The Daily Laws (7/10)



A collection of daily meditations drawn from Greene's books, each paired with a practical prompt.

⍰ Pros

- **Short**, consumable lessons for daily reflection.

⍰ Cons

- **Mostly recycled material.**
- **Shallower** compared to his other books.

Our review

A helpful companion to Greene's main works, best used as a daily reminder rather than a primary source.

Books Like Robert Greene's Books

Books similar to the ones written by Robert Greene tend to be quality but simple introductions to complex themes, striking a necessary tradeoff between accessibility and complexity (the 'Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™').

Some of them are:

- ***The Prince*** (Machiavelli): The Godfather of realpolitik
- ***The Art of Worldly Wisdom*** (Baltasar): The blueprint of *The 48 Laws*, almost too similar for comfort

- ***The Dictator's Handbook*** (Bueno de Mesquita): A more empirically sound guide for dictators and a lucid analysis of political power dynamics
- ***Games People Play*** (Berne): Analyzing some common dysfunctional patterns of interpersonal relationships
- ***Influence*** (Cialdini): The Godfather of modern persuasion books, based on social exchange dynamics and its practical applications
- ***Meditations*** (Marcus Aurelius): The OG of 'enlightened power', combining power and life philosophy
- ***The Social Strategist*** (Scarlett & Buffalmano): A beginner-friendly introduction to more advanced social skills like positive dominance and frame control

Although strictly not books, also consider:

- **The Power Moves**, this website, which applies power dynamics to men's self-development and self-advancement
- **Power University**: a multimedia course providing a proven and scientific hands-on blueprint for men's social and life success

And:

- **Best books on power**, for a full reading list on power

For a deeper dive on books like the *48 Laws of Power*, see:

https://thepowermoves.com/books-like-the-48-laws-of-power

FAQ

Which Robert Greene book should I start with?

For beginners, The 48 Laws of Power (1998) is the best Robert Greene book to start with. It's his most iconic work, introducing power dynamics and strategy through 48 principles explained with historical examples. Its engaging style makes it highly accessible as well as entertaining to read.

Are Greene's books based on research?

Robert Greene's books are not based on empirical scientific research.
Instead, they rely heavily on historical examples, classical works like Machiavelli's The Prince, and older psychoanalytic thinkers like Freud and Jung, which are less empirically sound due to their lack of experimental validation.

What are all Robert Greene's books, in order?

Robert Greene's books, in publication order, are: The 48 Laws of Power (1998); The Art of Seduction (2001) The 33 Strategies of War (2006); The 50th Law (2009, co-authored with 50 Cent); Mastery (2012); The Laws of Human Nature (2018); The Daily Laws (2021).
These books reflect Greene's focus on power, strategy, and human nature, though some critics note later works may revisit earlier themes, reducing originality.

What are Robert Green's books about?

Robert Greene's books explore power, strategy, and human behavior using historical and psychological insights. Greene's books share overlapping topics and all deploy the same proven Greene method: distill patterns from history, package them as sharp rules, and illustrate them with vivid stories.

What's Robert Greene's best book?

The best Robert Greene book depends on your goals. *The 48 Laws of Power* is often considered his masterpiece for its broad appeal and insights into power dynamics, ideal for professional and social strategies. Alternatively, Mastery excels for those seeking personal growth and skill development, with a less controversial tone.

What books are similar to Robert Greene's books?

Similar books include: *The Prince* (Machiavelli), *The Dictator's Handbook* (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith), *Games People Play* (Berne), and *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* (Baltasar).
For a practical next step, Power University applies a similar power-centric approach in a coherent system for succeeding in life and gaining status, respect, and attraction.

Best Robert Greene Books: Lucio's Top 3

These are the best Robert Greene books:

1. ***48 Laws*** as the most practical and eye-opening
2. ***The Art of Seduction*** is Greene's most advanced and refined work. But *too* advanced for most and less practical and effective for modern dating
3. ***The Laws of Human Nature*** is a gem of self-development, finally bringing some power dynamics and realness to the self-help industry

And divided by themes:

- **For power & competition:** The 48 Laws of Power
- **For human nature & self-development:** The Laws of Human Nature
- **For social cunning:** The Art of Seduction

How to read Robert Greene: best order

Defensive & practical:
48 Laws of Power → 33 Strategies → Art of Seduction

Strategic & competitive:
48 Laws → 33 Strategies → The 50th Law

Skill-building & mindsets:
Mastery → Laws of Human Nature → The Daily Laws

Open vs Closed Body Language: Read People, Signal Status

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Open body language is one of the clearest signs of confidence, comfort, and social power.

From job interviews to dating and leadership, understanding and using open body language helps you appear more trustworthy, approachable, and dominant—all without saying a word.

In this guide, you'll learn exactly what open body language looks like, how it differs from closed body language, and how to use it to your advantage.

This is a stereotypical open body language pose for a man. Perfectly suited for 'management by wandering around' to display power and approachability. But showing your hands is important in many other contexts

Contents

- What's Open Body Language
  - Open Body Language Continuum
  - Open vs. Closed Body Language
  - Open Body Language and Power
- How to Optimize Open Body Language
  - 1. Adopt an Open Baseline
  - 2. Execute Daily Action With Open Poses
  - 3. Strike A Balance of "Optimal Openness'
  - 4. Feel Open & Confident, Let Body Language Follow
  - 5. Strategically Switch Between Open & Closed
  - 6. Power Move: Strategically Send Mixed Signal
- FAQ
  - Advanced Mastery

What's Open Body Language

Open body language refers to physical cues like relaxed posture, uncrossed arms and legs, exposed torso, and expressive hand gestures that signal comfort, emotional openness, and confidence with

To properly understand open body language, we must contextualize it within the continuum of open-to-closed body language.

Open Body Language Continuum

Open body language is part of the 'open/closed' body language continuum with physical cues like relaxed posture, uncrossed arms and legs, exposed torso, and expressive hand gestures.

At the other end of the continuum, closed body language signals the opposite: discomfort, defensiveness, or low confidence.

Open vs. Closed Body Language

Open and closed body language represent one of the five main body language dimensions besides dominance, warmth, calmness, and interest.

Let's compare each:

Trait	Open Body Language	Closed Body Language
Posture	Upright, relaxed spine, head up, shoulders back	Slouched, tense, head down, shoulders rounded
Arms & Hands	Uncrossed arms, open palms, expressive gestures	Arms crossed, hands hidden, constricted gestures
Legs & Feet	Legs uncrossed, feet flat or pointed toward others	Legs crossed, feet turned away
Torso Orientation	Chest open, facing the person	Turned away, torso shielded
Facial Expression	Relaxed face, genuine smile, steady gaze	Tense face, tight lips, minimal or fake smiles

Trait	Open Body Language	Closed Body Language
Eye Contact	Direct, steady, calm gaze	Avoidant, darting, excessive blinking
Proximity	Comfortable closeness, grounded	Withdrawal, sitting at edges, leaning away

A typical closed body language pose arms and legs is this:

Not *terrible* body language, but stereotypically closed off, and crossed legs take away from it

Open Body Language and Power

Open body language signals power and status because it overlaps with dominant body language, which tends to be open and spread out.

However, openness and dominance are not the same, and it does not follow that 'the more open, the more dominant'.

Ultimately, while confident body language tends to be open, context determines when openness signals confidence, power, and status.

For example:

Although arms close off the torso, this is still a high-power position. It suggests confident defiance

How to Optimize Open Body Language

Let's learn now how to adopt an open language:

1. Adopt an Open Baseline

While the best body language to adopt depends on context, in general, **men should lean towards a more open body language baseline.**

How open depends on context, but to give you an idea, this spectrum applies to many social contexts:

Not terrible, but legs too open for many contexts

Good balance

Erect spine and, head level, right elbow ⍰⍰, hands OK, but legs ruin it ⍰⍰
The middle image strikes a good balance of openness for a high-status, dominant man.

Don't overdo it: constant openness is low value
Constant openness can sub-communicate you're always free and always ready to entertain anyone who comes along. Remember: high value people get busy with their goals and mission and aren't always open to the whole world

2. Execute Daily Action With Open Poses

Once you adopt a good baseline, it's time to focus on daily actions.

Many of our daily actions tend to close off our body language, including:

- Working on a laptop
- Checking the phone
- Checking the time

Be more conscious of how do you all of them until it becomes second nature

Good head position, but two arms ⍰⍰

Not terrible, but improvable

Upgrade: quick glance *to the side*

Check the time on the side, arm up, and with a glance. It's a small detail, but details add up.

Action	Open Body Language	Closed Body Language
Check Phone	Eye level	Crouched towards phone
Check Time	Slightly to the side, eye level	Crunched in front of torso
Hold Drink	To the side	In front of torso
Standing	Hands on hips	Both hands deep in pockets

3. Strike A Balance of "Optimal Openness'

Remember, the goal is never to be 'as open as possible', the goal is to be *appropriately* open.

For example, none of these are 100% open or extremely open, but they are ALL good open body language poses:

Despite some poses featuring crossed legs or arms, they're still solid open body language poses for men, in their given context.

Also see:

- Law of optimum balance
- Social calibration

4. *Feel* Open & Confident, Let Body Language Follow

While adopting certain poses may help to feel differently, it's more effective to go from the mind to the body.

Such as, **focus on feeling confident and open, and let body language follow naturally.**

The gift of closeness: listen to your subconscious
The more advanced and accomplished you become, the less you want to force yourself to 'change your state'.
If you're not feeling open towards someone or in a certain place, there may be good reasons for it. Consider *staying* close, cutting contact, and moving to better people and places.

5. Strategically Switch Between Open & Closed

Just like the goal is not to be 'as open as possible', the goal is not to always display open body language.

You shouldn't be open to everyone or any idea—that's naive.

Instead, advanced players know that **body language is a tool of advanced frame control**, and strategically switch between open and closed body language.

Do the same and match your body language openness to your goals.
Open up for good people and when persuading, and close down when you disagree, dislike someone, or are busy with your things.

Some examples of using nonverbal openness for strategic sub-communication:

Context	Strategic Open Signal	Strategic Closed Signal
Initial introductions	Lean in slightly and face frontally for confidence and respect	Look away and speak little to display distance or superiority
Negotiations	Palms up, nods and silences to increase rapport	Angle away, lean back and check the time to display unneededness
Group settings	Prolonged eye contact, smile, and face toward to display approachability	Unfocused gaze towards the crowd, hand in pocket to display you're not

Advanced power move: close up slightly to signal high value that's not for everyone to enjoy

6. Power Move: Strategically Send Mixed Signal

Open books are dull.

Advanced players maintain power by never giving themselves fully, keeping others on the edge in nagging suspicion.

Some examples:

- Open torso but legs pointing *away*
- Lean in but stroking your chin in doubt (judge power move)

Open torso, fully relaxed, straight gaze, but torso slightly leaning away and feet pointing away. Sub-communication: you have a chance, but you don't have my full approval yet

FAQ

What is open body language?

Open body language refers to nonverbal cues—like uncrossed arms and legs, open torso, and visible palms—that signal confidence, comfort, and emotional openness. It's the body's way of showing that you are receptive, secure, and socially engaged.

What is closed body language?

Closed body language includes nonverbal cues that signal discomfort, insecurity, or emotional withdrawal—such as crossed arms, crossed legs, hunched shoulders, and avoiding eye contact. It often suggests someone is defensive, anxious, or not open to connection.

What's the difference between open and closed body language?

Open body language shows confidence and approachability through relaxed and exposed movements, while closed body language signals discomfort or defensiveness with crossed limbs, hunched posture, and withdrawn gestures. Open cues invite connection; closed cues create distance.

Why is open body language important?

Open body language builds trust, signals confidence, and increases influence. It makes you appear more credible in job interviews, more attractive in dating, and more authoritative in leadership. People subconsciously respond better to open cues.

Is open body language always better?

No. While generally positive, constant openness can signal neediness or low value if overused. High-status individuals calibrate their body language to the context—being open when it builds rapport and closed when it commands respect or deters unworthy attention.

Advanced Mastery

If you find our articles helpful, we developed a training program built to internalize the mindsets and skills of a high-quality, effective, *winning* man:

- **Power University**: our best guide to becoming a strategic winner

Robert Greene Review: Power, Genius, and Limitations. Lucio's Uncensored Take

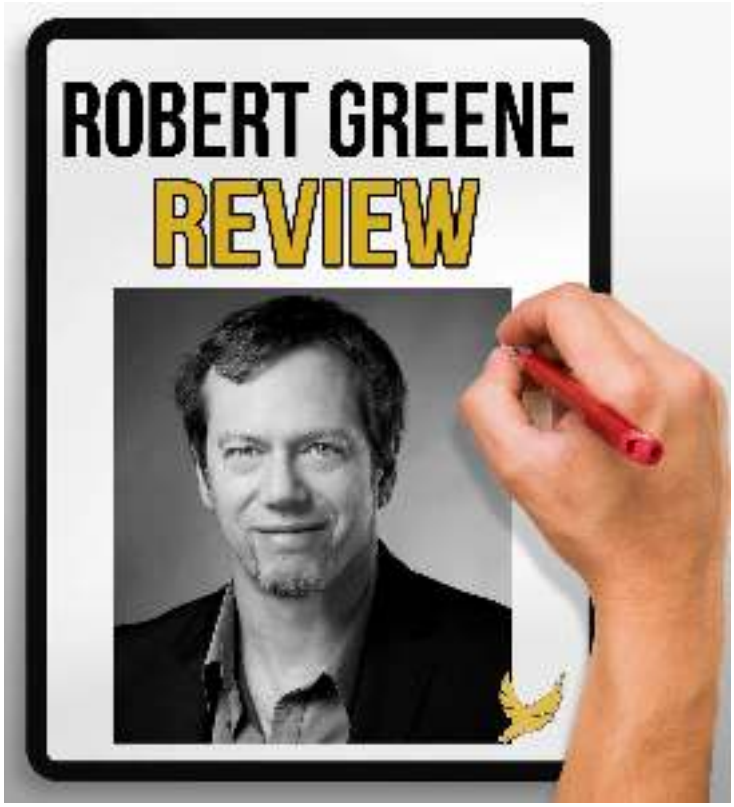
Lucio Buffalmano · 31 August 2025 · Archived copy · Original

In the realm of self-development, few authors cut through the fluff like Robert Greene.

His books dissect power, manipulation tactics, and human nature with compelling prose and superb storytelling—drawing from history's conquerors, seducers, and geniuses.

But does his work truly help you become a powerful man with status, respect, and attractive mates, or is he just a good marketer?

In this comprehensive review, we analyze Robert Greene's background, expertise, and quality of advice. You'll be the final judge.



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Who Is Robert Greene? Biography

Robert Greene was born on May 14, 1959, in Los Angeles to Jewish parents, the younger son in a modest family.

He first attended Berkeley but transferred to the University of Wisconsin–Madison for his B.A. in classical literature.

Before hitting the bestseller lists, Greene hustled through roughly 50 jobs: construction worker, translator, magazine editor, even a Hollywood scriptwriter.

In 1995, while at an Italian art and media school called Fabrica, he met book packager Joost Elffers. Their collaboration birthed *The 48 Laws of Power* in 1998, catapulting Greene from obscurity to notoriety.

Today, Greene resides in Los Angeles with his partner, filmmaker Anna Biller.

Approach, Method, and Influence

Greene's bibliography is a realpolitik view of human nature and relationships built on a single, sobering premise:

Humans are fundamentally selfish, engaged in a constant, often unconscious, struggle for power.
That struggle is often covert, leading to manipulation, deceitful appearances, and passive aggressiveness.

Method

Robert Greene research centers around biographies, classical thinkers, and historical books.

To write his books, he deploys the same proven approach that worked so well for him:

- **Find patterns** from history and notable figures and turn into…
- **Memorable rules**, aphorisms, catchy 'laws', and timeless archetypes. Then present it with…
- **Amoral framing**, without casting judgment of 'good or bad', then back it up with…
- **Storytelling**, with vivid examples and stories that well embody the concept

Influences

Greene's main sources are biographies, history books, and early psychology theorists like Jung and Freud.

Hence, Greene's takes on human nature are often psychoanalytic, touching on themes like shadow, repressed desires, and childhood experiences and traumas.

At The Power Moves **we'd like to see more personal experience and hard science.** Fortunately, Greene has two important qualities to help make up for that: he is intelligent and has a strong intuition for power dynamics.

Key Themes

- **Power Dynamics** among individual actors
- **Appearances vs. Reality**, a constant game of deception to look nicer while hiding one's true motives (similar to Goffman's sociology)
- **Power Awareness** as a necessity to survive and thrive in a competitive world of self-interested players
- **Emotional Intelligence** to see through others' emotions and control your own.

- **Strategic Thinking** and social maneuvering. Strategy often beats raw force in Greene's work
- **Human (dark) Nature** that governs people's behavior. Greene sees characters as largely unchanging
- **Competition**, an omnipresent background force, as people vie for power, status, and control

⍰ Pros and Unique Insights

A chart first comparing the strengths and weaknesses of Greene's work and approach:

Category	⍰ Strengths (Pros)	⍰ Limitations (Cons)
Masculine power	✅ Focus on strategy and interpersonal/social dynamics	❌ Lacks masculine dominance & self-reliance
Realism & Worldview	✅ Focus on selfishness is a helpful wake-up call to dispel naive illusions	❌ Can foster over-cynicism when in truth reality is *both* dark and bright
Psychology	✅ Deep insights into the "darker" aspects of personality psychology	❌ Anecdotal. Focusing on Freud/Jung misses decades of eye-opening research findings
Nuances	✅ Includes one example of the law working, and one for failing	❌ Lacks calibration. Misapplication can lead to appearing sociopathic or inept
Modern Applicability	✅ Many principles are timeless, and some others only require basic calibration	❌ The game has changed in many areas. 'The Art of Seduction' under-delivers today
Practicality	✅ More practical than most motivational and 'feel-good self-help'	❌ Lacks 'how tos' with clear action/reactions, a higher-level system to apply the principles

1. Dark Realism

Greene's primary strength is his realism on the human's darker side.

If, on one side, a focus on the darker side of human nature risks biasing the analysis on the negative side, we find this approach still has significant merits.

Namely, **Grenee provides a much-needed reality check for 'too naive' individuals**.
Realism is what we admire the most about Greene and share with him 'truth' as one of our founding values.

2. Power Intelligence

Robert Greene is a sharp, penetrating observer of interpersonal power dynamics, manipulation, and the psychology behind human behavior.

As someone with both natural predispositions and years of focused study in these fields, I can say that Greene is light-years ahead of most.
And even as an expert, I could draw novel insights from his work.

It's this power awareness that lets Greene turn old historical examples into timeless masterpieces.
Anyone else trying the same without science or first-hand experience would fail miserably. Greene succeeds because of his high "power IQ."

3. Accessible & Clear

Greene's rich stories not only entertain, but also make his principles easier to understand and remember.

And while not "scientific" in an empirical sense, capable analysis can still gain credibility from historical events.
In a sense, they're part of an *enlarged experience*: not first-hand, but drawn from observing other people's experiences.

Greene's masterful storytelling may also be the secret to his success.
They're beginner-friendly entry points to complex dynamics, while providing a sense of authority and timelessness.

4. Empowering

By exposing manipulative tactics and the "dark side" of human behavior, Greene's work equips readers to identify and defend against malignant players.

Greene's power-aware work may be even *more* important for self-preservation than for gaining power.
Indeed, while many powerful men are already somewhat power aware, "good men" aren't. These good men need resources like Greene and The Power Moves the most.

5. Unique & Superior Takes

In a self-help industry dominated by motivational speakers and feel-good gurus, Greene is the wake-up call you might not want, but probably need.

The power-centric approach peculiar to Greene and few others represents <1% of self-help, but it may account for 80% of success within competitive environments.

⍰ Criticisms and Limitations

Greene's work isn't flawless. Critics argue it's unscientific, overly cynical, and risky if misapplied.

1. Unscientific and Anecdotal

Greene's work is unscientific: anecdotal evidence and storytelling sell well, but lack empirical proof.

This is not to say Greene's work is not 'true' or not useful.
To the contrary, we believe a high-IQ, power-aware mind can produce accurate analyses and useful advice from observation alone.
However, ignoring scientific findings misses the opportunity to refine those observations.

At parity of IQ and power-awareness, scientific data improves accuracy and efficacy.
This is why at The Power Moves we use a three-pillar method that includes science, together with experience and critical thinking.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **I respect Greene's choice and take great intuition over poor pop-psychology**

Lucio:
Properly using empirical data is harder than it looks.

It requires the reader to understand how science works, understand pros and cons of different research methodologies, grasp some basics of statistics, look at the full literature, and then put everything into the context of their observations and experience.

Few people can do that well, and many authors who claim to be 'science-backed' only end up with poor analyses and advice.

In short, **Greene's power-aware eye is superior to many 'science-backed' self-help authors**.

The issue may be compounded by a tendency to jump to definitive, sometimes not sufficiently nuanced, conclusions.

2. Limited Personal Experience

While Greene reads through biographies and history books, he leverages little first-hand experience.

One, for example, may note that the*48 Laws of Power* was written with little successful experience climbing social hierarchies.
Or for *The Art of Seduction,* one may note that Greene doesn't seem to be a womanizer himself and that a long-term partner doesn't provide much womanizing experience.

Robert Greene's long-term partner, feminist filmmaker Anna Biller

DeMarco calls teaching something without personal experience the 'paradox of practice'.

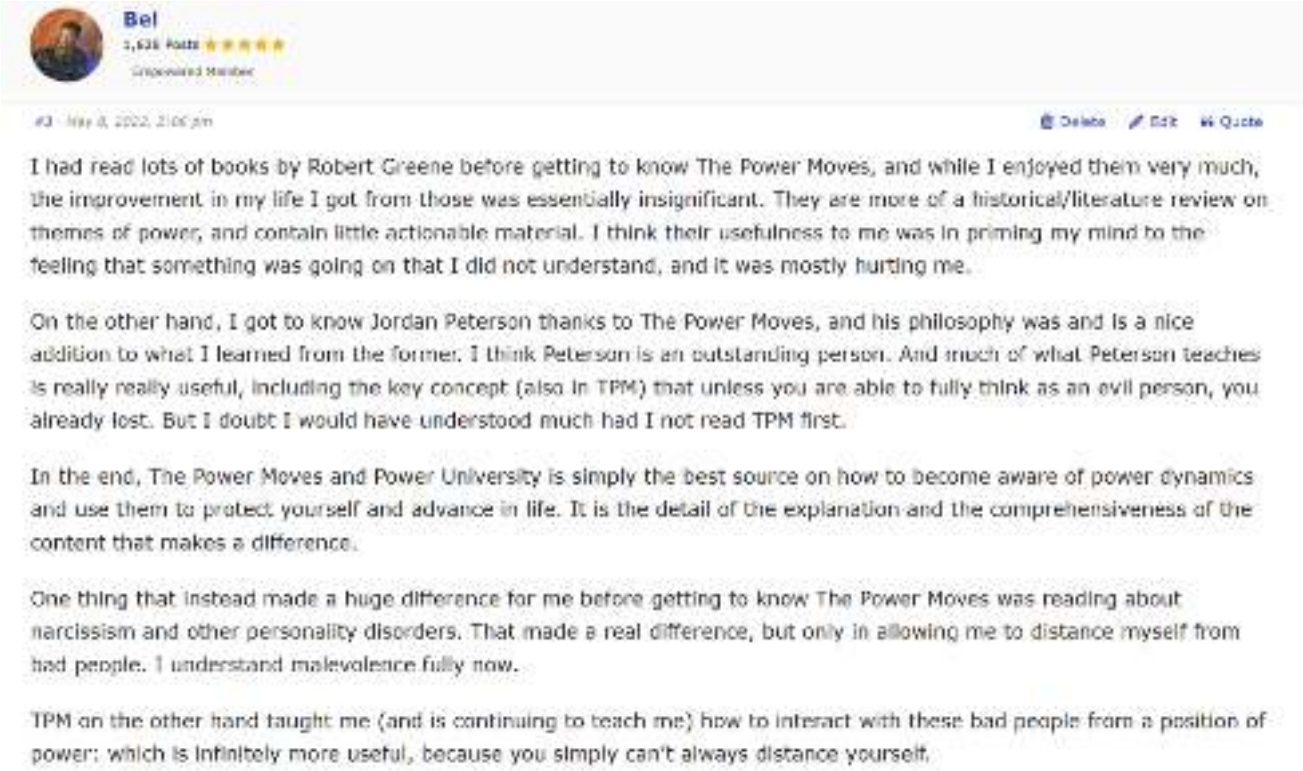
For a more practical review of Greene's work that may be disproven by research or experience, see:

- 48 Laws of Power Criticism
- Art of Seduction Criticism

3. Limited Practicality for Real-World Results

Greene's work excels in raising first awareness, but is not optimized to deliver real-life results.

For example, one of our alumni writes:



Bel

I had read lots of books by Robert Greene before getting to know The Power Moves, and while I enjoyed them very much, the improvement in my life I got from those was essentially insignificant. They are more of a historical/literature review on themes of power, and contain little actionable material. I think their usefulness to me was in priming my mind to the feeling that something was going on that I did not understand, and it was mostly hurting me.

On the other hand, I got to know Jordan Peterson thanks to The Power Moves, and his philosophy was and is a nice addition to what I learned from the former. I think Peterson is an outstanding person. And much of what Peterson teaches is really really useful, including the key concept (also in TPM) that unless you are able to fully think as an evil person, you already lost. But I doubt I would have understood much had I not read TPM first.

In the end, The Power Moves and Power University is simply the best source on how to become aware of power dynamics and use them to protect yourself and advance in life. It is the detail of the explanation and the comprehensiveness of the content that makes a difference.

One thing that instead made a huge difference for me before getting to know The Power Moves was reading about narcissism and other personality disorders. That made a real difference, but only in allowing me to distance myself from bad people. I understand malevolence fully now.

TPM on the other hand taught me (and is continuing to teach me) how to interact with these bad people from a position of power: which is infinitely more useful, because you simply can't always distance yourself.

> **PU alumnus**: I read lots of books by Robert Greene and while I enjoyed them very much, the improvement in my life was insignificant

And this alumnus notes that what he found missing was the exact steps on what to do and say.

Greene is not supposed to provide a system to help men advance. It may not even be his goal.
But it's good for men looking for real-world results to be aware of this potential limitation.

4. Risk of Misinterpretation, Cynicism, and Self-Handicap

While Greene's works offer invaluable understandings, translating theory into effective action requires strategic calibration.

Without calibration, **blind application of Greene's laws can lead to negative outcomes**.

Subreddits focused on Greene's work or dark psychology are replete with examples (pro tip: avoid communities full of beginners).

So here's a quick table to help you avoid some basic misinterpretations:

Greene's Original Law	Fail	Win
Law 1: Never Outshine the Master	Blindly suppressing one's talents, leading to stagnation and mediocrity, especially with average bosses.	✅ Frame output as beneficial to the master and make him feel good. Learn all you can, but strategically move past ASAP
Law 2: Never Put Too Much Trust in Friends, Learn How to Use Enemies	Distrusting good people, underusing alliances, missing opportunities to align interests, leading to isolation	✅ Cultivate a strong network, align interests, increase scope for win-win, but understand self-interest, and prepare for fallouts
Law 3: Conceal Your Intentions	Constant deception, a reputation for fakeness, loss of trust, poor relationships, lower mental health	✅ Conceal intentions in competitive or adversarial situations, and build trust with good people when interests don't diverge

Greene's Original Law	Fail	Win
Law 4: Always Say Less Than Necessary	Seeming uncommunicative or aloof, *losing* status when speaking up displays confidence and competence	✅ Say less when it enhances mystery or authority, but speak up confidently when beneficial. Focus on *impact* and goals, not quantity.
Law 24: Play the Perfect Courtier	Pandering to powerful big egos keeps you in their shadow, over-focusing on others' feelings and thoughts is feminine and low power	✅ Pursue power and excellence, prioritize goals and respect over being liked, and manage politics to make allies and minimize obstacles
Law 46: Never Appear Too Perfect	Deliberately underperforming undermines you; hiding capabilities misses opportunities for status, reputation, and attraction	✅ Be relatable in 1:1s and privately strive for excellence. Make others think you're untouchable: followers will flock, and competitors won't even try

Note: Greene most likely understands the nuances perfectly well. It's the readers who may misunderstand

Also read:

- Does the 48 Laws work?

4.2. Focus On 'Dark Side' Can Eclipse The Light & Lower Life Quality

While humans can be selfish and dark, we can also be bright and uplifting.

Indeed, science suggests that humans became the dominant species thanks to superior cooperation. And cooperation evolved because it's good for the (selfish) individual.

I'm sure Greene may agree with that, but since his work focuses on the darker side, readers may 'over-correct' from too naive, to too cynical.
So **learners harm themselves if they over-focus on competition to the detriment of cooperation.**

That comes with important costs, since studies show that over-cynicism is costly in mental health and personal relationships.
Instead, the optimum balance is to accept a healthy dose of cynicism, and be a *smart* cooperator.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Greene may have shifted to cynicm after a naive pahse**

Lucio:
Greene shares that in his younger years, he was on the far left of the political spectrum.

Being on the far left may suggest that one doesn't fully appreciate human motivation and selfish tendencies.
That, in turn, may predispose one to a naive approach to life that leaves one vulnerable to exploitation and power-related mistakes.

Greene indeed first thought of 'never outshine the master' after having been fired for an office politics faux pas.

Those early poor experiences may have shifted him towards over-correction, and cynicism.
But some idealistic naivete sometimes still transpires in more modern videos.

5. Low Dominance & Masculinity

Greene's emphasis on strategy over dominance may leave crucial dimensions of men's power unexplored:

- **Interpersonal dominance**. High-power behavior, confident talk, and masculine body language are cornerstones of men's success, including for status, respect, and attraction
- **Self-reliance**: while social reputation is crucial, a masculine 'sigma type' may focus on himself and his goals while caring less of what others think
- **Masculine honor** and straight talk beat 'playing the perfect courtier' for a respected leader

In a YouTube video Greene's criticism of a popular, highly masculine guru feels more ideological and preachy than analytical (e.g.: 'masculine men are nice').
While we share his doubts about that figure's character and methods, his dominance has undeniably fueled his success.

> **Lucio**: While we may sympathize with Greene's criticism of more flamboyoant masculine behavior, the behavior itself is masculine. and it can be a valid approach to achieving success

It's possible that Greene's own temperament and life experience, including a long-term partnership with a feminist filmmaker, influence his approach in these areas.

FAQ

Who is Robert Greene

Robert Greene is a Jewish American author renowned for his bestselling books on strategy, power, seduction, and human nature. Born on May 14, 1959, in Los Angeles, California, he holds a B.A. in classical studies.
Greene had a string of around 50 jobs before his breakthrough publication of "The 48 Laws of Power" in 1998, followed by six more best-selling books. He is a multilingual Zen Buddhist and lives in Los Angeles with his long-time partner, filmmaker Anna Biller.

Is Robert Greene a psychologist

No, Robert Greene is not a psychologist. He does not hold any formal degrees or licenses in psychology or related fields. His educational background is in classical studies, with a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Greene's books, while also exploring human behavior and motivation, are rooted in historical analysis, philosophy, and personal observations rather than psychological research.

Is Robert Greene married

No, Robert Greene has been in a long-term relationship with filmmaker Anna Biller since the 1990s, without official marriage. The couple lives together in Los Angeles, and it appears they have no children. Greene maintains a private personal life, rarely discussing details publicly.

What's Robert Greene's net worth

Robert Greene's net worth is estimated at around $7 million as of 2026. This wealth primarily stems from millions of book sales across his seven international bestsellers, including "The 48 Laws of Power" and "Mastery," as well as royalties, speaking engagements, and consulting work. Additional income sources may include YouTube advertising, public speaking, and media appearances.

Robert Greene & Lucio Buffalmano

Given the overlap between Greene and Buffalmano, a comparison table may be helpful to help you decide who to prioritize for your self-development:

Aspect	Robert Greene	Lucio Buffalmano / TPM
Core focus	Power, seduction, strategy, and Machiavellianism — largely in competitive contexts.	Interpersonal power dynamics in everyday life for men's empowerment, plus frameworks for both dominance and win-win cooperation
Approach	Historical case studies and timeless aphorisms distilled into "laws" and strategies.	How-to guides, modern examples, and a course with 'hacks' and system designed to develop competence and deliver results
Ethics / honor	Amoral framing; focus on manipulation and strategy, less emphasis on cooperation and alliances as power sources.	Realistic-holistic, including the power of cooperation. Stresses the risks & costs of long-term amorality. Combines cold strategy with an 'honorable approach' for best of both worlds

Aspect	Robert Greene	Lucio Buffalmano / TPM
Interpersonal dominance	Addresses manipulation and influence in general terms, less focus on daily, 1:1, and moment-to-moment dominance dynamics.	In-depth coverage of verbal and nonverbal dominance, status games, and frame control in live interactions.
Application	Readers must translate rules to modern, everyday scenarios on their own.	Step-by-step applications for modern contexts — dating, business, leadership, negotiations, and conflict resolution.
Scientific grounding	Based on anecdotes and literature, not on empirical testing.	Scientifically grounded — peer-reviewed research with real-life testing and experience. Plus continuous refinement.
Best suited for	Men and women seeking power principles, awareness, and historical perspective.	Men seeking an actionable system for winning respect, influence, and attraction in today's world.

Conclusions: Is Robert Greene Legit?

Robert Greene is a keen observer of power dynamics, social strategies, and manipulation, and his work is an excellent starting point for understanding human nature and power.

His prose and storytelling are unmatched, placing him in a category of his own when it comes to blending narrative appeal with depth of wisdom.

For men seeking practical empowerment, a more systematic, science-grounded approach—one that also covers cooperation and actionable "how-tos"—is essential for turning awareness into real-world results.

10 Books Better Than The 48 Laws of Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 7 September 2025 · Archived copy · Original

If Robert Greene's *The 48 Laws of Power* left you hungry for more insider secrets to influence, strategy, and domination, you're in the right place.

We've reviewed hundreds of books to handpick the ten most powerful reads to deepen your mastery of power dynamics—no fluff, just hard-hitting insights.

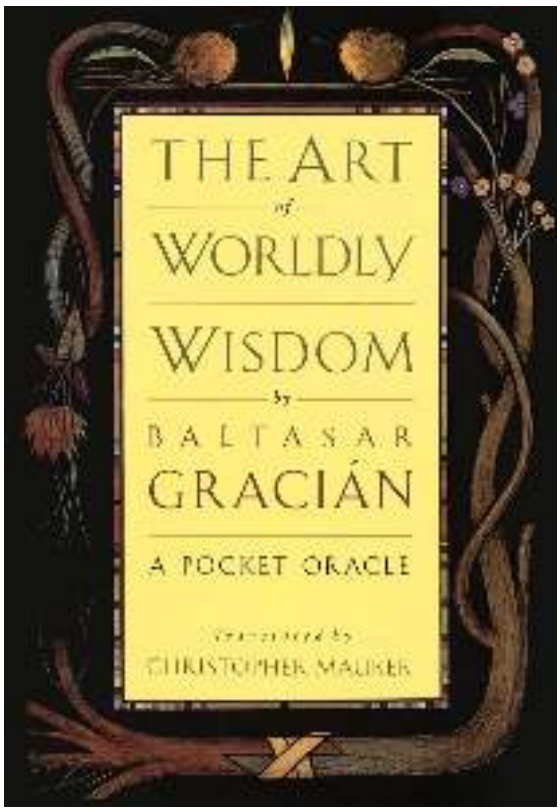
Ready to increase your status and power?
Let's dive in.

Note: The following books were personally studied and vetted by **Lucio Buffalmano**, a social scientist. Unlike many lists, his recommendations are based on science-backed analyses and first-hand reviews.

Contents

- 1. The Art of Worldly Wisdom
- 2. Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't
- 3. The Prince
- 4. Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion
- 5. The Power Broker
- 6. The Social Strategist
- 7. The Dictator's Handbook
- 8. Who Is Michael Ovitz?
- 9. Games People Play
- 10. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
- Bonus: From Laws & Books to a Complete Power System
- Somewhat Similar…
  - Other Robert Greene Books
  - ✕ Avoid These: Not Like 48 Laws of Power
  - Learn More

1. The Art of Worldly Wisdom



The blueprint for *The 48 Laws*—its structure and themes—bears a striking resemblance to this 1647 collection of 300 maxims.
The Art of Worldly Wisdom offers life and social strategy tips remarkably similar to many of Greene's law, but includes many more gems as well.

Pros

- **Most similar** to *The 48 Laws*
- **Great guide to social skills**, more than 'mere' manipulation, blending effective Machiavellianism with value-adding approaches
- **Advanced guide** with insights on social exchange, cooperation, and honor

Cons

- **Needs better editing**; some titles don't match content, and wording can be cryptic.
- **Outdated** views like national stereotypes and physiognomy claims that are both unscientific and illogical
- **Unmemorable laws**, probably the reason why Baltasar is forgotten, and *The 48 Laws* became a best-seller

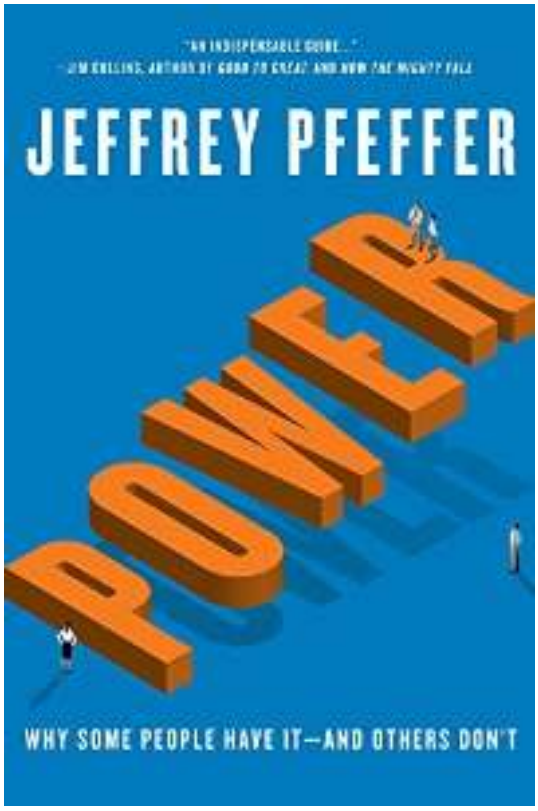
Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

The Art of Worldly Wisdom is a masterpiece of realpolitik and human insight, predating and inspiring Greene's laws with its profound maxims on power and strategy.

Its maxims are not as catchy or straightforward as the 48 laws, which may have limited its reach.
And it's still only a list of laws, without an overarching system and a how-to for turning insight into real-life results.

But overall, fantastic book.
And if you're looking for something like The 48 Laws to read next, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* is your next best pick.

2. Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't



Jeffrey Pfeffer's guide explains why power is essential for success and offers practical strategies for building it through networking, self-presentation, and navigating corporate politics.

⍰ Pros

- **Actionable**, making it highly applicable for career advancement.
- **Better-researched** and more empirically sound than Greene's.
- **Holistic,** including the costs of powerlessness

⍰ Cons

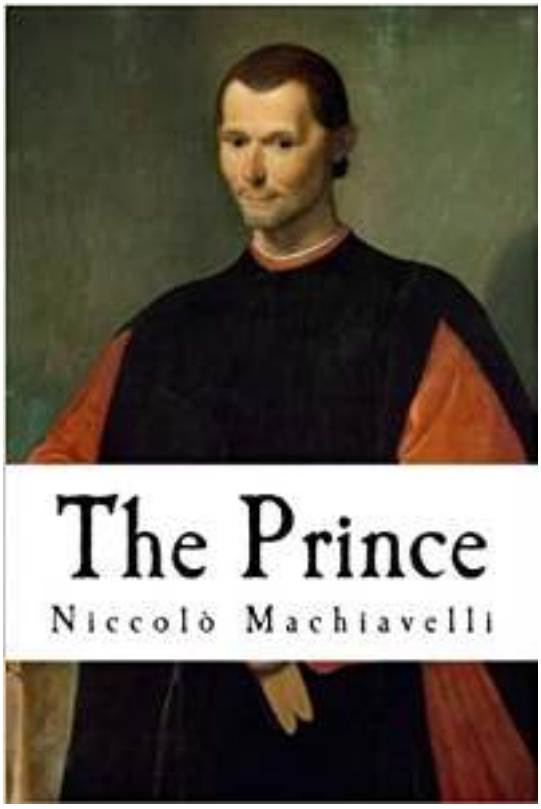
- **Downplays competence** in favor of politics, while we prefer an approach that maximizes *both*

⍰ Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't is one of the best books on power, bar none.

It's not as catchy as *The 48 Laws*, but it's more empirically sound and, even more important, more practical.

3. The Prince



This Renaissance classic is the godfather of realpolitik, advising rulers on acquiring and maintaining power through cunning, pragmatism, and occasional ruthlessness.
It inspired much of Greene's work.

⍰ Pros

- **Timeless insights**, original source of the Machiavellian construct
- **Encourages facing reality head-on**
- **Surprisingly honorable**, promoting strategies that empower good people against bad actors.

⍰ Cons

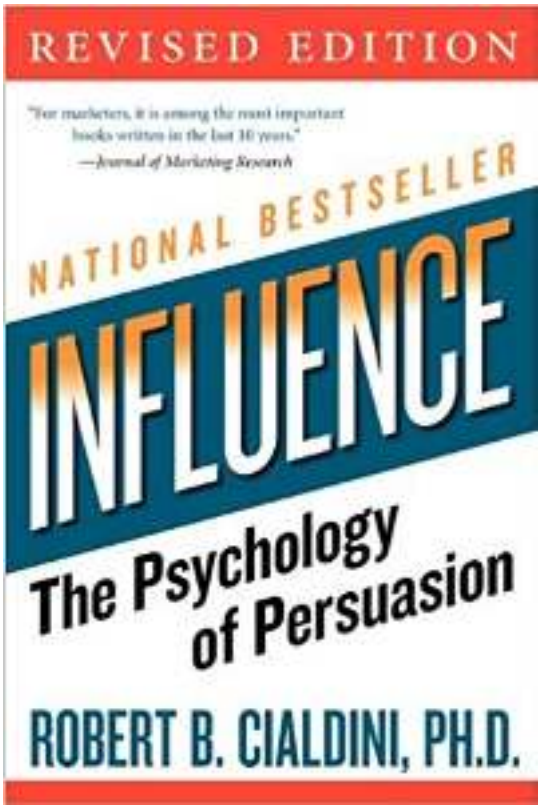
- **Less relevant for modernity**, focusing on princely rule rather than everyday interpersonal dynamics.

⍰ Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

The Prince better blends the darker arts with 'soft power pull approaches', and value-adding goals and aspirations.

For that, it's probably closer to The Power Moves. But younger folks used to high stimulation may find it slower and harder to connect with: it's an old text after all, and not as captivating as The 48 Laws.

4. Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion



A more scientific dive into six principles of persuasion—reciprocity, commitment, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity—backed by research and first-world experience among marketers and salesmen.

Pros

- **Well-researched**, written by an academic who also went 'in the trenches', thus mixing science with experience
- **Practical and well-structured**: with psychological triggers for quicker, smarter decision-making.
- **Influence & self-defense**, covering both angles and help people defend themselves against malignant players

Cons

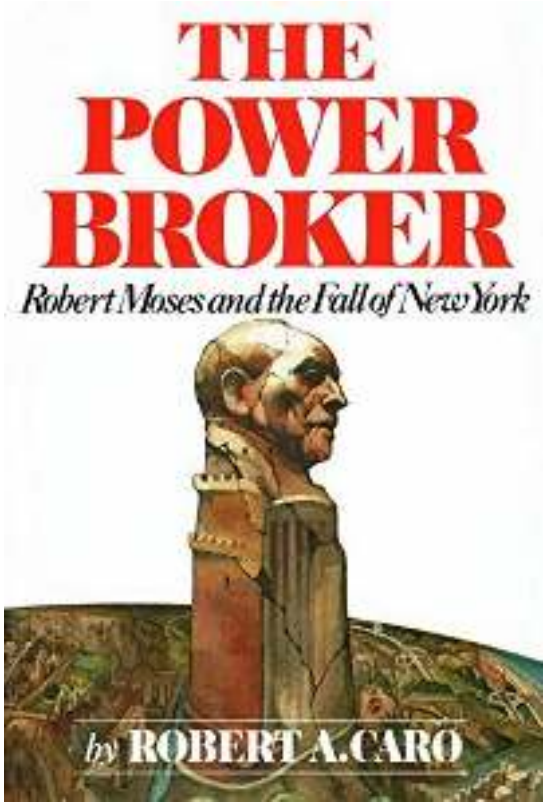
- **Power missing**: principles like authority and influence are rooted in interpersonal power dynamics and status. Presenting them as such would improve understanding
  - Power-protection missing: It wasn't "because" that made the photocopy request persuasive, as claimed—it was the power-protection strategy behind it
- **Social exchange missing** as the systemic dynamic behind principles like reciprocation, obligation, and even scarcity

Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

Influence is a powerhouse for understanding persuasion.
We still prefer handbooks, but *Influence* is closer to *The 48 Laws*, and it's still more scientific, more pragmatic, and **more effective for sales and marketing**—and potentially persuasion in general.

On the other hand, *The 48 Laws* is more 'power aware' and superior for competitive settings and everyday life.

5. The Power Broker



A monumental biography of Robert Moses, detailing how he amassed immense authority to reshape New York through public works, showcasing cunning, legal mastery, and interpersonal dominance.

Pros

- **Thorough**, offering detailed insights along Moses life
- **Showcases key traits missed by 48 Laws**, like competence, dominance, masculinity, and endless energy
- **Alpha male type psychology** of ultra-driven men

Cons

- ***Too* thorough**, it can overwhelm most readers. I doubt many would finish the book version. Consider our summary, built around its core nuggets of wisdom
- **May portray Moses overly negatively**: men like him, after all, build things. Including empires

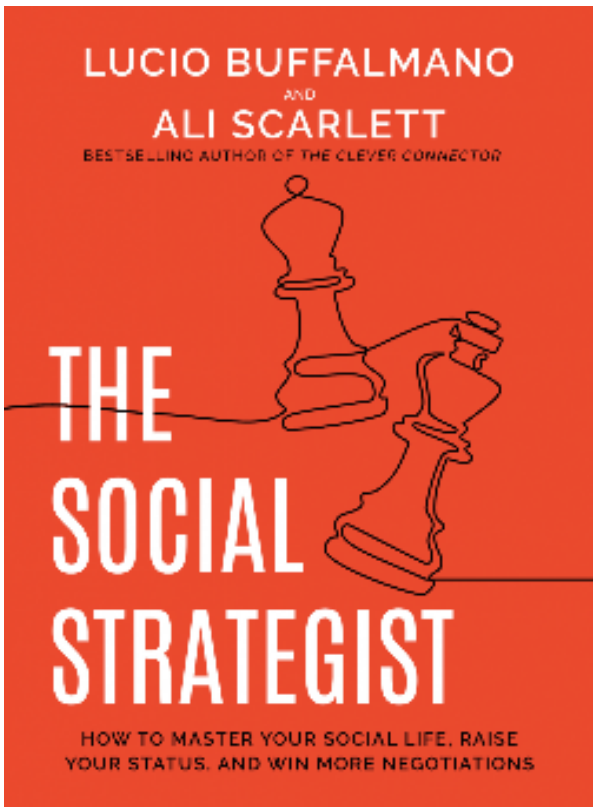
Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

The Power Broker is more 'real life' than *The 48 Laws*, and more modern too—no kings and queens, but real masculine men vying for power and influence.
It also includes several basic 'strategies' missing in *The 48 Laws*: competence, dominance, and an 'alpha male type' of character and leadership.

But while Greene makes his nuggets of wisdom readily available in an easy list, this book requires the reader to infer the strategies by themselves.

In brief, while *The Power Broker* better showcases power dynamics in the modern world, most lovers of *The 48 Laws* won't connect with this book.

6. The Social Strategist



A beginner-friendly introduction to more advanced social skills like positive dominance and frame control. This 6-chapter book ties foundational social success principles with more advanced power dynamics and strategies.

Pros

- **Covers the nuances** and exceptions to standard advice, like when aggression or passiveness trump assertiveness
- **Beginner-friendly guide**, with end-of-chapter summaries and action steps for practical applications
- **Unique advice** compared to standard self-help, like value exchanges and frame control.

Cons

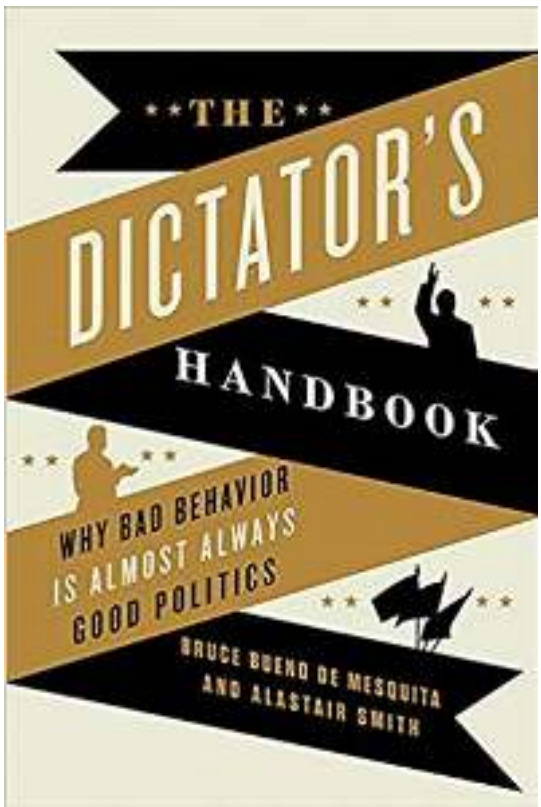
- **Only an introduction**, providing just a taste compared to deeper resources like The Power Moves and Power University.
- **Lighter on darker topics** such as motives and manipulation tactics
- **Exercises & summaries** may bother the reader who doesn't want to be guided and re-told

Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

The Social Strategist is more of an actual social skills guide, which may be more useful to beginners who lack basic calibration and who'd badly misapply *The 48 Laws*.

The 48 Laws though is more focused on the darker side, providing a stronger wake-up call for too-nice guys.

7. The Dictator's Handbook



A more empirically sound realpolitik guide for dictators and a lucid analysis of political power dynamics. This 2011 book reveals how leaders' self-interest drives policies, explaining why dictatorships enrich cronies while democracies foster prosperity.

Pros

- **Revolutionary approach** explaining political outcomes through leaders' needs and selfish interests
- **Eye-opening** on socio-political dynamics
- **Practical**… in case one wanted to become a dictator (don't!)

Cons

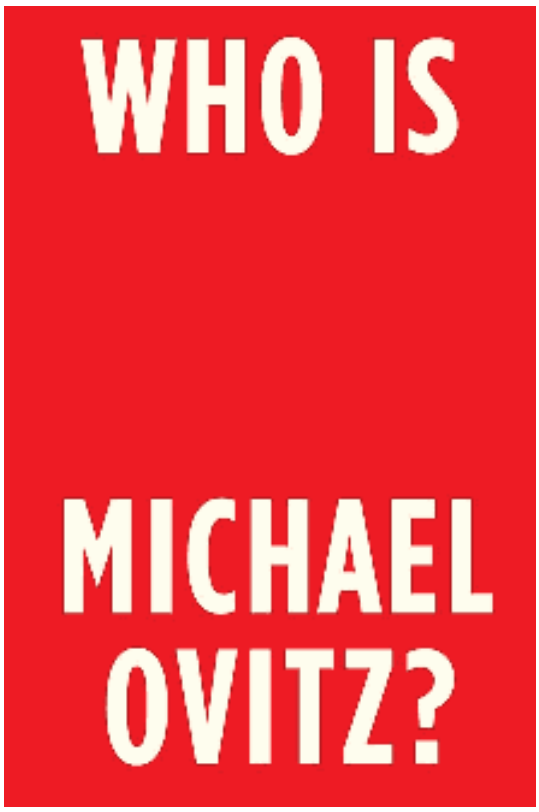
- **Overly cynical view of politics** as pure self-interest, ignoring pro-social human tendencies (even in rare enlightened dictators, sometimes).
- **Biased toward democracy**, potentially overlooking possible benefits of top-down command (eg.: prevent tragedies of commons).
  - May understate how even democracies can act like masked autocracies favoring the elite.
- **Data can be tough to ascertain**, for example, on concepts like the "resource curse" and indexes measuring policy effectiveness.

Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

The Dictator's Handbook is more of a real-world text for adults: less entertaining, but deeper.

The 48 Laws of Power though is more focused on *interpersonal* dynamics, so it's superior for men looking for an edge in everyday life and not interested in politics.

8. Who Is Michael Ovitz?



Michael Ovitz's 2018 autobiography chronicles his rise as a Hollywood super-agent, co-founding the powerhouse Creative Artists Agency (CAA), while unveiling the raw power plays, influence tactics, and shrewd maneuvering that defined his career in the entertainment industry's cutthroat elite.

⍰ Pros

- **Raw, insider's view** of high-stakes business dynamics
- **Rich with actionable insights** on reading people, building alliances, and managing perceptions
- **Serves as a cautionary yet empowering tale**

⍰ Cons

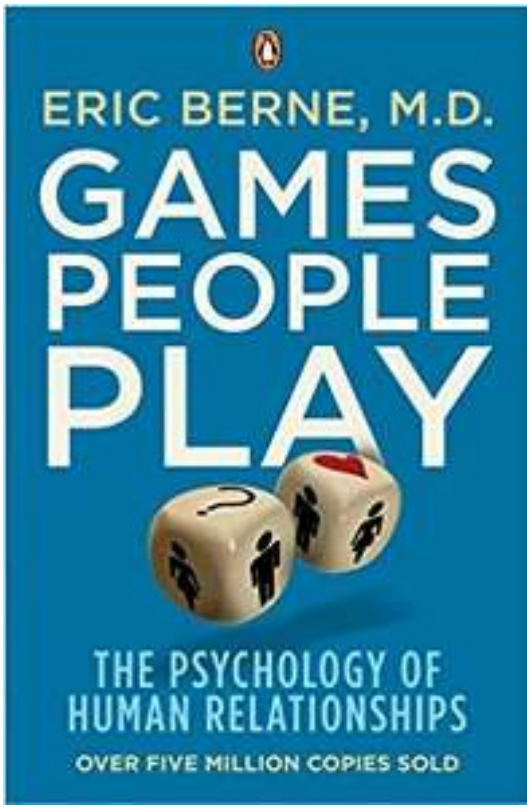
- **Omits some personal details** on key events, like a pivotal intervention, leaving readers craving more substance on critical turning points
- **Misses the costs of long-term over-Machiavellianism** as the author doesn't explicitly connect his fallouts, poor relationships, and his overly calculative approach

⍰ Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

Who Is Michael Ovitz? offers an important edge over The 48 Laws because the author speaks from firsthand experience in contemporary settings.

I find this book to be **the perfect pairing with *The 48 Laws*** because it shows both how useful *and* harmful a Machiavellian approach to life can be.
Ovitz proves our TPM approach of combining Machiavellianism with an honorable approach is the best mix to get the best of both worlds.

9. Games People Play



Berne analyzes some common dysfunctional patterns of interpersonal and toxic relationships. This 1964 psychoanalytical work uncovers the motives and dynamics of everyday interactions.

Pros

- **Pioneering** analytical look at everyday social games, bringing professional tools to common interactions.
- **Useful** descriptions of relationship patterns can also help readers fix them

Cons

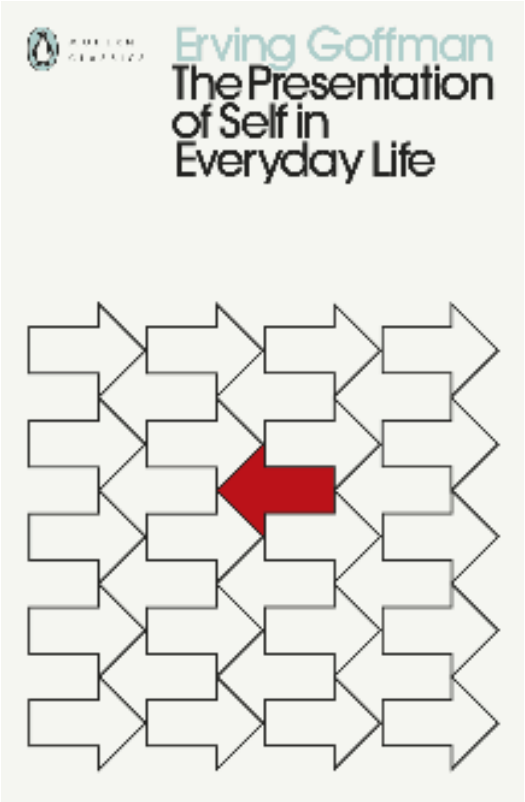
- **Overly Freudian explanations** tying everything to childhood and parents, limiting broader applicability.
- **Excessively dark view** of life as a web of traps

Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

Games People Play is superior to spotting toxic interpersonal dynamics when you seek brighter goals like self-development or better relationships.

But *The 48 Laws* is otherwise superior for competitive settings, strategy, and self-advancement tactics.

10. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life



Erving Goffman's seminal work draws parallels between theater and human interactions. Although he never refers to manipulation or reputation, he explores how individuals and teams perform roles to manage impressions and create desired perceptions.

⍰ Pros

- **Brilliant social dynamics analysis**, particularly in managing impressions
- **High social awareness** with some insights confirmed by later research (e.g., "civil inattention")
- **Rich with practical examples** from everyday life

⍰ Cons

- **Less practical** since his work is more sociological-descriptive

⍰ Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

It's odd how *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* can be so different from *The 48 Laws* while still touching on similar topics.

The main difference is that Greene discusses impression management as the pursuit of power, while Goffman mentions social expectation, roles, and team goals.
Both are right, and Goffman can be helpful to help overcome over-cynicism.

I'm partial to Goffman as this was my favorite book during university and, in hindsight, a harbinger of TPM. But *The 48 Laws* takes the crown when it comes to usefulness and practicality.

Bonus: From Laws & Books to a Complete Power System

Not a book, but a structured training program for those who want to move beyond more theoretical approaches.

Books similar to The 48 Laws of Power all suffer from the ”Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™’.
The tradeoff suggests that to become popular and appeal to the masses, they must necessarily simplify, generalize, or entertain at the expense of depth, nuance, and calibration. That means that **books like*The 48 Laws of Power* tend to be less effective for men who want top-1% results.**

Power University is different in that regard. It’s an advanced social skills and power-dynamics curriculum grounded in **empirical research** and refined through real-world application, with outcomes validated by post-program surveys of its alumni, including measured gains in respect, confidence, status, and attraction.

⍰ Pros

- **Delivers outcomes** supported by post-program alumni surveys, including gains in respect, confidence, status, attraction, and leadership
- **Practical** frameworks designed for real situations in dating, career, and social life
- **Research-based** principles translated into repeatable, real-world skill development

⍰ Cons

- **Effort-intensive**; not for those unwilling to apply themselves
- **Focused on men**‘s development from upgrade 9.0

⍰ Compared to The 48 Laws: Our Review

Go for Power University if you want skills, real-life results, and if you’re serious about success.
Stick to *The 48 Laws* and the entries above if you prefer knowledge, books, and a good narrative together with your learning.

Read more:

- **48 Laws vs. Power University**

> 48 Laws VS Power University: What’s Best to Advance In Life?

Somewhat Similar...

- ***The Art of War***, often listed as ‘similar to the 48 Laws’, but the age shows
- ***Meditations***: The OG of ‘enlightened power’, combining power with life philosophy

- ***Propaganda***: impression management from a state and PR perspective. Like Greene: good intuition, but no empirical evidence
- **Top books on power dynamics**, for a full reading list on power

Other Robert Greene Books

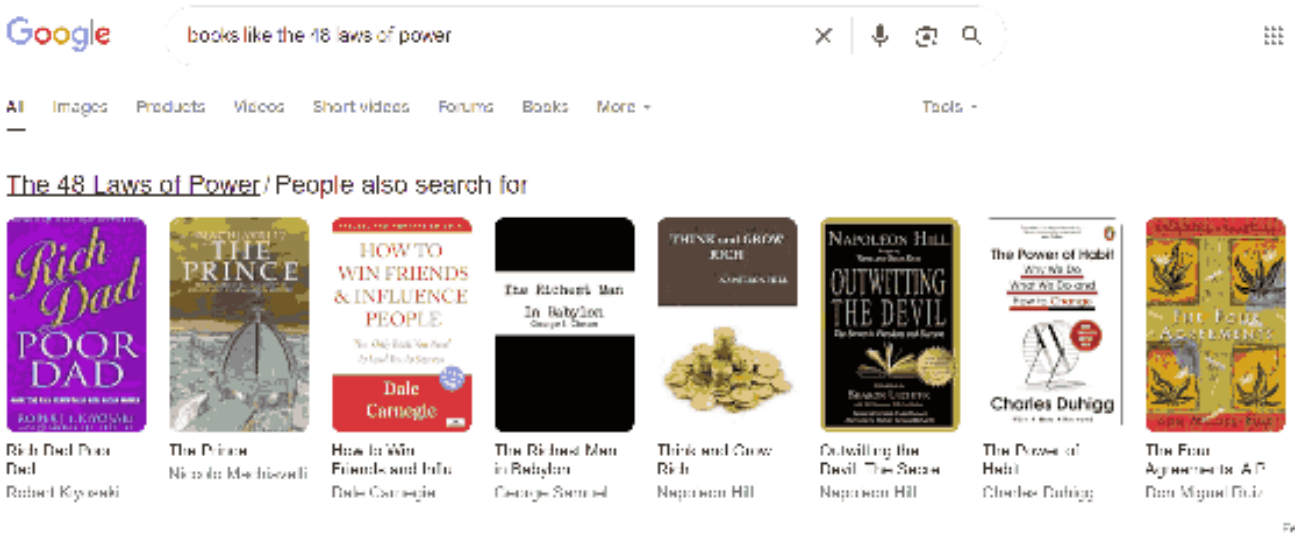
Similar to *The 48 Laws* and not included in the main list because readers likely know them:

- ***The 33 Strategies of War*** focuses on military campaigns, but plenty of takeaways for everyday life and interpersonal competitions
- ***The Art of Seduction***: Dark psychology in its most seductive form. But don't take it as a dating manual, and work instead on mate value, male leadership, and male dominance
- ***The Laws of Human Nature***: Possibly the best from Robert Greene, blending his usual focus on humans' dark side with self-development content
- ***The 50th Law*** for a sprinkling of 'street smarts' with 50 Cent's biography

For an overview of Robert Greene books, including pros and cons and in which order to read them, see:

https://thepowermoves.com/robert-greene-books

⍰ Avoid These: *Not* Like 48 Laws of Power



Many Internet lists are recycling the same titles (⍰⍰♂ Lucio's opinion: they're asinine).
Here are some popular 'like the 48 laws of power' entries that, in my opinion, are NOT similar to *The 48 Laws*:

- ***Principles***: ⍰⍰♂a book about *denying* will to power, and allegedly based on a lie. Read our version: 'Machiavellian principles: life and work'
- ***Atomic Habits***: ⍰⍰♂*nothing* about power dynamics or interpersonal strategies
- ***Think and Grow Rich***: ⍰⍰♂the only overlap is the author's amoral effectiveness to turn woo-woo and made-up stories into a best-seller
- ***How to Win Friends and Influence People***: ⍰⍰♂basic social skills focused on likability and power-protecting. Not ideal for good guys
- ***Thinking, Fast and Slow***: ⍰⍰♂what's even the connection there? Maybe 'both books are books'?

Learn More

- **Why The 48 Laws is all wrong**, important read to understand when the laws backfire
- **The 48 Laws for modern men**
- **Is Robert Greene legit?** A personality and authority breakdown

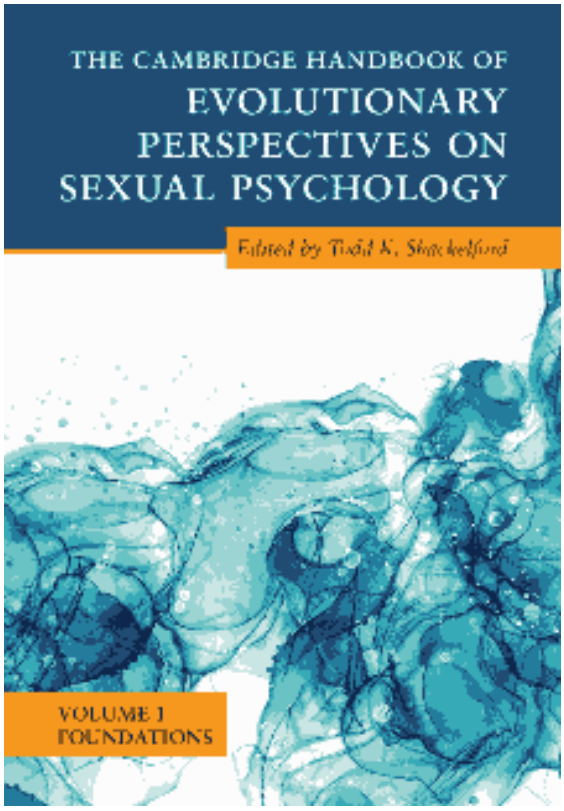
And if you’re serious about gaining power:

Turn Theoretical Laws Into Real-World Results

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 September 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology (2022) is Volume 1 in a three-part series. It lays the theoretical foundations for understanding human sexual behavior from an evolutionary perspective, while Volumes 2 and 3 focus on male and female adaptations, respectively.



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  - Chapter 2: Sexual Selection
  - Chapter 3: Inclusive Fitness Theory
  - Chapter 4: Adaptive Problems in the Domain of Human Sexuality
  - Chapter 5: Adaptations, By-products, and Spandrels
  - Chapter 6: Evolved Psychological Mechanisms: Properties and Evidence, Misconceptions and Mismatches
  - Chapter 7: Parental Investment Theory
  - Chapter 8: Parent–Offspring Conflict
  - Chapter 9: Theory and Evidence for Reciprocal Altruism
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  - Sociosexual Orientation: One Can Be High In Both Casual Sex and Relationship Motivations
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FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
This volume is edited by Todd K. Shackelford, a leading evolutionary psychologist and prolific researcher in human sexual behavior and conflict.
He also edited the excellent *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships*.
Each chapter is authored by a subject-matter expert, ensuring the content reflects the latest research and specialist insight in each area.

Chapter 1: Natural Selection

In this opening chapter, Sedlacek walks us through the logic of natural selection as the bedrock of evolutionary thinking. She first dismantles the myth of "nature as a conscious selector," showing instead that selection is an inevitable consequence of three simple preconditions:

- **Variation** in traits among individuals;
- **Heritability**/inheritance of those traits;
- **Differential reproductive success** tied to those traits.

> As long as there is variation, inheritance, and nonrandom differential reproduction, it is a logical consequence that some entities will become more numerous than others over the course of generations

From there, she explains how adaptive features—whether wings, eyes, or mating psychology—inevitably accrue over countless generations, bit by bit, through the blind but inexorable filter of what best propagates its own genetic "instructions." Along the way, she addresses common stumbling blocks—teleology (the impulse to see purpose in every trait), genetic determinism (the false dichotomy of "nature versus nurture"), and the idea of "optimal design"—by showing that adaptations are always local solutions, tailored by past environments and constrained by historical legacies.

Also worth noting:

- **Genes aren't selected directly**; they code for traits (phenotypes) shaped by environments. Sexual desire, for instance, evolved for reproductive edge, not as a standalone "lust gene."

The Myth of 'Survival of The Strongest'

The author also tackles common misunderstandings related to the 'survival of the fittest' argument, claiming that 'fit' only refers to fit to the environment, not necessarily in 'healthy' or 'strong'.

And survival only matters as long as it increases reproduction:

> (…) another misleading implication of the "survival of the fittest" mantra: the idea that survival is of paramount importance.
> The truth is that **survival serves reproduction**. An organism's survival ultimately means nothing to natural selection without reproductive success.
> (…) natural selection only "cares" about survival insofar as it benefits reproductive success

Chapter 2: Sexual Selection

Atari brings Darwin's second great insight—sexual selection—into sharp focus. Unlike natural selection, which prizes survival, sexual selection prizes reproductive success, often at the expense of survival. Two main engines drive it:

- **Intrasexual competition** (most often male–male combat using weapons like antlers or tusks);
- **Intersexual choice** (most often female mate choice for ornaments like peacock tails).
  He traces the history of the concept—from Darwin's bold proposal, through Victorian skepticism (Wallace's rebuke of "fanciful female aesthetics"), to its integration into the modern synthesis—and shows how both competition and choice sculpt the dizzying variety of mating strategies, from cricket chirps to courtship dances.

Signaling Value: Hamilton Paraside vs. Zahavi's Handicap Principle

> The Hamilton–Zuk hypothesis differs from Zahavi's handicap hypothesis in that, although both rely on males offering real signals of quality, the ornament is seen as a trait to directly display health rather than as a handicap.
> According to this theory, the more strongly parasites have played a role in a species' ancestry, the greater the pressure to signal lack of parasites.
> The Hamilton–Zuk hypothesis raises a fundamental question about the signals that animals display. For this hypothesis to hold, it is necessary for males to be "honest" signalers. Put differently, for females to benefit from the signals that male ornaments provide, it is crucial that these ornaments correlate with parasite resistance (rather than only appearing to be related).

Atari states that the Hamilton–Zuk hypothesis has been received favorably, but more empirical evidence is needed.

Both the parasite and handicap theories relate to signaling mate value, but another theory of ornamentation is not related to value at all:

> One important question is whether males' ornamentation evolved simply to make them attractive to females or whether they serve as honest signals of quality.
> The former argument can be traced to Fisher

In brief, these theories are not mutually exclusive, and they can all have contributed and be true at the same time. For a deeper overview, you can also check our review of *Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction* (chapter 3).

Measuring Male Intrasexual Competition Propensity: A Psychological Predisposition

The Intrasexual Competition Scale (ICS) measures how much people see same-sex interactions as competitive, especially in the context of mating.

It focuses mainly on rival derogation: envy, jealousy, and putting down same-sex rivals.
It found no average sex differences, but **high scores are more likely to compare with same-sex peers, feel**

competitive, and act on it.

Men with high ICS scores:

- **More likely to use steroid**s (especially with less training experience).
- **More motivated by appearance enhancement** (e.g., cosmetic surgery).

The ICS lacks balance and the Intrasexual Rivalry Scale (IRS) improves on this using two tactics (self-promotion + rival derogation) and adding four mating domains from the KASER model (Kindness/dependability, Attractiveness/sexuality, Status/resources, Education/intelligence).

Findings from both scales:

- **No sex differences** in total scores.
- **Scores decline with age**—younger people are more competitive.
- **Higher scores in men with low SES background** and women with high SES background.
- **Father absence linked to higher female competitiveness** and more short-term mating behaviors (flirting, makeup use, etc.).

Men who score higher:

- More status-driven and rival-sensitive.
- More likely to enhance their appeal or undercut other men.
- More active in competitive or mate-seeking environments.

Low scorers are less rival-focused, more indifferent, or long-term oriented.

Lucio's note: enlightening and important psychological measure
It's the first time I stumbled upon this scale, and it matches my observation. The fact that high scorers also use more steroids suggests that high scorers focus on muscle because they're focusing on sexual competition (something I consider ineffective and in some cases point to low intrinsic self-esteem).
I consider it an important psychological measure to understand people, behavior, and mating strategies

Human Sperm Competition

- Sperm competition likely arose in response to **female infidelity**, considered the most plausible ancestral context (Smith, 1984).
- Data show **some level of concurrent partnerships among women**, especially in younger age groups—for example, 15% of British women aged 16–24 reported overlapping sexual partners in the past year (Johnson et al., 2001); similar findings were reported in the U.S. (Laumann et al., 1994), China (Yan et al., 2009), and Iran (Honarvar et al., 2016). **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: Surprised about China and Iran, but I still suspect modern dating is much different from ancestral dating
- While not all concurrent relationships involve double-mating, **some likely do**.

Evidence for male physiological adaptation:

- **Men adjust sperm quantity** based on perceived sperm competition risk. Fewer sperm are found after recent contact with a partner, and more sperm after a longer absence (Baker & Bellis, 1989).
- Men produce **a higher percentage of motile sperm** when exposed to images implying high sperm competition (e.g., 2 men + 1 woman), compared to control images (Kilgallon & Simmons, 2005).

Psychological and behavioral adaptations:

- Men show **increased sexual motivation** after being physically separated from their partner—possibly to

counter sperm competition risk (Shackelford et al., 2002).

- **Mate guarding and copulation frequency** increase when female partners are more attractive (Pham et al., 2014) or spend more time around other men (Pham & Shackelford, 2013).
- **Men with lower quality sperm mateguard more (tradeoff hypothesis)** (Leivers, Rhodes, and Simmons 2014): *men who performed fewer mate retention behaviors produced higher-quality ejaculates, having a greater concentration of sperm, a higher percentage of motile sperm, and sperm that swam less erratically. Men's expenditure on mate retention and on the ejaculate may represent alternative routes to paternity assurance in humans* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: interesting, but was based on a small sample of 45 and evidence is mixed, see below
  - Evidence is mixed: *In conceptual replication attempts of the study by Foo et al. (2018) and Leivers et al. (2014), it was revealed that there was no relationship between ejaculate quality and (1) physical strength (DeLecce, Shackelford, Fink, & Abed, 2020) or (2) mate-retention behaviors (DeLecce, Shackelford, Zeigler-Hill, Fink, & Abed, in press)*

However, findings are not all consistent:

- A study found **no improvement in ejaculate quality** when men imagined partner infidelity compared to a control condition (Pham et al., 2018).
- Many **nonhuman sperm competition studies** involve designs that are not replicable in humans (e.g., tracking fertilization success across multiple males) (Price, Dyer, & Coyne, 1999).

In evolutionary terms:

- **Humans are mid-level competition**, likely falling between gorillas (low sperm competition; single-male harems) and bonobos (high sperm competition; group mating) (Zuk & Simmons, 2018).
- While not under extreme pressure, **humans are not free from selection related to sperm competition**. Both behavioral and physiological evidence suggests **moderate evolutionary relevance**.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** I tend to agree with this overview:

> While there are other contexts in which sperm competition might have occurred, Smith (1984) argued that, compared with female infidelity, these contexts may not have occurred frequently enough in our evolutionary history to cause selection pressures for adaptations to sperm competition

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** I'd also argue that biology here limits the physiological response. If sperm takes months to produce, how responsive can it really be to short term stimuli right before release?

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Why I have doubts regarding sperm competition**

Lucio:
Sperm competition is a fascinating topic. After reviewing Baker's flawed book on the subject, newer studies and authors convinced me to reconsider and give more weight to its potential impact in humans.

Still, several important questions remain—questions that, for now, limit how much I believe sperm competition truly shaped human evolution:

- **Pair bonding is a powerful evolutionary tool** that reduces the need for sperm competition in the first place.
- **Universal expectations for loyalty** add emotional and social controls that restrict women's freedom to "sperm shop"—especially in our evolutionary past. A woman would have to hide not just from her partner, but also from his kin, allies, and possibly the tribe as a whole.
- **Female mate choice sidesteps sperm competition altogether.** A woman in love wants the man she's bonded with to father her children. And a woman confident in her judgment prefers her chosen man to be the father. Some women do pursue sex for its own sake, but the more restrained and conscious choosers still limit the scope for post-mating competition.
- **Biology 1 – Timing:** It can take less than an hour for sperm to reach the egg. Even if we allow for a few hours or a day, that short window places a major constraint on the opportunity for sperm to compete.
- **Biology 2 – Egg bottlenecks:** In fertile windows, the egg is a bigger bottleneck than sperm. Most healthy men have more than enough viable sperm to fertilize an egg. If the egg is the bottleneck, the system simply doesn't lend itself to discrimate against sperm

Unless these points are more fully addressed, I remain cautious about assigning sperm competition a major role in human evolution. Plus, modern sperm competition may happen far more in sperm banks than 'in nature'.

Women Have Less to Gain From Multiple Partners

And it comes down to being the 'larger investing sex':

> This larger minimum investment decreases the reproductive value of multi-partner mating.
> Hence, compared with the opposite sex, the less heavily investing sex benefits more from seeking numerous

> sexual partners, whereas the more heavily investing sex benefits more from enhancing its capacity to support offspring.

In simpler words, for humans it means that if a woman has already found a guy whom she believes to be of high mate value, it doesn't make sense to add 3 more random sexual partners, especially after she may already be pregnant or already caring for an infant.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:
If we dig deeper, she may still gain somewhat with sperm selection, or by keeping backup options. But the general point is valid, and sperm selection is contentious, of smaller added value, and this strategy also entails much higher risks.

Chapter 3: Inclusive Fitness Theory

Fitzgerald and Lorentz introduce us to Hamilton's revolutionary insight: organisms may propagate their genes not only through direct reproduction, but also by helping kin who share those genes.

They unpack the math of **Hamilton's rule** (rB > C), illustrating how altruistic behaviors—warning calls, cooperative breeding, even self-sacrifice—can evolve when the genetic payoff in relatives outweighs the cost to oneself.

Common Confusions

Inclusive fitness theory is often misinterpreted in 3 key ways, leading to confusion about how natural selection works on genes related to social behavior:

1. **Misinterpreting "r" as "percentage of total genes shared"** between two individuals.
   In reality, *r* is the probability that the recipient of an altruistic act carries the same gene that caused the altruist's behavior (Hamilton, 1964).
2. **Conflacting Inclusive Fitness with Kin Selection and altruism**
   Many assume inclusive fitness only covers kin-based altruism. But inclusive fitness includes mechanisms like jealousy or parent–offspring conflict that aren't purely cooperative (Park, 2007; Dawkins, 1979; Buss, 2015).
3. **Misusing Hamilton's Rule to predict behavior**
   People often wrongly apply Hamilton's rule ($c < br$) to predict individual behavior. But the rule describes when a *gene* will be selected by evolution—not whether someone will act altruistically. It's a gene-level equation, not a psychological theory (Hamilton, 1964; Buss, 2015; Park, 2007; Dawkins, 1979).

Interesting notes:

- **People are more likely to rescue their romantic partner when they have a biological offspring together** *than when they only have adopted children or no children together – even when statistically controlling for emotional closeness between the altruist and recipient (Fitzgerald et al., 2010) – indicating that the probability of genetic inheritance may influence altruistic decision making among kin*
- **Mothers become more tolerant of investing resources in offspring as they age** (Beaulieu & Bugental, 2008), suggesting that parents may wish to hoard resources for future reproductive opportunities (Schlomer, Del Giudice, & Ellis, 2011)
  - Older mothers also provide more physical and verbal affection to their young children than younger mothers do (Bornstein & Putnick, 2007).
- **Male sexual jealousy decreases when the other man is a sibling**, but it was the opposite for women

Chapter 4: Adaptive Problems in the Domain of Human Sexuality

Asao maps out the landscape of the "adaptive problems" our ancestors faced in mating—and hence the selection pressures that shaped our sexual psychology.

- **The most costly reproduction, the choosier mate selection**: The more costly producing an offspring is – in terms of time, metabolic expenditure, and other resources – the more selective an animal should be when choosing a mate
- **Parental investment is a trade-off with mating effort**: offspring survival versus mating effort
- **Disease risk vs multiple partners**, balancing the rewards of variety against pathogen exposure.

Chapter 5: Adaptations, By-products, and Spandrels

Flegr tours the taxonomy of traits in evolutionary biology:

- **Adaptations**, which exist because they solved specific problems;
  - **Exaptations**, traits that evolved for one function but were later co-opted for another. Technically, all adaptations are exaptations because evolution doesn't start from scratch
  - **Postadaptations**: traits that were once adaptive in past conditions but have lost their original fitness benefit due to environmental or lifestyle changes; they may remain as vestiges or have reduced function today.
- **By-products**, neutral leftovers that hitchhiked on adaptive traits;
- **Spandrels**, incidental architectural features with no direct function.
- **Rudiments and atavisms**, traits inherited from ancestors—rudiments appear in all individuals but may no longer function (e.g., human appendix), while atavisms occur rarely due to special allele combinations (e.g., human tails); these may have been adaptive in ancestors but often lack function now (Flegr, 2025).

And something I particularly agree with:

"Just-so-story" pitfall: assuming every trait is an adaptation—and offers a rigorous checklist (complexity, efficiency, heritable variation, costs) to distinguish genuine adaptations from evolutionary side effects.

The Savanna Principle May Be Wrong

The savanna principle suggests humans evolved mainly in African savannas, shaping our mind and body.

But this idea might be wrong for two main reasons:

1. **Savannas may just preserve fossils better** than tropical forests, so fossils mostly come from savannas even if humans lived elsewhere more.
2. **Species adapt quickly only right after they form** (as per genetic theory), then become "frozen" and change little despite environmental shifts. Since our closest relatives live in tropical forests, it's likely humans originated there and adapted mostly to forests, not savannas.

If so, many traits we think fit savanna life are actually exaptations (traits evolved for other reasons) or postadaptations (traits that no longer fit our current environments) (Heerwagen & Orians, 1993; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990; Roberts et al., 2016).

Group Selection: From Reviled, to Back In Vogue

Group selection then fell out of favor after Maynard Smith and Williams showed that individual selection is usually stronger.
But in the 1980s new models showed group selection can matter, especially in species with frequent group extinctions and reformations (Alexander & Borgia, 1978; Shanahan, 1997).

Some traits may have evolved mainly through group rather than individual selection (D. S. Wilson & Sober, 1994).

Some traits and connected social dynamics that may have evolved this way:

- **Altruism within groups**: Helping behaviors that benefit others at a personal cost.
- **Group cooperation and coordination**: Behaviors that improve group success but may reduce individual gain.
- **Punishment of defectors or cheaters**: Sacrificing to maintain group norms.
- **In-group loyalty** and **out-group hostility**: Traits that benefit the group in intergroup competition.

Example: A jackdaw gives a warning call to alert others of a predator. This helps the group but puts the caller at risk.

Stability-Based Sorting (SBS) vs Natural Selection

Stability-Based Sorting (SBS) is an evolutionary process where only the most stable things stick around—whether or not they reproduce.

Contrary to natural selection, which only works on traits passed to offspring, SBS doesn't need inheritance or reproduction.
If something is stable and long-lasting, it stays; if it's unstable, it disappears.

The author claims that SBS can produce 'safety catches' that may not increase individual fitness, but that protect the species in the long term-for example, decreasing reproduction when resources become scarce.

All surviving species in the long run would carry these SBS, say the author.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: still can't see how this would work**
It's a novel and bright idea I had never thought of or read about. It sounds plausible and deep, potentially holding the keys to long-term survival (including for humans).
I'm still wrapping my head around it, and I'm not sure how it could work in practice. It seems a case of 'good for the group' vs 'good for the selfish individual'.
In the author's example, when resources become scarce, selfish players wouldn't be eliminated if they aren't already carrying SBS and they would out-reproduce the SBS-carrying individuals and quickly take over (and lead the species extinct).
I suppose the SBS may evolve 'randomly' and lie dormant. But here's the step I don't get: how would it spread across every single individual?

Chapter 6: Evolved Psychological Mechanisms: Properties and Evidence, Misconceptions and Mismatches

Pearson and von Hippel lay out what makes a psychological adaptation:

1. **Domain-specificity**—specialized "if-then" decision rules for ancestral challenges;
2. **Computational complexity**—processing inputs (cues) into outputs (behaviors) with clear design features;
3. **Cross-cultural robustness**—present across societies unless modern environments mask them;
4. **Developmental sequencing**—emerging at ages when they became functional ancestrally.

They tackle misconceptions—like confusing general intelligence with evolved modules—and explore how **mismatches** between ancestral and modern environments (e.g., contraceptives, social media) can hijack once-adaptive mechanisms, leading to disordered outcomes.

Interesting notes:

- **Error Management Theory** (EMT; Haselton & Buss, 2000): we may have evolved to favor the least costly

error via a collection of biases in our perception and cognition

- **Humans cooperate more than any other species**: Although cooperation is widespread in nature, human cooperation exceeds that of all other species in the scale and range of cooperative activities (Melis & Semmann, 2010)
- **We believe there's more competition than there truly is**: Internet and social media can lead us to believe we have more competitors than we do in reality, causing our jealousy mechanisms to misfire beyond adaptive utility
  <— Lucio's note: the same is true for mating options though, and we may believe we have more options than we truly have

Chapter 7: Parental Investment Theory

Pazhoohi deconstructs Trivers' landmark insight: because eggs cost more than sperm, females typically invest more per offspring, leading to sex-differentiated mating strategies.

Key predictions in humans include:

- **Women's greater choosiness** as part of the high-investment sex (usually females);
  - **Mate-value assessment** weighting cues to genetic and investment potential (e.g., resources, fidelity).
- **Men's greater competition** as part of the low-investment sex (usually males);

He reviews empirical tests—from human speed-dating studies to courtship in fish—showing broad cross-species support.

Chapter 8: Parent–Offspring Conflict

Salmon and Hehman explore how mothers and their offspring can have divergent genetic interests: each child benefits from more resources than the mother can afford to give to all her young.

They detail the **"weaning conflict"**, sibling rivalry, and even genomic imprinting—where maternal and paternal gene copies are differentially expressed to tilt resource allocation. They also examine human evidence: breast-feeding duration, sleep arrangements, and parent-child bargaining over food and attention.

- **Genetic imprinting**: Paternally inherited genes influence infant behavior in ways that increase demands on the mother, and maternally inherited genes influence infant behavior in ways that reduce demands on the mother
- **Weaning conflict**: Offspring want to nurse longer than is optimal for the mother's future reproduction, leading to resistance and conflict during weaning.
- **Sibling rivalry**: Siblings compete for parental attention and resources, often using crying, aggression, or manipulative behavior.
- **Different mate choice criteria for parents/children**: parents prefer attractiveness for their partners, but resource holdings and family background for their offspring. Whereas offspring often focus more on attractiveness and sense of humor (Apostolou, 2008a, 2008b, 2011a; Buunk, Park, & Dubbs, 2008; Perilloux, Fleischman, & Buss, 2011).
  Parents may prefer more resources to keep more for themselves and their other offspring, and benefit from stronger networks
- **Different mate strategies preferences**, with parents accepting short-term strategies more for themselves than for their children, and especially daughters (Apostolou, 2009)

Chapter 9: Theory and Evidence for Reciprocal Altruism

Takano and Ichinose revisit Trivers' proposal that nonkin can evolve cooperation through repeated interactions and the shadow of the future.

They explain the math of iterated games (Tit-for-Tat, Grim Trigger) and how reputational information, punishment, and social networks stabilize reciprocity.

The 5 Drivers of Cooperation

Five theoretical mechanisms for the evolution of cooperation have been proposed (Nowak, 2006):

1. kin selection
2. direct reciprocity
3. multilevel selection
4. indirect reciprocity
5. network (spatial) reciprocity

Theoretical and experimental studies have provided evidence for these mechanisms (Rand & Nowak, 2013).

In another review, we prepared this overview, adding a few other sub-drivers that have also been proposed:

Theory	Impact	Explanation
Kin selection (inclusive fitness)	Very high	Altruism toward genetic relatives evolves when helping kin (rB > C) still propagates shared genes.
Direct reciprocity	Very high	In repeated interactions, helping others pays off because they'll return the favor later.
Misdirected kin selection	Speculatively high	Cooperative behavior triggered by evolved kin-detection mechanisms (e.g., familiarity, similarity, proximity, emotional closeness), evolved in small kin-based tribes but triggers even without genetic relatedness
Indirect reciprocity (reputation)	High	Acts of helping build a good reputation, which attracts aid from third parties.
Network (spatial) reciprocity	High	Emergent property. Cooperators cluster together in networks or colonies and collectively outcompete isolated defectors.
Multi-level selection (group)	Moderate	Groups of cooperators outperform groups of defectors, so cooperative traits spread with the winning groups/coalitions.
Enforcement (punishment)	Moderate	Emergent cultural byproduct. Punishing or excluding defectors imposes costs on cheats, stabilizing cooperative behavior.
Parochial/Ingroup altruism	Moderate/low	Preferential help for in-group members, often paired with hostility toward outsiders.
Green-beard effects	Low	Rare "tagged" genes recognize and favor copies of themselves, leading to targeted cooperation.
Partner choice	Low	Cooperative partners are favored over selfish ones. 'Cooperative' signaling is a consequence. Its strong effect on long-term dating is offset by short-term mating and forced copulation

Two Strategies to Assess Others

Two main strategies for assessing reputation are:

- **Image scoring**: people assign reputation based on visible cooperative or defective actions. It's cognitively simple and common in experimental settings (Milinski et al., 2001).
- **Standing strategy**: considers context—e.g., defecting against a defector doesn't lower one's reputation. It's more nuanced but requires more memory, so less often used in practice (Milinski et al., 2001).

Chapter 10: Life History Theory and Mating Strategies

Figueredo and Peñaherrera-Aguirre introduce life history theory: organisms face trade-offs among growth, reproduction, and maintenance.
They apply the fast–slow continuum to human mating:

- **Fast strategies** (early reproduction, short-term mating, high offspring number) often emerge in harsh, unpredictable environments;
- **Slow strategies** (delayed reproduction, long-term bonds, high parental investment) thrive under stable, resource-rich conditions.

They highlight links to risk-taking, impulsivity, attachment styles, and illustrate cross-cultural and individual-difference evidence.
However, there is a limit to Life History (LH) influence. It strongly influences, but doesn't fully determine, specific mating strategies like promiscuity or precocity, so treating them as interchangeable is a mistake.

The Dark Core of Dark Triads

> In a more detailed examination of the lower-order facets of the dark triad, it was found that there were two more specific components that could be analytically extracted, jointly labeled the dark core, that accounted for much of the substantive content of the latent higher-order common factor underlying the dark triad, and that these were reducible to the traits manipulation and callousness.

Chapter 11: Sperm Competition Theory

DeLecce examines post-copulatory sexual selection from the sperm and fertilization point of view.
She reviews male and female adaptations and current theories and evidence.

Humans show mild sperm competition adaptations—testis size, ejaculate volume—suggesting ancestral tendencies toward polygynandry.

Potential supporting evidence for sperm competition:

- **Double mating increases with 'experience':** For women reporting fewer than fifty lifetime copulations, 17.5 percent reported having double mated at least once. This percentage increases steeply with sexual experience: 71.8 percent of women reporting more than 1,000 lifetime copulations reported double-mating at least once Baker and Bellis (1995).
- **13% of American college women copulated with two different men in 24h**: Gallup, Burch, and Mitchell (2006) found that 13.4 percent of a sample of American college women copulated with two men within a twenty-four-hour period at least once, and 8.3 percent copulated with two men simultaneously at least once.
- **Sperm competition scenarios are among the top female fantasies**: Price and Miller (1984) found that sexual fantasies involving sperm competition (multiple men simultaneously and sex with someone who's not the partner) were among the top ten most popular fantasies. **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: this was an interesting piece of evidence. However, fantasies don't translate 1:1 to reality and, hence, to evolutionary forces
- **Cuckoldry may suggest sperm competition**: A meta-analysis of thirty-two published studies from Western cultures documented that 3.1 percent of children are genetically unrelated to their social father (Voracek, Haubner, & Fisher, 2008). However, non-Western samples may face higher cuckoldry rates, like 48 percent of in indigenous Himba (Scelza et al., 2020).
  29.8 percent of men with low paternity confidence (e.g., those disputing paternity), compared to 1.7 percent of men with high paternity confidence, are genetically unrelated to their child (Anderson, 2006) **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** Cuckoldry may be an area of sperm competition, but not necessarily. 3.1% is not an extreme rate. And

Women who prefer the partner/affair partner may purposefully avoid sex with the non-preferred partner during fertile windows, or use protection, thus actively avoiding sperm competition.

- Men evolved preferences for choosing 'low sperm competition partners': the author claims that men's evolved preferences to avoid high sperm competition risk women for long-term is is a genetic indicator of moderate sperm competition exist in men as well <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** this is not a 'genetic indicator', it's a *possible* indicator for which other theories offer more encompassing ultimate explanations, such as that a low risk woman is a low risk for cuckoldry, which *may* include sperm competition, but is *not* the same as sperm competition

Interesting Notes:

- **Little link between markers of mate value and sperm quality**: A recent meta-analysis found little connection between sperm and markers of phenotypic quality like intelligence, attractiveness, voice pitch, and masculinity (often measured by finger length ratio) (Jeffery et al., 2016). The author advises to standardize methodologies for measuring both phenotypic traits and ejaculate quality

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: Female partner's choice is not sperm competition

Writes the author:

> The IPC proclivity model proposes that women manipulate the time between their IPCs and their EPCs. Gallup et al. (2006) found that 64.1 percent of women delayed indefinitely an IPC following an EPC and suggested that women may be actively avoiding sperm competition (…) Either possibility (female avoidance of sperm competition or female manipulation of male precedence) provides further evidence of an evolutionary history of sperm competition in humans.

I disagree: one is about sperm competition, the other is about female choice.
If women delay indefinitely, they've already *chosen* their favorite man, and actively minimize, or outright avoid sperm competition.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's recap: the evidence didn't convince me about the centrality of sperm competition
Little of the proposed evidence seemed to directly back sperm competition, and some of it only suggested the *possibility* of sperm competition.
To the authors, I'd also suggest a stronger speculative wording for some of the supporting evidence. Including the 'cunnilingus to smell opponents' semen' series that was an interesting interpretation, but that felt highly speculative to me.

Chapter 12: Sexual Conflict Theory

Candolin surveys the tug-of-war between male and female reproductive interests.

She explains how male persistence can override female choice (harassment, deception), and how females evolve resistance strategies (choosing deceptive males against, signaling unavailability).

This evolutionary arms race fuels ever-escalating displays, manipulation, and counter-manipulation, from water striders' genital shields to human "peacocking" and mate-guarding.

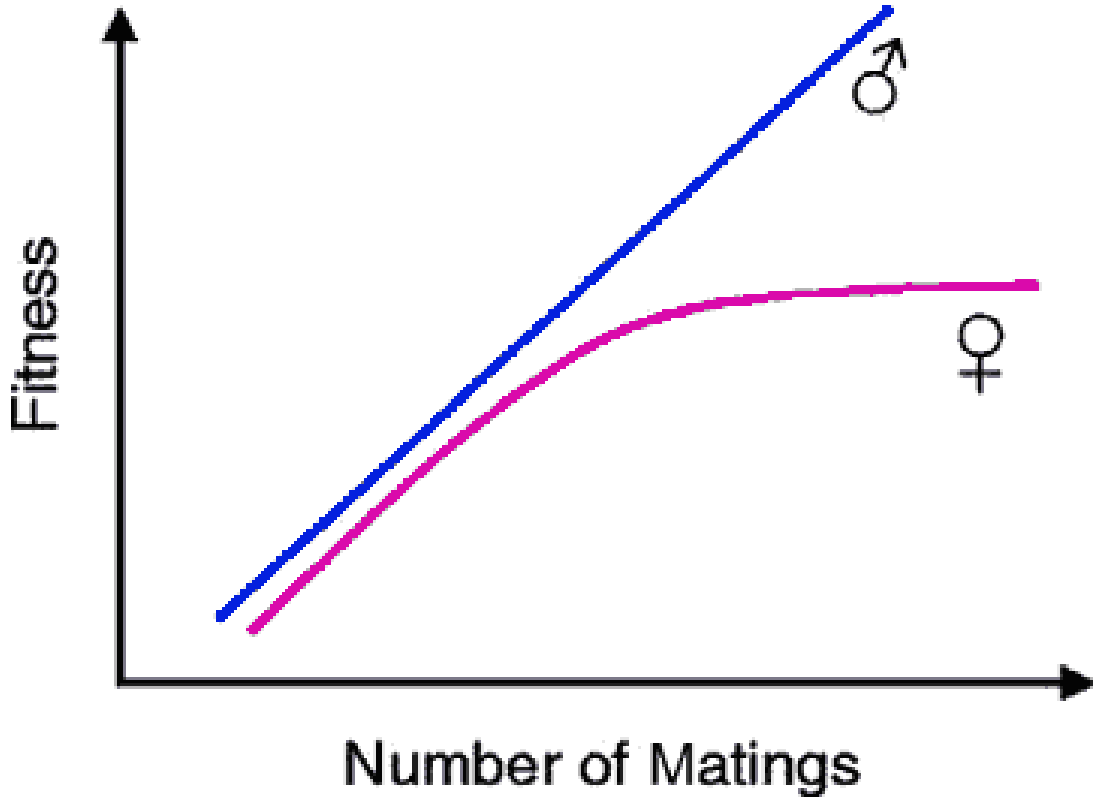
Sexual conflict, over time and with the constant male vs female coevolution increases the odds of speciation.

Key Concepts

- **Definition**: Sexual conflict occurs when the evolutionary interests of males and females diverge (Arnqvist & Rowe, 2005; Chapman, Arnqvist, Bangham, & Rowe, 2003; Hosken, Archer, & Mank, 2019; Parker, 2006)
- **Why it occurs**: This divergence arises from the fact that males and females are genetically different and

therefore have different optima for many traits (Lessells, 2006)

- **When it occurs**: When the ideal optima cannot be achieved for each sex, a conflict situation arises. This occurs during reproduction when the two sexes interact and the fitness of one sex depends on both its own traits and strategies and that of its partner
- **Example**: conflict over mating rate, with males attempting to mate with as many females as possible, while females are more choosy and reject most mating attempts (Andersson, 1994)



The Bateman gradients for males and females. Women have lowers potential reproductive rate compared to men. Men can increase their reproductive rate and fitness by mating with more women (as they can rapidly produce many sperm) while women are restricted by the time it takes to produce each egg. Thus, women reach a threshold when more matings will not increase the number of offspring produced.

We used to believe mating was monogamous and fully cooperative...

Originally, mating was seen as cooperative, based on monogamy and shared reproductive interests (Darwin, 1871).

In the 1970s, Trivers highlighted differing parental investment interests, and Parker expanded on the evolutionary roots of sexual conflict.

In the 1990s, Holland & Rice introduced sexually antagonistic coevolution, sparking experimental research.

Molecular studies later confirmed frequent extra-pair copulations and partner-harming reproductive traits, solidifying sexual conflict as a central concept in evolutionary biology.

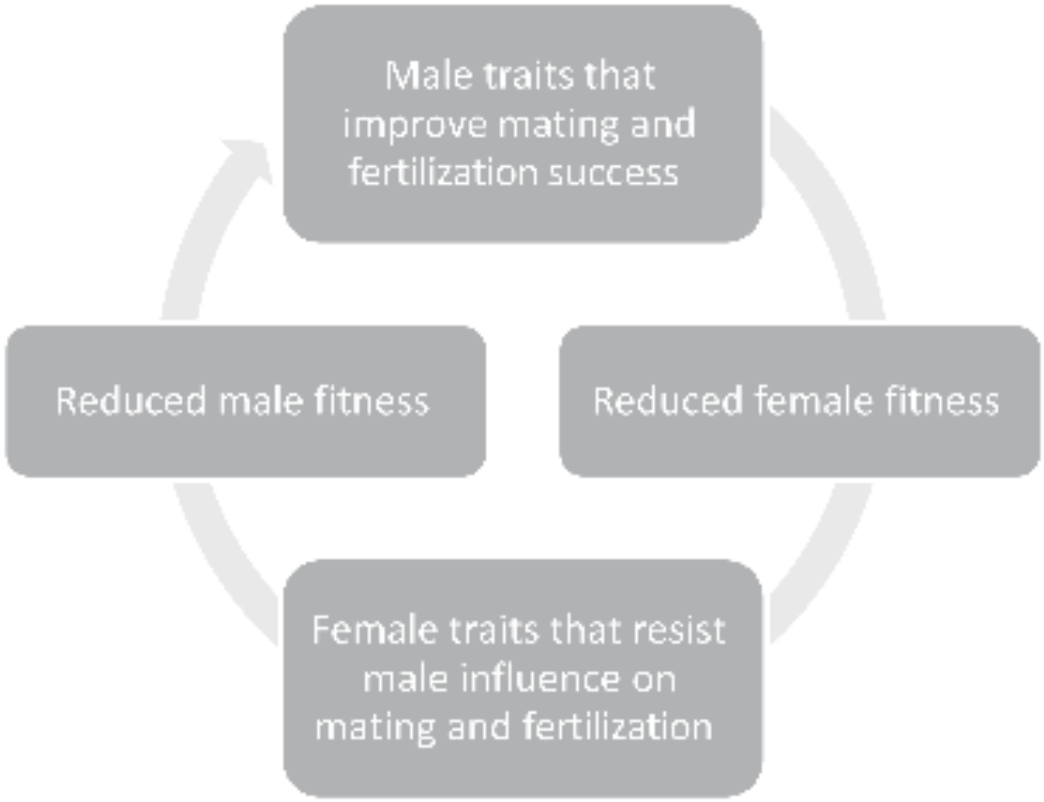
> Today, the theory of sexual conflict is widely accepted and cooperation is seen as only one extreme along a gradient from mostly cooperation to mostly conflict between the sexes.

Two Types of Sexual Conflict:

- **Intralocus Sexual Conflict**: *Same* gene, affecting males and females differently (typically morphological, physiological, or hormonal)

Occurs when the same genes influence traits in both sexes but optimal trait values differ for males and females (e.g: increases male fitness but might reduce female fitness, and vice versa). This creates a genetic "tug-of-war" that limits how well each sex can evolve toward its fitness optimum, reaching a **compromise**
  - ⍰⍰ Sex-limited gene expression may sidestep the compromise adn bot sexes volve traits toward their phenotypic fitness optima (Cox & Calsbeek, 2009; Ellegren & Parsch, 2007; Rice, 1984)
  - Example: red bill coloration improves male zebra finch mating success but harms female viability (Price & Burley, 1994).

- **Interlocus Sexual Conflict**: *Different* genes in males vs. females (often behavioral like mate guarding, female evasion, extra pair copulation, etc.)
  Arises from direct male–female interactions where traits that benefit one sex harm the other, leading to antagonistic coevolution (an evolutionary arms race)
  - Example: male seminal proteins that suppress female remating vs. female resistance traits (Chapman, 2006; Holland & Rice, 1998).



Sexual conflict drives an evolutionary arms race: males evolve traits to boost fertilization success, females counter to avoid unwanted mates, leading to ongoing coevolution.

Battlegrounds of Sexual Conflict

- **Male persistence vs. female resistance over mating decisions.** Males evolve tactics to overcome female reluctance—like harassment, forced copulation, sneaky mating, or exploiting sensory biases—while females evolve ways to avoid or resist these tactics.
- **Male tactics to win fertilization inside the female.** Males may guard mates, use toxic seminal fluid, insert mating plugs, or physically harm females to prevent remating. Females counter with cryptic choice: ejecting sperm, selective storage, or immune rejection.
- **Males chemically alter female behavior or fertility.** Seminal proteins can reduce female receptivity or fecundity. Females may evolve resistance to these manipulations, creating a molecular arms race.
- **Parents battle over who invests more in offspring.** Since care is costly, each sex tries to offload effort onto

the other. This results in manipulative behaviors like hormone deposition, care withholding, or even destruction of the partner's other broods.

- **Ongoing conflict through offspring investment.** Females may abort offspring from undesirable males. Males may commit infanticide to induce females to reproduce again. Conflict persists even after mating is "over."

Sexual Conflict is Unlikely to Be Fully Resolved

> Interlocus sexual conflict could be resolved if the evolutionary fitness interests of the two sexes become aligned. This requires monogamy, with the two partners entirely dependent on each other. However, strict monogamy is uncommon and perfect alignment of interests is thus unlikely to be achieved in most mating systems.

Intralocus conflict can be resolved when males and females evolve distinct genetic controls over shared traits, such as sex-specific gene expression or dominance.
For example, Atlantic salmon use sex-dependent dominance to mature differently. However, interlocus conflict and genetic correlations can limit this resolution, so how often sexual conflict is fully resolved in nature remains unclear.

The direction of sexual conflict also depends on the environment, which shapes the intensity of sexual conflict. Factors like temperature, food, density, or habitat complexity modulate costs of mating, male harm, or female resistance—altering the evolutionary dynamics of conflict.

Chapter 13: Cross-Species Comparisons

Escobar, Arcediano, Bell, and Truax champion the value of comparing sexual psychology across taxa.

By examining mating systems in birds, fishes, and mammals, they tease apart which features of human mating are uniquely human versus shared ancestral traits.

They show, for instance, that **pair-bonding**, **sexual size dimorphism**, and **cooperative breeding** each co-vary with ecological variables.

Chapter 14: Cross-Cultural Methods in Sexual Psychology

Butovskaya addresses the challenges and rewards of studying sexuality across human cultures. She outlines methods—from ethnographic observation to standardized surveys (e.g., the Sexual Strategies Scale)—and discusses sampling, translation, and ethical considerations. By pooling data from over 50 societies, cross-cultural work isolates universal features of sexual psychology (e.g., jealousy triggers) from cultural inventions (e.g., arranged marriage norms).

- **Passionate love is typical of individualistic societies**: *Whereas passionate love (intense and arousing) is emphasized in individualistic cultures, companionate love (tender and affective) is praised in collectivistic cultures (Feybesse & Hatfield, 2019)*
  - Eastern cultures emphasize financial prospects (Thomas et al., 2020, p. 17)
- **Collectivistic societies had higher levels of marital satisfaction**, providing evidence for collectivistic values as favorable for a satisfactory marriage (Dobrowolska et al., 2020)
- **Passion is highest in short relationships, but commitment is highest in longer relationships**: Level of passion was highest for the shortest relationship duration, and lowest for the longest duration. Up to one year couples had lower commitment, which gradually increased with duration (Sorokowski et al., 2021, p. 112)
- **Even height preferences are culturally flexible**: in societies with free mate choice, people tend to prefer taller men (and this preference aligns with actual partner height), while in more polygynous or arranged-marriage

societies, this preference is weaker or absent, showing height preferences vary with social and cultural context (Fink, Neave, Brewer, & Pawlowski, 2007; Pawlowski, 2003; Sorokowski & Butovskaya, 2012; Sorokowski et al., 2015; Stulp et al., 2013).
Read more in 'exceptions and dating success'

In general, the author rightly claims that we need more intercultural studies, and some more surprises may be in store.
For example, while Western men could assess grip strength from gait, Maasai people found physically stronger walkers to be weaker (Fink et al., 2017a, 2017b, 2019).

Chapter 15: Behavioral Genetics

Luoto and Woodley of Menie delve into genetics of sexual traits—mate preferences, sociosexual orientation, sexual orientation. Using twin, adoption, and GWAS studies, they estimate substantial heritabilities (often 30–50%) on mating-related traits.
They also discuss gene–environment interplay, and highlight that genetic influence does not imply immutability.

- **Love and pair bonding are parts of a broad reproductive strategy** of long-term attachment, influenced by basic reward circuitry and genetic factors (Acevedo et al., 2020; Bode & Kushnick, 2021; Luoto et al., 2019a)

Top 10 Replicated Findings From Behavioral Genetics

1. Most psychological traits are partly genetic.
Genes significantly influence traits like personality, intelligence, and mental health.

2. No trait is 100% genetic.
Even traits with high heritability—like height or executive function—are still shaped by environment.

3. Many small genetic effects matter.
Traits are influenced by many genes, each with a small impact.

4. Links between traits are often genetic.
When traits go together (e.g. anxiety and depression), it's often because they share genetic roots.

5. Intelligence becomes more heritable with age.
Genes play a larger role in intelligence as people grow up (the Wilson effect), but this may reverse in old age.

6. Long-term stability is mostly genetic.
When traits stay the same over time, it's mostly due to the same genes continuing to have an effect.

7. Even environments are partly genetic.
People shape their environments in ways that reflect their genetic tendencies (e.g. choosing stimulating settings).

8. Genes influence how we interact with environments.
We don't just passively receive experiences—we seek out or create environments that match our genetic inclinations.

9. Siblings experience different environments.
The most influential environmental effects are unique to each individual, even in the same family.

10. Mental disorders are extreme versions of normal traits.
Disorders aren't categorically different—they reflect the extreme ends of the same genetic influences seen in everyone.

Chapter 16: Sex Differences and Sex Similarities

Engelbrecht and Edlund synthesize decades of research on male–female psychological differences.
They emphasize both **overlapping distributions** (e.g., general intelligence) and **moderate, replicable gaps** (e.g., spatial rotation favors males; empathy favors females).

To summarize the authors' take:

> Are men and women more similar than they are different?
> The answer is, in some ways, yes. The common challenges of mating and reproduction have created mutual preferences for (mostly) monogamous mating, and partners who are healthy, kind, and intelligent.
> (…) However, there are clear and obvious differences in sexual psychology arising from the different stakes held in the reproductive process by men and women.

Noteworthy Findings

- **Femininity is associated with lower desired partners**: men's and women's scores on femininity were associated with lower numbers of desired partners (Tate, 2011)
- **Testosterone plus personality are both associated with number of desired partners**: levels of testosterone are associated with men's and women's desires for the number of sexual partners desired as well as measures of personality (Puts et al., 2015)
- **New relationships and partner choices are emerging**
  - People still prefer monogamy, but new relationships are emerging: *Consensual nonmonogamy (and polyamory in particular) allows participants to engage in multiple sexual and/or romantic relationships simultaneously, representing a more ethical approach to pluralistic mating strategies (Mogilski, Memering, Welling, & Shackelford, 2017).*
  - Coparenting: while only for gay in the past, a small number of straight men and women now opt for this family model as well, and the mate selection may be more based on parenting qualities
  - Sperm donation: Research on selection criteria for donor sperm already suggests differing mate preferences when reproduction is the only thing on the table. Whyte and Torgler (2015) noted that women rate psychological qualities such as character highly, even beyond physical characteristics like attractiveness. Resources are less important, and similarity of looks matters more to younger mothers than older ones
- **? Fertile women are more attracted to sexier men**, whereas women who are in the nonfertile phase of their cycle are particularly attracted to men who show signs of being good fathers. This happens entirely within the context of the relative value of the mate that the woman has as a primary partner (if their partner is high quality, they are especially attracted to them during the luteal phase; Shimoda, Campbell, & Barton, 2018) <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** caution here, based on the latest *Oxford Handbook* these findings related to dual sexuality and ovulatory shift are mixed and the effects rather mild

Women's Preferences Don't Change Much With Equality

The author says that sex differences in mate preferences don't seem to be influenced by economic and cultural conditions, and points to availability and preference for resources as an example:

> For instance, Wood and Eagly (2002) have suggested that women's preferences for resources are driven by their own relative inability to obtain resources themselves.
> This approach would suggest that the difference between men and women would disappear once society did not consistently have women earning less than men. However, recent research (Zhang et al., 2019) debunked this explanation by showing that there were no meaningful differences between samples collected in countries with high and low levels of gender equality

However, little later, the author acknowledges that it does make at least *some* difference:

> Increased equality and economic opportunities for women has an effect on this (Eagly & Wood, 1999), but a regression analysis by Zentner and Eagly (2015) suggests that women would need to earn far more than men in a society for the difference in preference to be eliminated.

I'd note that the difference doesn't need to be eliminated to have a major impact.
And I'd be careful here to distinguish preference vs. *behavior*:

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: preference doesn't always translate into behavior. Distributed resources still likely have important impacts
Of course the preference remains that of the handsome, wealthy, dominant, but deeply in love with her.
But I'd argue that even if the *preference* doesn't go away, the *behavior* changes. Smaller need for resources may still change dating *dynamics* and *behavior*.
For example, we may see more women as breadwinners, more women with younger and attractive but poorer men, and fewer women who 'mate switch' based on resources

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Overview: Studies on Men vs Women's Receptivity to Casual Sex

Drawing both from this handbook and from previous handbooks, here's a summary and overview:

- **Clark & Hatfield (1989): huge gender differences**
  Found a large sex difference in receptivity to casual sex—75% of men agreed to sex with a stranger vs. 0% of women. Equal numbers agreed to a date. Interpreted through Parental Investment Theory: men gain more from multiple partners, while women face higher reproductive costs.
- **Voracek et al. (2005): smaller difference**
  Partial replication in Germany with older participants and more varied public settings. Women were more receptive than in the original study, suggesting that context (age, culture, location) can moderate the sex difference—though men were still more receptive overall.
- **Baranowski & Hecht (2015): addressing safety concerns lead to an even smaller difference still**
  Replicated the effect in a more naturalistic, party-like setting. Women were significantly more willing to agree to casual sex when the setting felt safer, but men continued to be more likely to accept all types of offers.
- **Schützwohl et al. (2009): requestor's attractiveness makes a difference**
  Found that the requestor's attractiveness significantly influenced receptivity, especially for women. Men's already-high baseline left less room for change, while women's responses varied more with partner traits.
- **Edlund et al. (2021): requestor's attractiveness makes a difference 2**
  Confirmed that attractiveness had the strongest effect on women's willingness. Sexual orientation didn't significantly alter receptivity. Again, men remained more consistently open to casual sex.

These findings, combined with hormonal and evolutionary evidence (e.g., testosterone levels, Parental Investment Theory, and the Sexy Son Hypothesis), **support the conclusion that men are generally more open to casual sex**, but that **this difference is flexible and moderated by context, safety, and partner quality**.

Chapter 17: Individual Differences in Sexual Psychology

Figueredo and Salmon show that variation in mating psychology is not just between sexes but within them.

Some individuals adopt more **unrestricted**, short-term mating strategies; others favor **restricted**, committed approaches.
They link this variation to personality (Big Five traits), life history (fast–slow), attachment styles, and environmental cues—illustrating how plasticity and strategy diversity are themselves evolved adaptations.

Life History And Deception

Variation in life history (LH) strategies plays a key role in individual differences in sexual psychology.

Cognitive sexual schemata range from convergent-interest strategies, where males see their reproductive interests as aligned with females', to divergent-interest strategies, where these interests are viewed as conflicting (Malamuth, 1996).

Slow LH strategists are convergent-interest schemata favoring long-term relationships and cooperative biparental care, while fast LH strategists lean toward divergent-interest schemata, which are less compatible with long-term parenting (Malamuth, 1998).
In simpler words, this means that **short-term fast life history strategies are inherently less long-term cooperative**. It's not a stretch to think they may be more antagonistic, win-lose and potentially predatory and deceptive.

Figueredo and Jacobs (2010) expanded this model to social behavior, suggesting **slow LH strategists prefer mutualistic social strategies based on reciprocal altruism** with kin, nonkin, romantic partners, and offspring. These slow LH strategists favor stable, long-term cooperative relationships typical of predictable environments. **Fast LH strategists adopt antagonistic social strategies** (Brumbach, Figueredo, & Ellis, 2009; Brumbach, Walsh, & Figueredo, 2007; Ellis, Figueredo, Brumbach, & Schlomer, 2009).

Mate Value

Mate value refers to traits that make individuals attractive as partners (e.g., physical attractiveness, resources, parenting ability, status).
People with higher mate value tend to secure higher-value partners, especially in long-term relationships (Buss, 2002; Schmitt, 2003).

In **short-term mating**, the dynamics are different:

- **Lower mate value women** can sometimes access **higher mate value men** for casual sex.
- But **lower mate value men** are often **excluded entirely** from short-term mating opportunities (Van Straaten et al., 2009).

People tend to **adjust their mating strategies** based on their own perceived mate value (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2006). For example, attractive women show stronger preferences for masculine and high-status traits in men, especially in long-term contexts (Feinberg et al., 2006; Buss & Shackelford, 2008).

For **females and short-term mating**, the evidence is mixed:

- Some studies find **no clear link** between a woman's mate value and her pursuit of short-term sex (Mikach & Bailey, 1999).
- !? Others show that **physically attractive women** (e.g., with ideal waist-to-hip ratios) are more likely to engage in **unrestricted sociosexual behavior** (Brewer & Archer, 2007). **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: I've seen other sources claim that lower mate value women engaged in more casual sex while higher mate value women pair up with high status men, which makes more logical sense. I only read the abstract of that study, but there may be a mixup. The study referred to *facial* attractiveness, and the unrestricted sociosexuality was inferred by the raters, which isn't enough to claim that attractive women are more unrestricted. I'd encourage the authors to double-check that

Perceived mate value also plays a role:

- **Women who experience rejection** lower their standards and become **less choosy**. **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: this means more unrestricted and open to casual sex
- Conversely, **being accepted** boosts a woman's self-assessed mate value and makes her more likely to pursue

high mate value men and seek **long-term commitment** (Reeve et al., 2017). **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: same here, confirms the trend I was expecting

Mate value also influences sexual behavior:

- **High mate value men** report more sexual partners, earlier sexual debut, and greater success in short-term mating (Landolt et al., 1995; Clark, 2006; Perusse, 1993).
- **High-status or wealthy men** tend to marry younger, more attractive women—a pattern seen both historically and today (Betzig, 1992; Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2019).
- **Low-status men**, by contrast, struggle more in both long- and short-term mating markets and often need to lower their standards.

Additionally, **mate value affects mate retention**:

- High mate value men use more **benefit-providing** strategies (e.g., affection, gifts) and fewer **cost-inflicting** ones (e.g., jealousy, control) to retain partners (Miner et al., 2009).

For more practical takeaways, also check our articles:

- Mate value: a practical overview
- Mate value environmental contingencies (& related mate value 'hacks')
- Sexual market value: dynamics of dating

Dark Triad, Psychopathy, & Coercion

Life history (LH) theory helps explain the dark side of sexual behavior.

Individuals with a fast LH strategy—linked to traits like psychopathy and the Dark Triad—tend to pursue exploitative and coercive short-term sexual strategies.
Indeed, research has suggested that **coercive sexuality is a fundamental component of psychopathy** (e.g., Harris, Rice, Hilton, Lalumière, & Quinsey, 2007).
In fact, the best predictor of sexual coercion was predicted by this higher-order Dark Triad factor.

Sociosexuality Components

Sociosexuality was originally viewed as a single dimension (casual vs. committed), but newer research divides it into two separate orientations: short-term and long-term.

These two orientations are somewhat independent but have also been combined into a single higher-order factor to predict behaviors like partner violence and aggression.

Slow LH strategists (those who invest more in long-term planning and relationships) are generally less oriented toward short-term mating and more toward long-term mating. However, newer data suggest that slow LH individuals may integrate both short- and long-term mating strategies more flexibly.

This means that for slow LH individuals, these strategies are less mutually exclusive, allowing for greater adaptability in their mating behavior.

Chapter 18: Experimental Methods in Sexual Psychology

Fitzgerald and Thompson close Volume 1 with a practical guide to experimental design in sexual psychology.

Interesting findings:

- Anxiously attached individuals perceived ambiguous partner behavior to indicate infidelity
- Avoidant individuals perceived these ambiguous behaviors as less likely to indicate infidelity

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Culture of Honors Develop to Control Women's Sexuality

Atari, citing Shackelford (2005), writes:

> behaviors defined as indicators of a culture of honor, such as male aggression to punish sexual transgressions, might be the output of psychological mechanisms that evolved in response to the adaptive problem of mate retention

Supporting this idea, Atari et al. (2020) found that in Iran – a classic "culture of honor" – values around honor strongly correlate with both protective and punitive mate retention behaviors. These values emphasize men's duty to guard female kin and punish women's sexual transgressions, sometimes even by targeting the women themselves.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** I considered cultures of honors in this light even before I got deeper into evolutionary psychology: sexual control, and status-promotion.
But the sexual part is likely stronger than the respect/status part.

Similar evidence comes from more female repressive customs like forcing women to use a veil.
Writes Butovskaya:

> The study by Pazhoohi and Kingstone in twenty-five countries demonstrates that veiling promotes sexual fidelity in women (Pazhoohi & Kingstone, 2020).
> **Veiling is a male mateguarding strategy used to secure male reproductive success**.
> Men support veiling more than women, and this male mate-guarding strategy was more evident in harsher environments, with higher mortality rates, where paternal care may be more important for infant survival.

However, veiling is not always and necessarily imposed.
Continues Butovskaya:

> (…) although Islamic men are more supportive of veiling than are women, in general both sexes are more likely to support the veiling tradition when their reproductive interests are more male-centric (i.e., sons are more desirable) (Blake et al., 2018).

Short-Term & Uncommitted Mating Is Inherently More Conflictual

Candolin only indirectly suggests so when she writes that monogamy best merges the interests of both sexes:

> Interlocus sexual conflict could be resolved if the evolutionary fitness interests of the two sexes become aligned. This requires monogamy, with the two partners entirely dependent on each other. However, strict monogamy is uncommon and perfect alignment of interests is thus unlikely to be achieved in most mating systems.

However, it seems a logical next step to me that uncommitted and short-term sex has a larger scope for conflicting interests and, potentially, for manipulation and deception.

Dads vs. Cads (relationship types vs players)

Evolutionary game theory models, inspired by Hawk–Dove dynamics, describe two male mating strategies: “Dads,” who provide parental care, and “Cads,” who do not (Maynard Smith, 1982; Alger et al., 2020).

These strategies coexist in dynamic equilibrium influenced by ecological conditions that favor or disfavor paternal provisioning.

Empirical support for these categories comes from social perceptions, where “Dads” and “Cads” correspond to “Proper” and “Dark” heroes in British Romantic literature, with women preferring “Proper” heroes for long-term and “Dark” heroes for short-term relationships (Kruger, Fisher, & Jobling, 2003).

The models assume that tendencies toward these phenotypes are genetically determined, though this is a theoretical assumption, not an empirical finding.

Research shows men generally score higher on the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) than women, reflecting greater average openness to casual sex, though there is substantial variation within each sex (Clark, 2006; Schmitt, 2005).
Both genetic and environmental factors influence sociosexuality. A twin study found sociosexuality to be moderately heritable (about 49%) with a significant role for unique environmental influences (Bailey et al., 2000).

Additionally, unrestricted sociosexuality correlates genetically with sexual coercion (Westerlund et al., 2010). Dark Triad personality traits (narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism), linked to short-term, exploitative mating strategies, also show genetic and environmental influences (Jonason et al., 2009; Schermer & Jones, 2020).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s note: the ‘cad approach’ may come with a specific set of psychological and behavioral adaptations
Including avoidant attachment style, Cooldige effect and higher dominance motivation.
Also see our article on ‘cad psychology‘:

> Womanizers Psychology: The 10 Types of Players

For more practical applications, see our articles:

- Cads/lovers vs boyfriend types
- Lover, provider, and backup mate

> Lover, Provider & Friend: The Truth of Men’s Sexual Roles

Sociosexual Orientation: One Can Be High In Both Casual Sex and Relationship Motivations

In chapter 10 Figueredo and Peñaherrera-Aguirre explain the evolution of sociosexual orientation measurements.

The Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) originally measured openness to casual sex as a single trait (Gangestad & Simpson, 1990), but later research split it into two dimensions: short-term mating (STM) and long-term mating (LTM) orientations (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Though these two tend to correlate negatively (around r = –0.30), studies show they have distinct patterns of association with other traits—supporting their partial independence (Simpson et al., 2004).

Some researchers recombine STM and LTM into a single factor when predicting broad outcomes like partner violence (Figueredo et al., 2018), while others keep them separate to explore more specific traits like emotional intelligence or executive function (Figueredo et al., 2012).

Father Absence Promotes Fast Life Strategies (Casual Sex)

It's been proposed that girls raised without their biological father tend to mature sexually earlier, start having sex sooner, have more partners, and get pregnant at a younger age than those with present fathers (Anderson, 2015; Ellis et al., 2003; Quinlan, 2003; Salmon, Townsend, & Hehman, 2016).

A 2014 meta-analysis confirmed that father absence is linked to earlier puberty (Webster, Graber, Gesselman, Crosier, & Schember, 2014).

More recent research suggests that it's not just presence or absence, but also the *quality* and *amount* of paternal investment matters in shaping girls' sexual development and behavior (DelPriore, Schlomer, & Ellis, 2017; Ellis et al., 2012).

And a role for behavioral genetics has also been proposed (Mustanski, Viken, Kaprio, Pulkkinen, & Rose, 2004; Schlomer & Cho, 2017), with mathematical models suggesting genetic confounding (Barbaro, Boutwell, Barnes, & Shackelford, 2017).

However, ultimately, father presence or absence does seem to make a big difference:

> However, in an empirical test of the genetic confounding hypothesis (i.e., gene–environment correlations cause spurious relationships between father absence and females' age at menarche and first birth), Gaydosh, Belsky, Domingue, Boardman, and Harris (2017) used molecular-genetic data and found that father absence and polygenic scores independently predicted reproductive timing. This suggests that (at least for females) **father absence, as an index of stressful childhood environments, explains unique variance in sexual behaviors beyond genetic inheritance**.

There Is A Link Between IPV & Cuckoldry

This may be an uncomfortable finding and obviously it doesn't justify violence in any way, and we must be careful not 'victim blame' with it.

But cuckoldry, whether real or imagined, seems to be an important element of intimate partner violence and forced copulation:

> Men who report sexually coercing their regular partner also report greater suspicion of her extra-pair copulation (EPC), and women who report a greater likelihood of pursuing EPCs also report that their regular partner is more sexually coercive (Arnocky, Sunderani, Gomes, & Vaillancourt, 2015; Goetz & Shackelford, 2006, 2009).
> Among men convicted of physically assaulting their regular partner, those who performed forced intimate partner copulation (IPCs) – relative to those who did not perform forced IPCs – experienced greater cuckoldry risk events prior to the assault (Camilleri & Quinsey, 2009). Men at greater objective sperm competition risk are more likely to perform forced IPCs, but only those men who perceive a greater likelihood of their partner's EPC (McKibbin, Starratt, Shackelford, & Goetz, 2011; reviewed in Goetz, Shackelford, & Camilleri, 2008).

QUOTES

On survival meaning nothing from an evolutionary point of view if without reproduction:

> if an animal lives but does not reproduce, it may as well not have bothered, at least from an evolutionary standpoint

On humans losing to tardigrates unless we're careful:

> the human brain has enabled one species of apes to conquer the Earth and possibly also other parts of the solar system or the universe. However, the same brain has allowed the ape to construct hydrogen bombs that could destroy a large part of the Earth's biosphere, including its own species. Due to SBS, the winners of the evolutionary battle could be resilient, undemanding organisms without such "progressive" brains (e.g., tardigrades), and such organisms might prevail on the Earth and most planets in the universe.

On pop psychology books:

> One of the most popular "pop" psychology books of all time, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (Gray, 1992), focused on differences between men (…)
> Looking at selected pop psychology books and ancient civilizations is not the best way to understand the differences and similarities between men and women – instead, we need to turn to scientific evidence

REVIEW

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology serves as a solid and research-driven foundation for the follow-up volumes.
It offers a valuable introduction to the evolutionary study of sexual behavior and conflict.

While a few areas could benefit from refinement—such as clearer acknowledgment of ongoing debates (e.g., sperm competition, ovulatory shifts), and some closer alignment between cited studies and the interpretations—these are minor in the context of the book's overall quality.
From an editing perspective and ease of learning, some chapters may be streamlined by reducing overlap across topics or condensing them into a single chapter (eg.: sperm competition, dark triad/life history strategies).

That said, this is an authoritative textbook tackling a complex subject, and it succeeds in laying the groundwork for the adaptations explored in volumes 2 and 3.
I came away with new insights and I could improve several articles on our site as a result—that's always the biggest compliment I can pay to any resource.
I'm grateful to the editors and contributors ⍰⍰, and I look forward to delving into volumes 2 and volume 3.

Check the **best evolutionary psychology books** or **get this book on Amazon**.

The Science of Masculinity: Traits, Roles, and Strategy

Lucio Buffalmano · 14 September 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Masculinity can be confusing for men because the discussion is often biased, opinion-based, or unscientific.

At The Power Moves, we prioritize science, experience, and what's proven to work.

This masculinity guide helps you become a powerful, effective, and masculine man by synthesizing evidence from psychological research, sociology, and human behavior to provide a no-nonsense, proven approach—without platitudes or wishful thinking.

Contents

- What Is Masculinity
  - Common Masculine Traits
  - Core Masculine Roles
- Masculinity in Context: A Comparison
- Culture, Biology, and Masculinity
- Masculine Cultural Stereotypes
  - Masculine Stereotypes Set Masculine Standards
- Why Masculinity Is Important
- Masculinity & Power
  - Men Have Higher & Resilient Self-Esteem
  - Agentic Masculinity Improves Health & Self-Esteem
  - High Power Emotions
- Hyper, Positive, & Toxic Masculinity
  - Positive vs. Toxic Masculinity
  - The Dark Appeal of Toxic Masculinity

- Naive Masculinity Is Weak
- Calibrating Masculinity for Success
  - 1. Embrace Your Masculinity
  - 2. Choose Resilient Self-Identities
  - 3. Reach A 'Masculine Optimum Balance'
  - Calibrate Masculinity
- FAQ About Masculinity
  - Learn More to Master Masculinity

What Is Masculinity

Definition:

Masculinity represents a set of physical and psychological traits, behaviors, and achievements typically associated with dominant adult males.

Note:

- 'Achievements' is important because, unlike femininity, **masculine respect must be earned** (Vandello, 2008)
- 'Dominant' because many masculine traits align more with high-value, successful men, rather than 'men' in general.

Common Masculine Traits

Across many cultures and studies, common masculine traits include:

- **Mental strength**
  - Confidence and self-esteem
  - Courage and risk-taking (when appropriate)
  - Stoicism, emotional self-control and stability
  - Independece and self-reliance
- **Physical formidability**, including size
  - Strength and muscular build
  - Athleticism
  - Body cues: V-hape, prominent jawline, masculine nonverbals, etc.
- **Social power and influence**
  - Interpersonal dominance and assertiveness
  - Leadership
  - Status
    - Honor, upholding individual, familial, and group honor
- **Ambition**
  - Decisiveness & action bias

Many of these traits are not arbitrary, and correlate with testosterone and/or with evolved strategies (Myers and Bjorklund, 2020).

Lower scores on these traits signal lower masculinity.
Higher scores signal higher masculinity.

Core Masculine Roles

These roles, common among different cultures, also carry expctations of behavior:

- **Breadwinner**, or higher household income
- **Contributor** to society
- **Household leader**
- **Impregnator** (Gilmore, 1990)
- **Protector** of females or society (warrior archetype)

Culture plays a larger role in men's *roles*, rather than *traits*, but biology also matters.

The 'breadwinner' may be more contested.
Even if the hunter-gatherer hypothesis is correct, hunting equals not 'breadwinner' since some evidence suggests women's gathering can bring more food and calories.

The evolutionary and biological basis for the "protector" role is stronger, supported by physical dimorphism and male–male competition.
And the biological case for 'impregnator' is unquestionable.

The masculine archetype of warrior/protector, also highlighted by Gillette and Moore, is a cross-cultural role that emphasizes protection and strength.

Masculinity in Context: A Comparison

Masculinity often gets defined in contrast to femininity.

Here are research-based contrasts (with lots of overlap in reality):

Trait / Domain	Men	Women	Magnitude / Notes
Mental	Higher spatial (rotation/navigation), STEM propensity. Same general reasoning	Higher verbal (fluency, reading, writing) and superstition propensity (woo-woo)	verbal: small; spatial: moderate
Aggression	More physical & verbal aggression, especially in competitions	More relational & covert aggression (e.g., exclusion, gossip, & in relationships)	Moderate
Risk-Taking	Higher, especially under social pressure or masculinity threat	Lower; more cautious and risk-averse	Moderate to large in physical domains
Emotional Expression	More anger expressions; less expressiveness in public; similar in private	Higher emotional responsiveness, expressiveness (esp. for sadness/vulnerability)	Small to moderate, varies by emotion & context
Help-Seeking	Less likely to seek help; greater self-reliance	More likely to seek help, esp. for emotional or health	Substantial real-world implications
Communication Style	Report-focused, task-oriented, higher power language	Rapport-focused, cooperative, lower-power language	Context-dependent
Nonverbal Behavior	Less smiles & gazes; more dominant nonverbals	More smiles, gazes, touches in social contexts;	Small to moderate; varies with context
Socialization & Skills	Activity-based; instrumental support; lower self-disclosure & social skills	Emotion-based & intimate; co-rumination; higher emotional reading	Moderate
Empathy & Helping	More physical help in public or risky situations	More nurturing & empathetic in private	Moderate; varies by situation
Confidence & Self-esteem	Higher confidence; attributes success to ability	Lower & fluctuating; attributes success to effort & luck	Small to moderate
Leadership	More task-oriented or autocratic leadership. Competence assumed.	More democratic or transformational leadership. Competence must be proven	Large perception gap, equal results
Social Dominance	Higher interpersonal dominance and social-dominance orientation	Lower interpersonal dominance & SDO	Moderate to significant

Table compiled by Lucio Buffalmano, synthesizing empirically supported findings from the Sage Handbook of Gender and Psychology & Helgeson's Psychology of Gender, and various meta-analyses

Culture, Biology, and Masculinity

Biology influences culture and, in the long run, culture also shapes biology (Henrich, 2015).

Hence, rather than clashing, **biology and culture often move together**. Studies also show strong cross-cultural agreements regarding beliefs about manhood.

However, culture also plays a decisive role.
Some standards of masculinity shift across time and place (for example, *The Cambridge Handbook* notes changing views around oral sex, with older-school men seeing it as unmanly).

In many cases, cultural expectations may outweigh biological markers, since masculinity is judged socially rather than in the laboratory.

For example, there is no clear evidence that men are less emotional. In some studies, men have *stronger* physiological responses to emotion-inducing events.

However, people associate emotions with femininity and stoicism with masculinity.

Masculine Cultural Stereotypes

Men are different in important ways.

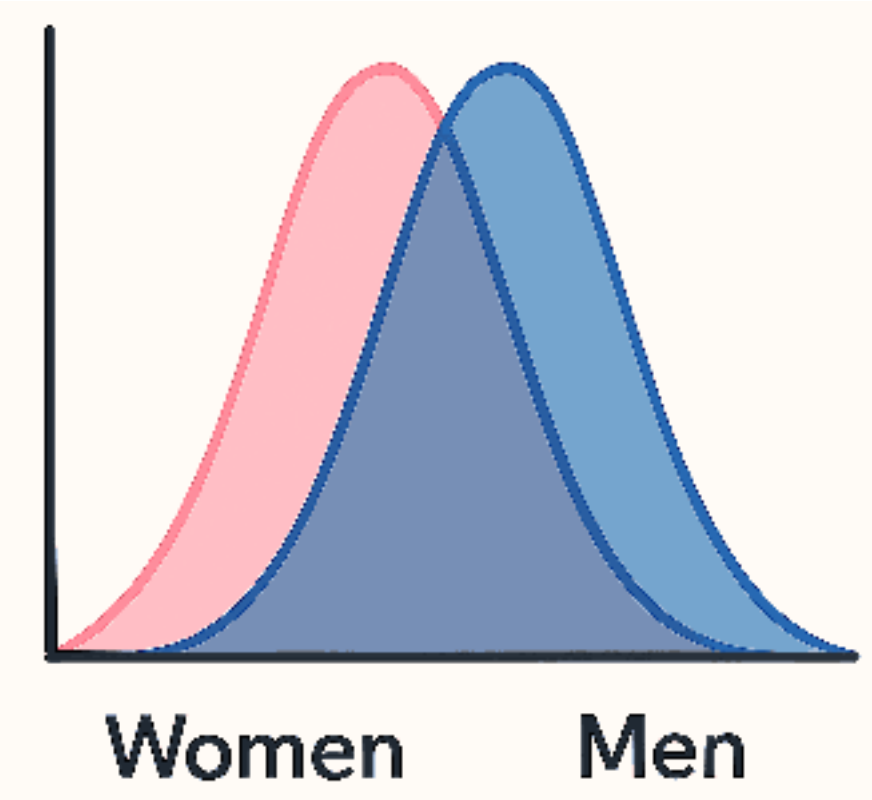
Gender differences also add up over time and aggregate at the group level to produce significant differences for both individuals and societies.

However, **pop psychology often overestimates gender differences**, contributing to perceptions of exaggerated differences.
It's not uncommon for people to associate these polar opposites to masculinity and femininity:

Masculine Traits	Feminine Traits
Assertive	Agreeable
Dominant	Nurturing
Stoic	Expressive
Independent	Interdependent
Competitive	Cooperative
Relaxed	Neurotic

Partly true—but without context, it's pop-psych, male wishful thinking, and disempowering clichés

In reality, the overlap is greater than many claim (Stewart-Williams, 2020), and many gender differences typically follow the pattern shown in this chart:



However, as we shall see, even mistaken cliches matter in defining masculinity.

⍰⍰**Takeaway**: To assess individuals, look more at *individuals*, rather than gender.

Masculine Stereotypes Set Masculine Standards

> Masculinity is what people believe masculinity is

Gender stereotypes are prescriptive, not just describing typical behavior, but suggesting how individuals *should* behave (Prentice & Carranza, 2004).

Meaning, **it doesn't matter whether a stereotype is biologically grounded, fair, or harmful—if X is expected of men, not doing X is deemed unmasculine**
And failure to perform may cost men status, mental health, and even their relationships.

This is why an early article on this website cautioned men around displaying vulnerability.

However, following stereotyping blinding won't serve a man's interests.
Some are bogus, some are manipulative, and some are obviously harmful.
For example, I've encountered older masculine stereotypes that 'mannish men smell (because they don't care about hygiene)'.
While it may be true that men, on average, are less invested in grooming than women, poor hygiene consistently lowers both social status and intrasexual attractiveness.

Lucio's Tip: **Choose *your own* standards**

Lucio:
Why would you let *random others* set *your* standard?

First, most claims about 'what men are' are baseless power plays to impose personal standards.
Second, generalizations refer to the *average* of men. If you're reading TPM, you want more than average.

I've seen enough cool guys lose self-esteem based on inherited standards.

Throw out others' definitions of 'what a man is'.
And focus on whatever moves you towards your goals.

This is what I've done for myself, and it has served me incredibly well.

It's mentally empowering. And paradoxically, *this* is actual masculinity: less other-reliance, more independence. ⍰

⍰⍰**Takeaway**: Both biological markers and culturally-shaped behavioral expectations define masculinity

Why Masculinity Is Important

Men who are more masculine than the average tend to gain in:

- **Status & respect**: High-masculinity men are perceived as more dominant and competent. They tend to gain status and respect. And the more masculine the context, the more masculinity matters
- **Attraction**: Masculine men are more attractive, especially to high mate value women (Figueredo and Salmon, 2022)
- **Competitive achievements**: Thanks to masculine traits like ambition, risk-taking, and assertiveness (Puts, 2010).
- **Leadership**: Masculine behavior correlates with being seen as a natural leader (Van Vugt & Spisak, 2008).

Conversely, low masculinity *costs* in all those areas.
And 'gender non-conformity' incurs extra social and health costs.

Masculinity & Power

> Masculinity gets ahead, femininity gets along
>
> *– A generalization, with a backdrop of truth*

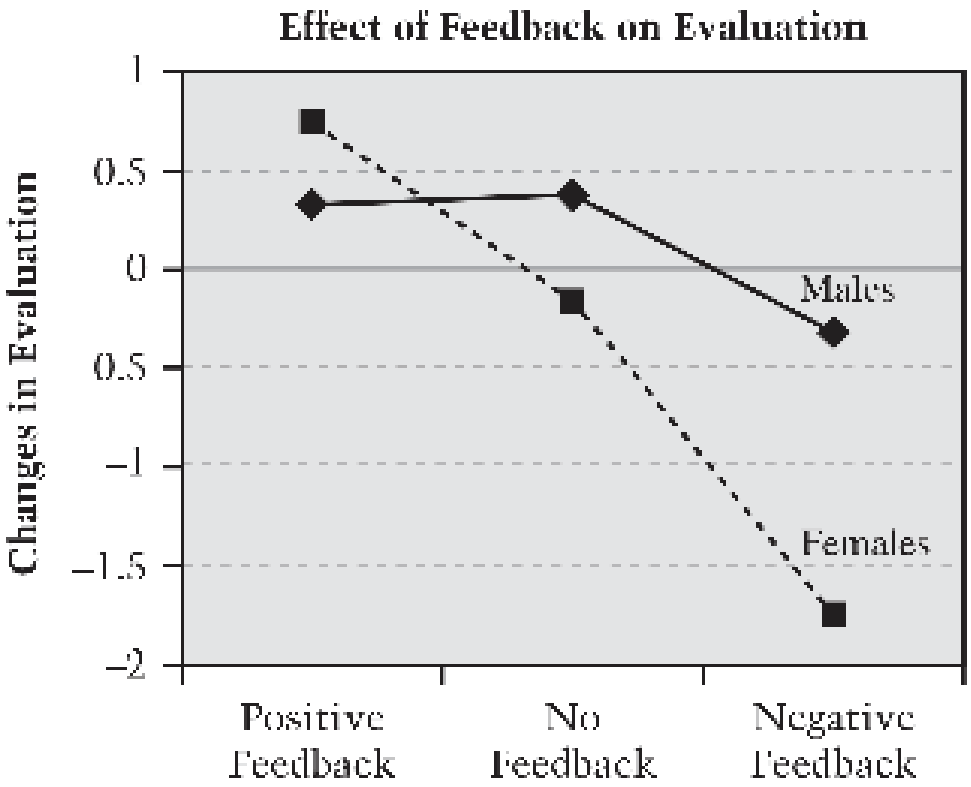
Already from childhood, girls play more relationship-oriented games, and boys more dominance-related games (Pellegrini, 2013).

Men seek more agentic power, whereas women prefer social connections (Hays, 2013; Yang & Girgus, 2019). Women also associate stronger emotions with their intimate relationships and are more anxiously attached.

⍰♂**Lucio's take: your value trumps gender for relationship dynamics**
Studies found *men* often value relationships more—likely because mate value trumps all. Lower-value men cling; high-value women choose. So forget 'men are…' and focus on *your* power.

Men Have Higher & Resilient Self-Esteem

Across several studies, men's self-esteem is more constant and independent.



from Roberts and Nolen-Hoeksema's study, adapted by Helgeson

Lucio's Note: Prioritize self-esteem
It underpins masculinity, mental health, and social power. If needed, check our confidence course.

Agentic Masculinity Improves Health & Self-Esteem

Power and acceptance relate to the 'agency' and 'communion' model (David Bakan, 1966):

Concept	Definition	Examples	Key Phrases
Agency	**Self-focus**: independence, assertiveness, control, achievement.	Ambition, leadership, self-reliance, competence.	*"I act" / "I achieve."*
Communion	**Others-focus**: warmth, cooperation, connection, nurturance.	Empathy, kindness, emotional support, belonging.	*"I belong" / "I care."*

Alignment with these modalities supports mental health.
Men's self-esteem seems based on power, differentiation, effectiveness, and independent action. Women's self-esteem is based on communion (Miller, 1991; Brizendine, 2006).

Asian men: prioritize power & masculinity
East and South-East Asian men are seen as less masculine. Plus, collectivist cultures are seen as low agency. This combo may explain why Asian men in the West have the fewest sexual partners.

High Power Emotions

Agentic emotions are associated with masculinity, and communal ones with femininity (Fischer and Evers, 2013):

Agentic (high power)	Communnal (subordination)
Anger	Sadness
Contempt	Guilt

Agentic (high power)	Commununal (subordination)
Disgust	Shame
Pride	Happiness

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: focus less on 'being happy', and more on being *proud* of who you become ⍰

⍰♂Lucio's Approach: **Go for power, and masculinity will follow**

Lucio:
Despite never building my identity around 'masculinity', two meaningful events made me reflect.

One day, my father proudly said of me, 'He's a real man'. And an ex-girlfriend in love said that 'I behaved like a (real) man'.

I suspect traditional ex and 'old school' father linked 'high power' to 'masculinity'.
But I found a 'power-focus' approach far more effective for achieving goals.

Hyper, Positive, & Toxic Masculinity

Hypermasculinity has negative associations because the Hypermasculinity Inventory measures *toxic* traits.

We take a different approach and define it neutrally to distinguish it from *toxic* masculinity:

- **Hypermasculinity:** extreme masculine traits (neutral)
- **Toxic masculinity:** extreme *antisocial* masculine traits (value-taking)
- **Positive masculinity**: extreme *prosocial* masculine traits (value-adding)
- **Naive masculinity**: milder, culturally acceptable, but biased masculinity

Masculine	Hypermasculine
Mascular definition	Bodybuilder

Masculine	Hypermasculine
Protector	Fighter
Honor (upholding reputation)	Honor-based aggression
High-ranking	Top ranking
Driven	Hypercompetitive

Positive vs. Toxic Masculinity

These dichotomies are simplistic, but can help understand the concepts:

Toxic Hypermasculinity	Positive Hypermasculinity
Gangster	Cop
Barbarian / Warlord	Special op / General
Genghis Khan / Mongols	Marcus Aurelius / Roman Empire
Joker / Villain	Batman / Hero
Deadbeat dad	Top 1% provider

They're both masculine, but one adds value, the other takes value

Note that women can also display behaviors labeled as 'toxic masculinity'. They're not *exclusive* to men—they are simply *more common* in men.

The Dark Appeal of Toxic Masculinity

The unmitigated dominance of toxic masculinity can be perversely attractive.

Part of it relates to sexuality.
For example, a popular study with 'Proper' and 'Dark' heroes in romantic literature showed that women preferred 'Proper' heroes for long-term but 'Dark' heroes for short-term flings.

The hero in Bonnie Tyler's song is a hypermasculine cowboy. And he's not carrying roses

Not all women prefer 'dark heroes'—it may be correlated with sociosexuality (ie, preference for short-term mating). But dominant and masculine men tend to out-compete men who are too low in dominance and masculinity.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's experience: Genghis Khan had 3 balls?
In primary school, a (female) teacher said, awestruck, that 'Genghis Khan was rumored to have had 3 balls'. I wasn't impressed: 'What's so remarkable about being a freak', I asked. I remained unimpressed by Mr. Khan's balls count, but I learned about hypermasculinity's appeal.

Men follow similar patterns.
In the 2020s, young men flocked to a high in psychopathy influencer.
It may be a historical aberration—a swing back against a wave of anti-masculinity. But the appeal of darker figures seems timeless.

Men have long been fascinated by drug lords, fictional or not, powerful despots, and gangsters. And few mind that male role models like The Godfather or Gotti 'made their bones' at the end of a barrel.

⍰ Covert Toxicity: Masculine Shaming Power Move to Support War

Toxic masculinity may be nuanced and covert.
Take this *alleged* quote from a US general as an example:

The quote's interpersonal dominance, sexual confidence, and 'warrior ethos' can also be seen as disrespectful mate poaching, narcissistic self-aggrandizement, and possible war (crime) apologia.

This approach is effective because young men loathe being seen as effeminate. Evolution underpins it: invading soldiers may out-reproduce low-status, cuckolded pacifists.

Unfortunately, it brings along ingroup-outgroup dynamics that include racism and tribalism ('Male warrior hypothesis').

🤔Lucio's Opinion: **Humanity needs *enlightened* (hyper)masculinity**

Lucio:

Cooperation is crucial to long-term human survival and thriving, solving global issues and maximizing our potential.

Conversely, war has always been progress and civilization's #1 enemy.
And it may be the #1 risk for humanity's future.

Naive Masculinity Is Weak

Naive masculinity is 'safe' but biased, and doesn't serve men's best interests.

Naive	Truth
Masculinity is to provide	Higher-testosterone men are more likely *players* than providers (Archer, 2005)
Men should be 'tender defenders'	No evidence that non-tender men are any less masculine
'Man up and commit'	Men face real risks and challenges in modern dating dynamics
Masculinity is to build	True, and toxic masculinity can also destroy
Downplays or undermines womanizers	The inseminator is a masculine archetype. 'Lover' is an effective sexual strategy

This sanitized version of masculinity may sound 'nice'—but it's a lie.
Worse, watered-down masculinity is ineffective and unappealing, and only pushes more men toward *toxic* extremes.

Solution: ***Honorable*** **masculinity is your life call**

Lucio:
I believe men's ultimate call is to advance humanity and civilization.

Ambitious men desire a strong impact.
That impact can be positive, building businesses, empires, and advancing humanity.

Or it can be destructive.

You must accept that reality.

And *choose* to be a 'builder'.

The answer is not 'less masculinity'.
The answer is *channeling* more masculinity well .

Read more:

- **Naive self-help** doesn't help men advance

Calibrating Masculinity for Success

Now let's get to practical strategies to make the most out of masculinity:

1. Embrace Your Masculinity

Ambition, independence, confidence and positive dominance are great things.

They make your life better, and if you pursue them with win-win, they make the *world* better.

Masculine ambition advances men, and humanity.

PRO Tip: Embrace your unfavorable masculinity, too.
The 'masculinity' that's often swept aside. Baldness is masculine, for example. And autism has been theorized as 'extreme male brain'.

2. Choose Resilient Self-Identities

Building your self-esteem around masculinity has some upsides if you 'meet the standards'.

But it has bigger downsides because masculinity is earned, but also *easily lost* (Vanedello and Bosson, 2013).

For example, men with more traditional masculinity beliefs suffer more anxiety and depression for as little as a job loss (Bosson et al., 2013). That's not masculine power, that's masculine *fragility*.

Solution: choose antifragile self-identities.
Be the relentless man, the strategist who finds ways. Or be like water, adapt, and win

3. Reach A 'Masculine Optimum Balance'

Masculinity follows the law of balance: benefits reach a peak, then decline, and may turn negative.

For example, extreme risk-taking becomes recklessness and shortens lives.
Write Helgeson and Fritz:

> unmitigated agency has been associated with reckless driving, substance use, binge eating, psychological distress, and overall lower levels of well-being (Danoff-Burg et al , 2006; Ghaed & Gallo, 2006; Yu & Xie, 2008).
> (…)
> unmitigated communion is associated with poor health

Also women's attraction decreases at extreme levels of masculinity (e.g., hirsutism, beards, muscularity, facial masculinity).

Most men must focus on *increasing* masculinity
While overdoing it is a risk, most men are far from that 'threshold'.

♂Lucio's Take: **Acquire empowered 'balanced' open-mindedness**

Lucio:
Men tend to be less progressive than women.

But reactionary masculinity is partially fear-driven.
Fear of losing social power, and fear of cuckoldry from 'sexually liberated' women.

Fearful reactionism is driven by neediness.

Peak power is always having others *want* to follow, without even *needing* them to follow.
Make women *want* to offer support and loyalty to a masculine protector (see here).

Calibrate Masculinity

The name of the advanced game is calibration.

Calibration is its own skill and requires power awareness and strategic thinking.
But just as examples:

- More masculinity with dominant men
- More communion bonding with a girl

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's experience: calibrating masculinity and bonding was the secret
In good part, women attached to me because I mixed power with effective empathic bonding.

FAQ About Masculinity

What is masculine

Masculine is anything commonly associated to men, both biologically and socially. Biologically, men on average have greater physical strength, higher testosterone, and more risk-taking tendencies. Culturally, men may be expected to provide and protect. What counts as "masculine" can shift across societies, but it always reflects a mix of male biology and social values.

What's toxic masculinity

The term 'toxic masculinity' is often misunderstood—it doesn't mean masculinity itself is toxic.
Toxic masculinity is a subset and distorted version of masculinity. It arises when otherwise neutral or even positive male traits—like strength, leadership, or ambition—are taken to extremes or expressed without regard for others. In those cases, they can cause harm to both individuals and society. Examples include gratuitous aggression, dominance pursued without moral qualms, or bullying.

What's the difference between masculinity and toxic masculinity

Masculinity refers to traits that help men gain respect, achieve goals, and navigate social hierarchies. Toxic masculinity is when those traits go to extremes and become antisocial—assertiveness turns to aggression, protectiveness to control. The Power Moves focuses on developing masculine traits effectively, avoiding the pitfalls of both naivete and harmful expressions.

Is masculinity natural or learned?

Both. Biology provides predispositions—testosterone, physical dimorphism, sexual interests—while culture channels them, and role models provide guidance. Effective masculinity comes from both innate tendencies and deliberate practice.
The Power Moves teaches men how to develop these traits practically, and to achieve relevant life goals.

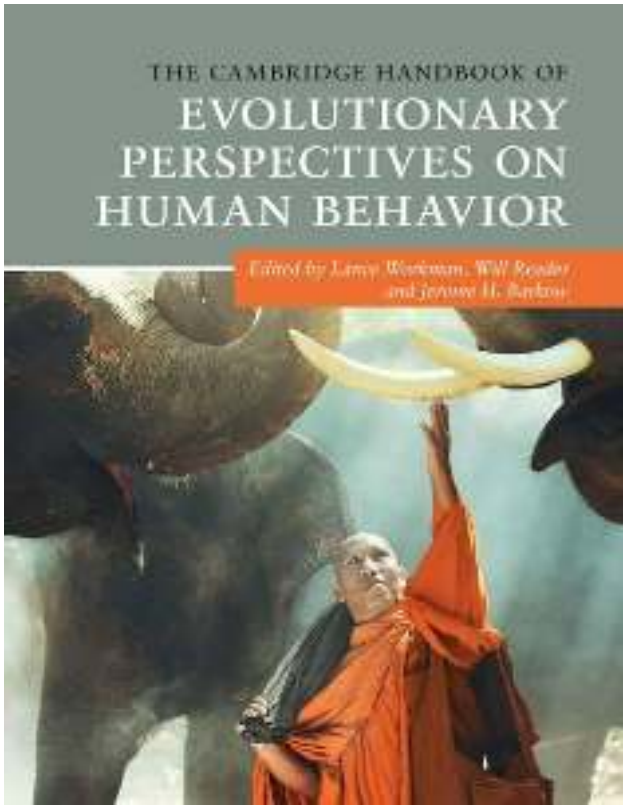
Learn More to Master Masculinity

- How to Become More Masculine: Practical Strategies for Men — actionable steps to build confidence, dominance, and social influence.
- Masculine Body Language & High Power Behavior
- Power University — our comprehensive program for top 1% men

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 September 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior (2020) offers a comprehensive overview of how evolutionary theory helps explain human behavior across domains like mating, cooperation, status, aggression, parenting, and culture. Written by top scholars, it distills decades of research into clear and groundbreaking insights into human psychology and behavior.



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SUMMARY

About the Authors:
Different authors, and the main editors are **Lance Workman**, **Will Reader**, and **Jerome H. Barkow**.
Workman and Reader also edited *Evolutionary Psychology: An Intro*.

Chapter 4: Eusociality in Humans

Laura Betzig opens by tracing the evolution of fully cooperative societies ("eusociality") in humans, contrasting our species with the eusocial structures of some insects.
She argues that human kinship systems and cooperative breeding foster levels of altruism and division of labor unseen elsewhere, yet still follow principles of inclusive fitness.

- **Allomothering & cooperative childcare**: human infants receive care from multiple relatives (grandmothers, aunts) boosting offspring survival.
- **Division of labor & reproductive skew**: though humans lack the morphological caste system of insects, social structures help regulate who reproduces vs. who helps.

Chapter 5: The Nature and Psychological Foundation of Social Universals

Bernard Chapais argues that many cultural universals (e.g. taboos, marriage rules) derive from evolved psychological adaptations for kin recognition, alliance formation, and status acquisition.

He outlines how a small set of cognitive mechanisms gives rise to the vast interlinked web of human social values and norms.

Category	Examples
Individual social acts	Insulting, tickling, healing the sick, gossiping, gift-giving, mourning, courting, greeting, threatening, joking, monitoring/imitating high-status individuals, provisioning children, stealing
Social interactions	Misinforming/misleading others, toilet training, rape, weaning, food sharing, teaching, taking revenge, incest avoidance, mating, male/female/sibling conflicts, mediation in conflicts, dominance interactions, coalitions, social play
Dyadic relationships	Friendships, pair-bonds, liaisons, mother–offspring bonds, father–offspring bonds, grandparent–grandchild bonds, lifetime bonds between cross-sex siblings, kin bonds, affinal bonds (e.g., brothers-in-law), task-specific partnerships, leader–follower relationships
Social differentiation criteria	Gender, age, kinship distinctions (paternal/maternal, lineal/collateral), generation (ascending/descending), affinal links, physical formidability, skills (physical, intellectual), temperament, beauty, health, in-group vs. out-group
Adaptive processes regulating social relationships	Reciprocity, negative reciprocity, mutual cooperation, kin altruism, nepotism, resource/status/sexual competition, male bias in violence, female mate choice, female bias in childcare
Moral dimensions of adaptive processes (derived)	Fairness (equity), generosity, judging others, disapproval of stinginess, resentment of exploitation, loyalty
Consistent social arrangements (derived)	Multimale–multifemale groups, kin groups, division of labor by age/sex, age grades, biparental families, households, status orders, prestige, lineages, clans, intergroup alliances, federated structures, leadership/government
Categories of social activities (derived)	Games, sports, feasts, ceremonies, cooperative labor, trade, decision-making, capital punishment, intergroup conflicts, religious rituals, rites of passage, visits, storytelling, dance, music, singing
Principles characterizing social life (derived)	Male political control, hospitality, collective identity, in-group favoritism (ethnocentrism), ostracism, parental mate influence, exogamy, property, territoriality, inequality, murder proscription, kinship, group coordination, social inheritance
Abstract social notions (derived)	Law, proscriptions, prescriptions, membership rules, kin/age-based statutes, rights, etiquette, obligations, sanctions, humor

A classification of a large sample of social universals found in Pinker's (2002) alphabetical list of absolute

universals drawn from Brown (1991). Primary social universals are likely to have psychological underpinnings. Derived social universals result from combinations of primary social universals.

- **Status-attainment module**: humans possess innate sensitivities to rank and prestige, which drive political alliances and social stratification.
- **Kin detection & incest avoidance**: cues like coresidence and maternal perinatal association inform inbreeding avoidance.
- **Coalition psychology**: mechanisms for recognizing and reciprocating support within groups underpin norms of obligation and trust.

Status-seeking

Humans are hard-wired to pay attention to status, and the author lists four motives related to status:

1. opportunistically **acquiring** and improving one's competence (in one or more domains of activity);
2. **monitoring** one's and others' relative position in the competence order;
3. seeking to **outperform or outrank** others whenever this is possible and advantageous – which depends on the context (e.g., Anderson et al., 2012) – and to maintain one's position in the face of challenges;
4. **signaling** one's position in the status hierarchy in order to reap the benefits associated with it

Learn more:

- What is social status and why it matters
- **How to effectively gain status**

> How to Gain Social Status as a Man: A Field Guide

Chapter 6: The Study of Culture and Evolution across Disciplines

Alex Mesoudi surveys how cultural evolution has been approached in anthropology, psychology, archaeology, and biology.
He advocates for moving past the evolution/culture dichotomy, and for integrative models that extend the scientific approach to culture (something that sociocultural anthropology isn't doing, but that cultural evolutionary scientists are).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: This was a good and well-balanced chapter showing how culture and evolution aren't two extremes of a continuum, but two mutually-evolving and codependent forces (just added a note to Rogers' paradox, see analyis below).

The 'Drift' Between Evolution & Cultural Evolution Is Thinning, But Differences Persist

The author argues that despite there still being some lingering drift between evolutionary psychologists and cultural constructionists, the field has been moving in the right direction of acknowledging the importance of both evolution/biology, and culture:

> This focus on universals was an explicit reaction against what Tooby and Cosmides (1992) called the "Standard Social Science Model," which they characterized as a denial of human nature and an extreme cultural determinism where evolution played no role in shaping human behavior.
>
> While this was a laudable aim, some have argued that evolutionary psychologists swung too far the other way. As Laland and Brown (2011) point out, in Buss et al.'s (1990) cross-cultural study of mating preferences, much

> more variation (around 14 percent) in responses was explained by the cultural background of the participants than was explained by sex (only around 2 percent).
> Yet the study is typically cited as evidence for the universality of human mating strategies.
>
> The situation has improved since these early studies, however, with evolutionary psychologists now formulating specific hypotheses about particular patterns of cultural variation and testing them in targeted cross-cultural comparisons (Apicella & Barrett, 2016).

And, most importantly, that cultural variations do not disprove evolution, but confirm it:

> In sum, an early focus within evolutionary psychology on human universals (e.g., Brown, 1991) has given way to an appreciation that cultural variation (Definition 3) is not only perfectly consistent with an evolved human psychology (Barrett, 2015), but also that cultural variation can be utilized to test evolutionary predictions (Apicella & Barrett, 2016)

However, while there are plenty of areas of disagreement, there still remain some differences to exactly how much culture matters, and which force is the most 'potent' in shaping human psychology, behavior, and society:

> In sum, while there are large areas of agreement, evolutionary scholars disagree over how much explanatory power to assign to transmitted culture.
>
> Evolutionary psychologists and human behavioral ecologists typically treat transmitted culture as a proximate mechanism that helps to explain how we arrive at genetically adaptive behavior. Much cultural evolution work is consistent with this, as in the case of genetically evolved content biases.
>
> But many cultural evolutionists argue that transmitted culture also often changes the rules of the human evolutionary game, creating new equilibria (e.g., large-scale cooperation), spreading maladaptive behavior (e.g., copycat suicide, small family sizes), and replacing genetic evolution as a source of adaptation (e.g., resulting in complex technology and institutions or grammatical structure).

In simpler terms, this means that evolutionary psychologists and behavioral ecologists view culture not as an independent force, but as a tool that helps people behave in ways that are aligned with their evolved genetic interests (ie.: use culture to enhance genetic fitness with better survival and reproduction).

The author seems to agree with evolutionary psychologists, and content biases, which are built-in tendencies, shaped by evolution, to focus on certain cultural content we're most likely to learn and retain, proves that **genetic evolution still ultimately drives behavior**, and culture just works within that framework — as a **channel for expressing evolved adaptations**.

In contrast, cultural evolutionists (like Boyd, Richerson, Henrich, etc.) argue that **culture can become its own evolutionary force**, sometimes even **overriding or changing genetic incentives**.

My note: both make great points, they're not antithetical, but cultural evolutionists fielded stronger arguments
The spread of maladaptive behaviors (like copycat suicides or choosing to have fewer children), the importance of culture to survival and reproduction in harsh climates and environments, and culture's increasing role in human evolution are too compelling to downplay.

Marriage Norms Adapt to Environments

> Human behavioral ecologists assume that human behavior is flexible enough to generate adaptive responses to

> diverse environmental conditions, in contrast to the sociobiological focus on behavioral universals or fixed genetically evolved predispositions.
>
> Consequently, human behavioral ecologists showed how marriage practices may vary in a biologically adaptive manner, with polyandry emerging in harsh environments where more than one man is needed to raise offspring (Crook & Crook, 1988; Smith, 1998) and polygyny emerging when men can monopolize resources and accumulate wealth, particularly via pastoralism (Borgerhoff Mulder, 1990)

Important Concepts

- **Dual-inheritance frameworks**: gene–culture coevolution models showing feedbacks between genetic propensities and cultural practices.
- **Transmission biases**: prestige, conformity, and content biases shape which cultural variants spread.
- **Methodological advances**: network-based diffusion analysis (NBDA) and experimental microcultures as tools to quantify cultural-evolutionary dynamics.

Chapter 7: Are Evolutionary Psychology and the Neuroscience of Motivation Compatible?

Frederick Toates explores how basic human drives like hunger and sex work.
He combines insights from evolutionary psychology with brain research, showing that many of our motivations are shaped by evolved systems in the brain—like the dopamine system—that push us to seek rewards and meet survival and reproduction needs.

Some of these systems, however, evolved for different environments and can turn maladaptive, including our preference for sugary or fatty foods, and our brain receptors that didn't evolve in a world where getting addicted to drugs was a possibility.

Interesting Notes

- **Pregnancy sickness may be an adaptation**: *Rather than being an example of pathology, pregnancy sickness fits the criteria of being an adaptation (…) It protects the baby from toxins at a time of maximum vulnerability of the developing nervous system (i.e., usually starting at 2–4 weeks of pregnancy and ending at 14 weeks) (Profet, 1992).*
- **Testosterone ≠ more aggression**: *in the popular imagination more T = more aggression. However, the evidence suggests a more nuanced view (Archer, 2006; Dreher et al., 2016).*
  (…) in keeping with principles of evolutionary function, the secretion of testosterone usually reflects the cost–benefit calculation of aggression in the animal's present context (Archer, 2006). (…) Testosterone increases aggression tendencies in men who are dominant and/or low in self-control (Carré et al., 2017).
  (…) In men, boosting levels of testosterone increases the punishment given to wrongdoers, but also increases the reward given to a deserving other (Dreher et al., 2016). The authors interpret both of these actions as assertions of status.
- **There may be a correlation between testosterone and short-term mating strategy**: Archer (2006) predicts that testosterone is positively linked to short-term mating and negatively linked to marital and parental investment. Supporting evidence suggests testosterone is associated with a more extraverted, uninhibited, and dominant personality (Archer, 2006, p. 337), aligning with a short-term mating strategy focused on mating over parenting
- **Empathy's strength is partially associated with in-group belonging** (Hein et al., 2016).

Chapter 8: Are We Designed to Be Happy? The Neuroscience of Making Sense of Pleasure

Stark, Berridge, and Kringelbach explain that the brain has separate systems for "liking" and "wanting." Evolution shaped these systems to help us seek rewards that boost survival and reproduction.

- "Liking" involves small brain areas (hedonic hotspots) that produce pleasure, using opioid and endocannabinoid chemicals.
- "Wanting" is driven by dopamine, which tracks reward cues—not pleasure itself—explaining why we can strongly crave things without enjoying them (as in addiction).

This split helps us stay motivated without becoming overwhelmed by constant pleasure.

Chapter 9: Environmental Pressures on Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance

Adhya et al. look at how stress during pregnancy or early life can cause changes in how genes are expressed—without changing the DNA sequence itself.
These are called 'epigenetic changes,' and when such changes can be passed on to future generations, it's called 'transgenerational epigenetic inheritance'.

They focus especially on links to autism-related traits.

- **Timing matters (critical windows)**: Stress in early stages of pregnancy (like the first trimester) affects gene expression patterns in developing brain cells.
- **Lab models**: Stem-cell–derived brain cells show abnormal gene activity in genes linked to autism.
- **Air pollution is harmful**: Maternal exposure to air pollution during pregnancy is also highly associated with autism, and one study showed pregnant mothers living near freeways were more likely to have children with autism (Volk et al., 2011).

I also noticed that the concept of autism as a 'extreme male brain' seems to get with these findings:

> Steroids are important factors in brain development, and higher levels of circulating sex steroids in the male fetus are positively associated with autism (Baron-Cohen et al., 2011, 2015). Mothers with polycystic ovary syndrome, characterized by hyperandrogenism and elevated levels of androgens during pregnancy, are also at greater risk of having children with autism (Kosidou et al., 2016; Pohl et al., 2014)

Chapter 10: The Problem of Altruism and Future Directions

Colquhoun, Workman, and Fowler revisit classic theories about why people help others—like helping family (kin selection) or expecting favors in return (reciprocal altruism).
They argue that in real life, cooperation often happens in larger social networks, not just one-on-one relationships.

- People tend to form **clusters of cooperators**, which helps keep altruism going even without direct payback
- **Altruism for reputation may be a strategy** to attract strong, reliable allies.
  Indeed:
  - **Altruism increases when behavior is made public** from altruism in economic games like public goods or dictator games (Andreoni & Petrie, 2004; Filiz-Ozbay & Ozbay, 2014; Rege & Telle, 2004), to greater engagement in volunteering (Carpenter & Myers, 2010; Linardi & McConnell, 2011), or buying "green" products rather than cheaper alternatives (Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010)
- **We help the highest values people when risk is high**: In life-or-death scenarios, participants would help young, healthy, and/or wealthy individuals as opposed to very young or old, unhealthy, and/or poor individuals.

They also found more help was given to premenopausal as opposed to postmenopausal women.
  - But we help the neediest when risk is low: But in the lower cost situation of everyday favors, the authors found a curvilinear effect for age, with the very young or old receiving more help, and the reverse or diminished effects for health, wealth, and many other factors (Burnstein, Crandall, Kitayama, 1994)
  - It's not always 'kin above all': While there was still found a preference to help close kin, the results demonstrate that it is not sufficient simply to state that kin selection should lead to favoring close relatives; rather, it should lead to the selection of the optimal indirect fitness gain
    Similar results are reported by Essock-Vitale and McGuire (1985)

- **Sexual selection may play a role, and men may help others to signal mate value**: *researchers have proposed that males are more likely to produce costly signals through altruistic behavior, either by aiding females or by aiding males to signal that they are of higher quality. In this way, both intra (within sexes) and inter (between sexes) components of sexual selection may be operating.*
  Some evidence supports this theory:
  - And prosociality may support sexual outcomes: *Following up on the themes explored by Barclay, Arnocky et al. (2016) found that "altruists" self-reported more sexual partners than "non-altruists." This was particularly the case for males. In a follow-up study, men who were more willing to donate money to a good cause reported a larger number of lifetime romantic partners (Arnocky et al., 2016). Both of these findings support the notion that altruism increases (male) mating success in humans.*
    In addition to recent empirical studies, circumstantial evidence for this position arises from social anthropologists' studies of hunter–gatherer peoples. It is well established that, in forager societies, men who hunt and share meat enjoy greater reproductive success (Hawkes, 1991; Hill & Hurtado, 1996).

- **Selfish genes don't negate altruism because in repeated interactions like relationships it's best to cooperate**: *In the iterated prisoner's dilemma, we have a microcosm of real-life dilemmas that regularly occur in everyday life – from whether we should offer people a lift in our car, to tipping a waiter (or not), to deciding whether or not to remain faithful to our romantic partner. Do we cooperate or do we defect? In most cases, it will be to our advantage in the long run to cooperate – so long as this is reciprocated, that is.*
- **Emotional closeness may be the cue to kin altruism**: empirical studies demonstrate that kin selection theory stands up to scrutiny, but supporting proximate mechanisms are not as well developed. Emotional closeness may be a proximate cue for kinship, as found it mediates the effect of relatedness and altruistic willingness to help for both low- and high-cost altruistic acts.
  - Nonkin altruism may hijack kinship cues (like emotional closeness): It's likely that the kin selection heuristic rule of "help those you are emotionally close to" could be selected for, and altruism towards emotionally close nonkin may be hijacking a once-adaptive heuristic.

Also, I found this interesting as a possible friction between individual empowerment and human progress:

- **Cooperation is good for everyone, but limits individuals' freedom**: *According to new group selectionists, while cooperation is advantageous to the group of cooperators as a whole, it may also curb some individual freedoms*

New Group Selection Theories

There are three main overlapping forms of new group selection:

- Multilevel selection (MLS)
- Dual inheritance theory (DIT; or gene–culture coevolution)
- Cultural group selection (CGS)

Let's quickly review them in relation to cooperation:

1. Multilevel Selection (MLS)

Wilson & Sober (1994); Wilson, 2007; Wilson & Wilson, 2007
This theory argues that natural selection operates not only at the individual level but also at the group level. Groups with more cooperation can outperform less cooperative ones, passing on more genes.

Humans, being highly social, may have evolved group-level traits like altruism.

E.O. Wilson later supported this, arguing that in some species (like social insects), group benefits outweigh kin benefits (Nowak, Tarnita, & Wilson, 2010). However, many scientists remain skeptical, defending Hamilton's rule (Abbot et al., 2011; Dawkins, 2016).

2. Dual Inheritance Theory (DIT)

Feldman & Cavalli-Sforza, 1976; Henrich & McElreath, 2007; Richerson & Boyd, 2005
DIT proposes that humans evolve through both genetic and cultural transmission. Cultural practices shape the environment in which genes evolve.

For example, imitating a successful farmer may pass on both useful and useless traits (Henrich & McElreath, 2007).
Altruism may evolve not because it's immediately adaptive, but because group norms favor it—especially when people reward cooperation and punish norm-breakers (a concept called strong reciprocity).

> They suggest that our current propensity for altruistic behavior is due to our evolved tendency to gravitate toward group norms.
> One of these group norms has been labeled "strong reciprocity."
> Strong reciprocity is based on Trivers' notion of reciprocal altruism, but is more generalized and culture specific. Strong reciprocity refers to a combination of: 1. Tendencies to reward others for cooperation 2. Norm-abiding behavior 3. Altruistic punishment (i.e., the propensity to impose sanctions on others who violate norms).
> (…)
> those cultural groups that exhibited strong reciprocity in the past are considered to have outcompeted those cultural groups that did not exhibit strong reciprocity.
> This then results in genes that underlie prosocial behavior being selected for, leading ultimately to a form of universal pro-social behavior.

3. Cultural Group Selection (CGS)

Boyd & Richerson, 1982, 1985; Richerson et al., 2016
CGS argues that **culture itself**—not genes—can drive group-level evolution.

Groups that share norms and cooperate may outcompete others, especially in conflict or war.

Behaviors like building defenses or punishing cheaters help such groups survive and grow (Laland & Brown, 2011).
CGS emphasizes **conformity, fast cultural transmission**, and **clear group boundaries**. But while it can promote **within-group altruism**, it can also lead to **between-group hostility** (Bowles, 2009).

Boyd and Richerson (2005) argue that cultural group selection (CGS) can promote pro-social behavior, based on studies in New Guinea.
But the authors correctly note that cultural group selection fosters altruism within groups while encouraging selfishness or hostility between them.
Bowles (2009), analyzing ancient death data, found that between-group competition significantly raised mortality.
So the key question becomes: **altruism toward whom?**
For example, suicide bombers may be seen as altruistic by their own group—but not by outsiders.

I'm glad the author pointed that out since I believe that tribalism stands in the way of both self-development and human development.
Also see:

- **Empowered individualism**

Lucio's note: cultural evolution is less convincing in explaining the origins of altruism
I so far found the evidence for cultural evolution strong and fascinating, but somewhat less convincing when it comes to explaining cooperation.
At the time of writing, I believe it may have had an impact, but more of a reinforcing one, rather than being a creationist force.

Humans: Not Selfless Altruists, But Still Good Cooperators

> As such, the goal of the theories discussed in this chapter is to demonstrate that true altruism, in an evolutionary sense, does not exist. From a gene-centered viewpoint, a gene mutation that encourages true altruistic behaviors will not be selected for. So while it may seem that natural selection and evolutionary explanations for apparent acts of altruism contradict Augustine's and Aquinas' views that humans are innately good, remember that the following evidence demonstrates that, while not altruistic from the genes' eye view, many species – humans included – have evolved to engage in pro-social and cooperative behaviors.

Chapter 11: Can Evolutionary Processes Explain the Origins of Morality?

Dennis Krebs investigates whether moral emotions (guilt, indignation) and judgments arise from adaptive mechanisms (e.g. policing, sanctioning) that enhanced group cohesion.
He critiques "moral-sense" theories of innate morality for underestimating the importance of culture.

- **Commitment devices**: moral norms as credible signals of cooperative intent.
- **Third-party punishment**: neural and game-theoretic data show a readiness to incur costs to defend group rules and cooperation.
- **Cultural amplification**: moral foundations vary by ecology, but rest on shared psychological foundations (Haidt's Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity).

The 6 Forms of Cross-Cultural Morality

Researchers have found that people from all cultures consider at least six forms of conduct moral (Krebs, 2011):

1. Altruism
2. Group solidarity
3. Respect for rules and authority
4. Fairness
5. Self-control
6. Cleanliness and purity

Cultures vary in which moral norms they prioritize and how they express them. Western societies value care and justice, Orthodox Jewish and Hindu cultures emphasize purity and authority, and Japanese culture highlights group loyalty (Pinker, 2008).

Altruism May Have Evolved Because We Can't Recognize Kin

> Strictly speaking, kin-selected altruistic dispositions should be triggered by kin.

> Fortunately for the evolution of altruism, however, members of most species, including our own, are not very good at determining the extent to which they are related to others, let alone the probability that potential recipients possess copies of their altruism genes.
>
> Like other animals, we infer the degree of genetic relatedness by attending to three main correlates of – or cues to – kinship: similarity (e.g., in appearance and smell), familiarity, and proximity.
> Because nonrelatives may look like relatives, be familiar to donors, and live in close proximity to them, nonrelatives may trigger kin-selected altruistic dispositions.

Group Selection For Morality & Tribal Instincts

Some forms of altruism—such as self-sacrifice for unrelated group members—aren't fully explained by kin or reciprocal altruism alone.

Most evolutionary biologists accept that under certain conditions, group selection can support the evolution of altruistic traits when groups with more cooperators outperform more selfish groups (Sober & Wilson, 1998).

This dynamic becomes especially powerful in humans through **cultural group selection**: cooperative norms, behaviors, and institutions spread because **groups that cooperate more tend to outcompete those that don't**, not just in warfare, but also economically and socially (Henrich, 2016; Richerson & Boyd, 2005).

These **"tribal instincts"** are thought to rest on evolved capacities like emotional bonding, norm enforcement, and loyalty, which are then **shaped and reinforced by cultural institutions**. This helps explain strong **in-group favoritism**, including moral concern primarily directed toward group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Greene, 2013).

Together, this body of research suggests that large-scale cooperation in human societies likely emerged not just from individual-level strategies, but also from **selection pressures acting on culturally organized groups**.

Mental Mechanisms Supporting Kin-Selected Altruism

Research shows that kin-selected a suite of neurochemical and emotional systems support altruism.
Hormones such as oxytocin, vasopressin, prolactin, and endogenous opioids help regulate altruistic behavior toward kin or those perceived as kin (Brown & Brown, 2006).

Two key emotions—**empathy and sympathy**—are central to this process (Batson, 1991).
According to de Waal (2008), these emotions are triggered by cues like similarity, familiarity, social closeness, and shared experiences.

Empathy tends to be activated toward cooperative or close others, while it is suppressed—or even replaced with Schadenfreude—toward strangers or perceived defectors.
Scan shows that empathy activates toward cooperative confederates but reward centers in the brain activate when seeing pain in defectors, at least in men (de Waal, 2008).

Although empathy can sometimes motivate helping to reduce personal distress or avoid disapproval, Batson's research (1991) supports the idea that empathy and sympathy can produce genuinely altruistic motivation—helping others as an end in itself, not for selfish gain.
This kind of motivation is typically judged as more moral.

Respect for Authority Is Evolved

Respecting authority helps maintain group cohesion, especially in large or structured societies. It supports order by encouraging individuals to follow rules and defer to those who enforce them — such as parents, teachers, and legal authorities.

This tendency serves adaptive functions. Deference helps individuals avoid punishment, access leadership and protection, and ensures smoother group coordination — especially in competitive environments.

In humans, this predisposition appears early. Developmental research shows that young children tend to equate morality with obeying rules and authority figures (Kohlberg, 1984). While later development brings more independent moral reasoning, many still view following legitimate authority as a moral obligation.

Neurobiologically, different pathways may drive respect for authority.
One is fear-based — linked to the threat of punishment. The other stems from admiration or awe, directed at high-status individuals.
Hormones like testosterone and serotonin modulate these tendencies (Cummins, 2005).

As people mature, they gain the cognitive ability to assess authority more critically. This includes distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate power, questioning unfair rules, and deciding when defiance may be justified — a level of flexibility less common in nonhuman primates.

Origins of Fairness, Justice, & Dislike of Cheats

Trivers (1971) used game theory to show how *reciprocal altruism*—helping others with the expectation of return—can evolve because it pays off biologically.

Strategies like *Tit for Tat* outperform selfish ones in repeated exchanges, making fairness not just moral, but adaptive.

Among humans reciprocal altruism is powered by evolved emotions like gratitude, guilt, indignation, and forgiveness. These “moral emotions” promote cooperation, punish cheaters, and help restore valuable relationships:

- **Gratitude** → Encourages helping those who helped us; reinforces beneficial cooperation.
- **Indebtedness** → Triggers discomfort when you’ve received help you haven’t yet repaid; pushes to restore balance and avoid being a “free rider
- **Guilt**→ Discourages selfish or harmful behavior by triggering discomfort after cheating or harming others.
- **Indignation (or moral anger)** → Motivates punishment or distancing from cheaters; protects the system from exploitation.
- **Forgiveness** → Allows reconciliation and restoration of cooperation after a breach, when it’s still beneficial long-term.

> the biological function of conscience and guilt is to induce members of groups to regret behaving in ways that undermine the cooperative social orders of their groups, to motivate them to right the wrongs they have committed, and to induce them to reform.

These emotions can be so strong that they even invert people’s self-serving biases.
Indeed, Janicki (2004) found that people tend to feel worse when they fail to repay their friends than they do when their friends fail to repay them. The long-term fitness benefits of upholding friendships outweigh the short-term benefits of exploiting one’s friends.

While fairness appears in other species (e.g., capuchins rejecting unfair rewards), humans stand out for their ability to manage complex fairness systems.
Fair behavior works best in small groups, where reputations and repeated interactions keep cheaters in check.

The Original Selfish Gene Approach Was Wrong

> As brilliant and renowned as Richard Dawkins is, he reached the wrong conclusion about the evolution of morality, primarily because he conflated genetic selfishness, which pertains to the selection of genes, with

> biological and psychological forms of selfishness (a mistake that Dawkins corrected in revisions of his books).
>
> In a nutshell, behaving in biologically and psychologically altruistic and moral ways can increase fitness, and behaving in biologically and psychologically selfish and immoral ways can diminish fitness (Krebs, 2011).

Chapter 12: The Evolution and Function of Third-Party Moral Judgment

Reader and Hughes focus specifically on third-party moral judgment, which is:

> Third-party moral judgment is the positive or (probably more usually) negative judgment of a behavior or trait in others that has no material effect on the person judging.

They integrate moral judgment with evolutionary theory, claiming that condemning norm violators serves to maintain group-wide cohesion and cooperation by broadcasting sanctions and enabling coalitional sorting.

Lucio's note: did third-party judgment evolve for individual benefit, or group benefit?
The authors claim that it likely evolved as a result of intergroup conflict, something I can partially agree on, but of which I'm not fully convinced.
I believe that the selfish gene point of view also provides a good ultimate explanation via virtue signaling and power signaling (eg.: i'f I can negatively judge others, it means I'm higher status/power').

- **Audience effects**: individuals amplify moral outrage when observed, signaling loyalty.
- **Proportionality norms**: calibrated punishments reflect perceived fitness costs of violations.
- **Cognitive underpinnings**: fast, intuitive judgments (System 1) followed by deliberative justifications (System 2).

Chapter 13: Evolution of the Human Family

Palmer and Coe argue that the human family isn't a 'core social unit' but a **mechanism** to transmit traditional behaviors to maximize fitness, eventually enabling the formation of clans.

- **Grandmother hypothesis**: post-reproductive women increase inclusive fitness by provisioning grandchildren.
- **Stepfamilies & paternity certainty**: trade-offs between male investment and cuckoldry risk shape mating systems and grandparent provisioning, with grandparents from the mother side investing more than from the father side

Chapter 14: The Parasite-Stress Theory of Cultural Values and Sociality

Thornhill and Fincher propose that pathogen prevalence selects for collectivist norms, stronger in-group ties, and purity taboos, as behavioral "immunizations." They integrate cross-cultural data on parasite load and individualism–collectivism.

- **Immune-behavioral links**: the 'behavioral immune system' supports the biological immune system with behavior like distancing oneself from sick people and toxic compounds. It's driven by disgust sensitivity, which is upregulated in high-pathogen ecologies.
- **Fear of infections drives xenophobia and ethnocentrism**: Faulkner et al. (2004) and Navarrete and Fessler (2006) provided evidence that the degree of xenophobia and ethnocentrism correspond to chronic individual differences in worry about contracting or catching infectious disease.
  Those who perceive high infectious disease risk are more xenophobic and ethnocentric
- **Higher parasites lead to good looks becoming more important**: Gangestad and Buss (1993) and Gangestad et al. (2006) empirically reported a positive correlation across countries between human parasite stress and the importance people place on physical attractiveness (good looks) in mate choice.

It was hypothesized that physical attractiveness is a certification of genetic resistance to parasites

- **Social distancing norms** (tight/loose): tight-loose theory says some cultures have strict norms (tight) and others are more permissive (loose). Tight cultures often emerge in places with high threats—like parasite stress—because strict rules help prevent disease spread and protect the group

Parasites Shape Collectivism and Conservatism

The parasite-stress theory of sociality proposes that **high levels of infectious disease promote collectivism and conservatism** over individualism (especially non-zoonotic infectious diseases transmissible between humans).

Collectivism–individualism is a cultural dimension that closely mirrors the political spectrum of conservatism–liberalism.
Regions with high pathogen stress tend to favor collectivist and conservative values like ethnocentrism, conformity, and xenophobia, which serve as behavioral defenses against disease.

In contrast, individualist and liberal values—such as autonomy, openness, and diversity—thrive in low-pathogen environments, where the risk of infection is lower and the costs of openness are reduced. Thus, disease prevalence helps shape both cultural and political orientations.

In short, high pathogen stress pushes cultures toward collectivism and political conservatism by activating a behavioral immune system aimed at minimizing disease risk. This leads to increased in-group conformity, xenophobia, religiosity, and resistance to social change, forming the cultural and political basis of conservative and authoritarian societies.

Lucio's Note: This was an incredible, novel insight ⁉️
What we may call a 'aha moment', or even a mindblown insight. It adds up and passes the 'logic test', but it's so groundbreaking for now that I need to further reflect on it (and I await further future data).
It may be an idea to test and see if more conservative individuals are less healthy, or more health-conscious

Key Findings:

- **Collectivism increases with pathogen stress**: Cross-national and within-country studies (e.g., across U.S. states and indigenous societies) consistently show that regions with higher pathogen stress display higher collectivism and lower individualism. This includes tighter family ties, traditionalism, and less tolerance for outsiders.
- **Non-zoonotic diseases matter most**: Diseases that spread human-to-human (as opposed to those contracted from animals) are particularly predictive of collectivist cultures. These findings hold after controlling for wealth, population, and geography.
- **Political conservatism and authoritarianism increase with pathogens**: Collectivism correlates with right-wing and conservative political ideologies, including authoritarian governance, gender inequality, sexual restrictiveness (especially for women), and limited property rights. This implies that high pathogen stress fosters politically conservative, hierarchical, and closed societies.
- **Religiosity as behavioral immunity**: Religiosity supports in-group cohesion and moral conformity, making it another collectivist value linked to parasite stress. Highly religious regions tend to have higher disease risk and more collectivist norms.
- **Conformity and prejudice rise with perceived infection risk**: Both experimental and survey-based studies show that people exposed to disease cues become more conformist, more prejudiced toward non-conformists and out-groups, and more favorable to traditional values. These are immediate, psychological shifts triggered by infection salience.
- **Disgust sensitivity links to collectivism and conservatism**: People with higher disgust sensitivity—often correlated with disease concerns—are more likely to be collectivist, religious, and prejudiced against sexual and

ethnic minorities. This supports the idea that **disgust acts as a behavioral immune trigger favoring conservative values**.

- **Linguistic and cultural fragmentation rise with pathogens**: Pathogen stress promotes the rise of new, smaller cultures and languages—a process termed the "parasite-driven wedge." It suggests that avoidance behaviors (e.g., ethnocentrism and limited dispersal) segment cultures even without geographic barriers.

Chapter 15: The Evolution of Pride and Shame

Beall and Tracy argue that pride and shame are universal self-conscious emotions that regulate status within hierarchies: pride signals success to others, shame promotes appeasement when status is threatened.

> In evolutionary accounts, emotions are fitness maximizing affective mechanisms that galvanize coordinated suites of physiological and psychological responses to recurrent events of evolutionary significance (Beall & Tracy, 2017; Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Nesse & Ellsworth, 2009)

- **Pride and shame are cross-cultural prototypical expressions**: consistent facial and body language cues for pride and shame
- **Pride is associated with high status** (Tracy, 2016)**, shame with low stauts**. Pride inclucdes dominant and confident body language, shame with closed off and low power body language
- **Two forms of pride** conceptualized and experienced as distinct and independent and are associated with highly divergent personality profiles (Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2014; Tracy et al., 2009)
  - hubristic, marked by arrogance and conceit, more antisocial, associated with disagreeableness, aggression, and lack of conscientiousness, and narcissism
  - authentic, fueled by feelings of accomplishment, confidence, and success
- **They both serve an adaptive function**: pride motivates dominance behavior, shame deflects aggression
  - Shame displays appease and decreases punishment: researchers found that a hypothetical convicted drug dealer was judged as less guilty and given a weaker penalty when displaying shame and embarrassment compared to contempt or a neutral expression

- **There are benefits to reading body language well**: Shame displays signal group commitment, helping observers choose trustworthy partners, avoid unnecessary conflict, and understand social hierarchies—key for cooperation and resource-saving
  - It's especially important for men: in certain contemporary cultures, men must constantly track their own status relative to those around them, whereas for women this is less essential (Tracy et al., 2013)

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's Note / suggestion: may want to revise the attractiveness of shame/pride**
The chapter says that '*shame expressions are one of the most sexually attractive emotion expressions shown by both men and women (Tracy & Beall, 2011; but see Beall & Tracy, 2014)*', which seemed strange.
Little later it says that '*men who displayed pride were found to be highly attractive to women compared to men who gave neutral, shame, or happy displays (male happy displays, in fact, were particularly unattractive)*'.

Chapter 17: Runaway Processes in Modern Human Culture

Miklósi and Konok apply Zahavi's handicap and runaway sexual selection models to contemporary media, showing how exaggeration of signals (e.g. social-media personas) fuels escalating patterns of self-presentation.

- **Costly signaling in digital realms**: curated online identities used as hard-to-fake reputational markers.
- **Cascade effects**: viral replication amplifies extreme traits through social copying.
- **Psychological drivers**: reward circuits respond to likes/shares, reinforcing signal inflation.

- **Cooperation and cheat punishment may be runaway selection**: *Nakamaru and Dieckmann (2009) demonstrated mathematically that cooperation and punishment of defectors in human groups underwent runaway selection, with evolution toward enhanced cooperation and ever stricter punishment norms mutually reinforcing each other*

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Notes On Runaway Selection & Handicap Principle

I had to do some extra research to clarify for myself how runaway selection isn't withheld by the women who don't like the runaway trait, and how it fits with the handicap principle.

Here's what I cam up with:

How Runaway Selection Starts & Works

Three phases:

1. **Accidental preferences** (sexual selection): A female shows a preference for a male trait (accidentally)
2. **Runaway** (sexual selection): the bearers of the trait increase their ratio in the population.
   - ⍰⍰ Trait competition may limit runaway: sexual selection simultaneously acts on multiple traits that could mutually inhibit the "runaway" of the others. For example, if females like long tails and dancing, then a too long tail hampering dance acts against longer tails
3. **Natural selection**: the trait that emerges as a result of sexual selection may be subject to factors of natural selection.
   At this point, if the trait is negative, natural selection will 'cap' how far the trait can grow

At the beginning, **random variation or drift** introduces a small number of females who prefer longer tails. These females:

- Choose slightly longer-tailed males → produce sons with slightly longer tails **and** daughters who prefer them.

Even if the advantage is **tiny at first**, that **correlation between trait and preference** builds momentum.
Once a small preference becomes common enough, then:

1. Long-tailed males get more mates,
2. The feedback loop kicks in (runaway), and
3. Short-tail males (and their daughters' preferences) get outcompeted <— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: This is not fully clear to me yet and I suggest the authors to dig deeper into it. Why would the short tail males get out-competed as long as females who don't acquire the taste for longer tails can still pick them to reproduce with? It seems to me there is a missing piece here: a **crowding out** whereby shorter tales men must compete on other traits, while still never winning the long-tail lovers (a **handicap by omission**, you may call it)

The text explains that the preference is expressed only in females and the sexually dimorphic trait is expressed only in males.
So only males pay the price of the costly growing ornament.

Zahavi Handicap Principle

Zahavi's handicap principle says costly traits (like long tails) signal male quality because only the healthiest can afford them.

Studies support this: females prefer such traits, which often reflect good genes or strong immunity. These traits act as honest, hard-to-fake signals of genetic fitness.

Getty (2006) refined this view: rather than just being costly, these traits are **strategic investments** by high-quality

males who benefit more from increased mating opportunities.

Fisher Runaway vs. Zahavi Handicap: They're Both Right

Both are **partially right**, and modern evolutionary biology sees them as **complementary**, not mutually exclusive:

- **Fisher** explains how female preferences and traits can co-evolve and become exaggerated—even if they start arbitrarily.
- **Zahavi** explains **why** a preference might evolve *in the first place*—because it's tied to reliable indicators of health or fitness.

In reality, many traits likely involve **both mechanisms**:

- A preference may **start** because the trait signals health (Zahavi),
- Then it becomes exaggerated through **runaway selection** (Fisher).

Chapter 18: Ontogeny of Tactical Deception

LaFreniere and Smith review how children develop deceptive tactics, going from simple feigning to complex deception, against a backdrop of evolving mind-reading and inhibitory control capacities.

They refer to the theory of Machiavellian intelligence, and claim that deception is a useful skill to succeed in life.

- **Stages of deception**: spotting opportunities, inhibiting truth, constructing plausible falsehoods.
- **Theory of mind** refers to knowing what others think and want, and it correlates with false-belief understanding and lie sophistication.
- **Cost–benefit trade-offs**: social learning conditions which deceptions pay off at different ages.

Chapter 20: The Adaptive Problem of Exploiting Resources

Wilke used experiments to show that people make smart choices in problem-solving tasks—similar to foraging—by weighing the cost of searching against the rewards they get.

- **Fishing vs. word-puzzle analogies**: similarity in participants' switching behavior across domains
- **Cognitive heuristics**: "good-enough" stopping rules rather than perfect optimization.

Chapter 21: Evolutionary Developmental Psychology

Myers and Bjorklund explain how evolution shapes different behaviors at different ages—like infant attachment or teen risk-taking—through the interaction of genes, environment, and culture.

- **Sensitive periods**: windows for imprinting and social learning.
- **Life-history calibration**: environmental harshness accelerates developmental milestones, shifts towards more risk-taking behavior and prioritize quantity of offspring rather than quality
  Children who are exposed to extrinsic morbidity–mortality cues, such as exposure to violence or harsh childrearing practices, shift their resource allocation toward earlier pubertal maturation and sexual debut, engage in more aggressive and risky behavior, become pregnant earlier, form unstable pair bonds, and provide less parental investment per offspring than children growing up in less harsh and more predictable environments (e.g., Ellis, 2004; Ellis et al., 2009; Nettle, 2010; Nettle & Cockerill, 2010; Placek & Quinlan, 2012; Wilson & Daly, 1997)
- **Adaptive plasticity**: variation in trait expression shaped by early cues.
- **Boys vs Girls** show differences from childhood
  - Boys problem solve, girls befriend: Boys are more inclined to use tools for problem-solving, whereas girls are more likely to be oriented toward personal relationships (Gredlein & Bjorklund, 2005).

- Boys play dominance-related games: *Girls' fantasy play tends to be oriented more toward relationships, such as playing house. Boys' fantasy play, on the other hand, tends to be more oriented toward dominance themes, such as playing cowboys and Indians or being "superhero crime fighters," dependent on current cultural themes (Pellegrini, 2013)*

> Men's relationships are more based on dominance and status, whereas women's relationships are more interpersonal and intimate (Bjorklund & Ellis, 2014).

Chapter 22: The Ontogeny and Evolution of Cooperation

Grüneisen and Wyman chart how cooperative behaviors emerge in toddlers—sharing, helping, group cohesion—and link these to ancestral needs for collective action, supported by oxytocin and endorphin systems.

- **Early helping**: infants as young as 14 months assist adults without reward.
- **Punishment & partner choice**: toddlers show aversion to unfair peers.

Cooperation is The Secret of Our Success

> We propose that a defining human characteristic, which in its scope and flexibility is unparalleled in the animal kingdom, is the ability to coordinate actions with others – even with total strangers – in the pursuit of shared goals

Chapter 23: Genomic Imprinting and Psychological Mechanisms

Brown explains how parent-of-origin effects on gene expression (e.g. IGF2, PEG3) shape early brain development and influence behaviors like attachment and resource solicitation, with implications for disorders.

- **Conflict theory**: paternal genes drive behavior that maximizes infant's resources while maternal genes 'defend' the mother, balancing growth vs. maternal investment.

Also see:

- **Sexual conflict theory explained**

Chapter 24: Evolutionary Explanations for Bullying Behavior

Smith reviews bullying as an adaptive strategy for social rank acquisition, outlining its costs and benefits in ancestral groups and modern contexts (Table 24.1).

- **Frequency-dependence**: bullying pays off only when rare.
- **Sex differences**: males favor physical intimidation, females relational aggression.
- **Intervention implications**: reframing anti-bullying efforts with status-alternative strategies (e.g. reputation enhancement).

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is generally defined as a subset of aggressive behavior – so, behavior with an intent to harm another person. But to be called bullying, most researchers agree that two criteria must be satisfied:

- repetition
- imbalance of power

Bullying Roles

Bullying involves different roles:

- **Ringleader bullies**: Initiate and organize the bullying *(Salmivalli et al., 1996)*
- **Followers**: Join in after the ringleader starts the bullying *(Salmivalli et al., 1996)*
- **Reinforcers**: Do not directly bully but laugh or encourage the bullying behavior *(Salmivalli et al., 1996)*
- **Victims**: The targets of bullying *(Smith, 2014)*
- **Bully–victims (AKA 'provocative victims')** : Children nominated as both bullies and victims. Often referred to as "provocative victims" because their behavior may provoke others, leading to retaliatory bullying *(Smith, 2014)*
- **Pure bullies / Pure victims**: Identified separately to avoid overlap with the bully–victim category, especially in research on outcomes and correlates *(Smith, 2014)*

Gender Differences in Bullying

Boys's stategy revolves more around physical power while women more around reputation

The physicality/reputation split is explained based on what's most effective for each gender:

> Physical strength is more important in boys' peer groups and reputation is more important in girls' peer groups, so this gender difference has been explained as each gender choosing the most effective method of displaying power and/or damaging a victim (Archer, 2009; Guerra et al., 2011).

Type of Bullying	Boys	Girls	Notes/Explanation
Physical bullying	More involved	Less involved	Physical strength more important in boys' peer groups
Verbal bullying	Similar involvement	Similar involvement	Little gender difference
Social exclusion, rumors, cyberbullying	Less consistent evidence; generally less involved	Tend to prefer these relational forms	Reputation more important in girls' peer groups

Adaptive vs. Maladaptive Bullying

Volk et al. argued that bullying is an adaptation based on its heritable basis and the advantages it provided for survival and reproduction (gaining dominance and social status, and hence access to resources).

The authors ultimately state that it may be too early to judge whether bullying is a specific evolutionary adaptation, also because many bullies operate in a novel environment of 'evolutionarily unnatural' classrooms.

Conceivably, it is a by-product of aggression, and pursuing dominance by displaying power against weaker peers may bring payoffs, including gaining or protecting resources and status (Archer, 1988).

While sometimes seen as a sign of poor social skills in children (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996), that's often wrong and **some aggressive kids are socially skilled and popular**, especially if they use aggression strategically and combine it with prosocial behavior (Hawley, 2003; Bjorklund & Hawley, 2014).
Kaukiainen et al. (1999) also demonstrated that social intelligence correlated positively with relational aggression in particular.

Bullying is a more extreme form of aggression, and although typically labeled harmful or antisocial, bullying can bring real benefits to those who use it effectively:

- **Strategic controllers** (not emotionally reactive) were the most successful. They mix aggression with prosocial

approaches, and tend to:
  - Score high in **theory of mind** (Sutton et al., 1999b).
  - **Are strategically smart** (Sutton et al., 1999b).
    they argued that ringleader bullies in particular might deploy skills such as knowing how to choose vulnerable victims, how to choose the right social context to initiate bullying, how best to put down the victim in a way that demonstrated their own power, and how to avoid detection by adults.
  - Be **popular**, **influential**, and **resourceful**

Bullying is usually **facultative**—children do it when the **benefits outweigh the risks**. Some researchers suggest victims adapt to avoid further harm, but this idea is controversial.

Outcomes depend on the type of bully:

- **Pure bullies**:
  - Often **popular, athletic, attractive**
  - **Powerful but not necessarily well-liked** (especially ringleaders) are seen as powerful and popular in terms of *perceived popularity*, though not necessarily *well-liked* (Peeters et al., 2010; Veenstra et al., 2005).
  - Show **few consistent psychological downsides**
- **Bully–victims** (both bully and get bullied):
  - More likely to experience **negative outcomes** like depression and loneliness

Because bullying can work as a dominance strategy, interventions need to go beyond teaching social skills. A better approach is to redirect status-seeking into prosocial behavior.

Bullies Enjoy Better Dating Outcomes

Research shows that bullies generally start dating earlier, have more dating partners, and engage in more sexual activity.

Physical bullies, especially boys, are particularly more likely to have more dating and sexual partners. However, the quality of their relationships tends to be poorer, with more aggression and less intimacy (Connolly et al., 2000; Espelage & Holt, 2007; Volk et al., 2015; Dane et al., 2017).

Relational bullying alone does not strongly predict dating success, but relational bully–victims (those who both bully and are victimized) may have more dating partners, especially girls (Dane et al., 2017).

Overall, bullies date quantitatively more, there is no information about partners' mate value, and these relationships often involve more conflict and less emotional closeness.

Health Outcomes Are Generally Poorer for Bullies, But Worse for Victims

Most research suggests that *pure bullies*—those who bully others but are not themselves victims—tend to have **poorer mental and physical health** than uninvolved peers, though findings are mixed and depend heavily on the methods used.

Some early studies argued that bullies enjoy **better or equal mental health** (e.g., Juvonen et al., 2003; Volk et al., 2012), but these conclusions were based on limited evidence. When studies clearly distinguish pure bullies from bully–victims, most show bullies scoring **worse on depression, anxiety, psychosomatic complaints, and suicidal ideation**, although:

- Some studies report no significant differences or slightly better scores for bullies (e.g., Juvonen et al., 2003; Koh & Wong, 2017).
- In several studies, **bullies score better than victims or bully–victims**, but still worse than noninvolved

children.

- **Self-reports** are the most common method used, and these often show worse outcomes for bullies.
- **Peer nominations**, used less often, show smaller or non-significant differences, suggesting self-report data may overstate the negative effects.
- **Self-esteem findings vary**: bullies may rate themselves low in *academic self-worth* (due to disapproval from school), but normal or high in areas like *athletics* or *peer relations* (O'Moore, 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1999).

Overall, while the picture isn't entirely uniform, the bulk of evidence—especially from self-report studies—suggests that being a bully is linked to **greater internalizing problems and poorer well-being**, though not as severely as being a victim.

This applies to self-reported bullies; more evidence is needed for peer-nominated bullies

Outcomes of Bullying Summary

1. Pure bullies are seen as powerful, not necessarily well-liked, but are seen as exercising resource control
2. Pure bullies enjoy better dating, but with more toxic relationships
3. Ringleaders bullies in particular have good theory of mind abilities (the stereotype of the bully as socially incompetent seems radically incorrect)

Genetics and Heritability of Bullying

Twin studies show that both bullying and being victimized are influenced by genetics.

For victimization, genetic influence increases with age, reaching up to 66% by age 10. For bullying others, about 60–70% of the variation is explained by genetic factors.

Genetic traits may make someone more likely to be bullied if they are introverted, emotionally sensitive, or have poor social or emotional regulation.
On the other side, children may be more likely to bully if they are impulsive, thrill-seeking, emotionally cold, or interpret others' actions as hostile.

"Bully-victims" often show signs of emotional dysregulation, which may also be genetically influenced.

Several heritable personality traits are linked to bullying:

- Low agreeableness and low conscientiousness (Big Five)
- Low honesty–humility and emotionality (HEXACO)
- Traits from the dark triad:
  - Machiavellianism: manipulative, distrusting
  - Narcissism: arrogant, entitled
  - Psychopathy: impulsive, thrill-seeking, uncaring
- Callous–unemotional traits, especially lack of caring

So bullying isn't just learned—it often reflects inborn tendencies shaped by personality and emotional style, which can either predispose kids to dominate others or make them more vulnerable to being targeted.

How to Stop Bullying

Bullying should not be viewed simply as pathological behavior since many bullies are socially skilled and gain real status and resources from it.

Because bullying can provide benefits and low costs in certain contexts, interventions need to address this balance. Successful reduction of bullying must consider the bully, the victim, and the social environment.

For bullies:

- Recognize that popular bullies may not respond well to standard anti-bullying programs.
- Provide alternative, pro-social, status-enhancing roles such as organizing activities, leading sports events, or peer tutoring to replace bullying as a way to gain respect (the "meaningful roles" approach).

For victims:

- Teach friendship skills and coping strategies through assertiveness training.
- Use buddying schemes to provide social support.
- Encourage high-status peer defenders to intervene on behalf of victims.

For the peer group and school context:

- Improve the overall peer group climate to reduce the perceived popularity of bullies.
- Apply clear sanctions and enforce effective school policies against bullying.
- Consider the bully's social competence and motivation for status, rather than just labeling bullying as "wrong," to avoid counterproductive effects.

Chapter 25: Birth Order and Evolutionary Psychology

Sulloway presents evidence that firstborns tend toward conformity and authority-orientation, laterborns toward rebellion and risk-taking, framing this as parent–offspring conflict over niche differentiation.

- **Resource dilution & niche partitioning**: siblings diversify strategies to reduce competition.
- **Personality correlations**: meta-analysis shows consistent but small effects across cultures.
- **Historical shifts**: family-size decline may amplify birth-order effects.
- **Later-borns are more likely to be homosexual**: Among males (but not females), higher birth rank is correlated with an increasing likelihood of homosexual orientation (Blanchard, 1997, 2004)
  Explanation: About 15% of mothers develop antibodies to male-specific antigens, which can interfere with the masculinization of later male fetuses. As a result, the likelihood of homosexuality increases by roughly 33% for each older brother.
- **IQ scores increase slightly among lastborns** growing up in large families

Birth Order Affects Investment & Emotional Bond

Since the last child can't be replaced, we could expect mothers to invest more in lastborns.
And indeed older mothers report that they feel more emotionally attached to their lastborn children (Suitor & Pillemer, 2007)

> Trivers (1972) has defined parental investment as any investment in time, energy, or resources that benefits one offspring at a cost to another offspring. Among humans, biases in parental investment are well documented and have often been based on differences in birth order, gender, and offspring quality (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy & Judge, 1993)

Chapter 26: Survival, Selection, and Sex Differences in Fear

Campbell integrates meta-analytic data on dot-probe tasks and fear conditioning to argue that women's greater fear sensitivity evolved as protection for offspring.

Summarized in one great quote:

> The benefits for women lie in lower mortality and greater longevity, which enhance mothering and enable grandmothering. Among women, living slow and dying late has been a winning strategy.

- **Preparedness theory**: faster conditioning to ancestral threats (snakes), stronger in females.
- **Hormonal modulation**: estrogen amplifies amygdala reactivity.
- **Clinical relevance**: sex differences in anxiety disorders reflect these evolved mechanisms.

Remember: the overlap is still larger than the difference

> It bears repeating that any sex difference is a matter of degree, not kind.
> For example, even with a large effect size of d = 1.00 (as found by Campbell et al., 2016), 62 percent of the male and female fear distributions overlap. Men and women are, after all, morphs of the same species, and selection pressures "nudge" rather than "shove."

But she reminds us that the differences become more noticeable and impactful at the extreme ends of the distribution.

Increasing Male Aggression Is Capped By Risks, and May Increase Monogamy

Traditional sex-role theory claims male aggression evolved to attract mates and beat rivals—but this view is problematic, claims Campbell.

Higher aggression means higher risk.
When competition gets intense or unwinnable, increasing aggression increases the payoffs of monogamy.
Males benefit more from sticking with one mate and helping raise kids (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

Aggression is not on a runaway trajectory, but on a tradeoff.
Data show aggression rises as more males compete, but drops once it gets too extreme—replaced by courtship and mate guarding (Weir et al., 2011).

A model also shows monogamy can evolve if women prefer resource-giving men. Low-status males adopt this to reproduce, and since they're the majority, the strategy spreads (Gavrilets, 2012).

Chapter 27: The Enigmatic Urge: How Sexual Desire Works

Toates dissects desire into drive (homeostatic), incentive (external cues), and cognitive (expectations) components, showing how each relates to certain reward circuitry and how they relate to evolved mating strategies.

- **Dual-control model**: balance of excitatory vs. inhibitory inputs varies by sex and context.
- **Sociosexuality**: individual differences in desire linked to mating market variables.

And I found interesting from a relationship power dynamics point of view:

- **Women seek confirmation in relationships**: *After time in an established relationship, women tend to place more weight upon associations with their regular partner, such as to receive confirmation of their desirability (Basson et al., 2003).*

Sexual Desire And Dominance

There is a link between dominance and sexuality.

Sexual violence is mostly male behavior and often driven by a mix of sexual desire and dominance—not just one or the other.

Desire is usually present, but the role of aggression varies: from calculated use of force to outright violent acts. Testosterone fuels both sexual and dominance motives.

Some men find women more attractive when primed with dominance cues, suggesting a link between power and sexual desire.

Rape victim age data clusters around 15, suggesting physical features and perceived vulnerability at that age may trigger these drives.

To explore this topic also see our article:

- **The role of dominance in dating**, courtship, and sexual success

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Lucio's suggestion: Revist the claim on bigger penis = bigger pleasure
The author states that '*the male penis is much larger than the female clitoris as a source of self-generated pleasure, deliberately induced or accidentally*'.
I'm not sure I understood the 'accidental' bit, and I don't think that women necessarily derive less pleasure from masturbation.

Chapter 28: Are Humans Peacocks or Robins?

Stewart-Williams evaluates whether human traits (e.g. ornamental displays, courtship rituals) align better with Darwin's runaway signal theory (peacock) or Zahavi's handicap model (robin), concluding both processes operate in mating domains.

- **Mate choice experiments**: women prefer indicators of genetic quality under high-risk contexts, ornamental cues under low-risk.
- **Signal costs**: costly self-disclosure and creative displays function as honesty assurances.
- **Low-investing sex develops ornamentation, high-investing one lives longer** because they avoid risk and take care for children
- **Cultural variation**: relative importance shifts across ecologies.

The Difference Between Sexes Isn't Smaller Than Some Evolutionary Psychologists Claim

While Stewart-Williams acknowledges that some differences between men and women are real, he shows they are often exaggerated.

He demonstrates that men and women's mating psychology tends to overlap more than it diverges, and that **large, attention-grabbing claims often rest on modest differences in averages**—differences that shrink further when placed in a broader biological and statistical context.

Let's review the domains:

Reproductive Variability

- **Common assumption**: Men can have many more children than women (e.g., Ismail the Bloodthirsty with 888 offspring), suggesting stronger male desire for multiple partners.
- **Reality**: Such reproductive extremes are historical anomalies, not typical.
  In small-scale societies, which better reflect most of human history, the difference in reproductive variability is usually small—and sometimes even favors women.
- **Implication**: Modest sex differences in reproductive outcomes mean we should expect only modest differences in sexual psychology.

Polygynous Desires & Short-Term Interest

- **Claim**: Men are more interested in casual sex and short-term mating.
- **Reality**: True across all cultures studied, but the effect size (d = 0.74) is still modest when compared to more intuitive sex differences like height (d = 1.63).
- **Implication**: The differences are real but relatively modest. This is expected on the assumption that our primary reproductive pattern was pair-bonding and biparental care.

Mate Preferences: Physical Attractiveness

- **Claim**: Men care far more about physical attractiveness than women.
- **Reality**: Men rate it slightly higher on average, but both sexes value it. In Buss's influential study, men ranked it only 10th, women 13th. The difference from a meta-analysis was moderate (d = 0.54), implying around 80 percent overlap between the male and female distributions.
  This makes evolutionary sense: women as the choosier sex are *expected* to care for looks
- **Implication**: Attractiveness matters to both sexes, and the average difference is meaningful but far from stark.

> Similarly, Kanazawa (2003) observed that, "In every society, men prefer young and attractive women for mates, and women prefer wealthy and powerful men" (p. 292).
> Such descriptions suggest substantial, dichotomous differences. The evidence for these differences, however, invariably consists of relatively modest differences in the central tendencies of highly variable and overlapping distributions. There is thus a mismatch between the data and the verbal descriptions of the data: we are comparing apples but concluding oranges.

Mate Preferences: Wealth and Status

- **Claim**: Women are hypergamous and strongly prioritize wealth/status in a mate.
- **Reality**: Women rank wealth slightly higher than men, but often below other traits like love, character, and intelligence. In many real-world cases, women prioritize attractiveness over wealth.
- **Implication**: While the sex difference is consistent, it's moderate in size (d = 0.69), with a lot of overlap. Many women don't strongly prioritize wealth or status.

Jealousy

- **Claim**: Men are more distressed by sexual infidelity, women by emotional infidelity.
- **Reality**: In the classic Buss' study, only 60% of men chose sexual infidelity as more upsetting, and in some cultures (like Germany or Japan), a majority of men picked emotional infidelity instead.
  We cannot conclude that men are more concerned about sexual infidelity when only a little more than half of men do and in some samples, more men are upset by emotional infidelity.
- **Implication**: *The difference is not accurately described by statements such as "men find sexual infidelity more upsetting, women emotional infidelity." A more accurate description would be that "a larger proportion of men than women find sexual infidelity more upsetting, whereas a larger proportion of women are more upset by emotional infidelity."*
  Buss' 'forced choice option' also exaggerated the differences, while the reality is that most men and women are upset by both

The 'menopause for women', 'retained virility for men' is an exaggeration

> Although men do not experience the complete cessation of fertility in middle age that women do, their fertility declines more precipitously than was once believed.

> To begin with, men's testosterone levels tend to nosedive with age (Harman et al., 2001), which may lead to a reduction in courtship effort and intrasexual competition. In addition, the quality and quantity of men's sperm declines throughout adulthood (Kong et al., 2012).
>
> The implication is this: the sex difference in age-related fertility is smaller than previously thought, which provides a theoretical rationale for thinking that the sex difference in the importance of physical attractiveness will be smaller than previously thought.

Lucio's Take: **Let's all be more careful in not over-stating the differences**

Lucio:
I loved this chapter, and I had noticed a similar trend to overstate the differences, including among some scholars.

Just as an example, the *"men seek looks, women resources"* not only didn't seem to square too well with the data, but also not with my personal experience of successful dating with limited resources.

I believe that stressing the differences may have been a knee-jerk reaction to decades of the "standard social science model" and of downplaying genetic differences.

However, it's now time to start being more balanced.
Balance is also important given the general public's (and pop authors') tendency to over-focus on the differences while forgetting the overlap.

Chapter 29: Human Mate Selection: A Multidimensional Approach

Conroy-Beam and Buss integrate mate-value indices, preference hierarchies, and mating market constraints to model real-world pairings.

- **Euclidean metric**: potential mates evaluated across multiple preference dimensions (Table 29.1 below)
- **Preferences reflect choice**: *People's actual long-term mates tend to fall close to their ideal preferences through the multidimensional preference space, exactly as they would if mate preferences were integrated according to a*

Euclidean algorithm (Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2016b)

- **Preferences reflect choice when people can afford to select**: *people who are themselves higher in mate value according to Euclidean calculations – that is, who are closer to the opposite sex's aggregate preference point in the preference space – tend to be mated to partners closer to their own mate preferences*
- **Market dynamics**: sex ratio skews and operational sex ratio modulate selectivity, as do other sexual market variables and localized dynamics
- **Preference fulfillment**: trade-offs between ideal standards and available options.

Table 24.1 A toy model of mate selection using a Euclidean algorithm to integrate five preferences.

	Trait 1	Trait 2	Trait 3	Trait 4	Trait 5	Mate value
Emma's preference	5	5	5	5	5	
Alfred	1	1	1	1	1	0
Charles	1	1	1	1	5	1.07
George	5	5	5	5	1	4
Bill	5	5	5	5	5	8

Note: Euclidean distances were transformed by multiplying each distance by −1 and adding the maximum possible distance value (8).

The Three Key Constraints in Realistic Human Mating Markets

While people have ideal mate preferences, real-life mating markets are complex, and several constraints significantly weaken the link between those preferences and actual partner choices. Agent-based models show that **three main dynamics** explain why preference fulfillment is often limited:

1. Availability

- **Constraint**: People can only choose partners from those who are locally available.
- **Impact**: Even if someone has strong preferences, they may not encounter partners who match them well.
- **Finding**: This was the **most impactful constraint** in reducing both preference fulfillment and predictive power.

2. Competitiveness

- **Constraint**: People compete for the same desirable mates, and each person can only form a limited number of relationships (especially in monogamous settings).
- **Impact**: Even if a preference-fulfilling partner is available, a rival might pair with them first.
- **Note**: Competitiveness alone had no strong effect, but it **amplified** the impact of other constraints.

3. *Mutual* Mate Choice

- **Constraint**: Attraction must be **mutual**—it's not enough to prefer someone; they have to prefer you back.
- **Impact**: Ideal partners may not reciprocate interest, forcing people to settle for less ideal matches.
- **Interaction**: This constraint becomes harsher in competitive markets.

Overall Findings

In fully constrained markets, predictive power of mate preferences dropped to r = 0.24, close to real-world findings like Campbell et al.'s r = 0.14.

These constraints **don't mean mate preferences are unimportant**, but rather that their influence is embedded in complex, dynamic systems.

Chapter 31: Integrating Feminist Perspectives

Fisher, Garcia, and Burch argue that evolutionary psychology must incorporate perspectives on gender inequality, intersectionality, and power dynamics, proposing revisions to standard mate- preference models to account for patriarchal cultural overlays.

> There is an enduring uneasy relationship between evolutionists and feminists when it comes to the study of human behavior. In general, feminists tend to view work incorporating an evolutionary perspective as being somewhat anti-feminist, unnecessarily reductionist, or at least neglecting to be inclusionary of sociocultural and gendered factors

However, things are changing for the positive say the authors, and there are now even 'feminist evolutionists'.

Lucio's Take: **I couldn't agree more**. **Some feminist scholars are spot on power dynamics**

Lucio:
The easiest way to spot a scholar biased by gender is a woman who rejects evolutionary psychology's universal tendencies, or a man who rejects feminist contributions to social and interpersonal power dynamics (social dominance theory also backs up some feminist theories).

From my perspective, evolutionary psychology is the foundation of all psychology-related disciplines—and feminists are spot on when they highlight the drive of some men to control and disempower women (which makes perfect sense to anyone who understands evolution and power dynamics).

Evolutionary Psychology's Reliance On Self-Reports Is Problematic

Eagly and Wood (2013), among others, note that evolutionary psychology's reliance on self-reports raises concerns.

While such studies often find sex differences (e.g., men reporting a stronger preference for casual sex or more sexual partners), these results may partly reflect social desirability and adherence to gender role norms, rather than innate differences.

For example, Alexander and Fisher (2003) used a bogus pipeline method (a fake lie detector) and found that men reported more sexual experiences only when they believed their answers would be seen by others.
When they thought lying could be detected, the sex differences nearly vanished.

Similarly, Eastwick et al. (2011) argue that implicit measures tend to reveal smaller sex differences than explicit self-reports.

These findings suggest that some evolutionary psychology claims may overstate innate sex differences, and that more reliable methods are needed—especially in light of broader replicability concerns in psychology (Camerer et al., 2018).

🤔 **Lucio's note: I agree, it's something to keep in mind**
I also suspect, for example, that people, and potentially women in particular, may rate the importance of looks lower than what they truly are.

The Main Issue Is Social Constructionism: Here's Why It Shouldn't Be

Feminist scholars often emphasize social constructionism, while criticizing evolutionary psychology for being biologically deterministic.

Social constructionism is the idea that much of what we consider to be "reality" — including concepts like gender, morality, or even intelligence — is not purely objective or natural, but shaped by social interactions, cultural norms, and shared beliefs.

However, the authors argue that social construction is itself enabled by evolved traits—humans are a culture-bearing species, and our capacity for social learning is biologically rooted.
Rather than opposing each other, social and biological explanations can be integrated.

Yet both fields have historically missed this opportunity to cooperate and build upon each other.

Chapter 32: Psychopathology from an Evolutionary Perspective

William J. Ray surveys theories of depression (analytical rumination, social competition), anxiety (smoke-detector principle), and more, emphasizing that many pathologies may be misfirings of once-adaptive defense mechanisms.

- **Autism may be an extreme case of understanding and developing systems**: Coupled with the inability to empathize in autism is the superior ability to systemize. Systemizing is the ability to analyze objects or events in terms of their structures and future behaviors. These deficits and abilities make up the empathizing–systemizing theory of autism (Baron-Cohen & Belmonte, 2005)

Histrionics and Psychopathy Are An Adaptive Cheater Strategy

From an evolutionary perspective, **psychopathy** may be understood not simply as a disorder, but as a possible **adaptive strategy**—specifically, a "cheater" strategy in reproductive and social life.

Psychopaths, characterized by manipulativeness, lack of empathy, dishonesty, and disregard for social rules, may exploit others for short-term gains without remorse.

According to Harpending and Sobus (1987), both **male psychopaths** and **female histrionics** can be seen as different forms of sexual cheater strategies:

- **Male psychopaths** deceive women about commitment to gain sexual access while avoiding investment in offspring.
- **Female histrionics** exaggerate emotional neediness and helplessness to attract male attention and secure resources, potentially even at the cost of their offspring's well-being.

This view frames certain personality disorders not merely as dysfunctions, but as **extreme or context-dependent evolutionary strategies** shaped by environmental pressures and individual reproductive incentives.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: psychopathy may be seen as an extreme end of a short-term and uncommitted sexual strategy (player strategy)
And unfortunately, the sexual deception strategy goes beyond 'deceiving about commitment'. This is an exposé article on a psychopath openly discussing his cheater strategy:

- Psychopaths' cheater strategy in dating: a shocking revelation from an actual psychopath

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Chapter 34: The Evolution of Prosocial Behavior: From Caring to Compassion

Gilbert outlines the phylogeny of care-giving systems.

The Benefits of Caring

Compassion training has been shown to positively affect physiology (e.g. nervous system, immune function, neuroplasticity) and mental health (reducing depression/anxiety) (Kirby et al., 2017b; Goleman & Davidson, 2017). Various training models now exist, including those based on Mahayana Buddhism and modern psychotherapy (Gilbert, 2010).

However, modern societies often promote competitive self-interest and narcissism, especially in schools and businesses, which can suppress compassionate instincts.

The evolutionary lens shows that while self-interest and tribalism are natural, so are empathy and cooperation. The challenge is to create individual and cultural environments that activate and reinforce pro-social motives over competitive or exploitative ones (Gilbert & Mascaro, 2017).

A Case For Working Toward A More Compassionate Society

One is mental health:

> There are concerns as to whether we should allow our schools to drift further and further into narcissistic, competitive self-interest, with consequences for vulnerability to mental health and reducing community values, or whether schools should be the grounding for the teaching of ethical and compassionate values and behavior (Weissbourd & Jones, 2014)

And the other is the future of humanity:

> This is important because we cannot simply rely on the emergence of contexts to create the kinds of justice, fairness, ecological sensitivity and compassion we may wish to see. Indeed, self-interest and tribalism can equally recruit new brain competencies, and they have done so for thousands of years, with some very horrific consequences. We may be vehicles for our genes and for different algorithms and strategies that are "battling" for the control of the minds

Wealth May Decrease Compassion & Cooperation

In environments where resources are scarce—such as in small-scale, low-resource hunter–gatherer societies—people tend to adopt strategies centered on caring and sharing.
In these settings, survival depends on mutual reliance and cooperation, so compassion and generosity are adaptive.

Reputation for helping matters, and group interdependence fosters empathy and support.

In contrast, in wealthy, high-resource societies, the strategy shifts toward controlling and holding.
As people can store resources, grow wealth, and live in larger, more anonymous groups, the adaptive approach becomes one of accumulation, protection, and self-interest.
Compassion becomes less central, and individuals are more likely to prioritize themselves or their close kin.

Research supports this shift:

- **Lower socioeconomic classes are more charitable**, often more trusting, and helpful than those from higher classes—despite having less to give.
- **Entitlement grows with wealth**: as wealth and power increase, individuals tend to show reduced empathy, greater entitlement, and less sensitivity to others' suffering.

This evolution poses a challenge: compassion evolved to function in small, kin-based groups, but modern societies are large, unequal, and often driven by competitive, individualistic, or nationalistic agendas.

Prosocial Adaptation Can Be Co-Opted For Selfish Purposes

> As evolution modifies physiological systems that facilitate different competencies, these competencies can begin to be utilized for a range of different purposes.
>
> For example, it is well known that human empathy can be used to be caring or for Machiavellian self-advancement or to cause harm (Gilbert et al., 2017b; Zaki, 2014).
> Similarly, caring behavior can be used for a whole variety of purposes, one being to advance one's reputation (Catarino et al., 2014; Goetz et al., 2010).

We Need Science to Develop A Better Future For Humanity

> It is very easy to inspire humans to violence and the enjoyment of narcissistic self-interest with a toning down of empathic concern for the misfortune of others.
> (…)
> Although many might like to see humanity as a compassionate species – and we can be – we can also be one of the nastiest, most brutal, and most exploitative species to have ever walked this planet.
> (…)
> Our challenges are to try to create a more compassionate mind in a more compassionate and pro-social world.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **I agree, and humanity's future may be at stake**

Lucio:
I consider ingroup/outgroup tribalism—and humans' tendency to band together to attack others—one of the major risks to humanity's future.

If we are to survive and thrive, and hopefully expand into the universe, some form of "cooperation and compassion engineering" may be necessary.

Chapter 36: A Bridge Too Far? Evolutionary Psychology and Social Problems

Buunk assesses evolutionary psychology-based interventions for social issues (e.g. aggression, obesity), warning against genetic determinism and urging policies that modify environments to align proximate incentives with adaptive goals.

Evolutionary Psychology More Useful In Telling Us What Not to Do, Than What to Do

For example, it's useless to tell or expect men to commit more if women far outnumber men, or if men have been raised in difficult environment and already adopted a fast life strategy.

Similarly, policies to bring more women to the to of organizations may fail or be misguided because, given women's different psychological makeup from men, it is unrealistic to assume that complete equality in the workplace is a reachable goal.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: potentially too critical and potentially underestimating the impact of Evolutionary Psychology**
I was surprised to find this chapter rather critical of evolutionary psychology's contribution to solving modern problems.
Every field may need internal criticism to avoid touting its horns and some of Buunk's points are valid. I agreed for example that some criticism of cognitive or social psychology may be taken too far.
However, I remain more optimistic about the value evolutionary psychology can bring to the table.

Chapter 37: The Evolution of Personality

Furnham and Kanazawa review Big Five traits as fitness-relevant dimensions balancing costs & benefits across environments, proposing that personality diversity is maintained by fluctuating selection (ie.: selection pressure change over time and contexts) and pleiotropy (ie.: one mutation affects many traits, so even sub-optimal traits may stick around even if they're not always helpful).

Factor	Adjectives	Q-sort Items	Positive Benefits	Negative Costs
Extraversion	Active, Assertive, Energetic, Enthusiastic, Outgoing, Talkative	Talkative, Skilled in play/humor, Rapid personal tempo, Facially/gesturally expressive, Behave assertively, Gregarious	Big social networks, Relationship and mating success, Explorer of opportunities, Happiness	Accidents and risk-taking, Impulsivity and poor decision-making, Relationship instability
Neuroticism	Anxious, Self-pitying, Tense, Touchy, Unstable, Worrying	Thin-skinned, Brittle ego defenses, Self-defeating, Basically anxious, Concerned with adequacy, Fluctuating moods, Hypervigilance, Achievement striving, Emotional sensitivity, Competitiveness	Hypervigilance Achievement striving Emotional sensitivity Competitiveness	Poor mental health, Stress sensitivity, Poor physical health
Openness	Artistic, Curious, Imaginative, Insightful, Original, Wide interests	Wide range of interests, Introspective, Unusual thought processes, Values intellectual matters, Judges in unconventional terms, Aesthetically reactive	Social attractiveness, Creativity, Flexibility, Change oriented	Mental illness, Social exclusion, Bizarre belief systems and lifestyles
Agreeableness	Appreciative, Forgiving, Generous, Kind, Sympathetic, Trusting	Not critical/skeptical, Behaves in a giving way, Sympathetic/considerate, Arouses liking, Warm/compassionate, Basically trustful, Psychological mindedness	Social networks, Strong relationships, Valued group member	Vulnerable to exploitation, Failure to maximize personal advantages, Too conflict-avoidant, Low assertiveness
Conscientiousness	Efficient, Organized, Planning ability, Reliable, Responsible, Thorough	Dependable/responsible, Productive, Able to delay gratification, Not self-indulgent, Behaves ethically, High aspirational level, Long-term planning	Longer life expectancy, Good citizenship, Dependable and dutiful team member	Obsessionality and perfectionism, Rigidity with poor flexibility, Slow to respond

All credits to Adrian Furnham and Satoshi Kanazawa

- **50-0-50 rule of personality**: for many personality traits roughly 50 percent of the variance in individual differences in personality is heritable (determined by genes), roughly 0 percent is attributable to the shared environment, and roughly 50 percent is due to the nonshared environment, including peer socialization (Harris, 1995, 1998).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: I still don't see how this squares with other evidence, and may be potentially misleading
The 50-0-50 rule doesn't reconcile perfectly with what I've learned and observed so far.
For example, Life History Theory says the early environment cues people into fast or slow strategies, often through perceived harshness or unpredictability (see next chapter and not for more ⍰⍰). That's often a shared environment heavily shaped by parents, including the simple presence or absence of a father.

I suspect the misunderstanding may be related to what counts as 'trait', and many authors may refer to the Big 5. But a fast life history approach more closely resembles that of individuals high in psychopathic traits, so I struggle to see how that's not a highly significant impact on personality.

Intelligence Predicts The Acquisition of Novel Preferences

> The idea is that intelligence is essential to comprehending and responding to complex and evolutionarily novel situations, but not necessarily to evolutionarily familiar situations. Thus, it is possible to explain a whole range of individual differences from television watching to political attitudes in terms of the intelligence of individuals. More intelligent individuals are more likely to acquire and espouse evolutionarily novel preferences and values such as political liberalism, atheism, and nocturnal lifestyles

There is no 'best' personality, only contextually better

> The fluctuating selection model highlights the fact that few personality traits have unqualified and universal reproductive benefits under all circumstances;
> instead, their **benefits depends on contexts and circumstances**. Every personality trait has trade-offs in terms of costs and benefits. Different geographical locations and different historical times may select for different personality types.

And this is why social calibration is crucial.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's suggestion: expand this great chapter!
This chapter was great, and with even bigger potential for more. It mentions the limitations of random mutation and natural selection in driving evolution toward a single optimum, due to factors such as shifting environments, niche specialization, pleiotropy, and the fact that most traits are not simply present or absent, but continuously distributed—potentially with adaptive advantages near the middle and maladaptive effects at the extremes—making them difficult to eliminate entirely
These are concepts I've been grappling with for some time and I'd love for the authors to explain them even more deeply.

Chapter 38: Applying Evolutionary Principles to Criminality

Taylor and Workman apply life-history theory to antisocial behavior, showing that "fast-life" strategies (early reproduction, high risk) correlate with Cluster B personality disorders and propensity for crime.

- **Secure attachment is rare for psychopathic offenders** (Frodi et al., 2001), and such offenders were far more likely to have been physically abused as children

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: sometimes a good family can't put a bad seed on a good path
The authors compare psychopathic researcher James Fallon's good upbringings and a psychopathic killer who had a bad childhood, suggesting that the contingent shift theory (ie.: adjusting to a different environment) explains the diverging paths. However, I'd note that we can't be sure that was the case, and the main difference may still be genetic, with Fallon having stronger impulse control, or stronger long-term thinking propensities. Or, simply, Fallon may score lower in psychopathic traits (eg.: psychopathy factor 1).
Finally, as per note above, this seems to defy the 50-0-50 'rule' that discounts the early shared environment.

Chapter 39: Substitute Parenting

Daly and Perry analyze stepfamily fertility and child-investment patterns, revealing higher mortality rates in stepchildren (the "Cinderella effect") and proposing evolutionary explanations for kin-selective caregiving.

Existing (dependent) children may decrease a mate's value:

> From a suitor's perspective, the prospect of becoming a stepparent to a predecessor's child is treated as a cost, not a benefit, in remarriage negotiations, and stepchildren are sources of marital instability, conflict, and violence (Becker, Landes, & Michael, 1977; Campbell et al., 2003; Daly & Wilson, 1996; Daly, Singh, & Wilson, 1993; White & Booth, 1985;)

The authors also state that 'stepparental investment has to be understood as a form of mating effort, not parental effort (Rohwer, Herron, & Daly, 1999)'.

Chapter 40: Historians and the Evolutionary Approach

Hanlon critiques historical narratives for ignoring biological factors, illustrating how warfare, state formation, and economic cycles are shaped by evolved incentives and collective action dilemmas.

- **Mothers don't automatically accept newborns**: n*or do they treat all of their children equally. It is lactation, with its attendant nurturing and cooing, that establishes the bond between mother and infant, who quickly responds (Hrdy, 1999).*
- **Abortion and infanticide have been common in history**: *Abortion and infanticide appear to be part of the universal repertoire of human behavior and are much more widespread than we thought. The mothers appear everywhere to be the authors of them, and midwives are active or complicit in the phenomena with various degrees of concealment.*
  - Christianity decreased infanticide: *The long-standing opposition of Christianity to infanticide is held to represent the dominance of culture over nature*
- **The certitude of punishment, not the severity, reduces crime**: teaching that the short-term advantages aren't worth it is key to deter people from pursuing a life of crime
- **Crime statistics are only as good as the bureaucracy that produced them**, and many crime go unreported, unregistered, or unprosecuted.
  The authors also imply that Pinker's work in *The Better Angels of Our Nature* was questionable
- **Battles are a game of posturing until one faction quits**: *The actual battle among men at close quarters is a process of posturing until one side turns and runs. "It is in the subsequent pursuit of a broken or defeated enemy that the vast majority of the killing happens. Dogs understand this too, and you will be pursued if you run from them" (Grossman, 2004).*
- **The desire for dominance drives status acquisition**: *All primate communities form status hierarchies, and individuals with a strong desire for dominance generally rise to the top.*

Chapter 41: The Psychology of Extraterrestrials: The New Frontier?

Barkow speculates on universal cognitive architectures and adaptive behaviors of hypothetical alien intelligences, using human evolutionary constraints to predict likely forms of extraterrestrial sociality and technology.

- **We don't know what they compete on, but if they reproduce sexually, they're competitive**: *Because we are a cultural species, the criteria in terms of which we compete and then allocate prestige – relative standing – can vary enormously (Barkow, 1975, 1980b, 1989, 2014a). What is universal is not the specific kind of competition, but competition itself, competition in terms of a standard of excellence*

Chapter 45: Evolution and the Media

In this finale, Workman et al. note that modern media exploit ancient biases (supernormal stimuli, gossip networks) to hijack attention and drive status hierarchies. They argue for "media hygiene" practices grounded in evolutionary

insight.

- **Law of least effort got us hooked**: people do what's easiest, and modern media makes it easy for most people to get entertained, without having to move or do much at all

> The principle of least effort has implications for all forms of media: why people may (…) pass up a chance to meet a woman in order to surf porn, pass up a chance to meet a man to read a romance novel
> (…) And he can do this while indulging the "rest when you don't need to move" impulse in a padded lounge chair and consuming supernormal stimuli for hunger or enjoying endogenous feel-good chemicals.

And just wait for AI and sex robots, I'd add…

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Tribal Altruists Are Humanity's Enemies

From Colquhoun et al.:

> Based on observations of pro-social behavior of various groups in New Guinea, Boyd and Richerson (2005) claim that CGS can work.
>
> There is, however, a downside to this, since **CGS can lead to altruism within the group, but simultaneously promote selfishness between groups.**
> In fact, Bowles (2009) looked at archaeological data on causes of death during the late Pleistocene and the early Holocene and concluded that between-group competition led to a large increase in mortality rates.
>
> **In a sense, the claim that cultural group selection can lead to altruism in humans really raises the question: Altruism toward whom?**
>
> From this perspective, **suicide bombers may be thought of as altruists to the cause of their group by other group members, but to non-group members they are anything but.**

Communism Is Failure to Understand Human Nature

> one might argue – with reason – that communist regimes were based on the assumption that the human mind was completely malleable and that society could strongly influence, if not completely change human nature. Indeed, many social scientists have been guilty of actively supporting this notion and the dictatorial regimes based on it.

And, I'd add, the failure of communism and its chronic underperformance in output, quality of life, and progress, is also the natural consequence of not maximizing the human drive to status and wealth accumulation in the same way that (regulated!) capitalism does.

Society Replaced Alpha Males With Institutions

Taylor and Workman, citing Dennis Krebs, say:

> Showing deference ensured survival, whereas defiance may have resulted in injury or death if the challenger was overwhelmed by the alpha male.
> Today, the concept of the alpha male has largely been replaced by societal infrastructure and, in particular, by the laws of the land. This means that whereas we once paid deference to the alpha male, we now do so to organizations such as the police force

However, I wouldn't say that the 'alpha male' has been suppressed, but more like it's been *supplemented*.
Social hierarchies haven't gone anywhere and are still part of our social architecture and internalized psychology.

Lower mate value men may drive monogamy

Quoting Campbell:

> Although the selective forces that led to widespread human pair-bonding are debated, Gavrilets (2012) found support for a plausible model that showed that, if females were willing to forego extra-pair matings and preferred males who provided resources, **male provisioning would increase driven chiefly by low-ranking males who would otherwise fail to reproduce at all**. Because these males outnumbered elite males, selection would have acted more strongly on them and their strategy, causing it to spread through the male population

This recalls the mantra of 'alpha fux, beta bucks'.

But the same author then notes:

Monogamy may make for better societies

> Humans' basically **monogamous mating system**, through its effects on individual behavior, **brings with it societal rewards in terms of reduced crime rates** and stronger within-group alliances.
>
> For women, it reduces gender inequality and domestic conflict while increasing child survival (Henrich, Boyd, & Richerson, 2012).
>
> Monogamy also means that mate selection becomes a two-way street: when men constrain their (potentially) high reproductive output to that of a single woman, they become much choosier

I agree with this, and even made it a step on our 'how to build an empire' article, since it stabilizes society.
But, importantly, I believe it may also make for a better quality of life for many, and children may benefit from monogamy and a present father.

Some aggressive men may find aggression exciting

Quoting from Toates' chapter:

> For those males who have a desire to dominate, the subliminal presentation of dominance-related words tends to increase the attractiveness rating of the female being viewed (Bargh et al., 1995).

Lying is part of being human

Quotes from the chapter on deception:

> lying is just a solution to the ecological circumstances of being human. We have to forge alliances with others, conceal important personal information, and manage multiple – often mutually antagonistic – relationships, none of which would be possible if we were obligate truth-tellers

Lying is so commonplace that it may be the default, and it's functional:

> We used to consider truth-telling to be the default position and deception to be deviant, but evolutionary research is increasingly demonstrating that deception is not only ubiquitous, but functional.

However, not all lies are mean and self-serving:

> The lies need not be directly malign, and unlike psychopaths and other pathological liars, they are motivated to grease the wheels, pour oil on troubled water, and generally manage social situations, albeit often for the ultimate benefit of the deceiver.

The best liars may believe in their lies

> It should be noted that it has been suggested that human cheats could employ complex methods of hiding their intentions, such as Trivers' (2011) theory of selfdeception, in which humans are not consciously aware that they will cheat, allowing them to hide dishonest cues

QUOTES

On how researchers still can end up on opposite side of the spectrum when it comes to the role of culture:

> Evolutionary scholars often appear to disagree strikingly about the value of "culture" in explaining human behavior.
> John Tooby (…_ responded to the Edge.org question "What scientific idea is ready for retirement?" with the answer "Learning and culture" (Tooby, 2014).
> At around the same time, Joseph Henrich published '*The Secret of Our Success: How Culture Is Driving Human Evolution*'.
> How can two highly reputable scholars, both committed to understanding human behavior within an evolutionary framework, come to such apparently opposing conclusions? Should the concept of "culture" be retired, or should it be heralded as the secret to humanity's evolutionary success?

My note:
I disagree with Tooby here, unfortunately, he spoke like a biology/evolutionary determinist

---

On the misplaced criticism against simple models being 'too simplistic':

> Simple models do not imply that the modeler thinks that the real world really is simple.
> (…) simple models are the best way of understanding a complex reality (Servedio et al., 2014; Smaldino, 2016).

On the relative importance between mothers and fathers:

> through our evolutionary past from an infant's viewpoint, mothers have always been essential while fathers have been an optional extra (Campbell, 2013) (p. 73)

On the cost and inheritability of honor:

> He who was ready to sacrifice his life, as many a savage has been, rather than betray his comrades, would often leave no offspring to inherit his noble nature (Darwin, 1871)

On sexual selection supporting human cooperation:

> The reason we're nice is that, throughout the course of our evolution, kind, loyal, and generous people attracted more romantic interest than their cruel, traitorous, or selfish peers, and therefore did better in the reproductive sweepstakes. (2018, p. 200)

On our natural morality:

> Mental mechanisms that disposed early humans to behave in moral ways were selected and shaped as humans evolved. Modern humans are naturally disposed to uphold culturally universal and culturally relative moral norms. **We are moral by nature**.

On women's 'slow life' winning strategy:

> The benefits for women lie in lower mortality and greater longevity, which enhance mothering and enable grandmothering. Among women, living slow and dying late has been a winning strategy.

Lucio's Analysis

Roger's Paradox Could Be Expanded: Cultural Learning Deserves Better Defense

Mesoudi introduces the Rogers' paradox, showing that undirected social learning can evolve without improving average fitness, due to frequency dependence.

However, as Mesoudi and others have clarified, this result applies only to **non-selective copying**. Human learners typically use **strategic, selective learning**—copying successful individuals or deferring to social learning when individual learning is costly—which can and does enhance fitness.

More importantly, **cumulative culture** allows humans to build on prior knowledge across generations, achieving innovations no individual could invent alone. This cumulative aspect—not modeled in Rogers' original framework—is central to culture's adaptive power.

Finally, human learners are not passive. They can **selectively learn, evaluating and refining** what they copy with some reverse engineering, filtering out outdated or maladaptive behaviors. These richer learning dynamics resolve the paradox and reaffirm the role of culture in human success.

More Structured Presentation of Main vs Speculative Theories

To improve clarity on complex topics, I believe it's best to first present the main, most well-supported drivers—those with the strongest empirical backing and largest effect sizes—before introducing additional or more speculative contributors.

Otherwise, readers can get lost in a dense web of interwoven theories, all technically valid, but lacking a coherent narrative or hierarchy of importance.

I recommend authors adopt a top-down structure from most important to least.
Start with the key explanatory drivers, then layer in secondary mechanisms and less supported hypotheses.

For example:

⍰ Ranking the drivers of altruism, morality, & cooperation

For example, despite several chapters dedicated on the topic, I wasn't able to gain the level of clarity I wanted.

What I wanted was a ranked explanation:

- What are the largest, most widely accepted evolutionary drivers of altruism and cooperation?
- And what are the possible, but less substantiated or narrower-scope, contributors?

This is what I would have liked to see:

Theory	Impact	Explanation
Kin selection (inclusive fitness)	Very high	Altruism toward genetic relatives evolves when helping kin (rB > C) still propagates shared genes.
Direct reciprocity	Very high	In repeated interactions, helping others pays off because they'll return the favor later.
Misdirected kin selection	Speculatively high	Cooperative behavior triggered by evolved kin-detection mechanisms (e.g., familiarity, similarity, proximity, emotional closeness), evolved in small kin-based tribes but triggers even without genetic relatedness
Indirect reciprocity (reputation)	High	Acts of helping build a good reputation, which attracts aid from third parties.
Network (spatial) reciprocity	High	Emergent property. Cooperators cluster together in networks or colonies and collectively outcompete isolated defectors.
Multi-level (group) selection	Moderate	Groups of cooperators outperform groups of defectors, so cooperative traits spread with the winning groups/coalitions.
Enforcement (punishment)	Moderate	Emergent cultural byproduct. Punishing or excluding defectors imposes costs on cheats, stabilizing cooperative behavior.
Parochial/Ingroup altruism	Moderate/low	Preferential help for in-group members, often paired with hostility toward outsiders.
Green-beard effects	Low	Rare "tagged" genes recognize and favor copies of themselves, leading to targeted cooperation.
Partner choice	Low	Cooperative partners are favored over selfish ones. 'Cooperative' signaling is a consequence. Its strong effect on long-term dating is offset by short-term mating and forced copulation

“Evolutionary Drivers of Altruism, Morality, and Cooperation: A Ranked Framework”
(by Lucio Buffalmano)

REVIEW

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior is an authoritative, comprehensive, and wide-ranging source of insights into human psychology and behavior.

I’ve reviewed and studied many evolutionary psychology textbooks, and yet the best ones still manage to deliver new and fresh insights.

This *Cambridge Handbook* ranks among the very best.
It helped me improve several articles, and I learned a ton in the process.

From chapters on cooperation and altruism to bullying, parasite-stress theory, and beyond—there’s so much value here that it’s hard to even pick a favorite.

So instead, I’ll just express my gratitude to every contributing author:
Thank you for the excellent work you do ⍰⍰

Check the **best evolutionary psychology books** or **get this book on Amazon**.

How to Be More Masculine: The 10-Step Guide for Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 21 September 2025 · Archived copy · Original

What does it mean to be a man in today's world?

Search "how to be more masculine" and you'll find everything from gym-bro clichés to feel-good advice that doesn't deliver.

Masculinity isn't about PEDs or being 'nice'. It's about strength, status, dominance, and mental power.

At The Power Moves we've helped thousands of men rediscover their masculine edge and achieve their goals.

This guide cuts through the noise with proven, practical steps to build real masculinity—backed by psychology, biology, and real-world power dynamics.

Contents

- 1. Unleash Your Inner Warrior
- 2. Pursue Ambitious Goals
- 3. Develop High Self-Esteem
- 5. Be More Dominant
  - 5.2. Adopt Masculine Body Language
  - Display Strength and Stoicism
- 6. Develop A Masculine Body
  - ⍰ Example: Quit Diet Fads & Optimization Porn
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- 10. Stay Honorable: The ‘Masculine Code’
  - Avoid B*tch Moves
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  - Logic Over Woo-Woo
  - Be Strategic
  - Own Your Shortcomings: Penis & Masculinity
  - Quit watching masculinity videos
- FAQs
  - Your Next Masculine Move

1. Unleash Your Inner Warrior

Ambition, Aggression, and Will to Power are the masculine trinity.

Call them the ‘warrior spirit’.

They can power heroes and build civilizations.
Or they can *destroy* civilization.

Unleash your inner warrior, yoke it with win-win, and you’re the ultimate masculine hero.

♂Lucio’s Experience: **Run to win the race of life**

Lucio:
My first 10k race highlighted the warrior spirit vs. ‘most men’.

I couldn’t believe people stopped for water. *Stopping* for water? In a *race*??

When the road bent, some runners ahead of us smiled and waved.
My prosocial half loved the festivity. But my inner warrior saw taunts to be avenged with my performance.

Left with no overtaking space in the last stretch, I horned in between two guys, their elbows hitting my arms. They looked incredulous. My prosocial shell apologized—it was a bold move. But my inner warrior gritted '***Get the f*ck out of my way***'.

At the end, it seemed like I was the only one spent. Was I the exception for having given his all?

Deep down, I couldn't help but think, 'No wonder I achieve my goals, while most people dream'.

2. Pursue Ambitious Goals

Effective men pursue and achieve ambitious goals.

Ambition without goals and hard work is called *entitlement*.
Don't be that guy. **Masculine self-respect is earned, not claimed.** Earned with the hard work that moves you forward.

Stay stedfast to those goals

Emotional steadfastness underpins behavioral steadfastness.
Stay resilient from criticism and bounce back from losses: both are more strongly associated with masculinity (Brizendine, 2006; Gard et al., 2007; Johnson & Helgeson, 2002).

Non-masculine	High-power Masculinity
Fluctuating self-esteem, based on external events	**Constant self-esteem**, high in victory or defeat
Undisciplined, start and stop	**Stick to plan**, day in/day out
Fickle, constantly changing one's mind	**Decisive**, changing one's mind only with evidence

Think of masculinity like a river: despite the bends and rocks, it never stops moving towards the sea.

3. Develop High Self-Esteem

Believing in yourself is a top priority.
A weak mind is like a weak foundation. **No amount of muscle or money can fix a self-doubting mind.**

The true foundation of confdience is self-esteem, also shown to be more resilient in men (Helgeson, 2020 for an overview).

Here's a good primer on higher self-esteem:

> **Lucio**: Start from the basics of self-love and self-respect, then work your way up

5. Be More Dominant

Dominance, status, and power are the base currencies of masculinity.

Masculinity is not just about how you look; In large part, masculinity is about *behavioral* masculinity.
Behavioral masculinity boosts relationship satisfaction and loyalty. Write French in the *Cambridge Handbook of Female Adaptations*:

> women whose partners are more (versus less) symmetrical or behaviorally masculine report increased attraction to and satisfaction with their partners near peak fertility (Gangestad, Thornhill, & Garver-Apgar, 2005; Meltzer, 2017)

Some tips:

- **Speak with confidence**, see here
  - Lower your pitch within your natural range
  - Speak clearly, don't mumble
  - Never rush, or you sound nervous
- **Behave more dominant**, see here and dating dominance

The off-the-charts masculine/feminine polarity is instructive (not necessarily advising you do the same)

5.2. Adopt Masculine Body Language

Masculine body language is *confident* body language.

- **Take up space**, arms on armrests, feet apart
- **Comfortable posture**
- **Open up**: straight spine, shoulders back

P.S.:
Avoid ‘power posing’. It’s pop-psychology, and screams of unmasculine overcompensation

Check out:

- ✅ Masculine body language
- ❌ Feminine body language to avoid

Display Strength and Stoicism

Lean towards *under*-reacting.
Lower reactiveness, including in facial expressions, are associated with masculinity.

Most of all, banish drama and hysterics.

Unmasculine	Masculine
Ouch	⍰
Oh my Goood! ⍰	WTF is that!
HELP!! Can anyone please help! I lost my dog, HELP! <– Emotional and dramatic	*Have you seen a black pitbull roaming around* <– Factual and collected

6. Develop A Masculine Body

Physical formidability is masculine.

- **Lift Weights** and train. It helps with *looking* masculine, and boosts testosterone
- **Healthy diet**: Rich in protein and vegetables. Avoid deep-fried, and ‘junk food’
- **Rest and recover**: Sleep deprivation impacts testosterone and mental sharpness. 4am alarms don’t boost masculinity
- **Stay lean**: Lower body fat is associated with higher testosterone and masculinity

Balance: health and fitness, no obsession
Healthy mind in a healthy body. Body dysmorphia is the opposite of healthy masculinity. And obsessing over carbs, sugar, or a drink isn't top masculinity either.

⍰ Example: Quit Diet Fads & Optimization Porn

The masculine man mindset around fads and 'over-optimization':

> **Alex**: *This has to sink in (…) I get the same questions (…) what's the new marketing trick what's the new hack. (…)* **It's like the gal who's like 'hey is it keto is it intermittent fasting'.** *It's how you sound like*

Top 1% masculine men look down on 'biohacking' fads—they focus on timeless, high ROI fundamentals.

Dress Masculine

- **Masculine accessories**, like a metal watch or a leather strap for younger men. Less is more
- **Boots are masculine**, and so are leather and dress shoes. Avoid overdoing trainers
- **Beard is masculine**. Stubble for younger men, beard up until middle age. Then shave more often

⍰⍰ **Tip**: develop a small wardrobe of sharp basics that suit your body type. Shopaholism is not masculine

8. Be A Leader

Leaders are high power and intrinsically top status.
And leadership is associated with masculinity.

True leadership goes beyond a title; it's about embodying the key **mindsets of a masculine leader**, such as ownership of your deliverables, of your life, and looking out for the people around.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **The Sigma male way to leadership**

Lucio:
I'm not interested in leading others.
It requires commitment and often comes with status games and politics.

But I am even less interested in *being* led. I'm fiercely protective of my freedom.

Instead, I think of myself as **leading my own life.**
And I lead my life the way *I* want.

9. Be Sexually Confident

Sexual confidence is masculine.
And despite the changing times, expectations of men being initiators and leaders persist.

If you're single, take action on your desires and respectfully but confidently approach the girl you like.
Lovers are a masculine archetype (Gilmore, 1990). And the proof is in the pu…dding: women's choice. Women prefer high-value men for uncommitted dating.

9.2. Retain Power to Be Masculine In Relationships

To remain masculine in relationships:

- **Ensure she wants *you***, not just your provisioning
- **Keep high-priority goals** outside the relationship
  - You chase goals > she chases quality time. That's the masculine/feminine dynamic
- **Prioritize respect**, if you lose respect, you lose masculinity and attraction

Example of the type of disrespect you may have to check:

Also read:

- How women control relationships, and how to maintain your masculine edge
- How to maintain masculine power in relationships

10. Stay Honorable: The 'Masculine Code'

An 'unwritten male code' combines power and honor.
And it glues masculinity, respect, and status (prestige-type of status).

Lack of social and mental power lead to dishonorable sneakiness

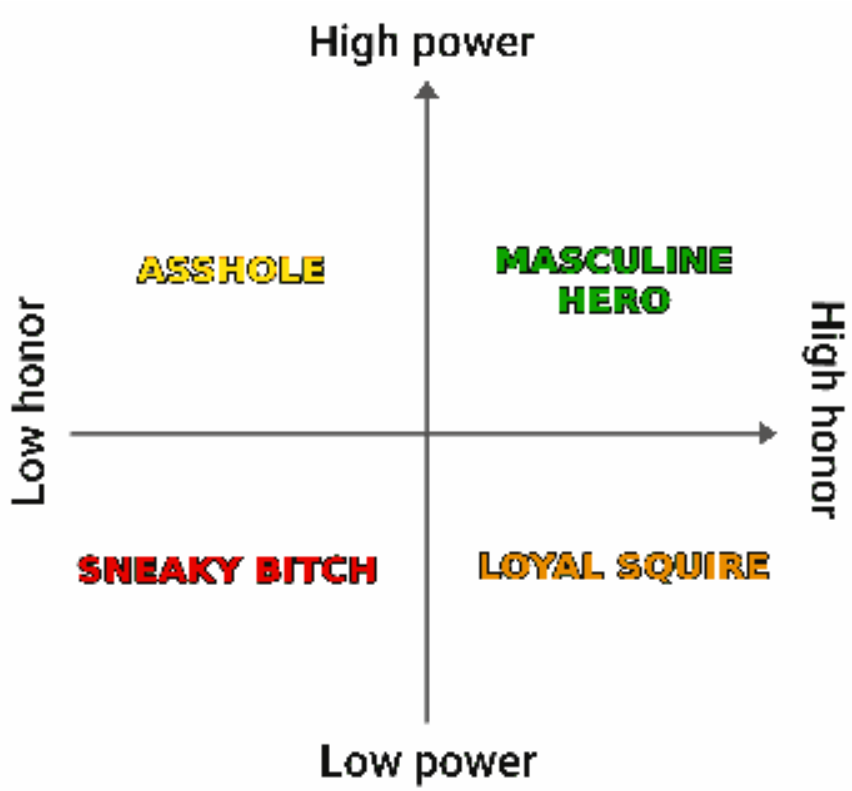
The 'unwritten male code' includes:

- **Assertive direct talk** over passive aggression
  - Man-to-man conflict resolution over sneaky tactics
- **Hierarchy-skills**

  - Respecting higher-ups
  - Stronger boundaries from below (lower status)
  - Not bothering higher-ups for small stuff
- **Team spirit**, playing to win for the team, channeling anger into fuel for performance
- **Self-reliance**, attempting to solve one's problems before crying for help

Avoid B*tch Moves

The 'b*tch' is the worst spot in the masculine quadrant of honor and power:



Nobody teaches this unspoken code. Some power-aware men naturally understand it. But some men are struggle to gain other men's respect because they're oblivious to it.

Some examples of masculine faux pas:

Code	Unmasculine	Masculine
Man-to-man	*"I'd like a supervisor"* <— Skips assertiveness, seeks fake corporate kid-glove	Demand proper service first. Only *after* you escalate
Self-reliance	*"Hey boss-of-my-boss, I want to complain about my boss"* <— Adult equivalent of calling daddy.	Find own solutions
Competitive	*"Ooow! You went in too hard* <— Expects nice playing, instead of playing to win	Play tougher next time
Directness	*"Dear, let's go. We'll leave a bad review"* <— Indirect aggression as revenge	Calls waiter to complain

Since this is crucial for men, we dig deeper in PU.

The man's code of honor starts from childhood.
Here's a good example:

> **Lucio**: We were having a 1:1, man to man disagreement. Suddenly he turns around and seeks support from another guy.
> Even as a kid I felt it broke the 'man code of honor'. Immediate respect loss

TPM Special Tips

Logic Over Woo-Woo

Men tend to believe less in 'supernatural forces'.

Here's how you can use that polarity to spike attraction:

> **Girlfriend**: You don't believe in horoscopes at all?
> **Lucio**: No. As if I'd let horoscopes tell me what's in store for me. I make my reality <— Immediate attraction spike

🧔♂Lucio's Take: **Woo-woo is the fastest way to lose my respect**

> **Lucio**: Masculine men run the world because they focus on active action, rather than 'passive attraction'

Be Strategic

Just like strategies beat dominance, strategic masculinity always beats rigid masculinity.

Own Your Shortcomings: Penis & Masculinity

Physical size, including penis size, can influence perceptions of masculinity.

In dating, men make it a bigger deal than women. Men are less satisfied with their penis size than their women are (55% vs. 85%).
And studies shows it impacts men's self-esteem.

Some men may feel powerless over less malleable traits like height or penis size.
But there is much you can do.

🧔♂Lucio's Take: **Locker room confidence as a 'grower'**

Lucio:
As a ‘grower’, I wasn’t always comfortable in locker rooms and showers.

That changed with mindsets, results, and expanding self-esteem.

More details here.

Quit watching masculinity videos

Learn if you must learn.
But don’t stay stuck in learning *forever*.

It’s demeaning to be an adult, eternally schooled on how to be a man

⁉️ **Solution**: Rediscover your nature, then do ‘masculine’ in your own way and move on.

FAQs

What causes low masculinity

Common causes include: low testosterone or health issues; overprotective parenting or overly shielded childhood; cultural discouragement of assertiveness; absence of male role models or mentorship; fear of conflict or rejection; low ambition and underdeveloped confidence. Most of these can be addressed through training, experience, and lifestyle changes, helping men regain status and agency.
The Power Moves we provide frameworks for **building status, confidence, and real-world masculine effectiveness**.

Can I become more masculine?

Yes, anyone can become more masculine by building mental resilience, physical strength, confidence, and other traits associated with masculinity.

Start by lifting weights to boost testosterone and increase muscle mass, practice assertiveness in daily interactions, and own your space. Masculinity is a skill set you can develop.

How to be more masculine in a relationship

To be more masculine in a relationship, lead with confidence by making decisions, setting boundaries, and protecting your partner without being controlling.
Communicate directly and honestly, expect and demand the same back, and handle conflicts calmly, but resolutely. Finally, build emotional independence to avoid neediness, and maintain your own pursuits to keep the relationship balanced and remain attractive.

How to be more masculine in bed

Being more masculine in bed means taking charge with confident, dominant energy—initiate boldly, guide the pace, and focus on her pleasure while owning yours. Build physical stamina with cardio, and practice lasting longer. Embrace raw passion, avoid overthinking, and lead the experience.

Your Next Masculine Move

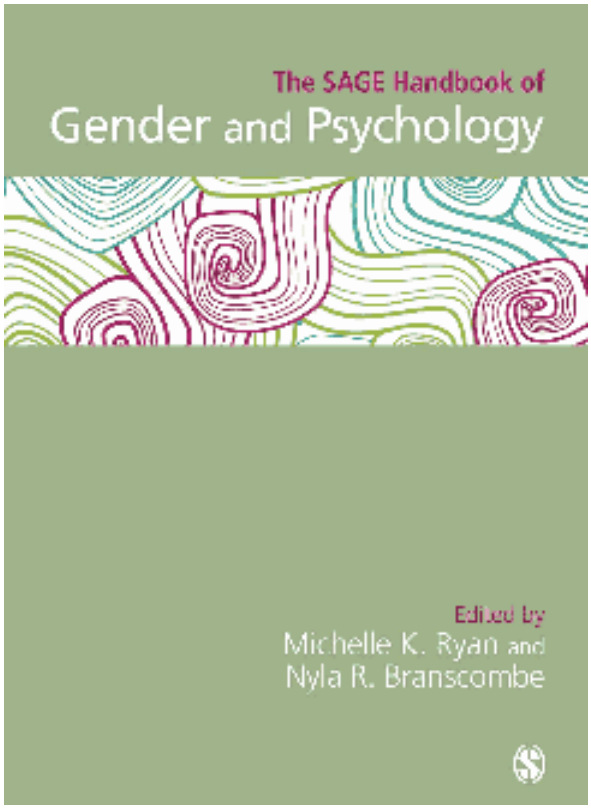
This masculine guide gives you a solid overview.
But real masculinity isn't learned from articles — it's lived. **Power University** is the definitive program for men ready to master the art of power, masculinity, and leadership.

> Power University

The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Psychology

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 September 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Psychology (2013) is a multi-author synthesis of the literature and research trends in the field of gender psychology.



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Exec Summary

- **Gender stereotypes create or reinforce the reality of gender differences**. Stereotypes aren't just descriptive, but prescriptive, applying social pressure on men and women to conform and be 'good men/women'
- **People exaggerate and over-generalize gender differences**, but gender differences are small
  - Even small effects can be significant when applied to whole population, when consistent (and, we add, when they shift the full 'bell curve')
- **Must must 'prove' their masculine worth**, while women don't need to prove femininity

FULL SUMMARY

About the Authors:
Various authors by chapter. The main editors are:
Michelle K. Ryan is a Professor of Social and Organisational Psychology at the University of Exeter and the University of Groningen. She co-developed the concept of the *glass cliff*: women promoted in leadership roles during crises and declines, setting them up for failure. Her research spans gender, leadership, and workplace diversity.
Nyla R. Branscombe is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Kansas. She is a leading scholar in social psychology, with a focus on intergroup relations, social identity, prejudice, and discrimination. Her work often explores how group memberships shape attitudes and behaviors, including issues around gender and inequality.

Trait	Men	Women	Magnitude
Emotion Expression	More likely to express anger; suppress vulnerability	More emotionally expressive overall	Small to moderate, context-dependent
Risk-taking	Higher, especially when masculinity is threatened	More cautious overall, favoring stability and safety	Moderate to large, especially in physical domains
Social Dominance	More encouraged to assert dominance	Discouraged from dominance, faces social penalties	Moderate, shaped by cultural norms
Communication Style	More direct and authoritative	More tentative and cooperative to avoid backlash	Small to moderate, highly context-sensitive
Motivation Focus	Status and achievement-driven	Relational and communal goals	Moderate, varies with context
Perception of Competence	Often praised for basic caregiving or support roles	Held to higher standards; competence often questioned	Large in perception, not in actual performance
Aging Experience	More concern about loss of status or utility	More affected by appearance-related ageism	Moderate, varies by culture and role expectations
Personality Traits	More assertive, less agreeable on average	More agreeable, especially in nurturing roles	Small on average; heavily role- and culture-dependent
Verbal Ability	Slightly lower performance in verbal tasks (e.g., reading, writing).	Slightly higher performance in verbal tasks (e.g., reading, writing).	Small ($d \approx 0.1$–0.2)

Trait	Men	Women	Magnitude
Spatial Ability	Higher performance in spatial tasks (e.g., mental rotation).	Lower performance in spatial tasks (e.g., mental rotation).	Moderate, dependingon task (d ≈ 0.5–0.7)
Aggression	Higher physical and verbal aggression, especially in competitive contexts.	Lower physical aggression; more relational aggression (e.g., social exclusion).	Moderate (d ≈ 0.4–0.6)
Empathy & helping	Men are more helpful in risky situations and in the presence of others	More nurturing and caring in private	
Social Expectations	Avoid femininity, avoid powerless emotions (e.g., sadness, fear, shame)	Avoid masculinity, show positive emotions (e.g.: smile, love, enthusiasm, warmth)	

Small Effects Are Still Significant If Consistent

> small effect sizes are not necessarily unimportant in daily life. Small effects can have substantial impact when they consistently describe female and male behavior across time and situations.
> As explained by Abelson (1985, p. 133), 'small variance contributions of independent variables in single-shot studies grossly understate the variance contribution in the long run'
> (…)
> In addition, when experiments are designed to have particularly weak manipulations or difficult-to-influence dependent variables, even small effects can be impressive and important (Prentice & Miller, 1992).
> These considerations raise serious concerns about routinely interpreting effect sizes in terms of Cohen's (1988) guidelines of 0.20 for small, 0.50 for medium, and 0.80 for large.

And:

> if studies' measures are not 'single-shot' but aggregated across multiple observations of behaviors, effect magnitudes are larger and sometimes dramatically larger (Eagly, 2009).

The authors mention the democratic VS autocratic leadership style for men and women as an example of a 'small' difference, but that was larger when based on measures that aggregated behaviors across more observations.

I'd also add that the 'small' difference is much larger at the extreme, so that despite the small different, almost all autocrats are men.

Researchers Favor Their Own Sex in Research

> (…) tendencies that are sometimes observed in meta-analyses for the sex of studies' authors to predict studies' outcomes, generally in the direction that authors of each sex obtain or publish more findings that favor their own gender and thereby shore up their gender identities (e.g., Anderson & Leaper, 1998; Eagly & Carli, 1981; Wood, 1987).

The Science and Politics of Comparing Women and Men

Eagly challenges the notion of simplistic sex comparisons, noting that such comparisons often reinforce stereotypes rather than clarify differences. She advises to focus on understanding context-dependent behavior.

In the next chapter Fine debunks pseudoscientific claims of hardwired sex differences found in brain imaging studies, and the limitations of neuroscans.

Any region can be recruited for most functions, so jumping to conclusions about the meaning of an area 'lighting up' is fraught with potentials for errors.
She emphasizes the role of context, expectations, and socialization in shaping brain activity.

- **Avoid simplistic male-female comparisons.**
- **Understand when differences matter in real-world settings.**
- **Consider how social roles influence behavior** rather than assuming innate sex differences.

An Evolutionary Understanding of Sex Differences

Jennifer Byrd-Craven and David C. Geary apply an evolutionary lens to sex differences, arguing that male and female behaviors evolved to maximize reproductive success.

They highlight men's tendency toward competitive and risk-taking behaviors and women's focus on nurturing and relationship-building, rooted in differential parental investment, but urge caution against overgeneralizing evolutionary explanations.

- Humans have more intrasexual reproductive strategies variation than other species.
- Men in successful coalitions have more reproductive opportunities and success than men in less successful coalitions
  - High status men in successful coalitions being the most reproductively successful (Zerjal et al., 2003).
- Sex differences start at around 3 years
- Bullying among boys of this age often increases at the beginning of the school year and decreases later in the year, likely a result of the establishment of a dominance hierarchy (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2001).
- Physical bullying in adolescent boys is associated with social dominance, as defined by peers and teachers, and with a higher frequency of dating and higher rated attractiveness by girls (Bukowski, Sippola, & Newcomb, 2000).
  They're not liked, but have 'social presence' (Berger, 2007).
- Both socially dominant men and women use a mix coercion and prosocial strategies to achieve dominance, depending on the context and the relationship (Hauntil hewley et al., 2007); the sex difference is in the frequency and pattern of physical aggression and social manipulation.
- **Girls are more sensitive to relational aggression**, and twice as likely to suffer from depression or anxiety than boys. The author suggests that's the reason why women use relational aggression: to disempower competitors

Precarious Manhood

The authors explore how manhood is often seen as earned and easily lost, leading men to engage in riskier behaviors to affirm masculinity.

Bosson, Vandello, and Caswell introduce the concept of "precarious manhood," positing that masculinity is a socially conferred status that men must continually prove through action.
Unlike womanhood, which is seen as biologically assured, manhood is vulnerable to threats like job loss or perceived weakness, leading to compensatory behaviors like aggression. This chapter offers practical strategies for addressing toxic masculinity in clinical and organizational settings.

In *Manhood in The Making* author Gilmore lists three recurring themes of masculinity across cultures:

- Impregnator
- Protector
- Provider

There have been many categories and traits that various authors listed and that makes a man a man, but what's striking is that, the authors suggest, there is cross-cultural consensus in beliefs about manhood:

> Cross-cultural consensus in beliefs about manhood is consistent with research by Williams and Best (1990), who conducted a 27-nation study of gender stereotypes.
> Respondents (approximately 100 university students in each country) read a list of 300 adjectives and rated whether each was more descriptive of men or women, or not differentially associated with either.
> High degrees of consensus were reached both within and across cultures, with people from every nation rating men as more adventurous, dominant, and independent than women.
> In short, the results suggest that despite cultural differences in specific norms and customs regarding manhood, there is substantial agreement across cultures regarding stereotypes of men.

- **Masculinity is seen as a status to prove**, unlike femininity.
  Some researchers stated that's remained the same despite cultural changes in 'what it means to be a man'
- **Men may overcompensate** when masculinity is threatened.
  - This dynamic contributes to aggression, competitiveness, and emotional suppression.
- **Perceived 'manhood' impacts men's health**: men who believed job loss made others question their manhood and lose status suffered anxiety and depression

Gender-Based Standards of Competence

This chapter discusses how competence judgments are filtered through gendered expectations in work and parenting contexts.

- Men and women are held to different standards for the same roles.
- Success is often seen as more surprising for women.
- Women in leadership face a "double bind": competent but disliked.
- Fathers are often overpraised for caregiving; mothers are scrutinized.

Minimum requirements VS confirmatory requirements

Minimum standards are **low-bar expectations** based on **group stereotypes** (women need less competence to be considered 'good enough' because expectations are lower).

Confirmatory standards are the higher bar of proof needed to confirm that someone has a quality (women need more evidence to prove competence, men more to prove warmth).

- In hiring, **women often meet minimum standards more easily** (e.g., get shortlisted), but:
  - They must **exceed higher confirmatory standards** to be hired.
  - **Men**, by contrast, are often hired with the same evidence that just got them shortlisted — for them, "suspicion equals confirmation."
- In firing decisions, **women are judged more harshly**:
  - **Fewer mistakes are tolerated** before concluding they're incompetent.
  - Men can make more errors before others conclude they are truly incompetent.
- These **shifting standards** show that:
  - **Women have to work harder to prove competence**.
  - **Men are given more benefit of the doubt** — both in being hired and retained.

This means that Lower expectations (minimum) help stereotyped groups initially but higher requirements

(confirmatory) hurt them at critical decision points like hiring or firing.

Gender and Personality

The authors emphasize that personality differences often reflect gendered social roles more than inherent traits.

Luisa Batalha and Katherine J. Reynolds challenge traditional views of personality as fixed, emphasizing social identity's role in shaping gendered traits. They argue that women's and men's personalities shift in response to group norms and social change, with women adopting more agentic traits in egalitarian contexts. This chapter provides actionable insights for fostering personality flexibility in educational and organizational settings.

- **Women are moderately more neurotic and agreeable** from crosscultural findings measuring Big Five personality. The differences in openness, extraversion, and conscientiousness were small.
  But it varied greatly across cultures, with a larger difference in the West (Costa, Terraciano, & McCrae, 2001)
- **Women's assertiveness has increased over time** and varies depending on role, suggesting that human traits aren't stable across time but varies with culture and role (Twenge, 2001)
- Differences in traits like agreeableness or assertiveness are context-dependent.
- Gender identity and social expectations shape behavior.
- **Men embrace sexism because it benefits them**

Long quote:

> the association of beliefs in gender hierarchy (sexism) with beliefs in innate gender differences (essentialism), is dependent on whether essentialism promotes or challenges the status quo (Morton, Postmes, Haslam, & Hornsey, 2009).
> When men consider increasing gender equality (social change) their sexism scores go hand in hand with essentialism scores.
> On the other hand, when they (…) think about areas in which they are disadvantaged in relation to women (reversed status quo), this relationship disappears or reverses.
> Clearly, when the status quo is threatened the more powerful group (men) adopt beliefs concerning natural disadvantage and innate differences, which provide justification for gender inequality.

The Social Basis of Emotion in Men and Women

⍰⍰♂ My note: the title of this chapter may suggest something about the preference of culture over biology.

Agneta Fischer and Catharine Evers explore gendered emotional expression, debunking myths like women's greater emotionality.

They find that women cry more and smile more, while men express anger more readily, but they lean more towards a social norms explanation, rather than biology (note: I don't necessarily fully agree it's *only* social norms).

- Women are more emotionally expressive
- Gendered emotions showing differences are:
- Women cry more, and a greater variety of situations or interactions. But as adults, not as children. This suggests that socialization, social roles, and social costs for men's crying play a role <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: not necessarily, biology changes wit hage, so it may reflect biological development
- Men may express anger more due to permissive norms.
- Emotional intelligence is influenced by gender roles.

The authors argue on this emotional categorization:

Agentic (high power)	Commununal (affiliation/subordination)
Anger	sadness
contempt	guilt
disgust	shame
pride	happiness

Anger, pride, and contempt

This text examines gender differences in emotions typically associated with male roles—especially anger, pride, and contempt.

- **Pride and contempt**, often linked to dominance and superiority, show **no consistent gender differences** according to existing studies.
- **Anger** is stereotypically male, but research finds **no evidence that men feel anger more intensely or more often** than women. Differences emerge only when the anger-triggering event aligns with gendered concerns (e.g., appearance for women, intelligence for men).
- The main gender difference lies in **how anger is expressed**, not experienced:
  - **Men** are more likely to use **physical and verbal aggression**.
  - **Women** tend to show **indirect or relational aggression** (e.g., ignoring, gossiping), due to higher concern about social harmony, fear of retaliation, and traditional subordinate roles.
- **Social context and gender roles** influence these patterns:
  - In **egalitarian relationships**, women express anger more directly.
  - In **traditional contexts**, they regulate it more, fearing social consequences.
- **Women often view anger as a loss of control**, while **men see it as a tool**, which further drives women's tendency to regulate it.

Overall, gender differences in anger expression depend on context, social roles, and perceived consequences than on actual emotional experience.

Different Expectations for Men and Women

Emotion norms have changed over time, and modern media shows both men and women expressing vulnerability (Labott et al., 1991).

However, **implicit norms still guide how men and women "should" express emotion** (Timmers et al., 2003):

- **Norm 1: Women must show positive emotions**
  - Women are expected to smile, express love, enthusiasm, and warmth—linked to their perceived communal, caregiving role (Graham et al., 1981; Stoppard & Gunn Gruchy, 1993).
  - Women face greater social sanctions for failing to appear positive (e.g., seen as cold or "bitchy").
  - In the workplace, female managers suppress negative and display positive emotions; male managers tend to do the opposite (Simpson & Stroh, 2004).
- **Norm 2: Men must avoid powerless emotions**
  - Men are expected to express dominant, powerful emotions (e.g., anger), which signal competence and status (Brescoll & Uhlman, 2008).
  - Powerless emotions (e.g., sadness, fear, shame) are seen as inappropriate for men but expected in women (Timmers et al., 2003).
  - A man showing sadness may be judged as weak, while a woman showing anger may be penalized as

unfeminine or aggressive.

Gendered Communication and Social Influence

Linda L. Carli investigates how gender shapes communication and influence, finding that women use more communal language (e.g., affiliative speech) and men more agentic (e.g., assertive speech).
These differences affect perceptions of influence, with women often facing backlash for assertive behavior.

- Women persuade better with a mix of power and warmth: combining communal with agentic behavior increases favorable reactions than merely agentic (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007).
  Women influenced men mixing nonverbal warmth (e.g., by smiling and nodding) with competence than competence alone (Carli et al., 1995).
- Influence is more challenging for women as because of the 'lower competence and authority' stereotype
- Women use more tentative language to avoid backlash.
- Men are perceived as more authoritative by default.

The Social Psychology of Gender across Cultures

Serge Guimond, Armand Chatard, and Fabio Lorenzi-Cioldi examine how culture shapes gender stereotypes and differences.
They find that egalitarian cultures reduce gender gaps in traits like assertiveness, while hierarchical cultures amplify them.

Men tend to dominate in high-status roles across cultures, but social comparison processes can mitigate stereotypes.

The various traits attributed to men and women are structured along two main dimensions: an individualistic dimension, typical of men, usually called agency, with traits such as dominant, assertive and boastful, and a more social or collectivistic dimension, typical of women, usually called communion, with traits such as affectionate, gentle and sensitive (Wood & Eagly, 2010; see also Carli, Chapter 13 this volume).

- Gender inequality correlates with rigid gender norms.
- Westerners, men, and people in general were attributed agency, Asians were attributed communion.
  My note: this may partially explain Asian men's challenges in dating, not being seen as masculine
- **Leaders are typically endowed with masculine, agentic characteristics**. The 'think manager—think male' phenomenon (Schein, 1996), making it difficult for women to combine leadership with femininity (see Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004).
- **Gender differentiation is greater in individualistic (and more egalitarian) nations** than in collectivistic (and less egalitarian) nations.
  - Egalitarian difference increase is known as 'gender equality paradox'
  - Some studies show that in egalitarian societies gender differences may decrease, for example in women placing less value on men's status and earning <— My note: this may be a confounding factor. Egalitarian societies tend to be richer, and women can 'afford' to care less about resources because resources are more abundant and more equally distributed

For a quick overview of the current literature between these two opposing theories:

Domain	Social Role Theory	Gender Equality Paradox
Mate preferences	✅ Supported (in *some* domains!)	❌ Less relevant
Personality traits	❌ Less supported	✅ Supported
Vocational interests	❌ Less supported	✅ Supported

Domain	Social Role Theory	Gender Equality Paradox
Behavioral roles (e.g., chores, parenting)	✅ Supported	❌ Less relevant

Stereotypes of gender differences create realities

A wide range of studies—from Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) pioneering research on self-fulfilling prophecies in classrooms, to Snyder's (1984) laboratory experiments, and the broader literature on stereotype threat (e.g., Steele & Ambady, 2006; see Betz, Ramsey, & Sekaquaptewa, Chapter 26)—support the idea that **stereotypes can shape reality by influencing behavior and memory in line with those stereotypes**.

The findings underscore the prescriptive nature of gender stereotypes—not just describing typical behavior, but suggesting how individuals should behave (Prentice & Carranza, 2004).

Consequently, gender differences in behavior may result from conformity to social expectations rather than innate differences, highlighting the critical role of social influence processes (Haslam et al., 1996; Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999). This strengthens the case for using social psychological approaches to understand gendered behavior patterns.

My note: but 'stereotypes' aren't necessarily 'plucked from thin air' and instead can *start* from biological differences

Gender Differences in Motivation

This was one of my favorite chapter, and in one quote:

> Men and women differ more in motivations tha in capabilities

Roy F. Baumeister argues that men's and women's differing motivations—men's drive for status and women's for relationships—shape social structures and inequalities.

Baumesteir also goes into dating market dynamics applying the social exchange paradigm.
He states that men's higher sex drive empowers women (principle of least interest, Waller, 1937).
I agree with Roy, but also add that it's not only about wanting sex more, but also about differential reproductive maxima, and risks and benefits. No risk for men in adding one sex partner, only benefit, and much bigger risks for women.

Finally, I'd also argue that while Roy's analysis is true for most and women, it also depends on mate value, and the power dynamics invert at the top.
And high-value men have more options and power than high-value women.

However, could only partially agree with this:

The notion that men conspire together against women is typical of a victim fantasy (see Baumeister, 1997) but has very little evidence to support it. Hence, let me offer an alternative hypothesis (from Baumeister, 2010).

I agree there is no 'conspiracy'… But not a conscious one.
Otherwise, there is an emergent property of individual men who'd rather have lower-power women for their mating success.

See:

- Male sexuality is more natural, female sexuality more cultural (higher plasticity)
  - Men have higher rates than women of almost all sexual paraphilias — but these do not seem to reflect plasticity per se.
- Men are more driven by status, women by relational goals.

- Monogamy is good for men, not women
- These patterns influence workplace dynamics and courtship.

Men believe in evolutionary psychology and women in cultural learning because it reflects their reality

This struck me as incredibly insightful by Baumeister, something I had never thought about but that immediately clicked after hearing it:

> My own reading of the literature uncovered one factor that almost certainly contributed to the disagreements about what mixture of nature and culture shapes the human sex drive: The answer differs by gender. In brief, male sexuality is more natural, female sexuality more cultural. This can also be phrased in terms of differing degrees of erotic plasticity, which is defined as the degree to which sexual motivation is shaped by social, cultural, and situational factors: Women have higher erotic plasticity than men (Baumeister, 2000).

And later:

> The difference in erotic plasticity may help explain some of the acrimony in the overarching debate between social constructionists and evolutionary psychologists about sexual motivation, because there really are different answers.
> Males may be intuitively more comfortable with theories that emphasize the innate and inflexible nature of sexual desire, whereas females may be more drawn to theories that depict sexuality as fluid and changing in response to circumstances.

Sexism in Contemporary Societies

Manuela Barreto and Naomi Ellemers analyze modern sexism, distinguishing between overt, hostile sexism and subtle, benevolent sexism.
Women are more likely to detect sexism but face social costs for confronting it, while men may overlook subtle forms.

Some takeaways:

- **You can use prejudice to maintain high self-esteem**: *in individual performance contexts (…) members of socially stigmatized groups can protect their self-esteem by attributing a negative outcome to prejudice or discrimination of the evaluator instead of their personal inadequacy (Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003).* However, this only works if prejudice is perceived as rare (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a) and it's harmful for individuals for whom this is a pervasive or recurring event (Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002).
  - Women with high self-esteem didn't need to 'blame shift'
- **Benevolent sexism can be more 'effective' in keeping women lower down** compared to no sexism or to overt sexism, including in giving up leadership more easily
  - Benevolent sexism decreases pushbacks: *blatant discrimination leads to intentions to protest, subtle discrimination does not (Ellemers & Barreto, 2009). This is partly because blatant discrimination is perceived as discriminatory and elicits anger in its targets (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b), an emotion that is an important precursor to collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). The negative emotions more typically elicited by subtle prejudice, such as anxiety or sadness, are directed at the self, and are less likely to lead to protest responses. (…) Thus, another way in which subtle prejudice is self-fulfilling is that it impairs group identification and collective protest, and fails to fuel attempts at social change.*
- **Women who encounter sexism can increase their 'woman identification'**, which can have positive mental

health effects: *Identifying with a socially devalued group has important psychological benefits, such as increases in self-esteem (Schmitt et al., 2002). One reason why group identification has this effect is that it draws individuals to the group, exposing them to its positive definition of the group, its social support, and its resources. In this sense, group identification itself constitutes a resource to which group members can turn to resist the negative effects of prejudice or discrimination (Leach, Rodriguez-Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, 2010).*

- **Successful women may become women's worst enemies (queen bees)**: *Yet, women who succeed in entering high-status positions often decrease the extent to which they identify with their gender group, and derogate ingroup members who have not fared as well (Ellemers et al., 2004). These so-called 'queen bees' distance themselves from other women as a way to escape sexist treatment at work (Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, & De Groot, 2011).*

Benevolent sexism is well-meaning but harmful

> Benevolent sexism can be manifested in several ways, such as by introducing restrictions on women's activities in order to protect them (Moya, Glick, Expdsito, de Lemus, & Hart, 2007) or by paternalistic forms of help (Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011). Such behaviors are enveloped in a positive layer of protection and flattery, but they also subtly convey the belief in women's inferior abilities to defend themselves, help themselves, or deserve rewards. The positive tone of benevolent sexism is thus only superficial.

Read more here for how these dynamics work and how you can handle them:

- **Benevolent racism**: dynamics and solutions

> Benevolent Racism: The Hidden Power Play Behind White Sympathy

Sexual Harassment: Motivations and Consequences

Anne Maass, Mara Cadinu, and Silvia Galdi investigate sexual harassment, highlighting its prevalence and impact on women, who are primary targets due to power dynamics and objectification.
Men's motivations often stem from dominance or sexual interest, while women face career and psychological consequences. The chapter offers practical strategies for prevention and intervention in workplaces and institutions.

The 3 Main Motivators Driving Sexual Harassment

There have been three main drivers hypothesizes to drive sexual harassment:

Sexual Motivation:
Some perpetrators harass in pursuit of **sexual arousal or satisfaction**, especially in cases like sexual blackmail. However, this motivation doesn't fully explain other types like gender harassment, which often targets less traditionally feminine women.
(Source: Maass & Cadinu, 2006; Berdahl, 2007a, 2007b)

Power Motivation:
Harassment can serve as a **tool to assert dominance**, especially in societies with entrenched gender power imbalances. For some men, **sex and power are cognitively linked**, making power-driven harassment more likely, particularly toward vulnerable victims.
(Source: Bargh et al., 1995; Maass et al., 2003)

Gender Identity Protection:
Harassment may function as a **defensive reaction** when a man's masculine identity feels threatened. It often targets women who challenge traditional gender roles (e.g., feminists), serving to reaffirm the perpetrator's in-group male identity, especially when reinforced by peers.

(Source: Maass & Cadinu, 2006; Maass et al., 2003; Hunt & Gonsalkorale, 2011; Siebler et al., 2008)

Traits of Men Likely to Sexually Harass

Men high in Likelihood of Sexual Harassment Scale (LSH) include:

- high levels of hostile sexism
- rape myth acceptance
- authoritarianism
- endorsement of traditional gender roles
- masculine ideology
- low levels of agreeableness, openness to experience, and empathy (see O'Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Arens Bates, & Lean, 2009; Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009 for reviews).
- High Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)

Reducing Gender-Based Violence

In samples varying from college-aged men to juvenile offenders to adult male sexual offenders, men who gain gratification from controlling or dominating women or who are distrustful of women, often display the following pathological personality traits:

- callousness
- disinhibition
- narcissism
- antisocial personality disorder colored by impulsivity
- Social dominance orientation

Another path to sexual aggression, which can interact with pathological traits, arises from a personal history that includes (Malamuth, 2003):

- lack of emotional bonding with sexual partners
- familial conflict or abuse
- adolescent delinquency

Psychological Perspectives on Gender in Negotiation

Hannah Riley Bowles examines gender differences in negotiation, finding that women face stereotype threat and social backlash for assertive bargaining, unlike men. Contextual factors, like ambiguity, exacerbate these gaps, but training can mitigate effects.

- Men offer smaller concessions and worst first offer to female (and black) buyers
- Peace offers from women may be more persuasive: *Maoz (2009) hypothesized that negotiators would be more receptive to peace proposals that came from female than male opponents because stereotypes suggest women are more willing to compromise than men are. As hypothesized, negotiators rated identical proposals more favorably when they came from female than male opponents.*
- **Too much warmth harms you in negotiations**: *The findings of multiple studies suggested that feminine warmth is more of a liability than flirtatious charm because warmth signals a lack of competitiveness and concern for self. There were no comparable effects for men.*
- Women perform better in negotiations advocating for others (Bowles et al., 2005)

MORE WISDOM

People over-estimate the links between behavior and power

> A meta-analytic review of the literature testing the association of nonverbal behaviors with verticality, a construct encompassing power, status, and dominance effects, revealed that people perceive stronger links between verticality and communication than actually exist (Hall et al., 2005).
> Specifically, people perceive possessing high power to be associated with an erect posture and open body position; rapid speech and lower vocal pitch; increased gazing, nodding, interrupting, gesturing, speech loudness, and touching of others; and decreased speech hesitations, smiling, brow raising, self-touch, and interpersonal distance.
> However, only three of these behaviors actually correlate with verticality: High-power individuals speak more loudly and have more open bodies and smaller interpersonal distances

But I think these signals can ALL indeed be power-cues, it just depends on the context.
Interrupting for example can be a cue of dominance indeed, especially *successful* interruptions.

Experimental work shows the tendency for over-generalization

Reflecting the particular tendency to essentialize gender, experimental work has shown that people readily generalize information about a single individual to their gender category as a whole (Prentice and Miller, 2006).

Essentialist thinking is an inevitable feature of certain individuals (e.g., those high in need for cognitive closure) and certain groups (i.e., higher status ones) and, the authors argue, it's an hallmark of male sexism.

Collectivist cultures may be seen as more feminine

> A series of studies by Lorenzi-Cioldi (2002) highlights the resulting greater ambivalence of perceptions concerning lower-status groups. Male and female Swiss participants judged the extent to which various attributes apply to people in general, to men and women, to Westerners and Asians, and to themselves. Two attributes represented the Western culture ('independent' and 'individualistic'), and two other attributes represented the Asian culture ('collectivistic' and 'follower'). The findings showed that, overall, Westerners, men, and people in general were attributed agency, whereas Asians were attributed communion.

Large cities are for attractive women

> A regions-of-significance analysis indicates some evidence of a 'liberation' pattern, but only among a very select group of women at the extremely high end of the attractiveness distribution (i.e., who reported low WHR).
> These women experienced higher quality friend relations and more life satisfaction if they inhabited the high mobility ecology of urban settings rather than the relatively restrictive ecology of rural settings.
> However, among the much larger group of women in the middle-to-low range of the attractiveness distribution (1.e., who reported high WHR), the regions of significance analysis indicated a 'risk' pattern, such that women experienced lower quality friend relations and worse life satisfaction in urban settings than in rural settings (Plaut et al., 2009).

Women had peak emotions in intimate relationships, men in groups

> When people were instructed to recall a single event from their lives marked by strong positive or negative emotion, women talked about intimate relationship events, whereas men were more likely to mention events

> involving groups or organizations.

Solitary events were a minority for both.

Feminist self-identity is healthy

> Perhaps because of the greater sense of control and efficacy such a decision reflects, a stronger feminist identity is also related to better health and well-being (Yakushko, 2007; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010).

Monogamy benefits men as a whole, not women

Baumeister says:

> Although laypersons have often expressed surprise at hearing that women outnumber men two to one among humankind's ancestors, thinking it would be closer to equality, experts have tended to be surprised for the opposite reason — they thought the imbalance would be even larger than it is (again, as is often found in other species).
> What has reduced the gap has been the spread of monogamy through the civilized world during the last couple of centuries.
> This is often depicted as a benefit to women, but it is difficult to see how enforced monogamy actually benefits women. It reduces their options. Indeed, even a woman who wants monogamy would be better off in a polygamous society, because there will be an oversupply of single men. Almost certainly, monogamy was institutionalized in order to ensure that almost every man could have a mate.

I agree at a population level.
But monogamy doesn't serve *high* value men well.

QUOTES

> Crying has generally been considered as the ultimate sign of helplessness, because it signals the inability to act in order to cope with a situation (Frijda, 1986).

On one often underestimated reason for men and women's different outcomes:

> Men and women differ more in motivations tha in capabilities

CONS

- **Socialization and nurture bias**

Several chapters and authors felt like over-leaning towards socialization, social roles, and culture, rather than genes and biology.

The cautioning -or complaints- against generalizations, genes, and biology sometimes felt overdone, without equally appreciating their impact and importance.

REVIEW

The Sage Handbook of Gender and Psychology offers a broad overview of gender differences and commonalities.

It seems to me it over-represents the constructionists' and feminist-leaning takes, but I could still learn a lot from it.

The Sage Handbook book also made me realize how benevolent sexism is the specular concept of benevolent racism. It was an old dynamic we described on this website, but only thanks to this book was I able ot give it the appropriate name, and provide it with academic references.

Check the **best books** to read or **get this book on Amazon**.

7 Best Books on Masculinity (Ranked & Critically Reviewed)

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 September 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Masculinity is a core aspect of men's identity and a core trait to succeed in the world as a man.

The best books on masculinity draw from psychology, history, and social perceptions to offer insights on becoming a well-rounded, empowered man.

At *The Power Moves*, we've studied masculinity— analyzing the psychology, the archetypes, and the practical applications to integrate it into our power-centric approach to men's development.

This guide reviews the best books on masculinity we've learned from, highlights their pros and cons, and shows how to apply (and adapt) their ideas in real life. (Note: we *only* list books we personally reviewed).

And now let's deep dive into each of these books on masculinity.

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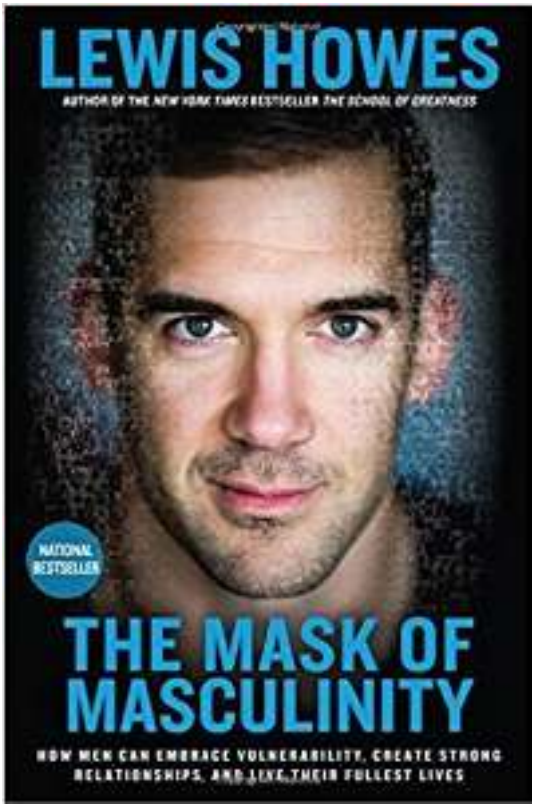
6. The Mask of Masculinity



Howes offers an analysis of the societal “masks” men wear to conform to traditional masculinity and feel powerful, and he suggests that dropping them leads to greater freedom and fulfillment.

❓ Pros

- **Solid, accessible psychological insights** into male behavior, presented clearly for broad understanding
- **Enhances self-understanding and growth**, especially helpful for men building greater awareness

- **Includes real-world illustrations**, making concepts highly applicable in everyday situations

⍰Cons

- **Missing the strategic payoffs of masks**. If masks evolved and many men use them, it's because they provided some payoffs.
- **Dropping the masks may come at a cost** in certain contexts, but the book doesn't go into these nuances
- **Offered alternatives aren't necessarily 'masculine'**, and in some cases 'dropping' the masks completely may cost in masculinity or motivation
- **Missing guidance on change**, on how to go from 'masks up' to 'masks down' (while still being motivated and achieving masculine objectives)

Our review

Excellent for identifying restrictive patterns in male experiences, useful for both self-awareness and self-development.

But we also find it flirts with naive self-help. **It offers a nice-sounding and sanitized critique of masculinity** that your gender studies professor would approve of, but that may not help you advance in life.

We don't fully agree that men would necessarily gain by 'dropping masks' *completely* or, based on Howes' guests, 'becoming vulnerable'.

Our strategic and goal-oriented approach proposes instead a more tailored approach: dropping or donning masks selectively and based on context and goals.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: Recognize and drop harmful masks to achieve emotional freedom, but balance vulnerability with strength.

Learn more:

- The Mask of Masculinity summary

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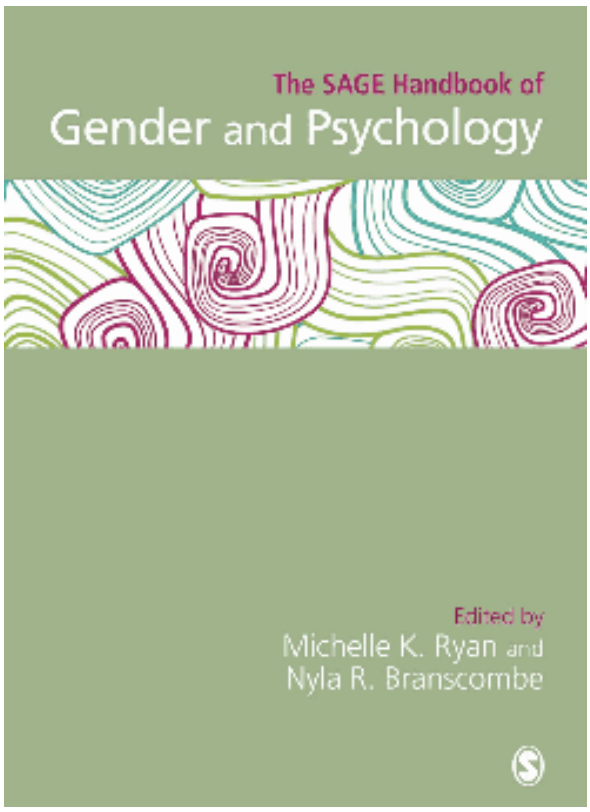
5. The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Psychology



The SAGE Handbook is a multi-author synthesis of the research literature in the field of gender psychology, helping men learn 'masculinity' in comparison with 'femininity'.

⍰ Pros

- **Scientific**, written by scholars and researchers based on the full research literature
- **Go to the core of masculinity**, based on biology and research results
- **Helpful gender comparison** of masculinity and femininity

⍰Cons

- **Dense**, it's not written to be easy to read, or entertaining. There is a reason handbooks don't sell despite being the most scientific
- **Limited practicality** since there is no advice on what to do or how to be more of a man
- **Cautious wording**, you'll rarely hear a good researcher provide conclusive remarks

Our review

The Sage Handbook, *The Psychology of Gender*, and similar quality handbooks offer the 'closest truth' about masculinity, but provide more limited practical takeaways.

They helped us write high-authority, scientific articles and lessons on masculinity, but still require good critical thinking and strong 'real world experience' to turn the scientific insights into coherent strategies and approaches to improve life results.

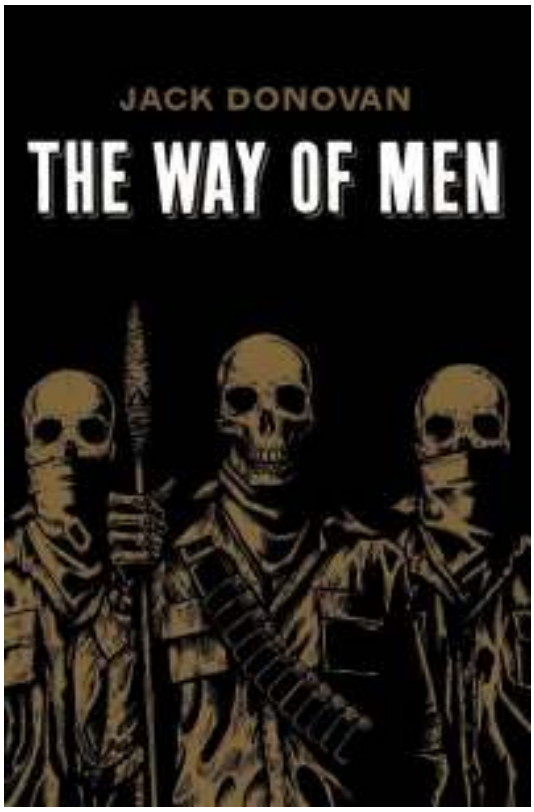
So while we always prefer a good handbook for our goals, we may not recommend the same for most readers looking for practical advice.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: Masculinity must be earned and is easily lost, with heavy prices. Build your self-esteem around less fragile beliefs than just 'being masculine'

Learn more:

- The Sage Handbook of Gender and Psychology Review

4. The Way of Men



Donovan offers an exploration of masculinity through a tribal lens and through his interpretation of evolution, emphasizing core masculine virtues and the role of male groups in defining manhood.

⍰ Pros

- **Valuable insights into social aspects of masculinity**, including male-only socialization, 'brotherhoods', and how men evaluate each other
- **Emphasizes important masculine traits** like resilience, bravery, and integrity among peers. Many modern men need this reminder
- **Captivating read** of riveting, atavistic masculinity.

⍰ Cons

- **Over-idealizes group-based lifestyles**, succumbing to nostalgia for simpler, supposedly superior eras. In that sense, it's a naive take
- **Restrictive definition of manhood**, based on four male virtues only, based on the author's opinion
- **Glorifies conflict and hierarchies**, with cooperation based on aggression towards the outgroup rather than, say, human development
- **Encourages group dependency** over individual expression, which is limiting for men who prefer to live their own way
- **Disempowering for individual men,** pushing conformity to society and authorial standards instead of

individual empowerment and freedom

Our review

A captivating read that gets many aspects of male psychology right, but without including their downsides, and while missing other crucial aspects of masculinity.

For example, one could argue that achieving goals is as masculine as physical strength.
Or that one displays more courage by leaving the tribe's support and protection and carving his own path.

The book is **great to reconnect with our caveman ancestors**, and that may help modern men who have grown overly shielded.
But it's also its limitation.

The Way of Men* is masculinity looking *backward, at how we *were*.
We may have huddled around bonfires for a tiny portion of our past, but **copying how we were won't help modern men win in today's world**. It may not even help them be more *masculine* for that matter, since masculinity also evolves.
And it certainly won't help civilization move from tribal cavemen to Cosmos explorers.

We must respect our forefathers: they took us here after all.
But the best way to respect our forefathers is not by copying them, but *outdoing* them.

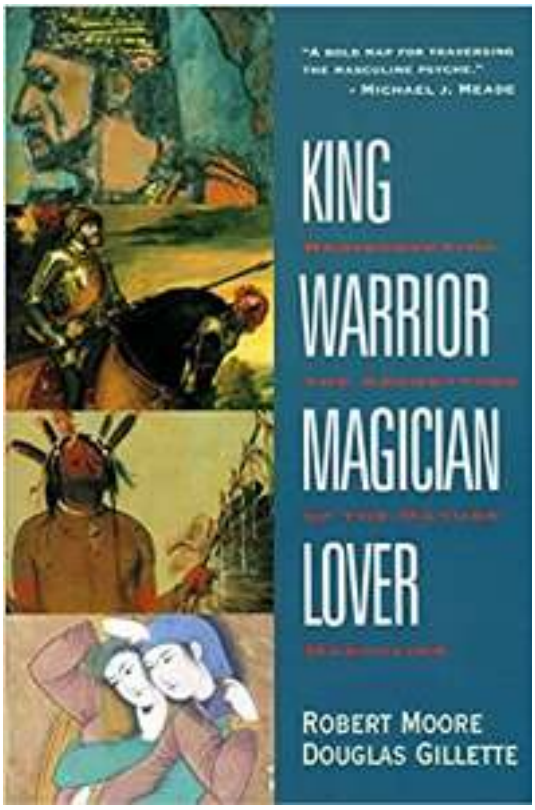
Finally, I disagree with this standard of masculinity at a personal level.
Top 'sigma males' leave restrictive tribes, set off on their hero's journeys to conquer the world, and become men by carving their own path. This approach displays *more* strength, resilience, and self-reliance.

⁉ **Takeaway**: Cultivate strength, courage, mastery, and honor, but define manhood on your own terms, and in a way that allows you to win in *today's* world.

Learn more:

- The Way of Men summary
- *Tribe*: similar to The Way of Men for embracing tribal societies and lifestyle, but more extreme.

3. King, Warrior, Magician, Lover



An exploration of four masculine archetypes drawn from myths, religion, and history. Moore and Gillette help men achieve balanced manhood by highlighting the 'toxic' and healthy expressions of each archetype.

⍰ Pros

- **Effective blend of myths, psychology, and spiritual elements** to guide men toward their best masculine selves
- **Details positive/negative traits for each archetype**, some of which felt like prefectly hitting the mark
- **Promotes an 'effective balance' approach**, and that 'optimum balance' is crucial for effective self-development

⍰ Cons

- **Limited scientific backing**, and in some parts it shows
  - Freudian influences at times, and evolutionary psychology backing would have helped
- **Magician archetype is less convincing** in both masculinity and in relation to 'modern magicians'
- **Not a practical manual**, but it's not necessarily a 'con', it's simply a different type of book
- **Lover archetypes falls short**, it's more politically correct but less realistic than Gilmore's 'inseminator' archetype, and lacks deeper evolutionary insights

Our review

King, Warrior, Magician, Lover is a gem serving as a valuable tool for both men's self-awareness and personal growth.

The description of **the lover archetype is more lacking and 'politically correct'**. A deeper understanding of the lover type must include lover psychology and evolutionary pay-offs of high-value men who can date freely (lover types).

The **warrior and king archetypes are what truly shine in this book**, including their child versions of 'hero' and

‘divine child’.
I learned a lot from the progression of ‘divine child’ onward, also at a personal level.

⁉ **Takeaway**: Lean towards your masculine archetype, add some warrior type, and stay away from toxic masculinity shadows

Learn more:

- King, Warrior, Magician, Lover summary

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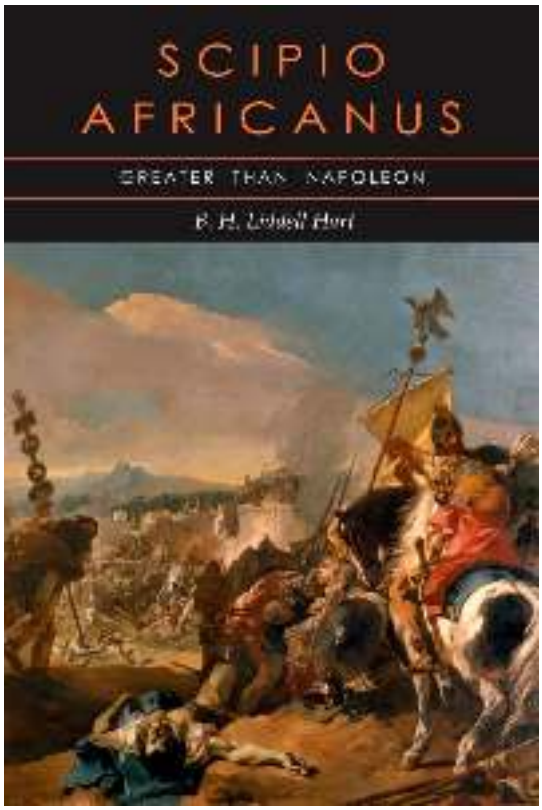
2. Scipio Africanus



A biography of the Roman general Scipio Africanus, highlighting his strategic brilliance, leadership, and honorable character as models of masculinity.

⁉ Pros

- **Masculine effectiveness** beyond historical role model, teaching valuable lessons in planning, guidance, and personal character building
- **Showcases exceptional leadership** with top-tier power intelligence to master soldiers and politics, grand strategy to win wars, and moral integrity to gain everyone’s respect
- **Role model of masculinity**

⁉ Cons

- **Less reliable** given the limited sources for ancient figures. But it’s not an issue for me: the best role model is an ideal, rather than an accurate depiction
- **Requires an extra real-life role model** for men to learn about positively dominant behavior or masculine body

language

- **Some author fandom** can feel too much. For example, he could have shortened the argument that Scipio is greater than Napoleon and Alexander the Great

Our review

This is the 'special TPM treat', a book you will hardly find in most others 'masculine books' lists.

And I almost had some qualms sharing it, since it feels personal. Scipio is as close as it gets to my role model of an ideal man. So to speak, **Scipio is my 'hero figure' to aspire towards**.
He is one of the 'past greats' I look at, and that in my life philosophy we should all strive to match up. That's how we pass the best baton to the future generations of men (and then it's on them to carry it forward).

Scipio embodies masculine traits I admire, all at incredibly high levels.
They are:

- **Effectiveness**. Undefeated, took on Hannibal, and won a Western civilization-defining war
- **Unstoppable drive**. Denied an army by the senate, he *built his own* (these feats are inimitable in modern age)
- **Virtue**, gaining 'near the top status', but without being an autocrat, over-narcissist type (eg.: Julius Caesar)
- **Honor**: Never too 'nice', he prioritized victory. But with an honorable approach to enemies
- **Long-term thinking** that builds enduring civilization, promoting peace deals and win-win commerce
- **Force for good**, playing the political game, but without letting games or power overwhelm or corrupt him.
- **Enlightened man**: while a staunch and proud Roman, he had a grander vision for civilization, uplifting and moving humanity forward

That makes a perfect role model of masculinity we can all aspire toward.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: True masculinity combines competence, honor, and strategic magnanimity to develop win-win and achieve lasting success.

Learn more:

- Scipio Africanus summary

1. Power University

Note:

We are the creators of Power University, so this entry comes from an insider's perspective. We aim to keep the description objective by focusing on the curriculum structure and the documented results achieved by alumni.

A multimedia course on power dynamics, strategy, and self-development tailored for men seeking success in status, relationships, and life.

⍰ Pros

- **Masculinity for success**, not as a goal in itself
- **Designed for ambitious men**, offering hands-on tips and tactics to achieve status, influence, and romantic opportunities

⍰ Cons

- **Not exclusively tailored for 'becoming more masculine'**, though recent updates include a lesson specifically on masculinity
- **Higher time investment** compared to books
- **Higher monetary investment** compared to the books on this list. As a premium course, the difference is large

Our review

While Power University's focus isn't masculinity as a goal, **masculinity becomes the natural consequence of Power University's skills** and mindsets.

Power University makes men *effective*, helping them achieve life-relevant goals like status, respect, career promotions, and women's attraction.

When you're a man who carries himself with confidence, behaves high power and achieves goals and status, 'masculinity scores' naturally go up.

Furthermore, the 9.1. upgrade added a dedicated lesson to becoming a more masculine man.

⍰⍰ **Takeaway**: Focus on power dynamics and goal achievement to become a winning man and masculinity becomes the natural consequence.

Learn more:

- Power University overview

Book	Theme	Key Concepts
King, Warrior, Magician, Lover	Mature masculine energies and archetypes	King (order, integrity), Warrior (clarity, destructive for good), Magician (knower, transformation), Lover (sensual, compassionate); shadows and boyhood forms
The Way of Men	Core values of masculinity in tribal contexts	Strength, Courage, Mastery, Honor; need for male gangs; masculinity vs. modern PC society
Scipio Africanus	Leadership, strategy, and honorable masculinity	Win honorably, reputation for magnanimity, treat foes well, confidence, strategic chivalry
The Mask of Masculinity	Societal pressures and false masks of manhood	Nine masks (Stoic, Athlete, Material, etc.); dropping masks for emotional freedom and growth
Power University	Practical power dynamics for men's success	Strategies for status, power, dating; winning mindset with real-world applications

Bonus: Books on Masculine Relationships

Books focusing on how to be more masculine in relationships include:

- ***The Way of the Superior Man***: while a popular book on male energy, the suggestion of 'accepting women's drama' and 'fixing it with more love' may *lose* attraction and power, instead of increasing them
- ***Practical Female Psychology***: several unique and insightful takes, but also less convincing personal speculations. Some advice, like leaning into her drama and her change of minds relinquish frame, and are *low* masculinity
- ***The Rational Male*** (Rollo Tomassi): Red pill insights on intergender dynamics. Good primer for beginners, but more advanced practitioners may want more (readers beware: the framing reflects the author's worldview, which can at times feel one-sided)
- ***The Tactical Guide to Women***: a great book written by a male clinical psychologist sensitive to men's issues and rights. Several of Shawn Smith's approaches also align with our TPM approaches

FAQ

What are the best books on masculinity?

The best books on masculinity include King, Warrior, Magician, Lover for archetypes; The Way of Men for core virtues; Scipio Africanus for historical leadership; The Mask of Masculinity for societal pressures; and Power University for practical strategies.

What order should I read books on masculinity?

Start with classical archetypes (King, Warrior), then raw masculinity core virtues (Way of Men), historical examples (Scipio), modern pressures (Mask), and practical application (Power University).

What's the top book on masculinity?

King, Warrior, Magician, Lover is often hailed as a classic for its deep dive into balanced masculine energies.

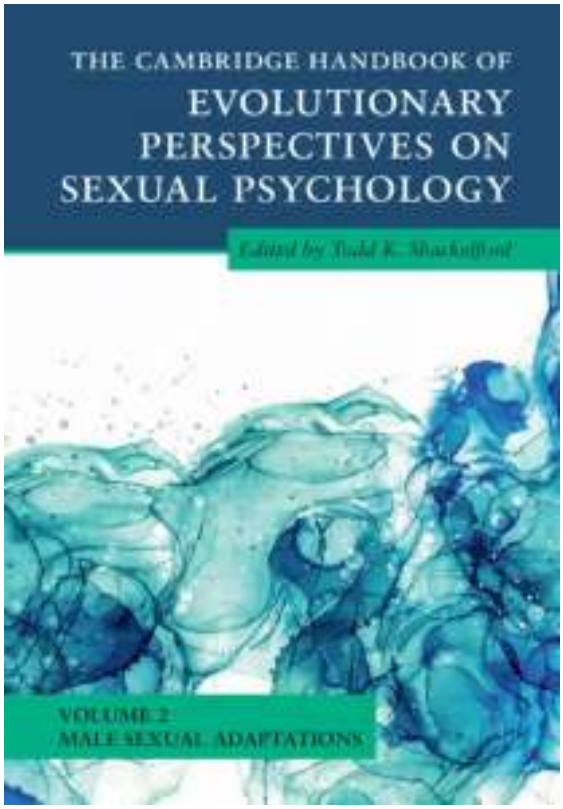
Learn More

- **Best red pill books**
- How to be more masculine in 10 steps
- **Power University**, the one-stop online course to become a winning man

The Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology: Male Sexual Adaptations: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 October 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology Volume 2: Male Sexual Adaptations (2022) is the second entry in a four-part academic series on sexual psychology. This volume offers an in-depth overview of male sexual strategies and adaptations through the lens of evolutionary psychology, exploring both well-established findings and emerging theories.



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  - Chapter 5: Competitiveness and Fatherhood as Overarching Domains of Female Choice
  - Chapter 6: Sexual Coercion and Rape
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  - Chapter 19: Men's Attachment-Related Needs in the Sexual Arena
  - Chapter 20: Paternal Care
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- ⍰⍰♂ SHARPEST INSIGHTS
  - Lower mate value men should leverage money
  - Lower-value men are more likely to be abusive
  - Lower status men are better daddies (not because they're 'nice')
- QUOTES
- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
  - Still unconvinced by semen displacement theory (Chapter 14)
  - The 'Sperm piggybacking hypothesis' is too speculative (chapter 14)
  - Suggestion: change the frame of 'solving problems'
- REVIEW

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Various experts for each chatper, while the volume is edited by Todd K. Shackelford, a leading evolutionary psychologist and active handbook editor.

Chapter 1: Men's Sexual Preferences

Authors: Daniel J. Miller and Ryan C. Anderson

Despite considerable overlap between men and women, there are also important differences.

Physical attractiveness dominates men's mate selection criteria, and higher interest for casual sex and sexual variety aligns with men's lower minimum parental investment compared to women.

Female Youth and Fertility

By responding to indicators of youth, men indirectly increase the likelihood of selecting mates who are biologically more fertile.

These cues can be physical, such as facial features and body characteristics, or behavioral, reflecting energy and vitality:

- Small nose and feet (Barber, 1995)
- Hairless skin (Barber, 1995)
- Full lips
- Lustrous hair
- Good muscle tone
- Physical enthusiasm high activity levle, and spiritely gait (Buss & Barnes, 1986)

Will You Have Sex With a Stranger? Experiments

Across varying experimental designs, men show a higher willingness than women to accept casual sex offers.

The difference can be explained by men's stronger evolved mating strategies for short-term, but women's lower acceptance rates are also partly explained by perceived danger, moral considerations, and the need to know the partner better.

Main studies

- **Clark & Hatfield (1989)** a Florida university campus proposed 3 options: date, go to the apartment, have sex.
  Findings:
  - Date: ~50% of men and women agreed.
  - Apartment: 6% of women, ~67% of men agreed.
  - Sex: 0% of women, ~75% of men agreed.
- **Hald & Høgh-Olesen (2010)**: Replication in sexually liberal Denmark.
  Findings:
  - Date: 30% of men, 20% of women.
  - Apartment: 22% of men, 8% of women.
  - Sex: 38% of men, 2% of women.
  - Among singles: 59% of men, 0% of women agreed to sex.
  - Women's consent more linked to requester attractiveness; men's consent largely unaffected.
- **Guéguen (2011)** Field study in France with confederates of average and high attractiveness.
  - Average attractiveness: 60% of men, 0% of women agreed to sex.
  - High attractiveness: 83% of men, 3% of women agreed.
- **Schützwohl et al. (2009)** Hypothetical scenario study in Italy, US, and Germany.
  Findings:
  - Sex: 45.8% men, 4.2% women.
  - Men more likely to accept from moderately or very attractive women.
  - Women's acceptance strongly tied to requester attractiveness.
  - Cultural variation for men: Italy (61%) > US (43%) > Germany (29%).
- **Shackelford et al. (2004)** Hypothetical one-night stand scenarios with partner relationship status varied.
  - Men less likely to pursue if partner is in a relationship, but still more willing than women in all cases.
  - Suggests evolved preference to avoid sperm competition.
- **Tappé et al. (2013)** Pencil-and-paper replication in Hawaii using photos of attractive individuals.
  Findings:
  - Men consistently more willing to accept sex request.
  - Women cited "don't know person/need to know better" most often, followed by "immoral," then "danger."
  - Danger cited by 17 women vs. 5 men.

Key concepts:

- **Error management theory**: Male psychology evolved to minimize the costliest reproductive errors—missing a mating opportunity or raising another man's offspring.
- **Sexual overperception bias**: A tendency for men to overestimate women's sexual interest as a byproduct of error management.
- **Priority of physical attributes**: Men gravitate toward cues tied to estrogen levels and reproductive potential

(Singh, 1993; Jasieńska et al., 2004) like WHR around 0.70, full lips, and symmetrical breasts

- **Casual Sex Preference**: Men's permissiveness toward casual sex outpaces women's, with meta-analyses showing a moderate gender gap (d = 0.45) (Petersen & Hyde, 2010).
- **Higher desire for many partners**: Across cultures, men desire and report more sexual partners than women. The authors explain how the gap originates, including possible biases of over-reporting for men and under-reporting for women
- **Transactional Sex**: Men are far more likely to pay for sex (16.7% in Australia vs. 0.3% for women) (Richters et al., 2014).

Interesting Notes

- **Men like partners who often change appearances** (Hughes, Aung, Harrison, LaFayette, and Gallup, 2021), probably because of men's preference for novel partners
- **Men's MILF porn explained with men relaxing standards for short term**. ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: not a valid explanation, since one should always prioritize the most valuable/fertile partner, even in short term. Instead, I believe that the MILF is attractive for proven fertility, less likely to require extra investment, and for unrelated potentially maladaptive pursuit of better sex through disinhibition/experience and male drive to experiment

Chapter 2: Men's Extra-Pair Sexual Interest

Authors: Adam C. Davis, Steven Arnocky, Megan Mackinnon, and Larissa McKelvie

Davis and colleagues argue that extra-pair sexual interest stems from a drive to boost reproductive output by siring more offspring with minimal investment, though it's a balancing act of opportunities and risks (e.g.: partner abandonment, retaliation, social costs).

Many factors influence the likelihood, intention, and behavior of extra-pair mating, including personality, culture, mate value, dissatisfaction in current relationship, availability of mates, etc.

Key Concepts:

- **Reproductive Gains**: Extra-pair mating can increase offspring without the burdens of provisioning (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).
- **Risk Trade-offs**: Costs include partner loss or violence, balancing the potential genetic payoff (Kaighobadi et al., 2009).
- **Influencing Factors**: Sociosexuality, self-assessed mate value, and low relationship satisfaction predict extra-pair pursuits (Schmitt, 2003).

Interesting Notes:

- **Extra-pair mating is a cross-culturally and historically ubiquitous phenomenon** (Betzig, 1989; Fisher, 1992; Huber, Linhartova, & Cope, 2004; Marlowe, 2000; Nowak et al., 2014; Scelza et al., 2020; Schmitt, 2004)
- **Men more likely to adhere to a mixed dual mating strategy of commitment + cheating** (Buss & Schmitt, 2019; Nowak et al., 2014): men were more likely to conceal their relationship status from a hypothetical extrapair sexual mate, whereas women were more likely to reveal it (Hughes and Harrison, 2019)
- **Men cheat more out of opportunity** (32.1%), women because they were unhappy (53%) and made to feel attractive by the extra-pair partner (41%) (Brand et al., 2007)
- **The most consistent predictor of infidelity is past infidelity**: Feldman and Cauffman (1999) found that 80 percent of college-age men that cheated once went on to do so again. Knopp et al. (2017) found that 45 percent of those who had previously engaged in sexual infidelity would do so in the next relationship
- **More unrestricted men are more likely to cheat**, and low agreeableness and conscientiousness and high

extroversion predicted infidelity

- Mate value and infidelity don't present a clear picture, with mixed results, but…
  - Believing to be higher mate value than one's partner predicted infidelity intentions
  - Attractive partners decreased men's intentions of infidelity, possibly suggesting their fear of jeopardizing the relationship
  - High mate value individuals are more indignant and less insecure in case of partner infidelity
- **More opportunities = more cheating**: Men primed with women's abundance increased their intention to cheat and embraced more unrestricted sociosexuality
- **There is cultural variance** for dispositions towards infidelity. When infidelity is more common, people are less harsh about. But…
  - **Globally women are judged more harshly** for infidelity

Also see:

- Why people cheat

⍰⍰♂ ⍰ Lucio's Suggestions

Great work, just a suggestion: change the description of Tinder, it seems to suggest it's dedicated to extra-pair sex, but it's not

Chapter 3: Male Sexual Attraction Tactics

Authors: Mitch Brown, Kaitlyn Boykin, Kelsey M. Drea, Alicia L. Macchione, Mary M. Medlin, and Donald F. Sacco

> Male signaling, whether perfectly diagnostic of actual mating qualities, evolved to outcompete at least some other men for at least some access to viable women. In this market, men seek to "sell" themselves, and their genes, to women. Women then act as "buyers"

Brown and his team explore men's tactics to captivate potential mates and signal genetic quality, status, or commitment.
Physical feats signal health, resource displays promise provisioning, and interpersonal dominance asserts a competitive edge.

These approaches vary by context, with short-term mating (STM) favoring dominance and long-term mating (LTM) emphasizing reliability, all calibrated to women's mate preferences.

- **Physical Displays**: Grooming and muscularity broadcast vitality and strength (Dixson et al., 2011).
- **Resource Signaling**: Wealth or luxury goods attract mates seeking security (Buss, 1989).
- **Dominance**: Competitive posturing deters rivals and appeals to women valuing protection (Puts, 2010).
- **Humor and Creativity**: Wit and artistry signal cognitive fitness, versatile across mating contexts (Miller, 2000).

Interpersonal Dominance

The authors suggest that trait dominance sees the largest upregulation from long-term to short-term.

And the preference for interpersonally dominant men converges with research showing that dominance is predictive of reproductive success, and particularly in short-term mating contexts.

Narcissists also seem to use dominance effectively, displaying as boldness upon first meeting, signaling agency and increasing attractiveness in short-term mating (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Jonason, Lyons, & Blanchard, 2015).

Narcissistic individuals tend to create a charming and impressive first impression when introducing themselves to strangers (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010). This social boldness mediates the link between men's narcissism and their mate appeal, with dominant men receiving more contact information from interested women (Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, & Denissen, 2013). Such appeal is largely specific to short-term mating and is driven by assertive self-enhancement rather than antagonistic traits like rival derogation (Wurst et al., 2017).

The authors also claim that the social boldness peculiar of extroversion is related to interpersonal dominance and mating success.

If dominant men are more successful, especially in the short term, **more promiscuous women are also more interested in dominant men**, preferring male facial structures suggesting interpersonal dominance (Brown & Sacco, 2017; Lyons & Blanchard, 2016).

Humor

Humor within mating domains shows a degree of sexual dimorphism, suggesting a role in sexual selection (Greengross, 2014).

Research shows humor plays a bigger role for men than women in dating, with **women valuing a man's ability to make them laugh as part of mate choice** (Feingold, 1988; Greengross, Silvia, & Nusbaum, 2020).
Funny men tend to have more short-term mating success (Greengross & Miller, 2011), and the pattern is clear: **men produce humor, women evaluate it** (Wilbur & Campbell, 2011).

The type of humor matters:

- **Benevolent humor is attractive in both short- and long-term contexts**
- **Biting is more for short-term**: sophomoric humor lowers trust (Bressler, Martin, & Balshine, 2006), but women are also more tolerant of aggressive humor in short-term scenarios, likely trading off some risk for signs of dominance and "good genes" (DiDonato, Bedminster, & Machel, 2013).

Men aware of this often lean into dominance-signaling humor in short-term contexts (DiDonato & Jakubiak, 2016). **Sexually explicit jokes appeal more to women with permissive sexual attitudes**, helping align with like-minded partners, but they're disliked by women seeking monogamy and are seen as a turn-off for long-term relationships (Medlin, Brown, & Sacco, 2018).

Interesting Notes:

- **Short-term mating is easier for high mate value men**: *"The potential costs of short-term mating for women would only be worth incurring if a selected short-term partner were especially high in putative good genes traits"*
- **Women outweigh attractiveness for short-term**: *"Indicating their minimal threshold of attractiveness for a one-night stand, women's criterion is substantially higher than for LTM (Kenrick, Groth, Trost, & Sadalla, 1993)"*
  - But downregulate it for long term: *"When selecting mates for LTM, however, women downregulate this interest in attractiveness, particularly for traits related to masculinization, because of its correlation with infidelity (Booth & Dabbs, 1993)"*
- **Risk-taking is attractive for short-term, not long term** (Sylwester & Pawłowski, 2011)
  - **Young men are more prone to physical risk-taking** in the presence of attractive women (Ronay & von Hippel, 2010)
- **Creativity is attractive**: Women at peak fertility report greater interest in creative intelligence. Men primed with both STM and LTM displayed considerably greater creativity (Griskevicius, Cialdini, & Kenrick, 2006)
  - **Creativity may be linked with short-term mating strategies**: because of creativity's association with subclinical levels of schizotypal traits that are associated with a disinterest in long-term pair-bonds (Nettle & Clegg, 2006). Highly creative men report greater STM success (Beaussart, Kaufman, & Kaufman, 2012),

and it's not the same for female artists, suggesting that creativity may be sexually selected to facilitate men's reproductive goals (Clegg, Nettle, & Miell, 2011).
This also explains why the artist has long been a recognized seducer archetype in pop culture

- **Altruistic men are highly attractive as potential long-term mates**, altruism suggests greater interest in monogamy and willingness to invest in a family (Barclay, 2010; Brown, Keefer, Sacco, & Brown, in press; Farrelly, 2013).
  Altruistic men also report more sexual partner (Arnocky, Piché, Albert, Ouellette, & Barclay, 2016)
- **Beards signal positive dominance for long-term**: a full beard augments perceptions of a man's ability as a father (Dixson & Brooks, 2013) and his desirability in LTM (Dixson, Sulikowski, Gouda-Vossos, Rantala, & Brooks, 2016). The inferred dominance in bearded men could suggest capable protection of offspring (Dixson et al., 2017). Though typically not desirable in LTM, beard may be specific to the paternalism and part of the colloquial "DILFs" (i.e., "Dads I'd like to fuck," Oswald et al., 2020).

Chapter 4: Men's Intrasexual Competition

Author: Karlijn Massar

Karlijn Massar dissects the competitive arena of male-male rivalry for mating opportunities.

This chapter frames **competition as an evolutionary imperative**, intensified by skewed sex ratios and modern platforms like social media.

Competition among men ranges from physical showdowns to strategic put-downs, each method designed to elevate one's own appeal while diminishing rivals'.
The stakes rise in male-heavy environments, as male-biased sex ratios heighten rivalry intensity (Schacht et al., 2014).

Combative Tactics

Throughout history and across cultures, men competed aggressively with other men to gain status, resources, and access to mates.

This form of competition—**intrasexual aggression**—is rooted in evolutionary pressures.
Men are generally larger, stronger, and more prone to physical aggression than women (Puts, 2010; Archer, 2004), and archaeological records show male-on-male violence has been common (Walker, 2001).

Even in childhood, boys use rough play to assert dominance and gain peer respect (Pellegrini, 1995).
Popular pupils manipulate and use aggressive behavior publicly to assert their superiority over others (Farmer & Cadwallader, 2000)

Aggression solves several male adaptive problems:

- Defend themselves
- Climb social hierarchies
- Keep mates
- Weaken rivals (Buss & Duntley, 2006)

Male aggression is sensitive to context—**men become more physically aggressive when status is threatened or when other men are watching** (Griskevicius et al., 2009; Vandello et al., 2008).

This pattern continues into adolescence and adulthood. Young, unmarried men—especially those with little status—are more likely to engage in risky violence, a phenomenon called **"young male syndrome"** (Wilson & Daly, 1985).
In some premodern societies, killing rivals even increases men's status and reproductive success (Chagnon, 1988).

Modern parallels include gangs, where the most violent men gain respect and more sexual partners (Palmer & Tilly, 1995; Voisin et al., 2004). Even indirect aggression in teen boys (e.g., social manipulation) predicts greater dating success (Arnocky & Vaillancourt, 2012).

Sport As Ritualized Combat

Many cultures developed **ritualized forms** of male competition, such as stick fighting, wrestling, or team sports.

These allow men to compete safely while showcasing strength and skill (Llaurens et al., 2009; Deaner & Smith, 2012).

Modern sports, especially those requiring explosive power (like football or boxing), likely evolved from training for hunting and warfare (Lombardo, 2012). Athletes gain status, resources, and often more sexual partners (Faurie et al., 2004).
Women even find aggressive male athletes more attractive (Brewer & Howarth, 2012).

Men also compete as spectators—they follow sports more closely, care more about outcomes, and use these events to assess others' strength, loyalty, or potential as allies (Lombardo, 2012; Winegard & Deaner, 2010). Sport fandom may be a modern expression of an evolved male psychology shaped by coalitional conflict.

Areas of Competition

- **Formidability**: men's fighting ability and resource holding potential are referred to as formidability.
  It's relevant interpersonally, but particularly relevant in the context of between- and within-group male contests (e.g., McDonald, Navarrete, & Van Vugt, 2012; Van Vugt, Cremer, & Janssen, 2007). Research established that ancestral men engaged in coalitional aggression with other groups of men.
  ⍰⍰♂ For a related suite of psychological adaptations and how they impact society, also see 'social dominance theory'
- **Social status is a central domain of male competition** with one another. Social status refers to one's position within the relevant social hierarchy. Intrasexual competition among men includes achieving a higher standing and status than rivals
  - Positional bias: outperforming rivals shaped human psychology for 'positional bias', with satisfaction contingent to the position of rivals, regardless of achievement in absolute sense (see also Schmitt & Buss, 1996).
    Envy is emotionally linked to higher standing rivals (Hill & Buss, 2006), and brain imaging studies corroborate: downward comparisons activate reward-related areas, whereas upward comparisons activate brain areas that are associated with social pain and envy (e.g., Swencionis & Fiske, 2014; Yaple & Yu, 2020)
- **Conspicuous consumption is for short-term**: the purchase and flaunting of expensive goods, services, or leisure activities, is linked to short-term mating.
  For example, men who pursue a mating strategy focused on short-term mating opportunities – that is, a low investment strategy – are particularly likely to conspicuously consume. For men with a high-investment strategy, the salience of mating opportunities did not increase their conspicuous consumption.
- **Generosity is a mating signal**: studies suggest that men engage in (public) displays of generosity to impress possible mates and compete with other men.
- **Indirect Competition**: Rival derogation and status displays subtly shift mate perceptions (Buss & Dedden, 1990)

Interesting Notes

- **Higher polygyny = more male competition**: *across species, higher degrees of polygyny are associated with more male–male competition and increased male risk-taking (e.g., Plavcan, 2000; Plavcan, Van Schaik, & Kappeler, 1995), sexual dimorphism (e.g., Clutton-Brock, 1985), and increased male mortality rates (e.g.,*

Promislow, Montgomerie, & Martin, 1992).

- **Testosterone is a 'social hormone'**: testosterone is considered to be a "social hormone" (Eisenegger, Haushofer, & Fehr, 2011) and it is implicated in a range of male behaviors: aggression, dominance, competition, courtship and sexual behavior, and partnerships and paternal care (for a recent review see Gray, Straftis, Bird, McHale, & Zilioli, 2019).
  - Testosterone levels are influenced by paternal involvement in child rearing

Chapter 5: Competitiveness and Fatherhood as Overarching Domains of Female Choice

Author: Gregory Gorelik

Gregory Gorelik says we can't be sure whether traits and behaviors were selected by intrasexual competition or mate choice.

But he claims that competition was the main driver of human sexual selection, citing several findings in support, including interpersonal dominance outweighing attractiveness (Hill et al., 2013).

🤔Lucio's Take: **I'm not fully convinced this holds true in modernity**

Lucio:
Although the author addresses the claim that in modern contexts intrasexual competition may matter less, in my opinion he didn't address some important changes that favor women's selection: women's empowerment, more strangers-to-strangers meetings, online dating, and cold approach.

Such as, smart men may approach women invidivually, and as strangers, outside of social hierarchies. In these contexts, mate choice matters more.
Especially as women's empowerment and safer societies also make them less needy of dominant men's protection.

For example, I was fortunate to have dated attractive women while I was still a nobody at work or in society—but my status wasn't salient when I met them.

That wouldn't have worked back in the days, but it did today.

In brief, I agree that competitiveness, competition, and success and life success matter a lot.
But one, it's not easy to disentangle it from female choice. And two, the competition isn't necessarily against nearby men, or based on aggression and intimidation.

Men's Dual Mating Strategies Mirrors Women's: Madonna/Whore Complex

It only occurred to me, thanks to the author, that both men and women have specular 'dual strategies'.

Women have 'dominant for short term', and 'kind provider' for long-term, while men have 'easy for short-term', and 'pious for long-term'.

He writes:

> Although many questions in this area of investigation are not yet settled, and despite its share of methodological hurdles, the picture that is emerging is that women employ a dual mating strategy marked by a preference for (a) dominant and physically attractive men on the one hand and (b) committed providers and carers who are invested in them and their offspring on the other

And later:

> Men may likewise employ a dual mating strategy, perhaps regulated by changes in testosterone, by shifting between competition for access to mating opportunities and direct paternal care within the context of a pair-bond.

I believe this dovetails perfectly with what at the maladaptive extremes becomes the Madonna-whore complex.
But it's more adaptive when it's more of an idealized, even simplistic *dichotomy* of 'marry and commit to the pious woman, and seek sex on the side with unrestricted ones'.

Read more in:

- **Lovers vs providers**

Chapter 6: Sexual Coercion and Rape

Authors: Andrew M. Holub and Gavin Vance

Holub and Vance tackle the grim topic of sexual coercion and rape.

The adaptation hypothesis suggests rape evolved as a bypass to female choice in mate-scarce contexts, potentially boosting reproductive success for some men. The byproduct view counters that it stems from broader traits like aggression or sexual desire, not a specific strategy.

Ethical note is important: explaining origins isn't endorsing, and insights here aim to inform prevention, not excuse perpetration.

- **Adaptation Hypothesis** vs **Byproduct Hypothesis**: Rape can be a selected strategy for mating access (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000) or a side effect of aggression and variety-seeking (Symons, 1979).
  Genetic technology can help us answer this question in the future
- **Ethical Stance**: Evolutionary analysis targets understanding, not justification (Holub & Vance, 2022).
- **Rapists are neurologically insensitive to consent**: *Rapists were more indifferent (in terms of erectile response) to sexual stimuli in which the woman expressed active consent or nonconsent, compared to nonrapists (Harris et al., 2010). Rapist don't differ from controls consensual stimuli arousal, but show greater sexual arousal to rape than*

do nonoffenders (Barbaree, Marshall, & Lanthier, 1979; Howes, 1998; Seto & Barbaree, 1993). Diminished inhibition of sexual arousal may be a key difference between rapists and nonrapists (Howes, 1998). Rapists also may be neurologically distinguishable by white matter abnormalities in certain areas of the brain

- **Sexual coercion may be at least partially heritable**
  - Past rape is one of strongest predictors of future rape
- **Anti-cuckoldry tool**: *men pursuing a long-term sexual strategy are hypothesized to employ a range of behaviors to manage their risk of cuckoldry. Accordingly, several studies have observed that men's use of sexual coercion is positively associated with their use of other mate retention behaviors.*
  Coercion is also correlated with perception of partner infidelity

Chapter 7: Mate Poaching by Men

Authors: T. Joel Wade and Maryanne L. Fisher

Wade and Fisher unravel mate poaching—men luring women from existing relationships—as a calculated evolutionary play.

Poaching leverages superior traits—resources, charm, or looks—to outshine a woman's current partner, exploiting relationship cracks.
Success depends on many variables, including the poacher's allure and the target's dissatisfaction.

- **Success Factors**: High mate value and partner discontent boost outcomes (Davies et al., 2007).
- **Risks vs. Rewards**: Gains in mate quality offset potential backlash (Wade & Fisher, 2022).
- **Poachers and poachees are less agreeable** (i.e., less empathetic, gentle, and generous), less conscientious (i.e., less self-discipline, vigilance, carefulness, and empathy), and higher in dark triad traits, especially psychopathy
- **Poached relationships have lower satisfaction**, including sexual satisfaction, lower commitment, and lower trust

Chapter 8: Sexual Fantasy

Authors: Mariana A. Saramago and Ricardo Ventura Baúto

Men fantasize more often and explicitly than women, emphasizing variety and visual cues over emotional depth—hallmarks of male psychology.

Lehmiller's (2018) survey of 4,175 adults found that the most common fantasies related to intimate/ romantic themes and, in order, were: "multipartner sex"; "power, control, and rough sex"; "novelty, adventure and variety"; "taboo and forbidden sex"; "swinging, partner sharing, and polyamory"; "intimacy, romance, and passion"; and, lastly, fantasies about "homoeroticism and gender-bending."

Gender Differences

Men and women are **more similar than different** in their fantasies, interests, and experiences, and these differences have **decreased over time**.

However, some patterns persist:

- **Men** tend to have **greater diversity** in fantasies and are more aroused by external stimuli, multiple partners, and sexual novelty.
- **Women** more often prioritize **mate quality** and long-term benefits, reflecting evolutionary strategies.

Evolutionary theories suggest that these differences arise from sexually dimorphic brain and mind mechanisms, with men generally more inclined toward short-term mating and women toward long-term provisioning and

protection.

Specific male-leaning fantasy trends include:

- Voyeurism and frotteurism
- Dominance and power-themed fantasies
- Multipartner scenarios (threesomes, orgies, sex with strangers, polyamory)

These patterns align with evolutionary explanations that men's sexual psychology evolved to maximize reproductive opportunities, while women's evolved to prioritize high-quality, resource-capable partners.

Most common 'deviant' fantasies

Paraphilic interests—like voyeurism, exhibitionism, or sadomasochism—are often labeled "deviant," but research shows they are **relatively common** in the general population.

For example, Joyal & Carpentier (2017) found that 45.6% of participants reported paraphilic desires, and 33.9% had acted on them at least once. Paraphilic fantasies also significantly predict actual behavior (Williams et al., 2009).
In order:

- **Voyeurism:** 34.9–83%
- **Frotteurism:** 13.4–72%
- **Sadism:** 21.8–62%
- **Fetishism:** 30–44.5%
- **Exhibitionism:** 30.6–39%
- **Masochism:** 15.8–23.8%
- **Transvestism:** 10%
- **Pedophilia:** 4.1–13%

- **Emotionally charged events can impact the development of sexual interests**, *Lehmiller (2018) further noted that those who reported fetish fantasies explained that the association between the object and the pleasure was learned when they had a very intense orgasm with the object present and from then on found this fetish to be arousing* ⁉️ **Lucio's note:** but I have to wonder if the fetish was already present and was the source of the 'intense orgasm'. Also, as a man, most orgasms feel pretty much the same, so I must wonder

Personality differences

Personality correlates with sexual fantasies, with psychopathy as the strongest predictor of deviant fantasies. Importantly, **criminal offenders had much higher rates of deviant fantasies** (12–56.5% vs. 9.1% in controls).

Paraphilic fantasies are also higher among sexual offenders compared other types of crimes (Curnoe & Langevin, 2002; Langevin et al., 1998).

- **Neuroticism:**
  - Higher overall fantasy frequency (egosyntonic and egodystonic)
  - Submission fantasies
  - Frotteurism and bondage fantasies
- **Openness to experience:**
  - Higher overall fantasy frequency
  - Frotteurism and pedophilia fantasies

- **Extraversion:**
  - Transvestism fantasies
- **Narcissism:**
  - Sadism fantasies
  - More intimate fantasies
- **Psychopathy:**
  - Bondage and sadism fantasies
  - Strongest predictor of exploratory, impersonal, and sadomasochistic fantasies
  - Interpersonal facet → voyeuristic and exhibitionist interests
  - Affective facet → pedophilic interests
- **Self-destructive / high affective personality types:**
  - Report more sexual fantasies than self-actualizing / low affective types
- **Obsessiveness:**
  - Positively predicts overall fantasy frequency

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's suggestion:** would have been great to get the strength of correlation for these studies

Chapter 9: Ejaculation Latency

Authors: Rosa Angélica Lucio, Alonso Fernández-Guasti, and Maria Reyna Fuentes-Morales

Lucio and her team dissect ejaculation latency, particularly the widespread premature ejaculation, as an evolutionary puzzle tied to reproductive efficiency.

They argue that rapid ejaculation may have been favored in high-competition settings.
Short latency could optimize quick insemination amid rival males or fleeting opportunities, enhancing sperm competition odds.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: while it's an interesting interpretation and may ultimately be valid, I'm skeptical.** While it may in some cases be adaptive, it's also maladaptive for seduction and partner retention, which have historically been more important for men's reproduction.

Chapter 10: Copulatory Thrusting in Males

Authors: Anders Ågmo and Gabriela Morali

Thrusting enhances fertilization with better sperm positioning and may dislodge competitors' sperm.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: While all explanations are plausible and possible, I remain skeptical about the degree to which trust directly contributed to reproductive success. I recommend caution in assigning definitive evolutionary causes.

Chapter 11: Men's Provisioning of Oral Sex

Author: Gavin Vance

Gavin Vance examines why men perform oral sex on women, first wondering if it's a byproduct or an adaptation.

Beyond pleasure, it signals commitment, boosts partner satisfactio,n and retains mates, and possibly detects rival sperm.

Cultural norms shape its practice though, as it seems more frequent among caucasians and Westerners.

Chapter 12: Inducing Female Orgasm

Author: Tara DeLecce

Tara DeLecce investigates men's pursuit of female orgasm, linking it to evolutionary goals like paternity assurance and mate retention.
Men's efforts aren't necessarily altruistic—they're strategic, enhancing bonds and reproductive odds. It's a deep dive into how male behavior adapts to female physiology.

Variability in women's responses means that it acts as an indicator of mate quality.
It seems to me that these mate qualities can also be divided into short-term/attractive and long-term/investing.
Indeed says the author:

> It could be that male performance of foreplay is another form of investment that signals willingness to invest in a woman, which is important for long-term relationships, and this supports the pair-bond hypothesis for female orgasm.

Short-term / sexy sons orgasms	Long-term / supportive orgasms
Physical prowess	Foreplay
Attractiveness	Attentiveness
Masculinity	Emotional satisfaction
	Oral sex

Men's effort for female orgasm, categorized by short and long term by Lucio Buffalmano

Takeaways

- **Paternity Boost**: Orgasm may favor sperm uptake (Baker & Bellis, 1993).
- **Mate Retention**: Pleasure strengthens pair-bonds (Shackelford et al., 2005).
- **Signaling Skill**: Success reflects mate quality (DeLecce, 2022).
- **Attachment styles moderate men's interest for her orgasms**, with anxious men reporting greater interest than secure men, and avoidant men report less interest
- **Orgasm is unrelated to reproductive success**: *In one study of over 8,000 women, there was no significant correlation between rates of orgasm and number of children conceived (Zietsch & Santtila, 2013)*

Chapter 13: Copulatory Urgency

Authors: Arial Bloshinsky and Valerie G. Starratt

Bloshinsky and Starratt define copulatory urgency as an intense motivation to pursue sex with a sense of immediacy, insistence, and persistence.

Urgency increases with fertile females or rival threats, pushing men to act fast and secure copulation. It's a flexible trait, varying by personality and context, but can lead to impulsivity—like pornography binges—when unchecked.

- **Triggers**: Fertile cues or competition spark urgency (Goetz et al., 2005).
- **Adaptive Value**: Quick mating maximizes fitness in uncertain contexts (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).
- **Variability**: Hormones and traits shape intensity (Bloshinsky & Starratt, 2022).

Chapter 14: Postejaculatory Adaptations to Self-Semen Displacement

Authors: Gordon G. Gallup, Jr., and Steven M. Platek

Gallup and Platek explore postejaculatory behaviors—like continued thrusting—as evolved tactics to ensure paternity.

Postejaculatory thrusting may scoop out competitors' sperm, a mechanism tied to penis morphology and timing precision. Psychological drivers like jealousy fuel these actions, integrating with mate guarding to protect genetic investment.

- **Semen Displacement**: Thrusting removes rival sperm (Gallup et al., 2003).
- **Timing**: Men suspecting infidelity seek sex ASAP, while women who believe the extra-pair partner is of higher value should actively avoid sex with their partner
- **Psychology**: Competition cues trigger adaptive responses (Shackelford et al., 2002).
- **Male jealousy accounts for most violence** (e.g., spouse and child abuse), more than social class, poverty, alcohol, or drug addiction combined (Burch and Gallup 2019).

Female Hypergamy & Bruce Effect

The Bruce effect—a phenomenon where a recently impregnated female mouse spontaneously aborts after exposure to a new higher quality male, is an adaptation of female hypergamy—the drive to seek and potentially switch to higher-quality mates.

The authors suggest that certain non-phase menstruation (bleeding outside the expected menstrual window) at the start of a new sexual relationship might be a human analog to the Bruce effect.
This bleeding could either:

- signal the termination of a prior pregnancy from a lower-quality mate, or
- serve as a signal to new partners that the woman is not currently pregnant—possibly reducing the chance of male cuckoldry.

From the male perspective, the chapter suggests that men might have evolved to detect unusual menstruation timing in their partners. If detected, this could lead to increased mate guarding behaviors and more vigorous sexual activity, aimed at reducing the risk of losing paternity to another man.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Bruce effect needs a stronger frame of *speculative* theorizing**

Lucio:
I was surprised to see the Bruce effect presented as applying to humans.

As expected, the theory is highly speculative, based on limited empirical evidence and with a likely small real-world effect even if it turns out to be true.

Prefacing it with *"There is reason to believe…"* overstates the case and, in my view, may undermine the authority of the chapter.
A stronger disclaimer of speculation would be more appropriate.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: male paternity 'detection system' is inaccurately biased for safety

The authors write:

> for men with low paternal confidence the incidence of nonpaternity was 30 out of 100 (…) an astonishing 15 times higher than those with high paternal assurance.
> (…)
> while attributions of nonpaternity are far from being failsafe, these data suggest there are some evolved/hardwired and surprisingly accurate paternity assessment mechanisms

Being wrong 70% of the time doesn't seem 'surprisingly accurate' to me.
Instead, it seems a case of perception bias erring on the side of safety.

Chapter 15: Male Mate Retention

Authors: Bruna S. Nascimento, Katia C. Vione, and Renan P. Monteiro

Nascimento and colleagues first explain the many benefits for men in commitment, and then outline how men guard mates to thwart infidelity and secure paternity.
These strategies, flexible to context, balance benefits like pair-bond stability against costs like effort, resource depletion, or partner alienation when they are value-taking.

Mate retention spans direct guarding—like jealousy-fueled monitoring—to indirect boosts like enhancing appeal or providing gifts. High mate value or infidelity risks dial up intensity, while harsh tactics risk backfiring.

- **Investing men obtain higher quality mates** because women value investment in long-term relationships, which are typically more advantageous for women in comparison to short-term relationships (Buss & Schmitt, 1993)
- **Cuckolding undermines social social and interpersonal respect**, on top of jeopardizing paternity
- **Direct Guarding**: Vigilance and control deter rivals (Buss, 1988).
- **It's a strategic dance of controlling**, while still retaining a mate.
- **Indirect Guarding**: Gifts and charm reinforce bonds (Shackelford et al., 2005).
- **Anxiously attached men work harder to retain their mates** (Barbaro et al. 2019)
- **Costly Tactics**: Threats can destabilize relationships (Nascimento et al., 2022).
  - Men use more submission tactics than women (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Kardum, Knežević, & Gračanin, 2006), in what I suspect are cases of emotional manipulation like guilt tripping

Chapter 16: Shifts in Partner Attractiveness: Evolutionary and Social Factors

Authors: Rebecca L. Burch, Maryanne L. Fisher, James B. Moran, Catherine A. Salmon, T. Joel Wade, and David R. Widman

Burch and her team analyze why partner attractiveness waxes and wanes, blending evolutionary cues like fertility with social dynamics like familiarity.
Evolutionary factors tie attractiveness to reproductive status: fertile phases heighten appeal, menopause dims it.

Interesting Notes

- **The importance of physical attractiveness decreases with growing familiarity** (Hunt, Eastwick, & Finkel, 2015)
- **Female youth is most appealing for long-term mating** (Buss, 1999)
- **Men find 'nipple erections' sexy** (Burch and Widman, 2021)
- **Inducing jealousy may increase attraction**: but it's not been empirically verified yet

Chapter 17: Emotional Commitment in Men

Author: Elizabeth G. Pillsworth

Elizabeth Pillsworth analyzes emotional commitment as an evolved male trait fostering pair-bonds and paternal care, critical for human offspring survival. It's not just sentiment—it's strategy, cementing relationships and boosting fitness.

Commitment increases resources and protection for vulnerable young, a hallmark of human biparenting. Attachment styles and satisfaction modulate the strength of pair bonding.

Interesting Notes

- **Reproductive success is the goal, not relationship strength**: commitment or relationship stability aren't the purpose or desired outcome, and there is no 'ideal' approach to a relationship. Each attachment style, commitment level, and relationship orientation represents a strategy that promotes the greatest reproductive success in a particular context
- **Men's infidelity is less predictive of relationship dissolution than is women's infidelity** (Betzig, 1989), suggesting that sexual infidelity and relationship commitment are not mutually exclusive, particularly among

men

Chapter 18: Sexual Jealousy in Males

Author: Tsukasa Kato

Tsukasa Kato argues that sexual jealousy is a tailored male adaptation to guard against cuckoldry, distinct from emotional jealousy.

He delves deep into intercultural studies and finds that the Buss' original findings that men are more concerned about sexual infidelity and women more by emotional infidelity is more nuanced.
He summarizes the findings in this way:

> Following Sagarin's criterion, the studies using a forced-choice measure found that the (evolutionary jealousy mechanism) EJM hypothesis was corroborated overall.
> As claimed by Buss, the sex difference in jealousy was robust and replicable (…) although the effect size was small.
>
> However, the studies using continuous measures presented mixed results.
> In contrast, when following Harris' criterion, the EJM hypothesis was not holistically corroborated by either forced-choice or continuous measures.
> (…)
> Following Sagarin's criterion, the studies using a forced-choice measure found that the EJM hypothesis was corroborated overall.
> As claimed by Buss, the sex difference in jealousy was robust and replicable, excluding a few samples, such as homosexuals, although the effect size was small.
> However, the studies using continuous measures presented mixed results. In contrast, when following Harris' criterion, the EJM hypothesis was not holistically corroborated by either forced-choice or continuous measures.
> (…)

He also adds though that we cannot deny the viability of the EJM based on low effect sizes, but that sociocultural factors and relationship type matter.

Chapter 19: Men's Attachment-Related Needs in the Sexual Arena

Author: Moran Mizrahi

Moran Mizrahi uses attachment theory to decode how men's emotional styles shape their sexual lives.

Secure men thrive in committed relationships, anxious ones chase reassurance through frequency, and avoidant ones favor detachment. These patterns, forged in childhood, steer mating strategies—long-term for some, short-term for others—revealing how attachment links to mating strategies and relationship dynamics.

Chapter 20: Paternal Care

Author: Ryan Schacht

Ryan Schacht traces paternal care's evolutionary arc, explaining why men invest in offspring and how this varies globally.
Paternal care is a fitness booster, enhancing child survival, yet flexible to ecology and culture.

Paternal care—rare among mammals—is particularly useful in humans because of children's prolonged dependency.

Interesting Notes

- **Poverty, low paternity certainty, and polygyny lead to absent fathers**: *Among Afro-Caribbean households in St. Kitts, offspring investment often comes from extended female kinship networks because men are typically peripheral to family structure due to limited male economic opportunities and lower paternity certainty (reviewed in Gray & Brown, 2015). When men can find new wives, they also look outside the household to invest their resources in new women* <— ⍰⍰♂ Bright observation, I had never thought that to increase paternal care one should also ensure a minimum income, paternal certainty, and encourage monogamy

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: paternal investment is expected IF it increases fitness**
The author states that paternal investment is expected to evolve if it aids in offspring survival or quality once pair-bonding evolves and paternity certainty is high (Clutton-Brock, 1991; Dunbar, 1976; Perrone & Zaret, 1979; Thornhill, 1976; Westneat & Sherman, 1993). While these elements are indeed crucial milestones, the ultimate driver of evolutionary outcomes remains **inclusive fitness**. There may be a species where women are more than enough to ensure offspring well being, and hence men still have no benefit in investing.

Chapter 21: Paternal Filicide

Author: Vibeke Ottesen

Vibeke Ottesen confronts the dark paradox of paternal filicide—fathers killing their own—framing it as an extreme response to reproductive conflict and perceived threats like doubted paternity or resource drain.

Filicide emerges when investment in a child clashes with a father's reproductive interests, a calculus from ancestral scarcity.
Mental health crises or step-parenthood amplify risks.

- **Reproductive Conflict**: Killing reflects investment trade-offs (Daly & Wilson, 1988).
- **Risk Factors**: Psychopathology and step-parenting heighten likelihood (Ottesen, 2016).
- **Cultural Mitigation**: Legal and social shifts curb incidence (Durrant, 1999).

How Northern Europe Tackled The 'Stepfather Issue'

The Nordic countries reduced stepparental violence by structurally removing the reproductive conflicts that typically arise in stepfather–child relationships.

Indeed, say the authors, the mere lack of genetic relatedness is not determined to motivate men to perform lethal behaviors toward children.
It's the extra costs of the stepchildren that fuel harm-inflicting strategies.

Key strategies include:

- **Shared custody and legal child support** obligations ensure that biological fathers retain primary parental duties after separation, relieving stepfathers of those burdens.
- This **removal of stepfathers' investment pressure** minimizes the evolutionary incentives for harmful behavior by stepfathers.
- **Strict laws banning physical punishment** of children, combined with cultural norms against violence, further reduce the behavioral outlets for such conflicts.

As a result, while stepfathers remain overrepresented among rare filicide cases, the overall rates of child abuse and filicide are very low.
Most remaining cases of paternal filicide in these countries are now linked to severe psychopathology, not reproductive conflict.

⍰⍰♂ SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Lower mate value men should leverage money

Contrary to misguided advice in some male development circles, lower value men should leverage resources to maximize their mating strategies and attract higher quality partners.
From chapter 3:

> This desirability of **provisioning becomes an especially important attraction strategy for unattractive men** because of the reprioritization of resource access over attractiveness in selecting mates, with men demonstrating greater beneficence toward women as a compensatory strategy for their own lack of attractiveness (Buss & Greiling, 1999; Takahashi, Yamagishi, Tanida, Kiyonari, & Kanazawa, 2006).

This also recalls, and confirms, a popular maxim on 'alphas vs betas' mating strategies.

Lower-value men are more likely to be abusive

Quoting Nascimento from chapter 15:

> Men with higher mate value are more likely to be able to provide the partner with benefits such as good genes, resources, and protection as opposed to men with lower mate value (Miner, Starratt, & Shackelford, 2009).
>
> Men with lower mate value are more likely to perform higher risk, cost-inflicting mate retention, because, unlike men with higher mate value, they may lack the resources to perform benefit-provisioning strategies. Indeed, Miner et al. (2009) suggested that men's mate value is a better predictor of men's mate retention than their partner's mate value

And:

> Mate retention strategies may be grounded in feelings of insecurity and, as such, activated by cues of real or perceived infidelity (Campbell & Ellis, 2015). As the risk of infidelity increases, men also experience more jealousy and allocate more effort to mate retention.

Of course, the answer for committed men is not to pretend all is OK when they doubt their spouses' infidelity or when someone is hitting on them.
The answer is to be smart and strategic about it so to not appear low value.

Lower status men are better daddies (not because they're 'nice')

Quoting Schacht:

> However, how much each individual father invests is flexible and depends on his social status with the group. Poorer, lower status Aka fathers spend more time with their children and provide more childcare than do wealthier, higher status fathers (Hewlett, 1988)

I suspect this is not because they're 'nicer', but a combination of having fewer extra-pair mating options, fewer

chances of siring other offpsring (and hence focus on the ones home), less fulfilling lives outside of home, and becaue they're expected to contribute more with the unwritten deal 'provisioning in exchange for intimacy'.

Indeed, little later writes the author:

> Additionally, where men can marry polygynously (i.e., have more than one wife), excess resources are often targeted toward attempts to gain additional wives rather than additional investments in improving offspring quality (Hedges, Mulder, James, & Lawson, 2016).

QUOTES

The bottom line logic of evolution:

> Reproductive success is the ultimate currency in the economy of natural selection" (Frank Marlowe, 2004)

On cold evolutionary investment logic:

> paternal investment in a genetically unrelated child is more or less a waste, in strict evolutionary terms. Even worse than a waste, investing paternal care in a stepchild would be aiding the transmission of another man's genes (i.e., an evolutionary competitor) to the next generation

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Still unconvinced by semen displacement theory (Chapter 14)

In previous volumes and handbooks I raised my concerns around the semen displacement hypothesis.

I'm glad Gallup and Platek address some of them, and I will respond to their points:

> Another common objection to the semen displacement hypothesis concerns the incidence of female infidelity. How often does the frequency of double mating produce instances in which viable sperm from two or more males coexist in a woman's vagina?
> (…)
> While it is true that sperm can live in a woman's reproductive tract for several days, a generous estimate of the amount of time that would be available to displace viable rival male semen from a female's vagina would be plus or minus twelve hours (Gallup, Finn, & Sammis, 2009)

The authors then note that several women have had sex with different partners within 24 hours.

However, this still does not fully account for biology.
The first hours after insemination are when sperm competition is most intense, and each passing hour reduces the likelihood of effective displacement.
Back-to-back encounters, which would be the most effective, are also likely the rarest.

Most importantly, **sexual activity in the cited studies does not equal reproduction**.
The study surveyed American college students—an environment dominated by hookup culture—where nearly none of these encounters were aimed at conception.

This context is therefore a poor proxy for ancestral conditions.

Overall, these factors suggest that the evolutionary relevance of semen displacement remains, in my opinion, more marginal than semen competition theories may lead to believe.

The ‘Sperm piggybacking hypothesis’ is too speculative (chapter 14)

Even as an hypothesis, leaving this section as it is risks undermining the book’s authority.
Here’s one passage:

> Put another way, if your partner is not circumcised you may be at risk of having sex with the men who had sex with your partner’s previous partner. <— ???
> This idea inspired a novel by Robin Baker (2013) who is one of the prime movers behind the concept of sperm competition.
> As implied by the title of his book, the sperm of one man may “hitchhike” under the foreskin of another man and lead to fertilization by proxy (see Figure 14.11)

It ‘might’, of course, but how likely and impactful is this be on an handbook of *adaptations*?

Even if it’s ‘proven’ to have happened a number of times, which over millions of years it probably did, what impact would it have on evolution?

I don’t see how this could be an adaptation.
And even to be a process with any evolutionary effect, you’d have to believe it was common for men to impregnate women with another man’s sperm lodged under their foreskin.

For many reasons, including basic biological constraints on sperm survival, I find that extremely unlikely. And no evidence or logic was provided to suggest otherwise.

At the mention of Baker’s novel though I had my own hypothesis: some of the most out there speculations on sperm competition may be driven less by logic and more by paraphilic fascination.

Suggestion: remove the novel’s book cover, add a clear claim of speculation, or reduce/remove the sub-chapter entirely. May note that modern sperm competition includes sperm banks and donations.

Suggestion: change the frame of ‘solving problems’

Referring to strategies and adaptations as solutions to “ancestral problems” is standard in the literature.

However, the phrase is not always logically precise.
You only *solve* a problem when you’re facing a specific, well-defined challenge.

But evolutionary changes often arise not from solving discrete problems, but from seizing *novel opportunities*.

Take for example this quote:

> “Physical aggression solves several adaptive problems.”

Besides sounding morally off with the ‘solving problem’ frame, it would be more correct to say that physical aggression created *opportunities* for those who could use it with lower costs relative to the benefits.

But I’m aware of being on the anal retentive side on this :).

REVIEW

The Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology Volume 2: Male Sexual Adaptations is a comprehensive, high-quality resource for understanding evolutionary logic in mating, particularly when it comes to male sexual psychology and adaptations.

If I were to offer some suggestions, it’s that a few chapters lean a bit too heavily on more speculative theories. Flagging those more clearly—or trimming them—would help.

Also, while some comparisons with female adaptations are useful, I'd encourage the editors to focus more tightly (if not entirely) on male-specific dynamics. That would make the four-volume series even tighter and on-topic, also helping with future information retrieval (e.g.: do I need to revisit a male adaptation? I'm sure it's going to be on volume 2, and not anywhere else).

On the plus side? Pretty much everything else.
I especially appreciated the editors' decision to avoid over-focusing on individual studies. That approach gives us readers the broad literature overview we're really after—and the one that's most useful. (That said, it might help to briefly note the statistical power of key studies and, more importantly, the overall strength of empirical support for the different theories).

Overall, this book gave me several new insights and directly helped me improve multiple articles on this website—which is the highest compliment I can give any handbook.

Big thanks to the editors and all contributors. I'm grateful for the work you've done and look forward to what's next.

Check:

- First volume, overview; volume 2, female adaptations
- **Best evolutionary psychology books**
- **Get this book on Amazon**

The Power Moves Reviews: The Good, The Bad, The Shocking

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 October 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Power Moves (TPM) is a leading resource on power dynamics, self-empowerment, and social strategies.

Founded by Lucio Buffalmano, author and expert on power dynamics and social strategies, it offers evidence-based articles, critical reviews, and training programs like *Power University*.

But what do real readers say about The Power Moves?
This article analyzes hundreds of verified The Power Moves reviews left by our readers. The data was collected between December 2023 and September 2025 with the Hotjar feedback system, anonymized, and analyzed to provide an unfiltered look at what readers say about The Power Moves.

Contents

- Overall TPM Rating: 4.2/5 Stars
  - Dataset at a Glance
  - Top Rated & Bottom Rated Pages
  - Trend: Improving Over Time
- Qualitative Analysis
  - Positive TPM Reviews
  - Critical TPM Reviews
  - ⍰ Critical Reviews: Power Dynamics Analysis
- Surveys
  - Would you recommend TPM?
  - What's Stopping You From Joining Power University?
- Conclusion

Overall TPM Rating: 4.2/5 Stars

Based on 452 anonymized responses collected via Hotjar from December 2023 to September 2025, *The Power Moves* earns an average rating of **4.2 out of 5 stars**. This score reflects strong satisfaction among readers, with 68% awarding 4 or 5 stars.

- **5 Stars: 58% (262 reviews)** – Praised for insightful, practical content.
- **4 Stars: 10% (45 reviews)** – Solid value with minor suggestions for enhancements.
- **3 Stars: 12% (54 reviews)** – Neutral.
- **2 Stars: 8% (36 reviews)** – Criticisms around content presentation or technical issues.
- **1 Star: 12% (55 reviews)** – Objections often related to strong reactions to content or site features.

Readers who also added written feedback generally found TPM to be a unique and valuable resource for self-development.

48	The Power Moves offers the best information regarding psychology, self-improvement and life effectiveness that I've encountered in the internet to date. When I found it I thought it was too good to be true. Now, after +5 months with PM and +1 year learning power dynamics I think it's too good, and it's true
47	I love it
45	Awesome
43	Awesome
41	The power moves is mind blowing. I haven't stopped reading it for 2 days straight
39	Great format
37	Pop up bullshit
36	Hello, I didn't know your name, sorry! I love your content a lot. I have a question, what do you think about Ayn Rand? In her books she seems to promote the ideal man as a type of narcissistic, high

Dataset at a Glance

- **Total responses**: 452
- **Date range**: 2023-12-03 → 2025-09-08
- **Ratings distribution**:
  - 5 stars: 262 (58%)
  - 4 stars: 45 (10%)
  - 3 stars: 54 (12%)
  - 2 stars: 36 (8%)
  - 1 star: 55 (12%)
- **Positive** (4–5): 307 (68%)
- **Neutral** (3): 54 (12%)

- **Negative** (1–2): 91 (20%)
- **Top countries represented**: United States (124), India (38), Germany (27), United Kingdom (22), Canada (18), Philippines (16), Nigeria (14)

Top Rated & Bottom Rated Pages

We've analyzed the pages with the highest and lowest average ratings in our dataset. This feedback is helpful for highlighting what our audience values most and where we can improve.

Top rated:

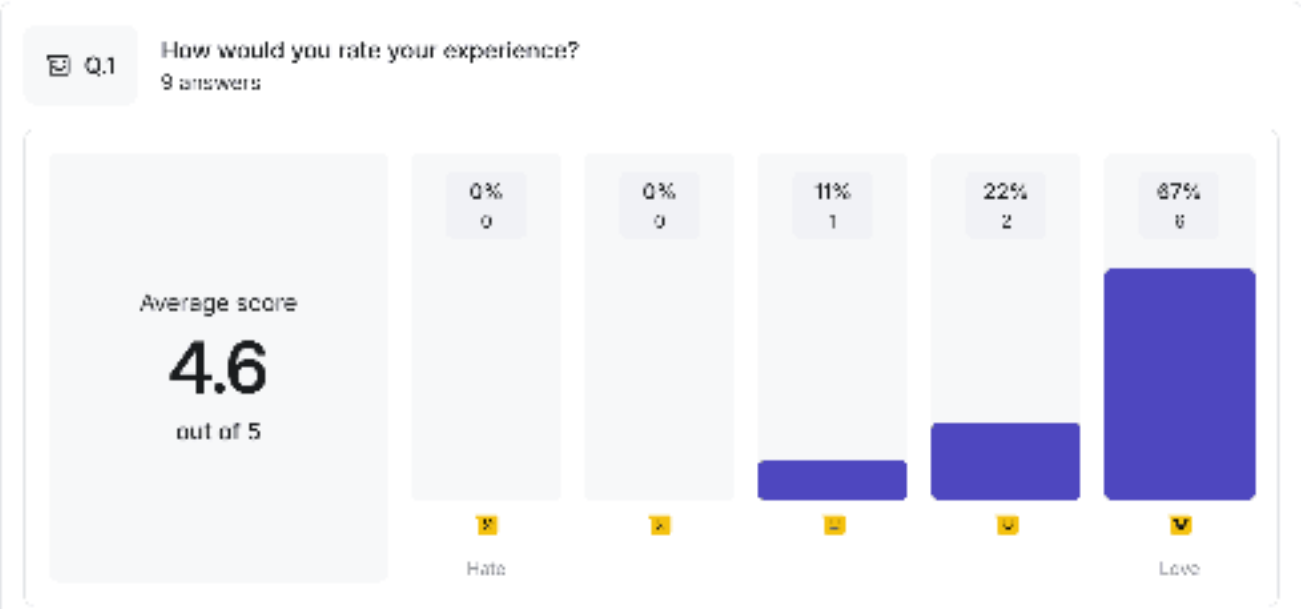
1. **Page:** https://thepowermoves.com/local-sexual-marketplaces/
   - **Rating**: 5/5
   - **Number of Responses**: 4
   - **Breakdown**: All 4 reviews at 5 stars
2. **Page:** https://thepowermoves.com/dictionary-of-power/
   - **Rating**: 5/5
   - **Number of Responses**: 2
   - **Breakdown**: Both reviews at 5 stars
3. **Page:** https://thepowermoves.com/forum/
   - **Rating**: 4.8/5
   - **Number of Responses**: 6
   - **Breakdown**: 5 reviews at 5 stars, 1 at 4 stars
4. **Page:** https://thepowermoves.com/three-pillars-of-knowledge/
   - **Rating**: **4.6/5**
   - **Number of Responses**: 5
   - **Breakdown**: 4 reviews at 5 stars, 1 at 4 stars

Bottom rated:

1. **Page:** https://thepowermoves.com/sexual-market-value/
   - **Rating**: 2/5
   - **Number of Responses**: 2
   - **Breakdown**: 1 review at 3 stars, 1 at 1 star
2. **Page:** https://thepowermoves.com/manipulation/
   - **Rating**: **2.3/5**
   - **Number of Responses**: 3
   - **Breakdown**: 1 review at 4 stars, 1 at 2 stars, 1 at 1 star

Our Analysis & Action: We were surprised to see the **Dictionary of Power** among our top-rated pages, as it has primarily been an unorganized repository.
But readers highly valued this resource. While we always intended to improve it, these reviews provided the evidence needed to prioritize turning it into a more structured and comprehensive resource.

Trend: Improving Over Time



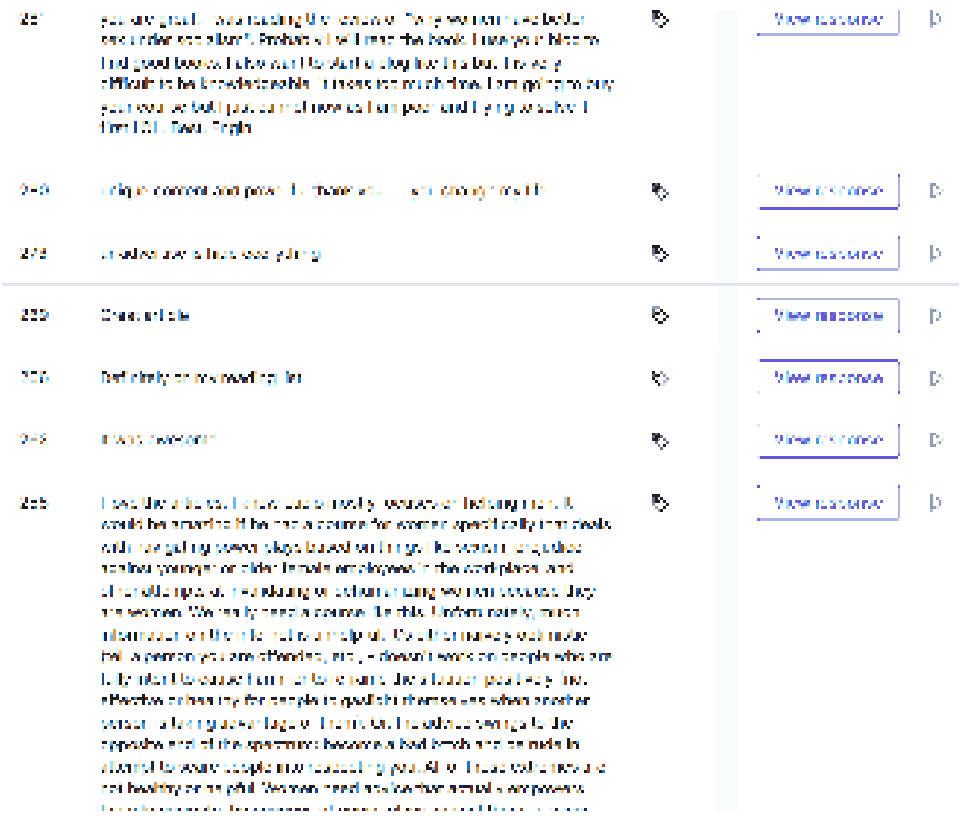
Last 30 days aggregate rating in September 2025

Reviews reveal a strong upward trend: from an average of 3.8/5 in late 2023 to 4.5/5 by mid-2025.
The early dip was primarily caused by technical friction (especially intrusive pop-ups). Once corrected, and as the content library expanded, satisfaction steadily increased.

Period	Average Rating	Common Themes
Dec 2023 – Jun 2024	3.8/5	Technical issues, content suggestions
Jul 2024 – Dec 2024	4.1/5	Balanced feedback, praise for insights
Jan 2025 – Sep 2025	4.5/5	High acclaim for uniqueness, fewer complaints

Qualitative Analysis

Several members left written notes about their experience with The Power Moves.



Readers overwhelmingly rate *The Power Moves* positively. Common themes include:

- **Actionability:** Readers consistently praised the concrete, usable tactics.
- **Uniqueness:** Many highlighted that TPM covers subjects rarely addressed elsewhere, such as manipulation dynamics and advanced social strategies.
- **Depth:** Several emphasized the deep research-backed analyses.

Positive TPM Reviews

Most high-rated reviews celebrate TPM's depth, practicality, and unique approach to self-development. Here are some representative examples:

> The power moves is mindblowing, I haven't stopped reading it for 2 days straight – 5 stars, US, Sep 2025

> Ive been browsing your blog for the past 2 years and it's absolute gold mine. Thank you for keeping all this content for free. – 5 stars, India, Feb 2024

> The Power Moves offers the best information regarding psychology, self improvement and life effectiveness that I've encountered in the interned to date. When I found it I thought it was too good to be true, now, after +5 months with PU and +1 year learning power dynamics I think it's too good, and it's true. – 5 stars, Spain, Dec 2024

Critical TPM Reviews

Lower ratings often pointed to technical issues (most of which have since been resolved), requests for more features, or differing views on content. These were valuable for shaping improvements.

Some examples:

> “Pop-up in mobile ist glitched” – 1 star, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jul 2025

> “Make clips work without having to sign in” – 3 stars, Australia, Feb 2025

> “The Adulteress section needs revising. It’s incredibly sexist to use the term UNDERSTANDABLE here…” – 3 stars, United States, May 2025

Among the negative content reviews, most related to sensitive topics such as gender dynamics, mate choice, and relationships.
These disagreements are expected in discussions about complex human behavior, but they provide useful signals for balancing tone in future updates.

⍰ Critical Reviews: Power Dynamics Analysis

Most angry reviews are legit and valuable. They pushed us to improve TPM, and for that, we’re grateful.

That said, TPM is a site about human nature and power dynamics. **Anger and strong emotions aren’t just feedback — they’re also social signals**.

Let’s start with a “dubious” one:

What's stopping you from joining PU?	Country
From reading your page and even email popup it’s clear you’re a bunch of toxic as fuck people who teach harmful shit to insecure guys. Pathetic.	Finland

> **Him**: From reading your page and even email popup it’s clear you’re a bunch of toxic as f*ck people who teach harmful shit to insecure guys. Pathetic

Contextual analysis: the referenced popup appeared after at least 15 minutes of session time — indicating this reader had substantial engagement before reacting.

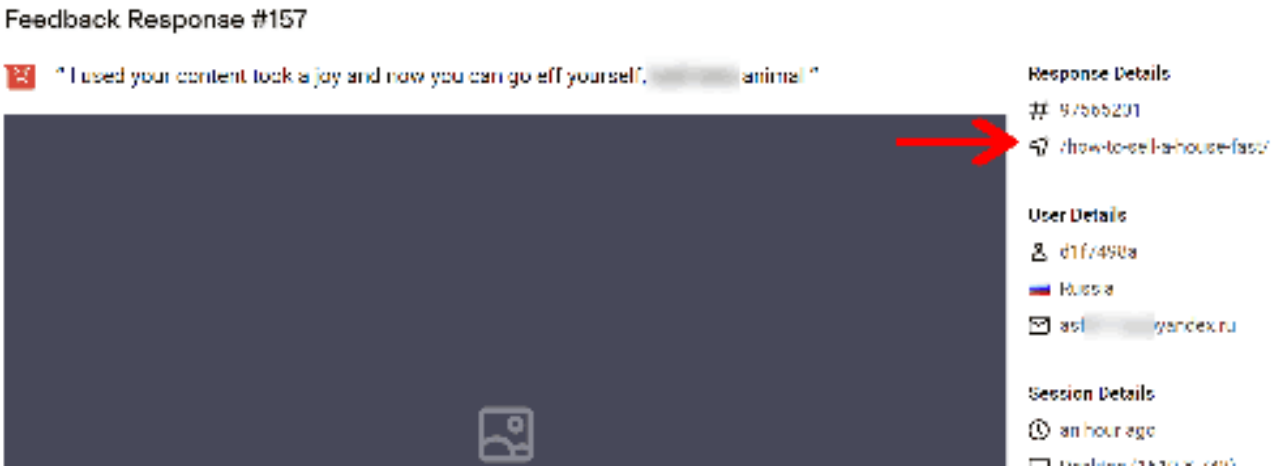
Sometimes people are drawn to certain type of content to consume privately, while also criticizing in public.
In power dynamics, this can stem from:

- **Envy**: wanting to learn from the material, but resenting the author’s position of authority
- **Status competitions**, not wanting empowering information to be widely available to others
- **Tricking others** into skipping effective content

But it’s also possible that some readers may honestly feel that way. Without knowing someone in person, it’s impossible to tell for sure.

⍰ Raging Review Case Study

This feedback was on a password-protected post that the user couldn't access:



> **User**: I used your content too a joy and now you can go eff yoursef (expletive)

This shows a taker mindset: consuming freely, but reacting with rage when access is restricted. This entitled approach to social exchanges expects unlimited benefits without reciprocity.

(For context: the protected post was titled "5 Machiavellian Techniques to Sell a House Fast (Unethical!)" — content deliberately not public.)

⍰ Manipulative 'Reviews' Dynamics

Several of the harshest negative reviews clustered around posts on mate selection and red flags (e.g., "Signs of Quality Women").
Several relied on shaming language rather than engaging with the substance. In power dynamics, **this is a suppression tactic** to:

- **Suppress knowledge** that could shift leverage in the dating market.
- **Discourage mate-quality assessment** to maintain the chooser's power, rather than also competing in being chosen

In both cases, it's about **empowering oneself at others' expense**.

Please note: this isn't about men vs. women or anyone being "better."
Some critical responses came from readers who identified as female because many of these posts are addressed primarily to men.

But similar dynamics are at play with men towards women and among different groups (e.g., 'have vs. have-nots').

In all cases, it's about social power moves: controlling the public narrative to gain or retain more power.
At TPM, our belief is that more empowerment for all leads to a better world.

Surveys

Separate feedback forms collected specific insights about The Power Moves.

Here's a summary of the main findings.

Would you recommend TPM?

We asked readers (N = 126) whether they recommended TPM in the past six months, and invited open-ended comments.
Responses fell into the following range:

- **30% said "yes"**
- **About half were considering**, including first-time users
- **The remainder provided a negative response**

A few selected quotes:

> Yes I always recommend you.

> I hooked the website a few time on Reddit

> One I don't know how I can contact you Lucio to say thank you (…) This is the site that changes your life is my recommendation to friends I have talked about

And some readers chose a more humorous approach to voice their criticism, for example, one said "*recommend to stay away*," and another, "*Take a look at this (sic) mysogynistic drivel*".

🙇♂️Lucio's personal note: **Thank you so much to anyone who mentioned us!** 🙏🙏

Lucio:
I give The Power Moves my full and best effort, but it's challenging for us to reach the people who may need us the most. So any mention or share is incredibly valuable for TPM.

And since I've dedicated my life to this, it truly means a lot to me.
For that, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you 🙏🙏

Follow up 1: What did you say?

The second survey question asked respondents what they shared in their recommendations. Here are some representative answers:

> better than anything I have read on how to handle the dark triad types.

> “Trust me, read it”

> I have highly recommended this sight to my close family as a novel new place that breaks down social interactions in a way I have never seen before, and that I can finally understand.

> When they noticed some of the changes i have had, I told them about The Power Moves and how it has helped me to become higher value.

> Yes I always do with the prime: best resource on social skills / power dynamics

A minority of negative responses, sometimes employed a humorous or sarcastic tone:

> This site is extremely sexist, please avoid it

> Yes, I told them to bust the pimp spank (Ed.: referring to an edgy ‘technique’ in the article)

Overall, readers overwhelmingly spoke positively.

Follow-up 2: What Makes Us Unique

Looking to find out what TPM readers would list as our USP, we lastly asked, ‘What do you think sets us apart from the competitors?’.

The answer largely pointed to the quality of the content.

17	You actually know what you're talking about.	
15	The quality of your articles.	
12	[redacted]	
6	No room for dogmatism here, which is good. Everything is critically analyzed and then incorporated.	
13	Lucio's background/credentials. The forums, sheer volume of reviews, leading to recommendations and discovering new content we never would otherwise	
5	Honesty, Accurate Information, Best resource.	
3	High quality	
7	Great information and easy to understand.	
10	Dont know	
20	Backed by research and you can tell that you know what you are talking about	

Some selected replies:

> Backed by research and you can tell that you know what you are talking about.

> Lucio's background/credentials. The forums, sheer volume of reviews, leading to recommendations and discovering new content we never would otherwise

> The quality of your articles

> The systematic way in which you present the knowledge, as well as the regular reference to scientific literature

> No room for dogmatism here, which is good. Everything is critically analyzed and then incorporated.

A psychoanalytic-inclined reader replied: 'Asking questions that are just thinly disguised attempts to obtain narcissistic validation'.

Overall, readers recognized and appreciated TPM's three-pillars method, ensuring quality by only writing we can combine science, experience, and critical thinking.

What's Stopping You From Joining Power University?

A second survey was more commercially focused and revealed a consistent theme: **price** was the most common hurdle to joining Power University.

[illegible]	[illegible]
25	[illegible]
20	[illegible]
15	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]
36	[illegible]
13	[illegible]
18	[illegible]
17	[illegible]
12	[illegible]
20	[illegible]
5	[illegible]

Several responses highlighted ways to improve product descriptions, while a few flagged onboarding issues we're addressing step by step. Our priority has long been content quality, sometimes at the expense of smoother onboarding.

Some interesting responses include:

> im a pathetic broke fuck

> Is your curriculum open to heterosexual women?

> I need to research this program first and see reviews from external sources.

> Where do you use these knowledges, if you have online business, and you do not have nothing to do with people. Basically you want to stay away from people?

Our replies to similar queries:

'Broke loser': Most TPM readers are smart, ambitious, and strategic. Those qualities last a lifetime. With the right mindset and tools, 'broke' is temporary.

'Is it for women?': While many principles apply universally, since upgrade 9.0 we've focused Power University primarily on men.

'Using PU to avoid socialization': Just like learning to drive doesn't force you to own or drive a car, learning how to navigate people doesn't force you to socialize. The skills empower you to engage more effectively—goal-based, faster, and limited to exactly what you need, if that's your choice.

Conclusion

Across 452 reviews collected over almost two years, reviews of *The Power Moves* are positive.

Readers find it helpful and unique, and providing real-life benefits.

The trend also shows clear improvement over time as we fixed technical concerns and content expanded.

Not every review was glowing—nor should it be, for a site that tackles complex and sometimes controversial topics. We believe that having zero strong criticism would be a sign of being too bland and shying away from reality. A reality that, although beautiful, also includes competition, diverging interests, and, at times, can also be darker than we wish it.

But the balance of evidence shows that most readers consider TPM to be unique, practical, and transformative in the field of self-development.

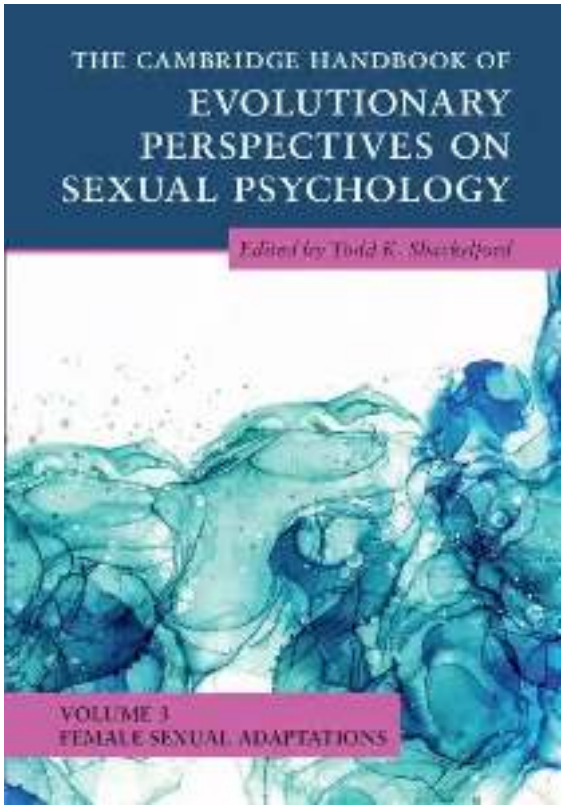
Transparency note: All reviews quoted here were collected via Hotjar, anonymized, and unedited except for typos or clarity. A downloadable file of the full dataset is available for verification upon request.

Methodology note: We analyzed N = 452 anonymized Hotjar responses collected 2023-12-03 → 2025-09-08. Quantitative metrics (average rating, distribution, trends) were calculated programmatically and cross-checked manually to reduce bias. All quoted material is verbatim except in some cases fixing typos; responses were anonymized prior to analysis and sensitive information in the pictures has been removed.

The Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology: Female Sexual Adaptations – Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 October 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology Vol. 3 (2022) is the third entry in a four-part academic series on sexual psychology. This volume offers an in-depth overview of female sexual strategies and adaptations through the lens of evolutionary psychology, exploring both well-established findings and emerging theories.



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FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Various experts for each chapter, while the volume is edited by Todd K. Shackelford, a leading evolutionary psychologist and active handbook editor.

Chapter 1 — Women's Preferences: Precopulatory Adaptations

Authors: Donald F. Sacco, Mitchell Brown, Kaitlyn Boykin, Alicia L. Macchione, Kelsey M. Drea, Mary M. Medlin

This chapter explains the evolved decision rules women use before sex to choose mates who maximize offspring survival and future reproductive success. It shows what those decision rules are — the kinds of cues they use, why some cues matter more in short-term versus long-term contexts, how fertility and ecology shift preferences, and how personality and life history calibrate choice.

- **Women trade off** heritable-quality cues (good genes) against indicators of investment and fidelity; cues are integrated across face, body, voice and odor and are flexibly weighted by fertility, pathogen risk, resource scarcity and individual sociosexuality.
- **Good-genes vs. investment trade-off:** Masculinity, symmetry and muscularity index possible genetic/immune benefits but often correlate with lower paternal investment or higher short-term mating orientation.
- **Signals of mate quality:** Facial masculinity, symmetry, limbal rings, white sclera with eye/skin contrast, and other cues signal health and reproductive value.
- **Short-term vs long-term cues:** STM emphasizes physical cues (masculinity, muscularity, symmetry); LTM emphasizes resources, prosociality, self-control and fidelity.
- **Cycle & context effects:** Fertility and local ecology (pathogen load, resources) shift cue weighting.
- **Individual differences:** Sociosexuality, personality, and pathogen avoidance motives modulate cue emphasis.

Interesting Notes

- **Expensive purchases signal short-term interests** (*e.g., purchasing a Rolex) are frequently perceived by women as a man interested in STM, with men motivated by LTM avoiding such behavior (Sundie et al., 2011).*
- **Daddy-types playing with children are attractive**: *Recent work has found that men who play and interact well with children are found to be particularly attractive (Bleske-Rechek, Remiker, Swanson, & Zeug, 2006; Oswald et al., in press).*
- **High status women are less hypergamous**: *Women belonging to a high socioeconomic status are more likely to seek mates with indicators of heritable fitness, whereas lower-status women frequently prefer resource potential and willingness to invest resources in offspring (Fan, Dai, Liu, & Wu, 2005; Fleck & Simpson, 2017; Stone, Shackelford, & Buss, 2008; Swami & Tovée, 2005).*
- **Unrestricted women prioritize looks**: Sociosexually unrestricted women prioritize physical attractiveness given its emphasis in STM (Li & Kenrick, 2006) and facial structures suggesting interpersonal dominance, namely, extraversion and narcissism (Brown & Sacco, 2017; Marcinkowska, Helle, & Lyons, 2015) whereas…
  - Restricted women have stronger preference for benevolent behavior (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991)
- **Unrestricted women like dirty jokes**: *Women with unrestricted sociosexual attitudes are attracted to men who utilize dirty jokes, although such mating displays are considered particularly aversive in LTM contexts (Medlin, Brown, & Sacco, 2018).*
- **Women who feel more vulnerable to infections prefer symmetrical faces** that signal good genes (Young, Sacco, & Hugenberg, 2011), a preference specific to opposite-sex faces, suggesting a mating basis (Ainsworth & Maner, 2019). They like less faces signaling extraversion (Brown & Sacco, 2016), which may be adaptive since extraverted men are more likely to contract diseases and pursue promiscuous strategies that increase infection risk (Nettle, 2005).

Chapter 2 — Female Sexual Attraction Tactics

Authors: Trond Viggo Grøntvedt, Mons Bendixen, Leif Edward Ottesen Kennair

This chapter describes the behavioral toolkit women use to attract mates: visual dress and grooming, body language, gait, vocal modulation, proxemics, flirtation scripts, and digital-profile curation. It explains how tactics differ for short- vs long-term goals.

- **Women's signals balance conspicuousness with reputation:** Attraction tactics are multimodal, calibrated to goals and context, and constrained by reputational costs.
- **Strategic deployment:** Short-term contexts favor sexual displays; long-term favors trust and commitment displays.
- **Hormonal effects:** Evidence suggests cycle-linked shifts in tactic use, though findings are mixed.

Interesting Notes

- **Men prefer hairless bodies** because they signal youth, fertility, or health
- **Shaved women report being more sexually active** (referring pubic hair)
- **Tattooed women are more sexually active** and more open to short-term sexual relationships (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). The common factor underlying both tattooing and sexual activity may be sociosexuality.
- **Dating app users are more sexually unrestricted**: current dating app users are less sociosexually restricted than former users, who again are less restricted than non-users (Botnen, Bendixen, Grøntvedt, & Kennair, 2018).
  But women also use it for long-term relationships and for entertainment and to pass time

Chapter 3 — Extra-Pair Sexual Interest

Authors: Marissa A. Harrison

This chapter reframes extra-pair interest as an evolved conditional strategy: not mere moral failing but a motivation that can yield genetic benefits, insurance against partner infertility, or an exit strategy when long-term provisioning declines.

People seem to be more interested in female cheating, than male.
Says the author:

> it appears that there are far more evolutionary psychological research endeavors geared at documenting women's extra-pair interest and behavior than men's extra-pair interest and behavior. Is it because women hold the keys to the kingdom with internal fertilization?

- **Extra-pair sex is evolved and adaptive:** Since our brains process information in a manner to facilitate adaptive behavior (Cosmides & Tooby, 1987), it seems that selection favored at least some degree of extra-pair sex (Andrews et al., 2008)
- **It's a risk-benefit calculation**: Extra-pair interest is hormonally and contextually modulated and represents a risk–benefit calculation.
- **Triggers:** Fertility cycles, relationship dissatisfaction, partner qualities, and local mating markets.
- **Constraints:** Male mate guarding, reputational sanctions, and provisioning loss limit payoff.

Interesting Notes

- **Love shields against cheating**: the most powerful predictor of deciding against cheating was love for and loyalty to the current partner.
  And loving one's partner and satisfaction with the relationship inoculates against infidelity (Shackelford, Besser, & Goetz, 2008). Apostolou and Panayiotou (2019) surveyed men and women in their early thirties
- **Women may partner with a lower-value mate and cheat with a higher value one**: *The dual-mating theory, AKA "good genes ovulatory shift hypothesis," states that women secure a long-term partner with inferior genes who provides, but engage in EPCs to reproduce with men with high-quality genes (Jünger et al., 2018; Pillsworth & Haselton, 2006a, 2006b).* This is called 'alpha fucks, beta bucks' in the manosphere, and there is some supporting but also mixed evidence for a more nuanced and couple-dependent picture. Also see our article for the full dynamics
- **Cheating is heritable, and more in men**: *by studying twin pairs, they documented an arguably high heritability in extra-pair behavior, with 63 percent of the variation for men and 40 percent for women in extra-pair mating propensity attributable to genetic differences* (Zietsch et al. 2015)
- **The most important factor in forgiving infidelity is children** (Apostolou and Demosthenous, 2020), and more children related to increased forgiveness.
  Dependence and increased age also raised the odds of forgiveness

⍰⍰♂Lucio's suggestion: the table of 'proximate factors creating risk for infidelity' is great, add a row for 'effect size'

Chapter 4 — Female Intrasexual Competition

Authors: Maryanne L. Fisher

This chapter analyzes how women compete with each other for mates and resources. It dissects typical forms (indirect aggression, reputation management, appearance enhancement), triggers, and adaptive trade-offs.

- **Indirect aggression:** Female competition is usually indirect and social, targeting investment rather than physical dominance.
- **Men's parental investment is a commodity women compete for:** women compete with each other for access to men who are able and willing to invest.
- **Forms:** Indirect aggression, derogation, exclusion, self-enhancement, and coalition-building.
- **Triggers:** High-value mates, rival fertility, status asymmetries, or scarcity of men/resources
- **Costs:** Reputation risks and cultural modulation of acceptable tactics.

Sexual Economics Theory

Sexual economics theory conceptualizes heterosexual sexual relationships as a market, where women are "sellers" of sexual access and men are "buyers" competing for it (Baumeister et al., 2017).

The theory assumes men desire sex more, giving women greater negotiating power. Women may exchange exclusive sexual access for material resources, while men compete to display those resources.

Women compete by signaling sexual loyalty, attractiveness, and willingness, and may view sexually promiscuous women as a threat because sex is a scarce resource that gives them leverage (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002; Baumeister et al., 2017).

To maintain this sexual economy, women may use indirect aggression, such as gossip or ostracism, to suppress rivals.

If indirect aggression is linked to mating, it should emerge at puberty, and evidence supports this. Adolescent girls who date earlier show higher levels of same-sex indirect aggression, while victims of such aggression date later and receive fewer flirtations (Gallup, O'Brien, & Wilson, 2011).
Adolescents of both sexes also score higher than adults on measures of intrasexual competitiveness (Buunk & Fisher, 2012; Polo et al., 2018; Fernández et al., 2014), suggesting that adolescence marks a peak in competitive behaviors for reproductive success.

In adulthood, strategies stabilize and become fewer but more refined (Ellis et al., 2012).

Gossip to damage and control rivals

Baumeister and Twenge (2002) suggest that women use acerbic gossip to enforce norms around sexual promiscuity, preventing rivals from "dropping the price" of sexual access.

Women compete strategically for desirable mates, balancing the risk of gossip against the benefits of granting sexual access selectively. They may also derogate rivals' promiscuity or use other information to improve their own mating success (Baumeister et al., 2017).

Indirect aggression works

Indirect aggression is a successful female adaptation that provides high benefits at low cost, by reducing rivals' ability or desire to compete for mates (Vaillancourt, 2013).

Attractive women can influence men's evaluations of other women, lowering rivals' mate value (Fisher & Cox, 2009).
Same-sex victimization can also cause negative outcomes—such as poor health, low self-esteem, or suicide attempts—which females may experience more than males (Vaillancourt, 2013).

Coalitions of Friends for Self-Defense

Women rely on friends to help protect their reputations, forming a buffer against malicious gossip (Reynolds, 2018; 2021).

However, if a friend is also a mating rival, support may depend on closeness, since close friendships can shield against social exclusion and harassment, and same-sex peers can act as alloparents or co-aggressors to defend one's children (Hrdy, 1999; Krems, Williams, et al., 2021).

The benefits of alliances often outweigh the risks of sharing personal information, so women form same-sex networks to gain status and dominance, increasing access to social and reproductive advantages (Liesen, 2013).

In this video we highlight though that women grow closer when men are perceived as more of a common threat, a phenomenon we dubbed the sisterhood.

Short vs. Long-Term Tactics

Tactics	Short-Term Tactics	Long-Term Tactics
Women	Emphasized sexuality and physical attractiveness. Derogate competitors as frigid	Self-promoted faithfulness and sexual restrictiveness. Derogate competitors for promiscuity
Men	Emphasized immediately available resources.	Promoted future resource availability.

P.S.:
⍰⍰♂ Loved this chapter

Chapter 5 — Female Intersexual Selection

Authors: Steven Arnocky, Adam C. Davis, Michael Suszter

This chapter reframes female choice as a driver of male trait evolution: preferences create selection pressure on male ornaments, displays, and behaviors.

Interesting Notes

- **Women engage in more mate retention tactics when with higher value men**: *women who are mated to men who are higher in status striving and income, as putative indices of their mate value, have been found to engage in more mate retention effort* (Buss & Shackelford, 1997).
- **Economic inequality increases women's expenditure for beauty** (Blake et al., 2018) and income inequality increased women's intentions to wear more sexualized clothing for a hypothetical night out (Blake and Brooks, 2019).
  This mirrors the "lipstick effect" – the finding that in times of economic uncertainty and hardship, women shift spending to appearance enhancement products (Hill, Rodeheffer, Griskevicius, Durante, & White, 2012)

Health & Genetic Quality Matter More In Unhealthy Places

Research indicates that in regions with higher pathogen threats, both men and women place greater importance on partner attractiveness as a cue for good genes and disease resistance (Gangestad & Buss, 1993; Arnocky et al., 2014).

Individuals higher in pathogen disgust rate unattractive targets as even less attractive.

Less healthy individuals are at a mating disadvantage and tend to be more vigilant against reproductive threats, exerting greater effort to retain desired partners.
For example, young adults with poorer health perceived their partners as more likely to cheat and engaged in more cost-inflicting mate retention behaviors (Arnocky, Pearson, & Vaillancourt, 2015; Davis, Belanger, Mattsson, & Arnocky, 2019).

Are Lower Value Women More Promiscuous? Maybe, More Research Needed

Buss and Shackelford (2008) argue that high mate-value women can secure all desired male traits from a single partner, while lower mate-value women may pursue pluralistic mating—gaining resources from one man and good genes from another.

Less attractive women are more likely to commit infidelity (McNulty, Meltzer, Makhanova, & Maner, 2018) and are viewed as less desirable long-term mates (Campbell et al., 2009), leading them to adopt a more unrestricted sociosexual strategy.

Conversely, some research shows a small positive link between women's attractiveness and unrestricted sociosexuality (Fisher, Hahn, DeBruine, & Jones, 2016; Arnocky et al., 2021), suggesting that high mate-value women may also pursue pluralistic strategies when confident in attracting future mates.

Chapter 6 — Evolution of Precopulatory Defense from Rape and Coercion in Women

Authors: Domenic Roberto, Rachel James, Melissa McDonald

This chapter examines evolved female defenses against sexual coercion — a 'threat management system' for rape avoidance that includes perceptual threat detection, avoidance, protective partners, and coalition-building.

> Given the importance of reproductive choice in women's mating strategy, rape presents a serious threat to women's fitness.
> Female rape victims are prevented from expressing their desired mate preferences, controlling the preferred timing of pregnancy, and may be subjected to conceiving with a mate of low genetic quality and/or who provides no protection or resources to the mother or offspring (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000)

- **Threat management system** includes:
  - Greater care when fertile: less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors that may put them at greater risk of rape during their ovulatory window (Bröder and Hohmann, 2003)
  - Greater risk is matched with greater care, suggesting an evolved 'risk tracking'
  - Alliances for protection, with other women and men. Women prefer men who are physically strong as friends, which may serve as protection and/or as future mating options (Weatherhead & Robertson, 1979)
  - Information gathering for avoidance and defense, which the author link to women's greater intereset for true crime

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's suggestion**: I'd suggest more caveats of speculation around some hypotheses like rape fantasies as rehearsal for self-defense. They didn't feel the most compelling explanation to me.

- **Rape is unfortunately cross-cultural and widespread**: *Minturn et al. (1969) examined 135 small-scale societies and found rape to be reported in 90 percent of those for which sufficient data were available for examination. Indeed, the hypothesis of a society without rape has been refuted (Rozée, 1993) even among allegedly "rape-free" societies (Palmer, 1989)*
- **Some men switch to aggression after rejection**: After repeated failed attempts at mating, some males shift strategies and become more aggressive, such that escalating the force of a coercive strategy may lead to rape (Gorelik et al., 2012)
- **Opportunistic rape is unfortunately a possible sexual strategy**: interviews with serial rapists suggest they select victims based on the probability that they will be successful and will not be caught (Beauregard, 2007). Women who are intoxicated for example are at greater risk of rape and coercion (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, & McAuslan, 2004)
  - Men can detect 'exploitability cues' from pictures, and rate these pictures more sexually attractive.

Categories of exploitability includes ‘susceptibility to manipulation’, ‘primiscuity’ and ‘risk-taking behaviors’

⍰⍰♂ Manipulation Is Related to Rape. But Seduction? Probably Not

The author proposes an interesting take:

> Related to rape are manipulative tactics that facilitate sexual coercion.
> Coercion tactics include behaviors categorized as sexual seduction, verbal or nonverbal pressure, and deception (Goetz, Easton, Lewis, & Buss, 2012).

I agree that some of these behaviors can range on a spectrum and pure manipulation is on the ‘coercive’ and ‘value-taking’ end of the spectrum.

However, I’d be careful listing ‘seduction’ there, and I offer a different take. **Good seduction is a display of advanced skills and mental abilities that signal genetic quality.**
It’s not any different than a woman mating with a good-looking man for pathogen resistance or a dominant man for genes that help climb social hierarchies.

Seduction falls squarely into the sexy son theory.

Chapter 7 — Mate Poaching

Authors: Jasna Hudek-Knezević, Igor Kardum, Nermina Mehić

This chapter analyzes mate poaching as a conditional tactic: pursuing already-partnered individuals can secure vetted, high-quality mates but carries retaliation and reputational risks.

- **Mate poaching is universal**, present in all cultures
- **Why adaptive:** Partnered targets are pre-vetted
- **Constraints:** Social sanctions and retaliation risks

Interesting Notes

- **Friendships can be a first step of mate poaching:** Friendship between men and women sometimes increases the likelihood of mate poaching. Friendship is often a first stage in a longterm romantic relationship and single men and women prefer friends for a long-term romantic relationship over those already taken (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001)
  ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio’s note**: this confirms that the male ‘fear’ of being a friend only applies to lower mate value men who are less likely to be a mating option and, hence, more likely to be used

Women’s Poaching Increases with Gender Equality, Decreases With Patriarchy

Social Structural Theory argues that sex differences in mating behaviors stem from patriarchal gender ideologies and social role expectations (Wood & Eagly, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2005).

Cross-cultural research shows that sex differences in short-term mate poaching are larger in traditional societies but smaller in more gender-egalitarian societies, largely due to increased female poaching behavior (Schmitt et al., 2004).

Women are more likely to engage in short-term poaching when they have greater access to resources, political power, or when they outnumber men, and women’s long-term poaching is also positively linked to gender equality (Schmitt et al., 2004).

⍰⍰♂**Lucio’s suggestion**: tighten the chapter around the core topic of mate poaching. Social structure theory was the cherry

Chapter 8 — Sexual Fantasies

Authors: Rui Miguel Costa

- **More frequent and diverse fantasies correlate with higher desire**
- **Fantasizing about someone else during sex is common**: popular fantasies during foreplay and/or intercourse included not only sex with the partner (100 percent of women and 84 percent of men), but also sex with someone other than the partner (80 percent of women and 92 percent of men).
  Oral sex on the partner and reliving a previous sexual experience were also common fantasies during foreplay and/or intercourse in the male and female control groups (Nutter & Condron, 1983, 1985).
- **Women fantasize more about current partners, men about new partners**: Evolutionary theory predicts that compared to men, women are less likely to fantasize about multiple partners, group sex, or sex with complete strangers, but more likely to fantasize about their current partner. Several studies have confirmed these predictions.
  One study found the current partner was involved in 64 percent of women's fantasies, but in only 46 percent of men's fantasies (Hicks & Leitenberg, 2001)
- **Rape fantasies are not uncommon in men and fantasies of forcing others are not uncommon in women**. While men have more rape fantasies and women more fantasies to be raped, the other way around is also not uncommon <— ⍰⍰♂ This was the first time I learned about this. Very surprising at first, logical with hindsight
- **Functions:** Rehearsal, compensation, and exploration of taboos.
- **Clinical relevance:** Fantasy informs assessment but does not predict behavior directly.

Rape Fantasies: Prevalence, Correlates, and Explanations

Rape fantasies are surprisingly common.

Studies since the 1970s estimate that **30–60% of women** report such fantasies, with 10–20% describing them as frequent or preferred (Critelli & Bivona, 2008; Joyal et al., 2015).
Men also report them, though fantasies of forcing others are more common among men, while fantasies of being forced are more common among women (Joyal et al., 2015).

Rape fantasies are not directly linked to actual victimization, but **are linked to childhood sexual abuse**, which is consistently associated with higher frequency and diversity of sexual fantasies, including coercive ones (Briere et al., 1994; Wilson & Wilson, 2008).
Not all women find the fantasies purely erotic. Emotional responses vary: some women experience them as erotic, others as aversive, and many as a mix (Bivona & Critelli, 2009).

Several explanations have been proposed:

- **Self-blame avoidance –** fantasies permit sexual expression without guilt.
- **Desirability theory –** women imagine being irresistibly attractive.
- **Openness to experience –** linked with greater fantasy variety and sensation seeking.
- **Sympathetic arousal –** controlled fear enhances sexual excitement.
- **Sociological accounts –** fantasies reflect cultural gender norms or eroticized stereotypes (Brownmiller, 1975).
- **Adversarial transformation –** fantasies symbolize the conquest of a cruel man into a loving partner.
- **Power dynamics –** some women's fantasies correlate with desire for control over resources (Hawley & Hensley, 2009).
- **Childhood sexual abuse and dissociation –** abuse may heighten fantasy proneness, leading to coercive themes.

Overall, no single theory explains rape fantasies; they likely emerge from **multiple pathways**.

Freud's idea of fantasy resolving contradictory desires (1915) may help integrate these findings: in fantasies, conflicting states—desire and resistance, fear and arousal, dominance and submission—can coexist safely, enhancing sexual arousal.

Chapter 9 — Copulatory Thrusting

Authors: Olivia Le Moëne

This chapter analyzes the biomechanics and communicative functions of thrusting: how tempo, depth and angle affect stimulation, sperm transport, arousal, and signaling.

Chapter 10 — Female Provision of Oral Sex

Authors: James B. Moran, Catherine A. Salmon, Rebecca L. Burch

This chapter treats female-provided oral sex as behavior with proximate motives (pleasure, reciprocity) and adaptive functions (pair-bond maintenance, signaling, reciprocity).

- **Main takeaways:** Oral sex operates as mating effort, retention strategy, and pleasure behavior; prevalence varies by culture.
- **Hypotheses:** Signaling commitment, reciprocity, and partner satisfaction.
- **Variation:** Cross-cultural and relationship-phase differences.
- **Some view male provisioning of oral sex as unmasculine**: For much of recorded history, performing oral sex on a woman was taboo and viewed as not 'manly'

The authors mention The Sopranos as an example:

> **Mobsters**: Make fun of Uncle Junior for giving oral sex, a 'non-masculine' behavior

We Can Explain Behaviors With Pleasure, Not Just Evolution

Agmo and Ellingson (2003) argue that **people aren't thinking about evolutionary survival when having sex.**

Sexual behavior is about the positive affect it produces—people have sex because it is pleasurable.

While behaviors like oral sex may still serve evolutionary functions, this perspective highlights the need to study all sexual behaviors, including non-reproductive ones.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** I couldn't agree more.
We sometimes get caught up in explaining every behavior strictly through the lens of survival or reproductive maximization, when in fact some may simply be byproducts of other adaptations that produce pleasure.

Chapter 11 — The Adaptive Value of Women's Orgasm

Authors: Lisa L. M. Welling, Virginia E. Mitchell, Jenna Lunge, Alex C. Orille

This chapter evaluates competing explanations for the female orgasm. It could be a 'happy by-product' of common fetal development with males, for which orgasm serves a reproductive purpose.
Or it could serve adaptive roles such as cryptic female choice, sperm retention, pair-bond reinforcement, and a screening tool for bonding only with quality and/or good long-term partner choices (mate choice of female orgasm hypothesis).

The authors seem to favor the adaptive role of female orgasm:

> The evidence that female orgasm may be adaptive, be it through increased pair-bonding, increased likelihood

> of conception, encouraging sex with high-quality partners, or by reinforcing sexual behaviors in general, is too plentiful to be dismissed.

But much research remains to be conducted.
The authors also raise important issues that must be addressed before linking female orgasm to 'sexy partners for sexy sons':

> (…) results from studies investigating female orgasm as a sire choice mechanism may have alternative explanations. More dominant and masculine men have more sexual experience (e.g., Keller, Elliott, & Gunberg, 1982; Perusse, 1993; Puts, Gaulin, & Verdolini, 2006)
> (…)
> Given that women find masculine men more sexually attractive (Little, Jones, Penton-Voak, Burt, & Perrett, 2002), the earlier timing of female orgasm with partners whom they consider attractive may not be related to increasing sperm retention (and increased probability that that individual will sire offspring), but rather associated with sexual excitability and arousal.

- **Main takeaways:** Orgasm may serve bonding and cryptic-choice roles but evidence is mixed.
- **Mechanistic proposals:** Bonding via oxytocin, sperm transport, mate assessment.
- **Evidence:** Orgasm frequency correlates with closeness and technique but causal mechanisms remain unclear.

Interesting Notes

- **Few women reach orgasm through coitus**: the estimates vary widely, from 6 percent (Wallen, 2006) or closer to 100 percent (Marshall, 1971), but the majority of research finds incident rates closer to 50 percent (e.g., Dawood, Kirk, Bailey, Andrews, & Martin, 2005)
  - Rates go up if there is concurrent clitoral stimulation: Eschler (2004) reported that only 33.3 percent of women experienced orgasm with no clitoral stimulation, and 77.4 percent of women reported experiencing orgasm with clitoral stimulation <— ⍰⍰♂ Could be a good tip for men to encourage women to touch themselves
  - Orgasms are more likely and intense if the man is attractive: Women report more intense orgasms (Gallup, Ampel, Wedberg, & Pogosjan, 2014) and are more likely to experience orgasm when they are more physically attracted to their sexual partner (Puts, Welling, et al., 2012; Shackelford et al., 2000) and if their partner is very masculine (Puts, Welling, et al., 2012).
  - There is wide cultural variation: *For example, rates of anorgasmia are higher among East Asian women compared to women from Western countries (Moreira et al., 2005), and field research on the Polynesian island of Mangaia, a culture that places a high emphasis on female sexual pleasure, reports that all women achieve coital orgasm (Marshall, 1971).*
  - Most women achieve orgasm via masturbation: women most often achieve orgasm through masturbation, clitoral stimulation, oral sex, or a combination of these practices (e.g., Baker & Bellis, 1993; Richters, de Visser, Rissel, & Smith, 2006).
- **Unrestricted women experience more orgasms in casual encounters**: *Women with more restricted sociosexual orientations experienced more orgasms in committed relationships, but women with less restricted sociosexual orientations experienced similar orgasm frequency in casual sexual encounters as they did in long-term committed relationships* (Wongsomboon et al., 2020)
- **Orgasm is a desired outcome for most women**. *One study found that only 6 percent of women rate having an orgasm during sexual intercourse as either somewhat or very unimportant, whereas 75.8 percent rate it as somewhat or very important (Eschler, 2004). Likewise, roughly 32 percent of women report they would be somewhat or very likely to enjoy sexual intercourse without an orgasm, compared to roughly 54 percent who would*

be somewhat or very unlikely to enjoy sex without an orgasm

- **Testosterone heightens orgasms**: *women with higher testosterone report more positive orgasm experiences (van Anders & Dunn, 2009), and a single dose administration of exogenous testosterone increases female genital responsiveness, genital arousal, and subjective reports of "sexual lust" and "genital sensations" (Tuiten, Van Honk, Koppeschaar, Bernaards, Thijssen, & Verbaten, 2000)*
- **Many women and few men fake orgasm**: *more than half of women admit to having previously faked an orgasm (e.g., Ellsworth & Bailey, 2013; Muehlenhard & Shippee, 2010; Roberts, Kippax, Waldby, & Crawford, 1995; Wiederman, 1997) compared to only 25 percent of men (most of whom faked orgasm because of intoxication or because they had already orgasmed that day; Muehlenhard & Shippee, 2010).*
  - Women who fake orgasms are more likely to engage in mate retention behaviors, suggesting faking orgasms is a tool to maintain the relationship
- **Orgasm is more complex for women than for men**, and women seem to be able to experience orgasm through non-genital stimulation

Chapter 12 — Copulatory Urgency: An Evolutionary Perspective of Women's Sexual Desire

Authors: Courtney L. Crosby

Crosby outlines the evolutionary purposes of desire, ranging from reproduction to mate attraction and retention, and maximizing offspring survival by tracking the presence/absence of children (and their age).

It's possible for example, that women may have lower sexual desire with young children to avoid being spread too thin with sexual effort or a new child.

- **Relationship length decreases desire**, and it's one of the strongest predictors of declines in sexual desire (Durr, 2009a; Laan & Both, 2008; Moor et al., 2021; Murray & Millhausen, 2012)
- **Bait and switch hypothesis with sex**: Women's higher levels of sexual desire at the beginning of relationships may represent efforts to bait – or secure – a high-quality mate.
- **The presence of children lowers sexual desire**: consistent with evolutionary metatheory, women who have children report lower levels of sexual desire than women without children (e.g., Dewitte & Mayer, 2018). Although there are no studies investigating if this effect is strongest when children are young, frequency of intercourse is lower with young children
- **Mate retention hypothesis**: when women face a mate retention problem, they may experience increases in sexual desire; engaging in sex in response to potential threats may facilitate partner retention
- **Sexual motivation-disgust hypothesis**: Sexual disgust is hypothesized to repel from costly mates or sexual situations (Tybur et al., 2009). Researchers hypothesize a continuum of sexual motivation, with sexual desire – or lust – being the opposite of sexual disgust (Lieberman & Patrick, 2018)

Chapter 13 — Mate Retention

Authors: Jitka Lindová

Mate retention has been defined by Buss (1988) as behavior aimed at preventing a partner's infidelity or desertion. This chapter catalogs mate-retention tactics from benefit-provisioning to high-cost surveillance and coercion. Choice depends on mate-value asymmetry and perceived infidelity risk.

- **Women are well-equipped to identify a decrease of male commitment**. On the emotional level, women are more anxiously attached than men (del Giudice, 2011). On the cognitive level, women are better at identifying emotions and responding with appropriate emotions (Thompson & Voyer, 2014)
- **Main takeaways:** Tactics are adaptive and scale with threat level.

- **Taxonomy:** Low-cost (gifts, affection) to high-cost (monitoring, aggression).
- **Predictors:** Infidelity risk, mate value, and stressors increase costly tactics.

Interesting Notes

- **Polygyny reduces the costs of mate sharing for women because she won't lose his investment:** *Research shows that, especially in the case of first wives, being part of a polygynous marriage is connected with reproductive success. For the subsequent wives, on the other hand, marrying an already partnered man can represent an optimal solution in a situation when there is a lack of alternative men able and willing to provide for her and any offspring she might produce (Gibson & Mace, 2007)*
- **Coalitional mate retention recruits an ally**, typically a friend (Pham, Barbaro, & Shackelford, 2015b). Think of it as the 'sisterhood' (real-life example of sisterhood in action here)
- **Sex differences in mate retention:** men more than women submitted to their partners, debased themselves, and were violent toward their rivals (the latter tactic was used more often by men in Arabic countries as well). Women, on the other hand, punished a mate's infidelity threat more than men did (Atari et al., 2017b; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; de Miguel & Buss, 2011; Kardum et al., 2006)
- **Women derogate other women for using makeup and revealing clothes because they're threats**: *women derogate other women for using makeup, perceive them as dishonest, promiscuous, and more inclined to mate poach, feel more jealousy toward them and do not want to associate with them (Batres et al., 2018; DelPriore, Bradshaw, & Hill, 2018; Mileva, Jones, Russell, & Little, 2016). Women are also intolerant of other women who wear revealing clothing (e.g., Arnocky et al., 2019; Borau & Bonnefon, 2019; Reynolds, Baumeister, & Maner, 2018; Vaillancourt & Sharma, 2011)*

The 19 Tactics of Mate Retention

The Mate Retention Inventory (Buss, Shackelford, & McKibbin, 2008) sorts nineteen tactics into five components and two higher-order domains:

1. Intersexual manipulations, i.e., behaviors directed at one's romantic partner:
   - 1.1. direct guarding (vigilance, concealment of mate, and monopolization of mate's time)
   - 1.2. negative inducements (threatening infidelity, punishing mate's threat of infidelity, emotional manipulation, commitment manipulation, and derogation of competitors)
   - 1.3. positive inducements (resource display, sexual inducements, enhancement of physical appearance, emphasis on love and caring, and submission and debasement),
2. Intrasexual manipulations, i.e., behaviors directed at same-sex rivals:
   - 2.1. public signals of possession (verbal signals of possession, physical signals of possession and possessive ornamentation)
   - 2.2. negative inducements (derogation of competitors, intrasexual threats, and violence)

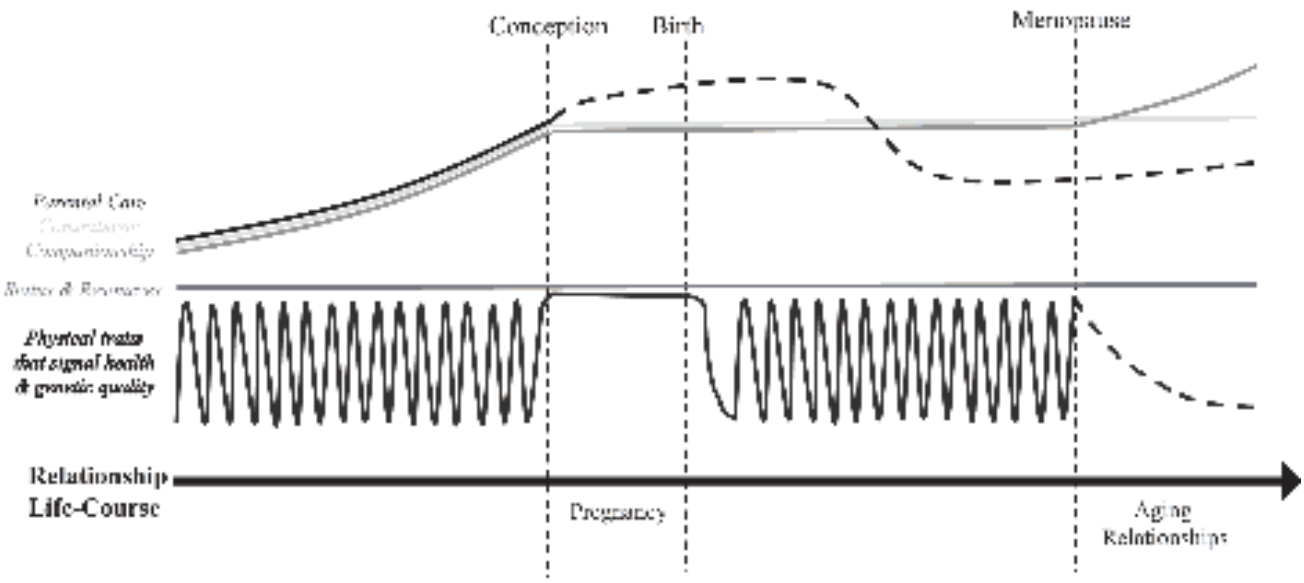
A major difference is between cost-inflicting and often associated with lower mate value women and dark triads, and benefits-providing, more associated with higher mate value women.
But the link between mate value and benefit-provisioning behaviors seems stronger in men; in women, their mate retention behaviors reflect their partner's mate value more than their own (Salkicevic et al., 2014)

Chapter 14 — Shifts in Partner Attractiveness

Authors: Juliana E. French, Sierra D. Peters, Olivia W. Breedin, Emma E. Altgelt, Andrea L. Meltzer

This chapter explains how and why partner attractiveness is re-evaluated over time, depending on needs, contexts, and dyadic changes in values.

Important drivers of change include fertility, pregnancy, parenting, aging, and hormonal contraception.



The importance women ascribe to each component of partner attractiveness, according to their functions, across the life-course of their relationship. Critical gaps in our current theoretical and empirical understanding are highlighted with dashed lines. French et al., 2022

- **Main takeaways:** Attractiveness is multidimensional and dynamically reweighted across life stages.
- **Drivers:** Fertility, contraceptive use, pregnancy, parenting, and aging transitions.
- **Research gaps:** More longitudinal research is needed.

Interesting Notes

- **Hormonal contraceptives decrease attraction for masculinity**: *women who use (versus do not use) hormonal contraceptives report lower attraction to masculine men (Little, Burriss, Petrie, Jones, & Roberts, 2013; for a review, see Alvergne & Lummaa, 2010; but also see Marcinkowska, Hahn, Little, DeBruine, & Jones, 2019) and symmetrical men (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1998; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999)*
- **Altruism trumps attractiveness for long-term**: Women demonstrate a preference for an unattractive partner high in altruism – an indicator of good character and parenting ability (Farrelly, 2013) – over an attractive partner low in altruism, but only in the context of a long-term relationship (Farrelly, Clemson, & Guthrie, 2016)

Masculinity and Indicators of Good Genes Increase Women's Faithfulness

> Women's long-term relationship outcomes (e.g., relationship satisfaction, extra-pair attention, dissolution) seem to depend on the extent to which their long-term partners possess traits signaling physical health, genetic quality, and genetic dissimilarity.
> For example, women whose partners are more (versus less) symmetrical or behaviorally masculine report increased attraction to and satisfaction with their partners near peak fertility (Gangestad, Thornhill, & Garver-Apgar, 2005; Meltzer, 2017). In a similar vein, women whose partners lack such good gene indicators report greater interest in extra-pair partners near peak fertility (e.g., Gangestad et al., 2005; Gangestad, Thornhill, & Garver-Apgar, 2010; Pillsworth & Haselton, 2006)

Chapter 15 — Emotional Commitment

Authors: Marissa A. Harrison

This chapter treats emotional commitment as an evolved mechanism that stabilizes biparental investment through

credible costly signals of future orientation.

- **Commitment provided evolutionary benefits**, or it wouldn't have evolved. Evolutionary psychologists seek to answer what those benefits are
  - Better survival of offspring
  - Cooperation / division of labor
- **Signals:** Sacrifices, public promises, and future planning.
- **Systems:** Attachment, reputation, and future orientation underpin commitment.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's question: baby cuteness, and the chicken-and-egg issue
The author states that 'baby cuteness' is an evolutionary mechanism to elicit parental emotional commitment. Cuteness is not an inherent trait—it only exists in the eyes of the beholder. So I wonder: did babies evolve traits that signal cuteness, or did parents evolve to perceive babies as cute? Probably co-evolution since both gained from it

Interesting Notes

- **Women seek pair-bonding more than men do**, and it appears to be intercultural (Buss, 1989; 2003)
- **Attractive women want a loving partner**: Women's own level of physical attraction can influence commitment. Attractive women have higher demand for a loving partner, an indication of an emotionally committed partner, and other traits most conducive to their reproductive success (i.e., good genes, investment and parenting potential). Buss and Shackelford (2008) called this mate value calibration adaptation (p. 141)
- **Love is a means to emotional commitment**, cementing the pair bond

What is a commitment?

Its first statement is already a reminder of evolution's amoral calculativeness:

> According to game theory, a commitment is a strategy to change or influence others' approaches (Schelling, 1960)

Commitment involves forsaking alternatives in exchange for reciprocity and assurance of others' behavior, thereby reducing free riding and fostering trust (Del Corral, 2015; Kurzban, McCabe, Smith, & Wilson, 2001).

Strong commitments signal reliability and clarify from whom one can expect benefits (Smith, Pedersen, Forster, McCullough, & Lieberman, 2017).

Why commitment? Because cooperation is good for long-term

> "Two parties who can count on reciprocity exchanges that transcend opportunities for short-term gain by cheating or defection will have an advantage over individuals who cannot establish this type of relationship" (Neese, 1990)

Humans gain many advantages by sacrificing short-term for long-term via pair-bonds, not the least of which is biparental care of offspring (Fisher, 1992).

Chapter 16 — Female Sexual Jealousy

Authors: Jaroslava Varella Valentova, Marco A. Correa Varella, Andrea Lorena da Costa Stravogiannis, Ana Maria Fernandez, Tamsin Saxton

This chapter analyzes sexual jealousy as an evolved system to prevent infidelity and resource diversion. It details affective, cognitive, and behavioral components.

- **Main takeaways:** Jealousy motivates detection and retention responses; shaped by individual and cultural factors.
- **Variation:** Attachment styles, ecology, and cultural scripts shape expression.

Interesting Notes

- **Jealousy matches the threat**: the bigger the threat, the more we can expect jealousy. Especially when a rival exceeds the qualities of the person
- **Higher jealousy when the partner is higher value**: *Individuals with a partner of higher mate value than themselves are susceptible to insecurity and hypervigilance, which increases jealousy and mate guarding (Redlick, 2016)*
- Some studies show women are more jealous than men, Although men report higher sexual than
- emotional jealousy, women show higher emotional, overall, reactive, and virtual jealousy than men (Buunk & Fernandez, 2020; Southard & Abel, 2010; Valentova et al., 2020). It might apply to populations where children depend on biparental care, and women depend economically more on men (cf. Schmitt, 2005)
- Higher neuroticism, social anxiety, & lower self-estee = higher jealousy (Buunk, 1997; Khanchandani & Durham, 2009)
- **Jealousy is considered proof of love** in many cultures (Sheets, Fredendall, & Claypool, 1997)
- **Father absence increases anxious and preventive jealousy** compared with women who grew up with their father (van Brummen-Girigori, Buunk, Dijkstra, & Girigori, 2016)
- ⍰ **Excessive jealousy can be a red flag**: *jealousy in women can thus be a manifestation of proper self-value and self-esteem, which can be influenced by many factors, such as previous relationship experience but also stress that each society gives to pair-bond, procreation, and intrasexual competition (Bhugra, 1993; Hupka, 1981).*

Chapter 17 — On Attachment and Evolution

Authors: William L. Dunlop, Majse Lind

This chapter retells attachment theory through evolution: infant proximity systems evolved for caregiver investment and were repurposed to sustain adult pair bonds.

- **Main takeaways:** Attachment styles are developmental calibrations linked to mating strategies and life history strategies (Del Giudice, 2009, 2011).
- **Developmental logic:** Harsh childhoods bias toward insecure attachment and faster life histories.
- **Avoidance is considered a "male-biased" strategy** as it is associated with reduced parental investment
- **Anxiety is hypothesized to be adaptive for women** under conditions of moderate environmental stress, whereas highly stressful and dangerous conditions would prompt avoidance and reduced parental investment in both sexes"

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's suggestion**: Consider cutting the history and explanation of attachment theory. I felt it could have been briefer on a book focused on female sexual adaptations.

Chapter 18 — Maternal Filicide

Authors: Vibeke Ottesen

This chapter treats maternal filicide as a rare, tragic, but potentially adaptive calculation.

> the evolutionary consequence of the fact that ancestral women would have to make exceedingly high investments to successfully rear the children in their care is that women inevitably evolved to be discriminative with regard to regulating whether and how much investment is made in any given child.

> From an evolutionary perspective, to study maternal filicide is to study discriminative maternal investment in its most extreme form

- **Main takeaways:** Filicide arises under extreme stress, deprivation, or illness and requires prevention efforts.
- **Preventing unplanned and unwanted pregnancies reduces filicides** by reducing the number of women who may experience reproductive conflicts with their neonates

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Makeup Sex: A Tactic to Keep Partners In Toxic Relationships

From Crosby, chapter 12:

> **when women face a mate retention problem, they may experience increases in sexual desire; engaging in sex in response to potential threats may facilitate partner retention.**

The author is clear that it's only speculation for now, but with some initial preliminary support:

> Though there is no research directly examining this hypothesis, there is preliminary evidence that provides insight into this as a possibility.

They list as supporting evidence:

> For example, relationship duration is associated with higher levels of sexual satisfaction such that the longer a couple is together, the more sexually satisfied they are (Heiman, Long, Smith, Fisher, Sand, & Rosen, 2011).
> This effect exists despite reported declines in sexual desire over the course of a relationship, suggesting that when couples do engage in sex, they are more satisfied.
> In turn, higher levels of sexual satisfaction are related to greater commitment (e.g., Sprecher, 2002).

It seems to me that even stronger evidence comes from real-world observation.

The most 'troublesome' partners, both women and men, seem to follow a cycle of fight/love.
And women may resort more than men to makeup sex for the differential value that sex and bonding have for each sex.

I've noticed this pattern from anxiously attached women (see 'anxious-avoidant trap' for the dynamics),
and borderline personality disorder, for example.
And both types make for poor quality and emotionally draining relationships.

This may go together with female emotional and behavioral control tactics that women may have evolved to control relationships and secure provisioning (linked is our take on it).

Self-Made Men Are Higher Value

> However, the desirability of this wealth is largely rooted in men's capability of earning money themselves instead of through inheritance or illicit means, with women finding men's industriousness a priority in their

> criteria to select a long-term mate (Buss, 1989; Jonason, Li, & Madson, 2012).

Extra-pair Sex Is Evolved And Adaptive

From chapter 3 by Marissa A. Harrison:

> Since our brains process information in a manner to facilitate adaptive behavior (Cosmides & Tooby, 1987), it seems that selection favored at least some degree of extra-pair sex (Andrews et al., 2008)

Relationships: A Contract of Sexual Exclusivity For Provision?

From chapter 13 by Lindová:

> granting sexual exclusivity to a man can be exchanged for other valuable resources, such as food or protection (Ellis, 1998; Lovejoy, 2009) provided to a woman, her offspring, and/or her family, while demanding sexual exclusivity from a man would decrease the risk that he will divert investment from her in the future

I believe that this is indeed a tacit but foundational barter in monogamous and committed relationships.

Women's Dream Is Turning A Player Into A Husband

From Harrison in chapter 15:

> Further, as shown by Cox and Fisher (2009) and Fisher and Cox (2010), women worldwide read billions of books, i.e., romance novels, where the predominant story is one of transforming a "cad" into a "dad." These stories follow particular patterns of female–male romantic commitment and of becoming a mother to the offspring of a wealthy male progenitor.

QUOTES

On the inherent challenges of human mating systems, and the challenges of monogamy:

> In an ideal world, women would prefer a marriage partner who has it all – that is, a partner who is (a) physically attractive, (b) committed to the relationship, and (c) willing and able to invest resources. However, such men (…) are likely few and far between and thus most women are unable to attract and – more importantly – retain such a long-term partner

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Avoid Inflating the Case for Nonpaternity

In chapter 3 the author takes the *highest* Western reported rate of extra-pair paternity (about 6% in low-income urban families: Larmuseau et al., 2019), scales it up to Belgium's population, arriving at half a million misattributed children.

Then the final number is compared to whole countries.

This feels a dramatization and I think the whole point of a good analysis is to focus on the *percentage* rather than inflating smaller rates into impressive raw numbers.

It also feels dramatizing when it says (and similarly restated in chapter 15):

> ‘Even today’s most sophisticated DNA tests are not guaranteed to provide accurate results, as laboratories can make mistakes and parties involved can lie about genetic samples.

Sure, nothing is *guaranteed*, but… how often do labs make mistakes?
And when they do, it’s rarely a false positive — most mistakes are false negatives that get corrected with a second test when the alarm bells go off.

And let’s be real: if paternity is in doubt, he won’t send the wife to confirm he’s the dad :)

Suggestion: cut history of attachment & myths of oral sex

They’re tangential to female adaptations.
The ‘myths of oral sex’ doesn’t seem befitting to a handbook—the note that it doesn’t imply loss of vaginal vrginity adds no scholarly value for an academic readership. I suggest cutting the whole section

Suggestion: focus on women only

Just like we said for Volume 2 on male adaptations, this Volume 3 is supposed to be about *female* adaptations.

I felt there is too much talk about ‘people’, ‘partners’, ‘fathers’, male mate guarding, and ‘men’. This should be about *girlfriends*, *mothers*, and *women*.

Remove ungendered and men’s point of view: focus on women.

REVIEW

The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Sexual Psychology – Female Adaptations caps the Cambridge series on evolutionary sexual psychology (general overview is vol. 1, and male adaptations is vol. 2)

There is a fourth volume on animals and open questions, but I’ll hold off on that since we focus more on humans here.

Overall, it’s a great text, just like the previous two volumes. I still recommend sticking closely to the main topic of female adaptations: cut all discussions about men and move them to the second volume (and vice versa). Doing so would make an already excellent series even stronger and more coherent.

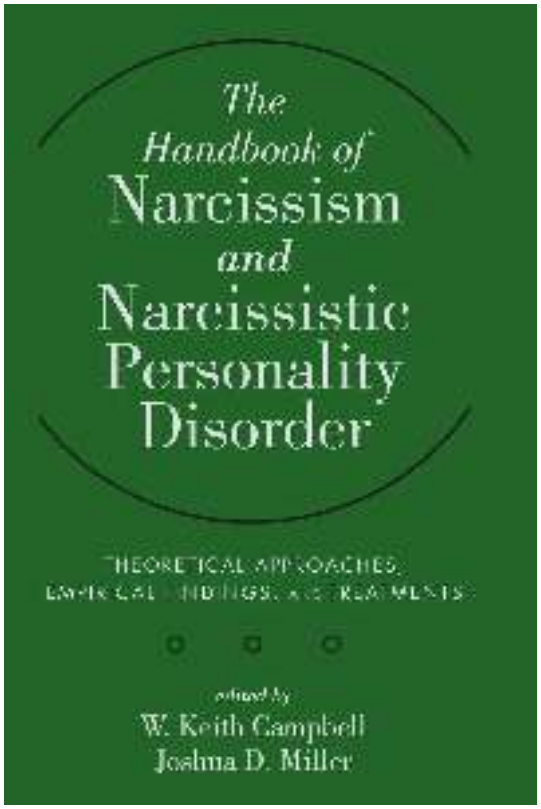
But overall, thumbs up.
I learned something new once again and could also improve a few articles. Thankful to the authors and look forward to reading more from them again.

Get this book on Amazon or check the **best evolutionary psychology books**.

The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 October 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings, and Treatments (2011) is a comprehensive academic reference edited by Campbell and Miller. It reviews theoretical models, empirical findings, and treatment approaches to narcissism, making it one of the most cited and authoritative works on the subject.



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FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
The handbook is an edited volume, with individual chapters contributed by various leading scholars and experts in narcissism and personality disorders.
The two editors are:

W. Keith Campbell, Ph.D. – Professor of Psychology at the University of Georgia, widely recognized for his research on narcissism, personality, and cultural change. Author of *The Narcissism Epidemic* and other influential works.

Joshua D. Miller, Ph.D. – Professor of Psychology at the University of Georgia, specializing in personality assessment, narcissism, and clinical psychology. Known for his empirical research on personality disorders and their measurement.

⍰⍰♂ Note: we moved and nested some chapters to improve reading experience and flow.

Chapter 1, 2, 3: History, DSM, Psychiatric Classifications

Authors: Kenneth N. Levy, William D. Ellison, Joseph S. Reynoso

The concept of narcissism evolved from ancient myth to a recognized psychiatric diagnosis.
Across the 20th century, narcissism shifted from myth and metaphor to clinical construct, with contributions from psychoanalysis, social psychology, and psychiatry.

- **Mythic origins:** The story of Narcissus introduced themes of self-love, fragility, and despair, which later

influenced psychoanalytic views (Hamilton, 1942; Ovid, 8 C.E.).

- **Psychoanalytic development:** Freud conceptualized narcissism as both normal (developmental) and pathological (defensive withdrawal, inflated self). Rank, Horney, Winnicott, and Kernberg elaborated on its defensive and relational functions.
- **From personality style to disorder:** Clinicians such as Wälder, Reich, and Kernberg described narcissism as a personality type marked by grandiosity, lack of empathy, and aggression. Kohut reframed it as a developmental failure of healthy self-integration.
- **Cultural expansion:** From Lasch's "culture of narcissism" to Twenge & Campbell's "narcissism epidemic," the construct has been used to describe both individuals and society (Lasch, 1979; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Chapter 2: Narcissism in the DSM

Authors: Elizabeth K. Reynolds, Carl W. Lejuez

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) became an official diagnosis in DSM-III (1980).
Its evolution across DSM editions reflects ongoing negotiations between clinical theory and empirical research. Earlier versions emphasized observable grandiosity, while later revisions streamlined criteria but downplayed vulnerability and dynamic shifts. DSM-5 proposed a hybrid dimensional model, integrating personality functioning and traits, to capture narcissism more flexibly.

- **DSM-III (1980):** First official inclusion of NPD, influenced by Kernberg, Kohut, Millon, and empirical trait research.
- **DSM-III-R and DSM-IV:** Narrowed to overt grandiosity, reducing recognition of vulnerable forms.
- **DSM-5 proposals:** Move toward dimensional assessment, aiming to capture narcissistic functioning beyond rigid categories.
  Current conceptions of DSM-5 do not include NPD among the five major personality disorder types.

Chapter 3: Narcissism in Official Psychiatric Classification Systems

Authors: Susan South, Nicholas Eaton, Robert Krueger

This chapter situates NPD in the broader landscape of psychiatric classification. While DSM traditionally emphasized categorical diagnosis, narcissism is increasingly viewed as dimensional — existing along a spectrum of severity.
The challenge is to integrate clinical richness (grandiosity, vulnerability, oscillations) into empirically valid diagnostic systems.

- **Dimensional approach:** Narcissism may be better understood as variation across traits rather than a binary disorder.
- **Future direction:** Hybrid models combining categorical clarity with dimensional nuance.

Chapter 4: Narcissistic Grandiosity and Narcissistic Vulnerability

Authors: Aaron L. Pincus, Michael J. Roche

Narcissism is not a single phenomenon but a dual expression: grandiosity and vulnerability. Grandiosity involves arrogance, dominance, and entitlement, while vulnerability manifests as hypersensitivity, insecurity, and withdrawal.
Both forms share self-absorption and fragile self-esteem regulation, but they differ in outward style. Research supports treating them as distinct yet related dimensions of dysfunction.

- **There is no gold standard definition**: *there is no gold standard as to the meaning of narcissism and thus whether it is clinically described or empirically measured*

  - Diverse conceptualizations include Nature (normal, pathological), Phenotypic Description (grandiosity, vulnerability), Expressive Modality (overt, covert), and Structure (category, dimension, prototype).
- **Phenotypic description:**
  - Grandiose narcissists appear confident and demanding;
  - Vulnerable narcissists appear defensive, anxious, and sensitive to criticism.
- **DSM limits:** Diagnostic manuals have traditionally emphasized grandiosity, underrepresenting vulnerability.
- **Oscillations between grandiose and vulnerable**: *Although the clinical literature often employs typological distinctions, many contemporary clinical experts on narcissism now recognize that grandiose self-states oscillate with vulnerable self-states and affective dysregulation within the same person.*
  - Classifications are of relative levels: *narcissistic patients are best differentiated from each other based on relative levels of grandiosity and vulnerability rather than categorical classifications (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010).*
- **Clinical recommendation:** Understanding both forms is crucial for treatment, as patients often shift between grandiosity and vulnerability.

I found the authors' definitions to be good:

> We propose that narcissism be defined as one's capacity to maintain a relatively positive self-image through a variety of self-regulation, affect-regulation, and interpersonal processes, and it underlies individuals' needs for validation and admiration, as well as the motivation to overtly and covertly seek out self-enhancement experiences from the social environment (Pincus et al., 2009).

And about pathological narcissism:

> From our perspective, the fundamental dysfunction associated with pathological narcissism is related to intense needs for validation and admiration that energize the person to seek out self-enhancement experiences. Such needs and motives are normal aspects of personality, but they become pathological when they are extreme and coupled with impaired regulatory capacities.
> (…) in the ability to manage and satisfy needs for validation and admiration, such that self-enhancement becomes an overriding goal (…) sought in maladaptive ways and in inappropriate contexts.

Chapter 5: Psychoanalytic Theories on Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality

Authors: Elsa Ronningstam

Psychoanalytic theories shaped early conceptualizations of narcissism.
Contemporary psychoanalysis frames narcissism as a failure in self-structure and relationships, driven by unresolved trauma, self-esteem dysregulation, and defensive grandiosity.

- **Freud:** Saw narcissism as a universal stage of development, but also pathological when excessive, tied to ego ideals and defense against feelings of insignificance (Freud, 1914/1957).
- **Kernberg:** Conceptualized narcissism as pathological grandiosity rooted in cold, rejecting parenting, leading to compensatory grandiose self-images.
- **Kohut:** Emphasized developmental failure of the "grandiose self" when parental idealization fails, producing dependency on others for self-esteem regulation.
- **Other contributions:** Horney stressed self-inflation without genuine self-love; Winnicott focused on the false self; Reich and others highlighted oscillations between grandiosity and despair.
- **Clinical implication:** Therapy approaches use empathic confrontation, helping patients integrate fragmented

self-states and reduce defensive reliance on grandiosity.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Not a big proponent of non-empirical theories**

Lucio:
Although some psychoanalytic insights into narcissism were sharp — even ahead of their time — the approach as a whole suffers from a lack of rigorous empirical testing.

Without evidence, many ideas remain speculative at best, and some have even been contradicted by later research.

To stay relevant today, psychoanalysis should discard what cannot be tested, update or abandon what evidence disproves, and ground itself in empirically supported theories while framing the rest as hypotheses to be tested.

Chapter 6: Narcissism from the Perspective of the Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing Model

Authors: Carolyn C. Morf, Eva Schürch, Loredana Torchetti

The dynamic self-regulatory processing model presents a unifying framework for the analysis of the self-regulation processing dynamics that characterize not just narcissism, but diverse personality types.

Narcissists strive to maintain a grandiose self-image by seeking validation, reacting defensively to threats, and amplifying their sense of superiority. Rather than being stable traits, narcissistic behaviors are strategic responses to protect self-esteem in real time.

The authors claim that from the 2001 Psychological Inquiry target article by Morf and Rhodewalt, research on has yielded extensive empirical support for the self-regulatory dynamics proposed by the model.

> A key feature of the narcissistic system seems to be the conjoint striving for grandiosity at overt explicit levels juxtaposed with a much more concealed implicit vulnerability, which leads them to be highly vigilant to opportunities to bolstering the self, but simultaneously also highly sensitive to potential threats.

- **Dynamic cycle:** Narcissists pursue admiration, react with hostility or withdrawal to criticism, and reinforce grandiose self-concepts through feedback loops.
- **Self-regulation strategies:** Attention-seeking, charm, aggression, and withdrawal are used flexibly depending on the context.
- **Heuristic utility:** Explains how narcissism can look adaptive (confidence, leadership) yet lead to dysfunction when validation is lacking.
- **Future directions:** Research should track how narcissists shift between grandiosity and vulnerability across social interactions.

Tactics to maintain high self-regard

The authors list a set of tactics that seem to be a mix of potentially adaptive, and some with larger social costs and potentially toxic to others:

- **Disparaging outperformers**: To diffuse negative social comparison, narcissists openly disparage an outperforming other—even directly to their face (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993; South, Oltmanns, & Turkheimer, 2003).
- **Hostility and aggression under threat** of negative evaluation or rejection, including toward displaced aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman et al., 2009; Penney & Spector, 2002; Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2003).
- **Unforgiving and vengeful**: Narcissists frequently perceive interpersonal transgressions, and in response, they tend to be unforgiving and vengeful (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Mooney, 2003; Brown, 2004; Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004).
- **Low accommodation in conflicts**: In the face of romantic conflicts, narcissists report less accommodative behavior—that is, fewer constructive reactions to potentially negative partner behavior (Campbell & Foster, 2002).
- **Psychological control as parents**: When children fail to meet expectations, narcissistic mothers often react by inducing guilt and exerting psychological control through hostility, intrusiveness, and withdrawal of love (Schürch & Morf, 2010).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: integrating vulnerable and grandiose narcissism may be a weakness
Hansen Brown in *The Handbook of Trait Narcissism* notes that the dynamic self-regulatory processing model conceptualizes narcissism as both grandiose and vulnerable simultaneously rather than as two separate subtypes. I also felt this was a possible weakness

Great First Impressions, Poor Long-Term Relationships

At first encounter, narcissists often make a strikingly positive impression.
They come across as charming, attractive, humorous, and confident, and others see them as agreeable, competent, and leadership material (Paulhus, 1998; Oltmanns, Friedman, Fiedler, & Turkheimer, 2004; Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Brunnell et al., 2008; Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006).

Yet this favorable impression tends not to last.
With more exposure, others begin to view narcissists as arrogant, hostile, and boastful (Paulhus, 1998). Supervisors, unlike co-workers, are quick to note their poor leadership quality and deviant workplace behavior (Judge et al., 2006).
The same pattern emerges in close relationships. Romantic partners often find the start of a relationship with a narcissist more exciting than average, but satisfaction declines as intimacy and emotional bonding fail to develop (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2003, as cited in Campbell et al., 2006). Over time, partners report feeling deceived, manipulated, and undervalued by the narcissist (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Torchetti & Morf, 2010).

However, and some studies do not find negative relationship satisfaction in their partners (Sedikides et al., 2004). The authors suggest it's because narcissists tend to date other narcissists, and because when partners elicited communal thoughts and feelings, narcissists' low commitment was no longer apparent (Finkel, Campbell, Buffardi, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009).

 It's a pattern of **early attraction followed by eventual disappointment**: narcissists shine in first impressions but lose their appeal as deeper flaws surface.

Chapter 7: Trait Personality Models of NPD, Grandiose Narcissism, and Vulnerable Narcissism

Authors: Joshua D. Miller, Jessica Maples

Narcissism can be understood through the lens of trait personality models, especially the Five-Factor Model (FFM). Grandiose narcissism aligns with high extraversion, dominance, and low agreeableness, whereas vulnerable narcissism aligns with high neuroticism, low extraversion, and hypersensitivity.
Viewing NPD dimensionally helps capture individual differences and overlap with broader personality traits.

> Ultimately, Paulhus' (2001) description of grandiose narcissists as "disagreeable extraverts" seems quite accurate.

- **Grandiose narcissism:** Assertive, dominant, extraverted, socially bold, but antagonistic.
- **Vulnerable narcissism:** Withdrawn, insecure, emotionally unstable, hypersensitive to rejection.
- **Trait narcissism's measurements align with grandiose:** *The vast majority of empirical research on trait narcissism has used the NPI, which measures a grandiose variant of narcissism*
- **Trait integration:** Both types share antagonism (low agreeableness), which may be the core feature of narcissism.
- **Trait narcissism vs NPD**: trait narcissism is considered a dimensional personality trait that exists to varying degrees in all individuals

FFM Trait / Facet	Grandiose Narcissism	Vulnerable Narcissism	NPD Expert Ratings
Neuroticism	.09	–.17	.58
Anxiety	.02	–.25	.41
Angry Hostility	.23	.14	.45
Depression	.03	–.26	.57
Self-consciousness	–.03	–.36	.54
Impulsiveness	.14	.04	.30
Vulnerability	–.01	–.30	.45
Extraversion	.12	.39 (.33/.43)	–.27
Warmth	–.07	.05	–.24
Gregariousness	.04	.17	–.17
Assertiveness	.19	.53	–.25
Activity	.09	.33	–.13
Excitement Seeking	.16	.28	–.02
Positive Emotions	–.02	.13	–.24
Openness	.08	.17	–.07

FFM Trait / Facet	Grandiose Narcissism	Vulnerable Narcissism	NPD Expert Ratings
Fantasy	.11	.06	.09
Aesthetics	.04	.03	.04
Feelings	.05	.08	.11
Actions	.04	.11	–.16
Ideas	.07	.15	–.03
Values	–.01	–.01	–.02
Agreeableness	–.34	–.28 (–.39/–.18)	–.35
Trust	–.20	–.09	–.38
Straightforwardness	–.31	–.41	–.18
Altruism	–.20	–.13	–.18
Compliance	–.26	–.36	–.18
Modesty	–.37	–.60	–.10
Tender-mindedness	–.17	–.24	–.10
Conscientiousness	–.08	.08	–.16
Competence	.01	.23	–.19
Order	–.03	.05	–.03
Dutifulness	–.10	.03	–.15
Achievement Striving	.02	.27	–.12
Self-discipline	–.09	.17	–.28
Deliberation	–.13	–.11	–.09
N (Sample Size)	3751 (domains) 3207 (facets)	8100 (domains) 1090 (facets)	1002 (domains) 599 (facets)

Note: FFM and NPD: Domains (weighted average from Samuel & Widiger's, 2008, and Saulsman & Page's, 2004, meta analyses; facet level effect sizes were taken from Samuel & Widiger's, 2008, meta-analysis). FFM facets and Vulnerable Narcissism: Relations come from Miller, Dir, et al. (in press) and Miller, Hoffman et al. (2010). In parentheses, first number represents meta-analytic effect sizes from measures of the FFM (NEO PI- R; NEO-FFI). The second number represents meta-analytic effect sizes from non-FFM measures, primarily the Big Five Inventory (John, 1991).

The Big 5 Underestimate Narcissism's Downsides

NPI measures of grandiose narcissism often appear adaptive because they correlate with high self-esteem, well-being, and low psychological distress (Cain et al., 2008; Trull & McCrae, 2002; Bosson et al., 2008; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004), but they miss key pathological features.

The Big Five framework emphasizes high Extraversion and low Neuroticism while underestimating low Agreeableness because it doesn't capture deceitfulness, callousness, and immodesty—core interpersonal and externalizing traits of narcissism (Miller, Campbell, et al., 2009).

Same as for psychopathy, the authors also caution to not equate low distress with psychological health, as seen in prototypical psychopathy (Cleckley, 1941; Miller, Lynam, Widiger, & Leukefeld, 2001).

Vulnerable Narcissism Is Closer to Borderline Personality Disorder

Research suggests that **vulnerable narcissism is largely distinct** from grandiose narcissism and NPD.

From a Five-Factor Model perspective, it presents high negative emotionality—depression, anxiety, hypersensitivity, stress, anger, and self-consciousness—and low interpersonal trust rather than grandiosity or dominance.
Vulnerable narcissists often display a **hostile attribution bias**, interpreting others' actions as malevolent, leading to problematic interpersonal behaviors (Miller, Dir, et al., 2010; Dodge, Price, Bachorowski, & Newman, 1990; Miller, Lynam, & Jones, 2008). Etiological factors such as abuse or harsh discipline are linked to these tendencies (Dodge, Pettit, Bates, & Valente, 1995).

Trait profiles of vulnerable narcissism closely resemble **Borderline Personality Disorder** rather than NPD or grandiose narcissism (r = .93; Miller, Dir, et al., 2010) and align more with expert FFM profiles for Borderline PD (r = .71) than for NPD (r = .06).

Chapter 8: Narcissism, the Agency Model, and Approach-Avoidance Motivation

Authors: Joshua D. Foster, James C. Brennan

The agency model highlights how narcissists are driven by approach-oriented motives: pursuing rewards, recognition, and dominance.
Narcissists rarely focus on avoidance (preventing harm) but instead on achieving visibility and success. This bias explains their bold risk-taking in areas like finance, relationships, and leadership, though it also exposes them to failures and social costs.

- **Agency model:** Narcissists orient their lives around personal agency — achievement, control, power, and recognition.
- **Approach-avoidance balance:** Narcissists strongly favor approach motivation, leading to overconfidence and risky decisions.
- **Narcissism may precipitate financial crisis**: anecdotal evidence suggesting that investor narcissism and overconfidence may have fueled some of the risky financial decisions that contributed to the recent collapse of the world economy (Cohan, 2009; Gladwell, 2009).
- **Application:** In financial choices, narcissists pursue high-reward opportunities while neglecting potential losses.
- **Implication:** This approach orientation explains both the charisma and recklessness associated with narcissism.

Chapter 9: Behind the Mask

Authors: Virgil Zeigler-Hill, Christian H. Jordan

This chapter explores the "mask model" of narcissism, which proposes that narcissists' overt confidence conceals fragile self-esteem. The model suggests a discrepancy between explicit (conscious) self-esteem, which is high, and implicit (unconscious) self-esteem, which may be low or unstable. However, empirical evidence is mixed: some studies support the fragile high self-esteem view, others find narcissists report genuinely high implicit self-regard.

- **Mask model:** Overt grandiosity hides insecurity, shame, or low implicit self-esteem.
- **Mixed empirical findings:** Some research supports fragile self-esteem; other studies suggest narcissists' implicit self-esteem can be as high as explicit self-esteem.
- **Fragile high self-esteem:** Narcissists' confidence collapses when challenged, fueling defensiveness or aggression.
- **Conclusion:** The link between narcissism and implicit self-esteem is inconsistent, suggesting subtypes or contextual effects.

Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13: Assessments and Measurement of NPD

Authors: Chris Watson, R. Michael Bagby

Assessing NPD is challenging because narcissism exists on a spectrum from normal to pathological. Traditional categorical diagnosis often misses nuances. Dimensional approaches, structured interviews, and self-report measures improve reliability. Assessment should capture both grandiosity and vulnerability as well as interpersonal dysfunction.

- **Dimensional vs. categorical:** Dimensional assessment better reflects narcissistic traits across severity levels.
- **Structured interviews:** Tools like SCID-II provide standardized NPD diagnoses.
- **Self-report:** Measures such as the Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire highlight narcissistic traits but risk self-presentation bias.
- **Future direction:** Combine self-reports with informant ratings for more accurate assessment.

Chapter 11: The Measurement of Trait Narcissism in Social-Personality Research

Authors: Michael Tamborski, Ryan P. Brown

Trait narcissism is usually measured with self-report scales, the most widely known being the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). Other measures capture vulnerable narcissism, pathological forms, or domain-specific expressions. Researchers debate whether narcissism is one construct or a family of related but distinct tendencies.

- **NPI:** Captures grandiose traits like exhibitionism, dominance, and entitlement.
- **Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI)** captures both grandiosity and vulnerability.
- **Choice of measure influences findings**, since different scales tap different narcissistic expressions.

Chapter 12: Of Tails and their Dogs

Authors: Simine Vazire, Laura Naumann, Joey T. Cheng, Jason P. Martens

This chapter critiques narcissism scales, arguing that measures can shape theories rather than reflect reality — the "tail wagging the dog." Researchers must ensure scales measure narcissism itself rather than assumptions embedded in item wording.

Chapter 13: Addressing Criticisms of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI)

Authors: Richard W. Robins, Laura Naumann

The NPI is the most used narcissism measure but also the most criticized. Critics argue it conflates healthy self-confidence with pathology. Defenders emphasize its predictive power for real-world outcomes. The chapter concludes that the NPI is valuable but incomplete.

- **Validity questions:** Debate over whether the NPI measures narcissism or simply extraversion + self-esteem.
- **Support:** NPI predicts leadership, risk-taking, and interpersonal dominance, consistent with narcissism theory.
- **Conclusion:** NPI remains useful, but complementary measures are needed to capture vulnerability.

Chapter 14, 15: Sociodemographic Correlates of NPD

Authors: Attila J. Pulay, Risë B. Goldstein, Bridget F. Grant

Large epidemiological surveys reveal that NPD is more prevalent in younger adults, men, and certain sociodemographic groups. Prevalence is lower among older adults, suggesting either remission or cohort differences. Findings highlight the social context of narcissistic expression.

- **Prevalence:** NPD affects roughly 1–6% of the population, depending on definitions.
- **Age:** Higher in younger adults; decreases with age.
- **Gender**: More common in **men** than women.

Chapter 14: Assessment of Youth Narcissism

Authors: Christopher T. Barry, Lisa L. Ansel

Studying narcissism in youth is complex, as traits shift with development. Early self-focus may be normal, but extreme entitlement, lack of empathy, and aggression can signal emerging narcissism. Reliable youth measures are needed to track risks without pathologizing normal development.

- **Risk of over-pathologizing** normal adolescent self-focus.

Chapter 16: Parenting as a Cause of Narcissism

Authors: Robert S. Horton

Parenting practices contribute significantly to narcissism development. Clinical theories propose two routes: overindulgence (teaching a child they are special without limits) and rejection (driving the child to compensate with grandiosity). Empirical research supports both, though effects vary by child temperament.

- **Overindulgence hypothesis:** Excessive praise fosters entitlement and unrealistic self-views.
- **Rejection hypothesis:** Cold or inconsistent parenting leads to defensive grandiosity to protect fragile self-worth.
- **Conclusion:** Both indulgence and neglect can cultivate narcissism, depending on context.

Chapter 17: Examining "Developmental Me"

Authors: Patrick L. Hill, Brent W. Roberts

Narcissism develops across the lifespan, peaking in adolescence and early adulthood when identity and status-seeking are central. It tends to decline with age as individuals invest in long-term roles (career, family).
This trajectory aligns with social investment theory: commitments to stable roles reduce narcissistic traits.

- **Childhood:** Self-focus is common but usually transitory.
- **Adolescence:** Narcissism peaks, especially in status-seeking and self-promotion.
- **Adulthood:** Narcissism declines as individuals invest in social roles and responsibilities.
- **Social investment theory**: roles (family, career) reduces narcissistic self-focus.

Chapter 18: Narcissism and Culture

Authors: Jean M. Twenge

Cultural forces contribute to shaping narcissism in individuals and societies.
Societies that emphasize individualism, materialism, and self-expression tend to foster higher narcissism. Cross-cultural studies show variations, and generational analyses suggest increases in narcissism among younger cohorts in the U.S. and other Western countries.

- **Both genes and culture matter**: Like many personality traits, narcissism appears to have a large genetic component (Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008).
- **Cultural products:** Media, advertising, and celebrity culture reinforce self-focus.
- **Individualistic vs collectivist cultures:** Individualistic cultures show higher narcissism than collectivist ones.
- **Generational rise:** Evidence suggests narcissism has increased among U.S. college students since the 1980s (Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Individualistic Cultures Have Upsides

An insightful point from the authors I also agree with:

> Individualistic cultures have enormous upsides, among them less prejudice and greater opportunities for people regardless of their backgrounds. Once a culture becomes so individualistic that it is narcissistic, however, negative outcomes are likely to follow.
> A society of narcissistic individuals might seem sexy and fun in the short term, but in the long term society breaks down

Chapter 19: The Evolution of Narcissism and Short-Term Mating

Authors: Nicholas S. Holtzman, Michael J. Strube

This chapter applies evolutionary psychology: narcissism may be adaptive for short-term mating strategies. Traits like charm, boldness, and exploitation facilitate sexual opportunities but hinder long-term bonds. Narcissism thus persists as a mixed reproductive strategy.

- **Empirical evidence:** Narcissists report more short-term relationships, higher mating success in the short run.
- **Evolutionary logic:** Grandiose self-presentation attracts mates but undermines stability.
- **Prediction:** Narcissism should correlate with sexual opportunism, infidelity, and risk-taking.

Read more:

- Love role in dating
- Short-term mating psychology

Status-Enhancing Strategy

> narcissists tend to engage in numerous competitive behaviors that could potentially be viewed as manifestations of a STM strategy.
> For example, narcissists tend to exhibit status-striving (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002), other-derogation (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993), and physical aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998a; Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Twenge & Campbell, 2003a), all of which could elevate narcissists to a top position in a social hierarchy, potentially increasing STM opportunities.

Evolved Adaptations for Short-Term Mating

The authors mention that narcissist may have evolved adaptations to facilitate successful short-term mating:

Narcissists may have different sperm qualities than non-narcissists, such as qualities that facilitate rapid fertilization following one-time intercourse.
In contrast, non-narcissists may have evolved defensive sperm, more designed to block the successful one-time insemination by male narcissists.

Male narcissists may have larger testicles for higher amounts of sperm production, to facilitate insemination.
This hypothesis can be derived from the primate literature in which it is evident that STM species tend to have larger testicles (Buss, 2007).

Also, male narcissists self-report larger penile size (Moskowitz, Rieger, & Seal, 2009); if true, this structure may help remove competitors' semen and increase insemination likelihood for one's own semen (Schmitt, 2005; Shackelford et al., 2005).

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Interesting, but still speculative**

Lucio:
I do think narcissists are more short-term oriented and that this may have an evolutionary basis. But physical adaptations remain largely speculative.

Larger studies would be needed, and for now these remain hypotheses.
The penis size link is intriguing, but it's correlational—causality could run the other way (e.g., men with larger penises may develop higher self-esteem, which then registers as narcissism on certain scales).
And as far as I know, there's no solid evidence for "sperm blocking."

Chapter 31: Narcissism and Sexuality

Authors: Laura Widman, James K. McNulty

Narcissism strongly influences sexual attitudes and behaviors. Narcissists are more likely to pursue short-term, exploitative sex, prioritize personal gratification, and engage in risky behavior.

- **Sexual attitudes:** Narcissists endorse permissive and game-playing views of sex.
- **Behaviors:** More infidelity, risky sex, and focus on performance rather than intimacy.
- **Outcome:** Narcissists report more partners but less relational satisfaction.

Chapter 20: Correlates of Narcissism and Psychopathy

Authors: Elizabeth A. Krusemark

Neuroscientific research shows that narcissism involves atypical patterns of brain activity related to reward, emotion, and self-referential processing. Overlaps exist with psychopathy, especially in reward sensitivity and reduced empathy.

- **Neuroscience of narcissism:** Greater activation in reward systems when receiving admiration.
- **Overlap with extraversion:** Similar neural correlates in approach/reward circuits.
- **Psychopathy link:** Shared deficits in empathy and heightened reward drive.

Chapter 21: Comorbidity between Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Axis I Diagnoses

Authors: Sebastian Simonsen, Erik Simonsen

NPD frequently co-occurs with Axis I disorders, complicating diagnosis and treatment. Narcissism can amplify vulnerability to mood, anxiety, substance, and eating disorders. Comorbidity worsens prognosis and requires integrated treatment approaches.

- **Schizophrenia:** Narcissistic traits complicate engagement and compliance.
- **Mood disorders:** Narcissism linked with bipolar swings and depressive episodes when grandiosity collapses.
- **Anxiety/eating/substance use:** Narcissists may use substances or control eating as self-regulation strategies.
- **Conclusion:** Comorbidity highlights the need for comprehensive, multi-diagnostic assessment.

Chapter 22: The Comorbidity of Narcissistic Personality Disorder with Other DSM-IV Personality Disorders

Authors: Thomas A. Widiger

NPD overlaps with other personality disorders, especially histrionic, antisocial, and borderline. This raises the issue of whether NPD is distinct or part of a broader antagonistic spectrum.

- **Histrionic PD:** Shared attention-seeking and superficiality.
- **Antisocial PD:** Shared exploitation and lack of empathy.
- **Borderline PD:** Shared instability and vulnerability, though narcissists externalize blame more.
- **Conclusion:** NPD is best seen as distinct but overlapping within the antagonistic and dramatic cluster.

Chapter 23: “I Love Me Some Me” (Narcissism & Self-Esteem)

Authors: Jennifer K. Bosson, Jonathan R. Weaver

This chapter examines the complex link between narcissism and self-esteem. Narcissists often report high explicit self-esteem but remain dependent on external validation.
Measures of the grandiose dimension tend to correlate positively with self-esteem, and measures of the vulnerable dimension correlate negatively or not at all with self-esteem and positively with shame-proneness.

- **High self-esteem appearance:** Narcissists score high on explicit measures.
- **Instability:** Their self-worth fluctuates strongly with feedback.
- **Conclusion:** Narcissism involves self-esteem that is elevated but fragile.

Chapter 24: Psychopathy and Narcissism

Authors: Donald Lynam

Psychopathy and narcissism overlap conceptually and empirically, especially in traits like callousness, entitlement, and exploitation. However, psychopathy includes broader antisociality and emotional deficits, whereas narcissism centers on self-image.

- **Theoretical overlap:** Both involve antagonism and lack of empathy.
- **Differences:** Psychopathy shows more impulsivity and criminality; narcissism is more image-focused.
- **FFM view:** Both share low agreeableness; psychopathy adds low conscientiousness.

Two Too-Broad Constructs For Any Significant Contributions

Narcissism and psychopathy are not unidimensional constructs but composites of more basic personality traits, which makes direct comparisons misleading.
A single correlation between them is uninformative because the overlap could stem from low agreeableness, high extraversion, low neuroticism, or some mix of these factors.

The problem is compounded by the fact that different measures capture different traits: for example, PPI Factor 1 diverges from traditional psychopathy factors, while NPD and the NPI each capture different sides of narcissism.

As a result, their observed overlap comes from different sources—NPD aligns with psychopathy mainly through low agreeableness, while the NPI's link to PPI Factor 1 comes from low neuroticism and high extraversion.

Given these discrepancies, working at the level of such broad constructs may never yield a deep understanding, making trait-level analyses more promising.

🤔 **Lucio's note**: I agree with the authors, casual comparisons between the two at their broader level reek of pop-psychology over-simplification.

Chapter 25, 26: Self-Perceptions & Self-Other Discrepancies

Authors: Erika N. Carlson, William D. Ellison, Simine Vazire

Narcissists' self-perceptions differ from how others see them.
They see themselves as charming, competent, and assertive. Others often agree at first but later view them as arrogant, selfish, and difficult. Narcissists also misjudge how they are seen, overestimating their positive impression.

- **Self-perception:** Inflated, focused on superiority.
- **Others' perception:** Initially positive, later negative as exploitation emerges.
- **Meta-perception:** Narcissists assume others admire them more than they do.
- **Narcissists know others see them as narcissist**s

Positive Impressions Fade Over Time

Initially seen as likable and competent, they are later perceived as poor performers, less agreeable, less warm, and more arrogant and hostile (Paulhus, 1998).
Research on self-enhancers—closely linked to narcissism—shows the same pattern: after a few months, acquaintances and even friends view them more negatively, describing them as condescending, manipulative, hostile, and prone to overreacting (Kwan et al., 2004; Kwan et al., 2008; Colvin et al., 1995).

Chapter 26: Self-Other Discrepancies

Authors: Thomas F. Oltmanns, Erin M. Lawton

Narcissists' views of themselves differ from peers and clinicians. They underestimate interpersonal impairment and overestimate competence. These discrepancies contribute to conflicts and poor outcomes.

- **Peer vs. self:** Others see narcissists as arrogant and difficult, unlike their own self-view.
- **Self-reported questionnaires raise concern**: The emphasis on self-report questionnaires for the assessment of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is surprising because many personality disorders involve distortions of self-perception and an inability to assess accurately one's effect on others (Oltmanns & Turkheimer, 2009).
- **Clinical view:** Interviewers detect dysfunction narcissists deny.
- **Impact:** Discrepancies fuel social impairment.

Chapter 27: Narcissistic Self-Enhancement

Authors: Harry M. Wallace

Self-enhancement is central to narcissism: exaggerating achievements, claiming superiority, and seeking admiration. These strategies can bring short-term gains but often backfire long term.

- **Strategies:** Boasting, credit-taking, self-promotion.
- **Trophy wives and husbands**: Narcissists seek romantic partners who offer self-enhancement value either as sources of fawning admiration, or as human trophies (e.g., by possessing impressive wealth or exceptional physical beauty) (Campbell, 1999; Tanchotsrinon, Maneesri, & Campbell, 2007).
- **Competing explanations:** Self-deception vs. deliberate manipulation.
- **Lower long-term competence paradox:** Self-enhancement helps in the short term but undermines long-term competence when narcissists deflect blame and lose an opportunity for self-improvement
  ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: Unfortunately this may not always mean lack of results. sometimes 'long term' is nothing but the sum of short-term boosts. If we look at Trump, he managed to reach the top despite unaddressed competence gaps

Narcissists Lack Calibration

Says the author:

Narcissists' self-enhancement prospects are also limited by the inflexibility of their approach toward attaining self-enhancement.
Behavior that elicits admiration in one context could induce the opposite response from observers in different situations, so admiration-seekers would be wise to calibrate their self-presentation to match their environment.
Narcissists apparently lack this wisdom. They employ the same unsubtle, exhibitionistic style of self-promotion regardless of the situation (Campbell et al., 2000; Collins & Stukas, 2008).
In effect, narcissists' primary technique for convincing others of their greatness involves bluntly proclaiming their greatness.

Chapter 28: Narcissistic Ego Deflates, Narcissistic Aggression Inflates

Authors: Brad J. Bushman, Sander Thomaes

Narcissism predicts aggression when ego is threatened. Grandiosity makes narcissists hypersensitive to criticism, fueling rage, hostility, and even violence when self-image collapses.

- **Self-esteem theory:** Low self-esteem does not predict aggression; threatened egotism does (Baumeister, 1997).
- **Findings:** Narcissists react aggressively to insults, rejection, or status loss.

Chapter 29: The Emotional Dynamics of Narcissism

Authors: Jessica L. Tracy, Joey T. Cheng, Jason P. Martens

Tracy and Chen, also authors of *The Psychology of Status*, explain that narcissists depend on pride to sustain self-worth but collapse into shame when criticized. Shame often fuels defensive anger and hostility.

> the narcissistic personality may be a result of the same selection pressures that led to a dominance-based hierarchical system, with narcissists best characterized as individuals whose trait profiles and early-life experiences make them prone to chronic shame and hubristic pride, and to seek dominance as an adaptive solution.

- **Shame:** Central emotion of vulnerability, often masked by grandiosity.

- **Pride:** Authentic pride (achievement-based) vs. hubristic pride (arrogance)

Trait Orientation	Negative Emotion	Positive Emotion
Self-aggrandizing (Narcissistic)	Shame	Hubristic Pride
Self-accepting (Authentic)	Guilt	Authentic Pride

Guilt Motivates Improvement & Apologies, Shame Doesn't

> Studies have found that attributing failure to unstable, specific, controllable aspects of the self promotes the negative self-conscious emotion of guilt, rather than shame (Brown & Weiner, 1984; Covington & Omelich, 1981; Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984; Niedenthal et al., 1994; Tracy & Robins, 2006).
> Guilt, in turn, promotes a wide range of positive social behaviors, ranging from apology and confession to empathy and altruism (Batson, 1987; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Furthermore, proneness to guilt is positively related to self-esteem, but generally unrelated to narcissism (Gramzow & Tangney, 1992).

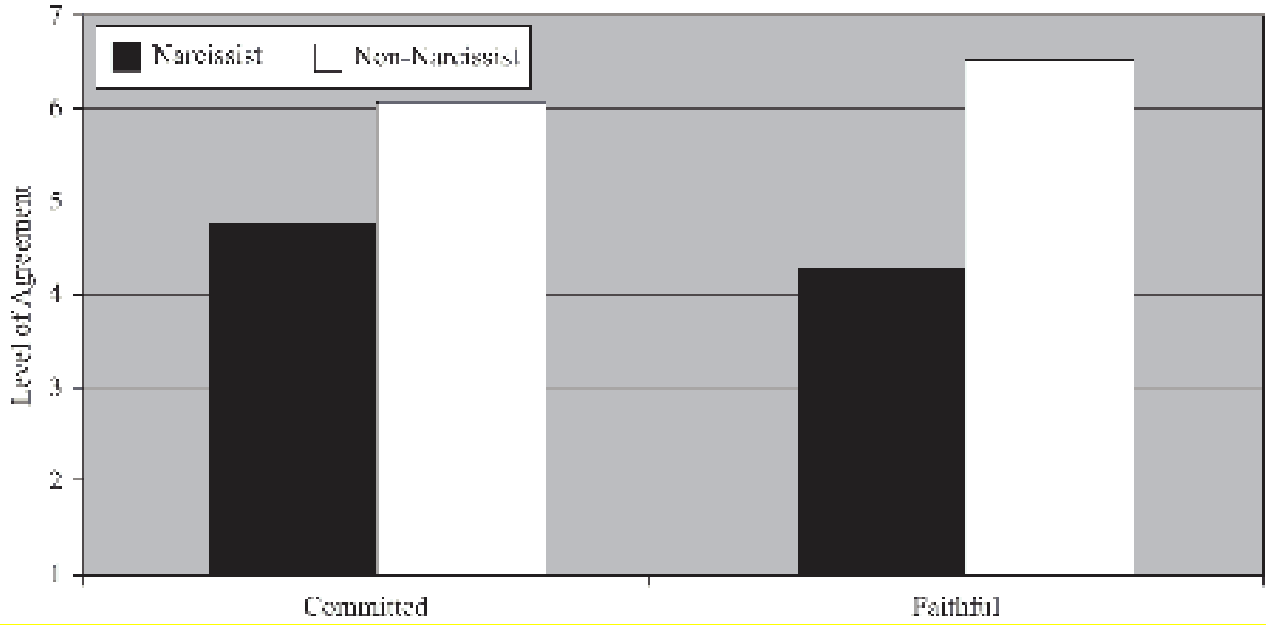
⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: gaslighters cannot own up and apologize
This is something we have noticed in our research and community as well. For example, in gaslighting dynamics and gaslighting signs we explain that some negative personalities may resort to gaslighting because they cannot own up and apologize.

Chapter 30: Narcissism and Romantic Relationships

Authors: Amy B. Brunell, W. Keith Campbell

Narcissism undermines close relationships. While initial charm attracts partners, long-term patterns of exploitation, lack of empathy, and self-focus erode intimacy.

- **Agency model:** Narcissists pursue relationships for status and self-image reinforcement.
- **Contextual reinforcement model:** Partners reinforce narcissists' self-focus by admiring their charm.
- **Chocolate cake model:** Relationships start sweet and appealing but end bitter and destructive. People reported that narcissists used them and played games with them
- **Can narcissists change?** Evidence suggests low motivation to change, but some improvement is possible with awareness and effort.

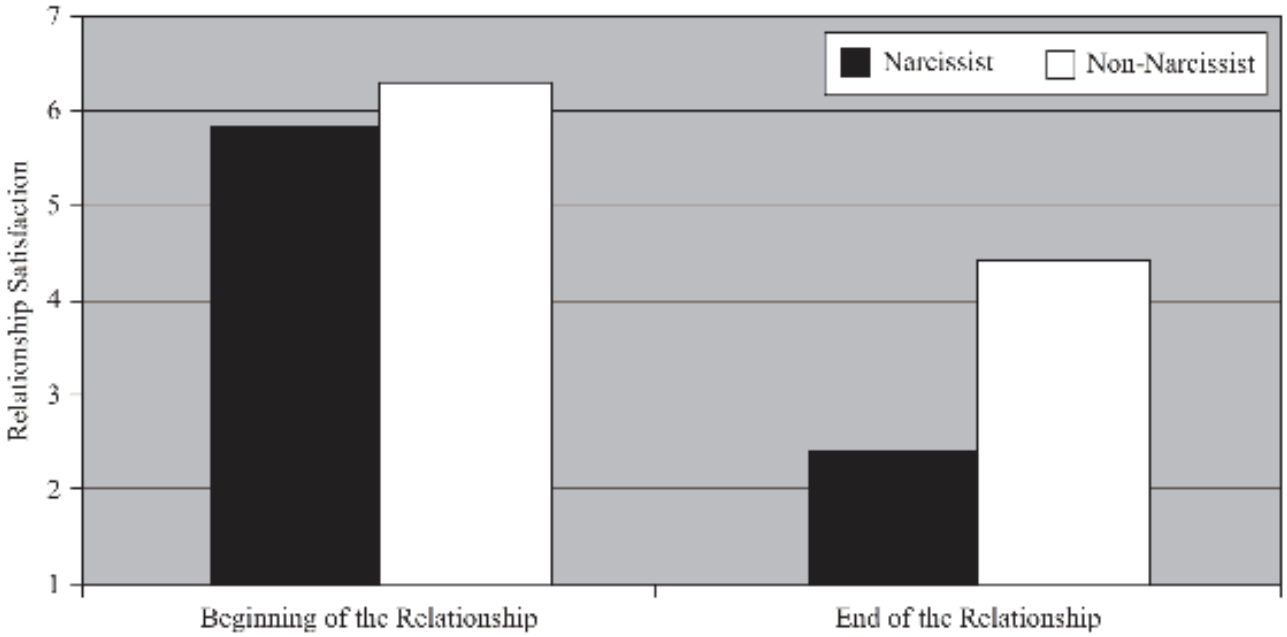


Participants' Ratings of the Partner During the Relationship, from Brunell, Campbell, Smith, & Krusemark (2004).

Participants' Ratings of Their Negative Feelings at the End of Their Relationships, from Brunell, Campbell, Smith, & Krusemark (2004).

🤔Lucio's Take: **Chart seems to disprove the chocolate cake model?**

Lucio:
While the theory and description seem to add up, the chart presented from the authors' study seemed to contract the model of 'great relationship start', with the non-narcissists slightly eding out the narcissists:



Participants' Ratings of How Satisfied They Were at the Beginning and End of the Relationship

I can think of some plasible explanations of why this is the case, but I wished the authors addressed it.

Narcissists Rarely Change

> Unfortunately, because narcissism is a feature of one's personality, it is extremely hard to change. Furthermore, (grandiose) narcissists feel good about themselves (Bosson et al., 2008), and this reduces

> motivation to change. Why should narcissists want to change when they believe they are better than everyone else is?

Chapter 32: Narcissism and Social Networks

Authors: Allan Clifton

Narcissists use social networks to maximize attention and status. In both sociocentric (group-based) and egocentric (personal) networks, they position themselves to gain visibility and influence.

- **Network position:** Narcissists seek central roles to maximize recognition.
- **Egocentric focus:** Relationships serve self-promotion more than mutual support.

Chapter 33: Narcissism and World Wide Web

Laura Buffardi notes that Narcissists post more attractive pictures, more frequent updates, and boastful content.

Chapter 34: Narcissism and Brand Name Consumerism

Authors: Constantine Sedikides, Sylwia Cisek, Claire M. Hart, Eva Schürch

Narcissists prefer luxury and brand-name goods as a way to signal status and superiority. Materialism and consumption serve self-enhancement but rarely increase long-term happiness.

> Brand names provide the platform through which narcissists shine, announcing their uniqueness, haughtiness, and dominance to the world. Brand names are just aids in the narcissistic pursuit of public affirmation and glory.

- **Brand preference:** Narcissists equate expensive brands with self-worth.
- **Inner fragility:** Consumption compensates for insecurity.
- **Happiness paradox:** Pursuit of brands rarely delivers genuine well-being.

Chapter 35: Leadership

Authors: Robert Hogan, James Fico

Narcissists often rise to leadership due to charisma, confidence, and dominance. However, their leadership is a double-edged sword: can be effective in crises or short-term goals, but harmful in the long run due to exploitation and poor empathy.

From a study of 111 CEO (Chatterjee and Hambrick, 2007):

> narcissists changed strategy more frequently, made more and more expensive acquisitions, and their decisions yielded high variability in performance. Moreover, the relationship was linear, so that the more narcissism, the more extreme the firm's performance.

- **Strengths:** Vision, boldness, persuasiveness.
- **Weaknesses:** Arrogance, insensitivity, exploitation.
- **Implication:** Narcissistic leaders succeed initially but risk organizational collapse.

Also read:

- Dark triads at the top: the myth of emotional intelligence

Interesting Notes

- **Appeal to their self-enhancement needs**: When coaching narcissists, one must appeal only to their self-interest. We find it useful to tell narcissists that certain behaviors will harm their careers, and certain others will enhance them.

Chapter 36: Celebrity and Narcissism

Authors: Brittany Gentile

Celebrity culture both attracts narcissists and fosters narcissism. The entertainment industry rewards self-promotion and attention-seeking, creating a feedback loop between celebrity and narcissistic traits.

Although disadvantageous in the long run, narcissists may do well as celebrities where they have to continually turn on the charm for new audiences. Each new performance offers the opportunity for narcissists to self-enhance, and they will exploit it to the fullest.

- **Appeal:** Fame offers validation and admiration.
- **Success:** Narcissists thrive in entertainment industries that reward visibility.
- **Consequence:** Celebrity life exacerbates narcissism, isolation, and instability.

Interesting Notes

- **Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic motivation inverts for narcissists**: Morf, Weir, and Davidov (2000) framed tasks in terms of either intrinsic or extrinsic goals. Participants high in narcissism enjoyed most the tasks in which ego goals were made salient and were motivated by the chance to be evaluated. In contrast, participants low in narcissism enjoyed the tasks most when completed for their own sake, without evaluation.
- **Poor team players but good stars**: *When narcissists were led to believe that they would receive group recognition for their performance, they outperformed all others in the group. When told that no one would be evaluated or that only the group's performance as a whole would be announced, they performed poorly. This drive to perform in front of an audience makes narcissism a potentially important personality characteristic to have as an entertainer* (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002)

Chapter 37: Narcissism and Spirituality

Authors: Steven J. Sandage, Shane P. Moe

Narcissists may pursue spirituality for self-enhancement rather than humility. Genuine practices of self-compassion and humility counteract narcissistic tendencies.

- **Religion:** Can be co-opted for self-aggrandizement.
- **Self-compassion:** Opposite of narcissism; linked to healthier outcomes.
- **Humility:** Protective against narcissistic entitlement.

Chapter 39: Attachment Theory and Narcissistic Personality Disorder

Authors: Björn Meyer, Paul A. Pilkonis

Narcissism can stem from insecure attachment — either avoidant (detachment, superiority) or anxious (hypersensitivity, vulnerability). Attachment-informed therapies encourage trust, emotional openness, and secure bonds.

- **Subtypes:** Avoidant vs. anxious narcissism.
- **Evidence:** Attachment therapy fosters more stable self-esteem and relationships.

Summary of studies:

Study	Sample	Measures	Main Findings
Brennan and Shaver (1998)	1,407 adolescents and young adults	Attachment: Bartholomew & Horowitz's 7-point scale PDs: Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire – R	Narcissistic PD not clearly associated with any one attachment style; low NPD prevalence (0.9%) may explain.
Dickinson and Pincus (2003)	80 undergraduates (26 grandiose, 26 vulnerable narcissists, 28 controls)	Attachment: Adult Attachment Questionnaire PDs: Narcissistic Personality Inventory	Grandiose narcissists reported secure or dismissive attachment; vulnerable narcissists reported fearful or preoccupied attachment.
Meyer et al. (2001)	149 adult psychiatric inpatients and outpatients	Attachment: Interview-based prototype rating PDs: Clinician consensus ratings from structured interviews	Narcissistic PD inversely correlated with secure attachment. Correlated with ambivalent and detached interpersonal functioning.
Otway and Vignoles (2006)	120 adults from general community	Attachment: ECR Scale (anxiety and avoidance) PDs: Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale & Narcissistic Personality Inventory	Attachment anxiety linked to covert narcissism. Both narcissism types linked to cold parenting and overvaluation. Overvaluation strongly associated with grandiose narcissism.
Popper (2002)	184 male cadet squad commanders (Israel Defense Forces)	Attachment: 15-item custom questionnaire PDs: Narcissistic Personality Inventory	High narcissism scores associated with more avoidant attachment.
Sherry, Lyddon, and Henson (2007)	273 undergraduate students	Attachment: Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) PDs: Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III	Weak positive correlation with secure attachment; weak inverse with fearful attachment. Narcissistic, antisocial, and compulsive PDs not well explained by attachment scales.
Smolewska and Dion (2005)	171 female undergraduate students	Attachment: ECR Scale PDs: Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale & Narcissistic Personality Inventory	Vulnerable narcissism strongly correlated with attachment anxiety; weakly with avoidance. Grandiose narcissism unrelated to anxiety or avoidance.

Chapters 38, 40, 41, 42, 43: Therapy for Narcissism

The last chapters review several treatment options for narcissism, including some excellent case studies.

Treating most narcissists remains challenging though:

> even when patients with NPD do commence treatment, they are often armed with enough arrogance and entitlement to blame not only everyone else for their circumstances, but the therapist as well.

> the majority of therapists choose to not work with patients with NPD, and many of those who do will feel relief when the patient ultimately ends the therapy (as is often the case).

Levels of Narcissism

From chapter 38 by Diana Diamond, Frank Yeomans, and Kenneth N. Levy:

Healthy narcissism

Integrated sense of self (accepts strengths and weaknesses).

- Stable self-esteem regulation.
- Ability to maintain values, relationships, ambition, and creativity.
- Can live in harmony with principles and enjoy fulfilling connections.

Neurotic-level narcissism

Grandiose self is present but identity remains relatively integrated.

- Excessive need for admiration, entitlement, envy, and lack of empathy.
- Outwardly adapted and can maintain stable self-esteem, but relationships remain shallow.
- Often seek treatment only after failures or crises expose the fragility of their grandiosity.

Borderline-level narcissism

Typical narcissistic personality disorder features: poor anxiety tolerance, impulsivity, and chronic failures in work and intimacy.

- Severe reliance on grandiose self, splitting of idealized vs. devalued self-aspects, with negatives projected onto others.
- Retreat into omnipotence and denial of dependency.
- Relationships are impoverished, others seen as either idealized or worthless.

Malignant narcissism

Most severe form.

- Ego-syntonic aggression, paranoia, and antisocial traits.
- Grandiose self fused with aggression and punitive internal objects.
- Need to dominate others, sometimes even sabotaging therapy through self-destructive acts.

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Narcissists Lose Out to Machiavellians

From Harry M. Wallace in chapter 27:

> Narcissists report Machiavellian willingness to manipulate others for personal gain (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002), but their perpetual grandstanding regardless of context suggests that they lack the craftiness required to exploit others in ways that maximize self-benefits.
> For example, narcissists would likely have trouble resisting their impulse to claim superiority long enough to make allies and disarm opponents with tactics like ingratiation or feigning incompetence that require displays of modesty.

I agree with this, and I've often seen neediness for admiration and neediness to display superiority as a major weakness in narcissism.

Video example here.

Narcissists Beat 'Too Nice Guys' In Dating

From chapter 30, by Amy B. Brunell, W. Keith Campbell

> To test the Chocolate Cake Model, we asked individuals to reflect on past dating relationships with narcissistic and non-narcissistic partners.
> These individuals reported that they were attracted to narcissists because of the narcissists' charm, popularity, and sexual attractiveness (Brunell, Campbell, Smith, & Krusemark, 2004). By contrast, their attraction to their non-narcissistic partners was far less exciting; the non-narcissistic ex-partner was frequently described as "nice" (e.g., the boy/girl-next-door type).

Narcissists Undermine Their Colleagues

From Harry M. Wallace:

> Teammates of narcissists can expect to eventually be victimized by narcissists' tactic of self-promoting by denigrating and exploiting others (e.g., Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000; Kernis & Sun, 1994).

The More You Talk, The More Leadership You Gain

From chapter 35 by Robert Hogan, James Fico.
Contrary to popular 'laws', talking more during group formation is associated with leadership emergence:

> A study by Sorrentino and Boutillier (1975) essentially brought leaderless group discussion research to an end, but for an interesting reason.
> Sorrentino and Boutillier reported that ratings of leadership emergence were related to how much a person talked, and not to the content of his or her remarks. Narcissists say that they are usually the first person to speak in a group of strangers; thus, leaderless group discussions are a good way to identify narcissists.

QUOTES

On the inherent neediness of narcissism's 'quicksands':

> It is as if the narcissistic self was being constructed on quicksand, continually needing to be refortified and built higher, but never succeeding because simultaneously it is eroding below.
> These efforts are endless not only because they often misfire, but also because narcissists seem never to be able to persuade themselves of their own grandiosity

A woman to a cat:

> Not on this skirt. It's Armani! —A (narcissistic, presumably) woman brushing a cat from her knee

On negative judgments that narcissists may not care about:

> Affluent individuals are also judged as less considerate (e.g., less kind, likable, or honest; Christopher & Schlenker, 2000), but these are communal attributes that narcissists do not value (Campbell et al., 2002).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

The Narcissism Construct Needs Updating

This book makes a strong case that narcissism is a complex, multifaceted construct.

In fact, the case was eveb *too* convincing—highlighting how problematic it is to lump together grandiosity and vulnerability under the same label. Even if there are overlaps, the differences are substantial enough to produce very different real-world outcomes and research findings.

Unless studies focus strictly on the shared core, combining the two risks muddying results—much like what happened in the past with research on self-esteem.

A cleaner solution may be to treat grandiose and vulnerable narcissism as distinct categories rather than forcing them under a single umbrella.

REVIEW

The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder is a rigorous scientific compendium and one of the most comprehensive resources on the topic.

It's one of the backbones for many of our articles on narcissism, and we are deeply thankful to the authors and editors for their outstanding contribution to the field.

Get **this book on Amazon** or check:

- Best psychology books
- Best dark triad books

The Art of Seduction by Robert Greene: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 October 2025 · Archived copy · Original

***The Art of Seduction** (2001)* by Robert Greene is one of the most influential books on the psychology of attraction and seduction power dynamics. It treats seduction not as romance, but as strategy — a psychological game where emotion, fantasy, and control decide who leads and who follows.
Below is a complete summary and review with The Power Moves insights, examples, and modern applications.

Contents

- The Art of Seduction Summary
- The Nine Seducer Archetypes
  - Anti-Seducers: Traits That Repel
  - The Eighteen Victim Types
- The Four Phases of Seduction
  - 1 — Separation: Entering Their World
  - 2 — Lead Astray: Creating Pleasure and Confusion
  - 3 — The Precipice: Intensify Emotion
  - 4 — The Kill: Sealing the Seduction
  - Pro Move: Seductive Environments
- Lucio Buffalmano's Review
  - Modern Takeaways & Applications
  - Final Verdict
  - Seduction Reading:

The Art of Seduction Summary

- **"Seduction is a game of psychology, not beauty."** Confidence, attention, and timing outweigh physical looks.
- **Pick targets you can move emotionally,** not just people you like. Seduction is strategic selection.
- **Make them fantasize.** Fantasies beat reality. People fall for what you represent, not who you are.
- **Power is magnetic:** confidence and status attract

The Nine Seducer Archetypes

Greene divides seductive power into nine archetypes. Each represents a timeless way humans attract and influence others:

#1. Siren

Sirens are raw sexual energy.
They use voice, allure, and sensual presence to promise pleasure and danger. They have slow movements, and are sexually self-assured.
Cleopatra and Marilyn Monroe seduced through irresistible femininity.

Power play: Overwhelm senses, promise release.

✕ **Dangers**: Jealousy from same-sex peers and frenemies

- **Case studies**: 3 female seductresses

#2. Rake

Lives for passion, and with his passion **he makes women feel uniquely desired**.
His intense desire flatters and disarms. He symbolizes escape from boredom, he's a guilty pleasure. Pure fun plus risk is perversely attractive.

Modern version: the charming bad boy who acts on impulse yet makes women feel seen.

✕ **Dangers**: Reputation backlash if overplayed.

- Psychology of womanizers

#3. Charmer

> *"Charmers seduce by focusing on others, not themselves."*

He masters social grace and empathy. He listens, mirrors emotions, and makes people feel safe and understood. His warmth builds trust before attraction.

✕ **Dangers**: Seen as fake—switch to firm when needed.

- Learn: How to be charming.

> How to be Charming: The Art of Social Seduction

#4. Charismatic

He radiates confidence and lifts people up with his energy. Charismatics combine faith, mystery, and magnetism; they lead crowds through belief rather than logic.

Examples: Joan of Arc and Rasputin <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: while Joan of Arc was *socially* seductive, I have doubts about her sexual seductivity

✕ Dangers: Volatile—emotions flip fast and charismatic leaders can become scapegoats.

- Learn how to be charismatic.

> How to Be Charismatic: A Practical Guide (W/ Examples)

#5. Ideal Lover

The ideal lover tailors his romance to his victim's fantasies and romances them hard.
Casanova's method was to study what each woman lacked and become it.

Power lesson: project what other wish they had. Beauty, mystery, or adventure people crave but can't find.

✕ **Dangers**: Flaws can shatter the illusion of the ideal lover's dream.

#6. Dandy

He rebels through style and ambiguity, including gender fluidity: he is neither masculine nor feminine. But he embodies both female and male energy.
Dandies embody freedom from convention and the power of individual expression. They are artists, poets, and composers.

✕ **Dangers**: Becoming “too much”, too weird, and being attacked for being different.

#7. Natural

Naturals are spontaneous, joyful, and childlike. They disarm cynicism and rekindle wonder. He spellbinds victims by reminding them of their childhood.

Power lesson: genuine enthusiasm seduces more than technique.

✕ **Dangers**: Pure childishness annoys. Mix it with adult’s wisdom.

#8. Coquette

> *“People only value what they can’t fully possess.”*

Coquette provoke with their sexuality and prod their victims to chase with their withdrawal. Emotionally, they alternate warmth and distance to keep others off-balance.
They are empowered and self-sufficient, making their victim crave their possession.

✕ **Dangers**: Overdoing withdrawal can cause victims to move on. And this game can turn love into hate.

#9. Star

Larger-than-life, surrounded by myth. They glow with mystery and distance; people fall for the fantasy, not the person: they are objects of desire.
In modern culture, celebrities and influencers play this role daily.

✕ **Dangers**: Fade when novelty wears off and a new star becomes ‘hip’.

For the full list and ‘how to’ see here:

- Art of Seduction Seducer Types
- Male seducer types, more scientific and real-world practical

Anti-Seducers: Traits That Repel

Greene also lists the opposite types — the **Anti-Seducers** — whose insecurity, self-centeredness, or moralizing destroys attraction.
These are the anti-seducers:

- **Brute**: No patience, skips seduction.
- **Suffocator**: Clings too soon.
- **Moralizer**: Forces their standards.
- **Tightwad**: Cheapness screams insecurity.
- **Bumbler**: Awkward, spreads discomfort. Fix social awkwardness.
- **Windbag**: Endless talk.
- **Reactor**: Ego-fragile.
- **Vulgarian**: Ignores rules, expects wins.
- **Greedy**: Obvious agenda. Goal diggers exposed.

Pro Tip: Ditch anti-seducer vibes with Power University—become top 1% in life and dating.

The Eighteen Victim Types

Seduction succeeds by filling emotional gaps. People reveal what they lack — admiration, adventure, validation, or freedom — through subtle cues. Greene categorizes common targets such as:

- **The Disappointed Dreamer:** longs for passion and escape from monotony.
- **The Pampered Royal:** expects adoration and fantasy treatment.
- **The New Prude:** fears judgment but secretly craves release.
- **The Rescuer:** wants to save someone from chaos or darkness.
- **The Beauty:** tired of surface praise, yearns to be seen for intellect or depth.
- **The Conqueror:** needs challenge; make them chase you.
- **The Crushed Star:** misses attention once freely given.
- **The Lonely Leader:** powerful but isolated; treat them as equal, not follower.

Power lesson: Never seduce your own type. The more different your strengths and their lacks, the stronger the pull.

The Four Phases of Seduction

Greene structures seduction as a four-stage process — psychological warfare wrapped in pleasure. Each stage deepens emotional dependence until the target willingly surrenders.

1 — Separation: Entering Their World

Targets live consumed by routine. The seducer's first task is to break that rhythm and appear as something new. Approach indirectly, study their weaknesses, and make them feel chosen. "There is nothing more effective than making the victim think they are seducing you."

- Approach sideways — intrigue, don't demand.
- Use mixed signals: warmth one moment, distance the next.
- Appear desired by others; triangles amplify status.
- Subtly remind them of what's missing in their life.

2 — Lead Astray: Creating Pleasure and Confusion

Once attention is won, the goal is emotional intoxication. Use surprise, storytelling, and small vulnerabilities to humanize yourself while maintaining mystery. "Dogs are reliable; a seducer is not."

- Keep them guessing; unpredictability sparks obsession.
- Use poetic, suggestive words instead of direct propositions.
- Pay attention to detail — scent, tone, and setting matter.
- Show selective weakness to lower defenses, never full neediness.
- Blur fantasy and reality so they forget where imagination ends.

3 — The Precipice: Intensify Emotion

Here the seducer deepens attachment through extremes — devotion, guilt, conflict, and transgression. Pleasure without risk bores; tension makes it addictive. Greene notes: "The lower the lows you create, the higher the highs will be."

- Prove yourself through effort or symbolic sacrifice.
- Tap childhood emotions (regression) by nurturing or being nurtured.

- Break taboos — forbidden equals unforgettable.
- Alternate affection and distance to create craving.
- Use spiritual or artistic frames to elevate physical desire.

4 — The Kill: Sealing the Seduction

At the peak of tension, reverse the chase. Withdraw slightly and let them pursue. “When the pursued becomes the pursuer, the seducer holds total power.” Physical connection now feels inevitable rather than forced.

- Back off to let desire build in your absence.
- Use touch, voice, and eye contact as cues for release.
- Be bold when the moment arrives — hesitation kills momentum.
- End cleanly; mystery must remain or attraction fades.

This is how you reverse the chase in advanced mode, *after* you seduced them:

> **Lucio**: She turned to make out with me, and she asked if she could spend the night over

Pro Move: Seductive Environments

Theatrical spaces block reality and allow your targets to let go.
Go for mystical vibes and role-play opportunities.

See how:

- Seductive environments guide.
- Playlist: Romance tunes.

> How to Create a Sensual Atmosphere: Sexy Environment

Lucio Buffalmano’s Review

The Art of Seduction is brilliant for its understanding of emotional power dynamics and social influence, but limited as a modern dating guide.
Greene’s framework shines at explaining emotional control, yet many tactics belong to the bygone era of slow-moving courtly love — not twenty-first-century relationships.

And even if you’re planning on a time machine and turning into a knight in shiny armor, you’d still need the foundations of dating power dynamics.

1. Good psychology, weak practicality. His advice on letters, mystery, and “therapist seduction” works only if you already have status. In today’s fast-paced dating, leadership and initiative outperform prolonged intrigue.
And heterosexual men have less to gain from non-heterosexual seduction.

2. No science or personal experience. And we believe both are important to teach others. For example, Greene claims powerful men secretly want to be dominated. That feels like a Freudian-psychotherapy approach, but modern data-driven sources and research suggest the opposite — high-power men often maintain dominance in sex as in life.

3. Ignores basics: status, dominance, and SMV. None of his archetypes captures the high-value, dominant man who leads naturally. Seduction divorced from sexual market value and man’s confidence becomes hollow and

ineffective. Even Casanova's 'ideal lover' charm was backed up by confidence and dominance (and a narcissistic streak, probably)

4. Less effective in today's age. The book relies on royal courts, poets, and saints — fascinating but detached from real, modern social dynamics. Some emotional truths remain useful, yet the scenarios feel theatrical rather than actionable.

5. No win-win. Greene never addresses responsibility or win-win. His manipulative tone can encourage deceit. Not only it's a possible failure of honor and ethics, but it's also potentially less effective in many contexts.

Despite these flaws, the book's brilliance lies in revealing that attraction is a social exchange of power. As Greene writes, "Every seduction has two elements: yourself and what is seductive about you; and your target, the actions that will penetrate their defenses." Understanding that duality is timeless.

Modern Takeaways & Applications

- **Seducers break the rules and conquer hearts and souls**: learn psychology but add power… And you won't need crazy looks, six figures, or a six-pack
- **Power and confidence** matter more than lines or looks.
- **Balanced polarity** — masculine leadership with emotional warmth outperforms one or the other.
- Real power is when others chase your validation, not your approval.

Final Verdict

Rating: 8.5/10 — A masterclass in dark psychology and timeless social strategy. Great read for students of advanced social arts to develop strategic thinking and power awareness. Use it to deepen your understanding of attraction, **but *not* a as manual for modern-day effective dating**. For that, including for modern seduction, address the basics of high-value men, dating power dynamics and sexual marketplace realities.

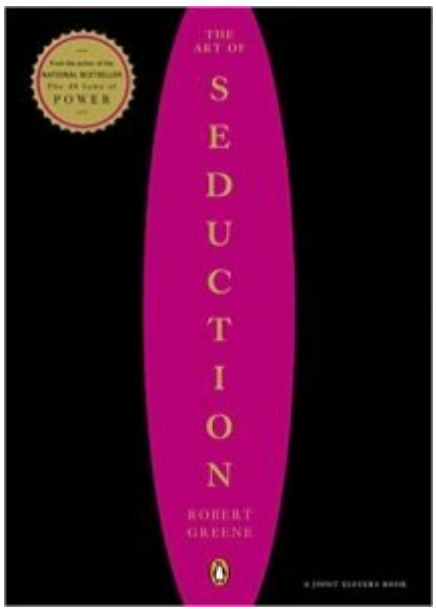
Seduction Reading:

- Top male seducers: the modern archetypes
- The Art of Seduction: our in-depth review
- Best Robert Greene books
- Best Dating Books for Men

And if you want to develop real-world confidence, respect, and true **modern seducer's power** — that actually work — start here:

- **Power University** — Learn status, confidence, and attraction with evidence-based psychology.

The Art of Seduction by Robert Greene: Summary & Review



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URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-art-of-seduction-summary/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.2

Masculine vs. Feminine Energy: The Science of Gender Differences

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 October 2025 · Archived copy · Original

In popular discourse, people often speak of “masculine energy” versus “feminine energy.”

Scientifically, however, there are no mysterious separate energies – **observed gender differences arise from biology (genes and hormones) and cultural factors**.

In this article, we’ll review the overlap and differences between men and women.

There is no masculine or feminine ‘energy’, but masculine and feminine biologies, behaviors, looks, mindsets, and gendered cultural associations (like blue for men and pink for women)

Contents

- Intro: Gender Differences
  - Self-Esteem In Genders: Resilient vs. Fragile
- The Roots of Gender Differences
  - 1. Biological Factors
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  - 3. Socialization
  - 4. Social Roles & Self-Identities
  - 5. Self-Identification (Yes, It Matters)
  - All Factors Co-Influence Each Others
- Bias vs Reality
  - The Denial of Gender Differences
  - The Overstatement of Differences
- The Truth: Overlap, Individual Variation
  - Evolutionary Perspective: Mating Differences & Life Phases

- Small Differences Matter: Emergent Behavior & Social Dynamics
- Power Dynamics Explain It All
  - TPM's Stance: Individual Empowerment Sets You Free

Intro: Gender Differences

Men and women differ on average in many traits, while also sharing much in common.

In practice, **masculinity and femininity lie on continuous spectra** with much overlap.
This comparison table reviews the key average male–female differences:

Trait / Domain	Men	Women	Magnitude / Notes
Mental	Wider IQ/math spread; higher spatial (rotation/navigation), STEM propensity. Same general reasoning	Higher verbal (fluency, reading, writing) & location memory; higher superstition (woo-woo)	verbal: small; spatial: moderate
Physical	Hairier, taller, heavier, stronger (esp. upper body), higher athleticism	Higher flexibility; similar endurance	From moderate to large
Aggression	More physical & verbal aggression, especially in competitions	More relational & covert aggression (e.g., exclusion, gossip, & in relationships)	Moderate
Risk-Taking	Higher, especially under social pressure or masculinity threat	Lower; more cautious and risk-averse	Moderate to large in physical domains
Emotional Expression	More anger expressions; less expressiveness in public; similar in private	Higher emotional responsiveness, expressiveness (esp. for sadness/vulnerability)	Small to moderate, varies by emotion & context
Help-Seeking	Less likely to seek help; greater self-reliance	More likely to seek help, esp. for emotional or health	Substantial real-world implications
Communication Style	Report-focused, task-oriented, higher power language	Rapport-focused, cooperative, lower-power language	Context-dependent
Nonverbal Behavior	Less smiles & gazes; more dominant nonverbals	More smiles, gazes, touches in social contexts;	Small to moderate; varies with context
Socialization & Skills	Activity-based; instrumental support; lower self-disclosure & social skills	Emotion-based & intimate; co-rumination; higher emotional reading	Moderate
Empathy & Helping	More physical help in public or risky situations	More nurturing & empathetic in private	Moderate; varies by situation
Confidence & Self-esteem	Higher confidence; attributes success to ability	Lower & fluctuating; attributes success to effort & luck	Small to moderate
Leadership	More task-oriented or autocratic leadership. Competence assumed.	More democratic or transformational leadership. Competence must be proven	Large perception gap, equal results
Social Dominance	Higher interpersonal dominance and social-dominance orientation	Lower interpersonal dominance & SDO	Moderate to significant
Health	Higher mortality, externalizing (antisocial); more completed suicides	Higher morbidity, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, suicide attempts, emotional volatility	Substantial health implications

Trait / Domain	Men	Women	Magnitude / Notes
Attraction & Relationships	Value physical attractiveness and sexual variety; more independent	Value emotional intimacy and resource stability; more interdependent	Consistent across many cultures

Table compiled by Lucio Buffalmano, synthesizing empirically supported findings from the Sage Handbook of Gender and Psychology & Helgeson's Psychology of Gender, and various meta-analyses

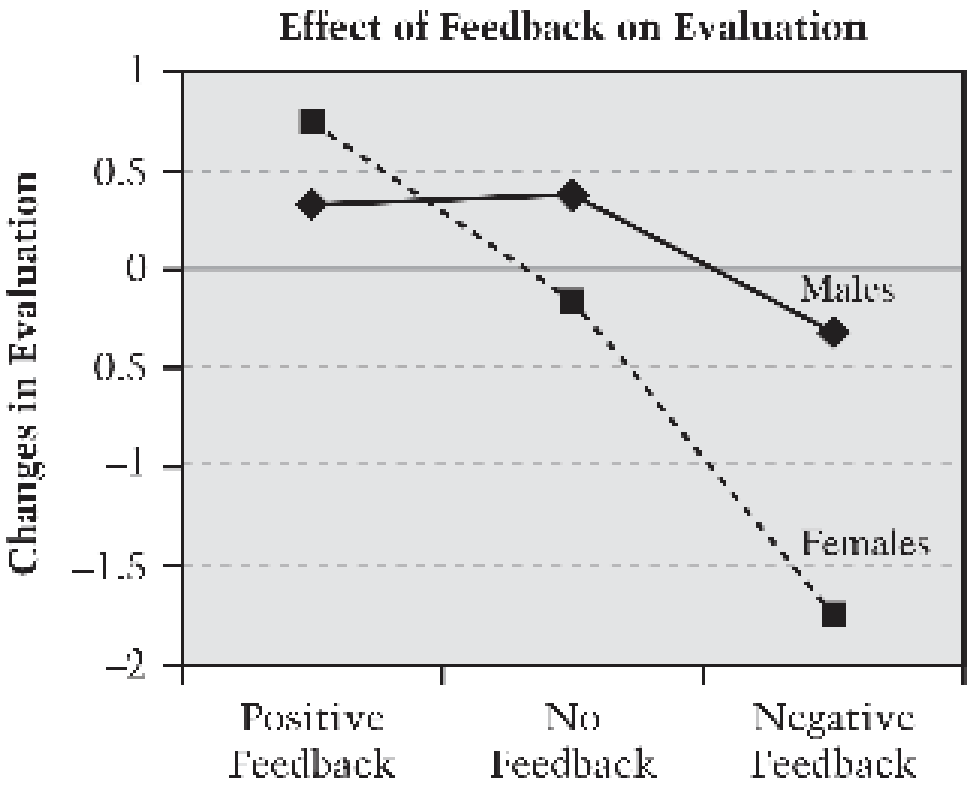
⁉️ **Reminder:** these are averages. They don't always apply to every single man and woman, and masculinity and femininity may also be unconnected to biological gender.

- **Male Physical traits:** Men are on average taller, heavier, with more muscle mass. This reflects innate differences in muscle fiber size and distribution
- **Female Physical Traits**: Women carry more fat relative to weight (important for fertility and energy storage) and have more flexible joints
- **Cognition:** Men tend to do better on spatial-visual tasks, especially 3D mental rotation (Voyer, Voyer & Bryden, 1995), while women have slight advantages in verbal fluency and episodic memory (Lindberg et al., 2010).
  No difference in mathematics (Hyde, Fennema & Lamon, 1990).
- **Personality and behavior:** Men report higher trait assertiveness and risk-taking; women report higher empathy and nurturance.
  Males use physical aggression more often (Archer, 2004) and more often adopt dominant or competitive communication styles in groups
- **Emotional expression:** Men and women experience similar emotions, but express them differently. Men are more likely to outwardly express anger or pride, whereas women more often show sadness, fear, guilt or shame

Self-Esteem In Genders: Resilient vs. Fragile

Meta-analyses find that men score slightly higher on global self-esteem.
Hyde reports a small effect (~d = 0.2), but the small effect may underestimate how self-esteem changes in real-world settings.

Across several studies, men's self-esteem seems more constant and independent when faced with criticism or feedback.
This study for example showd how men and women change their self-evaluation based on feedback:



from Roberts and Nolen-Hoeksema's study, adapted by Helgeson

The Roots of Gender Differences

Despite lacking evidence for 'feminine or masculine energy', there is strong empirical support for the following domains.

1. Biological Factors

Innate biology underlies many average differences, and may set the 'foundations' for everything else.

Sex chromosomes (XX for women, XY for men) trigger developmental differences in the brain and body. And circulating hormones play a major role in gender differences.

It's important to note that biology may also set preferences despite no innate skill differences.
For example, men still prefer STEM-related fields despite the fact that gender differences in math abilities have virtually disappeared.

2. Cultural Norms & Expectations

Cultural norms set the expectations of 'what a man should be' and 'what a woman should be'.
For example, many may consider a passive and submissive man 'less masculine'. And they may consider a more assertive woman 'less of a stereotypical woman'.

Cultural expectations are often also normative. Meaning: they exert social pressures to *conform* to the expectations, with social costs for non-conformers (ie.: status loss for men).
This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of first enforcing and then confirming cliches.

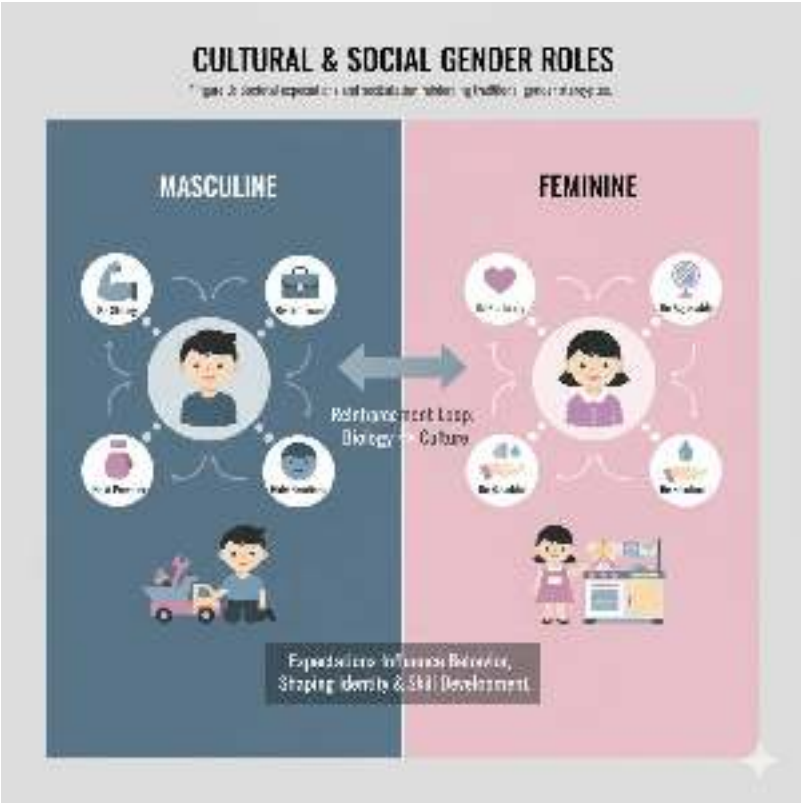
However, biology and evolution still influence culture (and the other way around).
For example, men's preferences for more feminine and submissive women may be rooted in men's evolutionary problem of paternity. A more submissive woman may be perceived to be, and may as well be, less likely to cheat.

3. Socialization

In many cultures, boys and girls are overtly or subtly steered into different roles and activities.

Again, socialization and biology may go hand-in-hand.
Pellegrini notes that many boys naturally choose more dominance-oriented plays, while women naturally choose more relationship-based games (Pellegrini, 2013).
But socialization still matters and may also reinforce these tendencies.

4. Social Roles & Self-Identities



Historically and in many cultures, men had traditional roles of protectors and providers, while women were expected to be kind daughters and nurturing mothers.

Roles are also influenced by biology and evolutionary drives.
For example, men's higher risk-taking and spatial abilities better aligns with hunting, which more modern societies may have inherited as working providers.

These roles may also set identities and provide a base for self-esteem.
For example, some men may think of themselves as 'independent players' and be proud of it, potentially inhibiting more long-term relationships or father roles.

5. Self-Identification (Yes, It Matters)

According to the *APA Handbook*, self-identification may shape nonverbal cues more than gender.

For example, feminine self-identification appears to predict decoding accuracy more than biological sex.
Write the authors:

> ***psychological gender may be more critical than biological gender.***
> *(…) nonverbal behaviors may often be telltale indicators of femininity and masculinity rather than manifestations of biological femaleness and maleness.*
> *The critical issue may thus be the degree to which any male or female personally subscribes to societal definitions*

> *of masculinity and femininity. In some cases, psychological gender dovetails with biological gender*

The authors also add that psychological gender can also match biological gender, which it often does.

All Factors Co-Influence Each Others

These factors may sometimes clash, but often reinforce each other.

For example, biology may set preferences. These inclinations may lead to choosing early-life plays and later jobs that hone certain skills. Those jobs turn into roles, self-identifications, and social expectations.

Bias vs Reality

It's challenging analyze topics like mating and gender differences without any bias (see power dynamics below). Bias can come from both sides: the *denial* of differences, and the *overstatement* of differences.

The Denial of Gender Differences

Several prominent scholars claimed that human innate mechanisms have been denied and suppressed in the social sciences.

Since our takes already align with evolutionary science, we refer to our review of Pinker's *The Blank Slate* for more, and address the opposite side of the argument.

The Overstatement of Differences

Table dichotomies and pop-psychology authors can exaggerate differences, and popular perceptions turn gradients of gradual differences into categorical polar opposites.

For example:

Masculine Traits	Feminine Traits
Assertive	Agreeable
Dominant	Nurturing
Stoic	Expressive
Independent	Interdependent
Competitive	Cooperative
Relaxed	Neurotic

Partly true—but without context, it's just pop-psychology (and manipulation attempts, see below)

These claims aren't totally wrong.
But they *overstate* differences. For example, Janet Hyde's review of 46 meta-analyses found that many small differences are context-dependent. And the largest gaps (e.g. aggression, sexuality) are still moderate in size (Hyde, 2005).

Pop Psychology-Consuming Masses Perpetuate The Myths

Dichotomous distinctions also persist because cognitively unreflective audiences cling to simplistic explanations.

Simplistic explanations, be it 'we're all the same' or 'we're opposites' are easy to process and remember.
The more truthful but complex explanations are more for 'the few' in the upper percentiles.

Misleading Scholars In Evolutionary Studies

While the denial of differences may sometimes be less factually correct, scholars may also not be immune to *overstating* the differences.

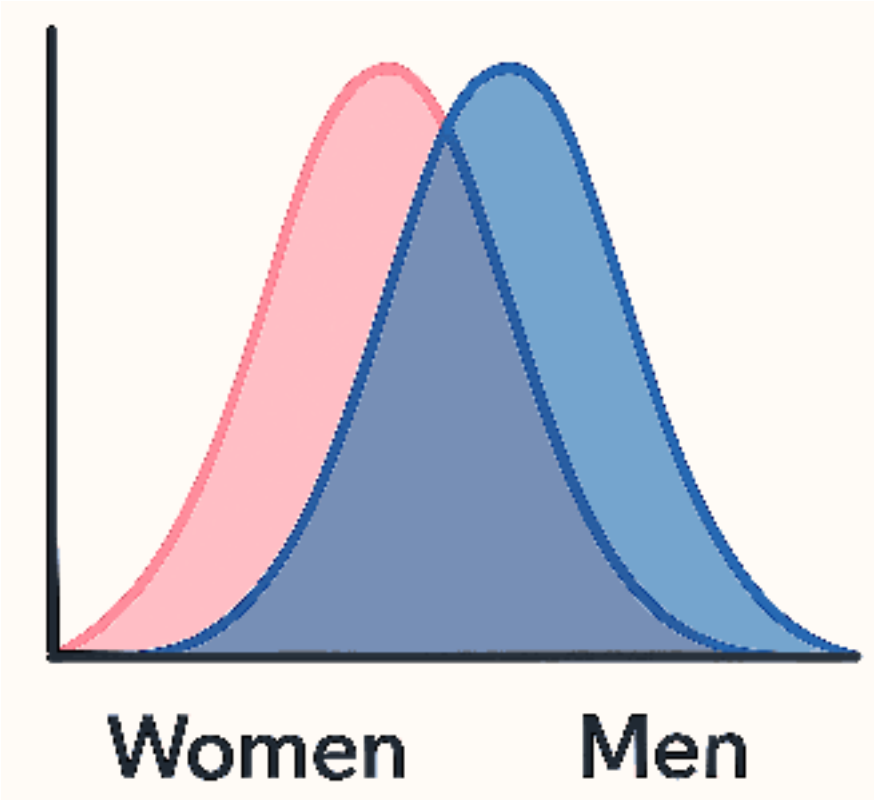
Stewart-Williams explains it in *The Cambridge Handbook on Human Behavior*:

> Kanazawa (2003) observed that, "In every society, men prefer young and attractive women, and women prefer wealthy and powerful men".
> Such descriptions suggest substantial, dichotomous differences. The evidence for these differences, however, invariably consists of relatively modest differences in the central tendencies of highly variable and overlapping distributions.

The Truth: Overlap, Individual Variation

There are real and important gender differences, with large overlaps.

Virtually no trait is *exclusive* to men or women, and the difference is more a matter of degrees.
Gender differences often follow this pattern:



Crucially, it's worth remembering that there is enormous variation *within* each sex. For many traits, intra-sexual variation is larger than inter-sexual vartiation.

Evolutionary Perspective: Mating Differences & Life Phases

From an evolutionary perspective, men and women should differ most in reproduction-related traits.
For example, men's higher preference for variety and women's higher preoccupation with forced copulation.

And as would be predicted by evolutionary models, several differences decline after the 'core reproductive years'.
For example, the 'smiling gap' in public narrows as women get older (LaFrance et al., 2003).

Importantly, the differences may be smaller or non-existent in survival-related traits like general intelligence or

cognitive biases.

Small Differences Matter: Emergent Behavior & Social Dynamics

There is much truth in the claim that 'differences aren't that big'.
But it would be a major mistake, and an unfortunately common one, to conclude that 'since gender differences are not so large, they don't matter'.

Instead, even small gender differences matter. Especially if they are persistent across time and situation, as many are.
There are three levels to this:

- **Individual differences add up.** A woman who negotiates 20% less often, 30% less assertively, and rarely demands a promotion ends up earning considerably less money across her life
- **Differences aggregate at population level** to produce large social effects
- **Outliers have the largest impact** even if most average men are just a little more ambitious or ruthless, the

This is how we naturally end up with more female kindergarten teachers, most male billionaires, and almost all top athletes and dictators being males.

In brief: gender is a crucial factor to predict personality and behavior, while still being one factor among many.

Power Dynamics Explain It All

> Masculinity gets ahead, femininity gets along
>
> *– A generalization, with an uncomfortable backdrop of truth*

The root cause of many gender-biased takes come down to power dynamics, as shaped by evolutionary drives, and fueled by subconscious self-interest.

Masculinity is associated with power/independence and femininity is associated with submissiveness/*inter*dependence. This has tremendous implications for gender relations and public discourse. It's the unspoken notion that drives all modern 'gender cultural wars'.

Both genders defend or undermine those associations based on their motives and self-interests.

Men stress the biological roots of gender dichotomies because they underpin their mating strategies.
If everyone accepts male power and feminine dependence, men maintain social power and women seek male 'provision and protection'. Protection-seeking women fall straight into men's arms, fulfilling their sexual and reproductive drives.

On the other hand, some **modern women reject the biological roots of gender differences because it better supports their preference for women's power.**
If differences aren't biological, then men aren't 'naturally' higher power, and women can be equally high-power and independent.
Women who champion women's empowerment fear that 'admitting' femininity's association with coyness and women's ancestral 'need for male provisioning' undermines their cause.

This is why feminist-leaning scholars lean culture/social constructionism, and male scholars lean biology/evolution.

These underlying power dynamics and opposing interests make an unbiased discourse challenging.
Bar for a few enlightened individuals…

TPM's Stance: Individual Empowerment Sets You Free

We take no side because we champion *individual* empowerment, rather than group or gender-based power.

Empowered *individuals* do better in life, and are also mentally unbiased. They are unbiased because they can be; they don't depend on their gender to do well.
If anything, empowered men *gain* with women's empowerment (see this video for more).

Want to become this type of man?
Our approach helps men 'fly higher', and achieve their goals no matter what:

- **Power University**: for men who want to win, no matter the culture

9 Types of Seducers: Robert Greene's The Art of Seduction Explained

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 October 2025 · Archived copy · Original

In the first part of *The Art of Seduction,* Robert Greene describes 9 seducer archetypes.
He says that these archetypes are timeless, and they are:

1. Sirens
2. Rakes
3. Charmers
4. Charismatics
5. Ideal lovers
6. Dandies
7. Naturals
8. Coquettes
9. Stars

Let's delve deeper into each one of them:

Contents

- 1. The Siren
  - The Secret of the Siren
  - Dangers of Sirens
  - How To
- 2. The Rake
  - The Secret of the Rake
  - How To
- 3. The Charmer
  - The Secret of the Charmer
  - The Dangers of Charm
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- 4. The Charismatic
  - The Secret of the Charismatic
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  - How To
- 5. The Ideal Lover
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- 6. The Dandy
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  - The Secret of the Natural
  - Dangers of Naturals
  - How To
- 8. The Coquette
  - The Secret of the Coquette
  - Dangers of Coquettes
  - How To
- 9. The Star
  - The Secret of the Star
  - Dangers of Stars
  - How To
- Are Greene's Seducer Types Correct?
  - Seducer Types FAQs

1. The Siren

The siren is a highly sexual woman, offering the promise of endless pleasure mixed with a bit of danger.

- **Historical Example**: Cleopatra
- **Modern Example**: Marilyn Monroe
- **Symbol**: Water

The Secret of the Siren

Robert Greene says sirens are the most powerful seductresses because they operate on a man's most basic drives, and these work on everyone.

Dangers of Sirens

Intrasexual competition is the main risk.
Meaning that other women can get jealous and plot against the siren.

Example:
Robert Greene talks about Marilyn Monroe's orgasmic faces. Here is an example for you:

How To

Be sexual and attractive.

Read more on siren seduction here:

- How to seduce a man case study.
- How to make him crazy

2. The Rake

The Rake is a man who insatiably adores women.

He is a great female fantasy because, deep down, women crave to be desired.
Unfortunately for some women, the rake is a lover at heart. He desires *every* woman, so he may be unfaithful. But

that only adds to his appeal.

- **Historical Example**: Giacomo Casanova
- **Modern Example**: Don Juan
- **Symbol**: Fire

The Secret of the Rake

The Rake is a guilty pleasure offering what society does not allow women: **an affair of pure pleasure**.
Plus, the excitement of rebelling, danger, and doing 'something bad'.

How To

Love women, love romance, love seduction.
Then, let that passion fuel your action.

Learn more here:

- The psychology of womanizers
- Lovers, providers, & friends: the 3 male sexual roles
- Lovers vs providers: picking your best strategy

3. The Charmer

Charmers are highly skilled social players.

Instead of thinking about themselves, they *remove* themselves from the equation.
Their spotlight and focus is on their target, and with their high empathy they learn what makes you tick, what you want, and… Your weaknesses.

- **Historical Example**: Benjamin Disraeli
- **Modern Example**: Oprah Winfrey
- **Symbol**: The Mirror

The Secret of the Charmer

With their full focus on the target, charmers **make you feel understood**, and targets bond deeply with them.

The Dangers of Charm

Greene says that some people may view Charmers as slippery and deceitful. They can come across as less masculine, and struggle to gain respect and status.

So Charmers must know when to stop being 'nice' and adaptable, and act with more dominance.

Learn how here:

- **How to be more dominant**, without being aggressive

How To

Learn advanced social skills, be smooth, charm *everyone*, not just your targets.
That will help you gain social status and diffuse admiration, making you an object of desire.

Learn more:

- How to be charming (with video examples)
- How to bond and connect

> How to Build Emotional Connection With Women & Friends

4. The Charismatic

Charisma is an exciting presence.
Inner qualities like confidence, unwavering belief, or a sense of purpose drive charisma. Others are drawn to charisma because they lack these qualities

- **Historical Example**: Joan of Arc and Rasputin
- **Modern Example**: Elvis Presley
- **Symbol**: The Lamp

The Secret of the Charismatic

Charismatics are highly influential leaders whom people flock to.
They thrive the most during turmoils, when fearful people look up to their conviction and belief.

Dangers of Charisma

Charisma can be as volatile as the emotions it creates, says Robert Greene.

TPM Note: Only extreme charisma is volatile
Greene refers to extreme, quasi-possessed personalities like Savonarola. More balanced and calibrated charisma isn't nearly as volatile.

Learn more:

- Law of optimum balance, so you don't overdo charisma
- **How to calibrate**

> The Science of Social Calibration: 7 Steps to Mastery

How To

Learn more:

- How to be charismatic

> How to Be Charismatic: A Practical Guide (W/ Examples)

5. The Ideal Lover

Ideal lovers learn their targets' broken dreams and fantasies and make them feel like they may now live them in real life.
Do you long for adventures, romance, and losing yourself in the moment? The Ideal Lover will provide it for you.

- **Historical Example**: Madame de Pompadour

- **Modern Example**: Christian Grey from Fifty Shades of Grey
- **Symbol**: The Portrait Painter

The Secret of the Ideal Lover

The ideal lover is so powerful because most people live a life of quiet desperation. They gave up their dreams and never enacted their fantasies.

Dangers of Ideal Lovers

You create a fantasy that involves the idealization of your own character. If your faults get in the way, you will destroy that fantasy.

The Ideal Lover is rare in the modern world because it takes much effort and time.

How To

> **Lucio**: I made her open up and share her full self. Then, I made love to her. And she fell in love

You must acquire empathy and theory of mind to learn about your target.

What they say is part of it, but even more important is what they *don't* say. And what they may not even know themselves.
Discover the fantasies that they don't even realize they have. And position yourself as the conduit to live them in real life.

If they're ambitious, appeal to lofty ideals together with carnal desires. And sexual affairs will become sense-engulfing love affairs.

6. The Dandy

Dandies focus on appearances, offering androgynous allure (example: Rolfo Valentino).

Dandies live for pleasure and surround themselves with beauty, while also 'beautifying' themselves.

He is also insolent like the Rake. But while the Rake's insolence is in his pursuit of women, the Dandy's insolence is towards society and conventions. He's not rebelling against the monogamy ideal, he's rebelling against *all* conventions.

- **Historical Example**: Marlene Dietrich
- **Modern Example**: Prince, Russel Brand
- **Symbol**: The Orchid

The Secret of the Dandy

Men and women often don't understand each other. That creates mistrust and prevents a deeper connection.
The Dandy is reassuring, feels comfortable for having similar traits, and bonds deeper with their targets.

Dangers of Dandies

Greene says that Dandies may be accused of **lacking masculinity** for men, or lacking femininity for women.
And their habit of breaking conventions can irk and annoy people.

How To

The key is ambiguity and straddling the line.
You are 70% heterosexual, but some people sometimes may not be 100% sure.

And embody both masculine and feminine energy.
Lead resolutely in dating, but when it comes to bonding, lean more feminine to make your target feel bonded and understood.

Learn more:

- Russell Brand dandy style: a video analysis

7. The Natural

Naturals are spontaneous and open.
They bring us back to childhood by embodying child-like qualities such as spontaneity and sincerity.

- **Historical Example**: Charlie Chaplin
- **Modern Example**: Zendaya
- **Symbol**: The Lamb

The Secret of the Natural

Childhood is the golden paradise we consciously or unconsciously try to recreate.

Dangers of Naturals

Total childishness can be annoying, so the best Naturals combine adult traits like experience and wisdom with a childlike manner.

How To

Rediscover your 'thirst for life'.
Be excited to see and try new things, discovering new foods and tastes, and experiencing all life has to offer.

The key is to truly rediscover your inner 'sense of wonder'. The more absorbed you seem in your own joy-filled world, the more seductive you become.

But when the conversation turns serious or there are goals to be achieved, move back to rationality.
It's the *mixture* of qualities that is most attractive.

- How women use Natural seduction: a 'regression' seduction example

8. The Coquette

Coquettes may alternate nice girl behavior with little devil upheaval

Coquettes are narcissistic, self-absorbed, and high-power.
They can come on strong, act in love and all over you… Only to later turn cold and distant.

- **Historical Example**: Empress Joséphine Bonaparte
- **Modern Example**: Andy Warhol
- **Symbol**: The Shadow

The Secret of the Coquette

The Coquettes' power is emotional enthrallment.
Tease and temptation are the initial lures, but the **coquette's superpower is emotional withdrawal** after they have gained emotional leverage over you.

The withdrawal also **makes targets insecure**, and the more insecure you feel, the more you cling to them.

Dangers of Coquettes

Volatile emotions can turn destructive, and love can easily be replaced by hate.

Their game of presence/absence can also lean too strongly on the absence, and the targets may break free for good.

Finally, too many negatives compared to positive moments can ultimately lead to stronger targets cutting contact for good.

How To

Be an object of desire, give yourself initially, but never fully. Alternate presence with withdrawal, romance with drama, and target-admiration with self-admiration.

- How coquettes seduce a man for a real-life example
- Emotional manipulation

9. The Star

The Star is a larger-than-life figure who captivates with their glamour, mystery, and presence.
They are ethereal, distant, and envelop themselves in mystery.

- **Historical Example**: John F. Kennedy
- **Modern Example**: Beyoncé
- **Symbol**: The Idol

The Secret of the Star

Daily life is mundane and boring.
The star represents the **escape into fantasies and dreams**.

Dangers of Stars

People may tire of your illusion, and stardom is always transient. After your 15 minutes of fame, people may move to the next up-and-coming star.

Once people move on, it it will be difficult to regain your spot in the sun. And there may be psychological blowbacks as well. Unless you develop an antifragile ego, you may feel depressed as a 'has-been'.

How To

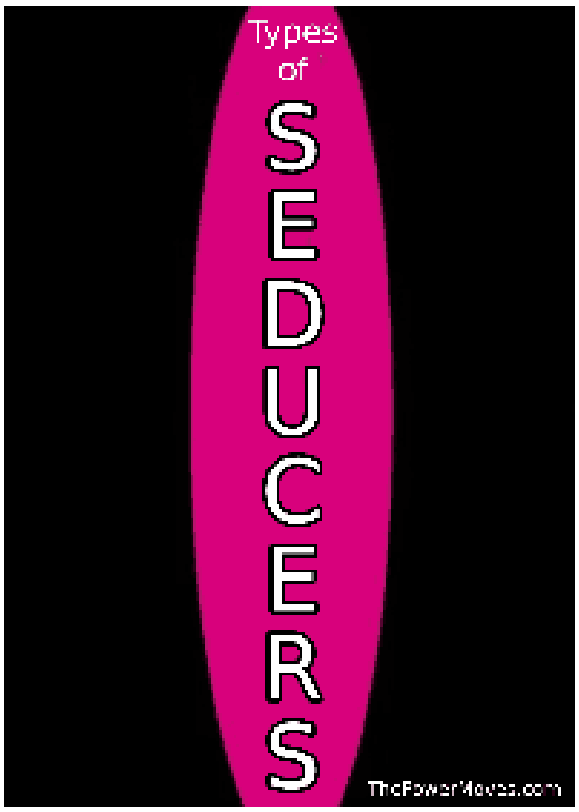
Greene in *The Art of Seduction* says you must transform yourself into a glittering object.

We agree, but we believe that the key is popularity and fame. Weak stars *play* the star, without being well-known. That's entitlement.
Powerful stars are at least social circle-level popular. Ideally, famous.
And fame is one of the best 'seduction hacks' possible:

- Sexual market value hacks: shortcuts to seduce and win at dating

> 10 Sexual Market Value Hacks to Boost Your Attractiveness

Are Greene's Seducer Types Correct?



Greene's seducer types are interesting, and we may argue that some of them include proven attractive traits.

However, it's important to notice that **it's not an empirically validated, exhaustive, or experience-based list.**

Some valid criticisms that can be leveled include:

- **Foundations of attractiveness are missing** including, at the higher level, high mate value that underpins *any* effective seducer
- ***Social* seduction mixed with romantic seduction**: The two overlap, but aren't the same. The 'charismatic leader' for example isn't always a seducer
  - Homosexual and heterosexual mixed, and heterosexual men may be set up for failure following homosexual tactics
- **Some archetypes feel more arbitrary and less effective**. The Ideal Lover for example hardly qualifies as a distinct, self-contained archetype and may have more limited scope.
- **Some archetypes are over-psychologized**. The 'rake' is simply a player type, and the 'star' leverages fame/status

And of course, and this is valid for any archetype: they're simplifications of reality. Advanced operators may integrate several styles, or change them to suit different partners and situations.

That said, Greene's analysis remains valuable in many parts, offering plenty of valuable lessons.
To integrate it with a more science-backed approach to male-only seducers, see:

- The most effective male seducer types

> 10 Proven Seducer Types That Drive Women Wild

Seducer Types FAQs

What are the 9 types of seducers?

Robert Greene's nine seducer types are Siren, Rake, Ideal Lover, Dandy, Natural, Coquette, Charmer, Charismatic, and Star. These are archetypal styles, not an exhaustive, science-backed taxonomy. For a more practical approach to dating, it is often more effective to look into more validated seducer archetypes that embody foundational traits like high status, physical attractiveness, and social dominance.

Are Greene's seducer types real?

No, Greene's seducer types are not empirically validated, discrete categories. Each highlights a trait or strategy based on Greene's analysis (e.g., Siren = overt sexuality; Dandy = androgynous flair; Coquette = presence/withdrawal), but they're not based on modern psychology of attraction.
While they offer interesting insights into human behavior, they lack the foundational elements of evolutionary psychology, such as Mate Value (SMV) and status.

Which of the 9 seducer types is the best or most effective?

The Siren is often considered the most powerful because it's the only one based on a more empirically validated attraction trigger. Otherwise, there is no "best" archetype among the 9 types because they are arbitrary and do not represent a hierarchy of effectiveness. Success in seduction rarely comes from picking one category to mimic. Instead, the most effective operators build a strong foundation of high mate value and then calibrate their social style.

Do Greene's 9 seducer archetypes work?

Some of Greene's seducer traits are effective, but they are not substitutes for the core drivers of attraction, such as physical attractiveness, status, and dominance. Greene's archetypes work better as a "stylistic layer" on top of a high-value foundation, rather than a standalone strategy.

Hamza Ahmed Review: Great For Beginners, But Top-1%?

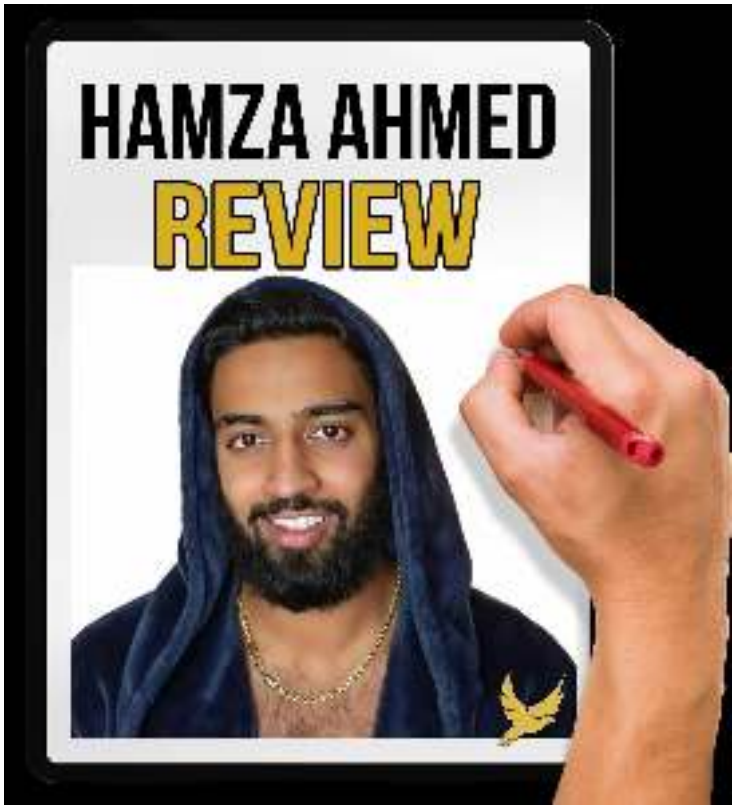
Lucio Buffalmano · 3 November 2025 · Archived copy · Original

If you're searching for a "Hamza review" or asking "is Hamza legit?", you're in the right place. The YouTuber Hamza Ahmed has become one of the most polarizing figures in the men's self-improvement space.

To his fans, he is the "**benevolent big brother**" who pulled them out of a cycle of video games and porn.
To his critics, he's a "**grifter**" or "cult leader" who overcharges for repacked advice on his "Adonis School" and promotes a simplistic, black-and-white worldview.

So, which is it?
We review what Hamza gets right, what he gets dangerously wrong, and where his advice *must* stop if you want to graduate to the top 1% of strategic effectiveness.

⁉ Note: This review focuses on Hamza's teaching & Adonis Skool
Some controversies raised questions about Hamza (TRT use, some power moves, and public split with a former partner). We reference them when they affect Hamza's teaching and products.



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What's Good

Hamza promotes discipline, habits, and consistency, all critical foundations for men's development.
These foundations help men succeed while also becoming more value-adding members of society.

This is great for all, and it's what we like about Hamza.

1. Effective Onboarding Ramp Into Self-Development

Hamza's greatest strength is that he has gotten tons of beginners into self-help.

He effectively targets and "converts" the bottom 20% who are dopamine-addicted and stuck in a loop of video games, porn, and junk food.

For this demographic, his simple mantras are helpful. **Hamza is the new "gateway drug" to self-improvement.**
And that's a compliment, not a criticism.
Hamza gets countless young men to take the first, most critical steps:

2. Clear & simple routines install better habits

Hamza builds a predictable ladder for teenagers and young men: morning and evening habits, simple workouts first, 3 minutes of meditation to start, etc. etc.

It's exactly what a demographic of doom-scrolling may need to kick-start their self-development journey.
Little by little, they can replace negative habits with better ones, and the outcomes will follow.

3. Hamza's Advice Is Good For The Basics

Hamza is not only charismatic but also largely correct on many of the basics.

His 'whys' are sometimes more pop-psychology than we like, but the main 'medicine' works for most young men.
For example:

Topic	Bad Theory	Good Practice
Masculinity	Masculine/feminine 'energy' with some made-up traits	Gets many foundations right & embodies masculine presence

Topic	Bad Theory	Good Practice
Social analyses	Sometimes simplistic or even misleading; imprecise evolutionary logic	External enemies & 'tribal unity' under Hamza galvanize action
Long-term > short-term	Simplistic. Short-term focus 'delivers' for dark triad sexual strategies	Long-term focus is often healthier and better for most Western men

Overall, while the theoretical foundations are improvable, Hamza delivers where it matters most: practical activation for beginners.

4. Correct Diagnosis: Build Value Before All Else

From a power dynamics perspective, Hamza's core premise is correct: become a high-value man.

His "Adonis" metaphor is a repackaging of "building your Sexual Market Value."
His "monk mode" is a method for building your Workplace and Social Value.

He correctly diagnoses that before you can even *think* about dating, status, or influence, you must have a baseline of *personal value*. He gets men to stop *consuming* and wishing and start *building* social exchange leverage.

5. The 'Adonis Ideal' Is An Honorable Role Model

Hamza's Adonis isn't just an attractive man, but also a man of values.
In some instances, Hamza also embodied that ideal. For example, talking about Sneako, he says:

> **Hamza**: You are not a man of character, you cheated on your last girlfriend, you have no integrity

That's an approach we like and respect.

Learn more:

- **How to be honorable and effective**

> The Honorable Man's Guide: Power, Respect, and Success

6. Strong Aspirational Persona

Hamza is a success story that inspires attainable success: proven average beginning, and visible results.

While the reproducibility may not apply to general money-making success, it works for almost everything else.

What Can Be Improved

While Hamza is perfect for many guys starting out, more advanced men may start hitting a ceiling once they progress.

1. Basic Advice Only Takes You So Far

Hamza discusses many topics with deep confidence.

That's both a pro and a con: it helps him set the guru frame and recruit followers.
But he also loses authority with the more advanced folks, and leads men astray when he's wrong.

We see some opportunities for improvement in power dynamics, dating, and high-power mindsets.

For example:

- **Hamza's habits only take you so far**: gym is great to start, no faps can help you stop porn. But you need more to be a top-1%
- **Lacks advanced power awareness, strategy, & psychology**, all foundational for a successful life
- **Calibration could be better**: 'more' isn't always 'more effective'. For example, Hamza's masculine focus makes him seem older. Good in certain contexts, but it must be calibrated for younger crowd dating
- **Generic dating advice,** solid foundations, but some generalizations decrease effectiveness.
  - *Not* for open-minded men: idealization and reactionary repression of free dating don't serve men seeking experience.

Also see:

- **Self-development 101:** the TPM way

> The 10 Steps of Self-Empowerment Everyone Must Follow

Limits & Downsides of Hamza's Routines Should Be Considered

Hamza could also better discuss the downsides to his approach instead of displaying only the positives.

In this video (deleted) he frames TRT fast recovery as a positive. But what caught my attention is that he injured his back three times doing kettlebell swings. Not exactly peak health and longevity.

3 times back injury for Hamza. Something that may weigh in older age and that you may want to avoid

His routines alone also wouldn't be enough: Hamza underwent three surgeries (gynecomastia, varicocele, and otoplasty).

2. Some Naivete Left: Idealization

Despite a 'red pill background', we see some 'blue pill idealization'.

For example, just from this one recent video, Hamza discusses:

- **Idealize fatherhood of father passing wisdom to son**: That's an idyllic image of fatherhood, but it's idealistic **<—- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's critical note:** bad expectations. You don't fully control your child's personality. He may not care about your 'wisdom' and do the opposite of what you teach
- **Idealized 'virgin good girl' waiting for his Adonis:** Hamza introduces 'Anastasia': the ideal woman who resisted society's corrupting vices. She's different, remained a virgin for her Adonis, and they make a perfect couple **<—- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note:** This is idealization of women and relationships, and textbook Madonna-whore dichotomy.

This type of content to me feels like a mix of hilarious, cringy, and… A setup for future disappointment.

Read more:

- **Escape the Madonna-whore complex to be a successful lover**

> The Madonna-Whore Complex: What it Means to You

3. Power Awareness Improvable

Sometimes I see room for growing power awareness and manipulation dynamics.
For example, in this video (later deleted), he says:

> **Hamza**: *I met this beatuful young Russian woman in a 5-star hotel, teaching me about wine* <— See if you spot the red flags ⍰
> *I wanted to be a better man for her* <— ⍰⍰♂

Attractive young woman in a 5-star hotel, expert on expensive wines… What do you think?
Do you think her job was sommelier, or that Hamza fell for the charm of a professional?

> **Lucio**: Quit pedestalizing! She's just a girl

4. Money-Making Advice Won't Work For Most

Hamza's business experience is monetizing a follower base as a self-help influencer.

But that may not be the best business for everyone—and likely isn't.
The influencer path is a frequency-dependent, winner-take-all dynamic. Since there can only be so many influencers for the same audience, this dynamic also means that **all Hamza students are inherently Hamza's competitors.** Power-aware men know this dynamic prevents good mentorship.

That may also explain Hamza's vitriolic downfall with his business partner when he started making self-development videos.

In contrast, Power University's frameworks are broadly applicable to **any field** (politics, corporate, dating, etc.), ensuring students are not competing for the same slice of a saturated influencer pie.

⚠ **Careful with Hamza's business & financial advice**
In one video he advises against ETFs in favor of highly volatile and risky investments. Recommending Iman Gadzhi in older videos may also raise some questions.

5. Guru-Disciples Dynamics Disempower Followers

Hamza doesn't hide that he wants a cult:

> **Hamza**: I see myself as a cult leader

Some dark triad traits may be expected for influencers, and they can be advantageous for the guru himself.
The biggest problem is that **cults and cult leaders suck for the cult *members*.**

Some gurus prefer their followers to remain disempowered in order to maintain control.
These gurus may resent empowered followers and actively undermine them.

Besides the recent controversies, we've also noticed various power moves that we didn't like.
For example, in this video, he says:

> **Hamza**: I make so much money, joke's on you, I'd be doing this for free <— ⍰⍰♂**Lucio's note:** Not the mindset of an influencer who respects & empowers his audience

An audience of beginners may not catch those moves, or when they're being talked down to.
But it will still cap their mental empowerment.

6. Some Disempowering Mindsets

Some of Hamza's mindset and attitudes don't align with a true top-1% man.

For example:

Hamza	TPM
⍰ Men are repressed in society	Top 1% strategists don't complain because they win anyway. There has never been a better time in history to be a smart, strategic man
⍰ Fapping & dating is bad	Guilt for one's drives and sexuality is a moralistic straightjacket. Empowered men accept their drive to release and date
⍰ Endocrine warfare is killing your T	Don't overblow things and be a b*tch about it, focus on masculine agency: avoid plastic, eat healthy, and move on.
⍰ You must be strong/masculine	Pick antifragile identities, adapt & calibrate, and be a man who achieves goals
⍰ Habits as goals	Habits can be scrapped or changed at any time: they are a means to an end. Achieving goals is what matters

We also see some of this:

Idealization & resentment of white women

Idealization of white women is not uncommon in some ethnicities, and some men resent women embracing their sexuality.

Recognizing this helps men develop a more practical, high-leverage approach to dating.

Hamza may also want to look into possible hidden resentment towards white male players.
See here for example:

> **Hamza**: (show signs of possible resentment against women's sexuality)
> **Lucio**: that's a poor mindset for men who want to gain experience

⍰ Bonus: 20-Something On TRT... ?

In a deleted video, Hamza shared his TRT routine while we prepared this analysis.

I applaud men who own up to it, especially if they do it before being found out.
And at the same time, I gotta wonder if it's a good example for young men.

Good habits should *prevent* medications, including jumping on TRT that early.

⍰⍰ **P.S.: Be more decisive: inconsistency undermines authority**
Shifting opinions and sharing-then-deleting (like with the TRT video) undermines the trust and authority of a supposed masculine leader.

From Beginner to Top-1%

If you started with Hamza, you have the minimum viable toolkit: discipline, routines, and social courage.
The next stage is the advanced level:

1. **Calibration** to function and win in any context
2. **Antifragile mindsets** that don't need muscle or habits and maintain self-esteem
3. **Manipulation dynamics** to defend yourself and win
   - Reading people to pick better and avoid value-takers

Hamza vs. Lucio: Comparison

Aspect	Hamza Ahmed	Lucio Buffalmano
Strength	**Masculinity**, habits, discipline, presence	Power dynamics, **strategies**, calibration, goal-achievement
Transformation	Disciplined and gym-going Adonis member of a '**tribe**'	High-power, effective, emotionally & socially **self-sufficient**
Worldview	Clear-cut: good vs. bad habits, Adonis vs. Jeffrey	**Nuanced**: Shades of grey, contexts
Method	**Personality-driven**, routines, rapid activation	**Evidence-based** and framework-driven; methods adapt to people/contexts
Risk	Plateuing; **relies on group identity** and group support for sustained effort	Overdoes self-reliance; May not stress the basics enough
Best For	**Beginners**, for activation, identity, and a 'kick in the butt'	**Sophisticated** & high performing men, for next level in human dynamics

Hamza Courses Review

Hamza's offers an entry-level Skool community and a pricer course.
The course is listed on Skool as Hamza Advanced Course, going from basic to what he frames as the advanced 'Hamza-level'.

Adonis Skool

Hamza's Skool community does a good job at one thing: getting young men (usually 14–22) to cut their dopamine distractions and start healthier habits.

If you're:

- Addicted to gaming or porn

- Have no discipline
- No masculine role models
- No positive male peer group

Then **Adonis School can genuinely help**.
It provides a community of men on the same journey, accountability, momentum, and *identity* ('I'm a man into self-development').

However, once you've:

- Built basic discipline
- Have a gym routine
- Have some focus
- Know how to hold eye contact
- Aren't completely lost socially

There isn't much next-level progression there.
The culture is very "one-note masculinity":

- Grind
- Go to the gym
- Grind some more
- Go to the gym again
- Become Adonis and more like Hamza

All important foundations, but for smart men who weren't completely lost it plateaus fast.
There's **little nuance on**:

- Social intelligence
- Power dynamics
- Leadership & influence
- Calibration
- Top-1% mindsets beyond stop being weak

If you stay too long, it can become dogmatic, overly performative, and even **cap your progress to becoming your own man** with that tribe mentality.

Stage of Development	Should You Join?
Beginner (no discipline, unhealthy habits)	**Yes** — it helps build momentum
Intermediate (gym, some discipline, improving socially)	**Maybe short-term**, but don't expect advanced growth
Advanced (top 20–1% goals: influence, status, leadership, strategy)	**No** — it doesn't teach high-level skills

In short:
Adonis Skool is a **good *launching pad***.
Once you outgrow the 'stop being a child' phase, you'll need more than masculinity motivation to become effective, influential, and respected in adult social environments.

Hamza Advanced Course Common Objections

- **Hamza-based**, rather than framework-driven; lessons are what worked for Hamza, not systematised models
- **Not much advanced** compared to the basic mentorship and community
- **Questioned credibility after TRT**, especially as the marketing stressed the 'latest transformation
- **Beginner-heavy**: advanced men are less likely to stick in 'cults', so fewer role models who are at advanced level

Hamza Course vs. Power University

Power University is for intelligent and more advanced men who want less motivation and more effective strategies for status, respect, and attraction (with measured results).

Feature	Hamza Advanced Course	Power University (TPM)
Focus	Smart men seeking an edge in life	Men's empowerment, strategies, life effectiveness
Evidence	Building on Hamza's personal experience	✅Higher — based on scientific research and Lucio's stronger affinity with scientific reasoning
Price	✅Lower	Higher
Community	✅ Community access; strong motivation is helpful for beginners	Self-study with the option of coaching and/or joining the community
Replicability	Lower — tactics are tied to Hamza's persona and may not generalize	✅Higher — includes calibration to apply across personalities and contexts
Target	20-somethings who want more from Hamza	Smart men seeking an edge on life
Goal	Accelerate: build on routines & discipline, 'stay with the tribe'	Compound: lifetime of critical skills for status, attraction, & power. Self-sufficiency unlocked
Risks	Idealization, groupthink, backslip into blue pill, Madonna-whore complex, self-help plateuing	Skipping some basics, dropping out without coaching, over-analyzing & overfocusing on power phases

What should you go for: if you lack basic discipline and must kick negative habits, start with Hamza and his course. Then move to TPM for higher-level strategies.

Hamza Ahmed: Short Review

Is Hamza legit? Hamza's teachings are a legit starter package to get young, undisciplined men moving. For many men, he delivered better habits, mindsets, and encouraging early wins.

Hamza takes you to the starting grid and gets you running.
Then, once you're ready to graduate from 'better-looking, better-scheduled' to 'high-status, high-leverage' you'll want the deeper and more advanced angles covered by The Power Moves.

Adonis Skool Review: Do his 90-day bootcamps to acquire basic discipline and habits. Then come back here for the systems and strategies of the top-1%.

Strategic Thinking for Top-1% Men: 3 Real-Life Case Studies

Lucio Buffalmano · 10 November 2025 · Archived copy · Original

In life, many men focus on effort: working harder, pushing more, or simply being more aggressive.

Effort matters, of course, but consistent winners don't just work hard: they move and **think strategically**. Strategic thinking is the ability to look beyond the immediate action, predict the long-term consequences, and position yourself for maximum leverage and minimal effort.

Most men think they're strategic.
But **few are truly strategic at a high level**. And high-level strategic thinking is almost an **unfair advantage** in life.
We'll show you to think strategically like the top 0.1% with three real-life case studies:

- **Win a Competitive Job Interview** by leveraging social dynamics you might not even realize are in play
- **Engineer Financial Freedom** with long-term decision-making
- **Master Seduction** by controlling the emotional arc of a date to build deep connection and attraction.

Let's dive in:

Contents

- Story 1: Getting My Dream Job
  - Socialize with the attractive girl, but leave early to signal you're not a player
  - Leverage The Loner To Display Prosocial Leadership
- Story 2: Dream Life Pursuing My Mission
  - Leave At High Leverage Point to Travel & Explore
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- Life Gets Easy

Story 1: Getting My Dream Job

After graduating, I had been shortlisted for a talent rotational program in Prague.

I wanted that job badly, and to get it, I had to ace the assessment center.
While the bulk of the work was done with preparation, presentation, and general high-power behavior, here are two advanced moves that helped:

Socialize with the attractive girl, but leave early to signal you're not a player

It was six of us: five men, and a woman.
If that wasn't enough to grab attention, she was also a typical Swede with blond hair and sparkling blue eyes.

During our socialization lunch break I made sure to talk to her, and get some good vibes.
That displayed:

- **Confidence** to talk and vibe with the attractive girl
- **Social charm** to get an attractive girl invested in you

BUT I also ensured not to get too close or flirty or, God forbid, exchange contacts.
And I also ended it myself to socialize with the other guys.

Why?

It's not to be 'professional'; it runs deeper.

Besides two female HR managers there were many senior managers to 'assess' us.
And **some high-status men feel like *they* are owed the women's attention in their teams**, not men below them.
These men may also be more possessive, and **they see charming men as competition**. **High status men don't to hire competition, they want to get rid of it**.

If you think 'this is petty', answer this:

What runs deeper in a man's psyche, sex and reproduction, or being a good professional and company allegiance?

Of course some men will be good professionals. But many others won't. So I played it for those who don't.

Leverage The Loner To Display Prosocial Leadership

During the break, a guy remained at his seat, and wasn't socializing.

Why do you think I went to talk to him?
Because it was the perfect chance to display pro-social leadership and kindness. This is especially something that

more empathic women in HR note.

It also worked for the more senior managers.
Everyone likes kind people, and it's not only for 'good' reasons.
Kind people tend to be less cutthroat, less competitive, and… **Kind people are lower competition**. Exactly what the most alpha types assessing that day may prefer.

Today, with the hindsight of years of experience, I would have even improved on that move.
Can you think how?

I should have built some rapport with that loner, and then said 'Oh you're interested in Y? That guy there is the same, come, I'll introduce you'.

That signals you're the type of leader who notices the weak link, helps him up, and brings him back into the team.
That's the dream empathic team manager who gets the most out of the team.

Story 2: Dream Life Pursuing My Mission

This is how I went from employed to entrepreneur, doing what I love, and living life on my terms.

My goals were to:

- Adventures and travels
- Purchase a flat for security
- Start TPM

Here is how I did it:

Leave At High Leverage Point to Travel & Explore

My employer was a startup, and I left at the highest point of my 'job market value'.

I had just 'won' my position against a competitor (details in Power University), I was the only full-time salesperson, and I had recruited all our active customers.

Maintain Rapport & Leverage

It was also an easy time to sour things because they needed me, and two, I thought I had good reasons not to be too fond of some people there.

But I kept it friendly and remained in touch because of the principle of 'make friends, not enemies'.
It's always better to have an extra option, and with the leverage I had, I could gain bigger concessions in the future.

So while I traveled the world and lived the life, I also did some freelance work for them.
Some extra money didn't hurt, but mostly I maintained the relationship, stayed in the loop, and maintained leverage for when I'd come back.

Strategically Negotiate a Higher Base Salary: Good For Mortgage

I came back, explored other options as well of course, and negotiated with them.

I asked for some perks I knew they'd reject as a tactic to get a larger base salary, and I got an important salary increase.

I wanted a larger base salary for my next move: purchasing a flat at the lowest possible interest rate.
You can't time the market, but real estate prices were great in my opinion and interest rates had no room to go any lower.

It turned out to be right, the mortgage rate has been below inflation most of the time, and the property value increased by around 70-80% in less than ten years.
But my goal wasn't appreciation, it was this:

Use Your New Place For Side Income

My main goal was securing years of financial independence, without ever working for anyone else.

To do that, I wanted a place with two rooms, furnish both as bedrooms, and use one for extra income.

If things got dire, I could move out and use both rooms for income, so I could still make mortgage payments.
I could go back home with my parents or find something cheap.

Soft Negotiation In Seller's Markets

I found the perfect place, in the perfect location.
It was close to main hubs (perfect for dating), but super quiet, and close to a park.

The seller called me to their office to discuss my proposal and they just said 'no'. I expected a power move because I knew it was a seller's market.

But I rolled with the punches.
This is what many people don't get: they think that being powerful is to always be dominant or call out power moves.
But strategy *always* beats dominance.

The place was perfect: ideal location, ideal location for extra income rent, and an attractive price already (it was a great price because in part because it had some conditions attached for another 10 years, but let's not go into too many details).

I negotiated with two goals in mind:

- Close fast
- Don't seem overly eager that they may pull a last-minute price hike
- Walk the line between easy-going but not a chump

Appearing 'docile' was a strategy.
The seller had other units in the building, and they were property managers. One of their clauses was to vote on my behalf for 2 years. That suggested they had some power struggles going on, and that they preferred easy-going buyers, potentially even naive, who wouldn't interfere with whatever they wanted.

And this is exactly what turned out to be.
My neighbor also wanted the flat before I even entered the picture. But she was *not* easy-going; she was litigious, and was passed over for me.

So I played disappointed, I said 'just give me some time to think about it', and little later I said 'OK, I'll take it if you can put a bed already inside to facilitate my move. If you can do it, you can pick the date of the transaction.

It was small enough for them to say 'yes', they did.
After that, I was 'secure enough' to work on TPM without too many worries.

Story 3: Strategic Seduction

This is a date with an attractive woman at the peak of her mate value.

Things were *just OK* in the beginning, but the dinner conversation was sputtering.

This is where many men talk more, trying to force a connection.
But remember: one, a connection is great but not always strictly needed. *Especially* not for short term. It's more important that she thinks you're a confident, dominant, and higher value man. And the more you rush to fill the silences, the more you chase, the more you signal that you're *lower* value.

> If anyone is uncomfortable with the silences, ensure it's not you.
>
> ✒ *TPM Proverb*

Two: **connection equals not conversation**. Connection is feelings and emotions. Bonding with someone's *presence* in the silences is even more powerful.
When you can do that, people then open up naturally, without forcing it.

The Question That Made Her Open Up

Indeed, when I next took her for a smoothie, she was ready for the question that changed everything.
The question was:

> 'Who do you hate'.

It can be an effective question. Don't try too hard to stay positive. Life is *both* light and dark, and your task isn't to be Tony Robbins.

And connecting on the dark is even more powerful because that's the part she doesn't share with everyone.
More than once that question changed the game, and this was the case.

Her reply was 'my mother', and that opened the floodgates.

Strategic Handling For Deeper Bonding

I replied 'Oh that's interesting', with flat tonality.

Why did I say 'interesting' instead of 'crazy'?
I use crazy a lot, but I use it for interesting situations to liven up the conversation and make her share more.

But **you never say 'crazy' when it's truly shocking or sad.**
It makes you come across as over-reactive, judgmental, and piles up pressure.

This is not the time to display dominance, this is the time to be interested, without displaying any surprise.
Remember: it's your skills that allow her to open up.

You must be interested, but not overly eager and free of any emotional over-reaction.

Think of enticing a cat that's unsure whether to advance. You move little, you speak softly. You display some interest, but you don't chase. You give space for the cat to come

That attitude also displays value.
It's the value of the man who's not impressed because he is *worldly*. He's been there done that, nothing shocks him.
And he knows people and human nature, and may offer guidance.

Display Uplifting Power to Change Tone

She opened up more as I asked thoughtful questions.

Then, callback humor: she'd mentioned Paris dreams, so I quipped, 'Soon you'll snap a pic with a Chanel bag under the Tour Eiffel and text her: "Shouldn't have left me behind, mom."'

It lightens things up, but with a powerful darker edge.

It's not a naïve 'you can do it', but a darker mix of victory and vendetta. And uplifting, implying she will reach her goals.

Remember, in dating you have a dual role: actor and conductor.
So I'm thinking 'right after the dark: lighter mood, transition, and 'pull".

So when she mentions guys from a certain country being 'nice.' I joked back: 'Yeah, but they have a small penis though'.

Lighten The Mood For Emotional Arc

She laughs, I join her: I only smiled at first, I laugh along with her to cement the bond.
That's perfect *emotional control*.

Think about the arc.
You went from comfort with little talk, then wading through the dark, and now you take her OUT of the dark.
Therapists linger in darkness. Seducers lead back into the light, and into sexual tension.

That joke displays sexual confidence and links that topic to *you*.

Last Power Move: Display Dominance

When it was time for the bill, the waiter said they had closed the terminal and couldn't take card.

I had cash, but told them to please check again>
It was tactical: I wanted to display I don't readily submit to external forces and that, if thigns went well, that I could get things my way.

It became a bit of a struggle as they came out once again, and she offered me to pay.
A good sign, but I waved it off saying 'It's all good dear', with a reassuring smile sub-communicating 'You're in good hands, don't have to worry about anything when you're with me'.

After I paid card as I wanted, I told her while walking away:

> 'Remember, in life you never take the first no'.

It's a high-power mindset and framed-expanded that you're used to negotiating things your way.
A high value trait.

10X Post-Intimacy Bonding

I then invite her home and do a signature, brief first escalation move in the elevator.

She already felt close to me, so as expected she just welcomed every move.

I made it a good session despite not being the best time of the month, and that's also always helpful.

Most guys think it ends after intimacy.
But that's where top seducers switch to the next gear instead.

I propose to go for a drink. But after a few minutes.

To understand this move, you need again strong theory of mind.

At this point, many women wonder what's up in the relationship, if they were 'too easy' and triggered his Madonna/whore dichotomy, and may fear they'll be invited to leave.

This is crucial because it prevents you from maximizing bonding and romance.

When you propose a drink, you go from a negative to a positive. It reassures her and lets her enjoy the pillow tlak, and makes her look forward to more and better. It 10xes the romance, bonding and connection.

Post-Intimacy Extra Date For Maximum Connection

I picked a winery and framed it as 'a great place to try'.
Also a tactical move: makes her look forward to a new experience together, and a romantic vibe.

Plus, a drink or two caps the evening for her as a dreamy escape from normal life.

We sat side by side, and at a certain point, she looked around and went to kiss me.

Compare: low power PUA
I read a blog of an older guy who went out with a young girl he was seeing. He told her he would 'get a kiss', made out with her in a hallway, and was all proud and braggy that he had her say 'yes, sir'.
I couldn't help but think how weak it was for a middle-aged man to chase kisses.

Refusing Night Together, In Style

Later, as the night drew to an end, she asked me, hopeful and submissive, if she could sleep over.

Notice how this all came full circle:

She started higher value as a very attractive young woman.
And now *she* is chasing for my company.

I say no because I needed to wake up early, a high-value frame.
And then I added that 'I snore anyway', with a smile. This is high-power 'vulnerability'. It power protects her so she doesn't feel spurned and self-reject, and positively humanizes you now that she already thinks you're so awesome.

Couple Frame: Make Her Positively Obsess

But I say that 'we can meet another day, and maybe go watch a movie'.

After seduction, a 'boyfriend frame' becomes effective.
Again, you must see it from her point of view. At this point, a woman may even fear of falling for the wrong guy.

But when you mention the possibility of closer emotional intimacy, she can let go.

Then, I'm getting picture with cats with hearts in her eyes.

This is good, effective seduction.
Start with little or no leverage and the man usually chasing, to her wanting more of you, and falling in love.

Life Gets Easy

When you get to this level, life gets easy.

High-level strategic thinking is almost an unfair advantage in life.

Indeed, I started my self-development journey very late BECAUSE life was too easy.

Strategic thinking is partially inborn, but it's also a skill.
We teach how to acquire it in Power University.

The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 November 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity (2023) is the most comprehensive scientific reference on why people cheat, bringing together leading researchers to provide a global, evidence-based picture of who is most likely to be unfaithful, why, and with what consequences.

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About the Authors:
Each chapter of The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity *(2023)* is authored by leading scholars and researchers in psychology, sociology, evolutionary biology, and related fields. The editors are:

Todd K. Shackelford, PhD – Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Oakland University, where he directs the Evolutionary Psychology Lab. He has over 500 scholarly publications and extensive editorial experience in evolutionary psychology. He also edited the *Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Sexual Behavior* (4 volumes), and the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology and Romantic Relationships*.

Tara DeLecce, PhD – Assistant Professor of Psychology at California State University, San Bernardino. Her research focuses on romantic and sexual relationships, infidelity, and the psychological and cultural factors that influence mating strategies.

Chapter 1: Are Certain People More Prone Toward Infidelity?

Authors: Emma E. Altgelt, James K. McNulty, Andrea L. Meltzer

This chapter reviews how personality traits and individual differences predict infidelity in both the individual and their partner.
Findings show consistent links between low conscientiousness, low agreeableness, and higher infidelity, with added risk from extraversion and (for women) neuroticism. The Dark Triad (narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism) is strongly associated with cheating. Attachment insecurity and unrestricted sociosexuality also predict infidelity. Partner traits matter as well—being with a partner low in conscientiousness increases the likelihood of straying.

- **Low conscientiousness and low agreeableness are consistent predictors** of higher infidelity.
- **Extraversion and female neuroticism track higher risk**, though effects are smaller.
- **Dark Triad traits correlate strongly with cheating**, via low empathy and manipulativeness.
  - Sexual narcissism is most predictive of infidelity (McNulty & Widman, 2014), rather than general narcissism, which can sometimes be inconsistent ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: narcissism as a whole may also lead to mixed findings when vulnerable narcissism is included. I'd expect vulnerable narcissists to cheat less because of fewer options
- **Attachment insecurity increases infidelity likelihood**, especially avoidance.
  "people higher in attachment avoidance see others as relatively unreliable and thus engage in cognitive and behavioral strategies aimed at gaining distance from partners (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003)"
- **Unrestricted sociosexuality robustly predicts infidelity**, beyond other traits.
- **Partner low conscientiousness raises your cheating risk**, indicating partner effects.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's suggestion**: fantastic work and opening chapter. For the tables, I'd suggest considering a more immediately clear visual representation. For example, green, grey, or red cell for positive, no, or negative correlation—paired with textual annotations indicating the strength of each relationship

Chapter 2: Predicting Infidelity in the Context of Race and Ethnicity

Authors: Kelly Campbell, Tiffany L. Brown, Brandyn-Dior McKinley

This chapter examines infidelity prevalence across U.S. racial and ethnic groups. The findings are blunt: infidelity rates are **highest among African Americans**, followed by Latinos, then Whites, and **lowest among Asian Americans**.

The authors stress that race itself rarely serves as a direct predictor of infidelity. Instead, it's the factors that correlate with race, such as cultural norms, socioeconomic pressures, religiosity, and social exchange dynamics and

sexual marketplace dynamics. <—🤦♂ **Lucio's note: This may partly read like a CYA for the cultural zeitgeist**. It's likely partially true. Still, I don't remember having seen definitive evidence that would fully rule out a contribution of race/ethnicity.

Religiosity suppresses infidelity across groups, while acculturation stress raises risks in immigrant populations.

- **Infidelity prevalence is highest among African Americans**, *with some estimating that African American men are twice as likely as White men to have relationships outside their primary partnership* (Pinderhughes, 2002)
  - Followed by Latinos, Whites
  - Lowest infidelity is among Asian Americans, because of emphasis on family union, sex for procreation and, potentially, options, since Asian American men have less sexual experience than women

Write the authors on the difference in sexual experience between male and female Asians:

> A partial explanation for this difference is the influence of sexual stereotypes that portray Asian women as submissive and exotic sexual objects and Asian men as asexual, emasculated nerds and outsiders (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018; Wong et al., 2012). Possibly, the eroticization of Asian women exposes them to more sexual opportunities relative to men

🤦♂ **Lucio's note**: Asian women *may* have some more opportunities, although I'm doubtful and it largely depends on individual's behavior and attractiveness. I suspect the main difference lies in the fewer options than their male counterparts, rather than the more options of Asian women

- **African American men have more options than African American women** leading to 'man sharing' for some women.
  The reasons are:
  - Black women outnumber men: *Largely due to higher mortality and incarceration rates, as well as disproportionate rates of substance abuse and poor healthcare related to racism (Penn et al., 1997), there are more available female partners than there are men within the Black community (Utley, 2011)*
  - Black men can 'date outside their race'
  - 🤦♂ **Lucio's note**: Another issue for American women is the even larger education gap. See this article on 'difficult dating markets for successful women'
- **Religiosity suppresses infidelity rates** across groups.
  - Conservative political attitude may also suppress infidelity, mention the authors
- **Acculturation stress elevates risk**, especially for immigrants.
  - The value of individualism relates to infidelity because people prioritize personal fulfillment over relational, family, or collective goals, potentially feeling entitled to fulfill their needs through EDI, even if it damages the primary relationship (Attridge & Berscheid, 1994).

Power In Relationships

At the relational (micro) level, power stems from controlling valued resources such as money or sex. The more a partner desires that resource, the more power the provider holds (Lennon, Stewart, & Ledermann, 2013). Power also shifts toward the less dependent or less committed partner—typically the one with better alternatives. Dependence and commitment are shaped by the ability to secure valued resources elsewhere.

At the macro level, societal structures (e.g., gender, race, class) influence power dynamics within couples (Coontz, 1997). Partners bring intersecting dominant or minority statuses into the relationship, and mismatches may lead to tension. The more powerful partner may falsely assume both have the same freedom, but only they do. If they deny or ignore their power, the other cannot initiate change.

Across cultures, men tend to hold more macro-level power, making women more relationship-dependent and more vulnerable to infidelity and exploitation. In interracial or interethnic couples, the partner from the dominant group (e.g., European American) typically holds more dyadic power as well, increasing the risk of conflict or exploitation.

The authors also point out that while the higher power partner may assume the other shares similar freedoms, only the powerful partner can act freely.
And more equitable change is only possible by admitting the power gap. I quote: '*When a person with power does not acknowledge their power or pretends not to have it, the other partner cannot implement change; they require recognition of the imbalance by the power-holder to achieve desired outcomes*'.

Power also fluctuates in predictable patterns depending on the relationship phase.

Also see:

- Stages of relationship power

> Relationship Power Dynamics: Strategies for All 9 Stages

Value exchanges overlap with power dynamics

A crucial concept we also unveiled on this website, value exchanges and power dynamics overlap, as the authors correctly note:

> In terms of equity, those who feel overbenefited (i.e., receiving more outcomes than they deserve) as well as underbenefited (i.e., receiving fewer outcomes than they deserve) report more EDI than those in equitable relationships. Equity is linked to power, in that people who are less dependent on their partner for rewards (satisfying outcomes) have more power in a relationship and are more inclined toward EDI (Prins, Buunk, & VanYperen, 1993)

Macro power differential may explain the gender gap in infidelity

> A variety of intrapersonal factors predict EDI across racial/ethnic groups. In nearly every culture studied, men are more likely than women to engage in EDI (Mark et al., 2011); however, a major reason for this gender difference may relate to power differentials between the sexes. When comparisons are made between men and women with similarly high levels of power and status, infidelity rates are comparable (Lammers et al., 2011)

Chapter 3: Hormonal Predictors of Infidelity

Authors: Lindsay Bochon, Brian M. Bird

Hormones strongly influence mating behavior. T
estosterone, estradiol, oxytocin, vasopressin, and cortisol interact with life history strategies to predict infidelity. Higher testosterone is linked with more short-term mating and extradyadic sex. Women's estradiol peaks correlate with greater attraction to alternatives around ovulation. Oxytocin and vasopressin promote bonding but, when dysregulated, can weaken exclusivity. Cortisol interacts with stress and opportunity, amplifying risk.

- **Higher testosterone aligns with greater extra-pair interest**, especially short-term mating.
  - Testosterone in men is associated with continued mating efforts
  - Men with unrestricted sociosexuality retain testosterone similar to single men
  - Mothers with higher postpartum testosterone show reduced affectionate behavior toward offspring (Fleming et al., 1997), suggesting that reductions in testosterone are necessary for nurturing behavior

- **Testosterone adapts to needs**: T, similar to other hormones, can drive behavior, but also responds flexibly to environmental cues of challenge and/or mating opportunities
- **Fertile-phase estradiol shifts increase attraction to alternatives**, particularly in some partnered women.
- **Bonding hormones can stabilize or destabilize exclusivity**, depending on regulation and context.
- **Fast life-history strategies predict more cheating**, reflecting short-term orientation.

Extra notes

- **Sociosexual orientation is malleable**: *men become relatively more restricted as mating opportunities become scarce (Arnocky et al., 2016) and as they transition from single into marriage and fatherhood (Gettler et al., 2019)*
- **High T women prefer masculine men**: Research by Welling and colleagues suggests that preferences for these sexually dimorphic facial characteristics—including women's attractiveness ratings of masculine men's faces (Welling et al., 2007) are associated with elevated endogenous testosterone concentrations (but see Marcinkowska et al., 2019)
  - High T men prefer feminine faces (Welling et al., 2008)
- **Status and power matter**: *polygynously married men had equivalent testosterone levels compared to their monogamously married counterparts* (Gray et al., 2007) *Polygynously married men, however, are older than men in monogamous marriages, suggesting that age and the continued acquisition of wealth and sociopolitical power is more important for marital status than testosterone-mediated behavior.*

Chapter 4: Operational Sex Ratio and Infidelity

Author: Daniel J. Kruger

The balance of men to women in a population changes infidelity dynamics.
Where men are scarce, men cheat more and commit less; where women are scarce, women extract commitment and resources, but men still may stray. Skewed sex ratios affect not only relationships but social stability, divorce, culture, and public health outcomes.

- **Male scarcity increases male infidelity** and reduces commitment.
- **Female scarcity lets women secure more commitment**, though cultural sanctions may limit female infidelity.
- **Women marry younger when there are more men**: Because women can secure male commitment earlier in relationships, they tend to marry at younger ages (Kruger et al., 2010).
  - Some men also marry younger to secure a prospective partner before another man does, but on average:
- **The variance in male marital age increases with more men**, because men need to acquire greater social status and resources to be considered eligible for marriage (Kruger et al., 2010).
- **Skewed sex ratios correlate with higher STIs and instability**, affecting public health.

Sex Ration Changes Cultures

In post-Roman Europe, Germanic invasions, population collapse, and rural subsistence with a preference for sons led to male-biased sex ratios (Herlihy, 1973; Coleman, 1976) and **the birth of courtly love can be traced back to sex ratio**, with men also idealizing unconsummated relationships and married women ("courtly love"; Guttentag & Secord, 1983).

In the late Middle Ages, this shifted because of losses of men to the Crusades, monastic life, and plague mortality. The new **female-biased sex ratios sparked early feminist thought.** Unmarried women formed Beguine communities—quasi-secular female communes—that produced radical proto-feminist literature and advocated for education and autonomy, though most women remained uneducated and unaware of these movements (Bolton, 1976; Herlihy, 1973).

By the 19th century, female-biased ratios coincided with a resurgence of feminist movements advocating for female independence (Gordon, 1976; Herlihy, 1973).

Cultural shifts continued into the **20th century**, where fluctuating sex ratios influenced media and relationship behavior: male-biased decades (1930s–50s) emphasized male commitment, while female-biased periods (1960s–70s) saw more casual male sexual strategies and rising divorce rates (Pedersen, 1991; Guttentag & Secord, 1983).

Chapter 5: It's Not You, It's Us—Relationship-Based Predictors

Authors: Jana Hackathorn, Brien K. Ashdown

Relationship factors are stronger predictors of infidelity than personality. The key is commitment, shaped by satisfaction, investments, and alternatives. Infidelity risk spikes with low satisfaction, high-quality alternatives, and boredom. Cohabiting couples show more infidelity than married couples. Risk also changes over time: women's risk peaks around 7 years, men's later, around 18 years.

> Satisfaction within various domains in one's primary relationship predicts a person's attitudes toward infidelity, and less satisfaction increases the likelihood to engage in an affair, as individuals who are happy tend not to stray from the things that make them happy

- **Low satisfaction and commitment are strong predictors** of infidelity.
  Conversely:
- **Relationship quality lowers infidelity**: quality is negatively related to intense attraction to others and to infidelity (Gibson et al., 2016).
- **higher quality of alternatives** is among the strongest predictors of cheating (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010)
- **Cohabitation shows higher cheating risk than marriage**, partly due to weaker constraints.
- **The earlier the marriage, the higher the cheating**: *Respondents who were married at a young age (i.e., 16 years or younger) reported four times more infidelity than those who were married in their early 20s.*
  The likelihood of infidelity decreases steadily as the age at which participants were married increases (Atkins et al., 2001).
- **Dependent women cheat more**: Lower relative income (i.e., economic dependency on one's current partner) is associated with higher odds of infidelity (Munsch, 2015). For women, those who are economically dependent on their partner are more likely to engage in infidelity than either women who provide all the income in a household (i.e., the breadwinners) or women who are in an economically equal relationship (Munsch, 2015).
  <— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's suggestion & note: This was super interesting to find out, and something I suspected based on experience and power dynamics. I really wanted to see here there effect size or at least a directional estimate—how much more likely? I'd advice the authors to share the effect size whenever possible
- **Risk timing differs by sex**, peaking ~7 years for women and ~18 years for men.

However, remember that infidelity can also happen in happy relationships:

> (while) demographic and individual characteristics are inconsistently associated with infidelity, relationship variables are the most consistent and robust across multiple studies (Haseli et al., 2019; Vowels et al., 2020). However, this research on relationship factors accounts for, on average, only one-fourth of the variance in infidelity behavior (e.g., Atkins et al., 2001; Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Tsapelas et al., 2010), leaving a large amount of variance unexplained. Simply put, infidelity does sometimes occur in happy relationships (Perel, 2017)

Social Exchange, Commitment & Infidelity (Handbook of Infidelity)

The **investment model of commitment**—validated and replicated across cultures—is based on **social exchange theory**, which holds that people seek relationships where rewards outweigh costs (Nye, 1979; Rusbult et al., 1998). Commitment is strongest when satisfaction is high, alternatives are low, and investment is substantial (Le & Agnew, 2003).

Low satisfaction, weak interdependence, and abundant alternatives predict infidelity across groups (Treas & Geisen, 2000; Atwood & Seifer, 1997; Nowak et al., 2014). In contexts like the African American community, gender imbalances and structural inequality reduce investment and increase infidelity risk (Adamopoulou, 2013; Penn et al., 1997). Religiosity can act as a protective factor (Atkins et al., 2001).

Globally, **economic-sexual exchanges**—such as transactional relationships—also contribute to infidelity, especially where emotional fulfillment is lacking (Smith, 2010; Lang & Smart, 2002; Scelza et al., 2020).

Chapter 6: Social Versus Sexual Monogamy

Authors: Catherine Salmon, Jessica Hehman

This chapter offers an important differentiation between social monogamy, when couples pair bond and live together, and sexual monogamy, which entails sexual exclusivity.
'Genetic monogamy' can occur without sexual monogamy if no extrapair paternity occurs.

Humans often practice social monogamy (long-term bonds) with expected but not guaranteed sexual exclusivity. Evolution shaped dual strategies: pair-bonding for cooperation and occasional extra-pair sex for genetic diversity or status. Cultures differ in how strictly they enforce sexual monogamy.

- **Social monogamy does not imply sexual exclusivity**, even in stable bonds.
- **Extra-pair sex is common in socially monogamous societies**, varying with norms and enforcement.

Interesting notes

- **Polygyny is more common overall, but monogamy is more common in societies with more evolved political systems** (Sanderson, 2001)

Chapter 7: Cultural Differences and Similarities in Correlates of Infidelity

Authors: Inmaculada Valor-Segura, Gemma Sáez, Abraham P. Buunk

Cross-cultural data show universal predictors—low satisfaction, high alternatives—while culture shapes expression and stigma.
Cultures of honor (e.g., Mediterranean, Middle Eastern) punish women's infidelity more harshly. Religious and collectivist cultures have lower infidelity prevalence, while urban, individualist settings foster higher rates.

> infidelity is not typically accepted or approved in Western countries such as Spain, Great Britain, or the United States, and is seriously disapproved of in many Islamic countries, with often serious consequences for the adulterer. On the other hand, in many African countries infidelity is sometimes tolerated, while in Eastern countries such as Thailand, people are more tolerant because sex has traditionally been marketed, thus increasing the approval or consent of extradyadic sex (Mackay, 2001)

- **Male infidelity is more accepted**: Mackey and Immerman's review (2001) of 216 cultures showed that male infidelity is less unacceptable than female infidelity. Even today many cultures view it as more 'understandable' if a betrayed party sought revenge (Buunk et al., 2018).
- **Low satisfaction and high alternatives predict infidelity universally**, across cultures.

- **Honor cultures penalize women's infidelity harshly**, shaping behavior and reporting.
- **Modernization and urbanization expand opportunities**, weakening sanctions.

Chapter 8: Predicting Online Infidelity

Authors: Carey J. Fitzgerald, Crystal Moreno, Jody Thompson

Online spaces expand opportunities for infidelity: sexting, private messaging, pornography alternatives, and dating apps. Hidden apps and passwords may help keep it hidden. Many people consider these behaviors infidelity, even without physical sex.

Chapter 9: Predicting Infidelity in Nonheterosexual Relationships

Authors: Jonathan M. Bowman, Benjamin L. Compton

Infidelity in nonheterosexual couples follows many of the same patterns as heterosexual couples: low satisfaction, weak commitment, and good alternatives. But there is a key difference: many LGBTQ couples negotiate consensual nonmonogamy. Infidelity is thus defined not by sex with others per se but by breaking the couple's agreed rules.

- **Low satisfaction and commitment predict cheating across orientations**, mirroring heterosexual patterns.
- **Men perceive same-sex cheating as less threatening** (Confer & Cloud, 2011; Denes et al. 2015; Compton & Bowman, 2017)

Interesting notes:

- **Bisexual women are more likely to rate higher on Machiavellianism** than straight or lesbian women (Lippa, 2020) and on the Dark Triad (Semenyna et al., 2018) <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: this reminds me of the book 'Confessions of a Sociopath', where the author states that bisexuality is her red flag for possible sociopathy

Chapter 17: Infidelity in Nonheterosexual Relationships

Authors: Justin J. Lehmiller, Dylan Selterman

Patterns of infidelity in nonheterosexual couples parallel heterosexual dynamics but with unique stressors. Minority stress, secrecy, and smaller dating pools shape behavior. Consensual nonmonogamy is more common, but infidelity still occurs when agreements are broken. Gay men report higher rates of sexual infidelity than lesbians, but less distress if agreements are clear.

- **Rule clarity defines fidelity in CNM**, not monogamy itself.
- **Gay men report higher sexual infidelity**, lesbians lower but more emotional boundary issues.
- **Minority stress elevates secrecy and boundary challenges**, impacting trust.

Chapter 10: Emotional and Sexual Infidelity—Evolutionary Origins

Authors: Julie A. Planke, Jacqueline M. Di Santo, Glenn Geher

This chapter explains why men and women differ in what they find most threatening.
Both sexes find infidelity of any type distressing. But men, on average, evolved to be more distressed by sexual infidelity (risk of paternity uncertainty), while women, on average, evolved to be more distressed by emotional infidelity (risk of losing resources and commitment).
Large-scale cross-cultural data support this pattern, though individual variation exists.

- **Men report greater distress at sexual infidelity**, women at emotional infidelity.
- **These sex differences appear cross-culturally**, consistent with evolutionary threats.

- **Individual differences modulate reactions**, including orientation, attachment, and culture.

Chapter 11: Sexual Novelty Motivations for Infidelity

Authors: Limor Y. Gottlieb, David P. Schmitt

A powerful driver of infidelity is the search for novelty. People cheat not only because of dissatisfaction but because novelty is inherently rewarding. Cross-cultural surveys show both men and women report sexual variety as a major motive, with men slightly higher. Evolutionarily, novelty seeking could spread genes and maintain excitement.

- **Men are higher in novelty-seeking**, though present in women.
- **Novelty seeking operates even in satisfied relationships**, not just those with deficits.
- **Psychopathy predicts novelty-seeking**, the robust link between psychopathy and novelty-seeking and infidelity (in both men and women) could indicate a reproductive strategy (Mealey, 1995) aligned with a fast life history strategy (Jonason, Koenig, & Trost, 2010).

Machiavellianism vs Psychopathy

Psychopathy predicts infidelity in men, while both psychopathy and **Machiavellianism** predict it in women.

One explanation: women face higher relational costs for infidelity (e.g., breakup risk; Brand et al., 2007), so Machiavellian traits—like planning, impulse control, and secrecy (Jones & Paulhus, 2011b)—may help them cheat more strategically and avoid detection.

Unlike psychopaths, Machiavellian individuals are less likely to destroy their relationships after infidelity. This suggests that **novelty-seeking women may use Machiavellian strategies** to maximize genetic or sexual benefits while minimizing social risk.

Chapter 12: The Mate Switching Hypothesis

Authors: Mike Abrams, Lidia Dengelegi Abrams

Infidelity often functions as a mate-switching strategy. Cheating may signal the end of one relationship and the start of another, especially when the new partner is perceived as higher value. Affairs often precede divorces. This hypothesis explains why many long-term affairs result in new committed partnerships.

- **Infidelity often serves as a mate-switching tactic**, paving the way for a new partner.
- **Affairs frequently convert into primary relationships**, especially with higher perceived mate value.
- **Women more often use affairs as exit strategies**, when dissatisfied or unsafe.

Interesting Notes

- **Infidelity is heritable, especially in men**: a study of 7,378 twins revealed that extrarelationship sex had a heritability of 62% in men and 40% in women (Zietsch et al., 2015).
  The higher heritability of infidelity in men is concordant with men's larger fitness benefits from infidelity
- **Low self-esteem pushes away partners**: Low self-evaluations may inadvertently convince a partner that this is the case.
  The solicitations the self-effacing partner offers may prompt a re-evaluation of relationship equity (Schmitt, & Buss, 2001; Arnocky et al., 2013)

Also read:

- Dating women with low self-esteem

Why Jealousy Is Inborn

> A man in such an epoch spending even a year or two providing sustenance and care to the progeny of another male paid a devastating price in genetic fitness. Men who were vigilant for competing males, put significant effort into mate guarding, and responded with violent rage when their monogamy was threatened, were more successfully in avoiding cuckoldry.
> (…)
> An early human who took a laissez-faire approach to his mate's behavior would have an increased chance of investing in other males' offspring and a diminished likelihood of leaving his own offspring and genes to survive in posterity. **As a result, "jealous" genes are more prevalent in modern men**

Dual Sexuality Hypothesis

> Sexual infidelity in relationships in which a partner perceives their mate to have less value may be explained by the "good genes hypothesis."
> Women have evolved a dual mating strategy—obtaining parental and other investment from one man while surreptitiously seeking and mating with those they find more sexually attractive. A woman drawn to a more sexually attractive man represents her nonconscious quest for "better" genes. Indeed, the willingness of many women to risk the consequences of an affair denotes the compelling attraction to someone with a superior genome. The quest for better genes is more motivation for women than for men, who, unlike women, will often have affairs even when satisfied with their current relationship (Shackelford & Buss 1997b). Their motives are the quest for novelty and opportunity to propagate their genes (consciously or unconsciously).

Read more in our article reviewing the corresponding manosphere mantra:

- Low status provides, high status has sex?

Mate Value Dissonance & Subconscious Devaluation

The authors describe an interesting subconscious process.

Mate switching as the result of a **slow, subconscious shift in assessment**. When one partner's **self-perceived mate value rises**—due to aging differences, career gains, or social advancement—they may begin to feel increasingly mismatched with their partner (Schmitt & Buss, 2001).

This internal dissonance builds gradually and often leads to **attributing dissatisfaction to the partner's flaws** (Abrams, 2012). As attraction fades, infidelity becomes more likely—and **infidelity feels justified based on the partner's flaws**, rather than regretted.
The unfaithful partner may then devalue their current mate while idealizing the new lover, paving the way for **infidelity to evolve into full mate switching**.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Note: Survival of the relationship may not depend much on the partner's attractiveness

The authors say that as love fades, relationships are more likely to survive if one or both partners possess high mate value—such as male status and masculine features (Jacob et al., 2002), or female markers of reproductive health like a .7 waist-to-hip ratio and facial neoteny.

However, I think that the survival of either love or the relationship may depend less on a partner's absolute attractiveness, and more on how well the partners' **mate values match**, and how those values compare to **available alternatives**.

Paradoxically, partners who are not much in demand or lower in confidence may be hold up better and happier

together.

Chapter 20: Formation of a Primary Relationship with an Infidelity Partner

Authors: Charlene F. Belu, Lucia F. O'Sullivan

Some affairs evolve into primary relationships. However, these new relationships face challenges: lower trust, fear of repeat cheating, and stigma. Success rates are lower than relationships formed outside infidelity contexts, but some do stabilize if partners rebuild trust.

- **Affair partners sometimes become primary partners**, but trust deficits linger.
- **Trust erosion and suspicion remain elevated**, challenging stability.
- **Relationships born from affairs break up more often**, relative to typical starts.

Mate Poaching May Lead to Poor Relationships Because of Poachers' Traits

> In line with traits that cue dominance, successful mate poaching by males was best predicted by their height, greater self-esteem, criminal tendencies, and greater display of cold affect (Sunderani et al., 2013). Targets of mate poaching attempts were higher on average in physical attractiveness (Sunderani et al., 2013). Together, these profiles indicate that the traits that characterize those who engage in infidelity or who are likely to be lured away from an exclusive relationship are not traits conducive to long-term committed relationships

Chapter 13: Deception and Secrecy in Infidelity

Author: Susan M. Hughes

Infidelity requires deception—concealing time, digital activity, finances, and emotions. People use verbal lies, technology tricks, and behavioral cover-ups. Detecting infidelity is difficult because cheaters refine concealment. Gender differences exist: men more often deny, women more often omit or emotionally redirect.

- **Gaslighting,** a term used to describe the manipulation of information and distortion of reality in such a way that the victim questions their own sanity (Gass & Nichols, 1988). Cheaters may lie, falsify the facts, and distort reality to convince their mates that they are crazy and that what their mate perceives is not happening
  - Also read 'signs of gaslighting' to protect yourself
- **Most infidelity victims remain ignorant**, which allows the transgressors the ability to sustain their primary relationship (Weiser & Weigel, 2015). Dowd (2012) found that most participants (78%) in the study never disclosed their infidelity to their partner, so it remained unknown
- **Withdrawal (39.5%) was the most commonly reported sign of a partner's infidelity** in Dowd's study (2012). Different types of withdrawal patterns included less frequency in phone contact, less physical contact, a diminishing sex life, a general loss of interest in their partner, being less communicative, emotional detachment, and breaking patterns of usual behavior (Dowd, 2012; Shackelford & Buss, 1997).
- **People can identify infidelity in others' romantic relationships**: Lambert et al. (2014) found that participants who watched a short video clip of a couple interacting could accurately detect which targets had cheated on their romantic partners. They found that this detection was mediated by ascriptions of commitment and trustworthiness of the persons they were observing
- **Men more likely to be suspicious** (Brand et al., 2007), to judge their partner will be unfaithful in the future, and to detect infidelity (Andrews et al., 2008).
  This is explained by 'error management theory': since men's costs of infidelity are higher, they err on the side of caution
- **Men more often deny; women more often omit or redirect**, in disclosure patterns.

- **Greater relationship satisfaction leads to more confessions**: *individuals who reported having greater satisfaction with their relationship were more likely to reveal their infidelity secret to their partner than those in less satisfying relationships* (Dowd, 2012)
- **Women are more likely to disclose infidelity than men** (Brand et al., 2007). But it may not all be because of 'honesty', but as a step to terminate the relationship:
  - Women were also marginally more likely than men to break up with their partner after they had cheated and subsequently more likely to then start a new relationship with the affair partner
- **Securely attached partners less likely to cheat** and more likely to confess or consider confessing
- **Men seeking extrapair concealed the relationship**, while women were more likely to reveal they had a committed partner

Interesting Notes

- **Mate value influences reactions to infidelity**. Those who perceived themselves to be high in mate value reported greater levels of indignation in response to infidelity, whereas those who perceived themselves to be lower in mate value reported greater levels of insecurity (Phillips, 2010)
- **Masculinity is an important facial indicator**: *Facial masculinity seemed to mediate women's accuracy, with women rating more masculine-looking men as more likely to be unfaithful and as having a sexual history of being unfaithful. Women were correct in their estimates because masculinity ratings correlated significantly with men's infidelity*
- **Lower-pitched voices judged more likely to cheat** for both sexes (Hughes and Harrison, 2017), while higher pitched voices more trustowrthy (O'Connor & Barclay, 2017)

Men and Women's Approaches to Concealing Infidelity

When attempting to attract a new partner while still in a committed relationship (i.e., **mate poaching**), men and women use different tactics to **conceal their intentions** from both their current partner and their social circle.

- **Men** tend to **increase displays of commitment** to their current partner to conceal infidelity. This includes talking about a shared future, expressing emotional closeness, showing satisfaction with the relationship, and fulfilling the partner's resource and emotional needs. Men also **hide the affair socially** by withholding information and isolating the extradyadic relationship from their broader network (Schmitt & Shackelford, 2003).

- **Women**, on the other hand, maintain **stable routines** to avoid drawing attention. They often **increase sexual and romantic behavior** with their current partner, making the extradyadic interest less detectable through consistent behavior and apparent emotional investment (Schmitt & Shackelford, 2003).

In short, men perform **over-investment**; women maintain **consistency** and increase intimacy—both aimed at hiding infidelity.

Machiavellian's Strategic Approach to Deception

Individuals high in Machiavellianism tend to **control what information they reveal**, making them more capable of **plausible and convincing lies** (Giammarco et al., 2013).

They often **endorse lying for personal gain** and feel **confident in their ability to deceive**, which makes them more likely to engage in **blatant lies** rather than subtle omissions (Brewer & Abell, 2015).

However, because they're also **risk-averse when it comes to detection**, especially in cases like infidelity, they still employ **strategic caution** in how they lie (Adams et al., 2014).

Learn more:

- How to be a good Machiavellian, using the positives within an honorable man's approach

Chapter 14: Infidelity Across the Ovulatory Cycle

Authors: Virginia E. Mitchell, Jenna M. Lunge, Alex Orille, Mercedes Hughes, Lisa L. M. Welling

Women's sexual interest fluctuates across the ovulatory cycle. During fertile phases, women are more likely to show attraction to men with markers of genetic quality, sometimes outside their primary partner. This creates a predictable window of higher infidelity risk, though it does not apply equally to all women or all relationships.

- **Attraction to alternatives increases near ovulation**, for some partnered women.
- **Testosterone and estradiol are positively associated with women's preferences for facial masculinity** (e.g., Bobst et al., 2014; Welling et al., 2007; although see Marcinkowska et al., 2019; for estradiol, see Dixson et al., 2018; Roney & Simmons, 2016; Roney et al., 2011).
  Estradiol levels are also positively associated with women's preferences for masculine male voices (e.g., Feinberg et al., 2006; Pisanski et al., 2014) and behavioral displays of dominance (e.g., Lukaszewski & Roney, 2009, although these authors used estimated rather than measured hormonal assessments)
  - **Progesterone** is negatively associated with facial masculinity preferences (e.g., DeBruine et al., 2019; Marcinkowska et al., 2018)
  - ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: **Estradiol** is more strongly associated with *feminine traits, fertility, sexually selective behavior* and even *mate value*.
    Progesterone is more associated with *nurturance and long-term bonding*, higher *post*-ovulation, and **inversely** related to masculine preference.

⍰♂Lucio's Question: **Is masculinity preferred by feminine or masculine women?**

Lucio:
The authors refer to women high in both testosterone and estradiol as preferring masculine men.

However, the two seem to be opposite: testosterone is associated with masculinity and dominance (and not most attractive in women), and estradiol with femininity (and often more attractive).

I wonder how these two square off together, if at all.

I found out that these two hormones seem to be moderately correlated.
So I suppose it's possible for a woman to be high testosterone, but not high estradiol, and the opposite.

Is it a coincidence that both prefer masculine men, or not?

Finally, progesterone seems to be negatively correlated with testosterone and be a stereotypically 'feminine hormone'.
Shouldn't this make a woman more likely to be feminine? ⍰

- **Infidelity risk peaks around ovulation**, especially when partner satisfaction is low.
- **Partner mate-guarding intensifies during fertile windows**, reflecting evolved counter-strategies.
- **Hormonal contraceptives change tastes and behaviors:**
  - Exotic dancers don't get extra tips during ovulation when using HCs (Miller et al., 2007)
  - Reduced preferences for male masculinity (Feinberg et al., 2008; Gori et al., 2014; Little et al., 2002; Little, Jones, & Burriss, 2007; but see Jones, Hahn, Fisher, Wang, Kandrik, Han, et al., 2018)

Theories of Women's Sexual Strategies

1. Dual Mating Hypothesis

Main idea:
Women evolved a dual mating strategy:

- **Long-term mates**: chosen for investment, reliability, and cooperation
- **Short-term mates (at peak fertility)**: chosen for genetic quality (e.g., masculinity, symmetry, health markers) *(Pillsworth & Haselton, 2006a)*

Message: Women may seek good genes via extrapair sex while keeping a dependable long-term partner.

Support:

- Some support from cycle-based shifts in preferences (e.g., increased attraction to masculine men near ovulation)
- But **replication is mixed**, and newer studies question how strong or consistent the effect is across individuals and cultures.

Also, it's possible that women may be in a relationship with high mate value partners, in which case the 'ovulatory shift' in attraction may favor the current patner:

> Moreover, women with more sexually desirable partners report feeling closer to their partners and experiencing more relationship satisfaction around ovulation than women who have less sexually desirable partners.
> Conversely, women with less sexually desirable partners report being less critical of and feeling closer to their partner during low-fertility versus high-fertility points in their menstrual cycle (Larson et al., 2013)

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2. Extended Sexuality Theory

Main idea:
Women's sexual behavior **extends beyond fertile windows** and serves a **bonding function**, especially in low-fertility (luteal) phases

(Grebe et al., 2013; Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008)

Message: Non-conceptive sex helps maintain long-term bonds, ensure male investment, and protect against risks (e.g., coercion, resource loss) during pregnancy.

Support:

- More support than Dual Mating in explaining **why women engage in sex when not fertile**
- Aligns well with human pair-bonding and concealed ovulation patterns.

Concealed Ovulation

Main idea:
Unlike many mammals, **women show no obvious signs of ovulation** (Nunn, 1999), and have sex across the cycle (Dixson & Altmann, 2000).

Message: Concealed ovulation evolved to:

- Increase **paternal investment** (men can't time their effort just around ovulation)
- **Reduce paternity certainty** to deter male infanticide (Hrdy, 1979)
- Allow covert extrapair mating at peak fertility

Support:

- Strong theoretical grounding
- Supported by comparative research and observed human mating patterns
- Fits well with both **Dual Mating** and **Extended Sexuality** theories

In chart:

Theory	Core Message	Support Level
Dual Mating Hypothesis	Women pursue genes short-term, investment long-term	Mixed — some evidence, contested replications
Extended Sexuality	Non-fertile sex evolved to maintain bonds and ensure support	Moderate to strong
Concealed Ovulation	Hides fertility to enable female choice, reduce infanticide, and increase male investment	Strong evolutionary rationale and comparative support

Chapter 15: Long-Term Infidelities

Authors: Dana A. Weiser, Jaclyn Cravens Pickens, Adam V. Thomas

Long-term infidelities involve emotional bonding and sometimes parallel relationships. These affairs can last years and involve deep secrecy. They often coexist with otherwise stable marriages, showing that infidelity is not always about dissatisfaction but can create a "dual life."

Chapter 16: Cultural Differences in the Nature of Infidelity

Author: Farid Pazhoohi

Cultures differ not just in prevalence but in type. In more gender-equal societies, women report more sexual infidelity; in patriarchal societies, men dominate infidelity rates.

Punishments also differ: in some Middle Eastern countries, female infidelity is punishable by death, while male infidelity may be tolerated. In contrast, Western cultures often normalize male infidelity but stigmatize female cheating less than in the past.

- **Greater gender equality correlates with higher reported female infidelity**, narrowing gaps.
- **Patriarchal cultures harshly punish women's infidelity**, while tolerating men's more.
- **Western societies show narrowing gender gaps**, with shifting norms.
- **Higher male provisioning = higher infidelity punishment**: both men and women viewed male more than female sexual and emotional infidelities more harshly in cultures in which direct paternal investment and provisioning is higher
  - Frequency and permissiveness of social norms toward extramarital sex were associated with higher female-biased sex ratios and lower paternal investment (Scelza et al., 2020a)
- **Infidelity acceptance and rates may be rising**: from 2000 to 2016, the percentage of American adults who report that extramarital sex is always wrong has declined from 79.4% to 75.8%
  - In China, infidelity rates have risen over the period 2000–2015 from 12.9% to 33.4% for men, and from 4.7% to 11.4% for women (Zhang et al., 2021).
- **Nature may beat culture**: It is argued that women from male-dominated societies such as Japan in the 1970s do not approve of extramarital infidelity; however, once they are exposed to such an opportunity they are as likely as American women to be unfaithful (Maykovich, 1976).

Chapter 18: Relationship Dissolution Following Infidelity

Authors: Caroline E. Shanholtz, David A. Sbarra

Infidelity is the number one predictor of divorce worldwide. Most relationships do not survive discovery of cheating, especially sexual infidelity. Factors influencing whether couples stay together include presence of children, financial dependence, and willingness to forgive. But overall, infidelity is the leading cause of breakup across societies.

- **Infidelity is the leading global cause of divorce**, across societies.
- **Testosterone has been associated with precursors to unforgiveness**, including more anger rumination (Herschl et al., 2012) and less empathy (Hermans et al., 2006).
- **Infidelity can be a catalyst toward growth** after a separation: *women who end very low-quality marriages show gains in psychological well-being over time and appear to be relatively free of the tumultuous period of adjustment that often surrounds the end of marriage* (Bourassa et al., 2015)
- **Couples with children and shared resources are likelier to stay**, despite betrayal.
- **Emotional affairs can be as breakup-inducing as sexual ones**, depending on values.

Chapter 19: Forgiveness for a Partner's Infidelity

Authors: Megan R. Dillow, Amanda Denes

Forgiveness after infidelity is rare but possible. Predictors include high relationship investment, religious values, and genuine partner remorse. Women are slightly more forgiving of emotional infidelity, men of sexual infidelity. But forgiveness does not always restore satisfaction—it sometimes only prolongs the relationship.

- **Forgiveness depends on remorse, investment, and values**, more than time.
- **Gendered forgiveness patterns exist**, with women more forgiving of emotional, men of sexual infidelity.
- **Forgiveness does not guarantee satisfaction recovery**, and may only extend the relationship.

- **Forgiveness can be healthy**: forgiveness-granting has been associated with decreased anxiety, depression, stress, and negative affect; in addition, it improves positive affect and overall life satisfaction (Riek & Mania, 2012; Toussaint et al., 2016). Conversely,
- Unforgiveness has been related to increased subclinical anxiety and depressive symptoms (J. Davis et al., 2015)
- ⚠ **Careful forgivingthose who don't deserve it**, like repeat offenders

> Women's forgiveness of a partner's abuse may reinforce unequal power distributions and may be equated with tolerance of abuse (Lamb, 2002). Dominant abusers who are able to elicit empathy from their female targets are more likely to be forgiven, implicating a vicious cycle wherein empathy-driven forgiveness is associated with continued patterns of abuse (Tsang & Stanford, 2007)

Forgiveness-Seeking Tactics

Checkmarks that one that seemed to work better, x the ones that didn't.

- ✅ **Explicit acknowledgment** — apologizing, expressing regret, taking responsibility, directly asking for forgiveness
- ✅ **Nonverbal assurances** — behaving especially nicely, showing affection, attentive behavior
- ✅ **Compensation** — doing favors, buying gifts, offering to "do anything"
- **Explanation** — giving reasons or context for the offense
- ❌ **Humor** — joking about the situation or trying to lighten the mood *(rare and ineffective for serious transgressions)*

What seems to work best then, as predicted by power dynamics theory, is to **re-empower the cheated partner**.

Sincere apologies, visible remorse, and **accepting responsibility** increase empathy and forgiveness (Metts & Cupach, 2007; Davis & Gold, 2011; McCullough et al., 1997).
and **commitment to change** and offering reparations further improve chances of being forgiven

Chapter 21: Renewed Love Between Partners After Infidelity

Authors: T. Joel Wade, Rebecca L. Burch, Maryanne L. Fisher

Some couples experience renewed passion after infidelity, triggered by jealousy, fear of loss, or honest confrontation. These cases are uncommon but show that crises can sometimes reignite attraction. Still, the new closeness often fades with time as post-infidelity passion tend to be 'spikes' in attraction.

Chapter 22: Relationship Quality Without Renewed Love

Authors: Mohammad Hassan Asayesh, Elaheh Golpasha

When couples stay together after infidelity without renewed love, the relationship often declines in quality. Trust erodes, communication worsens, and dissatisfaction increases. These marriages often continue due to obligation (children, finances) but are marked by low well-being.

- **Children and finances keep couples together**, despite chronic dissatisfaction.
  - Some victims form child coalitions, 🤦♂ **Lucio's note**: some coalitions can turn toxic and against the cheating partner. I've experienced this from an ex's family

Chapter 23: Violence and Homicide Following Infidelity

Authors: Steven Arnocky, Adam Davis, Ashley Locke, Larissa McKelvie, Tracy Vaillancourt

Infidelity is a leading trigger for intimate partner violence and homicide. Men are more likely to respond violently, especially when paternity uncertainty is threatened.

- **Biparental care provides benefits but also risks**, including infidelity.
  - Infidelity is a major reproductive challenge
- **Violent reactions correlate with male sexual proprietariness:** the many potentially violent consequences to real or suspected infidelity (ie.: psychological, physical, or sexual violence against partner, violence against affair partner, abuse and killing of children) all are robustly links to (typically) male sexual proprietariness, which embodies men's attempts to control and monopolize the reproductive decisions of women to stymie infidelity, reduce paternity uncertainty, and prevent women's attempts to defect from the romantic relationship (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Taylor, 2012; Wilson & Daly, 1996).
- **There is a link between infidelity and abuse**, several studies show. *Taken together, this body of evidence highlights that infidelity and IPV frequently intersect; real or suspected female infidelity likely precipitates and maintains, but does not justify, violence against women*
  - Women who committed infidelity during their prior relationship were more likely to experience sexual and physical abuse at the hands of their partner (Shields and Hanneke, 1983)
  - Men who suspected a partner was likely to cheat reported more controlling behavior, which in turn predicted violence against intimate partners (Cousins & Gangestad, 2007)
  - Arnocky, Sunderani, et al. (2015) supported positive correlations between anticipated partner infidelity and IPV (physical assault, partner injury, sexual coercion, and psychological aggression) in a sample of college-aged men
- **IPV may be considered a form of cost-inflicting mate retention behavior**, including emotional manipulation, controlling behavior, and physical abuse, that functions to stymie women's and men's infidelity and to reduce the likelihood of defection from the mateship (Albert & Arnocky, 2016; Davis et al., 2018; Miner, Shackelford, et al., 2009; Miner, Starratt, et al., 2009)
- **IPV may be adaptive**, with several lines of evidence
  - Domestic assault appears to function primarily to prevent infidelity, whereas in-pair sexual assault seems to be a response after infidelity has been committed (Camilleri & Quinsey, 2009; Daly & Wilson, 1992; Goetz & Shackelford, 2006)
  - ⚠ Don't jump to conclusions, though: it is difficult to determine the extent to which infidelity directly leads to abuse. Abused individuals may instead be more likely to be unfaithful (Arnocky, Sunderani, et al., 2015). And men suspected of infidelity are also more likely to commit IPV (WHO & LSHTM, 2010) (…)
    IPV is also risky, including violent retaliation, increased odds of relationship termination (discussed in Davis et al., 2018, Duntley & Shackelford, 2012, and Miner, Starratt, et al., 2009), and women deciding to terminate pregnancies when victims of IPV
- **IPV isn't male only, women can also perpetrate**, particularly in gender-parity cultures women and men perpetrate common forms of emotional and physical violence to a similar extent (Archer, 2006, 2018; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Straus, 2009).
  - Most IPV appears to be bilateral, whereby both partners are engaged in mutual violence toward one another (Babcock et al., 2019; Madsen et al., 2012).
- **Intimate partner homicide is considered an extreme form of male sexual proprietariness** (Daly & Wilson, 1988)
  - Uxoricide may best qualify as an evolutionary byproduct rather than the designed behavioral output of an adaptation because of its high costs and smaller payoffs <—- ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: I agree. And was surprised the author didn't list what seemed to be the strongest cost of uxoricide: losing one's mate with an act that may make it even harder to find a new one
- **Culture of honors may promote IPV,** men are more tolerant of male jealousy and male-perpetrated IPV, and

men tend to seek power and dominion over women and are more likely to treat them as sexual objects

Interesting Notes

- **Women focus on female rivals, men focus on their women**: women focus their attention on threats to infidelity from potential rivals (other women), compared to men who focus on monitoring their own partner's intents to commit infidelity (Ein-Dor et al., 2015).

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note on the chapter:** Steven Arnocky and his team stand out for their scientific rigor and critical thinking process. Rather than proposing hypotheses based on confirming evidence, they critically examined the **data and concurrent explanations both for and against** each claim. This balanced, falsification-aware approach is exactly what strengthens theoretical credibility and what we need more of. Both in the world, and in evolutionary psychology specifically.

Chapter 24: Male Sexual Coercion in Response to Infidelity

Authors: Lidia Dengelegi Abrams, Mike Abrams

Some men respond to suspicion or discovery of infidelity with sexual coercion, using sex as a form of control or punishment. This behavior is linked to evolutionary mate-guarding instincts but we shouldn't fall for the 'naturalistic fallacy' and can still condemn it as highly destructive and abusive.

- **Some men escalate to sexual coercion after suspicion or discovery**, as abusive mate-guarding.
- **There is no specific mechanism for rape although it's evolved**. Such as, rape emerges from other evolved male strategies for reproductive competition like aggression, jealousy, mate guarding, sperm competition, lower empathy in some individuals etc., but not because there's a specific neural system or module that evolved *just* for rape.
  - **Male mate guarding is an adaptation** to prevent infidelity and cuckolding, even in its most violent manifestations
- **Genetic differences explain 40% of sexual coercion** and shared environment explain only 2%. The data directly contradicts the social science model holding that sexual is learned
- **Men feeling less desirable than partner deploy more forced in-pair copulation**, and more when she is in, or close to, estrus (e.g., Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Goetz et al., 2005)
- **Sexual violence does not correlate with dominance in the relationship** (Gage & Hutchinson, 2006), contrary to authors who relate sexual partner abuse with need for control and domination (Basile, 2002; Bergen, 1996)

Interesting Notes

- **Emotional vs sexual jealousy may depend on lover/provider strategies**, rather than genders: *A study by Jones and associates (2007) shows that individuals who express high mating effort, characterized by short-term relationships and inconsistent partner-guarding, are more likely to be upset over sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity. Conversely, individuals with low mating effort, who conduct more mate guarding behaviors, but in a way that preserves the future of a relationship, are more likely to be upset by emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity. Moreover, the high-mating-effort individuals are more likely to react punitively to all types of infidelity.*

Sexual coercion is part of a cluster of cost-inflicting tactics

> *Starratt et al. (2008) find a correlation between partner-directed insults and accusations of sexual infidelity and sexual coercion. Resource manipulation, commitment manipulation, and defection threats are correlated with accusations of infidelity and partner insults. Insults such as derogating her physical attractiveness, her value as a partner, her mental capacity, or her value as a person correlate with sexual coercion and can be seen as a type of*

> *mate guarding. Lowering the partner's perceived self-value and self-esteem is meant to diminish her likelihood of attempting to stray*

People Constantly Assess Market Value

> partners to continuously assess their own mate value relative to their current partner and potential new partners. This challenge to relationship fidelity is exacerbated by the inevitable change of a person's status, appearance, health, and emotional stability over the life span. When time treats one partner more harshly than the other, there will emerge an increased disparity in relative mate value
> (…)
> A man's or woman's finding someone they believe to be both available and more suitable can lead to a breakdown in the continuing effort to sustain monogamy. For example, a woman who has a close friendship with a male coworker of a higher status or more physically attractive than her husband may progress to a sexual affair if her husband loses his job or otherwise becomes less desirable in her eyes

However, a good bond can go a long way to keep a partner attracted and in the relationship:

> Conjugate or companionate love can foster a bond that is resistant to the allure of another potential partner.
> (…)
> Unhappily, many relationships do not develop a strong enough familial bond (…) The combination of relationship fragility and the common practice of evaluating potential new partners may motivate a partner's focus on someone who seems to offer more

Dominance, Submission, & Sexuality

Rape and sexual coercion may reflect **exaggerated but evolutionarily grounded mechanisms** that evolved to facilitate reproduction.

Across species, females become less aggressive and less cautious when sexually aroused, particularly during estrus. Even predators like hyenas or lions adopt **submissive postures** to permit copulation when fertile (East et al., 1993). This behavioral shift is **hormonally mediated**—primarily by estrogen—and linked to a **submission circuit in the mammalian brain** that reduces defensiveness to allow close contact with potentially dangerous males (Pfaff et al., 1994; Ciaccio et al., 1979). The theory holds that evolution had to override the natural caution of females to make reproduction possible, given the risks involved.

Freud (1933) misinterpreted this sexual submission as evidence of innate female masochism, but in fact, **sexual masochism is more common in men** than women (Abrams et al., 2019; Donnelly & Fraser, 1998). Studies on sexual fantasies show that:

- **Men's submission fantasies** often involve **BDSM**, pain, or humiliation
- **Women's submission fantasies** typically center on being dominated by a **sexually committed male** (Abrams, 2016)

This female preference is consistent with **ancestral mating logic**, where larger, socially dominant males provided protection for women and offspring (Buss, 2004).
Even **modern socially dominant women** often report fantasies of sexual submission to dominant men (Hawley & Hensley, 2009), suggesting underlying sexual submission/dominance modules.

There is of course overlap in masculine/feminine responses; some men acquire a more submissive sexual response and some women a more aggressive one.

At the extreme end of these dynamics are **sadism and masochism**, which reflect **overamplified versions** of

dominance and submission. Sadism exaggerates the drive for dominance to the point where inflicting pain is sexually rewarding. Masochism does the reverse—turning submission into a need for degradation or pain as a condition for arousal.
Given that **sadistic and masochistic fantasies are nearly universal** (Brown et al., 2020; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017), **they likely reflect deep evolutionary structures**, originally tied to reproductive strategies involving dominance, submission, and mate choice.

Chapter 25 – 26: Nonhuman Animals & Future Directions

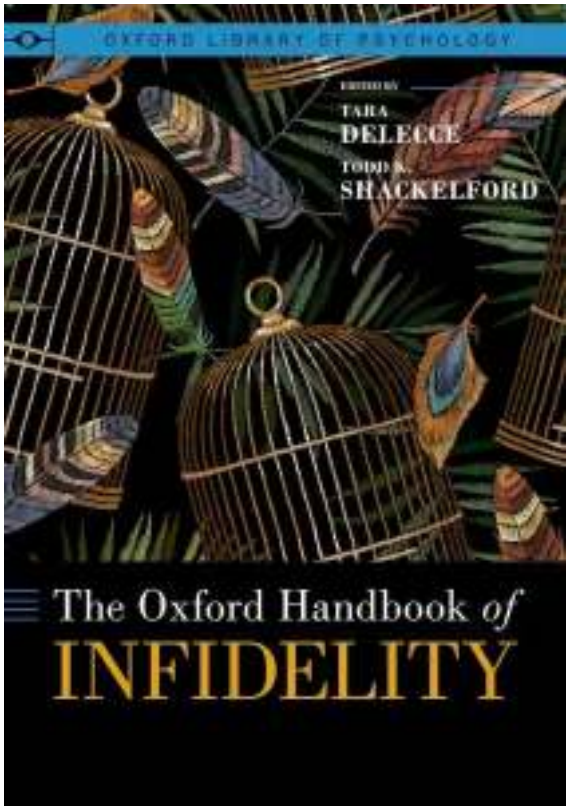
Author: Yu-Hsun Hsu

Infidelity occurs across species. Birds, mammals, and primates show extra-pair mating despite pair bonds. Consequences include paternal uncertainty, mate guarding, infanticide, and sperm competition. Animal studies highlight evolutionary roots of human infidelity.

Chapter 26: Future Directions for Infidelity Research

Author: Tara DeLecce

The book closes by urging clearer definitions of infidelity, better measurement (including digital and emotional), and more diverse global samples. Future research should focus on domain-specific personality traits (e.g., sexual narcissism), cultural variation, and the growing role of technology. Understanding both predictors and consequences is crucial for building realistic models of human mating.



SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Being Too Nice May Increase Odds of Infidelity?

From chapter 1:

> a study of almost 900 older married individuals that controlled for multiple confounding variables (e.g., demographics, the other Big Five personality traits, religiosity) demonstrated that people higher in agreeableness reported more instances of their partner engaging in infidelity (Mahambrey, 2020). The authors speculated that "perhaps individuals with agreeable spouses become accustomed to their highly understanding and accommodating partners, so much so that they assume even infidelity—if discovered—will be pardoned" (p. 294). Consistent with such speculation, other work suggests people do take advantage of partners who appear particularly accommodating (McNulty & Russell, 2016)

However, the findings are inconsistent on this, so it would be incorrect to say 'the more agreeable, the more you get cheated on'.

I suspect that the difference here is in the variables that sometimes go unmentioned in research, including:

- **Gender**: it's not the same for a man or woman to be overly agreeable
- **Power awareness**: being nice with those who deserve it
- **Social strategy**: being nice in the appropriate situations
- **Personal value**: high value and agreeable is good. Low value and agreeable screams 'overcompensating'
- **Masculinity/dominance** as the baseline behavior with 'agreeable on top'

Ie.: I suspect that being too agreeable, naive, lower-value and submissive *for men* increases the odds of being cheated on.

It may not be the same for women.

And it's probably not the same for men who are 'contextually and smartly agreeable'. Such as, being agreeable without being *overly* agreeable (optimum balance), and knowing when *not* to be agreeable.

On how to combine being agreeable with getting respect and attraction:

- High agreeable, and high power

Does Western's 'Expectation of Monogamy' Set Up People For Failure?

In chapter 12 Mike Abrams and Lidia Dengelegi Abrams write:

> The forces that drive people to seek new mates are in a continual battle with a socially endorsed ideal of lifelong bonds (…) Despite the best efforts of many well-intentioned individuals, innate inclinations often overwhelm the imperatives imposed by marriage or partners' strong intentions of fidelity. We humans simply are not evolved to remain with one partner exclusively and indefinitely. When we nevertheless do so, it is often with frustration and resentment.
> (…)
> In an era with long life spans and permanent marriages, love's relative brevity tends to lead to disappointment. Romantic love almost inevitably fades within a few years, leading to diminished commitment and broken vows

And from chapter 2 by Kelly Campbell et al.:

> The prevailing expectation of monogamy, which appears difficult to uphold considering EDI rates, causes individuals to feel devastated when infidelity occurs (Campbell et al., 2012; Coontz, 2005).
> (…)

> The Western norm of monogamy therefore does not work well, and it would be worth identifying different models that could help individuals and relationships thrive.

I agree with this.
It's understandable that anyone would be distraught by a cheating partner.

Yet there is also an element of naivete in the assumption that 'monogamy is the norm, cheating does not happen (to me)'.
And the higher the pain, the more one has bought into that unrealistic ideal.

Long-term monogamy CAN work for many and potentially even most couples *within certain cultural contexts and societies* (ie.: high social and religious conservatism, fewer options, rural areas, fewer women at work, etc. etc.).
However, that may just not be the case anymore for most Western countries. And it's been so for decades now.

Also linked, is this:

Naivete May Be Linked to Bigger Trauma After Infidelity

From chapter 22 by Mohammad Hassan:

> Balman (1992, as cited in Lusterman, 1998) noted that people who have suffered a severe trauma feel fundamental confusion about the nature of the world cognitively and existentially. Based on Balman's reports, these people had three basic assumptions in their mind before experiencing the trauma: (1) the world is a source of goodness, (2) the world is purposeful and meaningful, and (3) the self is valuable. Following the trauma of unfaithfulness, these assumptions are shattered.

Believing that 'the world is a source of goodness' is an indicator of excessive naivete, unless one also believes the world can be a sourch of 'not goodness' as well.

The More He Spends, The More She Cheats (Power-Imbalance Hypothesis of Infidelity)

From chapter 5 by Jana Hackathorn, Brien K. Ashdown:

> Lower relative income (i.e., economic dependency on one's current partner) is associated with higher odds of engaging in infidelity (…)
> For women, those who are economically dependent on their partner are more likely to engage in infidelity than either women who provide all the income in a household (i.e., the breadwinners) or women who are in an economically equal relationship (Munsch, 2015).

This is something I noted and aligns with power dynamics.

As usual, mate value plays an important role.
Female breadwinners may be more likely to be in a partnership with a more attractive or player type in an unspoken exchange of money for mate value.

For men, the more he earns compared to her, the less likely it is that it's a relationship between equals.
A relationship with higher power imbalance may seem good for the dominant party on paper, but it presents unique challenges.

Unless he's careful and highly power-aware, his financial contributions may turn the relationship transactional (even if she initially likes him for his qualities, the 'crowding out effect' of intrinsic motivation).

Submissive parties tend to avoid assertiveness and instead resort to passive aggression, sneakiness… And

cheating behind the dominant party's back.

I've seen these dynamics often, including with Western men traveling to poorer countries, and this includes younger and good-looking guys, not just the retired ones.
Some of these 'passport bros' believe they struck gold with local, submissive women. But front-facing submissiveness rarely translates to faithfulness.

I suspect that **relationships with a high power imbalance may inherently increase 'in your face submissiveness', but at the cost of increasing 'behind your back sneakiness'.**

Men: Don't Be Too Vulnerable

From an interesting clinical example of a man who made the mistake of 'seekign reassurance':

> In his despair, Val made the common mistake of seeking reassurance from a spouse going through an emotional crisis of her own. <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** Instead a masculine steadying presence, he added his own crisis
> Karen's priorities were her child and child to be, and their life quality now seemed at risk. Her anxieties were leading her to question the trajectory of their marriage. Val's new self-effacing demeanor and his apologetic efforts to do more at home had the paradoxical effect of diminishing his status in Karen's eyes. <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** Giving more in this situation can be framed as a (desperate) effort ot make up for an ever-growing mate value discrepancy
> She now pitied him, and pity is not attractive. As this tension in their marriage increased, their sexual encounters radically decreased in frequency

And then she went on to cheat on him.
I was quite surprised to see such a lucid, power-aware, real-life case study in a handbook.
The authors analyzed this example perfectly well, a TPM-level passage. These are the types of therapists that can put a man back on track.

Also read 'vulnerability without losing power'.

QUOTES

On the reality of humans' (subconscious) calculativeness:

> Partners in relationships are continually assessing their own and their mate's "market value," and their self-appraised mate value will often guide the treatment of their partner and decision of whether to be unfaithful.

On morality vs evolutionary logic:

> Since moral virtue was not an attribute that added to fitness during the epochs in which the preponderance of hominin and human behavior evolved, violence had many upsides and fewer downsides

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

This was an exemplary handbook: it analyzed infidelity both broadly and deeply, there was little overlap between chapters to maximize time to insights, and the authors wrote like true scientists.

Just take these examples:

- *it should be noted that this integrative data analysis was based on newlywed couples, a time when infidelity is rare*

and thus we are hesitant to draw strong conclusions from this single analysis <— This is how you critically analyze a sample and think about possible faults with it, rather than immediately generalize the findings (Chapter 1, Emma E. Altgelt, James K. McNulty, and Andrea L. Meltzer)

- *and behavioral displays of dominance (although these authors used estimated rather than measured hormonal assessments)*. <— The author highlights and uncovers an importantant limitation for the readers' benefit (Chapter 14, Virginia E. Mitchell et al.)
- *there are reasons to question whether IPV in response to infidelity constitute adaptations. Cost-inflicting mate retention is a risky reproductive strategy because it may result in violent retaliation and increase the likelihood of termination of the relationship (discussed in Davis et al., 2018, Duntley & Shackelford, 2012, and Miner, Starratt, et al., 2009)* <— this is good critical thinking skills, without jumping to easy conclusions. This is how you make you good evolutionary psychology, without falling for easy storytelling (Chapter 23, Steve Arnocky)

REVIEW

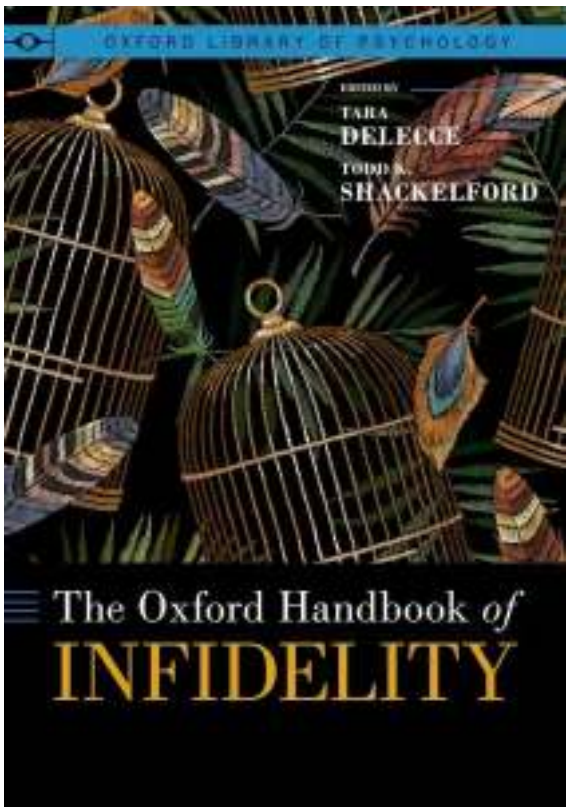
The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity (2023) is an exceptionally insightful and well-crafted volume, written with the rigor and clarity one expects from top researchers.

Each chapter not only summarizes the state of the science but also highlights limitations, unresolved debates, and where evidence remains mixed or merely hypothetical.

I hope more researchers will follow this example.
For TPM, I was able to update and improve several articles. I'm grateful to the authors, and I look forward to learning more from them ⍰⍰.

Check the **best evolutionary books** or get this book on Amazon.

The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity: Summary & Review



The Oxford Handbook of Infidelity (2023) is the most comprehensive scientific reference on why people cheat, bringing together leading researchers to provide a global, evidence-based picture of who is most likely to be unfaithful, why, and with what consequences.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/the-oxford-handbook-of-infidelity-summary-review/

Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
5

Escape The Black Pill: From Incel to High-Value Man

Lucio Buffalmano · 24 November 2025 · Archived copy · Original

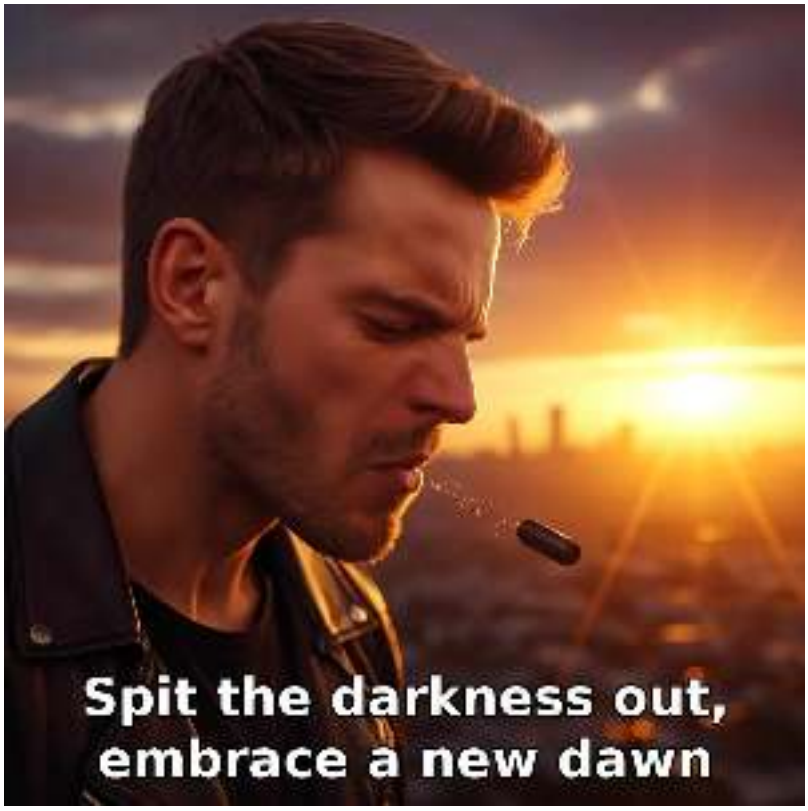
Feeling invisible, rejected, or like dating is ‘rigged’ against you?

If you’ve been pulled into black-pill or incel spaces, it can *feel* like women only want the top 1% of men with height, looks, status, and money, while the rest should just accept their fate.

I know that mindset.
And I also know it’s **false**.

This article is for men seeking an **incel exit**—a path to escape the black pill, clearly showing you that it’s possible, and providing you with strategies along the way.

Let’s dive in.



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Intro: I Should Have Been An Incel

My name is **Lucio Buffalmano**, founder of **The Power Moves**.

By mainstream dating standards, I should have been 'involuntarily celibate' myself.

I'm short, bald, and *not* stereotypically masculine.
I come from the middle of nowhere and wasn't blessed with an early start either: I'm a late bloomer.

The red and black pill as well as the loxxmaxxer crowds would have labeled me as **doomed to involuntary celibacy.**

Instead, I dated like a top-1% man.

I'm actually above top-1% in lifetime partners. And I largely maintained high standards.
I only approach women I truly like, and you'd classify almost all the women I dated from 'cute' upward. Several were *very* attractive and/or high-quality women that many men would wish to marry.

If I can do it, you can!

I write this post because few coaches are true underdogs.
They may not understand the average and below-average guy's struggles, and many men may not relate to them.

Instead, my background can provide the ultimate proof that **if I can do it, you can do it.**
If you want, you can escape the black pill, and you can escape involuntary celibacy.

And no, you don't even need anything crazy.
I worked hard, took countless shots, and also failed a ton. But I was a *player*. If your goal is to simply have a good woman, you only need *some* smart work.

Mindset:

> If one guy who is no better than me can do 100, you can sure as f*ck do 10
>
> *Empowered man's mindset*

Black Pill Lie #1: Height decides everything

You've seen the videos where girls reject guys for being short.
Short guys watch and give up.

That's the whole problem: those clips show **first reactions**, not long-term results.

First reactions don't predict long-term attraction. **Personality and behavior predict long-term attraction**, not looks.
If anything, great looks with poor mindsets and behavior only predict a downward slope. You start high, but lose attraction and respect.

Science supports this claim. Say Swami and Furnham in *The Psychology of Physical Attraction*:

> Clearly, when an interaction moves beyond the initial 'snap judgements' made about people on first meeting them (Schneider et al. 1979), the effects of static physical characteristics may diminish. Other variables — the dynamic components of physical attractiveness — begin to play a more important role in determining attraction in new or continuing relationships. Here, non-physical characteristics emerge as important factors in determining liking and eventual relationship formation (Byrne 1971).

♂ Proof

An ex of mine, a visibly taller woman, literally told me I 'didn't even exist' for her at first.
Worse yet, she added that for her, 'it was like I didn't even have legs'.

Up until here, just as predicted: a considerably shorter guy isn't even on the radar of an attractive woman.
Now, flash forward a year later, after we ended up together and then broken up. And I'm getting crying calls for another shot at being together.

No pride in that: there is nothing 'good' about causing grief. But it's the proof that attraction can grow. It's not fixed.

Club Queen With Shortest Guy

And you're also not 'condemned' to long-term dating if it's not your thing.

I once pulled a club queen from one of the largest clubs in central Prague. She was on a league of her own that night, and also compared to *other* nights.

When I walked towards her, two friends of hers came to cockblock me. They were both a head taller, but I didn't

let them intimidate me. Instead, I showed resolve. *She* came to shush her protectors, and guess what? I ended up with that girl.

I was one of the shortest guys in that club, and I wouldn't be surprised if I was *the* shortest.
Think about that: the shortest guy, ends up with the club queen. Without status, VIP table, throwing money around, or even having any cool friends there.

How To Beat Short Stature

- **Focus on *mental* empowerment**: can-do attitude, confidence, pride. Self-esteem is foundational to all and predicts mating opportunities (Sprecher et al., 2008)
- **Focus on *behavior*** that sub-communicates value, confidence, and power
  - Good body language: walk with confidence, masculine body language, etc.
  - High power behavior, interpersonal dominance, assertiveness, boundaries, etc.
  - 'Game': as in 'dating skills', largely based on power dynamics awareness

And of course, colors that elongate and boots that add a few centimeters also help.

Black Pill Lie #2: Looks are everything

Yes, good looks help a lot: they get attention and facilitate relationship initiation for both short and long-term.
But even here, both exceptions and nuances exist:

- **Looks matter *less* for men**, compared to women (Kniffin and Wilson, 2004)
- **Individual variance is high**: looks are also cultural, matter more in individualistic societies, and there is plenty of individual variance (Mogilski and Shackelford, 2023)
- **Confidence and attractive nonverbals** are also attractive
  - Some studies show dominance > looks, especially for short-term (Sacco et al., 2022, Bryan et al., 2011)

⍰⍰♂ Proof

I'm short, bald… And I still get plenty of eye contact.

This year I was walking toward a girl, and she stared so long at me that she tripped.

Sounds Hollywood-like, I know, but it happened. That's not genetic. I dressed well, walked like I owned it, and thought highly of myself. That's mental empowerment feeding into behavior.

P.S.: Smart men can find ways
This was in *Europe*, by the way.
I don't even consider some world regions where I also got approached or asked for pictures *several times*. Smart men can also move to strategically increase their mate value with various 'SMV hacks'.

How To Beat Looks

- **Focus on mental and social power**, just like for height
- **Quit comparing**: of course model-looking men are more likely to get initial attention. Great for them! But it has nothing to do with *you*.
- **Do more social circles**: studies show that the longer one is acquainted, the more couples differ in attractiveness (ie.: looks matter less)
- **Focus on life success**

And of course, the biggest nuke:

- **Forget looks, focus on *her***: you'd be astonished at how many attractive women don't care so much about the man's looks

Black Pill Lie #3: High-status men get all the women

This is based on female hypergamy, or the tendency of women to prefer men of higher social class, or greater wealth.

As usual, both red pill and black pill **take a general truth to untruthful conclusions**, forgetting shades of grey, exceptions, and subjective and contextual elements.
For example:

- **Wealth matters less in modern societies** of distributed wealth (Sacco et al., 2022), where romantic love matters more
- **Monogamy dampens hypergamy** since most men get a woman
- **Status matters less for short-term dating** since it's related to provisioning (Buss, 2016)

In general, for most dating scenarios, social status helps, *but only within that specific social circle*.

⍰⍰♂ Proof

At my former company's party my +1 night was, for many men's tastes, the most attractive woman.

At that time, I was a trainee in that company, making me one of the lowest-status men.

A low-status man, with the most attractive woman.
How did that work?
Because I met her with cold approach.

Cold approach bypasses status because it's inherently 1:1 and *outside* of group dynamics. This is an opportunity that our ancestors rarely had. But you do.

P.S.:
I'm also introverted, not very social, and I also wasn't high status in society at large. As a southern European, you're almost preframed as slightly 'below' the northern guys. Still, status didn't stop us.

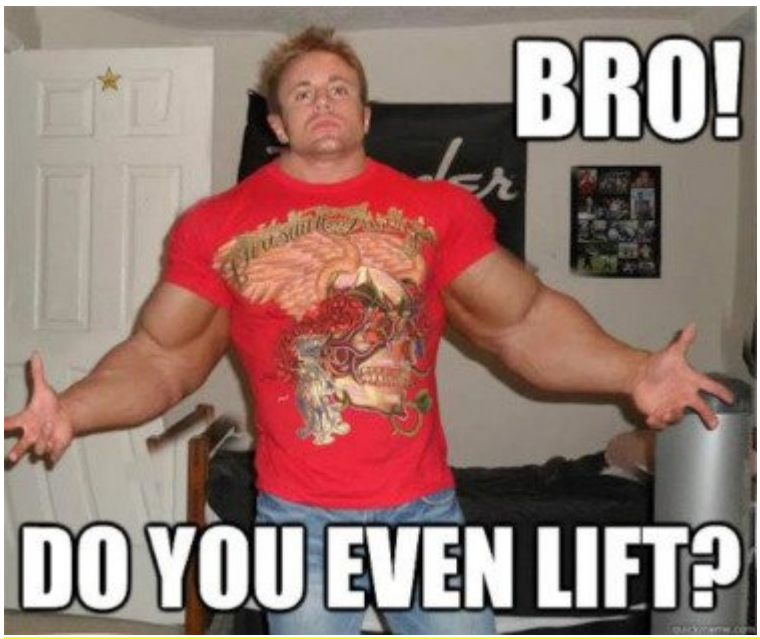
How To Beat Status

- **Cold approach**, and learn how to approach a girl
- **Enter new circles**, and status resets every time you enter a new circle
- **Learn how to gain status** in new circles, see here

For more on cold approach see:

> Cold Approach: The Science of First Meeting A Woman

Black Pill Lie #4: Strength & muscles are necessary for carnal attraction



The meme ‘do you even lift bro’ suggests getting strong is foundational to men’s life and dating success.

The red pill focuses heavily on physical dominance, sculpted bodies, and weight training.

The message is that ‘women’s true desire’ is based on strong male bodies.
And strength certainly won’t harm you, and may even help a bit. Physical formidability also certainly helps.

But *as long as you stay lean*, the link between strength and attraction is weak.

??♂ Proof

During most of my dating, I had never set foot into a gym.

I didn’t get into the gym until my late thirties, when I slowed down with dating.
To me, the gym was the place you go *instead* of meeting women.

Zero weight training didn’t prevent several women from being attracted to me—and yes, several also to my body. Based on experience, I believe today that many **women see an idealized body of the man they fell for.** I had women take pictures of me while sleeping, or send me pictures of more muscular men’s drawings that ‘reminded them of me’.

The Woman Who Only Wanted Sex

I dated a blonde who showed up in a fur coat, and nothing under it.

No words spoken. She just dropped the coat, came, and then went out with her friend (who was waiting for her in the car parked downstairs).

That’s as raw sexuality as it gets.
And it was based on *sexual* skills, not lifting skills. Good lovemaking requires little muscle. (And most relevant life goals also require little muscle).

How To Beat Gym Muscles

- **Exercise to stay healthy**. Lean is the goal, and muscle is a plus. Definition helps. No need for ‘bulking’
- **Be a good lover**. Getting good at making love is more fun and higher leverage than getting good at lifting

Black Pill Lie #5: 6-feet, 6-pack, 6-figures monopolizes women's choice

This red pill mantra states that women's choices come down to height, great physique, and income.

It's obviously true that height, a good physique, and high income boost a man's value.
What's a lie is that they're *necessary* or almost necessary. In truth, **none of those sixes are necessary for women's choice.**

This red pill mantra, again, over-generalizes and confuses women's *stated preferences* for real-world results. And, as always, it doesn't consider the many exceptions.

⍰⍰♂ Proof

I had a fling during my travels.
She was a designer and artistic type. We met as winter approached and had great chemistry.

We cooked together, had wine, made love, and listened to David Bowie while eating half-naked (not a chance pick by the way: higher odds of appealing to her artistic side).

On my last day, she asked me to remove my cover and climax inside. This wasn't a baby-trap move: she didn't even know my full name.
That was a carnal desire to have my child. And from a guy leaving, no support and provisioning: that is ***peak* mate choice**.

So here's what doesn't need sixes: good seduction.

And in case you're wondering: no, it wasn't a poor country, and it wasn't a country prizing white skin: I don't even take those into account. And, yes, it was a cute 20-something with a great body.
Good seduction doesn't need any sixes.

P.S.:
I was offered money and free accommodation to help a woman conceive (not in her prime though).
And several women I dated wanted or fantasized about children. When I asked one why she wanted a boy, she said that all women want a boy to resemble the man they admire.

How To Beat The 666 Rule

All that we previously said, plus:

- **Learn how to romance and seduce**
- **Take your shots**: finding a woman with whom you have chemistry is a numbers game

Start Now

This post may sound 'motivational', but it's not.
We don't do motivation here, we do *empowerment*.

And we prefer realism over motivation.
Looks, height, money, status… They are all important.
What we're saying is that they're not the end-all-be-all for smart, ambitious, and strategic men.

Of course, this doesn't mean it's easy.
And it doesn't mean everyone reading here will be successful.
Succeeding as an underdog almost by definition means being exceptional, rather than the norm.

What we're saying is that **it's *doable*.**
Anyone can become more attractive and almost anyone reading here can find a woman.

The keys are:

- Take more chances
- Maximize what you have
- Offset what you don't have

Start your self-development journey, and you'll become a higher-value guy.
Check out this primer on self-empowerment:

> 10 Self-Empowerment Foundations For Top-1% Men

Practical steps to escape the Black Pill

Here is the beginner's starter pack to exit the incel life:

1. Mindset

- **Address depression first**, if present. Consider a therapist

- **Embrace healthy nihilism**. So what if right now you're an incel? An incel and a chad are both going back to dust before you realize it
- **Embrace the 'non-fairness' of the world**. There is nothing bad with it, it's just how it is
- **Stop the fatalism**, adopt an internal locus of control
  - Introduce hope & optimism, focus on exceptions and success stories like this one. If religious, even praying can help

2. Basics of Self-Development

- **Quit negative habits** like doom scrolling, excessive porn, or smoking
- **Develop better habits**, like running, gym, meditation, work
- **Start small and aim for progress**, not perfection

Focus on the areas of highest impact, nothing crazy is needed
No need to become a lunatic biohacker with red lights on his package while needling himself to measure ketones

3. Appearance & presence

- **Dress well**
- **Maximize your presence**, from the basics of grooming to hairstyle, tailored clothes etc. etc.
- **Practice posture** and body language

4. Social skills & approach

- **Enter new groups**, practice being social, gaining status, and meeting women and guys alike
- **Cold approach** is a high-leverage skill for low-status men. Practice short opens: one minute, no expectations.
- **Learn to lead conversation**: ask fewer questions, make more statements that demonstrate value

5. Sexual/romantic skill

- **Lead more**: choose location, suggest plans, invite her back
- **Positive dating dominance**: tell her to sit beside you, and don't be afraid to call out inconsistencies. See here
- **Build sexual tension** gradually with touch or teasing

Later on you can graduate to more advanced frame control, sexual tension without touch, or proper seduction and making women fall in love.

FAQ

Is the "Black Pill" theory about female hypergamy and male genetics being everything actually true?

The Black Pill is based on some truths because genetics contributes to attraction and offers initial advantages, but it is fundamentally wrong because it overweights these factors compared to subjectivity, personality, and a man's power to increase his value with actions and learnable skills.
Ultimately, **the black pill is an unmasculine loser mindset** because it submits to an unfavorable view instead of focusing on agentic masculinity and personal power.
The truth, as demonstrated in this guide, is that **any man can become more attractive with learnable behavior**.

Can short or average-looking men still get attractive women?

Yes, if he develops high-power behavior, confidence, and meets several attractive women.

If I'm "genetically poor" (short, bald, low facial aesthetics), what percentage of women am I actually filtered out from?

You will likely get filtered out more often based on **first impression and zero-acquaintance situations** (like dating app swipes and pre-introductions). This is the superficial "funnel" the Black Pill focuses on.
However, you are **not** filtered out whenever you can showcase your other valuable attributes, for example, in social circles, dates, or even good cold approaches. Also, women have different personalities, and many quality women place lower importance on looks.
By becoming a more competent, confident, and successful man you bypass the initial superficial filters and compete for the highest quality.

How to escape the black pill and execute an incel exit?

The most important mindset shift is an empowering **Internal Locus of Control**. The Black Pill is an *external* locus of control (blaming genetics, society, and women).
Escaping requires you to fundamentally believe that **your results are in large part determined by your actions, effort, and skills.** Once you adopt this mindset, every single attractive becomes learnable and achievable. Next, start learning and practicing those skills, and you'll be on your way out of the black pill faster than you know it.

Do women really only want "6-6-6" men (6 feet, 6 pack, 6 figures)? If I don't have those, what chance do I have?

The "6-6-6" standard is a social media meme, not a comprehensive psychological truth. It captures some important qualities that many women value, but **it's not a barrier for smart men who possess none of those sixes.**
The truth is that **Good Seduction** and **High-Value Behavior** don't need any sixes.

Next Steps: From Basics to Mastery

If you're in a dark place, start with mental health first.
Then, simple actions.

Once you remove bad habits, you may be ready for the next step: **mental and social empowerment.** That's where the steepest climb begins.

It's the focus of our mission and flagship course **Power University**.

It's the complete, step-by-step framework that shows you exactly how to cultivate the confidence, game, and positive dominance that makes you the exception, not the rule:

Power University

Narcissism Explained — A Strategic Guide for Ambitious Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 December 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Narcissism is one of the most misunderstood concepts in psychology and personal power.

While pop culture frames it as toxic ego and poor relationships, the research paints a more nuanced picture showing that **narcissism affords important advantages**.
Leave the moral framing behind, and narcissism is an effective high-variance evolutionary strategy for status, power, and reproduction.

Done right, narcissism delivers confidence, agency, and the drive to rise. Done poorly, it undermines growth, relationships, and mental health.

This guide provides a comprehensive, research-backed overview of narcissism: its traits, underlying psychology, and—most importantly—how to model its adaptive side while avoiding the costly downsides.

Contents

- What Narcissism Is
  - Benefits: Why It Matters for Ambitious Men
  - The Two Main Types of Narcissism
  - The Narcissistic Mind & Psychology
  - The Origins: Where Does It Come From?
  - Narcissism vs. The Dark Triad
  - Adaptive vs. Maladaptive Narcissism
- Strategic Liabilities
- Effective Narcissism™: 7 Traits to Cultivate
  - 1. Be High Agency
  - 2. Pursue Your Goals & Focus On Yourself (Approach-Orientation)

- 3. Be High Self-Esteem
- 4. Be Self-Sufficient & Independent
- 5. Approach, Talk, & Lead In Groups: Strategic Extraversion
- 6. Calibrate Strategically: The Advanced Game
- 7. Conquer With 'Honorable Narcissim™'

- Strategic Takeaways
  - Next Steps: A Winning, Honorable Narcissist

What Narcissism Is

Narcissism is a personality trait characterized by grandiosity, self-focus, entitlement, and an intense preoccupation with status, power, and superiority.

Key Measures

Empirical research on narcissism relies on validated psychometric scales to measure its different facets:

- **NPI (Narcissistic Personality Inventory):** The most popular scale, primarily measures **Grandiose Narcissism**, more correlated with positive outcomes.
  (Take the NPI Test Here ↗)
- **Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS):** Measures **Vulnerable Narcissism,** assessing the defensive and anxious side of the trait
  (Take the HSNS Test Here ↗)
- **NARQ (Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire):** Differentiates between the two strategies that determine adaptive success or maladaptive failure:
  - **Admiration:** Assertive self-enhancement, confidence, and approach-oriented behavior.
  - **Rivalry:** Antagonistic self-protection, competitor derogation, and envy.
    (Take the NARQ Test Here ↗)

Disclaimer: online tests are non-clinical, for informational use only, and are not a substitute for psychological assessment. Take them to get an idea, then use this article to put it into practice

Benefits: Why It Matters for Ambitious Men

Narcissism provides too many advantages for ambitious men to ignore. These advantages are why the trait persists in the human population, despite its social costs.

Advantages include:

1. Leadership Emergence

Narcissists are natural-born leaders.

Many of the famous figures you study in history books may have had narcissistic traits

They rise in leaderless settings, structured organizations, and even in politics (Brunell et al., 2008; Nevicka and Sedikides, 2021; Watts et al., 2013).
Narcissist research and leading authority Keith Campbell wrote that he's not swayed by presidents' narcissism because he *expects* presidents to be narcissistic.

Narcissists aren't necessarily more effective leaders; they instead have higher variance (Resick et al., 2009; Chattterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Effectiveness instead seems related to an optimum balance of narcissism (Grijalva et al., 2015). In any case, narcissists are effective at *getting* to the top.

2. Better Dating Outcomes: Higher Attraction & Exciting Lovers

Narcissists have more sexual partners and are exciting lovers.
Says Campbell in the *Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder*:

> individuals reported that they were attracted to narcissists because of the narcissists' charm, popularity, and sexual attractiveness. By contrast, their attraction to their non-narcissistic partners was far less exciting; the non-narcissistic ex-partner was frequently described as "nice" (e.g., the boy/girl-next-door type).

In simplistic terms, **non-narcissists are "nice" and narcissists are "exciting."** This functional split recalls the cliché of the reliable but boring "nice guy" versus the exciting (but dangerous) 'bad boy' or 'asshole'.

This may be a central aspect of narcissism, as it's been hypothesized that narcissism evolved for short-term mating—a lover strategy, instead of the more common provider approach.

3. Mental Power & Health

Based on research, healthy sub-facets give grandiose narcissists:

- **Higher self-esteem** (Campbell et al., 2002)
- **Higher life satisfaction and subjective well-being**, including happier (Rose, 2002; Sedikides et al., 2004)

- **Greater sense of meaning** in life (Zondag et al., 2009)
- **Resilient psychological profile,** reporting lower levels of neuroticism, anxiety, loneliness, and depression (Akehurst & Thatcher, 2010; Watson et al., 1988).

They are also more **creative** and can boost a team's creativity (Raskin, 1980; Concalo et al., 2010).

4. Higher Status

Narcissists are effective at gaining status and fame.

The recent and persuasive hierometer theory suggests that while self-esteem tracks both status and inclusion, **narcissism evolved to focus on status pursuits**. And it works (Mahadevan et al., 2016; Mahadevan and Jordan, 2021).

5. Great First Impressions

Narcissists lead with initial charisma and people like and respect them.
They seem competent, attractive and leader-like (Paulhus, 1998; Oltmanns et al., 2004; Judge et al., 2006).

Narcissists *want* to charm, impress, and display high value. And they *succeed* at it.

6. Clutch Players

Studies showed that narcissists thrived when given the chance to prove their superiority, even when performance pressure was induced.

It's worth noting though that narcissists' performance suffers in mundane, low-visibility tasks.

The Two Main Types of Narcissism

This is important for us because grandiose narcissists have been described as "successful narcissists" while vulnerable ones as 'failed narcissists' (Back & Morf, 2018):

- **Grandiose**: High self-esteem, happy, extroverted, and arrogant
- **Vulnerable**: low self-esteem, neurotic, defensive

Here is a quick overview:

Trait	Grandiose	Vulnerable
Self-esteem	**High** (but can be contingent)	**Low** and fragile
Social tactics	Overt self-promotion, charisma, attention-seeking	Reassurance-seeking, victimhood, fishing for compliments
Approach orientation	Approach-oriented, reward-seeking. **Predator-like**	Avoidance-oriented, threat-escaping. **Prey-like**
Relationships	Transactional, shallow ties; prone to discard	Anxious/clingy attachment; fear of abandonment.
Emotionality	**Positive affect** (optimism, excitement, high life satisfaction)	**Negative affect** (shame, stress, envy, anxiety)
Aggression	More direct aggression	Narcissistic rage from hurt fragility; **passive-aggressive**
Correlates	Extraversion, histrionic, antisocial (ASPD)	Neuroticism, borderline personality disorder (BPD)
Control	**High** perceived control	**Low** perceived control

Based on leading research handbooks: *Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder* (Campbell & Miller, eds.); *Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism* (Besser, ed.); *Handbook of Trait Narcissism* (Hermann, Brunell, & Foster, eds.)

Note: We focus more on grandiose narcissism and how to positively model grandiosity because it better fits our goal of men's empowerment.

The Narcissistic Mind & Psychology

The Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing Model posits that narcissists' psychology and behavior serve their need to maintain a grandiose self-image (Morf and Rodhewalt, 2001).

Narcissists look for opportunities to bolster the self, while simultaneously defending against potential threats to their ego.
Some tactics include:

- **Disparaging outperformers** to defuse negative comparison (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993; South et al., 2003). This is part of a general 'social comparison bias' to look superior, wich may include focusing on poorer performers
- **Gain power** (Perceived Control Theory): to reinforce an image of competence and autonomy (Hansen-Brown, 2018)
- **Self-serving feedback reframing**, devaluing negative feedback and upweighing positive feedback across domains (universal), time (permanent), and identity (personality-based)
- **Fantasies of grandiosity** to boost identity, mood, and maintain biased positive comparisons with 'average others'
- **Narcissistic perfectionism**, hypothesized to stem from the fear of revealing an ordinary, flawed self. It predicts derogation, conflict, anger, and entitled rage above and beyond 'normal perfectionism' (Nealis et al., 2015 and 2016)
- **Hostility under ego threat** ('Threatened Egotism Theory'): aggressive response to provocation, rejection, or job constraints. Potentially re-establishing power to rebuild the ego (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998 ; Martinez et al., 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Raskin et al., 1991)
- **Low accommodation in relationship conflicts**, and I speculate it's for a focus on hurt ego and/or restoring power rather than solutions (Campbell & Foster, 2002)
- **Psychological control as parents**: narcissistic mothers may use emotional manipulation like guilt-tripping, intrusiveness, or withdrawal of love (Schürch & Morf, 2010; unpublished data)

The Origins: Where Does It Come From?

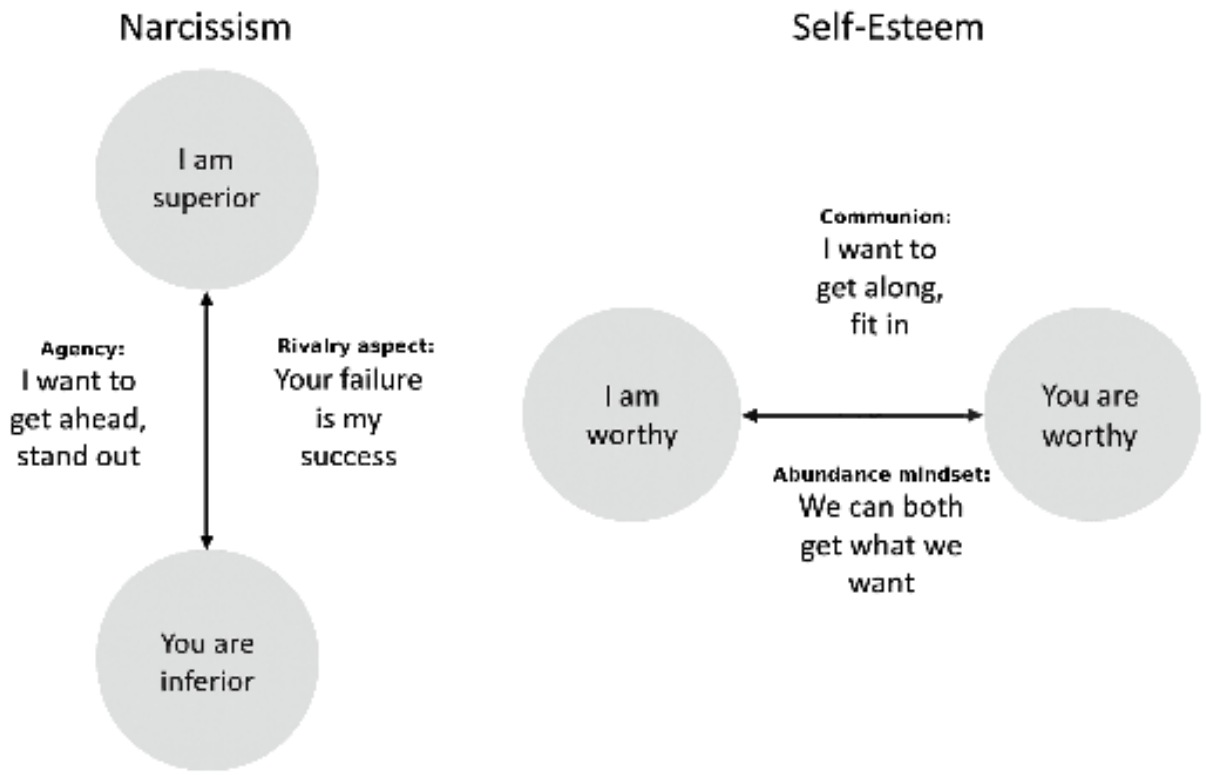
Narcissism is both nature and nurture.

The main twin studies on heritability suggest **40–60% of variance is genetic** (Livesley et al., 1998; Togersen et al., 2000; Kendler et al., 2008).
The remaining variance is usually attributed to non-shared environments. However, parenting can be non-shared, and studies show that it matters:

- **Overvaluation promotes grandiose narcissism**. I.e., 'golden child', gifted, and entitled to special treatment. Especially coupled with cold parenting, but only in children with high self-esteem
- **Warmth and affection promote healthy self-esteem**, rather than grandiosity

There are important differences between narcissistic and 'healthy' self-esteem:

Narcissistic Self-Esteem vs. Healthy Self-Esteem



The belief system underlying narcissism and self-esteem, adapted from Brummelman, 2018

Narcissistic Self-Esteem	Non-narcissistic Self-Esteem
Based on **superiority**; "God complex"	**Worthy**, not necessarily superior
Agentic traits (competence, intelligence)	Both **agentic and communal** traits
Inflated self-view,	**Realistic** self-view
Look down on others	**Respect** others; sees intrinsic worth
Craves others' admiration; may suffer without it	**Independent**, secure in self-worth
May lead to **rage** and **aggression**	More **forgiving** (Locke, 2009)

Based on Brummelman's chapter '*What Separates Narcissism from Self-esteem? A Social-Cognitive Perspective*, providing an overview of the research literature on narcissism and self-esteem

While some authors refer to non-narcissistic self-esteem as 'healthy' self-esteem, it may not always and necessarily be 'better'. Instead, **narcissistic grandiosity may provide a significant advantage in certain contexts**.

For example, narcissistic grandiosity may pass for **unmitigated confidence** and be more attractive in certain dating contexts; or it can better galvanize followers to pursue challenging goals (think of Steve Jobs' 'reality distortion field').

And remember that by hierometer theory, narcissistic self-esteem focuses on *status*, rather than inclusion. That means that **narcissistic self-esteem is higher agency**, and may be more effective for self-advancement and goal achievement.

To integrate high-status grandiosity with psychological resilience, see the TPM framework:

- **Antifragile grandiosity**

Narcissism vs. The Dark Triad

Narcissism has been conceptualized as part of a 'dark triad' also including Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

The unifying features are antagonism, low empathy, and a disposition toward using others.
And, potentially, **unrestricted sociosexuality** with predisposition for short-term mating (Jonason et al., 2011).

Trait	Brief Description — Pros & Cons
Narcissism	Grandiose, arrogant, and ego-focused. ⍰ Confidence, charisma, leadership attainment ⍰ Neediness for admiration and recognition, hypersensitvity
Machiavellianism	Strategic, long-term minded, pragmatic, ends-oriented mindset. ⍰ Strategy, political skills, leadership emergence ⍰ Over-cynicism, poor intimacy in relationships
Psychopathy	Impulsivity, low empathy, low anxiety, fearlessness, and boldness. ⍰Fearlessness, boldness, high stress tolerance ⍰ Impulsivity and irresponsibility undermine long-term achievement; substance addiction

Table based on *The Dark Triad of Personality* (Lyons, 2019), and other research

An ideal mix for maximum performance would be: narcissists' grandiosity, confidence and social charm, strategic predisposition of Machiavellians, and the ability to be selectively fearless and cold.
Add an honorable man's approach, and you get to TPM's transformation.

Adaptive vs. Maladaptive Narcissism

! Read it: This section is crucial for leveraging narcissism's positives, without the negatives **!**

The NARQ model subdivides narcissism into two main modes:

- **Admiration enhances the self** = assertive self-enhancement, high-agency, and approach-oriented
- **Rivalry tears others down**= antagonistic self-protection with competitor devaluation, derogation, and envy

This is important for life success because admiration largely accounts for mental and social power, while rivalry undermines both (Back et al., 2014).
It's admiration that delivers positive outcomes like early status, respect, and attraction. And it's rivalry that squanders it over the long run ('chocolate cake model', see below).

Admiration	Rivalry
Assertive self-enhancement (seeking admiration and status)	**Antagonistic self-protection** (defending grandiosity, blocking threats)
Dominance *and* prestige; charming; self-promotion	**Dominance and derogation** of others
Positive affect, confidence	**Negative affect** (envy, anger); lower self-esteem
Good first impressions, leadership emergence.	Conflict; toxic relationships; negative association with communion

Facets of Narcissism

Facets of narcissism have also been associated with adaptive and maladaptive outcomes (Watson & Biderman, 1993; Watson & Morris, 1991).
Categorizations differ by source, but authority and self-sufficiency are always considered adaptive, and entitlement and exploitativeness always maladaptive. Superiority and vanity are categorized as adaptive or neutral, and

exhibitionism as neutral or maladaptive.

Sub-facet	Explanation
Self-Sufficiency	Belief in one's **competence** and independence; not relying on others to succeed. ✅ Independent and confident. ❌Avoids seeking help.
Authority	Belief in one's **leadership skills**, power, and persuasiveness. ✅ Leads, drives initiatives. ❌ Can come off domineering.
Superiority	Feels **above others** and 'better'. ✅ High ambition, confidence. ❌ Arrogance, poor self-assessments, alienation.
Vanity	Excessive concern with **appearance** and attractiveness ✅ Improves impressions. ❌ Shallow, validation-seeking, fragile looks-based ego
Exhibitionism	Excessive **need to be the center of attention**. ✅ Charisma in groups. ❌ Obnoxious, insecure when ignored, poor 1:1 relationships
Entitlement	The **expectation of special treatment**, above the rules. ✅ Win exceptions or appear higher power. ❌Conflicts, chronic anger and frustration, repels quality men
Exploitativeness	Willingness to **manipulate or use others**; disregarding others' well-being ✅ Rapid short-term gain. ❌ Loss of trust, drive quality people away, isolation

Even the 'maladaptive' facets can help achieve goals, at least in the short term.
But even when excluding moral considerations, they come with significant costs. Research shows that **Entitlement and exploitativeness are associated with poorer mental power** and relationship difficulties (including lower self-esteem, higher neuroticism and envy, and lower theory of mind).

Let's dig deeper into the risks of narcissism.

Strategic Liabilities

Narcissism has incredible upsides and potential, but comes with important risks, especially when associated with rivalry, vulnerability, and unhealthier facets (exploitativeness and entitlement).

Some of the major liabilities include:

1. Limited Growth and Stagnation

Several issues may compound to limit narcissists' growth over time:

- **Competence-proving may cost in competence-*building***: while some focus on learning goals, narcissists focus on proving competence. Paralleling a fixed mindset, failure-avoidance may compound this issue (Elliot & Thrash, 2001; Gerhardt & Le, 2013)
- **Admiration over feedback**: rational learners would analyze critical feedback for self-development, but narcissists push back with self-protective behaviors (e.g., Kernis & Sun, 1994)
- **Little ownership**: Narcissists are less likely to learn from mistakes because they blame others (Campbell et al., 2004)

2. Poorer decision-making

Narcissists overvalue their expertise and ignore expert advice; it's not a good recipe for optimal decision-making (O'Reilly and Hall, 2021).

Narcissists' overconfidence can also cost financially.
A myopic focus on reward and over-optimistic expectations swelled narcissists' losses in gambling experiments (Campbell et al., 2004; Lakey et al., 2008).

3. Poorer Strategy & Results

The need for superiority often harms effective social strategy.
For example, says Wallace in the *Handbook of Narcissism and NPD*:

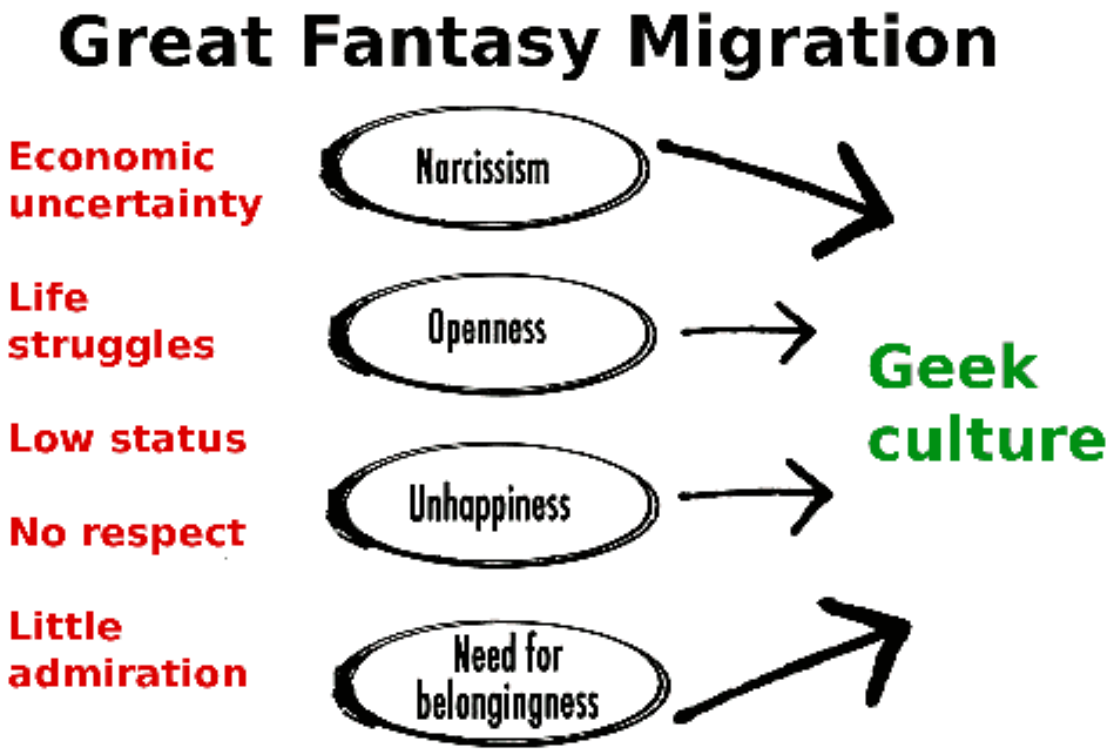
> Narcissists report Machiavellian willingness to manipulate others (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002), but their perpetual grandstanding regardless of context suggests that they lack the craftiness to maximize self-benefits.

Narcissists may also lack calibration:

> Narcissists' self-enhancement prospects are limited by inflexibility (…) admiration-eliciting behaviors in one context could induce the opposite in another, so admiration-seekers should calibrate to the environment. Narcissists apparently lack this wisdom. They employ the same unsubtle, exhibitionistic style of self-promotion regardless of the situation (Campbell et al., 2000; Collins & Stukas, 2008).

4. Escapism From Reality (Geek Culture & Collective Narcissism)

Faced with challenges, narcissists may escape into alternative realities instead of persevering. This is the Great Fantasy Migration hypothesis, and there is some evidence to back it up.



For example, narcissists engage in more fantasies of great feats and heroism, and are over-represented in geek culture and cosplay (Itamar and Shahar, 2014; McCain et al., 2015; W. Andrews and McCann, 2022).

A different but overlapping escapism from individual reality is tribalism.
Good empirical support now exists for collective narcissism, largely concerning *vulnerable* narcissists (de Zavala, 2019).
This is how the originator of the concept summarizes the available research in *The Handbook of Trait Narcissism*:

> the reviewed research suggests that **collective narcissists engage in intergroup hostility to protect their vulnerable self-worth invested in in-group's exaggerated greatness**.

Such as: individuals with disappointing personal lives feed their need for grandiosity through the group, rather than the self.

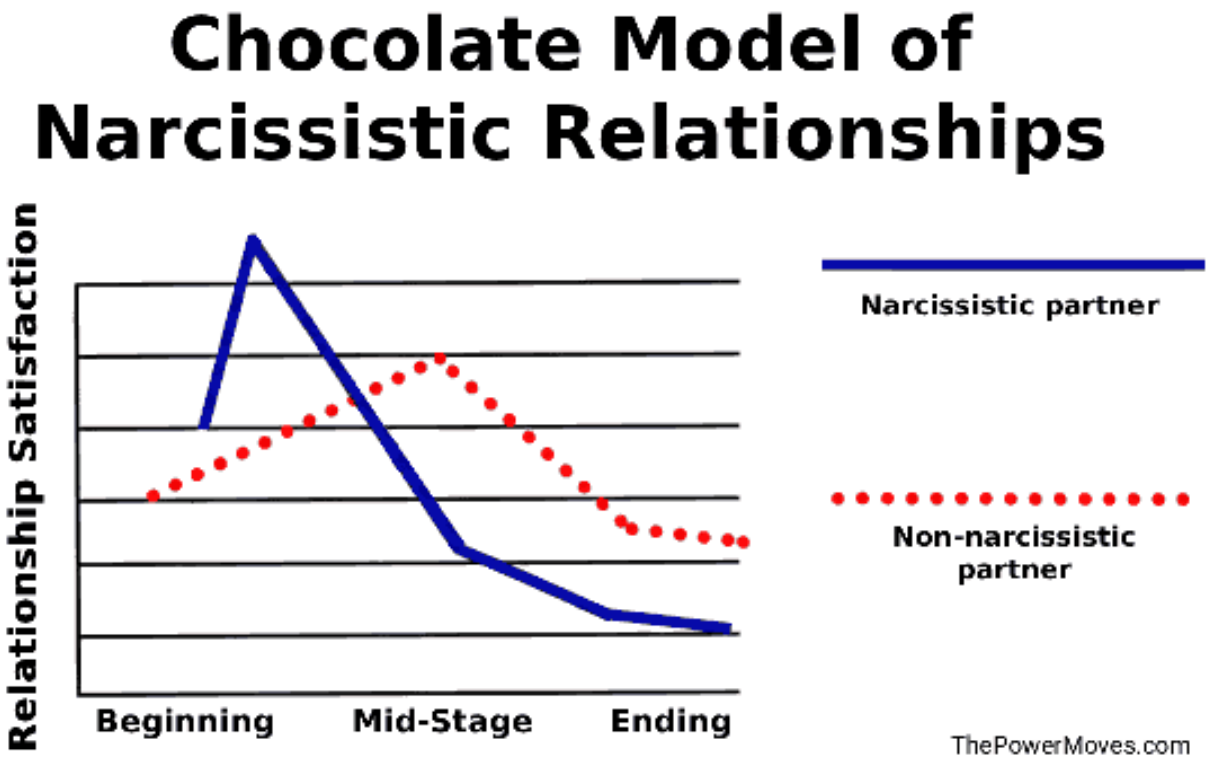
5. Souring Friendships & Social Networks

Narcissism is beneficial in the 'emerging zone', but increasingly detrimental as acquaintance increases in the 'enduring zone' (Campbell and Campbell, 2009).
As early favorable impressions fade, narcissists are seen as arrogant, hostile, and braggarts (Paulhus, 1998).

⚠ **Even early impression can be *un*favorable if rivalry is activated and empathy is required.**
In debating experiments that likely triggered rivalry, coders rated narcissists negatively (e.g., as acting irritable, hostile, bragging, and ignoring their partner).
Previous studies with more intimate and interactive contexts also showed lower popularity (see Küfner et al., 2013, for an overview).

6. Poorer long-term relationships

Narcissists' relationships may start more exciting, but plummet fast instead of growing.



The chocolate cake model of narcissistic relationships (Chart revised by Buffalmano, 2025)

A 2014 German study may explain this common trend: narcissists **switch from admiration to rivalry over time**. First, they search for admiration with self-enhancement or value-adding approaches. And once the partner is secured, they switch to rivalry. The authors hypothesize that putting the partner down serves the same goal of self-enhancement.
Partners indeed described the narcissist as game-playing, deceptive, and manipulative, and they feel less valued (Campbell et al., 2002; unpublished data as cited by Morf et al., 2011).

TIP: keep rivalry at bay, pick supportive partners, or consider atypical relationships
It's possible to have good relationships with or as a narcissist. If you're not the type for relationships though, consider the alternatives. Don't decide out of social pressure: it may cost everyone.

7. Contingent Self-Esteem: Makes You Needy For Positive Results

The mask model of grandiose outer shell but low implicit self-esteem has fallen in disfavor, but **narcissists' self-esteem may still be *contingent* on positive outcomes** and feeling superior.

Studies showed that when grandiose narcissists have low intellectual self-esteem, their well-being was *lower* than people low in grandiose narcissism.
Maladaptive facets of Entitlement / Exploitativeness also showed unstable self-esteem when facing interpersonal threats (Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013).

8. Psychological Fragility When Faced With Uncontrollable Obstacles

Strength without resilience and adaptability makes systems vulnerable.

Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that the higher the delusional sense of invincibility, the higher the risk and severity of PTSD and generalized anxiety disorder.
Besser, the author, hypothesizes that **narcissists' inflated and inflexible sense of control sets them up for failure** when events are uncontrollable.

Effective Narcissism™: 7 Traits to Cultivate

> **Effective Narcissism™** describes the high-functioning expression of narcissistic traits that reliably produce agentic, life-relevant outcomes (e.g., status, mating, influence, and resource acquisition), while reducing the self-defeating costs associated with maladaptive narcissistic expressions.

Effective Narcissism vs. Healthy & Adaptive Narcissism
Effective Narcissism™ is TPM's applied synthesis of leading empirical handbooks, peer-reviewed research, and Lucio Buffalmano's long-term analysis of power dynamics.
Related constructs appear as *healthy* narcissism (popular discourse), emphasizing assertiveness and prosociality, and *adaptive* narcissism (academia), typically treating entitlement and exploitativeness as uniformly maladaptive. TPM departs from the moral frame: in specific, strategically constrained contexts, entitlement and exploitativeness may yield instrumental advantages—even when they operate outside of traditional morality (George-Levi S., 2025; Brunnel et al., 2013, Study 4).

Effective Narcissism is the goal; **Strategic Narcissism™** is the work. It is the process of cultivating the traits that fuel power while consciously avoiding the toxic ones.

There is no one-size-fits-all to 'maximize narcissism' because it depends on the individual's starting point.
But at a high level, we can say:

- **Narcissists must reduce toxic traits** while keeping or increasing the empowering ones
- **Non-narcissists must develop the empowering traits**, while avoiding the toxic ones

Here are the most effective, research-backed behaviors and mindsets of successful narcissists:

1. Be High Agency

High agency includes:

- **High sense of control**: believe you can influence your lives and outcomes
- **Bias for action**, solution-oriented

High agency does not necessarily require competitiveness or narcissism—but it's a defining trait of successful narcissists. Narcissists' inflated self-views may also combine with high agency into unmitigated self-confidence.

Lastly, research shows narcissists don't care about communion, giving undivided focus on agency:

Agency	Communion
Get ahead	Get along
Goals	Relationships
Power	Warmth
Assertive	Kind
Independence	Interdependence

You can have both achievements and relationships—but high agency with an internal locus of control is a must.

2. Pursue Your Goals & Focus On Yourself (Approach-Orientation)

Grandiose are approach-oriented and sensitive to rewards, whereas vulnerable narcissists are avoidance-oriented and sensitive to threats (Foster & Trimm, 2008).

Approach orientation is associated with positive emotionality and boosts life effectiveness.
Writes narcissist researcher Keith Campbell with a dating example:

> Grandiose narcissists (…) **might ask ten people on a date to get one to say "yes."** (…)

Playing the numbers game when failure costs are low is a winning strategy—we've long espoused it here at TPM.

⍰⍰ **Approach orientation + self-focus addresses help fix rivalry**
Self-focus sidesteps the other-focus that fuels rivalry. Mindset: 'the competition doesn't even exist'.

3. Be High Self-Esteem

High self-esteem is the main driver of narcissists' mental health and power.

Self-esteem is in part genetic (Raevuori et al., 2007; Luo et al., 2013). But, like most traits, there is much you can do to increase it
See this video for a complete guide on increasing self-esteem and confidence, or consider Confidence University.

Narcissists' Tactic: Positively-Biased Attributions

Narcissists attribute successes to ability and failure to task difficulties while non-narcissists and vulnerable narcissists do the opposite (Stucke, 2003; Krusemark et al., 2015).

One may argue that this is a cheap trick that distorts reality. We agree, but… **It works**.
While you address self-esteem at its root, this tactic can help.

4. Be Self-Sufficient & Independent

High self-sufficiency is both empowering and attractive.
It doesn't mean you have to be alone. It means you *can* be.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Strong men walk alone**

Lucio:
I take this aspect to an extreme and take pride in self-sufficiency.
I believe strong men walk alone, while weak men seek refuge in groups (there is also some evidence for this). The ultimate measure of a man's power is the ability to carve his own path, on his own.

5. Approach, Talk, & Lead In Groups: Strategic Extraversion

Extraversion with confidence and social power fuels narcissists upward.

You don't need to become an extrovert if you're not; **you only need to *momentarily* act like an extrovert**. Think of it like 'switching on' when it matters. After performance time, you're back doing whatever you want.

This study attributed narcissists' initial success to:

- **Fancy appearances** (e.g., fashionable dress and stylish hair)
- **Charming facial expression** (i.e., looked more self-assured and friendly)
- **Self-assured body language** (e.g., straight posture, confident walk, smooth movements)

6. Calibrate Strategically: The Advanced Game

Despite popular 'power laws', the name of the advanced game is balance and calibration.
For example:

- **Use narcissism publicly** more than privately
- **Add warmth to the dominance**: lead with confidence, while also building intimacy
- **Display value with nonverbals first**, then double down verbally when they recognize it (think: *confirm* their reality instead of forcing it)
- **Calibrate work self-promotion based on culture & visibility**: self-promote more in individualistic cultures and for low-visibility work

Check this foundational article on being *both* dominant and warm.

7. Conquer With 'Honorable Narcissim™'

> **Honorable Narcissism™** builds on Effective Narcissim by placing **strategic honor™**, power-aware smart cooperation™, and a preference for win–win as the baseline

Writes Keith Campbell on combining narcissists' success with win-win:

> You demand power, status, leadership, material, and respect. That's great, and it often works. However, in turn, you should give back (…) that general trade-off is important ethically to conceptualize (…). Are you bringing more to the system than you're taking? Are you causing less suffering than you're creating? These questions can be tough to answer (…) but they're the ones that we need to consider.

We agree, and that's exactly our approach: **win, with win-win.** Or, at least, without being a value taker.

Strategic Takeaways

How does narcissism affect success—both short-term and long-term?

Narcissism tends to boost success early on because agentic traits like confidence, leadership, and self-promotion help people stand out, take initiative, and position themselves for opportunities.
More maladaptive forms of narcissism however grow and become more visible over time, and become a liability. Entitlement, hypersensitivity to criticism, and neediness for admiration and superiority can undermine teamwork, learning, and stable relationships.
The overall pattern supported by research is clear: the adaptive sides of narcissism help with early advancement, while the antagonistic sides often erode long-term success if left unchecked.

Can I intentionally adjust my narcissistic traits—up or down?

Yes. Non-narcissistic individuals can learn to amplify the adaptive traits linked to achievement, such as assertiveness, charisma, ambition, and confident goal pursuit. These are skills and dispositions that can be intentionally developed without sliding into toxicity. Narcissistic individuals can also reduce, or at least strategically avoid acting on, the more harmful facets such as rivalry, entitlement, or overreacting to criticism.

Is narcissism always a weakness in relationships?

No. Narcissism often increases early attraction because confidence, status, and leadership signals are appealing in dating and narcissists are described as 'exciting'.
Problems tend to appear later, when charm and confidence failed to build intimacy and give way to devaluation and competitiveness.
But research shows that with the right tools, like perspective taking, affirmations, and supportive partners, narcissists can improve their behavior and relationships.

Next Steps: A Winning, Honorable Narcissist

Narcissism is not a binary 'good' or 'bad', but a high-octane fuel.

As we have seen, the science is clear: the **Adaptive** traits (Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Approach-Orientation) are correlated with leadership, resilience, and happiness. They're fuel for power and achievement.

However, the **Maladaptive** traits (Rivalry, negative Entitlement, Neediness) are the brakes. They are the reason why so many high-potential men crash over the distance—or find themselves isolated at the top.

Now that you understand the *mechanism* of the narcissistic mind, you can delve deeper into the *how*.
In our follow-up guide, we detail how to nuke toxic traits and harness the adaptive ones:

- How to be an effective narcissist
- **Power University**: The complete, integrated system for mastering high-agency, Machiavellianism, and strategic dominance.

How to Be a Strategic Narcissist: Achieve Power Without Toxicity

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 December 2025 · Archived copy · Original

Narcissism is often framed as toxic, yet narcissism drives many of the world's most successful leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators.

When harnessed correctly, the confidence, ambition, and high agency of narcissism can propel you toward achievement, influence, and meaningful impact. This article shows how to channel narcissistic energy toward productive outcomes while neutralizing its toxic aspects.

Our 'strategic narcissism™' framework will show you how to:

- **Harness narcissistic fuel** (agency, ambition, and confidence)
- **Remove toxic traits** (rivalry, fragility, and entitlement)
- **Win long-term**, including good relationships

And add value to others as well with our 'honorable narcissism™' additions.

Let's dive in.

Strategic Narcissism™ — TPM's applied framework
This guide presents Strategic Narcissism™, an approach for cultivating the adaptive sides of narcissism while neutralizing the downsides to reach the end goal of Effective Narcissism™.
It combines the research on adaptive/healthy narcissism with TPM's proprietary insights, translated into actionable steps for ambitious men.

Many historical figures who built civilizations had narcissistic traits, but everyone benefited from them

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- 2. Be High Self-Esteem
- 3. Be Self-Sufficient
- 4. Pursue Your Goals (Approach-Orientation)
- 5. Approach, Talk, & Display Value: Strategic Extraversion
- 6. Dress to Impress & Mind Your Looks

- Phase II: Manage the Ego (Neutralizing Maladaptive Traits)
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  - 8. Use Haters & Competitors For Fuel, But Focus On Yourself
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  - 18. Long-Term Career: Calibrate Your Leadership
  - 19. Build Your Legacy, Add Value ('Honorable Narcissism™')
  - Next Steps

Phase 1: Building The Engine (Adaptive Traits)

The first step is to develop the effective narcissistic traits that help you advance in life, and achieve goals.

1. Be High Agency

High agency includes:

- **High sense of control**: you influence your life and outcomes
- **Goal-focus**
- **Bias for action** and drive
- **Solution-oriented**
- **Persistence**

You can have both achievements and relationships, but narcissists focus on agency because they care little about communion (Campbell et al., 2002):

Agency	Communion
Get ahead	Get along
Goals	Relationships
Power	Warmth
Assertive	Kind

Agency	Communion
Independence	Interdependence

Extreme agency can have downsides like overestimating control, rushing actions, blaming yourself for uncontrollable setbacks, and impatience. But it's a highly empowering trait, and you can avoid the downsides.

Takeaway: start with the mind: an internal locus of control—you decide what happens in your life.

2. Be High Self-Esteem

High self-esteem is the main driver of narcissists' mental power.

Self-esteem is only moderately heritable, meaning you can actively increase it (Raevuori et al., 2007; Luo et al., 2013)

Here are some quick tips:

- **Self-love** + self-acceptance + self-compassion = foundations
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy** to challenge negative thoughts
- **Increase competence**, make progress towards your goals
- **Increase social status and acceptance**: self-esteem tracks both
- **High power behavior** to self-signal you're worth of (your own) respect
- **Integrity**: live consistently with your values

Skip affirmations, being too nice to gain acceptance, or grandiose thinking without matching work.
Check this video for a deeper overview, or consider Confidence University.

P.S.:
Narcissists attribute success to their ability and failure to external constraints (Stucke, 2003; Krusemark et al., 2015). It's a distortion of reality, but it works.

3. Be Self-Sufficient

High self-sufficiency is both empowering and attractive.
Here's what it looks like:

Positives	Risks
A deep **belief in one's own capabilities**	Overestimation of one's capabilities
Independence, belief in one's ability to succeed on his own	Missing opportunities for collaboration
Trusting own opinion or one's own ability to find good answers	Distrust of expert advice, rejection of feedback, fear of looking deficient
Emotional self-sufficiency, not needing anyone for a happy internal life	Avoidance of intimacy, seen as weakness and dependence
High self-regard	Devaluing others as inferior, unable to help

Self-sufficiency is an adaptive and empowering trait. It doesn't mean you have to be alone, but it means you *can* be alone, and still be content.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Strong men walk alone**

Lucio:
I score high on this facet, and I take pride in it. Some of my beliefs and life philosophy are built around self-sufficiency.
I believe strong men walk alone, while weak men seek refuge in groups (there is some evidence for this). And the ultimate measure of a man's power is the ability to carve his own path, on his own.

4. Pursue Your Goals (Approach-Orientation)

Approach-orientation is active, agentic, and high-power, while approach avoidance is defensive.
Researcher Keith Campbell draws parallels with the animal kingdom:

> **Predators**, such as hawks or lions, have eyes that face forward with an intense focus on the goal. When predators commit to an action, they go for it full on (…) Their motivation is considered an *approach* tactic. **Prey animals** are different. Their eyes sit on the sides of their head (…) They are often skittish (…) Their motivation is considered an *avoidance* tactic.

Grandiose narcissists are approach-oriented and reward-seeking (Foster & Trimm, 2008), boosting their life effectiveness.
Writes again Campbell with a dating example:

> Grandiose narcissists (…) **might ask ten people on a date to get one to say "yes."**

That's a smart strategy.
Finally, approach orientation is associated with higher mental health (Elliot & Thrash, 2002).

5. Approach, Talk, & Display Value: Strategic Extraversion

Extraversion is a crucial trait for narcissists' early gains in status, leadership, and popularity.

Mimic this approach when entering new groups: be more outgoing, talkative, and slightly higher energy—but with

effective dominance, don't be a jester.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Introverts can 'switch on' when needed**

Lucio:
Despite being introverted, I score maximum points in the 'authoritativeness' facet of grandiose narcissism because I approach socialization strategically.

Entering new groups is 'performance time' for me: approach, socialize, and value-signal.
You can do the same, think of it as a 'switch-on mode'.
With a few hours and a few repetitions, you can become a high-status member. Then, you can chill.

6. Dress to Impress & Mind Your Looks

Looks matter, and narcissists look better.

There are no inherent genetic advantages; the difference is all in the presentation (Odom-Dixon, 2015).
This study lists:

- **Fancy appearances** (e.g., clothes and hairstyle)
- **Charming facial expression** (i.e., self-assured and friendly)
- **Confident body language** (e.g., straight posture, confident walk, smooth movements)

Phase II: Manage the Ego (Neutralizing Maladaptive Traits)

Many historical and present leaders can be even more successful if they manage their narcissism

Once built the foundations, we 'tame the beast'.
This is helpful for all, and a necessity for those high in narcissistic traits.

7. Reflect On Superpowers... *And Toxicity*

Narcissists are aware of their narcissism and its advantages, but underestimate the downsides (Carlson, 2018).

These unaddressed weaknesses cap your potential and may even cause your downfall.
And remember:

The more power you gain, the more careful you must be.
Power gives you sychophants, lulls you into a false sense of invincibility, and worsens narcissistic overconfidence (Macenczak et al., 2016).

So let's fix those weaknesses:

8. Use Haters & Competitors For Fuel, But Focus On Yourself

It's crucial to manage a competitive streak strategically.

The NARQ model subdivides narcissism into two main modes:

- **Admiration enhances the self** = assertive self-enhancement, high-agency, and approach-oriented
- **Rivalry tears others down** = antagonistic self-protection with competitor derogation, envy

Rivalry may still afford some status because it correlates with the dominant approach to gaining status. But admiration is superior because, as per our power and warmth model, it uses *both* dominance and prestige (Zeigler-Hill et al. 2017).

You can use rivalry as fuel to work harder and push further.
However, this is dangerous fuel that can make you look ugly on the outside, and poison your inner life. Use

sparingly and focus more on *learning to avoid* the uglier aspects of rivalry for both mental health, social prestige, and quality relationships.

⚠ **N.B.: Rivalry accounts for most of Narcissism's toxic aspects**
It lowers self-esteem, ruins relationships, and disempowers you mentally and socially (Leckelt et al., 2015; Wurst et al., 2017; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016; Geukes et al., 2017).

Takeaway: Use haters and competitors to fuel your drive. But focus on yourself as baseline bahvior: it sidesteps rivalry, and you work more effectively.
Also see:

- Winners' mindsets: 'the competition doesn't even exist'

9. Find Pride In The Self, Never The Group

Failed narcissists seek to feed their grandiosity through the group, rather than fixing their lives.

Says de Zavala, the originator of the concept in *The Handbook of Trait Narcissism*:

> Collective narcissism was related to low self-esteem via vulnerable narcissism (i.e., frustrated and unfulfilled sense of self-entitlement, de Zavala et al., 2017). Thus, both collective narcissism and nationalism seem to be underlain by low self-esteem, and both are likely to use their national identity instrumentally to compensate for deficits in their sense of self-worth.
> (…) related to sensitivity to intergroup threat and retaliatory hostility (de Zavala et al., 2016).

This form of tribalism is socially toxic, mentally disempowering, and keeps you stuck at the bottom.
Here's how to fix it:

- **Focus on yourself**
- **Switch mindset: honor the group with your results**
- **Embrace larger and diverse belonging**, like civilization or humanity
- **Switch from in-group belonging, to 'great men belonging'**, an elite group without geography or time
- **Switch to a weaker but healthier in-group satisfaction**

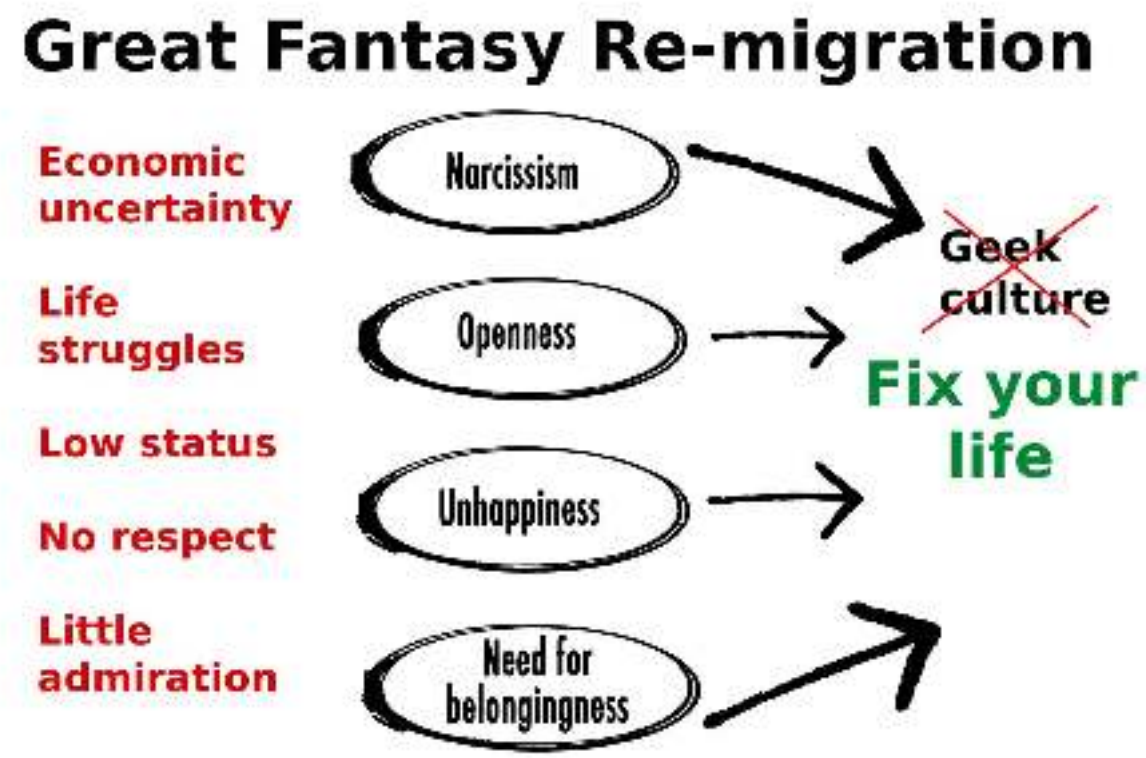
A foundational article on this:

- Empowered individualism

Address The Issues, Never Escape From Reality

Empirical support for the Great Fantasy Migration suggests that narcissists escape into alternative realities when life is disappointing (Itamar and Shahar, 2014; McCain et al., 2015; W. Andrews and McCann, 2022).

Don't let that be you.
There is no shame in having some work to do. The only shame is never beginning the work.



10. Move to Healthy Entitlement

Good entitlement is empowering.
You demand your worth, maximize social exchanges, and date more attractive partners.

But the 'bad' element disempowers you mentally and socially.
The crucial difference is that toxic entitlement demands far in excess, without doing the work, and reacts emotionally instead of strategically.

Bad Entitlement	Empowered Entitlement
I'm special	**I *prove* to be special** with work that develops competence and results
I'm due special treatment	**I don't need anything, but will earn whatever I want**. I'm due basic decency and respect
I'm due special service	**I'm due what I paid** for and will demand it
I'm owed attractive partners	My special someone will be **lucky to have me**, and silly to lose me

⍰⍰♂Lucio's note: I also embrace and advise an ethical and communal aspect:

Bad Entitlement	Honorable Entitlement
I'm entitled to consume it all until depletion	I can use as much as I want. But **I *choose* to be a responsible citizen**, preventing tragedy of commons and passing future generations a better world

11. Replaces Others' Admiration, With Your Own

Admiration-seeking is at the heart of narcissism psychology and behavior (Morf and Rodhewalt, 2001).
It can be useful, motivating you to gain respect, status, and the accolades that come from achievement.

But it's also the source of important limitations, including a need for others' adulation.
With rivalry, it also leads to reactive defensiveness and aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Martinez et al.,

2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Raskin et al., 1991).

To get the positives without the negatives, seek *your own* respect first and foremost.
Prioritizing your own respect gives you the motivation to excel, while freeing you from external dependencies.

🧔♂️Lucio's Take: **It worked wonders for me**

Lucio:
I narrowed down the people whose esteem I wanted to three. My father, I, and the collective of humanity.

Adding value to humanity is the north star to guide my path, but no single individual can assess my contribution. So once I made my father proud, I was left as my own sole judge—and it noticeably improved my life.

Tip: strike a positive balance. A demanding judge, but with enough self-love and self-compassion.

12. Learn The Value of Hard Work

Toxic entitlement makes some narcissists feel entitled to success, without the skills and hard work required for it.

So they stay stuck in menial jobs they half-ass while feeling too good for them.
A study confirmed this risk: narcissists thrived under pressure and when they could prove their superiority, but underperformed in mundane, low-visibility tasks.

Instead, **successful narcissists learn that hard work leads to success**.
Says clinical psychologist Bernstein:

> The narcissist who drops being special and instead works his ass off to *become* special, those are the narcissists who succeed.

I can attest to this progress as I went through a similar personal transformation.
Here are some tips:

- **Think of apprenticeship as a starting phase** that may include pointless work
- **Work on your own** or on what you love: it short-circuits this process
- **Find pride in hard work**, rather than in the end goal alone

13. Learn The Value of Continued Growth

Narcissists fall behind in skill-building because they try to *prove* competence, seek admiration instead of feedback, and deflect blame rather than learn (Elliot & Thrash, 2001; Gerhardt & Le, 2013; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Campbell et al., 2004).

In goal-orientation theory—similar to a fixed mindset—the biggest handicap to long-term growth is avoiding difficult tasks because one fears looking bad ('performance avoidance orientation' (VandeWalle, 1997; Dweck, 2006)).

The solutions are:

- **Approach orientation** and growth mindset
- **Pursue and value growth** above performance when you're learning
- **Be strategic**: it can be smart to avoid showing incompetence. Show competence to superiors, learn through mistakes in private

Context also matters, and a learning-oriented environment helps shift from performance to growth (Button et al., 1996; Mangos & Steele-Johnson, 2001)

14. Develop Antifragile Self-esteem

Self-esteem contingent on success is risky—you may lose it when struggling, *exactly when you need it the most.*

Fix: develop your self-esteem around values that are equally empowering but more in your control.
For example:

- **Grit** and perseverance
- **Resourcefulness** and finding ways, including strategic thinking
- **Honor** and integrity, living by your values, speaking your mind, and avoiding petty games

Embrace Your Mortality & Fragility

Believing in one's invincibility looks strong on the surface, but it fails when uncontrollable, unfavorable events hit. There is indeed evidence that, faced with uncontrollable military attacks, higher narcissism was correlated with higher risk and severity of PTSD.

Hence, despite counterintuitive, **accepting mortality and fragility is the true foundation of mental resilience.**

Also read:

- Embrace your mortality
- Positive cynicism

🤵♂️Lucio's Take: **Grandiosity Meets Positive Fatalism**

Lucio:
It's grandiose to believe that our work at TPM is important, and can add a small yet significant contribution to humanity.

I live a healthy life in good part to see this mission through.

However, I also accept that I may not personally see it through. Or that I may never see the impact of this work in my lifetime. Or that it may never have the impact I think it can.

And that would not be ideal, but it's OK.
See the TPM framework for **Antifragile grandiosity**.

15. Unplug From Social Media, Ignore Marketing

Social media attracts narcissists, and marketing can prime state narcissism (Casale and Banchi, 2020; De Bellis et al., 2016).

Most likely, they recruit the vanity and exhibitionism facets, offering larger downsides than upsides (neediness for attention, time sink, and low masculinity).
They also stoke materialism, associated with self-doubt and inner fragility (Kasser & Kasser, 2001; Chang & Arkin, 2002; Braun & Wicklund, 1989).

Remember: chasing brands is for the low-power masses.
The real power move is when brands chase *you* for the privilege of being associated with you.

Solution: focus on agentic goal achievement, ignore marketing and social media.

Phase III: Sustain Power & Success (Long Game)

Finally, let's use healthy narcissism to *sustain* success.

16. Long-Term Health: Work Out, Without Excesses

Narcissists exercise more, but have also higher rates of compulsive exercise, bulimia, and disordered eating thoughts and behaviors (Lichtenstein et al., 2017; Gordon & Dombeck, 2010; Dakanalis et al., 2015).

Balance may seem obvious to most people.
But some highly agentic men are unbalanced by definition. The trick is to recruit their own high-power psychology and associate weakness with excesses.
Here's how:

Weak & Ineffective	High Power & Effective
Over-exercising	Exercise + recovery + work + loving life = winner
Grueling exercise for self-acceptance = needy, weak ego	Feeling great about yourself no matter what = power
Stressing over food = not masculine	Healthy diet baseline without stressing = masculine

P.S.:
Unplug from compulsive biohackers, enhanced gym influencers, and masochistic compulsive exercisers.

17. Long-Term Relationships & Alliances: Maintain Win-Win

Narcissists are great at *starting* relationships. But for long-term success, *maintaining* is key.
Here's how:

Relationships: Do Them Smart, Or Not At All

Narcissists' relationships start strong, but plummet fast (Back, 2013).

The plummet has been associated with rivalry, which is why it's so crucial to keep it at bay.
However, even avoiding rivalry, high agency alone can 'crowd out' communion and relationships suffer without at least some quality time.

Do this:

- **Decide whether commitment is good for you**. If it isn't, don't do it (see 'player psychology')
- **Pick communal and supportive partners**, it increases satisfaction and commitment (Finkel et al., 2009)
- **Lay out the rules**, including your priorities
- **'Agentify' relationship quality**: making it a goal combines agency with win-win communion
- **Think about win-win**, focus on the common goals and similarities (Konrath et al., 2006)

Alliances: Maintain Win-Win

While there isn't enough data on friendships, researchers suspect it follows the same pattern of good start, poor ending.
Here are some tips to avoid it:

- **Quit the aggrandizement** on 1:1
- **Learn to bond and connect**, valid for both friends and women
- **Keep it win-win**, don't be afraid of instrumental friendships, but always seek to give back
- **Be happy for their success**, use this mindset: 'the more my friends advance, the stronger my network becomes'

18. Long-Term Career: Calibrate Your Leadership

Narcissism helps you climb higher, especially if combined with a Machiavellian grasp of office politics.

Once you're higher up, you can make a difference.
Unfortunately, most leadership resources are generic, naive, and uncalibrated.

For example, while a minimum level of respect-giving is good, Steve Jobs was very effective with what semeed to be an asshole style. Yet what worked for Jobs' ambitious reports doesn't work for mid-level management.
Instead, here's how to calibrate:

- **Hard charging with ambitious and strong followers** who can thrive with profit shares (Campbell, 2020)
- **Strong but respectful of other dominant men**, or you'll lock horns, and they'll soon leave
- **Mellower for more submissive & low self-esteem followers**: they're more likely to experience impostor syndrome, lowering performance
- **Match to career phase**: adapt when new, call your shots once at the top

Resist The Downward Pull of Cult-Like Followers: Hire for Competence

Powerful narcissists can repel high-power men and attract sycophants.
Says Bernstein:

> Narcissistic Legends create alternate realities that push powerful people away and attract the weak (…) People who doubt themselves are attracted to Narcissistic certainty

Dominance complementarity theory offers some evidence for this dynamic (Grijalva & Harms, 2014).
It also aligns with psychology: it's titillating for the ego to surround yourself with fawners and admirers. Resist the temptation. Contrary to popular 'laws', leading a cult is never peak power or success. Cult leaders lead losers. To win big, you need winners.

Surround Yourself With Smart Experts

Narcissists overestimate their expertise and ignore expert advice (O'Reilly and Hall, 2021).

Include the sychophants telling you what you want you hear, and you've got a recipe for ineffective decision-making.

Solution: surround yourself with experts with the courage to speak the truth. And hire strong men who drive results for all

19. Build Your Legacy, Add Value ('Honorable Narcissism™')

The ultimate step is to channel grandiosity into projects that outlast you.

Something that uplifts humanity and future generations.

The highest expression of effective narcissism seeks value-adding honor. It means building, never destroying.
Great men have built before you, paving the roads of civilization. Your goal is to add your meaningful brick to go further yet.

A successful legacy requires escaping the lures of short-term thinking, materialism, and edonism.
Instead, marry agency with long-term thinking, vision, and responsibility. The responsibility to win and lead not just for yourself, but for those who will come after you.

This is the 'honorable narcissist™' stage, a man whose goal is to add value.

Next Steps

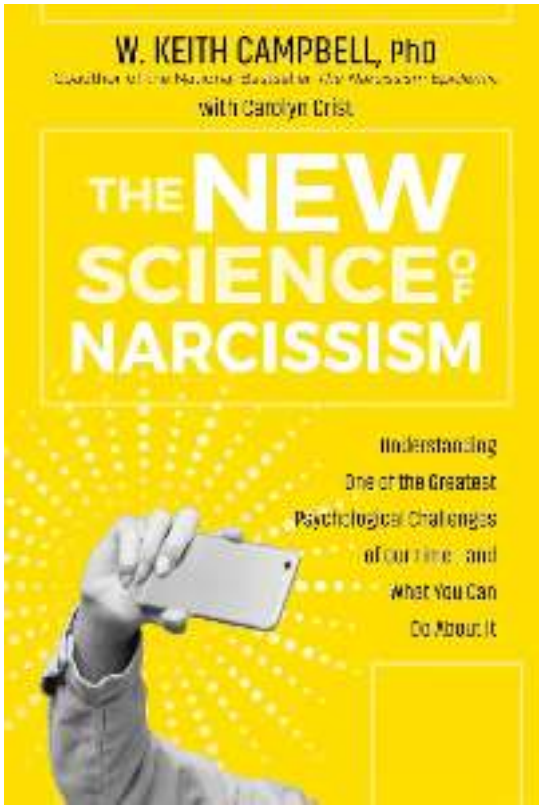
You now have the complete blueprint for calibrated power and honorable dominance.
But the path to peak performance requires systematic mastery of power dynamics and strategic execution.
If you're ready to move from strategy to **flawless execution** and join the world's most accomplished men, your next step is **Power University**.

Join Power University

The New Science of Narcissism: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 December 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The New Science of Narcissism (2020) offers a clear, research-based overview of narcissism as a spectrum trait, explaining what characterizes it, and how it shows up in everyday life.



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Notes

About the Author:
W. Keith Campbell is a leading social psychologist and professor at the University of Georgia, best known for his pioneering research on narcissism. Campbell has published over 120 peer-reviewed papers, several books, and has been the editor of the first handbook on narcissism, *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder* and authored a chapter in *The Handbook of Trait Narcissism* (⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: I very much appreciate top researchers who also contribute to handbooks that provide an empirically grounded overview of the field).

Chapter 1: Defining Narcissism

> At its core, narcissism is about self-importance, antagonism, and a sense of entitlement. Narcissists believe they matter more than other people and deserve to be treated that way.

Narcissism spans a spectrum: grandiose (ambitious, charming, high self-esteem) and vulnerable (insecure, depressed, low self-esteem), sharing a core of entitlement but differing in traits.

Some people have a mix of both, like Kaynie Waste, who is both grandiose and thin-skinned, reactive to criticism. Elliot Rodger's case exemplifies vulnerable narcissism with grandiose elements.

- **Psychotherapists don't often see grandiose narcissists** because they don't struggle socially or in life
- **Trifurcated Model of Narcissism bridges vulnerability and grandiosity**: *connects grandiose and vulnerable narcissism as two related but separate traits. Both share a core of disagreeableness, self-importance, and a sense of entitlement, but they differ. With grandiose narcissism, you see confidence, boldness, and self-esteem, but with vulnerable narcissism, you see low confidence, anxiety, and low self-esteem.*
- **The mask model is incorrect, and grandiose narcissists don't have a weak core**: *Under this interpretation, however, it would mean that when President Donald Trump goes home at night and looks in the mirror, he sees Woody Allen staring back at him. This is a neat idea, but like many neat ideas, it doesn't hold up to scrutiny.*

Models For Understanding Narcissism

Model	Description	Example
Nomological network (trait model)	Narcissism is a stable trait that exists in a network with other traits.	Narcissism is linked with psychological entitlement.
Self-regulation model	Narcissism is a trait but needs to be actively maintained by meeting goals.	Narcissism leads to forming friendships, which in turn leads to self-esteem.

Model	Description	Example
Evolutionary model	Narcissism is a trait, but needs to be actively maintained by meeting goals.	Narcissism predicts short-term mating success.
Cultural model	Narcissism is created, modified, and spread by cultural forces.	Narcissism was formed and spread by the broader focus on individualism.

Chapter 2: Measuring Narcissism

Narcissism scales include NPI (grandiose, 40 items) and HSNS (vulnerable, 10 items).

The author invites to testing yourself, but with self-awareness: interpret the scales as indicator to measure traits, not disorders.

Rigor vs. Pop Science

Campbell also calls into question some pop-culture personality tests:

> I'm sure you've taken a personality quiz or two—who doesn't love those? Under the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, you may be an ENTJ or an ISFT. Many variations exist, and chances are, **many of them have little or no grounding in scientific evidence**, especially if they are related to pop culture.
> (…) Quiz takers often encounter what psychologists call the Barnum Effect, who apocryphally said, "**There's a sucker born every minute**." The Barnum Effect works by giving vague, ambiguous feedback that applies to everyone.

As well as some definitions, for example referring to the *Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*:

> This massively popular work expanded the definition of self-esteem (…) yet it also captures many variables that today's psychologists would place beyond self-esteem, such as mindfulness and self-efficacy.

Chapter 3: Basic Traits and the Narcissism Recipe

Trait Level	Name	Description	Comment
Meta-trait	Big One	E + O + A + C – N	The "positive" poles of the Big Five
Meta-trait	Big Two	A + C – N E + O	Stability (also Alpha) Plasticity (also Beta)
Trait	Big Five	E, O, A, C, N	All-around most useful but has trade-offs of precision and generality
Aspect	Medium Ten	Extraversion split into enthusiasm & assertiveness	Useful for more specific questions
Facet	Thirty Facets	E split into activity, assertiveness, excitement-seeking, gregariousness, positive emotion, warmth	Useful for building complex profiles

levels of personality traits

The author describes personality with the analogy of a recipe.

Personality traits are stable descriptors; Big Five (OCEAN: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) form the foundation:

> The Big Five traits are the ingredients that cover almost all other personality traits. At the same time, a

> personality recipe loses precision when using the Big Five traits; it's a recipe that lists meat as an ingredient but doesn't specify steak, pork, or chicken. The recipe is simple and straightforward, but vague

Narcissism's "recipe":

- **Low agreeableness** (antagonism) is the 'key ingredient'. Antagonism has been called entitled self-importance or darkness.
  It includes:
  - sense of entitlement
  - lack of empathy
  - manipulativeness
  - superiority.
- **High extraversion** for grandiose, which includes:
  - Sociability
  - Boldness
  - Drive

> With extraversion, a much higher functioning individual compensates for the antagonism with likeability or success. If someone who is powerful or attractive is also energetic and likable, he can also be somewhat mean and get away with it. This extraversion is also what allows narcissism to spread across social media and upward into positions of power.

For vulnerabile narcissism the second ingredient is neuroticism, which includes insecurity, anxiety, depression, and hypersensitivity.

> a vulnerable narcissist is essentially someone who is self-important, self-centered, and entitled but also insecure, depressed, and self-conscious. Vulnerable narcissists are sometimes thought of as thin-skinned: they expect special treatment and are hypersensitive to criticism and "perceived slights," or situations that most of us wouldn't make a big deal out of

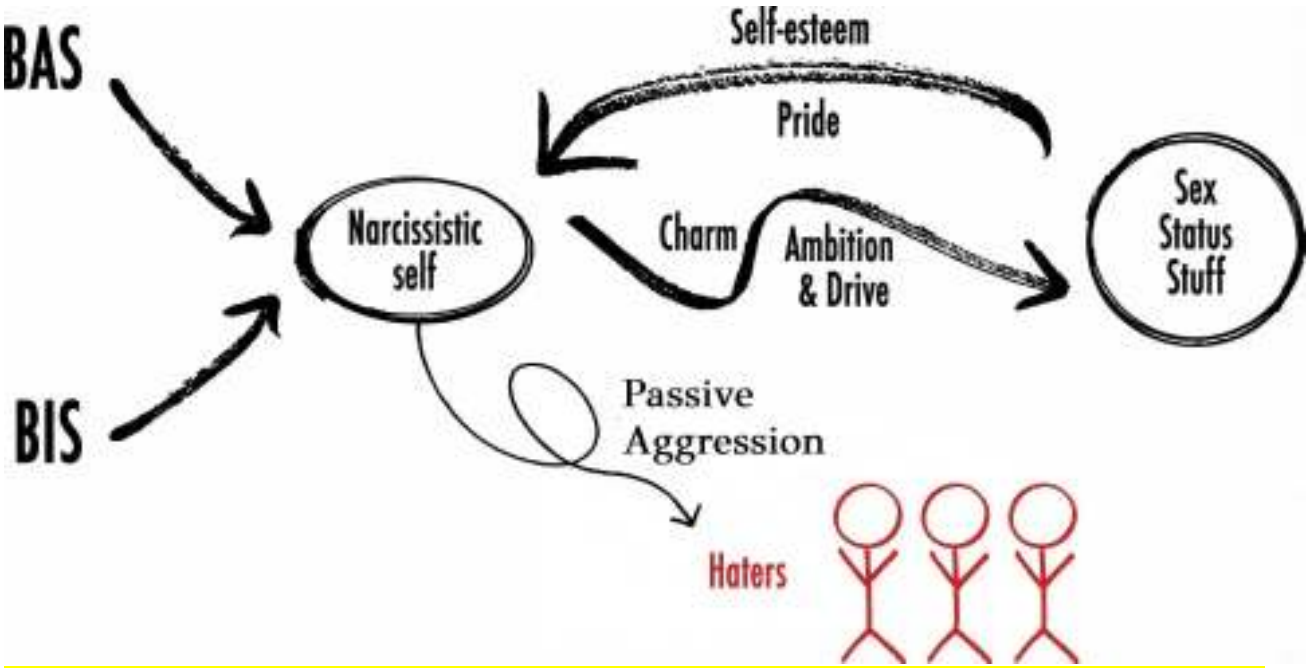
Extraversion Facets

> Most importantly, extraversion splits into *enthusiasm* and *assertiveness*. People are drawn to enthusiasm, or a high-positive-energy personality such as personal development coach Tony Robbins.
> People are moved by assertiveness, or the idea of pushing themselves, goals, or an agenda. Sometimes we respect assertiveness, and sometimes we push back against it. Narcissism correlates with both aspects of extraversion but especially the assertiveness side.

Chapter 4: Narcissists' Goals and Motives

Grandiose narcissists pursue approach (rewards) over avoidance (threats) goals, favoring extrinsic (status) over intrinsic (growth).
Self-regulation maintains an inflated ego via self-serving bias.

Vulnerable narcissists do the opposite.



Grandiose are approach-oriented (BAS), Vulnerabe approach-avoidant (BIS). Note: I removed 'self-serving bias' from the vulnerable as it may apply to grandiose too and replaced 'aggression' with 'passive aggression'. Based on Campbell, 2020

Narcissists' Pursuits: Sex, Status, & Stuff

Narcissists' core aim is to **boost their ego**. Their external goals—public praise, power, status, and sexual success—are tools to make themselves feel important. I summarize them as the "three S's": **sex, status, and stuff**.

- **Sex** is about feeling desirable and powerful, not intimacy. Narcissists want to be seen as attractive, often pursue short-term partners, and may choose "trophy" spouses. Even turning others down can serve the same purpose—it signals that *they* are the desirable one.
- **Status** is about social rank. Narcissists want admiration, dominance, and top positions—whether as leaders or trendsetters. The focus is the prestige and influence that come with the role, not the responsibility.
- **Stuff** refers to owning high-value items—luxury cars, designer brands, fashionable pieces. They want things that make them look impressive. It's not about appreciating quality or craftsmanship, but about boosting their image.

> **Sex relates to social power**, not intimacy. Because sex is about the self for narcissists, rejecting sexual requests from others can also be a goal. In this case, sex itself isn't the goal, but the fact that the narcissist is desirable.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Women play the rejection game more than men**

Lucio:
The author is correct.
I'd add that you see the game of spurning someone's advances far more from narcissistic women, than men.

Since from an evolutionary point of view men gain from an added sexual partner, it's rarer for men to turn down sex, but more common in women.

I list this as a game women play, sometimes a dating red flag, and would caution men to avoid considering women who play this game for a relationship.

Grandiose Pursue Their Goals, Vulnerable Withdraw In Fear

Grandiose actively seek the rewards they crave.
Vulnerable narcissists don't: they fear failure and withdraw up in their own world.

> In the social world, however, it is easier. The research shows that grandiose narcissistic motivation is related to learning through rewards to their ego.
> On the other hand, vulnerable narcissists are particularly avoidance-oriented and often suspicious, fearful, and mistrustful. The world is seen as predatory. The vulnerable narcissist protects the self from that and fights for the recognition that is owed. Most of this fighting is mental and emotional because vulnerable narcissists are often too fearful to confront people directly. In the research, these narcissists report being angry but not particularly aggressive.

Vulnerable narcissists may want to read the following:

- Stop being a beta male
- Passive-aggressive psychology and fixes
- Passive communication style

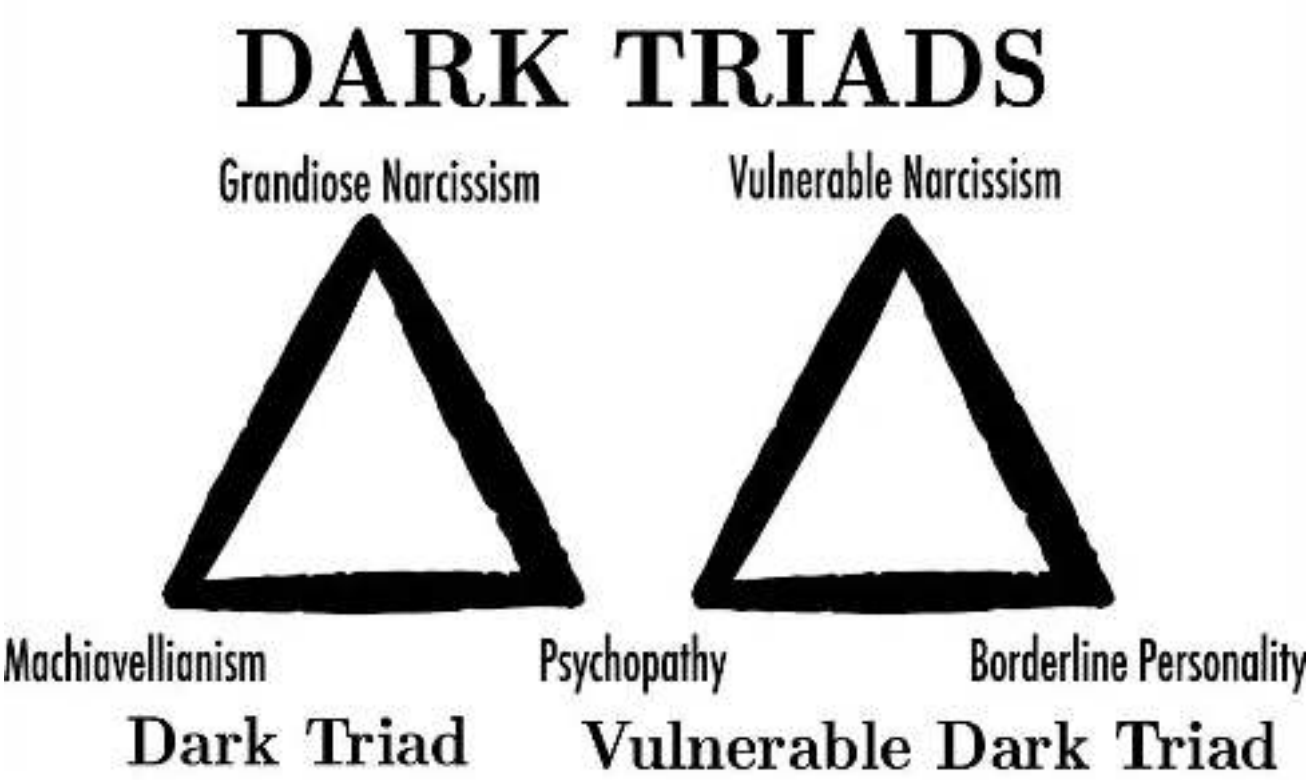
Chapter 5: Narcissistic Personality Disorder

NPD is extreme, inflexible narcissism causing impairment (prevalence ~1-6%).
However, **it's only diagnosed as a personality disorder if it leads to impairment**. Such as, the personality disorder is not based on levels: one could be a full-blown dark narcissist, but if he functions well in life, it's not a personality disorder.
Says tha author:

> these traits should only be diagnosed as narcissistic personality disorder if they lead to significant impairment. In the end, if someone has enough status and power and can get away with a large amount of narcissism, it may not be clinically impairing, even if it is extreme.

- **Impulsivity differentiates NPD from antisocial**: *One good differentiator between NPD and antisocial personality disorder (or psychopathic personality disorder) is impulsivity, or the need to act on impulsive thoughts and feelings. Narcissism is not typically associated with impulsivity, but antisocial personality disorder is. In the "real world," impulsivity might mean stealing somebody's watch or cheating on a spouse. In extreme cases, people who are antagonistic and highly impulsive often end up in and out of jail.*
- **Hypomania has confidence, but not attention-seeking**: *the grandiose phase of mania can create the confidence, energy, and grandiosity of narcissism, but they're typically not driven by antagonism and attention-seeking. Someone with hypomania may want to achieve a lofty goal like building the tallest structure in the world but not want to put his name on it. Plus, manic episodes tend to be cyclical*

Chapter 6: Narcissism's Cousins: The Four Triads



Triads group related traits:

- **Dark Triad** (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy): antagonistic core
- **Vulnerable Dark Triad** (narcissism, borderline, Factor 2 psychopathy): instability.
- **Light Triad** (Kantianism, humanism, faith in humanity): prosocial opposite.
- **Energized Triad** (narcissism, hypomania, extraversion): bold energy.

The light triad may help combat narcissism.

What's Most Effective Depends On Context

> Flat organizations are becoming more popular (…) Narcissistic leadership thrives in a hierarchy, so when organizational power becomes hidden in a network rather than formalized in a hierarchy, researchers aren't quite sure how narcissism will work.
> Based on the current research, my guess is that narcissists may gain some centrality in organizational networks, yet they will eventually be pushed aside or isolated due to company culture. Classic Machiavellians might be able to navigate a web of social power, so it likely depends on the network and those who are employed.

Wannabe Machiavellians

> Machiavellians are often callous and highly manipulative, believing that the importance of their aims justifies even immoral means. In real life, though, Machiavellians of this level are hard to find. Many wannabe Machiavellians think they are highly manipulative and clever, but they actually look and act like impulsive psychopaths.

Learn better:

- How to be an honorable Machiavellian

> 15 Steps to Be A Good Machiavellian: Your Secret Playbook

Chapter 7: Relationships and Narcissism

> A narcissist wants a relationship with someone who can boost self-esteem through high status, physical attraction, or money. Essentially, the narcissist's partner is a tool for inflating the narcissist's ego.

Strategy	Examples
Effective adornment	Hair and makeup
Flashy and neat dress	Stylish Colorful
Charming facial expression	Self-assured Upbeat
Self-assured body movement	Straight posture Dominant behaviors

Grandiose Narcissists Got Game

> Many people wait for their soul mate to show up at a bar and pick them up, using the perfect conversation starter and saying everything they want to hear. Well, someone just might do that—if that person is a narcissist.

But are built for short-term:

> Narcissists love the honeymoon period that's filled with excitement, passion, and confidence, but we all know it

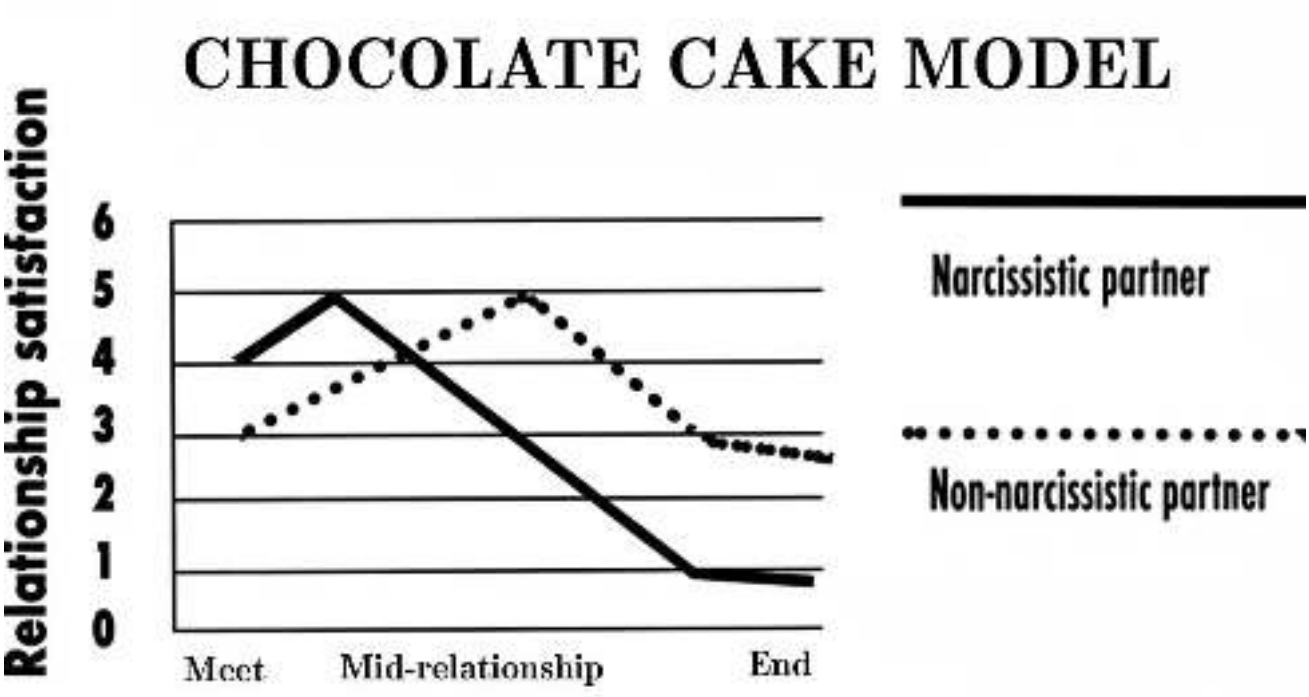
> doesn't last forever. (…) Over time, however, that feeling wears off (…) replaced with familiarity and comfortable conversation.

And that's when narcissists may begin to act out, or start angling for the door.

Vulnerable Narcissists Are Needy

> vulnerable narcissism, in particular, is associated with insecure attachment styles, and vulnerable narcissists tend to need a partner who reassures them, makes them feel accepted, or ensures that they are connected in the relationship. This experience of being with a partner who is needy is not pleasant, especially as it develops into a long-term relationship.
> In the short-term, providing this comfort can make partners feel good about themselves because they're helping someone, stabilizing that person, and reinforcing their own idea that they matter. In the long-term, however, this pressure becomes exhausting because the partner exists to establish someone else's self-esteem, and this builds as both partners realize they don't like being in a relationship with the other person anymore.

From Nice to Abusive: Admiration & Rivarly



Chocolate cake model of narcissistic relationship: start higher, end lower

Researchers split narcissistic behavior in relationships into two sides: **admiration** (the charming, confident, attention-seeking side) and **rivalry** (the competitive, critical, antagonistic side).

A 2014 German study suggested that narcissists **switch motives over time.**
Early in dating, they seek admiration from a new partner. But once they feel they've "secured" that person, the boost fades. Then they shift to rivalry—putting their partner down or competing with them to maintain their own sense of worth. Other studies show the same pattern.

Overall, the **admiration** side is appealing at the start and becomes neutral later, but it never turns negative. It goes from positive → neutral. The **rivalry** side starts slightly negative and becomes more damaging over time.

Chapter 8: Leadership and Narcissism

> **Narcissism and leadership go together** like picnics and ants. Leadership is a goal for narcissists because it means status, power, and attention. It means wealth, and it even means sex. Especially for men, leadership is a great way to gain the affection of—or simply to exploit—others for sex.

Talking about Trump, Campbell even says that he *expects* leaders to be narcissists.

This is only true for grandiose narcissists, though.
The neuroticism of vulnerables impairs leadership emergence and performance.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Is Trump not embezzling funds?**

Lucio:
The author mentions '*The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*' and says he has little doubt that Trump is narcissistic, but doesn't believe it represents a clinical level of impairment.

He cites as examples that '*he has not overreacted to threats or promoted himself over others to the extent that I thought was possible, has not been caught having affairs or stealing funds from the government*.'

I wouldn't even consider affairs as a level of impairment and wouldn't necessarily disagree with him (besides the expected and known leadership issues with high narcissists that I still personally find deplorable).
But stealing funds is debatable since one can leverage the presidency to make money. Think of launching crypto coins, receiving expensive gifts, or mis-spending on narcissistic pursuits like military parades, larger ballrooms, or cracking down on enemies.

Grandiose and Vulnerable Together Make For Poor Leaders

> Leaders who exhibit both types of narcissism may not do well either. Bob Hogan, a well-known personality psychologist and industrial psychologist, has said that this is the worst combination he sees when working with high-level executives. People who are highly narcissistic but also neurotic and vulnerable take slights easily and

> are immune to criticism. They go off the handle. They throw things. People who are power hungry but also have thin skins are a problem.

Narcissistic Leaders Need Tough Followers

Research actually shows that certain followers *benefit* from having a narcissistic leader.
A consultant friend of the author calls his approach “feed the eagle, starve the pigeons,” and actively seeks out narcissistic leadership for that reason.
Employees with high confidence and strong self-esteem may excel under these leaders where they work hard, close sales, and boost performance.

In contrast, people with low self-esteem, insecurity, or impostor-syndrome tendencies struggle. They often feel intimidated, mistreated, or exposed.
So for narcissistic leaders to be effective, they need followers who are tough, resilient, and able to handle—and even perform better under—their demanding style.

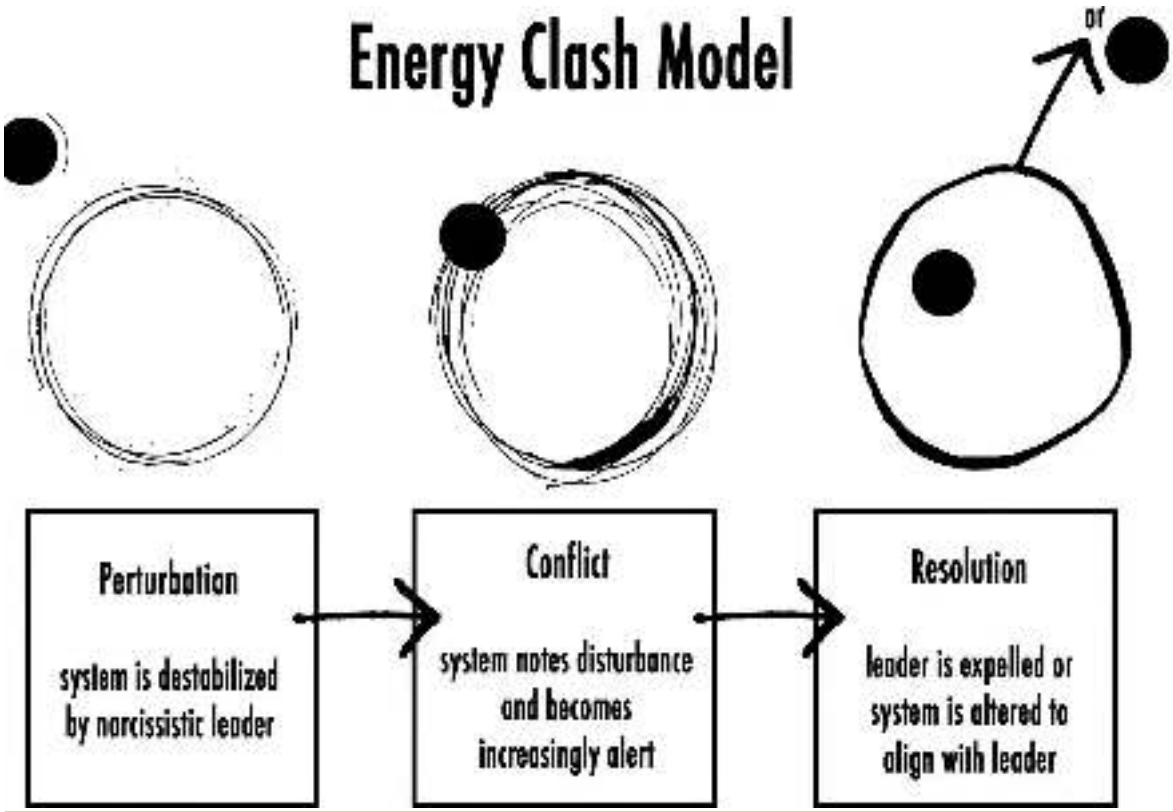
In Stable Organizations Avoid Narcissists, But In Uncertain Times...

Context strongly shapes when narcissistic leaders become effective.
During stable, prosperous times, organizations don’t need them—people prefer steady, competent, good-natured leaders who simply keep things running.

But in periods of chaos or uncertainty—economic instability, social confusion, or a general sense that life is out of control—people are drawn to narcissistic leaders who project certainty, strength, and clear direction, even if they can’t actually deliver it.

The danger is that these conditions are exactly what allow destructive figures to rise—such as Hitler during Germany’s post–WWI collapse—or charismatic extremists like Jim Jones, who filled spiritual or emotional voids by building cult-like power.

Energy Clash Model: narcissism vs. system resistance



Campbell, 2020

The Energy Clash Model explains what happens when a grandiose narcissistic leader enters an organization. The system reacts to their disruptive style in three stages:

1. Perturbation (Shock Phase)

The organization becomes unstable.
People don't know what the new leader will do.
The leader announces bold changes, and employees feel nervous but generally supportive.

2. Conflict (Pushback Phase)

As the leader starts reorganizing teams and pushing new directions, those who lose power or feel threatened push back.
Opposition forms, leading to internal battles, resistance, or departures.

3. Resolution (Integration or Rejection)

Eventually, the system settles.
Either the leader's vision becomes the new norm (*integration*, e.g., Home Depot's CEO case),
or the organization rejects the leader and removes them (*rejection*, e.g., Time Inc.'s CEO Jack Griffin).

The model also fits **political leadership**, such as Donald Trump's presidency: a brief honeymoon, immediate instability, prolonged conflict between supporters and opponents, and eventual resolution.

Dominance vs. Prestige

Two main pathways explain why certain people rise as leaders: **dominance** and **prestige**.

Dominance (the narcissistic path)

Leaders rise through force, confidence, intimidation, and aggression.

Dominance in dating and relationships can come across as bullying or abuse and can translate into physical, emotional, or mental domination. In the research world, narcissistic abuse in relationships comes from the core feature of antagonism, regardless of grandiosity or vulnerability.

A classic example is **General George Patton**: charismatic, bold, and visually commanding—but ultimately self-focused.
His decisions prioritized image over soldier safety (e.g., forcing removal of improvised armor because it "looked weak").
Dominance can get people to the top, but it often destabilizes teams and derails careers over time.

Prestige (the prosocial path)

Leaders rise because followers respect their **competence**, **ethics**, and **care** for the group.
Example: **General Omar Bradley**, who focused on logistics, survival, and troop welfare.
Prestige-based leaders are more agreeable, emotionally stable, less aggressive, and seen as wise.
This is the model of "servant leadership"—think Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Mother Teresa.

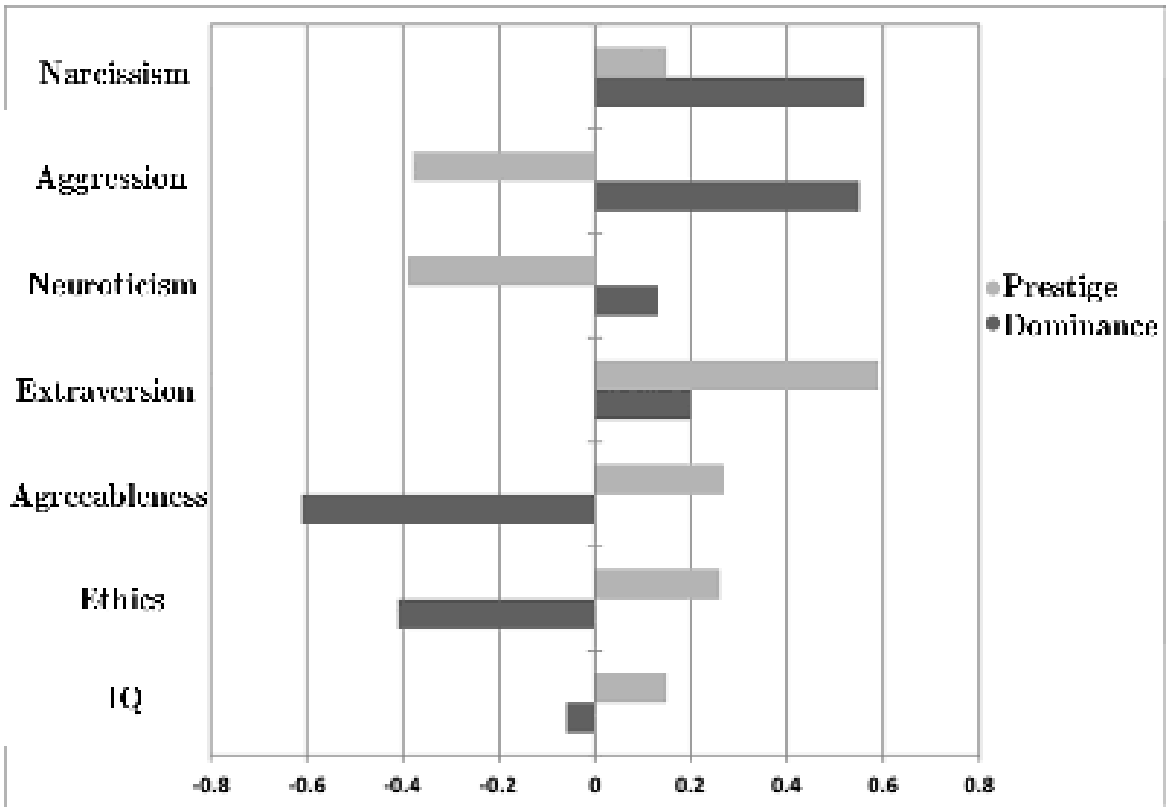
How pride reveals the difference

Research by Jessica Tracy shows two forms of pride:

- **Dominance-pride:** aggressive, "I'm better than you," ego-driven (fits narcissism).
- **Prestige-pride:** authentic pride—joy, self-efficacy, non-threatening confidence.

The leadership challenge

Organizations need confident people who want to lead *and* who care about followers.
But the people most eager to lead tend to be disproportionately **grandiose narcissists**.
We're "fishing for tuna with shark bait": the selection process attracts the wrong personalities.
The solution is to design systems that look beyond raw emergence cues and reward the qualities of prestige-based leadership.



Personality Trait	Prestige Score	Dominance Score
Narcissism	0.15	0.56
Aggression	-0.38	0.55
Neuroticism	-0.39	0.13
Extraversion	0.59	0.20
Agreeableness	0.27	-0.61
Ethics	0.26	-0.41
Intellectual ability	0.16	-0.06

Chapter 9: Social Media and Narcissism

> New smartphones, for instance, with new filters and high-resolution, front-focused cameras, have evolved for the narcissist's modern habitat.

Social media amplifies narcissism via self-promotion/audience. Selfies correlate with grandiosity. Cause-effect unclear; networks built strategically. Studies: meta-analyses link narcissism to activity; selfies/nose jobs. Practical takeaways: Curate profiles mindfully; recognize platforms reward narcissistic behaviors.

Humblebragging

> In this example, you are on the plane and may ask a flight attendant to take the photo. Then you share the picture on various social media accounts. You might be a little sophisticated in your self-enhancement and realize that openly bragging might make you look obnoxious, so you try a classic humblebrag by writing a caption that is more socially acceptable. In this case, #greatdayforflying and #blessed seem right. You show a little gratitude and people like you even more.

Also read:

- How to self-enhance without bragging

Chapter 10: Geek Culture and the Great Fantasy Migration

> For those who don't have real-world ways of expressing their superiority, success, and status, virtual worlds could offer a better way to do this.

Geek culture (anime, furries) allows narcissistic fantasy escape.

Chapter 11: Using Narcissism Strategically

When Narcissism Helps	When Narcissism Hurts
Initial meetings with people	Long-term relationships
Public performance	Ethical performance
Context where risk pays off (bull markets)	Context where risk hurts (bear markets)
Short-term romantic relationships	Long-term romantic relationships
Charismatic leadership	Ethical leadership
Social media connections	Meaningful friendships

The five rule for effective narcissism:

1. Use it briefly.
Narcissism works best at the start—first impressions, interviews, or quick introductions. A little confidence or bragging can help early on, but overstaying it turns people off.

2. Use it publicly, not privately.
Narcissists shine in front of an audience—they perform better under attention. Confidence helps on stage, in meetings, or in high-visibility situations. Just switch it off at home or with close relationships, and treat support staff respectfully.

3. Be bold—but controlled.
Narcissistic boldness can drive success: taking risks, putting yourself out there, trying new things. The key is balancing bold action with accountability and knowing when to stop—especially when others' needs genuinely matter more than your ego.

4. Build a broad network.
Narcissists are good at forming wide social networks that help in careers. The healthy version: reach out, connect, ask, offer help, and exchange favors. Breadth matters for opportunities; just avoid slipping into exploitative behavior and also make quality friends and connections.

5. Advocate for your worth—rationally.

Antagonistic people often earn more because they ask. The adaptive approach: confidently request what you're truly worth and provide a clear, evidence-based case for it. You're not "bragging"—you're giving your boss the business argument they need to support you.

Being A Good Narcissist: The Rule of Positive Bottom-Line Value

I couldn't agree more, and this may as well be The Power Moves' ultimate goal: succeed for the self, while adding value to the world.

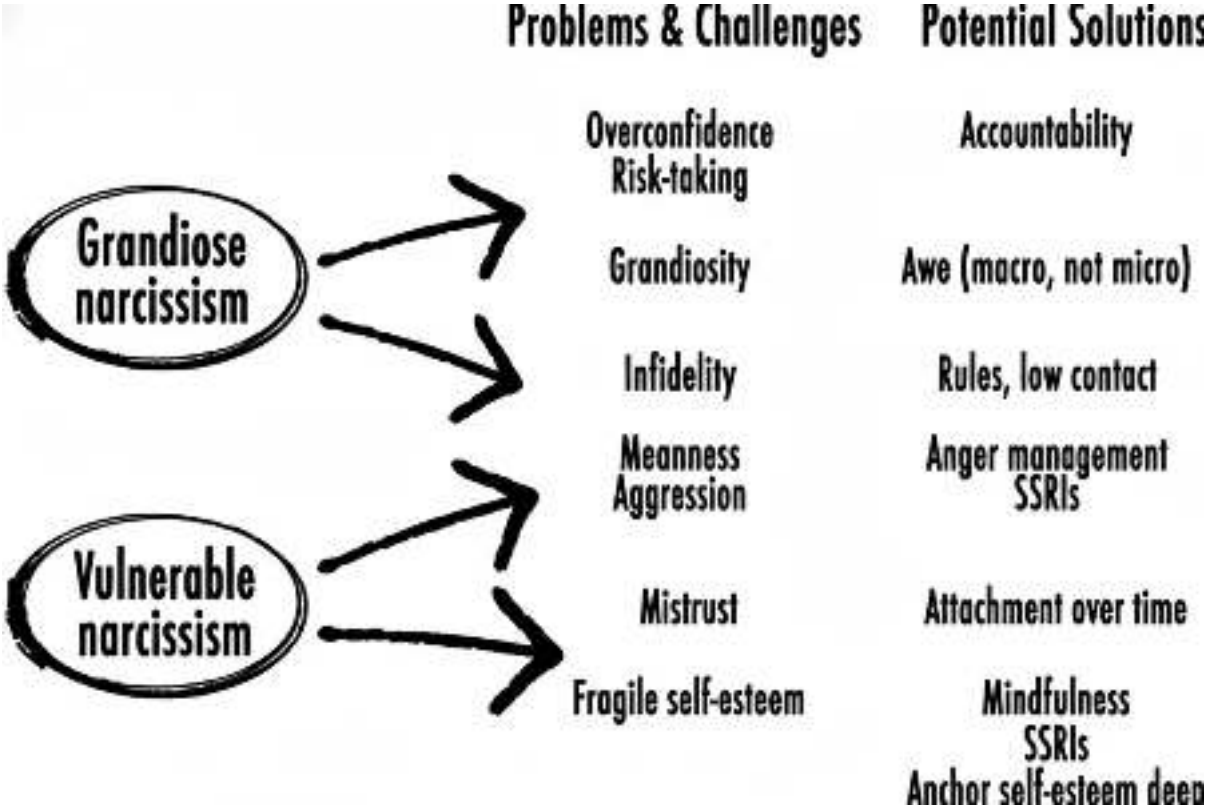
I'm so glad Campbell wrote this in his book, and I hope he is OK with us using his words for this concept:

> You demand power, status, leadership, material, and respect. That's great, and it often works. However, in turn, you should give back more than you take. If you build networks and are a friendly person, you will help the world with that narcissism. If you demand a fair wage at your job so you can support your kid, everybody wins. If you lead a company and make millions of dollars and also build a great product and employ a large number of people, that's the way it should work.
> In those cases, **the ego needs are being offset by a general benefit to society itself**. No matter the situation, small costs and small benefits will occur, and large costs and large benefits will occur, but that general trade-off is important ethically to conceptualize, especially when thinking about your own narcissism. Are you bringing more to the system than you're taking? Are you causing less suffering than you're creating? These questions can be tough to answer in our lives. They're hard to answer in the lab, too, but they're the ones that we need to consider.

Chapter 12-13-14: Reducing Narcissism

Make then want to change, and be a good parent, but don't stress about it: parents have limited control.

Chapter 13: Reducing Your Own Narcissism



Potential solutions for narcissism, (Campbell, 2020)

Some solutions:

- Awe for grandiosity
- Avoid spending time with attractive others for commitment
- Self-compassion for fragility/thin skin
- Open to love and engage in the community for big-picture changes: If you invest yourself in the community, you will become a community-focused person—with the personality traits of a community-focused person. At the individual level, changing narcissism is about opening up to love. At the social level, it's about connecting to the community more broadly.

Chapter 14: Psychotherapy for Narcissism

Different therapies are available, but the data is sparse. Focus on a good therapist first and foremost, and try out a few.

Chapter 15: Future Science Around Narcissism

Genetics has huge potential, including the birth of genetically modified babies.
Psychedelics and virtual reality may also help.

Epilogue: Are We Improving Or Not?

Campbell is very optimistic about the future:

> Fortunately, I believe we're beginning to shift to a moment where narcissistic leaders aren't able to rely on their dishonesty and manipulative nature because society as a whole is beginning to see through the façade.
> On social media, for instance, content is already shifting away from promotion and brand-building to entertainment and information sharing. The most successful businesses and solopreneurs are teaching others and providing true value through learning, and brand is becoming secondary.
> In addition, we're seeing a boom in podcasts and long-form content. Although studies show that our attention spans continue to shrink, we're spending more time on longer videos, audios, and articles that we think are worth our time.

I'm also an optimist, but I'm not as optimistic.
I still see endless conmen gurus, narcissistic leaders and influencers, and I gotta wonder about the quality of some of those long-form podcasts.

Let's hope AI can raise the average :).

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Humanity Needs New Systems For Leadership Emergence

> Groups need people who want to lead, are confident in leading, and care about followers. However, those who want to lead may come from a pool overrepresented by grandiose narcissists. As I see it, we're fishing for tuna by using shark bait, and we wonder why we keep getting sharks. In the end, the key to getting the right people into leadership positions is creating systems that look at qualities beyond these emergent leadership qualities.

Selfless Leaders Are Remarkably Rare: 2.000 Years Gap

> To put this in perspective, when George Washington gave up the presidency of the United States, it was such a remarkable act that Washington was compared to Roman leader Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, who was the most recent prior example of a leader to take rule when needed in war and then step aside. Washington was even carved in marble as Cincinnatus, showing the bond between these two generals who relinquished power. Selfless leaders are remarkably rare in history.

Chaos vs. Stability

> Plasticity drives change, and change means the destabilization and even destruction of older realities. When Silicon Valley folks talk about moving fast and breaking things or dump five hundred electric scooters in a town to see what happens, that is the work of high plasticity.
> On the other hand, stability solidifies and slows change. People high on the stability scale do this by getting along with others, following rules and tradition, and remaining calm. For example, Elon Musk represents someone very high in plasticity, so high that the SEC and some shareholders want him surrounded by stabilizing individuals. Many entrepreneurs get the boot after they are successful in building an organization because entrepreneurs thrive on plasticity, yet big structures need stability in the form of rules, manualized policies, and laid-out systems.

Life Follows The Law of Balance

> Humans evolved so that “average” and “normal” would be the desirable qualities. People want to be a little taller than average, but not too tall. The most attractive faces are symmetrical and a little different from average, but not too unique. For instance, we want a medium-sized mouth and eyes that aren’t too close or too far apart. We want a slightly wider smile than average or eyes that are a little larger, but we don’t want lips like a largemouth bass or guppy eyes.
> This same truth applies to personality (…) Thanks to the praised idea of individualism, those in the Western world want to be slightly outside of normal—a little above average on extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness and a little below average on neuroticism. The extremes of personality can lead to problems, even for what we see as “positive” personality traits. (…). Even extremely low neuroticism can be a problem. Humans get anxious because it protects them from danger. People with extremely low neuroticism can become overly risk-taking, sometimes with the result being an early grave..

And extremes

Also read:

- The law of balance
- Law of balance in dating

Everyone Wants Status, Not Just Narcissists

> As a highly social species, we are motivated to secure or increase our place in the community and the dominance hierarchy. Often, social psychologists talk about these as the needs for belongingness or connection and power or status. As modern humans, we have a highly complicated self that we build and defend. We worry about image and self-esteem but also feel lonelier than ever before.
> Narcissists’ goals and motives are grounded in the same systems as everyone else. That is, no narcissism-related motive or goal is solely exhibited by this small group of people;

Learn more:

- What is social status
- How to increase social status

> How to Gain Social Status as a Man: A Field Guide

Narcissism May Undermine Growth

> On a manageable everyday level, basic self-enhancing ego distortions may lead us to believe that we're slightly more attractive than we are or that our professors are to blame for a bad grade.
> At the same time, this self-enhancement has negative costs. Feeling good about appearance replaces improving attractiveness. Blaming others for failure prevents studying harder for the next exam. For narcissists, this self-enhancement delusion works well emotionally but doesn't lead to self-improvement. Storytelling continues to build their importance as long as others—and reality—will tolerate it.

Love Bombing: A Pop-Psychology Myth?

At the time of writing, virtually all articles and books on 'narcissistic relationships' list 'love bombing'.

AI models follow suit, also listing it as a common technique or phase.

I never thought that added up logically.
High-effort and high-cost courtships tend to disempower the *pursuer*, and be more associated with lower mate value men.

Exceptions always apply but, in principle, **high-value men are less likely to pursue high-cost courtships** by virtue of their greater optionality.

Plus, since narcissists tend to be more attuned to power dynamics, it didn't add up that they'd give all their power away.
From personal experience, I had also never witnessed it.

On this topic, Campbell writes:

> *I'm often asked about "love bombing" and whether narcissists have a tendency to overload you with affection and then ghost you once they're bored.*
> *Although research shows that narcissists tend to be more positive and attractive during the initial phase of a relationship,* ***researchers haven't found any good evidence to back up the idea of love bombs*** *in particular.* ***There's a possibility that this behavior could be related to vulnerable narcissism*** *and the tendency to seek love and attention through a sense of neediness and entitlement.*

Campbell's hypothesis makes more sense and may clarify this conundrum.

However, vulnerable narcissists may also be less likely to 'discard' a partner because they're needy, lower mate value, and wouldn't trust themselves to find a new one.
So maybe pop psychology just mixes the two: discarding from grandiose, and love bombing from vulnerables.

All in all, I still remain unconvinced by 'love bombing'.
See the current TPM power-theory here:

Grandiose = Predator, Vulnerables = Prey

The author says that predators are approach-oriented, like grandiose—who are also sometimes seen as predatory. Vulnerable narcissists instead act more like prey, trying to *evade* threats.

> For instance, grandiose narcissists focus on looking good, so they constantly hunt for opportunities to shine. Vulnerable narcissists focus on not looking bad, so they scan the environment for potential ego threats. The result in both cases is a life filled with course correction. Narcissists constantly search for short-term opportunities to look good or avoid feeling bad.
> (…)
> These two motives are even easy to spot across different species. Predators, such as hawks or lions, have eyes that face forward and stalk with an intense focus on the goal. When these predators commit to an action, they go for it full on (…) Their motivation is considered an *approach* tactic.
> Prey animals are different. Their eyes sit on the sides of their head, so they have a large field of vision. They are often skittish, mistaking a passing shadow or breaking branch for a potential predator. Their motivation is considered an *avoidance* tactic.

Narcissists Date Effectively With Approach-Orientation

> Grandiose narcissists, in particular, are approach-oriented and sometimes seen as predatory. For example, a grandiose narcissist might ask ten people on a date to get one to say "yes."

Campbell is exactly right.
The number one reason why some men rack up the lion's share of total lifetime partners is that they *seek* more women, approach more, and make the law of the large numbers work for them.

QUOTES

On narcissism as a blessing:

> Finally, and I have to say this cracks me up every time I read it, the DSM notes that "many highly successful individuals display personality traits that might be considered narcissistic."

On communal narcissists 'gaslighting quality' for their private relationship:

> This type of narcissism is also particularly tricky because leaders who are pillars of the community may fall into this category. Although they are devoted to the community and are generally positive in public interactions, their antagonism and self-focused nature hurts their private relationships, which can make it tough for spouses, children, and other relatives to grapple with the reality of their loved one's personality.

On the appeal of geek culture for those seeking an escape:

> A middle manager who works in a cubicle farm by day can run a guild in *World of Warcraft* by night. Those who struggled with athletics as a kid might be a legend in fantasy sports. The girl who got cut from the cheerleading squad can dress as a Klingon princess at a convention, and the men will line up.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

NPI Issues: Two Examples

The author raises some concerns about some NPI items.

I completely agreed with him, and had some on my own.
Consider this forced-choice pair:

- *I can easily influence or manipulate others.*
- *I dislike it when I notice myself manipulating someone.*

In my case, influencing or manipulating others **is easy**, mainly because I study social strategies and understand those dynamics well. That reflects **competence**, not a tendency or desire to take advantage of people.

The second statement also doesn't resonate: I avoid manipulating decent, trustworthy, or honorable individuals. But I don't feel the same restraint toward people who act in bad faith. So selecting that alternative would misrepresent me.

However, on the NPI, choosing the first response automatically counts as greater exploitativeness.
That's where the measure may conflate **ability** with **intent**: the respondent answers based on skill, while the scale interprets it as an exploitative mindset or moral stance.

The NPI's Entitlement Item Could Also Be Clearer

This also felt unbiguos:

- *I will never be satisfied until I get everything I deserve.*
- *I like to do things for other people*

I'm happy if I can help others, but I'm very high agency, so it shouldn't come at a loss of my time and my priorities.

And I initially read the first option as expressing drive and effort toward one's goals—essentially **high agency** rather than high entitlement.
This could have been just me, but I think it's possible that at least some other high agency folks would choose the first, without necessarily being highly entitled.

Are Sex, Status, & Stuff Fleeting Compared to Family?

The author writes:

> However, chasing sex, status, and stuff in the interest of building one's ego presents a couple of major problems. The first is the *fading goal problem*. Reaching a goal that is relatively stable, such as having a loving family, can provide a long-lasting source of self-esteem and satisfaction. Fleeting goals such as sex, status, and stuff do not create sources of stable self-esteem.

I'd like to add some caveats to this:

- **Enduring family benefits only apply in successful marriages and families**. Men who lost their shirts in costly divorces and can barely see their children may not see it the same way
- **Success in sex, status, and stuff may be enduring**: Maybe some people constantly need more. But I found that the success I've had dating made me feel more accomplished in my pursuits for life. Without necessarily needing new ones

REVIEW

The New Science of Narcissism is an excellent, well-referenced scientific book with a self-development angle that

remains fully accessible to the general public.

It delivers a simple yet thorough overview of narcissism, and also doubles as a solid introduction to personality psychology for anyone who wants a clear, research-based foundation.

The only note I have, which is also very subjective, is that while I appreciated the pop-culture examples and references, I didn't get most of them (and I had to wonder: how does Campbell even manage to be a father, professor, top researcher… And still view all those series? ⍰)

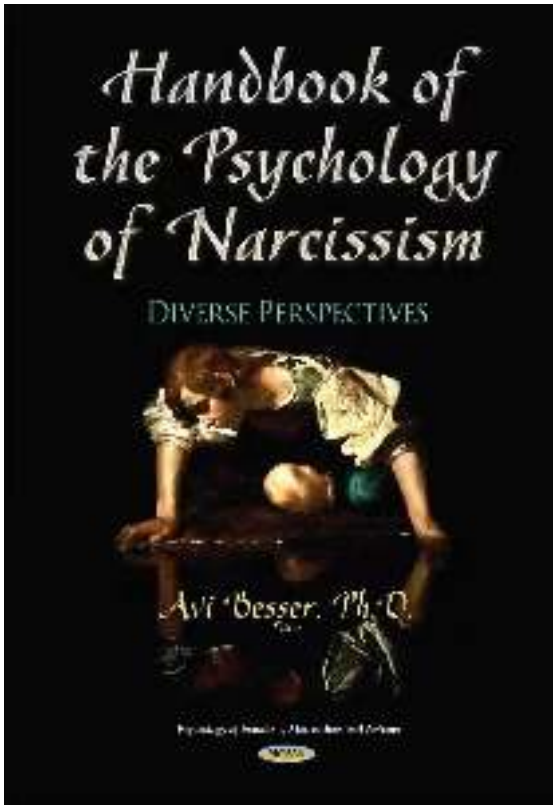
I loved it, I'm grateful to Campbell for his extraordinary work, and I can highly recommend it.

Get it on Amazon, or check the best books on narcissism.

The Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 December 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The *Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism* (2014) is an edited research volume that surveys intrapersonal, interpersonal, and clinical perspectives on narcissism.



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- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
  - Maladaptive needs a redefinition
  - Suggestion: edit out the repeated basics
  - Suggestion: skip or combine one-study chapters
- REVIEW

FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
The *Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism* is a multi-author edited volume, with each chapter written by subject-matter experts contributing their perspectives. The collection is edited by **Avi Besser** (Hadassah Academic College), who served as the general editor and organizer of this anthology of research.

Note: I focus more on empirical chapters and may skip chapters based on DSM, more psychoanalytic chapters, and one-study chapters.

Chapter 1: Do Narcissists Really Love Themselves? The Psychodynamic Mask Model

Authors: Ashton C. Southard, Amy Noser, Virgil Zeigler-Hill

The authors examine whether narcissists truly have high self-esteem or merely project grandiosity to cover deep feelings of inadequacy.
The psychodynamic mask model posits that **narcissists' outward confidence and self-esteem hides fragile and negative self-views** formed through early interpersonal wounds. The chapter reviews classic psychoanalytic roots, and reasons for inconsistent findings in modern research.

The Mask Model of Narcissism Posits:

- **Narcissistic grandiosity masks inner inferiority.** Freud (1914), Kohut (1966, 1977), and Kernberg (1975) all viewed narcissism as defensive overcompensation for fragile self-esteem developed in childhood.
- **Overcompensation maintains self-worth.** Narcissists seek admiration, exploit others, and self-enhance to maintain the façade (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).
- **Deep shame vs grandiosity:** Subconscious deep shame and insecurity contrast with conscious grandiosity, causing constant validation-seeking.
- **Volatility, defensiveness and anger explained by the model.** Narcissists' self-love is conditional and easily threatened, which explains both their charisma, volatility, and aggressive reactions when criticized

Testing the Model

- ✕ **Early research confirmed the model**, showing narcissists score high on explicit measures but lower on implicit measures that assess automatic self-worth (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

  - Discrepant high self-esteem is the name often used to refer to the mix of high explicit and low implicit self-esteem (Bosson et al., 2003)
- ✅ **More recent research shows mixed results and challenges the model.** Later studies (Campbell et al., 2007; Bosson et al., 2008) failed to replicate the pattern consistently.

Why Results Differ

Several theories may help explain why the results differ:

- **Unreliable implicit measures.** Tools like the Implicit Association Test and Name-Letter Task are noisy, context-dependent, and weakly correlated.
- **Domain-specific self-esteem.** Narcissists may feel agentic superiority but communal inadequacy—strong in power/competence, weak in warmth/connection (Campbell et al., 2002).
- **Grandiose vs vulnerable: multiple narcissism types.** Grandiose narcissists show true high self-esteem; vulnerable narcissists exhibit the low implicit self-esteem predicted by the mask model <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: this seems to be most important element

Chapter 2: Tales of Glory — The Narcissistic Ideal as a Defense Against Being Forgotten

Author: Robert Waska

Through a psychoanalytic case study, Waska explores how idealized self-images protect individuals from fears of insignificance and abandonment. Narcissistic idealization serves both as armor and as an obstacle to authentic emotional life.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Therapists should encourage positive expressions of power**

Lucio:
The man in therapy was bullied, and when he switched classes took the opportunity to start higher power: he entered, shook everyone's hands, got classmates' respect, and felt powerful and in control.

I thought ‘fantastic move’, that’s exactly what you needed!

But the therapist never acknowledged or encouraged that, and instead focused on his ‘broken core’.
I believe effective therapy doesn’t have to limit itself to exploration, but can also encourage positive expressions of power and self-growth. Status and man’s respect have been proven to also have positive mental effects.

Chapter 3: Narcissistic Perfectionists — the Quest for the Perfect Self

Authors: Gordon L. Flett, Simon B. Sherry, Paul L. Hewitt, Taryn Nepon

This chapter connects perfectionism and narcissism, distinguishing the narcissistic perfectionist—driven to appear flawless and feel flawless—from the neurotic perfectionist who fears failure.
It also highights the risk of narcissistic drive for perfection and possible suicide or psychological problems later in life when the high standards fail to turn into reality.

On the plus side, some narcissists view **grandiose standards as attainable**, not impossible goals, but as rightful standards.

Chapter 4: Narcissism and Heroism — A Rendezvous?

Authors: Shai Itamar, Golan Shahar

Itamar and Shahar introduce the **Heroic Self (HERS)** concept—the belief in oneself as a hero or wanting to see oneself as a hero—linking it to narcissistic pathology.
Heroic Identification (HI) predicts scores on the Pathological Narcissism Inventory.

The Heroic Self Model

- **Three HERS dimensions** reflect different narcissistic needs for glory.
  - Self-as-Conqueror
  - Self-as-Savior
  - Heroic Identification

🤔Lucio’s Take: **I see heroic self and strive towards heroism as more positive than negative**

Lucio:
This was very instructive, I can imagine it's more linked to grandiose narcissism than vulnerable narcissism.

I also don't happen to see it negatively since a heroic status is connected to honor and adding value, and it may as well be the ultimate positive male aspiration.

Chapter 5: Bodies and Men — Vicissitudes of the Masculine in Man

Author: Stefano Monzani

Monzani explores how masculinity and narcissism intertwine in shaping male identity, drawing on psychoanalytic theory from Stoller to contemporary authors.

Masculinity and Narcissism

- **Gender identity builds uniqueness and vulnerability.** The male ego ideal—phallic power and autonomy—anchors self-esteem but is fragile.
- **Freudian "psychic bisexuality."** Masculine and feminine elements coexist; denying one creates conflict.
- **Life-stage crises reveal masculine fragility.** Case studies show narcissistic collapse in midlife, psychotic adolescence, and castration anxiety.

Interesting Insights

- **Masculine narcissism can be a cover to defend against dependence.** Exaggerated strength hides relational fears.
- **Integrating softness and vulnerability yields maturity.**

🤔Lucio's Take: **Fragile masculine self-identities is why we stress antifragile identities here**

Lucio:
It was good to see this and it confirmed TPM's takes on self-identities, including masculine ones, and their risk for future weakness and psychological problems.

Read more on our guide on how to be more masculine, with future-proofed resilience.

Chapter 6: Narcissism in the Third Millennium — Disorder or Cultural Phenomenon?

Author: Gidi Rubinstein

Rubinstein questions whether today's narcissism is a pathology or a normal adaptation to a self-promoting culture. Modern society may reward narcissistic traits more than in the past, and the line between disorder and adaptation is also cultural.

The authors also examine reality-TV candidates, gym trainees, and cosmetic-surgery patients, all scoring higher in narcissism than control groups (in that order).

However, there is a positive in higher narcissism when it comes to body image and fitness:

> Research has found that individuals who score higher for narcissism are more satisfied with their bodies than those with lower narcissism scores (e.g., Davis, Claridge, & Brewer, 1996; Jackson, Ervin, & Hodge, 1992). Jackson et al. (1992) found that both males and females with high levels of narcissism evaluated their physical appearance, fitness, and sexuality more favorably than those with lower narcissism scores. However, these individuals also participated in more fitness and appearance-related behaviors and placed greater importance on fitness and appearance than less narcissistic individuals did (Brown & Graham, 2008).

Chapter 9: Physiological and Health-Related Correlates of the Narcissistic Personality

Authors: Sara Konrath, John Paul Bonadonna

This chapter reviews how narcissism relates to health, physiological markers, and mortality.
At first blush, narcissists seem to be doing great:

> In terms of many traditional indicators of well-being and mental health, narcissistic individuals appear to be thriving.
> For example, compared to less narcissistic people, more narcissistic people are **happier** (Rose, 2002), **have higher levels of life satisfaction and subjective well-being** (Rose, 2002; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004), have a **greater sense of meaning** in lives (Zondag, Van Halen, & Wojtkowiak, 2009), are **more creative** (Raskin, 1980), and have **higher self-esteem** (Aalsma, Lapsley, & Flannery, 2006; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Locke, 2009; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991; Rose, 2002).
> More narcissistic people are also **less neurotic, anxious, obsessive-compulsive, lonely, and depressed** (Aalsma et al., 2006; Akehurst & Thatcher, 2010; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Sedikides et al., 2004; Spano, 2001; Watson, McKinney, Hawkins, & Morris, 1988)

However, the authors spend the chapter adding important caveats.

Healthy vs Unhealthy Grandiose Narcissism

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988) can be divided into two subscales of healthy (or adaptive) narcissism versus unhealthy (or maladaptive) narcissism (Reinhard, Konrath, Lopez, & Cameron, 2012).

- **Healthy** includes Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, and Vanity subscales
- **Unhealthy** includes Entitlement, Exhibitionism, and Exploitativeness subscales

Healthy narcissism is associated with lower levels of depression, loneliness, and pessimism, as well as higher self-esteem and greater optimism (Emmons, 1987; Hickman, Watson, & Morris, 1996; Watson & Biderman, 1993).
But unhealthy narcissism is associated with more negative mental-health indicators like pessimism, depression, anxiety, and lower optimism and self-esteem (Hickman et al., 1996; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Watson, Taylor, & Morris, 1987).

But Self-Esteem May Confound Findings

Overt narcissism measures (e.g., the NPI) are typically associated with higher self-esteem.

This may be interpreted as a mental-health implication of narcissism in itself. However, several scholars have demonstrated that when self-esteem is controlled for, the relationship between narcissism and positive indicators of mental health is reduced or nullified (Rose, 2002; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010; Sedikides et al., 2004).

In other words, narcissistic people might only appear to have good mental health because they have high levels of self-esteem.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: it may be still correct to say that grandiose narcissism is associated with better mental health
still great chapter and great insight, very instructive. I may not fully agree though that this would remove the association between grandiose narcissism and health. If greandiose narcissism is associated with high self-esteem, isn't it the same to say that grandiose narcissism promotes mental health since, technically, it may not matter what aspect of narcissism triggers better mental outcomes?

Vulnerable Narcissism Is Unhealthier

Covert narcissists tend to be more timid, insecure, and low in self-confidence, often fearing negative evaluation from others (Arble, 2008).

Unlike overt narcissism—which correlates with greater happiness and lower levels of depression and

anxiety—covert narcissism is linked to reduced happiness, well-being, optimism, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and sense of meaning (Hickman et al., 1996; Rose, 2002; Wink, 1991; Zondag et al., 2009), along with higher levels of pessimism, depression, and anxiety (Hickman et al., 1996).

- **Hypersensitivity is the most harmful trait**: *the most consistent finding was that Hypersensitivity (a type of unhealthy narcissism) is associated with poor health and well-being many years later*

Longitudinal Studies

Longitudinal studies on narcissism and mental health are scarce, but existing research highlights key patterns:

- A study by Zuckerman & O'Loughlin (2009) followed students over eight months and found that narcissism was linked to higher well-being, but only through its association with high self-esteem. Narcissists also showed greater emotional instability after negative interpersonal events. Importantly, narcissism did not predict future well-being. Instead, initial high well-being and low emotional reactivity predicted later increases in narcissism, suggesting that well-being may foster narcissism—not the other way around.

- Another long-term study (Cramer & Jones, 2008) used three narcissism-related traits—Willfulness, Hypersensitivity (unhealthy narcissism), and Autonomy (healthy narcissism)—to track participants from their 30s to their 70s. High unhealthy narcissism combined with high identification with others predicted declines in psychological health. Autonomy was consistently associated with better psychological health across all time points but did not predict improvements. The author hypothesizes that '
psychological health might feed into healthy narcissism, rather than healthy narcissism causing improved psychological health'. But since no third variables were included in the model, causal inferences are speculative.

- A third study (Edelstein, Newton, & Stewart, 2012) found that only Hypersensitivity predicted long-term declines in well-being, including more depression, physical health problems, and lower life satisfaction. However, increases in both Willfulness and Autonomy over a 10-year span were associated with improved health at age 53.

Finally, in another section, the authors suggest that chronic vigilance for ego threats and higher hostility can cause 'physiological wear' despite apparent confidence.

Study	Results
Zuckerman & OřLoughlin (2009), 8 months	– Narcissism does not predict future well-being. – Well-being and low emotional reactivity predict future narcissism.
Cramer & Jones (2008), 40+ years	– Unhealthy narcissism (Hypersensitivity, Willfulness) and overidentification predict future poor psychological health. – Healthy narcissism (Autonomy) does not predict future psychological health.
Edelstein et al. (2012), 10 years	– Unhealthy narcissism (Hypersensitivity) predicts more depressive symptoms, physical health problems, and lower life satisfaction. – Increases in Willfulness and Autonomy predicted better health.
Wink & Donahue (1995), 30+ years	– Covert narcissism predicts poor psychological health. – Overt narcissism is linked to career success, but also substance use and relationship difficulties.

Interesting Notes

- **Delaying gratifiation matters**: *Given that the ability to delay gratification (i.e., self-control) is associated with a host of benefits (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004), it is likely that this tendency toward immediate gratification leads to a number of self-defeating behaviors that limit their ultimate potential to succeed (Miller et al., 2009)* <— ⁉️♂️ **Lucio's note**: the benefits of delaying gratificaiton are

context-dependent though

- **Fragile self-esteem issue**: *when we focus on overall overt narcissism scores, we find that narcissism is still associated with a host of defensive and self-protective strategies, making narcissists*' supposedly robust mental health seem more fragile than *it may appear. (See Bosson et al., 2008, for a review.)*
  - Defensive self-esteem: social cognition studies have found that when narcissistic people are exposed to ego-threatening information, concepts of worthlessness quickly come to their minds and are then suppressed (Horvath & Morf, 2009)
- **Poor financial decision making**: *'Taken together, narcissism is associated with poor financial decision-making'*
- **Sexual risk-taking**: *among people living with HIV or AIDS, narcissism is associated with a number of unsafe sex practices, including a higher likelihood of having sex after substance use and a lower likelihood of using condoms with a new partner (Martin, Benotsch, Perschbacher Lance, & Green, 2013)*
- **Substance Use and Addiction** Narcissism is linked to a variety of problems with substance use and addiction
- **Driving behavior**: *Other research has found that it is the unhealthy aspects of narcissism (e.g., exhibitionism, entitlement) that are specifically associated with aggressive driving behavior; whereas the healthier aspects of narcissism (e.g., superiority, vanity) are associated with less aggressive driving behavior (Schreer, 2002)*

Biological Correlates

Taken together, the studies point to potential stress-regulation problems among narcissistic people.

- **Cardiovascular reactivity elevated.** Narcissists show higher heart-rate and blood-pressure responses under ego threat.
- **Hormonal and neural patterns.** Greater cortisol spikes and distinct neural activation during self-relevant feedback.
- **More than 50% heritability:**, *the proportion of the variance in narcissistic traits that can be attributed to genetic factors (i.e., the heritability, which is referred to as a2) ranges from 53 to 64% in Canadian and American adult samples (Jang, Livesley, Vernon, & Jackson, 1996; Livesley, Jang, Jackson, & Vernon, 1993; Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008)*
  - Shared environment matters little studies all found that no proportion of the variance can be explained by shared environmental factors (i.e., having been raised in the same family; referred to as c2). Instead, the rest of the variance (between 36 to 47%) can be attributed to nonshared environmental factors (i.e., unique to each individual; referred to as e2)
- **Culture matters**: a substantial portion is shaped by nonshared environmental factors. The rise in narcissism among American college students over the past 30 years points to the strong influence of cultural and societal forces (Twenge et al., 2008).
- **Narcissism can be at least 'momentarility decreased'**: a brief interventions—such as promoting empathy, interdependence, or perceived similarity with others—can temporarily reduce narcissistic traits and their harmful effects (Finkel et al., 2009; Giacomin & Jordan, 2014; Konrath et al., 2006).

Study	Neural Regions Implicated
Cascio, Konrath, & Falk (2014); Adolescent males	Narcissistic participants show more activation in "social pain" regions (AI, dACC, subACC) during social exclusion compared to inclusion.
Choi et al. (2013); Adolescents	No correlation between covert narcissism and reward responses. Possibly due to small sample size.
Fan et al. (2011); Adults	High narcissism linked to reduced activation in right AI during empathy. Also less activation in right DLPFC, posterior cingulate cortex, and right pre-motor cortex.

Study	Neural Regions Implicated
Schulze et al. (2013); NPD patients vs. controls	NPD patients show less gray-matter volume in left/right AI, rostral/median cingulate cortex, and dorsolateral/medial prefrontal cortex.
Beer & Hughes (2010); College students	Those who see themselves as “above average” show less OFC and dACC activity during self trait judgments.
Barrios et al. (2008); College students	TMS stimulation of MPFC reduces self-enhancement, especially for egoistic traits.
Kwan et al. (2007); College students	TMS stimulation of MPFC reduces self-enhancement; stimulation of SMA increases it.
Luber et al. (2012); Adults	TMS of MPFC and right lateral parietal region at 160 ms SOA reduces self-enhancement. Left lateral parietal stimulation at 240 ms SOA also reduces self-enhancement.

Summary of neural regions associated with narcissism and related processes

Chapter 11: Everyday Deceptions — Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Lies

Authors: Chelsea Rose, Marc Stewart Wilson

While most people lie, some lies—like white lies which include concern for others—are seen as more acceptable and are told more often than more harmful “black lies.”
Subclinical narcissism and psychopathy were linked to a greater tendency to tell both types of lies, but especially black lies, suggesting that these darker personality traits are more strongly associated with harmful, self-serving deception.

Narcissism and Deception

- **All people lie, but motivations differ.** Narcissists lie for self-enhancement, image management, and manipulation, while others lie more for harmony or tact.
- **Narcissism blurs moral distinctions.** Both black and white lies serve self-interest rather than empathy.
- **Social skill masks manipulation.** Charm and verbal fluency allow narcissists to appear honest while strategically deceiving.

Chapter 14: Narcissism in Teams

Author: Esther Unger-Aviram

Unger-Aviram investigates how narcissistic employees affect teamwork and organizational performance.

Narcissism Facilitates Leadership

Narcissism is strongly linked to leadership emergence in group settings.
Studies by Brunell et al. (2008) found that individuals high in narcissism not only saw themselves as leaders during leaderless group discussions, but were also perceived as leaders by others. This effect held true in both student groups and among practicing managers, indicating that narcissistic traits consistently promote leader emergence across contexts.

The authors conclude by saying that ‘**Therefore, narcissists appear to emerge as leaders in team settings**.’

Narcissism Increases Volatility, But Doesn’t Necessarily Lower Organization Performance

Research shows that narcissistic leadership may not significantly impact team or organizational performance. Studies found no meaningful link between narcissistic CEOs and team success in professional baseball (Resick et al., 2009) or firm-level performance (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007).

Narcissistic leaders may introduce more volatility in decision-making, but their presence does not lead to consistent gains—or losses—in performance outcomes.

Maybe Good For Short-Term, Poor For Long-Term?

The contextual reinforcement model (Campbell & Campbell, 2009) explains how narcissists impact teams differently depending on the relationship duration.

In **short-term or emerging contexts**, like new or temporary teams, **narcissists often thrive**: they come across as charismatic, confident, and willing to lead, which can temporarily benefit team performance (Brunell et al., 2008; Schnure, 2010).

However, in **long-term or enduring contexts the same traits become harmful**. Narcissists' entitlement, arrogance, competitiveness, and need for constant validation strain relationships and undermine collaboration. They are seen as poor team players who take credit, manipulate others, and avoid accountability (Bergman et al., 2010).

While short-term settings may benefit from narcissistic traits, enduring contexts typically suffer. More research is needed to clarify how long "short-term" lasts, what factors moderate these effects, and how teams with multiple narcissists perform. Some evidence suggests two narcissists may even boost team creativity in specific cases (Goncalo et al., 2010).

?️?♂ Lucio's note: I agree
While this is a broad generalization and doesn't apply to every situation or context, it captures a clear and consistent temporal pattern.

Goal Orientation Theory: Short-Term Results But Little Learning for Long-term Growth (growth mindset)

Goal orientation theory distinguishes between **performance goals (PGO)**—focused on proving competence and gaining approval—and **learning goals (LGO)**—focused on developing skills and mastering new challenges (Dweck, 1986, 1999).

Performance-oriented individuals view effort and failure as threats to their competence. They prefer easy tasks that ensure success and avoid challenges that might expose weaknesses. Learning-oriented individuals, instead, see effort and mistakes as natural parts of growth. They respond to setbacks adaptively—by adjusting strategy, increasing effort, and improving mastery and may even relish difficult tasks as opportunities to improve skills.

Scholars and research suggest **narcissists adopt a performance-goal orientation**: they aim to demonstrate superiority and avoid failure rather than learn (Elliot & Thrash, 2001; Gerhardt & Le, 2013). High narcissism predicts stronger PGO and weaker LGO tendencies.

However, goal orientation can be both **trait-based and situational** (Button et al., 1996). When the environment promotes learning—such as in a **shared team learning climate**—even performance-oriented individuals, including narcissists, may temporarily adopt a learning approach.

Teams that foster **a collective learning climate**—encouraging experimentation, feedback, and learning from mistakes—show better long-term adaptation and performance (Bereby-Meyer et al., 2004; DeShon et al., 2004; LePine, 2005). In contrast, teams emphasizing **performance climates**—focused on comparison and competition—encourage surface-level effort and hinder growth.

In short, **narcissists thrive in performance-driven environments but struggle in growth-oriented ones**. Yet, with strong situational cues and supportive team cultures, even narcissistic members can be guided toward learning behaviors that enhance long-term team performance.

?️?♂ Lucio's note: Incredibly insightful, worth its weight in gold!

This was a crucial piece of information for me, and it will inform our articles and Power University module on dark triads. Very thankful to author and researchers ⍰⍰.

Interesting Notes

- **PGO to prove or to avoid**: research (VandeWalle, 1997) found that a PGO can be further divided into two independent dimensions:
  - performance-prove orientation: Individuals with a performance-prove goal orientation focus on demonstrating their competence and gaining favorable judgments from others
  - performance-avoid orientation: individuals with a performance-avoid goal orientation focus on avoiding the demonstration of difficulties or incompetence, as well as avoiding the unfavorable judgment of others
- **Teams depend on cooperation.** Narcissists' competitiveness and need for credit undermine cohesion.
- **Generation Y narcissism on the rise.** Younger workers value visibility and recognition more than harmony.
- **Narcissism increases creativity**: *Flynn, and Kim (2010) found that narcissism contributes to group creativity* <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** creativity isn't necessarily a net win. if we define creativity as novel ideas and approaches, it isn't necessarily positive unless those ideas are more effective
- **Narcissists may ace job interviews**: I*n the emerging zone (i.e., during initial encounters), narcissists are mostly perceived by others as highly outgoing, likeable, self-confident, charismatic, and* very likely to succeed. *Research has shown that narcissists usually shine in these situations and even the most experienced judges (i.e., experienced interviewers*

Chapter 15: Adolescent Narcissism and Interpersonal Relationships

Authors: Rebecca L. Kauten, Christopher T. Barry, Marion T. Wallace

The authors review how adolescent narcissism manifests socially and predicts aggression, popularity, and peer perception.

Interesting notes

- **Aggression for status.** Narcissistic teens aggress instrumentally to maintain superiority.
- **Perceived vs. actual popularity.** They rate themselves as well-liked, but peers view them as antagonistic and arrogant.
- **Focus on relationship power and games:**

> In addition to narcissism being linked to game-playing in romantic relationships, Campbell and colleagues (2002) noted that it is also associated with a "pragmatic and selfish" approach to romantic relationships (p. 351).
> They explained that a noncommittal approach to relationships is beneficial to an individual who expresses high levels of narcissism by allowing him or her to garner the esteem-boosting benefits of being in a relationship while simultaneously collecting positive appraisals from extradyadic interactions. The game-playing approach to relationships, then, affords power over the relationship partner.

Learn more:

- Games men play
- Games women play
  - Manipulative games women play: red flags

Chapter 16: Not Such a Funny Thing — When Humor Meets Narcissism

Authors: Liat Itzhaky, Avi Besser, Virgil Zeigler-Hill

Two studies explore how humor styles reveal grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, and highlight how humor can be a mask for covert aggression.

- **Grandiose narcissists favor aggressive humor.** Sarcasm and ridicule maintain dominance and superiority.
- **Vulnerable narcissists use self-defeating humor.** They mock themselves to elicit approval or deflect shame.
- **Humor mediates stress and self-esteem.** Different humor styles explain divergent emotional outcomes.

Learn more:

- How to handle aggressive humor

Chapter 17: Associations between Narcissism, Empathy, Personality, and Imagined Interactions

Authors: James M. Honeycutt, Michelle E. Pence, Christopher G. Gearhart

This communication-psychology study examines how "imagined interactions" (internal dialogues) relate to covert narcissism.

> Honeycutt et al. (2012) found relationships between antisocial traits (in the form of neuroticism and lack of conscientiousness) and imagined interactions. The extant literature on antisocial, dark-side attributes and imagined interactions includes research involving imagined interactions and Machiavellianism (Allen, 1990).Additionally, and especially pertinent to the current study, Machiavellianism has been studied in relation to imagined interactions. Allen found positive correlations between Machiavellianism and having proactive and retroactive imagined interactions (IIs) involving a diverse set of imaginary conversation partners and topics

Findings

- **Hypersensitive narcissism predicts hostile inner dialogues.** Rumination and imagined arguments reflect unmet ego needs.
- **Low empathy and high neuroticism.** Narcissists rehearse conflicts mentally but fail at perspective-taking.
- **Anxiety and anger co-occur.** The inner monologue reinforces entitlement and grievance.

Chapter 18: Theory of Mind in Vulnerable and Grandiose Narcissism

Authors: Chinmay Aradhye, Jennifer Vonk

Aradhye and Vonk explore how grandiosity and vulnerability differ in social-cognitive skills such as empathy and perspective-taking:

- **Vulnerable narcissists show deficits.** They misread others' mental states and display emotional blindness.
- **Grandiose narcissists perform well cognitively.** They understand others but use insight manipulatively.
  - Grandiosity masks cold cognition**.** Cognitive empathy without compassion enables exploitation.
- **Emotional vs. cognitive empathy distinction.** The ability to reason about feelings doesn't equal caring.

> Altogether, the current corpus of research supports the general understanding that individuals scoring high on some aspects of narcissisms, such as grandiose narcissism, perform better on social cognitive tasks and seem to possess superior social skills than those who score higher for vulnerable narcissism

The authors also propose a link between ToM and narcissists' social orientations, with grandiose narcissists who are extraverted and exploitative thanks to ToM, while vulnerables who are self-focused because they fail to properly function socially.

Chapter 21: Narcissism and Psychological Distress to War Trauma

Authors: Michael Weinberg, Avi Besser, Virgil Zeigler-Hill, Aaron L. Pincus, Yuval Neria

The team studies Israeli civilians under missile threat to assess whether narcissism moderates PTSD and anxiety responses.

> The results of this study revealed an association between exposure severity and acute PTSD symptoms and GAD symptoms for individuals with high levels of pathological narcissism, but not for those with low levels of pathological narcissism

- **Pathological narcissism heightens trauma impact.** High-narcissism participants showed stronger PTSD and GAD symptoms after exposure.
- **Low-narcissism individuals are more resilient**

The authors hypothesize that grandiosity may collapse harder when external control vanishes against uncontrollable threats:

> Unlike others, who may view themselves as reasonably safe from harm, individuals with narcissistic personality features may believe that they are invulnerable (e.g., Barry, Pickard, & Ansel, 2009). This sort of mental representation of the self has been referred to as an overvalued schema (Foa & Riggs, 1993) or an inflexible positive schema (Elliott & Lassen, 1997). Following a traumatic event, individuals with narcissistic personality features are commonly confronted with the fact that they are actually quite ordinary and as vulnerable to these events as any one else. This sudden and often dramatic change in self-view may trigger feelings of inadequacy or self-loathing, which may culminate in extreme emotional reactions to these traumatic events

⁉️♂️ Lucio's question: a U-curve where moderate narcissism is the sweet spot?
These results seem to show a linear association where lower levels of narcissism are more resilient. But wonder there may also be a U-curve where too high narcissism backfires, but lower narcissism may be more resilient than too low narcissism?
The following chapter suggests so:

Chapter 22: Normal Narcissism as a Buffer against Eating Disorders and PTSD

Author: Eytan Bachar

Bachar differentiates pathological, deficient, and normal narcissism in two longitudinal studies, showing that 'an optimum balance of narcissism' is the healthiest.

- **Pathological excess predisposes PTSD.** Grandiose and vulnerable forms heighten trauma susceptibility.
- **Deficient narcissism predisposes anorexia.** Self-neglect and self-erasure ("death narcissism," André Green) predict restrictive disorders.
- **Normal narcissism protects.** Healthy self-regard buffers both trauma and body-image pathology.
- **Healthy narcissism = self-investment.** Moderate pride and self-care maintain psychological immunity.

In the introduction, the authors point out that an 'optimum balance' applies to many areas of life:

> Several studies have demonstrated the adaptive role of normal narcissism in coping with everyday life, including good adjustment to college life (Lapsley and Aalsma, 2006), development of normal eating attitudes among college women (Brunton, Lacey, and Waller, 2005), and normal feelings of shame (Hibbard, 1994). Normal narcissism has also been shown to enhance interpersonal dominance (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004)

Chapter 23: Vulnerable and Grandiose Narcissism under Threat — Disparities and Similarities

Authors: Orr Spivak, Avi Besser, Virgil Zeigler-Hill

Spivak and colleagues compare emotional reactions of vulnerable vs. grandiose narcissists to achievement and interpersonal threats.

Comparative Reactions

- **Grandiose narcissists respond with anger and self-protective behavior.** Achievement threats elicit outward aggression, blame, or derogation.
  - Self-protective behavior response: *When threatened by comparison with a better performing other (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993) or by negative feedback (e.g., Kernis & Sun, 1994), narcissistic individuals often respond with self-protective behaviors, such as derogation or devaluation*
  - ⍰⍰ **Grandiose narcissists react against *achievement*-related threats**, rather than interpersonal ones, since they don't care as much about others
- **Vulnerable narcissists react with shame and withdrawal.** Interpersonal rejection triggers collapse and rumination.
- **Both share hypersensitivity to ego threat.** Defensive intensity differs, not underlying fragility.
- **Two faces, one insecurity.** Grandiosity externalizes, vulnerability internalizes the same wounded self.

Interesting Notes

- **Grandiose narcissists strive for power rather than intimacy** within relationships (Emmons, 1989)
- **Parenting may make the difference**: *Otway and Vignoles (2006) found grandiose narcissism to be associated with recollections of parents as both cold and excessively admiring; whereas vulnerable narcissism was found to be associated with anxious attachment. In line with these findings, Young, Klosko, and Weishaar (2003) described grandiose narcissists as suffering from difficulties experiencing love or being loved by others*

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

You can't spot lying 'cues' because people aren't nervous about lying

We noted a few times on this website that relying on 'nonverbal cues' to spot lies and 'read people' is not very effective.
The fact that many people who lie don't feel nervous or bad about it further reinforces that stance.

From chapter 11 by Chelsea Rose, Marc Stewart Wilson:

> For instance, research reveals that people tend to hold incorrect beliefs regarding lying behaviors, as they assume that lying is nonnormative and that liars will feel guilty and nervous regarding their socially unacceptable and morally reprehensible lie-telling, and so leak corresponding emotional cues (Bond & DePaulo, 2006; DePaulo, Lindsay, Malone, Muhlenbruck, Charlton, & Cooper, 2003; Global Deception Research Team, 2006; Taylor & Hick, 2007).
> In contrast to this everyday wisdom, empirical findings indicate that people lie frequently and may not feel much remorse for doing so.
> For example, in DePaulo et al.řs (1996) classic diary study regarding everyday lying, college students and community members admitted to telling an average of two lies and one lie per day, respectively. Participants indicated very little regret regarding their untruths and 70% indicated they would tell the reported lie(s) again if faced with the same situation.

And add the authors:

> If common wisdom suggests that remorse or guilt dispose the liar to noticeable lie-indicating behaviors, these results pose a problem for the stereotypical view of the liar. A deceiver may not necessarily feel guilty or nervous when telling a lie and so cues signaling these states would not be useful in detecting deception

Machiavellianism & 'social adroitness': two twigs of the branch

> the studies to date consistently implicate manipulative personality traits in both perceived acceptability and frequency of lies.
> These traits are well-captured by the construct of Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970), which is characterized by personality traits such as a lack of concern with conventional morality, the tendency to view others cynically, and admission to the use of lying and manipulation of others for personal gain (Christie & Geis, 1970; McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, 1998).
> Another construct capturing the manipulative personality is social adroitness, which portrays a subtler degree of manipulativeness and carries fewer negative connotations (Kashy & DePaulo, 1996). Both Machiavellianism and social adroitness were assessed by Kashy and DePaulo (1996) in their (previously mentioned) diary study of lying behaviors. Their results indicated that people scoring higher on these measures told more lies and provided partial support for the prediction that people exhibiting high levels of these traits would tell more self-oriented
> (…)
> Similarly, Gozna, Vrij, and Bull (2001) reported that participants with high scores on the Machiavellianism and social-adroitness scales indicated they felt little guilt when telling everyday lies and would feel more comfortable when telling a high-stakes lie, as compared to lower-scoring participants.

I've noticed that with some personalities who seem very sociable, extraverted, and socially skilled and successful. They tend to touch others, smile a lot, and confidently move from person to person or group or group.

They seem very charming and charismatic.
But they also have a 'casual' approach to truth and, if you learned how to read people, it shows. You can tell they're socially effective, but also manipulative and 'slimy' when not backed by positive dominance.

Narcissism is adaptive within a certain range

From chapter 22 by Eytan Bachar:

> The idea that normal narcissism can be adaptive is quite new in research and in theory. Watson, Hickman,

> Morris, Milliron, and Whiting (1995) stated that the assumption that scores on purposed narcissism scales may correlate positively with adjustment came as a great surprise.
> They went on to say that researchers had been working from the "obvious" assumption that valid instruments of narcissism would predict maladjustment. Indeed, not many researchers were open to examine the possibility that normal levels of narcissism might be adaptive. Most of the studies in this area have examined nonclinical populations in the context of daily life activities. They have found that normal narcissism is associated with good adjustment to college life (Lapsley & Aalsma, 2006), normal eating attitudes among college women (Brunton et al., 2005), and normal feelings of shame (Hibbard, 1994). Similarly, recent studies carried out among nonclinical, mostly student populations have found that normal narcissism helps individuals assert interpersonal dominance (Brown and Zeigler-Hill, 2004) and fuels approach and achievement motives, such as competitive and mastery strivings, while lowering avoidance motivation (Foster & Trimm, 2008; Lukowitsky, Roberts, Lehner, Pincus, and Conroy, 2007; Wallace, Ready, & Weitenhagen, 2009)

I find it surprising that for a long time researchers didn't consider narcissism could be adaptive, especially considering that much of the research has been in more individualistic countries like EU and US.

Early psychoanalysts like Freud and Kohut may share some responsibilities.
An evolutionary approach instead would have at least posed that question much more easily: if narcissism is so widespread and also increasing in certain areas and cultures, then it's possible that it's adaptive.

Relatedness & Independence: Both Are Necessary

Chapter 20 by Patrick Luyten et al., made me reflect on the psychology of avoidants and anxious attachments, as well as on my own development.

They explain that **healthy personality development depends on a balance between two fundamental psychological needs**: **relatedness** (the capacity for deep, reciprocal relationships) and **self-definition** (a clear, integrated sense of self and identity). Each supports the growth of the other—strong relationships help shape a stable self, and a solid self fosters healthier relationships.

When this balance is disrupted—due to genetics or adverse life experiences—people may over-rely on one line at the expense of the other:

- **Overemphasis on relatedness** leads to excessive dependency, fear of abandonment, and heightened sensitivity to rejection.
- **Overemphasis on self-definition**, as seen in self-critical perfectionists, results in rigid concerns over achievement, autonomy, and self-worth—often paired with the same sensitivity to rejection and ostracism.

Healthy narcissism involves a balance between relatedness and self-definition as it is not only associated with essentially positive feelings about oneřs self (self-definition), but also facilitates the development of mature interpersonal relationships (relatedness; Freud, 1914; Kohut & Wolf, 1978; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2011).

The authors note that in their study, only covert narcissism was related to sensitivity to ostracism, which may suggest that grandiose narcissism is more independent of others' acceptance.

Narcissists are the hypergamous kings

Despite some authors focusing on 'female hypergamy', narcissists may intrinsically be looking to trade up:

> Although individuals who are invested in their partner are generally inattentive to attractive alternatives (Maner, Gailliot, & Miller, 2009), it seems that individuals with high levels of narcissism actually pay special attention to attractive alternatives (Campbell & Foster, 2002). The authors explain these results by putting forth several propositions. Narcissistic individuals could be looking to "trade up"; thus, they are interested in

> potential relationship partners who could serve their ego to a greater extent than their current partner

QUOTES

On the 'banality of deception':

The use of deception in everyday life is ubiquitous and our motivations for using deception are varied (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996)

On why it's impossible to say that 'lying' is intrinsically 'bad' or manipulative (also see 'persuasion vs manipulation'):

> We lie to avoid punishment, to prevent hurt feelings, to sweeten an encounter with a potential date, and to create the façade of a desired self, to name just a few reasons (Bell & DePaulo, 1996; DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol, & Boden, 2004; Rowatt, Cunningham, & Druen, 1998).
> These varying reasons for deceit render blanket judgments of the morality of lying problematic for many (Vrij, 2008); telling a lie to comfort a friend is clearly of a different vein than lying to a professor about oneřs plagiarized work or to a prospective investor in a dodgy venture

On the ultimate takeaway on narcissism and adaptiveness (which sounds ironic, given that it doesn't say much):

> Perhaps the clearest conclusion that can be drawn regarding narcissism is that it is a mixed blessing (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Campbell et al., 2011)

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Some possible ideas to improve an already great volume for a possible future update:

Maladaptive needs a redefinition

While the scholarly discourse around narcissism improved when it started considering narcissism may be adaptive, I think it may still have to go a few steps forward.

For example, it seems like most authors still list 'Exploitativeness' or 'Entitlement' as 'maladaptive'.
I'm not convinced either necessarily are maladaptive, at least when it comes to acheiving certain self-serving goals.

Suggestion: edit out the repeated basics

Cutting the history of narcissism, the DSM definition or the core traits can help streamline the volume.

Suggestion: skip or combine one-study chapters

This may be more personal to how I approach handbooks, which is to gain an overview from different studies, commented by researchers themselves and scholars experts in the field.

It's a 'look at the combined trees to provide a forest-level view'.
Full chapters about a single study may be interesting, but may also risk over-focusing on individual trees rather than the forest.

REVIEW

The *Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism* is an excellent, research-rich volume.

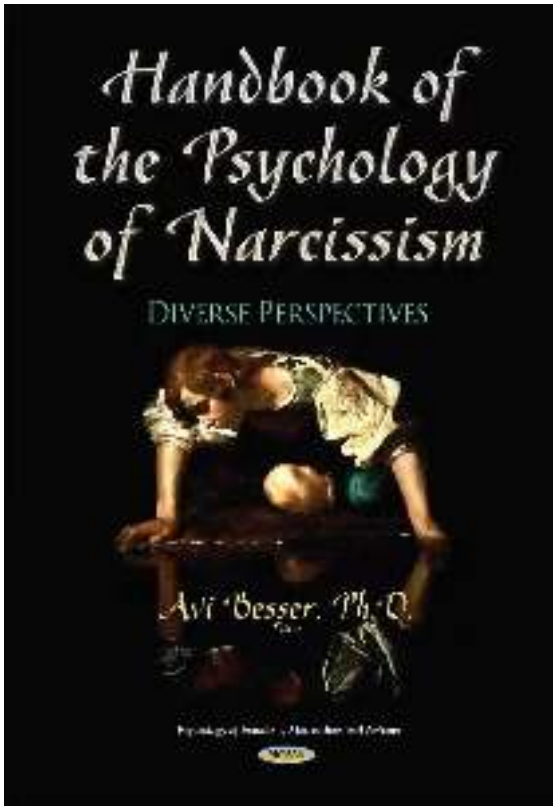
I learned a lot from it, and it directly helped improve several TPM articles—including our upcoming cornerstone

piece on narcissism. That's the highest compliment I can give any author: their work elevated ours.

I'm grateful for their contribution and look forward to reading more from them.

Get this book on Amazon or check our **most recommended books.**

The Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism: Summary



The Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism (2014) is an edited research volume that surveys intrapersonal, interpersonal, and clinical perspectives on narcissism.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/handbook-of-the-psychology-of-narcissism-summary-review/

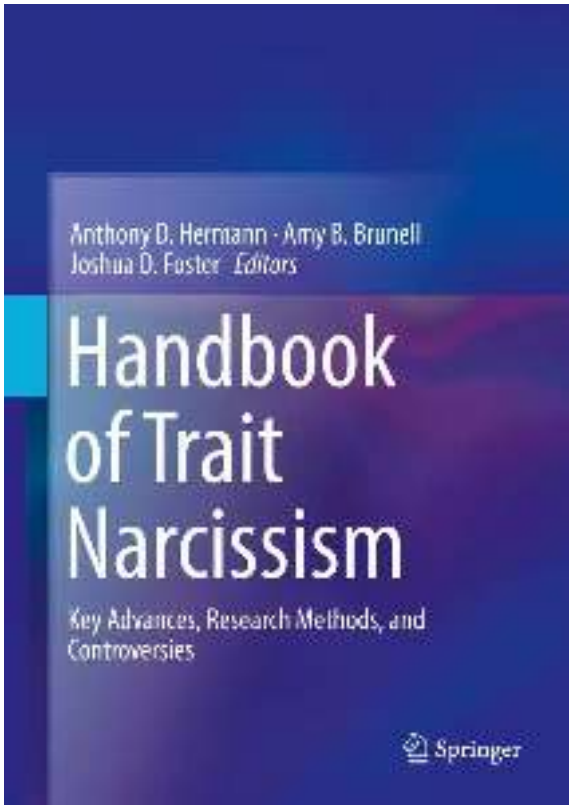
Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

Handbook of Trait Narcissism: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 December 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Handbook of Trait Narcissism (2018) offers a comprehensive, research-based overview of narcissism as a personality trait, covering its development, structure, social dynamics, and real-world consequences.



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FULL SUMMARY

About the Authors:
Many researchers and experts in the field authored different chapters. The main editors are:
Anthony D. Hermann is a leading researcher on self-processes and interpersonal dynamics, known for his work on self-evaluation motives, self-presentation, and how narcissistic traits shape social behavior.
Amy B. Brunell is a prominent scholar in personality and social psychology whose research focuses on narcissism's influence on relationships, leadership, entitlement, and decision-making across real-world contexts.

Joshua D. Foster is a recognized expert on narcissism, self-regulation, and personality processes, with influential work on the structure of narcissistic traits and their behavioral consequences.

Chapter 1: Distinguishing Between Grandiose, Vulnerable, and NPD

Authors: Brandon Weiss and Joshua D. Miller

> Comprehensive empirical literature demonstrates that narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder are well described by models of general personality and, in particular, three primary traits including (low) agreeableness (or antagonism, entitlement, and self-involvement), agentic extraversion (or boldness, behavioral approach-orientation), and neuroticism (or reactivity, behavioral avoidance-orientation).

> Our review led to three primary conclusions.
> First, the FFM trait correlates of NPD and grandiose narcissism overlap quite substantially. Second, the two differ to some degree with regard to the role of extraversion, with stronger relations found for grandiose narcissism than NPD. Third, extant data suggest that vulnerable narcissism represents a construct that is largely divergent from NPD and grandiose narcissism

This chapter analyzes grandiose, vulnerable, and Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) with the framework of general personality models, particularly the Five-Factor Model (FFM).
It asserts that these constructs are best described using three primary traits: **low Agreeableness (Antagonism), agentic Extraversion (Boldness), and Neuroticism (Reactivity).**
The review concludes that while NPD and grandiose narcissism share a substantial overlap in FFM trait correlates, vulnerable narcissism is largely a divergent construct defined primarily by negative emotionality.

Trait	Grandiose	Vulnerable
Core presentation	Outwardly bold, dominant, attention-seeking; projects superiority.	Quiet, defensive, anxious; hides grandiose needs behind sensitivity.
Self-esteem / confidence	Inflated, overtly confident (often contingent on admiration).	Fragile and contingent; reports low confidence and high shame.
Achievement & ambition (TPM)	High visible status drive; seeks prominence and trophies.	Wants achievement but is held back by fear of exposure and social anxiety.
Social tactics / self-promotion	Overt self-promotion, charisma, attention-seeking performance.	Subtle reassurance-seeking, victim stance, covert fishing for compliments.
Approach orientation	Approach-oriented and sensitive to rewards. Predator-like	avoidance oriented and sensitive to threats (Campbell & Foster, 2007 ; Foster & Trimm, 2008 ; Krizan & Herlache, 2018 ; Pincus et al., 2009). Prey-like
Attachment / relationships	Transactional, shallow ties; prone to discard when value drops.	Anxious/clingy patterns; fear of abandonment.
Emotionality	**Positive affect**, including feelings of cheerfulness, excitement, and overall high life satisfaction	**negative affect**, including **shame, stress, envy, and anxiety**, reflecting its core as an anxious and sensitive personality style.
Reactive Aggression	instrumental aggression to assert dominance in the face of strong direct status threats.	narcissistic rage from a fragile sense of self, but often bottled up and passive-aggressive
Correlates	extraversion, histrionic and antisocial personality disorders	Neuroticism; borderline and avoidant personality disorders (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003).
Sense of Control	high perceived control over outcomes	Low perceived control

Comparison table by Lucio Buffalmano, using content from both this chapter and others

Notes

- **Grandiose Narcissism is associated with high Extraversion and low Agreeableness**, encompassing traits like immodesty, dominance, self-absorption, and callous manipulation.
  - It is typically related to **low psychological distress and high self-esteem**.
  - Grandiose narcissism is closely tied to social dominance, which is a tendency toward social status and leadership over others (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004 ; Hodson, Hoggs, & MacInnis, 2009)
- **Vulnerable Narcissism is primarily defined by high Neuroticism (negative emotion)**, with increased psychological distress, anxiety, shame, and low self-esteem, alongside egocentric and hostile interpersonal behaviors.
- **Interpersonal antagonism is the essential feature shared by both subtypes**, although the intensity of this trait tends to be empirically weaker in vulnerable narcissism as currently measured.
- **NPD's trait correlates substantially with Grandiose Narcissism**, though its relationship with Extraversion is somewhat weaker, indicating that the full diagnostic picture includes a degree of emotional fragility not captured solely by grandiosity.

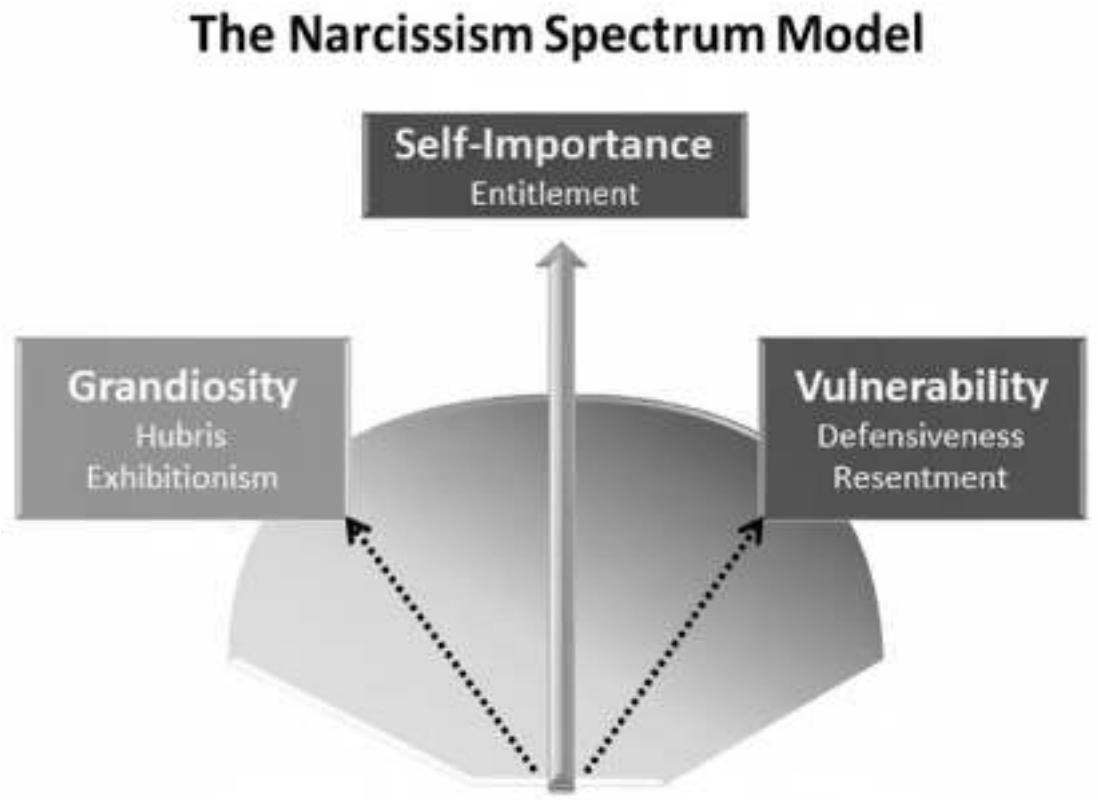
Interesting Observations

- **Vulnerables are less aggressive with lower testosterone**: at least one study suggests that, contrary to grandiose, vulnerable individuals report higher reactive aggression, but not higher behavioral aggression or increased testosterone production in a laboratory-based behavioral aggression paradigm (Lobbestael, Baumeister, Fiebig, & Eckel, 2014)

Chapter 2: The Narcissism Spectrum Model

Authors: Zlatan Krizan

Narcissism can be conceptualized along a continuous spectrum from grandiosity to vulnerability.



The three core axes of the narcissism spectrum. (by Sage Publications (Copyright 2018))

Notes

- **Parental overvaluation contributes to grandiosity**, while emotional neglect fosters vulnerability.
- **NSM explains oscillations between states**: Narcissists may shift from grandiose to vulnerable states in response to ego threats.
- **Entitlement and self-importance are shared traits** that most often co-occur with both grandiose and vulnerable features of narcissism in both normal and clinical populations (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008 ; Krizan & Johar, 2012 ; Miller & Campbell, 2008)

⁉️♂ Lucio's note: I'd like stronger argument or evidence before being persuaded
I remain open to the possibility of the spectrum model being a valid model, but I wasn't convinced by it just yet. Albeit it's true that individuals can oscillate between the two, I don't feel that a spectrum is necessary to explain the oscillation.

Chapter 3: Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism

Authors: Ashley A. Hansen-Brown

The Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism (PCTN) suggests that narcissism is rooted in the need to acquire, maintain, and assert a high sense of personal control.
Grandiosity and entitlement are complex regulatory strategies designed to reinforce an image of competence and autonomy. This framework provides a motivational explanation of narcissistic behavior, interpreting their actions as goal-directed efforts to manage feelings of efficacy and control over their lives and interactions.

Notes

- **High agency supports self-esteem (or undermines it)**: *perceptions of agency mediated the link between each type of narcissism and self-esteem, with grandiose narcissists' high agency statistically accounting for their high self-esteem and vulnerable narcissists' low agency statistically accounting for their low self-esteem* (Brown, Freis, Carroll, & Arkin, 2016)
- **Grandiose high agency may be partially true**: grandiose narcissism predicted perceiving higher relationship-specific control, and partners of grandiose narcissists perceived lower control in the relationship compared to their narcissistic partner (Hansen-Brown & Crocker, 2017)
- **Grandiosity and dominance serve to assert and defend a sense of superior control**, by projecting an image of power, the individual shields their self-concept from any perceived threats of incompetence or helplessness.
- **The difference between grandiose and vulnerable is in perceived control**: grandiose narcissists have high perceived control over their own outcomes, the behavior of others, and the world around them, whereas vulnerable narcissists' perceived control is low.
- **Entitlement and reactive aggression are compensatory responses** aimed at restoring a threatened sense of control, helping the individual re-establish a subjective feeling of power or influence when circumstances undermine their autonomy

Chapter 4: The Distinctiveness Model of the Narcissistic Subtypes (DMNS)

Authors: Stephanie D. Freis

> DMNS proposes that GN and VN share a particularly strong need to differentiate themselves from others and

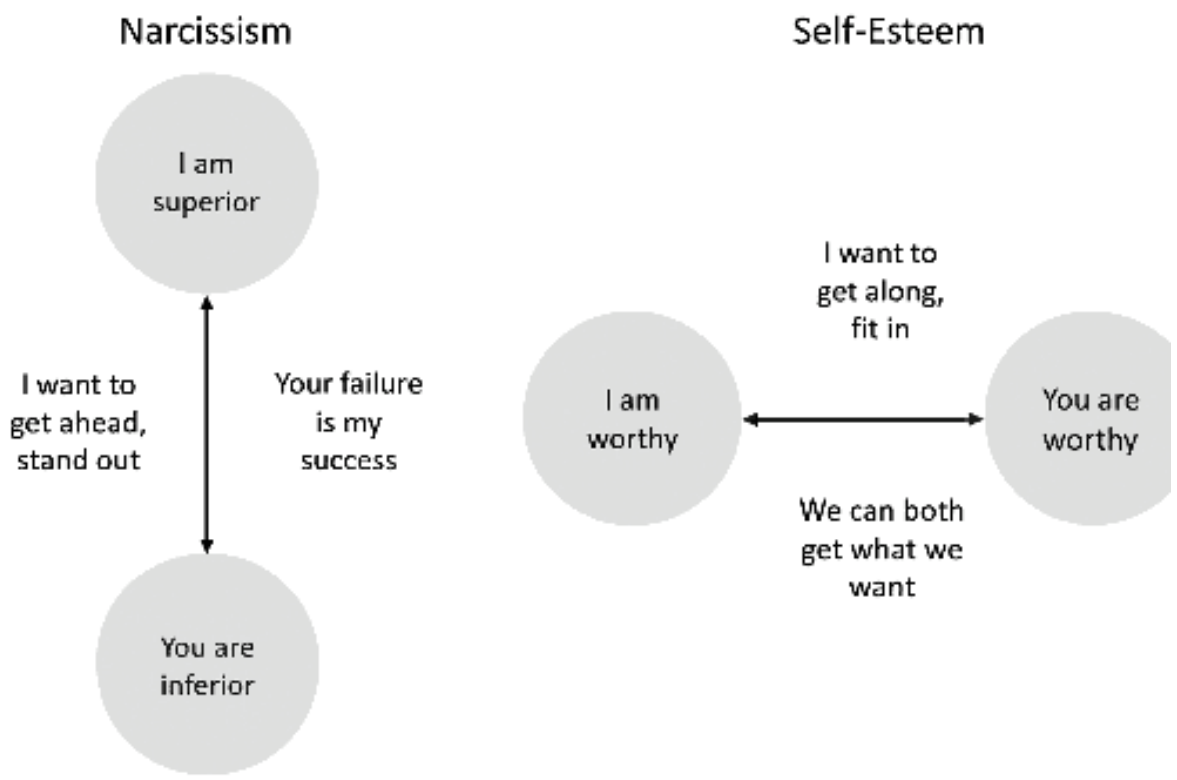
> be seen as distinct or "special." However, the subtypes differ in how they orient to this motivation: whereas GN are promotion-focused in their need for distinctiveness, VN are prevention-focused. This leads GN to concentrate on gains and seek new opportunities to become more distinct. In contrast, VN worry about suffering losses and thus remain vigilant to defend against diminishing special ness.

The Distinctiveness Model of the Narcissistic Subtypes (DMNS) argues that both subtypes are defined by a common **Antagonistic Core** but are differentiated by orthogonal (independent) dimensions.
This approach is essential for explaining why empirical research often finds a weak or non-existent correlation between the seemingly distinct behavioral profiles of the two forms.

Chapter 5: Narcissism vs. Self-esteem: A Social-Cognitive Perspective

Authors: Eddie Brummelman, Çisem Gürel, Sander Thomaes, and Constantine Sedikides

The key distinction lies in the fragile, entitled, and contingent nature of the narcissistic self-view versus the secure, stable, and healthy sense of self-worth characteristic of high self-esteem.
Narcissistic self-regard is driven by a constant, aggressive need for superiority and validation, making it inherently unstable and dependent on external praise.



Key Differences

Domain	Narcissistic Self-Esteem	Healthy Self-Esteem
Self-View	Believes they are inherently superior; "God complex"	Believes they are worthy, not superior
Traits Valued	Primarily agentic traits (competence, intelligence)	Both agentic and communal traits (warmth, kindness)
Reality Alignment	Inflated self-view, ignores evidence	Grounded, realistic self-view

Domain	Narcissistic Self-Esteem	Healthy Self-Esteem
View of Others	Look down on others; may dehumanize; see others as subservient	Respect others; see intrinsic worth; not a means to gain admiration
Dependence on Others	Craves admiration, external validation; experiences withdrawal if lacking	Independent of others' approval; secure in self-worth
Response to Rejection	Shame-rage cycle; may lash out aggressively	Forgive, seek reconciliation; maintain relationships
Origins	Parental overvaluation: seen as extraordinary/entitled; partly genetic	Parental warmth: treated as valued and worthy; partly genetic
Motivation	Motivational properties: narcissists *want* to think highly of themselves	Evaluative, reflecting how that person views oneself
Developmental Trajectory	Peaks in adolescence, declines gradually; stable due to self-reinforcing behaviors	Drops in adolescence, rises gradually; stable due to cooperative engagement
Malleability	Harder to change; resists interventions; can change if core beliefs targeted	Can be increased through interventions and supportive environments

- **Narcissism seeks and needs superiority, not adequacy:** The pursuit of superiority, not merely adequacy, is the key motivational difference that separates narcissism from self-esteem. Narcissists aim to be seen as *better than* others, while high-self-esteem individuals simply feel satisfied with who they are.
- **Narcissism requires external validation**, self-esteem is internally regulated. Narcissistic self-worth is dependent on outperforming others, receiving admiration, and maintaining a grandiose image through constant self-enhancement efforts.
- **High self-esteem is stable, narcissistic self-esteem *may* be less stable (contingent):** self-esteem reflects a secure and non-contingent self-view, meaning the individual's worth is stable. Narcissists are effective at maintaining self-esteem, but require more 'work'
- **Self-esteem predicts healthy relationships**, narcissism predicts conflict and exploitation.

Developmental Pathways

- **Parental warmth fosters self-esteem**
- **Overvaluation fosters narcissism**
- **Parental guidance**: provide warmth and realistic feedback, not exaggerated praise.

Chapter 26: How Do Narcissists Really Feel About Themselves? The Complex Connections Between Narcissism and Self-Esteem

Authors: Ashton C. Southard, Virgil Zeigler-Hill, Jennifer K. Vrabel, and Gillian A. McCabe

Grandiose narcissism is strongly and genuinely linked to high, stable explicit self-esteem, refuting the pervasive "mask model" for this subtype, while **vulnerable narcissism is linked to low, unstable self-esteem**. The chapter highlights that even for the grandiose type, a lack of **implicit self-esteem (unconscious self-regard)** might exist, suggesting a complex, *defensive high self-esteem* where the grandiosity is aggressively maintained through external means.

Explicit and Implicit Self-Regard

- **Grandiose narcissists have high, stable explicit self-esteem**, suggesting a genuine and conscious belief in their own superiority, which contributes to their low distress and high life satisfaction.

- **Vulnerable narcissists have low self-esteem and instability**, validating its conceptualization as a defensive and anxious form of self-focused personality.
- **A "defensive" high self-esteem suggests a fragile high self-regard** that, while consciously positive, is **maintained through constant self-enhancement efforts** and aggression against any perceived threat.
- **Facets matter: rivalry's self-esteem fluctuates**: admiration was positively associated with self-esteem level, whereas rivalry was positively associated with self-esteem instability.
  - Self-esteem levels of individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration were particularly reactive to changes in their perceived levels of daily status (i.e., being respected and viewed as important).
- **Self-esteem is for inclusion and status, narcissistic grandiosity for status only**: *Considering the current evidence for sociometer theory and hierometer theory, it seems that self-esteem may be entwined with both inclusion and status, whereas narcissism seems to be primarily associated with status (see Zeigler-Hill, McCabe, Vrabel, Raby, & Cronin, this volume, for an extended discussion)*

Hierometer Theory of Narcissism: Status, Not Inclusion

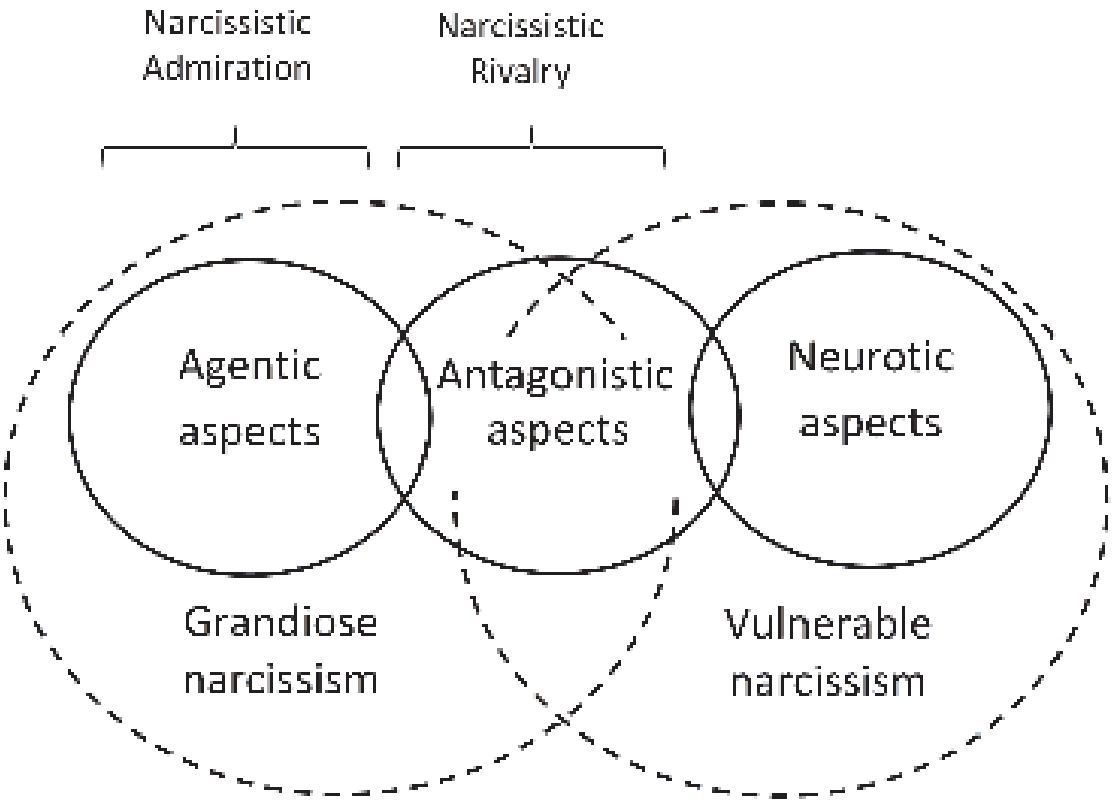
> Recently, Mahadevan, Gregg, Sedikides, and de Waal-Andrews (2016) proposed hierometer theory which argues that both self-esteem and narcissism evolved to help individuals navigate status hierarchies.
> Status hierarchies are pervasive among humans (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and, because there are benefits to being at the top of this hierarchy (e.g., greater reproductive success; von Rueden, Gurven, & Kaplan, 2011), humans likely evolved a psychological system to aid in navigating them.
>
> On a conceptual level, the theoretical underpinnings of hierometer theory are similar to those of sociometer theory. That is, they both suggest that self-regard helps individuals track their social value.
>
> However, whereas sociometer theory argues that state self-esteem tracks relational value (e.g., perceptions of acceptance, liking, and affiliation) and regulates affiliative behaviors aimed at increasing social inclusion, **hierometer theory argues that both self-esteem and narcissism track instrumental value (e.g., perceptions of respect and admiration)** and regulate assertive behavior aimed at gaining status.
>
> Previous studies have provided some initial support for hierometer theory.
> For example, Leary et al. (2001) found that self-esteem changes in accordance with feedback concerning status such that individuals who perceive themselves to be in a relatively dominant social position tend to report higher levels of self-esteem. In addition, Mahadevan et al. (2016) found that the combination of self-esteem and narcissism fully mediated the associations that status and inclusion had with assertiveness and affiliation, respectively. Further, Zeigler-Hill et al. (in press) found that state selfesteem increased on days when individuals perceived themselves as having higher levels of status even when statistically controlling for perceived inclusion, which suggests that this hierometer process (i.e., state self-esteem changing in accordance with status) is distinct from the sociometer process (i.e., state self-esteem changing in accordance with relational value). Together, these studies provide preliminary evidence that supports the existence of the hierometer system.
> (…)
> Zeigler-Hill et al. (in press) found that the selfesteem of individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration tends to be highly reactive to perceived status but not perceived inclusion.
> This is consistent with the tendency for narcissistic individuals to care far more about being respected and admired than about being liked.

The authors summarize saying that self-esteem and narcissism may have evolved for similar goals, but while self-esteem includes communion and 'fitting in', narcissism zeroes in on agentic goals of status pursuits.

Chapter 6: The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept

Authors: Mitja D. Back

> The goal to create and maintain a grandiose self can be pursued by two social strategies (narcissistic self-promotion and narcissistic self-defense) that translate into two sets of dynamics (narcissistic admiration and rivalry) with distinct affective-motivational, cognitive, and behavioral states that tend to have different social consequences (social potency and conflict).



Conceptual and empirical relations of narcissistic admiration and rivalry to the overarching structure of narcissism

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) posits that the core social strategies of narcissism are agentic **Admiration**, based on self-promotion, and antagonistic **Rivalry**, based on self-defense.
The fundamental motivation is the maintenance of a grandiose self-image, achieved through either self-promotion (Admiration) or self-defense (Rivalry).

Individuals differ in the balance of the two and they're not always fixed: ego threats can trigger a switch from admiration to rivalry.

The Dual Pathways to Grandiosity: Admiration and Rivalry

- **Admiration is the successful, agentic, and bright side of narcissism**, characterized by **striving for uniqueness, assertiveness, and grandiosity**; it predicts initial social success and high self-esteem.
- **Rivalry is the antagonistic, dark, and defensive side of narcissism**, characterized by **devaluation of others, aggression, and the hostility to protect the ego**; it predicts long-term interpersonal conflict and hostility.

Consequences: Rivalry vs. Grandiosity

- **Self-esteem is higher for agentic admiration**: *admiration was related to high and rather stable self-esteem, whereas rivalry was related to lower and more fragile self-esteem. (…) perceived lack of social approval might be one mechanism driving rivalry's self-esteem fragility (Geukes et al., 2017 , p. 783).*

- **Admiration gets jobs & money, rivalry gets jobless poverty**: In a population representative investigation, admiration was found to be related to employment, leadership, income, and job prestige, whereas rivalry was found to be related to unemployment and lower financial satisfaction (Leckelt, Richter, Wetzel, & Back, 2017)
  - High-net-worth individuals scored higher on admiration, and this difference held when gender, age, and education were controlled for with propensity score matching analyses (Leckelt et al., 2017)
- **Admiration gains initial popularity, rivarly loses it:** Leckelt et al. (2015) showed that admiration predicts initial popularity among peers, whereas rivalry predicts a decline in popularity over time.
- **The NARC provides a common empirical structure** that allows researchers to move beyond semantic debates by unifying different manifestations of narcissism under two predictive pathways.

Chapter 7: Communal Narcissism: Theoretical and Empirical Support

Authors: Jochen E. Gebauer and Constantine Sedikides

In Communal Narcissism, grandiosity is expressed with **pro-social, communal, and moral domains** rather than the typical domains of power and status. The communal narcissist believes, signals, and seeks admiration for being the "**most helpful**," "**most ethical**," or "**most compassionate**". The construct is shown to be *narcissistic* in its underlying process of entitlement and need for self-enhancement, but *communal* in its content, seeking superiority within an ostensibly caring context.

The Paradox of Pro-Social Grandiosity

- **Communal narcissists exaggerate their communal traits** and believe they are uniquely caring and supportive, creating a **misalignment between self-perception and reality**, as observers do not rate them as genuinely warm.
- **The core motivation remains a need for superiority and entitlement**, simply expressed through moral achievements, leading to a strong expectation that others should recognize their unparalleled benevolence.
- **The communal pursuit is maladaptive over time**, as their self-enhancement efforts can lead to distress and anger when their perceived moral superiority is not validated by others. Over time, it can harm the communities they may lead, and it can create a painful disconnect between toxic personal relationships but positive outward appearances

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Chapter 8: Collective Narcissism: Exaggeration of the In-Group Image

Authors: Agnieszka Golec de Zavala

> Collective narcissism is a tendency to exaggerate an in-group's importance and desire for its external recognition.
> The concept was coined to help explain the mass support for the Nazi politics in Germany. Recently, several successful populist campaigns were based on collective narcissistic calls for revival of national purity, uniqueness, and greatness.
>
> Collective narcissism is differentiated from (a) nationalism (i.e., a desire for national supremacy) based on its approach to ingroup's vulnerability, (b) in-group satisfaction (i.e., feeling proud to be a member of a valuable group) based on its approach to in-group's membership, and (c) individual narcissism (i.e., exaggerated self-image dependent on admiration of others) based on its means to fulfill self-entitlement.

> Collective narcissism is associated with retaliatory intergroup hostility over and above other predictors such as nationalism, blind patriotism, right-wing authoritarianism, or social dominance orientation.
> It is associated with exaggerated responses to in-group criticism, conspiratorial thinking, and a tendency to perceive the ingroup as threatened by external hostility. It is predicted by low self-esteem via vulnerable narcissism (i.e., frustrated and unfulfilled sense of self-entitlement).
>
> Thus, the reviewed research suggests that c**ollective narcissists engage in intergroup hostility to protect their vulnerable self-worth invested in in-group's exaggerated greatness**.

This chapter examines Collective Narcissism, defined as an entitled and exaggerated belief in the greatness of one's in-group (e.g., nation, political group) that is highly contingent upon external validation. **Unlike healthy group pride, collective narcissism** is a **fragile and defensive** form of group love, where **the group's alleged superiority is used to bolster a fragile personal sense of self-worth**. This type of narcissism has severe intergroup consequences, as the in-group's need for external validation often translates into hostility and aggression toward out-groups perceived as threats to the in-group's superior image.

Collective Narcissism and Politics

The authors don't shy away from recent political examples:

> When Theodore Adorno first proposed that collective narcissism motivated support for theNazi politics in Germany, he argued that the exaggerated sense of national entitlement compensated for hidden weakness of the self.
> Recently, appeals to national collective narcissism could be observed in political campaigns alarming about the loss of national greatness in the USA ("Make America great again") and in the UK ("Take back control").
> Collective narcissism predicted the Brexit vote in the UK because of the perception that the country was threatened by immigrants and foreigners (Golec de Zavala, Guerra, & Símão, 2017).
> Collective narcissism predicted an increase in conspiratorial thinking during Donald Trump's presidential campaign (Golec de Zavala & Federico, 2018) and the Trump vote in the 2016 American presidential election (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's reminder for readers: Don't leverage science as an opportunity to pathologize conservative voters
de Zavala did amazing work for which I'm grateful for and her analyses are on point. Just a reminder for readers that while it's plausible and, in some cases, empirically supported that collective narcissism plays a role in recent political movements, it would be an overreach to treat it as *the* explanation for the success of certain parties or leaders. Wanting to regulate migration, prioritizing national sovereignty, or opposing more liberal or social-democratic policies are valid and sometimes sensible preferences that don't automatically stem from collective narcissism.

And in the case of the Iraq war:

> Collective narcissism predicts retaliatory intergroup hostility after the in-group image is undermined by other groups. For example, American collective narcissism predicted support for military intervention in Iraq in 2003 because American collective narcissists felt besieged by hostility of other countries (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009)

Fragile Group Esteem and Intergroup Hostility

- **From self to social**: collective narcissism extends the concept of individual narcissism as an exaggerated self-image dependent on admiration of others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) onto the social level of self.

- **Nationalism is agentic, collective narcissism is defensive**: recent results indicate that collective narcissism and nationalism may be underlain by different motivations. Nationalism was related to individual grandiose narcissism (i.e., a sense of agentic superiority over others) and only inasmuch as it was associated with grandiose narcissism was it also related to high self-esteem. Otherwise, nationalism was related to low self-esteem. Collective narcissism was related to low self-esteem via vulnerable narcissism (i.e., frustrated and unfulfilled sense of self-entitlement, Golec de Zavala, Guerra, Sedikides et al., 2017). Thus, both collective narcissism and nationalism seem to be underlain by low self-esteem, and both are likely to use their national identity instrumentally to compensate for deficits in their sense of self-worth.
  - Defensive vs. dominant aggression: While nationalistic intergroup hostility is actively aggressive and openly dominant, collective narcissistic intergroup hostility may be subjectively defensive. Collective narcissists protect the in-group rather than assert the in-group's dominance (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016).
  - Collective narcissists are more thin-skinned: *when the overlap between nationalism and national collective narcissism was controlled, collective narcissism, not nationalism, was related to sensitivity to intergroup threat and retaliatory hostility (Golec de Zavala, Peker, Guerra, & Baran, 2016).*
    Collective narcissism uniquely (in comparison to individual narcissism, right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, national in-group identification, and blind and constructive patriotism) predicts hostile retaliation to in-group criticism.
- **Collective narcissists personalize group attacks:** c*ollective narcissists reported that negative opinions about their in-group were threatening them personally. In retribution, collective narcissists made resource distribution decisions that harmed the criticizing out-group. The perception of the in-group criticism as personally threatening mediated the relationship between collective narcissism and retaliatory aggression* (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013).
- **Collective narcissists are potentially paranoid**: *collective narcissists are hypersensitive to signs of the in-group image threat and perceive an insult to the in-group even when it is debatable, not perceived by others, or not intended by the other group. Collective narcissists do not have a sense of humor as far as their in-group is concerned, and they are disproportionately punitive in responding to what they consider the in-group image threat.*
- **Failed narcissists use the group for grandiosity**: *In line with Adorno's suggestion, recent studies suggest that collective narcissists protect their ingroups' exaggerated greatness so vehemently because they regard those in-groups as vehicles for fulfillment of their frustrated sense of entitlement*
- **Low sense of control**: *collective narcissism was linked to low sense of personal control – not having the ability to influence the course of one's own life (Deci & Ryan, 2000). resulted in heightened collective narcissism, suggesting that increased investment in the in- group's exaggerated greatness may be a way of compensating for loss of personal control (Cichocka, Golec de Zavala, et al., 2018)*
- **Negative affectivity and self-views**: Collective narcissism was also associated with self-criticism, low self-acceptance, negative affectivity, and a tendency to react strongly to environmental stimuli (Golec de Zavala, 2017)
- **Reactive and antagonistic**: The fragility of the in-group's perceived status drives a highly reactive and antagonistic stance toward other groups.

Interesting Notes

- **Individualistic culture may boost collective narcissism**: *individualistic cultural contexts that allow for the development of a strong ego may enhance the positive relationship between individual grandiose narcissism and collective narcissism (…) In collectivistic cultures, commitment to the ingroup may be associated with the submission of individual needs or goals, thus diminishing the association of grandiose individual narcissism and collective narcissism.*

- **Collective narcissists demand external recognition for their in-group's greatness**, feeling that the group's

importance is not sufficiently appreciated by others, which is the **hallmark of collective entitlement**.

- **Hostility and prejudice toward out-groups are direct consequences** of collective narcissism, as any criticism or perceived slight toward the in-group is interpreted as a **personal threat requiring aggressive defense or retaliation**.
- **The construct is independent of genuine in-group pride or patriotism**, as high collective narcissism is uniquely linked to intergroup antagonism and defensive reactivity.

Healthy In-Group Satisfaction vs. Collective Narcissism

> Collective narcissism with in-group positivity partialled out can be interpreted as **groupbased entitlement without the comfort of the sense of belonging to a valuable group**. In-group satisfaction with collective narcissism partialled out can be interpreted as **a confident, positive evaluation of the in-group, independent of external recognition and resilient to threats and criticism.**
> Indeed, unlike collective narcissism, in-group satisfaction did not predict hypersensitivity to intergroup threat (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016), it was not related to conspiracy beliefs about Jews or siege mentality (Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012), and it was negatively related to the belief in conspiracy explanations of intergroup situations (Cichocka et al., 2016). Recent studies showed also that unlike collective narcissism, in-group satisfaction was associated with positive affectivity, psychological well-being, and greater life satisfaction. In-group satisfaction was also associated with feeling safe and grounded in social networks and the tendency to experience gratitude.

When the overlap between the two was removed, the difference was even starker:

- *Pure* in-group satisfaction → **clearly healthy, confident, grounded, high self-esteem, grateful, more tolerant.**
- *Pure* collective narcissism → **clearly insecure, defensive, low gratitude, hypersensitive to threat, hostile.**

Collective narcissism was also hostile compared to in-group satisfaction's higher tolerance:

> This literature suggests that nonself-determined motivations to identify with the social group – such as collective narcissistic investment of one's self-worth in group identity – are linked with in-group bias, defensiveness, and negative attitudes toward outgroups. Positive, noncontingent, intrinsic in-group satisfaction is related to high self-esteem and intergroup tolerance (Amiot & Aubin, 2013; Amiot & Sansfaçon, 2011; Legault & Amiot, 2014).

Fixing Collective Narcissism

If it were possible, moving towards in-group satisfaction may address the harmful effects of collective narcissism:

> Studies indicate that negative consequences of collective narcissism for inter group relations are reduced when collective narcissism overlaps with in-group satisfaction (Cichocka et al., 2016 ; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013 ; Golec de Zavala et al., 2016).

One of our pillar articles walks men from weak collective narcissism to empowered in-group satisfaction with self-empowerment.
Check our article:

- **Enlightened individualism**: from collective narcissism to empowered in-group satisfaction

🧔♂️Lucio's Take: **Collective narcissism research supports TPM's call for self-focus over group-focus**

Lucio:
This chapter was one of my favorite and it provided further empirical support for TPM's long-held principle of deprioritizing group focus and pride in favor of the self.

We support individuals over group because it's:

- **Mentally empowering**, since it's higher agency and control (you control the self much better than a collective)
- **Higher-achievement**, since you focus on the self
- **Healthier** also for society: it supports cooperation and human advancement

These studies in this chapter lend further empirical credibility to this view.

Chapter 38: New Directions in Narcissistic Aggression: The Role of the Self-concept on Group-Based Aggression

Authors: Daniel N. Jones and Adon L. Neria

This chapter focuses on the nature of **narcissistic aggression**, particularly its manifestation in **group-based contexts**. Narcissistic aggression is more **reactive** than in non-narcissists, driven by a perceived **threat to the ego or self-concept** (narcissistic injury). The authors extend this to the group level, arguing that when a narcissist strongly identifies with a group (e.g., political party, gang, military unit), threats to that group's status are internalized as **personal threats** that trigger an aggressive, defensive response, even more so than for non-narcissistic group members. This suggests that narcissism contributes to the intensity of intergroup conflict and hostility.

Reactive Aggression and the Injured Ego

Aggression is a primary strategy for restoring a grandiose self-image following a perceived slight.

- **Aggression is strongly linked to ego-threat**, where any form of criticism, failure, or ridicule is met with a **hostile and often violent defensive reaction** to restore the perceived superior status.
  - Narcissists are most reactive in the dark triad: *Although psychopathy and sadism have emerged as the most*

overtly aggressive of these traits across most situations (e.g., Buckels et al., 2013), narcissism is unique in that it is associated with responding aggressively to the widest array of ego-provocations. For example, those high in other dark traits do not react aggressively to ostracism (McDonald & Donnellan, 2012) or insult (Jones & Paulhus, 2010).

- **What narcissists react to depends on how they define themselves**: *However, what defines a narcissistic ego may vary across individuals. Some may define themselves through agentic and individualistic qualities, whereas others define themselves through a communal framework or group identity. Thus, how narcissistic individuals define themselves may impact which ego-relevant domains become sensitive, and those domains may be relevant in predicting different forms (e.g., group-based vs. interpersonal) of aggression. of narcissism: individual, collective, and communal.*
- **Narcissistic leaders or group members amplify intergroup conflict**, as threats to the collective group-image are processed as **narcissistic injuries**, fueling retaliatory and disproportionate aggression against out-groups.
  - Narcissists are likely to lead those groups: *Because of their charisma, charm, and thirst for power, it is also likely that narcissistic individuals, with a fused group identity, will gravitate toward leadership positions in those groups. This gravitation would come from their sense of moral certainty, charm, charisma, and the need to be at the center of events. Take for example moral certainty (Skitka, 2010).*

Chapter 9: The Psychodynamic Mask Model of Narcissism: Where Is It Now?

Authors: Sophie L. Kuchynka and Jennifer K. Bosson

The Psychodynamic Mask Model of Narcissism posits that a grandiose, arrogant exterior conceals a **fragile, secretly insecure, or damaged core of low self-esteem**. The empirical review concludes that **contemporary research does not strongly support that grandiose narcissism uniformly masks deep-seated insecurity**. Instead, the authors argue that the relationship is more nuanced: **the mask model fits the vulnerable subtype** well, but i**t largely fails to describe the grandiose subtype**, which genuinely reports high explicit self-esteem.

The Main Hypotheses to The Test

- **Discrepant self-esteem** hypothesis (narcissism reflects high explicit self-esteem combined with low implicit self-esteem)
- **Unstable self-esteem** hypothesis (narcissism reflects high trait self-esteem that is unstable and reactive to contexts)
- **Contingent self-esteem** hypothesis (narcissism reflects high self-esteem that is contingent on achievement in agentic domains)

Hypothesis	Empirical Evidence / Results
Discrepant self-esteem hypothesis (high explicit + low implicit)	✕ **Overall: Not supported.**– Early studies seemed promising but *unreplicated* (Myers & Zeigler-Hill, 2012).- Likely failures due to broad measures of self-esteem, not examining agentic vs. communal domains, or relying on difficult-to-detect explicit × implicit interactions.- Implicit measures contain high error, making evidence inconsistent.
Unstable self-esteem hypothesis (high but unstable and context-reactive self-esteem)	⍰ **General hypothesis: Not supported. Specific version: Supported.** Grandiose is unstable only in response to negative achievement-related events (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2010). One facet, Entitlement / Exploitativeness, shows unstable self-esteem in response to interpersonal threats.

Hypothesis	Empirical Evidence / Results
Contingent self-esteem hypothesis (self-esteem depends on success in agentic domains)	⍰ **Strong, consistent support.**– Grandiose narcissists explicitly tie self-worth to agentic (achievement/competition) goals, not communal ones.- Consistent with literature showing inflated agentic self-views.- NPI scores correlate with statements like "My self-worth is influenced by how well I do on competitive tasks" and negatively with communal-based items like "My self-esteem would suffer if I did something unethical" (Crocker et al., 2003).- Grandiose narcissists openly acknowledge their self-esteem depends on achievement.

Revisiting the Fragile Core Hypothesis

- **Grandiose narcissism is consistently associated with genuinely high explicit self-esteem**, suggesting that for this majority subtype, the grandiosity is **not a facade** for a conscious sense of inadequacy.
- **The "mask" concept is more applicable to vulnerable narcissism**, which is marked by high neuroticism, shame, and feelings of inferiority, aligning with a defensive and anxious self-image.
- **The concept of "defensive high self-esteem" remains a plausible model** for the grandiose subtype, where self-esteem is genuinely high but is aggressively and defensively maintained against any threat.

Deep Dive: Self-Esteem And Narcissism

Grandiose narcissists' self-esteem is affected by agentic and achievement-related events, not so much by other interpersonal and social events.
The authors say that 'although they like attention, they are relatively unconcerned with gaining others' approval (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001)':

> For example, scores on the NPI were positively associated with contingent self-esteem in domains of competition and appearance, they were negatively associated with contingent selfesteem in the domains of others' approval and virtue (being a good and moral person), and they were unrelated to contingent self-esteem in domains of academic competence, family support, and God's love (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003)

When grandiose narcissism is treated as a single construct, it appears more reactive to negative achievement-related than interpersonal events. But when broken into facets, Entitlement/Exploitativeness emerges as the interpersonally fragile facet.
Those scoring high on Entitlement/Exploitativeness show drops in state self-esteem on days with social rejection (Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013), indicating fragility in interpersonal contexts. In contrast, those high on Exhibitionism maintain stable, high self-esteem even when rejected, showing little reactivity to negative interpersonal events (Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013).

Chapter 10: Distinguishing Between Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism

Authors: Huajian Cai and Yu L. L. Luo

This chapter addresses the dichotomy between the "bright" (adaptive) and "dark" (maladaptive) aspects of narcissism, with the core distinction made between the **Grandiosity/Leadership** facet (adaptive) and the **Entitlement/Exploitativeness** facet (maladaptive).
The authors emphasize that while the self-assured qualities can drive success, the trait's overall impact is undermined by the destructive, antagonistic element of entitlement.

The Function of Narcissism's Bright and Dark Sides

Intrapersonal Trait	Adaptive (Leadership/Authority)	Maladaptive (Exploitativeness/Entitlement)
Self-esteem	Higher self-esteem (Brown et al., 2009; Emmons, 1984; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Watson & Biderman, 1993; Watson et al., 1992)	Lower self-esteem (Brown et al., 2009)
Neuroticism	Lower neuroticism (Emmons, 1984; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995)	Higher neuroticism (Emmons, 1984)
Actual–ideal self-discrepancy	Smaller discrepancy (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995)	Larger discrepancy (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995)
Self-consciousness	Lower	Higher self-consciousness (Watson & Biderman, 1993)
Mood variability / emotional intensity	More stable	Greater mood variability & emotional intensity (Emmons, 1987)
Envy	leadership/authority component protects grandiose narcissists from dispositional envy (Neufeld & Johnson, 2016)	entitlement and antagonism, common to both grandiose and vulnerable forms of narcissism, predict malicious envy (Lange et al., 2016; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016; Porter et al., 2014).
Empathy	Higher	Lower (Watson & Morris, 1991; Barry et al., 2003; Hepper et al., 2014)
Social skills	High social skills ('cold cognition')	Low social skills (low ToM, empathy)
Psychological well-being	Higher	Lower, including anxiety, social anxiety, depression, personal distress (Emmons, 1984; Watson & Biderman, 1993; Watson & Morris, 1991)

- **Adaptive narcissism (Grandiosity/Leadership)** is characterized by **assertiveness, confidence, and goal-directed behavior**, which is associated with positive outcomes like career success and initial popularity.
- **Maladaptive narcissism (Entitlement/Exploitativeness)** is characterized by **manipulation, arrogance, and aggression**, which is linked to negative outcomes like relationship dysfunction, criminality, and long-term antagonism.
- **Neuroticism is low for adaptive, high for maladaptive**: *while relatively healthy factors, such as leadership and authority, are negatively associated with neuroticism; relatively unhealthy factors such as entitlement and exploitativeness are positively associated with it (Ackerman et al., 2011 ; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009 ; Corry et al., 2008 ; Hill & Roberts, 2012).*
- **Aggressiveness is mainly associated with unhealthy components** such as entitlement and exploitativeness rather than the relatively healthy self-sufficiency and superiority components (Moeller, Crocker, & Bushaman, 2009 ; Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008 ; Washburn, McMahon, King, Reinecke, & Silver, 2004)
- **Lack of empathy is more likely to be associated with unhealthy components** rather than the healthy ones
- **Delinquency is higher for maladaptive narcissism**: longitudinal study investigated a group of children and young adolescents over a 4-year period (Barry et al., 2007). Results showed that while maladaptive narcissism predicted delinquency and police contact at all follow-ups, adaptive narcissism exhibited no significant correlation with delinquency and a significantly negative one with police contact.
- **Intervention should focus on maladaptive**: people with the same NPI score may have different levels of adaptive and maladaptive narcissism. The authors suggest that since the dark side of narcissism mainly involves its maladaptive component, future intervention should focus on how to curtail the maladaptive aspect while perhaps leaving the adaptive aspect intact (e.g., Hepper et al., 2014)

> Taken together, it is maladaptive narcissism rather than adaptive narcissism that is associated with interpersonal problems.

Factors Underlying NPI

Factor-analytic studies show that the NPI does **not** have a single, consistent structure. Instead, researchers have identified multiple possible factor solutions:

- **Two-factor structures:**
  - Power and Exhibitionism (Kubarych, Deary, & Austin, 2004)
  - Leadership/Authority and Exhibitionism/Entitlement (Corry, Merritt, Mrug, & Pamp, 2008)
- **Three-factor structures:**
  - Power, Exhibitionism, and Specialness (Kubarych et al., 2004)
  - Leadership/Authority, Grandiose/Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness (Ackerman et al., 2011)
- **Four-factor structure:**
  - Exploitativeness/Entitlement, Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (Emmons, 1984, 1987)
- **Seven-factor structure (most widely used):**
  - Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, Vanity, and Entitlement (Raskin & Terry, 1988)

Despite this inconsistency, researchers agree that the NPI contains both **healthy** and **unhealthy** components (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988), and they're most obvious in the in the seven-factor model, where **authority** and **self-sufficiency** represent healthier traits linked to self-confidence and assertiveness, whereas **entitlement**, **exploitativeness**, and **exhibitionism** represent unhealthy traits associated with poor psychological well-being and social adjustment (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Watson & Biderman, 1993).
Superiority and vanity are neither adaptive nor maladaptive.

Using these factors, researchers have developed two NPI subscales with acceptable reliablity and validity (Barry et al., 2007; Cai, Shi, Fang, & Luo, 2015; Hepper et al., 2014) that gauge adaptive and maladaptive narcissism separately (Barry, Frick, & Killian, 2003).

Chapter 11: State Narcissism

Authors: Miranda Giacomin and Christian H. Jordan

> These findings suggest that narcissism does fluctuate across con texts or situations to some extent. Although people do vary in their narcissism across time, the majority of variation in daily reports of narcis sism occurred between persons suggesting that narcissism does have a significant stable component.

The concept of State Narcissism conceptualizes narcissistic grandiosity and entitlement not as purely stable traits, but as temporary, **context-driven states** that fluctuate in response to situational factors. The key insight is that even individuals with moderate trait scores can exhibit temporary spikes in narcissistic cognitions (e.g., self-absorption, superiority) when faced with ego-threatening or ego-boosting situations, but that there seems to be a 'stable average level'.

Situational Triggers of Grandiose States

- **Ego-boosting situations (e.g., praise, winning)** can also cause a temporary spike in state narcissism, leading to a momentary sense of heightened self-importance and entitlement.
- **Narcissism varies *less* than other personality traits**: T*he Big Five personality traits, in comparison, display considerably more within-person variation (50–70%) than between-person variation (Church et al., 2013 ; Fleeson, 2001 , 2007 ; Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002). People are thus more likely to fluctuate, or fluctuate to a greater extent, in their extroversion or agreeableness than their narcissism.*
- **Life satisfaction may increase narcissism, and the other way around:** *In addition, we found that people reported higher state narcissism on days when they reported more positive affect, more hostility, and were more satisfied with their lives.*
  - Daily state narcissism predicts greater daily well-being, more positive affect, and higher life satisfaction, even when controlling trait narcissism and state self-esteem (Giacomin & Jordan, 2016b).

Chapter 12: The Many Measures of Grandiose Narcissism

Authors: Joshua D. Foster, Jennifer A. Brantley, Melissa L. Kern, Jan-Louw Kotze, Brett A. Slagel, and Krisztina Szabo

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the various instruments used to measure **grandiose narcissism**, highlighting the evolution of measurement tools beyond the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). The authors discuss the necessity of a **multi-method assessment strategy** to capture the complexity of the trait.

- **The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) remains the most widely used measure**, but its limitations include a **focus primarily on grandiosity/agency** and a lack of coverage for the antagonistic/exploitative aspects of the trait.
- **Facet-specific scales** have emerged to measure distinct components of narcissism more precisely, showing that **entitlement and exploitation** are often the most maladaptive and predictive facets of the trait.
- **Behavioral and implicit measures** provide a way to assess the construct beyond conscious self-enhancement, offering insight into non-conscious self-regard and objective behavioral outcomes.

Chapter 13: Psychometric Properties of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory

Authors: Robert A. Ackerman, Conrad A. Corretti, and Kevin J. Carson

The authors confirm the NPI's overall strong psychometric profile and its effectiveness at measuring a dimension of non-pathological, agentic/grandiose narcissism. However, they address ongoing structural debates, such as whether it best fits a 3-factor or 4-factor model, and its primary limitation: a weak capacity to capture the full spectrum of pathological and vulnerable traits essential to Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).

- **The NPI demonstrates strong internal consistency and test-retest reliability**, confirming that it is a **stable and consistent measure** of the general construct of grandiose narcissism.
- **The factor structure remains debated**, with common models identifying facets such as Authority/Leadership, Exhibitionism/Grandiosity, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness, showing its multi-faceted nature.
- **Its primary limitation is its weak assessment of core NPD pathology**, as the NPI is more strongly correlated with high **Extraversion and low Neuroticism**, missing the maladaptive antagonism and vulnerability central to the clinical diagnosis.

Chapter 14: Homogenous Scales: Grandiosity, Entitlement, and Exploitativeness

Authors: Amy B. Brunell and Melissa T. Buelow

This chapter advocates moving toward fine-grained subscales to study narcissism, rather than relying on a single composite score from multi-faceted measures.
Specific, pure components such as Grandiosity, Entitlement, and Exploitativeness provide superior predictive validity and researchers can establish clearer, non-redundant links to outcomes.

The Power of Facet-Level Measurement

- **Entitlement and Exploitativeness** are the most toxic and predict a wide range of maladaptive behaviors (e.g., unethical actions, aggression), while the purer Grandiosity component is more closely linked to agentic behaviors.
- **Entitlement is consistently shown to be the most pernicious element of narcissism**, correlating strongly with **aggression, hostility, and a lack of empathy** due to the belief that one deserves special privileges and preferential treatment.
- **Exploitativeness and entitlement have lower empathic concern**, lower agreeableness, and higher impulsivity and sensation seeking
  - Exploitiveness is more strongly associated with grandiose narcissism and weakly associated with vulnerable narcissism (Brown & Brunell, 2017 ; Brunell & Buelow, 2018)
- **Only exploitativeness was associated with lower perspective-taking**
- **Only grandiosity was associated with positive mental health** and higher extraversion, lower personal distress, lower neuroticism, and lower anxiety and depression
- **Exploitativeness is the behavioral manifestation of Antagonism**, characterized by manipulation and using others for self-benefit, and is a critical predictor of unethical behavior and relationship conflict.
- **Grandiosity, when isolated from entitlement, primarily predicts agentic outcomes**, such as high confidence and an assertive pursuit of goals, which can be initially beneficial in achievement settings.

Bait and Switch Manipulation Tactic

Brunell et al. (2013) tested behavior in a commons dilemma using the forestry-harvest paradigm from Sheldon & McGregor (2000) and Campbell et al. (2005). Participants acted as forestry companies deciding how much of a limited, regenerating forest to harvest while competing with another company. The authors predicted that exploitative individuals would conserve less.

Results showed that **exploitative individuals cooperated early in the task but became less cooperative over time**, conserving fewer shared resources. Brunell et al. interpret this as a possible **"bait-and-switch" manipulation tactic**: gaining trust initially, then defecting once the partner is easier to exploit.

These effects persisted when controlling for psychological entitlement, which did not predict behavior in the commons dilemma. This suggests that **exploitativeness and not entitlement may influence a cheater's strategy.**

Read more in:

- **Manipulation tactics**

> Manipulation Tactics Abusers Use: Recognizing and Protecting Yourself

Chapter 15: Parents' Socialization of Narcissism in Children

Authors: Sander Thomaes and Eddie Brummelman

> Results supported social learning theory and contradicted psychoanalytic theory: Parents' overvaluation predicted increases in children's narcissism over time, whereas parents' lack of warmth did not. Parental warmth did predict increases in children's self-esteem over time, whereas parental overvaluation did not. Together, these findings are consistent with the view that children come to view themselves as they believe they are seen by their parents (Brummelman, Thomaes, & Sedikides, 2016).
> When their parents see them as more special or entitled than others, children may infer a sense of superiority—which is the core of narcissism. By contrast, when their parents appreciate and love them for who they are, chil dren may infer a sense of being valuable—which is the core of self-esteem.

Drawing on longitudinal research, the authors present a clear distinction between **parental overvaluation fostering narcissism** and **parental warmth fostering healthy self-esteem**.
This work debunks the myth that narcissistic children are simply a product of neglect, pointing instead to a specific, ego-inflating parenting style.

The Overvaluation vs. Warmth Distinction

Specific parental behaviors, rather than general styles, are the crucial etiological factors for self-regard.

- **Parental overvaluation (inflated praise)**, where parents treat the child as superior or special, is the primary environmental predictor of childhood narcissism.
  - But only in high self-esteem children: *Parents' use of inflated praise predicted increases in narcissism over time—but only among children with high self-esteem (assessed at the study start). They may perceive inflated praise as falling perfectly within their latitudes of acceptance (e.g., "Yes, of course I am incredible"), leading them to form more inflated, narcissistic views of themselves. By contrast, children with low self-esteem may perceive inflated praise as falling outside of their latitudes of acceptance (e.g., "No, how parental overvaluation may manifest in relatively subtle behaviors or communication styles that may foretell the development of narcissism.*
- **Parental warmth and affection** are the **primary environmental predictors of healthy self-esteem**, teaching the child that they are loved and accepted for who they are.
- **Narcissism is not a compensatory defense against parental rejection**

Chapter 16: The Etiology of Narcissism: A Review of Behavioral Genetic Studies

Authors: Yu L. L. Luo and Huajian Cai

> These findings suggest that about half of the variation of grandiose narcissism can be attributed to genetic influence, with the remaining half attributed to non-shared environmental influences, a pattern which holds true across cultures.

Behavioral genetic research, primarily with twin studies, show that narcissism is **moderately heritable**, indicating a significant genetic influence, but also with high influence from **non-shared environmental factors** (unique experiences not shared by siblings) over shared environmental factors (family-wide influences).

It suggests that individual life experiences play a larger developmental role than the common family environment.

Heritability and Environmental Factors

- **Narcissism is moderately heritable**, with genetic factors typically accounting for approximately **40–60% of the variance** in trait scores.
- **Non-shared environmental influences (unique experiences)** account for the majority of the remaining variance, confirming that individual life events and different peer groups are **more influential than the shared family environment** in shaping narcissistic traits.
- **Microenvironments still matter**, *both theories and empirical findings have demonstrated the importance of microenvironments, such as family (Brummelman et al., 2015 ; Kohurt, 1966), and macroenvironments, such as social culture (Cai et al., 2012 ; Twenge et al., 2008). However, the twin studies suggest that most influences aris ing from environments are unique to an individual.* **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note**: though I found this confusing since it didn't seem to be corroborated by the twin studies' data, where genes + nonshared environment added up to 100%, leaving no room for microenvironments.
- **The Grandiose and Vulnerable subtypes show different patterns of heritability**, supporting the notion that they are distinct constructs with potentially divergent genetic and environmental underpinnings.
- **Narcissism is stable over time**: *narcissism is highly stable in terms of rank order: a person with high narcissism still tends to be narcissistic years later (Cramer, 2011 ; del Rosario & White, 2005 ; Edelstein, Newton, & Stewart, 2012 ; Luo, Wang, & Cai, in preparation)*

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: Why such high discrepancy?

I couldn't help but wonder why such large discrepancies among studies when it comes to genetic vs environmental influences:

- Livesley, Jang, & Vernon (1998) – Canadian twins (686 pairs, nonclinical sample)
  - **Genetic influence:** 44%
  - **Non-shared environment:** 56%
  - **Shared environment:** 0% (no significant influence)
- Torgersen et al. (2000) – Norwegian twins (221 pairs, at least one twin treated for mental disorder)
  - **Genetic influence:** 77%
  - **Non-shared environment:** 23%
  - **Shared environment:** 0%
- Kendler et al. (2008) – Norwegian twins (2794 siblings, larger sample)
  - **Genetic influence:** 37.3%
  - **Non-shared environment:** 62.7%
  - **Shared environment:** 0%

Would be interesting to hear the authors' possible explanations.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Shares vs non-shared confused me, given that parenting matters**

Lucio:
Parenting is typically considered part of the shared environment, and research clearly shows that parenting style can shape narcissism. Twin studies reporting 0% shared environmental influence seem at odds with this literature.

Maybe the twin studies effectively partialed out parenting, but I would have liked to see at least a note on this.

Chapter 17: Narcissism and the Economic Environment

Authors: Emily C. Bianchi

Economic conditions can either facilitate or constrain the expression of narcissism. Periods of economic boom and prosperity may encourage narcissism by promoting individualism and a sense of limitless opportunity, whereas periods of recession or instability may suppress the trait's expression or favor its vulnerable form.

The Facilitating Role of Prosperity

- **Narcissism may be exacerbated by economic prosperity**, as a seemingly endless stream of opportunities and resources fosters the belief that **one is uniquely deserving of success and status**.
- **Wealthier people are more narcissistic**: *Piff (2014) found that wealthier people have higher narcissism. People with greater resources typically face fewer financial, psychological, and even physical challenges. As such, less adversity may underlie these trends*
  - But 'wealthy environment' may matter: *past work suggests that wealthier and better educated people inhabit cultural worlds that emphasize individuality and uniqueness (e.g., Snibbe & Markus, 2005). As a result, people growing up in these settings may be particularly influenced by conditions that seem to thwart it.*
- **Economic recessions can threaten the grandiose self-image**, forcing narcissists to confront external limitations, which may increase psychological distress and potentially foster the vulnerable expression of narcissism.
- **Downturns may foster more communion**, since they're associated with greater interdependence and less

individualism.

- **Generational increases in narcissism (e.g., the 'Narcissism Epidemic')** may be partially explained by shifts in the **socioeconomic context** that encourage individualism and self-focused ambition over collective concerns.

Chapter 18: Narcissism as a Life Span Construct: Fluctuations

Authors: Patrick L. Hill and Brent W. Roberts

With new methodological approaches to track mean-level changes and rank-order stability of narcissistic traits, the authors conclude that **narcissism remains stable relative to peers, but with systematic trends**. The most overtly maladaptive aspects (e.g., Entitlement and Exploitativeness) tend to decrease in intensity across the adult lifespan. This may be due to the maturation process and the demands of stable adult roles like parenthood and long-term employment.

Developmental Declines in Narcissism

- **Narcissism demonstrates moderate-to-high rank-order stability**, meaning that individuals who are more narcissistic than their peers in young adulthood usually remain so later in life.
- **Mean-level narcissism, particularly entitlement, tends to decline across adulthood**, suggesting that the acquisition of **adult roles (e.g., stable career, long-term partnership)** necessitates a reduction in self-centered, exploitative behavior.
- **Life transitions (e.g., retirement, empty nest)** are crucial periods to study, as they may either threaten or reinforce the narcissistic self-view, leading to corresponding fluctuations in trait expression.

Deep Dive: Generational Power Moves vs. Data

This discussion also typically involves attacking the opposing generation by demonstrating how they were too "entitled" or harbored unjustified perceptions of their own grandiosity.

However, research on generational differences in narcissism has produced mixed and often weak evidence. Empirical studies find at best modest differences (Twenge et al., 2008) and frequently little to no variation between cohorts (Donnellan et al., 2009; Roberts et al., 2010; Trzesniewski et al., 2008).

Some recent analyses even suggest a downward trend in narcissism when using more sophisticated methods (Wetzel et al., 2017). As a result, scholars increasingly recommend focusing on within-person fluctuations and developmental changes in narcissism rather than assuming meaningful generational differences (Hill & Roberts, 2011).

Chapter 19: Did Narcissism Evolve?

Authors: Nicholas S. Holtzman

Narcissism persisted in the human population because it conferred specific **short-term mating or status advantages** to ancestral individuals.
The argument is that narcissistic traits like charm, assertiveness, and risk-taking (the "bright" side) made individuals more competitive for resources and mates, counterbalancing the potentially negative long-term consequences of antagonism. The chapter frames the trait as a **strategy for social dominance and high visibility**, a trade-off that may have been reproductively successful in specific environmental contexts.

Criterion	Evaluation
Narcissism is heritable	✅ Evidence is clearly in favor of this
There are genes for traits tightly linked to narcissism	✅ Some evidence is in favor of this
There are genes for narcissism specifically	❓ No evidence; little research done
Narcissists pursue short-term mating (STM)	⚖️ Mixed evidence for this. Estimate of small to medium in size (perhaps r = 0.15–0.25).
Other people select narcissists for STM	✅ Evidence in favor of this
Narcissism confers unadorned attractiveness	❌ Correlation is near zero
Narcissism is linked to a reproductive pathway that could lead to fitness benefits	✅ Evidence is in favor of this

Narcissism as a Socio-Sexual Strategy

- **Narcissism may be a strategy for securing status and mates**, as the grandiosity and superficial charm allow for **rapid attainment of social visibility and access to mates**, particularly in short-term contexts.
- **The trait's costs (e.g., aggression, relationship failure) are viewed as trade-offs** for the **benefits of early dominance and reproductive success**, maintaining the trait's presence in the gene pool.
- **The high visibility and initial charisma of the grandiose narcissist** would have served as an **evolutionary signal of genetic fitness** and resource control to potential mates, leading to the trait's perpetuation.

Other possible explanations for narcissism's evolution

> Taken together, the evidence leaves room for other perspectives on the evolution of narcissism—such as perspectives about dominance (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010), overconfidence (Johnson & Fowler, 2011), and reactive heritability (Holtzman, 2011 ; Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015), where reactive heritability means that there are no genes for the trait per se but rather genes for physical traits to which an individual calibrates their psychological selves (Lukaszewski, 2011 ; Lukaszewski & Roney, 2011 , 2015 ; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990)

🤔♂️Lucio's Take: **Ultimately, the bottom line of evolutionary logic is still reproduction**

Lucio:
I would note that, ultimately, all other possible alternative explanations must still point to successful reproduction. Higher dominance or overconfidence must still either increase or at least not lose reproductive fitness for narcissism to develop, spread, and not disappear.

Also see my note below on why 'unadorned attractiveness' doesn't necessarily invalidate the short-term mating hypothesis.

Chapter 20: Generational Differences in Narcissism and Narcissistic Traits

Authors: Joshua B. Grubbs and Allison C. Riley

> across a number of studies using rigorous methods and large sample sizes, there is evidence that NPI scores have risen slightly in recent decades. Although these findings are controversial, arguments that raw NPI scores have not actually increased seem strikingly inconsistent with the body of evidence available.

The authors review cross-temporal meta-analyses and longitudinal cohort studies, which have investigated whether recent generations score higher on measures like the NPI than older generations did at the same age. While some meta-analyses initially suggested a rise in narcissism, more rigorous and recent studies have provided mixed and often contradictory findings. The authors conclude that the evidence for a dramatic, continuous increase in trait narcissism across recent decades is not as robust as commonly believed.

The Debate on the Narcissism Epidemic

- **Initial cross-temporal meta-analyses suggested generational increases** in NPI scores, which fueled the popular notion of a **"narcissism epidemic"** driven by cultural shifts toward individualism.
- **Later research and methodological critiques have cast doubt on these findings**, pointing to **non-linear trends, methodological confounds, and the need for improved measurement** to accurately assess change

over time.

- **Narcissistic traits are influenced by cohort effects**, meaning that certain societal factors (e.g., social media, parenting styles) unique to a birth cohort may contribute to temporary or localized elevations in specific facets of narcissism.
- **They may have risen more for women, not for men**: Twenge and colleagues (2008a , 2008b) found that NPI scores had risen significantly for women over time (d = .28), but were statistically undetectable in men (d = .12, ns).
- **Matching rising narcissism may be adaptive**: I*n the context of individualism, rather than being seen as "good" or "bad," rises in narcissism are simply further evidence of increased individualism and likely confer specific advantages and costs in a more individualistic society (e.g., Sedikides & Campbell, 2017)*

The Takeaways From Literature

1. Narcissism, primarily indicated by scores on the NPI, **has increased in recent decades**
2. Increases have been **rather small** in magnitude, though consistent in replication;
3. Increases have occurred in the context of **rising individualism** more broadly

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Chapter 21: Narcissism and Dark Personality Traits

Authors: Imani N. Turner and Gregory D. Webster

The authors emphasize the shared core of **callousness, antagonism, and manipulation** among the dark triad. They differentiate narcissism's distinct emphasis on **grandiosity and entitlement** from Machiavellianism's strategic exploitation and psychopathy's impulsivity.

Narcissism's Role in the Dark Triad

- **The unifying features are Antagonism and low empathy**, with all three traits sharing a disposition toward **interpersonal hostility, callousness, and deceit**; this core predicts negative social outcomes and relationship failure.
  - Sociosexuality may also be shared: a single, latent, global Dark Triad trait may explain some phenomena such as sociosexuality better than the three traits themselves (Jonason, Kavanagh, Webster, & Fitzgerald, 2011)
- **Narcissism is distinct from Machiavellianism in its focus on grandiosity**, as narcissists are driven by the need for admiration, while Machiavellians are driven by strategic, calculating manipulation to achieve a goal.
- **Narcissism is distinct from Psychopathy in its impulsivity**, as narcissism is generally less associated with the **extreme impulsivity** that defines the psychopathic core
  - **Emotional distress** may also be a difference depending on the type of narcissism and psychopathy
  - **Grandiose narcissism is closer to primary psychopathy**, characterized by charm and dominance.
  - **Vulnerable narcissists align more with secondary psychopathy**, marked by impulsivity and emotional instability.
- **Narcissism is the "brightest"** and most complex of the Triad, driven by ego-enhancement rather than pure exploitation.
- **Narcissism and Machiavellianism have weakest correlation** among the Dark Triad traits, producing correlations around 0.25 (Paulhus & Williams, 2002)
  - Psychopathy and Machiavellianism are the most highly correlated traits in the dark triad (Keller, Carter, & Lynam, 2016); however, large correlations around 0.50 between narcissism and psychopathy are not

uncommon (Paulhus & Williams, 2002)

Chapter 22: Narcissism and the Big Five/HEXACO Models of Personality

Authors: Beth A. Visser

This chapter maps trait narcissism onto the major dimensional models of general personality: the **Five-Factor Model (FFM)** and the **HEXACO model**. Visser highlights that the addition of **Honesty-Humility** in the HEXACO model provides a superior, non-redundant predictor of narcissistic antagonism compared to the FFM's low Agreeableness, offering a more nuanced explanation for the malevolent side of the trait.

The FFM and HEXACO Profiles of Narcissism

- **Grandiose narcissism's FFM profile is primarily characterized by high Extraversion and low Agreeableness**, reflecting the trait's social dominance, assertiveness, and antagonism.
  - Note: low agreeableness presents some exceptions
- **Vulnerable narcissism's FFM profile is primarily characterized by high Neuroticism and low Agreeableness**, reflecting high psychological distress and anxious antagonism.
- **The HEXACO model provides a stronger, more parsimonious link to antagonism** through the single, highly negative correlation with **low Honesty-Humility**, which captures the core exploitation, greed, and lack of sincerity central to narcissism.
- **Narcissists may use partners as sources of validation**, treating them as extensions of the self.
- **They tend to blame partners for relationship problems**, avoiding accountability.

Chapter 23: Physiological Reactivity and Neural Correlates of Trait Narcissism

Authors: Elizabeth A. Krusemark

> grandiose narcissism involves cardiovascular reactivity in response to aversive stimuli and achievement-related stressors that parallel reactivity associated with similar personality traits (e.g., competitiveness, dominance), exhibiting greater risk for cardiovascular disease. Additionally, grandiose narcissism is associated with acute and chronically elevated levels of cortisol as well as heightened testosterone reactivity and aggression. By contrast, vulnerable narcissism and exploitativeness/entitlement are generally associated with heightened cardiovascular reactivity to interpersonal rejection.

This chapter reviews research using **physiological (e.g., cortisol, heart rate)** and **neuroscientific (e.g., fMRI, ERP)** measures to understand the biological mechanisms underlying narcissistic behavior. Narcissists, particularly the grandiose subtype, often exhibit a **blunted or hyper-reactive physiological response to threats** or social exclusion. Furthermore, neuroimaging studies point to differences in brain regions associated with **self-referential processing, reward anticipation, and empathy**, suggesting that narcissists' self-focus has measurable correlates in their central nervous system functioning.

The Biological Basis of the Narcissistic Self

Biological evidence supports the idea that narcissism is more than just a personality trait, involving affective and cognitive regulation systems.

- **Cortisol responses to social evaluative stress are often blunted in grandiose narcissism**, suggesting a **physiological resilience** or a self-protective mechanism that allows them to maintain a stable, positive self-concept even under threat.
- **Vulnerable narcissism may be linked to stress-related neural and hormonal responses**, including cortisol dysregulation.
- **Lower anxiety for grandiose**: *individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism reported lower state anxiety, lower overall SCR, and marginally greater SCR habituation, indicating that narcissism may also be associated with a hypo-reactive physiological profile similar to psychopathy (Patrick, 1994 ; Raine & Venables, 1984)*
- **Neuroimaging studies show differences in the default mode network (DMN)**, suggesting an increased focus on **self-referential processing** and a heightened cognitive attention directed toward the self and personal status.
- **Abnormal neural activity in brain areas related to empathy (e.g., prefrontal cortex)** is sometimes observed, potentially explaining the narcissistic deficit in **perspective-taking and emotional response** to others' distress.
- **Grandiose narcissism is associated with heightened physiological reactivity to ego threats**.

Chapter 24: Narcissism and Memory

Authors: Lara L. Jones

Narcissists exhibit **self-serving memory bias**: superior recall for information related to themselves, their successes, and positive self-descriptions, with **poor memory for failures or negative feedback**. This bias is a cognitive mechanism that actively maintains the grandiose self-image by selectively reinforcing positive self-views and filtering out self-threats.

Self-Serving Memory Biases

Memory processes are functionally recruited to sustain the narcissistic self-concept and grandiosity.

- **Superior recall for self-relevant information (self-reference effect)** is consistently observed, indicating that narcissists have a cognitive processing advantage when information is linked to their self-concept.
- **Self-serving attribution bias**: *narcissists exhibited more self-serving attributions in their performance on an intelligence test with successes attributed to ability and failures attributed to task difficulty, whereas less narcissistic individuals exhibited the opposite pattern (Stucke, 2003).*
- **This self-serving memory is an adaptive mechanism for grandiose narcissists**, contributing to their **psychological well-being** and lack of distress by maintaining a continuous, positive self-narrative.
- **Agentic & positive memory bias**: *studies support the agency model of narcissism's prediction of attention biases and memorial enhancement for positive-agentic (e.g., clever, talented) rather than positive-communal (e.g., cooperative, sympathetic) events or information.*
  - Not as much bias for negative events: *However, results are mixed for the attention to and encoding of negative-agentic traits/events (e.g., shameful, stupid). Narcissists are only weakly motivated to avoid negative information. and may depend on the extent to which the information is ego-threatening as well as the subtype of narcissism (vulnerable or grandiose)*
  - High agency recall, low communal: narcissism predicted higher phenomenology ratings across these four constructs for recalled positive-agentic autobiographical memories (i.e., clever, talented) but not for positive-communal ones (i.e., cooperative, sympathetic).
    Instead, self-esteem (but not narcissism) predicted higher recollection and belief ratings for the positive-communal memories.

- **Vulnerable narcissists may ruminate on failures**, reinforcing negative self-views: *Horvath and Morf (2009) speculated that the narcissism subtype influences whether narcissists are hypervigilant or avoidant in their attention toward negative information, with a better ability to disengage and avoid negative information for the grandiose than the vulnerable subtype. Supporting this speculation, vulnerable (but not grandiose) narcissism was associated with an attentional bias in a dot-probe task for a mixture of agentic (e.g., stupid, ignorant, weak) and communal (e.g., selfish, cruel, vulgar) negative words and with greater recognition memory for these words (Krusemark et al. 2015*)

Chapter 25: Narcissism and Involvement in Risk-Taking Behaviors

Authors: Melissa T. Buelow and Amy B. Brunell

Narcissists, particularly the grandiose subtype, show a consistently **higher propensity for risk-taking** due to their inflated sense of competence, overconfidence in their ability to control outcomes, and underestimation of potential dangers. This behavior is motivated by the desire to demonstrate superiority and gain admiration, and the authors stress that this can lead to both spectacular, high-stakes successes (when the risk pays off) and significant, damaging consequences (when the risk fails).

Overconfidence and the Need for Thrills

- **Narcissists exhibit an illusion of invulnerability**, leading them to **underestimate risk and overestimate their personal control** over uncertain outcomes, which encourages risky financial and health decisions.
- **Narcissism was significantly associated with impulsivity** *(Crysel, Crosier, & Webster, 2013 ; Foster & Trimm, 2008 ; Jonason & Tost, 2010 ; Jones & Paulhus, 2011 ; Vazire & Funder, 2006), which itself was linked to involvement in risk-taking behaviors (e.g., Butler & Montgomery, 2004 ; Crone, van Duijvenvoorde, & Peper, 2016 ; Hosker-Field, Molnar, & Book, 2016)*
- **Narcissists also endorsed high levels of BAS** *and low levels of BIS (Foster, Shenesey, et al., 2009 ; Foster & Trimm, 2008 ; MacLaren & Best, 2013 ; Stenason & Vernon, 2016). It is possible the approach behaviors to signals of reward (high BAS), coupled with the lack of avoidance behaviors to signals of potential consequences (low BIS) (Carver & White, 1994), lead to a lack of acknowledgment of potential risks when narcissists engage in risk-taking behaviors.*
- **The desire for admiration and visibility drives risk-taking**, as narcissists are drawn to spectacular, high-stakes activities that have the potential to garner attention and confirm their exceptionality.
- ⚠**Self-report bias may undermine this association**: *That we found few consistent relationships between narcissism and the Iowa Gambling Task* (IGT) *may reflect a difference between what narcissists self-report about themselves (e.g., I am a risk-taker) and what narcissists actually do in a particular situation (…) It might be that narcissists are "all talk," in that they self-report engagement in high-risk behaviors yet fail to follow through on this boasting on behavioral measures*
- **The Entitlement/Exploitativeness facet is the strongest predictor of maladaptive risks** like unethical and criminal behavior, highlighting the dark side of this disposition.

Chapter 27: How Does It Feel to Be a Narcissist? Narcissism and Emotions

Authors: Anna Z. Czarna, Marcin Zajenkowski, and Michael Dufner

> grandiose narcissists appearing, on the whole, more like "successful narcissists" and vulnerable narcissists

> appearing more like “failed narcissists” (Back & Morf, 2018 ; Campbell et al., 2004

This chapter explores the emotional landscape of the narcissistic individual, emphasizing the stark contrast between the **positive affectivity of the grandiose** subtype and the **negative affectivity of the vulnerable** subtype. Grandiose narcissism is linked to high levels of positive emotions, low anxiety, and generally high subjective well-being, reflecting their confident self-image. Conversely, vulnerable narcissism is characterized by a high burden of shame, anxiety, and depression.
The chapter also discusses narcissists’ distinct emotional responses to social interactions, such as their **limited empathy** and their heightened propensity for specific negative emotions, such as **anger and envy**, particularly when their ego is threatened.

Divergent Emotional Profiles

Narcissistic subtypes represent two fundamentally different affective worlds, one of perceived success and one of distress.

- **Grandiose narcissists often report high positive affect**, including feelings of cheerfulness, excitement, optimism, and overall high life satisfaction (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004)
- **Vulnerable narcissism isnerable narcissists report more negative affect**, including **shame, stress, envy, schadenfreude, and anxiety**, reflecting its core as an anxious and sensitive personality style.
  - Vulnerable = neurotic: Miller et al. (2017) have shown that vulnerable narcissism is almost entirely reducible to neuroticism (the rest being antagonism and hostility) which is a strong and negative predictor of subjective well-being (Diener & Lucas, 1999)
  - Envy and Anger Envy is one of the most important emotions in the lives of vulnerable narcissists – they resent higher status peers and revel in the misfortune of others (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Nicholls & Stukas, 2011).
- **Approach orientation vs avoidance follows emotions**: Grandiose are approach oriented and sensitive to rewards, whereas vulnerable narcissists are avoidance oriented and sensitive to threats (Campbell & Foster, 2007 ; Foster & Trimm, 2008 ; Krizan & Herlache, 2018 ; Pincus et al., 2009).
  - Approach orientation typically goes along with positive emotionality, and avoidance motivation is accompanied by negative emotionality (Elliot & Thrash, 2002).
- **Grandiose Instrumental aggression vs. vulnerable narcissistic rage**: vulnerable narcissism is linked to uncontrollable narcissistic rage that stems from a fragile sense of self and results in disproportionate and dysfunctional aggression. Grandiose narcissism, in contrast, goes along with instrumental aggression that serves the purpose of asserting one’s dominance in the face of strong direct status threats.
- **Facets matter: leadership protects against envy, but entitlement and antagonism promote it:** Grandiose narcissism has a more complicated association and is thus less predictive of envy and schadenfreude (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Lange, Crusius, & Hagemeyer, 2016; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016; Porter, Bhanwer, Woodworth, & Black, 2014). Its leadership/authority component protects grandiose narcissists from dispositional envy (Neufeld & Johnson, 2016), while entitlement and antagonism, common to both grandiose and vulnerable forms of narcissism, predict malicious envy (Lange et al., 2016; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016; Porter et al., 2014
- **Grandiose narcissists were less prone to emotional contagion** than individuals low in grandiose narcissism (Czarna et al., 2015), not “catcingh the emotions” of others, a result corroborating their generally low empathy. This can facilitate frame control
- **Both types struggle with emotion regulation**, Altogether, narcissism, in both its forms, and with its self-esteem (dys) regulation, generates emotional instability (and interpersonal turmoil), especially under ego threat. Difficulties in emotion regulation are more evident in vulnerable narcissism than in grandiose narcissism.
  - Grandiose narcissists’ state self-esteem decreases substantially on days with more negative achievement events, leading to rapidly changing emotions (Zeigler-Hill, Myers, & Clark, 2010).

Narcissist Rage: Deep Dive

> Recent theoretical and empirical work on narcissistic rage suggests that it is indeed narcissistic vulnerability rather than grandiosity that is a key source of narcissistic rage, as its necessary conditions include a vulnerable sense of self, an explosive mixture of shame, hostility, and extreme anger (Krizan & Johar, 2015).
> The resultant outburst of aggression is disproportionate, dysfunctional, and often misdirected.
> Among grandiose narcissists, in contrast, aggression might rather be understood as an instrumental esponse to a threat to their position of dominance; it serves to directly defend and assert it and does not include the intermediary of shame (Campbell et al., 2004).
> Grandiose narcissists are prone to aggression when faced with strong direct threats to the self (such as public impeachments of one's ability, intelligence, or social status), and their aggressive responses might rather be maneuvers aimed at restoring their superiority rather than outbursts of unre strained, uncontrollable rage fuelled by shame and chronic anger (Barry et al., 2007 ; Fossati, Borroni, Eisenberg, & Maffei, 2010).

Chapter 28: Narcissistic Need for Perfection

Authors: Martin M. Smith, Simon B. Sherry, and Donald H. Saklofske

> We conclude that narcissistic grandiosity has unique positive relationships with self- oriented perfectionism (i.e., demanding per fection from the self), other-oriented perfectionism (i.e., demanding perfection from other people), and perfectionistic self- promotion (i.e., promoting one's supposed perfection) and a unique negative relationship with non-display of imperfection (i.e., concern over behavioral displays of imperfec tion). Likewise, we conclude that narcissistic vulnerability has unique negative relationships with socially prescribed perfectionism (i.e., perceiving others demand perfection), perfectionistic self-promotion, and non-display of imperfection.

The authors distinguish between **narcissistic perfectionism** and healthy (adaptive) perfectionism, arguing that the narcissistic form is generally **maladaptive and self-defeating**. This need for perfection is tied to the fear of imperfection revealing an ordinary, flawed self, and it manifests as an entitled demand for flawless performance and extreme over-reactions to minor failures. The authors note that this trait **contributes to stress and** psychological difficulties over time.

Maladaptive Perfectionism

- **Self-oriented perfectionism aligns with grandiosity**, supporting inflated self-standards.
- **Socially prescribed perfectionism aligns with vulnerability**, fostering fear of failure and rejection.
- **Narcissistic perfectionism is a maladaptive style** characterized by **fragile self-worth** that is **contingent on being flawless** and a self-critical component when perfection is not achieved.
- **Perfectionism is linked to the grandiosity and exhibitionism facets**, as achieving "perfect" results is a means of **securing the admiration and superiority** they feel entitled to.
- **Narcissistic perfectionism is different than perfectionism**: *Nealis et al. (2015) also demonstrated narcissistic perfectionism positively predicted daily derogation and daily conflict, even after controlling for perfectionistic concerns. Similarly, Nealis et al. (2016) found narcissistic perfectionism predicted anger above and beyond other-oriented perfectionism, entitlement rage, and pathological narcissism (Nealis et al., 2016). Hence, Nealis et al.'s (2015 , 2016) findings imply narcissistic perfectionism is neither redundant with nor fully captured by similar perfectionism constructs (e.g., other-oriented perfectionism) or analogous narcissism constructs (e.g., entitlement rage).*

- **This perfectionism is often expressed as an entitled demand for flawless performance from others**, which severely strains interpersonal relationships and workplace dynamics.
- **Narcissistic perfectionism can be adaptive short-term**, but is ultimately unsustainable and emotionally costly.

Chapter 29: What Do Narcissists Know About Themselves? Narcissists' Self-Knowledge

Authors: Erika N. Carlson and Reem Khafagy

> While narcissists tend to describe themselves in overly positive ways on some attributes, skills, and abilities, they also admit to being narcissistic, realize that other people experience them in less positive ways, and know that they lose the social status they crave over time.
> However, these insights are overshadowed by the fact that they seem to think that their darker attributes are character strengths that get them ahead. For example, while they admit to being narcissistic and realize that their popularity and status wanes over time, narcissists think that being arrogant, condescending, and hostile get them ahead. Thus, their blind spot might not be a failure to under stand what they are like but rather how their personality undermines their goals.

This chapter addresses narcissists' self-perceptions align with how others see them.
The authors conclude that narcissists have a notable **"blind spot" regarding the potentially maladaptive consequences of their antagonistic traits** (e.g., arrogance, manipulation), which they fail to recognize or admit. However, they have accurate self-knowledge regarding their agentic, charming, and dominant traits, which others also recognize, explaining their initial social success. This suggests that **narcissists know they are charming, but they are genuinely oblivious to their own toxicity.**

The Accuracy of Self-Perception

- **Grandiose narcissists overestimate their likeability and competence**, often unaware of negative traits. They're too positive about their agentic traits, such as high intelligence, charm, and competence
  - This rosy view is maintained with biased memory and interpretations: *They also enjoy receiving feedback and tend to interpret neutral feedback in positive terms. (Robins & John, 1997).*
- **Vulnerable narcissists may be more accurate**, but overly self-critical.
- **Narcissists have accurate self-knowledge regarding their communal attributes** narcissists are too positive about agentic "getting ahead" traits but are more accurate about communal "getting along" traits. knowledge of their darker, rivalry strategies,
- **Feedback from others rarely alters narcissistic self-views** due to defensiveness.
- **Narcissists have good insight on their 'chocolate cake effect'**: *All in all, narcissists seem to have some insight into the fact that they tend to make better impressions on people they just meet than on people who know them well, and they seem to realize that their popularity wanes over time. Despite this insight, they tend to assume they are seen in more positive ways than they really are.*
- **The discrepancy between self- and observer-ratings increases over time**, suggesting that while their positive traits are initially validated, their negative traits become increasingly apparent to others, eroding their long-term social success.
- **Improving self-perceptions may improve outcomes?** *Changing a narcissist's behavior will likely involve changing the way this individual thinks about narcissism. Specifically, narcissists already know that they are*

narcissistic, but what they fail to realize is how their behavior interferes with their ability to hold onto social status they crave. ative consequences of their self-enhancement and poor self-knowledge.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Disagree on self-awareness. Low communion *is* a strength for narcissists**

Lucio:
The authors claim that narcissists don't genuinely understand their conditions because, they say, *'narcissists seem to be reporting character strengths when they say they are narcissistic and less communal. For this reason, we conclude that narcissists' insight into the darker aspects of their personality does not reflect a genuine understanding of their condition, but rather, another form of self-enhancement'.*

I didn't feel the same way, at least on the communion aspect.
It may seem that way if we judge from the point of view that higher communion is good. I may even agree with that point of view from a moral and ethical point of view. However, that's the point: it's a moral stance.

Seen from the point of view of highly agentic people, high communion may be a drag on the achievement they value.

Chapter 30: Narcissists' Perceptions of Narcissistic Behavior

Authors: William Hart, Gregory K. Tortoriello, and Kyle Richardson

Narcissists tend to see their traits as an asset in themselves because they genuinely believe those actions are warranted and necessary for success.
They may not like narcissism in others, but do not see narcissistic traits as negative or undesirable as much as others do.

Justifying Grandiose Actions

- **Narcissists view grandiose traits as functional and desirable**, often rating traits like dominance, entitlement,

and exhibitionism as **positive characteristics** that lead to success and social capital.

- **The perception of entitlement is internalized as a justified belief**, where the narcissist genuinely feels they **deserve special treatment and resources**, rather than seeing it as an external flaw.
- **Narcissists are generally unmotivated to change their behavior**, because they perceive their narcissistic actions as **effective means to their goals** (e.g., status, admiration) and their negative outcomes as external problems (e.g., others' envy).
- **They dislike narcissism in others**, especially when it threatens their own status, but not as much as non-narcissists do
- **Narcissists seek narcissists and high-status mates and friends**: *narcissists pursue mates with narcissistic traits (e.g., Campbell, 1999; Keller et al., 2014; Lamkin, Campbell, vanDellen, & Miller, 2015; see also, Grosz, Dufner, Back, & Denissen, 2015. Other work has explored the characteristics which narcissists deem desirable in friendships. In Jonason and Schmitt (2012), narcissists indicated a multitude of reasons to pursue friendships, some of which implied a preference for narcissistic friends. In addition to seeking similarity in interests, narcissists appeared to seek friends who are strong, intelligent, physically attractive, and high in social status. Also, when modeled with other Dark Triad traits (Machiavellianism and psychopathy), narcissism negatively related to desiring a "kind" friend (a non-narcissistic trait).*
  - Vulnerable narcissists do not appear to pursue narcissists as romantic partners (Lamkin et al., 2015) and do not rate traits such as antagonism or reduced inhibition more positively (Lamkin et al., 2017).

Power Signaling In Narcissists

Narcissists often link power with personal freedom and a lack of restraint, so they may try to signal power by acting as if they never curb their impulses ("I do what I want because I'm the boss").

In Hart et al. (2017), narcissists showed a stronger desire to project a low–self-control image—wanting to appear "unfiltered," "fearless," and "self-indulgent"—and they reported intentionally behaving in ways that create that image more often than non-narcissists.

Their higher power motivation partly explained both this desire and the behaviors used to project low self-control. From the narcissists' perspective, much of their behavior may be a tactical, rational strategy to present a preferred self-image.

> from the perspective of the narcissist, tactical choices that support images of power, confidence, competence, influence, and toughness. Indeed, other work suggests narcissists' flouting of etiquette rules appears to be a strategy to attract attention (Adams et al., 2014), and narcissists' enhanced jealousy induction in mates is a means to demonstrate their mate value and gain power in romantic relationships (Tortoriello, Hart, Richardson, & Tullett, 2017).

And the authors convene on the effectiveness of displaying certain traits:

> Narcissistic behaviors can, when used appropriately, be instrumental in appearing capable, powerful, resilient, confident, and adept at winning competitions (Jones & Pittman, 1982)

Chapter 31: Narcissistic Consumption

Authors: Constantine Sedikides, Claire M. Hart, and Sylwia Z. Cisek

> The preference of grandiose narcissists for luxury (over mundane) products is due to at least four reasons:

> positive distinctive ness, materialism, meaning, and sexual signaling. The preference of vulnerable narcissists for luxury products is due to at least one reason: inner fragility.

Narcissists exhibit a tendency toward **conspicuous, high-status consumption** driven by the need to demonstrate superiority, acquire admiration, and affirm their unique self-image. They are drawn to luxury goods, brand names, and items that publicly signal wealth, power, and prestige. This behavior is less about deriving genuine pleasure from the product and more about the **social signaling function** of the purchase to gain external validation and admiration.

Spending as a Strategy for Status Signaling

- **Narcissists prefer luxury and brands** to signal status and superiority, using material goods as props to construct and maintain a grandiose self-image.
- **The consumption is driven by exhibitionism**, as the primary goal is the **admiration and envy elicited from others**, not the intrinsic enjoyment of the product itself.
- **Financial risk is often a consequence of this consumption style**, as the need to maintain an image of success can lead to **impulsive spending and debt**, demonstrating the maladaptive financial side of narcissism.
- **Vulnerable narcissists may consume to compensate for insecurity**. *More direct evidence indeed points to a positive link between inner fragility (i.e., self-doubt, inadequacy, insecurity) and materialism. For example, insecurity, either reported in one's dreams (Kasser & Kasser, 2001) or as an outcome of death cognition activation (Kasser & Sheldon, 2000), is related to materialism. Also, self-doubt predicts materialism, and manipulation of self-doubt (through memorization of such words as "doubtful," "uncertain," and "insecure") leads to higher level of materialism compared to a control condition (memorization of such words as "inside," "unicorn," and "double") (Chang & Arkin, 2002). Finally, persons expressing inadequacy in a given domain (e.g., tennis) are especially likely to own materialistic displays (e.g., brand-name clothing) that underpin the domain-relevant identity (i.e., tennis players; Braun & Wicklund, 1989). In all, inner fragility is positively associated with, and evokes, materialism, while materialistic displays can restore self-worth among persons high on inner fragility*
- **State narcissism can be primed with marketing**: De Bellis, Sprott, Herrmann, Bierhoff, and Rohmann (2016) also demonstrated that state narcissism can be primed via marketing communication of product uniqueness

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Chapter 32: The Narcissistic Pursuit of Status

Authors: Virgil Zeigler-Hill, Gillian A. McCabe, Jennifer K. Vrabel, Christopher M. Raby, and Sinead Cronin

> Individuals with narcissistic personality features tend to resolve the potential trade- off between status and affiliation by focusing their efforts on the attainment of status and demonstrating relatively little concern about affiliation (e.g., Campbell, 1999 ; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002 ; Raskin & Novacek, 1991 ; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991a , 1991b). To put it another way, narcissistic individuals tend to care a great deal about climbing the status hierarchy, but they are not terribly concerned about whether people like them.

This chapter establishes that the pursuit of social status is a fundamental and organizing motivation for narcissistic individuals. Status is defined as respect, admiration, and rank within a social hierarchy, and narcissists are driven to acquire it through both **prestige (competence-based)** and **dominance (fear-based)** pathways. The chapter clarifies that narcissistic behavior, from self-enhancement to aggression, is often a calculated effort to ascend the social ladder and secure the external validation necessary to stabilize their grandiosity. This pursuit explains much of their behavior in domains like leadership, achievement, and interpersonal conflict.

Status Acquisition Through Dominance and Prestige

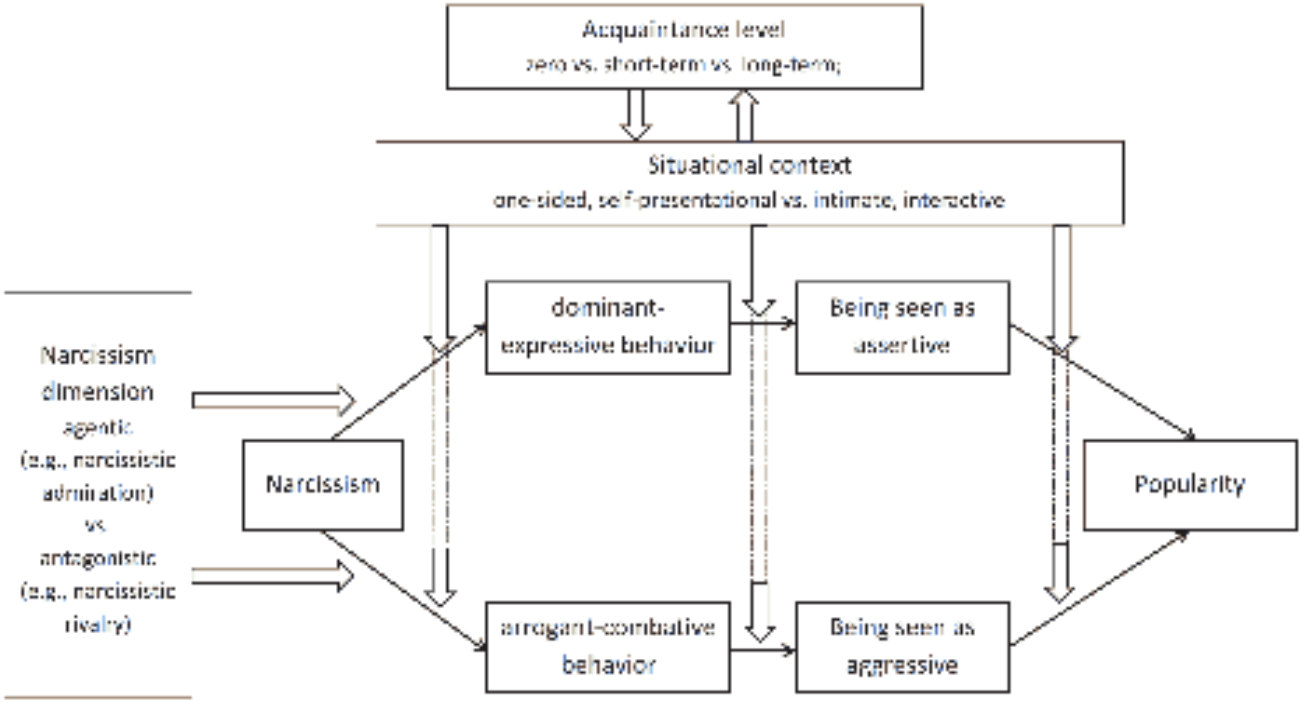
- **Admiration facet uses both prestige and dominance, while antagonism uses dominance**: *Zeigler-Hill et al. (2017) found that both narcissistic admiration (assertive self-enhancement and self-promotion) and narcissistic rivalry (antagonistic self-protection and self-defense) from the model (Back et al., 2013) were positively associated with the use of dominance-based strategies for gaining status. However, these two facets of grandiose narcissism had opposing associations with prestige-based strategies such that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with this approach to attaining status, whereas narcissistic rivalry was negatively associated with this approach.*
- **The need for status is important for the narcissist**, as the attainment of high social rank is viewed as **necessary for confirming their belief in their own superiority** and maintaining their self-worth.
- **Vulnerable narcissists may resent status hierarchies**, yet crave validation.

Chapter 33: Early Impressions of Grandiose Narcissists: A Dual-Pathway Perspective

Authors: Mitja D. Back, Albrecht C. P. Küfner, and Marius Leckelt

> narcissists tend to impress others despite the fact that others are able to accurately detect their narcissistic characteristics

This chapter focuses on the **initial charm and subsequent interpersonal costs** of grandiose narcissists, using the **Dual-Pathway Perspective** (interplaying with the NARC concept).
The **Admiration pathway** accounts for the initial positive impression, while the **Rivalry pathway** is responsible for the rapid decay of that impression over time, as their antagonistic core becomes impossible to ignore.
However, beginnings are only positive insofar as the context triggers the admiration pathway, which is not always and necessarily the case.



A dual-pathway model of grandiose narcissism and early interpersonal impressions (Mitja D. Back, Albrecht C. P. Küfner, and Marius Leckelt)

The Decay of Initial Charisma

- **Admiration gains early social capital, but antagonism can start poorly**: *The agentic pathway (admiration) includes the tendency to behave dominant and expressive, which leads to being seen as assertive, which is evaluated positively and, thus, fosters popularity. The antagonistic pathway (rivalry) includes arrogant and combative behavior, which leads to being seen as aggressive, which is evaluated negatively and, thus, fosters unpopularity. Depending on which of the two pathways is triggered more in a given situation, at a given acquaintance level, and by a given facet of narcissism, a more or less pos itive/negative association between narcissism and popularity can result.*
- **The more intimate the setting, the more narcissism starts poorly**: T*he mixed findings of previous research can be understood as a consequence of each study realizing a different social context that was more or less self-presentational versus interactive (and increasingly intimate) and thus triggered the two pathways to different degrees. In line with this logic, previous studies that found a positive effect of narcissism on popularity were characterized by a rather self-presentational context, whereas previous studies that showed a negative effect were characterized by a more intimate and interactive context (see Küfner et al., 2013, for an overview).*
  (…) In a pure self-presentational context, differences in arrogant behaviors were not observable, making the antagonistic pathway ineffective—resulting in more positive effects of narcissism (carried via the agentic pathway). Finally, in a more intimate, interactional context (e.g., discussing moral dilemma or each other's positive and negative personality characteristics), uncommunal perceptions (e.g., being seen as aggressive or untrustworthy) were evaluated increasingly more negative, while being seen as assertive was evaluated less (but still) positively
- **Admiration predicts initial popularity, rivalry the loss of it long-term** measures of admiration indeed predicted narcissists' popularity at first sight (via dominant, expressive behaviors and being seen as assertive), while rivalry predicted its decline over time by an increase in arrogant, combative behaviors and being seen as aggressive/untrustworthy (Leckelt et al., 2015)
- **Narcissists have better body language:** narcissist's initial popularity could be explained by individual differences in specific appearances and behaviors: narcissists were liked more, because they dressed fancier (e.g., fashionable dress, stylish hair) and showed a charming facial expression (i.e. looked more self-assured and friendly) and self-assured body movements (e.g., straight posture, smooth movements)—all of which led to positive liking judgments.
- **Grandiosity, assertiveness, and charm create an "acquaintance effect"** where narcissists are quickly rated as **highly desirable and socially competent** in initial interactions

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Chapter 34: Narcissism and Romantic Relationships

Authors: Joshua D. Foster and Amy B. Brunell

Narcissists tend to prioritize **physical attractiveness, status, and excitement** in partners over warmth and commitment, often viewing partners as "trophies" to enhance their own image.
They exhibit a distinct pattern of game-playing, low commitment, and a greater propensity for infidelity and relationship cycling. The chapter explains that their self-centeredness and inability to empathize lead to conflict, poor conflict resolution, and overall low relationship satisfaction for both partners over time.

Trophies, Game-Playing, and Dissolution

Relationship dynamics for the narcissist are dictated by the pursuit of self-enhancement and a lack of authentic intimacy.

- **Narcissists pursue "trophy partners"** who enhance their public image, prioritizing superficial qualities like **physical attractiveness and status** over emotional depth and genuine connection.

- **Narcissists may not even care they're not 'good at relationships':** *It might be true that narcissists miss out on benefits, such as emotional intimacy and mutual support. It is not clear, however, that narcissists would consider these to be benefits in the first place, given their highly individualistic nature (Campbell & Foster, 2007 ; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002).* <— ♂ **Lucio's note**: I agree, many highly agentic men prefer going through life focusing on their goals
- **Narcissists relationships can work if they're needs are met**: *although, narcissism is linked primarily to negative outcomes in long- term relationships, there are some instances when their long-term relationships function well. Most of these instances, perhaps not surprisingly, occur when narcissists are getting their needs met by their relationships/partners. For example, Foster (2008) demonstrated that narcissists, although generally less committed to their romantic relationships (Campbell & Foster, 2002 ; Foster et al., 2006), can be strongly committed when they feel highly satisfied with them.*
  - Attractive partners strengthen the relationship: *Seidman (2016) further demonstrated that narcissists tend to be most satisfied with their romantic relationships when they perceive their partners as meeting their agentic standards, such as attractiveness and status.*
- **Vulnerable narcissists struggle with intimacy**, often fearing abandonment but sabotaging closeness.

Extra Notes

- **Moderate grandiosity is good**: *Recent research suggests that the positive intrapersonal features of narcissism may be captured best by the lower half of the grandiose narcissism continuum (i.e., relatively low levels of grandiose narcissism), whereas negative interpersonal features are captured best by the upper half of the continuum (Foster, Shiverdecker, & Turner, 2016).*

Chapter 35: Narcissistic Qualities and Infidelity

Authors: James K. McNulty and Laura Widman

> McNulty and Widman (2014) used Widman and McNulty's (2010) measure of sexual narcissism the Sexual Narcissism Scale (SNS), to show that narcissism did predict infidelity when it was assessed specific to the sexual domain. Specifically, the SNS captures the extent to which people report entitlement, exploitation, sense of skill, and empathy in the sexual domain. For example, people report the extent to which they "will do whatever it takes" to have sex (exploitation), are "entitled to sex on a regular basis" (entitlement), are "an exceptional sexual partner" (sense of skill), and tend to be unconcerned with "the feelings of [their] sexual partners" (low empathy). **Although the NPI, a global measure of narcissism, was unrelated to infidelity in these samples, the measure of sexual narcissism was positively associated with the probability of infidelity**.

♂Lucio's Take: **This Sexual Narcissism Scale (SNS) sounds close to psychopathy**

Lucio:
I had some concerns about this scale.
The question of 'do whatever it takes to get sex' first and foremost, but also 'being unconcerned with the feelings of one's partner' and 'entitled to sex on a regular basis'.

The chapter right after added an interesting note:

- Narcissists who are high on rivalry (antagonistic self-protection) are less committed to their romantic partners, while there are no significant correlations for narcissists high on admiration (assertive self-enhancement) (Wurst et al. 2016)

Chapter 36: Understanding and Mitigating Narcissists' Low Empathy

Authors: Claire M. Hart, Erica G. Hepper, and Constantine Sedikides

The authors distinguish between **cognitive empathy (perspective-taking)** and **affective empathy (feeling what others feel)**, arguing that narcissists' deficits are not a *total inability* to understand others, but a *lack of motivation* to engage their empathy. They can understand others' feelings when instructed to do so (cognitive capacity exists), but they choose not to spontaneously, especially if it interferes with their self-enhancement goals. The chapter discusses strategies to potentially mitigate this deficit, mainly by reframing empathetic behavior as self-beneficial.

A Motivational Deficit in Empathy

- **Narcissists primarily demonstrate deficits in spontaneous affective empathy**, meaning they **do not naturally feel concern or distress** in response to another person's suffering.
- **They retain the capacity for cognitive empathy (perspective-taking)**, which can be **activated when they are explicitly motivated** or when it is self-serving to understand another's position (e.g., for manipulation).
  - Conscious focus allows for empathy: although narcissists displayed low empathy across a range of scenarios, they were capable of showing self-reported and physiological signs of empathy when explicitly instructed to

perspective-take (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996).

- **Maladaptive narcissism is lower empathy**: much of the empathy literature has been concerned with global narcissism, some studies find that low empathy is more closely predicted by maladaptive (e.g., entitlement, exploitativeness) than benign (e.g., superiority, authority) aspects of narcissism (Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014 ; Hepper, Hart, Meek, et al., 2014 ; Watson & Morris, 1991 ; Wurst et al., 2016).
  - Entitlement and exploitativeness high scorers reported lower empathy for their partner ($\beta = -0.28$, $p = 0.03$), and—crucially—their partners perceived lower affective empathy emanating from them ($\beta = -0.35$, $p = 0.04$).
- **Mitigation strategies focus on appealing to the narcissist's self-interest**, suggesting that engaging in empathetic or pro-social behavior will enhance their image or status (e.g., "Good leaders are empathetic").

Chapter 37: Narcissism and Friendships

Authors: Ulrike Maass, Caroline Wehner, and Matthias Ziegler

Similar to romantic relationships, narcissists are theorized to be initially successful at forming friendships due to their charm and confidence, but for those relationships to deteriorate over time as narcissists use them as admiration sources and status enhancers (i.e., people who reflect well on them).
However, the authors claim that while there is some empirical support for this model in romantic relationships, there isn't yet enough data on friendships. **Friendships may be different than romantic relationships** as there may be more space, variety, and potential for instrumental exchange to make them work for narcissists.

Extra Notes

- Narcissism is related to more disagreeableness, for example, to more anger and swear words (Holtzman et al., 2010

Chapter 39: Narcissism's Relationship with Envy: It's Complicated

Authors: Darren C. Neufeld and Edward A. Johnson

The authors argue that the relationship is complicated because it differs across the narcissistic subtypes: **vulnerable narcissism is strongly and consistently associated with envy** (a painful feeling of inadequacy), while **grandiose narcissism is less associated with destructive envy** and may even be associated with a more **"benign" envy** or feelings of contempt for those perceived as inferior.

Malignant vs. Benign Envy

- **Vulnerable narcissism correlates highly with malignant, self-defeating envy**, characterized by **feelings of pain, inferiority, and a desire to destroy** the target's success, reflecting their insecurity.
- **Grandiose narcissism is less prone to painful envy**, instead employing a defensive strategy of **contempt or devaluation** toward the successful person to maintain their subjective superiority.
  traditional self-report measures of grandiose narcissism (i.e., the NPI) and envy (e.g., the DES) do not find a substantial, replicable narcissism – malicious envy link; if anything, the relationship appears to be generally weak and negative (Krizan & Johar, 2012 ; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016). Second, it is equally clear that measures of vulnerable, pathological narcissism (e.g., HSNS, PNI) demonstrate a robust relationship with dispositional and episodic envy.

- **Maladaptive grandiosity may still promote envy**: *The final verdict on grandiose narcissism and envy may not yet be in, however. Lange et al. (2016) contend that grandiose narcissists are indeed envious, although with a significant caveat: that maladaptive aspects of grandiose narcissism involving narcissistic rivalry are distinctly related to malicious envy, whereas the adaptive aspects involving narcissistic admiration are linked to benign envy.*
  - narcissists' exaggerated sense of entitlement may indirectly contribute to stronger malicious envy reactions when their heightened expectancies are frustrated.

Chapter 40: Narcissism and Prosocial Behavior

Authors: Sara Konrath and Yuan Tian

> We find that narcissistic people self-report more prosocial behavior but are actually less prosocial on more objective measures (peer report, behavioral).

The core finding is that narcissists are **not generally altruistic**, but they *will* engage in pro-social acts **if the behavior is public, visible, and serves to enhance their reputation or status**. Thus, their helping behavior is **self-serving and contingent** upon the opportunity to gain admiration and positive attention. They prefer "heroic" or high-visibility acts (e.g., donating a large, publicized sum) over low-visibility, anonymous helping.

Helping for Self-Enhancement

- **The likelihood of pro-social behavior is contingent on public visibility**, meaning narcissists are **more likely to help when others are watching** or when they receive explicit praise and recognition for the act.
- **Communal narcissists help when feeling insecure**: *the relationship between communal narcissism and pro social behavior depends upon whether their need for power has been satisfied (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015). Communal narcissists are actually less likely to help when their power and status feel secure. However, they are more likely to help when their power and status feel insecure.*
- **Narcissists may not respect the social exchange**: *Another study found that more narcissistically exploitative people felt less obligation to return favors to others who had helped them in the past (Brunell et al., 2013)*
- **Narcissists favor "heroic" or dominant helping roles** that allow them to demonstrate competence and superiority over quiet, communal, or long-term volunteering.
- **The underlying motivation is not genuine altruism but a need for admiration and status**, turning what appears to be a communal act into a self-focused, agentic behavior.

Chapter 41: Grandiose Narcissism and Religiosity

Authors: Anthony D. Hermann and Robert C. Fuller

The authors find that narcissism is generally **negatively correlated with intrinsic religiosity** (a genuine, internalized faith) but can be **positively associated with extrinsic religiosity** (using religion for social status or personal gain). The narcissist's grandiosity often clashes with traditional religious humility, but they may utilize religious institutions or spiritual claims (e.g., believing they have a 'special' connection to a higher power) to enhance their feelings of uniqueness and superiority.

Instrumentalizing Faith for the Ego

- **Narcissism is negatively related to humility and genuine religious internalization**, as the need for

superiority directly conflicts with the core tenets of most humble faiths.

- **Spiritual grandiosity** is common, where the narcissist believes they have a **unique or privileged relationship with the divine**, using this belief to set themselves apart as special and entitled. Religion is co-opted as a social tool to reinforce grandiosity rather than to foster humility or community.
- **Vulnerable narcissists may use religion as a crutch**: *Zondag and van Uden's (2010 , 2011) findings similarly indicate that religious vulnerable narcissists may feel more dependent upon study also showed an intriguing positive correla tion between vulnerable narcissism (and other vulnerable dark traits) and religious fundamentalism (Unterrainer et al., 2016), suggesting that vulnerable narcissists may be drawn to highly structured religious belief systems to compensate for the lack of agency and control they perceive in their personal lives*

Chapter 42: Narcissism and Spirituality: Intersections of Self, Superiority, and the Search for the Sacred

Authors: Joshua B. Grubbs, Nicholas Stauner, Joshua A. Wilt, and Julie J. Exline

Spirituality is a less structured, more personally defined domain than organized religion. The authors identify a construct they term **"Spiritual Grandiosity,"** where the narcissist claims a unique, superior, or profound connection to the sacred, often expressing disdain for conventional religious practices. This reflects a self-enhancement strategy where spiritual experiences are used to affirm their exceptionalism and intellectual superiority over those who follow traditional paths.

Spiritual Grandiosity as a Self-Enhancement Tool

- **Spiritual Grandiosity involves the belief in a unique, deep, or profound spiritual insight** that is superior to the average person's understanding, which is a direct reflection of narcissistic exhibitionism.
- **Divine entitlement = belief in being owed by God**: report attitudes such as, "People like me deserve extra blessings from God," and "I insist on getting what I want out of my spiritual life." More simply, divine entitlement is characterized by the idea, "God owes me" (Grubbs et al., 2017).
  - Entitlement increases struggles with spirituality: entitlement consistently emerges as a robust predictor of R/S struggles with the divine. More narcissistic and entitled individuals report more anger at God in general, more anger at God in response to difficult life circumstances, more disappointment with God, and greater fears that God might be displeased with them.
- **Narcissists are more likely to endorse non-traditional or unconventional spiritual beliefs** that allow them to define their own rules and avoid the humility required by organized religion.
- **This spiritual belief often comes with a sense of entitlement to guidance or protection**, believing that the universe or a higher power should grant them preferential treatment due to their special nature.

Chapter 43: Narcissism and Leadership: A Perfect Match?

Authors: Barbara Nevicka

Narcissists **are highly likely to emerge as leaders** due to their charisma, confidence, and assertiveness, which align with stereotypical leader prototypes. However, their **leadership effectiveness is often mixed or negative** in the long term, due to their antagonism, poor listening skills, and tendency to prioritize personal glory over organizational success, leading to volatile or toxic work environments.

Emergence Is Narcissists' Speciality

- **Narcissism strongly predicts leadership emergence**, as their **high Extraversion, dominance, and confidence** make them appear decisive, charismatic, and "leader-like" in group settings.
  - *Acting dominantly enhances perceptions of competence regardless of actual competence, and thereby leads to attainment of influence in a group* (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009)
  - *Paulhus (1998) found, for example, that at first acquaintance, narcissists seemed to be perceived as intelligent by their fellow group members (see also Carlson et al., 2011)*
- **Narcissists seek leadership**: narcissistic individuals are also likely to actively seek leadership positions themselves. They show a dislike of subordinate positions (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016), unless it presents opportunities to climb the hierarchical ladder (Zitek & Jordan, 2016)
  - Leadership = opportunity for admiration: *Moreover, narcissists' ceaseless pursuit of admiration (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) leads them to seek social contexts that enable them to show off their superiority (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). The leadership role thus provides them with an alluring stage from which they can receive the adulation they seek.*
- **The relationship between narcissism and performance is often non-linear**, suggesting that **moderate levels may be optimal** (assertive but not destructive), while high levels are detrimental.
  - *A recent meta-analysis found no linear relationship between leader narcissism and follower perceptions of leader effectiveness (Grijalva et al., 2015) but did find a curvilinear relationship. Thus, while a certain level of narcissism in leaders appears to be associated with positive evaluations, beyond a certain threshold narcissism is considered negative.*

Advantages of Narcissistic Leadership

- **Decisiveness and persistence:** Narcissists make firm decisions and persist even after failures.
- **Thrive in high-pressure, evaluative environments:** They perform well when under challenge, scrutiny, and opportunities to display competence.
- **Charismatic communication:** They articulate bold visions and are often perceived as charismatic leaders, which helps mobilize followers.
- **Inspire followers toward shared goals:** Their confidence and vision can motivate teams and align people toward organizational objectives.
- **Promote radical innovation:** They are more likely to push for bold, transformative, and unconventional changes.
- **Reduce follower insecurity during uncertainty:** In crises or uncertain environments, their confidence can provide a sense of stability for followers.
- **Effective crisis leadership and agenda-pushing:** Research on U.S. presidents shows narcissism predicts strong crisis management, persuasive public communication, and the ability to push legislation forward.

Cons of Narcissistic Leadership

- **Embezzlement risks**: *Narcissists have been found to use resources for their own gain at a long-term cost to others (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005), which could end up hurting their organizations. Moreover, narcissism has been linked to white-collar crime (Blickle, Schlegel, Fassbender, & Klein, 2006) and engagement in counterproductive work behavior (Penney & Spector, 2002), such as theft, sabotage, interpersonal aggression, and work slowdowns.*
- **Close-mindedness and rejection of different opinions**: narcissists tend to only listen to information they want to hear, believe that their ideas and solutions are the best (Maccoby, 2000), and disregard other people's advice (Kausel, Culbertson, Leiva, Slaughter, & Jackson, 2015)

- **Reduced information-sharing**: *Research on the influence of narcissistic leaders in decision-making teams found that narcissistic leaders were inclined to dominate the discussion and reduce information sharing among their followers, which led to reduced team performance (Nevicka, Ten Velden, De Hoogh, & Van Vianen, 2011).*
- **Risky projects that can cost big**: Narcissists' tendency to ignore expert advice and their need for glory and adulation might also lead narcissistic leaders to pursue unrealistic projects and risky investments or even display unethical and deviant work behavior. Indeed, narcissistic CEOs made riskier investment decisions which generated greater volatility in organizational performance (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007).
- **Abuse of followers, potentially losing talent**: *narcissists' lack of empathy and their tendency to attribute failures to others while taking credit for successes (Stucke, 2003) could lead narcissistic leaders to abuse their power and bully their followers, thereby compromising follower wellbeing (Tepper, 2000). For instance, narcissists have been repeatedly found to show aggressive reactions toward criticism or anything they perceive as a threat to their ego (e.g., Barry, Chaplin, & Grafeman, 2006; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), even showing displaced aggressive responses toward innocent others (Martinez, Zeichner, Reidy, & Miller, 2008)*
- **Power makes it worse**: *Importantly, power seems to exacerbate narcissists' overconfidence (Macenczak, Campbell, Henley, & Campbell, 2016), which implies that the higher narcissists climb in hierarchy, the more toxic their negative characteristics might become*

Many world leaders are narcissists

> *It is thus not surprising that many world leaders and CEOs have been ascribed with narcissistic characteristics (Deluga, 1997; Glad, 2002; Maccoby, 2000). Examples of these leaders range from dictators such as Napoleon, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Saddam Hussein (Glad, 2002) to business leaders such as Steve Jobs and Kenneth Lay of Enron (Kramer, 2003; Robins & Paulhus, 2001) and political leaders such as Donald Trump* (Visser, Book, & Volk, 2017)

Narcissism May Work Short-Term, Not Long-Term

> Specifically, narcissistic leaders are proposed to be beneficial for organizations in the "emerging zone" (i.e., in short-term contexts following ascent to leadership position; during brief periods of instability, insecurity, or crisis; in situations involving unacquainted individuals or early-stage relationships) and detrimental in the "enduring zone" (i.e., in long-term contexts, in situations involving acquainted individuals or continuing relationships; Campbell et al., 2011).

Submissive Followers May Best Fit Narcissists

Dominance complementarity theory says relationships run more smoothly when one person is dominant and the other is passive, and that clashes occur when *both* try to be dominant.

So a narcissistic (dominant) leader paired with a dominant or proactive follower is likely to experience conflict and frustration on both sides. In contrast, submissive followers usually feel more comfortable being directed and structured by a dominant leader. Supporting this view, previous research shows that extraverted (dominant) leaders improve the performance of passive followers but harm the performance of proactive ones.

Narcissistic leaders may also remove strong followers in favor of submissive yes-men:

> Narcissists' need for adulation and desire to work with submissive followers might lead them to curb voices of opposition and surround themselves with sycophants. This makes it all the more important to not be blinded by the positive, sometimes charming, side of narcissistic leaders without realizing that this leadership package also comes with many toxic sides.

Chapter 44: Narcissistic Followership

Authors: Alex J. Benson and Christian H. Jordan

This chapter explores the relatively newer concept of **Narcissistic Followership**, examining how individuals high in narcissism behave when they are in the role of a subordinate.
Narcissistic followers are characterized by **ambition, entitlement, and a willingness to challenge authority**, especially when they perceive the leader as inferior or as standing in the way of their own ambitions. Their behavior is often a double-edged sword: they can be highly innovative and challenging (adaptive), but also disloyal, insubordinate, and disruptive to team cohesion (potentially maladaptive), particularly when their need for recognition is not met.

Ambition and Entitlement in Subordinate Roles

- **Narcissistic followers are highly goal-oriented and competitive**, often driven by a desire to **outperform their peers and eventually displace the leader** for their own advancement.
- **Their behavior is conditional on how the leader reflects on their own image**, showing **loyalty only when the leader is prestigious** and can serve as a source of reflected glory.
- **The most maladaptive aspect is insubordination and friction**, as their entitlement leads them to feel that rules and organizational procedures should be **waived for their superior talents**.
- **Hands-off management may work better:** *Narcissistic followers may respond more favorably to leaders who demonstrate how their own interests align with the collective interests of the group or team (Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, Beersma, & McIlwain, 2011).*
- ⚠ **Careful of narcissistic team members**: *research suggests that narcissists intentionally undermine organizational goals, by engaging in counterproductive work behaviors, when they feel constrained by their workplace role (Penney & Spector, 2002).*
  - Low engagement: *narcissists are less motivated in positions of followership. Narcissists are less willing to engage in extra-role behaviors and more concerned about their own interests when assigned to a subordinate role than a project manager position (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016)*
  - Poor mentoring experience: *narcissistic entitlement among protégés translated into mentoring relationships that were shorter in duration and characterized by more negative mentoring experiences (Allen, Johnson, Xu, Biga, Rodopman, & Ottinot, 2008)*

Chapter 45: Trait Narcissism and Social Networks

Authors: Allan Clifton

The research indicates that while narcissists initially have **large social networks** (due to their extraversion and charm), these networks are characterized by **low depth and quality** (low intimacy). Over time, their network centrality may decrease, and they tend to rely more on **weak ties** (acquaintances) than strong ties (intimate friends). The core finding is that narcissists value the breadth of their network as a stage for exhibitionism and a source of status, not as a source of genuine emotional support.

Breadth Over Depth in Social Ties

Social networks are instrumental for performance and admiration, not for emotional connection.

- **Narcissists maintain larger social networks**, consistent with their **high social engagement and drive to accumulate admiration** from many sources.
- **Their networks are characterized by low intimacy and emotional support**, as they prioritize **superficial, high-status ties** that enhance their image over deep, reciprocal relationships.
- **Lots of outreaches but few real friends**: *Narcissism was also associated with higher outdegree, but not indegree. In fact, narcissism predicted a lower reciprocity in connections*
  - Narcissists overestimate quantity and quality: *more narcissistic participants significantly overestimating the number and quality of their connections with others.*
- **They occupy a position of high centrality in their networks initially**, but the quality of these connections often **deteriorates over time** as their exploitative and demanding nature becomes apparent.

Chapter 47: Social Media: Platform or Catalyst for Narcissism?

Authors: Christopher T. Barry and Katrina H. McDougall

This chapter addresses the contemporary debate about the relationship between narcissism and **social media usage**. The authors argue that social media platforms are primarily **enabling environments** (platforms) for narcissistic behavior rather than direct *causes* (catalysts) of the trait. They contend that individuals high in narcissism are simply drawn to platforms that allow for **self-promotion, exhibitionism, and the accumulation of public admiration** (likes, followers). This allows narcissists to efficiently fulfill their core needs through frequent posting, high self-disclosure, and the careful curation of a grandiose online self-image.

Social Media as the Perfect Narcissistic Stage

The platforms offer an ideal environment for exhibitionism and harvesting external validation.

- **Narcissists are drawn to social media due to its affordance for self-promotion and exhibitionism**, as the medium provides an efficient way to **showcase their perceived superiority and attain admiration**.
- **Behaviors such as frequent selfie-posting, aggressive responses to negative comments, and the curation of an idealized persona** are manifestations of their core traits in the digital sphere.
- **Vulnerable narcissists spend more time editing photos**: *vulnerable narcissism is related to spending more time editing photos before posting to Instagram (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), perhaps because of concern with getting the most favorable responses from other users*
- **The correlation between narcissism and specific social media metrics (e.g., number of friends/followers, frequency of status updates)** supports the idea that the platform is **instrumentalized for ego-enhancement**.

Chapter 48: Theoretical Perspectives on Narcissism and Social Media: The Big (and Beautiful) Picture

Authors: W. Keith Campbell and Jessica McCain

This chapter offers a broader theoretical lens on the relationship between narcissism and social media, viewing the platforms as part of a larger **cultural shift toward individualism and self-enhancement**. The authors place social media within the **Contextual Reinforcement Model**, suggesting that the platforms reinforce narcissistic behavior by consistently rewarding self-promotion with immediate validation. They propose that social media is both a **reflection of and a contributor to** the cultural acceptance of narcissistic self-presentation, providing an echo chamber that actively stabilizes the grandiose self-image.

The Contextual Reinforcement Model

- **Social media provides consistent, immediate, and quantifiable reinforcement** (likes, positive comments) for narcissistic behaviors, which **stabilizes the grandiose self-view** over time.
- **The curated, idealized self-presentation** in the digital sphere allows narcissists to **control the narrative and minimize the appearance of their negative, antagonistic traits**.
- **The impact of social media extends beyond the individual**, potentially contributing to a **broadening of cultural norms** that encourage self-enhancement and focus on external validation.
- **Harsh reality and inflated self leads people into fantasy world**: *Given the stark realities of the economic collapse of the Great Recession, we have been working on another model, the great fantasy migration hypothesis (GFM). GFM presents the following argument: high narcissism plus a belief in a collapsing economic system will push narcissistic individuals into virtual or fantasy realms where their narcissism can be maintained. Or, simply, an inflated self plus a deflated reality predicts fantasy migration. Someone high in trait narcissism and failing economically can still retain an inflated self-view by engaging in an aspect of geek culture (e.g., gaming, sci-fi, cosplay) or social media where the checks of the reality principle are put on hold)*

Chapter 46: Momentarily Quieting the Ego: Short-Term Strategies for Reducing Grandiose Narcissism

Authors: Miranda Giacomin and Christian H. Jordan

This chapter shifts focus to **practical interventions**, specifically short-term strategies that can temporarily **reduce or "quiet" the expression of grandiose narcissistic traits** in a given situation. The authors discuss brief, targeted interventions, often based on cognitive-behavioral principles, that can disrupt the self-enhancement loop. These strategies involve **inducing empathy, promoting humility, or increasing awareness of their own negative impact**, showing that narcissistic behavior is not entirely rigid and can be momentarily modulated by context-specific cues.

Practical Intervention and Easing the Self-Focus

- **Inducing a state of awe or low power can reduce grandiosity and self-focus** (e.g., imagining the vastness of the universe)
- **Enhancing communal orientation** *(through greater empathy or interdependent selfconstrual) led participants to endorse fewer narcissistic self-statements on the NPI. In turn, reducing state narcissism reduced some of the negative tendencies associated with narcissism, such as an overriding desire for fame (Giacomin & Jordan, 2014, Study 4)*
  - Encourage thinking about similarities to others
- **Communal activation**: *Another series of studies examined effects of "communal activation" on relationship outcomes (Finkel, Campbell, Buffardi, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009). Narcissists are generally less committed to their relationship partners, but narcissists who reported that their romantic partners elicit communal traits from them (e.g., make them feel more caring and warm) actually became more committed to their marriages over time. Similarly, priming participants with communal images (e.g., a teacher helping a student) led narcissists to report greater commitment to their romantic partners*
- **Communal mantras**: *Other research found that repeating communal self-statements, such as, "I am a caring person" (even relative to statements such as, "I am a loveable person"; Kopp & Jordan, 2013), reduced endorsement of the entitlement-exploitativeness facet of narcissism for individuals who were initially high in entitlement-exploitativeness. Likewise, recalling a time when they were caring toward someone else reduced participants' entitlement-exploitativeness compared to recalling their typical morning routine. These results are notable because the entitlement-exploitativeness facet of the NPI is arguably its most maladaptive and interpersonally toxic facet (e.g., Watson & Morris, 1991). Thus, a variety of methodologies designed to enhance the extent to which people*

feel connected to others helped decrease their endorsement of narcissistic qualities, at least temporarily
  - Personal value journaling: *self-affirmation can be an effective means of reducing narcissistic aggression in at-risk youth. After completing a self-affirmation exercise or a control writing exercise they found that a values affirmation exercise (i.e., writing a short paragraph on important personal values) reduced narcissistic aggression for an entire school week among adolescents compared to a control writing exercise (Thomaes, Bushman, De Castro, Cohen, and Denissen, 2009)*
- **Perspective-taking interventions (e.g., explicit instructions to take the victim's point of view)** can **temporarily increase empathetic responding**, bypassing the motivational deficit.

Chapter 49: Narcissism and Bullying

Authors: Kostas A. Fanti and Georgia Frangou

> bullying is a complex behavior, in which someone engages purposefully when their goal is to gain power and social status (Olweus, 1993; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2007)

This chapter investigates the link between trait narcissism and bullying behavior, defining it as a form of proactive and reactive aggression driven by the need for dominance and status. The authors find that narcissism is linked to bullying and bullying is an effective, albeit toxic, way to assert superiority and gain attention. Bullying for the narcissist is often an *instrumental* act to secure or defend high status within a peer group, making it a functional, rather than purely emotional, expression of their antagonism.

Instrumental Aggression for Status

Bullying is a self-serving behavior used to establish and maintain dominance in the social hierarchy.

- **Grandiose narcissism is a robust predictor of both traditional (physical/verbal) and cyberbullying**, as these acts are effective ways to demonstrate **power and superiority** over victims.
- **Maladaptive narcissism is likely more linked to bullyin**g: *prior work supported that only maladaptive narcissistic traits were positively correlated with antisocial and aggressive behavior (Barry et al., 2003), although further research on the topic is required to make a firm association in regard to the relation between maladaptive narcissism and bullying or victimization.*
- **Bullying can be both proactive (instrumental) and reactive (ego-defensive)**, used either to secure a high social rank or to aggressively retaliate against any peer who threatens their status.
- **Low self-esteem and high narcissism is a tool for bullying**: I*t has been suggested that youth low on self-esteem and high on narcissistic traits tend to self-enhance or seek attention with antisocial behaviors to protect their vulnerable self and enhance their grandiose self-image (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Indeed, individuals with low selfesteem and high narcissism tend to use bullying to enhance their self-image, as bullying is a status-related goal behavior (Caravita & Cillessen, 2012; Fanti & Henrich, 2015; Sijtsema, Veenstra, Lindenberg, & Salmivalli, 2009). Findings by Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, and Lagerspetz (1999) also suggested that adolescents with defensive self-esteem (high defensive egotism and average self-esteem) showed high levels of bullying, whereas adolescents with low scores on both bullying and victimization (i.e., belonging in a normative group) scored high on self-esteem and low on defensive egotism.*
  - Bullying as reaction to ego-threats: I*n other words, when the ego of a bully is threatened, he or she might be more likely to exhibit aggression toward peers as a way to compensate for these threats and recover their inflated self-views (Barry et al., 2007; Washburn et al., 2004).*

Chapter 50: Narcissistic Individuals and Implications for Treatment

Authors: Joanna Lamkin

The chapter highlights that narcissists often enter treatment reluctantly, typically only when external consequences (e.g., relationship loss, career trouble) force them to. Their grandiosity and entitlement make them prone to **devaluing the therapist, challenging the process, and struggling with therapeutic alliance**, often leading to poor treatment adherence and high dropout rates.
The core interpersonal traits (antagonism, low empathy, grandiosity) create a **hostile and challenging dynamic** in the therapy room.

The Therapeutic Challenge of Narcissism

- **Narcissists often struggle with therapeutic alliance**, exhibiting **mistrust, demanding behavior, and devaluing of the therapist** as they perceive the professional relationship as a threat to their autonomy and superiority.
- **Narcissists' need for power makes therapy challenging**: *Interpersonal control (e.g., maintenance of a sense of mastery and self-sufficiency) can be a major hindrance to treatment for narcissistic personality disorder (Ronningstam, 2010). Therapy could be perceived as an affront to interpersonal control in that patients may have to relinquish some amount of this control.*
- **Treatment is often prompted by external crises** (e.g., job loss, partner ultimatum) rather than intrinsic motivation for change, making the focus of therapy on **symptom reduction to restore status** rather than genuine personality change.
- **The primary challenge is managing the grandiosity and entitlement** while maintaining a non-confrontational but firm boundary, necessitating a **specialized, supportive, and non-judgmental therapeutic approach**.

Chapter 51: The Treatment of Trait and Narcissistic Personality Disturbances

Authors: Jeffrey J. Magnavita

The author stresses that unlike other personality disorders (e.g., Borderline Personality Disorder), there are no empirically validated, manualized treatments specifically proven for NPD. Instead, clinicians rely on integrative, principle-based psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral approaches that focus on managing core traits like self-esteem regulation, entitlement, and empathy deficits. The chapter advocates for a holistic, unified approach that addresses the underlying fragility and the maladaptive self-regulatory mechanisms of the disorder.

Integrative Treatment Approaches

Therapy for narcissism relies on general principles due to a lack of disorder-specific empirical support.

- **There is an absence of controlled treatment outcome studies** that demonstrate efficacy for specific NPD-focused therapies, forcing clinicians to use **integrative, principle-based approaches**.
  - the treatment of narcissistic disorders remains rooted in clinical case material
- **Key therapeutic goals include regulating the fragile self-esteem** by encouraging a move from contingent, external validation to stable, internal self-acceptance.
- **Treatment focuses on managing the entitlement and aggression** by encouraging accountability, exploring

the interpersonal costs of their behavior, and slowly fostering a capacity for self-reflection and empathy.

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Overreaction in relationships = low power

> recent research showing that men low in relational power are particularly likely to take aggressive steps to restore their manhood when they are situationally threatened (see Overall, Hammond, McNulty, & Finkel, 2016) suggests perceived power and attempts to restore status may be relevant factors, at least among men.

You must power-protect high-power people to influence them

> More narcissistic people are less likely to help when directly asked (high social pressure), perhaps as a show of interpersonal domination. However, narcissism is unrelated to the tendency to help when under low social pressure.

It was the opposite for vulnerable narcissists instead, who probably caved in to the social pressure.

Read more:

- How to power-protect, show respect, and get it your way

> How to Show Respect, Maintain Rapport, & Influence People

Weak followers elect narcissists

At TPM we've long believed that empowered men not only do better for themselves and contribute more to society, but also choose better leaders.

In contrast, we've suggested that disempowered men not only fare worse themselves and add less value to society, but also elect worse leaders.

Disempowered men are more easily duped by dark triads (naivete), and more likely to submit and be drawn to dominance, even when value-taking dominance (submissiveness).

This passage lends credibility to this take:

> dominance complementarity theory would suggest that **narcissistic leaders might fit better with followers who are more submissive rather than dominant** (Grijalva & Harms, 2014). This theory posits that more satisfying relationships are achieved when dominant, assertive behavior by one person corresponds with submissive, passive behavior by the other (Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983).
> In contrast, when two individuals both demonstrate dominant behavior, this leads to irritation and anger (Shechtman & Horowitz, 2006).
> Thus, a narcissistic leader with a dominant follower might get frustrated in his/her efforts to exert influence over this follower, and likewise, proactive or more dominant followers might get frustrated with assertive leaders. Conversely, submissive followers will feel more comfortable in a position where they are controlled by

> a leader, because this provides them with structure and direction (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, & Tate, 2012).
> In support of the dominance complementarity theory, prior **research found that extraverted leaders had a positive influence on performance of followers who were passive, but a negative influence on performance of proactive followers** (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011).

QUOTES

Quote from Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the author comments that 'it didn't matter how he achieved fame':

> The incredible desire to be recognized. […] I got the feeling that I was meant to be more than just an average guy running around, that I was chosen to do something special. At that point, I didn't think about money. I thought about the fame, about just being the greatest. I was dreaming about being some dictator of a country or some savior
>
> -Arnold Schwarzenegger, in an interview with Rolling Stone (Peck, 1976)

On heritability:

> All personalities are heritable (Turkheimer, 2000), and narcissism is no exception.

On the amorality of evolution:

> just because something is morally suspect does not mean that it didn't evolve; indeed, bad things can evolve.

On narcissists' good first impressions:

getting-to-know situations are made for narcissists. These situations offer an opportunity to self-present and impress others, satisfying narcissists' motivation for admiration and glory rather than mutual liking (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Hart, Adams, & Burton, 2016; Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002).

On narcissists' tendency to rise to leadership positions:

> there is a group of individuals and one of them has many narcissistic characteristics, this person will most likely be chosen as the group's leader

A wise advice:

> pay attention to narcissists' actions, rather than their words, and that when narcissistic people do behave prosocially, it might be judicious to question their motives.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Collective narcissism may also apply to gender identification

de Zavala asks in the 'future directions' section:

> It is not yet entirely clear whether collective narcissism is a general tendency to form narcissistic attachment to all social groups to which people belong or whether some groups inspire collective narcissism more than

> others.

Even before reading the research on collective narcissism, I had observed collective narcissistic dynamics in some manosphere communities and authors, as well as in certain feminist circles.

Some individuals in these movements appear to project their personal ego onto their gender in-group and react accordingly. A 'win' for the in-group becomes a personal win, and a perceived 'loss' or 'attack' on the in-group, even when the comment is simply an observation not intended as criticism, is experienced as a personal attack.
I've seen many disproportionate reactions that resemble narcissistic rage, driven by ego threat and the perceived need to restore personal power or self-esteem.

I'd love to see more research examining how collective narcissism operates specifically in the context of gender-based identification.

See more:

- **Collective narcissism in the manosphere**

The Short-Term Mating Hypothesis Isn't Invalidated By Lack of Unadorned Attractiveness

Holtzman questions whether narcissism may have evolved via short-term mating because narcissists are not physically attractive at the adorned level ('lover strategy').
He says that 'short-term mating situations select for raw attractiveness'.

While I agree that physical attractiveness at the unadorned level may have provided stronger evidence, I believe that the lack of unadorned attractiveness does not undermine the theory because:

1. **Adorned attractiveness matters**, and may matter as much if not more than adorned one
2. **Behavior matters in attractiveness**, with some studies showing that dominance may matter more than looks
3. **Pursuit of short-term mating matters**, in itself. Everything staying the same, the guy who pursues sex the most will also *have* more sex

The idea that narcissism evolved via short-term mating, however, is currently questionable, mainly because narcissists are not physically attractive at the unadorned level; in theory, narcissists should be attractive at the unadorned level

The NPI May Confuse Ability With Disposition For Exploitativeness

One of the NPI choices is between:

- I find it easy to manipulate people.
- I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people.

In my case, I *do* find it easy to manipulate people, but that's because manipulation dynamics is an area I study and understand well. It reflects **competence**, not a desire to exploit others.
And the second option doesn't speak to me because I wouldn't manipulate good, close, or honorable people. But I also don't have the same concerns with individuals who, in my view, are acting in bad faith. So selecting the second option would be inaccurate.

Yet on the NPI, choosing the first item would automatically score as higher *exploitativeness*.
In that sense, the NPI risks **confounding ability with disposition**: I'm answering based on *skill*, but the scale interprets it as *attitude*, *motivation*, or *lack of morals*.

NPI May Be Clearer On Entitlement Questions

I also felt this question could have been phrased better.

> "I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve"

I interpreted it as working hard towards what someone want (high agency and lower entitlement).
But since the other option was high communion, I wondered what facet that question analyzed. And was surprised to see it was entitlement.

Suggestions to The Editors

This one was one of my favorite handbooks in both content and structure.
What I loved particularly and which I'd encourage other editors to emulate and systematize is:

- **Summary of the findings at the beginning**: it prepares the mind for what's to come, enhancing comprehension and retention
- **Skip intro on narcissism's history and basics in the chapters** (ie.: Narcissus, definition, etc.): saves time, space, and keeps the chapter high-density of quality information
- **Stick to the topic of the chapter**, limit off-topic to what's relevant to the chapter's topic. This handbook largely excelled at this

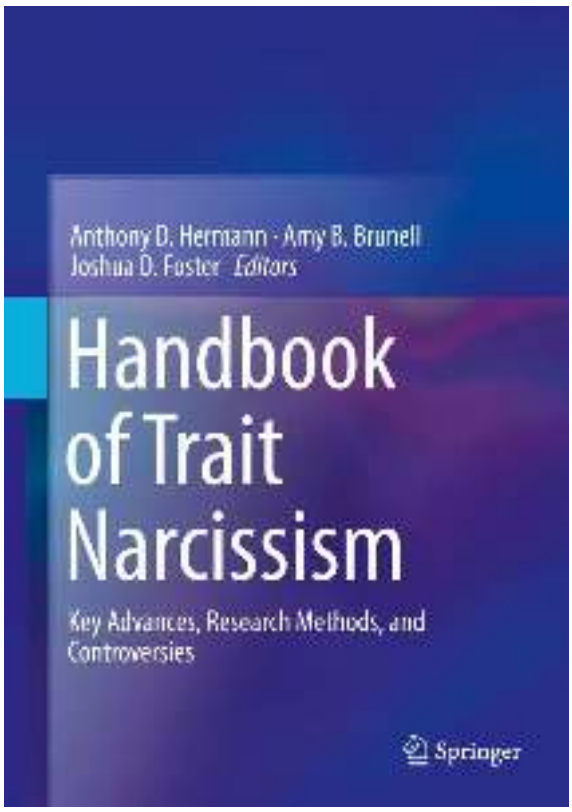
REVIEW

The Handbook of Trait Narcissism provides the most comprehensive, empirically grounded overview of narcissism.

Although written for a more advanced, research-oriented audience, it stands as the #1 reference work on the topic at the time of writing.
I've taken extensive notes from it to strengthen TPM's articles and training material, and I'm grateful to the editors and authors for producing such a valuable resource.

Check the best books on narcissism or check our **most recommended books**.

Handbook of Trait Narcissism: Summary & Review | The Power Moves



The Handbook of Trait Narcissism (2018) offers a comprehensive, research-based overview of narcissism as a personality trait, covering its development, structure, social dynamics, and real-world consequences.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/handbook-of-trait-narcissism-summary-review/

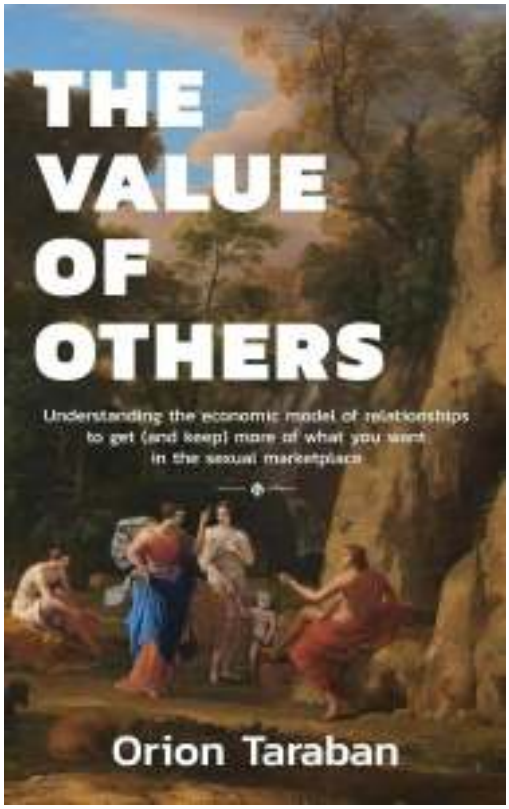
Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
5

The Value of Others: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 29 December 2025 · Archived copy · Original

The Value of Others (2024) is Orion Taraban's application of social exchange theory to relationships, describing power, attraction, and connection as outcomes of the value we're perceived to offer in others' eyes.



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Takeaways

- **Relationships are based on exchanges of value**
- **Men's SMV increases as a function of time**, while women's decreases <— ⁉️♂️ **Lucio's note**: it's more about having different curves, than one rising and one decreasing
- **Relationships & sex are decreasing because people can better meet their needs outside of relationships**

NOTES

About the Author:
Orion Taraban is a clinical psychologist and educator best known for his YouTube channel *Psych Hacks*, where he analyzes dating, relationships, and intersexual dynamics. Taraban got his master's degree from the *California School of Professional Psychology*, part of the for-profit university *Alliant International University*.

Chapter 1: Relationships Are the Media in Which Value Is Transacted

Human relationships are, at their core, value exchanges.
Relationships emerge when people have something the other wants.

People aren't aware of these dynamics because they act based on emotions, but emotions are based on the underlying principles of social exchanges.

The main law of relationships is that **people enter into (and remain in) sexual relationships with their perceived best options.**

The foundation of all relationships is perceived value. And people with more of what others want enjoy greater optionality. High value men (or women), are people who can provide to others more of what they want.

Chapter 2: Sexual Relationships Are Transacted in the Sexual Marketplace

The "sexual marketplace" with its raw drive for sex and reproduction permeates human society, no matter how much we try to sanitize or suppress it.

Understanding this marketplace lens helps us grasp why people behave the way they do. Just as with economic value, sexual desirability isn't evenly distributed. Some people have high demand, others don't. And just like in economics, those with more sexual value enjoy more options and power — unless they squander it or fail to manage it strategically.

Two skills to master to succeed:

- Seduction
- Frame management

See this advanced list of frame control techniques:

> 10 Frame Control Techniques to Out-Frame Anyone

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: Some dynamics must be rectified. Attractive women propositioning relationships are successful
The author writes that *'a man who directly propositions a woman for sex generally enjoys as much success as a woman who directly propositions a man for a "serious relationship. These two offers are gendered equivalents of each other.'*".
I get his point, but it's not the case: highly attractive men get away with it, and most average men would be more than happy to take up an attractive woman's offer for a serious relationship.

Chapter 3: Everyone Has a Value in the Sexual Marketplace

This chapter introduces the concept of SMV — Sexual Marketplace Value — the rough "price" at which each person trades in the dating world.
While some are uncomfortable with the idea, most people unconsciously apply SMV when making dating decisions.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: Imprecise estimation of SMV peak

Write the author:

> on a popular dating app found that, across millions of data points, women at age 23 were most attractive to men, while men at age 50 were most attractive to women (…) Collectively, this evidence makes sense (…) at 50 years old, a man might have an established position in society (…) from a wealth and status perspective, a man at this age is in his prime.

This fails to account for *who* preferred these 50-year-olds.
I'd be willing to bet it was mostly *older* women who preferred 50-year-old men, not *young* women at their peak.
And *especially* not younger women matching on raw attraction.

Chapter 4: Everyone Is Trying to Negotiate Their Best Possible Offer

Marketplaces, by nature, encourage the production and offering of value, which is a good thing.

Just like in economics, perceived scarcity, demand, and presentation matter. He draws a parallel with the commercial market: if everyone suddenly had infinite resources, cooperation would collapse. The same applies to people — a constant sense of needing more (love, approval, success) drives participation in the relational marketplace.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: it's not antagonism, it's converging and diverging interests

Taraban's overarching frames are antagonism and competitiveness, but they're not the best high-level frames to understanding these dynamics.

Instead, think of a mix of converging interests that promote cooperation and diverging interests that may promote game-playing and manipulation.

Ultimately, converging interests in relationships have been larger in evolutionary history, or relationships wouldn't have formed.

Chapter 5: Negotiation Is the Fundamental Game of Human Relationships

The human condition is to be always negotiating with others to get our needs met, and generally without violence or coercion.

Negotiation entails manipulation and, says the author, eliciting emotions in others is always a form of emotional

manipulation.

Chapter 6: The More Powerful Player Always Wins the Game

> power is an inescapable dimension of relationships, and if relationships are the media in which people transact for their needs and wants, then (…) it is in everyone's best interests to accept this reality and learn to navigate power dynamics as effectively as possible.

We agree with that, and that's our focus here at The Power Moves: teaching men how to navigate power dynamics to achieve goals and win at life.

This chapter reinforces a common truth from power dynamics: the person with more power determines the outcome.

The author also mentions how the 'willingness to transgress' can confer power:

> Understanding this principle goes a long way toward explaining why those with *dark triad* personality traits – narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy – often succeed (at least, in the first two phases) in the game of mating and dating.

There are more reasons why dark triads are more successful, and his analysis on 'emotionally weak', may refer to outdated views related to the 'mask model'.

Taraban also lists a few established principles of power dynamics, including the 'law of least social effort' based on social ROI dynamics:

Social ROI Matrix, part of Social Investment Theory (Buffalmano, 2026). The person who gets the most with the least effort is higher power

Also read:

- 5 Principles of dating power dynamics

- Laws of interpersonal power dynamics
- Interpersonal power dynamics: an overview

> The 5 Principles of Dating Power Dynamics: Effective Dating

Chapter 7: Attractiveness Is the Key to Power in Sexual Relationships

Attractive people enjoy more choice, better terms, and can bend norms with less consequence.

⍰⍰♂**Lucio's note**: Taraban's definition of 'attractiveness' illustrates why his work could gain with more simplicity, rather than added complexity:

> My working definition is that attractiveness is the degree to which people align with the gendered archetype of beauty that serves as the standard for their normalized sexual marketplace value, in general, and the degree to which they align with the specific interests, preferences, and desires of a given partner that serves as the basis for their perceived sexual marketplace value, in particular.

We agree with the author though, that:

- **Respect is the foundation of attractiveness for a man.** He says that '*if she can't respect him – she certainly cannot love him*'.
- **Being loved is empowering**, but loving gives away power

Learn:

- How to make a woman fall in love
- How to get respect as a man

> How to Get People to Respect You as a Man: 10 Proven Strategies

Taraban is also correct that a man 'gives more' with commitment by giving up his optionality. See this video to assess if commitment makes sense for you:

> **Lucio**: High-value men give more with commitment

Chapter 8: There Is No Happily Ever After

The story only begins with the relationships.
And relationships have their own power struggles.

The author suggests this to handle 'mutiny attempts' as he keeps using his sailing metaphor:

> "For the sake of our relationship, I can't give you control of the helm. If I allow you to dictate where we go and how we get there, then we're going to run ashore somewhere. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow – but eventually. And that's because you don't know how to sail: *I do*. If you knew how to sail, *you'd be your own captain*. And if I didn't know what I was doing, *you wouldn't be here*. So for the sake of everyone's safety and well-being, I can't allow you to commandeer this vessel. And if that doesn't work for you, I'd be happy to leave you with a canteen of water on the next island we pass."

Feels too try-hard to me.
It tries to signal both masculinity and intelligence at the same time, but overdoing both.

Also, strategically, avoid saying that 'she'd muck it up' because the natural response for confident women is to push back.
Instead, **you signal leadership with *your behavior***.

And once she decides to stay and her breakup bluff is called, the author suggests saying this:

> "I'm really happy that you've decided to continue on in the spirit in which we've been traveling. I'm glad that you're here, and I hope that we have many, many good years ahead of us. As long as we're together, I'll make sure that you're comfortable and well-provided for. And if you ever try something like that again, *I'll cast you adrift in a rowboat*. There will be no discussion and no questions asked. Do you understand? Don't *ever* do that again."

This feels like typical therapist-talk at the beginning, and then turns overly aggressive. As if the guy is trying too hard to be a tough guy.

Chapter 9: Love Has Nothing to Do with Relationships

Taraban claims here that romantic love was an 'invention' of Medieval Europe and a religious belief masquerading as relationship ideal.

While he makes some perfectly valid points, this was probably my least favorite chapter, and potentially the least correct one as well.

Lucio's note: pair bonding is the foundation of love. The rest is a strawman argument
Pair bonding, which is based on feelings, is a human universal. Romantic love stems more from pair bonding than from religion, as the author suggests.
Pair bonding is also well-supported by evolutionary logic. More data-driven analyses suggest that romantic love ideals originated from men outnumbering women, rather than pure religious invention.

Chapter 10: You Can't Have Any Relationship With Anyone

> 90% of a successful relationship is selection

Just because someone is attractive or desirable doesn't mean a relationship is viable. The majority of relationship dysfunction, Taraban argues, stems from poor selection. A good match shouldn't even require much work: the more aligned the natural fit, the less "work" is needed to maintain it.

Chapter 11: There Is Always a Better Move

In this chapter the author presents dating and relationships as a 'game' in which you can select superior moves.

We agree with that, and always made strategy a key skill we teach here, but some great strategies weren't listed here.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: traditional and conservative solutions, and not always most effective**
This chapter shows some possible bias. Taraban advocates for women marrying young and preserving virginity, which is a valid strategy indeed, but while ignoring other effective strategies that may better fit empowered women (for example: have fun young, make money, then select a verified top-10% man from a sperm bank. No need to even risk any relationship with a poor fit).

And again, we see here some generalization of men's SMV trajectory:

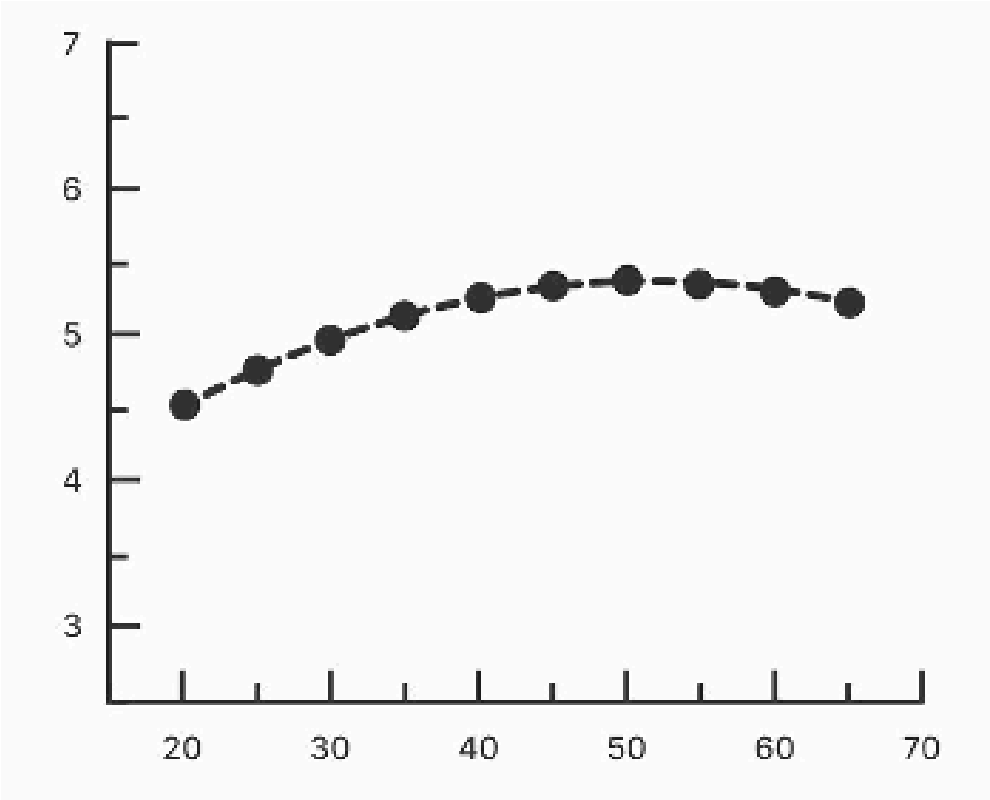


Chart of men's sexual market value as hypothesized by Orion Taraban

⍰⍰♂ Overblown estimation of men's SMV

Says the author:

> men's nSMV is lowest (…) at 18 (…) steadily climbs as men approach 40 and (…) holds constant for a good 20 years before gently declining
> (…) This is why their default mode is to wait: (…) men secure (…) more desirable women as a function of time

Based on Taraban's take, a man's SMV remains the same between 40 and 60, highest at 50, and higher at 70 than at 30.
So, based on that strategy, a man should remain single till past 50?

I disagree. This may be true for *highly exceptional men*. Not the *average* man.
Men shouldn't base their dating strategy on this.

Chapter 12: People Don't Really Want Relationships

This was the best chapter in the whole book, and the dating issues can be summarized with this video:

> **Lucio**: men struggle because women are higher power and don't want lower power men, and women struggle because they're higher power and they're not attracted to lower power men

People want *value*, and relationships are merely a vehicle. If those needs can be obtained elsewhere — more easily or at lower cost — people will take the alternative.
That's why relationships are falling: **modern men and women can find fulfillment for their needs with better alternatives than relationships**.

The solution is in 'atypical relationships' while abandoning the marriage/monogamy model.

Lucio's note: Taraban's argument of women finding resources online apply to *attractive* women
Also, things are changing once again, and now real women must compete with AI. So, no… Most women won't stop dating for good because they can make money online with simps.

QUOTES

It's an interesting take, but I'd note that also those low in power try to downplay the importance of power:

> On the other hand, those who argue that power doesn't really permeate all relationships – that such a position is cynical and Machiavellian, and that (in any case) there are far more important things to discuss – generally believe themselves to be the more powerful players in the Game

On desire being a fixed pie:

> people who are highly desirous often allow their partners to desire less.
> It's almost as though the former are doing the desiring for the entire relationship, making any desire on the part of the latter unnecessary. The upshot is that wanting more doesn't translate into being wanted more. In all likelihood, it will have the opposite effect.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

The Value of Others provides valid analyses by applying the same principles of social exchange, behavioral economics and power dynamics that we've long championed here.
So take these notes more as improving on an already solid foundation, rather than challenging the basic premise:

1. Some Fundamental Misunderstanding: LTR & Provider Bias

Taraban's analyses apply to long-term and provider types more than for short-term with a lover strategy.
Some examples:

Book quote	Truth
Women don't like players	women *publicly profess* not to like them, but are privately attracted to them and sleep with them
Women get nothing from players	Women get good genes from players ('sexy sons', and Red Pill's 'alpha fucks, beta bucks')
Women want as many resources for as little sexual opportunity as possible	Women engage in plenty of short-term mating and infidelity because there are payffos (sexual strategies theory)
Seduction is much more effective for women	Seduction is less effective for women because men assess looks and availability more than dating competence

Experience-wise it seems like Taraban may have had more provider experience.
And from a theoretical point of view, he mentions that reading academic texts is 'tedious'. We agree, but you need to if you want to deeply understand these dynamics.

⍰ Watch this: explains the author's provider experience (subs only)

People Seek The Best *Available*

Taraban postulates that the higher value someone is, the more people desire him.
While generally true, people often focus on **available value** and shut off unavailable value.
This is crucial for effective dating. See:

- Value and availability
- Self-rejection

2. Some Ethical Question Marks

The early PUA had a mantra I always liked: 'leave her better than you found her'.

The new crop of more relationship-minded red pill authors may have left that one behind.
The author mentions it's not anyone's job to let you know if they have different intentions for the relationship, which may feel like condoning lying by omission, and stringing along.

I'm sure he doesn't mean it that way, but I would have liked a stronger disclaimer.
I believe **it's your moral responsibility not to string her along if she wants something long-term and you don't.**
At least, if you want to be a man of honor.

It doesn't have to be stated on a first date. But eventually, if she wants a relationship, moving in, and family… It's just dishonorable to withhold what you'd rather not.

There were a few more things to note, but we have other articles on the red pill, so we'll keep it brief.

3. Talking Down On Readers: Teacher Frames & Power Moves

The author is smart, but the book would be even stronger if he simplified some passages and assumed the audience was also capable of following complex ideas.

Several passages read like classic *teacher frames*—power moves that expand the teacher's authority at the learner's expense.
Consider this example:

> This chapter title may come as a shock. However, to the extent that you're surprised by this claim, you haven't been paying attention. I said as much in the first pages when…

In that sentence, readers are not just reminded about 'who's the teacher'—they're also overtly reprimanded.
It doesn't get more 'teacher talking down on students' than that.

4. Is This Taraban's Theory? Credit-Giving Is Honorable

The author refers to 'his own theory', saying '*I call my theory the economic model of relationships*'.

And while at times he says that it's based on behavioral economics, he also frames it as a novel model:

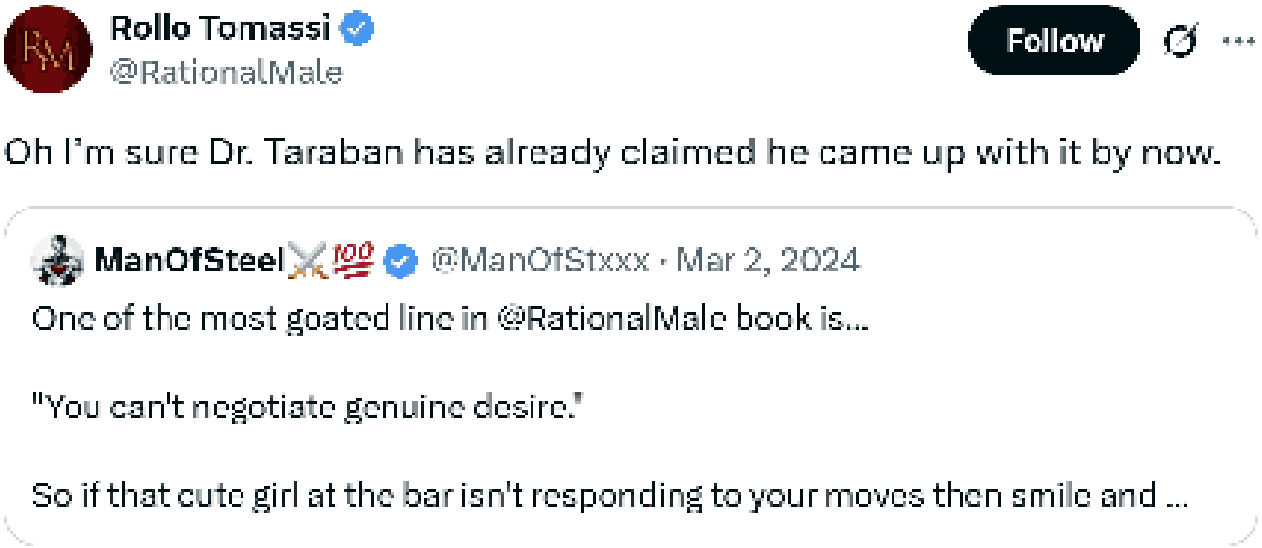
> The time has come to **address the obvious failings in our understanding by creating a new model** that exists in greater alignment with reality. (…)
> This book is a first, fledgling attempt at sharing such a model. And I feel satisfied by my efforts in no small part because I was often surprised by what they produced.

Besides the slightly self-referential tone, many of these dynamics had already been described in existing theories and disciplines—both in academia and in the manosphere. Examples include social exchange theory, behavioral economics, Baumeister's sexual economics theory, evolutionary psychology, and existing red-pill and power-dynamics writings.

Several specific concepts were also extensively covered by earlier authors, from dating and social power principles discussed by TPM and Robert Greene, to the "hypergamy" popularized by Rollo Tomassi.

Changing the name of existing concepts can also feel like a tactic to sound innovative without crediting, for example, ‘frame management’ instead of ‘frame control’, or ‘sexual marketplace value’ instead of ‘sexual market value’.

This lack of credit may also explain some of the negative reactions toward Taraban.
For example:



> **Rollo Tomassi**: I’m sure Dr. Taraban has already claimed he came up with it by now <— Tomassi hints at Taraban appropriating ideas without giving proper credit

And that’s a pity, because the author does offer several original and valuable insights.
Proper credit wouldn’t diminish Taraban’s work—it would reinforce its credibility and position it more strongly within the existing corpus of knowledge.

REVIEW

The Value of Others is a remarkable book applying social exchange theory to dating and relationships — a concept we’ve long embraced at TPM as part of our power dynamics approach.
Both the depth and breadth stand out among other similar red pill books and analyses, making it a top choice in this genre.

Taraban is intelligent, analytical, and only at times philosophical. His prose sometimes parallels that of fellow red pill author Rollo Tomassi, but with more depth—although with less short-term dating experience.

Overall, **we find his analyses good**: sometimes they could gain from a deeper grasp of short-term mating and evolutionary psychology principles, but generally solid and insightful. We also see some room to be more analytically neutral and nuanced.
But mostly, **we diverge more on the practical takeaways** for the highest dating effectiveness, with different top-1% solutions for both men and women.

See our:

- Best dating books for guys or
- **Most recommended books for top-1% men**

Or if you’ve already learned from Taraban, you can consider now how to apply these principles for effective dating

and advanced seduction:

Join Seduction University

How to Show Value On Dates Like A Top-1%: The 90 to 110 Principle

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 January 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Everyone says *"don't brag"*, but bragging works insanely well to display value and spike attraction *when it's well timed and executed*.
The problem is: **99% of men brag at the wrong time, in the wrong way**.

This guide shows you the exact sequence that makes bragging attractive rather than cringe.

Contents

- Intro: Common Mistakes
  - Why Early Bragging Doesn't Work
- The Value Sequence Model
  - Phase 1: Set the Foundations with Nonverbals (0% to 50%)
  - Phase 2: Display Value Verbally, But Strategically (50% to 90%)
  - Phase 3: The 'Positive Arrogance' Boost (90% to 100%)
  - Phase 4: Long-Term Acceleration (100% to 110%)
- The Principle: 90 → 100 → 110
  - Want Top-1% Dating Strategies?

Intro: Common Mistakes

Women confirm this constantly.
I always ask questions to expand my expertise, and two of the top complaints women have about men on dates are:

1. **Talk too much**: talking *at* her, instead of *with* her
2. **Brag too much**: lacking charm and charisma

Talking too much doesn't work because you cannot bond when she doesn't open up to you.
And bonding is an important element to make her feel understood, safe, and close to you. It's an important part of seduction.
Read more here:

- **How to bond and connect**

> How to Build Emotional Connection With Women & Friends

Why Early Bragging Doesn't Work

Bragging too much doesn't work for *two* reasons:

1. **There is no evidence yet**: Anyone can talk. Without evidence, words mean little.
2. **It confirms a lower value frame**: Bragging early says: *"You're the chooser. I'm here to impress you."*

In power dynamics terms, it's the *dance monkey dance* frame.

The Value Sequence Model

The Value Sequence Model is based on initial nonverbal displays of value with progressively increasing use of verbal value displays, going from indirect first, to very direct later

In general, value sequencing is the optimal display of value balanced and calibrated to context, target, and power. So here is how to display value with advanced calibration:

Phase 1: Set the Foundations with Nonverbals (0% to 50%)

Show up:

- Well dressed
- Nice watch
- Good posture
- Good perfume
- Warm, confident smile
- Light, calibrated hug
- Lead her toward the venue

So far: **zero verbal bragging**, it's all body language and nonverbals.

Learn more:

- **How to lead dates**

> How to Lead A Woman In 5 Simple Steps: Create Trust & Attraction

Phase 2: Display Value Verbally, But Strategically (50% to 90%)

If she is talkative, let her talk the most.
If not, keep it balanced with a 70/30 split: ask, ask follow up questions, and relate back.

This is where indirect verbal bragging begins.
And it's crucial: **you never brag directly at this stage**, but **you brag strategically.**

Don't say

- ✕*"I make good money"* <— Actually, this can work if said with confidence, but it's a provider approach, not a lover. It can set a disempowering dynamic for you of women wanting monetary value
- ✕ *"I've been everywhere"* <— So you want a medal now? The cooler guys travel because exploring is in their nature, being all over is a consequence of their adventurous trait, not a goal
- ✕ *"My ex was a model".* <— It suggests you're head-hunting for looks narcissist-style. Also, top men only date attractive women, so for them, beauty is normal

The early pick up artists used to carry pictures to show themselves as being 'cool' or social. It's the right idea, but it was uncalibrated (it feels forced, and pictures in a club is low power geeky).

Technique #1: Ask Questions That Let You Show Value Naturally

If you've traveled a lot, ask about her dream destinations.

Then relate:

> "Paris? Yeah, it's beautiful but dirty."
> "Japan? Amazing. Super clean, super safe. People don't speak much English, but they're very polite."

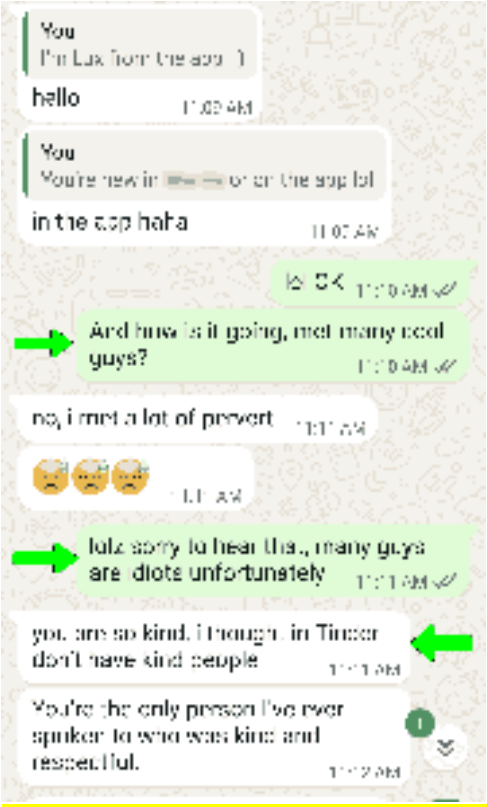
You're not *saying* you've traveled — you're **demonstrating** you have.

Result?
She will think, by herself, that you've been everywhere.

Technique #2: Look Good by Comparison

If you met on an app, ask about her experience.

The question is strategic, because most attractive women get matches, but haven't had a good experience (and a few may *say* they haven't had to sound pickier).
Example:



It's so easy to stand out today. Literally all I did in this case was being normal, light joking and vibing

That allows you to display value by contrasting your superior behavior first, and then your experience.

Once she asks you back, this is your first reply:

> **You**: It's OK. I prefer meeting in person anyway <— ⍰ **Sub-communication**: I can meet women in person as well

Then dig deeper about her experience. If she's not forthcoming, ask about the *worst* encounters or chat.
This primes her expectations lower, so you can even more easily come across as impressive.

Then she will likely ask back, and you say that 'I think men have a better experience'. That piques her curiosity, and whe she asks back, you explain that most guys are average, with lots of idiots in-between.

That sub-communicates that you're not one of them, and that she's lucky to be with a cool guy.

Read more techniques here:

- **How to brag without bragging**

> How To Brag Without Bragging: The Covert Brag Technique

Remember: Nonverbal Value *Continues*

Remember that even as you display value verbally, your nonverbals also continue to do the talking for you.
Including:

- Comfortable with silence
- Lead the ordering
- Move smoothly with confident nonverbals
- End the meal

These all stack up to display value.
Also read:

- **Positive dominance in dating**: the key that most men are missing

> How to Use Dominance to Boost Your Sexual Success

Phase 3: The 'Positive Arrogance' Boost (90% to 100%)

If you did things right, she now sees you as a high-value man.

Now direct bragging can work.
And can even boost attraction.

It's the **0.9 → 1 principle**:
Once you're close to "10/10 impressions", a confident direct brag gives the final push.

Not needed, but powerful.
I rarely do it *unless she invites it…*

The 'Good Arrogant Power Move': Brag When She Invites the Brag

If you've really done well, women sometimes ask questions that are *designed* to let you brag.

It's a **test + confirmation ritual**.

At that point, you don't just *have permission* to brag — **you must brag.**

If you dodge it with fake humility, it looks suspicious.
She was already thinking well of you — she simply wants confirmation.

Here are some examples:

> **Her**: "Why do you live in the center?"
> **You**: **"Because I'm fucking rich."**

> **Her**: "Why do you get these big muscle?"
> **You**: **"Because I'm a fucking G."**

The right mindset and attitude to answer these, which you can also use verbatim, is this:

> **"Because I'm a fucking winner."**

The key is that you must **say it like you believe it in your core.**
This is why mental self-empowerment is so foundational.

This is a display of sheer, **unmitigated confidence** that, albeit arguably arrogant, is calibrated to the time and **very attractive**.
Think of it this way: she's just about to fall for you, and that display of power is the final, figurative push.

⚠ Careful With These....

Some brags display value but don't *facilitate seduction*.

Questions like:

> "Why are you single?"
> "Why aren't you married?"
> "Why did you come talking to me?"

Often mean: *"Why hasn't someone snapped you up?"* and *"Why did I get so lucky?"*
They allow you to brag, but they're all dangerously pointing to the fear of dealing with a player.

Lucio's Take: **Why I Rarely Go For 'Arrogant Power Move' (Though It Always Works When Calibrated)**

Lucio:
Once she sees you as a cool, high-value guy, you can escalate to the next stage of true intimacy.

Initiating escalation *is* a display of value and masculine leadership in itself.
And it's the best step you can take.

But whenever I did use direct brags, they never failed. I only got confirming nods, coy smiles, or even 'that's true'.

Phase 4: Long-Term Acceleration (100% to 110%)

After intimacy, she has already chosen you.
That means that she's seen your value, and decided it's good for her.

However, that doesn't mean it cannot further grow. As a matter of fact, high-quality men grow over time in their attractiveness.

And **sprinkling high-confidence brags reminds her of her good choice, while displaying your inner mental confidence.**
Better yet, they thread-expand on your value. It goes like this:

- You brag
- She is reminded of your confidence
- She confirms your value the moment she accepts your brag (is he right? Yes. Confirmed)

This is the 'remind value, display confidence, confirm value'.
In frame analysis **bragging during the relationship works as thread-expansion.**

And at this point, a touch of arrogance is attractive, like a spike of interest and attraction.
A touch of arrogance also works because the relationship dynamics have changed.

Past the 'assessment phase', a good relationship enters a stronger win-win phase where interests align more than in dating.
That means that if you do relationships with a good win-win frame, your value is also her value. And **your brags are more welcome and more believable when the relationship is set as win-win** (Farrell and Rabin, 1996).

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: this is why I 'brag freely' at home.**
Interests with your parents are highly aligned. They'd rather have a confident son who reminds them of his achievements than an overly humble one. But remember that the key is to brag about something true or proven. My brags often start with 'that's why I (did X/achieved Y)'.

Time It Right

Timing is crucial.
You don't brag to 'win a fight', 'out of the blue', or just because you said something smart.

You brag when you did something great, and *you notice that she values it.*
For example, if you said something helpful and intelligent and she seems pensive, you do this:

> **You**: (share something truly insightful or helpful)
> **Her**: (reflective) <— This is your cue that what you said hit a nerve
> **You**: Makes sense, right? <— Confirms your read, thread-expands, and leads *her* to first confirm the value
> **Her**: (nods)
> **You**: Of course, aren't you lucky to have met such a super smart guy

---

The Principle: 90 → 100 → 110

Forget rigid 'laws', there are no laws in advanced power dynamics.
It's all principles that must be calibrated. So here's the principles of bragging:

> **Show first.**
> **Confirm later.**
> **Then add 'positive arrogance' dashes when the moment is right.**

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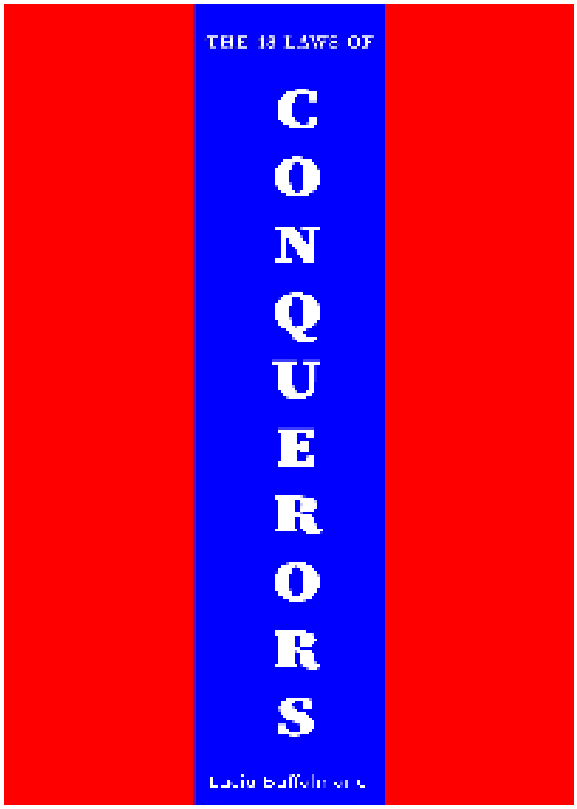
48 Laws of Power, Upgraded for Top-0.1% Men (Alphas & Conquerors)

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 January 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The *48 Laws of Power* is the most popular primer for anyone learning the mechanics of power dynamics, and we recommend it.

But some of its rules are small-time manipulation tactics.
They're too sneaky for honorable men, and too low power for dominant 'alpha male types' and world conquerors.

This article offers 48 laws of power for **top 0.1% winners and life conquerors** who want decisive, dominant, scalable laws without sneakiness and weakness.
Below each new law, you'll find the original law (✕) and a short note on why it doesn't work for life-conquerors.



Law 1: Get Rid of Your Boss: You're Your Own Master

✕ Never Outshine the Master ➡ A law for slaves

Winners don't have 'masters' and don't make themselves smaller to fit others' egos.
Research on narcissism shows it: successful grandiose narcissists are approach-oriented (**predator**), and failed vulnerable ones are avoidance-oriented (Elliot and Church, 1997), like **prey**. Be a conqueror, not a fearful prey.

- Start your own business, nip the 'master' in the bud
- Ally with your boss

Law 2: Set The Highest Bar For Your Close Circle

✕Never Put Too Much Trust in Friends ➡ A law for men with low-quality friends

Your close circle is sacred.
You may never be able to trust anyone 100%, but it's better to have trustworthy allies than not. People differ in their trustworthiness, and some are more trustworthy than others, so:

- Stay close only with high-quality, honorable, and high-integrity people.
- Let everyone else disappear from your life

Read more:

- How to make quality friends

> How to Make Quality Friends as an Adult Man

Law 3: Recruit With Your Plans of Conquest: Attract Ambitious Men

✖Conceal your intentions ➡ a law for value takers

People flock to winners with a vision.
We advise picking honorable goals and framing them as honorable, rather than faking and pretending (it's also possible to have honorable goals but poorly framed).

- Pursue meaningful goals, and share them to create a following
- Keep sensitive intel for yourself

Law 4: Speak up

✖Say less than necessary ➡ A law that applies as well to powerful taciturns as to submissive wallflowers

Dominant men speak up to gain early leadership, influence outcomes, and control the narrative.

- Speak up to gain early status and leadership
- Speak up to set your frame
- Stay quiet when it's not worth your time

Law 5: Develop Character & Systems For Effortless Reputation

✖Protect your reputation at all costs ➡ High ROI reputation develops naturally, and can be expandable sometimes

Reputation is fundamental, but honorable winners develop a great reputation as a consequence of who they are and do. That allows them to focus on their goals, instead of living to defend their reputation (a time sink).

- **Develop a reputation-worthy character** and business, with matching behavior and processes
- **Leverage your high reputation to ignore petty attacks.** Strong reputation from impeccable character allows you not to have to 'defend at all costs'. You can't and shouldn't please everyone
- **Focus on good work** to attract more positive voices, rather than defending against all negative ones. Ignore haters

Law 6: Stand Out For Alpha Status & Marketing, Win & Disappear For Sigma Lifestyle

✕ Court Attention at All Costs ➡ Diva behavior isn't masculine. Conquerors pursue goals and results, which in turn get visibility, without them needing to chase 'attention'

Conquerors receive enough attention by simply pursuing their ambitious goals.
So be remarkable by substance, not noise. And for 'sigma types', silent success away from public view provides the highest life quality.

- Pursue attention if you need branding
- Disappear once you're successful

Law 7: Share Credit to Build Loyalty & Attract Top Performers

✕ Take Credit from Others ➡ Scarcity mindset & loyalty killer. May work short-term, but backfires for long term and with top performers

First of all, winners trust they can get enough credit for their own work. Giving credit to others only reinforces their success with a high-honor frame.
Second, top leaders amplify their teams' work to achieve more than they could get on their own, or that the team members could get by themselves. Recognition breeds more loyalty and more performance, a virtuous cycle that takes you to the top.

- **Give public praise to contributors**
- **Shine as the leader of top performers**: as the leader, your recognition is automatic

Law 8: Approach, Display Value, Then Turn The Tables

✕ Make people come to you, use bait if necessary ➡ Valid maxim, but too passive for life conquerors who actively pursue opportunities

Design opportunities where others approach you, but when not possible, approach first. The advanced game is approaching, displaying value, and maintaining power. Then, after you have leverage, others will come to you naturally.

Learn more:

- Cold approach power dynamics and strategies

Law 9: Win With Actions *And* Arguments

✕ Win Through Your Actions, Never Through Argument ➡ Ignores useful persuasion. Top 0.1% men are highly competent at *both*: execution *and* communication.

Focus on actions first, but complement it with good PR and marketing.
And remember that persuasion is power.

Law 10: Help Struggling But Quality Bros: They'll Become The Best Allies

✕ Avoid the Unhappy and Unlucky ➡ It ignores that all self-made men were once poor and unlucky and anyone can have a bad moment

Audit relationships and help for effort and ROI, not on the receiver's happiness/unhappiness.

- Avoid *eternally* unhappy and unlucky people
- Help the *momentarily* unhappy and unlucky back on their feet: they will owe you big

Law 11: Be Self-Sufficient, Make Others Prove They're Worth Your Time

✕ Make Others Dependent on You ➡ Dependence affords control, but signals neediness. Conquerors are self-sufficient, they don't need dependants

Top 0.1% conquerors don't need the psychological validation of having others dependent. **Dependent people are a cost**. Instead, they want other top, independent players.

Law 12: Be an Honorable Winner

✕ Use Selective Honesty and Generosity to Disarm Your Victim ➡ Mindset of sneaky manipulator and takers. May work short-term, but not for close relationships and long-term

Honesty can be costly, which is why low-power chronic cheaters disproportionately rely on it. **Top winners can afford to be honorable** because they don't strictly need anyone else to like them or help them.
Be that type of winner.

Law 13: Provide Self-Interest, Appeal to Higher Values

✕ Appeal to Self-Interest, Never to Mercy ➡ Provide Self-Interest, But Appeal to Higher Values

Instead of attracting cynics, appeal to higher ideals and you'll work with driven missionaries who tend to have better character and output than overly cynical ones.

Law 14: Observe Deeply, Gain Intel, Act Accordingly

✕ Pose as a Friend, Work as a Spy ➡ Winners don't 'work as a spy'. At most, they *send* spies

Law 15: Crush Totally Or Offer Good Peace Deals: Prevent Revenge-Seeking

✕ Crush Your Enemy Totally ➡ Valid reminder of not stoking angry revenge-seeking, but generic. In many cases, a (figurative) slap or small-scale attack can win you status and respect

Total 'crushing' can cost a lot of resources and is often risky in real life.
If you can offer a peace deal after a display of force, that's often the best scenario (ie, USA and the Marshall Plan).

Law 16: Be Busy: Make Others Fight & Earn Your Time

✕ Use Absence to Increase Respect and Honor ➡ A law for men who need others, but play games to hide it. Conquerors are truly busy and naturally absent

Using presence and absence strategically is a valid concept. But once you're busy conquering it just isn't your main focus.

- Be on your mission
- Assign a high value to your time
- Ensure others value you and your time

Law 17: Use Emotional Intensity to Remind People Who's In Charge

✕ Cultivate an Air of Unpredictability ➡ Erratic behavior isn't good leadership. And it makes you look unstable, a sign of cognitive malfunction, rather than power

Instilling fear may occasionally be helpful for a leader. But instead of 'an air of unpredictability', use bursts of high-intensity emotions, potentially even raising your voice. It's more aligned with masculine power.

Law 18: Build Fortresses, While Being Comfortable Outside of Them

✕ Do Not Build Fortresses to Protect Yourself ➡ Fortresses are good to have

Fortresses aren't just literal walls, but strategies to protect your assets, businesses, and mental well-being.

- Diversify investments, keep some funds hidden
- Own a secure survival retreat
- Set up fallback options in case (business) partners betray

Law 19: Read People Accurately, Know Who You're Dealing With

✕ Know Who You're Dealing With — Do Not Offend the Wrong Person ➡ Fear-based 'law'. Conquerors don't think with fear in mind

The empowered frame for this law would be 'do not offend those who deserve your respect'.

Law 20: Stay Independent — Even When You Commit

✕ Do Not Commit to Anyone ➡ Valid in some cases, but some top players commit to a partner, a business partner, a family… Or a cause.

Top players may commit; the only difference is that they never become *dependent*. They're mentally prepared for things to potentially fall out, and materially ready for easy disengagement.

Law 21: Play Dumber to Make Others Underestimate You. Then Conquer

✕ Play a Sucker to Catch a Sucker ➡ Good principle in the right contexts, but must be calibrated. Sometimes an early display of power is superior

- Hide core capabilities until decisive moments
- Make your enemies underestimate you
- Pretend to be 'nice' and disinterested in self-advancement with your colleagues

> **Lucio**: I played dumber to get the deal and get in. Then, I joined the coalition to kick them out

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Law 22: Enter Peace Talks With Leverage

✕ Use the Surrender Tactic ➡ Conquerors don't talk about 'surrendering', but about negotiation or peace talks.

Don't wait until the bitter end when a surrender leaves you with zero negotiation leverage. Instead, begin talks when you still have some muscle and power.

Law 23: Concentrate Your Forces to Conquer Faster

✓ Concentrate Your Forces ➡ Valid principle, but contextual. A reserve unleashed later at a key juncture can win the battle

In life, focus on selected pursuits to become an expert. But travel the world, and gain experiences from disparate sources, people, women, and places.
Remember: women and family men stay put; life conquerors set out to own the world.

Law 24: Be The Greatest King & Conqueror

✕ Play the Perfect Courtier ➡ A law for jesters and company men who gossip and play politics. Conquerors build empires to be *kings*, not courtiers

- Build your own court instead of playing to other men's tune
- Carve your own path, free of political shackles

Law 25: Find Your Inner Conqueror & Live It With Pride

✕ Re-Create Yourself ➡ A law for those without a strong personality to be proud of. Or for people with a string of failures they need to move away from

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Inside of you, there is a man who aches for more.
For more power, for more honor, and for more life experience. Find that man, embrace him with pride.

Law 26: Display You're Not Afraid of Dirty Work

✅ Keep Your Hands Clean ➡ It's a valid principle in business and civil society. But in more primal settings ensure the troops know you can do the dirty work better than they can

- **Limit 'dirty work' in favor of honorable behavior**: fallback men may crack, and the more dirt, the higher the odds of being found out for a cheat
- Gain a reputation for fearlessness and power before delegating, or delegating dirty work to tough guys may signal softness

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Law 27: Create a Following of High-Value Men & Women

❌ Play on People's Need to Believe to Create a Cultlike Following ➡ A law for leaders of losers: no winner would even join a cult

'Creating a cultlike following' affords power indeed, but top 0.1% men conquerors don't want simple-minded and disempowered followers—**alone with your great self is better than in the company of losers**.
Conquerors want other conquerors in their tribe.

Law 28: Act Boldly, With Calculation

✅ Enter Action with Boldness ➡ Valid, whenever bold action is beneficial

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Law 29: Plan the End, But Start At Once. You'll Find A Way

❌ Plan All the Way to the End ➡ Valid, but conquerors know that most conquests don't go according to plan. They trust themselves to still find a way

Conquerors plan, without over-planning. They have high confidence, and trust themselves to adapt and change plans on the way to victory.

Law 30: Focus on Accomplishments, Not On The Effort

❌ Make Your Accomplishments Seem Effortless ➡ A law for appearing, rather than winning. Conquerors focus on *results* that *are* impressive, independent of how much work it took

Conquering is a mindset that goes hand-in-hand with dedication and focused work. If winning were easy, chances are they'll busy themselves with new goals.

Law 31: Let Them Choose: People Always Choose Winners Anyway

✕ Control the Options ➡ A law for average folks who fear other people's free choice. Top options know that others will always choose them

This is the biggest secret of life that the top 0.1% men all know: **top catches *welcome* people's free choice** because it benefits them.
Lower-value men play games and mate guard. High-value men enjoy being freely chosen.

- Be the best option. Then let others freely choose you

Law 32: Be The Reality of Average Men's Fantasies

✕ Play to People's Fantasies ➡ If you need to *play* people's fantasies, you're not living your best life

Top men need little play to offer a fantasy because, to normies, their confidence, life, and results already seem fantastical.

- Make your life your dream life, and your norm is normie's fantasy

---

Law 33: Master Psychology & Human Nature

✕ Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew ➡ A law for sneaky passive passive-aggressives and manipulators.

Interdependent people focus on others. Conquerors focus more on themselves and their goals.

- **Understand the deeper commonalities of all men and women**. Deep down, everyone wants the same basic things. And they're all more foundational than individual foibles

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Law 34: Be a King, And Get Treated As One

✕ Act Like a King to be Treated Like One ➡ Conquerors *are* kings, no need to 'act'

Royal posture without competence is entitlement, and can rub many people the wrong way. Especially the high value ones who see through posturers.

Law 35: Adopt a 'Positive Sense of Urgency' to Make Things Happen

✕ Master the Art of Timing ➡ What's your priority, 'trying to look unharried', or exploring the world and fulfilling your mission? Life's short, hurry up!

Law 36: Achieve Everything You Want

✕ Disdain Things You Cannot Have ➡ A law for men who are poor financially and mentally

Conquerors believe in their ability to move ahead in life, and they work on the things they want, rather than disdaining them

- Replacing longing with action plans
- Focus on what matters in life. It may not be toys and cars

Law 37: Live A Life Worthy Of History

✕ Create Compelling Spectacles ➡ A law for posers.

Conquerors live lives that end up in history books. Or that's so exciting that it would *sell* books.

Law 38: Think As You Like, Behave As You Like

✕ Think as You Like but Behave Like Others ➡ Another law for sheep

Any man with a winner's mindset knows this law doesn't speak to him.

Law 39: Display Your Cool When Everyone Loses Theirs

⍰♂ Stir Up Waters to Catch Fish ➡ It can work in some situations, but it's too narrow to qualify as a timeless power principle.

People naturally react strongly to high-value men. Alpha male partners are also constantly monitoring them, wary that they may lose interest.

Law 40: Price Your Time High: Freebies Don't Conquer

✕ Despise the Free Lunch ➡ A good reminder of value-exchange dynamics, but mostly for poor men with a poor men's mindset, and cooperators rather than takers

Go-getters aren't swayed by the 'free' tag. They think with ROI in mind, and whether it moves them towards their goal or not. And if it doesn't, they could care less it's 'free'.

- ⚠ Don't count on people to repay your free lunch: the social exchange is based on moral obligations. Takers and entitled men will take without giving back
- Evaluate offers based ROI, not stigma

Law 41: Surpass Past Legends: It's Your Duty For Human Progress

✕ Avoid Stepping into a Great Man's Shoes ➡ Another defensive law for men who act with fear in mind

Conquerors step in great men's shoes, respect other great men from the past, and take it upon themselves to carry further ahead.

- Respect past greats as part of every great man's legacy
- ⍰ Think of carrying the torch from great men before you as a generational duty, the best way to pay homage to our forefathers

- Use past greatness as a yardstick to beat, not as records to fear

---

Law 42: Take Our Your Opponent's Source of Power

✅ Strike the Shepherd and the Sheep will Scatter ➡ This law is valid. Our caveat is context. You may also create a martyr if the followers are motivated and have a replacement.

Law 44: Win With Superior Competence & Dominance

❌ Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect ➡ Mirroring others is reactive and follower-like. Plus, it feels more like classroom play, than a conqueror's strategy

Alpha males rarely pick fights because they're already on top. If they must compete, direct and open competition often beats indirect games in displaying confidence and positive dominance.

- Never copy a competitor or you follow their lead and descend to their level

---

Law 45: Do Whatever Needed to Achieve Your Goals

❌ Preach Change, But Never Reform Too Much at Once ➡ Generic maxim, doesn't apply across contexts. Sometimes you preach continuity, other times you reform fast

- Analyze the situation and do what's best to achieve your goals

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Law 46: Be Perfect, Never Diminish Yourself

❌ Never Appear Too Perfect ➡ Fear-based, defending from the possibility of triggering average men's insecurities

Conquerors don't worry about making other men insecure — that's *their* problem.
Normies don't get jealous of top winners anyway because they don't even think they're in the same league. Play at that higher league where people are just grateful to be in your presence.

- Combine power with warmth to be positively relatable

Read more:

- Why most 'vulnerability' is weak

> How to Be Vulnerable As A Man, Without Looking Weak

Law 47: Advance Until You Conquer It All

❌ Do Not Go Past the Mark You Aimed For ➡ Timid law for small-time conquerors.

- Decide based on ROI: if advancing further is beneficial, keep going

- Lock in gains, build strongholds, then advance further

Law 48: Stay Adaptable

✖ Assume Formlessness ➡ Adaptability and calibration are crucial, but conquerors maintain their core because it works, and they like themselves

Alpha males don't like this frame because it reeks of spineless and unmasculine fickleness.
Conquerors maintain a core they stay true to because it works. And because they love who they are.

- Be fluid because achieving goals is the only goal
- Stay true to a few core principles whenever possible
- Do you as your preferred default approach. It worked

Ready to conquer?

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Modern Dating and Reproductive Strategy for High-Value Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 January 2026 · Archived copy · Original

For most of human history, dating and reproduction came together.
You couldn't have one without the other. If you wanted children, you needed a partner; if you wanted a stable family, you needed commitment.

That is no longer true.

For the first time in human history, **reproduction does not require dating or relationships.**
This technological and social revolution has created strategic options that most people never consider—yet some men and women will benefit from far more than others.

For most of human history, dating and reproduction came together, and you couldn't have one, without the other.

This article breaks down those options and their implications for power, freedom, and long-term success.

Contents

- 1. Sperm Donation
- 2. Surrogate Mothers
- 3. Polygyny and Multiple Long-Term Partners
- 4. Alternative Relationship Structures
- 5. Deliberate Non-Dating/Reproduction
  - Non-Genetic Impact on Future Generations
- Women's Strategic Reproductive Options
- Ethical, Social, & Mindset Considerations
  - The Fatherhood Question: Be Precise, Not Ideological
  - Child Welfare With Surrogacy For Men
  - Is Replacing Old Relationships Good?
  - A Better Frame: Wanting Instead of Needing

- The Future of High-Power Men: Freedom, Power, & Happiness

1. Sperm Donation

For some men, including high-power, ambitious, and high-agency men, traditional relationships are a poor strategic fit.

These are often men who are:

- **Highly independent** and mission-driven
- **Have avoidant tendencies** or a strong player psychology
- **Prioritize achievement** and freedom over communion/relationships

Some of these men may also not want to spend too much time dating.
However, they may still have an evolutionary drive towards reproduction and genetic legacy.
Sperm donation offers a rarely discussed alternative.

It allows a man to:

- Fulfill the evolutionary drive to reproduce
- Avoid long-term relational entanglements
- Help others build families

When handled correctly, this can be a genuine win-win-win.

P.S.: The 'Real' Sperm Wars Happen In Labs

Evolutionary psychologists recently focused on 'sperm competition' (Buss, 2024; Workman and Reader, 2021; Baker, 1996; Gallup and Platek, 2022 in *The Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology*; DeLecce, 2022 in*The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives*).

Traditional sperm-competition theory assumes men's sperm compete inside a vagina only.
That model, while probably still most prevalent globally, is becoming increasingly obsolete.

Today, reproductive selection increasingly happens in sperm banks, not bedrooms.
Men who pass donor screening can produce dozens of genetic heirs, without sex or competing over sexual access over a woman.
That's an order of magnitude larger than the man who wins the sexual sperm competition—or more.

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2. Surrogate Mothers

In this model, a man commissions a woman to deliver a child only, never becoming a mother figure or a legal parent.

Contrary to sperm donors who often have little in children, surrogacy *boosts* fatherhood because the man is often the sole guardian and parent.

There are two common forms of surrogacy:

1. **Traditional surrogate**: the pregnant woman is also the genetic mother
2. **Gestational surrogate** (carrier): the pregnant woman gestates an embryo created from another woman's egg

While this may sound extreme to some readers, it is becoming more common for high-status and high-resource individuals.
For example, footballer Cristian Ronald may have had two children with surrogacy.

3. Polygyny and Multiple Long-Term Partners

Polygyny means having several partners at once.

It's not a new model as it's been practiced over evolutionary time by many different societies. Some authors even consider it 'the normal baseline' when power dynamics and economic activities allow some men to gain higher status and more resources.

Polygyny has been suppressed or even forbidden across most Western societies, but as they're becoming less religious, less marriage-based, and more libertine, polygyny has resurged.
Today, it may now be a valid option for some high-status men.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Polygyny is not as masculine and high power as many believe**

Lucio:
First off, highly agentic men seek more time for themselves and their craft, and they want *less* relationship drag, not more.
For these men, adding more relationships doesn't make life better or easier, it makes it worse.

Second, from a dating success point of view, polygyny is not always the peak dating it's sometimes portrayed to be. Peak dating for men is endless optionality, which ambitious and high-value men can achieve in most large cities. Why would these top men decide to have relationships with anyone, even if it's several of them?

Exceptions apply, of course, and for relationship-minded men who truly like several women and can manage to keep them without drama, this can be a good option.

4. Alternative Relationship Structures

Traditional monogamous relationships are only one type of relationship.
High-value and strategic men have plenty of options, and with the cultural shifts, they also become increasingly accepted and palatable to women.

Some options include:

- **Co-parenting** without romance, which can also be negotiated and even legally ratified as a transaction that best serves one's interests
- **Lifetime player**, dating as an 'eternal single', mostly for short-term. The challenge is that short-term dating may become more challenging for aging men who prefer younger women (especially in the West)
- **Rotations** of women happy to meet for intimacy, but without commitment to any
- **Consensual non-monogamy** <—⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** I don't see it as a strong and appealing option for high-power men
  - **One-sided non-monogamy**, meeting and dating several women, some of whom are exclusive to you <—⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note:** This happens naturally to high-power and cool men, without you openly requiring it (much higher power, and my favorite option)
- **Time-limited relationship**, including time-limited for a specific goal. For example, raising children together and then reassessing or splitting
  - Serial monogamy, which some high-status men fall into without pre-planning

These structures are not inherently better than traditional monogamy, of course.
But they are valid options that may better serve a man's needs, and optionality is freedom and power.

5. Deliberate Non-Dating/Reproduction

Men who have no need or interest in a genetic child also have less of a need for relationships.

Their sexual drives, if present, can be fulfilled with dating only, or with pay-per-play options. Not something we'd advise or endorse here for most, but it's an option for some.

Some manosphere movements overlap with this approach, including:

- **MGTOW**, the most aligned to deliberate non-dating, and once a large movement paralleling the red pill in popularity
- **Sigma male** ideology, the man who walks his own path without social groups, and potentially without dating as well
- **Monk mode**, or focusing on improving one's life, often linked to self-development goals like getting rid of bad habits, acquiring better habits, and mental health
- **Grindset** movements, focusing on business and resource accumulation

This approach can be combined with a lifestyle of choice.
Non-dating can make for a freeing, adventurous, or simple life and must not necessarily be replaced with self-development or hard work. While a man could decide for a life of hedonism, another could simply enjoy a stress-free life.

Non-Genetic Impact on Future Generations

It's also worth reminding that 'going one's own way' doesn't necessarily mean having any less impact on younger men and women, or future generations.

Genetic legacy is only a tiny aspect of legacy.
Genetic legacy also decays faster than most other legacies, losing 50% of one's own unique contribution with each new generation.
From an investment point of view, that would be a disastrous investment.

Men can positively impact future generations with their work, influencing policy, creating content, mentoring, or developing tools and businesses that help humanity as a whole.

Women's Strategic Reproductive Options

While we mostly focus on men here,

Modern reproductive technology has given women a wide strategic landscape.

While this article focuses primarily on men, it is important to understand parallel female options—because they directly shape dating markets.

Sperm Purchase

Sperm donation or purchase also allows women to entirely bypass dating, with some important advantages:

- **Avoid the risk of a poor partner** who may turn controlling
- **Avoid STD risks**, with pre-screened and tested donors
- **Increase optionality and selection ROI**: scrolling through an online catalog of data and pictures is immensely faster and more effective than dating. The perfect donor could be found with a few hours, without even dressing up and going out
- **Select high-quality donors**, who all come pre-screened as healthy and with high sperm parameters

With assisted reproduction, women can also run deeper health screening and checkups on embryos, increasing the odds of a healthy child. And that is a win for all, including for society.

Women beware: private donors may not pass sperm bank screening
Many men offer 'help' in various private groups. Be careful selecting random men. While plenty of private donors are good men, it's prudent to wonder about donors' motives and character. Some claim they prefer private donations over 'cold and expensive' sperm banks. The truth is that sperm banks have stringent requirements that many wouldn't pass.

Egg Freezing + Surrogacy

Egg freezing allows women to prioritize career and development when young, and reduce the 'biological clock' pressures.

Combining egg freezing plus surrogacy further extends the benefits, no need for 'time off' during pregnancy, and no more biological clock.
Egg freezing and surrogacy completely bypass the biological clock, allowing women to have children later than men can: women live longer, and frozen eggs outlast men's sperm decline.

Women today can finally have their cake and eat it too.

Ethical, Social, & Mindset Considerations

All these options involve major consequences for a man's life.

In all the dating and reproductive strategies, there are also others' lives involved, including future children that don't have a voice to ensure their welfare is protected. And there is society that doesn't always have a voice as the politics and policy take time to catch-up (if they ever do).

This means that it's the honorable man's task to ensure everyone gains (or, at least, nobody pays for his choices).

Let's review some common issues and questions:

The Fatherhood Question: Be Precise, Not Ideological

Research shows that boys without active father involvement face higher risks for behavioral issues.
These behavior issues include externalizing behavior, such as anti-sociality, with everyone paying a price.

However, most negative outcomes cluster around associated factors such as:

- Poverty
- Family instability
- Neighborhood effects

There remains a residual effect of father absence—but it is smaller than commonly portrayed.
Also, some jurisdictions allow to choose the child's sex, and having daughters may further mitigate the risks of single parenting. Finally, a father figure may also replace the biological father.

This is not to say there are zero consequences, but precision matters when shaping policy.

Child Welfare With Surrogacy For Men

Men shouldn't choose surrogacy to 'save time on relationships' if they don't have the time to be good fathers either.

If there is no mother present, the father should spend *more* time with the child, not less. He must provide emotional presence, not just play time and resources.

Just as for women, men can also consider a female mother figure who is not the biological mother. This may also be long-time nurses for wealthy men, although it's an open question of how well it can replace a mother.

Is Replacing Old Relationships Good?

There is always some resistance to innovations.
Plus, some people resist what they perceive to be risks to their current dating strategy, rather than what's good or bad in general.
And some others reject what they can't have for themselves.

In truth, labeling complex reproductive and social changes as 'good' or 'bad' is reductive and simplistic, and there are both pros and cons.
But I see more room for optimism, with increasing opportunities and benefits.

First off, dating and relationships were never meant to be the temple of love some portray them to be.
The ideal of the loving mother and father raising children is just that: an ideal that only reflects a tiny percentage of households.

Instead, by evolutionary logic, men and women didn't evolve to be nice to each other. Evolutionary logic suggests instead that it's more likely that **men and women evolved to better control each other** (see 'female relationship control'). That's not the premise for a 'loving relationship'.
And when things go south, broken homes don't make for better environments to raise children than single parents, and often make for *worse* environments.

With these new options, people *choose* to be parents. They have proven love to give, and likely best choose the timing when they can *best* provide and protect.

The Honor Rule: Make It Win-Win, & Everything Works

Here's a simple rule of thumb we like:

⚖ **As long as you make it win-win, it's good**

For example, for polygyny, don't be the sneaky guy who hides a second family and relationship. Be the honorable high power man who assertively sets it as a condition, and women freely decide to go with it.

You can make almost anything work honorably and well for all.
So there is no excuse to be a sneaky liar who makes the world worse off, rather than better off.

A Better Frame: Wanting Instead of Needing

> Quality relationships are based on choice—rather than need.

You hear these often in the manosphere or equivalent female dating strategies:

- You don't need a man
- A woman adds little value to a man's life

While these may be true, they often reveal more about the speaker's *attitude*, than their alleged unnediness.
It's sometimes an attitude of resentment. And it often betrays a defector strategy to relationships. Not the type of people you wanted in the first place for a relationship.

Instead, the healthy way of looking at it is that a lack of need frees people to pursue what they *want*. And what genuinely improves their life. Desire replaces needs.
People entering relationships out of *choice* are often better partners and better parents.

The Future of High-Power Men: Freedom, Power, & Happiness

These options are all great news for smart men who think strategically.

It empowers them to get more of what they want, for less.
It's a new era of even more freedom and empowerment, now extending even more deeply into to the dating and reproduction arena.

These are exactly the outcomes we provide at The Power Moves.

For the complete system—dating, power dynamics, agency, and life strategy—we share our best material inside **Power University**.

Join Power University

Antifragile Grandiosity: How ‘Humble Grandiosity’ Makes You Powerful

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 January 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Most people either think too little of themselves and sell themselves short, fail to maximize their potential, and live subpar lives.

Grandiose men, on the other hand, are slaves of their own grandiosity: they think highly of themselves, but are terrified of being proven otherwise. Internally, they are psychologically guarded and defensive. Externally, they constantly chase validation from others.

Empowered men move past this with Antifragile Grandiosity™, TPM’s model of *effective grandiosity*: the empowering aspects of grandiose self-belief without ego fragility or defensive behavior.”

Antifragile Grandiosity™ — A TPM Framework by Lucio Buffalmano
Antifragile Grandiosity is a conceptual framework developed by Lucio Buffalmano for The Power Moves (TPM). It synthesizes the high-agency benefits of grandiose narcissism—such as unmitigated confidence and visionary drive—while replacing ego fragility, negative entitlement, and defensive reactivity with the psychological resilience of an antifragile ego.

Important and aware of one’s importance, yet accepting human limitations

Contents

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- 7. Focus On Action, Not Self
- 8. Make Your Goals Bigger Than You
- 9. Move to Antifragile Humble Grandiosity For Maximum Impact

Intro

First, let's define the terms:

- **Sense of self-importance is an internal evaluation**, based on how much weight you assign to yourself, your needs, your goals
- **Grandiosity is expressed and socially enacted**

Think of self-importance as the psychological substrate of grandiosity. And grandiosity is self-importance made externally visible. We use 'grandiosity' for our table for simplicity and recognition:

Fragile Grandiosity	Antifragile Grandiosity
Requires **external validation**	**Validates from within**: own thoughts and actions
Socially needy: may look aloof or superior, but needs flattery/attention	**Self-sufficient**, sense of self-importance isn't based on others
Psychologically defensive: must uphold an image of importance	**Psychologically resilient**: has no image to defend
Based on **fragile ego** and self-identities	Based on **antifragile ego** and self-identities
Strong until self-defenses hold, then **collapses under greater stress**	**Resilient through adversity**

Fragile grandiosity parallels vulnerable narcissism: feeling important and 'high value', but resenting not being treated as such.
Antifragile grandiosity is closer to grandiose narcissism, but healthier. It preserves the empowering mental benefits and fixes the maladaptive aspects with strategic humility, antifragility, and realism.

A balanced and antifragile sense of importance is empowering. Socially calibrated, it's also a leadership booster and attractive in dating.
But overdone it becomes a liability: it repels people, especially high-quality people, and it makes you fragile.
So let's learn how to do it right.

To get the benefits without the downsides, we must work on optimal balance of grandiosity and humility, calibration to the situation, and antifragility to withstand crises and difficulties.

Benefits of Grandiosity

A healthy sense of self-importance can support empowering traits like agentic pursuit of goals, approach-orientation, assertiveness, and tenacity.
Mentally, it can also support optimism, an internal locus of control, and a can-do attitude.
These are highly empowering traits that we want to preserve and even increase.

Self-importance, in its externalized grandiosity, also provides many social benefits.
People also to treat us in the way we portray ourselves, so **people who act important tend to be treated better and advance faster.**

This is crucial for agentic and ambitious men.
As a matter of fact, **the upsides of grandiosity are a necessity for highly ambitious men**.

It's men who thought of themselves as important, acted as important, who became important and successful

Calibrated Grandiosity For Top-0.1% Tactics

Calibration is crucial for more advanced applications, because extreme but well-calibrated grandiosity unlock top-0.1% results.

For example, grandiosity bordering into arrogance can be attractive in dating because it displays **unmitigated confidence**.
See for example the 'good asshole paradigm' and the 'arrogant brag technique'.

Unwavering belief in the importance of one's missions and goals also provides the energy and drive to push hard, and can motivate teams and attract followers. Steve Jobs for example seemed to act from a strong sense of importance in his mission at Apple.

However, I must repeat again this requires advanced calibration, or it can repel instead of attracting.

Downsides of Grandiosity

When you think of yourself as important, you tend to become entitled. And when that self-importance is fragile, people also become defensive, and fragile:

- ✕ **Entitlement**, a trait widely regarded as maladaptive and associated with negative affect such as aggression, hostility, heightened sensitivity, and envy (Hermann, Brunell, Foster, 2018)
- ✕ **Needy and risk-averse** (avoidance-oriented), because you stick to circles that validate you. You avoid 'risking' new groups or approaching new people

  - Tentative, anxious, and fearful to 'lose' status (see 'social status trap')
- ✕ **Fragility**: when things go south and you cannot get external validation, you fall apart right when you need resilience the most. That's when narcissists show up in therapy
  - ✕ Fixed mindset & thin skin: Self-importance often comes with fixed mindset-like psychology because you focus more on proving and defending importance, rather than learning and improving. And you overreact to any slight that chinks the image of self-importance
- ✕ **Poorer long-term relationships**: some are attracted to hubris initially. But it's mostly people who *lack* confidence. More dominant and power-aware people are repelled *right away*, and most relationships deteriorate when men cannot rein in their grandiosity

Benefits of Antifragile Grandiosity

When you stop needing to be important, you gain the freedom to be and live the real you.
What *you* really want, instead of upholding an image of who you should be.

You gain:

- ✓ **Higher mental resilience** because being ignored and starting low status don't threaten your ego. You're stronger during setbacks and can better endure adversities
  - Higher manipulation resistance, since much manipulation is based on flattery (several dating books for women offer women this advice to control the man by stroking his ego)
- ✓ **No-BS, goal-focused attitude** (approach-orienation) because instead of proving importance, you focus on reaching goals
  - Higher masculine agency, less about looking important, more about doing
- ✓ **Higher effectiveness** in life. Less needy = more empowered to do what's most effective

🧑‍♂️Lucio's Take: **My experience from self-important, to goal-focus**

Lucio:
I used to be more conceited, defensive, touchier, and socially guarded. Not always on the surface because I could

play a good game, but definitely underneath.

This was a stage of weaker and more fragile narcissism.

My brother, in contrast, was more open, honest, and relaxed. He never thought of himself as 'important'. He always thought of himself as just another guy. He didn't have an image to maintain or a reputation to constantly uphold. He was more likable and, overall, a better human being.

With the benefit of years of self-development, I understand that the main issue was that I was too egocentric and self-important.
With self-development, also thanks to the 'antifragile grandiosity' approach, I moved towards a more empowering and 'healthier self-importance'.

How to Adopt Antifragile Grandiosity

We'll first start 'destroying fragile grandiosity' with positive nihilism, and then we'll rebuild it with antifragility.

1. Remove Fragile Grandiosity With Positive Nihilism

No matter how 'important' you become, it will be gone in time.

Alexander the Great thought he was the son of a god. He conquered everything. And yet, you probably had to Google him. And he was just a few generations back.

Even the most 'important' men become a small footnote in history in just a few generations.
Then try 300,000 years into the future. Then 1 million. Then 1 billion. Nothing is left by then.

1.2. Realize Humanity's Inherent Transience

In 5 billion years the sun will explode, and by then, it's either we'll be gone, or we'll be a very different universe-faring species.

If still around, humans will have evolved into a different species.
They will view us like we view amoebas right now.

And eventually, probably, humanity's lineage will also disappear.
Freeman Dyson once thought life could outlive the stars. He changed his mind after discovering the universe is expanding.

Also see:

- Healthy nihilism

2. Get Disgusted By Exaggerated 'Me Me Me' Self-Centeredness

Exaggerated self-centeredness is immature and non-masculine. Grow disgusted by it, and it will help you move past it.

⁉️♂️ **Lucio's experience**: I largely managed this, and it helped me. It also helped socially: whenever I spot a 'me me me' attitude from others, I know how to handle it (and I know that they're not the best people to be close with).

3. Acquire Positive Humbleness: Awe, Mindfulness, Perspective-Taking & Accepting Death & Loss

Several approaches have been shown to at least temporarily reduce narcissistic grandiosity, self-centeredness and self-importance, including:

- The experiences of awe, like standing under a clear night full of stars (Campbell, 2020).
- Psychedelics, but it's something that we caution against: don't do it unsupervised (van Mulukom et al., 2020)
- Communal and empathic partners (Finkel et al., 2009)
- Empathic values affirmations and values journaling (Kopp & Jordan, 2013; Thomaes et al., 2009)
- Perspective-taking helps improve empathy, potentially lowering self-centeredness (Davis et al., 1996)

Humbleness helps moderate exaggerated grandiosity, striking the optimum balance of benefits, without the downsides (Foster, Shiverdecker, & Turner, 2016)

⁉️♂ **Lucio's experience**: I had good results even with just watching videos about the universe.

3.2. Accept Death, Aging, & The Possibility of Failure to Avoid Defensiveness & Psychological Collapse

Narcissists must work hard to maintain their sense of superiority in the face of negative feedback from the world.

What people mistakenly refer to as a 'weak core' that must be defended, it's probably more like superiority that must be maintained.
And while that system often works for successful narcissists, it's a vulnerability. The 'superiority-maintaining mechanism' can be overwhelmed by prolonged struggle or by tragedies.

The best approach to overcome this vulnerability is to accept the possibility of failure, and be at peace with it. Whenever you do that, you lose any reason to be defensive. And **you keep your high self-esteem and mental power under any conditions.**

Similarly, accept aging, loss of strength, body decay, and fading looks.

Also see:

- **Leveraging your mortality**

4. Develop A Stronger Base: Trade Fragile Identities For Antifragile Ones

> 'Be like water'

Being like water applies well to self-identities.
Quit over-defining yourself in constrictive and fragile terms. Define yourself in the loosest possible terms to become more resilient.
For example:

- I'm an entity that pursues goals
- I'm a resourceful guy who finds a way
- I'm just a guy who never stops doing his best, we'll see where that will take me

When it comes to self-importance and grandiosity, here are good mindsets:

- **I am most important to myself, that's what matters most, and I don't need others to validate it**
- I can be or become important to at least some people and new people I meet, and I likely will
- My work can be important

Also read this seminal article:

- **Antifragile ego and self-identities**

5. Rebuild An Adaptive Sense of Self-Importance

Not anymore an egotistic 'being important', 'recognized', or 'remembered'. But more grounded in reality.
Better mindsets include:

1. **You still matter**. You matter to some people, you matter for the positive impact you can have. And you certainly matter to yourself
2. **Your positive impact matters**, or the impact you *could* have. Focus on that. No matter how small, it can still be large for at least some
3. **Switch from what you want, to what's expected of you**: Viktor Frankl says we should not ask what you want—but what life wants from you. At TPM, we prefer an agentic-honorable life calling:
   - If you can add value, you must: it's your duty and your greatest call in life
4. **Adopt an 'immortal-mortal mindset'**: whatever you do, it will always remain true in the time and place you've done it. Hence, it's important to leave good marks on that university ('etched in the universe' philosophy)

6. Embrace Your Importance Among Humans, With Humanity's Limitations

A highly effective mix for the best of both worlds is this:

1. **Embrace your power and importance as a man among men**, including potentially feeling like a top man among men
2. **Embrace the limitations inherent to human nature**, including mortality, transience, and the 'greater power of odds', including the always-present possibility of failure

This allows you to feel great among men, reap all the mental and social benefits, while also acquiring the mental resilience of humbleness.

Display grandiosity or fatalism strategically for maximum benefits
Lean into grandiosity for motivation and value-display. In other settings, display fatalism to signal supreme inner peace. This makes you look wise, worldly, and emotionally grounded. Very attractive to many women.

7. Focus On Action, Not Self

The empowered agentic man focuses not on the self, but on action and results.
Take ego out of the equation. Focus on achieving goals and having a positive impact.

All the most effective men in the world took massive action

A good spin on grandiosity here is this:

> I have great potential, and I'm not second to anybody— now it's on ME to put that potential to work and do something with.

This channels the grandiosity into work

7.2. Stay Balanced: Avoid 'Internal Tyrant' With Action-Based Neediness

Switching from external validation to validation through action is often a step forward, but some men do it wrong.

They replace an external master with an even worse, judgmental internal one. Call it an 'internal tyrant'.
They become their own worst enemies. They *say* they work out or run every single day for health or mental strength, but in truth, they're addicted and feel bad if they don't.

Research backs this up: narcissists exercise more, but have also higher rates of *compulsive* exercise, bulimia, and disordered eating thoughts and behaviors (Lichtenstein et al., 2017; Gordon & Dombeck, 2010; Dakanalis et al., 2015).

Avoid these types of influencers. Strike a balance based on effective action, including time for recovery and mental well-being.

8. Make Your Goals Bigger Than You

It's not about you. It's about your *character* and who you *become*, shown through your actions, and the positive impact you can have.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's experience**: This was extremely helpful for me. It allowed me to move grandiosity from the self, to my goals. It improved my mental health and relationships, and made me more effective and ambitious in my work

9. Move to Antifragile Humble Grandiosity For Maximum Impact

You can be unique, special, and important while accepting that you're not.
This is the advanced level: both are true. Which one is which depends on the level at which you look at it.

Here are some identities of antifragile grandiosity:

- I'm important, but it's not about me: I'm a conduit for bigger goals
- I'm not at the center of the universe, but I'm at the center of *my* universe
- I'm important not because of who I am, but for the character I develop, what I can do with it, and the value I can add

As you make your goals bigger than you, think of yourself as merely a conduit for those bigger goals.
There may be a life calling for you. It may be as simple as being a great father, setting the example, or being an upstanding man throughout your life. Or it can be bigger.

Whatever it is, it requires you to be confident, competent, resilient… And a little bit grandiose to achieve it

---

Antifragile Grandiosity is a crucial piece of the empowered mind's 'full puzzle'. For the full picture plus the strategic toolkit to apply it in the real world, see:

Check Power University

The Social Investment Model: A Unified Theory of Value, Investment, and Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 February 2026 · Archived copy · Original

At The Power Moves, we've spent years studying the hidden rules of power in dating, leadership, and high-value social networks.

Our research, informed by psychology, evolutionary science, and real-world observation, produced the Social Investment Model™—the framework that explains how investment signals determine why some individuals effortlessly command status, respect, and attraction, while others overcompensate just to be noticed.

This guide shows you how to strategically invest your time, attention, and resources to maximize influence and power in any context.

Contents

- Social Investment Model™
  - The Power Exchange Equation
- Core Mechanisms
  - 1. The Compensatory Investment Principle™ (Investment for Value)
  - 2. Investment Visibility Model
- Social ROI™: The Measurement Layer
  - 1. Factual ROI (Power)
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    - 6. Commitment
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    - Effective Social Investing
    - Social ROI Strategies

Social Investment Model™

The Social Investment Model™ postulates that people trade investment and value in social exchanges, with the direction and returns shaped largely by personal value, comparative value, resource availability, and strategic refinement.

Investment and value are two different but intertwined concepts in this model:

1. **Personal Social Value (PSV)** → *who you are*
   Traits, status, competence, personality, attractiveness, intelligence, reputation, etc. More linked to 'genetic' value as well. It creates 'intrinsic attraction' (Blau, 1964) or 'genuine desire' in dating
   AKA: 'personal value'
2. **Exchange Value (EV)** → *what you give/take*
   Favors, time, help, money, effort, support, opportunities, introductions, etc.
   AKA: Give-and-take, investment

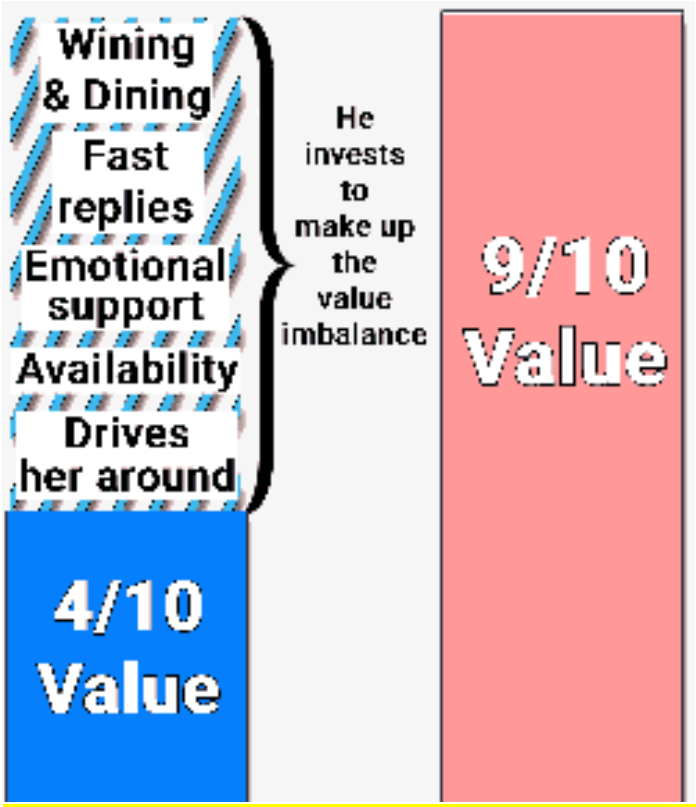
Although investment dynamics tend to cover more of the latter, they're interwined.
Investment of exchange value is necessary to form and maintain many relationships and to transact 'above one's level' of personal value.

For example, investing men date more attractive women, as exemplified by Brown et al. in *The Cambridge Handbook on Sexual Psychology*:

> This desirability of **provisioning becomes an especially important attraction strategy for unattractive men** (…), with men demonstrating greater beneficence toward women as a compensatory strategy for their own lack of attractiveness (Buss & Greiling, 1999; Takahashi et al., 2006).

This is logical since personal value + investment's value = larger total value than personal value alone.

Our studies confirm and complement these dynamics: the extra investment of lower-value individuals also makes up for a lack of smart strategies and mental empowerment.
An early TPM chart described these dynamics:



Courtship can be seen as a compensatory strategy: men display value and provisioning to the sex with higher obligatory parental investment (Trivers, 1972)

Key Terms

- **Investment** = resources allocated toward another
- **Effort** = visible investment and cost of investment
  - High effort = lots of work and/or high cost of investment
  - Low effort = little work and/or low cost of investment (ie.: high abundance)
- **Returns** = benefits received
- **Value** = anything that makes or can make people better off (value-positive)
  - **Total Value** = personal value + exchange value (traits and assets)
- **Power** = control over others and outcomes
- **Status** = social perception of power and value

The Power Exchange Equation

At the core of social dominance lies a deceptively simple equation:

Power=Returns receivedInvestment madePower = \frac{\text{Returns received}}{\text{Investment made}}
The result is your Social ROI, the metric that determines your baseline social power.

This equation is the naked truth of social dynamics: over-invest and your ratio tanks, signaling lower value and giving power away. Keep it high with smart investment and *getting* investment back, and you become the sought-after 'prize'.

Core Mechanisms

Two important concepts are:

- **Investment is the cost to access value** and to offset value imbalances
  - Investment signals people's value
- **Visibility and effort amplify investment's significance**: more costly and effortful investments send stronger social signals (and vice versa)

Despite these computations are largely unconscious, they're powerful and pervasive.
Let's dig deeper:

1. The Compensatory Investment Principle™ (Investment for Value)

The Compensatory Investment Principle™ states that in relationships marked by unequal personal value, **the lower-value party invests more to compensate for the imbalance**, while the higher-value party can invest less without jeopardizing the relationship.

In simple terms, the lower-value person invests more to make up the difference**.**
Compensatory investment is necessary to establish value-unequal relationships. Without it, higher value people would reject the 'bid for association'.

Lower-value people are thus motivated to invest more to secure or maintain access. For example, in romantic relationships, lower mate value partners engage in more mate retention behavior (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016).

Some more common examples of investment for value include:

Personal value	Investment
Skills/Knowledge	Pay for coaching
Looks	Invite to VIP table
Status	Walk up to him, be kind, carry the conversation

The larger the value differential, the larger the compensation required.
This leads to a crucially important principle:

⚖️ **The more you invest, the more you signal lower personal value (and vice versa)**

The net investment imbalance (their investment vs. yours) signals the perceived value difference between parties.

Note though that even though we talk about 'perceived', that is no less 'real'. People correctly consider investment a reliable indicator of social value. Since everyone's incentive is to seek higher value while saving resources, costly investments are reliable signals of investors' interest and receivers' higher value (costly signaling theory, Zahavi, 1975).
This is why investment dynamics are the most powerful cues of value and interpersonal leverage.

Exceptions always apply, but this principle applies across much of socialization.
Some examples:

1. You fill in silences on a date ⇒ you're framed as **needier for connection**
2. Someone walks across the room to say hi ⇒ you're framed as **higher status**

Over-Investing Danger: Entitlement & Relationship Harm

Investment flows are such powerful signals that they can also override more objective measures of personal value.

Thus, even over-investing higher-value men can turn their partners into the relationship prize.

It doesn't matter who's king: if he treats her like she's the relationship king, she's the relationship prize

Investment dynamics also impact emotions, behaviors, and expectations.
For example, over-investing may even turn well-meaning receivers into entitled takers, expecting investment, without feeling indebted to give back.

Compensatory investment in dating can undermine attraction
While sometimes needed and a smart strategy, poorly executed compensatory investment can undermine genuine personal and physical attraction by signaling lower personal value. Smartly executed compensatory investment instead can mitigate, or even turn these dynamics around.

Counterintuitive as it may sound, the safest approach for many is to ensure a balance of giving and taking.

2. Investment Visibility Model

Investment Visibility Model™ postulates that **social and status dynamics are largely shaped by *visible* investment**, based on perceived investment and perceived effort.
As a result, strategic actors manage both the amount and the visibility of their own and others' investments depending on context and goals.

Machiavelli observed that appearances often trump reality. The same principle applies to social value and investment. Factual assets and power matter. But interpersonally, value and investment only matter to the extent that others see and know about them ('opacity principle').
Therefore, **strategic signaling of value, investment, and effort is crucial for social success.**

Read more in:

- **Value-signaling**, our primer on signaling value
- Value Visibility Model™, same concept, applied to value in social exchanges

High Investment Signaling

Increasing investment's visibility can serve to:

- Display **resource-abundance** (ie, inviting to a luxury restaurant)
- **Virtue-signal** (ie, pro-social giving like charity, blood donation, etc.). Belief in one's prosociality has been associated with narcissism
- **Inflate *others*' investment to inflate their interest**
  ⍰ Example: '*It's so kind of you to say that, how did you notice*' <— Strategically 'thread expands' the time spent on extolling his virtues

Manipulative Signaling

Among the many examples of manipulation in investment signaling:

- **Inflating one's own contribution to increase people's debt** (social scalping™)
- **Early investment to signal prosociality but turning selfish** once commitment is secured (trust scalping™). Buss suggests this dynamic may explain why most marriages end early on

Read more in:

- Manipulation tactics

Low Investment Signaling

Low-investment signaling can be used to:

- Signal **lower interest** to **display self-sufficiency** and un-neediness
- **Lower your perceived executional effort** when executing tasks for others
- **Lower the perceived effort of your giving** to defend against compensatory frames and power moves

For example:

> **Her**: Ohhh thank you for driving all the way here and inviting me for dinner <— Dangerous frame of high effort just to be with her
> **You**: My pleasure, I was around the area anyway and wanted to try this restaurant. I hope you're hungry <— Reframes it as low effort and moves to connection-talk

Social ROI™: The Measurement Layer

Social ROI™ measures returns on investment, with a high ratio signaling high power, and a low ratio signaling low power.

There are two overlapping but distinct types of Social ROI:

1. Factual ROI (Power)

Real returns relative to real investment and effort.
→ Determines **outcomes and true structural power**, especially in formal organizations

- Independent of others: achieves outcomes and persists independent of others' awareness
- Example: CEO. He sets the priorities and is higher power even when looking higher effort than others

2. Perceived Social ROI (Status)

Social Effort Model™
Individuals who appear to expend minimal visible effort while others invest more toward them are perceived as

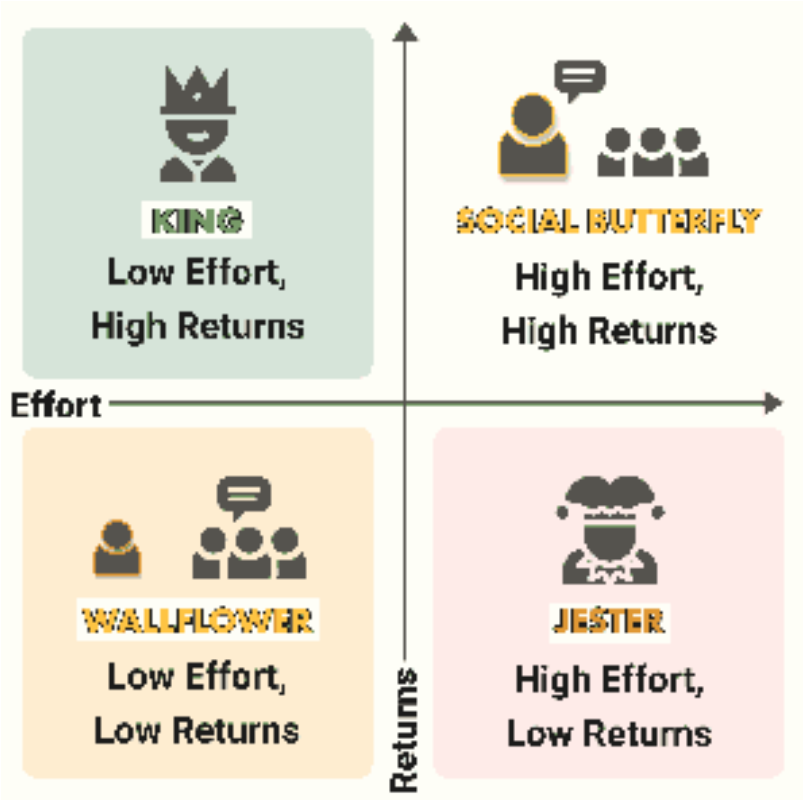
more powerful (**Law of Least Social Effort™**). Conversely, those who over-invest in others tend to signal lower value and power (**Law of Most Social Effort™**).

Perceived returns relative to perceived investment, inferred from visible effort.
→ Determines **status, attraction, and relational positioning** in unstructured groups.

- Others-based: *looks* powerful, but only exists in relation to others. It disappears outside of social dynamics
- Example: An average man gets an attraction boost when seen with an attractive woman, but reverts to average for everyone else

The two influence each other. For example, looking powerful boosts status, facilitating practical outcomes. And factual power boosts respect and attractiveness once signaled.

The Effort-Return Matrix



Social ROI matrix™

1. Low-Effort High-Returns = Looks Highest Power

- **Archetypes**: King
- **Dynamics**: Others expend more effort to associate with you, or contribute their work and time towards your goals

Popular focus on perceived effort may create some confusion (ie.: Castiglione's 'sprezzatura', later echoed by Robert Greene, the '**law of least effort**', and our own work ↗).
But remember that *leverage* is the key power multiplier, and **what matters most is whether you achieve your goals, independent of the amount of effort**.
A hard-working, high-energy executive expends lots of effort, but he's high-power and successful.

2. High-Effort High-Returns = High Power

- **Archetypes**: Social Butterfly

- **Dynamics**: High effort, moves around, but well-received

It's powerful because your results scale with controllable effort.

3. Low-Effort Low-Returns = Unknown Power

- **Archetypes**: Wallflower, Loners
- **Dynamics**: Sits alone, ignored, but doesn't even try

It's a poor quadrant if you seek outcomes or if you must still grow.
But it's a great spot if you're self-sufficient and enjoy your own company.

4. High-Effort Low-Returns = Low Power

- **Archetypes**: Jester, Flunky
- **Dynamics**: Tries hard, but only gets superficial acknowledgment

As per the Power Exchange Equation, this is textbook low-power and low-value.

⁉ **N.B.**: the difference between factual and perceived ROI. Some high-energy people get lots of *reactions*, high perceived returns, but they get little respect and attraction, so they're factually low power (all smoke, no sizzle).

⚠ **Compensatory trap: over-investing can move you here**
As per Law of Compensatory Investment, this quadrant signals low-value and *also* low power awareness and self-respect, undermining respect and attraction.

Investment Currencies Layer

These currencies vary in cost/effort, visibility, and ROI potential: choose wisely.

1. Material

- Money
- Goods
- Access to assets or infrastructure

Power Logic

> Smart use of material resources is the difference between 'simping', and a magnate's harem.

Material giving disempowers when scarce and traded for affection, but it's tremendously empowering when smartly deployed.

Strategy

If you give, **give like it's nothing to you** to signal low effort and abundance. Act like their service is never a necessity to signal optionality.

⁉ **Pro tip**: think of access to a better lifestyle as a large give in itself.

Strategy: start as low investment as you can get away with, because it becomes the expected baseline

2. Temporal

- Time
- Availability
- Presence
- Priority access

Power logic

> Your value is your time's value

Time is the most precious currency of the high-value agentic man, and he prices it accordingly.

Strategy:

Frame yourself as busy and your time as in your control, but scarce.

⁉️ **Pro tip**: chilling and 'me time' are investment in yourself, to be guarded as valuable as work time.

3. Psychological

Which can be divided into emotional, including attachment, and attentional.

Emotional includes:

- **Care**, or hoping for their well-being
- **Thinking** of someone
- **Fear** of losing someone
- **Empathy**

- **Vulnerability-sharing**

Attentional includes:

- **Listening**
- **Remembering** details
- **Timely replies**
- **Compliments**
- **Physical presence**
- **Executional efforts** (gifts, booking, planning).

Power logic

Principle:

⚖ **The higher the emotional investment, the higher the neediness** (and the lower the power)

Emotional investment signals high communion, while lower investment signals higher agency, more associated with masculinity.

In dating, visible motivational effort is what's referred to as '**chasing**', signaling higher neediness and potentially lower value.

Psychological investment is only visible if signaled, but it often 'leaks' from many behavioral, verbal, and nonverbal cues

Strategy

Focus on agentic goals.
Use attention early on: bonding facilitates seduction and emotional investment.
Restrict your later attention for quality time, and withhold it when undeserved.

4. Cognitive & Informational

Transfer of knowledge, skills, or perspective.

Includes:

- Advice
- Mentorship and teaching
- Sense-making

Power logic

It's high leverage giving, costs little, and adds a ton of value. It can also empower the giver thanks to teacher-pupil dynamics.

Strategy

Knowledge transfer can be priceless, but easily discounted at the price of hot air. Keep the most advanced insights for allies and worthy recipients.

5. Social Capital

Use of one's social status, reputation, or connections to benefit another.

Includes:

- Introductions
- Endorsements
- Access to groups/places
- Reputation/status-building
- Coalition-building

Power logic

Social capital investment can yield high returns, and some men acquire good status and power as 'connectors'. But it's an investment fraught with risks. Social investment is easy to give, valuable to others, but easy to forget.

Social Investment	Low ROI Risks
Introductions	Feels like stock socializing, and your intros soon feel like their own connections
Access to your circle	Feels like 'bringing a +1' and framing it as a give makes you look petty ('social bean counting™)
Endorsements	Feels like earned reputation if they do well, while you get the costs if they screw up

Strategy

A safe approach is to **keep your best contacts like poker cards**: close to you, but inaccessible to others. Exceptions are for allies and worthy recipients, not unproven folks.

6. Commitment

Binding oneself to future action.

Includes:

- Promises

- Exclusivity
- Public commitments
- Marriage
- Provisioning/protection

Power logic

> The higher one's value, the higher the resistance to commitment

There are eceptions to this rule, but **selectivity must increase with your increasing value**.

Binding commitments, including marriage, are costly but often under-appreciated.
High value men give a lot with marriage, but to most it feels like a normal step, rather than a large give (⍰ see video analysis ↗).
Be careful.

Strategy

Become a high-value, high self-sufficiency man. **Let others worry about earning your commitment**—it's their job to prove they're worthy.

⍰⍰ **Pro tip**: Avoid verbal commitments in dating. They signal neediness and dishonor, while largely failing to convince because they're easily faked.

7. Physical

- Bodily labor (e.g., helping move, carry stuff)
- Touch
- Sex/intimacy
- Protection

Power logic

It's high effort, yet it can be empowering when framed as prosociality or 'gallant'.
Often the higher cost of physical help is the associated time or emotional investment.

Strategy

Help with small everyday stuff to signal prosociality. But ensure you're never seen as dumb and low-value muscle.

In sexual escalation, never show desperation during 'last-minute resistance' or it lowers your perceived mate value.
Advanced escalation is making her *want* to do it.

Smart Investing: Strategic Layer

Social investing is crucial to succeed in life. It's the first step that moves you from 'random stranger' to a valuable connection, a friend, or an attractive partner.
Mutual investment also *keeps* relationships healthy (see 'win-win dating for women').

Over-investment undermines respect. But withholding investment prevents you from entering relationships with higher-value individuals.
So the key is to *smart investment*, a complex endeavour that few properly learn.

Social strategy 101: move to the side, don't lean in, quit gesturing. And potentially reconsider your friends

Effective Social Investing

A general principle is:

⚖ **Maximize your personal value signaling first, and then display and strategically invest the difference**

Strategic players work on themselves to:

- **Increase actual value** with self-development (ie.: strategic dominance, looks, and body language)
- **'Market' your value effectively**, for example, with strategic value display
- **Calibrate your investment** and signals. The optimum balance varies by individual, context, and their interest
- **Get investment back,** task others, 'thread expand' their effort to self-frame as 'the prize'

Learn more:

- **Power intelligence**, and learn effective calculation
- **Escape naive self-help**, look into positive Machiavellianism
- **Smart cooperator**

Social ROI Strategies

Downplay effort to signal high-genetic value

Make it seem like good results come naturally to you ('sprezzatura').

Work for results, while minimizing visible effort

For example, to approach a woman far away, play it like you're going there for another reason.

Some exceptions apply
For example, with sustained courtships that may work to win a woman over for provider-types, going for a provider

strategy.

Pay the Entry Price: Apprenticeship & Entry Tickets

Trying to be the 'king' or alpha type as a beginner is a trap. Remember that power beats status.

In your learning phase, focus on hard skills that grow factual power, rather than *looking* powerful.
Initial high-effort to learn from a master or 'buy into' a higher-value circle is not low-value, it's smart Capital Expenditure (CapEx).

Power tip for your learning curve:

- **Fail privately, win publicly**: private high-effort for growing skills, public display of skills

Advanced calibration

This article gives you the foundations.
For the advanced calibration used by the top 1%, see Power University.

Check Power University

Geomaxxing Explained: The Power Dynamics Most Men Miss

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 February 2026 · Archived copy · Original

If you're a Western man thinking about geomaxxing, or moving where dating is easier, listen closely.

Geomaxxing works.
The attraction boost is real. I've lived it for years.

But it ALSO comes with hidden risks — including a crucial one: **infidelity**.

Not because women are "worse" anywhere.
But because **power dynamics shift**, and most men don't understand what that shift does to relationships.

So let's break down the benefits—and the real dangers—of geomaxxing.

Contents

- Geomaxxing: Intro
  - Issue #1: Poorer Environment = Higher Odds of Expedient Behavior
  - Issue #2: Power differentials push problems from "in your face" to "behind your back"
  - Issue #3: Power differentials make genuine bonding harder
  - Issue #4: Submissive to You = Submissive to Everyone
  - Issue #5: Dominance Can Promote Revenge-Seeking. Culture Won't Help
- Solutions For Effective Geomaxxing
  - 1. Be Smart With Your Money
  - 2: Pick Right
  - 3: Bond With Her
  - 4: Teach Her to Speak Up
  - 5: Have a Good Relationship — Or None
  - 6: Become An Empowered Man

Geomaxxing: Intro

Geomaxxing is a ‘dating hack‘ consisting of moving to locations that offer better dating opportunities, given the peculiarities of the local sexual marketplace dynamics.
For example, it may include a favorable gender ratio, lower income compared to the foreigner, or a preference for the foreigner’s skin color.

I’ve been geomaxxing all my life before it even had a name. I’ve moved for personal growth, lifestyle, income… and yes, to experience dating all around the world.

Cumulatively, **I have spent years across the most popular “geomaxxing locations”**: Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, South America, and even Sub-Saharan Africa.

The dating advantages of geomaxxing are real and strong, and we consider it a top dating strategy here at TPM.
I’ve seen a few dating coaches downplay its effectiveness, and I’ve often thought it was either a lack of experience or potentially manipulative behavior to protect their business.
Take my example: I’m not a model — yet I’ve been approached, asked for pictures, and pursued. One girl once rushed to leave an event with me. And another one found me on Facebook and complained that I didn’t have time to meet her.

Things that almost never happen in the West.

But here’s the part most men overlook:

The same power dynamics that give you huge advantages… also introduce hidden risks you MUST understand and mitigate.

Let’s start.

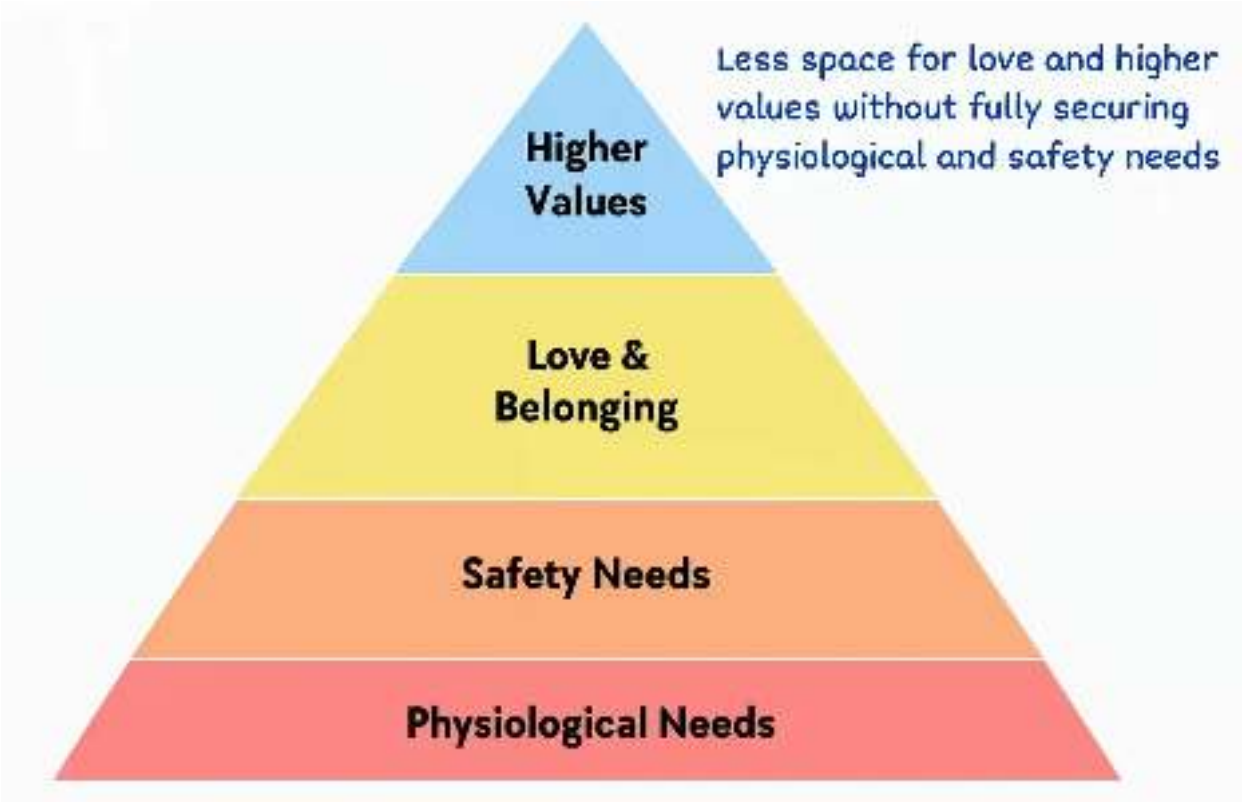
Issue #1: Poorer Environment = Higher Odds of Expedient Behavior

I don’t want to be misquoted on this, so please remember that this is a general theory and people differ. Great people exist everywhere.

That said, the principle is:

⚖️ **The closer someone is to survival needs, the less room they have for higher values.**

Similar to Maslow’s hierarchy.
When basic needs aren’t secure, you do what you must to survive.



Not because you're a worse person, of course — and in some aspects, harsher childhoods provide benefits. For example, people who struggled tend to be less entitled and potentially less narcissistic.

But neediness shifts priorities.
Honor isn't a priority. Getting resources is.

Some men miss these dynamics because they're not 'in your face obvious'.
Chances are you're not dating the poorest women alive. But neediness exists on a spectrum; different people sit at different levels on the curve, and different societies produce different averages.

Potential For Faster Life Strategies

Epigenetics suggests that a person's environment can influence gene expression (Adhya, 2020).

Specifically, life history theory suggests that **harsher environments cue people towards a faster life strategy, which is more associated with unrestricted sociosexuality** and dark-triad traits (Belsky, Steinberg & Draper, 1991).
Fast life strategies may also relate to the cooperation/cheat approaches, promoting more opportunistic behavior (Workman and Reader, 2021).

Many men moving to less affluent regions don't realize that **the local bell curve of life strategies has shifted towards a faster life strategy**.
And with faster life strategies comes **short-term thinking** and a higher risk of:

- **using you** for resources, passport, or status-hiking
- **security-seeking motives**, not love
- **fast consumption** and no savings (⚠ tip: ensure it's not your money being drained and that you're not the emergency fund)
- **STD risks** as unprotected sex may be more widespread
- **"side options"** and back-up mates
- **concealed partners**

Or a host of small or large lies, games, and power moves to secure one's future or the family's future.

Plenty of expats and passport bros found this out *too late*.
And that's still better than never finding out at all.

⚠ **As a wealthier foreigner, you're a *target* for scammers**
Because you're pre-framed as being wealthier, and potentially naive for being 'pampered' by safer Western standards. This also applies to everyday small scams like inflated checks: even good people can be quick to justify the scam with the frame of 'he can afford it'

Issue #2: Power differentials push problems from "in your face" to "behind your back"

The reason why men are more successful in certain locations boils down to power.
Whether it's attractiveness, uniqueness, higher dominance, status, or money… these are all aspects of dating power dynamics.

While higher power for you is good, lower power for her means less assertiveness and less power to speak up, communicate issues, and have her needs met. Plus, higher neediness means more 'caution' out of fear of upsetting you and maybe losing you.
That can lead to hiding issues, and unaddressed issues don't disappear — **hidden issues move from "to your face" to "behind your back."**

This isn't about character being bad, of course. It's about the general dynamics that change the context. And context can change behavior.

In comparison, an empowered woman who thinks of herself as having the same value as any man will speak up to your face.
Some guys may not like that, but when everyone's needs are met, the relationship is stronger.

P.S.: High power is a precondition of honorable behavior
These dynamics also mean that personal power is the foundation of honor and values. Higher values are the prerogative of those who are well-fed, well-off, and NOT needy of others.

Example

A girl I was seeing would not contact me much because she was worried that she would bother me.

That may seem the dream relationship for an avoidant-attachment and high-agency type of man.
But the truth was that she was suffering with little contact, didn't speak up about her needs, and that undermined the relationship.

Disengaged men can push women into emotional affairs
Situations like these also introduce infidelity risks because women may look for company and companionship with someone. And an emotional affair can easily transition into a sexual one.

Issue #3: Power differentials make genuine bonding harder

It's harder to connect with a woman who is — or *thinks* she is — too far below you.

And if she needs you much, as we've already said, she presents her best version instead of her full self.

Problem for you is: **hiding her true self undermines the premise of a genuine, honest, and win-win relationship.**
You can ONLY have a genuine relationship with partners who show up with their true and full self.

In comparison, an empowered woman who thinks well of herself has no need to hide any part of her personality.

Example

I never felt connected to the girl mentioned before like I felt with other women — that's the truth.

She didn't present her true self and didn't communicate clearly like I wanted. Over time, it made me less attracted, less trusting, and even having less respect.

Once the relationship ended, it was also a very different feeling. The relationship with past women with whom I bonded meant something.
With her, much less. Once it ended, it was more like the song *"just somebody I used to know"*, and '*I'm glad that it was over*'.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **I don't trust lower-power people**

Lucio:
Not because they're untrustworthy, but because they don't have the personal power and confidence to speak their minds and show their true selves.
And it's simple logic: **how can you truly trust someone who's not showing his full self**?

And if they're lower value and need you, they have an *incentive* to present their best self, and hide their full self.

This is interpersonal power dynamics 101: you can only trust affection and love from above, not below.

Issue #4: Submissive to You = Submissive to Everyone

Most men prefer a more submissive partner than a 'stronger' one.

But here's the mistake they confuse *"submissive to me"* with *"submissive as a trait"*, and **confuse submissiveness for relationship safety and faithfulness.**

A submissive woman is submissive to **everyone** — not just you.

All it takes is:

1. a confident guy
2. who makes a smooth move
3. who spots her interest
4. and takes her hand, leading

And she follows.
I didn't read that in a book…

In contrast, a more empowered woman may say 'no thank you' first, before the approcher has a chance to make inroads. And she may resist anyone taking her hand or leading a bit too dominantly because she is more power aware and not as submissive.
It's not a guarantee, mind you, but it's an important line of defense.

Issue #5: Dominance Can Promote Revenge-Seeking. Culture Won't Help

Some think leaving the West means escaping "hookup culture" and finding more faithful societies.

Sometimes that belief is strengthened by more conservative cultures and religious faith.
We agree that culture is important and does indeed shape personalities and behavior. However, **human nature runs deeper than culture.**

And here's another potential issue with power differential: **over-dominance without warmth and connection creates protest behavior.**
Such as, she goes along with his choices because she's passive and wants the lifestyle. But since she loses out and since he usually gets it his way, small things add up. Result: she resents the dominant man, and cheating isn't only 'fair game', but something she may *relish*.

We can see possible protest behavior in this power-imbalanced relationship lacking warmth. I wouldn't exclude this move was revenge

If you don't build:

- a bond
- trust
- and a win-win relationship

Infidelity becomes more likely, despite or even *because* of your higher power.
Your increased "status" abroad gives you a false sense of security.

Example: Status & Looks Failed Him

I approached a girl at a mall, and it went like this:

> **Her**: I'm waiting for my boyfriend
> **Me**: Let's exchange contact quickly then
> **Her**: (looks around furtively, pulls out her phone, and gives me her contact)

Right after that, I went up on the second floor to observe (I do what I do because I'm interested in people and social dynamics).

Her boyfriend arrived shortly after. He was a Western guy.
Tall. Handsome. Fit. Stylish. A true 'alpha' and a total winner.

As much as I think well of myself, on paper, this guy was higher sexual market value. Yet, the next day she came straight to my place.
That guy had a poor relationship, and high SMV didn't save him.

P.S.: This is why I've never been too into the red pill
and why this website is more advanced. Sure, principles like 'alpha fucks, beta bucks' describe valid general principles. But principles describe *averages*. Experience the exceptions enough times, and your mindset starts to shift. This is why we write for exceptional men here, who can achieve exceptional dating results.

Solutions For Effective Geomaxxing

Focusing on the basics:

1. Be Smart With Your Money

Whenever possible, **never lead with money first**.

If you start with money, the whole dynamic and relationship change.
It's worse than being a provider in the West; if the income gap is large, it's more like you being a *sponsor*.

However, the truth is that different men have different 'value currencies' to offer. And using money may be a fair approach for some.
But if you rely on money, ensure you control the purse. And I also recommend avoiding supporting the needs of her extended family.

Also see:

- Self-defense strategies

> Self-Protection in Love and Business, Without Losing Trust

⍰⍰ N.B.: higher-status & wealthier women are more loyal!

This may seem counterintuitive to some men, but it aligns with our analyses, and it's confirmed by research.
From the authoritative *Oxford Handbook of Infidelity*:

> For women, those who are economically dependent on their partner are more likely to engage in infidelity than either women who provide all the income in a household (i.e., the breadwinners) or women who are in an economically equal relationship (Munsch, 2015).

2: Pick Right

We talked about general trends.
But people differ enormously:

- values
- character
- personality
- compatibility with you

Of course, if you're not doing relationships, this matters less to you.
But still, pick good enough to stay safe and healthy!

3: Bond With Her

Get to know the real her and connect at a deeper level.

Lead the conversation, but don't *dominate* the conversation in the sense that you crowd her out.
Don't talk *at* her. Talk *with* her.

A woman who doesn't feel bonded also doesn't feel bad about cheating.
On the contrary, a woman who is bonded to you *values* that bond, wants the best for you, and feels bad about harming you.

Also read:

- How to bond with women and people

4: Teach Her to Speak Up

Don't fall for:

"I like what you like."
or
"I'm OK with anything."

Don't worry, she doesn't need to be ultra-assertive.
But she must share:

- preferences
- needs
- opinions

Otherwise, you're dating a mask, not a person.

5: Have a Good Relationship — Or None

A good relationship itself adds **positive incentives** to remain loyal.

This isn't about making someone a saint; it's about her own self-interest and self-preservation instincts. **When you have something good, you're positively worried about losing it.**
It's a natural desire not to break something valuable (and you don't even need to mate guard!).

This is the uplifting approach to *positive* control that we champion here.
Making people *want*, instead of coercing and controlling. Quality men have this option, use it! It's also the most honorable.

Example

From personal experience, the relationship I felt safest in, loyalty-wise, was with a higher-status Western woman.

Why?
Well, it helped that it was an early relationship and we were more like equals. But also:

1. **I knew she'd speak up** if something was wrong
2. **She wasn't needy**, so no incentive to entertain several men
3. **She grew up well-off**, prime for slow life strategies and cooperation
4. **She presented her true full self**, no masks, no liking everything I liked
5. **Relationship quality created a strong** bond that betrayal would destroy

Also read:

- How to maintain power and attraction in relationships

> How to Maintain Her Attraction in a Relationship: 7 Strategies of High Value Men

6: Become An Empowered Man

At the end of the day:

Geomaxxing is powerful.
But the biggest “maxxing” isn’t geography — it’s becoming a high-value and power-aware man.

Because if you have power with warmth, some ‘game’, and relationship skills… You can meet good women anywhere.

And if you don’t…
A passport enslaves you instead of freeing you.

We teach the ins and outs of power dynamics in **Power University**.
And for dating specifically, **Seduction University** takes you from “passport bro” to a global, top-1% man who succeeds anywhere.

Join Seduction University

Effective Calculativeness: How Strategic Giving Builds Power and Honor

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 February 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Many people approach generosity as an unquestioned virtue.
At The Power Moves, we've studied decades of real-world social dynamics, psychological research, and strategic interactions to understand how giving functions in practice.

Our conclusion shows that giving without strategy, what we call '**naive giving**', often backfires. Misallocating limited resources slows or halts personal advancement, undermines status and respect, and harms society.

In this article, we break down the principles of **effective calculativeness**: how to invest your time, energy, and resources strategically, maximize returns, and maintain strong relationships—without turning cold.
Let's dive in.

Effective calculativeness is a core component of strategic thinking

Contents

- Effective Calculativeness™
  - Honorable Calculativeness™
- Why Naive Giving Fails
  - How Manipulators Confuse You
- 7 Rules of Effective Calculativeness
  - 1. Increase Your Value, & Signal It Strategically
  - 2. Ask "What's In It For Me?" (WIIFM)
  - 3. Analyze Alternatives
  - 4. If the ROI is Good, Give Back to Lock Win-Win
  - 5. If ROI is Poor, Don't Engage, or Cut Losses

- 6. Be Strategic: Calculate, But Act Like You're Not
- 7. Add the 'Honorable Approach' For Best of Both Worlds
- Bonus: Gain the Edge by Reading People (Advanced Systems)

Effective Calculativeness™

Effective Calculativeness™ means evaluating where your limited time, energy, and resources produce the highest strategic return, and investing accordingly.

Calculativeness supports 'social accounting', is a foundational component of **strategic thinking**, and is related to power intelligence. Together, they boost your odds of achieving goals and climbing upward. As such, calculativeness doesn't make you 'selfish', **calculativeness makes you an effective man**.

Calculativeness alone, though, doesn't guarantee success. As with most traits, **calculativeness must be calibrated** to be effective.
This is a universal principle whereby advanced results depend not on 'laws', but on calibration and balance.
If calculativeness is overdone and misplaced, for example, within win-win relationships, it can undermine communion, attachment, and potentially attraction.

Learn more:

- **Social exchange theory**, social exchange laws and sexual marketplace for dating
- **Social Investment Model™**: the starting point for social investment dynamics
- How to be positively Machiavellian and Machiavellianism, a personality trait high in calculativeness and strategic thinking

Honorable Calculativeness™

Honorable Calculativeness™ pursues agentic goals, but with a preference for win-win, a distaste for being a burden, and the goal of creating net positive value with one's work and life

Honor requires calculativeness.

Coupled with an 'honorable man' approach, **calculativeness is the skill that allows you to be a net contributor to society** and to the world.

🧔♂Lucio's Story: **Calculative honor vs. 'unculculative dishonor'**

Lucio:
Years ago, while backpacking, I went out with hostel travelers. Some got drinks, but I didn't because I was on a budget.

A guy who few seemed to like started telling me aloud that 'where he comes from, everyone chips in money in a common pool, independently of who has it, and they all drink'.
He was trying to gang up with me to shame the drinkers into sharing.

I thought it was cheap guilt-tripping. Uncalculativeness was convenient for him, but I didn't want any part in that. No interest in being the scrounger.

Calculative Allocation of Resources Moves Humanity Forward

> Humanity and the world advance with the smart allocation of investment.

In financial investment, good investors are givers because they provide capital to good companies that make better products, for everyone's benefit.
Poor investors harm the system by wasting resources on inefficient companies. Everyone pays the price.

Interpersonal investment works the same way.
When generosity is non-selective, social investment is misallocated. Resources are diverted from contributors to takers. This keeps taker-strategies viable which may instead disappear when 'starved'.
Misallocation may also further corrupt the receivers, who can grow entitled and learn to scrounge instead of working.

Over time, productive reciprocity networks weaken while exploitative strategies keep draining the system. At scale, this makes society worse off.

Invest in quality people instead, and humanity improves. Seen from this point of view, honorable calculativeness may as well be a moral duty.

Why Naive Giving Fails

> Every minute spent on a “taker” is a minute stolen from a “giver” or a worthy cause.

Naive giving is a vulnerability ready to be exploited. As Machiavelli said, ‘Any man who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great number who are not good’.

Social interactions operate under exchange principles, where individuals evaluate costs, benefits, and alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Blau, 1964; Becker, 1976).

Even without considering predation, a lack of sophisticated social accounting is bound to be a strategic disadvantage.
Indiscriminate giving always fails agentic men looking to advance and achieve goals. To advance and achieve goals, you need return on investment.
Psychologist Adam Grant’s research into give and take supports this conclusion: naive givers lose out, while *strategic* givers advance.

Learn more:

- Effective cooperator: cooperate and give *smart*, without being naive
- Effective cynicism: the optimum balance between naïve cooperation and chronic suspicion

Naive giving undermines respect
Investing without returns signals lower value, undiscerning naivete, and makes you the sucker in the sucker’s trade. Nobody respects the sucker. Bad for success, respect, and self-respect.

How Manipulators Confuse You

First off, notice a double standard:

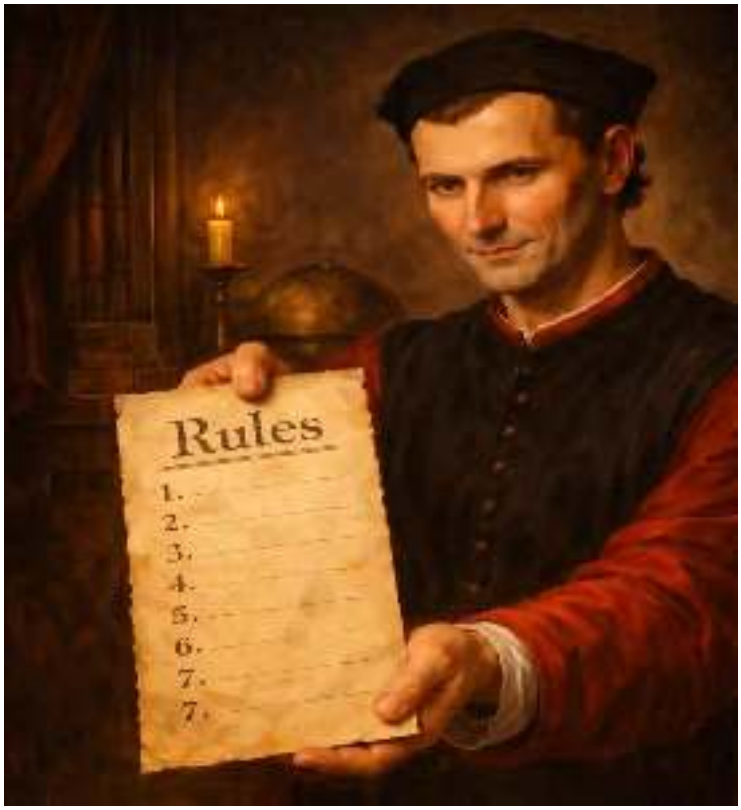
- Calculativeness in business = good
- Calculativeness in life = ‘bad’

Calculativeness in business is called due diligence, common sense, and dumb to skip. Yet, in our personal lives, you're discouraged from doing the same with your time and effort.
This shaming is a form of social manipulation. It functions on two levels:

- **Virtue signal** "uncalculativeness" to project an image of goodness
- **Handicap the competition** that falls for it and wastes resources

The only beneficiaries are the takers. And the tragedy is that **this double standard dupes the best men—**the generous, moral men who genuinely want to do good.

7 Rules of Effective Calculativeness



Here's how to become an effective and honorable calculator:

1. Increase Your Value, & Signal It Strategically

Value is the starting point.

Calculative before value protects you from takers, but it does not empower you with you quantity and quality of options.

Instead, work on yourself to become an attractive exchange partners. **Value is how you attract people and opportunities** to you, be in socialization, work, or dating.
As you grow your value, you want to progress into how to market it effectively. Also see:

- How to be a high-value man
- Signal value: show value in dating, (covertly) brag, and display competence
- **Power University**: The ultimate guide to becoming high value

1.2. Be High Power & High Warmth

Warmth invites others to you by signaling that win-win is possible, while power discourages and thwarts all types of

takers.

See:

- Power with warmth
- Effective social dominance

2. Ask "What's In It For Me?" (WIIFM)

All your investments should have a return.

The return that matters varies depending on context and goals, and isn't always and necessarily material. Returns may be emotional support, networking, or simply having a good time socializing.

3. Analyze Alternatives

Returns are relative, not absolute. A "good" investment is poor if a better alternative exists.

This is especially more relevant as your optionality increases with your value. This means that **the importance of effective calculativeness grows in tandem with your personal growth**.

Some golden principles:

- **Shop around**: The bigger the investment, the more deeply you test the market
- **Test & assess the recipients**: Are they grateful or entitled? Supporting you when you're in need?
- **Ask if you'd be better off on your own**: Do you really need an employer? Or a wife? You may also be by yourself <— This strategy has become more feasible for men in recent decades

Also read:

- Empowered individualism for an individual-centric mindset

4. If the ROI is Good, Give Back to Lock Win-Win

Once you've engaged a high-value partner or friend, give back to maintain the win-win.

While from an amoral point of view 'take as much as possible' may provide the largest returns, it's also a risky approach. Notably, most people are matchers and will avoid takers (*especially* the ambitious ones).
Two, former naive players can wise up, and may turn on you (and for good reasons).

In the end, when it comes to high-value and high-quality people, win-win relationships tend to outperform. Evolutionary biology supports this principle: people preferentially invest in relationships where returns are likely, making win-win the strongest relationships (Trivers, 1971).

Game theory of a good reputation: inviting more bids, at lower transactional costs
A reputation for someone who pays back invites more bids for cooperation and lowers the transaction costs of future deals because people trust you (Sylwester and Roberts, 2010).

5. If ROI is Poor, Don't Engage, or Cut Losses

Don't lend. Don't listen to their 3-hour vents. Don't meet for "coffee" to give free advice.

If you struggle saying no, you're in 'too nice guy' territory. Work on assertiveness, rejection tactics, or start with 'how to be a good asshole' before graduating to honorable man.
If you must maintain a working relationship, use the 'arms' length approach'.

⍰⍰ PRO Tip: think about ALL returns
Giving and taking apply across *any* form of value. Just to name a few, givers can raise your status with friends, boost your reputation at work, or simply listen. Takers can be low-level hostile with micro-aggression or covert power moves, publicly social climb on you, use relational aggression to undermine you, or 'simply' emotionally drain you.

6. Be Strategic: Calculate, But Act Like You're Not

In many everyday situations and first impressions, the sweetspot is to be calculative, but look like you're chill.

Remember that everyone engages in 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959). If you're the only one who doesn't, you may look overly Machiavellian or selfish. In a world where everyone virtue-signals, avoid being the odd one who 'doesn't get it'.

Some tips:

- **Pay attention to small stuff** because it previews the larger ones (ie, who pays a round, who gorges on the free buffet, etc.)
- **Act like you don't care about small stuff**

Avoid Social Bean Counting™
Social bean-counting™ is the over-preoccupation with tracking interpersonal credits and debts, especially over trivial matters or in contexts where connection or shared experience is the primary objective rather than exchange optimization.
Nobody likes this guy. Don't be one.

Also see:

Strategic thinking case studies: 3 real-life examples of strategic thinking to land a job, an attractive woman, and the life of your dream

7. Add the 'Honorable Approach' For Best of Both Worlds

Here's how:

1. **Prefer win-win** over win-lose
2. **Dislike being a taker**
3. **Always remember a 'give'**, keep a mental 'social credit'
4. **Always pay back a previous give**
5. **Relax calculativeness in established win-win relationships**
6. **Make 'adding value' your life's ultimate goal**

More often than not, honorable calculativeness outperforms pure calculativeness for life quality. Honorable calculativeness is better placed to deliver both self-advancement and great relationships.

Reminder: Communal relationships must be earned. And protect your downsides anyway
Only move from 'Exchange' to 'Communal' with worthy partners who have *proven* reciprocity. But keep a laxer 'background calculation' to ensure relationships *remain* win-win. And deploy self-defense strategies to ensure that you'll always land on your feet.

And the advanced step:

Bonus: Gain the Edge by Reading People (Advanced Systems)

Reading people is a crucial life skill.
It allows you to invest in the right people, without having to waste weeks, months or even years investing in the wrong people.

It's just like financial investment again. Poor investors who fail to assess companies lose money. Good investors get rich.
Some resources to get you started:

- Storytelling Red Flags: Recognizing Poor Friends
- ▯ One single power move can tell you who's a poor friend ↗ (video opens in new tab)
- ▯ Red flags from your girlfriend's girlfriends ↗ (video opens in new tab)

For the advanced level, we devised a new system for reading people, based not on pop-psychology 'deception cues' that mislead you, but on real-world power dynamics. It helps you assess not just lies, but *characters*.
We released it as a bonus lesson in our flagship course:

Check Power University

Why The 48 Laws of Power Doesn't Work: 5 Systemic Flaws

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 February 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Many men read *The 48 Laws of Power* to become more effective in life, learning about manipulation, strategies, and dark psychology.

However, despite being potentially eye-opening, **many find little practical improvement in their lives** — because the 48 Laws of Power often don't work in the modern world.

Some of our readers noted that the real difference came from foundational frameworks, mindsets, and calibration that turn tactical maxims into strategies, skills, and mindsets that deliver results.

This article fixes these issues for ambitious men who want real influence — not 'edginess' for its own sake.

⍰⍰ For the overview, see the main 48 Laws of Power guide

Contents

- Intro: The 5 Systemic Flaws
  - 1. Low Power (Laws 38, 24, 46, etc.)
  - 2. Over-cynicism & Paranoia (Laws 2, 12, 18, 20, 40)
  - 3. Defection Over Cooperation (laws 7, 12, 14, 33, 44)
  - 4. Coercion Over Conversion (Laws 11, 17)
  - 5. Maxims Don't Map to Real Power Principles
  - Bonus: Image Over Substance (laws 6, 30, 34, 37).
  - FAQs
- Laws of Power That Work

Intro: The 5 Systemic Flaws

We summarize the reason why The 48 Laws of Power doesn't work in this table:

Pattern	Example	Why it Fails
Low power mindsets	*'Behave like others'*	Subordinating individual sovereignty to the collective weakens an ambitious man's potential
Over-cynicism	*Despise the Free Lunch*	It mentally predisposes to defection and mistrust, undermining the long-term benefits of win-win
Defection over cooperation	*Pose as a friend, work as a spy*	Defection underperforms smart cooperation long-term
Coercion over conversion	*Keep others in suspended terror*	Value-taking as default underperforms smart value-exchanging as default
Sub-optimal 'laws'	*Say Less Than Necessary*	Maxims seldom describe deeper power principles, are contradicted by research, & backfire without calibration

Let's review better:

1. Low Power (Laws 38, 24, 46, etc.)

Advice that promotes behaviors and mindsets of submissive, unassertive, and unconfident men

Many ask: "is *The 48 Laws of Power* actually effective at gaining power?" The truth is that despite its name, many laws disempower, sub-communicating a lack of agency and self-trust.

Some laws at odds with an empowered man's mindset and behavior are:

Law	⍰ Low Power Sub-commmunication
Think as You Like but Behave Like Others (Law 38)	⍰⍰ Comply with the group, or you'll be punished
Never Outshine the Master (Law 1)	⍰⍰ Play small because without the master/job you're screwed
Play the Perfect Courtier (Law 24)	⍰⍰ Be yielding to stay in the court because outside of it you can't succeed
Avoid Stepping into a Great Man's Shoes (41)	⍰⍰ You cannot compare to previous greats
Never Appear too Perfect (Law 46)	⍰⍰ You must average yourself down because I need others to like me

Behaviorally, 'playing the perfect courtier' invites readers to be yielding and indirect, both associate with submissiveness, passive aggression, and sneakiness.

Mentally, 'Never Appear Too Perfect', 'Never Outshine the Master', and 'Behave Like Others' predispose you towards a defensive, others-oriented mindset to protect the status quo instead of a more empowered self-advancement orientation.

Reality check: would a top-0.1% man (think Donald Trump, Steve Jobs) worry about 'never outshining the master'?
Do you think that a grandiose, confident, high agency man would be too worried about 'behaving like others', 'never outshining his boss', or 'not appearing too perfect'? Probably not. These men are busy becoming masters of their world and changing the laws to what *they* prefer.

Group-Focus Disempowers You as an Individual

> The more you focus on ohers, the less you can focus on yourself

Laws that orient you towards fitting in the group disempower you as an individual. This is what we refer to as 'collective psychology' over an empowered individual psychology. **Collectively-oriented men fail to live their best lives because they put others above themselves.**

Read more here:

- **Empowered individualism**: the psychology of high-power individualism

🧍♂️Lucio's Experience: **My best life outshining masters**

Lucio:
In my first job as a 'talent graduate rotational programme', my immediate bosses had limited power over me because my mentor was a senior manager and my HR contact was a partner.

In my last job, my boss didn't mind that I'd outshine him because he had shares in the company. My outshining helped me secure a better position, salary, and equity package of my own after I had quit to travel the world (see the story here).

And my best life came when I stopped worrying about bosses altogether to work on The Power Moves. Today, 'Never Outshine the Master' feels like a small-timer mindset to me.

Defensive Logic to Support the Laws

Many 'laws' that on paper could apply to some circumstances are supported by defensive logic.
For example, in 'Say Less Than Necessary', Greene says that '*The more you say, the more likely you are to emit something foolish*', which sub-communicates a lack of confidence and self-trust.

Between the law titles and initial descriptions, Greene also uses 'always' ten times, but *sixteen* times the word 'never', highlighting a tendency towards threat-avoidance.

Low-Power Masked as Cynical Power

Several coercive and manipulative laws sound amorally Machiavellian, but inadvertently signal and nudge towards low-power mindsets.

For example, 'Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew' and 'Keep Others Dependent' betray a *lack* of self-sufficiency because high-value men don't need dependents.

Even 'Let Others Do the Work, but Always Take the Credit' can put you in a scarcity mindset of having to rely on others' work, instead of trusting that you can get enough recognition for your own.

These mindsets can sidetrack you into low-power, sneaky approaches instead of higher leverage self-empowerment.

Read more in:

- **Law of Power for Life Conquerors**, laws rewritten for top-1% men

2. Over-cynicism & Paranoia (Laws 2, 12, 18, 20, 40)

Over-cynicism is the mental source of 'defection over cooperation', and it transpires across the full book.

Over-cynicism	Positive Cynicism
Don't trust your friends, make some enemies	Don't over-trust anyone, but proven friends > enemies
Despise the Free Lunch	Be wary of social exchange manipulators, but accept free lunches as first-cooperative moves, and to access your higher value

Over-cynicism can limit practical outcomes because it can lose win-win opportunities. And it can also have *psychological* costs
For example, research found that Machiavellians are more dissatisfied with work and everyday life, and they tend to be alienated (Bereczkei, 2021).

Learn more:

- **Positive cynicism**: to balance the defensive benefits of cynicism, with the upsides of cooperation
- **Effective calculativeness**, the enabler of self-interest
- **How to be more Machiavellian**, in a winning way

3. Defection Over Cooperation (laws 7, 12, 14, 33, 44)

A behavioral orientation towards value-taking, manipulation, and defection, rather than attracting through high value and the possibility of win-win

Over-cynicism is the upstream mindset; defection-first behavior is its downstream expression.
And many of Greene's laws point towards defensive or aggressive short-term value-taking, rather than longer-term win-win.

Examples include:

- *Use Selective Honesty and Generosity to Disarm Your Victims* (law 12) <— Feigning cooperation to set up a con
- *Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew* (Law 33) <— Focus on negative information for emotional manipulation and blackmail
- *Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect* (Law 33) <— Focus on small-time mind games

While we embrace and advocate for learning more about defection, the goal shouldn't be to stick to defection only. **Cooperation strategies with high-value associates outperform exploitative ones** over the long-term.

For example, in *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Robert Axelrod showed that 'tit-for-tat', starting cooperative and retaliating only after defection, consistently outperformed purely defective strategies in long-term competitive environments.

A 'taker' approach may also be more damaging for leaders, who gain the most from a cooperative and engaged team.

For example, despite Greene's law on 'taking credit', studies link credit-stealing to employees' anger, lower work outcomes, and increased turnover (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001).

Read more:

- **Smart cooperator**: how to cooperate with power-intelligence
- **Self-defense strategies**: how to insulate yourself against possible defection

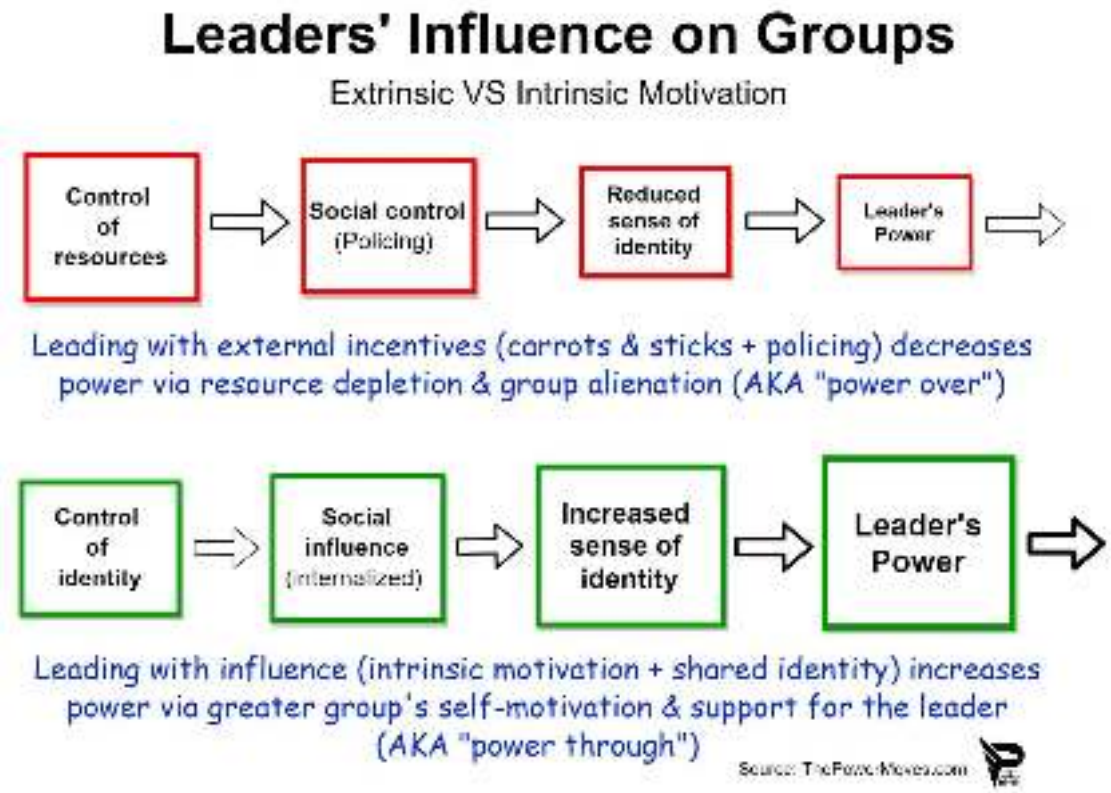
4. Coercion Over Conversion (Laws 11, 17)

An approach to coerce and constrain (push), rather than convert and attract (pull)

These two different approaches have been studied in several fields, including negotiation, status, and leadership. And, in general, the 'pull' approach of making others want to engage, trade, or follow you, is superior (especially in the modern world).

This is not to say that coercion doens't work. It does. And enforcement tools are crucial to lead effectively. But coercion tends to backfire when it's the *main* approach, as it is in Greene's 48 Laws.

For example, as explored by researcher Leon Haslam, **leadership based on coercion and control underperforms because it must spend resources on controlling and monitoring**. Leadership based on buy-in instead increases influence and engagement while *decreasing* the costs of control.



Coercive leadership requires constant control of antagonistic and demotivated subordinates

Learn better:

- **Leadership 101**
- Transformational leadership: how to inspire people
- How to become a good leader

5. Maxims Don't Map to Real Power Principles

'Laws' are memorable, but less precise and less effective.
Actual power principles are more precise and effective, but require calibration and are far less memorable.

Law (memorable)	Principle (truth)	Calibration (Hard)
Say Less Than Necessary	Speaking time correlates with leadership and social influence	Speak up during group formation, for visibility, and to influence the narrative; Listen more as an established authority and to bond
Use Absence to Increase Respect and Honor	Presence creates power; absence may amplify pre-existing power	Build leverage with high-power presence; selectively use scarcity when you know you will be missed
Appeal to Self-Interest	Self-interest is the foundation, but turns relationships transactional if it stands alone	Always cover self-interest, but play it down in relationships and appeal to higher ideals in leadership

In some passages, the advice can be not just uncalibrated but generally subpar.
For example, in the law's initial descriptions, Greene advises:

- *"Uncover something in your request, or in your alliance with him, that will benefit him, and emphasize it out of all proportion"* <— Feels manipulative, makes others feel venal, and likely underperforms
- *"You have more to fear from friends than from enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them"* <— Making enemies is bad advice, even for simplistic prose

Some other laws are plainly less effective in most everyday scenarios. For example, research found that talking time correlates so robustly with leadership emergence that the 'babble hypothesis of leadership' showed that talking quantity affords leadership *independent* of quality (MacLaren et al., 2020).

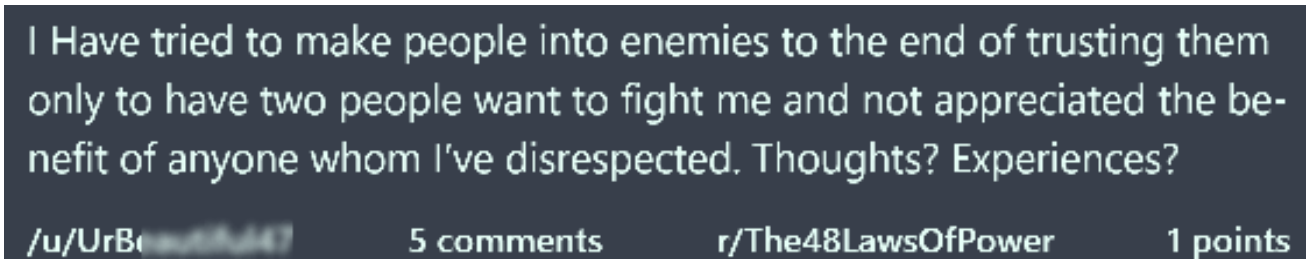
Learn better:

- **Social calibration**
- **48 Laws of Power Scientific Analysis**: For a granular, law-by-law breakdown of the scientific errors in Greene's maxims, see our

⍰ Real-Life Example of Blindly Following the 'Laws'

Warning against over-trusting anyone is solid advice; it's power intelligence 101.
Everybody should know that relationships can sour and loyalties can change depending on context, character, and incentives.

However, law #2 becomes weirdly extreme when Greene literally advises to hire enemies over friends, and 'finding a way to make enemies'.
Unfortunately, some readers may believe and apply this advice, as seen in this example from Reddit:



Source: original removed here, recovered thread here

Bonus: Image Over Substance (laws 6, 30, 34, 37).

Several 'laws' are focused on appearance without nearly as much attention to substance.
Appearances are crucial. But so are the competences, skills, and results that allow you to 'look good'.

Readers who over-focus on appearances may overlook the foundations of power. And they use appearances to *compensate* for a lack of personal power (another case of low power behavior).

Read more:

- **Foundations of self-development**

FAQs

Does The 48 Laws of Power actually work?

While The 48 Laws of Power can be entertaining and instructive, it **may not deliver consistent real-world results** for ambitious men without additional context and calibration.
Many laws promote defensive thinking, low-power mindsets, or over-cynicism, which **undermine long-term influence and goal achievement**. Simply following Greene's maxims without understanding the underlying principles often leads to **short-term manipulation at the cost of long-term power, deeper confidence, and relationships**.

Why does The 48 Laws of Power fail in real life?

The 48 Laws fail because they **prioritize appearance, coercion, and defensiveness over substance, value creation, and cooperation**. Many laws encourage low-power behaviors like playing small, small-timer manipulation, or fitting in instead of finding one's own path—all strategies that underperform for high-value men in modern social and professional environments.

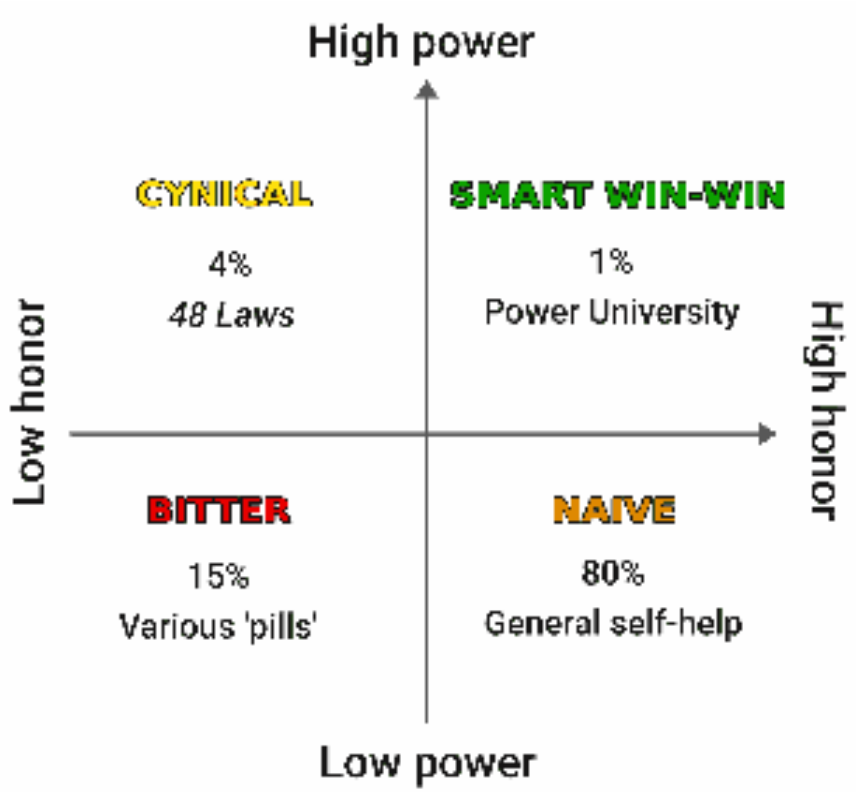
What works better than The 48 Laws of Power?

For men who want actual results—respect, status, attraction, and success— the "Smart Win-Win" framework is significantly more effective. While The 48 Laws focuses on defensive maneuvers and value-taking tactics, the TPM approach emphasizes power-related skills, practical frameworks to guide behavior, and high-power behavioral cues, blending high-value cooperation with strategic Machiavellianism. Survey results from Power University suggest that becoming a high-agency, high-power individual—rather than a "courtier"—is an effective path for modern men.

Laws of Power That Work

An effective approach that worked for many of our readers and students is:

1. **Learn truly effective strategies** based on tested frameworks and scientific power principles
2. **Be strategically Machiavellian whenever needed**, like in competitions and with shadier characters
3. **Be honorable with high-quality people** to get the best of both worlds: winning and achieving goals, and positive relationships



Cynical self-help like *The 48 Laws* performs better than naive self-help but undermines your relationships. Smart win-win uses Machiavellianism to win, plus genuine relationships for higher life quality

Power University is built on this model and has delivered real-life results in terms of respect, status, influence, and attraction to thousands of men. Check it out here:

Check Power University

Social Skills vs Power Skills: Why Likability Alone Won't Get You Ahead

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 March 2026 · Archived copy · Original

If you want respect, status, and women's attraction, mastering social skills alone won't get you there. Power skills will.

Social skills are for getting along. Power skills are for getting ahead.

At The Power Moves we've spent years decoding the science of power and we've taught thousands of ambitious men how to get ahead and achieve goals.

In this article, we'll show you why you need *power* skills more than social skills.

Contents

- Intro: Social Skills vs. Power Skills
  - The Overlap Between The Two
- The Psychology of Success: Agency vs. Communion
  - The Communion/Agency Clash
  - The Two Orientations: From Beginner to Advanced
  - Why Common Social Skills Advice Can Cost You Power
  - Successful Dating Is Power-First
  - Communion Requires Power
- Ambitious Men Better Start With Power
  - Too Nice Guys Better Start With Power
  - Next Steps

Intro: Social Skills vs. Power Skills

Social skills and power skills cater to different people, suit different goals, and require different training.

Social Skills	Power Skills
Harmony: be liked and accepted	**Impact:** influence, respect, status
Agreeable communication, validating, and supportive	**Assertive/Strategic communication**, display value, frame control
Date as friends first, see if you connect	**Date for attraction,** lead, and achieve your goal

One is not necessarily superior to the other, and which one is superior depends on personality, goals, and context.

Social skills are perfectly adequate for spending time with long-time friends when there is an established foundation of mutual respect.
And power skills are required for achieving outcomes, and for competitive environments when you don't want to be passed over, or pushed lower.

Social Skills

Typical social skills include:

- Smooth conversations
- Graceful exits
- Making friends and 'how to keep in touch with them'

Advanced social skills make people think: *"He is polished."*
Social skills without power skills make you likable, but they don't give you status, respect, and influence.

Power Skills

Power skills include:

- Climbing hierarchies
- Being respected
- Influencing decisions
- Making *high-value* friends, networking
- Getting women's attraction

Advanced power skills make people think: *"Oh, he is high value."* And high-value men consistently get more out of life.
Power skills without social skills can make you come across as 'rough around the edges' or brusque, less of a good fit for a family dinner or a good gala.

You Can Have Both

Power and social skills are not mutually exclusive and the best is to have *both*, and both at *high levels*.
Advanced social skills to be smooth and charming, and effective power skills to gain respect, status, and attraction.
And of course, the calibration to know when to lean more towards one or the other.

That said, we argue that f**or agentic men it's best to prioritize power** (keep reading).

You can have both. But prioritize power

The Overlap Between The Two

There is an important overlap that both must cover for advanced outcomes.

For example, despite bonding being more communion, it supports the end goal of both intimacy and long-term, quality relationships.
So good power skills also include bonding and connection.

Similarly, group social dynamics like entering social groups, taking turns and respecting others is covered by social skills, but also support social status and popularity.
So good power skills cover it.

This is why our Power University alumni increased their social skills manyfold, despite Power University focusing more on power.
It's because students improved their social skills through the power skills.

Also see:

- **Should I start with Power University?**

> Should Beginners Start With Lucio's Power University?

But Most Social Skills Training Do *Not* Include Power

Unfortunately, since they lean more communion, **many social skills coaches over-teach communion and under-teach power.**
Plus, power skills are often more complex and nuanced, and not everyone has a good grasp of them.

This means that many social skills books and courses, even the advanced ones, may not teach the power that agentic

men need to achieve the results they want.
We also argue here that this naive self-help also fails less ambitious men, because everyone needs some knowledge of power and manipulation dynamics for self-defense.

Fortunately, the opposite is not true. For several reasons, power skills tend to better cover social skills.
In part, this is because those who learned or naturally understood power can more easily pick up the simpler and more widespread social skills. And they can, in turn, teach them together with power skills.

The Psychology of Success: Agency vs. Communion

The difference between these two paths is rooted in personality psychology.
Power skills are associated with **agency**, and social skills are more associated with **communion**.

Agency and power are associated with masculinity, communion and social skills with femininity

The Communion Pole (Getting Along)

Social skills are for people who prioritize “fitting in” and harmony. This is the **feminine pole** of socialization. It’s about warmth and connection. While useful for maintaining friendships, it does not build status.

The Agency Pole (Getting Ahead)

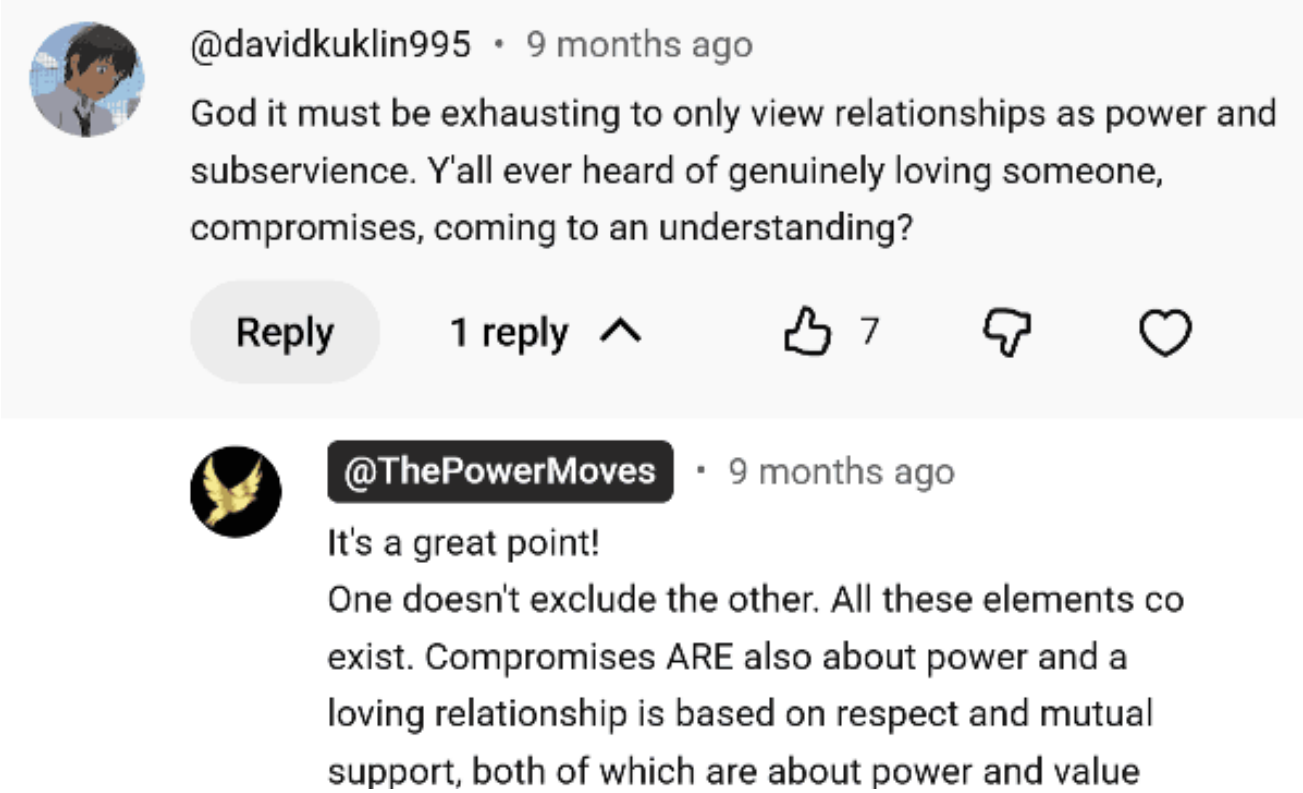
Power skills are for men who prioritize goals, progress, and outcomes. It’s more associated with **masculinity**. It’s about competence, impact, and results.
These are the men who get promoted, lead groups, and attract high-quality women.

The Communion/Agency Clash

You can sometimes most clearly see these different approaches by the reaction people have towards communion or agentic information.

For example, communion types may comment on our power dynamics analysis, ‘why does it even matter’ or ‘why

not just be yourself'.
A real-life example:



> **High-communion**: God it must be exhausting to only view relationships as power and subservience. Y'all ever heard of genuinely loving someone, compromises, coming to an understanding?

Conversely, a high-agency man wonders "why would anyone even ask 'how to keep a conversation going' if there is no goal".

In truth, they're both often better off understanding the other side.
The high communion man in our example could better appreciate that initiating a relationship requires a minimum display of agentic value and leadership, and *maintaining* a good relationship also requires keeping a minimum level of attraction and respect.

The Two Orientations: From Beginner to Advanced

Power skills can be seen as more advanced since they deliver more sought-after results.
However, the orientation towards agency or communion has more to do with personality psychology than with levels of sophistication.

And any man can lean more towards communion or agency, independently of their level of skills.

For example:

- A **communion-focused beginner** asks: *"How do I keep a conversation going?"*
- An **agentic beginner** asks: *"How do I get my classmates to respect me?"* or *"How do I get this girl to like me?"*

Advanced communion may instead want to learn how to better support a sad friend, while an advanced agentic man may wonder how to best navigate the boardroom power struggle.

Why Common Social Skills Advice Can Cost You Power

Good social skills teachers are perfectly competent to teach socialization, holding conversations, and making friends.

But if you're an agentic man, likability without respect, harmony without status, and good conversations without attraction are not exactly your best outcomes.

Worse yet, some social skills advice can even actively disempower you.

For example, a popular social skills teacher advises texting a friend: *"I thought of you."*
That is perfect for her personality, her friends, and the type of relationships she enjoys (notice she's a woman).
But if you're an agentic man, my agentic knee-jerk reaction: *"Who the f*ck does that?"*
I'd think the sender of that text is 'nice', but I also instantly see him as a low-power, too-nice guy. I may even worry if he'll get clingy or if we're both heterosexual.
It's not about being harsh — it's how an agentic mind works.

And since most people at the top are high agency, **high-communion advice can undermine your progress** socially, and professionally.

Successful Dating Is Power-First

Women are, on average, higher communion than men. But it doesn't mean they want high communion guys.

Sure, many women appreciate a high communion guy during the relationship, which is why we also encourage learning that side. It's a great plus. But the strongest *requirement* is power.

Women may be more communal themselves, but they want agentic, high-power men.

Communion Requires Power

Many men who first stumble on The Power Moves tend to believe that friendship or love stands in contrast to power.
But it couldn't be further from the truth because not only do the two go hand-in-hand, but **both friendships and love rest power**.

Already from inception, people have limited time and bandwidth and they want to select whoever gives them the best returns.
So becoming friends or lovers with someone is also a competition. To first establish that bond, you have to 'win' that competition by being valuable enough to form an association.

This is also a point made in Blau's seminal text *Exchange and Power in Social Life*:

> although men may want to associate together exclusively for the sake of sociable fellowship and have no interest in deriving any extrinsic advantage from their social relations, they must prove themselves attractive to each other by demonstrating qualities that make them preferable to other possible associates, qualities that must be comparable and that consequently are, in a relative sense, extrinsic.

Hence, don't fall for that naive, too-nice-guy dichotomy. Or, worse, don't fall for that manipulative virtue-signaling that 'love' doesn't require power or value.

Ambitious Men Better Start With Power

Ambitious men are often better off starting with power dynamics because they provide the fastest and largest returns, while also covering a good chunk of foundational social skills.

🧔♂️Lucio's Take: **My agency-first approach delivered the life I wanted**

Lucio:
I'm a good example of how power-first can work for some men.

I'm just *okay* at conversations, not great. And I don't even socialize much.
But I am much stronger at power-related outcomes, and that's allowed me to live the life I want.

I can:

- Join new groups and reliably gain status
- Come across as a valuable friend
- Get consistent results with women

And as I improved my power intelligence and skills, my friendships and relationships also substantially improved.

Starting power-first also benefits from the 'from hardest to easier' effect.
To make a comparison: power dynamics first is like mastering a race car to also cover city driving.

- The two aren't the exact same
- But if you learn racing first, you learn faster, achieve goals faster, and slow city driving feels easy

Power is car racing. Social skills are city driving.

Too Nice Guys Better Start With Power

Too nice guys are often not lacking social skills, but power.

Even more so for men than for women, power is a crucial element for a happy, successful, and even healthy life.

The truth is that **to enjoy communion, you must first learn power.**
All good relationships start with at least some display of power. This is especially true in dating and relationships, where sexual market value, leadership, and positive dominance are crucial to even start a relationship.

Next Steps

If you're more interested in outcomes, then you can consider Power University, the only dedicated program on power, masculine agency, and achieving goals:

Learn Power Skills With Power University

Why is The 48 Laws of Power So Popular? The Psychology of the Hype

Lucio Buffalmano · 9 March 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Why is *The 48 Laws of Power* so popular—and why has it stayed famous for decades, despite its flaws?

While the book is an undeniable masterpiece of storytelling and provides a necessary wake-up call to the reality of power, it also suffers from questionable morality, weak evidence, and limited real-world effectiveness.

In this guide, I break down the real psychological, marketing, and audience-fit reasons behind the book's massive success. We'll look beyond the hype to understand what actually drives the popularity of *The 48 Laws of Power*.

Let's dive in.

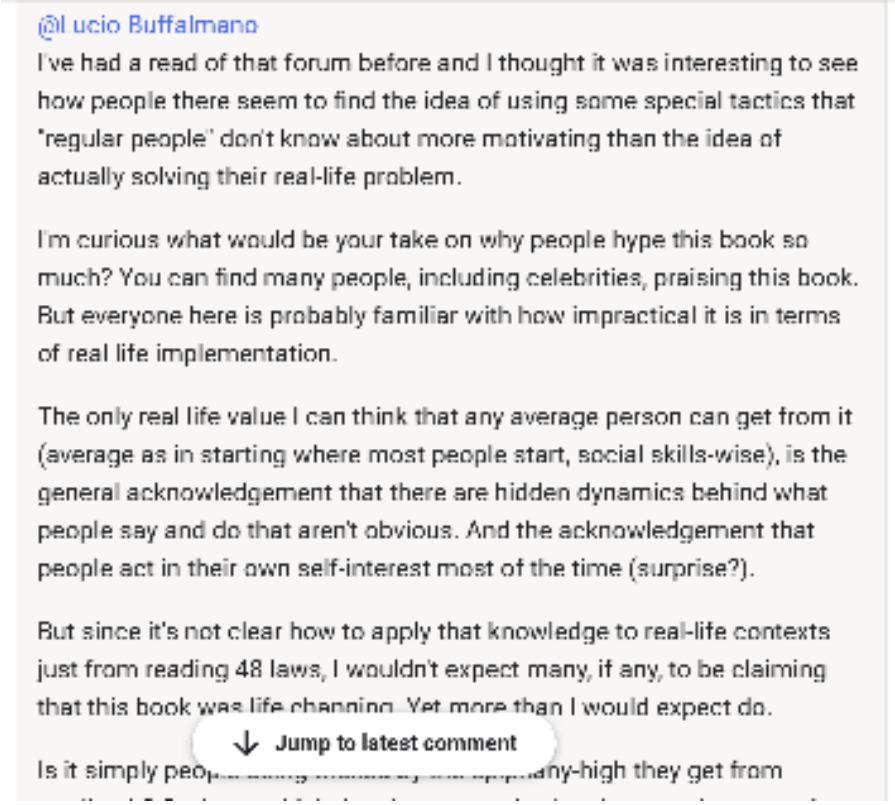
⁉⁉ For our broad overview on the book, see: 48 Laws of Power guide

Contents

- Intro
  - 1. Authority-Hijacking: Messianic Laws, Dogmatic Absolutes, & Historical Name Dropping
  - 2. Marketing Positioning: Dark Psychology Manual on "How to Be Bad (& Win)"
  - 3. From Niche Appeal to Mass Market: Power Signaling
  - 4. Cognitive Targeting: The 'IQ Sweetspot' (Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™)
- FAQs
- Moving Beyond the 'Laws'

Intro

Some time ago, I was asked why The 48 Laws of Power is so popular in The Power Moves community:



@Lucio Buffalmano

I've had a read of that forum before and I thought it was interesting to see how people there seem to find the idea of using some special tactics that "regular people" don't know about more motivating than the idea of actually solving their real-life problem.

I'm curious what would be your take on why people hype this book so much? You can find many people, including celebrities, praising this book. But everyone here is probably familiar with how impractical it is in terms of real life implementation.

The only real life value I can think that any average person can get from it (average as in starting where most people start, social skills-wise), is the general acknowledgement that there are hidden dynamics behind what people say and do that aren't obvious. And the acknowledgement that people act in their own self-interest most of the time (surprise?).

But since it's not clear how to apply that knowledge to real-life contexts just from reading 48 laws, I wouldn't expect many, if any, to be claiming that this book was life changing. Yet more than I would expect do.

Jump to latest comment

Is it simply peo[illegible]any-high they get from

> **Asker**: Why do people hype this book so much (despite) how impractical it is in terms of real-life implementation

It's a great question.

To be fair, as the asker also acknowledges, *The 48 Laws* is one of the best 'gateway' books ever written. It shatters the 'nice guy' delusion like few other books do, which is a mandatory first step for any high achiever.

Yet, it's not nearly as effective in delivering skills, mindsets, and real-life outcomes.
Why is it so popular, then?

This is why *The 48 Laws* became and remained so popular:

1. Authority-Hijacking: Messianic Laws, Dogmatic Absolutes, & Historical Name Dropping

Robert Greene is a brilliant writer, and the 48 Laws of Power is as captivating as it is **engineered for signaling authority** with:

- Messianic 'laws'
- Dogmatic absolutes
- Categorical imperatives
- Historical name-dropping
- Aesthetics of book cover & content

Let's review them:

Laws Format Signal Highest, Quasy-Divine Authority

The "laws" format is memorable and psychologically effective for signaling unquestionable authority, similar to inescapable physics laws like 'law of gravity'.

There may also be an element of the human psyche tapped by the format of 'lists of laws', similar to religious commandments: sacred, immutable… And a clear path to salvation.

Also read:

- Teacher frames
- Authority signaling: Andrew Huberman case study

Categorical Imperatives

Categorical imperatives support the 'laws format' to signal the highest confidence.
High confidence can enhance credibility in certain audiences because **people assume competence from confidence** (Schnaubert et al., 2021; Cialdini, 1984).

In the book, just between the laws' titles and the initial descriptions, the words 'always' and 'never' appear twenty-six times.

This is illusion of certainty can come at the cost of accuracy. Despite often being less correct, simplistic dogmas often outsell more nuanced but more correct principles:

Dogma (what sells)	Principles, models & calibration (what's true)
Say less than necessary	**Babble hypothesis**: Speaking time correlates with leadership emergence and social influence (MacLaren, 2020), but if you have leverage you can use silence to signal power

Dogma (what sells)	Principles, models & calibration (what's true)
Never Appear Too Perfect	**Pratfall effect**: a mistake can increase liking (Aronson, 1966) and prevent 'frenemies', but appearing perfect can awe followers and discourage opponents
Let Others Do the Work, but Always Take the Credit	**Social Exchange Theory**: Credit stealing may work with powerless followers or in short-term contexts, but as a 'take' it costs in engagement, talent retention, and long-term output

The 'real' principles are not catchy and memorable. On the upside, once understood, they allow for more effective calibration and yield better results.

Historical Name Dropping

TACITUS, C.55–120 A.D.

Your enemies, on the other hand, are an untapped gold mine that you must learn to exploit. When Talleyrand, Napoleon's Foreign Minister, decided in 1807 that his boss

Ancient quotes and references of people you've never heard of are powerful 'persuasion power moves'.
They serve as:

- **Authority-borrowing** from arcane ancient thinkers
- **Frame the author as higher authority than the reader** whenever the readers never heard of the source (covert power move, ie. 'I know more than you')

When readers tacitly accept that frame, they will automatically trust the 'more knowledgeable source'.

Of course, quoting ancient Roman authors is unrelated to expertise in advanced social and power dynamics—but few make that connection.

2. Marketing Positioning: Dark Psychology Manual on "How to Be Bad (& Win)"

Most self-help ignores power dynamics and provided the book with the perfect backdrop of 'politically correct but weak half-truths'.

Of the few books that dealt with power dynamics, none ever used an offensive-only perspective.

That provided a blue-ocean market for a **bold contrarian play** that positions itself as a power-focused, politically *in*correct, 'harsh but true' manual on 'how to be bad (and win)'.
Greene delivered it.

Read more:

- Dark psychology: what it truly is (and what isn't)
- Naive self-help

> Naive Self-Help: Why Self Help Is Failing You

The ‘Anti Too-Nice-Guy’ Positioning

The 48 Laws is the polar opposite, and cure, of men’s fear: the ‘too nice guy’ that’s taken advantage of, and fails in life.

Where the nice guy is powerless, *The 48 Laws* promises a guide for unapologetic dominance—’bad’ but effective (or so suggests the marketing positioning).

Greene followed his law of ‘Enter Action with Boldness’ and went all in with a purely offensive manual.
With great prose, valid insights, and the authority-building tactics above, it was a shark-level entrance that conquered this new market.

Note: marketing positioning ≠ ‘truth’ and ≠ results
The book was a needed ‘over-correction’ from standard self-help, providing a much-needed rupture and wake-up call.
Yet, some ‘laws’ are scientifically disproven. And offensive tactics alone under-deliver in a social species where personal value and smart cooperation are foundational to success.

More Evil, More Sales: Antifragile Against Criticism

Given the positioning as ‘evil but true’, critics pointing to the amorality of the laws only *helped* its sales.

The critics self-framed as ‘too nice guy’, and the wannabe power-players flocked to buy and proselytize.
This is why people hype it up. Praise sub-communicates high power, and criticism sub-communicates low-power ‘too nice guy’.

Public review	⍰ Sub-communication
⍰ *The 48 Laws of Power is amazing*	⍰ ⍰ *I’m a power player, I deal with reality to achieve goals*
⍰ *The 48 Laws of Power sucks*	⍰ ⍰ *I’m a too nice guy, I can’t stomach reality*

This dynamic may have discouraged some critics from speaking up — a pattern consistent with the spiral of silence described in sociology (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

The Prison Ban Marketing Hack

No book is as far from being ‘banned’ as a best-seller available at your local bookstore.

Yet, *The 48 Laws of Power* marketing benefited from some US state prisons banning it, gaining extra reputation as a ‘dangerous’ book, an offensive weapon to keep hidden from predators.

Although some laws may handicap an unsophisticated reader as much as they could help, that was the best marketing gift it could get. It cemented its position as a **forbidden fruit**. And forbidden fruits are supremely seductive, as Greene himself would have written.

3. From Niche Appeal to Mass Market: Power Signaling

As per Moore’s take (1991) on the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, to ‘cross the chasm’ from early adopters to mass market, one has to dominate a niche first, and then move to the majority with a well-rounded product.

That’s what *The 48 Laws of Power* did.

In certain environments, value signaling isn’t about projecting “goodness,” but about projecting ruthlessness,

cunning, and dominance to gain status. This is why rap culture, in particular, embraced Greene's work—the biggest dominant force in the contrarian space of 'book for bad guys'.

It wasn't necessarily as an endorsement of how well it worked, but a Machiavellian signal.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Feminist power-signaling parallel**

Lucio:
Similarly, I've seen women conspicuously display a copy of *'Why Men Love Bitches*', a book advocating for women's empowered dating.
The book doesn't necessarily help them date better, and it may even *decrease* the odds of finding a high-quality partner, but it serves as power-signaling (and self-signaling).

In my experience, at least for women, it's sometimes hurt people who swing to the more dominant/antagonist side. That signals neediness and relationship failure, rather than power and independence.

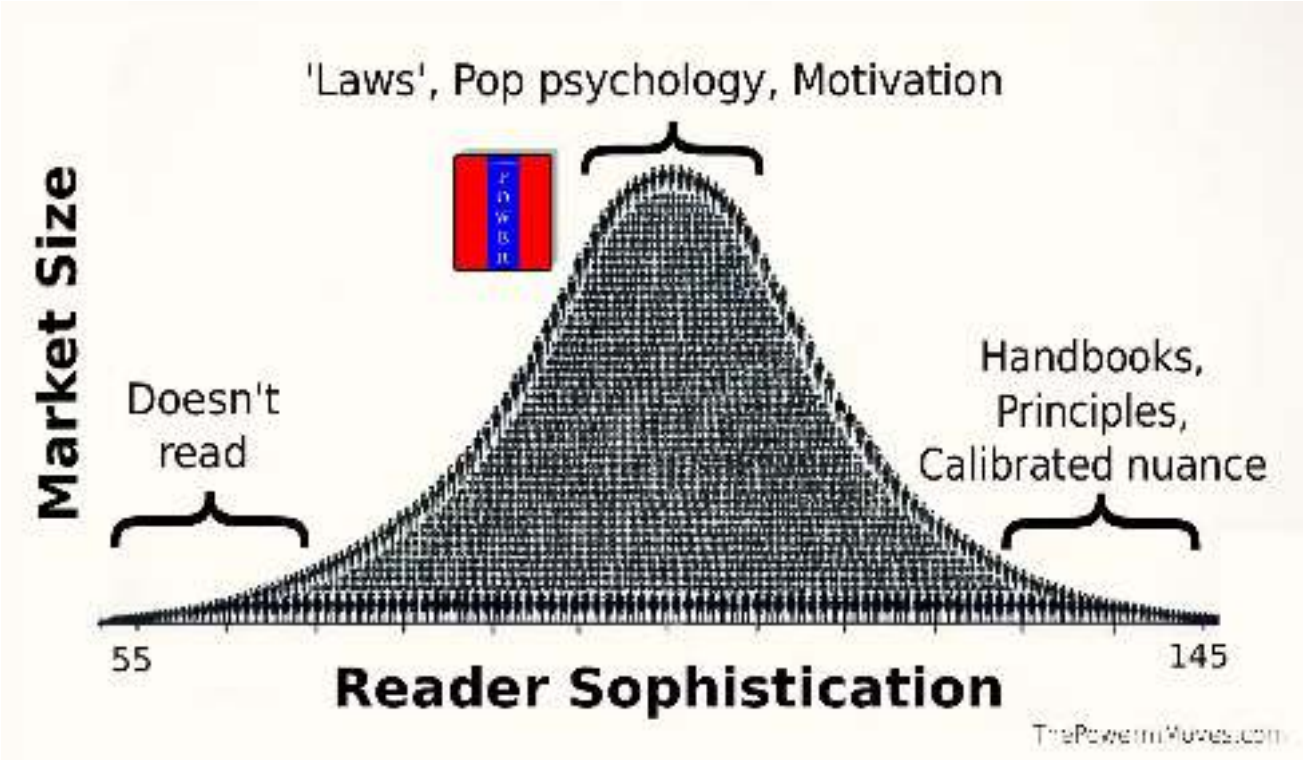
Tipping Point & Social Proof

The antifragile marketing and a product designed for easy consumption (point #4) pushed the book past the tipping point of the mass market, where many uncritically 'join the social bandwagon' (Leibenstein, 1950).

4. Cognitive Targeting: The 'IQ Sweetspot' (Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™)

The Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™ is the phenomenon where achieving mass-market success forces authors to simplify, generalize, or entertain at the expense of depth, nuance, and calibration. It posits a necessary trade-off between realistic complexity and the narrative simplicity required to appeal to the majority (the 'fat portion' of the distribution curve).

The 48 Laws is both masterfully written and written to be a best-seller.



Why The 48 Laws of Power Became Popular — Audience Fit Model

The 48 Laws' ease of consumption well satisfies the larger middle of the bell curve.

For example:

Captivating Storytelling

The stories are certainly useful to understand the concept, but they prioritize entertainment value over analytical soundness.

Memorability Over Applicability

The laws seldom map onto deeper underlying power principles, but they're memorable.

Same for the advice: it's at times insightful for many, yet simple, prioritizing memorability over applicability (some may even say it's *simplistic*).

Scannability

The page layouts are approachable and easy to scan, with different fonts, colors, and large spaces:

LAW

2

NEVER PUT TOO MUCH TRUST IN FRIENDS, LEARN HOW TO USE ENEMIES

JUDGMENT

Be wary of friends – they will betray you more quickly, for they are easily aroused to envy. They also become spoiled and tyrannical. But hire a former enemy and he will be more loyal than a friend, because he has more to prove. In fact you have more to fear from friends than from enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them.

PROFITING BY OUR ENEMIES

King Hiero chanced upon a time, speaking with one of his enemies, to be told ... that he had stinking breath. Whereupon the good king, being somewhat dismayed in himself, as soon as he returned home chided his wife, "How does it happen that you never

The layout is approachable even to those who don't read much

Law of Power #49: Target average folks to 'Create a Cult-like Following'
While *The 48 Laws* is incredibly helpful to awaken many readers to power dynamics, it takes a further step of sophistication to realize that *the book itself* is a series of 'persuasion power moves' (the 'quality-popularity tradeoff™').

Conquering Market Entrance: Dark Psychology & 'Hacks' Appeal

It's most profitable to sell to beginners because **few reach mastery, but everyone starts.**

That's what *The 48 Laws* does.
This younger crowd often starts with more approachable resources that require less cognitive investment, and *The 48 Laws of Power* provides the perfect book-level entry point. A 'real' book, yet simple and entertaining enough to read (or at least start).

Sometimes this demographic is also swayed by a 'hack approach' to 'dark psychology'. And Greene's laws deliver.

Simplistic offense	Strategic nuance
Crush Your Enemies Totally	Historically, leaders who crushed enemies removed a competitor, while some of those who wounded fostered revenge-seeking. However, crushing can be more costly than wounding, and ruthless-signaling may isolate, so the best strategy is contextual
Keep Others in Suspended Terror: Cultivate an Air of Unpredictability	Terror can boost compliance with disempowered followers. It works less well with more empowered followers, boosting the chances of brain drain and organized rebellion. Choose accordingly

FAQs

Why is *The 48 Laws of Power* so popular?

The book's popularity stems from its bold **contrarian positioning**, some valid insights, and entertaining narrative. By framing itself as an "evil but true" manual, it appeals to people tired of "politically correct" self-help. It uses a**uthority-hijacking**—through the format of "laws" and historical anecdotes—to create an illusion of absolute certainty in the more nuanced world of social and power dynamics.

Why is *The 48 Laws of Power* still popular after so many years?

It has benefited from the **Lindy Effect**: the longer something stays relevant, the longer it is likely to stay relevant. It has become a classic and almost a "cultural rite of passage" for many young men interested in personal success, goal achievement, and strategic power dynamics.

Why do people follow 48 Laws of Power?

Few people consistently follow the laws; it is difficult to apply them verbatim in most modern social contexts while remaining an effective operator.
More often, readers who were initially too naive find it beneficial as a first revelation of power dynamics they were not consciously aware of—a useful first step toward higher power awareness.
A few more cynical readers instead may follow it more closely because it validates their overly cynical worldview.
Finally, some people who promote it publicly use it to signal their Machiavellian persona. For them, it is less a guide to follow and more a brand that signals their personality.

Why is *The 48 Laws of Power* controversial?

The 48 Laws of Power is controversial because it takes a contrarian approach to self-help, focusing narrowly on power and offering tactics that are reputationally and relationally high-risk and often perceived as predatory.
Controversy has been a major driver of the book's marketing success: after gaining cult niche status and word-of-mouth promotion, it became one of the first mainstream guides to openly advocate manipulation, turning moral outrage into a powerful growth engine.

Moving Beyond the 'Laws'

Despite our critical approach, *The 48 Laws of Power* is a compelling introduction to the 'dark side' of human nature. Its popularity is well-earned as a cultural reset against "too-nice-guy" self-help.

We greatly respect Robert Greene and his work—TPM aligns philosophically with his work and with many of his insights, and we generally applaud and endorse his work.

At the same time, as we've seen, its "dogmatic laws" often underdeliver for smart and ambitious men who seek more empirically grounded and advanced resources.
If you prefer books, you can explore our "books better than *The 48 Laws of Power*" or the "best books on power" list.

And if you want to go straight to a deeper training ground that delivers status, respect, and attraction, Power University builds on these principles with an advanced, multimedia, and calibrated approach to power dynamics.

Check Power University

Psychopathy: Traits, Causes, Models, and Adaptive Potential

Lucio Buffalmano · 16 March 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Psychopathy is one of the most studied personality constructs in psychology and forensic psychiatry, with implications for societal functioning, personal effectiveness, and safety.

This article, continuously updated with the latest findings, reviews the full scientific literature on psychopathy from multiple angles, with special attention to adaptive and successful trait combinations. It then introduces Lucio's synthesis, examining psychopathic traits through an evolutionary lens and their potential for personal empowerment.

Contents

- Part 1 — Scientific Foundations
  - What Psychopathy Is
  - Diagnostic & Assessment
  - Factor 1 & 2
  - Affective Deficits
  - Biology
  - Dark Triad (Mach & Narcissism)
  - Pros & Costs of Psychopathy
- Part 2 — Scientific Debates
  - Does Psychopathy Include Antisociality/Criminality?
  - Is Psychopathy Always Impulsive?
  - Can Psychopathy Be Cured?
  - Popular FAQs
- Part 3 — Models of Functionality

    - Triarchic Model
    - The Adaptiveness of Boldness & Fearless Dominance
    - 3 Scientific Models of Successful Psychopathy
- Strategic Interpretations (TPM)
    - Predatory Strategy
    - Sexual Strategy: Coercion, Short-Term, & Abandonment
    - Does It Work? A Flawed Predator…
    - Calibration Model of Effective Psychopathy™
    - Honorable Psychopathy™

Part 1 — Scientific Foundations

What Psychopathy Is

Psychopathy is a multifaceted, dimensional personality construct characterized by a pattern of traits that often include low empathy, shallow affect, and impaired behavioral control.

Rather than a binary 'all-or-nothing' diagnosis or a fixed set of traits, contemporary research views psychopathy as a spectrum, where traits such as boldness, meanness, and disinhibition combine in varying ways to shape an individual's psychological and social functioning.

Common traits associated with psychopathy:

- Superficial charm and social dominance
- Low empathy and shallow emotional responses
- Manipulativeness and instrumental aggression
- Reduced fear and punishment sensitivity
- Impulsivity and poor behavioral control (more associated with factor 2)

But note that **psychopathy is not a static list of symptoms**. Researchers increasingly view psychopathy as a heterogeneous constellation of traits, and different combinations of traits can produce different psychopathic patterns.

🤔Lucio's Take: **The messy history of psychopathy research**

Lucio:
Psychopathy research is a young science seeking a clearer path after a complex start.

After Cleckley's initial accounts largely referred to factor 1, Robert Hare assumed psychopathy includes antisociality and is a 'classical syndrome'—meaning, a cluster of features that reliably co-occur and covary.

Later research undermined the co-variance (Blonigen et al., 2010; Marcus et al., 2013), suggesting that **psychopathy is a configuration of largely independent traits**. Lilienfeld (2018) even questioned the validity of a unitary psychopathy construct in itself.

Then Patrick's Triarchic model delivered ad-hoc, 'factorially pure indices', but today many researchers claim that Triarchic's boldness' shouldn't be a core component of psychopathy.

Finally, DSM's 'antisocial personality disorder' (ASPD) adds yet another construct, leaving us with many different and overlapping labels and constructs and several open questions.

Diagnostic & Assessment

The main assessment tools for psychopathy to date are:

- **PCL-R (Psychopathy Checklist—Revised)**: Clinician-rated 20-item assessment (Hare, 2003)
  - PCL:SV (Screening Version): Shorter, semi-structured version for quick triage (Hart et al., 1995)
- **PPI-R (Psychopathic Personality Inventory—Revised)**: Self-report tool for both offender and community samples (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005)
- **TriPM (Triarchic Psychopathy Measure)**: Self-report scale indexing Boldness, Meanness, and Disinhibition. (Brislin et al., 2015)
  Take the test ↗
- **Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits (ICU)** to assess psychopathic traits, referred to as Callous-Unemotional (CU) in youth. (Kimonis et al., 2008)
- **LSRP (Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy scale)**: Brief self-report (Levenson et al., 1995)
  Take the test ↗

Notes: PCL-R became the gold standard for forensic work, but self-report measures (PPI-R, TriPM, LSRP) addressed the PCL-R's reliance on criminal history. Use validated versions and follow publisher guidance for administration and scoring.

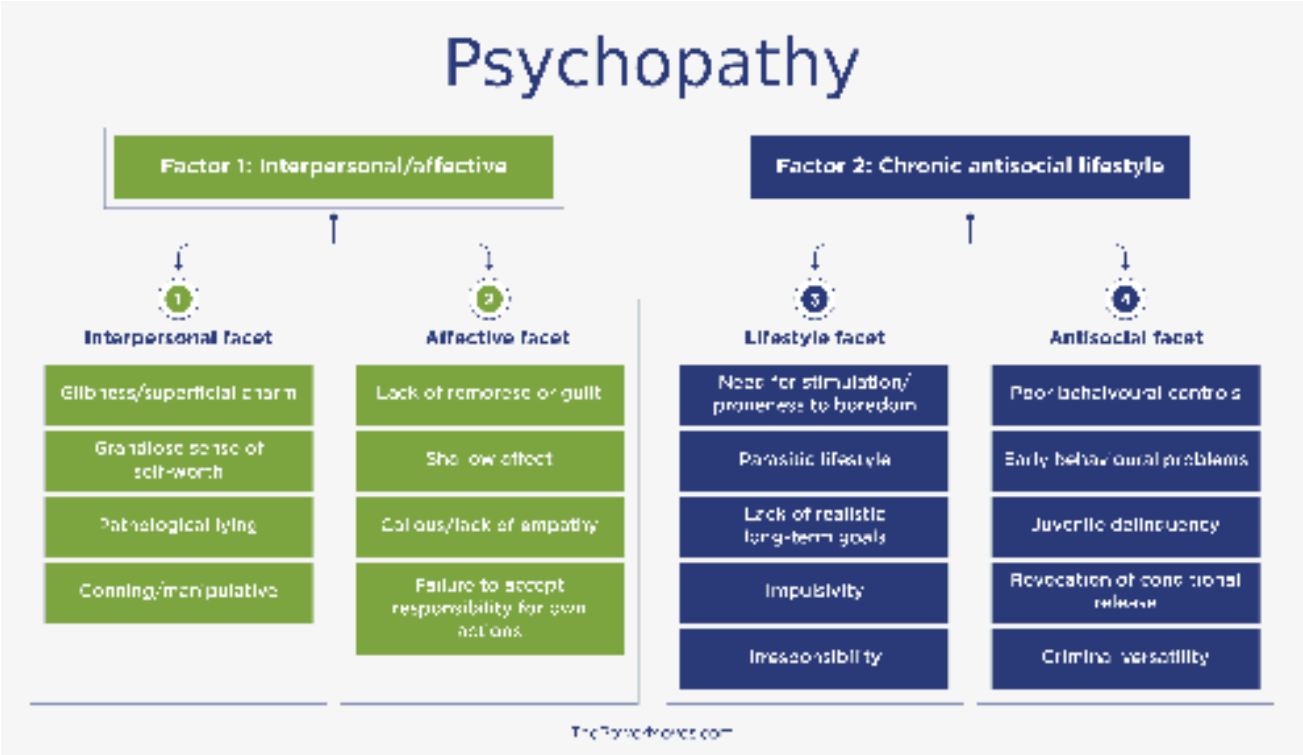
Factor 1 & 2

PCL-R-based frameworks such as the three-factor model (Cooke & Michie, 2001) and the four-factor model (Neumann, Hare, & Pardini, 2015) have been proposed as alternative structures. In research, the four-factor model is widely used because it separates interpersonal, affective, lifestyle, and antisocial facets.

However, the simpler two-factor model remains common for quick overviews and broadly aligns with the PPI's two-factor structure:

1. **Factor 1 (AKA 'primary')**: Covers shallow emotionality and attachment, and the interpersonal 'mask'
2. **Factor 2 (AKA 'secondar')**: Reflects impulsivity, disregulation, and antisocial behavior, and it's closer to antisocial personality disorder (ASPD)

In general, factor 1 primary psychopathy can be more adaptive.



Factors 1 and 2 derive from **PCL-R**, and are similar to the PPI-I Fearless Dominance (FD) & PPI-II Impulsive Antisociality (SCI)

Factor 1	Factor 2
Low fear: deficit in startle potentiation, brain's failure to "prime" for threat	**Normal or hyperactivated defenses**
Positive affect and emotional resilience. Low fear, anxiety, and depression	**Negative Affect**: anger, alienation, distress, stress reaction, dysphoria, suicidal ideation, neuroticism
Correlates with **narcissism**	Correlates with **borderline personality disorder**, **ADHD**, and other conditions
Low externalizing: largely uncorrelated to substance abuse and conscientiousness	**Antisocial**: aggression, externalizing proneness, substance abuse, impulsivity, low conscientiousness
High social power: achievement, interpersonal assertiveness, dominance, high extraversion	**Low social skills**: poor assertiveness, social anxiety, withdrawal, immaturity, susceptibility to peer pressure

Factor 1	Factor 2
Instrumental aggression: premeditated, unprovoked	**Reactive aggression**
Strong heritable component	Heritable; amplified by environmental deprivation and low SES

Research Base: This table integrates findings from the major academic reference works on psychopathy, along with the core empirical literature

 Examples: James Fallon and M.E. Thomas may be closer to factor 1. Mark Renton from the movie *Trainspotting* could be close to factor 2.

Affective Deficits

Affective deficits are a core component of factor 1, and this table helps you understand beyond vague umbrella descriptions such as 'lack of conscience':

Affective Components	Description & manifestations
Low Empathy/ Callousness	Blunted emotional response to others' suffering. But cognitive empathy, or understanding others' emotions may remain intact
Lack of Remorse	Failure to feel regret after harming others, even when understanding the causal link. Remorse = regret for harm caused
Lack of Guilt	Weak self-condemnation after moral violations. Guilt = negative self-evaluation after wrongdoing
Shallow Affect	Limited emotional depth: reduced intensity, restricted range, and rapid emotional shifts
Emotional Detachment	Weak emotional bonding and attachment, often resulting in shallow relationships, disposability, and low loyalty

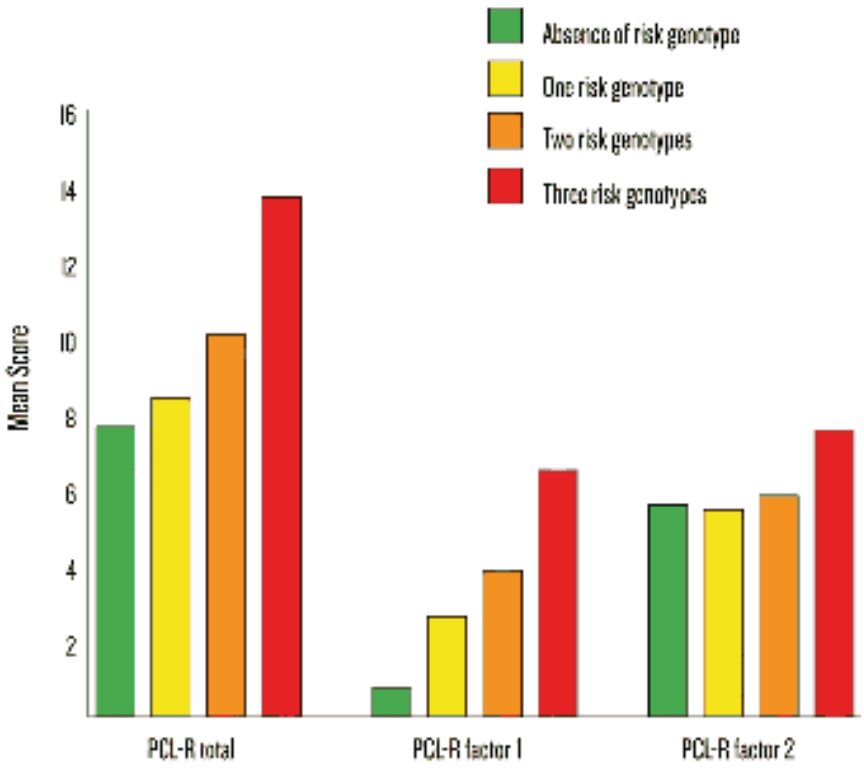
Biology

Key findings from psychopathy research include:

Genetic influences

Psychopathy is **moderately to highly heritable**, with genetics explaining roughly **40–60%** of trait variance (Blonigen et al., 2005; Viding et al., 2005).

- **Both factor 1 and 2 are heritable:** Factor 1's heritability may be marginally higher (Bezdjian et al., 2011), but factor 2's underlying disorders such as externalizing proneness and ADHD are highly heritable (Andershed & Lichtenstein, 2006).
- **Stability is also partially explained by genetic factors** (Loney et al., 2007; Lynam et al., 2007; Forsman et al., 2008)
- **Polygenic & Interactive Genetics:** Psychopathic traits arise from many small-effect genes acting additively and interactively, with both additive (32%) and non-additive (9%) influences contributing (Rhee & Waldman, 2002)



Additive effect of candidate gene polymorphisms on psychopathy. The more high-risk genes, the higher the chances of psychopathic traits.
Recreated by Lucio Buffalmano, based on Hoenicka et al. 2007

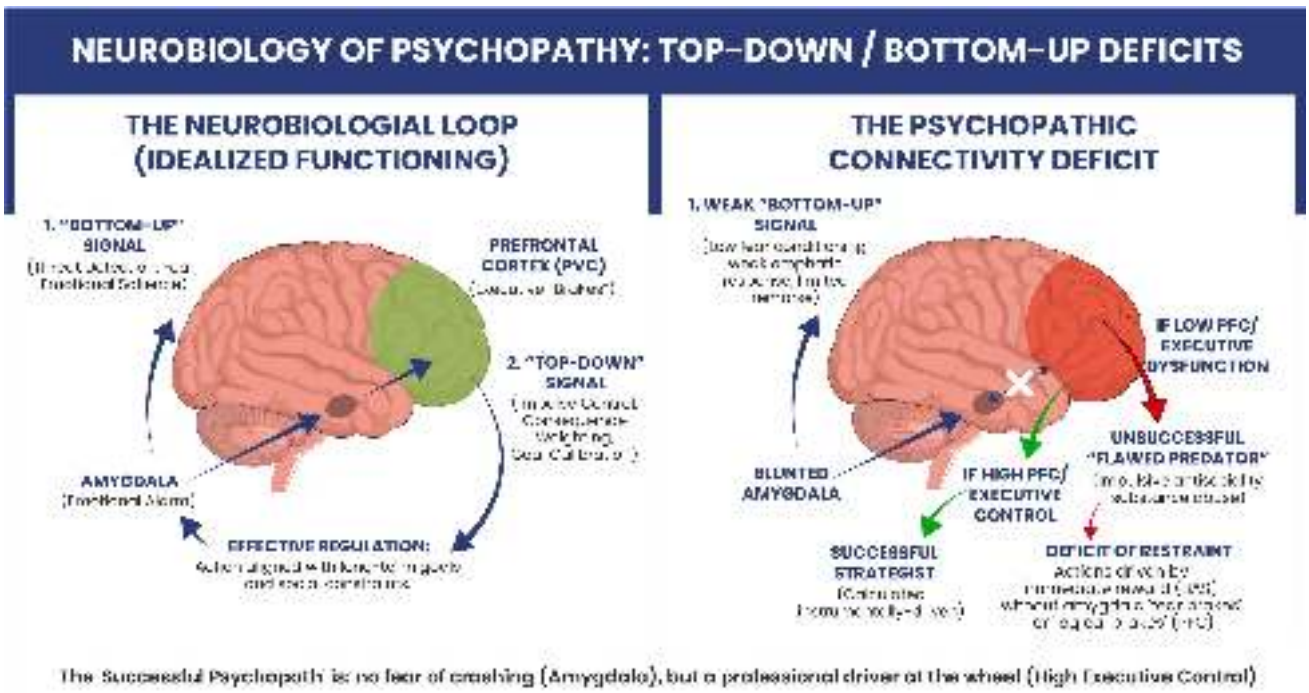
Hormonal Correlates

Overall, the evidence for hormonal effects is weaker:

- **Testosterone and cortisol seem weak markers**: Despite the theoretical correlation, the few studies that tested the hypothesis show inconsistent results (Glenn and Raine, 2014)
- **Testosterone-to-cortisol ratio *may*** relate to psychopathic traits (Glenn et al., 2011)

Neurobiological & Psychophysiological Systems

- **Amygdala-Prefrontal Dysfunction:** Reduced amygdala, ventromedial, and orbitofrontal cortex volume and responsiveness impair empathy, moral reasoning, and emotional integration into decision-making (Yang et al., 2005; Marsh et al., 2008; Glenn et al., 2009).
- **Impaired Paralimbic Connectivity:** Weakened white matter and functional links between emotional centers (limbic system) and executive control regions (PFC) prevent emotions from effectively guiding or restraining behavior (Heinz et al., 2005; Pezawas et al., 2005).
- **Blunted Physiological Fear & Stress Responses:** Low resting heart rate, reduced skin conductance, lower startle potentiation, and weaker autonomic reactions during fear conditioning, contributing to Boldness (Lykken, 1957; Patrick et al., 1993).
- **Reward-Focused Attention & Learning Deficits:** Attention bias toward rewards over threats and impaired punishment/fear learning, reducing sensitivity to cues that discourage harmful behavior (Blair et al., 2006; Newman & Kosson, 1986).



Neurobiology of psychopathy: reduced amygdala emotional signaling ("bottom-up") combined with varying levels of prefrontal executive control ("top-down") produces impulsive antisocial behavior or controlled instrumental psychopathy (Buffalmano, 2026)

Biosocial & Epigenetic Interaction

Both genes and environment matter, and they interact: epigenetic research shows stressors like childhood maltreatment can activate or silence genes, altering brain biology without changing DNA.

- **Gene-environment potentiating effect**: genetic risk combined with childhood maltreatment significantly increases the likelihood of antisocial outcomes (Caspi et al., 2002)
- **Parenting matters:** Harsh vs warm parenting can increase/decrease antisocial behavior and CU traits (Waller et al., 2013; Pardini et al., 2007; Pasalich et al., 2016);
- **Delinquent peers predict antisocial acts**, and psychopathic youth influence more than they are influenced; group settings increase risk-taking (Kerr et al., 2012; Goldweber et al., 2011; Steinberg, 2009)
- **Urbanization boosts criminality**, and high-crime neighborhoods particularly (Elliott et al., 1989; Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2013)

Bottom line: There is no single cause of psychopathy, but it emerges from an interaction of genes, neurobiological differences, and environmental experiences, and each individual will have a different mix of 'causes'.

Dark Triad (Mach & Narcissism)

The recently proposed 'D-factor' claims that the shared core relates to **maximizing one's individual returns**, even at others' expense (Moshagen, Hilbig, and Zettler, 2018).

Here at TPM, we'd also add that both narcissism and psychopathy have a 'weaker' side (respectively, vulnerable narcissism and factor 2), and a 'stronger' one more associated with social dominance, independence, and agentic goal-pursuit.

Trait	Motivation & Tools	Vulnerability
Narcissism	Admiration with self-promotion	Validation-seeking
Machiavellianism	Goal-achievement with strategic calculativeness	Over-cynicism

Psychopathy	Reward-seeking with bold or disinhibited action	Long-term instability

Pros & Costs of Psychopathy

We focus on factor 1 as the more adaptive facet:

Advantages

- **Social power**: Can gain early status, and glibness can seem charismatic for positive first impressions (IF basic social skills are acquired)
- **Career / Performance:** Low anxiety and fearlessness help in masculine and high-stakes environments
- **Psychological health:** Low anxiety, stress, and depression; high emotional resilience; no 'heartbreaks'
- **Strategic advantages of low empathy:** Ruthless and amoral decision-making can facilitate goal-achievement
- **More sexual partners**, due to dominance, boldness, and high short-term mating efforts
- **High power in dating & relationships**: Low attachment = low neediness; partners often invest more

Disadvantages / Potential Risks

- **Long-term underperformance:** Too much fearlessness without enough self-regulation is the #1 for psychopathy
- **Shallow relationships:** Emotional detachment often weakens bonds
- **Alliances risk**: Overly instrumental attitudes undermine reputation, trust, and cooperation, including in leadership
- **Criminal risks:** Especially when paired with disinhibition
- **Lower long-term social efficacy:** Low empathy and emotional depth = 'unnatural', sometimes even in brief interactions

Part 2 — Scientific Debates

Some of the most asked, debated, and misunderstood topics in psychopathy include:

Does Psychopathy Include Antisociality/Criminality?

Whether psychopathy inherently includes antisociality and criminality is debated, with recent models increasingly seeing them as possible outcomes rather than defining traits.

Robert Hare's PCL-R has been criticized for including criminality as a constituent trait of psychopathy (Cooke and Michie, 2001; Cooke et al., 2004).
Hare's approach also biases towards *convicted* psychopaths, or "blue-collar" criminals, underestimating non-criminals and more successful 'white-collar' psychopaths.

That being said, while psychopathy may not necessarily lead to antisociality, **psychopathic traits may lower the bar for antisociality**, criminality, or violence.
For example, callousness, weak moral internalization, and lack of behavioral restraint can all increase the odds of antisocial behavior.
Plus, some psychopaths may *enjoy* inflicting harm:

A Problematic Link Between Psychopathy & Sadism

Psychopathy is associated with several measures and outcomes related to sadism, including:

- Sadistic fantasies and paraphilias (e.g., Woodworth et al., 2013)
- Deviant sexual arousal (Barbaree et al.,1994; Quinsey et al., 1995; Serin et al.,1994)
- Higher levels of gratuitous and sadistic violence in homicides (Porter et al., 2003)
- Schadenfreude (Porter et al., 2014).
- 'Inverted' social rewards, with cruelty enjoyable and kindness not (Foulkes et al., 2014)

Even among violent offenders, psychopathic individuals had higher sadistic traits that non-psychpathic ones (Holt et al., 1999).
Sexual deviancy and sadism may increase the odds of antisocial and criminal behavior, especially when in conjunction with disinhibition.

Technical note: Sadism was more correlated to facet 1 and 4 in Robertson and Knight, 2014 and facet 2 in Mokros et al., 2011.

Is Psychopathy Always Impulsive?

Psychopathy as a whole, and factor 2 in particular, are related to impulsivity via several different paths, but not all individuals high in psychopathic traits are always and necessarily impulsive.

These elements that increase the odds of impulsivity, and can compound when they co-exist:

1. **Executive control deficit (Prefrontal Cortex, PFC)** <– The main 'missing brake', strongly implicated in factor 2 and ADHD
2. **Low fear and low Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS)** <– Removes the 'brake' of punishment anticipation (more associated with factor 1)
3. **Emotional dysregulation / threat reactivity** <– Can trigger emotion-driven impulsivity (more related to factor 2)
4. **High reward approach (high BAS)** <– The 'moving towards accelerator'

Not directly tied to impulsivity, but can contribute to interpersonal aggression:

- **Low empathy & attachment** <– Removes the 'empathy & caring brakes' on harming others

Technical note: triarchic model issue
Knight and Guay (2018) note the issue of clustering two different types of impulsivity: Reward-driven / goal-focused, more related to factor 1, CU-traits, and hypersexuality; and Emotion-driven, more sensitive to threats, emotional reactance, and loss of control, more related to factor 2.

Can Psychopathy Be Cured?

While for decades the dominant view was that psychopathy was untreatable, more recent research paints a more nuanced picture and provides evidence for modest treatment effects (Polaschek and Skeem, 2018).

Psychopathy itself is difficult to change, but modern interventions can reduce antisocial behavior and criminal recidivism, with promising evidence for the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model (Andrews et al., 1990).

The reductions in reconviction risk are modest but meaningful, with effect sizes around 0.15–0.34 (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). A program with an effect around 0.15 could reduce a 50% reconviction rate to roughly 35%.

Treatment is also helpful with high risk individuals and can be beneficial despite challenges to the therapy environment (Lipsey et al., 2009; Lipsey, Wilson, & Cothern, 2000).

Experimental findings also suggest that simple attentional cues can help recognize fear in others, a deficiency that has been linked to interpersonal aggression.

Popular FAQs

How is psychopathy different from sociopathy

Psychopathy is a well-studied personality construct, while sociopathy is not a formal clinical diagnosis and is used inconsistently outside of academic circles. Sociopathy is often used informally to describe individuals with antisocial behavior shaped more by environment or upbringing, a claim that may also be misleading since genetic influences matter for both factor 1 and factor 2.
For accuracy, the term psychopathy is preferred.

What's the difference between psychopathy and antisocial personality disorder

Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) is a clinical diagnosis defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). It focuses mainly on persistent antisocial and rule-breaking behavior, overlapping more with psychoapthy factor 2 than factor 1.
Psychopathy is a broader personality construct that includes interpersonal and emotional deficiencies (e.g., callousness, lack of remorse).
As a result, many individuals with psychopathy meet criteria for ASPD, but not all people with ASPD are psychopaths.

Are all psychopaths narcissists?

No. Psychopathy and Narcissistic Personality Disorder may share some traits, such as grandiosity and lack of empathy, but they are distinct constructs. Narcissism in psychopaths may also express differently, with equal grandiosity but lower motivation for admiration (Ronningstam, 1998).
And while psychopathy factor 1 is associated with narcissism, factor 2 is not.

Are psychopaths only men?

No, although psychopathy is more frequent in men, and men tend to score higher on psychopathy measures, it occurs in both men and women.
Women may show somewhat different patterns of expression, including more emotional disregulation in factor 2, more internalizing and self-direct harm (overlapping with borderline personality disorder and histrionic personality disorder), more relational aggression, but lower risk of criminal and violent outcomes.

How common is psychopathy?

Psychopathy is relatively rare in the general population. Estimates typically place the prevalence around 1%, although higher rates are observed in prisons and forensic samples. Some research suggests that subclinical psychopathic traits may be more common and can appear in competitive environments such as business, politics, and high-risk professions (Hare and Babiak, 2006).

For a quick differentiation between these commonly misunderstood constructs:

Construct	Status	Focus & Traits
Psychopathy	Research personality construct	Interpersonal + emotional deficits (factor 1) and poor behavioral control (factor 2)
ASPD	Clinical diagnosis in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)	Persistent rule-breaking behavior (closer to factor 2)
Sociopathy	Informal term	Inconsistent use

Part 3 — Models of Functionality

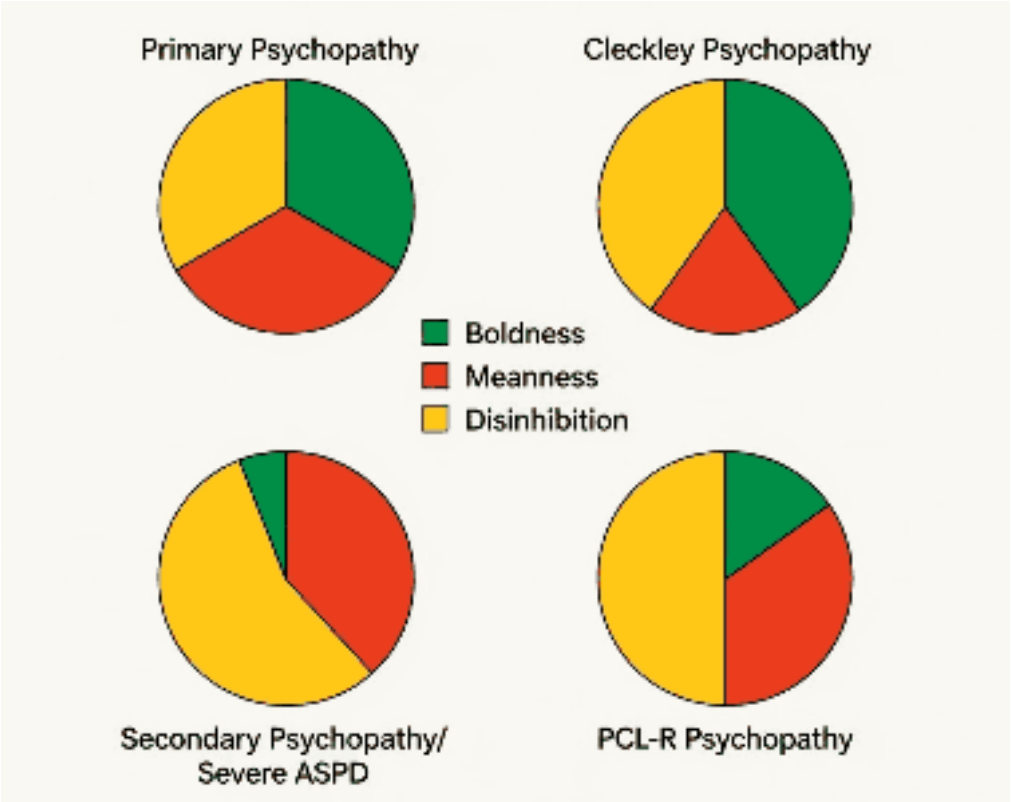
Triarchic Model

The triarchic model (Patrick, Fowles, and Krueger, 2009) subdivides psychopathy into three dispositional tendencies:

- **Boldness:** Social dominance, emotional stability/resilience, and venturesomeness (most adaptive).
- **Meanness:** Deficient empathy (callousness), selfishness, and aggressive exploitation of others (facilitates manipulative or coercive strategies)
- **Disinhibition:** Lack of behavioral restraint, irresponsibility, and emotional volatility (contributes to risk-taking, externalizing behavior, and sometimes maladaptive outcomes)

Boldness and Disinhibition are relatively independent, whereas Meanness shows a small to medium association with Boldness and a medium to large association with Disinhibition (Hicks and Drislane, 2018).

Component	Maps to PCL-R	Why
Boldness	Factor 1 (interpersonal)	Adaptive charm & social dominance, low fear
Meanness	Factor 1 (affective) + some Factor 2 aggression	Callousness, cruelty, lack of cooperativeness
Disinhibition	Factor 2 / externalizing liability	Impulsivity, poor self-control, antisociality



Schematic depiction of the hypothesized relative contributions of Boldness, Meanness, and Disinhibition to different conceptual models of psychopathy (adapted with color adjustments from Hicks and Drislane, 2018)

Adaptiveness of Triarchic Domains

Boldness by itself may support effective functioning.
In contrast, disinhibition—closely aligned with the externalizing spectrum—appears to be the primary driver of persistent antisocial behavior and life dysfunction.

That said, at TPM we also like to look at adaptiveness *in context*:

Component	Adaptive	Maladaptive
Boldness	**Leadership**, status, crisis management. 'Pro-social psychopathy'	**Recklessness** at extremes: can ignore real dangers
Meanness	**Ruthless execution**: to achieve (selfish) goals without guilt	**Isolation:** Destroys social capital and alliances required for long-term power; can foster mutinies
Disinhibition	**Opportunistic Speed:** Prevents "analysis paralysis"; seizes rewards in unstable environments	**Self-Sabotage**: stupid risks, substance abuse, and explosive outbursts ('car without breaks')

The Adaptiveness of Boldness & Fearless Dominance

Technical Note: Triachic boldness is similar to 'Fearless Dominance' from PPI-I. Sometimes authors treat them interchangeably.

Looking at the literature, **boldness may be the most adaptive aspect of psychopathy** (Skeem et al., 2011; Beinning et al., 2018), including healthy psychological adjustment and inverse correlation with emotional distress (Lilienfeld, 2018).

Boldness may be the primary differentiator between psychopathy and antisocial personality disorder (Venables et al., 2014; Wall et al., 2015)
Conversely, extremely low levels of boldness are tied to elevated risk for internalizing disorders (e.g., Lynam & Miller, 2012).

We can't yet say for sure whether boldness follows the inverted U-curve of the 'law of balance' and becomes maladaptive at extremely high levels. However, we can venture that it may be better to be in the upper range than in the very low range.

Real-life evidence for the adaptiveness of boldness

- **More leadership positions held** (Lilienfeld et al., 2014)
- **Higher representation in challenging occupations**, like special military teams (Kjærgaard, 2013) and North Pole expeditions (though discussed in terms of poor outcomes, Leon & Venables, 2015).
- **Strong leadership performance** with higher subordinate satisfaction (and lower for meannes & disinhibition, Sanecka, 2013), US presidents' performance (Lilienfeld et al., 2012), and positive leadership style (Lilienfeld, 2018).
- **More profitable decisions in economic games** (Yamagishi et al., 2014)
- **Higher incomes** (Benning et al., 2003) and ranks in financial occupations (Howe et al., 2014).

Boldness may be heroically prosocial

Fearless dominance is higher among first-responders and is positively, albeit weakly to moderately, associated with heroism and altruism toward strangers (Smith et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2018)

These findings provide some evidence for Lykken's controversial statement that 'the hero and the psychopath may be twigs on the same genetic branch'.
Deeper dive on this topic: are psychopaths and heroes the same?

🤵♂️Lucio's Take: **'Good psychopath' (pop-)psychology refers to boldness**

Lucio:
Boldness explains most accounts of ‘good’ or ‘prosocial’ psychopaths (ie.: Lykken, 1995; Dutton, 2012).

When referring to psychopathic heroes, soldiers, and neurosurgeons, most are referring to the effect of boldness, with little disinhibition and little or no meanness.

Technical Note: It’s debated whether boldness should even be a core psychopathic trait.
Researchers such as Lynam and Miller view Meanness (Antagonism) and Disinhibition (Low Conscientiousness) as core psychopathic traits, and boldness as more of a specifier

Not All Peace & Love: The Grey Side of Boldness

Benning (2018) and Lilienfeld state that boldness is associated with:

- Low empathy (Benning et al., 2005; Mullins-Nelson et al., 2006)
- Adult antisocial behavior (Benning et al., 2003)
- Nonverbal disciplinary infractions in prison (Patrick et al., 2006)
- High levels of narcissism (Lilienfeld, 2018)
- Self-interest pursuit of rewards and thrill-seeking, potentially mildly callous (Fowles, 2018)

However, referring to the first three, Benning also adds that ‘these relatively mild deleterious effects would be unlikely to prevent a person from attaining success.’
And we’d also add that grandiose narcissism tends to be adaptive and some healthy self-interest and calculativeness often support personal success, without requiring antisociality.

Boldness may require good parenting to not turn into meanness

Fearless temperament is a risk factor for meanness (Fowles, 2018; Pardini, 2006; Hicks et al., 2013). Fortunately, studies suggest that parenting and socialization may be more impactful for children high in interpersonal features.

Kochanska’s studies show that while gentler discipline is often sufficient to develop conscience in more sensitive and fearful children, fearless ones benefit more secure attachment and positive child-mother relationship

(Kochanska, 1995, 1997; Kochanska et al., 2007). The author speculates this is a reward-based pathway that doesn't require anxiety and fear of punishment.

Balanced, rule-based discipline seems the optimal middle ground. While permissiveness allows antisociality to flourish, over-correction triggers reactive aggression (Patterson et al., 1998 and 2000; Kochanska and Kim, 2013). Conversely, consistent, predictable consequences help bridge the empathy gap, fostering guilt and internal regulation even in fearless children (Cornell and Frick, 2007).

Caveat: Boldness is adaptive *if alone*

Boldness is most adaptive if on its own.
For example, Lilienfeld says:

> Boldness (…) becomes malignant in the presence of other traits, especially SCI. (…) when boldness is conjoined with poor executive functioning, it may be channeled into ill-conceived risk taking, giving rise to the "poor judgment"

Prosociality follows the same logic. When paired with SCI, Fearless Dominance is more related to predatory aggression (Smith et al., 2013), sexual risk-taking (Kastner & Sellbom, 2012), and negative affect (e.g., guilt, shame) afterward (Fulton et al., 2010).

For an overview of how they may interact:

Combination	Behavioral Results
Boldness	Facilitate success in occupations that call for bravery and emotional resilience, or leadership and persuasiveness
Meanness	Associated with low empathy, low social closeness, instrumental aggression, and antagonism
Dishinibition	Relates strongly to criterion measures indexing impulsivity, negative emotionality, substance use, delinquent/antisocial tendencies, and suicidal behavior, close to factor 2
Boldness + disinhibition	Like Cleckley's masked pathology: seemingly well adjusted and socially adept but reckless and irresponsible. Short-term rewards, disregarding the consequences. High antisocial deviance possible ('externalizing supergroup', Hicks and Drislane, 2018)
Boldness + meanness	Can be expected to express their social and emotional poise in exploitative–antagonistic ways (example: Bernard Madoff)
Meanness + Dishibition	Impulsive antisociality: severely aggressive externalizing behavior, ranging from psychological pressure or physical force to achieve selfish goals to sadistic acts of violence

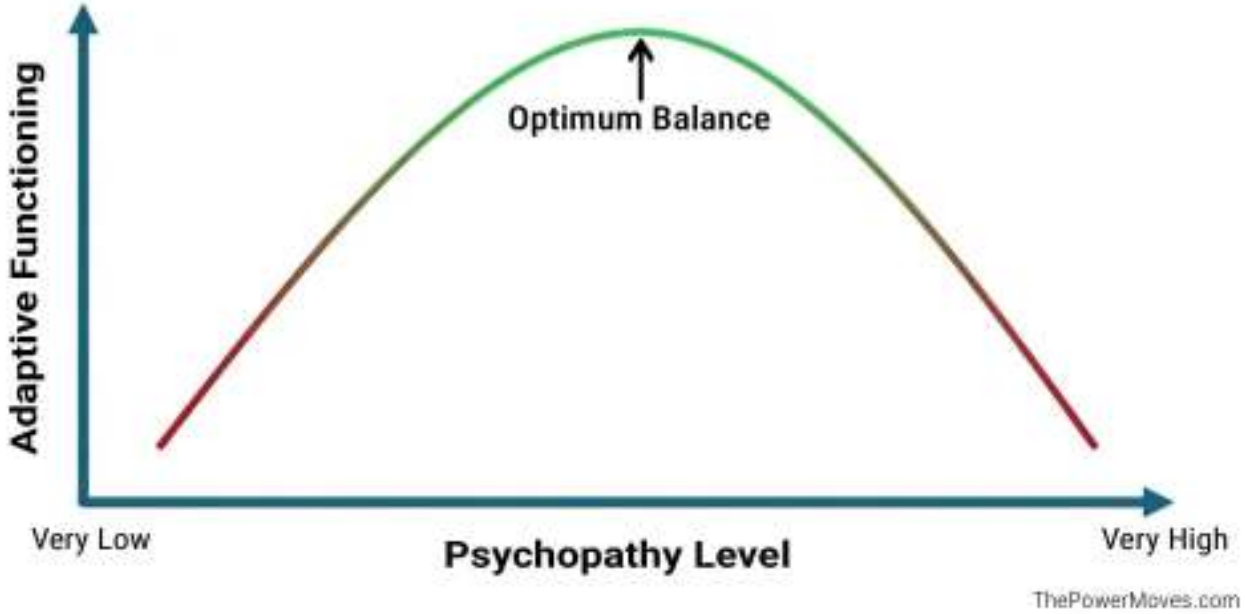
Table based on Benning, Venables, and Hall (2018)

3 Scientific Models of Successful Psychopathy

Models 2 and 3 may have the strongest support, and they can be complementary.

1. Subclinical Psychopathy Model

⍰⍰ Successful psychopaths are milder versions of clinical psychopaths



Inverted-U representation of the Subclinical Psychopathy Model (chart adapted by Buffalmano, 2026).
While somewhat intuitive, attenuation alone appears insufficient.
Research shows that individuals considered “successful” often display specific traits combined with compensatory adaptive characteristics, rather than mere ‘milder psychopathy’ (Lilienfeld et al., 2015a; Lilienfeld et al., 2016).

2. Moderated Psychopathy Model

⍰⍰ Environmental and individual moderators shape life outcomes

Different moderators have been proposed with strong but uneven support:

Moderators	Evidence & Effect
Executive functioning	**Strong**
Parenting & SES	**Small to moderate**, smaller than lay theories assume
Age	**Lower for psychopathic traits, high for antisocial behavior** which declines across adulthood
Physiological traits	**Strong**. Successful psychopaths are more similar to healthy controls for prefrontal cortex gray matter (Yang et al., 2005), orbitofrontal cortex and amygdala volume (Yang et al., 2010), hippocampus symmetry (Raine et al., 2004). Particularly important for PFC/executive functioning
Intelligence	**Mixed** (IQ lowers antisociality: Heilbrun, 1982; Heilbrun and Heilbrun, 1985; Watts et al., 2016); (No link: Walsh et al., 2004); (IQ boosts antisociality: Johansson & Kerr, 2005; Hampton et al., 2014). IQ = lower convictions (Ishikawa, 2001).

Not included by researchers, but power and status can also be powerful shields.

⍰⍰♂ **Technical Note: Buffalmano’s ‘Exchange Model’**
The Exchange Model suggests that high social and mate value psychopaths use less coercion because they can use the more effective social exchange

3. Multiprocess Model (Dual-Process / Triarchic)

⁉ Psychopathy is adaptive with the right mix of underlying facets

Psychopathy is not unitary, but the composition of its underlying facets can yield adaptive or maladaptive functioning.

The triarchic model is a multiprocess model building on the conceptually close "two-process model" and "dual pathway theory" (Patrick & Bernat, 2009; Fowles & Dindo, 2009):

- **Defensive fear system deficit** underlying interpersonal–affective features (largely related to factor 1), and
- **Executive control deficit** underlying impulsive–antisocial features (largely related to factor 2, and externalizing proneness)

In this model, successful outcomes are more likely with less cognitive–executive dysfunction and more dispositional fearlessness (ie.: in triarchic terms, less disinhibition and higher boldness).

Strategic Interpretations (TPM)

Despite a tendency to equate maladaptive with antisocial, **adaptive fitness is amoral**.
Evolutionarily, adaptive means higher odds of survival and reproduction. In humans, it may also boost the odds of achieving goals. Either way, it's independent of pro-social or anti-social orientation.

While we do not like or endorse antisociality at TPM and always prefer achieving goals with win-win, we also believe that to understand these dynamics it's important to keep the two separated.

Predatory Strategy

Several scholars suggested that short-term fast consumption, cheating, and coercion can be adaptive. These approaches overlap with a 'predation strategy' to life.

From a social exchange point of view, **predatory strategies are based on taking without giving**.
This is what makes someone a 'taker' and Robert Hare wrote about psychopaths that 'they all take more than they give'.

Defecting From Cooperation

Mealey proposed a sociobiological model of psychopathy of frequency-dependent social cheater strategy.

Indeed, psychopathic traits are associated with defection against coparticipants in the Prisoner's Dilemma game (Rilling et al., 2007), particularly against people who are viewed as low in value (Gervais et al., 2013), which may suggest a particularly calculative approach to exchanges.
Possible supporting evidence comes from frequent moving, aliases use, and preference for larger cities, since they can all faciliate escaping arrest, or escaping poor reputations (Robins, 1996; Jonason, 2018; Zuo et al., 2023).

Manipulation

Manipulativeness is a core trait of psychopathy, and multiple structural equation models suggested that manipulation and callousness are the common 'core' of the dark triad.

In relationships, David Buss notes that dark triad men engage in more cost-inflicting and 'game playing' strategies (e.g., evoking jealousy).

Suggesting a possible genetic component, interpersonal manipulativeness is related to aggression and reduced

prosocial behavior in young children (Pauletti, Menon, Menon, Tobin, and Perry, 2012)

Coercion

Coercion is a form of 'taking by force', related to aggression and criminal behavior.

Suggesting a link between psychopathy and coercive strategies, psychopaths are notoriously over-represented in prisons and more likely to violently recidivate (Kiehl, 2011), with important links to sexual coercion as well (Harris et al., 2007).
Reviewing the literature on sexual coercion, Knight and Guay (2018) claim that rape is part of a broader propensity of antisociality (Lussier et al., 2005; Smallbone et al., 2003).

Technical note: intimate partner violence may be the exception
Douglas (2018) notes that, contrary to factor 2, factor 1's affective deficits might ironically prevent intimate partner violence because they may not care enough, and studies show this trend (Hilton et al., 2008; Rock et al., 2013)

Sexual Strategy: Coercion, Short-Term, & Abandonment

Some scholars argue that unrestricted socio-sexual orientation and low parental investment, may form a **reproduction strategy based on quantity of offspring** (r-selected, Pianka, 1970).

There are several lines of evidence supporting this hypothesis.
For example, psychopaths have:

- Higher socio-sexuality, meaning more open to uncommitted sex (White et al., 2025)
- More sexual partners with less condom use (Reynolds et al., 2020)
- Higher sexuality ('hypersexuality', Kastner and Selbom, 2012)
- Higher likelihood to sexually coerce ('three-path model', Knight and Sims-Knight, 2003)
- In relationships: cheat more (Jones and Weiser, 2014), higher dissatisfaction (Weiss et al., 2016), seek make poaching (Craib et al., 2024)
- Fewer child support payments (Braver et al., 1997).

Behavioral evidence also suggests a higher mating effort, being less attractive in unadorned conditions but *more* attractive in adorned conditions.
Finally, neurobiological dysfunctions in emotional and moral processing may facilitate the pursuit of a more predatory strategy (Glenn & Raine, 2009).

Priming Psychopathic Sexual Strategy: Life History Strategy & Environment

Related to epigenetics, the life history strategy hypothesis (Ellis, 2009) suggests that environmental cues 'prime' psychopathic traits and behaviors to accelerate reproduction in harsher environments.

For example, children who grow up in harsher environments, such as high-stress or low-resource:

- Reach biological maturity earlier (Belsky et al., 1991; Harris et al., 2007)
- Have their first child at a younger age (Moore et al., 1993)
- Are more likely to have children outside of stable, long-term partnerships (Karney, 2020)

Furthermore, reminders of mortality bias individuals with low-SES backgrounds for short-term rewards over long-term investment (Griskevicius et al., 2011), suggesting that **impulsivity may be an evolved tactic to seize short-term opportunities.**

See more on this:

- ⍰ Investigative case study of a psychopath's sexual strategy

Does It Work? A *Flawed* Predator...

While "predator" is associated with dominance, it does not guarantee success—in nature, predators are also preyed upon, maimed, and face higher extinction risks than their prey.

When it comes to psychopathy, dishibition and poor planning often undermine a predatory strategy.
Write Porter, Woodworth, and Black (2018):

> (…) On one hand, psychopathic individuals engage in strategic, premeditated acts (…) on the other, they can react in impulsive (…) ways (…) that contribute to detection, arrest, and incarceration.
> In this light, individuals of this sort can be seen as "flawed predators," frequently preying on others but unable to reliably control their behavior.

The authors also explain that premeditation can co-exist with costly impulsive aggression, the latter undermining the possible adaptiveness of the former.

Crucially, effectiveness isn't a given in reproductive strategies either.
The few studies available provided no empirical evidence for higher reproduction, or even suggested otherwise (Marcus et al., 2011; Carter, Lyons, & Brewer, 2018).
However, the evidence is sparse for any conclusions, and different expressions of psychopathy may enjoy higher success (for a case study, see Buffalmano, 2020).

Calibration Model of Effective Psychopathy™

Effective Psychopathy™ refers not to promoting antisocial behavior, but to an adaptive profile of certain traits associated with psychopathy that boost fitness. It incorporates and calibrates functional strengths—boldness, effective grandiosity, emotional coolness, etc.—while removing maladaptive tendencies like short-term reward-seeking, criminal propensity, and externalizing tendencies.

The Calibration Model (Buffalmano, 2026) posits that since almost any trait can be adaptive or maladaptive depending on context and goals, **the most functional psychopaths calibrate behavior based on the situation and their end goal.**

Contextual and social calibration are central aspects of TPM's approach. Here are some examples of how adaptiveness changes in relation to context:

Trait	Maladaptive For...	Adaptive For...
Grandiosity	Reliable planning & prioritization	Interpersonal charisma and psychological resilience
Disinhibition	Substances & sustained success	First-movers advantages, & when rewards disappear
Lying	Long-term reputation & alliances	Social engineering & low-detectability scenarios
Callousness	Long-term cooperation & close bonds	Whenever selfish gains outweigh cooperation's gains

The effective psychopath may think grandiosely but turn more realistic when planning and executing.
Or he may be more ruthless and detached at work, but 'switch off' and be more empathic and warm to nurture cooperative alliances. If he values close relationships, he will also be kind to family and friends.

Researcher Keith Campbell proposed this approach to narcissism when he advised 'use it publicly, not privately' (Campbell, 2020).

As a fictional example, Vito Corleone in *The Godfather* maintained a loving family and strong bonds while running his organization. His son Michael tried the same by compartmentalizing work and life.

⚠ **Important reminder: psychopathy as a whole is often maladaptive, antisocial, and immoral**

Psychopathic profiles are often maladaptive and associated with unsuccessful lifestyles. The TPM approach focuses on isolating and cultivating the few functional traits that can be beneficial when properly regulated. We do not endorse or recommend its predatory aspects.

Strategic Psychopathy: Developing Helpful Traits

Strategic Psychopathy™ refers to developing a collection of adaptive traits sometimes associated with psychopathy, and learning how and when to use them.

There is no one-size-fits-all because **what you need depends on your goals** and your starting point.
But, some general guidelines for many can be:

1. **Increase boldness**
2. **Boost self-control**: remove dishibition, dopamine addictions, plan and work hard (conscientiousness)
3. **Calibrate** to situation and people for top-0.1% effectiveness

And for combining goal-achievement with life quality:

- **Be honorable**, especially with other quality people and close relationships

Honorable Psychopathy™

Honorable Psychopathy™ places **strategic honor™** and a preference for win–win as the baseline, while still incorporating effective psychopathy for goal achievement and self-advancement

We focus on the practical 'how to' in our flagship course:

Check Power University

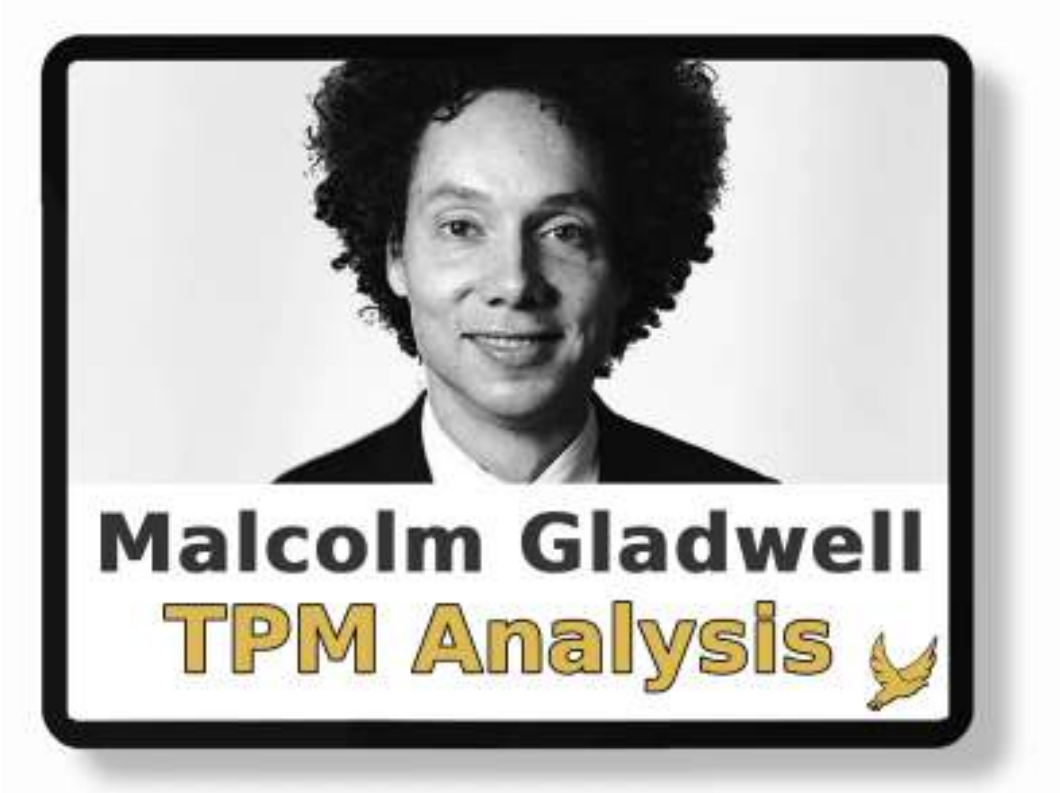
Malcolm Gladwell Review: Books and Pop-Psychology

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 March 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Malcolm Gladwell is a journalist and bestselling author known for turning complex psychological and social phenomena into engaging, story-driven narratives.

His books are highly readable and popular. But they often sit in the space between **insightful storytelling and pop psychology**.

At TPM, we break down his key ideas—and more importantly, where **they fall short for smart men who want realistic and evidence-based analyses** that deliver status, respect, attraction, and real-world results.



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INTRO

At TPM, we categorize much of Gladwell's work as pop-psychology and naive self-help.

Much of it falls for "narrative fallacy": the tendency to favor a good story over scientific rigor or tactical utility. For a man seeking power, Gladwell is an excellent study in *persuasion*, captivating writing, and *book marketing*. But a poorer choice for smart men who want deep, nuances and realistic analyses—including using those analyses for strategies that deliver results.

Note: we removed our past standalone reviews of Gladwell's books to focus on higher-ROI resources

1. Blink (2005)

Quick Overview: *Blink* investigates human cognition and explains how snap, subconscious decisions can be extremely accurate—provided they are made by experts "thin-slicing" relevant data.

⍰ Pros

- **The Theory of Thin Slices:** Correctly identifies that experts can see significant patterns in small samples.

⍰ Cons

- **Poor Science:** Heavily cites "priming" studies that raised questions during the replication crisis in psychology.
- **Mistaking Intuition for Strategy:** Gladwell celebrates "thinking without thinking," which is a death sentence for a novice in a high-stakes social environment.
- **Bending Narratives:** Pits snap decisions against deliberate ones as if they are antithetical, rather than tools that require different contexts.

TPM Review

Blink probably remains Gladwell's best work, though still limited from a practical perspective.

While intuition works for chess masters and anyone who has thoroughly learned the ins and outs of a discipline, it fails for those navigating novel situations.

The real takeaway is not to trust snap judgments blindly, but to:

- Understand **when they work**
- And more importantly, **when they don't**

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2. Outliers (2008)

Quick Overview: Gladwell argues that success is primarily a matter of luck, timing, and external "circuitous" circumstances rather than raw talent alone.

⍰ Pros

- **The Humility Lesson:** Puts individual success in a wider context of timing and environment.
- **Emphasis on Consistency:** Regardless of the "10,000-hour" debate, it correctly highlights that volume of effort is a prerequisite for greatness.

- **Practical Intelligence:** Correct distinguishes between IQ and “knowing what to say to whom,” which aligns with TPM’s focus on Social Calibration.

⍰ Cons

- **The Passive Success Myth:** By over-indexing on luck, it encourages a “wait and see” attitude rather than a proactive “build and take” mindset.
- **The 10,000-Hour Myth:** Simplistically and erroneously reduces expertise to a flat number, ignoring the quality of practice and innate biological floors/ceilings. The researcher Gladwell quotes in his book had to correct this myth in his own subsequent book (Ericsson, 2016)
- **Shallow Cultural Analysis:** Draws tenuous links between “rice cultures” and math ability that lack rigorous scientific backing.

TPM Review

Outliers is an entertaining read—but lacking in rigor and practicality.

Captivating anecdotes and thought-provoking rethorical questions, but not for intelligent men looking for rigorous science or practical insights to achieve goals. It fails to serve those who want to *build* power rather than wait for a stroke of luck.

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3. The Tipping Point (2000)

Quick Overview: Analyzes how localized trends go viral and “tip” into massive social movements.

⍰ Pros

- **The Law of the Few:** Correctly identifies the roles of Connectors, Mavens, and Salespeople in social engineering.
- **Social Power Moves:** Provides a rare “gem” regarding conversation rhythm—the person who makes the other to adapt to their speaking tempo usually holds the upper hand.
- **Cover over content:** Validates that *how* information is packaged is often more important than the information itself (Gladwell knows that very well)

⍰ Cons

- **Tautological Logic**, like ‘it worked because influencers spread it’, which provides little explanation of the true underlying dynamics and little predictive value for future campaigns.
- **Light Evidence:** Relies on plausible stories (like the Broken Windows theory) that faced valid criticism for oversimplifying crime reduction and, potentially, for not working at all
- **Lack of How-To:** It describes the *what* but fails to provide a manual for the *how*.

TPM Review

The Tipping Point is a pleasant read and introduces useful concepts—but stops at surface-level explanations.

Practical applications are also lacking. Saying “target influencers” is not a strategy. Everyone does that.
The real questions are:

- Why did *this* idea spread and others didn’t?
- What mechanisms drove adoption?

- What made it stick under competition?

The book doesn't answer those.

It's a good mental model—but incomplete for anyone serious about influence, marketing, or power dynamics.

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4. David and Goliath (2013)

Quick Overview: Argues that underdogs can find strength in their disadvantages and that "giants" often have hidden weaknesses.

⍰ Pros

- **The Disagreeable Entrepreneur:** Excellent insight into how successful leaders are often high on "disagreeableness" and willing to take social risks.
- **The U-Curve of Advantage:** Validates that beyond a certain threshold, wealth and resources can actually become a disadvantage for character building.

⍰ Cons

- **Historical Revisionism:** The attempt to frame Goliath as a "weak" underdog due to giantism is strategically nonsensical and ignores the military context of the time.
- **Overplays the Power of the Underdog:** Overplays the power of "unconventional tactics" to almost guarantee a win, ignoring that most underdogs who fight like David lose.
- **Disjointed Themes:** Forces unrelated stories about dyslexia, crime, and warfare into a single, tenuous "underdog" frame.
- **Platitudes Over Strategy**: That disadvantages can become strengths is an obvious platitude that adds little tactical value

TPM Review

This is Gladwell at his most "inspirational pop-psych."

The core idea—that disadvantages can become strengths—is valid. But the execution often stretches reality to fit the message.

In real life:

- Not all disadvantages are assets
- Not all underdogs win
- And strategy requires **precision, not inspiration**

Useful as a mindset shift. Weak as a strategic guide.

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5. Talking to Strangers (2019)

The weakest of the bunch, and he went too deep into his common approach to writing a best-seller:

- Pick a famous or attention-grabbing story
- Make it sound exciting

- Twist the story to make it sound like everyone always got it wrong
- Find an unexpected lesson learned

But he went too far with this one and we couldn't even recommend it for an easy fund read.

Gladwell's Books: Core Limitations

Across Gladwell's books, similar bupatterns emerge:

1. Storytelling Over Science

Gladwell is a master storyteller.

But stories are not evidence.

He often builds compelling narratives first—and then fits selective research around them. This creates explanations that **feel true**, even when they're incomplete or misleading.

2. Cherry-Picked Data

Many examples focus only on **successful cases to prove and provide a narrative.**

This is not an investigative approach; it's a storyteller approach.
What's missing:

- The failures
- The base rates
- Critical analysis

Without those, one is more likely to mislead than to provide valid analyses.

3. Correlation Mistaken For Causation

A recurring issue:

- X and Y happen together → therefore X caused Y

But real-world systems are more complex.

This leads to **oversimplified conclusions** that don't hold under scrutiny.

4. Sensationalism Over Truth (Pop-psych Thriller)

Gladwell provides sensationalism over truths. That may sell better, but it comes at the cost of truth and effectiveness.

Gladwell's books often follow the same format. He starts with a story, leads towards the most plausible interpretation… But then veers to the more counterintuitive take. It's a **'pop-psychology thriller' format that captivates but misinforms.**

5. Lack of Actionable Strategy

This is the biggest issue for the ambitious and smart men we serve.
Gladwell explains:

- What happens
- Sometimes why

But rarely how to apply it in real life. For men who want results, this is a critical gap.

Gladwell's Secret: 'Better Than the Rest Effect™'

The better-than-the-rest effect™ describes the psychological boost people get when they feel intellectually superior to others, often resulting in appreciation for the source of the psychological boost

> Some books make you smarter, while some others make you think you're smarter

As Machiavelli said, what appears often beats what is, and it applies to feelings over truths as well.

Gladwell's readers feel smarter because **Gladwell frames his takes as revelations that beat consensus**. While 'everyone else', including experts, think X, the 'real Gladwellian reason' is Y. This is the structure underpinning many of Gladwell's stories.
And Gladwell's readers get to become part of an intellectual elite that 'sees the truth', in contrast to all those other blind sheep.

This may be the same appeal that conspiracy theories offer: **everyone else is stupid and we are smarter**.
This format, in a way, sells the benefits of narcissistic grandiosity: a confidence-boosting sense of superiority over everyone else.

Final Verdict

Malcolm Gladwell at his best writes excellent introductions to complex ideas, but often provides misleading takes based on sensationalism over truth.

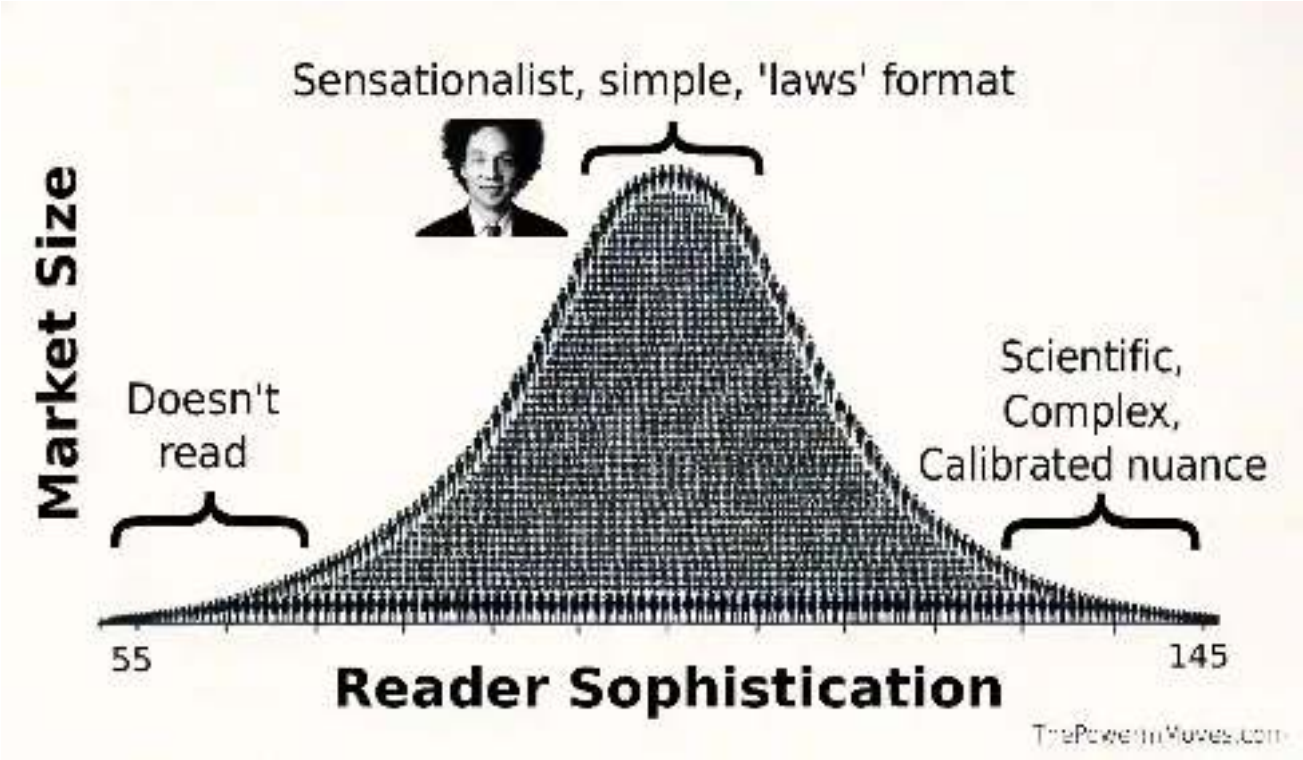
His books are engaging, thought-provoking, and easy to read, but they are also **insufficient for a deeper understanding of the same dynamics he tackles**, and at times even potentially misleading (ie.: the 10.000 hour magic number).
Use them to:

- Expand your thinking (including critical thinking)
- Understand how the "masses" think
- Learn the art of high-level storytelling

But don't rely on them for a deeper understanding of human psychology/the world, decision-making, or real-world execution.

For that, you need deeper, research-based, and more actionable frameworks.

Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™



The Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™ is the phenomenon where mass-market success necessitates simplifying, generalizing, or entertaining at the expense of depth, nuance, and calibration.

Malcolm Gladwell is one of many examples of the Best-Seller Quality Tradeoff™. To hit the bestseller list, an author almost always has to trade depth for accessibility.

The highest-quality work is inherently more complex—requiring careful nuance, detailed evidence, and sophisticated reasoning. But complexity has limited appeal: it can't reach the 'fat middle' of the IQ distribution curve—the majority of readers who prefer stories that are simple, entertaining, and immediately digestible.

The result is that mass-market success often comes at the cost of rigor and tactical usefulness.

This is why I stopped reading popular books and focused instead on handbooks. They provide infinitely better source material for our theoretical work at TPM and to provide the best practical strategies in Power University.

Start here:

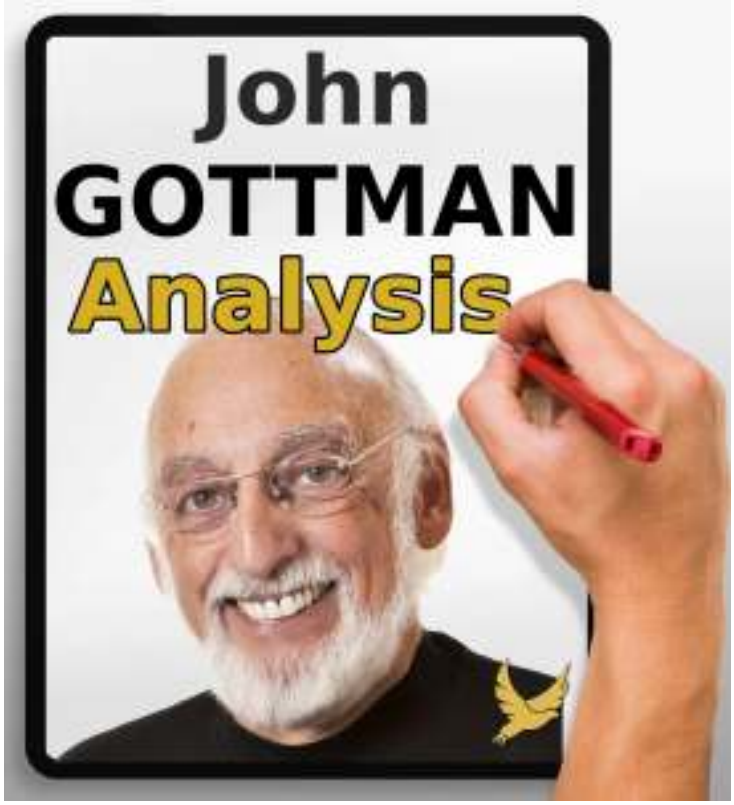
TPM's best resources.

John Gottman Relationship Research Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 March 2026 · Archived copy · Original

John Gottman is a renowned relationship scientist whose decades of laboratory studies (the “Love Lab”) have distilled empirical principles of interpersonal bonding. His work focuses on relationships but also offers practical, research-backed insights into general trust, communication, and conflict. Gottman’s findings are based on observation of thousands of couples, making his methods highly credible.

TPM Top-1% Angle: Gottman’s is for standard monogamous relationships.
Gottman largely skips crucial concepts like mate value, mating exchange dynamics, and dating and relationship games/manipulation.
He does not cover more ‘elite’ options available to higher value men like uncommitted dating, multiple partners, functional relationships, one-sided commitment, or men going their own way. That said, these principles are valid for committed and 1:1 relationships.



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Key Insights In Gottman's Research

Key concepts and insights in Gottman's research include:

- **Breakup predictors** (four horsemen of the apocalypse): can predict a breakup with over 90% accuracy. They are:
  - **Contempt**: disrespect, mockery, or superiority; it matters because it is one of the strongest predictors of relationship collapse and kills admiration.
  - **Criticism**: attacking the person instead of the behavior; it matters because it turns ordinary complaints into character judgments and starts escalation.
  - **Stonewalling**: shutting down, withdrawing, or going emotionally dead; more likely to be from men than women. It matters because it kills repair and makes problems impossible to solve.
  - **Defensiveness**: self-protection, counterattacking, or refusing responsibility. It matters because it blocks accountability and prevents real resolution.
- **Covert Request for Emotional Attunement ("Bids for Connection")**: Are 'covert cues' for attention or affection.
  Responding to them (turning towards) is important to improve the relationship. Ignoring or reacting negatively (turning away) depletes relational trust, while turning toward builds it.
- **Knowing Your Partner** ("**Love Maps**"): Knowing your partner's inner world, preferences, stresses, goals, and history. It matters because accuracy and familiarity make connection easier and prevent emotional drift.
- **Shared Meaning**: Shared values, rituals, goals, and a common sense of what the relationship is for. It matters because strong relationships are not only about feeling good together, but also building a common life direction.
- **Conflict Management Without Nastiness**: Handling disagreements with respect, accepting influence, and compromising
  - Unsolvable Problems: Accept that some problems are unsolvable due to inherent differences. Don't aim to "resolve" these issues or you'll be fighting over the same unsolvable problem over and over
- **Vicious Cycles:** Negative interaction loops where one partner's move triggers the other's worse reaction, creating a self-reinforcing spiral. It matters because breaking the pattern is often more important than "winning" the argument.
  Read more here
- **Mutual Influence**: Accepting influence strengthens loyalty and cooperation; refusing influence is a top predictor of failure. High-value men can leverage influence without ceding control.
  Read more here
- **Positive perspective:** To generally think well of your partner, and the ability to give your partner the benefit of the doubt and assume good intentions.
  - Positive ratio: High-performing relationships feature a high ratio of positive-to-negative interactions. It matters because positivity creates resilience, makes repairs land better, and keeps small conflicts from becoming relationship-threatening.
    Read more here

Book-by-Book Reference

For a quick overview of the books we personally analyzed from John Gottman to improve our own work and strategies:

1. The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work

- **Key Concept:** The “Sound Relationship House”—building friendship, managing conflict, and creating shared meaning.
- ⍰ **Pros:** The most comprehensive “operating manual” for long-term relationships.
- ✕ **Limitations:** Occasionally leans into “middle-class” social expectations that may feel overly domestic for high-power men

Full Analysis: The Seven Principles Summary

2. The Man’s Guide to Women

- **Key Concept:** “The Hero vs. The Zero”—understanding that a woman’s primary need is emotional safety and attunement.
- ⍰ **Pros:** Directly addresses female biology (ovulation cycles, stress responses) and provides a tactical “field guide” for men (although still geared for providers)
- ✕ **Limitations:** Can sometimes border on “provider-heavy” advice; men must balance this with maintaining relationship attraction and “lover” edge.

Full Analysis: The Man’s Guide to Women

3. The Relationship Cure

- **Key Concept:** The mechanics of “Bids for Connection.”
- ⍰ **Pros:** Applicable beyond romance—these strategies matters for most relationships, especially with more emotional and ‘communal’ types
- ✕ **Limitations:** The advice on “turning toward” can be misinterpreted as “always being available,” which can inadvertently lower your perceived status if not balanced with your ‘me time’ and mission-focus

Note: We removed it as a standalone review after we incorporated the best insights in our work to focus on the highest ROI work from Gottman.

4. The Science of Trust

- **Key Concept:** Using math and game theory to deconstruct how trust is built and betrayed. Found that ‘relationship cynics die earlier’ (important con to over-Machiavellianism).
- Note: Gottman reported a disturbing finding from his interviews: multiple women in high-conflict relationships cited their most intense sexual experiences occurred in the immediate aftermath of domestic violence or physical aggression. This highlights but does not condone complex dynamics related to dating dominance
- ⍰ **Pros:** High-level analyses; provides a framework for “Sliding Door” moments (the small choices that lead to loyalty or betrayal).
- ✕ **Limitations:** More academic and less applicable

Note: we removed the full stand-alone review to focus on Gottman’s higher ROI work (but we incorporated all his best takeaways in our frameworks).

5. Why Marriages Succeed or Fail

- **Key Concept:** Categorizing couples into “Validating,” “Volatile,” and “Avoidant” styles.
- 5:1 Positive Ratio: Gottman introduces the often misunderstood ‘5:1 ratio’. It’s not about having 5 “I love yous” for every 1 fight, but about positive sentiment (humor, touch, empathy, active listening) *while* arguing. If the

ratio drops to 1:1 during an argument, Gottman's data showed a 90% chance of eventual divorce.

- ⍰ **Pros:** Proves that there is no "one right way" to be a couple, as long as the 5:1 ratio is maintained.
- ✕ **Limitations:** Older research that focuses heavily on the "marriage" label rather than the broader "strategic alliance" of modern dating.

Note: full standalone review removed because his *The Seven Principles* includes most of the insights, with higher ROI.

6. Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage

- **Key Concept:** Practical application of the "Love Lab" findings through specific case studies.
- ⍰ **Pros:** Excellent for troubleshooting specific, recurring arguments (the "perpetual problems").
- ✕ **Limitations:** Focuses heavily on "repair," which may lead some men to stay in "sunk-cost" relationships that are fundamentally low-value.

Note: We removed this as a standalone summary after we extracted the best insights because it's less suited for our readership.

TPM's Analysis

Pros: Evidence-Based & Actionable

1. **Research-Backed & Empirical –** Thousands of couples observed in the "Love Lab," longitudinal studies, and statistically validated frameworks. This is high-authority content that's credible.
2. **Predictive Power –** Beyond popular claims of 'over 90% accuracy', these constructs align with known principles of power dynamics to predict, at the very least, loss of respect and attraction
3. **Actionable Frameworks –** Love Maps, Bids for Connection, and the Sound Relationship House provide concrete steps to improve communication, trust, and influence.
4. **Cross-Relationship Utility –** Many of Gottman's insights (turning toward bids, managing conflict) apply outside romance: friendships, networking, professional interactions.

Cons: 'Middle-Class' Focus ("Blue-Pill")

- **'Average Man's Frame':** Gottman's tends to be framed for middle-class, monogamous marriages.
- **High-Communion Preframe (Not For Top-1% Agentic Men)**: The hidden covert frame is that the goal is to "be happy" which can lead a man to adopt a "Happy Wife, Happy Life" mindset—a low-agency frame that may kill sexual attraction and respect.
- **Ignoring Several Power-Dynamics Realities:** Gottman treats relationships as closed systems. He ignores external realities and SMV-related realities. In truth, status, high-power behavior and optionality heavily impact these dynamics (and may even reduce the need for Gottman's own suggestions).
- **Lacks 'Optimum Balance' & Calibration Elements**: He suggests "accepting influence" (which is good for cooperation) but fails to warn that if a man accepts *too much* influence he becomes a "Zero" in his partner's eyes.
- **Over-Focuses on "Repair":** Gottman sometimes speaks as a relationship therapist, with the goal of "saving" things. Sometimes the best move isn't "repairing", but moving on (potentially, to a high-quality partner).
- **Ignores the 'Dark Side of Attraction':** In *The Man's Guide to Women*, Gottman pushes the "Hero" archetype as an attuned, protective provider. While effective for stability, it fails to mention that power, self-sufficiency, and potentially even some 'dark triad traits' can be attractive

Applying Gottman's Insights

- **Ensure you keep respect**: Gottman never calls it 'respect', but the truth is that contempt and criticism both point to a *lack* of respect
- **Uncover unsolvable problems, move on if compromise is costly**: If you two have irreconcilable differences, such as one wanting children and the other not, or one wanting his parents at home and the other not, you're not cut for each other
  - ⍰ **TPM Take**: Not compromising on anything is abusive, but giving up on what matters most for you is weak
- **Be *also* a friend (on top of lover and provider/protector):** Deep knowledge of your partner's world builds trust and influence.
  - ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's Take**: This is one of the approaches that made me stand out in some of my dating
- **Spot and respond to *some* bids for but tell her to speak as well':** Boost your emotional intelligence because some dynamics will always be unspoken. But also expect and tell your partner to speak up clearly on what's important to her
  Read about bids here
- **Remember that influence is a two-way street:** Dominant men may tend to overly deny influence, which erodes trust and bonding. But weak men are overly influenced and emotionally react to women's 'judge power'. Smart men instead influence on what matters most to them and gain loyalty and cooperation by accepting influence strategically.
  Learn how some women control relationships
- **Like your partner or don't be in a relationship with her**: If you cannot be positive about your partner, consider ending it for both of you

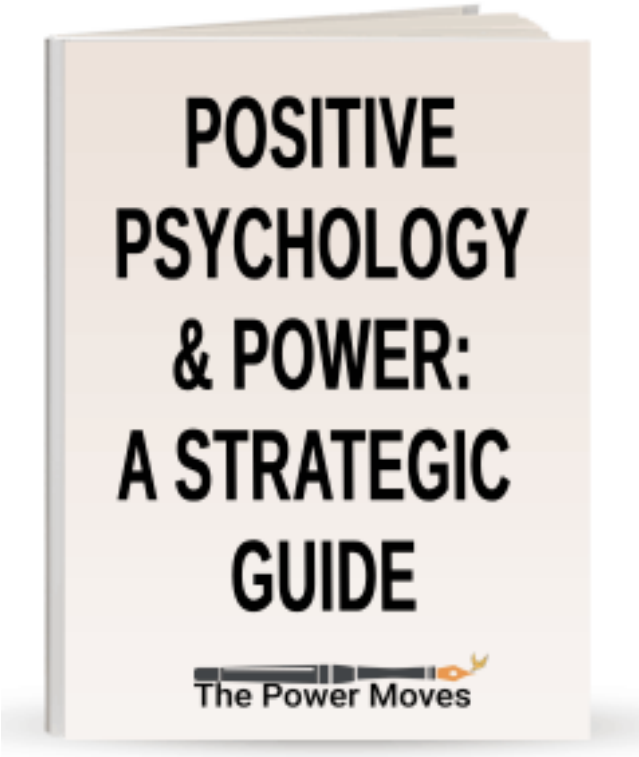
Learn more:

- Phases of relationships power dynamics
- **Maintain attraction in relationships**

Positive Psychology & Power: The Strategic Guide to What Actually Works

Lucio Buffalmano · 23 March 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living. Before the late 1990s, psychology was almost entirely focused on pathology—fixing what was broken (depression, anxiety, trauma). Positive psychology, spearheaded by figures like Martin Seligman, flipped the script to focus on “thriving.”



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- TPM Verdict: Pursue Foundational Mental Resilience + Power, Not ‘Happiness’
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Intro

For the agentic man, positive psychology is helpful with several mental foundations, yet not enough on its own.

On one hand, the mental resilience of a can-do, optimistic attitude coupled with the tools to control one’s state are foundational to mental empowerment (emotional sovereignty).

On the other hand, mainstream positive psychology is not a complete discipline. It misses some important aspects of mental empowerment. And when extending to external outcomes, it often devolves into naive self-help because it doesn’t properly cover its own achievement pillar.

For example, even health and mental-health-related achievements are often tied to power dynamics and interpersonal power dynamics because research has shown that social status is crucial to a man’s health and mental health (Wang and Geng, 2019; Demakakos et al., 2008).

Even when promoting relationships, it often assumes that good, win-win, and supportive relationships with well-intentioned others are easily reachable. But in truth, **good relationships are a hard-won achievement** that requires power awareness. You must know how to read characters, how to setup *smart* win-wins, and also how to protect your downsides in case of fall-outs.

This guide distills the science of well-being through the lens of power, stripping away the fluff to leave you with the actionable intelligence that actually works.

Core Concepts of Positive Psychology

Before diving into the literature, these are the foundational models of positive psychology that provide the highest strategic utility:

1. PERMA Model (Well-Being Framework)

Seligman’s updated model for well-being, standing for:

- **Positive Emotion**: Breaks down ‘positive well-being’ into various emotional components and practices such as hope, interest, joy, love, compassion, and gratitude.
  - Practical takeaway: “savoring” the present moment and maintaining an optimistic outlook on the past and future.
- **Engagement**: Reaching a state of “flow” by being fully absorbed in challenging tasks.
  - Practical takeaway: Train and work at a level where work is challenging but achievable.
- **Relationships**: Building deep, supportive connections because “other people matter.”
  - TPM Takeaway: It’s a two-way street, give to givers and bond with honorable men and quality women
- **Meaning**: Serving a purpose or cause that feels bigger than your own life.
  - Practical takeaway: Find a sense of purpose by belonging to and serving something greater than the self (family, work, community service, or spirituality)
- **Accomplishment**: Pursuing mastery and achieving goals for the sake of personal growth.
  - Practical takeaway: Work on your self-development, improve your competence in your chosen areas of expertise, set some goals and strive to achieve them

Meaning-Purpose Alignment

Pursuing goals aligned with values and contributing beyond oneself. This echoes the 'mission focus' of some manosphere content but, again, it's grounded in research.

2. Cognitive Behavioral Techniques (CBT)

Changing thoughts to change emotions and behaviors.

It provides the scientific foundation of many pop-psychology texts based on 'positive thinking', adding better and more effective approaches for managing and improving one's state.

Albert Ellis is one of its originators with Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy. It posits that events don't cause emotional distress; your *beliefs* about the events do.

3. Flow

Deep immersion in challenging and meaningful activities, boosting both well-being and productivity.

4. Strengths-Based Development

Identifying and leveraging personal strengths to decide what to focus on (rather than focusing only on weaknesses).

This approach of looking at one's strength to decide what to focus on and what to pursue in life and work is far superior to typical 'motivational' self-help based on 'you can do anything you want'.
It's both more persuasive for intelligent and critical thinking men, and it's **far more effective than motivation-only self-help** (see Lucio's video here).

5. Psychology of Optimism

Optimists and pessimists think differently along 3 crucial variables:

1. **Time / Permanence:** optimists see loss and rejection as temporary; pessimists see them as permanent
2. **Specificity / Pervasiveness:** optimists see loss and rejection as specific; pessimists see them as universal and as big general rejection to their whole work or personality
3. **Personal / External** optimists see loss and rejection as a consequence of the circumstances; pessimists take the blame on themselves and sees loss or rejection as a rejection of the self

Learned Helplessness vs. Learned Optimism

Helplessness is the ultimate state of pessimism, and it's the belief that no matter what you do, it will be useless. People in a state of helplessness become apathetic and take no action, including in situations in which they could change their environment.

Humans and animals can "learn" to give up after repeated unavoidable trauma. Learned optimism is the strategic counter-measure: training your brain to view setbacks as temporary, specific, and external rather than permanent, pervasive, and personal.

TPM Library: Positive Psychology Books Reviewed

Here is our curated breakdown of the most prominent books in the field, evaluated strictly for their real-world utility.

The Happiness Hypothesis

Jonathan Haidt explores ancient wisdom through the lens of modern psychology, introducing the famous “Elephant and Rider” metaphor.

- ✅ **PROS:** Valid breakdown of how human intuition and emotion work. It provides a realistic look at why humans are hypocritical and status-driven.
- ❌ **CONS:** It is academic and philosophical, lacking step-by-step actionable frameworks

Note: we incorporated the best findings in our frameworks and removed full review to focus on more actionable takeaways

The Happiness Advantage

Shawn Achor is not a researcher himself but did an excellent job at compiling the available research. He argues that happiness is the precursor to success, not the result.

- ✅ **PROS:** Good insights into how priming your brain for positive outcomes can increase cognitive bandwidth and problem-solving speed.
- ❌ **CONS:** Dangerously close to corporate “toxic positivity.” It ignores the reality that in highly competitive environments, strategic ruthlessness often outperforms a “happy disposition”

Note: we incorporated the best findings in our frameworks and removed full review to focus on more actionable takeaways

Authentic Happiness

Seligman’s book that launched the positive psychology movement, focusing on identifying and utilizing your “signature strengths.”

- **Incantations have no effect**: Seligman dyspels this major self-help myth here
- **Freud was unscientific**: Seligman provides a strong takedown of many of Freud’s foundational claims

- ✅ **PROS:** Good for establishing a psychological baseline and moving away from a victim mindset. Emphasizes leveraging what you are naturally good at. Strong
- ❌ **CONS:** The focus on “pleasantness” is outdated and largely abandoned even by the author in his later works. It lacks an edge for ambitious men.

Note: we incorporated the best findings in our frameworks and removed full review to focus on more actionable takeaways

Quote:

> This means that the promissory note that Freud and his followers wrote about childhood events determining the course of adult lives is worthless.
> I stress all this because I believe that many of my readers are unduly embittered about their past, and unduly passive about their future, because they believe that untoward events in their personal history have imprisoned them.
> (…)
> **Merely to know the surprising facts here—that early past events, in fact, exert little or no influence on adult lives—is liberating**

Flourish

Seligman's update to his own theory, moving away from "happiness" (which he admits is essentially "happiology") toward the broader concept of well-being (the PERMA model).

- ✅ **PROS:** A more realistic and mature model. The inclusion of "Accomplishment" validates the drive of high-achievers who seek mastery, not just a good mood.
- ❌ **CONS:** Still operates in a vacuum of "fair play," largely ignoring the dark triad traits that often inhabit the upper echelons of accomplishment.

Note: we incorporated the best findings in our frameworks and removed full review to focus on more actionable takeaways

Stumbling on Happiness

Daniel Gilbert provides a popular psychology overview, exploring why humans are poor at predicting what will make them happy and introducing the concept of "affective forecasting errors."

- **Focus on experiences**: Money won't buy happiness and you regret what you don't do
- **Put things in perspective**: We have adjustment mechanisms for major issues but not small one. Meaning, we might be more bothered by a scratch on our new car than by our house burning down.

- ✅ **PROS:** Strong research-backed insights on how we mispredict future happiness. Useful for avoiding major life decision mistakes and overestimating emotional outcomes.
- ❌ **CONS:** Lacks a clear framework or actionable system. More a collection of interesting psychological findings rather than a practical guide.

Note: we incorporated the best findings in our frameworks and removed full review to focus on more actionable takeaways

Learned Optimism

Martin Seligman's best book on positive psychology because it provides the best overview and presents a more mature framework.
It's also actionable. The theory on explanatory styles and resilience lends itself well to cognitive restructuring, and the author provides tips on how to reprogram a pessimistic brain.

- **Explanatory styles**: expands on the "Internal Locus" of control as an engine for resilience. If you believe the cause of a failure is "External" and "Specific" (rather than "Internal" and "Pervasive"), you maintain the agency to try again. This is the scientific basis for learned industriousness.

- ✅ **PROS:** A foundational text for mental anti-fragility. The ability to reframe setbacks from "I am a failure" to "This specific strategy failed today" is foundational for an empowered mind
- ❌ **CONS:** The book can be dry and relies heavily on lengthy academic questionnaires to prove its points.

Read the full TPM review of Learned Optimism

Forerunners: Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck

Ellis (and Aaron Beck) helped shift away from psychoanalysis toward more active intervention and self-intervention.

Decades before positive psychology, Ellis developed REBT, showing that beliefs—not events—create emotional

outcomes. Alongside Beck's work, this led to the development of cognitive-behavioral approaches (CBT). Positive psychology later adopted and expanded these ideas in frameworks like learned optimism and emotional regulation.

How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable

A masterclass in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), teaching you how to destroy the irrational beliefs that cause anxiety and depression.

- ✅ **PROS:** Extremely actionable. Ellis is blunt, realistic, and highly effective. This is internal frame control at its finest.
- ✕ **CONS:** The writing style is repetitive, and the core message could be condensed into a much shorter framework.

Read the full TPM review of How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable

How to Keep People from Pushing Your Buttons by Albert Ellis

This is highly relevant for us because Ellis applies REBT specifically to social dynamics, showing how to prevent others from manipulating your emotional state.

- ✅ **PROS:** A top-tier resource for handling manipulation. It teaches you how to deny toxic people the emotional reactions they crave, neutralizing their power entirely.
- ✕ **CONS:** Doesn't provide the socially offensive and defensive strategies needed to tackle these people in real life to maintain power, status, and reputation.
  TPM Note: Some examples on 'sharing vulnerability', including with a partner, are not what we'd advise

Read the full TPM review of How to Keep People from Pushing Your Buttons (for alumni)

TPM Analysis: The Good, The Bad, and The Naive

Positive psychology offers many empowering tools that are foundational to an ambitious man.
To combine 'mental health' with mental power and real-life outcomes, men must combine it with realism and strategy.

⍰ Good: Mental-Health & Mental Empowerment

- **Mental frameworks matter:** Thought patterns influence outcomes (frame control).
- **Emotional control is power:** Managing one's own emotions and feelings protects against emotional manipulation and 'judge dynamics', and puts control back into the sovereign individual
- **Positive emotions can boost performance:** Positive affect improves creativity, resilience, and persistence (though a high-power man must learn to act also when he doesn't feel like)
- **Resilience is trainable:** Techniques like CBT and optimism work when applied correctly.
- **Meaning drives long-term success and well-being:** Purpose sustains motivation beyond short-term rewards. This is also helpful for Machiavellianism and a healthier 'dark-triad edge'
- **Provides scientific backing for self-help**

Positive Psychology-related research confirmed or dispelled several findings. Says Seligman in *Authentic Happiness*, for example:

> Positive thinking often involves trying to believe upbeat statements such as "Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better" in the absence of evidence, or even in the face of contrary evidence. (…) Many educated people, trained in skeptical thinking, cannot manage this kind of boosterism. Learned optimism, in

> contrast, is about accuracy.

⍰ Danger: The “Happy Sucker” Paradigm

Lucio’s primary criticism across this entire genre is the naive approach to achievement and social relationships. Mainstream positive psychology assumes a “fair world” where everyone is operating in good faith. It is dangerous naiveté.

- **Ignores power dynamics:** Real-world success depends on power dynamics and not just mindset
  - Ignores the darker side of socialization, such as manipulation, status games, and hidden agendas
- **Overemphasis on positivity:** Emotions often associated with negativity, including anger and shame have their place. They’re powerful fuel for motivation and can be a catalyst for change and power
- **Not entirely new:** Many ‘positive psychology’ ideas (emotional control, reframing, acceptance) were already present in Stoic philosophy, raising questions about how much is innovation vs. scientific validation.

These can undermine a man’s achievement:

- **Sub-par for career progression**: the ‘Happiness Advantage’ in a competitive corporate environment without understanding office politics is a *dis*advantage. Your positive attitude will simply make you a “happy sucker” who gets exploited by Machiavellian colleagues.
- **Exploitation risk**: happiness without effective calculativeness is a *dis*advantage.
- **Men also need power to find love**: happiness without understanding dating power dynamics and effective seduction frameworks will not land you a quality woman.

As a whole, ‘happiness’ without power is just compliance, submissiveness, and failure to meet your potential disguised as wellness.

TPM Verdict: Pursue Foundational Mental Resilience + Power, Not ‘Happiness’

Do not pursue happiness directly: as Viktor Frankl suggests, happiness *ensues*.

Swap ‘happiness’ for ‘baseline of contentedness’ about who you are and what you stand for. This is not a ‘peak emotion’, which is good because peaks often come crashing down—but it’s a high-well-being baseline you always get to peak with you.
And **reach it as a byproduct of developing foundational values and mental traits** such as honor, competence, self-love, self-esteem, and power-aware win-win relationships with quality people.

For agentic men, **happiness may not even matter that much**. Smart self-development will automatically give you a good baseline of self-esteem and ‘general contentedness’. It becomes a natural consequence of who you become-and, in part, achieve.
Chasing ‘happiness’ may sometimes betray a lack of foundations.

⍰♂Lucio’s Take: **The happiest man is the one who doesn’t need happiness. Focus on foundational mental empowerment**

Lucio:
Over years of studying and coaching, I've noticed a pattern: people chasing 'happiness' often lack foundational self-love and self-sufficiency.

Exceptions always apply, but consider this:

Chasing happiness from others betrays a lack of self-sufficiency, chasing happiness with material possessions betrays a lack of inner contentedness, and chasing happiness in a state of unhappiness betrays a lack of mental empowerment.

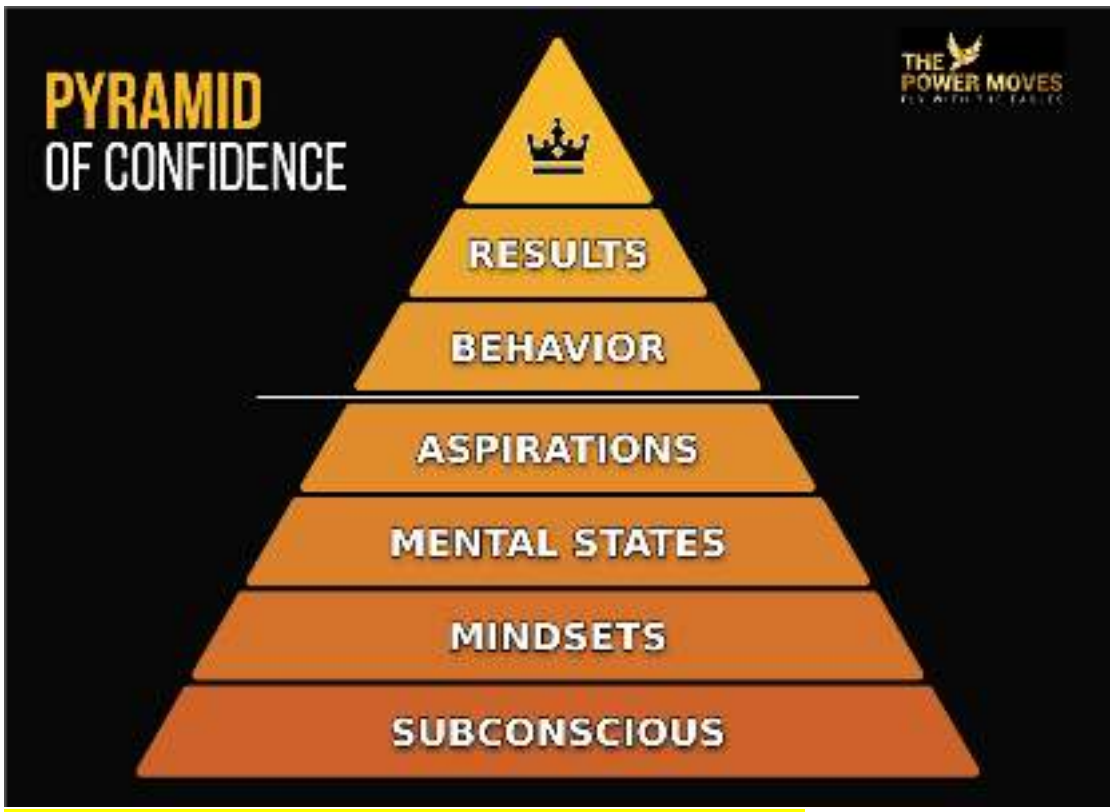
Someone said 'the richest man is not the one who has more, but the one who needs less'. It applies to happiness, too.

P.S.
Chasing happiness is not associated with agentic masculinity and undermines your social power.
See this reel.

TPM Takeaways for Ambitious Men

- **Keep**: emotional control, positive reframes, (learned) optimism and meaning (mission)
- **Add**: power awareness, social power, strategy, competence and everything we teach here and in **Power University**
- **Avoid**: 'chasing happiness', being 'happy but unaccomplished'

Build the pyramid of success from the ground up:



Positive Psychology helps with the lower and mid-level of the pyramid.

In our public articles we've focused more on the competence side. If you need help with the mental side, consider:

Check Confidence University

The Entrepreneurial Power Model: A Master Guide to Leverage & Influence

Lucio Buffalmano · 26 March 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Entrepreneurship is an economic, relational, and production system for gaining power, disproportionate value capture, and affecting change at scale.

From a self-empowerment perspective, entrepreneurship offers the largest leverage and **control over resources, decision-making, and time**. And insulates you from the vulnerabilities of being at someone else's mercy, a replaceable node in someone else's hierarchy.

This guide breaks down the power dynamics of entrepreneurship while providing ambitious men with tools and strategies for leverage and durable influence.

Contents

- The Power-Exchange Model of Entrepreneurship™
  - Core Problem: 'Value-Control Tradeoff Model™'
- Solution 1: Entrepreneur's Personal Power
  - 1.2. Mindsets
  - 1.3 Power Awareness
  - 1.4. Social Power
  - 1.5. Character
- Solution 2: Power Asymmetry (Greater Power-Greater Value Capture™)
- Solution 3: Strategic Exchange (& Manipulation)
  - Social Exchange Manipulation
- Solution 4: Influence (& Manipulation)
  - Manipulative Dynamics

- Solution 5: Execution
  - Learning Entrepreneurship: Literature Overview
- Dark Triad Traits & Entrepreneurship
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  - The Entrepreneurial Tetrad Hypothesis™
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The Power-Exchange Model of Entrepreneurship™

The Power Exchange Model of Entrepreneurship™ states that to get high value from high-value individuals within voluntary exchanges, entrepreneurs must give back high value (extrinsic or intrinsic), exert personal influence (leadership, charisma), or strategically manipulate the exchange.

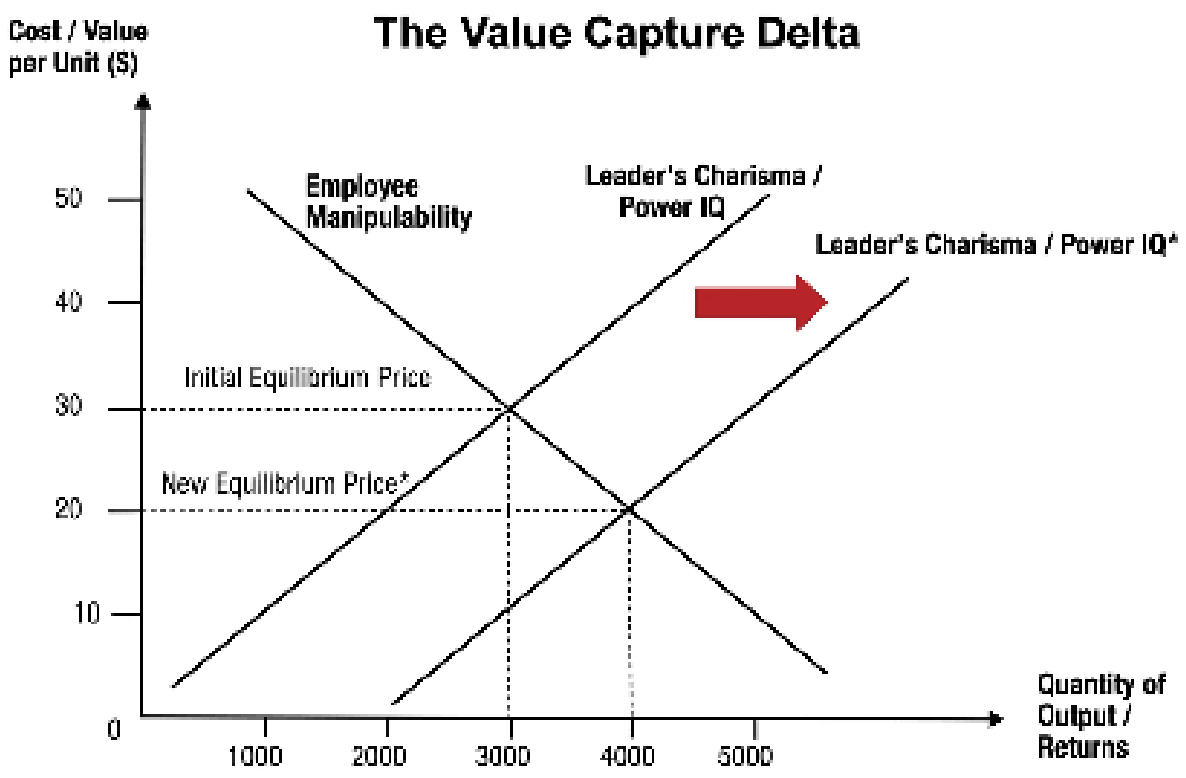
Value pertains to classical social exchange model (Blau, 1964), to which we add personal influence, and strategic persuasion/manipulation.
This model applies to all entrepreneurial relationships, from investors to business partners, to the general public and employees.

Core Problem: 'Value-Control Tradeoff Model™'

The value–control tradeoff™ states that the more value a person holds—ie., competence, capital, network, etc.—the more value they can provide, but the less controllable and more demanding they become. Entrepreneurs win by increasing their ability to exchange or extract performance from high-value, low-control individuals.

Lower value individuals tend to be less power aware and have fewer options, making them easier to control, but with lower added value.
Conversely, competent individuals add more value but are less manipulable, increasing entrepreneurs' costs.

Since not all forms of value are the same, entrepreneurs perform best when saving extrinsic resources, meaning that the topmost entrepreneurs may self-select to be high-IQ Machiavellians, hypercharismatic believers, or high-quality men that others genuinely look up to.



Entrepreneurs' competence allows for greater value extraction, boosting margins and business success

Let's explore their secrets to ensure you're more of the latter.

Solution 1: Entrepreneur's Personal Power

Personal power, which some refer to as 'charisma', 'character', or 'leadership', is a person's social value to others. And the more valuable the entrepreneur becomes, the more he can cooperate with high-value others.

In leadership, Maxwell called this the 'law of the lid', with the entrepreneur's level of leadership being the 'lid' to his effectiveness. Higher value entrepreneurs , can attract, retain, and influence top performers.

TPM Note: It's one of the most win-win and honorable approaches
While personal power can be abused, when it includes character and prestige, it tends to be win-win, lower risk, and stable. This is soft power per excellence, and the entrepreneur's equivalent of high mate value in dating.

1.2. Mindsets

Mental empowerment is a foundation of personal power, and key mindsets include:

Non-entrepreneur	Entrepreneur
Threat-focus, seeks safety and moves away (avoidance-oriented)	**Opportunity-focus**, seizes and moves towards (approach-oriented)
Consumer: Wants to buy	**Producer:** Wants to create and sell
Seeks entertainment	**Seeks knowledge & skills:** Uses media to extract mental models and promote
Passive: Waits for permission	**Hyper-agency** and action-taking
Follower: Comfortable in existing hierarchies.	**Leader/disruptor:** Driven to command
Naive nice guy: believes in the 'fairness of the system' and that giving is always rewarded	**Power aware**: sees power dynamics and trusts power above 'fairness'

Producer Mindset

Consumers look at a new cool gadget, want it, and ask 'how much does it cost'. Producers ask how it can help them create and sell better.

Entertainment vs. Education (Information Intake)

Consumers used media as escapism from their lives. Producers use it for informational acquisition, or customer acquisition.

High agency

Sense of control, the belief in one's ability to effect change.

Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking helps across the full spectrum of entrepreneurship, from prioritizing opportunity, to social strategy.

Good entrepreneurs are also effectively calculative. As high-value men, they must protect themselves against the many takers who seek their time, employment, or companionship.

Time = Most Precious Resource

Entrepreneurs constantly assess what's the highest ROI on their time, and constantly protect it against takers and time-wasters.

Employees sell time for money, while entrepreneurs leverage *other* people's time.

Risk-taking

Employees seek stability, while entrepreneurs take bets.

Seeking Permission vs. Hyper-Agency

- The employee waits for approval, turning to those with the title, certifications, or degrees to be told what to do. Entrepreneurs have a bias for results and fast action.

Realism & Pragmatism

Realism is a necessary tool for anyone who seeks to enact change in the world.
Ray Dalio is a good example. Dalio enjoyed philosophical discussions, but he made 'hyperrealism' a key principle at work.

1.3 Power Awareness

Non-entrepreneur	Entrepreneur
Naive nice guy: misses power moves & status negotiations	**Power aware**: sees power dynamics
Trusts fairness and 'karma'; 'give and you will get'	**Trusts power** above 'fairness'

Effective entrepreneurs are power aware.
Rao's interesting 'Gervais Principle' posits that entrepreneurs capture the lion's share of employees' added value because they're power aware, and employees are clueless.

Power awareness and skills are crucial through the 'entrepreneurship value chain' (networking, VC pitching, partner selection, selling, hiring and retaining, etc.).

Some key articles on power-awareness:

- Power intelligence
- Social investment model, and how it relates to interpersonal power dynamics
- Naive self-help, covering what's missing in most entrepreneurship resources

1.4. Social Power

Positive dominance and a minimum of masculinity are important to gain respect, especially with other men.
This is the power component of our power and warmth framework, without which a man may pass too much for a 'nice guy', but fail to gain the respect he needs to lead.
Read more:

- **High power behavior**
- How to gain respect

1.5. Character

With a reputation for competence, fairness, and honor.
This is the equivalent of prestige-based social status.

Read more:

- **How to be an honorable man**

Solution 2: Power Asymmetry (Greater Power-Greater Value Capture™)

This principle states that the greater the Power Gap between entrepreneurs and employees, the more value the entrepreneur can, and often does, capture

Can often turn into *does* because most living organisms seek maximum returns. It's a law of nature, and returns maximization can turn coercive with absolute power.

However, the greater value capture must not necessarily be win-lose.
In free markets, value capture often remains win-win, and both are better off. Plus, entrepreneurs could re-invest the larger share into the business, and grow it for everyone.

But alas, it's best to never have to hope in someone's magnanimity.
Extreme power gaps can push value capturing to extremes that some may consider unethical. This is why government regulations setting a floor on value capture can be effective.

One example from the book '*Shoe Dog*':

High power = small capture	Low power = extreme capture
Phil Knight took pride in treating sponsored athletes well, and made many wealthy	Many considered Nike's sweatshop working conditions appalling

Thus, entrepreneurs may use several strategies to keep others lower power, including:

- Geo-arbitrage, outsouring to poorer countries
- Automations
- Scripts and manuals to systematize and diffuse best M.O.

Solution 3: Strategic Exchange (& Manipulation)

Rational players are incentivized to give the least and take the most, without breaking the active cooperation.

However, note that in free exchanges ,**even strategic and calculative exchanges often remain win-win.**
For example, giving what's less valuable to you but more valuable to someone else is not underhanded, but smart.

However, there can be an element of manipulation.

Social Exchange Manipulation

One may inflate one's giving, while deflating others' giving ('social exchange scalping').

Often, entrepreneurs' 'gives' are framed as out love, towards 'members of the tribe', without mentioning the self-serving motive.
Some examples from the resources we studied:

Strategic Give	Strategic Take
Sam Walton called employees 'associates' and started a revenue-sharing scheme, aligning incentives and long-term cooperation	Long-term employees gained, but had to commit their working lives to Walton while still on minimum wage
Howard Schulz called baristas 'partners' and provided revenue share.	Baristas were blocked from joining unions and were first to be fired during downturns

Strategic exchanges are give-and-take with plenty of grey area framings
Cynics focus on the right side, and naives only see the left side. Smart cooperator look at the bottom line: if both stay in the exchange, it's fair to conclude it's win-win

Solution 4: Influence (& Manipulation)

Good entrepreneurs tap into intrinsic motivation to inspire others, boost their sense of belonging, and move them from a natural self-focus, to team players.

This is the true essence of leadership, maximizing output and minimizing costs, while also boosting morale.
For an overview on these topics see:

- **How smart leaders inspire**
- How to be a leader

Manipulative Dynamics

The line between good persuasion and manipulation is often blurred, but given people's incentive to maximize returns, it is crossed more often than people wish to admit.

For example, genuine pro-social missions tend to attract believers who work hard for less. But they may also be used as covers to maximize value capture.
Some examples of superficially persuasive but potentially manipulative attempts:

Manipulation	Effect
Share the 'tough journey' of entrepreneurship	**Discourage entrepreneurship**. More employees = more bargaining power
'Change the world' missions framed as prosocial	**Attract believers** who work harder and ask less
Teamwork as a value, which is 'good' and prosocial	**Shames calculativeness**, pursuing individual credit, and strong salary negotiation

Manipulative attempts don't need to be mean-spirited or calculated. Often, they work best when they're subconscious.
Indeed, sociobiologist Trivers theorized that self-duping is the highest form of manipulation.

Read more in:

Corporate manipulation, a list of common business-to-employee manipulation

The Bigger the Sacrifice, the Bigger the Manipulation

A principle of manipulation dynamics is that manipulation festers in the areas of diverging interests, and that the more obviously interests diverge, the greater the manipulation must be.

See more in:

- Great leadership is great manipulation: Ultimate sacrifices call for ultimate manipulation

Manipulation... Or Team's & Mission Win? Perspectives Matter

If one believes the ultimate goal is good, or the good of the company supersedes that of the individual ('collectivist psychology'), then he would see entrepreneurs' manipulation as positive persuasion.

Solution 5: Execution

This is the only part that entrepreneurship resources focus on, largely ignoring all preceding aspects.
Across the resources we've analyzed, the following are recurring key concepts:

1. **Define a problem**, instead of starting from 'great idea'
2. **Build the offer**: Alex Hormozi proposes that value = dream outcome x odds of success / time delay x sacrifice. Make your offer good & proven, and fast & simple
3. **Define the avatar**, your ideal customer, and pitch to him (see example below)
4. **Systematize and automate:** Sources like Gerbner's *The E-Myth Revisited* suggest switching from working *in* the business and working *on* the business to scale and gain independence
5. **Hire slow and fire fast**, hire based on experience or you'll be offering free training paid by you. Consider the 'No asshole rule', or they'll drive away any other competent person
6. **Scale**: dominate one single channel, market, and product first, and only later expand (example: Amazon first dominated books, then everything else).

Worked Example: Power University's Avatar

Max is 32.
He is intelligent, disciplined, and ambitious.
But he feels he could operate at a higher level—strategically, socially, and professionally—but he lacks a unifying framework.

His main constraints are blind spots in power, strategies, and attraction.

Max could read on his own all TPM's articles and figure it out. But Power University or coaching saves him time, and gives him invaluable extra insights not publicly available.

Learning Entrepreneurship: Literature Overview

Most entrepreneurship literature focuses on execution and mindset, while largely ignoring power dynamics, incentives, and value extraction.

- **The Millionaire Fastlane & Unscripted** The 'anti rat-race manifesto' <—🤔 **Lucio's note**: a favorite
  - ✅ Pros: Power-aware, takedown of 'compound interest myth' and 'paradox of practice'
  - ❌ Cons: Dismissive of employment, which can be by choice or strategy
- **Zero to One**. Monopoly = maximum power asymmetry → maximum value capture. But focused on VC and lacks how-to
- **The Lean Startup**: A classic that introduced the 'Build-Measure-Learn' feedback loop and 'Minimum Viable Product' approach
- **$100M Offers**
  - ✅ Pros: A hyper-practical, tactical manual
  - ❌ Cons: The 'price high' is a generalization that won't apply to everyone
- **The E-Myth Revisited**
  - ✅ Pros: The main reference to transition from self-employed labor to systems engineering.
  - ❌ Cons: Simple concept, 'how to' is simplistic
- **Rich Dad Poor Dad**: Entry-level with foundational mindset shifts, but too simplistic for our audience
- **Biographies**
  - ✅ Pros: First-hand experience
  - ❌ Cons: Inherently biased. Reputation management, self-promotion, and potentially marketing
- **Principles**
  - ✅ Pros: Organizational engineering.
  - ❌ Cons: For big and stable businesses only. Potentially impression management (see our 'Machiavellian principles' take)
- **Start With Why**: Deep-sounding, but speculation based on survivorship bias. Apple's success may also come down to Jobs' personality, as per our model

Courses & Limitations of Practicality

Most courses I've analyzed were too basic or too generic to significantly move the needle for TPM. Common issues:

- **Motivation over practicality**
- **Passion over marketability**, but nobody buys your passion if it doesn't add value
- **Naivete**, skipping the power dynamics (predatory partners, manipulative negotiations, and manipulation)
- **Marketers without experience**: Most courses' sellers are marketers; their only business is selling those courses

Dark Triad Traits & Entrepreneurship

> Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers
>
> *Apple's ad*

While many popular texts highlight positive entrepreneurs, the truth is that there are also 'darker' traits associated with it.

And a 2021 meta-analysis shows that **all 3 dark triad traits are associated with entrepreneurial intentions**.

Dark triads may be driven towards a shortcut to status and power, and moving away from positions of low power. While Apple's quote is inspirational, one may 'rebel' against starting at the bottom. And a 'misfit' may not fit because of high antagonism, or lack of inhibitory controls.

Calculativeness

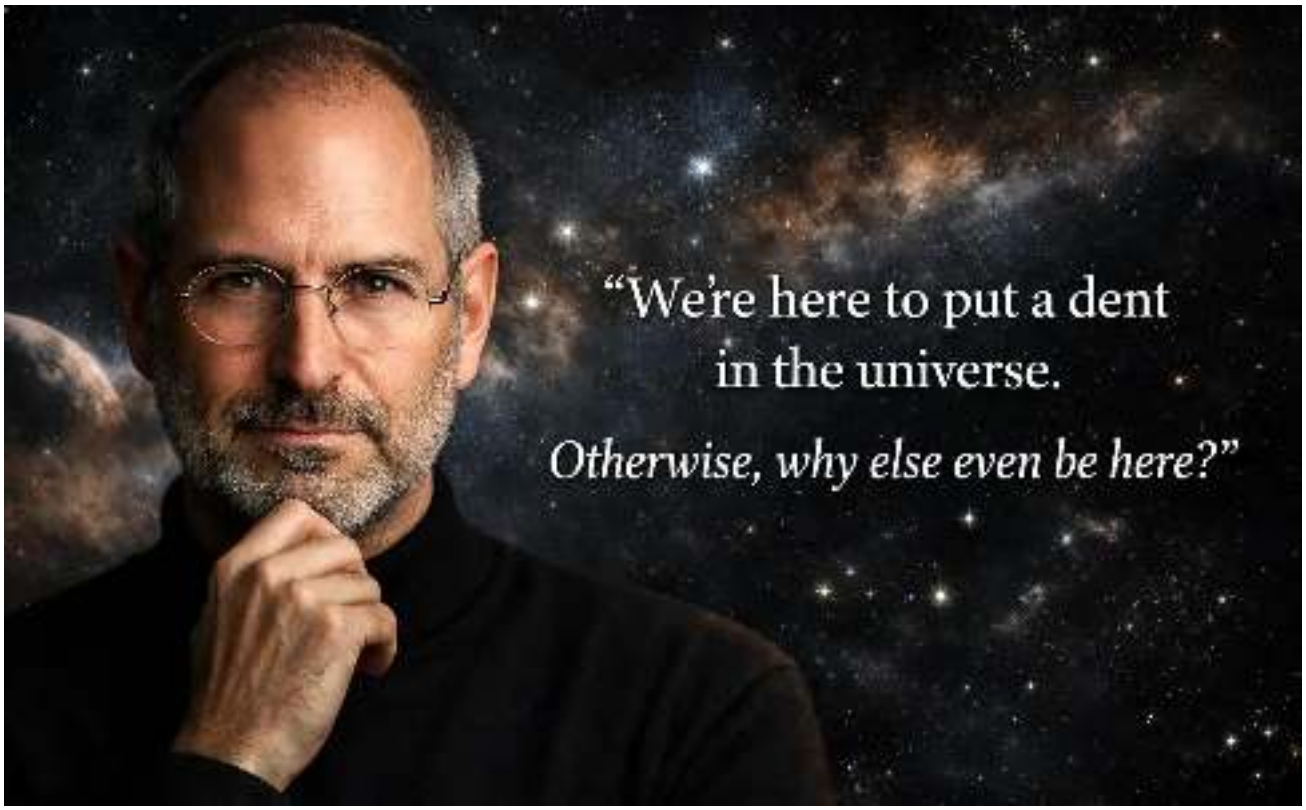
More selfish and calculative individuals are more likely to resent and reject an entrepreneur's greater value capture. They'd rather do the greater capturing than be at its receiving end.

Selfishness & Motivation

The research literature on narcissism suggests that narcissists are less motivated in positions of followership, and more concerned about their interests when they're project resources rather than project managers (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016).

Entrepreneurship, with its high returns and visibility, may be their only path to thrive.

Grandiosity



Grandiosity, a trait associated with narcissism and factor 1 psychopathy, may be one source of the (over)-optimism required for entrepreneurial risks.

Several entrepreneurial slogans of 'changing the world', 'disrupting' and 'denting the universe' may suggest grandiose thinking.
For example, Diamandis' rules in *Bold* read:

- If you think it is impossible, then it is for you.
- Start at the top, then work your way up.
- The best way to predict the future is to create it yourself!

Learn more here:

- **Antifragile grandiosity**: getting the grandiose boost, without the downsides

Spectacular Cases

Among the entrepreneurs that some suggested may have dark triad traits:

- Sam Bankman-Fried
- Elizabeth Holmes
- Bernard Madoff, mentioned in *The Handbook of Psychopathy* as a possible example of 'successful psychopaths' (until he got caught).

Elizabeth Holmes created and leveraged her status and fame to recruit an A-list board of directors and secure billions from top VC firms. She also allegedly, and likely, lowered her voice, a cue of authority and social power.

The Entrepreneurial Tetrad Hypothesis™

The Entrepreneurial Tetrad Hypothesis™ proposes that four personality dimensions—grandiose narcissism, Machiavellianism, Factor 1 psychopathy (boldness), and autistic traits—may be disproportionately associated with entrepreneurship for the advantages provided in ambition, will to power, strategic thinking, risk tolerance, and systemization.

Looking at the history of entrepreneurship, especially including modern successes, it seems that, besides the dark triad, autism may also provide some advantages.

Autism may have become more relevant with the rise of technology, science, and the digital age.
And although it may be a potential limiter in pure social power and leadership skills, it may provide the drive to tireless work in scientific and technical domains that may bore more neurotypical men.

Trait	Entrepreneurial advantage
Grandiose narcissism	Ambition, status drive, belief in one's exceptional destiny
Machiavellianism	Strategic thinking, political skill, goal-focus
Factor 1 psychopathy	Fearlessness, stress resistance, willingness to take risks
Autism	Systemization, obsessive focus, deep specialization

Looking at some examples:

- **Jobs** → narcissism + psychopathic boldness
- **Zuckerberg** → autistic traits + Machiavellian strategic thinking
- **Musk** → autistic traits + grandiosity
- **Holmes** → grandiosity + factor 1

Different Solution: Solopreneurship

Solopreneurship may skip this game, appealing to more freedom-loving, independent, and potentially less extroverted men (a 'sigma type' in popular talk).
Resources for solopreneurs include *The 4-Hour Workweek*, Sivers' *Anything You Want*, and *The $100 Startup*.

There are two types of solopreneurs:

Missionary/artist	High Power
Loves his job	**Doesn't love** or even dislikes his job
Stays on his mission and systematizes the rest (admin, support, etc.)	**Systematizes** everything to stop working

But they share in common:

- **Sovereignity over 'scaling':** Personal autonomy and mobility over scaling to maintain full control over one's time and mobility
- **Independence over status**, living outside of status hierarchies

TPM's Contribution to Entrepreneurs

Most entrepreneurship advice focuses on tools.
But entrepreneurship is not only about ideas or execution, but also swaying exchanges, incentives, and power asymmetries in your favor.

Entrepreneurs are net value-givers. They move society forward, and we're happy to help them.
Our alumni entrepreneurs found Power University helped them expand their influence and achieve their goals:

Check Power University

Spirituality, Agency & Power: What Works, What Doesn't

Lucio Buffalmano · 2 April 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Most high-agency and rational men hear the word 'spirituality' and think of woo-woo 'vibrations' and passive losers waiting for 'manifestations'.

They aren't entirely wrong. A massive portion of the spiritual self-help industry is manipulative gurus and naive self-help. From the "Law of Attraction" to "give and you will get," these concepts may be more likely to harm than to help.

However, to dismiss spirituality entirely is a massive strategic blunder.
Stripped of the pseudo-science, **spirituality can be tremendously empowering** and form the foundation of antifragility and unnediness.

In this guide, we strip away the "woo-woo" to reveal the core mechanism of spiritual power.

Contents

- What's 'Spirituality'
  - Effective Spirituality™
- The Core Mechanism: Detachment as Mental Power
- The Upside: Emotional Control, Antifragility, and Inner Freedom
  - Unneediness, Self-Sufficiency, & Resilience to Losses
  - Psychological & Emotional Resilience
  - Fearlessness From Loss & Death Acceptance
  - Contededness
- The Dark Side of Spirituality (Naivete, Power Loss)
- Literature on Spirituality
  - The Biggest Lie: "Think & Things Will Manifest"

- Spirituality for High-Value Men: TPM's Integrated Model

What's 'Spirituality'

Spirituality refers to the transcendence of materialism and physicality to embrace something larger than oneself, including inexplicable forces, a 'greater power' or God.

In truth, spirituality is a loosely utilized term that can refer to the search for meaning, purpose, transcendence, connectedness, and a relationship to what people consider sacred, or inexplicable by science.
Spirituality is also linked to the related concepts of 'awakening', 'awareness', and 'enlightenment'.

It overlaps and may include religion, but it's larger and can also exist without religion. Religion can be thought of as more organized, dogmatic, and ritualistic. Spirituality is broader, more personal, and often less tied to doctrine. However, spirituality is closer to Eastern religions, including Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism.

Spirituality in more practically-oriented self-help is also often linked to practices of **meditation and mindfulness**.

Effective Spirituality™

Effective spirituality™ combines emotional resilience and unneediness while maintaining the drive, ambition, and effectiveness of an agentic approach to life

Traits	Empowering Outcomes
Detachment (Mental Separation)	**Outcome Independence:** Focus execution, stay resilient independent of results. **Growth Mindset:** Failure is just data, not an emotional collapse.
Non-Neediness (Internal Value)	**High Self-Sufficiency:** Your value isn't dependent on others' validation or ownership. **Social Freedom:** Immune to typical social and emotional manipulation.
Strategic Acceptance (Amor Fati)	**Emotional Resilience:** You don't resist reality; you adapt immediately.
Present Moment Awareness	**Focus and Clarity:** Deep concentration on current tasks, reducing noise and anxiety. **Enhanced Observation:** Reading power dynamics, tells, and cues in real-time.
Connection to Purpose	**Unhindered Persistence:** Deep conviction fuels grit that standard motivation cannot match. **Charismatic Leadership:** People follow the internally guided.
Transcending Ego	**Antifragility:** Criticisms and reversals don't shatter your identity; they reinforce it. **Strategic Decision Making:** Actions are based on effectiveness, not validating the self.

Spirituality is valuable for **resilience, stability, and unnediness.** But it becomes harmful when it turns into naivete, loss of agency to 'the universe' or 'karma', and when it replaces action with thoughts only.

Our approach to men's empowerment aligns with 'effective spirituality', and places the mind at the center stage of a man's power.
You can read more in our antifragility articles, or our main training on this:

- **Confidence University**

The Core Mechanism: Detachment as Mental Power

The core useful mechanism in spirituality is **detachment**, especially detachment from life events and material possessions.

In practical terms, this means being **less reactive and more unfazed** by inner thoughts, fears, and cravings, and by external social reactions and events.
Mindfulness research describes this as nonjudgmental, purposeful awareness of the present moment, and modern studies show that meditation and mindfulness can help reduce stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and related distress.

TPM adds an important layer: pure spirituality and **full detachment alone can blunt your edge.**
It can make you less ambitious and less effective, lowering your status, respect, and attraction. While a spiritual man would reply 'so what', we serve men who also want to achieve goals here. So we prefer a more integrated approach for the best of both worlds (read below).

Bottom line: Spirituality is useful when it increases internal freedom, emotional stability, and clarity of action. It becomes harmful when it replaces agency with hope or strategy with belief.

The Upside: Emotional Control, Antifragility, and Inner Freedom

Non-spiritual	Positively Spiritual
Reactive: Everything is a personal threat or a "big deal."	**Emotionally Cool:** Detached from the drama; nothing is a big deal.
Materialistic: Identity is tied to ownership and status.	**Unneedy:** Value is internal; possessions are tools, not identity.
External Worth: Measures value by what others think/have.	**Internal Frame:** Judges character and personal integrity.
Hedonic Treadmill: Chasing dopamine spikes; crashing back to "lack."	**High Baseline:** Constant contentment and stable well-being.

Non-spiritual	Positively Spiritual
Fragile Ego: Shattered by failure or social rejection.	**Antifragile Ego:** Welcomes challenges; failures provide data, not pain.
Victim Mentality: “Why is this happening to me?”	**Amor Fati:** Do the best with whatever happens, and if you cannot, accept it: ‘it’s OK’

Some more agentic and rational men may wrongly downgrade spirituality to non-rationality, woo-woo, or ‘hippy culture’. In truth, spirituality can be a foundational pillar of mental health and power.

Unneediness, Self-Sufficiency, & Resilience to Losses

Spirituality reduces neediness towards things and, often, also from people.
This is important because while spirituality is often associated with the feminine pole, **higher self-sufficiency is supremely masculine**.

⍰♂Lucio’s Take: **Be bigger than any-*thing*. Material transcendence = mental power**

Lucio:
What you own, owns you. The more you attach to things and material possessions, the more they will control your mind.
Just like a mate-guarding partner, you become mentally invested and defensive, fearing the loss. And if you lose it, you lose psychological well-being with it.

This is a pattern I’ve noticed when people get attached to things. This is why I prefer a minimalist approach, with fewer things, and looking at them as instrumental tools. I feel much freer and more empowered transcending materialism.

The same goes for any possessions and people.
Attachment to partners can be good, but too much can make you overly dependent.

Transcending money: do what you love

I'd very much appreciate it if one million magically appeared in my bank account, of course. Yet, I would also keep doing the exact same things.
This is why increases or decreases in earnings don't have as big an impact on me. That doesn't make me the best entrepreneur to maximize returns. But it's tremendously empowering.

Psychological & Emotional Resilience

Effective spirituality can give you emotional control without emotional numbness. You do not need to suppress pain or to be overwhelmed by feelings, either. You can acknowledge it, feel it, and not be ruled by it.

Once your identity is less attached to praise, failure, or status, **you stop collapsing when life pushes back.**

By transcending failures, spirituality can be an essential pillar of antifragility, both 'antifragile grandiosity' and antifragile ego.

Social Resilience & Manipulation Resistance

Emotional control also lowers the desperate urge to be validated by others. That makes you less emotionally manipulable and more independent of judges' authority.
This directly supports social power.

Fearlessness From Loss & Death Acceptance

Surprisingly, spirituality's greater comfort with the possibility of loss, physical frailty, and death can make you more fearless.

Contededness

Finally, spirituality can be more effective than positive psychology in achieving 'happiness'.
It can produce a higher and more stable baseline of contentment instead of a fragile dependence on outcomes, or wider swings based on acquiring material possessions.

All in all, **positive transcendence may as well be the ultimate power move in life**: need nothing, depend on nothing, and always be content.
Contrary to being 'soft', this approach to spirituality may be the closest thing to 'successful psychopathy', taking the positives from psychopathy, without the meanness and antisociality.

The Dark Side of Spirituality (Naivete, Power Loss)

Bad Spirituality (low power)	TPM Spirituality (high power)
Underachieving: A warped approach to "non-striving" as an excuse for laziness.	**Ambitious:** High-striving for goals, but detached from non-essential social validation.
Naive: Believing others are equally "spiritual" or good-natured.	**Power Aware:** Realistically assesses others' darker drives while remaining open to genuine "light."
Low Self-Esteem: Uses "ego dissolution" to hide a weak sense of self.	**Antifragile Grandiosity:** strong self-belief, but with a larger, malleable, & antifragile identity
Over-Giving: Indiscriminate giving to takers and toxic social parasites.	**Strategic Generosity:** Invests value into high-quality people and close relationships (Effective calculativeness)
Anti-Science: Rejects logic in favor of "vibrations" and pseudo-science.	**Rational Realism:** Critical-thinking approach that accepts the limits of science without falling for scams.
Total Surrender: Passive "letting go" even when action is required or revenge is called for	**Strategic Grit:** Dogged goal pursuit, evening the scores, but letting go of what's outside one's control.
Law of Attraction: "Think and attract" (The Sucker's Strategy).	**Internal Locus of Control:** Mindset is the foundation, but massive action is the engine of results.

The dark side of spirituality may be smaller than the upsides, but it's more common because it's over-represented in self-help.
Even besides the most obvious woo-woo nonsense, even mild spirituality like 'trust the universe', 'give more' and 'acceptance' can turn harmful without power and strategy.

The emotional appeal is obvious. People want relief. They want a story that makes struggle feel meaningful-or make personal failures feel 'OK'.
That psychological need is exactly why **the market is crowded with snake oil salesmen**.

Some other common woo-woo, less useful, or potentially harmful concepts and associations to spirituality include:

- **Vibration**, the idea that all matter and energy—including thoughts and emotions—resonate at specific frequencies. Higher vibrations = love, joy, and enlightenment; lower rvibrations = fear and negativity
- **Law of attraction**, sometimes associated with not taking action because it would signal you 'don't trust the universe'
- **Karma**, absolving men of the responsibility to readdress wrongs
- **Simple solutions to complex problems** that won't always work (eg, 'letting go' for traumas)
- **Naive giving**, as 'give more to get more'
- **Using spirituality for material pursuits**, like giving more to get more or 'attracting riches'

Literature on Spirituality

Spirituality is potentially the largest-selling sub-genre of self-help.
Even many self-help 'gurus' or best-selling books that are not usually classified as 'spiritual' contain elements of spirituality, including Tony Robbins and *Think and Grow Rich*.

There is no clear "first book" or 'main book' on spirituality, but some of the main authors that shaped it include Norman Vincent Peale, Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, Anthony de Mello, Joe Dispenza, and David Hawkins.

An unfortunate **good chunk of spiritual self-help is predatory and manipulative.**
It panders to 'people's need to believe', as Robert Greene wrote in one of its 'laws'. Furthermore, as we have outlined in the 'best-seller quality tradeoff', most best-sellers must necessarily reduce in complexity, nuance, and often quality to appeal to the masses.

In simpler words, most **spirituality best-sellers are also lower-quality spirituality.**
Keep that in mind as we review these books:

- **The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success**: Unpalatable mix of law of attraction and ineffective spirituality for material gains
- **The Secret**: One of the most popular and one of the worst
- **Already Free**
  - ✅ Strong integration of acceptance and development; best bridge model.
  - ❌ Abstract in parts
- **The Power of Now**: Focus on mindfulness and presence in the present
- **As a Man Thinketh**: First book focusing on thoughts, an important aspect of mental health and power, but simplistic
- **The Go-Giver**: Naive giving, lacks any strategy
- **Letting Go**: Focuses on letting go to heal, but it offers nothing beyond that one solution
- **Awareness**: One of the most down-to-earth and best descriptions of 'enlightenment'
- **Self-Healing books and gurus**: Mixing thoughts and meditation with healing, or random practices to cure diseases (Steve Jobs opted for a diet of fruits to cuse his cancer)

The Biggest Lie: "Think & Things Will Manifest"

One of the weakest yet most popular concepts associated with spirituality is the 'law' of attraction/manifestation.

Thinking about your goals, sometimes associated with 'visualization' can help sometimes. It can focus on your goals and potentially deliver new ideas, and it may help internalize that achieving your goals is possible.

However, the second leg of the law of attraction is far more dubious for any critical thinkers.
The claim is that if you think the right thoughts strongly enough, the 'universe' will deliver it and reality will

reorganize around your desire.
This is unscientific and, we may say, lacking any logical connection.

Several ‘gurus’, for example Joe Dispenza, mix this old law with pseudoscience. For example, thoughts altering reality through metaphysics.
For believers, it is unfalsifiable: if it works, the belief is confirmed; if it fails, you “didn’t believe enough.”

Manifestation becomes actively harmful when it replaces action with hope and ‘thoughts’.
The result is predictable: delayed action, delayed competence, and higher odds of long-term failure masked as “spiritual growth.”

🤦♂️Lucio’s Experience: **My colleague ‘attracting’ losses**

Lucio:
I remember meeting a former female colleague and an otherwise high-power woman at a high-end shop in the city.

I was there to take a break from constant work on TPM and make some approaches. And she was there… Planning how to spend the money she would ‘attract’ and ‘manifest’.

Back then, it was the era of McGregor dominating UFC and endless videos done about him visualizing victories and attracting and manifesting victories.
My colleague had become a huge fan of McGregor, and her plan was… Quadrupling her money betting on his win against Mayweather.

Compare the two different approaches: one rationally working hard on his business. The other ‘attracting’.

And for the record, McGregor lost.

Spirituality for High-Value Men: TPM’s Integrated Model

The integrated model is simple: combine the resilience and unneediness of spirituality, reject the agency loss, and add agentic goal-achievement.

You act with full agency: strategize, work, compete, and achieve. But internally, you remain detached: outcomes do not define your worth, and losses do not devalue you as a person.

It's possible to use this approach to go all the way: obsessively ambitious, yet imperturbable. Become unbreakable while still acting aggressively in the world.
Or you may also add a middle path between passivity and obsession. Work hard, but take time off for relationships and spiritually-related pursuits.

You can also be religious while being ambitious, agentic, and practical.
You can be religious and still be practical. As the Italian saying goes, *"aiutati che Dio ti aiuta"* — help yourself and God will help you.

Finally, this approach is also effective in maintaining the upsides of Machiavellianism and 'dark-triad traits', while removing the downsides.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Transcendence via achievement**

Lucio:
Don't forget that one way to become more spiritual and non-needy is to… Achieve all your goals and needs.

Then you may naturally become less materialistic, chillier, and focus on giving back.

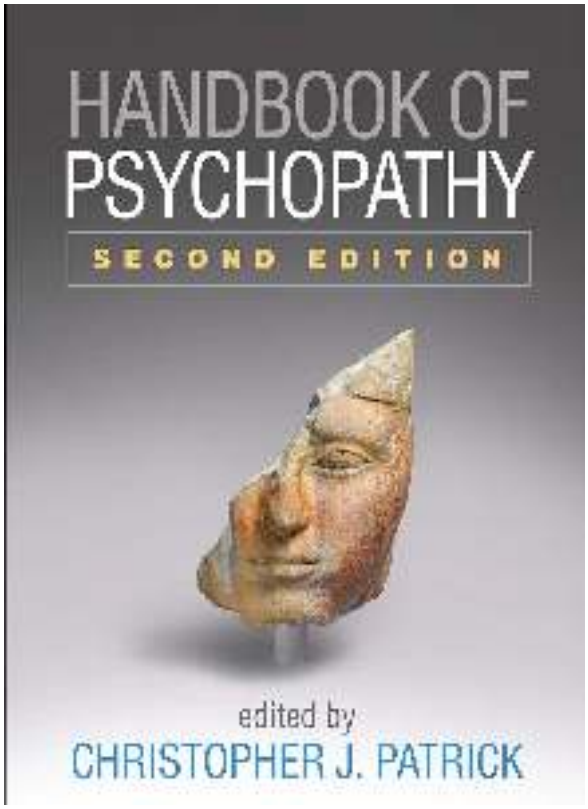
This integrated model aligns with TPM concepts like:

- **Healthy nihilism**
- **Leveraging death for life**
- **Antifragility**, antifragile ego, and antifragile grandiosity
- **Confidence University**, leveraging principles of spirituality, positive psychology, and even dark triad confidence tactics into a unified system for mental power

Handbook of Psychopahty: Summary & Review (2nd Edition)

Lucio Buffalmano · 6 April 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The *Handbook of Psychopathy* (2018), edited by leading scholars in the field, is the most comprehensive, research-based synthesis of modern psychopathy science.



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Notes

About the Authors:
Each chapter is authored by different experts and researchers in the field of psychoapathy and edited by Christopher J. Patrick, PhD. Patrick is a leading authority in the field of psychopathy and Professor of Psychology at Florida State University.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: I re-organize chapter for topical congruency and to keep the TOC manageable.

Chapter 1. Psychopathy as Masked Pathology

Author: Christopher J. Patrick

The opening chapter, explores psychopathy through the lens of Hervey Cleckley's classic clinical description in *The Mask of Sanity* (1941/1976). Cleckley's core proposition is a **masked pathology**—a severe, underlying deficit in behavioral and emotional regulation concealed by a credible outward appearance of psychological normality ('sanity').

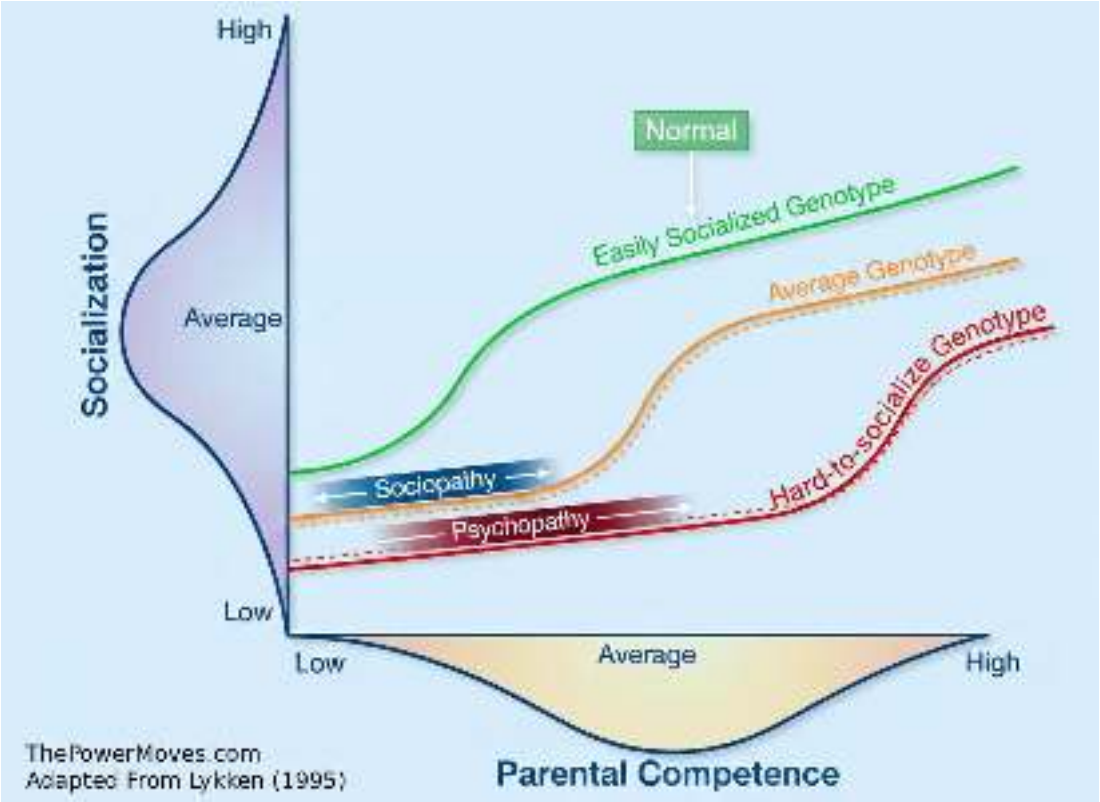
Main Takeaways:

The field has progressed from viewing psychopathy as a discrete condition to a **dimensional** and **multifaceted** disorder, which better aligns with the complexity Cleckley observed. The **Triarchic Conceptualization** (Patrick, Fowles, & Krueger, 2009) is introduced as a framework to integrate findings, characterizing psychopathy by three biobehavioral dispositions: **Boldness** (the "mask" or fearless dominance), **Meanness** (callousness-unemotionality), and **Disinhibition** (externalizing proneness).

- **Cleckley's 16 Diagnostic Criteria:** These criteria are categorized into "Mask features" (e.g., Superficial charm, absence of delusions/nervousness, suicide rarely carried out) and "Behavioral deviance features" (e.g., Unreliability, inadequately motivated antisocial behavior, poor judgment).

Chapter 2. Psychopathy, Sociopathy, and Antisocial Personality Disorder

Author: David Lykken



The Lykken model of antisocial genotypes. Redrawn from Lykken (1995, p. 11). Copyright © 1995 Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

This chapter was originally written by the late David T. Lykken and reprinted with William G. Iacono's commentary. It provides a historical and conceptual analysis of the terms psychopathy, sociopathy, and Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD).

Lykken highlights the importance of distinguishing between a predominantly genetically-influenced, temperament-based psychopathy (sometimes called "primary" psychopathy) and a form of antisocial behavior driven more by adverse social environment (sociopathy or "secondary" psychopathy).

- **Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD):** This official *DSM* diagnosis primarily focuses on overt behavioral deviance (e.g., impulsivity, irresponsibility, law-breaking), correlating strongly with the Disinhibition aspect of psychopathy but not as much the core affective-interpersonal deficits (Boldness and Meanness) central to Cleckley's psychopath.

Sociopathy vs. Psychopathy: Real-Life Examples

> If Mike's psychopathy is a result of one of the subtle brain malfunctions that are conjectured in later chapters, then even the most talented parents may be disappointed. But if Mike's "problem" is merely that he is relatively fearless, then those parents might produce a hero instead of a hoodlum.
> Some historical figures who, I believe, had the "talent" for psychopathy but who did not develop the full syndrome and achieved great worldly success include Winston Churchill (Carter, 1965; Manchester, 1986, 1988), the African explorer Sir Richard Burton (Farwell, 1963; Rice, 1990), and Chuck Yeager, the first man to fly faster than sound (Wolfe, 1979; Yeager, 1985).

And little later, Lykken includes IQ as a moderator for psychopathy, used to avoid petty crimes and instead to gain status in legitimate society. He says Lyndon Johnson exemplified this syndrome. Both Hitler and Stalin were relatively fearless, clever men, unconstrained by guilt or pity, whose ruthless rise to power would not have been possible had they felt normal degrees of caution or conscience.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: This sounds appealing in its simplicity, but it also feels less convincing and authoritative.

Churchill may have been high in boldness, but low in meanness and factor 2, rather than 'talent for psychopathy' and 'not developing the full syndrome'.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Note: Little empirical evidence for parenting effects on factor 1, but valid for factor 2

From chapter 24:

> Though influential theories posit that effective parenting is important for engendering success in individuals with psychopathic traits (Lykken, 1995), the empirical evidence for this proposition is mixed. Children with high levels of callous–unemotional traits—which correspond most closely to the affective facet of adult psychopathy—show high levels of conduct problems (Andershed, Gustafson, Kerr, & Stattin, 2002; Wootton, Frick, Shelton, & Silverthorn, 1997) and reactive aggression (Yeh, Chen, Raine, Baker, & Jacobson, 2011), irrespective of the measured adequacy of their parenting.

However, there is stronger evidence for factor 2:

> However, for the interpersonal features of psychopathy, Lykken's original hypothesis may hold: Adolescents high in these features who are exposed to inconsistent parenting show more deviant behavior than those experiencing consistent parenting (Edens, Skopp, & Cahill, 2008).

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **A more subjective and opinionated chapter that I'd consider dropping**

Lucio:
While Lykken is an authoritative voice, I found the tone of this chapter more opinionated and subjective.

The differentiation between sociopathy and psychopathy and 'nature vs. nurture' also felt a bit too clear-cut, including when compared to successive chapters.

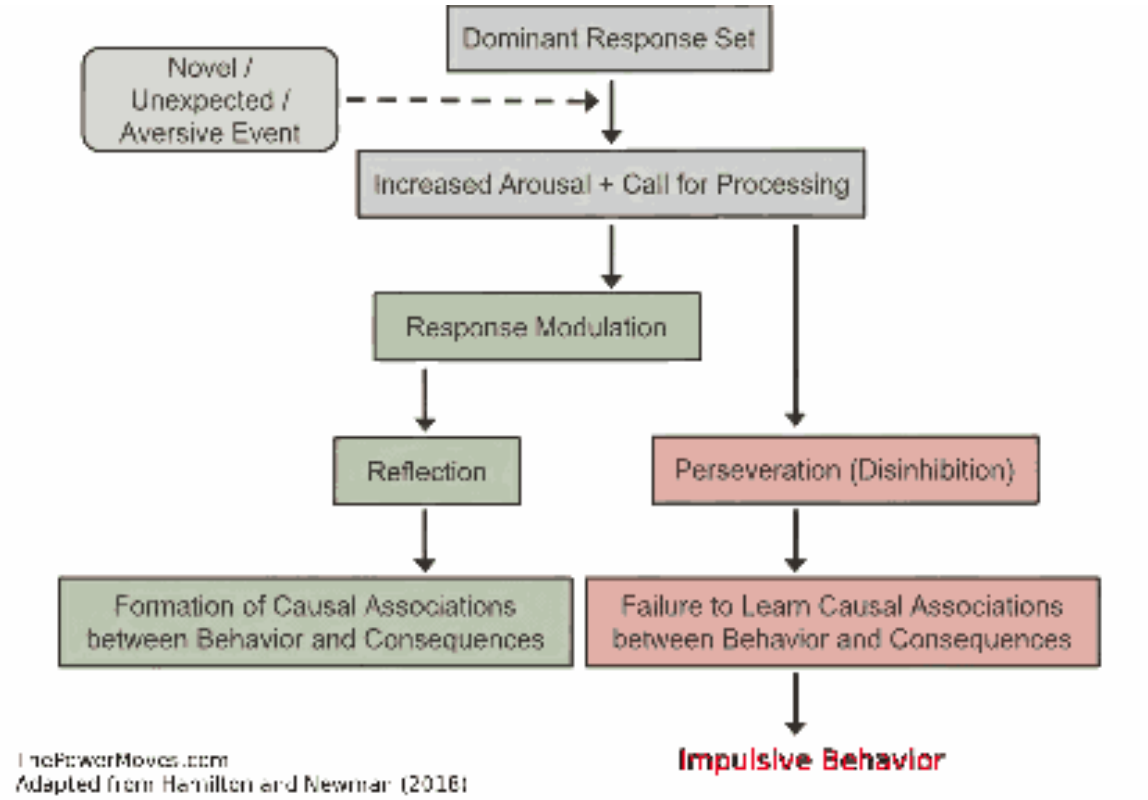
Leaving the original chapter and then adding refutations based on more recent studies may also tirp some learners, who may remember the original chapter more than the more recent findings.

Overall, I'd suggest the editor consider dropping this chapter or re-author it with updated takes and studies.

Chapter 4. The Response Modulation Hypothesis

Authors: Rachel Bencic Hamilton and Joseph P. Newman

> One of the most prominent cognitive models is the response modulation hypothesis (RMH). This perspective attributes the disinhibition seen in psychopathy to a failure to shift attention automatically from the implementation of ongoing goal-directed behavior to its evaluation (Newman, 1998; Patterson & Newman, 1993).



The Response Modulation Hypothesis (RMH) posits that the impulsive and problematic behavior characteristic of psychopathy stems from a **weakness in the capacity to process contextual cues** and redirect attention when focused on achieving a goal. Individuals high in psychopathy, when focused on a reward, fail to use peripheral or secondary information (like cues of potential punishment or danger) to modulate or adjust their ongoing behavior.

- **Core Deficit:** The deficit is not one of *knowing* right from wrong, but an attentional problem where goal-directed processing filters out contextual information that might otherwise inhibit a problematic response.
- **Time and Attention Deficits**: *the RMH suggests that psychopathic individuals' emotional deficits are moderated by attention. These findings suggest that the diminished reactivity to fear stimuli and affective cues seen in psychopathic individuals reflects idiosyncrasies in attention that limit the processing of information that is outside of the attentional spotlight (Newman et al., 2010).*
  - Enough time and attention could cure this: *when asked to turn their attention to processing and appraising the valence of emotion cues, and given enough time to do so, their performance is comparable to that of nonpsychopaths (Lorenz & Newman, 2002; see also Glass & Newman, 2009). Meffert, Gazzola, den Boer, Bartels, and Keysers (2013) presented evidence that higher-order cognitive processes moderate the empathic deficits of psychopathic individuals.*
- **Empathy may also be activated with directed attention & time**: *Meffert and colleagues suggested that when psychopathic individuals deliberately attend to empathy-related cues, they show normal empathy-related responses.*

It is only in situations in which the processing of empathy-related information is incidental that they show abnormalities. In our view, these findings provide evidence that the interpersonal and affective deficits characteristic of psychopathy are turned on or off depending on attentional focus (see also Ayame et al., 2014).

- **Mechanism underlying Disinhibition:** The RMH provides a mechanistic explanation for the Disinhibition facet of psychopathy, linking this biobehavioral trait to specific cognitive processing weaknesses.
- **Two Levels of Failure**: *failure to pause to evaluate the potential consequences of an action promotes impulsive action and prohibits the development of behavioral control, as well as a failure to devise a long-term life plan (Factor 2). (…) failure to reflect on the negative outcome of a maladaptive action encourages dysregulated and potentially asocial behavior*
- **Potentially underlying emotional deficits**: *The paradox of psychopathy is that psychopathic individuals show the capacity for intact reasoning and ostensibly genuine affect, but when they are engaged in goal-directed behavior, the information required for these activities is less accessible (Wallace, Schmitt, Vitale, & Newman, 2000). (…) decision making and emotional deficits seen in psychopathy can be viewed as being modulated by attentional focus.*

Chapter 16. Psychophysiology of Psychopathy: the Low-Fear Hypothesis

Authors: Adrian Raine (also author of '*Psychopathy, An Introduction to Biological Findings*'), Yaling Yang

This research stream has long sought to identify a core biological mechanism, often focusing on a fundamental deficit in the ability to experience fear or respond to threat and punishment cues. However, the data are complex, leading to an integration of multiple mechanisms: one related to the **Boldness**/fearlessness dimension and another related to the **Disinhibition**/impulsivity dimension.

- **Low-Fear Hypothesis:** Originally proposed by Lykken and others, this hypothesis suggests that psychopathic individuals' failure to learn from punishment or avoid danger stems from an innate, reduced emotional response (e.g., low skin conductance reactivity) to threat stimuli.
- **Deficit in Defensive Reactivity:** The chapter reviews evidence that high-psychopathy individuals, particularly those high in Boldness, exhibit reduced startle potentiation and other indicators of defensive (fear) reactivity.
- **Integration of Mechanisms:** Modern psychophysiology suggests a dual deficit: one pathway involves the low-fear temperament (affective/Boldness), and another involves deficits in inhibitory control (cognitive/Disinhibition).

Chapter 5. Temperament Risk Factors for Psychopathy

Author: Don C. Fowles

> Research on psychopathy in adults has strongly documented two somewhat independent dimensions that, to a significant extent, reflect different temperament risk factors. A temperament of low fear and anxiety contributes to the first dimension, whereas disinhibition due to deficient executive control combined with high negative emotionality— tendencies indicative of general proneness to externalizing problems—appears to contribute to the second.

These two dimensions map to both to the PCL-R facets:

> The two PCL-R factors are characterized as affective–interpersonal or "core features" of psychopathy (Factor 1), and impulsive–antisocial tendencies (Factor 2) (Benning, Patrick, Hicks, Blonigen, & Krueger, 2003; Hare, 1991, 2003; Harpur, Hare, & Hakstian, 1989). In personality terms, the correlation between the two factors is largely attributable to variance associated with Big Four or Big Five Antagonism (Lynam, Miller, & Derefinko, Chapter 11, this volume).

But PPI probably better captures this distinction:

> Validity studies indicate considerable parallelism between PPI Factors I and II and PCL- R Factors 1 and 2, despite their differing assessment formats (e.g., Poythress et al., 2010). However, the two psychopathy factors are more clearly differentiated in the PPI, with the PPI's Fearless Dominance factor in particular reflecting more of the positive psychological adjustment (i.e., "boldness") aspects of psychopathy seen in Cleckley's (1941/1976) concept of psychopathy, and less of the callous–unemotional or meanness component (see Patrick, Fowles, & Krueger, 2009, as discussed below).
> (…)
> Notably, in contrast with the correlated factors of the PCL-R, the two factors of the PPI are orthogonal.

Defining Temperament: Temperament is conceptualized as the heritable, early-emerging, biologically-basead and stable core of personality in affect and behavior that provides the foundation for psychopathic traits

- **Temperament and Psychopathy Facets:** The chapter reviews evidence for how different temperamental traits contribute to the psychopathy subdimensions:
  - **Boldness (Fearlessness):** This trait is linked to a lack of **fear sensitivity** or a low level of anxiety, which is a key temperamental factor.
  - **Disinhibition (Impulsivity):** This trait is linked to high levels of **impulsivity** and difficulty with emotional and cognitive control.
- **Low fear for factor 1**: *Importantly, the deficit in startle potentiation was specific to F1 of the PCL-R (Patrick et al., 1993), consistent with the idea that these core features of psychopathy reflect low fear (Lykken, 1995). In contrast, aversive startle potentiation was unrelated to F2.*
- **PPI vs. PCL-R**: *The Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI; Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996; Lilienfeld & Fowler, 2006) was designed to assess psychopathy in noncriminal populations. Factor analyses of the PPI's eight subscales (e.g., Benning et al., 2003; Benning, Patrick, Salekin, & Leistico, 2005) have revealed two higher-order factors, alternatively labeled PPI-I or Fearless Dominance, and PPI-II or Impulsive Antisociality. Notably, in contrast with the correlated factors of the PCL-R, the two factors of the PPI are orthogonal.*
- **Different scales reflect these two broad factors** (MPQ personality profiles): a cluster analysis of MPQ for high scorers on PCL-R found two subgroups labeled "emotionally stable" and "aggressive" that paralleled the trait correlates of PCL-R F1 and F2 (Hicks, Markon, Patrick, Krueger, and Newman, 2004; Skeem, Johansson, Andershed, Kerr, and Louden, 2007)

Children With Fearless Temperament Benefit From Good Parenting & Secure Attachment

Maternal gentle discipline is enough to promote internalization of conscience in more fearful children by generating sufficient anxiety. But children with fearless temperament are harder to parent and socialize, influencing conscience development (Kochanska, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2002).
Securely attached, mutually positive mother–child relationships provide a reward-based pathway for fearless children, allowing conscience to develop without relying on anxiety (Kochanska, 1995, 1997).

Good parenting can channel a fearless child into a pro-social career.
But a fearless temperament could lead in different directions, and lack of empathy and attachment could instead produce skilled predation.
Or fearless insensitivity shaped in the directions of antagonism and callousness could give rise to high levels of meanness with extreme antisocial predation.

Externalizing Spectrum Model

> The externalizing spectrum model views disinhibition (rather than strong reward-approach motivation) as the core liability (e.g., Krueger et al., 2002, 2007; Krueger & Markon, 2006). Although weak inhibitory control is central to this formulation, the deficit is viewed more broadly as one of executive control processes, including poor emotion regulation. For example, disinhibition involves "a lack of planfulness and foresight, impaired regulation of affect and urges, insistence on immediate gratification, and deficient behavioral restraint" (Patrick, 2010, p. 31), presumably related to "frontal-brain based differences in the capacity to restrain behavior and regulate affect in the service of non-immediate goals" (Patrick & Drislane, 2015, p. 629).

PART II DISTINCT PHENOTYPIC FACETS OF PSYCHOPATHY

Chapter 6. Externalizing Proneness and Psychopathy

Authors: Lindsay D. Nelson and Jens Foell

> The construct of externalizing proneness, which encompasses tendencies toward impulse control problems of various types, along with affiliated traits
> (…)
> Externalizing proneness closely parallels the disinhibitory–behavioral (Factor 2) features of psychopathy as assessed by different instruments, which in turn relate to substance use problems. As externalizing proneness predominantly reflects behavioral disinhibition, it is distinguishable from the affective–interpersonal (Factor 1) features of psychopathy

- **ESI**: *Scores on the ESI general Disinhibition factor showed expected robust associations with (1) a composite index of externalizing disorder symptoms, (2) broad MPQ traits of constraint and negative emotionality, known to correlate with externalizing psychopathology (Krueger, 1999a; Krueger, Caspi, Moffitt, Silva, & McGee, 1996), and (3) impulsive–antisocial (Factor 2) symptoms of psychopathy*
- **Genetically heritable**: *Genetic modeling analyses indicated that externalizing proneness (behavioral disinhibition) was highly heritable (84%), implying that a range of adolescent problem behaviors may share a common genetic etiology.*
- **Overlap with Other Disorders:** Externalizing proneness shows substantial comorbidity with other impulse-control conditions, such as Substance Use Disorders, Conduct Disorder, and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), highlighting a shared underlying propensity for behavioral deregulation.
- **Biobehavioral Referents:** The chapter reviews neurobiological and cognitive processes associated with this trait, often relating to impaired reward-and-punishment sensitivity, executive function deficits, and brain systems involved in self-control.

Correlates of Externalizing Proneness

General externalizing proneness is a coherent, well-studied construct representing trait liability toward disinhibitory problems of varying kinds.
It shows broad, cross-domain associations:

Psychiatric correlates

- Strong links with **substance use disorders** (alcohol, cannabis, other drugs) (Nelson et al., 2016).
  - Related to cigarette smoking (Whalen et al., 2001), cannabis use (Korhonen et al., 2010), pathological gambling (Grant et al., 2016; Slutske et al., 2001), and suicidal behavior (Verona et al., 2004).
- Associated with pervasive **distress internalizing disorders** such as major depression, dysthymia, and generalized anxiety (Nelson et al., 2016).

- Connected to ADHD—especially hyperactive-impulsive and combined types, but not strongly to inattentive type (Barkley, 1997; Patrick et al., 2015).
- In PTSD, high externalizing predicts more antagonism, alcohol problems, and antisocial traits (Miller et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2004).

Personality trait correlates

- Negatively related to Constraint and Conscientiousness
  - Low conscientiousness predicts poorer health behaviors and life outcomes broadly (Israel & Moffitt, 2014; Moffitt et al., 2011).
- Positively related to Negative Emotionality, Neuroticism, Agreeableness deficits, and emotional instability (Griffith et al., 2010; Tackett et al., 2014).

Behavioral and cognitive correlates

The relationship between disinhibition and inhibitory control appears largely genetically mediated (Young et al., 2009).

- Linked to **maladaptive decision-making** and disadvantageous gambling choices (Fein et al., 2004).
- Associated with **deficient executive function and response inhibition** across tasks (Young et al., 2009).

Neurophysiological correlates

- Lower baseline autonomic activity but **heightened stress reactivity** (Lorber, 2004; Ortiz & Raine, 2004).
- Dysfunction in vagal regulation and increased striatal dopaminergic reactivity to rewards/amphetamine (Buckholtz et al., 2010a, 2010b).
- Reduced ERN amplitudes indicating poorer internal error monitoring (Hall et al., 2007).
- Most robust marker: reduced P300 amplitude across tasks, partly genetic in basis (Hicks et al., 2007; Yancey et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2011).
- Intact processing of external feedback (FRN) but deficient elaborative processing of outcomes (Bernat et al., 2011).

Brain imaging findings

- Evidence for stimulus-driven processing style: reduced anticipatory activation and heightened amygdala reactivity to affective stimuli (Foell et al., 2016).
- Altered intrinsic connectivity involving the insula (Abram et al., 2015).
- Abnormal activation patterns during response inhibition tasks, suggesting dysfunctional reward–action coupling (Castellanos-Ryan et al., 2014).

Bottom line:
Externalizing proneness reflects a broad dispositional liability tied to poor inhibitory control, reward-driven behavior, substance problems, antagonistic outcomes, executive dysfunction, and identifiable autonomic and neural processing differences across multiple biological and behavioral systems.

Chapter 7. Callous–Unemotional Traits

Authors: Essi Viding and Eva R. Kimonis

Callous–Unemotional (CU) traits are the affective-interpersonal core of psychopathy measured in youth, characterized by lack of empathy, deficient guilt or remorse, and a general disregard for others' feelings or problems, and at high risk for developing full adult psychopathy.

They are similar to the **Meanness** dimension of psychopathy in the Triarchic model.

- **Core Components:** CU traits encompass:
  - **Lack of Empathy/Callousness:** Difficulty recognizing or sharing others' emotional states.
  - **Lack of Guilt or Remorse:** Failure to experience negative emotions following misconduct.
  - **Shallow Affect:** A limited range of emotional expression, especially warmth or positive feelings for others.
- **Relevance to Youth Diagnosis:** The inclusion of "with callous and unemotional traits" as a specifier for Conduct Disorder in the *DSM-5* underscores the clinical and prognostic importance of Meanness in developmental psychopathology.
- **CU Traits + Antisocial Factor 2 = Worst Outcomes**: *it is the combination of CU traits/affective dysfunction with the impulsive–antisocial behaviors captured by the Factor 2 dimension of psychopathy that designates the most severely antisocial group of youth.*
- **Etiological Distinction:** CU traits are linked to a distinct profile of neurobiological deficits, notably an impairment in the processing of distress cues (like fear and sadness faces), suggesting a unique etiological pathway involving the amygdala and other related brain structures.

Development of Callous-Unemotional Traits

CU traits emerge from **strong genetic liability interacting with the environment**. The most consistent profile is:

- fearless temperament
- blunted emotional and autonomic reactivity
- reduced amygdala and empathy-network response
- impaired sensitivity to punishment and distress cues

However, positive environmental inputs—especially warm, reinforcing parenting—can meaningfully buffer genetic risk.

Genetic factors

- **Moderate to strong heritability** in youth (≈ .45–.67) (Viding & McCrory, 2012).
- Elevated CU is highly heritable even without conduct problems (Larsson et al., 2008).
- Conduct problems + high CU are strongly genetic, whereas conduct problems + low CU are more environmentally driven (Viding et al., 2005, 2008).
- There is partial genetic overlap between CU and externalizing, but also CU-specific genetic influences (Bezdjian et al., 2011; Forsman et al., 2008; Viding et al., 2007).
- Stability of CU traits over time is largely genetically driven (Fontaine et al., 2010; Forsman et al., 2008).

Candidate genes and molecular findings

Key principle: there are no "genes for CU"; genes influence neurocognitive vulnerabilities that raise risk.

- Tentative links involve serotonin and oxytocin systems, but replication is needed (Beitchman et al., 2012; Dadds et al., 2013; Fowler et al., 2009; Malik et al., 2012; Moul et al., 2013).
- Gene effects likely depend on environmental context (gene–environment interplay).
  Example: serotonin transporter long allele linked to CU traits in low-SES youth (Sadeh et al., 2010).
- GWAS suggest many variants of very small effect; rare variants and interactions likely important (Viding et al., 2010, 2013; Trzaskowski et al., 2013).
- Epigenetic work links higher CU to increased oxytocin receptor methylation (Cecil et al., 2014; Dadds et al., 2014).

Environmental and parenting influences

- Harsh/negative parenting → higher CU (Waller et al., 2013).
- Warm parenting → lower CU (for a review, see Waller et al., 2013).
  - High levels of adoptive mothers' positive reinforcement were able to buffer the effects of heritable risk for CU behaviors (Hyde et al., 2016).
  - *High levels of parental warmth may buffer children with high CU traits from developing serious and persistent conduct problems (Kroneman, Hipwell, Loeber, Koot, & Pardini, 2011; Pasalich, Dadds, Hawes, & Brennan, 2011; Waller, Gardner, & Hyde, 2013).*
- Low affection, warmth, and positive reinforcement → increased risk for developing CU traits (Pardini, Lochman, & Powell, 2007; Pasalich, Witkiewitz, McMahon, Pinderhughes, & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2016).
- Genetic confounding likely explains part of parenting effects (Viding et al., 2009).
- Adoption study: positive reinforcement from adoptive mothers buffered genetic risk (Hyde et al., 2016).
- Children with high CU show less eye contact with mothers, suggesting child-driven effects on attachment (Dadds et al., 2011, 2012).
- Disorganized attachment is associated with CU (Bohlin, Eninger, Brocki, & Thorell, 2012; Pasalich, Dadds, Hawes, & Brennan, 2011).

Other developmental correlates

- Peer relations: more conflict and instability (Muñoz et al., 2008).
- Associate with delinquent peers (Kimonis, Frick, & Barry, 2004), but may be less influenced by them while they strongly influence others (Kerr et al., 2012).
- Possible modest negative association with IQ (Fontaine et al., 2008).
- Some links to low SES environments (Sadeh et al., 2010).
- Maternal psychopathology during/after pregnancy may be a risk factor (Barker et al., 2011).

Neurocognitive profile

Children with CU traits typically show:

- Marked lack of empathy and guilt (Frick & Viding, 2009).
- Proactive/instrumental aggression.
- Reduced attention to distress cues (fearful/sad faces) (Hodsoll et al., 2014; Marsh & Blair, 2008).
- Blunted empathy responses (Jones et al., 2010; Schwenck et al., 2012).
- Reduced eye gaze to attachment figures (Dadds et al., 2011).
- Slower behavioral change following punishment (Blair et al., 2001).

Neural correlates

Key brain findings in youth with conduct problems + CU:

- Reduced amygdala reactivity to fearful faces (Marsh et al., 2008; Viding et al., 2012).
- Low amygdala partly mediates proactive aggression (Lozier et al., 2014).
- Reduced activation in empathy network (insula, ACC, amygdala) when viewing others' pain (Cheng et al., 2012; Lockwood et al., 2013; Marsh et al., 2013; Michalska et al., 2016; Yoder et al., 2016).
- Atypical vmPFC/OFC responses to punishment and reward (Finger et al., 2008, 2011).
- Overall pattern: **low emotional responsiveness and poor reinforcement learning**.

Hormonal findings

- Mixed evidence for low cortisol; results inconsistent (Hawes et al., 2009).
- Cortisol alone is likely a weak biomarker.
- Hormone coupling (cortisol–DHEA) may be more informative (Johnson et al., 2014; Kimonis et al., 2017).

Physiological markers

- Reduced skin conductance and heart rate responses to others' distress (Blair, 1999; de Wied et al., 2012).
- Reduced autonomic reactivity during anticipation of aversive stimuli and provocation (Fung et al., 2005; Isen et al., 2010; Kimonis et al., 2008).
- Resting heart rate does **not** clearly differentiate CU (de Wied et al., 2012).

Early temperament

- Fearless, low-arousal temperament is a key early risk factor (Frick et al., 2014a).
- Fearlessness predicts later CU traits longitudinally (Barker et al., 2011).
- Linked to atypical development of empathy and guilt (Fowles & Kochanska, 2000).

Chapter 19. Psychopathy and Developmental Pathways to Antisocial Behavior in Youth

Authors: Paul J. Frick and Monica A. Marsee

Callous–Unemotional (CU) Traits related to psychopathy in youth and their presence identifies a severe, stable, and highly problematic subgroup of youth with conduct problems who are prone to proactive aggression and display an unperturbed, "cold" manner. Understanding the antecedents of CU traits is essential for early identification and targeted intervention.

Proactively aggressive	Reactively aggressive
do not show these problems in emotional regulation (Dodge et al., 1997; Vitaro, Brendgen, & Tremblay, 2002) and instead sometimes show reduced levels of emotional reactivity (Marsee & Frick, 2007; McAuliffe et al., 2007; Pitts, 1997; Xu, Raine, Yu, & Krieg, 2014).	Higher rates of anger and other problems related to emotional regulation (Marsee & Frick, 2007; McAuliffe, Hubbard, Rubin, Morrow, & Dearing, 2007)
/	Tendency to attribute **hostile intent** to ambiguous provocations by peers
/	Social skills problems: difficulty developing nonaggressive solutions to problems in social interactions (Crick & Dodge, 1996).
heart rate remained low among members of the reactive–proactive group in response to a simulated provocation from peers	heart rate increased significantly more for members of the reactive group compared to nonaggressive controls
Higher geneetic influences on childhood-onset conduct problems were considerably greater for those high in CU traits (81%) (Viding et al., 2005)	30% for those who showed normative levels of CU traits (30%) (Viding et al., 2005)

- **Antecedents and Early Markers:** The chapter reviews prospective studies that identify early markers of CU traits, such as blunted affect, reduced attention to eyes/fear cues (Dadds et al., 2006, 2008, 2011), and the early use of proactive, instrumental aggression (Salekin & Lynam, 2010).
- **Parents may be crucial to develop guilt/conscience in behaviorally disinhibited children**: behaviorally inhibited children, because they are temperamentally predisposed to develop appropriate levels of guilt, may need less optimal parenting than fearless and behaviorally uninhibited children.

In a sample of preschool children (ages 3–5), behaviorally inhibited children showed higher levels of guilt, irrespective of the consistency of parenting, while uninhibited children only with high parental consistency (Cornell and Frick, 2007)

- **Proactive vs. Reactive Aggression:** CU traits are selectively related to **proactive (instrumental)** aggression—aggression used deliberately to achieve a goal—rather than reactive aggression, which is impulsive and hostile.
- **Developmental Trajectory:** The stability of CU traits from early childhood into adolescence suggests they are a reliable, enduring marker of a psychopathic-like developmental pathway.

Chapter 8. Boldness: Conceptual and Methodological Issues

Authors: Scott O. Lilienfeld, Ashley L. Watts, Sarah Francis Smith, and Robert D. Latzman

Boldness, similar to fearless dominance, is a unique, often adaptive, trait characterized by social charm and confidence, low stress reactivity, a lack of fear, high self-assurance, and a tendency toward social dominance. It distinguishes individuals high in psychopathy who are "successful" (i.e., less prone to apprehension and incarceration) from those who are "unsuccessful" and is often negatively correlated with measures of anxiety and neuroticism.

- **Key Component Traits**: interpersonal potency, charisma, physical fearlessness, venturesomeness, and novelty seeking, along with calmness in the face of danger.
- **Brain's lower defensiveness**: *Although the etiology of boldness remains the subject of debate, Patrick and colleagues (2009) conjectured that it stems from individual differences in the sensitivity of the brain's defensive systems, including those rooted in the amygdala and other structures involved in threat processing (see LeDoux, 2015, for a discussion).*
  - *consistent with the hypothesis that boldness is associated with lower sensitivity to perceived danger. Taken together, these diverse findings point to a low level of responsiveness in the defensive system among individuals with elevated levels of boldness (see also Watts, Lilienfeld, DeMartino, & Sauvigné, 2015, for preliminary meta-analytic evidence).*
- **The "Successful Psychopath" Link:** Boldness is a key differentiator in the successful psychopathy literature (see Chapter 24), as it is hypothesized to confer resilience, intact executive function, and the ability to navigate complex social situations without the debilitating fear and anxiety that characterize others.
- **Behavioral Dishinhibition**: *Miller and Lynam (2012) reported that FD was associated primarily with (reversed) FFM Neuroticism (r,, = -.50), FFM Extraversion (r,, = .50), and, to a lesser extent, FFM Openness to Experience (r,, = .25); associations with FFM Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were negligible. Consistent with the conjectures of Fowles (1980) and Lykken (1995), FD was highly and negatively associated with measures of behavioral inhibition (r,, = —.57). Its associations with measures of behavioral activation were weaker but nonetheless positive and moderate positive in magnitude (rw = .35).*
- **Measurement and Correlates:** The chapter discusses the various ways Boldness is assessed (e.g., through the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure [TriPM] or the Psychopathic Personality Inventory [PPI]) and its contrasting correlates, noting that it often relates *negatively* to internalizing psychopathology like anxiety.
- **Methodological Challenges:** The authors address the complexities of separating Boldness from traits like Narcissism and examining its role in different populations.

Boldness and Interpersonal Behavior

Research increasingly links boldness (as assessed by Fearless Dominance, FD) to adaptive interpersonal traits such as leadership, heroism, and social influence.
Lilienfeld, Waldman, and colleagues (2012) found that higher FD predicted historians' ratings of leadership, communication, public persuasiveness, willingness to take risks, legislative initiative, landslide election wins, and

global stature, though it was also associated with assassination attempts.

In workplace and community samples, FD was positively associated with adaptive leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, and minimally related to counterproductive or domineering behaviors (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2012; Smith, Watts, & Lilienfeld, 2017). Across a large multinational sample, FD also predicted holding leadership and management positions, as well as risky occupations like police, fire, and military work (Lilienfeld, Latzman, Watts, Smith, & Dutton, 2014).

Consistent with Lykken's (1982, 1995) idea that heroes and fearless psychopaths share low dispositional fear, FD was positively associated with everyday heroism (e.g., helping strangers in risky situations) and altruism toward strangers in undergraduate and community samples (Smith, Lilienfeld, Coffey, & Dabbs, 2013). Similarly, presidential war heroism correlated with estimated FD scores, with leaders like Theodore Roosevelt and Zachary Taylor scoring high. Overall, these findings suggest that boldness relates to **prosocial behaviors that involve social or physical risk**, rather than prosocial behavior in general.

🤔Lucio's Take: **Is heroism only adaptive within a limited range?**

Lucio:
I wonder about the true extent of heroism' 'adaptiveness', at least in evolutionary psychology term of fitness (survival and reproduction).

Heroism is adaptive when it boosts a man's status, but if he pushes his 'heroic luck' too far, then… Dead heroes leave no offspring.

That makes me wonder if heroism may be on an inverted U of adaptiveness, and only fitness-enhancing within an optimum range and with strategic calibration (ie.: be heroic when the risks are not too high and it makes you look like a hero, but avoid too high risks).

Boldness Primarily Differentiates ASPD From Psychopathy

> As noted earlier, the results of two recent studies (Venables et al., 2014; Wall et al., 2015) demonstrate that boldness is a primary, if not the primary feature differentiating psychopathy, as measured by the PCL-R, from

> ASPD (see also Murphy, Lilienfeld, Skeem, & Edens, 2016).
> These findings dovetail with the longstanding historical view that psychopathy is more associated with adaptive functioning, including superficial charm, dominance, and psychologically healthy risk-taking, than is ASPD (Lilienfeld et al., 2015a).

The association between boldness and 11 non-PCL-based measures of psychopathy across 32 samples (N = 10,693) found a considerably high mean effect size (r = .38), and when the analyses were restricted to well-validated psychopathy measures, the mean effect size rose to r = .44 (Lilienfeld et al., 2016).

Lucio's note: This makes sense, so I had to wonder if it isn't also correct to say that the *broader* factor 1 differentiates them

Is Boldness a Core Feature of Psychopathy?

> the nature of boldness and its relevance to psychopathy have recently become flashpoints of intense scientific controversy (Lilienfeld, Patrick, et al., 2012; Lynam & Miller, 2013; Miller & Lynam, 2012; Patrick, Venables, & Drislane, 2013). In particular, experts in the field have debated whether boldness is an intrinsic feature of psychopathy, or is instead irrelevant or at best peripheral to it. Perhaps boldness is not part of psychopathy per se but only moderates its behavioral expression, predisposing individuals to "successful" or 179 "adaptive" psychopathy (Hall & Benning, 2006; see also Lynam & Miller, 2013; Widom, 1977).

Is Boldness Truly Adaptive?

> Moreover, the question of whether boldness is entirely psychologically adaptive or, like other features of psychopathy, it also has a dark side (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), remains a point of contention. Perhaps when dispositional boldness becomes too extreme or when it is coupled with certain unsavory personality traits, such as poor impulse control or antagonism, or certain cognitive traits, such as low intelligence or poor executive functioning, the right stuff can transmute into the wrong stuff, crossing the murky boundary that separates bravery from reckless risk taking.

The authors also argue that Boldness alone is usually not harmful. It tends to become maladaptive when combined with high SCI (Lilienfeld et al., 2015a; Lilienfeld, Watts, & Smith, 2016).

With intact executive control, boldness can produce the "right stuff" (Wolfe, 1979). But when paired with poor executive functioning, it is more likely to channel into poorly judged risk-taking (Frost, Ko, & James, 2007; James, 2008).

Empirical work supports this interaction: the combination of high FD and high SCI predicts outcomes such as predatory aggression (Smith, Edens, & McDermott, 2013), sexual risk taking (Kastner & Sellbom, 2012), and negative affect after risky sexual behavior (Fulton et al., 2014).

Boldness May Follow the Law of Optimum Balance

The authors conclude that very low levels of are tied to elevated risk for internalizing disorders, but we don't have enough data yet to say whether too much boldness becomes similarly maladaptive.
More data is needed to conclude whether boldness follows the law of balance.

FD and SCI Differences

> Taken together, these studies paint a picture of FD as being negatively associated with conditions marked by emotional distress, and positively associated with healthy adjustment.

Just like for factor 1 and 2 from the PCL-3, FD and SCI from the PPI displayed strikingly different psychopathological correlates.
that only SCI was significantly associated with substance and drug abuse, and consistently positively associated with a host of measures of childhood and adult antisocial behavior. In contrast, FD was essentially unrelated to childhood antisocial behavior, although it was slightly but significantly associated with interview-assessed adult antisocial behavior (r = .15).

PART III ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS OF PSYCHOPATHY

I move chapter 3 here for topical congruency

Chapter 3. The PCL-R Assessment of Psychopathy: Development, Properties, Debates, and New Directions

Authors: Robert D. Hare, Craig S. Neumann, and Andreas Mokros

The authors review the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003), which is considered the most established and empirically-supported measure of psychopathy for use with adult offenders. Its extensive use has led to a large body of research supporting the disorder's forensic utility.

The PCL-R's structure is multifaceted, yielding a two-factor, three-factor, or four-factor model of psychopathy. Associated versions have also been developed for adolescents, screening versions, and self-report instruments (e.g., PCL:YV).

- **PCL-R structure:** The PCL-R is an interview-based, file-reviewed measure that focuses on **criminal psychopathy** and is uniquely useful in offender samples due to its strong predictive validity for criminal behavior.
- **Multifactorial Structure:** The PCL-R structure is typically described by:
  - **Factor 1 (Interpersonal/Affective):** Captures the core personality traits (e.g., superficial charm, pathological lying, lack of empathy), aligning with the Boldness and Meanness aspects of the Triarchic model.
  - **Factor 2 (Lifestyle/Antisocial):** Captures the chronic behavioral instability and deviance (e.g., impulsivity, juvenile delinquency, criminal versatility), aligning with the Disinhibition aspect.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: Hare and possible bias with PCL-R
while it may seem most befitting to have Robert Hare author this chapter, there may be downsides to it, including conflicts of interest, potential bias, and a less-than-truly representative chapter. I would have liked to see more about the issues around the PCL-R, including criminal behavior, but I was left hoping for more. See the notes below for more details

Chapter 9. Capturing Psychopathic Personality: Penetrating the Mask of Sanity through Clinical Interview

Authors: David J. Cooke and Caroline Logan

Due to the psychopathic individual's superficial charm, manipulative tendencies, and pathological deceitfulness, interview-based assessment must go beyond self-report to gather objective, observable information. The authors advocate for a comprehensive, information-based approach to assessment that integrates data from collateral sources and uses a structured conceptual model, such as the Comprehensive Assessment of Psychopathic Personality (CAPP), to ensure all facets of the construct are covered.

- **The "Mask" Challenge:** Psychopathy is a disorder that cannot be observed only in a clinical setting; the true pathology is revealed only when observing the individual's history of real-life activity in "the marketplace, the saloon… to church, and to their work" (Cleckley, 1976).

Chapter 10. The Self-Report Assessment of Psychopathy: Challenges, Pitfalls, and Promises

Authors: Martin Sellbom, Scott O. Lilienfeld, Katherine A. Fowler, and Kristen L. McCrary

While self-report measures are highly cost-effective and capture subjective experiences not easily observable (e.g., thoughts, emotions), they are vulnerable to the psychopathic traits of lying, deception, and impression management. However, modern self-report instruments are increasingly valuable for assessing specific facets, particularly the Boldness/Fearless Dominance factor, which often correlates negatively with anxiety and is captured well by an individual's self-perception of fearlessness and confidence.

- **Challenges:** The primary pitfall is the risk of **faking bad** (over-reporting negative traits) or **faking good** (under-reporting negative traits, especially the affective/interpersonal components) due to the manipulative nature of the psychopathic individual.
- **Mean and exploitative were worse at faking tests**: *those scoring high on the meanness (i.e., callous–unemotional, exploitative–aggressive) domain of psychopathy were worse at avoiding detection by scales designed to identify underreporting than those who scored low on this domain.*
- **Psychopathy is a configuration of largely independent traits**: *The interview-based PCL-R also includes separable factors, further divisible into facets (Hare, Neumann, & Mokros, Chapter 3, this volume) that show strongly divergent associations with criterion measures in self-report, clinical-diagnostic, behavioral, and physiological response domains. Rather than a classical syndrome, which, as noted earlier, comprises a constellation of covarying signs and symptoms (Kazdin, 1983), psychopathy may instead be a maladaptive configuration of largely independent dimensions.*
- **New may be needed for what seems a configural construct:** *This alternative view of psychopathy as a configural condition may call for alternative models of scoring and interpreting self-report psychopathy measures. Scholars may need to consider configural (multiplicative or interactive) models of scoring self-report psychopathy measures instead of, or at least in addition to, more traditional linear (additive) models that rely on merely summing scores on lower-order psychopathy dimensions.*
- **Meanness and antagonism as core components**: *A compelling argument can perhaps be made for the essentiality of meanness or antagonism in differing manifestations of psychopathy (Lynam, Miller, & Derefinko, Chapter 11, this volume; see also Crego & Widiger, 2015; Lynam & Miller, 2015).*
  - But boldness differentiates between ASPD and psychopathy: *However, there is evidence that the boldness domain, which maps onto many of the features of psychopathy described by Cleckley (1976; see Lilienfeld et al., Chapter 8, and Patrick, Chapter 1, this volume), differentiates psychopathy from DSM ASPD (Venables et al., 2014; Wall et al., 2015), and consistently distinguishes primary from secondary psychopathy in subtype studies (Hicks & Drislane, Chapter 13, this volume).*

Best quote

> The psychopath shows a remarkable disregard for truth and is to be trusted no more in his accounts of the past than in his promises for the future

Chapter 11. Psychopathy and Personality: Benefits of a Trait-Based Approach

Authors: Donald R. Lynam, Joshua D. Miller, and Karen J. Derefinko

Conceptualizing psychopathy in terms of broader personality dimensions, like the FFM (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness), links psychopathy research to the massive existing research base in general personality science. This approach simplifies the construct by showing that psychopathy is primarily characterized by a severe lack of **Agreeableness** and **Conscientiousness**.

- **Five-Factor Model (FFM) Mapping:** The chapter demonstrates how the psychopathy traits align with the

FFM:
  - **Meanness/Antagonism** aligns with very low **Agreeableness**.
  - **Disinhibition** aligns with very low **Conscientiousness**.
  - **Boldness** is often linked to high **Extraversion** and low **Neuroticism** (fearlessness).
- **Benefits of Trait-Based Approach:** Using this framework allows researchers to study developmental change, cross-cultural differences, and basic psychological processes (e.g., those underlying Agreeableness) related to psychopathy using established methodologies.

🤔 **Lucio's note**: I agree with the author and it was an incredibly instructive chapter. My only note was that at times I felt the FFM-based approach may be stretched to fit certain facets or aspects of psychopathy. For example, referring to 'extraversion minus trust' is not describing FFM extraversion anymore, but something different. This is why other measures of psychopathy are equally relevant.

Chapter 12. Psychopathy and DSM-5 Psychopathology

Authors: Thomas A. Widiger and Cristina Crego

While the *DSM-5* maintains the behavioral-centric diagnosis of Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) in its categorical section, it introduced an Alternative Model for Personality Disorders (AMPD) that better captures the full spectrum of psychopathic personality. The AMPD's trait-based approach, which includes the domain of Antagonism and the facet of Callousness, aligns more closely with the interpersonal and affective features (Meanness and Boldness) that are often missed by ASPD alone.

- **ASPD Limitations:** The established *DSM* criteria for ASPD are heavily skewed toward observable antisocial behaviors (Disinhibition), leading to a diagnosis that is broader than psychopathy and fails to distinguish between the primary (affective/interpersonal) and secondary (anxious/reactive) variants.
- **Dishibitory liability is the genetic foundation**: *psychopathy, ASPD, substance use disorder, and low Conscientiousness (or low constraint) may all reflect a common, underlying disinhibitory liability. Consistent with this, twin studies have suggested a common genetic basis to ASPD, substance use disorders, and low Conscientiousness (Sher & Slutske, 2003).*
- **There are more antisocials than psychopaths**: *Antisocial Personality Disorder There has been a considerable body of research on the diagnostic co-occurrence of psychopathy with antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). This research has generally suggested that most cases of psychopathy diagnosed within prison or other forensic settings would meet DSM-IV (APA, 2000) criteria for ASPD (which were carried forward into DSM-5; see below), but only about half of the cases of ASPD would meet criteria for psychopathy (Hare, 2003; Hare & Neumann, 2008).*
- **The AMPD Framework:** The Alternative Model is trait-based and organizes personality pathology along domains, where psychopathy is best represented by a high score on the **Antagonism** domain (corresponding to Meanness) and a low score on the **Conscientiousness** domain (corresponding to Disinhibition).
- **Youth Diagnosis:** The chapter also addresses the inclusion of the **"with callous and unemotional traits"** specifier for Conduct Disorder in the *DSM-5*, which helps to identify the high-risk, psychopathic variant of youth antisociality.

Criminal vs. Antisocial: Non-criminal ≠ 'Good'

An interesting distinction between 'criminal' vs 'antisocial' that's relevant to the discussion of 'adaptive vs. maladaptive' psychopathy

> Although it is not difficult to imagine a psychopathic person without a criminal record or even a criminal history, it is perhaps difficult to imagine a psychopathic person not having a history infused with unethical, predatory, and other disreputable acts. Skeem and Cooke (2010) made a distinction between criminal and antisocial behavior. "Criminal" behavior is sanctioned by the legal system, whereas "antisocial" behavior is

> more inclusive, involving “behavior that defeats the interests of the social order” (p. 435). “Snakes in suits” (i.e., psychopathic persons in business, law or other white-collar professions; Babiak & Hare, 2006; Babiak, Newmann, & Hare, 2010) may not in fact break many laws, but they significantly bend, massage, and work the rules to an unfair, self-serving advantage.

Chapter 13. Variants (“Subtypes”) of Psychopathy

Authors: Brian M. Hicks and Laura E. Drislane

The idea of psychopathy subtypes (e.g., Primary vs. Secondary, or variants based on the Triarchic factors) reflects growing evidence that different configurations of underlying traits exist, which have distinct etiological origins, personality correlates, and clinical implications. The primary distinction focuses on the role of anxiety/fear.

Factor 1 vs. Factor 2 Table

⁉️♂ **Lucio’s note**: this table is my own, compiling a collection of studies from this chapter, as well as other studies from other chapters

Factor 1	Factor 2
PCL-R F1 (Affective/Interpersonal) & **PPI-I** (Fearless Dominance)	**PCL-R F2** (Lifestyle/Antisocial) & **PPI-II** (Impulsive Antisociality)
Low fear: deficit in startle potentiation, signaling brain’s failure to “prime” in response to threat (Patrick et al., 1993; Lykken, 1995). Note: Because threat cues fail to activate the defensive system, individuals show reduced fear conditioning and diminished sensitivity to punishment, boosting fearless behavior	**Normal or hyperactivated defenses:** functioning or even hyper-reactive defensive motivational system.
reward-approach (agentic positive emotionality): Because threat cues fail to activate the defensive system, individuals show reduced fear conditioning and diminished sensitivity to punishment. This creates a lopsided **“reward-approach” orientation**, where the pursuit of gains is never checked by the anticipation of risk.	reward-approach because of executive control/disinhibitory deficit
Behavioral disinhibition: negatively associated with measures of behavioral inhibition (r,, = —.57) (Miller and Lynam, 2012), low fear of punishment Note: If fearlessness alone, impulsive tendencies reflect a willingness to take risks due to an absence of normal fear-based restraint (low BIS), and the behavior might be effective and adaptive (cold and fearless) (Fowles)	**Low impulse-control inhibition**: impulsive, low self-control, low constraint (Krueger, Caspi, Moffitt, Silva, & McGee, 1996) Note: the impulsivity associated with F2 is theorized to entail a broader, more severe lack of inhibitory control based not on lack of fear, but on Executive Functions dysfunction (“unconscientious disinhibition”) (hot and disregulated) (Fowles)
Positive affect and high well-being and correlates negatively with fear, anxiety, and depression components of Negative Emotionality (NEM) (Skeem, Polaschek, Patrick, & Lilienfeld, 2011).	**Negative Affect**: anger, alienation, distress, fear, and stress reaction, dysphoria and suicidal ideation, neuroticism (Fowles & Dindo, 2006; Skeem et al., 2011; Hicks & Patrick, 2006; Blonigen et al., 2010; Harpur et al., 1988; Patrick, 1994; Smith & Newman, 1990; Verona, Hicks, & Patrick, 2005; Verona, Patrick, & Joiner, 2001).

Factor 1	Factor 2
Narcissism: more associated with narcissism (Blackburn, 1975, 1987, 1998)	**Psychological maladjustment**: associated with borderline personality disorder (Falkenbach et al., 2014), symptoms of major mental disorders (Skeem, Johansson, Andershed, Kerr, & Eno Louden, 2007), and maladaptive coping strategies (Claes et al., 2014; Hicks et al., 2010). Associations with social skills deficits: poor assertiveness, social anxiety and withdrawal, immaturity, and susceptibility to peer pressure (Blackburn et al., 2008; Fanti et al., 2013; Kimonis et al., 2011; Skeem et al., 2007).
Low associations with substance abuse (r's = .07) (Miller and Lynam, 2012)	**Substance abuse** (Reardon, Lang, & Patrick, 2002; Smith & Newman, 1990)
Low associations with antisocial behavior (r's = .12) (Miller and Lynam, 2012)	**Antisocial**, aggression, impulsivity, and sensation seeking; symptoms of ASPD;
High social power: achievement, interpersonal assertiveness, dominance (Skeem, Polaschek, Patrick, & Lilienfeld, 2011); high FFM Extraversion (r,, = .50), and, to a lesser extent, FFM Openness to Experience (r,, = .25) (Miller and Lynam, 2012)	
associations with FFM Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were negligible (Miller and Lynam, 2012)	
Instrumental aggression: premeditated, unprovoked, instrumental aggression (Reidy, Zeichner, Miller, & Martinez, 2007; Reidy, Zeichner, & Seibert, 2011) PCL-R Facets 1 and 2 have been related to premeditated aggression. Psychopathy as a whole may be a protective factor against reactive violence (Reidy, Shelley-Tremblay, and Lilienfeld, 2011)	More highly correlated with **reactive violence** (Falkenbach, Poythress, & Creevy, 2008; Hecht, Berg, Lilienfeld, & Latzman, 2016; Reidy et al., 2007; Reidy, Zeichner, & Martinez, 2008), including for facets 3 and 4 (Declercq, Willemsen, Audenaert, & Verhaeghe, 2012; Flight & Forth, 2007; Snowden & Gray, 2011; Walsh, Swogger, & Kosson, 2009).
	Greater treatment motivation (Poythress et al., 2010) and treatment change (Olver, Sewall, Sarty, Lewis, & Wong, 2015), with higher likelihood of reporting receipt of mental health treatment or use of prescribed antidepressant medications (Hicks et al., 2010; Vaughn et al., 2009).
Genetic	More strongly associated with environmental deprivation and low SES
Lower intimate partner violence since affective–interpersonal deficits might ironically protect against this type of aggression (Hilton, Harris, Rice, Houghton, & Eke, 2008) (Rock, Sellbom, Ben-Porath, & Salekin, 2013)	Higher intimate partner violence (Hilton, Harris, Rice, Houghton, & Eke, 2008) (Rock, Sellbom, Ben-Porath, & Salekin, 2013)
Low Externalizing Proneness with nonsignificant negative correlation (r = –.16) (Patrick et al., 2005).	**High Externalizing Proneness:** essentially complete overlap (r = .94) between broad externalizing factor from the Externalizing Spectrum Inventory (ESI) and PCL-R F2 (Patrick et al., 2005). Note: Highly heritable, it accounts for the high comorbidity among antisocial behavior, substance use disorders, and disinhibited personality traits (Krueger et al., 2002).
lack of empathy	

Note: many of these associations are only clearly evident after controlling for the variance in Factor 1 that overlaps

with Factor 2 (Blonigen et al., 2010; Harpur et al., 1988; Hicks & Patrick, 2006; Patrick, 1994; Smith & Newman, 1990; Verona et al., 2001, 2005).

Factor 1 vs. Factor 2

- **Primary Psychopathy:** Characterized by high psychopathic features, low trait anxiousness, a "cold" and calculated behavioral style, and often aligns with the **Boldness** trait. This subtype is theorized to stem from a core affective deficit.
- **Secondary Psychopathy (Sociopathy):** Characterized by comparable levels of antisocial behavior but **higher trait anxiousness**, strong negative emotions, and a "hot" or reactive and impulsive behavioral style. This subtype is often linked to neurotic conflicts and severe environmental factors like child maltreatment.

PCL-R factor 1 and 2 have a correlation of .50, while the PPI's factors termed Fearless Dominance and Self-Centered Impulsivity (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005; alternatively labeled Impulsive Antisociality [Benning et al., 2003]) do not.

However, their nomological networks are markedly similar when researchers control for their shared variance (Benning, Patrick, Blonigen, Hicks, & Iacono, 2005; Poythress et al., 2010).

> The largest difference between the primary and secondary subtypes on personality traits was for Neuroticism (d = 1.28), followed by Anger/Aggression (d = 0.75). Consistent with the notion of a severe subtype of ASPD or externalizing subtype, the secondary variant also scored higher on Disinhibition than the primary variant (d = 0.60). The primary subtype, however, was higher on Positive Emotionality/Extraversion (d = 0.70) than the secondary subtype, consistent with the conceptualization of good adjustment and greater social poise and engagement.

In general, factor 2 is messier and more problematic, with elevated levels of both internalizing and externalizing problems.
But **findings for the relationship between psychopathy subtypes and criminal behavior were mixed**.

- **No neurological subtypes yet**: *Ideally, the defining features of subtypes would be directly relevant to etiology, for example, features reflecting emotional or cognitive processes whose neurobiological pathways are well mapped. No such defining features have been established for psychopathy. Therefore, psychopathy subtypes are typically defined by differences on an array of traits and clinical features that we refer to here as 'personality structure'*
- **Triarchic Subtypes:** Patrick and colleagues (2009) proposed a triarchic model of psychopathy that seeks to synthesize multiple theoretical approaches and lines of empirical research proposing that different combinations of Boldness, Meanness, and Disinhibition can define distinct variants.
  evidenced by validation studies utilizing the TriPM (…) has substantial descriptive utility for comparing different conceptions of psychopathy based on how prominently Boldness, Disinhibition, and Meanness are represented.
- **Low boldness and high disinhibition had highest externalizing and psychological adjustment**: analyzing results from the Minnesota Twins, Hick's *intringuing findings suggest that individuals with high scores on Boldness and Disinhibition represent an extreme externalizing subgroup that lacks typically co-occurring internalizing problems. This lack of internalizing problems may in fact facilitate engagement in antisocial deviance. It is interesting to note that persons with high Boldness and low Disinhibition scores exhibited the lowest rates of psychopathology and highest levels of psychosocial adjustment (Hicks, 2014).*
  - Boldness + disinhibition is the issue: *boldness per se is not associated with psychopathology. Rather, Boldness appears to act as a moderator of disinhibitory tendencies, such that the combination of the two yields a distinct subsample that exhibits very high levels of antisocial deviance (i.e., an "externalizing supergroup"), while maintaining relatively stable emotional adjustment and competent interpersonal functioning.*

- **ASPD is low constraint and negative emotionality**: *the ASPD criteria do identify a relatively severe psychiatric condition that has strong personality correlates, most notably high negative emotionality (aggression, alienation, stress reactivity) and low constraint (Krueger, Caspi, Moffitt, Silva, & McGee, 1996). The personality profile associated with ASPD seems to be driven by the small group of people (nearly all men) within the general population whose antisocial behavior exhibits an early onset and persistent course.*

Chapter 14. Genetic and Environmental Influences

Authors: Irwin D. Waldman, Soo Hyun Rhee, Devon LoParo, and Yunsoo Park

Psychopathy and antisocial behavior are influenced by a complex interplay of heritable factors (genes) and specific environmental factors, often studied through twin and adoption studies. Crucially, the different facets of psychopathy show distinct heritability patterns, confirming the need to study psychopathy as a multifaceted construct with diverse etiological roots.

- **High Heritability:** The chapter details evidence suggesting that general antisocial behavior and personality traits underlying psychopathy (e.g., low empathy, fearlessness) have a significant heritable component.
- **Genes and non-shared environments account for the lion's share**: *Meta-Analysis Results The results of analyses of data from all of the samples meeting the inclusion criteria (N = 52 samples; 149 groups; 55,525 pairs of participants) are presented in Table 14.1. The full ACDE model fit best as compared with the other, more restrictive models, suggesting that additive genetic (32%), nonadditive genetic (9%), shared environmental (16%), and nonshared environmental influences (43%) have significant influences on antisocial behavior. Parameter estimates did not differ after excluding studies that examined psychopathy*
- **Environment still matters (from chapter 31):** *although identical twins exhibit increased similarity for levels of psychopathic features compared to fraternal twins, the concordance they show in absolute terms is moderate rather than high—indicating a substantial contribution of environmental influences (and their interplay with genomic makeup) to the emergence and expression of psychopathic symptoms across time.*
- **Facet-Specific Etiology:**
  - **Callous–Unemotional (Meanness) Traits:** Show a particularly strong heritable influence, suggesting a significant innate, biological vulnerability for the core affective deficits.
  - **Impulsivity/Disinhibition:** Also shows a strong genetic component but is more reactive to specific non-shared environmental influences.
- **Gene-Environment Interplay:** The authors explore the concepts of gene-environment correlation (where genetic predispositions influence the environments an individual seeks or is exposed to) and gene-environment interaction (where a genetic risk factor is only expressed under certain environmental conditions, such as early maltreatment).

Chapter 15. Family Background and Psychopathy

Authors: David P. Farrington

Adverse family and social environments, while not the sole cause, is an important exacerbating factor, especially for the behavioral and disinhibited aspects of psychopathy. Poor parenting, family disruption, and exposure to deviant models significantly increase the risk for an individual with a biological vulnerability (e.g., low fear, high impulsivity) to progress toward a psychopathic outcome.

- **Real but small effect sizes**: *Leschied, Chiodo, Nowicki, and Rodger (2008) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 38 prospective longitudinal studies in which the focus was to establish which, if any, family factors were related to later criminality and antisocial behavior. Taken together, the family factors measured (e.g., parental discipline, substance and child abuse, and family separation) had an effect size (Cohen's d) of 0.25.*
  - Effects vary by developmental period: *effects of family predictors varied somewhat over time and across*

developmental periods. For example, family structure appeared to have a greater effect when measured in adolescence ($d = 0.67$, $p < .01$), whereas parental management assessed during mid-childhood ($d = 0.41$, $p < .001$) was most strongly predictive of adult antisociality. These latter findings suggest that the effects of some family factors may be specific to certain developmental periods, which could potentially account for weak relationships reported in other studies focusing on only one specific period of development (Leschied et al., 2008).

- **There are 7 family factors**: *family factors are grouped into seven categories: (1) childrearing problems (poor supervision, poor discipline, coldness and rejection, low parental involvement with the child); (2) abuse (physical or sexual) or neglect; (3) parental conflict and disrupted families; (4) large family size; (5) criminal or antisocial parents or siblings; (6) other characteristics of parents (young age, substance abuse, stress, anxiety/depression); and (7) socioeconomic factors (e.g., low income, poor housing).*
- **Keep an eye on your children**: *studies show that parents who do not know where their children are when they are out, and parents who let their children roam the streets unsupervised from an early age, tend to have delinquent children.*
- **Urbanization boosts criminality**: *boys living in urban areas are more violent than those living in rural ones (Derzon, 2010; Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2013). In the U.S. National Youth Survey, the prevalence of self-reported assault and robbery was considerably higher among urban youth (Elliott et al., 1989). Within urban areas, boys living in high-crime neighborhoods are more violent than those living in low-crime neighborhoods.*
- **Key Risk Factors:** Several different factors affect outcomes
  - **Parental Antisociality/Criminality:** Transmission of deviance through both genetic and social learning mechanisms.
  - **Parenting Practices:** Factors like harsh, inconsistent, or neglectful parenting significantly contribute to externalizing behaviors.
  - **Family Disruption:** Socioeconomic deprivation, large family size, and family conflict are often associated with increased risk for youth conduct problems.
- **Environmental Impact on Subtypes:** Poor environmental factors are especially implicated in the development of **Secondary Psychopathy** (sociopathy), where anxiety and negative emotion are higher, often stemming from trauma or dysfunctional parenting.

Chapter 17. Psychopathy and Brain Function: Insights from Neuroimaging Research

Authors: Blair, Meffert, Hwang, and White

Neurobiological research has consistently pointed to structural and functional abnormalities in brain regions responsible for emotional processing, social cognition, and impulse control, offering insights into the biological underpinnings of psychopathic traits.

- **Amygdala Dysfunction:** The chapter highlights consistent evidence for functional and sometimes structural abnormalities in the **amygdala**, a region crucial for fear conditioning and processing distress cues. This dysfunction is strongly linked to the **Meanness** (Callous-Unemotional) trait.
- **Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) Abnormalities:** Deficits are often observed in the **ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC)** and **orbitofrontal cortex (OFC)**, which are involved in response reversal, inhibitory control, and evaluating consequences. These findings provide a neural basis for the **Disinhibition** and poor judgment aspects.
- **Integration with Mechanisms:** Neuroimaging provides a clear biological referent for understanding mechanisms like reduced empathy, impaired fear conditioning, and poor decision-making capacity.

Chapter 18. Cognitive and Emotional Processing in Psychopathy

Author: Christopher J. Patrick

> The triarchic model of psychopathy (Patrick et al., 2009) (…) encompasses three distinct dispositional tendencies that account for its observable symptoms and correlates: boldness, involving social dominance, emotional stability/resilience, and venturesomeness; meanness, entailing deficient empathy (callousness), selfishness, and aggressive exploitation of others; and disinhibition, involving lack of behavioral restraint, irresponsibility, and emotional volatility. The TriPM was developed to assess psychopathy in terms of these distinct dispositions.

The chapter ties together the different parts of the book by using three core psychological processes—**inhibitory control, defensive (fear) reactivity, and empathic sensitivity**—as conceptual anchors for the three Triarchic traits. This integrative perspective shows how specific deficits in these processes map directly onto the clinical manifestation of Boldness, Meanness, and Disinhibition.

- **Three Key Processes and Triarchic Links:**
  - **Inhibitory Control:** Deficits in this area (e.g., in executive function) are strongly linked to **Disinhibition**.
  - **Defensive (Fear) Reactivity:** Impaired or low reactivity to threat is the mechanism underlying **Boldness** (fearless dominance).
  - **Empathic Sensitivity:** Deficient processing of others' emotional states is the mechanism underlying **Meanness** (callousness-unemotionality).
- **Continuously varying dimensions**: *The empirical evidence for disinhibition, boldness, and meanness as continuously varying, polygenic dispositions lends credibility to the idea that liabilities for the three can occur in varying combinations.*
- **Dishibition = externalizing**: *the disinhibition construct of the triarchic model corresponds to the externalizing liability factor in the general psychopathology literature (Krueger et al., 2002, 2007), and it has well-established behavioral and neurophysiological correlates.*
- **Social attachment and empathy are linked:** *Decety (2011) drew attention to empirical evidence for a connection between social attachment and capacity for empathic concern, including evidence pointing to shared neural circuitry for these two processes. In doing so, he highlighted the role of neurochemical systems in the regulation of attachment behavior, with a particular emphasis on the neuropeptide oxytocin*
- **Continuous, not discrete:** *evidence strongly supports the view of psychopathy as continuous in nature (i.e., varying by degree across individuals) rather than discrete (i.e., either present or absent).*
- **Agentic disaffiliation = goal pursuit without empathy:** *standard attachment-style inventories are not well suited to indexing the weak social connectedness that characterizes classically "detached" psychopathic individuals, as distinguished from affectively dysregulated externalizing individuals (Hicks & Drislane, Chapter 13, this volume). The triarchic model characterizes the social deficit in psychopathy as active ("agentic") disaffiliation —involving pursuit of goals/resources without concern for the feelings or welfare of others (Patrick et al., 2009).*
- **Bridging Phenotype and Genotype:** The chapter demonstrates how these processes can be assessed behaviorally (phenotype) and linked to specific neurobiological systems (genotype), fulfilling the mandate of the NIMH Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) framework.

Affective Deficits + Low Control = Impulsive Disregard

> To the extent that individuals are deficient in control system function and lacking as well in fear of aversive outcomes, sensitivity to others' distress, or feelings of closeness/connectedness, their propensity to act in the moment without regard for consequences will be high. When affective deficits are present, only moderate levels of disinhibitory liability may be required to produce a reckless, unrestrained behavioral orientation. This

> may help to account for why many psychopathic individuals do not show impaired performance on behavioral tests of frontal executive function.

PART V PSYCHOPATHY IN SPECIFIC SUBPOPULATIONS

Chapter 20. Psychopathy in Children and Adolescents

Authors: Randall T. Salekin, Henrik Andershed, and Abby P. Clark

> Our review of the youth psychopathy literature indicates that the interpersonal, affective, and behavioral features of psychopathy are present and measurable quite early in life.
> (…) multidimensional psychopathy measures developed for use with children and adolescents do, for the most part, index a condition that appears similar to adult psychopathy, and that psychopathic tendencies identified early in life have a genetic basis and are relatively persistent across time.
> (…)
> available research indicates that psychopathic tendencies in youth are predictive of more severe antisocial–aggressive outcomes, but that psychological treatment has potential to ameliorate the condition early in its development.

- **Differences are evident from young age:** *research findings to date indicate that early on, pathological levels of these symptoms are also evident (Evans & Lee, 2013; Lewis, Stanger, & Sullivan, 1989; Parry, 2006; Peskin, 1992; Talwar & Crossman, 2011). Research has shown that even young children can dominate others excessively (Assary, Salekin, & Barker, 2015), tell strategic lies (Evans, Xu, & Lee, 2011; Fu, Evans, Xu, & Lee, 2012), and deliberately mislead others (Hsu & Cheung, 2013; Polak & Harris, 1999). Moreover, the differences between age-normative lying and more pathological forms of deceptiveness may emerge early in development (Waller et al., 2012). Past research has shown that even in preschoolers, a smaller subset of children can be identified and seen by others as chronic liars (Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986).*
- **Heightened risk-taking is visible early on**: *Although engagement in some risky behavior may be common among children (Sandseter & Kennair, 2012), emerging research on this topic suggests that variation in such behavior is possible to assess at a very young age, with certain youth being quite high in risk-taking and others being distinctly low (Morrongiello & Lasenby, 2006). For example, in a study that evaluated children ages 2–5 years for sensation-seeking tendencies, Morrongiello and colleagues (2012) found that very young "daredevils" could be reliably identified.*
- **Environment can channel psychopathic traits in very different directions:** *research has shown that parenting and other environmental factors may affect the manner in which impulsive/sensation-seeking tendencies are expressed. For instance, within affluent neighborhoods, high impulsivity or sensation seeking might lead to engagement in high-risk sports and adventuresome prosocial pursuits, whereas within less affluent neighborhoods, these same traits could give rise to delinquency, substance use, and other problems (Barker, Trentacosta, & Salekin, 2011).*
- **Extreme self-worth and beliefs of superiority predict proactive aggression and ringleader bullying** (e.g., Ang, Ong, Lim, & Lim, 2010; Barry et al., 2007; Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009; Kerig & Stellwagen, 2010; Stellwagen & Kerig, 2013; Washburn, McMahon, King, Reinecke, & Silver, 2004) and the interpersonal features of psychopathy were associated with better perspective taking and were more predictive of ringleader bullying than either CU traits or impulsivity.
- **Interpersonal manipulativeness is related to aggression and reduced prosocial behavior** in young children (Pauletti, Menon, Menon, Tobin, and Perry, 2012)

22. Cultural and Ethnic Variations in Psychopathy

Authors: Kostas A. Fanti, Alexandros Lordos, Elizabeth A. Sullivan, and David S. Kosson

> In summary, available research findings indicate that psychopathy is similar in many respects across cultures.

- **Slightly higher scores for African Americans?** Some studies pointed out to higher scores for African American in the US, but Skeem, Edens, Camp, and Colwell (2004) compared mean PCL-R scores for African American and European American participants across 21 studies and found a small but significant Cohen's d for PCL-R total scores (d = 0.11, SD = .23), and for scores on the Affective (d = 0.10, SD = .20) dimension of psychopathy. But didn't find differences for Factor 1, leading them to conclude that there is no strong evidence that African Americans have higher levels of the core psychopathic traits than European Americans. However, the heterogeneity and the variability in the range of differences in mean total PCL-R scores across ethnic groups (from +3.3 to –4.7) indicate substantial ambiguity.
  Verona and colleagues (2010) suggest that reported ethnic differences might actually be an artifact of SES.
- **Some differences among ethnicities exist**: *There do appear to be relatively consistent differences between African Americans and European Americans in relationships of psychopathy scores with some criterion variables, in particular with self- reported Impulsivity and Psychoticism, and responses in laboratory paradigms assessing cognitive and emotional processing. These differences raise the possibility of distinct mechanisms underlying psychopathy in African American as compared to European American prisoners.*
- **Correlates largely similar across countries:** *Our review of studies of adults (see Table 22.3) and youth (see Table 22.4) from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds provides evidence that the correlates of psychopathic traits are largely similar in different countries.*
- Cross-cultural PCL-R means lower in Europe/Asia. Societal factors of collectivism may suppress overt traits.

Chapter 21. Psychopathy in Women: Assessment, Manifestations, and Etiology

Authors: Edelyn Verona and Jennifer Vitale

Female psychopathy manifests with relational aggression and internalizing comorbidity, assessed via PCL-R showing lower prevalence but similar structure. Etiological factors include trauma and hormonal influences, with neurocognitive deficits paralleling males but moderated by gender.

- **Factor 2 is more emotionally disregulated:** *there is some evidence that psychopathy, at least the secondary subtype, is manifested in more emotionally dysregulated ways (e.g., BPD, suicidality) and within more intimate interpersonal contexts (e.g., domestic interactions, sexuality) among female compared to male offenders.*
- **More internalizing and self-directed harm:** *there is a growing body of work suggesting that psychopathic traits may not be protective for some types of internalizing problems, particularly suicidality and self-harm, in women compared to evidence for the protective role of these traits in men. In turn, these findings appear consistent with theorizing that impulsivity and aggression may be more likely manifested as self-directed violence and self-harm in women than in men (Forouzan & Cooke, 2005; Sadeh, Javdani, Finy, & Verona, 2011)*
- **Lower criminality and early conduct problems:** *less evidence of early behavior problems (Rutherford et al., 1998; Silverthorn & Frick, 1999), lower risk of criminal and violent recidivism (e.g., Edens et al., 2007),*
- **Manifestations**: higher histrionic, borderline overlaps.
- **Should we assess psychopathy differently for women?** *Assessment strategies may need to be modified for use with women. One approach may be to include other indicators of psychopathy that tap uniquely female expressions of antisocial–externalizing (Factor 2) tendencies, such as prostitution, sexual risk taking, IPV, self-directed aggression, and relational forms of aggression such as friendship betrayal and "backbiting." It is unclear whether the use of alternative indicators will further improve the validity of psychopathy assessments with women, or instead blur boundaries between psychopathy and other personality disorders in women*

Chapter 23. Deviance at Its Darkest: Serial Murder and Psychopathy

Authors: Eric W. Hickey, Bethany K. Walters, Laura E. Drislane, Isabella M. Palumbo, and Christopher J. Patrick

While psychopathy is a common characteristic among many serial murderers, the disorder is not solely defined by this crime, nor is it a necessary prerequisite for it. The association is driven less by the Disinhibition/Erratic Lifestyle factor and more by the core affective deficits (Meanness) that facilitate the violence.

- **The Affective Core:** Serial murder is predominantly linked to the **Meanness** (Affective) features of psychopathy, such as a lack of empathy and emotional coldness, which allow the perpetrator to commit heinous acts without remorse.
- **Compartmentalization:** many serial murderers can maintain an outwardly normal appearance (e.g., steady job, family life) while committing crimes in a highly secretive, compartmentalized manner, suggesting that high levels of Boldness and lower levels of Disinhibition may be present in some cases (e.g., John Gacy, Gary Ridgway).
- **Mass murderers are different than serial murderers:** *Mass murderers are also far more likely than serial murderers to meet diagnostic criteria for severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, whereas serial murderers more often exhibit personality disorders (most typically antisocial personality), along with paraphilias in many cases (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 2013; Duwe, 2004; Hickey, 2015; White-Hamon, 2000).*
- **Typical psychopath vs. typical serial murderers**: *we hypothesize that only a small proportion of serial murderers are "true psychopaths"—that is, individuals with an essential psychopathic disposition who engage in serial homicide. As conceptualized classically (Cleckley, 1976), psychopathy involves a persistent pattern of reckless, irresponsible behavior that pervades the affected individual's life. By contrast, many serial murderers commit their crimes in a secretive, highly compartmentalized manner—maintaining an ostensibly normal pattern of behavior in other areas of life (e.g., residing in a permanent home, maintaining a steady job, being married and raising children).*
- **Fantasy-Driven Behavior:** serial murder is predominantly a fantasy-driven pattern of behavior, which can arise in individuals with different interpersonal styles, confirming that the psychopathic profile is not universally identical among all serial killers.
- **Most serial murderers are men:** it's not true that they're 'genius level IQ' or particularly low-IQ and it's not true they're mostly white. But it's true they're mostly men
- **Start older**: *In contrast with other homicidal offenders, serial murderers typically commence killing at older ages, beginning in their early 30s on average (Fox & Levin, 2015; Godwin, 2008; Hickey, 2015).*

PCL-R Ratings for Five Well-Known Serial Murderers

The authors examined five notorious serial murderers based on interviews, avaible history, and court documents, and then compared the scores to each other and clarified when they were different.

> Consistent with the idea of a systematic relationship between serial murder and psychopathy, all five of these perpetrators exhibited salient psychopathic symptoms. However, contrary to the view that most serial killers (including these specific ones; LaBrode, 2007) are clinically psychopathic, only one of the five (Ted Bundy) exceeded the PCL-R cutoff score of 30 out of 40 points required for a diagnosis of psychopathy (Hare, 2003).

The authors conclude that most serial killers do not meet the clinical 30-point threshold for psychopathy, suggesting that their crimes are often driven by specialized paraphilias or other mental disorders rather than a "core" psychopathic personality.

Name	Total	Factor 1	Factor 2	Interpersonal	Affective	Impulsive	Antisocial
Bundy	34	16	15.5	8	8	8	15
Gacy	27	16	9	8	8	3	6
Kemper	26	13	11	5	8	4	7
Dahmer	23	9	12	3	6	8	4
Ridgway	19	11	4.5	4	7	2	3

All credits to the authors: Hickey, Walters, Drislane, Palumbo, and J. Patrick

The authors state that the affective features of PCL-R psychopathy are most consistently present in serial murderers because of the very nature of the acts perpetrated by serial murderers, involving repeated fatal victimization of others:

> In summary, the data presented in Table 23.1, together with our ratings of other serial murder cases to date, suggest that the main basis for a systematic association between the phenomenon of serial homicide and the diagnosis of psychopathy lies in the callous–unemotional (meanness) features represented in the Affective facet of the PCL-R. Two potential bases for this systematic association are that (1) deficient remorse, lack of empathy, and rationalization are part and parcel of serial homicide offending, and (2) lack of social connectedness (disaffiliation) contributes to serial murder, as well as to callous–unemotional features of psychopathy.

Chapter 24. Successful Psychopathy

Authors: Stephen D. Benning, Noah C. Venables, and Jason R. Hall

The "successful psychopath", who manages to avoid negative outcomes at least and enjoy some levels of personal success, is distinguished from the "unsuccessful" variant by possessing higher levels of adaptive traits—primarily **Boldness**—which are hypothesized to confer greater cognitive ability and better emotional regulation.

- **It's an old concept**: *"Successful psychopathy" is a concept that has long captured the interest of researchers and clinicians alike (Smith, 1978; Widom, 1977). This seemingly paradoxical concept has its roots in Cleckley's (1976) landmark monograph, The Mask of Sanity. Others have argued that certain psychopathic traits (e.g., glibness/charm, fearlessness) may serve as valuable personal assets in certain professions, including law, politics, business, or emergency responding (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Lykken, 1995).*
- **But it's a difficult phenomenon to study**: *Despite long-standing interest in this topic, successful individuals with psychopathy have proven to be an elusive target for research. Efforts to systematically study high-functioning persons with psychopathy in the community have been impeded by methodological obstacles. In particular, identifying and recruiting individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits from the general population pose ongoing challenges given issues of definition (discussed below) and the low prevalence of individuals with extreme psychopathic tendencies in noninstitutional settings.*
- **Intact or even enhanced executive functioning are key** (e.g., planning, decision-making) and greater autonomic reactivity to emotional stressors compared to their unsuccessful counterparts, allowing them to navigate complex social/professional environments effectively.
- **Successful psychopaths' brains are closer to healthy controls**: *in terms of prefrontal cortex gray matter (Yang et al., 2005), along with orbitofrontal cortex and amygdala volume (Yang, Raine, Colletti, Toga, & Narr, 2010), and in terms of symmetry between the left and right anterior hippocampus (Raine et al., 2004). Raine and colleagues (2004) have interpreted the relatively intact autonomic physiology and neuroanatomy of successful individuals as factors protecting such individuals from committing crimes in obvious or easily detectable ways.*
- **Strategic defection**: psychopathic traits are associated with defection against coparticipants in the Prisoner's

Dilemma game (Rilling et al., 2007), particularly against people who are viewed as low in value (Gervais, Kline, Ludmer, George, & Manson, 2013). Indeed, Mealey (1995) proposed a sociobiological model of psychopathy that characterizes people with psychopathy as deceptive cheaters, whose proclivities for antisocial behavior are genetically determined.

Defining Success

The authors start with the lowest bar of success as **avoiding the worst outcomes**:

- **Incarceration**: *Among adjudicated offenders, high and intermediate levels of psychopathy are associated with a higher proportion of crimes going undetected than low levels of psychopathy (Aharoni & Kiehl, 2013), suggesting that higher psychopathy is associated with more effective evasion of legal contact. However, in absolute terms, higher psychopathy tends to be associated with earlier and more extensive criminal arrests/convictions.*
- **Psychopathology:** *psychopathy, particularly its impulsive– antisocial features, is systematically associated with problems such as alcohol and drug dependence, as well as with rule breaking and aggression (Patrick, Hicks, Krueger, & Lang, 2005). Better-functioning, successful psychopathic individuals are expected to show fewer problems of these types: Rule breaking, to the extent it occurs, is less apt to lead to legal problems, and substance use is more likely to be recreational than habitual.*

Then, they move to **Attaining Desirable Outcomes**:

- **Agency**: *there are conceptual and empirical reasons for hypothesizing that psychopathic traits may contribute to success in areas involving goal-oriented activity (agency), like socioecological niches that favor the ruthless pursuit of status (ie., dense, transient populations that encourage individual-level approaches to resource (Kinner, 2003). Modern could be an occupational niche that rewards psychopathic behavior (Wexler, 2008)—in particular with large size, rapid growth, or frequent restructurings that foster instability in employee relations and insulate against the interpersonal consequences of selfishness (Babiak, 1995). Workers in professional settings are more likely to come into contact with individuals with psychopathic traits than are clerical or other junior workers (Boddy, Ladyshewsky, & Galvin, 2010), and high psychopathic tendencies are 3.5 times more common at senior levels compared to the general population (Babiak & Hare, 2006).*
  - Heroism: *Heroism is another form of societal success that shows some association with the interpersonal–affective features of psychopathy. This association shows up most clearly when these features are indexed separately from the disinhibitory features of psychopathy. Fearless Dominance as indexed by the PPI and related measures (cf. Drislane, Patrick, & Arsal, 2014) is associated with everyday heroism (Smith, Lilienfeld, Coffey, & Dabbs, 2013), in which people provide aid to others at the risk of minor physical danger to themselves. Fearless Dominance is also associated with engagement in occupations involving high levels of physical risk (Lilienfeld, Latzman, Watts, Smith, & Dutton, 2014)*
  - Also read: Psychopaths & Machiavellians at the top (emotional intelligence lie)

- **Communion**: psychopathy is unrelated to deficits in theory of mind (i.e., ability to deduce the thoughts/motives of others), but negatively related to empathic concern for others (Blair, 2008; Mullins-Nelson, Salekin, & Leistico, 2006; Seara-Cardoso, Neumann, Roiser, McCrory, & Viding, 2012; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). Psychopathic individuals are more likely to befriend others for instrumental than for affiliative reasons (Jonason & Schmitt, 2012), which may cause others to dislike interacting with such individuals in cooperative situations (Rauthmann, 2012).
  Communal success could mean having many (typically short-term) sexual partners (Hare, 2003; Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Jonason, Valentine, Li, & Harbeson, 2011), though it's not empirically established whether it results in more offspring (Gladden, Figueredo, & Jacobs, 2009; Glenn, Kurzban, & Raine, 2011). Finally, if successful in poaching others' sexual partners, they also appear more vulnerable to having their own sexual partners poached (Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010).

Success Must Be Assessed In All Life Areas, & Over Long-Term

I found it interesting that the authors picked Jordan Belfort as an example:

> a person can achieve a high level of professional success and still be unsuccessful in life as a whole. For instance, Jordan Belfort (known as "the Wolf of Wall Street"; Belfort, 2007) (…) conviction for offenses related to these activities required him to pay $110 million in restitution to his victims.
> This high-profile case highlights the fact that an individual with psychopathic traits who appears highly successful at one point in time may fail spectacularly at a later point and therefore no longer qualify as successful. Thus, the designation of an individual with psychopathic traits as successful should be considered provisional, subject to revision based on later biographical events.

In Belfort's case though, he still ended up successful thanks to the fame that the movie brought him (which by the way lends credibility to moderated psychopathy model, in this case moderated by IQ/strategic predisposition). The same can be said of some recent former mobsters who acquired a sizable following on social media (ie.: Michael Franzese and Salvatore 'Sammy the Bull' Gravano).

The 3 Models of Successful Psychopathy

Three main frameworks attempt to explain how some individuals high in psychopathic traits function adaptively in society, and they can be complementary:

1. Subclinical Psychopathy Model

The subclinical model proposes that successful psychopaths are simply milder versions of clinical psychopaths. The core traits are largely the same, but expressed at lower severity or without crossing the threshold into chronic criminality.

There is evidence for differences between the two, and also for differences between sub-clicanically high psychoapthy and non-psychopathy:

> The relationship between psychopathic tendencies and performance on tasks indexing risk taking and aggression appears to differ in nonclinical as compared to offender samples.
> (…)
> In undergraduates, subclinical psychopathy is associated with real-world cheating on classroom exams (Nathanson, Paulhus, & Williams, 2006b), proclivities toward body modification and tattoos (Nathanson, Paulhus, & Williams, 2006a), and preferences for antisocial forms of entertainment (Williams, Paulhus, & Hare, 2007).
> Psychopathy scores are higher on average for undergraduates who choose to study business as opposed to the arts or science (Wilson & McCarthy, 2011)
> (…)
> willingness to tolerate unethical practices mediates the relationship between psychopathy and publication rates for academic accountants (Bailey, 2015).

 Example: The authors mention 'The Godfather' Michael Corleone as an example of subclinical psychopathy.

However, research shows that individuals considered "successful" often display not just lower psychopathy, but different traits, including **higher conscientiousness, planfulness, and goal-directedness**. These traits not easily explained by mere attenuation of psychopathy. This suggests that success is not just "less psychopathy," but rather psychopathic traits combined with compensatory adaptive characteristics (Lilienfeld et al., 2015a; Lilienfeld et al., 2016).

One more empirical finding that struck me at odds with this model is that the crucial executive functioning doesn't

seem to be much higher in subclinical psychopaths:

> However, given that executive functioning, as measured by the Porteus Maze Test, is not enhanced in participants with subclinical psychopathy (Widom, 1977), the relationship between successful psychopathy and executive functioning may be limited to certain capacities (e.g., flexible responding as opposed to planning) or variable across samples.

In short, attenuation alone appears insufficient. Additional self-regulatory strengths are typically present.

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2. Moderated Psychopathy Model

The moderated model argues that successful and unsuccessful psychopaths share largely similar core dispositions, but environmental and individual moderators shape life outcomes. Under this view, psychopathy is the same underlying liability, but its behavioral expression depends on buffering factors.

Proposed moderators have included intelligence, executive functioning, parenting quality, socioeconomic status, special talents, and physiological traits such as fear reactivity. Age is one of the more consistently supported moderators, given the well-established decline in antisocial behavior across adulthood.

Classic formulations, such as the fearlessness model, suggest that low fearfulness constitutes a core vulnerability that may lead either to antisocial outcomes under poor socialization or to adaptive high-risk roles under more favorable developmental conditions (Lykken, 1995).

Importantly, empirical support is uneven.

Intelligence shows weak and inconsistent moderating effects. <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: However, chapter 25 suggests otherwise, at least when it comes to violence. In a passage, the authors's state that *'subsequent studies have failed to detect a significant interaction between psychopathy and intelligence in predicting legal contacts, incarceration, or recidivism (Holland, Beckett, & Levi, 1981; Walsh, Swogger, & Kosson, 2004; Watts et al., 2016)*. But when I checked Watts' study, it suggested the opposite, saying '*we found some support for the hypothesis that intelligence served as a protective factor against antisocial behavior among individuals with high levels of psychopathy'*

Parenting effects, while present, are stronger for factor than factor 1.
As for SES, the few existing studies show it does not affect the development of conduct problems in youth with callous–unemotional traits (Barker, Oliver, Viding, Salekin, & Maughan, 2011), nor does it affect recidivism in individuals with psychopathic traits (Walsh & Kosson, 2007).

But executive functioning seems to matter a lot:

> Because executive function by itself does not appear to be associated with psychopathy (Dolan, 2012; Mol, Van Den Bos, Derks, & Egger, 2009), it may be a more promising moderator of success in psychopathy than intelligence.
> Indeed, unlike individuals who exhibit high levels of antisocial behavior (Morgan & Lilienfeld, 592 2000), successful individuals with psychopathy have superior executive functioning compared to controls, and unsuccessful individuals with psychopathy, as assessed by perseverative errors on the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (Ishikawa et al., 2001; cf. Valliant, Freeston, Pottier, & Kosmyna, 2003).

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3. Multiprocess (Dual-Process / Triarchic) Model

The most mechanistically precise account comes from multiprocess perspectives, which argue that psychopathy is not unitary but reflects partially independent dispositional systems.

Dual-process theory distinguishes between:

- a **defensive fear system deficit** underlying interpersonal–affective traits, and
- an **executive control deficit** underlying impulsive–antisocial traits.

Weak defensive (fear) reactivity contributes most directly to the interpersonal–affective features of psychopathy, including charm and manipulativeness, grandiosity, and emotional insensitivity with low empathy and nonanxiousness,

> From the standpoint of the two-process model, successful psychopathy can be seen as the product of a low fear disposition unaccompanied by significant cognitive–executive dysfunction. Such individuals would be expected to be highly self-confident, socially assertive, and persuasive, and lacking in sensitivity to the feelings of others due to reduced personal experiences of fear, anxiousness, and distress. Consistent with these suppositions, those high in fearless dominance are more likely to make selfishly profitable decisions in economic games (Yamagishi, Li, Takagishi, Matsumoto, & Kiyonari, 2014); they also have higher incomes (Benning, Patrick, Hicks, Blonigen, & Krueger, 2003) and ranks in financial occupations (Howe, Falkenbach, & Massey, 2014).

Conversely, unsuccessful psychopathy lacks executive control:

> From a two-process perspective, unsuccessful psychopathy (i.e., expressed as persistent criminal deviance leading to repeated convictions and periods of imprisonment) can be viewed as arising from salient cognitive–executive dysfunction (cf. Moffitt, 1993) and antisocial attitudes alloyed with low dispositional fear. Unsuccessful psychopathy is further likely if an individual experiences adverse events that engender social detachment, distrust, and hostility or even hatred toward others (Christian, Meltzer, Thede, & Kosson, 2017; Lynam, 1996; Patrick et al., 2009).

These two processes are theorized to underpin the two main psychopathy factors, and research has provided compelling support for this theoretical model, especially with the PPI factors that display stronger diverging associations (for reviews, see Patrick, 2007; Patrick & Bernat, 2009; Skeem, Polaschek, Patrick, & Lilienfeld, 2011).

The triarchic model formalizes this further by separating **boldness, meanness, and disinhibition** as partially independent trait domains (Patrick et al., 2009). Within this framework, boldness reflects adaptive tendencies, along with some aspects of maladaptive functioning (Skeem et al., 2011).
Boldness seems to generally adaptive, and especially so for certain niches:

> In the domain of work and business leadership, ratings of supervisors' boldness are positively associated with subordinates' satisfaction with supervisors and with their jobs; by contrast, meanness and disinhibition are negatively related to these variables (Sanecka, 2013). High levels of boldness have also been found in special military teams assigned to patrol remote regions of Greenland (Kjærgaard, Leon, Venables, & Fink, 2013) and to North Pole expeditions (Leon & Venables, 2015). These studies highlight the potential contribution of high boldness (or dispositional fearlessness) to success in the business world and to effective performance in extreme environments.

But Boldness + Meanness/Dishibition Is Problematic & Meanness + Dishibition is Worst

Individuals high in meanness and boldness can be expected to express their social and emotional poise in

exploitative–antagonistic ways, while boldness and disinhibition, could be similar Cleckley's conception of psychopathy as a "masked" pathology: seemingly emotionally well adjusted and socially adept but act out in reckless, irresponsible ways to gratify immediate desires, without regard for adverse consequences.

Disinhibition coupled with high meanness would be expected to manifest as severely aggressive externalizing behavior, ranging from psychological pressure or physical force to achieve selfish goals to sadistic acts of violence.

This structure provides the clearest modern explanation of "successful psychopathy": individuals high in boldness but relatively low in disinhibition are less likely to show chronic antisocial failure.

The authors' examples are Don Draper, Sonny from The Godfather, and Amy from Gone Girl.

🤔Lucio's 4th model: **Exchange Theory of Successful Psychopathy (Buffalmano, 2026)**

Lucio:
The Exchange Theory of successful psychopathy builds upon the Moderated Model, narrowing its focus on 'social and mate value' moderating traits, and linking it to the social exchange as a legal and socially-approved venue for selfish goal-achievement.

For example, an attractive, high-IQ, power-aware, strategically inclined and confident (potentially from narcissistic grandiosity) psychopathic individual can exchange his value and previously acquired resources to get what he wants, without having to resort to higher risk, win-lose coercion. Or, at least, he can 'limit himself' to more grey-area but rarely sanctioned forms of pressure tactics.
This doesn't make him any nicer, so it doesn't need to be 'less of a psychopath', as he can cooperate smartly and calculatively while being ruthlessly unempathic, but it makes him less likely to fall on the wrong side of the law.

An example may be Ashton Kutcher's character in the movie *Spread*, who lives off women's largesse thanks to his attractiveness, Machiavellianism, and seduction skills.

Basically, this says that **high-fitness psychopaths succeed because they can use the exchange game over the predatory game**, and gain even larger returns with lower risks. For certain traits such as attractiveness, this may be obvious, even if only subconsciously, also to lower IQ individuals.

This model probably works best in combination with the multiprocess theory, for individuals with intact executive

control, and is probably correlated with Machiavellianism.
That said, more ‘readily monetizable traits’ like looks, and especially for women, may lower the bar to the exchange game, even in the presence of higher disinhibition (ie.: exchange goods for sexual favors or companionship).

🤔Lucio’s 5th model: **Calibration Theory of Successful Psychopathy (Buffalmano, 2026)**

Lucio:
This model suggests that success is determined by the ability to **contextually regulate** psychopathic expressions.

The ‘calibrated’ psychopath uses **strategic compartmentalization**. He may apply ‘Meanness’ and ‘Boldness’ as tools in competitive environments, while switching to a simulated, functional, or even genuine ‘pro-social’ mode in cooperative environments (family/alliances) to protect his long-term interests and social support.

For example, they may be more ruthless at work, and be able to ‘switch off’ outside of it to improve intimate relationships and friendships.

As anecdotal example, even during tough divorce proceedings with first-wife Ivana, Trump once said he’d ‘never say anything bad about his wife because ‘she’s the mother of my children’. That preserved functional relationships with the ex-wife and his children, improving family ties and reputation.
But in another interview about his work approach, prodded about a vicious reputation, he asked if that was a compliment.
And while we may know little of Trump’s intimate relationships behind doors, that may at least signal the intention of two different modes.

Researcher Keith Campbell proposed something similar for the related trait of narcissism when he advised ‘use it publicly, not privately’ (Campbell, 2020).

Empirical Conclusions

Successful psychopathy is best understood not as a single coherent subtype, but as particular configurations of partially independent liabilities. Individuals combining fearlessness and social dominance with intact executive control are far less likely to follow the chronic antisocial pathway.

> Whether termed “fearless dominance,” “boldness,” or “weak defensive reactivity,” dispositional fearlessness in itself appears to be associated with a range of adaptive tendencies, as well as with certain deviant tendencies readily recognizable as psychopathic (e.g., narcissism, risk taking). As such, the presence of dispositional fearlessness in the absence of neurocognitive liability for externalizing problems is perhaps the clearest basis for successful psychopathy. Other combinations of bold, mean–callous, and disinhibitory tendencies may also be associated with successful, noncriminal outcomes—but further systematic research is needed to evaluate the ways in which these differing configurations of psychopathic attributes are expressed.

Disinhibition—closely aligned with the externalizing spectrum—appears to be the primary driver of persistent antisocial behavior and life dysfunction (Patrick et al., 2005; Skeem et al., 2011).

Finally, empirical research also points to several aspects that increase the odds of successful psychopathy including increased age, higher executive functioning, and physiological and neuroanatomical similarity to healthy controls as traits.

⍰♂Lucio’s Take: **Super useful chapter** ⍰⍰

Lucio:
From an applied perspective, this was one of the most insightful chapters.
I want to thank the authors first and foremost.

If I may offer one small suggestion: it could help to add a few more sentences clarifying how the field moved from the dual-process theory to the triarchic model. The connection may be obvious to researchers, and I was able to infer it and explore it further myself, but a bit more context—whether chronological or conceptual—could make the bridge clearer for non-research readers.

Learn more:

- **Effective psychopathy**, TPM’s take on ‘successful psychopathy’

PART VI CLINICAL AND APPLIED ISSUES IN PSYCHOPATHY

Chapter 25. Psychopathy and Aggression

Authors: Stephen Porter, Michael T. Woodworth, and Pamela J. Black

> CONCLUSION: Available research findings indicate a clear relationship between psychopathy and aggressive behavior. In fact, the case can be made that high-psychopathic individuals commit more nonsanctioned violence than any other members of society.

- **Proactive Aggression:** This form of aggression is selectively related to the **Meanness** (Callous-Unemotional) component of psychopathy, reflecting a lack of empathy and a willingness to exploit others.
- **Reactive Aggression:** While psychopathic individuals engage in reactive aggression, it is less central to the construct and is more strongly correlated with the **Disinhibition** and high-anxiety/secondary psychopathy subtypes.
- **Often it's a mix of reactive and proactive:** *some violent acts contain elements of both reactivity and instrumentality (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). For example, Barratt, Stanford, Dowdy, Liebman, and Kent (1999) found that only 20–25% of the aggressive acts coded in their sample could be classified as either strictly premeditated or impulsive. Therefore, researchers who study aggressive behavior must refine their operational definitions beyond simply "instrumental" or "reactive" in order to capture the complexities of motivations for violence.*
- **Factor 1 more premeditated, factor 2 more reactive:** *There is evidence that scores on Factor 1 of PCL-R psychopathy, reflecting emotional coldness and manipulativeness, are related to premeditated, unprovoked, instrumental aggression (Reidy, Zeichner, Miller, & Martinez, 2007; Reidy, Zeichner, & Seibert, 2011), whereas scores on Factor 2, reflecting impulsive–irresponsible tendencies and antisocial behaviors, are more highly correlated with reactive violence (Falkenbach, Poythress, & Creevy, 2008; Hecht, Berg, Lilienfeld, & Latzman, 2016; Reidy et al., 2007; Reidy, Zeichner, & Martinez, 2008).*
  - Same for sub-facets: *Furthermore, at the facet level, PCL-R Facets 1 and 2 have been related to premeditated aggression, and Facets 3 and 4 to impulsive aggression (Declercq, Willemsen, Audenaert, & Verhaeghe, 2012; Flight & Forth, 2007; Snowden & Gray, 2011; Walsh, Swogger, & Kosson, 2009). These findings are in line with the previously noted results indicating that instrumental violence is related to little, if any, emotional arousal during acts of aggression*
  - But factor 1 manipulates to appear more reactive: . *analyses from Porter and Woodworth (2007) revealed that the tendency to exaggerate the reactive quality of homicide offenses was strongly related to PCL- R Factor 1 scores, and unrelated to Factor 2 scores.*
- **Dishibition related to severe aggression:** *Marcus and Norris (2014) evaluated relations between subscales of the TriPM and sexual coercion using a vignette paradigm. They found that scores on all three TriPM scales (Boldness, Meanness, Disinhibition) predicted reported use of low-level sexually predatory tactics, and that Disinhibition was uniquely predictive of use of severe, potentially criminal coercive tactics.*
- **As a whole, psychopathy may protect against reactive aggression**: *the relationship between psychopathy and reactive violence is not as clear. It appears that total scores and Factor 2/SCI scores are often related to impulsive aggression, but to a lesser degree than Factor 1 scores correlate with instrumental aggression in an in-depth review of research on the relationship between psychopathy and reactive violence, Reidy, Shelley-Tremblay, and Lilienfeld (2011) concluded that existing evidence as a whole points to psychopathy as a protective factor against impulsive violence.*

- **Factor 2 more linked to criminal behavior, factor 1 to motivation**: *would appear that while Factor 2 behavioral features may have a more direct and obvious relationship with criminal offending and recidivism (e.g., Walters, 2003), the core emotional–interpersonal traits of psychopathy represented in Factor 1 may better help to explain the motivations that underlie the serious types of violent crimes that psychopathic offenders choose to commit (see also Skeem, Poythress, Edens, Lilienfeld,* 2011)
- **Psychopaths may enjoy aggression:** recent research indicates that psychopathic offenders may derive gratification or enjoyment from their violent behavior. Analyses of their sexual violence, in particular, suggest that both thrill- seeking and sadistic interests may play an important role in psychopathic crime. (⍰⍰♂ Lucio's note: I wasn't sure how thrill-seeking may have been at the same level of sadism alone or high meanness rather than being, for example, just a smaller added contributor)
- **Self-harm is mainly related to factor 2:** *existing research at this time suggests that self-harm is related mainly to impulsive–antisocial (Factor 2) features of psychopathy, as assessed by different inventories, it may be the case that offenders who exemplify the affective–interpersonal features of psychopathy engage in self-harmful behavior that is insincere and enacted to manipulate others*
- **Assessment in Different Populations:** The chapter reviews the manifestation of psychopathy-related aggression across various populations, including incarcerated adults and children with Conduct Problems.

Intelligence moderates violent expressions of psychopathy

The theory sounds logical:

> A potential moderator of the relationship between psychopathy and violence is intelligence; that is, more intelligent psychopathic individuals may be less inclined to act aggressively because they can use their cognitive resources to devise nonviolent means (e.g., conning and manipulation) to get what they want (Nijman, Merckelbach, & Cima, 2009; Vitacco, Neumann, & Wodushek, 2008).
> Less intelligent psychopathic individuals may resort to violence to compensate for their inferior abilities to manipulate others through language.

And the evidence seems to support it:

> As evidence for this, Heilbrun (1982) found that past violent offending in a sample of male prisoners was influenced by the interaction of intellectual level and self-reported psychopathic tendencies: Less intelligent offenders who scored high in psychopathy showed greater likelihood of having a history of impulsive violence than either more intelligent psychopathic offenders or less intelligent nonpsychopathic offenders.
> In line with this, Heilbrun and Heilbrun (1985) reported that the most dangerous individuals in a sample of offenders were those with the following characteristics: psychopathic, low IQ, socially withdrawn, and history of violence.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: However, chapter 24, although more related to criminality rather than simply violence, seems to suggest otherwise

However, a confounding variable is that IQ may better allow individuals to avoid conviction, rather than outright engaging in less aggression or violent behavior:

> Ishikawa and colleagues (2001) tested a community sample of 16 "unsuccessful" and 13 "successful" psychopaths (classified based on their PCL-R scores and whether they had incurred criminal convictions) on laboratory measures of autonomic stress reactivity and executive functioning (referring to the capacity for initiation, planning, abstraction, and decision making). Although differing in conviction history, the two groups had engaged in substantial and similar amounts of self-reported criminal behavior, including violent acts. Results from the laboratory assessment indicated that participants in the successful psychopathy group

> exhibited greater autonomic reactivity to emotional stressors and stronger executive functioning than those in the unsuccessful psychopathy group. The implication is that psychopathic individuals who are able to avoid apprehension and adjudication for their violent acts are those who possess intact capacities for planning and decision making.

Language patterns: past tenses, filler words, cause-effect subordinating conjunctions, & material goods

> Hancock, Woodworth, and Porter (2013) used automated language analysis methods to explore the descriptions of homicides provided by these offenders (…) it was posited that many aspects of language use operate below the level of conscious control (…)
> Two systems, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2011) and Wmatrix (Rayson, 2008), were used to code transcripts (…)
> high PCL-R offenders used more past-tense and fewer present-tense words in their narratives, as well more disfluencies (e.g., "uh" or "um") than low PCL-R offenders, suggesting both psychological distancing and an emotional detachment from their crimes. Furthermore, high-psychopathy offenders used more subordinating conjunctions (indicative of cause-and- effect thinking) such as "because," "since," and "so that," demonstrating that they provided more reasoning for their actions, consistent with greater instrumental motives. Tellingly, high psychopathic participants also were more likely to use language (even within the context of a murder narrative) reflective of material needs and gains, such as references to food, drink, and money.

Premeditation & instrumental vs. foolhardy: flawed predators

> Clinical and empirical observations suggest that some physically aggressive actions by high psychopathic individuals share these characteristics of premeditation and instrumentality (….) However, most of these psychopathic individuals have difficulty controlling themselves at times (…) in ways that contribute to detection, arrest, and incarceration (…) In this light, individuals of this sort can be seen as "flawed predators," frequently preying on others but unable to reliably control their behavior.

Psychopathy is linked with sexual deviancy and sadism

Sadism and psychopathy are different but correlated:

> Mokros and colleagues (2011) evaluated whether psychopathy as indexed by items of the PCL-R and sadism as indexed by diagnostic criteria from DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000) and the 10th edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10; World Health Organization, 2004) share a sufficient number of defining features that they can be considered the same construct. Based on analyses of data for a sample of 100 male sex offenders (50% of whom were considered sadistic), they concluded that psychopathy and sadism are distinct constructs, and that specific features of PCL-R psychopathy, such as the deficient affect (Facet 2) features, are actually predictive of sadistic behavior.

Psychopathic offenders had higher sadism scores:

> Holt and colleagues (1999) found that such traits were more common among violent psychopathic offenders than violent nonpsychopathic offenders in a maximum security prison. Violent and sexually violent offenders did not differ in their level of sadistic personality traits, leading the authors to argue that the traits were not tied specifically to sexual pleasure.
> (…)
> Consistent with this, Woodworth, Freimuth, and colleagues (2013) reported that participants from a large

> sample of high-risk sexual offenders who showed elevated PCL-R psychopathy scores were significantly more likely to have a sadistic paraphilia than participants who exhibited either low or moderate psychopathy scores.

Sadism was associated with facets 1 and 4 of the PCL-R:

> Robertson and Knight (2014) examined the relationship between general measures of sadism and psychopathy at the facet level, and found that a variety of measures of sadism (e.g., self-report scales, file review of past crimes) correlated with total scores on the PCL-R and scores on Facets 1 and 4.

Psychopathy is also associated with deviant sexual arousal:

> *studies have found higher PCL-R scores to be associated with sexual arousal in response to deviant visual and auditory stimuli. Specifically, available data indicate a significant but modest correlation (.21-.28) between PCL-R total scores and deviant sexual arousal (Barbaree, Seto, Serin, Amos, & Preston, 1994; Knight, 2010; Quinsey et al., 1995; Serin, Malcolm, Khanna, & Barbaree, 1994).*

And empirical evidence from actual homicides support this, as analyzed by Porter and colleagues (2003)

> homicides committed by psychopathic offenders (n = 18) showed significantly higher level of both gratuitous and sadistic violence than those committed by nonpsychopathic offenders (n = 20). Most psychopathic offenders (82.4%) had committed sadistic acts against their victims, compared to 52.6% of the nonpsychopathic offenders.

Somewhat related, Porter, Bhanwer, Woodworth, and Black (2013) found that psychopaths also have higher levels of schadenfreude:

> Results indicated that higher psychopathy scores (as measured by Paulhus, Neumann, Hare, Williams, & Hemphill's [2016] Self-Report Psychopathy Scale) were related to increased self-reported schadenfreude across all conditions, even after being primed to feel empathy.

Chapter 26. Psychopathy and Substance Use Disorders

Authors: Jarrod M. Ellingson, Andrew K. Littlefield, Alvaro Vergés, and Kenneth J. Sher

There is a significant and complex overlap between psychopathy and Substance Use Disorders (SUDs), driven primarily by shared vulnerability factors related to poor self-control and high sensation-seeking. The relationship is strongest for the **Disinhibition** facet of psychopathy (e.g., impulsivity, irresponsibility).

> Most studies to date have found significant associations between psychopathy scores and measures of substance use and SUDs in a wide range of samples, including criminal, community, and clinical samples across development stages (adolescents and adults). Regarding subdimensions of psychopathy, there seems to be a robust association between the impulsive–antisocial factor and substance involvement, but less consistent or null associations for the affective–interpersonal factor. In studies employing the lower-level facets, associations are somewhat less robust, with the impulsive lifestyle and antisocial facets showing larger associations than the affective or interpersonal facets.

- **Shared Etiology:** Both psychopathy and SUDs are related to a broad underlying construct of **Behavioral Disinhibition** and **externalizing proneness.**
  - **Disinhibition**: facets of psychopathy within differing inventories that relate most closely to disinhibitory psychopathology—namely, those reflecting impulsive nonplanfulness and reckless irresponsibility—have

demonstrated particularly strong associations with SUDs.
  - **Externalizing proneness:** Recent theoretical and factor-analytic work has suggested that a dispositional factor of externalizing proneness, reflecting shared variance among different forms of disinhibitory psychopathology, contributes to both psychopathy and SUDs.
- **Dishinibitory liability as the root?** *Theoretical work across disciplines has suggested that a dispositional factor, sometimes labeled "disinhibitory liability" (Vanyukov et al., 2012), entails general deficits in inhibitory control and proclivities toward social deviance (e.g., rule breaking), and confers risk for all externalizing disorders, including psychopathy and SUDs (e.g., Gorenstein & Newman, 1980; Iacono, Carlson, Taylor, Elkins, & McGue, 1999; Sher & Trull, 1994; Yancey, Venables, Hicks, & Patrick, 2013).*
- **Heritable 'behavioral under-control' as another measure for disinhibition**: *Krueger and colleagues (2002) demonstrated that reverse-scored constraint (i.e., a broad-based measure of disinhibition assessed via the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire; Tellegen, 1982; Tellegen & Waller, 2008) loaded on a general, highly heritable externalizing factor that also included measures of substance use and ASPD. This observation led to the conclusion that "personality and psychopathology are linked at an etiological level" (Krueger et al., 2002, p. 421). Consistent with this notion, evidence from the behavioral genetic literature suggests that the vast majority of the genetic correlation between alcohol dependence and conduct disorders is accounted for by variance in behavioral undercontrol, a broad- band measure of impulsivity (Slutske et al., 2002).*
- **SUDs are most associated with ASPD**: *The Epidemiologic Catchment Area study, which assessed DSM-III disorders, found that 83.6% of participants diagnosed with ASPD had a co-occurring lifetime SUD (Regier et al., 1990). In addition, rates of ASPD among participants diagnosed with lifetime SUDs ranged from 14.3% (alcohol) to 42.7% (cocaine).*
  - Impulsive-antisocial factor explains most of psychopathy's association with SUDs: *The most consistent finding has been a significant association of total psychopathy scores with SUDs that is entirely explained by the impulsive–antisocial factor (Blackburn & Coid, 1998; Blackburn, Logan, Donnelly, & Renwick, 2003; Hart, Forth, & Hare, 1991; Hemphill, Hart, & Hare, 1994; Reardon et al., 2002; Smith & Newman, 1990).*
  - Impulsive lifestyle stronger association: *Walsh and colleagues (2007) found a strong and robust association for PCL-R Factor 2 with substance dependence. However, the impulsive lifestyle facet of Factor 2 demonstrated stronger associations than the antisocial facet with lifetime symptoms of alcohol and illicit drug dependence in this male sample, and with substance use among female offenders in another study (Kennealy et al., 2007).*
- **Psychopathy and SUDs share common genetic & biology:** *converging evidence suggests that both are associated with common neural systems (e.g., PFC, ACC), biomarkers (e.g., P300, ERN), and genetic markers (e.g., MAOA, COMT, ANNK1, 5-HTT, CHMR2).*
- **Factor 1 less related**: *Regarding facets of Factor 1, the interpersonal facet was positively correlated with cocaine, but not other drug, dependence symptoms (Walsh et al., 2007). Furthermore, adjusting for the other PCL-R facets resulted in negative correlations between the affective facet and some (though not all) substance use measures in both studies (Kennealy et al., 2007; Walsh et al., 2007), consistent with negative association of this facet with participation in substance use treatment (Durbeej, Palmstierna, Berman, Kristiansson, & Gumpert, 2014).*
- **Peaks at 18-25YO and decreases later:** *Although some have highlighted the temporal stability of psychopathy, ASPD, and related personality constructs (e.g., Lynam & Gudonis, 2005), others have noted the sharp decline in antisocial behaviors as individuals transition from adolescence to adulthood (e.g., Blonigen, 2010). This so-called "age-crime curve" (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983) parallels the "maturing out" of substance-related pathology (Winick, 1962), which "appears to be primarily a disorder of late adolescence and young adulthood" (Sher & Gotham, 1999, p. 933). Thus, engagement in antisocial behaviors and addictive behaviors both appear to rise and fall during emerging adulthood (roughly ages 18–25; Arnett, 2000).*
  - **Decrease in novelty-seeking and increasing in reward-seeking**: *Blonigen, Littlefield, and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that, relative to individuals who persisted in antisocial behaviors, those who desisted from*

antisocial behaviors across ages 18–25 showed marked decreases in novelty seeking (a trait broadly related to impulsivity–behavioral undercontrol) and larger increases in reward dependence (a construct related to positive emotionality and negatively related to disinhibition).

- **Boldness:** Also contributes through sensation-seeking—a willingness to take risks and pursue novel, exciting experiences (including drug use).

Chapter 27. The Role of Psychopathy in Sexual Coercion against Women

Authors: Raymond A. Knight and Jean-Pierre Guay

Psychopathy is a robust predictor of sexual aggression and coercion, a relationship primarily driven by the affective and interpersonal features of the disorder. The lack of empathy and callous exploitation of others (Meanness) allows for the instrumental use of sexual violence without guilt, which is the defining characteristic of this link.

- **Rape is part of a general propensity towards antisociality and not 'specialized':** *These findings replicated prior research suggesting that the commission of rape can be characterized as part of a broader general propensity to act in an antisocial manner (Lussier, LeBlanc, & Proulx, 2005; Smallbone, Wheaton, & Hourigan, 2003). Likewise, the versatility of offense behavior found among rapists in these studies is consistent with the hypothesis that antisocial tendencies are pervasive among convicted rapists.*
  - Only child molesters 'specialize': *Examining the criminal records of 506 sex offenders being evaluated for sexual commitment, Harris, Smallbone, Dennison, and Knight (2009) found that sex offenders as a whole were versatile (criminal generalists), regardless of whether they were committed or determined not to be sexually dangerous and released back to prison to complete their sentences. Indeed, evidence for specialization was found only in the child molester subgroup.*
- **Sadism is part of psychopathic coercion:** *both the iterative, empirically driven revisions of the MTC rape typologies (Knight, 2010) and the generation of a SEM for the etiology of sexually coercive behavior against women (Knight & Sims- Knight, 2016) have yielded evidence across multiple samples for a covariation between facets of psychopathy and sadism in both archival ratings and self-report measures.*
  (…) the combined CM/Hypersexual trait showed substantial covariation with Sadistic fantasies (Knight, 2013; Sims-Knight, 2013).
  - Paraphilia and sadistic fantasies also linked: *recent studies that have examined the relation for psychopathy as a whole have continued to show evidence of covariation between total psychopathy scores and sadistic fantasies and paraphilias (e.g., Fischer, 2008; Hill, Habermann, Berner, & Briken, 2006; Woodworth et al., 2013).*
- **Sadism may be the 'upper end' of agonistic continuum:** s*upport for a reconceptualization of sadism as the extreme high pole of an agonistic continuum that extends from no sexually coercive fantasies or behaviors at the low end, through paraphilic coercive fantasies, to fantasies of controlling, bondage, and humiliation during sex, to fantasies of hurting a victim during sex, and finally to serious sadistic fantasies and behaviors (Knight, 2010; Knight, Sims-Knight, & Guay, 2013; Mokros, Schilling, Weiss, Nitschke, & Eher, 2014). The current exploration of only the extreme upper end of this continuum might mask important relations because of partial measurement and truncation of the full range of the construct. Indeed, some data suggest that different subdimensions of psychopathy may be differentially related to varying levels of the agonistic continuum (e.g., Liu, 2014; Sims-Knight, & Guay, 2011).*

Three lines of research highlight the link between psychopathy and

Three independent research-domains highlight that key symptomatic subdimensions of psychopathy play significant roles in rape:

> First, in the general criminal research literature, there were some indications of increased risk for sexual coercion among psychopathic criminals, and this risk was consistent with recent theoretical explanations of

> particular symptom subdimensions of psychopathy.
> Second, studies of incarcerated rapists revealed a high incidence of psychopathy, and the facets of psychopathy had emerged as critical elements in an empirically validated typological model that identified important individual differences among rapists. Moreover, psychopathy had been identified as an important predictor of sexual recidivism among convicted rapists.
> Third, in both offender and nonoffender samples, the symptomatic facets of psychopathy had been identified as traits that define critical paths in structural equation models of the etiology of sexual aggression against women.

Sexual coercion may be linked to short-term sexual strategies:

> evolutionary explanations for sexual coercion have also highlighted the importance of psychopathic tendencies. Most notably, it has been speculated that proclivities toward short-term relationships, high mating effort, and low parental investment on the part of psychopathic individuals (Quinsey & Lalumière, 1995), along with their use of short-term cheating strategies (Mealey, 1995), might coalesce into a high reproduction-rate (r-selection; Pianka, 1970) mating strategy that not only has some evolutionary advantages but also increases the probability of sexual aggression. Although the evidence for such theories remains tentative (Marcus, Sanford, Edens, Knight, & Walters, 2011), recent neurobiological research nonetheless supports the hypothesis that dysfunctions in brain regions that are key to emotional processing and morality judgments may allow psychopathic individuals to pursue this evolutionary strategy (Glenn & Raine, 2009). Moreover, such evolutionary speculation emphasizes the theoretical congruence between characteristics associated with psychopathy and those associated with rape.

Read more:

- **Investigative case study of psychopaths' sexual strategy**

The 3-path model to coercion

Knight and colleagues' improved Malamuth's original two-path Confluence Model (1991) with:

1. **Callous–Manipulative** latent trait (replacing hypermasculinity, it's a latent trait not from PPI/PCL-R, but from MIDSA and related to factor 1)
2. **Antisocial** latent trait pathway (added)
3. **Hypersexuality** (maintained)

This three-path model (callous-manipulative traits, antisocial tendencies, and hypersexuality) significantly improved predictive power and was replicated across criminal and noncriminal samples, adolescent and adult samples (Knight & Sims-Knight, 2003, 2004, 2011, 2016).

Independent laboratories have similarly found that psychopathy dimensions—particularly callousness, manipulation, impulsivity, and antagonism—covary with impersonal sex attitudes, sexual dominance, unrestricted sociosexuality, and higher sexual drive (Harris et al., 2007; Visser et al., 2010; Kastner & Sellbom, 2012; LeBreton et al., 2013; Jonason et al., 2009; Baughman et al., 2014; Carter et al., 2014), and there is a **strong covariation between Callous–Manipulative (CM) traits and Hypersexuality** (Johnson & Knight, 1998; Knight & Sims-Knight, 1999; Graham & Knight, 2017). Combining the two improves model fit (Knight, 2013).

Conceptually, the unifying thread between CM traits and hypersexuality appears to be a **primary reward focus** and disregard for secondary information—others' needs, long-term consequences, or social norms. This aligns with Newman's response modulation hypothesis (Newman & Baskin-Sommers, 2011), which posits an attentional deficit in psychopathy: once goal-focused, individuals fail to process peripheral inhibitory cues. This mechanism is distinct

from general executive dysfunction associated with antisocial behavior.

Neurobiological evidence supports this linkage. High self-centered impulsive psychopathy (PPI-Scl) predicts heightened mesolimbic dopamine recruitment in response to rewards (Buckholtz et al., 2010; Bjork et al., 2012). Brain regions implicated in reward processing (ventral striatum, anterior cingulate cortex) overlap with circuitry involved in sexual motivation (Stoléru et al., 2012). Structural and functional abnormalities in these regions are also documented in psychopathy (Kiehl et al., 2001; Birbaumer et al., 2005; Glenn & Raine, 2009). This suggests shared neurocircuitry underlying CM traits and hypersexual motivation.

The data aligns with reward-driven, sensation-seeking impulsivity (linked to CM and hypersexuality; instrumental aggression; reduced threat sensitivity) rather than affectively dysregulated and impulsive antisocial aggression (linked to antisocial behavior, negative emotionality, and reactive aggression.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: I wished for more of the source studies linking psychopathy to hypersexuality to be published. Some of them were papers presented at various conferences or unpublished manuscripts.

All 3 dark triads are related to sexual drive, and psychopathy is the highest

> Several studies have linked various measures of the Dark Triad traits (subclinical narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy; Paulhus & Williams, 2002) with a variety of measures of sexual behavior and fantasy. In a study of undergraduate students Jonason, Li, Webster, and Schmitt (2009) showed that the scores on the Dark Triad traits were positively related to having more sex partners, unrestricted sociosexuality, and a greater preference for short-term mates. In another study of college students, Baughman, Jonason, Veselka, and Vernon (2014) found that all three Dark Triad scales were related to sexual drive, with psychopathy showing the strongest relation. Testing an online sample recruited by a marketing company, Carter, Campbell, and Muncer (2014) found that scores on the Dark Triad correlated positively with both recreational sexual behavior and sexual desire for others for both males and females.

Different paths to impulsivity

There seem to be two different kinds of impulsivity:

1. **Reward-driven** ignoring secondary information when pursuing goals: It involves risk-taking, sensation-seeking, and focusing on getting what you want while ignoring consequences or other people's feelings.
2. **Emotion-driven**: It involves being sensitive to threats, getting overwhelmed by negative emotions, and losing control when upset.

The research suggests that hypersexuality and callous–manipulative/self-centered impulsive traits are linked more to the first type — the reward-driven, goal-focused impulsivity.

The authors argue that it's important to keep these two types separate, because they may explain different kinds of aggression. Psychopathy-related aggression may be more about the reward-driven, goal-focused type, while other aggression may be more about emotional dyscontrol.

They also criticize the triarchic model for mixing different kinds of impulsivity together under "disinhibition," and for separating manipulative traits into a different category. In their view, that blending hides important differences instead of clarifying them.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Interesting, I wished for more details on how they related to factors 1 and 2**

Lucio:
The two paths the authors suggest about impulsivity seem to relate to factor 1 and factor 2.

But then they say that both hypersexuality and Callous Manipulative (CM), more linked with factor 1, and Self-Centered Impulsivity (ScI), more linked with factor 2, appear to *both* covary both with the reward-driven impulsivity, while based on the previous chapters I expected ScI factor 2 to relate more with the emotion-driven impulsivity.

Maybe the use of CM is creating some confusion here as it may tap into both factor 1 and factor 2. Or factor 1 and/or factor 2 can share both types of impulsivity?

I'd welcome a clarification on this.

Chapter 28. Risk for Criminal Recidivism: The Role of Psychopathy

Authors: Kevin S. Douglas, Gina M. Vincent, and John F. Edens

> With some disclaimers, it is fair to state that psychopathy is an important and meaningful risk factor for subsequent antisocial behavior of many types, across many contexts, in many different types of people.

- **Moderate predictive validity for PCL-R***: in the "typical" settings (offenders, forensic patients, civil psychiatric patients) in which the PCL-R is used, there is support for a moderate-level association between psychopathy and recidivism, which is subject to moderating influences of differing types*
- **HCR-20 and LSI-R are better predictors of recidivism:** *in Gendreau and colleagues' (2002; see also Gendreau, Goggin, & Smith, 2003) meta-analysis, the LSI-R outperformed PCL measures substantially in predicting general recidivism, and modestly in predicting violent recidivism.*
  (…)
  Guy and colleagues showed similar bivariate effect sizes for the PCL-R/PCL:SV and HCR-20, but when both measures were included together in a regression model, the PCL-R/PCL:SV's predictive contribution dropped to near zero, whereas the HCR-20's contribution remained strong.

- **PPI also predicts recidivism despite not having criminal items:** *the items of the PPI are less strongly imbued with crime- and violence-specific content. Despite this, the pattern of associations for the PPI factors with recidivism parallel those for the PCL measures—with much stronger associations for its behavioral deviance (SCI) features than its interpersonal–affective (FD) features (see Marcus, Fulton, & Edens, 2013; Miller & Lynam, 2012).*
- **Boldness more unrelated to crime:** *Boldness (when operationalized as PPI-FD) tends not to be strongly related to antisocial behavior (Marcus et al., 2013; Miller & Lynam, 2012), although in one study it was found to interact with disinhibitory tendencies (as indexed by PPI-SCI) to predict predatory aggression (Smith, Edens, & McDermott, 2013).*

Factor 1 protects against IPV, factor 2 predicts it

> Conceptually, the two main factors of psychopathy might be expected to show opposing relations with some types of partner violence. Primary (affective–interpersonal) deficits might ironically protect against this type of aggression because of an absence of normal affectional ties, whereas the antisocial deviance component, which includes items reflecting impulsiveness and reactive aggression, would be expected to positively predict IPV. Studies of men in a correctional facility with a history of IPV (Hilton, Harris, Rice, Houghton, & Eke, 2008) or enrolled in treatment for domestic violence (Rock, Sellbom, Ben-Porath, & Salekin, 2013) have generally shown this to be the case.

Chapter 29. Treatment of Adults and Juveniles with Psychopathy

Authors: Devon L. L. Polaschek and Jennifer L. Skeem

The historic pessimism regarding the treatability of psychopathy (**therapeutic pessimism**) is not fully supported by empirical data, and high-quality, high-intensity interventions can demonstrate positive outcomes, especially for juveniles. The focus has shifted from "curing" the personality disorder to **managing the risk** and reducing antisocial behavior.

- **Challenging Therapeutic Pessimism:** *Before reviewing these findings, we contextualize work to be reviewed by noting that conclusions of "nothing works with psychopaths" echo broader conclusions reached prior to the late 1980s regarding the treatment of criminal offenders in general. Since that time, research by an influential group of Canadian psychologists has convincingly demonstrated that some treatments do indeed "work" to reduce risk for recidivism.*
- **Modest but important impact:** *In general, the more programs adhere to the RNR model's principles, the larger the reductions overall in reconviction risk. The impact on crime for those adhering to all three principles is modest but important, with reported effect sizes ranging from 0.15 to 0.34 (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Even an effect size of 0.15 is notable. For example, if 50% of untreated offenders had been reconvicted at follow-up, the corresponding rate for treated offenders given a 0.15 effect would be 35%—a relative reduction of more than 30%.*
- **RNR 3 principles:** *treatment programs for offenders yield the largest reductions in criminal behavior when they (1) target relatively intensive services toward higher-risk offenders (the Risk principle), leaving lower-risk offenders with little or no therapeutic attention, (2) focus treatment services on changing empirically documented risk factors for crime (e.g., criminal attitudes, substance abuse, impulsivity), termed "criminogenic needs" (the Need principle), and (3) deliver interventions in a manner that maximizes offenders' engagement in the treatment process and ability to use the treatment services to make changes (the Responsivity principle; Andrews et al., 1990; Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Bonta & Andrews, 2016).*
- **Intervention seems to work even with higher risk juveniles:** *Although it tends to be assumed that high-risk youth represent "the most hardened and least likely to respond to treatment" (Lipsey, Wilson, & Cothern, 2000,*

p.6), there is little support for this assumption. In fact, as compelling evidence to the contrary, Lipsey (2009) concluded from a meta-analysis of 548 controlled studies of programs for adolescent offenders published before 2002 that "there was no indication that there were juveniles whose risk level was so high that they did not respond to effective interventions" (Lipsey, Howell, & Kelly, 2010, p. 23). Instead, meta-analytic evidence indicates that core principles of effective correctional services for antisocial behavior—including the risk principle—generalize to young people (for a review, see Skeem et al., 2014).

- **Poor behavior during treatment doesn't mean 'not effective':** *although research indicates that offenders with high PCL scores tend to challenge the treatment process, the extant evidence shows they still profit in general from that treatment, and there is no support for the view that psychopathic traits per se pose any unique problems for treatment beyond features generally associated with high criminal risk.*
- **Group dynamics make a large difference in youth:** *Adolescents are also more driven toward risk-taking when in the presence of peers than when alone (see Steinberg, 2009). Juveniles with psychopathic features are not immune to such influences. Youth with pronounced psychopathic features are likely to be integrated into delinquent peer groups (Kimonis, Frick, & Barry, 2004), commit crimes in groups (Goldweber, Dmitrieva, Cauffman, Piquero, & Steinberg, 2011), obtain low scores on measures of resistance to peer influence (Thornton, 2012), and engage in antisocial behavior that is significantly predicted by peer delinquency (if modestly less so than those with low-moderate psychopathic features; Kerr, Van Zalk, & Stattin, 2012).1 The point is that juvenile offenders with psychopathic features are—first and foremost—juveniles.*
- **Factor 2 psychopaths attend more, but results were similar:** *They found that offenders classified into a subgroup reflecting secondary psychopathy attended treatment more reliably and showed higher treatment motivation than offenders classified into a primary psychopathy subgroup, but no differences between these groups were found on disruptive behavior or skill mastery, or on the proportion of group members judged to be "treatment successes"* (Poythress and colleagues, 2010, p. 396).
- **Focus alone may also help reverse some psychopathic deficiencies:** *treatment innovation efforts may also benefit from findings of recent neuroscience-informed research. For example, Dadds and colleagues (2006) demonstrated that observed deficits in recognition of fearful facial expressions were reversed for children with callous–unemotional traits when they were told to "pay attention to the eyes." This finding suggests that recognition of others' distress can potentially be remedied using a basic behavioral manipulation.*

Chapter 30. Legal and Ethical Issues in the Assessment and Treatment of Psychopathy

Authors: John F. Edens, John Petrila, and Shannon E. Kelley

"Psychopathy" is a term frequently used in court, raising debates because it lies at the heart of fundamental legal questions concerning the restraint of liberty (e.g., civil commitment), the imposition of the death penalty, and the reliability of expert testimony. The central ethical concern is the potential for the diagnosis to be misused, leading to a presumption of incorrigibility and disproportionate sentencing.

Chapter 31. Understanding, Assessing, and Addressing Psychopathy: A Coordinated Agenda

Authors: Dustin B. Wygant, Dustin A. Pardini, Abigail A. Marsh, and Christopher J. Patrick

The future of psychopathy research must move beyond simply documenting associations to focus on clarifying underlying etiological influences, refining assessment methods through a dimensional lens (like the Triarchic model), and developing more effective, targeted interventions. The agenda emphasizes integrating neurobiological data with phenotypic traits to advance a deeper and more practically useful understanding of the disorder.

- **The RDoC Framework to replace DSM:** t*he National Institute of Mental Health's (NIMH) Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) project (Cuthbert & Kozak, 2013), which seeks to establish a new classification system for mental illness based on neuroscientific knowledge of behavior, to replace the current DSM system. Specifically, the RDoC*

> *project calls for psychopathology researchers to investigate transdiagnostic symptom dimensions rather than specific disorders, in terms of core biobehavioral processes (i.e., positive affect, negative affect, cognition, social interaction, arousal/bodily regulation) quantified using variables from multiple domains of assessment (e.g., genetic, molecular, neuroanatomic, physiological, behavioral, self-report).*

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Psychopaths go For Quantity Rather than Quality

> They tend to prize quantity over quality in intimate relationships, viewing romantic encounters as sources of fun (Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010) rather than as sources of commitment and intimacy (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010).
> To the extent that psychopathy has been linked to communal success, it has mainly been in relation to having multitudinous (typically short-term) sexual partners (Hare, 2003; Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Jonason, Valentine, Li, & Harbeson, 2011). Though this kind of sexuality may theoretically result in greater reproductive success (Nadelhoffer & Sinnott-Armstrong, 2010; Wiebe, 2004), it has yet to be established empirically whether this is actually the case (Gladden, Figueredo, & Jacobs, 2009; Glenn, Kurzban, & Raine, 2011). As successful as individuals with psychopathic traits may be in poaching others' sexual partners, they also appear more vulnerable to having their own sexual partners poached, yielding a net neutral effect on their reproductive fitness (Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010).

Also read:

- Psychopath's sexual strategy: a deep dive

> Psychopaths' Sexual Strategy: Marauders of Sex

Conscientiousness Differentiates Successful vs. Unsuccessful Psychopaths

From chapter 12.
Note that this is based on personal reflections based on personal experience, not measured or lab-tested, but logic and studies (quote right after) seem to back it up:

> Mullins-Sweatt, Glover, Derefinko, Miller, and Widiger (2010) surveyed clinical psychology professors, criminal attorneys, and forensic psychologists, asking them if they had ever personally known a psychopathic person who had been successful in his or her psychopathic endeavors—and if so, to characterize the person using trait descriptors. Persons so identified exhibited the antagonistic traits of deceitfulness, arrogance, manipulativeness, lack of remorse, callousness, and egocentricity, but they were high rather than low in Conscientiousness, which is associated with a number of positive life outcomes (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006).

However, studies seem to back it up:

> Conversely, studies have also demonstrated a significant negative relationship between Conscientiousness and a history of arrests (e.g., Clower & Bothwell, 2002). The lack of deliberation, rashness, and incompetence that characterizes low Conscientiousness could very well contribute to an increased likelihood of being arrested and convicted for one's criminal behavior.

Primary Psychopathy as a Deception Strategy

> Mealey (1995) advanced an evolutionary psychology analysis of psychopathy in which primary psychopathy reflects a survival strategy that relies on cheating or defecting from groups after signaling cooperation. Based on Mealey's arguments, it follows that the mechanism for this survival strategy is conserved in the human genome and would occur at similar prevalence in all human populations. In contrast, secondary psychopathy reflects an adaption to environments with limited resources. In such situations, there will be a higher incidence of individuals employing a cheating strategy to gain an advantage when competing for resources, and such individuals would be situated disproportionately in the lower SES sector of society, where access to resources is limited.

Logarithmic Effects of Psychopathy?

Reviewed in chapter 15, *The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development* shows large differences between those scoring 10 or more on the PCL:SV and the remainder of the study participants:

PCL:SV score / N.	Mean ASPD	Mean convictions	% convicted
0–2 (162)	0.21	0.29	20.5
3–5 (74)	1.05	1.68	56.8
6–9 (35)	2.14	3.83	65.7
10+ (33)	5.76	—	97.0

Lack of Conscience Alone Isn't 'Evil', But Facilitates it

From Lykken's chapter 2:

> Unlike the ordinary sociopath, the primary psychopath has failed to develop conscience and empathic feelings (…) This essential peculiarity of the psychopath is not in itself evil or vicious, but, combined with perverse appetites, or with an unusually hostile and aggressive temperament, this lack of normal constraints can result in an explosive and dangerous package.

Boldness Needs Two More Traits for Antisocial Behavior

From Fawles' chapter 5:

Boldness involves reward-seeking without fear, often linked to arrogance, defiance, emotional insensitivity, and excitement seeking. To explain antisocial and "mean" behaviors, at least two additional traits are needed: (1) lack of concern for others, reflecting poor attachments and low empathy, which can lead to exploitativeness, proactive aggression, guiltlessness, and mild callousness; and (2) antagonism, or active hostility toward others, promoting cruelty, destructive aggression, rebelliousness, and severe callousness.

However, fearlessness is a risk factor on its own:

> Pardini (2006) presented findings from a study of adjudicated juvenile males and females, indicating that fearlessness represents a risk factor for callousness and severe violence. A mediational model revealed

> evidence of a path from fearlessness to lack of punishment concern to callousness to severe violence. Thus, fearfulness contributed to callousness through its association with lack of concern for punishment, and callousness in turn was predictive of increased violent behavior. Findings from this study provide compelling evidence for fearless temperament as a risk factor for meanness.

Dishibition also plays a role:

Dishinhibition + Low Fear

With good parenting and attachment, normal Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS), and the emergence of empathy and conscience, fearlessness can look similar to boldness from the triarchic model.
However, boldness is still likely to include some degree of narcissism, thrill seeking, and lack of emotional sensitivity (Skeem et al., 2011, p. 106), with a tendency for self-interested, mildly callous pursuit of rewards.

Fearlessness accompanied by a weak BIS, and thus a lack of behavioral restraint, would make negative developmental trajectories much more likely.

Is Psychopathy Even a Unitary Construct?

From chapter 8, reflecting on the lack of correlation between factor 1 and factor 2 in the PPI (contrary to the PCL-R's stronger correlation):

> FD and SCI were largely orthogonal (uncorrelated) in Benning and colleagues' (2003) analyses, a finding buttressed by a subsequent meta-analysis (Marcus, Fulton, & Edens, 2013; see also Malterer, Lilienfeld, Neumann, & Newman, 2010). Given that many or most authors regard psychopathy as a classical syndrome, that is, as a set of covarying features, this surprising finding raises intriguing questions about the validity of the boldness construct and, perhaps more provocatively, the nature of the psychopathy construct itself.

And later, on how this concept surprised a field that believed in the syndromal nature of psychopathy:

> This assumption appears to be widely held in the psychopathy literature. For example, Hare (1993) wrote that "psychopathy is a syndrome—a cluster of related symptoms" (p. 34; emphasis added). Nevertheless, the assertion that psychopathy is syndromal is challenged by findings that (1) the lower-order and higher-order dimensions of several well-validated self-report psychopathy measures, including the PPI/PPI-R (Lilienfeld & Andrews, 1996) and at least one other self-report psychopathy measure, namely, the EPA (see Few et al., 2013), do not display a consistent pattern of positive manifold (i.e., uniformly positive interrelations among subscales); and (2) two major factors of the and PPI and PCL-R show opposing associations with measures of internalizing psychopathology.

The authors propose (Lilienfeld, 2013; Lilienfeld & Fowler, 2006) that psychopathy is a "compound variable," a constellation of largely independent subtraits that combine to form a meaningful trait complex (Berry, Sackett, & Wiemann, 2007), also called "emergent traits" (Hough & Schneider, 1996).

If this analysis is sound, they say, the answer to whether psychopathy is a true syndrome depends on how one defines psychopathy. When the term refers to ASPD and related models of largely "unsuccessful" psychopathy—highlighting disinhibition and strong affective detachment—psychopathy does appear syndromal. However, when referring to Cleckley's conception and similar models of largely "successful" psychopathy that emphasize boldness as central, psychopathy does not qualify as a classical syndrome, because boldness shows little relation to the other core psychopathy features (Marcus et al., 2013).

QUOTES

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Hare review of the PCL-R checklist

Hare has a financial interest in the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R), as he receives royalties from its use. A financial stake does not automatically imply bias, but it is a well-known source of potential bias, even if unconscious.

Past behavior, including responses to criticism and alleged attempts to block publication of critical research may even lend credibility to possible bias as they appear defensive of the PCL-R.

Cues to Hare's Defensiveness of PCL-R

I had first noticed some defensiveness in Hare's response to Ronson's book '*The Psychopath Test*'.

Then from chapter 28 of this handbook:

> in Gendreau and colleagues' (2002; see also Gendreau, Goggin, & Smith, 2003) meta-analysis, the LSI-R outperformed PCL measures substantially in predicting general recidivism, and modestly in predicting violent recidivism. **Hemphill and Hare (2004; see also Hare, 2003) sought to rebut these findings on methodological grounds**, and reanalyzed most of the studies from Gendreau and colleagues' meta-analysis that directly compared the LSI and the PCL. Although their reanalysis yielded markedly different results regarding the relative superiority of the LSI, neither meta-analysis reported statistical tests of incremental validity for the two measures.

And linked to potential bias, Hare also seems to actively promote the PCL-R efficacy.
Quoting from chapter 30:

> It is also asserted that "most clinicians who participate in this [in-house] training should have little difficulty in conducting reliable PCL-R assessments" (Hare, 2003, p. 18), although we are aware of no published research specifically examining the efficacy of any particular training program.

Many researchers avoid speaking with absolutes or sounding too self-assured, and would rather quote evidence to back up strong claims. It's noteworthy that Hare seems to express such strong confidence in his PCL-R without backing it up with credible research.

Criticism of PCL-R Only Appears In Other Chapters

For example, from chapter 13:

> Hare assumed a unitary model of psychopathy, so the process of pruning the initial item pool into the final PCL item set led to the exclusion of most of Cleckley's items related to positive adjustment (because they reduced internal consistency) and to the inclusion of items more explicitly related to criminal behavior (due to higher correlations with traits associated with social deviance; Patrick, 2006). As a consequence, there was some drift away from the Cleckley prototype, such that the PCL-R appears to index a construct more similar to the severe ASPD-subtype conception of psychopathy. For example, in prisoner samples, the prevalence "of ASPD is commonly 50%, whereas the prevalence of prisoners meeting the diagnostic cutoff for psychopathy using the PCL-R is often 25%, with nearly all of the PCL-R—defined psychopaths nested within those who meet criteria for ASPD (Hare, 1996, 2003).

Deprioritizing Cleckley's Accounts For More Empirical Evidence?

In some passages, I felt like Cleckley's original descriptions were used to justify or explain more modern theories, including providing a rationale for the concept of boldness in the triarchic model.
For example:

> boldness maps largely onto what Cleckley described as the "mask" of superficially healthy adjustment (but see Miller & Lynam, 2012, for a 183 dissenting view)
> (…) Moreover, noteworthy elements of boldness can be found in several of Cleckley's other criteria for psychopathy.

These notes are interesting and do add some value.
However, I worried that Cleckley's observations may not have too large an impact on modern theories, and that some concepts weren't also thought out to retrofit Cleckley's original accounts.
I'd rather the field move and rely on empirical findings alone, instead.

Suggestions for the Editor and Authors

Starting from a position of excellence, these are simply ideas that could make an already strong handbook even more to an audience such as myself:

Thematic consolidation by chapter-topic

Let me preface this that this book is already doing this well, and better than many other handbooks I've studied.

That said, there may be some extra room to make each chapter even tighter around a specific topic, and avoid repeating the same information in other chapters.

For example, chapter 7 on Callous-Unemotional traits could combine with chapters 19/20 on children and adolescents.
Various mentions to DSM could also be combined into Chapter 12 only.

And various mentions to Ckleckley and his pioneering work could be omitted from some places, epscially in light of the more recent findings available today.

This could tighten the book around stronger, core chapters, and free up enough space to then:

Cover some basics

- **A clear comparison between major diagnostic tools (ie.: PPI vs PCL-R)**, discussing the different items, forensic vs. non-forensic use, and why Factors 1 and 2 correlated in the PCL-R, but not in the PPI. Understanding this for example helped me evaluate whether antisociality is truly a core psychopathic feature rather than an artifact of PCL-R
- **Brief primers on commonly cited physiological markers** such as 'fear-potentiated startle' and skin conductance, explaining how they are measured and why they matter (at first I wondered why it's startle *potentiation* than matters, rather than simple startle response)

Provide a 'researcher-community' overview

Some of us non-researchers turn to handbooks for an integrated overview of the full literature in a single volume. And it would add immense value to know where the broad research community stands on certain open and debated issues.

For example, do most researchers today believe that antisociality is a core component of psychopathy? Do most researchers consider PPI a better measurement than PCL-R? Do most researchers prefer the triarchic model over

factor 1/factor 2 from PCL-R? Or do they regard the PPI's factors as better descriptors of psychopathy as a whole, not limited to prison populations?

I am aware there may not be an easy quantitative metric to capture field-wide consensus. However, even general impressions from well-positioned researchers, for example cautiously presented in a side box, would add substantial practical value for readers trying to understand where the field currently stands.

Clarify the role of IQ as a moderator for antisociality/violence

I was interested in this area of research and was first surprised by chapter 24's findings that IQ didn't seem to have a stronger moderator effect.

However, Chapter 25 then seemed to suggest a stronger role of IQ in moderating violent behavior, even as it ends by implying it may be due to better *evading* conviction rather than not engaging in it.

Chapter 24 instead seems to downplay the role of intelligence in moderating antisocial behavior for successful psychopathy (evidence for model 2 of successful psychopathy). Even if IQ helps evade conviction, from an amoral point of view, that would still boost the case for 'successful' psychopathy at least from an individual fitness point of view.

REVIEW

The *Handbook of Psychopathy* is one of the most comprehensive and rigorous syntheses of modern psychopathy research to date, and it provided an important empirical foundation for our articles and lessons on psychopathy.

I am grateful to the authors for their rigorous work and look forward to following their progress as they continue to move the field forward.

Is The 48 Laws of Power Evil? A Clinical Analysis

Lucio Buffalmano · 13 April 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Robert Greene's *The 48 Laws of Power* is often defended by fans as a neutral observation of history or a necessary defensive manual.

At The Power Moves, we don't stand for comfortable lies.
We've read Greene closely, analyzed the book's tone and structure, and taught power literacy to thousands who went on to achieve their goals while staying honorable. Short verdict first: **yes, The 48 Laws of Power contains highly manipulative elements and, by our definition, leans toward what we classify as 'evil'**. Below, we show why it is so.

Let's dive in.

This is a moral-free analysis, not a moral prescription
We provide evidence that the book is manipulative and skewed towards evil-making, without suggesting the book is 'bad' or that it should be 'good'.
⍰⍰ For the complete overview in one single place, see the main 48 Laws of Power guide

Contents

- Is The 48 Laws of Power Manipulative?
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  - 4. It's about psychology – no, it's about dark psychology
  - Own It, Quick Making Excuses

- In Sum: 100% Manipulative, 80% Evil
  - FAQs
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Is The 48 Laws of Power Manipulative?

The TPM Manipulation Model defines manipulation as:

> Manipulation is a form of influence that disguises objective truth for selfish ends, and can be costly to the receiver.

Based on this definition, it's clear that ***The 48 Laws* is manipulative** because Greene's recipe for power *revolves* around deception for selfish ends, aimed at creating win-lose exchanges, and with a high likelihood of harming the receiver.

Important elements that differentiate between persuasion and manipulation are also intention, such as if one manipulates in bad faith, and consideration towards the target, such as if one doesn't care about harm. *The 48 Laws of Power* shows no consideration for the targets and instructs in bad faith.

Take a few core laws as examples:

Law of Power	Why Manipulative
Conceal Your Intentions	a directive to lie systematically. If it wasn't clear enough from the title, Greene instructs: "*Keep people off-balance and in the dark, Guide them far enough down the wrong path, envelop them in enough smoke*"
Pose as a Friend, Work as a Spy	This is straight-up social engineering. And it's not even goal-based, as Greene seems to promote this as a baseline behavior when he writes, '*There is no occasion that is not an opportunity for artful spying.*'
Discover Each Man's Thumbscrew	Greene instructs to find insecurities because "*it is a thumbscrew you can turn to your advantage*". This is predatory, probably emotionally manipulative, and potentially even sadistic vexing of others

And these aren't outliers, either. The entire book is laced with imperatives like "Get others to do the work for you, but always take the credit" (Law 7) or 'Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victims'. If this isn't manipulation, then what is it?

Is The 48 Laws of Power Evil?

Let's first define 'evil' for a fair assessment:

> Evil is a selfish and predatory approach that sees others as means to an end, without a preference for win-win outcomes, and coupled with lack of empathy, care for others' well-being, guilt, and remorse

Now, based on this definition, ***The 48 Laws of Power* is evil because it prescribes an amorally selfish path to success while ignoring others' well-being**, without adding caveats for the human costs, and while ignoring potentially more effective win-win alternatives.

Greene's book is goal and power oriented, amoral, and without any compunction for others. If anything, *The 48 Laws of Power* may be more evil than a purely amoral approach because an amoral approach would include equally or potentially more effective genuine self-development and exchange; Greene's book lean more on win-lose and predation, instead.

This is also why *The 48 Laws* doesn't work that well in real life. It's because an effective approach would include self-development and smart cooperation.
These approaches are either underdeveloped or completely absent. Geeene himself suggested as much when he said that his follow-up book *Mastery* was to remediate this issue.

Evil is the Book's Main USP

The more it shocks, the more it sells

The book is popular in large part *because* the laws are framed as offensive and evil.

If you skip the "evil" frame, what's left? Valid but much blander advice like "Master the art of timing" (Law 35). Or purge the evil framing, and you get platitudes like 'consider your costs and returns before committing' (Law 20) or 'hire based on competence, not friendship'.

Is Robert Greene Evil?

No, Robert Greene is not evil. He *authored* a book that is inherently antisocial, but books do not necessarily represent an author's beliefs, values, or character.

Greene is on record saying that he wrote *The 48 Laws* because he was tired of the hypocrisy of naive self-help and wanted to call it out.

And his approach was sound. To correct cultural trends, it can be helpful to grab attention and go extreme in the other direction to rebalance things more quickly.
Greene went extreme into the dark side to 'average out' self-help total lack of 'darker side'. And the Messianic tone and marketing, he grabbed and diverted attention to a new course-correcting paradigm.

The need for 'correcting' general self-help is something we also share with Greene, and he did a masterful job at it.

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Greene comes across as an ethical, values-driven individual**

Lucio:
In his interviews and videos, Greene often comes across as a thoughtful, ethical, and even openly vulnerable individual, including when discussing his stroke recovery and the importance of empathy.

In his criticism of other manosphere influencers, he also shows a preference for win-win, a distaste for dark-triad behavior, and a philosophy that rejects tribalism in favor of humanism—something I also largely agree with.

Read more:

- **Robert Greene review**: pros and cons of Greene as an author who is low in empirical evidence, but high in intuition
- **Naive self-help**: why it fails ambitious men

The Weakness of Denying

Denying that *The 48 Laws of Power* is manipulative is common, but unconvincing at best.

It's:

- **Weak critical thinking**, and failure to appreciate reality (funny, if someone claims to enjoy the book for its 'realness')
- **Manipulative denial**, including an unintended gaslighting effect and self-manipulation (funny, doing that on a book about manipulation)
- **Virtue-signaling**, out of concern for looking bad if they're reading, enjoying, or advocating for a manipulative book

To be clear, exceptions always apply. Some readers do extract defensive insights from the book, and they're truly well-meaning.

But some others may gain by confronting the more uncomfortable truth.
Greene may say the denial betrays their own shadow, the repressed cunning and ambition the book awakens.
But we prefer empirically supported psychology, and cognitive dissonance may be at play. Admitting the book is

manipulative forces people to face their own darkness. So instead, they rationalize and virtue-signal with 'it's history', 'it's defensive', or 'it's about how you apply' (implying they apply it 'well').

Let's now review some common 'denial of the obvious':

1. "But Greene is only describing history" — no, it's clearly *prescriptive*, not descriptive

You'll often see the line, including from the author: *the book is simply describing power dynamics.* That's false for three reasons:

1. **Prescriptive tone:** Greene doesn't write saying 'historically some leaders did X'. He writes with imperatives
2. **Structured as 'rules to follow':** The book presents its maxims as laws to follow for those seeking power. The book provides advice on how to apply the maxims, not merely how they appeared in history.
3. **Frame of effectiveness:** The examples emphasize effectiveness and mimicry, not critical context

Here's the difference if it's not immediately clear:

Prescriptive	Descriptive
Crush your enemies totally	Historically, leaders who attacked without scoring a dominant victory sometimes stoked revenge-seeking (ie.: WWI and Germany)
Conceal your intentions	Hiding intentions prevents competitors from undermining and out-strategizing you, but over-concealment in close relationships can undermine trust

2. "You can use the laws defensively" — the book is written as *purely offensive*

First off, readers can use the book for self-defense since knowledge of offense also empowers defense. However, **the book is written purely as an offensive guide.**

Here's the difference if not immediately obvious:

Actual 'laws'	Defensive framing
Keep others in suspended terror	Some despots try to instill fear to keep you subjugated
Conceal your intention	Don't always fully trust others in competitive settings: they have an incentive to lie and mislead you
Pose as a friend, work as a spy	Be careful of friends who ask personal information, but share little. Some of them may be looking for intel or leverage over you

3. It's about "understanding power" — no, it focuses on defection *only*

The book helps to understand *some* aspects of power. And thanks to its popularity and its anti-naive focus, it's the first step into power-awareness for many.

Here's the difference:

Promoting Defection	Understanding Power
Keep others in suspended terror	Suspended terror works with absolute power and disempowered followers who can't quit or organize revolts. It risks defection and revolts when these conditions aren't met
Crush your enemies totally	It's best not to wound vindictive and powerful foes who can inflict damage. But smaller attacks or power moves can signal dominance, instill fear, and divert their resources into defense
you have more to fear from friends than from enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them.	Friends & allies are power multipliers. Look for cooperation opportunities, but be careful because the tighter the cooperation, the larger the defection risks. Always have contingency plans and fallback options.

An analytical treatment of power is broad, covering both pros and cons of different strategies. It would teach:

- **Costs and benefits of both cooperation and defection**, including how to create alliances while minimizing the risks
- **The benefits of honorable behavior (ie, credit-giving)**, a proven path to 'prestige-based status'. For example, giving credit retains and motivates talent
- **Psychological benefits of honorable behavior**, including higher self-esteem for many

The truth is that cooperation is a foundational aspect for any large accomplishment. Look around, all the greatest empires and accomplishments have been cooperative endeavors. Cooperation builds empires and alliances maintain them. But Greene includes none of that in *The 48 Laws*.

4. It's about psychology – no, it's about dark psychology

Applied dark psychology refers to psychological principles and dynamics to gain power and control over others, and it's heavily associated with manipulation dynamics.

In general, and unlike psychology, dark psychology focuses not on general human nature, but zooms in on the more competitive, selfish, and negative aspects, without considering the 'brighter' and more cooperative aspects.

Fans say that the book describes reality, but at most, it describes only one side of reality. The *dark* side.

Dark focus-only	Psyhcology
Self-interest runs the world	Living creatures are self-interested, but that self-interest can be expressed through cooperation. Humans also developed a sense for moral and ethics, often preferring to 'do the right thing'
Friends resent you and will betray	Many people are calculative, and the odds of betrayal increase with its benefits. However, people differ in their likelihood of betraying

With this distinction in mind, the book isn't about 'understanding psychology', which would include the evolution and psychology of cooperation, free-riding detection and punishment, and the evolution of morality.

Being charitable, one could say that *The 48 Laws* focuses on dark psychology only. But it doesn't present a broad overview of dark psychology either, so it's more like a selection of dark psychology tactics.

Own It, Quick Making Excuses

Quit the self-defense and untruthful claim. While it's tempting to rationalize the book's content to avoid the manipulator label, accepting the book for what it is—a manual on deceptive influence—is the first step toward true power literacy.

Its manipulativeness may as well be its strength, focusing on one thing only, ruffling feathers, and providing an important wake-up call for many too-naive men.

In Sum: 100% Manipulative, 80% Evil

Based on the TPM framework, the book scores as fully manipulative and highly evil.

It's not *fully* evil since the book's offensive mode is *instrumental*, in that it creates harm while seeking to achieve goals, but it doesn't harm for harming's sake.

FAQs

Is The 48 Laws of Power Evil?

The book is approximately 80% evil. Based on the TPM framework, "evil" is defined as a selfish, predatory approach that views others merely as means to an end, lacking empathy and concern for others.
The 48 Laws of Power qualifies as "evil" because it prescribes an amoral path to success that ignores human costs and omits equally effective, prosocial alternatives like cooperation and self-development. It is categorized as **instrumental evil**—harming others to achieve a goal—rather than sadistic evil (harming for pleasure).

Is The 48 Laws of Power Manipulative?

Yes. According to the TPM definition of manipulation, *The 48 Laws of Power* is **100% manipulative**. The book meets the clinical definition of manipulation because many of its laws instruct readers to disguise objective truths for selfish ends, often at a high cost to the receiver.

Is Robert Greene evil?

No. While Robert Greene authored an inherently antisocial book, he is not an evil person. Greene has stated that the book's extreme tone was a deliberate **course-correction** against 'naive self-help'.
Therefore, the book is a strategic tool for attention and paradigm-shifting rather than a reflection of the author's personal moral character.

Alternative: Effective Machiavellianism

Effective Machiavellianism combines manipulation know-how with cooperation and win-win because they're both important for different contexts and goals.

If your aim is results — money, influence, freedom —, Effective Machiavellianism adapts amoral strategies to competitive settings *and* appreciates the possibility of win-win and genuine relationships for a higher life quality.

Honorable Machiavellianism is similar, but adds the preference for win-win, distaste for cheating and lying, and the drive to add value.

Power University teaches both: ruthless effectiveness, and how to achieve everything you want while staying honorable.

Check Power University

Successful Psychopathy: A Strategy Guide for Ambitious Men

Lucio Buffalmano · 20 April 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The "Successful Psychopath" is often described as having stress immunity and fearless traits with high executive control to thrive in leadership, crisis, and competition.

However, that's a baseline, and at TPM we prefer a more systematic approach that maximizes personal power and the odds of success.

This article outlines TPM's *strategic psychopathy*: the maximization of traits and strategies to deliver *effective psychopathy*, a system for repeatable and sustained success.

Core principle: Effective Psychopathy is based on calibration to context
For many psychopaths, extreme or 'always-on' expressions often turn maladaptive. It's calibration + 'optimum balance' that unlocks higher levels of effectiveness.

Baseline 'successful psychopathy'	TPM Effective Psychopathy
Affective Detachment: undermines long-term bonds; eventually feels "robotic" or "off" to others.	**Strategic Empathy**: on and off switches and 'compartmentalization' gets the best of both worlds
Ruthlessness can be good in business but burns bridges and triggers retaliation	**Selective ruthlessness** and compartmentalization calibrate to context
Zero stress = less preparation and lack of 'clutch performance'	**Performance arousal**: Selective & balanced pressure provides hyper-focus
Fearless approach-orientation often ignores or underestimates risks	**Bold utilitarianism** for outcome-maximization planning + bold execution
Superficial charm works for first impressions but loses appeal over time	**Power + warmth** attracts (prestige) and earns for long-term social power
Grandiose confidence: miscalibrated + poor planning = lower results	**Calibrated confidence**: strong self-belief grounded in reality and feedback

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- Phase I: Building The Engine
  - Develop Unshakable Self-Belief
  - Develop Boldness
  - Adopt Utilitarian Thinking (Bottom Line-Based Rationality)
  - Grow Strategic Detachment (Emotional Non-Reactivity)
  - Master 'Mission Mode' for Strategic Ruthlessness (Compartmentalization)
  - Use Strategic Extraversion ('Social Performance Mode')
- Phase II: Neutralizing the Liabilities
  - Control Disinhibition
  - Boost Conscientiousness
  - Develop a Long-Term Time Horizon
  - Optimize Decision-Making: Focus on Risks, Not Just Rewards
  - Build Your "Moral Anchor" (Self-Imposed Rules)
- Phase III: Sustained Power & Success
  - Use Power to Underwrite Cooperation, Not To Force It ('Pull Approach')
  - Calibrate Calm & Detachment: Welcome 'Performance Arousal'

  - Maintain Win-Win Utility: Long-Term Alliances
  - Find Meaning & a Mission: Legacy & Curing the Void
- Checking the Stats

Phase I: Building The Engine

This phase focuses on cultivating the more adaptive core psychological mechanisms of primary psychopathy (low fear, stress immunity, calculated charm) without maladaptive behavior.

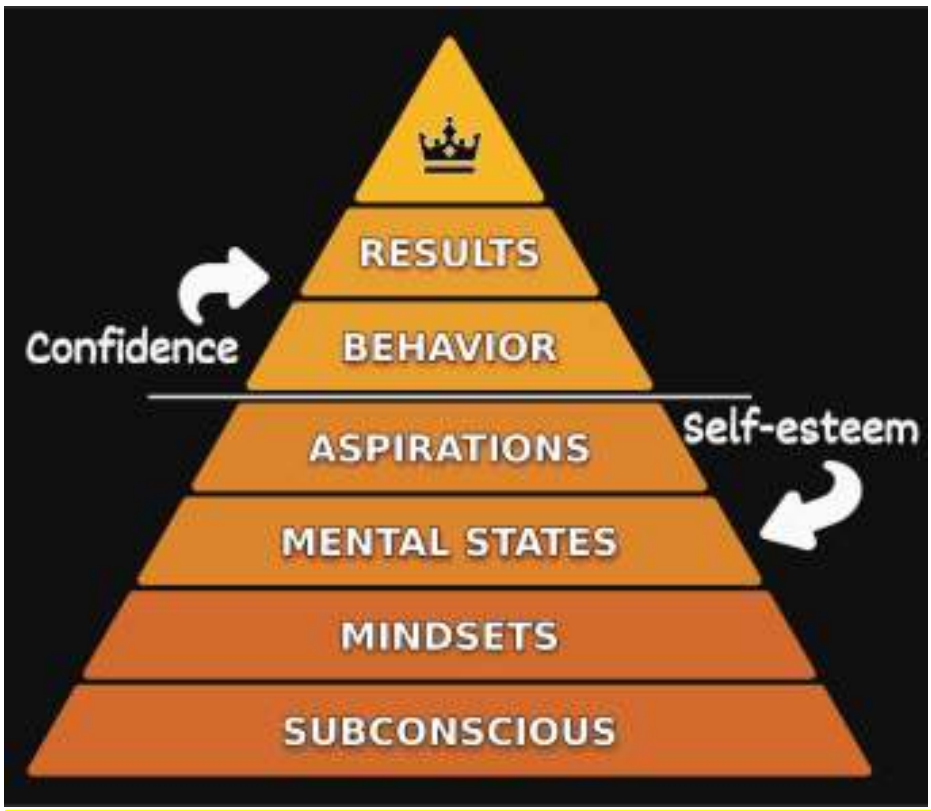
Develop Unshakable Self-Belief

Power starts with the mind, and self-esteem and self-confidence are foundational to a man's power.

Primary psychopaths' high self-confidence offers several mental benefits. But it can border on the unrealistic, and doesn't always lead to results when it lacks proper planning and execution.

The effective psychopath instead must temper confidence with realism, plans, reality-based feedback, and tireless execution.
More on effective confidence:

- **Antifragile grandiosity**, for high confidence without fragility
- **Confidence University**, for the full guide on turning self-esteem into results



Effective confidence starts with the subconscious and must always provide the foundation for effective action

Develop Boldness

Boldness is one of the most consistently adaptive components of psychopathy in the literature, combining two foundational advantages: low anxiety/stress immunity, and bold action/acting under pressure (Lilienfeld, 2018).

Develop Fearless Calm (Physiological Control)

Primary psychopaths have lower stress reactivity and greater physiological calm under pressure. It can be a massive advantage in crisis, escalations, and conflict situations.

- **Meditate** (e.g., mindfulness, breath-focused attention): reduces physiological arousal and anxiety, improving emotional regulation (Chen et al., 2012)
- **Exposure therapy**: Increasingly more challenging experiences to expand your comfort zone. Join public speaking clubs, improv classes, etc.
- **Physiological Downregulation:** Slow breathing, relaxation techniques, and controlled body language directly reduce arousal and improve stress resilience.
- **Embrace mortality** to 'be at peace' with the worst scenario

Learn to Act Despite Discomfort (Fearless Dominance)

In terms of pure agency, fearlessness doesn't have to be 'absence of fear'. The ability to act *despite* fear is all that matters.

- **Decouple anxiety from action**: The physical sensation of anxiety (heart racing, shortness of breath) must not be obeyed with submission or inaction. Act *despite* the fear.
- **Quit overthinking** (bias for action): Become more pragmatic and focus more on action and results. Practicality > philosophy
- **The 3-Second Rule:** Act within three seconds before the emotional mind can generate a prohibitive narrative

🤔Lucio's Take: **Embrace competitiveness to overpower fear**

Lucio:
I remember a football coach telling my parents I was fearless on the pitch, 'going in' without a care.

While I score high in boldness, I never felt 'fearless'. I'm very calculative with risk/rewards, and I always felt performance pressure, especially with crowds. But I was very competitive and driven to show resolve and power to

the opposing players. They weren't going to waltz on 'my' goal.

Being physically unimposing only made me *more* fearless, *especially* towards larger players. Fearlessness was a necessary tool to turn the size gap around.

Adopt Utilitarian Thinking (Bottom Line-Based Rationality)

Utilitarian thinking seeks the best course of action based on what maximizes outcomes. It empowers you to make purely logical decisions, independent of moral considerations. That doesn't mean it's 'immoral'; it may even be *more* moral when maximizing personal and social well-being.

- **Adopt an outcome-based morality**. ⍰ 'What is good is what maximizes utility'
- **View problems as equations**, not narratives. Ask: "What provides maximum benefit for the system?"
- **Effective calculativeness**, investing only in what yields a return
  See **effective calculativeness ↗**

Grow Strategic Detachment (Emotional Non-Reactivity)

Strategic detachment enables outcome independence and emotional non-reactivity (non-neediness), maintaining focus on agentic goal-achievement.
Reduced emotional reactivity is associated with mental well-being, including lower rumination and distress. For example, psychopathy researcher Kent Kiehl notes:

> psychopaths don't get distressed by being in prison (…) they don't get bothered by much of anything. They don't ruminate and they don't get depressed.

- **Expose yourself online** with opinions or content creation. Use negative feedback to reduce emotional reactivity and build tolerance to social disapproval
- **Embrace Effective Spirituality**: Transcendence can boost non-neediness and self-sufficiency
- **Stoic 'amor fati'**: Accept what you cannot control and focus on what you can influence

Strategic detachment in intimate relationships
Emotional detachment may undermine pair bonding and facilitate a short-term sexual strategy (related to 'player psychology' and 'lover strategy').
However, while some psychopaths may be abusive out of power motives, positive expressions of detachment can be protective *against* heartbreak, controlling, and abusive tendencies (Douglas, 2018; Hilton et al., 2008; Rock et al., 2013).

Immunity to Social Disapproval

Social approval can be a valuable and sometimes fundamental resource, but needing it puts you at the mercy of others, including judge power moves.
The effective psychopath pursues approval when it's instrumentally effective, and ignores it when it's not.

- **Put yourself first in daily interactions:** e.g., disagreeing, asking a difficult question, walking away from social functions you don't enjoy.
  See how to be a good asshole ↗

Master 'Mission Mode' for Strategic Ruthlessness (Compartmentalization)

Compartmentalization selects 'modes' based on contextual effectiveness.
And while power+warmth is a strong behavioral baseline, too-nice men must understand that **meanness may be**

the most adaptive 'mode' in some contexts (despite often being labeled as 'maladaptive' in the literature).

A study asked psychology experts about the traits of successful psychopaths they knew, and their list featured deceitfulness, arrogance, manipulativeness, lack of remorse, callousness, and egocentricity.

- **Personality calibration**: Realize that people differ, and some cheat more. Keep your best self for the best people, and your strategic self for the rest
- **Remind yourself of your objective:** Tell yourself 'The goal is X' to switch back to mission mode

Love tip for nice guys: realize that love rests on power
Many women aren't programmed to love kind and weak, but kind, strong, and life-effective.

Empathize Strategically (Performance vs. Relationship Mode)

Empathy is what makes us human and supports genuine relationships, but it can also prevent effective action.

The Effective Psychopath can act ruthlessly when needed (low affective empathy), while still perfectly understanding others (cognitive empathy) to predict and manage behavior.

- **Discover needs:** Find out what people truly want and need. Tip: most people want the same things
- **Read people and characters**: Start by learning to read body language for cues of inner states. Graduate to predicting behavior based on character and context
- **Run the full 'empathy gamut' for maximum effectiveness**: Eg., empathic listening and caring in close relationships, dominant and talkative during group formation, and more ruthless in business
  - Empathize strategically: mirror and validate for social capital (e.g., "I can see why you would want that")

Be a Strategic Chameleon

Most environments are mixed.
Work is a mix of competition and teamwork, and most relationships are a mix of converging and diverging interests.

For mixed situations, anything that's 'pure kindness' or 'pure meanness' backfires.

What may work best at work is **an outer layer of teamwork, but a core of Machiavellian calculativeness.** And what may work best in relationships is to boost cooperation, while remaining vigilant and preparing for the possibility of defection.
See:

- The myth of emotional intelligence: Machiavellians at the top

Use Strategic Extraversion ('Social Performance Mode')

Social power, linked to extraversion, boldness, and grandiose narcissism, facilitates leadership emergence, social status, and group influence.

- **Learn to 'switch on' ('social performance mode'):** If you're not naturally extroverted, you can always *act* like one. The more you do it, the better you get (and you may learn to enjoy it)

🤔Lucio's Take: **I 'switch on' extraversion entering new groups**

Lucio:
Despite being high self-sufficiency and leaning towards introversion, I always switched on 'social performance mode' when entering new groups. I approached more, talked more, and sometimes read the room to move towards higher status members ('social climbing').

This approach made friends and gained status, even allowing me to coast in future interactions.

Phase II: Neutralizing the Liabilities

This phase focuses on building the external structures—the guardrails—that prevent disinhibition and meanness from causing chaos, unnecessary harm, and failure.

Control Disinhibition

You must put in place systems to suppress irresponsibility. The Effective Psychopath is self-controlled and resolute (at least for his agentic goals).

- **Control dopamine loops**: Consider a clean-slate start with a 'dopamine detox'.
  - Train delaying rewards: Only allow yourself the reward *after* the work
  - Schedule blocks of 'deep work', without distractions
- **Use pre-decisions and "if–then" rules**: eg., 'If I feel a reckless impulse, I must wait 10 minutes before acting'
- **Develop accountability systems:** Don't rely on motivation, use public commitments, contracts, habits with rewards/punishments
- **Force financial discipline:** Implement automated savings and investments to counter impulsive spending

Establish The "Boredom Management System"

Chronic need for stimulation can lead to impulsive, self-destructive behavior. Counter it with:

- **Channel stimulation-seeking into value-adding pursuits** like entrepreneurship, learning complex new skills, or structured competitions
- **Replace destructive or overly risky thrills** with extreme but controlled sports (mountaineering, structured racing)
  - Consider videogames for easy thrills with less risk and effort
- **Develop habits:** Create daily routines to stabilize life (morning exercise, work schedule, food breaks)

Boost Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is associated with many positive life outcomes, but psychopaths tend to be low on multiple facets of conscientiousness (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006; Miller et al., 2001).

Higher conscientiousness instead can counteract impulsivity while enabling sustained, goal-directed execution. It's an important trait to boost success for high psychopathy individuals (Benning et al., 2018).

- **Goal setting & plans:** Define actionable goals, with a schedule, and execution routines
- **Pursue meaningful goals** that matter to you
- **Reward yourself for following through**

Technical note: address one, improve everything else
Twin studies suggested there may be a common 'disinhibitory liability' among psychopathy, ASPD, substance use disorder, and low conscientiousness (or low constraint) (Sher & Slutske, 2003), so addressing one can help with the others.

🤦♂️Lucio's Take: **How I developed conscientiousness**

Lucio:
I boosted conscientiousness in 3 ways:

1. **Switching to goals I care about**, pursuing my mission with TPM and Power University
2. **Aligning incentives**, from employee to entrepreneur

3. **Linking execution to honor** and earning my own respect. Reward after execution feels great. Reward without following through feels like dishonorable slacking

Develop a Long-Term Time Horizon

Psychopathy researcher Robert Hare said that psychopaths' behavior makes sense only if you live in the now. But immediate gratification undermines ambitious men seeking long-term success.
Besides the systems and mindset we mentioned, consider this:

- **Visualize the trajectory** 5, 10, and 20 years in the future. Anchor your daily choices to your high-value future self

Optimize Decision-Making: Focus on Risks, Not Just Rewards

While pop literature on 'good psychopathy' stressed psychopaths' utilitarian thinking, psychopaths' decision-making is often sub-par because it loses sight of risks when rewards are salient.
This can cause personal and financial losses — and leave you open to exploitation.

- **Focus on risks more than on rewards**. Studies show that psychopathic individuals can avoid monetary punishment just as well when that's their sole goal (Newman and Kosson 1986)

Build Your "Moral Anchor" (Self-Imposed Rules)

Since psychopathic individuals can lack a conventional internal conscience, they must create a logical code of conduct to keep them on track.

- **Set key red lines** that tend to be high cost and low rewards (e.g., "Never do substances", "Never assault", etc.)
- **Manage Aggression**
  - Channel aggression into training, sports, competition
  - Learn the often larger benefits of *pull* approaches.
    See: Motivational leadership ↗; soft power ↗; prestige ↗
- **Adopt TPM's "honorable power" framework**, combining honor with effectiveness
  - Switch mindset: value taker = weak dishonor. Value giver = strong honor

See:

- **The honorable man's guide**: honor, without costs

> The Honorable Man's Guide: Power, Respect, and Success

Phase III: Sustained Power & Success

This phase ensures that fearlessness and detachment are used to build sustainable institutions and legacy.

Use Power to Underwrite Cooperation, Not To Force It ('Pull Approach')

Once you have the *capacity* to be ruthless, it's time to wield it effectively. How much to show and use depends on context. But in general, for most life situations in modern states, **use display of force as leverage while seeking to avoid its actual use.**
Carry the sword, and keep it sheathed unless needed.

Al Capone said ‘You can get much further with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone’. But Capone’s proclivity for leading with coercion delivered a series of attempted murders, and imprisonment at just 33 years old.
Roosevelt’s ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick’ instead leads with cooperation and **backs cooperation with credible power**. And it set the ground for a longer-lasting empire.

This approach minimizes betrayals and costly escalations, while enjoying the fruits of peaceful cooperation.
And it aligns with our foundational social strategies and with seminal game theory work on effective cooperation (Axelrod, 1984).

Lucio’s Take: **Be low average meanness, but scale it fast to match needs**

Lucio:
While I score low-ish on meanness, my despisal for uncalled-for meanness allows me to muster the indignation and power to at least match it back.

This is a good combo.
Low average meanness allows for greater long-term alliances while making fewer enemies.
But you can draw from the ‘reservoir well’ of meanness to match various social attacks, ‘power moves‘, or betrayal.
In game theory, this is ‘niceness’ + ‘provocability’.

Learn more:

- Strategic cooperation

Calibrate Calm & Detachment: Welcome ‘Performance Arousal’

Once you can detach enough, it’s time to calibrate it.

Detachment seems to follow an inverted U-curve of optimum balance and ‘performance mode’ may benefit with moderate arousal.
For example, research suggests that while successful psychopathic individuals show increased heart rate before and during a public speech, unsuccessful ones don’t.

Benning (2018) suggests a relation with self-monitoring and impression management, conceptually closer to narcissism (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Self-monitors aren't lower anxiety, but Clifton notes they are superior social chameleons and charmers, and date twice more than non self-monitors (Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

Maintain Win-Win Utility: Long-Term Alliances

Long-term cooperation boosts returns for all, including for agentic players focusing on their own goals (Axelrod, 1984).

Some psychopaths' tactics of relocation and aliases to escape burn reputations are weak, bottom-feeding chater stratetgies that undermine ambitious men.
A better baseline strategy instead is to do this:

- **Gain a strong reputation**, gaining status, respect, and prestige in your social circles
- **Focus on value**, being high-value, providing value, and then finding other value-givers and matchers

Learn more:

- Social exchange and social investment model, the foundations of exchanges
- Strategic cooperation

Find Meaning & a Mission: Legacy & Curing the Void

The final stage of mastery is giving the detached, fearless life a direction and long-term focus to counter the inherent meaninglessness of a purely detached existence.

- **Channel your drive beyond material gains**
- **Find a project that will outlive you**
- **Think in terms of legacy**

This 'pull' approach of a motivational mission is far superior to 'routines', 'habits', and strictures.

Honorable Psychopathy: Pursue Value-Adding Missions

Honorable psychopathy places **strategic honor** with a preference for win–win and value-adding pursuits as the

baseline.
With this approach, **the mission adds value to humanity and civilization.**

This is TPM's favorite approach.
For non-psychopathic men, it also delivers a better life quality, with genuine charismatic leadership, and genuine relationships.

Checking the Stats

The goal is not to become a psychopath.
It's to become a controlled, high-effectiveness operator who can access these traits when they boost results—and shut them off when they don't.

For a general baseline and a rough guideline, aim for these results in the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure:

- **40+ in Boldness**
- **20-30 in Meanness,** but you can keep it scalable to match challenges
- **Below 25 in Disinhibition** for control and long-term success

For a full framework on how to incorporate dark triad traits into an honorable and successful life, we built our full course Power University:

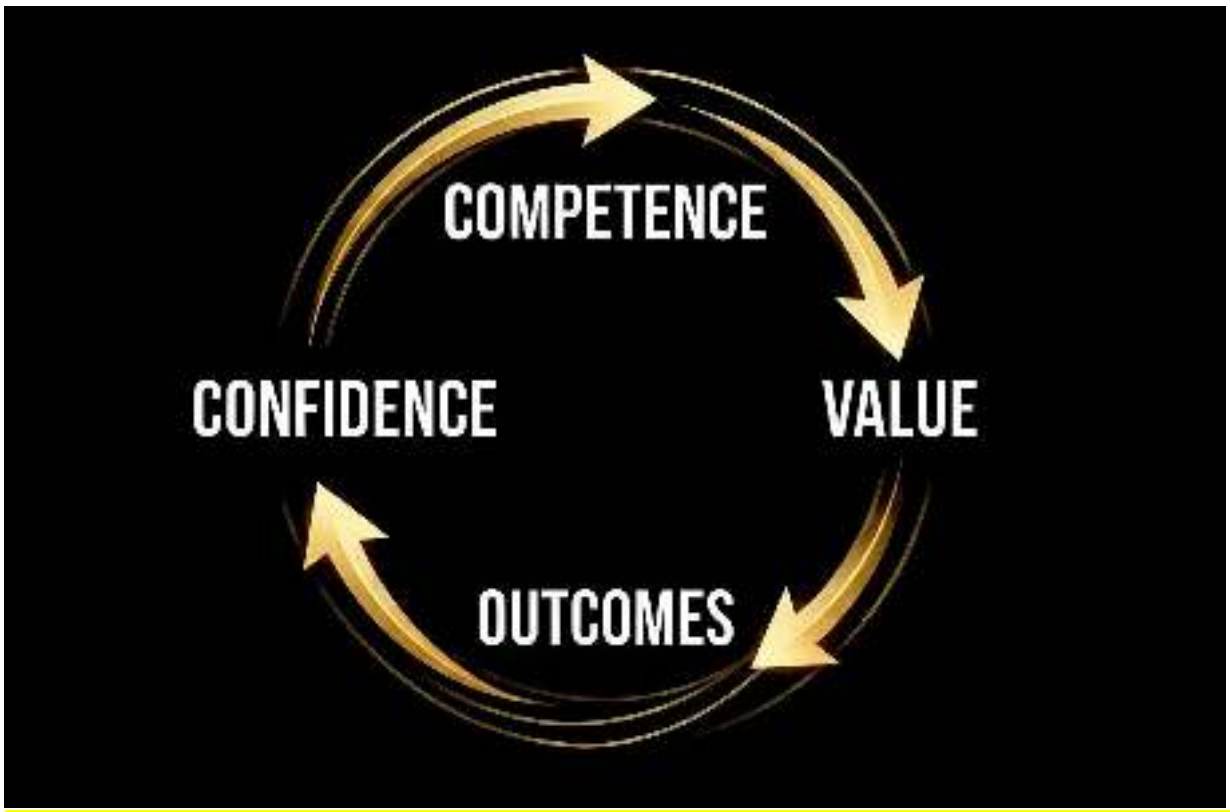
Check Power University

The Competence–Value Model: How Competence Drives Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 27 April 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Competence is the practical ability to produce reliable results in a domain, and it's one of the two main bedrocks of success.

At TPM, competence is a foundational pillar of men's empowerment because **competence strongly translates to leverage**, and competent men tend to gain respect, status, and attraction.



The Competence Loop: Competence is one of the foundations that boosts value, delivers outcomes, and boosts mental power with a positive 'outside-in' feedback loop

Contents

- Competence-Value Amplification Model™
  - The Limitations of 'Hacks-Seeking'
- The Science of Competence
- How to learn & become competent
  - How to Develop Skills
  - How to Learn
- Books on Learning: TPM Reviews
- TPM's Take: Key Competences In Life

Competence-Value Amplification Model™

The Competence–Value Amplification Model™ states that outcomes are largely determined by competence and personal value, while strategies serve to present, amplify, or at times misrepresent the underlying reality.

Strong fundamentals produce even stronger outcomes with good strategies and signaling; Amplying weak fundamentals instead undermines you.

Value, competence, and strategies are distinct, yet they overlap and reinforce each other.
Competence is technically a form of value, and can be offered and leveraged in social exchanges to demand value back, either in the form of financial compensation or status (and often both, see Blau, 1964). They're also connected in the sense that improving one usually improves all the others.
But to give you an idea, consider these three different examples:

Context	Strategies	Foundations (Competence & Value)
Entrepreneur seeking capital & team	Pitching, persuasion, social networking, negotiation tactics	Leadership competence; product or idea quality; execution ability; ownership/equity position
Dating, seeking a partner	Approach many, hide interest, signal value, plan the date	Dating competence (leadership, positive dominance, etc.); attractiveness; provisioning ability (his overall 'SMV')
Scializing, seeking friends	Mirror, relate, ask deeper questions	Power & social skills (power/warmth); confidence; status (job, income, etc.)

When we talk about value and competence being 'fundamental' and 'deeper', it doesn't mean that strategies 'matter less'. Value-signaling, self-promotion, and various social strategies are competencies in their own right, and are critical elements of the 'outcome chain'.
In fact, most men sell themselves short by failing to showcase their true value properly.

However, **strategic competence alone struggles to substitute underlying competence and value**, and especially so in the longer run.
Instead, the more objective levels of underlying competence and personal value can set a ceiling and constrain the effectiveness of any strategy. Especially so for men who prefer an honorable approach and don't want to lie and manipulate.

Instead, the higher your competence and more objective personal value, the more successful your strategies will be. Be competent and high-value enough, and even basic strategies will work

The Limitations of 'Hacks-Seeking'

This model clarifies a common misconception among many beginners who seek an edge, without addressing the foundations.

Some beginners are attracted to various tactics from 'dark psychology', showy 'power moves', or 'laws of power' that are often surface-level tactics, sometimes high manipulation and Machiavellianism (see 'why 48 Laws don't work'). But they still don't get results because they skip the foundations of personal value and social competence (including social power and positive dominance).
Beginners don't lose because of tactics. They lose because they lack value.

In truth, all the tactics in the world will at best build a castle in the sand if you don't back it up with competence and personal value. That castle will collapse as soon as it's stress-tested by life or others (P.S.: many men looking into 'how to pass shit tests' would also be better off working on competence and value. Tests only happen when value/competence are uncertain).

Strong leaders and 'alpha male types' don't rely on tricks. They're actually high-value, competent, and confident.

Power built on hacks, 'power moves', etc. collapses under stress. Power built on real competence and value delivers outcomes that last

The Science of Competence

Roughly listed from most important for real-life outcomes:

1. Real-Life Competence: The Ultimate Goal (Conscious Competence Matrix)

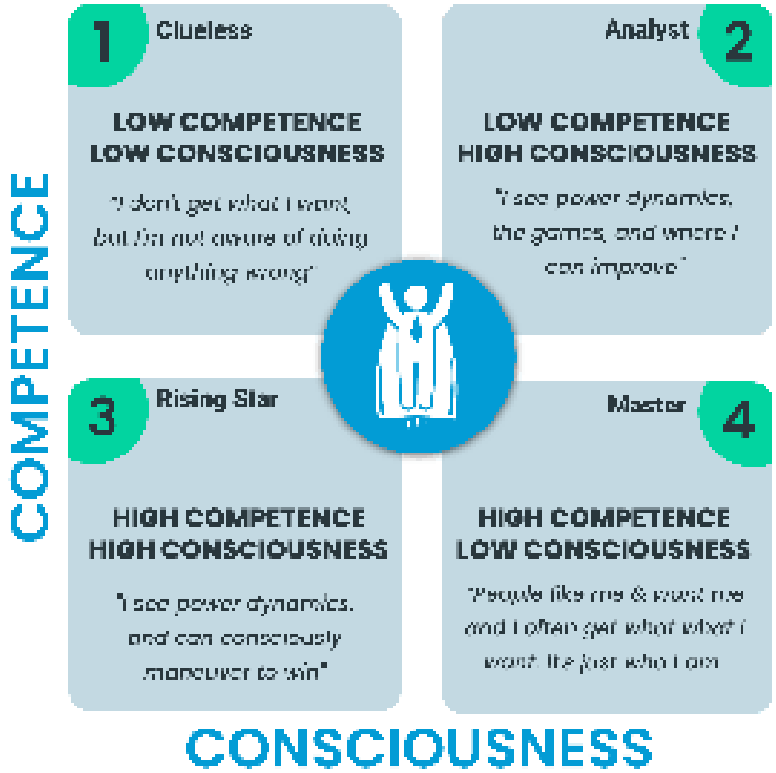
Real-life competence is what matters most to achieve most life and socially relevant goals. This is because gaining status, respect, and attraction requires effective and real-time behavior.

One of the most common questions we get is how to come up with the right response in real time.
What most don't realize is that by analyzing interactions, they are already one or two steps ahead of most men.

With continued analysis and exposure, real-time competence follows.

This framework is widely used in training and performance development and maps four stages of skill acquisition:

1. **Unconscious Incompetence:** You are clueless, and you don't even know it <— Where many men stand for power dynamics
2. **Conscious Incompetence:** You realize exactly how bad you are <— This is where the ego takes a hit, and many prefer denying instead of doubling down
3. **Conscious Competence:** You can understand or execute, but with cognitive load and focus <— At this level, you're not yet fully 'real-life effective' because the right move only becomes obvious later, upon reflection
4. **Subconscious Competence (Mastery):** The skill is fully myelinated and automatic <— You're 'real-time effective', gaining status, respect and attraction as a simple consequence of 'who you are'



TPM Takeaway: Embrace Incompetence as Opportunity and Consciously Work on 'Subconscious Mastery'
Once your hard skills are on autopilot, you read the room's power dynamics subconsciously, freeing up mental bandwidth to strategize and achieve goals, while looking confident and 'natural'

2. Competence = 'Rewiring' (Myelin and Neuroplasticity)

Your brain builds competence by creating and reinforcing neural patterns.
Each time you perform a behavior, the same circuits activate (or "fire"). With correct repetition, those circuits become faster and more efficient through processes like synaptic strengthening and, over time, increased myelination.
In simple terms: **the more you practice something correctly, the more your brain optimizes that pattern for speed and accuracy, and the more the skill becomes ingrained and automatic**.

TPM Takeaway: Learn From the Best, Use Deliberate Practice, and Coaching
The brain doesn't always reward effort—it reinforces patterns. Learn and repeat the wrong thing, and you get better at being wrong. Masters ensure the information you get works. Deliberate practice improves performance by targeting weaknesses and plateaus with expert feedback.

3. Focus on Experience to Learn Patterns (Cognitive Load Theory & “Schemas”)

Research shows that working memory has a very limited capacity and can only process a small amount of novel information at once.
To overcome this limitation, experts develop **schemas**—structured knowledge representations stored in long-term memory that compress and organize information into meaningful patterns. Schemas reduce cognitive load by allowing complex information to be processed as single units rather than many separate elements.

- **Real-time competence is pattern recognition that reduces cognitive load and enables fast, automatic decisions under pressure.**
  Expert performance is largely automated pattern recognition, not conscious reasoning.

TPM Takeaway: Train Experience-Based Recognition Looking For Outcomes
Outcomes are always the final objective, and sometimes you want performances on first attempts. However, whenever possible, try to get more reps first. People try to “perform well” too early. Experts first build pattern recognition speed.

🤔Lucio’s Take: **Mastery is in the experience that develops patterns**

Lucio:
Experience is a crucial pillar for TPM because experience builds patterns from real-life exposure and experience. Experts can select more effective strategies and spot red flags based on the patterns they’ve seen.

For example, if they know that kind and supportive women tend to do X, then Y behavior is a red flag even in the absence of an obvious red flag.
And they can advise for or against a certain approach based on

However, IQ and analysis remain foundational for mastery. IQ learns patterns faster and better connects the missing dots to develop more complex schemas (and avoid jumping to conclusions from limited exposure).
Analysis helps fix the inherent limits of repeated exposure (eg.: the rarity of certain events and contexts coupled with humans’ relatively short life span).

4. Competence = Confidence: Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory

In psychology, **self-efficacy** is your belief in your own ability to succeed in specific situations. Bandura's work suggests the most powerful source of self-efficacy is **mastery experience**—overcoming challenges and succeeding.

TPM Takeaway: Build Confidence With Competence & Improving Results
Skip affirmations, pop-psychology, and self-help myths. Whenever possible, build confidence with competence. Over time, that evidence compounds into a stable internal belief: *"I got this."*

5. The Dunning-Kruger Reality Check

The Dunning–Kruger effect is a cognitive bias in which people with low ability tend to overestimate their competence, largely because they lack the skills needed to accurately evaluate their own performance.

TPM Takeaway: Judge Yourself Based on Results
If you can achieve your goals and gain respect, status, and attraction, you're at a good level. If not, you're not yet fully 'life competent', and you have room for growth

How to learn & become competent

The great news is that competence can be increased. As a matter of fact, while personal value is slightly more tied to genetics, **most people can massively boost their competence**. So in this section, we will review how to become more competent.

We differentiate here between more practical skills, and learning.
For both of them, we recommend:

1. **Pick something you're naturally good at** because genetic predisposition matters
2. **Pick something you enjoy** or something you would do anyway. It makes hard work much easier

How to Develop Skills

What to Do	Why It Works
Define the skill as performance, not knowledge	Forces measurable outputs and ties practice to real competence
Break the skill into trainable subunits	Isolating weak components improves the system faster than repeating the whole skill
Use deliberate practice loops with fast feedback cycles	Rapid feedback is one of the strongest accelerators of learning speed
Use retrieval practice	Strengthens durable competence more than passive review
Space practice over time	Improves long-term retention and consolidation (spaced repetition effect)
Interleave related skills	Improves transfer and adaptability across varied conditions
Respect cognitive and physical limits	Prevents overload; working memory limits require structured progression
Track performance, not effort	Only observable performance reflects real competence growth

1. Define the skill as performance, not knowledge

- ✕ Bad: "Learn dating"
- ✓ Good: "approach 3 girls I like, go on a new date a week"

Competence improves when practice is tied to real performance, not passive understanding.

2. Break the skill into trainable units

If a complex skill can be broken into sub-units, isolate and train weak subcomponents.

3. Use deliberate practice loops (core mechanism)

Practice must be structured as a loop:

- Attempt
- Feedback: get tight feedback loops with external expert feedback.
- Error tracking and correction
- Repetition with adjustment

You do not improve from repetition alone. You improve from corrected repetition.
Fast feedback compression is one of the strongest predictors of skill acceleration.

4. Space practice over time

- Short sessions across days outperform long cramming sessions
- Forgetting slightly before relearning improves retention

Spaced repetition effect is one of the most robust findings in learning science.

5. Interleave related skills

Mix different types of problems or situations instead of repeating the same type.

- A → B → C instead of AAAAA → BBBBB → CCCCC

This improves transfer and real-world adaptability, even if it feels harder during training.

6. Do one thing at a time, and don't overload (respect cognitive & physical limits)

Do not try to learn too many elements at once.

- Start simple
- Automate basics
- Then increase complexity

TPM's law of optimum balance fits competence well. Both too little and too much can slow progress down. Too much with too high intensity also boosts the risks of injury.
The goal is not maximal suffering, but the right amount of it.

7. Repeat core actions until they become automatic

You know you're there where you can execute automatically, fast, and well.

8. Track performance, not effort

Effort feels productive but is often misleading. Competence is visible in performance curves, not subjective feelings.

- Measure outputs
- Track errors

- Track speed and consistency

How to Learn

What to Do	Why It Works
Build a conceptual map	Structures knowledge
Apply immediately or 'mentally stress test it'	Deepens understanding
Space sessions	Improves retention
Interleave topics	Builds flexible knowledge
Mental model reconstruction	Strengthens memory
Teach others	Reveals gaps
Anchor to existing schemas	Organizes memory
Embrace confusion (to solve it)	Motivates deep diving

1) Build a conceptual map first

Learning science shows that understanding the *structure* of knowledge — how ideas relate — is crucial for deep learning. The *framework* is what allows you to *reason and transfer knowledge*.

- Sketch the *big ideas* of the discipline before you start
- Identify the *core concepts* and how they connect.

2) Do and challenge the theory, don't just consume it

Whenever possible, doing is the best way to learn deep theory. When first-hand practice is unfeasible, 'stress test it'.

- Don't wait until you feel "ready"
- Start working on real problems early, even if you don't fully understand the theory yet
- Stress-test ideas: think how it could work concretely, and how it could backfire

Learn more:

- Three Pillars of Knowledge: first-hand experience, scientific evidence, and critical analysis. Competence grows best when those three are combined.

3) Space and revisit complex ideas

Spacing out study sessions improves retention and understanding far more than cramming — even for theoretical knowledge. This is one of the strongest findings in learning science.

- Don't try to understand everything in one pass
- Make notes to revisit later
- Revisit the same concepts the next day, then again after a few days

4) Use *interleaved study*

Interleaving helps your brain learn to *discriminate* between concepts and apply them flexibly. Especially useful in fields where concepts often overlap.

- Mix topics instead of mastering one completely before moving on.
  - e.g., study Group Theory, then Quantum Mechanics, then revisit Group Theory

- e.g., learn social exchange, think how it applies in your life; then social investment model, think what you can change in your life thanks to it; then learn effective calculatinveness and compare it to naive self-help

5) Build and test your *mental models*

Learning science shows that retrieving and reconstructing knowledge strengthens the mental model, or the internal representation of the discipline, which is the core of deep understanding.

Do not reread or rewatch. Force recall from memory:

- Explain the concept without notes
- Reconstruct the solution from scratch
- Predict how it applies in a new situation
- Draw diagrams or flowcharts

This strengthens durable competence more than passive exposure.

6) Use feedback loops (external or self-generated)

Feedback corrects misconceptions early — preventing you from reinforcing errors in your internal model.

- Check solutions against authoritative sources
- Ask peers or mentors to critique your reasoning

7) Teach or explain to someone else

Teaching forces you to organize your understanding and reveal gaps you wouldn't notice otherwise.

- Explain a theoretical concept to a peer, or even to yourself aloud
- Encourage them to ask questions: their questions can highlight your blind spots

8) Link new knowledge to what you already know

Learning science finds that new knowledge is learned best when it's anchored to existing schemas, becoming more organized and usable.
AskL

- 'How does this connect to what I already understand?'
- 'What is similar? What is different?'

9) Embrace confusion and revise

Feeling lost is part of mastering theory. It gives you the drive to seek the deeper mechanics that differentiate between the beginner and the master.

- Expect confusion early
- When you feel lost, lean into it and dig deeper

Books on Learning: TPM Reviews

- **So Good They Can't Ignore You** — Seeks to debunk the 'follow your passion' script and argues that skill and value come first.
  - ✅ Some valid arguments against passion-first thinking
  - ❌ Not the most scientific (quotes Pink and Gladwell's 10.000 hours rule); goes too far denying the role of

passion

- **Make It Stick** — A practical book on how to learn and retain information better.
  - ✅ Practical and evidence-based.
  - ❌ Less focused on high-pressure social or professional execution.
- **Peak** — Anders Ericsson's classic expertise book.
  - ✅ Foundational and research-based. Debunks the flow's concept from positive psychology for competence building
  - ❌ Deliberate practice is important, but not the whole story.
- **Mastery** — Robert Greene's attempt to fix the '48 Laws of Power' focus on dark tactics by adding competence.
  - ✅ Covers some power dynamics as well
  - ❌ Not scientific, more anecdotal and opinion-based; also not a guide, over-relying on mentorship
- **Ultralearning** — A self-directed, intense approach to skill acquisition.
  - ✅ Actionable and good for rapid, focused skill acquisition.
  - ❌ Can lean too hard on intensity if not balanced well; Bit of a 'bio-hacking' approach on tactics, rather than a full framework

TPM's Take: Key Competences In Life

The three main pillars of competence are:

Domains	Why
Mental foundation (self-esteem, antifragile ego and grandiosity, effective spirituality, confidence, etc.)	Mental power supports learning and sustains effort to turn competence into outcomes
Social competence (assertiveness, interpersonal power, high-power behavior, nonverbals, etc.)	Gives you respect, status, influence, and boosts attraction. It protects against the 'hollow success' of 'wealthy but not respected'. See: billionaire disrespected by girlfriend ↗
Life & strategic competence (Strategic thinking, effective calculativeness, positive Machiavellianism, etc.)	This is the 'strategic competence' that maximizes the presentation and outcomes of value and all other competencies
Work competence (technical skills)	Crucial for resources and career. And provides a floor of in case entrepreneurial efforts, more based on leadership and social competence, fail

These domains are distinct but strongly interdependent. Strength in one tends to reinforce the others over time. For example, status also supports mental and physical health.

We focus more on mental resilience in Confidence University, but Power University provides an overview of foundational mental power, fully covers social and life confidence, and also provides competence-based confidence:

Check Power University

Dark Triad: Traits, Benefits & Strategy Guide

Lucio Buffalmano · 4 May 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The dark triad captures three related but distinct traits: **narcissism**, **Machiavellianism**, and **psychopathy**.

These traits can provide advantages in key markers of success, including leadership, dating, social status, and influence.
But they also come with serious risks, especially over the long term.

This article explains what the dark triad is, how it can boost or undermine success, and how smart, strategic men can use it without becoming destructive.

Dark triad archetypes: a narcissistic leader, a fearless warrior, and a cunning strategist

Contents

- What the Dark Triad Is
  - The Three Traits at a Glance
  - The Shared Core: The Dark Factor of Personality
- Why it Matters for Ambitious Men
  - Pros & Cons
  - ⚠ But Beware: The Vulnerable Dark Triad (VDT)
  - Key Questions About Dark Triads
- Dark Triad Sexual Strategies
  - Dark Triad 'Game'
  - Exploitation, Coercion, & Mate Guarding
  - Evolutionary Logic: Why Dark Triads Stay
  - TPM Takeaways for Agentic Men's Dating
- Effective Dark Triad™

What the Dark Triad Is

The dark triad is a label coined by Paulhus and Williams in 2002 for three personality traits that are related, but not identical: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy.
The traits showed overlap in common traits like selfishness and low agreeableness, while still being different constructs.

Interpersonally, dark triads tend to view relationships not as cooperative ventures, but as transactional exchanges.

The Three Traits at a Glance

Narcissism tends to be more linked to extraversion and self-importance, Machiavellianism to strategic manipulation, and psychopathy to callousness and antisocial tendencies (Furnham et al., 2013).

- **Narcissism**: Grandiosity, pride, and egotism. Narcissists crave validation and adulation, but their high self-belief often propels them into leadership roles.
- **Machiavellianism**: Manipulation, self-interest, and cynical materialism. Machiavellians are long-term strategists who view social interactions as a chessboard.
- **Psychopathy**: Lack of conscience and remorse, muted emotions, and potential for antisocial behavior, impulsivity, and instrumental aggression. It is the most linked to criminality.

Trait	Main edge	Main risk
Narc	Confidence, status seeking, self-promotion	Entitlement, fragility, need for admiration
Mach	Strategic thinking, patience, social calculation	Over-cynicism, alienation & life dissatisfaction, trust erosion
Psycho	Fearlessness, boldness, emotional detachment	Impulsivity, imprisonment, drug use, long-term failure

Dark Tetrad

In 2013 Buckles and colleagues showed that dark triads were more willing to harm an innocent victim (though only sadists worked to cause harm) and proposed the ‘dark tetrad’.

Sadism may be more related to psychopathy, but reactive aggression from perceived slights may be more related to narcissism and factor 2 psychopathy (ASPD).

The Shared Core: The Dark Factor of Personality

Different models isolate different traits or dispositions shared by the dark triad, including:

- **Antagonism/Low agreeableness** from the Big 5 perspective
- **Low honesty/humility** from the HEXACO, better covering behavioral aspects like manipulation (Muris et al., 2017)
- **Manipulation and callousness**, based on Multisample Structural Equation Models (Jones & Figueredo, 2013)
- **Unrestricted sociosexuality**, or a predisposition for short-term mating (Jonason et al., 2009, 2012)

Researchers also introduced a new shared '**Dark factor**' (or 'D factor')—the tendency to **maximize one's own benefit even at the expense of others**, while maintaining justifying beliefs (Moshagen, Hilbig, and Zettler, 2018 and 2020).

You can measure your D-factor with this validated assessment questionnaire (Moshagen et al., 2020): Measure your D-factor ↗

Why it Matters for Ambitious Men

The more positive and empowering aspects of the dark triad include:

- **Social power**, including social dominance, influence, and leadership. From Machiavellianism and grandiose narcissism, and potentially boldness factor 1 psychopathy (Christie and Geis, 1970; Brunell et al., 2008; Watts et al., 2013; Deluga, 2001; Lilienfeld et al., 2014)
- **Boldness** and social confidence, related to extraversion from grandiose narcissism and low fear from factor 1 psychopathy (Patrick et al., 2009)
- **Mental power**, with low neuroticism and emotional resilience, related to psychopathy factor 1's boldness and grandiose narcissism (Campbell et al., 2002; Rose, 2002; Watson et al., 1988; Lilienfeld, 2018).
- **Strategic predisposition** and a calculative, pragmatic and rational approach to maximize goal achievement and self-interest, from Machiavellianism (Christie and Geis, 1970; Pilch, 2008; Deak, 2017; Samson & Paulhus, 1992)

These traits and behavioral patterns lead to many coveted results, including:

- **High status**, including acquiring status in new groups
- **Respect** from others
- **Confidence** and self-esteem
- **More sexual partners**, especially psychopathy and often narcissism (Borráz-León and Rantala, 2021; Freyth and Jonason, 2023)
- **Leadership**

Pros & Cons

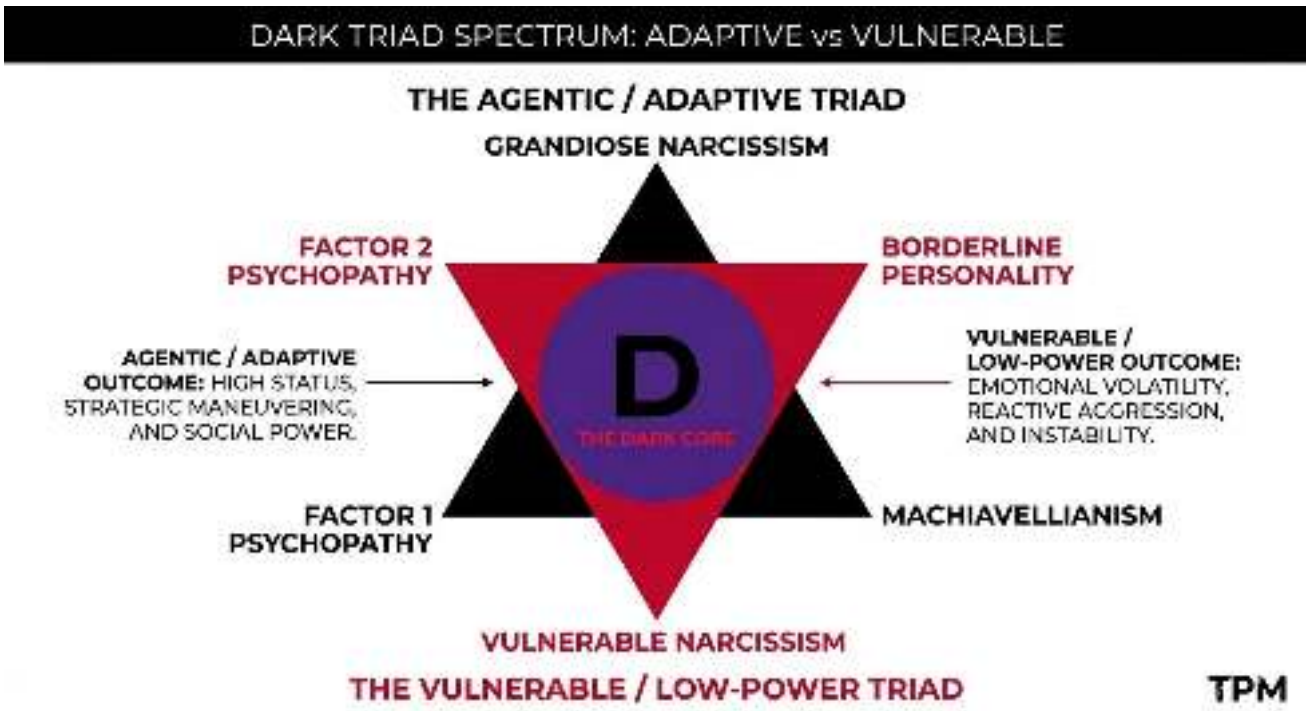
The dark triad traits are a double-edged sword. Research consistently links unchecked dark triad traits to counterproductive behavior, relationship damage, and legal risks—especially concerning psychopathy (Hampejs et al., 2025).

Think of them like always-on boosters on a racing car: great starts and speeds… But may crash you at the first curve.

Adaptive Upsides	Maladaptive Liabilities
Leadership: excels at first impressions, gaining status, and influencing decisions	**Reputation risk:** Driven by grandiosity, selfishness or a 'mask', risks long-term exclusion
Self-focus for goal-achievement takes care of 'number 1' and boosts the odds of success	**Self-absorption undermines alliances** and relationships
Strategic thinking: Highly effective in life, calculating best moves without emotional bias.	**Trust erosion:** people eventually feel used or uncared for, leading to burned bridges
Stress tolerance: boldness and low fear; effective in high-pressure environments.	**Legal & physical risk:** impulsivity, recklessness, and rule-breaking (psychopathy)
Self-promotion: gains visibility and networking opportunities	**Irritates others** when it turns into bragging and undermines bonds with 'me, me, me'
Short-term successful mating, independence, fewer heartbreaks	**Unstable long-term** relationships and lack of bonding and love
Competitive drive: intense self-focus to achieve goals	**Undermines cooperation** with 'fixed pie mindset', mistrust, and over-competitiveness

⚠ But Beware: The Vulnerable Dark Triad (VDT)

The vulnerable dark triad is a crucially important construct for TPM.
Most people often associate the dark triad with dominance and cunning agency. But in truth, they also have a 'weaker version' that Miller dubbed 'vulnerable dark triad' (VDT).



The dark triad 'low power shadow' is factor 2 psychopathy and vulnerable narcissism, both linked to BPD

Lyons in '*The Dark Triad of Personality*' says that besides the more adaptive factor 1 psychopathy and grandiose narcissism, the dark triad also includes their vulnerable versions: vulnerable narcissism, Factor 2 psychopathy, and features of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD).

Both narcissism and psychopathy have a vulnerable expression, but not Machiavellianism (or, at least, it hasn't yet been identified by research).

The vulnerable triad is linked to:

- **Neuroticism** and mood swings <— Low masculinity
- **Insecure attachment** <— Related to neediness, chasing, and low-power emotional manipulation (eg, 'pity plays')
- **Negative emotionality** (shame, stress, envy, anxiety, anger) <— Related to unpleasant emotions that can decrease both effectiveness and life quality
- **Self-harming behavior**

Vulnerable Triad	Low-power Correlations
Vulnerable narcissism	Low and fragile self-esteem; Avoidance-oriented; Low perceived control; negative affect
Factor 2 psychopathy	Antisocial; reactive aggression; externalizing proneness, substance abuse; impulsivity; low conscientiousness

Read more in these tables:

- Factor 1 psychopathy vs. vulnerable psychopathy
- Grandiose narcissism vs vulnerable narcissism

Key Questions About Dark Triads

Are dark triads more attractive?

Dark triads are not more attractive unadorned, and some studies even find dark triad facial morphs to be less

attractive. However, things change and invert in real life, where higher mating effort, better presentation, strategic predisposition and confidence can all boost attraction, ultimately resulting in more sexual partners for narcissists and psychopaths.

Can you develop dark triad traits?

While some aspects are largely determined by genetics and early environment, you can develop the adaptive behaviors associated with the triad. For example, you can train yourself to be more high-agency, more strategic in your social maneuvers, and more emotionally detached in high-pressure negotiations. The smarter approach is to develop the useful edges while skipping the destructive ones.

Can you be a good dark triad?

Yes, if you adopt the edge and use it within an 'honorable man's approach' of seeking win-win.
But not in the stricter sense of clinical 'dark triad', since it's defined by traits that, at their core, involve using others or disregarding them. That part is inherently not "good."

How do you distinguish between an Adaptive and a Vulnerable Dark Triad?

Key differences lie in traits related to emotional regulation, mental power, and agency. The adaptive Dark Triad is characterized by higher emotional stability, stronger and stable self-esteem, and agentic persistence under pressure. The vulnerable Dark Triad, in contrast, is associated with neuroticism, emotional volatility, insecurity, and more reactive (rather than strategic) behavior and aggression.

Dark Triad Sexual Strategies

Sexual strategies are central to the dark triad construct and key to their success in the mating market.

In terms of unadorned looks, dark triads are no more attractive and potentially even *less* attractive. However, they're *more* attractive adorned, suggesting higher mating effort starting already with better clothes (Holtzman and Struber, 2012; Lyons and Simeonov, 2016).

Dating success though isn't just physical attractiveness, but also includes behavior and value-signaling.
And **dark triad traits can be polarizing and particularly attractive to (some) women** (Louis Carter et al., 2014; Brown, 2008). Higher attractiveness may start with a 'power motive', or a predisposition to strive for status and power. Swami and Furnham say that studies have shown that a power motive provides men with access to fertile women as well as making them more attractive to women.

Buss also says there are good reasons why dark triad men are more attractive, including:

1. **Social confidence** and charm, particularly effective when compared to shy, awkward guys who signal low power, passivity, and submissiveness (referred in popular culture as "beta males").
2. **Status**, gaining status, social prominence, and leadership, key qualities that boost sexual market value
3. **High-power**: They don't seem desperate, don't trip over themselves trying to be too nice, and display high-status body language

Dark Triad 'Game'

While mainstream dating advice focuses on consistency, provisioning, and attentiveness, dark triads operate on a fundamentally different frequency.
Dark triads focus on presentation, high value-signaling, power, and gaining leverage.

This approach can be seen in this movie scene, with the protagonist showing a highly Machiavellian approach to dating:

> **Him**: (approaches with high confidence and with the goal of gaining emotional leverage with sex, romance, and Mach 'game'. Then chills when she is hooked)

- **The Narcissist's "Peacocking":** Wendy Patrick states that narcissists are perceived as most attractive (Rauthmann and Kolar, 2013) (…) due to their flashy appearance, superficial charm, and self-assuredness
- **The Psychopath's "Closer Attitude":** Lacking approach anxiety and fear of rejection, they can be incredibly bold and decisive
- **The Machiavellian's "Game":** Views dating as a game to boost attraction, achieve intimacy, or gain emotional leverage. They can spot a woman's insecurities to build a fast, albeit artificial, sense of intimacy

Trait	Mating Strength	Mating Liability
Narc	Charisma and status signaling; entitlement to go after high-value women	Need for adulation can seem weak. Can fear approach out of ego & status considerations
Mach	Expert at "game", framing, and using power for seduction	May over-game & over-hide feelings when sharing them could assuage fears and boost attraction
Psycho	High boldness; zero approach anxiety	High psychopathy lacks the social feel for smooth charm, a major con for the top women

Learn more:

- Player's strategy vs. 'provider strategy'
- Womanizer psychology

Exploitation, Coercion, & Mate Guarding

Research suggests that Dark Triad traits are related to exploitative short-term mating strategies, including sexual coercion, deceptive mating strategies, and infidelity (Altgelt et al., 2023; Buss, 2024).

The *Oxford Handbook* claims that dark triads are more likely to mate guard, but Machiavellian women are also more likely to *resist* mate guarding, suggesting a taker strategy of ensuring faithfulness without giving it back (Chegeni et al., 2018; Abell & Brewer, 2016).
David Buss states that dark triads are more likely to use cost-inflicting mate guarding strategies, including triangulation, emotional manipulation, and aggression.

Dark triad women are also more manipulative, including faking orgasms, luring men away from relationships, and lying about their partner's count. Women who pursue a short-term sexual strategy are also more likely to signal sexual exploitability.

The combination of Dark Triad personality traits and short-term mating strategy increases the odds of sexual assault, and while this may be even truer for psychopathy, sexual coercion relates to the whole dark triad (Lalumiere et al., 2005; Figueredo and Salmon, 2022).

Learn more:

- Psychopaths' sexual strategy

Evolutionary Logic: Why Dark Triads Stay

From an evolutionary psychology perspective, the Dark Triad is not a 'mental disorder', but an evolved, alternative survival and mating strategy.

Jonason and colleagues proposed that the dark triad facilitates a short-term mating strategy focusing on quantity of offspring over quality (r-selection, Pianka, 1970).

Psychopathy in particular may boost reproduction odds in unstable and risky environments as a 'fast life strategy'. But the other two traits can equally boost mating and reproductive odds, even when only indirectly. For example, narcissism may boost status, and Machiavellianism may boost goal-attainment.
These two traits can also boost 'mating returns' through cheating (valid for sexual narcissists more than narcissists in general, McNulty & Widman, 2014). Machiavellian women, for example, cheat more without breaking up, suggesting a more strategic approach to gain benefits while keeping their main relationship (Gottlieb and Schmitt, 2023).

Evolution is amoral, and what survives and procreates spreads and stays in the gene pool.

TPM Takeaways for Agentic Men's Dating

The upsides of certain dark triad traits in dating success are too big to ignore.
Helpful dark triad traits in dating are:

- ✅ **Dress well and catch attention**
- ✅ **Develop healthy entitlement**: Patrick states that the most attractive narcissists have an entitlement mentality (Back et al., 2010). BUT match it with high-value, or you won't go far
- ❌ **Avoid value-taking retention tactics**: it's the worst of both worlds. Dishonorable value-taking, and low-power neediness

The advanced level: Lucio's video example ↗

Effective Dark Triad™

Effective Dark Triad™ refers to an adaptive profile of traits associated with the dark triad, such as boldness, positive calculativeness, effective grandiosity, etc., while removing maladaptive tendencies like psychopathic short-term orientation and criminal tendencies, narcissistic neediness, and Machiavellian alienation.

Strategic Dark Triad™ is the process of cultivating the traits and learning the skills, without the downsides.
Finally, at TPM we also advise an **Honorable Dark Triad™** approach. It consists of placing strategic honor and a preference for win–win as the baseline, while still advancing and achieving goals.

Read more in:

- **Strategic Machiavellism**: How to be a good Machiavellian
- **Strategic Narcissism**: How to be a good narcissist
- **Strategic Psychopathy**: How to be a good psychopath

Trait to adopt	Effective Dark Triad
Agency & self-sufficiency	Keep both, but remain flexible and able to seek support when useful
Strategic predisposition (Mach), with 'positive cynicism', positive calculativeness, and self-defense	Add some activities just for pleasure, fun, and 'flow' to unwind and boost life quality

Trait to adopt	Effective Dark Triad
Extraversion: approach, talk, and lead in new groups and networking events	**Switch it on when needed**, you don't need to be extraverted
Emotional detachment	**Switch it on for work and 'missions'** but use empathy for closer bonds
High confidence and self-belief	**Combine with antifragility** for psychological resilience (antifragile ego & grandiosity)
Power awareness and power motivation. Ensure respect and always look for second motives and WIIFT	**Warmth + dominance** for cooperation & leadership. Develop meaning ('effective spirituality')
Provocability and capacity for meanness	Keep for dealing with toxic people, but develop a reputation as an honorable man

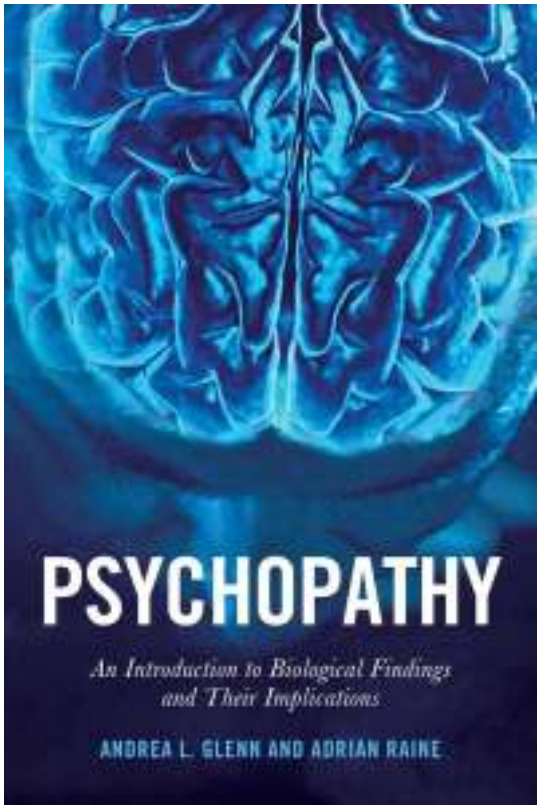
We focus on the how-to in our flagship course:

Check Power University

Psychopathy: An Introduction to Biological Findings

Lucio Buffalmano · 11 May 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Psychopathy: An Introduction to Biological Findings (2014) is a research-based overview of the genetic, neurological, and physiological mechanisms behind psychopathy, written by two of the top experts in the field.



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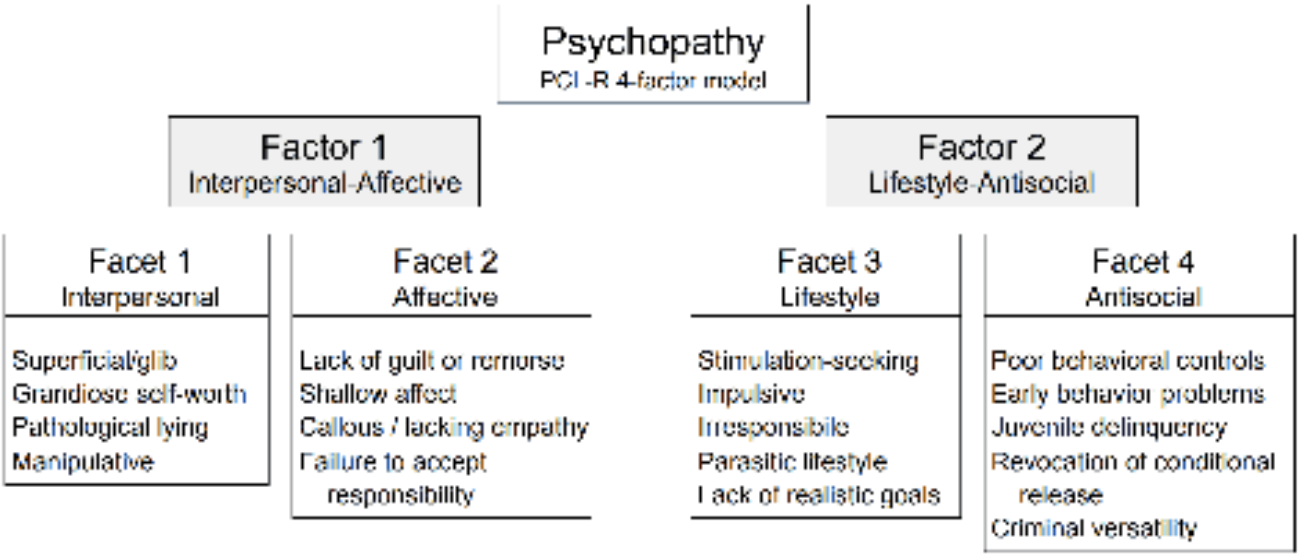
NOTES

About the Author:
Andrea L. Glenn is a psychologist and researcher known for her work on the biological and cognitive mechanisms underlying psychopathy and antisocial behavior.
Adrian Raine is a neurocriminologist whose research on brain structure, physiology, and genetics has shaped the modern understanding of antisocial and violent behavior.

Intro



Factor structure of psychopathy as defined by the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (Hare, 2003).

Psychopathy vs. Antisocial Personality

ASPD is a broad and heterogeneous DSM diagnosis defined mainly by persistent antisocial and criminal behavior: law-breaking, aggression, deception, and impulsivity. It captures about 75% of inmates, far more than psychopathy, and most research on "antisocial" samples does not distinguish which individuals are actually psychopathic.

The key difference:

- **Psychopathy includes the Interpersonal–Affective (Factor 1) traits**—callousness, shallow affect, lack of empathy, manipulativeness.
- **ASPD does not require these traits** and largely overlaps only with the Lifestyle–Antisocial (Factor 2) aspects of psychopathy.

Aggression also differs:

- Psychopaths show **instrumental (planned, goal-directed) aggression**, in addition to some reactive aggression.
- Individuals with ASPD or other disorders linked to aggression tend to show **more reactive** aggression.

In sum: psychopathy is a **narrower, more specific construct** centered on interpersonal–affective deficits, not merely antisocial behavior or criminality. ASPD is **broader** and captures many individuals who are not psychopathic. Psychopathy can—but does not have to—include criminal behavior.

Subtypes of Psychopathy: Primary & Secondary

Research suggests that psychopathy is not a single uniform pattern but includes **distinct subtypes**. Early theorists proposed etiologically different forms of psychopathy (Lykken 1957; Karpman 1941), and modern studies support

this view. Personality-based models consistently identify **two groups among individuals with high psychopathy scores**:

1. an *emotionally stable*, low-stress-reactive subgroup, and
2. a subgroup marked by *negative emotionality, impulsivity, and hostility* (Hicks et al. 2004; Hicks, Vaidyanathan, and Patrick 2010).

These are commonly referred to as **primary** and **secondary** psychopaths. Secondary psychopathy is linked to **higher anxiety** (e.g., Newman and Schmitt 1998; Skeem et al. 2007) and **poorer interpersonal functioning**—greater irritability, social withdrawal, and lower assertiveness—while both subtypes show **similar levels of antisocial behavior** (Skeem et al. 2007). Evidence also indicates that their **developmental pathways differ** (Kimonis et al. 2011; Skeem et al. 2003), and each group may involve **distinct neurobiological abnormalities**.

Chapter 1. Genetics

By analyzing twin and adoption studies, the authors conclude that psychopathy, like most personality disorders, has a significant genetic component, meaning a substantial portion of the variation in psychopathic traits is explained by inherited factors.

Key Findings:

- **Substantial Heritability:** *the main findings from these studies are that psychopathic traits appear to be moderately to highly heritable* and *share some common genetic factors with antisocial behavior more generally, but they are also attributable to unique genetic factors*
- **Stability is also partially genetic**: *Genetic factors have also been found to contribute to the stability of psychopathic traits over time. Several studies have established that psychopathic personality is stable (Loney et al. 2007, Lynam et al. 2007). A study by Forsman et al. (2008) found that genetic factors contribute to this stability. In contrast, changes in psychopathic traits over time were found to result primarily from environmental factors*
- **Different facets of psychopathy share common genetic factors** *The finding that there are common genetic factors infuencing the distinct aspects of psychopathy suggests that it is indeed a unified construct. Two studies have found that some of the same genetic factors contribute to the different facets of psychopathy (Taylor et al. 2003, Larsson, Andershed, and Lichtenstein 2006), finding sizable genetic correlations between the different factors of psychopathy, including callous-unemotional features and impulsive-antisocial features. These studies suggest that there is a strong relationship among the genetic factors that are associated with the different aspects of psychopathy*
  - But there are also unique genetic factors for different facets: *Blonigen at al. (2005) found no genetic correlation between the Fearless Dominance and Impulsive Antisocial factors of psychopathy, suggesting that the two factors may derive from independent etiological processes. Also Taylor et al. (2003) and Larsson, Andershed, and Lichtenstein (2006) found that unique genetic effects that are important for the different psychopathy factors (i.e., there are unique genetic effects that influence the different psychopathy factors over and above the genetic influence from the latent psychopathy factor)*
- **Psychopathy shares common genetic factors with antisocial/externalizing behavior**: Taken together, the results from behavioral genetics studies indicate that genetic and nonshared environmental factors account for individual differences in psychopathic traits from childhood through adulthood
- **Nonshared rather than shared environment accounts for the rest of the variance**: *Studies of antisocial behavior have most often found that the environment that is shared between twins has an effect on antisocial behavior (Rhee and Waldman 2002, Larsson et al. 2007). However, across all the studies reviewed here on psychopathic personality traits, the influence of shared environmental factors was negligible*
- **Gender may play a role**: For example, Fontaine et al. (2010) found that in youth with stable, high levels of callous-unemotional traits, boys demonstrated stronger genetic influences, whereas girls demonstrated stronger

shared environmental influences <— ⍰⍰♂**Lucio's note**: could this be related to women's higher interdependence?

Heritability studies provide *averages*

It is also important to keep in mind that this figure represents an average across a large number of people, and that in some individuals, genes may have a stronger influence on the development of psychopathic traits than the environment, and in other individuals, the opposite may be true

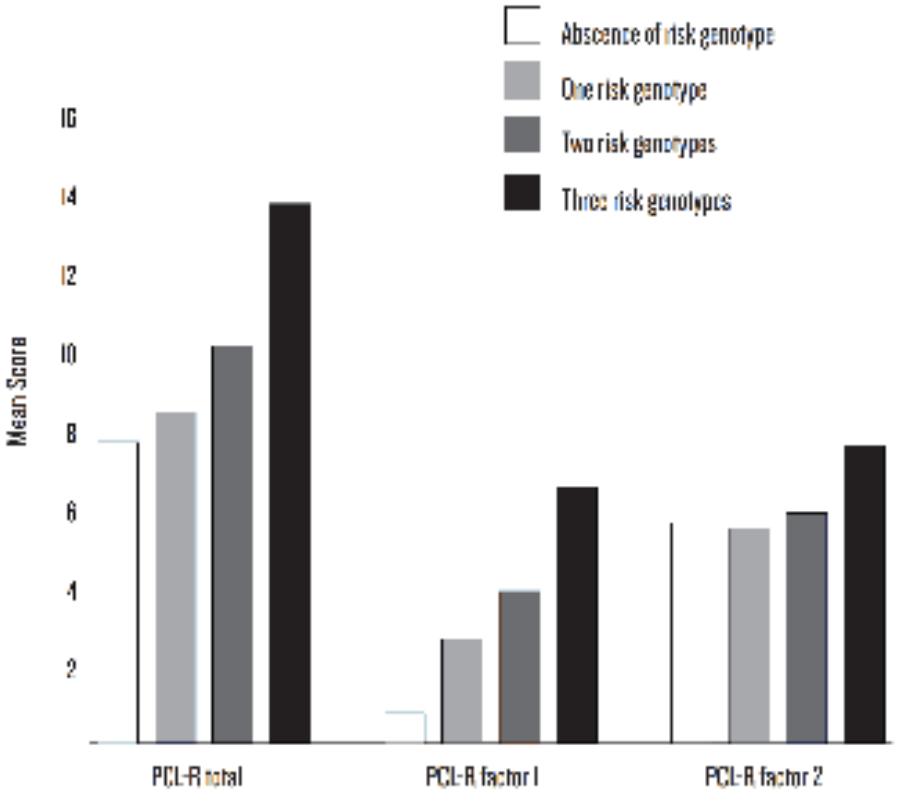
Domain	Psychopathic individuals relative to controls
Amygdala responsivity to negative stimuli	Reduced
Connectivity between amygdala and VMPFC –	Reduced
Error processing in the prefrontal cortex	Reduced error-related negativity; Reduced positive ERP amplitude (Pe)
Heart rate (resting)	Reduced
Heart rate variability	Increased
Fear potentiated startle	Reduced
Reduced skin conductance responding during fear conditioning	Reduced
Cortisol response to the Trier Social Stress Test	Reduced
Central serotonin functioning (fenfluramine challenge)	Elevated
Attention to negative stimuli in the periphery	Reduced
Passive avoidance learning	Poor
Risk taking (Balloon Analog Risk Task)	Increased risk taking
Decisions based on reward and punishment	Poor

When it comes to specific genes or polymorphisms:

Polymorphism/Gene	Sample	Main finding
TaqIA & B SNP	58 male inmates with substance abuse	No association with total psychopathy scores
TaqIA & B SNP	137 alcohol dependent males	A+ genotype associated with Factor 1, but not total scores
TaqIA & B SNP	176 alcohol dependent males; 150 controls	A+ genotype associated with Factor 1, but not total scores
C957T (DRD2)	176 alcohol dependent males; 150 controls	CC genotype associated with total, Factor 1, and Factor 2 scores
SLC6A3 (dopamine transporter)	137 alcohol dependent males	No association with total or factor scores
CNR1 (cannabinoid receptor)	137 alcohol dependent males	Associated with Factor 1, but not total scores
5-HTTLPR (serotonin transporter)	89 adolescents previously diagnosed with ADHD	Higher psychopathy scores in carriers of the short allele, driven by the affective factor
5-HTTLPR (serotonin transporter)	Youth from treatment/legal agencies and controls; male and female	Higher scores on the impulsivity dimension of psychopathy in short allele carriers; higher scores on the callous-unemotional dimension in individuals homozygous for the long allele of lower socioeconomic status

Polymorphism/Gene	Sample	Main finding
5-HTTLPR (serotonin transporter)	862 alcohol dependent males and females	Higher psychopathy scores in males homozygous for the long allele; higher psychopathy scores in females homozygous for the short allele
OXTR	Psychopathy screening device	Associated with the A allele of the OXTR_rs237885 gene
FAAH	137 alcohol dependent males	Associated with Factor 1, but not total scores
COMT	99 adolescents previously diagnosed with ADHD	Val/Val genotype associated with higher Factor 1 scores
MAO-A	88 adolescent males previously diagnosed with ADHD	Low activity allele associated with higher total and affective factor scores

The additive effects of different genes:



Hoenicka et al. (2007).

Chapter 2. Hormones

> The two primary hormones that have been associated with psychopathy are cortisol and testosterone

- **Findings linking testosterone with psychopathy are inconsistent**: *Despite the strong theoretical evidence that psychopathy may be associated with high levels of testosterone, only a few studies have tested the hypothesis and results are inconsistent.*
  - *One study found testosterone levels to be associated with scores on the Lifestyle-Antisocial Factor 2 of the PCL-R in forensic psychiatric patients, although results may be confounded by comorbid substance abuse and other psychiatric disorders (Stalenheim et al. 1998).*
  - *A more recent study in a large sample of individuals recruited from temporary employment agencies found no*

relationship between psychopathy (or its factors) and testosterone (Glenn, Raine, Schug, et al. 2011). Similarly…
  - *Another study found that testosterone levels were not different in boys with callous-unemotional traits compared to healthy controls (Loney et al. 2006).*
  - *In other antisocial and aggressive groups, higher testosterone levels have been observed in girls with conduct disorder (Pajer et al. 2006), adolescent boys with externalizing behaviors (Maras et al. 2003), young criminals (Kreuz and Rose 1972; Dabbs, Frady, and Carr 1987; Dabbs, Jurkovic*
- **Findings of lower cortisol are inconsistent**: *Low resting cortisol levels have been associated with impaired fear reactivity in young children (Kagan, Reznick, and Snidman 1988), increased sensation seeking in men (Rosenblitt et al. 2002), and increased monetary risk taking (van Honk et al. 2003). A few recent studies have found relationships between cortisol and psychopathy. However, others have failed to replicate this finding (van Honk et al. 2003; Glenn, Raine, Schug, et al. 2011)*
- **Hypothesis: T + other hormones**: Although a direct link between testosterone and psychopathic traits has not been established, some evidence suggests that testosterone may interact with other hormones to predispose to psychopathy
  - The testosterone/cortisol ratio hypothesis: *In a large sample of individuals Glenn, Raine, Schug, et al. (2011) found that psychopathy was associated with the ratio of baseline testosterone to cortisol reactivity to a stressor; this accounted for 5 percent of the variance in psychopathic traits. No significant relationships were observed between psychopathy and individual hormone measures, which included baseline testosterone and cortisol, and cortisol reactivity to a stressor; it appeared that only when both hormones were taken into consideration did a significant relationship emerge.*
- **Burnout hypothesis**: *One hypothesis is that there may be some type of "burnout" effect, where chronic stress or other environmental factors overwork the stress response system to the point that it no longer responds properly.*

The similarities between testosterone and psychopathy

High testosterone levels associated with	Psychopathy associated with
Impulsivity	Impulsivity
Sensation seeking	Stimulation seeking
Sociability	Sociability
Disinhibition	Poor behavioral controls
Showing off	Grandiose sense of self-worth
Forwardness	Promiscuous sexual behavior; increased number of sexual partners
More criminal violence	More criminal violence
Not marrying; marital instability; poor marital quality	Many short-term marital relationships
Law breaking	Law breaking
Reckless driving	Poor behavioral controls, risk-taking behavior
Failure to plan ahead	Impulsivity/failure to plan ahead
Judged more harshly by parole board; violate prison rules more often	Revocation of conditional release
Juvenile delinquency	Juvenile delinquency
Reduced emotional response to fearful faces	Reduced brain activity to fearful faces
Reduced empathetic behavior (facial mimicry)	Callous/lack of empathy

High testosterone levels associated with	Psychopathy associated with
Reduced fear-potentiated startle	Deficient fear-potentiated startle
Reduced skin conductance responding to affective stimuli	Reduced skin conductance responding to affective stimuli

Chapter 3. Psychophysiology

> Psychophysiological research involves the study of two overarching systems: the autonomic nervous system, which controls mostly visceral functions and is measured by skin conductance and heart rate, and the central nervous system, which consists of the brain and spinal cord and is measured by electroencephalogram (EEG)

- **Lower response to cues of aversive stimuli, not the stimuli itself**: *When examining the startle refex, aversive conditioning, or the response to aversive stimuli, one interesting fnding is that psychopaths do not appear to have reduced physiological responses to the actual aversive stimulus such as the shock or loud noise blast (exceptions include Hare and Quinn 1971, Lykken 1957, Fung et al. 2005). Instead, the deficits appear to be primarily in the ability to respond to cues that signal that an aversive event will occur*
- **Impaired Fear Conditioning:** Psychopathic individuals exhibit a deficit in **fear conditioning**. When exposed to a neutral stimulus (e.g., a tone) that is repeatedly paired with an aversive outcome (e.g., a shock), non-psychopathic individuals develop a fear response (measured by **skin conductance/electrodermal activity**). Psychopaths typically show a dramatically blunted or absent skin conductance response, demonstrating a fundamental deficit in learning to fear aversive consequences.
- **Blunted Startle Response:** They show reduced **startle reflex potentiation** when anticipating or viewing negative emotional stimuli (like threatening pictures or fearful faces). This suggests a failure to engage the normal, defensive physiological system, which contributes to their **Boldness** and lack of anxiety.
- **Orienting Responses:** Conversely, psychopaths sometimes show enhanced orienting responses to pleasant or reward-related stimuli, suggesting an imbalance where their attention is strongly biased toward **reward** but insensitive to **punishment**.

Chapter 4. Neuropsychology

This chapter links psychopathy to specific cognitive and executive function deficits, offering a bridge between brain structure and observable behavior.

- **Avoidance as a goal works, but avoidance with a reward doesn't**: *psychopathic individuals display normal abilities to avoid monetary punishment when this is their only goal. However, they exhibit deficits in the ability to avoid monetary punishment when the task also involves a goal of earning monetary rewards. It is suggested that when their primary goal is earning reward, they are unable to reallocate attention to cues of potential punishment (Newman and Kosson 1986)*
- Both neurological case studies and neuropsychological testing suggest that psychopathy likely involves **deficits in the ventromedial PFC and amygdala**

Chapter 5. Brain Imaging

> Brain imaging fndings, for the most part, have been able to confrm what has been hypothesized based on psychophysiological, neuropsychological, and behavioral data regarding the brain regions that are implicated in psychopathy. Tese regions include the amygdala and parts of the frontal lobe. In addition, brain imaging research has identifed several additional regions that may function diferently in psychopathic individuals, or that may indicate abnormal development of the brain.

- **Amygdala Dysfunction:** This is the most consistent finding, strongly linked to the **Meanness/Callous-Unemotional** traits. Studies show:
  - **Structural Abnormalities:** Reduced gray matter volume in the amygdala.
  - **Functional Abnormalities:** Hypoactivity (reduced activation) of the amygdala when processing fearful and sad facial expressions (distress cues) and during moral decision-making. This may explain the observed emotional blunting and lack of empathy.
- **Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex (vmPFC):** This region, which is critical for integrating emotion into decision-making and regulating the amygdala, also shows:
  - **Structural Abnormalities:** Reduced gray matter volume and white matter integrity.
  - **Functional Abnormalities:** Reduced activity during tasks involving emotional regulation, moral judgment, and reversal learning (learning to switch responses after an outcome changes). This links to poor judgment and impulsivity (**Disinhibition**).
- **Limbic System Connectivity:** Psychopathy is also viewed not as a deficit in a single area but as a **disconnection** between the limbic system (emotion centers like the amygdala) and the frontal lobes (control centers like the PFC).

Chapter 6. Biosocial and Environmental Influences

This chapter moves from purely biological factors to the crucial interaction between biology and the environment (Biosocial perspective).

- **Parenting matters**: *Numerous studies of antisocial behavior and crime have identified parenting practices such as harsh or erratic discipline, poor parental supervision, and distant, cold, and rejecting parenting styles as risk factors for antisocial behavior. In the Cambridge Study, poor parental supervision in youth significantly predicted psychopathy scores in adulthood, but this was true only for the Lifestyle-Antisocial*
  - Fathers matter: *One of the strongest predictors of the affective features of psychopathy was having an uninvolved father, although this is likely to be mediated by a number of other factors*
  - Parents' relationship quality matters: *Family conflict is another factor that has been associated with psychopathy. The Cambridge Study found a significant relationship between having a disrupted family at age 8 and psychopathy scores at age 48*
- **Maternal smoking *may* matter**: *psychopathic traits were associated with maternal smoking during pregnancy (…) Controlling for these factors, in addition to genetic factors, the effects of maternal smoking were reduced by between 75 percent and 100 percent. Thus, it is not clear whether maternal smoking itself (as a toxin that may damage the fetus) actually predisposes for psychopathic traits*
- **Gene-Environment (GxE) Interaction:** The expression of genetic vulnerabilities (e.g., MAOA low-activity allele) may depend on the level of environmental adversity experienced, such as **childhood maltreatment**. A high-risk genotype combined with a high-risk environment significantly amplifies the likelihood of psychopathic outcomes.

Chapter 7. Successful Psychopaths

This chapter addresses the controversial concept of “successful” psychopaths—individuals high in psychopathic traits but who avoid criminal detection and achieve societal success (e.g., in business or politics).

- **Biological Comparison:** Early research suggests that successful psychopaths may possess biological advantages that unsuccessful psychopaths lack. For example, they may have **intact executive function** and PFC activity, allowing them to regulate the *expression* of their antisocial impulses. They are better at engaging their frontal regions to control their amygdala-driven emotional deficits.
- **Mask of sanity:** This concept validates Cleckley’s original idea of the “mask of sanity,” where high intelligence and strategic control (functional biology) mask the core, underlying affective pathology.

Chapter 8. Ethical Issues

This chapter addresses the moral, legal, and societal implications of a biological model of psychopathy, including

- **Free Will vs. Determinism & responsibility:** If psychopathy is demonstrably linked to brain abnormalities (e.g., a damaged vmPFC), does this mitigate an individual’s **criminal responsibility**?
- **Neuro-Prediction and Dangerousness:** Using neurobiological or genetic markers to predict future violent or criminal behavior raises serious civil liberties concerns regarding preventative detention, especially for juveniles.
- **Labeling Effects & Bias:** The term “psychopath” is highly pejorative in forensic settings and can unfairly bias legal decisions (e.g., parole, death penalty sentencing), often leading to a presumption of incorrigibility, regardless of current evidence. **<— ⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s note: the opposite is also true**, though. The correct diagnosis though also allows society to reduce the costs of crime and spare many innocent victims

Chapter 9. Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment

- **Early Intervention:** Treatment is most effective for **youth** high in **CU traits** because their brains are still developing. Interventions include specialized parent training to increase warmth and consistent reinforcement, and programs targeting emotional recognition (e.g., training children to recognize fear/sadness in others).
- **Nutritional supplementation**: *Several studies have found that nutritional deficiencies predispose for antisocial behavior (…) Neugebauer, Hoek, and Susser (1999) found that male offspring of mothers who were severely malnourished during the first and second trimesters of pregnancy had 2.5 times the normal rate of antisocial personality disorder in adulthood. Poor nutrition in the first three years of life has also been associated with long-term antisocial behavior throughout childhood and late adolescence (Liu et al. 2004)*
- **Relieving maternal stress and depression**: *maternal stress and depression are factors that have been found to affect the developing brain and that are associated with psychopathic traits*
  - Sleeping patterns: *Another form of maternal stress is disrupted sleep patterns that result from shif work. Ramlau-Hansen et al. (2011) found that maternal shift work was associated with an 11 percent increase in testosterone levels in male offspring at ages 18 to 21*
- **Pharmacological Intervention:** Future treatments may involve medications to target specific neurobiological deficits, such as:

  - **Serotonin/Dopamine Agents:** To reduce impulsivity and aggression (Disinhibition).
  - **Oxytocin:** To potentially enhance social cognition and empathy (Meanness).
- **Neurobiological Intervention:** Emerging, though speculative, methods like **neurofeedback** or **transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)** could one day be used to functionally "re-tune" dysfunctional brain regions (e.g., to increase vmPFC activity or connectivity).
- **Treatment may also contribute**: a review found that treatment results for adult psychopaths range from low-moderate to poor with three of eight studies demonstrating that psychopathic individuals benefited from treatment (Salekin, Worley, and Grimes 2010). But findings are mixed for psychological treatment like cognitive behavioral therapy, group therapy, family therapy,

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Is Successful Psychopathy Even A Thing?

A story described by Cleckley can make us reflect on what 'successful' truly means:

> Cleckley describes a middle-aged man who came from a well-regarded family and who made his way through three years at a prestigious university by utilizing the work of his friends and cheating on exams.
> He dressed in nice clothes and was popular at social gatherings. Although he had not paid his fraternity fees, he was tolerated because of his entertaining style and his ability to easily recruit new freshmen to join.
> By age 50, a survey of his life revealed that he had consistently been supported by wealthy women who repeatedly loaned him money and would help him find new positions when he lost a job. He had no difficulty having several women at his beck and call. When one relationship would go sour, he had no trouble finding another woman to raise money for a new venture or find him a new position. He was also able to make valuable business associations by loitering at the country club, and these associations enabled him to make a good living for brief periods, but his ventures always failed. Such individuals are sometimes referred to as successful psychopaths—individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits who are able to get by in society, often taking advantage of others, without ever coming into contact with the law.

Look at this:

- ***Tolerated***, not admired
- Possible **lower value women** that supported him, not quality ones
- **No work/business success**

This is certainly leagues above the psychopaths who languish in prison, but I wouldn't call this 'successful' either.

QUOTES

The cost of psychopathy on society:

> The prevalence of psychopathic personality traits takes a major toll on society. In criminal populations, offenders with psychopathic traits are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime, particularly violent crime. In the rest of society, psychopathic traits are a driving force behind much of the corruption, exploitation, manipulation, and deception that occurs on both large and small scales. Psychopathy causes undue

> physical, emotional, and fnancial trauma in the lives of countless individuals

On ‘successful’ psychopathy being an even higher cost:

> Much of the research we have discussed thus far has focused on psychopathic individuals in forensic populations and may not be generalizable to psychopaths in the general population. However, noninstitutionalized individuals with psychopathic traits not only may outnumber the institutionalized psychopathic population, but also may in the long run be more dangerous and destructive to society (Gao and Raine 2010

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s Analysis

I’d Like Less Defensive: Findings Over Morals

One reminder that ‘genes are not destiny’ is important, but many of them feel like defensiveness, and I felt there were too many.
A book for scholars and researchers should focus on findings, not on moral and ethical concerns.

Also, some passages feel defensively negative about what we may be able to do in the future, like this one:

> There is no “crime gene.”
> By no means is there a single gene, or even a small group of genes, that will enable us to predict which individuals will commit crime in the future
> Genes confer risk for traits such as those observed in psychopathy, which may heighten the risk for criminal behavior, but we will never be able to use genes to predict which individuals will become psychopathic or persistent criminals. In reality, hundreds and maybe thousands of genes are involved, each of which makes a small contribution by coding for proteins and enzymes that in turn affect brain functioning, psychological processes, and ultimately behavior

There is no single gene, of course, but the tone feels like discounting the importance of genes. Or, worse, that mapping the hundreds or thousands of risk-related genes is a futile effort in terms of predictive power.
Instead, I believe that understanding these polygenic contributions could be **extremely valuable for prevention, early intervention, and tailored corrective strategies**.

There is no ‘single gene’ of course, but being able to map those hundreds or thousands may still be able to help with prevention and correction.

REVIEW

Psychopathy: An Introduction to Biological Findings is a valuable introductory text to understand the genetic, biological, but also cultural factors that contribute to psychopathy.

Since the book is meant for academics, it can be a bit dry at times, and you may have to dig or research separately to understand some concepts—but that’s an added opportunity to learn more.

Check the best books on psychopathy or our **most recommended books**.

David DeAngelo: Dating Advice, Cocky Funny, and Program Reviews

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 May 2026 · Archived copy · Original

David DeAngelo was an early and influential figure in the 'pick-up movement' who popularized the "Cocky Funny" style.

This page brings together TPM's analysis of David DeAngelo, two of his products — *Advanced Dating Techniques* and *Sexual Communication* — and the effectiveness of his work and approach.

Contents

- Who Is David DeAngelo?
- Cocky & Funny (C&F)
  - Reading Compliance
  - Limitations of Cocky-Funny
- DeAngelo Reviews
  - Review: Advanced Dating Techniques
  - Review: Sexual Communication
- Is David DeAngelo Still Worth Studying?

Who Is David DeAngelo?

David DeAngelo is the pen name of Eben Pagan, arguably the "Godfather" of modern commercialized dating advice. Before the market was flooded with generic "life coaches," DeAngelo's **Double Your Dating** was the first to bridge the gap between niche PUA (Pickup Artist) movement and mass-market dating advice and self-help.

DeAngelo's main contributions include:

- **Double Your Dating**, a popular dating program turned into a website, catchphrase and brand, and probably the biggest-selling PUA-inspired product
- **Cocky Funny**, a style based on high confidence and teasing. Compared to early PU canned lines, gimmicks, and 'magic tricks' Cocky Funny was revolutionary: simpler, more natural, and higher power all at once
- ***Attraction is not a choice***, a mantra-quote suggesting that attraction is involuntary and subconscious, not something you can negotiate rationally or that she can decide whether to have or not have. It also means: become an attractive man, and women's attraction becomes automatic

The Marketing Genius

DeAngelo's story is a classic case of a smart marketer turning a movement into a business opportunity.
As Eben Pagan, he was a real estate and marketing professional. He seemingly first entered the PUA niche for learning and free contributions in the sosuave.net forum together with folks like Mystery and Neil Strauss. DeAngelo came up with "Cocky & Funny", a principle he associated with his name and which gave him credibility, and then stopped posting and started selling instead.

He applied marketing principles—scarcity, branding, and psychological triggers—in a new blue ocean market with lots of interested men, but few teachers. And he reaped the benefits creating a high-turnover business.

Cocky & Funny (C&F)

This is DeAngelo's signature idea and still the most memorable part of his work, balancing arrogance and humor.

- **The logic:** "Nice guys" over-invest and signal low value. "Assholes" under-invest but push others away
- **Why it works**: cockiness signals power, while funny makes you social and draws people in
- **How to do it**: get in a 'let's have a good time' mood. Be playful, lightly teasing, and self-assured. Do not overexplain yourself if she asks for clarification, and instead lean into sexual tension
  - Push-pull technique: pull-pull is a specific form of 'cocky-funny', consisting of giving a compliment but 'taking it away'. For example, '*I like you, you're good fun. But you're too much trouble*'

C&F is a playful form of our 'power and warmth model'. By being "cocky," you signal confidence, high status, and a lack of neediness. By being "funny" you take some of the edge off and become more engaging and relatable.

Reading Compliance

It also works as a compliance test.
By teasing a woman, you are checking if she will accept your frame and leadership:

- ✅ **She laughs** = she accepts your leadership
- ❓ **Teases back** = high confidence woman, doesn't yet see you as 'above her', but you're in the game
- ❓ **She pushes back** = she doesn't see you as 'above her' yet. But you're still in the game and with good skills you can turn it around
- ❓ **She gets offended** = you overdid it and must learn proper calibration. It's still salvageable, but it requires advanced skills to walk back, without losing power

Limitations of Cocky-Funny

Cocky funny is most suitable in high-energy and/or hangout places. Think parties, night venues, but potentially also social circles.

It can also work in chiller contexts like day game, of course, but **in daytime you must eventually snap out of cocky funny mode** and present yourself as a real human being. Even if you're 'successful', if all you provide is a

mood boost and she walks out thinking 'that guy is funny' but nothing else, chances are that you won't see her again. High-value women don't meet 'funny guys' they haven't bonded with.

This also links to the main risk of cocky funny. Cocky funny often requires more, especially solid foundations. If on a date, it also requires some bonding and connection.

Finally, the concept can also be taken too far, turning into high-energy 'jestering' that undermines power and masculinity.

Read more:

- **When high energy undermines attraction**: don't become a jester

DeAngelo Reviews

DeAngelo's principles of not chasing, going out and meeting women, and progressing interactions forward are all valid.

At the level of personal authority, DeAngelo looked more like a smart marketer than a man who embodied top-tier seduction outcomes. Although his contributions were valuable in the budding PUA movement, his biggest edge was packaging attraction principles into a scalable business.

As for his products, we reviewed some of his work some years ago and we'll share our takes here.

The programs have disappeared since
Since we first released our reviews, DeAngelo programs have been removed. This may be due to lower demand over time.

Review: Advanced Dating Techniques

Advanced Dating Techniques is David DeAngelo's ultimate and most advanced dating program, aiming to build attraction, move interactions forward, and signal high value.

The central ideas are still valid: confidence matters, chasing undermines aggression, and supplicating men turn women off.
A large portion of the program is dedicated to 'inner game' or the mental aspects of self-development. But he also shares some advice on approaching women, being a 'good asshole', and gaining status with sub-communication and body language.

The problem is that the material is more basic than 'advanced', lacking how-tos, real-life examples, and deeper frameworks. For example, the advice of 'not stopping the behavior she reprimands right away' is about displaying power and not being controlled. But it lacks a deeper framework that could help men internalize the concept and apply it in all other areas of both dating and life.
It also missed decades of development and doesn't fully leverage research.

It's more like random DeAngelo talks than a true dating system that drives results.

Review: Sexual Communication

Sexual Communication is another David DeAngelo program, focused on flirtatious communication and sexual tension.

The core idea is that normal communication rules get reversed in dating. Instead of being nice, explanatory, or compliant, a man should lead, tease, stay selective, and build tension.
There are four steps:

1. **Directness:** Stop hiding intent and be more assertive

2. **Psychological Arousal:** Using “future pacing” and suggestive language to jiggle the target’s imagination
3. **Physical Escalation:** Touch women appropriately and early on to get used to your physical presence. Use the “Two Steps Forward, One Step Back” approach for escalation.
   See sexual escalation
4. **Handling Resistance:** Don’t get discouraged by initial rejection, and build comfort instead. See ‘handling resistance’

DeAngelo goes through a few core concepts like displaying high power, passing women’s tests, and his trademark ‘cocky funny’.
While there are valid insights, we frankly found the program fluffy and disorganized, with a few decent examples but too much filler around them (and some less than stellar examples).

Is David DeAngelo Still Worth Studying?

If you’re looking for high ROI, **there is better material** to help you succeed in dating.

DeAngelo deserves credit for helping men move away from desperate pursuit and from silly, jester-like early PUA tactics like carrying pictures and doing magic tricks.
He was revolutionary back then, but what’s revolutionary in the early days of a new movement often becomes outdated as the discipline moves forward.

But most men today can benefit from better programs that are high-power, more masculine, and ultimately more effective.

For men who want a more complete and updated framework, you can look into **Seduction University**, a more structured and practical program aligned with a modern understanding of attraction, social dynamics, and what works with attractive women.

Join Seduction University

The Hero’s Journey: Why Most Men Never Become Dangerous

Lucio Buffalmano · 18 May 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Most men in self-help chase healthy routines and pep talks, but struggle to get deeper confidence. It’s because real confidence isn’t built by habits alone; **deep confidence is earned when you survive real risk and conquer real-life challenges.**

Skip that trial by fire and you stay a boy, not a man.

In this post, I’ll show you what a man’s hero’s journey actually is, why it works, and how to start one without gambling away your life.

Contents

- Intro: What’s A Hero’s Journey
  - What’s not a hero’s journey
  - Standard Self-Help vs. Hero’s Journey
  - Modern Men Are Missing a Hero’s Journey
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  - Starting & Enduring
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- How to Start A Hero’s Journey
  - 1. Set A Life-Relevant Goal, and Aim High
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  - 3. Go Solo
  - 4. Remove Family Support, Rely On Yourself
  - 5. String Journeys For A Hero’s Life (Infinite Game)
  - 6. Strategic Risk-Taking: Limit the Downsides

Intro: What's A Hero's Journey

> A hero's journey is a phase of life that pushes a man beyond comfort and safety, forcing him to face real risk, struggle, and uncertainty that change his psychology and mindsets

A hero's journey is **high stakes**, both mentally and practically.
Failing the journey carries real costs, so the psychological intensity, including fear, is well-motivated.

If the journey is successful, the hero acquires agency, wisdom, competence, and confidence.

What's not a hero's journey

Here's a table to help differentiate general self-help advice vs. a hero's journey:

Self-Help Challenges	Hero's Journey
Acting beyond one's comfort zone	Fully outside one's comfort zone, no respite back in comfort
Facing what scares you (social anxiety, cold approach, fear of confrontation, etc.)	Existential challenge, beyond individual fears. Potentially, fear for life
Physical challenges in controlled and safer environments	Life itself becomes a challenge
Confidence you can follow habits, push yourself, and improve	Confidence you can handle *life*

Another important difference is between real-life heroes' journeys and mythical journeys. Myths and movies often entail a fight for a good ideal, or for the well-being of others (Campbell, 1988).
While these stories make good myths and movies, many real-life heroes' journeys are about individuation, growth, and self-advancement. In more extreme cases, also about survival.

Standard Self-Help vs. Hero's Journey

Good habits are crucial: they make you disciplined, healthy, and effective.

However, by themselves, habits seldom give you advanced skills and unshakable, antifragile confidence.
Normal self-help is also easy advice because it's safe: gym, sleep, no booze, meditation. These are all undoubtedly good for you, and everyone approves of them.

Unfortunately, they're also all comparatively easier than a true life test, so they're not as effective for inner growth.
No matter how much money you make or how much you bench, **if you haven't truly been tested, you are fragile.**

This is why pursuing a hero's journey is important for the most ambitious men.

Modern Men Are Missing a Hero's Journey

For most of history, life forced the test. When life was tough, simply surviving was a hero's journey that required boys to become men.

Even until recently, army drafts, early marriages, and little social safety provided external stressors and responsibility.

Today, those built-in trials are gone.
Modern society solved survival — and accidentally removed the developmental pressure that used to turn boys into men.

Today, only men who actively pursue a hero's journey may get to experience one.

⍰ Example: My Father Forced Into The Journey

I used to think my father was so attached to his service because of over-romanticism and some old-school nationalism/conservatism.

Today, I see it differently. Service was my father's hero's journey.

My father shared more than once when he mentioned to my grandmother that he might go back.
His mother didn't deny him, but told him that 'there was nothing back home for him'.
That letter was his mother's ultimate gift: she severed the umbilical cord with the truth: Montefion, his tiny boyhood village, was a dead end for an ambitious man. The only way forward is not backward, but through the storm.

My father left at 17. An inexperienced boy, including, I suspect, sexually.
Through rough seas and seasickness, he graduated from boyhood to manhood. And he was then ready to go talk to my mother and form a family.

My Hero's Journey

Much of my early life was a subconscious craving for a hero's journey.

I was a different kind of rebel.
Instead of resenting non-existent control, I resented their *support.*
I resented a too-easy life that wasn't allowing me the tough tests I craved to grow and earn my own self-respect.

My fantasy of the ultimate test was being a dumpster baby. The real-life equivalent of being alone at the foot of the mountain. No tools, no oxygen, no help. *Now climb.*

Solo travels, hitchhiking, and risky experiments were all smaller-scale attempts to test myself and earn my own respect.

Movie Example: 'I Must Go'

This scene from Fellini's work always struck me hard:

> **Kid**: Where are you going
>
> **Him**: I don't know, I go <— It's not about the destination, it's about the journey of growth
>
> **Kid**: What are you going to do
>
> **Him**: I don't know, but I must go <— It's not about knowing what to do, it's about the experiences and hardships along the way
>
> **Kid**: Weren't you OK here? <— The different mindset of those who stay: 'if you're fine, then you stay'
>
> **Him**: … <— Doesn't yet understand his own inner drive. He was OK there, and he's afraid to go. But he must go to become the man he wants to be
>
> (scenes of those who stay) <— The small reality he felt he had to outgrow

It was such a powerful scene, even when I didn't fully understand it. The movie was a light-hearted movie about enjoying a fun life in the periphery.

This scene seemed odd in that context. But it stuck with me the most from the first time I saw it.
It took me decades to truly understand the significance behind it. That man was looking for his hero's journey. That man was me.

Starting & Enduring

Despite my subconscious cravings for life tests, my strategic predisposition made life too effortless. But eventually, finally, the test I craved found me.

I found myself struggling, alone, and desperate.

I was renting a small guest room from a gay couple, and even that was temporary.
I'm still grateful one of them was nice to me. But his niceness may have caused his partner's hostility. He avoided eye contact and refused to speak English with me.
One day I heard him call me 'asshole' for putting his laundry out, something he'd always do with mine. And I had to take it because I needed their cheap room.
The internship I had taken hoping to turn it into a job ended without an offer. I was jobless and struggling with accommodation, employment, money, social life, and life direction.

I remember one day I just wanted to talk to somebody, and thought of my parents. I took the phone, I looked at it… And I put it back down (this was a key moment similar to my grandmother's letter to my father).
I was worried I couldn't manage to fake that all was OK, and didn't want to put that worry on my parents.

Another day, after another job rejection, I just crouched down on the floor, and cried.
I looked at the window, and I got scared. For the first time in my life, I truly worried about myself and my future.
For the first time in my life, I wasn't sure I'd find a way.
Maybe I still had a glimmer of optimism, but on that day, I could barely see any light at the end of the tunnel.

But one good thing I did is that I never stopped trying and moving. I kept going. And slowly, I climbed back up.

The Transformation

That experience changed me.
It was the watershed phase: I went in a boy, and came out a man. In truth, some of that boy in me died. But it was

for the better.

This is the part some men miss.
Not the suffering, but what suffering *produces* when you don't escape it, or numb it.

1. Upgraded Confidence and Self-Trust

Before, I had a naïve, boyish optimism, kind of *"Yeah, it's going to work out, because… Why not"*. That optimism was empty though, it wasn't backed by any life test.

After that journey, my agentic self-belief evolved into a more realistic, resilient, and **antifragile self-trust.**
Today, I accept and *embrace* limitations. Neither I nor anyone can guarantee success. Only boys believe in assured victory.
I'm comfortable with uncertainty and the possibility of failure.
And while I accept that, I also **deeply trust myself that I would at least give it a fucking good shot.** And if I were an outsider looking in, I'd never bet against myself.

That combination of life-tested self-trust and outcome independence is the foundation of my self-confidence.

2. Upgraded Self-Respect

I always had a good opinion of myself.
But before, it was only based on certain traits I had.

After, it evolved into **life-tested self-respect**.
I respected myself as a man who found himself at the bottom of the mountain of life, on his own, and managed to climb back up.

3. Upgraded, Honorable Mindsets & Work Ethics

My mindsets also shifted.
In the past, my idea of a good life meant little input, for maximum outcomes (highest ROI). Coasting through life like old royalty.

There is a book by a French employee who had a life of no work, for a good salary.
I wanted that, but better. Doing little, but while advancing. And the scariest thing is that I may have succeeded.

Fortunately, my hero's journey taught me to put hard work front and center. Today, I swung the opposite direction and seek maximum contribution.

How to Start A Hero's Journey

1. Set A Life-Relevant Goal, and Aim High

Aiming high will naturally place challenging demands on your life.

Life-relevant means that it must be central to you and what you want out of life. A hero's journey must have consequences for your present and future self.
Controlled environments don't cut it.

2. Move Physically

Moving uproots you, removes your social support, and forces you to build a new life on your own.

Paradoxically, ambitious country boys have an advantage because they *must* move. Circumstances quickly separate journey-takers from safety-seekers.
Urbanites, with opportunities nearby, may miss this opportunity.

⍰♂Lucio's Experience: **The day I realized I was gone for good**

Lucio:
I remember when my dad drove me to the bus stop.

I had already left for university, but I was still close and supported by my parents.
My first job felt different. I knew I'd seldom come back. And when I did, it wouldn't be going back 'home' anymore.

My father took a camera. He probably knew as well.

Once the bus took me out of sight, I got misty-eyed.
I was leaving boyhood behind me. Then, I stopped looking back and started looking forward to the new life chapter. Prague, here I come.

3. Go Solo

A hero's journey is a path of self-discovery.
But not so much about 'who you really are' like many think. It's more about discovering of what you're really *capable* of.

You can have a team if you're the leader taking responsibility for all.
But bar that, go solo.

4. Remove Family Support, Rely On Yourself

You're safer in your tribe, but too safe is the enemy of the hero's journey.

This is not to say you must cut contact, of course. But it is to say that your problems are yours only to face. And never bring your struggle to your parents: it's not honorable.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's example: my brother stayed, I went
And the difference is stark. Also, as much as I like him, respect, well… That's another thing.

5. String Journeys For A Hero's Life (Infinite Game)

The main hero's journey takes you from boyhood to manhood. But you can string several journeys that add new skills, and bring new challenges.

The ambitious man's life is often a series of overlapping and sequential journeys.
Looking at my life, besides moving and pulling myself back up, there were also ambitious dating goals that kept testing me. And then entrepreneurship with TPM and PU as my missions.

⍰⍰♂Lucio's take: I see civilization as a string of great men who move us forward.
Men who made their whole lives a hero's journey. Our job is to join them, and do our part.

6. Strategic Risk-Taking: Limit the Downsides

Even successful journeys can be costly.
And some failures can cost mental health, and potentially more.

Here are five steps for a challenging, but not stupid hero's journey:

1. **Have a 'safety valve contact' if things get dark**. A good friend or a therapist, if you can afford
2. **Have an emergency fund** for food or medical emergencies
   - Emergency roof to avoid homelessness
3. **Learn power dynamics and social strategies**: these are the main skills that provided me a lifeline and boosted my climb. And once you acquire them, nobody can ever take them away from you

How Power University Prepares You

This is why Power University isn't about motivation or routines. It's about building personal power, strategy, and social competence that keep you functional even when life gets tough.

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Best Books On Narcissism

Lucio Buffalmano · 25 May 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The market is flooded with books on **narcissism**. Most of them are written with limited expertise. Some are written by hurt people for hurt people. They are well-meaning, but without deep expertise they can devolve into "victim porn" that validates your pain but keeps you stuck in a cycle of complaining.

To master the dynamics of narcissism—both to defend yourself against the toxic types and to harness the high-energy traits for your own success—you need science, psychological depth, and actionable strategy.

This ranked list moves from specific recovery guides to the absolute highest-authority texts available today.

Why This List is Different
Unlike most narcissism book lists picked at random or from bestsellers list, Lucio personally reviewed each title. He checked them against the latest research, analyzed them through TPM's power-dynamics lens, and picked the best ones that teach real-world strategy, insight, and defense.

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- 6. Will I Ever Be Good Enough?
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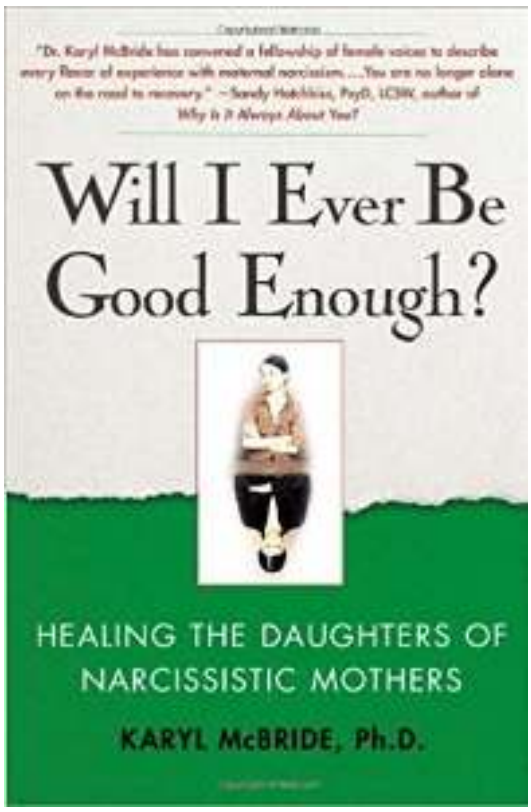
- Bonus: Leveraging Adaptive Narcissistic Traits

6. Will I Ever Be Good Enough?



By Karyl McBride

Summary

This is an important guide for a very specific demographic: daughters of narcissistic mothers (but it can also apply to *sons*).
It addresses the unique, insidious damage caused when the primary caregiver views their child not as an individual, but as an extension of themselves.

The author states that narcissistic daughters end up on two paths:

- **Self-destruction**, feeling unworthy, or rebelling against a narcissistic mother
- **Perfectionism**, trying to be everything their mother wanted to be and measuring up to her impossible standards

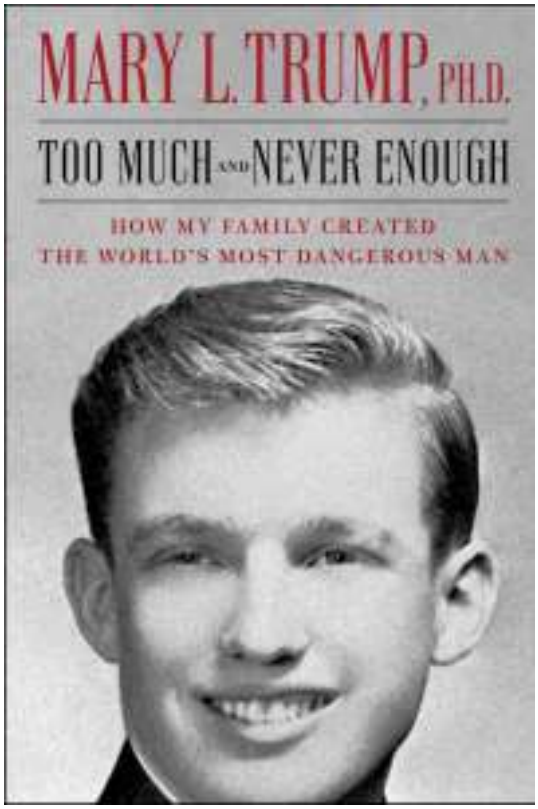
Pros

- **Empathic**, with the author providing almost a mother-figure role
- **Helpful for a precise demographic** of perfectionists and rebels, since understanding the dynamics can also help move past them. But helpful to all for learning more about human nature and power dynamics

Cons

- **Fewer practical strategies:** It focuses heavily on the emotional legacy and internal feeling of unworthiness. While critical for healing, it offers fewer “real-world” power strategies for handling the narcissist in the moment compared to Bernstein or Campbell
- **Little research backing**, relying mostly on the author’s clinical experience. It’s possible that there are plenty of daughters of narcissistic mothers who aren’t self-destructive or perfectionists, but who don’t show up for therapy
- **Doesn’t consider genetic** and ascribes everything to parental influence. Research tends to suggest though that parenting has limited effect on children’s personalities

5. Too Much and Never Enough



By Mary Lea Trump

Summary

This is a different type of book on narcissism, and it's **not for those looking for high research or clinical authority**.
However, it's still an incredible resource. Instead of focusing on narcissism as a psychothology, it provides the behind-the-scenes story of a potentially highly narcissistic man. Think of it as a big case study on one of the most prominent figures in the world.

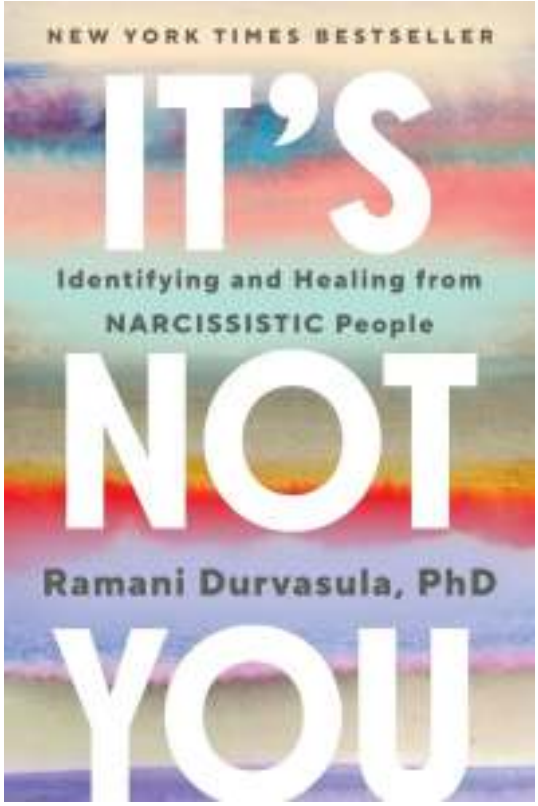
Pros

- **Captivating**, the most entertaining read on this list
- **Historically relevant**
- **Big case study** on the difference of public persona vs. 'behind the scenes', but also on wealthy family dynamics

Cons

- **Partisan & personal bias:** Trump sympathizers will dislike it on principle. However, even as a non-supporter, I could spot some possible bias
- **Psychoanalytic conjectures and poorer scientific grounding**. For example, in the etiology of narcissism and psychopathology it leaves out genetic influence. And refers to the 'mask hypothesis' of low self-esteem, as a given, which is not
- **No how-to:** It doesn't offer general or specific advice on narcissism

4. It's Not You



By Ramani Durvasula
Summary

Dr. Ramani is effectively **the face of pop-psychology** regarding narcissism today but, although sometimes I wished for more rigorous empirical depth, she is a generally knowledgeable, capable, and even authoritative science popularizer.

It feels like Ramani writes from the **point of view of someone who has been hurt by narcissistic** relationship dynamics, and *It's Not You* is her manifesto for all the victims of narcissism. It can serve as a (helpful) validation engine for those who have been gaslit into believing they are the problem.
It's mostly aimed at recovering victims, women, and people who want to spot and avoid narcissists.

As a website on men's agency and power, we see narcissism as a double-edged sword: it can be harmful indeed. But it also includes key empowering and adaptive mindsets and traits that boost the odds of success that one may model, while eliminating the negatives.
Ramani instead stated that 'healthy narcissism doesn't exist'. That, on paper, should put us in opposite corners. Instead, we liked Ramani's work; we appreciate how vocal she is in warning her audience that few narcissists 'recover', and she's a perfect teacher for her demographic.

Pros

- **Wake up call against the hope for change,** something that several other popular books on narcissism imply is possible with narcissists, but that in truth rarely happens
- **Capable author**, with good firsthand experience as well as research knowledge

⍰ Cons

- **Black and white 'monsters and saints':** In typical Ramani fashion, the book tends to paint narcissists as unchangeable monsters and partners as pure victims. While helpful for breaking trauma bonds, it lacks the nuance of evolutionary psychology and power dynamics (e.g., *why* narcissists are attractive and successful).
- **Defensive tactics only:** It teaches you how to survive and leave, but not necessarily how to negotiate, manage, or outmaneuver a narcissist if you are forced to stay (e.g., in a workplace or co-parenting situation).
- **Discourages self-reflection and ownership** of possible contributions in the toxic dynamic. Not everyone is *100%* victim, and relationship dynamics may see both partners contribute. Research also suggests homophily in narcissists, such as picking other narcissists in relationships
  - May discourage agentic solution-seeking: research also shows that partners who can elicit communal values in narcissists can lower their partner's selfishness. This could be a good strategy, but it first requires looking at one's own behavior

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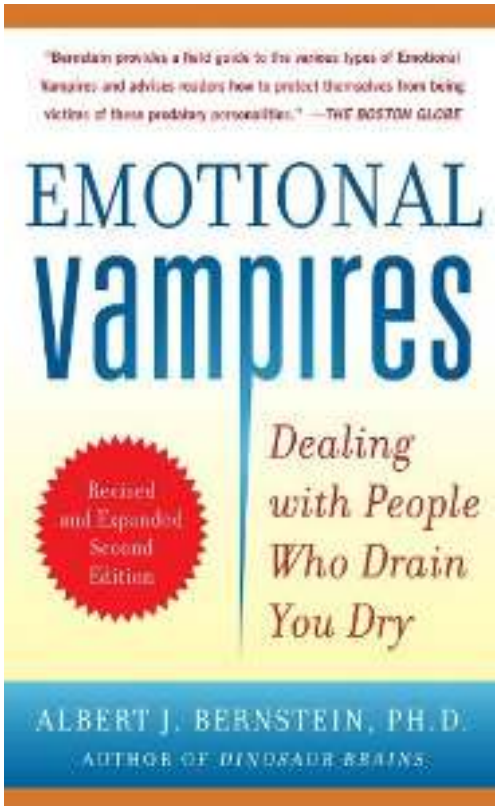
3. Emotional Vampires



by Albert Bernstein

Summary

A heavily underrated masterpiece that simplifies five personality disorders for the general public, but coming from a scientifically rigorous author.
Bernstein doesn't just describe clinical disorders in a clinical fashion; he looks at how these personality types function in the wild (and how they drain you to feed their own needs).

⍰ Pros

- **Descriptions of everyday behavior** simplify the pathology for everyone to understand

- **Amoral**, describing both the pros and cons of each personality, how they help succeed, and even in which areas they may contribute to society (N.B.: 'amoral' is not the same as immoral)
- **Practical**, not for people 'looking to heal', but for people looking to understand and handle these personalities

⍰ Cons

- **Not focused on narcissism only**, so if you're looking for a book on narcissism only, this is a con. On the plus side, it helps you put narcissism in perspective

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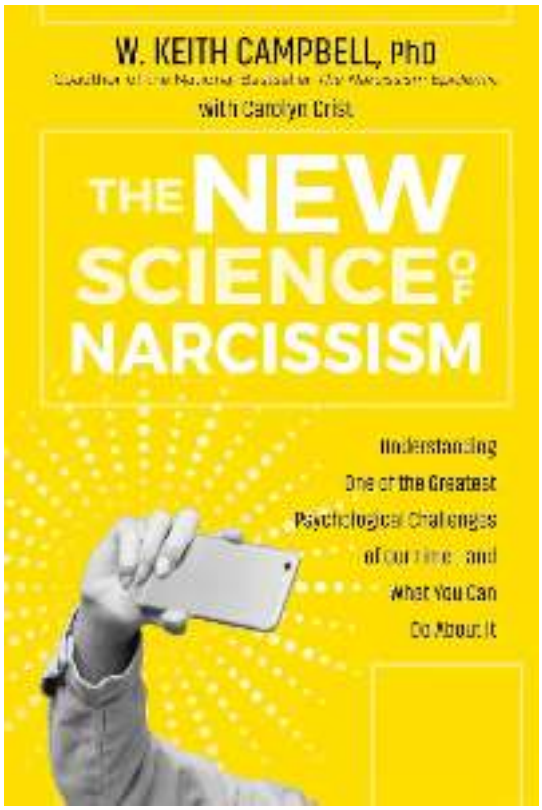
2. The New Science of Narcissism



By Keith Campbell

Summary

Dr. Campbell is one of the leading researchers in the field, making this book a bridge between dry academia and readable non-fiction. It strips away the internet "mythology" of narcissism and replaces it with research.

Crucially, it also includes the *advantages* of narcissism. Such as, with mating, initial leadership emergence, and confidence. The book explains why the trait exists evolutionarily and how it can become a trap for the narcissist themselves.

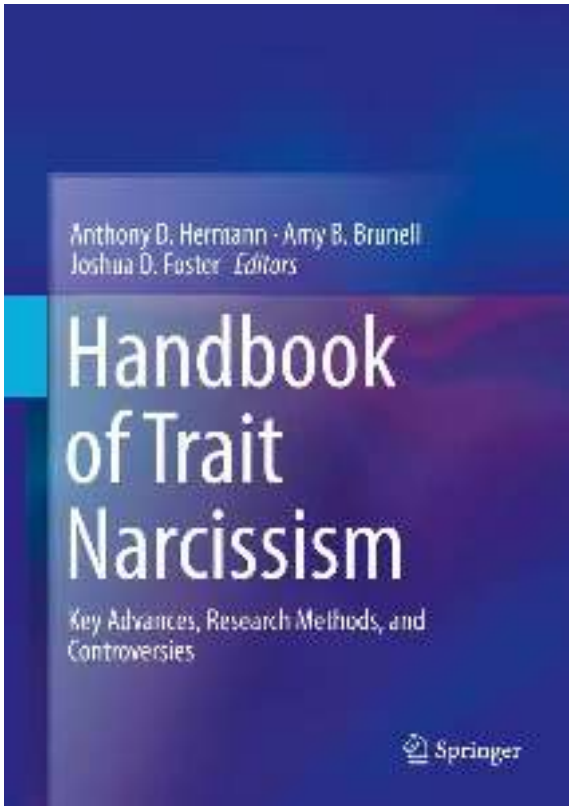
⍰ Pros

- **Narcissism as trade-offs of pros and cons**: It admits what few 'healing books' will: that narcissism has benefits.
- **Practical steps:** This is an in-between and self-help, with practical lists of 'steps' to take to become a 'healthier narcissist', or what to 'copy' from narcissists to become a more successful man

Cons

- **Examples from movies and series can get lost on you** if you're not familiar with series and Hollywood movies (still wondering how Campbell manages to have a top career as a leading researcher, a full-time job teaching, a family… And still enjoy Game of Thrones, Iron Man movies, HBO series, and more)

1. Handbook of Trait Narcissism



Various authors (Edited by A.D. Hermann, A.B. Brunell, J.D. Foster)

Summary

An edited academic volume collecting the latest empirical work on narcissism. We pick it because it provides a broad overview with all major aspects of narcissism, it includes recent findings, and it enjoys high-quality editing.

The other available handbooks on narcissism are also enlightening, including parts that are not covered in this one:

- *The Handbook of the Psychology of Narcissism* covers narcissistic perfectionism, heroical fantasies, fragility of invulnerable beliefs when faced with trauma, and issues related to long-term growth (goal orientation, performance-avoidance orientation, etc.)
- *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder*: the first handbook dedicated to narcissism, including the evolution of narcissism/short-term mating, narcissism and spirituality, narcissism and attachment styles, etc.

Pros

- **Ultimate authority on narcissism**, no pop-psychology of 'narcissists lack self-esteem', 'love bombing', etc. (as a matter of fact, you will learn that it's challenging to find correlations between narcissism and infidelity, and that narcissists can have good relationships if their partners can play up their communal side)

⍰ Cons

- **For researchers and scholars**: if you're more into lighter books, pop-psychology, or self-helpy titles with neat takeaways, 'laws' or 'steps for implementation…. This isn't it, and may not be for you

Next Steps

- How to be a healthy narcissist
- Best books on dark triads
- Best books on Machiavellianism

Bonus: Leveraging Adaptive Narcissistic Traits

Lucio Buffalmano
Overview

Learning about narcissism is the foundational starting point.
But **mastering the adaptive aspects of narcissism is what gives you an edge.**

First, most books teach you how to spot a narcissist so you can run away or defend yourself. But you cannot always run, and defending yourself is passive. Sometimes you must stand your ground, negotiate, and win. Most importantly, **"healthy narcissism" traits—high confidence, drive, and assertiveness—are a prerequisite for high-level success**.

Power University is where you go to stop being a victim and start being a player. It teaches you how to:

1. **Win** against toxic narcissists using positive Machiavellianism.
2. **Develop** the honorable, high-power traits of the "enlightened narcissist" to advance your career and life.

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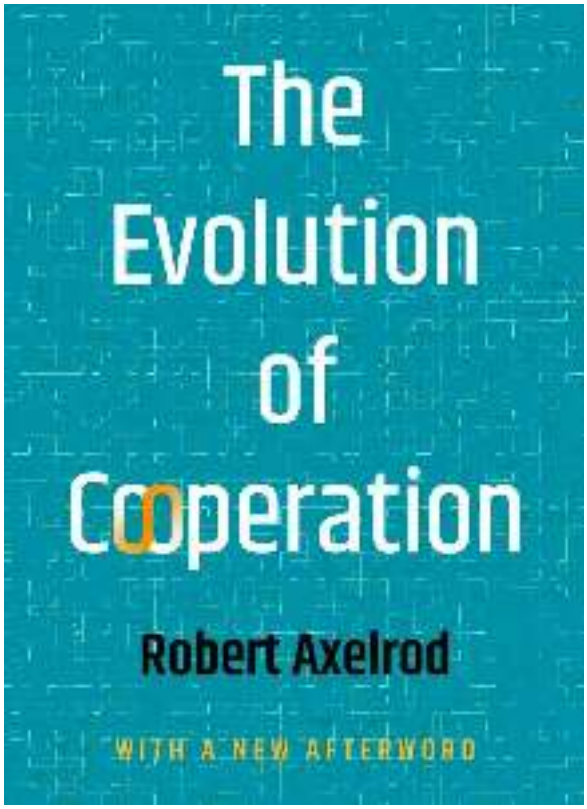
The Evolution of Cooperation: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 31 May 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The Evolution of Cooperation (1984) explains how cooperation can emerge and persist among self-interested individuals—even when defection is the dominant short-term strategy. Using the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma tested via computer tournaments, it shows that cooperation becomes rational when interactions repeat and future consequences matter.



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Core Principles of Cooperation

- **Cooperation beats defection in long-term exchanges**
- **The longer the time horizon, the more cooperation outperforms**
- **Cooperation needs power and 'retaliatory capacity' to keep cheaters in check**
- **One-off encounters & impending relationship dissolution boost the risks of cheating**: future value-giving is the best promoter of cooperation ('shadow of the future')

Core insight: Cooperation can evolve spontaneously among self-interested actors if interaction is repeated because cooperation satisfies both parties' self-interest.

Notes

About the Authors:
Robert Axelrod is an American political scientist, he holds a B.A. in mathematics and a Ph.D. in political science (Yale University).
William D. Hamilton is a Darwinian evolutionary biologist famous for **inclusive fitness** theory (ie.: altruism weighed by genetic relatedness and benefit/cost calculations (Hamilton, 1964 part I and part II).

Foreword (by Richard Dawkins)

Dawkins, author of The Selfish Gene, wrote the foreword.

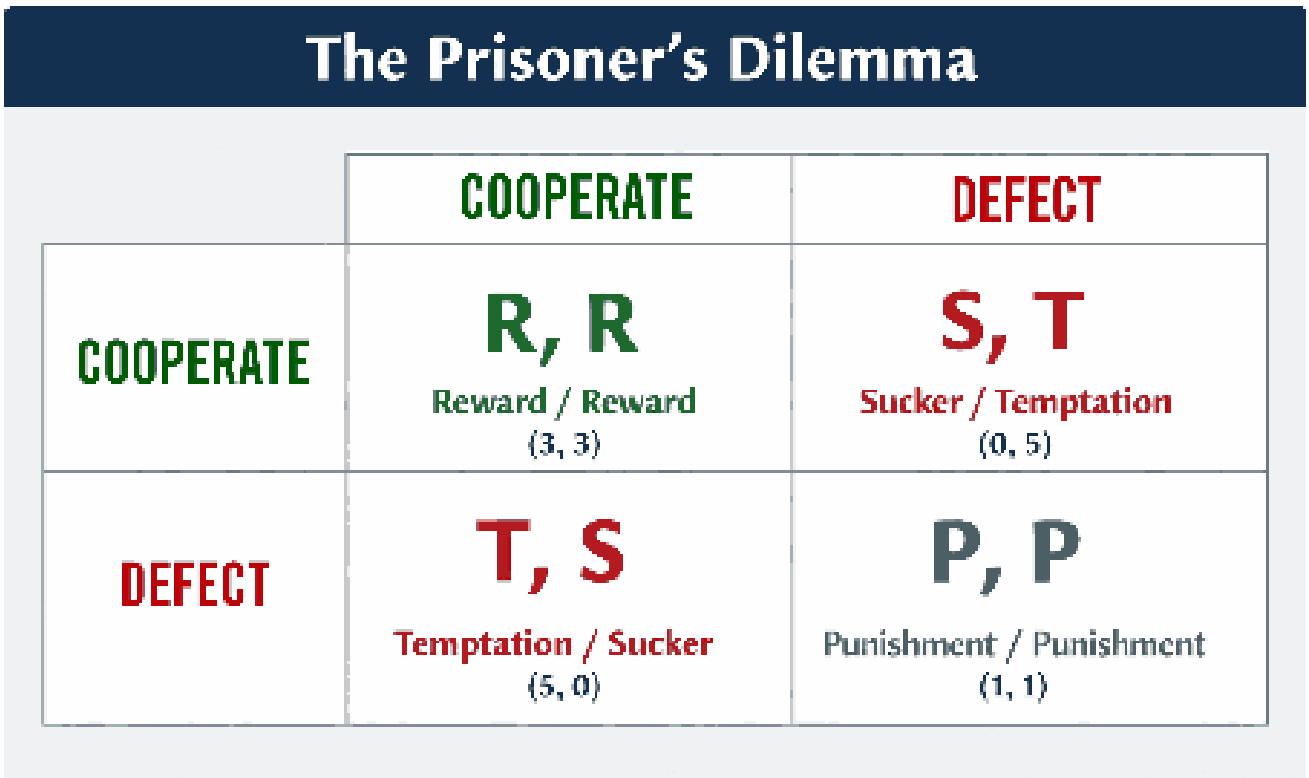
> THIS IS A BOOK OF OPTIMISM. But it is a believable optimism, more satisfying than naive, unrealistic hopes of pie in the sky (or rapture in the revolution).
> To be believable, an optimism must first acknowledge fundamental reality, including the reality of human nature, but also the nature of all life. Life as we know it, and probably throughout the universe if there is life elsewhere, means Darwinian life. In a Darwinian world, that which survives survives, and the world becomes full of whatever qualities it takes to survive. As Darwinians, we start pessimistically by assuming deep selfishness at the level of natural selection, pitiless indifference to suffering, ruthless attention to individual success at the expense of others. And yet from such warped beginnings, something can come that is in effect, if not necessarily in intention, close to amicable brotherhood and sisterhood. This is the uplifting message of Robert Axelrod's remarkable book.

Chapter 1: The Problem of Cooperation

Core problem: In life, selfish individuals find it hard to cooperate even if it is in their collective best interest.

Question: Under what conditions will cooperation emerge in a world of egoists without central authority?

The book seeks to answer this question with mathematical models derived from the Prisoner's Dilemma, a model where individual rationality leads to a collectively inferior outcome. In this game, two players face a choice between cooperation and defection:



	Cooperate	Defect
Cooperate	3 Years Each Reward / Reward	You: 5 Years Them: Go Free
Defect	You: Go Free Them: 5 Years	2 Years Each Punish / Punish

In order of what's best for the selfish individual:

- **T (Temptation to Defect):** The highest payoff, when you defect and the other cooperates.
- **R (Reward for Mutual Cooperation):** What you get if both cooperate.
- **P (Punishment for Mutual Defection):** What you get if both defect.
- **S (Sucker's Payoff):** The lowest payoff, when you cooperate and the other defects.

For the game to be a true Prisoner's Dilemma, the payoffs must satisfy two conditions:

- Condition 1: **T > R > P > S**
- Condition 2: **R > (T + S) / 2**

Because defection provides a higher individual payoff regardless of the opponent's choice, "rational" egoists are driven to defect, resulting in mutual punishment (P) rather than the superior mutual reward (R). Cooperation can only emerge when the game is iterated, allowing for the development of stable patterns based on future expectations.

Chapter 2: The Success of TIT FOR TAT (The 4 Properties for Success)

The effectiveness of various strategies was evaluated through a computer tournament involving a round-robin format of the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, and the TIT FOR TAT was the winning strategy.

TIT FOR TAT won with a simple policy: cooperate on the first move and subsequently mimic the opponent's previous action.

The success of this strategy is derived from four robust functional properties:

1. **Niceness: never defect first.** This prevents the initiation of unnecessary and costly conflict, ensuring that the maximum possible "Reward" for mutual cooperation is maintained as long as the opponent remains cooperative.
2. **Provocability to retaliate immediately:** This serves as a deterrent, signaling that exploitation will not be tolerated and will be met with a "Punishment" payoff
3. **Forgiveness to resume win-win:** After retaliating for a defection, the strategy immediately returns to cooperation if the opponent does. This can prevent the relationship from collapsing into a permanent cycle of mutual defection (but it needs the other strategy to make the first step)
4. **Clarity to help recognize reciprocity and cooperate:** The strategy is transparent and predictable. This allows the opponent to easily recognize the pattern of reciprocity, making it easier for them to adapt their own behavior toward mutual cooperation for their own self-interest

TPM Note: Utilitarian thinking
This approach aligns well with our concepts of 'power intelligence', Machiavellianism, and 'successful psychopathy' (removing the destructive and predatory aspects of psychopathy).

A Nicer Strategy Would Have Won Round 1, But Get Exploited In Round 2

TIT FOR TWO TATS defects only if the other player defected on the previous *two* moves. It is a more forgiving version of TIT FOR TAT in that it does not punish isolated defections.

Says the author:

> The excellent performance of this TIT FOR TWO TATS rule highlights the fact that a common error of the contestants was to expect that gains could be made from being relatively less forgiving than TIT FOR TAT, whereas in fact there were big gains to be made from being even more forgiving. The implication of this finding is striking, since it suggests that even expert strategists do not give sufficient weight to the importance of forgiveness.

Two other rules that would have won were 'LOOK AHEAD' and 'OPTIMISTIC DOWNING'.

However, the first tournament environment was relatively simple. TESTER, a strategy designed to probe and exploit overly forgiving opponents, would have exploited TIT FOR TWO TATS. Because TESTER never defects twice in a row, TIT FOR TWO TATS never triggers retaliation. As a result, it continues cooperating while TESTER periodically defects and gains the temptation payoff.

Round 2 Shows It Pays to Cooperate, But Not to Be Too Nice

> What seems to have happened is an interesting interaction between people who drew one lesson and people who drew another from the first round. Lesson One was: "Be nice and forgiving." Lesson Two was more exploitative: "If others are going to be nice and forgiving, it pays to try to take advantage of them." The people who drew Lesson One suffered in the second round from those who drew Lesson Two.

This confirms what Machiavelli said: 'those who are nice are ruined among the many who are not'

Best Quotes:

- *Even expert strategists do not give sufficient weight to the importance of forgiveness.*
- *Even expert strategists (…) made the systematic errors of being too competitive for their own good, not being forgiving enough, and being too pessimistic about the responsiveness of the other side.*

Chapter 3: The Chronology of Cooperation

The emergence and maintenance of cooperation are governed by three distinct evolutionary phases:

1. **Initial Viability:** In a population of individuals who always defect, cooperation cannot emerge through isolated individuals. However, it can take hold if it starts in "clusters" of individuals who use reciprocity (like TIT FOR TAT) and have a significant proportion of their interactions with each other.
2. **Robustness:** Once a strategy is present, its robustness is measured by how well it performs in a diverse environment containing many different types of strategies. Reciprocity is robust because it can elicit cooperation from many other strategies and protect itself against exploitation.
3. **Stability:** A strategy is "collectively stable" if it can resist invasion by a rare mutant or a small group of individuals using a different strategy.
   - TIT FOR TAT STABILITY**:** In an evolutionary sense, TIT FOR TAT is stable because it prevents "mean" mutations from gaining a foothold, as it immediately punishes defection while rewarding the cooperation of its own "kin" or similar strategists.

A critical requirement for this stability is the **"Shadow of the Future."** This is mathematically represented by the discount parameter (w), which reflects the importance of the next interaction relative to the current one. If the probability of meeting again is sufficiently high, the long-term gains of cooperation outweigh the short-term gains of defection.

Chapter 4: The Live-and-Let-Live System in Trench Warfare

The "Live-and-Let-Live" system during World War I provides a historical demonstration of cooperation emerging in a high-stakes, hostile environment without formal agreements. In the static environment of trench warfare, the months-long time spent in close quartiers with the enemies created an iterated game. The author refers to high "**shadow of the future**", meaning that **the anticipation of future interactions drives current cooperation**.

Cooperation manifested through several mechanisms:

- **Mutual Restraint:** Units would refrain from firing on specific supply lines or during mealtimes, provided the other side reciprocated.
- **Ritualization:** Artillery and snipers would demonstrate their accuracy by hitting specific, non-human targets (like a specific brick in a wall) at predictable times. This signaled that they *could* kill, but chose not to, as long as the peace was maintained.
- **The Role of Retaliation:** Immediate, proportional response also maintained the truce. If one side broke the informal truce, the other side would respond with an equal or greater volume of fire to restore the "balance of terror."

⍰⍰♂**Lucio's Note**: This is a highly relevant example, and it's important to contextualize it and remember that cooperation was the exception rather than the norm

Chapter 5: The Evolution of Cooperation in Biological Systems

Chapter 5 is written in cooperation with William D. Hamilton, providing his experitse on biology and evolution.

To account for cooperation, evolutionary theory proposes two approaches that could facilitate cooperation:

- **Genetical kinship theory**: Close relatedness of players permits true altruism—sacrifice of fitness by one individual for the benefit of another.
- **Reciprocity theory** by superior payoffs among cooperators

Cooperation does not require intelligence or conscious intent and it can evolve through the mechanical process of

natural selection. In biological terms, a strategy's "payoff" is reflected in the fitness boost it provides: increasing the odds of survival and reproduction.

The authors claim that reciprocity should start with clusters. A cluster provides a nontrivial proportion of the interactions with other cooperators.

Key biological insights include:

- **Discrimination is necessary for cooperation:** For cooperation to evolve, individuals must be able to recognize each other and remember the outcomes of past interactions. This prevents "cheaters" from exploiting the population indefinitely.
- **Repeated interactions increase win-win (Mutualism):** Inter-species cooperation (such as cleaner fish and their hosts) relies on the fact that both parties receive a higher fitness benefit from the interaction than they would from defection.
- **One-off interactions increase the odds of defection and predation (Impermanence):** impermanence of association tends to destabilize symbiosis and promote win-lose and predation
- **Cooperation collapses and turn exploitative when future interactions are unlikely:** Partners and parasites—including microbes—shift from mutualism to exploitation when the probability of continued interaction drops, such as during illness, injury, or aging.
  Example: pathogens are highly aggressive and exploitative during the "infectious stage" to maximize spreading to new hosts, but are less aggressive during a "chronic phase" once they are settled in, keeping the host alive only as long as a continued association remains profitable.

Also read:

- ***The Origins of Virtue***, a more recent account focused on evolution by Matt Ridley

Chapter 6: How to Choose Effectively (Advice for Players)

Based on the findings of the computer tournaments, four strategic principles are recommended for individuals in reciprocal situations:

- **Don't be envious:** Avoid comparing your score to the other player's score. TIT FOR TAT never actually "wins" a single game (it either ties or loses slightly), yet it wins the tournament overall because it maximizes its total absolute score by encouraging mutual cooperation.
- **Don't be the first to defect:** Maintaining a "nice" reputation is functionally superior because it avoids the heavy costs associated with mutual punishment.
  Exception: when the future is not important enough compared to immediate gains, or when the other player is likely to never be seen again
- **Reciprocate both cooperation and defection:** A strategy must be "provocable" to prevent exploitation. Pure cooperation (being a "Sucker") is not a stable strategy because it invites aggression.
- **Don't be too clever:** Overly complex strategies are often perceived as random or "shifty" by others. Simplicity allows the other player to understand your reciprocity and coordinate with you effectively.

Don't Be Envious

On the importance of not letting envy stand in the way of win-win:

> TIT FOR TAT achieves either the same score as the other player, or a little less. **TIT FOR TAT won the tournament, not by beating the other player, but by eliciting behavior from the other player which allowed both to do well**. TIT FOR TAT was so consistent at eliciting mutually rewarding outcomes that it attained a higher overall score than any other strategy.

> **So in a non-zero-sum world you do not have to do better than the other player to do well for yourself**. This is especially true when you are interacting with many different players. Letting each of them do the same or a little better than you is fine, as long as you tend to do well yourself. There is no point in being envious of the success of the other player, since in an iterated Prisoner's Dilemma of long duration the other's success is virtually a prerequisite of your doing well for yourself.

Note that the behavior still allowed TIT FOR TAT to win *overall*, even when not always scoring more tha various individual strategies it engaged with.

Reciprocate Both Cooperation and Defection

Best insights and takeaways:

- **Reciprocity is a necessity:** *The extraordinary success of TIT FOR TAT leads to some simple, but powerful advice: practice reciprocity.*
- **Provocability is necessary for nice approaches**: *Proposition 4 demonstrates that being provocable is actually required for a nice rule like TIT FOR TAT to resist invasion.*
- **Retaliation optimum balance**: *What is clear is that extracting more than one defection for each defection of the other risks escalation. On the other hand, extracting less than one-for-one risks exploitation*. (…) *While the exact balance will be hard to determine in a given environment, the evidence of the tournament suggests that something approaching a one-for-one response to defection is likely to be quite efFective in a wide range of settings.*
- **Retaliate calibrating to the environment:** *the precise level of forgiveness that is optimal depends upon the environment. In particular, if the main danger is unending mutual recriminations, then a generous level of forgiveness is appropriate. But, if the main danger is from strategies that are good at exploiting easygoing rules, then an excess of forgiveness is costly.*
  Later on, the author acknowledges that 'limited provocability' enhances returns when stable cooperation is the goal

Don't be too clever

- **Make it easy to predict cooperation:** *In chess, it is useful to keep the other player guessing about your intentions (…) the less efficient will be his strategy (…) to your benefit. But in a non-zero-sum setting (…) you benefit from the other player's cooperation. The trick is to encourage that cooperation. A good way to do it is to make it clear that you will reciprocate. Words can help (…) but actions speak louder than words.*
- **Don't be too calculative**: *unlike the chess opponent, the other player in a Prisoner's Dilemma should not be regarded as someone who is out to defeat you. The other player will be watching your behavior for signs of whether you will reciprocate cooperation or not, and therefore your own behavior is likely to be echoed back to you.*

This is why some of the popular literature on power and manipulation is often misleading when it states among its laws of 'keeping others in suspended terror' as a leadership tactic.

Chapter 7: How to Promote Cooperation (Advice for Reformers)

For those in positions of authority or systemic design, cooperation can be encouraged by altering the environment of the interaction:

- **Enlarge the shadow of the future:** Make the future more important relative to the present. Ie..: Make interactions more frequent, durable, and predictable. When players know they will interact many times, the incentive to cooperate increases. The two main strategies are:
  - More durable: for example, marriage

  - More frequent: when the next interaction happens sooner, the next move looms larger
- **Change the payoffs:** Use regulations or incentives to make the Reward (R) for cooperation more attractive or the Punishment (P) for defection more severe.
- **Teach people to care about each other:** While not strictly necessary for cooperation, social norms that value the other's well-being can supplement the strategic incentives.
- **Teach reciprocity:** Explicitly promoting TIT FOR TAT-like behavior helps individuals realize that cooperation is in their long-term self-interest.
- **Improve recognition abilities:** Systems that increase transparency and allow for the easy identification of defectors (such as credit ratings or reputations) make it harder for exploitation to occur.

Chapter 8: The Social Structure of Cooperation

Social structures provide additional layers of stability or conflict to cooperative systems. These include:

- **Labels/Stereotypes:** Stereotypes or observable traits (race, gender, status) can be used as proxies for expected behavior. This can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies where certain groups are discriminated against or where hierarchies of "dominance" and "deference" are maintained through the threat of retaliation.
- **Reputation for provocability:** A player's history with *others* affects how a new partner will treat them. This makes it vital to maintain a reputation for being provocable but nice.
- **Territoriality:** When players interact mostly with their neighbors, cooperative clusters can survive even if the global environment is hostile. This "local" reinforcement allows cooperation to spread outward like a wave.
  - The advantage of great success when diffusion by imitation rules: *in a social system based on diffusion by imitation, there is a great advantage to being able to attain outstanding success, even if it means that the average rate of success is not outstanding. This is because the occasions of outstanding success win many converts.*
- **Regulation is most effective when obedience is convenient:** Governments cannot enforce any rule it chooses and must instead elicit compliance from the majority. So they are most effective when they align with the natural incentives for reciprocity already present in the system.

The author here touches upon social power dynamics and status classes/castes (see 'Social Dominance Theory' for more).
He says that marginalized minorities who are short-changed by the majority may be better seeking defensive isolation and sticking to cooperation against isolated defections rather than facing unending punishment.

A Bully's Reputation to Stave Off Defection & 'Maximum Return's Defection Rate'

> Having a firm reputation for using TIT FOR TAT is advantageous to a player, but it is not actually the best reputation to have. The best reputation to have is the reputation for being a bully. The best kind of bully to be is one who has a reputation for squeezing the most out of the other player while not tolerating any defections at all from the other.

Note that this may not apply to humans because of social dynamics that create push-backs against bullying (see Lucio's analysis below).
Even then, a bully reputation is not easy says the author because it requires lots of defection, escalations (including with other wannabe bullies), and costs:

> Fortunately, it is not easy to establish a reputation as a bully. To become known as a bully you have to defect a lot, which means that you are likely to provoke the other player into retaliation. Until your reputation is well established, you are likely to have to get into a lot of very unrewarding contests of will. For example, if the other player defects even once, you will be torn between acting as tough as the reputation you want to establish

> requires and attempting to restore amicable relations in the current interaction.

But this Machiavellian approach makes sense from a perspective of pure maximization of returns:

> The way to squeeze the most out of the other is to defect so often that the other player just barely prefers cooperating all the time to defecting all the time. And the best way to encourage cooperation from the other is to be known as someone who will never cooperate again if the other defects even once.

And the author ends again with the advantages of TIT FOR TAT's 'assertiveness':

> Using TIT FOR TAT is an effective way of holding still and letting the other player do the adaptation. It refuses to be bullied, but does not do any bullying of its own.

Chapter 9: The Robustness of Reciprocity

The study of cooperation leads to a cautiously optimistic conclusion. Cooperation based on reciprocity can emerge from small clusters, thrive in diverse environments, and protect itself once established.
This "ratchet effect" suggests that once the conditions for reciprocity are met—primarily a sufficiently long "shadow of the future"—cooperation can become a stable and dominant feature of a system. This logic applies across scales, from the micro-level of biological cells to the macro-level of international relations, proving that mutual gain is possible even among individuals who are purely self-interested.

The Risk of Eliminating or Bankrupting Your Opponent

Axelrod seems to refer to US policy towards the former USSR here:

> Occasionally a political leader gets the idea that cooperation with another major power should not be sought because a better plan would be to drive them into bankruptcy. This is an extraordinarily risky enterprise because the target (…) would also have a strong incentive to escalate the conflict before it was irreversibly weakened.
> Japan's desperate gamble at Pearl Harbor, for example, was a response to powerful American economic sanctions aimed at stopping Japanese intervention in China (Ike 1967; Ho-soya 1968). Rather than give up what it regarded as a vital sphere, Japan decided to attack America before becoming even further weakened. Japan (…) decided that the cumulative effects of the sanctions made it better to attack rather than to wait for the situation to get even more desperate.

More Win-Win Games Than Competitions?

> We are used to thinking about competitions in which there is only one winner, competitions such as football or chess. But the world is rarely like that. In a vast range of situations mutual cooperation can be better for *both* sides than mutual defection. The key to doing well lies not in overcoming others, but in eliciting their cooperation.

Propositions

Proposition	Explanation

Proposition	Explanation
1: If the discount parameter, w, is sufficiently high, there is no best strategy independent of the strategy used by the other player.	When the future is important enough (large w), the best choice always depends on what the other player is doing. Assuming the opponent will always defect leads to endless mutual punishment, while permanent retaliation makes initial cooperation optimal. No single strategy dominates regardless of the opponent.
2: TIT FOR TAT is collectively stable if and only if w is large enough. This critical value of w is a function of the four payoff parameters, T, R, P, and S.	TIT FOR TAT cannot be invaded when the next move is sufficiently important relative to the current one. Specifically, w must exceed the larger of (T−R)/(T−P) and (T−R)/(R−S) so that neither ALL D nor alternating defection-cooperation can outperform the population average of mutual cooperation.
3: Any strategy which may be the first to cooperate can be collectively stable only when w is sufficiently large.	For a strategy to be collectively stable it must protect itself from invasion by any challenger, including the strategy which always defects. If it ever cooperates, ALL D gains the temptation payoff T on that move; only a large w nullifies this one-time gain against the long-run population average.
4: For a nice strategy to be collectively stable, it must be provoked by the very first defection of the other player.	If a nice strategy (never first to defect) were not provoked by a defection on move n, then it would not be collectively stable because it could be invaded by a rule that defected only on move
5: ALL D is always collectively stable.	If the other player is certain to defect, there is no point in ever cooperating. A population of players using ALL D will each get P per move, and no player can do any better than this if no one else will ever cooperate.
6: The strategies which can invade ALL D in a cluster with the smallest value of p are those which are maximally discriminating, such as TIT FOR TAT.	A maximally discriminating strategy cooperates on its first move even against a never-cooperator, then never cooperates again with ALL D while always cooperating with identical copies. This maximizes the cluster's internal score relative to its score against natives, allowing invasion with the smallest proportion p of within-cluster interactions.
7: If a nice strategy cannot be invaded by a single individual, it cannot be invaded by any cluster of individuals either.	Nice rules achieve the highest possible population average R/(1−w) when paired with themselves. Any cluster invader must therefore score higher against the native population than the natives do among themselves, which is impossible for a nice rule that is already uninvadable by single individuals.
8: If a rule is collectively stable, it is territorially stable.	In a territorial system (players interact only with neighbors and copy the highest-scoring neighbor each generation), any collectively stable rule cannot be invaded even when a single mutant is introduced into one location. The proof holds for any not-too-highly-connected grid because every point has a neighbor-of-a-neighbor that is not its own neighbor.

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Cooperation Requires Power & Continued Value-Provisioning

From chapter 3, on cooperation requiring future interactions and 'the ability to provide value':

> if the other player is unlikely to be around much longer because of apparent weakness, then the perceived value of w falls and the reciprocity of TIT FOR TAT is no longer stable.

And the author tightly links it to a real-life scenario from a historical power struggle:

> We have Caesar's explanation of why Pompey's allies stopped cooperating with him. "They regarded his [Pompey's] prospects as hopeless and acted according to the common rule by which a man's friends become his enemies in adversity" [translated by Warner 1960, p. 328].

And to a modern business scenario:

> Another example is the case where a business is on the edge of bankruptcy and sells its accounts receivable to an outsider called a factor. This sale is made at a very substantial discount because once a manufacturer begins to go under, even his best customers begin refusing payment for merchandise, claiming defects in quality, failure to meet specifications, tardy delivery, or what-have-you. **The great enforcer of morality in commerce is the continuing relationship, the belief that one will have to do business again with this customer**, or this supplier, and when a failing company loses this automatic enforcer, not even a strong-arm factor is likely to find a substitute. (Mayer, 1974, p. 280)

And the author, with one final example from politics:

> Similarly, any member of Congress who is perceived as likely to be defeated in the next election may have some difficulty doing legislative business with colleagues on the usual basis of trust and good credit

The author ends by adding that cooperation is also easier in smaller towns or ethnic neighborhoods, although I believe ethnicity is a confounding factor.

Cooperation Is Often Good... Unless It's For a Clique, to Society's Detriment

Smaller alliances within larger society can promote a small group's interest at the cost of everyone else:

> There are times when one wants to retard, rather than foster, cooperation between players. Collusive business practices are good for the businesses involved but not so good for the rest of society. In fact, most forms of corruption are welcome instances of cooperation for the participants but are unwelcome to everyone else. So, on occasion, the theory will be used in reverse to show how to prevent, rather than to promote, cooperation.

This is also the case with mafias and various 'secret societies'.

Reciprocity is Honorable & Supports Societal Functioning

> Unconditional cooperation can not only hurt you, but it can hurt other innocent bystanders with whom the successful exploiters will interact later. Unconditional cooperation tends to spoil the other player; it leaves a burden on the rest of the community to reform the spoiled player, suggesting that reciprocity is a better foundation for morality than is unconditional cooperation.

And then a crucial point we wholeheartedly agree with here at TPM:

> Reciprocity is certainly not a good basis for a morality of aspiration. Yet it is more than just the morality of egoism. It actually helps not only oneself, but others as well. It helps others by making it hard for exploitative strategies to survive.

But there is also a return for the self:

> But you also have a private advantage from another person using reciprocity even if you never interact with

> that person: the other's reciprocity helps to police the entire community by punishing those who try to be exploitive. And this decreases the number of uncooperative individuals you will have to deal with in the future.

QUOTES

It's value exchanges above trust:

> **The foundation of cooperation is not really trust, but the durability of the relationship.**

On the importance of continued interaction for cooperation to emerge and yield benefits:

> The very possibility of achieving stable mutual cooperation depends upon there being a good chance of a continuing interaction

On the four basic strategies of successful cooperation:

> The analysis of the data from these tournaments reveals four properties which tend to make a decision rule successful: avoidance of unnecessary conflict by cooperating as long as the other player does, provocability in the face of an uncalled for defection by the other, forgiveness after responding to a provocation, and clarity of behavior so that the other player can adapt to your pattern of action.

On the 'power of kindness':

> in fact there were big gains to be made from being even more forgiving. The implication of this finding is striking, since it suggests that even expert strategists do not give sufficient weight to the importance of forgiveness.

On the importance of starting off cooperative:

> The lesson is that not being nice may look promising at first, but in the long run it can destroy the very environment it needs for its own success.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Sometimes Over-extends Prisoner's Dilemma Implications Without Considering Alternative Dynamics (Psychology, Biases, etc.)

I've noticed this a few times.
As an example, providing real-life applications of how weakness and non-repeated interactions boost the odds of defection, the author writes:

> Conversely, a visiting professor is likely to receive poor treatment by other faculty members compared to the way these same people treat their regular colleagues.

This is often not the case because of different psychological and social-psychological dynamics.
For example, many people, and especially men with a strong ingroup-outgroup psychology, want to show the best possible time to high-value outsiders because it reflects well on their ingroup. It's a status boost if others think well about 'their' group/university/country.

Short-term visits also allow people to present their best selves in those brief interactions, and there are no considerations about possible competition for promotion.

Example 2: Shooting Back / Not Shooting is Also Tied to Psychology

For example, the author writes that people in war shoot back because 'mutual defection is preferred to unilateral restraint'. That is a good point, but there are also basic psychological dynamics at play, like self-defense and, as the author later also notes, revenge-seeking.

Conversely, not shooting is most certainly in good part because mutual restraint is better, but also because many people are uncomfortable with causing harm and killing. It's a well-known phenomenon that many soldiers don't shoot in situations where it makes little difference and they can freeride on other shooters.

Conflates Mobility as Cause of Defection Instead of Mobility As Enabler of Defection

Writes the author:

> Therefore, if the other player is not likely to be seen again, defecting right away is better than being nice. This fact has unfortunate implications for groups who are known to move from one place to another. An anthropologist finds that a Gypsy approaches a non-Gypsy expecting trouble, and a non-Gypsy approaches a Gypsy suspiciously, expecting double-dealing.

However, rather than being forced into a defector strategy because of moving, some cheater strategies may move *because* they adopt a cheater strategy.

For example, psychopathy has been linked to frequent moving, and I doubt that moving is the cause of psychopathy.

Unaccounted Costs for Bully's Reputation?

The author writes:

> The best reputation to have is the reputation for being a bully. The best kind of bully to be is one who has a reputation for squeezing the most out of the other player while not tolerating any defections at all from the other.

While this may apply to digital programs, the considerations are different with humans.
The author is correct in acknowledging later that creating such a reputation is costly, but I believe it goes beyond simple 'loss of returns from defection'.
The reputation for a bully may also decrease *future* cooperation once the reputation is established because other cooperators *avoid* the bully. And it may boost escalations and power showdowns as others approach him ready for an escalation and a fight, rather than cooperation.

It may also encouarage what have been called 'leveling coalitions', or coalitions of smaller players who 'gang up' against the bully.

We have seen similar dynamics in real world politics, see for example:

- US foreign policy analysis: How US forceful approach strengthens others and decreases US global influence

Chapter 5 Forgets About the Need For Power/Retaliation

This crucially important concept is directionally, but in my opinion, it could have been better fleshed out and misses an important mechanism of power dynamics:

> Other mutualisms are also characteristic of situations where continued association is likely, and normally they involve quasi-permanent pairing of individuals, or of inbred or asexual stocks, or of individuals with such stocks (Hamilton 1972 and 1978). Conversely, conditions of free-mixing, and transitory pairing conditions where recognition is impossible, are much more likely to result in exploitation—parasitism, disease, and the like.
> (…)
> Again, it is seen that impermanence of association tends to destabilize symbiosis.

Axelrod and Hamilton's argument is generally correct, particularly in cases where interests perfectly converge, such as vertical transmission through the egg and when the host's health boosts the parasite's own survival and reproduction.
In these specific scenarios, the guest's future is biologically tied to the host's reproductive success, making any defection or "cheating" self-harming and potentially self-destructive for the parasite in case of the host's death.

However, the logic fails to account for power asymmetry and the importance of retaliation.

If a host lacks the mechanical ability to retaliate or expel a parasite/predator, it becomes a permanent "Sucker," allowing the parasite to stabilize an equilibrium of **optimized exploitation**, rather than neutrality or optimized win-win.
Since the payoff for the temptation to defect (T) can be higher in real life than the reward for mutual cooperation (R), an unpunished parasite may evolve to extract the maximum sustainable resources rather than transition to a win-win outcome.

In these power-asymmetric relationships, permanence does not facilitate cooperation but only provide a longer timeline for one-sided extraction.

REVIEW

The Evolution of Cooperation is a seminal work on strategy and a foundational text for The Power Moves. It formalizes how cooperation, retaliation, and long-term incentives shape outcomes in repeated interactions.

While such an important work would have benefited from tighter editing, we are grateful to the author because it remains a core resource for understanding strategic interaction and supports many of this website's frameworks, strategies, and principles.

Read some in:

- Effective cynicism
- Effective calculativeness, which also applies the 'law of reciprocity'
- **Smart cooperation**: the main article and strategy based on cooperation

Exchange and Power in Social Life: 5 Laws of Social Power (Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 1 June 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Exchange and Power in Social Life (1964) establishes a rigorous sociological framework explaining how micro-level interpersonal exchanges of rewards and obligations generate power, status, and legitimate authority.

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  - Judge emotional dynamics help maintain social exchanges
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  - Physical coercion is the ultimate source of power, but it's limited in scope
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  - Sprezzatura vs. visible effort: value-signaling requires calibration
  - Social pressures are sexual manipulation
  - Modern men aren't dependent on status from any specific group
- QUOTES
- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
  - Misses more advanced power dynamics
  - Integration of psychology & evolutionary psychology would improve it
  - Status competition is only seen through the lens of prestige, not dominance
  - Social exchanges have "social slack" (limits of mechanistic interpretation)
  - Inflation & time discount of social debit and credits deserved a mention
- REVIEW

Key Mechanics of Power & Exchange

1. **People interact to get returns and achieve goals:** Social interaction is largely driven by expected rewards—material, social, or psychological.
2. **Unreciprocated value creates power:** When one party gives benefits that cannot be matched, the imbalance is repaid through **compliance**.
3. **Power = absence of alternatives to compliance:** A has power over B when B cannot reciprocate, cannot find alternatives, cannot coerce, and cannot do without the benefit.
4. **Dependence disempowers:** The more B values what A controls relative to alternatives, the more power A has over B
5. **Power must be legitimized to be stable:** Fair use of power generates **approval and authority**; perceived exploitation generates **resentment and opposition**.
   See: leadership 101 and leadership power dynamics

Core insight: Social life runs on exchanges, and power emerges naturally from asymmetric dependence in social exchange.

NOTES

About the Author:
Peter M. Blau (1918–2002) was a leading sociologist who developed exchange theory into a framework for explaining power, social structure, and institutional organization.
His work bridges micro-level interactions and macro-level systems, making him a foundational figure in modern sociology.

Introduction: What's Included in 'Social Exchange'

Social exchange is the process of voluntary actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others, and that

tend to cease when these expected reactions are not forthcoming

Blau specifies two conditions for behavior to constitute social exchange:

1. Oriented toward ends achievable through interaction with others
2. Involve an attempt to adapt means to those ends

Blau explicitly excludes coercion and conformity to internalized moral norms from the definition.
Social exchange covers the broad swath of voluntary, goal-oriented social interaction.

To avoid making exchange theory unfalsifiable, the author restricts the concept to actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others and that cease when those reactions are not forthcoming, and he commits to deriving operationally testable hypotheses.

The Introduction also announces the book's structural argument in advance:

- Social attraction generates exchange;
- Unreciprocated exchange generates power;
- The exercise of power generates either legitimation and organization or opposition and change depending on how fairly it is exercised.

And, central to his macro theory, the same forces that restore equilibrium in one respect are disequilibrating in others.

1. The Structure of Social Associations

Most human pleasures are rooted in social life, and most suffering originates from the actions of others. This elementary observation explains why people seek to prove themselves attractive to others: because association with others is the primary medium through which human ends are achieved.

The basic causal chain Blau outlines is:

- **Social life is governed by the reciprocal flow of rewards**—ranging from instrumental services to social approval—and that power emerges specifically when these exchanges become imbalanced
- **Unilateral giving create power imbalances and subordination:** When one party cannot reciprocate in kind, because the person who supplies needed services that cannot be matched obtains the compliance of the other as a substitute currency
  - Power differentials equilibrate the exchange because people give power to those who are giving them value
- **People seek a balance in their favor**: *Individuals and groups are interested in, at least, maintaining a balance between inputs and outputs and staying out of debt in their social transactions; hence the strain toward reciprocity. Their aspirations, however, are to achieve a balance in their favor and accumulate credit that makes their status superior to that of others; hence the strain toward imbalance*
  - Imbalances are experienced negatively, as shown for example by people's tendency to escape from domination if they can
- **Fair use of power elicits approval and legitimacy:** The fair exercise of power gives rise to approval of the superior, whereas unfair exploitation promotes disapproval.
  If followers agree that the demands are fair and just in view of the rewards delivered, feelings of obligation and loyalty bestow legitimating approval on authority, strengthening and extending the leaders' influence
  - Legitimate authority obviates the need for coercive measures
  - Unfair use of power promotes opposition: if the demands of those in power are experienced as exploitative and oppressive, frustrations promotes disapproval and antagonism. Communication among followers justifies and reinforces the negative orientation toward the oppressors, increasing hostility and potentially opposition.

- **People try to be attractive to others** to realize the expected rewards of association. This prompts impression management, but how impressive people try to be also depends on roles (later)
- **Gratitude helps but it's not enough to sustain exchanges without mutual benefits**: *While the other may be sufficiently rewarded by expressions of gratitude to help him a few times, he can hardly be expected regularly to devote time and effort to providing help without receiving any return to compensate him for his troubles.*

Social exchanges are inherently competitive

> The same human acts that cause pleasure to some typically cause displeasure to others. For one boy to enjoy the love of a girl who has committed herself to be his steady date, other boys who had gone out with her must suffer the pain of having been rejected. The satisfaction a man derives from exercising power over others requires that they endure the deprivation of being subject to his power (…) In short, the rewards individuals obtain in social associations tend to entail a cost to other individuals.

However it's important to note that social exchanges are not zero-sum games:

> This does not mean that most social associations involve zero-sum games in which the gains of some rest on the losses of others. Quite the contrary, individuals associate with one another because they all profit from their association. But they do not necessarily all profit equally, nor do they share the cost of providing the benefits equally, and even if there are no direct costs to participants, there are often indirect costs born by those excluded from the association, as the case of the rejected suitors illustrates.

Macrostructures vs. microstructures

Macrostructures differ from microstructures along 3 key mechanisms:

- **Value consensus** is the mediating mechanism because direct social interaction among all members is impossible. Shared values serve as functional substitutes for personal attraction
- Complex interplay between the forces within substructures and the forces connecting those substructures develop
- **Enduring institutions** perpetuate social arrangements beyond the life span of any individual participant.

Social Attraction

> Social attraction is the force that induces human beings to establish social associations on their own initiative and to expand the scope of their associations once they have been formed.

Blau states that an individual is attracted to another if he expects associating with him to be in some way rewarding for himself. Such as, **attraction is driven by the possibility of getting value**, and driven by a 'what's in it for me' motive.

Blau also differentiates between two types of attraction:

- **Intrinsic attraction** In its narrower sense, social attraction refers to liking another person intrinsically and having positive feelings toward him <— TPM Note: in the Social Investment Model this is based on 'personal value'
- **Broader attraction** refers to being drawn to another person for any reason whatsoever <— TPM Note: This includes what at TPM we called 'exchange value', or 'extrinsic value'

Processes of social attraction, in turn, are likely to lead to processes of social exchange as attracted people spend more time together and interact.

2. Social Integration

When people enter a new group or form one from scratch, they seek to impress others with their abilities to become valuable associates and command respect.
Yet impressive people also put others on the defensive, because acknowledging someone's high value means accepting a subordinate position relative to them. This creates what Blau calls a **competition for social recognition** that functions as a screening test for leadership: those with genuine competence prove it under competitive pressure, and others discover that competitive tactics like incessant self-promotion become self-defeating.

- **People seek to impress others** to gain status and acceptance
  - Good impressions must be well done: Self-conscious concern with impressing others can become self-defeating. Awkwardness and being seen as 'putting up a front' leave a poor impression. Creating a good first impression is a subtle form of bragging, but its success depends on its being so natural that it does not appear to be bragging at all.
- **Excessive modesty only works in combination with power:** *Hence, unless the weaknesses to which a group member calls attention are less significant than the attractive qualities he has exhibited, he will not have succeeded in demonstrating to others that he is approachable as a peer as well as attractive but only in convincing them that he is fundamentally not an attractive associate at all.*
- **People bond when they're not competing for status:** *the discovery of common links is essential for the development of social integration, and this discovery tends to be made when group members withdraw from the competition for status*
- **Most relationships are both intrinsic and extrinsic**. For example, workers participate in unions to improve their employment conditions but also to enjoy the union's fellowship and the pleasure of helping others.
  - Rewards are 'fused': It is not so much a specific kind of social reward as the fusion of a variety of rewards in a given association that makes these fused rewards inseparable from the associate who is their source and hence creates intrinsic attraction to him
  - Even intrinsic attraction is initially based on extrinsic comparisons of rewards: *the initial attraction of individuals to others always rests on extrinsic factors that permit comparisons. Even falling in love is the result of implicit, and partly unconscious, comparisons of specific traits of various girls*
- **Exchange in intimate relationships serves to maintain the bond**, whereas in other social relations the association is a means for obtaining extrinsic rewards
  - But there is expectation for (continued) devotion: Although there is no quid pro quo of explicit services, partners expect their devotion be rewarded by the other's enduring commitment

2.2. Social Status & Power

- **High value makes someone attractive and a threat at the same time** (Paradox of integration): *impressive qualities make a person attractive in one sense and unattractive in another, because they (…) pose a status threat for the rest of the group*
  - People prefer not to show their social attraction: Fear of dependence and subordination lead to a defensive reluctance to let oneself be easily impressed, which is part of the competition for social recognition in early stages of group formation
  - Social status is a competition of impressing others: *The more successful A is in impressing B and earning B's high regard, the more displeasure he causes to C whose relative standing in the eyes of B has suffered.*

	A's choice	
B's choice	*Expressing regard*	*Withholding regard*
Expressing regard	Peer relation (2nd choice of both)	A superior to B (A's first choice)
Withholding regard	B superior to A (B's first choice)	No relation (Last choice of both)

People prefer *getting* high regard, but both prefer reciprocal regard to no regard

- **High-power & high-warmth may be the best mix to gain status**: *The inference derived from the theory presented, in contrast, is that group members who have positive characteristics on a salient attribute, which make them attractive, but negative ones on a less salient attribute, which also make them approachable, have the best chance to win informal acceptance*
- **High status men don't compromise (on important issues):** *in matters irrelevant to the status hierarchy, then, superiors were willing to compromise their own beliefs in a conciliatory gesture of moving toward closer, although not full, agreement with subordinates. High status requires firm judgments on issues that directly pertain to the basis of the superior position (…) To compensate for this insistence on contradicting their ideas, superiors made concessions to subordinates in other areas, modifying their opinions to bring them into greater harmony with that of subordinates, and modestly depreciated their own important as well as unimportant qualities in response to the pressure to win the approval of subordinates.*

See more in:

- High-power and high-warmth social strategy

Confident People Seek Status, Unconfident Ones Seek Acceptance

> The newcomer to an established group tends to employ (…) unthreatening strategies, such as ingratiating himself through flattering remarks, to gain social acceptance. Such strategies, however, can only succeed in eliciting a bare minimum of social attraction.
> Whereas the insecure newcomer may feel constrained to confine himself to them, the members of a newly forming group, none of whose social position is more insecure than that of the rest (although psychological differences in feelings of security exist, of course), often resort to more aggressive tactics to establish themselves as valuable associates.

Low-Status People Seek Support

The concept is that people with low status and power seek social and psychological support:

> differentiation of status in the group intensifies the need for integrative bonds, particularly for those who do

> not command respect for their ability to make important contributions.

Blau says this is especially the case during group formation, when people must still gain full social acceptance.

Vulnerability is a Sign of Submission

At TPM we long cautioned men against vulnerability, which some years ago seemed to have become a new hype. One of the reasons, as Blau confirms, is that vulnerability signals withdrawals from status competitions, which ambitious men may not want to signal:

> By calling attention to his weaknesses, a person gives public notice that he withdraws from the competition for superior standing in the group and that he considers acceptance as a peer sufficient reward for his attractive qualities and for whatever contribution they enable him to make.

People who initially tried to impress others and gain status but failed turn to self-depreciation to gain support. But don't overdo it. Blau also shrewdly points out that overdoing self-deprecation does not always promote sympathy and social acceptance, but discomfort and rejection.

Read more in:

- How to be vulnerable without losing power

> How to Be Vulnerable As A Man, Without Looking Weak

3. Social Support

The central **dilemma of approval** is: people need approval and therefore want others to express it, yet approval expressed too freely depreciates in value because it ceases to be reliable evidence of genuine judgment.

The dilemma manifests across several social domains:

- A person of high status whose approval is rare and selective provides the most valuable approval; one who praises everything provides little signal value
- Respect and social approval are related but distinct: respect is unilateral acknowledgment of superior ability, while approval is broader and can be mutual. Giving too much approval risks losing respect; withholding it risks antagonism
- People are far more willing to express approval than disapproval, partly because of social pressure and partly because the social cost of being wrong in one's criticism is higher
- **People are freer to express approval when in power:** *A leader whose expertness is widely acknowledged does not endanger respect for his judgment by praising the performance of followers, but a man whose status is not so secure does.*
- **Respect is necessary for status and social power:** social approval of a person's beliefs and values and his conformity does not help raise him to a superordinate position; only respect for his superior qualities raise status

The **dilemma of love** parallels the dilemma of approval: both parties want to encourage the other's affection by providing rewards, yet providing those rewards too generously deflates their significance. The key insight is that commitments must keep pace—if one lover is considerably more committed than the other, the imbalance either invites exploitation or provokes withdrawal. A lasting attachment requires that devotion expand at roughly the same pace on both sides.

- **Success in social and sexual exchanges determines one's self-esteem**: In dating an individual places the

attractiveness of his own self on the market, which makes success of extreme importance for his self-conception. Success validates attractiveness in their own eyes as well as those of others <— TPM's note: Blau refers to sexual market value

- **Professing love works if she already has feelings:** *man's expressions of affection that meet a woman's suppressed desires tend to intensify her love for him, but if his affection far exceeds her feelings and desires it is likely to alienate her.*

4. Social Exchange

This is the definitional core of the book, where Blau establishes the concept of social exchange and distinguishes it from both purely economic transactions for entailing unspecified obligations that require trust.

- **Social exchange** refers to voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others
- **Process of exchange**: Processes of social association can be conceptualized, following Homans' lead, "as an exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons."
- **Rewards and costs:** Rewards are what we can provide others, at a cost.
  - *The cost incurred In providing social rewards in exchange for others may be thought of as "Investment cost," "direct cost," and "opportunity cost.*
- **Obligation**: An individual who supplies rewarding services to another obligates him. To discharge this obligation, the second must furnish benefits to the first in turn.

Blau identifies six types of social rewards distributed across two analytical dimensions (spontaneous evaluations vs. calculated actions; intrinsic vs. extrinsic vs. unilateral):

- **Personal attraction** (intrinsic, spontaneous)
- **Social acceptance** (intrinsic, calculated)
- **Social approval** (extrinsic, spontaneous)
- **Instrumental services** (extrinsic, calculated)
- **Respect/prestige** (unilateral, spontaneous)
- **Compliance/power** (unilateral, calculated)

	Intrinsic	*Extrinsic*	*Unilateral*
Spontaneous Evaluations	Personal attraction	Social approval*	Respect-prestige†
Calculated Actions	Social acceptance*	Instrumental services*	Compliance-power‡

The six types of rewards listed by Blau

- **People seek to obtain extra returns from social exchanges ('social scalping' and manipulation)**:
  - Covert questions: *consulting others indirectly by telling them about difficult problems is a more economical method of receiving help with decision-making than directly asking for advice, but only experts whose discussions of problems others find stimulating can avail themselves of this method of obtaining help without becoming obligated to reciprocate for it*
    See: manipulation tactics
  - *individual can cut his costs by obtaining rewards from actions of others that are profitable rather than costly to them, if this is possible*
  - *Social exchange can also be made less costly and more profitable by supplying social rewards that simultaneously benefit and obligate several others. The person who makes important contributions to an entire group illustrates this way of multiplying the benefits produced by one's actions*

  - Mediating disagreements
- **Exchanged benefits are sometimes tokens of support**: *the specific benefits exchanged are sometimes primarily valued as symbols of the supportiveness and friendliness they express, and it is the exchange of the underlying mutual support that is the main concern of the participants*
- **Exchanges are mixed games of cooperation/competition:** *with some common and some conflicting interests—the common ones in the partnership and the conflicting ones concerning who makes the greater commitment.*
- **Excessive reciprocation may be a power move**, 'emberessing' says Blau because it is a bid for a more extensive exchange relation than one may be willing to enter <— It's also a power move /social exchange scalping though, because it seeks to create a bigger debt for the receiver
- **Too fast reciprocation signals distance:** *Generally, posthaste reciprocation of favors, which implies a refusal to stay indebted for a while and hence an insistence on a more businesslike relationship, is condemned as improper, "Excessive eagerness to discharge an obligation is a form of ingratitude."*
- **Time is a significant cost in social exchanges:** *The most general cost incurred in supplying any social reward is the time required to do so in social associations* <— TPM Note: this is true for higher value men mostly. High value and busy people give simply with their time. But lower value people take that time, rather than give it
- **The first step carries opportunity and risks**: The initial offer of a favor entails the risk of rejection of favor and overture, and it can turn into cordiality or hostility because the offer cannot be refused without being insulting <— TPM Note: this is why we stress 'power protecting'

5. Differentiation of Power

- **Unilateral value-giving creates power:** *By supplying services in demand to others, a person establishes power over them. If*
  - Regular rewards allow for coercive power: *The only difference between punishments and rewards is in relation to this initial baseline, whether he is worse or better off than he was before the transaction started (…) Regular rewards make recipients dependent on the supplier and subject to his power, since they engender expectations that make their discontinuation a punishment.*
    For example, receiving a salary from work employment.
- **The ability to provide rare or superior benefits empowers:** *The ability to provide superior benefits than are available elsewhere, in a situation where these benefits are needed and cannot be extracted by force, constitutes a very strong claim to power, although not a completely inescapable one.*
  - But the 'ask' for those benefits must be commensurate: *If the power demands are too severe, relinquishing these benefits may be preferable to yielding to the demands.*
- **Unilateral dependence creates subordination:** *unless they can furnish other benefits to him that produce interdependence by making him equally dependent on them, their unilateral dependence obligates them to comply with his requests lest he cease to continue to meet their needs.*
  - The second-best option determines the leverage: *The degree of dependence of individuals on a person who supplies valued services is a function of the difference between their value and that of the second-best alternative open to them.* This is why coercive force is also important
- **Status enables making demands, but demands can deplete power**: *Superior status that empowers a person to command a variety of services from others enables him to gain many advantages. But if securing these advantages requires making too stringent demands, he depletes his power and endangers his status for several reasons. The costly services he forces others to supply to him may make it profitable for them to relinquish the benefits on which his power rests in favor of the lesser benefits that can be had from another person at lesser cost.*
  - Highest power doesn't get depleted: *The distinctive asset of vast power is that it obviates the need for making excessive demands that undermine power. This means not merely that individuals or groups with much power*

still have a great deal left after using some of it, by commanding services, but that their exercise of power usually does not deplete it at all and often actually helps them further to enhance it.

- **Coercive force is a last-resort compliance tool**, *coercive force, which can hardly be resisted, is important as a last resort for exercising power over individuals who cannot otherwise be made to yield.*
  - But it's an imperfect tool, since people may still resist or choose death

The **fourfold schema of power conditions** is the chapter's most important analytical contribution. A person or group has power over others when those others cannot:

1. **Reciprocate** with equally valued services (they lack strategic resources). Strategic resources explain exchange and the distribution of assets
2. **Obtain the needed benefits elsewhere** (the power holder has monopoly over the service). Available alternatives explain competition and the emergence of going rates;
3. **Take the benefits by force** (they lack coercive capacity). Coercive capacity explains organizational differentiation and political processes
4. **Do without the benefits** (they cannot lower their needs through ideology or self-sufficiency). Ideals lessening needs explain value formation and ideology <— TPM Note: this is where 'effective spirituality' can help by freeing people from material needs

Blau summarizes them with this schema:

Alternatives to Compliance	Conditions of Independence	Requirements of Power	Structural Implications
1. Supply Inducements	**Strategic Resources**	**Indifference to what others offer**	**Exchange and distribution of resources**
2. Obtain Elsewhere	**Available Alternatives**	**Monopoly over what others need**	**Competition and exchange rates**
3. Take by Force	**Coercive Force**	**Law and Order**	**Organization and differentiation**
4. Do Without	**Ideals Lessening Needs**	**Materialistic and other relevant values**	**Ideology Formation**

Or more detailed for strategic uses:

Leverage	Subordinate Strategies (For Independence)	Superior Strategies (To Sustain Power)
1. Strategic Resources (Reciprocity)	**Supply a Return Benefit**: Accumulate resources (money, specialized skills, or services) to pay for what you need in kind, ensuring the exchange remains balanced.	**Maintain Indifference**: Prevent the subordinate from gaining access to resources you actually need. Secure your own benefits from outside sources so you remain "un-bribable" and disinterested in what they offer.
2. Alternatives (Monopoly)	**Market Mobility**: Seek out alternative suppliers or employers to break the provider's monopoly. Reduce your "investment" in a single relationship to lower the cost of switching.	**Monopolization**: Bar access to alternative suppliers. Become the "only game in town" (the only firm, the only savior, the only source of security) to ensure the subordinate has nowhere else to turn.
3. Coercion (Force)	**Coalition Building**: Form unions, parties, or groups to create "strength in numbers." Use collective force or social pressure to compel the provider to deliver services without your compliance.	**Divide and Conquer**: Obstruct the formation of coalitions or unions. Support "law and order" to protect existing exchange processes from being disrupted by the "coercive" power of the masses or the state.

Leverage	Subordinate Strategies (For Independence)	Superior Strategies (To Sustain Power)
4. Values (Ideology)	**Asceticism / Resignation**: Re-evaluate your needs to "do without" the service. Adopt religious or revolutionary ideologies that make material or social rewards from the superior seem unimportant.	**Value Perpetuation**: Spread and fortify social values that make your resources essential (e.g., materialism for employers, patriotism for governments). Oppose "counter-ideologies" that would make your rewards seem less valuable.

Further notes:

- **Advice giving creates social capital, orders deplete it:** *giving advice and issuing orders have opposite consequences; advising another creates obligations, while ordering him to do something uses them up, as it were, by enabling him to discharge his obligations through his compliance*
- **Everyone is a social climber, the secret is to not look like one:** *the individual who appears a striver is a poor one indeed, but few of us are entirely free of it*
  See: signs of (poor) social climbing
- **It's mid-status who form the 'core' of groups:** *The middle stratum in a collectivity, therefore, tends to constitute its solid core of members who neither have much reason for wanting to leave it nor much tempting potential for doing so*
- **Climbers must initially 'pay respect' upon joining the upper status:** *the deferential role individuals who have recently moved up into a higher social stratum generally must assume in interaction with its established members, to gain full social acceptance, is a significant source of social reward for the established members. This deference fortifies the superiority of the higher stratum by furnishing continual evidence of the high price others are willing to pay for acceptance in this stratum.*
- **Having suggestions followed by others boosts status**, *while others' social standing simultaneously suffers for two reasons, because they often follow his suggestions and because their own are rarely accepted*
- **Moving to visit someone implies lower status**: *since inferiors usually take the initiative in approaching superiors, "if you can get another man, hitherto considered your equal, to come to your office rather than your going to his, to discuss some problem, you are to that extent one-up on him.*
  Also see: making someone wait
- **Higher status people expect a return to associate with lower status ones:** *The fact that many people find it rewarding to associate with superiors means that those of superior status can furnish rewards, and expect a return for them, merely by associating with others of lower status.* **<– TPM Note**: that return is often in exchange value, rather than personal value. This replicates the exchange between high personal value people and lower value people, who must 'pay the difference' to associate with them, including in dating. See the social investment model for more:

> The Social Investment Model: A Unified Theory of Value, Investment, and Power

- **High-status men enjoy socializing with lower status ones**: *Superiors obtain much satisfaction from associating with inferiors, who usually look up to them and follow their suggestions. The rewards that high status yields are undoubtedly an incentive for engaging in social Intercourse*
  - But associating with lower status people risks lowering one's status: *Insecure superior status, which can be jeopardized by social contacts with others of lower status, puts pressure on individuals to forego these satisfactions. Only firmly grounded social standing enables a person to benefit from such social contacts without the risk of losing his superior status or some of it.*

Status is a layered competition

In simple social structures, everyone competes with everyone else for rewards, recognition, and social approval. As status differences emerge, the more competent and respected individuals increasingly compete among themselves for leadership and dominance, while lower-status members, having already accepted a subordinate role, are effectively excluded from that higher-level competition.

At that stage, exchange and competition diverge. High-status individuals provide guidance, competence, and instrumental value to lower-status members, who repay them with respect, support, and compliance. That support, in turn, strengthens the high-status individuals in their competition for greater power within the group.

Meaning: the high status people exchange and reward the low status ones in exchange for social support that 'pushes them upward'.

Status is expandable capital

Superior social status resembles capital in that it is depleted in use (exercising power draws down obligations), can be invested at risk for greater returns (taking leadership risks to earn greater power), and provides compounding advantages when substantial (the person with great power can take risks that the person with little power cannot afford).

Making demands on others enables them to discharge their obligations and therefore diminishes one's power over them; but successfully coordinating their activities to produce collective benefits replenishes power by creating new obligations.

Tolerance as a sign of strength (and intolerance as an admission of weakness)

Only people whose power is not threatened by the actions of others can afford to view those actions with equanimity.

For example, lower-class Southern white is more racist than the upper-class Southerner because his social standing is genuinely threatened by Black advancement. Similarly, intolerant suppression of a political opposition publicly acknowledges that it poses a real threat, which may itself strengthen it.

Ideologies and patriotic values are tools of control

Blau confirms our observation that patriotism is a tool to build empires and that, in general, ideologies are promoted to serve a group or channel the power needed to accomplish a goal:

> Patriotic ideals, which identify people with the success of their country in war and peace, fortify the power of the government, Religious convictions, which make the blessings of a church and the spiritual counsel of its representatives rewards of great saliency, reinforce the power of church dignitaries. Revolutionary ideologies, which define the progress of a radical movement as inherently valuable for its members, bestow power on the movement's leadership.

Also see:

- Great leadership is great manipulation
- Political manipulation

Coercive force is the ultimate escalation layer, yet not a silver bullet

> For these reasons coercive force, which can hardly be resisted, is important as a last resort for exercising power over individuals who cannot otherwise be made to yield. Whereas physical force is a perfect protection against power, killing a man or incarcerating him disposes of his threat—it is an imperfect tool for exercising

> power, since people can choose even death over compliance. Hence, coercive force differs only in degree from the power that rests on the supply of needed benefits, albeit an important degree.

6. Expectations

How people react to social rewards depends not just on the rewards themselves but on the expectations they have.

Blau distinguishes several types of expectations:

- **General expectations**: overall achievement needs and aspirations, governed by cultural values and past attainments
  - Cultures place general expectations and can set up frustrations: *A strong cultural emphasis on achievement, such as that manifest in the ideology that any good man can achieve financial success and should try to do so, creates high general expectations, with impending frustrations for many whose achievements might have been satisfactory had it not been for their high expectations.*
- **Particular expectations**: what an individual anticipates from a specific associate, based on the impressions that person has made
- **Comparative expectations**: the ratio of rewards to costs (profit) that an individual expects from social associations, which constitutes a common standard for comparing different potential associations
  - Inequitable treatment betrays moral expectations and is costly: *Inequitable treatment and, particularly, exploitative use of power, therefore, evoke social disapproval, which makes it costly to take such unfair advantage of others.*
- **Social comparisons:** rewards tend to be more significant if they're unique or if they elevate the receiver above others, as compared to being common, given to all, and without raising the receiver above others (relative deprivation and principle of diminishing collective marginal utility)

The **principle of eventually diminishing marginal utility** applies to social as well as economic rewards. Increasing amounts of a given benefit produce ever-declining increments of value. Attaining rewards raises the expectation baseline, meaning that what was once a gratifying surplus becomes the new minimum. These two forces (diminishing marginal utility pushing value down, rising expectations pushing it back up) operate in tension, which is why the relationship between reward quantity and satisfaction is not simple.

Fair exchange and reference groups

The going rate of exchange in a group—how much compliance advice commands, for example—is governed by supply and demand.
The fair rate of exchange instead is governed by social norms calibrated to the long-run investments required to supply the benefit.

Norms of fairness function somewhat like the "normal price" in economic theory: they set a long-run standard that the going rate tends toward but frequently departs from. When the going rate falls short of the fair rate, individuals experience exploitation.

A secondary exchange of fairness for social approval is superimposed on primary exchanges: treating others fairly earns community approval, while exploitative treatment earns disapproval.

7. The Dynamics of Change and Adjustment in Groups

This chapter demonstrates that the theoretical framework can generate specific, testable predictions applying economic marginal analysis to the exchange of advice for status in work groups.

The main analytical contribution is the concept of elasticity applied to the supply and demand for advice. Advice is

seen as a trade between status benefits and costs in time and opportunity, with the initial status being more valuable and then decreasing progressively in value.

- When demand for advice is **elastic** (the task is easy, substitutes exist, status concerns dominate task concerns), a change in the number of experts primarily changes the *volume* of consultation rather than the going rate of compliance, so status differences are relatively unaffected
- When demand is **inelastic** (complex tasks, no substitutes, high task stakes), a reduction in expert supply intensifies status differences rather than reducing consultation volume
- When supply is **elastic** (experts are not under time pressure, near-experts exist who can join the consultant ranks), increased demand produces more consultation without inflating status differences
- When supply is **inelastic**, increased demand inflates the rate of compliance required, sharpening hierarchical differentiation without much change in consultation volume

Empirical data from twelve welfare agency work groups confirm the key prediction.
The analysis reveals a **self-perpetuating element of power**: once superior status has been established through furnishing needed services, it can be sustained without continuing to furnish those same services at the same rate, because the accumulated capital of obligations maintains power even as the original service supply diminishes.

8. Legitimation and Organization

Stable coordination requires **legitimazed power**. Meaning, to go from coercive or obligation-based force into **authority commanding willing compliance** that doesn't require continuous enforcement because the subordinates themselves enforce it through their own norms.

The compliance with a superior's commands is enforced by the collectivity of subordinates (or its dominant subgroups). Authority in Blau's theory is thus a social norm among followers. This distinguishes authority from personal mere influence (where the follower complies because they respect the individual) and from coercion (where compliance is compelled by external force).

Legitimation originates in the **social approval** that followers grant to leaders. Social approval is foundational to leadership because compliance can be enforced with sufficient power, but approval cannot be forced, regardless of how great the power. And **the effectiveness and stability of leadership depend on social approval.**
To boost the odds of social approval, a leader must ensure that:

1. **The leader's demands are fair**
2. **The leader provides excess benefits** compared to the expectations of what a fair return for submission requires

The leader's own power can help gain approval, as Blau notes that 'Small needs for power as well as great power make it easy for a man to exercise his power in ways that elicit legitimating approval from subordinates'.
This approval, when communicated among followers, generates shared norms that enforce compliance with the leader's directives.

- **The dilemma of leadership** is that attaining power over others requires furnishing services that make them dependent, while remaining independent of any services they might offer in return. But to legitimate power and leadership he must earn followers' social approval, which requires not maintaining total independence from them <— **TPM Note**: However, this is not always the case and pertains more to smaller and more egalitarian formal groups. The author also later says that when the followers are many the leader naturally becomes more independent
  - Approval is important, but a leader can't be too preoccupied with being liked: *preoccupation with the approval of followers interferes with a leader's ability to command their respect and compliance by making the greatest contribution to their welfare he can, because concern with being liked prevents him from basing his decisions consistently on criteria of effectiveness alone.*

- **Managers 'have it easier' with contracts and rank supporting them**: managers in a structurally advantaged starting position. They can earn legitimating approval not by furnishing outstanding personal leadership but simply by refraining from exercising the full force of their official powers
  See: the manager's guide to leadership

Followers may 'self-manipulate' to escape the reality of subordination

> To resolve this cognitive dissonance, individuals are under pressure to appreciate the value of the benefits and depreciate the cost of compliance. They may extol the abilities of the superior and their respect for him and stress that following the guidance of such an expert is objectively the best course of action. They may emphasize that issuing directives is the manager's duty, not his privilege, and that their compliance with these directives does not constitute submission to his will but is simply part of their freely accepted responsibilities, just as issuing the directives is part of his.

9. Opposition

> One of the most potent remedies that a prince has against conspiracies, is that of not being hated by the mass of people
>
> *Machiavelli*

Exploitative power, depriving people of resources and autonomy, can also generate a social surplus of oppositional resources.

The conversion of private grievance into collective opposition requires:

1. A **collective situation** in which many people share the experience of deprivation
2. **Communication among members** to share grievances and organize action
3. A degree of **social isolation** from the larger community to protect intragroup communication from community values that legitimate and 'defend' existing powers
4. A **revolutionary ideology** that transforms the personal desire for revenge into a noble collective cause

Revolutionary ideologies turn aggression into a noble pursuit. Revenge, aggression, and violence are culturally tabooed and evoke guilt feelings, especially when pursuing personal gains. A revolutionary ideology converts these base tendencies into noble and prosocial ideals.
Also see populism power dynamics.

Intensity-appeal tradeoff

A radical ideology that unites a core ingroup of disenfranchised generates intense commitment from within but also makes it more repulsive to outsiders.

Appealing to broadly shared values (universalistic features) like fairness or prosperity would expand its appeal but dilute the ideological purity that sustains member devotion.

Blau talks about idealists and realists on each side, and parliamentarians and idealists tend to be on opposite sides of this tradeoff. Parliament members need to make concessions in the give and take and politics and want re-election, which they may get with a broader appeal. That makes them more realistic.

10. Mediating Values in Complex Structures

Common values mediate the lack of direct interaction among most members.

Conformity to norms often requires individuals to forgo direct exchange advantages (the girl who does not grant sexual favors for short-term rewards; the professional who refuses gratuities from clients) in exchange for approval and status from the community. Norms transform the incentive structure so that behaviors harmful to the collective interest become costly to individuals through social disapproval.

Institutionalization is the mechanism by which some value-mediated social patterns are perpetuated across generations.
Three conditions are required for institutionalization:

- Organizing principles must become **formalized** in external, historically transmitted arrangements (written documents, laws, organizational structures)
- The legitimating values that give these external forms meaning must be **transmitted through socialization** and internalized as part of individuals' personalities
- The **dominant groups** in society must be sufficiently identified with these institutions to use their power in defense of them

Interesting notes:

- **Moral principles protect the collective against rational but selfish individual choices:** Moral standards develop against behavior that is harmful to the collective, and become internalized and socially enforced, changing the rewards and costs. Social disapproval and guilty feelings are real costs that can outweigh the rewards, turning selfish but rational choices into costly choices that would be irrational to pursue. Hence, men who forego the advantages made possible by cheating do not act contrary to their self-interest if the peace of mind and social approval they obtain for their honesty is more rewarding to them than the gains they could make by cheating.

11. The Dynamics of Substructures

The elements of macrostructures are not individuals but other social structures.

Blau traces nine relationships between integration, differentiation, and organization at the substructure and macrostructure levels. Among the most important:

- The internal differentiation of substructures generates **crosscutting ties** between similarly situated members of different substructures (e.g., class solidarity among workers across communities), which in turn create new integrative links in the broader macrostructure
- **Relative-absolute status tradeoff:** vertical mobility between differently ranked substructures offers the dilemma between superordinate position within a lower-status group versus a subordinate position within a higher-status group. The rewards of each differ—daily social dominance and immediate recognition versus the prestige and privileges of higher-class affiliation

12. Dialectical Forces (the Macro Theory)

🤔Lucio's Take: **The most insightful contribution is the *micro* description**

Lucio:
While the macro model is interesting and thought-provoking, I find it less incisive, less convincing, and less empirical than the micro-analyses relating to interpersonal and smaller group dynamics.

The true genius of this work—and its primary practical value for the TPM framework—lies in the granular mechanics of social exchange (reciprocity, indebtedness, and power dynamics).

In the final chapter, Blau presents 'dialectical sociology', his theoretical framework to reconcile interpersonal exchanges with macrostructures.

Two Main Types of Exchanges

Two main types of exchanges exist, depending on whether people are intrinsically attracted and whether they provide unilateral benefits:

	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Reciprocal	Mutual attraction	Exchange
Unilateral	One-sided attachment	Power

Social Dilemmas

The most interesting dilemmas listed are:

- **Relationships are mixed games of conflicting and shared interests:** *aside from their common interest in assuring that there is sufficient commitment, the two partners also have conflicting interests, because each is interested in having the other make the greater commitment. This situation poses the dilemma for each partner that*

he must put pressure on the other to make the greater commitment by withholding his own commitment up to the point where it would endanger the relationship but not beyond this point

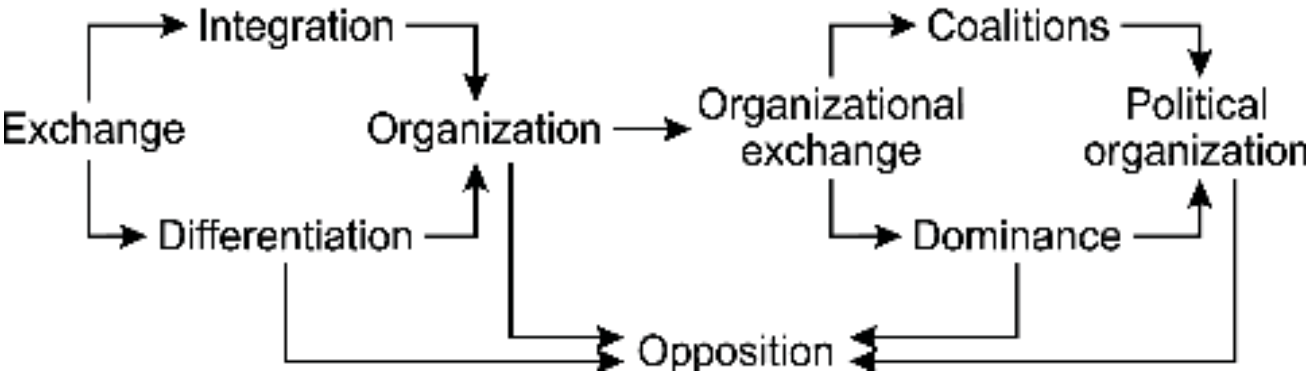
- Giving vs. withholding: *Lovers, too, are under cross pressure to furnish emotional support and express affection for one another, on the one hand, and to withhold excessive demonstrations of affection and premature commitments, on the other, because the free expression of affection and commitment depreciates their value.*
- Conflicting first choices but shared last choices: *coexistence of conflicting and common interests in all these social associations means that associates always have first choices that conflict but last choices that are identical, and the first choice of either is the second-last of the other, though it may still be preferable to any available alternative*
- Relationships develop best when feelings and investment go at the same pace: *If one lover is considerably more involved than the other, his greater commitment invites exploitation or provokes feelings of entrapment, both of which obliterate love. Whereas rewards experienced in the relationship may lead to its continuation for a while, the weak interest of the less committed or the frustrations of the more committed probably will sooner or later prompt one or the other to terminate it. Only when two lovers' affection for and commitment to one another expand at roughly the same pace do they tend mutually to reinforce their love.*
  See win-win dating
- Common interest is keeping the bond, but diverging interest as to wants it more: *aside from their common interest in assuring that there is sufficient commitment, the two partners also have conflicting interests, because each is interested in having the other make the greater commitment. This situation poses the dilemma for each partner that he must put pressure on the other to make the greater commitment by withholding his own commitment up to the point where it would endanger the relationship but not beyond this point.*

- **Leadership requires a position of dominance and the legitimating approval of followers**, but achieving dominance over others frequently inspires more fear than love, as Machiavelli noted
- **Approval and respect dilemmas**: *People seek the approval of those they respect, and they also seek their help with improving their own performance. But the two are not compatible, inasmuch as supportive approval fails to furnish an instrumental basis for improvements and critical appraisals imply disapproval. By being supportive through his praise of others, a person gains their appreciation but fails to earn their respect, and by offering incisive criticisms, he earns their respect but often also their dislike, since they are predisposed to consider his criticism too severe.*

Many of these dilemmas disappear once status is firmly grounded.

Dialectical theory

The author's macro-theory dynamics are emergent properties from the core principles of social exchange. This is how it looks in a chart:



The dialectical model posits that social structures form through exchange, but produce contradictions that lead to constant restructuring, rather than reaching a final equilibrium.

- **Exchange generates integration** (bonds of mutual trust acquire intrinsic significance) and **differentiation** (unilateral services produce status hierarchies)
- Integration and differentiation together create the conditions for **formal organization**
- Organized collectivities engage in **exchange and competition** with each other; success in competition creates hierarchical differentiation among organizations;
- Dominant organizations seek **political organization** to maintain order and protect existing power distributions
- The **restraints** exerted by established organizations provoke **opposition forces**, which serve as the catalysts of social reorganization

Social change goes through intermittent reorganizations driven by antagonizing forces of stability (institutionalization, legitimate authority, integrative values) and the forces of change (exploitation, opposition ideologies, structural rigidities that accumulate intolerably).

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

While we use the authors' quotes and research, these represent our own TPM's interpretations.

Judge emotional dynamics help maintain social exchanges

Social exchanges aren't just governed by self-interest, but also by the need for approval and fitting in. This is power that others, and the collective, exercise on each individual.

> the tendency to help others is frequently motivated by the expectation that doing so will bring social rewards. Beyond this selfinterested concern with profiting from social associations, however, there is again an "altruistic" element or, at least, one that removes social transactions from simple egoism or psychological hedonism. A basic reward people seek in their associations is social approval, and selfish disregard for others makes it impossible to obtain this important reward.

The power that others have to make us feel 'approved of' is a foundational element of the 'judge', a concept we mapped here at TPM.
See more:

- Judge power dynamics

Assessing others = judge power move

Interesting to see that Blau reached the same conclusions we reached at TPM decades earlier:

> positive evaluations of another's abilities, however, may imply either that the evaluator has a superordinate status that qualifies him as a judge, as is the case when an instructor praises the talent of a student

Subcommunication of power

Social exchanges are largely based on sub-communication.

For example, Blau says that being tolerant sub-communicates power and confidence in one's own status, while intolerance sub-communicates precarious status and lower confidence.

How we treat others also sub-communicates how seriously we take them, and it also applies to the *threats* of others:

> By treating the juvenile delinquent as a boy in need of rehabilitation, we deny his claim to being a strong man through our condescending tolerance. We cannot remain equally permissive in the face of the gangster or

> fascist hoodlum, who poses a more serious threat to our lives and fortunes and freedom, yet our intolerant opposition to him in attempts to suppress him serves to validate the power that he craves.

Physical coercion is the ultimate source of power, but it's limited in scope

> unilateral services that meet basic needs are the penultimate source of power. Its ultimate source, of course, is physical coercion. While the power that rests on coercion is more absolute, however, it is also more limited in scope than the power that derives from met needs.

In unity and coordination lies power

> The weakness of the isolated subordinate limits the significance of his approval or disapproval of the superior. The agreement that emerges in a collectivity of subordinates concerning their judgment of the superior, on the other hand, has far-reaching implications for developments in the social structure.

In turn, collective disapproval of power engenders opposition. When the group is cohesive and coordinated, that opposition can be turned into bargaining power, including shows of force like strikes, or potentially even rebellions and ousting of the leader.
This is also a dynamic we leverage in our guide on 'how to handle a poor boss'.

Power underpins communion

And some power, listed by Blau in the form of competence, is also necessary to form friendships:

> although men may want to associate together exclusively for the sake of sociable fellowship and have no interest in deriving any extrinsic advantage from their social relations, they must prove themselves attractive to each other by demonstrating qualities that make them preferable to other possible associates, qualities that must be comparable and that consequently are, in a relative sense, extrinsic.

This is something that many guys who first stumble on TPM often miss. They believe that 'love' or 'communion' is independent of power. It's not.
Also see:

- Social skills vs. power skills: approval is social skills, and power is status

> Social Skills vs Power Skills: Why Likability Alone Won't Get You Ahead

Sprezzatura vs. visible effort: value-signaling requires calibration

Blau draws on Goffman's concept of role distance, but takes it a step forward by adding calibration.
Contrary to Greene's '*48 Laws of Power*', you don't always impress others by making your actions appear effortless. Instead, if the audience is clueless, a display of strain impresses more than total ease:

> Whether exhibiting strain or ease makes a difficult performance still more impressive depends on the sophistication of the audience and ultimately on whether the fact that the performance is difficult must be established or can be taken for granted. If others do not know how very difficult a performance is, manifesting tense concentration and strain in the course of it provides this knowledge and increases their admiration. If they already realize the difficulties involved, however, it is the great ease with which such a hard task can be

> mastered that is most impressive.

Social pressures are sexual manipulation

Once again, Blau and TPM reached similar conclusions when it comes to social manipulation dynamics to handicap the competition:

> The interest of girls in protecting the value of sexual favors against depreciation gives rise to social pressures among girls not to grant these favors readily.

We diverge though as Blau then sees perfect complementarity with men, while thanks to evolutionary psychology research we could better refine our foundational models of manipulation.

He is correct though that men's shaming of other over-investing men is probably related to social manipulation against deflating the value of courtship and value exchanges (see 'simping dynamics').

Speaking time affords power, cracking jokes affords acceptance

> The unequal distribution of speaking time produces an initial differentiation that gives some an advantage (…) The group member who makes lesser contributions—for instance, relieving the tensions generated by conflicts of opinions through his good humor and congeniality—is likely to earn the approval and acceptance of others, though not their high respect.

Modern men aren't dependent on status from any specific group

As we mentioned in our core article 'pursue power over status', modern men are free to join or leave countless different groups, which in turn frees them from being dependent on the status of any single one of them.

Blau draws the same conclusions, but focuses on societal costs, rather than individual empowerment:

> Multigroup affiliation entails social costs, as shown by the last illustration, particularly. It enables individuals in modern society to make the informal and partly even the formal, sanctions of the community at large ineffective by organizing themselves into subcollectivities whose social approval alone is considered important

Lean more here:

- **Why power beats status for modern men**

> Pursue POWER, Not Status: Big Fish in Litte Pond Syndrome

⚠ … But this means that societies may need stronger guardrails

> Social approval has less pervasive significance as a restraining force in complex societies than in simpler ones, because the multiplicity of groups and the possible mobility between them in complex societies enables deviants of nearly all sorts to escape from the impact of community disapproval by finding a subgroup of like-minded persons where they can gain approval. Impersonal restraints are, therefore, of special importance in modern societies, and a basic source of impersonal restraint is power.

This is a crucial insight and it's a possible risk factor we often considered here at TPM.
It means that **modern society may provide a more fertile terrain for dark triads, including psychopathy**.

QUOTES

On the pervasiveness of the social exchange:

Not all human behavior is guided by considerations of exchange, though much of it is

On the selfishness behind the selflessness:

An apparent “altruism” pervades social life; people are anxious to benefit one another and to reciprocate for the benefits they receive. But beneath this seeming selflessness an underlying “egoism” can be discovered; the tendency to help others is frequently motivated by the expectation that doing so will bring social rewards.

On the ‘power of tolerance’:

Intolerance is an admission of weakness that acknowledges the power of another, just as tolerance is a sign of strength that confirms the other’s inferiority.

??♂ Lucio’s Analysis

A seminal text with just a few minor tweaks that could further upgrade it:

Misses more advanced power dynamics

For example, talking about dating, Blau implies that a man courting and trying hard to please a woman may win her attraction by rebalancing the exchange.

In truth, **rebalancing the exchange with over-investment sub-communicates lower personal value which is likely to lower attraction**, instead of increasing it (Buffalmano, 2026).
The woman may still accept the relationship, but it will be on her terms and because of the benefits, not because of honest, intrinsic attraction and desire. Exceptions apply for smart and power aware men, of course, but that’s not the general principle.

Read more:

- Dating power dynamics
- Principle of dating dynamics

> The 5 Principles of Dating Power Dynamics: Effective Dating

Integration of psychology & evolutionary psychology would improve it

For example, the author seems to frame a mother’s devotion as the example of pure selflessness, but evolutionary psychology suggests that the motivation is genetic.

He also lists little exceptions to the general propensity for repaying rewards, while in truth people differ. For example, dark triads and men high in psychopathic traits are less likely to repay, and have been specifically described as embracing a cheater’s approach to social exchanges.

Sometimes dated in its treatment of female agency and mate choice

For example, he writes of attractive men who earn their women’s love:

> Although he can take advantage of her greater commitment to obtain sexual favors from her, his exploitative orientation in doing so is not likely to stimulate an intrinsic attachment; and if his superego prevents him from exploiting her, he is likely to terminate the relationship under these circumstances.

This passage frames men as the active side and underplays women's role as active choosers, missing bidirectional mate choice and women's own motives and returns in engaging in sexual activities.
The Freudian reference (superego) also reflects a dated theoretical lens.

Group evolution?

In this passage, the author seems to place the group's interest above the individual's interest, which goes against evolutionary forces as understood by most modern researchers:

> Exchange processes utilize, as it were, the self-interests of individuals to produce a differentiated social structure within which norms tend to develop that require individuals to set aside some of their personal interests for the sake of those of the collectivity.

However, selfish individuals rarely 'set aside their personal interest' for the sake of the collectivity. Although exceptions certainly apply, I wouldn't make group-first a foundational piece of the theory.

Status competition is only seen through the lens of prestige, not dominance

For example, writes Blau:

> The obligations of group members to those who make such benefits possible are discharged by according them superior status. They command respect and compliance, which serve as rewards for having made contributions in the past and as incentives for continuing to make them in the future.

This textbook prestige by being competent, giving to others, and getting status/prestige in exchange.
However, more modern research also highlighted that people can gain status with dominance.

Social exchanges have "social slack" (limits of mechanistic interpretation)

Blau's exchange is often described in quasi-mechanistic terms (credits, obligations, reciprocity), which is analytically useful but can be overextended.

In practice, social exchange involves social slack. Such as, social debts/credits and **obligations create a *tendency* toward repayment, but not precise balancing**. Debts are often only partially repaid—or not repaid at all—without necessarily breaking the relationship.

In real life, many social debts/credits aren't repaid or fully repaid, without harming the relationship.
This is especially true for smaller debits, and when accounting for 'social inflation'.

Inflation & time discount of social debit and credits deserved a mention

The credits and debits that social exchange tend to create follow a time discount. They're stronger right after the 'give'—especially during the same interaction and in the ones immediately following—but tend to decay over time.

As time passes, the perceived obligation weakens as both givers and takers forget and move on. This also explains why many social debts are only partially repaid—or not repaid at all.

Also see:

- Applied principles of social exchange

> 9 Laws of Social Success From Social Exchange Theory

REVIEW

Exchange and Power in Social Life is a seminal book of both sociological theory and TPM's power-driven approach to men's self-development.

Not so much in its macro-theory that was more speculative and less practical, but for its description of social exchange dynamics between individuals and smaller groups (reciprocity, indebtedness, and power dynamics).

The central theme of exchange among individuals who seek to maximize returns is a deceptively simple insight, yet it's an enlightening realization for many and a foundational concept for ambitious men to succeed and advance in life.
At TPM, we build and expand on social exchange with related concepts to boost men's success, including:

- **Effective calculativeness**, a foundational orientation to succeed in exchanges
- **Strategic cooperation**, with foundational approaches and mindsets to succeed in exchanges and in life

Female Dating Literature Explained: Psychology, Strategies, & Power

Lucio Buffalmano · 8 June 2026 · Archived copy · Original

In this article, we analyze the major dating books, coaches, and schools of thought for women to uncover the core strategies they promote, what actually works in the real world, and what it means for men seeking quality women and win-win relationships.

Strategy A is supportive and interdependent, often encouraged by men. Strategy B is more libertine and individualistic, somewhat closer to a male approach, but may struggle to reconcile personal power with relationship success.

Contents

- Main Strategies
  - Strategy A: Feminine & Supportive (Win-Win)
  - Strategy B: Power & Independence (Feminist/Egalitarian)
  - Strategy C: Attractiveness & ‘Sexual Pull’
  - Strategy D: Gold-Digging (Most Manipulative)
  - ⚠ Modern Cultural Dissonance: Will to Power vs. Wish for Intimacy
- Darker Motives Behind Dating Advice
  - Men’s (Darker) Motives
  - Women’s (Darker) Motives
  - TPM’s Take: the Best Strategy (for women)
- Takeaways for Men

Main Strategies

Looking broadly at the literature for women, we can isolate 4 main strategies, all potentially valid depending on her goals, but not all equally effective for finding quality men and relationships.

Goal	Strategic Focus
Relationship	Femininity, kindness, timing, and family
Power	Independence, sexual gratification, personal returns, success
Attraction	Sex appeal, leverage over men, 'game'
Extraction	Target-selection, manipulation, control

Before proceedings, note that some strategies may overlap, and be executed with different 'modes'.
For example, the feminine woman may use a more 'active mode', going out and socializing, and she may even approach. But she'd approach within her main strategy of choice—for example, asking for help. Or she may have a good career, but still prefer the feminine approach—for example, think of Dolly Parton.

Strategy A: Feminine & Supportive (Win-Win)

The Concept: Traditional woman who seeks a man to lead, provide, and protect. She embraces traditional feminine roles and prioritizes being a good partner or mother over career.

Resources: *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*; *The Rules*; *The Surrendered Wife*;

Examples: Kate Middleton

Common Tactics: Delaying sex; ask to be picked up; let him take the bill; etc.

⍰ PROS

- **Attracts relationship-minded men**, including quality men who can be effective providers
- **Potentially easier and simpler life** IF he is a good man and leader
- **Undersupplied niche** in today's Western society, boosting mate value

⍰ CONS

- **Dependence = high risk**. Some men can turn overly controlling or even abusive
- **Must protect reputation** as a 'wife material'. That may mean skipping formative dating experiences or fully enjoying one's sexuality
- **Can create Madonna-whore dichotomies** in some men

Best Match: Providers; dominant men

⚠ **Careful renouncing this approach: most women (and men) still prefer a loving relationship**
Modern dating culture reviles this approach, but it remains highly effective to get relationships (keep reading)

Strategy B: Power & Independence (Feminist/Egalitarian)

The Concept: An independent, assertive, and empowered woman who prioritizes her well-being and will walk away from men or relationships that serve her best interests. Pursuing her own goals and career, she doesn't prioritize her partner.

Resources: *The Power of The Pussy*; *Why Men Love Bitches*, *Fu*k Him*

Examples: Taylor Swift; Sex and the City (Samantha and Miranda)

Common Tactics: Focus on your goals and don't develop feelings; under-invest to maintain power; think of relationships transactionally; lead the interaction; control the frame; etc.

⍰ PROS

- **High agency life**, pursuing her own goals. In a way, more similar to a successful man
- **Relationship control** since she often pairs up with meeker men who are OK with egalitarian or women-led relationships
- **Possible 'power couple'**, though that's rarer since high-power men often prefer a supportive woman

⍰ CONS

- **Less effective with other high-agency men** who often prefer warmer and more traditional women (see 'submissive vs. strong')
  - Loses to warmer women for relationship, who enjoy broader appeal at parity of attractiveness (including conservative men)
- **Sometimes includes (power) games** that escalate conflict for control, undermine intimacy and turn off high-power men
- **Lower raw attraction** because it can lose the masculine/feminine polarity (especially when pairing up with meeker men)

Best Match: Meeker men; younger men; lower SMV men; open-minded men

⚠ **Beware the hurt woman on the revenge path**

Some women started out overly naive and got hurt, potentially by narcissists or dark triad men. They then swing the opposite side with the 'don't need a man' approach (sometimes with a child from the previous guy). While her pain is understandable, these dating coaches can pass hidden resentment onto other women (same dynamics apply with men, of course).

Strategy C: Attractiveness & 'Sexual Pull'

The Concept: Sexuality and seduction are the tools of power, using both psychology and physicality. Depending on the style, she can be demure/exploitable (Marlyn Monroe) or more assertive (Madonna).

Resources: Seduction University, *The Art of Seduction*, *Kamasutra*, *Seductresses*

Examples: Mae West; Marilyn Monroe; La Païva; Cleopatra;

Common Tactics: Sexual innuendos; baby talk; provocative clothes; sexual confidence; flirting; etc.

⍰ PROS

- **Strong pull**, especially when paired with physical attractiveness
- **Can niche down** and appeal to men with specific sexual kinks, potentially transcending looks

⍰ CONS

- **Social and reputational risk**, with added risk of evoking pity when trying to be overly sexual later in life
- **Retention risks** as sexual appeal fades and men wise up to psychological influence

Strategy D: Gold-Digging (Most Manipulative)

The Concept: Use men to extract resources. A strange of mix of 'financial dependence on men', while maintaining psychological independence

Resources: *A Goal Digger's Guide*; *Ho Tactics*

Examples: Hugh Hefner's girlfriends

Common Tactics: Feign attraction; withhold sex as a bargaining chip; lingering touches; pick an expensive restaurant; drop hints of 'enjoying shopping', etc. See: Tactics women use to drive men crazy ↗

⍰ PROS

- **Attracts high-investing men** and filters out low-investment men
- **Sets her up as the prize** to be wined, dined, and maintained

⍰ CONS

- **Repels quality men** (unless for the ease of sex without strings attached,
- **Stigma lasts forever** and she may have to hide her past for future relationships

⚠ Modern Cultural Dissonance: Will to Power vs. Wish for Intimacy

Contemporary Western women have grown up in cultures that encourage independence and may discourage traditional roles.

This culture has shrunk support and market for the 'strategy A'-but women's will for a relationship has not shrunk nearly as much (genes only partially 'bend' to culture).
This has led to a self-harming phenomenon in both dating advice and women's psychological health.

Dating Advice: The ‘Bitch Who Gets Men’ (Lie)

Much ‘Strategy B’ modern dating advice is framed as high independence, while also promising to deliver genuine relationships.
For example, *Why Men Love Bitches* leads with the high power ‘bitch’, promises to attract men and relationships, and winks at the popular but low-agency law of attraction.

Unfortunately, this approach sells well, but offers a mismatch of incompatible goals. It would require advanced social IQ and ‘compartmentalization’ to pull off.

⍰ Example: Parading Strength, While Signaling Neediness

Culturally, this phenomenon is observable in songs such as ‘I can buy myself flowers’.

In the lyrics, author Miley Cyrus claims she can treat herself better than any man can, appealing to the ‘will for power’ and ‘not needing a man’.
Yet, looking deeper it betrays a wish for emotional intimacy. Starting from a high-dependence broken heart, her self-love activities relate not to high-agency independence, but to interdependent emotional intimacy (see analysis here).

This is neediness masked as strength. A truly independent woman wouldn’t have written that song at all. And a mentally healthier woman may be better off by simply owning up to her emotions and wishes (‘high power vulnerability’).

⍰♂Lucio’s Experience: **The guilt of wanting a man**

Lucio:
Dating in northern Europe, I’ve encountered this phenomenon more than once.

An ex-girlfriend felt bad for ‘needing’ a relationship and ‘failing’ the independent woman’s goal.

Meanwhile, her friends egged her own that ‘no, she is fine single’.

Darker Motives Behind Dating Advice

Men tend to advise and support 'Strategy A', while it's almost only women who advise Strategy B.
With a power-aware lens, it's easy to spot possible evolutionary and sexual strategy reasons.

Gendered advice	Men's Darker Motive	Women's Darker Motive
♀ Be independent ♂ Let him protect/provide	Boost partner control; strengthen social power	Undermine the competition; shape the culture; disempower controlling men
♀ Pursue education & career ♂ You don't need education & career	Maintain & strengthen social power; boost control with naive, lower SES women	Influence society with policies that empower women; recruit allies
♀ Embrace your sexuality ♂ Be chaste	Boost fidelity & paternity; boost social power with sexual repression	Enjoy dating around; prevent 'slut shaming' with cultural changes
♀ Embrace 'body positivity' ♂ Mind your body	Maintain larger choice of attractive women; Confine women to 'just be pretty' roles	Undermine the competition; relieve social stigma for themselves

In brief, women often encourage high power 'Strategy B'. And men advise for supportive, warm and, although they may not say it, the more submissive 'Strategy A'.

The different incentives can explain the vastly different takes.

Men's (Darker) Motives

Most men's incentive is to have lower status, more submissive women because it boosts their dating choice, decreases the risks of celibacy, and maximizes their relationship satisfaction and 'safety'.
This also works socially, because the lower status a group is compared to yours, the more comparative benefits you gain (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999).

Women's (Darker) Motives

Women as a whole gain when women as a whole gain social power.
Individual independence though goes both ways: it protects against controlling men, but it can be a liability compared to more submissive women.

So **women's high-independence advice may be a subconscious manipulation tactic to harm the competition**.
The more independent women around, the stronger the social benefits for all women, and the less competitive the sexual marketplace becomes. Then, she may instead defect and be submissive to a man she likes.

The advice can be manipulative, even when from genuinely independent women. The 'independent woman' approach attracts flak from men who fear that a society of independent women will leave them celibates.
So independent women need more independent women to protect themselves as a group.

These motives cast doubt on much of Strategy B, at least when it comes to dating effectiveness.

TPM's Take: the Best Strategy (for women)

The best strategy was already shown in the thumbnail and opening infographic: it's the combination of both, with an optimum balance, and leveraging each in the most appropriate context

The best strategy is almost always situation and goal-dependent.

If a woman has no interest in relationships, she doesn't even need to bother with dating advice.
But if she'd prefer a relationship, then we can tease out a good general principle:

⚖️ **Be independent in life, selective and strategically more submissive in dating, and ready to let a high-quality man provide and lead in relationships**.

This approach covers the downsides of high dependence, a crucial aspect in a world where too many men turn out controlling and value-taking.
But it also maximizes her market reach, appealing to the many quality men who value feminine, kind, and supportive women.

Embrace Reality, Reject PC

Across the board, much of dating advice ignores or plays down basic social exchange dynamics and mate value considerations.
Solid advice based on these foundations includes:

- **Boost Sexual Market Value (SMV):** For women, this is heavily weighted toward youth, beauty, femininity, and social grace
- **Time Your Relationship to Peak Value**: The 20's is most women's peak SMV, a good decade to pair up with a high-value man
- **Plan Your Reproduction:** and look into reproductive tech options (freezing eggs as contingency, for example)

Takeaways for Men

For men, this literature also offers a useful screening lens. What women read and what strategy they adopt signals their dating strategy, values, and 'relational value'.

In general, many quality women won't be consuming much dating advice, especially outside of Strategy A. First, because they believe in honest win-win, rather than seeking 'strategies and tactics'. Second, because they need it less. At parity of value and quality, men benefit from dating advice more than women because men are expected to initiate, lead, and signal value. Women, less so.

In simple terms, this is how you assess women based on the literature they consume:

- ✅ **Red flags literature** (eg, 'signs you're dating a sociopath') <— It's a good sign because it often means she wants a good guy
- ❌ **Gaining power literature** can signal a Machiavellian, selfish, and 'taker approach' (strategy B, C, D & E)
  - Feminist literature can signal an antagonistic approach and distrust of men.
    See more dating red flags ↗

In general, **most men interested in win-win dating and relationships with a supportive woman are better off with women following the traditional Strategy A**.

But to be more precise, as always, what's best depends on your goals.

She reads...	Best For
Nothing	Beginners, marriage, family
The Rules / Act Like a Lady / Men Are From Mars	Relationships; traditional men; provider-type men
The Power of The Pussy	Player types
Kamasutra / Seductresses	Sex lovers; open-minded men; advanced operators
Ho Tactics	MGTOW men, 'pay per play and move on'

🤔Lucio's Experience: **High-power women & gold diggers = advanced learning**

Lucio:
Some men revile 'gold diggers' and profess never to get close.

It's understandable, yet some dominant women and even sex workers offer the biggest learning opportunities for

more advanced men.

High-power women test your frame and leadership harder. And sex workers may unleash their full tactical toolbox to extract resources, even while they're falling for you.
It's an advanced game of seduction that taught me a lot.

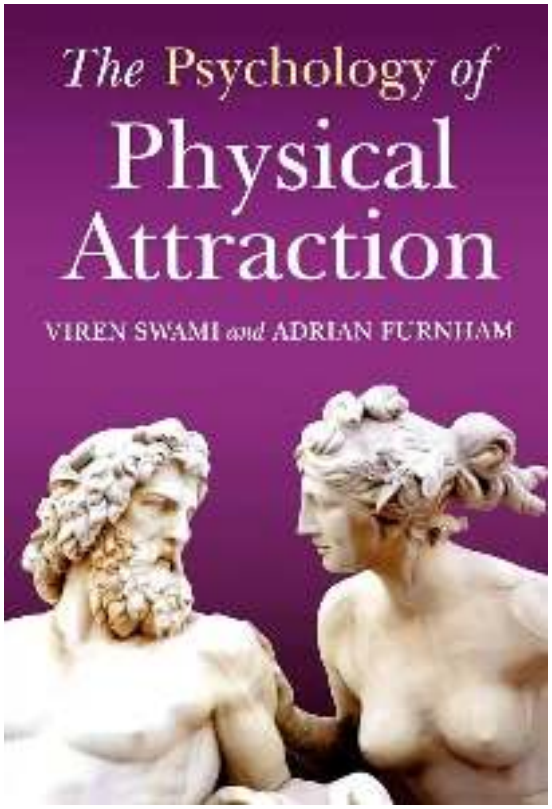
To leverage all the advanced know-how and find a quality woman, see:

Check Seduction University

The Psychology of Physical Attraction: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 15 June 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The Psychology of Physical Attraction (2007) is a research-based overview of what makes people attractive, covering face, body, and behavior through both evolutionary and social psychology.



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NOTES

About the Authors:
Viren Swami and Adrian Furnham are psychologists known for their research on physical attractiveness, body image, and individual differences. Their work combines evolutionary psychology with social and cultural perspectives, and they have published extensively in academic journals and books on attractiveness, personality, and human behavior.
We also previously reviewed Swami's 'Attraction Explained'.

Chapter 1: What Pythagoras unleashed upon the world

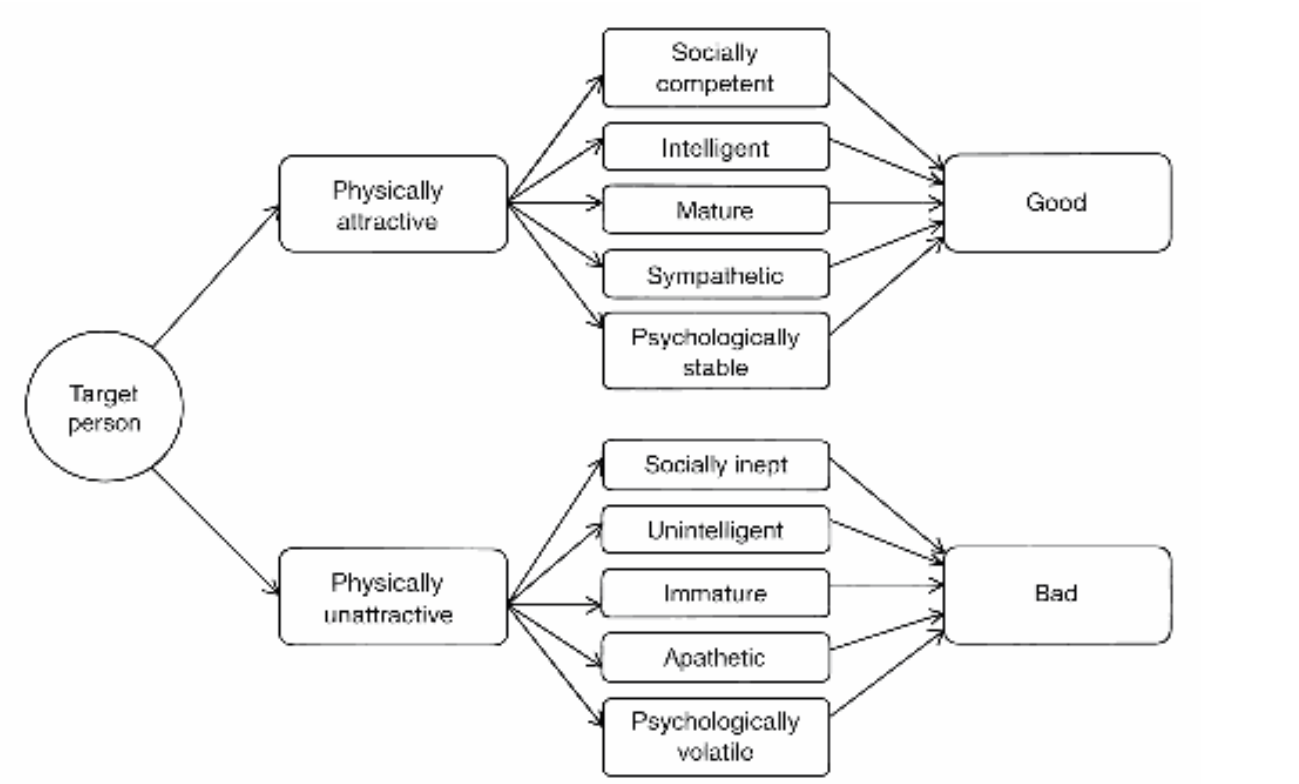
Modern psychology approaches physical attraction through two distinct but intersecting lenses:

- **Social psychology** emphasizes how attraction is shaped by dynamic social interactions and cultural contexts.
- **Evolutionary psychology**: focus on universal, adaptationist traits that define human nature across millennia

The authors position the book as an integration of evolutionary, social, and cultural perspectives to explain both why attractiveness exists and how it operates in real-world contexts.

- **Lookism:** The documented phenomenon where physical appearance profoundly impacts how individuals are treated by society and how they view themselves, confirming that beauty is a highly consequential social factor rather than a triviality (Patzer, 2002; Mann, 2003).

Chapter 2: What is beautiful is good



A diagram of impression formation (Swami and Furnham, 2007)

Physical appearance is the most accessible human trait and plays a dominant role in impression formation, boosting personal value in social exchanges without even having to do anything.

- **Impression Formation:** The instant, cognitive process of categorizing individuals based heavily on non-verbal cues and physical appearance, which dictates expectations about their behavior and personality (Asch, 1946;

Park, 1986).

- **The Attractiveness Bias:** *Attractive individuals are judged as more honest (Yarmouk 2000), less maladjusted and disturbed (Cash et al. 1977; Dion 1972), happier, more successful and more sociable than less attractive individuals (Dion et al. 1972). Attractive people are also reported to be afforded more personal space, more likely to win arguments, more trusted with secrets and generally considered better at everything in comparison with less attractive individuals (Cash and Soloway 1975; Horai et al. 1974; Patzer 1985).*
- **Courtroom and Employment Leniency:** The phenomenon where attractive defendants receive more lenient sentencing and mock-juror verdicts (Castellow et al., 1990; Stewart, 1980), and attractive applicants are more likely to be hired and receive higher starting salaries (Dipboye et al., 1975).
  - Exceptions for using beauty: *when the defendant 'used' her attractiveness in the crime (a swindle), the advantages of attractiveness in sentencing were lost* (Sigall and Ostrove 1975; but see Wuensch et al. 1991)
  - Exception with 'lazy' stereotype: *Shahani-Denning and Plumitallo (1993) showed that when an employee had committed a mistake, supervisors were more likely to perceive those who were attractive as failing because of a lack of effort.*
- **Beauty Matters More in Individualistic Cultures**: *Rosenblatt and Cozby (1972) found that the function that attractiveness plays varies with the cultural context. Other cross-cultural research suggests that the attractiveness bias may be more pronounced in cultures that emphasise individualism over group-oriented values (Dion 1986). In their review of various cultural dimensions, Fiske et al. (1998) referred to two culturally patterned social systems or 'psyches': the individualistic, Euro-American (sometimes referred to as 'Western') cultural dimension and the collectivist, East Asian (or 'Eastern') dimension.*
- **Implicit Personality Theory:** The framework explaining the attractiveness bias as a set of learned knowledge structures where social categories of "attractive" are mentally linked with specific positive evaluative dimensions, primarily social competence (Eagly et al., 1991; Ashmore, 1981).
- **The Dark Side of Beauty:** A counter-bias where highly attractive individuals are occasionally penalized or perceived as vain, egotistical, or using their looks for manipulation (Cash and Janda, 1984; Sigall and Ostrove, 1975).

Physical Attractiveness Matters Less In Real-Life Interactions & Long-Term (Compared to Pictures & Short-Term)

> Eagly and colleagues' (1991) meta-analysis showed that the strength of the physical attractiveness stereotype was affected by
> information other than physical attractiveness. That is, the attractiveness bias was weaker when participants received individuating information along with attractiveness cues.
> Other research supports this idea: in a celebrated study, Argyle and McHenry (1971) showed that when shown photographs as stimuli, participants rated individuals wearing spectacles as more intelligent than those not wearing spectacles. However, this effect disappeared when the same individuals were shown communicating on video-recordings, suggesting that the individuating information provided by such recordings allowed participations to be more discriminating in their perceptions. This would seems to suggest that physical attractiveness may be less important in the perception of friends, family members and co-workers than in the perception of strangers, because we have considerable additional, 'moderating' information about people close to us.

Chapter 3: Darwin, sexual selection and the peacock's tail

Evolutionary psychology is based on Charles Darwin's theory of sexual selection to explain why certain physical traits are considered universally attractive. Attractive features are biological ornaments that evolved to signal an individual's underlying genetic quality, health, and reproductive value to potential mates. Due to the differing

biological costs of reproduction, men and women have evolved distinct mate-selection strategies and preferences.

- **Sexual Selection:** Darwin's evolutionary mechanism explaining how traits that hinder survival (like a peacock's bright tail) evolve because they provide significant advantages in attracting mates and outcompeting same-sex rivals (Darwin, 1871).
- **Parental Investment Theory:** The principle that the sex investing the most physiological resources into offspring (typically females) will evolve to be choosier in selecting mates, forcing the lesser-investing sex (males) to compete for access (Trivers, 1972; Bateman, 1948).
- **Runaway Selection and Sensory Bias:** Evolutionary models suggesting mate preferences can originate from arbitrary perceptual biases (e.g., a bias for a specific color to find food) that become genetically linked to exaggerated physical traits in the opposite sex (Fisher, 1930; Kirkpatrick and Ryan, 1991).
- **Good Genes Hypothesis:** The dominant evolutionary theory asserting that physical attractiveness serves as an "honest signal" of an individual's immunocompetence, parasite resistance, and overall physiological condition (Hamilton and Zuk, 1982; Zahavi, 1975).
- **Men and Women Value the Same Thing But With Different Weights**: *while both men and women may value the same characteristics (such as attractiveness, status, emotional stability and so on), they weigh these characteristics differently as a result of their evolutionary endowments.*
- **Quality Detection Varies in Evolutionarily Predictable Fashion in Men and Women:** The evolutionary proposition that men prioritize cues of youth and peak reproductive potential (fecundity) in women, while women prioritize cues indicating a man's ability and willingness to provide resources and parental care (Buss, 1989; Symons, 1979).

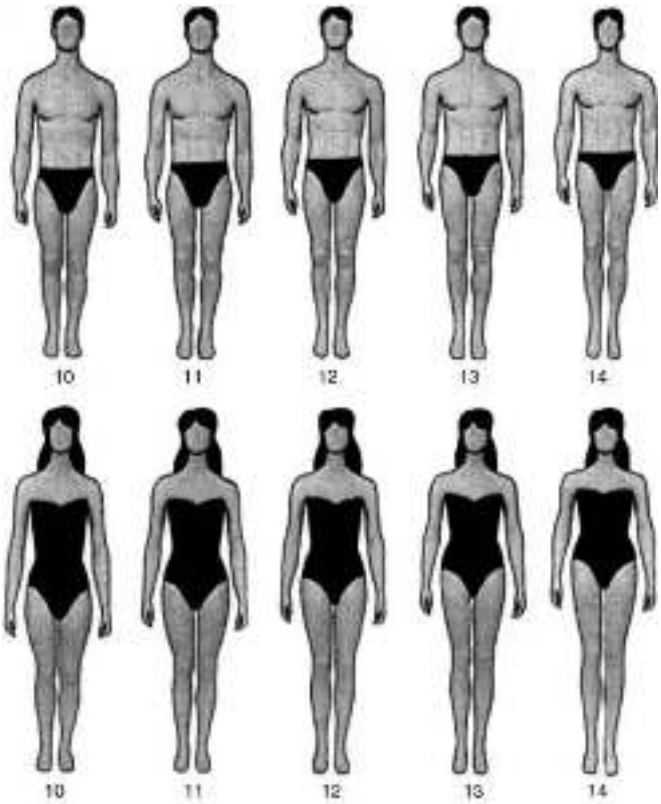
Chapter 4: The naked woman and man

Evolutionary psychologists argue that features such as youthfulness, facial sexual dimorphism, symmetry, and height act as observable markers of a potential partner's underlying genetic fitness, developmental stability, and reproductive value. However, preferences for these traits often reveal complex interactions between biological signaling and socio-cultural modification.

- **Women Use More Cues, Men Fewer***: Grammer (1989) found that women use more cues than men when evaluating prospective mates. Men typically prioritise physical attractiveness, while women consider many different traits including both social and economic status. Similar findings have been found by ethnographers and anthropologists: men in many tribal societies prize youth above all else in their prospective brides (Borgerhoff Mulder 1988).*
- **Masculinity Holds Longer Than Femininity**: *Studies have shown that ratings of physical attractiveness for men and women decline with age (McLellan and McKelvie 1993), although these effects are more pronounced for the latter. While women are rated as less feminine with increasing age (Arking 1998), ratings of male masculinity do not appear to be affected to the same degree (Deutsch et al. 1986).*
- **Facial Sexual Dimorphism is Attractive:** The preference for hormone-driven facial differences; female facial femininity (driven by estrogen) signals reproductive condition, while male facial masculinity (driven by testosterone) signals immunocompetence, though female preferences for the latter fluctuate based on the menstrual cycle (Penton-Voak et al., 1999b; Gangestad and Scheyd, 2005).
  - Facial masculinity as costly ornament: For example, a broad jaw is thought to be a costly ornament, insofar as increasingly masculine features reduce men's resistance to disease and parasites (Folstad and Karter 1992)
- **Rarity is Attractive** (for female hair, at least) *Thelen (1983) showed that for the same brunette, preference increased significantly from the first to the third series. In other words, preference for the brunette increased in proportion to the rarity of her hair colour. More recently, Schweder (1994) reported that women tend to change their hair colour and style to a type that is less common in the general population.*
- **Symmetry is Attractive:** Small, random deviations from perfect bilateral symmetry in the face and body; high

symmetry is theoretically perceived as attractive because it signals “good genes” and the ability to resist environmental pathogens during development (Thornhill and Gangestad, 1993; Moller, 1992).

- **Vocal Attractiveness:** The “vocal attractiveness stereotype” where pitch and vocal quality communicate biological information (like symmetry and hormone levels) and are linked to perceived personality traits and sexual behavior (Hughes et al., 2004; Zuckerman and Driver, 1989).
- **Height, Stature, and Leg Length:** Taller men enjoy greater reproductive, social, and economic success, leading to women’s generalized preference for tallness as a cue for genetic quality and resource access (Pawlowski et al., 2000; Judge and Cable, 2004). Higher leg-to-body ratios (LBR) are generally preferred in women as a dimorphic signal of stable childhood development, but not in men (Swami et al., 2006)



Figures used to test leg-to-body ratio preferences (ratios are noted below each image) (from Swami et al. 2006)

Facial Masculinity Isn’t Universally More Attractive

Across cultures, men with masculine faces are perceived as being more socially dominant (Mazur et al. 1984).

But social dominance doesn’t equal attraction. Says the author:

> Some studies have also found that feminine features are sometimes attractive on male faces (Little et al. 2001), while others show no consistency in sexually dimorphic features that are considered attractive (Scheib et al. 1999).

And the authors explain it as a tradeoff:

> Perrett et al. (1998) have proposed that women actually seek a ‘tradeoff between good mates and good fathers, and that more feminine faces suggest better fathering abilities. As this view hypothesises, men with feminine faces are perceived to be warmer, more agreeable and more honest than men with masculine faces (Fink and Penton-Voak 2002).

All in all, the consensus seems to be this that the “winning” male face is:

- **moderately masculine**
- **high in averageness**
- **not overly dominant-looking**
- **not too feminized either**

Mix of Neonate-Maturity-Expressivity For Women's Face

Early research seemed to suggest that neotenous features like large, widely spaced eyes and a small nose and chin are important for female facial attractiveness. Cross-cultural support for this was provided by studies with African-American, Asian, Hispanic and Taiwanese participants, whose judgements of women from their own cultural background gave the same result (Cunningham et al. 1995; Zebrowitz et al. 1993).

But later criticism noticed that high cheekbones in attractive female faces is in marked contrast to the protruding, puffy cheeks of babies (Grammer and Atzwanger 1994).
Modern evidence indicates that feminization, or the presence of features shaped by estrogen during puberty, is a more reliable predictor of attractiveness than mere youthfulness (Little et al., 2011; Perrett et al., 1998). These markers include high cheekbones, a narrow lower face, and full lips. Unlike neoteny (which just signals "young"), these traits signal fertility and immunocompetence.

The most recent meta-analyses and studies suggest that attractiveness is a "composite" signal. The highest-rated faces typically possess:

- **Neotenous "Baby" Features:** Large eyes and a relatively small nose/lower face. These act as a "first-pass filter" signaling youth and high reproductive value (fecundity).
- **Sexually Mature "Adult" Features:** Prominent cheekbones and a narrow chin. These provide the "second-pass" signal, proving the individual is a fertile, post-pubescent adult
- **Expressive Cues:** High eyebrows and a wide smile, which signal social competence and accessibility.

Chapter 5: Of hourglasses and triangles: human body weight and shape

While male attractiveness is heavily dependent on an upper-body "V-shape," the debate surrounding female attractiveness centers on whether the waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) or overall Body Mass Index (BMI) is the dominant cue for health and fertility.

- **Male Body Shape (The Inverted Triangle):** Women generally prefer men with a mesomorphic physique featuring broad shoulders and a narrow waist—a low waist-to-chest ratio (WCR)—which signals physical strength and upper-body muscle development, combined with a normal BMI (Maisey et al., 1999; Dixson et al., 2003).
- **Female Body Shape (The Waist-to-Hip Ratio):** Singh's (1993a) hypothesis posits that a low WHR (around 0.70) evolved as a universal "first-pass filter" for female attractiveness because it reliably signals optimal fat distribution, fertility, and resistance to major diseases.
- **Body Mass Index (BMI) vs. WHR:** Extensive methodological critiques using photorealistic stimuli demonstrate that overall body weight (BMI) accounts for vastly more variance in female attractiveness ratings than WHR, serving as a more accurate visual proxy for health, nutrition, and reproductive potential (Tovee et al., 1998, 1999)
    - *BMI was a far more important factor than WHR (Tovée and Cornelissen 2001; Tovée et al. 1998, 1999). In their studies, BMI accounted for more than 70 per cent of the variance in attractiveness ratings, whereas WHR accounts for little more than 2 per cent.*

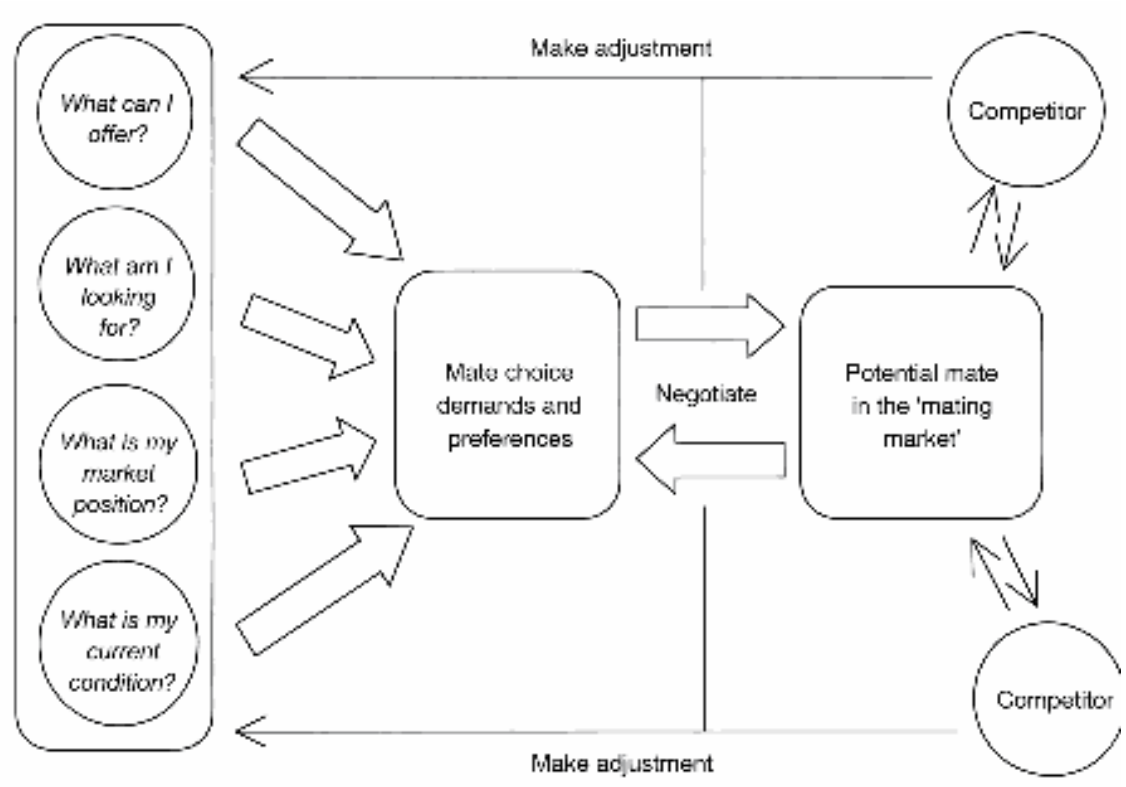
Stimuli used by Swami and Furnham (2008)

Chapter 6: The Venus of Willendorf, Rubens and milking huts

Attractiveness ideals for body weight and shape are demonstrably malleable and vary significantly across history and cultures, varying based on socio-economic conditions, environmental resource security, and cultural practices.

- **Historical Relativity of Beauty:** Ideals of female beauty have fluctuated drastically over time, from the robust, statuesque ideals of the Victorian era and the plumpness celebrated by painters like Rubens, to the tubular thinness idealized in contemporary Western media (Freese and Meland, 2002; Mazur, 1986; Eco, 2004).
- **Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Body Weight:** Cross-cultural findings show an inverse relationship between societal wealth and preferred body weight.
  - Poorer cultures prefer larger women: In resource-scarce, low-SES environments, heavier female bodies are idealized as symbols of health, fertility, and status, whereas resource-rich, high-SES environments idolize thinness (Swami and Tovee, 2005b; Tovee et al., 2006).
- **Adjustments Are Evolutionary Predicted:** The evolutionary counter-argument that human mate preference mechanisms are not fixed to one absolute standard, but are designed to recalibrate to local environmental and nutritional conditions, resulting in a preference for a WHR or weight that is simply optimal for that specific locality (Sugiyama, 2004)

Chapter 7: Welcome to the mating market



Mating market dynamics, Swami and Furnham (2007)

Individuals do not form attractiveness judgments in a vacuum, but actively negotiate the "mating market" based on their own mate value, relationship goals, and shifting environmental circumstances. Humans deploy conditional strategies that adapt to social exchanges.

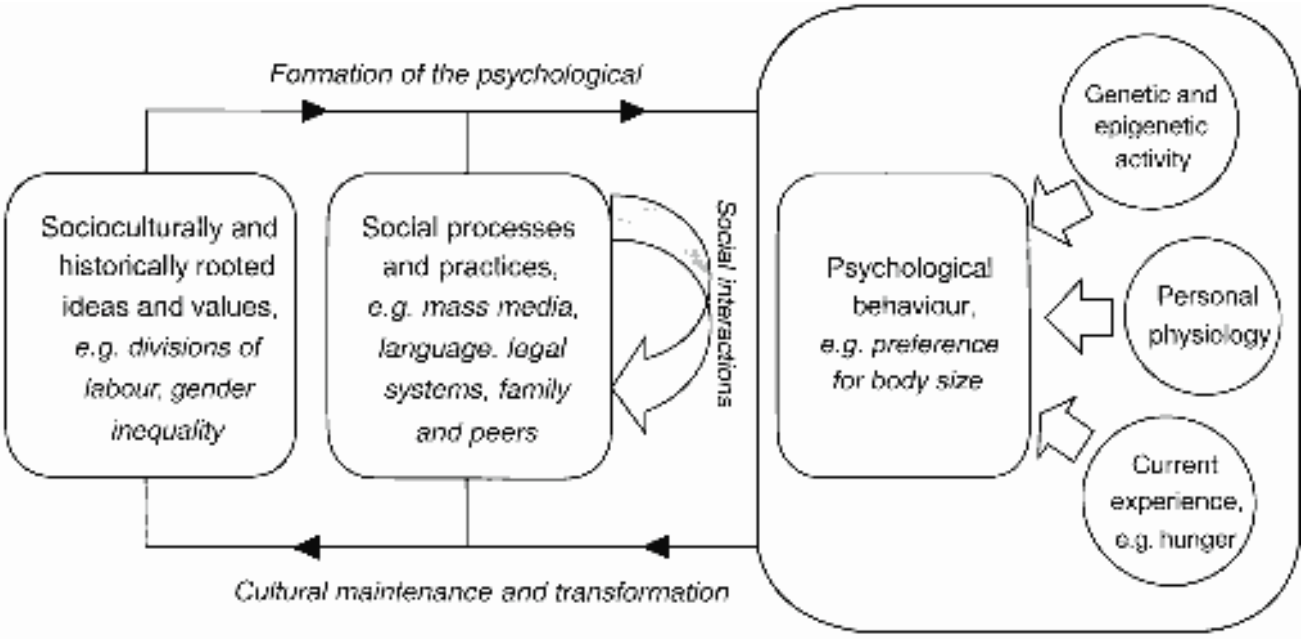
- **Mating Strategies:** Preferences shift based on intent; individuals prioritize physical attractiveness when pursuing short-term casual relationships, but compromise on physical traits in favor of interpersonal responsiveness and resources for long-term partnerships (Buss and Schmitt, 1993; Regan, 1998).
- **Assortative Mating:** "Like prefers like" and people tend to form relationships with partners who closely match their own level of physical attractiveness, social background, and market value, functioning as a stabilizing evolutionary strategy (Pawlowski and Dunbar, 1999; Berscheid et al., 1973).
- **Social Exchange Theory:** A framework viewing attraction as a dynamic negotiation where partners assess the costs and rewards of the interaction against their own subjective "comparison levels" built from past experiences and societal norms (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Rusbult et al., 1991).
- **The Environmental Security Hypothesis:** The theory that immediate physiological and socioeconomic threats (such as financial scarcity or physical hunger) cause individuals to temporarily shift their preferences toward heavier, more mature partners who signal stability and resource access (Nelson and Morrison, 2005; Pettijohn and Tesser, 1999)
  - Hungry men prefer larger women: *hungry men preferred heavier women than did satiated men. Nelson and Morrison (2005) proposed that the construct of hunger is more universal than financial satisfaction, and suggest that their findings, therefore, lend support to the idea that implicit cues are used when stating preferences for potential partners. Moreover, when Swami and Tovée (2006a) replicated their study using photographic stimuli, using hunger as a proxy for personal resources, they found the same result: hungry men found a slightly heavier female body weight more attractive than satiated men.*
- **Power Motive Can Boost Results:** *The power motive refers to the predisposition to strive for status and power, which some studies have shown provides men with access to fertile women as well as making them more attractive to women* (Kenrick et al. 2003; Li et al. 2002; Simpson and Orina 2003).
  Note: this is why dark triad may have a 'dating advantage' (see psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism)

- **Lovers and Providers Have Different Strategies**: *Men too showed a corresponding tendency: those who were unlikely to invest favoured flaunting their sexuality to women, while those were likely to invest emphasised chastity and fidelity (Cashdan 1993). Pawtowski and Dunbar (1999) have also considered how an individual's market value affects her or his willingness to make demands of a preferred partner.*
  Also see: lover, provider, friend roles.

Also see:

- **Global & Local Mating Markets** and how to use them for better dating

Chapter 8: No one is an island



(by Swami and Furnham, adapted from Kim and Markus 1999).

Attractiveness ideals are also constructed and maintained through a process of mutual constitution between the individual and their surrounding socio-cultural environment. Gender roles, subcultural affiliations, and social learning mechanisms continually script what individuals perceive as beautiful, demonstrating that biology alone cannot account for human aesthetic preferences.

- **Mutual Constitution:** The continuous feedback loop where historical values, cultural institutions (like media), and daily social practices shape individual psychological preferences, which in turn reinforce those societal structures (Kim and Markus, 1999).
- **Gender Roles and Ideals:** Traditional gender role socialization deeply impacts physical preferences; individuals subscribing to rigid gender norms generally prefer highly dimorphic body shapes (muscular men, hourglass women), whereas liberated roles correlate with less stereotyped preferences (Courtenay, 2000; Swami et al., 2006a).
- **Subcultural Divergence:** Specific communities actively construct their own beauty norms that defy mainstream ideals. For example, the lesbian community often rejects the patriarchal "thin ideal" in favor of heavier body weights, while gay male culture places a hyper-focus on extreme upper-body muscularity (Siever, 1994; Swami and Tovee, 2006b).
- **Sources of Learning and Fetishes:** Beauty standards are learned early via parental modeling and pervasive mass media messaging (Bandura, 1973; Levine and Smolak, 1996). Furthermore, classical conditioning and imprinting can explain the development of highly specific, non-adaptive sexual fetishes (Staats and Staats, 1957).

Also see:

- **Sexual Market Value tactics** that leverage these 'market differences'

Traditional Gender Beliefs Impact People's Ideals of Attractiveness

> In one early study, for instance, Wiggins et al. (1968) found that men who were very 'masculine' according to the traditional sense (that is, had a high need for independence and dated frequently) showed a greater preference for large-breasted women than did less masculine men. Similarly, Beck et al. (1976) showed that women who preferred a large bust had an interest pattern which could be considered as traditionally feminine. Unfortunately, such studies have used definitions of gender roles that are today considered quite imprecise. In another study, Lavrakas (1975) reported that women who adopted a traditionally feminine gender role had a greater preference for masculine male physiques (a tapering V-shape) than did less 'traditional' women. In conjunction with more recent work (Swami et al. 20071), this study suggests that individuals adopting traditional (that is, more strongly masculine or feminine) gender roles tend to have preferences for body shapes that are defined as attractive in the 'traditional' sense, namely hourglass shapes for women and muscular V-shapes for men. In contrast, individuals adopting 'liberated' gender roles have less stereotyped preferences (Furnham and Greaves 1994; Maier and Lavrakas 1984).

Chapter 9: Getting to know you

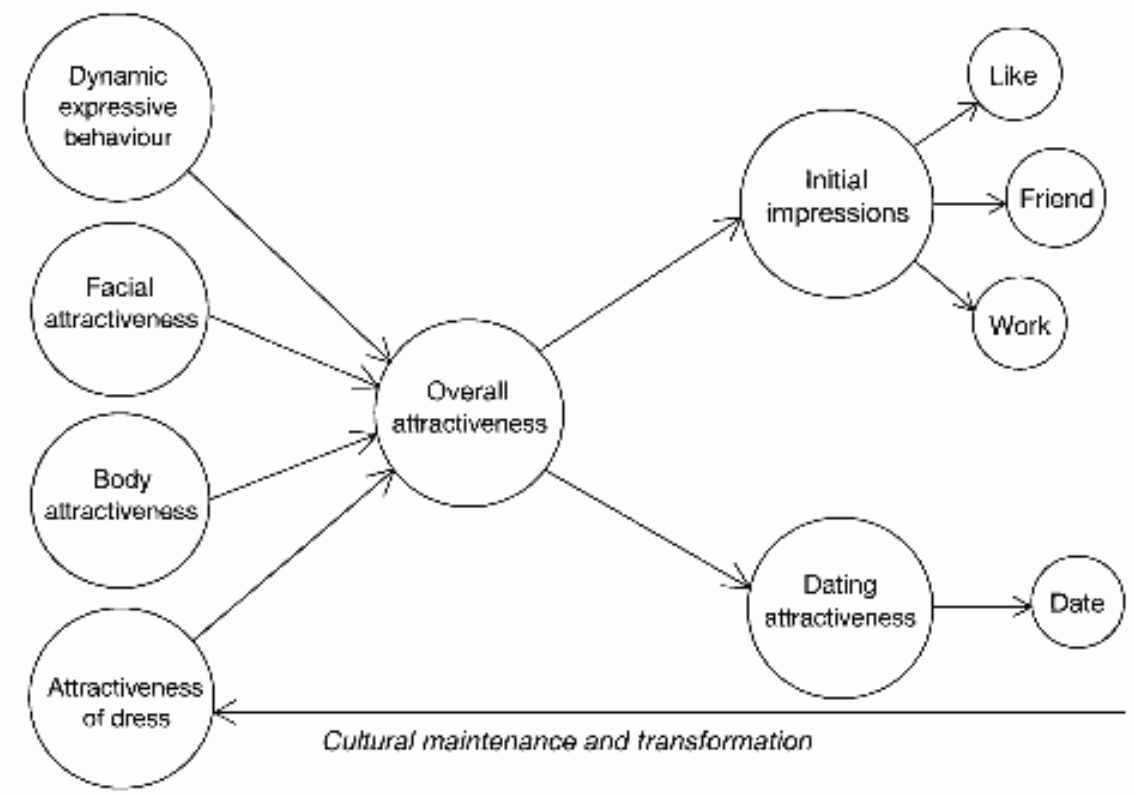
Beyond static morphological features, the actual process of interpersonal attraction involves dynamic, non-physical variables. Factors such as physical proximity, behavioral reciprocity, shared values, and expressive communication skills ultimately dictate whether people end up dating or not.

- **Proximity and the Mere Exposure Effect:** The foundational social psychological finding that geographical closeness and repetitive visual exposure to a person significantly increase familiarity and subsequent liking (Festinger et al., 1950; Zajonc, 1968).
- **Extraversion and Exhibition Can Boost Attraction**: *Certain personality dimensions, most notably extraversion and exhibition, have been shown to be positively related to both increased display of expressive behaviour and attraction ratings in initial encounters (Friedman et al. 1988; Riggio et al. 1981; Riggio and Friedman 1986).*
- **Reciprocity and Similarity:** Attraction is heavily driven by mutual reinforcement (liking those who explicitly like us) and the "law of attraction," where relational bonds strengthen linearly with the proportion of shared attitudes, beliefs, and demographic traits (Byrne, 1971; Dittes and Kelley, 1956).
- **Dynamic Attractiveness and Self-Disclosure:** Overall physical attractiveness is a composite that includes dynamic expressive styles, conversational skills, and the building of trust through reciprocal self-disclosure, which can permanently alter how a partner's physical form is perceived (Riggio et al., 1991; Altman and Taylor, 1973).
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** The powerful role of covert cues—such as mutual gaze, interpersonal distance, and touch—in regulating intimacy and signaling romantic interest outside of conscious awareness (Argyle and Ingham, 1972; Hall, 1966).
- **The Love is Blind Bias:** A positive psychological illusion where individuals in established romantic relationships rate their partners as significantly more physically attractive than themselves, a mechanism that enhances relationship stability and personal well-being (Swami et al., 2007b).

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Familiarity and 'liking' ≠ attraction**

Lucio:
It seems that this chapter sometimes may conflate liking, dating, and attraction.
It's normal and expected that people tend to date people who live close by. But that is not the same as someone's level of attractiveness, or what others find attractive.

Riggio et al. (1991) Model



Riggio's model of attractiveness (1991), as conceptualized by Swami and Furnham

The model breaks “Attractiveness” down into an equation of several different variables rather than a single source of attractiveness. It argues that overall attractiveness is the sum of them all:

1. Static Components

These are the fixed physical traits that evolutionary psychologists focus on.

- **Facial Attractiveness:** Symmetry, neoteny, and sexual dimorphism.
- **Body Attractiveness:** BMI, WHR (women), and WCR (men).
- **The Role:** This provides the “first-pass” filter. It sets the baseline for the “Halo Effect.”

2. Adornment Components

These are the elements of self-presentation that an individual chooses.

- **Dress Sense & Grooming:** Clothing, hairstyles, and cosmetics (Cash et al., 1985).
- **The Role:** These signal **Socio-Economic Status (SES)**, subcultural belonging, and conscientiousness (effort). They can compensate for lower static attractiveness by signaling high “mate value” in other domains.

Also see:

- **Value-signaling**: the full framework
- How to signal value on a date (value-sequence model)

3. Dynamic Expressive Style

This is the core of Riggio’s contribution. It consists of individual differences in social and emotional skills:

- **Emotional Expressiveness:** The ability to spontaneously and accurately communicate emotions through facial expressions and gestures.
- **Social Sensitivity:** The ability to read the room and adjust one’s behavior (Self-Monitoring).
- **Social Control:** Skill in formal self-presentation and verbal fluency.
- **The Role: This is the “Multiplier.”** Riggio found that people with high “Dynamic Expressivity” are rated as more attractive than those with identical physical features but “flat” or “awkward” expressions.

TPM Note: A model that highlights the importance of traits beyond pure looks
This model, and supporting research, should be encouraging to less attractive men about their dating prospects (Schneider et al. 1979; Byrne 1971). Also see our article on ‘escaping the black pill‘

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors’ quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors’ intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Reciprocity Is Most Attractive to Low Self-Esteem

> But the effects of reciprocity may not be the same for everyone: positive interpersonal feedback may be more important for those individuals who have a higher need for interpersonal security (Sperling and Borgaro 1995). Similarly, Dittes (1959) found that people with low self-esteem showed stronger positive and negative reactions to group feedback; by contrast, people with high self-esteem did not seem to be affected by acceptance or rejection.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Possible Bias Against Evolutionary Psychology

The authors present their position as straddling social and evolutionary psychology, and they're not wholly wrong, both angles are covered.

Yet, I find them leaning towards the social aspect, including a tendency to criticize evolutionary psychology that at times feels unwarranted and may oversimplify evolutionary psychology.
For example, quoting from the book:

- *We remain unconvinced that evolutionary psychology will be able to explain all facets of human behaviour.*
- *Despite the proclamations of some evolutionary psychologists, it is clear that the 'ideal' female body has not remained static*

I doubt most evolutionary psychologists would claim that they explain *all* facets of human behavior. It's not its goal. It can, however, provide the foundation for understanding most of the general tendencies related to attraction, mating, survival, and reproduction.
And I don't think that many evolutionary psychologists would proclaim that the 'ideal' female body has remained static.

Exaggerates Cultural Relativity

For example:

> In some cultures, the advantages of plumpness or obesity can be significant, and individuals of extreme size such as Sumo wrestlers in Japan can become cultural icons.

This is misleading because:

1. Sumo wrestlers can absolutely be a cultural icon without being sexually or romantically attractive (and I'd bet they're not very attractive to most women)
2. Japan may actually be a counterexample, because one of the lowest obesity rates in the developed world may suggest that low body fat is the dominant attractiveness standard, not the opposite.
3. Almost no overweight person becomes a cultural icon in Japan if we account for the total number of overweight people and high-status sumo wrestlers

Sometimes Shies Away From Unpopular Truths

For example, the authors say that studies show that mock jurors consider sexual harassment more likely when the defendant is less attractive, or when the plaintiff is attractive (Castellow et al. 1990; Wuensch and Moore 2004).

However, a deeper analysis should look at the actual numbers, or at least raise some questions, rather than treating these findings as a sure perceptual bias.

REVIEW

The Psychology of Physical Attraction offers a solid, science-based approach to attraction.

It would have benefited from some editing, trimming for example, the history of waist-to-hip ratio research and focusing more on later research and emerging consensus. And I would have liked a stronger focus on the universals of attraction, while the authors instead focused more on the equally valid cultural variations.

The authors and TPM may have slightly different perspectives. TPM favors a slightly more evolutionary angle

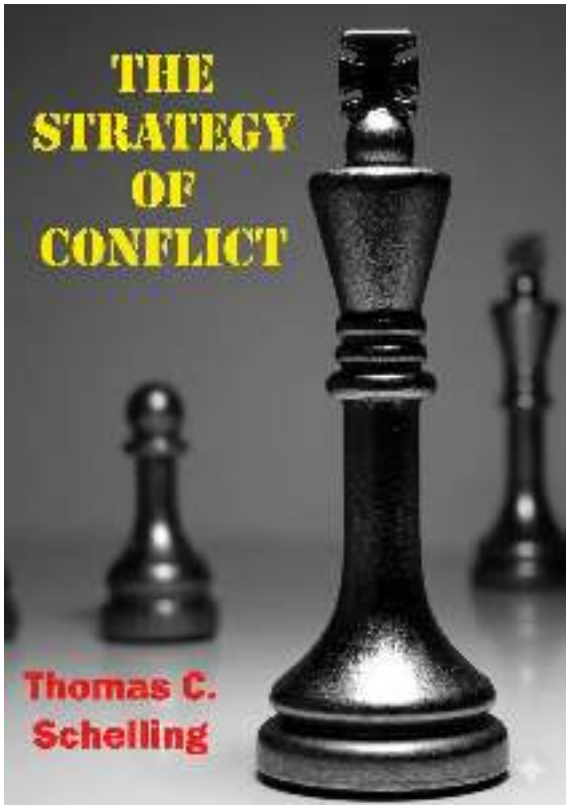
because we believe it sets stronger foundations of attraction common to many, though not all, people. The authors instead, at least in this book, slightly favor a cultural approach. But the commonalities are stronger than the differences, we enjoyed the book, and it has served as a reference for refining several of our science-driven articles. And that's always the biggest compliment we can provide to anyone.

Check the best evolutionary psychology books & TPM top recommendations

The Strategy of Conflict: Summary and Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 22 June 2026 · Archived copy · Original

The Strategy of Conflict (1960) is a seminal reorientation of game theory that treats strategy not as the application of force in win-lose games, but as a theory of interdependent decision in “mixed-motive” situations where conflict is inextricably linked with mutual dependence and the need for coordination.



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Takeaways

- Most situations are mixed motives
- Pure conflict and pure cooperation are rarer

Core insight: Most real conflicts are not pure conflicts, but mixed-motive situations where you cooperate and compete simultaneously. And limiting one's own freedom can sometimes create the largest leverage because power comes from shaping expectations.

NOTES

About the Author:
Thomas C. Schelling (1921–2016) was an American economist and professor best known for applying game theory logic to the messy, psychological world of international relations and nuclear standoff during the Cold War. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2005.

Preface

This book analyzes situations where player share both conflicting and common interests in negotiations, war threats, deterrence, and extortion.
Schelling states that the same logic applies to disparate situations like limited war, jockeying in traffic, deterring international enemies, abd disciplining children. And 'old' customs like exchanging hostages solved real issues by leveraging principles that we should learn from to also solve modern issues.

- **Most competitive situations contain mutual dependence**. Your goal is often not annihilation but favorable terms within a shared framework. When negotiating salary, promotion, or business deals, identify what the other party needs from you and structure your position around that interdependence rather than pure confrontation

1 – The Retarded Science of International Strategy

Most conflicts are not zero-sum—the total gains are not fixed, so both parties can lose or both can gain depending on outcomes.
A central problem is that each participant's best choice depends on what the other will do, creating an infinite regress of expectations. Rationality can be a strategic disability, because predictable rationality makes you exploitable, while demonstrated irrationality, obstinacy, or inability to receive communication can strengthen your bargaining position.

- **Pure conflict is rare**: i*n international affairs, there is mutual dependence as well as opposition. Pure conflict, in which the interests of two antagonists are completely opposed, is a special case; it would arise in a war of complete extermination, otherwise not even in war. For this reason, "winning" in a conflict does not have a strictly competitive meaning; it is not winning relative to one's adversary. It means gaining relative to one's own value system; and this may be done by bargaining, by mutual accommodation, and by the avoidance of mutually damaging behavior*
- **Most situations benefit from cooperation:** *most interesting international conflicts are not "constant-sum games"*

but "variable-sum games": the sum of the gains of the participants involved is not fixed so that more for one inexorably means less for the other. There is a common interest in reaching outcomes that are mutually advantageous.

- **Limited war also benefits from some coordination between temporary warrying factions:** *To characterize the maneuvers and actions of limited war as a bargaining process is to emphasize that, in addition to the divergence of interest over the variables in dispute, there is a powerful common interest in reaching an outcome that is not enormously destructive of values to both sides. A "successful" employees' strike is not one that destroys the employer financially, it may even be one that never takes place. Something similar can be true of war.*
- **Deterrence works only through credibility**, which requires committing oneself in ways that make backing down impossible or more costly than following through.
  - Burning bridges behind you, plate glass windows that shatter noisily, "trip wires" that automatically triggers response—these are tools for proving commitments.
- **The strategic value of irrationality**: A person who visibly cannot control his temper, cannot hear threats, or has an inconsistent value system becomes harder to coerce.

Practical applications:

- **Reduce your own flexibility deliberately** when facing an adversary. Announce positions publicly so retreat becomes costly. Use third parties or automatic mechanisms to remove your own choice.
- **When threatened, make yourself unavailable for communication** or demonstrate that you cannot understand the threat. The child who cries too loudly to hear the parent's warning, the leader who is "out of town" when the ultimatum arrives, gains immunity.
- **Mind your reputation to strengthen your commitments**: future negotiations may depend on not backing down now. This is why losing power is genuinely costly—it reduces your future bargaining power across all relationships.
- **Demonstrate that conceding is not possible**, for example with too high costs of of reputation or losing face

2 – An Essay on Bargaining

Pure bargaining situations have no logical resting point—each party would accept less than they demand rather than reach no agreement, yet each knows the other knows this. The solution lies in tactics that voluntarily and irreversibly sacrifice freedom of choice to set a strong, visible boundary that the other party must take the limited gain or leave it and lose.

- **Examples**: Union negotiators stir up membership to the point where they cannot accept less than the demand, diplomats who arouse public opinion that permits no concessions, executives who exhaust their budget early so the need for more funds becomes irresistible—all use self-binding to win.

Threats and promises distinguished: A threat is a commitment to do something you would prefer not to do, designed to deter the other party. Its efficacy depends entirely on credibility—the threatened party must believe you would actually carry it out despite the cost. Since you have no incentive to fulfill after the threat fails, you must arrange incentives or penalties that make fulfillment unavoidable. A promise is a commitment to the second party, required whenever agreement leaves incentive to cheat. Promises are credible if there are costs associated to not following through (ie., the "right to be sued" in legal frameworks).

Practical applications:

- **Belegate authority to someone who cannot change instructions.**
- **Use threats that leave something to chance**: create a shared risk rather than a certainty. It's more credible than absolute threats because you don't need to convince the other you would deliberately choose disaster, only

that disaster might happen inadvertently.

- **Devise threats that leave the final decision to them to maintain a good reputation:** *Similar to decomposing a threat into a series is starting a threat with a punitive act that grows in severity with the passage of time. Where a threat of death by violence might not be credited, cutting off the food supply might bring submission. For moral or public relations purposes, this device may in fact leave the "last clear chance" to the other, whose demise is then blamed on his stubbornness if the threat fails.*
- **Use peacemeal bargaining to gain trust and leverage long-term gains with cooperative players:** . *What makes many agreements enforceable is only the recognition of future opportunities for agreement that will be eliminated if mutual trust is not created and maintained, and whose value outweighs the momentary gain from cheating in the present instance. Each party must be confident that the other will not jeopardize future opportunities by destroying trust at the outset. This confidence does not always exist; and one of the purposes of piecemeal bargains is to cultivate the necessary mutual expectations.*
  This is textbook smart cooperation
- **Persuade others that you cannot concede**. eg. "*If I conceded to you here, you would revise your estimate of me in our other negotiations; to protect my reputation with you I must stand firm*"
- **Help others out of their commitments** through casuistry—offer reinterpretations that let them save face while conceding. Help them find an "excuse" to retreat that preserves their reputation.
  This is where strategic thinking, Machiavellianism and frame control help

3 – Bargaining, Communication, and Limited War

When communication is impossible or incomplete, parties can still coordinate through focal point. These are conspicuous features of the situation that each expects the other to notice and, hence, to be likely choices.

In pure coordination (common interests), people can for example often find each other by going to prominent spots (eg, 'info point' in station, or the mall's main entrance).
In mixed-motive situations (conflicting interests), the need for coordination can override the conflict at the focal point—the party disadvantaged by the obvious focal point may still accept it because no other point can be mutually recognized.

The power of the first and last offer: When someone makes a concrete proposal before communication is cut off, that proposal becomes the only available focal point. Even without acceptance, the other party knows you know it exists, and thus offer may coordinate expectations by default.
 Example: parachutist saying "I'll head for the highest hill" before jumping determines where both will meet up, even if the other thinks it's stupid.

Practical applications:

- **In ambiguous situations, be the first to propose a specific, salient solution**. Name a number, suggest a meeting point, propose a deadline. The "if not here, where?" argument is powerful when there is no other focal point.
- **Commit to a principle**: *commitments usually have to be qualitative rather than quantitative, and to rest on some rationale. It may be difficult to conceive of a really firm commitment to $2.07½; why not $2.02¼? The numerical scale is too continuous to provide good resting places, except at nice round numbers like $2.00. But a commitment to the principle of "profit sharing," "cost-of-living increases," or any other basis for a numerical calculation that comes out at $2.07½, may provide a foothold for a commitment.*
- **Leverage precedents and be careful of the precedents you set:** *Precedent seems to exercise an influence that greatly exceeds its logical importance or legal force.*
- **Justify your concession to avoid losing reputation**: *Concession not only may be construed as capitulation, it may mark a prior commitment as a fraud, and make the adversary skeptical of any new pretense at commitment.*

One, therefore, needs an "excuse" for accommodating his opponent, preferably a rationalized reinterpretation of the original commitment, one that is persuasive to the adversary himself.

- **Qualitative distinctions matter more than quantitative ones**. In negotiations, seek principles and clear lines in the sand rather than sliding scales—"profit sharing" is ambiguous; 50/50 is not.
  eg., "No gas" works as a limit on war because it's simple and unambiguous; "some gas" cannot be coordinated.
- **Use natural boundaries to crystallize convenient agreements**. Say '10' instead of '9.7'. Natural boundaries, round numbers, historical precedents, and cultural conventions all serve as focal points. The river, the 50-yard line, the 50-50 split, the previous year's price—these are not necessarily fair, but they are recognizable.

4 – Toward a Theory of Interdependent Decision

In games of pure coordination (identical interests) players can converge on the same choices without communication. The intellectual process is a recursive problem: what does he expect me to expect him to expect me to do?

For example, the number 1 wins in "pick a positive number" because it's the first positive number. Labels, connotations, and symbolic details can also transcend the mathematical structure to become the shared choice.

Contrast with zero-sum games: In coordination, you want to avoid randomization and look for shared logic. In pure conflict, randomization prevents the enemy from anticipating your move.

- **Pure cooperation may be rare since all options must be equally preferable:** *the zero-sum game is the limiting case of pure conflict, what is the other extreme? It must be the "pure-collaboration" game in which the players win or lose together, having identical preferences regarding the outcome. Whether they win fixed shares of the total or shares that vary with the joint total, they must rank all possible outcomes identically, in their separate preference scales. (And, to avoid any initial conflict, it has to be evident to the players that the preferences are identical, so that there is no conflict of interest in the information or misinformation that they try to convey to each other.)*
- **Accommodation requires some honesty, but deceiving can still provide an advantage:** *Mutual accommodation ultimately requires, if the outcome is to be efficient, that the division of gains be in accordance with "comparative advantage"; that is, the things a player concedes should be those that he wants less than the other player, relative to the things he trades for. Each needs, therefore, to communicate his value system with some truth, although each can also gain by deceiving.*
  TPM Note: this can make some of the literature on negotiation naive, as it ignores the possible advantages of deception and manipulation. See for example the otherwise valid '*Getting to Yes*'

Practical applications:

- **Look for uniqueness when you need to align with allies**, not what is optimal. The most prominent meeting point beats the most convenient one if prominence is what others will notice.
- **Label options to set frames and control the outcome**: If you control how choices are presented, you control what becomes focal. Ordering options alphabetically, putting yours first, or framing the decision in terms of your preferred analogy all shift expectations.

5 – Enforcement, Communication, and Strategic Moves

A strategic move influences another's choice by affecting their expectations of your behavior.

Schelling describes how constraining your own behavior can leave the other a simple maximization problem whose solution benefits you. Threats, promises, commitments, delegations, and destruction of communication can all serve to constrain your behavior or affect expectations.

The power of limited freedom: constraining your choices can improve your strategic position. A penalty that makes you unable to pay blackmail protects you from extortion. Burning bridges behind you disheartens the enemy.

Putting your assets in forms that cannot be transferred makes you immune to threats against your family. Delegating decisions to agents with different incentive structures (insurance companies, sadistic guards, foreign troops who cannot receive threats) changes the game by making certain responses automatic or certain communications impossible.

The power of being attacked, sued, and pursued: The power of being identified and sued (legal enforceability) is the power to make promises. If you could not be made to pay for a breach of agreement, your word would carry little weight.

The power of secrecy against intimidation: The secret ballot goes both ways. Voters cannot reliably sell votes, but they also cannot be intimidated. <— TPM Note: This only works in a perfect game theory scenario. In real life, there have been plenty of votes that have been traded

- **Trust is required when there is no outside authority, but it's not a given:** *Enforcement schemes. Agreements are unenforceable if no outside authority exists to enforce them or if noncompliance would be inherently undetectable. The problem arises, then, of finding forms of agreement, or terms to agree on, that provide no incentive to cheat or that make noncompliance automatically visible or that incur the penalties on which the possibility of enforcement rests. While the possibility of "trust" between two partners need not be ruled out, it should also not be taken for granted*
- **A strategic move influences the other party's move:** *If the essence of a game of strategy is the dependence of each person's proper choice of action on what he expects the other to do, it may be useful to define a "strategic move" as follows: A strategic move is one that influences the other person's choice, in a manner favorable to one's self, by affecting the other person's expectations on how one's self will behave.*
- **Disarmament may work better by removing defensive weapons only:** *the hostage idea is logically identical with the notion that a disarmament agreement between the major powers might be more efficacious (and probably more subject to technical control) if it related to defensive weapons and structures. To eschew defense is, in effect, to make hostages of your entire population without bothering to put them physically into the other's possession.*
- **Trust rests on the continuation of win-win**: *Trust is often achieved simply by the continuity of the relation between parties and the recognition by each that what he might gain by cheating in a given instance is outweighed by the value of the tradition of trust that makes possible a long sequence of future agreement.* **<— TPM Note:** This is the 'shadow of the future' into the present as well explained by Axelrod in *The Evolution of Cooperation*

Practical applications:

- **Build cooperation and trust by leveraging the possibility of long-term win-win**, a strategy that we expand in Power University
- **Reduce your own options to make the threat credible**. Station troops where they cannot retreat. Give authority to someone else with proven resolve. Create automatic response mechanisms that cannot be countermanded.
- **To resist threats, make yourself unavailable for communication** or incapable of understanding. Turn off communication channels. Demonstrate ignorance of the threat's content. Delegate authority to intermediaries.
- **Use third parties strategically**. Delegating authority can free you from pressure and costs in case you decide against the request. A hostage (literal or figurative) can guarantee compliance when trust is absent.

Twenty VS. 1 Guman

Schelling uses the example of twenty unarmed men facing a gunman with six bullets to show that power in conflict depends less on raw numbers than on coordination, credibility, and commitment.

The group could overpower him, but only if they can agree on how to share the risk, credibly commit to acting together, and reassure the gunman that surrender will not lead to punishment.

Meanwhile, the gunman retains power if he can divide them, prevent communication, undermine their promises, or credibly commit to retaliation.

The broader lesson is that domination by a minority or a single actor often persists not because the majority lacks strength, but because it lacks the tools to channel the power of numbers (coordination, trust, and mechanisms for credible collective action).

6 – Game Theory and Experimental Research

Mixed-motive games among humans entail psychology. People must achieve a meeting of minds that cannot be deduced analytically.
Taking hints, perceiving patterns, and coordinating expectations are fundamentally social phenomena that depend on shared culture, context, and experience.

The role of context, culture, and psychology: Coordinating an efficient outcome often depends on familiar patterns, historical precedents, and cultural conventions. Players with similar backgrounds coordinate more easily. Practice and how the game evolves also matter. The opening moves shape what rules are later recognized. And when there are no precedents, players create their own boundaries and rules as they go.

Practical applications:

- **Learn about the other player**: When entering any strategic interaction, understand the other party's cultural frame. What precedents do they recognize? What analogies will they see? What focal points exist in their mental landscape?
- **Slow things down to boost coordination**: The tempo of interactions matters. Incremental moves with time for response allow mutual accommodation to develop. Rapid, irreversible moves preempt the learning process and make coordination harder.
- **Build traditions of trust** through small preparatory bargains before tackling large issues. Each party risking a small investment to demonstrate good faith creates the mutual expectation that trust is available and valuable

> You cannot demand trust; you can only demonstrate that you appreciate it and can be trusted

TPM Note: Schelling turned out to be right
Future research found out that humans are often *conditionally* cooperative, that fairness matters, and generally that humans are far less rational than original game theory posited

7 – Randomization of Promises and Threats

A threat of certain mutual destruction may be incredible because you would never actually choose it, but a threat to create a 10% chance of mutual destruction may be both credible and sufficient. The probability of fulfillment scales down too-large promises or threats and makes it more credible.

Smaller threat = smaller cost of following through: If a threat might fail to change behavior because of misjudgment, miscommunication, or the other party's irrationality, your costs to maintain reputation are high when you must followup. A smaller threat reduces your losses when it fails.

Optimal threat fine-tuning: The optimal threat is the smallest that still meets the minimum deterrence threshold. Fractional threats—threats with probability π of fulfillment—allow fine-tuning that pure threats prohibit.

Practical applications:

- **Threaten probabilities when certitude is not credible:** Warning that your dog that might bite can be more intimidating than it certainly will because the certainty threat raises doubts. The risk of accident, the chance of escalation, the possibility of third-party intervention—all can create higher-credibility probabilistic threats.

- **Use lotteries to overcome impasses**: In negotiations, use lotteries to make indivisible objects divisible. “We flip a coin for it” is often superior to either “you get it” or “I get it” when both want it and neither can concede.
- **Use ‘increased risk with time threats’ to pile up pressure:** A threat that starts fulfilling itself creates urgency for the other party to comply before the risk materializes, or before the risks become too large (ie.: speeding up a car which boosts the risks of a crash; pulling the trigger of a Russian roulette game)

8 – The Threat That Leaves Something to Chance

Since threats are costly to execute, the most credible threats are those where fulfillment is not entirely under your control. If you can demonstrate that the probability of war, accident, or disaster rises when the other party takes certain actions, and that you cannot fully prevent that escalation, you create a threat that works even if you obviously prefer to avoid the outcome.

The threat that leaves something to chance does not require you to prove you would choose disaster, but only that ‘disaster might happen’. This is more credible because it doesn’t depend on your resolve, only on the uncontrollable elements of the situation.
Says Schelling:

> The threat is not quite of the form “I may or may not, according as I choose,” but, has an element of, “I may or may not, and even I can’t be altogether sure.”

Limited war is effective as deterrence partly because it generates a shared risk of general war—a risk neither side can completely control.

Brinkmanship explained: The brink is not a sharp change from 0 to 1, but a curved slope where the risk of slipping increases as you advance. Brinkmanship as defined by Schelling means getting onto that slope, creating a recognizable risk that you may fall in spite of your own best efforts, and dragging the adversary with you. The ideal deployment of brinkmanship tactics is to let the situation get somewhat out of hand because its being out of hand is intolerable to the other party.

Practical applications:

- **Threaten to create conditions where punishment might occur inadvertently** whenever you cannot credibly threaten a deliberate action. The risk itself becomes the sanction.
- **Play the crazy game for intimidation**: In escalating conflicts, the other party’s perception of risk may be more influential than your actual intentions. Actions that signal “this is getting out of control” can be more persuasive than explicit threats.

9 – The Reciprocal Fear of Surprise Attack

When striking first carries an advantage, each party fears the other might strike preemptively out of fear of being struck first. This creates an infinite regress of suspicion: he fears I might strike because I fear he might strike because he fears I might strike… The problem pertains to all partners who distrust each other (for example, each tempted to steal or consume joint assets, each fearing the other might do so first or faster).

The threshold condition: The spiral only leads to a first attack if at least one party’s basic probability of “irrational” attack exceeds a critical threshold. Below that threshold, the regress stabilizes—each knows the other will not attack, so fear of fear does not generate additional motive. Above the threshold, the situation collapses into certain attack.
The multiplier effect does not produce intermediate probabilities, but an all-or-none outcome.

The same applies to warning systems that trigger processes of counter-attack.
So sometimes the best way to prevent surprise attacks is to be visibly incapable of surprising: making your own first

strike impossible rather than trying to detect the other's.

Practical applications:

- **Assess whether fear and supiscion is dangerously high:** In any relationship where preemption is possible (business partnerships, alliances, competitive markets), assess whether the temptation to defect exceeds the threshold. If it does, expect defection or attack; if it does not, focus on increasing trust to boost cooperation to

10 – Surprise Attack and Disarmament

Stable deterrence requires that a first strike cannot destroy the other's ability to retaliate (ie.: the balance is stable only when neither, in striking first, can destroy the other's ability to strike back).

This means that the balance of terror is stable only when retaliatory forces are invulnerable. This leads to counterintuitive conclusions: weapons that are good at killing people but bad at killing other weapons are stabilizing; weapons designed to destroy enemy missiles and bombers are destabilizing because they create first-strike advantage.

The hostage-defense paradox: A stable balance of terror is a modern form of massive exchange of hostages. Each side holds the other side's population under the threat of nuclear war. Civil defense that protects populations actually destabilizes deterrence because it reduces the hostage value. "Dirty" bombs that maximize civilian casualties can be more stabilizing than "clean" bombs that target military forces.

The disarmament paradox: Sometimes more weapons increase stability. If each side needs to destroy a certain percentage of the other's forces to prevent retaliation, larger starting numbers require larger proportional advantages to achieve dominance, making arms racing less attractive.

Practical applications:

- **Distinguish between offensive and defensive capabilities** when evaluating competitive situations. The ability to neutralize the other's ability to respond is destabilizing; the ability to absorb punishment and still respond is stabilizing.
- **Seek arrangements where both parties can always strike back** in business, partnerships, or any mutual deterrence situation (and neither party can preempt the other's ability to respond).
  Escrow accounts, automatic renewal clauses, reciprocal hostages create stable cooperation by making first-move advantage disappear.

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Much of 'Negotiation Skills' is in The Preframe

> This conclusion may seem to reduce the scope for bargaining skill, if the outcome is already determined by the configuration of the problem itself and where the focal point lies. But perhaps what it does is shift the locus where skill is effective. The "obvious" outcome depends greatly on how the problem is formulated, on what analogies or precedents the definition of the bargaining issue calls to mind, on the kinds of data that may be available to bear on the question in dispute. (…) Much of the skill has already been applied when the formal negotiations begin.

And when the frame is already set, the skill is in undoing it. The author proposes to approach with confusion, but which in truth can be done with even more effective approaches:

> Perhaps another role for skill is contained in this general approach. If one is unsuccessful in getting the problem so formulated that the "obvious" outcome is near his own preferred position, he can proceed to confuse the issue. Find multiple definitions for all the terms and add "noise" to drown out the strong signal contained in the original formulation. The technique may not succeed, but in the variant of our income-tax problem mentioned above it certainly did.

Learn more about these skills:

- Frame control techniques
- Basics of frame control

Strengthening or Weakening Frames

The author talks about the shared belief of nuclear weapons as completely different from other weapons or as 'just another weapon'.
But these dynamics apply to most beliefs and frames:

> It is a distinction that to some extent we can strengthen or weaken, clarify or blur. We can strengthen the tradition, and enhance the symbolic significance of this distinction, by talking and acting in a way that is dramatically consistent with it; we can erode the distinction—but not readily destroy it—by acting as though we do not believe in it, by emphasizing the "just-another-weapon" argument and by making it evident that we in fact have little compunction about using nuclears.

Mafia & International Relations Are Similar

> Gang war and international war have a lot in common. Nations and outlaws both lack enforceable legal systems to help them govern their affairs. Both engage in the ultimate in violence. Both have an interest in avoiding violence, but the threat of violence is continually on call. It is interesting that racketeers, as well as gangs of delinquents, engage in limited war, disarmament and disengagement, surprise attack, retaliation and threat of retaliation; they worry about "appeasement" and loss of face; and they make alliances and agreements with the same disability that nations are subject to—the inability to appeal to higher authority in the interest of contract enforcement.

Splitting the Difference Works

Contrary to popular books on negotiation, splitting the difference actually works well:

> The frequency with which final agreement is precipitated by an offer to "split the difference" illustrates the same point, and the difference that is split is by no means always trivial. More impressive, perhaps, is the remarkable frequency with which long negotiations over complicated quantitative formulas or ad hoc shares in some costs or benefits converge ultimately on something as crudely simple as equal shares, shares proportionate to some common magnitude (gross national product, population, foreign-exchange deficit, and so forth), or the shares agreed on in some previous but logically irrelevant negotiation.

QUOTES

On learning from Mafia, *The Art of War*, Machiavelli, and Machiavellianism instead of ‘good people’:

Here perhaps we perceive a disadvantage peculiar to civilized modern students of international affairs, by contrast with, say, Machiavelli or the ancient Chinese. We tend to identify peace, stability, and the quiescence of conflict with notions like trust, good faith, and mutual respect. To the extent that this point of view actually encourages trust and respect it is good. But where trust and good faith do not exist and cannot be made to by our acting as though they did, we may wish to solicit advice from the underworld, or from ancient despotisms, on how to make agreements work when trust and good faith are lacking and there is no legal recourse for breach of contract.

On concessions coming from strength and resolve:

A bargain is struck when somebody makes a final, sufficient concession. Why does he concede? Because he thinks the other will not.

When troops are really hostages:

the American divisions that were stationed in Europe principally to demonstrate that America could not avoid becoming engaged in a European conflict can probably be viewed as hostages; if they cannot, their wives and children can

⍰⍰♂ Lucio’s Analysis

The Premise of Rational Players is Limited in Real-World Applications

Although the author adds plenty of caveats, overall it still feel like most of the situations imply rational player maximizing for self interest, without human emotions like anger, stubborness, or pride getting in the way.
For example, he writes:

> But if B can link the projects together, offering to carry out one while A carries out the other, and can effectively threaten to abandon both unless A carries out one of them, A is left an option with a gain of four and a cost of three, which he takes, and B cuts his cost in half.

However, in the real world A may get angry and force B out of his plot. Or he may get angry and simply refuse to deal with B, preferring to walk away with a loss but his ‘honor’ intact, rather than submitting to blackmail. This would not be uncommon.

I had similar reservations across several scenarios. For example, the author also says that:

- The threat is not credible unless the threatener shows that he has an incentive to carry it out **<— TPM Note:** However, most threats that are carried out in interpersonal relationships are fueled by anger and vengeance
- The wife ‘wins’ the argument if she yells her favorite restaurant and then hungs up. **<— TPM Note:** But only a pushover man would go meet her after such a power move
- To be credible in your threat to capsize the boat, you have to risk capsizing it **<— TPM Note:** This really depends on the personality of the players. A fearful man in the company of a crazy man may be persuaded by the simple mention of capsizing

Some Games Simplify Reality

Just as an example, the twenty men held up for robbery by a single man who has a gun and six bullets scenario takes for granted that 6 men would die if they all attacked.

In truth, ‘one shot equals not one kill’.

Even more relevant, a mass simultaneous attack would likely lead to no shooting at all since the armed robber's faith would be much worse if he inflicted maximum damage before being overrun (ie., he prefers being captured as a 'good guy' rather than a murderer).

Finally, in many real-life scenarios, most captives may be better off not to attack at all, since most hostages are eventually released.

REVIEW

The Strategy of Conflict is a seminal book that moved attention beyond simpler and math-focused win–lose games to the more common and more real-life practical mixed-motive conflicts, where cooperation and competition coexist.

This is also an important milestone in game theory for the work we do at The Power Moves, learning from the science with the goal to boost real life effectiveness.
We agree and support Schelling's criticism that the previous mathematically elegant version of game theory, including Nash's work, was incomplete for the kinds of strategic situations that matter most in real life.

Schelling first opened the door to a messier world, including a world where psychology first started playing a role.

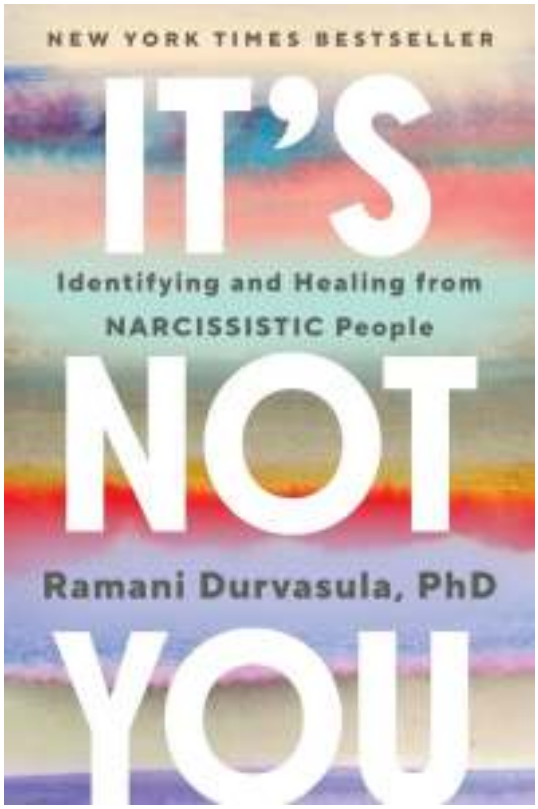
On the downside, some parts still remain somewhat abstract. While Schelling is credited for moving beyond pure mathematical models, we believe that real-world decision-making is even more deeply governed by psychology and irrationality.
This could mean that in the real world, a strategically minded man who thinks with psychology-first may often outperform a game theorist armed with equations, but with less understanding of human nature.

Get it on Amazon or check our **most recommended books**.

It’s Not You: Spotting & Healing From Narcissistic Relationships

Lucio Buffalmano · 28 June 2026 · Archived copy · Original

It’s Not You (2024) is a practical guide to understanding narcissists, spotting their tactics, protecting yourself, and healing from narcissistic abuse.



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Takeaways

- **Narcissists don't change**. Change is rare, plan for things staying the same, rather than positive change
- **Narcissists cannot bond**, they focus on them and their needs, and take more than they give
- ***You* must change and become narcissist-resistant**. Once you accept reality and regain self-esteem, you can then better decide whether to leave or make the most with what you have

NOTES

About the Author:
Dr. Ramani Durvasula is a licensed clinical psychologist, professor (emerita) of psychology, media mental-health expert, and founder of LUNA Education who has built a reputation for translating academic insight on narcissism and personality disorders into accessible, research-informed guidance for everyday relationships.

Preface

Dr. Ramani shares a personal story of hiding herself as a child to introduce a core theme: survivors of narcissistic abuse often learn early to silence their needs and desires. But healing means reclaiming visibility, voice, and self-worth.

Introduction

The introduction reframes narcissistic abuse as a widespread, invisible issue that leaves victims confused and blaming themselves. The book's goal is to provide clarity, validation, and tools to heal from that fog.

> The person who holds the narrative holds the power.

Narcissistic vs Antagonistic

The author consciously chooses to use the term 'antagonistic' to cover larger ground and overlapping personality types and disorders:

> I prefer to characterize the behavior of the psychologically harmful person in my clients' lives as antagonistic, which is a broader and less stigmatized term than narcissistic. This is the term I use when teaching other professionals about these patterns, because it captures the breadth of antagonistic behaviors and tactics that we observe in narcissism—manipulation, attention-seeking, exploitativeness, hostility, arrogance—but also in other antagonistic personality styles, such as psychopathy, and positions it as a unique stress that antagonistic relationships evoke.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: I agree and like this. We use the term 'value taker' for an even broader categorization**
In our community, as in most other places, people tend to use labels like 'narcissism' and over-apply them to people or behaviors that may not be typical of narcissism or some other specific personality type. Instead, we like the term 'value taker' here because v**alue taker and value-taking behavior covers ANY behavior we want to avoid.** And little later, she adds:

> don't get lost in naming the personality, but instead allow yourself to clearly observe the behavior.

100%.
Labels don't matter. Just focus on their behavior: good for your, or not?

Why Narcissistic Abuse is So Confusing

- **It's not dramatic** Narcissistic abuse is often chronic and subtle, not explosive.
- **It's not your fault** The narcissist trains you to think everything is your fault.
- **It's invisible to others** Outsiders rarely see what's happening behind closed doors.

1. Clarifying Narcissism

This chapter breaks down what narcissism is—and how it manifests in real life.
It debunks myths around narcissism and shows how it manifests—not always as arrogance and 'alpha male grandiosity', but often **many narcissists appear kind, helpful, or even insecure**. What makes someone narcissistic isn't superficial traits—it's a consistent, damaging pattern rooted in **lack of empathy, emotional manipulation, and a chronic need for control**.

Through real-life vignettes like Carlos (who cheated but felt shame) and Adam (who is dismissive and controlling but performs grand gestures), Dr. Ramani demonstrates that narcissists often confuse others because of the mix of harm and charm.
Understanding narcissism requires looking beyond labels and observing how someone consistently makes others feel: devalued, invisible, confused, and guilty.

What Narcissism Really Is

- **A maladaptive personality style** built around insecurity, control, and lack of empathy. <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: it may not be maladaptive for many narcissists. See below
- **A pattern, not a phase** It's consistent across relationships and time.
- **Protective mechanism** Narcissists use domination, charm, or victimhood to avoid vulnerability.

Core Traits That Define Narcissism

- **Inconsistent empathy** They may show caring behaviors occasionally, but it's unreliable and often performative.
- **Need for control** Narcissists must dominate the emotional tone of relationships—through criticism, praise, silence, or volatility.
- **Hyperreactivity to criticism** They often lash out, sulk, or retaliate when confronted, even gently.
- **Sense of entitlement** They believe their needs matter more, and they shouldn't be held to the same standards.
- **Superficial charm** Many narcissists are socially likable or charismatic—but only on the surface.
- **Low self-awareness** They rarely reflect on their impact or take responsibility.

Types of Narcissism

- **Grandiose narcissist** Bold, controlling, dismissive of others, needs admiration.
- **Vulnerable narcissist** Plays the victim, emotionally fragile, craves sympathy.
- **Communal narcissist** Uses "good deeds" or spirituality to gain superiority and praise.
- **Malignant narcissist** Combines narcissism with aggression or cruelty—often overlaps with antisocial traits.

Why It's Hard to Spot

- **They confuse you** One moment they're cruel, the next they're affectionate.
- **They gaslight and blur the moral line** You feel guilty even when you're mistreated.
- **They weaponize your empathy** against you

> Unlike people who have personality styles that are more uniformly dysregulated and will yell at you in front of your friends, clients, and strangers alike, narcissistic people tend to be much more tactical and less disorganized.
> Narcissistic people know what looks good and bad, and how to choose their audience to maintain a public image while privately using those closest to them as punching bags and pacifiers.

2. Death by a Thousand Cuts

Narcissistic abuse isn't usually explosive. It's slow erosion—constant micro-abuses that break down your confidence, identity, and perception of reality. The abuser chips away at you over time while presenting a different face to the world.

> "What does the narcissistic person need?" The answer is control, domination, power, admiration, and validation. How they go about getting that is where the narcissistic abuse comes in.

Subtle Yet Damaging Tactics

- **Invalidation** Your feelings are dismissed or mocked.
- **Control masked as concern** "I just worry about you" = I don't want you to have autonomy.
- **Hot-cold behavior** Keeps you emotionally unstable.
- **Public charm, private cruelty** You're the only one who sees the real side.
- **Gaslighting**, a systematic pattern of generating doubt about your experiences, memory, perception, judgment, and emotions. Gaslighting isn't lying or a difference of opinion. It's designed to confuse you and undermine your autonomy and sense of who you are.
  It can include denying events that occurred, behaviors that were engaged in, experiences you are having, or words that were said. It causes you to question reality, and it qualifies as emotional abuse.

?️?♂ Lucio's note: good analysis on gaslighting patterns and frame control tactics I haven't seen in other sources. It suggested me the author has a good power awareness ??

Learn more on gaslighting signs here:

> Galisghting: 17 Signs You're Being Manipulated

3. The Fallout

After narcissistic abuse, survivors often feel worse than ever—confused, ashamed, depressed, and unsure of what even happened. This chapter outlines the psychological and emotional scars narcissists leave behind.

> where you are hoping for connection and attachment, they are working from control and selfishness.
> As a result, they are emotionally investing far less and deriving much more.

Long-Term Consequences

- **CPTSD-like symptoms** Flashbacks, hypervigilance, avoidance.
- **Shame and self-doubt** You think their abuse was your fault.
- **Loss of trust** Both in others and in yourself.

How It Affects Behavior

- **People-pleasing** You try to prevent further rejection.
- **Isolation** You withdraw to avoid judgment or gaslighting.
- **Overcompensation** You strive to prove your worth in relationships or work.

Internal Beliefs That Must Be Challenged

- **"I'm too sensitive"** ➡ You were reacting to real harm.
- **"I should have known better"** ➡ Narcissists are skilled at hiding red flags.
- **"I failed the relationship"** ➡ It wasn't a relationship, it was control.
- **"It's me because he's so awesome"** ➡ It's not me

Crucial for the mental power dynamics:

> Narcissistic people are often so resolute in the belief of their goodness, warmth, empathy, and all-around awesomeness that if you already have a devalued sense of your own worth, you are more likely to take the blame (*They are saying they are awesome, and I don't see myself as awesome, so maybe it IS me?*)

4. Understand Your Backstory

To fully heal, you must understand how your own background made you vulnerable.
Many survivors grew up in environments where love was conditional, emotions were invalidated, or boundaries were blurred.

The Narcissistic Family Systems & Roles

- **The Golden Child**: Favored for being a source of narcissistic supply, this child is idealized for traits that reflect the parent's ego (e.g., looks, obedience, talent), but their value is conditional—if they stop performing, the affection disappears, leaving them trapped in a lifelong quest for approval and unable to freely pursue their own identity.
- **The Scapegoat**: Blamed for everything wrong in the family, this child becomes the emotional punching bag and target of projected shame, often enduring the harshest treatment and growing up with low self-worth, chronic anxiety, and a painful sense of exclusion that may persist into adult relationships.
- **The Helper**: Cast into the role of caretaker, this child gains a fragile sense of control and visibility by constantly serving the narcissistic parent—cleaning, soothing, and managing others' needs—but at the cost of their own development, often growing into adults who over-function and can't stop giving.
  - Moving beyond: learn to say 'no'. If someone is angling for help, it's a manipulation tactic to take without asking. Never volunteer help!
- **The Fixer / Peacekeeper**: Constantly on high alert, this child tries to prevent explosions and manage family tensions by mediating, appeasing, or distracting the narcissistic parent, which leads to chronic anxiety, conflict avoidance, and a tendency to enable abusive behavior in adulthood under the guise of "keeping the peace."
- **The Invisible Child**: Ignored and emotionally abandoned, this child receives no validation or engagement, which leaves deep wounds of unworthiness and invisibility; they may drift through life with low self-esteem,

vulnerable to toxic relationships that mimic the same neglect.
  - Moving beyond: Find your way of being seen that is authentic to you. Stop sharing your achievements, joys, and experiences with your family of origin; it dampens the joy to have them unacknowledged and repeats the cycle of wanting to be noticed by people who can't see you.

- **The Truth Seer / Teller**: The one who perceives and sometimes speaks the truth about the dysfunction, this child is often punished, scapegoated, or discarded for breaking the family's code of silence—yet they often grow into insightful adults with strong boundaries and the potential to break free, though often burdened by grief and isolation.

Patterns to Identify

- **Fawning** You appease to stay safe.
- **Over-functioning** You take responsibility for everything.
- **Overtolerance** You normalize mistreatment.
- **Over-justifying** You find too many excuses or blame yourself, which can be self-gaslighting (e.g., justifying narcissistic behavior on the basis that you are always being too sensitive).

5. Embrace Radical Acceptance

This chapter centers on a hard truth: narcissists won't change. Hoping, fixing, or waiting keeps you stuck. The only path to healing is accepting who they are, not who you wish they'd become.

What Radical Acceptance Means

- **Giving up hope for change** You stop clinging to the fantasy.
- **Seeing the full pattern** Even the good moments were part of the manipulation.
- **Letting go of control** You stop trying to manage their moods or image.

> Realistic expectations are also about information management. This means not sharing good news with them because they will minimize and take the joy out of it or behave in a victimized and passive-aggressive manner. It also means not sharing bad news with them because they may rage and criticize and make it worse. What's left? Indifferent topics: the weather, the neighbor's cat, the taste of the chocolate cake.

What It Allows You to Do

- **Make empowered choices** You act based on facts, not illusions.
- **Set strong boundaries** You stop justifying your limits.
  TIP: to set strong boundaries you must learn address what fear to enforce them
- **Reclaim your peace** Mental space opens up when you stop spinning in "what-ifs."

Test for Narcissism

Communicate a real need directly (closeness, help, behavior change, feedback, etc.).

Observe the response:

- ✅ **Healthy response:** empathy, acknowledgment, and genuine effort to address it → likely not narcissistic abuse.
- ❌ **Toxic response:** gaslighting, manipulation, rage, or abuse → strong confirmation of narcissistic abuse.

6. Grief and Healing

Grieving a narcissistic relationship is complex because you're mourning an illusion. You grieve what you wanted it to be, not what it was. This chapter helps you move through that grief without guilt.

What You're Really Grieving

- **The fantasy** Who they pretended to be.
- **Your time and effort** Years spent trying to fix something that never could work.
- **Lost self** You mourn the parts of yourself you abandoned.
- **Loss of innocence**. But 'positive cynicism' isn't bad and can empower you

How to Heal

- **Allow all feelings** Rage, sadness, even nostalgia are normal.
- **Avoid false closure** Narcissists rarely give you honest endings.
- **Rebuild slowly** Your identity, joy, and safety will return over time.

As a bonus for peace of life: spend less time on social media:

> in an ideal world, spend less time on social media. Something about the validation seeking, the rants, the comparisons, the cruel clickbait, and the egocentricity of social media just isn't good for healing, so try to reduce your exposure. Once again, the less of this you are dealing with, the better you will feel, and this fosters radical acceptance.

7. Become More Narcissist Resistant

Once you see the patterns, you can learn to protect yourself. This chapter teaches practical tools for spotting red flags, enforcing boundaries, and trusting your intuition.

Red Flags to Watch Early

- **Entitlement** They expect special treatment from the start.
- **Love bombing** Fast intimacy, excessive praise, "soulmate" talk.
- **Disrespect in disguise** Jokes that belittle you, "honesty" that's cruel.

10 Resistance Tactics

- **Set limits early** Don't wait for proof they're harmful.
- **Stop falling for charisma and charm.**
  - Stop being impressesd by superficial qualities such as intelligence or education—or appearance, wealth, and success
- **Learn their tells**, how they act when stressed, or how they treat others
- **Stop giving multiple second chances**
- **Find solace in solitude** It's not about being 'isolated', it's about holding space for yourself, stop reacting and chasing or over-helping. It's about finding your own voice
- **Don't explain too much** Narcissists twist your words.
- **Trust your discomfort** Your gut notices what your brain tries to excuse.
- **Trust your reality**. To become more narcissist resistant, you also need to become more gaslight resistant.
  - Quit over-apologizing: Over-apologizing can be a response to gaslighting, causing you to gaslight yourself.

Apologies are for when you do something wrong. Having a feeling, an experience, or not agreeing with someone's distortion of your reality does *not* call for an apology.

> The best way to turn off the gaslights is to avoid them in the first place by owning your reality, recognizing it as reality, and not sacrificing your experience and perception in the process, even while acknowledging that someone can have a different experience from you. Resisting gaslighting early on in a new relationship can result in the gaslighter becoming frustrated and moving on to a target they can more easily dominate. If you're currently in a relationship with a narcissistic person, your resistance may result in the person escalating the gaslighting and rage. But simply knowing what gaslighting looks like can help you know when it's happening and remain aware of your subjective reality instead of capitulating or falling into self-blame and self-doubt.

8. Heal and Grow When You Stay

Sometimes you can't (or won't) leave—this chapter offers strategies for emotional survival if you stay connected (e.g., co-parenting, family).

> The primary challenge of healing while staying in the toxic situation is that narcissistic people don't really want you to heal. It's not that they care about your healing per se, but rather that your healing means they get less supply. Your healing means that you are experiencing yourself separate from them, which defies their expectation for domination and control.

Key Principles

- **Lower expectations** Don't look for empathy or growth.
- **Stick to neutral topics** Avoid emotional engagement.
- **Document everything** Especially in legal or parenting scenarios.

Tools to Stay Sane

- **Gray rock technique** Be uninteresting, unemotional, brief.
- **Limit exposure** Physically and emotionally.
- **Find emotional refuge** From friends, therapy, routines, or hobbies.

Grey rock vs yellow rock techniques

Gray Rock

- Be boring, flat, and unemotional.
- Keep responses short, factual, and minimal ("yes," "no").
- Don't feed arguments, drama, or validation.
- Expect the narcissist to escalate at first before eventually losing interest.
- ⍰ Example: When Gloria's mother asked at dinner if she had remembered to congratulate her sister on her new home, Gloria flatly replied: *"Yes."*

Yellow Rock

- A warmer, more polite version of gray rock.
- Still concise and boundaried, but with civility and basic warmth.
- Useful in co-parenting, family, or work settings where gray rock is too cold.
- Looks "normal" to outsiders while still protecting boundaries.

- ⍰ Example: Same situation, but with warmth and brevity: *"Yes, I responded yesterday when I saw the picture of her house."*

9. Rewrite Your Story

The final healing step is reclaiming your identity and rewriting your narrative. Abuse distorts your self-view—healing reclaims it.

> The true act of rebellion is to live a life that is not a response to them but a life as an authentic person with wants, needs, aspirations, mistakes, strengths, vulnerabilities, hopes, and feelings that are completely yours.

How to Reclaim Your Voice

- **Name what happened** Truth-telling breaks shame.
- **Reframe your identity** You are not broken—you adapted to survive.
- **Celebrate strength** Even staying too long taught you what you won't accept again.

What Growth Looks Like

- **Trusting yourself again** You learn to believe your gut.
- **Living by values** Not fear, people-pleasing, or self-erasure.
- **Helping others (if you want)** Turning pain into wisdom, not your purpose.

Don't force forgiveness. If it comes later, great. But if you don't, it's OK

Slightly paraphrasing for brevity:

> It seems that every single self-help book, healing practice, and spiritual scripture talks about the value of forgiveness (…) in healthy relationships it has tremendous value. But **narcissistic relationships are not healthy, so all the conventional wisdom about forgiveness goes out the window.**
> (…)
> In most cases, narcissistic people didn't recognize forgiveness as the gift that it is (…) Instead, they likely saw it as permission to keep on doing what they were doing. **Forgiveness is narcissistic supply**, one more thing that emboldens the narcissistic person's entitlement (…)
> Multiple studies suggest that forgiveness is not good if it is not followed by an attempt to make amends or foster safety.

The author correctly calls out the literature we called here 'naive self-help'. She says that most most of what is written about the virtues of forgiveness does not account for narcissism and antagonism.
Forgiving someone who doesn't change or doesn't deserve it may instead only lower your self-respect (the 'doormat effect').
When we do account for repeat offenders and disagreeable personalities, research suggests that it would be better for your well-being if you didn't forgive.

And she shares:

> Embracing my non-forgiveness has significantly helped my healing and brought the volume down on my an

Think of yourself like a hero in a hero's journey

> Have you ever heard of the hero's journey? It provides an outline for many myths and biographies across time

> and cultures. The framework is pretty simple: A heroic person is called to an adventure, faces down a critical crisis, often considers giving up, and returns home, permanently transformed. Along the way, the heroic person wanders through the unknown and is met with helpers, mentors, fellow travelers, threats, and existential crises, and upon returning is not only changed but also does good for others.
> **You are the heroic person in this journey.**

How does that journey end?
With your blossoming:

> This journey culminates in the private and public launch of your authentic self, and that will be a gift to yourself, to the people who love you, and to the world at large.

SHARPEST INSIGHTS

These are the insights that struck us the most.
We use the authors' quotes and research, but the titles and interpretations are our own—and may not reflect the authors' intent.
Credit for the insight goes to them; blame for the interpretation is on us.

Should Narcissism As A Diagnosis Be Disbanded?

A provocative and thought-provokign take:

> I personally believe the diagnosis should be disbanded altogether, because there is little substantial evidence for accessible treatment, and because there is little reliability across clinicians in assigning this diagnosis
> (…)
> but this term *narcissistic personality disorder* has muddied the waters of the conversation on narcissism. We all have a personality; some are just easier to get along with than others.

I felt similarly, but for different reasons.
Specifically, after learning more about grandiose and vulnerable narcissism because they seem to be two very different personality profiles.

QUOTES

On the fantasy of 'change' and the reality of most narcissists NOT changing:

> If a narcissistic person does not believe there is a reason to change—and in fact, they may believe it would hurt them or take away their "edge"—they will be no more likely or able to make that switch to agreeableness or to become self-aware than you would be able to switch over from agreeableness to disagreeableness.

On narcissists needing you below them:

narcissistic people make you feel small so they can feel safe.

On the win-lose nature of narcissistic relationships and the ultimate frame battle it entails (what's true/not true):

for a narcissistic relationship to last, you must submit to their reality

On 'flying higher' negative people, a concept we also espoused here with the allegory of an eagle flying higher the petty turkey games:

Arguing gives them another way to get supply, let out some steam, air their grievances, and remain dominant. It's like the aphorism "Never wrestle with a pig—you end up dirty, and the pig likes it."

On removing toxic people:

If cleaning out a closet is supposed to bring joy to a person's life, cleaning out toxic people should bring ecstasy.

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Is narcissism maladaptive? I think it can be very *adaptive*

People may confuse the word 'adapative' with 'good' or 'nice'. And maladaptive with 'bad' or 'creating problems'.

But 'maladaptive' only refers to harming an organism's chances for survival and reproduction.

Causing problems is not in itself maladaptive, especially if the issues are *for others*.

The author, like most others in the narcissism self-help literature, claims that narcissism is an 'interpersonally *maladaptive* personality style'.
However, the only clear cases of maladaptivity I see are in the *victims*.

Whether narcissism is maladaptive is far from certain.
An evolutionary perspective may claim that **narcissism is adaptive in certain contexts and environments, and especially the grandiose aspect of narcissism.**

A clue may even come from the book itself, referring to narcissists' beliefs:

> If a narcissistic person does not believe there is a reason to change—and in fact, t**hey may believe it would hurt them or take away their "edge"**—they will be no more likely or able to make that switch to agreeableness or to become self-aware than you would be able to switch over from agreeableness to disagreeableness.

Truth is, they may have a point.
Grandiose narcissism may indeed provide an edge to achieve certain life-relevant results like fame, dating success, or pursuing opportunities others wouldn't.

Infidelity is not a feature of narcissism; it's a *human* evolutionary tactic

The author mentions a couple of times 'narcissistic infidelity'.
Referring to a client, she says that 'she was now experiencing the sting of narcissistic infidelity' and she adds later:

> For too long we have viewed betrayal as an unfortunate occurrence that can happen in a relationship, but that misses how devastating this common dynamic of narcissistic relationships can be.

This is where I feel the book may have gained with some evolutionary perspective.
Betrayal *is* an unfortunate occurrence that can happen, and happens relatively frequently in the West.

Narcissists may engage more in infidelity, but it's not nearly as clear-cut as one may think.
The *Oxford Handbook of Infidelity* says that findings are mixed, and only replicate specifically for *sexual* narcissism, not for *general* narcissism.
Plus, Foster and Brunell explain based on empirical evidence that narcissists in happy relationships don't necessarily cheat more, narcissists with spouses who elicit their communal feelings are also more communal themselves. Plus, without over-generalizing or blaming victims of course, but it's also true that narcissists tend to pair up with other narcissists.

Ultimately, and contrary to what one may feel reading about 'narcissistic infidelity', **narcissism is not defined by infidelity because infidelity is endemic to any pair-forming species.**

Infidelity is a specific case of defection from a collaborative endeavor. Defecting is an attempt to gain an extra payoff, and humans often seek to get the highest payoff possible (like any other form of life).

Do all relationships follow a cycle with love bombing?

The author writes:

> Narcissistic relationships follow a cycle. This cycle often begins with charm, intensity, idealization, or the patterns we call *love bombing* that draw us in. Then gradually, the "idealized" mask falls off and the expectable patterns of devaluation and discard kick in. (…) These phases show up differently depending on the nature of the relationship, but the cycle is universal across all narcissistic relationships.

That is a strong claim and it was surprising from such an otherwise careful author.

Not only do I not think that love bombing is present in *all* narcissistic relationships, but **there is no evidence for narcissists using love bombing (Campbell, 2020)**.
This follows basic value exchange and power dynamics principles. First off, strategically aware narcissists don't love bomb because love bombing, just like any other high-investment strategy, gives lots of power away (and that's also why it's not very effective).

Second, the author claims includes the victim's idealization in 'love bombing'. But that's a very different dynamic in my opinion. That's *attachment* (or *love* in the case of relationships). It's categorically different from love bombing.

Sometimes misses the realities of mate value & sexual market dynamics

The author never considers that people end up or stay with narcissists because maybe they're also exciting ('chocolate cake model'), or provide genetic benefits ('sexy sons hypothesis').

Sure, many of these relationships are toxic and people may indeed be better off ending them.
But is that *always* the case?
I doubt it.

Some people enter the relationship or stay because… It's still better than the alternatives.
For example, the author writes:

> "I know this relationship is bad for me, but I don't have time to go back out there, find someone new, get married, and have a child before it is too late."
> (…) The reality is, we rarely make our best decisions under pressure.

But maybe staying *was* the best decision for her client.
At least from an evolutionary point of view, her client may be totally right.

Even more clear-cut cases apply to relationships with very high mate value narcissists.

Should we mention for example the case of women married to narcissistic CEO or presidents?
Still not a textbook great relationship maybe. But **a narcissistic but wealthy or exciting man may be better than a poor nice guy for many women.**
That's the reality that self-help books rarely indulge.

REVIEW

It's Not You is a great book for anyone living with a narcissist and looking to disengage, heal, and move forward. Ramani is a clinically experienced voice in the field, and shares strategies and mindsets that are practical, realistic, and genuinely useful.

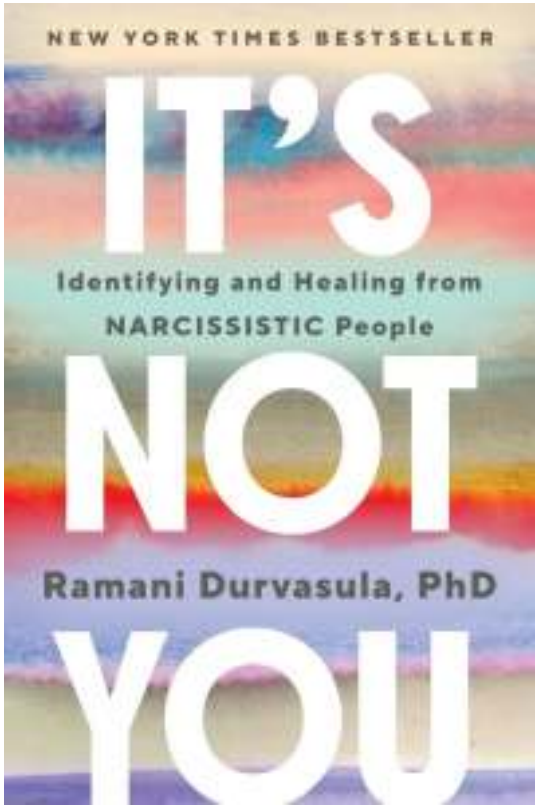
It's not a perfect match with the TPM approach. The book is primarily focused on self-defense and recovery, while at TPM we place more emphasis on active goal achievement, growth, and integrating the more functional traits of narcissism into an honorable man framework. The book's "victim-focus" also speaks more directly to women, while we'd stress more personal empowerment and positive dominance as a way to recovery.

The criticisms we've raised above also remain valid.
Still, t**his is a high-quality work** that reflects core TPM values in its critical thinking, rejection of naive advice, and good scientific grounding.

Bottom line: while TPM readers may find our handbooks and articles on narcissism more closely aligned with ambitious men's goals, *It's Not You* remains a highly recommended resource.

Check the **best books** to read or **best books on narcissism**.

It's Not You Summary: Dealing and Healing From Narcissists



It's Not You (2024) is a practical guide to understanding narcissists, spotting their tactics, protecting yourself, and healing from narcissistic abuse.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/its-not-you-summary-review/

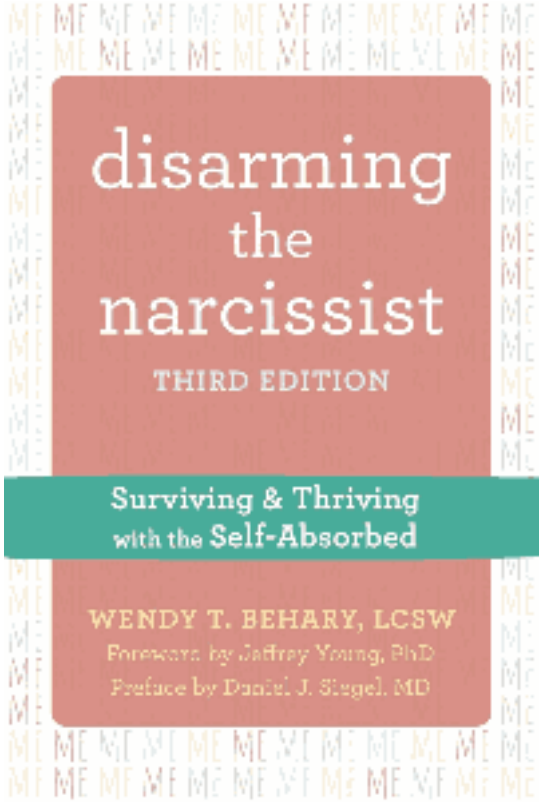
Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
4.8

Disarming the Narcissist: Does Schema Therapy Work? (Book Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 5 July 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Disarming the Narcissist (2021) is a practical guide that teaches readers how to manage and communicate with narcissistic individuals using empathic confrontation, boundaries, and schema-informed strategies.



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- More Wisdom
- QUOTES
- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
  - Potentially naive
  - Sometimes ineffectively low power & too 'vulnerable'
  - Ignores evolutionary roots of narcissism
  - Schema therapy alone is limiting
- REVIEW

Notes

About the Author:
Wendy T. Behary is a licensed clinical social worker, expert in schema therapy, and founder of The Cognitive Therapy Center of New Jersey.

1. Framing The Situation: Understanding Narcissism

Narcissists are not just arrogant; they often have deep insecurities masked by defensive patterns and emotional armor.

> the truth is that he actually longs for a deeper and much more profound connection—a need that he simply cannot realize, comprehend, or accept. He's likely to view the idea of an emotionally intimate connection as weak and pathetic. As a consequence of his unrealized longings, which he considers unacceptable, his needs are misguided, so he can only seek your attention through charming yet unnerving behaviors.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note: I'm unconvinced this is 100% accurate**
While it may be true for some narcissists, I also feel it's a mix of pop-psychologizing, 'naive take', and potentially subconscious revenge-seeking that seeks to frame the dominant narcissist as weak.
The authoritative *Handbook of Trait Narcissism* for example states that grandiose narcissists are 'low on need for intimacy', suggesting the opposite is true.

Core Characteristics of Narcissists

- **Grandiosity and entitlement** – They believe they're superior and deserve special treatment.
- **Lack of empathy** – They struggle to connect with others' emotions.
- **Sensitivity to criticism** – Even mild feedback feels like a deep wound.
- **Control and manipulation** – They exert power over others to maintain superiority.

Healthy Narcissism.

Healthy narcissism supports self-respect, assertiveness, and the ability to express needs without trampling on others.

In childhood, narcissistic traits like demanding attention or acting out are developmentally normal, helping the child secure care and protection.

As adults, people with healthy narcissism are confident, driven, and often influential—but they remain grounded. They may seek recognition, but their goals are guided by empathy, integrity, and purpose.

They can lead, confront, and stand up for themselves—without arrogance or cruelty. At their best, they inspire others, form deep connections, and make a lasting positive impact.

2. The Impact on You

- **Self-doubt and confusion** – Victims often question their own worth and reality.
- **Walking on eggshells** – Avoiding topics that may provoke narcissistic rage.
- **Loss of identity** – Constant accommodation leads to self-erasure.
- **Sense of loneliness**

> A client who was married to a narcissistic man said that she found herself less lonely when he traveled (…) his inability to be emotionally available left her feeling far more lonely and deprived.
> He was immersed in an evasive strategy of emotional silence. To him, any exposure of his vulnerability would feel like a fusing of the two of them in some needy and dependent way. This is unthinkable for the narcissist,

> whose mission is one of sovereign self-reliance.

2. Schemas and The Brain

This chapter explores how narcissism develops from unmet childhood needs and early relational traumas. Narcissists often had inconsistent or conditional caregiving, leading to intense inner pain they mask with false superiority.

Developmental Roots

- **Unmet emotional needs** – Especially for empathy, validation, and safety.
- **Conditional love** – Praised only for achievements, not authentic self.
- **Insecure attachment** – Alternating between craving closeness and fearing it.

Schemas: Definition & Common Narcissistic Schemas

Behary introduces the main "schemas" (deep mental patterns) that drive narcissistic behavior and defenses.

- **Entitlement/Grandiosity** – Belief in being above rules and others.
- **Insufficient self-control** – Poor frustration tolerance; seeks instant gratification.
- **Mistrust/Abuse** – Assumes others will hurt, manipulate, or deceive.
- **Defectiveness/Shame** – Hidden sense of being unlovable or broken.
- **Unrelenting Standards** – Perfectionism used to gain approval and avoid shame.

Full Schemas List

- **Emotional Deprivation**: The belief that one's emotional needs will never be met by others — that no one will truly care, listen, or understand.
- **Abandonment**: The fear that significant others will leave, die, or abandon them — emotionally or physically.
- **Mistrust/Abuse**: The expectation that others will intentionally hurt, abuse, cheat, or take advantage.
- **Social Exclusion**: Feeling fundamentally different from others and not fitting in socially or emotionally.
- **Defectiveness/Shame**: A core belief of being flawed, unlovable, or bad — often tied to deep shame and fear of rejection.
- **Failure**: The belief that one is fundamentally inadequate and will fail in achievement-based domains like work or school.
- **Dependence/Incompetence**: Feeling unable to handle everyday responsibilities or solve problems without help.
- **Vulnerability to Harm or Illness**: A chronic fear that disaster (medical, financial, natural) is always looming and that one cannot prevent it.
- **Enmeshment/Undeveloped Self**: Feeling overly involved with or emotionally dependent on others — to the point of losing one's own identity.
- **Subjugation**: The belief that one's needs or desires must always be suppressed to avoid anger, retaliation, or abandonment.
- **Self-Sacrifice**: An excessive focus on meeting others' needs at the expense of one's own, often driven by guilt.
- **Approval-Seeking/Recognition-Seeking**: Placing excessive importance on gaining approval, recognition, or attention — often at the cost of authenticity.
- **Negativity/Pessimism**: A pervasive focus on the negative aspects of life — expecting disappointment or failure.
- **Emotional Inhibition**: Suppressing emotions to avoid disapproval, embarrassment, or loss of control.

- **Unrelenting Standards/Hypercriticalness**: The belief that one must meet high internalized standards to avoid criticism or failure — often resulting in perfectionism.
- **Punitiveness**: The belief that mistakes should be harshly punished — both for oneself and others — with little room for forgiveness.

Why Schemas Matter

- **Schemas shape reactions –** The narcissist's behavior is predictable once you know their schemas.
- **Schemas are targetable –** You can interact differently based on the schema driving the moment.

5. Empathic Confrontation: Disarming the Narcissist

This chapter introduces the book's core strategy: using empathic confrontation to get through narcissistic defenses and promote healthier interactions.

Empathic Confrontation Defined

- **Validating emotion + holding accountability –** *"I understand that was hard for you, but that doesn't make it okay."*
- **Speaking to the pain behind the armor–** Address the wounded inner child, not just the inflated outer self. <— ??♂ **Lucio's note**: I found these formats stereotypical 'therapist talk', they felt overly scripted for normal life and 'fake'. Also, they wouldn't always be effective in my opinion
  - Acknowledge the mode – Identify if the narcissist is in Angry Child, Detached Protector, etc. <— ??♂ **Lucio's note**: these felt very power-movey and I think they'd annoy most people, especially dominant personalities. I also think they wouldn't be wrong to be annoyied as they felt 'pscyhologizing power moves'

Goals of Confrontation

- **Protect your boundaries –** Assert yourself without hostility.
- **Break defensive cycles –** Interrupt power struggles or shutdowns.
- **Encourage self-awareness –** Gently highlight distorted thinking or unfair behavior.

Sample Scripts

- *"I get that this feels unfair to you, and I want to understand your reaction. But yelling shuts down the conversation."*
- *"You seem hurt underneath the anger. Can we talk about that without blaming?"*

6. Parenting with a Narcissist

This chapter provides specific strategies for co-parenting or parallel parenting with a narcissistic partner or ex-partner. The priority becomes the child's well-being and your own sanity.

Key Principles

- **Use structure and predictability –** Kids need consistency even if the narcissist is erratic.
- **Don't engage in drama –** Keep communication minimal and fact-based.
- **Protect the child's experience –** Avoid speaking negatively about the narcissistic parent, but validate what the child feels.
- **Protect the child from the burden of performance –** Some narcissists will push children too hard, and starve

them for love.
  - Narcissists may ‘Subjugate children to a legacy-driven future‘, ie. “you will join my law firm one day, of course”

Legal and Emotional Safety

- **Keep records** – Document exchanges and incidents neutrally.
- **Use third-party apps** – Tools like OurFamilyWizard reduce conflict.
- **Educate the child** – Age-appropriate conversations about emotions and boundaries.

7. When to Leave

This chapter reframes the narcissistic relationship as a dysfunctional “dance” and in some cases, the narcissistic relationship is too toxic to repair. This chapter explores how to know when to leave and how to do it safely.

You must make the move because, the author says, narcissists do not typically end the relationship, despite threats of doing so.

Signs It’s Time to Go

- **Repeated boundary violations** – Even after clear confrontation.
- **Escalating emotional or physical harm** – Safety becomes the top priority.
- **Complete emotional depletion** – You feel numb, trapped, or broken.

More Wisdom

How male and female narcissists differ

> Women can be narcissistic too, but they tend to express these traits mostly within the domains of personal appearance or vanity, the status of their children or household, and their value as caregivers. In addition, narcissistic women are inclined toward more covert manifestations of this syndrome. They are likely to show up as martyrs, whiners, and gratuitous victims.
> Of course, you will also meet grand dames and divas, who look more like their male counterparts in their aggressive quest for attention and admiration.

Spot a narcissist based on his reaction to your isssues

> When my dad was very ill and eventually dying, my selfsacrificing clients actually felt guilty coming in for their sessions, despite my repeated reassurance that I really wanted to be there for them. On the other hand, my narcissistic clients often seemed visibly annoyed if I arrived at a session a little late after leaving the hospital.

QUOTES

On preparing yourself before responding to a narcissistic mother:

> Before responding, you remind yourself that you love your mother, though you’re not always sure why <—
> ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio’s note**: This made me smile :D. But I also don’t see why you should be loving, love her, or seek your mother’s love and quality time with her, if you don’t even see why

Funny quote on narcissism's big business:

> In the process, terms and phrases such as "narcissism," "sex addiction," and "lack of empathy" have boldly appeared in the headline of many an article or broadcast (boosting my book sales, thank you very much).

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Overall, I wished for more scientific grounding, for a broader breadth of resources, and for more strategies and tactics based on power dynamics and personal empowerment.

Potentially naive

Says the author in the first chapter:

> Most narcissists are not "evil" or "bad" at a deeper level, no matter how they treat us. If you can learn to assert your rights while simultaneously working hard to reach the vulnerable, lonely core of the narcissist in your life, you stand a much better chance of bringing out the side of your partner that can love and care for you.

The whole book is built on its premise: talk to that poor little child inside, and you may turn your narcissist into a loving man.

Most narcissists are not evil, but I still couldn't help to feel this premise was naive. And that, despite the good intention, it could lead some readers to dealing with narcissists from a position of low power that may only make them bigger victims.

Sometimes ineffectively low power & too 'vulnerable'

This is what the author offers as a script example talking to a supervisor:

> Here's another example, this time using an interaction with a supervisor: "It's not very easy for me to say this because I'm aware of my long-standing tendency to do what I'm told, <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: Unecessary, potentially disempowering
> even if I don't agree or if I have another, possibly better solution.
> Sometimes I'm overly invested in your approval of me. <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: Unnecessary in many business organizations
> However, I want to propose that we improve our marketing efforts in this way… I also think that you and I should have regularly scheduled meetings to measure the progress on this project. <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: Lacks power protection, many bosses would push back on this just because it oversteps authority boundaries
> The current process leaves me feeling invisible and sometimes unfairly criticized, <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: Therapist talk, can feel weak. If goals are priority, you must frame your requet based more achieving goals, and less based on how you feel
> even though I'm sure that isn't your intention." <— ⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: Unnecessary

It's the perfect 'therapist talk', and may work great talking to your schema therapy supervisor. But it can be miscalibrated in most organizations.
I wouldn't recommend this approach, and especially not for men and in private organizations. In many private organizations, and especially in competitive or masculine environments, this style can lower perceived status or authority.

Ignores evolutionary roots of narcissism

Like many popular books on narcissism, *Disarming the Narcissist* misses out on the insight that evolutionary psychology provides.

Contrary to what the book suggests, narcissism may not be maladaptive for the narcissist.
In many cases there may be no 'wounded little child' inside, but a darker core of power hunger, and callous selfishness because… That may work better from an evolutionary perspective.
See:

- Advantages of narcissism, and how to use it

Schema therapy alone is limiting

The book uses schema therapy and psychotherapeutic frameworks.
While these can be helpful, it's also limiting to put all your eggs on a single approach.

REVIEW

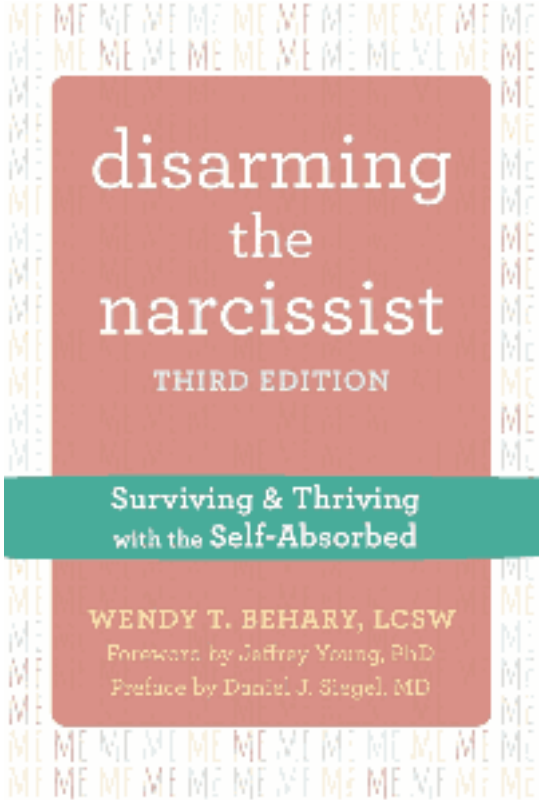
Disarming the Narcissists is a book developed around a specific clinical approach and largely built on the premise that narcissists can change, and those are both its strengths and its main limitations.

While the author is not naive and clearly states many narcissists don't want to change and will laugh at your empathic communication, the book still largely relies on that approach.
I have some reservations about a book developed to change 2% of narcissists who want and will change, when 98% won't.

Finally, although I may agree with the author that this book can work for both men and women, it seems to me better suited for women.
And I wouldn't necessarily recommend men, and especially the type of ambitious and smart men reading TPM, to copy the book's communication scripts.

Check our most recommended books and the **best books on narcissism**

Disarming the Narcissist Summary: Strategies for Thriving



Disarming the Narcissist (2021) is a practical guide that teaches readers how to manage and communicate with narcissistic individuals using empathic confrontation, boundaries, and schema-informed strategies.

URL: https://thepowermoves.com/disarming-the-narcisssist-summary-review/

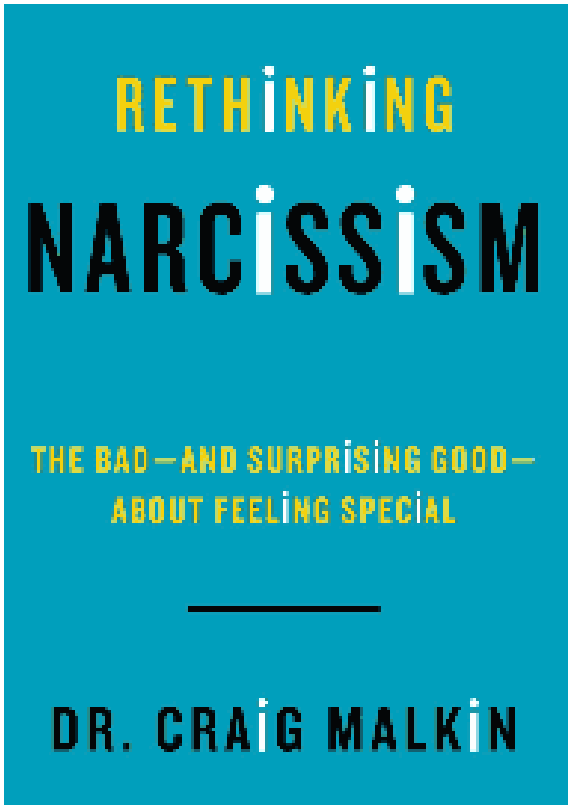
Author: Lucio Buffalmano

Editor's Rating:
3

Rethinking Narcissism: Summary & Review

Lucio Buffalmano · 12 July 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Rethinking Narcissism (2015) describes **narcissism** as a spectrum ranging from too low, to healthy self-esteem to toxic grandiosity — and offers a practical guide to understanding, managing, and healing narcissistic dynamics in ourselves and others.



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FULL SUMMARY

About the Author:
Dr. Craig Malkin is a clinical psychologist, lecturer at Harvard Medical School, and best known for his work on narcissism and emotional intelligence.

1. Rethinking Narcissism: Old Assumptions, New Ideas

Malkin opens the book by challenging common assumptions about narcissism.
He argues that narcissism is not inherently bad — in fact, a healthy dose of it is essential for well-being. Rather than being a binary (you are or aren't a narcissist), it exists on a spectrum. At one end is echoism (self-effacement), in the middle is healthy self-worth, and at the far end lies pathological narcissism.

2. Confusion and Controversy: How Narcissism Became a Dirty Word and We Found an Epidemic

Here Malkin traces how the cultural narrative around narcissism evolved. He critiques pop psychology and media-driven panic about a supposed "narcissism epidemic." He argues that many signs mistaken for narcissism (like selfies or self-promotion) are not inherently pathological. He also criticies the idea that Millennials are more narcissistic, citing more nuanced research. The real problem, he argues, is our misunderstanding of narcissism — and our failure to differentiate between healthy self-regard and harmful behaviors.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: the data is clear that there has been an increase in narcissism scores.

3. From 0 to 10: Understanding the Spectrum

This chapter introduces the narcissism spectrum in detail with the author's own model and measures.

At "0" is the echoist — someone who avoids the spotlight, struggles to assert needs, and fears being seen as special. At "10" is the extreme narcissist — entitled, exploitative, and lacking empathy. In between lies the healthy range, where people enjoy admiration without needing it.

4. The Narcissism Test: How Narcissistic Are You?

Malkin introduces the Narcissism Spectrum Scale (NSS), a self-assessment tool designed to help people understand where they fall on the narcissism continuum.

Unlike older tools that emphasize grandiosity, the NSS also captures low narcissism (echoism) and healthy narcissism. This chapter walks readers through the test and shows how recognizing one's position on the spectrum can offer insight into relationships, behaviors, and self-image. The test is meant to encourage self-awareness, not judgment.

⍰⍰♂ **Lucio's note**: I wished for a simpler online test and I may have taken it. For readers, keep in mind that the author's assessment is not nearly as validated and tested as the NPI or the other popular measurements.

5. Root Causes: The Making of Echoists and Narcissists

This chapter explores the environmental and developmental origins of narcissism and echoism.

I found it a bit more on the psychoanalytical side at times, and sometimes overly downplaying the role of genes and biology.

6. Echoism and Narcissism: From Bad to Worse

Echoism and narcissism can fuel one another in toxic relationship dynamics. Echoists — afraid to seem "needy" — often attract narcissists, who dominate the emotional space. The more the echoist retreats, the more the narcissist demands. This chapter describes how these pairings create painful cycles of emotional neglect, control, and resentment. Malkin warns that untreated echoism can become just as harmful as narcissism, leading people to tolerate abuse, ignore their own needs, or lose their sense of self entirely.

7. Warning Signs: Staying Alert for Narcissists

> One crucial sign: narcissists dodge normal feelings of vulnerability, including sadness, fear, loneliness, and worry

Malkin outlines the key behaviors that help you spot narcissists early. These include emotional hot-and-cold behavior, hypersensitivity to criticism, entitlement, and a tendency to idealize others before devaluing them.

He emphasizes that early charm and intensity (especially in dating or friendship) can mask these traits. The real red flag isn't confidence — it's emotional manipulation and a pattern of exploiting others.

8. Change and Recovery: Dealing with Lovers, Family, and Friends

This chapter focuses on navigating relationships with narcissistic partners, parents, or close friends. Malkin explains that some narcissists — particularly those on the mild to moderate end of the spectrum — can improve with feedback and therapy. He offers tools for prompting change, like empathy prompts, boundary setting, and emotional mirroring. But he also stresses the limits: some individuals won't change, and in those cases, protecting your well-being must come first.

9. Coping and Thriving: Dealing with Colleagues and Bosses

Narcissism in the workplace presents a different set of challenges. Narcissistic bosses or coworkers may take credit for others' work, gaslight colleagues, or manipulate social dynamics.
Malkin offers tactics for managing these relationships, such as depersonalizing attacks, documenting interactions, and avoiding unnecessary conflict. I found some of the scripts good, but some too low power for dealing with dominant narcissists.

10. Advice for Parents: Raising a Confident, Caring Child

Malkin draws on parenting psychology to help readers raise children with healthy narcissism — meaning kids who feel special, but not superior.

He recommends authoritative parenting: high warmth, clear boundaries, and emotional responsiveness. Overpraising leads to entitlement; underpraising to echoism. Instead, parents should mirror children's emotions, model vulnerability, and reward empathy. The goal is to nurture both confidence and compassion — the heart of healthy self-worth.

11. SoWe: The Healthy Use of Social Media

"SoWe" stands for "social wellness," Malkin's framework for using social media in a psychologically healthy way. Rather than chasing likes for external validation, users should engage to connect meaningfully with others.

Malkin warns that narcissistic use of platforms (posting for admiration, obsessing over followers) reinforces dependency on approval. By contrast, intentional, relationship-focused use of social media can support emotional well-being and reduce isolation.

12. A Passionate Life: The Ultimate Gift of Healthy Narcissism

The final chapter ties everything together: when people embrace healthy narcissism, they feel worthy, pursue passions, and remain open to love and feedback.
They live "a passionate life," not one governed by fear, avoidance, or manipulation. Malkin ends by reaffirming that narcissism isn't inherently bad — only when distorted does it cause harm. With self-awareness and the right environment, we can all move toward the center of the spectrum, where confidence and connection coexist.

Learn how to be a healthy narcissist:

Honorable narcissism: win at life, without toxicity

> How to Be a Strategic Narcissist: Achieve Power Without Toxicity

QUOTES

> The truth is a slightly outsized ego has its benefits. In fact, numerous studies have found that people who see themselves as better than average are happier, more sociable, and often more physically healthy than their humbler peers.

A good Machiavellian take:

> Do not trust HR. They work for management and *are* management

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Narcissists Don't Steal?

Writes the author:

> A boastful narcissist might lie, claiming to be a graduate of Harvard when he's really a high school dropout, but it wouldn't dawn on him to steal.

I wouldn't be too sure about that.

Not All Narcissists Are Psychopaths, But All Psychopaths Are Narcissists?

That's what the author claims, but I'm not too sure about that one.
Some psychopaths display narcissistic traits, but the expression of narcissistic traits between the two can also look rather different.

Some Criticism of NPI Feels Misplaced

Writes the author:

> The NPI, on which Twenge draws so heavily, is a deeply flawed measure. Under its design, agreeing with statements that reflect even admirable traits can inch people higher up the narcissism scale. For example, **picking "I am assertive" and "I would prefer to be a leader" counts as unhealthy** even though these qualities have been linked repeatedly in decades of research to high self-esteem and happy relationships. People who simply enjoy speaking their mind or being in charge are clearly different from narcissists who enjoy manipulation and lies. But the NPI makes no distinction. More people checking these salutary statements could easily account for millennials' rising NPI scores through the years, and that's what some studies indicate has happened.

I don't fully disagree; the NPI is an imperfect tool.
But I think this criticism could be better leveled. I don't think it's correct to say that 'picking I am assertive' necessarily 'counts as unhealthy'. It's well recognized in the literature that the authoritativeness facet is adaptive.

Are We Back With The Mask Model?

Writes the author:

> Human interaction poses a scary problem for narcissists who are, deep down, extraordinarily insecure people.

Again, I remain doubtful about that. And I can't help but remember what Campbell wrote: clinical psychologists only get a biased sample from the struggling narcissists. The successful ones don't show up for therapy.

Therapist Talk Is Low Power Sometimes

One of the scripts provided:

> *Mia, you mean the world to me. When you show up hours late for our dates, I feel sad, like I'm not important to you.*

Not the approach I'd recommend for our readers.

REVIEW

Rethinking Narcissism is an interesting book with a key insight that we agree on: narcissism in the right doses is healthy.
We also take one step further, adding that narcissism can be adaptive at higher doses, as long as it's calibrated, and as long as it's in the *adaptive* facets.

Get it on Amazon, check the **best books on narcissism**, or check our most recommended books.

Value Signaling: The Complete Guide to Signaling High Value

Lucio Buffalmano · 19 July 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Your success depends equally on your objective value and how effectively you signal it — but most men are clueless about the latter.

Signaling is a fundamental feature of life. Animals constantly send and interpret signals to achieve life-relevant goals, and humans do it with far greater complexity and strategy.
When it comes to social and life success, one of the most important classes of signaling relates to value, be it social value, job value, or mate value.
In general, **the higher value you signal, the more successful you will be** in life.

This article presents a framework for understanding the different sources of value signals, their relative credibility, and how to communicate your value accurately and effectively.

Verbally professing value with visibly low objective value is weakest and repels people

Contents

- The Value Signaling Framework™
  - Value, Signaling, & Perceived Value
  - Genuine vs. Manipulative Signals: Self-Serving Bias
  - The Perceived Value Formula™: Objective Value x Signaling
- What to Signal
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  - Promote Invisible Value, Let Visible Value Speak for Itself
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- Calibrate to Audience: Opportunity Meets Detection Risk
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  - The Sequence Value Model (Dating)
  - ⍰ Advanced: Countersignal to Display Maximum Value
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  - Humblebrag
  - Time Scarcity
  - Mentor's Frame & Growth Mindset
  - More Value-Signaling Tactics
  - Applying it For Top 1%

The Value Signaling Framework™

The Value Signaling Framework™ explains how people assess your value, and how value is communicated.

In simple words, **value signaling is the communication of value to others**. Value is an umbrella term that includes anything that increases someone's social or mate value. It includes and is not limited to, signaling confidence, social dominance, virtue ('virtue signaling'), intelligence, status, or lower comparative investment.

Broadly, value signaling includes not only deliberate self-promotion, but also signals from visible underlying value, environment, and reputation. In common parlance, value signaling refers more often to active communication, and in this article, we focus more on *active* signaling strategies.

Active signaling is crucial because it carries real weight and because it's in the signaler's full control. Active signaling reinforces already visible value, showcases semi-visible value, and is completely responsible for presenting the sizable non-directly accessible value like past history, mental faculties, character, etc.

Value, Signaling, & Perceived Value

People evaluate others on a combination of visible value, which they can assess without relying on the signaler's trustworthiness, and the signaler's active communication.

The key elements of value-signaling are:

- **Objective visible value**, including personal value foundations such as body language, confidence, and looks, and exchange value such as wealth and status. Total value ranges on a continuum of invisible to visible
- **Active signaling strategies**, controlled by the signalers to best showcase value (or undermine it when poor, and potentially manipulate it)
- **Perceived value** is the value others assign to us based on the visible portion of one's personal value, and their assessment of signals they receive

In marketing speak, objective value is the 'product' and active signaling is the 'marketing' for the promotion of that product.
Honest self-development work tends to address more the 'underlying value', while strategies address more the presentation.

Perceived value is the most important, true bottom line of success because others assess and behave based on their perception, rather than 'what truly is'. As Machiavelli said, everyone sees what you appear to be.

Genuine vs. Manipulative Signals: Self-Serving Bias

The **self-serving bias principle** states that signalers have an incentive to manipulate signals and communicate higher value than their objective value to boost their odds of survival and reproduction

- **Genuine signaling** (value-backed) reflects the true underlying value
- **Manipulative signaling** does not reflect true underlying value. It can signal non-existing value, inflate existing value, or hide negative value to present a higher total value than what's objectively true

Manipulation is common in both nature and human socialization, although most everyday signaling is a mix of genuine and manipulative.

Manipulability: The Evolutionary Arms' Race

Strategic and manipulative signaling can certainly sway perceived value, which advantages more Machiavellian players.

However, that's not to say that everything's fake or 'easily fakable'.
Others can more reliably assess the visible parts of objective value. And we can expect organisms to evolve to be more discriminating of easy-to-manipulate information. Meaning, most humans naturally favor reliable, hard-to-fake signals while discounting cheap, easily manipulated signals.

The Perceived Value Formula™: Objective Value x Signaling

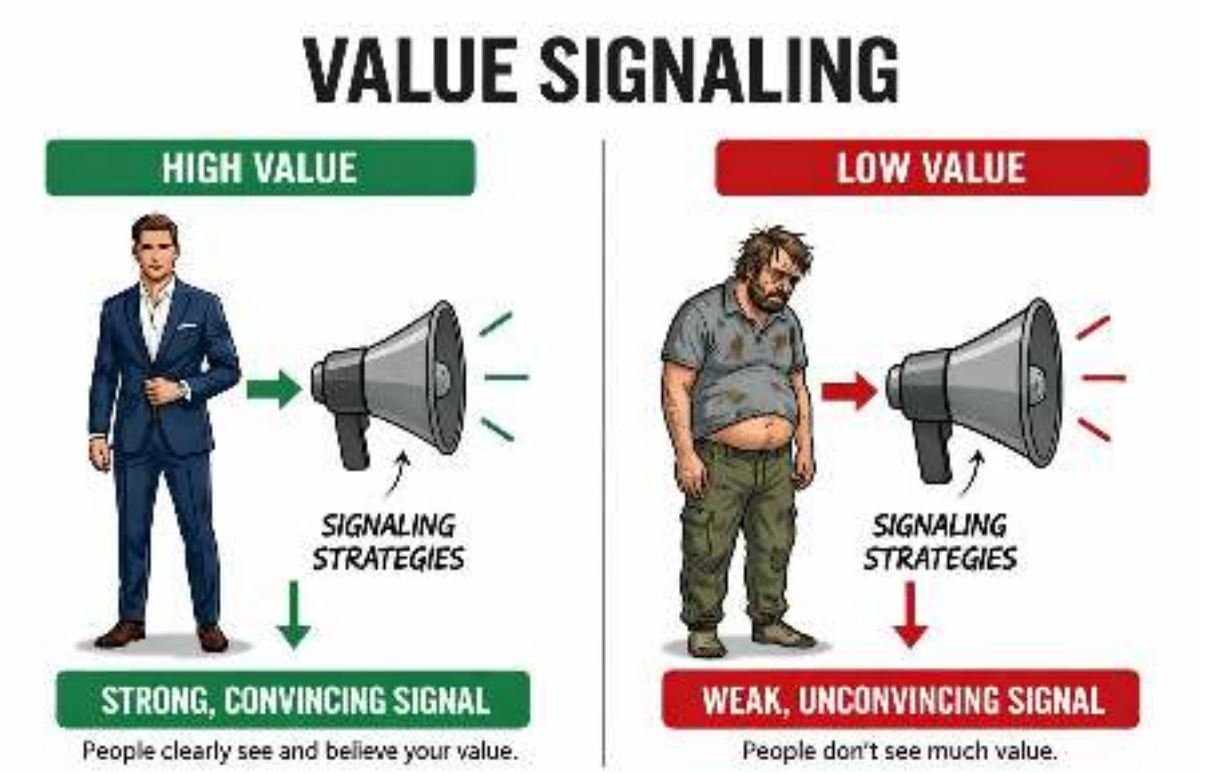
Both objective value and signaling matter.

- **Objective value is the raw material**, and it shows: it's partly visible, tends to 'leak out' when people fake higher value, and tends to 'surface' over the long run
- **Signaling showcases value**, is fully responsible for non-visible value, and it's especially impactful in the short-term.

So perceived value comes down to:

Perceived Value=Visible Value×Signaling\text{Perceived Value} = \text{Visible Value} \times \text{Signaling}
Both are crucial and improvable, but The Power Moves, we stress working on objective value with honest self-development.
Higher personal value makes value signaling easier and more effective. Just look at the math:

8 (High Value) × 7 (Good Signaling)=**56**3 (Low Value) × 9 (Excellent Signaling) =**27**\begin{aligned} \text{8 (High Value) } \times \text{ 7 (Good Signaling)} &= \color{darkgreen}{\mathbf{56}} \\ \text{3 (Low Value) } \times \text{ 9 (Excellent Signaling) } &= \color{red}{\mathbf{27}} \end{aligned}



Signaling well is a skill you can improve, and it works even better if you also work on the foundations of objective value. High value men may not even need much active signaling

High value also allows for more genuine self-presentation, less manipulation, and more win-win.
Also see:

- Self-empowerment: working from the ground up
- Competence-value model
- High value men: mindsets, traits, skills

What to Signal

Based on the signal dynamics we explained, this is what to prioritize for value-signaling:

Signal What's Costly, Hard to Fake, & Unbiased

Reliable signals are...	Examples
Costly	**Costly**: Conspicuous consumption **Cheap**: Bragging about income
Hard to fake	**Hard**: Calm under pressure **Easy**: Power poses
Unbiased	**Unbiased**: Boss' praise **Biased**: Mother's praise

Overt verbal bragging without proof, what most men do, is sub-optimal because it's cheap, easy to replicate by low-value individuals, easy to fake by anyone, and inherently biased.

Similar dynamics have been studied in nature.
Economist Michael Spence and biologist Amotz Zahavi both focused on costs, and reached the same conclusion.
Signals that seek to convey value but that are cheap to produce are unreliable because anyone can fake them.

Costly signals are reliable because only high-value animals can produce them. The cost itself is the proof.
The common example is the peacock's tail: it's costly to produce and maintain, and only genetically gifted peacocks can boast the largest and most colorful tails.

And Dawkins and Krebs (1978) reached the same conclusion about speakers' bias: signalers have an inherent interest in appearing higher value than they are, incentivizing manipulation, and making self-reports structurally unreliable.

⁉ **Takeaway**: avoid talking without showing, prioritize harder-to-fake signals

Value Credibility Hierarchy™: Signal From the Bottom-Up

A simplified value display hierarchy. Verbal claims are least credible, results and behavior are credible, and consistent value displays over time are most credible

1. **First-hand observation**: Others discover your value directly
2. **Contextual signals**: Status and wealth cues, clothes, house/office
3. **Third-party signals:** Others praise you, defer to you, introduce you as an expert, etc. Their credibility also depends on the interest alignment between praiser and praised (ie.: family and allies vs. strangers and competitors)
4. **Personal sub-communication**: Value inferred from your words or behavior. Can be subconscious and unintentional or conscious and strategic (signaling, without looking like you are)
   - **Nonverbal sub-communication**: including body language, social dominance, and behavioral leadership
   - **Verbal sub-communication**: conversational leadership, thread-expanding, name drops, humblebrags, stories, signals nested inside unrelated conversation, etc.
5. **Direct verbal claims** are the least credible because they're cheap, easy to fake and replicate, and biased
   Ie.: "I'm great"

Promote Invisible Value, Let Visible Value Speak for Itself

Some men brag about what's already visible because they think that visible value makes their bragging credible. While the logic is valid, it's a sub-optimal strategy. Bragging about what's already visible trades little added signaling value for a reputation of an obnoxious bragger.

The smart strategist instead uses high visible value to self-efface, gain a reputation for humility, and use that social capital for promoting invisible value, or canceling flaws.

This is a similar tactic that launched the first viral get-rich guy in Web 2.0:

⍰ How this marketer used this strategy

This popular 2010s marketer first displayed value with a supercar, then self-effaced by stating to be more proud of his knowledge, which he later sold (as a way to achieve the supercar value, implied)

Visibility-informed Strategies

Visibility and value form a quadrant that can guide your signaling strategies:

	Low Visibility	High Visibility
High Value	**Hidden gems** Bring in sight, sub-communicate	**PR Assets** Thread-expand, but never brag about it
Low Value	**Hidden weaknesses** Ignore and never mention	**PR Liabilities** Work on it as high prio, reframe it, or own it with confidence

Also see:

- Self-promotion at work: foundational strategies
- Guru marketing tactics: Tai Lopez case study
- Self-promotion at work: tactics

How to Signal: Strategies

First, a reminder on why the foundations are so important:

Be Congruent: Posers & The Leakage Principle™

The congruence principle™ states that people trust signals most when they are congruent, and trust the more credible signals when they're incongruent.
Corollary (Leakage Principle™): Because the self-serving bias incentivizes inflating one's own value and faking high-value signals, unintentional lower-value signals tend to be more credible, and therefore often dominate perception.

In simple words:
⚖ **When you mix low and high-value signals, people trust the low-value ones**

This is because, as a self-interested source, you have an incentive to fake high-value signals, while hiding lower-value ones.
And it's often visible in real life. Men can consciously send socially dominant cues, for example, striking open and confident body language poses even when not feeling confident.
However, without true underlying confidence, most men struggle to be 100% congruent.
Instead, **low-confidence behavior tends to leak out**. And, people trust those tiny leaks to spot a 'poser'.

Hence, if in strategy the name of the game is calibration, in signaling it's congruence.

This is why on The Power Moves we propose the 'source approach' solution based on mental empowerment as the foundation. Set the foundations of a strong and resilient mind, and everything else flows downstream naturally and congruently.
See:

- Foundations of self-empowerment, starting with the mind
- **Power University**, built to internalize these principles from most foundational to advanced

Focus on *Sub*-Communication First

Effective sub-communication signaling is the art of signaling, without looking like you are.

Sub-communication is extremely powerful. As active signaling, it's fully within your control. Yet, **effective sub-communication is perceived as honest and reliable** because it doesn't look like active promotion.
Since it's never perceived as active self-advocacy, it's as credible as first-hand observation when well-executed.

Yet, few men truly master it, falling back on the simpler but less credible direct self-promotion.
Thus, the social strategist gains an immense advantage mastering the *sub*-communication.

⍰ Example: sub-communicating high value

> **You**: Love a good wine <— Staying fit without over-sacrificing is a costly signal. Wine frames it as 'classy' but alcohol is on pause because I'm on a massive project sprint and training for a personal best <—⍰⍰ I'm ambitious, fit and health-conscious, without being a nut/bore

Calibrate to Audience: Opportunity Meets Detection Risk

Inflated or exaggerated signaling can undermine credibility and rapport, diminish signaling effectiveness, and may even signal *lower* value.

However, the risks and opportunities of detection largely depend on context, goals, and audience.

Principle:
⚖ **The more empowered the audience is, the more signaling nuance is required.**
Conversely, the more naive and low-power the audience, the more obvious your signals can be.

Similar dynamics apply with influence, status gaining, and leadership.
Nevicka in *The Handbook of Trait Narcissism* suggests that narcissistic leaders fit better with submissive followers (Grijalva & Harms, 2014).
Similarly, bragging bravado attracts disempowered men and repels more empowered ones (Kakkar and Sivanathan, 2017), who are more likely to find it weak and annoying and, potentially, an affront to their own power (Willer et al., 2013)

This principle is also seen in self-help and 'guru' dynamics, including our previous example.
Blatant signaling of supercars or cocky arrogance attracted beginners and less power-aware men. However, it only *lost* the trust of more power-aware and successful men.

Target	Strategy
Naive audience	**Flashy displays** of cars, luxury, and models
Low power and insecure audience	**Bragging bravado** impresses them
Smart audience	**Higher logic**, medium authority signaling, zero brags
High-power audience	**Power+warmth** for respect and win-win, without competitive hostility

On this topic, also see:

- Huberman value signaling: complex jargon, long sentences, and the breadcrumb technique to display high authority
- Political populism power dynamics: bigger talkers attract fawners
- Humblebrags examples from Tony Robbins

When to Signal

Calibrating to Time: Frontload Value

Principle:
⚖ **The briefer the interaction is, the earlier and more actively you must signal value**

Early signaling in first impressions helps because people weigh the benefits of long-term associations based on future extrapolation of present sampling ('sampling principle', see Thibaut and Kelley, 1959).

The Sequence Value Model (Dating)

Principle:
⚖ **The more credible value you display over time, the more backing you have for verbal signaling**

Especially valid in dating, value-backed displays of high confidence can boost attraction, rather than competition.
It may not be a coincidence that narcissists, known for grandiosity and value displays, are the most attractive of the dark triads (Rauthmann and Denissen, 2014; Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013).

A framework we introduced and that I've personally found very effective on multiple occasions:

- **Phase 1: Display nonverbal foundations** with leadership and social confidence
- **Phase 2: Indirect Verbal displays** as you move to the date location, move to conversational leadership and high-value sub-communication

- **Phase 3: 'Positive arrogance'**: Verbal self-promotion works better once there is proof of it (O'Mara et al., 2018). Then, bursts of direct brags confirm her belief, thread-expand, and display a rare excess of confidence that's often attractive. Even borderline arrogance can turn into a positive 'yes, he's a bit haughty… But he's right'.
- **Phase 4: Reminder bursts**: If things progress and you set good win-win relationships, direct value displays are more welcomed and more believable when interests align (Farrell and Rabin, 1996)

Read more:

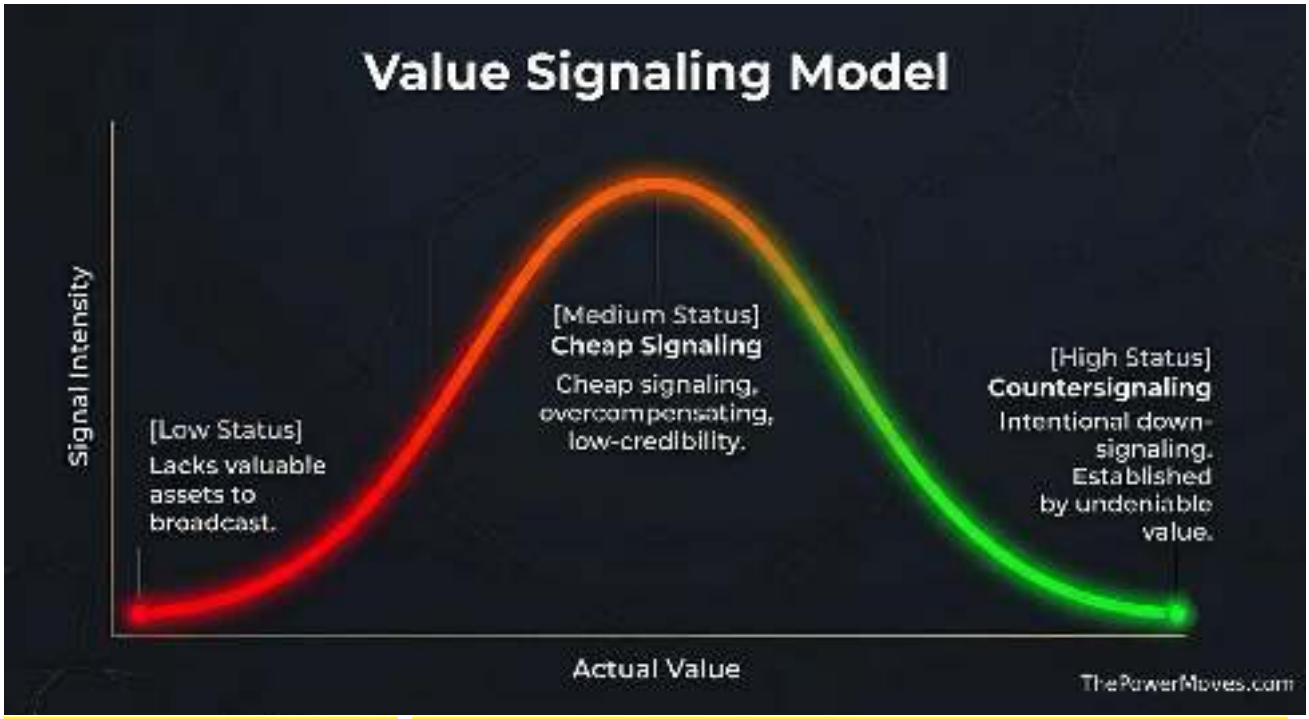
- Value sequence model: How to demonstrate high value in dates
- ⍰ How to DHV on dates

⍰ Advanced: Countersignal to Display Maximum Value

It's often not the lowest or highest value men who signal the most, but the mid-level tiers:

1. **Low value** possess no major assets to signal about
2. **Medium value (The "Try-Hard" Trap)**: terrified of appearing low value and hopeful they can climb to the upper tier, they're the busiest signaling and managing impressions
3. **High value (The Countersignalers)**: having visible value, structural status, and brand name visibility, they intentionally withhold information, dress down, self-deprecate, or follow a different signaling code than the masses

This phenomenon has been referred to as **countersignaling** (Feltovich, Harbaugh, and To, 1999).



Lowest value has no value to signal; medium value signals as much as possible; highest value differentiates himself from the masses by not signaling at all

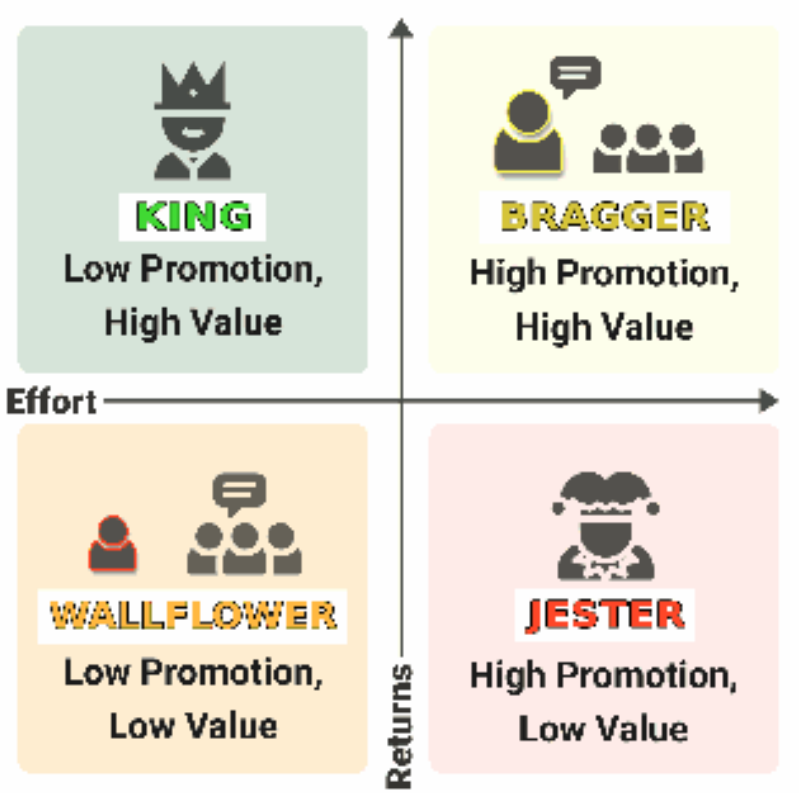
Risks of Over-signaling: The Needy Jester Trap

Signaling value is effortful and betrays the intent to impress, which is needy.
For this reason, signaling follows the social investment model, meaning that oversignaling displays:

- **Neediness for approval**

- ***Lower* value**, trying to make up the difference (compensatory investment principle)
- ***Lower* confidence**, driven by feelings of not being enough

As per our social investment model, high value signaling with less (visible) signaling effort is higher power nad more effective:



The Signaling-Return Matrix measures the returns on signaling effort (self-promotion) in terms of perceived value, applying the same principle as the Social ROI Matrix™, which measures the returns on social investment.

Also read:

- Social climbing: the leader's mistake

⍰ Advanced: Value Stacking

The pinnacle of sub-communication is to seamlessly stack multiple high-value signals while remaining high warmth.
Consider this response to a date complaining about work:

> Yeah, I hear you.
> It was the same for me. I hated the alarm. The moment it rang, I started the day alraedy pissed off (smiles to nonverbally offset the verbal negativity).
> So for a character like mine, and maybe you too, doing my own thing wasn't even an aspiration, it was a *necessity*.
> But the true blessing is not just doing your thing, but doing what you're passionate about. So you're not just getting money and freedom, but doing what you love doing.

Look what this single moment sub-communicates:

- **Peak personal success**, succeeding in entrepreneurship while working on one's passion: most people's dream
- **Virtue & wealth-signaling combined**: saying 'not just money' puts passion first, while suggesting *also* making

money (this is positive virtue signaling)
- **No brags**, there is on 'I' in there. It's implied he did it, but he never says so
- **Less about him, more about her**, and ends shifting the focus completely to her
- **Similarity and understanding**, deepening the bond
- **Inspirational**: she's led to imagine doing the same, disarming her from even registering there is any signaling intention (and later potentially empowering her to believe she can)

Now imagine a guy with these skills across a full date, or across a lifetime of social exchanges, and you may start to understand the upsides of being an advanced social strategist.

How to Signal: Tactics

Humblebrag

A signal that on the surface may seem neutral, low-value self-deprecating, or querulous, but designed to boost the speaker's perceived value with the sub-communication

The humblebragger uses neutral or lower-value covers to hide the higher-value signal.

If effective, people won't even consider it a humblebrag—they may simply see a joke, a self-effacing remark, a complaint, or a neutral statement.
But if people see through it, as it frequently happens, the high-value signal loses effectiveness. The speaker loses trust and likability, and the move may even turn net-negative (Sezer et al., 2017). Sezer's research points to complaint-based humblebrags as most likely to backfire.

Lowest Power	Medium Power	Max Power
Inept striver: Obvious cover + weak value signal	**Grifter**: Obvious humble cover + high-value signal	**High quality**: Honest humility + high personal value
Low power: Disempowering cover + weak value signal	**Social climber**: Credible humble cover + medium value signal	**Machiavellian**: Credible cover + high-value signal

Example of a generally poor humblebrag:

> **Her**: I am so tired of these men coming after me wherever I go, can't a woman just be left alone once? <— Common tactic, seemingly a complaing, but signals being in demand and, supposedly, attractive

See more:

- ⍰ Tony Robbins humblebrags

Time Scarcity

While rather banal, busyness signaling is such a common status signal in Western cultures that it deserves its own entry (Bellezza et al., 2017).

Busyness signals ambition, high agency, and competence and, importantly, boosts scarcity. Busyness for work also implies wealth accumulation potential.
However, notice the important difference:

Low Power Busyness	High Power Busyness
Imposed by others (errand boy frame)	**Chosen** (high agency frame)

Low Power Busyness	High Power Busyness
Without valuable practical returns (OCD & performative)	**With concrete returns** (mover and shaker)

Mentor's Frame & Growth Mindset

> **Mentor**: I have made all these mistakes, so that you don't have to <— It's power-protecting because teaching is not based on personal superiority like genetics or IQ, only on *experience*, which you can also achieve

However, it still signals success, and it also happens to be a power move because it empowers the speaker, while disempowering the listener.
If the listener accepts this frame, he becomes a lower-value learner who must learn from the speaker to avoid costly mistakes he'd otherwise commit (says who?).

More Value-Signaling Tactics

- **The "Casually Dropping Gold" Move:**
  Nonchalantly drop references, data, or quotes to signal authority. Bonus point if you do it as an aside, signaling an overflowing well of knowledge
- **Bamboozling Technique**
  Start high complexity to signal expertise, then cut to practical takeaways to maintain attention. Frame it as 'for the sake of time' or 'to skip the science and focus on the practicality'
- **The Frame Reversal**
  Imply or state that generally higher power parties are pursuing you. For example, imply the woman or the employer wants you, flipping the usual frame of men and interviewees courting and seeking jobs.
- **Onion self-description**
  To give brief self-descriptions and answers, prompting others to ask more and thus evoking a sense of first-hand discovery.
  Casanova used this tactic
- **The Story Embed**
  The early 'pick-up artist' approach to 'demonstrating higher value' by telling a story that made them look cool and high value.
  The formula: trait you want to convey → achievement that demonstrates it → story that makes it vivid.
- **Eliciting Compliments** (for dating)
  For example, misrepresenting a positive general observation of her as if it was for you, and openly asking if it doesn't indeed apply to you if she corrects you. Or complimenting her for something you have in common, which calls for the same compliment back.
  See more here.
- **The Giver Frame**
  Signaling value generation or value-giving, which implies having high value, and adds a pro-social and 'kind' signal.
- **Thread expanding** (fame control)
  Expert value signalers do not just initiate novel signals, but maximize external signals, which is lower effort and more credible. It can be done in many ways, from asking a question, to commenting on a positive observation, to laughing about an empowering joke.
  See basics of frame control

See more:

- Covert bragging tactics

Applying it For Top 1%

The highest-value people rarely need to convince others they're valuable.
They build lives and internalize skills that naturally generate evidence of value.

Their signaling simply helps others notice what's already true. We teach how in Power University:

Check Power University

Animal Signals: Information or Manipulation (Research Review)

Lucio Buffalmano · 17 August 2026 · Archived copy · Original

Animal Signals: Information or Manipulation? (1978) by Richard Dawkins & John R. Krebs is the 10th chapter of *Behavioural Ecology: An Evolutionary Approach* (J.R. Krebs & N.B. Davies), arguing that communication in nature should not be assumed to have evolved to share honest information, but can instead be selected to manipulate others.

Contents

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- Notes
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  - Communication as a Substitute for Physical Force
  - Selection for Subversion, Not Sharing
  - Cooperation Is the Exception — Even Between Mates and Kin
  - Why Manipulation Cannot Take Over (Communication Survives)
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- ⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis
  - Learning manipulation dynamics is crucial so as not to fall behind the evolutionary arms race
  - Slut-Shaming: for all species with male parental investment?
  - Typical intensity challenges the "honest information" view, but…
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Overview

> We are contrasting two attitudes to the evolution of animal signals.
> One attitude, which we (…) called classical, emphasises cooperation (…) actors make it easy for reactors to 'read' their internal state.
> The other attitude, which we espouse, emphasises the struggle between individuals. If information is shared at all it is likely to be false information.
>
> - **Information shared is likely manipulative** because individuals are in constant competition
> - **Manipulation is higher ROI than coercion:** instead of physically forcing others, manipulators gets the same result having another animal do the work
> - **It's an arms' race to who manipulates best**: Communication is a coevolutionary arms race between signalers and receivers, with each side continually trying to outwit the other.
> - Receivers evolve to be skpetical: We can expect receivers to evolve counter-measures to detect and resist manipulation.

Core insight: Manipulation evolves 'naturally' and unavoidably with communication. This means that manipulation is part and parcel of biological life just as much as communication is.

Notes

“Classical” Cooperation vs. “Manipulation”

Dawkins and Krebs trace the “classical ethology” position to Tinbergen (1952), Morris (1956), Marler (1959), assuming that communication evolved for shared benefit.

Dawkins & Krebs instead assume that **communication evolved to promote *self*-interest** rather than the species’ interest, and thus naturally includes manipulation.

Cooperation is not excluded, but survives only when it’s the individually optimal strategy.

Communication as a Substitute for Physical Force

Following Dawkins’s *The Selfish Gene* (1976), the chapter frames every animal as a machine built to preserve and propagate the genes that ride inside it. To get what it needs, that machine has to manipulate the objects around it — including other animals (themselves selfish replicators pursuing their own agendas).

> When an animal seeks to manipulate an inanimate object, it has only one recourse: physical power. But when the object it seeks to manipulate is itself another live animal there is an alternative way […] communication is energetically more efficient than trying to take her by force.

This produces the chapter’s central — almost cynical — definition of communication:

> Communication […] could be characterized as a means by which one animal makes use of another animal’s muscle power.

Quick takeaways:

- **Manipulation is more effective than force** — you don’t need to physically move someone if you can get their own body to move for you.
- **Reframes persuasion, charisma, and courtship as remote-control tools**: the goal isn’t mutual understanding, it’s getting the other party’s own effort working for you.

Selection for Subversion, Not Sharing

Dawkins and Krebs note that animals are already selected to respond to their environment in whatever way benefits them on average. That responsiveness is exactly what a signaler can exploit:

> As an inevitable byproduct of the fact that animals are selected to respond to their environment in ways that are on average beneficial to themselves, other animals can be selected to subvert this responsiveness for their own benefit. This is communication.

Information ≠ honesty ≠ cooperation & manipulation ≠ harm

However, this communication/manipulation is not necessarily harmful (though it can be):

> It may happen that both parties benefit by the arrangement, in which case the word “subvert” will seem inappropriate. But as far as our definition of communication is concerned, whether the reactor benefits or not is incidental.

A signal can:

- contain accurate information,
- be useful to the receiver,
- and still have evolved because producing it benefits the signaler.

Likewise, a signal can be manipulative without being false.
Also see:

- **Manipulation vs persuasion**

Cooperation Is the Exception — Even Between Mates and Kin

Cooperation shouldn't be the null hypothesis.
Citing Robert Trivers's work on parental investment and parent-offspring conflict, the authors point out that even the closest relationships carry built-in genetic conflicts of interest.

> Cooperation, if it occurs, should be regarded as something surprising, demanding special explanation, rather than as something automatically to be expected. Even mates (Trivers 1972), and parents and offspring (Trivers 1974, Trivers & Hare 1976) often have divergent genetic interests, and must be expected to conflict with each other rather than to cooperate.

Lucio's Take: **This section may understate the case for cooperation's own power and pervasiveness**

Lucio: The authors write that cooperation "should be regarded as something surprising, demanding special explanation". This is a useful 'positively cynical' correction to naive group-selection thinking, but as for many corrections, you don't want to go overboard in the opposite direction.

Cooperation is not so exceptional if we posit that it's relatively common for two or more parties to both benefit from it.

Dawkins himself later commended Robert Axelrod's work on cooperation, even providing the foreword of its seminal book *The Evolution of Cooperation*.

Axelrod's work shows that cooperation is likely to evolve even among selfish players whenever it benefits both (a likely not-rare occurrence).

Quick takeaways:

- Don't assume alignment of interest just because a relationship looks close (mates, family, partners) — divergent interests are the default, not the exception.
- Cooperation must be justified by self-interest, rather than assumed

Why Manipulation Cannot Take Over (Communication Survives)

Deception cannot become universal.
Deceit within a species turns out to be rarer than deceit between species (predator-prey mimicry, for instance) for two reasons:

- The deceit has to stay **relatively rare**, so that on average it still pays the receiver to trust and react to the signal (if he doesn't, he would stop responding)
- The receiver has to be, at least sometimes, **unable to tell the fake from the real thing**.

Plus, the authors may highlight in a different section a third reason:

Probing and assessment also limit manipulation

> "The general conclusion is that bluff and deceit are always advantageous, but they are limited by probing and assessment."

Remember that manipulation is an arms race; hence **manipulation creates the selection pressure for manipulation resistance.**

Quick takeaways:

- Deceit is always individually advantageous in principle. What limits it isn't morality, it's detectability and base rate.
- The countermeasure to manipulation isn't refusing to communicate — it's probing and assessment, i.e., verifying rather than taking signals at face value.

Ritualized Contests: Hawk-Mouse Game & The Logic of (Not) Fighting

Animals usually settle disputes with conventional displays and smaller-scale fights rather than all-out combat. Often, the loser gives up without a struggle, and even the winner doesn't go for the kill (Lorenz 1966, with exceptions noted by Geist 1971).

For example, in red deer:

> The stags compete for hinds to add to their harems, and contests consist of prolonged roaring duels. Escalated contests are rare, and they are costly because of the high risk of injury and because subordinate males, known as sneaky fuckers, may steal matings during a prolonged fight.

That raises a real problem for a "selfish gene" view — ritualized combat is obviously good for the species, since it saves lives, but is it good for the genes of the individuals to back off?

Maynard Smith and Price (1973), building on earlier sex-ratio theory (Fisher 1930, Hamilton 1967), showed that the best strategy for an individual to adopt depends on what everyone else in the population is doing — a game-theoretic, frequency-dependent strategy.

Imagine a population that only ever displays and retreats at the first sign of real danger. A mutant "hawk," who fights viciously in every contest, would prosper: it always wins, and never risks injury. But once hawk spreads, most contests are hawk-vs-hawk, and each hawk now risks serious injury. If the cost of that injury outweighs the value of winning, a retreating "mouse" strategist does better on average than the now-common hawks. **Both aggressive and retreating strategies do well when rare and get punished when common —** this is a frequency-dependent, evolutionarily stable mix rather than a single winning strategy.

The authors formalize this as a payoff matrix:

	Against a Hawk	Against a Mouse
Payoff to Hawk	(V – W) / 2	V
Payoff to Mouse	0	V/2 – T

Where **V** = the value of the resource (benefit of winning), **W** = the fitness cost of injury, and **T** = the fitness cost of time wasted in conventional display.

Setting the average payoff to hawk equal to the average payoff to mouse, for p = the proportion of hawks in the population, gives the stable ("ESS") proportion of hawks:

p* = (V + 2T) / (W + 2T)

This mixed equilibrium only holds when injury costs more than the resource is worth (W > V). But *"if the cost of injury is bigger than the value of victory (W > V) then hawk does worse than mouse in a population of hawks*". If instead the value of winning is large relative to injury risk, hawk should sweep as a pure strategy (ie.: full, permanent escalation for all).

The chapter's own conclusion from this:

> "we would not expect to observe animals using purely escalated fighting, if costs of injury are high relative to benefits from winning. They should use predominantly conventional displays, and escalate only in retaliation."

⍰♂Lucio's Take: **Do 'display costs' even count?**

Lucio:
The authors charge a 'cost of display', but I had to wonder if that even amounts to anything significant. And if so, the model doesn't charge Hawk any time cost at all, only injury risk (W), and only in Hawk-vs-Hawk contests. Mouse is the only strategy priced for time (T), win or lose.

I understand the authors may imply that hawks start fighting right away, but even escalated fights most often include some posturing preceding it

Conventions: Win or Lose Based on Customs & Rules

The authors list several species where members of the species give in immediately based on random rules, like for example, who arrived at the location first.

These rules work when resources are abundant and one can easily move somewhere else.
It also works when the costs of losing are high.

For example, a worked numeric example appears later in the chapter (Table 10.3), using V=60, W=100, T=10, in the context of an arbitrary tie-breaking convention (see the next section):

- Hawk vs. Hawk: (60 – 100) / 2 = **–20**
- Hawk vs. Mouse: **+60**
- Mouse vs. Hawk: **0**
- Mouse vs. Mouse: 60/2 – 10 = **+20**

A strategy of "owner wins, intruder loses" (average payoff 30 against itself, since each contestant is owner half the time) resists invasion by any mutant that ignores the ownership convention and plays hawk some of the time instead — the mutant does worse than 30 no matter what probability it picks.

Quick takeaways:

- **Fighting only works when rare**: It isn't inherently favored by selection, it wins only while rare, and gets punished once common, because injury risk compounds within a population of fighters.

- **The stable outcome is a mix** ($p^* = (V+2T)/(W+2T)$), not a single "correct" strategy — how much escalation persists in a population is set entirely by the ratio of stakes to injury risk.
- **Ritualized display is best for all**: not just a 'peace treaty' — it's what a genetically self-interested population lands on once fighting risk outweighs the prize.

P.S.:

- While the dominant males are locked in a costly, high-stakes display, lower-status "sneaky" males exploit the distraction to mate opportunistically — direct competition isn't the only path to reproductive success.

The Hypnosis Parallel: Manipulation as a Human Continuum Too

Near the end of the chapter, Dawkins and Krebs explicitly extend the manipulation framework beyond animal signaling into human persuasion:

> There may be a continuum between hypnosis as it is commonly understood and ordinary verbal persuasion, with the 'spellbinding' oratory of a Hitler or a Billy Graham falling between

Quick takeaways:

- The authors themselves draw the line from biology to human persuasion and manipulation
- If hypnosis and ordinary persuasion sit on the same continuum, the interesting question for any given interaction isn't "is this manipulation or not" — it's "how far along the continuum is it."

⍰⍰♂ Lucio's Analysis

Learning manipulation dynamics is crucial so as not to fall behind the evolutionary arms race

It's a principle we've long held on TPM, and it's one of the reasons why this chapter is so crucial for us. **Ambitious men must learn manipulation dynamics if they don't want to be at a comparative disadvantage** in all areas of life, including business and mating.

See this video here:

This is also why we have a full module on manipulation and dark triads in Power University.

Slut-Shaming: for all species with male parental investment?

The chapter's discussion of barbary dove courtship gives an evolutionary account of a very human-sounding behavior:

> If the female goes into the bow posture (an advanced stage of courtship) too quickly during courtship, the male starts to attack her.
> In Erickson's and Zenone's experiment, the 'eager' females were produced by a pretreatment of stimulating them with the courtship of another male, so the reaction of the test males makes very good sense: they rejected females which showed signs of having philandered.
> The male barbary dove contributes considerably to the care of nestlings, so that assessment of mate fidelity and avoidance of cuckoldry are of great importance to him.

Typical intensity challenges the “honest information” view, but...

> Morris (1957) noted that many displays are performed in a rather constant manner (‘typical intensity’) regardless of the strength of motivation of the performer. This is just what one would expect if these displays have evolved as a means of winning contests and not as a way of providing opponents with as much information as possible about the subtle variations in motivation of the signaller (Morton 1977).

Fixed-intensity displays are evidence against the “honest broadcast” theory of signaling. If displays existed to inform, you’d expect them to scale with true internal state.

But then I must wonder, wouldn’t a powerful, motivated signaler who’s likely to win stand to gain more from displaying with extra intensity, rather than capping it?
What stops selection from favoring signalers who “turn it up”? I can imagine that weaker actors may still assess formidability even with baseline typical intensity, but the original text could have been clearer here.

Deceit works best when rare

Bluffing and exaggeration are always advantageous in principle, but only work if they stay rare and if the receiver can’t always detect them — which is why deceit within a species is rarer than deceit between species.

Quotes

On manipulation and selection:

Natural selection favours individuals who successfully manipulate the behaviour of other individuals, whether or not this is to the advantage of the manipulated individuals.

On fighters losing to more strategic Machiavellians:

Escalated contests are rare, and they are costly because of the high risk of injury and because subordinate males, known as sneaky fuckers, may steal matings during a prolonged fight.

Takeaways

Richard Dawkins & John R. Krebs’s chapter provides foundational theory for The Power Moves frameworks and strategies.
It explains why manipulation is not an exception to communication, but part of its structural default. In practical terms, it means that learning manipulation dynamics is not optional but a must for ambitious men.
And from a singular’s perspective, it also explains why effective signaling must be reliable to be trusted and accepted.

Some of our foundational resources build directly on this insight:

- **Manipulation in humans**: the overview
- **Effective cooperation**: how to maintain cooperation despite the reality of endemic manipulation and self-interest
- **Value signaling**: how to signal value effectively and reliably

Or check out our training program where we turn these foundational principles into applied strategies and tactics for men’s success:

Check Power University